

**Identification**

<i>Nomination</i>	The City of Vicenza and the Palladian Villas of the Veneto (extension)
<i>Location</i>	Veneto Region, Provinces of Vicenza, Treviso, Verona, Rovigo, and Padova
<i>State Party</i>	Italy
<i>Date</i>	10 October 1995

**Justification by State Party**

The unequalled value of Palladio's lesson in the history of world architecture is universally recognized. The incontrovertible proof is that what is known as Palladianism spread to many parts of western Europe, to the United Kingdom, and to the American continent, and that this movement of unprecedented proportions was studied everywhere.

Palladio's work in the territory of Venice, and particularly the architectural complexes that are the subject of this proposed extension to the existing World Heritage monument, bear the extraordinary imprint that one single artist was able to leave on a territory. Palladio's works have marked this area so deeply that this connotation has become an artistic and cultural landmark that cannot be ignored. Moreover, in addition to the intrinsic value of each individual villa, as a group they form a very important element in the regional territory in general, and particularly in the Vicenza area, which gives an additional value to this province, because the formal relationship between the villas and the landscape of the Veneto results in a unique quality that gives it a universal value. The artistic relationship established by Palladio between the town palaces and the country villas also adds to the beauty of this area, which can be most fully appreciated in the vicinity of Vicenza.

**Category of property**

In terms of the categories of property set out in Article 1 of the 1972 World Heritage Convention, the Vicenza ensemble of the city itself and the Palladian villas in the surrounding region is a *group of buildings*.

**History and Description***History*

At the beginning of the 15th century the Venetian Republic extended its territory to a wide area of the mainland, roughly delineated by the river Po to the south and the Mincio to the west. This ushered in a long period of peace for the Veneto, as this region became known. The local feudal lords were able to improve their estates and Venetian aristocrats purchased lands in which to invest their profits from Venice's maritime trading activities.

In the first half of the 16th century the Venetian state joined forces with private landowners in a campaign for the reclamation of unproductive and swampy areas and the introduction of improved methods of cultivation, to be institutionalized in 1556 with the establishment of the *Magistratura dei Beni Inculti* (Magistracy for Uncultivated Properties). Landowners needed to create infrastructures that would enable them to exercise more direct management of their estates, and the villas that began to be built at this time gave material form to this process. Villas already existed in the Veneto, but these had been used primarily as summer residences for the urban grandees, and varied greatly in form and style. However, they also possessed certain common elements: a central hall, a portico, and a front loggia.

The new concept of the villa designed for semi-permanent occupation by the landowner was first advanced by Jacopo Sansovino in the villa that he built between 1538 and 1540 for the Garzoni family at Pontecasale. He retained the central loggia flanked by side wings of the earlier villas, but transformed it using the artistic vocabulary of classical antiquity; he also introduced the complex of service buildings (again adopted

from the Roman villa complex) needed for permanent occupation. Sansovino's basic concept was taken over and modified by Andrea Palladio.

Like Sansovino, Palladio was profoundly influenced by classical architecture, which he had studied at first hand in Rome. However, his first country villa, built at Lonedo for the Godi family around 1537, before he went to Rome, made only limited use of classical elements. He was responsible for a number of other villas in the years that followed, into which classical motifs, and in particular the pediment, were introduced. Between 1540 and 1550 he designed a number of striking country houses, such as the Villa Valmarana at Vigardolo di Monticello, the Villa Forni Cerato at Montecchio Precalcino, the Villa Grimani Gazzotti and the Villa Thiene at Quinto Vicentino, the Villa Pisani at Bagnolo di Lonigo, the Villa Saraceno at Finale di Agugliaro, and the Villa Pojana at Pojana Maggiore.

