




# THE LINGUISTIC LANDSCAPE OF NAMING PRACTICES IN A SOUTHERN AFRICAN CITY: A CRITICAL TOPONYMIC ANALYSIS

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## ABSTRACT

*Maseru, the capital city of the Kingdom of Lesotho, has seen changes in naming practices because of political changes. The country has also changed its flag more than once due to regime changes. This paper discusses the naming practices corresponding to the British colonial period and subsequent rule by Leabua Jonathan and other Basotho leaders. Strategic buildings, villages, and streets were given English names after events associated with the British. However, after independence, many new names were given in indigenous languages, especially Sesotho, the national and predominant language in Lesotho. Data used in this paper were gathered by purposive sampling, involving planned driving around Maseru to record both Sesotho and English toponyms visible on and from different roads. As Lesotho generally has limited signposts, additional names were collected from Google Maps, while memory and online resources were used to record some of the previous names used in Lesotho before the name changes discussed. The study is premised on Critical Toponymies Theory from a linguistic landscape perspective, and semiotics was used to interpret visual signs. Lastly, the paper acknowledges that place-naming is a continuous process which occurs in environments with overt and covert power dynamics.*

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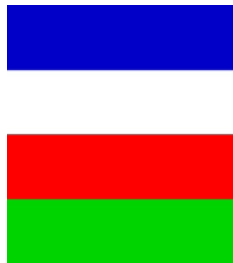
**Keywords:** Colonialism, flags, Lesotho, naming practices, Sesotho

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Given the place-name changes in the Kingdom of Lesotho (Lesotho), some names have been eroded from the city's linguistic landscape. Maseru, the capital city of Lesotho, has seen changes in naming practices due to the changing politics of the day. Lesotho has also changed its flag more than once due to regime changes. For instance, when Chief Leabua Jonathan (Leabua) ruled Lesotho from 1966 to 1986, his party created a national flag based on his party colours. After toppling him, the army changed the national flag again, as the flag of the Basotho National Party (BNP) features blue, white, red, and green, which have meanings that are associated with the party and not necessarily with the country. The same colours can be seen on the old Lesotho flag, although in the national flag they were not arranged horizontally as on the BNP flag. The use of party colours to symbolise the Basotho nation may be interpreted as a sheer abuse of power by the then government, especially because Lesotho has never been a one-party state. Commenting on events leading up to the 1965 elections, Makoa (2005:61) says that Lesotho had three parties that were contesting the elections, namely the Basotho Congress Party (BCP), Basutoland National Party (BNP), and Marema-Tlou Freedom Party (MFP), reinforcing our stance that BNP's use of its party colours was a means of asserting its political power rather than of representing the whole nation after Lesotho regained its independence from colonial rule. The flag changes are observed in Figures 1 to 4 below:



**Figure 1:** *Lesotho flag with the Basotho National Party colours (Source: Berry (2001))*



**Figure 2:** *Flag of Lesotho, 1966-1987 (Source: Berry (2001))*



**Figure 3:** *Flag of Lesotho, 1987 (Source: Berry (2001))*



**Figure 4:** *Flag of Lesotho, 1987 (Source: Wikimedia Commons (2024))*

As the flags above represent Lesotho’s different political eras, the names discussed in this paper highlight the relationship between naming and renaming and political power in these different political eras. As Chilala and Hang’ombe (2020:84) observe, “there is no such thing as an innocent name, and even the presumption of ‘neutral’ names is a contested space”. This relationship is not peculiar to Lesotho and has been recorded in many other countries in Africa and beyond (David 2013; Rusu 2021). If we interpret the changing of flags as symbolic to “renaming” or “re-identifying” the country as a result of power changes, then Lesotho was “renamed” twice after the initial flag in Figure 2 above.

Research on naming is often carried out through the lens of linguistics (morphology, phonology/phonetics, and semantics) (Klink 2000; González del Río *et al.* 2011). For instance, Mojapelo (2009) analyses the morphology and semantics of proper names in Northern Sotho, while Van Langendonck’s (2007) work discusses the semantics of proper nouns. Tanaka (2023:1) traces studies of proper names from 1843 and comments that, “These studies, however, were mainly concerned with the semantics, (morpho)syntax,

and/or functional aspects of proper names”. Their study focuses on the phonology of personal and place names. Whilst the field of onomastics studies proper names, this paper only focusses on toponyms as introduced above.

