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'Bullet-proof' death, and a most unusual burial

By Tony Adibe | Publish Date: Sep 17 2016 2:00AM

Despite the rough, narrow road leading to the community and a trip coinciding with the funeral of a 13-year-old killed while testing the efficacy of a 'protection' charm, our reporter had one big adventure in the line of duty.

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The natives of Amaga Uwani Mgboko Aku in Igbo Etiti local government area of Enugu State came out in droves to witness the burial of a 13-year-old boy, Obumuneme Oluka who reportedly died while a charm popularly called 'African bullet-proof' or odeshi in local parlance was being tested on him. The juju is believed to be a form of 'shield' to protect the individual from knife stabs or bullets from penetrating the body.

Our reporter had gone to trace members of the family of the deceased to ascertain why a 13-year-old boy who ought to be schooling would instead get entangled with charms to the extent of losing his life. Did the boy have ambitions? Why didn't the parents or guardian of the deceased warn him on the dire consequences of getting involved in juju? And why couldn't they stop their kinsman who was using the boy as guinea pig? And why did family members allow the kinsman to escape?

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The police spokesman in Enugu State, SP Ebere Amaraizu told Daily Trust by phone that the police have launched a manhunt for the suspect and his family members since they all deserted their home after the incident.

He confirmed that before the latest incident, the deceased had always made himself available for 'experimental testing' of 'bullet proof' charms said to be prepared by the herbalist for protection.

It was gathered that the suspect had earlier tested anti-bullet and anti-cutlass charms on the deceased which allegedly worked effectively but as he tried to test that of the bottle on the deceased, it broke and caused severe injury on the head of which left him unconscious and confirmed dead on arrival at a hospital.

In the community, perhaps the teenager would not have been killed if somebody had cautioned against using himself as a guinea pig on the efficacy of the charm.

However, on August 15, before 10.30a.m, the police had brought Obumuneme's corpse from the hospital for burial in his community, affected



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by erosion which made access through the only narrow road an uphill task. Having passed through the difficult terrain to reach the family compound of the deceased, our reporter was warned not to photograph the crowd that gathered to witness the burial. He was warned not to make jottings or record any interview with anybody, not even the father of the victim. He was told in stern language that the youths of the area were almost becoming restive over the situation and that they would not like to hear that the matter was going to be published in a newspaper.

It was a coincidence that this reporter had gone to trace the family of the deceased without an inkling of the burial only to be faced with a huge crowd of sympathisers.

The first effort at tracing the area was not a success as my car got stuck somewhere along the narrow village path. It took the help of some village boys who were playing football nearby to get the car out. Upon getting out and being told by the boys that it was still had a long distance ahead before reaching the destination and coupled with the fact that my car tank was near empty, I did a quick U-turn.

I had to alert our head office in Abuja about my efforts and the problem encountered and was advised to go back to Enugu and prepare for a revisit. That was how the second attempt coincided with the burial of the victim.

Upon arriving at the village, the motor-cyclist that was hired linked me with a brother of the deceased who later took us to his father who in turn ushered us into a room full of people.

I had to explain my mission severally before the man could understand me. Several cannons were fired to announce the burial proper and people were eating, drinking and talking at the same time. It was really noisy.

"I can't say anything now because I'm devastated by my son's death. I can't say any other thing, please. But I will call my younger brother to attend to you," said Mr. Oluke.

Many people came in and out of the room until the deceased's uncle who said he is a police detective serving in Warri, Delta State arrived. He was very friendly but stern and unbending. He said he was trying his best to control the restive young men. He said the case had reached the Inspector General of Police's office, hence nobody would grant any interview in order not to jeopardise the investigation. He said he knows the working relationship between the police and the press, noting that he would assist to ensure our safety so long as we stuck to his instructions and advice.

"If for any reason we search your BlackBerry and see any picture concerning this burial in your handset, I can't say what next will happen to you. So I advise you in your interest and safety don't photograph anything, not even the picture of the deceased on the poster," he said.

The man said he returned specifically because of the death of the lad. He said that he appreciated the pains our reporter had to take to trace the village but he was not happy with the people who published whatever they heard on the internet without bothering to visit the area for first-hand

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information.

As we were being conveyed on the motor-cycle on the return trip, I managed to photograph a section of the rural roads leading to Aku. When we got back to the market square where my car was parked, I felt depressed and disappointed, but the journey back to Enugu had to begin.

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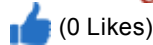
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