

EKO TRUST

How Ladipo market riot began

Ladipo International Spareparts Market, Mushin, possibly one

of the biggest in Lagos metropolis started about 30 years ago as a street market. Today, it has grown to become a thriving market, with people from different parts of Nigeria, Benin Republic, Togo, Ghana, Cameroon and other parts of Africa coming to meet their needs for good quality fairly-used automobile parts.

The market is named after one of the streets at Matori area of Mushin-Ajima local council. Other adjoining streets are today beehives of business activities because of the transformation of the market. The growth of the market has also swept over many residential buildings that have been turned into shops and warehouses.

There is a strong presence of people of southeast origin in the market who started it all and have remained major stakeholders ever since.

Prior to last Monday, the market had witnessed one other major crisis, which was caused by the closure of the market by the Lagos state government two years ago.

From Otumide Bajulaiye, Lagos

were yanked open and the men, obviously intent on robbing him, ransacked the glove compartments, lifted the floor-carpets and probed underneath the seats, taking his handset, money and whatever else of value they found. Many shops were closed as business were paralyzed for over three hours. Traffic jams spread to the adjoining Fatai Akere Way in Matori and clogged up movement on the Lyana Isolo section of the ever-busy Oshodi-Apapa expressway.

Signals that the day would be tough came early in the morning when traders were said to have assembled at the Trade Centre, repelling the invasion of hoodlums suspected to be members of the OPC. They alleged that Ajibade Hassan Olajoku, son of the late chairman and managing director of Paramo Ventures invited the hoodlums.

While addressing the traders, Paulinus Ezeanyim reminded them that Olajoku called on the traders in 2000 to help develop the Trade Centre, which was leased to

approved a "build, operate and transfer" (BOT) arrangement with a developer.

"When they were coming to build, we told them only bonafide traders will run the market. It was clearly understood by all the parties that the issue of collection of levies, sanitation, parking fees, discipline and other matters will be controlled by us. We have a union here. What was important to the developer was that his money is paid to him when due.

"But since last month, they have been trying to impose thugs on the market. Those people are not traders.

They do not have anything at stake except to collect money and we told them, we shall be doing so and that they should keep away. We were informed they will try to take over our shops this morning and indeed, they came and we rebuffed them.

"They came with dangerous weapons and charms and attacked our union office.

"Some of us were injured, likewise many of them too," Oladele said.

Another trader, Chuks

snatching handbags and robbing people of their cash and other valuables such as handsets.

"One of the victims, who was on his way to the airport, was courageous enough to fight back. He recovered his

ticket and brief case but lost money to the hoodlums.

At Five Star bus stop, people, including traders preparing for Aswani Market, came out to fight the hoodlums before policemen drafted to the scene from Daleko sta-

tion came at about 3pm to the rescue some of the victims.

On their arrival, the policemen ordered the traders to leave the. Traders in the market area ran out of their shops, their hands raised above their heads.

government two years ago over its unsanitary environment.

For about three hours on Monday morning, the entire Ladipo Road, the Spare Parts Market, the Toyota Bus Stop area and further down to Five Star and Iyana-Isolo Bus Stops, were engulfed in a tremor of violence between two groups in the Ladipo Spare-Parts market. Broken bottles and bricks were hurled, knives and iron rods used in a fight over who controls the Panama section of the market.

Riot broke out in the popular spare parts market located in Mushin area of Lagos Mainland sending traders, passers-by and school children scampering for safety. The mayhem left no fewer than four persons dead with several others seriously injured.

In contention is the control of the 2000 lock-up shops within the premises of the Aguiyi Ironsi International Trade Centre. The fight was between Paramo Development Ventures Limited, which had a 20-year lease of the centre with the state government and the traders.

Dangerous weapons such as machetes were freely used. Passers-by were molested and dispossessed of their valuables. The owner of a Nissan sport utility vehicle paid a higher price. He had unknowingly slowed down.

As soon as he did that the men swooped on him. Before he knew what was happening, a bottle hurled from somewhere behind smashed into his rear windshield.

The doors of his vehicle

centre, which was leased to him by the state government for 25 years. He said the cost was over N400, 000 to build a shop. As a result, both the traders and Hassan resolved to pay N200 per month for 12 years after which they will pay the normal rates as agreed. But he Hassan later died in February 2005.

But rather than allowing the nominated member of the family, Ibitoye, to replace the late Hassan, Ajibade who was said to have just returned from the United States dissolved all the committees including the advisory one constituted by his late father.

To enforce his directive, Ajibade reportedly stormed the market with area boys to forcefully remove officers of the unions and members of committees operating in the market. He was alleged to be flouting the rules of the market.

It was learnt that before Ajibade led his gang to disrupt activities in the market, the wife of the late Olajoku, who is also the vice chairman of Paramo Development Ventures, Mrs. Fausat Olajoku, had through her lawyer, directed the traders to ignore Ajibade's statement dissolving the unions and committees in the market.

Several traders were seriously injured as were some of the invaders while it is not clear yet whether anybody was killed in the latest mayhem at the popular automobile parts market.

According to one of the traders, Funso Oladele, trouble started from the Panama section where the Lagos state government had

Ekwe, said it was unacceptable to them that, "thugs an area boys should make law and determine what happens in the market. We learnt our lessons from Idumota, where idle young men ran the market and imposed levies indiscriminately.

"When there was a problem among them, they set the market on fire and traders suffered. That is what we are determined to avoid.

"Since the management of the markets here at Ladipo and Trade Fair Complex was left in the hands of traders, there have been more cases of fire disasters destroying peoples' goods and shops. They want to bring back the old method and we said we do not want them," he said.

The opposition of the traders to the take-over bid by the men reported to have come from Mafoluku caused a lot of panic in the area.

Motorists from Isolo and Mile Two reversed and took the service lane into Isolo Town, through Daleko market flyover, Osolo Way, for exit at Airport Road before proceeding to Oshodi.

From the Isolo and Daleko area to Five Star Bus Stop, fear gripped residents and passers-by that they ran helter-skelter not knowing the cause of the violence that was spreading from Ladipo.

Commercial bus drivers were forced to make illegal turns on the expressway so as not to run into the trouble ahead.

The hoodlums who were dispersed from the market turned on innocent passers-by at the Toyota, Daleko, Isolo and Five Star bus stops