

The Use and Application of Proverbs in Basotho Accordion Music

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Abstract

This paper examines Basotho accordion music as a dynamic form of entertainment that promotes oral tradition among the Basotho. It briefly discusses the history of Lesotho and Basotho, offers an overview of Basotho music in general, some background regarding local accordion music tradition, and some notes on theoretical framework and methodology before moving to analysis of proverbs in Basotho songs. The paper argues that the use of proverbs among Basotho is still common at present to such an extent that they are even employed in the Basotho accordion music. The analysis deals with songs by different artists who have liberally spiced their songs with proverbs. Careful listening to this music reveals that there is much to be learned from sung proverbs regarding oral literature: customs, beliefs, language and other aspects. Through the proverbial flavoring in this music, Basotho traditional wisdom, spiritual heritage, culture, morality, collective experience and general well-being of the nation are easily transmitted. The employment of proverbs in this music can be an indication that oral literature like in other African societies is so central to contemporary Basotho culture.

1. Introduction: Lesotho as a Country and Its Nationals

Lesotho is a Southern African country enclosed by the Republic of South Africa (see Fig. 1). Its population is estimated at 1.9 million (Population census: 2006). According to Ellenberger (1912) and Gill (1993), Lesotho was established around the years 1820s-1830s by the founder of the Basotho nation, Moshoeshoe I.



Figure 1. Map of Lesotho.

Many commentators have tried to explain the origins of the word Basotho but Ellenberger's account is widely accepted. Relating the history of the first Basotho, he refers to the Bapeli in the eighteenth century who lived next to the Amaswazi, observing that the first tribes to bear the name Basotho were the Bapeli, Makhelokoe, Maphuthing, Batlokoa and Basia:

These used to laugh at the breech-cloth of the Bapeli, and the trouble they took to make one of the three ends pass between the legs and join the other two in a knot behind, thinking their own fashion a *mocha* or sporran, made of jackals' tails or the dressed skins of rock-rabbit, more dignified. So they called the Bapeli, *Abashuntu*, a derivative of the verb *uku shunta*, to make a knot. This designation, bestowed in derision, was adopted with pride by the Bapeli, and later by the other tribes similarly clothed, and was the origin of the present term Basuto. (Ellenberger 1912: 34)

Gill further states that although various groups, called the ‘Southern Sotho’, today have much in common linguistically and culturally, they were different in other respects and not united politically. Their traditions were frequently innovative, localized and contested. The word Basotho only came into being between 1820s-1830s. Prior to this period each ethnic group was called by its clan name:

“Basotho” was later adopted by Moshoeshe as a unifying political term for his emerging kingdom, which contained peoples from a large number of clans, both Sotho and Nguni. It is important that we look upon the pre-19th century “Sotho” with an eye for diversity and be prepared to break out of the stifling uniformity which has sometimes been wrongly imposed upon the “Sotho” peoples. (Gill 1993: 27)

The Sesotho language is difficult to define. It is a mixture of different related dialects spoken by different clans under the leadership of Moshoeshe I. Ellenberger (1912:34) notes that the dialect of Bapeli was Sesotho, though it was harsh and crude compared to the soft and graceful Sesotho of Bakuena and Bafokeng. This feeling is shared by Wells, who writes:

This Sesotho language was a mixture of the Sekoena of the ruling clan, the Sefokeng of the original Sotho occupiers of the land and Setlhaping (Setswana) usages added by the missionaries. The standardization of written Sesotho under the missionaries had a powerful unifying effect on the succeeding generations of the diverse clans that constituted his nation and helped confirm a Basotho identity. (Wells 1994: 29)

During the time of King Moshoeshe I, Sesotho language, played an important role in unifying his people. It enabled him to rule a united nation with one medium of communication, even though individual groups spoke and retained their languages.

2. Overview of Basotho Music

Basotho, like other nations, have their own music that can be divided into two main types: traditional forms of music of many varieties practiced by Basotho before they came into contact with Europeans and adopted forms of music borne from contact with western culture. Traditional music originated among the Basotho and was passed on from generation to generation among different ethnic groups that constitute the Basotho nation. It bears the

cultures of Basotho people. Wells (1994:1-2) refers to this music as established canon rather than traditional music. He argues that tradition relates to something static, while canon implies a created concept that provides people in the present with a constructed access to the past. He further notes that the music styles of the established canon tend to be associated with performance contexts that are thought to contain values relating to past experiences.

2.1 Traditional Music

Basotho music can be divided into a variety of songs that relate to different occasions, institutions and groups of people from different levels of society. These occasions include work songs and dance songs. Work songs specifically relate to the type of work done by the Basotho that identifies them as Basotho: communal actions such as hoeing, tanning ox hide or threshing corn for example (Guma 1967:103). Basotho have their own style of doing things. Where they work together as a team, for example, they sing songs that are specific to the work done, helping to make their work easier.

The initiation of Basotho males and females is an important institution that takes into consideration the types of songs rendered, how they are sung, when they are sung and why they are sung (Moitse 1994: 45-79). Institutions vary according to their status and functions; hence, each has its special songs and certain roles it plays in the society. Moitse (1994) divides Basotho music into three main institutions: divination, initiation and birth. She further divides the institution of divination into two sub-topics: ancestral worship that deals with Basotho religious beliefs in ancestors, and traditional healing that refers to the practice of traditional medicine. The institution of initiation subdivides into male and female initiation, under which distinction she discusses the music and other relevant activities. Moitse also relates the musical performances and other activities performed during the celebrations surrounding the institution of birth.

