

While using the accounts of foreign writers, historians must distinguish between statements based on hearsay and those grounded in perceptual observations". Elaborate with examples.

Foreign literature (or) the accounts of foreign writers ~~are~~ were initially the classical writings in Greek and Latin. The foreign accounts were either a result of their visit to India (eg. Megasthenes) (or) after gathering information from others without visiting India (eg. Herodotus)

Historians should distinguish between hearsay and observations because even the foreigners who visited India could not give the actual picture of the society. There is difference seen in Arthashastra of Kautilya and Megasthenes' Indica.

Megasthenes mentioned that Indian society was divided into seven and agriculturist class comes second to philosophers (or) Brahmins. But the actual situation was different where society was divided into 4 and agriculturists came only after warrior class. He might have copied the Greek class system with 7 classes.

Megasthenes mentioned that there was no famine in India. ~~This~~ He did not ~~even~~ visit the whole of India, but saw only the progress of Mauryan Capital Pataliputra. There was around 20 years of famine in Magadha. He mentioned that India was free from slavery. He so might have compared with Greek systems where slavery was severe; but India had domestic slaves.

According to Megasthenes, crime was not high in Mauryan empire. This goes against Asthashastra where punishments were given based on varna system. Shudras were severely punished than Brahmins for the same crime.

Megasthenes mentioned that peasants were left untouched during war; but the Ashokan ~~insp~~ inscriptions quoted the huge number of peasants killed and deported.

Greek geographer Strabo himself says that accounts of India are only based on some visits in certain portions of India and some based on hearsay. Hence these accounts were only to get an idea about faraway country; and not the actual story.

To what extent archaeological materials are useful in understanding the progress of neolithic man in India? _____.

Neolithic (or) New ~~Stage~~ ^{Stone} Age is a period of new type of stone tools modified from earlier Palaeolithic and Mesolithic ages. Archaeological materials are the major source of evidence to study their culture and progress.

The period saw a shift from hunting and gathering to cultivation of crops. This is evident from type of tools excavated which includes well polished bone and stone tools, ground stone axe also development of pottery. Shows a more settled life. Chopani Mando in Belan valley shows the earliest evidence of use of pottery in the world.

Pottery found a progress from crude hand made to ~~machine~~ ^{wheel} made one of different shapes and shades. Eg: Wheel made red-ware pottery in Burzahom.

The period saw the beginning of domestication of animals. Sheep, goat and

cattle remains are found in many neolithic sites. Mainly, the period is characterised by mixed economy where farming and domestication go side by side.

Evidence of rectangular houses of mud bricks and smaller compartments for storage shows the emergence of village community. Neolithic houses are excavated in Mehgarh, Burzahom and Cuikral in Kashmir Valley shows village settlements.

Belan Valley, Mid-Ganga valley, Deccan Plateau, South India and North-west regions of India gives clear evidences of neolithic culture. Cultivation of rice, wheat, barley, peas; domestication of draught animals and others for milk and meat; development in pottery, its standardisation and fine tools and implements marked the transition to a modern way of life.

Thus the neolithic transition period shows a clear distinction between the earlier and later phases.