

	Time Frame	Ecology	Agriculture	Population	Government	Religion	Writing
Mesopotamia	Beginning about 4000 BCE	Alluvial soil, river valley, destructive seasonal flooding	Irrigation; winter growing season, protective dikes and ditches	Cities as centers of population	City states, priest kings, periodically united into an empire; responsibility for public works, food storage	Polytheistic; gods as forces of nature; arbitrary rule of gods; limited afterlife	Cuneiform (syllabary), developed from commercial records
Egypt	Beginning about 3500 BCE	Alluvial soil, surrounded by desert, gentle seasonal flooding, little rain	Irrigation to supplement already favorable circumstances	Evenly spread with no major concentrations	Upper and lower Egypt united early; central rule by god kings (pharaohs); responsibility for public works, food storage	Polytheistic; gods as forces of nature; pharaoh as god; moral standards; afterlife like this one; judgment after death	Hieroglyphic (logograms with some phonetic signs)
Indus Valley	Beginning about 2500 BCE	Alluvial soil, river valley, seasonal flooding, monsoons, two crops a year	Irrigation where needed; grazing lands	Two large cities, many small ones; uniform city layout	Standardization and storage facilities indicate strong central government; expansionism indicates military force	Polytheistic?	Writing not deciphered
China	Beginning about 2500 BCE	Alluvial soil, unpredictable flooding	Extensive controls of river (dikes, canals, etc.); grazing and hunting	Expansion into frontier towns	Divine kings; responsibility for public works, food storage	Ancestor worship; divination; shamans	Logograms, developed from oracle bones