

PERCEPTIONS OF *SESHOESHOE* FABRIC, NAMING AND MEANINGS OF MOTIFS ON FABRIC

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ABSTRACT

A programme has been initiated with the Basotho women use *seshoeshoe* dress as symbol of identity. This dress is made from a fabric called *terantala* or *seshoeshoe* and that is manufactured outside of Lesotho. This study was designed to assess the perceptions of college staff and students together with *seshoeshoe* dressmakers with regard this fabric. The study was based on the following research questions: What is the fabric commonly referred to as? Has the fabric quality changed over time? What are the problems encountered when handling the fabric? What are the respondents' perceptions of the fabric uses? Are the respondents aware of the different motifs, motif names and meanings or symbolism?

The research design was quantitative. The sample included 140 staff members and 350 students who were randomly selected and 23 dressmakers who were selected by means of snowball sampling. The staff and students filled out a self-administrative questionnaire, while personal interviews were conducted with the dressmakers. Participants were asked to respond to aspects such as *seshoeshoe* fabric naming, quality, choice, fabric care, uses and health hazards as well as names and meanings of its motifs.

Responses of participants showed that both the dress and fabric are popularly known as *seshoeshoe*. It was further found that the choice of the fabric has increased in the market due to the wide variety of motifs and colours although the quality of fabric has not improved. There are still problems encountered by dressmakers when handling the fabric. Most participants in the study had a good knowledge of the names of motifs. Dressmakers, being the first handlers of the new fabrics, were responsible for the originations of the names.

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INTRODUCTION

What is known as *seshoeshoe* fabric today originated from the blue cloth or calico which was imported to Europe from India. It is a cotton fabric which was dyed with a natural indigo dye. Eventually a synthetic indigo dye was developed in Europe and so was the manufacturing and printing of the fabric. The blue print known in Lesotho as *terantala* was introduced to South Africa by German settlers in 1858/9 after they settled in the Eastern Cape and Natal. By the

19th century Xhosa women had gradually replaced their animal skin garment with the cotton ones (Stephen Gill, Curator Morija Museum and Archives, Personal Communication 17 March 1998; Helen Bester, Da Gama Textiles, Personal Communication 12 January 2004).

OBJECTIVES

The objectives of this study were to a) assess the perceptions of college staff, students and dressmakers in Maseru City with regard to *seshoeshoe* fabric name, quality, choice, uses and problems encountered when handling fabric, and b) to identify the different motifs used on *seshoeshoe* fabric and the basis for their naming.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Since the 1950s when Basotho women saw a need to have a national identity and embraced the blue "German Print", or *terantala* as it was called, the fabric has evolved extensively. The most popular brand of the fabric that was produced was called the Three Cats and this was exported to South Africa. This brand is now produced by the Da Gama Textiles in South Africa specifically for Basotho consumption (Gill 1998; Bester 2004).

The fabric has a variety of designs that are not arbitrary, but are motifs that carry meanings. The principal author noted that many users of the fabric and the dress were not paying much attention to making a distinction between the name of fabric and dress and the significance of the motifs. Because of the historical importance of the fabric and the dress, it became clear that documentation of the users' knowledge about the fabric and the dress was necessary in order to preserve such knowledge for future generations.

BACKGROUND ON SESHOESHOE FABRIC

Seshoeshoe fabric, also known as *shweshwe* or *isishweshwe*, is produced by Da Gama Textiles in King Williamstown, South Africa. The company indicates that *seshoeshoe* or the blue cloth originated in Europe from cloth imported from India. In the East they used a natural indigo dye that was obtained from the leguminous plant of the genus *Indigofera*. During the 19th century central/mid European textile manufacturers developed a printing style on indigo-dyed cotton fabric. Around 1890 a German factory

developed a synthetic indigo dye that is still used today. The fabric was manufactured and printed in Czechoslovakia and Hungary by Gustav Deutsch, who migrated to England in the 1930s. The factory was later bought by Blue Printers Ltd in Wigan. There were four companies producing this print style, the largest being Spruce Manufacturing which produced the most popular brand name of Three Cats, which was exported to South Africa (Gill 1998; Bester 2004).

The blue print was introduced to South Africa by German settlers in 1858/9 after they settled in the Eastern Cape and Natal. The fabric was imported from Europe to meet the demand of the German settler women. Consequently, by the 19th century, Xhosa women had gradually replaced their animal skin garment with the cotton ones. Young women who were educated at mission stations began to dress in European style dresses and the indigo gave them a blue hue that was beautiful on their skins. The original *seshoeshoe* is very stiff when new. This is because during the long sea voyage from England to South Africa, starch was used to preserve the fabric, giving it a characteristic stiffness. The stiffness usually disappears after the fabric has been washed (Gill 1998; Bester 2004).

Da Gama Textiles further indicates that the production of Indigo Dyed Discharge Printed Fabric in South Africa began in 1982. This occurred after Tootal, a company from the UK, invested in Da Gama Textiles. German Print was then produced under the trade mark of Three Leopards, a South African version of the Three Cats trademark that was produced in Manchester. During the same time Tootal also introduced a range called Toto. Two new colours, a rich chocolate brown and a vibrant red were added to the blue. Since 1992 Da Gama has purchased the sole rights to own and print the branded Three Cats range designs.

