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THE ORIGIN OF ITSEKIRI-URHOB BROTHERHOOD

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By:

Dr. Raymond Orororo (Econs)

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THE ITSEKIRI AND URHOBOS
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 This can be true.

Cain killed Abel Gen. 4: 8
 Abraham was, in obedience to God's instruction, about to sacrifice his only son Isaac. Gen. 22 : 10
 Sampson was betrayed by Delilah. Judges 16: 17 - 21
 The eleven sons of Jacob agreed, betrayed and sold Joseph as a slave into Egypt. Gen. 27: 28. Since that event, Israel knows no peace nor rest.

And so the Itsekiri and Urhobo-people, descendants of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob ect, step brothers at Benin during the Ogisos and Isi regnum, sell, kill or betray one another till this day for land matter only. Oh yes! because we are Israelites who are spread all over the world, perhaps we shall have no peace and or rest.

But with education and attachment to God, with our belief in Christ Jesus, the Messiah and Saviour of mankind, is it not time God makes us love one another absolutely and live on our land and waters peacefully. Not my will O God but thy will be done

This little pamphlet is dedicated to late uncle Sir Arthur Prest of the Ogbe family in Gbunwague, former Minister of Communication, who discovered oil in commercial quantity in the Delta and who located the confluence point of the oil at patani during the last geophysical year in Nigeria. This gentleman strongly advised the Itsekiri to team up (since they are naturally so) with the Urhobo for peace, progress and prosperity for us all. And also to the memory of Chief Ovie Ayavoro, a lover of the Itsekiri and Urhobo people in Jos. He died 17th April, 1937.

I am grateful to my Confidential Secretary, Miss Gladys Anuka, who typed my manuscript and uncle Chief Ageze of Eku, a Chief in the Oba of Benin Palace from whom I gleaned some of the information in this little book.

Raymond A. Orororo

Raymond A. Orororo,
6, Sheriff Road,
London N.W.6.

19th November, 1960.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

URHOB AND ITSEKIRI AFFAIRS

For sometime now there has been misunderstanding between the above mentioned people of the Delta Province - Nigeria. This situation appears to be growing worse. Politicians and Businessmen of all grades have contrived ways of setting us apart. Very recently at a celebration in London, wisdom prevailed to avoid a disorder between us.

How long shall we remain subjects of this squabble? Unless we sincerely love one another as was in the past, we might have occasions to regret this disunity among our people in our country. Have we not already had enough odd? Do we behave as the first people in Nigeria to come into contact with Western Civilization?

You as well as myself are citizens of the Delta Province. We have come to England to learn so as to enlighten our people when we get back home. We have read and seen how people live together in peace and progress. Switzerland is a fine example for us. England, Scotland, Wales and Ireland are also worth emulation.

You are therefore invited to attend a meeting where we might be able to find ways and means of re-establishing our cordial relation at home and abroad. The meeting will be held in the Western Nigeria Office on theDecember, 1960, at 4 p.m. Please note the time and attend punctually.

Yours very sincerely,

Raymond Orororo.

THE ITSEKIRI AND URHOB SPIRAL

By Dr. Raymond A. Orororo

I sincerely congratulate Mr. Rewane for his brilliant academic article published in the Tribune recently. I am in sympathy with him. Mr. Rewane is a citizen with abundant goodwill for Itsekiri and Urhobo. That is as it should be for, he belongs to the two people. Unlike others who take side completely with the Urhobo or with the Itsekiri.

Brother Rewane got it all wrong when he accused the Olu of supporting the creation of the Delta State. The Olu was highly encouraged firstly, by the Itsekiri and secondly, by his Urhobo kits and kins to support the creation of the Delta State. That he is not being made the Chairman of the Council of Chiefs or what have you. does not make him wrong.

Afterwards, there was a time when the late Olu at the Lagos Airport Hotel wanted to cede the Itsekiri territory to Ijebu, to avoid the Itsekiri being part of the Mid-western State. I remember clearly how four Itsekiri celebrities including your late brother, returned the late Olu back home not to attempt the suicidal act of making the Itsekiri part of the Ijebu territory. In support of this move by the celebrities, they recounted the ills they suffered when they were harried out of Benin and they joined the Ijebu and with unpleasant consequences they were to leave and normad along the escravos. Late Mr. Jimmy Adetutu and myself were the Lagos Zone Tribune Representatives in Apongbon Daily Service Office, Lagos.

In the course of such movements, some Itsekiri were left behind and they constituted the Ilaje people. Others meandered to Ogho (owo). The greater population rowed and met the Urhobo and the Ijaw in the riverine areas.

The Urhobo and Ijaw people who left Benin in protest in the third century embraced their former step brothers with open arms. They quickly inter-married. Most of the Itsekiri married Urhobo ladies because of their fidelity and industry.

It was a very happy reunion blessed by God. One may not trace such blessings in any part of the world. A very fruitful union. As at

today, I challenge anyone to name any Itsekiri who is not partly Urhobo or Ijaw. I am Urhobo and Itsekiri. I know my homes and families.

The Itsekiri quickly settled in various Islands and made Big Warri an outlet to the Ijaw and Urhobo people. They were ruled by Chief Olomu, a Ghanaian, the father of Nana and Igbe etc. No sooner Olomu died, the Itsekiri had another upliftment. They had contact with the Europeans: Christians and businessmen.

Thus, they learned to read and write and foreign civilization crept into them. Some of their biggest assets from that civilization and religion are patience, tolerance, cold-headness and steady plodding. The Urhobos and Ijaws admired them and were proud of them as their in-laws.

Thus, most treaties with the Europeans were made by the Itsekiris for the Urhobos. The Itsekiris on the other hand rather than being truly honest to their former step-brothers and in-laws at Benin made these treatise and documents in their own names and made the Urhobos to be witnesses. Ignorantly, the Urhobos still respected their in-laws who were under the leadership of Chief Dore, paternally Ijaw, maternally Jeremi.

Chief Dore himself built a solid mansion on Ijaw land in Daudu. Daudu is the name of the first Ijebu man to settle in Warri, near Igbudu. Till today, Daudus have not claimed the land. At that time around the Ijaw territory extended from Alaja, Kpesu passed just behind Roman Catholic School moved all the way to St. Andrew's Anglican Church, stopped at the stream between Okere and Agbasa included St. Andrew's School territory, ended and plunged into a river by the Warri General Hospital.

The Agbasa on the other hand had boundary with Igbudu and Gborikoko. It included Okere. Okere is the name of an edible frog which was copious in the that territory. The Itsekiri fished the Okere and squatered on Big Warri side. No one ever suspected that the Itsekiri will ever claim the land of their in-laws until documents revealed that with their leadership and interaction with European civilizations, they siphoned through paper the land of the Urhobo.

This is the main cause of hatred today between the Urhobo and Itsekiri. There is no other cause of friction between them. I therefore say without any fear of favour that the claim of Warri land through documents by the Itsekiri is the only annoyance of the Urhobo. No more No less. And no matter what some of us Itsekiri do, the Urhobo will never compromise their land. Court or no court. The Urhobo people are generally not patient, not tolerant and are spasmodic and irrational, when they are mal-treated or cheated.

The Urhobo man is one of the most sincere fellow in this country even though people say "Urhobo Wayo" The cause of this "Urhobo Wayo" was that the Urhobo retaliated the cheats by the Itsekiri in Palm Oil trade. They cheated during the palm oil trade. The Itsekiri leaked oil from the cask into another container. When the Urhobo saw this cheat which had gone on for a long time, the Urhobo put water in the cask to fill it with less quantity of oil. This created the term "Urhobo Wayo", which my intelligent Itsekiri brothers publicised to the detriment of their Urhobo in-laws.

WHY THE ITSEKIRI WIN LAND CASES

I have said the Itsekiri are steady plodders with patience, cold-headness and more influential city girls. They used their women folks mostly our grand daughters to move into any circle even in the judiciary to influence any position. This is why in the majority of land cases between the Urhobo and Itsekiri, despite the authenticity of ownership by Urhobo, are tentatively lost by them. As long as the Itsekiri continue to arrogate claim to any Urhobo land, so long will there be aggression.

The entire Mid-western people are offspring's of Israel liberated slaves from Babylon. They did not settle in Israel any longer but wandered on. They got to "Ife" and their brother again from Babylon refered them to the shores of Lagos to farm. At that time, the Lagos area was swampy and watery. The senior brother returned to "Ife", where his junior blood brother in Israel demanded the homage which was due only to the senior.

My fellow Mid-western people moved to Ugbeku and settled. This association of step-brothers had a leader. An Akure trader called Ado, pregnated the daughter of this leader. Before this elder mar

died, he arranged for the daughter's son to be leader after him. This caused quarrel among the entire step-brothers. Majority of the step-brothers and their families left for Ologho. The Ado of Akure family now settled in Benin. They finally settled a family dispute and in 1170 a.d. the second regnum and dynasty started.