It was not until he returned from a two-year stay in Rome (1546-47), however, that Palladio began to create buildings in the style that is associated with his name. His 1548 design for the Villa Angarano, which was probably never built but is illustrated in his *Quattro libri dell'architettura* (1570), and its ancillary buildings, which survive to the present day, represent a decisive step forward. This was followed by a period of hectic villa building by Palladio, which produced the Villa Cornaro at Piombino Dese, the Villa Pisani at Montagnana, the Villa Zeno at Cessalto, the Villa Foscari at Mira, the Villa Chiericati Porto at Grumolo delle Abbadesse, the Villa Badoer at Fratta Polesine, and the Villa Barbaro at Maser. During the last decade of his activity Palladio worked on fewer villas, some of which were not completed. They include the Villa Valmarana at Lisiera di Bolzano Vicentino, the Villa Emo at Fanzolo di Veduggio, the Villa Serego at Santa Sofia di Pedemonte, and the Villa Capra (La Rotonda) in Vicenza.

#### *Description*

The definitive Palladian country villa synthesizes, both figuratively and materially, the functional aspects of management of the land and the aristocratic self-glorification of the owner. Its core is the house-temple, embellished with a monumental staircase and crowned by the pediment supported by the columns of the loggia. Porticos lead from the sides to the wings, which often have towers. The different components are linked by a common classical language and are ordered according to a well defined hierarchy. Outstanding examples of this type of establishment are the Villa Badoera at Fratta Polesine, the Villa Emo at Fanzolo, and the Villa Barbaro at Maser.

Alongside these villa-farms, Palladio also designed villas with no economic function, designed principally as summer residences, with the subsidiary function of demonstrating the wealth and rank of the owners. They are usually located near a village and do not have the extensive ancillary buildings of the villa-farms. The form is that of the urban palaces, with two storeys so as to provide a *piano nobile*. They usually have twin loggias stretching out on either side of the main block. This type is well illustrated by the twin villas built for the Pisani family at Montagnana, the Villa Cornaro at Piombino Dese, the Villa Chiericati at Vancimuglio, and the Villa Foscari at Malcontenta.

The following properties are included in this nomination:

**Note** Those marked with an asterisk are already inscribed on the World Heritage List as part of the main inscription of Vicenza, City of Palladio.

#### *Province of Vicenza*

- Villa Almerico Capra, known as La Rotonda (Vicenza)\*
- Villa Gazzotti Grimani (Bertesina)\*
- Villa Angarano, known as the Villa Bianchi Michiel (Angarano di Bassano)
- Villa Caldogno Nordera (Caldogno)
- Villa Chiericati Porto Rigo (Vancimuglio di Grumolo delle Abbadesse)
- Villa Forni Cerato (Montecchio Precalcino)
- Villa Godi Malinverni (Lonedo di Lugo Vicentino)
- Villa Pisani Ferri de Lazara (Bagnolo di Lonigo)
- Villa Pojana (Pojana Maggiore)
- Villa Saraceno (Finale di Agugliaro)
- Villa Thiene (Quinto Vicentino)
- Villa Trissino (Meledo di Sarego)
- Villa Trissino Trettenero (Cricoli)\*
- Villa Valmarana Scagnolari Zen (Lisiera di Bolzano Vicentino)
- Villa Valmarana Bressan (Vigardolo de Monticello Conte Otto)
- Villa Piovene (Lonedo di Lugo)

#### *Province of Rovigo*

- Villa Badoer, known as La Badoera (Fratta Polesine)

#### *Province of Treviso*

- Villa Barbaro (Maser)
- Villa Emo (Fanzolo di Veduggio)
- Villa Zenobio (Donoval di Cessalto)

#### *Province of Venezia*

- Villa Foscari, known as La Malcontenta (Gambarare di Mira)

#### *Province of Padova*

- Villa Pisani (Montebelluna)
- Villa Cornaro (Pombino Dese)

#### *Province of Verona*

- Villa Serbelloni (Santa Sofia di Pedemonte)

### **Management and Protection**

#### *Legal status*

All the buildings that constitute this extension of the World Heritage site of Vicenza are protected under the *vincolo* provisions of the basic Italian monuments protection law, No 1089/1939, which requires any interventions to be authorized by the appropriate regional agency (*Soprintendenza*) of the Ministry of Cultural and Environmental Property (*Ministero dei Beni Culturali ed Ambientali*).

