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Murder they cried: Revisiting medicine murders in literature

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TITLE: "Murder They Cried": Revisiting Medicine Murders in Literature

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1. Introduction

In July 1949 the British Government appointed an anthropologist from Cambridge, G. I. Jones, to inquire into the diretlo murders in the Protectorate of Basutoland. From the report which he compiled, the occurrence of the murders is recorded from 1895, where there were 6 reported cases in that year, rising and declining through the years, until they reached a peak of 20 in 1948 (Jones, 1951:104). According to Jones' report, among a variety of reasons which were responsible for the epidemic political and administrative changes which involved positions of marena (chiefs) and boramotse (headmen) seem to be the uppermost for the practice of diretlo murders.

Medicine murder, a concept which is often translated as ritual murder, in Sesotho is diretlo, a cognate of ditlo: According to Jones' definition: "Ditlo is the traditional name for flesh and other parts of the body obtained from the body of an enemy killed in the normal course of warfare... diretlo is not obtained from bodies of strangers or enemies, but from a definite person who is thought to possess specific attributes considered essential for the particular medicine being made." We are further informed that a person marked for diretlo is "usually a member of the same community and is frequently a relative of some of the killers. He is killed specifically for this diretlo which has to be cut from his body while he is alive" (1951:14). These diretlo were mixed as an ingredient for a lenaka (horn) medicine.

My interest in this phenomenon is limited to the period 1910 and 1960. These dates have no historical significance, but mark the time of the writing or publication of the Sesotho literary texts which deal mainly with diretlo murders as a theme. Those which I would like to study in this discussion are: Mofolo's *Chaka* (1925), Matlosa's *Katiba* (1950), Mopeli-Paulus' *Liretlo* (1950) and Khaketla's *Mosali a Nkhola* (1960). I will also refer to Guma's *Morena Mohlomi, Mor'a Monyane* (1960), and Ntsane's *Nna Sajene Kokobela CID* (1963). In critical writings on the literature of Basutoland so far diretlo has never been addressed as a major theme in these works. Studies generally tend to see this theme as part of the run of the mill Christianity versus Sesotho traditions. This discussion is meant to redress this shortcoming. It also sets out, with reference to the above-mentioned texts, to look at the nature of intertextuality - the coreference of texts, and also to study how far given writers could be said to reflect the fears and aspirations of their society, more from an applied than a theoretical perspective. The concept of intertextuality will be broadened so that the social and historical discourse which forms the context of the text will be regarded as text.

Bearing the above definition of diretlo in mind, I would like to consider the literary texts in the chronological order of their publication, starting with Mofolo's *Chaka*. The year 1910 is noted as the time when Mofolo completed the manuscript of this novel. It is now a universally known fact that there was a delay of fifteen years before it was published as a book. The missionaries' objections

to the publication of the *Chaka* manuscript is also a known saga, which I would not like to delve into in this discussion. What I intend to do is take as a hypothetical position that one of the main objections to the publication of *Chaka*, that it glorified "pagan superstion" (Kunene and Kirsch, 1967:8), was a reference to diretlo or ditlo. This argument has never been given a proper context. Part of my attempt here is to throw some preliminary light on this omission. Though Mofolo's narrative, whose protagonist is the Zulu king of the nineteenth century, Shaka Zulu, does not reflect on diretlo per se, it ought to be noted that as pointed out earlier about Jones' report, the text was written at a time when the phenomenon of diretlo murders was already noted in Basutoland, and was developing to proportions where it caused alarm among the Basotho in general, and the colonial Government which had been in charge since 1867, when Moshoeshoe I asked Queen Victoria to annex Basutoland. One would be justified in supposing that the wrangling which ensued between 1910 and 1925 was fully conscious of the implication of diretlo in Mofolo's text, in that it might have seemed to the missionaries that the temporal context was inappropriate for its publication. Obstructing the publication of a book which seemed to suggest that glory might be found in what was tantamount to ditlo, must have been thought to be justifiable. I am putting this to the reader as a prima facae case.

The years 1947 and 1948 is the highest watermark of diretlo murders, with an occurence of 12 and 20 cases respectively, which were prosecuted in the Basutoland courts. A significant point to note is that among the people who were brought to justice were mostly marena and boramotse. In 1949, the year that Jones was commissioned to investigate the murders, there were further 7 cases of diretlo murders which were brought to the courts. The following year Matlosa, a Mosotho writer of Basutoland, published a play entitled *Katiba*, titled after the protagonist.

At that time (1948–1949) there was a storm which concerned two main chiefs, Gabashane Masopha and Bereng Griffith, who were convicted in 1948 with ten other Basotho, and sentenced to hang. Despite some outcry of abortion of justice the two chiefs were executed in 1948. In the *Bantu World* and *Koranta ya Batswana* (1948), it was reported that the Lekhotla la Bafo (Basutoland Association of Commoners) drew up a petition which called the United Nations to intervene and have the execution of the two chiefs stayed, pending an appeal to the Privy Council in England, which was responsible for presiding over appeals of cases which had been tried in the Protectorates of Basutoland, Bechuanaland and Swaziland. The Lekhotla's allegation was that in three cases, including that of the above-mentioned chiefs, the Crown's prosecution was based on evidence which had been forced on witnesses, and that they had been coerced to sign statements (*Naledi ya Batswana*, 25.12.48:8). This is the context in which Matlosa's play was written and published.

2. The text and context of *Katiba*

The tragedy of Katiba, a Mosotho chief, centres on his conflict with his Christian wife, Manchoathi. The dramatic conflict starts with what seems to be a tiff which might be expected in any marriage, but take a new dimension when attention is shifted from Katiba's personal problems to political ones. A message comes from the paramount chief, inviting all chiefs and ward chiefs to a meeting at the capital. Katiba sends one of his aides to represent him. He gives him a stick which he is meant to hide under his blanket when he presents his views to the audience. This is meant to have some influence on his listeners, and make them susceptible to accepting his views without resistance.

When Katiba's emissary returns, we learn that the purpose of the gathering was to reorganise the position of chiefs, and abolish some chiefdoms, which were to be placed under the wardenship of others. Katiba is pleased to hear that his ward is safe, and besides that he has been given the lordship of other areas. This outcome reinforces his belief in ditlhare (traditional medicine). This leads to expected satisfaction, and the resultant euphoria in turn leads to bouts of ceasefire between the usually cantankerous Katiba and his wife.

However, the dramatic equilibrium is disturbed when a character called Khanyapa (a name which refers to a mythical water snake, not far removed from the one conceived by Mofolo in *Chaka*, and also used by Mopeli-Paulus in *Liretlo*) comes to tell the chief that he overheard a conspiracy among some chiefs and sub-chiefs that he had to be killed because he has usurped a position which he is not entitled to. This statement is supported by his most trusted aide, Tlhoriso (the name ironically means persecution): Sena seo o se bolelang ke moya o fehlang setsokotsane se tla latelwa ke maru ... - "what you are saying now is the wind which stirs a storm which will be followed by clouds ..." (Matlosa, 1950:39–40). After Khanyapa and Tlhoriso depart, Katiba remains alone, to be found by his wife, engaged in a soliloquy. The storm has started raging in his heart. He reveals his inner plight to her, and predictably, she advises him as a devout Christian would: Modumedi ka mehla o dula a nyakaletse hobane o sireleditswe ke Jehova le mangeloi a hae - "A believer is happy at all times because he is protected by Jehovah and his angels" (1950:41). At this point the stage is set for a new conflict between Katiba and Manchoathi, based on his political ambition on the one hand, and her Christian convictions on the other.

