

Basotho accordion music's influence on Seema's life: Capturing Africana woman's strength



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This study is propelled by the observation that although Basotho accordion music artists have contributed much to the Basotho's lives through their music, it seems little has been done to focus on individual artists to unpack each and every artist's music. Our conviction is that artists are individuals who have their own style, diction, themes and prowess. Therefore, this study intends to focus on Puseletso Seema's selected songs to find out how the Basotho receive and utilise them and how her music impacts on their lives. This study is framed within Africana womanism and indigenous knowledge system to highlight the framework's attributes through Puseletso Seema's accordion music. It is a qualitative study and uses secondary data. It analyses four purposely selected songs that merit the notion of interest in this study to reveal specific features of Africana womanism. The study's findings reveal that Puseletso Seema manages to encourage, motivate and show strategies that can be used to empower Basotho women through her songs. The songs further help to preserve Basotho culture and empower Basotho women to navigate through patriarchal culture and social structures.

Contribution: This article confirms that Basotho accordion musicians contribute positively to the Basotho's lives. Therefore, it is imperative that each artist's music be recognised as expressions of individual creativity by unpacking it to find out how it contributes to the promotion of a desired society considering that music is one of the important factors that influence the society's life. The high unemployment rate among the Basotho justifies the need to find more strategies that can be used to encourage citizens to empower themselves.

Keywords: Africana womanism; women empowerment; Basotho women identity; *famo* music; folklore; women's songs.

Introduction

Puseletso Seema is a Mosotho woman who joined the accordion music industry while she was living in South Africa. In *The Post* newspaper (2017:4-5), Puseletso Seema describes her gruelling life story as one of the Basotho accordion music artists. Puseletso narrated that she joined gangsters while in South Africa, which she indicates was a dangerous 'family'. Running away from the situation, she started a shebeen business. However, she could not keep her business of selling food and beer running. It was during this time that she had to go back to gangster life. To survive the gangster wars, she had to learn how to use a gun that later turned her into a criminal. She narrates a story of when her group was attacked by another, in pursuit of taking her as one of the bosses' wives. Puseletso claims that she had never seen so much bloodshed and death in her entire life. Resultantly, she was destined to death. She openly told men that she could not be under the control of cowards and be used for men's oppressive regime. In that 'tumultuous' period, Puseletso found time to launch her music career of which some of her songs were influenced by gangsterism.

Puseletso Seema explains that she was a shepherd while she was a teenager. In *The Post* (2017), she explains that being a shepherd is a lonely task because animals do not talk. What shepherds do is to follow their animals in silence and end up playing games to overcome the loneliness. She further clarifies that at times, shepherds find themselves whistling or humming a tune because of being alone in the veld (*The Post* 2017). The loneliness that the shepherds sometimes feel or suffer from, force them to be creative and compose songs. Therefore, the content of the songs the shepherds compose is full of both their shepherd life and life in general. Finnegan (1970:250) notes that 'sometimes the song's emphasis is on the singer's sorrow or the way the song possesses her'. The attitude displayed by Puseletso Seema reveals that she is strong, a characteristic espoused by Africana womanism (Al-Harbi 2017; Mokala 2020). Her mission is to challenge the oppressive forces confronting impending Basotho women's struggle for survival. Borrowing Pellerin's (2012) views, Puseletso Seema as an agent of change for Basotho women.

Through her songs, she stands against all forms of oppression women go through in their relationships and within the industry extraordinarily dominated by men. At other times we are given a picture of another side of her nature—wilful, unpredictable and her impulsiveness.