Da Gama Textiles still produces the original "German Print" or *seshoeshoe* in the Eastern Cape. The process is still done in the traditional way, whereby fabric is fed through copper rollers which have patterns etched on the surface, allowing a weak acid solution to penetrate the fabric, bleaching it and leaving a traditional white design. The common trademark of a back-stamp on the fabric serves as proof of the authentic brands of Three Cats, Three Leopards and Toto 6 Star. The indigo fades with washing in the same way that denim does. The Three Cats

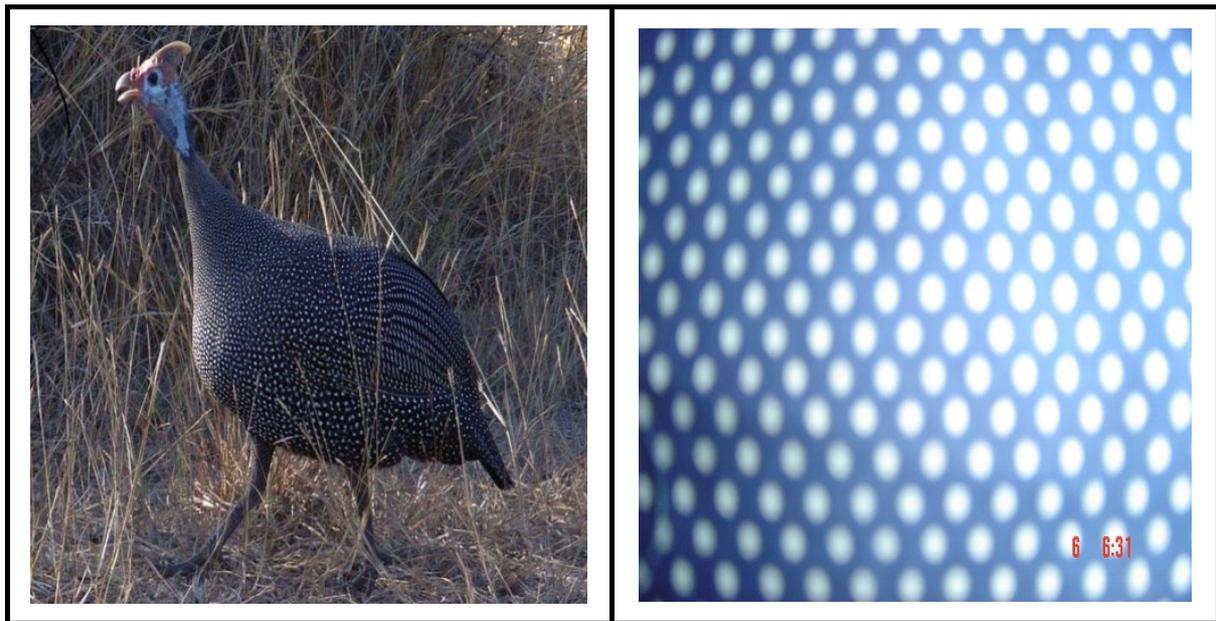


FIGURE 1: ORIGINAL FABRIC KNOWN AS “TERANTALA” OR “KHAKA” FROM GUINEA FOWL DESIGN

range is sourced from a closed library of designs while the Three Leopards range introduces new designs on a regular basis.

According to Fashion (2011:1) *seshoeshoe* or *shweshwe* is the most popular fabric for women in South Africa: “Shweshwe is the cloth of choice for outfits for traditional ceremonies. It is a common thread in the fabric of South African life: worn by kings, politicians and socialites and also by rural women as they gather firewood or fetch water.” Da Gama Textiles (s.a.) indicates that in the early 1840s the missionaries presented Moshoeshoe I, the king of Basotho with a gift of an indigo printed cloth, hence the name *seshoeshoe* (*shweshwe* and *isishweshwe* in South Africa). Fashion (2011) further posits that the fabric was widely worn by the German settlers in the Eastern Cape. Xhosa women added it to their wardrobes and called it Ujamani. The cloth is called Mojeremani (i.e. from German), in Botswana.

Gill (1998) submits that the origins of the fabric from Culicutta in India, hence the name calico. He argues that *seshoeshoe* fabric is a calico or an inexpensive variety of all-cotton fabric woven in plain or ‘tabby’ weave and printed with simple designs in one or more colours. Calico was imported into the Republic of South Africa, and Lesotho from around the mid-19th century. He maintains that when Morija was burnt in 1858 by the Free State Commando, one trader named Pullinger lost £1102.00 worth of property

including three and half dozen Voerchitz (lengths of calico). Gill (1998) points out that according to the Dictionary of South African English, 1980 edition, Voerchitz is also referred to variously as kaffir print, sis, and Duitse sis. He further notes that in French, the calico skirt is known as “jupeindienne” (from India, referring to the indigo blue colour) or “calicot”.

The cloth was used by Christian women in Lesotho during the 19th century for skirts in more or less the same way that it was used by the young Xhosa women, who were Christian converts, as suggested by Da Gama Textiles (s.a). The cloth became widespread during the early 20th century. During this time the cloth was mainly used to make large billowing skirts that had layer upon layer of petticoats. ‘*Terantala*’, as the fabric was called, is derived from the Afrikaans word *tarentaal* - the spotted guinea fowl, or *khaka* in Sesotho which was the typical design on the fabric as shown in Figure 1. Despite the rich history between the founder of the Basotho nation and the fabric, the concept of *seshoeshoe* in Lesotho is believed to have taken root only in the 1950s (Gill, 1998).

Having presented the background of *seshoeshoe* it is pertinent to review some of its aspects such as quality and motifs which form part of the subject of this study.



