



Issue no: 1 | Vol no: 7 | April 2025: 33-46

Re-evaluation of dominant visual images present in national symbols for communication in Kenya

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Article History

Received: 2025-02-20

Accepted: 2025-03-22

Published: 2025-04-22

Cite this article in APA

Muturi, E., Kamau, N. G., Ndoro, P., & Githinji, P. (2025). Re-evaluation of dominant visual images present in national symbols for communication in Kenya. *Editon consortium journal of literature and linguistics*, 7(1), 33-46. <https://doi.org/10.51317/ecjahss.v7i1.590>

Abstract

The present study aimed to evaluate the dominant visual images embedded within Kenya's national symbols. This investigation was guided by two theoretical frameworks: Social Semiotic Theory (SST) and Multimodal Discourse Analysis (MDA). Adopting a qualitative paradigm and descriptive survey design, the study employed purposive sampling to select three key national symbols for analysis: the national anthem, national flag, and national emblem. Content analysis was utilised to scrutinise these symbols and extract thematic findings. The results revealed that the elements of Kenya's national flag effectively conveyed a sense of unity, progress, and the nation's core values. Similarly, the dominant visual components of the Kenyan coat of arms communicated a powerful narrative of national defence, strength, vigilance, unity, and a deep-rooted connection to the country's agricultural and economic foundations. These symbols were found to reflect the aspirations, values, and historical experiences that have shaped Kenyan national identity. The themes present within the national anthem were central to the Kenyan national consciousness and served as guiding principles for the country's ongoing development and progress. The data obtained would be valuable in enlightening the public about the importance of Kenyan national symbols in promoting peace and highlighting their efficacy as a means of communication. Furthermore, the findings contribute new knowledge and information to the field of applied linguistics.

Key words: Communication, dominant, interpretation, national symbols, sign, signifier.



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INTRODUCTION

Kenya's national symbols hold the potential to enhance a sense of harmony and national cohesion, as this is what is envisaged. If these symbols are well interpreted, we expect peace and harmony to prevail. If peace is not communicated, it will lead to conflicts and war; however, the role of Kenya's national symbols in communicating peace has not been effectively explored. National symbols are visual, auditory, or linguistic representations that embody the values, history, and collective identity of a nation, serving as communicative devices to convey a country's culture, aspirations, and shared consciousness. Communication refers to the process by which these national symbols transmit meaning and signify various socio-cultural concepts. Visual images play a crucial role in communication, reading, expression, thinking, assessment, and criticism (Aiello et al., 2019). Symbols, as a form of visual communication, exhibit a dynamic nature that evolves over time, conveying different meanings in different contexts (Kiarie, 2017). For instance, in African communities, face painting and tattoos were historically utilised by warriors to signify courage and strength (Odle, 2022). However, in contemporary society, these practices have shifted their significance and are now commonly embraced for recreational and aesthetic purposes (Kiarie, 2017). This evolution highlights the fluidity and adaptability of symbols, as their meanings and functions can change in response to shifting social, cultural, and individual contexts (Sizer, 2020). Kenya has multiple national symbols, including the national language, the presidency, monuments, and national holidays. This study focused specifically on three key symbols: the national flag, the national anthem, and the national emblem. These symbols were selected because they are explicitly enshrined in the New Constitution of Kenya, promulgated in 2010 (ROK, 2010). By narrowing the scope to these three symbols, the study aimed to delve deeply into their potential as tools for communicating national unity in Kenya. The focus was on analysing and understanding the dominant visual images present in these symbols, with the goal of providing insights and recommendations on how they can be effectively utilised to enhance national unity and harmony. The dominant elements are the most prominent or salient features within a national symbol, carrying the

primary signification. Interpretation denotes the process of ascribing meaning to national symbols based on their signifiers and cultural, historical, and contextual associations.