## **2. BACKGROUND**

Lesotho can be considered to have had four major political eras, namely: Moshoeshoe’s pre-colonial rule until 1868; colonial rule (1868–1966); Leabua’s post-colonial rule (1966–1987); and lastly, the post-Leabua rule (1987–present). Each of these eras seems to have been characterised by unique naming practices in both private and public settings, possibly because of the different political agendas of the different bestowers of the names. The process of renaming may be influenced by social and demographic changes (Wu & Young 2023:1). For instance, during colonisation, which took place between the 1870s and 1966 (Maliehe 2022), the British government had the power to name and rename places in Lesotho. However, when Lesotho gained independence in 1966, the Basotho regained the power to affect changes, including through naming practices. It should be noted that Lesotho has not fully weaned itself from its allegiance to the British government, and as a result, in some instances, the spatial nomenclature of urban infrastructure continues to reflect the established patterns of strategic toponymy, maintaining a link to historically significant place names and the functional geography of the built environment it inherited from colonial rule.

It should also be noted that the British do not seem to have been interested in the development of Lesotho, hence Hirschmann (1987:459) says: “At independence there was one mile of paved road, and one spur of railway line and they both ran from the border post into Maseru”. The apparent disinterest was glaring in the rural areas and justifies the position that the British generally named whatever was of value to them and left the rest of the toponyms to the Basotho to deal with. The lack or absence of development in the rural areas went hand in hand with the lack or absence of toponyms.

When the British gained control of Lesotho, they changed the country name to Basutoland in 1868 (Thabane 2023) as a sign of their political dominance over the rightful owners of the country. However, as soon as the Basotho regained independence in 1966, they renamed it to Lesotho as that was the correct and preferred name. The renaming signalled power shifts and represented the will of the people of Lesotho. Khati (2007) uses the toponym “Lesotho” to refer to both the pre- and post-colonial country, thereby indicating that *Lesotho* had always been the preferred toponym to the Basotho.

It is not clear why the Basotho did not rename many of the other geographic features that had been named or renamed by the British. This contemporary alliance suggests a pragmatic approach to international relations, wherein historical injustices are acknowledged yet do not impede diplomatic and socio-economic engagements. The resilience and adaptability demonstrated by the Basotho reflect broader themes of postcolonial reconciliation and the complexities of historical memory in shaping contemporary geopolitical affiliations.

One such example is the main government hospital, which was known as Queen Elizabeth II Hospital, and until 2020 had not had a name change, as is the case with many post-1994 place names in South Africa. What used to be known as King Edward VIII Hospital in Durban, South Africa, for example, has been renamed Victoria Mxenge Hospital (KZN Health 2024). However, as reported by the Government of Lesotho (Velaphe n.d.), Queen Elizabeth II Hospital in Lesotho has recently had a name change: “The construction of the Maseru District Hospital commonly known as Queen Elizabeth II Hospital is funded by the Government of the People’s Republic of China”. Similarly, Lancer’s Road and Lancer’s Inn Hotel in Maseru have not been renamed in the post-colonial era, despite the former being named by the British. In the latter case, the business name is associated with the toponym, Lancer’s Road.

Analysing naming practices in Zanzibar, Myers (2009:85) asserts that “the social construction of space and place consists of a multifarious and ever-changing process of positioning oneself and others in the matrix of power relations, and not a spatial fixing of identities based solely on domination”. Regarding street naming, the British were interested in Maseru West and Florida only because they lived in Maseru West. Apartments were built in Florida for civil servants, many of whom would have relocated to Maseru from other districts. Generally, the Basotho do not like living in apartments, however many government apartments were close to work and affordable to the civil servants who rented them and had homes away from the capital city. The Basotho live in *metse* (“villages”), which are usually named in Sesotho. However, the British named the areas which they occupied with non-Sesotho names. Most of them lived in what they called Maseru West and their staff were in Florida. Villages still carry colonial names and have many government properties occupied by civil servants. For instance, the State House, where the Prime Minister lives, is in Maseru West. Clearly, these toponyms were not named by the locals and represent the “other” people who occupied the land during colonialism. The following street names then came into being in the central business district, Maseru West or Florida.

