

**THE EVOLUTION OF THE LESOTHO NATIONAL FLAG: A SEMIOTIC
ANALYSIS**

By

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Submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts
in African Languages and Literature in the Faculty of Humanities at the National
University of Lesotho

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August 2024

Declaration

I, **BOHLOKOA SENYANE (201301643)**, hereby declare that **THE EVOLUTION OF THE LESOTHO NATIONAL FLAG: A SEMIOTIC ANALYSIS** is my own original work. I further declare that part of it or its entirety has not been submitted at any university. I have included a complete list of references as a means of acknowledging all sources that I have used throughout the study.

Signature

Date

Supervisor(s)' Recommendation

Supervisor(s)

Date

Acknowledgements

I am eternally grateful to God Almighty for giving me the strength to complete this work. *Ke lebisa khanya eohle ho uena Moholo oa matsatsi!* I also wish to express my heartfelt gratitude to everyone who contributed to the completion of this research.

Firstly, I wish to thank my supervisor, Dr. Thabo Paul Martins, for his immeasurable support and guidance throughout this study. Words cannot begin to express my gratitude for the various roles which you played during this time. Thank you for your encouragement, and your relentless efforts in creating an academic out of me. Dr. Litšepiso Matlosa, thank you for your input and concern for my work as well. I am truly grateful.

I also wish to extend a very special thank you to my mother, Mrs. Motšeo Senyane, for always being my biggest cheerleader. I am always reassured by your inexhaustible love and your commitment to our growth. You have been my biggest inspiration to pursue this degree and for that I am grateful. Thank you for the financial and moral support which you have poured into this work.

To Miss Liteboho Senyane and Miss Bohloeki Senyane; the Senyane *Gurlies!* Thank you for your input and sacrifices on this work. Eminado; thank you sister-girl for assisting with creating the graphs; and Child, thank you for listening when I needed an ear. Thank you, also, for all the advice and nudges to study. You guys are the best sisters ever! My brother and sisters-in-law, Mr. Lebamang Motheo, Ms. Mamokete Motheo, Ms. Palesa Motheo, Mrs. Maphahlane Motheo and Miss Refiloe Motheo, thank you. Your motivation and moral support have not gone unnoticed. *'M'e 'misi!* Thank you for encouraging me to go after this dream.

I also wish to acknowledge my classmates for their constructive criticism and words of encouragement throughout this journey. *Banaating baheso ruri kea leboha hle!*

Finally and most importantly, I thank my husband, Mr. Majoro Motheo, who has been my greatest motivator throughout this degree. I am truly humbled by the support, encouragement and love which you have shown me from the beginning of this journey. You have supported me in every way possible, and you have lightened the load to the best of your abilities from day one. From editing and being a companion to interviews, to being a designated driver when I needed one you have been there for me. For all of these and much more *kea leboha hle Ntat'a ka!*

Dedication

I dedicate this dissertation to my husband, Mr. Majoro Motheo, who has been my greatest motivator. *Tebele*, I am humbled by your high level of commitment towards my academic achievement.

Abstract

The study analyses the evolution of the Lesotho national flag through the semiotic lens. The research is carried out with the aims to establish what each of the six colours of the Lesotho national flag versions represent. The study also aims to uncover the reasons that prompted the evolution of the national flag. Another aim is to establish the significance of the colours and the symbols of the three national flag versions. The research uses semi-structured interviews to collect data. The sample for the study is collected in three districts; Maseru, Berea and Leribe.

The findings reveal that the representation of three of the colours of the national flag, blue, green and white are expressed in the national motto of Lesotho which is *khotso, pula, nala*. The study further finds that the interpretations of the colours which are used on the Lesotho national flags align with the global symbolism of the six colours.

Among other reasons, the findings show that the evolution of the national flag of Lesotho was prompted by the change in political power. The reason influenced both the first and second evolution of the flag. The study also finds that the reasons for the evolution of the Lesotho national flag and the impact of such evolution on society align with those that influence the evolution of national flags globally.

The findings reveal, among other things, that the significance of *mokorotlo* to the Basotho is that it shows prominence and national identity. The findings also reveal the significance of the Coat of Arms as preserving the monarchy and the tribal identities of the Basotho nation.

The study recommends that further research be conducted on the Lesotho national flags to determine the criteria which were used when selecting the national flag design to use. The study also recommends that further research be carried out to

determine the criteria which were used when deciding which national symbols to use on the three Lesotho national flags. Further research may also be conducted on the semiotic analysis of other flags and colours in Lesotho.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.0 Introduction

This chapter narrates the history of the evolution of Lesotho's national flag. The subsequent sections of the chapter are an outline of the research problem on which the study is based, the review of related literature, the theoretical framework and the methodology, which the study adopts.

1.1 Background Information to the Study

The study is set out to analyse the evolution of the Lesotho national flag through the semiotic lens. The word evolution is defined by Losos (2016) as the process of change and development of an entity over time. According to Najafi (n.d.), the word *flag* is defined as a piece of cloth that is used as a sign, signal or symbol and is designed using a fixed variety of colours. The evolution of the national flag in this study, therefore, will be taken to mean the periodical change of the Lesotho national flag as a national symbol.

In Legum's (2023) account, Lesotho was formerly known as the Basutoland while a semiautonomous country was under the British protector. South African History Online (2024) also supports that Lesotho was a British protectorate since March 1868. It was subsequently a crown colony from 1884 to October, 1966. However, it was subsequently known as part of the Cape Colony before it gained independence on the 4th October 1966.

Ever since it gained independence in 1966, Lesotho is a constitutional monarch, which Carpenter and Muscato (2023) explain as a system of government that is

ruled by a king or queen whose power is limited by the constitution of the country. The power of governance for constitutional monarchies is divided between the king or queen and the constitutional government.

With Lesotho, according to Rakhare (2019), the democratic parliamentary government comprises the King as the Head of State, the Prime Minister as the Head of government, a forty-member Senate and a one hundred and twenty-member National Assembly. Rakhare explains that the King does not actively participate in political activities, except for ceremonial duties. The Prime Minister has executive authority. Simply put, the power of governance in Lesotho rests on the aforementioned personnel, with the Prime Minister's word being paramount.

Furthermore, 'Nyane and Maqakachane (2020) clarify that while ordinarily the King is obliged to work under the advice of either the Prime Minister or his government in general, the constitution gives him the right to be consulted and to be fully informed concerning the general conduct of governmental matters. The Prime Minister, therefore, has a corresponding obligation to the King to provide him with information. This is because the King may request updates pertaining to the government of Lesotho. The above account is necessary in the study as Lesotho has always used the democratic parliamentary system of governance.

The transition in governance, to an extent, seems to have a bearing on the evolution of the national flags. It is important for this study to understand the political journey that Lesotho underwent since gaining independence in 1966 until 2006, when the last national flag was introduced in honour of the country's forty years of independence. The journey is presented in the phases of governance, and each phase indicates when each government has changed the national flag.

The first phase starts from 1966 to 1986. In 1966, when Lesotho gained independence, the first national flag was introduced. Arnold (2024) present that the King Moshoeshoe II was the constitutional monarch during that time, and the Chief Leabua Jonathan of the Basutoland National Party (BNP) was the Prime Minister. Numerous scholars account that the King Moshoeshoe II wanted more political powers, but that he eventually failed in that quest. He was, in fact, striped off political powers in 1970.

There were general elections held in 1970, but they were reported to have been nullified by the then Prime Minister. The parliament was then dissolved, as well as the constitution, which was suspended. The Prime Minister justified the nullification by announcing that there were some irregularities during those elections. A series of events took place in the country in that following decade and some additional years. Those were inclusive of the jailing of the Basutoland Congress Party leader, Ntsu Mokhehle; and other individuals, political instability; and countless deaths and brutalities, leading up to 1986 (Weisfielder, 2015; Mokotso, 2019; Rakhare, 2019; Aerni-Flessner, 2023; South African History Online, 2024).

In addition, Pherudi (2022) reports that the Prime Minister was eventually overthrown in a military coup that was led by Major General Justin Lekhanya on the 20th of January 1986. A six-member military council took over the control of government. The new military rule paved the way for the introduction of the second national flag, which was flown on the 20th January 1987. According to Berry (2022), the previous flag was rumoured to be identified too closely with the BNP by many because it used all the party colours.

The second phase was the military regime. In the account of Coleman (2015), there was suspended democracy and banned political activities during Major General Justin Lekhanya and his military council regime. Coleman continues to explain that in the late 1980s, the King and Major-General began to have disagreements, which eventually led to the King being exiled. The King Letsie III was later sworn-in as a replacement for his exiled father. Major-General Lekhanya's reign was short-lived as he was also deposed in another military coup.

Mothibe (2017) asserts the replacement of Lekhanya by stating that a group of senior military officers, which was led by Colonel Phisoane Ramaema, overthrew Lekhanya in 1991. According to Ntaote (2015), Colonel Ramaema was a Lieutenant Colonel who headed the six-member Military Council that replaced that of Major General Lekhanya. Once Colonel Ramaema's military council assumed the office, political bans were lifted; and the general elections, which were held in 1993, were prepared for. According to the report given by Motsamai (2015), the BCP won all the sixty-five National Assembly seats and ultimately in the 1993 general elections.

The third phase was the democratic rule. The general elections, which were held in 1993, marked the Lesotho's return to representative democracy. Motsamai (2015) explains that the former leader of the BCP, Ntsu Mokhehle, founded the Lesotho Congress for Democracy (LCD) and led the party to victory in the 1998 general elections. Unfortunately, Mokhehle was forced to resign from politics due to ill-health. The party was then left under the leadership of Pakalitha Mosisili.

During the tenure of the then Prime Minister, Pakalitha Mosisili, Lesotho ventured on the journey of restoration. The attempts to reach political stability were made by the ruling government. Mokotso (2019) asserts the immediately preceding

statement by explaining that there was still significant instability and unrest to settle, which later necessitated the mediation of the Southern African Development Community. After the consolidation by the SADC in 1998, there was relative stability in democracy until 2007. In 2006, there was a decision to introduce yet another flag in honour of the country's independence on the 4th October; the flag is still in use presently.

It is the global expectation that after gaining independence, a country should design a national flag that best accommodates the identity of that nation. Smith (2022) supports this view by explaining that Lesotho flew the Union Jack as a protectorate, and therefore, had no need for a national flag. Cataliotti (2023) says that the Union flag, also referred to as the Union Jack, is the flag of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. Upon gaining independence, however, the country then needed a national flag.

Lesotho had to design the national flag that sets it apart from other countries. Matthews (2022) affirms that the design of the national flag of Lesotho is an unwavering reflection of the country's history, culture and values. The presentation of the three national flags, which is given by Smith (2022), helps to establish an understanding of the journey that the flag of Lesotho has undergone.

In Smith (ibid)'s account, the then Prime Minister Chief Leabua Jonathan wanted to use the flag of his ruling party, which were four horizontal stripes of blue, white, green and red, divided equally the national flag. This was negated by the opposition parties, and in the end, the country introduced a flag that displayed green and red thinner horizontal stripes and a royal blue dominating stripe that featured a white *mokorotlo* hat.

Smith (2022) continues to explain that the second national flag is a diagonal division of triangles. The lower triangle is green, and there is a blue stripe that separates it from the upper triangle. The upper triangle is white and displays a brown design of elements from the Coat of Arms. In addition, the third flag exhibits three horizontal stripes of green, blue and white. The white stripe in the centre houses a black *mokorotlo* hat. Matthews (2022) reports that the first national flag was introduced on the 4th October 1966 and on the 17th January 1987; roughly twenty years post-independence, another flag was introduced. Again, on the 4th October 2006, forty years post-independence, the latest national flag was introduced.

When inspecting the three dates on which the national flags were introduced, an observation is made by the researcher based on the provision by Matthews (2022) that the national flag of Lesotho has been evolving roughly every twenty years since the country gained independence. The view by Matthews that the national flag of Lesotho reflects the country's history, culture and values, therefore, precedes the interest in the evolution of the Lesotho national flag.

In the view of the researcher, if the aforementioned view is valid, then there would not be any reason for the flag to evolve. Therefore, the researcher is compelled to interrogate the validity of this view by finding out the factors that cause the national flag to evolve. The findings will be derived by also interrogating what the colours of the flags represent, as well as the significance of the colours and the symbols on the flags.

Studies have been carried out on the flags over the years to learn more about their symbolism and the history that they contain. According to Kingson (2020), the study of flags is called vexillology. Kingson explains that vexillology studies the

history, symbolism and use of flags. In the perspective of Leone (2022), flags are inherently interesting objects for semiotics because they convey meaning through a systematic arrangement of shapes and colours. This means that semiotics is useful to the study of flags because it allows the researcher to interpret all the entities that make up the flag. The information given above suggests that vexillology associates with linguistics through semiotics, which is a sub-field of semantics.

Following the trend of studying the flags in the previous authorship, the study analyses the evolution of the Lesotho national flag within the perception of semiotics. Because of the limited information available, the researcher has undertaken this study on the semiotic analysis of the three Lesotho national flags. The design of all the three national flags of Lesotho has repeatedly used white, blue and green. The flags have featured other colours as well, which are red, brown and black; however, each one of these three colours only features once on the first, second and third flags respectively.

Amongst other aims, the study endeavours to analyse the representation of colours on the three flags in order to see whether the meaning has either been maintained or added on to as the flags have been evolving. This inquiry is brought about by the statement made by Pherudi (2019) that the ‘peace’ aspect of the Lesotho slogan has been undetermined on countless occasions. As a result, the people of Lesotho know neither joy nor peace. Another aim of the study is to unpack the significance of the colours and symbols of the flags to a society.

This aim is motivated by the observation made by Pherudi (2019) that the significance of the national flag is widely communicated in terms of the Lesotho slogan. The slogan only talks about the significance of the three colours: white, green and blue but omits the rest of the colours that feature on the flags and the

flag symbols. The last aim that this study is in pursuit of is to find the reasons that have prompted the national flag to evolve over the years.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

The assignment of a national flag is an integral part of identity for any nation or group of people. National flags are important because they are national symbols which are globally recognised. Kalampokas, Mentizis, Vrochidou and Papakostas (2023) support this view by stating that the national flags are the most recognisable symbols of the identity of a country. The national flag of Lesotho has evolved three times since the country first gained independence in 1966.

In the view of the researcher, the national flag of Lesotho might be lacking in serving as a recognisable symbol of identity for the country as prescribed above. If the national flag of Lesotho had previously been in sync with the above view, then there would not have been any reason for the flag to evolve. The study, therefore, seeks to establish the reasons for the evolution of the national flag of Lesotho as a symbol of identity for the country.

The study seeks to address this problem by making a semiotic analysis of the three versions of the Lesotho national flag. The studies on national flags have been carried out worldwide by scholars, such as Adedoyin (2018), Choi (2023) and Arslan and Haroon (2023). In the Southern region of Africa, the scholars, such as Brownell (2015) have studied this phenomenon. However, the researcher could not find any studies on the semiotic analysis of the Lesotho national flag.

As a result, the study endeavours to carry out a semiotic analysis of the three versions of the Lesotho national flag to discover the reasons that led to the evolution of the flag over the years. The research proposes to unpack what the

colours of the three national flags represent, to find out the significance of the colours and the symbols of the national flags to society.

1.2.1 Research Questions

To achieve the aims of the study, the following research questions are asked:

1. What does each of the three Lesotho national flags' colours represent?
 1. What are the reasons that prompted the Lesotho national flag to evolve?
 2. What is the significance of the colours and symbols of the three Lesotho national flags to society?

1.2.2 Assumptions

The study assumes that:

1. The colours of the three Lesotho national flags, which are white, blue, green, red, black and brown, could represent peace, rain, prosperity, bloodshed, nature and the historical past respectively.
2. The reasons that prompted the Lesotho national flag to evolve could be the shift in political climate. The choice to display different national monuments, the change in social interests and the choice to communicate the history of Lesotho from different perspectives.
3. The significance of the colours and symbols of the three Lesotho national flags to society could be that they communicate the social and political ideologies of the Basotho nation, such as peacefulness and constitutional democracy respectively.

1.3 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to analyse the evolution of the Lesotho national flag so as to discover the reasons that prompted its evolution over the years. The study also aims to interrogate what the colours of the three versions of the flag represent, as well as the significance of the colours and the symbols of the flags.

1.4 Rationale

This research was motivated by the view given by Matthews (2022) that the national flag of Lesotho reflects the history, culture and values of the country. The researcher was rendered curious by the said view because the national flag of Lesotho has evolved several times since the country gained independence. Therefore, the researcher was compelled to conduct this research.

Since there is a scarcity of documentation on the semiotic analysis of the Lesotho national flag, this study serves to fill that gap by making a semiotic analysis on the evolution of the Lesotho national flag. This study will benefit the students in the Department of African Languages and the Department of English Language who wish to research on semiotics. It will also benefit the students in the Department of History and Heritage Studies with the information about national symbols and national flags of Lesotho.

1.5 Scope of the Study

The aforementioned aims of this study delineate the research scope. Through semi-structured interviews, the aims will be achieved with a sample of twenty-five adults residing in Maseru, Berea, and Leribe. The analysis will be carried out using the Semiotic Theory.

1.6 Review of Related Literature

This section provides related literature on the topic of the study. The review of related literature is divided into the evolution of national flags, the significance of national flags, the interpretation of national flag colours and the use of Semiotic Theory in the flag analysis. This implies that the review of related literature for this study is arranged thematically to accommodate the aforementioned sub-headings.

The reviewing of scholarly sources on the research topic is essential to the study because it allows for identification of appropriate theories for the analysis of data, as well as the identification of gaps in the existing research, which is a stride towards avoiding duplication of effort. McCombes (2023) asserts this view by explaining that literature review is primarily intended to put each document in its offering to the others under study, to identify new ways to analyse and shed some light on any gaps in the previous authorship and to resolve the conflicts amongst the previous studies that seem contradictory. Following this explanation of the intention of the literature review, the reviewed literature in this section should shed more light on the study's research objectives.

1.6.1 Evolution of National Flags

Brownell's (2015) study analysed the South African flag history with the 1994 flag, which is presently used. The research provided the background for the flag outcome: from the colonial era through to the introduction of the first national flag in 1928. The major concern of the study was to give an account of the process, which led to the raising of the April 27th 1994 flag. That includes how the flag was meant to consolidate the South Africa's political future by serving as a symbol of identity for the nation and its people.

Brownell's (2015) study, on the one hand, goes on further to discuss the level of acceptance of the flag by the South African nation while the current study does not. The two studies are similar, on the other hand, because they both discuss Southern African flags post-colonialism.

Cunha, Martins, and Machado (2020) discussed the modification of national flags in terms of a system that changes the flags based on trendy topics derived from news titles. Cunha et al. propose that the evolution of flags can be traced by employing a system that entails confronting participants with the questions of identity through the alteration of the country flags in relation to current events. The study was conducted from the computational creativity standpoint. It suggests that the national flags are the symbols of identity for countries, both nationally and globally. Therefore, the national flags are subject to evolution depending on the entity, which the flag stands for. The findings show that political changes in the country can subject the national flag to evolution.

Cunha et al. (2020) explored the evolution of the national flags with the focus on the reasons that prompt the evolution. This makes their study similar to the current one since the latter also seeks to uncover the reasons that prompted the Lesotho national flag to evolve. More specifically, the present study seeks to find out whether the political changes in the country can influence the national flag evolution, amongst other reasons, as is the case with the findings of Cunha et al.'s (2020) research.

1.6.2 Significance of National Flags

Jaskulowski (2016) conducted a study called the magic of the national flag. It focuses on the cultural importance of national flags. The study employed the Leach's Theory of Magic, with a focus on two existential realms, which are the metonymical-casual and symbolic-metaphorical. Jaskulowski's study finds that the societies tend to behave as though the national flags are an intrinsic part of the nation. They also behave as though they are physically and casually related to the flag. As a result, the people fear that damage to the national flag is de-sacralisation. Therefore, it may have direct repercussions on the nation or even potentially threaten the continuance of the nation.

The national flags are awarded power by modern societies. This is in contrast with the argument presented by Jaskulowski (2016) that the national flags are actually a modern concept, and that the position of the national flag is central to nationalism. Jaskulowski's study is similar to the current study because it explores the cultural significance of national flags. The current study also analyses the significance of the Lesotho national flags, amongst other phenomena.

The contribution of Chan's (2017) study is that it explores how the America's national flag influences the political ideologies of the Americans. Chan suggests that political ideology and national identity go hand in hand in America. Hence, the national flag is expected to elevate contrasting political beliefs depending on the participants' political ideology. Chan (2017) finds that for the Democrats, being American denotes supporting Democratic values while being the American for the Republicans denotes supporting Republican values. The overall findings of the study are that citizens concur with the phenomenon that the national flag polarises the nation's political ideologies.

Chan's (2017) research is similar to the current study because both studies delve into the significance of national flags. However, the two studies are different because Chan interrogates the American flag's influences on the political ideologies of the nation. The present study seeks to ascertain whether the national flag of Lesotho symbolises the ideologies of the Basotho.

