I. Early China, 2000 - 221 B.C.E.

A. Geography and Resources

1. China is divided into two major geographical regions: the steppe, desert, and high plateau west and northwest; and the eastern zone, more suitable for settled agriculture.

2. The eastern zone is subdivided into two areas; north and south. The northern area includes the Yellow River Valley and has a dry, cold climate; the southern area includes the Yangzi Valley, has plentiful rainfall, and is relatively warm.

3. China’s natural resources include timber, stone, and metals. The loess soil and cool climate of the north are suitable for growing millet; rice may be cultivated in the warmer and rainier south.

4. Agriculture in this region required the coordinated effort of large numbers of people.

B. The Shang Period, 1750 - 1045 B.C.E.

1. Pre-Shang China was a land of Neolithic communities. Pigs, chickens, and millet were domesticated; silk textiles were developed; and bronze metallurgy was begun (ca. 2000 B.C.E.)

2. There are no contemporary documents to confirm the existence of the legendary Xia dynasty. Later documents concerning the Xia may be referring to one of the late Neolithic societies of the Yellow River Valley.

3. The Chinese writing system (Chinese characters) developed during the Shang period. The Chinese writing system of today is directly related to
the writing of the Shang dynasty. The chief written remains are oracle bones used in divination.

4. Shang religion centered on a supreme god, Di, who could not be approached directly but could be reached indirectly through the ruler’s ancestors. This made the ruler a link between heaven and earth, and provided a rationale for authoritarian rule.

5. The Shang elite was a warrior aristocracy who enjoyed hunting and warfare. They fought with bronze weapons and rode on horse-drawn chariots. Kings ruled directly over the core area of their kingdom and exercised indirect rule over peripheral areas.

C. The Zhou Period, 1045 - 221 B.C.E.

1. The Zhou territory was a dependent state of the Shang. They defeated the Shang in the eleventh century B.C.E. and adopted many elements of Shang culture. The two founders of the Zhou were Wen, who led the resistance movement against the Shang, and his son, Wu, who attacked the Shang capital and assumed the throne as first ruler of the dynasty. The Zhou invoked their own deity, Tian (“Heaven”) and introduce the concept of the “Mandate of Heaven” in order to justify their rule.

2. The Zhou dynasty is subdivided into two periods: The Western Zhou and the Eastern Zhou. In the early years of the new dynasty, King Wu created a land distribution system similar to the feudal system of Europe’s Middle Ages.
3. Early Zhou rulers constructed a new capital city, and other urban centers followed. Built in a grid pattern aligned with the north polar star, the design followed their ancient belief in *feng shui* to maintain harmony. Religion played a large role in both public and private life. Women were expected to live a life of subservience.

4. The Eastern Zhou period was characterized by a decline in the strength of the central government as regional elites began to rule their territories and independent states, often fighting with each other until there was a gradual consolidation into a smaller number of larger, more powerful kingdoms. Warfare during this period contrasted with the earlier noble endeavors led by the elite. The later Zhou saw the development of larger armies made up of conscripted farmers, as well as larger number of casualties.

5. Technological advances in warfare were adopted by the Zhou from people of the northern steppes. They learned how to fight on horseback and to replace bronze with iron and steel. Advances in government came from a new class of educated men who became bureaucrats and who recorded data for the rulers administered the government’s business, and offered advice to rulers.

D. Confucianism, Daoism, and Chinese Society

1. Confucianism and Daoism had their roots in the chaos of the late Zhou period. Confucianism was found by Confucius and assumes that human nature is essentially good; has a hierarchical view of the universe, society,
and the family; and is concerned with establishing the moral foundations of government. Confucius was not influential in his own time, but Confucianism later became the dominant political philosophy of imperial China.

2. Daoism is said to have been founded by Laozi. Daoism assumes that the universe is in constant flux, that there are no absolute moral standards, and that people should take the world as they find it. Daoism developed into a complex system of popular beliefs and magic, and many Chinese have drawn on both traditions, though Daoism might appear at odds with Confucianism.

3. In society, the Eastern Zhou period saw the development of the three-generation family and the development of the concept of private property, including privately owned land. Women were more firmly subordinated to the patriarchal hierarchy; their subordinate position was justified by the concepts of yin and yang.

