



**Title of Project : Ancient West Asian civilization as the foundation
of all modern civilizations: A counter to the
“Clash of Civilizations” theory**

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【Purpose of the Research Project】

The Ancient West Asian civilization, which had emerged long before Islam surfaced in the Middle East, was an extremely important civilization because it laid the foundation for elements necessary in all modern human societies, from fundamental foodstuff, technological innovation, social systems to the spiritual life. In this scientific research, we examine the conditions of “advancedness” and “universality” of ancient West Asian civilization, and try to illuminate why and how the civilization was able to survive a series of great transitions in human history. We investigate the historical processes of ancient West Asian civilization through multiple field researches and by studying environmental sciences to obtain answers. We try to establish a new perspective, i.e. the ancient West Asian civilization as the foundation of all modern civilizations, a counter to the “Clash of Civilizations” theory.

【Content of the Research Project】

Our research involved four main study groups. The A01 group conducts research on “Great transitions in human history” such as the distribution routes of *Homo Sapiens* after coming *Out of Africa*, the origins of wheat cultivation, the development of metallurgy, animal domestication, urbanization, and so on. The A02 group conducts research on “Urbanity in historical records” by reviewing literature about societies, studying Akkadian languages, Mesopotamian theology, festivals, and so forth. The A03 group conducts research on the “Paleo-environment and human societies” by conducting an isotopic study of human bones, recording historical earthquakes, engaging in material studies of the natural sciences, and so forth. The A04 group conducts research on the “Preservation of cultural heritages.” The A01 and A02 study groups investigate historical processes that introduced “advancedness” and “universality” to ancient West Asian civilization. “Advancedness” means that the event or transition happened earlier than in any other area of the world. “Universality” means that the event or transition was not constricted to the region in which it first occurred (here in

West Asia) but eventually spread all over the world. Additional studies, such as the origin of monotheism, are welcome to further the research conducted by the main study groups. The A03 study group supports the research of the A01 and A02 groups and systematizes the relationship between cultural and natural histories of West Asia. The A04 study group will work for the preservation of cultural heritages in West Asian countries because we would like to contribute to the societies from which we obtained the study materials.

【Expected Research Achievements and Scientific Significance】

We will execute our fieldwork in West Asian countries to obtain the study materials necessary to explain the great turning points in human history. Collaborating research between humanities and paleo-environmental studies certainly contribute to furthering our understanding of each great transition. At the same time, however, we consider these great transitions as a series of historical processes, and we investigate the motives for stimulating West Asian civilization as a dynamic organism. In pursuing the motives that donated to the advancedness and universality of West Asian civilization, we would like to promote a new academic field, “West Asian civilization studies,” and establish a diverse perspective for modern West Asia. Our research has been developed with the objective of establishing the first professional institute for West Asian civilization studies in Japan.

【Key Words】

West Asian Civilization: The whole body of cultures which appeared in the Middle East mainly between 10th and the first millennium BC. It proposed the foundations for all modern civilizations.

【Term of Project】 FY2012-2016

【Budget Allocation】 349,500 Thousand Yen

【Homepage Address and Other Contact Information】 <http://rcwasia.hass.tsukuba.ac.jp/kaken/index.html>