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Chapter 5
The settlement pattern and material culture of the island of Naxos

5.1 THE NAXIAN LANDSCAPE

The island of Naxos (Fig. 5.1) belongs to the east central Cyclades and is located in the southern Aegean, approximately at an equal distance from mainland Greece, Asia Minor and Crete (Fig. 1.1). It lies east of Paros, approximately 103 nm southeast of the port of Piraeus and the capital city of Greece, Athens. The island’s central geographic position offers a unique horizon, since apart from the neighbouring islands of Paros, Iraklia, Schinoussa, Koufonissia, Keros, Antikeri, and Donousa, many other islands are visible from different places on Naxos ranging from Ikaria to Amorgos, and Andros to Melos (Fig. 2.1). The total surface of Naxos covers an area of approximately 430 km², placing it as the largest island among the Cyclades. It has an ellipsoid shape with its longest axis (NE-SW) measuring 33 km and its narrower axis (NW-SE) 25 km (Fig. 5.1).

In general, the island of Naxos definitely has a mountainous character. Its landscape is completely different compared to the neighbouring island of Paros. On Naxos an astonishing alternation of landscapes occurs, combining mountainous reliefs and flat zones with coastal sceneries and a wide range of geological formations. Mountainous villages, high mountaintops, barren and steep slopes, rocky shores, and caves alternate with torrents, gorges, deep lush river valleys with dense vegetation, fertile plateaus, few coastal settlements, sandy or pebbled beaches, and few shallow bays. Naxos has a good supply of water in a region where water is usually lacking.

Geologically, Naxos’s land morphology can be divided into: a) metamorphic rocks, mainly alternating marbles and schists occupying a major part of the island, b) granite or gneiss dominating the western section, and c) minor undifferentiated rocks (Jansen 1977; Leontaris 1994; Higgins & Higgins 1996, 177-180; Vasalakis & Voudouris 2006, 182, 188). Each of these formations creates diversified landscapes providing different conditions for plants so the vegetation differs a lot from one area to the other, mainly because of their respective water retention, erosion susceptibility and chemical composition (Renault-Miskovsky & Dalongeville 1994). In the regions where the bedrock is granite or slate the water doesn’t drain underground as it does in the areas with marble bedrock. In the region of Eggares igneous rocks can be found while abundant sources of marble and emery deposits dominate the northern, central and north-eastern parts of Naxos. Ancient marble quarries are located on Agios Ioannis hill in the north part of Naxos and near the ancient port of Apollonas, as well as in the region of Melanes, east of the ancient city. In addition, modern quarries are located near the village of Kinidaros in the central part of the island. Emery mines are found in the north-eastern mountainous side of Naxos, around the modern villages of Apeiranthos and Koronos.

Contrary to Paros, Naxos’s coastline is not as complex, forming only few significant bays or natural harbours and measuring approximately 148 km (Fig. 1.2). The island lacks many safe anchorages for vessels, with the exception of a few bays, the most important of which is the shallow bay of Apollonas in the northeast coast (providing safe anchorage from south-westerly winds) and the coves of Panormos and Kalantos on the southeast coast (protecting ships from northerly winds). As a result of this, islanders have never developed a close relationship with the sea compared to the island of Paros. Rocky coasts in low altitude or sheer marble cliffs occupy the largest part of the shoreline and are mainly located in the north, northwest, east and south parts of the island. This rough landscape is interrupted by a few scattered sandy or pebbled beaches and shallow bays. In contrast, Naxos’s west coastal zone is characterised by low land morphology with small
Fig. 5.1: Map of Naxos with regions and places discussed in the chapter.
Fig. 5.2: Aerial view of western lowland Naxos with regions discussed in the chapter.
promontories mainly consisting of granodiorite, and separated by sandy beaches. Almost the entire central and southern part of the west shoreline from Chora to Kastraki is a string of long, sandy beaches, unprotected, however, from the strong wind.

In terms of geomorphology, the island is divided into two parts: the relatively flat lowland Naxos on the western and southwestern side (Fig. 5.2) and the mountainous Naxos on the central, northern, eastern and southern part of the island (Fig. 5.3).

On the western coastal part of Naxos (Fig. 5.2), where the landscape is more gentle compared to the mountainous interior, are located some of the most extensive and fertile plains and valleys of the island. The flat area of Livadia is the largest coastal plain on the island, extending southeast of the present-day Chora (Fig. 5.4a). Two smaller coastal plains are also located further south of Chora in the regions of Plaka and Polichni (Fig. 5.4b). At Kechrees south of the village Tripodes is situated a small fertile low plateau. Farther inland, southeast of Chora and Tripodes, in the south-western part of Naxos is located the area of Saggri where mountains of the hinterland slope down, creating another relatively large fertile plain (Fig. 5.2). At Eggares north of Chora, is located another small plain within a green valley that carves the landscape from the mountainous interior to the coast (Fig. 5.2).

What, however, makes Naxos special among the Cyclades is its extensive, rich and well-protected mountainous hinterland with a wide range of geological formations covering almost 70% of the island's total surface (Fig. 5.3). The greatest part of the island from north to south is dominated by a mountain range, with the highest peaks being Mt Koronas (alt. 992 m) (Fig. 5.1), Mt Fanari (alt. 902 m) (Fig. 5.5a) and Mt Zas (alt. 1004 m) (Fig. 5.5b), which is the highest mountain top in the Cyclades. These mountains tend to trap the clouds, permitting greater rainfall. Within this mountain range, a variety of landscapes can be observed with a plethora of deep valleys, gorges, plateaus, rivers, steep and rocky slopes, and caves that have formed over the years, populated with endemic flora and fauna. Gentle valleys with olive groves, terraced vineyards and gardens with vegetables and trees of all varieties alternate with steep rugged mountain slopes, either barren or overgrown with oak forests or low bushes.
with natural springs, surrounded by plane trees and deep, fertile gorges. Several small or large fertile lands that are highly important for the sustainability of Naxos’s population are scattered around the Naxian landscape at different altitudes. Another characteristic of this deeply rugged mountainous landscape is that in the hidden valleys and plateaus between mountains one can almost forget the close proximity of the sea.

The eastern part (along the east shoreline) is occupied by steep rugged mountain slopes, barren or covered by low or sparse vegetation, deep gorges and very few small cultivated valleys, such as that of Apollonas and Lionas. Central Naxos is dominated by the extensive and fertile plateau of Tragea (about 300 to 400 m above sea level) bursting with all kinds of tress, many villages and large quantities of water that spill from the nearby

Fig. 5.4: a) Panoramic view of the coastal plain of Livadia. b) View of the coastal plain of Polichni. The island of Paros is in the background.
mountains. On the western side of mountainous Naxos there are lush green valleys watered from the springs, such as Melanes and Potamia (Fig. 5.6). The deep river valley of Kinidaros with remarkable dense vegetation is located north of Tragea’s plateau. Similar rivers flow in many other valleys north-west and north of Mt Koronos. In general, the eastern and southern parts of the island have an especially typical Cycladic landscape. In contrast, the northern and central parts of Naxos, from the regions of Apollon and Koronida to the area of Tragea resemble the mountainous landscapes of Crete and Mainland Greece.

The island has a Mediterranean type climate with wet winters and hot, dry summers (Psarra-Fotopoulou & Psarras 2006, 25). The mountainous hinterland gives the island higher amounts of rainfall than other Aegean Islands. The relief of Naxos with
a wide range of geological formations in connection with the extensive fertile lands and the climate conditions have diachronically inevitably influenced the residents’ occupations (agriculture and livestock farming), making Naxos the most productive island in the Cyclades.

Nowadays the capital and main port of Naxos is the coastal settlement of Chora, located on its west coast, while the island’s total population is approximately 19,000. Numerous villages and settlements of different sizes and character are scattered mainly around the mountainous hinterland such as Apiranthos, Melanes, Potamia, Chalki, Glinado, Koronida, Koronos, Damarionas and Filoti, and some along the coastline such as Chora and Apollonas. After the 1970s the island of Naxos experienced a significant development in tourism. However, in contrast with Paros, most of the island’s tourism concentrates in the very limited region of the south-western part of the island around the area of Chora and the sandy beaches of Agios Prokopios, Agia Anna and Mikri Vigla. As a result of this, tourism development heavily impacted this coastal landscape. In contrast, in the hinterland and the eastern part of Naxos, due to the steepness of the landscape, the impact of tourism is much smaller. Nevertheless, intensive and durable exploitation of marble and emery has played an important role in modifying the landscape; especially in the wider area of Kinidaros where modern mining activity has produced a lot of “scars” on the mountainous relief of Naxos.

The island of Naxos was divided into five regions concerning the localised environmental advantages of the Naxian landscape and the density of archaeological evidence, in order to provide the basis upon which settlement patterning and material culture from Late Antiquity and Byzantine Early Ages can be studied and interpreted (Fig. 5.7).

5.2 THE REGION OF CHORA: A DIACHRONIC AEGEAN COASTAL URBAN CENTRE

5.2.1 Landscape and micro-topography

The region of Chora is located almost in the middle of the island’s west shore (Figs 5.2 & 5.7: I). This coastal zone is characterised by low land morphology with a few hills and several small promontories mainly consisting of granodiorite and alluvium, separated by long sandy beaches.

The region’s most advantageous location is situated at the site of the present-day Chora of Naxos, the island’s only urban centre since antiquity (Figs 5.8 & 5.9). The site’s most important topographical reference point is the slightly elevated hill of Kastro close to the sea which overlooks the modern port, the flat interior of the region and the north entrance of the naval channel between Paros and Naxos (Fig.
5.9). On the northern side of the modern port is situated, very close to the Chora of Naxos, the small islet of Palatia, which is connected to the rest of the island via a narrow and low strip of land. The site is also known as “Portara” (large doorway), named by the huge marble doorway which is the only standing element remaining from the archaic temple of Apollo. The coastal zone northeast of Kastro is dominated by a low rocky hill, called Aplomata (Fig. 5.10). During antiquity a stream flowed between the hill of Kastro and the hill of Aplomata, but likely did not have continuous water flow all year round.

The region of Chora is adjacent to the large fertile coastal plain of Livadia, a rural space of vital importance for the ancient city’s agricultural production and food supply, which dominates this micro-topography (Fig. 5.4a). The plain of Livadia occupies an extensive area from Chora to the modern villages of Agkidia in the east, Galanado and Glinado in the southeast and Agios Arsenios in the south (Fig. 5.8). Nowadays, the plain is intensively cultivated mainly with grain for animal fodder and with potatoes, which play a fundamental role for the local economy.

South of Chora the rocky promontory of Stelida (alt. 151 m) is located between the shallow bays of Agios Georgios and Agia Anna. The bay of Agios Georgios is a coastal zone forming three concave sandy beaches separated by a small headland and sheltered from an islet, called Manto and a partially merged reef. South of the bay, in the area called Alikes west of the modern airport of Naxos there is a rectangular low-lying alluvial plain filled with lagoonal deposits. The bay of Agia Anna consists of two concave sandy beaches (Agios Prokopios and Agia Anna) whilst further south a relatively straight long sandy beach up to the area of Plaka begins, measuring approximately 4 km in length. Despite the formation of the small bays along this coastal zone, the harbour is not safe or well-protected from the winds even today, as the modern port of Chora is only accessible to ships depending on weather conditions.

The gentle morphology and typical Cycladic landscape of the Chora region attracted the major wave of tourism development on the island of Naxos. As a result, the coastal landscape, especially along the shoreline, has been strongly affected and
its character changed in many ways. Over the recent decades the settlement of Chora functions as an administrative centre and capital of the Municipality of Naxos and the Small Cyclades, and the main passenger and commercial port on the island. The urban built-up area and the population of Chora have almost doubled. Fortunately, the core of the Late Medieval town of Kastro has maintained a traditional and picturesque character. In contrast, the modern extensions of the present-day town have built over the areas of Grotta, Plithos and Aplomata, where important ruins from different periods were discovered, drastically changing the landscape. Along the seafront and terrestrial part of the coastal zone of Agios Georgios, Agios Prokopios, Agia Anna and Stelida hill constructions of all sorts have contributed to the alteration of the local coastal and rural landscape. As has been observed in many places on the neighbouring island of Paros, a new coastal landscape is created over recent years dominated by numerous blocks of modern private residences and touristic facilities.

5.2.2 The ancient city of Naxos: a brief history of research and a historical background

In earlier stages of research regarding the archaeology of Naxos, the coastal area of Chora, and more specifically, the remains of the ancient city were at the centre of attention. The earliest excavation report regarding archaeological researches on the island of Naxos was published by P. Kallivoursis in 1871. In this report the local doctor presented the results of a brief excavation at the temple of Apollo on the islet of Palatia (Kallivoursis 1871). Later in 1924, G. Welter continued excavations at the same site intending to clarify the architectural history of the temple. In this context, he discovered that the pagan temple was converted into a Christian church sometime during the 5th or 6th century (Welter 1924, 17-22).

During the second half of the 20th century the Archaeological Society at Athens undertook systematic archaeological researches in the region of Chora (see Sfyroera 2007, 196 with further bibliography). A large scale excavation began east of the islet of Palatia, along the coastline of Grotta, on the adjacent hills of Aplomata and Kamini as well as in the Metropolis Square by N. Kontoleon from 1949 until his death in 1974, and continued by V. Lambrinoudakis between 1976 and 1996 under the sponsorship of the Archaeological Society (Kontoleon 1950; 1951; 1954; 1960a; 1961; 1963; 1965; 1967; 1969; 1970; Lambrinoudakis 1974; 1976; 1977; 1978; 1979; 1980; 1981; 1982; 1984; 1985; 1988; 1991; Lambrinoudakis & Zafeiropoulou 1983; 1984; 1985; 1994). They revealed extensive architectural remains of an important fortified urban centre which flourished on the west coast of Naxos during the Mycenaean period (Vlachopoulos 1999; Lambrinoudakis & Filaniotou-Hadjianastasiou 2001). However, what is more important for our research is that Lambrinoudakis identified and recorded architectural remains from the Roman and Late Antique city of Naxos.

Over the recent three decades mostly rescue and secondary systematic excavations, and restoration works carried out by the Ephorate of Antiquities for the Cyclades (former 21st Ephorate of Prehistoric and Classical Antiquities and 2nd Ephorate of Byzantine Antiquities) in the area of Chora have discovered important remains of the ancient city enlarging our knowledge about the Late Antique and the Byzantine Early Middle Ages (annual archaeological reports in Archaiologikon Deltion; Sfyroera 2007, 196-197 with further bibliography). Despite the fact that the vast majority of the excavated sites have been covered by modern residences and only a small part of the relevant archaeological material has been preliminarily published, the results of the continuous archaeological research in Chora provide us with a concrete picture of the changes in this coastal urban centre from the Late Roman period to Early Middle Ages.

