

Bloody cultural festival in Imo

By Chidi Nkwopara

CULTURE has been severally described as a people's way of life. South East Voice cannot however claim that this description can be sustained when it turns bloody as it did last week, at Amakohia and Umuderim autonomous communities in Ihitte Uboma local council areas of Imo State.

The event was Mbomuzo Cultural Festival at Amakohia. The venue, as usual, was the Nkwo-Ihitte Market Square and people looked forward to this yearly cultural festival with great expectation.

People of all age brackets started gathering at the square. They wine, dined and exchanged pleasantries. Nzubechi Korie from Umuderim, was also seated in a shop and had a good view of the environment.

What looked a little bizarre was the clothing that adorned by the youngsters. Some boys and girls completely forgot to cover their private parts. No one, especially the first timers, thought it was a taboo for



Destroyed building during the festival

people to cover their raw sides, during the festival.

Beyond the scanty dressing, the seemingly crazy boys wielded all manner of dangerous weapons and chanted war songs, as if they were out for a warfare. They blocked the link roads and effectively impeded free flow of traffic. Vehicle owners and commuters were forced to part with varying sums of money

before they were allowed to continue with their trips.

No one could tell what sparked off a serious argument that gradually snowballed into a fight, between an indigene of Amakohia and a group of boys from Umuderim.

Nzubechi, who was at the market square at the time, not only noticed that his brothers were involved in the fracas, but decided to intervene and

restore normalcy.

South East Voice also gathered that an obviously enraged boy from the opposing side, brought out a very sharp dagger and stabbed Nzubechi on his neck and he died instantly. The assailant's group reportedly protected and spirited him out of the scene.

The shocking death of Nzubechi magnified the issue into an inter-communal battle. Many were seriously injured before the arrival of the police.

Obviously angered by the untimely death of Nzubechi, Amakohia youths regrouped and stormed the home of the alleged killer in neighbouring Umuderim.

The family of the alleged killer quickly scampered to safety, on sighting the advancing Amakohia youths. Realizing that the occupants of the house had fled, they set fire to the building.

A villager, who pleaded anonymity, confirmed that some lives were lost last year, when Amakohia community celebrated its Mbomuzo Festival. Umuderim community equally suffered a similar fate some years ago. The issue now is: Is the killing of people part of the culture of the area?