

THE LONG HUMAN JOURNEY UNTIL SETTLING DOWN

Text prepared by Erdal Yavuz

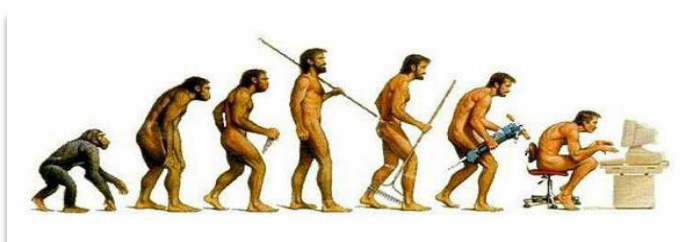
Out of Africa

The biological and cultural evolution of humankind took place against a complex environment of constant climatic change. The first signs of glacial cooling occurred about 35 million years ago. There was a major drop in world temperatures between 14 and 11 million years ago, and another about 3.2 million years ago, when glaciers first formed in northern latitudes. It was during another glacial period, about 2.5 million years ago that, in Africa “human-like” beings **able** to use tools began to evolve (that is why they are called *homo habilis* (able man).

More developed *Homo erectus* (upright man) fossils are found in East Africa and date to around 2 million years ago. *Homo erectus* new to use fire, and used more diverse and sophisticated tools than its predecessors.

During the evolutionary adventure of the “human” serious climatic oscillations took place. Glacial conditions were especially intense about 75,000 years ago, when the archaic Neanderthal people were living in Europe. After a milder interval about 40,000 years ago, the cold intensified again reaching a peak about 18,000 years ago. The cold climate began to diminish about 15,000 years ago, reached a steady condition since 7000 B.C.

Most scientists agree that the “modern human” *homo sapiens* (wise man) began to exist about 200,000 years ago also in Africa. The best-known early *Homo sapiens* populations are the so-called *Neanderthals*, named after the Neanderthal Cave in Germany, where the first Neanderthal fossil was found 1856. Neanderthals became symbol of the “early man” in literature particularly cartoons (Remember famous Flintstones, and the main character Fred). But they were replaced in their homeland by more modern humans between 40,000 and 25,000 years ago.



Evolution of human being!

The use of stone tools seems to have progressed very slowly but beginning around 50,000 “technology” starts to change at much greater speed. They bury their dead, make clothing from animal skins, develop sophisticated hunting techniques and decorate their houses! (cave paintings)

Tools such as fish hooks, buttons and needles made of bone begin to show signs of variation among different population of humans.



30,000 years old cave painting of lions. Chauvet Cave, France

The cultural side

Observing the particularities that make human being different from animals the following aspects seems to be obvious:

Human being equipped with hands and a developed brain is more able than other animals in handling the changing conditions.

Human infant, different than animals, needs a longer period for maturity, and is in physical and psychological dependence to the adults. Consequent to this vital dependence, all activities for survival are not simply motivated by natural needs and can not do without familial or communal mechanisms and institutions.

All human knowledge and skills are acquired by a long process of recollection, observation and experiment. Every generation is inheritor of a tradition (social, cultural, scientific etc.) and needs it for survival and reproduction.

Consequently a “social group” is elemental for the existence of individual materially as well as culturally for the acquisition and transmission of experience, knowledge and norms.

Survival of the individual depends upon the survival of the group. Only as members of a community can human beings use their capacities effectively and meet their physical and social needs.

Learning and production systems, traditions, religious beliefs, and daily social communication all transmit culture and allow societies to develop complex and continuing adaptations to aid their survival.

As a result culture is a guide to human behavior created through generations of human experience. While biological evolution has protected animals from environmental changes, only human beings survive by their adaptive and innovative capacity.

Throughout the long long prehistory, human culture became more elaborate, as a means of adaptation to environmental, technological, and societal changes.

Periods of evolution

Philosophers, historians and scientists have tried to divide prehistory into meaningful periods in terms of technological or organizational changes.

One of the most long-lasting subdivisions of the prehistoric past is a “three age” system: the Stone Age, the Bronze Age, and the Iron Age.

These three ages are subdivided further. The Stone Age, for example, is conventionally divided into three periods: the **Paleolithic**, or Old Stone Age (Greek: from *palaios*, old and *lithos*, stone), which applies to societies who used chipped-stone technology; the **Mesolithic** (Middle Stone Age), which is a transitional period; and the **Neolithic** (New Stone Age) when polished stone tools and objects are used, and agriculture begin.

Prehistoric societies are also classified on the basis of political and social development: like *pre-state* or *primitive* or *hunter-gatherer* evolving to *state* or *sedentary* societies

Hunting and gathering

From emergence till the “Neolithic” period human beings lived by hunting animals and gathering eatable plants. That is why such groups are called “hunter-gatherer” in social science terminology.

Depending on the season of plant foods and the movements of animals, human groups were also moving after their food. In such small, continuously moving communities, there was little opportunity for technological as well as social change.

Life was communal and knowledge and skills were equally diffused. There were no sharp social distinctions and the only obedience was towards custom and traditions, transmitted by the legends and myths of the group. In such a structure the rules are simple, clear and the conformity to the norms is closely watched by all group members.

Because of their mobile way of life to follow animal herds or plant seasons due to the limits of local sources, these groups had to limit their size to increase mobility. Consequently they could support only a low child-to-adult ratio.

