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Roman baths of Forum Traiani

Patrimonio culturale
SARDEGNA Virtual Archaeology



■ Use of the baths

Roman baths were for personal hygiene; curative properties were only added to the original function when the Baths exploited natural thermal waters, as in Fordongianus.

Roman houses had no hygiene systems and running water. Personal hygiene was taken care of at the end of the working day in baths buildings where, at a very low political price or even free, citizens could go to take a bath; baths were also meeting places (fig. 1).

Baths buildings had areas heated by an insulation system formed by a double wall through which hot air produced by ovens was conveyed; this ran under floors supported by small pillars (*suspensurae*, figs. 2-3). These warm rooms had baths and basins with water used to cool off with (fig. 4), while the bath itself took place in large baths in the cold areas.



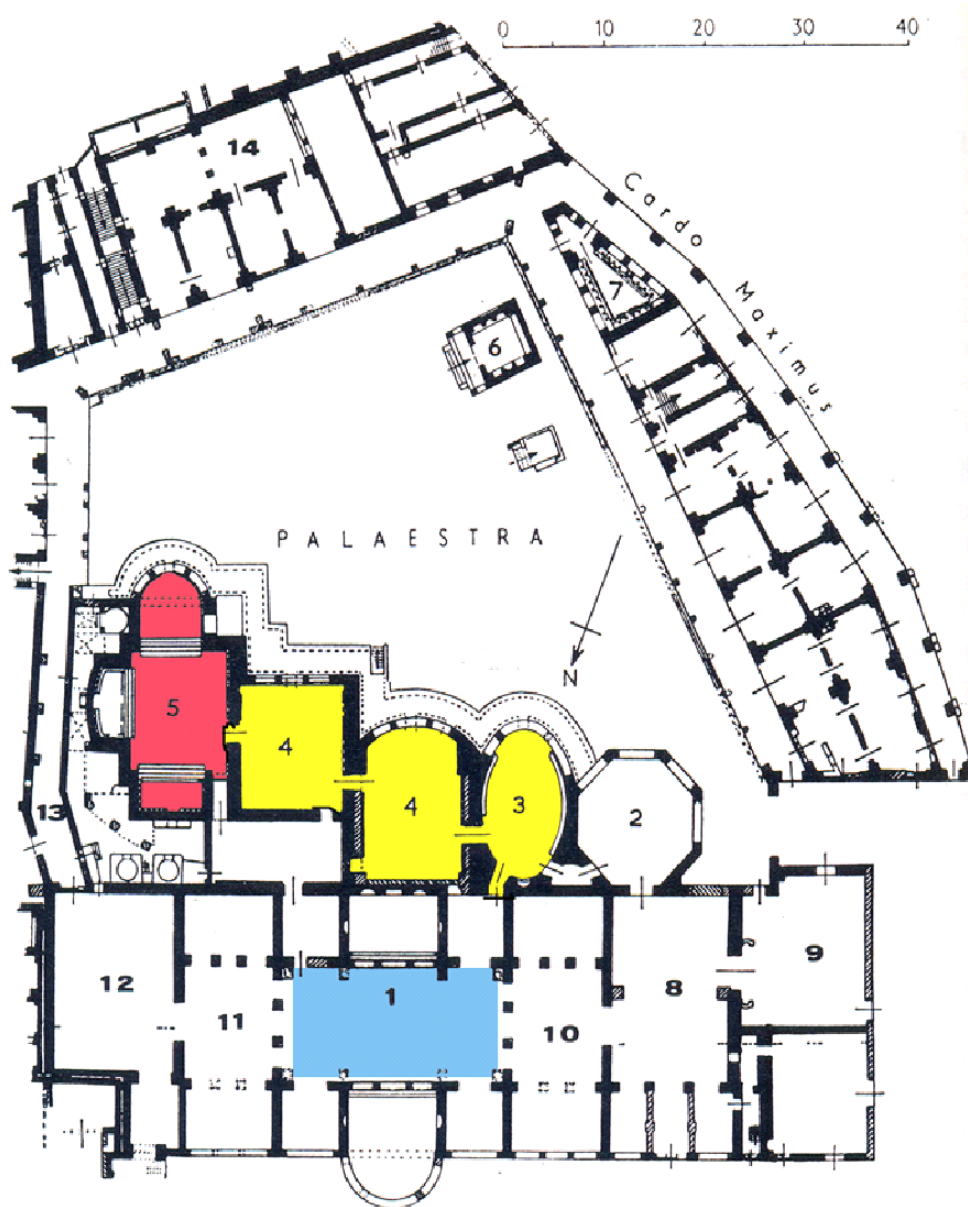


Fig. 1 - Ostia, baths of the Forum (II cent. A.D.). Baths environments: in light blue the *frigidarium*; in yellow the *tepidaria*, in red the *calidarium* (from Pavolini 1983, re-worked by C. Tronchetti).

