African Origins

Movement of man from the hearth in eastern Africa, which occurred over thousands of years, was accompanied by an ever increasing population in all of the river valley and coastal regions once settled. Population growth in Mesopotamia, the Nile Valley, etc. was the basis for additional migration. After settling and prospering in these early hearths, migration took place along trade routes to the east, west, and north.
Physical landscapes of the early Neolithic Era (New Stone Age) inhabited by man were primarily river valleys where climate, water for agriculture, and transportation opportunities contributed to the development of civilization.
Humans used and adapted to their environment over thousands of years and in many different ways. Likewise, what was used for shelter early in the Paleolithic Era may have been dictated by availability (e.g. rock overhang, cave, etc.). With subsequent generations, knowledge of different materials used for shelter, and gradual movement to the middle and high latitudes, the variety/complexity of shelters multiplied. No small set of images can capture the variety. What can be understood from many images is climate (wet-dry, hot-cold, etc.).
Çatalhöyük is located southeast of the present-day city of Konya, Turkey. It was a settlement location for almost 2,000 years (7500 BC-6700 BC). The former settlement site is today an eroded mound which would have risen about 66 feet above the plain at the time of the latest Neolithic occupation. The prehistoric mound settlements were abandoned before the Bronze Age. It was composed entirely of domestic buildings with no obvious public buildings or ceremonial spaces. The population is estimated at between 5,000 and 10,000 people at its peak. The inhabitants lived in mud-brick houses that were crammed together with no footpaths or streets. The maze of connected buildings with common walls was entered by holes in the roofs and ladders from the ground level. Those same roof access holes provided ventilation from summer heat and chimneys for simple cooking hearths.
Weaving and basketry are crafts that cannot be directly recorded because their end products are organic and therefore perishable. The practice of these crafts is indirectly confirmed from our knowledge of flora (reeds, flax) and fauna (sheep and goats) of this period and from imprints left on the base of clay vases and recovered bone needles. The main weaving fibers were flax and wool. The use of flax came earlier than that of wool and dominated during the Neolithic Period. Coarse textiles were used in the manufacture of vases with their imprints on the base and sides surviving the ravages of time. Basketry was a related craft but less time-consuming than weaving. An earlier form of weaving was that associated with construction of roofs for shelter, baskets for storing goods, straw mats for resting, and thick mats used as partitions in houses. Imprints from straw mats have survived on the bases of coarse ware, which were assumed to have been placed on straw mats or rough textiles to dry.

Source: http://www.hnmuseum.com/hnmuseum/eng/whatson/exhibition/kg_4.jsp

The development of the plow can be traced back to Neolithic times with the domestication of plants and use of draft animals. The plow was a very simple tool, little more than a suitably forked branch with a sharp point. Applying metal to the plow and use of draft animals allowed deeper plowing and over larger fields.

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The Neolithic Revolution, sometimes called the Agricultural Revolution, not only gave man the security of regular food production but also the freedom to settle in villages. This changeover from a migratory life of hunting, gathering, and herding took place not once, but repeatedly over time and at different locations.

The release of people from food production to other endeavors led to artisans better prepared for building trades, tool making, commerce, and to the development of village governance, defense, and religion. Most evidence of social developments comes from artifacts and study of permanent villages/cities. One such city is Çatalhöyük (Turkey).

Some believe that this city (estimates of 6,000 to 10,000 people) was little more than a collection of domestic buildings without streets/paths to separate buildings. Archeological digs have yet to discover public buildings, temples, streets, central source of water, or indicators of a defense (i.e., walls, defensive towers, etc). The opposing opinion is that Çatalhöyük was indeed planned and “shows” many indicators of an advanced society.

Another city of the Neolithic Age that has been saved/reconstructed with numerous artifacts is Aleppo, Syria. Planning is evident with the outer walls, defensive towers, limited entry gates, and construction of the Citadel higher than the surrounding city. The central location of this Citadel within Aleppo is also characteristic of planning during the Medieval period.
Knowledge of food consumption during the Neolithic Age comes from archeological discoveries of animal bones, pottery art, cave art, village garbage disposal sites, and written records. Because of the Neolithic’s long time span of over 5,000 years and the immense area occupied, a complete list of foods consumed would not be possible. In addition, the warming climate after the last ice age, further development of domesticated plants and animals, as well as the evolving adaptability of the human system, all contribute to the complexity.
Source: Display, Dolní Věstonice Museum
http://www.donsmaps.com/mammothcamp.html

Source: http://donsmaps.com/clancave.html

Source: http://www.beloit.edu/logan_online/exhibitions/virtual_exhibitions/before_history/europe/lemoustier.php
Group Burial:

Source: http://www.fotocommunity.de/pc/pc/display/23925903, Neanderthal Museum, Germany