

THE EVOLUTION OF SOTHO ACCORDION MUSIC IN LESOTHO: 1980–2005

by

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Abstract: The article describes the origins, evolution and status of Sotho¹ *koriana* accordion music from the 1920s through the 1960s and 70s when it was considered *shebeen* music, and from 1980 to 2005, when there was a change of attitude towards it and only sporadic production. Two concerns are: the status of *koriana* music, and, its appreciation by Sotho people themselves. Data was collected through observations, interviews with artists and listeners, and from cassettes, radio and TV programmes. Aspects of the music are described and related to non-musical events of the period.

Keywords: Basotho, accordion music, *koriana*, evolution, status, Lesotho, *famo*, *focho*, *shebeen*.

Introduction

The history of Sotho *koriana* (accordion) music can be traced back to the 1920s, when, as Coplan (1985: 93–103) indicates, it originated in the slum yards of Johannesburg. Most Basotho identify this music as traditional, because it uses the Sotho language spoken mainly in Lesotho and in parts of South Africa.² Coplan (1988: 337, 250) defines the word Sesotho as the people's "conceptions and perceptions of themselves and of their situation in society and history, formulated in the terms and the occasions of their culture". The "concept 'Sesotho,'" he says, "means far more than their language and culture narrowly conceived. 'Basotho' means social identity and its entitlements, reciprocities and their resources, and relates further to investments of the self and personal as well as communal genealogical and national history, and a secure, self-comprehending way of life".³ Due to the migration of people following the South African Land Act of 1913 which deprived Africans of their land, people from different places

¹ Koriana is a "sotho" word for accordion, hence 'mino oa koriana/accordion music.

² The Sotho language, in common with most languages of South Africa, uses prefixes before "Sotho" to distinguish the word when it means the people "Basotho" (sing: "Mosotho"), the language or national style "Sesotho," including cultural practices in ways of living, lines of thinking, customs, beliefs and values (Coplan:1992, Phafoli and Zulu: 2014), "Bosotho" Sotho-ness, and so on, "Sesotho" and "Bosotho" may be used interchangeably as they both refer to "style". All prefixes are omitted here when writing in English, except for the name of the country, "Lesotho".

³ Lesotho is a sovereign mountain kingdom enclosed by the Republic of South Africa. People who are born of Sotho lineage, or have lived in the country, are aligned to Sotho customs or who have been naturalised are called Sotho, thus being citizens of Lesotho. The Sotho language spoken by most citizens of Lesotho acts as a unifier, and is mostly referred to as South Sotho to distinguish it from the North Sotho (or Pedi) spoken in more northern parts of South Africa.

migrated into towns looking for employment. The Basotho were among these, although they had their own country. On the proclamation of the Union of South Africa in 1910 they refused to join because the Union would not extend the franchise to black Africans (Machobane 1990: 111).

Women also became migrants in search of their husbands who had never returned home. Many women living in the slum yards of the new urban centres were joined by others equally destitute. As a result, many women became involved in brewing *skokiaan*, an illegal home-made beer sold in *shebeens*. With the sale of liquor as one way of making a living, the music accompanying beer drinking became a fully-fledged type of entertainment, meant to attract customers to the *shebeens* to increase business. Musicians became engaged to perform in *shebeens*. Describing the origins of this music, Coplan (1985: 94) writes:

In the 1920s, these musicians assimilated elements from every available performance tradition into a single urban African musical style, called *marabi*.... A kind of symbiotic relationship developed between musicians and entertainment sponsors, and helped to create a new culture for an urbanizing mass audience. As a social occasion it was a convivial, neighborhood gathering for drinking, dancing, coupling, friendship and other forms of interaction. Finally, *marabi* also meant a category of people with low social status and a reputation for immorality, identified by their regular attendance at *marabi* parties.

Coplan mentions that one Gashe, identified as being amaXhosa, who was known for his versatility on the piano, moved to Johannesburg where he took up the Sotho version of the *marabi* party known by then as *famo*, meaning to flare one's nostrils (Mphahlele 1971: 45). This was a type of dance where women dancing without underwear flared their skirts to reveal their thighs to the men. During the early years it became known as *Mino oa famo*, or sexually suggestive music. The instruments used in *famo* music were adapted over time to suit the musicians. The piano was replaced by the concertina. Concertina music was developed by the 1940s and recordings were made. One example of the earlier tradition was a woman named 'Malitaba whose songs were played up to the 1970s on Radio Lesotho and Radio Bantu of the South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC). The main instruments were the concertina and the drum. As time passed, musicians tended to choose the *koriana*, which they found convenient. Referring to this change Coplan (*ibid*: 95) observes that:

It was also during the early sixties that the piano accordion appeared in South African music stores and was adopted by Basotho instrumentalists in the mining compounds and *shebeens* in preference to the pedal organ. Combining the portability of the concertina with the musical range and full-textured volume of the organ, the piano accordion enabled its most serious exponents to make live performance something like a full-time profession.

