

# Corpse, 2 houses, 7 vehicles burnt in Delta

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TWO family houses, a corpse of an octogenarian village head and casket as well as over seven vehicles were weekend in Ukala-Okpunor, Oshimili North local council in Delta State set on fire following disagreement over burial rites. The incident which occurred during a wake keep

in the town led to the alleged killing by police of a popular businessman and millionaire, Chief Frank Nezieanya, an indigene of the area.

Trouble, it was gathered, started following disagreement between the children of Diokpa of Ogbe lyase of Ukala Okpunor, the late Chief John Maduka over which type of burial rite should be given to their father said to

have died early January.

The deceased, before he took ill and died at the age of 96, was said to be a believer in the custom and tradition of the people.

However on his sudden demise *Daily Champion* gathered, one of his three sons and the eldest, Mr. Magnus Apani Maduka now

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# Corpse, 2 houses, 7 vehicles

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in police net over the mayhem had insisted that the late dad be buried according to the christian rite. But the idea was rebuffed by his kinsmen who believed that the late village head be buried according to custom and tradition so that it would pave way for a new diokpa to emerge.

The disagreement that ensued between the late diokpa's children and his kinsmen over burial rite was also said to have taken them to Lagos where initial dialogue on the burial arrangement collapsed.

Investigations further revealed that the late diokpa's wife, one Mrs. Cecilia Unojei Maduka was alleged to have separated long ago from her matrimonial home till the death of her husband and therefore according to the tradition of the people of the area she needed to perform certain rites before she could be admitted back into her family house to mourn her late husband.

The rites which included open confession by the woman was reported to be the main reason why the eldest son disagreed that the deceased father be given a traditional burial so that his mother does not face an ugly consequence.

*Daily Champion* gathered that during the wake keep (Thursday), while the corpse of the octogenarian was lying in state some young men from the town started beating drum, an action which irked the man's son who doubles as a pastor of the Redeemed Church in Lagos.

It was gathered that the aggrieved pastor quickly called in nine policemen attached to the Akwukwu-Igbo police station same night while the wake keep was about to begin.

Following the arrival of the police, it was gathered, argument ensued and at that

point one of the policemen names withheld opened fire on the late Frank Nezieanya suspected to be leading his kinsmen against giving the late diokpa a christian burial.

It was learnt that moments after the late Frank was shot by police, pandemonium broke loose as the policemen disappeared into the night even as it was gathered that one of the boys beating the drum was also arrested by police on the orders of the late diokpa's eldest son.

The trigger happy policeman who is now on the run was said to have abandoned his rifle, pulled off his force uniform at the scene of the incident.

Irked by the unfolding ugly scenario, particularly the shooting to death of the young Frank, youths and elders of the village took to the streets and set the houses, the corpse, the casket and the vehicles ablaze.

When contacted, the Police Public Relations Officer (PPRO), Miss Olabisi Okuwobi confirmed the incident but said the command was investigating it and was still searching for the run-away cop for engaging in extra judicial killing.

According to the PPRO "the policeman knows the consequence of his action that the command does not tolerate extra judicial killing. He pulled off his uniform and dropped his rifle and ran away."

She was, however, silent on the fate of the other eight police officers, even as she informed that the situation in the village has been brought under control.

## Agbaje plans economic zones for Lagos