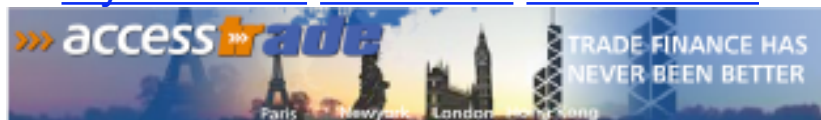


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Man Killed by Friends to Appease Local Deity in Ondo State

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Ondo State Governor, Olusegun Mimiko

By James Sowole

“The heart of man is desperately wicked; who can know it?” This Biblical assertion perhaps

aptly captures the story of how Mr. Olufemi Ogunkorede, 56, was craftily lured to death by his bosom friends and others. The motive and intrigues that preceded the murderous plot is now the subject of investigation by men of the Ondo State Police Command who have sworn to unearth the sacrificial killing of Ogunkorode, a Lagos based businessman, who specialised in the supply of medical equipment.

Ogunkorede was a childhood friend of Chief Babatunde Olumofe, a staff of 7Up Bottling Company, Lagos. They had schooled together at Christ College, Ado-Ekiti in Ekiti State some 38 years ago. Their friendship blossomed so much that when they moved to Lagos, they both settled in Ikorodu. With time, they developed their own property, and decided to cement their friendship by buying land from the same family. Their compounds followed each other.

While Olumofe hails from Erusu Akoko, in Akoko North West Local Government Area of Ondo State, Ogunkorede came from Ilu Omoba Ekiti, Ekiti State.

But as their friendship grew, the little rivalry among friends also grew, and in time, it developed into a vice, the degree of which was perhaps unknown to Ogunkorede.

They continued to live like true friends, supportive of each other seemingly, so much that when the Erasu Akoko community decided to bestow a chieftaincy title on Olumofe, Ogunkorede was around to celebrate with him.

But that incident became the source of friction between both friends and ultimately led to the killing of Ogunkorede.

The police narrated that before the chieftaincy title, Ogunkorede and Olumofe had performed some traditional rites together, preparatory for the installation of Olumofe in the latter's village. The natives were to later hear of the rites performed by Olumofe and his friend, who was a non-native of the town.

Allowing a stranger to perform such a rite was considered a sacrilege by the traditionalists, who insisted that the only appeasement is to offer the blood of the offender for purification.

The natives were said to have mounted pressure on Olumofe to bring the “offender” back to serve the ultimate punishment.

Olumofe thus contacted two of his other friends-- Mr. Sunday Akeju and one other simply identified by his nickname, Eso, to help him with a plot that can lure Ogunkorede back to his village. They soon came up with the story of inviting him for the burial of Olumofe's mother. As it is the practice in Lagos, a ceremonial uniform, called ‘aso ebi’, was procured and given to Ogunkorede, so he would have a sense of belonging at the said fictitious funeral. Ogunkorede fell for the plot.

Last Saturday, they all left Lagos for the “burial” at Olumofe's village, all decked in the ‘aso ebi.’

A source revealed that immediately they arrived in Erusu Akoko, the suspect allegedly handed over Ogunkorode to the traditionalists who tricked him to a sacred grove and killed him. They dumped his corpse on a major highway and claimed that he was killed by armed robbers. And

to avoid being suspected of involvement in the murder, they rushed to the Erusu Akoko police post, to file the report of the “discovered” killing.

But the incoherence in the storyline began to show when the Divisional Police Officer (DPO) at Oke Agbe Police Station, where the case was later transferred, was told that the deceased merely slumped and died.

They could not defend the conflicting storyline on the cause of death.

Two of the suspects, including Olumofe, have since been arrested.

Expectedly, the incident has fouled the relationship between the communities of Ogunkorede (in Ekiti) and that of Olumofe (in Ondo State). The hostilities were manifested last Sunday when youths of Omoba Ekiti drove away emissaries from Erusu-Akoko who had come to beg for forgiveness.

The source said, "delegates from Erusu, including some traditional chiefs, were in Ilu Omoba last Sunday in connection with the case.

"They even promised to take care of necessary funeral rites but they were chased away by irate youths of Ilu Omoba."

The Police Public Relations Officer (PPRO) for the Ondo State Command, Mr. Aremu Adeniran, confirmed the incident and added that two of the suspects had been arrested and

that a case of murder had been established against them.

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