When Katiba is told that some chiefs were overheard conspiring against him, this might have some connection with a case which was cited on the front page of a Sesotho newspaper, *Mphatlalatsane*, where Chief Mahlomola Lerotholi and others were on trial for diretlo murder:

> Bopaki bo neng bo nehelwe lekhotla ke ba hore moqosuwa, Mr Mahlomola Lerotholi, o ne a ile a utlwa tshebo ya hore o tla tloswa boreneng. Yaba o batla ngaka le baqosuwa ba bang hore ba mo

thuse ho fumana nama ya motho ho etsa moriana ka madi a hae e le hore a dule setulong sa hae sa borena - "The evidence which was given in court is that the accused, Mr Mahlomola Lerotholi, had overheard some gossip that he was to be removed from his chieftaincy. Then he looked for a ngaka [traditional doctor], with his accomplices so that they should help him get human flesh to make a potion with his blood, so that he could retain his seat of chieftaincy" (17.01.48).

This may be a coincidence, or indeed Matlosa's source in building the motif of his protagonist. My interest here is the intertextual significance, irrespective of whether it is derivative or coincidental. I shall refer to Mahlomola Lerotholi's case again later.

Going back to the drama, Khanyapa and Tlhoriso come back sometime later to advise Katiba to strengthen his position with medicine, and inform him of a ngaka who has arrived in the village, who can help him in this regard. The idea of a doctor emerging out of the blue is also reminiscent of Mofolo's great doctor, Isanusi, who appears while Chaka is wandering in the wilderness. While Mofolo's doctor goes by the name of his profession (Isanusi - diviner in Nguni), Matlosa's doctor is called Phothoma (a significant name which means hurry up, in Nguni). Phothoma also goes by the title of "Doctor" - he is called Doctor Phothoma. The name suggests some irony, in the sense that those who understand its underlying meaning realise that the dramatist is mocking this character, as a traditional doctor is never called by that title by the native speakers of Bantu languages. But there may also be an intertextual dialogic significance with the contextual discourse in the title of Doctor. In an article entitled Dingaka tsa Basotho (Basotho Doctors) in *Mphatlalatsane*, the public was informed that the Government Gazette of 30 June 1948 had announced that every ngaka (traditional doctor) and raditlama (herbalist) has to obtain a licence from the Government, at the cost of five pounds. These practitioners would be restricted to the districts mentioned in their licences. The announcement went on to amplify that no one without such a licence would be allowed to charge people for his services, and that:

Basotho ba sebedisang laksense ena ha ba na ipitsa ka lentswe la Sekgowa la Doctor kapa 'chemist' kapa 'dentist' kapa lentswe lefeng feela le ka etsang hore batho ba hopole hore ke ngaka e nang le mangolo a thuto e pahameng - "The Basotho who use such licences would not call themselves by the Western title of Doctor, or 'chemist' or 'dentist', or any other title which might suggest that they are doctors who have acquired certificates of higher learning" (28.08.1948:1).

The point about the restriction of doctors will be postponed for the time being. When Phothoma is brought before Katiba, at the latter's request, we hear that Katiba's ambition has changed. Unlike earlier, his concern is now not only to protect himself from the impending threat, real or imagined. He now says: Na Phothoma o a tiisa hore ha ke batla ho ba morena le molaodi wa ditjhaba tsohle tsa Lesotho ho ka etsahala? - "Can you, Phothoma, confirm that if I want to become the king and commander of all nations of Lesotho that can happen?" (1950:43). This seems to be an echo of Mofolo's Chaka when he says to Isanusi: - Ha eba o ka etsa hore ke be morena e moholo, ya ipusang, eo marenana a mang a kgotsitseng ho yena, nka leboha haholo (1985:45) - "If you can make me into a great king, one who is independent, to whom all lesser kings owe allegiance, I shall be very grateful" (Kunene's translation: 1981:41). A few scenes later on Katiba takes his men to the summit of the mountain, and says to them: Metse ela ya Thepung le a e bona ... haufinyana e se le neng e tla be e le taolong ya ka ... meedi ya Bophirima, Botjhabela, Borwa le Leboya e tla thijwa ke mawatle feela ... - "Do you see those villages out there in Tembuland ... soon they will be under my command ... the frontiers in the west, east, south and north will be bounded by the sea" (1950:71). Phothoma says to him: Ke batla hore o mphumanele mafura a diphiyo tsa motho eo e leng Mokwena ka seboko ... ya bohale ya ratang ntwa, ya manganga ... - "I want you to find me some fat from the kidneys of a person who is a Mokwena by clan ... a fierce and belligerent person, who is also stubborn ..." (1950:46). When Katiba eventually agrees to abide by this order, it is not without apprehension, which is expressed in subsequent monologues.

The difference between Matlosa's *Katiba* and Mofolo's *Chaka* implies the difference between ditlo and diretlo, as defined earlier in this discussion. Chaka has to kill as many people as possible in order to become the greatest king of all (1981:45), without necessarily having to remove their parts for medicine. These people have to be killed in battle, but not to be singled out as individuals. Doctor Phothoma, like Isanusi in Mofolo's text, has to go away for a while, only to come back when his instructions have been carried out (1985:45/1981:41). He leaves Katiba with Zulu medicines to use, in the same way that Isanusi does. He tells Katiba that he will come back to fetch the balance of ten heads of cattle. We remember Isanusi telling Chaka that he will return to take his remuneration in the form of cattle when Chaka has acquired the kingship which his heart hankers after. There is no doubt that Matlosa was fully conscious of Mofolo's text, and the debate about diretlo murders, and that he might have been aware of the writings on that subject in the Sesotho and other newspapers.

When Doctor Phothoma promises Katiba that when he comes back he will strengthen him with lenaka la bafu (the horn of the dead), and asks him to pay twenty pounds, Katiba's response is that: Ho nna tjhelete hase letho le mosadi enwa wa ka nka mo rekisa ha feela nka fumana borena boo ke bo batlang - "As far as I am concerned money is nothing, I can even sell my wife if only I can get the kingship which I am after" (1950:78). The willingness to sacrifice the closest relative also points to

Chaka's killing of his beloved Noliwa (Mofolo, 985:125/Kunene, 1981:126–7), in order to become king of kings. Historically, around the time of the writing of Matlosa's text, there were a number of diretlo murder cases where people were alleged to have sold their kith and kin. In a case concerning Chief Khethisa Molapo, for instance, the court was told that the deceased had been sold by his brother, Tootse Khampas, for one hundred pounds. Initially the prize was ten pounds, but raised to one hundred after Khampas protested and asked for more (*Mphatlalatsane*, 28.08.1948:1).

