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A PANORAMIC OVERVIEW OF NDIAN DIVISION  
BY CHIEF NASAKO FRITZ GERALD

Ndian Division was established by Federal Cameroon Decree of 1966, carved out of Kumba Division and Victoria Division as concerns the Bamusso Maritime Localities, which were already part of Bamusso Sub Division created in 1964. At creation, Ndian had four sub divisions viz Mundemba, Ekondo-Titi, Bamusso and Isangele. Districts were later established first at Kombo Itindi, Idabato and Kombo Abedimo and subsequently at Dikome Balue and Toko. All these districts were raised to the status of subdivisions in 1992 for those on the Bakassi Peninsular and 1996 for the mainland districts of Dikome Balue and Toko. This gave Ndian its present structure of nine (09) sub divisions.

Ndian Division has twelve (12) cultural groups viz in alphabetical order: Bakolle, Bakoko, Balondo, Balondo ba Diko, Balue, Barombi, Batanga, Bima, Ekombe, Isangele, Korob and Ngolo.

Of course, there have been cravings for the creation of more administrative units either at Divisional level or sub divisional level. At divisional level, we recall that historically, the Germans, since the beginning of the 20th century had wanted to establish Rio Del Rey Division, but when they were defeated in the First World War, their plan was cancelled. However, one could say that this dream came to be realized by the establishment of Ndian Division in 1966. In spite of this situation, there had been bickerings for other divisions to emerge, for instance, the Bakassi Division, the Ndongore Division or the Rumpi Maritime Division besides the residual Ndian Division. At sub divisional level, there have been cravings for units to be created at Lipenja Batanga I, Bamusso Mainland, Lower Balue to name a few. We even heard sometime in the past that a new region had to be
created as Bomana Region to include Ndian Division but this has remained a rumour or a dream for some.

Ndian Division has no first class chiefdoms, but has seven second class chiefdoms in the national catalogue, viz Bamusso, Bekumu, Dikome Balue, Ekondo-Titi, Isangele (Oron), Mundemba, Ndian Town and Toko. Reclassification is also very highly desired.

There once existed an umbrella structure called Ndian Economic and Cultural Organisation (NECO), which attained its climax late 1980s and stopped functioning early 1990s with the advent of democracy. NECO lobbied for the creation of a Ndian Development Authority (NDA) but in 1987, the South West Development Authority (SOWEDA) was created for the integrated rural development of the entire South West Province which involved Ndian too; So NDA’s ambition was stopped. Subsequently, there were attempts to revive this umbrella organization through the Ndian Development and Cultural Association (NDECA) which also went down the drain and most recently the Ndian Empowerment and Development Association (NEDA) which is still trying to surface. The spirit is the same, a rallying force for all Ndian people and an apex coordinating structure for all cultural and development associations within Ndian Division. Maybe this All Ndian Conference will reassess the necessity for such an umbrella mega structure and perhaps give added impetus to the NEDA project. Let’s wait and see.

In my humble opinion, the All Ndian Conference is intended to:

Reactivate a sense of common belonging, brotherhood and solidarity amongst the Ndian people;
Reawaken in each and every one an unshakable commitment to work together for our general mutual interest and social cohesion;
Rally behind our present God-given leader, His Excellently Chief Dr. Joseph Dion Ngute, Prime Minister, Head of Government who is in tandem with the Head of State President Paul Biya.
NDIAN LEADERSHIP AND HALL OF FAME


At municipal level, we have names like Pa Z.N. Etamba, Chief Rudolf Muanja Ngute, Chief D. B. Monyongoh, Chief Esoh Itoh Stephen, Chief Anki Ambo Daniel, Chief Akanang Christopher, Chief Nfoni Mokeo, Barrister Ekole Verine, Mrs Elisabeth Bekomba Isele, Prince Mosongo Njong Philip, Rev. Mesembe James Nyando, Oliver Ntimin, Etane Ebokeley Sakwe, Esona Christian, Mbongo, Itoe Benjamin Njio, Besumbu, Mrs Usim Caroline, Mrs. Grace Mbeng, Nanji Kenneth, Magdalene Pondy, Edonde Cornelius, Aboko Patrick Anki, Ekale Rills, Menye Divine, Ekenue Samuel, Meme Meme Samuel, Betana Ferdinand, Motuba Victor Nebare, Etongo Edem, etc.

