



Dressing in borrowed robes: Name borrowing amongst the Abire of South-eastern Nigeria

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Abstract

In most African societies, personal names are conferred in accordance with the cosmology of each social universe. Amongst the Abire of Ojor-Akamkpa and Ojor-Umon, in South-eastern Nigeria, a significant number of personal names are products of borrowing from neighbouring communities and the migrant settler populations. Against the background of the Abire naming culture and tradition, this study interrogates the practice of name-borrowing amongst the people. Using the purposive sampling technique, data were collected from thirty-three (33) research participants (name-givers and name-bearers) in Ojor-Akamkpa, Ojor-Umon and Calabar. The data were analysed qualitatively in order to determine the extent of psycho-spiritual harmony, variation and/or fulfilment in bearing borrowed personal names. In addition, a descriptive approach was adopted to conduct an ethnographic study of the Abire and their settler neighbours across eleven (11) villages in Ojor-Akamkpa and four (4) villages in Ojor-Umon. Anchored on the theory of linguistic borrowing, the findings of this study confirmed that borrowing into the Dubire and Lubila dialects occurred as a result of sustained contact with 'foreign' or neighbouring languages that dominated administration, education and trade within and around Kabire land. The study concludes that such names have become an integral part of Abire onomastics, serving distinct psycho-spiritual and societal functions whose meanings and significance can only be expressed through those specific borrowed labels.

Keywords: Abire/Kabire, anthroponomastics, foreign/neighbouring/local languages, languages in contact, linguistic borrowing, psycho-spirituality.

Introduction

As a concept in languages and linguistics, 'borrowing' refers to the conscious adoption of elements from one language into a recipient language (Haspelmath, 2009; Jafaar et al., 2019). It generally occurs in situations of language contact. Against this backdrop, Haugen (1950) describes the phenomenon of 'borrowing' as a by-product of two related processes: (i) bilingualism and/or (ii) language mixture, whereby loanwords from a 'foreign' language are introduced or inserted into a 'local' language for want of an appropriate word to express an idea. Haugen makes a clear distinction between the two situations by insisting that, in borrowing through bilingualism, there should normally be a minimum of bilingual mastery of the two languages in contact; whereas in the case of language mixture, users merely pick up words from one language for use in another without an adequate understanding of their usage

Haugen's (1950) bilingual orientation of perception of borrowing closely aligns the phenomenon with code-mixing and code-

switching as seen in the English-Dubire/Lubila examples below:

a). Code-mixing:

I'm going k'ètor-ùbàsè
1SG-COP go-PROG PREP church
'I'm going to church.'

b). Code-switching:

I'm going home. M-bùninè
ñhɔgɔr kéwañ.
1SG-COP, go home. 1SG-want
rest 1SG-POSS Spirit
Gloss: 'I'm going home. I want to
rest my spirit.'
'I'm going home. I want to rest.'

Apart from the introduced lexeme, 'k'ètor-ùbàsè' (church), that appears as the object of the sentence in example (a) above, the other elements of the sentence (subject + verb) appear in English. This constitutes code-mixing or a

hybridization of two language codes within a sentence. In example (b), code-switching occurs as the speaker moves from one code (in sentence 1) to another (in sentence 2) in the same conversational or speech sequence.

Myers-Scotton (2002) highlights this aspect of Haugen's (1950) perspective by analyzing the outcome(s) of such convergence of languages in a contact situation in terms of lexical borrowing, mixed languages, [possible] language loss and creole formation. However, she diverges from Haugen's (1950) position by proposing, in line with Haspelmath (2009), that borrowing should not be equated with bilingual code-mixing or code-switching, as borrowed lexemes can also be fully integrated into the speech of monolingual speakers

In diachronic change, 'borrowing' generally occurs as a result of various sociolinguistic factors as the need to fill linguistic gaps in a language (Mahmudi & Mahmudi, 2018). These authors identify the need to fill lexical gaps in Albanian as the main factor for borrowing words from English into the language. They consequently advise against unnecessary borrowing, which has resulted in serious Anglicisation in Albanian, especially in cases where functional equivalents already exist in the language. According to Mahmudi and Mahmudi (2018), the following borrowed English words, which have usable equivalents in Albanian, should be discouraged by the Albanian elite in favour of their Albanian equivalents (see words in brackets). Such

words include, but are not limited to, blue (kaltër), community (bashkësi), mix (përzierje), monster (përbindësh), and shocking (tronditës).

In their study, Carling et al. (2019) highlight the sociolinguistic factors of need and prestige as the likely underlying causes of lexical borrowing. They state that 'need' relates to the internal pressure to borrow a term from another language to describe a concept or idea that does not exist in the 'recipient' language. This, more or less, agrees with Mahmudi and Mahmudi's (2018) position that lexemes tend to be borrowed from one language to fill linguistic gaps in another language. With regard to 'prestige', Carling et al. (2019) maintain that it concerns the external pressure to borrow a term from a more prestigious language into a language of lower prestige.

To Myers-Scotton (2002 & 2006) and Haspelmath (2009), the postulations on linguistic borrowing by Mahmudi and Mahmudi (2018) and Carling et al (2019) appear to draw significantly from the writings of Bloomfield (1933), who distinguishes three types of borrowing, namely: cultural borrowing, intimate borrowing and dialect borrowing. While cultural borrowing relates to the necessary borrowing of lexemes to

denote new notions, ideas or to accommodate simple semantic change or extension (Haspelmath, 2009, p. 46), intimate borrowing corresponds to Haspelmath's (2009) 'core borrowing', Mahmudi and Mahmudi's (2018) unnecessary borrowing and Carling et al's (2019) 'prestige' borrowing where, in a context of language contact, a 'high prestige' language with an evident sociolinguistic and/or socioeconomic edge can become the purveyor of lexemes that may replace or substitute lexemes with equivalent meanings in the 'low prestige' language. Bloomfield's (1933) dialect borrowing, for its part, involves the process of lexeme borrowing from a standard language into the dialects that make up the language and vice versa.

