

ARTICLE

## Rhinoceros as a Symbol of Admiration in Setswana Indigenous Poetry, Stories and Proverbs

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### ABSTRACT

This article expounds on the relationship between Batswana and the rhinoceros. The co-existence of Batswana and the rhinoceros brought the two together. There are different types of relationships like commensalism, i.e., metabiotic, phoresy and microbiota. People have utilized animals in a variety of useful relationships. Animals improve the welfare of humans in many ways, ranging from providing companionship to facilitating rescues during natural disasters and for recreation purposes. It is also believed that the Batswana learned some of their virtues from the rhino. They learn some of their virtues from metabiotic of the rhinoceros' relationship with the oxpecker. When the Batswana prayed for rain, they emulated the rhinoceros by stomping the ground. The Batswana are loving people who look after one another. The study assesses the connection or affiliation between their genera. A mutually beneficial and dynamic relationship between people and animals. It's influenced by behaviors essential to the mental, physical and social health and well-being of both. The vegetarian's role is to maximize the potential of this relationship and promote the well-being of people and animals. The Batswana and the rhinoceros shared space. In some areas, they work and help each other for their survival, whereas in other cases they harm each other as indicated in poetry, stories, metaphors and proverbs. This entanglement encompasses the transference of animal behavioral traits to humans. The rhinoceros played a role in helping Batswana who did not have a well where they could get water for their cows.

**Keywords:** Batswana; Rhinoceros; Poetry; Stories; Metaphors; Proverbs

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## 1. Introduction

African rhinoceros conservation is facing serious threats, which require clear strategies and using all opportunities to combat them. This study explores the use of imagery in indigenous Setswana poetry regarding the rhinoceros.

It concentrates on metaphors, stories and proverbs of Setswana cultural and the symbolic significance of the rhinoceros. The objective of this research is showing purpose of rhinoceros to Batswana and vice-versa. Rhino plays an integral role in the maintenance of healthy, balanced ecosystems. They help Batswana by consuming huge volumes of vegetation. Batswana depend on many resources that can be found within rhino habitats. It does not examine the stylistic analysis of the poem as a whole; its primary focus is to assess the images of the rhinoceros. Metaphors make implicit comparisons.

Stories are important for the children because they educate, discipline and instruct them to know right from wrong. Metaphorically, axioms are sentences that people often quote, which give advice or tell you something about life. Setswana tales were repeated now and then. Setswana teams, *bogwera*, boy initiation and *bojale*, girls' initiation was regarded as central pillars of society.

Africa is a vast continent with various fauna and flora, and folklore serves to carry on the old traditions, and to preserve and uphold them as a means of handing down traditions and customs from one generation to the next. Oral history, mythology, proverbs, poetry and music have thrived for generations because of the absence of printed material. The value of folklore is to prepare young people for life.

Batswana kingship is often featured as a central figure in stories, embodying traits such as courage, determination and wisdom. Rainmakers value rhinoceros' horns. The rhinoceros has two horns, one short and one long.

The short horn, *lenaka la pula*, is used as a container for the rain ritual, while the long horn, *lenaka la Kgosi*, is used to protect the chief/king.

The (*tshitlo*) itself was made from the roots of several plants, the body of the common frog (*segogwane*) or the small rain frog (*senanatswii*), and portions (feathers, flesh and dung) of the lightning bird<sup>[1]</sup>.

The rhinoceros played an important role in the lives of

Batswana people, whose lives, traditionally centered around rain and hunting<sup>[2]</sup>. Batswana elevate rain to godly deeds when they associate it with *kgomo*, and in the same breath, associate *kgomo* with God, *Modimo o o nko e metsi*, meaning the living God or God the provider<sup>[3]</sup>. The most prized possession, rain, furnished their everyday needs. The horns of rhinoceros were used to protect the king/chief. This part of the article concentrates on the names of rhinoceros given to them by Batswana<sup>[3]</sup>.

Setswana's name for the rhinoceros is *tshukudu*. They differentiate between *tshukudu e ntsho* (black rhinoceros) and *tshukudu e tshweu* (white rhinoceros). *Bodile*, *Kenenyane*, *Kgetlwa*, *Makgale* and *Thema* are black rhinos. *Mogofu* and *Kobaoba* are white rhinos.

From the above example of the naming of the rhinoceros, Batswana were acute observers and, as the various names suggest, attached great importance to this animal. As is apparent, horn size and shape play a major role in ethnozoological classification, which in turn, influenced early scientific classifications by European explorers and naturalists<sup>[4]</sup>.

From travelers' accounts and early lexicographic studies, the different Setswana names for the black and white rhino were classified based on body size and especially, horn size<sup>[4]</sup>.

