

**A VISUAL INTERPRETATION AND EXPRESSION OF THE CULTURAL
MEANING OF BASOTHO BLANKETS**

By

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DATE: 31 October 2024

DEDICATION

I dedicate this study to Six women who have been source of strength in my life.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I can never be more grateful to have women as pillars of strength in everything I have accomplished. First and foremost, my great-grandmother Mma Mosikari, my grandmother Motlagomang, Professor Nombeko Mpako, my wife and my ever-supporting mother, who I believe has moved mountains in order for me to be where I am today. A mother's love is unmeasurable, unconditional and strong. My mother, through everything she's been through, has taught me how to be strong. A successful story of how to be a mother and a father at the same time; **this is the reason why I love the word woman.**

To everyone who has contributed to moulding this fine gentleman, all gratitude goes to you.

ABSTRACT

A VISUAL INTERPRETATION AND EXPRESSION OF THE CULTURAL MEANING OF BASOTHO BLANKETS

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The study was practice-led, offering an interpretation of the cultural significance of the Basotho blanket through the medium of ceramics. It drew inspiration from Thabo Makhetha's innovative incorporation of Basotho blankets in her fashion designs. The research delves into the historical, cultural and symbolic dimensions of the Basotho people, focusing on the evolution, uses, meanings, connotations and overall importance of the Basotho blanket as a significant cultural artefact. The study was set within Professor Denis Ekpo's post-Africanism conceptual framework. As Ekpo advocates, post-Africanism guides the exploration, emphasising Africa's cultural renewal, a theme exemplified by Makhetha's contemporary interpretations and representation of the Basotho blanket. Michel Foucault's genealogical concept was applied to interpret the cultural significance of the Basotho blanket and its intricately woven symbols. The research methodology involved the phenomenological application of information from the researcher's lived experiences as a Mosotho. This included the knowledge acquired through formal interviews and informal conversations with key informants such as elders within and outside the researcher's family. The study culminated in creating a body of ceramic works featuring embossed and/or engraved representations of popular Basotho blanket symbols. The tangible outcome is a visual and tactile expression of the cultural exploration undertaken throughout the study.

Keywords: Cultural re-appropriation; Basotho blanket; Thabo Makhetha; Magdeline Odundo; Denis Ekpo; Michel Foucault; Ceramicware

TLHALOSO E BONAHALANG LE PONAHALO YA MOELELO WA SETSO WA DIKOBO TSA BASOTHO

KA

CALVIN TEBOHO MOSEKARE

KGUTSUFATSO

Boithuto bona bo eteleletswe pele, le ho fana ka tlhaloso ya bohlokwa ba setso sa kobo ya Basotho ka dirafshwa tsa letsopa. E ile ya kgothaletswa ke Thabo Makhetha wa ho kenya dikobo tsa Basotho mekgweng ya hae ya feshene. Patlisiso e shebana le nalane, setso le matshwao a Basotho, e tsepamisitse maikutlo kgolong, tlabollo, ditshebediso, meeelo, meeelo le bohlokwa ka kakaretso ba kobo ya Basotho jwalo ka bonono ba setso, meeelo, dikeletso le bohlokwa ka kakaretso ba kobo ya Basotho. Boithuto bona bo ne bo behilwe ka hara moralo wa mohopolo wa Moprofesara Denis Ekpo wa ka mora ditataiso tsa seAfrika tse totobatsang ntjhafatso ya setso sa Afrika, e leng morero o bontshitsweng ke tlhaloso le boemedi ba Makhetha ba mehlang ba kobo ya Basotho. Kgopolo ya leloko la Michel Foucault e ile ya sebediswa ho hlalosa bohlokwa ba setso sa kobo ya Basotho le matshwao a yona a lohilweng ka mokgwa o rarahaneng. Mokgwa wa ho etsa dipatlisiso o ne o kenyelletsa tshebediso e makatsang ya lesedi ho tswa boiphihlelong ba mofuputsi e le Mosotho. Sena se ne se kenyelletsa tsebo e fumanweng ka dipuisano tse hlophisitsweng le dipuisano tse sa rerwang le batsebi ba bohlokwa jwalo ka baholo ka hare le kante ho lelapa la mofuputsi. Boithuto bona bo fihlile sehlohlolong ka ho theha sehlopha sa mesebetsi ya letsopa e nang le ditshwantsho tse hatisitsweng le/kapa tse betlilweng tsa matshwao a tsebahalang a dikobo tsa Basotho. Sephetho se bonahalang ke ponahatso e bonahalang le e mahlahahlaha ya hlahlobo ya setso e entsweng thutong yohle.

Mantswe a bohlokwa: Kabo botjha ya Setso; Kobo ya Basotho; Thabo Makhetha; Magdeline Odundo; Denis Ekpo; Michel Foucault; Disebediswa tsa letsopa

IMIBONISO NENKCAZELO YOKUTOLIKA INTSINGISELO YENKCUBEKO YEENGUBO ZABESOTHO

NGU

CALVIN TEBOHO MOSEKARE

ISISHWANKATHELO

Esi sifundo saqhutywa kusetyenzwa, kutolikwa ukubaluleka okusekelwe kwinkcubeko yengubo yabeSotho ebonakala kwizihombisi ezenziwe ngodongwe olutshiwe luxutywe nezinye izithako (*ceramics*). Umdla wokwenza esi sifundo watsalwa kukufaka iingubo zabeSotho kuyilo lwezimbo zefashoni zikaThabo Makhetha. Uphando lungena kwiinkalo zembali, zenkcubeko zomelo (isimbolizimu) kubeSotho. Kugxininiswe ekuguquguqukeni, ekusetyenzisweni nakwiintsingiselo nokubaluleka jikelele kwengubo yabeSotho njengomsebenzi wezandla obalulekileyo nosekelwe kwinkcubeko. Isifundo esi sayilelwa kwisakhelo seengcinga sikaNjingalwazi Denis Ekpo apho kuphakanyiswa inkqubela yeAfrika. Njengoko uEkpo esitsho, ubuAfrika bamva (*ipost-Africanism*) bukhokela uphando, bugxininisa kuhlaziyo lwenkcubeko yama-Afrika, mxholo lowo uzekeliswa ngotoliko lukaMakhetha nokubonisa ngengubo yabeSotho. Kwasetyenziswa ingcinga kaMichel Foucault yokulanda umnombo ekutolikeni inkcubeko yokubaluleka kwengubo yabeSotho neesimboli zayo ezilukwe ngobuchule nononophelo olukhulu. Uphando lulandele uhlobo lokuchaza ulwazi ngokwefinominoloji, kuthathelwa kumava obomi bomphandi njengoMosotho. Oku kwaquka ulwazi olufunyenwe kwiindliwano ndlebe ezisesikweni neencoko ezingekho sikweni nabantu abanolwazi abafana neenkonde zosapho lomphandi nezangaphandle kosapho lwakhe. Isifundo saqakunjelwa ngokuyila ingqokelela yemisebenzi yezandla, ezenziwe ngomxube wodongwe olutshisiweyo neyahonjiswa ngeempawu neesimboli ezithanda ukusetyenziswa kwiingubo zabeSotho. Isiphumo esibambekayo yaba ngumboniso wokubonwayo nokuphathwayo okungenkcubeko nokuqhutywe ngexesha lophando.

Amagama aphambili:

Ukubuyiselwa kokubaluleka kwenkcubeko; Ingubo yabeSotho; uThabo Makhetha; uMagdeline Odundo; uDenis Ekpo; uMichel Foucault; Imisebenzi yezandla yomxube wodongwe olutshisiweyo

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

The study is an interpretation of the cultural meaning and significance of the Basotho blanket through ceramics. It was influenced by the works of Thabo Makhetha's use of Basotho blankets in her fashion designs. Makhetha attests that while she also draws and paints, her fashion-designed garments are what led her to fame. This research seeks to emulate Makhetha's contemporary use of traditional Basotho blankets by creating functional ceramic basins imprinted with some of the most famous Basotho blankets' meaningful motifs towards the preservation of cultural identity heritage. It seeks to unpack the history of the Basotho, in particular, the significance, use, meaning, connotations, and tracing the evolution of these blankets as significant but borrowed cultural objects.

The innovation of the Basotho blankets from the ones that were made from sheep skins to those woven with the wool still from sheep skin, and sometimes from synthetic fibre, aligns with Denis Ekpo's theory of Post Africanism that advocates for Africa's cultural renewal, and a move away from cultural burden and overload to global citizenship (2014). Ekpo advocates for innovative ways of life that seek to renew and elevate African epistemic thought and literature to a level where it would compare well with other global epistemologies. Some scholars take Ekpo's assertion literally and misinterpret it to mean that he is calling for Africans to move away from being Africans and copy Western or other so-called progressive cultures. My understanding of Ekpo's argument is that the existence of humankind is progressive, and ever-changing as aspects like climate change, human rights, and the fight against the extinction of original animal species present themselves. He is therefore not only calling for new ways of doing things but for a changed mindset, a critical and analytical mentality towards progress. Thus, my utilisation of Ekpo's theory in this study corroborates with my interpretation of his concepts of Africa's cultural renewal, and a move away from cultural burden and overload to global citizenship where African wisdom is elevated for other nations to learn from.

Through ethnographic data collection and phenomenological processes, Michel Foucault's genealogical concept (Bevir, 2008) is applied to trace and interpret the cultural meaning of the Basotho blankets and their various woven and imprinted

symbols. Genealogy explains how humans have developed and that the narrative is based on factual material and history (Bevir 2008: 263). Bevir further states that for Nietzsche and Foucault, Genealogy exposes the cherished ideas and entrenched practices of societies (Bevir 2008:264). The use of Genealogy in this research is not a definitive, but rather a visual interpretation of the Basotho blankets' cultural meaning. It does not merely focus on its history, but it shows its development from the historical 'Kaross', which was made from animal skins to its contemporary representation and use.

This research culminated in an exhibition entitled "Di a Boa dikobo tsa gosi" which translates to "The Basotho Kings' blankets are back". It was composed of a body of bathroom ceramic basins decorated with popular Basotho blanket symbols/motifs. Through symbolism, these ceramics were arranged in installations narrating the way of life of the Basotho traditional communities with a special focus on the Basotho kingdom's cultural way of life. The artistic influence that informed both the conceptualisation and creation processes of this study was from Thabo Makhetha, a Mosotho fashion designer, as well as Magdalene Odundo, a Kenyan-born ceramist. Makhetha reimagines the use of the blanket to fit a modern woman. She not only manipulates the traditional use of the blanket as a throwover but makes it fit beyond the cultural sphere that not only defines a Mosotho. Wearing a Makhetha garment does not necessarily make the wearer a Mosotho or even have any associations with their culture, nor does it make one even want to understand the cultural meaning behind the blanket, but it makes one enjoy the patterns, colours, design, and the aesthetic that comes with it.

In this study, I reimagine these blankets by imprinting the bathroom ceramic basins with various symbols found on them in a way that signifies or reappropriates their cultural meanings. I make use of meaningful symbols highlighting their cultural significance. Unlike Makhetha's use of the actual blanket and emphasising the various symbols when designing the garments, I only make use of the symbols to decorate the basins. Since 2020, amid the COVID-19 pandemic, when the fashion business faced slowdowns due to restrictions that compelled people to stay and work from home, Makhetha creatively designed bathroom tiles incorporating motifs inspired by Basotho blankets. This has made her recent work even more relevant

and now complements my bathroom basins. Thus, her work influenced my conceptualisation and enhanced my creative process, and her new adventure complements my ceramic works. This culminated in an exhibition entitled “Di a boa dikobo tsa Kgosi” meaning the King’s blankets are back.

Thus, our use of the Basotho blankets' motifs suggests the idea that cultures are on shifting ground and also comments on the move from the use of 'Kaross' (sheep skins) to the contemporary Basotho blanket. Odundo's well-travel experience, which influenced her art making immensely in which she incorporates different techniques learnt from various places she has been, has also influenced my art creation. She produces non-functional ceramic vessels that only serve as decorative objects similarly to the art for art's sake concept. She engages in an elaborate sequence of burnishing her vessels, followed by dipping them in a highly processed slip before several steps of firing. It is her elaborate finishing and the aesthetic look of her vessels that attracted me to her finishing process, which I employ in my ceramic basins. Thus, in my case, I employ several steps of firing these basins, which are functional objects, to make their use durable and apply a decorative process for aesthetically appealing artefacts.

Chapter One presents a general research layout and how it makes a cohesive argument. Chapter two presents a literature review tracing the evolution of the Basotho blankets and their imprinted motifs' significance, iconographic interpretation, and meaning. It also presents Ekpo's (2010, 2014, and 2021) interpretation of Post Africanist theory, the genealogical concept of historic evolution, and the fact-finding of epistemic creation. Chapter three presents the artistic influence of both the conceptualisation and creation processes of the emergent artworks which were presented at the solo exhibition. Chapter four presents a discursive analysis of the exploration of cultural identities and heritage through art, and it concludes by associating Ekpo's cultural renewal with cultural re-appropriation, where (cultural re-appropriation) is explained along with cultural appropriation. Chapter five is the conclusion and reflection on practice concerning artistic development and general academic research development, as well as the recommendation for further research.

1.1 THE CONTEXTUAL BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

The study seeks to present the cultural meaning of the Basotho blankets and how they have evolved from being borrowed cultural objects to upheld cultural identity signifiers. It elevates and highlights their significance towards the preservation of Basotho heritage. It traces the meaning, use, and importance of the Basotho blanket to the Basotho nation. The most common use of the blanket was and is still to be used for warmth, particularly during the snow in winter months. The blanket comprises 90% pure wool and 10% cotton. This means that it keeps the body at an even temperature even during the summer months. This is the reason why the Basothos wear the blanket throughout the year. This is because the blanket protects the skin from sunburn and the body from fluctuating temperatures. During the rainy season, the blanket acts as a raincoat and umbrella because wool does not readily absorb water.

In addition, the blanket is fire resistant, protecting the wearer from an open fire that the Basotho people use for cooking (Bredenkamp, 2006:13). When men wear the blanket, they fasten it on the right shoulder, leaving the right hand free for movement. For women, the blanket is wrapped around the waist to keep the womb warm and around the shoulders as a sign of respect while still allowing them to perform their daily chores. When children are born, the blanket is used to wrap the newborn. Boy initiates also wear the blanket as a sign and evidence that they have reached manhood. The coronation of a king is also mediated by the blanket, and the custom of wrapping a corpse with the blanket is still relevant. Most importantly, each blanket and its imprinted symbols denote different meanings and uses. The Basotho blankets measure 155cm X 165cm making it ideal to wear and not necessarily used for sleeping.

The focus of this study is not merely to regurgitate the history of the blanket but to show its evolutionary meaning and use through the ages. It also focuses on how the blanket remains relevant to the Basotho nation and is now used as a symbol representing a Mosotho. The blanket replaced the traditional animal skins, which were used for various functions before it was adopted for the same functions. The adoption of the blanket can be traced back to the 1800s when contact between Europeans and the Basotho occurred (Bredenkamp, 2006:12). The first blankets

brought by Europeans were white-smearred with red ochre. These blankets were a mitigating effort to meet the short supply of 'Kaross' of which there existed a shortage of animal skins, as well as to replace poor quality cotton wool blankets previously attempted (Bredenkamp, 2006:12). The blankets patterned with symbols/motifs were only introduced in 1899 in honour of Queen Victoria hence there are some known as the Queen Victoria blankets. Since then, the Basotho blankets imprinted with various meaningful symbols have always been noticeable cultural artefacts. Thus, this study does not only trace the cultural significance of the blanket but also seeks to re-appropriate its symbols toward meaningful restoration of values. This is done by integrating its traditional value with contemporary everyday use.

1.2 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The research investigates the contemporary interpretation and representation of the Basotho blankets while appraising their traditional uses and meaning. Furthermore, the ever-evolving meaning of the blanket through the ages is explored as a means to emulate Ekpo's concept of "Africa's cultural renewal". Ekpo terms this "the advantage of backwardness", which means the endeavour always to invent the "new" rather than seeking validity and inventing the "new" Ekpo (2010:184). He advises reappropriating what can be offered to the world to signify pertinent and innovative cultural values rather than dwelling on regressive aspects. Makhetha's repackaging of the Basotho blanket for it to be used in different ways worldwide is one such example of elevating cultural objects and showcasing their value. The practical component of this research sought to reappropriate the use of the Basotho blanket by highlighting the meanings of the symbols imprinted on them as a way of elevating their cultural significance.