The Itsekiri left Ugbeku (Palace) in the 12/13 century. Firstly, for Ijebu and finally settled with the Urhobo in the rich Escravos. Let it be known firmly that the Itsekiri constitute a nation of islands with Batere as their Royal Headquarters. Big Warri was never a capital, it was just an outlet and served as a point of contact for the Itsekiri with the Europeans and Urhobos.

Let me thank Bro. Rewane for his very brilliant article. I am sure he has forgotten that the Warri Resident's office got burnt about 1939, where most of the Itsekiri/Urhobo valuable documents corrected by the Residents got burnt. At that time, Mr. Johnson Ejebimiye Oghothouma Okene was the Senior Treasury Clerk in Warri. He is my maternal Uncle in Eku and I reserved some of the remarks he made to me about the documents burnt in 1939, because it will only fan the embers of trouble.

I need to remind Bro. Rewane, a great patriot to the Itsekiri and Urhobo not to forget what Late Obafemi Awolowo said that our Itsekiri language is adulterated Ijebu, in one of his political remarks.

LET US EMULATE LAGOS

I must say that the Lagos State Awori/Yoruba have accommodated all sorts of strangers. No stranger has claimed the land of Ojora, Oluwa or Giwa. There will be no trouble between Urhobo and Itsekiri, if my Itsekiri brothers, some of who are Ijaw and Urhobo paternally stop litigation and learn to live harmoniously together.

Our individual share of the land is 6 ft. Whatever we want to do we can do provided we don't say it is our land. I appeal to everyone, Itsekiri or Urhobo who disturb our peace that most of the youths do not share the views of their elders who formulate trouble among us.

LATE ARTHUR PREST REMEMBERED

Big Uncle Chief Arthur Prest warned the Itsekiri and Urhobo at Kano in 1952 to exploit our blood relationship for a peaceful co-existence and progress of the Itsekiri and Urhobo. I was then the Secretary of the Delta People's Association in Kano. My efforts prevented eruption of fight between us in Kano. Our envoys played some part to stop the fratricide fight between us at home. I remember Bro. Quelle of Ajagono (Aghalokpe), Chief Eduvie of Igun, Okene of Oha, Ogun of Uvwie, Mafeni of Isoko, Johnson of Itsekiri. with pride in this regard.

It is very interesting and astonishing that full-blooded Urhobo children who have no relationship with the Itsekiris at all and who accompanied their sisters in marriage to Itsekiri, on the attainment of manhood antagonize the Urhobo whence their paternal and maternal homes. And they are many.

We the youths seriously warn our elders not to maladvise the Olu, look down on him with disdain and disrespect because of their age and experience and tarnish his reputation on the pages of newspapers. Whether we like it or not, with co-operation between the Urhobo and Itsekiri, the Olu will surface and occupy his rightful position in Nigeria's socio-political economy. I quote late Manna Theresa Ololo of Holy Child Lagos. "Whether Urhobo likeamo, whether Itsekiri likeamo, de quarrel go finish one day. Because this quarrel no get head". A devout Catholic. She may be foretelling the future with Holy accuracy.

Mid-westerners should know by now that they do not appear to be loved in this country. You remember the Challenge Cup final on K.G.V. between Amukpe and a Northern Team. The replay was at Ibadan. There we were booed despite our victory. With our mineral resources, what is our share of position, finance, development, rural or urban in the national cake? Let us hail Shehu Shagari for the Aladja Steel Factory now staffed by non-Mid-westerners. When shall we know ourselves, stop quarrels and make united progress. Politicians, the Press, the Police etc. divide and disunite brothers for holy exploitation. God dey.

OPEN LETTER TO MY ITSEKIRI BROTHERS

Once again my Itsekiri people from the Delta part of Nigeria, have started to rake problems from no where in the Delta. On the 14th of April, 1992, they sent an open letter to the President of Nigeria complaining against many odds. Firstly, no one will ever reduce the glamour of the Olu of Itsekiri. In the Delta as I knowit, nobody will ever deprive my Itsekiri people of holding posts if they are qualified. Let me explain a little of some points you might not know. Let me remind you all in Delta and Nigeria as a whole, that Okpe is the oldest traditional kingdom after the Ogiso's. It was established as early as 641 A.D., when Patriach Nicholas reigned as Head of State and Head of Church in Rome. Whereas the Benin Kingdom was established about 1170 A.D., when the son of the daughter of Esigie was enthroned by the children of Ado of Akure in Benin. The true sons of Ogiso i.e. Isoko, Urhobo, Ora, Esan, Afemai and Ijaw had angrily left Ugbeku for Umoghuvwu and Orogho.

At Umuoghovwu, there was a dispersal which sent the various sons away. The Urhobo, left Isoko for Ogo. And Okpe left Ogo for their present habitation. On arrival in their present habitation, they quickly crowned their son before Ado of Akure crowned their own in Benin. Please note that the Oba of Benin at that time was the son of Ado a merchant. Because of the quarrel and disagreement among them, the Oroje was crowned before him. This does not mean that Okpe kingdom was establish before Ogiso's kingdom. You may not know until now that the Ogiso dynasty retunees from Babylon into Isreal whence they migrated to Africa through the Sudan.

The Olu of Itsekiri was the son of an Oba of Benin. He was joined by about 60 princess and rowed away. They inter-married with the Ijebus. Trouble broke out and they left Ijebu territory, rowed along the coast and met the Ijaw and Urhobo with whom they co-habited freely.

The prince left Benin in the 13th century, about 3 century, after the son of Ado of Akure in Benin had been crowned Oba of Benin.

Already the Okpe who left Benin about 641 A.D. had crowned their king in the 8th Century. Who is senior? The Oroje or the son of Ado in Akure; judge for yourselves. Thus, in the Midwest, the Okpe

dynasty, after the Umoghovwu episode, Okpe kingdom is next. No one doubts that Okpe came from Isoko. It was the question of who was first to crown a king. The Oroje is the oldest king in the Ogiso kingdom. I do not talk of age. I talk of who was first to crown a king. The Oroje was even crowned before Ado of Akure in Benin. This Oba's mother was the grand-daughter of an Ogiso.

If the Urhobo and Ijaw have been hostile to the ejected prince of Benin and his people, they could perhaps had moved to the Congo. Without any equivocation therefore nature must have its way no matter the intrigues of man.

Late Chief Obafemi Awolowo changed the name of Warri Province to Delta Province and changed the name of Olu of Itsekiri to Olu of Warri and created all the confusion for the Itsekiri and Urhobo so much so that the late Olu came to Ikeja Airport Hotel and was about to attach Itsekiri to Ijebu when late Rewane and other 3 gentlemen discarded and hurried him home.

Let me remind my people that acrimony petitions and appeals will not do us any good. We reaped where we have not planted. Let nature correct itself. The crown must go to where it belongs, no matter what cruel men do.

In 1952, Uncle Arthur Prest visited the Delta people in Kano. He had a special meeting with us the Itsekiri people warned that the more we antagonise, the more hardship we shall experience.

I was then the Secretary of the Association at Kano and made sure that the trouble at home did not reach us at Kano. We sent delegates to our people at home to stop the fight. The Itsekiri people cannot do without the Urhobo and Ijaw and because they are most our people and in-laws. They better remain quiet and do dialogue with the Government rather than expose the skin to the sun. Any great Itsekiri man or woman is maternally or paternally Urhobo or Ijaw. Why then the noise to disstabilise thoughts.

Definitely, no government in Delta State will ever treat the Itsekiri with disdain. The Itsekiri should not create problem among their people. Finally we pray for the creation of Anioma State and its capital should be at Ogwushi-Uku and not Asaba.

For as far I am concerned, I am a direct son from Eku, Urhobo, from Benin, in the 14th century. I am an Okpe from (Oha), Uvwie (Alaka) and Itsekiri (Ugbunwagwe). I am an Urhobo from Abraka, Ogorun, Ukwani and Isoko and Uzoro. I am therefore a true origin of the Delta and those of us who are so born suffer spiritual consequences if we side unjustly.

DELTA AND ITS PEOPLE

By Raymond A. Orororo

This article which appears in one of the issues of the **DELTA MUSIC EXPRESS** is a summary of what shall appear in future editions of this paper.

DEMOGRAPHY

Do you know that the people of Delta migrated from Israel into Nigeria through the Margi Territory with their brothers Isoko, Urhobo, Benin, Ora, Afemai, Esan and Ijaw? They settled at Ugbeku, broke up and made their Headquarters at Umoghuvwu. Internal dispute brought them to God's River. They left there and settled at Ogo whence the Okpe went to settle at their present habitat

Do you know that the Uzere people came from Isele-Uku? Do you know that Jesse people came from Agbara-Oto? Do you know that Uvwie people came from Erua and Uriefrun? Do you know that the Ijaw people left their brothers at Umoghuvwu, passed through the rivers and settled at the Delta area before their brothers Urhobo, etc. reached there? Do you know that no one is made king in Ijaw unless he has Urhobo blood in him?

