NAME: DATE: CLASS:

DBQ FOCUS: The Spread of Islamic Civilization

Document-Based Question Format

Directions: The following question is based on the accompanying Documents (The documents have been edited for the purpose of this exercise.) This question is designed to test your ability to work with and understand historical documents.

Write a response that:

- Has a relevant **thesis** and **supports that thesis with evidence** from the documents.
- Cites evidence from included source perspectives.
- Analyzes the documents by grouping them in as many appropriate ways as possible. Does not simply summarize the documents individually.
- Takes into account both the sources of the documents and the author's points of view.

Historical Context: *From its beginnings in Arabia to its extensive empire encompassing the Middle East, parts of Asia, North Africa, and parts of Europe, the spread of Islam in the late 600's and 700's has drawn much study. The Spread of Islam began when prophet Muhammad (570 - 632) started preaching the revelation he claimed to have received from God at the age of 40. During his lifetime the Muslim ummah was established in Arabia by way of their conversion or allegiance to Islam. Muslim dynasties were soon established and subsequent empires such as those of the Abbasids, Fatimids, Almoravids, Seljukids, Ajuuraan, Adal, and Warsangali in Somalia, Mughals in India and Safavids in Persia and Ottomans were among the largest and most powerful in the world. The people of the Islamic world created numerous sophisticated centers of culture and science with far-reaching mercantile networks, travelers, scientists, hunters, mathematicians, doctors and philosophers, all of whom contributed to the Golden Age of Islam.*

Question

How did Islamic civilization spread to encompass such an extensive empire?

Document 1

Source: In this excerpt, Mohammad gives choices to the leader of a Christian Arab tribe

Believe or else pay tribute [money]… obey the Lord and His Apostle [Mohammad], and he will defend you… But if you displease them… I will fight against you and take captive your little ones and slay the elder...

Student Analysis

What alternatives does Mohammad offer to the leader of the Christian Arab tribe?

Document 2

Source: This quotation from the Quran offers specific directions.

Ye shall do battle with them, or they shall profess Islam… whosoever shall obey God and His Apostle, He shall bring him into the gardens of [Paradise]; but whosoever shall turn back, He will punish him...

Student Analysis

What does Mohammad offer to Muslims who follow him?

Document 3

Source: This excerpt from *History of the Arabs*, by Philip K. Hitti, explains the Muslim view on equality. (London: MacMillan & Co. Ltd., 1946).

We have witnessed a people [Muslims] to each and every one of whom death is preferable to life, and humility to prominence, and to none of whom this world has the least attraction. Their leader is like one of them: the low cannot be distinguished from the high, nor the master from the slave. And when the prayer time comes, all wash their hands and feet and humbly pray.

Student Analysis

How does this writer describe the Muslim people?

Document 4

Source: This description of the Battle of Tours in 732, from *Fifteen Descisive Battles of the World* by Sir Edward Crecy (E.P. Dutton & Co., Inc.), provides a perspective on the Muslim fighting style.

The Moslems struck their enemies and laid waste to the country and took captives without number… everything gave way to their scimitars [swords]… All the nations of the Franks trembled as that terrible army… attacked Tours… and the fury and cruelty of the Moslems towards the inhabitants of the city were like the fury and cruelty of raging tigers.

Student Analysis

How does this writer describe the methods and conquests of the Muslim army at the Battle of Tours?

Document 5

Source: This excerpt suggests that there are options to conversion depending on the religion of the people facing conversion. (From J.J. Saunders, "The Caliph Omar: Arab Imperialist," in *History Today*, March 1961, pp. 180-181.)

Koranic revelation commanded them to "Fight in the cause of God against those who fight you, but do not be the aggressors." The early Muslims thus fought their heathen enemies… war against unbelievers was sanctioned by divine revelation and the example of the Prophet.

But many Arabs were Jews or Christians: What was to be done with them? Mohammad respected the older monotheistic faiths… he called them "People of the Book"… they were not forced into Islam but were allowed to retain their ancestral religion on payment of tribute.

Student Analysis

How were Jews and Christians to be treated?

Document 6

Source: In this excerpt from *The Spirit of Islam*, by a Muslim writer, Syed Ameer Ali (London: Chatto and Windus, 1964), the expansion of Islam is defended and that of Christianity criticized.

Islam never interfered with the dogmas of any moral faith, never persecuted… Islam "grasped the sword" in self defense; Christianity grasped it in order to stifle freedom of thought and liberty of belief. Wherever Christianity prevailed, no other religion could be followed without molestation. The Moslems, on the other hand, required from others a simple guarantee of peace, tribute in return for protection, of perfect equality — on condition of the acceptance of Islam...

Student Analysis

How does this document present the expansion of Islam?

Document 7

Source: Philip K. Hitti, in *History of the Arabs* (MacMillian, 1946), offers another explanation for conquest.

