

PREFACE

In Lesotho the subject of medicine murder is a difficult and controversial one, for reasons that unfold in this book. We had become interested in it independently, each of us having long experience in the country: Murray as an anthropologist and Sanders as a colonial officer and historian. We have been helped along the way by many different people in Lesotho, in Britain and elsewhere. Many of our debts, especially to the people we interviewed, are recorded in the list of Sources at the end. We would like to acknowledge the generosity with which they shared their experiences and opinions with us. We would also like to thank a number of individuals, likewise identified in the Sources, who assisted with the provision of photographs or other material. Other debts we wish to record here directly.

In 1996 we were prompted to join forces by Miriam Basner, whose husband H. M. Basner, as defence attorney for Chief Gabashane Masupha in his trial in 1948, had been convinced of his innocence, and who had herself contributed to the flourishing genre of fiction about medicine murder. We owe her much – for putting her ‘young men’ in touch with one another, and for her unfailing support and enthusiasm. She read and commented on an early draft of the manuscript, and it is a great sorrow to us that she died in 2003 and did not live to see this book in print.

We are also deeply indebted to David Ambrose of the National University of Lesotho. To many different questions from us, both esoteric and mundane, he responded most generously with his time and with his unrivalled knowledge of written and other sources on almost every aspect of life in Lesotho in the past and the present. He read through the first major draft of the manuscript with painstaking care and attention and made many valuable suggestions. Robert Edgar, whose deep interest in Lesotho crossed our own research paths on several occasions, especially in relation to the Lekhotla la Bafo, responded quickly to various requests. Stephen Gill, responsible for the Morija Museum and Archives, helped us with particular sources there, and also offered comments on and raised questions about Case Study 1 and Case Study 4.

We would like especially to thank Khalaki Sello, in Maseru, for his vital assistance to both of us on our fieldwork journeys in 1999 to different parts of the country in search of the testimony of key individuals who were caught

up in medicine murder in one way or another: as relatives of victims or of perpetrators, as alleged murderers, as independent witnesses, or as observers with particular knowledge of local conflicts and circumstances. His diplomatic skills and his sensitivities of translation from Sesotho were invaluable to us in negotiating and carrying through a wide range of individual interviews. He introduced us to Nkherepe Molefe, a retired policeman who had his finger on the pulse of medicine murder investigations throughout the late colonial period, and indirectly to a number of other interviewees. We also thank Patrick Mohlalefi Bereng, Monaheng Maichu and Peete Mofoka for acting as occasional assistants and interpreters. For simplicity, in our accounts of individual interviews, we have often written 'we' in the main text. In practice, most interviews were conducted separately by Murray (CM) with Khalaki Sello (KS) or by Sanders (PS) with KS. This is made clear in section F of the Sources.

We are grateful to staff at many different institutions for their help in finding primary archival material: especially the Public Record Office (PRO, now the National Archives), London; the Records and Historical Department of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office at Hanslope Park, outside Milton Keynes; and Rhodes House, Oxford. Many other repositories of valuable information of one kind or another, in Lesotho, South Africa and Britain, are acknowledged in the Sources. It is appalling that the Lesotho National Archives, the most important single source of relevant primary material for our work, are now inaccessible to researchers, as described in the Introduction. Largely for this reason, we have included a substantial Appendix in this book that contains summary information on all the suspected cases of medicine murder in the colonial period that we were able to trace.

The Nuffield Foundation generously provided a grant which enabled us both to carry out fieldwork on oral sources in the course of 1999. We are very grateful for this financial support.

We have had the opportunity to make seminar presentations at the universities of Cambridge (1996 and 2001), Oxford (2001), London (2001), KwaZulu-Natal (2004) and Pretoria (2004); and at the biennial conference of the African Studies Association of the UK in September 1998. We would like to thank the participants for helpful comments and suggestions.

We thank Avril McIntyre for drawing our attention to press coverage of several '*muti* murders' in Johannesburg, and Tim Couzens for the same and for his great encouragement. Graham Taylor kindly lent us a rare copy of the souvenir booklet of the Royal Visit to Basutoland in March 1947. Michael Pollard, Derek Trillo and Nick Scarle at the University of Manchester were generous with their time and attention to fine detail in the preparation of photographs, maps, graphs and the genealogy. Megan Murray-Pepper helped her father grapple with the mysteries of Excel in preparing the first drafts of

the three graphs, and through their late adolescence she and her sister Hannah accepted with good humour his preoccupation with the project.

Anita Jackson assisted with some of the first-hand work at the PRO; she read many drafts, took part in countless discussions with PS and offered comments and suggestions throughout the research. For this, and for her support in so many other ways, PS in particular is deeply indebted to her. CM would like to thank Jane Osgood for her love and support.

Finally, we would like to thank Elizabeth Dunstan, indefatigable chair of the Publications Committee of the International African Institute, for the grace and efficiency with which she 'opened the way' to publication. Three outside readers – Richard Rathbone, Jeff Guy and William Beinart – gave us positive and valuable comments on the manuscript.

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Peter Sanders
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