Do you know that the Delta people consider the marriage system to be the most sacred thing? They hold marriage in high esteem. You have heard of girls circumcision. It is very important in the Delta area, particularly among the Jeremi. Do you know that no Delta child can be used for fetish rituals with success? Do you know that most Nigerian women now tie cloth like Delta women?

MONARCHY

Do you know that Oroje of Okpe was first crowned king of the

Delta? Do you know that the Itsekiri on leaving Benin in the 12 century, first inter-married with the Ijebu along the coast before they were forced to come down south where the Urhobo received them with open hands? Do you know that the head of Itsekiri Prince Ginuwa who later become the Olu of Itsekiri was expelled from Benin? Do you know that some Itsekiri disagreed with their Olu at Ijebu? They took sides with the Ijebu and remained along the Ijebu in Ondo. These are the Ilajes.

Do you know that the most junior king in the Delta is the Ovie of Agbon? Do you know that Eku was the only town that had a king in Agbon?

Do you know that the mother of late Akenzua is an Orhokpo woman in Agbon? Do you know that the boundary between the Benin and Urhobo is along the Orhiowon-river, Ologho, Umoghuvwu and Ugo? Do you know that Ugbeku and Igodomigodo is not Benin? It was the palace of Ogiso and his sons. Thus it is owned by Isoko, Esan, Ora, Ijaw and Aboh. This was made known on the day Chief Ageze of Eku and Chief Oboyeghere of Abraka and Udi were made chiefs in the Oba's palace. Do you know that I still visit my family home at Umoghuvwu (Idu family), regularly, to see the grand children of mama Akpeyavi?

ASABA

Do you know that Asaba came from Ezionum in Ukwani? You may not know that Umuebu came from Ebu who left Igala via Ozigono.

Do you know that my grand father, king Ozi settled a bitter quarrel between two rival chiefs of Agbon as to who was responsible for the beheading of a chief that antagonised the Oba of Benin?

Do you know that whereas Delta is Urhobo etc., many Benin emigrants settled in the Delta, e.g. Otedo in Jeremi? Do you know that the Udu and Ijaw are close associates in marriage etc.?

Do you know that Eku left Itikori (Irri), settled at Iyede, Ihwureku, Isokuro (head of cow) before they reached their present habitat, where they met king Okpovwie who ruled Igun, Abraka and Agbaro? Igun and Abraka reached their present site before Eku. No wonder Iku has small territory. Do you know that Orogun and Ugheli people

came to Salubi, Eku village to trade with U.A.C. for a rent of 12.00 pounds a year each?

NANA ITSEKIRI

Have you read of the exploit of Nana and his request for a trade depot at Oghara (Koko)? Do you know that the Itsekiri were the first christians, taught religion in Itsekiri language and gave Itsekiri names at baptism, e.g. Ewetuya, Otimenyi, Eyitimi, Eyituoyo, Ukasajuya, Mebaghando, Abiro, Teminikannarin, etc. and made trade camps in Urhobo e.g., Ajagono, Ajaguaibo, Otumara, Atiwo Ajalomi? They have since vacated these camps. These above points or synopsis shall be vividly explained without bias or bitterness for posterity in this paper, one after other.

ISOKO/RELIGION

Do you know that the Isoko people are very dutiful, hard workers, very strictly honest and are the richest in the Delta? They got christianity before the Urhobo people. They had the Bible in Isoko language before Urhobo.

Do you know that Eku was the Catholic Headquarters in Bendel until Reverend Father P. Shine moved it to Sapele in 1927? Father P. Shine forced Bishop Kelly to move the Headquarters to Benin after the thunder and fire of 1939 at Sapele.

That Bishop Kelly build the first upstairs in Agbon in Eku in 1920/21? That Aragba took over leadership of the Catholic Church from Oria in the days of Reverend Father George and Erhame? That Reverend Father Erhame opened the first maternity in Abraka in Oria in 1942? Do you know that due to being too dogmatic and self appointed head christian gossips the Catholic Church has lost many members to the Baptist Church, founded by Pastor Ejovi Ajanbi since the death of Papa Peter Owughegheavwie Inweh.

Do you know that the C.M.S. Church School Eku was established in 1910/11 by Pastor J. Madedo Okoro Edo and Brother Akoro father of Barrister G. Akoro?

Do you know that for the gift of God schools in Delta are very ill equipped for good and qualitative education?

Do you know that the Baptist Church members in Urhobo practice faith to the core? They are strictly honest, devoted and very supporting.

GOVERNMENT

Do you know that Action Group government caused more confusion in the Delta than any other government? Do you know that lack of bank owned by natives has stifled economic progress in the Delta? Do you know that lack of Newspapers has enhanced mis-understanding among the people of the Delta? And the Daily Times, Observer, and Tribune have deliberately fanned mis-understanding among the people of the Delta.

Do you know that there will be happiness and progress in the Midwest if Anioma State is created?

In my next article, I shall append a copy of the Treaty between the Effurun and Britain which defines Warri as a whole to be Urhobo land. Now is the time. Our silence should not be taken as timidity.

No. WAC/1952/13

Urhobo Clans Executive Board,
7, Simpson Street,
Lagos, Nigeria.

18th September, 1958.

The Secretary
to the Nigeria Constitutional
Conference, London.

Through:
The Deputy Governor General,
Governor-General's Office,
Lagos.

WARRI LAND BELONGS TO URHOB (USOBO) PEOPLE

Who does not know that Warri land and the suburb belongs to the Urhobo (Usobo) people. Did the English Government Consuls and

came to Salubi, Eku village to trade with U.A.C. for a rent of 12.00 pounds a year each?

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WARRI LAND BELONGS TO URHOB0 (USOB0) PEOPLE

Who does not know that Warri land and the suburb belongs to the Urhobo (Usobo) people. Did the English Government Consuls and

officials who first came to Urhobo land and entered into agreements with the Urhobo people not find out. And do not the records of Government reveal who are the indigenes of Warri? Do not the annals show the Kingdom of Uvwie to be the most powerful next to Benin in the whole country stretching from the Delta to Benin Province? What was the cause of Nana's war and Uvwie expedition that reverberated throughout the whole of the Urhobo tribe?

On May 15th 1957, members of the Urhobo Clans Executive Board forwarded a memorandum through the Chief Secretary to the Federation of Nigeria to seek protection from infiltration of domination into Warri. When the Commission of Inquiry into the affairs (fears) of minorities was to do its work, the Urhobo Clans Executive Board and Warri Aborigine Congress again submitted a memorandum and appeared with their counsel Barrister J.B. Akinyede to give evidence. To our surprise and dilemma, the Western Regional Government decided to surrender this Urhobo land to the Olu of the Itsekiris (Jekiri) and his Chiefs who are not the descendants of those who owned and ruled the land, and who surrendered sovereign rights to Her Britannic Majesty, the Empress Queen Victoria, and who by a deed of leasehold gave land to the Nigerian Government to build offices.

We therefore resume the matter with the resumed Constitutional Conference and refer all concerned to the Memorandum of the 15th of May, 1957, and that of 17th October, 1957; No. WAC/1952/12, tendered to the Minorities Commission. (See their letter of acknowledgement LA/1/91 of 15/11/57).

The Itsekiris (Jekiris) understood English first, through some "Teddy Boys" and used that weapon to pilfer, though in vain, to usurp our fatherland. But our position and landworks are so strong and clear that they have not succeeded. It is regretted that a ruling power in the Western Region appears to support this wrong claim of the Itsekiris (Jekiris). We now seek for independence for this country. But unless justice is done to every indigenous and ethnic group in the country, this may not be possible or if possible would be an era of unhappy events in the country and the British who granted the independence.

We therefore appeal again to the Secretary of State for the Colonies and the Conferences as a whole, to inform the Western Regional

Government to reconsider their decision and ask the Olu to remove from Warri to Amatu or Ijula or their settlement at Ode Itsekiri from whence he came. This is necessary for orderly and peaceful government. Let it be known to all that Warri land belongs to the Uvwie people in Urhobo land.

We are,

Your obedient Subjects,

D.O. Ibeke
Hon. Secretary.

T.O. Ako
President

T.W. Owhin
Chairman.

General Ibrahim Babangida cfr, fss, mni
The President, Commander -in-Chief of the Armed forces
of the Federal Republic of Nigeria.

Your Excellency,

THE TRUTH ABOUT WHO OWNS WARRI

...an Ijaw Point of View

I humbly wish to draw Mr. Presidents attention to the series of petitions and representations by the Olu of Warri and his Chiefs for the creation of a Warri State or merger with Edo or Ondo State. The recent demonstration of shame by the Itsekiri in Abuja gave the impression that Warri Township or Old Warri Division, now Warri South and Warri North, belong to the Itsekiri and were therefore free to demand for a Warri State without the consent of the Ijaws and the Urhobos who historically are members of the Warri community.

