

Poverty and Economic Challenges in Lesotho As Reflected In Sesotho Accordion Music

Dr. Lehlohonolo Phafoli, Dr. Palesa Khotso

(Department Of African Languages And Literature, National University Of Lesotho, Lesotho)

(Department Of African Languages And Literature, National University Of Lesotho, Lesotho)

**Corresponding Author: Dr. Lehlohonolo Phafoli*

ABSTRACT:- This paper makes an in-depth analysis of poverty and economic challenges reflected in Sesotho accordion music. Accordion music like most oral Sesotho artifacts of the Basotho is a channel of thought of the society and mouthpiece of the folk that practices it. Functionalism is a theoretical base for this study. Data was collected through individual and group interviews. In this paper, we found that whereas most singers sing for recognition, they also principally sing for improvement of their livelihoods. While grappling with accruing funds to sustain their lives, they are observant of the rampant state of poverty and deteriorating economic standards they are faced with. They protest against piracy and exploitation dispensed upon them by recording companies and promoters. They are making an application to those in power to protect their talent and improve their lives in totality. Generally, the artists lodge a direct protest and complaint to those in power to observe their presence and hence protect them. Therefore the study recommends that those in power should pay attention to the limitations the accordion music artists face in order promote this genre and the lives of the artists in general.

Keywords:- Accordion music, functionalism, exploitation and poverty alleviation.

I. INTRODUCTION

The present research set out to make a general overview of the poverty and economic challenges portrayed in Sesotho accordion music from 1997 to 2005. This period is characterized by the drastic growth of accordion music industry. To realise the aim in question, the following sub-topics are discussed in detail: background information detailing how the music came into being, the methodology, the theoretical framework, analysis of the songs with the following concepts; state of poverty in Lesotho and its alleviation, unemployment and exploitation.

1.1 Background to the study

Sesotho accordion music originates from famo music, which was a popular shebeen performance played by Basotho immigrants in Republic of South Africa (RSA). Around the 1860s the mining industry attracted and eroded the able-bodied young Basotho men and women who were in search of lucrative jobs in RSA. According to Coplan (1985,[1]) the spread and growth of famo music primarily owes its popularity from the illegal shebeens in RSA. The music was played mostly during weekends where people had organized themselves into the business of stokvel. The music was meant to attract more customers into the then illegally run shebeens. Apart from this, the music was played in various places such as lipoto. The famo artists did not have their music recorded except one, 'Malitaba, whose recorded songs were played over Radio Bantu and Radio Lesotho. But later in 1979, 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 was invited to perform at different places on a variety of occasions in Lesotho and RSA. The formation of **Tau-ea-Matšekha** and others that followed instantly sparked a change of attitude among the Basotho. Instead of referring to the music as low class and associated with immoral behaviour, Basotho began to identify themselves with it, accepting the music as they said it reflected their culture, as highlighted by Coplan (1995:258,[2]) In it, they ensured that their language, customs, beliefs and thematic aspects were retained and propagated. Based on the change of attitude, the famo music was renamed `mino oa koriana (accordion music), `mino oa li tsamaea-

naha (music of travelers) or `mino oa Sesotho (Sesotho music) mostly because it used Sesotho language and broadly covered Basotho's experiences and ways of their livelihood. Generally, the artists were not only viewed as the eyes and ears of the Basotho nation but also their conduit of thought and ethnicity on the whole.

Sesotho accordion music, to most of its artists, serves principally as a form of improvement of the singer's livelihoods. Although superficially to the listeners and supporters of this music it features generally for aesthetic purposes, the artists extend their vision beyond only entertainment to as far as income generation. As such, performance of Sesotho accordion music serves as the main source of income and self-employment through which the artists support their families. Because of prevalent unemployment that has struck the youth of Basotho lately; especially men who must fend for their families, a group of new generation of artist keep on burgeoning in accordion music industry daily. As a result, the accordion music trade has not only become an ever-growing enterprise but also a fast growing economy. To sustain their livelihoods, artists engage on staging concerts, playing at the various ceremonies, sale of cassettes, CDs and DVDs for the betterment of their lives. Whereas the sole aim of the artists in singing is to generate income, there is seemingly a chronic exploitation and poaching in various daises of their quest for survival.

