THE PLACE OF CULTURE IN ARCHITECTURE

by
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Dedication

I would like to dedicate this thesis to my mother, my friend and mentor. Without you this piece of work would not have reached the level it reached. Thank you ma' for keeping me on the right track.

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Abstract

The Southern African country of Botswana is relatively young, having gained its independence from the British in 1966. The capital city, Gaborone, is relatively new, designed after the garden city models in 1963. A proud people, the Tswana are full of tradition in their ways. The culture dates back centuries. Many people do not call Gaborone home. It is just a place they happen to work in; home is in the village, for some over 800 km away. All seasonal festivities (Independence Day, Christmas and so on) are times for heading home to celebrate with the family. It is a time one uses to see the cattle at the cattle post and visit the lands to see how the crops and the small livestock are doing. Yes, the pastoral culture still reigns supreme.

A proud nation indeed, you come to the city and very little of the people is visible. The architecture has all the ideas the layman attributes to the west. The culture of the nation is nowhere to be found. Even the nation's *kgotla*, the House of Parliament, does not relate to the culture of such a proud people.

The thesis is an architectural research of how the Tswana culture can inform architecture. I have looked at the Tswana culture with particular attention to ways of public gathering and governance. The culture, though, is really found in the everyday events: for example, what happens in a typical dwelling and also in rituals like traditional dancing. The values learnt here culminate in the design of the new parliament building(s) in Gaborone. The point is not to transplant the village to the city, since this would not be fruitful; the idea is to learn the values and principles of the culture and apply them to the present setting. This is in essense a reading (an interpretation) of the culture for architectural design purposes. This thesis is undertaken in keeping with the fact that Botswana is a democratic country, and as such the ideas the building(s) portray relate to both tradition and democracy, and the two coexist.

Acknowledgements

There are a lot of people to thank for the completion of this thesis. First and foremost I would like to thank the Lord, Almighty. It is only through you, Lord, that I was able to get through all this. I know that without you at times carrying me through I would not be where I am right now Thank you, Father.

I would like to thank Grant Wanzel, Frank Palermo and Essy Baniassad for their assistance in the thesis. Without you this thesis would not have advanced to the level it did. For the late night crits and work on this thesis, and at times just for being willing to listen to my rambling on about the work, I would like to thank Emmanuel (for showing me the direction forward and pushing me when I seemed to be dragging my feet). Lazarus (thanks for the quote), Bernard, Sakgomo,Arnold, Marisa, Sarah, Reatile, Ming, Trina and all those whose names do not appear here, it does not mean I do not appreciate all you did to help me through. Your enthusiam and at times criticism made the work enjoyable right to the end. I would also like to thank Boineelo (you know why),Tsepo, Portia and Joy for reminding me that there is more to life, Gontle for being the one to prove that I could go through a lot and persevere. And lastly, my younger sister, Tiroyamodimo "T-Gal" Olerato TAU, thank you *kiddo* (Yes, *kiddo*, He is love).

1.0 Introduction

1.1 History

"No!! I happen to be from Gaborone, *ntatemogolo* (grandfather) is the one who is from Mochudi," Tshepo argued.
"No! No! No! No one is from Gaborone. If your family (extended) is from Mochudi so are you, that's what *malome* Ntonki told us when we went to the cattle post last school holidays," returned Tebogo.
"Well, *ntate* (father) does not have a compound here, but has one in Gaborone so we are from Gaborone."

Back and forth the children went with argument after counter-argument. I know Tshepo and Tebogo knew better. We were from Mochudi, though I did not have a residence there yet. I grew up in Gaborone and Mochudi. School days were in Gaborone while the holidays were spent between Mochudi, the lands and the cattlepost. Mochudi is where I will retire. Gaborone is where I happen to reside now.Though I know it is just playful talk among the twins, they do strike a point. They were making fun of Segametsi, who happened to be our neighbour's daughter. The family does not go to their villages as we do. Sega (short for Segametsi) was born and raised with the undertsanding that she is from Gaborone, though I know the parents are from Boteti farms, in the far north of Botswana. It would be close to a day and a half drive to go there. Unfortunately Sega's parents are not close to their extended family and as such never go "home" for the holidays.

Tshepo and Tebogo are among the lucky children nowadays. Every school holiday they get to enjoy the simple life that some of the older generation enjoyed. Tending after livestock at the lands or the cattlepost, taking a bath in the reservoir, going swimming in the river on the occasions when it is flowing after heavy rains, eating wild berries in the arid savanna landscape and at the end of every day after collecting the all-important water from the well, sitting around the fire and listening to the day's adventures and the folklore stories

by our great grandfather, Bophelo. God bless his soul, at 92 he still could walk the walk and talk the talk. He looked just a day above 60. Tebogo and Tshepo have learnt a lot from him I know, just as much as I did growing up. The stories ranged from stories about demons to the wars he participated in and the stories about the village meetings he attended at the main *kgotla* back in the day. The stories he loves to tell most of the time are the celebrations that took place there: the chief's wedding, the initiation ceremonies of the *masogwana* (young boys regiment), the visit of the first president of Botswana to the village, the ceremonies that commemorated the beginning of the ploughing season, the sessions for praying for rain and on a sad note, the funeral of the last born son of the chief. Everything took place at the *kgotla* if it was to involve the whole village.

The *kgotla* is a place of places, the village meeting place, but in simpler terms it is where the chief's residence is found and also where his administration "offices" are found. All disputes are settled here by the chief with the assistance of the elders of the village. In the olden days, before the office block at the village was erected, the chief and the elders did all the business of the village in the open under the huge trees found on the site. The tree was the backdrop for the meetings. In smaller gatherings it offered shade for those present and in larger gatherings it was the point of focus.

Even to this day the chief and the village elders still settle disputes of villagers, but now they are just small cases relating to customary law. The other cases are sent out to the magistrate courts of the country. The importance of the *kgotla* and tradition according to some people is being eroded and there is no better place to see this than in Gaborone. In the village, wherever you go, you have to greet everyone you meet, at times stop and ask them how they are doing. As a child I found it a drag to have to stop and greet people but now I look back and see the reason: it brought us closer together. We were a community. Bophelo would stop and greet everyone. A five minute walk would take over thirty minutes because he would stop and talk for ages with whomever we met on our way. Courtesy was

so important. Children now and adults too in the city have lost this. Because we try to separate our city life from the village life we tend to be more individuals than a community in the city. We forget that we are one society. Yes, we are from different tribal groups from this diverse country, but at the end of the day we are *batswana* and that should be reflected not only when we are in the village but also when we are in the city. Our tradition is slowly eroding, and more children like Sega will grow up with no notion of the traditional Tswana culture when raised in the city. I know the city is different from the village; there is a faster pace to life, but that does not mean we have to throw away our culture in the name of modernity.

I sit back and hope that not many children will have to grow up like Sega, but if they do, hopefully the culture that Tshepo and Tebogo have easy access to through me and Bophelo and all their uncles in the village will have found its way to the workings of the city. The city will not only be the economic hub of the country, but have the diverse culture of the people shine through. The city is a reflection of its inhabitants and so far this has not been the case. If it starts to reflect the people and not just their "city life image" then there is no fear for the Segametsis of this world growing up knowing Gaborone as home because they will still have strong ties to their culture and tradition.

1.2 Thesis Question

How can culture inform architecture now? What the question entails is a deep understanding of culture and then an interpretation of it into architecture in this day and age, using materials and building methods of this age. A reading of the architecture in the city should reflect the cultural aspirations of the people who live in the city. We are a modern city, but not just any modern city: a modern city in Botswana.

The thesis looks at the above stated issue and shows how design can in essence be culturally relevant and culturally based. My belief is that if culture is taken as the main parameter in the design of the city of Gaborone, the city will evolve in a manner that represents the Tswana people now. The principles of our culture will not be eroded in our quest to be modern. The thesis looks at urbanisation issues but dwells more on interpretations of culture in architectural form and the renewal of an urban institution: the parliament.

Design is for the people, not the people for the design. We create for a society and not design in such a manner that does not respect the society but creates its own society in the process. As architects we should not just make spaces and say that people will appropriate them, or learn to live with what we have designed. This in essence would be creating our own societies. The call to architects I see is learning about the culture and ensuring that people do not just have to learn to live with the design but can understand it and how their activities are reflected in the design. Architecture in this sense continues the practices of the society. Design in the city should be an image of the society. As designers it is our duty to portray the city in a manner that suits the society and gives a clear image of the societal image of the client and community.

The thesis attempts this within the following parameters:
- settlement patterns and ways of governance in Tswana culture, and what we can learn from them.
- study of the ways in which we gathered in a traditional setting.

- the idea of threshold in Tswana culture.

The principles learnt from the above study have informed the way in which one can design the nation's *kgotla*, the parliament.

1.3 Motivation

Growing up in a new age of town life, school days are in towns and cities while holidays are in the villages with one's grandparents. Very little of that is happening now; a lot of the children are growing up with little appreciation of the village. Our first president, the late Sir Seretse Kgama, once said, "A nation without a past is a nation without a soul." My fear is that this will come to pass, especially in architecture. I do not know whether it is because architectural works have been commissioned to foreign architects all along but the buildings that we find in this country have little to no relation to the rich culture that is slowly being dissolved.

In 1998 there was a competition for the design of the new parliament building in Gaborone. What I found a failure in the brief and some (if not all) of the designs was a clear understanding of the people of Botswana. Questions of who we are, where we have been and where we are going are important here, but do not seem to have been considered by the designs or the brief. A deeper understanding of governance is essential in designing the parliament. The parliament is not just another building. It should be the symbol of democracy and tradition for all the people of Botswana. Everyone should feel that it reflects him/her in a way. The parliament is a reflection of ourselves in the city's architecture.

2.0 *Ngwao* (Tradition)

> Until the lion learns to write, the story of the hunt will always glorify the hunter. (African proverb)

2.1 Patterns of Settlement: Placement of the *kgotla*

The internal organisation of the Tswana settlement was not geometrically organised according to physical elements but its form was derived from the conceptual model of the social structure of the society. A settlement started with the strategic placement of the main *kgotla* (the main public gathering space for the whole settlement). This is a large open space surrounded by a circular fence of stout poles and usually a few big trees for shade. Everything then radiated hierarchically from the *kgotla*. The chief would have his compound right off the main *kgotla* and the next to settle closest to him were his *basimane*. His "boys" or guards and then those of the royal family settled. The pattern of settlement is by wards. A ward is a grouping of closely related kinsmen. Each ward automatically knew its position in relation to the physical position of the head of the state, the *kgosi* (chief) and the main *kgotla*. The village may move but the position of the wards was always relatively the same. This way of settlement was carried further into individual wards, where each individual compound was placed relative to that of the leader of the ward.

In the case of Mochudi the *kgotla* is situated at the most defensible area of the village (at the base of a hill). The big tree here marks the "hearth" of the *kgotla*. The buildings form the foil (see Figures 1 to 6), the backdrop, for the gathering space. The rest of the village radiates out from the *kgotla*. The chief is given the utmost importance, with his small pavilion where he meets the elders of the village being elevated to higher ground to signify this. The pavilion is at the highest point of the *kgotla*. Power is vested in the chief and as such he has the vantage point to

Figure 1: Main approach to *kgotla* in Mochudi.

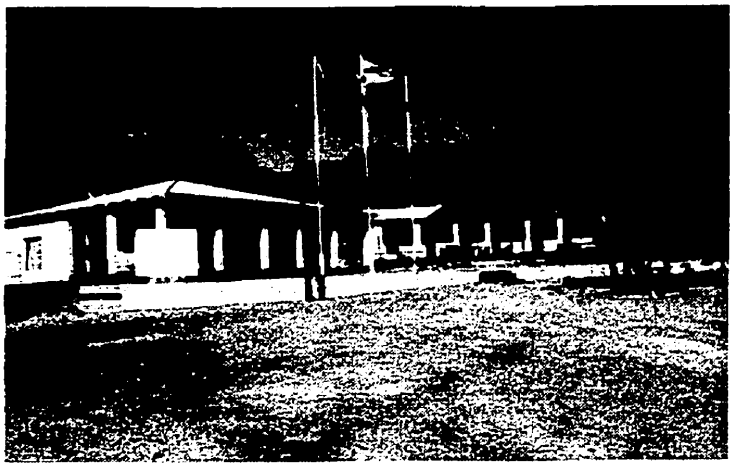


Figure 2: *Kgotla* administration offices with elders pavilion in the background and a view of the big tree in the *kgotla*.

