

Ancient Architecture

Ancient Architecture – Study Notes

1. Overview

- **Definition:** Built environments created by early civilizations (??3000?BCE?–?500?CE) that reflect cultural, religious, technological, and environmental contexts.
 - **Key Characteristics**
 - Monumental scale
 - Use of locally available stone, mud?brick, timber, and later, early concrete
 - Symbolic ornamentation tied to cosmology and power
 - Integration of engineering innovations (arches, vaults, post?and?lintel)
-

2. Major Civilizations & Representative Structures

Civilization	Timeframe	Iconic Buildings	Structural Innovations	Materials & Techniques
Mesopotamia (Sumer, Akkad, Babylon)	3500?–?539?BCE	Ziggurats (e.g., Ur?Ziggurat), Ishtar Gate, Etemenanki	Step?pyramid platform, glazed brick reliefs	Sun?dried mud?brick, baked bricks, bitumen mortar
Ancient Egypt	3100?–?30?BCE	Pyramids of Giza, Temple of Karnak, Valley of the Kings	Precise stone cutting, corbelled vaults, massive post ?and?lintel halls	Limestone, sandstone, granite; limestone plaster, mortared stone
Indus Valley	2600?–?1900?BCE	Great Bath (Mohenjo?Daro), city grids, granaries	Uniform brick size (1:2:4 ratio), sophisticated drainage	Fired brick, baked mud, mud?plaster
Minoan Crete	2000?–?1450?BCE	Palace of Knossos, frescoed walls	Multi?story complexes, central courtyards, light wells	Mud?brick core, stone veneer, wooden beams

Ancient Architecture

Civilization	Timeframe	Iconic Buildings	Structural Innovations	Materials & Techniques
Mycenaean Greece	1600?–?1100?BCE	Lion Gate, Treasury of Atreus (tholos tomb)	Cyclopean masonry, corbelled dome (tholos)	Large limestone blocks, mud?brick, timber
Classical Greece	5th?–?4th?century?BCE	Parthenon, Temple of Hephaestus, Theater of Epidaurus	Doric, Ionic, Corinthian orders; optical refinements	Marble, limestone, timber roof structures
Hellenistic & Roman	323?BCE?–?500?CE	Pergamon Altar, Colosseum, Pantheon	Arch, vault, dome, concrete; urban planning (grid, forums)	Concrete (pozzolana), brick, marble cladding
Ancient China	1500?BCE?–?220?CE	Great Wall (early sections), Qin Terracotta Army, Han tombs	Rammed earth, timber?frame, dougong bracket system	Earth, stone, timber, glazed tiles
Mesoamerica (Olmec, Maya, Teotihuacan)	1500?BCE?–?900?CE	Pyramids of Teotihuacan, Temple of the Inscriptions, Palenque	Talud?tablero façade, corbel arches, observatory alignments	Limestone, volcanic tuff, stucco
Andean (Inca)	13th?–?16th?century?CE	Machu Picchu, Sacsayhuamán, Qor		