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Compiled by Arvind KrS

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Prelims 2026 Edition · Compiled November 2026

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UPSC Prelims Research: Medieval Indian History 2026

All 1 Medieval Indian History questions of UPSC Civil Services Preliminary Examination 2026, General Studies Paper 1, with the correct answer and an explanation of every option.

Q. Which one of the following statements with regard to the Moidams, built by the Tai-Ahom kingdom and inscribed as a World Heritage Site by UNESCO, is/are correct?

1. They acted as army fortresses.

2. They were recreation centres of the Royals and Nobles.

3. They were burial grounds of the Royals and Nobles.

4. They were battle drill centres of the Royals and Nobles.

Select the answer using the code given below:

(a) 1 only
(b) 1 and 3
(c) 3 only
(d) 2 and 4

Answer: (c) 3 only

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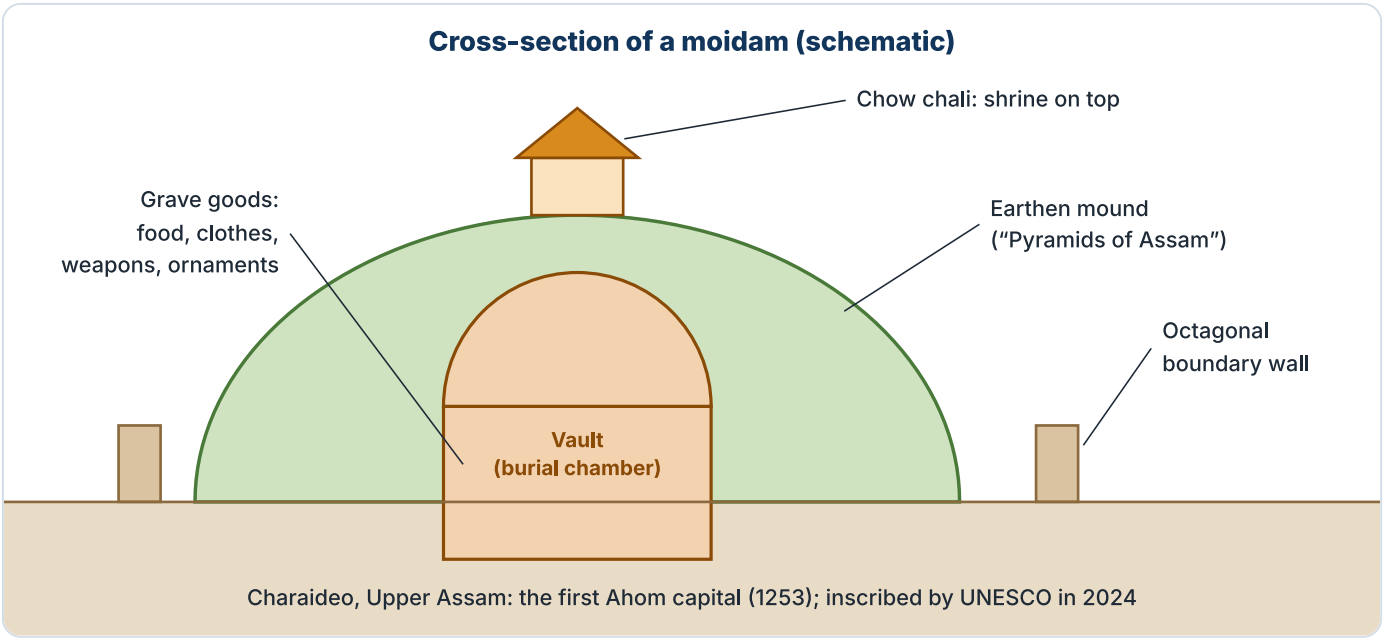
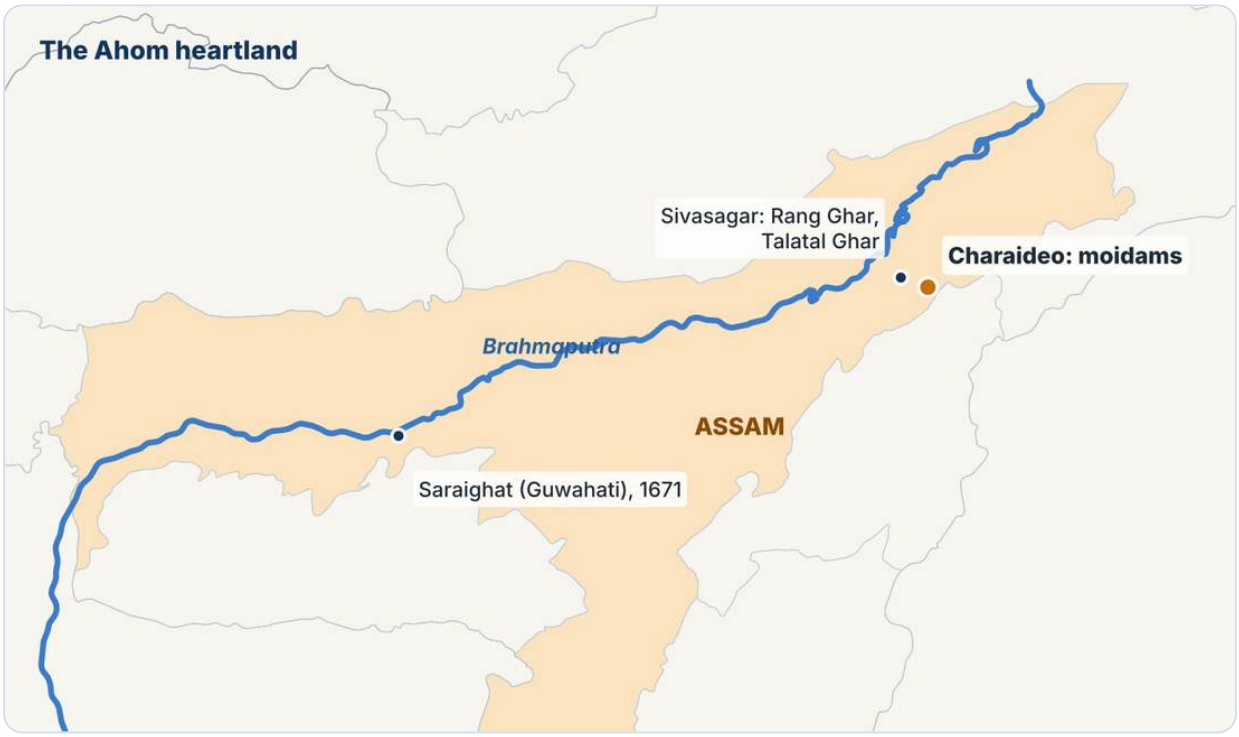
Moidams: the mound-burial system of the Ahoms