LITERATURE REVIEW

This review explores the role and functions of national symbols, defined as visual, auditory, or linguistic representations that embody a country's values, history, and collective identity. Unlike metaphors, symbols have the capacity to evoke values, memories, and emotions within individuals, impacting their cognitive processes, attitudes, and actions (Turner, 2018; Hanna et al., 2017). National symbols, such as flags, anthems, and emblems, can evoke a sense of identity, unity, and pride among citizens, fostering a shared understanding and connection to the nation (Mahmuluddin, 2024). Symbols can transcend linguistic and cultural barriers, making them effective tools for communication and promoting peace by evoking shared values and emotions (Sullivan, 2018).

In social semiotics, symbols comprise a sign and a signifier, where the sign refers to the actual object, and the signifier represents what that object signifies in the perceiver's mind (Dunleavy, 2020). The interpretation and meaning of a symbol are contingent upon the individual and the context, but socially shared symbols represent accepted expressions of symbolic meanings within a given community (Owens, 2016). Understanding the social nature of symbols is essential for effective communication and peacebuilding efforts, as widely recognised and accepted symbols can serve as powerful tools for conveying messages of unity, identity, and peace (Linklater, 2019).

Acknowledging the dynamic nature of symbolic meaning and the social construction of symbols enables the utilisation of symbols in promoting intercultural understanding, fostering dialogue, and bridging divides, thereby contributing to peacebuilding endeavours. Bonvillain (2019) notes that the connection between a symbol and its meaning is not inherently natural but rather learned through cultural and social contexts. Individuals acquire the ability to perceive and relate to symbols both unconsciously and consciously, with the effects

of symbols manifesting implicitly and explicitly (Ohme & Boshoff, 2019).

The process of associating symbols with specific meanings is influenced by personal experiences, cultural norms, and societal values. Hutchins (2020) suggests that cognitive effects emerge from the interaction of persons with the rich cultural content of the cognitive ecology. Acknowledging the constructed and learned nature of symbolic meaning provides a foundation for effective communication and peacebuilding initiatives (Ting-Toomey et al., 2018), encouraging critical reflection and cultural sensitivity. Quinn, Donnelly, and Kidd (2018) emphasise that a single symbol can have multiple possible representations, underscoring the importance of considering individual perspectives and subjective experiences in understanding their significance (Hatch, 2018).

The perspective of 'symbols' as domination highlights how those in positions of authority can manage and influence the meanings of shared symbols to shape people's attitudes and achieve specific goals (Hall, 2019; Heersmink, 2018). By critically analysing the use of symbols, researchers can uncover the underlying intentions and effects of symbol manipulation, enabling a better understanding of societal dynamics and power relations. By critically assessing the ways in which symbols are employed and managed, researchers can promote inclusive and equitable approaches that foster understanding, dialogue, and social change (McGregor, 2020).

In the case of Kenyan national symbols, such as the flag, anthem, and emblem, these representations encompass multiple dimensions of national identity rather than a singular meaning (Onditi, 2018). The interpretation and effects of these symbols vary depending on the context, particularly in peaceful situations versus situations of conflict. During times of conflict, individuals often experience heightened identification with their own group, leading to a greater significance and impact of the symbols (Lipset, 2018). Acknowledging the multifaceted nature of symbols and their differential effects in different contexts enables a deeper understanding of

the role of national symbols in fostering unity, peace, and identity within a diverse society.

The practice of creating and adopting national symbols has a historical foundation rooted in the use of banners, crests, and fanfares for communication and identification purposes (Finn, 2018). The development of standardised national symbols gained prominence during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, reflecting the rise of nationalism and the increased emphasis on distinct national identities (Weiss, 2018). Political elites have played a significant role in the introduction and promotion of national symbols, utilising them as tools to forge bonds and achieve specific objectives (Zuk, 2018). The flag, in particular, holds prominent value as it represents the nation itself, with its significance often constructed and reinforced through conflicts and struggles (Arthur, 2018).