Thus, this research seeks to redress issues associated with "cultural overload" and "Afrophilia", as expressed by Ekpo through the work of Makhetha and mine, by highlighting elements to be re-appropriated. Her work is used in this research as a model of a contemporary way of viewing and using the blanket, as is interpreted in my exhibition. Genealogy is used to trace the history of the blanket, and Post Africanism is used to explain the phenomenon that is currently at play. Both Makhetha and my way of repackaging the Basotho blanket can be considered a

post-modern way of expression and do not necessarily seek the 'new' or validity from the West.

1.3 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Genealogy is used to explain the evolution of the blankets' design and their significance to the Basotho people. Genealogy explains how humans have developed and that the narrative is based on factual material and history (Bevir 2008:263). The blankets' evolution through the years is explored and represented using bathroom basins. Nietzsche argues that we must enquire critically into the historical origins of our morality to trace how we have evolved. This has been echoed in an African proverb that says, 'for one to move forward, you need to look back'. Such quotes come from the very same oral literature that has informed this study. This means that, in order not to repeat past mistakes, we need to learn from the past. Nietzsche explains that the emergence of an object, its usefulness, its practical application, and incorporation into a system of meaning are *Toto coelo* separate. This means that anything in existence is continually interpreted anew, transformed, and given a new purpose. Overpowering and domination consist of a process of re-interpretation and adjustments in which the former meaning and purpose of the object must be obscured or completely obliterated (Nietzsche, 2006:51).

This clearly defines what Makhetha has done with her interpretation and use of the Basotho blanket and what I intend to do by rendering it anew with ceramics. Post-Africanism is used to explain the modernisation of the Basotho blanket and its relevance in this day and era through my ceramics. The blanket's symbols are imprinted on the basins in a modernistic manner where even a non-Mosotho can enjoy and appreciate their aesthetic appeal. I counter-argue post-Africanism to show that Africans have always been open to other cultures to modernise themselves and are collaborative, not in the sense Ekpo (2010) puts it that Africans have Afrophilia and always hide behind 'African solutions by Africans'.

1.4 ARTISTIC INFLUENCE

Odundo uses symbolism in her work. She has taken a functional object and turned it into an ornament to be only appreciated for its aesthetic appeal. Using traditional

creation methods and shifting the presentation of these African vessels elevates them towards viewing African ceramics as art in their own right and deserving of being showcased at galleries rather than being displayed for functional use and/or as crafts. This approach gives Odundo's vessels a new and different outlook, thereby elevating them to high art. This approach appeals to me, and I decided to transform a common and ordinary object into something aesthetically appealing. Makhetha's work, on the other hand, influences my conceptualisation, which highlights the meaning and significance of the Basotho cultural symbols. We both elevate these blankets to be seen differently while telling the Basotho people's way of life from which the societies can take. I employ Makhetha's approach in using the blanket's symbols and designs, and I incorporate them to decorate my basins to fit a modern society towards "Africa's cultural renewal" (Ekpo 2010).

In my solo exhibition, the blanket is portrayed metaphorically to depict the Basotho people's cultural principles of enculturation of children, including the role of a Basotho Kingdom as an example of a way of life worth emulating. The blanket symbols are imprinted on the basins through lustre firing, metaphorically depicting being worn by the basins similarly to how the human body wears the blanket to keep the vessel warm. The worth, in this case, is symbolically its newness and the meaning of these symbols. Poone and Seanamarena blankets worn by kings and queens were presented as large-sized sculptures narrating the significance of the role of the Basotho Kingdom in the welfare and upkeep of Basotho principles.

1.5 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The importance of this study is to highlight the phenomenon that is currently happening not only in South Africa but the rest of Africa. African people are not merely reclaiming their history or consuming it. They are becoming contributors to the narrative. There is a strong shift happening in the art space that needs to be recorded and written about. Nietzsche frames it in Genealogy that history is subjective, and happenings that writers feel are not worth recording are negated. It is up to African scholars to write a good story about Africa, and within that story, bad things happen in parallel to the good. As much as bad things are projected, so should good things. This study does not aim to regurgitate history but seeks to

show the progression of the Basotho blanket through and by a Mosotho to the world. The gains made may be small but significant to the ones involved in that change. The progression from wearing skins to the blanket and now using the designs beyond the initial aim of accommodating a modern Mosotho and for the cultural artefact to be enjoyed by the world is significant. The study also contributes to African history, Art, and Design by examining the culture, tradition, and house designs related to the blanket designs.

As a researcher in this study, I am a practitioner seeking to weave together the theory and practice of scholars and African ceramists who actively comment on or participate in the dialogue that involves the African continent (Gray & Malins, 2004:23). Robson (2003) defines the term 'practitioner-researcher' as "someone who holds down a job in some area and at the same time carries out ... inquiry which is of relevance to the job". The rewards of being a practitioner-researcher come from the combination of technical and material knowledge, which is termed 'insider' knowledge. Such knowledge lends credibility and trustworthiness to the research as opposed to an external researcher with no first-hand knowledge (Gray & Malins, 2004:23).

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Chapter two presents a literature review and theoretical framework in support of the argument and objectives of this study. The literature review seeks to track the historical significance and meaning of the Basotho blanket as a valuable cultural artefact. The information in this literature review was supplemented by oral literature from data collection, which was achieved through interviewing elite informants from selected communities and is presented in detail under the methodology of this study discussed in chapter three. Thus, the literature review drew upon oral literature, corroborating its findings where feasible with existing written sources. Through this process, the researcher sought to unpack the cultural meanings of the symbolism imprinted on the various ceremonial blankets from an “insider's” point of view.

The concept of Genealogy, as espoused by Foucault, is presented to explain the importance of Basotho blankets as cultural objects set within cultural appropriation and re-appropriation and about Makheta’s work. The chapter also presents a Theoretical framework in which iconographic meanings of the blankets' imprinted designs are explained using Genealogy towards the post-Africanism process.

2.1 EVOLUTION AND THE USE OF BASOTHO BLANKET

The Basotho blanket remains a common sight in Lesotho and a significant cultural object. Despite being initially a borrowed cultural object, it came into existence after being first worn by King Moshoeshe I, who received it as a gift from a trader. King Moshoeshe I was born in Lepoqo in 1786-1870 in Lesotho to Mokhachane and Kholu, his mother. Mokhachane was the chief of one of the Basotho clans in Lesotho. The second encounter was with the contact between the Basotho and Europeans during the nineteenth century. The contact between the Europeans and Basotho during the late eighteenth century saw Europeans coming with their cultural objects and different enterprises. Blankets were some of their useful and functional household objects and were meant for sleeping instead of being worn as throwovers. Karstel (1991:18) speaks of how the first blankets were imported from England by Fraser's firm, which was the first manufacturer of the blankets.

The Macmillan English Dictionary explains acculturate “as to change your ideas and behaviour so that you start to become part of another culture” (2007:11). This would be a better definition of what the Basotho did when adopting and borrowing the blanket as part of their tradition. The blanket was then adopted by King Moshoeshoe I, and it replaced the ‘Kaross’, which was made from animal skins. Acculturation did not happen solely because of trading and/or Moshoeshoe I, receiving the blanket as a present, but was also pushed by societal and environmental factors that Lesotho faced. Four of the most important factors were population growth, population survival, the scarcity of animal skins, and the cold climate. According to Karstel (1995:198), the scarcity of animal skins was a result of population growth, continental draught, and rinderpest that happened in 1897. This would prompt any leader to look elsewhere for the betterment of his nation so King Moshoeshoe I adapted the blanket as a cultural symbol and used it as a throwover similar to the ‘Kaross’.

The Basotho culture, like most African cultures, has always relied on the division of labour and cooperation in the running of the households. Men took care of the livestock whilst the women cultivated the fields and did basic household chores such as fetching water from rivers and firewood from the forest for domestic use. When boys come of age, they are taught courage, strength, and how to provide for their families, while girls learn how to take care of household needs. Elders gathered the children in their respective villages and taught them the values of life through life stories, some referencing animals’ ways of life. Thus, the construction of the community was rooted in cooperation and sustenance of a united community life, shared by each other’s contribution, says Lebe Mohale (South African Travel website [accessed:2023/01/20]).

Europeans came to Lesotho after they had been residing in Southern Africa for some time, and their influence is evident in the majority of Basotho joining catholic missionary churches and wearing European clothes. Karstel (1995:196) recalls how Moshoeshoe I would appear wearing European clothes on Sunday and back to traditional ‘Kaross’ during the week. The Basotho wore a wide range of animal skins, but missionaries thought the skins posed several challenges, including

leading to the extinction of wild animal life. Clothes are a very important visual communicator as observed in the traditional wearing of the different animal skins by Basotho people. Kings wore 'Kaross' made from leopards' skins as a throw-over, whilst a commoner wore a jackal skin, shepherds a sheep skin together with women in the community, and men wore ox skins. The ox skin would have a loosely closed front, to allow movement for daily duties just as the modern-day blanket is draped to free the wearer's arms and hands. Furthermore, the stipe is a cloak that is worn like a coat, reaches ankle length, and is trimmed neatly by an expert craftsman, with a thin leather made from an ox skin (Karstel 1991:18). Furthermore, women would wear sheep skins over one of their shoulders whilst the other shoulder is left bare. The other leg of the sheepskin went under the armpit to tie a knot.

The evolution of the blanket from being just a day-to-day throw-over was a consideration of the Basotho culture, customs, and heritage. The first blankets were white, smeared with red ochre Karstel (1995:197), and were later replaced with the now Mbalo Matrosse grey with four black lines, as shown in Figure 2.8. The Basotho blankets were worn in different settings, surroundings, and circumstances. They were worn in the humblest surroundings such as normal life of doing chores to important ceremonies like the coronation of kings and sacred places like burials. Wearing the blanket provides one with stature, importance, and recognition, and these blankets were worn with symbolism, hence empowering the wearer to walk with a sense of elegance and righteousness (Dan Basko 2007: 23-32).

The Basotho blankets' symbolic designs were later incorporated, transforming the single-coloured blankets into colourful ones with several meaningful motifs. The first blanket motifs were taken from the land's prominent forms, such as Litema (geometric patterns). These geometric patterns were derived from ploughing and cultivated land which could be seen from an aerial view when standing at the top of the mountain as Lesotho is within and surrounded by mountains land (Figure 2.1). Alan Taylor (2014) makes the point that Lesotho is 1,400 meters above sea level and that it is a highland plateau. The first blankets' designs were adopted from the natural oxides which were used to decorate houses by women.



Figure 2.1: Bob Gibbons, 48.8 x 32.5 cm, 2014



Figure 2.2: Litemas on traditional houses (Geometric design)

Matsooana Sekokotoana (2020) asserts that the art of *Litema* was done by women, and it was a woman's pride to inscribe these designs on their houses. *Litema* designs were also derived from or influenced by other everyday forms/patterns such as girl's plated hair, birds' wings, maize cob, and mountainous formation, as can be seen in Figure 2.2 simplified patterns. Thus, the *Litema* geometric forms

were first inspired by the cultivated landscape forms and later derived from and influenced by various daily observed patterns.



Figure 2.3: Queen Elizabeth II in her coronation crown (1953), and Honeycomb formation



Figure 2.4: Seanamarena blanket (to swear by the King)

Other significant motifs were incorporated later derived from various encounters such as symbols of the crown of Queens of England, honeycomb, *kop* (card spade

symbol), the Basotho straw hat that resembles a mountain pick, and corncob to mention just a few figures 2.3 to 2.6.



Figure 2.5: Queen Elizabeth II's crown and the Basotho straw hat that also reference a mountain

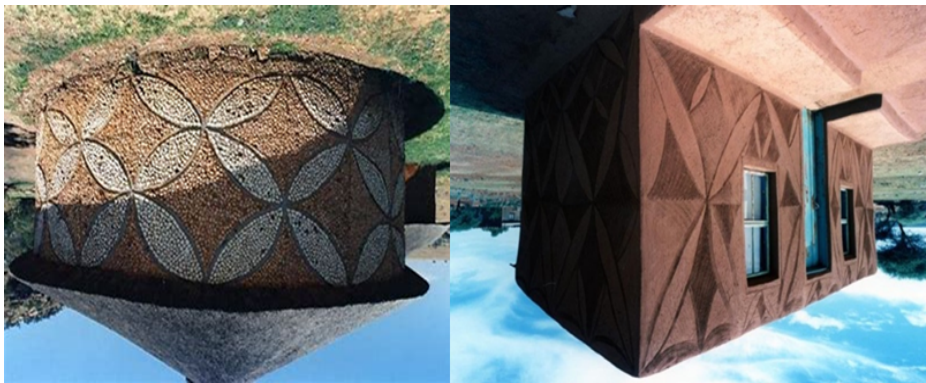


Figure 2.6: Basotho traditional house decorations with Litema



Figure 2.7: Basotho traditional house decorations referencing the Basotho straw hat

The first blankets did not have motifs until towards the end of the eighteenth century to almost the beginning of the nineteenth century when various motifs were incorporated (Karstel 1995:197).

2.2 ICONOGRAPHIC MEANING OF THE BLANKETS' SYMBOLS

The origins of the traditional Lesotho blanket date back to 1860, when European traders gifted King Moshoeshe I with a woollen blanket. The king was very happy with it, and he abandoned the leopard skin 'Kaross' he had been wearing before he was gifted with the blanket. This set a trend among his subjects and has continued to the present day. These blankets are now a central part of daily life and illuminate important events, ranging from births to marriages, deaths and coronations. These Basotho heritage blankets have a deep cultural significance and meaning to the Basotho people. They are imbued with cultural symbolism, telling stories of the Mountainous Kingdom, which Lesotho is known to be. Their designs and motifs symbolise authority, honour, righteousness, respect, fertility, growth, prosperity, protection, good health and wealth. They are woven in a thick weave that is soft, warm and repels rain. Over time, the blanket became rooted in the Basotho culture not only as a shelter against the cold but as a bold and beautiful expression of Basotho virtues, status, and unity Basko (2007:23-32) and Karstel (1995:198).

2.2.1 Mbalo Mattross

The Mbalo Mattross blanket is one of the oldest blankets, which replaced the first one, which was white smeared with red ochre and was and still is used for rituals. White represented the beginning, purity, and innocence Faribault Mill (2022). It is unknown how these first blankets arrived in Lesotho, but speculation is that they arrived through trade with the Zulu people and sailors from the Natal region of South Africa. Mbalo Mattross blankets are plain, one colour, and have no motifs except for the four black lines on each side of the vertical borders (Figure 2.8). The Mbalo Mattross is the size of a double bed and was and is still used to wrap the corpse of a king before burial (Bredenkamp 2006:14).

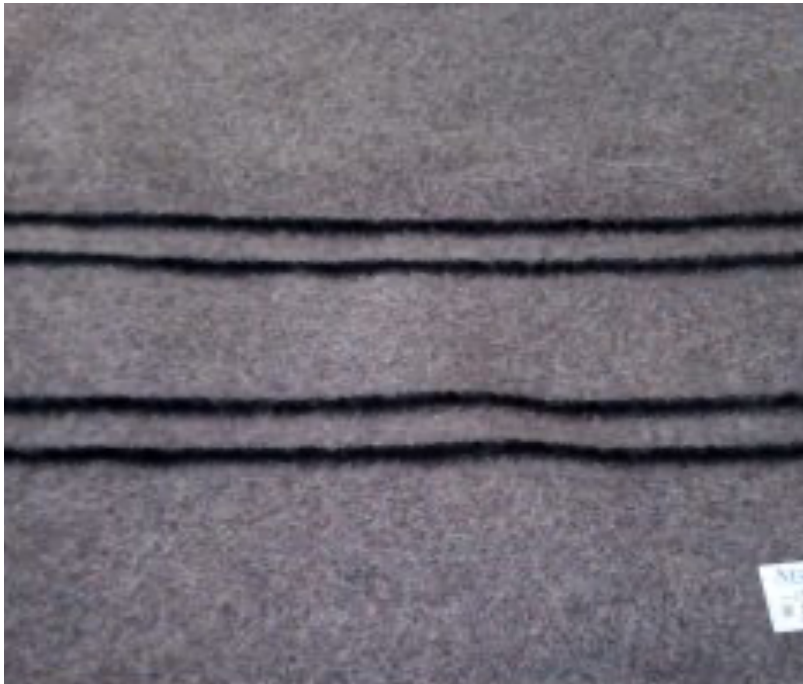


Figure 2.8: Mbalo Mattross, C, Mosekare, 2021

The black stripes symbolise the end of life and represent mourning. Although the Mbalo Mattross does not have geometric-shaped designs, the symbol that ties the blanket to the rest is the four straight lines on the two opposite borders. The white and grey blankets with black lines are referred to as “*kobo ke bophelo*” meaning life and death, as lamented by the owner of Aranda Textiles that “these blankets represent a full cycle of life” (Karstel 1995:218)

2.2.2 Seanamarena blanket

The Seanamarena blanket means to ‘swear by the chiefs’. The blanket presents various symbols, as seen in Figures 2.4 and 2.9. The blanket represents authority, influence, highness, respect, and leadership; hence, it is bestowed to kings, queens, chiefs, dignitaries, and prominent people Karstel (1991:26). The first pattern references a honeycomb formation and is used in the Seanamarena blanket as the unifying symbol or background. Bees are known to be hard-working and are usually compared to busy people in the Sesotho saying “*phathahane joalo ka notsh*” similar to the English expression “busy like a bee” which goes back from time immemorial.