FIGURE 2: EXAMPLES OF DA GAMA TRADEMARKS FOUND ON THE WRONG SIDE OF SESHOESHOE FABRIC

Fabric quality

The choice of *seshoeshoe* fabric by consumers and dressmakers depends on the quality of the fabric, garments and the cost of products produced. The word quality is defined by De Klerk and Lubbe (2004:87) as “the totality of characteristics of a whole that has the capacity to satisfy the explicit and implied needs of consumers or the excellence of a product. In clothing products, it can be defined as the capabilities of the product to provide satisfaction in relation to other alternatives”. Peters (1983) views quality as conforming to the customers’ requirements in production or manufacturing in order to earn his respect and hence business continuity. According to Kadolph (1998:12-13) quality is one of the factors that determine consumers preference and emphasises that it is “the way a product or service conforms to specifications, or ability of a product or service to meet customers’ needs and satisfy their demands”. The quality of the fabric, trimming and workmanship are used as a product costing criteria. According to Heizer and Render (2005) quality as assessed in the study is important in

that (a) it exhibits the image of a company; (b) it determines the product’s worth and © its potential to penetrate the global market. In addition to these general factors, in the clothing industry, the design and quality of the fabric as well as the garment are critical for the purpose of delivering a “fashion right” statement.

Trademark and brand

To ensure that the fabric is genuine and not an imitation consumers and dressmakers use the Da Gama trademarks. The word brand is used to identify products and differentiate them from those of competitors. The aim of branding is to facilitate, improve and simplify control of the market process. A brand suggests consistency in the quality and origin of the product (Wild, 1995). According to Visser (1995) the term ‘mark’ refers to any sign capable of being represented graphically.

In the context of the study Da Gama’s brand as the producer of the *seshoeshoe* fabric such as Three Cats are important to the dressmakers. A sample of Da Gama trademarks is presented in

Figure 2.

FABRIC MOTIFS

Gunter (2003) and Hann (2004) note that religion played a significant role in both Chinese and Japanese textile designs. For example, Gunter (2003) shows that Taoism inspired motifs of supernatural powers and of longevity. Buddhism, the most influential religion on design, brought motifs such as the accoutrements associated with esoteric Buddhist sects and Confucian values are evident in motifs such as Three Friends in Winter, a traditional Chinese plant grouping which includes the pine, bamboo, and plum. Japanese textile designs were influenced by the religions in China. Among the most popular and prominent Japanese motifs are the bamboo, pine, cherry blossoms, plum blossoms, maple leaves, peony, camellia, crane, and chidori (Gunter, 2003). Hann (2004) observes that a wide range of decorative motifs was used in the decoration of Qing dynasty textiles. These encompassed humans, mythical animals, plants and fruits, natural phenomena, man-made objects, abstract line drawings, and various calligraphic signs influenced by major religions. However, on some occasions the design applied to a textile was purely decorative in nature.

In other cases, subtle meanings were conveyed by the use of combinations of homophonic or auspicious motifs or compositions. Motifs can be grouped as follows: Botanical, Animal/Insect/Bird, Water-related, Everyday objects, and abstract shapes and geometric designs (Gunter, 2003). Hann (2004) points out that Buddhist motifs have a clear symbolism, for example the lotus symbolises purity, a pair of fish marriage and unity and the vase enduring peace. Other examples from Confucian and other related cultures are the lozenge as a symbol of victory, the coin for wealth, the rhinoceros horn for health and the artemisia leaf as a symbol of good luck and the prevention of diseases.

The Kente cloth in West Africa has a symbolic significance and motifs have clear names and meanings. Names and meanings originate from historical events, individual achievements, proverbs, philosophical concepts, oral literature, moral values, human behaviour and certain qualities of plant and animal life. Patterns and motifs may be geometric abstractions of objects that they are intended to symbolise or arbitrarily determined. Patterns and motifs are created by weavers and they are the ones that assign

names and meanings to them. Forms, names and meanings of patterns and motifs come to designers through dreams and contemplation. Some cloths are given names by kings and elders who have specially commissioned them. In addition the names may be based on the warp arrangement of the cloth or both the warp and weft arrangements of cloth (Achberger, s.a.).

According to Rouse (1989), clothes, fabrics, the stylistic features of the garment, the colour, and the way the garment is worn can all act as signs, that carry messages and transmit meaning. For example, the pattern of the fabric from which a Scottish kilt was made acted as a sign of clan membership, and tartans are still associated with certain surnames. Rouse (1989:27) further indicates that "the type of fabric, the colours, the types of design or pattern on the fabric all act as signs and carry social meanings". Motifs and colour of a fabric may communicate some ritual. Whilst the original *terantala/seshoeshoe* fabric was blue with white dots, today the fabric is available in a variety of colours and motifs. Symbols are used to provide some degree of continuity and structure from one context to another (Kaizer, 1990). Magwaza (2001) further notes that symbols are also vehicles with which it is possible to visually present thoughts, experiences and concepts. Furthermore, another form of clothing communication and dress is the ritual meaning of motif and colour. Grousset (1968) observes that Africans, as manifested in their traditional way of life, never consciously or slavishly copy design motifs from each other. The motifs that have been adopted are first assimilated and then used as personal expression.

