**Chapter 8**

*Chapter Summary*

The common thread running through this chapter has been post-Pleistocene adaptation. Wherever we have looked in Europe, Asia, North and South America, Australia, and Africa, we have seen the same trends: intensification of food collection, increasing economic and social complexity, and a marked jump in regional, cultural diversity. After about 12,000 B.P., human beings were faced with fundamental changes in the Pleistocene environments to which they had become adapted. Land covered in ice became exposed, temperatures rose, and some areas became drier, others wetter. Land connections were breached, and coastal configurations rapidly changed. Animals on which some humans subsisted became extinct, and new, different animals took their place. Plants became available that were useful for food, in the form of nuts, seeds, fruits, leaves, or roots. People were faced with many options in the rapidly changing post- Pleistocene world. Some broadened the subsistence quest to include a wide variety of plant and animal resources. Others intensified the subsistence quest, focusing on a single resource or very few particularly productive resources. Other human groups became increasingly sedentary as they adapted to rich Holocene environments. As a result of the diversity of the post-Pleistocene resource base, cultural diversity increased exponentially, with myriad cultures proliferating, each thriving in its own territory. Some settlements became more permanent, and populations grew. In a number of cases, the food quest was intensified further still as groups attempted to increase the productivity of the resources on which they depended.