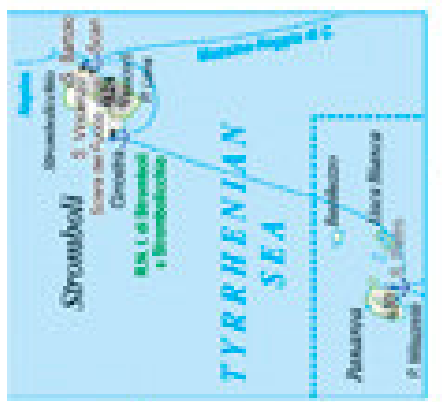
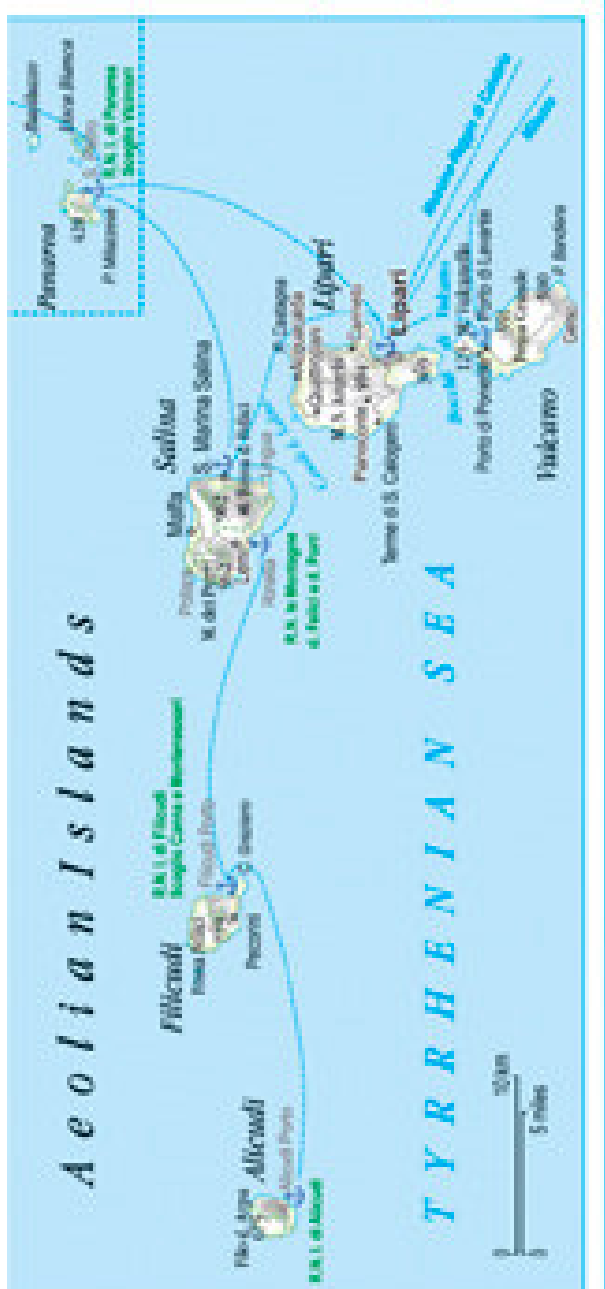
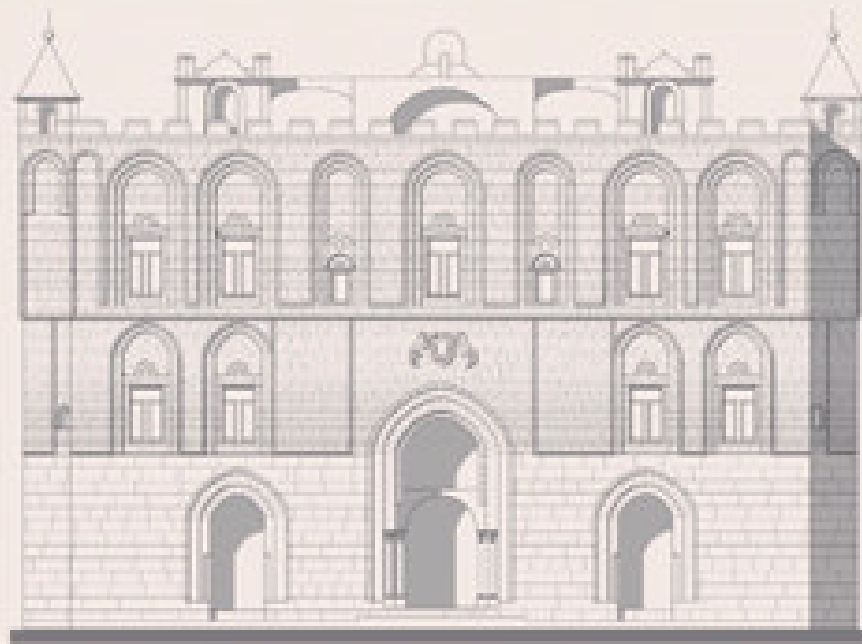


Aeolian Islands



outside, formerly part of the gardens, collected the water from the fountain in the ground floor hall, which was fed by a nearby Roman aqueduct. A damaged inscription in Kufic letters at the top of the east façade has not yet been deciphered.