With regard to age and gender aspects, (Wells 1994: 2) makes three main divisions between men's, women's and children's songs. His grouping takes into account both age and gender aspects. For instance, certain songs among the Basotho are sung by young males and females who are ripe for marriage. Examples in this case are drawn from the *selia-lia* and *sephumula* games. The participants who sing in these games are young males and females. In these games, accompanied by singing, they are given a chance to choose their future husbands and wives. Another example is that of *mokorotlo*-war song, usually sung by male adults and

not females. The other example is that of *lesiba*, which is also played by males, especially herd boys. This is played on a mouth resonated instrument with a hole cut at one end of a stick, with a quill tightly folded and firmly held in place by two small sticks. The quill has another hole from which a string is attached and runs along to the other end of the long stick. The lips are put against the quill, as the performer inhales and exhales to provide the vibration that produces melodious sounds. A variety of songs known as *linong* are played by the *lesiba* in this manner.

One may argue that there are few static examples of traditional Basotho music as most of the traditional music, including dances, displays much influence from western culture. The attire that is worn for *Mohobelo*, for example, is of foreign origin. The *Se-Leribe* or *Se-Molapo* performers normally wear white large shirts, large black trousers, black and white shoes and one shiny handy iron bar with a handkerchief or a yellow cloth fastened to it. The *Se-Matsieng* performers put on white shirts, large tan trousers, black and white shoes and the shiny handy iron bar. The type of attire, though of western origin, distinguishes one group from another. The *mohobelo* they perform is nonetheless still regarded as Basotho traditional dance. It is also the case even with *mokhibo* performed by females. They put on a variety of blouses, *seshoeshoe* and other decorations not necessarily indigenous to Lesotho. Basotho even seem to have adopted foreign materials and behavior to portray their cultural identity; western technology is employed to reflect traditional cultural practices. Thus, it is not surprising that accordion music is regarded as Basotho traditional music. The process of acculturation seems to have affected the entire lives of the Basotho in a network of evolutionary changes that affects each subsequent generation.

2.2 A Brief History of Basotho Accordion Music

This section deals with works that cover the history of Southern African Township music and Basotho accordion music. *In Township Tonight*, Coplan (1985) discusses the brief history of Basotho accordion music. Coplan highlights the origins of *lifela* from as far back as 1867 with the opening of the South African gold mines. *Lifela* are migrant workers' songs that express their working and living conditions, and their nostalgia for home in exile. Coplan describes the mining compound conditions, which prompted the migrant workers to compose *lifela* and observes that that migrant workers used to sing *lifela* in their solitary journeys to and from the

mines. The composition covered various topics, referring to the social problems of family life and the economic issues of unemployment which led to their going to the mines.

Coplan has undertaken intensive research into the origins of what is now called Basotho accordion music. He observes that the popular instruments in the nineteenth century were the concertina and the home-made-drum. These instruments were accompanied by a variety of *lifela* from the audience who participated in the dancing during the drinking session. The establishment of shebeens became one way of solving the problem of unemployment through the illegal sale of liquor. Music was played in the shebeens as one way of attracting more customers and entertaining them so as to speed up cash flow into the shebeen queens' pockets. He further indicates that the music was played in shebeens for rough and sexy Basotho migrants, both men and women. He writes:

According to numerous eyewitnesses, the *famo* (from *ho re famo*) to open nostrils; to raise garments, displaying the genitals, was almost defiantly suggestive. Women made shaking and thrusting movements with their shoulders, hips and bosoms while lifting their flared skirts in an effort, perhaps to show their ass to Lesotho. The dancers wore no under wears but instead had painted rings around the whole area of their sex, a ring they called "stoplight". ... Men, dancing along side or seated against the walls, chose the women they wanted and took them into the back for intercourse (Coplan 1985: 98).

Coplan further relates the historical background of this music up to the 1950s when some of the recording companies recorded the *famo* music. He further points out that the *famo* music comprised recitative songs performed by the women with the purpose of paralleling the male's *lifela*; that is, women addressed their *famo* songs to men.

Against the historical background given by Coplan, this study will discuss the content of different cassettes recorded by various musical groups. Coplan's work, which concentrates on performance, leaves room for one to analyze the language used in the Basotho accordion music. The focus of this study is not only based on the fact that accordion music is produced by migrant workers but also, that it is currently sung by artists who have never been to the mines. Basotho accordion music thus addresses various aspects that affect Basotho lives in general; aspects that go beyond the ill-treatment of miners or the poor living conditions experienced in the mines.

The setting and form of performance that used to take place, as described by Coplan above, has changed considerably today. Women no longer flare their skirts without under-wears to attract men, but dress in any form which is acceptable. This music is accepted as the Basotho traditional music which is meant to preserve the integrity of the Basotho as a nation. Although, in most cases, the artists are semi-literate, it inspires both the literate and illiterate as it identifies them as Basotho. The Basotho who attend the concerts or shows of different artists, behave in a more acceptable manner, attending these concerts, not for sex but because they want to listen to the music and see the artists in person. Many attend the shows because they want to listen to the fluency of the artists when they employ figurative and poetic language.

This change of attitude could be traced as far back as 1979 when a group by the name Tau-ea-Matšekha released their album of the same name. The album became popular among the Basotho to the extent that the group was highly in demand and invited to perform at different places on a variety of occasions. The formation of Tau-ea-Matšekha and others that followed sparked a change of attitude among the Basotho. Instead of referring to the music as low class (associated with immoral behavior), Basotho began to identify themselves with it, accepting the music as it reflected their culture, as highlighted by Coplan (1995:258). In it, they felt that their language, customs and beliefs were retained and propagated. Based on the change of attitude, the *famo* music was renamed '*mino oa korianana* (accordion music). There are two reasons for this change of name: i) the accordion, as a musical instrument played a major role, as it was accompanied only by the home-made drum; and ii) it had its own special and acceptable taste, and had to be distinguished from *famo* which was associated with immorality. The accordion music was welcomed with respect, the *famo* was meant for the commercial business of prostitution.

The years 1980–1985 considered as formative in which few groups (e.g. Tau-ea-Linare, Tau-ea-Thaba, Lilala-tsa-Sekhonyana and Mahosana a ka Phamong) began to organize themselves and recorded their albums. This music has won the hearts and sympathy of most Basotho. The period from 1985 until the present marks the increased production of the Basotho accordion music and the proliferation of artists in great numbers.

