



UNIONE EUROPEA



REPUBBLICA ITALIANA



REGIONE AUTÒNOMA DE SARDIGNA  
REGIONE AUTONOMA DELLA SARDEGNA

# Castle of Monreale

Patrimonio culturale  
**SARDEGNA** Virtual Archaeology



## ■ The spa area

The castle of Monreale is located in the Municipality of Sardara about 50 kilometres north of Cagliari (South Sardinia), where it was built in the second half of the thirteenth century to guard the border between the kingdom of Arborea and that of Cagliari (fig. 1). Nearby, at the foot of the hill on which the fortress stands, there are the thermal baths of *Santa Maria de is Acguas*, built in the area of the ancient *thermae*, known as *Aquae Neapolitanae* or *Aquae calidae Neapolitanae*.<sup>1</sup> The Itinerario Antonino of Ptolemy placed them a short distance away from the road to *Turre Karales*, between *Othoca* (= Santa Giusta) and *Karales* (= Cagliari). On this site, during the Roman Era<sup>2</sup>, a large thermal complex was built (fig. 2), of which there is still a square tub (9.5 metres per side), interpreted as *natatio*, and a smaller thermal complex<sup>3</sup> that was reused in the Middle Ages and in modern times<sup>4</sup>.



**Fig. 1** - The castle of Monreale and the spa area (transposition by M.G. Arru, from Google Earth).

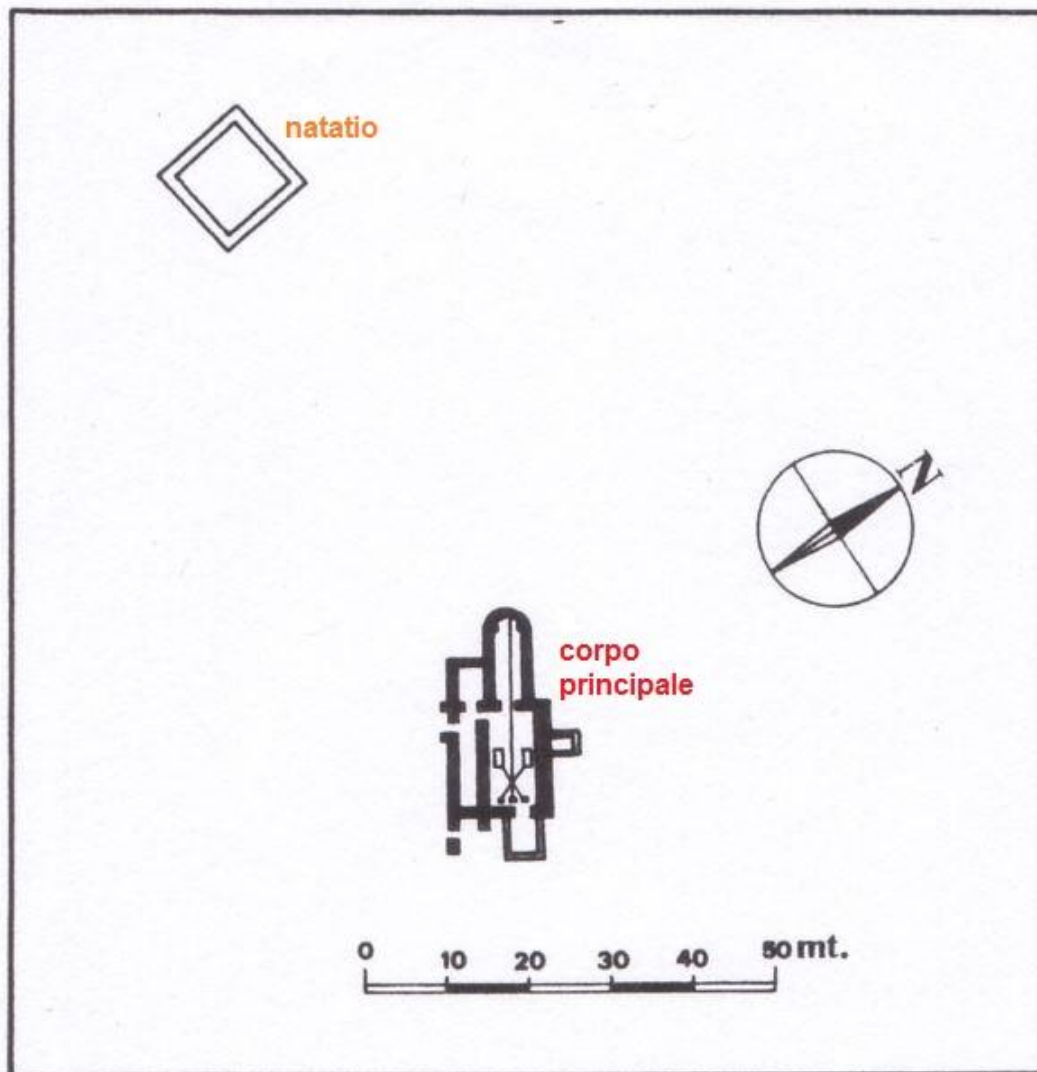
<sup>1</sup> R. ZUCCA, *Neapolis e il suo territorio*, Oristano 1987, pages 138-139.