The Development of National Symbols

The practice of creating and adopting national symbols has a historical foundation rooted in the use of banners, crests, and fanfares for communication and identification purposes (Finn, 2018). The development of standardised national symbols gained prominence during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, reflecting the rise of nationalism and the increased emphasis on distinct national identities (Weiss, 2018). As societies and political entities developed, the adoption of specific symbols became a means of consolidating collective identity and asserting a sense of unity and belonging. These symbols serve as visual markers of collective identity, fostering a sense of unity and shared purpose within a nation (Fukuyama, 2018).

The development and adoption of national symbols reflect the ongoing process of nation-building and the construction of social and cultural identities, as seen in the case of the Republic of South Sudan (Ylönen, 2020). Political elites have played a significant role in the introduction and promotion of national symbols, utilising them as tools to forge bonds and achieve specific objectives (Zuk, 2018). The flag, in particular, holds prominent value as it represents the nation itself, with its significance often constructed and reinforced through conflicts and struggles (Arthur, 2018).

The Red Cross emblem, a widely recognised global symbol, exemplifies the power of symbols in transcending language and cultural barriers while evoking shared values and emotions across different societies and contexts (Linklater, 2019; Ramsey, 2018; Henry, 2017). Research suggests that

maintaining a positive perception of the Red Cross symbol requires consistent representation and adherence to key principles by humanitarian organisations (Cole, 2018; Ataev, 2020; Girma, 2021).



Figure 1 Red Cross flag

Similarly, the United Nations flag is perceived as a powerful symbol that encapsulates the aspirations and objectives of the international community, contributing to its recognition and interpretation as a symbol of global betterment (Low, 2015; Smis &

Sääski, 2013; Pristupa, 2018). The extensive display of the UN flag worldwide has played a significant role in solidifying its image as a symbol of multilateral problem-solving.



Figure 1 United Nations flag

The repeated exposure to the United Nations flag has helped imprint the notion of international cooperation and collective action for global challenges in the public consciousness. However, criticisms have emerged regarding a perceived "democratic deficit" within the UN, leading to the need to enhance representation and inclusivity in UN procedures and decision-making processes to preserve the legitimacy of the symbol (Williams, 2017).

Symbols promoting inclusion and cultural exchange, such as the Olympic rings, have gained significant meaning alongside care-oriented symbols. The Olympic rings represent a celebration of diversity and unity, emphasising the spirit of international cooperation and camaraderie that transcends borders and cultural differences (Giulianotti & Klauser, 2010; McAtee, 2020). The sustained projection of the Olympic rings has played a crucial role in solidifying the symbol's virtue-based perceptions internationally (Mitchell, 2019). However, political

boycotts have posed a risk to the symbol's impartial image, leading to concerns about the perception of favouritism in the selection of host nations.

To preserve the perception of inclusive representation, it is crucial to depoliticise the Olympic Games and maintain a focus on the principles of sportsmanship, fair play, and global unity that the rings symbolise (Moon, 2016).



Figure 3 Olympics rings

According to Linklater (2019), a nation's flag serves as a symbolic representation of its history and identity. The U.S. flag, in particular, activates America's core values of egalitarianism and humanitarianism. The flag holds such significance that its history itself tells the story of the nation. The design of the flag, with its 50 stars representing the 50 states and the 13 stripes representing the original colonies, symbolises the journey of the United States

from its early origins as a collection of British colonies to its emergence as a unified nation (Callcott, 2019). Exposure to the U.S. flag has been found to have positive effects, as Erden (2019) suggests, it can decrease hostility and increase concepts of egalitarianism. The flag serves as a unifying symbol that fosters a sense of national pride and shared values, promoting a sense of belonging and unity among Americans.



