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Lebollo's Potential to Reduce Violence and Murders Linked to Likobo/ Famo Gangs in Lesotho: Thoughts on Peacebuilding Education

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Abstract: Lesotho currently ranks among the top ten countries with the highest murder rates in the world, according to Population Review data, due to its high homicide rate. *Famo* gang violence contributes significantly to various forms of violence, including murder and domestic abuse. A number of strategies, including interventions by the government and non-governmental organisations have been used to reduce violence related to *famo* gangs. In contrast, I argue in this paper that most peace initiatives have focused on direct or physical violence by using peacekeeping and peacemaking strategies. These programmes do not address the cultural and structural manifestations of murder and violence that have contributed to conditions inimical to sustainable peace. Therefore, this paper proposes strategic intervention that uses education for peacebuilding to address structural and cultural violence. It further argues that the knowledge and skills acquired at *Lebollo* School are often uncritically linked to the violent behaviour of *famo* gangs. In order to transform and re-articulate the knowledge and skills from *lebollo* into peacebuilding cultural resources, it has been suggested that peacebuilding education be incorporated into the curricula of *Lebollo* Schools. Specifically, the conscientisation of the cohorts of *lebollo* through dialogical processes is proposed to support the contextualisation and application of international peacebuilding education material for the transformation of *lebollo*.

Keywords: famo; lebollo; marashea; peacebuilding education; violence

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Introduction

In this paper, I argue that the indigenous Basotho education and schooling system (*lebollo*) has the potential to mitigate *likobo/ famo* gangsters' violence and conflict in both Lesotho and South Africa. *Famo* gangs derive their name from *famo* (also known as *likobo*) *music*, which originated among Basotho male groups but has subsequently attracted women, who wear Basotho blankets with identifying colours and participate in *famo* performance. According to Phafoli and Zulu (2017) and Monaheng (2014), *famo* refers to the act of opening one's nostrils widely (*ho famola linko*) while dancing to accordion music (*'mino oa koriana*) combined with Sesotho songs, praises and poetic illustrations (*lithoko/lifela*), often accompanied by

holding a fighting stick (*molamu*). Coplan (1987) interprets *famo* music more broadly, describing it as a dance in which both male and female dancers display their private parts, rather than limiting its meaning to nose posture, sticks and the accordion. Consequently, the term *famo* has evolved to denote Basotho accordion music in its entirety, rather than a single dance posture or gesture. According to Monaheng (2020), Phafoli and Zulu (2017), and Coplan (1987), contemporary *Famo* music can be traced back to the early twentieth century to Basotho gangs of migrant mineworkers known as *Marashea* or Russian men (naming themselves after the notorious Russian armies of World War II) and *matekatsi* women (loosely translated as prostitutes).

Contemporary *famo* gangs appear historically connected to earlier *Marashea* gangsterism. Kynoch (2001) explains that the *Marashea* emerged in the Rand mining compounds during the early 1940s, where frequent ethnic violence prompted Basotho mineworkers and other groups to organise themselves for protection. This violence later spread to nearby townships, where Basotho migrants were often targeted by urban criminal groups. The *Marashea* later developed into organised rival bands structured along regional identities from Lesotho, particularly the Matsieng (Makaota) and the Matšekha (Molapo and Masupha sub-groups). These groups used distinctive blanket colours and reflected longstanding regional tensions. Although initially defensive, they gradually became associated with criminal and antisocial activities (Kynoch, 2001).

Kynoch (2001) also distinguishes between employed miners and loafers (*malofa*) within the *Marashea*. The *malofa* depended on miners' wages and provided services such as managing relationships with women. Over time, they increasingly relied on coercive and illegal activities, including robbery, property seizure, illicit alcohol production, and illegal trading of minerals.

The old *Marashea* gang system went into decline in the late twentieth century, most likely due to the decreasing number of Basotho employed in the mining sector because of increased retrenchments, non-renewal of contracts, and reduced recruitment rates (Phafoli, 2018). Modern *famo/likobo* gangsterism emerged in the early 21st century in the northern parts of Lesotho (Matšekheng, Berea district) when veteran *famo* artists such as Apollo Ntabanyane rose to prominence. At this point *famo* music began to move beyond shebeens, where it was used to attract and entertain customers, to the formal music industry where artists began to be invited to perform at special national and private activities, and sell their music productions (Mohloboli 2018; Phafoli, 2018). As a result, numerous talented artists entered this new industry. By the year 2000, the *famo* music industry had firmly established itself in Lesotho and South Africa, with more artists joining, the majority of whom came from Lesotho's southern parts (Makaoteng, Mafeteng district).

Famo-related violence in Lesotho is believed to have originated from competitive burial associations. As the number of *famo* artists grew and the music market declined, rivalry intensified over resources such as radio airplay, recording opportunities, market influence, and control of illegal mining sites in South Africa (Monaheng, 2014). By 2009, these tensions had escalated into violent conflict, with over 100 reported deaths by 2010. Unlike earlier gangsterism – which was limited to urban townships – *famo* violence extends to artists' family members – causing fear, displacement, school dropouts, and community disruption (Shale, 2021; Mohloboli 2019; Mohloboli 2019; Moya, 2018). Its persistence has elevated *famo* gangsterism to a national security concern, with political leaders describing it as a form of terrorism (Mohloboli, 2022).