Figure 2.9: Seanamarena blankets (to swear by the King)

Similar to Isaac Watts' poem for children, the Basotho encourage their offspring to be diligent and resilient. Hence, the honeycomb formation integrates other culturally meaningful motifs in the Seanamarena blanket.

How doth the little busy bee
Improve each shining hour,
And gather honey all-day
From every opening flower!
(Isaac Watts 1674-1748).

Thus, by referencing and using honeycomb in this way, the Basotho people are cognisant of these fundamental attributes associated with the bees to build a nation and instil pride.

The second motif represents a human heart and or the spades for the card game. The Ace is considered to be the highest and most valued ranking card among the batch of the spades. The Ace of Spade in Lesotho is called '*kopo*', meaning 'head' from an Afrikaans term *kop*. The head represents power and authority, similar to

the heart that is required to keep the body and soul alive. Thus, whichever way one sees this motif, it represents life, valuable intercommunal existence, and wisdom, which are signs of power and authority. Power comes from the king who heads his subjects, and swore to protect his nation represented by the batch of spades. The *'kopo'*, which is the *'Ace'*, is the first card in a stack of cards. Thus, the king is regarded as the *'First citizen'*. The spade symbol is also found on the queen's crown, thus denoting righteousness, honour, and protection. In addition, there exist several African proverbs about the importance of the heart as a metaphor for strength and resilience. These include sayings such as:

Pelo e ikhohomosang e ka pholoha ho hlōleha ho akaretsang hobane ho hlōleha ho joalo ha ho ipake boikhohomoso ba eona.

This means that a “proud heart can survive a general failure because such a failure does not prick its pride”. Thus, every motif was chosen as a meaningful reminder of communal and constructive moral-fibre

When the Afrikaners wanted to invade Lesotho, King Moshoeshe I went to Britain to ask the Queen to protect the Basotho kingdom/nation from that imminent invasion. The Queen agreed, and King Moshoeshe I returned home to inform his people that they were being protected by the Queen, and the Lesotho kingdom was then declared a British protectorate. A protectorate is a country that is controlled and protected by a powerful country. When King Moshoeshe I returned from Britain, he explained the protectorate agreement by the queen and said, “Britain is spreading its power under the leadership of Queen Victoria like a blanket covering or protecting Lesotho and its people from the intrusive invasion of the Afrikaners”. This agreement inspired the naming of the Seanamarena blanket to Victoria England I and 2 blankets in different colours, as seen in Figures 2.4 and 2.9. The spade also represents the cosmic tree, epitomising the connection of several important aspects of existence. According to the Asian mythology of South Eastern Asia, the cosmic tree is believed to be uniting the sky with the earth, symbolising the wholeness of the universe (Oxford University Press (2002) [Accessed: 20/08/2023]).

A star exists in the centre of the heart/spade motif, and it also generally has several significant meanings. Within the Basotho mythology, it is made of shapes like a mealie-cob. For example, various stars are associated with different seasons, such as ploughing, cultivation, and reaping. Basothos believe that the *dithutlwa*, which are the bright stars that can be easily seen with the naked eye, called Giraffe stars in English, indicate the cultivating season. Another significant meaning is associated with *Naka* (horn), one of the brightest stars in the night sky, referred to in English as Canopus star, which has to be identified, and chiefs would award a cow to Naka's first spotter. After the spotter has come forward the chief would call his medicine men to predict whether the new season would be good or bad so that the nation is not found unprepared.

The third symbol on the blanket represents *Fleur-de-lis*, which is a French name for a flower or lily. It is believed that the *Fleur-de-lis* symbol was adopted from France, where it represented faith, wisdom, and chivalry. Thus, this symbol on the crown of the queens of England also represents loyalty and devotion to serving the nation by the kings and queens. In the Basotho nation, the *Fleur-de-lis* represents the Queen of England being honoured for agreeing to protect the Basotho kingdom; hence, the seanamarena is associated with kings and queens and is a prestigious cultural object. In the seanamarena blanket, the *Fleur-de-lis* motif is hybridised with the Basotho hat-stylised symbol. This could mean King Moshoeshoe accepted the relationship, likening it to a marriage between the United Kingdom and the Kingdom of Lesotho. The top part of the Basotho hat, which also resembles that of the queen's crown, is called *Thaba Qiloane* in Sesotho, which is the name of a mountain. *Thaba Qiloane* is popularly known by Basothos for being an enabler for many wars that were won under the leadership of King Moshoeshoe I. Hence, he is also buried there at *Thaba Qiloane* mountain.

The fourth symbol is made from four corn cobs attached to the four hearts and four *Fleur-de-lis* motifs forming a circular formation around the cobs patterns resembling a mandala. A mandala in Eastern religion represents the spiritual journey, starting from the outside to the inner core, through layers. According to Watts (2000), a mandala is a picture that tells a story. It is a sacred space, often a circle, that reveals some inner truth about people and the world. Therefore,

seanamarena blankets carry various significant meanings encompassing not only Basotho cultural values but solemn principles of a united nation.

As a result of the significance of the seanamarena blanket, the Basotho people composed a song similar to a national anthem that is sung at most ceremonial events and acknowledges success, prosperity, and any kind of excellent achievement. The blanket functions as a collective signifier of identity and empowers the Basotho people. The reference to the Blanket in the song laments its importance and suggests the adoration of the blanket as a cultural symbol of unity, respect, and patriotism (Ball, 1990: 139-141).

Ntate nthekele, Seanamarena,
Ntate nthekele, Seanamarena,
Ntate nthekele, Seanamarena, kobo ya bogadi, Seanamarena,
le nna kae batla, Seanamarena,
ke rata go e apara, Seanamarena,
ke tshaba di puo, Seanamarena,
tsa batho, Seanamarena, ga di fele, Seanamarena'
kobo ya bogadi, Seanamarena, (First version)

English version
Father, please buy me a blanket,
Father, please buy me a blanket,
Father, please buy me a blanket, a marriage blanket
I also want the blanket,
I would love to adorn it,
I am afraid people's jealousy,
People's jealousy never ends,
Marriage blanket

As people started getting Western education and qualifications the song became synonymous with celebrating educational achievements and the blanket held a similar association with the academic graduation gown. Thus, the meaning of the blanket is associated with protection, adorning, empowerment, and honour, hence the blanket's association includes progress related to education. It can be said that it is a symbol of power and achievement. The study does not aim to trace the gradual evolution of the blanket but seeks to highlight the unhighlighted and

unexplored gaps found during the blanket's evolution and written history (Ball, 1990: 139-141). The corn is also found on the next blanket called Poone.

2.2.3 The Poone blanket

The Poone means mealie cob and the blanket represents corn as a staple food of Lesotho. It refers to the utmost importance that people must work the land for the nation to be fed. The blanket was made famous by the miners who wore the blanket not only as a representation of being Mosothos but as a representation of the one who works the land Karstel (1991:26). The miners made it fashionable after the unearthing of diamonds and Basotho men being labourers and working in the mines. They bought readymade blankets from European traders and became a status symbol as the Basotho people started doing away with animal skins.



Figure 2.10: Poone, (mielie/corncob) blanket, Aranda textiles

[Accessed: 20/01/2022]

The corn represents wealth, fertility, and growth as they are manifested from being well-fed. The blue colour speaks to good fortune and prosperity. The visual

symbols can also be seen in traditional Basotho homesteads' external wall paintings.

2.2.4 Spitfire Basotho Blanket

The Spitfire blanket is a series of blankets imprinted with various motifs referred to as Badges of the brave, and they were made to mark the unveiling of the Spitfire Museum during Lesotho's 50th Independence celebrations in 2016. It is said that during World War II, the Basotho people, under the leadership of King Moshoeshoe I, collected enough money to buy 25 spitfire aeroplanes from the royal army of England to protect Lesotho air space from invasion (Bredenkamp 2006:18). This series of blankets also pays homage to the fallen soldiers who lost their lives during World War two. These blankets also pay tribute to King Moshoeshoe I for his devotion to protecting his people as a leader of the Basotho. The inclusion of the Basotho in the British wars did not only show the trust the royal army had in Lesotho but also their strong partnership.



Figure 2.11: Spitfire blanket (badges of the brave), Aranda textiles
[Accessed: 10/09/2022]

The “Badges of the Brave” series of blankets bear a Crest motif, and it was only incorporated as a motif in the blankets’ design after the visit of the Prince of Wales in 1925 to Lesotho, thus symbolising royalty (Bredenkamp 2006:18). These blankets are not mass produced, but batch controlled as ‘limited edition’, and they are important (Andrew Unsworth 2017). Included with the centred crest and aeroplanes are four “V” shaped signs with wings on each side representing the British Royal Air Force plane and their regiment spitfire badges and the Lesotho coat of arms presented by the two horses and a crocodile. The crocodile on the shield represents the largest ethnic Basotho group called Bakwena. Thus, the Spitfire series encapsulates motifs that are imbued with patriotism and national unity and are worn to commemorate British Allied forces and the Basothos who lost their lives during World War II. This blanket celebrates bravery, strength, and conquest, thus bearing the ‘badges of bravery’, thirteen iconic emblems related to brave armed forces. The year 1947 saw the royals of England visiting Lesotho. This was met with the blanket being engraved with the symbol of a crown. Subsequently, more designs of the blanket had a crown, which in some way re-enacted a sense of royalty to the wearer of the blanket. The elegance of the blanket means one can appear in a suit yet use the blanket as a throwover.

2.3 THE CULTURAL FUNCTIONS OF THE BASOTHO BLANKETS

The Basotho blanket is worn differently with significant meaning for various community members, particularly men, women, boys and girls, etcetera (Karstel 1991:25-25). Men wear the darker side outwards, whilst women wear the lighter side outwards, as seen in Figure 2.10. The stripes are always in a vertical position when worn. It is folded at the top, and the opening is adjusted to the right side for men and in front for women like a cape. A big safety pin is used to hold together the folded overlaps, and it is hidden for men but displayed prominently for females.

Women also wrapped the blanket around their waist. The blanket is a symbolic shield of a woman's fertility as it is believed in the Basotho culture that a woman's womb and waist should never get cold and must always be warm to prevent infertility. During the rites of passage, boys' old clothes are burnt, symbolising the end of boyhood, and they do not look back. These are replaced by a red blanket called Moholobela, and their bodies are smeared with red ochre. Maholobela is a

fertility blanket worn by young Mosotho men in preparation for their transition to manhood (Figure 2.11). This is done to keep the body warm and to allow the wound to heal without being disturbed by tight clothes. After the initiation ceremony, the young men are presented with a blanket called Lekhokolo, confirming their manhood, as seen in (Figure 2.11). The change in the blankets symbolises the transition between being a boy to being a man.



Figure 2.12: Seanamarena blanket (to swear by the King), Aranda textiles [Accessed: 20/09/2022]

A blanket is given to a bride as a symbol of the union and would be compared to giving a ring to the bride in a Western Union. The blanket also serves as a gift to the parents of the bride and as a token of appreciation for having given their daughter to the groom's family. When someone dies, custom requires that they be wrapped in a blanket to symbolise warmth. The metaphor here symbolises security, care, respect for the dead, and dignity.

The Basotho public figures, such as council representatives, dignitaries, and public speakers, wear certain types of blankets at formal governmental events. In these

events, important guests would be given blankets to acknowledge their relationship with the Basotho nation. For example, when Pope John Paul II visited Lesotho in 1988, he was also gifted with a blanket, and it is said that it is still in his house at the Vatican in Rome. This was to acknowledge and endorse the Basotho's religious affiliation to the Roman Catholic church and Christianity. While the Basotho blankets are upheld as borrowed cultural objects identifying a Mosotho, King Moshoeshe II warned the nation to remain rooted in their culture; hence, these blankets are used the same way as the 'Kaross'.



Figure 2.13: Community members wearing different Basotho blankets, Aranda textiles [Accessed: 15/10/2022]

The blanket known today as '*Malekabe*' (Figure 14), meaning 'Flames and/or fire', was designed and popularised to entice the younger generation to wear and cherish their culture (Aranda textiles) [Accessed:20/10/ 2022]. The wearing of the blanket by the young generation was revived by Queen Mmamohato, wife of King Moshoeshe II, during her reign from 1970 to 1996, where she wore it regularly during public ceremonies.



Figure: 2.14: 'Malekabe blanket' (Flames and/or fire), Aranda textiles [Accessed:10/05/2023]

Later on, a blanket called Marona (Figure 13), meaning the mother of all, was designed to honour Queen Mmamohato.



Figure 2.15: "Marona" Blanket (the mother of all), Aranda textiles [Accessed:10/10/2023]

Another blanket bearing Qiloane mountain and a shield motif was designed to commemorate King Moshoeshe I. Another blanket that is worn to celebrate King Letsie III's birthday, which falls on the 17 of July, was made in 2005 and is called the 'Linare' blanket. It was designed by Motsamai Moloko who resided in Leribe in

Lesotho. Its colours are black and peacock together with natural over-stripes resembling the colours of the Leribe mountain range. Although this blanket came later, it adopted the symbols already printed on the postage stamps, which were released in 1990, and on posters and postcards of the Lesotho Tourist Board. Thus, the Basotho blankets are imprinted with significant motifs that not only depict important historical moments of the Basotho nation but are a symbol of pride, and the citizens always wear them with dignity.

2.4 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This section unpacks the genealogical account of the Basotho blankets along with Denis Ekpo's (2010) concept of post-Africanism. It introduces genealogical representation about the function and meaning of Basotho blankets, in particular their imprinted motifs, and juxtaposition them to Post Africanism's concept of renewal as a form of cultural re-appropriation towards innovation and cultural heritage.

2.4.1 Genealogy

Historians and Archaeologists often argue whether Foucault's works would fall in their disciplines. Genealogies are based on archaeology; however, archaeology seeks to find out how artefacts fit together in a historical context, whilst Genealogy seeks to understand what kind of people or a society relates to such artefacts (Bevir 2008:263). There exist three fundamental differences in Foucault's Genealogy as opposed to how this notion is conceived in archaeology and history. This looks into continuous and discontinuous historical accounts. Continuous accounts look at how things remain the same as opposed to discontinuous which look at how much things changed.

My study's interest is in the discontinuous concept of change from the use of karoos to the adoption of blankets as throwovers and as symbols of a traditional Mosotho. Thus, the showcasing of their several imprinted motifs as signifiers of the evolved cultural history of Basothos is of significance. History would highlight modernism as a continuation of the Enlightenment, as this is explicated in science, politics, and reason. Foucault frames modernism under a discontinuous (de-Africanisation) history. This is also explicated in, for example, industrialisation and

institutionalisation. Foucault's study does not focus on finding the truth about a society's history. Thus, his study does not fall under history. That said, this does not mean that Foucault does not focus on truth but rather concerns himself with the present. He argues that, firstly, history does not follow everyday events and does not record everyday happenings, so no history is objective (Strawberry, 2012). Secondly, he adds that millions of people have lived and died with that said not every account of their lives has been recorded in any historical account.