Between the conspiracy and its execution Manchoathi, Katiba's wife, is horrified when she sees the herbs which Phothoma has given to her husband. Later on, in a monologue, the dramatist exposes Katiba's suspicions and doubts about Phothoma's character, but when Tlhoriso arrives and talks him out of his fears, they are laid to rest. When all is eventually agreed upon, a man called Sekhoali is chosen for diretlo. His personality fits Doctor Phothoma's description which we quoted above. There are other accomplices who have to be involved in the killing, and besides Tlhoriso and Khanyapa, there is Methinya, Ralikate and Hlanaka, who are conscripted into the enterprise. Jones, in her report, states that among other features of diretlo murder is that: "The murder is prearranged and carefully planned, it is never an unpremeditated assault," and that "it is executed by a group of people, most of whom take part not only in the assault on the victim, but in cutting portions of diretlo" (1951:15). This is exactly how Sekhoali's murder is planned and executed in the play. Once again, it may be a coincidence, that in December 1945 there was a diretlo murder case where five men were charged with the murder of a man called Sekoati (*Mphatlalatsane*, 15.12.1945:4).

The dramatist introduces some sharp dramatic irony when we see Sekhoali busy drinking with the men who are later to kill him that same night. They tell him that they will leave before it is too dark because they are afraid of witches. Sekhoali says:

> Ke a swaba ho bona hore Morena o dula le makwala feela, dintho tse tla mo siya potong ha dira di mo hlasela. Ka lakatsa haholo hore a ke a kgethe nna ke tsamaise setjhaba sena sa hae ka toka - "I am sorry that the chief lives with cowards only, people who will leave him in the lurch when enemies attack him. I so wish that he would choose me to lead his people with justice" (1950:53).

The audience knows that he has indeed been chosen to make the lenaka of Katiba's leadership. We read another irony when the woman who serves them liquor warns him: Nnyeo, o tla bolawa ke batho. O se ka nna tsamaya le bosiu - "You, you will be killed by people. Stop your night prowls." In his typical obstinacy, Sekhoali says: Nna ke mokeo, mokebe wa bosiu - "I am a fearless person, the snake which prowls the night" (1950). Here he describes himself in the same vein that Phothoma did when he marked him for sacrifice, except that Sekhoali is eloquently poetic.

The would be butchers part with Sekhoali, so that they can waylay. When he passes the appointed sport, they attack, and the dramatist gives some impressionistic narrative of the act of slicing his parts in stage directions, that is, compared to Khaketla's graphic depiction:

> Motho a mo otla ka koto sekotlong a ba a mo lahla .... Moo pobodi ya Sekhoali yaba e makatsang, ba mo retla a ntse a phela, yare hoba ba qete ba mo qetella - "someone dealt him a blow at the back of the head and knocked him down ... when Sekhoali's moaning became sorrowful, they operated on him while he was still alive, and when they finished, they finished him off" (1950:55–6).

Jones outlines another feature of diretlo murder as follows: "The diretlo is taken from the victim while he is technically alive. In some cases he is rendered unconscious by a blow on the head ... the operation of diretlo does not itself cause his death, he is deliberately killed" (1951:16). Matlosa's text follows very closely to this documentary text.

When the parts removed from the body are delivered at Katiba's place Matlosa introduces a new word, maleo - synonymous with diretlo. Methinya (whose name means 'treacherous curves of the road') says: Leha lehodimo le lefatshe di ka fetoha, ha ho motho ya tla bona lebitla la hae - "Even if heaven and earth change, no one will ever see his grave" (1950:59). This final aspect of the murder in the drama differs from Jones' suggestion that the corpse is normally exposed in such a manner that it will be found with as much publicity as possible. In *Katiba* the body is hidden away instead. This is also the case in *Mosali a Nkhola* and *Nna Sajene Kokobela CID*, to which I shall refer later. The murderers leave Katiba with the maleo, and then Doctor Phothoma arrives. Katiba tells him that he is pleased because everything is going well. They agree that Doctor Phothoma will come back at night to take Katiba away. His wife must not know about this. True to his word, at night he comes and leads him to a great pool, where a scene reminiscent of Chaka's initiation in Mofolo's *Chaka* is enacted. Then he is led to his father's grave, where the performance is even closer to that depicted by Mofolo when Isanusi takes Chaka to his father's grave.

Matlosa's plot gives an opportunity to compare with a case which was brought to court in 1948, which was reported on the front page of *Mphatlalatsane*. In this case, already mentioned earlier in this discussion, Chief Khethisa Molapo, and five others (three men and two women), were accused of diretlo murder which was committed in Mokhotlong on 5 May 1948. One of the Crown witnesses, Tootse Khampas, told the court that Chief Khethisa Molapo had instructed that they should kill a Mofokeng or a Mosiea. After a day of drinking with him, they left him behind and walked ahead. They waylaid him near a stream, anaesthetised him with a blow, operated on him, and murdered him (28.08.1948). These details seem to be a perfect prototype for Matlosa's plot. Just as

Katiba gives his accomplices medicine to make them brave enough to commit the act, so did chief Khethisa Molapo give Tootse moriana o motsho a o nwe a se ke a tshoha - "black medicine to drink so that he should not have fear" (28.08.1948:1). Even in Khaketla's depiction of the stages of a diretlo murder plot, the baretli initially keep the phofu in their company, leave him behind, waylay him, pounce and retla (operate on) him.

From here Katiba becomes more ambitious, wishing for more greatness. But the conflict with his wife starts again. She pontificates about the coming kingdom, and reprimands her husband for desiring worldly possessions. But all has gone so well for Katiba that he does not take heed of what his wife says to him. This well-being, however, does not last long. He arrives home one day from khotla, and his wife tells him about a Phothoma who had come looking for him. When she describes him, her repugnance (1950:74) reminds us of Dingiswayo, the symbol of absolute good in Mofolo's *Chaka* when he saw Malunga, one of Isanusi's apprentices for the first time (1985:63–4). In a later scene, where Katiba and Tlhoriso argue about African medicine, Katiba extolls the potency of Zulu medicine, saying that Zululand, where Doctor Phothoma comes from, produces the best: Ba merung, ditlhareng, naheng e ratwang ke methokgo - "They [the amaZulu] live in the forests, amidsts medicines, a counrtry which produces herbs in abundance," and then he goes on to list herbs with Zulu names: Velabahleke, pindamshaye [sic], mayime, sehlulamane, phunyuka bamphethe (1950:75–6). Once again we cannot help but think of Mofolo's description of the Zulu's expertise at medicine at the opening of *Chaka*:

> Mekgweng re ka re, bana ke mofuta o tsebang dihlare ho feta merabe yohle ya South Africa, etswe ba merung, dihlareng (1985:6) - "As regards their customs, we can say they are a people more skilled in medicine than any other group in South Africa, and no wonder, since they live in the proximity of forests where medicinal plants are in abundance" (Kunene's translation, 1981:2).

Tracing our steps back to Jones' report, we find a suggestion that the Swazis believed that medicine murders originated from Natal, and that: "Similarly in Basutoland, it is claimed that the diretlo murders are a new thing introduced from Natal, that protective lenaka (horn of medicine) in which Diretlo is now being used, was traditionally compounded from animals ... " (1951:13).

Katiba's life is upset by another meeting of chiefs which is called. When he returns from this meeting he tells his wife that he has been demoted as a chief. His chiefdom has been given to the chief of the Bataung. When his friends arrive, he breaks the bad news to them. He wants to see Doctor Phothoma urgently, but he is nowhere to be found. The pace of the drama moves fast from this point. They tell the chief that they have heard that Tlhoriso was being sought by the police, to be

questioned about the murder of Sekhoali. A series of events lead to Katiba's nightmares. In a Macbethean manner he sees and hears Sekhoali in his delirium, who mocks him by calling him the great king or Paramount Chief of Lesotho.

