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THE PLOW AND ITS INFLUENCE ON  
THE RISE OF CIVILIZATION

by  
Tom Langdon

In the magical land of Toosuiter, Butane worked his small garden. He worked with his little digging stick clearing the patch of eternal rock that seemed to multiply from one season to the next. Then he'd sing the little redundant ditty:

"Little poke here, little seed there, little poke here, little seed there."

He planted his seeds and delicately covered them up with the fresh fertile earth. Yams were a delicacy. They really "tasted good" with the fresh meat that Pamela, his wife, would hunt in the surrounding forest. It was a magical life, and the land and the forest provided everything.

One day while Butane was resting in the shade drinking some tooter and Pamela was setting her snares in the forest, Eyesack--an old peddler from a distant village--stopped to visit. Eyesack was always selling something. Most people in his village ignored him, they thought him to be too old to know anything. But Butane was always friendly to him, and kept him company while Pamela was trapping and hunting.

"My son," Eyesack said, "I have something here that will make you the lord and king of the whole land!"

"Oh my," replied Butane, "Why would I want to be a lord and king? What is a lord and a king anyway?"

Eyesack described the nobility system to Butane, which he had heard about from Randy the Raven, who had learned it while perched on a windowsill listening to the Englishman explain the lord and king concept to his wife. Afterwards he reached around to his kelty pack which was strapped on his back with collared peccary

sinew, and pulled out a rolled up piece of parchment tied yellow ribbon.

"My son, what I have here are the blueprints for the

"A what?" replied Butane.

"A plow. It's a magical instrument that will make you You'll be able to produce so much food, people will be begging to live next to you and swim in your pool. And it's a buy".

"What is a 'buy'?" asked Butane, "Is it like a yam?"

"No boy, buying is giving you something of value for the My God, you don't know anything. But...for a price...I'll give you."

"This plow, Eyesack, what does it do?"

"Oh, it's a marvelous device my son. It will enlarge your garden a hundred paces and make all the earth fall into long little rows. It will stretch your gardens to the forest, forest even! The forest will all be food."

"But what about the trees and the meat in the forest," Butane. "What will this plow do to them?"

"Well, my son, the trees will have to go. But don't worry there's plenty of trees over there and all the meat can use the forest!"

"Oh, I don't know Eyesack," Butane stammered. "Pamela will be so mad if I take her forest. She gets so mad when she has to go to that forest. The meat there doesn't taste as good, and anyway she's afraid of the giant four-legged rolling pin."

"My son, trust me, have I ever lied to you?"

"Well...no you haven't...but..."

"I'll make you a good deal. You give me a pound of meat and I'll give you the blueprints for the plow. Even better, I'll help you finance it. It will be a prototype. Maybe we can even mass produce it. Just think Butane, up there on a scratch script, sign Eyesack and Butane Company, dealers of fine plows!"

"Well, I just don't know..." quivered Butane.

"My son, the world's waiting for this. Let's get started, we've dallied long enough. Now the first thing that we need... ~~humm~~, let's see...here it is, two young saplings three meters long and as thick as a cow's hoof."

"What's a cow's hoof, Eyesack?" questioned Butane.

"Don't rush things, my son, the time will come soon enough to know that!"

The years passed and, indeed, Butane and Pamela became wealthy. The forest was now flat and filled with corn, beans and squash, and the fields stretched for as far as the eye can see. People were buying Butane's harvest by the bushel. In return they gave him sugar, dog meat, and life savers.

Poor Butane, however, didn't look or feel too good. The years of forcing the plow through the hard fields had taken much strength and he could hardly stand up straight. It even took a great amount of energy to pry his hands from the handles of the plow. And poor Pamela had raised nineteen children and there was not a one, since the first two, that were over one plow in height, and most of the children had lost their teeth at an early age. She no longer

hunted for there really wasn't much to hunt anyway. The Eyesack and Butane Plow Company had cut all the trees so that they could mass produce the magical plow. Butane was the Test Plower, and that was his official title in the company. Eyesack wouldn't let anyone into the plant, except during social functions.

Most of the children had helped Butane in the fields when they were growing up. Futan, the oldest and tallest of the children, was the hardest worker, but he was offered a scholarship to play the tuber game for the city college, and it was too good of an offer to pass up. All of the other children, except the young one, li'l Beav, went to the city to seek their fortunes. Pamela's breast milk ran out years ago, and she fed the Beav with a milk substitute produced by Eyesack and Eyesack Bottling Company.