### **3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS**

The paper employs Critical Toponymies Theory and semiotics to discuss the strategic names highlighted in this paper. The choice of frameworks is supported by the argument of Berg and Vuolteennaho (2009:9) that, “Given that naming a place is always a socially embedded act, one that involves power relations, the ‘pure’ linguistic standpoint remains inadequate for the critical study of toponymy”. While it is important to highlight some of the linguistic features of the names under study, this paper cannot overlook their role in the political, cultural, and linguistic landscape of Lesotho. The linguistic landscape is understood to be the “visibility and salience of languages on public and commercial signs in a given territory or region” (Landry & Bourhis 1997:23). In addition, the linguistic landscape has been described as being “somewhere at the junction of sociolinguistics, sociology, social psychology, geography, and media studies” (Landry & Bourhis 1997:23), hence the need for theories which recognise the relevance of these disciplines in discussing social matters such as toponyms and odonyms. Moriarty (2002:20) comments that “Semiotics is the study of signs and signals, and sign processes”. The ensemble of offline and online semiotic signs, such as printed signs, written signs, carved signs, sprayed signs, pictures, colours, logos, and graphs, constitutes the linguistic landscape of a given place. These semiotic signs include notice boards, traffic signs, billboards, shop windows, posters, flags, banners, graffiti, menus, and t-shirts (Rapeane-Mathonsi & Mathonsi 2022:27), which is why semiotics was used as one of the theories in this paper.

Studies of the linguistic landscapes of different cities fall under sociolinguistics and onomastics. Examples of such studies include Du Plessis (2011, 2012), Sarjälä (2025), and Helander (2015). In sociolinguistics, scholars generally study, among other things, how languages are used in multilingual societies. This is necessary because as identities evolve, linguistic landscapes adapt in response, as observed by Kotze and du Plessis (2010). Orthographic changes and renaming are done to give the languages spoken in a place visibility in the linguistic landscape. “The study of linguistic landscape aims to add another view to our knowledge about societal multilingualism by focusing on language choices, hierarchies of language, contact phenomena, regulations, and aspects of literacy” (Gorter 2013:191).

### **4. METHODOLOGY**

Data used in this paper were gathered through purposive sampling, which involved planned driving around Maseru to record both Sesotho and English toponyms visible on and from different roads. Many toponyms are not visible on signposts in Lesotho

(Khotso & Chele 2020:96), making it difficult to collect data, as they do not form part of the visible linguistic landscape of the city. However, for a few street names of streets on which the author or their friends had lived as children, memory was used to record some of the previous names used in Lesotho before any name changes are discussed. Additional names were collected from Google Earth on the advice of the Maseru City Council staff member who reported that the city had run out of the latest map of Maseru with street names. This sampling was done in order to establish whether and why there had been changes in the naming practices in the city of Maseru. The collected names were then classified according to their types and analysed. Given that the data was collected qualitatively, they were analysed qualitatively.

Maseru is a relatively small city, covering an area of 138 km<sup>2</sup> (Romaya & Brown 1999, citing Physical Planning Division 1989a, 1990a). A total of 19 toponyms were collected through planned drives, five from Google Earth. In addition, two names were added from memory (the researcher's), as they were not indicated on signposts nor could the Maseru City Council, the entity responsible for managing the city, provide the necessary information. Because of the size of the city and the limited number of relevant toponyms available, those two names could not be omitted. It is worth noting that Lesotho does not have an official body dedicated to naming toponyms, such as the South African Geographic Names Council in South Africa. The absence of such a regulatory institution means that work on toponyms can be challenging, as there are no formal guidelines that standardise or provide oversight for the naming process.

## 5. RESULTS ON RENAMING

After independence in 1966, Lesotho embarked on a renaming exercise and renamed some of the names from the British era, mainly because of their national importance. The names concerned are listed in Table 1:

**Table 1:** *Post-independence name changes*

Sesotho name	Colonial name	Corrected name
Basotho	Bassuto	Basotho
Lesotho	Basutoland	Lesotho
Moshoeshoe	Moshesh	Moshoeshoe

“Basotho” is the collective name of the people of the country Lesotho; its singular is “Mosotho”. The name is found in some literature as “Bassuto”. The country was also

known as “Basutoland” during colonial rule (Swallow, Mokitimi, & Brokken 1986). Similarly, the name of the first king of the Basotho nation, King Moshoeshe I, appears in early literature as Moshesh and was later corrected to Moshoeshe in post-independence literature (Richards 1961). The study could not establish why these changes existed in the first place and can only assume that all three changes were a result of choices made to suit the French orthography which was later revised after independence.

It is not hard to understand why it was important for the Basotho to change the names above in written texts and in the linguistic landscape of the country. Place names are carriers of meaning and intent, making it unacceptable for them to be changed by the powers that be. “The connection between names and identity does not only affect people. Names and naming also constitute an important part of the work of the building of a nation” (Windt-Val 2012:275).

