

POLITECNICO DI TORINO
SECOND SCHOOL OF ARCHITECTURE
Master of Science in Architecture (Rehabilitation and Revaluation)
Honors theses

The archaeological site of Kusquam (Ethiopia): preservation and enhancement

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“Il padre della storiografia, Erodoto (484–430 a.C.), nel terzo libro delle sue Storie nomina per primo il popolo residente all'estremità meridionale del mondo conosciuto, gli “aethiopi”, gli uomini dagli occhi scintillanti come fuoco”.¹

Ethiopia has always been considered remote and difficult to reach, yet little known, has jealously preserved over time treasures of inestimable value and beauty. A network of peoples, religions, cultures and traditions.

In this frame in the city of Gondar lays the foundation to the study of this thesis, born after an internship at the office of Gondar *Site Planning and Conservation* of the Ethiopian Cultural Heritage Project.

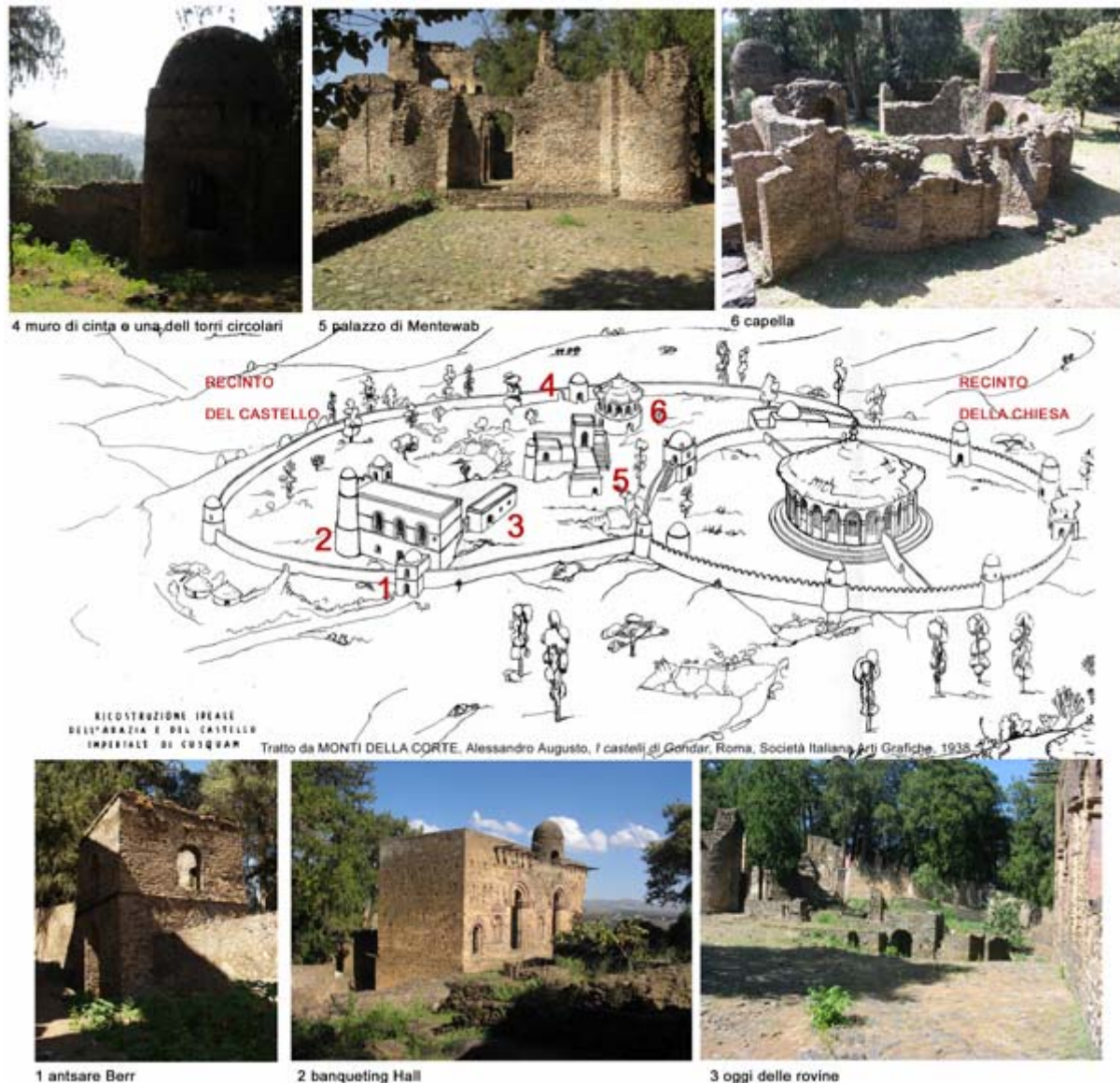
The archaeological site of Kusquam is one of the sites in the city, along with Fasil Ghebbu and Bagni di Fasil, entered the World Heritage List since 1979. Located just a few kilometers from the center *“sul verde colle omonimo, in un folto freschissimo di ginepri e di tuie, che avvolgono di un'alta pittoresca cortina la cinta quasi intatta della storica reggia della ormai leggendaria Itteghie² Mentewab.³”*

The construction of Kusquam is interwoven with the events of the life of Princess Mentewab, the only woman who reigned in Gondar, which wanted the building of this new residence outside the city around 1730. The site consists of two fences communicating the first of which is the church and the second is the castle where they are well recognized three buildings: the palace of Mentewab, the chapel and banqueting hall, smaller buildings to the state of ruin are cataloged the voice ruins.

