

# FROM ETHIOPIA TO THE SAHARA: ON MEGALITHISM

Alain Gallay  
Rome :  
Current ethnoarcheology  
25 – 27 November 2015



Roger Joussaume

# 1. THE EPISTEMOLOGICAL BASES



*It will be impossible to provide cogent explanations, as it is not the task of the historian to make comparisons nor is it the task of the sociologist to carry out historical studies.*

*Explanations can be cogent only if they are valid for every possible case and use a formula that includes every type of implementation.*

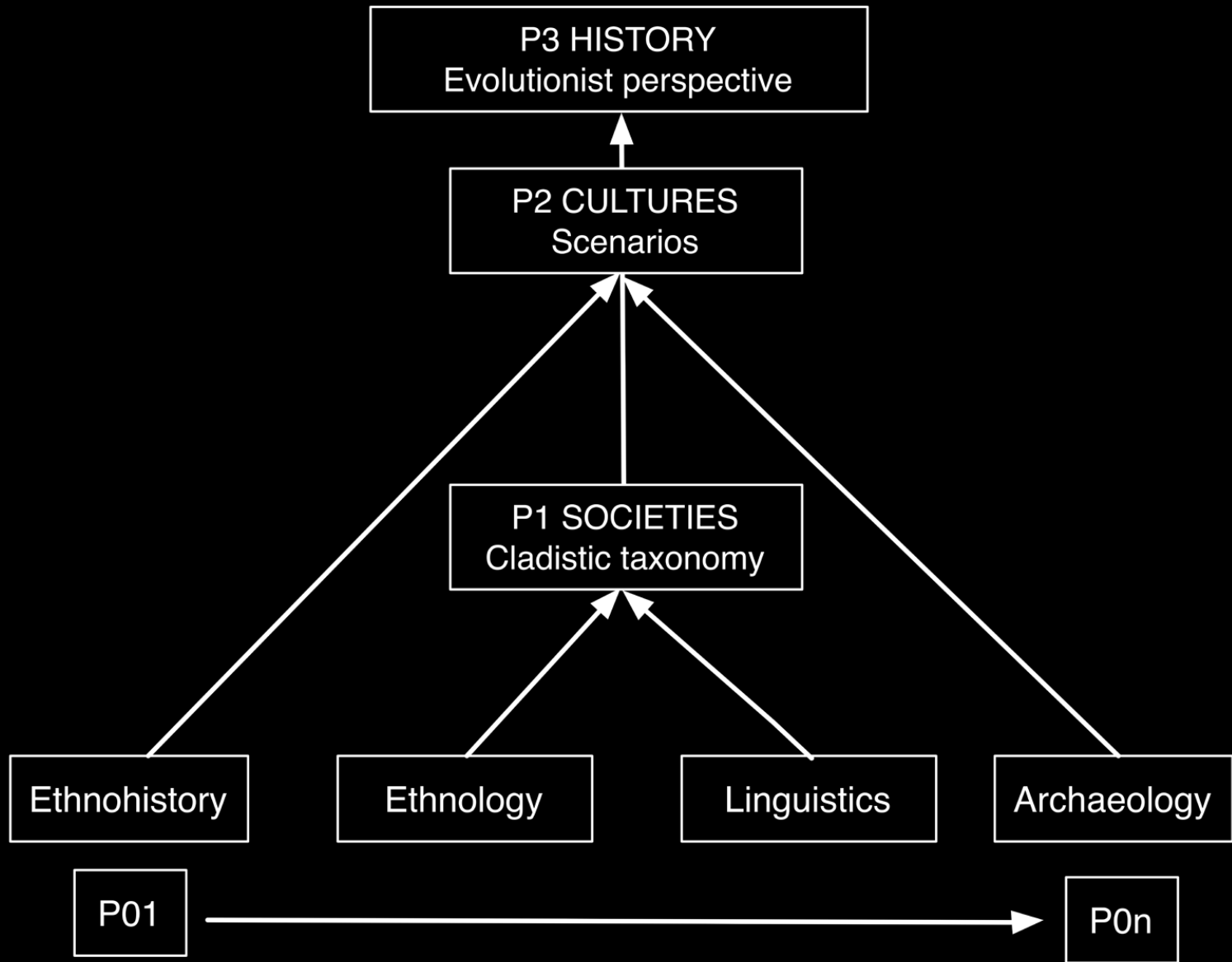
*In short, we need comparative historical sociology.*

(Alain Testart 2010, unpublished, p. 242).

# 1. THE EPISTEMOLOGICAL BASES

Testart 2012	Gallay 1990-2015	Gallay 2012 <i>Journal des Africanistes</i>
Evolutive laws	Mechanisms	Explaining social facts by other social facts (Durkheim 1895)
Societies	Regularities: Structures and models	Dynamic classification of the phenomena Cladistic taxonomies (Phenetic taxonomies)
Cultures	Scenarios	Local scenarios integrated into history Phylogenetic taxonomies (see Darwinist Illusion)

# 1. THE EPISTEMOLOGICAL BASES





# THE ETHIOPIAN CASE-STUDY

La Corne de l'Afrique  
The Horn of Africa



Borana people  
East Cushitic language

<https://www.flickr.com>

Banna people  
Omoti language



East Cushitic-speaking populations  
Humid highlands:  
enset culture  
(*Ensete ventricosum*)