Figure 3: Main pavilion in the *kgotla*.

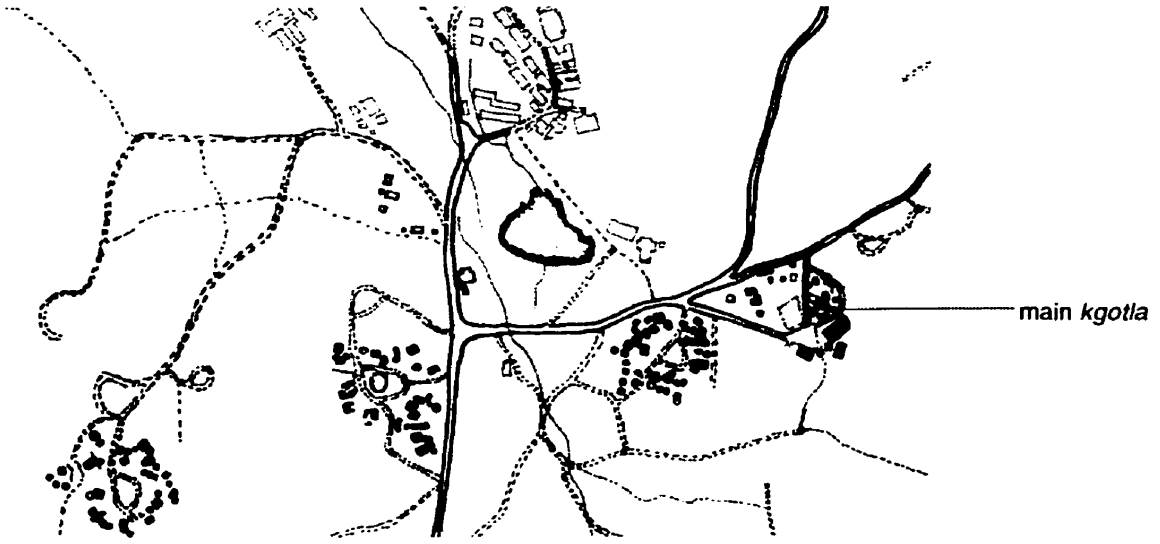


Figure 4: The village of Mochudi. As evident in the array of roads and the few dwellings here, the village was never based on formal geometry.

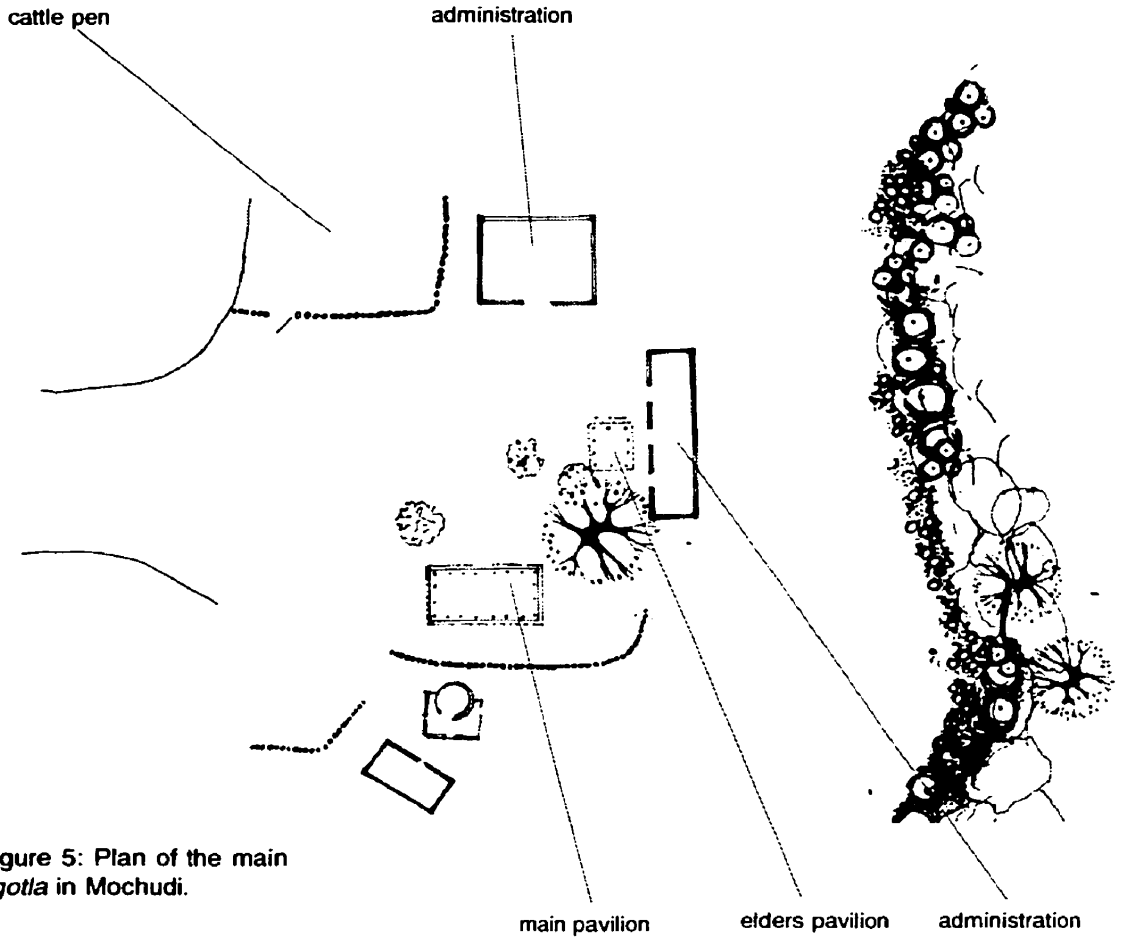


Figure 5: Plan of the main *kgotla* in Mochudi.

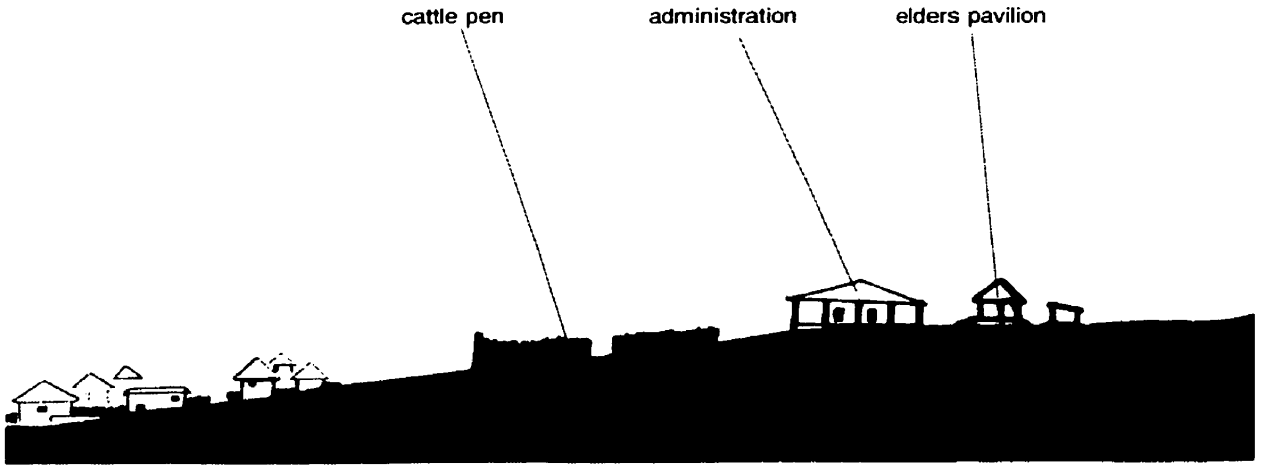


Figure 6: Section of the main *kgotla* in Mochudi.

overlook the village. The *kgotla* space, though, is still held in high esteem and is the real focus for the village. The backdrop for the *kgotla* is the buildings and the cattle pen. The buildings are used for administration purposes. The cattle pen is used to keep cattle temporarily in cases where there is a celebration that will require the killing of some of the cattle, or when a tribesman pays tribute to the chief. In cases where some cattle have been found they are kept here for claiming by the owner.

All the legislative, judiciary, defence, taxes and land allocation matters and all other civic matters of the village were administered by the chief at the *kgotla*. The chief had elders to give advice, but the final say on all issues pertaining to the tribe was by the chief. The belief was that the chief would give the word and what he said was for the good of the tribe and all parties involved. The way of governance was accessible only in the fact that you saw the chief and his elders at work, but you voiced your thoughts respectfully only when asked. Chieftaincy was hereditary and normally the tribe moved every time the chief changed to ensure that the position closest to the main *kgotla* would always be that of the chief.

The approach to the *kgotla* seems straight on when looking at the earlier pictures, but when entering the *kgotla* to show respect when there are not many people within the gathering space, one walks along the periphery of the gathering space. This is a mark of respect to the chief and the people who may happen to be there and also to yourself as an individual. Respect in this manner is threefold.

2.2 The Ward

As noted earlier, the placement of each ward was according to its social status in the community and not according to any particular physical geometry. This pattern of settlement continued into the ward itself. The village formed a community and the ward (Figure 7 and 8) formed another closer knit community. All the compounds faced into a public square (*kgotla*) that was used as a meeting place for any activities of the ward, be it a wedding, a funeral or just a dispute among members of the ward. The *kgotla* here was a less formal gathering space at most times and was used by children of the ward as a play area. These smaller *kgotlas* also had their own cattle pens for storing livestock temporarily. Much like the main village *kgotla*, the one in the ward would also have a tree as its hearth.

2.3 The *lolwapa* (compound)

Patterns of dwelling do not differ much from well established methods seen in looking at the ward and the village as a whole. The compound is the most intimate place where one can observe the Tswana culture. Here one can easily point out places of gathering in their degrees of varying privacy. The idea of thresholds should be pointed out here. When approaching a Tswana compound, one greets people in the compound when at the tree in the front of the yard; this is the first threshold. The tree is the "address" for the compound. Directions are given based on elements such as the tree. After the greeting one ventures in crossing the first threshold and entering into the yard itself.

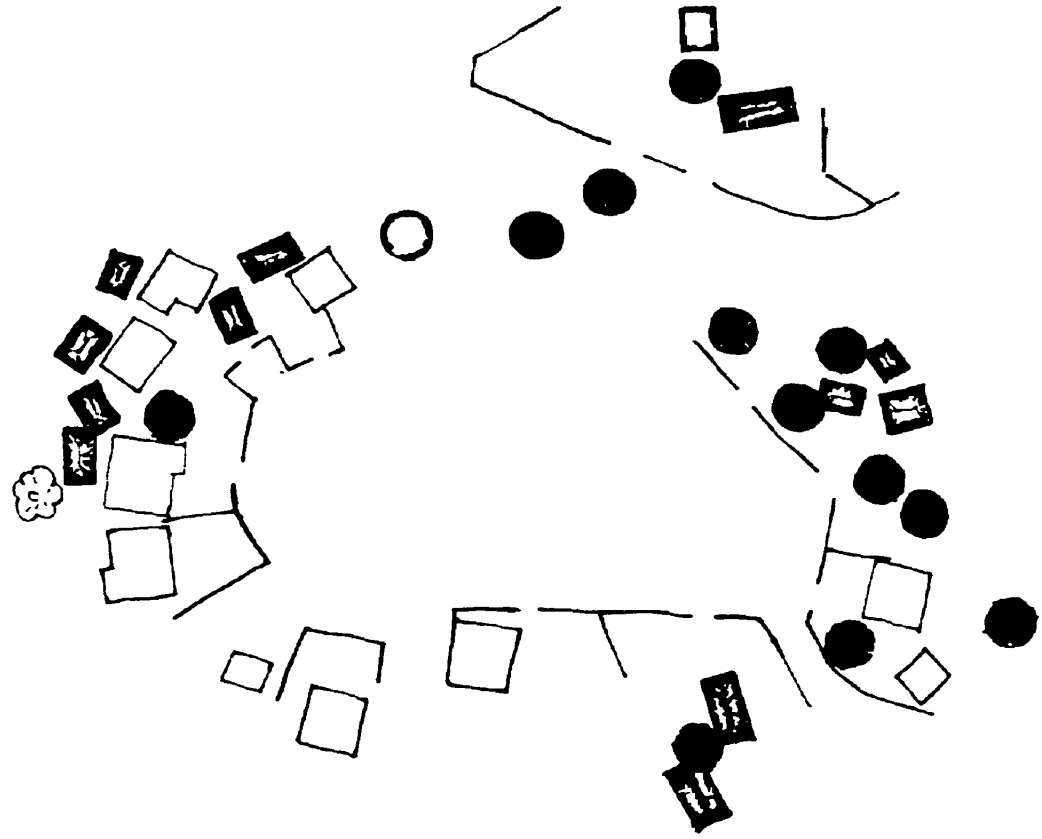
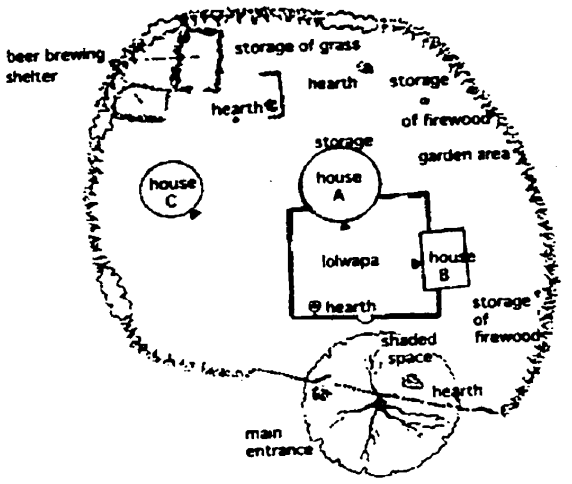


Figure 7: Plan of a typical ward, showing the edges of the *kgotla* being defined by the edges of the compounds.