Famo music spilled over into Lesotho and became common in *shebeens*. Its arrival in Lesotho can be attributed to two major groups: first, migrant labourers, especially men, and second, Basotho women who came from the locations and mine compounds in Johannesburg. Mphahlele (1971, in Coplan 1985: 102) recalls Newclare as one of the towns where migrant Basotho men and women used to hold *famo*. Coplan recounts the experiences of Adelina, a Sotho woman who attended *famo* in towns like Vereeniging

and Kroonstad. In the Maseru district there were *shebeens* such as Thibella, Qoaling and Lekhaloaneng, while in the Leribe district well-known *shebeens* were Maputsoe, Lisemeng and Mankoaneng. *Famo* music was played to entertain the customers in the shebeens. Most people who patronised *shebeens* had come to look for work in the towns or to try their fortunes with the National Recruiting Company (NRC). The NRC offices in Lesotho were agencies which recruited capable men from Lesotho to work in the mines of South Africa. Others were low-paid labourers in towns. *Famo* music was diffused into rural country areas, especially in drinking places such as *shebeens*. People who had come to town admired the music and when they returned home they played *famo* with the instruments they bought.

Information gathered through personal interviews, radio and Lesotho TV interviews indicates that *koriana* performers were invited to several places and occasions in Lesotho, such as weddings and graduation ceremonies, to play *famo* music. They became labeled as *maloabe* (wanderers). A renowned *koriana* performer would be invited to places far from where he lived. As a result, there is a Sotho saying: “*Ngoana oa hao ha u sa mo rate u mo rekele koriana a tle a tsekele a e’o shoella moo u sa tsebeng*” (If you do not love your child buy him an accordion so that he can wander and disappear into thin air). Lekena Bohale ba Tau (1997), one of the artists, protests in his song “Boloabe” (wanderer) against this stereotype:

Boloabe ke kelello ea motho
Boloabe ha se koriana...
Batho ke khale ba re sonta,
Liriti tsa rona li behiloe fatše,
Le se ’nale soma ’mino oa koriana
Koriana e tšoana le mesebetsi eohle
Ebile e buseletsa motho.

Wandering is one’s way of thinking,
 Wandering is not accordion,
 People have long been despising us,
 Disregarding our integrity,
 Do not keep on criticising the accordion music,
 Accordion music is like any other type of work,
 It even benefits those who play it.

From the above it is evident that the objection was not only to *koriana* performers who played for *famo*, but even to those performing at wedding feasts. Such persons spent weeks or months away from their families and their whereabouts could rarely be traced; their many invitations could delay their return home. Most parents developed a negative attitude towards *koriana* and *famo* because they perceived them as immoral. Similarly, many wives refused to let their husbands own an accordion, because they feared they would leave for long periods and become *maloabe*. Regardless of this disapproval, *famo* songs and *koriana* music never disappeared or declined in Lesotho.

The other name for *famo* during the 1970s in Lesotho was *focho*. It was common to hear people saying: “*Re ea fochong*” (we are going to *focho*). The music played at *focho* was known as ‘*mino oa focho* (*focho* music). In Sotho the word means to miss a target, but according to Coplan (1985: 110), in the context of *famo* it refers to disorder where audiences would sing and dance randomly in response to the *koriana* music. I recall a place called Setebing (mostly known as Molimo-Nthuse), where one group performed *focho* in several villages in the area. *Focho* was held on weekends, from Friday night to Sunday. Weekends were good for liquor sellers as there were many customers. A variety of beers was sold as well as food such as meat and porridge. In short, *focho* could be likened to *stokfel* as it was meant to generate an income for families. Coplan (1985: 106) defines *stokfel* as a pattern of working-class social organisations where traditional forms of reciprocity and redistribution were harmonised with the demands of the mainstream economy. With the group playing *koriana* and a homemade drum, customers would join in by performing variously-modified *lifela* (travelers’ songs).