Volaita

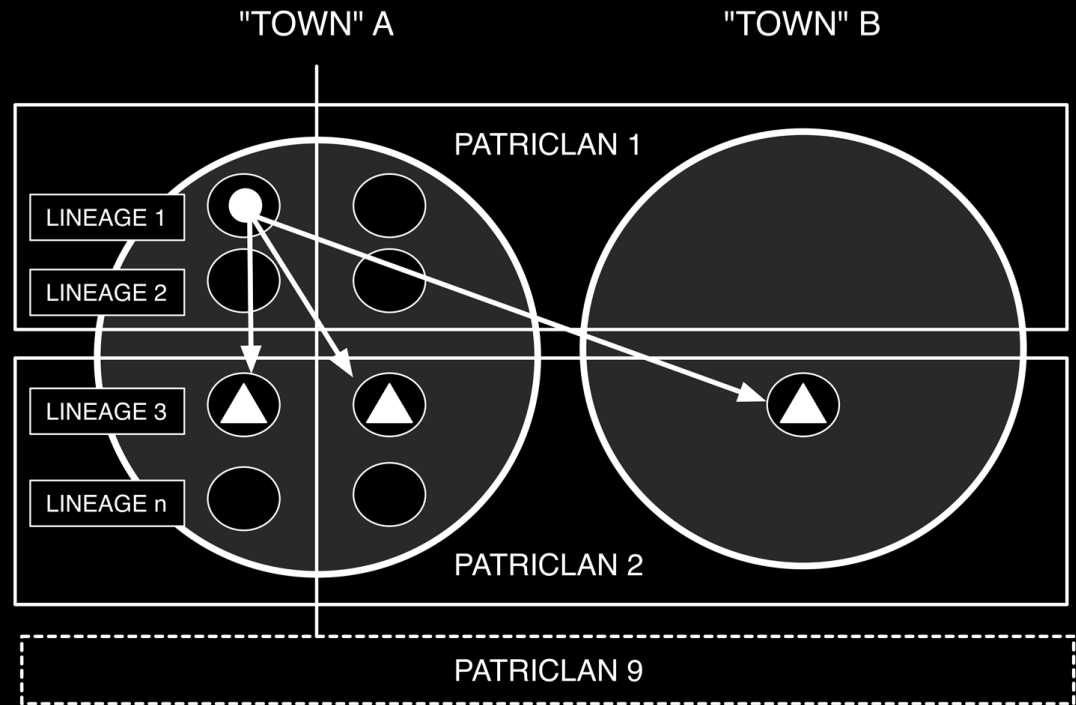


Pankhurst, Ingrams 1988



# The Konso people, a « primitive democracy » ?

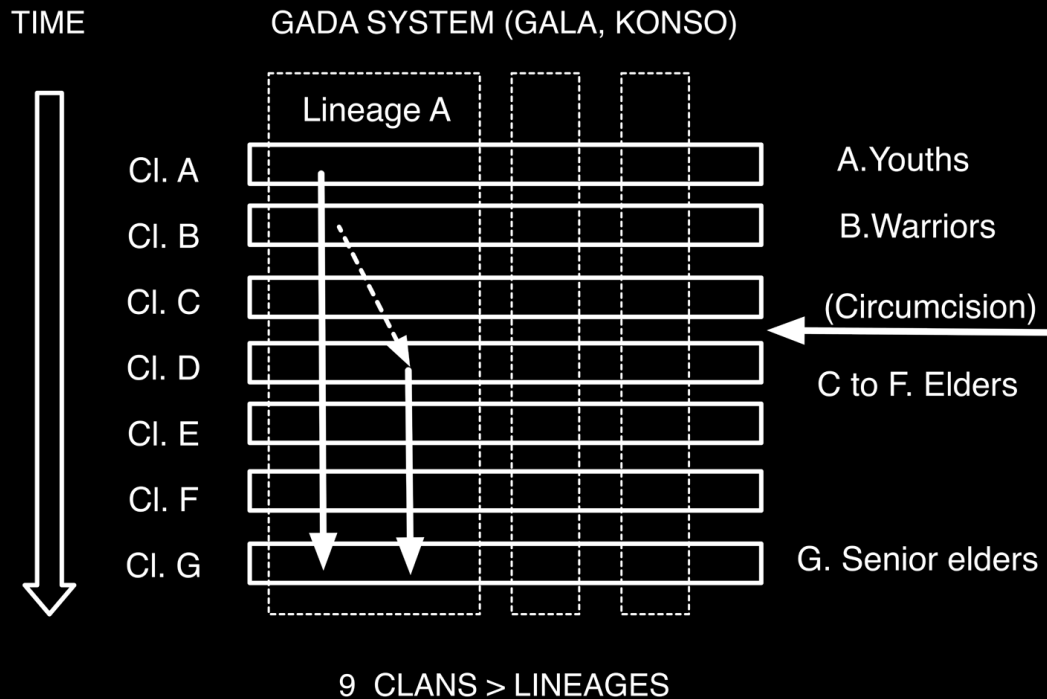
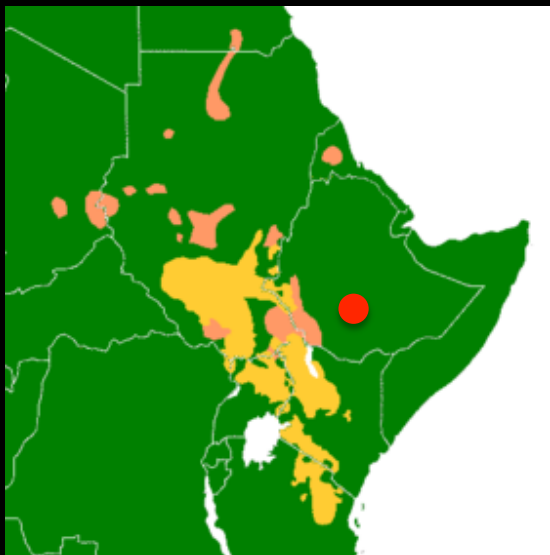
Poquallas :  
Religious chiefs without  
political power



Clan system:  
patrilines and lineages

# On transversal systems

## The gada generation-grading system



The father is circumcised when his son becomes a father for the first time

Nilo-Saharan language phylum: Central and Eastern Sudanic (Nilotic) languages



# The Konso people, a « primitive democracy » ?



<http://www.cyark.org/news/>

Men's house



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Popular assemblies:  
Regulatory authorities and councils