#### *Management*

The villas are in private ownership, with the exception of the Villa Caldogno (Comune di Caldogno), Villa Forni Cerato (Comune di Montebelluna), Villa Pojana (Istituto Regionale per le Ville Venete), Thiene (Comune di Quinto Vicentino), and Villa Badoer (Amministrazione Provinciale di Rovigo).

All the villas are covered by the planning regulations of their respective provinces and communes. The tourist offices of the six provinces in which the villas are located are also associated with the management of the sites and their surroundings.

### **Conservation and Authenticity**

#### *Conservation history*

With the end of the Venetian Republic in 1797 the economic and social structure of the Veneto collapsed, and the condition of the Palladian villas began a slow process of deterioration. The situation became acute at the end of World War II, during which many of them were misused for military purposes. Efforts for their restoration and conservation began in the late 1940s, initiated by private individuals and local associations, working through press campaigns and an exhibition that travelled widely in Europe and the USA.

After a decade of intense activity by these disinterested parties, public and private institutions were won over and the Authority for the Villas of the Veneto (*Ente per le Ville Venete*) was set up in 1958. It carried out many restoration and conservation projects, for which it won several national and international awards. In 1979 it was replaced under Regional Law No 63/1979 by the Regional Institute for the Villas of the Veneto (*Istituto Regionale per le Ville Venete*). It should be noted that the Institute has powers of compulsory purchase when owners are considered not to be managing and maintaining their villas adequately.

The present state of conservation of the villas that make up this proposed extension is variable. Several (La Rotonda, Villa Saraceno, Villa Valmarana at Lisiera, Villa Pisani at Bagnolo di Lonigo) have recently been thoroughly restored, and work on the Villa Caldogno and the Villa Gazzotti Grimani is beginning. These activities have the support of the Andrea Palladio International Centre for Architectural Studies in Vicenza, which has for

more than a decade been organizing seminars on operational techniques and intervention methods in the restoration of historic buildings.

#### *Authenticity*

The authenticity of these villas is high. The Vicenza International Centre has carried out detailed archival, technical, and scientific studies aimed at identifying the original forms of the villas and from these have been able to specify appropriate materials and techniques for use in restoration and conservation projects. The Regional Institute for the Villas of the Veneto is closely associated with this work.

#### **Evaluation**

##### *Action by ICOMOS*

An ICOMOS expert mission visited all the villas in February 1996. An international expert on the work of Palladio provided an evaluation of the cultural significance of the villas.

##### *Qualities*

The outstanding universal value of the work of Andrea Palladio has already been recognized by the inscription of the historic centre of Vicenza and three Palladian villas in its immediate vicinity in 1994. The proposed extension extends that recognition to the other manifestations of his creative genius in the Veneto region, covering his versatility in applying his principles to rural as well as urban contexts.

##### *Comparative analysis*

The uniqueness of Palladio's *oeuvre* has already been acknowledged with the original inscription on the World Heritage List.

