



2. Creating a Stable Food Supply

During the Paleolithic Age, people obtained food by hunting animals and gathering plants. They did not have a stable, or dependable, food supply. Wild plants and animals grew scarce when people stayed in one area for too long. Hunting was dangerous, and hunters were often injured or killed.

Gradually, people found ways to lessen their dependence on hunting and gathering. Instead of gathering wild plants, people discovered that they could plant seeds and harvest crops. Over time, farmers learned which seeds produced the most crops in the areas where they lived.

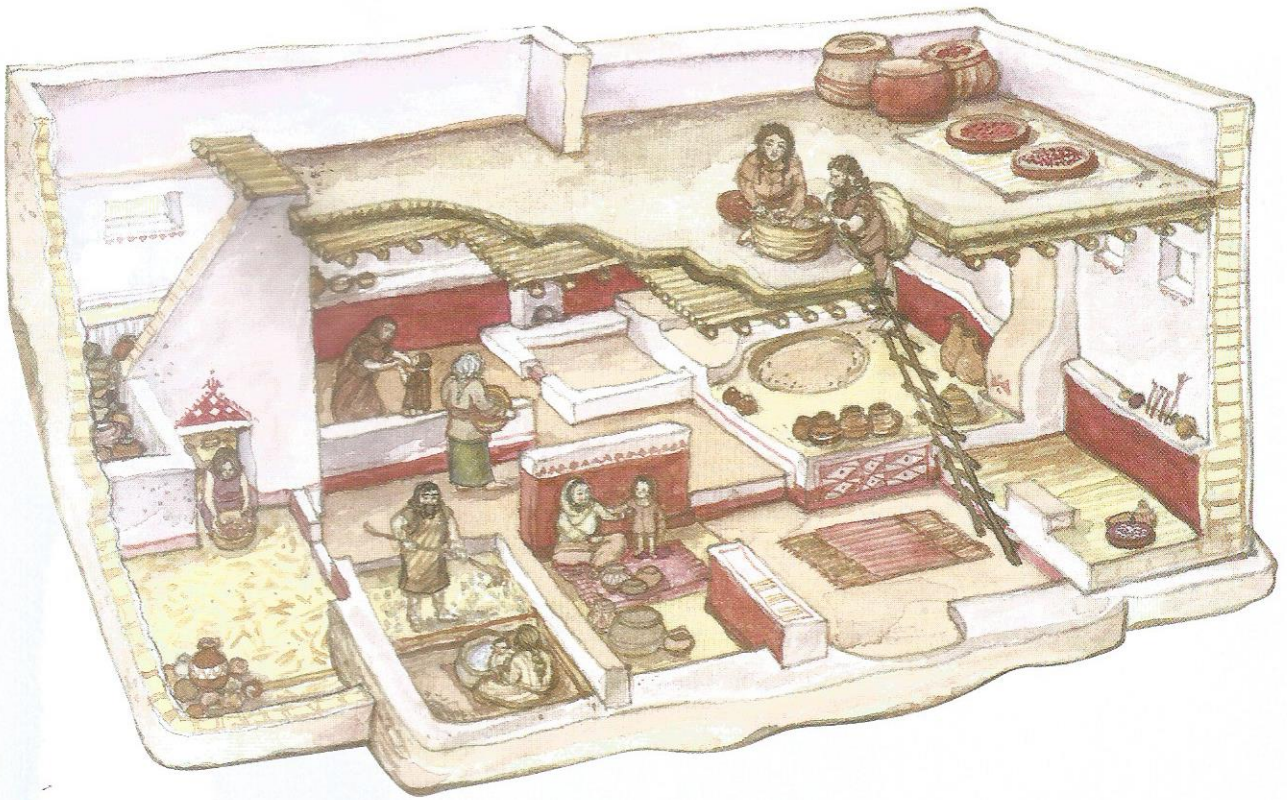
Early farmers also learned how to **domesticate** animals, or to raise and use them for people's needs. They raised sheep, goats, and cattle for the meat. Goats and cattle also provided milk. Mules helped carry heavy loads and pull plows.

These two developments—the growing of crops and the domestication of animals—are called **agriculture**. The Neolithic Age began with the invention of agriculture. For the first time, people had some control over their food supply. Let's explore why this change was one of the most important advances in all of history.

