

FAQ's

1. Discuss the early civilizations of Mesopotamia and Egypt.

The two areas which first develop civilization - Mesopotamia and Egypt - share a natural product which is ideal for relatively small buildings in a warm climate. Bundles of reeds can be bound together to form pillars and beams. Their tops can even be bent inwards and tied to shape an arch or a dome. And the spaces in the frame can be filled with smaller branches and mud to complete a weather-proof shelter.

From early in the 3rd millennium BC the pharaohs and their nobles are buried beneath mastabas. These rectangular flat-roofed buildings, made of mud brick, cover the burial chamber. They also contain the supplies of food and other items which will be needed in the next world.(3000- 2500 B.C.)

2. What is the role of cement in ancient civilizations?

Builders in Greek cities on the coast of Turkey (and in particular Pergamum) evolve cement in about 200 BC as a structural material, in place of weaker mortars such as gypsum plaster (used in Egypt) or bitumen (in Mesopotamia). The secret of the new material is the lime which binds sand, water and clay. The Romans subsequently use finely ground volcanic lava in place of clay, deriving it mainly from the region of Pozzuoli. Their cement, known for this reason as pozzolanic, is the strongest mortar in history until the development of Portland cement

3. Discuss the development of stupas and temples.

The most significant architectural feature of southeast Asia is the Buddhist stupa, known in India from the 1st century BC but no doubt dating from earlier. An

architectural descendant of the burial mound, the stupa is a brick and plaster hemisphere with a pointed superstructure (seen as an image of the cosmos). Enshrining a relic of the Buddha, it serves as the sacred centre around which ritual occurs in an open-air setting. Within India the simple shape of the early stupa evolves into the complex superstructure of later Hindu temples - rich in architectural ornament and often encrusted with teeming sculptures of deities and devils. Sometimes they are brightly painted to add to the sense of tumult. Unlike the solid stupa, these structures rise above interior spaces which are used for worship. They are like steeples above churches, whereas the stupa is a massive inert reliquary at the centre of a temple complex.

4. Discuss the details of medieval countryside.

In the medieval countryside people lived in a very wide variety of settlement types, from individual farms, through hamlets of a few households, to much larger villages. In addition to these permanent places there were also temporary or seasonal abodes in outlying places associated with seasonal activities.

An essential characteristic of both village types is the long back gardens, frequently amounting to a small holding which was attached to each dwelling and which in many instances was approached from the rear by an access lane. The back lanes were generally upgraded into roads providing access to new houses during early stages in the expansion of a village in small market towns to this day many of these back gardens of the original cottages have yet to be developed. In towns which prospered and continued to expand this space was usually built over by the advent of the Industrial Revolution.