On the whole, two consistent aspects of linguistic borrowing stand out. These are:

- Necessary or cultural borrowing used to fill linguistic gaps that express new ideas or simple semantic change or extension in the 'recipient' language; and
- Unnecessary, intimate or core borrowing that serves mainly to accentuate the image of a 'foreign' or 'high prestige' language by substituting or

replacing existing lexemes in a 'local' or 'low prestige' language with semantically equivalent lexemes from the 'foreign' or 'high prestige' language.

In terms of necessary or cultural borrowing and in spite of its contact with such 'foreign' or neighbouring languages as English, Ejagham, Efik, Ibibio and Dòkò (Ayo), the 'local' Dubire/Lubila language (spoken by the Abire in Kabire land) appears to be generally self-sufficient as it does not seem to borrow from any of the above-listed languages to fill linguistic gaps relating to new ideas or simple semantic change or extension. Nevertheless, within the context of unnecessary, intimate or core borrowing, the question arises as to whether Dubire/Lubila does indeed draw lexemes from the above-listed 'foreign' or neighbouring languages to substitute or replace some of its existing lexemes. Furthermore, what might be the underlying reason(s) for this form of borrowing in Dubire/Lubila anthroponomastics, where borrowing occurs primarily to substitute or replace existing Dubire/Lubila lexemes specifically for naming purpose?

Though name-borrowing may not be a new phenomenon in onomastics, the case of Dubire/Lubila goes beyond the simple labelling function to embrace the psycho-spiritual conceptions embedded in neighbouring languages. This is unlike the situation in most sub-Saharan African languages (and societies) where the message inherent in such labels is often rooted in shared 'local' linguistic consciousness and belief systems (or sociocultural contexts).

This study, therefore, not only identifies and describes such 'foreign' or neighbouring labels from which Dubire/Lubila draws, but also explains the thinking that underpins the adoption and use of these labels amongst the Abire in Southeastern Nigeria to express in different neighbouring languages the Abire name-giver's or name-bearer's message to their immediate community and to the wider world.

Theoretical framework

This study applies the theory of linguistic borrowing, which Hoffer (2002) describes as the process of transposing or transferring linguistic objects from one language system to another whenever two cultures come into close contact over a sustained period. It is believed that linguists such as Crystal and Haspelmath

adopt this theory in their various research activities. For instance, Crystal (2008, p. 58) describes borrowing as a term used in comparative and historical linguistics to refer to a linguistic form taken over by one language or dialect "as loan" from another. Crystal further provides two situations where borrowing can occur: (i) in less common cases, sounds may be borrowed as in cases where loanwords are pronounced in the 'recipient' language system with the accent of the 'source' or 'donor' language system; and (ii) in the case of grammatical structures wherein a 'source' or 'donor' language's plural system, say 's' in English is used in European languages, as in the nouns 'drinks', 'goals' and 'girls'.

To Haspelmath (2009, pp. 36-37), borrowing in linguistics dates back to at least the 18th century and relates to two phenomena, namely:

- i). A transfer or copying process where perhaps native speakers of a language adopt elements from other languages (donor languages) into theirs (recipient language) or a situation where non-native speakers of a language impose properties of their own native language

(donor) onto a 'recipient' language; and

- ii). The incorporation or imposition of foreign elements into speakers' native language.

These phenomena are generally the consequences of language contact, leading to social and attitudinal factors wherein one language (the donor language) may be categorized as a high-prestige language and the other (the recipient language) as a low-prestige language. In each case, there is typically a transfer, copying and/or use of a new lexeme (loanword) from the 'donor' language into the 'recipient' language. This process is called lexical borrowing. Such new words do not belong to the original linguistic repertoire of the 'recipient' language and are, consequently, usually not analyzable in the 'recipient' language (Haspelmath, 2009, p. 37) because the lexemes are alien to the latter's language code.

It is important to note that a loanword, though not an analyzable unit in the 'recipient' language (since it is alien to the latter), is a lexeme that can nevertheless fit into the 'recipient' language for use without any structural or semantic harm being done to it. The use of the new lexeme in the 'recipient'

language will, therefore, not be considered as code-switching, because, contrary to the principles of code-switching, the new lexeme also occurs in the speech of monolinguals (Haspelmath, 2009, p. 40).

Though Bloomfield (1933) emphasizes three types of borrowing (cultural borrowing, intimate borrowing and dialect borrowing), Myers-Scotton (2002, p. 41; 2006, Section 8.3) and Haspelmath (2009, p. 46) tend to emphasize that borrowing generally occurs mainly in the following two broad ways:

- i). Cultural borrowing: this relates to a new concept that is introduced to a language from outside. It may happen when a language is deficient and the cultural item in question did not exist in the language originally.
- ii). Core borrowing: this refers to a duplicate or replacement lexeme from a 'donor' or 'source' language for an already existing one in the 'recipient' language.

In essence, although this study on name-borrowing amongst the Abire is anchored on the general theory of borrowing, it focuses more on core borrowing since the latter captures the purpose of Abire

anthroponomastics where, for psycho-spiritual reasons, their ordinarily self-sufficient language (Dubire/Lubila) borrows from neighbouring and settler languages to substitute or replace existing Dubire/Lubila lexemes specifically for naming purpose.