II. Nubia, 3100 B.C.E. - 350 C.E.

A. Early Cultures and Egyptian Domination, 2300 - 1100 B.C.E.

1. Nubia is located in the Nile Valley from Aswan south to Khartoum and forms a link between tropical Africa and the Mediterranean world. Nubia's natural resources include gold, semiprecious stones, and copper.

2. The development of civilization in Nubia was spurred by the need for irrigated agriculture and by its trading relationship with Egypt. Nubian
culture and Egyptian culture developed through a process of mutual influence and borrowing.

3. Early Nubia carried out trade with Old Kingdom Egypt, and the northern part of Nubia was occupied by Egypt during the Middle Kingdom period.

4. In the southern part of Nubia, the Kingdom of Kush developed by 1750 B.C.E. Kush was noted for its metalworking and construction.

5. Egypt invaded Kush during the New Kingdom period. The results of Egyptian occupation included the brutal exploitation of Nubian laborers and the imposition of Egyptian culture on the Nubian people.

B. The Kingdom of Meroë, 800 B.C.E. - 350 C.E.

1. A Nubian kingdom arose in the eighth century B.C.E., and for a time the Nubians ruled Egypt as the Twenty-Fifth Dynasty (712-660 B.C.E.)

2. The Nubian kingdom had its capital at Napata from 660 B.C.E. to the fourth century. The Napata period is characterized by continued Egyptian cultural influence, including the use of Egyptian hieroglyphs and pyramids.

3. In the fourth century B.C.E., the kingdom moved its capital to Meroë, which was better located for both agriculture and trade. Egyptian cultural influence waned during the Meroitic era.

4. The ruling dynasty of Meroë practiced a matrilineal family system, and queens often were influential.

5. The city of Meroë dominated trade routes, used reservoirs to catch rainfall, and became an important center for iron smelting.
6. Meroë decline due to a combination of factors: a shift in trade routes, the rise of the kingdom of Aksum, and the depredations of camel-riding nomads.

III. First Civilizations of the Americas: The Olmec and Chavin, 1200 - 250 B.C.E.

A. The Mesoamerican Olmec, 1200 - 400 B.C.E.

1. The Olmec, the most important Mesoamerican preclassic civilization, were at their strongest between 1200 and 400 B.C.E.

2. Major centers of Olmec civilization were located along the coast of Mexico.

3. The use of raised fields provided the agricultural surpluses the Olmec needed to sustain urban centers.

4. The center of early Olmec civilization was located at San Lorenzo. San Lorenzo was surpassed by La Venta around 900 B.C.E., which, gave way to Tres Zapotes around 600 B.C.E.

5. Large earthen mounds dominated Olmec urban centers.

6. It is likely that Olmec political structures were built around some form of Kingship.

7. Olmec power rested on the control of certain commodities and the popularity of their religious practices.

8. Given their limited technology, Olmec architecture was very impressive.

9. The Olmec played a role in the early development of writing and astronomy.

B. Early South American Civilization: Chavin, 900 - 250 B.C.E.
1. Chavín was the first major urban civilization in South America.

2. Chavín was politically and economically dominant between 900 and 250 B.C.E.

3. A combination of military strength and the appeal of its religious system explains Chavín’s influence and control over its territory.

4. Chavín possessed all the essential characteristics of later Andean civilizations, including a clan-based system of labor.

5. The evidence suggests that increased warfare led to the fall of Chavín around 200 B.C.E.

IV. Conclusion

A. Differences Among Civilizations

1. The flood-prone rivers and lack of dependable rainfall in the north China plain led to authoritarian central governments to organize large labor forces needed to dig and maintain irrigation channels and build dikes.

2. A strong state was needed in Nubia for protection from the desert nomads and from Egyptian rulers who coveted Nubian resources.

3. The fertile lands and adequate rainfall of continental Europe led to a more fragmented organization for the Celtic peoples than for peoples in other regions.

4. The Olmec of Mesoamerica and the Chavín of South America lived in ecological zones that required them to share their resources and products through trade networks. Both cultures were led by ruling elites who gathered wealth and organized labor for building projects.
B. Differences Between Hemispheres

1. The Eastern Hemisphere contained a larger number of plant and animal species that could be domesticated than did the Western Hemisphere.

2. The north-south axis of the Eastern Hemisphere contained similar climatic zones, making it easier for the spread of domesticated plants and animals. The Western Hemisphere’s north-south axis contained more variations in climate, making it difficult for species to spread.