

Necropolis of Sant'Andrea Priu

Patrimonio culturale
SARDEGNA Virtual Archaeology



■ The thermal baths complex of Sas Presones

The rural building known as *Sas Presones* is in Bonorva, a short distance from the village of Rebeccu and the hypogeum necropolis of San Andrea Priu, in a very important area for the Roman road system in Sardinia. It is assumed that a road to Olbia started from this point on the central Sardinian road to *Karalibus Turrem* (fig. 1). Several findings of road milestones in this area are useful for locating this fork in the road.

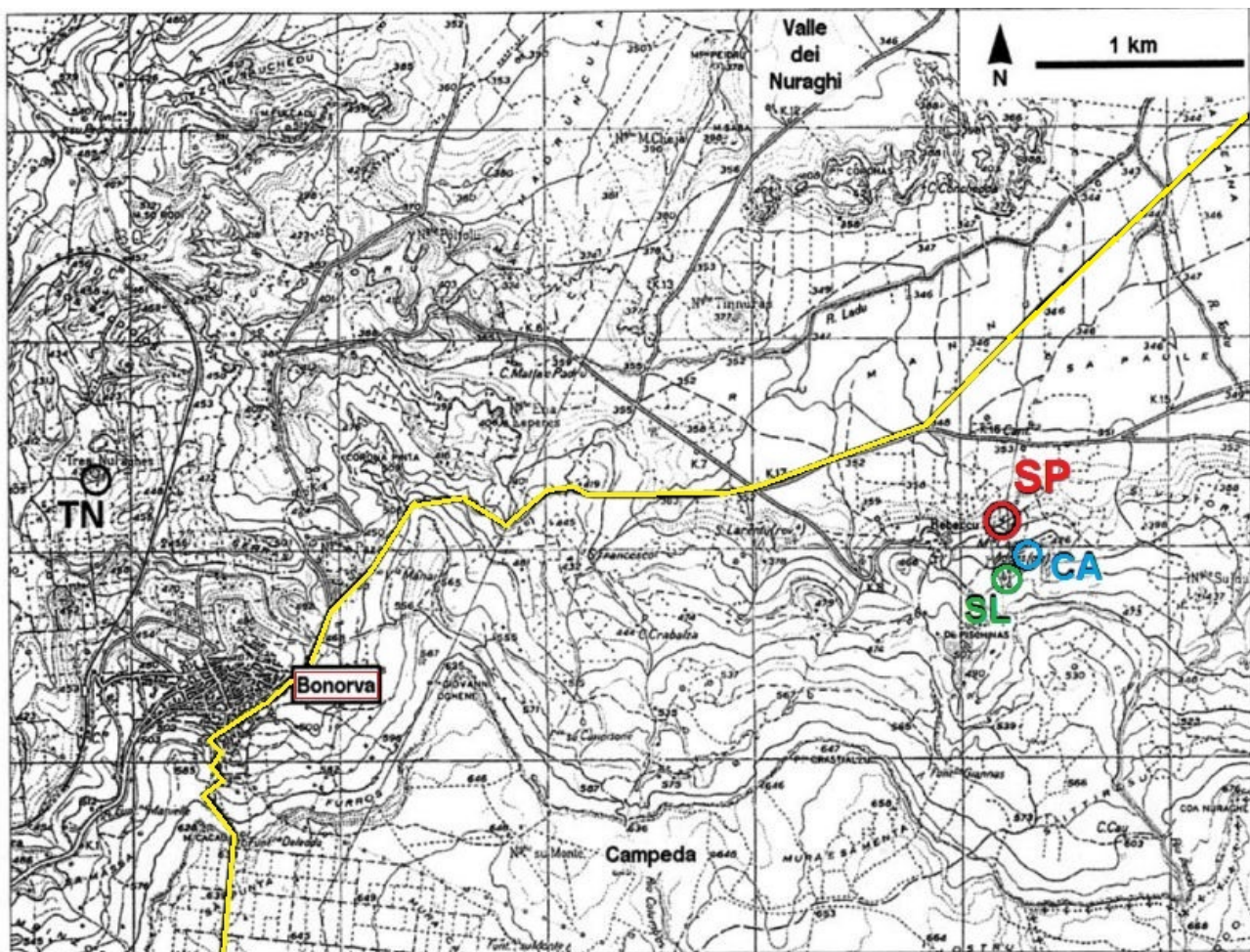


Fig. 1 - in yellow, the road for Olbia; SP = Sas Presones, CA = Cantaru Addes, SL = Su Lumarzu, TN = nuraghe Tresnuraghes (from Ialongo *et alii* 2007, p. 208, fig. 1).

Known already in the nineteenth century, the building of *Sas Presones* was recognised as being part of a thermal baths complex from the Late Antique age, regarding a public *praetorium* for the roads to Olbia.

The recent restoration work of *Sas Presones* allowed a careful study of the two remaining rooms and the overall layout of the original building, that had at least eight rooms (fig. 2).



Fig. 2 - The building of *Sas Presones* in Rebeccu after restoration (by Mastino, Ruggeri 2009, p. 556, fig. 2).

Room 1 (rectangular room 5.70 x 3.60 metres) was thought to be the *frigidarium*, while no. 5 (4.50 x 3.00 metres) could be the *apodyterium*; the terrace is on the west side, outside room 8, with a tub for ablutions. The warm rooms are lower down; the *tepidarium* was in no. 2 (5.40 x 3.60 metres); while there were *sudatoria*, the two small rooms 6 and 3, at its sides, heated like the nearby room 4 that could be a real *calidarium* with adjacent *prae-furnium* to the north (fig. 3).

