

Quadrant II – Transcript and Related Materials

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Unit: I Evolution of the Artistic and Architectural Traditions

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Notes

Brief History of Classical Greeks:

Greece is situated in the South Eastern part of Europe and separated from Asia Minor by the Aegean Sea. A number of Islands appear on all three sides of the main Peninsula and among them the largest Island was Crete. It was here that predecessors of ancient Greeks developed a great civilization called the Aegean Civilization. This Civilization is also known by other names such as Cretan or Minoan.

Greece was attacked by a number of Tribes. These were the Mycenaean's, Achaeans, Dorian's, Ionians and Aetolians.

The Geographical factor and tribal character of the early Greeks was responsible for the formation of city-states. The most prominent city -state were Athens, Sparta, Corinth and Thebes. All the Greeks strongly believed they were all Hellenes (descendants of a common

ancestor, Hellen). Another bond which united them was the common language, literature and religion. They worshipped Gods like Zeus (Sky God), Apollo (the Sun God), Poseidon (God of the Sea), and Athena (Goddess and Protectress of the cities). They believed that these Gods and Goddesses often played a considerable role in their daily affairs and so treated them with great respect.

The early Greeks made development in the field of Literature, Science and Art and Architecture.

Greeks Architecture- General Feature:

The pride of the Greeks is reflected in their architecture. The brilliant achievements of Greek Sculpture and Architecture are well illustrated by the monuments of the age of Pericles in Athens. Temples of the gods of the city-states were the magnificent monuments. Temples were means by which the people could show their respect and admiration for the divine. The Greeks temples in the earliest times were built of wood and later sun-dried bricks and stone were used.

There were three main orders of Greek Architecture distinguished by different types of columns or pillars. They are Doric, Ionic and Corinthian.

The Doric style is rather sturdy and its top (the capital) is plain.

The Ionic style was characterised by the style of its columns. Ionic columns have an ornate base and less tapering shaft and also has a capital decorated with double Scroll.

The Corinthian style of columns has its capital in an elaborate and decorated style with Acanthus leaves.

The Acropolis of Athens was adorned with the beautiful temple of the Parthenon, for the Goddess Athena. The Parthenon temple was a magnificent building of White marble, designed by the Architects Ictinus and Callicrates. The temple walls were carved with fine relief work in marble stone. It is a rectangular shape building contained with rooms for the cult statue, space for priests and their attendants. This temple has forty-six Doric columns which supports the roofs. The capital of the column was plain and well balanced the transition between the shaft and lintel.

Erechtheum is another monument which stands near the Parthenon on the Acropolis. It is built on two levels: On the upper level facing the shrine of Athena, is an Ionic porch; on the lower level facing the north are six Ionic columns that support the roof.

It reveals the technical perfection that the Greeks had achieved in the field of Architecture.

Sculpture:

Three ideas that inspired the Greek sculptors were truth, beauty and perfection. Their sculpture is called classical. Famous sculptors of this period were Phidias, Myron, Praxiteles, and Polycletus. Phidias attained fame for the "statue of Athena" in Parthenon and the "Colossal Statue of Zeus" in the temple of Zeus in Olympic. Myron was famous for his "Discuss Thrower"; Praxiteles was famous for the statue of Hermes at Olympia. Polycletus was famous for his "Bronze statue of Athlete".

The Sculpture of the Greeks represents a means of expressing their ideas and their talents. The sculptor was one of the most honoured men in the city- state. The subject in the Sculpture was the human figure and God. The sculptors executed bas-relief to adorn the walls of the temple, its façade or its pediments.

Origin of Roman Architecture:

The Ancient Roman Style of architecture is said to be a reproductive form of the Greek Architecture. Although Romans have borrowed much of the Greek style, they have used their own knowledge in construction, to improve the architectural features. They copied the Greek style in the construction of columns or pillars but arches and domes were their inventions. Amongst the many achievements of the Romans the architecture features the Arch, Dome, Vault and Columns. In this way Romans were able to create many impressive Buildings and Structures.

The vast Colosseum (Stadium) at Rome is a masterly specimen of Roman Architecture. Many highways were constructed by Romans, which are still considered as best.

Roman Innovation

The Columns:

Roman developed two style of architecture such as Tuscan and Composite.

This is a simplified Doric having unfluted Column and a plain base, capital and shaft having no decoration. It combined elements of both Ionic and Corinthian Style.

Arch and Vault:

The art of arranging cut stones in the Arc of a circle was developed by Romans. The arch allowed them to erect buildings much larger and more varied than those of the Greeks. Romans used arches to support the things they built. They also built victory arches called Vault.

Some of the Important Monuments of Romans are as follows:

Roman Pantheon:

Roman Pantheon was similar to Greek temple with broad and vestibule and vaster and surmounted with Dome.

Basilica:

It was a long low edifice, covered with a roof and surrounded with Porticos.

Amphitheatre:

It was constructed of several stories of arcades surrounding an arena; each range of arcades supported many rows of seats. Example is Colosseum at Rome.

The Arch of Triumph:

It was a gate of honour wide enough for the passage a chariot. It was adorned with columns and surmounted with group of Sculptures.

The Bridge and the Aqueduct:

It was supported by a range of arches thrown over a river or over a valley. Example is the bridge of Alcantara.

Sculpture:

The art of Sculpture in Ancient Rome was highly inspired by the Greek sculptural style. Many beautiful statues of Gods and Goddesses were made. They also gave representation to human beings. The head of Roman youth is a good example of Roman sculpture at its best.

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