

**ANSWER KEY & MARKING SCHEME · CBSE CLASS 12**

# Kings, Farmers and Towns — Early States and Economies

History · Chapter 2 · Use this with the Board Paper · Companion to Quick Drill

**HOW TO USE**

Attempt the Board Paper first (closed-book, full time). Then come here. For 2-mark+ questions, compare your answer to the model. For 3-4 mark questions, also consult the **Topper Templates** below — these show the exact step-by-step structure that scores full marks per CBSE marking-scheme conventions.

**MODEL ANSWERS · BOARD PAPER****Section A — VSA (1 mark × 4)****Q1. Who deciphered the Brahmi and Kharosthi scripts in 1838? [1 mark]****| Ans:** James Prinsep, an official of the East India Company's mint in Bengal.**Q2. Name any two of the five major political centres of the Mauryan Empire. [1 mark]****| Ans:** Any two of: Pataliputra (capital), Taxila, Ujjayini, Tosali, Suvarnagiri.**Q3. To whom is the Arthashastra attributed? [1 mark]****| Ans:** Kautilya, also known as Chanakya, the minister of Chandragupta Maurya.**Q4. What does the Kushana title 'Devaputra' mean? [1 mark]****| Ans:** 'Son of god' — reflecting the Kushana idea of divine kingship.**Section B — SA-I (3 marks × 2)****Q5. What are the limitations of inscriptional evidence? (any three) [3 marks]****| Ans:** (1) TECHNICAL — letters are sometimes faintly engraved, weathered, damaged or missing, so the reading is uncertain. (2) LINGUISTIC — the precise meaning of some words is debated, and a word may mean different things in different contexts. (3) CONTENT BIAS — inscriptions recorded what was grand and durable (royal acts, donations); ROUTINE EVERYDAY LIFE of ordinary people was rarely inscribed. (Also: many inscriptions have not survived or been discovered.) Hence inscriptions give only a partial record and must be cross-checked with other sources.**Q6. Why did Magadha become the most powerful Mahajanapada? [3 marks]****| Ans:** Magadha rose to power because of several advantages: (1) FERTILE land in the Ganga plains gave large agricultural surpluses to support armies and administration. (2) Rich IRON ORE mines nearby supplied tools and weapons. (3) ELEPHANTS from the forests strengthened the army. (4) Major RIVERS (the Ganga and tributaries) provided cheap transport and communication. (5) Ambitious and able KINGS — Bimbisara, Ajatasattu and the Nandas — used these resources aggressively to absorb rival states.**Section C — SA-II (5 marks × 2)****Q7. Describe the administration of the Mauryan Empire, including the role of the five political centres. [5 marks]****| Ans:** The Mauryan Empire (c. 321-185 BCE), founded by Chandragupta Maurya and at its height under Asoka, was administered from a principal capital and four provincial centres. (1) CAPITAL — PATALIPUTRA (modern Patna), placed at the confluence of rivers in Magadha. (2) FIVE POLITICAL CENTRES — Pataliputra plus TAXILA and UJJAYINI (on major trade routes), TOSALI (east/Kalinga) and SUVARNAGIRI ('golden mountain', south, near gold mines); Asokan inscriptions cluster near all five, showing the empire's reach. (3) MILITARY — Megasthenes describes a committee of six sub-committees coordinating navy, transport, infantry, cavalry, chariots and elephants. (4) COMMUNICATION — land and riverine routes linked the centres, enabling movement of armies, officials and messages. (5) DHAMMA — after the Kalinga war Asoka spread a code of ethical conduct through DHAMMA MAHAMATTAS, integrating a diverse population morally. CONCLUSION: Control was probably strongest along routes and near the five centres and lighter in remote regions, but the combination of capital, centres, communication and dhamma made Mauryan administration remarkably effective.

**Q8. Explain the new notions of kingship that emerged under the Kushanas and the Satavahanas. [5 marks]**

**Ans:** After the Mauryan decline (c. 185 BCE), new dynasties developed fresh ways of projecting royal power. KUSHANAS (c. 1st century BCE - 1st century CE): (1) associated kingship with DIVINITY, installing colossal royal statues in shrines at MAT (near Mathura) and SURKH KOTAL (Afghanistan), implying the king was god-like; (2) adopted the title 'DEVAPUTRA' ('son of god'), an idea possibly influenced by Chinese notions; (3) issued the first extensive GOLD COINAGE, depicting rulers with a range of deities — high-value coins that were both economic instruments and royal propaganda across long-distance trade routes. SATAVAHANAS (Deccan): (4) emphasised VEDIC sacrifice and lineage; rulers like GAUTAMIPUTRA SATAKARNI were celebrated in inscriptions (e.g. by his mother Gautami Balashri) as destroyers of enemies and upholders of social order; (5) uniquely used METRONYMICS — kings named after their MOTHERS (Gautami-putra = 'son of Gautami') — though succession remained patrilineal. CONCLUSION: post-Mauryan kingship moved towards claims of divine or semi-divine status, projected through statues, gold coinage and elaborate inscriptions.