Lifela is defined as a solo form of *mélange* poem recited by Sotho in a distinctive tonal manner (Mokitimi 1998), a form of poetry related to Basotho heroic poetry in style and form but differing in tone and content. Mokitimi (*ibid.*) states that its creation was shaped in the lonely journeys of migrant labourers from Lesotho to the diamond and gold mines in South Africa. This is why they are called “travelers’ songs.” She observes that they differ from heroic poetry in that they focus on the artist himself and his experiences on the mines, unlike heroic poetry which dealt with brave deeds and exploits in war. The solo artists of *lifela* are said to have been concerned more with exposing the exploitation and dehumanisation of migrant labourers at their workplace. The *lifela*-with-accordion, however, may be understood as orally transmitted, similarly to a solo performance in music. In this style, instruments accompany the *lifela*. Phafoli and Mokitimi (2001: 221) refer to it as “modified *lifela*,” as it is sung in a group, and in a different setting. Unlike the authentic travelers’ songs which have one tone, accompanied songs become part of the *lifela*-with-accordion, in that they incorporate a variety of tunes and tones. They may be likened to chants (Okpewho 1992: 133) in that the performer balances high, middle and low vocal tones to achieve a tonal harmony complemented by the instruments. In popular terms the chants sound more like “music”.

Historical background: 1980 to 2005

Sotho *koriana* music during this period saw drastic changes that distinguished it from *famo* and *focho*. It became a popular form of music that blended story-telling, spoken words and rap styles that reflected the lives of the people of Lesotho.

Around 1980, a band by the name of Tau-ea-Matšekha from Matšekheng, Bela-Bela in the district of Berea, recorded their first album, “Tau-ea-Matšekha”. The main members were Forere Motloheloa (*koriana*, lead singer) and Apollo Ntabanyane who intoned the modified *lifela*. In 1981 they performed at the National University of Lesotho where I was pursuing my first degree. Apollo sang about a variety of social issues such as the infidelity of women. One of the *lifela* is as follows:

*Ntšang likhomo le nyale basali
 Le tle le bone ha meleko e ata.
 Mosali oa likhomo o kentse meleko lapeng
 Mosali ea ratanang le bashanyana.*

Pay out the cattle and marry women,
 You will observe when evil deeds increase.
 Married woman has brought bad omen in the family
 A woman that flirts with boys.
 (Tau eaMatšekha 1980)



Figure 1. Famo artists in around 1978 dressed in national costume with *koriana*, home-made drum and guitars. Photo by Gil Kreslavsky.

By the early 1980s more groups were recording their songs, including Lilala tsa Sekhonyana, Tau-ea-Thaba, Tau-ea-Lioli, Tau-ea-Linare, Mahosana a ka Phamong, Manka le Phallang, Puseletso Seema, Maele and Manka le Phallang. Increased sales of cassettes led to a growth in the number of accordionists. It was considered patriotic to perform the music and for the public to possess all the latest releases.

The period from 1987, after the national strike of the National Union of Mineworkers in South Africa when many Sotho migrant workers lost their jobs, saw further proliferation of *koriana* performers. Wells (1994: 293) observed that this growth was due to the rising rate of unemployment among Lesotho residents, and more recently among the migrant workers. This could partially be attributed to men choosing the accordion to provide a living. The Central Bank of Lesotho Quarterly Review (2005) states that retrenchments since 1990 had resulted in a drastic decline of Basotho migrant workers employed on South African mines. In 1994, there had been 96,623, in 2000 about 64,907, and in 2005, 54,171.

During this period and the following years Lesotho experienced social and political upheavals that were captured by the musicians in their songs. When Jonathan's civilian government fell in 1986 many artists approved of the military take-over. The songs of the time captured the social, economic and political changes taking place, particularly those that personally affected the performers. By this time most established groups were using electric guitars, many with microphones to show that they were technologically advanced. Wells (1994: 297) noted that the heavy, new sound of *famo* songs was generated in part by the common use of the contra-bass chord buttons of the accordion that provided the effects of a double bass. He observed further that the sound was accentuated by the prominent use of a bass guitar moving in parallel with the vocal chorus. Many groups were formed and had their music recorded on cassettes. Around this time, the standard price for a cassette was R20.