The next spring while Butane was turning over the dry earth, he collapsed and died. It took twelve full-sized men to pry his hands from the plow's handles. Pamela thought that Butane would have to be buried with the plow, but luckily she had a bottle of Eyesack's K2 jelly. That, with a bit of imagination, got Butane's hands off the handles.

Futan dropped out of college, and brought back his wife, who had only 6 didas, Bitzi. Futan and Bitzi had grown accustomed to city life, so they weren't the best farm family. Futan had grown up after being pampered as a tuber game star, and Bitzi spent most of her time washing her hair with different dyes and trying on different shoes. Pamela just rocked in the Eyesack and Eyesack rocking chair she had received at Butane's burial from Eyesack the Eyesack, with the Beav on her lap.

The months passed, until one day Eyesack the Younger stopped for a visit. Futan was just coming in from the fields. He had hired some men to do the work for him, although to make sure that they all worked and didn't steal his crops, he spent several time pegs in the fields watching them. But the heat was high, the work was done, and it was time to relax.

"Futan, you know your father and my father were great friends. Although my father and yours were demcils apart in age, it gives me great joy, along with a bit of sorrow, that they both died within the same cleema. It was meant to be. Now you and I must continue."

"Futan," Eyesack the Younger continued, "I want us to pick up where our fathers left off. I have this great idea how to make the plow work better. It's much easier, and it will produce much more food."

"Well, what is it?" Futan asked with a gleam in his eye.

"It's the simple cow. The cattle post has had them for years, feeding them, butchering them, and selling the meat to the Digdugs across the river."

"How is one of those ugly animals going to pull a plow?"

"Futan, you're a genius! I was thinking that the cow could push the plow. Pulling the plow with a cow seems alot better! Futan, there's a great future here. I can see it now, carved in stone, 'Eyesack and Futan Plow Cows'!"

And so it happened, just like their fathers before them. Eyesack supplied the bankroll, and Futan was the cow tester. But

there were some difficulties encountered. How does one teach a first plow cow to pull the plow? Bitzi seemed to know exactly to do.

"Oh, you boys don't know nothin'. All you gotta do is tickle him right here like this," as Bitzi lifted up his tail. It was amazing the way that cow took off with that plow and pushed it through the earth with the strength of ten men.

"Futan," Eyesack said, slapping Bitzi on the back, "I think this is the beginning of a beautiful friendship!"

One thing that Eyesack and Futan didn't think of, or were not prepared for, was that if the cow could plow like ten men, it would also eat and drink like ten men.

"Well, Eyesack, what do I do now? I thought it was such a great idea, that I bought ten cows and now I can barely feed them and my family." And in the same breath, Futan said, "My yields are down, Eyesack. The corn is puny looking, the squash is shriveled, the beans are falling off before ripe, and we can't grow what the cows eat. Alfalfa doesn't taste good anyway. But I have more alfalfa fields than anything else! It hasn't rained in weeks and I spend way too much time and energy fixing the irrigation system. I can't buy any meat anymore, I'm going to have to cull some of the skinny cows just so I can feed Bitzi and the boys. The Beav doesn't seem to like your powdered milk. I should have sold the farm when papa died. I could have made my living as a pro tuber player."

"Futan, if you want better yields, I think I have some ideas here that will help your sick soil. It comes from the great



magician Pfizer."

"Pfizer," exclaimed Futan, "The holy man of crop yields!

Oh, thank you Eyesack, you're so up on everything!"

And it came to pass, Futan's yields increased, at least for the next several years. But the land was like his father; the years had caused it much damage and it was near death. Futan knew that his father, at one time, had used a slash-and-burn technique to help his land, but there was hardly anything to burn on his land. Even the weeds didn't want to grow. Only the river banks had trees, but you couldn't plant the crops there, that was for sure! The rains were unpredictable, and it had been clignons since the yields had been drenched with rain. And now a new disaster was unfolding, unknown to Futan, the dreaded corn smut and rootworm.

Story has it that an old evil man living high up in the hills had raised the corn smut and rootworms to get even with the people who had destroyed the forests and grasslands. Late one moonless night, he came down from the mountain and swam down the river with three zutus of the smut and worms strapped to his back. He ran into the fields and scattered the contents of the zutus all over the land. But that wasn't all. Along with the zutus, he opened a vial containing the eggs of the green bean eating bug, and threw the vial in the air scattering the eggs far and wide.

A short time later, Futan's now meager crops were all dying. He was at the end, he thought. That is, until Eyesack came by with a gleam in his eye.

