

## 【Grant-in-Aid for Scientific Research (S)】

### Broad Section A



### Title of Project : The Origin of the Tribal Society in the Near East: Comprehensive Study of the Pre- and Proto-historic Nomadic Cultures in the Arabian Peninsula

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#### 【Purpose and Background of the Research】

Our current understanding of the Near East falls into two extremes: ancient civilizations as romantic images, and the Islam as a less familiar geo-political entity. In this sense, it is highly vulnerable and far from comprehensive. Among others, the nomadic society, another aspect of the Near Eastern society, is trivialized into one of historical, geographical and ethnological landscapes and, for this reason, not subject to full-scale human and social sciences with the only exception of anthropological surveys. Archaeology is no exception to this. The only way for breaking through this situation is to step into the drylands outside the *Fertile Crescent* and patiently collect up the archaeological footprints of ancient nomadic tribes.

This study aims to: 1) reorganize the study of pastoral nomadization in the Near East from the conjecture-level argument based on indirect information from the urban-rural society within the Fertile Crescent to the substantive discussion associated with specific site names and precise dates; and, in so doing, 2) shed new light on the historical peculiarity of the Near Eastern society, tracing back to the formation process of nomadic tribes.

#### 【Research Methods】

Toward this goal, this research project implements the comprehensive investigation of pre- and proto-historic nomadic cultures in the Arabian Peninsula, focusing on the five millennia spanning from the early Neolithic when sheep and goats were first domesticated to the Early Bronze Age when full-scale nomadic society based on tribalism is supposed to have been established (Fig. 1). The target research fields include the al-Jafr Basin (southern Jordan), the Hijaz Highlands (NW Saudi Arabia), the Majma/Thumamah Plain (central Saudi Arabia), Bahrain Island, and the eastern desert of Egypt.

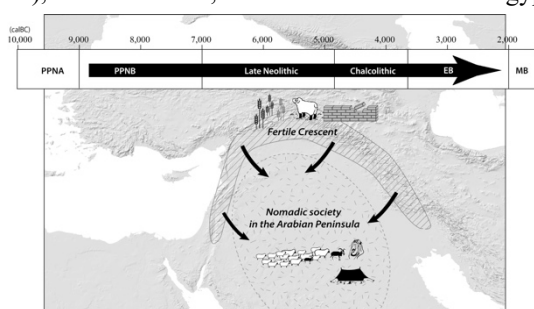


Fig. 1 Geo-chronological framework of this research project.

The focal points of our discussion are the social organization of pre- and proto-historic local nomads and

its diachronic and synchronic change during the key five millennia. The investigation approaches the issues from multiple perspectives including palaeo-environment and climatic changes, burial practice and social organization of local nomads and their diachronic/synchronic transition, migration pattern of nomadic tribes viewed from production and circulation of prestige goods and wool-shearing flint tools (i.e. *tabular scrapers*), appearance and expansion of rock-engraved tribe signs (i.e. *wasm*), history of water-use technology, osteological and genetic characteristics of tribesmen and their livestock, and structure and history of corrals. In addition, with a view to exploring the relationship between the internal structure of a cemetery and the social organization behind it, the investigation also plans sociological and anthropological studies of cemeteries of modern nomadic tribes.

#### 【Expected Research Achievements and Scientific Significance】

This study is expected to fundamentally revise the Near Eastern history greatly biased to the urban-rural society within the Fertile Crescent. The challenging revision would deepen our understanding of the bimodality or dimorphism of Near Eastern society past and present.

#### 【Publications Relevant to the Project】

- Fujii, S. (2013) Chronology of the Jafr Prehistory and Protohistory: A key to the process of pastoral nomadization in the southern Levant. *Syria* 90: 49-125.
- Fujii, S. (2018) Bridging the enclosure and the tower tomb: new insights from the Wadi al-Sharma sites, north-west Arabia. *Proceedings of Seminar for Arabian Studies* 48: 83-98.

#### 【Term of Project】 FY2019-2023

#### 【Budget Allocation】 136,700 Thousand Yen

#### 【Homepage Address and Other Contact Information】

Under construction.