Being cognizant of this, when chanting their lyrics; the artists relay societal challenges facing income generation mechanisms as well as problems of economic manipulation, and poaching they are faced with in music industry. Some of the fundamentals of accordion music as a renowned genre and a popular culture of Basotho dissipates the characteristic role of other oral literature forms of maintaining social order, reiterations of the concerns of the society and conformity to relate a few. It is in line with the background above that this paper looks at how accordion artists express their feelings towards the state of poverty in Lesotho, their exploitation and challenges of poverty that they are faced with.

II. METHODOLOGY

The Sesotho accordion music has lately become not only a renowned form of oral literature played in different sectors of life but it has also become the symbol of culture with which Basotho identify themselves among the nations of the world. Through listening to this music at various levels, the researchers got struck by how the accordion musicians articulate their concerns with regard to poverty, piracy, economic exploitation and challenges surrounding them. It was from this observation that the researchers took an initiative to listening to various Basotho accordion music CDs, watching DVDs and radio programmes that dedicate this music as a programme.

From listening to the music, the researchers identified the hits/tracks that contained what they were interested in. The DVDs, CDs and cassettes were listened to and those that related issues of poverty, piracy, exploitation and any other economic issues were identified. The researchers then listened to the music several times in order to acquaint and familiarize themselves with the content of the songs. Such songs were later transcribed on paper. This was done in an attempt to identify the relevant excerpts that related to the core of this research.

1.3 Theoretical Framework

The analysis of the accordion music in this paper is informed by the theory of functionalism. According to Parsons (1999:1-3, [3]) the concept function entails that, different groups within the society contribute to the operation or functioning of the system as a whole. This is so because each society has certain needs in that there are a number of activities that must be carried out for social life to survive and develop. If the needs are being met, it is the social structures that meet them (<http://uregina.ca/~gingrich/n2f99.htm> [4]). In pursuit of the afore-going tenets of functionalism, the paper focuses on the function of accordion music in the society in which they live. The artists are viewed as a social structure that is instrumental in providing services to the nation in that 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. Naturally, their music is bound to influence and reflect the environment which has bred them. Thus, their artistic creativity is somehow dependent upon their social and economic environment. Similarly, their survival as artists and the sustainability of their careers depends on the reception and marketability of their product hence their economic plight, poverty alleviation and exploitation by record companies.

2. Analysis of the songs

The songs analysed refer to the following; state of poverty in Lesotho and its alleviation, unemployment and exploitation. In each theme there is background which is provided in order to contextualize it, which is followed by specific songs which are interpreted or paraphrased in order to reflect their relevance to the mentioned theme.

2.1 Poverty in Lesotho

Poverty in simple terms is a standard of living where there is little or nothing to live on. Basotho do not want to be identified with poverty hence the composition of some proverbs that have negative connotations towards it. They have proverbs like: Bofutsana bo jesa ntja/likatana (Poverty can lead one to eating a dog (literally.) and Bofutsana bo ja kobo maaparo (A poor person can end up eating their own clothes (literally.)) With this scenario in mind, Basotho try their level best to distance themselves from poverty by finding means to overcome or reduce it. It is not surprising therefore that accordion artists address it in their music with the intention of finding ways to deal with it.

It is worthwhile to contextualize the state of poverty in Lesotho as it is addressed in the accordion music. According to the Central Bank of Lesotho Quarterly Review (2005, [5]), Lesotho's economy seems to rely on tax collections from the Southern African Customs Union (SACU) that constitutes 54.7%, income tax with 24.6% and value added tax with 17.6%. There seems to be an imbalance when it comes to exports and imports in Lesotho, for instance, within the merchandise trade about 2.2 % are exports, while imports constitute about 27.6%. Most exports seem to be from the textile and clothing industry where the United States of America is the largest recipient of Lesotho's exports.

Concerning employment, the same report of 2005 gives three structures that are the main employers of the Basotho:

- Employment in the mining industry in South Africa was 54,171;
- The manufacturing sub-sector was about 41,985; and
- The government had about 36,710 employees.

We observe that, in a country with about 2 million people where the majority of the people within the country are not employed as the country does not have a large private sector that can accommodate the rest of the unemployed people. Unemployment could be said to be one of the most disturbing factors in the economic lives of the Basotho.