Figure 4 America's flag

National flags are highly visible during events where a nation's identity is perceived as threatened (Edensor, 2020). The presence of national symbols becomes pronounced during events like the soccer World Cup, with the European flag representing positive ideals shaped by common values and shared experiences among Europeans (Bergbauer et al., 2018). However, the effects and significance of symbols can vary depending on the context. During conflicts, individuals often experience a stronger identification with their own group, leading to increased attachment and importance placed on

symbols representing their identity (Bergbauer et al., 2018).

The Indian flag holds a significant position as a symbolic representation within the dynamic political landscape shaped by nationalist discourse and practices in India (Castelló et al., 2018). The flag's star image conveys a sense of "Indianness" and shapes collective identity and a sense of belonging (Wojczewski, 2020). Conversely, the flag can elicit contrasting interpretations, representing active resistance against dominant political hegemony for

some while evoking painful emotions associated with anger, hatred, division, and racism for others (Anziska, 2020).



Figure 5 India's flag

The flag serves as a reminder to Indigenous peoples of their cultural heritage, interconnectedness with the natural world, and shared responsibilities towards Mother Earth and their communities (Suleiman, 2019). It symbolises the ongoing struggle for recognition, justice, and the preservation of Indigenous cultures and traditions. These divergent interpretations of the flag highlight the complex and multifaceted nature of Indigenous identity and the ongoing challenges faced by Indigenous communities in their quest for self-determination and cultural resurgence.

According to Edensor (2020), national flags are highly visible, particularly during events where a nation's identity is perceived as threatened. The presence of national symbols becomes pronounced during events like the soccer World Cup, with the European flag representing positive ideals shaped by common values and shared experiences among Europeans (Bergbauer et al., 2018). However, the

effects and significance of symbols can vary depending on the context. During conflicts, individuals often experience a stronger identification with their own group, leading to increased attachment and importance placed on symbols representing their identity (Bergbauer et al., 2018). Jordan, like many other countries, possesses a set of national symbols that contribute to a sense of unity and national identity (Robins, 2019). The national flag, anthem, crown, and national day serve as prominent examples of these symbols, playing a crucial role in fostering a collective sentiment and a shared sense of belonging among Jordanians. As Jordan experiences an increase in ethnic diversity, the need to find effective means to maintain stability becomes increasingly important (Barakat, 2015). The selection and recognition of national symbols can contribute to shaping a collective national narrative and foster unity, inclusivity, and social harmony in a diverse society like Jordan (Suleiman, 2019).



Figure 6 Jordan's flag

Edensor (2020) highlights the function of national symbols in promoting a sense of belonging and connection to one's nation. These symbols serve as powerful tools that evoke emotions and foster a deep attachment, representing shared history, culture, and identity. The emotional attachments felt towards national symbols can be significant, as they evoke a sense of personal identification with and commitment to one's nation (Schatz, 2020). In addition to flags, national anthems also hold symbolic importance (Erden, 2019), serving as musical expressions of national identity. Zuk (2018) explores the agency of political leaders in introducing symbols and utilising them to foster a sense of belonging and mobilise support for their agendas, underscoring the strategic nature of symbol selection and deployment by those in positions of power.

National symbols, such as anthems, national days, and mottos, play a significant role in expressing the identity and aspirations of a nation. The selection of symbols reflects the historical and cultural context, contributing to their recognizability and coherence across nations (Schwarz, 2018; Kenyatta, 2015). The selection of national symbols serves to reinforce a sense of national identity, foster unity, and evoke pride among citizens. Kaneva (2018) investigated the processes by which symbols are created, adopted, and imbued with meaning, shedding light on the interplay between symbolism, culture, and nation-building.

When a new nation adopts national symbols, it signifies its presence and seeks recognition from established nations. However, the adoption of symbols does not guarantee immediate legitimacy or promote national unity. Understanding the historical trajectory and the evolution of symbols allows for a

more nuanced perspective on the complexities and challenges faced by new nations in the process of symbol adoption and nation-building (Maleki, 2018; Goldstein, 2019; Taussig, 2018).