Figure 8: Picture of Mochudi. A ward, *kgotla*, is evident in the foreground. The main gathering area is marked by the semi-circular log arrangement and the trees there.

In the compound itself there are places that are more public. The second threshold is the *lolwapa* and the last one is the entrance to the hut. The circles in Figure 9 show the varying thresholds. Each circle signifies a threshold. In total, three thresholds are crossed before one enters a hut within the compound.

Before one looks past the compound itself to some rituals that are important in gathering patterns, it is important to look at the building technology of the Tswana hut. The inner courtyard (*lolwapa*) is built up about a step to vary it from the outer parts of the compound. This also differentiates it from the other parts. Being built up even a step signifies it as the most important place within the compound, which it is. The inner courtyard of the *lolwapa* is where the family gathers for meals and late night stories by the elders in the family. The whole family meets at the fire for meals. This sanctuary is entered only by those very close to the family; otherwise one sits under the tree and is attended to there. To enter one's hut, one steps down into the hut. This is to make you aware that you build out of the ground and are part of the ground. The huts are all made from mud that is strengthened using cow dung. The walls are decorated with different kinds of pigments. The walls are free-standing and columns are placed on the outside of these walls and hold up the roof. Space is left between the wall and the thatch roof to allow for air movement through the hut. Roof overhangs are wide and the overall height of the structure is low, so one bends to enter but stretches out when inside the hut.



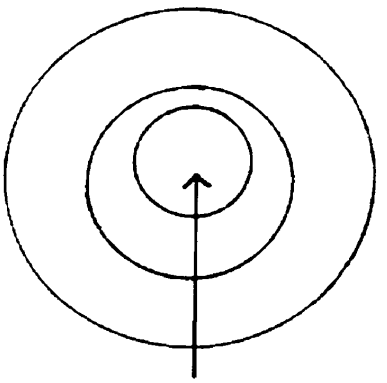


Figure 9: *lolwapa.*
Plan of a typical compound, showing the different thresholds and general building placement.

Adapted from M. Mothibedi, "The Experience of Ritual in Architecture," 1999.

2.4 Gathering Patterns

An important ritual in the Tswana culture is dancing and this offers itself to analysis. In dancing, the group that is singing and dancing forms a semi-circle facing the audience while the audience completes the circle as they watch the performance (Figure 10).

Another manner of gathering is the small gatherings that happen in the village. The main way in which people gather is in a circular manner such that those conversing all face each other. This is fundamental no matter how big the gathering. This way of gathering is rooted in the idea that one shows others respect by facing them when talking to them. Even when it is hot and a large group meeting takes place, the leader of the group will be under the shade but the rest of the group will gather in front of him, completing the circle even if they happen to not fall under the shade by doing so.

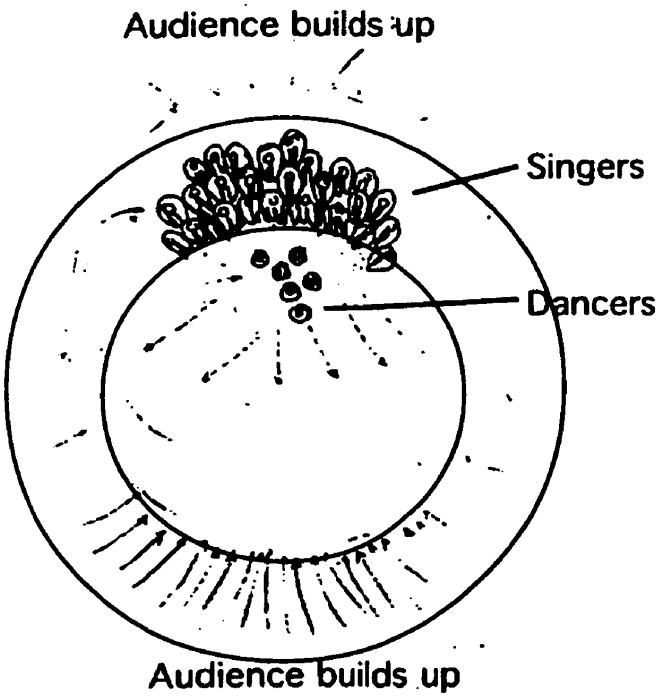


Figure 10: Traditional dance patterns. The audience builds from the outer circle toward the inner circle. The inner circle is kept clear for the dancers to perform in. The cluster at the top is for the singers who accompany the dancers.

Adapted from M. Mothibedi, "The Experience of Ritual in Architecture," 1999.

3.0 The City of Gaborone

3.1 Regional Location

Gaborone is located in the southeastern part of Botswana. The city boundaries are marked by Tlokweng village to the east, Kgale view residential settlement and the Gaborone Dam to the south, Mogoditshane village to the west and Sebele to the north.

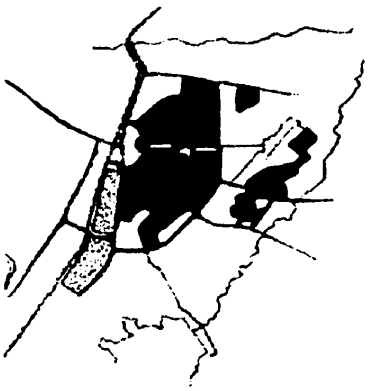


Figure 11: Plan of Gaborone in 1963

3.2 The Master Plan

In 1963 Gaborone was designated as Botswana's capital and in the same year a master plan was prepared for the new settlement. Before independence in 1966 the capital was in Mafikeng, South Africa. Before 1966 the only urban settlements were in Francistown (440 kilometers north of Gaborone) and Lobatse (75 kilometers south of Gaborone). The master plan is known as the Central Gaborone Area (CGA) master plan. The master plan, with a lifespan of 20 years, was to cater for a total of 20,000 people at the end of the 20 years. Over this period, however, the population rose to over 60,000 and by 1991 it had again risen close to 135,000. At present the population is estimated at well over 150,000. This unexpected growth has resulted in more area on the outskirts of the city being taken up to cater for the growth and a sporadic spread of commercial and office development throughout the city.

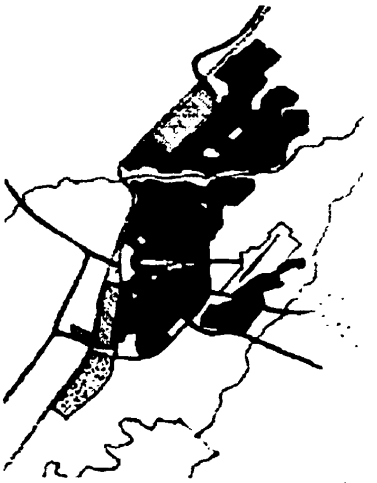


Figure 12: Plan of Gaborone in 1978 - growth to the north, commercial and residential growth

In 1963 (Figure 11) the boundaries of the city were the railway line to the west, the dam to the south, Notwane River to the east and Segoditshane River to the north. In 1978 (Figure 12) the city had grown towards the north, on the other side of the Segoditshane River. And by 1989 (Figure 13) the growth of the city had resulted in the city boundaries moving outside the physical boundaries of the railway line towards the west, resulting in the establishment of Gaborone West. Gaborone is still a relatively young city and its growth proves that. It is constantly changing and the city should be allowed to grow but in a responsible manner, not in sporadic bursts

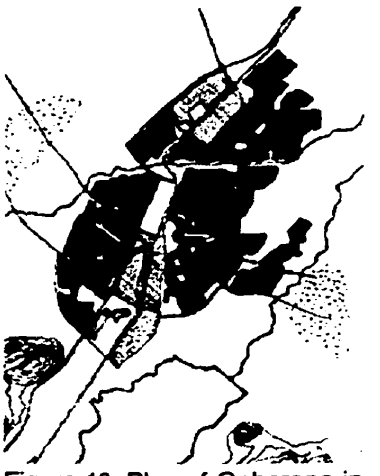


Figure 13: Plan of Gaborone in 1989 - growth to the west, more commercial and residential

of energy that have been the case so far. We know how fast it can grow so when we make growth patterns we should factor in the growth patterns that we have seen so far.

The growth of the city has affected the residences in the downtown. Residences along the periphery of the mall are changing into small commercial outlets such as tailors and hair salons. The planning department is planning to stop this growth within the CBD and move these outlets to other areas of the city. I think this is not a wise decision.

The one storey high residential buildings (sections in Figure 14) in my opinion could be densified and cater to the needs of small businesses such as hair salons but also for other needs such as more shops. With the government enclave employing a high percentage of people, the right place to develop is the downtown. Only with the densification of the downtown will the businesses here thrive and also the city work in a manner befitting a capital city. A densification of this area will allow for the use of the squares within the city centre at all times.

Another thing that could be done to curb urban sprawl is provide other activities within the downtown. A mixture of residential and commercial just outside the downtown (Figure 14) would help bring people into the downtown and as such make it thrive. The establishment of hair salons has pushed the residents to the sub-urbs and this has killed the potential for any activities outside the working hours of 8am to 5pm to be successful. The cinema that was found in the mall was taken out as a result. The mall does thrive, but the moves outlined above would help sustain it and offer an alternative to the urban sprawl that has been the norm so far in the growth of the city.

Figure 14; Plan and sections of the main mall in Gaborone showing ideas of how densification can be achieved: fully commercial to mixed use extensions of the mall.

3.3 The Urban Fabric

Envisioned in the plan was a business centre to cater to the commercial, political and civic needs of the settlement. This central business district (CBD) would be comprised of a pedestrian oriented central mall (Figure 16), bracketed by the government enclave at one end and the city hall at the other end. With the ground plane rising slightly towards the west, the government enclave was put at the western end of the CBD. The rest of the settlement would revolve around this central core. The mall was designed in a symmetrical manner. The buildings face inwards towards each other across a central pedestrian avenue. The mall has three large squares with the central one being the only one that is fully paved. The mall has a mixture of shops, public buildings, parking lots and open spaces.

The government enclave comprises the House of Assembly, the House of Chiefs, ministerial offices and a number of embassies. The Southern African Development Community (SADC) house, commercial banks and office towers are also located here.

To the east, the mall is bordered by the civic centre (Figure 16) comprising the City Hall, the National Library and the National Museum and Art Gallery.

The above situation makes the CBD read as a set of precincts: the political precinct comprising the government enclave, the commercial precinct housing the mall and the civic precinct housing the Civic Centre and Library. Beyond the government enclave to the west the Nelson Mandela Highway bounds the enclave. The road is a backdrop for the enclave.