Thirdly, things that are accounted for are what historians would find important to write about, but that does not mean it is less important for the society or community at that point. Fourth, historical wars and the Basotho blanket have been recorded in this research account, and the ceremonies and traditions with respect to the blanket do not necessarily include every account. Fifthly, since the records of history do not include everything that has ever happened then the selection of what gets recorded is exclusive instead of inclusive. Sixthly, since the selection is exclusive, it is intellectually sound to take responsibility as historians that history is biased. Foucault did not write objective history, but critical and effective history that focussed on being a lever in understanding who we think we are as opposed to a reflection on the past (Strawberry, 2012).

Foucault introduced terms such as 'globalisation', which Ekpo points out as Africans and their traditions belonging to the world, cementing Foucault's point. Furthermore, Ekpo stresses how cultures are not exclusive and should be more inclusive. The term befits as a concept that does not fit in 'totality' like the Marxist term "ideology", which focuses mainly on the totality of historical discourse. Foucault's concepts had expanded into counter-history, where it looked at the development of people and societies through history. Genealogy investigates contradictory pasts that power has had on the truth. Genealogy also seeks to highlight how all truths are questionable, it further exposes the irregularity and inconsistency of truth while unsettling the idea that history progresses in linear form. Genealogy poses questions such as:

- What is happening now?
- What is the 'now' that all of us find ourselves (Bevir 2008:264)

Looking at the use of the blanket, in as much as it was created from animal skins, used by the Basotho and then transcended to become what it is today, King Moshoeshoe I wore the blanket first, which thus made the Basotho people follow suit. This shines a new light on how the Basotho accepted the blanket as one of the symbols representing a Mosotho person. With the input or buy-in from the king, it became evident how then the 'machine' through discipline followed suit. It is as if it became a commonplace understanding that the nation would agree that the blanket is the icon of its tradition by historicising the 'body' or, in this instance, the blanket. Through the idea that "knowledge is power", knowledge sits next to power but is not used as a power weapon. Donald Fraser (knowledgeable) and Sean Maliehe (2014), together with Moshoeshoe (power), managed to incorporate the blanket into the Basotho tradition. Donald Fraser was a Scottish textile manufacturer who, after meeting with King Moshoeshoe in 1876, first produced the Basotho blankets. Fraser may have understood that producing the first blanket would lead to an everlasting inter-generational business while the king resolved a pertinent issue for his nation.

So, with such big cultural implications, one can only think of how the introduction of the blanket to the Basotho was and continues to be intergenerational. When Makhetha was interviewed on the Fresh Breakfast show, she pointed out how using the blanket with the '*Kobo*' symbol in her fashion range reflects her roots, and her upbringing and shows the Basotho tradition. She also pointed out how important the blanket is to her as an individual Figure 14.

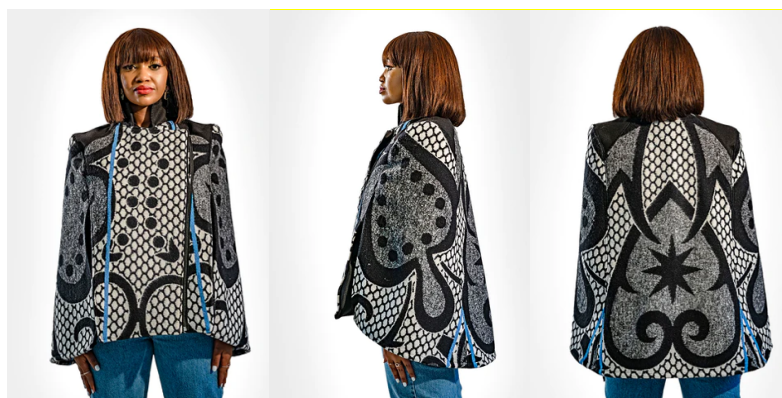


Figure 2.16: Makhetha's use of the Seanamarena blanket, online store, 2022

Foucault (1977:146) defines culture as being heterogeneous, which is exactly what Basotho culture is, particularly when looking at how the blankets are interwoven into the Basotho society. The blankets are heterogeneous since they are all different and unique yet form an important culturally significant artefact. The designs are homogeneous in their respect, yet the blankets' integration into the Basotho society remains heterogeneous due to the meaning and messages of the various motifs, which on their own represent evolved and still evolving cultural knowledge. This is suggested when considering who wears the blanket, when, how, where, and for which occasion. So, the wearing of the blanket and the different amount of money spent on it give a sense of how it has proliferated the Basotho cultural identity and heritage.

2.4.1 Post-Africanism

Dennis Ekpo's Post-Africanist theory makes an important contribution to African Studies. The theory contends that Africa, like any other continent, is a constantly evolving and dynamic entity, challenging traditional notions of African identity and culture. Ekpo's theory, at its core, asserts that Africa cannot be reduced to a single, unchanging entity. Instead, it must be viewed as a diverse and complex continent that is constantly changing. Various factors, including globalisation, migration, and the spread of new technologies, drive this change. As a result, Africa is no longer defined solely by its traditional cultures and customs but is shaped by various global influences.

One of Ekpo's key insights is that Africa is not an isolated continent. Instead, through trade, migration, and other forms of exchange, it is inextricably linked to the rest of the world. As a result, new forms of African identity have emerged that are not constrained by traditional notions of culture and ethnicity. Ekpo, for example, contends that the rise of the African diaspora has resulted in the emergence of a new, transnational form of African identity shaped by those who have left the continent.

Another important aspect of Ekpo's theory is that it calls into question the notion that Africa is merely a passive recipient of outside influences. Ekpo, on the other

hand, contends that Africa is an active participant in shaping its destiny. This can be seen in how Africa has adapted to and integrated outside influences into its own cultures and societies. Ekpo, for example, discusses how African cultures have adopted and adapted Christianity and Islam, two religions brought to the continent by outsiders.

Ekpo's theory also emphasises the significance of agency and individual choice in forming African identity and culture. He contends that rather than being defined solely by their ethnicity or nationality, individuals and communities can shape their own identities and cultures. This is especially important in Africa, where traditional notions of identity have frequently been used to justify colonialism and oppression.

Dennis Ekpo's Post Africanist theory provides a new and nuanced look at African identity and culture. It challenges traditional perceptions of Africa as a monolithic and immutable entity, instead emphasising its diversity, dynamism, and agency. This theory is an important contribution to the field of African studies because it provides a useful framework for understanding the complexities of Africa in the twenty-first century.

Post-Africanist theory is a method of studying and interpreting African art that emphasises African artists' agency and creativity, as well as the cultural and historical contexts in which their work is produced and presented. The rejection of the notion that African art is primitive or inherently different from Western art is one of the key ideals of post-Africanist theory. This idea, which has persisted in the Western art world for centuries, is based on the notion that Africa is a homogeneous and unchanging entity and that its art reflects this ostensible lack of progress or development. According to post-Africanist theorists, this view is not only inaccurate, but it also perpetuates racist and colonialist stereotypes about Africa and its people.

Another idea of post-Africanist theory emphasises African artists' agency and creativity. This approach recognises African artists as active producers and presenters of their work rather than passive recipients of external influences or inspiration. It also recognises that African art is a diverse and dynamic field with

many styles, techniques, and meanings. The importance of understanding the cultural and historical contexts in which African art is produced and presented is also emphasised by post-Africanist theory. This approach recognises that African art reflects the social, political, and economic conditions of the societies in which it is created rather than just a visual representation of Africa. It also recognises that the meaning and significance of African art can shift over time and across contexts.

Post-Africanist theory emphasises the importance of understanding the cultural and historical contexts in which the work is created in terms of African art production. Similarly to this subject of his study, this may entail researching the specific cultural traditions, beliefs, and practices that inform the work, as well as the social and economic circumstances that shape the artist's experiences and perspectives. Furthermore, post-Africanist theorists argue that understanding the work's historical context is necessary to comprehend how it has been received and interpreted over time.

The post-Africanist theory promotes the idea that African art should be presented in a way that respects the artist's intentions while also emphasising the cultural and historical contexts in which it was created. This could include providing information about the work's cultural and historical contexts, as well as giving the artist a voice in how their works are presented. Furthermore, post-Africanist theorists argue that rather than reducing African art to a single stereotype or image, it should be presented in a way that emphasises its diversity and complexity.

Post-Africanist theory emphasises the agency and creativity of African artists, the cultural and historical contexts in which their work is produced and presented, and the importance of understanding and respecting the artist's intentions. This approach seeks to dispel racist and colonialist stereotypes associated with African art, as well as to promote a better understanding of the field's complexity and diversity. Dennis Ekpo's post-Africanist theory is used as a theoretical framework for this artistic research project to engage post-Africanist aesthetics in the evolution and mutation of indigenous South African Basotho culture into contemporary African art forms by analysing existing work in the fashion genre and developing creative production in ceramics.

As a theoretical framework, post-Africanism emerges as a response to the limitations of traditional Africanism, which focuses on the preservation of African culture and traditions without taking into account the dynamic nature of cultural production or the influence of globalisation. Post-Africanism, on the other hand, emphasises the agency of contemporary African artists in shaping their own cultural identities, as well as the creative possibilities that emerge from the intersection of various cultural influences. Post-Africanist aesthetics is used in this research project to examine how indigenous African crafts have been transformed and adapted in the process of becoming contemporary African art forms. Materials, techniques, and motifs used in traditional African crafts are examined, as well as how these elements have been reinterpreted and recombined in contemporary artworks.

One important aspect of this research is that it examines how colonialism and the global art market have influenced Indigenous African crafts, such as the acculturation of the blanket through visiting the British Monarchy. The incorporation of contemporary art styles and motifs in contemporary African art, for example, can be seen as a response to the global art market. In contrast, the use of European materials and techniques in traditional African crafts can be seen as a response to the demands of the colonial market. Another crucial aspect of this research is that it looks at how contemporary South African artists use indigenous African crafts like the Basotho blanket to create new forms of cultural expression. This includes the use of new and unexpected materials and techniques, as well as the incorporation of new technologies.

This study made use of a variety of methodologies to investigate these issues, including visual analysis, ethnographic research, and phenomenological interpretive creative reaction. This provided a rich and nuanced understanding of how indigenous African crafts, such as the Basotho blanket, have been transformed and adapted to become contemporary African art forms, as well as how these processes are shaping the cultural identities of contemporary African artists. The research project aims to contribute to a better understanding of the dynamic and evolving nature of African culture and art, as well as how

contemporary African artists engage with the past and the present to create new and exciting forms of cultural expression through this framework.

2.5 LIMITATIONS

The study is limited to analysing written cultural accounts from members of various established cultures, such as Basotho, Batswana, and Ndebele. The researcher did not physically visit specific heritage sites or cultural stores. Instead, online data was acquired from online or desktop research. However, an exception was made to visit the Aranda Textile Mills, situated in Randfontein, a mining town west of Johannesburg, South Africa. Visiting this physical location was crucial to understanding where the blankets were manufactured and produced.

The researcher, though not having visited Lesotho for this research, was raised in a Basotho household and gained firsthand experience of Basotho life through information from key informants like grandparents, aunts, and uncles who originated from Lesotho. This personal connection to Basotho culture influenced the study's focus on selecting the blankets not for chronological order but rather for the story they tell about significant moments in Basotho history, shaped by environmental and political forces.

CHAPTER THREE: ARTISTIC INFLUENCE AND METHODOLOGY

This chapter articulates the artistic influence of Thabo Makhetha and Magdeline Odundo in terms of conceptualisation and creation processes adopted in the creation of the ceramic basins which were used in the final narrative installation of my exhibition entitled “*Di a boa dikobo tsa kgos*” directly meaning “the return of the Kings Blankets”. It begins by giving a brief biographical presentation of the chosen artists Makhetha and Odundo concerning their specific influences on both conceptualisation and creation processes. Their significant artworks are shown to indicate direct and indirect influences that played out in my artworks. My creation and presentation processes are discussed, stipulating specific artistic influences. The chapter concludes with a presentation of the methodology that was used in this study to discover the emergent knowledge from this study.

3.1 THABO MAKHETHA’S BIOGRAPHICAL INSPIRATION FOR MY ARTISTIC CONCEPTUALISATION

Thabo Makhetha is a fashion designer who was born in Lesotho. When she was three years old, her family moved to South Africa. She enrolled for a diploma at the Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University and graduated in 2009. Her company is called “Thabo Makhetha” est. 2009 and she designs traditional African garments according to her customers’ preferences. Thabo Makhetha is 33 years old and has lived in many provinces in South Africa, Gauteng, Kwa Zulu Natal, and Cape Town to name a few. She is also well-traveled and has exhibited in the United States of America, Germany, France, and most African countries. Her travelling experience has enhanced her understanding of what is trending not only in Africa but globally. The experience of exhibiting overseas put not only her brand on the map but influenced the way she also approached her design.

This experience and influence set her in a direction to understand that she does not have to produce craft, but because of the quality of materials at her disposal gave her confidence to produce quality garments. She has won prizes both locally and internationally since the establishment of her company in 2009. Makhetha’s brand is a new brand that seeks to make cultural objects such as the Basotho Blanket, which has been known for a century by the Basotho nation as a functional

object, a sophisticated brand. Makhetha left her village home and did not want to leave her culture behind, so she came with it to an urban space. She feels it has been a misfortune that young people feel culture is a thing that belongs to the old. Makhetha's designs are being inspired by a 150-year-old cultural heritage.

Makhetha is influenced by her culture and tradition in her fashion designs. She explained using white and red in her garments to symbolise girls' initiation to womanhood. She expresses the cultural significance of white and red colours during the girls' initiation process. These are small but important points to note regarding her design and use of colour for certain designs (Zita Zambo 2015). She explains that whilst other colours she uses derive meaning from cultural practices, others, like black, work well together with red and white. The black would then represent her input as an artist and in consideration of design principles. Makhetha took inspiration from her grandmother, who was a seamstress, as she enjoyed seeing her fix and create clothes. She attests that this inspired her to start designing her fashion designs. Through this, an interest in fashion and entrepreneurial spirit grew after completing high school and went into business straight after completing her diploma in fashion design.

Makhetha recalls how she was goal-driven and wanted only the best. She sent two proposals for her portfolio to one of the most prominent fashion design figures in France and was rejected twice. She then saw that the only way to be at the top was to create her brand using a different fabric. She wore her first Basotho coat at the annual Durban July held in Kwa Zulu Natal province of South Africa, which is a chiefly horse racing event that attracts a large crowd, including celebrities and the general public. The event is known for its extravagant fashion displays, making fashion a significant part of the experience and where Makhetha was one of the participating designers. The event organisers briefed the participating fashion designers on how to create costumes of royalty. Makhetha recalled how her grandmother would tell her that she was a princess and that she came from a royal family. Makhetha investigated how she could best represent Royalty and link it with her roots, hence making the outfit from a Basotho blanket.

Being a Mosotho Makhetha understood the importance and cultural significance of the Basotho blankets. She then decided to research both the written and oral history of the blanket. She felt the need to create a garment that does not only celebrate the Royal nature of the blanket, nor sit well on the body, but one that is modern, a garment that can be worn every day, not as a cultural object, even though it carries cultural significance. A garment that is informed by culture but does not dictate that the wearer should understand the background and/or cultural history of the item. Makhetha felt strongly about her roots and wanted them to be visible and show through her designs. While she understood the risks of taking such a prestigious cultural object and putting it under scissors would be frowned upon by the gatekeepers of culture and those who would not appreciate her interventions, she felt confident in taking the risk. Makhetha recalls having made her mother a coat with the blanket, and she attended a funeral in Lesotho wearing it. Her mother was frowned upon by women from the village, and one even asked her how she could cut up such an expensive blanket.

However, she stood firm and showed that she understood the background, significance, and history behind the blanket being a borrowed but bestowed Basotho cultural object. Makhetha did not just choose any blanket to cut; she chose to use the blankets that are worn by women, in particular those that celebrate women. She showed that she understands the blanket's protocol, which is the wearing of the blanket with one-centimetre stripes facing vertically and the lighter side outward, representing how it is culturally worn by women. As a designer, she understood the four dimensions of designs applied to the blankets and made sure to respect the motifs found on the blankets. Makhetha's first design was seen at the 2013 Durban July and it was a Rose Coat (Figure 3.1) inspired by Alexander McQueen's designer dress worn by Beyonce Knowles. After this spectacle, people started ordering, and her collection and ideas grew from people asking her to design with their special specifications. Through this recognition, exposure, and orders from people, Makhetha transcended from just being a dressmaker to a fashion designer.