Background

This study analyses Puseletso Seema's four accordion songs. The intention is to determine how the selected songs influence Basotho women's lives. Basotho accordion music, also known as *famo* music as described by Phafoli (2009), has been a popular shebeen performance from its origins in the Republic of South Africa. With migrant labour from Lesotho, it crossed into Lesotho. Phafoli (2009) further stipulates that this type of music is part of the traditional oral music of the Basotho as it retains some features of traditional verbal music and reflects the lifestyle of the Basotho. In another study, Phafoli (2020) states that *famo* refers to Basotho music, which started with a concertina. He traces the history of Basotho accordion music as far back as the 1920s and indicates that *famo* music used to be '... played in shebeens and was famous for the immorality of its participants' (Phafoli 2020:22). Phafoli further notes that *famo* had been popular Basotho music performed in the shanty towns in South Africa as a form of entertainment even though it was regarded indecent by some people. Coplan (1995) affirmed that accordion music was played for rough and sexy Basotho migrants in the shebeens. Coplan (1995) avows:

According to numerous eyewitnesses, the *famo* was almost defiantly suggestive. Women made shaking and thrusting movements with their shoulders, hips, and blossoms while lifting their flared skirts ... The dancers wore no underwear but instead had painted rings around the whole area of their sex, a ring they called 'spotlight' ... Men, dancing alongside or seated against the walls, chose the women they wanted and took them into the back for intercourse. (p. 98)

Phafoli (2020) indicates that the setting and the form of performance, as stated in the above extract, are no longer like that as Basotho men and women sing this music, both in Lesotho and outside the country at morally acceptable places. Therefore, the Basotho of today have accepted it as their traditional music.

Sometimes, artists used concertina and improvised homemade drums with wires and bottle covers attached to produce entertaining sounds when hit by a stick used to beat the drum. The artists sang and blended their songs with the lyric poems.

By singing, Basotho women publicise their problems (Khotso 2017). They construct and re-enact their histories and reflect on the ideals and attitudes of their society. Finnegan (1976:103) asserts that female singers confront many aspects of cultural life through songs. She continues that singing is a strategy for empowerment to contest and fight the structure of social disparity. Finnegan indicates that African females have long-standing discourse and dialogues through

alternative methods cutting through the hegemony of the written word and patriarchal cultural discourse with singing. Rapeane-Mathonsi (2011:76) attests that Basotho women use songs to communicate their messages to their listeners and to address their concerns as females. All these ideologies are reflected in the songs of Puseletso Seema. Coplan (1990:256) supports that '... a women's genre whose texts are often fiercely critical of the behaviour of men and governments is being denied a public identity'. Therefore, it is worth noting that women who operate shebeens for survival have endured the stigma associated with its scenery. Different connotations associated with shebeen songs and dance include *bonyatsi* [a non-normative but virtually institutionalised form of adultery in which married men or women contract extended extramarital relationships in the frequent and lengthy absence of a spouse] (Spiegel 1990), *ho fetjha* [the pelvic movements of a woman during sexual intercourse] (Coplan 1990; Khotso 2017), *ho feba* [to commit adultery], *fotjho* [wild, bawdy or intoxicated dancing], *botekatse* [prostitution], *sepoto* [pot or bar] (Rapeane 2003) and *famo* [to throw up one's skirt]. Mokala (2020:60) adds that 'initially, the *famo* music was associated with single, deserted, deserting or married promiscuous, undesired women who were known as *matekatse* [prostitutes]'.

Contrary to the popular belief that women who frequent shebeens are *matekatse*, it seems that the shebeen is a place worthy of praise for empowering women by providing them with a platform to portray their singing talent. It can be considered a safe place for women to forget about the oppressive social structures that limit their freedom. To use Coplan's (1990:255) words, 'their flight from the normative proclaim a resolute, individualistic spirit imitative of itinerant male heroism, and deliberately contrary to the domestic stationery commitment expected of adult women in Lesotho'. Furthermore, Coplan (1990) expounds that:

[T]heir right to sing out was ensured by the intoxicated [literally] freedom of the 'immoral' and illicit but indispensable shebeen, a setting whose social centrality is symbolized by the white or yellow flags [*phephesela*] that fly on poles outside this *dibara* [English 'bar'] in every Lesotho community. Unlike the family homestead, the pastures and crop fields, or the remote workplace, which end to segregate the sexes and limit social intercourse between them, the shebeen provides an environment for cross-gender communication, performance, and sociability: a change in relationships fostered universally by processes of proletarianisation. (p. 256)

It can be deduced that bars should not only be viewed negatively but also positively. For example, women use bars as a platform to interact and socialise with men as Basotho women cannot do that freely elsewhere.