3. Methodology

The research engaged random sampling of eight albums, each having ten songs. The total number of songs analyzed was 80. The focus was on the recorded material and out of many language aspects, proverbs were singled out because of their bearing on Basotho traditional wisdom, spiritual heritage, culture, morality, collective and general well-being of the nation. The sample was made out of the total number of cassettes owned by researchers. As such, it is not entirely representative given the researchers' keen interest in the Basotho accordion music in general. Researchers listened to each and every song in each album in order to detect the use of proverbs. The proverbs were compiled and analyzed according to the functionalism approach as will be evident later in the paper.

4. Theoretical Framework

Functionalism is a sociological philosophy that originally attempted to explain social institutions as collective means to fulfill individual biological needs. It studies the contributions made by socio-cultural phenomena to the socio-cultural systems of which they are part. It emphasizes the organic unity of society that leads functionalists to speculate about needs which must be met for some social systems to exist, as well as the ways in which social institutions satisfy those needs, Murphy (2005:1)

Although there are several sociologists who subscribe to functionalism, the study will refer mostly to Parson's (1951) and Radcliffe-Brown's (1952) views of functionalism. Both consider the three key elements to functionalism as: function, social system and social structure. The research views the Basotho nation as a social system that has a social structure of artists who play Sesotho accordion music. These artists have a specific function to perform within the Basotho nation. As such, they are connected to the nation through interaction.

This paper focuses on the function of the artists in the society in which they live. The artists are viewed as a social structure that is instrumental in providing services to the nation. A number of questions are raised regarding the functionality of the music associated with artists of accordion music.

- What type of music do they offer the audience?
- Does the music they play relate to the basic needs of the society?
- To what extent does the music respond to the social, political, economic and religious aspects of the Basotho?

Arguably accordion music is functional in that:

- The music is produced for the society;
- The contents or messages conveyed by the music are relevant to the society;
- The music transmits language skills to its audience; and
- It meets the basic needs of the artists for their survival.

Basotho accordion artists as individuals are basic units that form social structures and perform certain functions within Basotho society. They are born into and nurtured within the society of Basotho; consequently they imbibe and internalize norms and values of Basotho. Their music and artistic creativity is influenced by, and reflects, their social environment. Their survival as artists and the sustainability of their careers depends on the reception and marketability of their product however their audience expects to be fed with music that satisfies their needs. Thus the relationship of parasite-host and host-parasite is symbiotic, exhibiting interdependence between the artists and their society for the benefit of harmony within the society. This form of interdependence ensures the continuity of both their music and the social structure of their society.

5. Performance

The current Basotho accordion musicians differ from those of the *famo* when it comes to organization. Each band has its name and members who play different roles during the performance. In some bands, such as Mosotho Chakela, Mantša and Likheleke tsa Lesotho, the lead-singer plays the accordion, along with a guitarist, a drummer, chorus singers and dancers. The lead-singer sometimes chants *lifela* assisted by one or two of his members. . In other bands, such as Apollo Ntabanyane, Famole and Puseletso Seema, the roles of the lead singer and accordionist are demarcated between two separate individuals. Each band has its own style of organizing itself during performance but most tend to follow either of these two formats.

Accordion songs also follow certain patterns that are popular with most of the artists. *Makhele* and *masholu* are the main types of accordion music. With *makhele*, there is a chorus that is normally followed by the chanting of *lifela*. The most popular structures are chorus-*lifela*-chorus-*lifela* and chorus-*lifela*-chorus. In most cases, *Makhele* refer to songs that have a

chorus regardless of the format they follow. *Masholu* does not have a chorus but *lifela* can be chanted throughout the song while still accompanied by instruments. The *lifela* may be sung by one or more people, depending on the individual band. Sometimes the *masholu* songs are just instrumental and not accompanied by *lifela*. During the performance, there is a systematic turn-taking for the chanting of *lifela* as well as the chorus for singers. (Fig.2, slideshows 10)

6. Defining Proverbs

In the use and application of proverbs in the rendition of their accordion music, Basotho artists regard dicta as eminently adequate to convey the intended and intrinsic meaning of their songs. Guma (1967:65) defines a proverb as “a pithy sentence with a general bearing on life”, noting that ‘a proverb serves to express some homely truth or moral lesson in such an appropriate manner as to make one feel that no better words could be have been used to describe the particular situation.” Finnegan (1984: 389 & 393) defines a proverb as “a rich source of imagery and succinct expression on which more elaborate forms can draw, observing that it is a saying that is more or less in a fixed form marked by shortness, sense and salt and distinguished by the popular acceptance of the truth tersely expressed in it”. Finnegan goes on to quote Nketia (1958) saying that “the poet of today who is an artist in the use of words, to him the proverb is a model of compressed language...the artist takes interest in the verbal techniques, that is, the selection of words and use of comparison as a method of statement.” This is characteristic of accordion music artists in Lesotho who employ proverbs because of their technical language; a technique highly appreciated by most Basotho.

This paper discusses proverbs, as defined above, and different forms of proverbial expressions that can be categorized under it, including idiomatic sayings. It highlights that Basotho accordion music is currently one form of entertainment that retains aspect of the Basotho oral traditions. It will further demonstrate that this music is also a verbal transmitter of dynamic oral literature that is a combination of praise poetry and *lifela-tsa-li-tsamaea-naha*. As part of its promotion of cultural aspects, this music is flavored with proverbs, the language of wisdom.

Furthermore, the paper seeks to challenge the assumption that proverbs are sayings of the past that are no longer in use or relevant in present day communication. In this regard, it follows Mokitimi’s (1999:1) claim that it is wrong to view idiomatic expressions and proverbial sayings as language of the past that do not have a place in a modern society; a

claim she substantiates with Mielder's (1995: x & xii) argument that these expressions have not lost their established popularity and that they continue to be present even in a modern technological society.