The designs on *seshoeshoe* are most likely inherited from the original manufacturers. According to Fashion (2011), each *seshoeshoe* design is created in conformity to a large manual containing hundreds of samples of the designs. The designs must be true to the originals or slight variations of the originals. *Seshoeshoe* has had many influences e.g. Arabs, Phoenicians, Indians, Dutch, Chinese, Mormons and Germans. Besides skirt panels, *seshoeshoe* is also printed in all-over patterns with common designs that range from florals and stripes, to diamond, square- and circular designs. As an example of how new designs are created from time to time, after the death of Albertina Sisulu, the wife of the celebrated Walter Sisulu who was one of the proponents of democracy in South Africa, Da Gama Textile manufacturers in 2011

designed a *seshoeshoe* skirt panel with an artist's impression of Ma Sisulu to commemorate her life and contribution to South African political freedom. In Lesotho there are special annual designs with the face of King Letsie III and an appropriate district colour according to the district in charge of organising the king's birthday celebration. These fall under occasional designs made for royalty and prominent political figures.

The forgoing literature review serves to illuminate and bring understanding into the origins and meanings of motifs found on *seshoeshoe* fabric.

METHODOLOGY

The study was designed to assess the perceptions of college staff, students and the dressmakers with regard to *seshoeshoe* fabric. The former group represented the consumers of the product from *seshoeshoe* fabric while the latter represented dress producers. Students to a large extent represented perceptions and attitudes of youth while the staff represented the attitudes of the mature or elderly. A sample was obtained from a population of 200 staff members and 1048 students of the Lesotho College of Education in Maseru, the capital of Lesotho. Samples of 140 and 350 were selected respectively using a table of random numbers.

Sample sizes were above the required 95% confidence level and 5% confidence interval, to allow for sample mortality (Sheskin, 1985; Babbie, 1995; Leedy, 1997; McMillan & Schumacher, 1997). Furthermore, the researcher used snowball sampling to identify and select 23 dressmakers as part of the sample (Cohen & Manion, 1984; Berg, 1995; Babbie, 1995). Snowball sampling – as one type of non-probability sampling - entails approaching a single case that is involved in the phenomenon to be investigated in order to obtain information on other similar persons. The person in turn identifies potential people who could be interviewed to make up the sample (Strydom, 2005; Pascoe, 2014).

Data among college staff and students were collected using both closed-ended and open-ended items in self-administrative questionnaires, while interview schedules were used for the dressmakers. Face to face interviews were conducted with the dressmakers. Questionnaires for the study consisted of biographic information, uses of the

fabric and perceptions of fabric naming, as well as meaning of motifs and properties associated with fabric. Descriptive and inferential statistics were used to analyse the college staff and students' responses and to draw inferences concerning relationships. The Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software programme was used for processing the data.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Knowledge about motifs on the *seshoeshoe* fabric is shown in Table 1.

Symbols are used to provide some degree of continuity and structure from one context to another, as well as presenting some variety in terms of change as they may be manipulated in many different ways. A reasonable proportion of both staff (48.1%) and students (45.1%) indicated that they knew the meanings of the motifs, but were unable to articulate them i.e. the concept of symbolism or meaning of motif was foreign. The names that are given to the motifs depend on what the consumers associate them with in relation to their environment and objects they know that are closely resembled by the motifs. It has been shown that the fabric designers and weavers name and give meanings to the motifs. The study could not find information from the fabric manufacturers about the meanings of the motifs from the designers. The data also confirmed that both the staff and students knew a name of at least one motif on the fabric.

Except for shrinkage and durability, more than 50% of the respondents were positive on the attributes associated with the fabric. In particular there was greater agreement between staff and students on comfort as shown in Figure 3.

Perceptions on *seshoeshoe* fabric

Commonly used name for the fabric: When asked if there was a difference in meaning between *seshoeshoe* and *terantala* the majority (69.6%) of respondents indicated that there was no difference. Those who said there was a difference had mixed feelings. Some respondents felt that *seshoeshoe* was a sewn dress and *terantala* was a fabric, or vice versa. In general, respondents referred to the fabric as *seshoeshoe*. According to the dressmakers, customers prefer mainly dresses made from blue, brown and red *seshoeshoe* fabric (Table 2).

TABLE 1: KNOWLEDGE OF MOTIFS ON SESHOSHOE FABRIC

VARIABLES	OPTIONS	STAFF		STUDENTS	
		N	%	N	%
Number of motifs on seshoeshoe fabrics known	Zero	7	8.4	14	7.6
	Between 1-5	37	44.6	90	48.6
	More than 5	39	47.0	81	43.8
	Total	83	100	185	100
Knowledge of the symbolic meanings of motifs	Yes	41	51.9	101	54.9
	No	38	48.1	83	45.1
	Total	79	100	184	100
How well motifs known	Very well	12	14.6	27	14.6
	Reasonably well	14	17.1	22	11.9
	Not so well	32	39.0	57	30.8
	Not at all	16	19.5	59	31.9
	Uncertain	8	9.8	20	10.8
	Total	82	100	185	100