Becker, Butz, Sibley, Barlow, Bitacola, Chris and Wright (2017) examined the concepts and emotions that are linked to the national flags by the people. They uncovered how such associations are linked to patriotism and nationalism. The study was carried out using the Schwartz's Theory of Basic Human Values. The findings of the research reveal that structures of associations are different across countries such that they display historical progress. Additionally, positive emotions are linked to the national flags across the board.

However, significant differences are found between the countries because of historical politics. Becker et al. (2017) study asserts the bearing of history and politics on the perception and emotions of societies pertaining to national flags. Similarly, the current research strives to validate the influence of the political history of Lesotho on the national flag. To this end, the study aims to establish the reasons that led to the evolution of the Lesotho national flag. The current study also seeks to incorporate the perceptions and emotions of the Basotho by determining the significance of the colours and the symbols of the flags to the society.

Muldoon, Trew and Devine (2020) viewed the national flags as representatives that are meant to unite their respective nations, with the consideration of the participants' relationship to national identities. The research employed the Appraisal and Intergroup Emotions Theory. The findings show that emotional

responses seem to be particularly fundamental in driving allegiances to flags. They also show that emotional responses to the national symbols can be alienating.

Again, Muldoon et al. (2020) find that the responses to the flags are closely associated with the strength of national identification and the emotional state of the participants. Although their research is similar to the present study in that they both make inferences on the societies pertaining to the national flags, the difference between the two studies is that the former uses the Appraisal and Intergroup Emotions Theory whilst the latter is underpinned by the Semiotic Theory.

Additionally, Mawere (2020) researched on the politics and symbolism of the hashtag flag as a movement in Zimbabwe. The study also uncovered the reasons behind the Zimbabwean national flag being policed by the government. Mawere's research was carried out from the literary and discursive point of view. It is a desktop research that focused on the contentions engulfing the flag. The findings show the instability of symbols and symbolic implications. Further, the findings present the reasons the hashtagThisFlag had symbolic revolutionary power and the capacity to use the country's cultural tools.

The study by Mawere (2020) differs from the current study because its primary focus is on the contentions surrounding the flag, while the current study primarily focuses on the evolution of the Lesotho national flag. Additionally, with Mawere's research, the comparison is between the national flag of Zimbabwe and a hashtag movement flag, whereas the present study deals with three versions of the Lesotho national flag. Moreover, the research carried out by Mawere (2020) is a desktop research, which is carried out from a literary and discourse view point. In contrast, the current study is phenomenological, and it is interview-based.

Shi, Wang and Shi (2021) used the Theory of Patriotism to research on the use of the national flag to promote patriotism in China. The focus of their research was on patriotism and education. In their study, the national flag was used as a medium to evoke patriotism in the people. Shi et al. view the national flag as a symbol that represents the country's beliefs, culture, dignity and national spirit. Hence, the symbol is selected to promote patriotism.

The study of Shi et al. (2021) reveals that using the national flag is the best avenue for cultivating patriotism because the national flag is a basic national symbol that has a solid content for guiding the people. Amongst other national symbols, Shi et al. use the national flag as the focus of their analysis. This makes their research similar to the current study because the latter study also focuses on the national flag of Lesotho as a national symbol. Shi et al. (2021) find the national flag to represent the beliefs, culture and dignity of the country. Similarly, the current research endeavours to find what the colours of the Lesotho national flags represent.

Berry (2022) uncovered the history and symbolism of using royal standards and national flags in Southern Africa and Madagascar. The study finds that the first native royal standards in Southern Africa, including the flags and banners, were symbolising the presence or authority of a monarch. This was initially observed in Madagascar and later in Lesotho and Swaziland when the royal standards and national flags were flown upon gaining independence.

Berry (2022) uncovered that the first Lesotho national flag and royal standard were considered questionable because of their close relation with the Basutoland National Party. Berry's paper provides relevant information about national symbols, specifically the royal standards and national flags of the Southern African

countries, including Lesotho. This information delineates how far the previous research has been carried out on Lesotho national symbols. Berry (2022) suggests the extent of the literature compiled on the Lesotho national symbols, which include the national flag. Hence, the research by Berry (2022) is useful to the current study since it forms the foundation of the national flags for the current study.

Hassid (2023) conducted a study on the density and power of the national flags, which explores the forms of power that are associated with the national flags. It challenges the speculation that viewing the national flags can promote patriotic zeal. The research is a micro-foundational analysis. The findings suggest that the large-scale display of the national flags is not related to other measures of state capabilities, such as healthcare, education and welfare. Hassid's research differs from the current study because it uses a pre-registered survey experiment as a data collection method while the current study uses a semi-structured interview protocol as a means of data collection.

In addition, Choi and Park's (2023) study is an investigation of why the South Koreans respond subtly towards the Rising Sun Flag (RSF), and how they perceive the RSF. The study is conducted through semiotic network analysis. The findings show that the RSF causes recollection of the Japanese military rule and the colonial era for the South Koreans. Thus, raising the flag is taxing from the South Korean point of view. The study also finds that using the symbols, such as the flags, can be filled with historical implications and be politically subjective, especially at sporting events.

Reviewing Choi and Park's (2023) findings on the South Koreans' perception of the RSF shed light on the analysis of the respondents' perceptions, which the

current study is interested in. This implies that, to uncover the reasons for the evolution of the Lesotho national flag over the years, interviews are administered on a selected sample of the population. The interviews are intended to reveal the Basotho's perception of the national flag.

1.6.3 Interpretation of the National Flag Colours

Adedoyin (2018) analysed the colours of the Nigerian national flag. The study aimed to prove that, like all the national flags, the flag of Nigeria is expected to integrate the ideologies, inclinations and fervour of the Nigerian nation. The flag is also expected to promote patriotism, evoke the respect and admiration of the nation, as well as be compliant with the challenges of the present day Nigeria.

Adedoyin's (2018) study delineates the relationship between the Nigerian national flag and the phenomenon of national development. The study by Adedoyin also answers whether the country's national flag must communicate about the landscape and developmental direction of a nation. Furthermore, Adedoyin (2018) explores the symbolic meanings and significance of the Nigerian national flag in modern day social, economic and political issues of the country.

Adedoyin's (2018) study is an analysis of the Nigerian national flag, which uncovers the symbolism and significance of the flag, amongst other things. Similarly, the current study seeks to uncover the symbolism and significance of the colours and the symbols of the Lesotho national flag versions. However, Adedoyin's study differs from the current study because the primary focus of the former is on the colours that are found on the national flag, yet the latter will analyse both the colours and the symbols of the Lesotho national flags.

Additionally, Leone (2021) explored the national flags as signs and as symbols in line with de Saussure's (1916) development of semiology. The focus of Leone's study was on two elements: the national flags as textiles and the textiles' interaction with natural elements. Leone's (2021) study presents that the flags are designs of forms and colours that convey the cultural ideas, which they stand for. Like Leone's study, the current study will partly employ semiology as proposed by de Saussure. However, the two studies will differ in that Leone (2021) delved into the forms of the national flags of Italy as textiles, whereas the current study will deal with the colours and the symbols, as opposed to the physical realms, of the Lesotho national flags.

Arslan and Haroon (2023) analysed the flags of thirty countries using Semiotic Theory. They employed the Berger and Luckman's (1966) model for their analysis to find out how each country's dominance is elaborately associated with its image and perspective. The study finds how the countries' flags reflect the significance that is attached to them in terms of their background, history and culture. The findings also reveal that each country communicates its ideologies through its design, including themes, colours and patterns.

In addition, the findings show that the national flags portray the pride and sense of identity of each country and symbolise their historical journey towards nationhood. The current study will be similar to Arslan and Haroon's (2023) study because the latter analysed the national flags through the lens of Semiotic Theory, in the prescription of Berger and Luckman (1966), which the current study will also employ.

1.6.4 The Use of Semiotic Theory in Flag Analysis

Yunus (2021) discussed semiotics and semiotic analysis. The paper concentrated on the semiotic analysis through the lens of several semioticians who proposed their typology of signs. Yunus argues that semiotics is not widely recognised as an academic discipline. Rather, it is a field of study involving many theoretical viewpoints and methodological approaches.

The findings show that the semioticians have not set a general typology of signs as yet. This is because the parameters on which the typologies of signs can be based on are multidimensional. Yunus' (2021) paper outlines some proposals for a typology of signs, including those of Pierce, Morris, Husserl, Cassirer, Eco and Sebeok. Yunus' paper gives an overview of the semiotic analysis and presents some proposals of the typologies of sign. More specifically to this study, Yunus (2021) outlines Pierce's Theory of Signs, which the study will use.

Cahyaningsih (2016) conducted a semiotic analysis of anthems and flags. The focus of the research was the United States and the United Kingdom. The analysis was made through the assumptions of Halliday (1985) and Leech (1977). Cahyaningsih also employed the Semiotic Theory as per the prescription of Berger (1984). The study presents the verbalism in the anthem's lyrics of the two countries in line with meaning. It also describes the visual messages of the flags of the aforementioned countries.

Also, Cahyaningsih (2016) describes the correlation between the anthem's lyrics and the flag of the respective country. The Cahyaningsih's study finds that the flags of both the United States and United Kingdom employ four out of six elements of visual sign aspect. The current study will differ from Cahyaningsih (2016) in that the latter is an analysis of both the country's flags and anthems

whereas the current study will only focus on the national flags of Lesotho and not the country's national anthem.

The section presented the review of literature on the national flags and Semiotic Theory. In addition, the review included documentation on the interpretation of the colours of the national flag, the significance of national flags and the evolution of the national flags to address the research objectives that are previously mentioned.

1.7 Theoretical Framework

In this section, the theoretical framework for the study is presented. It defines the Semiotic Theory, which the synthesis of data in the study employs. This section gives an overview of the theory, including the origin, the advantages and the shortcomings. Finally, it presents the principles which the data syntheses theory is guided by for the purposes of this study.

A theoretical framework gives a particular stance for assessing a topic, and it is selected based on the type of research problem under study. Theories are used to define concepts and explain observations pertaining to research. Sreekumar (2023) asserts this view by stating that a theory is a set of connected principles that show logic and coherence of phenomena through description of the relationship amongst the measures that explain the said phenomena.

According to Lederman and Lederman (2015), it is easier to comprehend the form and application of a theoretical framework if it is regarded as the answer to two fundamental questions: what the research problem is, and why the method of solving the research problem is feasible. In other words, a theoretical framework is a format that guides research through the use of a formal theory or theories that are

founded on a logical explanation of certain phenomena to answer a given research question and its sub-questions, as well as to test given hypotheses.

1.7.1 Semiotic Theory

The current study is underlined by the Semiotic Theory. Franz and Taylor (2023) explain that the study of the relationship between the world and the symbols that are used to explain phenomena has been an on-going quest for centuries. The designation ‘semiotics’, however, was only used by an American pragmatist philosopher named Charles Sanders Peirce (1839-1914) and the followers of his work. Idris (2021) clarifies that Peirce’s outline of a formal approach of describing how the signs generate meaning to people in delineated contexts was guided by John Locke’s study of semiotics in *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (1689).

Franz and Taylor (2023) continue to account that Ferdinand de Saussure (1857-1913) synchronously established a system for studying signs, and he called it ‘semiology’. The system, similar to Peirce’s work, outlines an approach for studying how language generates meaning instead of simply communicating an already existing meaning. Given the above account of how the Semiotic Theory was simultaneously proposed by both Peirce (1839-1914) and de Saussure (1857-1913), the two philosophers are both the proponents of the theory since the former is the founder of ‘semiotics’ while the latter is the founder of ‘semiology’.

Idris (2021) states that the objective of the Semiotic Theory is to teach on what the signs consist of and what laws govern them. Further, the theory is said to have been proposed by de Saussure to be a branch of social psychology but was instead published as a General Linguistic Theory. The Semiotic Theory, like other theories of analysis, has some advantages, which enables the researchers to make use of it

and arrive at the findings and conclusions that are accurate. More specifically, it enables the researcher to analyse the three Lesotho national flag versions. The theory also has some disadvantages, which may compel a researcher to find another theory that will meet its shortfalls, as well as to pave the way for further development of the theory.

The first advantage of Semiotic Theory that is noted by Long and He (2021) is that it stresses the significance that is attached to the symbols. This means that the interpretation of the symbols and the meaning that is derived from the interpretation are mainly contained in the significance of the symbol. In this case, the significance attached to the three versions of the national flag of Lesotho is important to the analysis.

Ibrahim and Sulaiman (2020) also note that semiotic interrogation of different phenomena in different cultures can contribute to more in-depth understanding of research. This means that the more different phenomena are interrogated in different cultures, the deeper the understanding that the pool of research will avail under such phenomena.

Semiotics is, however, without any limitations. This is because Long and He (2021) outline that the Semiotic Theory cannot distinguish between implicit and explicit messages. The explicit or denotative meaning of the sign cannot be separated from the implicit or connotative meaning for as long as the signifier is also intended to be viewed as the signified. Further, Long and He point out that interpreting the symbols requires familiarity with the sets of conventions or codes, which are employed to convey meaning.

Long and He (2021) explain that semiotic code refers to the set of rules through which the given elements are selected and combined to produce new elements, and

that the most common code is one's written language. This means that the interpretation of signs and symbols requires the complete knowledge and understanding of the semiotic rules, which will guide the transition of signs from the signifier to the signified.

The theory will be used in accordance with the Berger and Luckman's (1966) Theory of Social Construction of Reality, which was later revised in Pierce's (2006) Theory of Signs. The model comprises three concepts: sign, context and meaning. It is a theorem, which proves that the signs that express exact context can prompt pertinent reactions from intended recipients. This implies that a sign/signifier, when provided with the exact context, can convey its designed meaning to evoke the intended response (Riera, 2020). In line with the theory, the study will establish the symbolism and the significance of the colours and symbols of the Lesotho national flags.

The three concepts, sign, context and meaning, of the Semiotic Theory are, therefore, applied in the data analysis. This is because they allow for the synthesis of data to view the signs in light of both the cultural and historical contexts, which form the basis for the signifier being viewed as the signified. It is important to note that de Saussure (1916) in Pierce (2006) viewed a sign as being composed of both the semblance it assumes in physical reality (called a signifier) and how it is envisaged or elucidated by the viewer (the signified). It is important to define first the three concepts that the theory features conceptually:

1. Sign - a concept that stands for something else, as a spoken or written word, a drawn figure, or a material object unified in the mind with a particular cultural concept (Zhao, 2023). In this study, the sign is integrated in the mind with a particular historical notion, as well, meaning that the sign is

prescribed with corresponding cultural and historical context transitions from the signifier to the signified.

2. Context - the circumstances that form the setting for an event, a statement or an idea, and in terms of which it can be fully understood (Nouraldeen, 2015). This refers to the situational background in which something happens. For this study, the historical and cultural context will be observed.
3. Meaning - it is defined by Martin and Lopez (2018) as what is meant by a word, text, concept or action. Kumara, Ariyawansa and Kalansooriya (2022) put it differently by stating that meaning is what one intends to convey, especially by language. Semiotic Theory deals with two types of meaning, in particular, denotation and connotation. Denotation, on the one hand, refers to the authentic meaning of a term or entity, and it is descriptive. Connotation, on the other hand, deals with the cultural implications that become connected to a term.

In this study, the three concepts of Semiotic Theory defined above will be assumed in the following manner as Bowcher (2018) and Zlatev (2018) prescribe:

1. Sign - the images of the flags, as the blocks of colour and silhouettes of *mokorotlo* 'Basotho straw hat' on two of the flags, and *koto, thebe le lerumo* 'knobkerrie, shield and spear' or Coat of Arms on the one flag will be viewed as the signifiers. The same signs will be viewed as the signified when they have been interpreted by the viewers or the respondents to be the Lesotho national flags.
2. Context - the aspects of interaction, both historical and cultural, provide relevant and specific meaning. This means that the aspects, which the study

will observe, are both the historical and the cultural contexts. The context helps the viewer of the signifier to derive the intended meaning or the signified.

3. Meaning - the relationship between the viewers of the signs and their personal experience of their surrounding environment in relation to the national flag of Lesotho.

The Semiotic Theory is applicable to this study because it is specifically designed to analyse the signs and their meaning. It is essential to the study because it allows for the analysis of the three national flags of Lesotho.

The section presented the theoretical framework for the study. It identified the theory that the synthesis of data in the study will employ as the Semiotic Theory. The section also dealt with an overview of the theory, including the origin, the advantages and the shortcomings. Finally, it presented the principles, which the theory will be guided by for the study.

1.8 Methodology

The methodology chapter gives an outline of the methods and techniques that are used in the data presentation and analysis. The chapter explains the procedures of data collection, the data analysis and the relevance of the chosen processes to the study.

1.8.1 Research Approach

Based on the requirements of the research problem and its sub-questions, the study adopted the qualitative research method. Sreekumar (2023) defines qualitative research as a systematic process of using techniques and procedures to analyse data. It examines the opinions, behaviours and experiences of people. In other

words, qualitative research allows the researcher to explore the topic of study, using various tools that consider and accommodate all the necessary parameters to arrive at an accurate analysis.

Denzin and Lincoln (2005) in Aspers and Corte (2019) add that qualitative research involves an interpretive and realistic approach to its content. This means that with the qualitative research approach, the phenomena are studied in their intrinsic settings, by giving interpretation and explanation in terms of the meaning that the people convey about such phenomena. The study used the qualitative research approach to analyse the three Lesotho national flag versions.

In this study, the focus of the interpretation is on Lesotho national flags as the symbols of identity for the Basotho. Amongst the advantages that Rahman (2016) lists on conducting qualitative research, is the capacity to study symbolic aspects and social intentions. This serves as an indication that the qualitative research method is a befitting research paradigm for this study since the study deals with the interpretation of national flags as symbols, which fall under the scope that qualitative research covers.

1.8.2 Research Design

Under qualitative research, this study is further classified as a phenomenological study. Phenomenology is defined by Neubauer, Witkop and Varpio (2019) as a qualitative research approach that focuses on the study of an individual's lived experiences within the world. In this study, the researcher employed this approach to inquire about the experiences of the interview respondents to make inferences pertaining to the three versions of the Lesotho national flag.

The stance of the study within this approach was interpretive phenomenology, also referred to as existential or psychological phenomenology. Interpretive phenomenology is explained by Smith and Osborn (2015) as the aspect of the approach, which acknowledges that the researcher cannot completely classify their own viewpoint and background, and that the data analysis comprises a co-creation of meaning between the researcher and the respondents.

Simply put, interpretive phenomenology proposes that the interviewer should consider the participants as collaborators in the study. Smith and Osborn (2015) explain further that the data analysis process is carried out in three steps, which are reading, reflecting and writing. The three steps that are required for the data analysis process are found within the six-steps of the thematic analysis process, which was formulated by Braun and Clarke (2006) that the study employs. The three steps are explained at a later stage in the chapter.

This design is suitable for the current study because it uses the participants' lived experiences as the basis for any conclusions that the study makes. The data for this study were the responses from the participants about their experiences of the evolution of the Lesotho national flag. The participants' views and input influenced the conclusions made by the researcher about the phenomena being analysed.

1.8.3 Data Collection

This study seeks to analyse the evolution of the Lesotho national flag from the semiotic viewpoint. In order to achieve the aims outlined in the preceding chapters, data collection is essential. Kabir (2016) explains data collection as a means of gathering and measuring information on the measures of interest systematically. The data enabled the researcher to answer the stated questions, validate

assumptions and evaluate outcomes. Further, the data collection measures entail boundary setting for the study, data compilation through either unstructured or semi-structured observations or interviews, illustrative content and documents, as well as protocol establishment for documenting information.

The boundaries and protocol for documenting the information for this study will be discussed below. The collection of primary data was through the semi-structured interviews. Because the entities being analysed in the study were secondary data, both primary and secondary data were used in the study. There was a need for primary data collection, which was then used to address those aims.

The study answered the stipulated research questions and verified the given assumptions using two types of data. The first method that was used, which was the interviews, falls under primary data collection. Primary data is defined by Stewart (2024) as the data that has been generated by the researcher, especially designed for understanding and solving the research question at hand.

The researcher compiled a semi-structured interview protocol, which guided the respondents to provide relevant information for analysis and discussion in the subsequent chapters of the research. The interview comprised six questions, five of which informed the research sub-questions adequately. To make the respondents comfortable, one question was used. The limit to the guiding questions for the interview protocol is chosen because of the flexible nature of the semi-structured interview protocol.

The choice to use the semi-structured interview protocol was to maximise the level of responses from the respondents as Kallio, Pietila and Johnson (2016) prescribe that the use of the semi-structured protocol sufficiently allows for reciprocation between the interviewer and participant. Thus, it enables the interviewer to devise

the follow-up questions based on the interviewee's feedback and allows space for the participants' distinct verbalism. This means that the six questions of the semi-structured interview protocol functioned as guiding questions.