Town structure:  
Dry stone walled towns



Jensen 1936



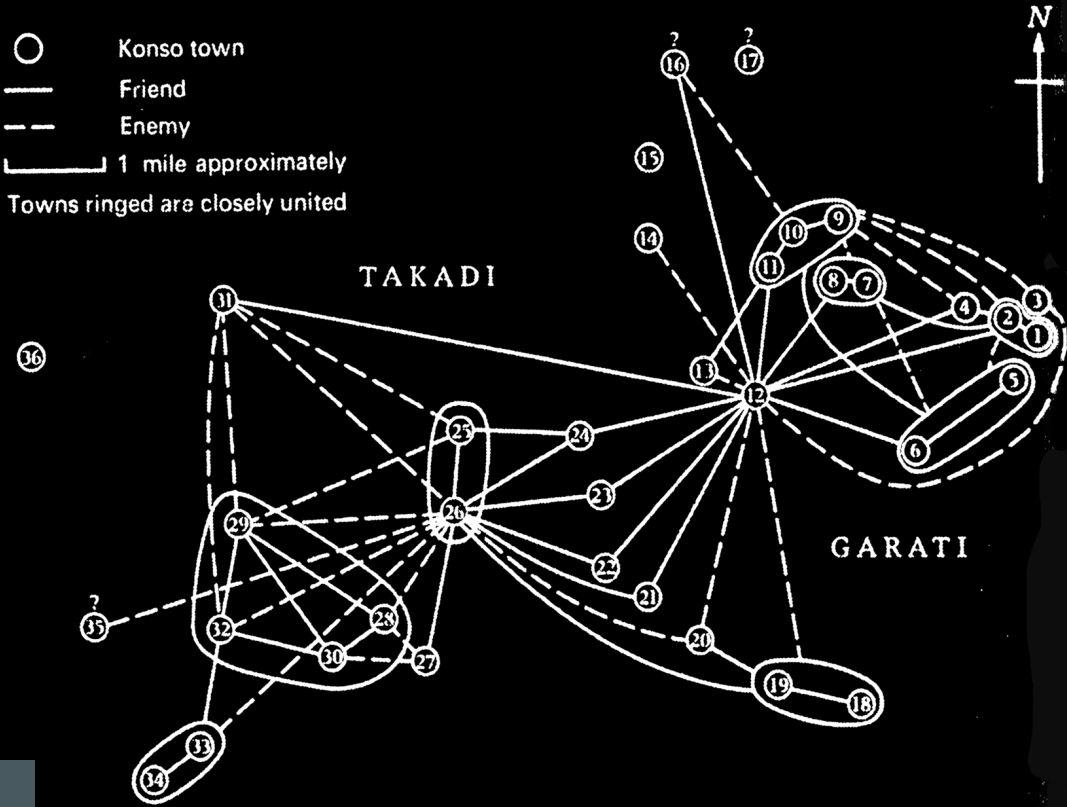
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Jensen 1936

# Organisation of war

## Political Relations Between the Towns



Self-sufficient towns fighting one another.

After Hallpike 2008

Battles resulting from minor incidents

Anarchic and labile alliance systems

None of the towns is able to conquer another town and to form a politically consistent group



# War and heros

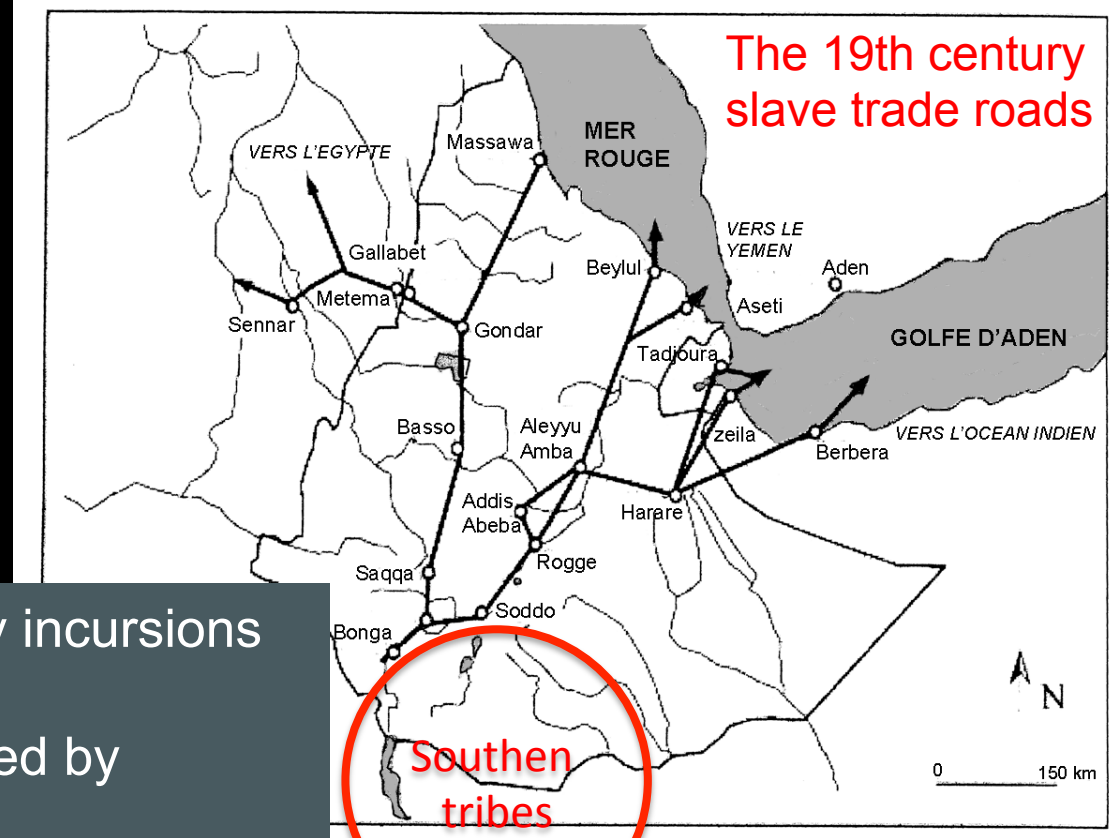
Exacerbated masculinity of the warriors based on hunting and war

- « phallicism »

Traditionally, the enemies slain in battle were subjected to castration and the severed genitalia of the vanquished were worn as a trophy.