In the periphery of Chora, between 1986 and 1998 joint systematic excavations of the Department of Archaeology of the University of Athens and the Munich Polytechnic University directed by Lambrinoudakis and Gruben brought to light the architectural remains of the rural pagan temple of Dionysus at Yria southeast of the Chora region, within the Livadia plain (Lambrinoudakis et al. 1987; Lambrinoudakis & Gruben 1987-1988; Lambrinoudakis 1992). After years of archaeological research the site was donated to the public between 1992-1996 at the discretion of the University of
Athens in collaboration with the Ministry of Culture and the Ministry of Aegean along with the support of the University of Munich. The temple at Yria is another example of the pagan sanctuary on Naxos that was converted into a Christian church during the Late Antique period (Lambertz 2001; Deligiannakis 2011).

Additionally, excavations and restoration works have been undertaken by the former 2nd Ephorate of Byzantine Antiquities at the ruins of the Early Christian basilica at Agkidia east of the modern urban plan of Chora (AD 2005, 945-947; AD 2006, 1113). The site was included in the large project concerning the restoration and the preservation of the ancient Aqueduct of Flerio (Sfyroera & Lambrinoudakis 2010, 27-28). Finally, a wide variety of studies from various fields, such as architecture, archaeology, sculpture, pottery, history etc. have been published by many scholars to this today.

In terms of habitation patterns, the earliest traces of human activity in the area of present-day Chora and its periphery have recently been discovered on the low hill of Stelida promontory dated to the Middle and Upper Palaeolithic period (Carter et al. 2014). Important remains from the Early Cycladic era have been unearthed in the areas of Palatia, Grotta, and Aplomata, near the modern port of Chora (for an overview on the Prehistory of Naxos see in Filaniotou 2006). Later in the Mycenaean period, and more specifically during the 12th and at the turn of the 11th century B.C. a large coastal settlement flourished on the west shore of Naxos. The Mycenaean urban centre covered an area of approximately 35,000 m² extending over the western part of Grotta up to the islet of Palatia to the west, the Metropolis Square to the south and a torrent channel to the east. It was an important city with harbour installations and other public works, secure defences, a defined residential area, organised workshops and delimited cemeteries on the adjacent hills of Aplomata and Kamini (Vlachopoulos 1999; Lambrinoudakis & Filaniotou-Hadjianastasiou 2001). At the end of the 2nd millennium the coastal area of Grotta was progressively abandoned and this specific region remained uninhabited for a long period of time until the Roman period (Lambrinoudakis 2006). The former flourishing settlement was now confined to the low hill of Kastro. Thus, for approximately 1000 years Grotta’s coastal zone was used as a burial site and progressively as a place of worship of ancestors, but not as a place of permanent habitation (Lambrinoudakis 2006, 65-66; for latest finds regarding the Geometric burials in the area of Grotta see AD 2009, 883-885). In early historical times a tumulus was formed in the area, marking the importance of the site as a sacred place for the local community.

From the Late Geometric and Archaic periods, the island of Naxos was progressively organised as a typical Cycladic city-state, and the city of Naxos started to play a fundamental role in the island’s economy (Lambrinoudakis 2013, 100). The urban area’s progressive enlargement is recorded by the sporadic archaeological evidence. The shrunken defensive settlement on the hill of Kastro developed into an important coastal urban centre in the Aegean Archipelago. The urban plan was extended again along the north coastal zone of the present-day Chora around the hill of Kastro, especially in the area of Mesa Grotta (Inner part of Grotta today located less than 100 m south of the shoreline). However, the largest part along Grotta’s shoreline still remained out of the urban planning while part of it had been submerged into the sea.

Unfortunately, architectural traces of these periods are very fragmentary preserved and the plan of the city is only partially known. The lack of detailed knowledge of the urban organisation does not allow for the identification of the exact location of the most important public buildings, with the exception of the Hellenistic Agora. The town centre was, probably, located in the area of the modern Metropolis Square where a few parts of porticos from a public structure have been excavated and identified as the Hellenistic Agora of Naxos. A limited picture about the plan of the city over the course of historical times is also provided by a number of unspecified buildings, fragmentary excavated domestic and artisanal structures, and roads and sewage systems mainly dated to the Hellenistic period (Zafeiropoulou 2006, 85).

Until now, no archaeological remains of ancient harbour installations have been identified along the coastline of the modern town of Chora. However, the existence of port infrastructures associated with the ancient city of Naxos is attested by the written sources. The Stadiasmus of Maris Magni, which lists the harbours of the Mediterranean Sea and their
distance in *stadia* from main harbours or landmarks, among others counts the distance between the ports of Delos and Naxos (Müller 1855, 500). *Stadiasmus* is probably dated to the 3rd or 4th century despite the fact that its anonymous author obtains information from various ancient sources (Arnaud 2005, 212-214). Additionally, in the Medieval period a number of cartographers of the 15th and the 16th centuries, such as Cristoforo Buondelmonti, Bartolommeo dalli Sonetti, Benedetto Bordone and Piri Reis, mapped important elements of the port that connected with the Venetian Kastro of Naxos, which have left no structural traces (Belavilas 2004). Finally, according to a palaeogeographical reconstruction of the western part of Naxos Island, the large shallow bay of Agios Georgios, which is adjacent to the region of the ancient city to the south, was probably used as a harbour during antiquity. It was protected by an elongated coastline, which extended almost parallel to the present-day shore and formed an active lagoon (Evelpidou et al. 2012).

5.2.3 The Roman and Late Antique city of Naxos: a changing townscape

Writing about the Late Antique city of Naxos poses many major obstacles. Primarily, the continuous use of the settlement up to the present day and the intensive modern building activity over the last five decades destroyed many of the ancient city’s remains. In the area of Kastro, where the ancient acropolis was located, the construction of the Late Medieval town of Chora at the beginning of the 13th century by Marco I Sanudo destroyed almost any trace of the previous periods (Fig. 5.9). Furthermore, the city of Naxos is barely mentioned in the available literary sources of Late Antiquity while epigraphic witnesses remain very limited. In this respect, once again archaeological research becomes the major source of information and the basic interpretation process for piecing together all the fragmentary material traces. Despite obstacles, a combination of data derived from rescue or systematic excavations give us a general picture of the changing townscape in the ancient city of Naxos from Roman period to Late Antiquity.

In contrast with the paucity of architectural remains of the previous historical periods, the Roman Imperial times and especially the Late Antique centuries are represented in abundance (Fig. 5.11). The results of the aforementioned research revealed clear traces of important building activity in the city of Naxos, which resulted in dramatic changes in the ancient urban landscape. Archaeological data shows clear evidence of a re-organisation and enlargement of the urban tissue during the Roman period and Late Antiquity. This process started sometime in the 2nd and the 3rd centuries and continued with more intensity during the 4th century.

Traces of redefinition of the ancient urban planning with clear evidence of gradual privatisation of the public space are observed in the wider area of Mesa Grotta, especially in the civic centre of the Hellenistic city of Naxos. In the area of Mesa Grotta, north of the Metropolis Square and less than 90 m from the shoreline, the architectural remains of the Hellenistic Agora from the city of Naxos were unearthed. Unfortunately, due to modern building activity and the numerous properties fragmenting the excavation area into small pieces, it took more than 60 years for archaeologists to complete the rescue excavations in different periods of time (Kontoleon 1965, 176-182; 1967, 119-123; 1969, 141-145; 1970, 152-155; Lambrinoudakis 1979, 249-251; 1988, 208-218; 1989, 208-219; 1991, 257-261). This situation raises doubts regarding the fragmentary nature of the material collected by three different archaeologists, especially the pottery. Nevertheless, despite obstacles and the fact that the architectural remains are covered by modern residences, we have

It seems that over the course of the Roman Imperial period the Agora progressively ceased to serve the public needs of the local community and as a result started a process of urban space privatisation. According to Lambrinoudakis, this public space was gradually occupied by humble structures, possibly, private houses (1979, 251; 1988, 213-218; 1991, 257-266). However, pottery and architectural evidence suggests a possible reconstruction of some porticos in the Roman Imperial centuries and presumably the Agora did not completely lose its public function during this period (Müller 2003, 42-47; Le Quéré 2013, 91-92). Nevertheless, archaeological evidence suggests that from the 4th century the Ancient Agora’s former public area, which was the most vital space for the economic and political activities of the ancient urban environments, was completely transformed into a residential quarter for the Late Antique city of Naxos (Kontoleon 1967, 122-123; 1969, 145; 1970, 155; Lambrinoudakis 1979, 251; 1988, 213-218; 1991, 257-266). The phenomenon of the urban public spaces dissolving is observed in many cities of the Aegean world (see more information regarding the process of public space privatisation in Saradi 2006, 186-207). From the 4th century onwards the Agora of Naxos was initially occupied by humble domestic structures and progressively over the course of Late Antiquity by more lavish private houses, which were illuminated with lamps imported from many Mediterranean workshops (Bournias 2014, 791).

Apart from the civic centre, evidence of urban plan redefinition has been observed in the residential districts of the Hellenistic city. Newly-built domestic structures dated to the 4th century have been unearthed, not only in the wider area of Mesa Grotta around the Hellenistic Agora, but also in the modern regions of Plithos (AD 1986, 241; AD 1987, 493; AD 1988, 494-495) and Katsarga (AD 1988, 493, fig.12), two relatively flat areas southwest of Aplomata hill and southeast of Kastro.

As is mentioned above, in the case of Naxos apart from the re-organisation of the ancient urban network we can trace clear evidence of the expansion of the built up areas along Grotta’s coastal zone (Kontoleon 1972; Lambrinoudakis 1978, 211-217; 1979, 251; 1980, 259-262; 1981, 293-294; 1982, 253-255) and the adjacent hill of Aplomata (Kontoleon 1960a, 258-259; 1961, 194-200; 1969, 140-141; 1970, 146-152; Lambrinoudakis 1976, 298-299; 1993, 162-163; 1994, 171-172). These regions, as is the case of Kastro in the present-day Parikia of Paros, constitute an interesting archaeological palimpsest providing a picture of the landscape as a continuously changing cultural product of human-environmental relationships. This micro-landscape played an important role in the development of the urban centre of Naxos and has been strongly affected by human activity since the prehistoric period.

Thus, from a flourishing urban environment in the Mycenaean period with a large cemetery in the Aplomata hill the coastal zone of Grotta transformed over the course of the historical times into an open air sacred space closely connected with the nearby ancient city of Naxos. This implies the area remained uninhabited and the local natural environment, which was strongly affected by previous intensive human activity, was largely restored, as human presence was only limited to small-scale activities. However, in the beginning of the Late Roman period a dramatic change occurred with the rapid urbanisation of this small area. After long use as a sacred place, it lost its particular ideological and symbolic significance for the local community and was progressively occupied by private residences (Lambrinoudakis 2006, 76-77; forthcoming). Grotta and Aplomata hill became parts of the townscape as coastal suburbs (Figs 5.10 & 5.11). In terms of stratigraphy, in most cases the Roman or Late Roman architectural remains lie on a backfill layer covering the Mycenaean antiquities. However, in many cases the prehistoric layers have been disturbed by some Late Antique structure’s deep foundations. The latter have been disturbed by a large number of later simple tombs dated to the 14th century, which covered the coastal zone of Grotta and Aplomata (Lambrinoudakis 1978, 211, 214).

Enlargement and renewal of urban areas is not a consistent pattern across the Aegean world, as most of the cities show traces of economic vitality on the one hand, and reduction in size on the other. The cities of Hyetos and Thespia in Boeotia (Central Greece) for example, shrank dramatically by Late Antiquity (Bintliff et al. 2000; Bintliff & Snodgrass
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1988b; Bintliff 2014b). Even the city of Corinth, a provincial capital of great importance, shrunk during Late Antiquity compared to its large size during previous periods (Slane & Sanders 2005). However, enlargement of the urban areas is not an unknown phenomenon in the wider Mediterranean world, as is recorded, probably, in the case of the nearby ancient city of Melos which shows evidence of possible expansion of the town planning beyond its previous limits, (Renfrew & Wagstaff 1982, 145) and with more certainty, in several North African coastal cities (see more details about the Late Antique cites of North Africa in Leone 2007). Construction of new houses and enlargement of the urban areas are recorded in some North African cities, such as Pupput and Thuburbo Maius (both located on or close to the coast; Leone 2007, 48-50). This change of urban space had started from the late 2nd century and continued into the 4th century, as is also observed in the case of Naxos. According to Leone, this situation can be explained either as a need to recreate a regular urban network with the erection of new houses in the centre of the cities or as a desire for aristocracies to have a larger space for building luxurious domestic structures in regions beyond the previous urban limits (2007, 47-49). However, the pattern of urban renewal from the end of the 2nd century is not consistent across North Africa (Leone 2007, 50-51). In other cities in the area the shrinking process had already started by the 4th century.

The different residential districts of the Roman and Late Antique city of Naxos were interlinked with a complex network of streets. In the area of Mesa Grotta the remains of a street which measured 3 m in width were unearthed (Lambrinoudakis 1978, 215; 1996, 259-260). The street connected the top of the hill of Aplomata with the lower part of the city in the area of the stream (NW-SE orientation). Remains of houses were discovered along the north side of the street close to the stream, dating from the Hellenistic till the Late Antique period. The streets were accompanied by a complex system of double or single sewage drain pipes.

Regarding domestic architecture on Naxos, it is worth mentioning that the material is not only fragmentary preserved and excavated, as in many cases only a few walls of houses have been unearthed (Lambrinoudakis & Zafeiropoulou 1982, 261; 1983, 299-301), but is also preliminary published in the form of brief archaeological reports. Thus, at the moment, it is hard to acquire a better understanding of how domestic architecture was used in order to provide a more comprehensive view of housing in the Late Antique city of Naxos. For these reasons it is also not possible to identify a common typology or trend in the plans of the houses. Nonetheless, general observations can be made, since different types of houses reveal different social identities.