The questions introduced the interest of the particular question, and the interviewer subsequently probed as necessary until the question was fully answered, as per the researcher's discretion. The researcher also used an audio recorder, notebook, coloured sticky notes or any other form of dividers and a pen to record the answers. An audio recorder is necessary for recording the interview sessions, which were later transcribed and coded before the audio records were then destroyed.

The researcher also used a secondary data collection method, which is the use of existing visual materials for the images of the national flags of Lesotho. Secondary data is defined by Longe (2023) as the data that has already been collected through the primary sources and made readily available for the researchers to use. The existing visual materials of the images of the national flags of Lesotho were used because they are the entities under review in the study. The visual materials were obtained from the National Archives of Lesotho, which are housed at the National University of Lesotho in the Thomas Mofolo Library.

1.8.4 Sampling Procedure

The collection of data discussed above was made on a sample of twenty-five participants who represented the Basotho at large to ultimately make inferences about the nation. Sampling is defined by Shaheen, Pradhan and Ranajee (2019) as a process of choosing a certain number of individuals from a population to participate in a study. Sampling is, therefore, the process through which a number of persons are elected for a study such that they represent the entire population.

The research employed non-probability sampling. Under non-probability sampling, the research employed the purposive/judgmental sampling procedure, which is explained by Sreekumar (2023) as a sampling procedure through which the participants are selected at the researcher's discretion. Purposive sampling is used to select a sub-group that can sufficiently address the research aims. Purposive sampling is suitable for this study because the researcher should target the participants who have adequate knowledge of the entities being analysed in the study.

The sample that was selected for the interviews was 30 adults, who were senior citizens aged between 55 and 80 of years since they know all three flags that will be under discussion. The researcher carried out a simple survey in selected areas prior to conducting the interviews, to choose the participants who met the criteria for the research. As the proposed sample of participants was 30 people, 15 of them were males while the other 15 were females. The 50/50 gender-ratio was adopted to avoid gender bias. The study targeted the individuals from the districts of Maseru, Berea and Leribe.

This implies that the selected areas in Leribe are *Hlotse* and *Maputsoe*, *Teyateyaneng* and *Mahlatsa* for the Berea district, as well as *Maseru Central* and *Moriija* for the Maseru district. The areas are selected because they were easily accessible to the researcher, hence the convenience sampling. The sample of thirty respondents is minimal enough for the researcher to collect data that adequately represents the larger population without much repetition of the same views.

1.8.5 Data Organisation and Presentation

After completion of data collection, the interviewer listened to the audio recordings and transcribed the content. The respondents were assigned pseudonyms as new

identifiers as soon as the content was transcribed. Afterwards, the audio records were destroyed. The new coding for the data comprised the group identifier and a numeric assignment, such that each interview was identified according to the responding group. The custodians of history were identified by (CH), influencers of the changing of the flags by (CI), Council of State members by (CS), active politicians by (AP) and the general population by (GP). During the analysis, the data were separated using coloured sticky notes as a colour code. The coded data were then be divided into specific themes, which were derived from the participants' responses.

1.8.6 Data Analysis

The study used thematic analysis to synthesise the data. Thematic analysis is explained by Caulfield (2023) as a qualitative data analysis method that is usually used in a collection of texts, such as transcripts or interviews. The interviewer scrutinised the data and identified repeatedly apparent topics, ideas, common themes and similar patterns of meaning. The study used thematic analysis following the six-step process that is created by Braun and Clarke (2006), which is familiarisation, coding, generating themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes and writing up.

Caulfield (2023) continues to explain that thematic analysis is an appropriate approach when the researcher's interest is in the respondents' views, opinions, knowledge, experiences or values. The above explanation indicates that thematic analysis is suitable for this study because the views, knowledge, experiences and opinions of the respondents are essential to the interpretation of the three versions of the Lesotho national flag.

1.8.7 Analysis Procedures

Data were analysed to ascertain what each of the three Lesotho national flag colours represent, to uncover the significance of the colours and symbols of the three versions of the flag, as well as to find the reasons that prompted the Lesotho national flag to evolve. The chapter headings and sub-headings in the subsequent chapters of this study were informed by the research aims as previously presented.

The data collected from the respondents were grouped into themes and analysed accordingly. The grouping of the data was done using the thematic analysis method as specified above, through the prescription of Braun and Clarke (2006). This means the researcher pursued familiarisation by reading the transcripts of the interviews to understand them. The researcher then grouped the data according to the proposed participants' groups as outlined earlier in the chapter.

Based on the phenomena that arise from the feedback, the researcher generated the themes to further group the data. The themes were defined by the researcher and arranged in terms of frequency of the phenomena, as well as the guidance of the research aims. In addition, the interviewer narrated and discussed the study findings based on the analysis. The synthesis of data was carried out using the Semiotic Theory for this study.

1.8.8 Ethical Considerations

In order to assure the rights of the participants, to enhance research validity, as well as to maintain academic integrity, the researcher observed all the prescribed ethical considerations for this study while collecting the data from the groups of participants. Bhandari (2021) explains that ethical considerations are a set of conventions that regulate the research methods and processes.

The researcher sought the informed consent from the interviewees. Before deciding whether to accept or decline participation, the participants were informed about the purpose, benefit, and potential risks of the study. The researcher then ensured voluntary participation. All the participants were notified prior to their interviews that they were free to opt in, but that they were not bound to participate until the end. This means that if they were in any way uncomfortable with continuing at any point during the interview, they were free to opt out without fear of any consequence.

In line with the prescription of Bhandari (2021), the researcher assured the participants that data, which may be linked directly to them, were kept at a minimum in the study to ensure anonymity. The participants were made aware that identifying the personal data that has been collected, such as names and other demographic information, would be made anonymous prior to their data being analysed so that the data cannot be linked to them by anyone else.

Further, the study maintained confidentiality. The participants were informed that their identity was concealed so that different identifiers would be used in the place of their names. Once the data has been fully analysed by the interviewer, the collected data was destroyed to ensure that it was accessible to other people besides the researcher.

The methodology section has been a discussion of the essential aspects of the employed research approach. It has outlined the means by which data would be collected, presented and analysed in this study.

1.9 Organisation of the Study

The study is organised into five chapters. The first chapter introduces the study; it provides the background, which the main research question and its sub-questions are formulated. It also provides a literature review on the topic of study and highlights the methodology and theory that is used in the analysis of data. In the second chapter, there is an exploration of the representation of colours in the three versions of the Lesotho national flag. The significance of the colours and symbols of the three national flags of Lesotho is discussed in the third chapter. Exploring the reasons for the flag's evolution over the years, the fourth chapter delves into this topic. The fifth and the final chapter comprise the conclusion and recommendations.

CHAPTER TWO

INTERPRETATION OF THE COLOURS OF THE THREE LESOTHO NATIONAL FLAGS

2.0 Introduction

The chapter is about the interpretation of what the colours of the three Lesotho national flags symbolise. In line with the definition that Veverka (2020) gives, interpretation in this chapter will be taken to denote the process of communication, which is meant to unveil the representations of the colours and their interrelation with the culture and heritage of the nation.

The colours are discussed individually to uncover what they represent. The first national flag comprises the blue, green, white, and red colours. The second national flag comprises blue, green, white and brown. The third national flag features blue, green, white and black. The responses of the interviewees are summarised in a chart-form, indicating the numbers and percentages for each colour. Sub-headings designating what each colour represents are also given.

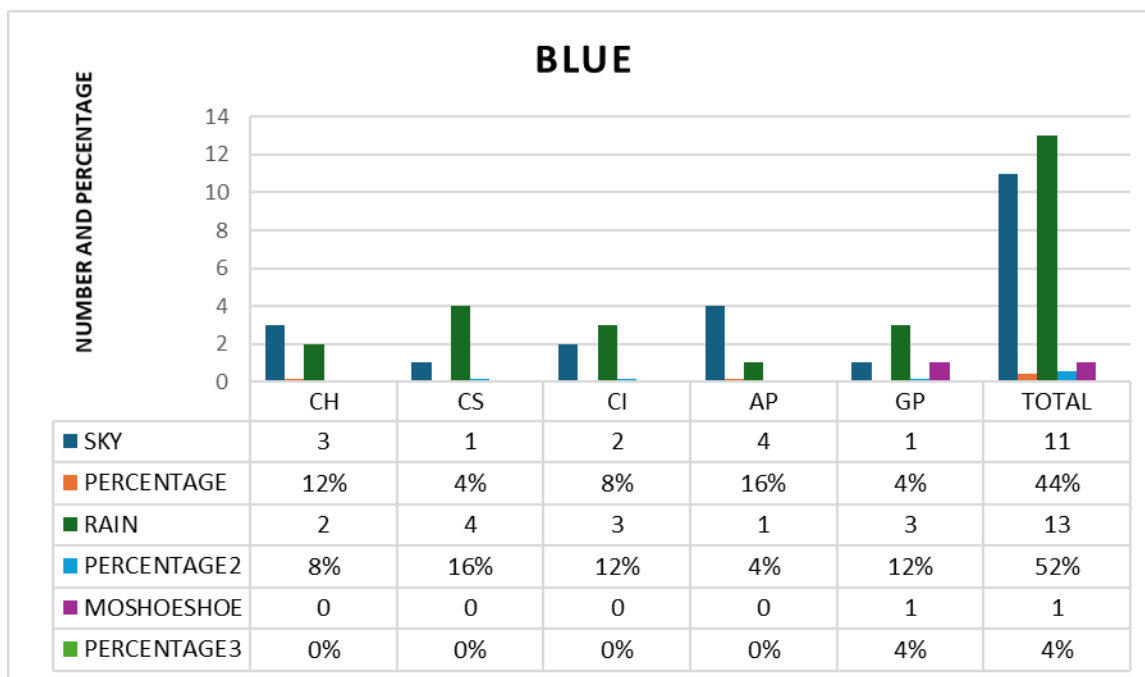
2.1 Interpretation of the Colours of the Lesotho National Flags

This section analyses the colours of the Lesotho national flags. The data that is analysed is assigned codes as the identifiers for the participants. As noted earlier, the participants are classified as follows: the custodians of history are identified by 'CH', the influencers of the changing of the flags by 'CI', the Council of State members by 'CS', active politicians by 'AP' and the general public by 'GP'. The participants are also assigned numbers 1 to 5 for each category.

2.1.1 Interpretation of the Blue Colour

The section gives the interpretation of the blue colour that is in all the three Lesotho national flags. A chart giving a summary of the results from the respondents is provided and interpreted accordingly. The section provides the sub-headings indicating the responses of the interviewees about what each set of respondents considers the colour to represent. Bar chart 1 below is the summary of interviewees' responses pertaining to the blue colour.

Bar Chart 1: Responses about the Blue Colour



The responses from the above chart reflect the following: 13 (52%) interviewees interpret the blue colour as representing rain, 11 (44%) interviewees say that the colour represents the sky, and 1 (4%) interviewee says that blue represents Moshoeshoe I. Below are the discussions of the participants responses about the blue colour.

2.1.1.1 Rain

While discussing the blue colour as used on the Lesotho national flag, the interviewees gave a range of responses about what the colour represents. The interpretation that blue represents rain is given by 13 (52%) respondents. Rain is regarded as a necessity for human survival, which is why the Basotho summons rain through various rain making rituals, such as *lesokoana* and *molutsoane* during droughts.

According to Matšela (2001), *lesokoana*, in its various forms, is played by the girls and young women using a stick that is used for stirring *papa* ‘maize meal porridge’. Different from *lesokoana*, Rakotsoane (2008) claim that the men go on a hunt called *molutsoane* while singing *mokorotlo* ‘war song’ to pray for rain. The activities are performed during the dry season because their aim is to induce rain.

Thirteen (52%) interviewees argue that their interpretation of blue on the flag is based on the fact that the national motto of Lesotho is *khotso, pula nala* ‘peace, rain, prosperity’. The motto is used to express the aforementioned values of the Basotho, one of which is rain. Rain is the source of water and Vollmer and Mustard (2019) explain that water is generally represented using the blue colour, as it is the case on the Lesotho national flags. In addition, the interviewees express that water is a valuable basic resource for the Basotho, and that it generates a significant portion of the country’s revenue.

2.1.1.2 The Sky

The respondents argue that the blue colour also represents the sky. The explanation that Hisoler (2021) gives about the sky is that it is the upper expanse that is seen above the earth. This is the area where the clouds, the sun, the moon and the stars

occur. Since Lesotho rests entirely above 1 000 meters in elevation, it bears the moniker of ‘the Kingdom in the sky’ (Sexton 2023).

Eleven (44%) respondents suggest that the blue colour resembles the sky on the Lesotho national flags. This interpretation of blue could be given because clouds occur in the sky, and according to Amajama (2016), the rain comes from the clouds. The colour of a clear sky is blue; therefore, that could be the reason the signifier blue on the Lesotho national flags signifies the sky.

Four (16%) participants are indecisive about the symbolism of the blue colour. They associate blue with both rain and the sky. In the interviewees’ opinion, there is a close association between the sky and rain. Therefore, the two may be symbolised by the blue colour because they emerge from above. The researcher deduces that, although the interpretation of the blue colour is made in different shades across the flags, the meanings are linked. This is because the feedback says that the blue colour of the sky obviously resembles the rain. The deduction that the interviewer makes is that the respondents are conscious of the distinction in the shades of blue, which are used on the flags, and that they are symbolic of both the rain and the sky.

2.1.1.3 Moshoeshoe I

One (four per cent) respondent argues that blue represents Moshoeshoe I on the flag. The King Moshoeshoe I is the founder of Lesotho. Moshoeshoe I of the *Bakuena* clan prevented the Basotho nation from being absorbed by other nations during the *Lifaqane* wars. The explanation that Pheko (2017) gives is that the founder of the Basotho nation was born around 1786 in Menkhoaneng as the first son of the Mokhachane household. The respondent, therefore, regards blue as symbolic of the founder of Lesotho because of the dominance of the colour on the

first national flag and its presence on the second and third national flags. This could be because Humeniuk (2020) lists one of the global symbolisms of the blue colour as authority. The interviewee could be associating the colour with royalty because it symbolises authority.

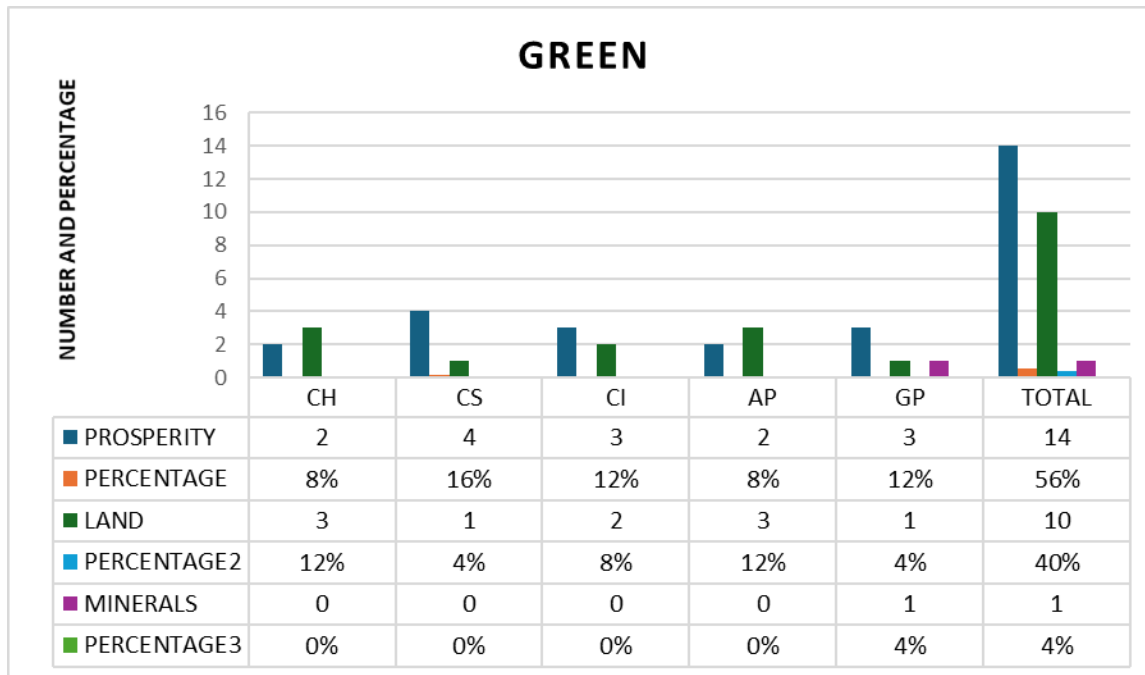
The interpretation could be made because, according to the Land Act (2010), land and biodiversity in Lesotho are entrusted to the King through chieftainship. The blue colour on the flag can be interpreted to represent the components that make up Lesotho, which is governed by Moshoeshoe I. The size of the colours on the flags will be discussed further in chapter four.

In light of the summary of data and the discussions of the blue colour above; the colour is concluded by 52% of the interviewees to represent the rain on the Lesotho national flags.

2.1.2 Interpretation of the Green Colour

This section interprets the green colour that is found in the three Lesotho national flag versions. The colour is analysed in terms of the interview results as presented in the chart below. The responses of the interviewees about the green colour form the subheadings for the discussions.

Bar Chart 2: Responses about the Green Colour



The presentation illustrates that 14 (56%) interviewees interpret the green colour as signifying prosperity. Ten (40%) interviewees say that the colour represents land while one (4%) interviewee says that green represents minerals. The results are analysed under the given sub-headings below.

2.1.2.1 Prosperity

Prosperity is the state of being successful. Accomplishment is measured in terms of social status and economic-wellbeing (Akpa, 2020). The wealth of Lesotho is measured in terms of natural resources, including water, mineral resources and commercial agriculture. According to the respondents, prosperity is signified by the use of the green colour across the Lesotho national flags.

The 14 (56%) interviewees mainly suggest that the green colour is interpreted in terms of the national motto *khotso, pula, nala*. One interviewee elaborates that the interpretation is adapted from a Sesotho adage, which says *khotso ha e le teng*,

pula e tla na, 'me nala e tla ba teng ‘when peace reigns, it will rain, and there will be abundance/prosperity’. In line with the Semiotic Theory, the green colour is seen as a signifier in the Lesotho national flag. The colour signifies prosperity.

2.1.2.2 Land

Differently, the interpretations of green as summarised above suggest that the colour symbolises land; 10 (40%) respondents express this view. According to Li (2014), land refers to the solid surface of the earth that is not covered by water. It may be used for various purposes, including residence and agriculture. The respondents argue that the interpretation of the green colour as land was given by the government upon the introduction of the first national flag. This interpretation could be given because the land is a necessity for agricultural production.

The views of other participants about the green colour on the flags show an association between the two symbolisms, land and prosperity, of green. The respondents say that the green colour across the flags represents the rich soil that is found in Lesotho. According to the respondents, prosperity is the result of that rich soil. The view may be motivated because Lesotho is known for its agricultural potential.

According to Lesotho Highlands Development Authority (LHDA, 2017) the district of Leribe, for example, is referred to as *Leribe le letšoana la 'Mamosa le Molapo* ‘the black Leribe of 'Mamosa and Molapo’. Mahava (2023) supports the claim that the soil of Lesotho is rich by likening the soil with gold. The interviewees also refer to the soil of Lesotho as *o nonneng* (fertile); hence, it fosters a satiety, which the respondents equate with prosperity. The respondents are not only aware of the changing of the flag but also of the evolution of the green colour as used on the flags.

2.1.2.3 Minerals

Additionally, the summary of data about the green colour reflects that green represents the minerals on the flags. The interpretation of green as minerals is given by one (four per cent) respondent. As stated, the wealth of Lesotho is measured in terms of natural resources, such as water, mineral resources and commercial agriculture. The opinion of CH04 is presented in the excerpt below:

Excerpt 1:

Botala bo emetse naha ea Lesotho ka liminerale tsa eona. Eleng hore re tla re moruo oa naha re o bona ka 'mala o motala.

Green represents the land of Lesotho with its minerals. This means that we can say that wealth is seen by the colour green.

The response expresses that green symbolises the land and prosperity on the flags. However, the respondent adds that the colour symbolises wealth. Excerpt 1 delineates that the Lesotho's wealth is in the form of minerals. This wealth is represented across the flags using the colour green. This could be because Lesotho is rich in various minerals. According to Shelile (2024), the Minister of Mines revealed that Lesotho is rich in different mining deposits. These include diamonds, clay, sandstone and gypsum. According to the interviewees' comments, they are aware that the colour green is a sign of wealth.