Figure 3.1: Makhetha's online store [Accessed: 20/10/2022]

Makhetha wanted to give the Basotho blanket a 21st-century look while showcasing her cultural identity and heritage. Her work combines good craftsmanship and fine skill, embracing the relevant contemporary dispensation. In using the Basotho blanket, Makhetha is elevating an indigenous cultural object of significance to an internationally fitting fashion statement, fusing the two worlds in an amicable blend of aesthetics relevant to a world-class stage. Makhetha is inspired by how stories change and grow. She wants to tell the changing and growing story of a modern Mosotho. Makhetha stands on the words of Giants like the King and Queen of Lesotho, who come up with new vibrant and bright blanket designs that could capture the new generation while honouring the Basotho cultural heritage. Makhetha transcends the mundane cultural use of the blanket showing more existing possibilities the modern world can tap into. Makhetha shows that indigenous cultural tradition can be accommodated in a modern world. Makhetha's inspiration espouses the Basotho blanket as a visual moving history, inspiring her to tell her cultural story.

In an interview with The Insider SA, which is a TV show that airs On a South African channel called SABC 3, an episode that aired in 2022, Makhetha said,

My love for fashion came from my desire to show off my cultural heritage because I always enjoy the story we tell through clothing, and I love to wear garments that have a cultural reference. I always find garments with a cultural reference timeless; they can be worn at any stage, and they're not outdated. Getting more into my culture has made me look at the African continent as a whole, and more than anything, it's where we come from. What is our choice of reference when we are telling our stories?" Thomas Chiothamisi (2021).

Currently, Makhetha designs for female consumers and has two online stores and a physical one in Cape Town, a province in South Africa. Makhetha's designs resonate well with Cheikh Diop and former President Thabo Mbeki's concept of the African Renaissance for Africans to strive to overcome challenges towards cultural and economic renewal. This is also due to the timelessness of her designs. Although the blanket material is suitable for cold weather, she can still produce her outfits throughout the year. This is due to her worldwide clientele, which resides in both the northern and southern hemispheres, meaning that her winter designs can be enjoyed during Southern hemisphere winters during the first half of the year and in the northern hemisphere during the second half of the year.

Makhetha's timeless designs resonate with my study of ceramics. Hence, I was inspired by her adaptation of this prominent and esteemed cultural object. Clay is also an abundant natural raw material that has been used to create cultural objects from time immemorial. While clay is found everywhere in the world, it was and still is used to create valuable African cultural objects everywhere within the African continent. Ceramic/pottery has a long functional history within households, is manufactured from natural resources, and can be traced back to different civilisations. Thus, my use of traditional Basotho blanket motifs in decorating my ceramic basins augurs well with cultural renewal, which Makhetha also alludes to in her use of the blankets. Makhetha uses the actual blanket to articulate Basotho's cultural stories, interpreting the motifs and observing their protocols; however, in my ceramics, I have chosen significant motifs to also tell Basotho's cultural way of life in a universally used modern object. By so doing, I am also reappropriating this valuable cultural object to unpack the cultural knowledge embedded in its use. I do this by metaphorically draping my ceramics with the motifs, elevating them to high-end ceramic products. She made designs from the most esteemed blankets, such as the Poone and Seanamarena. The Seanamarena is seen in her Rose

coat design, whilst the Poone blanket is seen in her Indaba's designs showcased in the 2014-15 season.



Figure 3.2: Makhetha's online store[Accessed:10/20/2022]

Makhetha had an interview that was held on a South African Radio on Metro FM Called the Fresh Breakfast Show (19 April 2019), where Makhetha also explained her works, influences, and accolades. The interview is recorded by the principal researcher and attached as a soft copy.

In an interview with South African Radio in April 2016 she spoke of competing with the best South African designers. She explained her use of '*Kobo*' motifs to tap into her traditional background, showing where she came from, where she went, and her aspirations as a fashion designer. In this case, it can be deduced that she does not seek to trace her roots as a Mosotho, but rather uses her cultural knowledge to influence the world to learn from her culture towards the archival of her identity heritage. She appreciates the important symbolic function and the utilitarian aspects the blanket plays in defining a Mosotho from Lesotho.

She critiqued the South African Fashion industry for basing their judgment of good standards on European ones as a form of achievement, thereby neglecting their African indigenous cultural perspective. She further explains how her brand first

gained recognition internationally while it was first rejected in South Africa and the African continental fashion industry. In Addis Ababa, she was accused of appropriation for representing South Africa whilst using the Basotho blanket. Her answer was, “does it mean being born on the other side of the border makes one less of their cultural background?”. Her answer was also because the Sesotho language is one of the nine South African recognised languages. This recognises that Basotho people are part of the South African population groups. In the same vein, she also spoke of how her ancestors did not draw a line in the sand between being a South African Mosotho and a Mosotho in Lesotho and that if you are in South Africa from Lesotho, you were a lesser Mosotho.

In her critique of inherent biases associated with local products, local products are priced at a low price when compared to international brands such as Louis Vuitton. She made an example about one of her garments, which was made popular after it was worn by Jackie Burger at the Louis Vuitton show in Paris, France, and how two stores in Cape Town and Johannesburg, South Africa, were sold out of most of her garments after the international audiences saw Jackie Burger. Thus, it is her persistent resilience in telling the Basotho cultural way of life through her garments that inspired me to do this study on ceramics, and so my conceptualisation is influenced by her adaptation of the Basotho blanket to showcase her cultural identity and heritage.

3.2 MAGDELINE ODUNDO BIOGRAPHICAL INSPIRATION ON MY ARTISTIC CREATION

Magdeline Odundo is a Kenyan-born ceramist who grew up in Nairobi. She lived briefly in India as a child and later returned to Kenya. Odundo’s cross-cultural influences impacted by her travel inspired her art creation. With the help of a scholarship, she pursued her art education in England (Slayter-Ralph, 2004:9). The places where she lived as a child influenced not only her art but how she perceived the world. Her travels made her gain interest in modernist sculptures and local craft traditions. She also gained interest in ceramics by meeting Michael Cardew, a Cornwall potter. Only upon her return to Kenya that she start exploring all the influences she had gained during her travels and started to express them in her language. Odundo’s forms are universal as they synthesise an eclectic cultural

mix of materials that she studied in all her travels. She can be regarded as a multinational whose work has influences from many cultures and traditions. Odundo studied at the West Surrey College of Art in 1973, where she continued her love for ceramics. In 1976, she completed her BA and obtained her Master in the Arts in 1982 from the Royal College of Art in England. She picked up influences while going back and forth between Europe and Africa.

Studying in the West not only informed her work but opened the channels of exposure to cultures other than her own. Jencks (1989: 7) attests that these days, due to mass media and globalism, it is much easier to learn about other cultures. Odundo makes non-utilitarian vessels that show cultural shifts and transformations. The conversations she creates through her pots and my ceramics communicate with each other. As slight as the communication is, the viewer's interpretation also adds value. Her Kenyan background and the role of ceramic vessels in the modern world show that shifting contexts lie in geography (Slayter-Ralph, 2004:9). My interest as a researcher is in the shapes or forms of her vessels. The organic features inherent in her work are the reminiscence of most Basotho blanket motifs, which are mostly observed in natural environments and plants.

Odundo's vessels are open-ended (Figure 3.3), thereby rendering her works to a multiplicity of interpretations and not limited to her explanations or one scholar's point of view. This responds to a postmodern thought of "death of an author" (Roland 1967; Foucault 1969 and Kvale 2008), making the work always relevant and open to any interpretation. Barthes (1967) argues that when a viewer interprets a work of art, he/she comes with his/her perspective that may be different from that of the author, making the work meaningful to the beholder. This is also because her work breaks boundaries between African and Western art, craft and art, functionality and aestheticism, making it global instead of being confined to a certain location. This can also be directly linked to ceramics, which are used as everyday objects to carry food and store liquids throughout various world nations. This is a significant point that confirms the universality of ceramic artefacts, which are commonly used by different people worldwide. In addition, contemporary ceramists/potters are not restricted by any technological improvements as they use

different techniques and styles from different periods. Odundo was also exposed to a potters training school situated in Abuja, Nigeria, run by an English potter, Michael Cardew, who wanted to teach more advanced techniques to traditional African ceramics. Whilst my creation efforts in ceramic design matured during my tenure as a moulder and designer in the industry, I was more inspired by Odundo's creation processes, especially her finishing techniques, which include firing and glassing.

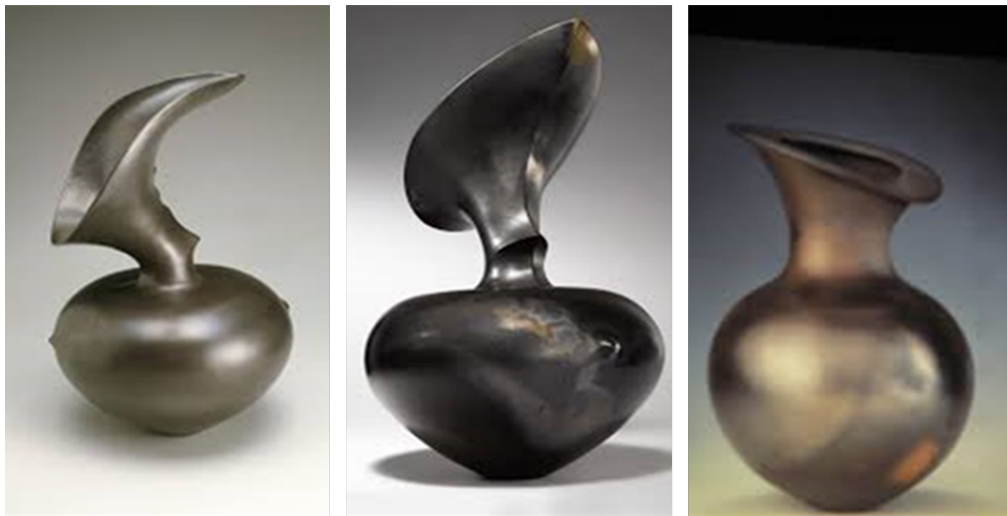


Figure 3.3: Magdelene Odundo, untitled, [Accessed: 10/10/2021]

Odundo's ceramic vessels do not have decorations and are designed as if they are captured in movement. The static pose that these vessels hold is as if reflecting a frozen pose (Farina 2001: 9). I explore this tension technique by using stands that hold my ceramic vessels in mid-air, holding different positions and creating movement. Furthermore, Odundo's vessels have a strong sense of individualism, where each one is different from the other. I also create my ceramic basins in different shapes and dimensions, although some come from the same mould but are finished differently, through the glaze that gives them a glassy coating and through the use of the art of Kintsugi. Kintsugi is the Japanese art of repairing broken pottery by joining the pieces with a liquid called lacquer mixed with gold, silver, or platinum powder Figure 3.4.



Figure 3.4: Thomson, 2017 [Accessed; 15/08/2023]

Odundo works in her vessels for months, perfectly sculpting each vessel to perfection using pinch and coiling techniques. For finishing, she uses a pebble, burnishing her vessels to achieve the gloss finish. In my case, I make moulds using plaster and casting techniques. For finishing, I used underglaze from paint and overglaze from gold lustre to achieve Basotho's different coloured motifs. Odundo, on the other hand, combines two different coloured clays in one vessel to achieve different shades, making a perfect blend as seen in Figure 3.3 third vessel. Odundo fires her pieces more than 5 times because she uses unpredictable saga firing; although it can be controlled, it can sometimes yield undesired results. These techniques are the oldest creation techniques and form the basics in ceramic art because they require minimal water use but slip to join the coiled clay (Farina 2001: 15).

3.3 THE CONCEPTUALISATION PROCESSES

My conceptualisation was inspired by Makhetha's use of Basotho's blanket in her fashion designs in which she re-appropriates the symbolic meaning of the blankets' imprinted motifs to reclaim and showcase her cultural heritage as a form of cultural re-appropriation. Similarly to Makhetha, my study seeks to also reappropriate the significance of the Basotho way of life by interpreting the blanket motifs as a form of cultural renewal as espoused by Denis Ekpo's Post-Africanism concept. My

study argues that the Basotho blankets, although borrowed from cultural objects, carry the pertinent history of how Indigenous knowledge is created and disseminated. Through genealogical fact-finding, my emergent artworks presented not only how cultural knowledge is created but also how it can inform innovative ways of cultural renewal. Cultural renewal refers to how cultural practices from the past can be adapted to positively inform present generational ways of life toward preserving cultural heritage.

Cultural re-appropriation is described as the process of reclaiming or signifying one's cultural practices and artefacts that were previously not recognised for their cultural identity and importance. It differs from appropriating or adopting another culture benefiting at the expense of the appropriated culture. According to Tuulikki Pietilä (2022), "appropriation springs from the perception that some essential source for a product's value is being concealed and exposed as someone else's creative accomplishment, expanding the latter's fame and gain...". Meio Ambiente (2015) describes the concept of cultural re-appropriation as "a process of emancipation and decolonisation" of the historical heritage of cultural artefacts and reinvention of cultural identities.

Thus, Makhetha and I, through our work, are acknowledging the authenticity, meaning, and role the blankets play in defining a Mosotho, and we do not merely appropriate for financial gain but to showcase our identity proudly. Similar to Makhetha I also started by researching the evolution, functions, and importance of the Basotho blankets as esteemed cultural objects. I researched the evolution of the various motifs that are imprinted in the blankets unpacking their significance and meaning to Basotho identity and cultural heritage. Makhetha uses the blanket's elegance to fit not only in a modern corporate environment but also to elevate it as a Basotho status symbol. I imprint significant motifs onto my ceramic basins for aesthetic appreciation elevating them to high-end products. Both Makhetha and I do not alter the original symbols but present them as they are to enhance their cultural meanings.

Furthermore, when conceptualising my basins and resulting imprinted motifs, I was first inspired by the two important Lesotho mountains, Thaba Qiloane and Thaba

Bosiu, which are both regarded as Lesotho national symbols. Secondly, Lesotho is referred to as the Kingdom in the sky because, as a country, it is situated at the highest altitude in Southern Africa and is surrounded by mountain ranges. When boys attend the initiation school towards manhood, they are said to have gone to the mountain. This is because they have to be separated from the community, hence the mountain, which is away from the settlements. Alan Taylor (2014) makes the point that Lesotho is 1,400 meters above sea level and that it is a highland plateau.

For example, the first blanket motifs were influenced by the prominent natural forms, including the barren and cultivated landscapes and the mountains. Litema (geometric patterns painted on most Basotho homestead walls) and Basotho hats called Qiloane and Mokokotlo symbolise this landscape. Qiloane mountain is also respected because it is where King Moshoeshe I is buried, while Thaba Bosiu, translated to mean 'mountain at night', was used as a hiding place by Moshoeshe I subjects after migrated from ButhaButhe in 1824 during the Difiqane/Mfecane wars.

Moshoeshe I was and still is one of the most respected Kings of the Basotho nation and was known as a unifier and visionary; hence, the Basotho blanket as a borrowed cultural object is associated with him and with Basotho cultural identity. The title of my exhibition, "*Di a boa dikobo tsa kgosi*", which directly translated to mean "The Return of the Kings Blankets", sought to acknowledge the role of King Moshoeshe I played in crafting the Basotho identity and cultural heritage. King Moshoeshe I was also associated with peace, hence the famous Basotho greeting "*kgotsong*", meaning "I come with peace and peace be with you", and as a result, there is a blanket called *Kgotso*. Thus, my final exhibition installation narrated the cultural way of life of the Basothos towards re-appropriating valuable norms and values.

Basothos identify themselves by animal totems such as the Bataung, meaning Lion, Bafokeng - Rabbit, Makgolokoe – Rooster or hen, and Bakuena - Crocodile. However, these animals are not used as motifs for the blankets because King Moshoeshe I was avoiding classifying the nation by clan names associated with

these animal totems. This is because each clan would have clung to their animal totem thereby creating division among the Basotho nation. This is the reason behind the non-animal symbols. Moshoeshe I wanted to unify the Basotho people; thus, the blankets bared national unifying symbols that were upheld by the whole nation. Thus, my ceramic basins take different forms not only for their use but are also influenced by the geometric patterns and organic forms emulating both the Basotho landscape and the mountainous range.

