



# the forest beyond the field: the consequences of domestication

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Humans always have been and always will be social animals. Where our food comes from and how we get it largely determines how we interact with each other.

If we are going to take ourselves seriously as anarchists, then we have to understand that anarchy is about far more than the type or presence of government. It is about social relationships. Simply not having government doesn't tell us a whole lot about a particular society. To understand what anarchy might mean, look and feel like, we have to understand human society.

As animals, the way we interact with each other is rooted in the way that we live. When we are surrounded by wilderness we will act differently than when we are surrounded by machines and concrete. When we are surrounded by domestication we act, think and feel differently. The isolated, sedated, tense, and overwhelming reality that we've created now is inseparable from the material world our elders have built and that we maintain.

It gets harder and harder to imagine a world different from the one we are born and raised into.

It gets harder to imagine that the way people interact now is not how humans have always been.

So we give in. We accept this reality as our only reality. We accept that hu-

mans have a natural inclination to take action at the expense of each other and at the expense of the world at large. We try to make the best of our time and that is that. Some of us turn to god, some turn to politics, some turn to sedatives (electronic or chemical); we turn anywhere that we can find some break from the dry, inhuman condition that drowns us.

Traditionally anarchists haven't been able to really get out of the reality that surrounded them. Rural anarchists have tried to turn the feudal farm life into an anarchist dream world. Urban anarchists have tried to turn the curse of the factory into a blessing for humanity at large. Contemporary anarchists have tried to wrestle their new savior, technology, from the capitalist hands. Downscale, decentralize, democratize, or

whatever it is that these anarchists and other social reformists or civil revolutionaries are aiming at doing, never gives up that reality. It mistakes hope for real potential and despair as a limitation to how deep change could or must be.

But this reality is a created reality. It has a beginning and it has an end. From our vantage point, we are able to see both. To understand what options we have and depths of where we can go from here, we need to look outside our reality, outside of our society and our machines. From here, we can understand that our reality is not as mighty as we are led to believe and that the soul of the human is not the individualistic scourge waiting for the chance to take power. We can see that the world that we've cut, plotted, paved, tamed, wasted, and mined is not dead and it is not lying passively. We can see the wildness lurking both around and within us. And, through this, we can see the end of our own reality and the community of wildness that awaits us.

This is the point of the anarcho-primitivist critique. It is not an ideology, party or basis for any platform. It is an understanding of the origins and implications of our reality. It is a window looking outside of the city, field and garden to understand both what we have lost and how.

This essay is a contribution to that critique. It is meant to shatter the idea that there is a monolithic type of society like 'hunter-gathers' or 'horticulturalist' or 'agriculturalist' because things are more complex in reality. And it is in this complexity that we can best see the origins of our own reality and better understand how we can break out of it.

But it is also important to remind ourselves that as a critique, it is only meant to inform our reality and our ac-

tions, not to define them. I am critical of domestication in any form and am working towards a life of semi-nomadic gathering and hunting myself, but this in no way limits my solidarity and sympathy for the many struggling horticultural or sedentary gatherer-hunter societies that have and will exist. My conclusions about the consequences of domestication are important for those overturning our own domestication and breaking from civilization. It is meant for those of us who are in need of someplace to go. My target is civilization, the culture of cities (with an emphasis on both the culture and the city). Noting the very early signs of coercive power and the seeds of civilization among other societies is not meant to say that those seeds will always flourish, but it is meant as both a warning and a direction for us and for future generations.

And with this said, it's time to dig at the roots of our own reality.

## HUMANITY IN THE STATELESSNESS OF NATURE

I believe in human nature.

It's not necessary that you do, but there's a lot about human society and behavior that has to be answered to either way. Put in certain situations with respect to socialization, we tend to act in similar ways. Likewise, the ongoing domestication process has always worked in the same ways, manipulating and channeling human need into dependency. Our similar reactions are part of our heritage as social animals. And that is how millions of years of evolution and social living have made us.

There's an organic nature to evolutionary change. But evolutionary change is something great that spreads out over thousands and millions of years. It is a

*While this essay stands on its own, the basic arguments are an overview of those dealt with in much greater detail in my book-in-progress, Catalyst: the birth and death of civilization. I left out citations, pull quotes, and the like to make it more readable and because there isn't enough room in this issue. So consider this an introductory overview.*

response to long term conditions with respect to short term changes. We survive because, as a species, we are adaptive. But that has been a kind of mixed blessing. While it helps our body store fat and water so we can cover large distances or that we are capable of taking in so many types of food, it has also made it possible for us to survive in cities and sustain ourselves off of overly processed

ordered city, the industrial bubble, the global system and the virtual reality. We've seen change in terms of generations rather than thousands of years. Those who shape and benefit from these realities can only do so with a willing army, producers and reproducers. They take their short term benefit as reality and turned history into evolution. They created gods and then became them.



!Kung women gathering.

waste. What we've been capable of surviving for a short period has been seen by some as an evolutionary change in itself. It has allowed some to think that humans were intended for city and industrial life or that this way of survival and cancerous growth can continue to exist. Either by the Hand of God/s or the Knowledge of Science, we believe this way of living is natural.

Evolution has been condensed into a social reality. That is why we have racism, sexism, class or caste societies, and their realities of slavery, war, colonization, imperialism, and the like. As we stepped into the tamed countryside, the

Our knowledge, our reality, is what the domesticators have and continue to teach us about ourselves and about our world.

Evolution becomes the survival of the fittest because that is the only way to really 'make it' in our reality. Some are born to rule, some are born to serve. Or some are simply smarter and more driven than others.

The same goes for society. Some were meant to fail, some were meant to succeed. Some were meant to produce and some to consume. Those who raise the lobster for the rich to eat have to buy

## CASE FILE IN ANARCHO-ETHNOGRAPHY 1: A SENSE OF SECURITY

"I have attempted to evaluate the subsistence base of one contemporary hunter-gatherer society living in a marginal environment. The !Kung Bushmen have available to them some relatively abundant high-quality foods, and they do not have to walk very far or work very hard to get them. Furthermore this modest work effort provides sufficient calories to support not only the active adults, but also a large number of middle-aged and elderly people. The Bushmen do not have to press their youngsters into the service of the food quest, nor do they have to dispose of the oldsters after they have ceased to be productive.

The evidence presented assumes an added significance because this security of life was observed during the third year of one of the most severe droughts in South Africa's history. Most of the 576,000 people of Botswana are pastoralists and agriculturalists. After the crops had failed three years in succession and over 250,000 head of cattle had died on the range for lack of water, the World Food Program of the United Nations instituted a famine relief program which has grown to include 180,000 people, over 30 per cent of the population (Government of Botswana, 1966). This program barely touched the Dobe area in the isolated northwest corner of the country and the Herero and Tswana women there were able to feed their families only by joining the Bushman women to forage for wild foods. Thus the natural plant resources of the Dobe area were carrying a higher proportion of population than would be the case in years when the Bantu harvested crops. Yet this added pressure on the land did not seem to adversely affect the Bushmen.

In one sense it was unfortunate that the period of my field work happened to coincide with the drought, since I was unable to witness a "typical" annual subsistence cycle. However, in another sense, the coincidence was a lucky one, for the drought put the Bushmen and their subsistence system to the acid test and, in terms of adaptation to scarce resources, they passed with flying colors. One can postulate that their subsistence base would be even more substantial during years of higher rainfall.

What are the crucial factors that make this way of life possible? I suggest that the primary factor is the Bushmen's strong emphasis on vegetable food sources. Although hunting involves a great deal of effort and prestige, plant foods provide from 60-80 per cent of the annual diet by weight. Meat has come to be regarded as a special treat; when available, it is welcomed as a break from the routine of vegetable foods, but it is never depended upon as a special treat; when available, it is welcomed as a break from the routine of vegetable foods, but it is never depended upon as a staple. No one ever goes hungry when hunting fails."

-Richard B. Lee, 'What Hunters Do for a Living'. In Lee and Devore, *Man the Hunter*, New York: Aldine de Gruyter, 1968. Pg. 40.



the rice that they are sold. Those whose children were sacrificed by Aztec kings bodies withered while they only had a diet of corn to eat. Those who cut the forests and carved the giant statues on Easter Island were those who could only have focused on what they were going to eat then and there. That's the nature of the civilized game: someone or someplace will always have to sacrifice for the 'benefit' of society.

These are the realities of the great myth of Progress: the pure form of social evolution. We look towards the heavens or towards our glorious Future as we sacrifice our lives and our bodies for the society that ultimately consumes us. This applies as much to the early agricultural kingdoms as it does to our own society. We move forward out of our savage state of nature or we don't.

The philosophers tell us this is an intentional act, a choice for every human born to make: Progress or regress. They tell us about the social contract where society was created and directed. They tell us about the evolution of savages to barbarians to primitive kingdoms and onto the state and, the high point of evolution, civilization. The movement was directed and intentional, the consequences were necessary, and the direction was final.

But there was never any social contract. Only recently were the directions of growth and social momentum capable of being directed in such a predetermined and controlled way. Never was the creation or change of society such an ordered and planned thing. Never did any part of humanity 'evolve' into a different being or was there any massive change over from gatherer-hunters to horticulturalists. Some societies changed, some societies grew, some stayed in a particular form, but some

other kept growing. To feed that growth they developed more tools and technologies designed to kill more people and cut more forests and dig more soil quickly. There was no Hand of God in this nor any act of evolution.

And never was there an origin of 'society' as such. No matter what we are now or have been, we have been social first and foremost. Even the most archaic form of human society flowed organically from the way our bodies and minds have evolved.

This is where our 'human nature' stems from. It flows from our needs as social animals that must think, eat, drink and sleep, our need for companionship and community (both human and non-human), our need for autonomy and the fulfillment of simply being. For over 99.99% of human history, that has looked like small and open bands of about 15-25 people who live in temporary camps throughout a given bioregion with loosely defined and larger affiliations to each other. Food was hunted, gathered, scavenged, or fished. In some people could make fire, others would keep coals, and some had none at all. Cultural knowledge was shared and all had equal access to what domesticated peoples refer to as 'resources'. Meals, hunts, and social life were collective and while men and women often did separate things, neither was seen as more valuable than the other.

This is the life of the nomadic gatherer-hunter. It is the way that we have lived for the bulk of our existence as humans and then it goes back even further. This is the world that has shaped our minds and bodies as humans.

And this is where we'll start our look at human societies.

NOMADISM AND THE SPIRIT OF

## ANARCHY

If you needed one word to sum up the nature of nomadic gatherer-hunter life, it would be that very thing that shaped our evolution: adaptivity.

