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Q39

Who of the following had first deciphered the edicts of Emperor Ashoka? (a) Georg Buhler (b) James Prinsep (c) Max Muller (d) William Jones Official key: B.

UPSC Civil Services Prelims 2016 · General Studies · 2 marks · History (Ancient, Medieval, Modern)

Ancient, medieval and modern Indian history - Prelims GS Paper I.

Explanation

(a)

Georg Bühler. He edited inscriptions and Prakrit texts later in the nineteenth century; he did not first crack Ashokan Brahmi. This letter is not the key.

(b) Official key

James Prinsep. In 1837 Prinsep deciphered Brahmi (and related **Kharoshthi** work) and showed that 'Devanampiya **Piyadasi**' was **Ashoka**. That stored letter is the official key.

(c)

Max Müller. He was a Sanskritist and editor of the Sacred Books of the East, not the first reader of Ashokan edicts. This letter is not the key.

(d)

William Jones. He founded the **Asiatic Society** and identified Sandrocottus with Chandragupta, but he did not decipher **Ashoka**'s edicts. This letter is not the key.

Summary

Official key is (b) James Prinsep. Prinsep's 1837 Brahmi decipherment opened **Ashoka**'s edicts. Bühler, Müller and Jones are other Indological names, not that first key. Honour the stored letter (b).

Related possible facts

These can be asked in a future Prelims paper.

Year of Brahmi decipherment

1837

Prinsep's post

Assay Master, Calcutta Mint; Asiatic Society

Piyadasi

Title in edicts equated with **Ashoka** via Sri Lankan chronicles and Maski

Kharoshthi

Also read in the northwest in the same era of work

Asiatic Society

Founded by William Jones, 1784

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