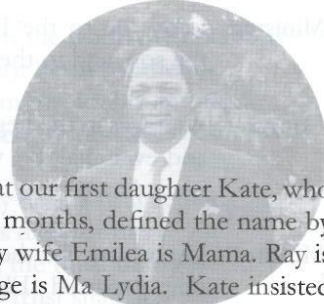


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A short Biography of
Chief Rae Alias Ray Ajebe Ejedepang Koge
17th July 1942 - 8th April 2008
By S. N. Ejedepang-Koge



To demonstrate how closely knit our family is I like to recall that our first daughter Kate, who lived with Ray and his wife Doreen from the age of eighteen months, defined the name by which each of us should be called. My name is Daddy and my wife Emilea is Mama. Ray is Uncle and his wife Doreen is Auntie, while Lydia Emade Koge is Ma Lydia. Kate insisted that each member of the family calls us thus, and it is so to this day.

Chief Ray Emmanuel Ajebe Ejedepang Koge was born during the Second World War. He lived from 17th July 1942 to 8th April 2008. He lived for sixty six years, thirty eight of which have been spent in Victoria-Limbe. This has been a very hard and busy life of patient study and work for self-realisation and for selfless service to family, village, clan, province and country.

He was the second of four children (three boys and one girl). His mother, Lydia Emade Ajebe was a princess of the Nyasoso royal family. She died at the age of thirty two, leaving behind four children aged 13, 9, 6 and 3. Though orphaned of mother, Ray received good care because his paternal Aunt Lucy Mekang was always caring.

Because Ray's father, Peter Ejedepang Koge lost his father early, he had to engage precociously in petty trade so as to be able to pay his way through primary school. He fell in the trap of customs and had to escape for his life to Nigeria where he became a trader. Unlike other Bakossi, he never practiced agriculture, yet he became well to do and was able to sponsor and encouraged all his children to pursue western education to as high as they could go. His birth during the difficult war years, strict mother's discipline and father's early struggle for survival and his encouragement of his children to succeed conditioned Ray to hard work

Ajebe Ejedepang Koge attended the Basel Mission vernacular and junior primary schools in his village, Ndom, and then the middle and senior primary school in Nyasoso. He proceeded to the Basel Mission College Bali. On graduation, he taught at the Basel Mission Secondary Schools Kumba and Besong Abang respectively. He passed the entrance examination to the School of Pharmacy, University of Ife Nigeria and was awarded a scholarship by Mr. O. E. Effiong, the Nigerian proprietor of Rainbow Chemists Limited, Limbe, the first private Chemist in Anglophone Cameroon.

Graduating from Ife in 1970, he was recruited by the Rainbow Chemist and worked patiently with his benefactor for a while. When Mr. Effiong went to study ophthalmology in Britain, Ray's management of the business so impressed the proprietor that he left him in charge

when he decided to return to Nigeria and, later sold the business to him. Eventually, thanks to the good offices of Ray's political mentor and associate Mola Njoh Litumbe, the infrastructure that makes up the establishment, was sold to Ray. In spite of the biting and prolonged economic crisis and the phenomenal rise in the number of pharmacies in Limbe to twelve, which made greater managerial demands on him, Ray succeeded to hold the pharmacy on the balance until his death. He provided employment to at least ten Cameroonians at any one time, and benevolences to many more. A committed professional, he was an active member of the National Order of pharmacists.

With the return to multi-party politics in Cameroon in the 1990s, Ray became a member of the Liberal Democratic Alliance (LDA) and was elected its Treasurer. His interest in politics derived from the fact he thought his elder brother who had shown much interest in politics from the late 1950s would join the band wagon and replace him. But he was surprised when the brother rebuked him for "endangering his (Ray's) business prospects by dabbling in the kind of politics that prevailed in the country. He admonished Ray to drop the idea or tone it down. Elder brother explained to Ray why he had discounted any further involvement in politics and why politics would be a danger to Ray's business. Ray was a member of the LDA delegation to the Tripartite Conference that ended the political stalemate of the early 1990s and ushered the so-called democratisation of Cameroon.