The document further states that, since 1990, there had been a drastic decline of migrant workers due to retrenchments. In 1994, there were 96,623 migrant workers, in 2000 about 64,907, while in 2005 it was 54,171.

The decline resulted in large numbers of unemployed people, and this was aggravated by poor agricultural conditions, poor grazing lands due to overgrazing, and high rate of stock theft as well as terrible droughts that led to poor crop production. Although there is a textile and clothing sector that accommodates the highest percentage of labour force in Lesotho, the economic gaps are however still far from being closed until presently. As such, unemployment which ultimately leads to poverty remains the national concern for all Basotho. Because this scenario remains a national outcry, the accordion artists, somehow feel compelled to address it in their music. The theme of poverty is divided into three sub-headings namely state of poverty, poverty alleviation and unemployment.

2.2 State of poverty

The paper will first deal with songs that address the state of poverty in Lesotho. The first song to be analysed is sung by the group **A Matle Majantja** (2002, [6]). In their song Ha se tlala Lesotho (The famine in Lesotho is shocking), the soloist says:

Ha se tlala Lesotho,
 Basotho ba phela ka ho sokola,
 Ba phela liotlong se ka maeba,
 Ho ja e ne e se ka mathata ana,
 Re ka be re se khauteng maboneng.

The famine in Lesotho is shocking,
 Basotho are striving hard to make a living,
 They live in a threshing floor like pigeons,
 If it were not for these problems,
 We could not have been at Gauteng in the lights.

The title itself suggests that there is a real problem of starvation in Lesotho that is very disturbing and that needs to be addressed urgently. The statement of the title is an antithesis. The way it is put, to someone who does not understand the language or one who could make a literal translation, it would suggest that there is no famine in Lesotho. The deeper meaning of the antithetic statement is that famine is extremely appalling in Lesotho. This group gives a general overview of the state of poverty in Lesotho that people live from hand to mouth because starvation is beyond explanation. The lead-singer further indicates that he could not have gone to Gauteng had it not been for the poverty that they experience in their families thus:

Ho ja e ne e se ka mathata ana,
Re ka be re se khauteng maboneng.

What the above excerpt suggests is that the singer has now left Lesotho to work in the mines in RSA because of the problematic state of starvation in Lesotho which he puts as follows: “ha se tlala Lesotho”. Once more the singer artistically puts his words in an antithetic version. He negates what he actually intends for his listeners to hear. This statement alone highlights that the state of famine has gone beyond normal and to that effect he adds that: ba phela liotlong se ka maeba. This means that they literally leave on the basis of from hand to mouth.

Although in the extract above the singer is referring only to himself, in essence he is referring also to the cohort of other Basotho men who have left the country in search of lucrative jobs elsewhere; particularly RSA mines. Yet again another group **Manka le Phallang No.23** (2004, [7]), in their song, titled Rea sokola (We are striving), says:

Rea sokola ntho e malapeng mona,
Ha se lefu ha se tlala,
Re phela ka thata,
Banna ntho e malapeng mona.

We are striving, what we experience in our families here,
There is death, there is famine,
We are striving,
Men what we experience in our families here.

Like **A Matle Majantja**; **Manka le Phallang** share the similar sentiments and observation about the seriousness of famine in Lesotho. While **A Matle Majantja** say; “Basotho ba phela ka ho sokola” **Manka le Phallang** say; “Rea sokola ntho e malapeng mona.” Both the groups raise concern that they are struggling because of famine in the homesteads. **Manka le Phallang** go further to point out that hunger has also accrued the scourge of diseases (Ha se lefu ha se tlala). On the whole, the two groups reiterate that famine has seriously struck Basotho such that they are even scorged with diseases. To heighten the horrific standard of poverty, **Manka le Phallang** also apply an antithesis to heighten its degree. The group relates the terrible state of poverty in Lesotho and that people are struggling hard for survival.