In the Setswana dictionary of Brown, a rhinoceros can be differentiated this way: *tshukudu*; a short-horned-*bodile*; *kenenyane*; large, long horned – *mogofu*; a large very long horned – *kgetlwa*; From travelers' accounts and early lexicographic studies, Batswana classified rhinoceros based on the body size<sup>[5]</sup>. The story of the rhinoceros became popular when it was sculpted in gold 800 years ago. As a symbol of kingship, the sculptor used gold to carve the rhinoceros. As it was the custom of the tribe to lay the king to rest with all his wealth, the golden rhinoceros was placed in King Zwanga's grave. The golden rhinoceros was retrieved in 1934. It was found by archeologists from the University of Pretoria and stored in their museum as an artefact. Initially, there was a development conflict between Zimbabwe, South Africa and Botswana. Today many students and scholars from different countries in western, eastern, southern and northern countries converge in Mapungubwe to do research, and to learn about the big five, namely, the lion, the buffalo, the leopard, the elephant and the rhino.

## 2. Methodology

The study analyses the rhinoceros as a royal symbol of Batswana kings was found in Setswana literature and interviews from Batswana experts. The article contributes to understanding the symbolic significance of the rhinoceros in Setswana culture through poetry, proverbs, and stories. This exploration provides valuable insights into the intersection of wildlife, culture, and traditional practices, highlighting the relationship between humans and animals in African cultural heritage. There is another correlation of the two species, namely, *mophato* or regiment:

The concept of *mophato* is one of the factors that enabled Batswana to develop as a strong nation. Similarly, a group of rhinoceros is called a crash of rhinoceros; there will usually be one dominant rhino who will defend the territory from intruders. Batswana also has a *modisa* or guardian. The relationship inspired Batswana to create metaphors, poetry and stories about the rhinoceros.

## 3. Theoretical Framework

This study uses Afrocentricity to understand great historical movements in Africa. It is not only necessary, but imperative to grasp the essentials of Africa's animals, especially the big five, geography, its physical features, vegetation and rainfall. These factors have a direct impact on African history. To deconstruct purposively selected Setswana songs, proverbs, poetry and myths, were recorded between the 1900s and 2000s. To quest the significance of the Afrocentric approach and how it places the African phenomena at the centrality or agency.

## 4. Impacts on Rhinoceros' Conservation on Population Recovery

- There is a crisis of losing rhinos. The animals were brought back in the early 1900s. Why did their numbers get so low and what led up to their initial crisis? How do we apply that success to other rhino species that are in a similar crisis now?
- Restore and rewild degraded wildlife habitat.
- There are several ways that national parks, game reserves and organizations are fighting rhino poaching, from fitting rhinos with tracking devices, having anti-poaching units

on the ground actively monitoring them, rhino dehorning, education drives, and more.

- Illegal killings of rhinos in South Africa are on the decline. In 2019, poachers killed 594 rhinos, down from 769 in the year prior, according to South Africa's Department of Environment, Forestry, and Fisheries.
- People need to be educated that without rhinos, there are fewer grazing lawns since they keep the growth of vegetation under control.
- A return to normal state of health, mind or strength
- Regaining of possession or control of stolen or lost rhinoceros
- Illustrated the cultural identity of the Batswana as a repository of knowledge and philosophy and an understanding of values, ethos, and belief systems unearthed by poetry, stories and proverbs regarding rhinoceros.
- Most importantly, the study analysed how through poetic imaginativeness, ingenuity stories and resourceful proverbs the Batswana people's identities constantly changed in the face of social context whether induced by local factors or external ones.
- Except for what has been discussed in this research, the article can be dissected to show the materials from which it has been constructed. The significance of this study warrants further research in the literature of Setswana.

## 5. Images of Rhino in Setswana Kingship Poetry

Batswana borrowed some ideas, images and symbols from the rhinoceros. These include poems like *Kgosi Matlapeng*, *Kgosi Phoko a Boijane*, *Kgosi Mmolotsi a Mma-Poe*, *Modingwana a Mokgoe a Pooe*, *Mokgosi a Pooe*, *Kgosi Khama III*, *Leboko la ga Samoele* and *Kgosi Bareki (Mogolane)*, to mention but a few.

### Kgosi Matlapeng

*Bodile a Tshwaane, go robala ga a robala, o bobile*

*Makgale o laditse namane e sa le nnye,*

*O rile a tsoga a fesola motho, a mo tseelwa Direthwa*

*Tshukudu ya lekoko la Diphakana*<sup>[6]</sup>

*Bodile of Tshwaane, is not sleeping but hiding.*

*Makgale* is cuddling the calf to sleep for it is still small.

When it woke it knocked a person down and snatched *Diretlwa* away.

Rhinoceros a member of *Diphakana*

In the above lines, Matlapeng is associated with two types of black rhino, namely *Bodile* and *Makgale*. According to Brown, *Bodile* is a small, short horned rhinoceros. *Makgale* does not appear in any Setswana dictionary<sup>[5]</sup>. Matlapeng is symbolised as a rhino because he assisted Bakwena in their fight against Bangwato and later a tree next to the sight of their settlement was named *Mokgotlho wa Matlapeng* or Matlapeng's tree.

