

Controversy over death, burial of TOS Benson's son

CONTROVERSIAL has trailed the death and alleged plan to secretly bury entertainment icon and founder of defunct Faze 2 Night Club, Yaba, Lagos Prince Soji Benson.

The family is enmeshed in accusations. Benson, the eldest son of First Republic Minister Otunba TOS Benson, died on February 12 while on a 10-day visit to his son, Oye, at their Apapa, Lagos, home.

The deceased, who lived in Ikorodu with his wife, Gloria, it was gathered, had violent marks on his body when his corpse was first seen by family members last Friday.

The Nation learnt that an argument ensued between Mrs. Benson and her stepsons—Oye and Lanre—who allegedly went to the General Hospital, Lagos mortuary, where they initially deposited their father's body, to take it for funeral without informing the family.

It was gathered that the parties had disagreed over hurried plans to bury the deceased, during which Gloria allegedly uncovered a grave at their Ikorodu home where her stepsons wanted to bury their father.

A source told our correspondent that it took the intervention of the deceased's siblings before his body was retrieved from his sons and embargoed in the mortuary.

It was learnt that someone had contacted the deceased's cousin, Tony Benson that he was found by the roadside in Apapa where he allegedly tripped and fell, prompting Tony to call his father.

Besides last Friday's attempt at the General Hospital, The Nation gathered that the deceased's sons again attempted to bury him on Wednesday after allegedly taking the body forcefully from the mortuary, but were stopped by the police following complaints by the family.

They and their guests were said to have worn black T-shirts with their father's picture imprinted on them when policemen from the State Criminal Investigation and Intelligence Department (SCIID), Pantti, Yaba, on the instruction of Police Commissioner Zubairu Muazu, stopped them.

While the body was retrieved from the vehicle they used, it was learnt that the mourners

- I learnt of incident on Facebook, says widow
- Son: my dad died of kidney, heart failure

By Precious Igbonwelundu

allegedly proceeded with an empty casket to the Vaults and Gardens, Ikoyi, Lagos for funeral rites.

Narrating the incident to our correspondent, the source said: "They said he tripped and fell. That is very suspicious. How did they know who to call? It was as if he was beaten and he collapsed. The son did not carry him to somewhere close. So they called a cousin of his, who called his dad."

"It could not have been a problem if the place they took him, two days after he died, had agreed to issue a death certificate. The doctor there said he could not write a death certificate because when he was brought to him, he was in a coma and he needed the coma report."

"His son (Oye) then started fighting with his aunties and uncles that they were the ones who killed him. He said he wanted to bury his father in Ikorodu. He started digging the grave."

"Instead of them to call the elders and hold a meeting, they did not do that. They have been insulting people."

"We thought this whole issue has been sorted, with the family directing that Prince Benson's body should not be given to his sons. The family was making burial plans, only for someone to call on Wednesday that the boys had picked the body from the mortuary and were going to bury him without telling anyone."

"The family immediately contacted the police and the vehicle carrying the body was intercepted. The body was retrieved from them with the help of the police. It looked badly mutilated. It is in police custody."

"The boys were still going to Ikorodu to bury an empty casket, but their guests did not follow them. I don't know what happened thereafter. His sons are in their 30s. They have been acting really suspicious. I don't know if the family has property disputes."

"Whatever the matter, the deceased deserves

a decent funeral. He was a good man; he helped a lot of people. They should not bring shame to him in death."

Benson's widow told our reporter that she learnt about her husband's death on Facebook. She said there were violent marks on his body when she first saw him.

Said she: "I don't even understand what is happening. I did not know my husband had died. I learnt about it after it had been posted on Facebook. My husband visited his son at Apapa, Lagos, he died at Apapa. They didn't allow me to see his body until March 1 when I learnt Oye had gone to take the body for funeral."

"Before that day, I discovered a grave being dug by Oye at Ikorodu and I objected to the place. I told him my husband deserved to be given a befitting funeral, he should not be dumped at a dunghill just like anybody."

"They continued to dig the grave and I protested by jumping inside the grave. That was when they stopped. I reported to the police at Shagamu Road and they came, saw the place and advised us to hold a family meeting to resolve the matter."

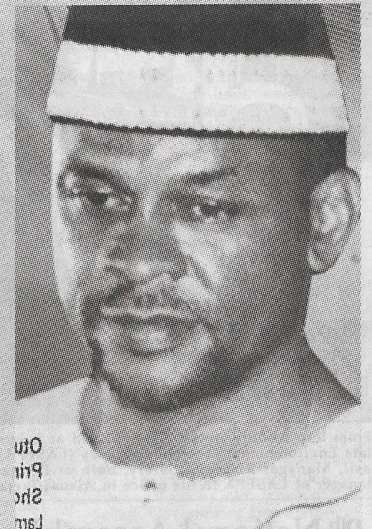
"They wanted to bury my husband without my consent. I have no issues with my stepsons. This is why I'm surprised at these happenings. I was not there when my husband died because he was at Apapa where he had gone to visit his son. They did not even tell me he had died."

"When they wanted to bury their father, I reported the matter to one of my brothers-in-law, who stopped them."

"I don't know why he (Oye) did not even want anyone to be involved in my husband's funeral. They (Oye and his brother, Lanre) just wanted to bury their father quickly for reasons best known to them. It was last Friday that I saw my husband's body for the first time."

"When I saw the body, I noticed that he was beaten to death. The son was making it look like I was the one who wanted to bury him, until I jumped into the grave, took a picture of myself and sent it to the family."

"My husband was in hospital but I was not



• The late Benson

to secretly bury him. It is not true that the police intercepted us while taking his body to Ikorodu. We were asked to bring his body to the police and we did."

"The autopsy report will be out by 2pm today (Thursday). I don't know where Lanre is at the moment."

The Deputy Commissioner of Police (DCP) in charge of SCIID, Yetunde Longe, denied that Oye was in her custody.

She said: "Nobody is in our custody. We don't have a suspect in that case."

Police spokesman Chike Oti, a Chief Superintendent (CSP), told our correspondent that Benson's body was in the mortuary and investigation was on. He refused to answer further questions on how the police got the body, insisting that investigation was being conducted on the matter.