In response to the famo-related violence and other associated factors, this paper proposes aligning *Lebollo* School with the formal education system as a peacebuilding intervention. Using analytic autoethnography, the study explores how *Lebollo* education can support peacebuilding and help reduce gang-related violence.

The study does not present *lebollo* as a direct cause of *famo* violence. Instead, it situates it within broader structural conditions such as political corruption, economic marginalisation, and institutional failure. *Lebollo* is analysed as a site of cultural transmission whose symbols, skills, and values are reinterpreted within the *famo* gang culture to legitimise and sustain violence, functioning as a cultural mediator rather than a deterministic cause.

Method

The discussion on articulating *lebollo* as a framework to address the current *famo/likobo* music murders was guided by an analytic autoethnography. According to Qutoshi (2015), autoethnography is the study of human lived experiences as portrayed through cultural lenses in order to make sense of life situations within their sociocultural contexts. Ellis et al. (2011) argues that the author of autoethnography writes about prior events

retroactively and selectively. Typically, the author does not live through these events primarily for the purpose of including them in a published document; rather, these experiences are reconstructed through reflection. To aid memory, the author employs a variety of texts, including interviews, existing literature, and recordings.

Alongside autoethnographic reflections, I consulted newspapers, government and non-governmental reports, journals, and books to provide contextual depth and triangulate findings beyond personal experience. Sources were selected for their relevance to *famo*/*likobo* violence, peacebuilding education, and the cultural context of *Lebollo* School, with emphasis on materials published within the past two decades. Credibility and diversity were prioritised by using official reports, peer-reviewed journals, and reputable news outlets.

The documents were analysed using thematic content analysis to identify recurring themes on the nature of *famo* violence, its cultural and structural foundations, and peacebuilding efforts. These themes were compared with autoethnographic accounts to identify areas of convergence and divergence, strengthening interpretive validity. Triangulation involved integrating documentary evidence, lived experience, and academic literature while remaining critically aware of potential biases such as political influence or media sensationalism. Information was crosschecked, where possible, to minimise these limitations.

My discussion of *Lebollo* School and *famo* gangsterism draws on my position as an indigenous Mosotho, enabling me to function as a complete member researcher in line with Anderson's (2006) analytic autoethnography. By situating personal perspectives within existing literature, I maintained analytic reflexivity and dialogue beyond the self. My understanding of *famo* gangs, *lebollo*, and education is examined and validated through engagement with scholarly sources. The self is reflected through the organisation of arguments and interaction with literature rather than field notes. Galtung's (1975, 2004) theories of violence and peacebuilding education further informed the theoretical analysis.

This study adopts an analytic autoethnographic approach that prioritises insider cultural knowledge and theoretical engagement over extensive personal narrative or field observation((Boyd 2008; Anderson 2006). The analysis relies on relevant and credible literature selected for its proximity to *famo/likobo* violence. However, the study acknowledges the absence of primary empirical data from *lebollo* schools, initiates, or *famo* gang members as a limitation. As an indigenous Mosotho researcher, I also recognise that my positionality – including gender, class, education, and personal relationships to *lebollo* and *famo* culture – shapes the interpretation. This reflexive awareness enhances transparency and rigour, while highlighting the need for future research incorporating direct community perspectives and deeper positional reflexivity.

Analytic framework

The purpose of this study is to examine ways of reducing violence and fostering peace among *famo* gangs. Understanding *famo* gangsterism and its associated violence and conflict is the first step towards proposing a peacebuilding plan. According to Galtung (2004), in order to propose an effective approach for dealing with violence, it must first be analysed and comprehended. Violence analysis, which seeks to develop a clearer and deeper understanding of the genesis, nature, and dynamics of the violence in question, is a most crucial and necessary step that must be taken before any peace intervention can be proposed or implemented.

One of the imperatives of analysing violence, according to Galtung (2004), is to trace its creation and examine how the meta-conflict has wreaked havoc within and among humans, groups, and communities, resulting in war-torn people, war-torn societies, and war-torn places. To map the analytic framework for violence, Galtung proposes a triangle model with three components: direct violence, indirect cultural violence, and structural violence. Direct violence reflects and reinforces structural and cultural violence. Direct violence, physical and/or verbal, is displayed in visible behaviour. However, this visible action does not arise from nowhere but stems from invisible cultural and structural violence. Galtung (2004) explains that direct violence can take many forms. In its classic form, it entails the use of physical force, such as murder or torture, rape and sexual assault, and assault. It also includes verbal abuse, such as humiliation, provocation, and psychological harm.

Galtung (2004) defines cultural violence as "the prevalent attitudes and beliefs about the power and necessity of violence that people have been taught since childhood and that surround people's daily lives" (p.12). Structural violence, on the other hand, refers to unequal access to goods, resources, opportunities attributed to specific groups, classes, genders, nationalities, and other social classifications and stratifications, and this unequal advantage is embedded in people's social, political, and economic structures. The Galtung violence triangle

framework is a useful tool for analysing *famo* direct, cultural, and structural constructs. Understanding the nature of violence, as Galtung suggests, aided in the formulation of the proposed *Lebollo* School peace intervention.