The image of the rhino is used metaphorically to portray Matlapeng's role as a powerful arbiter. Usually when there is war, a mediator is regarded as a broker who extinguishes the fire, that is, bringing about a cessation of hostilities. In this context, ending strife. The following epic likens Kgosi with a rhinoceros like this:

#### Phoko a Boijane

*Theme ya lebotu la ga Motlabatlaba*

*Theme ga a tlhabe a sa rumulwa*

*Le mo tsenetse kwa o Lalang*<sup>[6]</sup>

*Theme of the foothills of Motlabatlaba*

*Theme's horn does not stab if not offended.*

*Theme's sleeping place has been encroached.*

For that Theme is going to crush you.

By dragging you through the thorn bushes

This praise song is based on the aftermath of the war in which Kgosi Phoko a Boijane repulsed his enemies. Phoko's strength is equated to a raging and furious. *Theme* – another species of black rhino. Just like *Makgale*.

A Setswana proverb says, *Tshukudu ga e ke e tsenelwa mosimeng*, it is dangerous to kill a snake in its hole or never follow a beast into its lair<sup>[2]</sup>.

Bakgatla disregarded this maxim and paid dearly. The poet uses a metaphor, comparing Phoko's spear with a rhino's horn. A rhino is not aggressive if not provoked.

#### Mmolotsi a Mma-Poee

*Ke Mogofu a saka la badimo*

*Mma-Maleka, o Lesele*

I am Mogofu from badimo cattle-post.

Son of Mma-Maleka and nephew of Lesele<sup>[6]</sup>

The song is based on Mmolotsi's repulsion of Batlokwa after raiding cattle belonging to Ba-ga-Malete. Mmolotsi is likened to *Mogofu*, a large, long horned rhinoceros<sup>[5]</sup>. He introduces himself as a person who comes from a family of well-known warriors among the Batswana. He refers to himself as *Mogofu*, the white rhino, or (*ceratotherium simum*). It is commonly known that the white rhino is not as aggressive as the black rhino, but if provoked it may well be as lethal.

Mmolotsi was aggravated by Batlokwa and like a white rhino, he retaliated to protect his people. The successor of Mmolotsi is also compared to a rhinoceros:

#### Mokgosi a Poee

*Segope yoo dinaka di tshwaana*

*Bolelela Raditshwaana, Tshukudu*<sup>[6]</sup>

Rhinoceros of the white tusk!

Inform Porogwane, I am on my way.

Mokgosi a Poee did not know how to escape, he was running in many different directions or places, and in a disorganised way. The expression, "hither and yon", is appropriate for a person who does not know where to go.

Mokgosi went to Bangwaketse. He settled among them and joined the raids. After they took many cattle, again he took more cattle, enriching himself. He was expelled by Bangwaketse.

*...are, a jaana tau gaekantshware,  
a fa e ka ntshwara Kilamolelo.*<sup>[7]</sup>

and saying, "Won't the lion now seize me,  
won't fire-hater seize me here?"

In the above extracts the image of a lion and rhinoceros is used to portray the characteristics of Mokgosi. This image implies that a chief has the qualities of both animals. A chief is supposed to be very strong to protect his tribe against droughts and famine. African agriculturalists were traditionally attributed to a disturbance of the social order and associated with ritual danger, which generated heat and had to be cooled down.

A belief among Batswana that black rhinos supposedly charge and stomp out campfires could provide an explanation for their association with rain making rituals.

### Modingwana a Mokgoe a Poee

Sehuralwana ga o itse go tshaba  
O lebagane le naka lwa tshukudu  
O tloga go more o manakanake<sup>[6]</sup>

Sehuralelwa you will not outwit Poee.  
You are facing horn of rhinoceros.  
A strong horn of Bodile  
Facing and dangling horn of beast

The poem is based on the war between BaMaletle and Bangwaketse at Tlokwe near Dinokana. The history of Bangwaketse is traced to Ngwaketse, the junior son of a Mokwena king, Malope. At the same time, Bahurutshe was fighting Bakwena. The Bahurutshe defeated Bakwena and name of the area was named Madikwe blood of Bakwena, *medi a bakwena*.

Makgoe a Poee, bravery and fearless, is compared with Bodile. The spears that stabbed Bakgatla ba Mmaanana are associated with the horns of rhinoceros.

### Kgosi Khama III

‘... are, a jaana tau gaentshware,  
a fa gaaka ntshwara kilamolelo.’