The songs relate the effects of poverty that has hit hard on most families in Lesotho. The two groups seem to be concerned about the general state of poverty that prevails in the country. Since poverty is a general problem, it affects all the Basotho, and accordion artists even use similar diction to express their feelings. For instance **A Matle Majantja** says; “hase tlala Lesotho” (The famine in Lesotho is shocking) and sokola (struggling) while **Manka le Phallang** group says; “hase lefu hase tlala” (There is death, there is famine) and “rea sokola” (we are striving). As the eyes and ears of the public the artists feel duty-bound to speak on its behalf to express the feelings of the nation. They want to alert those in power about the plight of the nation.

2.3 Poverty alleviation

With regard to poverty alleviation, some accordion artists suggest solutions to overcome it in the country. The artists feel that they must also play their role by providing a way out of national problems, with the view that they can be of great help to their people. Mokitimi & Phafoli (2001:232 [8]) refer to one song by Mantša which gives a specific solution to the unemployment in Lesotho. The artist calls for the retirement of those who have been working for a long time and their replacement by young blood. In the song the artist further suggests the re-opening of Lesotho diamond mines to cater for those who have been retrenched from the mines in the Republic of South Africa.

One song that provides a general solution to unemployment in Lesotho comes from the **Mahosana a ka Phamong** group (2001, [9]), in which the lead-singer points out that:

Ha ho na tsuonyana phatela 'ngoe,
Ha ho na khomo sebeletsa pere,
Motho o phela ka mofufutso oa phatla ea hae.

There is no chicken that fends for another,
There is no cow that works for the horse,
Every person has to sweat in order to survive.

The first two lines entail that in life, everybody has to work hard to make a living, and nobody should turn idle and expects to be spoon-fed. The last excerpt is even a biblical expression “motho o phela ka mofufutso oa phatla ea hae.” It was a punishment given to Adam by God that he shall have to sweat in order to

put bread on the table. What **Mahosana a kaPhamong** informs us about is that, for one to survive, one has to labour and fend for one's family.

While on the one hand the artist is aware that Basotho chronically live under severe claws of hunger; on the other he suggests that they should not fold their arms and sit back to be spoon-fed but instead they must work relentlessly in order to earn a living. This statement in its own right is suggestive that Basotho must stand up in order to alleviate themselves from the claws of hunger.

Additionally, the similar view is also shared by the **Moketa Special** group, [10] in a song namely: Khomo ea boroko (a bovine earned out of sleep). **Moketa** says:
 Khomo ea boroko ha e eo,
 U ikentse mokotla o mahlo.

Sleep does not earn one a bovine,
 You turned yourself into a bag with eyes.

Moketa has coined himself the lyrics that have been informed by the Sesotho proverb that reads as "ha ho na khomo ea boroko" (there is no price of a bovine earned out of sleeping). Like **Mahosana a kaPhamong**, **Moketa** relies on the wealth of knowledge of the Basotho in advising them that people should not lazily lie down but rather wake up and work because there is no price earned out of doing nothing. Again, they should use their minds properly in order to be constructive in life and refrain from being like bags which always expect to be filled with food they have not worked for. He also urges people to engage themselves in projects that would solve their economic problems instead of idling and moving up and down streets.

The striking feature about these two artists is the application of proverbs in their pleas, which enables them to easily convey their message to the public. According to Guma (1976: 65, [11]) proverbs are known as the pithy statement that however convey not only rich and succinct opinions about the mores of the society but also tip off and guide the society about the ways of living. In order for the artists to substantiate their assertion, they relied on the wealth of the folk. **Mahosana a kaPhamong** says: "ha ho na tsuonyana phatela `ngoe" and "ha ho khomo sebeletsa pere" (There is no chicken that digs for another and There is no cow that works for the horse respectively) while **Moketa** says; "khomo ea boroko ha e eo and "u ikentse mokotla o mahlo" (there is no price of a bovine earned out of sleeping and you have turned yourself into a bag with eyes).

The tone of this communication encodes a more audible message to the audience to refrain from acts of laziness and idling. The two artists are totally condemning laziness. They are pleading with other artists as well as the entire Basotho nation to engage themselves in developmental projects or to effectively use their talents to make a living.