Parts of a moidam



Charaideo and other Ahom sites in Assam

- **Moidams** are **burial mounds** of the **Ahom kings, queens and nobles**. The main group is at **Charaideo**, in present-day **Charaideo district of Upper Assam**, near Sivasagar. Charaideo was the **first capital** of the Ahom kingdom, founded by **Chaolung Sukaphaa** in **1253**; he had entered the Brahmaputra valley from the upper Irrawaddy region in **1228**.
- **UNESCO inscription: "Moidams – the Mound-Burial System of the Ahom Dynasty"** was inscribed as a **cultural** World Heritage Site in **July 2024**, at the **46th session** of the World Heritage Committee held in **New Delhi**. It became **India's 43rd** World Heritage Site and the **first cultural site in the North-East** (Kaziranga and Manas are natural sites).

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- **Structure:** each moidam has an **underground vault** (often with more than one chamber) built of brick or stone, covered by a **hemispherical earthen mound** that can be very large. On top stands a small pavilion called the **chow chali**, and the mound is ringed by an **octagonal boundary wall**. Because of their size they are often called the **"Pyramids of Assam"**.
- **Burial customs:** the dead king was buried with **grave goods**: food, clothes, weapons, ornaments, and in early times even **servants and animals**. In the **18th century**, under Hindu influence, the Ahoms began to **cremate** their dead and place the **ashes** in moidams. The rituals followed the Tai belief in honouring ancestors (**Me-Dam-Me-Phi**, the ancestor worship festival, is still observed).

Feature	Detail
Built by	Tai-Ahom dynasty (1228–1826)
Main site	Charaideo, Upper Assam (first Ahom capital)
Purpose	Burial of royals and nobles
Parts	Vault, earthen mound, chow chali (shrine) on top, octagonal wall
UNESCO	Cultural WHS, July 2024; India's 43rd

Why the other statements are wrong

- **Statement 1 (army fortresses):** moidams are **tombs**, not forts. The Ahoms built separate **earthen forts and ramparts (garhs)**, and their great river battle against the Mughals at **Saraighat (1671)** was led by **Lachit Borphukan**.
- **Statement 2 (recreation centres):** Ahom recreation was elsewhere: the **Rang Ghar** at Sivasagar was a **royal pavilion** from which kings watched **buffalo fights** and Bihu sports. Moidams were **sacred** places for ancestor worship.
- **Statement 4 (battle drill centres):** there is no evidence that moidams were used for military training. The **Talatal Ghar** and **Kareng Ghar** were the Ahom palace complexes; moidams were **closed burial mounds**.
- Only **statement 3** is correct, so the answer is **(c)**.

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UPSC Prelims Research: Medieval Indian History 2019

All 5 Medieval Indian History questions of UPSC Civil Services Preliminary Examination 2019, General Studies Paper 1, with the correct answer and an explanation of every option.