# Slavery: Slave trade by Muslims and Christians



Médard et al. 2013

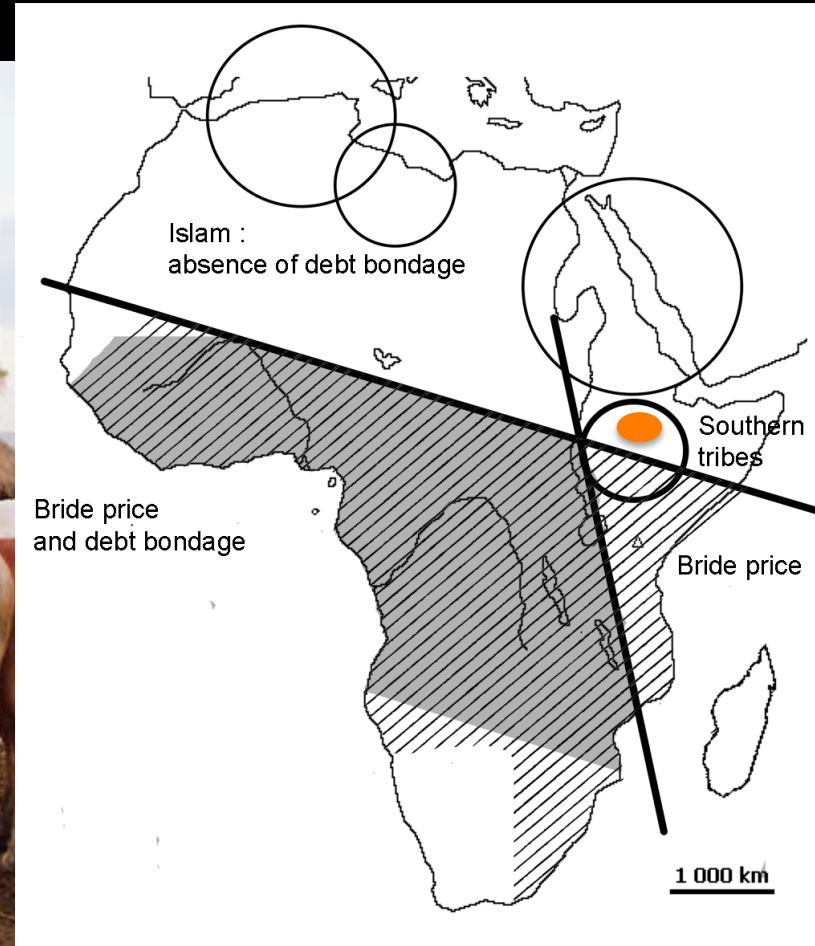
From the 7th century AD, military incursions from Arabia.  
Factories in coastal areas followed by autonomous sultanates.

Muslim as well as Christian slaver's kingdoms in the north.

Slaves were made amongst the « black » people in the south on the occasion of war or during military incursions at the margins of these Northern states.



# Presence of debt bondage?



After Testart 2001. *L'esclave la dette et le pouvoir*



AG



AG

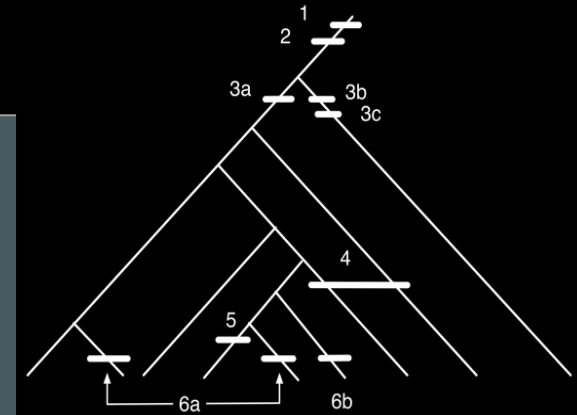
Megalithism:  
Memorial monuments: wooden statues  
(wakas) and erected stones  
Society:  
Primitive democracies and city-states



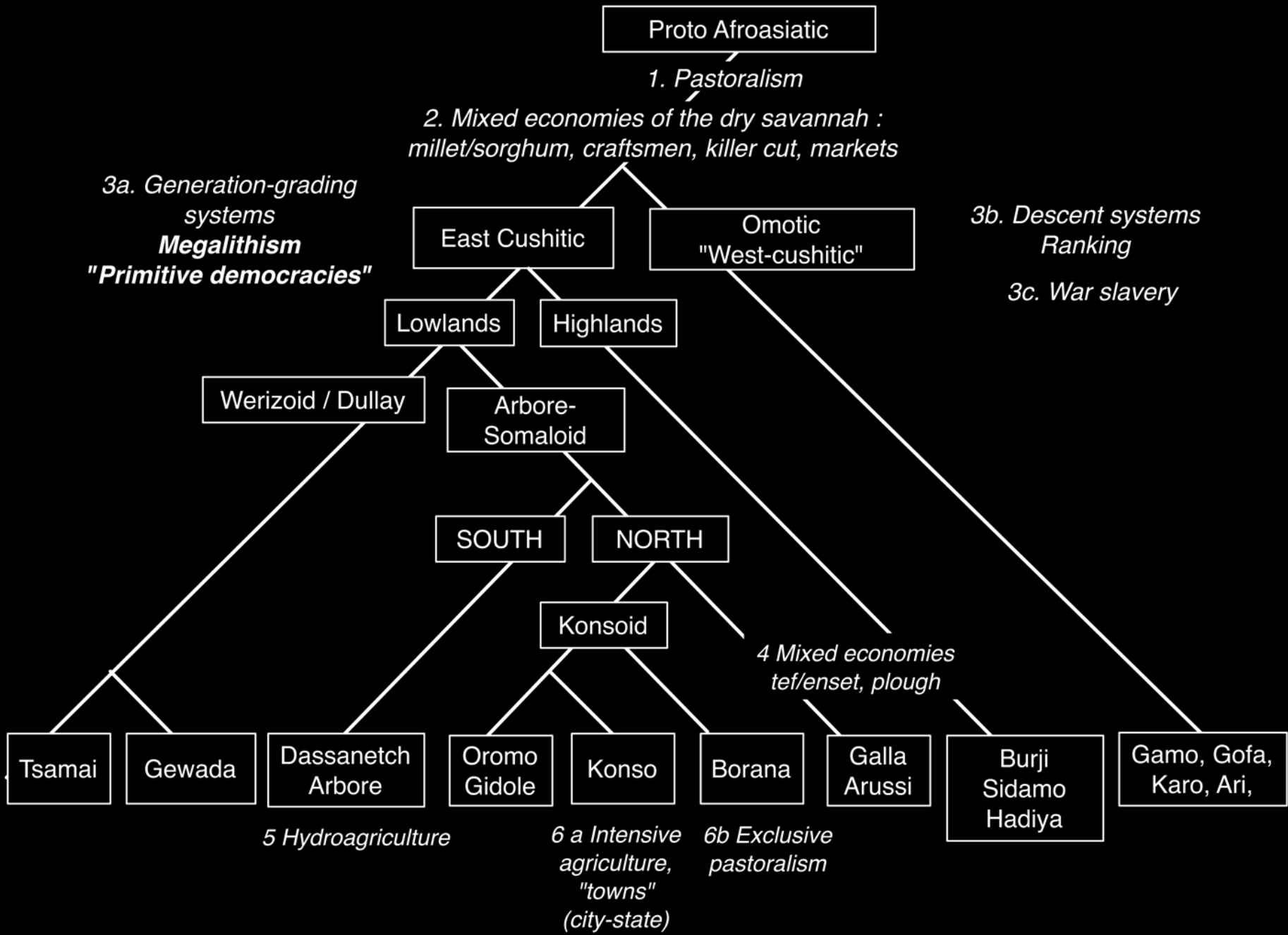
# Is a cladistic analysis possible?

