Twitter Thread by Rizoma Field School



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I've been ruminating (ha, new cow owner here) on this topic of annuals versus perennials today. Why DID humans move to annuals? Let's examine some

> annuals vs. perennials, the underground war in the alt ag scene https://t.co/YMrC8rBEPJ
>
> — Jason Snyder (@cognazor) January 17, 2021

Team perennial like Mark Shepard and The Land Institute argue it was basically just a bad choice to move to annuals as tilling degrades soil and the land base civilizations need to thrive.

@csmaje on the other hand says it seems implausible that so many civilizations would choose to rely on grains just because they're...making a stupid choice? There must be something else at play. He goes deep into plant characteristics and yields.

My go to author on these topics, Morris Berman, argues it's really the distinction between immediate return economies (hunter gatherers) and delayed return economies (which require storage) that explains this shift. "Quantity precipitates a shift in...

But why they made this shift is still unclear. Classic chicken and the egg...

Berman argues it was population presure and lack of ability to escape ecological limits through mobility that lead to sedentism, and the search for more calories per land area.

Berman: "under stressful env. conditions...a certain aggressive subgroup comes forward to take power, and this pushes the rest of the group into a prisoner's dilemma situation: get on the bandwagon or get left behind."

There are a lot of implications to this. How our form of agriculture either builds or destroys nature (soil) is also what it does to our societies. What we do to nature we do to ourselves.

What that means for us moving forward isn't abundantly clear. We've grown into a highly hierarchical complex species and there's no easy return. I like the idea of pulling from different ways of doing ag, guided by the goal to regenerate ecosystems.

Maybe if we can get to a point where we are living amongst forest gardens teeming with cattle and chickens (or wild game) we will be able to let go of the insecure feeling we get with the uncertainty of food supply.

Maybe then we will be able to internalize this security to be able to make genuine, mutually reinforcing social attachments.

Or maybe I'm having a mushroom flashback lol