##### *ICOMOS observations*

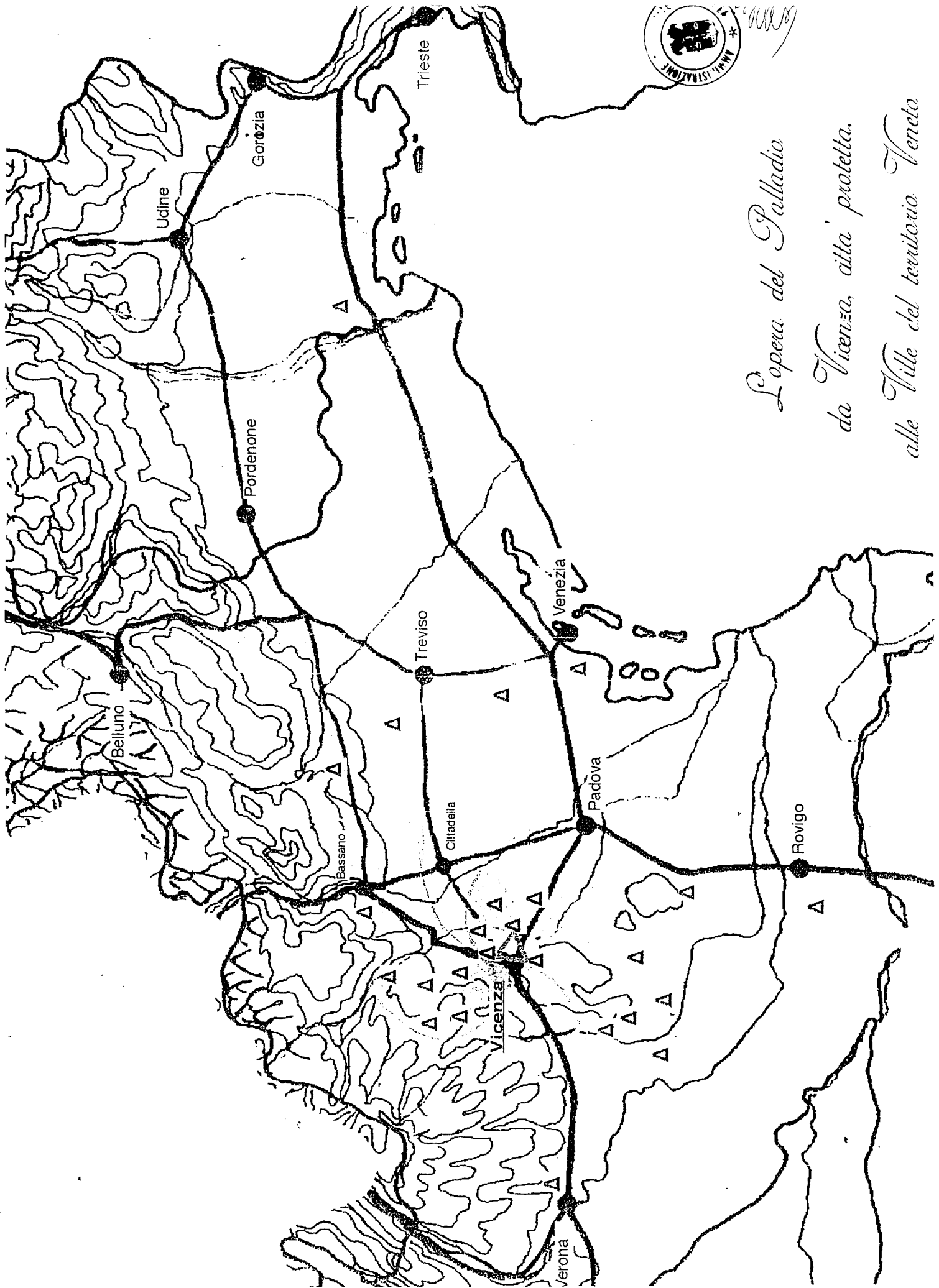
There is a need for appropriate contemporary uses to be found for several of the villas. The solutions adopted for the Villa Saraceno, which is used for holiday letting on the model established by the British Landmark Trust, and the Villa Emo, where the wings (*barchesse*) have been adapted by the owner (who still resides in the main villa) as a restaurant and kitchens, were especially commended in the ICOMOS expert mission report.

The relationship between the villas and their environments is a fundamental element in Palladio's designs. Great care needs to be exercised to ensure that this is maintained wherever possible and still feasible.

#### **Recommendation**

That this proposal for extension of World Heritage monument No 712 be approved and inscribed on the basis of the existing **criteria i and ii**, the title of the inscribed property being changed to "The City of Vicenza and the Palladian villas of the Veneto."