The recent provocative Open Letter to President Ibrahim Babangida in the Vanguard of May 8, 1993 by Itsekiri Chiefs and those by Mr. A.O. Rewane, who arrogates to himself the Chief spokesman on Warri affairs, took liberty in insulting and condemning the Ijaws, the Urhobos, Governor of Delta State and even demonstrated a veiled hatred for his traditional Ruler, the Olu of Warri.

For the record, let me state here that in all the statements issued by the Warri Council of Chiefs, Itsekiri National Council and Mr. A.O. Rewane, deliberate attempts were made to distort history and this, I think, cannot go unchallenged.

In all humility, I wish to assert that I enjoy a privileged position when it comes to historic matters affecting the Urhobos, the Ijaws, the Isokos and the Itsekiris in Warri because of my blood relationship with the four ethnic groups. My father is Ijaw and Urhobo: so is my mother. My grand-father, Late Chief Bekerderemo is partly Ijaw and partly Itsekiri. His younger sister, Late Fuobode Egbe was married to Chief Egbe, father of Late Asifo Egbe and had Madam Teye Egbe. Chief Bekerderemo was a descendant of Oshoron in Egbokodo in Warri South. As a Commissioner for Education and Finance in the defunct Midwest State and a senator in the Second Republic representing the Ijaws, Itsekiri Urhobos in Warri and the Isokos, I associated with the people very closely and effectively.

EVIDENCE OF OPPRESSION OF THE IJAWS IN WARRI BY THE ITSEKIRIS

Who is oppressing who? And who is harassing who? It is the Itsekiris that are oppressing the peace-loving Ijons and the Urhobo of Agbassa and Okere. The Itsekiris treat the Ijaws and the Urhobos in Warri as second class citizens and as "customsry tenants"

Chief Nana and Chief Dore who were the middlemen and Political Agents in those historic days terrorised the Ijaws and claimed all their territories. They intimidated them into giving up their rights, seized their agreements. For instance Chief Nana seized the lease agreement of the Ogula people, signed with the Royal Niger Company. This was reported to Her Majesty Commissioner in Niger and Oil River Protectorate, Major MacDonald during his visit to Forcados in 1898.

AMBITION TO CLAIM SUZERAINTY OVER URHOBOS AND IJAWS.

The Itsekiris have now taken advantage of taken advantage of the change in the title of Olu of Itsekiri to Olu of Warri to fortify their claim that they are the owners and rulers of Warri. This was the fear anticipated by the Secretary to the Government in Lagos in 1936 and here I quote the relevant portion:

"He is, they say, advising the Olu to persist in claims of suzerainty over Sobos and Ijaws, which, as Mr. Egbe (late Asifo Egbe) points out, is a claim which the Itsekiri people themselves realise they cannot sustain. The more the Olu claims in this respect the more determined are the Sobos to free themselves from all possibility of domination by the Olu, as they were dominated in the past by Chief Dore".

It must be clearly understood that no one grudges the Itsekiris for holding their Olu in the highest esteem. That is how it should be and they earn my admiration. But the issue is that as far as the Urhobos, Ijaws and Isokos are concerned, the Olu of Warri is no higher in esteem than any of the traditional rulers in Urhobos, Ijaw and Isoko. The Orodje the Pere of Kabowei and the Ovie of Uzere, are on the same traditional pedestal and The Ijaws in Warri-Ogbe Ijaw, Isaba, Gbaramatu and Egbeoma have NEVER accepted the overlordship of the Olu of Itsekiri and even after the change of the title to that of Olu of Warri in 1952, and they will never accept it NOW and in FUTURE.

The four Ijaw Traditional Rulers in Warri are independent of the Olu of Warri. Even in the hay days of Chief Obafemi Awolowo led Action Group Government, when the Itsekiri were regarded as the 'bride' of the Western Regional Government, Chief Awolowo did not use his powers as Minister of Local Government to subject the Ijaws in Warri Division to the overlordship of the Olu of Warri. Their autonomy and identity were established and recognised.

The Warri Traditional Council has never functioned because of disagreement between the Itsekiris and the Ijaws, since the launching of the Council in Benin by the then Military Governor of Bendel State, Commodore Hussaini Abdullahi on September, 16, 1977. The Commissioner for Local Government and Chieftaincy Affairs, Dr. John Utomi Aire, was sent by the Governor to resolve the stalemate and restore peace in the area. The following issues were resolved:

1. Itsekiri and Ijaws Languages should be accepted as official languages of the Council. Any member was therefore free to use any language of his choice. In this connection, the Secretary of the Council was directed to make arrangements to provide the required interpreters.

2. The Hon. Commissioner further commented on the demand of the Ijaw members to rotate the Chairmanship with the Olu of Warri and

for the enlargement of the Council membership to accommodate Ijaw Traditional Chiefs.

REFUSAL OF OLU AND HIS CHIEFS TO RECOGNISE THE FOUR TRADITIONAL RULERS IN WARRI DIVISION

The position and status of the Ijaw Traditional Rulers has always been recognised by the various Governments Nigeria Colonial, Civilians or Military. They are the prescribed authorities of their own areas while the Olu of Warri is the prescribed authority of the Itsekiri Kingdom.

REFUSAL OF ITSEKIRIS TO ALLOW THE IJAWS TO REMAIN WHERE THEY TRADITIONALLY BELONG.

The Itsekiris, during the administration of Ambrose Alli caused the transfer of Ogbe-Ijaw, Gbaramutu, Egbeoma, Isaba to Burutu Local Government Area. It was during the time of the Military administration that they were transferred back to Warri. Up till now the Itsekiris are still working hard to give Tsekelewui away to Ondo in order to reduce the effectiveness of the Ijaws in Warri. It was the transfer of Tsekelewui to Ondo State in 1978 that made Ondo State an oil producing area at the time. This is a most unpatriotic act on the part of the Itsekiris.

OIL PRODUCING AREAS IN WARRI

The Itsekiris have usurped the rights of the Ijaw oil producing communities in Warri. And they have made false claims that the Itsekiri communities produce more oil than any other area in the Delta, conceding nothing to the Ijaws. The oil companies particularly Chevron which is presently operating in Opuama and Tsekelewui and other Ijaw communities gave all the rights and privileges to the Olu of Warri including the fencing of his unofficial palace at Ekurede in Warri at a cost of =N=3m, control the employment of staff, Guest House in Lagos, access to Chevron aircraft.

The following Ijaw communities produce oil;

ABADIGBENE, OKIMFAMBA, ODIDIGBENE, OGBE-IJAW, DEIBRI, KOKODIAGBENE, PEPE-AMA, TSEKELEWUI, OPUAMA, EKPEMU, AKPATA, IJANSA, OFUNAMA, OGBOINBRI, OKERENKOKO AND KUNU-KUNUMA.

All Ijaw speaking communities in Warri North and Warri South Local Government Area.

CHANGE OF TITLE OF OLU OF ITSEKIRI TO OLU OF WARRI.

The Itsekiris now believe and behaves as the sole owner of Warri and they regard other citizens as customary tenants to the Olu even though directives for the change of title was conveyed to the Resident in Warri in the following terms:

"His Honour approves the change in Olu's title from that of Olu of Itsekiri to that of Olu of Warri. It should be clarified, however, that this change in title does not on any account imply an extension of Olu's traditional authority."

THE DEMAND BY THE IJAW COMMUNITY IN WARRI DIVISION FOR SEPARATION FROM THE ITSEKIRI AUTHORITY

It is wicked and vicious for the Itsekiri Chiefs to accuse the Government of Delta State of Felix Ibru of promoting the creation of Ijaw Local Government Area known as Nein-Ibe from the two Warri Local Government Areas. The demand for creation of this Local Government for Ijaws dates back to the 40s and the official comment on the demand was contained in a letter NO. WP. 1452/14 of 20th August, 1952 addressed by the Resident, Warri Province to the Hon. The Civil Secretary, Western Region and here I quote

"I have recently met the Gbaramatu and Ogbe-Ijaw Councils, and explained that their request would be considered in relation to the whole question of local government reform in the Province. Their grievance against the Itsekiris is that they are treated as inferior beings, looked down in Council and generally disregarded. This is the natural reaction of a very backward tribal minority, and represents strong feelings on the part of most of the people concerned, though there is a pro-Itsekiri element in Isaba, a village of the Ogbe-Ijaw group. At both council meetings I was implored, as representing a Government of god-like power, to arrange removal of the Itsekiri yoke"

The Itsekiris have used every effort to stop the creation of the Council for the Ijaws in Warri Division and in their grand design they

would not like the four Ijaw clans to be transferred to Warri South because to do so would give the Ijaws the opportunity to contest elections with Itsekiris.

All the Itsekiri institutions including Chieftaincy titles now identify with the name Warri-viz Itsekiri Kingdom to Warri Kingdom; Ologboshere of Jakpa to Ologboshere of Warri the Iyasere of Ubeji to Iyasere of Warri, Uwangue of Jakpa to Uwangue of Warri etc. The impression being given is that Itsekiri has now become synonymous with Warri. This is illegal and fraudulent. The only name that was officially inter-changeable or synonymous with Warri was "Ogbe-Ijaw"

All lease of Crown land granted in Warri by the Government of the Federation of Nigeria (Southern Secretariat) carried the name of Ogbe-Ijoh-

(i) " Reference File No. A. 1234/1923 Mr. J. O. Agbeyegbe - lease of land at Ogbe-Ijoh" in June 1925.

