

Performance Task – Contextualization: Belief Systems Expand and Adapt

Goal of task

Target Concept: I can explain how and why Islam changed as it expanded and adapted in the context of local institutions and cultural beliefs and practices.

For this task you will be evaluated on your ability to:

- Explain how Islamic societies changed over time due to Byzantine and Persian institutions and cultural beliefs and practices.

Task summary

You will be asked to explain why Islam adapts/changes during the Umayyad and Abbasid Caliphates.

Task 1:

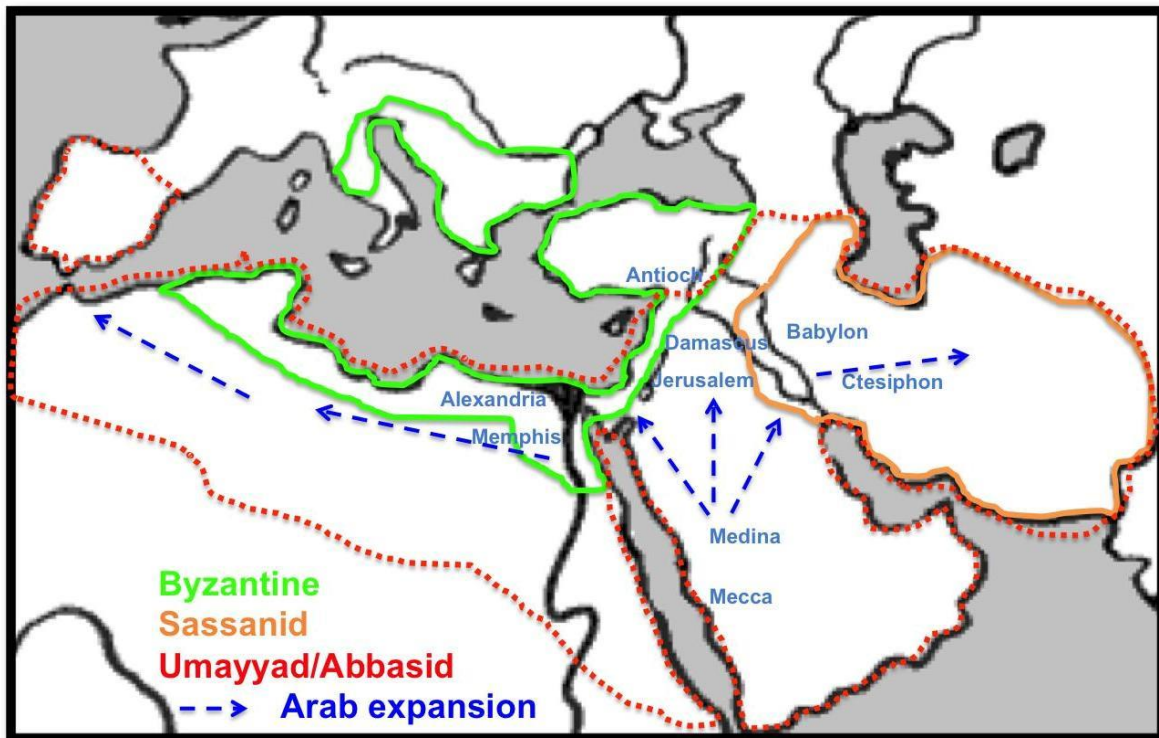
Use the three data sets below to complete the tasks at the bottom.

Data Set 1	Byzantine	Sassanid
Political Characteristics	Leadership centered in emperor who is both head of church and state. (<i>Caesaropapism</i>) Emperor aided by elaborate court bureaucracy consisting of educated clergy.	Persian monarch continues centralized rule from earlier years. (<i>Shahanshah</i> – King of Kings) Regional governors (satraps) appointed by Shah to continue centralized control. Shah aided by court bureaucracy of educated scribes.
Economic Characteristics	The Byzantine state flourished with revenue from luxury trade routes including a western terminus of the Silk Road and the Eastern Mediterranean and Black Seas.	The Sassanid state flourished through luxury trade revenues from routes such as the Silk Routes and the Persian Gulf/Indian Ocean.
Religious Characteristics	The Byzantine state patronizes Eastern Christianity that embraced monasticism and a hierarchical clergy. Disagreements over uses of icons in worship led to religious conflict and persecution.	The Sassanid state established an official faith, Zoroastrianism, with a central deity (Ahura Mazda) and the principle of freewill to choose truth from lie. State subsidized a priesthood (magi) to guide the faithful.
Social Characteristics	Continuing previous Mediterranean patterns from Classical era, empire is urban, multi-ethnic with large peasant class dominated by a landed aristocracy. Patriarchal systems emphasize the seclusion of women from public sphere.	Continuation of Classical Persian patterns of a multi-ethnic state with patriarchal structures limiting female rights of property and divorce and marriage contracts.
Local Cultural Traditions	Eastern hub of former united Roman empire left a legacy in arts, engineering, sciences, and philosophy.	First multi-ethnic, geographically diverse empire inherited Persian cultural legacy as well as Hellenistic culture due to the conquest by Alexander the Great.