¹ RAUNING, Walter, *Etiopia: storia, arte, cristianesimo*, Milano, Jaca Book, 2005, p.7

² Itteghie o Imperatrice è il titolo specifico spettante alle sovrane.

³ MONTI DELLA CORTE, Alessandro Augusto, *I castelli di Gondar*, Roma, Società Italiana Arti Grafiche, 1938, p. 49



The site of Kusquam in an ideal reconstruction from the book *I castelli di Gondar* of Alessandro Augusto Monti Della Corte

This thesis aims to propose a conservation project that does not forget the important archaeological site as well of primary importance for the transmission of a civilization. This should be investigated by scholars but first understood by the population, so it is of fundamental importance to its knowledge, which must be transmitted to future generations through conservation. In places such as Ethiopia, preservation requires more attention from scholars and working in the sector, because we must intervene but adapting the techniques for restoration and enhancement plans in context, placing himself in a position to look, listen and not forget. Working on the strengths and weakness of the site were defined the themes of exploitation:

Accessibility and maintenance

To reach the site you must travel a dirt road, understood that the Taxi Company are not well prepared to accompany visitors, so it was thought to provide a "vehicle" alternative: the donkey.

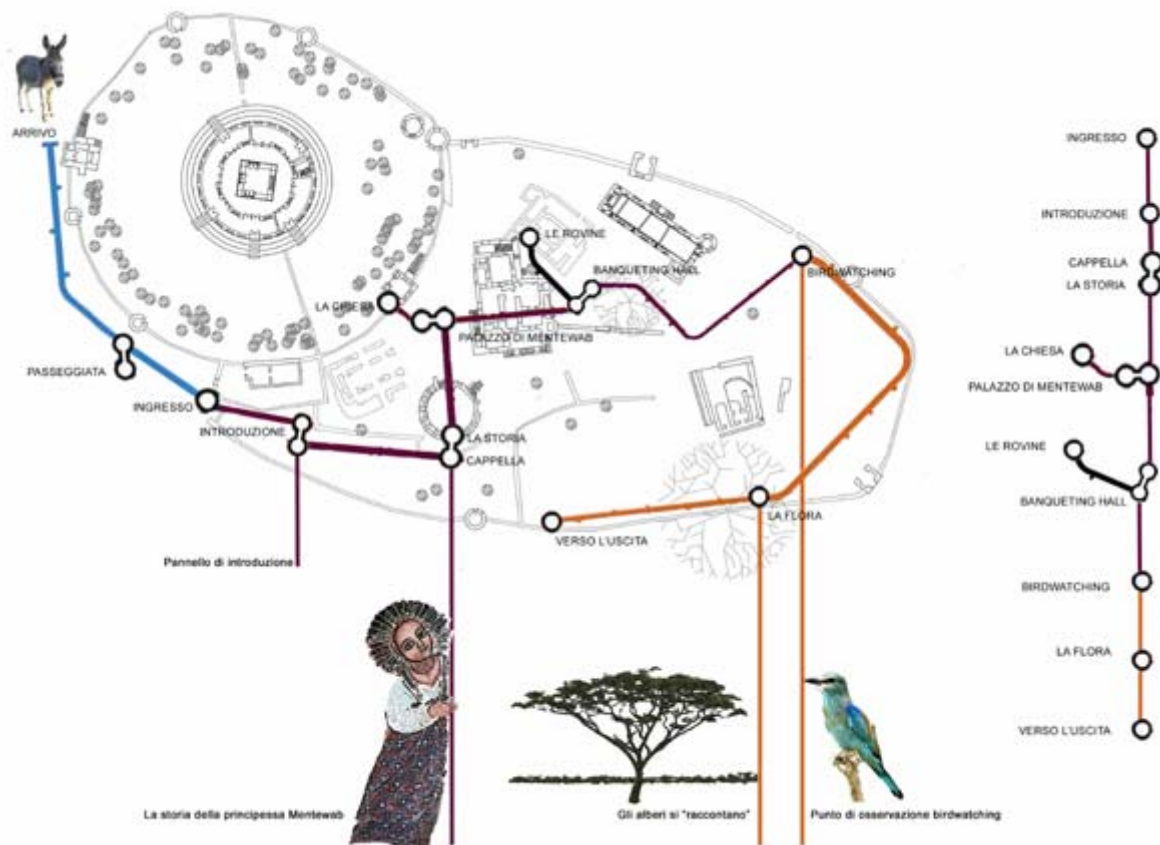
At closing employees lead donkeys to the site and will graze in meadows among the ruins, so that the problem of uncontrollable growth Dell'erba, can be managed in a sustainable way.

Access

It was chosen to exploit a gap in the wall protected by a metal gate, where the wall of the castle joins with the church thus avoiding to pass through it, often used for religious rites.

The use of the site

The visit will increase the sense of fulfillment of the visitor without interfering with the remains that, just for the fact exist, they express all their memory and their memories, but you must open with a key new signs confused and almost forgotten that enclose.



Planimetria generale del sito archeologico di Kusquam, la base del disegno è stata prodotta durante il progetto ECHP

The image shows the new path of access and the integration of some new elements such as the story of the princess, birdwatching and flora

Knowledge and communication

As Italo Calvino the city, in this case the site Kusquam, contains his past as the hand contains the lines: this is the first point of knowledge that must be investigated and submitted. The lines that are contained among the ruins are the architecture and its client, the Empress Mentewab, but we have one more chance, to transmit through this place not only its intrinsic values but also some of the lines sailing l' Ethiopia, where the fauna and flora which will be presented through panels.



The design panel

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