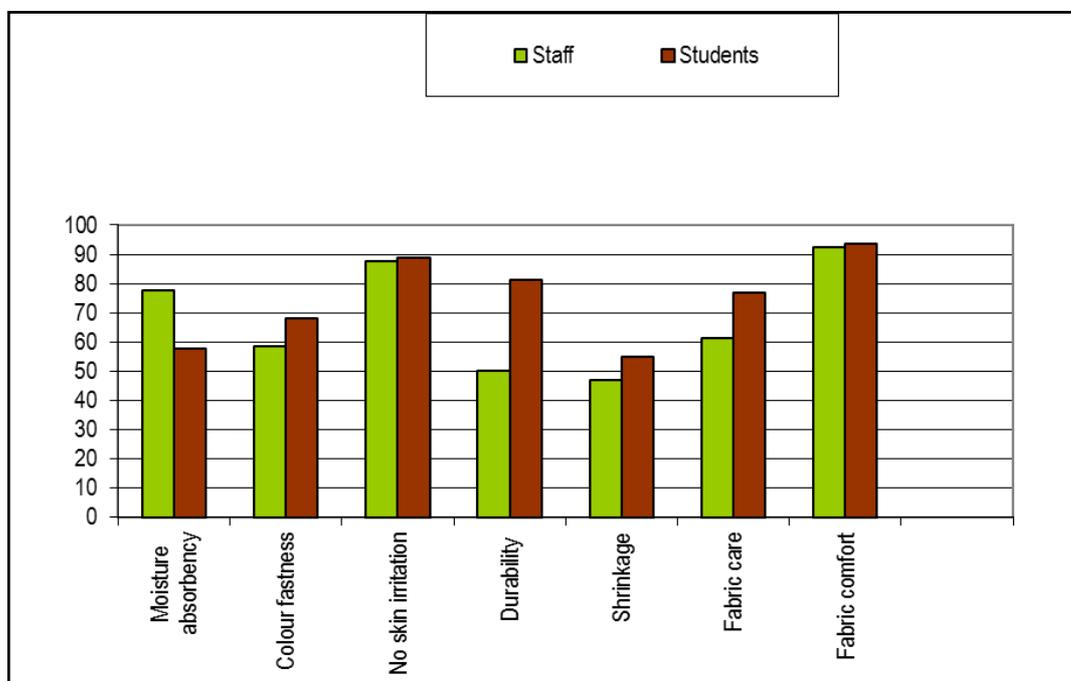


FIGURE 3: ASSOCIATION OF PROPERTIES WITH SESHOSHOE FABRIC

Quality: Table 3 shows that the quality of the fabric has not improved over time, however there has been an increase in the choice available to consumers. The problem with the wide choice of fabric is the abundance of imitations in the market. These imitations, which are much cheaper than the genuine fabric, have implications regarding the quality of *seshoeshoe* dresses produced. Although there are various methods for testing fabric quality such as hand feel and taste, 74% of the dressmakers relied on the label only, for example Three Cats, Three Leopards and Toto 6 Stars.

Care of the fabric: Dressmakers employ specialised skills to maintain the quality of the fabric, and hence their products, during garment production. Table 4 shows how dressmakers take care of the fabric and the significance of the process.

The majority (90.9%) of the respondents pre-shrunk the fabric before sewing, but no detergents were used. Respondents indicated that this was done so that starch is removed for the needle so as not to damage the fabric and prevent re-shrinking of garments after they are sewn. *Seshoeshoe* fabric has to be washed to

TABLE 2: CUSTOMERS COLOUR PREFERENCES ACCORDING TO DRESSMAKERS

VARIABLES	OPTIONS	N	%
Colours customers liked most	Golden brown	4	17
	Blue, brown, red	12	52.1
	Other	7	30.9
	Total	23	100

TABLE 3: DRESSMAKERS PERCEPTIONS ON SOME ATTRIBUTES OF SESHOSHOE FABRIC (N = 23)

VARIABLE	AGREE		DISAGREE		DO NOT KNOW	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Quality has improved over the past 10 years	9	39.1	13	56.5	1	4.3
Choice of fabric has increased	23	100	-	-	-	-
A lot of imitations of the fabric are found at the market	17	77.3	3	13.6	2	9.1

TABLE 4: PRE-SHRINKING OF SESHOSHOE FABRIC BEFORE SEWING

VARIABLES	OPTIONS	N	%
Fabric pre-shrunk before sewing	Yes	20	90.9
	No	2	9.1
	Total	22	100
Reasons for pre-shrinking	To remove starch	14	77.8
	Easy to sew	3	16.7
	To last longer no colour change	1	5.6
	Total	18	100
Detergents used to pre-shrink	No	20	100
	Total	20	100
Reasons for using detergent to pre-shrink and for not using detergent	Removes starch only	6	54.5
	If detergent is used fabric becomes too soft and difficult to sew	2	18.2
	If soap is used colour runs and fabric is made soft	2	18.2
	Total	11	100

TABLE 5: PROBLEMS ENCOUNTERED IN HANDLING SESHOSHOE FABRIC (N = 23)

PROBLEMS	YES		NO	
	N	%	N	%
Allergies	10	43.5	13	56.5
Stitching problems	6	26.1	17	73.9
Shrinkages	12	52.2	11	47.8
Colour runs	19	82.6	4	17.4
Fabric too stiff for style	16	69.6	7	30.4
Fabric too soft for style	16	69.6	7	30.4
Fabric losing starch	17	77.3	5	22.7
Other	3	13	-	-

remove starch. Detergents are not used because fabrics lose colour and they become soft and difficult to sew tucks.

The need to starch the fabric is explained by the fact that, during the sea voyage from England to South Africa when the fabric was first imported, starch was used to preserve the *seshoeshoe*

fabric and hence gave it a characteristic stiffness. After washing, the stiffness disappears and the beautiful soft cotton remains (Da Gama Textiles, s.a.). Problems encountered in handling *seshoeshoe* are listed in Table 5.

Dressmakers indicated several problems encountered during the handling of the fabric.