Methodology

The study area is Kabire (Figure 1), situated around the south-western and south-eastern boundaries of Akamkpa and Biase Local Government Areas of Cross River State, respectively. The area includes the expansive mother Kabire community of eleven villages (Abakpa, Aronghojong, Ayughaba, Mbarakpa, Mkparatop, Ndighene, Nkonimba, Nsirong, Ojor Camp, Okoroba and Usangharet) known generally as Ojor-Akamkpa (in Akamkpa Local Government Area) and the four villages (Ayaba, Agbanga-nang, Nyeneke-Usung and Obichi) of Ojor-Umon founded by the hunter, Attah Akim Agbor, in the neighbouring western Biase Local Government Area, when he migrated from the mother Kabire community in search of a water route to Calabar/Itu (Ayang, 2005).

While Akamkpa Local Government Area has an estimated population of 228,000, Biase Local Government Area is estimated

to have 256,000 inhabitants (City Population, 2022). Though recent migratory trends make it difficult to situate the exact population of both Ojor-Akamkpa and Ojor-Umon, the Ojor Traditional Council relied on an unpublished 2023 population estimate for the entire Kabire Community to state that Ojor-Akamkpa has about 7000 inhabitants, with some 6,500 native speakers of Dubire, and Ojor-Umon has approximately 4000 inhabitants with 3,500 native speakers of Lubila across the two neighbouring local governments (Romanus Ewoh, personal communication, December 18, 2023). Lubila (spoken in Ojor-Umon) has very strong dialectical similarities with Dubire (spoken in Ojor-Akamkpa). Other indigenous languages in and around the Kabire community are: Efik, Ejagham, Dòkò-Uyanga, Kiong and Nkukoli.

The sample population of thirty-three native Kabire people was based on a purposive sample (Maximum Variation Technique) with seventeen from Ojor-Akamkpa (because of its larger concentration of Kabire people), that is, the Obol Loche (Village Head) and eight males and eight females; eight from Ojor-Umon, that is, one male and one female from each of the four villages; and eight (four males and four females) drawn from

Kabire diaspora members (made up of Kabire indigenes of both Ojor-Akamkpa and Ojor-Umon) in Calabar.

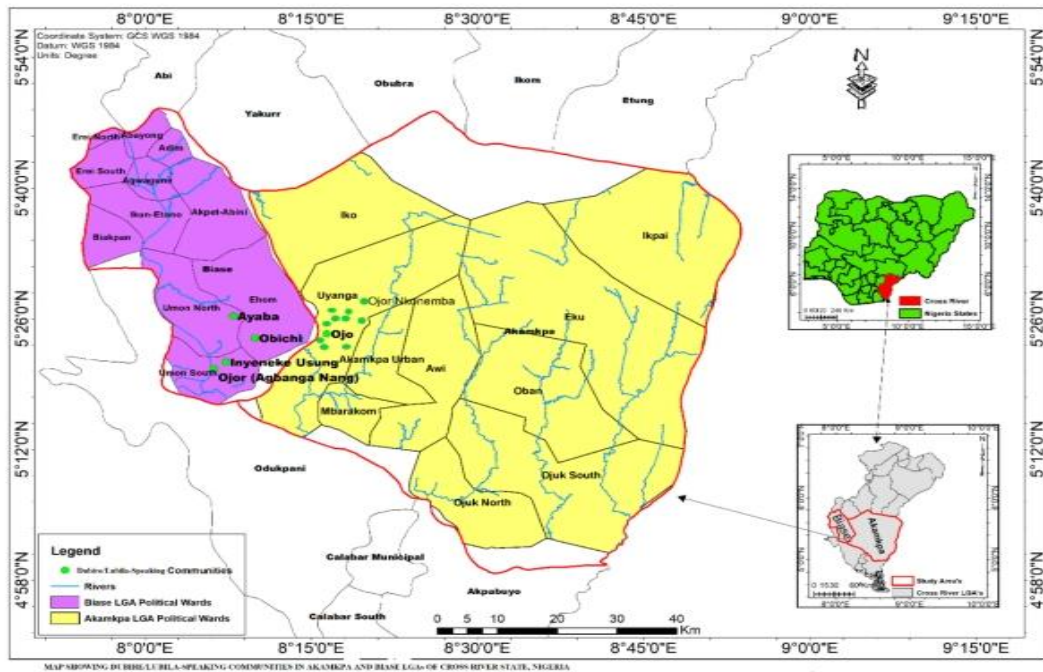
The criteria used for selection were gender (the Obol Loche plus sixteen males and sixteen females across board), age (between 20 and 80 years of age since participants within this range are expected to possess fairly good knowledge of Abire naming culture), and parentage/base (all participants are Kabire people who have lived in their homeland at some point in their lives). As earlier mentioned, purposive sampling was used in the field because the study requires accurate information on the Abire naming practices.

The researchers interacted informally with all thirty-three participants. For four of the seven participants aged between 70 and 80 years, each was asked questions relating to eleven examples of names borrowed from neighbouring languages. Sixteen other participants

(aged between 20 and 69 years) were interviewed in relation to these same eleven examples of borrowed names which they themselves bore. The other ten participants (aged between 20 and 69 years) were also interviewed in relation to the eleven borrowed names that had been bestowed on them by their respective Abire parents.

The qualitative method was used to analyze the data collected. The eleven examples of borrowed names were transcribed and explained, using the descriptive method to identify their Abire equivalents that could have served as appropriate labels for the name-bearers. This provided evidence and indications that names were borrowed by the Abire not because their language is deficient or lacks equivalent labels, but rather because of their psycho-spiritual beliefs and their desire to be associated with the prestige or otherwise of the 'donor' languages around them.

Figure 1: Map of the study area



Review of literature

Language contact

Generally speaking, language contact results from such sociocultural, political and economic factors as education, administration, migration and trade that cause speakers of a particular language to move out of their natural habitat to interact with people of different languages and cultures to the extent of adopting or transferring linguistic features from the languages with which

they were in contact into their own language.