Excavations at the site of Aplomata have revealed the architectural remains of a relatively large wealthy mansion decorated with mosaic pavement (today in the Archaeological Museum of Naxos) and frescoes with figure patterns (Kontoleon 1961, 196-200, pl.151-153; 1963, 153-155; Lambrinoudakis 1993, 162-163; 1994, 171-172). At least eight spaces have been unearthed in very poor conservation status, probably belonging to the same structure. This aristocratic house was constructed with rubble masonry at different levels because of the relief’s inclination. The largest space was recognised as courtyard (Kontoleon 1961, 197-198), thus it is possible the residence belonged to the luxurious peristyle type of villas. Houses of this type had a complex ground plan consisting of a courtyard with a portico on all sides, surrounded by chambers of different sizes and functions. The most prominent and sizeable of them were decorated with mosaics and wall-paintings functioning as private audience chambers, receptions and dining rooms, the triclinia (for a bibliographical overview see Uytterhoeven 2007a, 41-43). It is quite possible the room with the rich decoration from the town house of Naxos might have functioned as a reception or dining room. On the basis of the mosaic pavement’s stylistic and iconographic analysis, the initial phase of this lavish urban house on Naxos can be dated to the 4th century (Kontoleon 1961, 198-199).

The mosaic with the theme from pagan iconography (Nereid riding a sea-bull) indicates the strong survival of pagan culture in the city of Naxos, at least until the 4th century (Fig. 5.12) (Lambrinoudakis 2006, 76-77). On the other hand, the construction of large richly decorated private town houses reflects the existence of local urban aristocracy. Luxurious urban villas were used by the members of Late Antiquity’s local elites to promote their social and economic
superiority, showing off their status and wealth to the lower classes, who according to Uytterhoeven, were economically, politically and socially bound to them (2007a, 41-43). During the Late Roman period, the construction of *villas* was a common characteristic in many urban centres of the Aegean world (see for an overview see in Bintliff 2012b, 369-371). Aplomata must have been attractive as luxurious residential quarter in the Late Roman city, since the landscape is characterised by a slightly elevated hill offering a nice view of the sea, port and islet of Palatia (Fig. 5.10). The owner of this Naxian urban villa could have been a rich landowner with large properties in the adjacent large fertile coastal plain of Livadia, or merchant involved in exporting local products.

Apart from the luxurious urban *villa* in Naxos an important number of various smaller and simpler houses has been discovered. The picture emerging from the excavations is much more fragmented, despite the fact the majority of the architectural remains from the Late Antique city can be classified into this general group. Complete plans of the houses have not been published, as only few rooms have been excavated, the majority of them of unspecified use. The examples in this group are characterised by heterogeneity. Nevertheless, they have some common features such as the simple architectural style compared with the more lavish style of the aristocratic architecture, the relatively poor decoration and the occupation of restricted space (see for a bibliographical overview in Uytterhoeven 2007a, 43-44). They consisted of clusters of small spaces used for various activities and have been discovered in the areas of Grotta, Plithos and Katsagia. The owners of these houses could be less wealthy aristocrats, craftsmen, and shopkeepers, or probably small landowners and peasants related to the exploitation of the fertile coastal plain that dominates environs of the ancient city.

The most characteristic examples come from the area of the present-day Metropolis Square. According to excavators, the upper layers of stratigraphy are dominated by a dense network of structures dating to the Late Antique centuries (Lambrinoudakis & Zafeiropoulou 1982, 261; 1983; 299-301; 1984, 315-316, 320-321; 1985, 163). The Late Antique layers lie directly on the Mycenaean, Geometric and Early Hellenistic antiquities discovered at the same site. Although many unspecified spaces and wells were unearthed, the large amounts of everyday domestic pottery allows for the identification of the area as an urban residential district (Lambrinoudakis & Zafeiropoulou 1982, 261). The very poor conservation status of the Late Antique walls, which are fragmentarily preserved up to the height of the foundations, does not allow for the identification of a common typology or trend in the house’s plans. Nevertheless, different construction phases have been recognised, while some walls reflect more lavish structures and others more humble houses.
Another characteristic example was discovered in the area of Mesa Grotta east of the Hellenistic Agora of Naxos, close to the present-day Metropolis Square (Kontoleon 1969, 145, fig.158β; Lambrinoudakis 1979, 249-251, fig.1). A complex cluster of spaces used for various purposes including artisanal activities was brought to light and was dated to the Classical period. Later, during the Roman Imperial times new simple structures with rubble stone masonry and stone-paved or pebble-paved floors were constructed on the ruins of the previous buildings. Some walls from the Classical structures were used as foundations for the new buildings whilst the later floors lie approximately 1 m higher than the ancient floors. The new complexes were destined for domestic use, and probably consisted of more than one house. On the basis of numismatic and ceramic evidence it is clear this block of houses was built sometime during the 3rd century (Lambrinoudakis 1979, 251).

The architectural remains of a Late Antique house were unearthed in the area of Katsagra (AD 1988, 493-494, fig.12, pl.299γ). Although only a few parts of the house were excavated, two construction phases were identified. In the latest phase underground storage facilities have been dated, these included earth floors in which large storage vessels (*pithoi*) were found *in situ*. The ceramic material consisted mostly of domestic pottery.

What is most important in the examples of both categories is that the vast majority of these domestic structures have produced evidence of long and continuous occupation (Lambrinoudakis forthcoming). Some spaces in the urban *villa* on Aplomata hill remained in use probably from the 4th till the middle 8th century, as indicated by numismatic evidence (Lambrinoudakis 1993, 162-163; see more in Chapter 5.2.6). The block of houses in the old urban area of Mesa Grotta was in use from the 3rd till the 7th centuries on the basis of numismatic and ceramic evidence (Lambrinoudakis 1979, 251). Study of the pottery material from the excavations of the Agora, mainly the lamps, suggests there was continuity in use of these structures from the 3rd to the 7th centuries (Bournias 2014). Thus, on the basis of numismatic and pottery evidence it is clear that most of the domestic structures of Late Antique city of Naxos were used for many centuries, surviving well until the beginning of the Byzantine Early Middle Ages. The total abandonment of some houses is dated sometime between the late 7th and middle 8th centuries.

Domestic architecture in many provinces of the Mediterranean world show evidence of a general trend to restore, refurbish or rebuild houses throughout Late Antiquity (for a bibliographical overview on urban housing in Late Antique Greece see Uytterhoeven 2007b, 68-69, 82; for North Africa see Leone 2007). In the case of Naxos, despite the poor conservation status of the preserved architectural remains, the aforementioned limitations of the publication of the excavation results, and the fact that research has been focused primarily on earlier antiquities, evidence of rebuilding, refurbishment or restoration during these centuries has been identified in the areas of the Metropolis Square (Lambrinoudakis & Zafeiropoulou 1982, 261; 1983, 299-301) and Katsagra (AD 1988, 493-494). The several construction phases, which were identified in many of these buildings, in conjunction with the large concentrations of domestic pottery, demonstrate a continuity of use of the area as a residential quarter until the 7th-8th centuries, with a clear trend to restore, refurbish, rebuild or, probably, a subdivision of houses throughout the centuries. Inevitably, the initial form of the structures could not remain unaffected during their long history and some changes took place in order to adopt the needs of each period from the 4th to the 8th century. Moreover, architectural aspects of the city continued to transform and adapt to the urban community’s needs.

In general terms, we can argue that domestic architectural remains uncovered in the city of Naxos from the Roman Imperial period to Late Antiquity, are characterised by a dense network of humble or lavish houses with irregular plan. The construction of the houses was so dense that there was no free space around them and in many cases the limits of property were unclear. Despite changes, archaeological evidence suggests the Late Antique city of Naxos was still keeping urban planning under control by trying to maintain a regular organisation with public paved streets, sewage systems, new residential areas, and workshop installations. In the beginning of Late Antiquity, a new larger city emerged with a new style...
of architecture and town planning very distinctive from those of its ancient predecessors. After the building activity in the 4th century the new urban areas remained occupied, showing a general trend to restore, rebuild or refurbish houses.

An unusual characteristic of the Late Antique city of Naxos is the absence, at the moment, of secure evidence for newly built Christian churches within the urban network, especially after the 5th-6th centuries. Not only does this contradict other Cycladic urban centres, such as Paros, Melos, Thera, and Andros, but also the remainder of the island. Although it is a temporary research gap, it indicates a different urban pattern of the Late Antique town of Naxos compared to the city of Paros, where the new urban planning was centred around the monumental religious complex of Ekatontapiliani, which emerged as the urban landscape’s main landmark from the 6th century onwards (see Chapter 4).

The only case of a Christian church in the area of the ancient city of Naxos is the conversion of the large Archaic temple of Apollo on the small islet of Palatia in the harbour of Naxos (Welter 1924; Kontoleon 1954, 338; 1960b, 468-469; Ekschmitt 1993, 264-270; Deligiannakis 2011, 332 with n. 62). Although in terms of topography, the temple was slightly out of the urban tissue, it can be seen as part of the wider urban environment because of its close proximity to the city (Figs 5.11 & 5.13). During Late Antiquity the pagan temple was converted into a spacious Christian church. It has the architectural layout of a three-aisled “cella-basilica” with narthex (Welter 1924, 22; Kontoleon 1960b, 468-472). The basilica was created within the temple’s cella and measured 37,42x 15,96 m. The church’s internal arrangement is not clear as all its remains were removed during modern times. The rows of columns were probably maintained, dividing the interior space into three aisles. In the east part of the edifice, between the cella and the opisthonaos, a semi-circular inscribed apse was constructed. The intercolumniations of the prostyle were blocked by walls and the west part of the earlier building served as the basilica’s narthex. The church’s floor, which was paved with marble architectural members, was 1,38 m below the temple’s original floor level. According to Welter, the conversion of the temple into a Christian basilica is dated presumably during the 5th century (1924, 21-22).

This temple conversion reflects a process of redefining and Christianising the landscape. It also demonstrates the growing wealth and prestige of the local Church in the 5th and 6th centuries. The same process is also observed in the periphery of the city, as is demonstrated below (see Chapter 5.2.4). The temple’s unique position close to the port area, which overlooks the maritime channel between Naxos and Paros, its large dimensions, and its function as main landmark visible almost from any corner of the city must have been attractive elements for the Christians. In addition, visitors landing at the port of Naxos would sense the Christian presence of the city as they approached.

Apart from the temple conversion, the possible existence of Christian churches in the Late Antique city of Naxos is indicated by a number of epigraphic and sculptural evidence. More specifically, an interesting inscription, which found accidentally in the area of the modern Chora and is now housed in the local Archaeological Museum, provides information about two churches. According to Kiourtzian, it is dated to the 5th or 6th century and served as a boundary between the areas belonging to two churches, one dedicated to the archangel Michael and the other to a today unknown saint, the Saint Apikrantios (2000, 100-101 with n. 29). These churches are totally unknown by other types of sources and we ignore their exact position.

Additionally, an indirect evidence for the existence of more religious monuments in the area of Chora comes from a small number of marble sculptures, mainly closure slabs, which have been incorporated into later structures. The most characteristic example comes from a later workshop in the area of Grotta. A marble closure
slab from an ambo which bears the inscription: “+ ὑπὲρ εὐχῆς Ἀνδρέου” was re-used for the construction of a basin (Lambrinoudakis 1981, 293, pl.200β; Jacobs 1987, 279-280; Kiourtzian 2000, 102; Mitsani 2006, 83). On the basis of stylistic and iconographic similarities, the example from Naxos has been regarded as a product of the same workshop that carved the templon’s closure slabs in the main church of Ekatontapiliani on the neighbouring island of Paros, dating to the middle 6th century (Mitsani 2006). A second unpublished fragmentary preserved closure slab with similar decoration is now housed in the archaeological Museum of Naxos (Mitsani 2006, 83-84 with n. 37).

5.2.4 The periphery of the ancient city of Naxos

This section discusses three regions of vital importance for the ancient city of Naxos which surround the urban centre and constitute its periphery: the mountainous region of Melanes, the large coastal plain of Livadia and the area of Agkidia (Fig. 5.8). The study of the material culture from these rural areas with distinct landscape character significantly expands our knowledge of the urban centre of Naxos during Late Antiquity and of the function of the space surrounding it. Since antiquity all of these regions were culturally and economically associated with the urban centre of Naxos, and constituted diachronically rural spaces of great importance for agricultural production as well as food and water supply of the city. As evidenced by the examination of the material culture, there are clear traces of strong bonds between the city of Naxos and its periphery during Late Antiquity. This chapter aims to illustrate some important aspects of this relationship from the 4th to the early 8th centuries.

The Aqueduct of Flerio (Melanes)

The area of Melanes is located a few kilometres east of Chora (Fig. 5.8) and constitutes a mountainous landscape with a wide range of geological formations, small village communities, gorges, fertile basins, deep lush river valleys with dense vegetation, and rich water springs. It contains the modern villages of Agios Thaleleos, Melanes, Kournochori and Mili. Due to its mineral wealth consisting of rich marble deposits and the abundance of water resources, Melanes emerged as an extremely important region for the interests of the urban centre of Naxos since antiquity. In economic terms, the exploitation of the marble from the ancient quarries of Flerio (east of the village of Mili), which was very famous in the Greek world during the 7th and 6th centuries B.C., contributed to the island’s financial growth.

However, the region’s most valuable natural resource was the extremely rich water sources which proved diachronically a key element for the sustainability of the urban population. During antiquity the impact of water management in urban contexts was of vital importance for the sustainability of the ancient cities, affecting the size and density of urban populations. The location of the ancient city of Naxos lacked abundant water resources. The surface hydrology of the area over which the urban centre was developed could cover only a small part its population’s need in water supplies, as only a few streams flowed periodically and large quantities of water went down to the sea. Although excavations in Chora unearthed an important number of wells along the banks of the stream that crosses the area between the hills of Kastro and Aplomata to gather water, it seems that at a very early stage the need for a more effective solution to overcome the problem of water supply appeared (Sfyroera 2013, 127). The need for extra water led the city to look for a suitable water source, not too far away, at the right level and of good quality, in order to transport water through an ambitious engineering project to the urban centre. In the west of central Naxos the wider area of Melanes was the closest region to the ancient city with an abundance of natural water resources. Thus, in order to overcome this critical problem an aqueduct was constructed in the late 6th century B.C., conveying water from the distant springs of Flerio and the adjacent valley of Kamiones into the city of Naxos (Fig. 5.14).