**Section D — Source-based (10 marks)**

**Q9. Read the passage and answer the three sub-questions. PASSAGE (adapted from a Major Rock Edict of Asoka): 'Beloved-of-the-Gods, King Piyadassi, conquered the Kalingas eight years after his coronation. One hundred and fifty thousand were deported, one hundred thousand were killed, and many more died. After the Kalingas had been conquered, Beloved-of-the-Gods came to feel a strong inclination towards Dhamma, a love for Dhamma and for instruction in Dhamma. Now Beloved-of-the-Gods feels deep remorse for having conquered the Kalingas.' SUB-QUESTIONS: (a) Who is 'Beloved-of-the-Gods, King Piyadassi', and how do we know? (b) What change did the Kalinga war bring about in the king, according to the edict? (c) What was Asoka's 'Dhamma', and how did he try to spread it across the empire? [10 marks]**

**Ans:** (a) IDENTITY [3 marks]: 'Beloved-of-the-Gods (Devanampiya), King Piyadassi' is ASOKA, the Mauryan emperor (reigned c. 268-232 BCE). His inscriptions almost never use the name 'Asoka' but the titles Devanampiya and Piyadassi. We know the identification because in 1838 JAMES PRINSEP deciphered the Brahmi script and scholars realised that 'Piyadassi' of the inscriptions was the same king the Buddhist tradition remembered as Asoka. (b) CHANGE AFTER KALINGA [3 marks]: The edict records the enormous human cost of the war — 100,000 killed, 150,000 deported, many more dead — after which the king felt DEEP REMORSE. He turned away from conquest by war (dig-vijaya) towards a 'conquest by Dhamma' (Dhamma-vijaya): a love for Dhamma, instruction in Dhamma, and a more compassionate ideal of rule. (c) DHAMMA [4 marks]: Asoka's DHAMMA was NOT Buddhism as a religion but a broad set of ETHICAL PRINCIPLES meant to unite a diverse empire — respect for elders, kindness to servants and slaves, generosity, non-violence and toleration of all sects. He spread it by: inscribing EDICTS on rocks and pillars across the empire so people would see his message; appointing special officers called DHAMMA MAHAMATTAS to teach and supervise dhamma; and setting a personal example. Thus the edict shows both the violence of Mauryan expansion and the king's attempt to replace it with a moral ideology of governance.

★ **TOPPER TEMPLATE — 8-mark: 'Describe the administration of the Mauryan Empire / explain the five political centres.'**

Annual

<b>Step 1</b> [1 mark]	<b>Scale + capital</b>	The Mauryan Empire (c. 321-185 BCE) was the first large empire in the subcontinent, founded by Chandragupta Maurya. Its principal capital was PATALIPUTRA (modern Patna), strategically placed at the confluence of rivers in Magadha.
<b>Step 2</b> [2 marks]	<b>Five political centres</b>	Administration ran through FIVE MAJOR POLITICAL CENTRES: the capital Pataliputra and four provincial centres — TAXILA and UJJAYINI (on important long-distance trade routes), TOSALI (in the east, Kalinga region) and SUVARNAGIRI (literally 'golden mountain', in the south, near gold mines). Asokan inscriptions are found near all five, showing the empire's reach.
<b>Step 3</b> [2 marks]	<b>Communication + control</b>	Holding such a vast, varied territory required a system of COMMUNICATION along land and riverine routes, MILITARY mobility, and a network of officials. Megasthenes describes a committee of six sub-committees coordinating military activity (navy, transport, infantry, cavalry, chariots, elephants), indicating sophisticated organisation.
<b>Step 4</b> [2 marks]	<b>Dhamma + officials</b>	After the Kalinga war, Asoka propagated DHAMMA — a code of ethical conduct — and appointed DHAMMA MAHAMATTAS to spread it across the provinces. This was a tool of moral integration that supplemented coercive administration, helping bind a diverse population.
<b>Step 5</b> [1 mark]	<b>Conclusion</b>	The combination of a strong capital, five regional centres, organised communication and the unifying ideology of dhamma made the Mauryan administration remarkably effective for its time — though scholars debate how uniformly central control actually reached every corner.