In the 1990s, many emerging artists became visible and *korianana* music was reaching every corner of the country. The sale of cassettes became a business among street vendors who sold cassettes at negotiable prices from as low as R10, instead of R30 which was the standard price at the time. This era saw the involvement of many women in *korianana* music as groups such as Bo-mme ba Mehahlaula, Bo-mme ba Maphutseng, Bo-mme ba Ha Mootsinyane, Mankoko and others formed music bands with the assistance of experienced male artists. *Korianana* music was made available on compact disks and many artists produced DVDs that became popular. In these years, artists began to openly express their views with regard to the exploitation they experienced at the hands of their promoters. As much as *korianana* music was increasing in popularity, its economic benefits did not advance in line with its popularity.

The musicians involved in *korianana* music these days are more in charge of their careers compared to those of *famo*. Their confidence stems from the fact that most Basotho identify with this music as being traditional. It is no longer regarded as a *shebeen* type of music that involves people from a lower socio-economic class. Instead, it is admired and recognized as a Sotho genre. For instance, as far back as 1984, Her Majesty, Queen 'Mamohato, attended Apollo Ntabanyane's concert at the Airport Hotel (Coplan 1995: 156). In 1994 the National University of Lesotho honoured band leader, Apollo Ntabanyane, and Puseletso Seema, composer and vocalist, with doctoral degrees in recognition of their contribution to Sotho accordion music. Accordion artists are invited to perform at many official functions held by the government. For instance, when Lesotho celebrated its 25th year of independence in 1991, accordion artists were invited to entertain the audience at the race course in Maseru. Another example is that of Mahase of Mahosana a ka Phamong who joined the Prime Minister's delegation to Malaysia to formalize the "Smart Partnership" between Malaysia and several African countries. Mahase and his *korianana* music entertained guests in Malaysia.

Korianana music is played on five radio stations within Lesotho, namely: Radio Lesotho, Mo-Afrika Radio, Catholic Radio, Thaha-Khube Radio, People's Choice Radio and in South Africa: Radio Lesedi. *Korianana* music fans can listen to these five radio stations at any time when accordion music programmes are aired. Each radio station

has a programme where it plays Basotho *koriana* music for one hour or more. For instance, Radio Lesotho has a programme called *Re Hlasela Thota* [We explore the landscape, Wednesday 21:45–23:00], Mo-Afrika has two, *Mino oa Koriana* [Accordion music] and *Mino oa Sesotho* [accordion music/Sotho music, Monday/Thursday 21:20], Catholic Radio has one, *Rea Kubasela* [We are traveling, Thursday 21:45] and Radio Lesedi broadcasts *Mino oa Litsamaea-naha* [Music of the travelers, Wednesday 21:45]. The popularity of this music and its identification with the people are shown by broadcasting these radio programmes. The presenters contribute towards marketing the music and encourage accordion fans to buy recordings from the music shops.

Currently, accordion artists hold concerts to promote their music and generate an income. To show my support and learn more about various artists' performances and their audience reactions, I attended concerts organized by artists in various places, usually in public halls, where the audience pays an entrance fee. Restaurant owners also often invite artists to perform in their compounds to attract customers. In exchange, the artists are paid for their performance. The annual Morija Arts and Cultural Festival, inaugurated in 1999, included *koriana* music. This festival was usually held at the beginning of October every year until 2013. Festivals included activities such as jazz, drama, choral singing and *koriana* music. As usual, one evening was set aside for a festival of *koriana* music where artists performed and were paid. I observed that several *koriana* music festivals are organized to celebrate the anniversaries of radio stations such as Catholic Radio, RadioMo-Afrika FM and Thaha-Khube Radio. The audiences that attend these concerts come mainly for entertainment and to while away time, not for sexual satisfaction as was the case with *famo*. While *famo* was meant for smaller groups of adults only, current Basotho *koriana* music attracts many more people of different ages and interests.

Production of the music

Koriana singers' music can be classified into those who never had any formal schooling, those that have primary school education, the majority, and a few with post-primary education. Most of the artists interviewed by me or by radio presenters have indicated that they perform because they like singing. Many, such as Ntabanyane, Puseletso Seema, Mosotho Chakela, and others, felt the urge to perform when they were teenagers. Apollo mentioned that as a herd-boy he used to play the 'mamokhorong or *sekhankula* (tin-resonated bowed string instrument. See Figure 2).