3.4 CREATION PROCESS

Clay is a medium dating back to around 24,000 B.C. The clay industry is one of the earliest in human history. In the 16th century, the Industrial Revolution was born, where ceramic ware was mass-produced. A brief overview of ceramic history: In 14,000 B.C., the first tiles were made in Mesopotamia and India, but it was only 9000-10,000 B.C. that pottery making began. The process of incorporating printed images onto ceramics, which particularly interests me, dates back to 1756 in England. John Sadler and Guy Green of Liverpool pioneered this technique as a way to reduce labour by reproducing patterns consistently. It is rather non-traditional and utilises progressive methods of designing, casting, and firing the pieces. The pieces are designed using plaster moulds instead of the traditional method of using a clay model as the original form. To acquire a positive final product, this technique requires designing the piece in negative form, what we would term designing "upside down" and "inside out". The concept is to then place an "artwork" in a utilitarian object, like a toilet, but with a completely different form and purpose. This artwork will not be "art for art's sake" but will have a deeper meaning and functionality.

My creation processes are moulding, casting, firing, and glaze. My basins are moulded using Plaster of Paris, and the process involves making a mould, which is a shaped cavity that can make a copy of the desired object. It can be used to reproduce the object using clay or clay slip. The designed object takes the shape from the inside out using slip (liquid clay) through a process of casting. My basins are single-fired and then glazed onto bone-dried clay, sometimes resulting in an undesired end product. However, this technique can lead to more experimentation, altering basins into interesting shapes.



Figure 3.5: Mosekare, Moulding process, 2021

To finish, I first imprint by embossing or etching the desired motif onto the basin, then refire the pieces to Temperatures between 750 to 950 degrees Celsius.

The final designs that are created using gold lustre are done on top of the glaze. This solidifies the gold lustre and makes it adhere to the ceramic body. The golden repair pattern cannot be repeated to produce the same results due to the marble effect. In any given marble piece, you don't get the same effect twice.

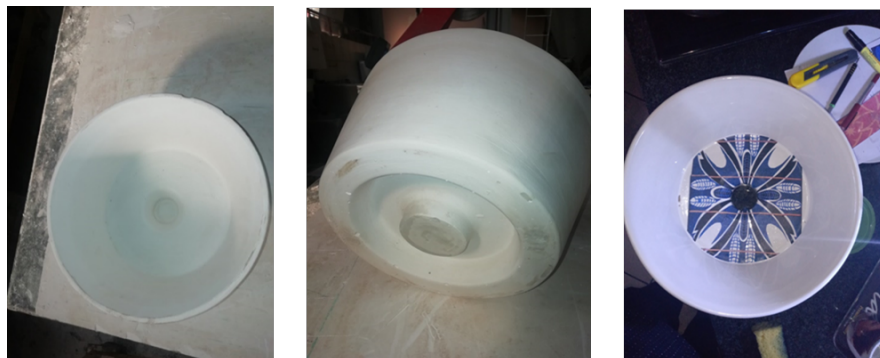


Figure 3.6: Finishing: Mosekare, Embossing of the final design, 2021

3.4.1 Kintsugi

Kintsugi refers to “golden joinery” and is a Japanese art form in which broken ceramics are repaired using golden lustre forming visible contrasting lines, and it is sometimes called ‘kintsukuroi’ meaning “golden repair”. Broken ceramics are not thrown but mended with a Lacquer resin mixed with powdered gold, silver, or platinum. The repairs remain visible yet somehow beautiful and aesthetically pleasing to the eye (Dilonardo, 2015: 1). The importance of introducing the technique is to relate it to the life of a person, in this instance myself. A person gets broken daily by issues of life, but through the brokenness, you do not give up

on yourself but build and/or rebuild on what broke you. The artefact is used as a symbol of one's trials and tribulations.



Figure 3.7: Mosekare, mmabole, 2021

The art of Kintsugi dates back to the 15th century when Japanese Shogun Ashikaga Yoshimasa returned a broken bowl to be repaired in China. The bowl was then fixed with staples, which was the known and used method to fix valuable vessels, and this was unattractive. The results were practical but aesthetically not pleasing. With the latter employed, some artists were even accused of purposefully breaking the vessels and mending them back again with the gold; it was deemed that the pieces looked more aesthetically pleasing than their original form.

They take on the look of a deliberate incursion of radically free abstraction into an object that was made according to an utterly different system. It's like a tiny moment of free jazz played during a fugue by Bach" (Dilonardo, 2020).

The difficulty of kintsugi is that once the lacquer is dry, it cannot be moved, making the process dictate that even if the bowl has 20 broken pieces, they must be put together all at once and not piece by piece. Then, the lacquer is allowed to dry and harden, a process that can take weeks. The lacquer is then sanded down for

a smooth and flush finish. Gold is primarily used because it does not tarnish and it is food safe, whilst aesthetically pleasing. My basins use gold lustre and refiring the pieces to create the illusion of a broken piece.

3.5 ADOPTION OF BASOTHO BLANKETS' MOTIFS INTO NARRATIVES

In my final exhibition, the basins are presented to tell stories about the Basothos' way of life, particularly referencing the kingdoms as the custodians of authority and governance. The visual motifs solidify the oral narratives about not only the history of the Basotho but also the history of the Basotho blanket as narrated by the community members. The motifs' stories mostly happen through the encounter between people and the blankets, and they give a sense of where Basotho comes from, their way of life, and their strength as a nation. The stories told through these motifs range from the Basotho wealth, sovereignty, heritage, identity, and spirit of endurance. The representation of the blankets' motifs in narratives is seen throughout Basotho blankets' motifs. The motifs carry with them stories, and no one motif remains purely for aesthetic purposes. Every motif in the Basotho blanket is thought through from the first designs that came after Moshoeshoe I adorned the first blanket. It is important to note that every motif carries a narrative that means something or is derived from Basotho's life stories.

The Poone (corn cob) motif that is imprinted onto this blanket reminds the Basothos about the staple food which has to be ploughed and harvested under good and bad climatic conditions, and it epitomises resilience and hard work. An uninformed person sees it as just a design until those who understand the narrative behind the blanket's motifs tell-tale. Another important blanket is the Seanamarena blanket because it is associated with Royalty; hence, it is called the kings' blanket. It is worn by prominent people, and gifted to dignitaries at important ceremonies. The importance of the blanket is also carried through the song composed after it. I remember one profound moment when one of my undergraduate lecturers, sitting next to me during one of my graduation ceremonies, asked, "I always hear this song being sung at these events; what does it mean"? I then narrated the story of what the song meant and its history with pride. With that, she managed to understand the importance of the song and learnt and appreciated its cultural meaning.

The four vertical stripes found on the blankets, which were the weaver's faults were also adapted into a narrative prescribing how it must be worn. This narrative is barely spoken about as a mistake but is used as a guiding protocol towards uniformity. Such narratives not only show cultural adaptation to available resources but also that meaning is always created to suit the setting or time. It is important to understand that culture is not a fixed entity nor cast in stone but serves as a guideline for a group's survival. Many cultural interventions were to serve a particular purpose, as anything and everything that is created by people can be changed or altered by them.

3.6 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY FOR DATA COLLECTION

The study used a qualitative research paradigm focusing on ethnographic methods. Ethnographic research methods take a cultural lens to the study of people's lives within their communities (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007; Fetterman, 2010). Ethnographic research focuses on studying communities. The researchers would live within the set communities to understand their way of life as participants. I, as the researcher, do not only observe but practise the culture; hence, the phenomenological methods are used to supplement ethnography. Thus, I had first-hand experience throughout my life. The main point about ethnographers is that they observe and study how people live and interact in the community under investigation. Ethnographers seek to obtain a thick description of the culture and the indigenous people's perspective about their culture. Ethnographers want to understand the culture from the inside instead of looking at it as outsiders. My research applies ethnography, and I participate in this research firstly as a Mosotho and secondly as a ceramicist. Therefore, the explanations and explorations of both practical and theoretical research are from an insider's point of view. I engaged with the research daily and through interviewing informants and observations of my lived experiences as a researcher.

3.6.1 Observation methods

Observation as a method varies from non-participant to full participation of the researcher. Observation is one of the key research methods in social sciences. The researcher, as a participant, observes by engaging with the community being

researched at a much deeper level. The researcher must be there for a long period and be accepted in the community either as one of them or as a visitor. On the other hand, non-participant observation refers to the researcher's involvement only as an observer and is not participating in the group's activities but just observing from a distance (M. Ciesielska et al. 2018:33-35). Participant and non-participant methods have been used to observe various groups of people (Cooper et al. 2004:1). Spradley (1990) cautions that the researcher might be subjective instead of objective towards other aspects that the research might focus on whilst neglecting others.

For example, in my research, I chose to talk about the blankets with motifs that narrate stories associated with identity and left out some not because they are of less importance. Ram (1999) used his ethnic background as one basis for choosing field sites (small companies) where he could become a full member of the group being studied. When the researcher is a participating member of the group being studied, he/she develops a "working knowledge" that enables a good understanding of the culture (Rosen,1991:16). He claims that the ethnographer should try to be both an outsider and an insider, staying on the margins of the group both socially and intellectually. Therefore, combining the outside and inside views is fruitful (Rosen,1991:156). It is important to understand a culture from within yet be bold enough to be on the margins and be objective about the experience, observations, and understanding of that culture. As the researcher, I listened to interviews that I conducted and looked at primary and secondary sources on the subject of this study to expand not only my knowledge but also to augment visible gaps in the literature.

3.6.2 Interviews

A key informant is described by Krishna Kumar (1989:1) as a person who has knowledge or who is knowledgeable about the subject the researcher is conducting. Key informant interviews are informal and sometimes open-ended and are more of a conversation between the informant and the researcher. Key informant is used in cultural anthropology to understand a chosen culture, traditions, and way of life (Marshall, 1996:92). Marshall quotes Tremblay, who describes key informants as "natural observers" (Marshall, 1996:92) who are

interested in their surroundings, are engaged and play a part in their community. The informant must be communicative and be willing to give information or the knowledge they possess.

3.7 DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

Data analysis and interpretation give meaning to new knowledge beyond the immediate setting (LeCompte and Schensul,1999:4). Thus, the results do not “speak for themselves” but emerge with new knowledge. The interpretation of the captured data seeks to understand what it means and how it is relevant to my study. In ethnographic research, data collection, analysis, and interpretation happen simultaneously throughout the research. This means that, during the research process, the researcher continuously analyses, interprets, and learns from the empirical data. In this respect, analysis involves both creative insight and careful attention to the purpose of the study’s objectives. At some stage of your research process, you stop collecting data and turn your attention more fully and systematically to the analysis of captured data. Then, questions such as What do my field data tell me? What have I learned in the field? What interesting and unique things can I say to answer my research question? During the research, the data I gathered, both written and through observation, was analysed to understand the Basotho way of life. One of the findings confirms that the Basotho blanket represents life, as confirmed by the Sesotho saying, “*Kobo ke bophelo*”. Thus, these blankets are a constant reminder of who they are and serve as a socialising mechanism between the elders who understand the history and the young ones. When someone wears the blanket, it sparks conversation between the wearer and the viewer, eventually leading to the viewer's understanding of Basotho culture.

3.8 THE APPLICATION OF PHENOMENOLOGY

Phenomenology is a method of data analysis where the researcher uses his/her lived experiences to interpret the emerging knowledge as an insider. Phenomenology is an attempt to describe lived experiences without making previous assumptions about the objective reality of those experiences (Hollow & Wheeler 1996:117). Through one’s upbringing or enculturation, one gets to understand customs and how things are done. Enculturation happens spontaneously throughout children’s lives.

For example, I recall being told the difference between the Qiloana and Mokorotlo hats I came across as they were hanging on the wall in my grandparents' house. The explanation was not merely about the shapes of the hats but their significance associated with the two esteemed Basotho mountains, Thaba Qiloane and Thaba Bosiu. Every time I come across these mountain names, I always remember their historical importance, and thus, I see the stories they represent as just being natural formations. Thus, during this research, I also used the knowledge I learned as I was growing up to interpret the data I collected. It is this oral history that enhanced the interpretation of the data. Thus, the stories about these hats and their associated history and meaning were narrated to me as a way of educating me about significant cultural knowledge and their contemporary relevance. So, I learnt about most of the valuable cultural symbols and artefacts at a young age.

The Molamu, a man's stick that was always hanging next to the hat, as well as *moseme*, a grass mat, was explained to me as a symbol of man's responsibility as the head of a household, and the mat a symbol of submission and acceptance of her role as the carer of the whole family. The story was narrated that displaying them all at the same represents their matrimonial relationship and their acceptance of it. I still carry these stories and many more that I learnt as a young boy and those that I discovered during this research. Hence, my lived experiences played a major part in collating and analysing this study's emergent knowledge.

During many ceremonies that I attended during my upbringing and as an adult, I would emulate accepted etiquette, making me a proud Mosotho man. When I got married, my wife and I were gifted with Seanamarena blankets, and I received my molamu and my wife her moseme. These gifts carry not only Basotho's history but also personal family history. This is because every time you look at them, you think not only about the memories they carry but also about their sentimental value. Furthermore, since I am the eldest son, I now take up my father's role, especially during rituals and ceremonies, and my decisions on how to act or carry out these duties are informed by my knowledge learnt from all the family and cultural interactions. Thus, the purpose of the phenomenological enquiry is to explicate the structure or essence of the lived experience in the search for the meaning that

identifies with the phenomenon, and its accurate description through the everyday lived experience (Streubert & Carpenter 1999:48).

3.9 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

This study conformed to the research ethics as prescribed by the University of South Africa. All scheduled face-to-face questionnaires and mailed questionnaires, as well as all the scheduled structured and semi-structured interviews, adhered to required research ethics. The researcher also conducted observations while protecting the anonymity of participants. The participants had the full right not to participate in a study. To exercise this privilege, potential participants were told about the study and given their written consent to participate.

CHAPTER 4: REPRESENTATION OF CULTURAL IDENTITY AND HERITAGE IN CONTEMPORARY ART

This chapter presents a representation of cultural heritage and identity and their constructs, arguing for their relevance and value for this study and in modern society. It also discusses two artists who re-appropriate cultural identity and heritage in their practice as part of contemporary artistic discourse. Cole (2019) defines culture as a term that is diverse and includes tangible and intangible aspects of everyday life. Most sociologists describe culture as a collective that includes a set of languages, rules, forms of communication, values held by the group, and its belief system. Cultural or Indigenous knowledge is acquired through enculturation or socialisation, influencing the behaviour and utilisation of cultural objects associated with the respective cultures. In general terms, culture is constituted by its knowledge, daily used artefacts, and the people's behaviour driven by their affiliation to the respective cultural communities. Cole (2019) further asserts that "culture is distinct from social structure and economic aspects of society, but it is connected to them—both continuously informing them and being informed by them".

Cultural identity is what an individual identifies with as part of his/her personal self-conception and self-perception and is related to nationality, ethnicity, religion, social class, generation, locality, or any kind of social group that has its own distinct culture. In general terms identity is a person's qualities, what makes a person who they are (Yilmaz 2023). Most of these qualities a person has no control over as they include things such as where a person is from, the colour of their skin, and or height. The primary phase in gaining identity happens when one is an infant, the caregiver instils a sense of self onto the offspring. In Basotho's case, a child is first given a blanket as a symbol of accepting him/her to the family and pledging to protect him/her through nurturing and enculturation within the culture he/she belongs. Erikson (1956) speaks of how teenagers experiment as they grow and question what they have been taught to either add or change in building their character and their identity.

Heritage, on the other hand, refers to something of value that is given or passed to someone, including both material and non-material things. Thus, these refer to tangible and intangible cultural objects, knowledge, and belief systems passed down from previous generations to the current as a form of cultural preservation. Thus, heritage is a combination of practices and traditions that are passed from one generation to the next, including what has been passed to a child by his/her family and the community in a particular area. In addition, cultural heritage can be described as the inheritance of physical/material objects/property and intangible attributes of a group or society inherited from past generations. Therefore, cultural heritage can be said to be the transference of valuable cultural attributes from the past to the future generation with the application of particular approaches in the present one.