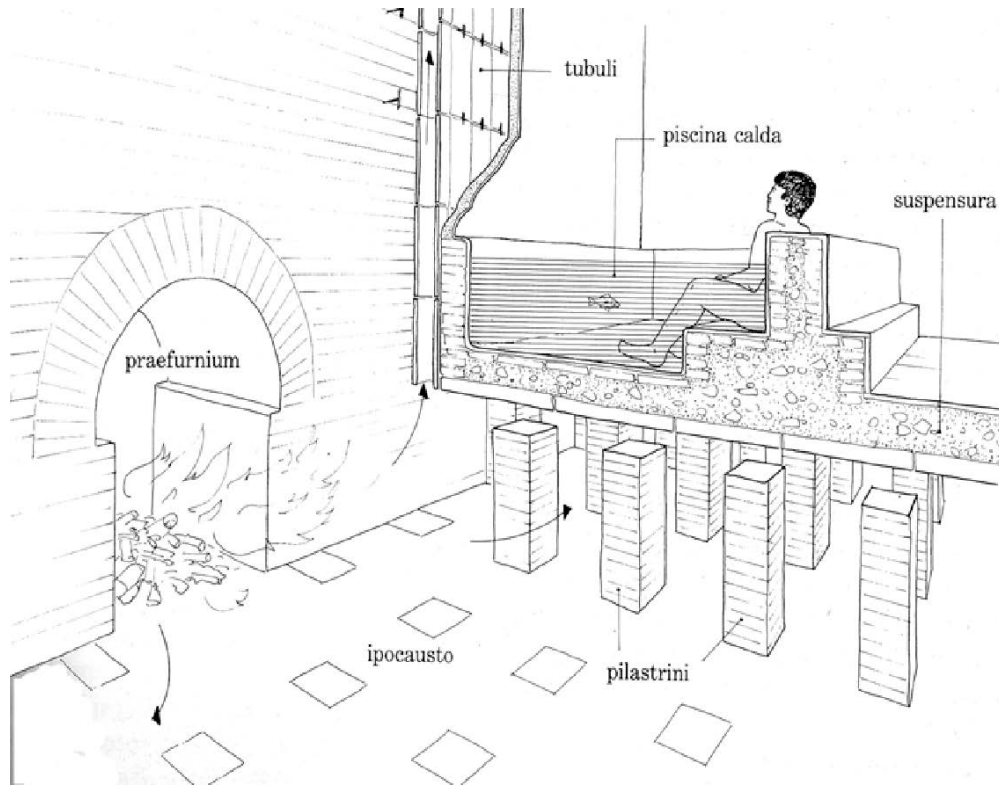


Fig. 2 - Heating system: from the oven the hot air flowed under the floor supported by *suspensurae* and, passing through holed *tubuli* in the walls, created warm insulation for the room (from Adam 1988, p. 293).

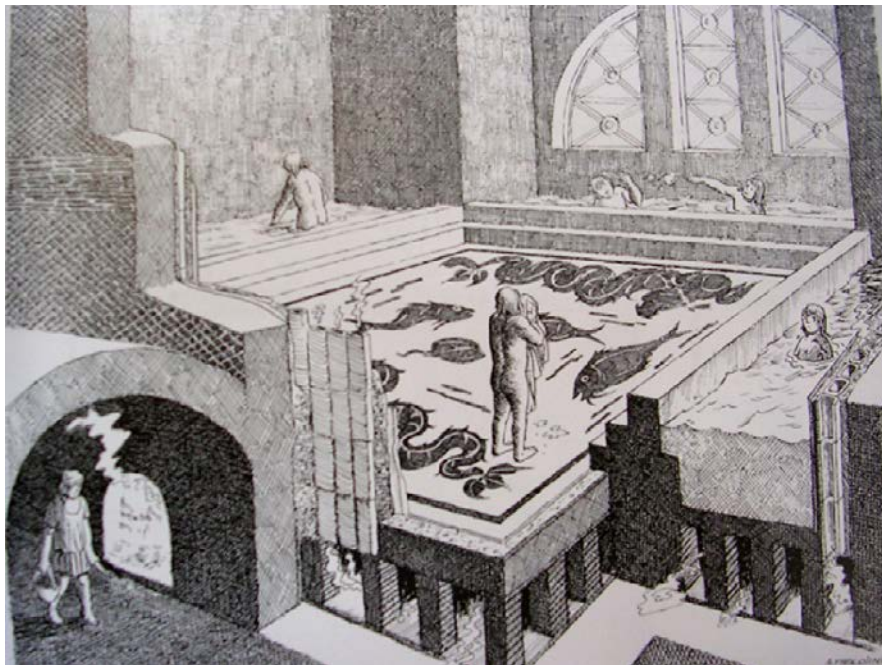


Fig. 3 - Reconstruction of a *caldarium* with two baths (from Adam 1988, p. 292).