Q. With reference to Mughal India, what is/are the difference/differences between Jagirdar and Zamindar?

1. Jagirdars were holders of land assignments in lieu of judicial and police duties, whereas Zamindars were holders of revenue rights without obligation to perform any duty other than revenue collection.
2. Land assignments to Jagirdars were **hereditary** and revenue rights of Zamindars were not hereditary.

Select the correct answer using the code given below.

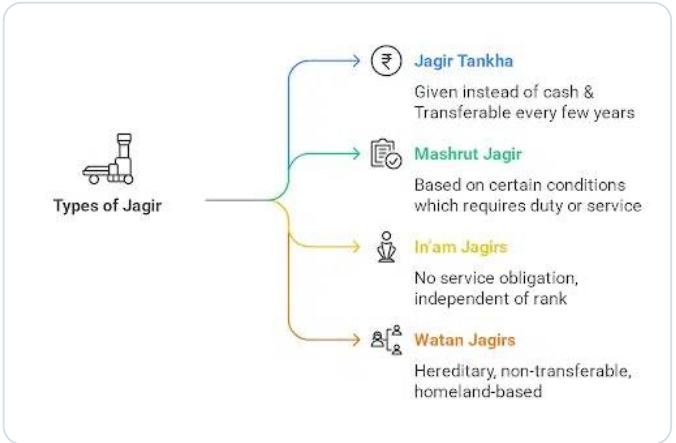
(a) 1 only
(b) 2 only
(c) Both 1 and 2
(d) Neither 1 nor 2

Answer: (d) Neither 1 nor 2

Notes:

Jagirdars:

- Jagirdars were **officials who were granted land assignments (jagirs) by the Mughal emperor,** in lieu of service, **particularly military or administrative duties.**
- Jagirdars did n**ot necessarily have hereditary rights** over their jagirs. The land could be reassigned or revoked by the emperor based on performance or loyalty.



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- They had **obligations to maintain law and order and collect revenue**, which they would then remit to the Mughal treasury.
- Jagirdari system was a **crucial component of Akbar's Mansabdari system** and was modified several times under his successors. All Mughal mansabdars were compensated through the assignment of jagir.
  - During Akbar's reign, **all the territories were divided into Khalisa and Jagir.** The revenue from **Khalisa (Crown Land) went to the imperial territory**, and the **income from Jagir (Land Assignments) was allocated to Jagirdars instead of their cash salary**.

Zamindars:

- Zamindars were **landowners who held rights over land primarily for revenue collection**. They acted as **intermediaries between the peasants and the Mughal state.**
- Zamindari rights were **generally hereditary,** meaning that these rights could be passed down through generations within a family.
- Their **primary duty was to collect revenue from the peasants,** but they did not have the same obligations related to military service or administration as Jagirdars.

FEATURES	JAGIRDARI SYSTEM	MANSABDARI SYSTEM	ZAMINDARI SYSTEM
Definition	It was land **grants to the nobles and the officials** for revenue collection.	It was a **ranking-based system** in the Mughal Army.	It was a **revenue collection system** by the zamindars from the peasants.
Role	Governance and revenue collection	Military and administrative duties	Collection of revenue and land management
Military Responsibility	Depending on the size of the jagir, the jagirdar had to maintain a contingent.	Mansabdars were responsible for **maintaining a specified number of troops**.	Zamindars had no military responsibility.
Control over Land	Jagirdars had **administrative authority** over the land but **did not own it**.	Mansabdars were given **administrative positions** but were not associated with specific lands.	Zamindars held **hereditary rights** over their land and maintained direct control over them.

Q. Consider the following statements:

1. In the revenue administration of Delhi Sultanate, the in-charge of revenue collection was known as 'Amil'.
2. The Iqta system of Sultans of Delhi was an **ancient indigenous institution**.
3. The office of 'Mir Bakshi' came into existence during the **reign of Khalji Sultans** of Delhi.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

(a) 1 only
(b) 1 and 2 only
(c) 3 only
(d) 1, 2 and 3

> **Answer: (a) 1 only**

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Jagirdari System and Iqta System

- Jagirdari System and Iqta Systems served as **means of military governance and tax collection**.
- The **Iqta system was a land distribution and administrative system in the Delhi Sultanate.** It was introduced **by Shamsuddin Iltutmish**.
  - The word "Iqta" is Arabic and refers to a **regional administrative unit, similar to a province.**
- The **Delhi Sultanate instituted the Iqta system, giving nobility non-hereditary, movable land allocations in exchange for tax collection and military maintenance**.
- In the Jagirdari system, the jagirdars collected the revenue as part of their salary. It was **created under the Mughals** and included both inherited and transferable grants.
- **Iqtadars had more direct administrative and military control**, whereas Jagirdars had revenue collection power and limited administrative roles.