...and saying, “Won’t the lion now seize me  
Won’t the fire-hater seize me?”<sup>[8]</sup>

Raditladi is praising his great grandfather, Khama III. He compares Khama with the rhinoceros, the animal that stamps out fires in the veld to invite rain to cool the ground. Scheub says:

“The poet must be aware of his ancestors, of his tradition: he must incorporate the achievements of his predecessors in his own works but be aware of his own time and place so that his work reflects a consciousness of both his own time, his own culture, and that of his own ancestors.”<sup>[9]</sup>

Khama was respected by his subjects and members of other tribes in southern Africa. He symbolised beauty, wisdom and life. Refugees who came to Botswana were given good treatment. Khama was compared to still waters because he was calm, kind, humane and merciful. In his inaugural speech at the University of Colombia, in New York, Pixley Seme shared his respect for Khama. He said Khama was far

ahead of his time. Among other things, Khama declared a ban of alcohol in his territory. Khama did not have security; he visited his villages with his horse now and again. He also started an industry where people could work and built schools for children in his nucleated settlements.

The following poem also uses the image of the rhino:

### Kgosi Bareki (Mogolane)

*Tshukudu ya Matimakgabo Kgalema*  
*O kgalemele Baamotlharo ba utlwe.*  
*Re utlwa go twe Janji o a golegwa,*  
*Re tle re tsene mo kgwafeng la gago* <sup>[10]</sup>

Rhinoceros, please alert them  
Warn the Motlharo tribe to listen  
There is a hearsay that Janji is going to jail  
We would like to be your subjects

He was the son of Morwe, chief of the Batlharo in Tsoe in the district of Kudumane.

The poet uses images such as rhinoceros, lightning of Mmantereke, peacemaker, and radical leader having a strong effect on people’s lives; a person who amalgamates people; a strong tree, gemsbok, lion. His age-set was known as *Legatakomo*. The poet is requesting Bareki to help Batlhaping because their chief and his army were attacked by British soldiers.

According to Poetry is usually a dramatic statement in which the composer recalls an experience and gives us an imagined revision of how it affected him. He interprets the action, giving it significance. His vision unfolds in the structure of the poem and the order of ideas<sup>[11]</sup>.

### Kgosi Gopane

*Mogobe o motona Ntlatsang*  
*O ka tlala go ka nwa Ditshukudu*  
*Ditlou di o nwa di o latile di tswa Shashe*  
*Di lebile Motseng wa Matebele*<sup>[12]</sup>

The great pool, Ntlatsang  
Rhinoceros come here to drink.  
Elephants come from far as Shashe  
Herding to the village of the Ndebeles.

In this poem, Kgosi Gopane is equated with a great reservoir storing rainwater. This water would be used for irrigation purposes and would serve as a lifeline for hundreds

of animals and birds who would visit it to quench their thirst. The reservoir also holds dangers, and people need to ensure that the edge is free of hazards, such as algae or debris, which could cause slips and falls, possibly giving rise to drowning and near drowning incidents, and fall impact injuries. Provoking Kgosi Gopane is like “drowning in a sea of grief”, a metaphor for profound sorrow and regret.

The poetry about water illustrates the intriguing diversity of artistic responses to water. While some poets portray water as agentive in its intra-actions with human and nonhuman nature, others do not. Others use water to symbolise the suppressed historical links between indigenous Africans and nature, as well as the transgenerational pain and trauma of colonisation<sup>[13]</sup>.

### Kgosi Diutlwileng

*Moya o kile wa bolaya Tshukudu*

*Moya o bolaile Makgale*<sup>[12]</sup>

The wind that killed Rhinoceros

The wind which killed Makgale

Diutlwileng was *Kgosi* of Kaditshwene. His praise song is about his death. Moilwa the Second, one of the sons of Diutlwileng’s brother, the late chief Sebogodi, also resided there. He died in the battle fought against the Bakololo of Kgosi Sebetwane at Kolontwaneng, the capital of the Hurutshshe allies, the Batlokwa booMolefe.

The grandfather of Sediakgotle was Sebogodi, and his father was Motladiile, who married *Mmatshukudu*. Their first son was named *Tshukudu*.

Indigenous poetry of Batswana is a part of history because it educates modern Batswana to understand and to know where they come from.

Animals in general have always been friendly to people as emblems to represent social world and in the different relationships between human beings or different fragments of society. This affair association encompasses the conveyance of animal behavioral characteristics to members of human race or vice-versa. Fostering of animals as a trademark, insignia or the distinguishing character, milestone and the use of animals as go-betweens assemble to convey clearly with ancestors and the spirit world in general.

The article has also collected primary data using methods such as interviews, field observations, and ethnographic work.

The following primary data was collected through interviews with Setswana cultural experts, oral histories, or ethnographic fieldwork.

The evidence of primary data collection below, such as interviews, field observations, or ethnographic work was done by visiting Mapungubwe and Gaditshwene. They incorporate primary data through interviews with Setswana cultural experts and oral histories, or ethnographic fieldwork was done. On (12.11.2024) I interviewed former UNISA Academic and Setswana animal expert, Dr Jurie le Roux. He was doing research in Lehurutshe, North-West Province in South Africa. He has knowledge of the big five animals.