In doing this, the following basic characteristics of proverbs will be critically examined:

1. that they all have a fixed and rigid form which they adhere to at all times.
2. that some are didactic and teach a lesson by expressing a moral and summing up everyday experience in getting on in the world as it is.
3. that others are practical in significance and suggest a course of action to be followed; often passing judgment on a particular situation.

The paper is divided into two main sections. The first discusses the use of proverbs in four particular contexts and the second the application of proverbs in accordion music by eight selected Basotho artists.

6.1 Proverbs Used as Titles

Proverbs employed as part of the language convey meaning to listeners even when they are sung. That is why artists give proverb titles for their songs. Mokitimi (1999:3) identifies some contexts where Sesotho proverbs have been applied for effective communication. Some of the situations include titles of books, titles of poems and names of societies. The following discussion addresses the use of proverbs in accordion music where they are used as titles of the songs. It should be noted that the English translations have been rendered by the authors of the paper.

The first group to be dealt with is Tšeole in their cassette entitled *Tšeole No.5* (1998). Its songs are composed by Lehlohonolo Leboli and produced by the late Thabo Senone who was the lead vocalist. Of its nine songs, the group used six proverbs as titles even though they are stated in elliptic form. The underlined version is the title as written on the cassette while the second part relates to the proverb in its rigid form. The songs are as follows:

'Ngoan'a Lekhala' - *Ngoan'a lekhala o tsamaea ka lekeke joaloka 'm'ae.*

(A child of the crab - Like father like son, children take after their parents).

'Masoto a Thari' - *Ho etsa matsoho masoto a thari.*

(Loose ends of baby's blanket - To be inactive when it's time to work).

'Mokhoka-khoale' - *Ho iketsa mokhoka-khoale.*

(Witch-hunt – Get oneself into endless difficulties or problems.

'U ka nketsang' - *U ka nketsang ha e hahe motse, motse ho hahuoa oa morapeli.*

(Stubbornness – Negotiations help to bring peace and stability).

'Thuto-boholo' - *Thuto-boholo ea roba.*

(Adult education - It's not easy to instill changes into aged people).

'Tse bonoang' - *Molimo o etsa tse bonoang ka tse sa bonoeng.*

(Practical experience- People often learn a lot from experience.

The second group is Poho-li-Matla in *Poho-li-matla* No.5 (1999). The songs are composed and produced by Keketso Mokhiba, four of the ten songs have proverbial titles as follows:

'Ha e lale makoala re none' - *Ntoa ha e lale makoala re none.*

(Stop the fight so that cowards can enjoy life – Let there be peace and prosperity).

'Lefatše le otlala bana' - *Ke tla otlala bana ka lebaka la bokhopo ba batsoali ba bona.*

(The earth punishes children - Children will always bear their parents' misfortune).

'Lebelo le fela' - *Lebelo le fela thota e sale.*

(Speed fades away- Man lives and passes away but the world never does).

'Leboela le ja' - *Leboela le ja.*

(Anything that comes back is dangerous - One's going for the second experience results in disaster).

The third group is Selepe, in its album *Selepe* No. 5 (1996). They have two songs out of ten with the following proverbial titles:

'Taba li mahlong' - *Taba li mahlong.*

(Deeds are on the face - The face is an index of the mind).

'Li ka robana melala' - *Ho robana melala.*

(They can break one's neck - To be at each other's throat).

Matsekela group in its album *Ba tatile batho* (1996) has two out of ten songs with proverbial titles. Its composer is Mohapi Tlelase. The proverbs are as follows:

'Meno-masoeu' - *Batho ke bo-meno masoeu, ba u bolaea ba ts'eha/Meno-masoeu a phoma.*

(White teeth – White teeth deceive/Dangerous people are those with double standards).

'Maea-ke-maboea' - *Maeo-ke-maboea.*

(That which goes, comes back- It is worthwhile to return to one's origins).

Matsie (1999), with its composer Tau Thabeng and the producer Matsie Sefali, has one song out of ten entitled:

'Moiketsi ha a lleloe' - *Moiketsi ha a lleloe ho lleloa moetsuo.*

(He who brings trouble on himself does not invoke one's sympathy -
Self-infliction is no excuse for sympathy).

Majakathata (1996), produced by Joe Ransala, has one song entitled:

'Oa lebala' - *Moetsi oa lebala moetsuo ha a lebale.*

(Tormentor forgets - He who inflicts pain easily forgets while the victim does not).

From the above examples, one notes that twenty seven percent (i.e. sixteen songs out of sixty) have titles with proverbial connotations. This figure confirms the frequent use of proverbs in accordion music. The proverbs used as titles are not in their complete form but only words

bearing the basic meaning of the proverbs. Thus, one learns that the artists are also aware of the economic use of words. One might argue that, since Basotho love proverbs, the artists have taken advantage of that fact to have their songs entitled in proverbs as a means of pleasing and enticing potential buyers. Put another way, even though most of the artists are not well read, they have sound business acumen in marketing their products.

6.2 Proverbs Used to Explain Others or Used Synonymously

This section indicates that the artists in this music are very conversant with their use of proverbs. That they sometimes use more than one proverb to summarize or refer to one incident, shows that they are transmitting agents of oral literature; passing it from one generation to another with the aim of retaining the richness of the Sesotho language. This practice shows the knowledge that one has in one's own language where more than two proverbs are used to explain certain situations. This highlights their capability of mastering the Sesotho language in an era when many fear that oral literature is dying a natural death as future generations fail to actively engage with it.

In the cassette *Tšeole No.5* in the song, 'Ngoan'a lekhala' there are two proverbs. The first one is '*Ngoana oa lekhala o tsamaea ka lekeke joaloka m'ae*' which is used interchangeably with '*Ngoana oa tali o tsejoa ka mereto*' (both meaning 'like father like son, children take after their parents'). In another song, 'Masoto a Thari' the artist says '*lenong ha le lapa lea solla*' ('when one is in need, one wanders about to make a living') which is used to give a supplementary explanation to another proverbial expression, '*se etseng matsoho masoto a thari*' ('one who avoids being inactive at work, makes his life better'). Tšeole also has a third song entitled 'Thuto-Boholo' in which another proverb supplements another. The proverb, '*thupa e otlolloa e sa le metsi*' ('it is worthwhile to mould a person at childhood') is used to explain or is synonymously used with '*thuto-boholo e ea roba*' ('it is not easy to instill changes for aged people').