Constraints with regard to a descent phenomenon with modification

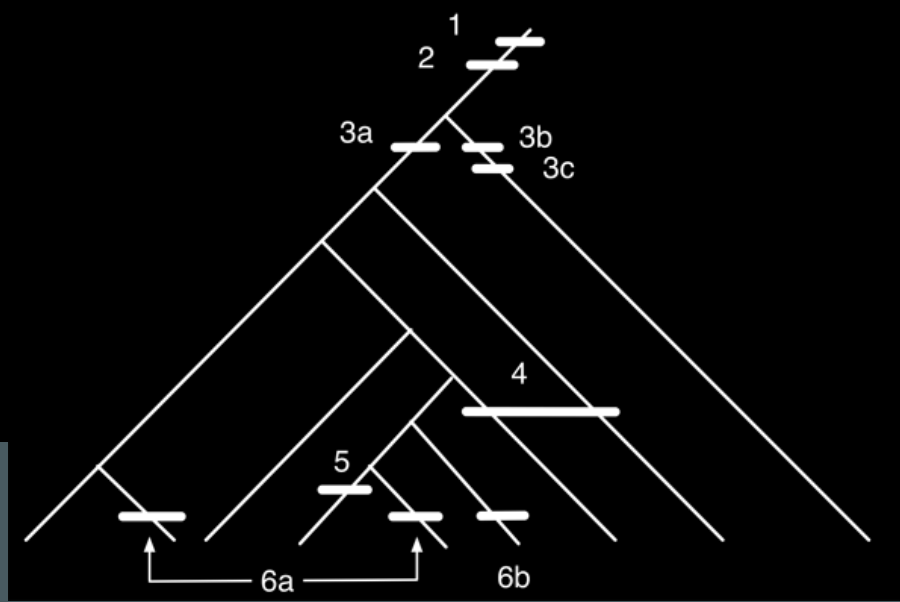
1. Phylogenetic classification of the language families (ambiguity linked with linguistic classifications)
2. Distinction between generation-grading societies (East Cushitic) and descent societies (Omotic) according to Hallpike and Tornay
3. Based on the archaeological record, pastoralism established prior to mixed economies
4. Mixed economies of the savanah (sorgho) as opposed to mixed economies of the humid highlands (ensete, tef)
5. Intensive agriculture, camel-nomadism and hydroagriculture are of secondary significance







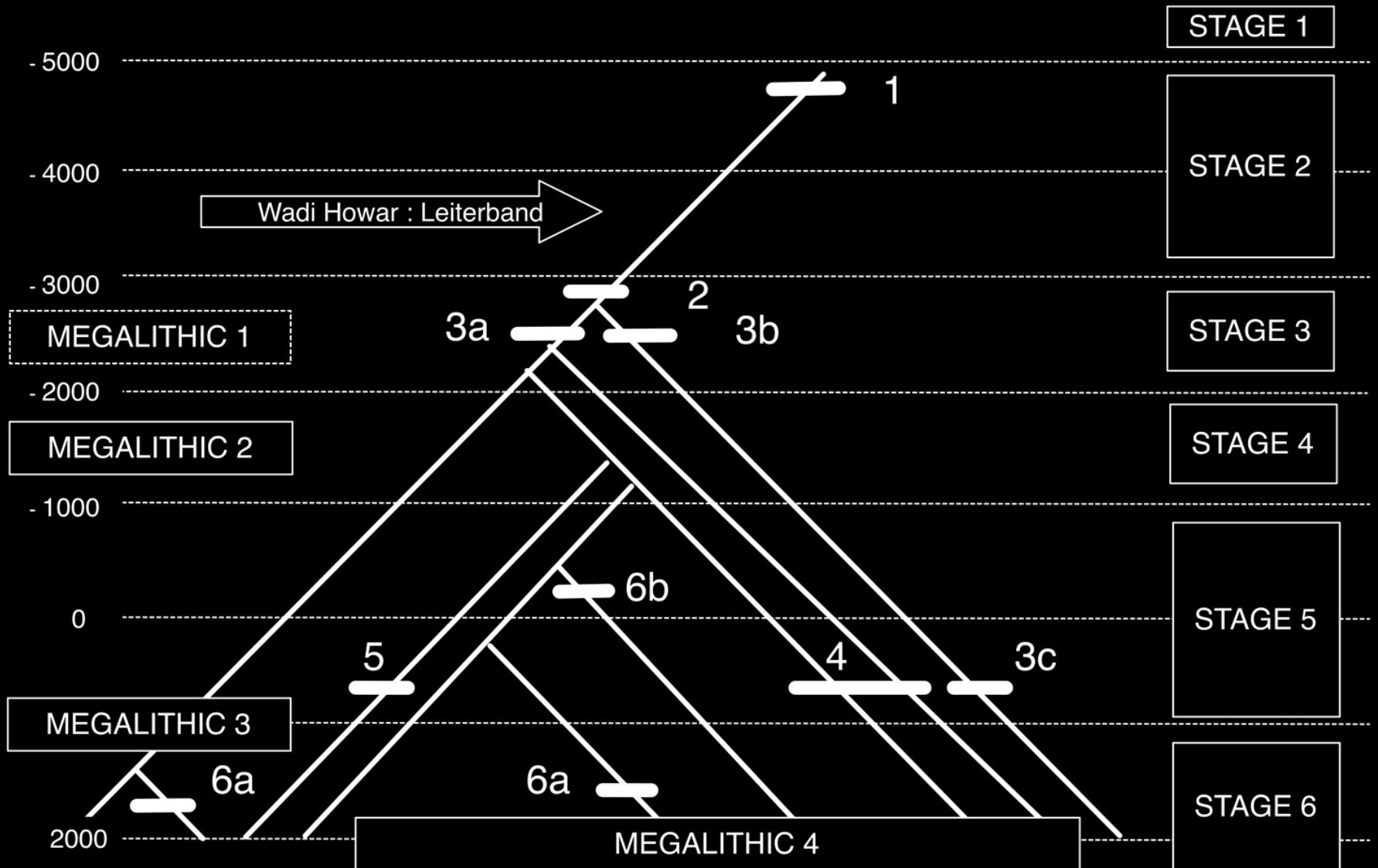
# A diagram illustrating the formation of the societies related to the Afroasiatic phylum