In this African cave painting, herdsman work with cattle. These domesticated animals were raised for their milk and meat.

domesticate to train a wild animal to be useful to humans

agriculture the business of farming; growing crops and raising animals



Neolithic houses made of packed mud helped people stay warm in winter and cool in summer. Notice the number of different rooms within one family's home.

nomad one who moves from place to place with no permanent home

3. Making Permanent Shelters

The first great change agriculture brought about was the use of permanent shelters. During the Paleolithic Age, people had lived in caves or rough, tent-like structures. These were **temporary** shelters because hunter-gatherers were **nomads** who had to move often in order to follow the wild animal herds or find new plants to eat. As people settled down to farm during the Neolithic Age, they built shelters that were more permanent.

In many areas, people used mud bricks, packed together, to build houses that were round or **rectangular** in shape. Sometimes, people added stones and tree branches to the mud to strengthen the walls and roof. These houses had openings high in the walls. Historians believe that people may have climbed ladders to reach the openings and enter the house.

Inside were several rooms that had places to store food built right into the floor. Pits for cooking were also dug into the floor and lined with clay. People may have filled the pits with water, dropping in hot stones to make the water boil for cooking.

The development of permanent shelters was important in several ways. Houses gave people protection from harsh weather and wild animals and made life more comfortable. People could cook food in new ways. The long-lasting shelters enabled people to settle together in larger communities.

4. Establishing Communities

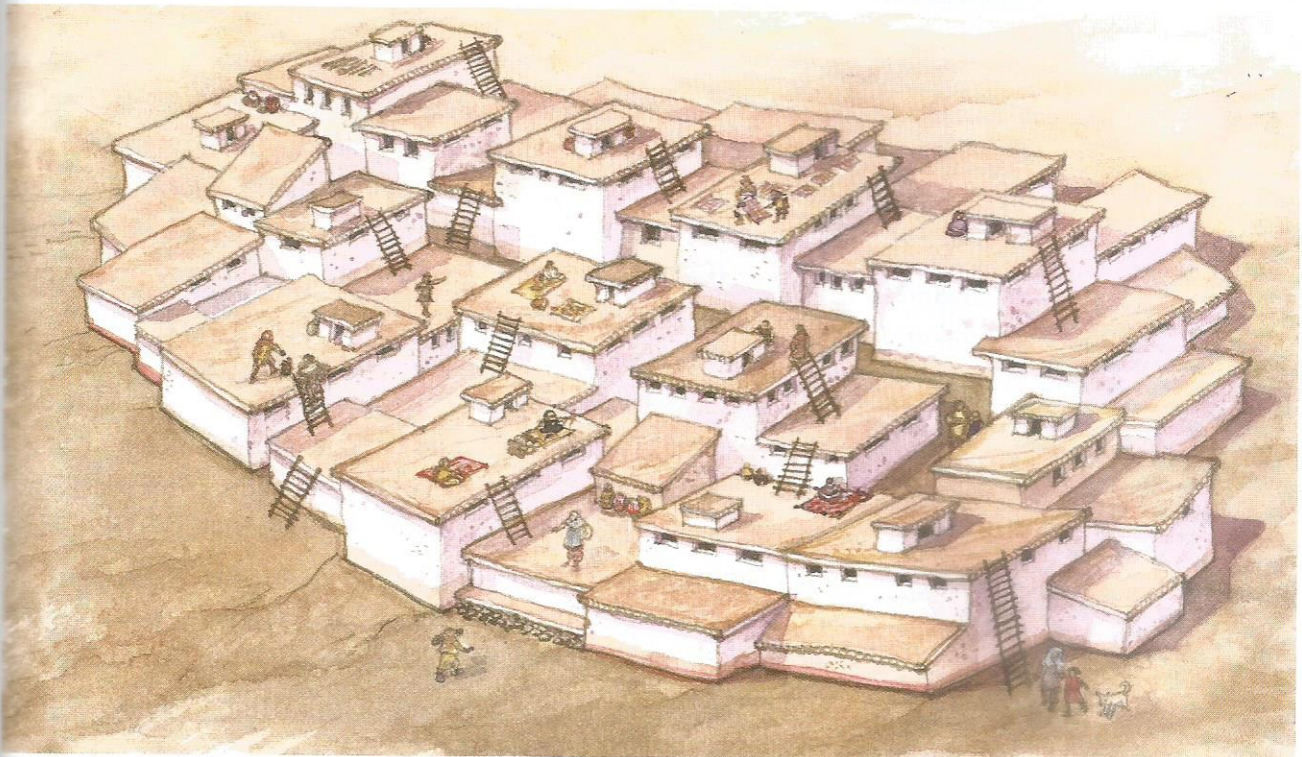
The ability to raise food by farming allowed people to settle in permanent shelters. These structures, in turn, enabled people to form larger communities. In Paleolithic times, small bands of perhaps 20 to 60 people wandered from place to place in search of food. As people began growing food, they settled down near their farms. As a result, towns and villages grew up, like those at Jericho (in present-day Israel) and Catal Hoyuk (Turkey).

