

Frequently Asked Questions

Question 01:

Explain in detail about Mesopotamia and various factors that influenced Architecture of the said Area.

Answer:

The earliest civilization of Western Asia flourishes in the fertile plains of twin rivers, Tigris and Euphrates. This region has been both cradle and tomb of nations and empires. The plain of Mesopotamia was irrigated by canals from river to river, and thus the land became fertile enough. Earliest of all civilizations as people formed permanent settlements. The name Mesopotamia means land between two rivers. It lasted for almost 3000 yrs. They were the first to formulate irrigation, create a system of writing

(i)Geographical:

Lower Mesopotamia is an alluvial district of thick mud and clay. Such soil was apt form making brick, which hence became the main building block in Babylona. Region of swamps and floods ; torrents of floods for weeks at a time. Hence elevated platforms were used in buildings. From about 3000 BC onwards many cities like Ur, Uruk, Eridu, Mari etc grew.

(ii)Geological:

The Lower Mesopotamia is alluvial, being formed of the thick mud or clay deposited by the two great rivers Tigris and Euphrates. The soil, containing no stone and bearing no trees, could be made into bricks, which thus became the usual building material. As a cementing material, bitumen or pitch, applied in a heated state, seems to have been used, being obtained from bitumen springs found in the district, as at Is, on the Euphrates. Mortar, made of calcareous earth, was used in the latest periods. In Assyria, where stone was not scarce, the walls were also faced, internally and externally, with alabaster or limestone slabs, on which were carved the bas-reliefs or inscriptions.

(iii)Climatic:

The unhealthy exhalations from the vast swamps in Chaldaea, and the swarms of aggressive and venomous insects infesting the entire region during the long summer, rendered the construction of elevated platforms for the towns and palaces not only desirable, but almost essential. Moreover, the floods during the rainy season, when torrents fell for weeks at a time, further demanded the need for such structures. Persia is for the most part a high tableland and has been described as a country of sunshine, gardens, and deserts, with a climate ranging from the extremes of heat and cold.

(iv)Religious:

The people were worshippers of the heavenly bodies, such as the sun and the moon, and of the powers of nature, such as the wind and thunder. Numbers of omen tablets have survived, and bear witness to the extreme superstition which existed.

(v)Social:

The Assyrians were a sturdy, warlike, but cruel people. The Assyrian sculptures give in a very minute way the social conditions of the period, and show us the costumes of the time and the military character of the period, for the long inscriptions and series of pictures with which the palace walls were covered form an illustrated history of the battles and sieges of succeeding monarchs, the sculptor thus explaining the political events of the period in a lasting manner.

(vi)Historical:

Three main periods :

- **Babylonian Period:**

BC 4000 – 1275

Earliest Babylonian king – Sargon of Akkad

Declined under the attacks of Hittites & Kassites

- **Assyrian Period:**

BC 1275 – 538

Remained the great military power until BC 606

- **Persian Period:**

BC 538 - 333

Struggle for further extension of power

Greek province under Alexander the Great

Made Baghdad new capital of great magnificence

Question 02:

Elaborate the architecture of Ziggurats with the example of Ziggurat of Ur.

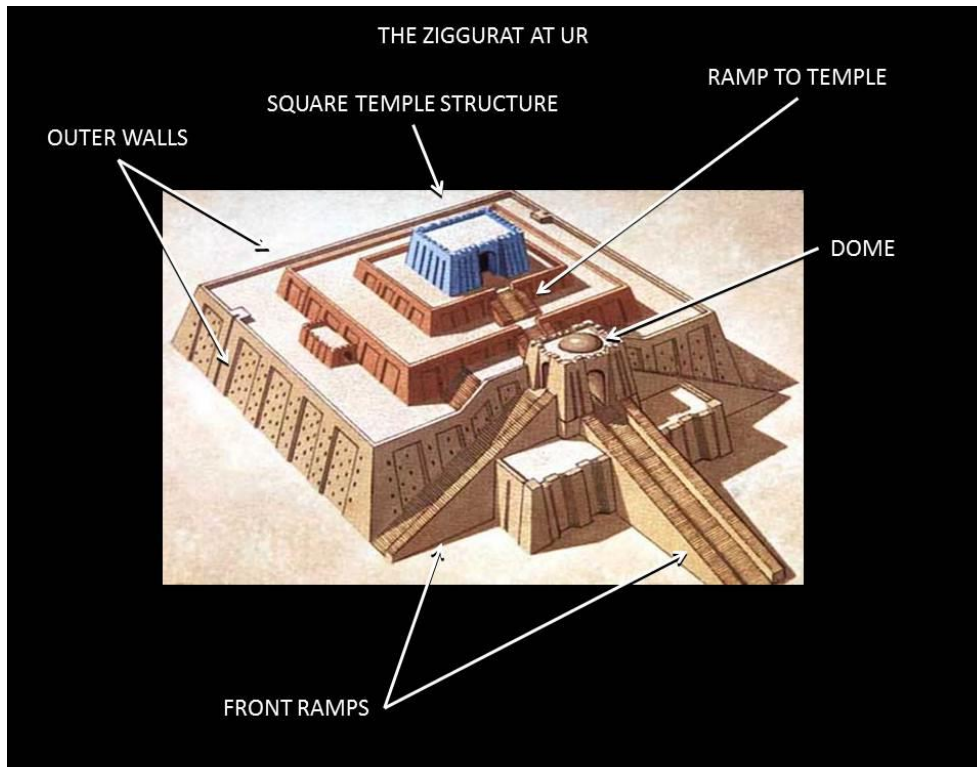
Answer:

Ziggurats are remarkable pyramidal towers. They meant holy mountains. they were nothing but huge temples. Ziggurats were made by layer and layer of mud bricks in the shape of a Pyramid in many tiers. The temple on top beautifully decorated, considered God's home.

