

Good essay about
the role of
monumental
architecture as the
source of morality,
b...

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In the “ Dialogue of Civilizations” symposium in Guatemala, several historians and archeologists studying cultures of ancient civilization such as those of the Maya, Mesopotamia, Indus Valley and Egypt have found that their huge monuments were built for three major reasons: as sources of religious and moral nourishment, entertainment and beauty. For spiritual purposes, one can note that monumental structures like the Tikal Temple in Guatemala, Temple of Horus at Edfu, the Luxor Temple in Egypt and the Great Budha Statue were built for religious and moral purposes. The Taj Mahal monument in India is considered one of the beautiful buildings that have ever been created. Certain monuments such as akshardham in India have become certainly unique due to their elaborate themes of entertainment. Therefore this essay will critically analyze some of the selected ancient monuments to reveal the reasoning behind their constructions as far the three themes of religious and moral transformation, entertainment and beautification are concerned.

The first reason why ancient civilization built very huge monuments was religious and moral nourishment and transformation. One of the ancient monuments that were constructed ostensibly for religious and moral purpose is the Delphi in the ancient Greek city of Athens. It was the central place for the cult of Apollo, and no important state matter could be settled before seeking the Oracle’s advice from Delphi. The ancient temple complex lies under the slopes of Mount Parnassus. The temple’s first time can be traced back from Neolithic period to 1600-1100 BC. Most of the ruins that can be seen today are those that survived during the period when activities in the area were very intense probably in the 6th to 8th BC. Later, it is also

important to note that when emperor Theodosius converted into Christianity, he silenced the oracle and destroyed it in a bid to eradicate all forms of paganism in Greece.

The Delphi (PBS n. pag)

Inside Egyptian tombs (Monuments n. pag)

The Temple of Edfu (Monuments n. pag)

The other ancient monument is the Great Ziggurat of Ur, which is depicted in the epic of Gilgamesh. In the second millennium BC, Gilgamesh, the ruler of Mesopotamia is seen boasting about the huge monuments he constructed- the Great Ziggurat of Ur, which was built to honor god Nanna. Put up during the Early Bronze Age, in the 21 BC, it was crumbled in 6 BC by Babylonians.

The Great Ziggurat of Ur (Gazur n. pag)

Secondly, ancient monuments were also built for entertainment purposes.

One of the ancient monuments that were built ostensibly for entertainment purposes is the Roman Coliseum. Built in 75 AD, during the reign of Emperor Vespasian, it was used as stadium for matches that involved gladiators. In the monument too, the public enjoyed games that featured prisoners competing with wild beasts. It had a carrying capacity of over 50, 000 blood thirsty spectators.

The Roman Coliseum (Colosseum n. pag).

The other ancient monument for entertainment was the Greek theater. The origin of this theatre lies in cult of Dionysus who was the god of merry making and wining. In this place, dramas were the most liked form of entertainment in the ancient Greek world. However one should also note that

there are other similar monuments in other parts of city. Enormously large and semi-circular, the theatre was an open structure that was built on sloping hillside to provide the setting of classical terraced seating. One should also note that since the ancient Greek drama had a high affinity with religion, the theatres were located near major religious sanctuaries.

The Greek Theatre (The Greek Theatre n. pag)

In India, due to the influence of Swaminarayan, many social events including entertainment were really inspired. In the Akshardham temple that was built in 1700s, one can see statues with elaborate themes of entertainments.

The Akshardham temple (Deefholts n. pag)

The third important feature of the ancient monuments was to render beauty. One of the most beautiful monuments in the world is the Ishtar Gate which was constructed under the order of King Nebuchadnezzar II in 537 BC as a dedication to the Babylonian goddess. It is considered as one of the most beautiful monuments in the world. The gate had a processional way and lined with walls on which the statues of the Babylonian deities were paraded to beautify the New Year celebrations in the Babylonian city.

Replica of the Ishtar Gate built in 20th century; (Garcia n. pag)

The other beautiful monument is the Great Wall of China which was built in 220-206 BC by presumably the first emperor to China, Qin Shi Huang.

However, although the remains of the ancient wall are not yet known, it has been maintained, rebuilt and enhanced on several occasions. Even though it was built for military purposes to contain the likely resistances from war

lords, the majority of the existing parts were rebuilt during the Ming Dynasty as one of its famous cultural features of beauty. While one is walking through the wall, he will obviously enjoy the beauty of the Great Wall, as he sees its meandering through Valleys and mountains.

The Great Wall of China (The Great Wall of China)

The Taj Mahal has been considered to be one of the most beautiful monuments ever built in the world. The designers used the exquisite marble to render its beautifulness that can even be seen today. In this regard, the Shah Jahan, as the King of the World, wanted to show the love of a husband to her dead beautiful wife. Taking into account that it was the time when the Mughal rulers were at the peak of their rule, they had amassed a lot of wealth from the sale of gem minerals. It was therefore very easy for him to pour such wealth in the construction of a beautiful structure that would forever be likened to the beauty of her wife Mumtaz Mahal who had died during child delivery. The Muhal could access masons, stone carvers and favorite artists across India and as far as Iraq and Turkey to ensure that a beautiful building with lush gardens was built. According to various sources, it is considered the jewel of Islamic Art in India, and it is one of the most universally admired masterpieces in the whole world.

The Taj Mahal (Taj Mahal n. pag)

Therefore from the discussion, it can be noted that most monuments in the ancient time were built for three major reasons: beauty, entertainment and religious and moral nourishment. However, in some cases, it can be noted that such aims could overlap each other. For instance, in the case of the

Ishtar Gate, although it was built as a dedication to the Babylonian gods, it also served as the empire's beautifying feature. Likewise, one cannot separate entertaining effects of ancient Greek theatres and Indian Akshardham from religious affinities. In a closer look, the three purposes are in fact supplementary: although most ancient monuments were built to appease deities, they were well designed to render their beauty and serve as sources of pleasures/ entertainment for those who could see them.

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