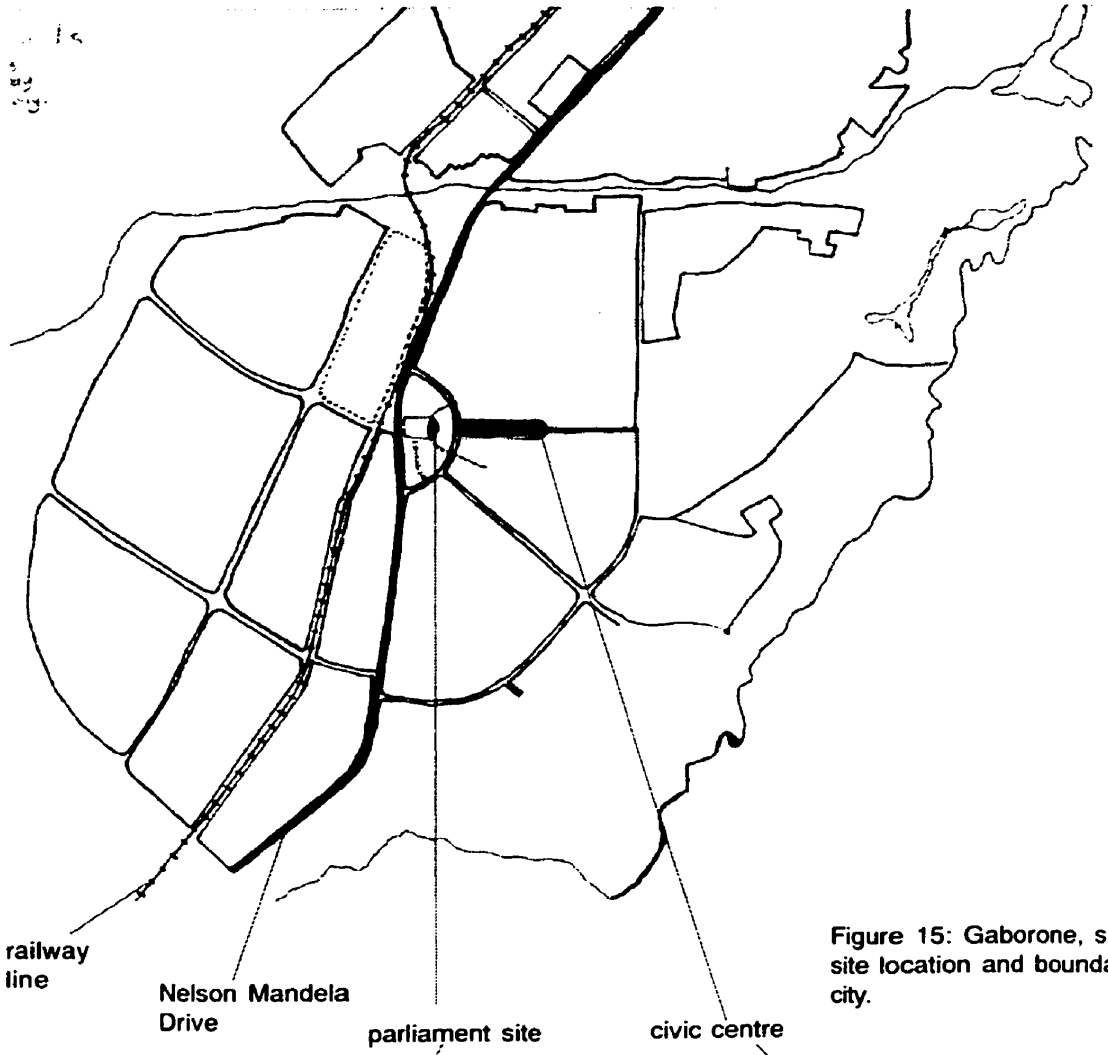


Figure 15: Gaborone, showing the site location and boundaries of the city.

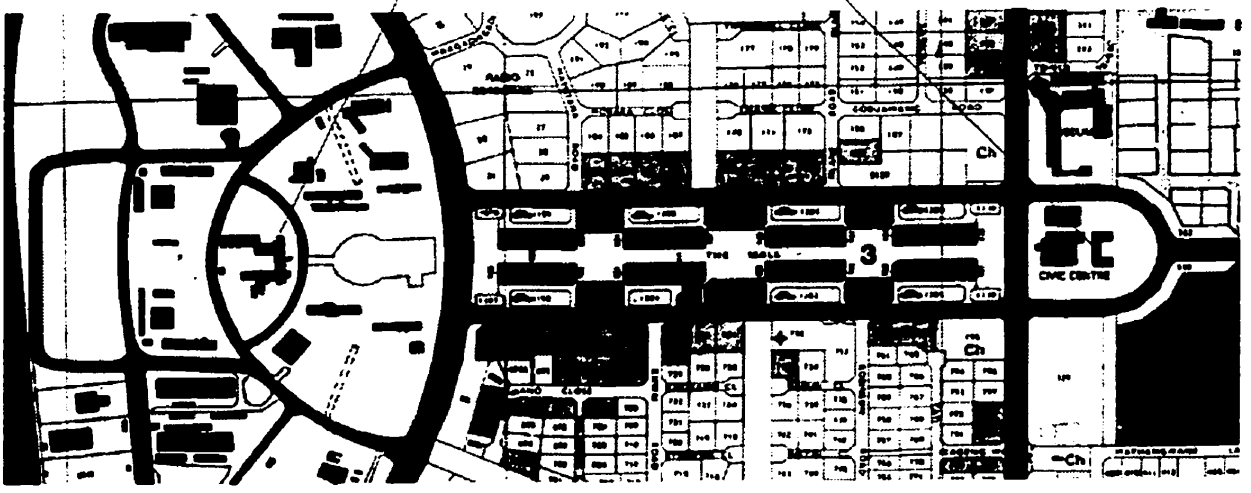


Figure 16: Gaborone, showing the site location relative to the mall and city hall.

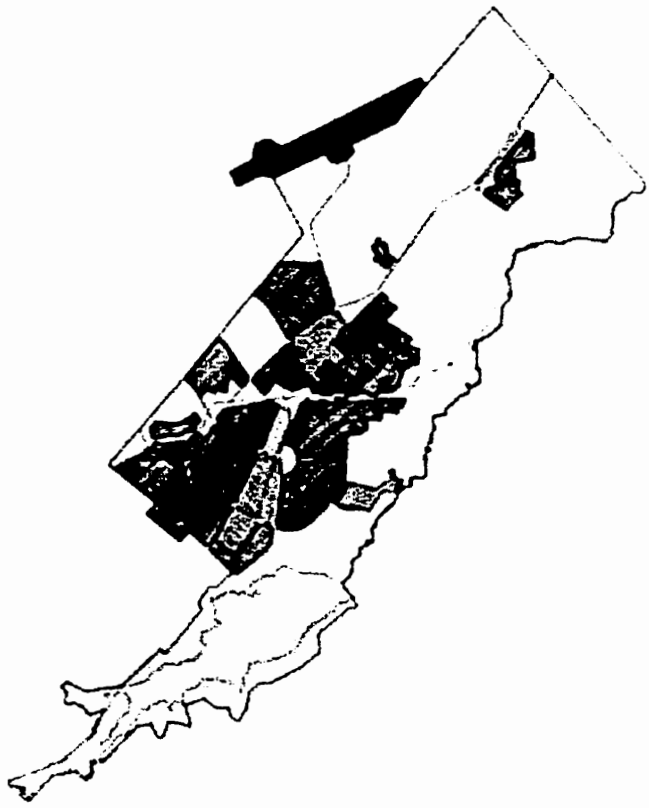


Figure 17: Gaborone, showing the Greater Gaborone boundaries. The outer edges of the drawing are the boundaries of the city.

4.0 Area of Study

4.1 The Government Enclave: An Analysis

For Botswana, a newly democratic country, the significant symbol of self-governance and independence was and still remains the House of Assembly. The first chamber for the parliament (which accommodates 40 members of parliament) was designed in 1965 and completed before independence in 1966. The chamber was a double storey structure with a concrete shell roof. To make the ensemble complete the buildings that would house all the functions of the parliament (chamber and administration block) were fronted by a slender colonnade supporting semicircular shells. The office of the president sat in the centre of the axis from the mall.

In 1995 a larger chamber (housing a total of 76 seats for the members of parliaments and their staff) and parliament complex was completed, comprising the House of Assembly, the House of Chiefs, administration offices and a parliament park and plaza. The park and plaza were envisioned in the 1965 plan but never really executed.

The main way in which people come to the building is from the mall. From the mall little can be seen of the parliament house (Figure 18); all one sees are trees and rocks in the middle of the path leading to the parliament buildings. One crosses Khama Crescent Road and enters the big park and plaza of the complex. From this point one can get a glimpse of the colonnade that fronts the parliament buildings. To the north and south the park is flanked by 3 storey ministerial buildings (Figure 19). One passes the well kept natural grass park to the complex. Within the park one can see a scattered array of shrubs and acacia trees that provide shade within the area. In the centre of the plaza is the statue of the late first president of Botswana, Sir Seretse Khama. In front of the colonnade is a reflecting pool. One then steps up into the colonnade through a huge semi-circular canopy about 2 storeys high, marking the entrance into the building side of the complex. This canopy is a half-cylinder 16 meters

Figure 18: Obstructed view towards government enclave from mall.

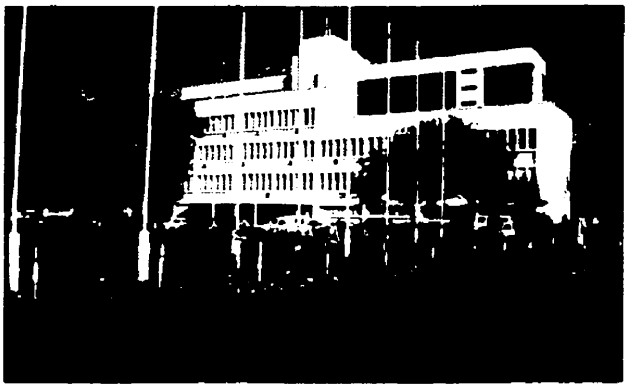


Figure 19: Ministerial offices flanking the plaza.

Figure 20: Benches around the fountain within the plaza.

Figure 21: A view into the plaza towards the parliament complex, showing the canopy and colonnade in the foreground of the buildings.

in length and 6 meters wide with a radius of 3 meters (Figure 21).

To traverse the complex, the connecting element is the colonnade. The colonnade is a unifier of the different parts and in some way brings the complex together to make one entity. The old chamber and the new developments are brought together by the colonnade. The two chambers are designed in a similar manner but the rest of the complex differs from these two. The House of Chiefs, for example, has a flat roof instead of the concrete arched one of the chambers. The House of Chiefs uses red face brick in contrast to the lighter plastered parliament chambers.

Over the years since its inception the axis from the mall has lost some of its importance. With the placement of the huge fountain in the sightline from the mall to the parliament complex and vice versa, one does not even have a visual connection to the parliament buildings. This needs to be remedied architecturally. The president and his staff required larger offices and were moved from the centre of the axis to a site off-axis which had the only open space close to the complex. The centre of the axis is now empty. The entrance canopy marks the beginning of the complex but then what one looks forward to is not on the axis but well off this extrapolated line of symmetry. The importance of this axis in my view needs to be stengthened. The new parliamentary chamber is to be located in the same complex where the old chambers are found and to make room for this the House of Chiefs is being demolished, to be located in an unspecified area. Working with this I think the House of Chiefs should be demolished and rebuilt in the area within the complex of the parliamentary buildings. This will strengthen the relationship between the members of parliament and the traditional chiefs. At the moment, the chiefs are consulted when issues of customary law come up. Any changes to customary law have to be addressed to the chiefs first before being voiced in parliament. Though their power has been cut down from days gone by, they still do have some say in the way customary practices are carried out.

In looking at the approach to the complex, one notes a number of thresholds that are being crossed to make one's way to the parliament complex, the first being the Khama Crescent Road. The second threshold is the plaza itself, followed by the entrance canopy, which looks back to the mall while announcing one's entrance into this charged environment. The steps one climbs bring one across this threshold. The next is the the entrance into the chamber itself, where you now get to see your member of parliament doing the job you elected him to do. The power is still yours, loaned to the parliamentarian. The slight elevation of the complex signifies its importance and should be kept in the future design of the complex; it may even be exaggerated to make it more charged. The thresholds need to be more articulated.