<sup>2</sup> R. J. ROWLAND, *I ritrovamenti romani in Sardegna*, Roma 1981, p. 117.

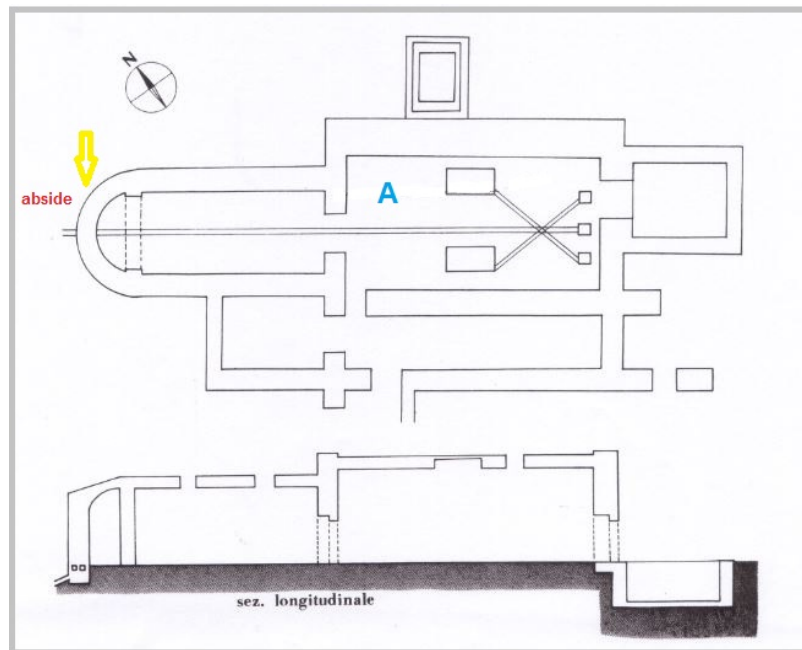
<sup>3</sup> C. COSSU, G. NIEDDU, *Terme e ville extraurbane della Sardegna*, Oristano 1998, pages 67-68.

<sup>4</sup> During the Low Middle Ages, the Judges of Arborea often resorted to thermal cures at Villa d'Abbas, as proven by some documents published in F.C. CASULA, *Breve storia della scrittura in Sardegna*, Cagliari 1978, doc. 333, p. 200 and pages 131-132, note 33.

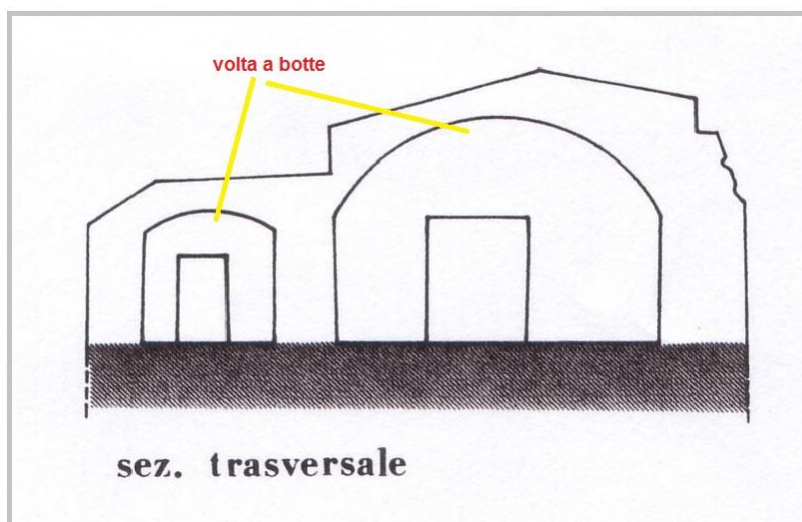
The latter building consists of a large rectangular room (A) with a barrel vault, housing two small rectangular pools and two swimming-pools on the North-East and North-West sides. Room A opens to the north-west onto another rectangular room with a barrel vault and apse. A door to the south-west of the A environment allows entering an ambulatory and then a small square room whose function is unclear (figs. 3-4).