(ii) " No. SP 9761/15, Secretary's Office, Southern Provinces, Nigeria Enugu dated 1st August, 1933. Messrs Campagn Francaise de l'Afrique Occidentale; Sublease of Lease hold property at Ogbe-Ijoh, Warri belonging to Mr. Solomon Dakolo".

(iii) " No. 03841/61 Land and Survey Department, Lagos dated 15th March, 1944. Mr. F. M. Ikomi - Sublease of Land to G.B. Ollivant Limited Ogbe-Ijoh, Warri". Both the Senior Resident of Warri Province, Major R. L. Bowen and the Local Authority, Warri Mr. P. R. Fulker Roberts, as recent as May 1944 used the name Ogbe-Ijoh to describe parts of Warri Township.

But the Itsekiris in continuation of their oppressive way of usurping other people's rights have used their influence to eliminate all traces of Ogbe-Ijoh in Warri.

Ogbe-Ijoh properties including Crown lands in Warri Township have been exploited by the Itsekiris through all sorts of craftiness and manipulations. The Itsekiri communal Lands Trusts was created for them by Chief Awolowo's Action Group Government to executive this unholy exploitation and their inordinate ambition to subjugate others under their overlordship. Almost every Crown Land in Warri GRA hitherto known as Ogbe-Ijoh was surrendered to the Itsekiri Communal Lands Trusts and allocated to mostly Itsekiri elites between 1966 and 1992. All major streets in the GRA now bears

Itsekiri names - The famous Swamp Road was once changed to Ben Southerland Avenue before reverting to Swamp Road again.

Few weeks ago, it was named after an unknown "Princess Olunogho" Crescent. The historic "School Road" is now Mabiaku Road. The Ijaws who were the original owners of the area are being discriminated against and marginalised.

Despite all the efforts by the Itsekiris to change history, the official records as to the history of Warri is very clear and impeccable and here, I quote a portion of the official Intelligence Report.

"The township of WARRI, in marked contrast to the village of OLD WARRI, is recent growth. The original settlement, which in due course became the nucleus around which the population settled, was known as OGBE-IJOH and the name is still retained to define that portion of that town around the present market. As the name indicates, OGBE-IJOH was originally an Ijaw settlement and translated literally means, I am informed, "the Ijaw fish market"

It is dishonest and mischievous of the Itsekiri to want to claim Warri by sponsoring for publication on the pages of Newspapers so-called judgements which were fraudulently obtained by the influence of Dore Numa in collaboration with the Colonial Masters who got land grants from Dore. A contrary judgement would have created chaos and the Colonial Government losing their lands.

The so called Supreme Court Judgement in 1927 and which later went to the Privy Council was obtained by fraud. Subsequent judgements followed the precedent laid down in the Privy Council judgement of 1927 because Chief Dore who was the defendant in that case had earlier confessed in a letter dated 28th February, 1923 to the Agbassa people through their lawyer Mr. S. L. Bucknor that he, Dore, in his private capacity or as a Representative of the Itsekiri Olu did not own Agbassa Land; that the Land belonged to Agbassa people. That although the Olu of Itsekiri had always had sovereign rights over all lands in Warri, but such rights had nothing to do with ownership of or title to land. The letter was written for him by one Mr. E. G. Ajuyah. He wrote a similar letter in respect of Okere land.

It is clear from the above that the Itsekiri leaders used their powers and influence to oppress and deprive the Ijaws and the Urhobos in Warri of their rights. These poor and uninfluential Ijaws and Urhobos could not succeed in any of their cases against the Itsekiris at the time. It was obvious that the Colonial powers who signed treaties with Chief Dore and other Itsekiri Chiefs always gave judgement to the Itsekiris in order to protect their interest. But the situation has changed and the Itsekiris have failed to recognise this, hence the frequent clashes and unwarranted riots. The descendants of the oppressed Ijaws and Urhobos of Warri are no longer ready to accept the Itsekiris as their leaders and overlords and they are ready and prepared to correct the situation.

Today, Itsekiri leaders including the Olu of Warri and the same leaders of thought are now claiming closest affinity with the Edos.

But Mr. Alfred Rewane and his crown are deceiving the Itsekiri people that the Itsekiris still have viable option of either merging with the Edos or with the Ondos. Justice Ogbobine in his letter of 10/7/92 addressed to the Olu of Warri stated "*Some of us felt that time has come for us to have a complete break with Urhobos either by joining Ondo State or Edo State*".

These Itsekiri elites still believe that the old Warri Local Council now Warri South and Warri North is synonymous with Itsekiri people. Indeed, there are other ethnic groups occupying parts of the two Warri Local Government Areas namely, the Ijaws and the Urhobos. They are indigenes and have their own traditional rulers.

The claims by the Chiefs that the Itsekiris share a 60 mile boundary with the old Benin Province is not correct. The fact is that most of the boundary are occupied by other ethnic groups particularly the Ijaw people, (Egbeoma) and Ethiopie West (Ogbara and Ajagbodudu). Indeed, because of the riverine nature of the area and the scattered distribution of habitable spots the different ethnic group i.e. Itsekiris, the Ijaws and the Urhobos have been mixed up in non-contiguous manner and thus became inseparable.

The last census showed clearly that the whole of Warri South and Warri North uncluding Warri Urban is 300,720 and the Itsekiri cannot claim one-third of this population. It is unrealistic for the Itsekiri leaders to think that the minority group can carry the majority of the

Ijaws and Urhobos to where ever they want to go.

On the 13th of June, 1992, a few months into Governor Felix Ibru's Administration, the Itsekiris for no justification, marched through the street of Warri carrying meaningless placards, herding themselves into the Olu's Palace demanding since the creation of Delta State, and that the Itsekiris have been the object of endless intrigue, political degradation, and untrammelled ethnic aggression. They cried loud and clear to the Federal Government, to all Foreign Embassies in Nigeria of "*looming genocide and violence*" against the Itsekiri people. They said: "*Let the anguish of the Itsekiris echo in the anteroom of every foreign "embassy"*".

The Itsekiri Chiefs also accused the Delta State Government of a plan to fragment the "Warri Kingdom" and that pressure was applied on the former Military Administration, Group Captain Luke Ochulor to create two Urhobo clan heads for Agbassa and Okere Communities. Mr. A. O. Rewane, sometime ago, wanted to know whether Mr. Onuwaje, a commissioner in Colonel John Yeri and Ochulor's Administrations ever took part in the discussions and decisions that led to the creation of the two clan heads.

Suprisingly, without conducting any investigation, he repeated the allegations some months later, casting aspersion on the integrity of the present Administration in Asaba, Mr. A. O. Rewane, with all the facilities at his disposal should have known that Colonel John Yeri as Governor of Bendel State did not originate the creation of Okere and Agbassa Clans. Ochulor did not either.

Another reason adduced by the Itsekiri for the creation of a Warri State is simply because the Federal Government had directed that the Ijaw Clans of Ogbe-Ijaw, Isaba and Gbaramatu which were wrongly grouped with Warri North Local Government Area should be returned to Warri South where they originally belong. The President directive Ref. No. VP/925 Vol. 1 of 12th November, 1992 was addressed to the Military Administrator, Group Captain Luke Ochulor.

The Itsekiris complained that the election conducted by the Traditional Rulers on 4th March, 1992 to elect their representatives to Abuja was stage-managed by the State Government in order to

humiliate the Olu of Warri and to appoint the Orodje of Okpe. That the meeting was held without an agenda and attended by many Urhobo Traditional Rulers and Chiefs. That the meeting which was held at the Petroleum Training Institute, Effurum was illegal because it was held outside the State Capital. They, therefore, resolved not to accept the outcome of the election and resolved further that they would not sit down to watch "Urhobo State Government" desecrate and vandalise their Traditional Institution.

The Olu of Warri responded to the Governor's speech on behalf of the Traditional Rulers while the Orodje of Okpe prayed on the presentation of the Traditional kolanuts. At the end of the meeting it was again the Olu of Warri who prayed for the Orodje to have a successful tenure of office.

1991 GUBERNATORIAL ELECTION

The Itsekiris has already accepted the creation of Delta State with Capital at Asaba.