The so-called aqueduct of Flerio was a large-scale water management project and one of the most impressive public works ever built in the Cyclades. The Archaic aqueduct was a pipeline
11 km long constructed of ceramic pipes which followed an artificial ditch. Several small-scale restorations of the tubes were conducted during the Archaic and Classical periods (Sfyroera 2013, 129). At a second stage in the 1st century A.D., a radical reconstruction of the aqueduct took place. The pipeline was replaced by a masonry channel with waterproof plaster, which however, followed the initial course of the Archaic period. At a last stage, probably during the 4th century, the aqueduct underwent one more long-scale refurbishment (Fig. 5.15). The first Roman channel was replaced by a similar stone-built new one, running on or near the line of the former one (Lambrinoudakis 2007, 1; Sfyroera & Lambrinoudakis 2010, 9; Sfyroera 2013, 130). Ceramic evidence found at the entrance and exit of the tunnel in Flerio suggests the last phase of aqueduct remained in function until the 8th century (Lambrinoudakis 2007, 1). Aqueducts of this kind were usually used to supply communal drinking fountains within the urban centres. It makes sense to assume that the aqueduct of Naxos was connected with a number of fountains within the urban tissue. The present-day Trani Fountana in Chora could have been the end of the aqueduct in Roman times (Sfyroera 2013, 131). It is a relatively large cistern which is marked on the maps of many cartographers of the 15th and 16th centuries (Belavilas 2004).

The technical difficulty of this project is apparent as evidenced by the 220 m tunnel which was dug through the mountain between Flerio and Kapones in order to tap a source in the latter area. However, the technical features of this infrastructure are beyond the scope of this work. What is most important for this research is to integrate this public infrastructure into the historical context of the city of Naxos during Late Antiquity and the Byzantine Early Middle Ages, providing important economic, cultural and social evidence not only for the urban centre but also for the surrounding rural environment.

Apart from its great importance in technological and architectural terms, the aqueduct of Flerio can tell us a different story since it reflects aspects of the history of the urban centre of Naxos and its periphery during the periods in question. The aqueduct of
Flerio as a large-scale public project, designed, financed and built by the city, must be studied in close connection with the evolutions which occurred in the urban centre of Naxos during the periods in question. As is mentioned above, it has been demonstrated that there was continuity of use of this structure with many restorations and reconstructions from the Archaic period until the Byzantine Early Middle Ages (Lambrinoudakis 2007, 1; Sfyroera & Lambrinoudakis 2010, 9; Sfyroera 2013). All the decisions for restoration and refurbishment of the aqueduct were made and financed by the city, reflecting a diachronic special care to improve the efficiency of this structure which emerged as a durable key element for the sustainability and economic growth of the urban centre.

Focusing on the periods in question, the large-scale rebuilding and the subsequent refurbishment of the aqueduct in two phases during the Roman and Late Roman centuries can have multiple readings concerning the local urban community. First of all, the radical reconstruction of the aqueduct in the 1st century apparently reflects an attempt to improve quality of life in the Naxian urban centre. In this respect, we can argue that this long distance water supply system has significantly contributed to the process of urban expansion of the city of Naxos, the first traces of which have been recognised by excavations in the 2nd century. Additionally, it suggests an active insular urban community which was able to design, finance and implement a very expensive, ambitious and challenging public project, especially during a period that has been considered by most scholars as a general decline for the Cyclades. According to Sfyroera, the construction of an expensive public project on such a small island possibly attracted funds from both the emperor and local aristocracy (2013, 130 with n. 15). Finally, on a rather different note, this reconstruction reflects not only an important technological change in the aqueduct technology during the Roman period (from pipelines to masonry channels), but also indicates an “open” local community interacting with broader words and well-informed about the new technological evolutions in the Empire.

In this context, regarding the second phase of the aqueduct’s radical refurbishment during the 4th century we can trace the large impact of water management in an urban context on the Late Antique city of Naxos. A combination of evidence from the aqueduct with excavation data from the urban area discussed above indicates an association between the operation of this large scale public work and the re-organisation and enlargement of the town planning which occurred during the 4th century. In other words, the refurbishment of the water supply system was most likely necessary in order to cover the increasing needs of a coastal insular urban centre which was in an ongoing process of expansion. Once again, the diachronic special care of the urban community for water management is reflected in this public infrastructure. During the 4th century the city of Naxos was still able to construct large-scale public works seeking the improvement in quality of everyday life. Moreover, the communal care to...
improve the quality of life of the urban population is also attested by the complex sewage systems in the public roads through which waste was removed, keeping the town clean and free from effluent.

The continuous and uninterrupted function of the aqueduct over the course of the Late Antique centuries in combination with the long use of the urban domestic structures, indicate that the city of Naxos not only maintained its urban character, but was also populated by a significant number of inhabitants. The use of the aqueduct until at least the turbulent late 7th and early 8th century suggests that the city of Naxos survived well into the beginning of the Byzantine Early Middle Ages. The same picture emerges from the excavation results from some urban houses which, as is mentioned above, were still occupied until the 7th or 8th centuries. The total abandonment of the aqueduct reflects the radical changes in the urban environment of Naxos and the wider Aegean context. Possibly, this evolution is connected with a major shift in the settled landscape from the coastal urban centre of Naxos to the fortified castle of Apaliou (Kastro Apaliou) in the interior of the western part of the island during the Early Byzantine centuries (see more in Chapter 5.3.9). However, as is mentioned below, the abandonment of the aqueduct does not mean total abandonment of the coastal settlement which most probably shrank in size, and lost its urban status and its importance as the cultural, political and economic centre of Naxos (see more in Chapter 5.2.6).

On the other hand, the impact of water management is not only obvious in urban contexts but also in the rural sphere. Agricultural exploitation requires good water supplies and irrigation systems. According to Sfyroera, the aqueduct of Flerio had a dual function, since it was also used for the irrigation of the productive zones along the course of the water channel (2013, 127). Thus, local agricultural exploitation benefited from the aqueduct, as run-off channels were created to provide water for land irrigation. However, due to the vital importance of the water supply for the survival of the urban centre, it is considered that the management of water for irrigation followed strict rules and regulations (Sfyroera 2013, 127).

A closer look at the region’s micro-topography through which the water supply system passed, suggests that the initial design of the aqueduct’s line, most likely, took into account the most fertile geological formations of the wider area, such as small plateaus and valleys. During the Archaic phase of the aqueduct, the tunnel had already been dug through the mountain in the northern plain of Flerio, in order to make the best use of water distribution to all the fertile areas on the way to the city. The remains of the entrance and exit of the channel are preserved in a very good conservation status and are dated to the last phase of the structure, probably during the 4th century (Sfyroera & Lambrinoudakis 2010, 16-17; Sfyroera 2013, 135). In the tunnel entrance there were facilities for cleaning the water. The water ran through the masonry channel into a deep, wide quadrangular basin which served as an entrance of the tunnel and at the same time as a settling basin in which the water was filtered before entering the tunnel. Nowadays the natural flow of the water continues to follow the same route supplying the adjacent valley of Flerio, as probably happened during antiquity. At the tunnel’s exit the Roman channel came out and continued its route to the north while it turned westwards behind the hill in order to reach the adjacent valley of Kampones, supplying the local fields with water for irrigation. A second settling basin has been constructed at the tunnel exit. Another characteristic example was observed in the area of the present-day village of Agios Thaleleos. The micro-landscape is dominated by a small but fertile basin east of the village. Large parts of the line of the Roman aqueduct (Fig. 5.15) are preserved in good conservation status in or around the village (Sfyroera & Lambrinoudakis 2010, 24; Sfyroera 2013, 138). From there, canals would distribute water to fields of the adjacent basins for irrigation.

In the rural context, the irrigation systems which were linked to the aqueduct testify to a continuous exploitation of the agricultural landscape over the course of the Roman period and Late Antiquity as well as, presumably, in the beginning of the Byzantine Early Middle Ages. This picture may indicate the presence of a dense network of rural communities scattered in the most fertile regions located along the course of the aqueduct of Flerio, which could have been organised as small estates-centres or villages. Nevertheless, an intensive surface survey is needed in order to locate the exact positions of those sites. The continuous special care of the urban centre to
improve the long distance water supply system during Roman Imperial times and Late Antiquity might also reflect an intensification of agrarian production in this rural landscape of vital importance for the interest of the city of Naxos. The possible existence of rural communities in this part of the Naxian landscape makes sense within the wider Aegean context, suggesting a busy countryside with intensified exploitation of the agricultural landscape during Late Antiquity (Bintliff 2012b, 353-360). This kind of rural organisation is well-attested in the Cycladic context by the *cadaster* of Thera which provides valuable information regarding rural life and agricultural production in the Cyclades during the Roman and Late Antique centuries (Kiourtzian 2000, 212-240; 2001, 11). According to Kiourtzian, it is astonishing that on such a small island approximately 50 large estates have been recorded in the 4th century, with a particular name, domestic organisation and farming practices. Additionally, the Keos Survey provides clear evidence of rural site expansion across the countryside of the island during Late Antiquity (Cherry *et al.* 1991). In the case of Naxos, tangible traces of the existence of a Late Roman settlement have been recently found in the modern village of Melanes. A Late Roman bath was located at the site of the present-day small church of Agios Georgios within the river valley of Melanes (Bilis & Pagnisali 2011). This probably indicates the existence of a rural community during Late Antiquity within this small but fertile productive zone.

Finally, it reasonable to assume there would be a possible land route which would have followed the course of the aqueduct. This itinerary could help not only to connect the urban centre with its periphery but also for the necessary and constant maintenance of this huge infrastructure.

*Aspects of transformation of the rural sacred landscape around the city of Naxos*

The urban centre of Naxos is adjacent to the large fertile coastal plain of Livadia, which extended southeast of the present-day Chora, along the island’s west shoreline (Figs 5.2 & 5.4a). This extensive productive zone has been diachronically proved as a rural space of vital importance for the city’s agricultural production and food supply.

In the midst of the plain (Fig. 5.16), approximately 1 km from the western shore and less than 3 km from Chora is located the rural pagan sanctuary of Dionysus at Yria (Lambrinoudakis *et al.* 1987; Lambrinoudakis & Gruben 1987-1988; Lambrinoudakis 1992). The site was used as a sacred place from the Mycenaean period until Late Antiquity. Four successive temple structures were erected from the Geometric to Archaic periods. Around 580-570 B.C. the fourth and largest Ionic *prostyle* temple with *adyton*, marble *prostasis*, and a marble altar was erected (Fig. 5.17). Generally, it has been demonstrated that there was continuity of use of the temple with some restorations, especially during the Early Roman Imperial period, until the late 3rd – early 4th century (Lambrinoudakis *et al.* 1987; 569-621; Lambrinoudakis & Gruben 1987-1988, 133-191).

The temple was converted into a Christian church with minor modifications to the plan of the original pagan building (Lambrinoudakis & Gruben 1987-1988, 170; Lambrinoudakis 1992, 208-209). The basilica was created within the temple’s *cella*. Due to the fact that only a few traces of the Christian period are still *in situ*, the internal configuration of the basilica is not clear. It seems the two colonnades, consisting of four columns each, were probably maintained dividing the interior space into three aisles. Several traces of grooves, probably for fastening closure slabs were discovered *in situ*. It is possible that some of these traces belonged to the foundation of the Holy Bema’s chancel screen (Lambrinoudakis & Gruben 1987-1988, 146). Furthermore, in the north part of the *cella*, 1,30 m west of the wall of the *adyton* and east of the axis of the temple a trench was found, the walls of which were covered by stones and mortar. It was covered by a marble circular slab (diameter 47 cm and thickness 12 cm) with a graffito of the Greek capital letters «Α» and «Ω». At the bottom of the trench a bone with carbon brushes and pottery (geometric-roman) were found. According to the excavator, this structure can be identified as the *enkainion* (a cavity beneath the altar in the Holy Bema of a church in which holy relics are placed) of the Christian church (Lambrinoudakis & Gruben 1987-1988, 147). From the sculptural decoration of the basilica two well-preserved imported column capitals were found. They belong to a type of
Corinthian capital manufactured in the famous workshops of Proconnesus between the middle 5th and the middle 6th century and widely distributed in the Mediterranean world (Fig. 5.18) (Sodini 2000b, 423-446).

According to the excavators, the conversion of the temple into a Christian church is dated sometime during the 5th century (Lambrinoudakis & Gruben 1987-1988, 170; Lambrinoudakis 1992, 208-209). An earlier dating seems impossible, since the luxurious urban villa discussed above with the mosaic from the pagan iconography in conjunction with the continuous use of the temple until at least the 4th century indicate a relatively strong presence of the pagan cult on the island during the first centuries of Late Antiquity. Taking into account that the general type of the imported Corinthian capitals from the sculptural decoration of the basilica was being manufactured between the middle 5th and the middle 6th century; it makes sense to assume that the conversion took place sometime during the second half of the 5th century.

However, the excavation data combined with indirect information from other Christian religious monuments on western Naxos have produced evidence that the edifice was used as a Christian place.
of worship after its conversion, only for a short period of time. Lambertz has argued that ancient material from Yria had been reused in the construction of the middle 6th century basilica of Agios Matthaios in Plaka (see more in Chapter 5.3.3), less than 3 km south (2001, 379-408). As Deligiannakis reveals, evidence from Yria, Palatia and Saggri (see more in Chapter 5.3.6) suggest that during this early period temple conversions on Naxos were characterised by minor alterations in pagan architecture (2011, 333). This is an indication that the pagan building at Yria was in good conservation status before its conversion and was not abandoned for a long period of time, since this would lead to the structure’s total or partial collapse.

Apart from the archaeology of temple conversion, what is also important in this case is to investigate the possible reasons for the selection of the site in symbolic terms. A first observation has to do with the spatial relationship between the temple and the urban centre. The pagan sanctuary of Dionysus held a unique position in the rural landscape of the city’s immediate periphery amid a productive zone of vital importance for its interests. This indicates strong bonds between the urban population and this rural temple, while the long-term use of the site as a place of worship shows its great significance for the city. Thus, having considered this close relationship, it is quite reasonable to assume that the Christian church from the 5th century at the same site was also associated with the nearby urban centre and its increasing Christian community. This is also supported by the excavation evidence which does not suggest the development of a settlement around the church during Late Antiquity. In this respect, the area of Yria maintained its character as a rural sacred place of great importance for the city of Naxos in the beginning of Late Antiquity, adopting the increasing needs of the Christian population.