Adaptivity means a number of things, but we'll keep our focus in the sense of ecological and social adaptivity. The life of the nomadic gatherer-hunter is rooted in their ecological world. It means reading the signs and movements of the animals around you. It means following the growth of plants and the lives of other beings as they follow that growth and death.

The health of the bioregion at large is inseparable from the world around you. For us, this can be understood in a purely material or rational sense: you don't shit in your own bed. That much is true, but humans are spiritual beings. Our spirit has been channeled through the soulless anti-spirit of Science, God, and an uprooted Reason. But among rooted peoples, that spirit is everything. That spirit is what connects an individual to the community and wildness around them.

There is no split between the Self and the Other. There is no way of taking yourself mentally or physical out of the bioregion/s where you live. It's as unthinkable as it would be unnecessary. The purpose and place of any individual is inseparable from their world. So what you end up with is a lived spirituality: one that is about individual connections and experience, that grows through self-discovery, that is

celebrated through being lived rather than through highly elaborate rituals and ceremonies (though they often still occur for primarily social reasons), and is anarchistic in essence.

That spirit of anarchy is important for a number of reasons. But I mainly bring it up because it is something we've had taken from us and something that we tend to lack an understanding of or capacity for. Spirituality for us refers to something distant and based on

belief rather than direct experience. It is dictated to us rather than coming from within. For us, spirituality equates to religion which equates to something created and spread by (typically) old men roaming in far away deserts thousands of years ago. That distance is reflected



Onge father and son

## CASE FILE IN ANARCHO-ETHNOGRAPHY 2: BIRTH AND BIRTH CONTROL

"!Kung siblings are likely to be about four years apart in age—an unusually long birth spacing for a population without birth control. How !Kung women maintain these long intervals between births is a question only now being answered. The !Kung claim to know of plants that cause miscarriage when properly prepared and ingested, but there is no evidence that these are effective—or even that they are used. A taboo against resuming sexual relations is also said to be in effect for about six months after a child's birth, but most couples share their blankets again immediately after a birth and do not abide by this restriction for very long. (Even if they did, it would allow the women to get pregnant soon after the end of the six months, resulting in a birth spacing of two years at most.)

Infanticide has also been suggested as an explanation. Bantu law now prohibits this practice, but even in traditional times it probably occurred only rarely—in cases of congenital deformity, of too short birth spacing, or of twins, regardless of gender. The length of the birth interval could be a life-or-death issue: if a woman had another baby too soon, either the baby or her older child—already the object of great affection—would probably die. Nursing a child requires a large daily intake of calories by the mother. Although the !Kung diet is usually adequate for this, it would be debilitating or even impossible for a woman to produce enough milk for *two* children. (The milk has been analyzed and found to be nutritionally adequate and almost comparable in composition to samples taken from Western women.) With no other sources of milk available, the older child would have to be weaned onto bush foods, which are rough and difficult to digest. To survive on such foods a child would have to be older than two years—preferably substantially older. (Today cows' milk is available for toddlers, so this problem has largely been eliminated.)

The decision in favor of infanticide was never made lightly or without anguish, but sometimes there was little choice. The woman would probably give birth alone and bury the infant immediately, preferably before it took its first breath. (The traditional !Kung did not consider a child a true person until it was brought back to the village; thus early infanticide was not seen as homicide.) Such cases, however, must have been extremely rare; even stillbirths, only a fraction of which could be concealed infanticide, accounted for only about one percent of births. Thus, only a few women had to face this choice personally and directly.

One likely explanation for the long birth intervals is the !Kung pattern of prolonged nursing. Although solid foods supplement a child's diet as early as six months of age (either premasticated or mashed at this early stage) nursing continues on the average of several times an hour throughout the first few years of a child's life. The constant stimulation of the nipple has been shown to suppress the levels of hormones that promote ovulation, thus making concep-

Whatever the exact cause, the resulting four-year birth interval is essential

to the !Kung way of life. !Kung women are the major providers of child care and carry young children almost everywhere they go—an estimated 1500 miles a year. Women are also the major providers of food and walk between two and twelve miles two or three times a week to go gathering. When they return they carry, along with their child, fifteen to thirty-three pounds of wild vegetables, although loads of forty pounds and more have been recorded. They also make frequent trips to villages a few miles away and take longer trips when the entire group moves camp or visits people living at distances of up to sixty miles. On these long trips women also carry their few possessions—a mortar and pestle, cooking utensils, water containers, a digging stick, various ornaments and pieces of clothing, as well as water—adding another two to four pounds to their burden.

For women who weigh an average of ninety pounds themselves, maintaining their subsistence activities would be difficult, if not impossible, were the birth interval any shorter. A four-year-old is able to keep pace walking with adults, at least on short trips, or may be willing to stay in the village while her goes gathering for the day. A younger child would be more dependent; the mother would have to carry her, as well as the new infant, wherever she went.

Perhaps they tend to experience only a few menstrual periods between pregnancies, !Kung women consider menstruation "a thing of no account." Although it is occasionally referred to as "having sickness" and although some associated physical discomfort is acknowledged (for example, cramps, breast tenderness, headaches, and backaches), menstruation is not thought to affect women's psychological state. Many !Kung women do believe, however, that if a woman sees traces of menstrual blood on another woman's leg or even is told that another woman has started her period, *she* will begin menstruating as well.

!Kung women try to conceal their menstrual blood, but this is not always possible. Leaves, pieces of leather skins, or, more recently, cloth that can be washed and saved are the only articles they have to contain their flow. They are concerned about cleanliness, but water is available only in small quantities during much of the year, making daily bathing difficult. Some women curtail their visiting when the flow is heaviest, but others carry on their normal activities. One woman explained, "When I want to visit, I go at night. Then, no one can see if there is blood on my legs." The end of menstruation is followed by bathing, even if water is scarce.

Menstruation is given minimal attention by the !Kung. Women are not set apart and couples do not cease to lie beside each other at night. Sexual activity is expected to come to a halt, but since conception is thought to result from the joining of semen with the last of the menstrual blood, the taboo may give way, especially during the last day or two, if conception is desired."

-Marjorie Shostak, *Nisa: the Life and Words of a !Kung Woman*. New York: Vintage, 1983. Pgs. 66-68.



in our own distance from our spirits and the place where spirits grow.

That spirituality, that connectedness, is something that we need, and, as we shall see, it is through this that the domesticators tap into our being and break us. But it is also the basis of social life. There are few mysteries to how life works together for those who live within wildness. A nomadic gatherer-hunter will grow up learning about the plants, animals, and everything else that they directly

consume, but they are not isolated in that world with only themselves and their food. They are

a part of that greater community and so they are constantly learning about the interconnections of things.

This contrasts pretty harshly against our own disconnected reality. For instance, a lot of civilized people despise insects, snakes, and rodents. We're not taught to see how all of these things interact. So we swat flies and mosquitoes away while we spray insecticides on their and our homes, we step on spiders and cockroaches, and have rats exterminated. While ignoring the health consequences of all these chemicals temporarily, we miss out on the obvious. Spiders very rarely bite in any serious way, but we're afraid of them (even though we're far more likely to die or have serious health effects from what we use to

rid them), but then complain when the flies and mosquitoes are around us more when we kill the spiders that would otherwise eat them. Or we overlook how similar rats can be to us as they live off the waste of our own society. And we definitely overlook how most rats, mosquitoes, stinging bees and the like were brought into these places through our Progress and Growth, not theirs.

But for those rooted in their bioregion, it is as impossible to see all of

these things as disconnected even more than it is for us to see how they all fit together and need each

other, even as we pull the rat from the domesticated cats' mouth. That spiritual connection and rooting is one of the most important aspects for remaining adaptive: you can see the immediate and delayed consequences of any action that you take.

And this is where nomadism is most important: if you are rooted in a bioregion, but not physically stuck in a particular area, then you are capable of moving before any spot has been over foraged, over run or over hunted. Nomadism is about adaptivity. Just as having a wide ranging diet is important, so is having a wide ranging area which you are familiar with. Life tends to be predictable, but things always come up. One year might be dry, another wet, some

plants and animals might be having a harder year than normal while some might have small population bursts. These are the things that a nomadic life prepares you to deal with and help you to understand.

All of this applies equally to social life. When you move often, it only complicates the situation to have stockpiles. You own what you can carry, which is often nothing that couldn't be easily recreated by most members of society. There aren't options for trying to establish any individually owned territory. The only thing that comes close is a sense of 'belonging' that, where it does exist, usually only applies to honey and some fruit trees. But even this is nothing like private property: it refers to a particular connection to a certain person or family rather than being a right of exclusion for others. Everyone has equal access to the same places and same things.

Food is shared on principle rather than any exception. That is a foundation for mutual aid: you share when you have food, I share when I have food, and no one goes hungry. With no stockpiles, granaries or stashes, no one has anything to yield over others, at least nothing that they're just as capable of getting on their own. Everyone contributes in their own right.

This is the basis for an egalitarian society. No one in society is given more or less merit than others. Children are given the same respect and standing as others, though, like the elderly, they are not expected to make the same kind of contributions as their parents. Everyone brings something different to a society. Children have the freedom to go off with others in their age groups and create their own camps, mimicking the lives of their parents. This is how people learn to survive and how society maintains it-

self: by willing individuals who take their own steps rather than have them forced.

This is primal anarchy and this is the world that our minds and bodies have grown into.

And it can stay this way for a long period of time. The adaptivity of nomadism ends up being rather ingenious in a number of ways. Keeping on the move keeps populations down. You can only have as many children as you can carry and with a lack of processed and domesticated food sources, the primary food source for children up till the age of four is breast milk. Being rooted in a particular region, the parents will not bring a child into the world if they can not support them or offer the same world their parents gave them.

Though this decision can end in infanticide (an act of compassion as opposed to the cruelty of bringing a child into the world unwanted and unloved because of some distant morality rather than direct needs), rarely does it get this far. Producing breast milk slows ovulation. Living a nomadic and active life both slows the onset of menstruation for girls and further slows ovulation for women. There are plants that can be taken and are taken as preventatives or to induce an early miscarriage. None of this carries social taboo because everyone understands the basic needs of a child and knows that a child born without these is worse off than a child who dies at birth.