The next morning a messenger arrives to tell Katiba that Tlhoriso, Methinya and Ralikate have been arrested, and that Tlhoriso has revealed everything to the police. When the police come for him, he resists arrest. A compromise is eventually reached, whereby he has to report at the police station later. That night Katiba sees and hears Sekhoali, demanding the parts of his body which were taken away as diretlo. He tries in vain to run away. The play closes when Katiba hears a bell tolling the knell of his parting soul. Then he capitulates, and utters this Biblical declamation: Batlang mmuso wa mahodimo le ho loka ha wona pele, mme dintho tsohle le tla di ekeletswa - "Seek ye the kingdom of heaven and its righteousness, and all will be multiplied for thee" (1950:104). Then he dies. The final stage directions tells us that: Doctor Phothoma, Tlhoriso le Khanyapa ba kena ba tsheha, ba nka setopo ba tswa ka sona - "Doctor Phothoma, Tlhoriso and Khanyapa enter laughing, take the dead body and leave with it" (1950:104).

Matlosa's tragic hero, unlike some chiefs who were accused of diretlo murders, does not meet poetic justice in the gallows, but dies just before that. There is one case cited, where one of the chiefs who were awaiting trial in prison died before the courts impose their justice (Jones, 1951:?/*Mphaylalatsane*?). Matlosa's play, like the saga of Mofolo's protagonist, has taken its full run. Mephestophilis has come not to claim his remuneration in cattle, but to demand Katiba's soul. The overtly didactic Christian message is brought home to the reader, and Matlosa's pontification, which is dispersed through the drama, in given a final stamp in the mind of the audience.

3. The text of Mopeli-Paulus' *Liretlo*

Mopeli-Paulus is the only South African writer among these who has dealt with the theme of diretlo in his novel. However, he lived in Witsieshoek (later to be known as QwaQwa), which is very close to Lesotho. His text was published in 1950. Unlike Matlosa, Mopeli-Paulus seems to be sympathetic towards the practice of diretlo, despite the direct warning that he writes as a prologue to the novel: Bukana ena e bontshahatsa hantle qaleho ya morero wa diretlo, e leng lona lefu la sewa kajeno mareneng a Basotho" - "This book shows clearly how the diretlo began, which is now an epidemic among the Basotho chiefs."

The narrative of *Liretlo*, set in the nineteenth century, borrowed liberally from Mofolo's plot. The central character at the beginning of the story, chief Lelume, is dogged by the same problem as Chaka's father, Senzangakhona in Mofolo's text. His first son, Ranne, is born to one of the junior wives. When other senior wives later give birth to sons, jealousy opens up a conflict, and the

protagonist, like Chaka, has to be taken to exile, so that he should remain safe until the time comes for him to take over the chieftainship from his father. But before he leaves, a traditional doctor suggests that he be strengthened with medicine mixed with the flesh of a thirteen year old girl, a Mofokeng by clan. In one line the narrator informs us that the murder was committed - morero wa sehloho wa phethahala ka ngwana eo wa batho - "the cruel plan was fulfilled with that poor child" (1950:29). This remains a secret and no one gets to know about it, except those who committed the murder.

The suggestion that strong medicines come from the Zulus is also raised in Mopeli-Paulus' text. When Lelume's wives become jealous, one of them invites a Zulu doctor to help her kill Ranne, but in vain. The traditional doctor who advised that the thirteen year old girl should be killed is a Motlokoa by clan, but he was trained in Zululand, and has a Zulu name, Nkosikosi. We also learn that the traditional doctor who has to strengthen Ranne with the strongest medicine, Qeko, was trained in Zululand, and that: "E ne e hlile e le radiretlo. Dingaka tsa Basotho bongata di tsebile diretlo ka yena - "He was a medicine murderer. Most of the Basotho traditional doctors came to know diretlo through him" (1950:39).

When Ranne has to be finally prepared for his father's chair, Nkosikosi travels with him to Zululand to consult with Qeko. When they reach their destination after a long journey and meet Qeko, he says to them : Ke phekola ka seZulu (sic) haholo, o se ke wa makala wa heso - "I work according to the Zulu tradition, don't be surprised, my countryman" (1950:53). Here we are once again reminded of the doctor of Bungane in *Chaka*, who prepared the young man, so that later he should be treated by Isanusi, her senior.

After consultation with Qeko a man is earmarked for medicine murder. He has to be a Motaung (clan of the lion). Qeko expresses some regret that he has to commit murder for the medicine required, but does not hesitate to plan the murder. Like in *Katiba*, the men who are to kill are given medicine to make them fearless. A man called Rakutoane is called out of his house at night, under pretext that his cattle have strayed into someone's fields. When he comes out of his house, they catch him, carry him to the bush and murder him. In this case Rakutoane is anaesthetized with medicine so that he should not scream or feel much pain (1950:56). It is here that there seems to be some underlying sympathy with the practice, as the narrator makes it less cruel than it is. This is reinforced later, after the necessary parts were used, when Ranne, after returning home to take his father's chair, is warned by Qeko that: Diretlo di fele di felle moo ba ileng ba qala teng, e se re a silafatsa manaka a kganyapa - "medicine murders must stop where they started, lest they defile the horns of the kganyapa" (1950:66). I will come back to the point of sympathy later.

After all has been done, some rituals have to be performed. Here we once again see Mopeli-Paulus' borrowing from *Chaka*. Ranne is taken to the river, where he meets with the snake of the

waters. The narrator refers directly to Mofolo's text: "Ditaba tsena tsa tshebetso ya Ranne di batla di amana le tsa tshebetso ya Chaka ka Isanusi - "the matter concerning Ranne's strengthening is similar to Chaka's by Isanusi" (1950:58).

When Ranne returns home, like Chaka, he finds that his father has died. After some quarrels with his half brothers he is eventually installed by the Paramount Chief (King). For a while all seems to go well, and the medicine murders are forgotten. However, Ranne forgets the advice which Qeko had given him, and commits another murder. It is thus not because of the previous murders that poetic justice is meted out, but for the last murder, which was committed against Qeko's stern warning. Even the third one does not bring his punishment directly. He starts by neglecting his duties and becoming a useless drunk. His younger half brother takes over from him and he ends up a drunkard. His accomplices, in anger because he no longer supports them materially, betray him. He is arrested, together with them, and sentenced to death. All this happens in the last ten lines of the novel. It seems that the writer forced such an ending, while all anticipation leads to the expectation that he lived happily forever after. The fact that Ranne does not suffer because of the two murders seems to suggest that the narrator (as the writer's mask) is justifying, or shows some symphathy towards medicine murder as long as it is committed according to certain instructions, towards a good end.

4. The text and context of Khaketla's *Mosali a Nkhola*:

Khaketla followed on Matlosa's and Mopeli-Paulus' footsteps with a novel entitled *Mosali a Nkhola* (The woman has Betrayed me), ten years after Matlosa's text, and thirty-five years after Mofolo's *Chaka* was published. Khaketla wrote the novel while he was working in South Africa in the late 1950s. Hs suggests that he was not explicitly concerned with medicine murders, but wanted to contribute to the growth of Sesotho literature[1], even though the setting of the narrative is during the period of the medicine murder epidemic in Basutoland. At the beginning of chapter five, the narrative voice explicitly puts the time of the story as kgwedi ya Phupu, selemong sa 1944 - "In July in the year 1944," and chapter six starts in 1945. According to Jones' report between 1944 and 1945 there were 15 cases of diretlo murders, which were brought to court. One of the prominent ones was Chief Mahlomola Lerotholi's, who was accused with accomplices of killing a woman called Mmalefu Gude in December of that year. Chief Mahlomola Lerotholi was sentenced in 1948 (17.01.1948:1).

