

This chapter is the first in Trigger's *Early Civilisations* and is divided into eight sub-sections. First Trigger outlines an abstract of the book followed by a section detailing how early civilisations have been studied in the past, particularly comparing Egyptology and anthropology. Trigger challenges the notion that explaining only similarities between civilisations is more important than explaining the differences and *visa versa*. He states that his work assumes that both are equally important. The section continues by outlining the arguments for and against the evolutionary development of civilisations. Trigger concludes the section by outlining his own opinion, that evolution of civilisations is not unilateral and that both similarities and differences should be considered. The next section looks at creating a definition of early civilisation, the use of hierarchy and literacy as identifying factors as well as the importance of distinguishing early civilisations from the other types of pre-industrial societies. The third section begins with Trigger's observation that early civilisations can be split into two general types: city states and territorial states. Both are defined in terms of geography, hierarchy, economy along with other features and examples are given of the civilisations within Trigger's sample. Trigger speculates on the reasons for their development and the section concludes that there may only be a limited number of ways a complex society may develop due to the limitations imposed by 'the varying costs of decision-making and political control in different kinds of societies' (Trigger 1993:14). In the next section, Trigger explains how he came to conduct a comparative study as well as the criticisms against them and how Trigger avoided these problems. This is followed by a section explaining his methodology. Trigger explains how he researched, where he focused his attention, what terminology he uses, and his justifications for these decisions. He also explains where and how he changed his methods and why, including examples from several cultures throughout the section. The next section is the shortest, dealing with the sources Trigger uses in his research and their usefulness as well as the unreliability of contemporary written sources. The second to last section debates the various ways modern bias can influence the interpretation of evidence along with examples from several cultures. Finally, the chapter has a section on why Trigger thinks his conclusions will be debated or criticised and recommends that anthropologists and Egyptologists have much to offer each other with inter-disciplinary cooperation.

Looking at Trigger's assumptions and if justified

The first statement I will look at is Trigger's claim that 'when it comes to accounting for human behaviour, explaining differences is theoretically as important as explaining similarities' (Trigger 1993:4). Having studied Geography at A-Levels, I am familiar with the concept that the similarities between two things can be as equally informative as the differences and that both are needed for a true comparison. This allows for a clearer picture overall as it makes the significance of each similarity/difference easier to comprehend. However, comparison can have the unfortunate effect of implying the two things being compared are completely exclusive. This is not always true, for example the conquest of other nations, such as Egypt's occupation of Nubia during the twelfth and thirteen dynasties (Brewer and Teeter 2007:43), would have brought the two cultures into contact and possibly cause some of the similarities a comparison would note. Overall, by comparing more than two cultures which were not all contemporaries, Trigger overcomes this problem therefore I agree with this assumption.

Trigger also claimed that cultural evolution cannot be denied and is not unilateral. The first point is well reasoned and Trigger supports it with evidence I recognise from my own research, such as the evolution from Palaeolithic hunter-gatherers e.g. in the Nile valley tribes became agricultural when aridification made hunter-gathering unsustainable (Brewer and Teeter 2007:32-33), hence I agree that cultural evolution exists and is seemingly inevitable. The second point is also supported, this time by evidence of where the opposite approach has been used. Trigger deems these works as

based on an 'unrealistic faith in the cross-cultural regularity of human behaviour' (Trigger 1993:6). From his wording it can be implied that there is no evidence to support this 'faith' however in the same vein Trigger offers no evidence to counter the 'faith' either. From my own experiences discussing free will, preordinance and conscience during my Religious Studies/Philosophy A-Level, I agree that a universal human behaviour is unlikely.

Bibliography

Trigger, B.G. (1993) *Early Civilizations: Ancient Egypt in Context*. Cairo: The American University in Cairo Press.