



**Title of Project : The Essence of Urban Civilization:
An Interdisciplinary Study of the Origin and
Transformation of Ancient West Asian Cities**

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【Purpose of the Research Project】

Urbanized society appeared for the first time in human history in ancient West Asia and formed a social structure in which the characteristics of each region were determined centered on a city. The remains of the cities of West Asia provide voluminous data about the birth of urban culture and its transformation during ancient times, in the form of abundant archeological records and numerous cuneiform texts written on clay tablets. This project aims to study the process of the appearance of ancient cities, the development of their diverse landscapes and social structures, and interactive relationships between urban societies and the natural environment, to clarify the essential aspects of ancient West Asian cities through interdisciplinary study linking archeology, philology, and the natural sciences. Furthermore, considering the question “What is a city?” by examining regions adjoining West Asia and West Asian cities in later ages, this project will clarify the uniqueness of ancient West Asian cities and their influence on later ages and present a theory of civilization that will be of use in achieving a sustainable future for modern urban civilization.

【Content of the Research Project】

To study the diverse aspects of cities in West Asia diachronically and synchronically based on an interdisciplinary method, four research categories were established: A01 *First Signs of Urban Civilization*; A02 *Landscape and Structure of Ancient West Asian Cities*; B01 *Environment and Resources of West Asia*; and C01 *West Asian Cities from Medieval to Modern Times*. Category A01 clarifies the ways that various elements included in the urban civilization of West Asia emerge before the birth of cities in southern Mesopotamia at the end of the fourth millennium BC. A02 studies diverse aspects of urbanization in Mesopotamia and Egypt during the following 3,000 years by jointly applying the methods of archeology and philology. B01 conducts an analysis of the earth sciences and material chemistry regarding the environment and resources that nurtured and transformed the West Asian urban civilization. C01 clarifies how ancient urban civilization sustained and transformed the

traditions of the cities of West Asia from medieval times to the present day and tackles social challenges facing modern West Asian cities. Supplementing such diverse aspects by soliciting invited research, the essence of West Asian cities is diachronically clarified from multiple perspectives. Finally, the characteristics of ancient West Asian urban civilization and its impact on modern times are evaluated historically, sociologically, and culturally.

【Expected Research Achievements and Scientific Significance】

Based on the results of the latest research concerning the historical development of urban civilization in ancient West Asia, an outline encompassing the diverse forms of cities in each region of ancient West Asia is presented in a comparative lattice of space and time. West Asian cities are compared with modern cities, diachronically clarifying the form of West Asian cities from ancient times until the present day. This study also aims to achieve a comprehensive understanding of the *essence of a city* to present a theory of civilization that will be of use in achieving a sustainable future for modern urban civilization.

【Keywords】

Ancient West Asian Urban Civilization: The world’s oldest urban civilization, which emerged and developed in the ancient Near East (West Asia).

【Term of Project】 FY2018-2022

【Budget Allocation】 694,500 Thousand Yen

【Homepage Address and Other Contact Information】

<http://rcwasia.hass.tsukuba.ac.jp/city/>