Since there were so many cases involving chiefs, it would not be helpful to speculate that this specific one was Khaketla's source, but it suffice it to illustrate that there was abundance of readily available material for Khaketla to wrought his plot from. As opposed to Katiba in Matlosa's drama, Khaketla's protagonist is not a traditional chief who believes in Sesotho medicine, but an educated

young man who takes over from his traditional father. There is an inversion of motif, in the sense that when the young chief's father, Lekaota, is about to die, he explicitly tells his son that he had never believed in anything except the instructions of his conscience. This is a traditional polygamist, whose son is a monogamist, educated in Western institutions.

At the beginning of the plot of the story Mosito returns home from college with his close friends and confidantes. Arrangements are made for him to marry another chief's daughter. Between the two maidens who are presented to him he chooses the one who is least educated. His father is unhappy about the uneven match, but does not interfere with his son's choice. Within a short space of time Lekaota dies, and Mosito takes over the reins of chieftaincy. On his inaugural day the Assistant Resident Commissioner delivers a speech which touches on diretlo:

> Ke a tseba hore hara ditjhaba tsa batho ba batsho ho na le tumelo ya hore borena ba motho bo hodiswa ka ditlhare, le hore ha morena a tla ratwa ke setjhaba ekakgona a sebeletswe ke meriana e thatathata ya manaka ke dingaka; empa ka ha wena o motho ya rutehileng ha ke rate ho senya nako ka ho o bolella hore ha ho ntho e jwalo "I know that among black nations there is a superstition that a person's chieftaincy can be strengthened with the strong medicine of the doctor's manaka; but as you are an educated person I would not like to waste time by telling you that there is not such a thing" (1960:22).

This speech might have been inspired by the High Commissioner's address at the opening of the Basutoland National Council at the beginning of 1948, which was reported in *Mphatlalatsane* (09.10.1948) and *The Bantu World* (25.09.1948). It may not be necessarily this one in particular, or others by the same person, which expressed concern with regard to diretlo murders. The intertextual connection does not always have one-to-one equivalence, but can be obliquely and figurative. Later on, when Mosito is demoted and placed under another chief because of the restructuring of the chieftaincy in Basutoland, he finds himself under political pressure and becomes gullible to Khati's and Sebotsa's suggestion that he resorts to diretlo murder to strengthen his position. This is not to say that he is easily convinced. Several times the two old men are rebuffed, until they eventually resort to using his wife as a bait. Having being brought up traditionally, she is easily convinced, and starts working on her husband. Mosito finds himself torn between this company on the one hand, and his two friends, Pokane and Khosi on the other. Eventually his wife attempts suicide, and this marks a turning point in Mosito. He deserts his two friends and aligns himself with the old men.

Taking one step further back in the narrative, when Khati and Sebotsa approach Mosito, they make reference to what amounts to an explanation of the transition from the use of ditlo to diretlo.

Sebotsa says: Ha morena a thea motse o motjha o lokela hore a o tiise ka lenaka le matla. Mehleng ya kgale lenaka leo le ne le fumaneha habonolo hobane dintwa di ne di le ngata, mme metswako e sa hlokwe; empa kajeno ka ha dintwa di sa le yo metswako eo e fumanwa ka thata - "When a chief establishes his new homestead he must strengthen it with a strong horn. In the olden days the horn was easily available because there were many wars, and the ingredients were not scarce; but nowadays there are no longer any wars and these ingredients are hard to come by" (1960:26). His friend, Khati, goes straight to the point and tells him that he has to get a human liver, and that: Sebete seo se ne se ka nna sa fumaneha habonolo ka ho epollwa ha motho ya shweleng, mane mabitleng, empa ekare moriana o tla sebetsa hantle sebete seo ya eba sa motho ya bolailweng ka matsoho ... - "That liver could be easily obtained by exhuming a corpse from the cemetery, but it seems the medicine works well if the liver comes from a person who is killed deliberately" (1960:26).

Mosito is driven to diretlo murder by the same reasons which drove Katiba. Like in *Katiba* and *Chaka*, a ngaka, Selone, comes onto the scene after Mosito had been convinced to agree to diretlo murder. He arrives as a wandering ngaka, and is introduced to Mosito by the two old men. A man called Tlelima is chosen for diretlo. The execution of the murder, like in Matlosa's drama, has to be done by more people. Here Senyane, Bohata, Papiso, Letebele and Molafu are brought in. The plot follows very closely on Matlosa's. On Christmas day the men go drinking with the victim, then leave him somewhere, only to waylay and kill him. Khaketla gives details of the murder, more than Matlosa's, and we follow the sacrificial victim from the moment he is caught up to when his body is disposed of. Khaketla also introduces the word maleo (1960:124) for parts removed from the body. But unlike Matlosa, Khaketla resorts to subtlety on the symbolism of names. His characters' names are less allegorical. On a different point, we should perhaps not be accused of reading too much into the meaning if we think aloud that for Tlelima to be killed on Christmas day Khaketla wanted to underline the extremity of the of diretlo murders by making them an antithesis of the birth to Christ. This heightens the sorrow which befalls the victim's family, amidst the joy which characterised the celebrations of this Christian occasion. On the other hand there is a case where a man called Katse Phatela was murdered for diretlo on Christmas day (Jones, 1951:52). Conviction in this case was repealed by the Privy Council.

When we consider the number of people involved in both Matlosa's drama and Khaketla's novel we note that it is in accordance with the cases of diretlo murder; those which involved less than five people are extremely rare. Other details, as we indicated in our discussion of *Katiba*, are also in keeping with the feature of diretlo as reported in real cases - selection, plotting, anaesthetizing, surgery and euthanasia. Khaketla cannot be surpassed in describing the murder of Tlelima (1960:121–5). He also adds a dramatic turn. When the body is carried to a ravine where it is meant

to be thrown into a gorge, one of the murderers slips and goes down with it, so that two people have to be accounted for.

Without going into further details of the plot, suffice it to mention that Mosito and his men end up being arrested. We are given a detailed court case. Some of the details might have been lifted from cases which were reported in the newspapers. Mosito is then sentenced to death. In their case, like in nearly all historical diretlo murders, the Crown's strongest case comes from accomplices who turn against the chief and others involved. In the same manner Maime and Letebele decide to turn Crown witnesses. The case is held in the High Court of Basutoland. An added dimension is the ghost, when Tlelima, like Sekhoali in *Katiba*, comes to haunt Mosito at night, telling him that he should be happy that he has now become king of the whole of Basutoland (1960:177). Katiba closes with Biblical words, as already mentioned, and Mosito spends his final days with a church minister who prays for his soul. His last moments are spent in genuine contrition and reconciliation with his inner self. He is ready to accept his punishment. The stamp of Christianity bangs on the table with a loud sound. The apparitions in Matlosa and Khaketla are reminiscent of Mofolo's Chaka towards the end of his life, when he is haunted by the souls of the thousands of people he had killed, emerging from the uDonga lukaTatiyana. The ghost seems to be a Christian (even Medieval) archetype used as a symbol for the conscience, to harp on the Christians' consciences and make them avoid evil ways.