Basotho are known for their devotion to work, they hate being associated with laziness. This is reflected in many of their proverbs, such as: Sekhoba se batola leloala ka lenala (a lazy person is never serious with his/her work) (Mokitimi:1997:19, [12]). Lazy people contribute towards impoverishing the country as they play no productive role, which is why Basotho have negative expressions for them. Basotho further say: "Mphe-mphee'a lapisa molekane motho o khonoa ke sa ntlo ea hae". (One has to refrain from regular begging, instead, he has to fend for himself for survival).

Practically, Basotho prefer industrious people who devote their lives to improving their standard of living. They encourage everybody to work hard in order to lead a better life. Such is being supported by a Sesotho proverb that reads: "Hlapi folofela leraha metsi a pshela o a bona."(Make use of whatever is available for survival) and "Phuthi e tsoha kameso e anyese" (Early bird catches the worm) (Mokitimi: 1997:45). The above proverbs suggest a way forward towards overcoming poverty in our families. If one follows and implements the instructions as suggested by the proverbs; there is a likelihood that our economy can flourish. It could also be said that accordion music as one genre of Basotho oral literature recommends explicit measures to be taken in order to overcome some economic problems. This comes as a response to the saying that "Pharela ha e eo banneng" (Each and every problem has an existing solution). That is why Basotho will also say: "Letšoele le beta poho" or "Ntja-peli ha e hloloe ke sebata" or "Ba ka ba babeli, ba ka ba bararo bana ba monna, mong a bolaea, mong a tsoaela, mong a okha mollo ka sekhono" (Unity is strength).

In short, it means that when many people are involved, the job is made lighter and is easily and quickly done. This feature shows that Basotho have always appreciated communal labour as one strategy that helps to improve their economy. This feeling is raised by Mphanya (2004: 34-36, [13]) who indicates that the colonial rulers discouraged Basotho from communal labour because it contributed to their resistance to work for the whites. It therefore, goes without saying that communal labour was the best strategy for poverty reduction, which is why accordion artists come together to form bands in order to generate income. Artists are engaged in fighting poverty through their music by making authorities and the public aware of its effects. They want measures to be put in place in order to reduce poverty.

2.4 Unemployment

A specimen of a song that addresses unemployment problem which also aggravates the poverty in the country is by **Monyase** (1997, [14]), in the song “Ha re sebetse” (We are not working). In this song, **Monyase** makes a public outcry that they are wrecked by unemployment. This is a public protest to those in power that Basotho are without jobs. As such he is making an indirect appeal to them to see to it that they create jobs for the nationals. He directs his plea to the then Prime Minister of Lesotho, Dr. Mokhehle, to offer employment to them. His worry is that poverty has hit hard on their families because there is lack of job opportunities and that is why they become accordion artists to fight hunger. He pleads with the Prime Minister because, like other politicians, he promised them jobs if and when in office, but to the artists’ surprise, even in Mokhehle’s fourth year in office, the artist was still without a job. He takes the song as an opportunity to express his inner feelings which he could not express when face to face with the Prime Minister.

2.5 Exploitation

Through their music, artists protest on behalf of their people against any form of exploitation that affects the Basotho. Their understanding is that the lives of the Basotho have to be improved and not to be worsened as that would lead to the downfall of the economy. They want to promote the trend that is embedded in Basotho proverbs such as “Ngoana ea sa lleng o shoela tharing” (People must speak in order to get what is rightfully theirs). Sometimes they say: “Tsa habo moshemane ha li joe, u li je u li siee masapo hobane molhang a holang o tla litseka.” (Never cheat or deny the young male his rights because when he grows up he will demand them). As representatives of the people, accordion artist feel that they have to fight for the survival of their people by exposing the malpractices and injustices by the business people who take advantage of some Basotho. They feel that it is high time that Basotho are vigilant and fight for what is rightfully theirs in order to improve their standard of living, thus boosting the economy of the country.

The situation in Lesotho is in line with Mai and Kirkegaard’s (2002: 8-10, [15]) view about music and its economic impact in Africa that:

Apart from minerals the music industry is the only area in which Africa as a continent seems to have an opportunity to make money at present. Because of this the World Bank has launched a programme on commercial music development as it realised that the music, so vibrant and alive in spite of the downfall and economic depression of most African nations in which Africa had a potential for making money. But it is also a way of living for many- combined with the hardships of making ends meet and its performers are often met with the double sword of both being needed and respected and at the same time deeply feared and mistrusted.