Theoretical framework

The current study draws on Africana womanism and indigenous knowledge systems as the theoretical frameworks to understand how Puseletso Seema has persevered and strove for Basotho women's empowerment through her

songs in patriarchal, cultural and social structures. The observation is that the study of African women would require an Africana womanist perspective. According to Ahamed (2017), Africana womanism is a term coined by Clenora Hudson-Weems in the late 1980s. Hudson-Weems (1993:24) defines Africana womanism as:

[A]n ideology created and designed for all women of African descent. It is grounded in African culture, and therefore, it necessarily focuses on the unique experiences, struggles, needs, and desires ... of African women.' (p. 24)

For the present study, Africana womanism seemed suitable since it embodies this reference of framing, which Clenora Hudson-Weems coined in response to African women's experiences, struggles, needs and desires that could not be addressed by theoretical lenses such as feminism.

Africana womanism aims to establish a relationship between culture and identity of African women. It is important to note that the framework centres on family matters. Al-Harbi (2017:121) clarifies the attributes that define Africana womanism among others as self-naming, self-definition, being strong, genuine sisterhood, and family centredness. These are the few descriptors that the study addresses. Indigenous knowledge systems entail 'traditional songs, stories, legends, dreams, methods and practices as the various modes of indigenous knowledge systems' (Mutema 2013:59).

Drawing from her experiences as a woman who had encountered abuse, Puseletso Seema empowers other women through her songs. Through her long observations, she has become a specialist in her own indigenous setting, presenting this knowledge in a familiar worldview, in the form of *famo* music. According to Mohlabane (2022:158) 'indigenous knowledge systems embody a holistic, inclusive view of the world and foreground interconnectedness for the promotion of life'. Therefore, we found this framework befitting the study as we learnt that Puseletso Seema was a shepherd, and it is during those days that she developed her singing talent. The application of this framework in this study helped us to understand indigenous knowledge imparted to Basotho women through Puseletso Seema's songs. The following section reviews related studies.

Review of related studies

Mokala (2020) conducted a study entitled 'Understanding the Meanings Represented in *Ditolobonya* Songs: Basotho Women's Experiences and Realities'. The study aimed at revealing how Basotho women use *ditolobonya* songs to communicate their daily frustrating life experiences such as problems they encounter in their marriages. The study, therefore, showed how the women express their feelings through the songs. Mokala's (2020) study adopted Africana womanism as the lens to frame the analysis and interpretations. The present study shoulders on Mokala's (2020) study. The researchers discuss issues about the silencing of women, dynamic relations between a married

woman and her in-laws and oppressive patriarchal ideologies that prevail within social structures. Worth noting is that Mokala's (2020) study is essential for the current one since it highlights the ways in which Basotho women address issues of oppression and disempowerment imposed upon them by their culture, language and social structures inherent within their existence. However, Mokala's study focuses on *ditolobonya* songs, while the current study reveals the power of Puseletso Seema through *famo* songs.

