

The Mechanics of Production and of Diet



ARCH0770 Food and Drink in Classical Antiquity
<http://proteus.brown.edu/foodanddrink2013/home>

The paradox of the ancient countryside



The paradox of the ancient countryside

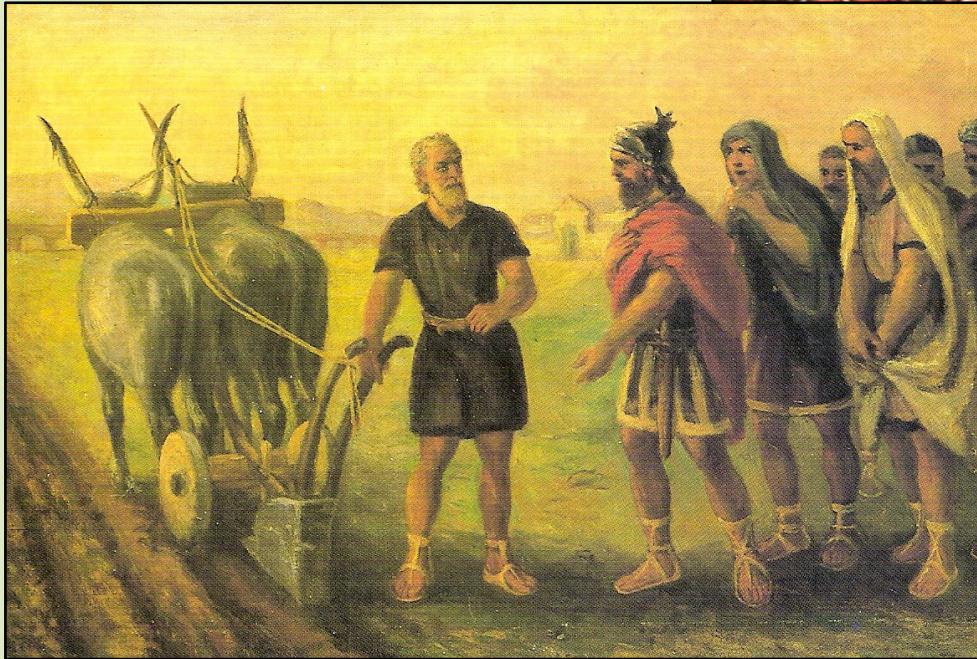


silent **but essential....**



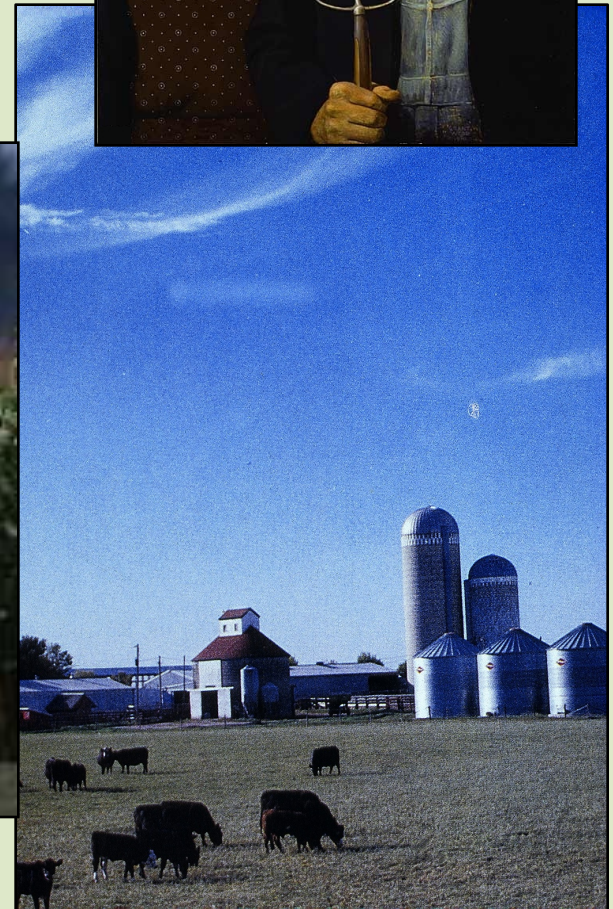
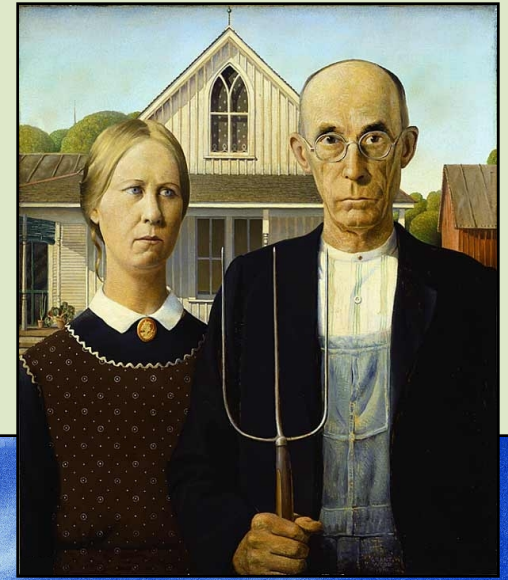
The ideological *authority* of the countryside

