

FREE EDITION · NOTES + 3 SAMPLE MCQS

CUET · HISTORY · CLASS XI · CODE 314

# Changing Traditions

CUET unit: World History — Background

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## Snapshot

- This is a short introductory/transition chapter (Theme III opener) that frames the period c. 1300–1700 in western Europe and its global contacts.
- It explains how the post-Roman feudal order in western Europe evolved into the Renaissance, voyages of discovery, and early European expansion.
- It positions European change against parallel developments in Africa, Asia, South Asia, the Americas and Australia/Pacific (via Timeline III).
- CUET frequently tests the linkages here: feudalism → Renaissance → voyages → cross-cultural encounters → date-anchored events on the timeline.

## Detailed Notes

### 2.1 Core concepts

- By the ninth century, large parts of Asia had seen great empires — some nomadic, some city-and-trade-based; the Macedonian, Roman, Arab and Mongol empires were distinguished from earlier (Egyptian, Assyrian, Chinese, Mauryan) empires by being continental or transcontinental in scope (NCERT Theme III intro, p. 78).
- In western Europe from the ninth to the seventeenth centuries, features we associate with modernity evolved slowly: experimental science (rather than purely religion-based knowledge), organisation of government with civil services and parliaments, codes of law, and improvements in industrial and agricultural technology (NCERT Theme III intro, p. 78).
- By the fifth century CE the Roman Empire in the west had disintegrated; in western and central Europe the surviving Roman institutions were adapted to the needs of tribal kingdoms, and urban centres in western Europe remained smaller than further east (NCERT Theme III intro, p. 78).
- By the ninth century, small but significant commercial and urban centres such as Aix, London, Rome and Sienna existed; from the ninth to the eleventh centuries there were major rural developments in western Europe (NCERT Theme III intro, pp. 78–79).
- The Church and royal government combined Roman institutions with the customary rules of tribes; the finest example was Charlemagne's empire in western and central Europe at the beginning of the ninth century. After its collapse, urban centres and

trading networks survived attacks by Hungarians, Vikings and others (NCERT Theme III intro, p. 79).

- "Feudalism" was characterised by agricultural production around castles and manor houses where lords held land cultivated by peasants (serfs) who pledged loyalty, goods and services; lesser lords were in turn vassals of greater lords and ultimately of kings (NCERT Theme III intro, p. 79).
- The Catholic Church, centred on the papacy, supported the feudal order and itself held land; in an age of poor medicine and low life expectancy it taught how to live so that the afterlife would be tolerable, and monasteries were created for devotion to God (NCERT Theme III intro, p. 79).
- Churches were part of a scholarly network running from the Muslim states of Spain to Byzantium, giving the petty kings of Europe a sense of the opulence of the eastern Mediterranean and beyond (NCERT Theme III intro, p. 79).
- From the twelfth century, Mediterranean entrepreneurs of Venice and Genoa carried growing trade with Muslim states and the eastern Roman remains; lured by wealth and the wish to free the holy places associated with Christ, European kings reinforced links across the Mediterranean during the Crusades, while trade within Europe grew around fairs and the Baltic and North Sea ports (NCERT Theme III intro, p. 79).
- From the fourteenth century, especially in north Italian towns, the Renaissance saw the wealthy turn from preoccupation with the afterlife to "the wonders of life itself"; sculptors, painters and writers became interested in humanity and discovery, shaped also by Islamic respect for living things and Greek art and ideas transmitted via Byzantine trade (NCERT Theme III intro, p. 80).
- By the end of the fifteenth century this fed an age of voyages: Spaniards and Portuguese pushed down the west African coast around the Cape of Good Hope to India (sought for its spices); Columbus reached the "West Indies" in 1492 trying for a western route; others sought a northern route to India and China via the Arctic (NCERT Theme III intro, p. 80).
- European travellers encountered diverse peoples. The papacy commissioned the North African geographer Hasan al-Wazzan (Leo Africanus) to write the first geography of Africa in the early sixteenth century for Pope Leo X; Jesuits wrote on Japan in the sixteenth century; the Englishman Will Adams became counsellor to the Japanese Shogun Tokugawa Ieyasu in the early seventeenth century (NCERT Theme III intro, pp. 80–81).
- Non-Europeans sometimes assisted Europeans: an Aztec woman later known as Dona Marina befriended, interpreted and negotiated for the Spanish conqueror of Mexico, Cortes (NCERT Theme III intro, p. 81).
- European attitudes ranged from cautious and observant to overbearing and cruel; the Portuguese tried to enforce a trade monopoly in the Indian Ocean after Vasco da Gama reached Calicut (Kozhikode) in 1498. The Catholic Church both studied other

cultures and encouraged attacks on those it considered "un-Christian" (NCERT Theme III intro, p. 81).