While Galtung's violence triangle offers a key framework for understanding conflict in Lesotho, peacebuilding scholarship and the "local turn" stress that local practices are neither inherently peaceful nor violent (Mac Ginty and Richmond 2013; Mac Ginty and & Raymond , 2013; Autesserre 2014; Leonardsson & Rudd, 2015). Within this context, *lebollo* (initiation school) emerges as a contested local practice shaped by indigenous knowledge systems and decolonial educational philosophies that transmit moral values, cultural norms, and social responsibilities (Odora Hoppers, 2002; Shizha, 2013; Kaya & Seleti, 2013). Simultaneously, *lebollo* contributes to constructing masculine identities linked to bravery, warriorship, and social discipline, which may also reinforce violent masculinity (Hunter, 2005; Leclerc-Madlala 2009; Morrell 2001). These perspectives position *lebollo* as a complex institution that can both mitigate and legitimise violence depending on its social and political expression.

Analysis of the nature of Famo/Likobo Gang violence

Famo violence operates at three levels proposed in Galtung's violence triangle: direct, structural and cultural violence. Direct violence among *famo* gangs occurs in two forms identified by Galtung (2004), namely, verbal or physical conflicts. *Famo* gangs' verbal violence is exhibited through traditional music genre, in which *famo* artists attack rivals using offensive lyrics. Hence why Ms. Tampane – the then Minister of Tourism, Environment, and Culture – ordered all national radio stations to temporarily stop playing *famo* music in 2015. The Minister also considered petitioning studios to temporarily stop recording *famo* music and urged Basotho not to purchase it (Kabi & Mokotjo, 2015).

Wearing specific colours of *likobo* (blankets) and the accompanying clothing, such as jerseys and wool hats, also constitutes direct violence. The wearing of *likobo* signifies one's open rivalry with – and perhaps direct provocation of – the rival blanket colours. For example, Kabi (2016, May 3) describes how one *famo* group insulted and harassed school children for wearing a school uniform with the colours of the rival group. According to Kabi and Mokotjo (2015), Minister Tampane also urged Basotho in general to refrain from wearing famo-related regalia until a more permanent solution to the violence that has claimed dozens of lives since 2009 could be found. Direct physical violence by *famo* gangsters has also taken the form of sporadic murders targeting rivals from other *famo* gangs, as well as their relatives including children and women. Members of the police service have also been among the targeted victims. Sergeant Qetelo Letela, who was allegedly shot dead in Mokhotlong by 10 members of the Kobo-kholo *famo* gang, is one example of police victims. Other victims include members of the legal profession, including Advocate Elliot, a well-known lawyer who was believed to have been murdered by *famo* gangsters who were enraged by the fact that he was representing members of a rival gang in an unspecified criminal case (Mohloboli, 2022; Chikowore, 2021; Liphoto, 2021).

Political, legal, and economic opportunities – which Galtung (2004) identified as defining characteristics of structural violence – also appear to drive *famo* gang conflicts. According to Shale (2021), some political parties have turned to alliances with well-known *famo* music groups, particularly the "Terene" and "Seakhi," in order to raise money for their political campaigns. In return, the parties nominated members of these groups among their parliamentary candidates, as was the case during the 2017 snap elections. Other *famo* group members have worked for the government as drivers. Their infiltration of state institutions seems to suggest that their violent activities are tolerated. As a result, the Basotho widely perceive these groups to be politically shielded from prosecution.

Furthermore, according to Mohloboli (2022) and Likiki (2021), politicians use *famo* gang members as assassins to kill their political rivals. The former leader of Terene, "Mosotho Chakela" or Rethabile Mokete, allegedly demanded his "pound of flesh" from the ABC-led government during a radio broadcast in 2019. He demanded to be rewarded with a ministerial position, government tenders, and other government jobs for his supporters. In his demands, Chakela stated that he had "fought tooth and nail" and "shed tears and blood" in order to bring the All Basotho Convention (ABC) to power. Chakela's statements were widely interpreted as referring to the killings carried out by the Terene group to eliminate ABC political rivals. Politicians employ *famo* artists as assassins not only for political rivalry, as Mohloboli (2022) suggests, but also against individuals perceived to pose a threat to politicians' personal or social interests. For instance, in one legal proceeding, former Prime Minister Thomas Thabane and his wife, Maesaiah, were accused of paying the Terene leader, Rethabile Mokete, to arrange the killing of the former premier's ex-wife, Lipolelo Thabane, on June 14, 2017. In court documents submitted to the

High Court in 2020, Deputy Police Commissioner (DCP), Paseka Mokete, named Mr. Rethabile Mokete as one of the alleged hitmen who the Thabane couple allegedly hired to kill Lipolelo.