Cincinnatus
(saves Rome,
makes chili)



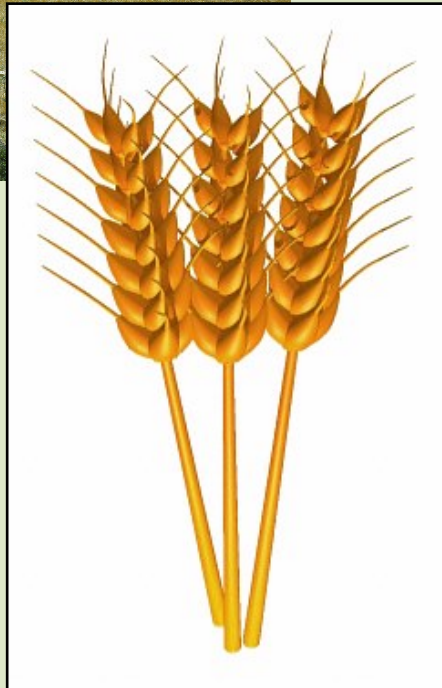
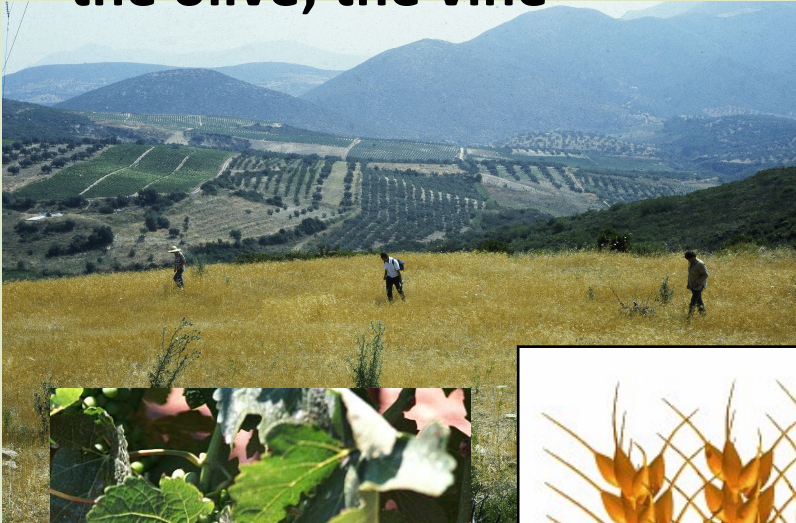
The ideological authority of the countryside