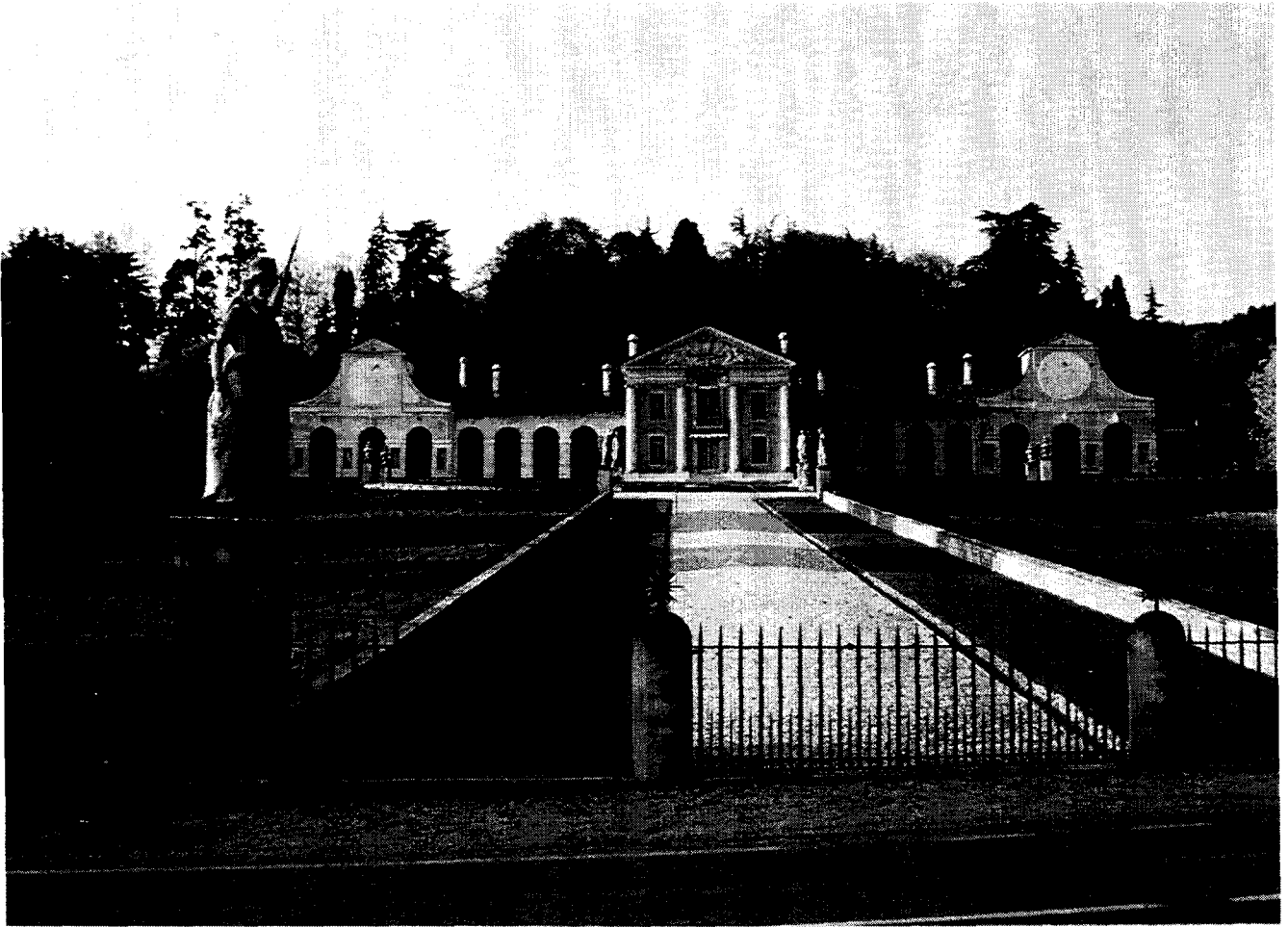
ICOMOS, October 1996



Vicence : carte de distribution des villas de Palladio en Vénétie  
 Vicenza : distribution of Palladian Villas of the Veneto



Vicence : Villa Pojana  
Vicenza : Villa Pojana



Vicence : Villa Barbaro  
Vicenza : Villa Barbaro