The phenomenon of conversion of the temples of Apollon at Palatia and Dionysus at Yria during the 5th century shows a significant process of Christianising the sacred landscape in the immediate periphery of the Late Antique city. Both pagan sanctuaries held unique positions in the landscape, serving as sacred landmarks in the immediate environs of the urban centre. The pagan temple at Yria functioned as the dominant sacred landmark in the midst of a rural landscape with great economic potential, proving crucial for the sustainability and the development of the ancient city of Naxos. During the 5th century, this monument continued to serve as the main reference point of the region, under the aegis, however, of the new religion with growing power. In this respect, symbolically, it reflects a progressive process of Christianisation and transition to a new cultural identity, and way of life which differed in many ways compared to the ancient pagan world. Thus, this basilica served to Christianise the landscape in the periphery of the urban centre. Individuals arriving from the western lowland of Naxos would sense the Christian presence as they would have passed by this church on their journey towards the city. Similar phenomena are well-known in the wider Aegean world as evidenced by the case of the neighbouring island of Paros discussed above, and mostly from the study of the periphery of Corinth (Rothaus 2000).

On the other hand, the conversion of ancient temples which had survived in good conservation status, might have been an easy, quick and less expensive solution for the creation of places of
Christian worship during this early period (before the 6th century) when the new religion struggled to establish itself as the Empire’s dominant religion.

It has been suggested that the total abandonment of the Late Antique church at Yria after the late 5th century might have been due to the instability of the area’s soil and the local community’s ambition to undertake a new building project in the neighbouring area of Plaka, using Yria as a quarry (Deligiannakis 2011, 333). However, as it is suggested by this study the erection of basilicas such as the one of Agios Matthaios in Plaka during the 6th century on Naxos, is a more complex phenomenon which is closely connected with a general trend of intensification of the agricultural exploitation on the island (see more in Chapter 5.3.3). In any case, the converted Christian church at Yria lost its importance for the urban centre and ceased to serve the increasing needs of the local Christian community by the 6th century, since the building itself had been erected for the religious needs of the pagan cult and was no longer functional. Thus, it was more useful as a quarry supplying building material for reuse in the erection of the nearby basilicas in the 6th century.

As mentioned below, during the 6th century the sacred landscape of western Naxos drastically changed with the erection of many Christian basilicas, mainly in the most fertile areas on the island (see more in Chapter 5.3). In the fertile coastal zone of the ancient city of Naxos the only secure evidence for a newly erected church during that period comes from the site Fraro between Chora and the village of Agkidia (Fig. 5.16). In a prominent site on the lower slope of Mt Xilokastro a relatively large Christian church (Figs 5.19 & 5.20) was erected close to the line of the aqueduct of Flerio, less than 1.5 km southeast of the urban centre (Kalokiris 1960, 11; Drandakis 1985-1990, 23-24; Gruben, 1999, 296-299; Dimitrokallis 2000, 11, figs 7-8; AD 2005, 945-947; AD 2006, 1113; Sfyroera & Lambrinoudakis 2010, 27-28; Bilis & Pagnisali 2011; Ohnesorg 2012, 107-109). The initial church had the architectural layout of a large three-aisled basilica without a narthex (Fig. 5.19). It measured 23.35 m in length and 12.70 m in width. Two colonnades consisting of 5 columns each, divided the church interior into three aisles. The nave terminated at its eastern end with a projecting semi-circular apse. A large number of ancient building marble members were used for the construction of the basilica. Later, in the Middle Byzantine period a smaller church was erected on the ruins of the early basilica.

Concerning the site of the basilica, due to its close proximity to the city it is reasonable to assume this monument can be associated with the Christian community of the Naxian urban centre. Similar to the case of the pagan temple conversion at Yria, archaeological evidence, at the moment, does not suggest the development of a settlement around the basilica during Late Antiquity. The basilica of Agios Stefanos built on a slightly elevated site overlooked not only the city of Naxos but also almost the entire plain of Livadia. In this respect, the Late Antique basilica could have acted as a main landmark in this coastal landscape, as it was visible from almost any point of the plain and the city. After the abandonment of the Christian church at Yria in the 5th century the urban Christian community of Naxos, probably in
the wider context of the religious building boom of the 6th century in the Aegean, undertook a new more ambitious project at a new site closer to the city. The new basilica emerged as the new sacred place of this non-urban landscape replacing the church at Yria. On the other hand, the construction of the basilica only few meters west of the line of the aqueduct may indicate some form of relation between the landscape’s two dominant monuments. Moreover, at the time of the basilica’s erection in the 6th century the aqueduct was in full operation.

5.2.5 Late Antique material culture and trade networks

Ceramic material constitutes the main evidence for dating and studying the aspects of social, economic and cultural behaviour. Especially in the context of the highly interactive Aegean islands, the imported pottery evidence is one of the most valuable historical sources suitable for the study of interaction and connectivity between local insular societies and broader worlds. Large amounts of ceramic finds have been collected during the almost seven decades of excavations in the area of the ancient city of Naxos and its periphery. Unfortunately, the vast majority of this material is still unpublished. Nonetheless, a group of imported vessels, consisting of a number of well-published lamps from Chora, Yria and Saggri, and some sporadic brief references in the archaeological reports of the local Ephorate of Antiquities provide valuable information regarding the economic links of the Late Antique city of Naxos. This chapter offers a fresh approach to this fragmentary material in an attempt to connect all the available evidence in order to investigate trade connections, and at the same time expanding the picture of the changes that occurred in the Cyclades during the Late Antique centuries.

A large number of clay lamps were discovered in cist or pit graves during the rescue excavations of different plots around the hill of Aplomata and the Metropolis Square. Bournias studied this material and classified the lamps into groups on the basis of their provenance (2014, 789-791). The lamps span a wide chronological spectrum ranging from the 2nd to the 7th centuries. Several groups of lamps recognised have been imported from famous production centres in the Eastern Mediterranean. The lamps can be grouped in the following categories: a) Greek lamps of Corinthian type from the late 2nd – early 3rd centuries, b) Athenian lamps from the 4th – 5th centuries, c) lamps of unknown provenance which have been regarded as products of an “Aegean” workshop from the second half of the 4th – first half of the 6th century (see more on this type in Gerousi 2003; 2010), d) Asia Minor lamps dated from the 5th to the 7th centuries, e) Cypriot lamps – from the 5th – 6th centuries, f) imitations of North-African lamps from the 5th century and, g) lamps imported, probably from Constantinople during the late 6th – early 7th century.

A second group of imported ceramics came from a rescue excavation of a plot in the area of modern Chora (AD 2001-2004, 208). The very brief excavation report mentioned that a few sherds of Phocaean and North African red slip wares along with fragments of LR 1 and LR 2 amphora types from the 6th – 7th centuries were discovered. Unfortunately, it is impossible to check the validity of this information due to the total absence of more data, such as photographic documentation and drawings. A third group of imported ceramics has been recognised in the excavations conducted in the basilica of Agios Stefanos at Agkidia, close to Chora. According to the brief archaeological report, several sherds of red slip wares and lamps from Asia Minor as well as lamps of the so-called “Aegean” type have been discovered (AD2005, 945-947, fig.14; AD 2006, 1113). The lamps are dated to the late 7th century (AD 2005, 946).

Despite the obvious limitations, mainly, because of the fragmented nature of the material and its preliminary publication, the imported ceramics of the city of Naxos and its periphery offer some indications concerning socioeconomic and cultural behaviour of this Aegean coastal urban centre’s population during Late Antiquity. According to Bournias, from the 4th century the Naxian market was progressively flooded with imported lamps fabricated in several production centres around the Eastern Mediterranean, especially in the wider area of the Aegean world (2014, 791). The vast majority of the material constituted grave offerings and was found to be used, probably because it was originally destined for domestic use in the houses which, as is mentioned above, occupied the areas of Grotta, Aplomata, Plithos and the Metropolis Square during Late Antiquity. Additional material from Yria and
Saggri suggests that these types of lamps were also imported to Naxos from North African and Syro-Palestinian production centres (Bournias 2014). Apart from the lamps, it seems that different types of domestic pottery, such as table wares and amphorae, were imported from production centres in Asia Minor, North Africa, Cyprus and Constantinople. The picture of Naxos as a highly interactive microcosm is also supported by the evidence provided by the graffiti at the bay of Grammata on the island of Syros (Kiourtzian 2000, 134-200; 2001, 11-12). The inscriptions are dated between the 4th and first half of the 8th century, suggesting high connectivity between the islands of the Aegean Archipelago but also communication with the wider eastern Mediterranean world, such as Asia Minor, Syro-Palestine and Egypt. At least three inscriptions are preserved inscribed on the rocks of the bay by seafarers with origins from the island of Naxos (Kiourtzian 2000, 173-177, n.108-110, pl.XXXIV-XXXV). The graffiti belonged to the invocative inscriptions, where the name and the origins of the captains are mentioned.

A combination of ceramic, epigraphic and architectural material produces evidence for economic links between the coastal urban centre of Naxos and other regions of the East Mediterranean during the Roman period and Late Antiquity. It appears that during the Roman Imperial times the city of Naxos participated in the maritime trade routes. The picture emerging from a number of early imported lamps dated between the 1st and 3rd century shows the island’s commercial connections with the wider Aegean world and contradicts previous historical views about isolation of the Cyclades during the Roman period. From the 4th century onwards, the urban population of Naxos was increasingly involved in the maritime trade networks. Imported ceramic material from famous Mediterranean production centres such as Cyprus, North Africa, Egypt and Middle East as well as from Aegean production sites, shows that the main port of Naxos was fully integrated into the regional and inter-regional maritime trade routes that connected the Aegean and parts of the eastern Mediterranean to Constantinople over the course of Late Antiquity. The urban centre of Naxos would have acted as a suitable regional trade station, and at the same time as a smaller market for commercial products manufactured in the famous Mediterranean production centres of the period. Additionally, ships from Naxos with Naxian mariners sailed over the Aegean, as verified by the pilgrimage centre on Syros. Therefore, the coastal city-port of Naxos and its periphery shows evidence of a highly interactive insular microcosm fully integrated in networks of communications and exchange.

5.2.6 The city of Naxos in the Byzantine Early Middle Ages

The scant literary sources dated to the Byzantine Early Middle Ages offer limited information regarding the fate of the Naxian urban centre after the late 7th century. In 653 Pope Martin I (649-655) was arrested in Rome and was conveyed first to Naxos where he remained for some time on the island as a prisoner and subsequently to Constantinople (Peeters 1933; Dakoronia 1969-1970; McCormick 2001, 483-488). The place and the duration of his stay on Naxos remain unknown. In contrast with the more concrete picture derived from the material culture of Late Antiquity, archaeological evidence from the city of Naxos and its periphery does not allow us to be very accurate when discussing the fate of the urban centre between the 8th and early 9th centuries. Nevertheless, despite the fact that some questions remain open, a general trend can be recognised.

As is mentioned above, the emerging picture from the excavations at Chora suggests a progressive abandonment of the Roman and Late Antique houses between the late 7th and middle 8th century, after a long and continuous occupation (Lambrinoudakis 1993, 162-163; 1979, 251; Bournias 2014). Thus, on the basis of numismatic and pottery evidence it is clear that most of these domestic structures survived well until the beginning of the Byzantine Early Middle Ages. In the luxurious urban villa on Aplomata hill a gold coin of the Emperor Constantine V Copronymus (741-775) was discovered (Lambrinoudakis 1993, 162-163). It seems that, until the second half of the 7th century or probably the early 8th century the coastal city of Naxos maintained, in general terms, some urban characteristics. During the late 7th and middle 8th century however, radical socioeconomic changes in the urban environment were observed.
The progressive abandonment of many domestic structures suggests the city of Naxos dramatically shrank in size during the 8th century. At the same time, the aqueduct of Flerio ceased its function after the early 8th century (Lambrinoudakis 2007, 1). This also reflects dramatic changes in the urban environment, since the aqueduct was diachronically from the 6th century BC onwards a public structure of vital importance for the urban population’s survival.

Taking into account all the evidence discussed above, it is demonstrated that, progressively, from the late 7th and with more intensity during the first half of the 8th century the coastal urban centre of Naxos ceased functioning as a dominant socioeconomic and administrative centre on the island of Naxos, and as a smaller link in the chain of the inter-regional trade system. It seems that it lost its urban status during the 8th century, as is also indicated by the cessation of the aqueduct operation. However, archaeological evidence suggests that the former ancient city survived, probably as a coastal settlement smaller in size. Along the shoreline of Grotta northeast of the church of Agios Georgios architectural remains from different periods were unearthed (Kontoleon 1972; Lambrinoudakis 1978, 211-217, fig.1, pl.143-144; 1980, 259-262, fig.1, pl.150; 1981, 293-294, pl.199-200; 1982, 253-255, pl.155-158). Initially, a structure with long walls was built at this site, probably a house, dating to the late 4th century on the basis of ceramic evidence discovered in the foundation trenches of the walls (Lambrinoudakis 1980, 259). After continuous use of the house for many centuries, at a later stage, presumably during the 8th or 9th centuries, a craftsman’s workshop was established at the same site. According to excavators, this complex can be securely identified as a tannery with a paved yard, tanks of different depths, basins, wells and pipelines (Lambrinoudakis 1982, 253-254, pl.155-157). For the construction of the basins older material, such as a marble closure slab from an ambo dating to the middle 6th century was re-used (Lambrinoudakis 1981, 293, pl.200B). At an even later stage a pebble-paved floor, remains of walls and pipes were discovered associated with this structure (Lambrinoudakis 1982, 255). A coin of the Emperor Leo V the Armenian (813-820) was also attested (Penna 2001, 404).

These limited but extremely valuable archaeological records suggest that life and small scale economic activities continued to exist in this coastal landscape despite the Arab threat. This picture contradicts previous historical views about desolation of coastal regions and retreat of populations to the mountains and into island interiors. At the moment however, it is difficult to ascertain the exact extent of this coastal settlement. In any case, it is important to underline that despite dramatic changes in the urban built environment during the Byzantine Early Middle Ages, the coastal landscape of Chora presents a picture of continuous human occupation from the 4th to the early 9th century.

5.3 WESTERN LOWLAND NAXOS

5.3.1 Landscape and micro-topography

Apart from the ancient city of Naxos and its immediate periphery, the remainder of the west part of Naxos, south and north of the modern Chora, is also characterised by a lowland landscape and is well-endowed with several small or large fertile productive farming zones (Fig. 5.7: II & 5.21).
Less than 5 km north of Chora, along the northwest coastline are located the regions of Eggares and Faneromeni. The local natural environment is dominated by fertile river valleys which carve the landscape from the mountainous interior to the sea. In the south-western part of Naxos, approximately 9 km southeast of Chora is located the present-day village of Tripodes or Vivlos. The small traditional village is situated on a slightly elevated hill less than 3 km from the nearest coast. The wider region’s landscape is very interesting as it is a relatively lowland coastal zone with a wide range of geological formations. In the northwest, Tripodes is adjacent to the plain of Livadia offering a clear view of the region of the ancient city of Naxos and easy access to the main port of the island. In the west of the village is extended a small plain within a fertile valley that carves the landscape from the mountainous interior to the coast of Plaka. The so-called valley of Katarraktis and Plaka is delimited to the south by the hills of Kasteli and Korkidaki, to the north by the range of hills of Karbou and Stroumboula, and to the west by the beach of Plaka.