Basotho is the name of the nation that was formed by King Moshoeshe I, and it could not be changed at random because Lesotho was now under British rule. The same argument is relevant for changes to the king’s name from Moshoeshe to Moshesh and to the country from Lesotho to Basotoland. The practice of renaming countries is not peculiar to Lesotho but has been seen in other countries too. For instance, in 2018 the Kingdom of Swaziland was renamed the Kingdom of Eswatini. Similarly, the orthography of a country that the world had for a long time known as “Turkey” was revised to “Türkiye” in April 2021 (Dinçer 2022).

There follows below a discussion of the toponyms collected from around the city of Maseru, which show it to be a city that has experienced three different administrative eras.

Maseru is a small city and as a result does not have many toponyms. In addition, because of the current lack of coordination of toponymic naming practices in the city and the country at large, some of the streets in the many villages of Maseru do not have toponyms. For a long time, this practice has made it difficult to carry out research on some of the focus areas that are researched in countries with street names and visible signage.

This section discusses toponyms found in the Maseru central business district (CBD) and suburbs surrounding it and argues that while many of them are not Sesotho, the country’s most popular language, they could have been in that language if the namer had so wished.

**Table 2:** *Non-Sesotho toponyms in Maseru CBD and surrounding suburbs*

Toponym	Location	Sesotho equivalent	Geographic feature
Caledon	Maseru West	Mohokare	Street name
Caledon	Border of Lesotho and South Africa	Mohokare	River
Constitution	Maseru West	Molao-Theo	Street name
Hammerskjold	Florida	n/a	Street name
Lancer's Road	CBD	n/a	Street name
Lancer's Gap	Sehlabeng	Sehlabeng	Village name
Mabille Road	Hills View	n/a	Street name
Orpen Road	Old Europa	n/a	Street name
Pioneer Road	CBD	Pulamaliboho	Street name
Pioneer Mall	CBD	Pulamaliboho Mall	Mall name
Old Europa	Near CBD	N/A	Suburb name

The toponyms above were collected in the CBD and suburbs close to the CBD of Maseru. Many of the examples provided above are odonyms, with a few names covering other toponyms which will be discussed below. The information provided in the table includes the toponym itself, its location, and the type of geographical feature it is; and where a Sesotho equivalent exists, it is provided. Caledon appeared as two toponyms, first as an odonym and a river name. The river "Mohokare" is also called "Caledon", as in Makara's (2013) work. Similarly, Caledon is one of the odonyms in Maseru West, a suburb in Maseru. This means that it is possible for the Sesotho toponym to be used exclusively to highlight the language that the majority of Basotho speak as their home language in Lesotho. Mosotho (2023:27) notes that 85% of the 2.3 million people who live in Lesotho speak Sesotho as their mother tongue. This makes Sesotho the most popular language in Lesotho. Constitution Road is found in Maseru West, which used to be the main area for British civil servants and continues to have a significant number of civil servants. For instance, the Prime Minister's residence is in Maseru West. However, this location could have been given a Sesotho toponym, in line with the country's naming patterns. Since Lesotho lacks a body that is responsible for geographical names, it is not possible to refer to the naming guidelines followed when naming toponyms in this country.

The second odonym, Hammarskjold, in Florida, Maseru, was presumably named after the Swedish Dag Hammarskjold, the Secretary-General of the UN from 1953 until 1961, (UN, n.d). We observe that the odonym could have had a Sesotho name, as it is the language

spoken by the majority of the speakers in Lesotho. Lancers Road, a street in the heart of the CBD, which is presumable named after the British Lancer regiments who were stationed in Lesotho during the British rule (Lancers Inn, n.d.). Any physical or social features associated with Maseru could have been used to name or rename the road, as is commonplace in the few names seen in Maseru and the rest of the country.

It should be noted that there are still many villages and suburbs which do not have odonyms in modern day Lesotho. They include, but are not limited to: Ha Matala, Thabong, Upper Thamae and Qoaling.

On the other hand, the odonym “Mabille Road” was named after the Paris Evangelical Missionary Society missionary Rev. Adolphe Mabille, who was also a Sesotho dictionary author (Kunene 2014). Similarly, “Orpen Road” was named to honour Joseph Orpen, a British Resident in Nomansland who was responsible for some of the work done by the British government in Lesotho during Moshoeshoe’s rein (Mitchell & Challis 2008). Pioneer Road is said to have been named after the so-called British “pioneers” who lived in Lesotho during colonisation. However, any relevant Sesotho odonym could be used to name or rename the road. In addition, Pioneer Mall is on Pioneer Road and consequently named after it to highlight its location in the city of Maseru. Lastly, the suburb called New Europa, which is less than a kilometre from Pioneer Mall, is named after “Europe”, perhaps because many of the early civil servants of European descent lived in this area, which was close to government offices and other strategic infrastructure.