Our own morality causes us to see these things as cruel. But our lack of understanding comes from our own mediation from the world and from the needs of our own children. Even the moralistically driven Kropotkin noted the irony: "if these same Europeans were to tell a savage that people, extremely amiable,



Huaorani husband and wife hunting

fond of their own children and so impressionable that they cry when they see a misfortune simulated on the stage, are living in Europe within a stone's throw from dens in which children die from sheer want of food, the savage too, would not understand them."<sup>1</sup>

This is just a sign of how far we've gone from where we've lived. And it's one that clouds our ability to see what it is that we have lost. We look for an economic sphere, a religious sphere, a social and political sphere among these societies until we can find something and

isolate it: we reflect our own world into these different surroundings and contexts and sure enough it can be as unappealing and contrived as our own society. But this dissection leaves nothing of the original society. There are no separate spheres or dirty laundry: things simply are as they are.

You can see this in everyday life. There are no gardens to tend, there is far less in the way of ritual and ceremony to prepare for compared to village dwellers. There is no need for schedules, time or calendars. You can remain adaptive.

### CASE FILES IN ANARCHO-ETHNOGRAPHY 3: SOCIAL VIEWS ON NOMADISM

"...Hadza do not assert rights to the areas with which they are associated. Anyone may live, hunt and gather wherever he or she likes without restriction—both within the area with which he or she is mainly associated and anywhere else in Hadza country. The camp units in which people live are not fixed entities: there is constant movement in and out while a camp remains at one site: when the site is changed people may move together to one or more new sites or all or some may choose to move to an existing camp elsewhere. There are continuities in the composition of these local groupings but none which seriously limit individual freedom of movement.

In all these societies nomadic movements of all types, both within and outside of the local area, is apparently not seen as a burdensome necessity but positively as something healthy and desirable in itself. I have discussed elsewhere how neither the frequency nor the spatial patterning of Hadza moves can be interpreted in terms of ecological factors alone, although probably such flexible movement does, among other things, rapidly accomplish a rational distribution of people in relation to resources available at any particular time. What it also does is to allow people to segregate themselves easily from those with whom they are in conflict, without economic penalty and without sacrificing any other vital interests. Most important of all for the present discussion is the way that such arrangements are subversive for the development of authority. Individuals are not bound to fixed areas, to fixed asserts or to fixed resources. They are able to move away without difficulty and at a moment's notice from constraint which others may seek to impose on them and such possibility of movement is a powerful mechanism, positively valued like other leveling mechanisms in these societies."

-James Woodburn, 'Egalitarian Societies': *Man*, Vol. 17, No. 3 (Sept. 1982). Pgs. 435-436.

Women and men will wake up and join their friends to talk and share gossip. The men might spend the morning or the day gambling over arrows, determining which folks might be going hunting the next day. They play games and joke, just as the women do as they hang around camp or while out gathering. The smaller children might be with their parents, though most often the mother until they are properly weaned. Once they are weaned they'll play together on their own with other kids their age, spending

will gather. Though there is no pressure on youths to provide all their own food, it's all become a part of their play as it remains through the rest of their life. Men gamble so they aren't relied on for hunting every time just as women aren't out gathering everyday or expected to serve their husbands who are as capable of foraging. There are few to no demands. There are always opportunities to mix things up a bit. New folks might stay with your band for months at a time, and anyone is able to go stay with an-



Batek men roasting a gibbon

their time playing games based around cooperation rather than competition and they'll create their own mock societies and marriages, even including feuds. The older children will do much of the same, though starting to play around more with the idea of sex. Parents might discourage this kind of playing, but it's in word only: they did the same, just as their parents did. They know their children are off somewhere and likely having sex, but they'll do nothing about it. Kids will just be kids.

In the mock societies of the youths, young boys will hunt and young girls

other band when they want to. Large kills turn into gorging feasts with people from far and wide. When you have no means or need for storage, the only option is to eat it then and there, which can make for some large social reunions.

Warfare is unknown, largely because there is no (quasi)political means for organizing nor any solidified group identity along which to form sides. Tensions might arise, arguments and fights might happen, but violence is never as much of an issue as when those involved have always known each other and probably have some binding connection



(even if it is relatively distant). Where there are no strangers, you lose the anonymity that frees you from the consequences of your actions. So when tensions raise and others can't cool them down, those involved can simply go with another band or a minor 'nothing fight' just gets everything out. But the greatest soother is the ability to laugh at and with each other. In such a world, there's no reason to take things more seriously than they need to be taken. I know it's hard to imagine, but we weren't always the wound up mess that we've become.

And this is where our bodies and minds are forged. This is a place where there is no authority or institutions. This is primal anarchy: a way of life that is lived rather than idealized and constructed. It is organic and flowing, and most importantly, adaptive.

This is what lurks within us.

## DOMESTICATION

No one gives up the primal anarchy of our spirit easily. But clearly something happened. Somewhere something came along and changed everything. The social contract theorists tell us we broke out of our savagery through a new collective consciousness, the social Darwinians and their followers tell us that we (or at least some of us) evolved, and some say we changed out of necessity.

Any way you put it, most tell us that what happened was a matter of inevitability. And no matter how many divisions there are about why things happened, there is no question about what that 'something' was: domestication.

Domestication can mean a number of things. In terms of plants, it refers to intentional breeding for what we consider 'desired' traits until the initial genetic structure of that plant has changed.

The same applies among domesticated animals; their wild ancestors were brought into captivity and selectively bred. The real level of genetic change is questionable, but the underlying goal is this: what is bred is what the domesticators' desire and that the plant or animal becomes dependent upon the domesticator to exist.

Domestication is, at its root, about the creation and maintenance of a synthetic order. It is about control. It reduces the fullness of the world into categories and systems of needs and resources. It turns wild communities into a sum of all parts rather than a single interconnected community.

By most definitions, domestication is about breeding something "for human use." That definition can be rather problematic. Humans too, we tend to forget, are wild animals. Like all other wild beings, use-value thinking is something foreign to our understanding and relationships with the world. A need to turn beings into something solely for human use is as unthinkable as it would be impractical. If the world were turned into something for our own use, what would happen to the rest of that world?

Unfortunately that question is being answered.

But this isn't just 'for human use'. It is for civilized human use, for domesticated human use.

In terms of humans, domestication is the civilizing process. It is about turning wild humans into something for civilized use. It turns individuals into farmers, peasants, workers, bosses, police, and soldiers just as it turns forests and wetlands into gardens and gardens into fields surrounding cities and fields into deserts.

It is about taming humans for domestic life. That is, a life of villages and

## CASE FILES IN ANARCHO-ETHNOGRAPHY 4: GAMES AND COOPERATION

Two pastimes illustrate the kind of education that takes place in the *bopi* [playground]. The youngest children begin to explore hanging vines. They pull themselves upward, developing their young muscles while getting to know the vines. They climb and they swing and soon they learn skipping and hoop-jumping, which, like climbing and swinging, can be done in a variety of ways and can be done alone or with others. This ultimately leads to the most difficult of all these vine pastimes, which the children will be able to indulge in only when they are youths when it is mainly a male activity. An enormous vine is strung from high up between two trees with a clear space between them. Swinging from an axis perhaps thirty feet above ground, but with the loop a bare two feet from the earth, one youth sits in the swing and swings himself higher and higher. Then the others join in. As their companion starts his backward arc one runs after him, grabs one side of the vine swing, and, when it soars upward, leaps with it, and does a somersault over the head of his companion, who jumps to the ground, allowing the other to take his place. It requires perfect coordination, as well as considerable strength and agility. There are variations that at first may look like competitiveness, but that in fact demand just the opposite. The "jumper" may swing himself right over the head of the youth sitting on the swing and land on the ground in front of him as the swing descends. If the "sitter" does not sense what is happening and also jumps, expecting the other to take his place, there is a moan from the spectators; both have failed, the perfection of the ballet has been spoiled. Alternatively, the "sitter" may decide to remain sitting and the "jumper" has to make the extra effort demanded to complete the swing over his head and land safely. There can be no question of the one trying to outdo the other, for the fun is in developing daring maneuvers spontaneously and executing them together.

Similarly, climbing leads gently and steadily from individual development to social development. The children are all adept at tree-climbing by the age of four or five, limited only by their physical size and the size of the trunk and the limbs of the tree. At first they climb alone, exploring every branch, testing every way of getting from one branch to another, one tree to another. The idea is never just to get to the top, it is to know more about the tree. The younger are constantly stopping, riveted with fascination at a tiny detail of the bark they had not seen or felt or smelled before, or to examine the movements of ants up and down the tree, or to taste some sap oozing from its side. Put your own ear to a tree one day, as they told me to do, and see if, like an Mbuti child, you can hear it sing with happiness or cry with sorrow.

... Little that the children do in the *bopi* is not full of value in later adult life.



While they are learning the fun and beauty of working and playing with and not against others, they are in a positive way learning by prescription rather than proscription, by being told what they should do rather than what they should not do. There is the essence of cooperative, communal life, of which competition is the antithesis. With cooperativeness in action comes community of spirit, and with community of spirit the foundation for truly social behavior is secured; social order becomes possible without law, as we know it, and without the threat of physical coercion, and without anything even approaching a penal system."

-Colin Turnbull, *The Human Cycle*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1983. Pgs. 43-44.

cities. These are places where we are separated physically and mentally from the bioregions we've grown in, where autonomy is gradually lost to the influence turned authority, where life is dictated rather than based on self discovery, where work is necessary, and where armies roam, both inside and out.

Anarcho-primitivists, like most social theorists, have typically focused on agriculture as that source of change and the real origin of domestication. But that doesn't explain why the walls of Jericho were built by gatherer hunters or how societies like those along the Salish Coast (northwestern United States into Canada) and some Maori of New Zealand had complex kingdoms complete with slaves while lacking agriculture. Looking at domestication as a social phenomena as well as referring to plants does help to explain this while offering a glimpse of what would (in some cases) become the cornerstone of civilization.

## SLED DOGS, TAME HORSES, FISH RUNS AND WILD GRAINS

Domestication runs counter to the adaptivity that has helped and shaped us for millions of years. Sure enough it has 'allowed' us to expand the size of our SPECIES TRAITOR NO. 4

society, but never without consequence. It has given us some conveniences where we might not have had them, but, again, not without consequence.

Everything we do has consequences. Some of them are more immediate and more widely impacting than others, but they are consequences all the same. At no point was there a step into domestication that jumped right into cities and civilization or was there a leap between the small scale bands of nomadic gatherer hunters into massive scale kingdoms. Change comes with time. Only recently, with the 'helping hand' of the machine, was that change happening in terms of years rather than millennia. And you can see the bounty of such change as most past civilizations have lasted one to two thousand years whereas the American empire has been collapsing after only two centuries.

Domestication, like all change, is a gradual process. The first appearance of domestication in any society is going to be far less noticeable than any of the spectacular events that we are sold through ideas of History. Reality is never that fantastic or cut and dry. But domestication has crept into some gatherer hunter societies, and through these, we can get a clearer picture of how it is impacting.