5.0 Design Approach

5.1 Design Strategies

As stated in earlier chapters the design of the parliament building takes its cues from the Tswana culture, the people it is being designed for. One thing to note is that times have changed; the ruling manner is no longer hereditary but democratic. Accessibility is not just visual but physical. The design is thus a marriage between democracy and Tswana culture in architecture. Governance has changed in the way it works but its focus is still the same: for the people. History in the design will be a learning tool, but it is not to be rebuilt in a nostalgic manner. What is important are the principles behind the history and the symbolic meaning of the moves, not the material palette used. As in any modern design the building will reflect modern building technology and materials.

The main *kgotla* in the village is much like the parliament in the city. It is the most important place within the community. The parliament, however, now holds a higher level of importance in that it not only represents a particular tribe within the country but represents the aspirations of the whole nation. It is the nation's *kgotla*.

The first thing to look at is the larger urban context. The plaza needs to be reconfigured to make it more a place of gathering in the city. The plaza at the moment has one purpose: a thoroughfare for those passing to the station on the west of the city. It is not a place to sit or to stand and converse with people. The chains around it alienate it from being a place of gathering. One does not want to be there right now, but through necessity has to be there, as in an event that one has to attend. One thing that I think would help in removing this sense of the plaza is firstly the removal of the chains around the grass. This would allow for people to walk across the plaza and use it in a manner they see fit. When pathways through the space and meeting points where one can talk have been established by observing the movement of people in the site over time, then physical paving

can be put in and benches added and pavilions can be erected to bring people together, but this is only through observing how the people use the space. This idea encourages people to appropriate the space, not dictate its use. The only concrete idea for the use of the space is the addition of paving through parts of the grass sections of the plaza. These should offer a suggestion of how the space could be changed. The trees that are added offer a canopy one can walk under and establish the plaza as a place to move through but also pause and stand in: a formal space with informal uses. The circle in the plaza is re-decorated, forming 15 circles at 1 metre intervals that represent each tribe in Botswana.

The fountain that blocks the visual link between the mall and the parliament will be scaled down (not removed). The fountain does have sitting areas around it (Figure 20) that offer one privacy in this totally public domain. It is important to establish different ways in which a place can be used, and the fact that in this area one can have places of solitude, gathering and others just for passing through is something to build on.

The trees that are found in the plaza need to be taken care of in a better manner and some more trees planted within the plaza, helping one focus their attention at the complex. Rows of trees along the axis of symmetry could do this with ease (Figure 27). This would not only offer places to just stand or sit but also reestablish the axis of symmetry from the mall to the complex.

The colonnade that currently stops at the House of Chiefs is an element that unifies the complex and as such will be kept as it is. The corridor continues across the site, completing the formal nature of the complex. The reflecting pool in front of the colonnade is mirrored on the other side of the entrance canopy, enhancing the formal look of the complex.

5.2 Schedule of Accommodation

The brief for the new parliamentary complex offers mainly indoor spaces, as a response to the culture and also the city plan. The outdoor spaces are also marked as highly charged important spaces in the design.

Room	Number of officers	Area sq. m.
President	1	50
President's secretary	1	20-30
Presidential dining room	1	35
Leader of the House	1	30
Leader of Opposition	1	50
Speaker	1	20-30
Clerk	1	20-30
secretary	1	20-30
deputy speaker	1	20-30
deputy clerk	1	20-30
members of parliament	42	20-30 each
5 committee rooms		40-50 each
auditorium	200 users min.	300
public welcome area (below auditorium)/ central foyer		
2 press interview studios		50 each
post office	1	30
branch bank	1	30
VIP restaurant	1	200
staff restaurant	1	175
kitchen (serves all restaurants)	1	75 min.
executive lounge	1	35
MP's lounge	1	100
bar	1	50
basement car park	100 cars min.	
washrooms (as required)		
principal admin. officer	1	25
senior admin. officer	1	20
secretary	1	15
assistant admin. officers	4	25
senior accountant	1	20
accountant	1	15
accounts officer	3	20
chief research information		
public relations officer	1	30
principal research officer	1	25
senior research officer	1	20
research officers & information		
officers	3	20
library	1	50 min.
librarian	1	1

assistant librarians	2	15
15 chiefs (min.)	1 each	20-30 min.
3 secretaries	1	15
typist	1	10
central typing pool	6	50
principal clerk assistant	1	25
senior clerk assistant	1	20
clerk assistant	1	15
senior committee clerk	1	20
clerk assistants	2	20
committee clerk	1	15
assistant committee clerks	2	20
registry	6	35
tea kitchens (1 each floor)		5
stationery store		20
document store		20
cleaners store		10
garden store		5
Total	104	3570

5.3 Design

The building complex is approached from the main plaza through the entrance canopy which is now flanked by two pools (Figure 28 and 29).The colonnade is kept and the corridor is extended along the front of the building, bringing the new and the old together. On axis with the mall is the main gathering space: the chamber building. On the ground floor of the chamber is the welcome foyer which is also an exhibition space for items of public interest. The entrance to the building, though, is off-axis, pulling you into the outside space that the entrance overlooks. This is the *kgotla* space. I see it at most times being bare, much like the *kgotla* in the village is bare at most times but highly charged even in its bare form because of its symbolic meaning to the people. To enter the space one steps down into it, in a way becoming one with the place (see Figures 31 to 34). I see trees being planted in the space to provide shade. On important events, such as a bill by parliament that requires the signature of some of the chiefs, I see this place being transformed with temporary pavilions: a tensile structure to provide shade, with people sitting on the steps looking into the space. This space could also be used when a new president is being sworn into office, or a visiting dignitary is being welcomed. The space becomes a meeting place of varying proportions. In the case of letters being submitted to the president, for example, when students boycott classes they could come here and meet the president in the *kgotla*. The plaza would be used for larger meetings and the inner *kgotla* more for intimate but highly charged meetings. During larger celebrations the space could be an extension of the restaurants, with activity spilling out into the space. This is further encouraged by having french doors along the whole front of the parliamentary block. The space could combine natural elements (sand, water and grass) with paving for the landscape. The trees and grass are on the periphery of the space; they are a backdrop for the *kgotla* space, humanizing the space and also being a transition between the space and the tall buildings. On normal days I see the space as a symbol of the power of the people. Without them, no one ventures into the space. The corridors are

places where tradition meets democracy. The *kgotla* space meets the offices. This allows for interaction between parliamentarians and the common people, offering an exchange of ideas between people, which is paramount in the working of parliament.

The building that houses the chamber is a stand-alone piece that one can see into from afar. The materials used for it are primarily glass, symbolizing assessibility and transparency of govenance in a democratic state. This also relates back to the traditional way in which we have visual connection to our chief every time he is in the *kgotla*. The chamber is elevated to signify its importance in the complex. To go up to the chamber one goes into the welcome foyer of the building and either takes the stairs or the elevator to the second floor that leads into the chamber. The chamber also has a gallery which is accessed through the second floor (Figure 30). The stairs and the elevator face onto the *kgotla* space and are all glass facades, thus giving one a continuous visual connection to the place.

In the design of the building, elements that I found to require more assessibility to the public are placed on the ground floor of the buildings (Figure 28). All the restaurants are found on the ground floors, and so are the lounges and the bar.

The chamber of the House of Chiefs is also elevated (Figure 32). Above this chamber is a small library that is primarily for those in the House of Chiefs building. The building is four storeys high, with the ground floor housing the bar and lounge and a transition space that acts as an exhibition space for traditional items from different tribes. This could be a cultural celebration with the items changing periodically. The top floors are office spaces with allowance for a committee room on each floor and a small tea kitchen and lounge.

In the composition of the complex it is evident that the House of Chiefs building exists as an entity by itself (Figures 34-37), which is the idea since they are a power unto themselves. The rest of the complex is tied together by a series of pathways that link the buildings

together. The pathway fronting the parliamentary block is a glass envelope that can be used as a corridor to move from one building to another or as a viewing point. The corridor is large enough to enable people to stand and look into the space without disrupting movement through the space. The corridor is a street where one can stop and talk to people, the long greetings that our culture is full of can happen in this corridor: a place to hang out. The space is offered to allow for this. The pathway also brings one into the old buildings of the complex, thus making the whole complex a single entity, with the old and the new living as one (Figure 40). Modernity and tradition coexist.

The parliamentary block has the kitchen in the basement and the main washrooms catering for the VIP restaurant on the ground floor overlooking the *kgotla*. The ground floor also houses the postal office outlet, newspaper stand, a small bar and a lounge. The elevators overlook the space and, like the ones for the National Assembly building, are made of glass. The president's offices are found on the first floor (Figure 29). The next three floors house the other parliamentarians. Each floor has its own small kitchen/lounge area, which is large enough to allow for a group of colleagues to sit and just hang out. The last floor houses the library. The library would have a terrace on the northern part of the block, stepping down to the National Assembly block. The block is also stepping down to acknowledge people getting into the complex from the west, which will be possible in the future (Figures 33, 37 and 38).

The administration block is an office block. On the ground floor is the branch bank and the staff restaurant. The staff restaurant here spills out onto the podium, above which is the House of Chiefs chamber. The upper floor houses offices and committee rooms (Figures 32 and 39). As in the other buildings, each floor has its own small kitchen/lounge area.

The material palette for the buildings is glass and brick, most probably red face brick, which is easy to find. The red face brick would be

used for all the brick work, to help unify the different parts and as such the buildings would become a backdrop to the National Assembly block and the *kgotla*.

As a design strategy the options below were looked at to pick the option that not only takes its cues from the Tswana tradition but also brings in ideas of formality needed in a parliament building.

Figure 22:
This is the existing condition with the House of Chiefs still in its place.

Figure 23:
Option 1: The House of Assembly within the Parliamentary Block. Accessibility of the chamber becomes questionable.

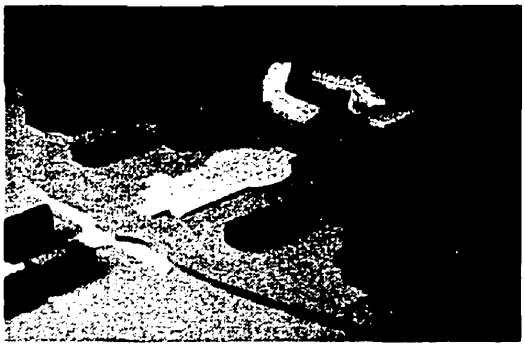


Figure 24:
Option 2: All the parts are separated and placed off axis to the mall. All the parts are irregular in shape. The placing seemed arbitrary and did not relate in any way to a formal look of a parliament, though it does relate more to the placement of buildings in a *kgotla*.

Figure 25:
Option 3: The offices are rectangular buildings while the special piece, the House of Assembly, is circular. The amount of building the program asked for could not be accommodated in this scheme.

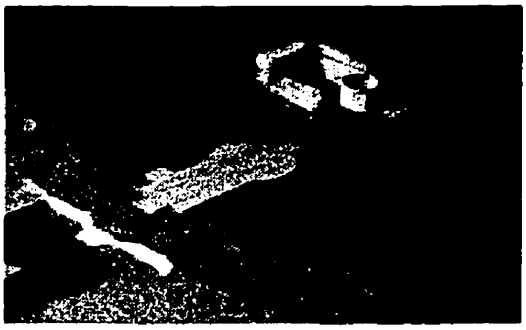


Figure 26:
Option 4: The composition here is more refined with the right dimensions in use for all the parts. This is the massing model on which the rest of the design is based. The rest of the buildings are a backdrop for the chamber, while the whole complex is a backdrop for the centre piece: the *kgotla* space.

