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What did the earliest cities look like? How were they organized and governed? Who lived there? What did it mean to live in a city more than three thousand years ago?

The urban experience is a universal phenomenon resulting from the basic human need of social existence. As Ferdinand Braudel wrote: "A town is always a town, wherever it is located, in time as well as in space." This project is about one particular type of urbanism, namely the city in Hittite Anatolia of the 2nd millennium BCE. The Hittites were one of the great ancient civilizations of the Ancient Near East along Sumerians, Babylonians and Assyrians, and the first IndoEuropeans to leave behind written evidence. The Hittite cuneiform texts attest to over two thousand settlements that existed in central Asia Minor more than three thousand years ago. The analysis of those texts can help us better understand the world in which the Hittites lived and which they formed, and this project focusses on the essential element of their civilization, the city.

Ancient cities of Anatolia in 2nd Millennium BCE have been excavated for over a hundred years now and yielded more than 30,000 cuneiform tablets that help us reconstruct the composition of the city, what they looked like and what kind of people lived there and what deities they worshiped. While archaeologists, philologists and historians have intensely analysed various individual aspects of Hittite cities, there has never been a comprehensive study of this phenomenon.

This project aims to remedy that situation. During this project various types of evidence will be utilized, first and foremost cuneiform of Hittite and Assyrian texts, Hieroglyphic Luwian inscriptions, but also available archaeological data, evidence from other ancient cultures and theoretical studies on urbanism, all in order to better understand urbanism in Hittite Anatolia. The Hittite city will be examined in its ecological, physical, historical, sociological and ideological aspects. A whole array of individual topics will be addressed which, taken together, help identify common features of the cities of the Hittites. These will entail the question on origins of the city in Anatolia and settlement patterns, urban landscape, codification of the city and civic institutions, urban economy, civic society and urban experience, and finally death and decline of the Hittite city.

By combining various types of evidence, the project will adopt an interdisciplinary approach and will provide the subject matter in its historical development. By framing the evidence in theoretical thought it will lead to creating a theoretical model of the Hittite city, which will introduce this particular type of city to researchers of urbanism and allow us to better understand the ancient world.