Emphasizing this point, Auer (2020) explains that the concept 'language contact' is the short form for 'contact-induced language change' that presupposes a process through which one linguistic system changes under the influence of another. He further highlights the fact that any such contact-induced change in language can only occur in a bilingual or multilingual setting wherein code-mixing and/or code-switching may take place if the

lexemes transferred or adopted for use in such linguistic practices have cognitive and contextual relevance to the users. To Auer (2020), this essentially means the enactment of the concept of borrowing since the linguistic features used in the code-mixing and/or code-switching functions are drawn from different languages. This is what Myers-Scotton (2008, pp. 22-23) explores when she uses the notion of Outside System Morphemes in five different bilingual contexts (Turkish-Norwegian, Finnish-English, Croatian-English, Spanish-English and Shaba Swahili-French) to explain the indispensability of a second or third language in any situation of language contact and, by extension, linguistic borrowing.

It is important to note that both Auer (2020) and Myers-Scotton (2008) are more or less in full agreement with Weinreich (1963) and Thomason (2001) that all situations of language contact are necessarily bilingual or multilingual with a high degree of either unidirectional or mutual influence on the speakers' cognitive representations of their languages and, consequently, their linguistic behaviour which may eventually give rise to code-mixing and/or code-switching involving borrowed lexemes.

For all the definitions and explanations on language contact and linguistic borrowing provided in the works discussed above, none makes any reference to the language contact situation between Dubire/Lubila, on the one hand, and Ejagham, Efik, Ibibio and Dòkò, on the other, that has resulted in a distinctive type of borrowing that goes beyond the mere transfer or adoption of linguistic features from the latter four for code-mixing and/or code-switching functions to include name-borrowing by the Abire that appears not to be rooted in the popular 'local' Dubire/Lubila linguistic consciousness and belief system (or sociocultural context).

Naming

In their studies on naming practices, Pavlonic (1987), Wamitila (1999), Croft (2009) and Himes (2016) explain that proper names do not only directly or indirectly connect the person or persons so named to a specific locality, community, family or nationality, they also situate these individuals within the context of a tradition, heritage and lineage since "names are important indices for the reconfiguration of identity and ethnicity" (Mensah, 2015, p. 116). It is based on this premise that Mensah and Mekamgoum (2017) explore Ngâmbara

(West Region of Cameroun) personal names as communicative acts that mirror a wide range of human experiences within the Ngômbà sociocultural context; they, thus, embed significant historical resonances and cultural assumptions that reflect both cruel and perhaps pleasant personal memories, unresolved tensions and promising futures.

For his part, Mensah (2024), somewhat drifting from the established naming patterns in sub-Saharan Africa, especially the generally known and established patterns of naming amongst the Tiv of North Central Nigeria as captured in the sociocultural account on aspects of traditional Tiv naming practices (Mensah et al., 2019), notes that naming by Tiv adherents of Traditional religion, Christianity and Islam seems to be circumscribed by a personally determined system of representation derived from the name-giver's and/or name-bearer's belief in spiritual practices and icons like witchcraft, an afterlife, the influence of ancestors and a supreme God. Mensah goes on to demonstrate that religious names in Tiv land portray a strong symbolic association between the name-givers/bearers and their faith or beliefs.

Apparently aligning their views with those of Mensah (2024), Aboh et al.

(2021), in their study of naming practices among Bette Pentecostal Christians, reflect a practice that challenges traditional Bette cosmology and cosmogony as emphasized by Nzuanke and Akpagu (2019) and Betiang (2019), because the emergence of Pentecostal Christianity in Obudu (South Eastern Nigeria) tends to alter the traditional naming patterns and practices of the Bette people producing names that now embody multidimensional connotations, ranging from religious identity to stereotyped gender ideologies.

Going beyond the circumscribed studies on religious or Christian names, Boluwaduro (2019) categorizes Ibibio personal names along broader headings like Christian religion, order of birth, endearment and character attributes that depict the characteristics, cultural norms and religious beliefs of name-bearers among the Ibibio of Southeastern Nigeria. Boluwaduro (2019) infers in her study that family relationships, beliefs and knowledge of the Ibibio culture are important ideological indicators for the construction of identities through naming. In this sense, the names given may either portray the bearer's self-definition and identification or convey social biases embedded in the

transmission of cultural conceptualizations.

In their investigation of functions of emotion-referencing names in Ibibio, Mensah et al (2021) seem to align with Boluwaduro's (2019) views in relation to the motivations for some name choices, their socio-onomastic significance and the extent of their influence over their bearers' "selves" by underscoring the fact that emotion-referencing names among the Ibibio are generally inspired by family problems, death-prevention situations, religion and name-saking and, consequently, do not only have a subtle psychological impact on the name-bearers' self-perception, but also serve as a mirror for self-reflection and interpretation of emotions.

Apart from Ayang (2005), there appears to be a dearth of studies on the Abire history and naming culture. Aside from a translation of some Abire chieftaincy terminologies and traditional institutions, not a single mention is made anywhere in Ayang's (2005) work of Abire as a people, Dubire (or Lubila) as their language or even their naming culture.

While all the other studies analyzed above may have contributed significantly in building the literature of African

onomastics, none of them focused on name-borrowing as a method of appropriating labels that can be used to refer to or in identifying specific referents in the different African societies whose naming cultures were studied. On a more specific note and as far as we searched in different onomastics contexts in the world, we are yet to find another study on the peculiar Abire phenomenon of name-borrowing and its use that appears not to be rooted in the popular 'local' linguistic consciousness and belief system (or sociocultural context) of the 'recipient' culture as is the case with Dubire/Lubila.