It must be borne in mind that during the last gubernatorial election Prof. Eric Agume Opia was NRC gubernatorial candidate with Itsekiri's Dr. Richmond Leigh as running mate. The Itsekiris were internally preening themselves, arrogantly confident of victory which would have made Prof. Opia the Delta State Governor, with Dr. Leigh as Deputy Governor. Unfortunately, NRC lost to SDP's Chief Felix Ibru, and Urhobo. Predictably, the results went to court; after the court verdict - and on the approaching eve of National Assembly and Presidential election - the Itsekiris now want a WARRI STATE created out of the present Delta State; the reason? "Urhobo domination" and that the Itsekiris are certain that no amenities can reach them from Ibru's government at Asaba and that no amenities have reached Itsekiri land since Chief Ibru was sworn in on January 2nd 1992. Of course the court actions have been conveniently forgotten. If the absence of any amenities as such between January and June last year is yardstick for demanding a WARRI STATE, then Ijaw people also request the immediate creation of an IJAW STATE because no amenities have been brought to IJAW-land since January last year. It was the crashing of Opia/Leigh that made the Itsekiris to demand a Warri State.

CONCEPT OF DEMOCRACY

Democracy presupposes rule of the majority. The Itsekiri notion and concept is that the minority must rule the majority or that they, the Itsekiris, must forever be in the corridors of power. Unfortunately, their political calculations do not work out the way they want, and when this happens they resort to the usual battle cry of "oppression". It needs reminding that if Prof. Opia had been Governor with Itsekiri's Dr. Leigh as Deputy-Governor, no one would have heard of "oppression" or "demand for Warri State" through appeals to "foreign embassies" and "world powers".

On behalf of the Ijaws in Warri, I passionately appeal, let the people of Nigeria join the Ijaw people to tell our Itsekiri brothers and sisters that they should learn how to live with their neighbours. Let the nation join Ijaw people to tell our Itsekiri neighbours that ENOUGH IS ENOUGH, that they just have to learn to live together with others that they cannot be an island or world of their own; that they must learn to take the smooth with the rough, that they must learn to live and WORK like others in this 20th Century and that democracy and social justice go hand in hand, and that there is no trick they can play which others cannot play in present-day Nigeria.

We need each other.

Chief (Dr.) E. K. Clark

Former Federal Minister of Information

*And Senator Representing the Ijaws, Itsekiris,
Isokos and the Urhobos in Warri.*

OKERE URHOB0 CLAN WARRI

The President,

General Ibrahim Badamosi Babangida, CFR, FSS, MNI;
Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces,
Federal Republic of Nigeria,
Presidential Villa,
Abuja.

SECRETARIAT:

Ogwa R'Olodi,
Olodi Square,
P. O. Box 3319,

Okere Warri,
Delta State.

Dear Mr. President,

**THE RECENT UNSAVOURY CRY BY THE OLU AND HIS
ITSEKIRI CHIEFS-A REJOINDER BY CHIEF BENJAMIN**

O. OKUMAGBA (JP)

AN OPEN LETTER TO MR. PRESEIDENT.

I wish to draw the attention of Mr. President to the recent unsavoury cry of the Olu and his Itsekiri Chiefs in connection with a suit in the Warri High Court as published by the Olu and his Itsekiri Chiefs in a number of newspapers including the following:

- (a) The Vanguard of 19th January, 1993 captioned " Warri council of chiefs - the last straw in Warri"
- (b) The Daily Times of 18th January, 1993 captioned "Itsekiris Petition Babangida, "threatening to secede from the state if the Olu's title is redesignated from Olu of Itsekiri"
- (c) Nigerian Tribune of the 18th January, 1993 captioned "Itsekiris to pull out of Delta if their Olu's title is change to the Olu of Itsekiri"
- (d) National Concord of the 18th January, 1993 captioned "Itsekiri threaten to pull out of Delta if....."
- (e) Daily Champion of 25th January, 1993 captioned "Itsekiri youth protest plan to change Olu title" where it was reported that some Itsekiri youth went to the Warri High Court premises to demonstrate and marched through some streets in Warri to the residence of the Olu
- (f) National Concord of the 9th of February, 1993 captioned "Warri Council of Chief petition Chief Justice."
- (g) The Vanguard of the 9th of February, 1993 captioned "Itsekiri take Olu's case to the Chief Justice" and also

showing the photograph of some Itsekiri chiefs and the chief Justice of the Federation

- (h) Daily Times of the 9th February, 1993 captioned "Chief Justice Assures Itsekiris of Justice" also showing the photograph of the Chief Justice of the Federation and some Itsekiri Chiefs to mention a few.

I am therefore constrained in view of the above vituperations some of which borders on treasonable acts against the State by the Olu and his Itsekiri chiefs, to make the following facts available to Mr. President and the general public:

1. The Olu is the Traditional Ruler of the Itsekiri people and his home is in Ode-Itsekiri, not in Warri Township. His traditional rulership does not cover Warri Township which is a metropolis comprising several distinct indigenou, autononous communities including our Okere-Urhobo clan which have existed from time immemorial.
2. There was nothing like Olu of Warri before and during the British Advent. The first Olu after the British Advent was the Grand Father of the present Olu who was installed in Ode-Itsekiri on the 7th of February, 1936 as Ginuwa II the Olu of Itsekiri.
3. The Itsekiri claimed to have had an interregnum that lasted about one century. There was no city called Warri that embrace the present metropolis and no Olu lived in any part of the present Warri metropolis before and during the British Advent until Erejuwa II the father of the present Olu was moved into Warri Township after 1952. Indeed Erejuwa II was installed as Olu of Itsekiri in Ode-Itsekiri in 1951.
4. The Olu himself is from Ode-Itsekiri - a community on an Island several kilometers away from Warri Township. He and most of his noise making chiefs are stranger elements in Warri Township where they cannot lay claim to one single square inch of land through inheritance as compared to my humble self and other Urhobos of like situations whose landed properties in Warri Township are Okere Urhobo clan, Warri as

is confirmed by the consent judgement in suit No. W/28/65.
This is clear case in view.

5. It was the Action Group Government of the then Western Region that unilaterally changed the title from Olu of Itsekiri to Olu of Warri in 1952 as a punitive measure against the communities that refused to vote for them including the people of Okere-Urhobo clan.

It was the same Action Group Government that moved the Olu from his home and palace in Ode-Itsekiri to Warri Township where he has been living in his private residence as a tenant.

6. There are three distinct, autonomous, indigenous ethnic groups in Warri South Local Government Area, namely the Urhobos, Ijaws and the Itsekiris.

7. The place known as Warri Township today is made up of several distinct, autonomous, indigenous communities such as Okere, Agbarha, Igbudu, Edjeba, Ekurede Urhobo, Ogunu Ugbuwangue, Ugbori, Ekurede Itsekiri and the GRA which formed the nucleus of the European settlement in Warri and that these distinct communities were separated by bushes, farm lands, streams and rivers before the British advent.

8. That these different communities are referred to today as Warri Township is a product of urbanisation as could be found in Lagos, where Lagos Island, Ikoyi, Ebute-Metta/Yaba, Apapa, Ajegunle, Mushin including Ikeja and Agege to mention a few now form what is known today as Lagos metropolis.

It is pertinent to state that Okere-Urhobo clan, its people and land have always been a distinct autonomous, indigenous Urhobo community within the area known today as Warri Township, a fact which has been laid to rest in Suit No. W/48/68 and confirmed by the Supreme Court in Suit No. SC.309/74 where it was clearly stated that the Olu's kingdom and over-lordship rights does not extend to Okere. It will also interest Mr. President and the general public to know that our

immediate neighbouring communities of Ugboroke, Ugborikoko, Akpan and Effurum of Uvwie clan as well as other communities of Udu clan in Okpe Local Government Area have grown and merged with Warri urban as a result of the recent rapid developmental growth in Warri area resulting from perceived cause of the recent reckless unsavoury cry by the Olu and His Itsekiri Chiefs.

(a) The former military administrator of Delta State, Group Captain Luke Chijuba Ochulor accorded formal recognition of Clan and Clan Headship to the distinct, autonomous, indigenous Urhobo community of Okere-Urhobo clan in Warri South Local Government Area on the 24th December, 1991 after a through investigation which spanned over a period of about two decades.

(b) The Olu and his Itsekiri people including the chairman of Warri South Local Government Council in Suit No. W/48/92 in which they joined the State Government as Co-defendants but later withdrew that Suit and replaced same with another Suit No. M/51/92.

This Suit was aimed at depriving us of our fundamental human rights as a distinct, autonomous, indigenous community in Warri South Local Government Area by parading the title of the Olu of Warri as a toga to deny us of our rights despite the fact that the Supreme Court has confirmed that the Olu's kingdom and overlordship rights does not extend to Okere land and its people. We are as at today still in court over that suit which we have been pursuing constitutionally

(c) Consequently, we took the Olu to Court in Suit No. M/6/93 and joined the State Government as co-defendant in the suit in which we are asking among other things that the title of the "Olu of Warri" be reverted back to its original title of "Olu of Itsekiri" because the title was changed from the original title of "Olu of Itsekiri" to Olu of Warri" only in 1952 by the Action Group Government purely for political reasons and bearing in mind the fact that the title is now being falsely used to oppress and deny the people of Okere-Urhobo clan of their fundamental human rights.