## SIX EVOLUTIONARY STAGES:

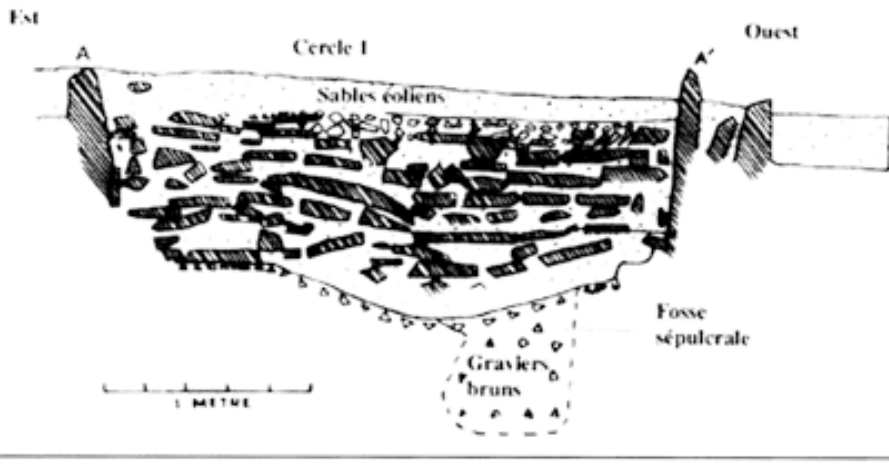
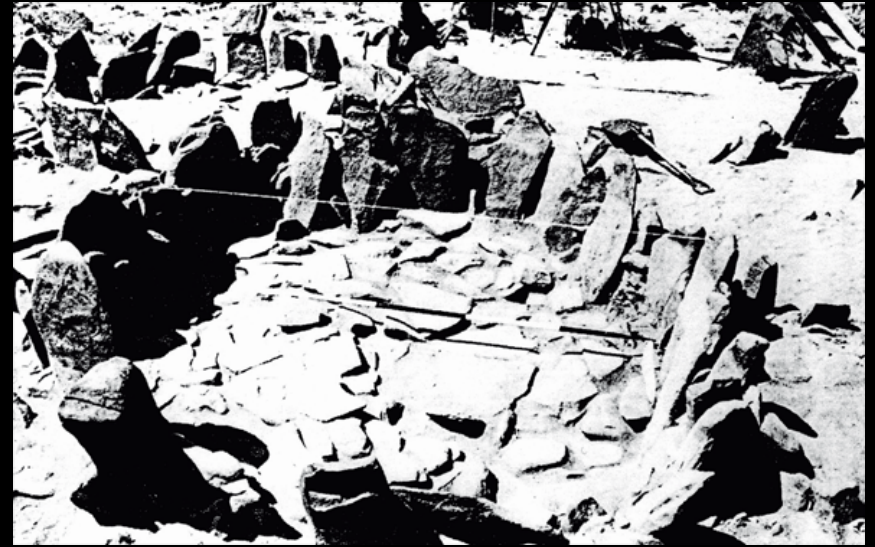
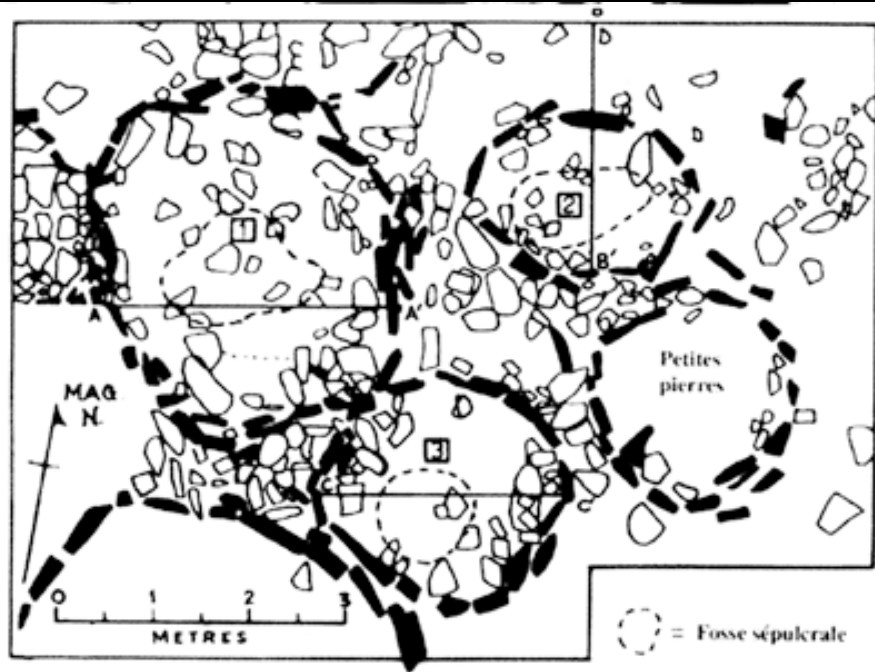
1. Proto-Afroasiatic and pastoralism.
2. Mixed economies of the dry savannah (sorgho), craft specialisation, markets, descent systems (lineages), warriors.
3. generation-grading systems, « primitive democracies », MEGALITHISM (3a) as opposed to ranking processes (3b). War slavery (3c)
4. Highland cultures (enset, tef).
5. Hydroagriculture (Arbore, Daassanach)
6. Intensive agriculture (Konso, Gawwada) or exclusive pastoralism (Borana).