Mohloboli (2022) also highlights the connection between the police and the *famo* gangs. Police are accused of either being *famo* gang members or of assisting the criminal activities of these gangs by supplying them with firearms. In what was allegedly an inside job, seventy-five guns were taken from the Mafeteng Police Station's arsenal in November 2021. It has been reported that some of these weapons were sold to the *famo* gangs, who were allegedly responsible for a series of killings in Lesotho and at several illegal mining sites in South Africa. Since then, three police officers have admitted to taking some of the weapons and selling them to the *famo* gang members for up to M50, 000 each. The issue of structural violence, in which the police enabled Basotho gangs to commit crimes, is not new; it dates back to the days of the early *Marashea* gangs. Kynoch (2001) observed that the old *Marashea* were able to establish working relationships with some police officers, usually by bribing them or providing information and acting as assassins for the police. The police reportedly helped the *Marashea* in a variety of ways, including by giving them guns, intervening in their fights, apprehending rivals, and misplacing or destroying evidence.

At Galtung's (2004) level of cultural violence – which takes into account attitudes and beliefs about the power and necessity of violence taught from childhood and embedded in everyday life, *Lebollo* School and education – seems to have a direct relationship with *famo/likobo* gangs and *Marashea* gangs. The knowledge and skills used by *famo* musicians were learned at *Lebollo* School, and *Lebollo* School graduates constitute the majority of these *famo* gangs. *Famo* is a genre of music that, despite using foreign instruments like the guitar, drums, and accordion, is remarkably unique to Basotho culture because of the *lifela/lithoko* (praise songs), to which the instruments merely add rhythm and melody. According to Coplan 1988, the origin of *lifela/lithoko* can be mostly attributed to the songs (*mangae, likoma*) and initiates' praises (*lithoko tsa makoloane*) sung at the pass-out ceremony of *lebollo* candidates. For Coplan, the term *sefela* (plural-*lifela*) originally referred to solo sections within *mangae* (traditional) choral songs performed at the *Lebollo* School graduation ceremony, where candidates recited self-praising poetry.

According to Maharasoa and Maharaswa (2004), the *lebollo* curriculum incorporates artistic competencies which enable students to learn to compose songs and poems. Additionally, Manyeli 1995 states that *Lebollo* School places a high priority on musical instruction. Students learn how to cram, compose, and recite poems that use allegory to describe natural objects, with a strong emphasis on rhyme and poetic form. The singing of *mangae* and recitation of *lithoko* by *lebollo* candidates at their graduation, according to Coplan (1991), demonstrates knowledge and skills acquired through intensive instruction provided by the basuoe (sing: *mosuoe* - teacher). The name is derived from *ho suha* - "to make hides supple". *Mosuoe*'s responsibilities include instructing students in various *lebollo* curriculum activities, such as singing *likoma* (secret songs) and creating *mangae* and *lithoko*.

The *molamu* dancing stick is another factor that ties *famo* gangs to *lebollo*. The *molamu* is swayed dramatically in harmony with the *famo* music. In addition to being a dancing stick, the *molamu* is a representation of bravery or readiness for battle. The significance of *molamu* for Basotho men is well defined by Mokala (2020), who asserts that Basotho men are typically observed walking around carrying their sticks. They use *molamu* as a tool and a symbol of identify. A Mosotho man uses his *molamu* in battle and believes that if he has it with him, he will prevail even if his opponents use karate moves. Since the early years of Basotho boys' development, *molamu* has been used in combat. While taking care of the animals, boys engage in a variety of games in the veld. *Mokallo* (stick fighting) is one of the most notable games that Basotho boys play to prepare for selection as warriors and for more rigorous training at the Futhwa 2011 asserts that *molamu* fighting is a crucial part of the *lebollo* curriculum, which exposes young Basotho to learning how to fight (*ho kalla*) using *molamu. Ho kalla* is a required course that all *lebollo* students must take to master the proper use of *molamu*.

Dancing with *molamu* in *famo* music is also a demonstration that one is skilled in *molamu* fighting, and serves as provocation, mostly among *lebollo* alumni. As stated by Kynoch (2001), joining *borashea* or becoming a member of *Marashea* gangs was viewed as the fulfilment of a longstanding dream of *lebollo* alumni. One of Kynoch's informants said.

When I came out of initiation [Lebollo] school I was interested in the people called Marashea in South Africa. I wanted to go to the mines so that I could join them. When I arrived there I visited Thabong [township adjacent to Welkom] where I met [and joined] Marashea (p.254).

In other words, *Marashea* provided a stage for individuals to demonstrate their proficiency with *molamu* fighting strategies. However, *molamu* has been transformed into what Liphoto (2018) calls a gun culture in contemporary *Marashea* or *famo* gangs. The gun has taken the place of *molamu*, hence the *molamu* that is waved during singing is merely symbolic – the real *molamu*, the gun, is kept hidden. The Sesotho word for gun – *sethunya* – is rarely used by Basotho men who, instead, refer to a gun as '*molamu'*. Therefore, the word *molamu* can refer to both a symbolic fighting stick and the actual *molamu*, which is the gun.