At top administrative level, we have had Hon. N.N. Mbile Senior followed by Hon. L.E. Nwalipenja, Namaya Michael Elangwe, Chief. Dr. Joseph Dion Ngute, the latter propelled to the status of first ever Prime Minister, Head of Government from Ndian Division.
At the level of the Ndian Chiefs Conference, we have had their Royal Majesties Esoh Itoh Stephen, Norbert Mbile, Anono Motiti, J. B. Mukete, Lucas Itoe and today Efamba Nganya.

Administratively, we have had in random, Mrs Hans Penda Sone, Ake Donatus, Ebong Ngole John, Acham Peter Cho, Nzegge Onyong Charles, Nana Jean, Panjouono Daniel, Nzeki Theophile, Galim Ngong Irene, Chamberlin Ntou’ou Ndong, Peter Tieh Nde, Babila Akaou, Etah Mbokaya Ashu, Forwang Lawrence, Guibaï Baldena.

At the level of party politics, before independence we were followers of CPNC and KPP championed by Dr. E.M.L Endeley and Hon. N.N. Mbile Senior. After independence, we became followers by majority of KNDP of Hon. John Ngu Foncha until 1966 when all parties merged into CNU (Cameroon National Union) which transited to CPDM. From CNU to CPDM, our first leader was Hon. L.E. Nwalipenja followed by Hon. Chief Ebune Nakeli Alexander, Hon. Bau Okha, Chief Akanang, Dr. Imbia, Prince Mosongo, Efamba Vincent, Hon. Ibeku, Chief Mekanya Charles Okon, Chief Ebune Emmanuel Eboka, etc. Apart from 1992 to 1996 when we went to the opposition, the remaining years have portrayed Ndian Division as a pro-CPDM administrative unit.

At the level of the CPDM Central Committee as well as the National Bureaus of WCPDM and YCPDM, we have so far had Hon. Nwalipenja, Chief Dr Joseph Dion Ngute, Hon Dr Imbia Sylvester, Chief Akanang Wosany Christopher, Mrs Ankie Affiong Rebecca, Mrs Mambe nee Mbongo Agnes Nokuri as full members, and Hon Mary Muyali Meboka as Alternate member.
Of course, we also have Honorable JOSHUA NAMBANGI OSIHX from Ndian Division but representing another constituency in Wouri Division, the first ever Senator from Ndian Division Mrs ANKIE AFFIONG REBECCA and more recently the sixteen pioneer Regional Councilors which include Commissioner ELANGWE WILLIAM ITOE.
EDUCATION

Ikassa, initially the headquarters of the Catholic “Balundu” Parish, which in 1904 covered the whole of Meme and Ndian Divisions, is the cradle of education in present day Ndian Division, followed by public schools set up at Lipenja Batanga I and Lobe Estate. All other public schools emerged after these mother schools. However, those who are at lower Ndian Division schooled at Mbonge Marumba in Meme Division. Secondary schools were set up at Mundemba and Ekondo-Titi in the 1970s. Today, primary schools and secondary schools are littered all over the division. There is however no institution of higher learning based in Ndian Division. On the whole, this has hiked educational consciousness to the extent that every tribe can boast of an educated population. This has also increased the quality and quantity of human resources. In the late 1980s and most of the 1990s, especially when Chief Dr. Joseph Dion Ngute was managing Director of the National School of Administration and Magistracy (ENAM), his tenure coincided with the increase in training of young civil service professionals, which constituted a foundation for a later boom in top administrative and management positions. We can call this “The Chief Ngute Effect”