Data presentation, analysis and discussion

Name borrowing in Abire anthroponomastics

Generally speaking, naming in Abire cosmology tends to follow the same observable patterns found in many sub-Saharan African societies, especially as they are deeply rooted not only in the sociocultural contexts, nature and circumstances of a marriage or union, and the conception and birth of a child, but equally in local belief systems as praising or beseeching God, preserving family bloodlines, sending messages to

the larger community and the world, marking an event, pleading with, challenging or mocking death, maintaining an intimate relationship with close friends or family, among others. Yet, the origins of some of the names given by Kabire people to their offspring raise serious questions of identity since, at face value, such names appear to be non-indigenous to them.

Indeed, the interactions of the Abire with their immediate Ejagham and Ayo neighbours, on the one hand, and the migrant settler Efik/Ibibio population, on the other, appear to have generated healthy symbiotic relationships that resulted in a contact-induced language

change with a clear unidirectional influence (Auer, 2020). These language contacts evidently gave rise to a rare type of linguistic borrowing: a name-borrowing tradition amongst the Abire whereby the latter freely transfer or adopt labels from these different groups of people to replace or substitute existing labels in Dubire/Lubila for naming amongst their people.

From our fieldwork, we got eleven examples of names borrowed by the Abire from their Ejagham and Ayo neighbours, as well as from the migrant Efik/Ibibio settler population. The names are presented and analyzed from Tables 1 to 11 hereunder:

Table 1: Okon

Personal name	As pronounced	Gloss	Gender	Origin	<i>Dubire/Lubila</i> equivalent
Okon	Ô-kón	Night	Male	Efik/Ibibio	Kirini

Generally, any Efik/Ibibio male who is named 'Okon' (noun) was born at night. And in the Abire culture, night, translated as 'Kirini' (noun), is often associated with darkness and may even embody evil. It engenders fear (of the unknown) in the subconscious of most Abire. Amongst the Kabire people, therefore, when night (or

kirini) falls, humans are expected to retreat and retire to rest in the safety of their homes or wherever they may find peace, comfort and security. Nevertheless, this need for security, comfort and rest does not prevent nature from taking its course in matters of pregnancy, labour and childbirth. Therefore, when a male child is born to

an Abire family at night, he is automatically named 'Okon' (noun), an Efik/Ibibio name. But, the question arises, "why not 'Kirini' (noun), which translates as 'night' and is the natural equivalent of 'Okon'?"

In the Abire cosmology, 'Kirini' is associated with darkness. It is a time after day; a time when the human world in Kabire land takes a compulsory break and leaves the scene for the spirits to take over and re-order their universe. Thus, night, amongst Kabire people, carries an underlying eerie feeling and message that embody fear of, perhaps, the unknown. Consequently, no indigenous Abire parent will accept to name his/her offspring 'Kirini' for fear of what 'Kirini' symbolises in Abire cosmology. However, owing to the fact that naming in Kabire land must necessarily occur within a specific context, their name-givers prefer to

borrow the more common 'Okon' from the Efik/Ibibio migrant settler population.

Adopting 'Okon' (noun) from Efik/Ibibio to duplicate and replace the already existing equivalent 'Kirini' (noun) in Dubire/Lubila confers on Efik and Ibibio the status of 'donor' languages, and, in the circumstance, Dubire/Lubila becomes the 'recipient' language. This process is an example of core borrowing as outlined by Myers-Scotton (2002; 2006) and Haspelmath (2009), whereby speakers of the 'recipient' language (Dubire/Lubila) adopt the new lexeme in order to be associated with the prestige or otherwise of the 'donor' languages (Efik and Ibibio). This was affirmed by a respondent (Okon Inyang & Christopher Etim Ekumgbe, personal communication, December 24, 2023).

Note that 'Okon' (noun) is unanalyzable in Dubire/Lubila since it is not part of the latter's original morphology.

Table 2: Ekumgbe

Personal name	As pronounced	Gloss	Gender	Origin	<i>Dubire/Lubila</i> equivalent
Ekumgbe	É-kúm-gbè	Bush	Male	Ejagham	Ketama

Table 3: Ikot

Personal name	As pronounced	Gloss	Gender	Origin	<i>Dubire/Lubila</i> equivalent
Ikot	Í-kòt	Bush	Male	Efik/Ibibio	Ketama

The Abire are predominantly farmers and hunters. By their farming traditions, they generally build huts in their farms or plantations, which are almost always located in far-off bushes, away from their community. During the planting, harvesting or hunting seasons, many Kabire families leave their homes in the village to stay in their huts on the farms or plantations for weeks to farm, harvest and/or hunt. Sometimes, women (who may have been pregnant) deliver their babies in these farm lands or plantations.

In such circumstances, if the child is a male, he may be named 'Ekumgbe' (Ejagham) or 'Ikot' (Efik/Ibibio), depending on the peculiar family ties or linguistic leaning or affiliation of the parents with an Ejagham or Efik/Ibibio family or friend (Christopher Etim Ekumgbe, personal communication, December 24, 2023). Both names translate as 'bush' in English. The Dubire/Lubila word for bush or forest is 'Ketama'.

However, in Abire cosmology, the lexeme, 'Ketama', is not considered suitable for naming a male child because, in the subconscious of the average Abire individual, it evokes distance, a faraway place of apparent continuous toil and

sojourn. Consequently, the Abire prefer to adopt the equivalent name(s), 'Ekumgbe' or 'Ikot', of their immediate Ejagham neighbours or the settler Efik/Ibibio population, respectively, as a replacement for the already existing Dubire/Lubila equivalent, 'Ketama'.

