

Case 15

Pange and Matini were two women who lived all their lives in a secluded area of Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe) belonging to the primitive Kalanga tribe, and had never interacted in any significant way with people outside of the tribe. In 1961 there was a drought in the area, which posed the threat of starvation to the entire tribe. While talking to a local witch doctor, the women expressed their fears to him, and he promised to prepare some muti, a magic potion, to mix with seeds during planting so that crops would be plentiful. It was a custom among the Kalanga people to prepare such a potion during the times of drought, consisting of several ingredients collected by witch doctors plus the fingers, toes, and inside portion of the stomach of a tribe member who is killed, usually a relative of the person who requests the potion. The witch doctor told Pange and Matini they must kill a child. Neither woman had children, however, they killed Matini's two year old cousin, and brought her body to the witch doctor. The colonial authorities of Rhodesia (Rhodesia was a British colony) learned of the killing and brought murder charges against Pange and Matini. The two women were put on trial in a Rhodesian court.