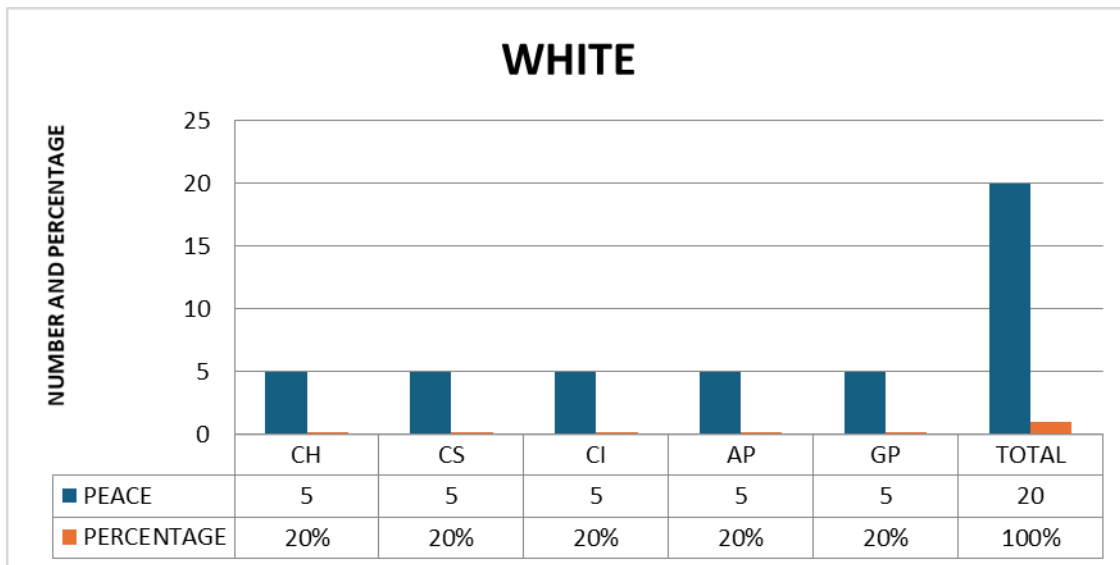
Moreover, the response adds weight on the three interpretations of the green colour, prosperity, land and minerals. The response implies that the interpretations of green as prosperity, land and minerals co-occur. This is because the response points out that the colour represents Lesotho with its minerals. According to the respondent, green also represents *moruo oa naha* 'the wealth of the country'. The extract says that the prosperity of Lesotho is rooted in its minerals.

The analysis of the green colour above presents different interpretations. Based on the summary of data and the discussion of the results, 14 (56%) respondents decide the interpretation of the green colour as prosperity.

2.1.3 Interpretation of the White Colour

The section is the interpretation of the white colour. White is found across all the three Lesotho national flags. In the view of Wang (2018), the white colour symbolises new beginnings, purity, simplicity, innocence, peace, cleanliness and goodness. These results of what the white colour signifies on the flags are discussed, and the responses are used to identify the sub-headings for the discussions. The summary of responses is also given in bar chart 3 below:

Bar Chart 3: Responses about the White Colour



The above illustration shows that 100% of the interview respondents are of the view that the white colour represents peace across the three Lesotho national flags. The responses of participants about the interpretation of white are discussed below.

2.1.3.1 Peace

All 25 (100%) respondents agree that white symbolises peace across the Lesotho national flags. Peace is a social state of harmony and societal absence of violence and civil unrest (Owsiak, 2016). The respondents specify that the white colour denotes the peacefulness of the Basotho. From the interviewees' interpretation, the researcher infers the colour in a cultural context since they equate it with a value of the Basotho, which is peacefulness.

Khotso ke khaitsele ea Moshoeshe I 'peace is Moshoeshe I's sister'. That is because, according to Mofuoa (2015), Moshoeshe I nurtured and valued peace as he would with his sister. Another expression is *ngoan'a khotso ha a lebale tsa khotso* 'a child of peace does not forget [the things] of peace'. The expression means that nurturing a child in a peaceful environment shapes who they become in the future, and they also foster a peaceful environment for others (Mokuku 2021).

To show that the Basotho continue to uphold the principle of peace across generations, it is represented by the white colour on all three flags. Moshoeshe I initiated and fostered a peaceful environment for the Basotho. They then upheld peace as a national value. To elaborate, one interviewee, AP02, refers to the Maseru Bridge sign-post that says, '*Kena ka khotso Lesotho*' to welcome people to Lesotho.

Some respondents suggest that the reason for maintaining the interpretation of the white colour is that Leabua has set a trend for the rest of the flags by explaining the colours of the first national flag. The response suggests that subsequent designs were inclined to maintain the same meaning for the colours even though they might potentially want to communicate something different. Otherwise, the

governments, which introduced the flag designs, could have decided to assign a different explanation for white according to the respondents.

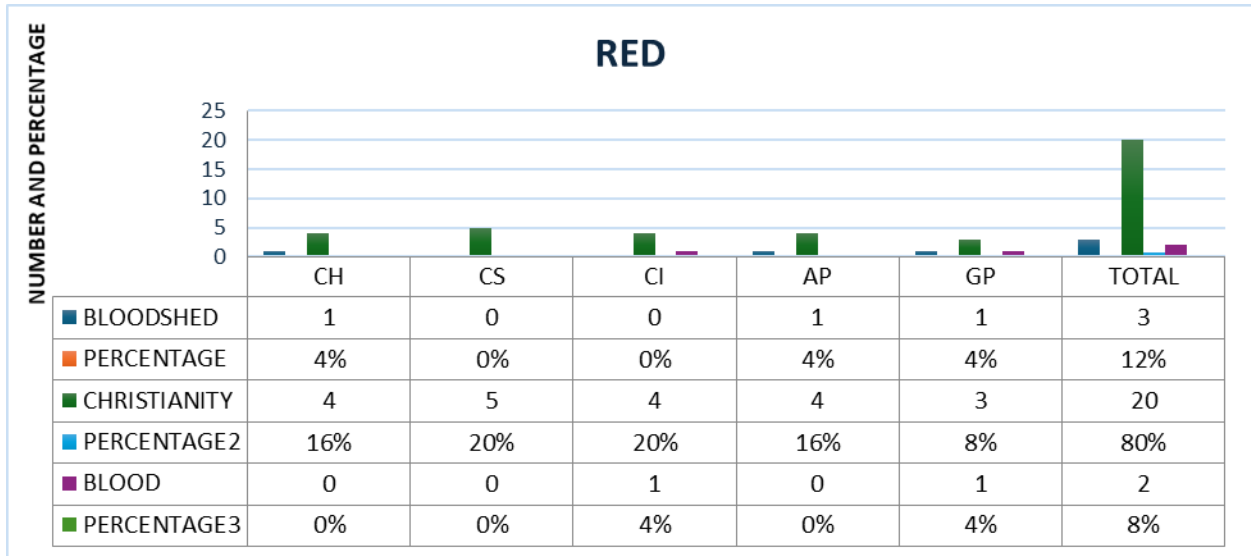
The reason could be that some may share the opinion of Pherudi (2022) that the current interpretation of the colour is unconvincing. Additionally, some respondents associate the white colour on the flags with the peace that is fostered by the military. MuIholland (2020) verifies this view by explaining that, on several counts, Lesotho has deployed the military to restore peace and order.

The interpretation of the colour across the flags aligns with Semiotic Theory that the interpretation of symbols should be made in particular situations or environments that have been identified. Thus, the white colour on the Lesotho national flag is the signifier, and the response that the signifier white evokes from the respondents is peace.

2.1.4 Interpretation of the Red Colour

This section provides the interpretation of the red colour that is on the 1966 Lesotho national flag. The sub-headings provide the responses of the interviewees of what each group believes the colour to represent. The bar chart 4 below is a summary of data from the participants about the interpretation of the red colour.

Bar Chart 4: Responses about the Red Colour



The above summary reflects that three (12%) respondents view the red colour as bloodshed; two (8%) interviewees see the colour as representing blood while twenty (80%) interviewees say that the red colour symbolises Christianity on the first national flag of Lesotho. The responses of interviewees about the interpretation of the red colour are justified in the ensuing sections.

2.1.4.1 Bloodshed

The summary of the results suggests that the red colour resembles bloodshed on the first national flag. Bloodshed has been an on-going occurrence in Lesotho. This is supported by Rakhare and Coetzee (2020) who acknowledge that since 1966, Lesotho governance has been distinguished by unstable democracy and notable incidents of bloodshed. Presently, the country is experiencing bloodshed because of disagreements amongst the people, such as the rivalry amongst some music artists (Lekhooa, 2021).

Three (12%) respondents agree that red signifies bloodshed on the Lesotho national flag. The excerpt 2 below is the view of AP02 who emphasises that,

Excerpt 2:

'Mala o mofubelu o folakheng ea Leabua, 'mala oono o ne o bolela tšollo ea mali! Mali a bana ba Basotho, morali. U ea nkutloa? A ileng a tšoloha leetong la boipuso. E! ke 'nete hore ho kile ha 'na ha bueha hore bofubelu bono bo emetse hore Lesotho ke naha ea borapeli, joalokaha re bile ra ba le likereke tseo tsa makhooa tse ne se ntse li le teng ka nako eo.

The red colour on the Leabua's flag, that red colour meant bloodshed! The blood of the Basotho children, daughter. Do you hear me? It was shed during the journey of independence. Yes! It is true that it has been said that the red colour stands for Lesotho that it is a Christian country, just as we even had the Whites' (Western) churches, which were already there.

The response equates the red colour to the blood of the Basotho children that was shed on the journey of independence. The interviewee refers to the first national flag as *ea Leabua*. This shows that there has been a significant political division in Lesotho, and the respondent has not been a partisan of Leabua's political party. The political division may have motivated the interviewees to view red as resembling bloodshed on the flag.

2.1.4.2 Blood

The red colour is also interpreted as blood on the first Lesotho national flag. Two respondents, who account for eight per cent, hold the opinion. The participants interpret the colour on the flag from the global symbolism, which are blood, fire and danger. For instance, one respondent, CI03, argues that red is a symbolic of fire and of blood. The colour is also the symbolic of danger, according to the respondent. Inference is made then that the interviewee is familiar with the global

symbolic meanings of the red colour. However, the respondent is indecisive because he cites that red resembles fire, blood and danger on the flag.

2.1.4.3 Christianity

The results also present that red symbolises Christianity. Christianity in this study is taken to mean the doctrine and practices associated with the different denominations that identify with belief in the life and works of Jesus Christ (Wainwright, Spencer & Pelikan, 2024). Based on the feedback, it is evident that 20 (80%) interviewees associate Christianity with the red colour on the first national flag. The association is made by assigning red as representing prayer on the first national flag. The inclusion of the Christian practice, prayer, is a sign of alliance with churches as the supporters of the government that designed the flag.

To support this, Matlosa (1997) says that the Roman Catholic church extended support to the BNP. Matlosa explains that there was an alliance between the 1966 government and the Roman Catholic church because of anti-communism by the former. One interviewee, CI01, says that *they called it [red] prayer*, which presents an element of scepticism. The scepticism of the respondent about the symbolism of red on the flag disregards the saying that Lesotho *ke naha ea bokeresete* 'Lesotho is a Christian country. The respondent implies that there might be an underlying interpretation of the colour on the first Lesotho national flag.

Some respondents justify that red is chosen to signify prayer and sacrifice because of the consistence of the colour with the shedding of blood that historically took place on the cross. The view links red to the shedding of the blood of Jesus. Therefore, the respondents could be taken to agree with the above argument that the colour equally signifies the shedding of blood that historically took place in Lesotho. Pherudi (2001) asserts this view by reporting that such happenings were

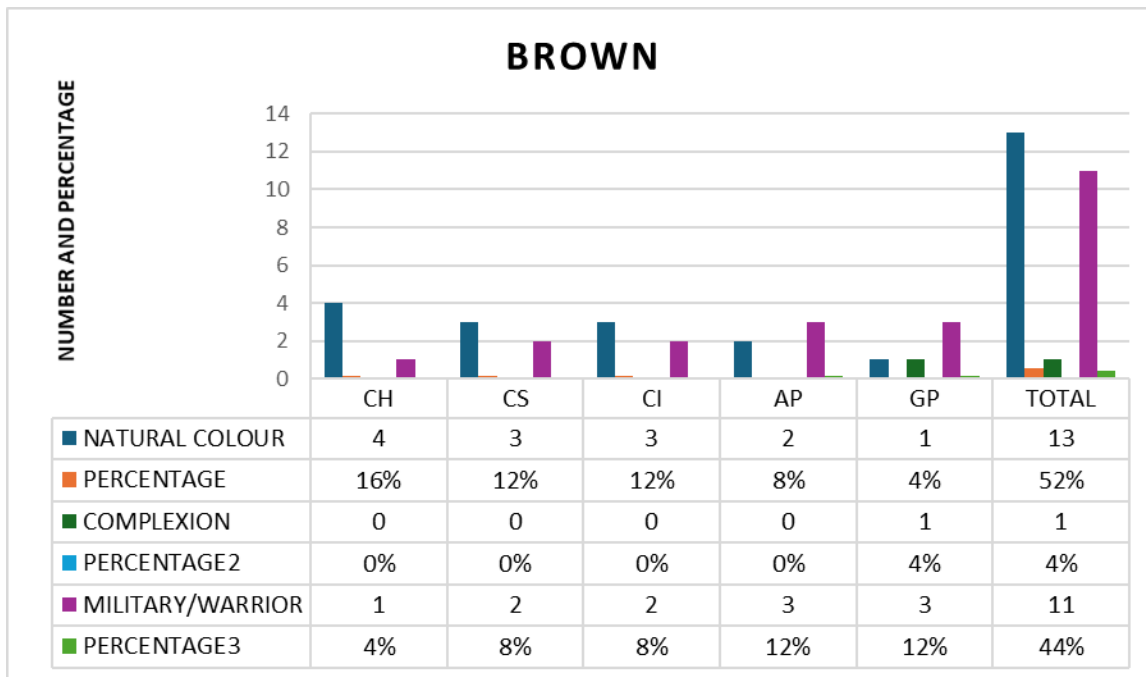
influenced by political preferences in Lesotho from 1966 to 1993. Other respondents mention that the red colour represents Lesotho being a prayer-oriented country. Thus, Christianity is signified by red on the first national flag of Lesotho.

The summary of respondents and the analysis of the results in this section lead to the conclusion that the signifier red, as used on the Lesotho national flag, signifies Christianity. The view is expressed by 20 (80%) respondents.

2.1.5 Interpretation of the Brown Colour

This section deliberates on the interpretation of the brown colour that appears on the 1987 national flag of Lesotho. The section provides the sub-headings reflecting the responses of the interviewees about what the colour represents. A summary of the distribution of respondents is given in bar chart 5 below.

Bar Chart 5: Responses about the Brown Colour



The bar chart show that 13 (52%) interviewees agree that brown is a natural colour. On the one hand, 11 (44%) respondents say that the colour represents the military; on the other hand, 1 (4%) interviewee says that the brown colour represents complexion. The results of the interpretation of brown are discussed below.

2.1.5.1 Natural colour

Thirteen (52%) interviewees suggest that brown is used on the flag because it is a natural colour. According to Cherry (2023), brown is associated with the natural world. This could be the reason the interviewees say that the brown colour on the second national flag signifies a natural colour. The respondents agree that brown is the colour of the shield. Additionally, one of the 13 (52%) respondents also says that brown is the colour of the knobkerrie and of wood. In line with the Semiotic Theory, the interviewees interpret the brown colour on the flag and the natural colour is signified.

2.1.5.2 The Military and Warriors

The concepts, military and warrior, also arise from the summary. These two concepts are analysed together in the study. The opinion that the colour signifies military constitutes 11 (44%) respondents. According to the interviewees, the brown colour symbolises the military's uniform on the second national flag. The respondents also argue that the shield represents Lesotho's weapons. Following Pitso (2009), the respondents refer to Moshoeshe I as Rantšo since he is the founder of the Basotho nation. This could be the reason the interviewees say that the shield, which is presented in brown on the flag, is used to resemble the weapons that were used by Rantšo's warriors.

Additionally, the respondents reflect that brown is the natural colour of the Coat of Arms on the flag because the symbol is made from brown bovine skin. The

respondents also clarify that the brown colour on the flag does not bear any representation in isolation. This means that the colour is used to represent the Coat of Arms because that is the natural colour. Based on the responses, brown represents the Basotho warriors on the flag. They are represented by including the Coat of Arms, weapons and military uniform on the second national flag.

2.1.5.3 Complexion

Additionally, the data suggests that brown resembles complexion on the second national flag. The interpretation of brown, as complexion, is the view of one (four per cent) interviewee. The respondent explains that the Basotho *ke sechaba sa Rantšo* ‘a black nation’. However, the respondent interprets the brown colour on the second national flag as the natural complexion of the Africans. That is because the respondent says that *ke lebala la rona batho ba batšo* ‘it is our complexion as black people’.

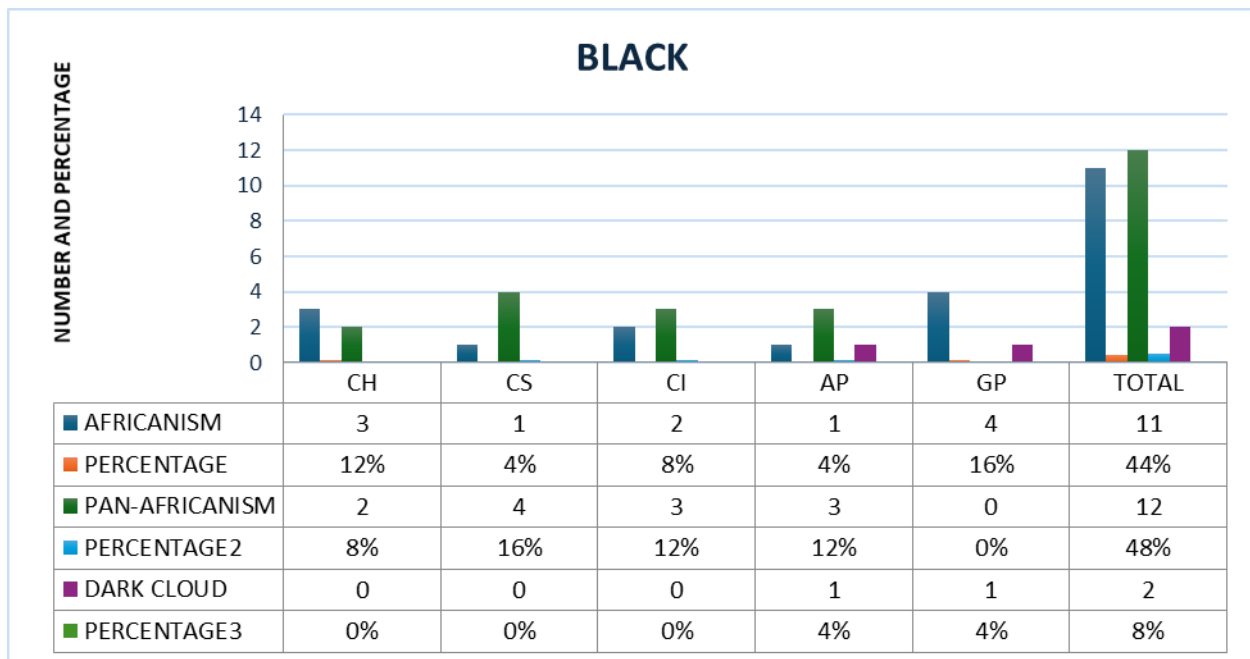
Amongst other things, the extract suggests that the Basotho are represented in terms of their brown complexion on the second national flag. However, the statement is inconsistent because it also says that the complexion of the Basotho is black. The statement that the Basotho are a black nation is consistent with the global view on the African complexion, according to Jablonski (2020). Since the response offers both brown and black as the complexion of the Basotho, the interpretation that brown represents complexion is questionable.

The presentation of data and the discussions of the brown colour above justify the conclusion that the signifier brown on the flag has no symbolism in isolation. Thirteen (52%) respondents share this view.

2.1.6 Interpretation of the Black Colour

This section gives the interpretation of the black colour that is on the 2006 Lesotho national flag. The sub-sections provide the sub-headings, indicating the distribution of the interviewees on what the black colour is considered representing. Below is the bar chart showing the results of the respondents about the black colour.

Bar Chart 6: Responses about the Black Colour



The above summary shows that 11 (44%) interviewees say that the black colour represents Africanism; 12 (48%) respondents say that black represents pan-Africanism while 2 (8%) respondents say that black represents a dark cloud. The results about what the interviewees interpret the black colour to represent on the Lesotho national flag are discussed as follows:

2.1.6.1 Africanism

According to Torhovets (2022), the symbolism of black depends on the context of interpretation. In the Lesotho national flag, the feedback given by 11 (44%) respondents suggests that black resembles being an African. The respondents specify that black is used on the third national flag. A deduction is made that the government that designed the third national flag of Lesotho chose to include the black colour to honour the country's return to constitutional democracy.

This is because Pherudi (2001) asserts that, in 1993, the Basotho elected the government through general elections. Therefore, the black colour on the national flag signifies the African nation. The interviewees raise the idea of the Basotho being a black nation by referring to them as the nation of Rantšo. For this reason, when the respondents view the signifier black in the Lesotho national flag, *sechaba sa Rantšo* is signified.

