

Rajghat Archaeological Site

Prelims: Current events of national and international importance | History

Why in News?

Banaras Hindu University (BHU) has begun systematically documenting over 10,000 artefacts excavated from the Rajghat site in Varanasi.

- **Location** - Located on the north-eastern outskirts of Varanasi near the **confluence of the Ganga and Varuna rivers**.
- **Capital of Kashi Janapada** - Identified by archaeologists as the main urban core and historical capital of the ancient **Kashi Janapada / Mahajanapada**.
- **Functional Distinction** - Rajghat developed as the commercial and administrative urban heart of ancient Varanasi.

Key Archaeological Discoveries

- The lowest cultural layers yielded **pre-Northern Black Polished Ware (pre-NBPW)**, pushing the verified origins of the settlement back to around **800 BCE** during the early Iron Age.
- Features hundreds of seals and sealings containing references to local administrative units and officials.
- Notably, several seals feature **Greek inscriptions**, hinting at far-reaching commercial and diplomatic interactions.
- Excavations unearthed punch-marked coins, iron tools, ivory objects, terracotta figurines, and storage jars spanning up to the Gupta period, reflecting advanced craftsmanship and urban trade networks.

Significance

- Serves as concrete material evidence documenting the transition from agrarian early Iron Age settlements to organized urban centers (Second Urbanisation) in the Gangetic plains.
- Its continuous occupation layers provide a foundational sequence for dating ceramic cultures (Pre-NBPW to NBPW and beyond) across eastern Uttar Pradesh and Bihar.
- Human skeletal remains excavated from the site in the 1960s are currently being examined using modern DNA and isotope analysis to uncover ancient population ancestry, diet, and lifestyle.

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Unravelling the Early Urban Past of Varanasi



Key Archaeological Discoveries & Antiquity



Deep Stratigraphy (800 BCE Origins)

- Lowest cultural layers yielded pre-Northern Black Polished Ware (pre-NBPW), pushing the verified origins of the settlement back to around **800 BCE** during the **Early Iron Age**.



Administrative Seals & External Links

- Hundreds of seals and sealings with references to local administrative units and officials.
- Several seals feature **Greek inscriptions**, hinting at far-reaching commercial and diplomatic interactions.



Economic & Industrial Artefacts

- Punch-marked coins, iron tools, ivory objects, terracotta figurines, and storage jars spanning up to the Gupta period, reflecting advanced craftsmanship and urban trade networks.



Geographical & Historical Context



Location

North-eastern outskirts of Varanasi, near the confluence of the Ganga and Varuna rivers.



Capital of Kashi Janapada

Identified as the main urban core and historical capital of the ancient Kashi Janapada / Mahajanapada.



Functional Distinction

While nearby Sarnath developed primarily as a Buddhist pilgrimage and religious center, Rajghat developed as the **commercial and administrative** urban heart of ancient Varanasi.



Excavated remains at Rajghat (earlier excavations, 1957–1969)

Reference

[The Indian Express | Why is Rajghat a key archaeological site?](#)



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