**Introduction**

The advancements made in the various sectors of the economy have been attributed to among different factors including the availability of infrastructure. The development of infrastructural designs has been as a result of improved and developed architectural approaches to design and creativity. The advancements made in architecture in terms of designs and the elements involved has rendered the modern day designs of the existing elements to be modified and structured into state of the art architectural pieces. Ancient architecture has been considered as the foundation of a growing and developed sector that has encouraged modern day architectural designs. Ideally, while the structures that have continued to be put up and redesigned on the basis of the foundations of past architectural innovations and elements, the understanding of the evolution of architectural elements such as columns brings into focus the advancements made in architecture. The significance of the columns in architecture is traced to historical buildings that have also become monumental structures in the contemporary world. In contrast, the value and significance of the columns may be understood from the comparison of the relevance and meaning associated with columns in Ancient Greek and Roman architecture and the modern American Iconic columns.

**Types of Columns**

The field of architecture is vast and comprises of various factors that have to be aligned in a manner that ensures that the structures that are put up are secure and fit for occupation. The history of architecture dates back to the ancient regimes of the Greeks and the Romans and hence, the approaches and the elements of architecture and footed in the foundation that was laid by the Greeks and the Romans. Ideally, the structures that were put up in ancient Greece and Rome stood distinct following the diversity of the elements that were put together. Columns in particular were the distinguishing factor in the application of the neoclassical styles that were accompanied by the gothic themes of the structures (Barletta, 2013). The columns stood out based on the designs that were used as well as the type of stone used to sculptor. The distinction of the Greek and the Roman columns was based on the reasons as to why they were used. Greek columns were purposely for holding up the roofing of the buildings erected while the Roman columns were for décor purposes majorly. However, the designs were further categorized based on their designs as discussed.

1. **Greek Columns**

The Greeks are known for their various inventions as well as their articulate expertise in architecture. Buildings and structures such as theatre arenas, temples and stadia formed a significant part of the art that the Greeks displayed in their architectural expertise. Greek architecture in terms of the columns is categorized into five orders (Barletta, 2013). Essentially, the Greek are attributed with being pioneers of the designs and use of columns. The five orders include the Doric, Ionic and the Corinthian orders which are originals of the Greek while the other two orders are the Tuscan and Composite (Barozzi da Vignola, 1999). These orders differed mainly in terms of design but all were used for purposes of support and holding up the roofing of the buildings that they built.

The Doric order came to be after the transition of the columns from using wooden pillars to the use of stone. The Doric column was a thin structure that equally had no base and was distinct for its square capital. The Ionic column is among the most common used orders. The column featured a slim and straight column with scroll capitals and a base (Barletta, 2013). The Corinthian column is one that has been used in majority of the western countries including the United States. Corinthian columns present similarities with the Ionic columns with the main difference being the decorative capital of the column that comprises fern leaves and acanthus (Barozzi da Vignola, 1999). The Corinthian order can be easily spotted in majority of the major classical buildings in the western countries following its common use and preference to other orders.

The stability and firm nature of the columns designed by the Greeks have since rendered them to be the most preferred and used orders in the construction of several majestic buildings both in the ancient world as well as the neoclassical era of contemporary architecture. While the Greeks may be deemed as the pioneers of the architecture element of columns the Romans in their architectural developments also came up with two orders that were primarily modifications of the Greek orders (Barozzi da Vignola, 1999).

1. **Roman Columns**

Roman civilization is one that was equally characterized with various innovations and inventions in the different fields of science, mathematics and even physics. Ideally, the expertise of the Romans similar to the Greeks was significant in ensuring that the creations and works associated with them met the perfection required. Roman architecture featured the establishment of temples and structures that manifested the superiority of the Roman civilization. Ancient Rome similar to ancient Greece was characterized with buildings and structures that were fitted with strong and tall standing columns (Barletta, 2013). Unlike the Greeks who used the columns for purposes of supporting the upper structures of the buildings, the Romans used columns purely for decoration. The Romans put to use the Greek orders Doric Ionic and Corinthian in their structures. However, the Tuscan and Composite orders are considered to be creations of the Romans.

The Tuscan order type of columns was a simplified modification of the Doric order of the Greeks. Ideally, the Tuscan columns were more plain and simple without any form of decorations. The Tuscan order of the columns ideally was considered to be the firmest and more solid in comparison to other orders. Buildings that required less attention and décor such as military buildings used this form of columns in the Roman Empire. The Composite order is a combination of the Ionic and Corinthian orders. Practically, the Composite column maintains the structure of the Ionic column with the exception of its capital taking up the shape and design of the Corinthian columns. Ideally, the composite column despite it comprising of two different column designs, it was still considered to be part of the Greek orders until it was considered an independent order and a creation of the Romans (Barletta, 2013). The Roman orders in this regard may not necessarily be considered to be new inventions but the modification of the existing Greek orders.

**Neoclassical architecture**

The ancient economies and architecture underwent a phase of silence up until the Renaissance period when the classical styles that were once used in classical architecture were up in demand once more.  The concepts and designs of the classical styles that were common in ancient Greece and Rome ideally became areas of significant interest and the professionals in architecture sought to re-use and bring back the different orders in terms of columns and their use in architectural designs in comparison to ancient Greece and Rome. Ideally, the uses of columns in this period were for both support and decorative purposes. The adoption of the use of columns made it possible for majority of the buildings put up in the western countries to have a touch of the ancient designs but in a manner that the buildings would exude authority and beauty at the same time.

