FROM ETHIOPIA TO THE SAHARA: ON MEGALITHISM

Alain Gallay
Rome: Current ethnoarcheology
25 – 27 November 2015
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.

1. THE EPISTEMOLOGICAL BASES

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1. THE EPISTEMOLOGICAL BASES

- **P3 HISTORY**
  - Evolutionist perspective

- **P2 CULTURES**
  - Scenarios

- **P1 SOCIETIES**
  - Cladistic taxonomy

- Ethnohistory
- Ethnology
- Linguistics
- Archaeology

- P01
- P0n
THE ETHIOPIAN CASE-STUDY

Borana people
East Cushitic language

Banna people
Omotic language

https://www.flickr.com
East Cushitic-speaking populations: Humid highlands: enset culture
(\textit{Ensete ventricosum})
The Konso people, a « primitive democracy » ?

Poquallas :
Religious chiefs without political power

Clan system: patriclans and lineages

https://sarawastibus.wordpress.com
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 »?

Men’s house

Popular assemblies:
Regulatory authorities and councils

Roger Joussaume

http://www.cyark.org/news/
Town structure:
Dry stone walled towns

Roger Joussaume

Jensen 1936
Self-sufficient towns fighting one another.

Battles resulting from minor incidents
Anarchic and labile alliance systems
None of the towns is able to conquer an other 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.
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*

http://www.surivalfrance.org/galeries/peres
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 savannah (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)
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 » ?)

Fauvelle-Aymard, Poissonier 2012
Megalithic 4 (2nd millennium AD > 14th century)
East-cushitic people excluding Somali during the 1st/2nd millennium AD
Megalithic 4 (present time)
Konso burials

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

Issue of the emergence of city-states
FOR A COMPARATIVE HISTORICAL SOCIOLOGY

P3 HISTORY
Evolutionist perspective

P2 CULTURES
Scenarios

P1 SOCIETIES
Cladistic taxonomy

Ethnohistory

Ethnology

Linguistics

Archaeology

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