During my interview, I asked him why the Bafokeng tribe greet each other with a phrase *Mmanape a tshukudu*. What is their totem... is it *Tshukudu*? He laughed at me and said there is no tribe of Batswana that uses *Tshukudu* as a totem. Rhinoceros is a sacred animal of all Batswana royalty. The *Mmanape a Tshukudu*, is the name that emanates from *nape* singular *bonape*. *Nape* is one of the chiefs of the initiation ceremony who impersonates a deity; one who speaks with the gods; the demi-god of wisdom, a divine being<sup>[5]</sup>. In Setswana the name *moitseanape* is erudite person. He is keeper of the Mysteries, god of the moon, messenger of the deities and master of knowledge.

Mr. S.F. Motlhabane, Motswana elder, farmer and former hunter who stays in Mmametlhake village in Mpumalanga Province, played a video, a praise song, showing a named *Tshukudu of Malatsana*. The song was a performance by John Moriri, the song of lyrics. He played music videos in recognition of rhinoceros as a friend of Batswana. There are several schools named *Tshukudu* in Northwest Province in South Africa, recognition of rhinoceros highly respected by Batswana.

As regards outsiders visiting Africa, the big five and land remain the most useful and practical gifts. A Batswana cultural aesthetic entails the sacredness of animals. In the African and Batswana context the everyday is sacred and the sacred is every day; rhinoceros supply a royal’s daily needs. The African aesthetic is functional. When re-storying a Batswana aesthetic, we might say that rhetoric restores the dignity and self-respect of the Batswana nation. “It is the culture which he inherits that gives a man his human dignity”<sup>[14]</sup>.

In Setswana traditional society, the role of Kgosi is to

care for his people just like the rhinoceros protects its calf. The proverb, *Kgosi thutubudu e olelwa matlakala* means a chief is like an ash-heap on which gathered all the refuse, meaning, the higher the position, the greater the responsibility<sup>[2]</sup>. Batswana culture is often distinguished for its complex system, involving looking for the poor and the handicap. The concept of *mafisa* derived from this concept.

### Mafisa

Mafisa is a Setswana word that means to assist others in need. It is a core principle of traditional Setswana culture.

Batswana were also loving people who looked after one another. The concept *mafisa* principle is assisting others in need. It is the core of traditional Setswana culture. People who were rich in cattle would hire the less privileged as workers and lend the workers cattle so that they would also have a basis to create wealth. The workers were allowed to use the cattle to plough maize and sorghum, and to milk them for their families. The workers were not allowed to sell milk, maize or sorghum without informing the owner.

Just like other shepherds or guardians, they were expected to inform the owner if one of the cows was dead or lost. The role of the shepherd was to look after the cows so that they multiply. At a later stage when the owner takes them back, the shepherd will be given half of the number of cattle so that he can support his family. This concept was advantage to someone for the good of mankind.

The essence of the principle lies in the commonality of the contributors and the participants who are also beneficiaries.

In Setswana the lender was referred to as *tshukudu* while the shepherd was known as *kala*. It looks like the relationship of Batswana was derived from the relationship between the rhinoceros and the oxpecker.

There is another correlation between the two species. The concept of *mophato* is one of the factors that enabled Batswana to develop as a strong nation. This concept is made of a group of individuals of the same age. The regiment of boys and girls of the same age who separately went through an initiation ceremony at the same time. The regiments united the community for tasks in the community, like hunting, fighting beasts of prey, building roads, schools, bridges and hoeing weeds.

Similarly, a group of rhinoceros is called a crash. In a normal sized crash, there will usually be one dominant rhino

who will defend the territory from intruders. The females within the group are often related to each other. They usually stay together to protect one another. This is the way in which people and animals are connected. There are many proverbs about animals and people. They have been defined by several researchers from various angles, which explains why there are so many different yet closely related meanings in every language and culture. According to Nwadike<sup>[15]</sup>, each in its own genre has something to underscore such as caution, praise, encouragement, dissuasion, child upbringing, self-control, thrift or hard work. For example, there are proverbs about animals such as locusts, birds, fish, insects and rhinoceros.

The Setswana proverb utilized by Kgosietsile may be read as what Sylvia Wynter calls a new science, hybrid science of the Word' preconditional to rewriting/resounding and producing knowledge beyond the machinations of Euromodern "Man". What is noteworthy here is that Winter deems Aime' Cesaires' of Poetic knowledge as constituting that science. Poetic knowledge constitute the stories, mythologies, cosmologies, indigenous languages, proverbs, and songs that break with the limits and structures of the dominant order and its categories of being and knowing<sup>[16]</sup>.

Most of the rhinoceros' proverbs in this work were sourced from S.T. Plaatje's "Sechuana Proverbs" published in 1916<sup>[2]</sup>.

### Rhinoceros stories

Setswana has proverbs that emphasise leadership as a role occupied by men instead of women, and Batswana culture teaches this from an early age. *Tshukudu e e tonanyana ga e ke e etelelwa ke e namagadi kwa pele*<sup>[17]</sup>.

