

Architectural styles ancient egypt history essay



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Ancient Egypt was a civilization that flourished between the years of 3100 B. C. E and 332 B. C. E. The people of Egypt were very advanced compared to the rest of the world. They made advancements in mathematics, medicine, building techniques, and literature that the rest of the world wouldn't see for another thousand years, and all of this surrounded by a vast desert. Egypt is enclosed by the inhospitable Sahara. In the Sahara, very few plants can grow and almost no animals live. Due to this the Egyptians relied on the Nile River for almost every aspect of life. This included food, water, and building materials. The Nile was their one and only way to support a civilization. The Egyptians created vast temples, great tombs, and monuments that would last thousands of years after the civilization itself had faded.

There was a severe shortage of wood, as trees could grow only very close to the Nile, meaning that there was a very slim area in which trees could be grown. Due to this, the Egyptians had to use alternate building materials in order to construct their buildings. The less expensive and more plentiful building material was sun dried mud brick. The other was stone, primarily sandstone and limestone. Mud bricks were made by taking wet soil from the banks of the Nile, then that mud would be put into molds and left out to dry in the sun for a week or more. This technique was used for the construction of homes. Unfortunately many of these homes were lost over the course of thousands of years of the Nile flooding. Sandstone and limestone were used for the more important buildings, such as royal palaces, tombs, and temples. These structures are the ones that are still standing as a testament to the great civilization that built them. Unfortunately the majority of the architecture of ancient Egypt remaining is in fact made of stone, and only a

few isolated cases of mud brick structures still remain. From those few cases historians are able to tell a lot about the structures that non-royal ancient Egyptians lived in.

A few instances of ancient Egyptian towns or villages exist. These towns were either on high enough ground to survive the yearly flooding of the Nile, or were secluded enough that they were not destroyed in one of the many invasions of Egypt of the course of five thousand years. These few towns, such as Deir-el-Medina in southern Egypt, and the Middle Kingdom town at Kahun, offer insight on what type of homes the commoners of ancient Egypt lived in. From these towns historians were able to conclude that post and lintel construction was used to build the homes of the majority of the population. The post and lintel method is very simple; it consists of a large, flat roof that is supported by thick external walls in addition to possible interior support such as columns. This method only would have been used for larger homes, however. Smaller homes would not have needed support, and it is likely that they were made of bricks stacked on top of each other and more bricks running across the roof.

Egyptian architecture is iconic and easily recognized thousands of years after it stopped being used. Ancient Egyptian buildings that remain standing often have huge, thick walls, with columns inside the structure in order to help support the massive weight of the thick roof. On these walls on columns are colorful hieroglyphics and frescoes. From a technological standpoint, the ancient Egyptians were not very revolutionary in terms of their architecture. Much of what they used was very simple, and that which wasn't simple was taken from other civilizations. For example, the Egyptians did not even begin

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to use the arch until the 4th century B. C. E, and that was only after the Romans showed them how to do so. They were limited in their materials, however, so it is not hard to believe that they did not innovate many things in the architectural field. Also characteristic of ancient Egyptian architecture is the precision with which measurements were made. Oftentimes important temples or tombs were angled in such a way that during the solstices or equinoxes of the year their walls were perfectly aligned with the sun. This was important because in the ancient Egyptian religion the sun god, Ra, was one of the most important deities.

Temples are one of the few things that remain from ancient Egypt. Temples were built to worship their gods, who played a central role in the lives of everyone in Egypt. The major gods, of the sun, of death, the harvest, etc., were prayed to several times a day. In order to please the gods in the hope of a good harvest, pharaohs commissioned and built massive structures in honor of them. These temples were run by the high priests, who had a lot of power in ancient Egyptian society. Temples were adorned with hieroglyphics and huge wall paintings in honor of the god or goddess the temple was for. Hundreds of temples are scattered along the banks of the Nile, in various stages of disrepair.

Tombs were built in honor of the pharaoh whose body the structure would house. The Egyptian religion dictated that there was an afterlife, and only if the pharaoh was honored in death would he be able to travel to it. For this reason pharaohs were buried with a multitude of things that they would need when he or she died. These things were gold, boats, jewelry, clothing, and pets, among other things. Since the pharaohs were buried with so much

gold, the tombs attracted the attention of thieves who wished to steal the gold and other riches inside. In order to combat this, pharaohs built secret tunnels and false passageways within their tombs. Tombs rivaled temples in terms of size and ornamentation. Each successive tomb built by each successive pharaoh grew larger, more lavish, and more elaborate, which led to all of the massive tombs that still remain today. (Great Pyramids at Giza)

Obelisks are possibly the most impressive architectural feat the ancient Egyptians had under their belt. Obelisks are tall pillar like structures that have a small pyramid on top that were used solely for decoration. The tallest obelisk of ancient Egypt was over 100 feet tall and weighed 455 tons. These massive structures were carved straight out of the rock, and when they were finished, were erected using pulley systems and ropes. The obelisks are covered in hieroglyphics and are often found in pairs by the entrance to a temple.

Ancient Egypt was a great civilization that produced architectural sites that are still recognized and appreciated around the world 5000 years after they were built.