Less than 400 m south of Tripodes is extended the small but fertile plateau of Kechrees. The plateau, which is located less than 2 km east of the nearest coast, is surrounded by the hills of Kasteli and Korkidaki to the west while connected with the larger plain of Saggri to the east. Further south of the plateau of Kechrees is extended a small valley that carves the landscape from the mountainous interior to the beach of Polichni or Aliko, which is Naxos’s second larger coastal plain. A few kilometres southeast of Tripodes and east of Kechrees is located the village of Saggri. The village is divided in Ano and Kato Sangri with a distance of a couple of kilometres between them and is built on a large lowland fertile basin which dominates the landscape of west central Naxos. A few kilometres south of Saggri and southeast of the fortress of Apalirou the well-watered inner plain of Marathos is extended, forming the southern limit of the lowland western Naxos. The plain is connected not only with the valley of Saggri but also through a small gorge within the small shallow bay of Ayiassos, which is set along Naxos’s south-western shoreline. It becomes apparent by the aforementioned description of the micro-topography of south-western Naxos that it is a mild and relatively lowland coastal landscape with plenty of rich cultivable land. However, the coastline lacks a well-protected anchorage for ships.

5.3.2 The regions of Eggares and Faneromeni

The region of Eggares (Fig. 5.21) is dominated by the large eponymous fertile valley (Fig. 5.22) in which a present-day small settlement is located. Further north, along the coastal zone between Eggares and the Monastery of Faneromeni, are located several small river valleys that carve the landscape from the mountainous interior to the coastline. The most important of them are the valleys of Erinia, Pergandi and Skinou (from south to north) (Fig. 5.23). These geological formations correspond to the best agricultural land in this coastal landscape. The shoreline is relatively straight with the exception of a few tiny bays which are formed in the areas of Pachia Ammos, Akrotiraki and Faneromeni.

Our knowledge of diachronic settlement patterns in this region has been improved by the archaeological field survey conducted in the early 1980’s by the French School as part of a larger project on the island of Naxos (Erard-Cerceau et al. 1993). Their work however, identified a number of prehistoric and classical sites, but did not consider the post-classical landscape in any detail. In this context, an important number of possible sites were discovered and dated to Late Antiquity and the Byzantine period. The limited information provided by this archaeological research regarding these sites does not allow us to be very accurate when talking about their function. We can only make some general
but valuable observations regarding this coastal landscape’s settlement pattern during Late Antiquity and the Byzantine Early Middle Ages.

Most of the sites are either situated in slightly elevated locations on the slopes that surround the valleys, offering good visibility of the small productive farming zones or are set beside the well-watered valley floors, where the rivers create arable strips with a permanently high watertable (Fig. 5.23). Thus, these sites were being deliberately located close to both fertile soils, suitable for cultivation, and areas of grazing land. The emerging picture suggests that during Late Antiquity the wider region were inhabited while both cultivated and uncultivated land was intensively exploited, as crucial economic sources. Most sites are located within or around the valleys of Eggares, Erinia and Skinou, where there is an abundance of the region’s best fertile soils and substantial areas of grazing land. At the moment, it is difficult to ascertain the specific types of the settlements due to the lack of detailed publication. However, the placement of these sites within this landscape mainly reflects a rural and possibly a pastoral character (see more about pastoralism in Chapter 5.4.6). It seems highly probable that in this context the majority of them can be classified as small villages or farmsteads. It appears the locations of the settlements’ sites are related to the availability of arable and grazing land, a close supply of water, direct access to the sea, and in some cases, landscape

Fig. 5.23: The distribution of possible Late Antique sites in the areas of Eggares and Faneromeni according to the French survey in the early 1980’s (Detail: view from Google Earth).
visibility. Two sites are located along the coastline beside tiny bays and are closely associated with the valleys of Erinia and Skinou. The sea orientation of these sites is apparent and they might have functioned as small anchorages along the coastline.

In the publication of results from the French survey a few photos of the most diagnostic ceramic fragments upon which is based the dating of the Late Antique sites are presented (Erard-Cerceau et al. 1993, 90-91, figs 12-13). The majority of them belongs to securely dated Late Roman amphora types or to several Late Antique storage vessels. All types are associated with agricultural production and transport. The plethora of rural sites suggests an agriculturally intensified use of this coastal micro-landscape during Late Antiquity.

At the moment, the fate of these sites is unclear in the transition from Late Antiquity to the Byzantine Early Middle Ages since the survey did not provide any kind of relevant information. The only secure evidence comes from the site of Monastiriotissa which is located 7.5 km northeast of the ancient city and less than 1 km east of the present-day village of Eggares (Fig. 5.23). The site lies along the east bank of the Xerotrochari river (today a dry river), which flowed inside the fertile coastal valley of Eggares. It is situated approximately 2 km away from the shoreline, but has no visual contact with the sea. However, the site is easily accessible from the sea, as it is just a few minute walk from the coast through the flat valley of Eggares (Fig. 5.22). According to the survey results, a concentration of Late Roman and Post-Roman (probably Early Medieval) surface ceramics was identified around the twin-naved ruined church of Monastiriotissa (Erard-Cerceau et al. 1993, 66, site 75). Additionally, as Aslanidis has argued, this church can be dated to the 8th century on the basis of its aniconic decoration and architectural similarities with other contemporary examples from Naxos (2014a, 123-126). Thus, a combination of ceramic and architectural evidence suggests the continuation of this site from the Roman period to the Byzantine Early Middle Ages. This is another example supporting the view that settlements during the late 7th and 8th centuries were not only confined to the mountainous regions of the island but were also located very close to the coastline. In the case of Monastiriotissa the correlation between settlement location, land productivity, proximity to water sources and grazing land as well as accessibility to the sea is persistent from Late Antiquity to the Byzantine Early Middle Ages, despite Arab threat.

The application of least cost path analysis has shown an equally important parameter concerning the location of the site (Fig. 5.23). Monastiriotissa was situated on a crucial point along a land route that connects the coastal valley of Eggares with areas of north and central Naxos such as Sifones, Tragea, Kinidaros, Keramoti and Koronos. A possible path starts from the coastline and reaches the site of Monastiriotissa through the valley of Eggares. Then, it continues eastwards and after few meters is divided into two directions. A path follows a south-easterly direction towards the areas of Sifones and Tragea. A second path follows north-easterly direction towards the regions of Koronos, Keramoti and Kinidaros through the valley of Chalantres. In the lush valley of Chalantres, there is a small church dedicated to Agios Dimitrios approximately 1.5 km northwest of Kinidaros and 4.5 km northeast of Eggares. The church of Agios Dimitrios is dated to the period of Iconoclasm based on aniconic frescoes (Mastoropoulos 2006, 232-233; Aslanidis 2014a, 146-150, pl.42, figs 56-57 with further bibliography). It lies amid a well-watered narrow fertile valley, where spring sources create limited but valuable arable land with a permanently high watertable. Although due to the lack of surface survey it remains unknown whether this church is related to a settlement, it makes sense to assume that it is associated with this land route. The valley of Chalantres is connected to the east with the region of Kinidaros.

It is most likely, then, that Monastiriotissa and Agios Dimitrios were being deliberately located at crucial points of this road network that linked the coastal zone of Eggares to areas of north and central Naxos in order to control the mobility of people and goods. A combination of ceramic evidence, architectural observations and application of spatial analysis suggests Monastiriotissa, probably, played a consistent role to the intra-island connectivity during Late Antiquity and the Byzantine Early Middle Ages.

5.3.3 The valley of Plaka

Almost in the middle of the valley of Plaka (Fig. 5.24), at the site called Trana Chorafia, is situated the
The small chapel is located a few meters west of the ancient tower of Plaka, less than 3 km south of the ancient temple at Yria and approximately 1 km away from the nearest coast. It has been erected on the ruins of a preexisting Late Antique Christian basilica (Figs 5.25 & 5.26). The basilica has been preliminarily studied and published. In 1960 Kontoleon was the first scholar who mentioned the basilica’s existence (1960b, 472). Later, in 1972 Zias conducted a small-scale excavation in order to shed light on the architectural plan of the edifice (AD 1972, 616-617, figs 576-577). In 2001 Lambertz published a more detailed paper in an attempt to make the history of the monument clear (379-408).

The so-called basilica of Agios Matthaios belongs to the type of the simple three-aisled basilica with an atrium. The main church measured 20.9 m in length and 12 m in width. In the west part of the building no traces of a narthex have been found as only a small atrium, measured 10.10 by 11.60 m was annexed to the main church. The total length of the structure reached 31 m. Two colonnades, consisting of 6 columns each divided the interior into three aisles. The nave was wider than the side aisles, forming a semi-circular projecting apse at its eastern end. A semicircular stepped bench, the *synthronon*, was constructed around the curved wall of the apse. In front of the apse traces of the altar have been discovered. The area of the Holy Bema was delimited by a U-shaped chancel screen projected into the nave up to the height of the first column. On the west facade of the screen an axial entrance provided the only access to the Holy Bema. The floor of the nave was decorated with mosaic.
**Fig. 5.25**: Church of Agios Matthaios (Plaka): view of the marble sculptures from the Late Antique basilica.

**Fig. 5.26**: Church of Agios Matthaios (Plaka): architectural traces of the pre-existing Late Antique basilica’s east wall (apse).

**Fig. 5.27**: Viewshed analysis showing the visibility from the basilica of Agios Matthaios. Visible areas marked with grey.
pavements. Fragments of the main mosaic carpet (8 x 5.4 m) which covered the eastern part of the nave in front of the western facade of the chancel screen was unearthed. The composition consisted of two parallel zones of interconnected roundels and one zone of intersecting circles in the middle, all within a broad frame decorated with a rincaeu with ivy leaves. The early building was adorned with marble architectural sculptures such as unfluted and spiral columns, ionic impost capitals, mullions, cornices, and piers, a large number of them are preserved today in the courtyard around the later chapel (Fig. 5.25). As has been observed in many other cases in the Cyclades, the erection of the basilica of Agios Matthais is characterised by the extensive reuse of ancient building material. Lambertz has studied the spolia from the basilica’s site arguing that a part of this material was taken from the pronaoi wall of Yria temple (2001).

The basilica of Agios Matthais has been dated to the second half of the 6th century, on the basis of stylistic observations of the fragments of the mosaic pavements and the sculpture decoration, mainly the well-preserved ionic capitals (Lambertz 2001, 390-392). At the moment, there is no secure evidence in order to date the basilica’s abandonment. In a later period was erected the small chapel dedicated to Saint Matthew which occupied the area of the Holy Bema and part of the nave was erected on the ruins of the basilica (Figs 5.25 & 5.26).

Apart from the importance of the monument in terms of architecture, it is also interesting to expand by investigating the basilica’s function and its relationship with the surrounding micro-landscape. In 2006 the site was surveyed in order to determine the use of the church, in the context of the intensive surface survey (Naxos Survey Project) carried out by the former 2nd Ephorate of Byzantine Antiquities around chapels and Byzantine structures or meanings. A characteristic example is the Trani Fountana (the Great Cistern) in present-day Chora, in which the aqueduct of Florio probably ended. Important evidence of intensive diachronic agricultural exploitation of the valley of Plaka during earlier periods is provided by the ancient tower of Plaka which is located a few meters northeast of the basilica.

Thus, the placement of a large basilica, the development of a rural settlement around it, and the visual relationship between the site and the surrounding rich cultivable land suggests a pattern of this rural coastal landscape’s intensive exploitation during Late Antiquity. On the other hand, the partial view of the sea, the lack of safe and well-protected wind-shelters for ships along the nearest shoreline, and the placement of this community 1km away from the coast, may indicate that the site was not related to a small local harbour and the agricultural surplus was transferred to the nearby port of the Late Antique city.

In this context, the large basilica emerged as the local landscape’s new rural landmark connected to an agrarian community, probably replacing the older reference point of the area which was the ancient tower (at the moment it is unknown if the tower was in use during Late Antiquity). Moreover, as has been demonstrated in the peripheries of the ancient cities of Paros and Naxos, religious monuments, mostly basilicas, were integral parts of the historic landscape serving multiple roles during Late
Antiquity. This rural site was, possibly, the only one within the valley during Late Antiquity as the limited space available does not suggest the existence of more sites. The evidence of architecture (especially the large dimension of the structure), sculpture and mosaic decoration of the basilica are trademark signs of village life, suggesting that the landowners were presumably in residence (Bintliff 2012b, 354).

At the moment there is no evidence of human activity at the site during the Byzantine Early Middle Ages. Having considered the general context of the island, and especially the nearby areas of the ancient city and Polichni (see more in Chapter 5.3.5), it is quite possible this rural community could have survived well into the 8th century. However, we cannot suggest either continuity or discontinuity after the 8th century due to the lack of published ceramic material from the site.

5.3.4 The small plateau of Kechrees

In the west part of the plateau of Kechrees or Stavropigi (about 150 m above sea level) at the region’s most prominent site is located the rural church of Agia Kyriaki (Fig. 5.28) (Dimitrokallis 2000, 24; Mastoropoulos 2006, 103, 106-107, fig.68; Aslanidis 2014a, 102-103, pl.28, figs 34-35). It is a small chapel, the type of a free cross with a dome resting on four arches, decorated with aniconic...
frescoes (Fig. 5.29). The church is situated 6.5 km south of Chora, 1.5 km southeast of the basilica of Agios Matthaios at Plaka and 2.5 km northeast of the basilica of Agios Akepsimas. Although excavations have yet to be conducted at the site the church is surrounded by visible remnants of several ruined structures. On the basis of the non-figurative decoration the church is dated to the 9th century.

In 2006 the site around the church was surveyed in the context of the Naxos Survey Project (AD 2006, 1113-1114; Vionis 2013, 33, fig.9; forthcoming). Analysis of the surface ceramics (Red Slip wares,
LRA types etc.) collected by Vionis during this project suggests the existence of a relatively large rural settlement over the course of the Late Antique centuries, which extended immediately northeast and northwest of the church on the slope of the low rocky hill (Fig. 5.30). The settlement also bears evidence of occupation during the Byzantine Early Middle Ages as evidenced both by the surface pottery material and the erection of the chapel sometime during the 9th century.