**COMMON LOSS OF MARKS:**

- Naming fewer than five political centres or getting them wrong.
- Confusing dhamma with Buddhism.
- Omitting Megasthenes / the Arthashastra as sources.
- Listing features without explaining why control was difficult.

★ **TOPPER TEMPLATE — 8-mark: 'Explain the new notions of kingship that emerged after the Mauryas.'**

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<b>Step 1</b> [1 mark]	<b>Context</b>	After the Mauryan decline (c. 185 BCE), new ruling houses — notably the KUSHANAS (c. 1st century BCE - 1st century CE) in the northwest and the SATAVAHANAS in the Deccan — experimented with NEW WAYS of projecting royal power.
<b>Step 2</b> [2 marks]	<b>Kushana divine kingship</b>	The KUSHANAS associated kingship with DIVINITY. Colossal statues of Kushana rulers were installed in shrines (e.g. at Mat near Mathura and at Surkh Kotal in Afghanistan), suggesting the king was treated as god-like. Many Kushana kings adopted the title 'DEVAPUTRA' (son of god), borrowed partly from Chinese ideas of the divine ruler.
<b>Step 3</b> [2 marks]	<b>Kushana coinage as propaganda</b>	The Kushanas issued the first extensive GOLD COINAGE in the subcontinent, depicting rulers alongside a range of deities (Indian, Greek, Iranian). High-value gold coins broadcast royal grandeur and divine sanction across long-distance trade networks.
<b>Step 4</b> [2 marks]	<b>Satavahana ideas</b>	The SATAVAHANAS, by contrast, emphasised connection to Vedic sacrifice and lineage. Some rulers, like Gautamiputra Satakarni, were described in inscriptions (e.g. by his mother Gautami Balashri) in grand terms; uniquely, they were sometimes identified through METRONYMICS (named after their mothers), though succession was patrilineal.
<b>Step 5</b> [1 mark]	<b>Conclusion</b>	Thus post-Mauryan kingship moved towards claims of DIVINE or SEMI-DIVINE status, projected through monumental statues, high-value coinage and elaborate inscriptions — a shift from the Mauryan ideal of the king as upholder of dhamma.

**COMMON LOSS OF MARKS:**

- Confusing Kushana and Satavahana strategies.
- Forgetting 'Devaputra' and the divine-statue evidence.
- Not mentioning Kushana gold coinage.
- Missing the metronymic detail for the Satavahanas.

★ **TOPPER TEMPLATE — 5-mark: 'What are the limitations of inscriptional evidence?' (or source-based on decipherment).**

Most years

<b>Step 1</b> [2 marks]	<b>Technical + linguistic limits</b>	TECHNICAL: letters are sometimes faintly engraved, damaged, weathered or missing, so reconstruction is uncertain. LINGUISTIC: the exact meaning of some words is debated, and the same word can mean different things in different places and times — so even a fully readable inscription can be hard to interpret.
<b>Step 2</b> [2 marks]	<b>Content bias + survival</b>	CONTENT BIAS: inscriptions record what those who commissioned them thought important and durable — grand royal acts, donations, conquests — while routine everyday life (ordinary farming, women's work, the poor) was rarely inscribed. SURVIVAL BIAS: many inscriptions have perished or not yet been discovered, so what survives is only a fraction.
<b>Step 3</b> [1 mark]	<b>Implication</b>	Therefore historians treat inscriptions as ONE source among many, cross-checking them against texts, coins and archaeology rather than taking them as a complete record.

**COMMON LOSS OF MARKS:**

- Giving only one or two limits instead of the full range.
- Forgetting the 'everyday life was not recorded' point.
- Not stating the cross-checking implication.

**MARKING SCHEME — GENERAL NOTES**

- Specific facts (the five centres, dates, source-author pairs) carry marks; vague answers lose half-mark per instance.
- Source-based answers MUST quote or reference evidence from the passage.
- State dhamma as an ethical code, NOT as the Buddhist religion.
- For land grants, present BOTH interpretations (weakened vs extended central authority) for full marks.
- For limits of inscriptions, the everyday-life and survival points are required for full marks.