

HIS6E01-PRINCIPLES AND METHODS OF ARCHAEOLOGY –ELECTIVE COURSE

MODULE-1

TOPIC- GORDON CHILDE 1892-1957

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- One of the prolific writer & most influential archaeologist of 20th C
- Basically n Australian philologist later specialized in archaeology
- best known for his theories about the development of prehistoric civilisation.
- He studied classics at the University of Sydney and went on to Oxford University
- It was during this time that his initial interest in European prehistory developed, as well as his commitment to socialism
- He eventually became the first professor of prehistoric archaeology at Edinburgh University, serving from 1927 to 1946
- He was then professor of European archaeology at the University of London, until he retired in 1956.
- His most famous excavation was that of the Neolithic site of Skara Brae in Orkney.
- His particular skill lay in bringing together great amounts of data for examining 'archaeological cultures', which he saw as recurring groupings of artefacts and structures - such as house types, pottery and burial rites - that defined distinct prehistoric human groups, or peoples.

- First to explore the developments, what he characterized the Neolithic Revolution & Urban Revolution in archaeological records – vital concepts in pre-historic studies
- Concentrate his attention on Europe & Near East & stated that the developments in civilization could be explained with reference to the change in the technology that occurred, which are accessible from the archaeological records
- He used the terms bronze Age, Iron Age- as a way of explaining shifts from one level of material developments to another
- By introducing the models Neolithic Revolution & Urban Revolution- tried to explain how human beings in pre-history broke beyond hunting & gathering into settled farming communities, which then developed into new types of social organization, spawning of cities & civilizations
- Argued that urban revolution is the process by which small, kin based, non-literate agricultural villages were transferred into large, socially complex urban societies

- Introduced the concept of Urban revolution in his 1936 book, 'Man Makes Himself' & elaborated it in his 1950 article in journal, 'Town Planning Review'
- Began his paper on Urban Revolution by noting that the notion of city is notoriously hard to define. He stated that the aim of the study was 'to present the city historically or rather pre-historically- as the resultant & symbol of a revolution that initiated a new economic stage in the evolution of the society'
- 10 point model for changes that characterized urban revolution-
 1. extensive & more densely populated
 2. had full time craftsmen, transport workers, merchants, officials, priests
 3. pay surplus as tax to deity or king, who concentrate surplus
 4. monumental public buildings- symbolise the concentration of social surplus
 5. priests, civil & military leaders & officials- concentrated surplus- formed ruling class

- A system of writing
- Exact & predictive science- arithmetic, geometry & astronomy
- Conceptualized & sophisticated style of art
- Regular foreign trade
- State organization
- His method was based on an integrative principle
- Related the known events of history to the data of natural history to form a total picture of the development of human civilization
- Studied the legal, political economic, religious & sociological structure of primitive & developing societies & linked the relevant studies with anthropology, geology, zoology & paleontology
- His concept in fact describes the transition from agricultural villages to state- level urban societies
- This change which occurred independently in several parts of the world is recognized as one of the most significant changes in the history of socio-cultural evolution

- Saw the underlying causes of the urban revolution as the ‘cumulative growth of technology & increasing availability of food surplus as capital’
- Choose the phase revolution to say that these periods changes were really revolutionary- affected all aspects of life
- Childe's thinking was infused by an interest in the politics of the left.
- From 1916 to 1921 he was heavily involved in the Labour movement in New South Wales and he later made a number of visits to the Soviet Union.
- While his attitudes to Marxism were at times ambiguous its philosophical basis influenced much of his archaeological thinking.
- His academic publications marked milestones in the development of culture-historical archaeology, and his later volumes 'Man Makes Himself' (1936) and 'What Happened in History' (1942) brought a much wider audience to his work and a longer-lasting legacy.

- After retiring, Childe returned to Australia.
- On 19 October 1957 he died after falling from a cliff in the Blue Mountains.
- It is thought that he probably took his own life, troubled by failing health and fearful that his intellectual abilities were declining.