The Doric order of the Greek columns essentially was the most preferred in the neoclassic period which was equally associated with the concept of simplicity (Johann, 1856). As a consequence, majority of the buildings that were erected during the period only put to use simple designs such as the use of the Doric columns and blank walls as opposed to the ancient period insistence on the use of décor and other complimentary factors. In the long term, the neoclassic styles were adopted not only by the western countries but also in Europe.

**Contemporary use of Columns**

Modern architecture has borrowed much from ancient Greek and Roman procedures and art as well. The articulate nature of the structures brought up by the Greeks and the décor by the Romans have been a common attraction that several of the older structures in the United States have been constructed and designed in the same manner. One of the significant factors is that, while the entire designs of the ancient Greece have not been adopted, the columns have been a major influence in majority of the historic buildings more so in the United States of America (Hutton, 2015). The different types of columns that are used in different structures reveal the impact that the element has on the manifestation of the beauty of the architecture used.

American buildings and structures such as the American Supreme Court, the US Treasury building, the Jefferson’s Memorial and the Longworth House Office building have the characteristic of the Ionic and Corinthian columns. These structures have been designed in a manner that their appearance is magnified to levels that render them to represent the neoclassic era as the designs and columns were mostly used in government buildings. Primarily, the use of the columns was equally for support and décor thus combining the approaches used by both the Greeks and the Romans (Hutton, 2015). However, majority of the structures have undergone a series of renovations but maintained the column appearances that have continued to be distinct features of the building.

The United States Supreme Court building for example does not only have the sixteen columns on its frontispiece. On the contrary, the interior of the building also comprises of other columns that have been carefully designed and structured to support the triangular pediment. Additionally, the columns have been erected within the chambers next to prominent figures as a form of authority (Oleson, 2009). The American Supreme Court is just one of the major buildings in the United States capital to manifest Greek architecture and use of columns. Other government buildings also have been designed in a manner that the columns stand out and are vividly placed on the entrances such as the US Treasury building in Washington DC. While the use of the Greek architecture elements have been used with buildings for majority of the structures in the West, the Roman consideration of décor has also been at the core of the designs. Columns in the Rose Hill Manor have been viewed as décor to the mansion with their Ionic capitals and the triangular pediment that they support (Oleson, 2009). The mansion though modern still displays a rich classical architectural design. This is the same factor with the Delgado-Correa Manor in Middleton Delaware.

Aside from the columns being used on buildings, the contemporary architectural designs have evolved to include open air spaces such as the Thomas Jefferson Memorial. The structure was influenced with the design of the Pantheon of Rome that encompassed of the dome shaped structure that is held up by solid columns. In total, the Memorial has 54 Ionic columns that stand firm to hold up the dome structure. The United States Capitol columns are yet another example of how the Corinthian columns of ancient Greece have been used outside the common approach of having them in buildings (Oleson, 2009). Ideally, the 22 Corinthian columns are found in the Arboretum of the national capitol after the intended construction involving a dome to be placed on top of the columns failed to materialize. The columns hold a distinct feature of the Corinthian design and have been arranged in a manner that they form part of the various tourist attractions in the US capital Washington DC.

The contemporary use of the columns in architecture in essence has not moved far from the original use and presentation of the element in buildings. On the contrary, the use of columns has been taken up as a means of advancing neoclassic styles of architecture in the modern setting. Ideally, modern buildings and structures continue to bear their modern appearances with a touch of neoclassicism. The buildings are mainly found within the capitals of the different states reflect a history of the development of architecture (Summerson, 1992). The government buildings, though revamped and renovated still maintain a touch of ancient history in their appearances. Further, the neoclassic architecture is not only limited to the official buildings in the United States but it is also used with private residential properties and buildings in the modern society (Stevens, 2003). The decorative aspect of the columns has been considered to be a consideration in the designs of different houses such as the Rose Hill Manor. The authenticity of the Greek and Roman column architecture in adding a sense of age in the buildings and still maintaining a modern outlook is considered to be an evolution that has comfortably accommodated the ancient structures in the modern setting.

The common use of the Ionic and Corinthian columns in the neoclassic styles continue to advance the nature of the ancient architecture element and how best to incorporate it even in the evolving modern designs of architecture. Further, the use of the columns continues to preserve the ancient history of the profession and reveals how much development has been witnessed since the ancient Greek and Roman eras. In comparison, the contemporary projects project the use of specific elements that best suited the designs that would reflect authority and at the same time, maintain an authentic appearance that fits the western and European designs of different buildings and structures. Evidently, both the United States and parts of Europe sought to borrow some ideas from the Greeks and the Romans but also ensured that the final outcome portrayed more of their authentic designs with simple touches of ancient architecture.

**Conclusion**

The significance of the columns in architecture is traced to historical buildings that have also become monumental structures in the contemporary world. In contrast, the value and significance of the columns may be understood from the comparison of the relevance and meaning associated with columns in Ancient Greek and Roman architecture and the modern American Iconic columns. In looking into the different column designs that were invented by the Greeks and modified by the Romans, it is evident that the United States and Europe also found the designs to be compelling to include them in some of their architectural designs. While the Ionic and Corinthian columns are the most commonly used, their purpose maintains the original intention of support and décor. The government buildings remain to be the most convenient examples of how ancient architecture can be infused with modern designs to depict classic architectural styles in the contemporary society.

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