2.1.6.2 Pan-Africanism

The summary of data in this section also shows that the black colour on the third national flag represents pan-Africanism. The results illustrate that 12 (48%) interviewees agree on this interpretation of black. In the discussion, the concept refers to the freedom of Lesotho, as an African country, from colonialism as marked by constitutional democracy.

The respondents suggest that the design of the third national flag uses the black colour to present *mokorotlo* on the national flag so that the signifier is interpreted as pan-Africanism. The view indicates that independence and constitutional democracy constitute pan-Africanism, which had to be incorporated into the flag. This could be because the Lesotho Congress for Democracy, as the advents of the third national flag, subscribes to pan-Africanism.

2.1.6.3 Dark Cloud

The results by two (eight per cent) respondents suggest that the black colour resembles a dark cloud. The respondents view the colour on the national flag as resembling a darkness that covers the country. This could be because, as Humeniuk (2020) states, black is sometimes interpreted as a colour of mourning and death. Humeniuk adds that in some cultures, a dark cloud is a symbol of doom. The interpretation of the respondents could be in line with this view. One respondent implies that the third national flag design should have retained the red colour. In the view of the interviewees, the black colour on the Lesotho national flag, signifies a dark cloud.

The conclusion, based on the summary of respondents and the discussions of the black colour that are given above, is that 12 (48%) respondents say that the black colour represents pan-Africanism on the Lesotho national flag.

2.2 Conclusion

The chapter presented the interpretations of the colours on the three Lesotho national flags. Blue, green, white, red, brown and black are the colours on the flags that have been discussed in the chapter. The colours were discussed using the Semiotic Theory. These colours are the signifiers across the Lesotho national flags. According to 52% of the respondents, the signifier blue in the Lesotho national flag signifies rain. Again, 56% of the respondents say that the green colour symbolises prosperity.

Moreover, 100% of the respondents agree that white symbolises peace. According to 80% of the respondents, the red colour signifies Christianity on the first national flag. Also, brown is the signifier representing natural colour. The interpretation of

brown, which is given by 52% of the interviewees, is that the colour has no symbolism on its own on the second national flag.

According to 48% of the interviewees, black signifies pan-Africanism on the third national flag. The findings show that the national flag of Lesotho can be interpreted in terms of the national motto, *khotso, pula, nala*. Furthermore, the responses of the interviewees tend to differ with the key influence being who flag created the flag. Finally, the discussions show that the interpretations of the colours, which are used on the Lesotho national flags, align with the global symbolism of the colours.

CHAPTER THREE

REASONS THAT PROMPTED THE EVOLUTION OF THE LESOTHO NATIONAL FLAG

3.0 Introduction

This chapter investigates the reasons that prompted the national flag of Lesotho to evolve. To this end, the flags are discussed individually to identify the reasons that influenced the evolution. The reasons are discussed alongside the reasons that have previously influenced the flag change in other countries. The chapter also discusses the impact of the evolution. Under the definition by Meyer and Keas (2011), evolution in this chapter will be taken to mean the gradual development or change of the flags over time. Based on the interviewees' reports, the analysis is conducted. The feedback is used to present the sub-headings for the discussions. The results are also summarised in bar charts for each section.

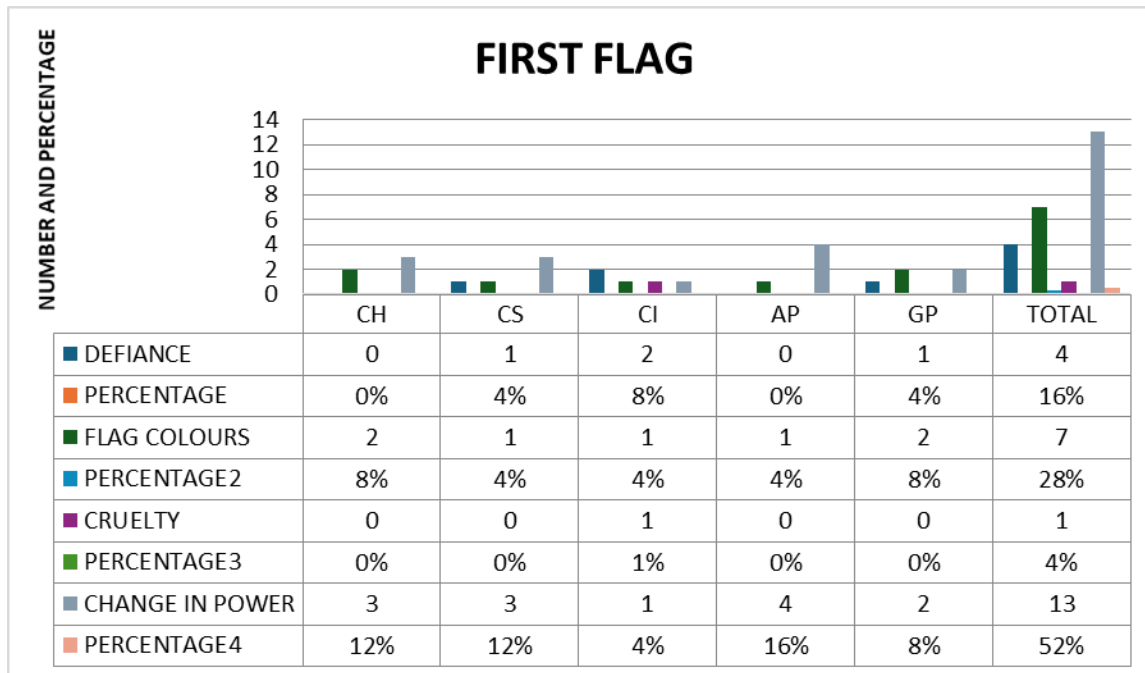
3.1 Reasons that Caused the Evolution of the Lesotho National Flag

The countries around the world are at times compelled to change their national flags to reflect the shift in leadership or political power, update of borders or cultural values and interests (Esmezyan, 2022). Additionally, Cunha, Martins and Machado (2020) outline other reasons for the flag evolution as an updated status of war or peace following a civil war or revolution, reimagining of the country's political or structural future, a change in agricultural offerings, or an update in design for aesthetic purposes. The discussions in this section outline the reasons, which interviewees cite as having influenced the change of the previous Lesotho national flags.

3.1.1 Reasons that Caused the 1966 Lesotho National Flag to Evolve

The section discusses the reasons that prompted the evolution of the 1966 Lesotho national flag. Bar chart 7 below is a summary of the results.

Bar Chart 7: The Evolution of National Flag



The chart shows that four (16%) interviewees mention that the flag was changed because of defiance. Seven (28%) respondents say that the flag changed because of the flag colours; one (4%) respondent says that it was changed out of cruelty whereas thirteen (52%) interviewees say that the flag was changed to mark a change in leadership. The results are discussed under the given sub-headings.

3.1.1.1 Flag Colours

The data argues that the 1966 Lesotho national flag was altered because of several reasons. Several (28%) respondents argue that the flag was changed as a result of the national flag colours. The interviewees agree that the flag was not a national

design but a design for the BNP. This is because the national flag was designed using blue, green, white and red, which are all the BNP colours. Hence, the respondents argue that the political party chose to design a national flag, which represents them as the ruling party, more than designing the flag to represent the nation. For the respondents, the first national flag of Lesotho signifies the BNP. One interviewee, AP04, expresses the view in this manner:

Excerpt 3:

U tl'o bone hore batho bao ba ne ba hlile ba lelekisa mebala ea bona, ba khethile ho beha molia-nyeoe (mokorotlo) o mosoeu hore mebala eno e hle e felle.

To show that those people were after presenting their colours, they chose to put a white hat (*molia-nyeoe - mokorotlo*) so that the colours could all be present.

The extract (3) implies that the white straw hat was included on the national flag in order to complete the colours of the then ruling political party. The researcher deduces that the interpretation of the 1966 Lesotho national flag as signifying the BNP is expressed by non-partisans of the political party. That is because the extract isolates the ruling government and members of the BNP by referring to them as 'those people'. It implies that the respondent and those who share the sentiment are not part of the party supporters. In addition, some interviewees explain that their aim was to avoid having national teams wear party colours as the colours of their uniforms during sporting activities.

The researcher gathers that the respondents refer to the blue, green, white and red colours as political party colours. This is because the four colours were used on the first national flag of Lesotho, which the interviewees labelled a BNP flag because of the colours, which were used in the design. Therefore, removing the red colour

meant that the BNP colours were no longer all represented on the Lesotho national flag. Consequently, the national flag was no longer perceived as the BNP flag. Hence, it became acceptable for the national teams to use the flag colours.

3.1.1.2 Defiance

Another reason, which the respondents gave for changing the 1966 flag, is the defiant behaviour of the BNP youth and their criminal activity that eventually caught the attention of the military and police forces. The view is suggested by four (16%) respondents. Baynham and Mills (1987) affirm the view of the interviewees by explaining that the Royal Lesotho Defence Force (RLDF) took to Leabua's offices five days prior to the 1986 insurrection. Their aim was to state their grievances over the activities of the BNP Youth League.

Baynham and Mills (1987) continue to explain that the BNP youth were used as a political instrument to intimidate the government's opposition. Therefore, for the respondents, the 1966 national flag of Lesotho signifies the defiance of the BNP Youth League. The interpretation of the national flag implies that the respondents were not the supporters of the ruling party. This is because the 1966 national flag, as a signifier, is associated with the BNP through its defiant youth. The respondents may have interpreted the signifier differently if they were the supporters of the then ruling political party, the BNP. That is because they would also be the supporters of the mandate, which had been given to the Youth League. In addition, the respondents communicated political division in Lesotho since independence. The division is implied by the respondents since they hint that there are different political parties, which the respondents support.

3.1.1.3 *Cruelty*

Based on one (4%) respondent, the summary also suggests that the national flag was changed as an act of cruelty. The interviewee suggests that the 1966 flag was one of the positive creations or implementations by chief Leabua, and that those who changed the flag were out to destroy all the good things, which he had achieved. For this reason, the respondent condemns the decision of the military to change the flag. What we deduce from this is that the interviewee is a supporter of Leabua.

The researcher also deduces that if the national flag had not been designed by Leabua and the BNP government, perhaps it would not have been changed. This means that the interviewee suggests that the flag was only changed because of the initiators of the change. According to the interviewee, the 1966 Lesotho national flag signified the good works of Leabua, and the military wanted to remove the signifier of the achievements of the BNP government.

3.1.1.4 *Change in Political Power*

The change of governments in various countries is an adequate reason to design a new flag. According to Dinas, Martinez and Valentim (2024), the decision to modify the existing flag may be influenced by a variety of factors, such as the need to communicate a preferred system of governance. The change in political power is discussed as the final reason that has caused the evolution of the 1966 Lesotho national flag.

Thirteen (52%) respondents argue that the reason the military changed the 1966 national flag of Lesotho was to mark their tenure. Some interviewees mention that there was no binding reason that could have warranted the flag to change. The interviewees further argue that the military flag design served as a proof that

Lesotho was indeed under military rule. The respondents concur with each other that the flag was modified to reflect a change in the regime.

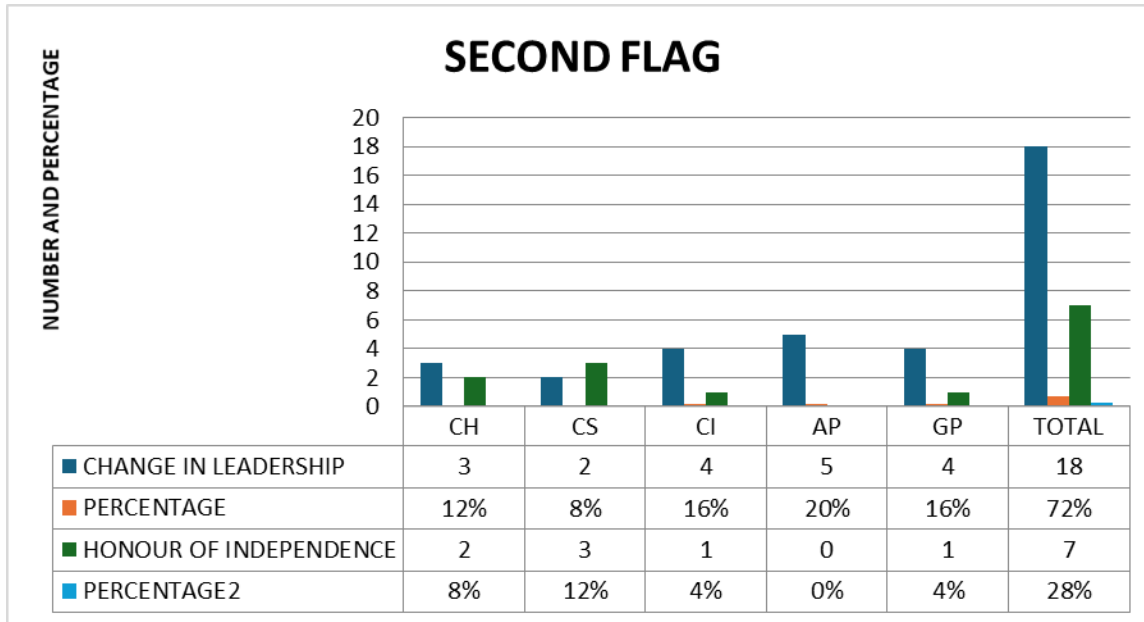
One interviewee explains that the behaviour of the BNP youth motivated this decision by the military to overthrow the government, and to change the national flag, which reminded the nation of the BNP leadership. The Lesotho national flag was a signifier that signified the first post-independence government for the 13 (52%) respondents. Therefore, the following leadership created a national flag, which signified the military rule, as per respondents.

Based on the discussions and summary of the data above, the change in political power proves to be the reason the 1966 Lesotho national flag developed. The reason is indicated by 13 (52%) interviewees.

3.1.2 Reasons that Caused the 1987 Lesotho National Flag to Evolve

This section gives the reasons the 1987 Lesotho national flag evolved. The responses given by the interviewees pertaining to the evolution of the flag are summarised in bar chart 8 below:

Bar Chart 8: Responses on the Evolution of the National Flag



The summary illustrates that 18 (72%) respondents say that the evolution was influenced by the change in political power. Seven (28%) respondents say that the second flag changed to honour the country’s forty years of independence. The results are discussed in the upcoming sub-sections.

3.1.2.1 *Change in Political Power*

Eighteen (72%) interviewees share the view that the national flag was changed due to a shift in political power. The respondents suggest that there was no longer any justification for using the military design; hence, it had to be changed. One may deduce that the then ruling LCD was expected, by those who share the sentiment, to change the design because the flag was not a national design. Some respondents put it differently by saying that the expectation was for the LCD to change the design because of the country’s transition back to constitutional democracy.

One interviewee elaborates that, having transitioned to constitutional democracy, it was appropriate to change the flag design to suit the country's new political structure. This statement suggests that the military design of the national flag was not primarily designed to represent the nation, but it was designed to reflect the military regime. It is for this reason that the respondent said that the military design could no longer be justified when the country was no longer governed by the military.

Some respondents are of the opinion that the 1987 flag design does not count as a national flag because the 1966 Lesotho national flag was only lowered because the country was under the interim military rule. The respondents explain that once the country returned to the constitutional democratic government, the military flag design had to be lowered and the national flag had to be re-hoisted. This means that the 1987 Lesotho national flag signified the military. As a result, the flag had to be removed to mark the change in leadership once the military gave up governance.

3.1.2.2 Honouring the Country's Independence

The results give another reason, which prompted the evolution of the 1987 national flag as honouring the independence of Lesotho. Wearne (2015) asserts that countries may decide to change their national flags to represent post-colonial national independence. The countries, which are the former British colonies, such as Canada and New Zealand, changed their national flags to show their stance as the independent nations (McIntosh, 2019).

Additionally, Wearne (2015) cites the adaptation of a new national flag by Fiji to celebrate forty-five years of independence. In this instance, the flag is symbolic on both counts. In Lesotho, the 1966 national flag was introduced to mark the

country's independence. Besides, the 2006 national flag was adapted to celebrate the country's forty years of independence.

The account by seven (28%) respondents is that the national flag was still a good representation of the country, but that the government desired to change it to honour forty years of independence for the Basotho. The opinion of the interviewees is that the military might not have been as tolerant of any other reason for changing the flag. The researcher infers from the reflection of the interviewees that the military expected their design of the national flag to be used a long term.

This could be the reason the military would not easily accept the decision by the succeeding government to change the national flag, which they designed. Also, the respondents imply that the military agree with the decision to represent the independence of Lesotho on the national flag. The 2006 Lesotho national flag signifies the celebration of the country's independence to the interviewees.

The analysis in this section indicates that the changing of the 1987 Lesotho national flag signified a change in leadership. This view is presented by 18 (72%) interviewees.

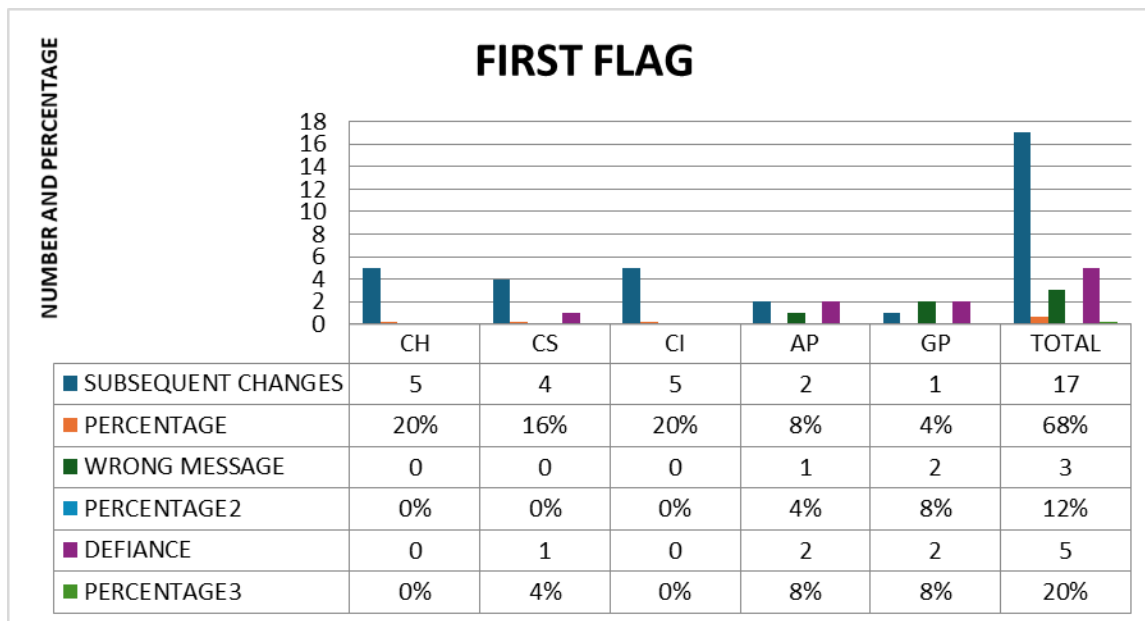
3.2 The Impact of Flag Evolution

The section delineates the impact, which the interviewees say was brought about by the evolution of the national flag of Lesotho. The discussion covers the transition from using the 1966 Lesotho national flag to using the 1987 national flag of Lesotho and replacing the 1987 national flag with the 2006 Lesotho national flag. The responses of the participants are discussed under the identified sub-headings below.

3.2.1 Impact of Changing the 1966 Lesotho National Flag

The analysis in this sub-section concentrates on the effects of changing the 1966 national flag of Lesotho. The interviewees have given their responses, which are outlined in bar chart 9 as follows:

Bar Chart 9: Responses on the Effects of Changing the 1966 National flag of Lesotho



The illustration communicates that 17 (68%) interviewees say that the evolution promoted subsequent changes. Three (12%) respondents say that the flag had communicated a wrong message while five (20%) respondents argue that the evolution promoted defiant behaviour. The results are discussed below.

3.2.1.1 Subsequent Changes

According to the views of 17 (68%) interviewees, the result of carrying out the first change to the national flag of Lesotho is that it sets precedence for subsequent changes to the flag. The argument of the interviewees is that changing the national

flag of Lesotho for the first time brought about subsequent changes that have been made to the flag.

According to the interviewees, the military is solely responsible for the evolution of the Lesotho national flag due to making the initial change. The view implies that the future changes to the flag should also be blamed on the military. From the respondents' point of view, regardless of the military's reasons for changing the flag, the choice has brought about the lasting repercussion of having empowered all other governments who wish to change the national flag of Lesotho, to do so.

3.2.1.2 Wrong Message

According to the results, three (12%) respondents express that the impact, which has been brought about by the evolution of the national flag of Lesotho is that it corrected the wrong message that was communicated by using the flag. The respondents suggest that the message, which was conveyed by using a national flag, which was directly associated with the ruling political party, was that the nation was in support of the party. This, according to the interviewees, was false.