According to Erikson (1956), although as an adult, one tends to change, however, this change is small when compared to what a person's outlook on life is from a young age; thus, the foundation and what they learnt growing up still forms a big part of their character as adults. There exists a distinction between identity, character, and personality. Although these are sometimes used interchangeably, the three have distinct differences and are used differently. Personality informs one's behaviour towards everyday or day-to-day interaction, whilst the character is revealed when engaged, especially in making a decision (Erikson 1956). In this case, cultural identity heritage does not necessarily refer to money or property but values and traditions such as shared bonds of the community, history, and everything else that a community identifies with as a group. The Basotho blankets' significance, use, meaning, and connotations, although they were adopted and adapted through the imprinted motifs, are regarded as important cultural symbols of the Basotho people.

4.1 THE SIGNIFICANCE OF CULTURAL KNOWLEDGE WITHIN THE MODERN SOCIETY

Modern society exists within a conglomeration of multicultural cohabitation, and while this may lead to the manifestation of cross-cultural tolerance, however, a firm foundation of individual cultural identity is always necessary. This is because identity is what makes a person who he/she is (Yilmaz 2023) and usually influences

his/her behaviour. Indigenous cultural knowledge, which guides an individual's behaviour, is acquired first naturally through enculturation or socialisation and has a lasting effect on an individual or a group. All cultures have ways of guiding and taking control over their people, instilling needed culturally acceptable moral fibre and ethical norms and values. The real meaning of cultural identity is the understanding of your roots and respect for one's nationality. Thus, indigenous knowledge is important for the development of modern science.

Cultural objects such as clothes, accessories, and other household functional artefacts are important mechanisms for facilitating an individual's identity, and they can be signposts for a shared belief system. Thus, the knowledge that is acquired through the utilisation of cultural objects contributes to the formation of an individual's identity or personality. While the Basotho blanket was borrowed and adapted to replace the original karoos, it is, however, a significant cultural esteemed object. The motifs imprinted on them carry relevant cultural, communal meanings with culturally shared significance. They constitute a major role in the enculturation of children as they (the children) can relate to the mundane symbolism of life.

Another important factor is that most African indigenous people construct their cultural knowledge by observing nature and the animal kingdom's ways of life, which are easily available in everyone's surroundings. When elders teach their offspring in indigenous cultures, they tell them stories about their surroundings to develop their individualistic and independent instincts (Tomkins, 1988). This is because indigenous knowledge is learnt through observation of the natural environment, similar to the empirical process of so-called scientifically deduced knowledge acclaimed in Western education. Indigenous peoples have vast knowledge that they have learnt from their interaction with the environment, and this includes how natural resources can be maintained. This means that there is a great opportunity for this knowledge to contribute to modern science and the management of natural resources. Thus, "the term enculturation is used to emphasise the agentic individual incorporating cultural elements during socialisation," such as cultural knowledge associated with that cultural behaviour

(Weinreich 2009: 124). For every behaviour, there is always an underpinning cultural or tacit knowledge.

Acculturation, on the other hand, happens when individuals from different cultural backgrounds meet one another (Schwartz, Zamboanga, Rodriguez, Wang, 2007:160). Acculturation is seen more in modern societies where people from different cultures live together, sharing their indigenous practices and knowledge, such as food, clothing, and various kinds of artistic expression, such as dance, music, and artefacts. For example, the Basotho blankets, with their imprinted motifs or symbolism, represent many important lessons about Basotho nationalism. Hence, I chose to single them out of many other Basotho cultural objects. This is because of the multiplicity of their functions, from protecting the body to representing the Basotho people's way of life, revealing and maintaining pertinent cultural knowledge for future generations.

4.1.1 Enculturation and Socialisation of Children

Kofi Gbolonyo (2009, iv) stated that "among the Ewe, music is the pivot around which Indigenous cultural practices revolve, and their musical texts are embedded with and are dynamic in the transmission of Indigenous knowledge and values". The quote speaks to how musical instruments are used in fostering cultural cohesion. Lesotho is still one of the countries where you find Sesotho descendants who speak Sesotho and practise the culture, although challenges come when the young Mosothos get urbanised due to work or school. These challenges are due to cross-cultural influence from acculturation. Das Gupta (2011, 57-58) asserts that indigenous cultural knowledge gets diluted when people move geographically because the new environment dictates new ways of approaching life. The move forces the community to acclimatise to the new environment, and change eventually occurs. Das Gupta (2011: 58) confirms that material culture within a set society is prone to change after relocation and that this is due to technological advances and acculturation. However, what guides an individual is his/her ingrained identity and cultural principles.

Due to several accounts and concerns about lost moral fibre among the current generations, societies worldwide are devising interventive psychosocial strategies

to redress these issues. In South Africa, for example, among many of these interventive strategies, there is a television programme entitled “Media and Society”, which is presented on Sundays at 9 am, and it presents talks from various experts in psychosocial issues. The speakers include the South African storyteller and motivational speaker Ngcina Mhlophe, who uses her Zulu cultural background and upbringing, which she attests has made her the person she has become. In her introduction to the topic that was concerning the lost generation, one of the speakers asserted that “we lost touch with young people”. In answering the suggestion from the facilitator of the programme, Naledi Moleo, “Let’s go back to maybe what we did right as the country?” Mhlophe’s response is:

In the times when we were dealing with things right, we were caring about young people, underline caring about young people. What is extremely important, then, is that we release the children from the shackles of only English. We release the children from the shackles of being separated from the grownups. We grew by having inter-generational dialogues (Mhlophe on Media and Society, SABC 404).

Casey Chambers, another speaker in the programme, in her response, says, “I think as young people they are dealing with so many more difficult problems, and issues than we did 10, 20 or 30 years ago, and don’t have necessary tools to cope”. These assertions testify that the current generation has lost direction, which would have been grounded in a proper upbringing, mostly due to modern socialisation aspects, including acculturation. Due to the socio-economic aspects of modern society, parents have to work while children are minded by domestic helpers or nurseries and when they are school age by teachers. Most modern families have since abandoned the responsibilities as guardians of their children, leaders, and role models. Thus, modern children, especially those growing up in urban areas, are mostly separated from grownups/parents, as Mhlophe alluded to. This is because most parents have full-time jobs and do not allocate quality time to their children, resulting in children learning promiscuous tendencies from social media and peers. Nowadays, there are several bad influencers, both through social media, which is easily available via the smartphones most children own and around them in communities.

The term “Ubuntu” is derived from the Indigenous African expression that “a human being is a human being because of other human beings” (Letseka 2012: 48). Letseka (2012: 48) further argues that Ubuntu instils moral principles, such as “altruism, kindness, generosity, compassion, benevolence, courtesy, and respect and concern for others”, and that communities who embrace Ubuntu treat others with fairness and justice. The principles alluded to by Letseka were embraced in traditional society and influenced by sayings such as “it takes a village to raise a child”, and this is similar to Mhlophe’s caution that we have to “release the children from the shackles of being separated from the grownups”, and that the older generation “grew up having inter-generational dialogues”. These dialogues were the main source of knowledge transfer from older generations to the younger ones through the enculturation or socialisation of children.

I believe that modern societies, especially those in townships and suburbs, are mostly susceptible to the lack of Ubuntu principles mainly due to socio-economic issues that include the separation of children from their guardians. This is not to say that all families living during the modern era do not guide their children; however, some of them just cannot, resulting in most of the children lacking relevant and necessary tools to cope in life. For example, I grew up in an urban area and was raised by a single mother, like many other modern children. However, the principles instilled in me with the help of my uncles and my grandmother during my upbringing are what have made me the moral person I believe I am. Das Gupta (2011) refers to the upbringing that embraces the traditional African way of life as folk life.

Mhlophe, in recalling her upbringing, stresses the importance of the stories that her grandmothers used to tell them as children, which were based on folklore. Storytelling was the main way of enculturation of children, and each story had important teachings. I remember one of the stories we used to be told by our grandmother, which was meant to teach us not to play outside at night. When these stories were told, usually at night after dinner, adults would conspire to make the stories real. For example, the story of ‘*tshwene*’ meaning the monkey, was told to us after we heard a sound of a chain being pulled against the ground. The story was that there was a monkey that slept during the day and woke up at night to

patrol the surroundings. It was carrying a big chain, and the noise was said to be that of the monkey's chain. We were told that if we went outside during the night and if the monkey saw us it would beat us up with its big chain.

Such stories were narrated to children to instil fear, respect for elders, courage, "altruism, kindness, generosity, compassion, benevolence, courtesy, and concern for others" (Letseka 2012: 48). In traditional societies elders were role models for the younger generations and promiscuous behaviours such as being intoxicated in front of children, kissing, and engaging in intimate acts in the presence of children were also unacceptable to prevent young children assimilating these acts before they know their meaning. The Basotho blankets are imprinted with several motifs, all with messages about moral values and the sustenance of an exemplary Mosotho, hence their relevance in every aspect of Mosotho's life. Most of the stories portrayed through the Basotho blanket motifs are meant to build one's character and knowledge about their surroundings. Sometimes, after a story was told, especially those that were meant to enforce important principles, our grandmother would ask us questions testing our listening and comprehension skills, and if your answers were correct or made sense, you would be rewarded with treats, such as cookies or goodies that as children we cherished.

Das Gupta (2011: 58), quoting Herskovits (1948), asserts that enculturation has two phases, and these are the "unconscious" stage, which happens in early human life, and the "conscious" stage, which takes place when the person is a grownup. Enculturation and socialisation of children are commonly administered through storytelling in Basotho societies, and these stories bind the Basotho people together and carry their history, cultural heritage, and traditions. Thus, during modern times, these oral stories are replaced by children's books, which means that parents and caregivers can still use these stories to teach children important and needed principles by reading to and with them. Some of these stories still have a significant role to play in shaping children's characters.

Children's identities are formed by observing their parents, extended family, and community members' etiquette during gatherings, performing rituals, and performing several other relevant ceremonies and practices. In summing up how

it functions, Regina Fabry (2018) asserts that enculturation is a complex process that is the product of bio-cultural evolution. The process involves knowing, learning, and understanding things throughout human life. When elders tell the stories, they sometimes do not make explicit the imbedded messages and meanings to allow the children to discover the essence of the stories on their own and at the right time. For example, some of the lessons I learnt as a child only made sense to me during my adult life, culminating in the “oh” and “aha” moment as the teachings started to make sense.

4.1.2 Acculturation

Acculturation is unavoidable within modern societies due to the close cohabitation of cultures from different backgrounds. “Acculturation comprehends those phenomena which result when groups of individuals having different cultures come into continuous first-hand contact, with subsequent changes in the original cultural patterns of either or both groups” (Bryan Kim and Saul Alamilla 2019: 4). The adaptation of some cultural aspects from other cultures sometimes leads to a shift in cultural practices, adoption of new values, beliefs and social structures. Globalisation is another form of acculturation initiated by intercultural contact and leads to cultural and individual change (Berry, 2008). Individuals are acculturated through observing practices and way of life from another culture, and this happens in a linear format; the longer the individual is exposed to these practices, the more he/she adopts or adapts them as his/her own.

Language plays a major role in acculturation as it is by and with it that the new practices are communicated and transmitted. Although the process usually takes time to happen, when it happens, it transforms various aspects of the acculturated individual, fortifying other indelible lifestyles. However, if the encultured principles are grounded, the individual would still relate to them as a form of identity. I argue that in modern society, we must still uphold these foundational principles in our children to give them self-definition.

Acculturation similar to enculturation, is learnt through socialisation as a result of the continuing contact between people of different cultural backgrounds (Sam & Berry, 2006: 27). In the modern society where children spend more than eight

hours of their time per day either with nannies, nurseries and at schools including boarding schools acculturation usually take precedence over family values due to the absence of parents. Again, referring to Mhlophe's comment that we must "release the children from the shackles of only English", referring to it as the main language used by modern societies when living together. In addition, most urban schools, including nurseries, are run by white people or people from different ethnic groups, and English then becomes the first language the child learns. Another issue is that the advancement of technology has made people more inclined to change their culture due to their contact through social media, leading to them adopting uncensored practices and habits.

4.2 CULTURAL RE-APPROPRIATION WITHIN CONTEMPORARY ART

During the post-colonial period, most African artists sought to produce art that resonated with their cultural values and identities as an act of demystifying the so-called African authentic art, which was associated with primitivism by Western art critics and historians. While these artists are still creating artefacts depicting aspects of their cultural way of life, however, the interpretation of their artistic expression is being seen anew. This is due mostly to them re-appropriating some significant elements of their culture and representing them afresh sometimes using innovative techniques and or reinterpreting the subject matter.

For example, Makhetha's reuse of Basotho blankets to produce high-end modern garments elevates these cultural objects, making them seen afresh and appreciated worldwide. Other examples are the traditional African homestead wall paintings such as the Ndebele geometric shape patterns by Esther Mahlangu, a South African, the Basotho Letimas, the Botswana Lekapos, as well as the amaXhosa beadwork geometric patterns adapted by Laduma Ngxokolo in his knitwear designs also a South African, just to mention a few.

The indigenous knowledge of African people can be used for cultural purposes and as a wealth-creation tool. Indigenous knowledge informs the majority of decision-making locally, around the world, and its implementation. The creation of strategies for growth and development is fundamental for sustainable development (Bahuda and Marumo 2021: 62).

Thus, this study argues that some African cultural elements can be regarded as devices for the sustainability of identity and heritage. In this way, it is imperative to utilise indigenous knowledge-based strategies for economic empowerment since they comprehend local realities (Bahuda and Marumo 2021: 62).

4.2.1 Esther Mahlangu

Cultural re-appropriation happens when an artist adopts his/her cultural elements and incorporates them anew in contemporary art, elevating his/her culture to fit into the global context. Martins (2021: 295) describes cultural heritage re-appropriation as it seeks to sustain a culture by highlighting the foundational knowledge, traditional practices, as well as the norms and values of previously subverted communities. Kayandago (2003:45) described cultural re-appropriation as a programme “for Africans to re-appropriate, revalorise, learn about, and love their cultures... some kind of cultural therapy”.

Esther Mahlangu is a South African Ndebele artist known for her traditional Ndebele wall paintings, beadwork, and pottery which she learnt from her mother and grandmother as a child. She became an expert in executing the murals as a teenager, using a widening range of paint colours that emerged in the 1940s (Ester Mahlangu 2015). Mahlangu’s first exposure to an exhibition came when researchers from Paris, travelling the world, saw her Ndebele-painted house, which grabbed their attention. They extended an invitation to Mahlangu to enter into an international exhibition the “Magiciens de la Terre” (Magicians of the World) (Mahlangu 2015). This was the beginning of her rise to fame, and while she was in France, she also decorated a wall inside the Angoulême Museum of Fine Arts and showed her work at other locations in France (Mahlangu 2015).



Figure 4.1: Esther Mahlangu Creates Murals For Virginia

Mahlangu etched her name in the art industry when she became the first Ndebele painter to transfer her mural paintings onto canvas. This became her niche, and in 1991, Mahlangu was celebrated by being featured in the patterning of the BMW 525i with Ndebele patterns. Mahlangu became the twelfth artist but the first woman artist to be featured in the BMW Art Car Project, behind household names such as Andy Warhol and Roy Lichtenstein.



Figure 4.2: Esther Mahlangu, BMW 525i with *Ndebele* patterns

Ester also established a school at her house, teaching young girls and boys freehand painting designs and pigment mixing, including life skills such as patience, concentration, discipline, self-esteem, and/or self-confidence. I chose Mahlangu for this section because her traditional Ndebele geometric patterns can now be seen painted on different surfaces, such as bangles, earrings, hats, and knobkierie, similar to how Basotho patterns were also assimilated from Letima homestead paintings.

Mahlangu's Ndebele pattern designs and her influence as an artist in this section are important because she also creates ceramics and decorates them with the mural house painting patterns using her free hands, as seen in Figure 4.3. Every design and mark becomes distinct instead of the stencilling of mass-produced designs. Mahlangu does not do a layout or sketch her geometric design first, nor use stencilling. Mahlangu paints from memory, considering the surface and shape she is about to paint on. She then first has a feel for how to go about the design in a small portion and then expands or extends her design from there. This renders her approach unique and distinct (ARTsouthAFRICA, 2013). Mahlangu has managed to carefully navigate the art world by not only showing teachings from her ancestors but transcending from the teachings to a modern figure (Valerie Behiery, 2020)



Figure 4.3: Esther Mahlangu, various Clay Pots (2019). Courtesy of the artist and The Melrose Gallery.