"*Ke hotse ke letsa 'mamokhorong ha ke ntse ke lisa liphoofofo. Ke ile ka qetella ke letsa koriana ka 1973 eaba ke ha qalile ho rata mino oa Koriana*" (I grew up playing 'mamokhorong when I was a herd-boy looking after animals. I ended up playing the accordion in 1973. From then I developed great interest in accordion music. Interview 2004). According to Moitse (1994: 107) the instrument, as shown below, is made out of a five litre can with one end completely removed. A bluegum branch is bent and a thin wire firmly tied to the top end. The bow is fitted deeply into the empty can and the other end of the wire is tied to the corner of the can. To produce sound, another bow made of



Figure 2. Lebohang Letšohla, also known as Sefako sa Menoaneng, with a 'Mamokhorong or *sekhankula*. Photo by Thabo Rakhomo.

twisted strands of horsetail hair is stretched on a small, curved stick. When this is scraped against the wire it produces a sound which is constantly “fingered” by the left thumb pressing against various points at the lower end of the wire. Moitse (*ibid.*) observes that this instrument plays a variety of tunes and is mostly played by herd boys as it eases and relaxes their minds while looking after the animals. The instrument is currently not restricted to herd boys. Pusetso started singing while she was looking after animals. She used to sing about any incident that affected her. Chakela said that since his youth he had always been an eloquent person and formed his accordion group in 1989.

Other artists such as Mantša Lephoi, Teboho Tšepiso said that they developed a love for accordion music because they were inspired by other artists. Mantša said that his love for accordion music started in 1983 when he became obsessed by one accordion artist, Mabili, in the Mafeteng district. “*Ke ile ka khahloa haholo ke sebini seo ho thoeng*

ke Mabili sa Mafeteng. Ke ne ke utloa a mpinela hamonate eaba le 'na ke qala ho rata 'mino oa koriana. Ke ile ka qala ho letsa koriana ho tloha ka 1983" (I was fascinated by one artist by the name of Mabili in the Mafeteng district. His music touched me and I developed great love for accordion music. I started playing accordion from 1983. Interview, 20 August 2005) Teboho developed a passion for this music when he listened to accordion music cassettes while working as a driver. After a while he bought himself a guitar and an accordion and started his group.

Artists such as Bokaako Khoatsane, Motloheloa Forere, and others, were engaged in different groups that sang vocal music before joining accordion musicians. Bokaako started his singing career while he was a student at Auray High School, Mantšonyane, where he was a member of the school and church choirs. He later joined his brother who played a guitar while he chose the accordion. "Na haeso ke Mantšonyane, seterekeng sa Thaba-Tseka. 'Mino ke o qalile sekolong ha ke le sekolong se phahameng sa Auray moo ke neng ke bile ke binela le sehlopha sa 'mino sa kereke. Ke ile ka bina le mor'eso, 'na ka khetha koriana ha eena a letsa katara" (I come from Mantšonyane, in the district of Thaba-tseka. I started singing when I was a student at Auray High School where I sang for the church choir. I joined my brother in the music and chose to play accordion, while my brother played guitar. Interview, 20 March 2005). Forere, on the other hand, was a lead-singer in *ndlammo* dance.⁴ Having felt he was gifted in music he took up accordion music.

It should be noted that most people in Lesotho rely largely on oral traditions. This is the case even when it comes to music, as most musicians do not write their songs on paper. This observation coincides with a point raised in the *African Crime Journal* (2017), which states that every performance is an exercise in the art of recalling past events and of relating them succinctly to the audience in a coherent tale. Artists always recall and recite what has been learned orally. For instance, boy initiates do not write their praises and their *mangae* (initiation songs) but during graduation they perfectly sing the *mangae* and recite the praises no matter how long they may be. This is the case with other songs such as *mokorotlo* (war song), *mokopu* (pumpkin songs) and many others that are never written but learned orally.

Given this background, it is not surprising that accordion songs are not written prior to their rendition. The group members normally rehearse the words, each singing the part that suits him or her; the lead-singer does his part, others sing soprano, tenor or bass. It is during the rehearsals that an adept singer composes the accompanying poetry and the rest of the group follows the main singer with the chorus.

When it comes to the playing of instruments, I learnt that most accordion artists, if not all, have not undergone any formal training. They have all learned to play the accordion or guitar or any other instrument informally. They practised with their relatives' or friends' instruments. As they practised they developed an attraction to the instruments and later began to play for bands. All in all, one could claim that Sotho

⁴ In Sesotho it is pronounced *ntlamo*, but it is spelled as *ndlamu/ndlamhu*. This is a Nguni (Zulu) mens' dance in South Africa where the dancer lifts one foot over his head and brings it down hard, landing squarely on the downbeat. It is mostly meant for entertainment (Wells: 1994).

accordion music has no formal and standard way of assessment. Songs are delivered spontaneously and as a symbol of a culturally derived oral proclivity.

