

Botswana National Museum and Monuments, Ratsie Setlhako

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Ratsie Setlhako is a small publication by the Botswana National Museum, a result of a research programme aimed at documenting the life of the folklore musician Ratsie Setlhako. It is written in two languages, on one side pages 1 – 11 are written in English and on the other side, numbered pages 1 – 11 as well, is the Setswana translation.

Even though no date of publication is given, this is a welcome development to see the history of some Batswana who have left their mark in the history of this country documented before it disappears. For example, none of the relatives of Ratsie still alive could remember the name of the mother of Ratsie Setlhako's three children other than that she was the daughter of Goitsekgosi at Morale (p.4).

In the foreword, Batho Molema clearly highlights the valuable contribution that Ratsie Setlhako made to the music industry of Botswana. Molema notes the relevance of Ratsie's music to the Botswana society especially nowadays when society is faced with problems of HIV/AIDS, among other things. Hence, it is befitting to commend the Botswana National Museum researchers for documenting the life of Ratsie Setlhako.

Pages 1 – 5 documents Ratsie Setlhako's childhood. From the limited information gathered, his date of birth is estimated to be in the late 1890's at Ditima-Modimo-kwa-Ditlharapeng in the year of the locusts, hence the name Ratsie. It is clear that Ratsie was born during those historical times when there were lots of movements from one settlement to the other due to conflicts between different tribes. Evidence of this is provided in a stanza from one of his songs titled 'Matshwaro'. Unfortunately, the authors overlooked translating this stanza into English in the English version of the booklet. This omission runs throughout the English part of the booklet, excerpts from Ratsie Setlhako's songs are not translated into English making it difficult for readers who are non-speakers of Setswana to understand the relevance. This section is especially interesting because it also educates us on how the musical instrument, segaba, is made step by step.

Pages 6-7 highlights how Ratsie Setlhako used his music to comment on the historical, political and social issues faced by the Botswana society. Once again, the authors overlooked translating these stanzas from two of his songs used to illustrate into English. The next section informs us of Ratsie Setlhako's tragic death when he was hit by a car in Palapye. He was later buried in Palapye as per his wishes, on the 21 May 1976.

The last section looks at how he was honoured when in the year 2000 the Central District Council built a primary school in Palapye which was later named Ratsie Setlhako Primary School. The Parent Teachers Association of this school was instrumental in putting up a tombstone on his grave and building a Ratsie Setlhako Cultural Village in his memory. The authors should be commended for providing Ratsie Setlhako's family tree in the booklet. Even more interesting, are the pictures of Ratsie Setlhako playing his segaba which are provided throughout the booklet.

Even though more research is required to fill-in some of the gaps we see in the booklet, it is a very good contribution to the history of folklore music in Botswana. Such a study should form part of the Social Studies curriculum so that Batswana children can appreciate some of the legends in the History of Botswana music. Even more interesting is that the booklet is written in both Setswana and English. The Setswana part is very well written and thus making the information accessible to Setswana readers. However, the authors are advised to edit the booklet to rid it of some of the editorial things which run through the booklet especially the English part as well as translate Setswana songs into English on the English part of the booklet.

Reviewed by Joyce Mathangwane