The *Heartbeat* of America



The Mediterranean Triad

Cereals (wheat/barley);
the olive; the vine



Legumes/pulses



Animals

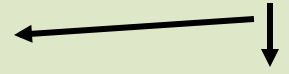


Animal husbandry/ Pastoralism

*primary vs.
secondary products*



ovicaprids



Animals



Animal husbandry

agro-pastoral symbiosis
vs. transhumance



Life and life cycle of the farmer



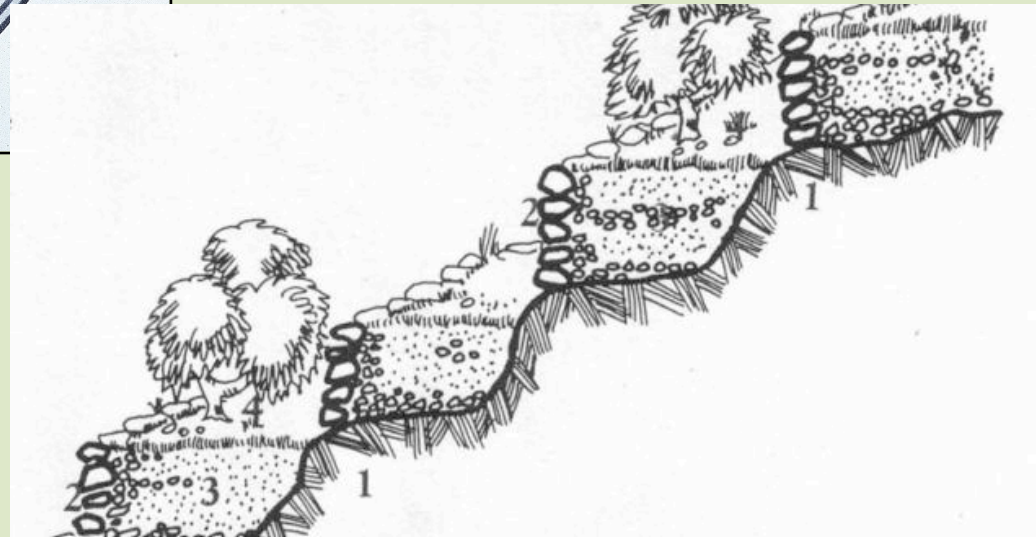
ponos =
hard
work



Life and life cycle of the farmer



ponos =
hard
work



Who is the farmer?



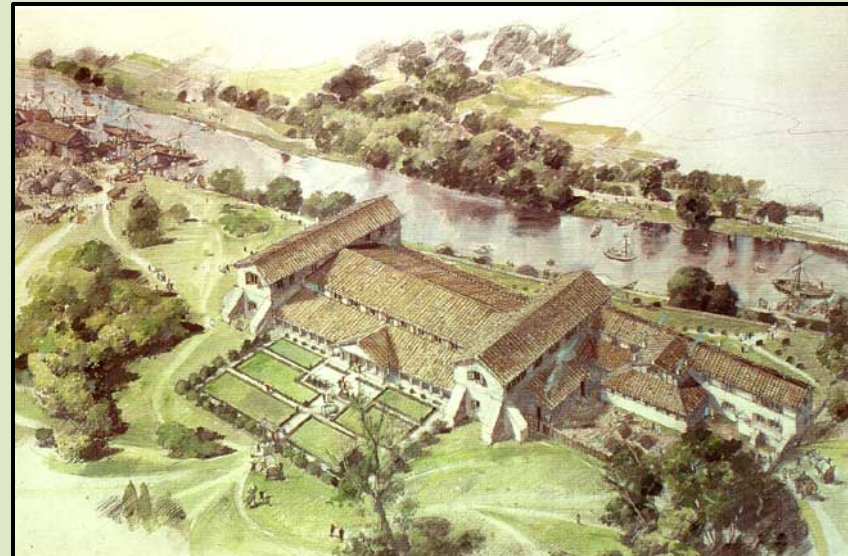
Strategies of farming

Depends on size of holding and
size of family/labor unit
= a spectrum

Subsistence level (peasants)
small surpluses; close to edge;
risk averse

VS.
Large landholders; wealthy/elite
more flexible;
more 'aggressive'; more ability
to roll the dice