The Matsie group, in their song 'Moiketsi ha a lleloe' ('self-infliction is no excuse for sympathy'), has the proverb '*ngoan'a mahana a joetsoa o ka 'mona ka likhapha ho lla*' ('one who does not heed advice suffers'), which supplements another one '*moiketsi ha a lleloe*'.

Poho-li -Matla No.5, in their song 'Leboella lea ja' ('one's going for the second experience results in disaster') sings '*motho o se ke be oa mo ts'epa, o ts'eha ka meno e ka oa u rata that is Meno a masoeu a phoma*' ('dangerous people are those with standards') which

is explained by '*motho ke nama ea ntja ha a jeoe*' ('never trust a human being'). The second proverb stresses the point contained in the first one: that a human being is untrustworthy and should not to be trusted under any circumstances.

Sentle (1996) in his song '*Ke Kopa Tšoarelo*' ('I ask for forgiveness') in the album entitled *Ntoa lia Loana* has five proverbial expressions which explain his regret as suggested in the title of the song. He sings:

Phoso li tsamaea le mohatise (Even editors do err).
 Khomo e khoptjoa e le maoto-mane (A horse, though four-legged, falls).
 Litsebe li ka eba li mametse (Attentive ears also miss some words).
 Leihlo le fahloa le shebile (Sharp eyes also fail to dodge dirt).
 Phoso li etsoa ke batho (To err is human).

Under normal circumstances when one feels that he has really done something wrong he tries his best to convince the partner that he is really sorry. In this song, the artist tries his best to make the partner and the audience realize that he is really sorry for the wrong-doing he has committed. As one listens, we could say that he invokes sympathy from listeners. The proverbs are said one after the other in a chain to show the artist's proficiency of Sesotho.

The above examples highlight that the artists have good knowledge of the language. The fact that they use two or more proverbs to explain one incident or use one proverb after the other proves them as versatile verbal artists whose knowledge of their language enables them to manipulate words while still retaining their basic meaning. Listening to this music increases one's vocabulary and knowledge of Basotho proverbs.

6.3 Proverbs Used Randomly in Songs

Proverbs as part of the language are used at times to convey any message the speaker wishes to pass on to listeners. This is also the case in the accordion music where artists spice their songs with proverbs to reinforce the message. The casual use of proverbs demonstrates that accordion music is a vehicle of oral literature; one that is arguably overlooked in academic discussions of literary genres.

Tšeoale, in his song, '*Mokhoka-Khoale*', says: '*o sa fetoha sethotsela*' ('as you did not become involved in nocturnal activities') which comes from '*ho fetoha sethotsela*' ('to be involved in nocturnal activities'). In the same song he sings: '*lefu ha se letho moshanyana oeso, ke ngoetsi ea malapa e ntse e tla le lapeng la likhorane e kena feela*' ('death is no

threat, it is everywhere, and it visits even the wealthiest) which under normal fixed order is *'lefu ke ngoetsi ea malapa 'ohle'* ('death is in every homestead').

Mahosana a ka Phamong in one of their albums, *Shalusa No.12*, in their song 'Mandela Lijong', include this proverb: *'sekhukhuni se bonoa ke sebatalali'* ('the crawler is seen by the stalker') to communicate their message. The proverb means that if anything is done in secrecy, there is a likelihood that it might be known.

Articulate and random use of proverbs in everyday language, as shown above, could be said to prove that proverbs cannot be divorced from stylized songs as well as everyday conversation. Proverbs can be included in whatever message we want to communicate to the listeners. Again we may say that Basotho accordion music is one genre folklorists, public and academics alike cannot ignore since it helps to revive and transmit oral literature. One's love towards Basotho accordion music develops as one apprehends its proficiency in Sesotho language.

6.4 Proverbs with Neither Fixed Nor Rigid Pattern

Guma (1967: 65) points out that, proverbs have a fixed and rigid form to which they adhere to at all times, but, as highlighted in examples below, there are cases in some of the accordion songs where they do not follow the normal structure. Artists use them to suit their messages without following their fixed and rigid forms, giving a certain amount of freshness to one's message.

The Matsie group, in their song 'Moiketsi ha a Lleloe', use the proverb, *'ngoan'a mahana a joetsoa o ka 'mona ka likhapha ho lla'* instead of *'ngoan'a mahana a joetsoa o bonoa ka likhapha ho rotha'* ('one who does not heed advice suffers'). In his song, 'Mokhoka-Khoale', Ts'eole says *'lefu ha se letho moshanyana oeso, ke ngoetsi ea malapa e ntse e tla, le lapeng la likhorane e kena feela'* instead of *'lefu ke ngoetsi ea malapa 'ohle'* ('death is in every homestead'). In another song, 'Thuto-Boholo', Ts'eole says *'ngoana ea sa mameleng batsoali o tla 'mona ka likhapha ho rotha'* (the child who does not listen to the parents is always regrettable) instead of *'ngoan'a mahana a joetsoa o bonoa ka likhapha ho rotha'* ('one who does not heed advice suffers').

7. Application of Proverbs

This section deals with the application of proverbs to various situations based on the experiences of the artists. Proverbs may be applied to different situations and embody the distilled and collective experience of the community on such situations. They are also didactic and can suggest a course of action to be taken or even pass judgment (Guma 1967:65) The Basotho artists concur with this idea, employing different proverbs in various songs to communicate with society through concise messages based on their differing practical life experiences. This section will explore different situations in which proverbs are used within the accordion music to demonstrate that proverbs are used in songs contextually.