Adopting 'Ekumgbe' (Ejagham noun) or 'Ikot' (Efik/Ibibio noun) to duplicate and replace the already existing equivalent 'Ketama' (noun) in Dubire/Lubila confers on Efik and Ibibio the status of 'donor' languages, while Dubire/Lubila becomes the 'recipient' language in this context. This process is an example of core borrowing as presented by Myers-Scotton (2002; 2006) and Haspelmath (2009) whereby speakers of the 'recipient' language (Dubire/Lubila) adopt the new lexeme in order to be associated with the prestige or otherwise of the 'donor' languages (Ejagham, on the one hand, and Efik and Ibibio, on the other). This was the same view expressed by a respondent (Christopher Etim Ekumgbe, personal communication, December 24, 2023).

It is worthy of note that 'Ekumgbe' and 'Ikot' as nouns are unanalyzable in Dubire/Lubila since they are not part of the latter's original morphology.

Table 4: Iwang

Personal name	As pronounced	Gloss	Gender	Origin	<i>Dubire/Lubila</i> equivalent
Iwang	Í-nwáng	Farm	Female	Efik/Ibibio	Keram

In Abire cosmology, however, a female child born in the forest will rarely be given any name that denotes 'forest' in whatever language. This is because such names are evocative of distance and apparent continuous toil and sojourn, which the Abire culture does not accept for their supposedly tender female gender who should be managed with care and tenderness.

'Iwang', an Efik/Ibibio word for 'farm', is, therefore, preferred to any word that denotes 'forest'. The Dubire/Lubila equivalent for 'farm' is 'Keram'. However, the Kabire people do not name their female children 'Keram', since they fear it may register in their subconscious and eventually engender a negative psycho-spiritual effect on the female name-bearer (Sylvia G. Mbey, née Iwang), personal communication, December 24, 2023). Consequently, the Kabire people would rather adopt the Efik/Ibibio

equivalent 'Iwang', which they consider suitable in this context.

Adopting 'Iwang' (Efik/Ibibio noun) to duplicate and replace the already existing equivalent 'Keram' (noun) in Dubire/Lubila confers on Efik and Ibibio the status of 'donor' languages, while Dubire/Lubila becomes the 'recipient' language in this context. This is an example of core borrowing as outlined by Myers-Scotton (2002; 2006) and Haspelmath (2009), whereby speakers of the 'recipient' language (Dubire/Lubila) adopt the new lexeme in order to be associated with the prestige or otherwise of the 'donor' languages (Efik and Ibibio). This position was affirmed by a respondent (Sylvia G. Mbey, née Iwang), personal communication, December 24, 2023).

'Iwang' (noun) is unanalyzable in Dubire/Lubila since it is not part of the latter's original morphology.

Table 5: Iquo or Ikwo

Personal name	As pronounced	Gloss	Gender	Origin	<i>Dubire/Lubila</i> equivalent
Iquo or Ikwo	ĩ-kwɔ	Market	Female	Efik/Ibibio	Éyà

'Iquo' or 'Ikwo' is given as a name to a female child born on a market day. Unlike in cities and towns where markets occur every day, the Kabire people have their market twice a week, making it easy to trace an event to a market day in the week.

The Dubire/Lubila equivalent for 'market' is 'Éyà'. But the Kabire people do not name their female children 'Éyà' because their cosmology does not consider that name proper for a human being. From a purely psycho-spiritual perspective, and like the case of the name (Keram) that denotes 'farm', the Abire see 'Éyà' (market) for what it is: an all-comers location where people of different walks of life, including the high and mighty, the lowly, even mad men and women, can walk in and out to buy and sell goods. So, to the Abire, such a name is inappropriate, especially as some Abire even associate 'Éyà' (market) with witchcraft (Mbey Bassey, personal communication, January 3, 2024). Thus,

in the thinking of the Abire, the Efik/Ibibio equivalent 'Iquo' or 'Ikwo', which is of common usage, is preferred for the duplication and replacement of the already existing Dubire/Lubila equivalent, 'Éyà'.

Adopting 'Iquo' or 'Ikwo' (Efik/Ibibio noun) to duplicate and replace the already existing equivalent 'Éyà' (noun) in Dubire/Lubila confers on Efik and Ibibio the status of 'donor' languages, and, in the circumstance, Dubire/Lubila becomes the 'recipient' language. This process is an example of core borrowing as discussed by Myers-Scotton (2002; 2006) and Haspelmath (2009) whereby speakers of the 'recipient' language (Dubire/Lubila) adopt the new lexeme in order to be associated with the prestige or otherwise of the Efik and Ibibio 'donor' languages (Mbey Bassey, personal communication, January 3, 2024).

'Iquo' or 'Ikwo' (noun) is unanalyzable in Dubire/Lubila since neither of them is part of the latter's original morphology.

Table 6: Inyang

Personal name	As pronounced	Gloss	Gender	Origin	<i>Dubire/Lubila</i> equivalent
Inyang	Inyañ	River	Unisex	Efik/Ibibio	Orkpa

In Abire onomastics, the name 'Inyang' which means 'river' is given to a name-bearer for reasons of name-saking, often reflecting friendship or family ties that a parent may have developed with someone of Efik or Ibibio origin who bears the name. In this case, the Kabire parent names his/her child 'Inyang' as a mark of true friendship or in honour of his/her friend.

It should, however, be noted that 'Orkpa' (river) in Abire cosmology does not only symbolise the river, it also relates to the river goddess and marine spirit whose invocation by giving a child the name 'Orkpa' may become a constant in not only the child's life, but also that of an entire family.

Adopting 'Inyang' (Efik/Ibibio noun) to duplicate and replace the already existing equivalent 'Orkpa' (noun) in Dubire/Lubila confers on Efik and Ibibio the status of 'donor' languages, and, in the circumstance, Dubire/Lubila becomes the 'recipient' language. This process aligns with the theory of core borrowing as outlined by Myers-Scotton (2002; 2006) and Haspelmath (2009) whereby speakers of the 'recipient' language (Dubire/Lubila) adopt the new lexeme in order to be associated with the prestige or otherwise of the Efik and Ibibio 'donor' languages (Mbey Bassey, personal communication, January 3, 2024).