VS.
Somewhere in the middle

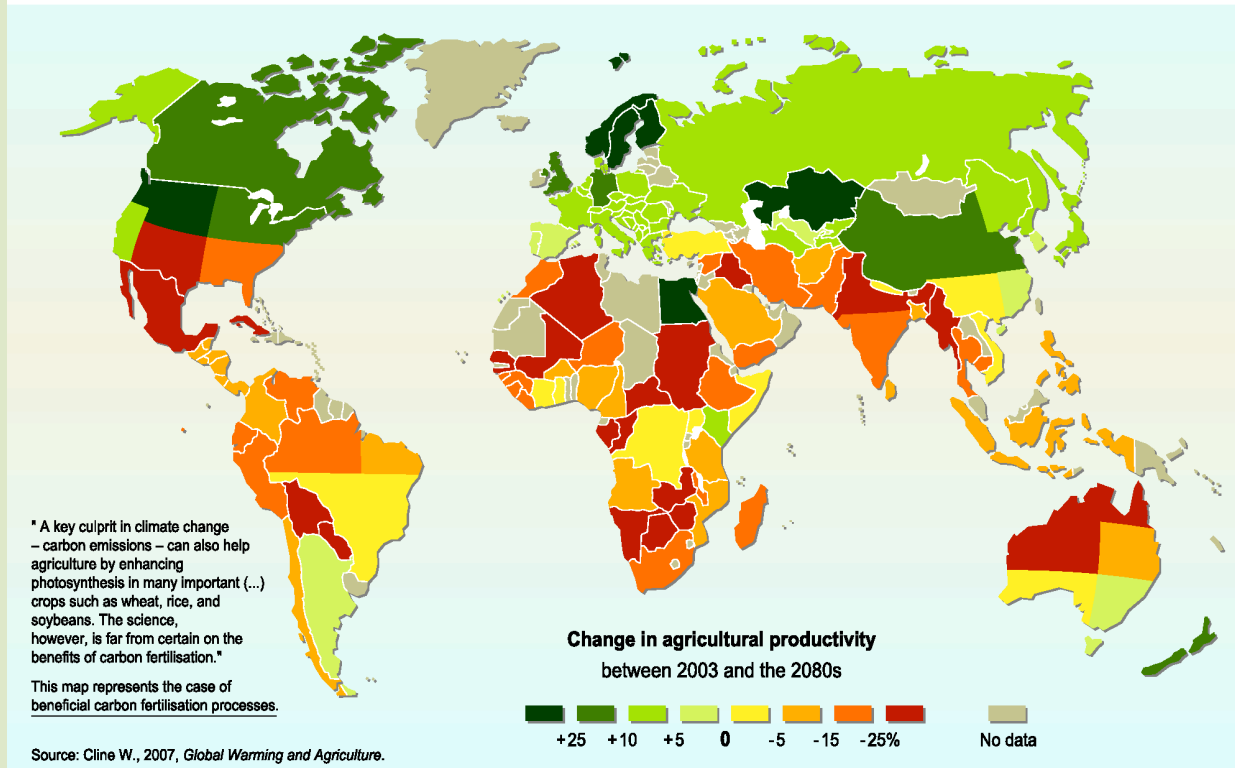


How easy/secure was Mediterranean farming?

- Hard work (*ponos*)
- Mediterranean climate
dry summers/wet winters
- Variable, dissected topography
- Inter-annual variability in precipitation



Projected impact of climate change on agricultural yields



Crop 'yields'

Different crops need different water supply: e.g., barley tougher than wheat



Coping Mechanisms

storage



Modern?
2 years wheat
4 years olive oil

Coping Mechanisms

storage



‘Do as I tell you, and the ears will sweep the ground in their ripeness, if the Olympian himself grants that all shall end well; and you can knock the spider-webs from your bins, and, as I hope, be happy as you draw on all that substance that’s stored up. You will have plenty to make it till the next gray spring; you need not gaze longingly at others. It’s the other man who will need you... (Hesiod, *Works and Days*, 473-78)