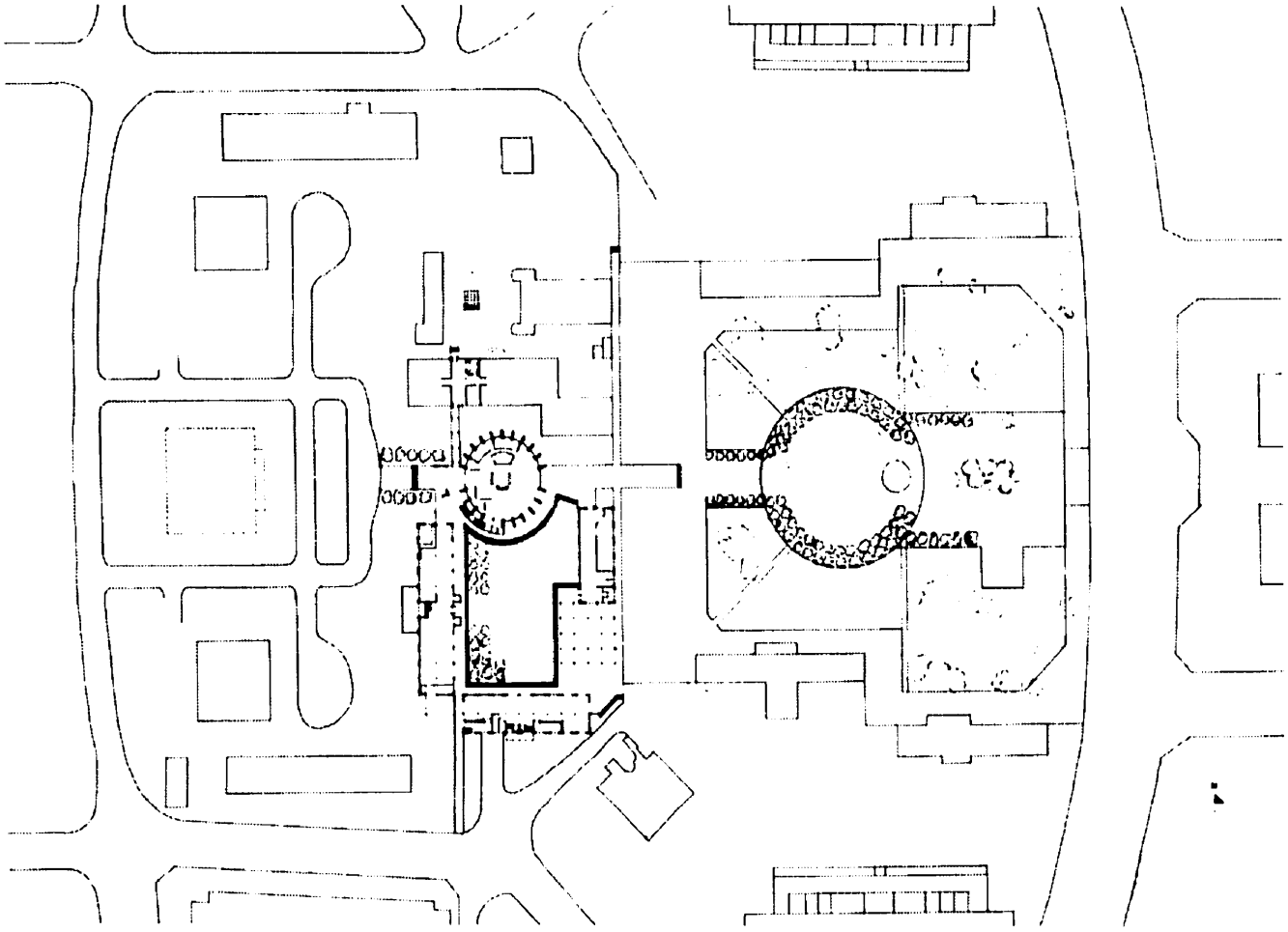


Figure 27: Site plan, showing the layout of the complex with a canopy of trees arranged formally in the plaza. Two paved paths are added off the middle of the plaza, offering direct routes out of the complex to the rest of the city.

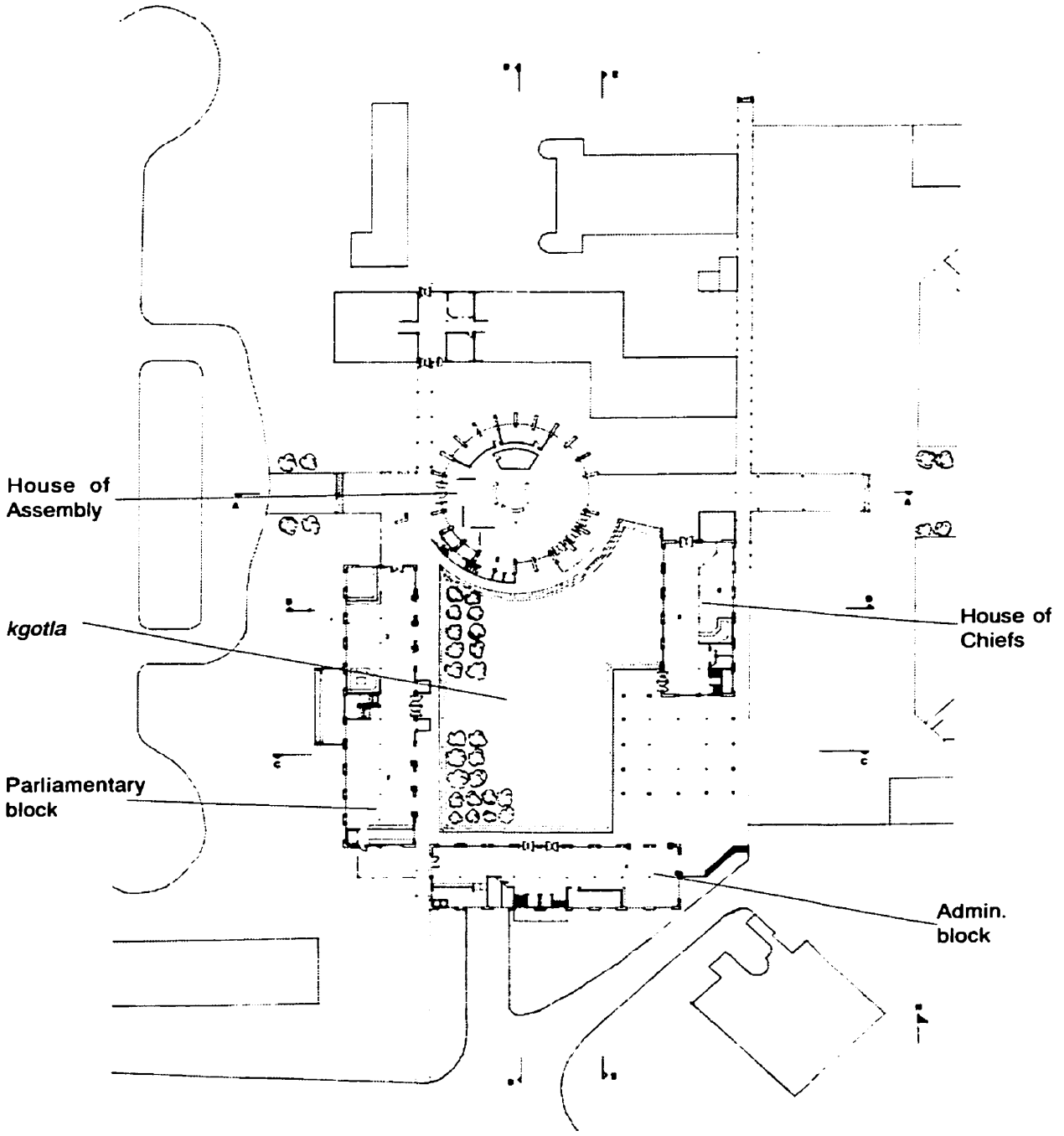


Figure 28: Ground floor plan, showing the trees that are the entrance piece to the parliamentary block. Small gatherings will occur on the stairs of the *kgotla*, while larger ones will spill into the *kgotla* itself.

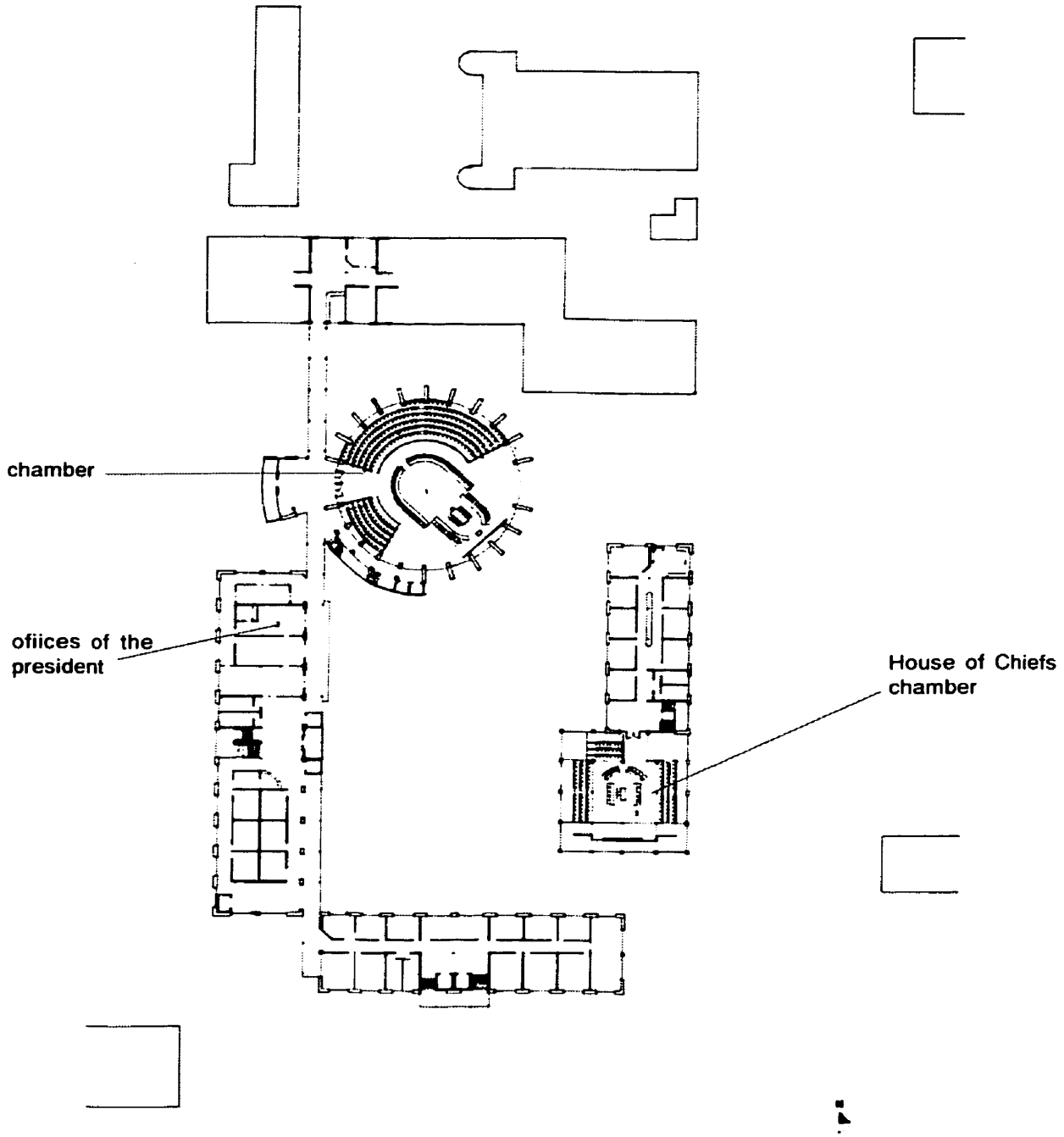


Figure 29: First floor plan. Corridors here vary in size enabling for varying patterns and sizes of gathering within these spaces.

