

Legends of our Common Heritage 7

A Typical Day of a Mother in Mankon

She wakes up at twilight. Hurries down to her valley farm (*nikom*) from where, at this time of the year, she harvests much cherished fresh corn. By six o'clock, she is back home with sweat drawing contours down her ebony black face. She is on time to wake her younger kids so they can join the older ones for the much dreaded morning bath. By the time the kids are clad in their school uniforms, she has readied breakfast for them, (most of the time steamed reserves of last night's dinner). Then she provides breakfast for her "eldest son," her husband. When the compound is all vacated, she goes to the nearest market to sell her early morning harvest to her fellow sisters, the *buyam-sellam*. Her sale is good this morning and, as usual, she uses the money judiciously. She stops at the local Credit Union where she puts a thousand francs (two dollars) in her account, saves 500 frs for her weekly quarter women's club (*njangi*), buys much needed provision for her kitchen and picks up a few used shorts for her kids. *God, my children risks going naked someday*, she sighs to herself. It's not even ten o'clock in the morning. You think she is going home? you are mistaken!

She leaves for her fertile farm on the border of Mankon and Bali. She would rather finish weeding that farm before the crops get destroyed by rodents. Her kids join her there, if she is lucky, later in the day from school. By dusk, mother and kids file back home carrying everything including foodstuff for the evening meal, firewood and water. The family takes the evening bath and she is always on time with dinner. The night closes with all her kids listening drowsily, while in macabre positions round the hearth, to her folk tales that are so full of morales of chastity, honesty, obedience, humility and you name the rest.

So goes a typical day for our mothers back in Mankon. But even they too dislike this monotony. So they step out once in a while to do something special.

Our Mothers' Special Discrete Touch

Discretely, our mothers do special things to the honor of their families. In the days of poll tax, many were Mankon mothers who saved enough

throughout the year to pay their husbands' tax and save the family from the embarrassment of seeing their "bread winner" whisked away for tax evasion. Our mothers are the real determinants of whether or not kids go to college. With money from their *njangis*, they give our dads money for college tuition. Don't we all remember how many times *Tata* decides kids aren't going back to college just because he thinks it is macho for him to take such a decision? But Mama knows how to bring him back to his good senses (sometimes in the middle of the night, read my lips). And when the kids start bringing back home the fruits of college education, our mothers decline any gifts (especially monetary) if they don't pass through our dads. No wonder men in our land were, and probably still are, avowed polygamists! It is hard to pen down all the attributes of the Mankon mother. But at this time of the year when people around the world celebrate Mother's Day, let us all join our voices to the rest of humanity and pay tribute to all the mothers of the land of our birth and ancestry-Mankon.

N/B: *Legends of Our Common Heritage* is a literary corner that seeks to remind all Mankon people about who we are, where we are coming from, and where we are heading. All contributions are welcome.

The *Njala* for today is: "We are princes celebrating in the palace." Who really are we?

The correct answer to today's *njala* will be published, together with that of *Legends...6*, in our future publication.

Let the women of our land continue to be the hidden force thanks to which Mankon owes its success! Happy Mother's Day!

Tangyie Munyong-Abieri

Click here to return to the legends page; <http://www.macudaamerica.org/legends.htm>
