



ACHILLEAN THERMAL BATHS

The name is due to the fragments of a Greek inscription, dating back to 434 AD, related to the restoration works that the structure, remembered as "Achillean thermal baths" (*Thermae Achilleianae*), underwent after a fire. The access to what is preserved of the complex, which probably was larger, is through an opening in the parvis of the cathedral, leading to a mortar barrel-vaulted corridor. Few meters further, on the left, there is a room containing a hypocaust (a floor supported by pillars, through which hot air circulated) and a flight of stairs. At the end of the corridor, a squarely planned hall opens up, with a vault supported by pillars and decorated with *stucco*, depicting *erotes* (amorini, mythological figures associated with love and sexuality), vine shoots and bunches of grapes. The original floor had to be built with *opus sectile* (made of marble slabs of different sizes and colours), whereas in the centre there was a rectangular basin, originally covered in marble. We do not know the functions of other rooms located around the hall. The original building dates back to the 2nd century BC, whereas in the first half of the 5th century BC the complex underwent a reduction, affecting the central room, which is now square in shape.



Achillean Thermal Baths. Eastern wall of the "pillars room" (Branciforti 2010, p. 227, fig. 142).



Achillean Thermal Baths. Little basin in the centre of the "pillars room" (Branciforti 2010, p. 229, fig. 147).

For further information:

M.G. Branciforti, *Da Katane a Catina*, in M.G. Branciforti, V. La Rosa (a cura di), *Tra lava e mare. Contributi all'archaiologia di Catania*, Catania 2010, pp. 135-258.