"Futan, the news spreads rapidly. I hear that bugs are

destroying all your fields. It's amazing how fast news spread to the city. You should give up this farm and come back to the city, it has everything. Why there's even talk of a way to control the number of children you have!"

"Eyesack, I don't have to worry about that, Bitzi is safe now, that she wouldn't be able to get poco anyway!"

What I need, Eyesack, is somehow to get rid of the worms and bugs. My beans and corn are nearly ruined!" As Futan began to sob, he placed the tip of his steel knife next to his head.

"Futan, my old friend, don't be too hasty. A miracle has happened, as it always does. Last night an alien dropped right out of the sky and landed in town. There was a great commotion. This large noisy bird landed right on the main street of town. This huge blonde haired man jumped out of the bird. He was wearing these glass circles over his eyes, and made a big toothy grin. "Hi folks," he said, "I'm Smilin' Jack, where the hell am I and where can I get a shot of whiskey?"

We were all confused for several moments, but then they all began yelling and screaming with delight! The man wanted to go to the tooter. A reason to go to the tooter, what a spectacle!

Well, let me tell you, I was the first to introduce myself and we soon became great friends. He mentioned something about getting lost in the clouds while he was spraying a field in the wherever that is. He was in the clouds for a long, long time before he saw the lights of the city.

"As a matter of fact I saw him this morning and told him about your bugs. Oh, my gosh, Futan, here he comes now! Look up to

in the sky!"

And sure enough, coming low out of the rising sun was this large red bird followed by a trail of smoke as far as the eye could see. The big red bird streaked up and down Futan's fields, dropping smoke all over the crops until the fields were in a fog. The bird began to lower and then touched the ground, right in front of Futan's house. It made its way to Eyesack and Futan. Bitzi ran out of the house with the li'l Beav screaming behind her. Futan hid behind the only tree in the front yard, trembling with fear from the noise. The big bird stopped and out jumped the blonde haired man.

Walking up to Eyesack, he threw his arm around him and said, "Hi there, Eyesack. Hey you, behind the tree, quit your quivering, I'm Smilin' Jack, crop dusting and barnstorming is my game. Hi babe," putting his arm around Bitzi, "got any cold tooter? Boy that stuff's good. Gotta wash down this insecticide. Boy this place is really a dump. Stop that screaming kid, I hate kids!"

Futan was still quivering behind the tree. "Hey, I told you to quit your quivering, Smilin' Jack has just saved your crops, all the bugs should be dead in about thirty seconds. Ah, I love the smell of insecticide in the morning. You know that smell, it smells like....life. Makes me feel good all over and it sure can cure a hangover."

Well, you can probably guess the rest. Smilin' Jack stayed around, and signed a multiyear contract with Eyesack as a professional consultant, whatever that is. He showed everybody how to make their

own cropdusters, central pivot irrigation systems, how to use the fuel and how to put a lid on fuel production so that it was more valuable. He came up with the idea of raising cows in the dark with no lights, and then butchering them while still young. He introduced the honky tonk, child labor in the cities and the corporate farming concept. He brought foreigners into the valley to buy the land, and see if they could do any better--they couldn't do any worse.

He and Bitzi got along quite well, especially when Futan sold the farm and disappeared. Story has it that he took the last money that he got from selling the farm and bought a little piece of land right on the banks of a river, far away. Nobody saw him for years, until one day, down by the river, a water skier pointed him out on the bank with a stick.

"Hey old man, what are you doing?"

Futan looked up for a moment as the skier streaked by and then went back to his digging.

"They'll be sorry," said Futan to himself. "They've dug up all the land, but they're not going to destroy my little garden." "Just a little poke here, a little seed there, a little poke here, a little seed there..."

Nobody ever saw Futan again. Eyesack got this great idea to dam up the river and make a recreation area out of it. Smilin' Jack was now his business partner, and Eyesack had set him up as the main attraction of his Boardwalk, down on the shores of Eyesack Lake. Bitzi and Smilin' Jack had broken up several years

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before and she was living with the Beav, who had married Eddie. Everybody lived in the city, nobody farmed anymore. There was no need to farm, food was imported from foreign lands. Not only that, but chemical substitutes were used now as food. Eyesack the Third was known throughout the land as "The Food Substitute King," using the slogan, "It may not be real, but it sure tastes good!"

Well, so comes to completion the story of civilization as we know it today. As is true with all stories of civilization, there's happy times and sad times. We have to just take it for what it is, something of our own making. Sometimes I wonder though, what would it be like if it weren't for the invention of the plow?

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