'Inyang' (noun) is unanalyzable in Dubire/Lubila since it is not part of the latter's original morphology.

Table 7: Usung

Personal name	As pronounced	Gloss	Gender	Origin	<i>Dubire/Lubila</i> equivalent
Usung	Usuñ	Road/Way/Path	Unisex	Efik/Ibibio	iyem

'Usung' is an Efik and Ibibio word which means 'road', 'way' or 'path'. Usung' is not attested as a personal name in Efik, but it occurs in Ibibio anthroponomastics. The Abire found value in the word and, drawing from their cosmology and psycho-spirituality, they adopted it into their naming in terms of "the way or path to progress" or "the way or path to peace", depending on the context and circumstance in which it is given; or the message a family intends to convey through the name at the time a family is taking or giving it.

Adopting the lexeme 'Usung' to duplicate and replace an already existing equivalent 'Ìyem' (noun) in Dubire/Lubila confers on Efik and Ibibio the status of 'donor' languages. With respect to Efik, this process is called loan creation. Here,

too, Dubire/Lubila is still the 'recipient' language in a process where the formation is inspired by the 'foreign' Efik/Ibibio concept of 'road', 'way' or 'path' (Haspelmath, 2009, p. 39). Loan creation is semantic borrowing (Haspelmath, 2009). With respect to Ibibio, however, the process qualifies as core borrowing as demonstrated by Myers-Scotton (2002; 2006) and Haspelmath (2009). In both cases, speakers of the 'recipient' language (Dubire/Lubila) adopt the new lexeme in order to be associated with the prestige or otherwise of the Efik and Ibibio 'donor' languages (Romanus Ewoh, personal communication, December 18, 2023).

As a word, 'Usung' remains unanalyzable in Dubire/Lubila since it is not part of the latter's original morphology.

Table 8: Usungise

Personal name	As pronounced	Gloss	Gender	Origin	Dubire/Lubila equivalent
Usungise	Ùsùng-ìsè	Road/Way/Path	Unisex	Efik/Ibibio	Ìyem

The name, 'Usungise', is both a derivative and a product of two Efik/Ibibio words 'Usung' and 'Nse'. While 'Usung' means road, way or path, 'Nse' means 'see'. Although 'Nse' occurs as a personal name in both Efik and Ibibio onomastics,

'Usung' is attested as a personal name only in Ibibio. 'Usungise' as a derivative and product of 'Usung' and 'Nse' is a purely Abire creation, intended to convey the meaning, "let me walk" (on the road) ", and see where it will lead to".

Although road is 'Ìyem' in Dubire/Lubila, the Abire avoid giving 'Ìyem' as a name to any human being for the same reasons adduced for market (or 'Éyà'). They rather draw from the Efik/Ibibio word 'Usung' and deform the word 'Nse' to create the suffix 'ise' to birth 'Usungise'. It is important to note that 'Usungise' as a personal name is not attested in the onomastics of both the Efik (of Cross River State) and the Ibibio (of Akwa Ibom State). Rather, it is a complete Abire neologism, one that is alien to both Efik and Ibibio but fully satisfies the anthroponomastic needs of the Abire. The name is unique within the Lower Cross River Region, but peculiar to the Kabire people.

'Usungise' is created from two Efik/Ibibio lexemes ('Usung' and 'Nse') to express a new concept which an existing near-equivalent, 'Ìyem' (noun), cannot fully express in Dubire/Lubila because of its psycho-spiritual constraints rather than lexical absence. This process qualifies as cultural borrowing and confers on Efik and Ibibio the status of 'donor' languages. Here, too, Dubire/Lubila is still the 'recipient' language (Myers-Scotton, 2002; 2006; Haspelmath, 2009).

Though a Dubire/Lubila creation, 'Usungise', as a neologism, is still unanalyzable in Dubire/Lubila especially as it is not part of the latter's original morphology.

Table 9: Arong

Personal name	As pronounced	Gloss	Gender	Origin	<i>Dubire/Lubila</i> equivalent
Arong	Árõñ	Inheritance	Unisex	Ayo	Ibusa

As a name, 'Arong' is very common amongst the Ayo people who are spread across Akamkpa and Biase Local Government Areas of Cross River State and whose language is Dòkò. Some Ayo Communities include: Iwuru (Big Iwuru, Iwuru Central, also known as Small Iwuru), Iko Ekperem, Iko Esai, Uyanga,

Owai, and Ifumkpa. While these Ayo Communities surround Kabire land from the north, south and west, the Ejagham people occupy the area to the east of Kabire land. This contiguity has led to a lot of intermarriages between the Abire and their Ayo neighbours, and those who bear the name 'Arong' in Kabire land are geneologically linked to the Ayo.

'Arong', translated as 'Inheritance' in Dòkò, only explains the fact that Abire bearers of the name are symbolic inheritances of Abire-Ayo intergroup relationships. To the average Kabire person, the Dubire/Lubila equivalent, 'Ibusa', conveys the notion of commodification of the name-bearer, which is unacceptable in Abire psycho-spirituality.

Adopting 'Arong' (Dòkò noun) to duplicate and replace the already existing equivalent 'Ibusa' (noun) in Dubire/Lubila confers on Dòkò the status of a 'donor' language, and, in the circumstance,

Dubire/Lubila becomes the 'recipient' language. Though this case of Dòkò-Dubire/Lubila lexeme replacement aligns with the theory of core borrowing as demonstrated by Myers-Scotton (2002; 200) and Haspelmath (2009), it only confers on Dòkò the status of a 'neighbouring foreign' language in relation to Dubire/Lubila as a local language because Dòkò's spread and influence are limited to the point of its contact with Dubire/Lubila.