METHODOLOGY

The present study aimed to evaluate the dominant visual images embedded within Kenya's national symbols in the context of peace communication. The study adopted a qualitative paradigm and descriptive survey design. The study employed purposive sampling to select three key national symbols for analysis: the national anthem, national flag, and national emblem. These symbols were selected because they are explicitly enshrined in the New Constitution of Kenya, promulgated in 2010. By narrowing the scope to these three symbols, the study aimed to delve deeply into their potential as tools for communicating national unity in Kenya. Content analysis was utilised to scrutinise these symbols and extract thematic findings. This method allowed researchers to analyse textual or visual materials to uncover underlying themes, symbols, and representations. Employing content analysis, the study provided a rigorous and comprehensive analysis of the data, shedding light on the perceptions and interpretations of the national symbols in relation to peace communication in the Rongai Sub-County.

RESULTS AND FINDINGS

The objective of the study was to identify the dominant visual images present in the Kenya national symbols. This study had confined itself to the three national symbols, that is, the national flag, the coat of arms and the national anthem. An analysis of each was done and discussed.

National Flag.



Figure 7 Kenya's flag

The identifiable dominant images coming out in Figure 1 were:

a) The three broad horizontal stripes.

The three colour stipes were broad, and each colour had a symbolic representation. The black stripe represented the people of Kenya, their unity, and the struggles they had faced. The black stripe was interpreted as representing the African heritage and identity of the Kenyan people. Black was associated with the African continent and its people, symbolising their shared history, culture, and experiences. In the context of the Kenyan flag, the black stripe was meant to convey the unity and resilience of the Kenyan people, who had endured various struggles and challenges throughout their nation's history.

The red stripe represented the bloodshed and sacrifices made during the fight for independence. The red stripe was a powerful symbol of the sacrifices and bloodshed made by Kenyans in their fight for independence. This colour was a solemn reminder of the struggles and conflicts that the Kenyan people had to overcome to achieve self-determination and sovereignty. The red stripe represented the courage, bravery, and determination of those who fought and gave their lives for Kenya's liberation from colonial rule.

The green stripe symbolised the country's natural resources, agriculture, and its fertile land. The green stripe was widely interpreted as a representation of Kenya's natural wealth and abundance. This colour was highlighted to symbolise the country's lush landscapes, fertile agricultural lands, and rich natural resources. The green stripe conveyed a sense of prosperity, growth, and the promise of a sustainable future for Kenya, rooted in the careful stewardship of its environmental assets.

b) The thin white stripes.

The two separated the broader stripes and are white in colour. The white colour represented peace and unity among different ethnic groups. The white stripes, positioned between the bold colours, were

seen by the researchers as representing peace, unity, and harmony among the diverse ethnic groups that make up the Kenyan nation. White was often associated with purity, neutrality, and the absence of conflict. In the context of the Kenyan flag, the white stripes were intended to symbolise the country's commitment to fostering inter-ethnic cooperation, mutual understanding, and social cohesion despite the historical challenges and tensions that may have existed.

The Maasai shield and spears symbol.

The two are placed in the centre of the flag, cutting across all the colours. This was a representation of the country's defence preparedness and the willingness of its people to protect their sovereignty. It also paid homage to the Maasai community, one of the prominent ethnic groups in Kenya. The symbol was a representation of Kenya's defence preparedness and the willingness of its people to protect their sovereignty. By placing this iconic Maasai warrior symbol prominently in the centre of the flag, the design emphasised Kenya's cultural heritage, military strength, and commitment to safeguarding its national interests. This symbolic element added a distinctive cultural and geopolitical dimension to the overall visual representation of the Kenyan national identity.

In summary, the dominant imagery in the Kenyan flag combines the symbolism of national unity, sacrifice, natural resources, and defence preparedness, all of which contribute to the construction of a cohesive national identity. This multifaceted symbolism in the Kenyan flag serves to foster a sense of national pride, unity, and connection to the land, history, and identity of the Kenyan people, which can contribute to effective peace communication and the reinforcement of a cohesive national identity.

