

The Indirizzo Roman baths at Catania*

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The Terme dell'Indirizzo (to give them their Italian name) stand near the centre of modern Catania (access today is from Piazza Currò) on Sicily's E coast (fig. 1). They are not a new discovery: the ancient structure remains as a standing building. It is not just the

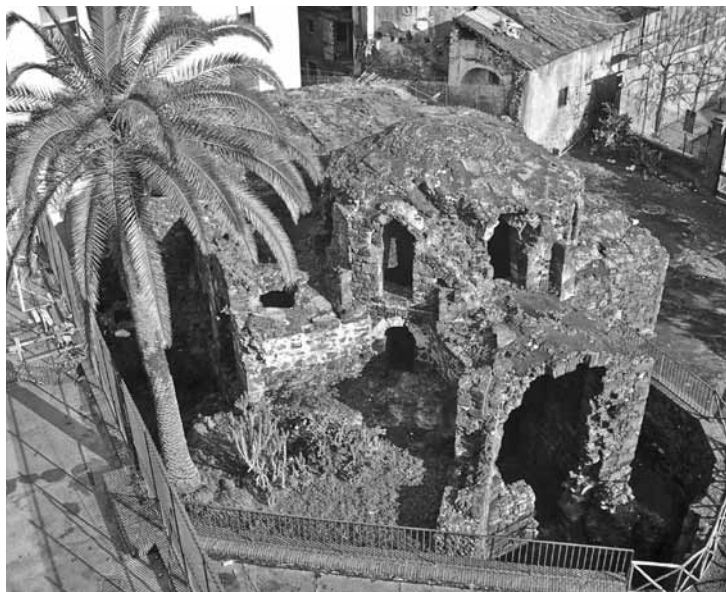


Fig. 1. Terme dell'Indirizzo, from the southwest (G. Margani).

best-preserved Roman bath-building in Sicily; it is among the best-preserved examples of its type anywhere in the empire, the original roofs of nearly every surviving room being, remarkably, intact. Despite this, the structure is little known, mainly because it has been publicly accessible only on sporadic occasions. Our purpose is to make the baths better known by presenting a modern survey of the standing structure, with new information above

all on the building's geometry and construction techniques, and by setting it in the context of bath-buildings in Sicily and the wider empire.

The baths are so-called because they stand next to the church of Santa Maria dell'Indirizzo and the adjacent Carmelite Convent (now a school);¹ the baths have been incorporated into and between these two structures for centuries. After the gigantic earthquake of 1693, the convent was completely rebuilt, in the process incorporating the baths, an action which also helped to preserve them, despite some alterations, down to the present day. Their location in the ancient city was in part dictated by a nearby branch of the underground Amenano river, which was tapped to provide their water supply. In antiquity, the building stood on the SE fringes of the Roman city near the W edge of the harbour area, very close to the sea.²

* Frequently cited works:

- Branciforti, *Indirizzo* = M. G. Branciforti (ed.), *Le Terme dell'Indirizzo di Catania* (Palermo 2013);
Houel, *Hermitage* = *La Sicilia di Jean Houel all'Ermitage* (Palermo 1989);
Nicoletti, *Catania antica* = F. Nicoletti (ed.), *Catania antica. Nuove prospettive di ricerca* (Palermo 2015);
Tortorici, *Atlante* = E. Tortorici (ed.), *Catania antica. La carta archeologica* (Rome 2016);
Wilson, *Sicily* = R. J. A. Wilson, *Sicily under the Roman Empire* (Warminster 1990).
- 1 S. Boscarino, "Il Convento e la Chiesa di S. Maria dell'Indirizzo," *Quaderno dell'Istituto di Disegno [Catania]* 2 (1967) 81-95.
 - 2 Cf. Tortorici, *Atlante* Tav. 9-10, no. 155; see further n.17 below. The topography of modern Catania diverges hugely from that of its ancient and mediaeval predecessors, largely due to the