'Arong' (noun) is unanalyzable in Dubire/Lubila since it is not part of the latter's original morphology.

Table 10: Ebongo

Personal name	As pronounced	Gloss	Gender	Origin	<i>Dubire/Lubila</i> equivalent
Ebongo	Éboñgo	Derived from <i>Ekpe</i> incantation	Male	Ejagham	Not Available

'Ebongo' is a popular mystery language of the Ekpe cult or society. In Kabire land, the cult's masquerade is 'Ikpe'. The nature, function and operations of Ekpe in Kabire land are the same as those of the Ekpe Society among the Efik/Ejagham of the Lower Cross River Region and the

Ejagham of the Upper Cross River Region (Nzuanke, 2023).

Thus, the word 'Ebongo', which is used for Ekpe Society incantations and expression of agreement amongst its members, is an Ejagham word whose exact semantics (in terms of what it signifies) has been lost in the mystery of the Ekpe language.

However, Kabire people who are strong adherents of the Ekpe Society often give this name to their male offspring as a demonstration of their love for and identification with the cult. Our informant explained that once a child (only male) is so named, he becomes automatically dedicated to the Ekpe Society as a future member.

'Ebongo', an Ekpe cult term of Ejagham origins, borrowed into Dubire/Lubila, consequently confers on Ejagham the status of a 'superstrate' language with regard to the Ekpe cult, and, in the

circumstance, also makes Dubire/Lubila the 'substrate' language. This process aligns with the borrowing theory of imposition as demonstrated by Haspelmath (2009), whereby speakers of the 'substrate' language (Dubire/Lubila) retain an emblematic word from an original 'superstrate' situation associated with the 'donor' Ejagham language (Christopher Etim Ekumgbe, personal communication, December 24, 2023).

'Ebongo' (noun) is unanalyzable in Dubire/Lubila since it is not part of the latter's original morphology.

Table 11: Nkpong

Personal name	As pronounced	Gloss	Gender	Origin	<i>Dubire/Lubila</i> equivalent
Nkpong	N-kpɔŋ	Tomorrow	Unisex	Ibibio	ika

'Nkpong' is a death-related name given to a child whose parents think or believe that s/he will not live long. To the parents, the child is expected to die the day after her/his birth or anytime soon. Nkpong is an Ibibio word which means 'tomorrow'.

The Dubire/Lubila word for 'tomorrow' is 'ika', which is hardly used as a personal name in Abire onomastics because,

within Abire cosmology, naming a child who has been predestined to die anytime soon as 'ika' may presuppose a procrastination of that child's unfortunate destiny and, consequently, prolong the parents' anguish. Thus, to the Kabire people, the Ibibio equivalent 'Nkpong', which has gained widespread usage and whose semantic force is perceived as less emotionally immediate, is preferred, as it tends to be less of a

reminder of the imminence of the child's anticipated transition, is preferred.

The adoption of 'Nkpong' (Ibibio noun) to duplicate and replace the already existing equivalent, 'Ika' (noun), in Dubire/Lubila confers on the Ibibio language the status of a 'donor' language, while Dubire/Lubila assumes the role of the 'recipient' language in this context. This is core borrowing as demonstrated by Myers-Scotton (2002, p. 41; 2006) and Haspelmath (2009), whereby speakers of the 'recipient' language (Dubire/Lubila) adopt the new lexeme in order to be associated with the prestige or otherwise of the 'donor' Ibibio language (Romanus Ewoh, personal communication, December 18, 2023).

'Nkpong' (noun) is unanalyzable in Dubire/Lubila since it is not part of the latter's original morphology.

Using a purposive sample of 33 native Kabire speakers drawn from Ojor-Akamkpa and Ojor-Umon, we established that the Abire naming culture and tradition remain vibrant, reflecting typical sub-Saharan African naming practices imbued with spirituality. The eleven examples of names borrowed by the Abire were not only drawn from their Ejagham and Ayo neighbours, but also from the migrant Efik/Ibibio settler

population. Apart from "Ebongo", which is a name taken from the Ekpe secret society by its member(s), all the other ten examples of borrowed names by the Kabire people came essentially due to language contact with the neighbouring Ejagham and Ayo cultures and the settler Efik/Ibibio population.

Conclusion

In this study, we set out not only to identify and describe labels which the Abire borrow from their neighbours, but also to explain the underlying cognitive, cultural, and psycho-spiritual motivations that inform their adoption and use as both name-givers or name-bearers. In the context of this study, borrowing as a result of the contact between languages has created situations whereby three (Ejagham, Efik and Ibibio) of the four languages (Ejagham, Dòkò, Efik and Ibibio) that came in contact with Dubire/Lubila naturally assume the status of 'foreign' languages. These languages have historically been dominant in administration, education and trade around Kabire land. By contrast, contact between Dòkò, a language limited in geographical spread and sociolinguistic influence and Dubire/Lubila, results primarily from geographical contiguity and intermarriages. Nevertheless, it is from these four languages that the

above-listed examples of lexemes, as loanwords, have been borrowed into the 'local' Dubire/Lubila language. Though all the borrowed names (apart from 'Ebongo') have their direct referential equivalents in Dubire/Lubila (language/dialect of the Ojor-Akamkpa and Ojor-Umon, respectively), the Kabire people deliberately chose, for psycho-spiritual reasons and the fear of the unknown, to adopt the rather well-known, commonly used and established names of their neighbours and the settler

population to duplicate and replace the already existing Dubire/Lubila versions. This situation provides the Abire with a platform to connect easily with the four 'donor' languages. This study concludes that, novel as this phenomenon may appear from a diachronic perspective, it has the potential, over time, to become an important reference point for understanding the diffusion of naming cultures from Africa to other parts of the world.

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