参考译文：

农业的起源

How did it come about that farming developed independently in a number of world centers (the southeast Asian mainland, Southwest Asia, Central America, lowland and highland South America, and equatorial Africa) at more or less the same time? Agriculture developed slowly among populations that had an extensive knowledge of plants and animals. Changing from hunting and gathering to agriculture had no immediate advantages. To start with, it forced the population to abandon the nomad’s life and become sedentary, to develop methods of storage and, often, systems of irrigation. While hunter-gatherers always had the option of moving elsewhere when the resources were exhausted, this became more difficult with farming. Furthermore, as the archaeological record shows, the state of health of agriculturalists was worse than that of their contemporary hunter-gatherers.

农业是如何独立地在世界的多个中心（东南亚大陆、西南亚、中美洲、南美的高地与低地以及赤道非洲地区）几乎同时发展起来的呢？在那些熟知动植物的人类中农业发展得相当缓慢。从打猎和采集转变为农耕并没有显而易见的好处。首先，它会迫使人们放弃游牧生活，定居下来去发明贮存方法，并且发展出通常所需的灌溉系统。采集狩猎者往往可以在资源耗尽的时候迁到它处，对于耕作者来说就没这么容易。而且，考古学记录显示，农民的健康状况要比同时代的采集狩猎者差。

Traditionally, it was believed that the transition to agriculture was the result of a worldwide population crisis. It was argued that once hunter-gathers had occupied the whole world, the population started to grow everywhere and food became scarce; agriculture would have been a solution to this problem. We know, however, that contemporary hunter-gatherer societies control their population in a variety of ways. The idea of a world population crisis is therefore unlikely, although population pressure might have arisen in some areas.

传统上认为向农业转变是世界性人口危机带来的结果。有人认为一旦采集狩猎者遍及全世界，人口开始增长，食物变得匮乏，此时农业就是解决这个问题的一个方法。但是，众所周知，同时代的采集狩猎者具有很多种控制人口的方法。因此世界性人口危机的想法就不太可能成立了，虽然在某些地区可能会存在人口压力。

Climatic changes at the end of the glacial period 13, 000 years ago have been proposed to account for the emergence of farming. The temperature increased dramatically in a short period of time (years rather than centuries), allowing for a growth of the hunting-gathering population due to the abundance of resources. There were, however, fluctuations in the climatic conditions, with the consequences that wet conditions were followed by dry ones, so that the availability of plants and animals oscillated brusquely.

有人提出冰河时代末期，也就是 13000 年前的气候变化是农业起源的原因。短时期内（以年而不是以世纪为单位）温度急剧上升使得食物资源丰富，采集狩猎者人口增加。但是，气候条件存在波动，造成干湿交替，以致可以获取的动植物数量忽高忽低。

It would appear that the instability of the climatic conditions led populations that had originally been nomadic to settle down and develop a sedentary style of life, which led in turn to population growth and to the need to increase the amount of food available. Farming originated in these conditions. Later on, it became very difficult to change because of the significant expansion of these populations. It could be argued, however, that these conditions are not sufficient to explain the origins of agriculture. Earth had experienced previous periods of climatic change, and yet agriculture had not been developed.

似乎是气候条件的不稳定性造成了那些原本放牧的人定居下来，逐渐发展出了定居的生活方式，这也反过来造成人口增长以及所需食物量的增加。在这些条件下，农业诞生了。后来，由于人口的急剧膨胀，这种生活方式就难以再变回去了。但是，我们可以说这些条件并不足以解释农业的起源。先前地球经历了多个气候变化的时期，但是也没有发展出农业。

It is archaeologist Steven Mithen ‘s thesis, brilliantly developed in his book The prehistory of the Mind (1996),that approximately 40,000 years ago the specializations of the mind: technical, natural history (geared to understanding the behavior and distribution of natural resources), social intelligence, and the linguistic capacity. Cognitive fluidity explains the appearance of art, religion, and sophisticated speech. Once humans possessed such a mind, they were able to find an imaginative solution to a situation of severe economic crisis such as the farming dilemma described earlier. Mithen proposes the existence of four mental elements to account for the emergence of farming (1) the ability to develop tools that could be used intensively to harvest and process plant resources;(2) the tendency to use plants and animals as the medium to acquire social prestige and power;(3) the tendency to develop “social relationships” with animals structurally similar to those developed with people –specifically, the ability to think of animals as people (anthropomorphism) and of people as animals (totemism); and (4) the tendency to manipulate plants and animals.

考古学家斯蒂文·米森有一个观点，这在他的《思维的史前史》一书中有精彩地阐述，该观点认为约在 40000 年前，人类的思维形成了认知流动性，即对各种特化的思维加以整合：技术史、博物学（以理解自然资源的行为和分布）、社交智能以及语言能力。认识流动性解释了艺术、宗教以及复杂的演讲。一旦人类拥有了这样的思维，他们就可以找到解决严重的经济危机，例如先前所述的业困境的具有创造力的方法。米森提出存在四种可以解释农业起源的心理因素：（1）打造集中用于收割以及加工植物资源的工具的能力；（2）将动植物作为获取社会声望和权力的手段的趋势；（3）与动物发展出与人类结构相似的“社会关系”的趋势——尤其是把动物当做人（神人同形同性论）以及把人当做动物（图腾崇拜）；（4）驯化动植物的趋势。

The fact that some societies domesticated animals and plants, discovered the use of metal tools, became literate, and developed a state should not make us forget that others developed pastoralism or horticulture (vegetable gardening) but remained illiterate and at low levels of productivity; a few entered the modern period as hunting and gathering societies. It is anthropologically important to inquire into the conditions that made some societies adopt agriculture while others remained hunter-gatherers or horticulturalists. However, it should be kept in mind that many societies that knew of agriculture more or less consciously avoided it. Whether Mithen’s explanation is satisfactory is open to contention, and some authors have recently emphasized the importance of other factors.

有些社会驯化了动植物、发现可以使用金属打造工具、通文达理并且形成了国家的事实不应使我们忘记其他社会虽发展出了畜牧或园艺（蔬菜园艺）但是仍停留在文盲状态，并且生产力较低，只有少数社会进入了现代的狩猎采集社会。探究使某些社会选择农业而其他社会停留在狩猎采集或园艺的条件具有重要的考古学意义。但是，我们应该记住有很多知晓农业的社会几乎是有意不选择它。米森的解释是否恰当还有待讨论，而且近来有些作者强调其它因素的重要性。