- Non-European responses varied: for the Islamic lands, India and China, Europeans remained a curiosity till the end of the seventeenth century; the Japanese rapidly adopted muskets and began large-scale production by the late sixteenth century; in the Americas, Aztec rivals used Europeans against the Aztecs, while European diseases killed over 90 per cent of people in some areas by the end of the sixteenth century (NCERT Theme III intro, p. 81).
- The "long century" 1300–1700 covered by Theme III is best read as four overlapping movements — (a) the late-medieval crisis of feudalism (Black Death 1348, Hundred Years War 1337–1453), (b) the Renaissance from north Italian city-states, (c) the Age of Discovery (Portuguese coastal voyages, Columbus 1492, Vasco da Gama 1498), and (d) the early modern globalisation of contacts in which the Mughal, Ottoman, Ming/Qing and Tokugawa empires interacted with European traders (NCERT Theme III intro + Timeline III, pp. 78–85).
- The Black Death (1348) — bubonic plague — wiped out one-third of Europe's population in three years, causing a labour shortage that loosened serfdom and accelerated the move to a wage economy; it appears in Timeline III as a hinge between the feudal and Renaissance phases (NCERT Timeline III, p. 83).
- The Ottoman capture of Constantinople (1453) ended the Byzantine state, redirected European traders away from the Black Sea route, and pushed Iberian states to seek alternative sea routes to Asia — a chain of cause that ultimately produced Columbus (1492) and Vasco da Gama (1498) (NCERT Timeline III, p. 83).
- Mediterranean entrepreneurs of Venice and Genoa pioneered cross-cultural exchange — borrowing Arabic numerals, double-entry book-keeping, marine insurance and bills of exchange — practices that travelled north as the Renaissance economy expanded; Venice's Doge Palace (p. 80) and Avignon's Palace of the Popes (p. 79) are the two anchor images.
- "Exchange" was the dominant motor of the period: exchange of goods (silver from American mines for Asian textiles and spices), of ideas (Greek and Arabic texts entering Renaissance Europe via Byzantine and Andalusian channels), of people (Jesuits in Japan, African slaves to the Americas) and of micro-organisms (smallpox in the Americas killed over 90% in some regions). This is the Columbian Exchange in NCERT language (NCERT Theme III intro, p. 81).
- Will Adams (English navigator, c. 1564–1620) reached Japan in 1600, became samurai-ranked counsellor of Tokugawa Iyeyasu, and helped negotiate Dutch/English trading rights; he is a counter-example to the stereotype that all early-modern contact was European conquest (NCERT Theme III intro, p. 80).
- Hasan al-Wazzan / Leo Africanus (c. 1494–1554), born in Granada, captured by Christian pirates and gifted to Pope Leo X, was baptised and commissioned to write

Description of Africa — Europe's first systematic geography of the continent (NCERT Theme III intro, p. 80).

- The Aztec interpreter "Dona Marina" (Malintzin/La Malinche) was a Nahuatl-speaking woman gifted to Hernán Cortés in 1519; her Nahuatl-Spanish translation enabled the Spanish conquest of Mexico (1521). She illustrates the active role of non-European intermediaries (NCERT Theme III intro, p. 81).