The Coat of Arms.



Figure 8 The Kenya's court of arms.

The coat of arms of Kenya consists of the following dominant visual images: a shield, two lions, a ribbon inscription of harambee, two roosters each holding an axe, a maize corn.

- a) The coat of arms of Kenya featured a shield supported by two lions. The shield represented the defense of the country and its sovereignty, national defense and the readiness to protect the country. At the centre of the coat of arms was a shield, a representation of the defence of the country and its sovereignty. The shield symbolised the national defence capabilities of Kenya and the readiness of the Kenyan people to protect their country from external threats.
- b) The two lions, as supporters, represented courage, strength, and protection. The two majestic lions, flank the shield as symbols of courage, strength, and protection. The lions served as supporters, guarding and upholding the shield, reinforcing the idea of Kenya's unwavering commitment to safeguarding its national interests and territorial integrity. **iii)**
- c) The rooster holding an axe stood as a powerful symbol of vigilance and preparedness of the nation. It also symbolised vigilance and the wakefulness of the people of Kenya. The rooster, with its ability to herald the dawn, represented the country's constant state of wakefulness and readiness to defend itself. The axe symbolised the willingness and capacity of the Kenyan people to engage in hard work and take decisive action when necessary, emphasising their commitment to the development and progress of the nation.
- d) The motto "Harambee," displayed on a ribbon below the shield, was a Swahili word meaning "Let's Pull Together." The motto reflected the spirit of working together as a nation to overcome challenges and promote national development, reinforcing the idea of a shared national identity and a commitment to collective progress. The researcher viewed this as a powerful call for unity, collaboration, and collective effort among the Kenyan people.

The maize plant was a significant agricultural symbol in Kenya, representing the country's agricultural wealth and the importance of farming in its economy. It symbolised the nation's commitment to food security and agricultural development. The researcher interpreted this element as a testament to the country's commitment to food security and its recognition of the vital role that agriculture plays in the nation's economic and social development.

The visual imagery of the Kenyan coat of arms reflects a multifaceted symbolism that promotes national identity, unity, and a commitment to peace and security. These symbolic elements in the Kenyan coat of arms serve to foster a strong sense of national identity, communicate Kenya's readiness to defend its interests, and promote the values of unity, cooperation, and collective progress - all of which contribute to effective peace communication and the reinforcement of a cohesive national identity.

The National Anthem

Stanza 1:

*"O God of all creation.
Bless this our land and nation.
Justice be our shield and defender.
May we dwell in unity Peace and liberty.
Plenty be found within our borders."*

Stanza 2:

*"Let one and all arise.
With hearts both strong and true
Service be our earnest endeavour
And our homeland of Kenya
Heritage of splendour
Firm may we stand to defend."*

Stanza 3:

*"Let all with one accord
In common bond united
Build this our nation together
And the glory of Kenya
The fruit of our labor
Fill every heart with thanksgiving."*

Source: Republic of Kenya. (2010). *The Kenya Constitution*. Nairobi; Government Printer.

The analysis of the Kenya national anthem will take both the semantic and pragmatic analysis approach. Based on the semantic analysis approach, the first stanza invoked a religious and patriotic sentiment. It acknowledged God as the creator and called for divine blessings upon the land and nation of Kenya. It emphasised the importance of justice, unity, peace, liberty, and prosperity within the country. The semantic content highlighted the aspirations for a just and prosperous society where unity and peace prevailed. The second stanza emphasised the importance of unity and collaboration in nation-building. It called for all individuals to come together with a shared purpose and a common bond. The stanza highlighted the continuous effort to build and develop the nation collectively. It also spoke of the glory of Kenya, which was described as the fruit of the labour of its people, and expressed the desire for gratitude and thanksgiving.

