

FREE EXTRACT

Ancient History Mindmaps

Three questions from inside the book, with the explanation written out as it appears throughout. Nothing here is abridged for the sample.

1

With reference to the Harappan Civilisation, consider the following statements:

1. Lothal has yielded a large brick-built basin that has been identified as a dockyard.
2. Kalibangan has yielded evidence of a ploughed field belonging to the pre-Harappan level.
3. Dholavira has yielded an inscription of ten large signs found near one of its gateways.

Which of the statements given above are correct?

- (A) 1 and 2 only
- (B) 2 and 3 only
- (C) 1 and 3 only
- (D) 1, 2 and 3

Answer: (D) 1, 2 and 3

All three statements are correct. Lothal in Gujarat has a large trapezoidal baked-brick basin connected by a channel to the river, which S.R. Rao identified as a dockyard; a few scholars prefer to read it as a water reservoir, but the dockyard association is the one the examination expects you to know. Kalibangan in Rajasthan gave us the earliest known ploughed field in the subcontinent, with two sets of furrows crossing at right angles, and it belongs to the pre-Harappan or early level of the site, alongside the well-known fire altars. Dholavira, in the Rann of Kachchh, is remembered for its threefold town plan, its remarkable series of rock-cut reservoirs, and the so-called signboard of ten large Harappan signs recovered near the northern gateway. The examiner in such questions almost never invents a feature; he simply shifts a famous find from one site to another, so fix each site in your mind with one or two signature discoveries and you will catch the swap immediately.

2

With reference to the inscriptions of Ashoka, consider the following statements:

- 1. Over most of the empire they were engraved in the Prakrit language using the Brahmi script.**
- 2. In the great majority of them the king is referred to by his personal name, Ashoka.**
- 3. A bilingual inscription of Ashoka in Greek and Aramaic has been found at Kandahar.**

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (A) 1 only
- (B) 1 and 3 only
- (C) 2 and 3 only
- (D) 1, 2 and 3

Answer: (B) 1 and 3 only

Statement 1 is correct, since the edicts were mostly composed in Prakrit and cut in Brahmi, with Kharoshthi used in the north-west at sites such as Shahbazgarhi and Mansehra, and Greek and Aramaic used on the Afghan frontier. Statement 2 is where candidates slip: in nearly all his inscriptions the king calls himself Devanampiya Piyadasi, the Beloved of the Gods of Gracious Countenance, and his personal name occurs only in a small group of minor rock edicts, Maski being the best remembered of them. That is precisely why the edicts, once deciphered by James Prinsep, could not at first be attached with certainty to Ashoka of the Buddhist chronicles. Statement 3 is correct; the bilingual Greek and Aramaic inscription found near Kandahar shows the Mauryan state translating its dhamma message for a Hellenised and Iranianised population on the western edge of the empire. Keep the language and the script separate in your notes, because questions of this type are built almost entirely on that confusion.

3

Consider the following pairs:

- 1. Burzahom : Neolithic pit dwellings**
- 2. Chirand : Neolithic bone and antler tools**
- 3. Inamgaon : Chalcolithic settlement of the Deccan**

How many of the pairs given above are correctly matched?

- (A) Only one pair
- (B) Only two pairs
- (C) All three pairs
- (D) None of the pairs

Answer: (C) All three pairs

All three pairs are correctly matched. Burzahom, near Srinagar, is the standard example of Neolithic pit dwellings cut into the karewa soil of the Kashmir valley, and it is also famous for a burial in which a dog was laid beside its human owner. Chirand, on the bank of the Ganga in Saran district of Bihar, is known above all for an unusually rich industry of tools made from bone and antler, a rarity among Indian Neolithic sites. Inamgaon, on the Ghod river in Maharashtra, is the most thoroughly excavated Chalcolithic village of the Deccan, yielding Jorwe pottery, large storage jars and traces of a channel and embankment for diverting river water. Note that the counting format, how many pairs are correctly matched, deliberately removes the chance to work backwards from the options, so the only reliable preparation is a plain mental table of site, present-day State and signature find.

The full book

Every question from the papers, each explained like this.