The examples above highlight that in terms of naming in Maseru, colonisation did not really end when independence was attained as these foreign toponyms are still an important part of the linguistic and cultural landscape of Lesotho.

Confirming the tendency of retaining names from the colonial past for many years, the Basotho continued to use English names to name their businesses and Christian names to name their children. One of the oldest pharmacies in Maseru, Husteds Pharmacy, was established by a Mosotho nurse from the Queen Elizabeth II Hospital and her family. Similarly, when the Lesotho Government established hotels in different areas, it gave English names to many of them, including, Airport Hotel, next to Leabua Airport (former airport name); Golden Egg (found in Maseru Border), and Victoria Hotel, found on Leabua Highway (former road name).

In Lesotho, land belongs to the king and many villages are overseen by chiefs, whose names are usually in Sesotho or Sotho-ised (transliterated) versions of European languages. However, during colonial rule the naming of many villages in Maseru did not

follow this practice and therefore the names of these villages did not exhibit the chiefs' relevance to the land as is usually the practice. Many of the villages in Maseru which were occupied by the European population and/or their civil servants, as highlighted in Table 3 below, were the ones that acquired non-Sesotho names. They included Maseru West, Florida, White City, Old Europa, Hills View, and others.

The city of Maseru is divided into suburbs, particularly around the central business district (CBD). However, in areas farther from the CBD, traditional leadership plays a significant role in governance, with chiefs overseeing villages. These villages are often named after the chiefs themselves, using their anthroponyms. The villages were initially governed by the chiefs and later by their descendants, continuing a long-standing tradition in Sesotho naming practices.

Beyond personal names, some villages derive their names from geographic features or other key landmarks. For instance, Ha Sempe translates to "the village that belongs to Sempe", following the custom of naming villages after their founders. An example of naming based on geographic significance is Thaba-Bosiu, which means "a mountain that grew at night". This historical site was King Moshoeshoe's fortress during times of war. According to Sesotho belief, the mountain's appearance changed at night, growing taller to protect Moshoeshoe and his people from enemy attacks.

**Table 3:** *Maseru village and suburb names*

<b>Structure of village names showing jurisdiction</b>	<b>English equivalent</b>	<b>Non-Sesotho village names (jurisdiction not clear)</b>
Ha Matala	Chief Matala's village	Florida
Ha Thamae	Chief Thamae's village	Hills View
Ha Thetsane	Chief Thetsane's village	Maseru West
Ha Maama	Chief Maama's village	New Europa
Ha 'Nelese	Chief 'Nelese's village	Old Europa

Although some villages retained their colonial names, many new villages and/or suburbs were given Sesotho names. It must be noted that the second set of villages above are mainly near the CBD and continue to attract elite residents, comprising Basotho and foreign residents. However, Ha Thetsane has managed to attract many Basotho and a fair number of diplomats based in Lesotho while retaining its Sesotho name. The village is one of the prime areas in Lesotho, despite its name, indicating that it is not necessarily a foreign name that makes an area prime.

During colonial rule and the early years after independence, many strategic government infrastructures bore English names; however, the practice is changing.

In this section, names for strategic government buildings in the city of Maseru and how they have changed over time are analysed. The first name is “Basotho Hat”. This is a historical landmark and the national symbol of Lesotho which resembles the traditional Basotho hat, *mokorotlo*, and is found in the CBD. Its formal name is “Basotho Hat”, but it has since acquired a Sesotho name, “Mokorotlong”, which means “a structure which looks like the mokorotlo hat”. The main Maseru Post Office was for a long time known as “Post Office”, but has been named “Moposo House”. Moposo is the Sesotho equivalent for “postman”. Another popular name is that of the Lesotho Agricultural College, which is fondly called “Temong”/“Sekolo se Seholo sa Temo” in Sesotho. The two Sesotho names mean “place of agriculture”, and are the preferred names, although they co-exist alongside their English equivalent. Lastly, the current Government Printing was established pre-independence, in 1960, and known as “Government Printing”, (Foko 2000, citing Willet & Ambrose 1980). It is now fondly known as “Khatisong”, literally meaning, “the place of publishing/printing”. The last name, Qhobosheaneng, means “fortress”, perhaps in recognition of Thaba-Bosiu, King Moshoeshe’s fortress. It is a complex built after independence to house some of the government’s offices.