Data Set 2	Muhammad and the First Four Caliphs (622-661 CE)	Umayyid and Abbasid
<p>Political Characteristics</p>	<p>Arab society evolved from clan/communal rule based on consensus of the community. The successor to Muhammad (<i>caliph</i>), chosen among respected members of the community, continues the communal nature of rule versus an inherited rule as seen in bordering societies.</p>	<p>Islamic society divides into sectarian divisions (Sunni and Shia) based on disputes around Caliphal succession. After the first four caliphs, political authority in the Islamic world evolves into a centralized hereditary caliphate of Arabic lineage with professional bureaucracy headed by a vizier, who under the Abbasid, could be of any ethnicity but was usually dominated by Persians.</p>
<p>Economic Characteristics</p>	<p>Merchants focused Arab economies on caravan trade across the deserts.</p>	<p>Merchant caravans continue as empire grows to control major overland routes. Additionally Indian Ocean maritime trade grows to be dominated by Islamic mariners even beyond the political borders of the caliphate.</p>
<p>Religious Characteristics</p>	<p>Muslims believe in the spiritual equality of all believers (the <i>umma</i>) – and in a strict monotheism.</p> <p>Islam is based on the primacy of the Quran as source of law.</p> <p>Two central tenets of Islam, part of the Five Pillars of Islam, are the principle of charity or support of the unfortunate in the community (Zakat), as well as pilgrimage to Mecca (Hajj).</p>	<p>Sectarian divisions over political authority (Sunni and Shia) widen into sometime divergent practices and beliefs.</p> <p>As the caliphate evolves into a centralized political office, Muslim religious scholars (<i>alim</i> – <i>singular</i>, <i>ulema</i> - <i>plural</i>) assume local judicial roles over civil and criminal matters. These scholars form an important layer to Quranic legal interpretation and the codification of the practices of Muhammad (<i>hadith</i>) that preserve and define the beliefs and traditions of the divisions within the faith.</p> <p>Other important religious groups include religious devotees who seek individualistic spiritual union with Allah called Sufi. They generally seek a different path from legalistic or sectarian interpretations of the faith. They develop unique practices focused around charismatic leader or <i>shaykh</i>. These traditions are passed down from generation to generation. Sufis organize themselves into brotherhoods akin to monasticism in other spiritual traditions. Local adherents also undertake pilgrimages to Sufi shrines.</p> <p>As Arab conquests turned to Arab rule, a gradual conversion of local populations begins from the 9th century forward, though majority of population in many areas remain faiths of prior states.</p>

	Muhammad and the First Four Caliphs (622-661 CE)	Umayyid and Abbasid
Social Characteristics	As Islam spread with Arab conquests, non-Arab converts were accorded subordinate or secondary status (<i>mawla</i>) akin to a patron-client relationship (association with a clan) whereas the Arab acts as patron. Islamic teachings accorded women the right to inheritance, divorce, and property.	Non-Arab Muslims (<i>mawali</i>) granted full legal status after fall of Umayyad in 661 CE. Gradually as Islamic culture becomes focused in major urban centers, women are secluded from public life and restricted from political power.
Local Cultural Traditions	The harsh environment combined with nomadic conflict over unclear territorial lines led to the development of polygamy, clan feuds, and a focus on poetic/oral tradition.	Greek and Persian learning is integrated into Arabic culture and expanded upon. Poetic tradition remains important, but written Arabic becomes key common article of faith between all Muslims as the Quran is in Arabic. The Persian language maintains its importance in the arts.

Data Set 3



Use the information in the data sets to develop three claim statements that support the thesis below and then list three specific pieces of data to support each claim.

While the fundamental beliefs of the Islamic faith remained the same from 600 to 1450, other elements of the faith changed as it spread beyond the Arab homeland. These changes reflected the traditions of the of the empires it conquered.

Check your understanding

Look back at your table and map before and after you read the selections.

- Are any characteristics missing from your map that you discovered in your reading selection?
- What prior characteristics of the Byzantine and Sassanid societies seem to survive into the Islamic era?
- Why would these characteristics survive conquest? What could make them attractive to a new power?