Phafoli (2009) conducted a study on language techniques in Basotho accordion music. According to Phafoli (2009), Basotho accordion music has been male dominated in Lesotho for a long time. He points out that the majority of the male-dominated groups included Tau-ea-Matšekha, Tau-ea-Linare, Tau-ea-Thaba, Lilala-tsa-Sekhonyana, Mahosana ka Phamong, Manka le Phallang and Tau-ea-Lioli. We find Phafoli's (2009) study informative for the current study as it singles out Puseletso Seema, a female accordion musician who also recorded her songs in the industry around the early 1980s. The groups referred to above are the ones that seem to have surfaced during that time. Coplan (1995:12) further brings this to light by saying: 'Today shebeen singing, as retailed on recordings and even on South African Television by popular artists such as Puseletso Seema is the nearest form to a Basotho national music'. In another study, Phafoli (2020) explains that in the early 1980s, some Basotho who liked the then *famo* music showed a changed attitude towards this type of music. The changed attitude emanated from the fact that *famo* music was popular and played publicly in different settings such as concerts and public transport. The author further states that around the 1980s, *famo* music was renamed accordion music [*mmimo wa koriana*]. For Khotso's (2017) study, Basotho accordion music was explored with the intention to discover its contribution to the performance of masculinity. She found out that Basotho accordion music contributes to precarious masculinity. Khotso's study informs the study on the contributions of accordion music among the Basotho. However, this study differs from Khotso's study as it focuses on a female artist.

Research methodology

The study adopted an interpretive content analysis of four purposely sampled songs by Puseletso Seema (Rubaya 2022). The songs focus on issues of challenging relations between women, silencing, sex issues, taboos, as well as how these songs are used as a tool to communicate inner feelings, thoughts, desires and wishes that cannot be verbally defined (Mokala 2020; Nkealah 2009). The songs were considered as the case study for Basotho women empowerment. In selecting the songs, we were influenced by the notion of interest. The researchers listened to the songs and transcribed only the parts of the songs that aligned to the notion of interest in this study. For this reason, in collecting these songs for analysis, the aim was to understand the parts of the songs aligned to the interest of the study and finding out if they could be said to be a form

of Basotho women empowerment. It should be noted that this study is limited to those attributes found in Puseletso Seema's songs as selected for the purpose of this study. The study was determined to be non-human subjects research as there was no human interaction.

Analysis of Puseletso Seema's songs

The study revealed that Puseletso Seema sings about family life and her children. Content analysis was complemented with thematic analysis to match the themes that emerge in Puseletso Seema's songs with the attributes of the African womanist theory underpinning the study. It must be pointed out that the radical and main agenda that African womanism portrays is 'to alter human thinking in terms of uprooting deep-seated misconceptions about female sex and implanting a new, wholesome, positive and progressive outlook on being female' (Nkealah 2006:135).

This analysis is based on the choruses of the four selected songs by Puseletso Seema.

Song 1: *Ke batla basali ba thata*:

Ntoa ea loana ke batla basali ba thata [The battle is on I want strong women]

Bao ke eang ntoeng le bona [Women that I will go to war with]

Ha ke batle bananyana [I do not want young girls]

Ha ke batle lihloepha mamina [I do not want the mucus eaters]

Ha ke batle lilallane [I do not want those who cry easily]

A he bo mme oee [Hey women]

Ha o sena letsoalo itlise ke eme ka mali a ka [If you do not fear come, I stand on my blood]

He nna ke jakile ka leleme la ka [Hey, I stay where I am by my eloquence]

Nna 'Malibakiso [Myself, 'Malibakiso]

Ke batla basali ba thata [I want strong women]

The song *Ke batla basali ba thata* [I want strong women], was initially male-oriented among the Basotho in that the title was *Ke batla banna ba thata* [I want strong men]. This song was sung when men were facing difficult times such as harsh working conditions or war. Likewise, in this song, Puseletso Seema is calling for strong women as the conditions she is in are harsh. '*Ntoa ea loana ...*' denotes that the battle is on and clearly communicates that she is in a difficult situation. She further calls for collaboration with other women who have qualities of womanhood, not just young girls. We surmise that by indicating that she does not want small girls, Puseletso does not literally mean young girls, but she refers to women who can endure pain and sustain difficulties. Among the Basotho, the word *ngoananyana* has both literal and figurative meanings. Literally, it refers to a teenage girl while figuratively it refers to women who cannot endure pain or difficult situations. Therefore, Puseletso's situation qualifies for a call for women who can exercise patriotism: being in a foreign country (South Africa) but working hard for their families back home in Lesotho.