When talking about gatherer hunter societies with domestication, we're most often referring to settled gatherer hunters. These societies, settled around fields of wild grains or along rivers with seasonal fish runs which can be caught and stored. But the best place to start is to talk about the nomadic gatherer hunters with domesticated or captive animals.

The two types of societies we're referring to here are the sled-drawn arctic hunters and the mounted hunters of the American plains (throughout North and South America) and the subarctic. We'll look first at the sled-drawn arctic hunters.

The northern arctic and subarctic are a huge place. Most peoples living there are typically considered Inuit or Inuit related, but the diversity between nearly neighboring groups can be as varying as groups on different parts of the world. But one thing that is held in common is the widespread presence of sled dogs. Domesticated dogs are a rather common thing. You'll find them among gatherer hunters just as you'll find them in horticultural societies or our own. These dogs often came into our world through a slow process of self domestication: they

liked our sloppiness and we make good companions. Eventually humans would get a hand in their breeding and lead to the breeds we're familiar with now.

The sled pulling dogs are clearly somewhat closer to their wild ancestors than many other dogs we see throughout the world. But this isn't to give the

impression that they are more recently or less intensively domesticated. Getting dogs to pull sleds is no easy task. It takes an intensive form of domestication that turns them against each other and (ab)uses their pack instincts. They are separated at an early age, have their teeth filed, and are kept hungry to near starving to keep them focused on the hand that feeds. This is domestication in the truest social sense.

The dogs offer nothing in and

of themselves aside from their labor. What keeps nomadic societies from accumulating possessions and surplus is their inability to carry it. So the dogs do it. Being able to carry large quantities of meat, fat and hides leads to a social situation not too different from the more egalitarian villages and the dogs make it possible to remain a nomadic society rather than a typically settled one. The



Ache mother and child





dogs make surplus possible where it otherwise could not be.

And you get the social relationships that come along with surplus, though not in the extreme form that you'll find in sedentary societies. Surplus is really a form of property: it is a possession that, while often communally held, must be put under some kind of control for redistribution. That informal control nearly always finds its way into the hands of men (those who hunt the meat). So while the arctic gatherer hunters still have relatively egalitarian societies, you get an increasing emphasis on social compliance and structure. You get minor forms of dependency.

But the animals don't always have to be domesticated. The Caribou Inuit, for example, seasonally round up herds of wild Caribou and become mounted hunters. So while this is only seasonal, you get a micro-scale version of these kinds of relationships.

Mounted gatherer hunters, like those of the plains, are another type altogether. Those throughout the Americas were largely horticulturalists or roaming gatherer hunters before the horse was brought over (or returned as some of these societies will say) by Europeans. The horse changed their means of subsistence, but it didn't intrinsically change the ways of a once sedentary society. Even more so, it became possible to focus more on raiding and warring with surrounding and even distant societies. So rather than being a return to gatherer hunter societies, they became (to some degree) extensions of settled life. That's not to say that nomadism didn't revive older, more egalitarian, ways, but it's not to say that it was a complete throw back either.

The increased reliance on warfare and raiding tended to emphasize the

warrior spirit that carries the seed of patriarchy. With warrior societies, you get an increased interest in secret societies and men's houses at the cost of the more value free egalitarian societies. You get an increased emphasis on violence in childhood and its ritualization into social life. We'll see this developed more among when we're talking about horticulturalists. But needless to say, surplus produces a kind of property that humans had never known before and this is the birth of political life.

You see this even more where gatherer hunter societies have settled around huge, seasonal runs of fish which can be caught, dried and stored. Or where there are huge fields of storable wild grains. The latter is what laid roots for our now global civilization. Gatherer hunters settled aside the floodplains of Mesopotamia where seasonal flooding kept the soil rich and gave rise to fields of wild grains. Though technically not domesticating plants or animals till later, they turned into harvesters of these fields, or farmers without farming. Their social life was really no different than farmers. And it should come as no surprise that this was the first society to begin building huge defensive walls around its city.

There's little way of telling why these societies chose to settle. There's always theory, but considering when this happened, we'll never know.

But we do know the consequences.

It starts out on a minor scale: they come seasonally to the flood plains or runs to gather and fish respectively. They eat a lot and take some with them as they move. Not much changes at this point, especially without domesticated animals to carry their surplus for them. Slowly, seasonal stops turn into seasonal camps and seasonal camps turn into seasonal

villages. Place becomes increasingly more permanent and sedentism creeps in.

The problem with sedentism is that it goes against our adaptivity. People become attached to a place rather than a bioregion. They accumulate more possessions and you start to get an increas-

ing sense of group identity as population grows and that individual flexibility starts to hinder the new social life that is emerging. And the informal but influential roles of surplus 'manager' that we see among the mounted and dog-sled hunters turns into an increasingly important position as huge granaries and store

## CASE FILES IN ANARCHO-ETHNOGRAPHY 5: COMPETITION VS. ENTERTAINMENT

Among the Sherente and Kraho (horticulturalists in Brazil) races where groups run while carrying massive logs play a huge part of their ritualized festivals. Anthropologist David Maybury-Lewis was living among a band of Sherente heavily influenced by missionaries when one of these festivals took place with a far less contacted group. Though the race was heavily anticipated on both sides and they would take cheap shots at the other groups' strength and ability, what he saw was something very different than what he expected:

"The race started casually and equally casually as we loped back towards the village. There were about eight of us, four Sherente, three Kraho and an anthropologist. I forced myself to concentrate on where I planted my feet so as to effect the maximum economy of effort and to take my mind off the contest. The Kraho raced ahead as if they had every intention of disappearing from view. I shall not dwell on the discomforts of the next quarter of an hour. I passed one Kraho walking. He grinned at me, probably amused by my set face. Now we were running through slushy, porous savannah before entering the narrow trail which led into the village. There was a finely-built Sherente running easily beside me.

'Kraho can't run,' he said cheerily.

It dawned on me that we had left the others behind. We entered the village together. The Sherente was jubilant.

'Talk, talk, talk,' they jeered. 'That's all the Kraho are good for. They do not work. They do not plant gardens. All they do is run log races where they come from and yet when they come here they don't know how to run.'

I lay in my hammock concealing my exhaustion and wondering why the Kraho had put up such a poor showing. It was not till later that I remembered the grinning face of the man I had passed. Of course! They had no competitive spirit. They got bored with the race and simply dropped out. They would not have understood the curious motives which had impelled me to run against all my inclinations, let alone outrun them. The Sherente on the other hand had learned the ways of the outside world. They no longer ran for pleasure but only to prove something."

-David Maybury-Lewis, *The Savage and the Innocent: second edition*. Boston: Beacon Press, 1988. Pg. 87.

houses emerge.

Informal power, with the help of arising religious institutions and shaman-priests, turns to formal power, complete with its institutions, hierarchy, and force. Storage gave birth to coercive power, ultimately in the form of the State and civilization.

The increasing reliance upon the stored foods shaped a kind of political society unseen among any other gatherer hunters and even most horticulturalists. You get complex chiefdoms and kingdoms. Though the village life of fishers typically has higher populations, those surrounding wild grains would build cities. When domestication did happen, it was less of an event than it was a need to feed a growing population. When you eliminate nomadism, you eliminate natural checks on population and the ability to see the effects of your way of living. Thus begins the perpetual cycle of growth and expansion that leads to warfare, raiding, colonization, imperialism, genocide, and omnicide.

This is the birth of civilization.

#### FROM GARDENS TO FIELDS

Looking at settled gatherers around fields of wild grains and runs of fish is taking a bit of a leap. This obviously has happened and is the heritage of our own civilization, but is a relatively rare occurrence.

The origins of domestication through many parts of the world looked far different. As I said earlier, there was nothing "natural" about the origin of domestication and certainly nothing evolutionary about it. It's something that happened. Sedentism, by its nature, makes it possible for population to grow and relatively quickly. But it didn't just expand unchecked everywhere. Far

more societies have lived as horticulturalists and in a relatively stable manner for thousands of years.

Horticultural society is really a gatherer society as opposed to field farmers. Like a garden, it is smaller scale and heavily diversified. You hear about Native American and Asian gardeners having hundreds of variations of a couple species of plant or grain: that's gardening. Plants are domesticated over a long period, starting with the selection of larger or tastier parent plants from the wild and then selectively breeding them for desired quality. This can be risky business, so it's best to diversify. So you get hundreds of domesticated species and thousands of (typically regional) variations. This is a human controlled attempt at adaptivity: we can never replicate evolution, but we have certainly tried. And this diversity is an understanding that our efforts will likely fail, at least at some point.

There are a couple types of horticultural societies, but the two polar ends are those who focus on plants and animals higher in protein and those that are lower. And you'll get a mix of the two. But this matters because those who get less protein from their gardens and domesticated animals are going to stay more rooted in a semi-nomadic gatherer hunter life way, whereas those with higher protein will turn more towards a huge growth in village life and are more prone towards an eventual growth into cities if they don't collapse first.

Those who are still rooted in their gatherer hunter life ways are those who were spread throughout the Americas and parts of Eurasia. There are more sprinkled throughout the world, but certain regions having plants and animals that are more easily domesticated and that effects how a society develops. For

a mixture of the two types, you'll get horticultural societies like those throughout the south Pacific Islands (New Guinea, Hawai'i, Trobriand Islands, etc) and some parts of Africa where tubers like sweet potatoes, taro, tapioca, and the like are a major part of the diet and you'll often find domesticated animals like pigs

playing a huge role. And for societies which focus on protein or even less nutritious, but highly abundant crops like corn, you have some mixed in the Americas (Pueblo, Cherokee, Aztec, etc) and then plenty in Africa and throughout Asia where domesticated animals like goats and cattle play an important role.

There are also pastoral societies who are semi-nomads who focus almost exclusively on their domesticated animals like cattle and goats. These societies are most often outgrowths of horticultural and agricultural societies as they make a living through trade of animal by-products for crops. They also tend to act as trader-merchants as they travel vast areas while grazing their animals and coming into contact with a number of other societies. Some of these societies (especially in central to southern Africa, like the Nuer and the Pokot) practice horticulture themselves as well, leaving them will highly developed village and politi-

cal lives carried by parts of the population on their seasonal grazing (this kind of nomadism is called transhumance).

We'll turn our attention first to the semi-nomadic horticulturalists.