The above quotation, although too general, summarises the economic impact of music in Lesotho. Even though the music industry seems to be progressing, there are various problems that the artists encounter in their career as musicians. One of the major problems is that of exploitation. Most artists have been complaining and keep on doing so because they feel that they are being exploited by recording companies and their coordinators, though some people prefer to call them promoters. For the purpose of this paper, they will be called coordinators, as they link the artists and recording companies. The views of the artists are reflected in most of their songs, their concern is that, they sometimes get very small amounts of money in terms of royalties from their masters, while, in some instances, although rare, they are not paid at all. During personal interviews, radio and television interviews, it was observed that each and every artist has his story that points to exploitation. Although there are different forms of exploitation, the paper looks at the exploitation by coordinators and record companies.

2.5.1 Exploitation by coordinators

Coordinators could be said to be some well-to-do people or those who are familiar with the music recording venture that are approached by artists for assistance. Most of them are based in Lesotho and help to provide artists with financial assistance so that they can go and record in South Africa, since there is scarcity of recording studios in Lesotho. For instance, there are people like Paseka Selonyane, Jakobo in the Leribe district, Matebesi Matebesi and Motseka-papa Mohapi in the Maseru district, Marcus Sidney in the Mafeteng district as well as Edward Vereira who has worked with many artists since 1980’s until 1990’s.

Complaints about coordinators are observed in the song Machaena by the group **Ka sotleha Hatlane** (2001, [16]) where it sings:

He! Ntate ke itse u nthuse NtatePaseka,
Ntate Paseka Selonyane...,
Na ha ke re ke etsa k’hasete,
'Na ke re ke e rekisa mashome a mabeli a liranta,
Eena o etsa fong-kong ha a tloha,
O e rekisa R10.00 molisanyana Hatlane.

He! Father I asked you to help me father Paseka,
 Father Paseka Selonyane,
 When I try to make a cassette,
 When I try to sell it for R20.00
 You make it fong-kong fake one from the start,
 You sell it R10.00, the shepherd Hatlane.

Hatlane's complaint is that Selonyane sells a cassette at a lower price almost half price, while the artist sells it at R20.00. This is a pathetic situation for our artists, when the very people who are said to be helping them, cheat them in broad daylight. That is, if the artist wants to make some profit from his cassette he cannot do it because in Lesotho most of the coordinators have music shops, and sell a cassette at a cheaper price. It is obvious that the cassettes that are sold by the artists will not sell as expected. The plea is that, fair play in the deals is required if accordion music is to be promoted.

From what the researchers gathered from personal interviews, even over radios and television it is observed that artists who request this form of assistance are those who do not have any connections with recording companies and are highly dependent on the coordinators. With only verbal agreement, the coordinator caters for all the costs, inclusive of accommodation, food and lodging, rehearsals, the recording process and the product and transportation of the group to and from RSA. Having completed the process, when the cassettes are out on the market, the coordinators are said to sell a certain number to recover costs. As the two were engaged in a gentlemen's agreement, the total costs are hardly disclosed to the artists. After sometime, the artist may be given a certain portion of money as his royalties, and may be given another at any time it suits the coordinator. It is never known to the artists as to how many cassettes were paid for, and how many were sold, let alone, how much the outstanding balance is. In some instances, artists are given a certain number of cassettes to sell, the collection belongs to them, to some artists, and this becomes their only payment in the form of royalties. The artists' complaint is that they are never clear about what is due to them and when and why? It seems that most coordinators have taken advantage of this ignorance and exploited most accordion artists (Radio and television interviews 2000 – 2005, [17]).

2.5.2 Exploitation by recording companies

Recording companies means centres that are engaged in producing the finished product which is in the form of cassette, CD or DVD. There are two kinds of artists that deal with these centres. The first group is that of the artists who are directly in contact with recording companies or studios. These are some of the experienced artists who manage to pay for all their costs, and enter into an agreement with the recording companies. The other group is that of inexperienced artists who are financially frustrated and need to be boosted for the payments of their dues. These two groups approach the well-known and popular recording studios for accordion artists such as EMI, SM and TAKK.