Ziggurat of Ur:

- Built in 2125 BC
- The Sumerians grew powerful under the third dynasty ruler Ur-Nammu. He constructed the Ziggurat at Ur.

- The Ziggurat of Ur was on a platform 200' long, 150' wide, , and rose 70 feet above the plain.
- It was built on a platform called a parraku, designed to dominate the horizon and also to provide protection from floods.
- Each king would add on to the temple with numerous stairways leading to different levels.
- It was made of rectangular mud bricks because they didn't have stone or timber.



Ziggurat of Ur

- The city of Ur had three levels –
- Richest like Government officials, Priests and soldiers were at the top
- The second level had teachers, merchants, laborers, farmers and craft makers
- The bottom were for slaves captured in battle
- Some Ziggurats were like modern day skyscrapers – 70 feet tall
- It was decorated with clay cones which were dipped into red, black or buff paint and then inserted into the plaster to form zigzags or geometric designs.
- Weep holes were square or rectangular shaped holes placed at different levels in the temple to provide drainage.
- Sumerians believed blind obedience and constant gifts and sacrifices would give them protection and success on earth.
- Inside every ziggurat was a rectangular central shrine called a cella, for the god's emblem or statue.

Question 03:

Detail out the architecture of Palace of Sargon, Khorsabad.

Answer:

- BC 722 – 705
- 10 miles north – east of Nineveh, excavated in 1864 by Place. Provides the best idea of Assyrian palaces
- Appears to have occupied 25 acres
- 700 rooms
- Some rooms were 50ft above the plain. On a platform of sun dried bricks faced with stone
- entrance portals to the principal court were flanked with great towers and guarded by man – headed winged bulls or lions 12 ft. 6 in high
- This supported a bold semi circular arch
- Most impressive creations of the Assyrian architecture were concentrated on the palace portals
- Ward off the approach of evil
- The palace has 3 distinct groups of apartments :
 - The Sergio or palace proper –
Kings residence, state halls, men’s apartments and reception rooms, with 10 courts, sixty rooms and numerous corridors
 - The Harem–
Private family apartments
 - The Khan–
Service chambers
- The dadoes in the royal apartment were 2m high
- At the end was the throne room about 49m x 11m
- High plinths of the temple were decorated with polychrome glazed brick
- There was also a temple observatory or ziggurat on the west side of the platform
- Sufficient light reached the interiors without the use of windows.
- Various terracotta pipes have been found, which were probably inserted in domes, vaults and walls to admit light and air
- The Ziggurat stood on a square base side rising in seven tiers to a height of 45m with the shrine at the top

- It had a winding ramp of 1.8m wide by which one could reach on its top
- Each of the tiers were painted in different colors
- The Ziggurat stood on a square base side rising in seven tiers to a height of 45m with the shrine at the top
- It had a winding ramp of 1.8m wide by which one could reach on its top
- Each of the tiers were painted in different colors
- The method of roofing was formally in debate
- It will be seen from the plan that only open courts were planned in squares, while covered in rooms are narrow and long
- Furthermore, the immense thickness of the wall was more than required to even keep them from the heat
- This was assumed to be for heavy vaulted roof

Note: Add sketches to supplement your answer.

Question 04:

Elaborate the Architecture of Palace of Persepolis.

Answer:

- In around 1000 BC, Aryans from Caucasus region settled in Medes and Persia
- The founder of this empire, Cyrus the great – captured Medians and Assyrians
- His great successor Darius founded two new capitals, one at Susa and one at Persepolis
- The palace of Persepolis is a remarkable structure, 1500ft by 100 ft in extent and 40ft above the plain
- Partly hewn out of solid rock and partly built up of large blocks of local stone laid without mortar, but held together by metal cramps
- Approach on the North west by a magnificent flight of steps, 22ft wide shallow enough for horses to ascend
- It was also executed By Xerxes (486-465 BC) and completed in 460 BC by Artaxerxes.
- Gateways were flanked by imposing towers and guarded by man headed winged bulls
- Between this stood the Hall of 100 columns built by Darius, which according to Plutarch, was burnt By Alexander the Great
- It was probably the audience hall or throne room to the palace and was 225 ft square, enclosed by brick wall 11ft thick, in which there were 44 doorways and windows.
- The wall flanking the entrance portico was enlivened with bas-reliefs representing the king with his retinue receiving ambassadors
- The throne room was set on a high platform with supporting flat roofs
- The palace of Darius, the earliest built on this platform, was rectangular in plan with a portico of 16 columns

- The palace of Xerxes, though it only consisted of a central column and three columned porticos was 24000 sq.ft

Note: Add sketches to supplement your answer.