In our view, because of changes in family structures today, women have had to assume different roles where at times, they become heads of families. Khotso (2017) states that when the Republic of South Africa retrenched thousands of Basotho men in the mines, they returned to Lesotho. In Lesotho, they resorted to what was once thought to be feminine tasks such as sewing and teaching. By engaging in these tasks, men could still provide for their families though it was with less economic potential compared to the power they used to bring from the mines. The point of retrenchment evolved a new phase of masculinity among the Basotho, which needed to cater to both men and women. For Khotso (2009:4), 'first, literature expresses the economic relations of the society'. This citation set us reflecting on the changes that took place regarding the role of women in taking over to become heads of families while their husbands were away.

Secondly, literary texts can often be understood when related to societal and economic conditions. Thirdly, literature must have a social function. Fourthly, characters, situations and events created in literature must portray a society in totality. Lastly, literature should be committed to the uplifting of humanity. It responds to why men have shifted from their traditional masculine traits. The role norms are social facts; they can change through social processes. Thus, women's role has changed in Lesotho. Women are no longer limited to working in a home and raising children. They migrate to South Africa to work for their families while most Basotho men stay at home. Consequently, there is a need for strong women and hence the song *Ke batla basali ba thata*. In the African tradition, boys and girls are raised to hold different positions and roles in the future, but circumstances force such upbringing to divert. In the absence of strong men, strong women must fill that gap. As one of few women in the male-dominated industry, Puseletso Seema represents and proves to be one of the strong women needed as per the song.

Puseletso's nickname, 'Maitšokolele, in the music industry, can also be linked to this song, *Ke batla banna ba thata*. Adejare (1992:44) states that 'nicknames signify either positive or negative attributes of the character or a combination of both'. Nicknames are used to ridicule or praise a person (Khetoa & Mokala 2022). In Khotso's (2017) informal interview with Puseletso Seema, the singer explained that it is proper to have a Basotho accordion music industry nickname. She nicknamed herself 'Maitšokolele, which can be translated as "fend for yourself". Seema indicated that her life from childhood until she joined music industry was problematic. She learned it was hard to survive. Therefore, her nickname was befitting the situations she lived in. The name 'Maitšokolele can be subjected to women's empowerment that women should fend for themselves. This name is linked to the economic setting. It emphasises that Puseletso and the Basotho women she represents should work hard to earn money and property for themselves. Puseletso's self-naming and self-definition subscribe to African womanism. The voice in the song defines her interests, aspirations and

agendas hence becomes a self-namer and self-definer. She is not voiceless but claims authority over her life.

Song 2: 'Namolele

'Namolele, nnamolele [Come to my rescue]

Basali ba ntlhoile [Women hate me [Puseletso Seema]]

Ba ntsekisa botle ba ka [because of my beauty]

Le fikara eo ke nang le eona nnamolele [as well as my physique, come to my rescue]

'Namolele Mme 'Masenate [Rescue me the Queen mother
'Masenate]

In the song 'Namolele [Come to my rescue], Puseletso Seema makes a plea to the current queen mother (Her Majesty Queen 'Masenate) of the Kingdom of Lesotho to come to her rescue. She explains that she needs to be rescued as other women hate her because of her beauty. She notably clarifies that she is not only beautiful but also well built [*fikara*], hence other women resent her. It is widespread for women to be jealous of a beautiful woman, especially when she seems to attract men. For Puseletso, this belief resulted in her being accused as a husband snatcher (Seema is accused of 'stealing' other women's husbands).