The third stanza conveyed a message of collective action and loyalty to the homeland. It encouraged all individuals to rise and contribute with strong and sincere hearts. It emphasised the value of service and dedication as the nation's earnest endeavour. The stanza also acknowledged Kenya's rich heritage, described as a heritage of splendour, and emphasised the need to stand firm in defence of the country.

Based on pragmatic analysis, the first stanza reflected the values and ideals that the Kenyan people strived for. It expressed a desire for a just and unified society where peace and freedom were enjoyed by all citizens. The stanza also acknowledged the importance of prosperity and abundance within the country's borders. It served as an inspirational call to uphold these values in the collective endeavour of nation-building. The second stanza emphasised the power of unity and collective action in the process of nation-building. It encouraged individuals to work together in harmony and solidarity to build a prosperous nation.

The stanza recognised the achievements and progress of Kenya as the result of the collective efforts and hard work of its people. The pragmatic message inspired a sense of pride, gratitude, and a shared responsibility for the nation's success. The third stanza reflected the call for active participation and

commitment to the nation. It encouraged individuals to unite in their efforts and serve their country with dedication. The stanza also highlighted the significance of Kenya's cultural heritage and the importance of defending and preserving it. The pragmatic message was one of unity, loyalty, and collective responsibility towards the nation.

The Kenya national anthem reflected the aspirations and values of the Kenyan people, emphasising unity, justice, peace, liberty, and prosperity. The anthem began with the line, "O God of all creation," acknowledging a higher power and seeking blessings for the land and nation of Kenya. This demonstrated a spiritual and inclusive perspective, recognising that the land and its people are part of a larger divine order. The next line, "Bless this our land and nation," expressed a desire for divine favour and protection upon Kenya. It reflected a sense of pride and reverence for the country, emphasising the importance of the land as a foundational element of Kenyan identity.

The anthem then emphasised justice as a shield and defender. The line, "Justice be our shield and defender," underscored the significance of fairness and equality in the national ethos. It reflected the aspiration for a just society where all individuals were treated equitably, and their rights were protected. The anthem further highlighted the values of unity, peace, and liberty. The line, "May we dwell in unity Peace and liberty," emphasised the importance of harmony among Kenyans, irrespective of their diverse backgrounds. Unity was seen as a prerequisite for achieving peace and liberty, suggesting that a united nation can better safeguard individual freedoms and foster an environment of harmony.

The concept of plenty was introduced as well, with the line, "Plenty be found within our borders." This phrase symbolised abundance and prosperity, expressing the hope that Kenya would be a land of plentiful resources, opportunities, and wellbeing for its citizens. The anthem encouraged collective action and dedication to service. The line, "Let one and all arise, with hearts both strong and true Service be our earnest endeavor," underscored the importance of selfless service and working together for the betterment of the nation. It called upon Kenyans to

unite in their efforts to build a prosperous and harmonious society.

Kenya's heritage was depicted as one of splendour, as mentioned in the line, "And our homeland of Kenya Heritage of splendour." This phrase acknowledged the rich cultural and historical legacy of the nation, recognising the contributions of past generations and celebrating the unique heritage that shaped the identity of Kenya. The anthem emphasised the importance of collective responsibility in nation-building. The line, "Let all with one accord In common bond united Build this our nation together," called for unity and collaboration among Kenyans in the pursuit of national progress and development. It highlighted the idea that the nation's success depended on the collective efforts of its citizens.

The anthem concluded with an expression of gratitude and celebration. The line, "And the glory of Kenya The fruit of our labor Fill every heart with thanksgiving," acknowledged the achievements and contributions of the people. It encouraged a sense of pride and gratitude for the accomplishments and progress made, reflecting the desire for a prosperous and grateful nation.