Bravery or having a brave attitude is related to *molamu*, which is another factor linking *lebollo* to *Marashea* or *famo* gangs. The conflict and killings between and among *famo* gangs are seen as acts of bravery because neither group is willing to submit to the other for fear of being perceived as cowardly. *Famo* musician gangs frequently show off their admiration for bravery at funerals of fallen members, who are praised for their bravery rather than mourned. In Pheko 2019 account, heroic songs (*makhele*) are sung while gunshots are fired into the air and *molamu* fighting takes place during a funeral. Some of the participants in the fighting sustain serious injuries. The coffin is raised high in order to be beaten with *melamu* (plural of *molamu*) while singing "*tlake se solle re epela motho, motho oa marumo h'a epeloe hae*" (let vultures not hover around for we are burying a hero who died from spear stabbing, who is not supposed to be buried within village vicinity). Kynoch (2001) noted that the same behaviour was displayed during the *Marashea* burial rites, where fighting broke out between group members because blood had to be shed before the deceased could be buried. The *Marashea*'s militaristic identity was more obvious during their funeral rites, when the corpse was carried to the grave while being accompanied by war songs. According to Kynoch 2000, bravery and fighting prowess were necessary for career advancement because they helped one earn the respect and admiration of colleagues. The *Lebollo* School instils a behavioural attitude of bravery in all its students. The importance of *bonatla* (*warriorship*) or bravery in *lebollo* education, where students are taught to develop war skills like courage and the capacity to face an enemy, is well noted by Maharasoa and Maharaswa (2004). According to Mohlaloka et al. (2016), *lebollo* schools provide spaces where brave warriors are raised and taught how to live like 'real men'. Manyeli 2001 supports the idea that the physical hardships *lebollo* students had to endure – such as beatings, fighting among themselves, and being subjected to thirst and hunger – helped to instil courage in them. Students who persevered through these ordeals without flinching won the admiration of their peers and teachers.

These are just the few instances that connect *lebollo* to *famo* gangsterism; the list is undoubtedly much longer. If *Lebollo* School is a factor in the skills and knowledge exhibited by *famo* gangs, might it not also offer a potential remedy? How could *lebollo* be enlisted to encourage harmony among *famo* musicians? What other initiatives have been made to advance peace, and why did they fail? This study explores some of these questions with the aim to contribute to transforming *lebollo* into a useful tool for social and moral development.

Proposition for peacebuilding among Famo Gangs

If it is reasonable to assume that *lebollo* directly influences *famo/likobo* gang culture, then peace initiatives should aim to transform *lebollo,* both as a concept and a cultural institution. The argument acknowledges that the problem of *famo* gangsterism was not left unaddressed; however, the peace initiatives employed are unlikely to result in a lasting peace. Galtung (1996) distinguished between negative and positive peace initiatives. The absence of direct violence is a form of negative peace. This might signal the end of active hostilities or a ceasefire. Positive peace is the absence of all types of violence, including indirect structural and cultural forms of violence. Building positive peace means aiming for a lasting peace rather than just putting an end to or stopping violence. In Galtung's words (1996), positive peace is more than "passive peaceful coexistence." One could contend that the failure of peace initiatives to reduce violence associated with *famo* gangs lies in their emphasis on negative peace without taking positive peace into account.

The second argument is that the current *famo* gang peace initiatives are based on two approaches of peacemaking and peacekeeping, which Galtung (1976) argued needed to be augmented by peacebuilding. According to Galtung (1976), peacekeeping is frequently a dissociation method in which antagonistic parties are kept apart by the mutual fear of harsh punishment if either side crosses into the other's territory. Social controls such as social distance are used to maintain power relationships between antagonistic groups. If these social efforts are insufficient to sustain or lessen the absence of direct violence between warring factions, outside intervention may be required.

The government initiated a peacekeeping approach to address violence associated with *famo* gangs. One example was the peace initiative of the former Prime Minister Thomas Thabane. According to Mohloboli (2018), Thabane

organised a meeting with the rival *famo* factions in Mafeteng, a notorious hotspot for *famo* killings. At the gathering, Thabane declared that his government had made the urgent decision to stop the killings and violence related to *famo* gangs. He appealed to the gang leaders to put an end to the bloodshed. According to Kabi (2016), even though it appeared that there was no ceasefire in following Thabane's plea, Special Operations Unit (SOU) police were stationed in Mafeteng district, and this undoubtedly contributed to a reduction in murders. After a significant outbreak of violence in 2019, the army set up camp in the same district. The army reported positive results, including a decline in crime in the areas where their troops were stationed (Sello, 2019). Galtung (1976) contends that peacekeeping primarily produces a negative peace that disregards structural and cultural violence centred on direct conflict, which only results in a brief ceasefire. Despite the army and police maintaining relative calm in a violent area, *famo* gang violence has persisted.

A peacemaking or conflict-resolution strategy is another way to bring about peace in a violent environment, according to Galtung 1967. The primary goal of conflict resolution is to eliminate the sources of tension. Peacemaking initiatives can take a more or less radical approach to achieving peace, and may vary in their tolerance for the status quo. Typically, a third person will mediate a solution between competing parties. Throughout the process, the third party may have separate and/or simultaneous contact with the conflicting parties, or facilitate interaction through a carefully "controlled communication" context. The goal of the communication process may be to make the parties more aware of the situation, identify possible solutions, or even carry out a decision that has been reached.