Living in communities made it possible for people to organize themselves more **efficiently**. They could divide up the work of producing food and other things they needed. While some people grew crops, others built houses and made tools.

Village dwellers also learned to cooperate to do a task more quickly. For example, toolmakers could share the work of making stone axes and knife blades. By working together, they could make more tools in the same amount of time.

With many of their basic needs now met, people had more time and energy for other activities. They could invent new ways of making their lives more comfortable and much safer. Larger communities could defend themselves more easily against their enemies. For example, strong stone walls protected the Neolithic town of Jericho. All of these changes in farming villages led to growing populations.

Neolithic villages were the first real communities. People were able to cooperate as they worked and defended their homes.





People in Neolithic communities had the time and the tools to create works of art, like the pottery piece the man is creating here. It may have been used to carry water from the rivers to the community settlements nearby.

5. Developing New Jobs

Having a stable food supply allowed people to develop new kinds of jobs. In Paleolithic times, people's main job was finding enough food to survive. With farms providing steadier supplies of food, Neolithic people could develop more specialized skills.

A good example is the town of Catal Hoyuk, which dates back to about 6000 B.C.E. Historians believe that the townspeople of Catal Hoyuk worked in a variety of jobs. Besides farmers, there were weavers, basket makers, toolmakers, and traders.

Focusing on one job at a time gave people the opportunity to improve the ways they worked. In Catal Hoyuk, farmers learned how to grow more than 14 kinds of food plants. Clothing makers developed a way to spin and weave. They wove natural fibers such as wool and linen into comfortable cloth. In some regions, people mined flint so that stoneworkers could create sharper tools.

Neolithic people didn't merely want to survive. They wanted to make themselves, and their surroundings, more beautiful. They decorated their pottery and baskets with geometric shapes. Stoneworkers learned to polish stones to make shiny jewelry and mirrors. House builders added special rooms to honor the gods and goddesses they believed in.

One effect of the development of different jobs was to inspire workers to improve their skills. This specialization led to newer and better ways of doing things. And different jobs added much greater variety to community life.

6. Beginning to Trade

Another **major** change introduced in Neolithic times was the growth of **trade**. Paleolithic hunter-gatherers rarely traded with other groups. They were mostly concerned with the animals, plants, and other **resources** they found nearby. As people settled in towns and villages, trade became a more common activity.

Usually, people trade to get resources they do not have in their own area. As Neolithic people became more skilled in their crafts, they wanted materials that would improve the strength and beauty of the things they made. Getting those resources became the job of traders.

Traders often traveled hundreds of miles in search of these materials. They crossed mountains on foot, rode donkeys across deserts, and sailed the Mediterranean Sea on ships.

What kinds of things were traders looking for? Popular items included flint and obsidian. Obsidian is a black glass found at volcanic mountains. Craftspeople used it to make knife blades, arrowheads, and mirrors. People also traded for “beauty products” like shell ornaments and a red ore called *hematite*. Women rubbed hematite on their lips and cheeks to make them redder.

The growth of trade allowed people to make use of more resources. It also brought them into contact with people from distant places. These contacts helped spread ideas and knowledge throughout the ancient world.

trade the business of buying and selling or exchanging items

resource something that can be used to fulfill a need



This hand ax is made from obsidian. Neolithic traders in the Mediterranean region prized this resource. It was found mostly in present-day Turkey.

Lesson Summary

In this lesson, you learned how the development of farming changed people's lives between the Paleolithic Age and the Neolithic Age.

A Stable Food Supply During the Paleolithic Age, people lived as nomads, obtaining their food by hunting animals and gathering plants. Gradually, people discovered they could grow crops and domesticate animals. These two developments are called agriculture. Agriculture marked the beginning of the Neolithic Age.

Shelters and Communities As people began to farm, they built permanent shelters and formed communities. Towns and villages grew up near farms and in fertile areas.

Jobs and Trade Living in communities allowed people to improve how they lived and worked. They created new jobs and traded for the resources they needed.