7.1 Tšeole

‘Ngoan’a lekhala’:

Ngoana o tšoana le ‘m’ae, o tsamaea ka lekeke joaloka ‘m’ae.
Ngoana oa lekhala o tsamaea ka lekeke joaloka ‘m’ae.
Ngoana oa tali o tsejoa ka mereto.(chorus)
Ke bolela kamehla ke hlola ke joetsa bana bana ba ka,
Ke re ngoana o motle ha a futsitse ‘m’ae le ntat’ae.
Ngoana a sale mekhoa ea batsoali morao.

The child is like her mother, he walks sideways like her mother.
The child of the crab walks sideways like his mother.
The child of the field mouse is known by the stripes. (chorus)
 I always tell these my children,
 I say that child is good if he behaves like his mother and father.
 A child must follow in his parents’ footsteps.

Tšeole addresses his children that they should be well-mannered and behave like their parents. They should also refrain from being influenced by gossip from the villagers as this causes problems for families. His concern is within the family context where he is pleading for peace, stability and good relations in the family circle. One can therefore say that the two proverbs (‘ngoan’a lekhala o tsamaea ka lekeke joaloka ‘m’ae’ / ‘ngoan’a tali o tsejoa ka mereto’) in this context are used to pass a moral lesson to his children: that the children are expected to behave properly in a socially acceptable manner.

‘Masoto a thari’:

*Se etseng matsoho masoto a thari Tšeole
 Banna ee! Se etseng matsoho masoto a thari. (chorus)
 Helele! Uena monna oa Ha Ramarou,
 Ba ntse ba botsa ha u lule keng Lesotho!
 U tla lula u etseng?
 Ha u ka lula moo u katile Jenete!
 U katile fikara kapa botle!
 U tsebe u tla fetoha leloabe.
 Lehlohonolo lenong ha le lapa lea solla.*

Do not turn your hands into loose ends of baby’s blanket Tšeole.
 Men eh do not turn your hands into loose ends of baby’s blanket.
 Hi! You man of Ha Ramarou. (chorus)
 They are asking why you do not stay in Lesotho!
 You will stay and do what?

In this example, the artist sends a message to the entire Basotho nation to refrain from idleness and laziness while they have hands to work for themselves in order to earn a living. The proverbs (‘*se etseng matsoho masoto a thari*’ / ‘*Lenong ha le lapa lea solla*’) urge lazy people to stand up and act accordingly to stave off unemployment in Lesotho. The artist recalls his workmate from Ramarou who is an example of an industrious man who works hard in order to live. He also sings about himself as an example of a hard-worker who moved from one place to another looking for a job. He did not sit back and expect to be spoon-fed. These proverbs could also be said to be didactic while, at the same time, they suggest a course of positive action to be taken. Just like a hungry vulture that fends for itself, a man must go out to fight for his survival through thick and thin. These proverbs call on men to work hard and sweat in order to survive and scorn the idlers.

‘Mokhoka-khoale’:

*He! Ntate Tšeole ba u neheletse mokhoka-khoale.
 Ba u neheletse ntho e se ka ka letho. (chorus)
 ‘Nake ngoan’a leboli,
 A k’u ba tlohele ba ntšale morao.
 Ntho eo ke bonang lapeng la ka Tšeole,
 Feela ba tsebe ke ‘moulo ha ke thape.*

He! Father Tšeole they are witch-hunting you.

They have sent you the monster. (chorus)
 My brother the child of Leboli,
 Let them witch-hunt me.
 What I see in my family Tšeole,
 But they must know that I am a mule I do not get tamed.

This proverb (*'ba u neheletse mokhoka-khoale'* (*'ho nehella mokhoka-khoale'*)) sends a message to Tšeole, the vocalist, that an evil spirit is sent to him as bad luck until his death. Some of the villagers who are witches are to blame for his misfortunes: his daughter and his niece experience problems in their marriages. On the one hand, he is being made aware of the terrible situation he is in, while on the other hand, he is encouraged to accept it as his fate that ill-luck will follow him to his grave. It should be noted that this is the title of the last album he released before his death. This is the reason why his close friends feel that he was bewitched to his grave.

'U ka nketsang':

U ka nketsang ha e hahe motse.
Motse ho hahoa oa morapeli. (chorus)
'Nake ngoan'a theka la ka.
U joetse morali'a Puleng,
U joetse 'Maliekhe.
He le ke le mamele mosali eo oa ka.
He! Jo oa likhomo ha a le khalema le mo mamele.
Ho tloha moo le tla phela maqhofeng.
Mona teng ke le joetsa 'nete.

Stubbornness does not build a family.
A family that grows is that of the faithful. (chorus)
 My brother, my child.
 You tell the daughter of Puleng,
 You tell 'Maliekhe.
 Please listen to that wife of mine.
 Please listen to the one whose *lobola* has been paid when she reprimands you.
 Or else you will into being non-entities.
 On this note I am telling you the truth.

This proverb (*'u ka nketsang ha e hahe motse - motse ho hahua oa morapeli'*) is addressed to the children of the artist who are advised to listen to their mother if they want to live a

decent and progressive life. The artist also addresses the husbands and wives who are inebriated and disorderly, causing family problems. This is also directed to husbands and wives who dislike being questioned about their whereabouts especially when they come home late in the evenings. Having observed family frictions he proposes some solutions to the problems. He is calling for peace and stability within the families, between children and parents, and between husbands and wives. This accords with Finnegan's (1970:412-413) claim that: "proverbs are a suitable form of communication in situations and relationships of latent conflict, where there is a need to regulate formalized conflicts". She further points out that proverbs imply some general comment on how people should behave when in the same pages says: "it is clear that the conveying of a people's experience and expectations can be performed in a particularly effective way through the use of proverbs." Accordion artists, being first language speakers of Sesotho, have observed this effect of proverbs on the public and use them accordingly to communicate moral lessons that will benefit the society as a whole.

