

Supyire Calendar

By Michael Jemphrey, 2009

The Supyire people, over 350,000 strong (Lewis 2009), live in south-eastern Mali. Their language, which also bears the name Supyire, is one of approximately twenty Senufo languages spoken in West Africa. The region of Sikasso - called the breadbasket of Mali – which they inhabit is savannah, hosting series of plains and gently undulating hills (Coulibaly, Daouda et al [n.d.]: 4). Since the soil is fairly fertile, much of the forest surrounding the villages has been cleared for growing crops. The dry season from November till March is dominated by the warm Harmattan wind blowing off the Sahara. Then the humidity builds from the south before the rain is released in tropical downpours. A good rainy season lasts until October. The Supyire year has 12 lunar months, outlined in the table below, each month commencing at a new moon.¹

¹ Since the lunar year is shorter than the solar year and the lunar months do not match the solar months, there seems to be an adjustment made in the calendar once in a while, but to date it has not possible to elicit any specific information on how this occurs or who is responsible for deciding this.

Table 1: Supyire months

Supyire month	Translation	Nearest equivalent on Western Calendar	Typical activities in the Supyire community during this month
Kafubwoyi	Great heat	April	Village festivals seeking blessings and fertility for the coming agricultural year.
Wwɔrɔyɪŋke	---	May	Ploughing after the first rains have softened the earth.
Ŋkaannɔŋi	---	June	Sowing corn, peanuts and cotton.
Kaafuwaani	---	July	Weeding, sowing millet.
Kaafubwoŋi	---	August	Planting trees.
Sitɔŋi	---	September	Tending millet.
Yingwɔhe	Black moon	October	Harvesting corn. Searching in the bush for traditional remedies against sorcery.
Yingwofyiini	Black and white moon	November	Cotton harvest and weighing.
Sunmpiniŋke	---	December	Millet harvest and drying.
Kafeepyire	Slight winds	January	Transport of grain to the granaries.
Kafeebwoyi	Great winds	February	Building with mud bricks.
Kafupɛɛre	Chaleur	March	Making pots.

The Supyire follow both a six-day week and a seven-day week. The calendar for the month of *Yingwɔfyiini* (November) 2008 below illustrates this. The names of the seven-day week (*Tɛɛn*, *Tɛɛntahara*, etc.) along the top row are partially based on the Bambara calendar. The days of the six-day week written in the boxes are uniquely Supyire. So, each day has two names: the 1st March will be a *waraba-cwɔ̀hɔ̀li*. This same combination of names will come up every 42 days.

Table 2: Supyire Weekdays

Yingwɔfyiinni 2008 Nɔvanburu

Lundi	Mardi	Mercredi	Jeudi	Vendredi	Samedi	Dimanche
<i>Tɛɛn</i>	<i>Tɛɛntahara</i>	<i>Waraba</i>	<i>Di</i>	<i>Pwɔɔɔ</i>	<i>Pwɔɔɔna</i>	<i>Kari</i>
					1 tòɔ	2 cwɔ̀hɔ̀li
3 cɔ̀ɲɔ̀ɲɔ̀	4 wáa	5 kii	6 sɔɔn	7 tòɔ	8 cwɔ̀hɔ̀li	9 cɔ̀ɲɔ̀ɲɔ̀
10 wáa	11 kii	12 sɔɔn	13 tòɔ	14 cwɔ̀hɔ̀li	15 cɔ̀ɲɔ̀ɲɔ̀	16 wáa
17 kii	18 sɔɔn	19 tòɔ	20 cwɔ̀hɔ̀li	21 cɔ̀ɲɔ̀ɲɔ̀	22 wáa	23 kii
24 sɔɔn	25 tòɔ	26 cwɔ̀hɔ̀li	27 ● cɔ̀ɲɔ̀ɲɔ̀	28 wáa	29 kii	30 sɔɔn

Specific combinations are auspicious days for certain sacrificial rites and community events: marriages in the village of *Kabakanha* should take place on *tɛɛntahara-kii*, so the 11 November 2008 would have been a good day to hold a wedding ceremony. In fact, it is said that *kii* is a weighty day: everything that happens then is amplified: the good is better and the bad is worse. So arrangements for a burial can be speeded up to avoid it taking place on a *kii*.

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