Given that Puseletso Seema is a divorcee, she seems to be a threat to married women. The word 'Namolele' signals that the singer must have been in trouble with women as she openly discloses that she is beautiful and well built. As Phafoli (2009:97) articulates, one can say that Puseletso Seema '... employs language techniques that bring forth the clear picture ...' of how she looks. In this song, the characteristic of self-definition as per Africana womanism is reflected. Al-Harbi (2017) states that self-definition is one characteristic that creates Africana womanism identity. Self-definition is about one's individuality and what sets one apart from others. Therefore, we see Puseletso Seema reflecting on her existence, which is a threat to other women, because of her outstanding beauty.

In this song, Puseletso also shows other Basotho women what they have to do to get rescued from trouble. She indicates that when she faces problems, she takes heed of the royal household (Matsieng). Matsieng is the main royal household where the queens of Lesotho stay. The usual practice of the Basotho women when they face difficulties in marriage is to go to their homes. However, going to one's original home when facing problems of jealousy caused by other women, is not a practice among the Basotho. In this song, Puseletso shows Basotho women that every problem needs to be addressed by the right person. As Queen Masenate is a custodian of Basotho women, Puseletso considers her to be the right person that Basotho women can run to for protection. Showing other women where to go to when they face difficulties calls for African womanism's genuine sisterhood as it is open to good advice. Adopting Nkealah's (2009:30) words, she 'advocates a radical transformation of the social order such that women choose to break away from men once their individuality is threatened'.

Through Basotho accordion music, Puseletso Seema displays social issues regarding Basotho women. As Nkealah (2009) states, through her songs, Puseletso Seema:

'[C]aptures women's strengths and weaknesses, explores the challenges they face in society, articulates problems they encounter in the areas of marriage, child upbringing and employment, and reveals their strategies of survival in difficult circumstances'. (p. 28)

Mokala (2020) argues that through songs, Basotho women:

'[H]ave the opportunity to voice out their social problems, feelings and indicate among others their understanding of masculinity. Songs shed light on social issues; they have remained part of the oral patrimony and sung by females in different celebrations'. (p. 144)

This study revealed how Puseletso Seema challenged the status quo through her songs by setting out to empower Basotho women to navigate patriarchal cultural and social structures.

Song 3: *Ea pota ngoetsi*

Ea pota ngoetsi, hao, hao ea re kea loea [Daughter-in-law utters nonsense, she says I am a witch]

Nna ha ke loee, hao [I am not a witch]

Ho leo ngoetsi ea ka [she is the one bewitching people]

O tlile le seroto, ha a e tsoa setsoetse [she brought a reed basket when she came from home after giving birth]

This song presents animosity between a mother-in-law and a daughter-in-law. Rapeane-Mathonsi (2011:77) notes that 'the relationship between the mother-in-law and her daughter-in-law is generally that of conflict perpetuated by jealousy, competition, poverty, the fight for independence and many other factors'. The mother-in-law and the daughter-in-law are constantly at each other's throats, each claiming that the other is a witch. Mokala (2020) concludes that:

[M]ost married women suffer in the hands of their mothers-in-law who want to take over and control finances of their sons' families, therefore ignoring the daughter-in-law as entitled to ownership and control of her family affairs. This usually happens in cases where a woman is financially dependent on the husband because she does not have a job and stays with the in-laws. (p. 152)

Issues of culture and tradition are displayed in this song. It is important to note that according to Basotho culture and tradition, a newly married woman goes to her village to give birth, especially when it is a firstborn baby. Puseletso Seema, representing a mother-in-law in this song, reveals that her daughter-in-law is a witch. She proves her claim by expounding that her daughter-in-law came from her biological parents bearing gifts. She suspects that the reed basket the daughter-in-law brought from her village had *muthi*, which is used for bewitching people. The use of the phrase '*ea pota ...*' means to rave, to be delirious or delirious talk. This phrase is a substitute for stating that one is insulting the other. In this song Puseletso Seema is showing

sisterhood, she avoids using harsh language. Instead, she uses words that are meant to maintain good relationships though revealing that some women lack 'respect and appreciation of the elders' (Al-Harbi 2017). Puseletso Seema plays a pivotal role in the choice of words to teaching the young and newly married women to respect and appreciate their elders.

