

Complex Societies During the Bronze Age

Introduction

A. Complex Societies

- a. After the Agricultural Revolution brought about new ways to settle and utilize the land, complex societies began to form and develop.

B. Thesis

- a. Complex societies began to thrive in the Bronze Age largely due to the cultivation of farming technology and animal domestication, which allowed for permanent settlements to be established, and promoted the development of religion, creation of specialized jobs, and social hierarchies.

The Standard of Ur

A. Domestication of Animals

Animal domestication provided meat that was necessary for diet, as well as a way to further farming technology by using them as beasts of burden. (WH pg14)

B. Agriculture/Using the land

1. The development of wheat and barley, as shown in the primary source, allowed for sustainable food sources.
 - a. Harvesting and crop growing was key in the development of permanent cities, as dietary needs of the people could be fulfilled while being stationary.

C. Social Hierarchy

1. Evidence of a ruler (pictured in the primary source as larger than the rest) shows a social order within the society.

Mohenjo Daro

A. Architecture

1. The architecture of the bath in the Indus River Valley gives evidence of the development of permanent settlements.
 - a. This is as opposed to having societies of hunter-gatherers, that were forced to move as the livestock moved.

B. Development of Cities

1. The ruins at Mohenjo Daro show that cities were built in order to have a thriving community, enabling permanent settlements.

Code of Hammurabi

A. Development of Laws

2. Because towns were becoming permanent and the population was growing, the creation of law codes allowed for harmony within the community.
3. The justice system as described in Hammurabi's Code points toward social and political hierarchy, with power granted to certain people to enforce the laws.

B. Complex Religion

1. The laws in Hammurabi's code mention complex religion, with religious figures being the ultimate higher power in the society.

C. Specialization of Jobs

1. The liability codes show that there is evidence of craftsmanship in the community, as well as priests and religious authorities.

Tomb of Lady Fu Hao

A. Artisanal/Craftsmanship

1. The pottery and bowls found in the tomb show the development of art and appreciation of beauty.

C. Belief in the Afterlife/ Complex Religion

1. The development of the tomb illustrates a belief in the afterlife, as well as a respect for the dead and complex religion.

D. Specialization of Jobs

1. There are multiple skeletons lying around the perimeter of the tomb, suggesting that they might have been guards of the royal family or servants of the priestess, who were then buried with her when she died.

Statue of Gudea

A. Complex Religion

1. The inscription of his piety and the presence of the libation jar show the evidence of religion in the society.

B. Craftsmanship/Artisanal Work

1. The structure and craftsmanship of the statue itself shows a development of the arts and specialized jobs within the society.

Conclusion

The Bronze Era ushered in a new development of city-states and civilizations, which was a direct effect of the Agricultural Revolution and its advancement of civilized societies. With the help of domesticated animals, societies were able to further develop their farming techniques, and build their settlements around their harvests. The reliability of farming and now permanent settlements allowed for development of other characteristics, such as specialized jobs and religion. These characteristics all make up the complex societies that dominated the Bronze Era.

Bibliography

Bradley, Richard. *The Significance of Monuments: on the Shaping of Human Experience in Neolithic and Bronze Age Europe*. Routledge, 2010.

This book by Richard Bradley shows the development of humans over time through the monuments they constructed, starting with the Neolithic Age and going until the end of the Bronze Age. It analyzes the key developments shown through architecture.

Crumley, Carole L. "Heterarchy and the Analysis of Complex Societies." *Archeological Papers of the American Anthropological Association*, vol. 6, no. 1, 2008, pp. 1–5., doi:10.1525/ap3a.1995.6.1.1.

This paper, written by a professor of anthropology, details the complex society and how it came about in the historic world. In it she describes what consists of a complex society, and where and why they developed in relation to social hierarchy.