Recent anthropological studies on contemporary hunter-gatherer groups have shown that most common group sizes are more or less 200 members.

A fundamental difference between hunter gatherers and agricultural societies is that the latter needs manpower for production so agricultural populations tend to increase. (We may even observe this in contemporary societies. Those living in big cities are obliged to move, leave their homes each day to their works (hunting) and obtain the needs from markets (gathering). Inevitably they have to limit the number of children of the family. On the other hand in rural areas children are desired as they are the necessary no-cost elements of agricultural production).

The “Neolithic Revolution”

After the last ice age a global warming began about 15,000 years ago.

As glaciers melted river and sea levels rapidly rose*, hunter-gatherers were faced with the problem of adapting to the changes in the flora and animals. For example most of the large animals like mammoths became extinct, as a result of this rapid climate change.

* Might this be the origin of the “flood” stories common in most cultures?

For a rich collection of flood stories look:

<http://home.earthlink.net/~misaak/floods.htm>

Human groups adapted to the challenges by developing and refining the methods of hunting and look for alternative sources.

Some of these societies, especially those living in areas with rich and diverse food resources like fish and other local animals.

Groups began to live in their places constantly and reached a higher degree of social complexity, with some signs of social ranking. Domestication of animals and plants also took place during this period.

Domestication: Approximate dates and locations

Dog	15000 BC	multiple locations
Goat	10000 BC	Asia & Middle East
Sheep	8000 BC	Asia & Middle East
Pig	8000 BC	China
Cow	8000 BC	India & Middle East
Donkey	4000 BC	Egypt
Chicken	3500 BC	Southeast Asia
Camel	2500 BC	Central Asia & Arabia
Horse	2000 BC	Ukraine

In the Near East, the denser human settlements was confined to major river valleys like Tigris, Nile or places like Anatolia where open steppe, woodland, and water sources meet.

Living permanently in one place, (becoming “sedentary”) means exploiting a relatively small amount of land very intensively, rather than exploiting a large amount of land extensively, as hunter-gatherers did.

The earliest agricultural sites in the world have been found in the Near East: in the Nile Valley, northern Syria, and the Jordan River valley and in Anatolia.

Around 10,000 to 12,000 years ago, agriculture began to emerge in these places inevitably needing a sedentary way of life, in permanent residences. For the first time, it was possible for humans to invest for the long term and construct the world’s earliest towns. Çatal Höyük and Hacilar in Anatolia are the most spectacular examples.

The Neolithic site of Çatal Höyük was first discovered in the late 1950s and excavated by James Mellaart between 1961 and 1965. Situated at fifty kilometers southeast of Konya the site rapidly became famous internationally due to the large size and dense occupation of the settlement as well as the spectacular wall paintings and other art that was uncovered inside the houses.

Nine thousand years ago the towns’ more than thousand inhabitants would have been herding sheep or goats; hunting wild cattle, horse, and deer; produce wheat, lentils, and other cereals; or collecting wild plant foods. Some would have been bringing valuable raw materials to the site such as obsidian from volcanic peaks to the northeast.

In size and complexity Çatal Höyük is considered as the biggest and most developed Neolithic town yet founded.

For more information with the archeological history and photographs visit:

<http://www.catalhoyuk.com/>

The terms “Neolithic Revolution” is used for the beginning of agriculture and domestication of animals, and “Urban Revolution” is used for the beginning of cities, writing, and literate civilization in Mesopotamia and Egypt.

With a certain retard about 5000 B.C. similar developments are observed in the Yellow River Basin in China and Indus River basin in India.

All these developments required a new mode of social organization, emergence and centralization of a “state” authority and specializations in the economy. Hierarchies of wealth, status and power began to characterize these new societies.



An early example of “product differentiation”

New ways, new frontiers

Approximately at the same period when agriculture emerged out of hunting and gathering, a parallel specialization appeared: societies particularly living by herding of domesticated or partially domesticated animals. The necessity to move the herds continually in search of fresh pastures makes this a semi-nomadic way of life. On the other hand, for many groups around the world this mode of life became stable over long periods of time and reached until our days.

Pastoralism tended to develop often in semi-arid regions like Central Asia. Wherever agriculture and pastoralism existed near one another, a trade usually formed between farmers who had grain, metal and fabricated objects to exchange with the hides, wool, meat, and milk products of pastoral nomads.

These societies often served as intermediaries for the trade among regions which was not negligible since the earliest times.

During the next 5000 years new societies with central states continued to emerge not only in the Near East, but also in south Asia, Southeast Asia, and China. They also flourished in Central America and the Andean region of South America.

States emerged because they were necessary for the organizing production, irrigation systems and fulfill other functions, to assure a certain social order and social peace.

The Neolithic revolution is also remarkable for the development of trade that linked hundreds of societies with one another. Trade was inevitable due to the specializations forced by natural resources and ecological conditions.

Such interregional trade relations can be traced back as early as 6000 B.C. in the Near East and Anatolia where agricultural goods were exchanged by stone, metals and timber. During the next millennium long-distance trade even expanded over the boundaries of the Near East, linking societies all the way from the India, Iran, Mesopotamia, Anatolia, and the Nile Valley.

You may consider this as a “*globalization*” of the “known” world of the time.



Harvest in Ancient Egypt



Harvest in contemporary Egypt

CERTAIN SOURCES USED IN THIS TEXT:

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