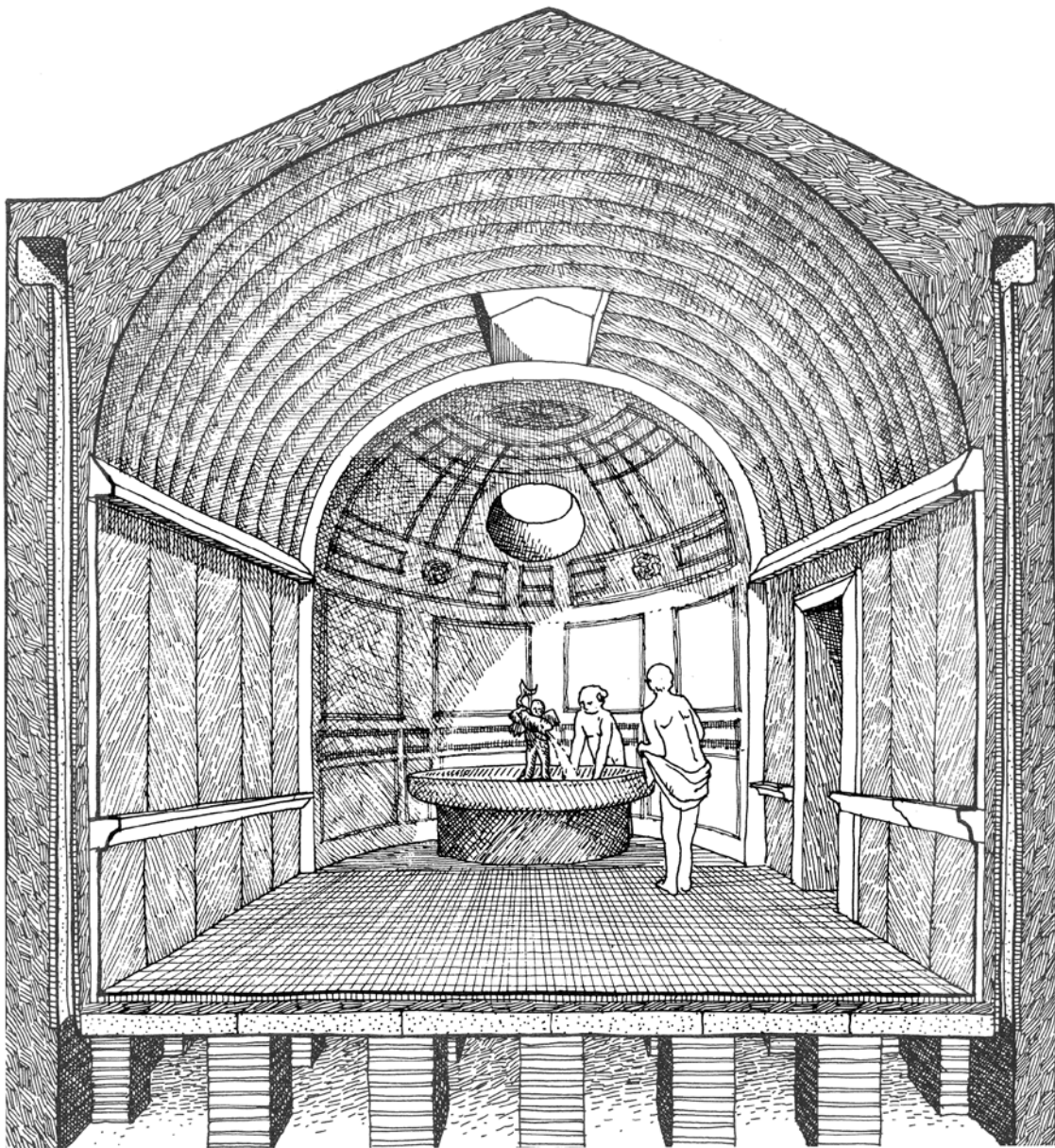


Fig. 4 - The reconstruction presents the apse of a *calidarium* with a basin of water to cool off with. It highlights the preparations for heating the environment (*suspensurae*) and the lighting from windows and skylights (from Macaulay 1978, p. 86).

■ Credits

Deepening card edited by Dr. Carlo Tronchetti

■ Bibliography

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