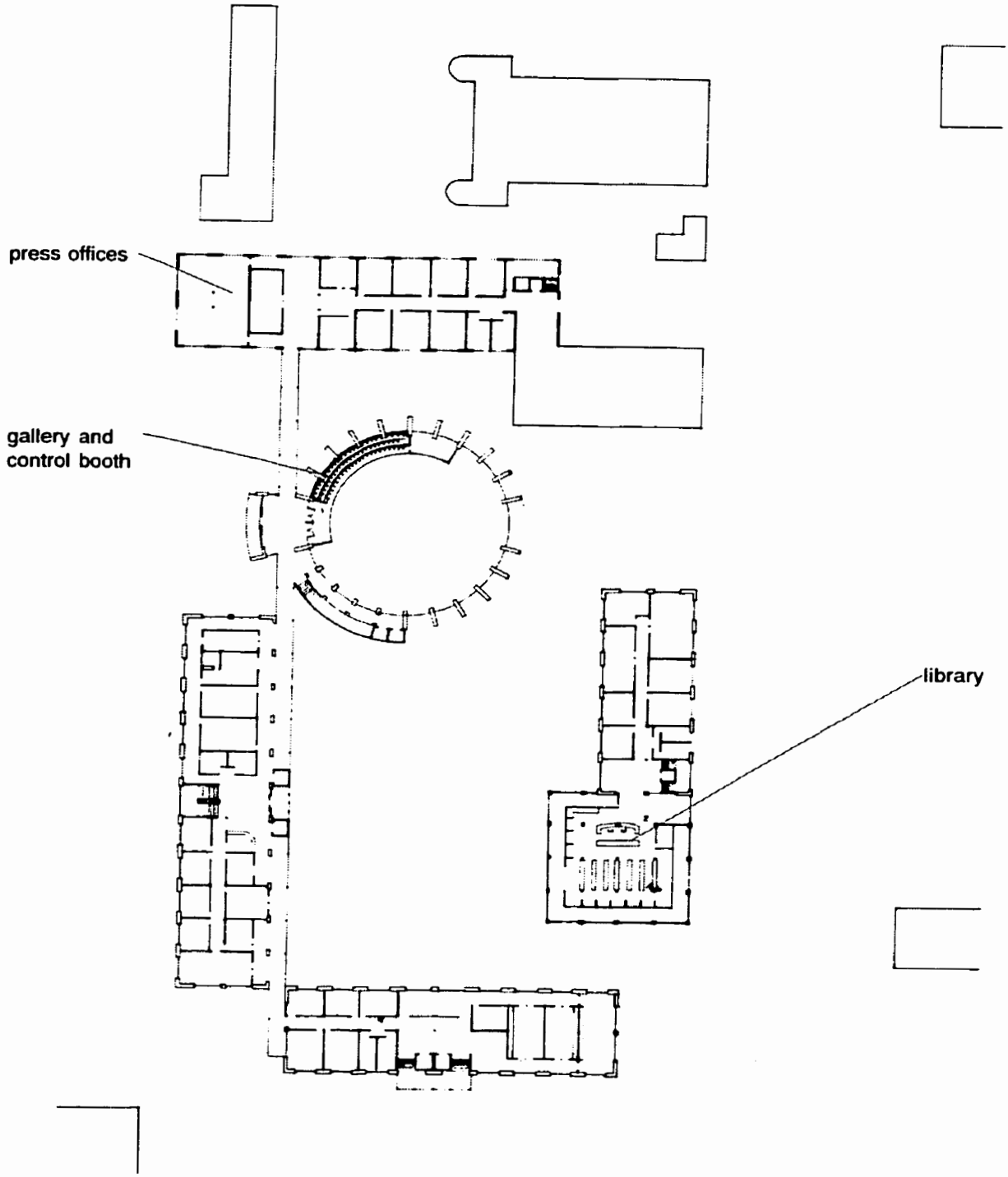


Figure 30: Second floor plan, showing the gallery and control booth of the House of Assembly, and the library of the House of Chiefs block.

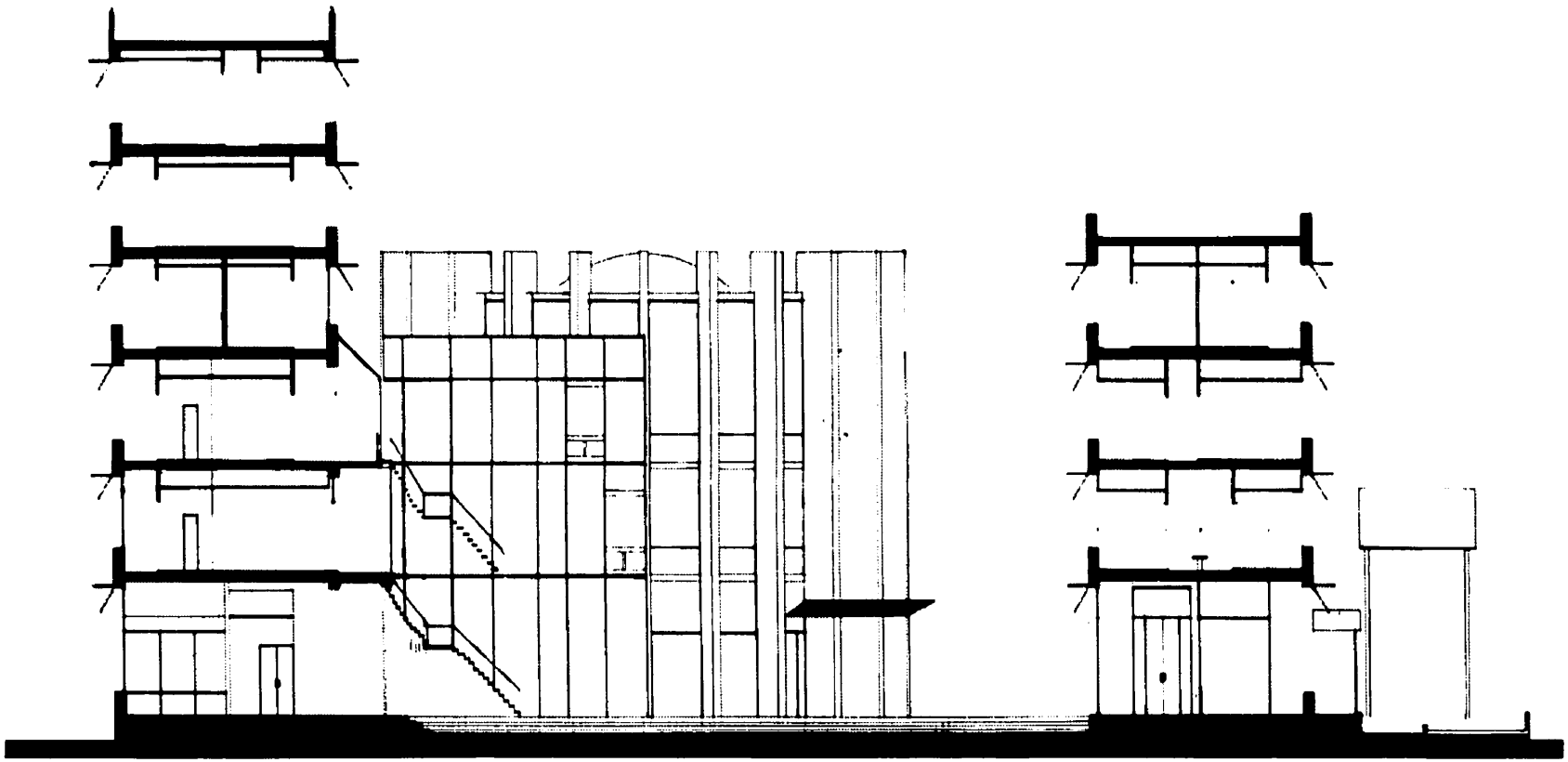


Figure 31: Section through parliamentary block and House of Chiefs block with the entrance canopy and the House of Assembly in elevation. All the buildings open up into the *kgotla*.

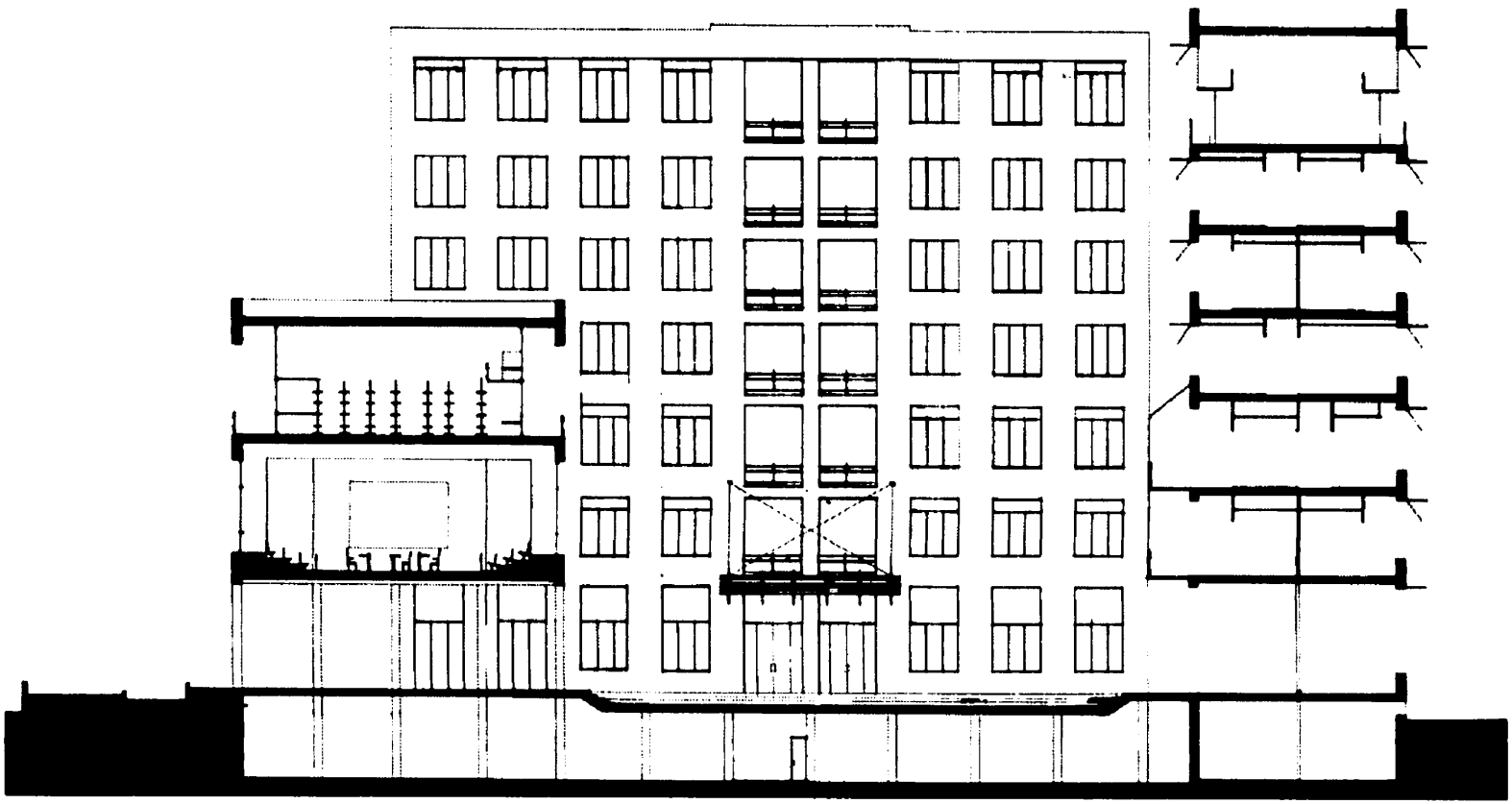


Figure 32: Section through the House of Chiefs chamber and library and also through the parliamentary block on the other side of the *kgotla* space. Both libraries pull away from the edge of their respective buildings, enabling the establishment of balconies that look out to the outside, and are used as study areas. The administration office elevation opens up in the centre into the *kgotla*. In the basement is parking and a kitchen that serves the restaurants in the complex.

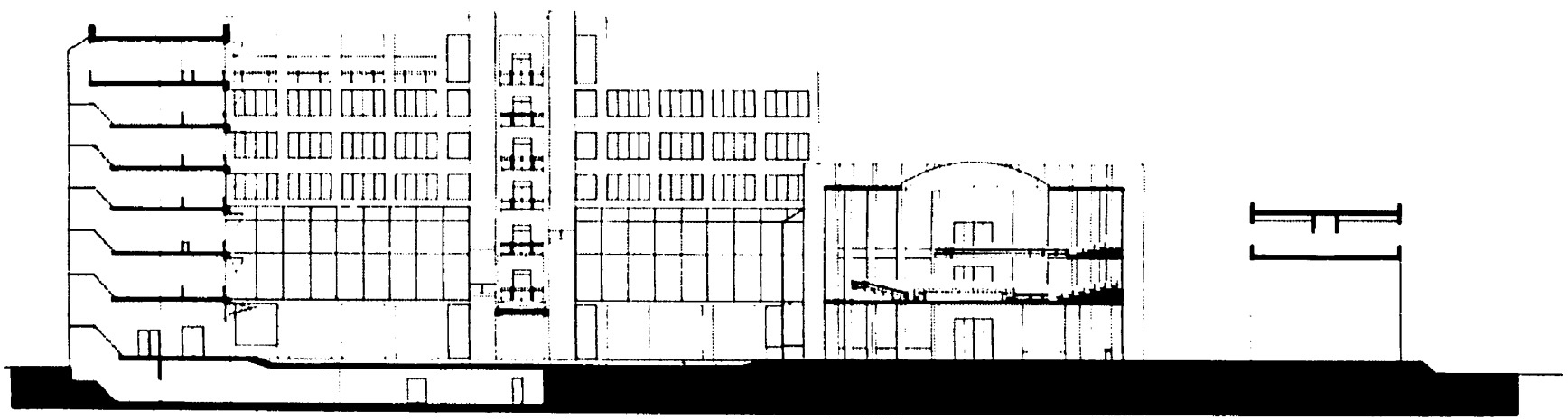


Figure 33: Section through the administration block and the House of Assembly. The buildings open up into the *kgotla*. The main entrance to the parliamentary block faces into the *kgotla*. The House of Assembly is a double height space 10 metres high on the sides, rising to 12 meters high at the centre of the space. The chamber acknowledges the *kgotla* by opening up towards it.