Taking into consideration the background of many of these artists it was found that many joined accordion playing for economic reasons. That is, most of the artists developed an attraction towards this music because it was the only source of income for their families. It was observed that none of the artists had attended formal music lessons. As such, one could assess Sotho accordion artists on the quality of their work rather than their academic qualifications.

Organization styles in the delivery of music and words

When it comes to delivery, current Basotho accordionists differ from those of *famo*. Each band has its name and members who have different roles during the performance. In many bands it may be found that the lead-singer plays the accordion; there is a guitarist, a drummer, and members who sing the chorus and dance. Assisted by one or two of his band mates the lead-singer occasionally chants *lifela*. This is the case with groups such as Mosotho Chakela, Mantša and Likheleke tsa Lesotho. As indicated earlier, *lifela* could be described as a *mélange* poem which is part of the song sung by the lead singer in the form of a poem. *Lifela* has to be understood as a component of the song which is orally transmitted; it is like a solo performance. In many songs the instruments accompany the *lifela* from the beginning to the end while in others *lifela* are intermittently given space after the chorus, as described in the paragraphs below.

I observed that in several bands, there is a lead singer who chants *lifela*, an accordionist, a guitarist, a drummer, members who sing the chorus and others who are dancers. In such groups, the lead singer does not play the accordion at all but sings and chants *lifela*. The bands of Apollo Ntabanyane, Famole and Puseletso Seema are examples of this organizational style. Each band has its own style of organizing itself during performance but the two examples mentioned above seem the trend which most bands follow.

In the live performances I attended and when listening to songs I learned that accordion songs follow certain patterns that are most popular with the artists. They have *makhele* and *masholu* as their 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 as follows: chorus-*lifela*-chorus-*lifela* and chorus-*lifela*-chorus. This style refers in most cases to songs that have a chorus, regardless of which format they follow. The second type, *masholu*, does not have a chorus but *lifela* are chanted throughout the song although now they are accompanied by instruments. *Lifela* may be sung by one or more people, depending on the individual band. Some *masholu* songs are only instrumental and not accompanied by *lifela*. Monaheng says that *famo* is based on *masholu* when the artist goes on and on atop a beat, without pausing or singing a chorus (Mail and Guardian 2017). During the performance, there is systematic turn-taking for the chanting of *lifela* as well as the chorus. As an example, when *makhele* are sung, the group may start by singing the chorus accompanied by instruments, or the chorus

may be followed by the chanting of *lifela* by one or two people, with each having a turn in a pre-arranged manner. They do so throughout until the song comes to an end. It is unlike *famo*, where everyone present in the *shebeen* would join in with his or her own *lifela* whenever they felt like it.

It was also observed that there are instances where the artists have organized themselves in such a manner that they sing with other groups. This means that artists may at any given time, upon agreement, team up to produce one album without necessarily abandoning their groups. For example, Lehlohonolo, the well-known accordionist, and Tseole, the *lifela* poet, produced cassettes that were titled “Lehlohonolo No. 1” up to “Lehlohonolo No.9” and during his lifetime Tseole produced cassettes from No.1 up to No.5. Tseole died in August 1997.

When reading the names of the cassettes closely it was found that in many instances, artists produce albums under different names. That is, one artist may have several names and record different albums under each of those names. Examples of this practice are: Mantša who sings as both Lekena Bohale ba Tau and Mantša No. 3; Matsie who sings under two other names, Lesholu la Maboloka and Raboshabane; Keketso Mathula is labeled Poho li Matla while on other cassettes the name Keketso Mathula is retained. On such cassettes, members may have changed their style of singing or have re-organized themselves in terms of the roles they occupy when singing. Information gathered from the artists is that there are many reasons for this practice, the major one being economic. It pays better to produce cassettes under different names than under one name. Another reason is that well-known artists release albums in their own names to help promote young artists. For example, it may often be found that background singers or dancers who have been with the group for some time want to record an album under their own name. As members of one band, they may agree on how to go about it: Sanko teamed up with Libatha to produce a cassette entitled, “Sanko le Libatha”. Mosotho Chakela has recorded albums with other members of his group under the name of Haeso Terateng or Chaba sa Matelile. In this way, they help young artists in their careers.