The interviewees explain that the choice to use the colours of political party on the national flag may have been a ploy to coax the nation to the BNP partisanship. This is because Thakalekoala (2003) concurs that the 1966 Lesotho national flag was found to be too political and furthering the aims and aspirations of the BNP. The international world could also have been coaxed into believing that the nation at large supported the then ruling party.

Another explanation by the interviewees is that, although the Lesotho national flag was viewed as beautiful, it was also annoying because it was designed using the BNP colours as though it was meant to resemble the political party instead of the

nation. The researcher infers, first, that the flag was not widely embraced by those who were not the supporters of the ruling party. Second, this sentiment was shared by a significant portion of the society. This is because the interviewee says that rectifying the false communication made the nation happy.

3.2.1.3 *Defiance*

Five (20%) respondents reflect that defiant behaviour is another result of changing the 1966 Lesotho national flag. The opinion of some interviewees is that the national flag and the government, which designed the flag, may be used interchangeably. An example of this view is expressed by GP05 as follows,

Excerpt 4:

Ha u bua ka folakha ea mong'a sekontiri sena, u utloisa pelo eaka bohloko. Folakha eno e ile ea re sebeletsa ka nako e telele haholo 'mè. Le botsitso ba eba teng kahar'a naha, ho fapana le tsena tse bileng teng ka morao ho eno. Haholo ena ea morao tjena hobane e hloloa ho laola sechaba.

When you talk about the flag of the owner of this tar road (Leabua), you are hurting my heart. That flag served us over a long period. It also maintained order in the country. It is unlike the subsequent flags, especially the current flag because it cannot govern the nation.

The above extract (4) reflects that the government of Leabua introduced the tar road in Lesotho because the respondent refers to him as the owner of the tar road. Also, according to the respondent, a national flag is tantamount to the government, which introduces it. The researcher infers then that the interviewee expects every government to design the national flag. The interviewees associate the 1966 national flag of Lesotho with good governance and cite the heinous acts, which

take place in the country recently as evidence that changing the 1966 national flag has resulted in the production of a defiant generation.

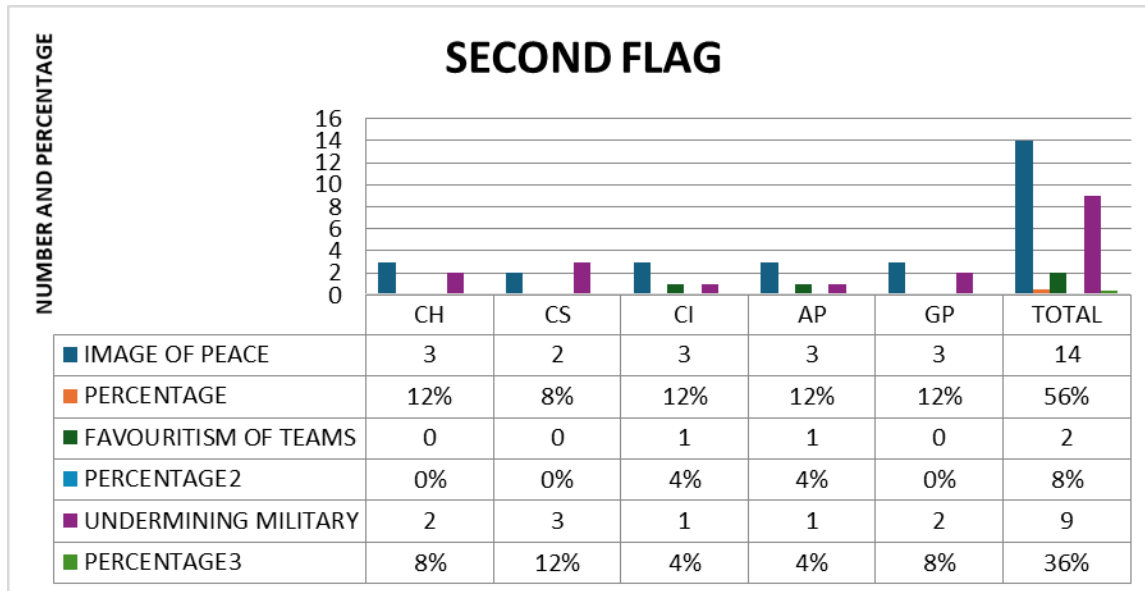
Also, some respondents mention the extent to which Lesotho has changed to mark the magnitude of the negative impact in the country of late. The remark implies that all wavelengths of negative impact in the country are the result of changing the national flag. The two latter Lesotho national flags, 1987 and 2006, signify defiance, according to the interviewees.

The analysis in this sub-section has shown that the decision to change the 1966 national flag of Lesotho has allowed for other governments to change freely the flag. This is said by 17 (68%) interviewees.

3.2.2 Impact of Changing the 1987 Lesotho National Flag

The effects of the evolution of the 1987 national flag of Lesotho are given in this section. The effects are discussed under appropriate sub-headings. A summary of the results is given below:

Bar Chart 10: Responses on the Effects of Changing the 1987 National Flag of Lesotho



The presentation shows that 14 (56%) respondents say that the 2006 flag reflects an image of peace. Two (eight per cent) respondents say that the flag suggests favouritism of certain sports teams and nine (thirty-six per cent) interviewees say that the national flag undermines the military. The results are analysed below.

3.2.2.1 *Image of Peace*

Fourteen (56%) respondents express that the impact of changing the national flag gives an image of peace. The research carried out by Szekeres (2017) indicates that numerous countries around the world experience or have experienced disagreement at one point. The disagreement may occur either internally or externally with another nation or other nations.

The intensity of a dispute differs depending on a few parameters. In a severe case, a dispute may cause a revolution. The result of a revolution, according to Szekeres (2017), is either war or peace. The war or peace status in a country is stated as one

reason for modifying the national flag. In Lesotho, this reason is also an impact of the evolution of the national flag.

According to the respondents, the signifier *koto*, *thebe* and *lerumo*, which appear on the 1987 Lesotho national flag, are interpreted as symbolising war. It is for this reason that the interviewees are of the inclination that the symbolism of war contradicts that of peace. This is also communicated across the three Lesotho national flags. This is the basis for the respondents' position that the evolution of the 1987 Lesotho national flag had the impact of clarifying the status of peace in the country.

In the view of the respondents, the impact of the evolution was positively embraced by the nation. That impact was the representation of peace. The interpretation of some respondents is that the 1987 national flag was a symbol of oppression. This could be because Mangani and Yingi (2023) agree that capacity for democracy and good governance in Lesotho have been affected by an oppressive military-backed rule between 1966 and 1993, and after 2012. The researcher discovered that the respondents have felt the oppression; hence, they view the 1987 national flag of Lesotho as signifying an oppressive rule.

3.2.2.2 *Favouritism of Certain Districts' Sports Teams*

A different impression of the evolution of the national flag of Lesotho is that the flag promotes the favouritism of certain districts' sporting teams. The sentiment is shared by two (eight per cent) respondents. The interviewees have become increasingly aware of the similarity of the national flags' colours and the colours of the Maseru and Leribe districts' team colours on the second and third Lesotho national flags.

This could be because the 1966 national flag had a red stripe, which may have clouded the fact that the two districts' team colours have always been present across all three flag versions. Also, District Football Association (DIFA) as a body within the national football association uses white, green and blue as the country colours on their logo. This could further influence the impression, which the respondents get from the evolution of the national flag of Lesotho. The evolution of Lesotho national flag signifies *Matlama* (Maseru football team) and *Linare* (Leribe football team) according to the respondents.

3.2.2.3 *Undermining the Military*

The final impact of changing the 1987 Lesotho national flag is that the change undermines the military. The argument is presented by nine (36%) interviewees. Some respondents convey that the military was not pleased with the decision to replace their design of the national flag. The aftermath of the decision to modify the design, which the military had chosen for signifying Lesotho, is that the military felt that their efforts were being undermined by the then governing LCD.

The deduction is made by the researcher that the government may have had other intentions in mind for changing the flag design. However, they already anticipated that the military would have a negative reaction to the decision. Hence, they made the effort to explain their version of the flag to the military and to assure them that the modifications did not deviate too much from their previous design.

In this section, a conclusion is reached that the impact, which is brought by the evolution of the 1987 national flag of Lesotho is that the image and the status of peace in the country are clarified. Fourteen (56%) respondents share this view.

3.3 Conclusion

The chapter presented the reasons for the evolution of the Lesotho national flags. It also discussed the impact of the evolution on a society. Amongst other reasons, the discussions show that the national flag of Lesotho was prompted to evolve by the change in political power. This reason is given for both the first and the second changes to the flag. Thirteen (52%) respondents give this reason for the evolution of the 1966 flag while 18 (72%) respondents give this reason for the evolution of the 1987 flag.

The discussion also showed that the decision to change the 1966 national flag of Lesotho has allowed for other governments to freely change the flag. This is according to 17 (68%) interviewees. In addition, the impact, which is brought about by the evolution of the 1987 national flag of Lesotho, is that the image and the status of peace in the country are clarified. This view is expressed by 14 (56%) respondents.

Another observation, which the researcher makes from the analysis, is that the reasons, which influence the evolution of national flags can also be the results or the impact of flag evolution. Finally, the discussions show that the reasons for the evolution of the Lesotho national flag and the impact of such evolution on the society align with those that influence the evolution of national flags globally.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE COLOURS AND THE SYMBOLS OF THE THREE LESOTHO NATIONAL FLAGS

4.0 Introduction

The chapter discusses the significance of the colours and the symbols of the three Lesotho national flags. In line with the definition that Perezgonzalez (2015) gives, significance in this chapter will be taken to refer to the qualities that mark the colours, and the symbols on the three Lesotho national flags as important to the society. The discussions of the colours will be based on the results illustrated in chapter two. The analysis of the results by the interviewees pertaining to the national flags' symbols will be given. The sub-headings designating the importance of the colours and symbols are also given. In addition, the summaries of the respondents are presented in bar charts.

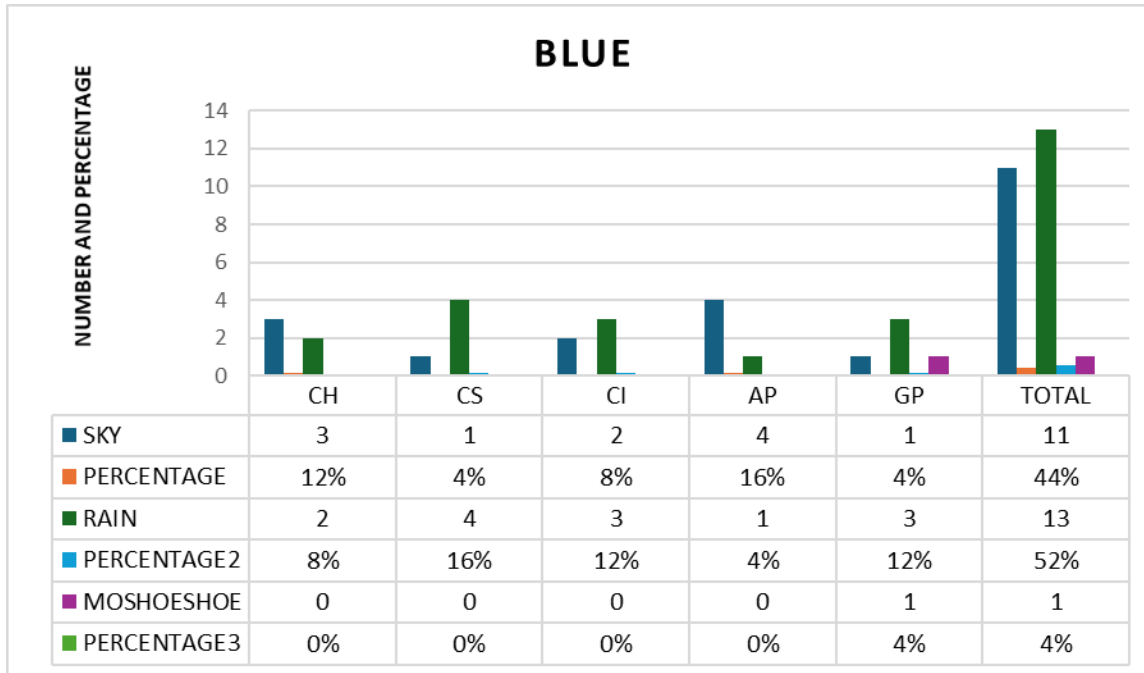
4.1 The Significance of the Colours

This section deliberates on the significance of the colours that appear across the Lesotho national flag versions. Each colour is discussed individually to establish its significance on the Lesotho national flag.

4.1.1 Significance of the Blue Colour

The sub-section discusses the significance of the blue colour that is found across the three Lesotho national flags. The analysis provides the sub-headings reflecting the responses of the interviewees about the importance of the blue colour. A summary of the distribution of respondents is given in bar chart 11 below.

Bar Chart 11: The Significance of the Blue Colour



The chart above shows that 13 (52%) interviewees interpret the blue colour as signifying rain. Eleven (44%) interviewees say that the colour signifies the sky while one (4%) interviewee says that blue signifies Moshoeshoe I. Below are the discussions of blue colour, which show the significance of the colour across the Lesotho national flags.

4.1.1.1 Rain

Thirteen (52%) respondents suggest that the blue colour that is used on the Lesotho national flag signifies rain. The interviewees argue that their interpretation of blue on the flags is based on the national motto of Lesotho: *khotso, pula, nala* ‘peace, rain, prosperity’. The motto is used to express the aforementioned interests of the Basotho, owing to their importance to the nation. Rain is a source of water, and the water in Lesotho is signified across the Lesotho national flags using the blue colour.

The respondents elaborate that, amongst other things, the water of Lesotho is important because it is a subject of foreign income. Mokhethi (2018) confirms this view by explaining that Lesotho has been exporting water to South Africa for decades because of the treaty on the Lesotho Highlands Water Project (LHWP) between the two governments. Thus, according to the respondents, the significance of the blue colour is that the colour is a symbol of foreign income, which Lesotho gains from exporting water.

The Basotho have various rain-making rituals as previously exemplified in Chapter two. Johnson (2018) explains that under the cultural beliefs of the Basotho, rain, amongst other environmental conditions, is sent by their ancestors. To conform to the beliefs of the Basotho, therefore, using the blue colour across the flags is a prayer for downpours of rain in Lesotho. This is because, according to the Basotho, rain symbolises peace, hence the motto peace, rain, prosperity. The downpours of rain produce agricultural abundance and satiety. Therefore, the importance of the blue colour is to pray for the rain. Simultaneously, the importance of the colour is to pray for agricultural abundance because of the rain.

4.1.1.2 The Sky

Eleven (44%) respondents argue that the colour blue also signifies the sky on the Lesotho national flags. According to the interviewees, blue symbolises the sky because the government, which created the first Lesotho national flag, assigned this symbolism to the colour. The significance of the sky to the Basotho is its characteristic of being the highest entity. The situation of the sky marks its resemblance to the country. This could be because Sexton (2023) explains that Lesotho is the only country in the world that rests entirely above 1 000 metres in elevation.

One sees the sky when they look up because it is high above. Likewise, the mountains of Lesotho are high points in Southern Africa; hence, they are compared to the sky. Taylor (2014) asserts this view by saying that the word sky is used to represent the tall mountains of Lesotho. The respondents could also view the importance of the sky as resembling the high waterfalls of Lesotho, meaning that the blue colour is used to symbolise the sky across the Lesotho national flags. The significance of the sky is its likeness in height to the mountains of Lesotho.

4.1.1.3 Moshoeshe I

One (4%) respondent presents a different opinion that blue represents Moshoeshe I on the three flags. The respondent indicates that the blue colour is dominant on the first national flag because the colour signifies the founder of Lesotho. The researcher gathers that the presence of the blue colour on the subsequent flags still signifies Moshoeshe I. The significance of the signified on the Lesotho national flags is to mark the foundation of the country and to recognise the founding leader of the nation.

This could be because Phakisi (2024) acknowledges that Moshoeshe I continues to be honoured in various ways. Therefore, the importance of resembling him on the flag is to recognise the founder of the Basotho. As mentioned earlier, the respondent alludes to the dominance of the colour on the flag. According to Cummins (2015), dominance is categorised by power and influence. Also, it is often associated with status and social hierarchies.

In line with the above explanation, the respondent could associate the dominance of the colour on the flag with Moshoeshe I because of his title as the ruler of the nation. The title sets Moshoeshe I apart and makes him important. Thus, the interviewee identifies the significance of making the blue colour on the first

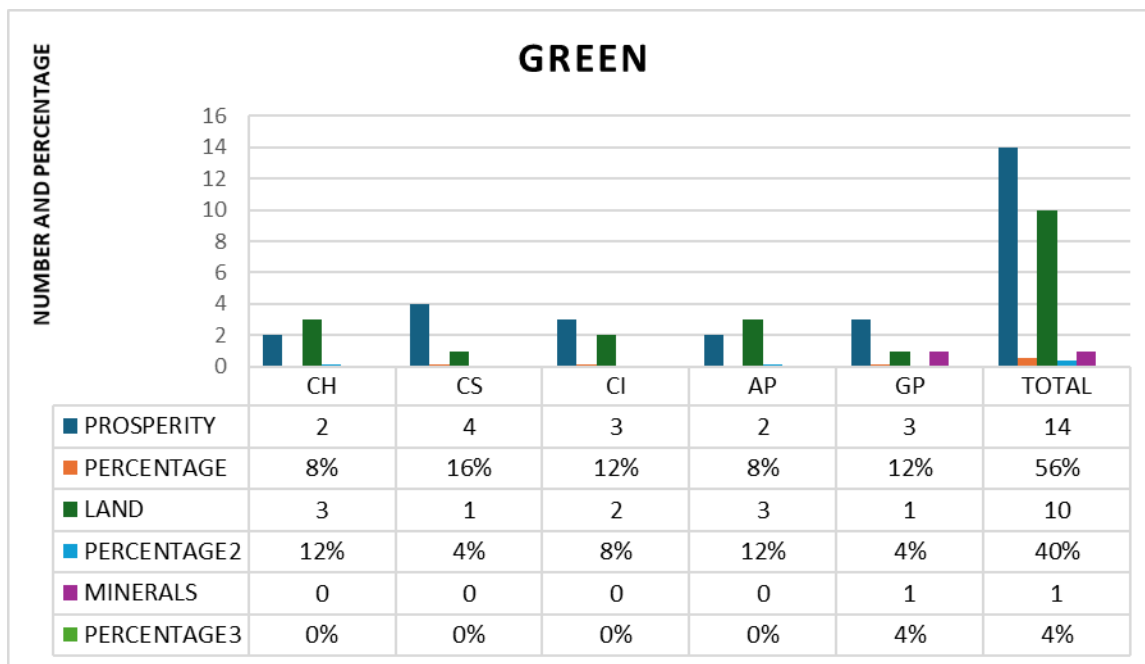
national flag to occupy a larger area as to resemble the founder of the nation since he was an important person.

Although the discussions of blue above suggest that the colour signifies numerous elements, the colour is concluded by 13 (52%) interviewees to signify rain when used on the Lesotho national flags. The significance of the blue colour to the Basotho is that it is a prayer for the rain.

4.1.2 Significance of the Green Colour

This section outlines the significance of the green colour that is found in the three Lesotho national flag versions. The responses of the interviewees about what the colour is considered signifying designate the sub-headings for the discussions. A summary showing the distribution of data is given below.

Bar Chart 12: Significance of the Green Colour



The presentation illustrates that 14 (56%) interviewees interpret green as signifying prosperity. Ten (40%) interviewees say that the colour represents land while one (4%) says that green represents minerals. The results are analysed under the given sub-headings below.

4.1.2.1 Prosperity

The respondents argue that the signifier green as used across the Lesotho national flags signifies prosperity. The opinion is expressed by 14 (56%) interviewees. The respondents suggest that the significance of the green colour is drawn from the national motto *khotso, pula, nala*. One interviewee elaborates that the interpretation is adapted from a Sesotho proverb, which says *khotso ha e le teng, pula e tla na, 'me nala e tla ba teng* 'when peace reigns, it will rain, and there will be abundance/prosperity'.

Prosperity, as the result of the presence of peace and rain, is signified by green across the Lesotho national flags. The signifier of prosperity on the flags is important because it indicates the sustenance of the Basotho, which is agriculture. This could be because, according to Ndlalambi (2022), agriculture is an important source of livelihood in Lesotho as more than 70% depend on agriculture for food or income. Agriculture is portrayed by resembling prosperity as its result of the flags.

4.1.2.2 Land

The interpretation of green by 10 (40%) respondents as summarised above also suggests that the colour symbolises land. The responses of the interviewees about green, which say that the colour signifies land, explain that this interpretation of the colour was given by the government upon the introduction of the first national flag. The significance of land is its role in agricultural production, that is, for

livestock to flourish there must be availability of grazing land. Also, for the crops to grow there must be fertile land for production.