#### THE SOCIAL LIFE OF GARDENERS

Life among these horticultural societies can in many ways resemble that of nomadic gatherer hunters. Things are relatively easy going. There are no schedules and few demands aside from those associated with clearing and working gardens. But even this is hard to



Tapirape garden.

consider work. Though gardens are intensive and often invasive, they tend to mock the layers of growth of the forest. They're a far shot from the clean and cleared gardens we're used to. Most often, an outsider barely even recognizes that he's standing in the center of one.

This type of horticulture is called swidden gardening or slash-and-burn agriculture. Patches of the forest are burned and cut to make way for gardens. Some societies prefer old growth, while some will return to gardens left fallow for at least 25 years. The gardens merge with the forest as they are slowly moved in one direction every two years or so, keeping a good cycle of fallow to garden land. Gardens are kept in an area

## CASE FILES IN ANARCHO-ETHNOGRAPHY 6: LEVELING SOCIETY THROUGH LAUGHTER

This comes from Richard B. Lee talking about his experience with the Dobe !Kung during his first round of field work. Towards the end of his research he decided to give something back to the community as an act of appreciation for their cooperation over the year. He bought the biggest ox from nearby pastoralists for a Christmas feast. Though the ox surely provided more than a large amount of meat, the !Kung responded with statements like this: "Do you expect us to eat that bag of bones?" "Everybody knows there's no meat on that old ox. What did you expect us to eat off it, the horns?" Despite the heckling, the ox was killed and a feast followed, but Lee didn't quite understand what the fuss was about. He later sought out one of the !Kung that was harshest to him, /gaugo: "Why did you tell me the black ox was worthless, when you could see that it was loaded with fat and meat?"

"It is our way," he said, smiling. "We always like to fool people about that. Say there is a Bushman who has been hunting. He must not come home and announce like a braggart, 'I have killed a big one in the bush!' He must first sit down in silence until I or someone else comes up to his fire and asks, 'What did you see today?' He replies quietly, 'Ah I'm no good for hunting. I saw nothing at all [pause] just a tiny one.' Then I smile to myself," /gaugo continued, "because I know he has killed something big."

"In the morning we make up a party of four or five people to cut up and carry the meat back to the camp. When we arrive at the kill we examine it and cry out, 'You mean to say you have dragged us all the way out here in order to make us cart home your pile of bones? Oh, if I had known it was this thin I wouldn't have come.' Another one pipes up, 'People, to think I gave up a nice day in the shade for this. At home we may be hungry, but at least we have nice cool water to drink.' If the horns are big, someone says, 'Did you think that somehow you were going to boil down the horns for soup?'"

"To all this you must respond in kind. 'I agree,' you say, 'this one is not worth the effort; let's just cook the liver for strength and leave the rest for the hyenas. It is not too late to hunt today and even a duiker or a steenbok would be better than this mess.'"

"But," I asked, "why insult a man after he has gone to all that trouble to track and kill an animal and when he is going to share the meat with you so that your children will have something to eat?"

"Arrogance," was his cryptic answer.

"Arrogance?"

"Yes, when a young man kills much meat he comes to think of himself as a chief or big man, and he thinks the rest of us as his servants or inferiors. We can't accept this. We refuse one who boasts, for someday his pride will make him kill somebody. So we always speak of his meat as worthless. This way we cool his heart and make him gentle."

-Richard B. Lee, 'A Naturalist at Large' in *Natural History*, December 1969.

only so long as the soil is as healthy as it was in the beginning, then they move on.

The gardens are usually within a couple hours walk of the village, though sometimes wind up a bit further. But the closer is the more ideal situation. Villages typically last about 25 years. When there is no room close left to garden, then the whole village will move closer to an area where gardens are needed. But more often than not, fallow gardens and village sites will be used again later in time.

Village types can vary from informal and campy to semi-permanent and large structures. The Yanomami live in a shabono: a large, primarily open roofed oval structure which the whole band occupies. The Tapirape, like some of the societies in the northeastern United States lived in multi-family long houses in an oval shape with the men's house in the center. The Jivaro have open walled structures in an oval surrounding the men's house. You'll have a large variation in structures, but the overall pattern is the same: an oval shape with the men's house in the center (we'll get back to the significance of this in the next section).

Whatever types of structures any given society has, the daily life is typically the same: families tend to sleep around their own fire pit (though sometimes men, adolescent boys and, occasionally, menstruating women will share their own dwelling instead of with their family) within the larger structure. In all the South American societies mentioned here, everyone sleeps in hammocks which are strung up in the structures. Throughout the day, you'll often find them there relaxing, joking, telling stories and spreading gossip, perhaps weaving cordage, baskets or nets, or fashioning some other type of hunting tool. Like the care free nomadic gatherer

hunters, they laugh, sing, sleep, eat, and are overall just very laid back and relaxed.

The talking and visiting will often go on late into the night while others sleep through the noise awaking long enough to bring the fire back to life and maybe eat at some leftovers from the days' food. They'll wake up early, bathe and meet back up. Men might clear a garden or go hunting while women might work in the garden or process foods at home. Most of this is all done by early afternoon when the lounging starts back up again.

Over time, the settled life tends to have a build up in tension or just gets overrun by heaps of scraps from food or whatever projects individuals have been working on. The response is to trek: to go out and live in the forest for a couple months as gatherer hunters again (though typically with a fair share of manioc flour). The change is always welcomed and leaves behind the tensions of village life.

But this is extremely important ecologically speaking as well. While the people are trekking, the forest re-enters the village. New life spreads in the decay of the left over waste. The social and ecological build up of village life is cleared and ready for things to start over again. The trek ties them back to that greater ecological awareness of a rooted society, reaffirming what is always kept in mind through hunting, gathering and general roaming.

There is a general coolness to these societies and they are still tied to that primal anarchy. But things are different. And in these subtleties we can see the consequences of domestication most clearly.



## WARS AND WITCHES

The semi-sedentary societies that we've been looking at are no doubt anarchistic in both their lack of politics and in their relative egalitarianism. But I want to emphasize that this is relative to the kind of egalitarianism of the nomadic gatherer hunters that we looked at earlier.

All settled societies challenge carry-

However, maintaining that relative egalitarianism does have its costs in both social and political terms.

There are certain social customs that societies develop to keep inequality from emerging. The personal belongings of the dead are either buried with them or burned after their death as a limit to the amount of 'wealth.' Most positions that are particularly influential are kept tem-



Shavante Big Men making simultaneous speeches.

ing capacity to some degree. Those who domesticate plants or animals are going to increase that more. How a society deals with this determines how sustainable it is. Horticultural societies rarely expand on such a scale that they face collapse the way that civilized societies do. That they remain small scale and that gathering and hunting still play a large part in their society and are ways to keep that higher level of autonomy.

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porary and often as short lived as possible. But maintaining that small scale society without strangers is likely the most important aspect and that takes some more evasive effort.

The settled life with increased access to storable food or foods that can be used to wean children earlier and places where mothers can easily raise multiple children without much concern for birth spacing leads inevitably to population

## CASE FILES IN ANARCHO-ETHNOGRAPHY 7: WHAT MAKES INDIANS LAUGH

"[The Yanomami] do have a sense of humor and are quite prone to jokes. To start with, they avoid telling the truth on principle (even among themselves). They are incredible liars. As a result, a long process of verification and inspection is required to validate a piece of information. When we were in the Parima we crossed a road. When asked about its destination, the young man who was guiding us said he didn't know (he traveled this path maybe fifty times).

"Why are you lying?"

"I don't know."

When I asked the name of a bird one day, they gave me the term that signifies penis, another time, tapir. The young men are particularly droll:

"Come with us into the garden. We'll sodomize you!"

During our visit with the Patanawateri, Hebewe calls over a boy around twelve years old:

"If you let yourself be sodomized, I'll give you my rifle."

Everyone bursts into laughter. It is a very good joke. Young men are merciless with visitors their age. They are dragged into the gardens under some pretext and there, held down while the others uncup their penis, the supreme humiliation. A running joke: You're slumbering innocently in your hammock when an explosion plunges you into a nauseating cloud. An Indian has just farted two or three centimeters from your face...

Life in the *chabunos* [village, often spelled shabono] is generally monotonous. As everywhere else, ruptures in the customary order—wars, festivals, brawls, etc.—do not occur every day. The most evident activity is the preparation of food and the processes by which it is obtained (bows, arrows, ropes, cotton). Let us not think for a minute that the Indians are undernourished. Between basic farming, hunting (game is relatively abundant), fishing and harvesting, the Yanomami get along very well. An affluent society, then, from a certain perspective, in that all people's needs are met, even more than met, since there is surplus production, consumed during celebrations. But the order of needs are ascetically determined (in this sense, the missionaries create an artificial need for unnecessary clothing among certain tribes). Furthermore, fertility, infanticide and natural selection assure tribes of a demographic optimum, we might say, as much in quantity as in quality. The bulk of infant morality occurs in the first two years: the most resistant survive. Hence, the flourishing, vigorous appearance of almost everyone, men and women, young and old. All of these bodies are worthy of going naked.

It is uniformly said in South America that Indians are lazy. Indeed, they are not Christians and do not deem it necessary to earn their bread by the sweat of their brow. And since, in general, they are most concerned with taking other people's bread (only then do their brows sweat), we see that for them joy and work fall outside of one another. That said, we should note that among the Yanomami, all the needs of society are covered by an average of three hours of work per person, per day (for adults). Lizot calculated this with

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chronometric rigor. This is nothing new, we already know that this is how it is in most primitive societies. Let us remember this at sixty when demanding our retirement funds.

It is a civilization of leisure since they spend twenty-one ours doing nothing. They keep themselves amused. Siestas, practical jokes, arguments, drugs, eating, taking a dip, they manage to kill time. Not to mention sex. Which is not to say that that is all they think about, but it definitely counts. *Ya peshi!* This is often heard: I feel like having sex!... One day, at Macava, a man and a woman struggle on the floor of a house. There are cries, screams, protests, laughter. The woman, who seems to know what she wants, has slipped a hand between the man's legs and grabbed a testicle. At his slightest move to flee, a slight squeeze. This must hurt, but she doesn't let go: "She wants to copulate! She feels like copulating!" And this, it seems, is indeed what happens."

-Pierre Clastres, *The Archeology of Violence*. Brooklyn: Autonomedia, 1994. Pgs. 20-21.

growth. Nearly all horticultural societies have these conditions, but most have a very minimal level of population growth. What that translates to socially is an increased number of taboos surrounding sex, large increases in infanticide, and, most importantly, warfare.

Warfare and violence are not the same thing. All humans are prone to violence, though some conditions, like overcrowding for example, bring out the worst in us. That doesn't make us evil or bullies; it just is what it is. What separates warfare from violence is that it is one group attacking another and it is planned. When a fight breaks out, it's usually spontaneous. Most people might approach each other angry, but there's usually not a whole lot of forethought in the whole ordeal. Either way, it's typically individuals who've got no other way or interest in avoiding a circumstance that involves the two of them directly. You see this more among gatherer hunters who only take matters into their own hands.