# From the formation of societies to the cultures : a scenario





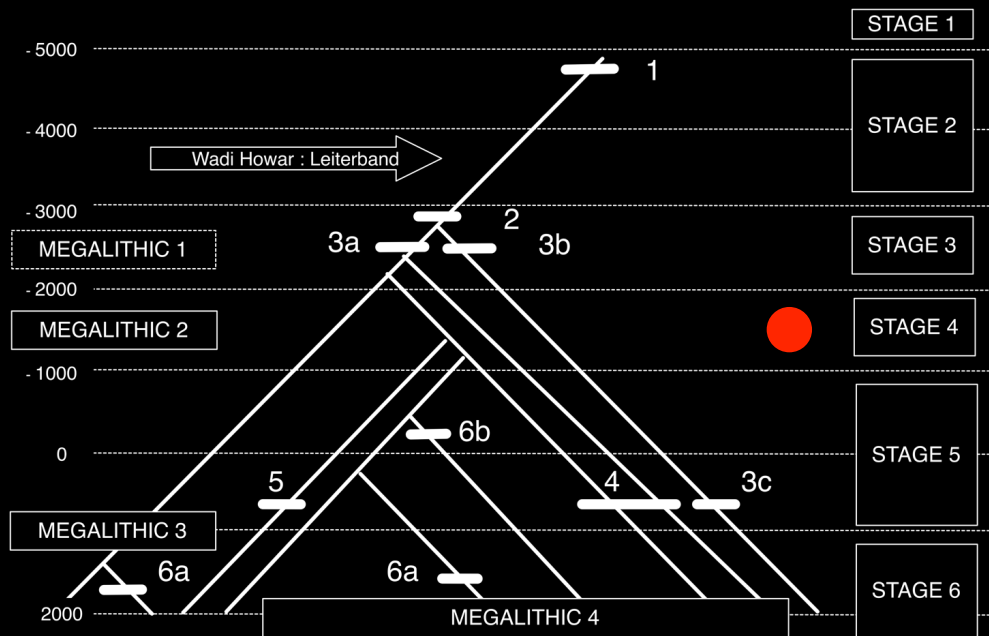
# A scenario : Megalithic 1 (3rd millennium BC)



## Namoratunga sites (Turkana)

- Relationships with Turkana people's cattle brand systems (Nilotic)
- Monuments very closely related to the basket-shaped burial monuments of the Messak in the Fezzan region
- (Early Pastoral style depicting cattle and figures with « negroid » profile, 5300-4000 cal BC)

# Megalithic 2 (2nd millennium BC)



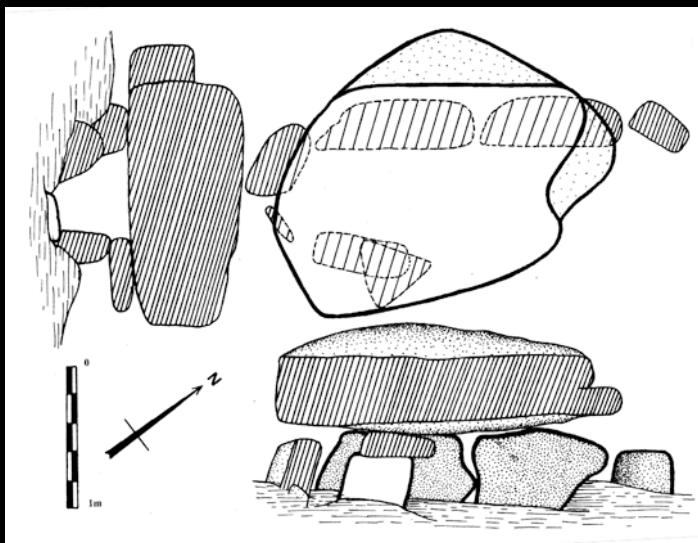
Three different language groups deriving from the East Cushitic of the lowlands :

- Proto-Baiso-Somaloid
- Arbore-Oromoid
- Afar - Saho

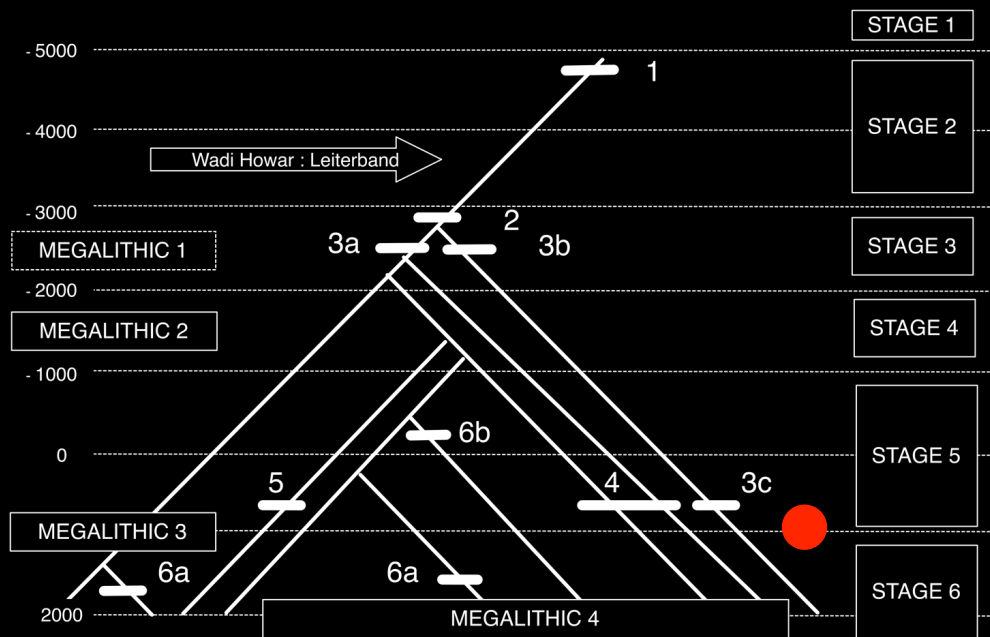
Dolmenic cists of the Chercher/ Harar (population ?)

