



The International Council
of Onomastic Sciences

Onomastics Online

12 November 2026

17:00 UTC+1 / 18:00 GMT+2

Microsoft Teams

Maleshoane Rapeane-Mathonsi

Durban University of Technology, South Africa

Moderator: Chrismi Loth

University of the Free State, South Africa

A socio-onomastic analysis of Basotho blanket names and colours: from representations of unity to turf wars

Abstract: Lesotho, a former British protectorate, inherited what is now commonly known as the Basotho blanket from the British rule. Today, it stands as a powerful symbol of unity and cultural identity among the Basotho people. These blankets are given distinct names based on their motifs or the occasions they are worn, reflecting their deep cultural significance. Due to this strong attachment, many Basotho prefer authentic blankets over cheaper imitations found in neighbouring SADC countries. However, the blanket also reflects divisions within Basotho society. It has become a marker of identity for rival accordion music groups, Seakhi and Terene, who wear blue/black and yellow blankets respectively. Political parties similarly associate themselves with specific blanket colours, turning a symbol of unity into one of factionalism.

This paper explores the various names given to Basotho blankets and how these names reflect both national pride and group identity. Using socio-onomastics as its framework, the study draws on data from Aranda and other blanket retailers, family collections, and literature. It highlights how the blanket, while representing the Basotho nation, also serves as a visual language for political, musical and other affiliations.

Keywords: Basotho blanket, cultural identity, group identity, socio-onomastics, symbolism

Register here (required): <https://events.teams.microsoft.com/event/863e914b-25d8-4940-82a6-6feddd0914b4@8efc1bb9-b90f-4a48-bf6c-ba0686193b80>

- Upon registration you will receive an email with the link.
- The system will also circulate a reminder with the link an hour before the event.

ICOS policy on privacy: <https://icosweb.net/membership/icos-personal-data-protection-policy/>





LinkedIn:

<https://www.linkedin.com/in/maleshoane-rapeane-mathonsi-618152144/>

Biography: Maleshoane Rapeane-Mathonsi is an Associate Professor in Media, Language, and Communication at Durban University of Technology. She began her academic career at the University of Cape Town, where she earned her PhD, and later worked at the National University of Lesotho before joining Durban University of Technology (DUT). Her research explores formal linguistics, socio-onomastics, and language and gender. She co-founded DUT's Faculty of Arts and Humanities conferences. She contributed to the *Lesotho Sign Language Dictionary* and also works as a translator. She serves as Deputy President of the Names Society of Southern Africa and sits on the International Symposium on Place Names panel.

Onomastics Online lecture series:

Onomastics Online is a series of online lectures dealing with important timely topics related to names and naming. Given by distinguished scholars from various academic backgrounds, the lectures demonstrate the importance and the multidisciplinary nature of onomastic research. To see the list of upcoming and past lectures, please visit our webpage at: <https://icosweb.net/onomastics-online/>.

Previous lectures can be found on our YouTube channel:

<https://www.youtube.com/@theinternationalcouncilof2460>.

If you are interested in ICOS membership, please visit our website:

<https://icosweb.net/membership/membership-registration/>.