Warfare is made possible by the settling of societies as relationships solidify around the semi permanent structures they live within. Unlike the unrestricted

band membership among nomadic gatherer-hunters, group identity begins to emerge. As society breaks away from wildness through what it eats, it develops that same distance between itself and the 'Other'. It's easy for outsiders to become enemies, especially when things start to get tougher in your own life. But warfare is a bit more complicated: it doesn't just happen and there are specific reasons. Among horticulturalists, warfare is almost always retaliation against other bands or tribes for a wrongful death or serious illness, most often at the hands of a sorcerer.

Now you have sorcerers and you have witches. A sorcerer is like a witch but attacks another village. A witch is in a village and often is not even conscious of the witching substance within them. Both of them cast spells upon others that they have serious problems with. Either position can be held by anyone regardless of gender.

Regardless of what people think of these ideas, you can't say that this is just pointless superstition. Certainly the people truly believe it, but what reason do they have for not believing it? The accused witch can either be killed or

must compensate individuals; an accused sorcerer will be killed in a raid where others might be killed as well. Nearly all deaths are retaliated, so the cycle continues.

This whole mess serves a number of functions; most notably it serves as a check on population. Warfare results in death which results in fewer people. But in social terms, an increased interest in warfare also means an increased need for warriors. And for the first time, you start to get a preference for having boys instead of girls and for that group of boys to become fighters. With that preference there is a higher rate of female infanticide leading ultimately to fewer women. Fewer women means fewer children.

This is a check how a society will check itself from growing. In doing so, it isn't as much of a threat to the carrying capacity of its home and ultimately to itself.

There is a lot more meaning to having witches as well. Ecologically speaking, the witch is a reason for staying sanitary: you can have a spell cast upon your something that was a part of you: like feces or hair. People go off into the forest to 'do their business' and bury it. As villages can last up to 25 years, you would end up with enormous heaps of waste and a rather unpleasant situation in terms of comfort and health. A witch is a solidified mixture of all the negative feelings, anger, frustration, jealousy, and irritation between people. The witch is unrestrained and anti-social. It is everything that the villager shouldn't be. Yet what the witch represents is something that everyone has felt at some point. Settling down makes us semi-permanent neighbors and throws out our ability to just leave our arguments behind and go somewhere else. Tension runs high. The threat of witch accusations is one way to

keep people from letting those tensions out and to keep the peace. No one wants to be accused of witchcraft.

This is proto-morality in a place where the group becomes more of a solid entity than a band being comprised of whoever is around at the time. There is an increasing need for some kind of social institution where people turn to rather than to take care of their own matters. Socially speaking there emerges the idea that "thou shall not kill" unless it is under socially acceptable circumstances: warfare, duels, or executions which are based on group decisions.

But there is an underlying point here: social tensions run high when a society is under stress for whatever reason: too many people, not enough food, water, or not enough places for hunting and gardening. Stress here translates to ecological stress of some sort. A witch is an indicator for something larger that is going on and warfare is the reaction. This type of retribution-raiding-warfare cycle applies to indigenous societies throughout the Americas and largely where smaller scale horticulturalists exist, but in places like the South Pacific Islands where pigs or other domesticated animals play an important role, you get this kind of warfare and a far more ritualized form surrounding the growth of a plant or arguments over village boundaries. Crowding is a bigger issue and so is the question of land availability: warfare ends up taking the shape of larger raids with a much higher death toll (wiping out all the men or an entire society is rare, but is not unheard of) or can be taken to a battlefield.

## THE ORIGINS OF POLITICS AND ROOTS OF PATRIARCHY

Where morality begins to emerge, so



## CASE FILES OF ANARCHO-ETHNOGRAPHY 8: THE WORLD REFLECTED IN MYTH

Among more egalitarian societies, there is typically less of a drive to interpret and hand a certain view of the world to the youths. Their own reality is shaped through their own experience and the words of those around them, but nothing is handed over quite so easily. They don't need morality to tell them what is right and what is wrong. A part of myth is to help shape those kinds of ideas, but not to breed morality.

The functions of myth are simple: to give a way for people to entertain anti-social ideas, to pass on personal understandings of the world around them, and to entertain. The following myth is a classic trickster tale from the Winnebago which does all of the above. It shows the cost of arrogance, reminds us that 'plants' and 'animals' speak to us if we listen, is rooted in a particular place, and, most of all, it's funny.

Also, this is transcribed and translated as it is told. Note the difference between the way a story is told orally versus the way it is told in a predominantly literate and recorded story. When you can't rewind or turn back a page, repetition does the job.

"As [Trickster] went wandering around aimlessly he suddenly heard someone speaking. He listened very carefully and it seemed to say, 'He who chews me will defecate; he will defecate!' That was what it was saying. 'Well, why is this person talking in this manner?' said Trickster. So he walked in the direction from which he had heard the speaking and again he heard, quite near him, someone saying: 'He who chews me, he will defecate; he will defecate!' This is what was said. 'Well, why does this person talk in such fashion?' said Trickster. Then he walked to the other side. So he continued walking along. Then right at his very side, a voice seemed to say, 'He who chews me, he will defecate; he will defecate!' 'Well, I wonder who it is who is speaking. I know very well that if I chew it, I will not defecate.' But he kept looking around for the speaker and finally discovered much to his astonishment, that it was a bulb on a bush. The bulb it was that was speaking. So he seized it, put it in his mouth, chewed it, and then swallowed it. He did just this and then went on.

'Well, where is the bulb gone that talked so much? Why, indeed, should I defecate? When I feel like defecating, then I shall defecate, no sooner. How could such an object make me defecate!' Thus spoke Trickster. Even as he spoke, however, he began to break wind. 'Well this, I suppose, is what it meant. Yet the bulb said I would defecate, and I am merely expelling gas. In any case I am a great man even if I do expel a little gas!' Thus he spoke. As he was talking he again broke wind. This time it was really quite strong. 'Well, what a foolish one I am. This is why I am called Foolish One, Trickster.' Now he began to break wind again and again. 'So this is why the bulb spoke as it did, I suppose.' Once more he broke wind. This time it was very loud and his rectum began to smart. 'Well, it surely is a great thing!' Then he broke wind again, this time with so

much force, that he was propelled forward. 'Well, well, it may even make me give another push, but it won't make me defecate,' so he exclaimed defiantly. The next time he broke wind, the hind part of his body was raised up by the force of the explosion and he landed on his knees and hands. 'Well, go ahead and do it again! Go ahead and do it again!' Then, again, he broke wind. This time the force of the expulsion sent him far up in the air and he landed on the ground, on his stomach. The next time he broke wind, he had to hang on to a log, so high was he thrown. However, he raised himself up and, after a while, landed on the ground, the log on top of him. He was almost killed by the fall. The next time he broke wind, he had to hold on to a tree that stood near by. It was a poplar and he held on with all his might yet, nevertheless, even then, his feet flopped up in the air. Again, and for the second time, he held on to it when he broke wind and yet he pulled the tree up by the roots. To protect himself, the next time, he went on until he came to a large tree, a large oak tree. Around this he put both his arms. Yet, when he broke wind, he was swung up and his toes struck against the tree. However, he held on.

After that he ran to a place where people were living. When he got there, he shouted, 'Say, hurry up and take your lodge down, for a big warparty is upon you and you will surely be killed! Come let us get away!' He scared them all so much that they quickly took down their lodge, piled it on Trickster, and then got on him themselves. They likewise placed all the little dogs they had on top of Trickster. Just then he began to break wind again and the force of the expulsion scattered the things on top of him in all directions. They fell far apart from one another. Separated, the people were standing about and shouting to one another; and the dogs, scattered here and there, howled at one another. There stood Trickster laughing at all them till he ached.

Now he proceeded onward. He seemed to have gotten over his troubles. 'Well, this bulb did a lot of talking,' he said to himself, 'yet it could not make me defecate.' But even as he spoke he began to have the desire to defecate, just a very little. 'Well, I suppose this is what it meant. I certainly bragged a good deal, however.' As he spoke he defecated again. 'Well, what a braggart it was! I suppose this is why it said this.' As he spoke these last words, he began to defecate a good deal. After a while, as he was sitting down, his body would touch the excrement. Thereupon he got on top of a log and sat down there but, even then, he touched the excrement. Finally, he climbed up a log that was leaning against a tree. However, his body still touched the excrement, so he went up higher. Even then, however, he touched it so he climbed still higher up. Higher and higher he had to go. Nor was he able to stop defecating. Now he was on top of the tree. It was small and quite uncomfortable. Moreover, the excrement began to come up to him.

Even on the limb on which he was sitting he began to defecate. So he tried a different position. Since the limb, however, was very slippery he fell right down into the excrement. Down he fell, down into the dung. In fact he disappeared in it, and it was only with very great difficulty that he was able to get out of it. His raccoon-skin blanket was covered with filth, and he came out dragging it after him. The pack he was carrying on his back was covered with



dung, as was also the box containing his penis. The box he emptied and then placed it on his back again.

Then, still blinded by the filth, he started to run. He could not see anything. As he ran he knocked against a tree. The old man cried out in pain. He reached out and felt the tree and sang:

"Tree, what kind of a tree are you? Tell me something about yourself!"

And the tree answered, "What kind of tree do you think I am? I am an oak tree. I am the forked oak tree that used to stand in the middle of the valley. I am that one," it said. "Oh, my, is it possible that there might be some water around here?" Trickster asked. The tree answered, "Go straight on." This is what it told him. As he went along he bumped up against another tree. He was knocked backwards by the collision. Again he sang:

"Tree, what kind of a tree are you? Tell me something about yourself!"

"What kind of a tree do you think I am? The red oak tree that used to stand at the edge of the valley, I am that one." "Oh, my, is it possible that there is water around here?" asked Trickster. Then the tree answered and said, "Keep straight on," and so he went again. Soon he knocked against another tree. He spoke to the tree and sang:

"Tree, what kind of a tree are you? Tell me something about yourself!"

"What kind of a tree do you think I am? The slippery elm tree that used to stand in the midst of the others, I am that one." Then Trickster asked, "Oh, my, is it possible that there would be some water near here?" And the tree answered and said, "Keep right on." On he went and soon he bumped into another tree and he touched it and sang:

"Tree, what kind of a tree are you? Tell me something about yourself!"