HISTORY OF LA ZISA



La Zisa was one of a group of palaces built by the Norman kings in their private park of Genoardo (used as a hunting reserve) on the outskirts of Palermo. It was begun by William I c. 1164–65 and completed by his son. The palace is known to have been used by Frederick II, but it was already in disrepair in the late 13th century. It was fortified by the Chiaramonti in the 14th century. By the 16th century it was in a ruined state and was drastically reconstructed by the Spanish Sandoval family who owned it from 1635 to 1806. It was expropriated by the Sicilian government in 1955, but then abandoned until part of the upper floors collapsed in 1971. After years of neglect, a remarkable restoration programme was begun in 1974 and it was finally opened to the public in 1990. The structure had to be consolidated throughout, but the astonishing architecture has been preserved. As a finishing touch, the magnificent gardens have recently been imaginatively re-created, with lily ponds, fountains and walks.

The interior

The beautiful interior of the palace is on three floors. The exceptionally thick outer walls (1.9 metres on the ground floor), the original small windows and a system of air vents (also found in ancient Egyptian buildings) kept the palace protected from the



View of Cefalù and its duomo from the Rocca.

(12th–17th centuries), next to its convent (the old portal survives on the corner of Via Porto Salvo). Opposite is the 16th-century Porta Pescara with a lovely Gothic arch through which the sea can be seen. It is now used to display fishermen's tackle and nets. Beyond, the Discesa Fiume, with wide steps curving down past a few trees, leads to the *Lavatoio*, a picturesque medieval wash-house, where a spring of slightly salty water was converted into a laundry by the Arabs and was still in daily use until quite recently.

From Corso Ruggero and Vicolo dei Saraceni steps and a path lead up (in c. 1 hour) to the Rocca, the summit (278m) of which commands a wonderful view. According to legend, the rock is the head of the shepherd Daphnis. He so loved the nymph Nomia that he promised to be faithful to her, on pain of being blinded. Chimaera then enticed him into the woods, gave him wine and seduced him. Nomia accordingly blinded him, and Hermes, on the orders of Hera, to whom Nomia was dear, turned him into stone. His bitter tears at his folly are said to form the spring that supplies the *Lavatoio*. On the top of the Rocca is the so-called **Temple of Diana**, with walls made out of huge polygonal blocks and a carved architrave over the entrance. It was probably a sacred edifice built in the 5th–4th century BC over an earlier cistern. Stretches of castellated walls can also be seen here as well as numerous cisterns and ovens, but only vague traces remain of the original castle.

