

FREE SAMPLE SET | IGNOU GUESS PAPER | DECEMBER 2026 TEE

MHI-01 and MHI-101 Ancient and Medieval Societies

What three IGNOU papers asked, three repeat themes solved in full, and plans for the rest

Course: MHI-01 (MAH) and MHI-101 (MAHI), Ancient and Medieval Societies; MHI-101 carries 6 credits (Common Prospectus July 2026)

Programme: MA History (MAH and MAHI)

December 2026 paper: Saturday 2 January 2027, 10 AM to 1 PM, both codes in the same slot (IGNOU tentative date sheet dated 21 September 2026)

Built from: IGNOU papers MHI-01 June 2024, MHI-101 December 2024 and MHI-01 June 2025, read on IGNOU's servers on 29 September 2026

STUDY REFERENCE

WRITE IN YOUR OWN WORDS

NOT AN IGNOU PUBLICATION

One set for two codes: read this first

IGNOU's December 2026 date sheet places MHI-01 and MHI-101 in the same slot. The two courses carry the same title, and the three papers read for this set asked closely related questions. That is why one set serves both codes.

Your own course code still decides your syllabus. Check it on your hall ticket and read the paper IGNOU filed under that exact code. Do not assume the two syllabi are identical.

How IGNOU sets the paper

- Time and marks.** 3 hours for 100 marks.
- Choice.** Answer any five questions in about 500 words each, including at least two from each section.
- Short notes.** Each section ends with a short-notes question: any two notes of about 250 words, at 10 marks each.
- Sections.** Section I (or A) covers early and ancient societies. Section II (or B) covers the medieval world and its transition.

Repeat map: what came back

A tick means the theme was asked as a full question or a note. Only what we could read is counted; the last questions of the June 2025 and December 2024 papers were only partly visible to us.

Theme	MHI-01 Jun 2024	MHI-101 Dec 2024	MHI-01 Jun 2025	Papers
Feudalism: as a mode of production, its emergence, the debate on its decline	Q6	Q6	Q8	3 of 3
Bronze Age cities and the Harappan civilization	Q2, note	Q2	Q2, note	3 of 3
Early human societies: Palaeolithic tools, language, domestication, early agriculture	Q1, note	Q1, note	Q1, 2 notes	3 of 3

Theme	MHI-01 Jun 2024	MHI-101 Dec 2024	MHI-01 Jun 2025	Papers
The Americas: Inka and Maya	Q4 (Inka)	note (Inka)	Q4 (Maya)	3 of 3
Europe from medieval to modern: culture, science, astronomy	Q8	Q9	Q7	3 of 3
Slavery and lower classes in Rome	Q3	Q3	none seen	2 of 3
Indian Ocean trade: 15th century, the cartaz, British and Dutch companies	Q7, note	Q7	none seen	2 of 3
Medieval towns; family and demography in medieval societies	Q9, note	Q8, note	none seen	2 of 3
Nomadic empires and pastoral nomadism	none	none	Q1, Q3	1 of 3
Islamic world (Umayyads); craft production; Zoroastrianism; Babylon	note	Q4	Q6, note	1 each

What the map says. Five themes came back in all three papers.

- Feudalism, Harappan and Bronze Age cities, and the transition to modern Europe are solved in full below.
- Early societies and the Americas get answer plans.

Before your exam, read the December 2025 and June 2026 papers on ignou.ac.in under your own code.

Three repeat themes, solved

1. Explain feudalism as a mode of production, and discuss the debates on its emergence and decline in medieval Europe.

Covers MHI-01 June 2024 Q6, MHI-101 December 2024 Q6 and MHI-01 June 2025 Q8. Take the part your question asks and shorten the rest.

Introduction. Feudalism describes the social and economic order of medieval Western Europe between roughly the ninth and the fourteenth centuries. Historians use the term in two ways. One is a narrow legal-military sense: the bond of lord and vassal through the fief. The other is a wider economic sense: a mode of production based on peasant labour and the lord's control of land.

Feudalism as a mode of production. In the Marxist view, the basic unit was the manor. Peasants, many of them serfs, possessed plots and tools and produced their own subsistence. The lord extracted their surplus through labour services on his demesne, rents in kind or money, and dues such as payments on marriage or inheritance. Because the peasant held the means of production, the surplus was taken not by the market but by the lord's legal and political power: his courts, his rights over the peasant's person, and force. This extra-economic coercion is what distinguishes the feudal mode from slavery on one side and capitalism on the other.