How the Iqta System worked

- The Delhi Sultanate was divided into Iqtas, or provinces
- The Iqtas were assigned to nobles, officers, and soldiers
- The officers in charge of the Iqtas were called **Iqtadars, or Muqtis**
- **The Iqtadars were responsible for collecting taxes, maintaining troops, and governing the Iqtas**
- Any surplus revenue was sent to the Sultan's treasury

Iqtadars' duties and responsibilities

- **They were supervised by the central government**
- **They carried out the Sultan's orders**
- They **maintained large armies**
- They maintained order in their territories
- They protected the lives and property of the people
- They appointed soldiers in their armies

Mir Bakshi

- In the Mughal Empire, the Mir Bakshi, also known as the **paymaster-general and administrator of the army, was the head of the military administration, responsible for maintaining records, salaries, promotions, and appointments of soldiers, and supervised the branding of horses and checked the soldiers' muster roll.**
- The Mir Bakshi's office was closely linked to the **Mansabdari system**, which defined the ranks and responsibilities of military officials.
- The **first Mir Bakshi was appointed by Akbar in 1574**, and the office continued to exist until the decline of the Mughal Empire in the 18th century.

Q. Consider the following statements:

1. Saint Nimbarka was a **contemporary** of Akbar.

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2. Saint Kabir was **greatly influenced** by Shaikh Ahmad Sirhindi.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

(a) 1 only
(b) 2 only
(c) Both 1 and 2
(d) Neither 1 nor 2

> **Answer: (d) Neither 1 nor 2**

Notes:

Saint Nimbarka:

- He was the preacher of **Vaishnavite Bhakti** in the Telangana region.
- Saint Nimbarka was **not** a contemporary of Akbar. Saint Nimbarka belongs to the **13th or 14th century** while **Akbar reigned during the 16th century.**
- He was the **disciple of Ramanujacharya**.
- He was the first to introduce **Radhamadhav cult** which was centered n the worship of Radha and Madhav
- He founded the philosophy called **Dwita Advaita**. It was centered on the balance between **Advaita and Visishtadvaita.**
- He wrote **Dashasloki and Vedanta**
- He was also a prominent astronomer
- Its philosophy held that men were trapped in physical bodies constricted by **prakrti**(matter) and that only by surrender to Radha-Krishna (not through their own efforts) could they attain the grace necessary for liberation from rebirth; then, at death, the physical body would drop away.

Saint Kabir:

- **Kabir** was the disciple of **Ramananda.**
- **Saint Kabir** was the follower of **Nirguna Bhakti** who lived in the **15th century** while **Shaikh Ahmad Sirhindi** was the Islamic scholar of **Naqshbandi Silsilah** who lived during the **16th century**.

Q. With reference to Mian Tansen, which one of the following statements is not correct?

(a) Tansen was the title given to him by Emperor Akbar.

(b) Tansen composed Dhrupads on Hindu gods and goddesses.

(c) Tansen composed songs on his patrons.

(d) Tansen invented many Ragas.

> **Answer: (a) Tansen was the title given to him by Emperor Akbar.**

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Mian Tansen

- He was a **prominent Indian classical music composer, musician and vocalist, known for a large number of compositions**, and also an instrumentalist who popularised and improved the plucked rabab (of Central Asian origin).
- He began his career and spent most of his adult life in the court and patronage of the **Hindu king of Rewa, Raja Ramchandra Singh** (1555–1592), where Tansen's musical abilities and studies gained widespread fame.
    - This reputation brought him to the **attention of the Mughal Emperor Akbar**, who sent messengers to Raja Ramchandra Singh, requesting Tansen to join the musicians at the Mughal court.
- He was among the **Navaratnas (nine jewels) at the court of the Mughal Emperor Jalal ud-din Akbar.**
- **Akbar gave him the title Mian**, an honorific, meaning learned man.
- Tansen as a historical personality is difficult to extract from the extensive legend that surrounds him.
- Tansen is remembered for his epic **Dhrupad compositions**, creating several new ragas, as well as for writing two **classic books on music Sri Ganesh Stotra and Sangita Sara**.
- He is given credit for introducing some famous ragas viz., **Miyan ki Malhar, Miyan ki Todi and Darbari**.

Q. Who among the following Mughal Emperors shifted emphasis from illustrated manuscripts to album and individual portrait?

(a) Humayun

(b) Akbar

(c) Jahangir

(d) Shah Jahan

> **Answer: (c) Jahangir**

Notes:

- **Jahangir** shifted emphasis from **illustrated manuscripts to the album and individual portraits.**
- The **Mughal School of painting** originated in the reign of Akbar in 1560 A.D.
- **Mughal Paintings** revolved around the themes of battles, hunting scenes, wildlife, portraits, etc.

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