It is evident from how Mahlangu's work arose to fame while she was still painting the same patterns as she did before she was discovered by the Paris tourists that contemporary artistic discourses are shifting. While this is a positive issue, however, it is still worrying that this shift first has to be endorsed by the West. Thus, my study calls for Africans to be determined in terms of cultural renewal and not to seek approval from the West. For example, Mahlangu's work, similar to Makhetha's, rose to fame coincidentally after they were endorsed at or by Paris platforms or people. Before them being exposed to the West, they were just perceived as African Cultural or, to borrow Western terms, primitive or falling into so-called African authentic art.

Ekpo's theory of Post Africanism warns that Africa must be viewed as a diverse and complex continent that is constantly changing, but for it to be credible must first be endorsed and come from an African perspective. This is because factors such as globalisation, migration, and the spread of new technologies driving this change are experienced worldwide. According to Ekpo, Africa should not be defined by its traditional cultures and customs but by what shapes global influences. In addition, new forms of African identity have emerged that are not constrained by traditional notions of culture and ethnicity. Ekpo further asserts that the rise of the African diaspora has resulted in the emergence of a new, transnational form of African identity shaped by those who have left the continent and acculturation.

Post-Africanism is a different way of thinking about Africa than Postcolonialism and Pan-Africanism. It moves beyond dwelling on the negative impacts of colonialism and seeks a more positive and forward-looking approach. The focus is on developing new and creative ideas for African intellectuals to address contemporary issues within Africa while also engaging with modernity and the West on a more dynamic level. In simpler terms, Post-Africanism acknowledges the past but is more interested in shaping a better future for Africa by encouraging a fresh perspective and active engagement with the world (Van Haute, 2011:1).

Thus, African cultural re-appropriation can be used to amplify and reshape these transitional forms of identities towards cultural renewal and instil pride, among other things. The marketing of artistic items additionally represents a way for Indigenous communities to show and strengthen their cultural diversity and identity. This proves that African indigenous knowledge still has its exceptional contribution within the globally esteemed epistemologies. Finally, Ekpo's concept of post-Africanist aesthetics, which mainly refers to African art, emphasises the significance of agency and individual choice in elevating African identity and culture. Dr Umar Johnson believes Black people have the right to reexamine history from their own perspective and re-educate themselves to achieve a more inclusive understanding.

A Kenyan born writer and academic, Ngugi wa Thiongo, begs to differ. He feels that colonialism brought immense suffering and violence to African people. language and art as essential aspects of African identity and way of life. Literature and art are interwoven into the very fabric of the African experience. Wa Thiongo argues that colonialism eroded African languages, which in turn weakened people's sense of self. He uses the metaphor of erasing memories to highlight the destruction of cultural identity. He criticizes the dismissive attitude towards African art, often labelled as "primitive" or mere craft, denying its sophistication and depth. Ekpo suggests that we do away with 'Africanness'. Wa Thiongo speaks of how the coloniser erased the 'memory' of the subjugated in order to control and dominate them. The linguistic culture of Africans was stunted even though he adds that learning another language is beneficial as long as the native language is not totally destroyed.

4.2.2 Laduma Ngxokolo

Laduma Ngxokolo is a South African fashion designer who creates knitwear inspired by Xhosa beadwork geometric patterns. Ngxokolo started his designs to be worn by Xhosa boys after graduating from the initiation school to manhood Figure 4.4. His initial idea led to exploring premium knitwear that celebrates Xhosa beadwork aesthetics. This exploration of the Xhosa beadwork came as a source of inspiration after he observed Thabo Makhetha's use of Basotho blankets.

Laduma was Makhetha's junior at the university, and their relationship grew after Makhetha's first garment, which she wore at the 2011 Durban July in Kwazulu Natal province of South Africa. Ngxokolo's fashion designs are called Maxhosa designs, and they exhibit the beauty, culture, heritage, language, aesthetics, and aspirations of the amaXhosa nation. His boutique was founded in 2010 and is called Maxhosa Africa.



Figure 4.4: Laduma Ngxokolo, a Xhosa boy Initiates after transitioning to manhood

Ngxokolo's designs for men assimilate both the geometric patterns and popular colours used in most of the Xhosa men's beadwork. For men, cool colours such as different shades of blues as well as violet and lilac are used, while for females, warm and earth colours such as reds, orange, and yellows are all mixed with white and rarely black see Figures 4.5 to 4.7.



Figure 4.5: Mpondo coiled beaded belt worn by young men and amaMpondo beaded calabash, 1900

Similar to Makhetha's appropriation and use of Basotho blanket motifs, Ngxokolo also observes the protocol for colour coding the garments following the beadwork's culturally accepted colours. His clients enjoy wearing his garments as they are made to fit all types of occasions. His designs are a fusion of African patterns in terms of the material, but they can be made in different designs, such as elegant to casual wear.



Figure 4.6: Maxhosa-Africa-spring-2021-fashion-show- backstage

Ngxokolo not only appropriates the Xhosa geometric patterns but also creates his geometric assemblage, like Mahlangu in her Ndebele patterns. Similar to Mahlangu, his designs do not only copy the original patterns but fuse the patterning anew, creating busy formations with overlaps made easy through knitting weaving. Furthermore, the colours hold significant meaning, and to those who know and understand the coded patterns appreciate them.

Ngxokolo's use of cultural heritage items also talks about cultural reappropriation, elevating the process of beading to be appreciated differently. Ngxokolo understands the material culture and its importance in keeping culture alive. Cultural artefacts, including clothing and accessories and their symbolism, are mundane mechanisms that hold together traditional cultural identity and heritage due to their simplicity and accessibility. Thus, Ngxokolo does not seek to represent the culture and its traditions but seeks to create a modern alternative for people to appreciate the Xhosa culture and traditions.



Figure 4.7: Maxhosa-Africa-spring-2021-fashion-show- backstage

Similar to Makhetha's use of Basotho blankets, Mahlangu' and Ngxokolo's cultural heritage reappropriation is also used not only to elevate their respective cultures but they have also to create niches to sustain their economic fulfilments towards cultural capital and promotion of cultural diversity. Bourdieu (1986) argues that social life can be conceived as a multidimensional status game in which people draw on three different types of resources, economic, cultural, and social, to compete for status. Thus, these cultural objects or symbols, in this instance, are appropriated, converting them into valuable objects to gain wealth. Rogers (2006: 477) asserts that the adoption of cultural "symbols, artefacts, rituals, genres, and/or technologies" is an everyday practice among modern cultures; however "where the politics of cultural appropriation can be tested or contested", is in fashion (Hurst

and Manona 2023) quoting Mary Corrigan (2017). The adoption is used here to retain the meaning of appropriating something without the negative connotations (Rogers 2006: 476).

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

This research was an interpretation of the cultural meaning and significance of the Basotho blanket through ceramics. It sought to investigate the contemporary interpretation and representation of the Basotho blankets while appraising their traditional uses and meaning. This chapter serves to conclude the argument posed by this study and to recontextualise the emergent discourses. The argument this study posed was framed by Denis Ekpo's concept of Post Africanism in which he stated, among other things, that the existence of humankind is progressive and ever-changing as aspects like climate change, human rights, and the fight against the extinction of original animal species present themselves. Furthermore, the discussions that unfolded served to frame coherent arguments starting from Makhetha's re-appropriation of the Basotho blankets in her fashion designs to uphold not only their cultural significance but also to pay tribute to her culture.

Michel Foucault's genealogical fact-finding process, reasserted by Bevir (2008), was used to trace the evolution, iconographic interpretation, and cultural meaning of the Basotho blankets and their place as significant Basotho's identity signifiers. Genealogy was facilitated through a critical review of available literature and key informant interviews. Phenomenology through the lived experience of the researcher was also used to enhance the emergent knowledge. Cultural re-appropriation was used to explain the discontinuous account of Genealogy towards cultural renewal. Bevir (2008) explained Genealogy as a historical narrative that explains an aspect of human life by showing how it came into being. Bevir also points out that Genealogy can trace some aspects of historical narratives that continue throughout our existence while some are discontinued or represented anew towards personal or social transformation. According to Bevir (2008), "Genealogy opens novel spaces for personal and social transformation precisely because it loosens the hold on us of entrenched ideas and institutions; it frees us to imagine other possibilities".

Thus, the reimagining and reimaging of cultural symbols by the Makhetha, Mahlangu, and Ngxokolo, which inspired this study and the artistic creation of my ceramics, elevate these cultural objects towards the imagination of new

possibilities. This aligns well with Ekpo and Sidogi's (2021) concept of African aesthetics, in which they assert that art has a foundational meta-cultural role to play in enabling society and cultural progress (Ekpo and Sidogi 2021:132). Ekpo's theoretical framework was used throughout this study, unpacking how the Basotho heritage blanket developed, highlighting that this development was not just a linear progression from the old materials to the new ones but that they are now symbols of communication, identity, cultural heritage, as well as being converted to cultural capital through innovative ways. Through this study, I emphasise shifting grounds on which cultures worldwide sit. I argued that we should embrace these shifts creatively towards self-realisation.

King Moshoeshoe I realised the need to be proactive when he adopted and declared the use of the first Basotho blankets to combat the extinction of animals whose skins were used to make the old version of the current blanket. He took it upon himself to adapt and adopt the blanket as a cultural symbol. Although it was a borrowed one, it replaced the idea of 'Kaross'. Thus, the original function of the blanket is still the same. However, its significance for cultural identity is being expanded, not nullified. This is because while modernisation ushered many new possibilities into how we live our lives, some features have remained the same, such as the Lesotho cold climate, as mountains still surround it.

5.1 GENEALOGICAL ACCOUNT

Genealogy in this study has demonstrated how historical accounts can be both subjective and objective at the same time. Subjective perspective refers to the researcher choosing what he/she wants to investigate based on the study's objectives. In contrast, the objective can include unavoidable factual accounts from both oral and written history. It further exposes how cultural knowledge and its construction can be vast, making it difficult for it to be presented in a linear perspective. This is because societies exist within a myriad of natural and unnatural/ manmade environments and continuously changing situations, be it climate or socio-political and socio-economic changes. Through Genealogy, we do not regurgitate history but choose the phenomena that must be put into context to support the arguments being made. Genealogy in this study allowed the

researcher not only to rely on written literature but also to tap into oral knowledge through key informants and phenomenological approaches.

Thus, using Genealogy in tracing the evolution, functions, and cultural narratives of the subsequently imprinted motifs not only presents the complex nature of navigating history but uncovers the “historical contingencies that made it possible for the current generation of Basotho people “to think and act as they do” (Bevir 2008). The study discovered that Basotho cultural symbols throughout the years have evolved from geometric designs taken from the natural environmental spectacle, as well as from shared historical narratives of existence (Taylor 2014). The study also discovered that there are those symbols that have since been adopted and adapted from incidental processes and practices, such as the four lines that appear in all these modern blankets, which are explained as they were a factory fault when the blankets imprinted with motifs were first produced. The first lines were white, but after they were adopted, they are now in different colours, such as red, black, yellow, blue, and so on. They were subsequently used to dictate the wearing protocols and are still an important recognisable feature in all the blankets. The lines have to be worn vertically. Thus, the current motifs or symbols all tell a story.

This adaptation of and adaptation to natural and manmade circumstances also denotes the resilience associated with being a Mosotho, and it is meant to instil pride in the younger generation. The study has also shown how the Basothos appropriated the blanket that was not theirs and weaved it into their way of life, as can be seen in words such as “*Kobo ke bophelo*”, meaning the blanket is life. While this saying may be associated with its functions as it was first used as a body protective garment from various extreme climatic conditions, thereby giving the wearer life, its cultural meaning has been made deeper and befitting the Basotho national identity. This is because its meaning and functions encompass the Basotho way of life from infancy to adulthood and for bidding farewell to the departed as a symbol of honour and respect.

5.2 POST-AFRICANISM

The “cultural renewal” (Ekpo, 2014), which is an integral part of this study, sought to highlight the importance of indigenous African cultural knowledge, placing it into the Global epistemic canons. King Moshoeshoe I was a visionary, and his act of adopting the modern manufactured Basotho blanket way back in 1860 was already a kind of cultural renewal, which confirms that societies from time immemorial had always adapted to new situations as they avail themselves. This is, in fact, how knowledge systems are created and amended throughout the world. While cultural re-appropriation can be taken as some kind of rebellion against the Western epistemic hegemony, however, it is a valuable process towards decoloniality and Africans’ self-realisation.

Thus, cultural renewal, according to Ekpo, stresses the importance of agency and individual choice in the formation of African identity and culture. He argues that rather than being defined solely by their ethnicity or nationality, individuals and communities can shape their own identities and cultures (Ekpo 2010). The notion of agency is very important for Africans because it demystifies the justification for colonialism, which eventually led to the oppression and dominance by the West of African people.

All the various artists who were used as subjects of this study, including myself as the researcher, are intervening in a heavily contested topic. This is because of the original meaning of appropriation, which is usually associated with exploitation by a dominant group at the expense of the subverted one. While cultural re-appropriation seems to be acceptable, it is regarded as not appropriating from another culture but some kind of showcasing your own culture; however, in some instances, it is frowned upon from within the culture being showcased, as was visible in Makhetha’s use of the blanket in her designs. This is again evident in the fact that both Makhetha and Mahlangu’s works were first acknowledged and appreciated outside the African continent.

This study used various methodologies to investigate issues, including visual analysis in my final exhibition, ethnographic research, and phenomenological interpretive creative reaction in both my data collection and analysis. These

accounts provided rich articulation and understanding of how indigenous African crafts, such as the Basotho blanket, have been transformed and adapted into contemporary African art forms. Similar to the Ndebele homestead geometric pattern paintings on the BMW 525i, the amaXhosa beadwork patterns have been adapted into knitwear and are now showcased on international fashion platforms. This shows how these processes are shaping the cultural identities of contemporary African artistic discourses. The study aimed to contribute to a better understanding of the dynamic and evolving nature of African culture and art. It also portrayed ways in which contemporary African artists can engage with the past and the present to create new and exciting forms of cultural expression through Ekpos' concept of cultural renewal as a contribution to African Studies.

5.3 RECOMMENDATION

Based on the objectives of this study, the conclusions offer the following recommendations: there must be a promotion of cultural understanding and appreciation. Thus, initiatives that promote a deeper understanding and appreciation of Basotho blankets and other cultural artefacts should be encouraged. This can be achieved through educational programmes, cultural events, and exhibitions that highlight the historical evolution, symbolism, and cultural significance of these objects. Collaboration with cultural institutions, museums, and educational institutions can play a crucial role in this regard.

Furthermore, there should be support for contemporary artistic expressions that re-appropriate cultural symbols, such as the work of Makhetha, Mahlangu, Ngoxokolo, and the researcher. These artists contribute to the preservation and evolution of cultural heritage by reimagining traditional elements in innovative ways. Funding, mentorship programmes, and platforms for showcasing such art can further encourage this form of cultural expression. The support could also take the form of integrating cultural education into formal curricula, ensuring that the significance and evolution of cultural symbols such as the Basotho blankets are included in educational materials. This will contribute to a broader understanding of cultural identity and foster a sense of pride and connection to heritage among the younger generation.

Moreover, collaboration and knowledge exchange between artists, researchers, and cultural practitioners both within and outside the African continent should be promoted. This can facilitate the sharing of ideas, techniques, and perspectives and contribute to a more interconnected and enriched global cultural landscape where African cultures are understood and respected on the one hand and not suppressed and repressed on the other hand. This would demand continuous ongoing research and documentation of cultural symbols, practices, and their contemporary interpretations and relevance to the indigenous people. This can involve interdisciplinary studies that combine art, history, sociology, and anthropology to provide a holistic understanding of the cultural dynamics at play. This research can inform future artistic expressions and cultural initiatives.

Finally, there should be advocacy for the concept of “cultural renewal”, as proposed by Ekpo, emphasising the importance of agency and individual choice in shaping African identity and culture. This can involve challenging stereotypes, resisting cultural appropriation, and actively participating in the reinterpretation and reimagining of cultural symbols for self-realisation.

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