Theories of emergence.

- *Continuity from Rome.* Late Roman estates, bound tenants (coloni) and patronage led gradually into medieval lordship.
- *The Pirenne thesis.* Henri Pirenne argued that the Arab conquests closed the Mediterranean and ruined long-distance trade. Western Europe fell back on an agrarian, land-based economy under the Carolingians.

- *Military explanations.* The need for mounted warriors, including Lynn White's argument about the stirrup and shock combat, pushed rulers to grant land in return for service.
- *Marc Bloch's feudal society.* Invasions by Vikings, Magyars and Saracens in the ninth and tenth centuries broke central authority. Local lords took over protection and justice, and dependence spread.

The debate on decline.

- *Trade and towns.* Paul Sweezy argued that the revival of trade and towns dissolved the self-sufficient manor from outside.
- *Internal contradictions.* Maurice Dobb answered that the crisis came from within: lords' growing demands exhausted peasants, drove flight and resistance, and pushed the system into crisis.
- *Population.* M. M. Postan stressed demographic cycles: growth to the thirteenth century, then famine and the Black Death (1347 to 1351), which made labour scarce and strengthened peasants.
- *Class structure.* Robert Brenner argued that the outcome depended on the balance of class power. Where lords won, as in eastern Europe, serfdom revived; where peasants gained, as in England, commercial agriculture developed.

Conclusion. Feudalism was a system in which surplus was taken by lordship rather than by the market. Its rise is explained through the fall of Rome, invasions and military needs. Its end is best seen as the result of internal crisis, demographic shock and changing class relations together, not one cause.

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2. Describe the main features of the Harappan civilization and compare its cities with those of Mesopotamia.

Covers MHI-01 June 2024 Q2, MHI-101 December 2024 Q2, MHI-01 June 2025 Q2 and the notes on Harappan religion and Bronze Age writing.

Introduction. The Harappan (Indus) civilization flourished in its mature urban phase from about 2600 to 1900 BCE. It spread across present-day Pakistan and north-western India, with major cities at Harappa, Mohenjo-daro, Dholavira, Rakhigarhi and Lothal.

Main features.

- *Planned cities.* Streets ran in roughly regular grids, and many sites had a raised citadel and a lower town. Houses of standard-sized baked bricks opened onto lanes. A covered drainage system ran along the streets.
- *Public structures.* The Great Bath at Mohenjo-daro, large buildings often called granaries (their use is debated), and elaborate water management at Dholavira.
- *Standardisation.* Uniform bricks, weights and seals across a wide area point to a strong system of regulation, though no palace or royal burial clearly shows who ruled.
- *Economy and crafts.* Agriculture and herding, specialised crafts in beads, shell, metal and pottery, and long-distance trade that reached Mesopotamia. Mesopotamian texts refer to a land called Meluhha, generally identified with the Indus region.

- **Writing and religion.** Short inscriptions on seals in a script that remains undeciphered. Religious life is inferred from female figurines, the so-called proto-Shiva seal, fire altars at Kalibangan, and sacred animals and trees. These readings remain interpretations, not certainties.

Comparison with Mesopotamian cities.

Feature	Harappan cities	Mesopotamian cities (such as Ur and Uruk)
Layout	Grid-like planning, citadel and lower town	Growth around temple and palace, more irregular streets
Religious and political centre	No clearly identified temple or palace	Temples and ziggurats at the centre; kingship attested in texts
Building material	Standardised baked bricks	Mostly sun-dried mud brick, baked brick for important buildings
Drainage and sanitation	Street drains and house bathing areas widespread	Less uniform civic drainage
Writing	Short, undeciphered seal texts	Cuneiform on clay tablets, deciphered, with long records

Conclusion. Harappan cities show remarkable planning and uniformity without visible monuments of kingship. Mesopotamian cities show power openly in temples, palaces and written law. The contrast is exactly what examiners ask you to explain.

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3. What cultural transformation changed Europe from medieval to modern?

Covers MHI-101 December 2024 Q9, MHI-01 June 2025 Q7 and MHI-01 June 2024 Q8 on advances in astronomy.

Introduction. Between the fourteenth and the seventeenth centuries, European culture moved from a world view centred on the Church and inherited authority towards one based on human reason, observation and a new idea of the individual. Several linked movements carried the change.

The Renaissance and humanism. Beginning in Italy, humanists such as Petrarch recovered classical Latin and Greek texts and valued human achievement and civic life. Art turned to realism, perspective and the human figure. Patronage by city-states and merchants carried these values across Europe.

