



Archaeological area of Tharros

Patrimonio culturale
SARDEGNA Virtual Archaeology



■ Roman thermal baths in Sardinia

The thermal baths are undoubtedly one of the most characteristic buildings from the Roman world. If present, they are a clear indication of the Romanisation of the area, and Sardinia has a large number of them, both public and private, both urban and rural (fig. 1).

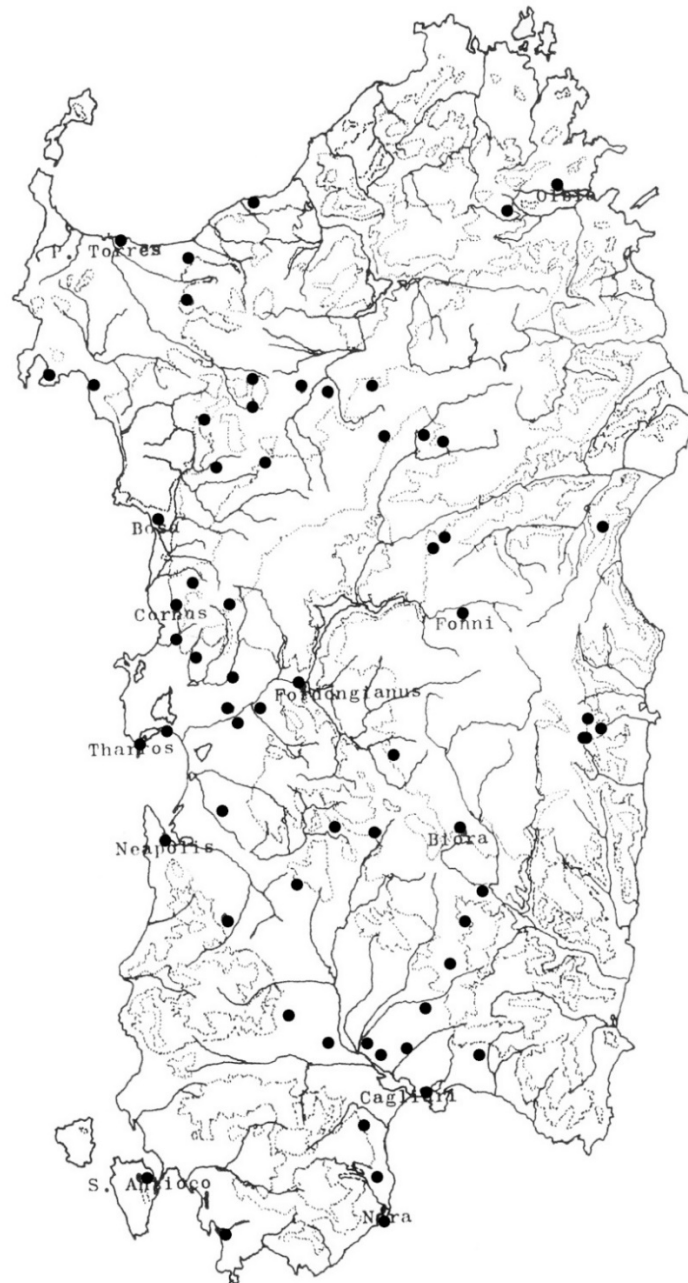


Fig. 1 - Distribution of Roman thermal baths in Sardinia (from ROWLAND 1981, fig. 3)

Clearly the larger buildings that provide us with the greatest information are the ones found in the towns, especially the ones that have not been built over in modern times, such as Tharros and Nora that, together with Porto Torres, have maintained their thermal baths in the best state of conservation.

We can therefore see how the thermal bath buildings that can be dated between the 2nd and 3rd century A.D., mainly have a circular path, that started from the *frigidarium* and then returned there without the need to retrace one's steps (figs. 2-5).

