Ancient History

DAILY PRACTICE 27/11/2026 · UPSC CSE · Ancient History

Q1.

Archaeologists excavating an Iron Age settlement in France discover coins, human skeletal remains and a bronze wagon wheel within the same archaeological context. Which of the following would be the most appropriate approach to interpreting these findings?

A. Treat the objects as definitive evidence of a single religious ceremony.

B. Examine their spatial association, burial context and material characteristics before drawing conclusions about social status, ritual practices and trade.

C. Conclude that the settlement was directly controlled by the Roman Empire.

D. Consider the coins sufficient evidence that the site functioned exclusively as a commercial centre.

Correct answer: Option B — Examine their spatial association, burial context and material characteristics before drawing conclusions about social status, ritual practices and trade.

Explanation

Correct Answer: (b) — Archaeological interpretation requires contextual analysis of associated finds rather than conclusions

based on individual artefacts.

1. **Contextual association:** The location and relationship between artefacts and human remains help reconstruct possible burial practices and social organisation.
2. **Coins:** Their metal composition, inscriptions and distribution can provide evidence of economic exchange, political authority and cultural contacts.
3. **Bronze wagon wheel:** It may indicate technological capabilities, transport practices or elite material culture, depending on its archaeological context.
4. **Limits of inference:** Such discoveries may suggest ceremonial or elite significance but do not independently establish the exact function of the site.

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Q2.

With reference to the cultural history of India, the memorising of chronicles, dynastic histories and epic tales was the profession of which of the following?

A. Shramana

B. Parivraajaka

C. Agrahaarika

D. Magadha

Correct answer: Option D — Magadha

Explanation

Correct Answer: (d) — Magadha

- Magadhas were professional bards and genealogists who memorised and recited dynastic histories, chronicles and heroic tales.
- They preserved and transmitted historical traditions through oral recitation.
- Their role was particularly significant in the cultural traditions of ancient India.

Q3.

Who among the following first deciphered the edicts of Emperor Ashoka?

A. Georg Bühler.

B. James Prinsep.

C. Max Müller.

D. William Jones.

Correct answer: Option B — James Prinsep.

Explanation

Correct Answer: (b) — James Prinsep

- James Prinsep deciphered the Brahmi script in 1837.
- This enabled scholars to read many inscriptions of Emperor Ashoka.
- His work was crucial in reconstructing the history of ancient India.

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Q4.

Which one of the following books of ancient India contains the love story of the son of the founder of the Sunga dynasty?

A. Swapnavasavadatta

B. Malavikagnimitra

C. Meghadoota

D. Ratnavali

Correct answer: Option B — Malavikagnimitra

Explanation

Correct Answer: (b) — Malavikagnimitra

- *Malavikagnimitra*, written by Kalidasa, narrates the love story of Agnimitra, the son of Pushyamitra Sunga, the founder of the Sunga dynasty, and Malavika.
- It is a Sanskrit play belonging to the classical literary tradition.

Q5.

With reference to the difference between the culture of Rigvedic Aryans and Indus Valley people, which of the following statements is/are correct?

1. Rigvedic Aryans used the coat of mail and helmet in warfare whereas the people of Indus Valley Civilization did not leave any evidence of using them.
2. Rigvedic Aryans knew gold, silver and copper whereas Indus Valley people knew only copper and iron.
3. Rigvedic Aryans had domesticated the horse whereas there is no evidence of Indus Valley people having been aware of this animal.

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

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A. 1 only

B. 2 and 3 only

C. 1 and 3 only

D. 1, 2 and 3

Correct answer: Option A — 1 only

Explanation

Correct Answer: (a) — 1 only

1. **Statement 1 is correct:** Rigvedic references mention protective armour and helmets used in warfare. Comparable archaeological evidence has not been established for the Indus Valley Civilization.
2. **Statement 2 is incorrect:** Harappans knew gold, silver and copper, but iron was not commonly used during the mature Harappan period.
3. **Statement 3 is incorrect:** The presence of horse remains at some Harappan sites is debated. Therefore, the categorical claim that Harappans were unaware of horses is not firmly established.

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Q6.

With reference to forced labour (Vishti) in India during the Gupta period, which one of the following statements is correct?

A. It was considered a source of income for the State, a sort of tax paid by the people.

B. It was totally absent in the Madhya Pradesh and Kathiawar regions of the Gupta Empire.

C. The forced labourer was entitled to weekly wages.

D. The eldest son of the labourer was sent as the forced labourer.

Correct answer: Option A — It was considered a source of income for the State, a sort of tax paid by the people.

Explanation

Correct Answer: (a) — It was considered a source of income for the State, a sort of tax paid by the people

1. *Vishti* referred to forced or unpaid labour imposed on people by the state or authorities.
2. It could function as a form of tax or obligation, requiring labour rather than payment in money or goods.
3. It was not generally a system of weekly paid employment, and historical evidence does not support the other options.

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Q7.

In which of the following relief sculpture inscriptions is ‘Ranyo Ashokan’ (King Ashoka) mentioned along with the stone portrait of Ashoka?

A. Kanganahalli

B. Sanchi

C. Shahbazgarhi

D. Sohgaura

Correct answer: Option A — Kanganahalli

Explanation

Correct Answer: (a) — Kanganahalli

1. Kanganahalli, an important Buddhist archaeological site in Karnataka, yielded a relief sculpture depicting Ashoka.
2. The inscription includes the Prakrit expression “Ranyo Ashoka,” meaning “King Ashoka.”
3. The find is significant evidence of the representation and memory of Ashoka in early Buddhist art.

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Q8.

Which one of the following is not a Harappan site?

A. Chanhudaro

B. Kot Diji

C. Sohgaura

D. Desalpur

Correct answer: Option C — Sohgaura

Explanation

Correct Answer: (c) — Sohgaura

1. Chanhudaro was an important Harappan settlement known for craft production.
2. Kot Diji is a significant pre-Harappan and early Harappan archaeological site in present-day Pakistan.
3. Desalpur is a Harappan site in Gujarat.
4. Sohgaura is known for an ancient copper-plate inscription, not as a Harappan site.

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Q9.

With reference to cultural history of India consider the following pairs:

	Term	Meaning
1.	Parivrajaka	Renunciant and Wanderer
2.	Shramana	Priest with a high status
3.	Upasaka	Lay follower of buddhism

Which of the pairs given above are correctly matched?

A. 1 and 2 only

B. 1 and 3 only

C. 2 and 3 only

D. 1,2 and 3

Correct answer: Option B — 1 and 3 only

Explanation

Correct Answer: (B) — 1 and 3 only

1. **Pair 1 is correctly matched:** Parivrajaka refers to a wandering ascetic or renunciant who gives up worldly life in pursuit of spiritual knowledge.
2. **Pair 2 is incorrectly matched:** Shramana refers to an ascetic or renunciant belonging to non-Vedic religious traditions. It does not mean a priest with high status.

3. **Pair 3 is correctly matched:** Upasaka refers to a lay follower of Buddhism who accepts its teachings without becoming a monk.

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Q10.

With reference to the period of Gupta dynasty in ancient India, the towns Ghantasala, Kadura and Chaul were well known as

A. ports handling foreign trade

B. capital of powerful kingdoms

C. places of exquisite stone art and architecture

D. important Buddhist pilgrimage centres

Correct answer: Option A — ports handling foreign trade

Explanation

Correct Answer: (A) — ports handling foreign trade

Ghantasala, Kadura and Chaul were important ancient port towns associated with maritime trade. They facilitated commercial exchanges with regions beyond the Indian subcontinent, reflecting the importance of overseas trade during ancient India.