5. The contextual, textual and intertextual dialogue

When Katiba attributes the power of his medicine to the Zulu, it is tempting to ask whether he is implying that diretlo originate from Zulu medical practice. It may be plausible to suggest that Matlosa wanted to place responsibility somewhere else, but this is not straightforward, because both Katiba and Phothoma are so obnoxious as characters that it seems to be irrelevant where they come from. Katiba is not built along the model of a protagonist who evokes sympathy from the reader. Thus, both Katiba and Doctor Phothoma are condemned without sympathy. Nonetheless Phothoma is made to be more guilty than Katiba, if culpability can be measured in relative but not absolute terms. In this text one finds no extenuating circumstances. Perhaps Matlosa condemns his characters in caricature because he was writing at the time when diretlo murders were still fresh in the minds of the Basotho, and wanted to use a forthright approach to the subject. On the other hand Khaketla does not attribute diretlo murders to Zulu medical practice. Perhaps because he wrote later, when the phenomenon of diretlo murders was receding into the past. His sympathy, initially, seems to lie with Mosito, who is an educated person, with qualities of character which call for sympathy from the reader. The reader moves along with him from his vehement refusal to consider, let alone get involved in diretlo murder, until the snare closes up on him. Even up to the final stage of his

temptation and fall, the reader is invited to sympathise with Mosito, in his tragic end, in nearly the same way as Mofolo's Chaka has appealing qualities of character at the beginning of his protagonist's life. Perhaps this is so with all classic characters who are sucked into evil - from Macbeth to Faustus, and Dorian Gray. Khaketla puts the blame on the ngaka, Selone, and the two old men, Khati and Sebotsa. Like Matlosa, he also gives his chief absolution. In most of the diretlo murders reported the chiefs who were involved were present at the time of the murder, but Matlosa's is not there, so that it is done vicariously - ego te absolvo - rings the voice of the authorial narrative. The blame is thus shared between the doctor and those who encourage the chiefs to resort to diretlo murders to protect their positions. Are these writers reflecting the attitudes and fears of the Basotho at the time of diretlo murders? Did the Basotho in general ever speculate about the origin and subsequent causes of diretlo murders?

Jones explains that during her investigations as to the cause of diretlo murders she discovered that there were eight schools of thought: (1) dingaka, (2) lebollo - initiation institutions (3) the Roman Catholic Church (most of the chiefs convicted were Roman Catholics), (4) Johannesburg underworld, (5) undemocratic chiefs, (6) lesser chiefs and headmen, (7) blame on Native administrative reforms of 1938–45, and lastly, (8) the Government for its inefficiency in stamping out diretlo murders because they were bent on selling chieftaincy to the Union of South Africa (Jones, 1951:20). A Mosotho writer, R. M. S. Masopha, under the subheading: Lebaka le Leng (Another Reason) in *Mphatlalatsane* attributes diretlo murders to a deeply rooted belief in superstition among the Basotho, that medicine can help in acquiring chieftaincy or a good job, and other benefits (27.09.1947:3).

In Khaketla the Government is exculpated. The Resident Commissioner represents the Government. The doctors are used as a scapegoat. This seems to be in keeping with sentiments expressed in some texts in the form of letters and articles in the newspapers of the times of diretlo murders. In the same article by an R. M. S. Masopha in *Mphatlalatsane* a number of suggestions are made as to how diretlo murders can be curbed, under the subheading: Baeti ba Dingaka (Travelling Doctor). Among them the author suggests that:

> Baeti ba dingaka bohle ka ho tshwana ha ba kena motseng ofe kapa ofe oo ba tlileng ho wona ba lokela hore pele ba ka fetela malapeng ao ba yang ho ona ba itlhahise ho mookameli oa sebaka seo, ke hore morena, leha e le mang kapa mang ya apesitsweng matla a jwalo e leng baeti ba tsejwe hantle moo ba etetseng e sita le tsona dingaka ho fumanwe hantle hore na di na le mangolo a nepahetseng mme a ba lokollang ho tsamaya ba kena hara metse ka phekolo le hore na ba na le tsebo e phethahetseng ya dihala-hala tseo-tseo ba di jereng hore ba ka li sebelisa ho motho kantle le ho ntsa kotsi mothong. Batho ba mofuta o joalo ba be le tumelo e tswang ho marena a bona eo

ka yona ba lumelloang ho chakela libakeng tseo ba eang ho tsona ka mangolo a bopaki bo hlwekileng a nang le setempe sa morena se dumellang joalo .....

All travelling dingaka must report to the community leader, that is, the chief, when they enter an area, before they can go to any homestead, or they should report to anyone who has been given powers, so that it should be known where strangers are visiting, and that it should be ascertained whether they have practising licenses which permit them to enter villages to cure, and that they have the knowledge of the use of the herbs which they are carrying without causing any harm to people. Such people must have permission from their chiefs which allows them to visit all the places they are going to, with bona fide documents bearing the chief's stamp giving such permission ... (27.08.1947:3).

The irony is obvious, in that the chiefs, who have in most cases been perpetrators of diretlo murders, are further entrusted with the duty of being protectors. The dingaka have to be restricted in their profession, where travelling is a prerequisite to facilitate learning different herbs which are not available in their environment, while the chiefs remain free. In September 1948 an article entitled Lesotho Fatshe la Bontata Rona (Basutoland, our Fatherland) written under the Zulu pen name of Lahlingubo Mfana (run away, boy) came to the defence of the chiefs even more explicitly. After thanking the British Government for the steps which had been taken to curb diretlo murders the writer refers to Mofolo's *Chaka* as if he is making a factual historical reference: Hopolang Tshaka morena ya neng a tumile a ena le masole o kae? O bolailwe ke madi a batho bao a neng a ntse a ba bolaya ka taelo ya ngaka ya hae Isanosi. - "Remember Tshaka the famous king who had cohorts of warriors, where is he today? He was killed by the blood of the people he has killed on the instructions of his doctor Isanusi" (11.09.1948:3). Although in this instance Lahlingubo Mfana spells Shaka's name as some historical texts normally do, Isanusi is not a historical figure but Mofolo's creation. In a kind of double-speak he refers to the chiefs' role in diretlo murders, and then defends them by blaming dingaka:

Morena oa ka ke se ke buwa le wena ya esong ho kene polaong tsena tse sehloho - Feela taba ke eo Mohloding. (Dingaka) Ekaba tsona ho thata hore di fumanwe. Dingaka tsena tsa Mekotlana ke tsona tse kenyang Marena a rona molekong ona - "I am talking to you, my chief, who has not been involved in these cruel murders - But the cause of the matter is at the source. Is it difficult to find these dingaka. These dingaka who carry pouches are responsible for leading our chiefs into this temptation" (*Mphatlalatsane*, 11.09.1947:3).

The above text seems to create the impression that all dingaka were culpable. In reality this was not so. In a case cited by Jones, and quoted at length in *Mphatlalatsane* under an article sub-

headed Boloi (witchcraft) a woman ngaka called Bernice Hlalele is said to have been approached by men who asked her to make lenaka la moriana. They produced a man's head, with which he was meant to make the potion. She told them that she could not make such a medicine, and chased them away. She identified that head as that of a certain Stephen Thobela (20.07.1948). In the two texts which we studied, Matlosa's and Khaketla's above there is no counterbalance. The practice of diretlo murders is largely attributed to the profession of dingaka, they bear the brunt of responsibility as tritagonists in these tragedies. There is also a case where a ngaka called Mokonya was murdered at Qacha's Nek (Jones, 1951:83), and another where a ngaka who saw baretli committing diretlo murder narrowly escaped death at the hands of the baretli (Jones, 1951:80). Yet our texts shift the blame to and say to the chiefs - ego te absolvo[2)].