NDIAN ECONOMY

Farming and fishing characterize the economy of Ndian Division, whether at individual level or at corporate level. Ndian Division habours two major agro-industrial corporations viz Plantations Pamol du Cameroon which has become Pamol Plantations Public Limited Company and Cameroon Development Corporation (CDC). PAMOL, affiliate of UNILEVER, established estates from 1927 with headquarters at Lobe, and after forty (40) years of operations, Ndian Division was created. CDC had banana plantations in Bamusso mainland, but piped down in late 1950s and early
1960s after the Banana pest, such that it is the value that PAMOL gave to this area formerly called ironically “Cameroon Overseas” that Ndian Division came into being. That is why it is rightly said that PAMOL is the precursor, the life-wire and heartbeat of Ndian Division. However, CDC came strongly in the 1970s at Ekondo-Titi sub division with rubber plantations and in the early 21st century with palm plantations in Bamusso sub division. Meanwhile the Ndian content of PAMOL was very insignificant in terms of manpower at both rank-and-file and management levels, not to talk of corporate social responsibility. Because of this apparent imbalance which is partly caused by the Ndian people themselves, a heritage or tendency which has continued to present day (in fact our people are naturally not prone to overpopulation, besides not liking the kind of work we think are associated with slaves such as plantation work experience in the American Sugar Plantations of the West Indies), this made PAMOL to operate as a stranger to Ndian people. Eventually, management was devolved to Ndian in 2016, after cosmetic appetites from 1997 to 2016 under successive chairmanships of Hon Chief D.B. Monyongoh and Chief Ofonda Esoh Itoh Stephen. 2016 is approximately ninety (90) years since the creation of PAMOL.

After the Bakassi Peninsular dispute, PAMOL was supported by government funds to expand with new plantations at Ekondo-Nene and on the Bakassi Peninsular, besides revamping of existing plantations. In the meantime, new ventures and opportunities emerged from 2015 such as HERAKLES Farms in Mundemba and Toko sub divisions, amidst a hostile atmosphere and propaganda promoted by international nongovernmental organizations against the extensive land exploitations.
Government succeeded in streamlining the land surface needed from 73,000 hectares to 20,000 hectares of which 7,000 is in Ndian Division with a commitment to support 10,000 hectares of small holders schemes as well as a component of corporate social responsibility. Operations had hardly been launched when the ongoing crisis broke out, and as a result of accumulation of causes, including but not limited to the situation within PAMOL which progressively alienated workers of Ndian origin, earlier discontent with regards to the HERAKLES Farms project despite forged government compromise, the review of the Korup project and the perception by some cultural groups of some degree of alienation from leadership and diverse opportunities, Ndian Division joined in the social unrest.

I also remember that Ndian Division has also been courted by big groups like CARGILL (American), interested in establishing large plantations (over 30,000 hectares) around Ililor and Dibonda in Ekondo-Titi sub division. But the timing of this investment interest coincided with the anti-land-exploitation campaign by some NGOs and so it was temporarily frustrated. Maybe this All-Ndian Conference will make us to revisit our stand with regards to the economic extensive exploitation of our vast land resources.

In reality, although we claim resource potential in vast oil and gas reserves and forests, these are rather exploited for national common wealth or biodiversity conservation, thus the virtual disillusion feeling inhabiting us for so many years. Whereas what we can always hang on is an extensive land resources, yet unexploited – only these can be harnessed permanently though modern plantation agriculture with an array of small holders schemes to enable Ndian Division sustainably emerge.
Indeed, it had been alleged and proven that Malaysia got from our country Cameroon through Pamol Company Research Facility or Nursery oil palm seeds. They went further to do genetic engineering and hybrid culture applied on extensive oil palm plantations to increase productivity. It is the exponential productivity which is at the basis of Malaysia to become a newly industrialized economy, with multiple uses of palm oil even as fuel.

Of course, this experience spilled over to Indonesia another East Asia Dragon as we know them today.

Whereas we at the source are still at the basic or perhaps post primitive stage of oil palm culture, although with full biological or botanic value to human health.

Is this interesting East Asian experience worth replicating beginning with PAMOL to make Ndian and Cameroon at large a paradise? Either PAMOL is rehabilitated and modernized with improved agricultural technics to harness the vast land surface of Ndian yet unexploited, or that other agribusiness ventures should be given the opportunity to establish and practice such innovative agric-techniques. Moreover, this also calls for a radical change of mindset and some flexibility to encourage innovation and diversification.
Finally, we cannot forget the legendary Korup Project and the Rumpi Rural Electrification and integrated Agricultural schemes. These two projects had mixed fortunes as concerns the development of Ndian Division. Under the Korup Project, a plant called Ancestrocladus Korupensis was discovered by botanists with a reputation for having an active ingredient to fight against HIV/AIDS. After this discovery, whereas we were waiting for royalties, we were unfortunately told that it has a toxic element michelamine. Whether it was an Alibi or a ploy to deprive us of such royalties while the plant is being exploited by pharmaceutical companies, we cannot quite explain. Forest royalties too had a limited life span for our councils.