With the help of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace (CCJP) adopted a peacemaking strategy to put an end to the *famo* violence. The Mafeteng district's Ribaneng area became the focus of these targeted interventions to advance social cohesion and peace because it was thought to be the epicentre of the *famo* music gang-related violence that has claimed many lives, including women and children (Shale, 2021). Although Shale classifies this as a peacebuilding intervention, it is argued that this initiative was primary peacemaking. Shale (2021) claims that the CCJP used a community-based peace model to settle the dispute. Shale argues that this model was largely successful in handling the Ribaneng cases because it made use of social capital. This model was used to establish, train, and support the Ribaneng Peace Making Committee (RPMC), a local peace committee made up of members of the community policing forum, herdsmen, teachers, and church leaders, to facilitate peace activities in the affected communities. Given that it was the first structured multi-stakeholder conflict intervention after the initial initiatives spearheaded by the government; the CCJP Ribaneng intervention was widely regarded as effective.

Shale (2021) acknowledged the successes of the RPMC, but also noted its shortcomings, chief among which was the manner in which the committee was increasingly used as a political tool to further political goals. Shale's observation can be used to support the claim that the strategy was more akin to peacemaking than peacebuilding because the main objective was to eliminate immediate sources of conflict while assuming the rest would resolve itself. It thus produced momentary or a form of negative peace, not a lasting peace. Galtung (1976) argues against the peacemaking strategy because it involves a misconception that conflict resolution occurs once both parties confirm a deal. The actors could disappear (fragment) and be replaced by new actors for whom the agreement is no longer binding, thereby limiting the durability of such resolutions. An agreement established, often under duress from outside parties, may not even be self-sustaining. The creation of the RPMC and its activities were predicated on the problematic assumption of bringing parties involved in a conflict together to work towards the eradication of direct violence while structural and cultural violence remained unaddressed. The weakness of peacemaking structures is reflected in the political manipulation of the community and the persistence of violence.

Peacebuilding, according to Galtung (1976), encompasses both peacekeeping and peacemaking, but unlike the two latter types of mediation, it supports an associative approach to conflict that can address the direct, structural, and cultural roots of violence in their broadest sense. This is the strategy advocated in this study as having the possibility for sustainable peace. The peacebuilding strategy is based on the premise that peace mechanisms should be included within permanent structures as resources from which the system may draw, similar to how a healthy body can create its own antibodies and does not require ad hoc drug administration (Galtung, 1976). One way to promote peace is through education. Peace education, according to UNICEF (1999), is the dissemination of the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values necessary to influence behavioural changes that will enable children, youth, and adults to prevent conflict and violence, both overt and structural, to resolve conflict amicably, and to establish the conditions necessary for peace, whether at an intrapersonal, interpersonal,

intergroup, national, or international level. The goal of peace education, according to Harris (2009), is to instil a commitment to the ways of peace in people's everyday practices and consciousness.

Since it is argued in this paper that there is a connection between the *Lebollo* School and *famo* gangsterism, peace education for existing and potential *famo* members ought to be carried out within this institution. *Lebollo* School is a cultural hub for the educational development of Basotho youth. For better or worse, says Naidu-Silverman (2015), culture and conflict are intertwined. To put it another way, it has the potential to both spark and transform violent conflict. In a similar vein, despite the assertion that its graduates were violent, the Lebollo School can be reconceptualised for education in peacebuilding.

Justification for teaching Famo Gang members about peacebuilding at Lebollo School

Several reasons can be advanced for promotion of peacebuilding education through merging *Lebollo* School and formal education system. Apart from the perception that *Lebollo* School is responsible for the knowledge that produced *Famo/Marashea* members, there are additional reasons supporting the articulation of cultural resources for peacebuilding. Firstly, it has to be understood that peacebuilding education is a global phenomenon. However, there is a growing realisation that culturally motivated violence cannot be addressed by prescriptive externally driven peacebuilding activities. According to UNESCO (2018), there is now a shift in global thinking from "one-size-fits-all" peacebuilding initiatives to "local ownership of peacebuilding," where local actors are actively involved in the design and decision-making processes of peacebuilding. This global recognition of the needed local participation in peacebuilding has been popularised as the "local turn." The "local turn" describes a growing interest on international peacebuilding stakeholders to explore indigenous, customary and traditional institutions and approaches to conflict resolution and peacebuilding. The "local turn" hybridises international notions of peacebuilding with local modes of thinking and institutions that can contribute to peacebuilding (UNESCO, 2018). Proposing *Lebollo* School and formal education, therefore, contributes to the broader global agenda of peacebuilding through the integration of international peacebuilding educational content with local education content. That is, employing transformative approaches that can reframe *lebollo* and orient it towards providing peacebuilding education.