Recording and distributing the music

Since this music is commercial, the level of recording quality is of vital importance to both artists and consumers. Recordings are made in South Africa, as studios in Lesotho are scarce. Many groups have recording contracts in Johannesburg (Wells 1994: 292); it is the prime destination for *famo* musicians where much of the album production takes place. Although independent studios are emerging in Lesotho, state of the art recording facilities are not available. According to artists interviewed in the media, those who are eager to have their songs recorded obtain introductions to studio managers from other well-known artists. They sign contracts before starting the recording process. The studio managers usually incur all expenses until the cassettes are completed because most artists do not possess the means. As a result, studio managers take the lion's share when the product is sold. Nevertheless, certain artists have the capital to pay for the entire process up to distribution.

Distribution, according to the artists, depends on the type of agreement they sign with the recording company. Artists may undertake to do this personally, or the company may do it on their behalf, in which case it takes a bigger share. This option causes much dissatisfaction. Many artists complain that it takes too long to receive their royalties and when they do, they are a pittance. Frequently, concerns are raised in the media: an artist complains that he only received 200 Maloti (R200) for the cassette he had recorded, or, of the death of a promoter named Sidney following heated disputes between accordionists and promoters (Public Eye 2006: 4).

Artists often compose songs that express their dissatisfaction with the recording companies. In his song, “*Mophaphathehi*,” Sanko sings:

*Ke khale ke jeoa banna,
 'Na ke ile ka jeoa ke S.M.
 Ka jeoa ke bo-Edward,
 Ha e sa le ke ntse ke bina ke jeoa.*

I have been exploited for some time,
 I was exploited by S.M.
 I was exploited by Edward,
 All the years of my singing I was exploited. (Sanko 2002)

Regarding self-distribution, artists maintain that, depending on the agreement with the music or cassette shop, they simply collect their royalties at the end of the month. Another case can be a direct exchange of cash for cassettes. For renowned artists, this helps them to maintain control and market their product profitably.

Since the sale of their music is the highest motivator, many experienced singers compete to have their songs recorded, their major concern being their marketability. They compose with care and effort to produce work which sells well in the market. Lesotho-based artists would like the government to intervene to establish a local studio to retain capital recirculation within the country.

Continuity and change remain constant in music in Lesotho. “Traditional” types of music have modified to adapt to the times. *Koriana* music expresses an accepted fusion of tradition and the West that satisfies the aesthetic and economic needs of the nation (Mokemane 2011).

How the music is received: Audience response

I compiled views expressed in the media and in person from stakeholders, that is everyone who attends *koriana* music festivals and concerts, coordinators, music shop owners, hawkers and radio presenters, to determine how accordion music is received. Each group had its own questionnaire, but the core of each focused on the reception of *koriana* music. I looked first at the common views shared by interviewees, followed by specific responses from each group.

Results showed that people are attracted to *koriana* music because they appreciate the following aspects: the Sesotho language, eloquence, themes, voice, instruments, clan

relationships, identity of place, message and the manipulation of emotions. These general views fall into two major categories: those that refer specifically to the lyrics of the music and those that relate to the artists' personal attributes. In lyrics the characteristics are these: Sesotho linguistic devices, themes, message and the manipulation of emotions, while those that focus on the artists are eloquence, performance on stage, attire, voice, the *koriana* and other instruments, clan relationship and identity of place.

With regard to appreciation, it could be said that male and female adults observed that the music appeals to them because it uses their mother tongue, the Sotho language. They understand and can easily interpret what is being said without help from anybody as is the case with songs in English. Their feeling is that the Sotho language is an emblem of an identity that distinguishes them from other nationalities. As such, *koriana* music makes them feel their *bosotho* (sense of being a mosotho) is retained and maintained as they listen to the music. Sesotho *koriana* music is popular and highly appreciated by most Basotho people (Mokemane 2011).

A point worth mentioning, as raised by female adults, is that *koriana* music seems to manipulate the emotions of its audience. Artists are invited to perform at various functions; in most cases, they play songs that fit the occasion and win the hearts of those attending; when they are invited to play at wedding feasts, they perform the songs that relate to the occasion and make people feel happy and entertained. Funerals are different, where they sing the songs that would console those affected by the death of a relative.

Koriana artists have to become business-minded, now that the music is commercialized, and perform repertoires to match the occasions to which they are invited. If one chooses the wrong kind of music for an occasion or plays badly, the people for whom the music is performed do not respond positively or feel a sense of well-being. The flexibility of good artists helps them adapt to any situation where they are called to perform. They satisfy the feelings of the audience according to the given contexts. Sekoni (1990: 142) refers to this as emotive satisfaction, where MCs, artists and all kinds of oral story tellers and narrators hold the audience's attention by manipulating their emotions.