"What kind of a tree do you think I am? I am the basswood tree that used to stand on the edge of the water. That is the one I am." "Oh, my, it is good," said Trickster. So there in the water he jumped and lay. He washed himself thoroughly.

It is said that the old man almost died that time, for it was only with the greatest difficulty that he found the water. If the trees had not spoken to him he certainly would have died. Finally, after a long time and only after great exertions, did he clean himself, for the dung had been on him a long time and had dried. After he had cleansed himself he washed his raccoon-skin blanket and his box."

-Paul Radin, *The Trickster*. New York: Schocken Books, 1971. Pgs. 25-28

does politics. As group size increases from the 25 or so of a nomadic band to the 100-150 or so of a village, it gets harder for every decision to be based on consensus. That is unless you have some kind of manipulation. Here you get Big Men (this is the common name as the position is almost always held by a man,

though it can be held by a woman in some societies), who are powerless when it comes to coercion, but they are upheld for their ability to influence people. The position is by no means permanent, and there can be more than one Big Man in a society.

Most small scale horticultural soci-

eties tend to be matrilineal. That means that group membership and property runs through the women's side of the family, not the men's. Gardens belong to a woman and are cleared by the men in her family and her husband. Yet what comes out of the garden often belongs to the man. There are no workers here and all are roughly in the same social position. But a Big Man will often take multiple wives and thus have more gardens and a larger network of kin groups. Having access to more gardens, they tend to have a larger stockpile of food which they might offer to those in need or hold large feasts with. The favors are exchanged as goods and are traded for support and social standing. The Big Man earns trust through giving and respect through their ability to speak and mediate arguments. They never possess coercive power, but influence can be powerful. Yet the autonomy of the individuals and of society as a whole can be seen in the relative powerlessness of the position: a Big Man lasts only so long as his input seems worth listening to and rarely is there a need to immediately fill the position if it's empty.

Though powerless, the position is still in the political realm: it is about influencing personal decisions into the flow of group consensus towards the will of an individual or small group. Like I said earlier, that individual is almost always a man. Take this, the higher value placed on warriors, and an emerging religious order that is preached more than rooted in self exploration and experience which is also passed down by men, and what starts to emerge is the roots of patriarchy.

No doubt about it, the men in horticultural societies have the upper hand. Or at least, they like to think so. But that thought translates to practice. Village

structures and thinking are built around the idea that men have some hold over women and society. Most villages have a separate men's house (though not necessarily where all the men live) in the center of the village. The men's house is the center for men's secret societies and a place for where boys become initiated into man-hood and are passed on the religious and quasi-political hold of the elder males. The house tends to be walled so that women can't see what is going on inside of it (or at least in theory they shouldn't be able to) but the men can see what is going on outside and in the other structures.

The position that the men grant themselves is rooted religiously as their creation myths emphasize how men came to power (even occasionally with stories about how it had to be stolen from the women). And that is something they often protect through threats of violence and gang rape upon prying or socially deviating women.

By all means, this looks like patriarchy. But in practice, things are a bit different. You have the basic elements of patriarchy on the men's side, but the difference lies with the women: they refuse to fall victim to the self-granted power of the males. They know their role in society and they know that they too have their grasp over the actions of men. Unlike most patriarchal societies, the women are not isolated in their own homes or gardens, but themselves hold strong alliances between each other. They stick together and are not afraid to take the offense against their husbands or other men.

The men have no monopoly on violence. Though they might wield it more often and gang rape can't always be defended against, the mystical rooting of their 'power' is no real mystery to the

women. That's not to say that they don't have interest or don't believe in or pass on their cultural knowledge (in fact, it is largely the mother that encourages aggression among boys), they just aren't starry eyed over or frightened by their husbands ritualized displays of power.

This is clearly where patriarchy is rooted, but its true origins lie with the pacification and isolation of individual women. The strength of women as a whole lies in their deep seeded connec-

The women in matrifocal societies have known each other all their lives and it is the men that have to earn their respect. All connections are through the women, and these are the relationships that tie men together. So if a husband does wrong to his wife, it is her family that he has to answer to.

But when society grows, so does the need for a larger structure. The control of that structure has been almost exclusively in the hands of men. Egalitarian-



Hadza women roasting roots

tions to each other. I mentioned earlier that most small scale horticultural societies are matrilineal, but most are also matrifocal. That means that not only are group identity and property passed through women, but that men come into the women's society, not the other way around (Nearly all nomadic gatherer hunters are ambilineal, who, like us, recognize paternal lineages on both their mother and their fathers side and have no set preference of moving with the husband or wives band, since they'll likely spend time with both and others).

ism is lost to the bureaucrats and their hierarchies. The mutual aid that once held society together becomes mutual dependency that eliminates difference. And this is the world of the farmers.

#### THE SOCIAL LIFE OF FARMERS

Anarchists since Kropotkin have held a deep urge for what they see as a life of simplicity yet still holding the 'benefits' of civilization. Kropotkin, the Russian Prince, yearned for something simpler and more humane than his aristocratic

#### CASE FILES IN ANARCHO-ETHNOGRAPHY 9: SEX AND (HOMO)SEXUALITY

I have no interest in proving that there is some innate sexual tendency among all humans, but how societies view sexuality can be relative to their means of subsistence. Recently Ted Kaczynski has made an effort to show that nomadic gatherer hunters look down upon homosexual relationships and thus homosexuals. I found his references questionable or falsely used and the implications even more irritating.

Marriage is universal in human society. What differs is its importance. It is common knowledge that most people at some point will cheat on their spouses. For the most part, this is known and accepted so long as it is out of sight. It is not uncommon for being caught to end in divorce or fights. Most divorces, like marriages, are hardly fantastic ceremonies. Many really have no noticeable sort of commencement and begin and end when the two involved say it does.

Homosexuality is a bit more complicated. In smaller scale societies, you aren't as likely to come across a person who solely identifies as a homosexual. This does happen and almost universally that person is accepted as all others, though they'll likely take the gender roles attributed to the opposite sex and carry on all the same. But most homosexual relations are things that just happen. For example, Colin Turnbull noticed that the young Mbuti boys who slept together would occasionally 'make a mess on each other' while sleeping. Or sex play among children might just as easily take place among same sex children as it does with each other. A rare glimpse into female homosexuality comes from Marjorie Shostak's primary !Kung informant, Nisa, who talked about her homosexual encounters the same way that men might. There are little to no taboos on the subject, and it seems inevitable that groups who spend most of their time together may share these kinds of moments.

Among horticulturalists, homosexuality tends to take on a whole other level with gender roles strictly for homosexuals. Among some societies, like the Sambia, homosexuality becomes ritualized and is the primary type of sex in society with heterosexuality being a brief part of their lives.

What folks like Ted have done is take a lack of information and occasional spoken taboos or jokes as the truth without digging deeper. I came across one instance that seemed to me indicative of the real situation: missionaries and outsiders in general had been so outright discouraging of homosexuality that they simply covered it up. This comes from Clayton and Carole Robarchek living among the Huaorani who observed two men one evening who "were standing in the middle of the airstrip as the soccer game was winding down. Tuka bent over from the waist to tie his shoes, and Kogi laid across Tuka's back and put his arms around him. Tuka looked towards us with an embarrassed grin. The two spoke softly, and we caught the word "kowudi" as they straightened up. They proceeded down the airstrip, with Kogi keeping his arm around Tuka's neck." (*Waarani: the Contexts of Violence and War*, Fort Worth: Harcourt

Brace, 1998, pg. 57.) *Kowdi* translates to outsiders and this was not a sole incident. Homosexuality, like all sexuality, is something that happens about and is joked about like anything sexual tends to be. This is a far cry from the homophobia that some have argued is universal outside of our modern society.

life. In his attempt to reject his royal upbringing, he romanticized what he saw as the opposite: the rural peasant communal life.

Among the recently industrializing world, the yearning for a past golden age never went too deep. For the dreamers and revolutionaries, most could hardly see beyond the factories while others saw rows of crops as their savior, their liberators from the oppression of authority. Unfortunately, both of these ideals still hold today though we have access to a much deeper sense of human history. The golden age of the farm simply did not happen. Most of it is inseparable from aristocracies and earlier kingdoms. And that applies equally to indigenous kingdoms and proto-states.

Farms and gardens are far from being one in the same. The gardens of horticulturalists are seeded in and with the forest while the fields of farmers are the antithesis of the forest or the prairie: they are planned and meticulously controlled environments. Their social life is hardly different. All the things that we see emerge in small scale horticultural societies become daily reality: political and religious control, hierarchy, bureaucracy, warfare, and patriarchy. And there are more: you get the origins of work, the economy, social debt, a drive towards sameness, specialization, and a highly organized division of labor. Most importantly, growing villages turn into emerging cities and the full time military is turned inwards with police. We should never forget that the walls of Jericho and of all empires since were to keep civil-

ians in as much as to keep outsiders out.

These societies have to have this kind of force and the reason is simple: the life of the worker and the peasant is hard. Villages grow larger and the heavy work falls onto a separate class of peasants. Among indigenous kingdoms, the elites are a typically small group of people who also control distribution. The position of farmers is held by the majority of the society and most of who serve as the army are not exempted from this drudgery. And this has its costs as well: the larger a society becomes, the more specialized its crops which means less options you have for food. Health takes a dive as larger more permanent villages with domesticated animals and issues of sanitation breed diseases.

Work in the gardens or with domesticated animals becomes the work of both men and women. The overall role of the woman takes a turn towards domesticity. Their job becomes more devoted to the reproduction of society literally through making and processing foods and turn into child producers rather than the highly valued role of the mother in smaller scale societies. Children are born as field hands and future soldiers, bred as servants of society rather than individuals worthy in their own rite. Exchange is taken to a new level as the many specialists create markets to peddle their goods.

These societies can start out small like the Cahokians, Mayans or Anasazi who settled as gatherer hunters and incorporated gardens into their lives. Their growing populations were not kept in the ways that the small scale

horticulturalists worldwide had done successfully. Among the Classic Maya, they were able to support large religious centers and cities off of large gardens before they made the quick change to agricultural fields with drainages only to collapse 200 years later.

Agricultural societies are far more ecologically and socially exhausting than horticultural ones. As society grows and becomes more politically complex, so does the need for workers and soldiers to get their jobs done right and efficiently. There is a drive towards sameness that comes through a more solidified religion with angry and vengeful gods and the ability of the political leaders to coerce workers and peasants into doing their work at the risk of death or enslavement.