It is against our above Suit No. M/6/93 at the Warri High Court that the Olu and his Itsekiri Chiefs and people are protesting to President Ibrahim Babangida and the Chief Justice of the Federation to intervene in their favour. It is also against the Suit that they staged a violet demonstration which they started from the premises of the Warri High Court through the streets in Warri to the Olu's residence as reported in the Daily Champion of Monday the 25th of January, 1993.

It is most difficult for any normal human being to understand the reasoning behind the protest to President Babangida and the Chief Justice as well as the demonstration in the Warri High Court premises and in the streets of Warri by the Olu and his Itsekiri people especially bearing in mind the fact, as I am told that the Olu himself is a lawyer by profession. Some of the question which should come to the mind of any normal human being on this issue are:

Is the Olu and his Itsekiri Chiefs wanting President Babangida to use his position as the President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria to promulgate a decree to ban us from exercising our fundamental human rights as free citizens of this country by going to court to ask for redress when our rights are being trampled upon?

2. Is the Olu and his Itsekiri people saying that President Ibrahim Babangida should promulgate to stop the courts from hearing a case against him (the Olu) because he (the Olu) is above the laws of the Federal Republic of Nigeria?
3. Is the Olu and his Itsekiri people wanting our respected President to get out of his normal way to dictate to the Court what to do with the case before it?
4. What really does the Olu and his Itsekiri people think is the business of Mr. President with a case that is in the Warri High Court for which they called on Mr. President to intervene?
5. What is the purpose of the Olu and the Itsekiris organising demonstration in Warri High Court premises, through the Streets of Warri to the Olu's residence?

6. Does the open threat by the Olu and his Itsekiri chiefs to secede from the state as reported in the back page of the Daily Times of 18th January, 1993 not amount to acts of treason or treasonable felony?

It is clear that the actions of the Olu and his Itsekiri chiefs and people are aimed at stampeding and intimidating the Federal Government, the State Government, the Judiciary, the Nigerian public and the News Media in particular into doing their biddings.

Regular threat and monopoly to violence by the Olu and His Itsekiri people. It must be recalled that this same Itsekiri people that went to the law court premises to demonstrate violently as reported by the News Media also threatened a bloodbath in Warri if the Government and the Courts fail to do their biddings in a petition signed by Chief Mene Afejuku on behalf of the entire Itsekiri people on the 13th of June, 1992.

I therefore humbly call on both the State and Federal Governments especially the law enforcement agents to call the Olu, his chiefs and his Itsekiri people to order in the interest of peace and tranquility in Warri South Local Government Area. No section of the community should be allowed the undue privilege of taking laws into their hands and behaving as if they are above the laws of this country with impunity as the Olu and his Itsekiri people have been doing. It is most dangerous for any ethnic group and indeed the Itsekiri to arrogate to themselves the monopoly of violence in Warri South Local Government Area.

The Government and the Law enforcement agents owe it as a duty to curb such excesses as is often demonstrated by the Itsekiris to the annoyance of the other ethnic groups from time to time.

Signed

CHIEF B. O. OKUMAGBA (JP)

The Otota of Okere-Urhobo
Clan, Warri.

**OPEN LETTERS TO PRESIDENT IBRAHIM
BADAMOSI BABANGIDA CFR. FSS. MNI AND
MEMBERS OF THE AFRC**

A REJOINDER TO:

A. REPRESENTATIVE OF DELTA STATE TRADITIONAL RULERS COUNCIL TO THE NATIONAL COUNCIL OF STATE: STAGE-MANAGED ELECTION.

B. THE ITSEKIRI CLUB DECRIES URHOBOS SUPPRESSION

Dear Mr. President,

1. We refer to the two open letters stated above. They cover a wide range of issues, but we shall concern ourselves here with those aspects that touch on traditional rulership in Delta State.

2. We, as chiefs, and on behalf of all our people - Ijaw, Isoko, Ndokwa and Urhobo - do revere the positions of authentic traditional rulership and hold them in high esteem. We therefore feel it most inappropriate to discuss any issues relating to our respected fathers on the pages of newspapers. Our stand is not unique; we know that Mr. President and all well-meaning Nigerians do accord our Ovie, Olu, Obis, Obas and Emirs the same high respect and recognition.

3. Our normal view notwithstanding, should we keep quiet over the gross misinformation propagated by the Itsekiri, then all Nigerians will be left with incorrect and biased impressions about the Ijaw, Isoko, Ndokwa and Urhobo. We owe our peoples the obligation to present the facts to nullify the incitive untruths coming from mischief makers among the Itsekiri people as follows.

4. A STAGE - MANAGED ELECTION ?

4.1 Mr. President and members of the AFRC will recall the letter from the Presidency to the Governor of Delta State to send a representative to the Council of States meeting at Abuja.

4.2 Acting on this afore mentioned letter, the Government and the Deputy Governor summoned

Delta State traditional rulers to a meeting at the Petroleum Training Institute, Effurun to democratically elect a representative (there is no State Council of Chiefs in Delta State at the moment).

The following is the composition of invitees:

Delta North Senatorial District (Anioma):

.....9 traditional rulers

Delta Central Senatorial District (Ijaw, Isoko, Itsekiri)

.....8 traditional rulers

Delta South Senatorial District (Urhobo)

.....8 traditional rulers

4.3 After welcoming the traditional rulers, the Governor left for the Deputy Governor, who is from Anioma and in charge of Chieftaincy affairs, to conduct the meeting.

4.4 The Deputy Governor asked for three (3) nominations for the election of the representative.

4.5 The Obi of Ubulu-Uku (from Anioma) nominated the Obi of Owa (from Anioma). He was seconded by the Obi of Onicha-Ugbo (from Anioma). The Ovie of Aviara (from Isoko) nominated the Orodje of Okpe (from Urhobo). He was seconded by the Pere of Gbaramatu (an Ijaw from Warri South, the same LGA with the Olu of Warri).

4.6 The Obi of Owa declined his nomination.

4.7 In the absence of any other nomination, the Ozu I of Igbuku, JP. (from Ndokwa) moved that the Orodje of Okpe be unanimously accepted as the State's representative. He was seconded by the Pere of Kobowei (from Ijaw).

4.8 The Orodje of Okpe was therefore unanimously elected unopposed, to represent the state at Abuja.

4.9 It is pertinent to note that

4.9.1 The Asagba of Asaba, like the other 24 traditional rulers, was invited to the meeting, but did not attend.

4.9.2 The Olu of Warri was present at the said

meeting and said the closing prayer, to wish the Orodje of Okpe success at the deliberations at Abuja.

- 4.10 A video recording of the proceedings of the said meeting is available for anybody who cares to confirm the facts.
- 4.11 Besides, the election of the Orodje satisfies the law of natural justice - his kingdom is among the oldest and has the largest population in the state.

5. THE SOUTHERN DELTA TRADITIONAL RULERS FORUM:

- 5.1 This forum exists and its motto is "Upliftment of Our Peoples".
- 5.2. The forum comprises all the oil producing areas of the state, areas which fall within the old Delta province, and have common economic, social and environmental problems, the traditional rulers, being God's anointed leaders of their peoples, have expediently come together to lead in finding solutions to these common peculiar problems.
- 5.3 The membership of this forum is open to all traditional rulers from the Delta areas of the state. The Olu of Warri is a party to the discussions that led to its formation. Presently, the following is the list of the attendants to its meetings.

1. HRH Pere Aduwo II, Pere of Kabowei, Bomadi LGA
2. HRH Pere P.H. Bigborogha II. JP. Burutu LGA
3. HRH Okpara I JP. Ovie of Agbon, Ethiope East LGA
4. HRH Orreki II. JP. Ovie of Aghara, Ethiope West LGA
5. Prince Eribor of Ozoro, Isoko North LGA
6. HRH Emaviwe I. JP. Ovie of Aviara, Isoko South LGA
7. HRH Obukeni I. Ovie of Igbide, Isoko South LGA
8. HRH Ovie of Enwhe, Isoko South LGA
9. HRH M. O. Edeimu. JP. Ozu I of Igbuku, Ndokwa East LGA
10. HRH G.E. Ugbome II, Igwe of Okpai, Ndokwa East LGA
11. HRH Orhorho I. JP. Orodje of Okpe, Okpe & Sapele LGAs
12. HRH ERUOHWO II JP. Ovie of Uvwie, Okpe LGA
13. HRH O. Adjara III. JP. Ovie of Ogor, Ughelli North LGA
14. HRH Ovie of Ewu, Ughelli North LGA

15. HRH L. Ogbon Ogorin I. JP. Ohworode Elect of Olomu, Ughelli South LGA
16. HRH O. A. Omamowho II, Osuivie of Agbarho, Ughelli South LGA
17. HRH Gbaran II, Pere of Gbaramatu, Warri South LGA
18. HRH Oduwor II, Pere Amakosu of Ogbe-Ijoh, Warri s. LGA
19. HRH D. D. Donokoromo II, Pere of Isaba, Warri S. LGA
20. HRH Ovie of Agbarha, Ughelli North LGA
21. HRH Ovie of Uzere, Isoko South LGA

5.4 The Orodje of Okpe is the Chairman of the forum, while Prince Eribor (from Isoko) is its Secretary

5.5 The activities of the forum are open. We refer to the memo to Mr. President and members of the AFRC on 12th February, 1992. The primary economic issues contained therein, which have been twisted by the Council of Chiefs in their open letter, are the concession fees being paid to the owners of the land (concession areas); the impoverishment of our peoples through successive denial of employment and contract awards inspite of Government policy on "Catchment Area", oil companies non-chalant attitude over compensations for pollution caused by their operations, to mention a few.

