

In chapter three of Bruce G. Trigger's 'Understanding Civilizations', He covers Childe's characteristics of early civilizations, which I am going to discuss in relation to Ancient Rome as my chosen culture.

The first of Childe's characteristics of early civilizations is to have 'large urban centers', which existed in the cities of the Roman Empire, especially Rome, as it was the capital. These urban centers were inhabited by craftsmen, the ruling class, and their slaves, and according to Donald Dudley, in 150 BCE there was also a noticeable population from Greece and the Orient¹. These urban centers were supported by the farmers through the food surplus that they were producing. This carries on to two other of Childe's characteristics.

Two of Childe's characteristics can be combined in relation to Rome, which are "craft workers, merchants, officials, and priests supported by the surpluses produced by farmers", and "ruling class exempt from manual labour."² Donald Dudley writes in his book 'Roman Society', that "the basis of the Roman economy at this time was small-scale farming carried on by family units", and "it was subsistence farming and not very productive."³ This form of economy was during the early Roman Republic, and this form of farming doesn't sound like it could support large numbers of skilled people, however I believe that they were still able to meet the criteria of the ruling class exempt from manual labour, as the largest farms were owned by the ruling class, who would have plebeians to work their land.

Monumental architecture is another of the characteristics, and I believe that Rome easily meets this criteria, as during their civilization they built the pantheon, the Colosseum, and the Pont du Gard, which were all built during the empire, and the scale and detail shows the Romans were capable of impressive feats of architecture.

Rome had their own written language and alphabet, known as Latin, and they would record information on papyrus, though would inscribe into stones in order to preserve what was written, as papyrus doesn't last long enough to keep the information for hundreds of years. Religious writing and laws (also sometimes rude jokes in bath houses) would be inscribed into stone, much like other cultures, such as the Greeks, who had a cultural impact on the Romans, as many Greek immigrants came to live within the Republic and Empire.

Exact, practical sciences is another of Childe's characteristics of early civilization, and according to Mark Cartwright in his article on Roman Science, the Romans had assimilated Greek science by "accepting or rejecting that which was most useful", and according to Cartwright, Greeks were the first specialists for fields such as architecture, and doctoring.⁴ Though they continued to advance this science on their own by using what the Greeks had done as a foundation for their own work, and Romans invented the first recorded steam turbine, though did not use it for any important purpose.

¹ Donald Dudley, *Roman Society* (London: Penguin Books, 1975), p. 43.

² Bruce G. Trigger, *Understanding Early Civilizations* (Cambridge: The Press Syndicate of The University of Cambridge, 2003), p. 43.

³ Donald Dudley, *Roman Society* (London: Penguin Books, 1975), p. 43.

⁴ Mark Cartwright, *Roman Science* (06 September 2016) <https://www.ancient.eu/Roman_Science/> [accessed 16 November 2019].

Childe Also has monumental art in his criteria, which I believe is important for a civilization, as it shows that they have a strong culture. The Romans created many instances of monumental art, such as the Fresco wall in the house of livia, and the Column of Trajan. Art is important to a culture, as it shows the ideas that they share, and their history. Art is also a great source for historians to find information about culture as they use art to display leaders, events and religious imagery.

The next of Childe's criteria is importing raw materials as luxuries and industrial materials, which the Romans did from trading with gauls, and also getting rare materials from the silk road in China, such as silk. Expensive items such as silk and lapis lazuli were used to display the power of those who could afford them. Construction materials however were only imported when necessary, or when they were too expensive in Rome, according to the website mariamilani.⁵

To conclude, Rome fits the characteristics set out by Childe, and in my opinion were one of the most advanced of the early civilisations. I also believe that the characteristics set out by childe are accurate to many of the early civilizations.

⁵ Unknown, *Building Materials in Ancient Rome* (Unknwon)

<https://mariamilani.com/ancient_rome/rome_building_materials.htm> [accessed 16 November 2019].

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