Furthermore, there is a strong argument that while cultural content has the potential to cause and fuel conflict, it can contribute immensely to peacebuilding efforts. For example, Naidu-Silverman (2015) shares a similar view to Seidl-Fox and Sridhar (2014) that while art and cultural activities can fuel violence and conflict, they also have significant potential to build peace and facilitate processes of reconciliation. Naidu-Silverman (2015) observes that if strategically harnessed towards rebuilding a just and peaceful society, art and culture can indeed contribute to reconciliation and lasting peace. Artists offer original and alternative future visions while speaking for the political and cultural realities of their times. As already mentioned, the main sources of *famo* violence have been traditional poetic music that depicts intergroup conflicts and the provocative *molamu* dance that is embedded in *famo* culture. On the other hand, through the *Lebollo* School and the broader education system, *famo* music and *molamu* dance could be strategically reframed as cultural artefacts for peacebuilding.

Naidu-Silverman (2015) makes the additional point that just as culture affects conflict, conflict also shapes the cultural facets of group identity. New cultural patterns that promote a culture of violence appear when there is persistent violence. Groups in conflict situations develop specific cultural beliefs about the conflict, such as the perceived victimisation of the in-group, the delegitimisation of the out-group, and beliefs related to patriotism and loyalty to the in-group. Additionally, the conflict generates some cultural products, such as monuments and new rituals that tend to support the ongoing hostilities and the myths that have emerged as a result of the conflict. However, Naidu-Silverman (2015) acknowledges that societies may be able to reimagine cultures of peace, justice, and equality by using the same cultural content that is produced during conflict. Such cultural resources could also be mobilised to develop interpersonal relationships based on empathy, respect and trust, as well as creating spaces for communication, reconciliation, and forgiveness.

Supporting, Naidu-Silverman's claim, it has been noted that *famo* gangs have developed cultural practices and rituals that sustain conflict and violence. According to the LesothoTimes (2010), the conviction of two men who were accused of planning to kill two well-known *Famo* musicians and two radio hosts and ultimately sentenced to four years each revealed the ritualised nature of violence in the *Famo* music industry. The two convicts, Puseletso Motsoaole, 28, and Thabiso Roeli, 20, testified in court that they were required to murder four people as part of their initiation into the Seakhi (*famo* gang) led by Bereng Majoro, also known as "Lekase" in *famo* circles. These victims included two radio hosts who were accused of playing music from rival gangs and two

members of *famo* rival groups. According to the Lesotho Times, a litany of murders committed in acts of group solidarity includes killings of family members and friends in retaliation for the deaths of victims' associates. However, it would be strategically beneficial to reorient these cultural practices and rituals for peacebuildin*g* through *Lebollo* School.

Galtung 1990 argues that cultural violence makes direct and structural violence appear and even feel acceptable, if not right. The study of cultural violence should focus on how structural violence and direct acts of violence are justified and, as a result, made acceptable in society. Changing an act's moral hue from red (wrong) to green (right), or at the very least, yellow (acceptable), is one form of cultural violence. Another is to mask reality in order to prevent people from seeing violent acts or facts or from perceiving them as violent. The *Lebollo* School's cultural knowledge and skills have historically obscured the true nature of *famo* music's violence by giving it the name "*bochaba*," or nationalism. *Lebollo* Cultural School is being proposed to address direct and structural forms of violence while also challenging and delegitimising cultural denial of them.

Re-articulation of Lebollo School for peacebuilding education

The re-articulation of *Lebollo* School and formal education through peacebuilding education is proposed within UNESCO's (2018) framework of hybridisation, which suggests combining international peace education content with local cultural channels for the dissemination of peacebuilding information. As defined by Dinnen and Kent (2015), hybridisation eliminates state-centric, formulaic, and externally driven interventions and replaces them with locally grounded and indigenous resources. The field of peacebuilding has undergone processes of hybridisation, which have led to the concept of "hybrid peace," which is explained as "intertwined relationships between the global and the local, the formal, informal, and indigenous peacebuilding education systems." In this paper, I advocate for the teaching and learning of international peacebuilding education in line with the idea of hybridisation, or "hybrid peace." However, given that the violence being addressed is locally rooted, culturally specific, and linked to indigenous schooling, such content should be delivered through indigenous educational systems with the aim of integrating international peacebuilding education teaching and learning.

When describing how hybridity is used in peacebuilding initiatives, Forsytha et al. 2018 draw a distinction between "descriptive" and "prescriptive" or "instrumental" practices. Descriptively, hybridity refers to the peaceful coexistence of various local, national and global institutions, practices, and ideas. The main objective of descriptive hybridity, according to Dinnen and Kent (2015), is to understand how things actually work on the ground from a local perspective rather than relying solely on external viewpoints. In this situation, hybridity provides a window through which to view the interactions between external actors and complex local contexts and to comprehend the crucial role of a local agency in mediating external interventions. In doing so, it makes it possible to expand the traditional focus on the state to include the entire range of actors, institutions, and practices, allowing both state and non-state actors to participate in the process of peacebuilding.