Three (12%) respondents elaborate that the green colour across the flags represents the rich soil that is found in Lesotho. According to the interviewees, prosperity emanates from that rich soil. This means that the signifier *green* across the Lesotho national flags signifies rich soil. The significance of the rich soil is that it fosters the belief that Lesotho has got some agricultural potential.

4.1.2.3 Minerals

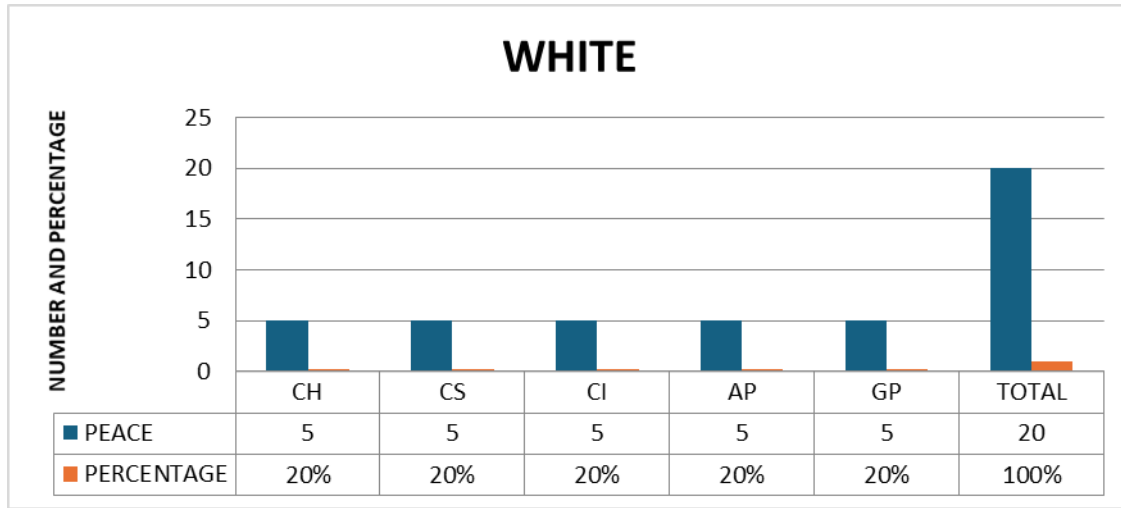
Additionally, the summary of data about green reflects that the colour symbolises minerals on the flags. One (four per cent) respondent argues that the significance of minerals as resembled by green across the flags is wealth because the wealth of Lesotho is in the form of minerals. Lesotho is rich in various minerals, as previously explained by Shelile (2024).

Based on the summary of data and the discussion of the results, 14 (56%) respondents suggest that the green colour symbolises prosperity. The significance of prosperity is that it portrays the sustenance of the Basotho, which is agriculture.

4.1.3 Significance of the White Colour

This section analyses the significance of the white colour, which is found across all three Lesotho national flags. The results of what the white colour signifies on the flags are discussed. To identify the sub-headings for the discussions, the responses are used. The summary of responses is also given in bar chart 13 below.

Bar Chart 13: Significance of the White Colour



The above illustration in bar chart 13 shows that all 25 (100%) interviewees are of the view that the white colour represents peace across the three Lesotho national flags. The responses of participants about the interpretation of white are discussed below.

4.1.3.1 Peace

Twenty-five (100%) respondents agree that white symbolises peace across the Lesotho national flags. The respondents specify that the white colour denotes the peace of the Basotho. This is because of the national motto *khotso, pula, nala*, which is represented in white, blue and green respectively across the national flags. The interviewees argue that the importance of white as one of the three national colours of Lesotho is that it serves as a prayer for peace of the nation.

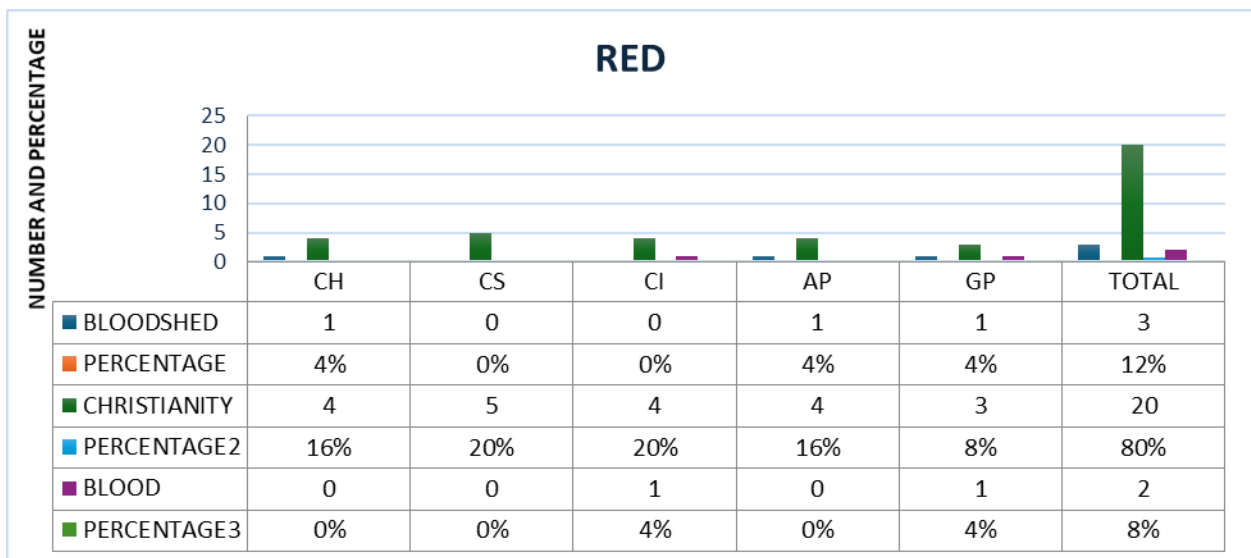
This is in line with the cultural beliefs of the Basotho pertaining to the previously discussed national motto. The importance of the signified is to encourage the love of peace amongst the people. This could be because the Basotho have been desired by Moshoeshe I to be a nation of peace, which persistently pursues peace. Thus,

under the Semiotic Theory, the white colour on the Lesotho national flags is a signifier of peace. The importance of the signified is that it denotes a payer for the peace of the nation.

4.1.4 Significance of the Red Colour

This section provides the significance of the red colour, which is found on the first Lesotho national flag. The section provides the sub-headings that show the results of the interviewees about what each group views on the significance of the colour. The bar chart 14 below illustrates the summary of data from the participants about the importance of the red colour.

Bar Chart 14: Significance of the Red Colour



The above summary in bar chart 14 reflects that three (12%) respondents view the red colour as signifying bloodshed. Two (8%) interviewees see the colour as resembling blood while 20 (80%) interviewees say that red signifies Christianity on the first national flag of Lesotho. The responses of the interviewees about the significance of the red colour are discussed in this manner:

4.1.4.1 Bloodshed

The results reflect that three (12%) participants argue that the red colour resembles bloodshed on the first national flag. The respondents emphasise that the blood, which was shed, is the blood of the Basotho. This marks the signified as important to the nation. The interviewees view the signifier of blood as important because it reflects the political history of Lesotho.

The violence and brutality that is reported to have taken place in Lesotho resulted in the spilling of the citizens' blood, as previously outlined in the background of the study. Therefore, the signified is important because it is a memorial of the lives of the Basotho that have been lost. The respondents also suggest that the ruling political parties use the colours to advocate their beliefs. According to the proponents of red signifying bloodshed, the colour on the flag condones a bloodbath in Lesotho. It encourages the people to spill blood without fear.

4.1.4.2 Blood

The opinion of two (eight per cent) respondents is that the red colour represents blood on the first Lesotho national flag. The interviewees interpret the colour on the flag in line with the global symbolism of red. According to McMahan (2005), humans do not deserve to be slain. As a result, the signified does not hold any significance on the Lesotho national flag.

4.1.4.3 Christianity

The summary of respondents also presents that red signifies Christianity. Twenty (80%) interviewees agree on this symbolism of red. Some interviewees reflect that the importance of red on the first national flag of Lesotho as a signifier of Christianity is to show the support of churches towards the BNP during the 1965

election period. The respondents also suggest that the signified is a belief of the then ruling party; hence, it is included on the flag design. The respondents reveal that they hold the churches accountable for the bloodshed, which took place at the time.

As a result, the interviewees question the decision to represent Christianity as a belief of the ruling party on the first Lesotho national flag. The interviewees disclose that the youth who were the non-partisans of the BNP took down and burned the national flag to ashes in the streets, following the military coup d'état. The respondents justify this act by explaining that the aim of the youth was to signify their dislike of the ousted government, which introduced the first national flag.

Although the perpetrators of the burning of the flag perceived the act as symbolic of their dislike of the BNP, Bojang (2024) says that burning a national flag is disconcerting and treasonous. This is because a national flag is an important symbol of identity for a nation. Consequently, there cannot be any importance that is attached to destroying the national flag.

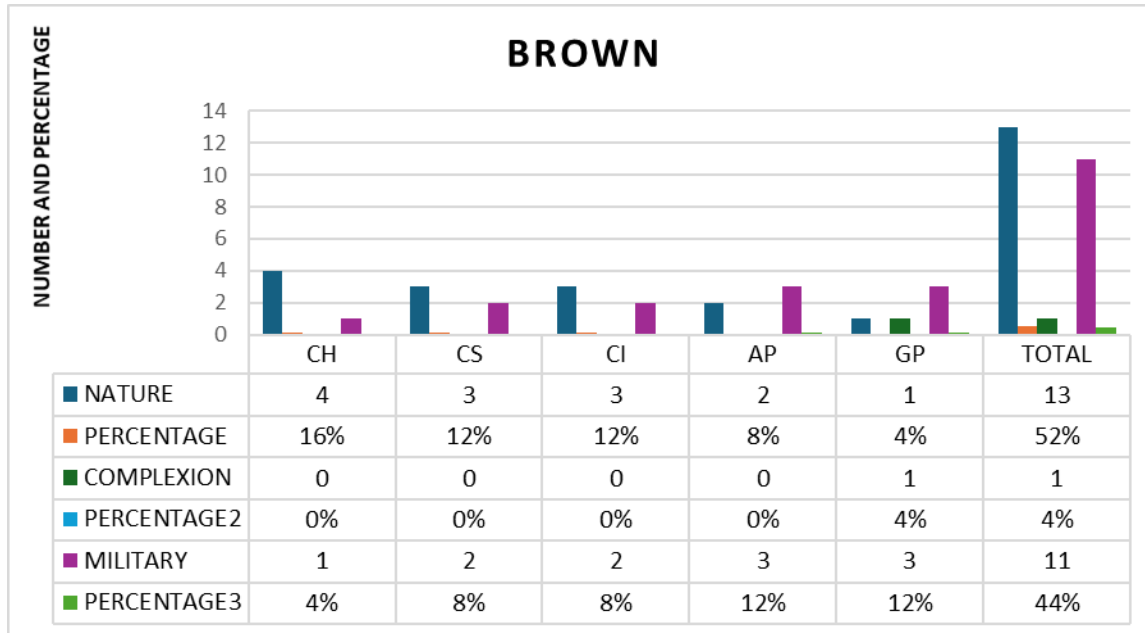
The summary of respondents and the analysis of the results in this section lead to the conclusion that the signifier red as used on the Lesotho national flag signifies Christianity. This view is expressed by 20 (80%) respondents. The significance of the signified is that it is a belief of the first post-independence government in Lesotho.

4.1.5 Significance of the Brown Colour

This section deliberates on the significance of the brown colour, which appears on the second Lesotho national flag. The section provides the sub-headings reflecting

the responses of the interviewees about what the colour signifies. A distribution of respondents is given in bar chart 15 below:

Bar Chart 15: Significance of the Brown Colour



The bar chart shows that 13 (52%) interviewees agree that brown is a natural colour. Eleven (44%) respondents say that the colour represents the military, and one (4%) interviewee says that the brown colour represents complexion. The results of the significance of brown are discussed below.

4.1.5.1 Natural Colour

Thirteen (52%) interviewees suggest that brown is used on the second national flag because it is a natural colour of the Coat of Arms. In accordance with the theory, the interviewees interpret the brown colour in the Lesotho national flag and a natural colour is signified. The importance of the signified on the flag is that it indicates the types of bovine, which have been present in Lesotho, whose skin has been used to create the shield.

Also, the importance of using the natural colour of the Coat of Arms is to boast the strength of the wood which makes the knobkerrie. This could be because, according to Duffield (2021), naturally dark woods are slow-growing and have notable natural strength. Portraying the natural colour of the wood on the flag could be to disclose the type of wood, which the Basotho used to make the knobkerrie.

4.1.5.2 Military

Eleven (44%) respondents are of the opinion that the brown colour signifies the military. One of the 11 (44%) interviewees point out that the brown colour is the colour of army uniform, and the military are represented through their uniform on the second national flag. The importance of the signified is the protection, which the military brings to the nation. This could be in accordance with Abidjanova (2020) that the military plays an important role in ensuring peace and stability in the society.

4.1.5.3 Complexion

One (four per cent) interviewee expresses the view that brown on the second national flag symbolises complexion. The respondent explains that the signified is important because it portrays *botho* 'humanness'. According to the respondent *batho* 'humans' are categorised by complexion. As a result, the importance of the signified is assurance that the Basotho are human beings. This could be because Jayaraman (2016) asserts that some Basotho only consider the nationals of Sotho countries to be humans. Thus, the importance of the signified is its role in asserting the humanness of the Basotho.

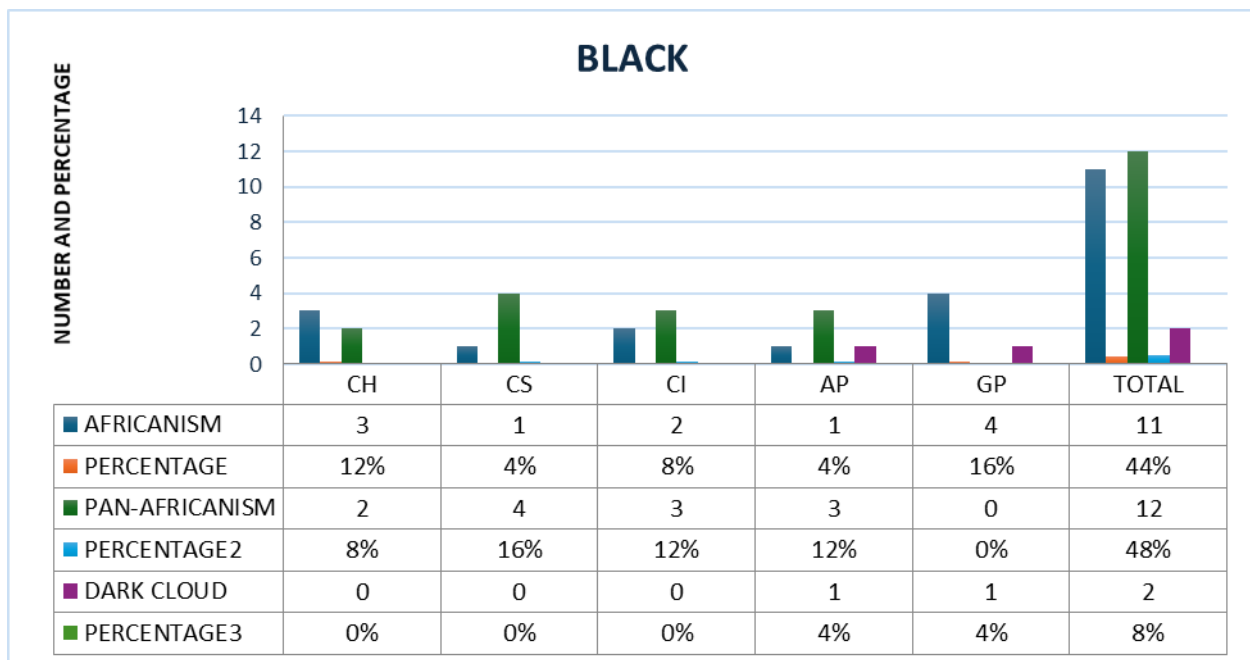
The discussions of the brown colour above lead to the conclusion that the signifier *brown* on the second national flag of Lesotho is the natural colour of the Coat of

Arms. Thirteen (52%) respondents share this view. The significance of the signified is that it boasts the strength of the Coat of Arms.

4.1.6 Significance of the Black Colour

This section gives the significance of the black colour that is used on the third Lesotho national flag. The sub-headings indicating the distribution of the interviewees on the significance of the black colour are given. Below is the bar chart showing the results of the respondents about what the black colour signifies.

Bar Chart 16: Significance of the Black Colour



The above summary shows that 11 (44%) interviewees say that the colour represents Africanism. Twelve (48%) respondents say that black represents pan-Africanism and two (8%) respondents say that black represents a dark cloud. The results about the significance of the black colour on the third Lesotho national flag are discussed.

4.1.6.1 Africanism

Eleven (44%) participants view the black colour in the Lesotho national flag, and the colour signifies an African nation. The respondents indicate that the importance of the signifier of Africanism is that it portrays a quality of the Basotho. The signifier portrays the quality of being a black nation. Additionally, the importance of the signified on the flag is the promotion of social and moral values. According to Idang (2015), the African nations prescribe respective beliefs and practices for the members of societies. As a result, the African cultures have strong moral considerations. The moral factors set the African nations apart from the rest of the world; hence, they are considered as important.

4.1.6.2 Pan-Africanism

The results of 12 (48%) interviewees reflect that black on the third national flag represents pan-Africanism. This view indicates that independence and constitutional democracy constitute pan-Africanism, which should be incorporated into the flag. The respondents argue that the black colour is used to represent *mokorotlo* on the flag to accommodate this belief of the government, which introduced the flag.

The significance of the signified on the third national flag is liberation from colonial rule. This could be because pan-Africanism seeks to eliminate external influence on the governance in Africa, as well as to empower the continent to fulfil its potential to independently provide for all the Africans. Eze (2013) asserts that the signified strives for independence and unity for the African people, amongst others. The researcher gathers that the importance of the signified to society includes the intra-African trade that Lesotho engages in.

4.1.6.3 Dark Cloud

The results also suggest that the black colour signifies a dark cloud. The opinion is expressed by two (eight per cent) respondents. These interviewees suggest that the signifier of a dark cloud does not hold any significance to the society. This is because the signified is the reminder of the tragic and violent experiences that have happened in the country. Therefore, the signifier of a dark cloud on the flag insinuates a reoccurrence of similar events in the country.

Based on the results and the discussions of the black colour that are given above, the study concludes that 12 (48%) respondents outline the significance of the black colour as representing pan-Africanism on the third Lesotho national flag. The respondents suggest that the importance of the signified is colonial liberation and intra-African trade.

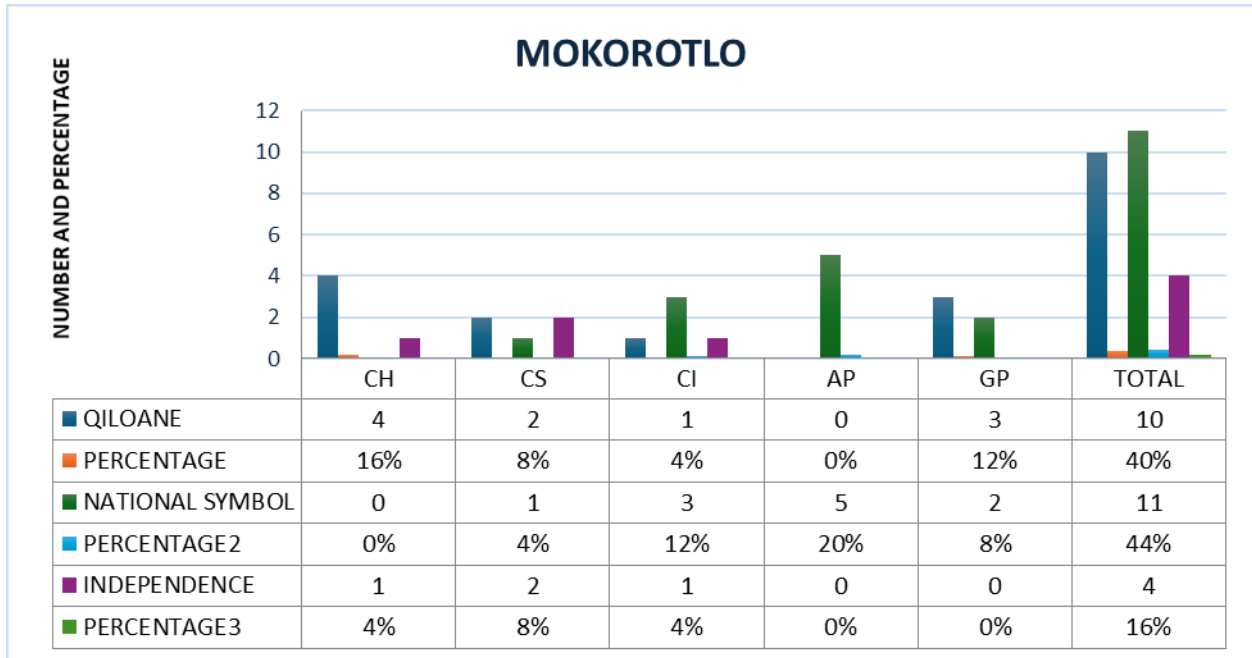
4.2 The Significance of the Symbols

This section discusses the significance of the *mokorotlo* and the Coat of Arms as the symbols that appear across the Lesotho national flag versions. Each symbol is discussed individually to determine its significance on the respective Lesotho national flag.