Ndian Division is also contiguous to the Rio Del Rey Sedimentary Basin which harbors most of oil exploration and exploitation activity in Cameroon. Our people have been clamoring for royalties. We may need to exploit the current decentralization laws and in particular the law on local finance.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE GOOD AND THE UGLY

Indeed, Ndian Division was historically propelled to the limelight, first by the Bakassi Peninsular Dispute of 1993 to 2002, settlement year, and the appointment of Chief Dr. Joseph Dion Ngute on 04th January 2019 as Prime Minister and Head of Government;

Ndian Division is known to be largely remote with difficult radio and telecommunication links, as well as a poor road connectivity. In the 1990s, Ndian Division because of this insularity was spared of ghost towns and civil disobedience. This situation has changed with the penetration of mobile telecommunications and the use of more modern telecommunication devices.
As said earlier, Ndian Division area was referred in popular parlance as “Cameroon Overseas”, given its largely maritime nature and difficult accessibility. Initially, travel towards the administrative headquarters was from the beach at Ekondo-Titi, through the eight hour Rio-vessel to Bulu beach near Mundemba. We rejoiced at the first road access to Mundemba in 1983 and since then, many initiatives by government, agencies like SOWEDA and the Korup Project, and by some cultural and development associations like NCUDA, led to the development of many roads now existing with more possibilities of complete road connectivity as follows:

Kumba – Ekondo-Titi – Mundemba – Isangele – Akwa
Mundemba – Toko – Manyemen Toko – Dikome Balue – Kumba
Ekombe Three Corners – Big Ngwandi
Mbongo – Bokoso – Idenau Kombone Bafaw – Difenda – Dikome Balue
Boa Balondo – Idenau Mbongo – Bamusso

All these routes need to be developed for permanent connectivity within and without Ndian Division towards Meme, Fako and Manyu Divisions.

After the Biafran Civil War in 1967-70, piracy developed around Ndian offshore waters. This activity has been fought bravely and successfully by the Cameroonian forces of Law and Order. Ekondo-Titi has experienced some kind of stigma-first in 1993 as part of government action to fight against smuggling and customs fraud, a report depicted the beach under the Lobe Customs brigade which was the third station at the time in terms
of customs revenue collection in the whole country, but considered as a major smuggling route. This was met with high handed repression which inspired the outbreak of the Bakassi Peninsular dispute, since it spurred a Nigerian reaction to the high handedness on its traders citizens.

As part of measures to manage the aftermath of the Bakassi dispute, a presidential Bakassi Commission was set up supervised by the Presidency of the Republic, subsequently incorporated under the Prime Minister's Office and today transformed into Bakassi Development Project (BADEP) under the Ministry for Economic Planning and Regional Development.

Yet, Ekondo-Titi area saw the abduction of six (06) divisional delegates, the assassination of four students and a teacher of GBHS and recently, the capture of smugglers of war weaponry.

On the whole; it must be emphasized that:

PAMOL was not only a precursor to the establishment of Ndian Division but also with CDC, they motivated the creation of large corporate extensive plantations in the other parts of Cameroon eg, SOCAPALM, HEVECAM (40.000 hectares), SAFACAM, SUDHEVEA (45.000 hectares) and today CAMVERT (50.000 hectares) presently doing wonders in Ocean Division.

Ndian Division harbours the Bakassi Peninsular which was defended by no other than Cameroon Government to uphold our territorial integrity.

Ndian Division harbours enormous oil and gas resources, both onshore and offshore within the Rio Del Rey sedimentary basin.

Given the ugly situation of youth unemployment, it is important
- That our youths should free themselves from the mentality our parents were made to have that plantation work is only for slaves;
- That management of our major corporate agribusinesses be conscious of the need to preserve N'dian content heritage.

- That all large corporate extensive plantation schemes be made to prosper including PAMOL, CDC, HERAKLES farms and CARGILL schemes.
- That all roads heretofore highlighted be improved upon to permanent connectivity status.

- That leaders be conscious of inclusivity as an essential ingredient social cohesion.

We are all called upon to work together to make N’dian Division, like the Biblical garden of Eden, a haven of Paradise not only for us but also and above all for future generations. Yes We Can!

Long live All N’dian Conference;
Long live N’dian Division;
Long live our one and indivisible Cameroon.