The proverb above speaks about leadership within a household and teaches that males are expected to lead in specific roles, especially in the household.

The saying is a clear reflection of the traditional gender roles of the Batswana people and a reflection of the status of the masculine over the feminine.

Mokoma<sup>[17]</sup> translates the proverb as "*Nilo e e laolwang ke mosadi, monna a le teng ga e a siama*", which means a house led by a woman while a man is present does not go right. In such statements, one sees how a woman's leadership ability is questioned and subordinated to a man. "Ga di ke di etelelwa ke e namagadi pele, di wela ka lengope"<sup>[17]</sup>. The proverb above is like the preceding one, suggesting that

failure or disaster will likely follow when females lead, just as the proverb before it conveys a lack of confidence in the woman's ability to lead and reinforces traditional gender roles where males lead.

Mokoma<sup>[17]</sup> explicitly translates this proverb by saying "banna ke baeteledipele ba tlhologo le lelapa", loosely meaning that men are the natural leaders of society and the family. Both sayings above teach that it is inappropriate or even unnatural for women to lead men. Thus, they instill in boys the stereotypical belief that leadership is inherently a male trait and perceive female leadership as incompetent. This results in boys undermining and undervaluing the capabilities and contributions of their female peers.

Some behaviours associated with hegemonic masculinity include dominance, assertiveness, and control, and sayings like these encourage such behaviour while discouraging equality and collaboration, which society learns to perceive as feminine or weak. By perpetuating the idea that females should not lead males, these proverbs reinforce a social structure where men hold power and women are subordinate, maintaining the status quo of gender inequality.

## 6. Images of Rhino in Setswana Stories

There are stories of about rhinoceros encountered by Batswana:

### *Leinane la Mosimane Pholo le Tshukudu*

#### **The story of Pholo and the rhinoceros**

*Mo teng ga sekgwa sa Magalakwena go ne go na le poo ya tshukudu e e neng e sa tshabe le fa e le sepe se se tshelang. Ditau tsa Magalakwena di ne tsa e tlhoboga e ise e gole. Matsholo a Bangwaketse a ne a e itse, mme a e tshaba go gaisa Matebele. Fa ba ne ba tle ba rakane le yona mo nageng, go ne go latlhiwa dikobi, metsu le marumo. Go ne go tlhanolwa direthe go gopolwa ditlhare.*

*Letsatsi lengwe setshosa se, se se neng se rwele dinaka tse pedi mo nkong sa lemoga menate ya tshimo ya ga RraPholo sa tsena. Dintšwa tsa Rrapholo tsa re kge!*

*Tsa e dikanyetsa di ntse di bogola di bitsa Pholo gore a tle a tabogile. Mogajana a goroga a ntse a tsokotsa molangwana wa gagwe. E ne e le la ntlha a bona setshedi se tshwana le majwe a a bonalang kwa thabeng fela.*

*Ka a ne a tshogile go feta selekanyo a e re ruthu ka molamo. Tshukudu ya tenega ka gore kwa e tswang teng e tlwaetse e le phologosepagamisamere, mme batho ba bagolo ba ikana ka yona. Jaanong ke o, mothwana o a e telela. Ya sunetsa gangwe fela ya re fff! Ya kgologela Pholo.*

*Mosimane a inaya naga a setswe morago ke dintšwa di ntse di re tšau! tšau! Kwa gae a tlhalosetsa rraagwe gore o ne a lelekilwe ke lejwephologolo kwa masimong. RraPholo a bo a bitsaka dintšwa tsotlhe. A tsamaya a tlhometse go ya go kampana le selo se aneng a sa se itse gore ke eng. A taboga a šakgetse thata, dintšwa di mo setse morago. A tlhasela Tshukudu kwa morago. Ya retologa ka bonako. Ya mo tlhaba ka lenaka le lennye a wela fa fatshe. Ya mo tlola ka bonako ya itsamaela. Go tloga tsatsing leo, a itse gore, fa o bona tshukudu o namela setlhare.<sup>[18]</sup>*

In the deep Magalakwena's forest there was a rhinoceros which was not afraid of any living beings. Lions of Magalakwena feared this animal when it was still small.

Bangwaketse hunting parties knew about this potentially dangerous animal while it was still a calf. For them, it was more dangerous than an army of Mandebele. When they came across this beast in the veld, they threw away their bows and arrows and spears. They ran away as fast as possible to climb the tallest tree. One day, this feared beast, with two horns next to the nose discovered the sweetest shrubs in Rapholo's ploughing field. Rapholo's dogs emerged! They surrounded the rhinoceros while barking continuously to draw Rapholo's herdsmen's attention.

The brave hero arrived brandishing a knobkerrie. It was the first time seeing this beast whose colour looked like the rocks in the mountain.

Even though he was terrified he struck it with his knobkerrie. The rhinoceros was angry because, it is re-



spected by Batswana. Now look at this nonentity who disrespects him. The rhinoceros sniffed repeatedly fff! It attacked Rapholo's herdsman.