The dominant images that come from the Kenyan national anthem evoke religious and patriotic sentiment, where the invocation of God as the creator underscored the deep spiritual and religious foundations of Kenyan national identity. This reflected the importance of faith and divine providence in the Kenyan worldview. The call for God's blessings upon the land and nation of Kenya demonstrated a profound sense of patriotism and reverence for the nation. The wellbeing and prosperity of Kenya were seen as intimately connected to divine favour and blessing. The emphasis on justice, unity, peace, liberty, and prosperity reflected the aspiration for Kenya to be guided by these noble principles and values, which were seen as God-given or divinely inspired.

Collective nation-building and unity, with the call for all individuals to come together with a shared purpose and common bond, highlighted the importance of national unity and collective effort in the process of building the Kenyan nation. The

emphasis on collective effort and collaboration underscored the belief that the success and progress of Kenya could only be achieved through the united efforts of its citizens. The recognition of Kenya's rich heritage and the need to defend it suggested a deep appreciation for the country's historical and cultural foundations, which served as a unifying force for the Kenyan people.

Aspirations for a just and prosperous society raised the desire for a just, unified, and peaceful society. This was a reflection of the Kenyan people's vision for their country, where social harmony, equity, and stability were paramount. The importance of abundance and prosperity within the country's borders suggested an aspiration for economic wellbeing and self-sufficiency, free from external dependence or exploitation. The inspiration for upholding the values of justice, unity, peace, and liberty indicates a commitment to those principles as the foundation for a thriving and equitable Kenyan society.

Loyalty and dedication to the nation as shown in the call for active participation and commitment to the nation underscored the expectation that Kenyan citizens will actively engage in the process of nation-building and the defense of their homeland. There was emphasis on selfless service and earnest endeavor reflects the belief that individual dedication and sacrifice were necessary for the greater good of the nation. The importance of defending and preserving Kenya's cultural heritage suggests a deep-rooted sense of national pride and a desire to safeguard the country's unique identity and traditions.

Collectively, the symbolic imagery and thematic content of the Kenyan national anthem serve to cultivate a strong sense of national identity, foster a spirit of unity and collective progress, and provide a foundation for effective peace communication both within the country and in its international relations. The anthem's ability to transcend linguistic and cultural barriers while evoking shared values and emotions underscores its potential to be a unifying force in the pursuit of national unity, prosperity, and a just society.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusion: The national symbols of Kenya, including the flag, seal, and anthem, hold significant symbolic meaning that represents various aspects of the country's identity, values, and aspirations. The Kenyan national flag's design, with its horizontal stripes of black, red, and green, along with the Maasai shield and spears symbol, conveys the country's history, values, resources, and cultural identity. The symbolic meanings of these colours tell a powerful narrative about the Kenyan people's shared identity, their struggles and sacrifices, their natural wealth, and their aspirations for a peaceful, unified, and prosperous future. The Kenyan coat of arms' dominant visual elements convey a narrative of national defence, strength, vigilance, unity, and a deep-rooted connection to the country's agricultural and economic foundations. The motto "Harambee" displayed on the banner reinforces the message of unity, collaboration, and collective effort in achieving national progress and development. The Kenyan national anthem's dominant images revolve around religious and patriotic sentiments, the

collective effort of nation-building, aspirations for a just and prosperous society, and loyalty from its citizens. These themes are central to the Kenyan national consciousness and serve as guiding principles for the country's ongoing development and progress, reflecting the aspirations, values, and historical experiences that have shaped the Kenyan national identity.

Recommendations: Based on the conclusions provided, the study made the following recommendations: preserving and promoting the symbolic significance of national symbols among Kenyans; encouraging inclusive representation in symbols to foster belonging; strengthening the symbolic connection between people and nation through critical reflection; adapting symbols to reflect contemporary realities; and leveraging symbols in grassroots development to connect local efforts to the national narrative. Implementing these recommendations can help Kenya harness the power of national symbols to strengthen identity, promote unity, and support the country's ongoing progress and development.

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