We learnt from the interviews that artists also cry foul because the contract that they are asked to sign is written in English and as most of our artists are not sufficiently fluent they become victims. They complain that some companies cheat them by reproducing their cassettes under different names. That is, since the companies are familiar with recording technology they easily manage to complicate matters in such a way that those who are ignorant cannot easily comprehend. Sometimes they are said to charge large amounts with the aim of forcing the client to owe the company. This is when the company gets its chance of producing as many cassettes as possible that out-number those given to the client. Since they know their tricks, they easily and quickly distribute them so that, by the time, the artist comes along with his package of cassettes; the shelves are already full of the record company's cassettes which are sold at cheaper prices. This means a total loss on the artist's side as he suffers on the market, while, on the other hand, he still has to pay back the money he owes the company.

Manka le Phallang (2004, [18]), in their song *Sello sa monna* (The complaint/cry of the man), directly attacks Edward for having exploited him. Phallang's complaint is that Edward has stripped him of his toil by cheating him. He says:

Le'a 'mona ke eo o lutse Cape Town,
 O lutse holim'a mahlabathe,
 Joale o ja matla a Phallang.

You see him there he is residing in Cape Town,
 He is on the shore,
 He is eating the fruits of my toil.

The mention of the name Edward in this song shows how deeply hurt the artist is. One might also say that the artist seems to be knowledgeable about Edward regarding his character and his dealings with the artists. This

was one of the songs that were played at the funeral of Phallang where there was an outcry about the artists' exploitation. One radio presenter from Leseli FM, Mosololi Mohapi, confirmed how some Basotho accordion music is hijacked through fraudulent means by recording companies. He advised artists to take precautionary measures when signing the contracts with the record companies.

The other song is taken from the group **Seeiso Tšoana-Mantata** (2004, [19]). In the song *Lenong le'a solla* (The vulture wanders). He sings:

Ho neng ke theosa le lifeme tsena.
 Ke ne ke qale femeng ea Pita,
 Ka kena e sa le Eric.
 Ka tloha ka leba RPM,
 Moo ke ileng ka tloha ka leba DSM,
 Ka bua le ntate Emeka Londao.
 Ke hopola Jack a mpha 67 maloti ea cassette.
 Hele! Meleko! Ka tsamaea ka leba EMI,
 Ha e le Edward eena e sa le a e-ja Basotho ba bangata.

For how long have I been working with these firms?
 I started at the firm of Pita,
 I joined it at the time when it was Eric.
 I left and went to RPM,
 There I left and went to DSM,
 I talked to father Emeka Landao.
 I remember Jack giving me M67.00 for the cassette.
 Hei! What a hell! I went to EMI,
 For Edward himself has always been exploiting many Basotho.

The soloist narrates how he has worked with different coordinators and companies that exploited him to the extent that he once got M67.00 for a cassette. Basotho have a saying that 'Morena ha a se na tjako u motlohelle u e'o jaka ho a mang mahosana' (When a chief has no site for you, leave him and go and find a site from other chiefs). This means that if your chief is not hospitable, leave him and find space from other chiefs who may be more welcoming than him. The lead-singer in this seems to have changed from one company to another with the hope that he would find reliable/credible one. This is a reflection of the inhospitable conditions under which accordion artists operate. For one to be given a mere M67.00 for his album is a disgrace, not only that but also an insult to one's integrity and dignity. If one cassette at the music shop sells for an average of M40.00, one may wonder how M67.00 can be paid for an album that has been multiplied to make as many copies as possible.

Many artists seem to have undergone this bitter experience in their music career as shown below. For instance Some of the songs analysed in this paper are specific about the company or the person that exploited the artists while others are too general. The first one comes from Lehlohonolo (1997, [20]), its title is 'M'e le Ntate (My mother and my father). The soloist, Tšeoale requests one of his friends to talk to Edward who seems to want to turn people into living ghosts. He warns Edward that he has been in music circles for some years, and that he has worked with EMI Company owned by Solly whom he left because they had some personal differences. He threatens Edward that he is likely to part with him if he continues to treat him like a ghost although he is still alive. That is, he is killing him economically, as he does not provide for his basic needs. He is financially frustrating him, since money is everything, he feels like a ghost because, much as he sings, he never gets what is due to him and cannot be treated like a respected human being.