The herd boy escaped followed by dogs barking, *tšau! tšau!* At home he explained to his father, Rapholo, that he was chased by a rhinoceros at the ploughing fields. Rapholo called all the dogs excitedly. He armed himself on his way to wrestle with a monster he did not know. He ran as fast as he could, followed by his dogs. He attacked the rhino from the back. It turned quickly.

It cut Rapholo's belly with the small horn and he fell. It jumped over and left. From that day, he knew that if you see a rhinoceros, you must climb a tree. He knew that he was lucky to be alive, *O dule ka lesoba la mogodu*, you were in great trouble, but fortunately got out of it in the nick of time. You have come out through the opening in the rumen (leaf-stomach), literally meaning he was lucky to be alive.

The Setswana story demonstrates the benefits of obedience and the consequences of disobedience. Traditionally, the behaviour of Batswana was regulated through the larger community. An adult Motswana was expected to treat animals with respect, especially big and dangerous animals. In this story, Rapholo refuses to obey the Setswana belief that if you see a rhinoceros, you must climb a tree. Rapholo was humiliated and hurt. The story teaches one of the simplest yet most profound life lesson, namely, that it is in listening that we truly live and make the world a better place. There is another story of rhinoceros:

### Tshukudu le matlakadibe

#### Rhinoceros and the stormy rain

*Ga twe go kile ga bo go na le tshukudu e e jang mabele a batho. Se se ne se diragala gaufi le motse wa Dikwebu. Mo dingwageng tseo, batho ba ne ba akanya gore Tshukudu e ja dikala tsa ditlhare fela, e seng ntšhwe. Kgalema, molemi yo o neng a na le tshimo e kgolo, o ne a jetse ntšhwe mo tshimong ya gagwe. Baagi ba Dikwebu ba ne ba tlwaetse ditshukudu e bile ba itse gore ke diphologolo tse di bokgwabo. Ke ka moo Kgalema a neng a jala ntshwe mo tshimong e e di fetang tsoitlhe.*

*Ka letsatsi lengwe, Kgalema a ya go lekola dijalo tsa gagwe. O ne a itumetse e bile a letsa*

*molodi. O ne a gagamala thata fa a utlwa mokgwasa mo tshimong. Fa a leba kwa pele a bona setshosa se se rweleng dinaka di le pedi mo nkong ya sona. Tshukudu e ne e ja ntšhwe mo tshimong, e bile e sa utlwe mokgwasa wa motho o o gaufi.*

*E rile a ntse a nanya, a re kgatlha-thu, le namanane e tona! Kgalema a ntsha tlhobolo, a ya kwa morago ga yona. Kgalema a thunya Tshukudu ka fa morago. A e itaya ka marumo a tlhobolo a ka nna tharo. E rile fa marumo a e tlhaba, ya tswa e taboga ka bonako ya mo timelela mo sekgweng se se leng gaufi le tshimo.*

*Tshukudu e itsiwe e le seoka se se dirisiwang go kopa pula fa naga e okame ke lešekere.*

*Ya ema mme ya simolola go kiba lefatshe ka maoto a yona e kete e tima molelo, tiragatso e e tshwanang le ya diolamelora fa di rapelela pula. Ya re e ntse e kiba ga tsoga pula e e matla, maru a thiba ka bonako. Batswana ba ne ba e bitsa kilamolelo. Pula ya na ka sefako, ya robakaka dikala tsa ditlhare le dikungwa di le dintsi. Dithulelo tse di matla tsa rutlololwa ke phefo ya matlakadibe. Basadi le bana ba iphitlha ka fa tlase ga bolao.*

*Ga utlwala selelo le phuranyo ya meno mo Motseng wa Dikwebu. Dikgomo le dihutsana tsa lelela dinamane le dikonyana. Dinonyane tsa lelela mamphorwana. Tladi ya itaya le go robakaka ditlhare tse dikgolo le tse dinnye.<sup>[19]</sup>*

Once upon a time there was a rhinoceros that ate sorghum. Batswana fooled themselves by thinking that the rhinoceros eat tree branches only. This occasion took place next to Dikwebu village. Kgalema, one of the successful farmers, planted corn next to the forest. A crash of rhinoceros lived in the forest a few kilometers from Dikwebu. Inhabitants used to play with calves and adult rhinoceros. The reason Kgalema decided to plough corn next to the forest was because there was a big dam there.

One day Kgalema decided to go to the farm to find out how his corn was faring. He was excited and whistling to

see the corn. Suddenly he heard some noise close to where he was. When he looked next to where he was, he saw a big animal with two horns between the nose and eyes eating the corn in his farm. He took out his gun, slowly moving to the back of rhinoceros. He shot the animal at the back with his rifle. The big animal did not look back. She ran faster to the nearest forest and Kgalema was unable to kill the animal.