Africana womanism encourages confidence, helps women see, affirm and believe in the importance of their expression (Nkealah 2006). Through her music, she echoes her struggles, achievements, joys, sorrows, happiness, losses and defeats she has had to encounter in her life. Not only does this reflect resilience but also perseverance to become the best out of her struggles. In this process, she becomes a true leader and a role model to many.

Africana womanism embodies the spirit of creativity in the struggle for liberation and the full expression of one's life and love. Puseletso Seema's songs reveal that she is a woman who loves others. Thus, she expresses 'genuine sisterhood', as Al-Harbi (2017:121) puts it. She uses accordion music to fight against women suffering silently in their communities. According to Rapeane (2003:110), 'Sotho society, like many others, imposes silence on the disempowered to maintain the status quo'. Nkealah (2009) observes that:

[S]ilence is imposed on women through value systems informed by patriarchal ideology; it is a mode of life for women. They are forced to adapt to survive in societies where avenues of power are controlled exclusively by men. (p. 28)

From Nkealah's (2009:28) explanation of women's silence, it can be understood that women are forced to be silent since they live in primarily male-dominated societies. We must highlight that the Basotho nation is patriarchal. As such, this is also evident in the way language is used. There are Sesotho proverbs that give men power over women to support the patriarchal ideology (Mokala 2020; Rapeane 2003). Research shows that Basotho men and women use language differently as men are not restricted in how they use language (Khotso 2017; Mokala 2020; Rapeane 2003).

Song 4: *Ke na le taba* ('Mathato)

'Mathato, 'Mathato

'Mathato wee, ke na le taba, [Hey 'Mathato, I have a burning issue]

Ke na le taba, ke na le taba, [I have a burning issue x2]

'Mathato oee, ke na le taba, [Hey 'Mathato, I have a burning issue]

Mpuse, Seema, basali che, ke na le taba [Mpuse, Seema, women hey, I have a burning issue]

Mpuse, 'Mathato, 'Mathato wee ke na le taba [Mpuse, Mmathato, I have a burning issue]

Ke na le taba, kena le taba, basali che, ke na le taba [I have a burning issue x2, women hey, I have a burning issue]

Mme Mpuse, khoba maitšoafo

Sebina o re u ba rutile, [Mother Mpuse, calm down, Sebina says you taught them]

U ba file kahare ho letsoho pinyaneng ea malapa, ea basali [You have explained to them all about top family and women's secrets].

Empa ena ya kajeno, ya ho ba ruta mokhoa oa pina, ea ho siea lefa lena la hao la pina, ekare bohle joale ba ka tla ba tla anya lena le mokhasula [But this one of today of teaching them your secret of being a musician and leaving them the legacy, it's as if all can come to benefit from you].

In the above song, Puseletso Seema, popularly known as Mme Mpuse, seems to be worried that there is a top-secret that fellow women do not want to reveal to her. She discovers that the top-secret is about her and the excellent work she is doing in teaching young women to consider genuine sisterhood and provide them with the tactics of living happily in their marriage. Young women are very thankful for all the teaching she gave them. The excellent work she is doing reflects on attributes of Africana womanism. Al-Harbi (2017) reiterates that the Africana womanist is family centred and is committed to mothering and nurturing. These, then, are Puseletso Seema's characteristics in her society. Puseletso uses her songs, in this case, to display the excellent work of mothering and to nurture especially young women in her community through her teachings.