You can see this among the early cities of our civilization's own past, or you can see this among the indigenous civilizations and empires that have and do exist. These societies are defined by their political and religious order. Among the many African empires, like the Zulu or the Bantu, there are established and powerful kings. The role of the king is a step above the chief. Though some small scale horticultural societies do have chiefs, they tend to be closer to Big Men and the position hardly more solidified. But there are exceptions, among the Trobriand Islanders and among the Maori, chiefs are upheld like kings: commoners must stand lower than them, often cannot make eye contact, and among the Maori, they are often held to be so powerful in a religious sense that they become taboo themselves and have to be fed with tools to avoid impurity.

These chiefs, like kings, inherit their status, but earn their positions through the image of power that they uphold. But they never have as much power as they

do in times of war. And here is where we have the birth of the State.

## ETERNAL WAR AND THE BIRTH OF THE STATE

In nearly all horticultural societies, the only time that a chief holds any solid power is during warfare. As I said earlier, chiefs in these kinds of societies and kings inherit their status but must earn their position. Unlike the Big Men, they must be more than just influential: they must be prominent and skilled warriors. The old western ideal of the esteemed hunter or warrior taking the lead roles in society doesn't emerge until here. In earlier societies, that kind of status was made impossible through ridicule because they know everyone has their abilities and their streaks of bad luck.

What starts out as a circumstantial position and power can only lead to more. As soon as the battle or raid is over, the war chief has lost all of his (this is a role almost exclusively held by men) control. The only way that they can expand that control is by increasing warfare. It's no mystery that positions of power only come with a larger society. Agricultural societies eliminate the taboo and customs that keep population in check because they need more people. They need more bodies as part of the emerging Megamachine of human bodies, more bodies that can be lost on the frontier of an expanding empire or can colonize the smaller scale bands of gatherer hunters and horticulturalists that surround 'their territory'.

When those checks are lifted, massive population explosions are a matter of inevitability. The domestication of plants and animals brought a 975 percent increase in human population bringing a total global population of 8 million





by 8000 BC barreling on to a billion by 1800 AD and now over 6 billion. More people, means more food which means more land which means warfare and expansion. As the population grows, so does the presence of war. It doesn't necessarily take the emerging power of the king to continue to wage war: war becomes an increasingly felt necessity. That applies to our civilization as much as it has to the empires of the Zulu, Bantu, Maya, Aztec, Cahokia, Hopewell, Anasazi, Chaco, Mesopotamia, Indochina, and so on.

The State, with its permanent and imposed order of coercive power, is born through eternal war. That's not just war against outsiders, but a war against looming wildness, war against treason and disloyalty, a war waged as much on civilians as the would be conquerors or even those living more egalitarian and autonomous lives on the outside that threaten the existence of a willing work force by their existence.

The spirituality that once tied us to the world at large is turned against us as the wholeness of the world turns to the oneness of god/s. No longer is our spiritual awareness a way of connecting with the life and wildness that flows between living beings, but it is turned upwards into the sky or deep into scattered places, but it is always external and always distant. We come to fear the created 'Other' as our idea of Self merges with our civilization. Just as horticulturalists begin to fear the world outside their gardens as they become dependent and hunt predators as trophies to their own courage, we fear the wildness that we're born into. Our escape from such a savage, primal state becomes the earmark of our evolution. And our fears haunt us and allow the State to come in and manipulate them so that we will rightfully give up our

autonomy for their protection.

There never has been a social contract; we never willingly and knowingly gave up our wildness for a civilized life: the domesticators have only tricked us from birth.

And this is where civilization emerges: from within the city and its countryside, from the order that is necessary to make both possible. The solidified control of the State is what civilization needed to become complete as we know it now. That is where all its roots come to fruition.

This is where we step into the world we know: the world of control and manipulation. The idea is put in place through cosmology and then actualized by emerging technology. Morality was the eyes and ears of the State before we created the technology to do the same. Steel tools were crafted to ease the chopping of forests and bodies. Guns, railroads, and ships simplified expansion and conquest. Having long ago buried our adaptivity, civilizations just keep on growing and expanding. They don't have the will or the way to stop.

There are no ways to downscale this beast or prolong it for long. Just as the Russian Revolution couldn't change the fact that a millennia of over farming the same area meant a decreasing amount of crops for the peasantry. They brought in machines and chemicals, but those could only prolong for so long before they could rejoin the global economy or die. But even this option is fading quickly as global collapse becomes our reality.

And that makes it even more important that we start paying attention to these things now.

THE FUTURE PRIMITIVE AND A QUESTION OF SUSTAINABILITY



As we rapidly approach the inevitable collapse of our civilization, the implications of this critique become all the more important. We need to ask what does it mean in terms of our own future and how does that influence our decisions and directions now.

I think the most important conclusion to draw from this is that domestication is not some monolithic and irreversible event in the past, but a constant reality that we recreate daily through our own lives. Realizing that we are agents of our own reality rather than passive actors or victims is the most important thing. For me, the logical conclusion is to act on this through rewilding and resisting (see my 'Agents of Change: Primal War and the Collapse of Civilization' later in this issue).

But the question must be raised, how applicable are these lessons to our own lives?

When I say that I want to live as a

nomadic gatherer hunter, the most common reaction is that it's simply not doable at this point. The biggest issue is population. The only thing six billion people can do is die. My hope is that the planet doesn't go with us. But assuming we take some agency and bring the collapse while working to bring people back into their own wildness, then the much talked about 'die off' might be avoidable. Honestly though, I don't see the massive die off being as much of an issue unless the civilizers have their way and take their empires to the logical conclusion: complete destruction of all life.

Most likely, I think we're going to see a larger decrease in births than the often proposed number of deaths. But there is no question that a lot of people will die in the process. As any challenge to carrying capacity, this is an unfortunate matter of inevitability and the impact of which we can only work to lessen. Most people take this as an argument for reforming civilization, but even if that





were possible, it only makes a larger die off inevitable.

How civilization collapses isn't the topic right here, what life might be like after the collapse is. We can expect that the population over the first hundred years will drop drastically and likely stabilize. So the question is how people might live. The life way of the nomadic gatherer hunter is no doubt the most sustainable way of living. As we've seen it is the most adaptive and most egalitarian way of being. For both social and ecological reasons, it is important. The idea that there isn't enough wildness left for this way of living is actually more of an argument for it. If wildness is running thin, then it is all the more important to adapt a nomadic way of life. That keeps any particular area from being overrun even further and requires more social fluidity to challenge the social hold-overs of our own civilization. The more active effort we take now to help rewind places or let them grow back over, the better things look for human society in the future.

A lot of anarchists and folks who are skeptical of how much longer this civilization can last talk about the importance of gardening. I'm a bit reserved about this not necessarily because of theoretical reasons but because of practical issues. The one message that I hope people can learn from the history of domestication is that humans, like any other animal, aren't meant to control the world around it and dictate its relationships. No doubt a horticultural society is largely sustainable and far more in touch with wildness than any of us, but the amount of effort it takes to learn about gardening and the effort taken to plant them seems far more research and work than it would take to spread native seeds. Native plants grow with their

SPECIES TRAITOR NO. 4

bioregions: they come together with a number of other species to function together as a whole. There is no question about their ability to sustain themselves.

A garden is invasive. Especially a garden that takes the plants that we know now. The gardens of horticulturalists work with the forest, they are built around the importance of not abusing the soil. You can't simply take the plants that we know and plant them in these types of gardens. Tomatoes, corn, beans, grains and the like need certain environments to grow. Some native species exist in some places, but most of what we have needs gardens that look more like mini-fields: they are weeded, planted in rows, and the like. So I think the real question is how much effort is needed to plant and maintain this kind of garden versus the amount of effort taken to spread native seeds and let the forest grow on its own.

I think there is also an issue about whether or not this kind of society is going to be more vulnerable to raids than a nomadic one. While I have a personal preference for the life and wildness of a nomadic gathering and hunting life way, I don't have any flat out opposition to gardener societies. I have no intent of preaching to the horticulturalists and trying to convert them to gatherer hunters. My critique is not aimed at them, it is meant for those of us who are living within civilization and are facing the oncoming collapse. If we're looking to go anywhere, I wonder why we wouldn't want to go for the most egalitarian and sustainable way of living.

True, this takes a number of changes in our own lives and that'll take more than turning to the garden instead. But we need to think in the long term. What kind of societies do we want our children and the future primitives to be living in?

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We would be arrogant to think that the organic flow of society wouldn't take the turn that nearly every other horticulturalist society has: towards warfare, increased infanticide, and the like. Of course, they're all fine with these things, but that's a cost of challenging carrying capacity. And these things will no doubt arise again if growth is to be checked. If we are talking about the societies we want to create or live in, then the least we can do is to talk honestly about them.

Agriculture is no longer really an option. It is highly degrading socially and ecologically and one of the primary reason past civilizations have collapsed and likely the reason our own will collapse. Forests are cut, taking their interlocking relationships with them, the soil is dug deep, and lies exposed in the sun, drainages are cut causing the remaining bits of healthy soil rain to run off into the diverted and drying rivers. The only reason it has lasted this long is that there have been new places to move to and chemicals to delay the inevitable. The vast fields that feed this civilization are running dry and simply cannot support the fields they once did. There is not the room for recreating this kind of living even on a micro-scale. Nor would I hope many people would want to.

There is still some time to react to what we know about civilization and about wildness. There is time to work to apply some of these implications in our own lives and on the large scale.

What keeps us from getting from here to there is the rooting of their domestication. When we see it for what it is and we have the ability to undo it. We have the ability to attack. That is something that cannot be taken from us, we only believe it has. What we do with this understanding is in our own hands.

<sup>1</sup> Kropotkin, Petr, *Mutual Aid: a factor of evolution*. Boston: Extending Horizons, undated [1902]. Pgs. 104-5. Note that when Kropotkin was writing this, 'savage' was a schematic definition of gatherer/hunters and some horticulturalists rather than the derogatory one it is now.

## *I Don't Believe in Machines*

-Sky Hiatt

I believe in the lost times. I believe in memory and sensation.  
I believe in calling out. I believe in dreams. I believe in sudden hope that does not die, that cannot die. I believe in courage. And sacrifice.  
And the humility of one species among many. I believe all dams will burst, all rivers will run free. I believe in the wild heart. I believe tomorrow will be different than today. I believe in the mind of thunder and the sound of rain. I believe the Earth knows what we are thinking. I believe in the plunge of waterfalls. And the knowledge stored in trees and I believe they remember everything they've seen. I believe the wind is speaking. I believe in vision. I believe in utter beauty. I believe small stones are polished by a patient sea. I believe things can change suddenly. Unexpectedly. I believe we were meant to be wild. I believe so many things.

I don't believe machines will ever understand me.

SPECIES TRAITOR NO. 4

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