Rhinoceros stopped running and started clomping the land, emulating breasts of young girls dancing ritual songs. While stomping the ground, heavy clouds covered the sun. There was darkness everywhere. Heavy rain poured the land with hail. Branches of big trees fell. At the village strong winds dismantled the roofs, women and children were hiding under the beds, calves and kids were bellowing, birds were whistling, trying to protect the chicks. Thunderbolts deforest big and small trees.

Batswana believe that the rhinoceros is a powerful, large and potentially dangerous animal. They also respect and venerate the rhinoceros because it is associated with political power of the royal family. It plays an important role in rain ceremonies responsible for the well-being of the people, fertility of the land and abundance of harvest. In this case, the rhinoceros paid the price for eating Kgalema's sorghum. The two bullet shots on the rhinoceros back were a lesson it will never forget.

There is a Setswana proverb that says "*Chukudu ga e ke e cwa sekgoeng fela, ea be e utlwile botlhoko*"<sup>[2]</sup>, that is, the rhinoceros never leaves the forest without it being hurt. In this case, the rhinoceros lost the fight but won the war. Although defeated in a small conflict he won a larger more important one.

Kgalema lost his sorghum, his cattle and his house. He had never seen the strongest hurricane; two thirds of his building lost the roof. The storm lasted for hours while people of the village were frightened and confused. The cows and calves were frightened by lightning and hail. A Setswana proverb says *ntwa kgolo ke ya molomo*, the greatest war is the war of the mouth, meaning diplomacy is greater than military operations. An English equivalent is, in these days, whether we like it or not, the power is with the tongue. The proverbs can be used in education to teach a variety of skills and concepts.

## 7. Images of Rhino in Setswana Proverbs

### Proverbs about the tshukudu/rhinoceros

Sol Plaatje wanted to teach Batswana about the significance of the proverbs and how they tie up with Setswana traditional education.

1. *E kabo e ele Chukudu e ka bo e ntlhabile*: if it were a rhinoceros, it would have tossed (pierced) me. English equivalent: "talk of the devil and he'll appear"<sup>[2]</sup>.
2. *Chukudu e feta marwana e kgotshe*, that is, when a greedy person refuses food, he has over-eaten<sup>[2, 20]</sup>. When a person does not want to protect himself, he has a good reason to do so.
3. *Chukudu kwa gobe e isiwa ke ngwana*, that is, the rhinoceros is led to trouble by its calf, or the birth of a child is the imprisonment of a soul<sup>[2, 21]</sup>.
4. *E re o gopola tshukudu o namele setlhare! If you think of a rhino, climb up a tree!* Meaning, regard a premonition of pending danger as a warning, and find safety<sup>[21, 22]</sup>. I have just been talking about you<sup>[2]</sup>.
5. *Gola, o nne kana ka tlou! Tshukudu e nne Mosimane*. Grow, and become as big as elephant! Let the rhino be a mere boy.

Aside from elephants, the land animals most capable of taking on a rhinoceros in a one-on-one confrontation are hippopotamus and Cape buffalo. Despite being semi-aquatic, hippos are incredibly powerful and aggressive.

They have strong jaws and large teeth that can inflict serious damage. Buffalo are known for their strength and unpredictable nature; Cape buffalo can be formidable opponents.

They often defend themselves in groups but can stand their ground against large predators. The meaning of the proverb is this is the blessing of an old man when he thanks a young man who has done him a favour.

Times have changed, and the relationship between rhinoceros and Batswana chiefs has greatly diminished, but the memory and usefulness are enshrined in collective imagination and carried in language.

The article offers a unique and valuable exploration of the symbolic significance of rhinoceros in Setswana indigenous poetry, proverbs, and stories, contributing to the broader

understanding of African cultural and literary traditions. It highlights the Batswana people's deep connection to wildlife and their use of animal symbolism to convey social values, leadership qualities, and environmental awareness.

## 8. Conclusions

The aim of this article is to expound on the association between Batswana and rhinoceros. The study looks at the two different kinds of organisms when one receives benefits from the other without damaging it. The affiliation is engagement in positive social interactions with other species. Attachment is selective affiliation because of the development of a social bond. Batswana and rhinoceros share space. In some areas they work together and help each other for their survival, whereas in other cases they harm each other. It is also believed that Batswana learned some of their qualities of virtuousness from the rhino. They learned some of their virtues from rhinoceros' relationship with the oxpecker. When the Batswana were praying for rain, they emulated the rhinoceros by stomping the ground. Batswana were loving people who looked after one another. The principle of *mafisa* in Setswana is to assist others in need. It is believed that the Batswana learned this concept from the relationship of the rhinoceros and the oxpecker. The article examined the rhino by delving into and exploring Setswana indigenous poems, stories and proverbs.

There are so many Batswana kings who were given rhinoceros names like *Bodile*, *Theme*, *Makgale*, *Kobaoba*, *Mokgofu* and others. Batswana created stories and proverbs, oral history, mythology and music from their encounter with rhinoceros.

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## Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflict of interest.

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