## **5.1 Naming during Leabua Jonathan’s rule**

The Basotho National Party (BNP), which became the first post-colonial government, was led by Leabua Jonathan. Leabua named some places after himself and/or his family. The following names are examples of strategic names that came from his era.

### ***Leabua Highway***

This was the toponym for the main road in Maseru. It leads to the palace and the CBD. When Leabua named it there were many befitting eponymic names that his government could have used had their intention been to honour key figures in Lesotho’s history. King Moshoeshe’s name is a typical example as well as the names of any member of his large family. As Wakumelo *et al.* (2016:270) argue, “odonyms are not just mere signposts. Street names may be given to reflect the social, political, and cultural ideologies maintained by the name-givers”. This observation supports the assertion that Leabua chose the toponym in this instance to extend his authoritarian rule to the naming of the streets of Maseru. Under normal circumstances, rulers do not usually name toponyms

after themselves. It is the responsibility of those who may choose to honour them to do so – and generally when they are no longer in power.

### ***Leabua Jonathan Airport***

The airport is in Maseru and was then the main airport for many years. It is obvious that Leabua named the airport after himself rather than after any of the other Mosotho who deserved to be honoured.

### ***'Mantahli Old Age Home***

This was one of the few old age homes in Maseru and Lesotho. 'Mantahli was Leabua's wife, and the home was named after her as a way of asserting his dominance over the Basotho.

## **5.2 Lekhanya's military rule (1986–1991)**

Colonel Metsing Lekhanya overthrew Leabua in 1986 and Lesotho consequently came under military rule. His government effected name changes, especially of those associated with Leabua. This new trend might have been motivated by the fact that, unlike colonial names which affected almost all Basotho in a similar manner, some of the names given by Leabua were eponyms created to glorify and immortalise him. In addition, these names were supposed to appeal to BNP supporters, and by the time he was toppled, he was not as popular as he once was and the names were no longer desirable to the majority of the Basotho. The changes are highlighted below:

**Table 4:** *Prime Minister Leabua Jonathan and Major General Metsing Lekhanya's Toponyms*

<b>Leabua</b>	<b>Post-Leabua</b>
Leabua Highway	Kingsway
Leabua Jonathan Airport	Mejametalana Airport
'Mantahli Old Age Home	Old Age Home (Lehae la Maqheku)

The first odonym above was named Leabua Highway during Prime Minister Leabua Jonathan's reign. It is the name of the street that leads to the palace in Maseru and is of significance to all Basotho and not only BNP supporters. In addition, it is the main street in the city. The Mejametalana Airport was initially named Leabua Jonathan Airport. Mejametalana is one of the original names of the city of Maseru. The airport was never

the private property of Leabua and his family or supporters; it belonged to the country, hence the name change. It is now used as one of the bases of the Lesotho Defence Force. Lastly, one of the few old age homes in Maseru was named 'Mantahli Old Age Home after Leabua Jonathan's wife, 'Mantahli Jonathan. It is now known as Old Age Home without reference to anyone's name. Removing Leabua's wife's name created a sense of ownership for all Basotho and not just Leabua's wife and his supporters, especially because Lesotho has a dire shortage of homes for the elderly.

## **6. CONCLUSION**

The research did not find evidence of formal name replacements when British colonialism gave way to Basotho rule. Rather, a trend of changing the namescape from English to Sesotho was observed from the new Sesotho names. Sesotho subsequently became visible almost everywhere in Lesotho, from public to private infrastructures, turning Lesotho's linguistic landscape predominantly Sesotho. Generally, the Basotho is a peace-loving nation, hence the greeting, "Khotso, Pula, Nala" (Peace, Rain, Prosperity), and seem to have extended this peace-loving spirit to limiting significant renaming of old British toponyms in Lesotho. However, between the rivals Leabua and Lekhanya, there were noticeable place-name replacements. In the absence of an official place-name authority, the place-namescape is responsive to the decisions of those with name-giving authority. As such, this study is a reflection of place names as entities that reflect covert and overt power dynamics. The observed trend of turning to naming in Sesotho is a clear indication of an established if informal naming practice. These new naming practices in Lesotho will ensure the sustainability of Sesotho language and culture.

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