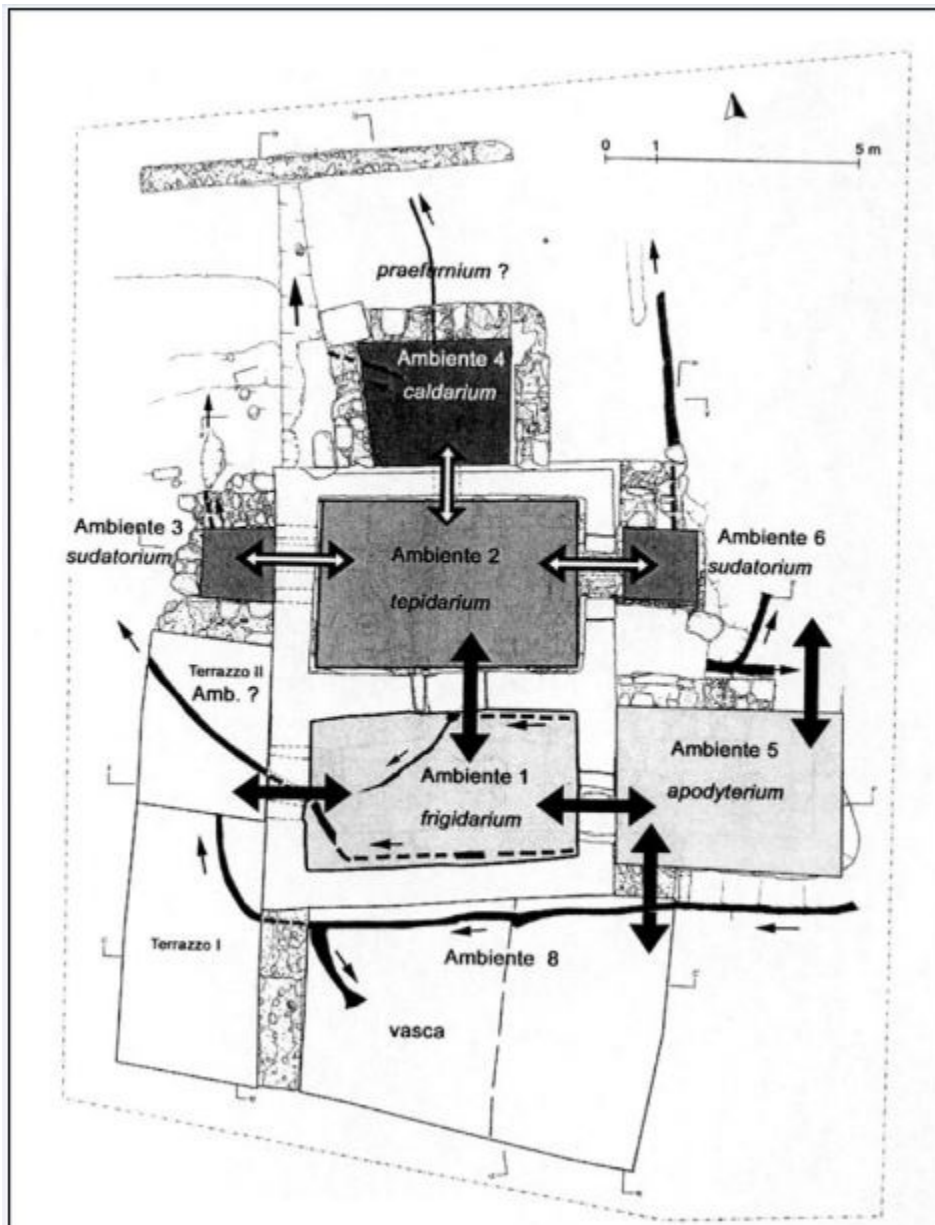


Fig. 3 - The rooms that makes up the thermal bath complex of *Sas Presones* (by Ialongo *et alii* 2007, p. 210, fig. 3).

Recent archaeological surveys brought to light the original floor in the central tepidarium (room 2) made with rectangular basalt rock slabs, that covers the hypocaust cavity and is suspended on 24 trachyte pillars 60 cm high, that are actually fragments of milestones blocks carrying traces of inscriptions (fig. 4).

The milestones probably come from the fork in the road, after Campeda, that leads to Olbia and Turrìs. It has been hypothesised that after being replaced, they were stacked in a collection centre and then reused as building material in the thermal baths.

The milestones show the titles of emperors from the 3rd to the 4th century and show the *terminus post quem* for the construction of the thermal baths.



Fig. 4 - The milestones that support the floor in room 2 (by Mastino, Ruggeri 2009, p. 562, fig. 8).

The building of *Sas Presones* may therefore be dated to the end of the 4th century A.D., as the road milestones reused in its structures cover a period of time from the age of Galerius to Constantine or Julian.

The thermal baths building of *Sas Presones* underwent changes in both the Medieval era and Modern times, that determined a progressive rising of the floor.



■ Credits

Deepening card edited by Dr. Maria Grazia Arru and Dr. Emanuela Atzeni

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Progetto cofinanziato dall'Unione Europea
Programma Operativo FESR 2007-2013

FESR - Fondo Europeo di Sviluppo Regionale - Asse I, Linea di Attività 1.2.3.a