

Legends of Our Common Heritage 1

How Mankon Got Its Name

Before settling down at the present site, the Mankon people had been quite migratory and war faring. They are said to have descended from the Lake Chad Basin area via the Adamawa Plateau. Their nearest and last temporary settlement is known to have been Widikum in the North West Province. While in Widikum, the Mankon people continued to scout for a better settlement, that whose terrain was even, well irrigated by natural streams and rivers and also highly protected by natural defensive barriers. Such a site would be conducive for agriculture, animal breeding and security which, by themselves, were prerequisites for a permanent settlement. However, a site that good was going to be eyed by many other powerful tribes also. But Mankon was a tribe unlike the others.

When they became aware of the existence of the present site of the village, the Mankon people strategize for some time while still in Widikum until they were sure that the time was right to embark on the most challenging and ultimate journey of conquest. The leader of the tribe at that time was Fon Munwi Tingoro (Dagger without Handle). He was the most feared warrior of his time. While in Widikum, he split up the tribe into clans headed by his lieutenant clan heads. These clans were geographically separated but were in permanent contact thanks to a team of tribal scouts. The reason for this separation was to insure that at no time would the entire tribe come under attack by an enemy. If one of them was attacked, the others had time to be warned so they could regroup and launch a counter offensive. Furthermore, it was difficult for the enemy to know the military might of the tribe since it was seldom seen together. The final exodus from Widikum to the Bamenda lowlands offered the people that rare opportunity for a total come-together and the result was amazing!

It is passed down that just before they arrived at their final destination, Fon Munwi Tingoro who led the expedition, looked back in order to make a panoramic census of how many of his people had survived the laborious trip with him. Behold! What the Fon saw was an endless stretch of followers that

went as far back as the eyes could see. With awesome satisfaction, the Fon is said to have exclaimed, "Webe, Or Mah Nko," in other words, "My Goodness, What A Giant Tail!"

And that's how the name "Mankon" came to be.

A few alternatives were tried subsequently, especially as impositions by the colonialists. The most significant was "Bande," from "Bah Ndeh," a metaphor from Mungaka meaning "The Followers of Ndeh." Fon Ndeh Fru, another legendary leader, ruled Mankon at the time. Fortunately or not, this name did not stand the test of time and "Mankon" was quickly reinstated as the name of the tribe.

So fellow tribesmen and women, as we look forward to celebrating our common heritage in August, let MACUDA MN remember that we shall be like the lion and our guests, its tail. For whatever happens to the lion's tail will trigger an immediate reaction from the lion itself. Stay well until I put together another story of our common heritage.

But before I go, this is the "Njalah" of the week

"I respect no one, even the Fon." Who am I?

Munyong-Abieri

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