## 2.2 Definitions to memorise

Term	Definition	Page
Feudalism	Order marked by agricultural production around castles and manor houses, where lords held land cultivated by peasants (serfs) who pledged loyalty, goods and services to them.	79
Serf	A peasant who cultivated the lord's land and pledged loyalty, goods and services to him.	79
Vassal	A lord who in turn pledged his loyalty to a greater lord, ultimately to the king.	79
Manor house	The lord's residence on the estate around which feudal agricultural production was organised.	79
Crusades	Military expeditions through which European kings reinforced Mediterranean links, inspired by trade wealth and by the aim of freeing "holy places" associated with Christ from Muslims.	79
Renaissance	Cultural change from the fourteenth century, especially in north Italian towns, in which the wealthy became less concerned with life after death and more with the wonders of life itself.	80
Leo Africanus (Hasan al-Wazzan)	North African geographer and traveller who, encouraged by the papacy, wrote the first geography of Africa in the early sixteenth century for Pope Leo X.	80
Dona Marina	An Aztec woman who befriended Cortes, the Spanish conqueror of Mexico, and interpreted and negotiated for him.	81
Charlemagne	Carolingian emperor (c. 800 CE) who built the finest example of a Church-and-royal-government empire combining Roman institutions and tribal custom in early-medieval Europe.	79
Vikings	Scandinavian sea-raiders who attacked western Europe after Charlemagne's empire collapsed; urban centres survived their attacks.	79
Hungarians (Magyars)	Mounted nomads from the steppes who attacked central Europe in the post-Carolingian period.	79
Monastery	Religious community devoted to God; created within the medieval Church to teach how to live for a tolerable afterlife.	79
Papacy		79

Term	Definition	Page
	The institution of the Pope; the head of the Catholic Church based in Rome (later Avignon for part of the 14th century).	
Venice and Genoa	Mediterranean entrepreneurial city-states that carried Europe's growing trade with Muslim states and the eastern Roman remains from the 12th century.	79
Cortes	Spanish conqueror of Mexico (1519–21); used Dona Marina as interpreter.	81
Tokugawa Ieyasu	Japanese Shogun (early 17th century) whose counsellor was the Englishman Will Adams.	80
Cape of Good Hope	The southern tip of Africa rounded by Portuguese navigators on the way to India.	80
Calicut (Kozhikode)	Spice port on the Malabar coast of India where Vasco da Gama landed in 1498.	80
West Indies	Name Europeans gave to the Caribbean islands Columbus reached in 1492, mistakenly thinking he had arrived in India.	80
Ottoman Turks	Muslim dynasty that captured Constantinople in 1453 and Egypt in 1517 (Timeline III).	83
Black Death	Bubonic plague that killed about a third of Europe's population from 1348.	83
Hundred Years War	War between England and France (1337–1453).	83
Babur	Founder of Mughal rule in north India; defeated Ibrahim Lodi at the first battle of Panipat in 1526.	84
Akbar	Third Mughal emperor (1556–1605); consolidated Mughal control over north India.	84
British East India Company	English chartered trading company established 1600 to operate in Asia.	84

### 2.3 Diagrams / processes to remember

- Photograph of the Palace of the Popes in Avignon, a fourteenth-century town in south France (p. 79) — visual cue for the papacy and the period after Charlemagne.
- Photograph of the Palace of the Doge, Venice, fifteenth century (p. 80) — visual cue for the role of Mediterranean entrepreneurs (Venice, Genoa) in trade and the Renaissance.
- Timeline III (c. 1300 to 1700) — a five-column chart covering Africa, Europe, Asia, South Asia, Americas and Australia/Pacific Islands.
- **Process — sequence from feudal crisis to global voyage:** (1) Black Death (1348) wipes out a third of Europe's labour force; (2) wage labour rises, serfdom

weakens; (3) Hundred Years War (1337–1453) drains feudal aristocracies; (4) Ottoman capture of Constantinople (1453) blocks Black Sea trade; (5) Iberian states fund Atlantic voyages; (6) Columbus 1492 reaches the Americas; (7) Vasco da Gama 1498 reaches Calicut. Each link is examinable.

- **Process — early modern global encounter (sixteenth century):** Portuguese and Spaniards in Asia and the Americas → silver from Potosí flows to China for porcelain and silk → Jesuits reach Japan (1549) and China → Japanese craftsmen copy musket → Aztec-Inca empires destroyed by disease + alliance with Spanish rivals → Mughal and Ottoman empires tolerate but do not depend on European merchants.