Going back to documentary texts on diretlo murders we find that according to Jones, quoting Ellenberger and McGregor (1912), Moshoeshoe might have used a lenaka with diretlo (1951:14). But in an article against diretlo murders entitled Dipolao tsa Sehloho (the cruel murders) in *Mphatlalatsane*, a Mosotho writer, L. M. Monyane, tells the readers that Lepoqo (Moshweshwe I), once went to Morena Mohlomi, who was a famous ngaka-king who had travelled widely in his profession. Moshweshwe was under the impression that Mohlomi had a lenaka, and therefore asked him to give him one. The writer says Mohlomi's reply was: Ngwana moholo wa ka, borena ha bo na setlhare empa setlhare ke pelo ya motho, o rate batho ka pelo yohle ya hao, hape o se ke wa kgolwa ke ditaba tsa lefeela tsa ho bolaya motho .... - "Son of my elder, chieftainship does not need medicine but medicine is a person's heart, love people with all your heart, and do not believe the nonsense that you should kill a person ..." (06.12.1948:2). The article goes on to explain that from that day Moshweshwe became a changed person. Later on the writer says:

> Batho ba bang ke a tshepa hore e ne e re mohla ba ntseng ba bala ditaba tsa buka ya Chaka, e ngotsweng ke Mr Thomas Mofolo, ba ile ba kgolwa ruri hore seo Chaka a bolelwang ka sona, ho ne ho hlile ho le jwalo ruri, haholo ka moo mongodi a boledisang tsa ditlhare tseo a neng a di sebedisa, athe ke kgolwa mongodi o ne a mpa a natefisa buka eo ya hae .... - "I believe that some people, while reading the narrative of Chaka, written by Mr Thomas Mofolo, believed indeed that all that is told, truly happened, especially the way in which the writer praises the medicines which he used, whereas I believe that it was merely embellishment" (06.12.1948:2).

In another article published earlier under the title Di Befile Dipolao Lesotho (Murders are Raging in Basutoland) Monyane had made reference to Mofolo's under the heading: Madimo a ile a qhalwa ka bohlale ba baholoholo ba rona, dintwa tsa Chaka tsa tenngwa bohetene ba aparelwa ke lesedi.... - "Cannibals were destroyed through the wisdom of our forebears, and Chaka's wars were

decimated, and paganism was overcome by light" (27.11.1948:6). This may be thought to be a historical fact, but the spelling of Shaka Zulu's name as Mofolo spelt it, indicates that the reference is more to the fictional text than to historical discourse.

There is also an interesting dialogue across fictional texts which needs to be studied. When Khaketla's protagonist, Mosito, seriously considers going ahead with committing a diretlo murder, the narrative commentary tells us that: Kaha re tseba hore e ne e le motho ya badileng, a nahana kapele ka pale ya Chaka ... "Ke jwalo ka Chaka," ke yena eo, o bua ka pelo. "Ke tswetswe ke le Morena, empa ka baka la bobe ba batho, kobo ya borena ke lokela ho e hlobola - As we know that he was a learned person, he thought quickly of the story of Chaka ... 'I am like Chaka,' he said.' I was born a king, but because of man's evil, I have to take off my kaross of kingship' " (1960:111). Here a fictitious character reminds us of R. M. S. Masopha.

The latter writer, Masopha, who starts by referring to Mofolo's text as if it was historical fact, seems to be evocative of Guma's historical novel, whose protagonist is King Mohlomi, entitled *Morena Mohlomi, Mor'a Monyane*, which was published in the same year as Khaketla's *Mosali a Nkhola*. Some words seem to have been quoted almost verbatim: Moshweshwe a ba a mo kopa hore a mo fe setlhare sa bona. Yaba Mohlomi o mo araba ka ho re: Ha ho setlhare, ngwana ka: setlhare ke pelo ya motho ... - "Moshweshwe asked him to give him their horn. Then Mohlomi answered: 'There is nothing such a setlhare [medicine]: medicine is a person's heart". Guma goes on to put the following words into Mohlomi's mouth: O hlokomele dingaka, o se ke wa ba wa di tshepa le hanyenyane feela hobane bongata ba tsona ke bathetsi le baqabanyi ba batho - "Beware of dingaka, never ever trust them because most of them are cheats who cause quarrels among people' " (Guma, 1960:114). After he blessed Moshweshwe, the narrative continues: Moshweshwe yena a tloha moo a fetohile ka botlalo. A tloha e se e le motho wa kgotso eo le yena a neng a ba a e bitsa kgaitsedi - "Moshweshwe left that place being a changed person. He left as a person full of peace, which he even called his sister" (1960:114–5). The founder of the Basotho nation is absolved in this text, so is his progeny, those who were ruling Basutoland during the times of the epidemic of the diretlo murders, in Matlosa's and Khaketla's texts. Here we find a dialectical relationship of intertextual harmony among fictional texts, resounding with a note of discord in documentary texts.

It was left to Ntsane's narrator-protagonist, in the novel *Nna Sajene Kokobela CID*, which was published three years after Khaketla's, to apportion part of the blame on the ordinary Mosotho, and also to reinforce Khaketla's Delilah or Eve motif - the temptation of women. Kokobela, the narrator, tells of his exploits as a policeman in the Basutoland just after the European War of 1939–1945. He is sent with two colleagues to investigate a diretlo murder case in Berea. Without going into details of the plot, only salient points will be highlighted.

The first question which Kokobela asks when he gets to Berea is whether there is any chief whose position is threatened. An answer to the contrary shifts his suspicion to Topisi's (the deceased's) wife, and sister: Eseng ke etswa ke hona ho dumela hore mosadi ke noha? - "Is it possible that my reason [to suspect] is caused by my belief that a woman is a snake." (1984:24). This is of course in addition to another preconceived idea that is expressed a few breaths earlier in the narrative through authorial commentary:

> Ho neng ho mpa ho hana ho dula maikutlong a ka ke hore ha se marena feela retlang [sic], batho ba bang le bona ba sebetsa ka dinama tsa batho leha yeo taba e eso fumanwe, e mpa e ntse e bueha feela - "What I could not really be convinced of is the fact that the chiefs were not the only people who engaged in diretlo murders, that other people also use human flesh even though this matter has not been confirmed, it is only hearsay" (1984:22).

After some trials and tribulations, Kokobela's resilience and intelligence leads him to a character called Mafethe, a Mosotho who had served in the European War II. Hence the chiefs are absolved from Kokobela's taking the blame alone, when in the narrative, an ordinary Mosotho called Mafethe is arrested, charged convicted and sentenced to hang by the neck until he dies. By some twist at the end, Mafethe writes Kokobela a moving letter before he goes to the gallows, and in it we see all the injustices of power, which have led Mafethe to committing such a crime. Speaking subjectively, this is the most memorable part of the narrative, which reverberates in the mind even after Kokobela's final words in rounding off the narrative. There were of course many cases where diretlo murders were committed by ordinary citizens, but it is not in Ntsane's interest to justify, defend or condemn. Unlike Matlosa and Khaketla, he cuts with a double-edged sword, which neither absolves the chiefs, nor condemns the ordinary Mosotho, but provokes deeper thoughts about the diphofu (victims) and baretli (perpertrators).