Thuto-boholo:

Thupa u e otlolle e sale metsi Tšeole.
Thuto-boholo e ea roba. (chorus)
'M'e 'mangoan'aka Pulane,
A k'u mp'u joetse bana bao beno, Lelingoana.
Le ngoan'abo Motlatsi ke khale ke khalema ba 'mamele.
Ke utloa ke tšaba sebetse sa 'Mathipe, ngoan'a moholoane.
O ile a tseba ho phetha melao.
Le mohla a nyaloang o ile a joetsa 'm'ae le ntat'ae.
'Matiisetso eena o sa re phoqile.
Ngoan'a moholoane o thobile bosiu.

Straighten the stick while it is wet Tšeole.
Adult education is difficult to instill. (chorus).
 Mother, the mother of my child Pulane,
 Please tell your brothers and sisters, Lelingoana.
 And his brother Motlatsi I have been warning them to listen to me.
 I just wonder at determination of 'Mathipe, my brother's daughter.
 She managed to heed her family rules.
 Even on her she informed her mother and father.
 While Matiisetso disappointed us.
 The daughter of my brother eloped during the night.

The message is sent to the sons, daughters, relatives of the artists and even the entire society. The artist takes himself as an example in that, even in his old age; he still recalls what his parents used to tell him in order to be a disciplined youngster. He goes further to compare the two daughters of his brothers. The first one had her marriage planned by the parents because she was well-disciplined and was also the pride of her parents. The other one eloped because her behavior was disappointing as she did not heed her parents' advice. His appeal is that youngsters should listen to their parents in order to become disciplined adults, because in their adulthood it is difficult to change behavior. In this case, the proverb ('*thupa o e otlolle e sa le metsi*' / '*thuto-boholo ea roba*') suggests a course of action in relation to the upbringing of the children.

7.2 Poho-li-matla

'Lebelo lea fela':

Lebelo lea fela he thota e sale!
E sale he thota e sale! (chorus)
Lebelo lea fela thota e sale bahlankana ba heso!
Pelo ea ka e ntse e utloa bohloko,
Ho betere ke mpe ke ichoelle.
Lefatšeng ke tenehile.

Speed fades away while distance remains intact!
 It remains, it remains! (chorus)
 Speed fades away while distance remains my homeboys!
 My heart keeps on aching.
 It is for me to die.
 I am tired of this world.

This proverb ('*lebelo lea fela thota e sale*') is used to communicate the artist's depression because of the problems he is experiencing in life. He even longs for death in order to escape from this world of troubles. When he released this album the artist had just come out of prison and, when recording this album, he had problems with his voice. His message is that even if he dies the music career should be taken up by other artists. As if to echo Shakespeare, he makes us aware that the world is a stage: we play our part and exit while the world remains with other actors who will continue to play their roles.

‘Leboella lea ja’:

*Keketso hlokomela hle he leboella lea ja hle!
 Mathula hlokomela hore leboella lea ja.
 Ke re ke utloa ke tšaba pelo tsa batho.
 Motho o tšoana le nama u se ke be ua mo tšepa.
 Helele ndoda Keketso.
 He! Ba tšeha ka meno e ka ba u rata,
 Ha u potela o ntse a u bua.*

Keketso beware that anything that comes back is dangerous!
 Mathula beware that anything that goes back is dangerous.
 I say I am afraid of people’s hearts.
 Helele! Keketso!
 He! They laugh showing their white teeth as though they love you.
 When you are out of sight they bite you back.

The artist seems to have been betrayed by one of his friends is warning of the dangers of unfaithful friends. The concern is that if he ever goes back to his former friend he might encounter worse problems. He is determined not to re-establish friendship with his erstwhile friend whose betrayal sent him to prison. As Guma (1967: 99) puts it, this is one of the proverbs (‘leboella lea ja’) that counsel society on the basis of past experiences.

7.3 Matsekela

‘Bo-meno-masoeu’:

*Bo-meno-masoeu ba tšeha ka meno ba tla u bolaea.
 Hela Mohapi hlokomela batho bana, ba tšeha ka meno ba tla u bolaea! (chorus)
 Batho ba heso ha ba nthate, ba re ho ‘na ba tla mpolaea.
 Ba tšeha ka meno, bongata ba bona bo nthetsa ba re ba nthata.*

Those who display their white teeth when laughing are those who will kill you.
 Hi! Mohapi beware that these people with white teeth will kill you. (chorus)
 My home people do not love me they told me that they will kill me.
 They display their white teeth when laughing, while many pretend to love me.

The artist is here addressing the nation but the direct message goes to his fellow villagers who are unreliable deceivers. They write letters which threaten the artist while pretending to love him when meeting him. The song states that the artist is aware of the situation and sends a warning to the villagers that the artist knows of their double standards. Thus this proverb (‘bo-

menomasoeu ba ts'eha ka meno ba tla u bolaea') is based on personal experiences which ought to be valued in life.

‘Maea ke maboea’:

*Maea-ke-maboea,
Le ba ileng ma-ea-ke-maboea. (Chorus)
Mathaka bongata le mpotsa ke lula kae?
'Na ke lula lokeisheneng lena la Odendaal.
Helele! Ngoan'a 'Maliso!
Leha u khutla ke ntse ke u rapella bophelo.*

That which goes, comes back,
Even those who have gone will come back. (chorus)
Young most of you are asking me where do I stay?
I stay at the location of Odendaal.
Helele! The child of 'Maliso!
Even when you come back I still pray for your survival.

The artist seems to be staying in the Republic of South Africa in Ondendaal. The plea is that, though he went to South Africa, he is still expected to come back to Lesotho despite the tendency for some Basotho men not to return. This song is a warning to each migrant worker that it is worth coming back home where one belongs, to look after family and meet old friends. It is imperative for one to remember and honor his roots no matter how green the grazing pastures are in South Africa. Therefore home is home and will always remain so. Migrant workers are encouraged to go back to Lesotho having accumulated wealth in the Republic of South Africa. He despises those migrant laborers who come back to Lesotho when they are in a devastating situation and ready for burial. He employs the proverb (*'maea-ke maboea'*) to argue that they should come home when they are still capable, healthy and alive.