TABLE 6: AWARENESS OF SESHOSHOE MOTIFS

VARIABLES	OPTIONS	N	%
Number of motifs on the <i>seshoeshoe</i> fabrics, awareness of	Between 1-5	2	8.7
	More than 5	21	91.3
	Total	23	100
Names and symbolic meanings of the motifs known	Yes	22	95.7
	No	1	4.3
	Total	23	100
How well the names and meaning of motifs are known	Very well	23	100
	Total	22	100
Number of motifs	4	4	17.4
	5	5	21.7
	6	5	21.7
	More than 6	9	39.1
	Total	23	100

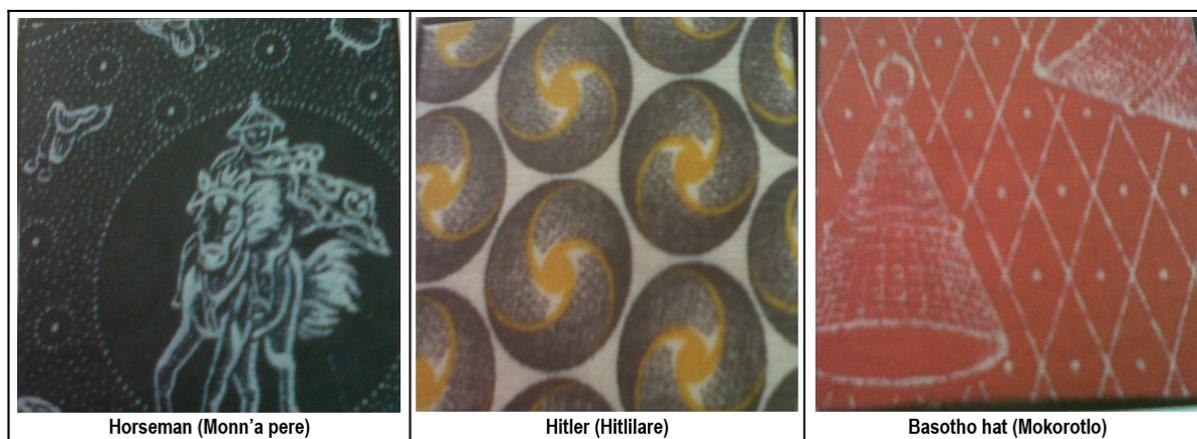


FIGURE 4: SESHOSHOE MOTIFS WITH KNOWN MEANINGS

These include allergies, stitching problems, shrinkages, colour runs, stiffness of fabric for styling, or too soft for styling after losing starch. The problem of colour running (83%) and difficulty to style after removal of starch (77%) were major ones according to the respondents.

Respondents indicated that colour running was not a problem with all fabrics, but was characteristic for some colours like blue. If not washed well and dried too long, *seshoeshoe* fabric becomes too stiff and it becomes too soft if rubbed too much. The only health hazard that was observed by the dressmakers was that of allergies (43.6%).

Dressmakers showed that customers were mostly pleased with the *seshoeshoe* products and that, in addition to Basotho, there were regular customers from Botswana, South Africa and Swaziland.

Motifs on the *seshoeshoe* fabric

As the regular users of the *seshoeshoe* fabric, the dressmakers have a greater knowledge about the motifs found on the *seshoeshoe* fabrics than the consumers (Table 6).

According to Table 6, the majority (91.3%) of dressmakers interviewed were aware of the motifs and 95.7% were aware of the names given to the motifs. However, the concept of symbolic meanings of the motifs was new to them. Only three motifs out of those identified can be said to have some kind of a meaning to Basotho. These motifs are Hitler (because of the swastika symbol on the fabric), Basotho Hat and Horseman (Figure 4). Hitler is the memory of the participation of Basotho in World War II; Basotho Hat is the national identity and the Horseman symbolises trustworthiness of a horse as the most important form of transport for many rural Basotho.

Various motifs collected were categorised and documented as shown in Table 7. Unlike the Chinese and Japanese whose motifs are primarily influenced by religion (Gunter, 2003; Hann; 2004) and the Kente cloth in West Africa with elaborate motifs and colours each of which has a symbolic meaning (Achberger, s.a.), the origins and meanings of *seshoeshoe* motifs are not known.

When responding to the issue of using *seshoeshoe* fabric for mourning attire as shown in Table 8, both staff (74.7%) and students (81.6%) strongly indicated that *seshoeshoe* should not be used to make widows' mourning attire. They felt that this kind of use causes the fabric and hence the significance of national identity in the dress to be lost. In Sesotho a period of mourning is regarded as a period of darkness or "bofifi" and therefore the fabric should not be used for such an occasion as this will discourage the youth from upholding its dignified use. Perani and Wolff (1999) submit that people's culture dictates appropriate dress

for specific occasions. Nonetheless, people have freedom of choice of dress, thus a relatively low proportion of staff and students (15.7% and 13.2% respectively) gave the following justification for the use of the fabric for mourning attire: The fabric portrays respect, it is durable, it is a cultural symbol for Basotho, the black used for mourning is depressing, it is easy to care for, it does not attract attention about one as a mourner, and it uplifts the wearer.

In terms of producing men's shirts and pants, 39% of staff and 62.4% of students felt that it be improper to use *seshoeshoe* for men's attire. Also, 61.2% of staff and 72.5% of students did not support the use of the fabric to manufacture young girls' dresses. The resistance to diverse use, apart from national identity, signifies a strong attachment to the original use of the fabric. However, any form of cultural use such as for dance, clubs, choirs, and other, as a form of group identity and for changing the bride's garments at a wedding has begun to enjoy support.