Puseletso Seema symbolises a woman who loves music and fights for other women's rights through her songs. According to Coplan (1990), women performed *famo* songs in the shebeen not only for trade or entertainment purposes but also because:

[B]ars provided women with the inspiration and compositional models of male patrons' songs of experience, along with acknowledged places to perform their songs of worldly wisdom, moral assessment, self-justification, and affliction. (p. 255)

It is worth noting that women play an essential role in accordion music. Coplan (1990) further explains that:

[T]hough men also take their solo turns, often as a resort to an appreciation for a female singer's barbs or praises, the recognised virtuosity of this style are women, who will not perform without instrumental accompaniment. (p. 255)

Thus, through accordion music, women are empowered to express themselves. The delineations imply that Puseletso Seema's mission is to challenge the oppressive forces confronting Basotho women's struggle for survival. Borrowing Pellerin's (2012) views, Puseletso Seema is an agent of change for Basotho women. Through her songs, she stands against all forms of oppression women go through in their relationships and within the industry so much dominated by men.

Research shows that *famo* music was initially brought to the scene by women, but men took over, trying to discourage women from singing this type of music (Khotso 2017; Phafoli 2009). Coplan (1990) echoes the sentiments of Phafoli by explaining that '[u]p until 1962, 25% of known Basotho migrants were women, but South African legislation made female migration from Basutoland illegal'. In taking this

argument further, Coplan (1990) notes that Basotho women migration to South Africa was banished because of the notorious behaviour of the women getting into prostitution and their illegal selling of alcohol. These 'barflies and canteen-keepers; single, deserting, or married who develop' the *famo* dance and song genre that forms the basis of contemporary Basotho national popular music. Coplan (1990:255) further explains that the distorted social system that no longer provided social security in return for the continuing subordination of women made migration to South Africa an attractive, sometimes necessary alternative to exploitative local chiefs and in-laws. Local authorities attempted to deal with this problem by collaborating with South African attempts to prevent the flow of women across the Caledon River, but with little effect except to keep female migrants on the move, wherever they were. Women who migrated explicitly to enter the liquor trade often returned with their migrant menfolk and established the shebeen as a fixture of town and country life in Lesotho itself.

Conclusion

Puseletso Seema has managed to empower herself and Basotho women represented by her. Her songs reflect her survival during difficult times while she was young and when she first started as an artist in the Basotho accordion music arena. The strategies that she provides through her songs empower Basotho women to improve their own livelihoods. Besides, Puseletso Seema has shown that when women fend for themselves, they acquire nicknames that talk about their ability to work for their families; though they are also given derogatory names as is exemplified by the fact that she was bestowed a dehumanising 'name' for fending for herself. In this way, she communicates to the Basotho women that they should not be demotivated by toxic nicknames, but that they should continue to work for their families. She also encourages Basotho women to have secrets and only open up their secrets to the right people who can offer help, hence her call to Her Majesty Queen 'Masenate.

The songs further disclose that older women like Puseletso Seema have a crucial role to play in society. Their role is to teach young women to respect and appreciate their elders. Furthermore, through the African womanism framework, Puseletso Seema's accordion music demonstrates that even though society might sometimes misjudge beautiful and well-built women like her, they have an important role to play in society. Hence, through the chosen *famo* songs, Puseletso Seema perseveres and strives for Basotho women empowerment as a female accordion musician. This study concludes that the selected songs reveal some situations whereby women are forced to change their roles and migrate to South Africa to work for their families. Lastly, this article concludes that through her song, Puseletso Seema encourages young women to respect their in-laws so that their relation can change for the better. What is particularly striking about Puseletso Seema's songs selected for this study is that she addresses Basotho women's challenges, approaching several

issues that range from oppression, silencing social structures and issues about relationships with other women.

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Competing interests

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Authors' contributions

N.T.M. conceived the original idea and wrote the manuscript; L.G.M. contributed to the conceptualisation of the article, as well as analysis and interpretation of the data. M.K. contributed to the conceptualisation of the study and the three authors jointly critically revised, edited and approved the article.

Ethical considerations

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Data availability

The authors confirm that the data supporting the findings of this study are available within the article.

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