7.4 Matsie

‘Moiketsi ha a lleloe’:

*Moiketsi ha a lleloe,
Ngoan'a mahan'a joetsoa o ka 'mona ka likhapha.
Ho lla, ha a lleloe,*

Ngoan'a mahan'a joetsoa o ka 'mona ka likhapha. (chorus)
Ntho e nkhopotsa tseo eleng khale ke li lebetse.
Bana ba Marupinyane khale ba balehile.
Bana ba otlang bo-ntat'a bona, batsoali hantle.
Ha ke le teng ha ba sa chakela mahahabo bona.
Ba re e tl'o re ha ba fihla ke tl'o thunya.

He who brings trouble does not evoke one's sympathy,
A child who refuses to listen to advice is seen with tears.
 Crying, nobody has cry for him,
 A child who refuses to listen to advice is seen with tears.
 This thing reminds me of the things that I have forgotten.
 The children of Marupinyane have long left their home.
 Children who beat up their fathers, their real parents.
 When I am around they no longer visit their home.
 They assume that when they visit their home I will shoot them.

The proverb ('*moiketsi ha a lleloe*' / '*ngoan'a mahana a joetsoa o bonoa ka likhapha ho rotha*') is addressed to the children of Marupinyane who beat up their parents. It is not only abnormal but immoral and socially unacceptable in any society for children to beat up their parents. That is the reason why the artist volunteered to protect the parents against the unruly children. As a result of his stern interference coupled with physical punishment, the children deserted their home for Maseru town where they walk the streets as gangsters. The artist indicates that the unruly life-style of the children is of their own creation. Therefore they do not need sympathy from anybody. This proverb passes judgment in that anybody who turns a deaf ear to a piece of advice will always find himself in trouble. His plea is that children should be obedient and respectful to the society for them to be acceptable, social beings with dignity.

7.5 Majakathata

'Oa lebala':

Oa lebala.
Moetsi eena oa lebala.
Oa lebala.
Moetsi oa lebala empa moetsuoa ha a le bale. (chorus)
Ua tseba moetsi oa lebala.
Ua tseba ha u nts'u li etsa u sa li hopole....
U sa tla bona meleko.

He forgets.
 The tormentor himself forgets.
 He forgets.
 The tormentor forgets but the victim does not forget.
 Do you know that the tormentor forgets.
 Do you know that when you commit them and forget them.

The tormentor often forgets his actions while his victim seldom forgets his ill-treatment. As South Africans say, ‘we can forgive but not forget’. The proverb (*‘moetsi oa lebala, moetsuo eena ha a lebale’*) is used here in a general manner to warn the society that whatever they do to others paints an indelible mark; it will always be recalled even after many years when the doer has forgotten. The artist is calling for people to treat others in a more cordial and friendly manner, so that good memories would be remembered instead of those sad moments which may open irreparable wounds.

8. Conclusion

In conclusion, this is a summative table of proverbs. The table shows how many proverbs have been used by one artist in one of their album cassettes. This shows that proverbs are not dying in usage. Accordion music can therefore be seen as a genre that promotes and retains some of the Basotho traditions and as such qualifies to be regarded as a traditional music of Basotho.

Names of albums	Total number of proverbs per album	Total number of songs per album
Tšeole No5	13	10
Poho-li-matla No.5	5	10
Sentle	5	10
Selepe No.5	2	10
Matsekela	2	10
Matsie N09	2	10
Majakathata N012	2	10
Mahosana a ka Phamong Shaluza No12	1	10
Total	32	80

According to the figures above, we find that thirty-two proverbs have been sporadically deployed in eighty songs. Tšeole and his group are most prolific in the use of proverbs, employing thirteen proverbs in their ten songs; followed by Poho-li-Matla and Sentle who both use five proverbs.

The paper has highlighted the frequent use of proverbs in accordion music as evidence of their continued use in Basotho culture. This challenges accounts of accordion music as a mere form of entertainment advocating that it is a genre worthy of closer academic and musicological scrutiny, particularly with regard to its use and application of proverbs. The artists involved in this music are teachers of oral literature in that they apply and use proverbs contextually. As such, they promote the use and understanding of proverbs among younger generations. According to Phafoli (1999:9) Basotho accordion music should, therefore, be treated as one verbal art that changes with times and verbally transmits oral literature from one generation to another. This paper invites the public to reconsider the status of Basotho accordion music, not as a mere form of entertainment but as an art form that conveys some of the customary and cultural aspects which a nation wishes to retain for its survival and identity. Accordion music could be seen as one of the reservoirs of oral literature worth preserving for future generations. Its artists need special attention and respect from both public and academics.

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Cassettes

Mahosana a ka Phamong, 1996. *Shalusa No.12*, produced by Solomon M. Khoza, Company-Cool Spot Productions, South Africa.

Majakathata, 1996. *Majakathata No.12*, produced by Joe Ransala, Company-Teal Records, South Africa.

Matsekela, 1996. *Ba Tatile Batho*, produced by Calvin Blignant, Company-W. C. M. South Africa.

Matsie No.9, 1998. *Matsie No.9*, produced by Matsie Sefali, Company-Edward Viereira Productions, South Africa.

Poho-li-Matla No5, 1999. *Batho Ba Bang*, produced by Keketso Mathula, Company-Edward Viereira Productions, South Africa.

Selepe No.5, 1996. *Selepe No.5*, produced by Calvin Blignant, Company-W. C. M. South Africa.

Sentile, 1996. *Ntoa Lia Loana*, produced by Calvin Blignant, Company-W. C. M. South Africa.

Tšeole No.5, 1998. *Mokhoka- khoale*, produced by Thabo Senone & Senone Leboli, Company-Edward Viereira Productions, South Africa.

Figures 2-18: Pictures of Lesotho Musicians Performing Traditional Songs

The images show Puseletso Seema and her band performing traditional Lesotho songs.





