5.6 The forum did invite the oil companies to foster better community /oil company relationships.

5.7 Copies of the correspondence between the forum and the companies are also available for anybody who cares about the truth.

5.8 We challenge the Warri Council of Chiefs to publish the letter (unedited) they claim to have in their possession. If they do not, or, if the content of the said letter is contrary to the falsehood contained in their open letter, then the Government has a duty to decisively put an end to the unprovoked incitements.

6. WHO ARE THE OPPRESSORS IN DELTA STATE?

6.1 Reference is made to the memo of 12th February, 1992 from the Southern Delta Traditional Rulers Forum to Mr. President and Members of the AFRC on

political issues in Delta State.

6.2 In it, it was stated that the Peres of Egbema, Gbaramatu and Ogbeh-Ijoh, all Ijaw traditional rulers in Warri North and South Local Government Areas, have their separate domains and are of equal status as the Olu of Warri. (WRLN Nos. 176, 179, 182 and 184 (WR Gazette No. 30. Vol. 4. 30th June, 1955): WRLN 1959 Vol. 1 Chapters 1 - 28 (Cap 19): Bendel State of Nigeria Gazette No. 51. Vol. 14. 15th September, 1977 refer). But all along, the Itsekiri have succeeded in creating the wrong impression in the minds of most Nigerians that the Warri Council is wholly the domain of the Olu of Warri.

6.3 The Olu of Itsekiri, through political fiat by the then Action Group Government, in 1952, was proclaimed the Olu of Warri. This action has never been accepted by the non Itsekiri indigenous (Ijaw, Isoko, Urhobo and Ndokwa) whose protest led to renaming the old Warri Province Delta Province.

6.4 The Yeri Government of Bendel State and the Ochulor Administration of Delta State reverted the unjust situation.

6.5 Governor Ibru has nothing to do with the appointments of

- The Ovie of Agbasa
- The Ovie of Okere - Urhobo.

6.6 In any case, if the Olu's kingdom was in 1952 created by political fiat (of the Action Group), the Itsekiri are being hypocritical and falsely raising alarm over a corrective political fiat almost forty years later.

6.7 The Itsekiri have in the last 40 years arrogated to the Olu of Warri, with the connivance of successive governments, the chairmanship of the Warri Traditional Council, in spite of their minority status within the council. They also insist that the lingua franca of the traditional councils and in the schools be the Itsekiri language. This situation is comparable to apartheid South Africa where the minority uses CONNECTION AND OTHER INVIDEOUS MEANS to

lord it over the majority.

6.8 From the above, who is the oppressor in Delta State ?

Finally Mr. President and Members of the AFRC, we would like to end where we started. That -

7.1 We would restrict our rejoinder to issues that touched on our traditional rulers.

7.2 We, like other sensible Nigerians, to hold all traditional rulers in very high esteem.

7.3 We do not condone issues relating to traditional rulers being commonised on the pages of newspapers.

7.4 The Itsekiri are professional alarmists.

7.5 The alarm by the Itsekiri is false and maliciously incitive of Nigerians against our peoples.

7.6 The Itsekiri in their greed are the oppressors of not only the Ijaw, Isoko and Urhobo but now also the Iba, Ibusa, Ila, Okpanam, Ebu and Ndokwa peoples.

7.7 The Itsekiri people before and after the creation of Delta State continue to fee the Government of the day with provocative misinformation. Their unabridged propensity to arrogate to themselves what rightly belongs to other peoples has led to the creation of a Delta State that has turned out to be a state engaged in avoidable ethnic polemic.

LONG LIVE DELTA STATE

LONG LIVE THE FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF NIGERIA.

Signed:

CHIEF S. I. COUSINE (IJAW)

CHIEF E. OSEIMO (ISOKO)

CHIEF S. J. EMONEFE (URHOBO)

CHIEF O. ODILI (NDUKWA)

CHIEF D. O. UKEREDI (URHOBO)

**PRESS STATEMENT BY THE DELTA STATE
GOVERNMENT "ENOUGH IS ENOUGH"**

The Delta State Government views with considerable concern the series of publications which some Itsekiri leaders have been making in the form of paid advertisements in some National Newspapers and in which some allegations have been levelled against the State Government, Prominent among such recent publications are:

- (i) the paid advertisement signed by three Itsekiri Chiefs, namely, Brown E. Tenumah, B. A. Otuedon-Okome and D. E. Ogedegbe in the Vanguard Newspaper of Monday 18th January, 1993 titled "An open letter to the President: The last straw in Warri" and
 - (ii) the Report in the Daily Times of Tuesday, 19th January, 1993 titled "Itsekiris report Delta Government to IBB".
2. Two major allegations which have featured prominently in the publications relate to the so-called plan of the State Government to "create new traditional rulers in Warri South Local Government Areas" as well as the imaginary desire of the State Government to change the title of His Royal Highness, Ogiame Atuwatse II from Olu of Warri to Olu of Itsekiri.

The State Government wishes to use this medium to state categorically that the allegations are unfounded and baseless. Regarding the first allegation, although the State Government is empowered by the Traditional Rulers and Chiefs Edict No. 16 of 1979 (still applicable in Delta State) to approve town or village or a group of towns or villages the majority of indigenous of which are believed to have a common ancestry as a clan and increase the number of Traditional Rulers in the State, it recognises the need for absolute caution in exercising these powers so as to ensure that the interests of all the communities in the State are protected.

3. The second allegation concerning the fancied plan by the State Government to change the title of the Itsekiri monarch is even more frivolous and mischievous. Coming closely on

the heels of a law suit filed at a Warri Hight Court by one Chief Benjamin Okumagba and two other challenging the propriety of the present title of the Itsekiri monarch, there is no doubt that the vituperations and outbursts of the Chiefs have been touched-off by the pending law-suit. The State Government is at a loss in fathoming why mischievous insinuations should be made to the effect that it was in support of Chief Okumagba's law suit. For one thing, Chief Okumagba is not a functionary of the State Government and he is certainly not acting on behalf of the State Government. Furthermore, the State Government is itself joined as a co-defendant in the law suit filed by Chief Okumagba and Co. If, what is sauce for the goose is sauce for the gander, one wonders why a hue and cry should be raised over the legal right of Chief Okumagba, a private citizens, to seek redress in Court just as the Itsekiri monarch and his Chiefs had done by taking Government to Court on two occasions of late.

4. In the light of the foregoing, it is clear that the two allegations are the figment of imagination of handful of disgruntled elements who are bent on causing inter-communal conflicts in our State by crying wolf where none exists. The State Government wishes to use this medium to warn all those concerned to desist from this unpatriotic act forthwith in the interest of the unity and progress of our young State. Enough is Enough.
5. Government wishes to reassure all Deltans especially our Itsekiri brothers and sisters of the irrevocable commitment of the present Delta State Government to the principles of fairness, justice and even development of the State. Let us stop fanning the embers of ethnic conflicts and suspicion in our State, so that together we can realise our great potentials which are the envy of others.

Signed
(J. I. UKPEDOR)
Director-General
Local Government and Chieftancy Affairs,
Asaba.
27th January, 1993.

P.O.Box 400,
Lagos.

May, 1989:

Dear Sir/Madam,

DELTA SQUARE CLUB, LAGOS.

Once again Nigeria is about to witness a Third Republic. The Delta people have gained little or nothing from the various civilian republics. The Military regime has very little to write home about.

All things considered our disunity has precluded us from using our most strategic weapon to our advantage. Rather others have cashed and fanned our seemingly artificial disunity and gained in the various phases of the nation's socio-economy.

As you will see from the attached circular attempts have been made in the past to forge a strong fraternal bond of relationship. This failed due to unavoidable mundane circumstances. Individually we have a strong bond of fidelity, collectively we wane in this respect.

I am compelled, after a long time research, to call together men and women of goodwill who will unite to ensure absolute unity and fraternal goodwill among the Ijaws, Isokos, Itsekiris and Urhobo. Our regular and collective reasoning and deliberations and consequential actions will annihilate any erstwhile grudge for maximum progress on all fours in our province/state. Your Sir/Madam have been chosen to help forge our unity and progress:

Our first meeting shall take place on theJune, 1989, in the Vanguard Board Room at 3 p.m. prompt.

In the name of God, please have pity on your people of the Delta/Warri province and attend.

The Delta Square Club is no political body. It shall only monitor and advise for the good of our people.

Yours very sincerely,

Dr. Raymond A. Orororo.