

SOLVED PRÉCIS FROM PREVIOUS PAPERS

Précis 1: CSS 2022

- Q.2: Write a précis of the following passage and suggest a suitable title: (20)
- The fear of human being when faced with the mysteries of life and their weakness by comparison with the vastness of nature created in them a need to communicate with the divine. With the supervisor powers which they believed regulated the universe and determined their own fates. Knowledge for wishes of the gods was always a sure guide for human behavior. In ancient Greece, the precise nature of these wishes was 'decoded' by the art of giving oracles, practiced by soothsayers who had the gift of understanding the sings or signals sent by the gods.

The soothsayers uttered their oracles by interpreting flashes of lightening, rolls of thunder or the flights of certain birds of prey (omens), alternatively, they might observe the direction in which the fire burned when a sacrifice was made, examine the entrails of animals which had just been scarified, or base judgments on the sacrificial beast's willingness to approach the altar. The interpretation of dreams was popular too, and so was palmistry. The most notable soothsayers of ancient Greece were Tarsiers, Calchas, Helenus, Amphioxus and Cassandra.

However, there were abundant instances in which the gods did not manifest themselves to the faithful in the forms of signs but spoke directly to an intermediate who for a short time was overcome by a 'divine mania' and transcended his own human essence. Here the prophet – or more usually the prophetess – entered a state of ecstasy in which he or she delivered the message from the gods to the suppliants.

These practices for foreseeing the future were the basis on which the ancient Greek oracles operated. Each oracle was located within a properly – organized sanctuary and was directly associated with one or other of the gods. Apollo was the archetypal soothsayer for the Greeks, the god who was responsible for conveying to mortals the decisions pronounced by Zeus. The most important of all the oracles, that at the Delphi, delivered the message with the intervention of Apollo, while the oldest that of Dodona, functioned with the assistance of Zeus.

The Role of Soothsayers and Oracles in ancient Greece

Man's fear of the unpredictability of life and universe ignited the passion to communicate with the supernatural powers - believed to be the drivers of everything. This required knowledge of their wishes, provided by soothsayers of ancient Greece via interpretation of natural symbols. Palmistry and dream-decoding were common too. Tarshians, Calchas were among the famous soothsayers. Nevertheless, in many cases Gods communicated with humans through intermediaries - prophets and prophetesses. These oracles had the ability to foresee the future and each oracle was associated with one of the Gods. Apollo and Dodona were considered as the most important oracles in ancient Greece, delivering message of their respective God.

Original text = 311

Precise text = 104.