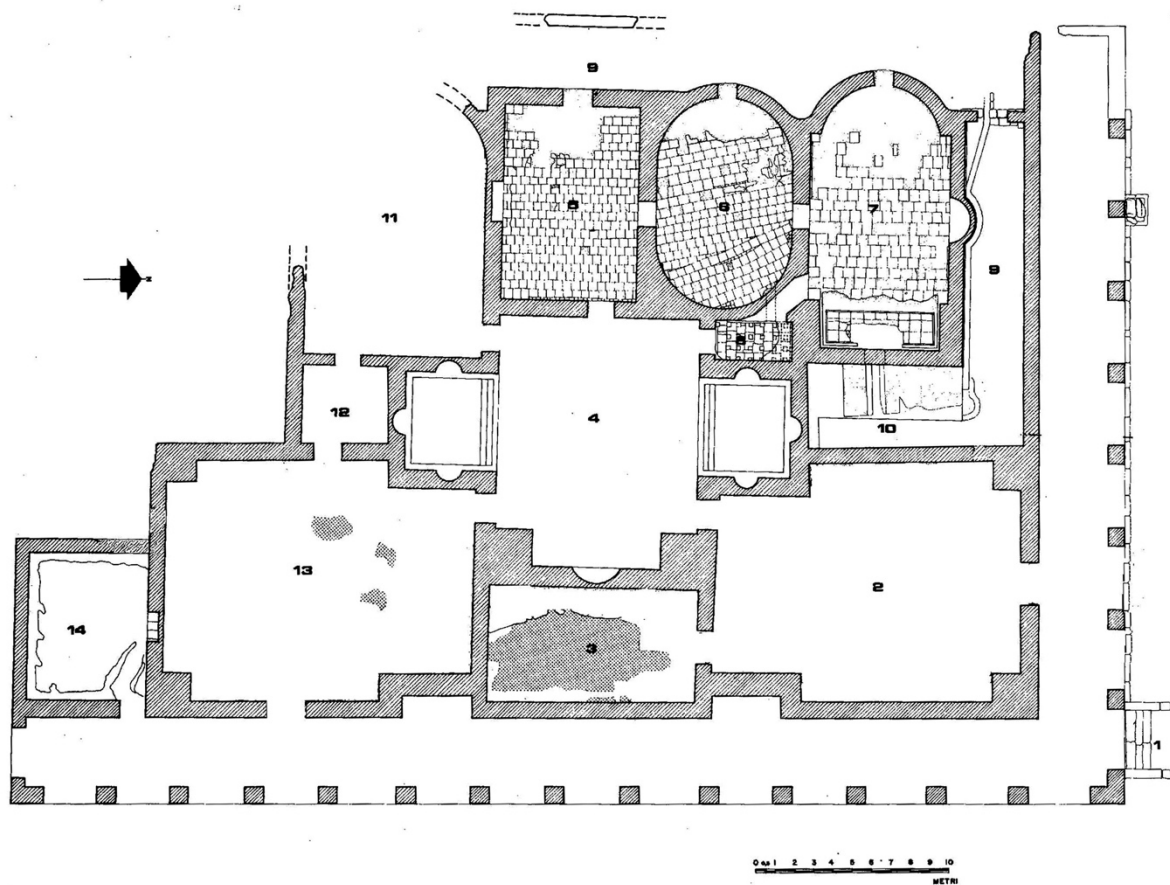


Fig. 2 - The sea thermal baths in Nora. Building phase at the start of the 3rd century AD.
(from TRONCHETTI 1985, fig. 12)



Fig. 3 - The sea thermal baths in Nora. (courtesy Gianni Alvito – Teravista)

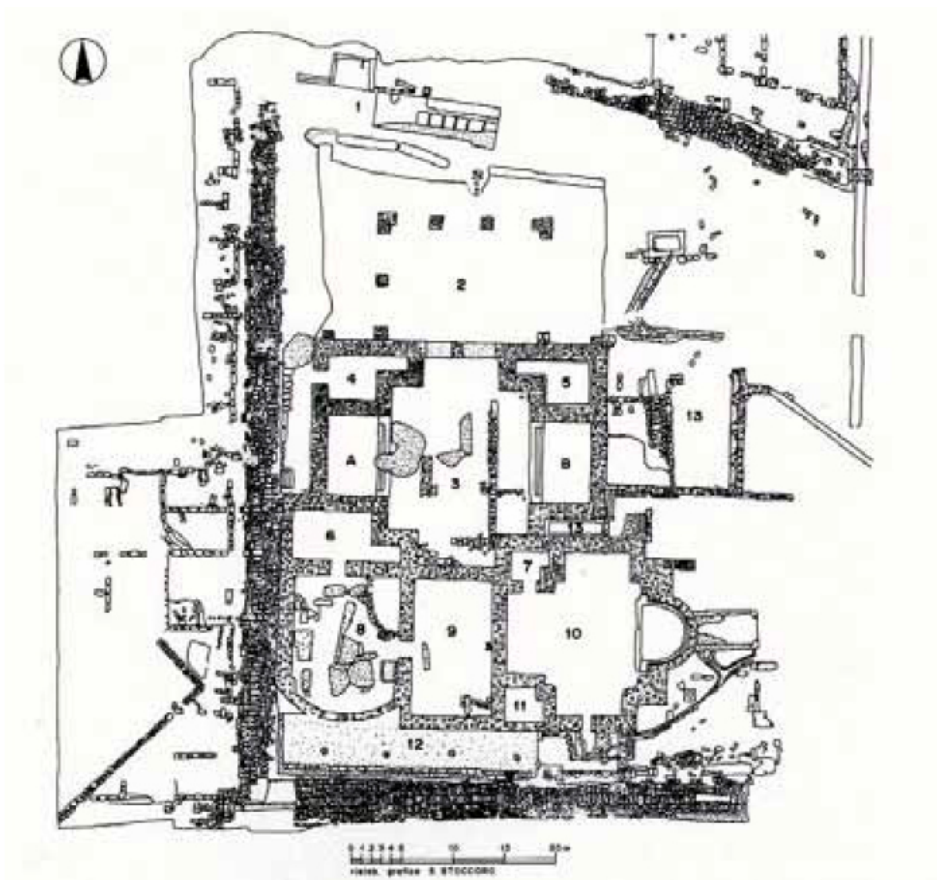


Fig. 4 - The so-called thermal baths of Re Barbaro in Porto Torres (from GHIOTTO 2004, p. 123)



Fig. 5 - The Convento Vecchio thermal baths in Tharros (photo by Unicity S.p.A.)

Clearly the arrangement of the interior path depended on the size of the buildings and on other characteristics, such as, for example, the large pool with curing waters at the Fordongianus thermal baths, that were the heart of the entire complex (fig. 6).



Fig. 6 - Thermal baths of Fordongianus: the thermal water pool (photo by Unicity S.p.A.)

The towns had several thermal bath buildings: at least four in Nora, three in Tharros, at least three in Cagliari, and two in Porto Torres.

Remains of small thermal baths are often found in the country, without any remains of dwellings around them (fig. 7). In these cases, the building probably served a small village of farmers, with homes made of perishable materials: mud bricks and stones, that have left no trace: the thermal baths are the only evidence remaining of these small villages.



Fig. 7 - Rural thermal baths in Ulassai (Archaeological Superintendency Archive)



■ Credits

Deepening card edited by Dr. Carlo Tronchetti

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