TABLE 7: CLASSIFICATION OF MOTIFS ON SESHOESHOE FABRIC

ORIGIN	SESOTHO	ENGLISH
Animals	<i>Leihlo la khomo</i> <i>Leihlo la koena</i> <i>Lipere</i> <i>Litlou</i>	Cow'seye Crocodile'seye Horses Elephants
Birds	<i>Khaka</i> <i>Lesiba</i> <i>Lesiba la pikokoandsetonosapikoko</i>	Guinea fowl Feather Peacock's feather, tail of a peacock
Plants	<i>'Mela</i> <i>Khahla (mofutaoajoang)</i> <i>Lekhasi</i> <i>Lierekisi</i> <i>Mahe a likoekoe (mofutaoalinaoa)</i> <i>Matokomane</i> <i>Peneapole</i>	Malt Grass used to make Basotho hat (<i>molianyeeo</i>) Leaf Peas Bean Peanuts Pineapple
Other	<i>Sonobolomo</i> <i>Boea</i> <i>Fene (sefehlamoeba)</i> <i>Hitlelare</i> <i>Kama</i> <i>Lebete</i> <i>Lenkoane</i> <i>Lifofane</i> <i>Litaemane</i> <i>Malakabe</i> <i>Maluti (maru a mats'o)</i> <i>Masapo</i> <i>Masela a macha a se nangmabitso</i> <i>Mokokotloathapi</i> <i>Mokorotlo</i> <i>Molleloa</i>	Sunflower Wool Fan Hitler Comb Spleen Donga Aeroplanes Diamonds Flamesj Clouds of thunder Bones Unnamed fabric Fish backbone Basotho hat Beauty - worth to cry for (variation of Mokhehle)



FIGURE 5: ANIMAL MOTIFS DEPICTING COW'S (LEIHLO LA KHOMO) AND CROCODILE'S EYE (LEIHLO LA KOENA) RESPECTIVELY

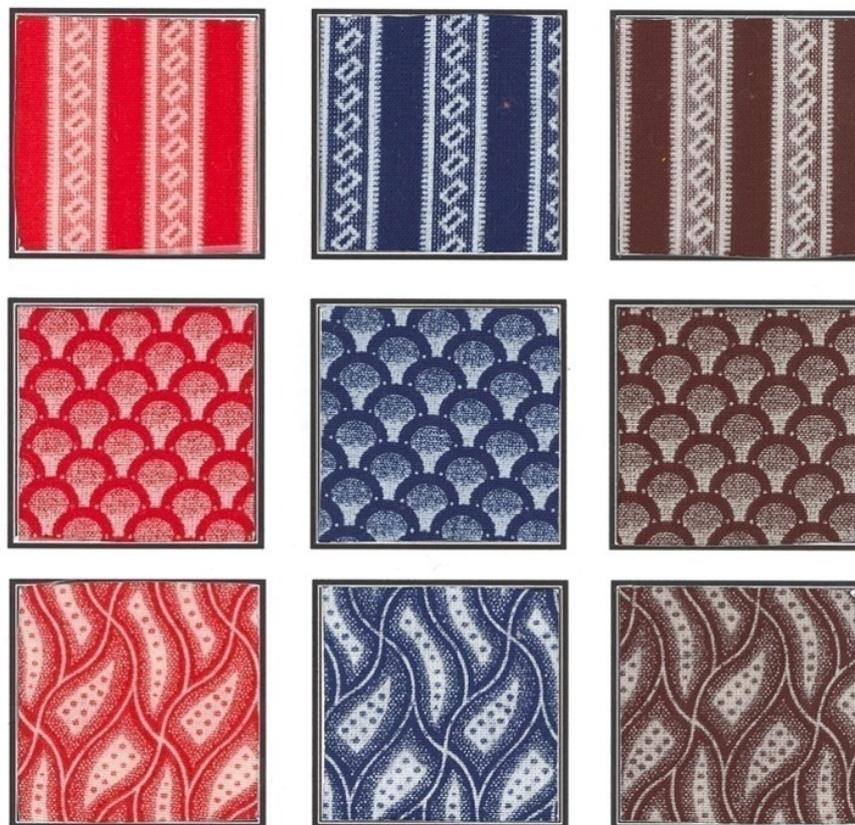


FIGURE 6: SIMILAR MOTIFS IN DIFFERENT COLOURS

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Reflecting back on the objectives of the study, the results show that *seshoeshoe* refers to both the fabric and the dress made from the fabric. The fabric's colour runs and it therefore requires skill like pre-shrinking to design a variety of dress styles and to maintain its beauty. The quality of the fabric has not necessarily improved over the years, but the choice in fabric has increased in terms of colour and motifs. While blue, brown and red colours are most popular in dress making the choice of new

colours and motifs has become unlimiting. In addition, there are a lot of imitations that extend the choice, but such imitations compromise quality of the end product. The use of trademark for genuine or original *seshoeshoe* which is stamped on the wrong side of the fabric is the most reliable test against imitations.