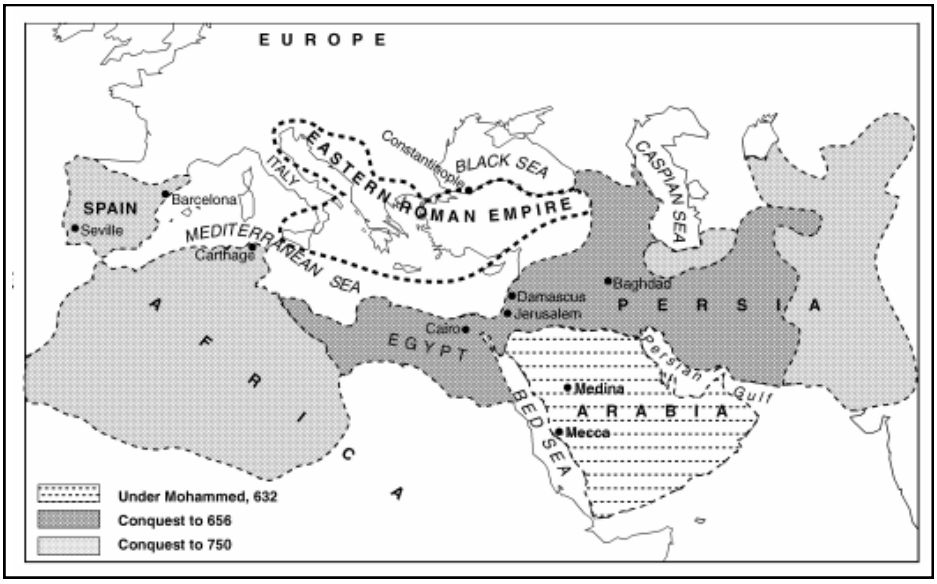
The passion to go to heaven in the next life may have been operative with some, but the desire for the comforts and luxuries of the civilized regions of the Fertile Crescent was just as strong in the case of many… The campaigns seen to have started as raids to provide new outlets for the warring tribes, the objective in most cases being booty [riches] and not the gaining of a permanent foothold… The movement acquired momentum as the warriors passed from victory to victory… the creation of the Arab empire followed inevitably.

Student Analysis

How is the expansion of Islam explained in this passage?

Document 8

Source: The Growth of the Muslim Empire (632-750 CE)

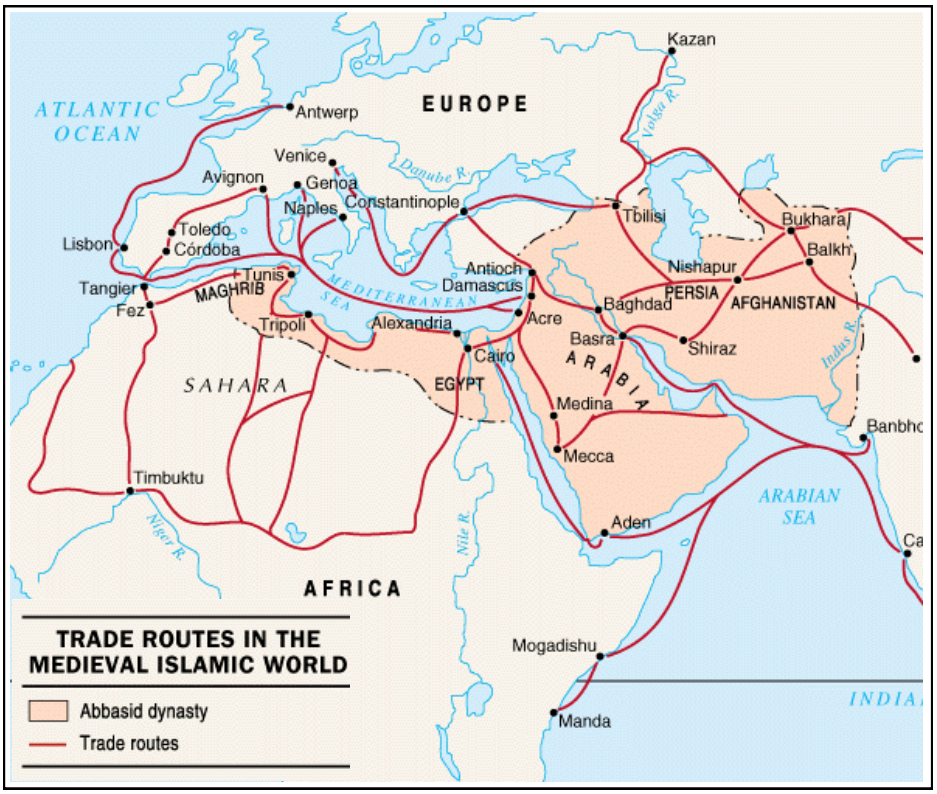


Student Analysis

What does the map reveal about the extensive area in the Muslim empire by 750 CE.

Document 9

Source: Map compiled from various sources



Student Analysis

How was trade instrumental in the expansion of the Muslim empire?

How do medieval trade routes compare to the boundaries of the modern Islamic world?