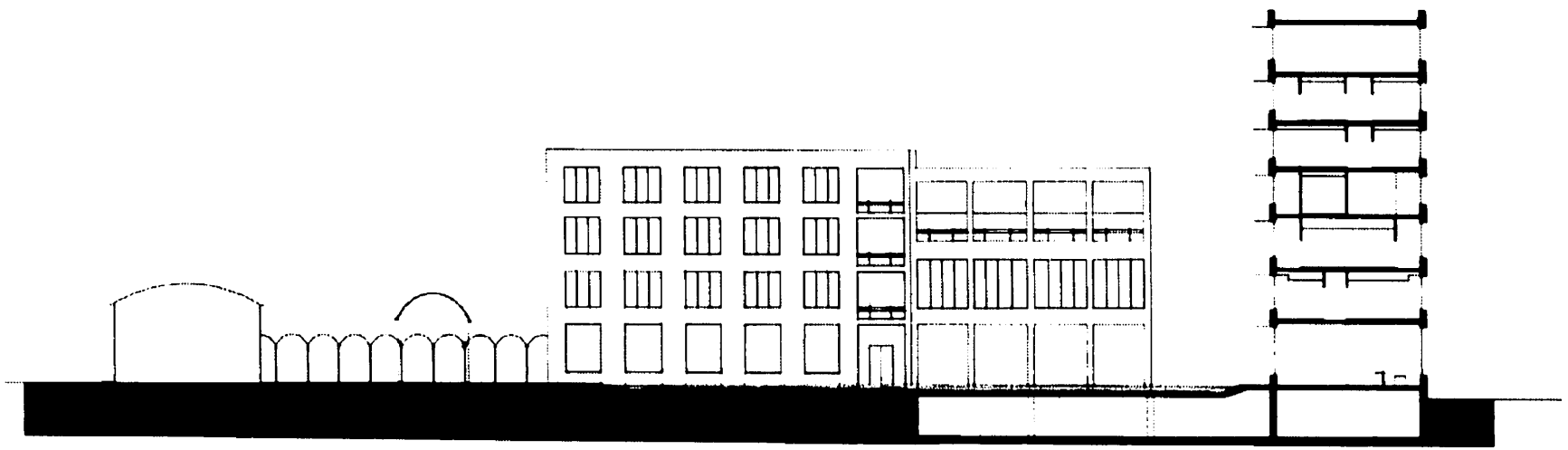


Figure 34: Section through the administration block, with the House of Chiefs building. The entrance canopy to the complex and the colonnade that front the complex are seen in elevation here.

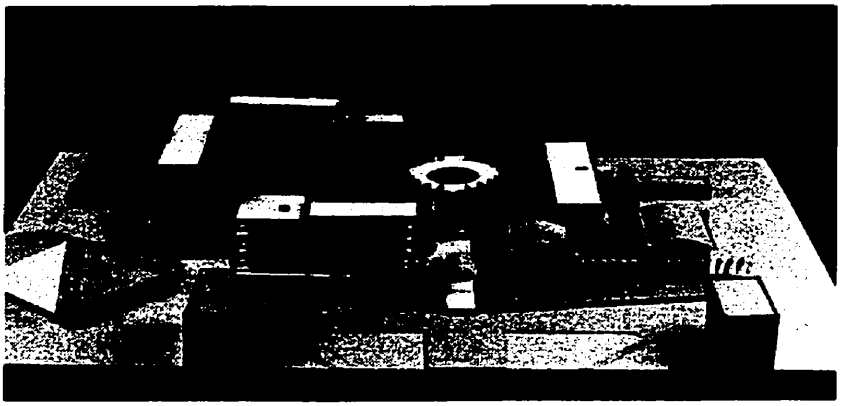


Figure 35: Main approach to the complex from the mall.

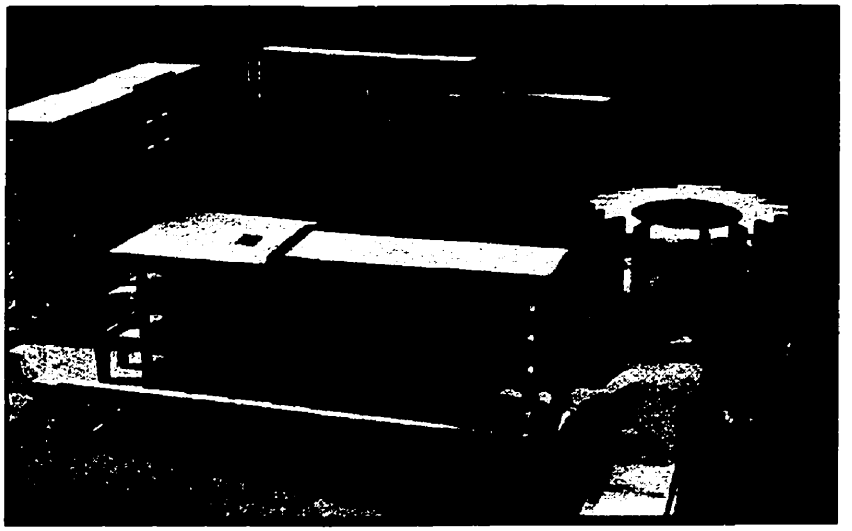


Figure 36: A view into the complex from the entrance canopy, looking towards the House of Assembly. The House of Assembly has a canopy in front of it that draws one off the extrapolated axis from the mall into the complex.

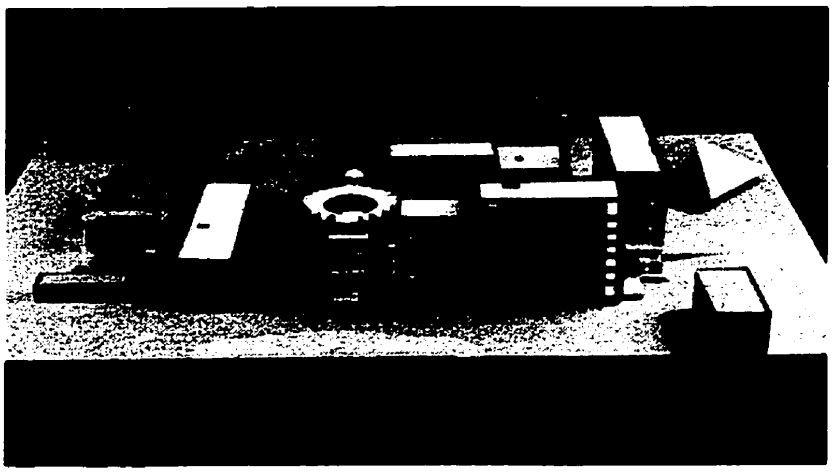


Figure 37: View of the complex from the west, looking towards the mall. The entrance to the House of Assembly from this side is on axis.

Figure 38: View of the complex from the west, with the glass walkways linking the various parts of the complex.

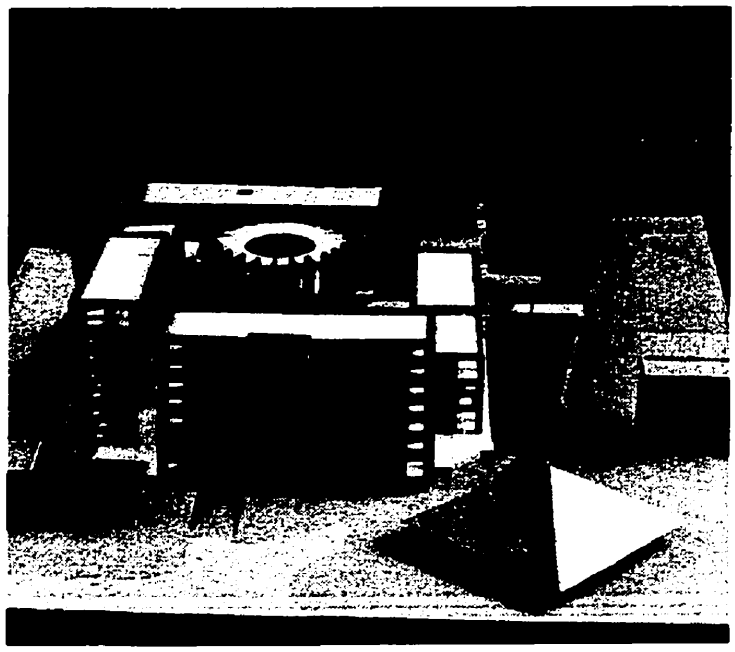


Figure 39: View of the administration block (looking north), with the entrance to the basement parking in the foreground.

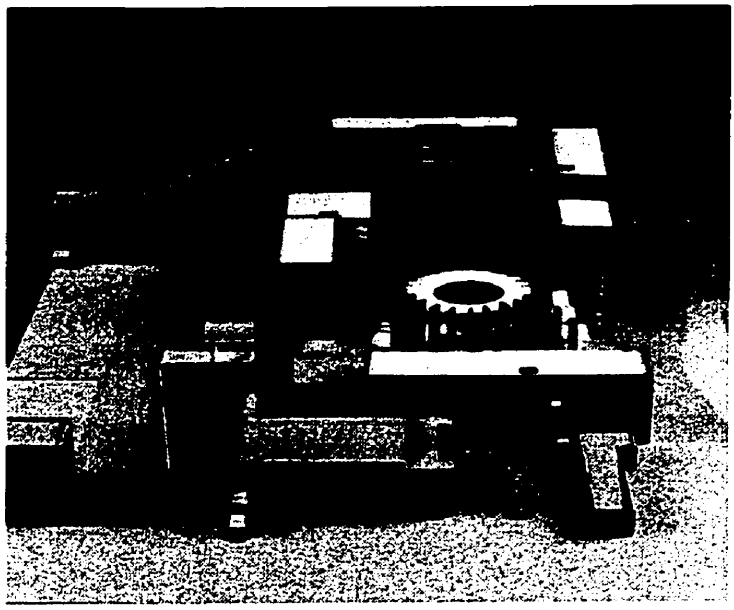


Figure 40: View of the addition (looking south) that is on the old administration office. A new gathering space is added here to unify the existing parts of the complex with the new.

Conclusion

In tackling the thesis I wanted to make an architectural design that embodies Tswana culture, democracy and a new way of governance. These elements coexist in the complex. The complex provides a setting in which traditional rituals can occur. This offers a way forward for us. In designing for any culture it is important to understand it to make it easier for people in the society to feel "at home" in the buildings we design. A culturally informed design provides the setting in which a society can appropriate space with ease.

A few questions left to answer are:
How does the complex fit in with the rest of the city?
How does the design fit in with the future plans of the city?
What happens when a building is added to the west of the complex?

Much can be said of tradition and culture. Many Batswana students have tackled issues pertaining to our culture and I think there is much that can be gained from it. The only problem is that there is very little that one can gather during one thesis. If articles pertaining to our culture could be collected by the School, not only would it be easier to take up the issues I tackled here, but the supervisors would also have the knowledge and be better equipped to assist in thesis work. This work could be incorporated into work that is done during workterms, and also in the Cities course in the School.

The thesis opens up avenues that I think will strengthen my work in architecture. The idea is not to shun the culture because some people see it as inferior, but to work with it in design, be it residential projects or institutions such as schools and community buildings. This will make for not only better designs, but more meaningful and poetic architecture. Also, the work here showed me that architecture should be open to many influences but especially rituals and ceremonies that occur within a society.

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