Ntsane also brings in a new dimension, that is, the way in which the police at times extorted confessions from suspects arrested for diretlo. Kokobela, the narrator-protagonist, exposes himself when he tells of how he and his colleagues punished Sankwela Hlobola, Mafethe's accomplice, from whom they eventually managed to squeeze a confession which incriminates Mafethe. As mentioned earlier, in the petition of the Lekhotla la Bafo methods which the police used were also brought into question. Jones' report also touches on allegations which were made under the heading "Allegations against the police" (1951:60–3). In Kokobela we see a man who joins the police force with good intentions, but his methods are by no means just or impeccable.

When Kokobela tells of how he and his colleagues, Tabola and Lentswe, interviewed Sankwela, we are left with little sympathy for their methods:

Ka botsa hore na o sa ntsane a hana ho bua nnete, a thola feela a hobotse mahlo ... Ka re Tabola a ke a mo neheletse tlelapa tse pedi. Yeo a mo tjhesa ka tse pedi tse tjhong. Ka utlwa motho wa rona a bobola sa ntja e opelwa ke maqeba a tse ding. Ka re: "mo eketse." - "I asked if he is still refusing to tell the truth and he just stared silently ... I told Tabola to slap him. He gave him two hot and loud sounding ones. I heard our man groaning like a dog which has been mauled by others. I said: 'give him some more' " (1984:76).

The question which the reader may as well ask is whether means do justify the ends of justice. On the other hand Khaketla's policeman, who investigates Tlelima's death, uses nothing but intelligence. Is it because the case involved a chief, so he could not arrest and torture him?

Having drawn parallels with Matlosa's and Khaketla's plots from historical cases, I might as well conclude this section of the discussion by following on this precedence with regard to Ntsane's. Among the cases that I have read about so far there is none where someone was involved in the murder of their spouse. Two which have some remote suggestion is where a man "abducted a girl whom he intended to marry as he had made her pregnant" and handed her over to a man who wanted diretlo, at the price of three pounds (Jones, 1951:84). In the second one a man betrays his lover. He pretends to "have carnal knowledge of her", and then the woman is killed and operated on (Jones, 1951:). In *Nna Sajene Kokobela CID* the victim's wife has an affair with Mafethe. She connives with him and others to kill Topisi. There is also a case where two women were charged as accomplices. In another case reported under the subheading of Thipa ya Tafole (Table Knife) in *Mphatlalatsane* a witness alleged that a woman held a bowl while the chopped off head of the victim, Springkaan Modibedi, bled into it (11.09.1948:3). So the Delilah or Eve motif may not necessarily be an underlying argument in Khaketla's and Ntsane's texts, but merely a suggestion that even women were involved, somehow or other.

It is interesting to note that in most suggestions which were made in the newspapers most do not at all point directly at the role of the chiefs and headmen. Some actually make it easier for them to victimize people, while some measures threatened innocent Basotho with a scourge for crimes which they had not committed. In a decree which was passed by the Morena e Moholo (Paramount Chief), after consultation with The High Commissioner, there is a threat of collective punishment, where all residents of an area where a diretlo murder has been committed have to pay for the costs of investigation and prosecution. This decree was announced in the Paramount Chief's circular No. 17 of July 1948.

There are many intertextual coreferences across fictional texts and historical discourse, and many interesting points indeed. I have only studied one aspect of this intertextuality, leaving a vast

landscape unexplored. Some of the names of people who were charged with diretlo murders, and those of some victims, are chillingly poetic: Morena Mahlomola, Lejaha, Mojatau, Ramabanta, Kemaketse, and Moloi (the man who sold his brother for the controversial Gabashane Masupha and Bereng Lerothodi's diretlo murder case). Others are trenchantly ironic: Sankatana, Molemohi, Mosiuwa, Lebusa, Fusi, Moeletsi, Tshediso, and Springkaan, to quote from but a few. They call for a fully-fledged study which has the potential to develop into an interesting subject. This is just an example among many. All what we could afford to do in this discussion is to show the symbiotic relationship between literary texts on the one hand, and historical and social events and discourse on the other. We now proceed to our conclusion.

6. Conclusion

My study has perhaps revealed how Mofolo's *Chaka* seems to be a source of the literary texts which I have studied, particularly Matlosa's drama. It has also indicated how context can feed into the text, and how the text in turn can feed into the discourse of context, where a convergence of both contextual and textual discourse can generate other texts. *Chaka*, *Katiba*, *Mosali a Nkhola*, *Nna Sajene Kokobela CID*, records and debates about diretlo murders, form one intertext within which dialogue and communication goes on, in a convolution of kaleidoscopic images which no linear discourse can do fully justice. Perhaps one can now look back with better hindsight, sensitivity and empathy to the missionaries' objection to the publication of Mofolo's text, a subject which I mention only to provoke readers who might have further interest in this hackneyed subject, noting that Mofolo wrote his text after the diretlo murders had become a source of concern. Maybe the missionaries should have defended the text as a thesis against medicine and witchcraft, but history is riddled with contradictions.

Looking at all the above texts as one intertext, one cannot draw a specific conclusion about diretlo murders, how they originated; who actually should carry more blame (though of course some parts of this intertext reveal a certain bias), where the practice originated, how the perpetrators thought that this was going to solve their problems, and so forth. It was, anyway, never the intention of this essay to look deeper in to the origin of diretlo, an area which calls for more intimacy with both religious philosophy, medical anthropology, history, and law, areas in which I claim no expertise. My intention was merely literary, and all I can do beyond this is to open up further areas of discussion and research for students of the history of Sesotho literature. I have to mention that there is one text by a South African writer which I have not dealt with in this discussion, Mohapi's *O Jelwe ke Makgala* (1959), a play. There are other sources I have not been cited: 109 articles

appeared in *Moeletsi oa Basotho* (*Mobali oa Moeletsi 1933–1960*). These are subjects of another paper.

NOTES:

1) I interviewed the author, now 83 years old, in Maseru on Thursday, 4 July 1996. His opinion is that some of the cases concerning Basotho chiefs, especially Chiefs Khabashane Masupha and Bereng Griffith were engineered by the British Government, because they feared their powerful influence among the Basotho. He insists that they were innocent. He also thinks that it is not true that the Basotho inherited the practice of medicine murders from the Zulus. The traditional doctors, he emphasized, knew the weaknesses of the ordinary Basotho and their chiefs, and exploited that to make them commit murder. He is a strong supporter of Basotho chieftainship, and it is for this reason that he parted with the Basutoland Congress Party, when Ntsu Mokhehle's (now Premier of Lesotho) view was that chieftainship had to be abolished.

2) Khaketla also said that 'Mantsebo, who Jones suggests in some private correspondence with the Home office in London that she committed some medicine murders, was one of the Basotho leaders who tried to help stop the epidemic of medicine murders. He informs me that she was respected by the Basotho. She once convened a meeting where the epidemic of medicine murders were to be discussed, but the meeting ended unceremoniously when Ntsu Mokhehle came short of exchanging blows with the British High Commissioner.

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