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## Ziggurats in Ancient Mesopotamia

### The Importance of Ziggurats in Ancient Mesopotamia:

Today, many people like to compare ziggurats – which is derived from the ancient Akkadian word for the structures, *ziggurratu* – with their counterparts the pyramids in Egypt.

Although both pyramids and ziggurats were constructed during the same time period, they served different functions and were built using different methods and from different materials. Ziggurats were also built over a much longer period than Egyptian pyramids and most importantly,

ziggurats were built by a plethora of different people who inhabited ancient Mesopotamia. Mesopotamia, unlike Egypt, was full of disparate and at times warring ethnic groups, but they all followed a similar religion and built ziggurats to appease their gods.

The fact that ziggurat construction took place over such a long period – from the third millennium until the sixth century BC - and was done by so many different groups of people is an indicator of the importance of these colossal structures. An examination of the various dynasties that came to rule Mesopotamia shows that ziggurats were important for a number of reasons: they served as a way for the people to connect to their most important gods, they provided a focal

point for the secular community, and they also acted as a visible and tangible sign of a king's power. Any king in ancient Mesopotamia had to build a ziggurat that could be seen for miles, which would ultimately serve to immortalize him for posterity.