

*In memoriam*

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**Henri Joannes Maria Claessen**

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On July 26, 2022 Henri J. M. Claessen passed away. We all were and still are all very saddened by the news of his passing. It is a great loss to all of us and for our journal. His humanity, devotion and participation in *Social Evolution and History* will be sorely missed.



**30 November 1930, Wormerveer – 26 July 2022, Wassenaar, NL**

We want to pay tribute to Henri Claessen, to his contribution to anthropology, and to his memory. So we decided to make a special section with reminiscences about Henri Claessen from people who knew him and communicated with him. The section opens with a brief essay about Claessen's life and work. We have also decided to republish one of his articles that tells about his academic research. So in a sense, we feel that Henri is still with us.

*Editors*

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### **Brief Academic Biography and Legacy**

Henri Claessen's scientific background can be traced back to the University of Amsterdam where he was trained as a social geographer and cultural anthropologist. His academic interests were influenced by the comparative approach of Andre Köbben, who guided the inchoate phase of his work in political anthropology and later supervised Claessen's PhD thesis.

After getting his Ph.D. in 1970, Henri Claessen was appointed Associate Professor at Leiden University in the Department of Cultural Anthropology. Claessen's main teaching load consisted of the introductory courses and lectures in political anthropology. He developed political anthropology into a flourishing specialty attractive to many students as an alternative to the general, culture-area-focused and structuralism-dominated interests that prevailed in the department in those days. Apart from this he devoted his qualities as an organiser and team-worker to the development of the study of 'Early States.' In 1984, he became a full Professor there. He served as Professor in Cultural Anthropology at Leiden University from 1984 to 1994, Dean of the Faculty of Social Sciences at Leiden University from 1989 to 1991, and Vice-President of the IUAES (International Union of Anthropological and Ethnological Sciences) from 1982 to 1992. He was Honorary Member of Koninklijk Instituut voor Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde/Royal Netherlands Institute of Southeast Asian and Caribbean Studies (Royal Academy of Sciences), Center for Asian and Pacific Studies (University of Nijmegen), and an Honorary Lifetime Member of the IUAES. In 1994 he retired from the University. He had a collaborative spirit and always looked for interdisciplinary projects. He was always willing to read drafts or give advice. Prof. Claessen will be missed by everyone who knew him, and those involved in Cultural Anthropology will miss his new contributions to the field.

Henri Claessen devoted much of his scholarly career to the study of the origin and evolution of the Early States. Shortly after the first conference on *The Early State* in Leiden in 1979 he founded a rather informal Early State Society, a group of Dutch scholars studying the Early State from various angles. Claessen also developed a dense international network setting up and maintaining a theoretical discussion on the evolution of medium-sized and archaic polities.

The rapid development of national and international contacts induced Claessen to initiate the 'Early State Project' with the goal of assembling dispersed students and appropriate data on that subject.

Together with Peter Skalnik he started to edit a series of influential important volumes on this topic and that way contributions by many scholars in the field of political anthropology were brought together. The theoretical perspectives of the authors often varied considerably and Claessen and Skalnik attempted to synthesize various theoretical perspectives in their editorials and summaries of these studies. At the same time these contributions provided them with a much wider range of states for their research.

The co-edited influential volumes on the Early State which have been acclaimed throughout the world:

- 1978. *The Early State*. The Hague: Mouton. Claessen, H. J. M. and Skalnik, P. (eds.)
- 1981. *The Study of the State*. The Hague: Mouton. Claessen, H. J. M. and Skalnik, P. (eds.)
- 1985. *Development and Decline; the Evolution of Sociopolitical Organization*. South Hadley, Mass.: Bergin and Garvey. Claessen, H. J. M., van de Velde, P., and Smith, M. E. (eds.)
- 1987. *Early State Dynamics*. Leiden: Brill. Claessen, H. J. M. and van de Velde, P. (eds.)
- 1991. *Early State Economics*. New Brunswick: Transaction. Claessen, H. J. M. and van de Velde, P. (eds.)
- 1996. *Ideology and the Formation of Early States*. Leiden: Brill. Claessen, H. J. M. and Oosten, J. G. (eds.)

For more details about the 'Early State Project', visit <https://www.sociostudies.org/news/3249799/>.

When the founders of Social Evolution & History were reaching out to the leading scholars, they were so pleased that Prof Claessen agreed to join the Editorial Board of the new journal and remained on board for 20 years, until passing away. He published in the journal sixteen articles (for details about his publications in *Social Evolution & History* see <https://www.sociostudies.org/news/3249799/>).

Claessen's impact on Cultural Anthropology is immense. It would be hard to overestimate the influence of his works on early states on both his colleagues in the academy and generations of students.