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Steadman and Ross Critical Review
What Makes Civilisation? HPAR4006

I have decided to write my critical literature review on Chapter 2 of Steadman and Ross' 2017 Book entitled 'Ancient Complex Societies', where the full bibliographic citation can be seen here: Ross, J., & Steadman, S. (2017). 'Human Cultural Institutions- Critical Elements in Complex Society' in, *Ancient Complex Societies*. New York: Routledge, pp. 6-15. The main focus of this particular chapter aims to address how it is apparent that there are 4 main cultural factors that influence the social organisation of a particular culture or civilisation. These 4 factors include kinship relations, religious beliefs, economic systems and political structures (6). However, it is also worth noting how this chapter explicitly says how the latter 2 of these cultural factors apply heavily to more complex civilisations, including Ancient Egypt.

As previously mentioned, it is apparent that this chapter heavily discusses how the factor of kinship relations influence the organisation of a society. For example, this chapter discusses how kinship ties become "less influential" in state societies, whilst other factors that define one's identity begin to flourish, although this chapter mentions how the reasons for this are both complicated and run alongside other factors that both 'cause' and result from increasing societal complexity (6). Another point that this chapter discusses on kinship relations is how there are 3 main factors that provide to these relations, including social identity (6), ownership of property and power and politics (7). It is clear that this is prominent in Ancient Egypt, where the pharaoh of Egypt had vast amounts of power over the rest of its population, and how his 'will was supreme' and how he governed by 'royal decree' (Augustyn et al, 2016).

As mentioned in my introduction above, another key factor that this chapter touches upon is how religious beliefs influence social organisation. For example, the first point this chapter makes on this factor is how religion is operated and practices in different ways across varying societies, where less complex societies featured mostly household worship, whereas more complex societies include this, but also feature more grand, general and public religious practices (7). This is clear in Ancient Egypt, where there is vast amounts of evidence showing household worship in villages such as Deir el-Medina, but how there were also extravagant public practices annually, in festivals such as the Opet Festival to Amun, Mut and Khonsu. Another point that this chapter makes on religion is how the culture's religion is rather reflective of the culture itself (7). This too can be found in Ancient Egypt, where Egypt was a very agriculture-based society, and they worshipped Osiris, who is a god dedicated to a whole host of attributes of their lives, including agriculture (Hill, 2008).

Another factor that this chapter mentions that influences social organisation is economic systems. Firstly, it mentions how economic institutions are the 'root of social organization' (8). This chapter also touches upon how one thing that's fundamental to economic organization is how the civilisation makes use of the various resources at its disposal, including raw materials and subsistence (8). This is clearly an accurate point to make, as this could be seen in Ancient Egypt, where Egypt had a large quantity of decorative stone, copper and lead at their disposal, which they used continuously throughout the civilisation's lifespan (crystalinks.com, 2012). This section also mentions how exchange played a large role in social relationships, as economies were 'interconnected' with social institutions (10). This too is apparent in Ancient Egypt, as the civilisation had various trade routes, such as trading with Nubia for gold during its Predynastic period (crystalinks.com, 2012).

The final factor that this chapter touches upon about influencing social organisation is political structures. The main aspect of this factor that is mentioned is how although political organization can't be separated from social or economic behaviours, it also is linked to leadership and political control (12). It is evident that this could be easily linked to Ancient Egyptian civilization, as throughout the lifespan of this particular civilisation, there was always a leader in charge of the country, who had full power and political control over everyone- this person was known as a pharaoh.

It is rather clear that this particular chapter of this book could be seen as factually accurate and reliable to use in the future, as it is rather evident that many of the points that it makes could easily be linked to a whole host of Ancient complex civilisations, including Ancient Egypt and the Inuit Tribe of the Arctic Circle, in many different aspects and from many different viewpoints.

Bibliography

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