Sanko (2002, [21]), in his song, *Mophaphathehi* (Refugee) also complains about Edward and SM recording company. At the time the album was recorded he was working with a coordinator by the name Pulumo who resides in the Free State Province. As he expresses his disappointment, he points out that he had been cheated by white men from SM Company and later by Edward, and he peacefully settled with Pulumo's contract. Artists, like the rest of the Basotho, use the word *jeoa*, *jele* and *ntja*- that means cheated or exploited. As indicated earlier, Edward has worked with many Basotho artists and they left him due to misunderstandings on the settlement of finances.

Our third song is taken from Keketso and Moketa (2003, [22]). In their song *Likhapha tsa mofutsana* (Tears of the poor), the soloist complains about exploitation by one coordinator in the Free State Province. When expressing his bitterness, he says that he was cheated of his monies and dispossessed of his clothing; his anger arises from the fact that he was given only R50.00 for an album.

Many artists seem to have undergone this bitter experience, for instance Lehlohonolo (1997, [23]), in the song titled 'M'e le Ntate (My mother and my father), the soloist, Tšeoale requests one of his friends to talk to Edward (owner of the record company) who seems to want to turn people into living ghosts. He warns Edward that he has been in music circles for some years, and that he has worked with EMI Company owned by Solly whom he left because they had some personal differences. He threatens Edward that he is likely to part with him if he continues to treat him like a ghost although he is still alive. That is, he is killing him economically, as he does not provide for his basic needs. He is financially frustrating him, since money is everything, he feels like a ghost because, much as he sings, he never gets what is due to him and cannot be treated like a respected human being. Another artist, Sanko (2002, [24]), in his song, Mophaphathehi (Refugee) also complains about Edward and SM recording company. At the time the album was recorded he was working with a coordinator by the name Pulumo who resides in the Free State Province. As he expresses his disappointment, he points out that he had been cheated by white men from SM Company and later by Edward, and he peacefully settled with Pulumo's contract. Artists, like the rest of the Basotho, use the word jeoa, jele and ntja- that means cheated or exploited. As indicated earlier, Edward has worked with many Basotho artists and they left him due to misunderstandings on the settlement of finances.

As a result of exploitation, misunderstanding between artists and companies or coordinators ends up with threats and sometimes deaths. This was the case on a live Lesotho Television programme in September, 2006 where Paseka Selonyane, a coordinator, and artists like Chakela and Selomo were brought together with the aim of encouraging them to sort out their differences peacefully. One of the concerns was that Selonyane owed some artists huge sums of money. In his defense, he pointed out that he had paid them and some of them still owed him for giving them some assistance to record their albums. The coordinator was threatened, and one wondered what would be the next step after the programme.

As though that was not enough, one coordinator by the name of Marcus Sidney was gunned down in early October of 2006 by two gunmen in Maseru City. This happened after, the March 2006 incident where Sidney was accused of having taken copyrights of one Famole, (Teboho Lesia). But when Lesia's wife was sick Sidney did not offer assistance. It developed to the extent that there was a tense atmosphere at the funeral of 'Masechaba Lesia, the wife of Teboho Lesia (Mosotho, Tlhakubele: 2006, [25]). One observes that different forms of exploitation, if not addressed in time, may bring chaos in the accordion music industry.

III. CONCLUSION

It could be said that Basotho accordion artists as eyes and ears of the Basotho nation are aware of the important role they have play in their society. They fulfill their obligation by expressing their views with regard to discontent they experience in the music industry and feel obliged to warn the in-coming artists and even the nation as a whole about the hardships in the music industry. Their plight as much as it goes through entertainment it sends clear message to the authorities and the Basotho nation as a whole to assist them and to find sustainable solutions to their economic problems which would see the Basotho and their country out of the poverty lane. On the other hand, it could be said that accordion artists are challenging Basotho nation to listen attentively and also to critically analyse their lyrics as they bear messages worth attending to. By so doing the Basotho accordion music industry would be able to grow as certain measures to curb problems such as exploitation would be put in place for the betterment of the artists and the Basotho lives as a whole.

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**Corresponding Author: Dr. Lehlohonolo Phafoli
(Department Of African Languages And Literature, National University Of Lesotho, Lesotho)*