Both the college staff and students, as well as the dressmakers demonstrated an awareness and good knowledge of names of motifs. To a large extent, the dressmakers are the ones who handle the new fabrics first and give them

TABLE 8: USE OF SESHOSHOE FABRIC

VARIABLES OPTIONS		STAFF		STUDENTS	
		N	%	N	%
To make widows' attire	Yes	13	15.5	25	13.2
	No	62	74.7	155	81.6
	I am not sure	8	9.6	10	5.3
	Total	83	100	100	100
To make the following for men	Men's shirts	30	36.6	27	14.3
	Men's pants	1	1.2	-	-
	Both	9	11.0	8	4.2
	Neither	32	39.0	118	62.4
	I am not sure	10	12.2	36	19.0
	Total	82	100	189	100
To produce young girls' attire	Yes	53	64.6	111	58.4
	No	24	29.3	66	34.7
	I am not sure	5	6.1	13	6.8
	Total	82	100	190	100

names according to the motifs on them. The naming is based on known objects and features closely associated with the motifs. An extensive classification of motifs was developed under the following groups: animals, plants, birds and other and this is an important contribution to knowledge about the fabric. New motifs are designed all the time and the familiarity of motifs determines the ease for naming. Nonetheless, new motifs which have not yet been named continue to be developed. Because to a large extent, motifs on *seshoeshoe* do not originate from Basotho, although they have been able to name a number of some of them the study identified only two motifs from Three Leopards brand that were directly related to Basotho culture and were symbolic. These are a horseman/horse and the Basotho hat. The motifs will begin to have meanings that are symbolic to beliefs, culture and values of Basotho if they originated or are designed with their input. This will result in a much deeper socio-cultural value of *seshoeshoe* fabric than at present.

Both staff and students identified the following outstanding qualities of *seshoeshoe* fabric: good comfort and absorbance, easy to care, durable, non-irritability to skin and non-shrinkage once it has been pre-shrunk before garment construction. On the other hand, the dressmakers indicated instances of allergies as a result of working with the fabric. This could be from the cotton dust during cutting and sewing. It is therefore important that they put protective masks during operations.

In terms of the uses, both staff and students

indicated the fabric should not be used for making mourning attire as that would cause it to lose its significance in producing the national identity dress. Staff and students further observed the fabric should not be used for making men's shirts and pants. However the current trend shows that the use of the fabric is rapidly growing in a variety of uses and dress styles such as uniforms for choirs, dance clubs and women societies.

Limitations of the study

The researcher encountered problems with the dressmakers because they are busy people working on orders. Some were one-person businesses and to schedule an interview meant taking some of their time from work. The researcher also encountered a problem in obtaining pieces of the fabric samples from the dressmakers as they were not co-operative in this regard. The researcher opted for one-on-one interviews as opposed to focus groups in order to accommodate the constraint of time on the side of the dressmakers. However, allowing for a qualitative component in the study, such as focus group discussions, could have been a useful tool to illicit a richer oral history of *seshoeshoe* fabric and its uses among the dressmakers.

Recommendations

Stemming from the main findings of the study, the following recommendations can be made:

- Because *seshoeshoe* fabric has a national significance, the Ministry of Tourism Environment and Culture, being the

custodian of cultural heritage, should engage with the manufacturers to encourage design of motifs that originate from Lesotho.

- The rapid changes and designs in the fabric motifs require a continuous study and documentation.
- Since the *seshoeshoe* fabric has been in use for more than half a century, it is important to collect whatever information is available from its origin to the present and archive that for educational purposes.
- Most of the dressmakers have a low level of education and are most likely unaware of health hazards associated with their type of work. The relevant government ministries, i.e. Ministry of Trade and Industry and the Ministry of Health, should therefore ensure that dress makers are informed on matters of health and safety.
- The study has found that there is very little work undertaken in documenting the fabric and its diverse uses. This offers further opportunities for research on individual and specific aspects, for example how the quality of the fabric could be improved.

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APPENDIX

Sample		<p>Name of motif in Sesotho <i>Khaka</i></p>	<p>Name of motif in English Guinea fowl</p>
		<p>Name of motif in Sesotho <i>Setono sa pikoako</i></p>	<p>Name of motif in English Tail of a peacock</p>
		<p>Name of motif in Sesotho <i>Lesitha la pikoako</i></p>	<p>Name of motif in English Peacock's feather</p>
Sample		<p>Name of motif in Sesotho <i>Leitho la khomo</i></p>	<p>Name of motif in English Cow's eye</p>
		<p>Name of motif in Sesotho <i>Leitho la kwenia</i></p>	<p>Name of motif in English Crocodile's eye</p>

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Sample		Name of motif in Sesotho <i>Litsoemoane</i>	Name of motif in English Diamonds
Sample		Name of motif in Sesotho <i>Lenkoame</i>	Name of motif in English Doga
Sample		Name of motif in Sesotho <i>Lifogose</i>	Name of motif in English Acropylanes
Sample		Name of motif in Sesotho <i>Sonofokomo</i>	Name of motif in English Sunflower
Sample		Name of motif in Sesotho <i>Mabe o tshoekae</i> (motisa oa linsoo)	Name of motif in English Type of a bean
Sample		Name of motif in Sesotho <i>Makotomome</i>	Name of motif in English Peanuts

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Sample		Name of motif in Sesotho Maseia a macha a se nang mabitso	Name of motif in English No names yet due to newness in market
Sample		Name of motif in Sesotho Maseia a macha a se nang mabitso	Name of motif in English No names yet due to newness in market
Sample		Name of motif in Sesotho Maseia a macha a se nang mabitso	Name of motif in English No names yet due to newness in market
Sample		Name of motif in Sesotho Lebetse	Name of motif in English Spleen
Sample		Name of motif in Sesotho Fene (ogfala moon)	Name of motif in English Fan
Sample		Name of motif in Sesotho Hilehale	Name of motif in English Hitler