

Childe's criteria: The Emergence of Society

In the Aegean

Childe's ten criteria for the makings of a civilisation are a set of indicators of an intelligent civilisation. His objective was to be able to identify key factors that are observable by archaeologists and historians, that would give them an indication of the factors that create a civilisation. He identified these criteria as a list of ten factors or technologies that would have taken place or been created during the time period of a certain location for example the Aegean.

One of Childe's criteria (the appearance of urban centres) can be seen very well in the case of what is considered to be Troy in the late Bronze Age as archaeologists have found remnants of a late Bronze Age urban centre found on the hill of Hissarlik in modern day Turkey. This settlement was a walled and gated settlement. These fortifications were made of mudbrick meaning that this would have been a more advanced civilisation than many of those during this period in the 2nd millennium BCE. This indicates that there would have been a deeper understanding of architecture during this period in Hissarlik, indicating then that this would have indeed been the early stages of developing a civilisation. It must also be noted that in this time period the city found on the hill of Hissarlik it has been discovered that this city would have been an essential point for trade. This would then mean that another of Childe's criteria (distant trade) can be observed in this region. Trade between this settlement and other settlements would have been extremely important, as the strategic location of this settlement in a trade sense, would have made it a centre for trade as it has easy access to the Mediterranean sea and would be instrumental in trade heading further east from the Aegean. With this then we can also identify many of Childe's criteria being fulfilled within this region, including class structure with some people being of an elite class or group and others of a lesser class such as slaves, and fulltime specialists such as carpenters traders or builders. (Kolb, F. (2004))

Here then, we can examine the effectiveness of Childe's criteria as a method of identifying the emergence of civilisation. As stated previously, the city thought to be Troy during the time between the 2nd and 1st millennium BCE, had begun to develop many of these traits identified by Childe. However, the use of Childe's criteria is debated among scholars, as the idea has been developed by many other scholars over time for example, Richard Mc Adams identifies six more broad criteria that could be considered as more effective than those identified by Childe. (Kradin, Nikolay N, Social Evolution & History, 5-1 March 2006) Childe's criteria have a tendency to concentrate on many of the early stages of the traits that are associated with a very capitalist society. For example, many of Childe's criteria focus on the aspects of a capitalist society such as distant trade, class system and supply surplus for the purpose of trade. This would mean that it is discriminatory of some civilisations that may have been more advanced but have been overlooked under Childe's criteria. However, this could also have been an advantage, as many ancient civilisations displayed many traits associated with capitalism such as a focus on trade and innovation of technologies such as new boats for travel and trade as well as weaponry and agricultural technologies (<https://www.britannica.com/topic/urban-revolution>). It must also be noted that despite the capitalistic nature of Childe's criteria, he does not in fact state that the emergence of currency would be a factor in the rise of a civilisation, which could indicate some anarchistic trader civilisations such as many "barbarian" cultures.

The emergence of new technologies are an essential part of the development of a civilisation. Many civilisations have created new technologies that we still use to this day, therefore it was an essential part of the development of civilisations. One such technology is the emergence of

ceramic in the city of Troy. And with this, another of Childe's criteria is demonstrated, that of a political hierarchy, as during this time political systems began to reform and develop. During the development of the city of Troy there were many phases to its construction. Archaeological data has shown us that many of the buildings in the city of Troy during the 5th to 7th phases were stone based with large pillars, with many items of Aegean and Mycenaean ceramics. These structures were domestic in nature, which would then indicate that there is a class structure, as these would not have been structures readily available to the majority. The evidence of outside pottery also indicates trade with distant settlements. This would therefore also suggest that there would be an emerging ruling class, indicating that this would become a more evolved civilisation (Cultural dynamics and ceramic resource use at Late Bronze Age/Early Iron Age Troy, northwestern Turkey, *Journal of Archaeological Science*, 40-4, April 2013). Childe's criteria is useful in the analysis of Troy, as many of his criteria are met by the civilisation at Troy. Many of the factors had been achieved by the end of the 1st millennium BCE. However, if we examine the area with the criteria set out by MC Adams in response to Childe we can see that his criteria are also met (Kolb, F. (2004).

Through the examination of Childe's criteria, we can see that they have some advantages and some disadvantages. For example, using the work of Childe, the city of Troy does reach civilisation status. However, due to the nature of some of the criteria, it would have meant that many areas that were slightly less developed or may have created different systems than taxation and surplus trade supplies for monetary gain. However, we also see aspects of Childe's criteria that are extremely important for many of the other criteria that he puts forward. Language writing and science are a key part in the formation of a civilisation. This is due to the fact that without science, maths and historical writings there would be very little in the form of understanding towards the wider world and consideration of the other aspects that are essential to the formation of a civilisation. For example, all architectural structures would require Maths and Science in order to build in an effective manner. We can also see that writing would be an essential skill for a person in a city such as Troy, as the trade brought in from dealing with other colonies and settlements in the Aegean. We can also see the importance of writing and language in this era as some of the world's earliest writing come from this era and region, for example Homer's *Illiad* and *Odyssey*. Both of these writings depict some of the myths surrounding the Aegean, with the *Illiad* being the writing which contains the story of the Trojan war. These are also the earliest writings ever found on the European continent (Manuel Robbins (2001)).

Another of Childe's criteria involves the formation of power groups as previously stated these can be political or religious. However, the military aspect of this has yet to be discussed. War and the military have been a vital part of the development of the human race. War has been an aspect of humanity that we have found to be unavoidable in many cases, due to arrogance and social differences. However, if we look at the city of Troy, we have both a myth and historical evidence surrounding military actions in Troy. The myth of the Trojan War could not have come about without a war or battle taking place. It is debated how faithful the myth is to actual historical events. By using Childe's criteria, war would show a rather advanced civilisation. War on a large scale would indicate that a civilisation is complex enough by the use of technologies and possibly political and literary writing, that it is able to fight other civilisations with a degree of confidence that their forces would bring victory. Literacy is also integral to the emergence of a civilisation found in a war. Without modern technology, information regarding battles, victories and defeats would come from couriers sent from superiors. This would have been vital for tactical information and the longevity of the civilisation and the continued control of its leaders (Manuel Robbins (2001)).

Here we have examined Childe's criteria for what makes a civilisation. We have seen that many of the criteria put forward by Childe had been achieved in the Aegean by the 1st millennium BCE. With a long reaching (relative to the time) trade system, a political hierarchy, literary and technological advancements and the emergence of myth and culture. Childe's criteria has been examined by looking at the ancient city of Troy and many of the traits put forward by Childe are useful in determining the development of civilisation in the region. This would mean that the ancient city of Troy was in fact an intelligent civilisation. Its intelligently designed structures, systems, trade and technologies would have been instrumental in the success of a city that would last an era spanning nearly 2000 years. In relation to Childe's criteria, we can see that it has described many aspects of what makes up a civilisation. However, it must be noted that the work of Childe does in many ways overanalyse many of the traits a civilisation can have. For example Childe's criteria has many points that could either be simplified in order to distinguish them more easily or could contain a more over-arching terminology, so as to include many civilisations that did not trade with distant lands. The creation of culture, history and technology be more instrumental in the makings of a civilization as some may be isolated due to geological factors and would not have been able to access these other civilisation without modern day technology. Therefore, we must conclude that the work of Childe is useful in determining the status of ancient cultures. However, due to there being other more realistic and broad sets of criteria such as that of Mc Adams and Renfrew, we must conclude that Childe's criteria is useful for civilisations that were the building blocks of our modern civilisations, rather than all the civilisations that have risen and fallen in history and is therefore ineffective when compared to work created by other scholars

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