4.2.1 Mokorotlo

The section gives the significance of the *mokorotlo*, which is used on the first and the third Lesotho national flags. The sub-sections that follow provide the sub-headings indicating the distribution of the interviewees on what the significance of the *mokorotlo* is considered being. Below is the bar chart 17 showing the results of the respondents about the *mokorotlo*.

Bar Chart 17: Significance of Mokorotlo



The above summary shows that 10 (40%) interviewees say that *mokorotlo* signifies Qiloane. Four (16%) respondents say that the signifier represents independence whereas eleven (44%) respondents say that the *mokorotlo* is a national symbol for the Basotho. The significance of the symbols on the first and the third Lesotho national flags is analysed as follows:

4.2.1.1 National Symbol

Eleven (44%) respondents agree that *mokorotlo* is a national symbol. Four (16%) interviewees explain that *mokorotlo ke letšoao leo re tsebahalang ka lona machabeng* ‘*mokorotlo* is the symbol that we are globally identified with’. Consequently, the importance of *mokorotlo* on the first and the third national flags of Lesotho is that it distinguishes the Basotho nation. Thus, the significance of *mokorotlo* is national identity. Some respondents reflect that the importance of the signifier is prominence. This could be because the hat was previously worn by the

chiefs and men who were part of the chief's council. Rosenberg (2004) explains that *mokorotlo* has been linked with chieftainship as the traditional power structure in Lesotho.

4.2.1.2 *Qiloane*

Ten (40%) respondents suggest that *mokorotlo* signifies mount Qiloane. The mountain was near a fortress, Thaba-Bosiu, during the *Lifaqane*. Thaba-Bosiu is regarded as significant in the history of Lesotho. Pheko (2017) asserts that the Basotho were moved to the Qiloane plateau because of the *Lifaqane* attacks. The mountain was used as a sanctuary against foes. Consequently, the name was later changed to Thaba-Bosiu, which loosely translates to 'mountain at night' (Pheko, *ibid*).

In the view of the respondents, the fortress is an important part of the existence of the Basotho. The importance of Qiloane is protection against enemies. The history of the nation is represented on the first and the third national flags using *mokorotlo*. Since *mokorotlo* is designed in likeness with mount Qiloane, the significance of the symbol on the flags is a request to the ancestors to protect the nation in the same way that the Basotho have been protected during the *Lifaqane* attacks.

4.2.1.3 *Independence*

The remaining four (16%) interviewees are of the opinion that the *mokorotlo* signifies independence. The justification that the respondents give is that the first national flag of Lesotho resembles the nation's independence and the symbol, which is used in the design is the *mokorotlo*. Therefore, the third national flag of Lesotho also resembles independence because it uses the same symbol, *mokorotlo*.

One of the 4 (16%) respondents elaborates that the nation has longed for the return of the national flag because the second flag was a military design, not a national flag. The respondent clarifies that the national flag of Lesotho is recognised by the national symbol of *mokorotlo* because Lesotho is an independent country. Another respondent reflects that *mokorotlo* is the national symbol with which the Basotho were granted independence. Therefore, the *mokorotlo* should be featured on the national flag of Lesotho.

The symbol *mokorotlo* is used on the third Lesotho national flag, which was hoisted in the celebration of the country's forty years of independence. According to the respondents, *mokorotlo* signifies independence. One interviewee suggests that representing *mokorotlo* using the black colour signifies the nation of Rantšo. The connotation is that the Basotho are a black nation; therefore, the black *mokorotlo*, which is on the third Lesotho national flag, symbolises an African nation.

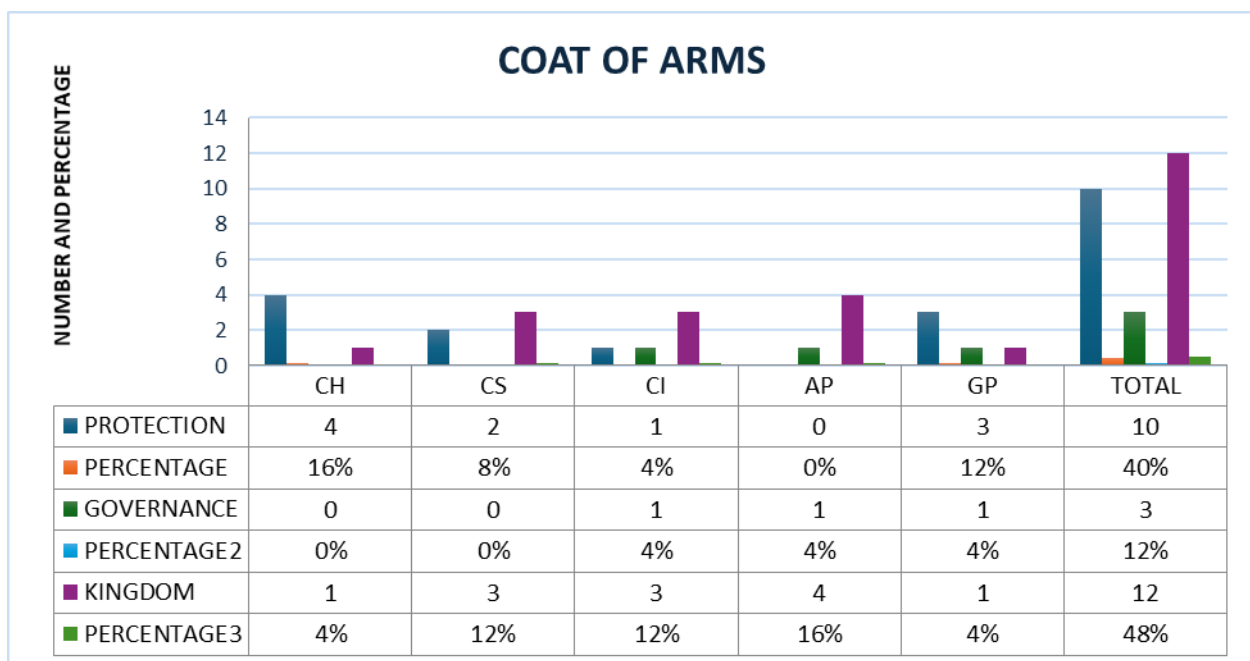
According to Harrison and Boyd (2018), a nation is characterised by having a government, amongst others. Referring to the Basotho as a nation implies that Lesotho is an independent country. The significance of the black *mokorotlo* on the third Lesotho national flag is that it portrays the independence of Lesotho. The signified is important because social and economic control of Lesotho rests on the Basotho. Also, the country controls its foreign policy. As a result, the power to grow the economy of Lesotho rests entirely on the nation.

The presentation of data and the discussions of the *mokorotlo* above precede the conclusion that the significance of the symbol on the first and the third Lesotho national flags is that it is a national symbol. Eleven (44%) respondents share this view. The significance of the symbol is prominence and national identity.

4.2.2 The Coat of Arms

This section analyses the significance of the Coat of Arms as used on the second Lesotho national flag. According to Jonovski (2018), the Coat of Arms is the main part of a heraldic achievement. It is centred on a shield that is accompanied by other designs and includes a motto. The importance of the Coat of Arms is analysed in terms of the interview results. The responses of the interviewees about what they consider the significance of the symbol to be designate the subheadings for the discussions. A summary showing the distribution of data is given below:

Bar Chart 18: Significance of the Coat of Arms



The presentation illustrates that 10 (40%) interviewees interpret the Coat of Arms as signifying protection. Three (12%) respondents say that the symbol resembles the state of governance in Lesotho. Additionally, 12 (48%) respondents say that the Coat of Arms represents being a kingdom. The results are analysed under the given sub-headings below.

4.2.2.1 *Protection*

The summary of the results above reflects that 10 (40%) interviewees view the Coat of Arms as a symbol of protection on the second Lesotho national flag. The respondents clarify that the shield is used on the national flag, together with the knobkerrie and the assegai. It is the national symbol of protection against foes. According to Rajan (2022), national security is important for the countries because it protects the nation against any threat that compromises the country's authority and jeopardises its stability. The importance of the Coat of Arms, therefore, is the security of Lesotho.

Some respondents put it differently that the shield is a symbol of Basotho warriors. The shield has protected the nation; hence, the Basotho are still an existing nation in the present day. The respondents agree that it was important to include the Coat of Arms on the second Lesotho national flag because it resembled the military as the governing authority. Some respondents justify differently that the Coat of Arms is a greater national symbol than *mokorotlo* is.

The respondents argue that the Coat of Arms is a safeguard for the Basotho, which they used to get to Thaba-Bosiu. They clarify that *mokorotlo* only became a national symbol following the historical event of when the mountain became a fortress for the nation. Hence, the interviewees are of the opinion that the Coat of Arms as used on the second Lesotho national flag is a significant national symbol, which reflects the protection of the Basotho.

Some respondents argue that the Coat of Arms as a symbol of protection was used on the national flag because the military wanted to instil a sense of security in the citizens, that is, the importance of the signifier is the protection of the nation. This is because the Coat of Arms has been the safeguard of the Basotho. In addition, the

interviewees elaborate that Mohlomi gave Moshoeshe I the knobkerrie, together with the shield and assegai. The instruction that Mohlomi gave to Moshoeshe I was that he should take the knobkerrie with him and use it to thresh sorghum for his nation. An additional importance of the signifier is the protection of the nation from hunger through threshing of sorghum.

Another interviewee associates the shield with *lehaqasi* ‘a swallow’. The respondent explains that the bird flies exceptionally high. The Basotho decided to make their shield in likeness of the bird. Collins, Tella and Colahan (2009) narrate that swallows are the fastest, high-flying birds. The Basotho may have decided to design their shield in likeness to the bird because the aforementioned characteristics resemble those of mount Qiloane, which was explained to increase in elevation. The interviewees suggest that the importance of the swallow on the national flag is fleeing from danger.

4.2.2.2 *Lesotho’s State of Governance*

Three (12%) interviewees reflect that the second Lesotho national flag shows an update of the country’s state of governance through the Coat of Arms. The respondents explain that the Coat of Arms symbolises the military because of its use on the military decoration. The military uses the symbol to signify their reign on the second national flag.

The respondents suggest that the symbol signifies *Lesotho le lecha le pholositsoeng ka mohlolo* ‘a new Lesotho, which was miraculously rescued’. The respondents explain that the military restored peace to the nation and saved the Basotho from bloodshed. That is the reason for referring to the country as a new Lesotho. The Coat of Arms signifies an update of governance on the second

Lesotho national flag. The importance of the signifier to the society is the beliefs of the military, such as maintenance of order and peace.

4.2.2.3 *Kingdom*

The remaining 12 (48%) interviewees say that the Coat of Arms resembles the Monarchy. According to some respondents, the Senate of Lesotho comprises 33 seats. Twenty-two of the seats are allocated to tribal chiefs while eleven seats are reserved for the nominees for the King. The Inter-Parliamentary Union (2018) supports this claim, which is made by the respondents. This view implies that the aggregation includes hereditary tribal chiefs because Lesotho is the kingdom. The significance of the signified is continuity of the dynasty of Lesotho. Also, the importance of the signified is the preservation of tribal identity. This is because the Basotho belong to the different tribes.

The respondents point out that Lesotho may have gained independence, but the Basotho have maintained some principles that are practised by the United Kingdom, such as being a monarch and observing the Royal Crown. The respondents reflect that Lesotho also uses the Coat of Arms as a national symbol on the matters relating to the identity of the Basotho, such as official letterheads. The view implies that the Coat of Arms is a sign of allegiance to the King.

In light of the summary of data and the discussions of the Coat of Arms above, the symbol is regarded by 12 (48%) interviewees as signifying a kingdom when used on the second Lesotho national flag. The significance of a kingdom is the continuity of dynasty and the continuity of tribal identity.

4.3 Conclusion

The chapter analysed the significance of the colours that are used in the three Lesotho national flag versions. We additionally discussed the significance of the *mokorotlo* and the Coat of Arms as the symbols that are used on the three national flags of Lesotho. Three (52%) respondents conclude that the blue colour signifies rain. The signifier is important because it is a prayer for the signified, rain. The signified is important because it is a necessity for success in agriculture. Fourteen (56%) interviewees say that the green colour symbolises prosperity. The significance of the signified is that it portrays the sustenance of the nation, which is agriculture.

Also, 25 (100%) interviewees say that the symbolism of white is peace. A signifier is important in that it encourages the nation to strive for peace. The reflection of 20 (80%) respondents presents the symbolism of the red colour as Christianity on the first national flag. The significance of the signifier is allegiance to churches, which have supported the government. Thirteen (52%) interviewees reflected that the brown colour, which is found on the second national flag, is a natural colour of the Coat of Arms. The importance of the signified is that it reveals the strength of the national symbol.

Also, 12 (48%) respondents say that black signifies pan-Africanism on the third national flag of Lesotho. The importance of the signified is the liberation of Lesotho from colonialism. These discussions of the *mokorotlo* conclude that the signifier on the first and the third Lesotho national flags is a national symbol. The view is shared by 11 (44%) respondents. The signifier is important to the Basotho because it shows prominence and national identity. Finally, the discussions of the Coat of Arms decide that the symbol on the second Lesotho national flag signifies

a kingdom, and 12 (48%) interviewees shared their opinions. The importance of the signified is the preservation of monarchy in Lesotho. Also, the signified preserves the tribal identities of the nation.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.0 Introduction

The chapter overviews what the study has dealt with. The summaries of the discussions, which have been made in the previous chapters, are given. This chapter also gives the challenges, which were encountered while carrying out this research. Finally, the chapter delineates the recommendations that the researcher makes upon completion of the study.

5.1 Summary of the Chapters

This section presents the general overview of the previous chapters of the study. The summaries of the different chapters are given under the appropriate subheadings as listed below.

5.1.1 Chapter One

The first chapter introduced the study. It provided the background to the main research question and its sub-questions. The background information highlighted the cultural and political history of Lesotho. The sub-questions focused on the evolution of national flags, the significance of national flags and the interpretation of national flags. This chapter also provided a review of related literature, which was organised thematically. This is such that it dealt with the interpretation and the significance of national flags. The review also covered the use of the Semiotic Theory in flag analysis.

The methodology, which was used in the study, was also given. This qualitative research study adopted an interpretive phenomenological research design because it focused on the lived experiences of the interviewees pertaining to the Lesotho national flags. Additionally, the chapter gave the theoretical framework. The theory, which was used for the analysis of data was the Semiotic Theory with focus on the three principles: signifier, context and the signified. The analysis interpreted the three national flag versions as signifiers in Lesotho and established what they signified.

5.1.2 Chapter Two

The chapter discussed the interpretations of the blue, green, and white colours which are found across the three Lesotho national flags. Additionally, the chapter analysed the red colour which is found on the first national flag, the brown colour which is found on the second national flag, and the black colour which is used on the third national flag. The colours were analysed using the Semiotic Theory. The colours were viewed as the signifiers on the Lesotho national flags to determine what they signified. According to 13 (52%) respondents; blue signifies rain. Fourteen (56%) respondents said that the green colour signifies prosperity.

Additionally, 25 (100%) interviewees agreed that white symbolises peace. The analysis also showed that the red colour as used on the first national flag signifies Christianity. The interpretation was given by 20 (80%) respondents. Moreover, the interpretation of brown, which was given by 13 (52%) interviewees, was that the colour has no symbolism on its own on the second national flag. The respondents argue that brown is the natural colour of the Coat of Arms. According to 12 (48%) interviewees, black signifies pan-Africanism on the third Lesotho national flag.

The findings showed that the national flag of Lesotho may be interpreted in terms of the national motto. Further, the researcher observed that the responses of the interviewees tend to differ based on who the flag was created by. The discussions showed that the interpretations of the colours, which are used on the Lesotho national flags, align with the global symbolism of the colours.

5.1.3 Chapter Three

The chapter presented the reasons for the evolution of the Lesotho national flags. It also discussed the impact of the evolution on society. The discussions reflected several reasons that prompted the national flags of Lesotho to evolve. Four (16%) interviewees mentioned that the first national flag was changed because of unruly behaviour. Seven (28%) respondents said that the flag changed because of the flag colours. One (4%) respondent said that it was changed out of cruelty while thirteen (52%) interviewees said that the flag was changed to mark a change in leadership.

Eighteen (72%) respondents said that the evolution of the second national flag was influenced by the change in political power. Seven (28%) interviewees said that the second flag changed to honour the country's forty years of independence. Amongst these reasons, the results showed that the evolution of the national flag of Lesotho was mainly influenced by the change in political power. This reason was prevalent for both the first and second changes to the flag. This is because the reason was cited by 13 (52%) respondents for the first national flag while 18 (72%) respondents gave this reason for the second national flag.

Another observation, which the researcher made from the analysis in this chapter, is that the reasons that influence the evolution of national flags may also be the impact of the evolution on the societies. This is the case in Lesotho. Additionally, the discussions showed that the reasons for the evolution of the Lesotho national

flag and the effects of the evolution on society align with those that often influence the evolution of national flags for other countries.

5.1.4 Chapter Four

The chapter analysed the significance of the colours that are used in the three Lesotho national flag versions. The chapter also analysed the significance of the symbols, which are used on the Lesotho national flags, including the *mokorotlo* and the Coat of Arms. In line with the theory, the colours and the symbols were discussed as the signifiers, and their symbolism was discussed as the signified. The study concluded that the colours of the three Lesotho national flags have a varying significance.

Thirteen (52%) respondents found the blue colour to signify rain. The signifier is important because it is a prayer for rain, which is essential for agricultural production. According to 14 (56%) interviewees, the green colour symbolises prosperity. The signified is important because it shows the livelihood of the Basotho. Moreover, 25 (100%) interviewees said that the white colour symbolises peace. The significance of the signifier is the prayer for the signified, peace. The signified is important because it encourages the nation to live in harmony.

The analysis also presented the symbolism of the red colour as Christianity on the first national flag. This view was expressed by 20 (80%) respondents. The significance of the signified is that it has been a belief of the BNP as the ruling party in 1966 in Lesotho. Thirteen (52%) interviewees perceived brown as a natural colour of the Coat of Arms. The importance of the natural colour is that it exhibits the strength of the Coat of Arms.

Also, 12 (48%) respondents said that black signifies pan-Africanism on the third national flag of Lesotho. The importance of the signified is the liberation of the Basotho nation and the empowerment of the country to provide for its people. Eleven (44%) respondents shared the view that the *mokorotlo* as a signifier on the first and the third Lesotho national flags is a national symbol.

Therefore, the significance of the symbol is national identity. The signified has also been a symbol of prominence in the Basotho. Finally, the discussions of the Coat of Arms concluded that the symbol on the second Lesotho national flag signifies a kingdom. The opinion was given by 12 (48%) interviewees. The significance of the kingdom is the maintenance of monarchy and tribal identities in Lesotho.

5.2 Challenges

The methodology section of the study outlined that the sample would be aggregated such that it avoids gender bias. The challenge, which the researcher encountered during data collection, was that the sample of females required for the research was difficult to reach. This was because the relevant field has been male-dominated in Lesotho. Therefore, the researcher took a longer time to arrive at the required sum of knowledgeable female participants for the study.

Additionally, most of the politicians who qualified to be interviewed for the study sample are retired. As a result, it took time for the researcher to locate such participants and to secure appointments with them. This is because the researcher had to accommodate the different schedules of the participants. Also, some individuals who were sampled under the Change Initiators (CI) category as the main influencers for changing the flags are deceased. Therefore, sampling the

participants for the CI category of the interviewees proved to be more challenging than the other categories.

5.3 Recommendations

The review of related literature reveals that there is a limited documentation on the Lesotho national flags. Therefore, the researcher recommends that further studies be carried out on the Lesotho national flags to determine the criteria, which were used when selecting the national flag design to adapt. Also, further research should be carried out to determine the criteria, which were used when deciding the national symbols to use across the three Lesotho national flag versions.

The current study only discussed the significance of the *mokorotlo* and the Coat of Arms as the Lesotho national symbols. As a result, further research remains to be carried out on the national symbols of Lesotho to find out their origin, and how they came to be nominated as the national symbols for the country. The scope of this study was limited to the national flags. Hence, further research may be carried out on the semiotic analysis of other flags and colours in Lesotho, such as the symbolism of district colours.

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