The church of Agia Kyriaki is surrounded by rich cultivable land which even today constitutes an agricultural zone in western Naxos (Fig. 5.30). Viewshed analysis of the site of the church was conducted in GIS in order to assess what other regions could be seen from it (Fig. 5.31). First of all, as has been observed in the case of the neighbouring valley of Plaka, it becomes apparent the site has good views over the plateau’s surrounding fertile land. Secondly, from the site a limited section of the plain of Livadia and the ancient city of Naxos as well as an important part of the maritime channel of Paronaxia are visible. The visual relationship between this rural community and the surrounding natural environment suggests a strong connection between the settlement and best quality land. This correlation may be the major factor in the development of this settlement. The pottery material, which provides evidence of extensive human habitation within this micro-landscape in connection with the traces of economic activities related to rural production, once again reflect an intensive exploitation of this region’s agricultural resources during Late Antiquity. Thirdly, the visual connection between the settlement at Kechrees and the adjacent plain of Livadia as well as the Late Antique city of Naxos might indicate some sort of relationship between the Naxian urban centre and this agrarian space, giving us an idea about where the area’s agricultural surplus was transferred and representing an interactive rural-urban relationship.

The continuity of the settlement at Kechrees through the Byzantine Early Middle Ages offers another example on the island of Naxos which supports the view that settlements during the late 7th, 8th and 9th centuries were not only confined to the mountainous hinterland of the island but were also located very close to the coastline. The site is only located 2 km away from the nearest west shore of Naxos with direct visibility over the coastal zone of Livadia-Chora and the maritime area of Paronaxia as well as easy access to the sea. Thus, as is observed in many other cases, it seems the pattern of settlement distribution in relation to soil productivity did not dramatically change in the 8th and 9th centuries on western lowland Naxos despite the Arab threat.

5.3.5 The plain of Polichni

At the exit of the small rocky valley that carves the landscape from the mountainous interior to the flat coastal zone of Polichni or Aliko, approximately 2.5 km south west of the neighbouring settlement of Kechrees and less than 2 km away from the shoreline, at a slightly elevated site is located the basilica of Agios Akepsimas (Fig. 5.32). The monument, which remains in use to this day, has only been published preliminarily while no excavations have been conducted so far (Drandakis 1985-1990, 27-30; Mastoropoulos 2006, 107, 110-111; Aslanidis 2014a, 28, pl.8, figs 6-7). As a matter of fact many questions concerning the dating of the different phases of the monument remain open. The church, in the form that is preserved today, belongs to the type of barrel-vaulted three-aisled basilica supported on piers (Fig. 5.33). However, it is apparent the building went through several construction phases during its long history. The basilica’s walls were decorated with fresco paintings...
Fig. 5.33: View of the basilica of Agios Akepsimas within the micro-landscape of the Polichni plain. The island of Paros is discernible in the background.

dated to different periods. A two-conch barrel-vaulted church was added to the south part of the basilica in the Middle Byzantine period. On the basis of architectural analysis and stylistic observations on marble sculptures which are found in the building, the erection of the initial basilica is possibly dated to the 6th or the 7th century (Aslanidis 2014a, 28).

In 2006, the monument was included among the sites that were surveyed in the context of the Naxos Survey Project (AD 2006, 1113-1114; Vionis 2013, 33; forthcoming). The picture emerging from the study of the ceramic material shows a multi-period site. According to Vionis, analysis of the surface ceramics collected during this project bears evidence of the existence of a relatively large settlement around the basilica over the course of the Late Antique centuries (2013, 33, fig.9). Furthermore, the continuity of the settlement from Late Antiquity to the Early and Middle Byzantine periods is also demonstrated. It is worth noting that the Middle Byzantine settlement was larger in size than the Late Antique predecessor at the same site, occupying an area of 1 ha, as indicated by the high concentration of pottery sherds dated between the 11th and 14th centuries (Vionis 2013, 33).

Regarding the location and character of the settlement, the setting of this community within a productive farming zone cannot be considered coincidental (Fig. 5.33). Southwest of the settlement is extended the fertile plain of Pilichni, which is the second larger coastal farming zone on Naxos occupying an area of almost 5 km² (Fig. 5.4b). The narrow valley in the northeast has provided this coastal zone with the necessary water supplies for cultivable field irrigation and the connection with the areas of Kechrees and Saggri through a possible land route that leads northeast. Viewshed analysis from the site of the Agios Akepsimas basilica was also conducted in order to assess what other regions could be seen from it (Fig. 5.34). As is observed in Plaka and Kechrees, the visibility from the site is
mostly restricted within the borders of this coastal geological formation. From the slightly elevated settlement almost any point of the fertile farming zone was visible. There is no intervisibility between the adjacent areas of Polichni, Plaka and Kechrees. Secondly, the southern section of the maritime channel of Paronaxia is partially visible from the site.

Thus, as has been demonstrated in the cases of Plaka and Kechrees discussed above, which are also inscribed in the wider context of lowland southwest Naxos, the placement of a settlement in the landscape is closely related to its proximity to the best agricultural land, the availability of water sources and the landscape’s visibility. Once again, the visual relationship between the site and the surrounding fertile land may indicate that this specific coastal farming zone was controlled by this community during Late Antiquity. From this point of view, the settlement at Polichni seems to have had a rural character. Furthermore, as has been observed in the case of Plaka, setting a relatively large basilica during the 6th or 7th century in such a coastal landscape and the development of an agricultural settlement around it suggest an intensification of rural production in this productive farming zone during Late Antiquity. The Christian basilica emerged as the new rural landmark of this coastal landscape connected with a local rural community which actively exploited the adjacent plain (Fig. 5.33).

With several radical modifications the church of Agios Akepsimas remained the core successor of Early and Middle Byzantine settlements at the same site while surviving to this day as a diachronic integral part of the historic landscape after the site’s
total abandonment. The continuity of the settlement at Polichni through the Byzantine Early Middle Ages offers another example on west Naxos showing that settlements during the late 7th, 8th and 9th centuries were situated very close to the shoreline and the wider lowland coastal landscapes were not totally abandoned. The site is located less than 2 km away from Polichni’s shoreline with easy access to the sea (the landscape is completely flat), direct visibility over the coastal zone and the maritime channel of Paronaxia. Thus, yet again, it becomes rather clear that despite Arab threat the pattern of settlement distribution in relation to soil productivity did not dramatically change in the 8th and 9th centuries in the coastal landscapes of western lowland Naxos.

5.3.6 The region of Saggri

In the midst of the fertile plateau of Saggri (Figs 5.21 & 5.35) on the top of a low hill at a site called Gyroulas is located one of the most important archaeological sites on the island of Naxos, the Archaic rural sanctuary of Demeter and Apollo (Fig. 5.36). In 1954, the temple was initially excavated by Kontoleon (1954, 330-338; 1960b, 469-472). Between 1976 and 1995 systematic excavations and architectural researches were carried out by the Department of Archaeology at the University of Athens and the Lehrstuhl für Architektur und Baugeschichte at the Munich Polytechnic University directed by Lambrinoudakis, Gruben, Korres and Ohnesorg (Lambrinoudakis 1976, 295-308; 1977, 378-386; 1979, 249-258; 1981, 293-297; 1982, 253-259; 1984, 301-312; 1991, 256-271; Simantoni-Bournia 2001; Lambrinoudakis et al. 2002).

In terms of architecture, the temple belongs to the telesterion type with a hypostyle hall for the celebration of mysteries (Fig. 5.37a-b). Archaeological evidence suggests the continuity of use of the sanctuary from Archaic (c. 530 B.C.) till

![Fig. 5.35: Panoramic view of the fertile plateau of Saggri with sites discussed in the chapter.](image-url)
RECONSTRUCTING THE SETTLED LANDSCAPE OF THE CYCLADES

Fig. 5.36: View of the Archaic rural sanctuary of Demeter and Apollo within the plain’s micro-landscape.

the Roman period. The temple held a unique position in the landscape and served as the main sacred landmark of the rural region of Saggri in the course of antiquity (Fig. 5.36). During Late Antiquity the ancient pagan temple was converted into a Christian church. On the basis of excavation evidence and architectural observations three phases of conversion have been identified (Simantini-Bournia 2001, 22). The first and second phases were characterised by minor modifications to the ancient edifice’s plan. The third phase however, corresponds to a radical reconstruction of the earlier building (Fig. 5.37b). The ancient walls were almost entirely demolished and at the same site a relatively small three-aisled timber-roofed basilica was constructed, supported on columns with a narthex and atrium in the south side of the complex. The new church was erected through the reuse of ancient material. Two colonnades consisting of 3 columns each, divided the interior into three aisles. Important traces of liturgical installations such as almost the entire chancel screen and the ciborium of the Holy Bema, fragments of the ambo in the nave, and a small baptismal font near the eastern wall of the south aisle were unearthed. A small peristyle atrium (2x3 columns) with a central fountain and a main entrance to the complex were annexed to the south. The atrium was flanked by many auxiliary chambers and spaces, some of which have been identified as artisanal units (for more see below) (Fig. 5.37b).

Many questions arise so far regarding the dating of the different phases of this Christian religious monument during Late Antiquity. Concerning the chronology of the temple’s conversion and its later rebuilding archaeological data cannot be very accurate. Nevertheless, on the basis of stylistic observations of the architectural decoration in conjunction with similarities with other examples from Naxos (Yria and Palatia), the conversion of the pagan temple into a Christian monument with minor modifications can be placed during the 5th or the early 6th century. The erection of the basilica is dated approximately after the middle 6th century using as terminus post quem a bronze coin of Justinian which was discovered in the south wall of the main building. Additionally, the reuse of Christian architectural members (mullions, capitals, closure slabs, piers etc.) from Gyroulas in many other mainly later religious monuments of the wider region since the 10th century indicates that the basilica had already been abandoned before that period (Simantini-Bournia 2001, 26). While studying the phenomenon of temple conversion on the island of Naxos (Saggri, Palatia and Yria) Deligiannakis has identified two major phases of this procedure (2011, 327-333). During the early stage of conversions of pagan monuments minor alterations characterise the ancient buildings, marking a period during which Christianity progressively struggled to establish itself as the dominant cult. However, at a second stage from the middle 6th century the newly erected basilicas reflects a more confident and ambitious local Christian community.

Fig. 5.37: a) View of the archaeological site at Gyroulas, b) Plan of the 6th century basilica and the surrounding artisanal units (Simantini-Bournia 2001, 8, fig.2).
A crucial question however which remains open concerns the function of this basilica and the site’s character. This study made an attempt to thoroughly discuss this question in a wider socioeconomic context offering a fresh approach under the prism of current archaeological investigations.

The excavators in the preliminary publication of the excavation results, without providing any convincing evidence, associate the radical reconstruction of the basilica after the middle 6th century with the establishment of a small monastic community around at the site (Simantoni-Bournia 2001, 13). Nevertheless, especially in the early Christian centuries identifying coenobitic monastic sites without an inscription or a literary mention and distinguishing them from settlements such as villages, rural villas, fortresses, estates etc. is particularly problematic. In the East Mediterranean coenobitic monasticism was already established by the middle 4th century. The majority of the securely identified monastic sites, however, have been discovered in Egypt, Syria, and Palestine, where literary and archaeological evidence is abundant (for a general overview see Bowes 2008). On the basis of several well-excavated and published examples in these regions, monastic sites are characterised by strong regional diversities and as a result of this, in archaeological terms their secure identification remains difficult. Regarding the topography, monastic sites can be set not only in isolated regions but also near large and prosperous villages and towns, and near or within fertile agricultural zones. Additionally, their plans and structures also varied so the early monastic communities do not present common architectural or other features. In economic terms, early monasteries in Egypt and Syro-Palestine often acted as landowners buying and selling property, producing and trading wine and oil, and playing a fundamental role in local economies (Bowes 2008, 601-603).

In the wider Aegean world literary sources and archaeological evidence are extremely scanty and fragmentary. Although there are only a few indications for monastic communities on the islands of Crete, Rhodes, Thasos, Samos and Kalymnos, the lack of tangible and secure evidence is characteristic, making the identification of those sites even more challenging. Most of the examples could be classified as hermitages and only one case on Samos seems to have been a coenobitic monastery (for an overview of early monasticism in the Aegean region see Deligiannakis 2006, 58-72). Thus, as Deligiannakis has argued, the character of these sites differs in comparison to the securely identified monastic sites in Egypt, Syria and Palestine, whose cultural and economic impact on local communities was fundamental (2006, 70). In this fluid and unclear context of the monastic archaeology in the Aegean during Late Antiquity, the monastic function of the site at Gyroulas is hard to prove. At the moment it finds no parallel examples in other insular communities of the broader Aegean world.

In order to obtain a better understanding of the function of the site at Gyroulas, it is necessary to elaborate on this interpretation, combining excavation results, the local landscape’s parameters, the spatial analysis offered by the GIS, socioeconomic aspects of the island in Late Antiquity, especially from the 6th and 7th centuries, and the settlement pattern within the fertile plain of Saggri.

On the basis of architectural and other archaeological evidence, the excavations at Gyroulas show that around the basilica’s atrium, installations of kilns and workshops were developed from the 6th to the early 8th century. Local production of pottery is evidenced by the discovery of ceramic kilns, mould-made lamps and the moulds, which were included among the most valuable finds from the site (Bournias 2014, 788-789). This type of lamp was locally produced between the late 6th and early 8th centuries, imitating the widely distributed African lamps. Additionally, several examples of a local variation were found, possibly dated to the late 7th or 8th century. Other finds testify production of wine, oil, wool-processing and honey-making (Simantoni-Bournia 2001, 30-31, fig.34).

The emerging picture through the preliminary study of the ceramic evidence from the excavation shows that, in contrast with the previous periods which are characterised by low concentrations of ceramic sherds (Archaic to Roman), the Late Antique pottery at Gyroulas is well-represented by impressively large quantities and high quality finds. According to the excavators, analysis of this evidence suggests that an important number of inhabitants lived at the site between the 5th and early 8th centuries (Simantoni-Bournia 2001, 29). The
Late Antique ceramic assemblage from Gyroulas contains large numbers of common domestic wares, such as drinking and dining vessels (imported red slip wares, unpainted dishes and cups etc.), jugs, storage jars, cooking pots, and a great number of amphora fragments. Transport and storage vessels (LRA 2 type, pithoi etc.) constitute the most frequently observed group of this ceramic assemblage. Thus, despite the fact that no architectural traces of houses have been recognised at Gyroulas so far, ceramic vessels
used for food preparation, cooking, serving, and consuming suggest domestic use and long permanent occupation. Additionally, the study of imported ceramics from Gyroulas shows lamp imports from Asia Minor, Samos and Syro-Palestine are dated from the late 6th century to the 7th century (Bournias 2014, 788-789). This valuable pottery and architectural material is an indirect indicator of economic, social and cultural behaviour suggesting the development of a highly interactive local community with artisanal, commercial and daily domestic activities.