**Fig. 2** - Plan of the Roman thermal baths (reconstruction by M. G. Arru from Zucca 1987, Table 27, p. 258).



**Fig. 3** - Plan and sections of the main building  
(reconstruction by M.G. Arru from ZUCCA 1987, Table 27, p. 258).

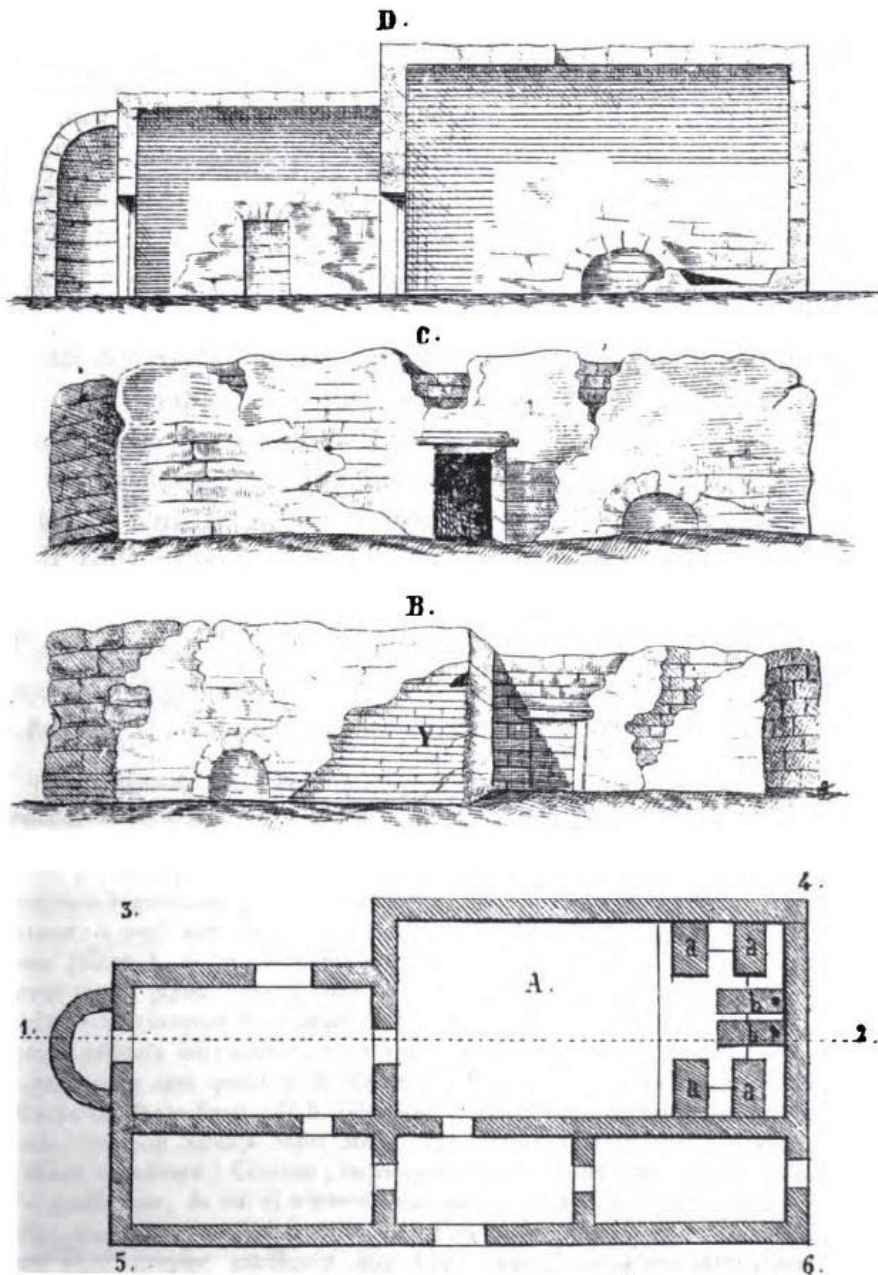


**Fig. 4** - Cross section of the main building  
(Reconstruction by M. G. Arru from Zucca 1987, Table 27, p. 258).

The state of the thermal building in the 19th century is shown in a drawing published by the priest G. Spano, from which, however, it is not possible to understand the building technique used, i.e. If it was a simple or mixed *opus vittatum* (fig. 5)<sup>5</sup>.

<sup>5</sup> G. SPANO, *Aquae Neapolitanae, ossia bagni di Sardara*, BAS, 5, 1859, pages 20-24.

# AQUÆ NEAPOLITANÆ



Bull. Arch. Sard. An. V.

Caplan Lit. Pires. 1859

Fig. 5 - Survey of the Roman baths published by Canon G. Spano (Spano 1859, page 21).

Several fragments of pottery have been found on the site, dating to a time span ranging from the first century AD to the Medieval Age<sup>6</sup>.

Near the spa, there is the country sanctuary dedicated to Santa Maria de is Acguas, built in the eighteenth century (fig. 6). The necropolis of the centre of *Aquae Neapolitanae* was located about 300 metres to the south-west of the church in 1875<sup>7</sup>.



**Fig. 6** - The sanctuary of Santa Maria de is Acguas  
(from <http://wikimapia.org/1422765/it/Chiesa-di-Santa-Maria-de-Is-Acguas-o-Santa-Maria-Acguas#/photo/1057788>)

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<sup>6</sup> ZUCCA 1987, p. 139

<sup>7</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 139.

## ■ Credits

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## La Sardegna cresce con l'Europa



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