Every artist has his or her own way of winning the hearts of their listeners. Hatlane for instance is singled out as one who strikes a balance in his songs which are both spiritual and entertaining, while Mantša's music focuses on the revival of Sotho traditions and values and the economic development of the country. He encourages the Sotho to preserve their customs, *Boulelang meetlo* (Preserve customs: 2005): "*Le tšoare Sesotho se tiee hantle, Sechaba sa Peete le Mokhachane*" (Uphold Sesotho custom firmly, The nation of Peete and Mokhachane).⁵

Listening to Manka le Phallang and Mahosana a ka Phamong's compositions I note they are more inclined towards the historical events of the country. For instance, Manka addressed the 1987 signing of the Lesotho Highlands Project and many other historical events in Sotho lives. Mahosana captured various events relating to Sotho history, from

⁵ Peete was the father of Libe and Mokhachane, whose son Moshoeshoe (c.1786 –1870) was the founder of the Basotho nation.

the 1986 military government coup up to the democratically elected 1993 government, citing other events like the firing of many ministers during the reign of the former and the 1997 split within the Basotho Congress Party government.

It was observed that many people admire the eloquence displayed by artists. To assess this quality, one has to be very attentive. As my interviewees put it, it includes knowledge of the Sotho language, creativity, imagination, and spontaneous composition that enable the speaker to combine bits of information in a coherently poetic style in a rhythmic flow of words. Wells (1994: 7) elaborates on it further as a socially valued concept of poetic artistic talent when an artist is able to create innovative and impressive images by extemporizing rhythmic commentaries on events, real or imagined, personal or collective.

The audience most admires eloquence as a skill that retains the attention of listeners. Many *koriana* artists of perceived eloquence are: Lekase, Famole, Selomo, Puseletso and Mankoko. These are acknowledged for the way they relate whatever they sing about, in a poetic manner, logically and coherently, using figurative expressions and other linguistic devices. Famole's song, "*Ea khaola ea ea*" describes how both young and old listen to him as a result of his fluency:

*Le utloa le ntsele re khotla ha le tlale,
 'Na ha ke le teng lea tlala.
 U tla bona bahlankana ba hatane holimo,
 Bashanyana ba sutumetsa maqhekoana,
 Joale ka nku li kena tipi,
 Joale ka pholo li kena sekete.
 Banna ba heso ba ntlhoele holimo,
 Joale ka tsoere li aparela mohlaka.*

You always say the men's court never gets full,
 When I am around it is filled to capacity,
 You will see young men squeezing themselves.
 Boys jostling the old men,
 Like sheep entering the sheep dip,
 Like oxen entering the pound kraal,
 My village men gathered closely around me,
 Like a flock of Cape canaries spread out on a marsh.
 (Famole two: 2002)

The image is of the men's *khotla* (corral) filled to the brim, reflecting Famole's popularity and fame. His imagery proves that he is a master, a threat to his peers and that no one can out-perform him. One male soldier commented: "*Ha u batla ho ithuta Sesotho, u mamele Famole, ke moo u tla fumana manoni a puo. Lethula leno ke monna kaofela*" (If you want to learn Sotho listen to Famole. That is where you will learn the beauty of the language. That Lethula is a man and a half).

Audiences, both male and female, appreciate artists' dramatic styles, as they take on the characters they sing about. In *koriana* music their drama intends to "capture"

the interest of the audience (Abrams1999: 69). Adult females tend to prefer the artists' dances on stage, picturing every action in the song. Apollo Ntabanyane and Puseletso Seema were considered leaders in this respect. When they arrive on stage they urge spectators to ululate and dance impulsively to their tunes. During a performance of Apollo's "*Seqaqana se seng le se seng*" (Each and every frog) at the Palace Hotel in 2004, his son, acting out the song, jumped like a frog then acted like a lizard basking in the sun. Apart from acting, Apollo, dressed in traditional Sotho attire and dancing, has a unique style that attracts many accordion music fans to his shows.

Conclusion

Music has an impact on the transition of society towards goals such as national identity, and Sotho *koriana* music is no exception. As described above, it offers a diverse form of individual as well as social expression. This article has described its evolution and identified how it has changed Sotho attitudes towards *koriana* to the extent that it is appreciated as traditionally "Basotho". Owing to its current status among the Sotho and its income-generating capacity for many households, it is likely to evolve into a form of world music as it moves from the margin to a world of many mainstreams.

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