Strict childhood upbringing under his mother left a lasting impression on him. Very strict, she encouraged her children to participate in home chores, church and school activities, never tolerating absence from and negligence in school matters. She regularly looked through our exercise books and encouraged good work. This instilled a spirit of hard and good work in the children and constitutes the bedrock on which Ray's social, spiritual and intellectual life was built. He grew up to be a compassionate man, a dedicated husband and father, indeed a family man, an epitome of the family virtue of humility that shuns all forms of ostentation and publicity.

In 1970, Ray married Doreen Pysang Ebokolle, a professional teacher. The happy couple is blessed with six biological children (two girls and four boys). Dr. Koge Ajebe (Pharmacist), Kollé Effiong (Engineer), Emade Ajebe (Environmentalist), Mesode Ajebe (Accountant), Ngole Ajebe and Ekane Ajebe are still in High School. Dr. Koge Ajebe and Sylvie have given the family three grand children; Ajebe Ian, Silo Lea and Koge Jr. Yet all the children of the family were his without distinction

Ray was at ease with the rich and the poor, the urbanite and the rustic, in the family, at the workplace, at Church and in the community as a whole. He belonged to several associations and development groups; a Rotarian, a Boban, a member of the Lions Club, Mwan'Ngoe, MWASHA, TACUDA, MWADAC. Although he was allergic to and shied from holding post

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of responsibility in organisations, the MWAN'NGOE BAKOSSI Community of Limbe made him their Chief, a non-hereditary post he held until his death.

Originally, he shied away from responsibility within the Church. He considered himself unworthy for the service, because he was fully occupied with the heavy duties of the Rainbow Chemists and would not like to render half-hearted service. But, when congregational responsibility was thrust on him as an elder and Chairperson of Beach Congregation, he accepted it with humility. He said, "Since I did not apply for the job, I believe God has chosen me". And he took the responsibility seriously, asking God to enable him render sincere and dedicated service. Henceforth, he shared his time amongst his house, the pharmacy and the Church building project that became his greatest passion and dedication. This project drained his energies as he spent time thinking how it could be completed.

Looking closely at principles of Christian living and comparing this to how people live practically, he often told me, "Daddy, I pity the Almighty God when I see the way his creature use him, his name and the gifts he has bestowed on them both within and outside the Church. We seem to be mocking the very compassionate God for not acting fast to pay us for our irreverent acts".

In 1967, when both of us were still at university, I proposed to him that we should strive to change the status of our family so as to distance witchcraft from it. "Let us endeavour to train at least one child from each household of our family. Those so trained will then serve as trail-breakers, and in turn train others. If no household feels rejected, the motives for jealousy and hatred that lead to witchcraft would have been outlawed". Regarding this project, while we were preparing for the 2006 family meeting, he asked me rhetorically, "Daddy, when will this your baby-sitting end?" I simply answered, "Soon, when our children and relatives would have begun to take their share of family responsibilities." Several years ago, during a discussion, I confided to him, "When I die, bury my mortal remains near our father and mother at Ndom". Then I turned to him and asked, "What about you?" He looked embarrassed, waited a moment, and politely answered, "What if I request to be buried in my compound in Limbe?" Without any hesitation, I told him that it would not be proper and repeated the reasons I had given to justify my option. He neither agreed nor objected to my position. I had expected to raise the matter again, but death has disrupted everything. The tradition of our family demands that every member should openly express his opinion, but the decision is rationally made by the head of the family. Today, I reverse the decision we made several years ago to and opt bury Chief Ajebe Ejedepang Koge in Limbe in accordance with his wish expressed earlier. I do this in profound recognition of the deep love and mutual understanding that characterised our relations. Because he never denied us anything, I wish his burial in Limbe to be seen as a sign of our appreciation of the love that he showed to the family, village and tribe.