Printing. Gutenberg's movable-type press (about 1450) made books cheaper and more numerous. It spread humanist learning, the vernacular Bible and new scientific work, and widened the reading public.

The Reformation. Martin Luther's challenge in 1517 broke the religious unity of Western Christendom. It stressed scripture and individual faith and encouraged literacy. Its political consequences strengthened territorial states.

The Scientific Revolution. Copernicus (1543) placed the sun at the centre of the universe. Kepler described planetary orbits as ellipses. Galileo used the telescope and experiment. Newton's *Principia* (1687) joined heavenly and earthly motion in one set of laws. Knowledge came to rest on observation,

mathematics and experiment rather than on ancient authority. This is the astronomy that the June 2024 paper asked about.

Wider change. Voyages of exploration, growing commerce and the rise of strong monarchies widened Europe's horizon and prepared the ground for the Enlightenment.

Conclusion. No single event made Europe modern. The Renaissance, printing, the Reformation and the Scientific Revolution together changed how Europeans understood God, nature and themselves.

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Answer plans for the other repeat themes

Early human societies (all three papers)

- Upper Palaeolithic blade tools, burins, and bone and antler tools as advances on earlier core and flake tools.
- The role of language in cooperation, planning and passing on culture.
- The domestication of plants and animals in the Neolithic.
- Early agricultural sites such as those of the Fertile Crescent and Mehrgarh.

The Americas (all three papers)

- *Inka*: Andean empire centred on Cuzco, road network, quipu records, labour service.
- *Maya*: city-states such as Tikal and Copán, writing, calendar and astronomy.
- The Classic Maya collapse is explained by drought, warfare, population pressure and environmental strain. Present it as a debate.

Slavery and lower classes in Rome (June 2024, December 2024)

- Slaves from conquest on large estates and in households.
- Revolts such as that of Spartacus.
- Manumission and freedmen.
- The later shift towards bound tenants (*coloni*).

Indian Ocean trade (June 2024, December 2024)

- The fifteenth-century network of Gujarat, Malabar, the Swahili coast, the Red Sea and South-East Asia.
- The Portuguese cartaz, a pass that Asian ships had to buy.
- The entry of the English East India Company (1600) and the Dutch VOC (1602), and how they changed trade.

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Short notes worth preparing

Domestication of plants and animals. It began in the Fertile Crescent around 10,000 BCE with wheat, barley, sheep and goats, and arose independently in other regions. It led to settled villages, surplus and eventually cities.

Zoroastrianism. Religion taught by Zarathustra in ancient Iran: worship of Ahura Mazda, a struggle between good and evil, and moral choice. It was important under the Achaemenid Persians.

The cartaz. A licence the Portuguese required Asian merchant ships to buy in the sixteenth century. Ships without it could be seized, so it was a way of controlling Indian Ocean trade.

The Dark Ages of Greece. The period after the collapse of Mycenaean palaces (about 1100 to 800 BCE): decline of writing and population, followed by revival and the rise of the polis.

The Umayyad dynasty. Caliphs ruling from Damascus (661 to 750 CE) who expanded the Islamic empire from Spain to Central Asia. They were overthrown by the Abbasids amid discontent over privilege and succession.

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Practise these in your own words

These practice prompts are ours, written to match the repeat themes above. They are not IGNOU questions.

1. Compare the Dobb and Sweezy explanations of the decline of feudalism.
2. What does the absence of palaces tell us about power in Harappan cities?
3. How did printing change European culture?
4. Why did the Classic Maya cities decline?
5. How did European companies change Indian Ocean trade after 1600?

Use this set in the last three weeks

- **Week 3:** write the three solved themes from memory in 500 words each.
- **Week 2:** turn the four answer plans into full answers, two from each section.
- **Final week:** learn five notes of 250 words.
- **Last two days:** read the June 2026 paper filed under your own code on ignou.ac.in.

What this free set is, and is not

This set covers the MHI themes that repeated across the three papers above. The complete set for your code, with every repeat theme and note solved, costs ₹49 as a PDF or ₹100 as a printed copy, plus a one-time ₹100 courier charge per printed order. Order on WhatsApp +91 93546 37830 and say whether your code is MHI-01 or MHI-101.

IGNOU does not publish guess papers, and no guess paper can tell you which questions will be set. Use the official study material and IGNOU's own past papers (ignou.ac.in, Student Services, Downloads, Previous Year Question Papers) as your first sources.

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