

Features

A tragedy to lose
our local language

— Femi Oke

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Shot for attempting to disarm robbers

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RESIDENTS of Ikorodu and its environs in Lagos State may now have cause to heave a sigh of relief following the arrest of two members of a six-man notorious armed robbery gang which has been holding the sleepy town by the jugular as a result of their escapades.

Oluwadamilare Ibikunle and Azeez Sabitu, who are currently singing like canaries in the detention of the Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS) of the Ogun State Police Command Headquarters, Eleweran, Abeokuta, and four others, Lukman, Sheriff, Seun, Henry and Kazeem, still at large, were said to be responsible for various robbery attacks on residential homes in Ikorodu.

Following the insurgence, no fewer than 30 lives were lost to underworld men in Ikorodu town between January and to date.

According to the duo, Oluwadamilare and Azeez, their gang usually operates in two motorcycles between the hours of 6:00p.m and late at night and its target were private homes.

They said they usually preyed on cash, GSM sets, trinkets and other valuables, which they dispose of immediately to their ready-made buyers and also, share the proceeds on agreed sharing formula among members.

But on Sunday, October 9, 2011, nemesis was said to have caught up with the gang as two members were arrested shortly after they reportedly raided a home at Abe-Obi Road, Popo Terry Area of Ogijo, Ogun State, a neighbouring town bordering Ikorodu town. In the process they were said to have shot dead one Fuwad Asenuga, whom the suspects claimed, wanted to disarm them when they accosted him at gunpoint to surrender all valuables he had at home.

Speaking on the arrest of the two suspects, Nicholas Daru Nkemdeme, Ogun State Police Commissioner, described the gang as notorious one, which operated in two motorcycles.

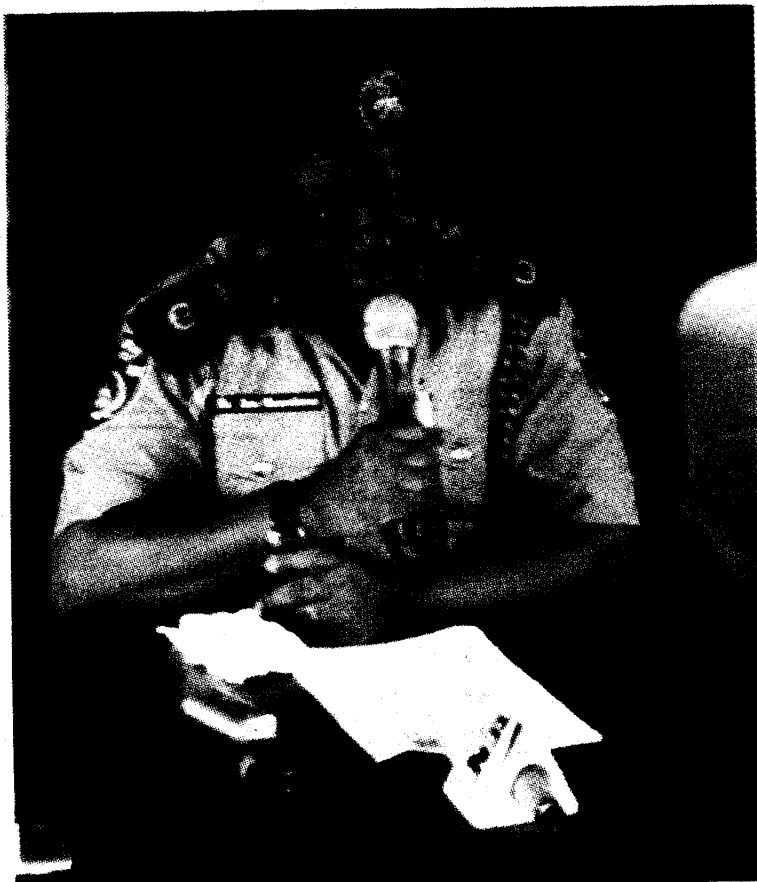
He said an expended shell of a cartridge which was used to kill the 31-year-old man and a necklace were recovered from the two suspects.

Ibikunle, is said to be the point man who shot dead the victim, when he attempted to disarm them.

In an encounter with *Daily Independent*, he admitted his six-man gang was responsible for various raids on homes in Ikorodu and its environs beginning from January to the time of their arrest, disclosing that he had taken active part in not less than 20 operations.

"I am 24 years old. I am married and my wife, Adijat is four-month old pregnant. But she stays with her parents because we just did an introduction. She is yet to move down to my home. I am a fashion designer by trade and I had my shop at Aga Junction but I joined the robbery gang sometime in January this year. Initially, I began by using stick, bearing a nail on it to remove valuables from homes which had their windows open before I graduated into a full-blown robber. We have three guns and two motorcycles, which we use in carrying out operations. Sheriff owns the three guns and he supplies us whenever we have raids to carry out. He equally owns an okada machine and Henry owns the other.

"We strike on homes beginning from 6:00p.m till late at night where



•Nkemdeme

the doors of their homes are opened. Operations we had carried out so far had been successful except this very one we were arrested. Even the Sunday operation carried out at about 11:00a.m was successful but we were later picked up, shortly after. What led to our arrest was that, one man Sodiq by his name is somebody that I knew and he identified me. Immediately after the operation we were escaping from the scene he and his (Sodiq) friends were sitting at Orita Meta Area, opposite Ogijo Police Station and they saw how we zoomed off on the two motorcycles and that aroused curiosity in them.