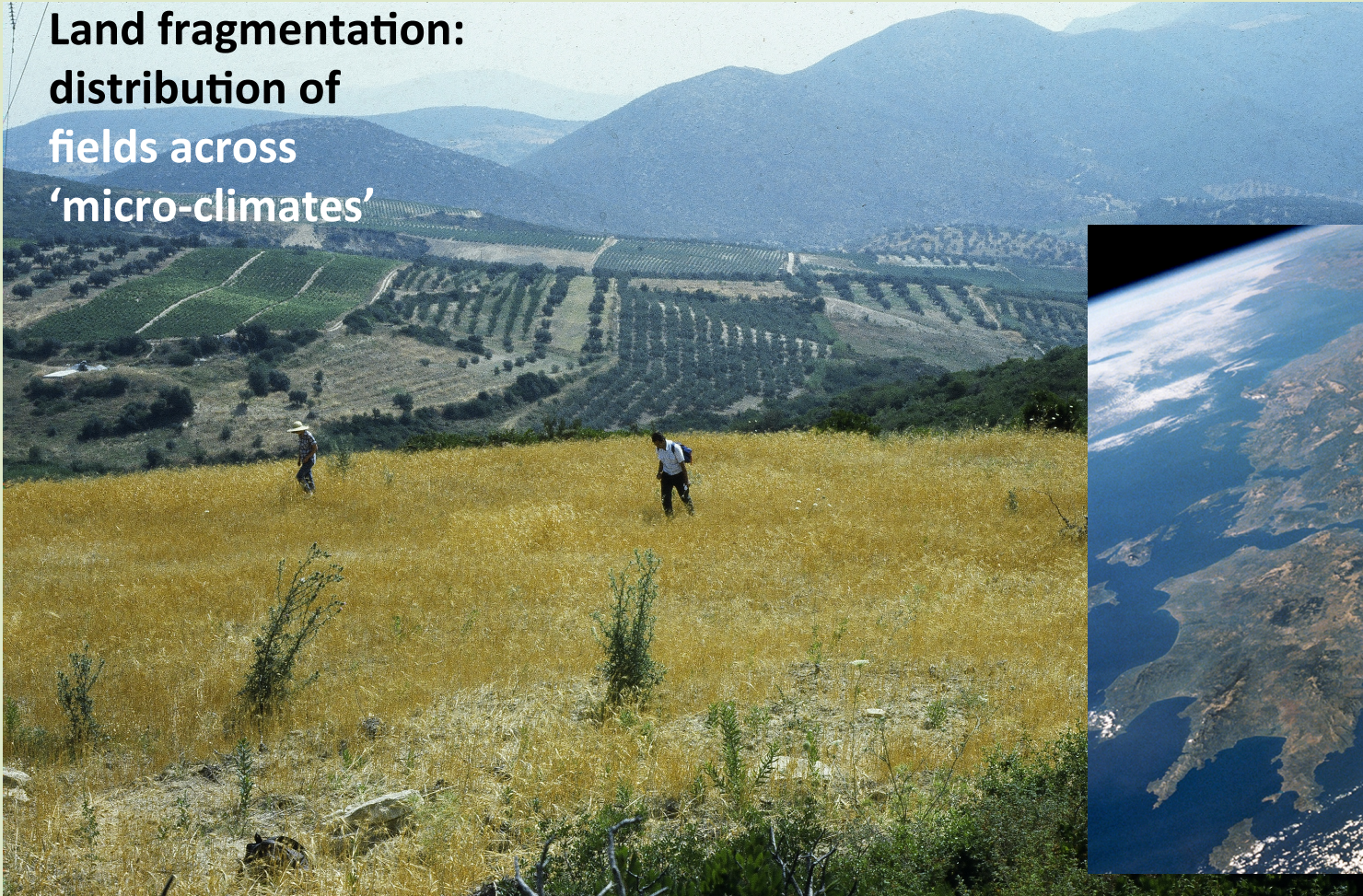
Mix of crops

Avoidance of
Specialization

Coping Mechanisms

Crop diversification and
land fragmentation

Land fragmentation:
distribution of
fields across
'micro-climates'



Coping Mechanisms: safety net

Trade/Exchange: labor, goods, slaves, bodies (The sell/barter for survival tactic)

Make friends; develop 'neighbors' (The Little House on the Prairie tactic)

Find a 'patron' to take care of you (The Godfather tactic)

Get rid of useless mouths: The infanticide tactic

Tough decisions...

'Invite your friend to dinner, have nothing to do with your enemy. Invite that man particularly who lives close to you. If anything, which ought not to happen, happens in your neighborhood, neighbors come as they are to help; relatives dress first. A bad neighbor's as great pain as a good one's a blessing. One lucky enough to draw a good neighbor draws a great prize...Take good measure from your neighbor, then pay him back fairly with the same measure, or better yet, if you can manage it; so, when you need him some other time, you will find him steadfast.' (Hesiod, *Works and Days*, 342-351)

