We propose that the development of social hierarchy following the Neolithic Revolution was an outcome of the ability of the emergent elite to appropriate crops from farmers. Cereals, for which storage is feasible and required, are easier to confiscate than roots and tubers, for which post-harvest storage is typically inefficient and unnecessary. Thus, regional differences in the suitability of land for the cultivation of roots and tubers or of cereals can cause differences in the formation of hierarchy and in social institutions. A simple model illustrates our main theoretical argument and motivates our empirical analysis. We demonstrate that farmers tend to avoid farming cereals if tuber cultivation is sufficiently productive and that cereal farming, instrumented with geographical factors for land suitability, explains the formation of hierarchical institutions.