The seven original culture hearths

1) The Nile River Valley
2) The Indus River Valley
3) The Wei-Huang Valley
4) The Ganges River Valley
5) Mesopotamia
6) Mesoamerica
7) West Africa

Characteristics of hearth areas include:

- labor specialization
- government
- metallurgy & other technologies
- long-distance trade connections
- urban culture
- writing, astronomy, mathematics

Culture hearths had certain common geographic features that were helpful for the beginning of early agriculture like: a mild climate, fertile lands, and near a major river. The people discovered ways to make use of these good conditions.

Cultural Diffusion — spread of elements of culture from the point of origin over an area

The term cultural hearth to describe centers of innovation and invention from which key cultural traits moved to influence surrounding regions. We can trace the domestication of plants & animals to a small number of areas in the world. Early cultural hearths formed in areas of surplus in which agriculture freed some people to pursue occupations other than farming.

Modern cultural hearths include cities such as London, NY and Tokyo.
Cultural hearths of major religions:

Middle East – Judaism, Christianity, Islam

Indus / Ganges Rivers – Hinduism, Buddhism

In terms of religion for example, the area around Mecca is considered the culture hearth for the Islamic religion and the area from which Muslims initially traveled to convert people to Islam.