HISTORY OF SELINUNTE

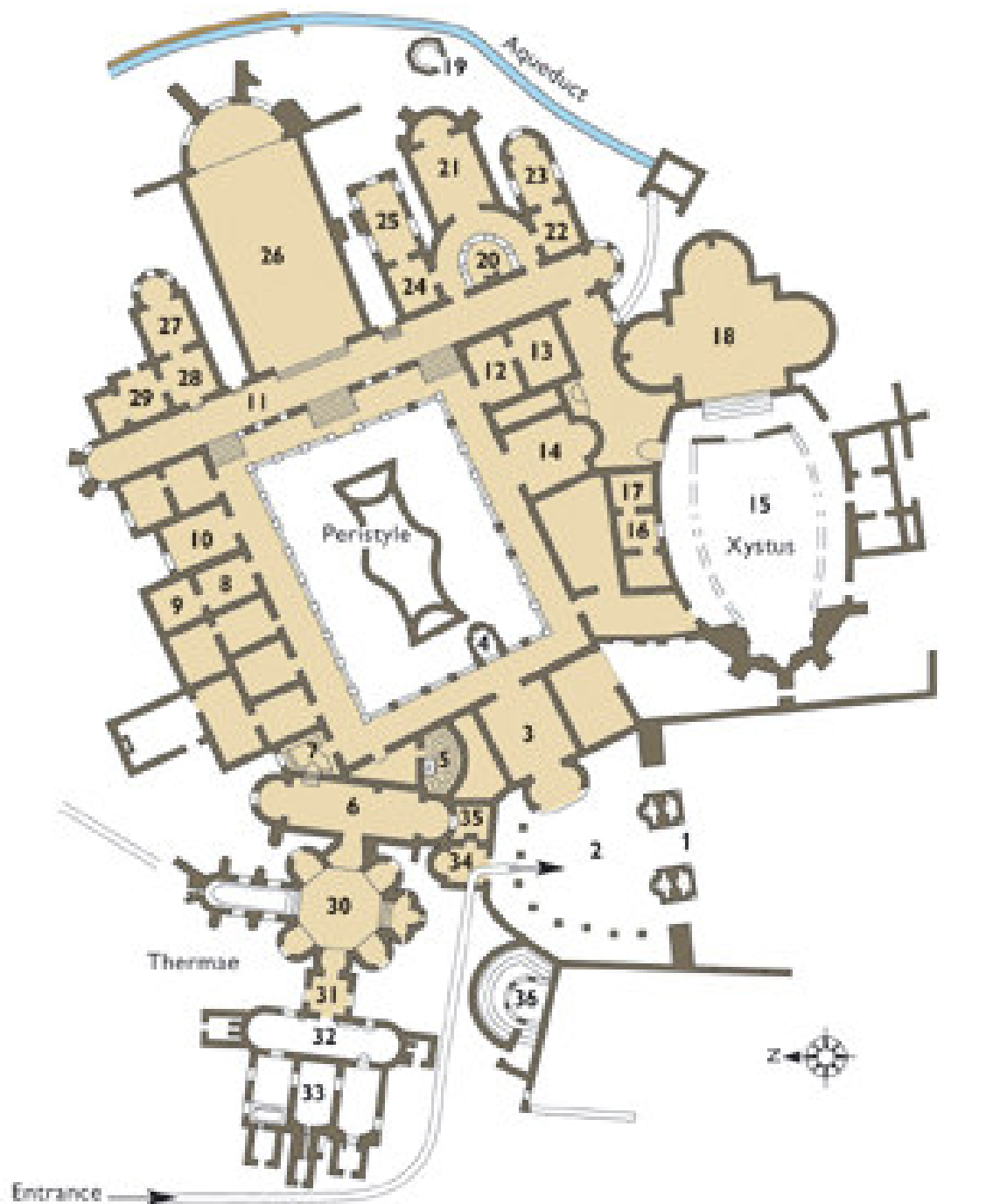
Selinunte was a colony of Megara Hyblaea, probably founded as early as 651 BC. It takes its name *Selinus* from the wild celery, *Aplium graveolens* (Greek, *selinon*), which still grows here in abundance, and which appears on its coins. The colony's most prosperous period was the 5th century BC, when the great temples were built and the city was laid out on a rectangular plan. After the battle of Himera in 480 BC Selinunte took part with Syracuse in an alliance against Carthage, and in 409 BC the Carthaginians, summoned to the help of Segesta, the mortal enemy of Selinunte, sent an army of 100,000 under Hannibal, son of Gisco, which captured Selinunte before the allied troops of Acragas and Syracuse could arrive. The city, which fell in only nine days, was sacked and destroyed, and its inhabitants sold as slaves. A later settlement, led by Hermocrates, a Syracusan exile, was dispersed by Carthage in 250 BC, and the population resettled at Lilybaeum. It is thought, however, that the utter destruction of every building, scarcely a single column being left upright, could also have been due to earthquakes. In fact, around and under the columns of Temple C are the ruins of a Byzantine settlement, and a later, Arab village called *Rahal al Asnaam*, or 'village of the columns', which must have been destroyed by an earthquake in the Middle Ages.

Temple E (490–480 BC), reconstructed in 1958, on the East Hill at Selinunte.





VILLA ROMANA DEL CASALE



- | | | | |
|-----------------------|-------------------------------|--------------------|------------------|
| 1 Monumental Entrance | 10 Room of the Small Hunt | 19 Latrine | 28 Antechamber |
| 2 Atrium | 11 Corridor of the Great Hunt | 20 Atrium | 29 Bedchamber |
| 3 Tablinum | 12 Anteroom | 21 Room of Anion | 30 Frigidarium |
| 4 Aedculum | 13 Room of the Ten Girls | 22 South vestibule | 31 Massage Room |
| 5 Small Latrine | 14 Music Room | 23 Bedchamber | 32 Tepidarium |
| 6 Circus Room | 15 Xystus | 24 North vestibule | 33 Caldarium |
| 7 Vestibule | 16 Cupids | 25 Bedchamber | 34 Aedculum |
| 8 Four Seasons | 17 Cupids | 26 Basilica | 35 Vestibule |
| 9 Cupids Fishing | 18 Triclinium | 27 Bedchamber | 36 Great Latrine |