

Discuss the contributions of iron technology to the process of state formation in...

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THE CONTRIBUTIONS OF IRON TECHNOLOGY TO THE PROCESS OF FORMATION IN BANTU AFRICA THE CONTRIBUTIONS OF IRON TECHNOLOGY TO THE PROCESS OF STATE FORMATION IN BANTU AFRICA

This paper reflects and discusses two major issues, which are the process of state formation in Bantu Africa and how iron technology contributed to this process of state formation. State formation has been explained to be the growth and expansion of a group of people within an identified setting such that their expansion leads to the need for them to be governed under a single political system (Wagner, 2006). Tracing the history of Bantu Africa, it would be noted that the process of state formation took place within their midst in different forms and through different stages. Generally, the highlight of the state formation process in Bantu Africa was in the rate of growth, where within a very short time frame, the people had occupied a very wide area of land. Starting from Cross River region around Nigeria and Cameroon border, the people had by 1000 B. C expanded into Lake Victoria and later to southwest and south (Dubrulle, 2002). Wagner (2006) has explained that one important factor that could be accounted for the rapid process of state formation is the social and economic changes that involved other tribes tying up with the Bantu people as they moved along through interracial marriages.

Regardless of the argument made for the social and economic changes that made the process of state formation possible and rapid, one aspect of growth factor that cannot be overlooked is the role of iron technology. Iron technology can be explained as the smelting of iron through the use of advantaged mechanisms in ensuring that the irons are refined into usable

tools and equipment (Dubrulle, 2002). Generally, iron technology did not develop among Bantu Africa as an isolated trade. Rather, it came as a necessity to help in the boost of agricultural growth, which was identified as a major economic viability for the people. Agricultural growth in itself was also dependent on the fact that population was growing at a rate that was very high. Due to this high rate of population growth, it was necessary for the people to find a means of feeding themselves. But the old forms of tools made from stones, bones and woods were found not to be durable and strong enough to help them achieve this purpose. To this end, the people fell on iron technology for the production of various farm tools that were deemed to be more durable. Examples of such tools are axes, arrows, knives, spears and hoes.

Though the original intent was not iron technology as a trade, iron technology would eventually become the catalyst behind which Bantu Africa would experience a heightened process of state formation. For instance it was later realized among the people that iron was more productive for forest lands. Meanwhile there were not much of such forest lands within their setting. This created the necessity to go beyond their borders to look for more fertile forest lands. Noting that the people were bringing in tools and equipment that were generally useful to farm production, the Bantu Africa people got hospitable and warm welcome wherever they perched their tents. This was when the intermarriages and other social factors started creating a very rapid state formation process coupled with the introduction of a new political system that came to be known as praise singing of “ big men”.

Cited Works

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