The prescriptive approach, as outlined by Forsyth et al. (2018), explains how hybridity can be deliberately designed into local peacebuilding interventions. It suggests that global and national actors can organise and manage hybridity in post-conflict settings to promote more predictable social outcomes. Proponents often argue that significant reforms are necessary before local contexts can meaningfully shape international peacebuilding efforts. For example, prevailing norms, values, and informal institutions within local communities should be recognised and, where appropriate, incorporated into new frameworks aimed at fostering peace and stability. While this recognition is an important first step, advocates of the prescriptive approach contend that merely using hybridity descriptively risks missing opportunities for practical intervention. Without intentional design, efforts may fail to address the beliefs and behaviours that sustain specific forms of localised violence.

A prescriptive hybrid approach is necessary because this paper seeks to promote international peacebuilding education as a means of transforming culturally embedded violent behaviour. Admittedly, Forsyth et al. (2017) caution that prescriptive hybridity can legitimise intrusive and overly ambitious interventions, including those aligned with divisive political, economic, or even military agendas. Given that *Lebollo* School operates outside formal state regulation within a predominantly indigenous context, such concerns may appear warranted. However, the prescriptive hybrid proposed here does not advocate direct intervention by state or international peacebuilding actors. Rather, it calls for conscientisation (critical awareness) among those involved in *lebollo* schooling regarding the ways in which certain educational practices may shape or reinforce violent norms. The aim is to explore how insights from global peacebuilding education can support internal reflection and reform,

enabling the transformation of violent beliefs and behaviours embedded within the *lebollo* educational content towards a more sustainable culture of peace.

Conscientisation is the process of becoming aware of one's social reality through critical reflection and action. Critical consciousness is a process of planned educational activities that, according to Freire (1974), are intended to expose social and cultural reality and its oppressive nature and, in this case, its violent dimensions. Critical consciousness differs from naïve consciousness, which believes it stands above facts and can manipulate them to suit its own interpretations. Critical consciousness stands in contrast to magical consciousness, which imparts knowledge to those in positions of authority while causing others to relinquish responsibility for the systems that govern them. Conscientisation is therefore an educational process that involves engaging individuals with knowledge and experiences that foster new viewpoints on violent acts and behaviours.

By making *lebollo* cohorts more conscious of how their skills and knowledge affect violence and violent behaviour, they could become more accountable. National and international peace-supporting organisations should raise awareness among those responsible for *lebollo* education regarding the relationship between *lebollo* and the violent actions of *famo* gangs. Among other *lebollo* regulatory systems, Lebollo National and Community Councils are mandated to guide and recommend changes to the management and curriculum of *lebollo* schools (Liphoto, 2022; Rapolaki, 2022). These bodies therefore constitute the key targets for conscientisation efforts.

Critical consciousness, or conscientisation, according to Paulo Freire (1974), prepares individuals to confront the barriers to their humanisation through transformative action rather than remaining at the level of mere subjective awareness. In this sense, conscientisation cannot be fully realised without social and cultural transformation. The process begins with dialogue, which seeks to move individuals beyond naïve or idealistic understandings of reality towards critical transitivity. This dialogical engagement is grounded in horizontal relationships characterised by empathy and sustained by a matrix of love, hope, and mutual trust.

Within this framework, critical consciousness must move beyond awareness to embodied praxis, concrete action directed at overcoming dehumanising structures and practices. Conscientisation is realised when reflection and action intersect to produce transformation. Such transformation is cultivated through dialogical engagement that challenges entrenched assumptions, disrupts "magical" interpretations of reality, and nurtures critical transitivity. This process depends upon horizontal relationships marked by empathy and sustained by a matrix of love, hope, and mutual trust, thereby creating the conditions necessary for meaningful social and cultural renewal (Freire, 1974).

Discussions on peacebuilding education through *Lebollo* School should focus on acknowledging and appreciating *lebollo* as a national cultural asset for peacebuilding. In order to produce *lebollo* graduates who value peace and could use their singing, dancing, and *molamu* mock combat stick for peace activism, *Lebollo* school's curriculum needs to be rearticulated.

Conclusion

Peacebuilding education cultivated through *Lebollo* School is likely to have a positive impact on *famo* gang violence. As is the case with the mainstream education system in which stakeholders and teachers are first conscientised about peacebuilding education and its pedagogy before its introduction in schools, this process should similarly occur with *lebollo* administrators, board members and teachers. A properly coordinated structure is required to ensure synergy in the entire process. However, the *lebollo* schooling system must adopt a more dialogic process as it operates outside direct government control and is culturally grounded. Transformation of cultural structures to address cultural violence requires a careful approach accompanied by empowerment strategies, including empathy and critical dialogic matrix for cultural sensitivity.

Declarations

Interdisciplinary Scope: This study spans peace and conflict studies, indigenous education, cultural anthropology, and social theory by examining *famo* gang violence in Lesotho. It engages violence analysis using Johan Galtung's framework and reinterprets *lebollo* education through critical pedagogy. Drawing on Paulo Freire's conscientization theory, the paper explores cultural knowledge transformation for peacebuilding. The research also connects music, masculinity, and

cultural performance within Basotho social contexts. Overall, the study promotes hybrid peacebuilding education integrating indigenous and global perspectives.

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