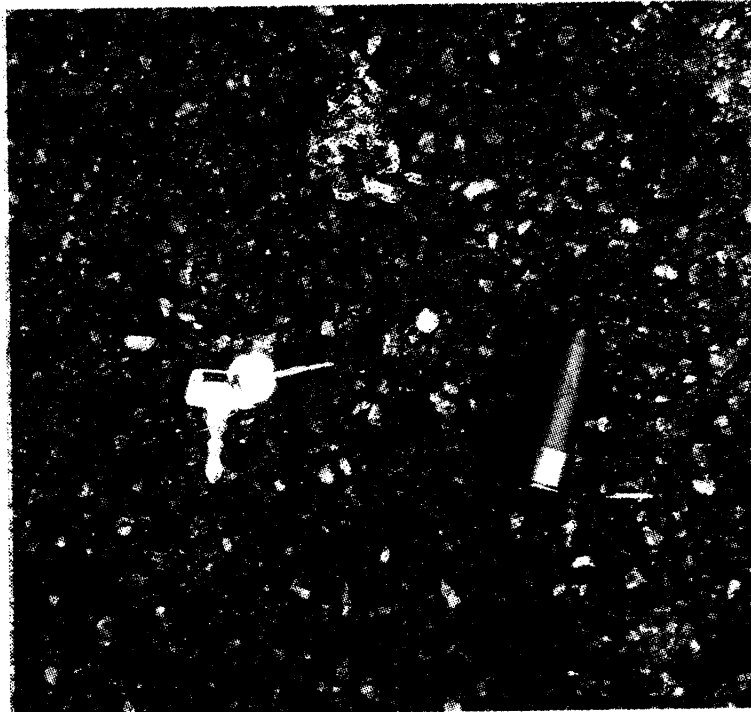
"I think, it was later that they heard about the raid and the killing of the man and they suspected us. It was later in the evening Sodiq, who knew I am a robber, called me and asked where I was and I told him I was at a junction by Ebute Police

Post. About two hours later, he had met me and he asked for his own share of the loot but I confided in him that we had not sold the gold necklace we made away from the slain victim. When he was disturbing me I removed the one on my neck and gave to him but he was not satisfied.

He added: "The next thing he did was that, he notified one Mukaila who now worked against us. It was this same Mukaila who told the police that I was one of the robbers who operated in Ogijo on Sunday morning and killed Fuwad. They set a trap for me by calling me and I was arrested. It was through me that Azeez Sabitu was arrested I had taken the detectives to the homes of the quartets, Lukman, Sheriff, Seun and Kazeem but they had fled their respective homes before we got there."



•Azeez



•Expended shell of a cartridge and necklace recovered.

On how they raided the Abe-Obi, Ogijo home he said: "We were six in number and we all entered the home together. Upon entering the home, we met three persons, two men and a lady whom we suspected was a girlfriend of the deceased. We ordered every member of the household to lie down on their face and they complied. But at a stage when we began to dispossess them of what they had on them, Fuwad was stubborn as he got up and attempted to disarm Sheriff and that was why Sheriff shot him dead."

When prodded further to find out who fired the shot that snuffed life out of the victim, Dare, as he is fondly referred, denied the allegation but pointed an accusing finger at the kingpin of the gang, Sheriff whom he said pulled the trigger when the victim attempted to disarm him.

Sabitu, 22, who also, admitted taking part in the raid, claimed he met Dare when he used to visit his mother at Itunmeko, in the heart of Ikorodu town, who introduced him into the robbery gang. He recalled

when they used a long stick laced with a nail to remove valuables from homes through the window frames. He said it was Dare that introduced him to Sheriff, the leader of the gang.

His words: "It was on Sunday that I received a call from Dare to meet him. We all left in two motorcycles and went to Ogijo. I think one of the okada riders knew the place and took us to the home. The operation was successful but the victim attempted to resist us and he was shot dead. It was later I learnt that the victim was a member of a notorious cult group, Eiye Confraternity and he wanted to put up a stiff resistance, go into his room and pick up his gun and in the process, he was shot dead. Shortly after the raid, Lukman offered me a sum of N10, 000 and also two mobile sets as my own share from the proceeds of the loots. I think it was one Mukaila, a land speculator who knew Dare that sold us out to the police. This man Mukaila, I learnt is also a cultist, who belongs to the same confraternity the deceased belonged. Mukaila was used and he called Dare and he was arrested. Following the arrest of Dare I was the next target and I was picked up from my home. That was how I was arrested."

Azeez, who is an aluminum fabricator by trade with his workshop at Ladilak, Bariga, Lagos, recalled his first operation in Ikorodu town sometime in January during a crisis between touts and officials of the Power Holding Company of Nigeria (PHCN). The crisis, he said, was a fall-out of an electrocution involving a younger boy. Through the crisis, he added they exploited the opportunity to rob people at will.

An informed police source hinted that the deceased, Fuwad was also a notorious cultist who sometime had to flee to Agric-Owutu Area of Ikorodu to take refuge and soon afterwards, travelled to South Africa. Sometime, he was said to have taken part in a rival cult clash in Shagamu, Ogun State during which the other party suffered a heavy casualty.

He was said to have just returned from the foreign trip until death came calling at his doorstep on Sunday.

The remains of the slain clearing and forwarding agent are said to be kept at an undisclosed mortuary for autopsy.



•Ibikunle