## 2.5 Timeline / Key events

Year / Period	Event	Significance
c. 800 CE	Charlemagne crowned Holy Roman Emperor	Apex of early-medieval Church-and-royal order (NCERT p. 79)
9th–11th c.	Major rural developments in western Europe; feudalism crystallises	Manor system takes shape (NCERT p. 79)
12th c. onwards	Mediterranean trade revives under Venice and Genoa	Linkage with Muslim states (NCERT p. 79)
14th c.	Renaissance begins in north Italian towns	New humanist culture (NCERT p. 80)
1337–1453	Hundred Years War between England and France	Drains feudal aristocracies (NCERT Timeline III, p. 83)
1348	Black Death (bubonic plague)	One-third of Europe's population dies (NCERT p. 83)
1453	Ottomans capture Constantinople	End of Byzantium; trade routes shift (NCERT p. 83)
1492	Columbus reaches the "West Indies"	European contact with Americas begins (NCERT p. 80)
1498	Vasco da Gama reaches Calicut	Sea route to India established (NCERT p. 80)
1517	Ottomans conquer Egypt	Africa column of Timeline III (NCERT p. 83)
1519–21	Cortes conquers Aztec Mexico with help of Dona Marina	First major European conquest in the Americas (NCERT p. 81)
1526	First battle of Panipat — Babur defeats Ibrahim Lodi	Foundation of Mughal rule (NCERT Timeline III, p. 84)
1556–1605	Reign of Akbar	Apex of Mughal consolidation (NCERT p. 84)

Year / Period	Event	Significance
1600	English East India Company chartered	Begin of organised English trade in Asia (NCERT p. 84)
1603	Tokugawa shogunate founded in Japan	Will Adams becomes counsellor (NCERT pp. 80, 84)
1632–53	Taj Mahal built	Mughal architectural apex (NCERT Timeline III, p. 84)
1638–1715	Reign of Louis XIV in France	Absolutist apex of early-modern Europe (NCERT p. 85)
1644	Manchu (Qing) rule begins in China	New East-Asian empire (NCERT p. 85)

## 2.4 Common confusions / NTA trap points

- "Vassal" vs "serf": the serf is a peasant tied to the lord's land; the vassal is a lord who owes loyalty to a greater lord. NTA often swaps these in match-the-following items.
- The Renaissance began in north Italian towns (not in France or Spain) — distractors will often substitute these locations.
- Columbus in 1492 reached islands the Europeans called the "West Indies"; he did not reach mainland India. Vasco da Gama is the one who reached Calicut (Kozhikode) in 1498.
- The Catholic Church both studied other cultures (e.g., commissioning Leo Africanus) and encouraged attacks on "un-Christian" peoples — questions test the dual character, not a single attitude.
- Timeline III mixes continents: students often confuse which event belongs to which column (e.g., Ottoman conquest of Egypt 1517 is under Africa; capture of Constantinople 1453 is under Asia).
- Charlemagne's empire vs. the Holy Roman Empire of the later medieval period — both are called "Roman," but Charlemagne belongs to early-medieval (c. 800 CE) Europe, not the later imperial revival.
- "Renaissance" is not a single date but a movement from the fourteenth century; NTA distractors will date it to 1453 (the Constantinople fall) or 1492 (Columbus).
- East India Company year confusion — the **British** EIC was chartered 1600; the **Dutch** VOC was chartered 1602; the **French** Compagnie des Indes much later (1664). Only the British EIC is mentioned here.
- Will Adams was English, not Portuguese or Spanish; he served the Japanese, not the Chinese, Shogun.
- "Crusades" in this chapter is about Mediterranean trade reinforcement, not just religious war — the economic dimension is what NCERT highlights.

- Dona Marina assisted Cortes (Mexico, Aztec), not Pizarro (Peru, Inca) — common geographic mix-up.

## Practice MCQs

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## PYQ Alignment

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This Theme III opener is a high-yield "linking" chapter in CUET: factual hooks (feudalism, Renaissance, Crusades, voyages, Vasco da Gama 1498, Columbus 1492) and Timeline III dates appear regularly across CUET 2023–25 papers, typically as direct factual recall, statement-based and match-the-following items. Full history PYQ bank: </pyq/history>.