Generalisation of animal husbandry

Agriculture difficult to identify



# Megalithic 3 (2nd millennium AD < 12th century)

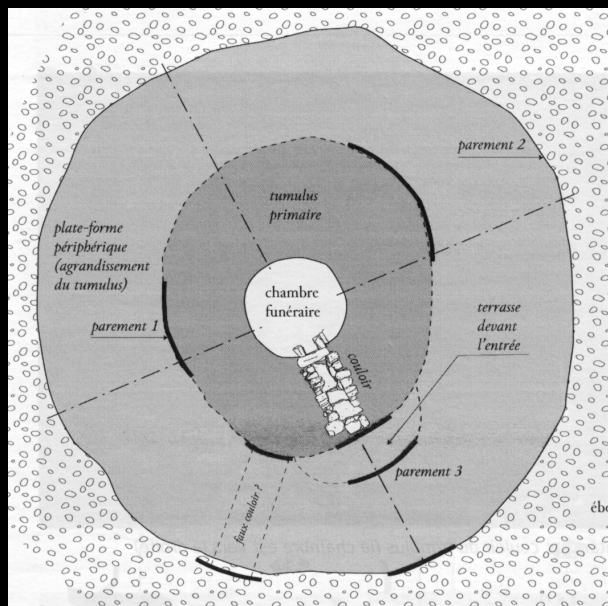


## Historical periods:

- 1140-1270 AD : Zagwe dynasty
- Vers 1400 AD : Salomonid dynasty
- 1527-1800 : Expansion of the Galla-Oromo

## 8th to 12th century AD : Megalithic 3

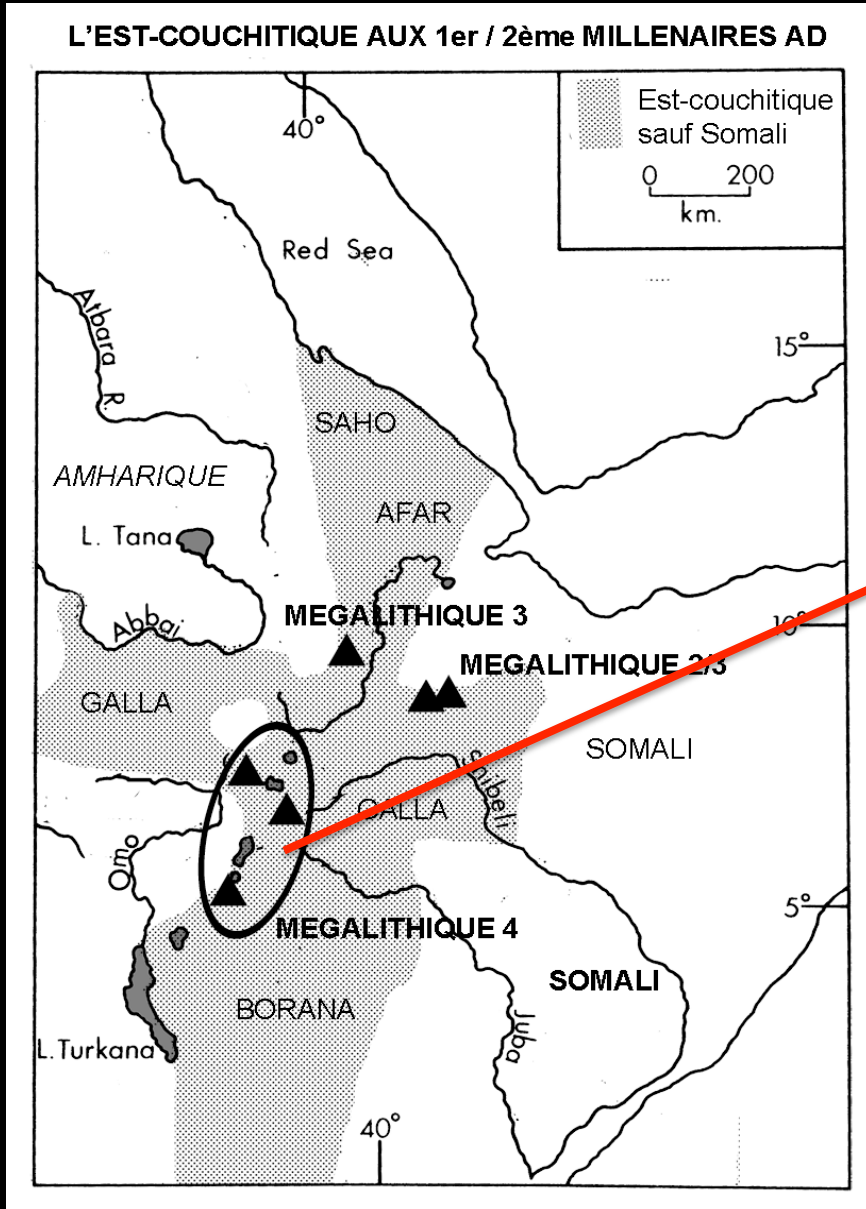
Harar tumulus and Shay culture  
(« chiefdoms » or « merit systems » ?)





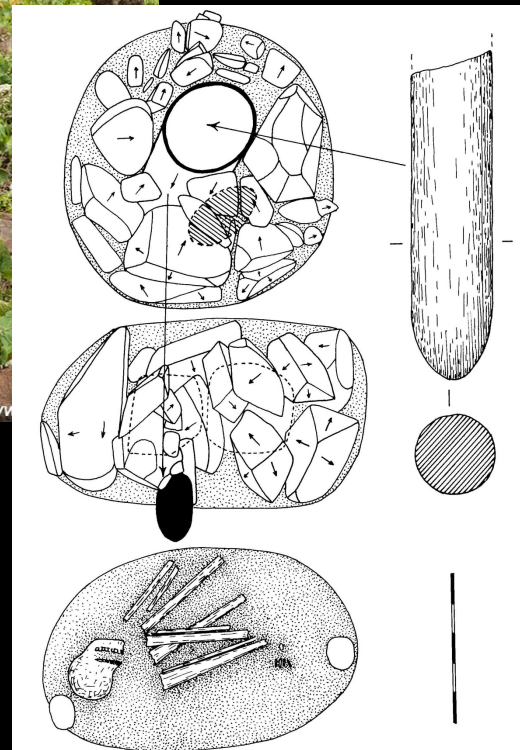
# Megalithic 4 (2nd millennium AD > 14th century)

East-cushitic people excluding Somali during the 1st/2nd millennium AD



Tuto Fela

Roger Joussaume





# Megalithic 4 (present time) Konso burials

Intensification of agriculture and Konso  
« towns » (16th century)

Issue of the emergence of city-states



Photograph Father Azais 1923-1926



Jensen 1936



# FOR A COMPARATIVE HISTORICAL SOCIOLOGY