In topographic terms, the site is set at a very prominent location in the midst of the fertile and well-watered rural productive zone of Saggri on the top of a low hill which overlooks and dominates the surrounding rural landscape. The setting of an important diachronic sacred place in the most dominant location of this agricultural landscape is not a coincidence and allows us to draw an association between the site and the surrounding best quality land since antiquity. This connection is also suggested by the visual relationship between the site at Gyroulas and the surrounding landscape. The application of viewshed analysis of Gyroulas has shown that the visibility of the site is mostly restricted within the borders of this fertile basin (Fig. 5.38). In addition, the site has been selected in order to be visible from almost any place of the plain.

The rural pagan sanctuary was not established in isolation, since it was associated with a number of satellite agrarian sites scattered within the basin of Saggri, as indicated by epigraphic and archaeological evidence dated to the Hellenistic period. According to excavators, the settlement pattern within this productive farming zone during the Hellenistic period was characterised by the existence of five small agrarian communities scattered over the plain (unfortunately, they do not provide more details for the exact position of the ancient settlements; see Simantoni-Bournia 2001, 11). An inscription dated to these centuries witnesses the function of a local council called συμβούλιο τῶν πενταρχῶν (council of pentarches). Thus, during antiquity the sanctuary at Gyroulas acted as a rural sacred centre for these five adjacent communities, reflecting the cohesion of the local society. In this respect, the epigraphic evidence indicates that the inhabitants of Saggri basin, due to the peculiar traits of this micro-landscape since antiquity, had a sense of common regional identity simultaneously with their identity as Naxians, forming a small geo-cultural entity within the island of Naxos. On the other hand, this density of rural settlements during the Hellenistic period suggests an agriculturally intensified use of this landscape.

A question inevitably arises concerning the possible relation of the Christian church at Gyroulas, which was the successor of the pagan temple, with a network of satellite rural settlements within the micro-landscape of Saggri during Late Antiquity (Figs 5.35 & 5.39). Shedding light on the region’s settlement pattern produces more data for better understanding the function of the site at Gyroulas over the course of Late Antiquity. In 2006 the Naxos Survey Project produced evidence of at least two small rural dispersed Late Antique sites, concentrated around small later chapels (AD 2006, 1113-1114; Vionis forthcoming).

Approximately 900 m southeast of Gyroulas is located the small twin barrel-vaulted church of Agios Georgios and Agios Nikolaos at the site called Lathrinos (Zias 1970, 227-232; Panagiotidi 1991-1992; Pennas 2000, 22-23; Dimitrokallis 2000, 16 with n. 8; Mastoropoulos 2006, 138, 142-143, 145; Ohnesorg 2012, 115; Aslanidis 2014a, 218-221). It is placed within a relatively flat area surrounded by rich cultivable land which is intensively exploited to this day (Figs 5.35 & 5.39). In the surrounding area of the Middle Byzantine church several marble architectural members from a Late Antique Christian basilica have been discovered (Mastoropoulos 2006, 143, 145). The site of Lathrinos was surveyed in 2006 (radius 200 m around the church) producing ceramic evidence dating over the course of the Late Antique centuries (AD 2006, 1113-1114; Vionis forthcoming). The low concentration of pottery sherds suggests the site could be regarded as a small village community or a farmstead. This rural settlement occupied a limited area immediately south and west of the church and was in use at least from the 5th to the 7th century. At the moment, there is no secure evidence regarding the occupation of the site in the Byzantine Early Middle Ages. Nevertheless, despite the fact that it is difficult to provide a secure dating for the erection of the church, which is generally placed during the 11th century (Aslanidis 2014a, 221), it produces, however, evidence that the region of Lathrinos...
was inhabited during the Middle Byzantine period.

About 1350 m southeast of Gyroulas and less than 400 m east of Lathrinos is located the chapel of Agios Ioannis Theologos (Figs 5.35, 5.39 & 5.40) at the site Vrisi t’ Adisarou, «fount of Adisarou» (Acheimastou-Potamianou 1984; 1989; Mastoropoulos 2006, 138-139, 143, figs 105-106; Aslanidis 2014a, 163-165). It is set in a relatively flat area at the eastern limits of the plain of Saggri, as a few metres eastwards the mountainous landscape of south central Naxos which is dominated by the fortress of Apalirou (southeast) begins (Fig. 5.40). The small single-aisled church, which preserves traces of anicinic decoration on the walls and a synthronon with an episcopal throne in the apse, is dated to the 9th century and erected through the reuse of ancient material. The site was also surveyed in 2006 (radius 200 m around the church) and the study of the surface ceramics shows a high concentration of pottery sherds dated to the Classical
and Hellenistic periods and a small percentage of Late Antique ceramics dated between the 5th and 7th centuries (Vionis forthcoming). Thus, the settlement at Adisarou could have been one of the ancient rural communities which was scattered around the pagan temple of Demeter and Apollo during antiquity. The scatter of surface ceramics from the 5th-7th centuries suggests a smaller settlement; presumably a village or farmstead which existed at the same site during Late Antiquity. Taking into account the setting of the site at the eastern boundaries of the plain, this settlement might have functioned as a boundary point of the productive farming zone of Saggri. The erection of the chapel of Agios Georgios in the 9th century produces tangible evidence of the site’s continuous habitation from Late Antiquity to the Byzantine Early Middle Ages.

The picture about the settled landscape within the valley of Saggri during Late Antiquity, emerging through the data discussed above, shows clear evidence of a settlement pattern consisting of a central leading site and a number of small satellite rural communities which existed and functioned around it (radius 2-3 km). The fact that this local productive centre was not established in isolation suggests an agriculturally intensified use of this landscape during Late Antiquity. It also indicates that the local community still had a sense of common regional identity. Although at the moment only two of these sites have been identified, a future intensive survey centred on this particular area would contribute more evidence to support this view. Some of the sites, such as Adisarou had already been established since antiquity, whilst some others such as Lathrinos, were probably developed during Late Antiquity. The diachronic existence of these dispersed rural sites, which exploited the surrounding fertile land of the plain of Saggri, shows that this landscape had been settled, cultivated and in many ways modified by humans. Nowadays, the natural environment of Saggri is characterised by long and sinuous terraces which run along the hillsides around the temple. Furthermore, these sites, which can classified as small villages or farmsteads, were certainly associated and dependent on the productive centre of Gyroulas, especially between the 6th and early 8th centuries.

The conversion of the pagan sanctuary to a Christian church in the 5th or the early 6th century continued an ancient tradition, maintaining the sacred character of Gyroulas and its vital importance for the local community. In symbolic terms, as is also observed in other cases of Naxos, this conversion reflects a process of Christianising the landscape. From the middle 6th century however, the newly erected Christian basilica replaced the ancient modified building serving as the new main landmark visible from almost any point of this rural landscape. However, the considerable increase of ceramic evidence dated to the 6th and the 7th centuries in conjunction with architectural material and other types of finds from the excavation, reflects an important change in the site’s character from the ancient times to the Late Antique. From a local sacred place of the pagan worship, the temple is converted into a Christian church and progressively the site also became a regional production centre. Beyond any doubt, Gyroulas was not only a local rural religious place but also an emerging regional centre for economic and social activities, especially after the middle 6th century. Whether it was a monastic community or a village, the site at Gyroulas, which was set at a prominent location amidst the largest and most fertile productive farming zones on western Naxos, would have functioned in the context of Late Antiquity as a well-organised regional production, storage and distribution centre for the local produce. There was a clear interaction between this regional production centre and the smaller rural sites that occupied the surrounding landscape. The agrarian produce of the plain was presumably transferred...
to the workshops of Gyroulas for final processing. It remains an open question if Church was the new landowner of the region or a local elite.

Additionally, the development of artisanal units around the basilica indicates a commercialisation of the local production. It would not be unreasonable to assume that part of the local produce was transferred to the port of the Late Antique city of Naxos in order to be exported for commercial purposes. The imports from several famous production centres of the period and the imperial centre of Constantinople (see more in Chapter 5.3.7) as well as the various local products manufactured and exported from this inland industrial site to external markets indicate the degree of connectivity between the plain of Saggri and other sites in the Eastern Mediterranean. The processing and exporting centre of Gyroulas bears many similarities with another contemporary inland productive site on Naxos in the area of Chimarros (see more in Chapter 5.5.2). This picture suggests a highly interactive, economically vibrant inland rural microcosm which was fully integrated into regional and inter-regional communication networks.

The study of the ceramic material suggests that the production site of Gyroulas survived well into the beginning of the Byzantine Early Middle Ages, at least until the early 8th century (Simantoni-Bournia 2001, 31). The middle 8th and 9th centuries however, are marked by several major changes in the site’s character. The emerging picture through the study of the ceramic evidence from the excavation shows extremely low levels of pottery finds after the early 8th century (Simantoni-Bournia 2001, 29-31). This situation suggests that the intense industrial activity has progressively stopped and the production site of Gyroulas ceased functioning as an export centre and the region’s main reference point in socioeconomic terms. It is quite possible that this highly interactive and well-connected inland site was influenced by the wider changes in sea routes and trade patterns. In this context, it is most likely that in the middle 8th and 9th centuries Gyroulas may have remained in use, but this rural community was rather smaller in size. Unfortunately, the nature of this use was such that it left less visible archaeological traces. This picture seems inconsistent with the case of Chimarros, where despite changes in use of the site, the systematic study of ceramic material reveals a fascinating picture of continuity in ceramic types and an equally intense use of the site from Late Antiquity into the Byzantine Early Middle Ages (Vionis 2016).

The immediate periphery of Gyroulas within the plain of Saggri presents a similar picture. However, the erection in the early 9th century of humble rural churches with aniconic wall-fresco decoration such as the chapels of Agios Ioannis Theologos Adisarou discussed above and Agios Artemios approximately 1.5 km east of the present-day village of Kato Saggri (Aslanidis 2014a, 159-166) suggest humans occupied and exploited this landscape. The distribution of small early medieval sites in the plain of Saggri indicates that despite major changes after the middle 7th century in the wider Aegean context these rural communities had established ways of becoming self-sufficient, and the landscape continued to be occupied and exploited continuously throughout the Byzantine Early Middle Ages. It is worth noting that the fortress of Apalirou, the new Early Medieval leading point of Naxos, which was established immediately southeast of the plain of Saggri on the mountain, has commanding views over this important productive zone on western Naxos (see more in Chapter 5.3.9). The settlement associated with Agios Ioannis Theologos Adisarou could have served as a point for unloading merchandise and goods on donkeys and mules, and transporting them up to Kastro Apalirou. A possible road could have passed through the region of Saggri before climbing up to the village of Kato Apalirou (see more in Chapter 5.3.9), and then to the last and steepest part up the fortified town.
5.3.7 Material culture from Gyroulas: the evidence of sculpture

During the excavations at Gyroulas a number of marble architectural sculptures, integral or fragmentarily preserved, associated with the 6th century phase of the basilica were unearthed. Different pieces from the marble chancel screen which delimited the Holy Bema were among the finds, allowing its reconstruction (Fig. 5.41) (Simantoni-Bournia 2001, 25-26; Korres 2000; 37-38). In this brief study we are dealing with the marble closure slabs from the chancel screen in order to trace the possible different origins of this heterogeneous group of sculptures, reflecting the connectivity and interaction between the region of Saggri and the broader world.

The entrance to the Holy Bema that formed on the west facade of the chancel screen was flanked by two rectangular marble closure slabs sculpted on both sides (Fig. 5.41). One is almost integral as only a small part of the upper corner is missing while the other is extremely fragmentarily preserved (a few broken pieces from the centre field and the upper corner are preserved). The front sides of both examples are decorated with the same iconographic pattern enclosed by a plain border. The central field is occupied by a composition of a christogram in combination with Latin crosses (Fig. 5.42a). In the middle of the composition the christogram is inscribed with a double ringed medallion, closed below with stylised, knotted ribbons which swing out, terminate with a heart-shaped leaf pointing upwards. Each leaf supports a Latin cross on each side of the medallion. The back side of each slab is decorated with a different pattern. One is adorned with fish-scale ornaments while the other with imitations of cancelli (Fig. 5.42b-c).
What makes this pair of slabs quite an interesting case-study is the obvious difference in the quality of workmanship between the front and back sides, which appears to reflect the building history of the church. The front side of each slab is characterised by high technical calibre, conveying the impression of mastery and confident execution (Fig. 5.42a). The marble’s surface is polished so that there are no visible marks of the chisel. The iconographic pattern and the technical quality of the front sides allow us to attribute both slabs to a Constantinopolitan sculpture workshop. Moreover, the large grained white marble with grey bands appears to be proconnesian. In contrast, the back sides are characterised by rough workmanship of the decorative elements given in a highly stylised manner (Fig. 5.42b-c). They give the impression of clumsy and extremely speedy execution whilst the marble’s surface is not polished so there are visible marks of the chisel. The heterogeneity of the iconographic pattern in connection with the low technical quality suggests work of craftsmen from a regional sculpture workshop.

The closure slabs from Gyroulas are not the only example of this type of decoration found on the island of Naxos. A pair of marble closure slabs sculpted only on the front side with similar decoration was discovered in the church of Panagia Drosiani (Fig. 5.43) and presumably comes from its original chancel screen (Drandakis 1988, 34-35; see more about Drosiani in Chapter 5.4.3). One is integral but very badly preserved as it is incorporated into the floor of the church, and the decoration in some parts is completely missing. The second is fragmentarily preserved allowing however the identification of the iconographic composition in detail. The central field is occupied by a small Greek cross with expanding ends enclosed in a triple ringed medallion, closed below with simplified, knotted ribbons which swing out and supports a large Latin cross with expanding ends on each side of the medallion. The slabs from Drosiani are characterised by rough workmanship of the decorative elements which are given in a highly stylised manner whilst the marble’s surface is not polished so there are visible marks of the chisel. On the basis of stylistic and technical observation, Drandakis has dated the slabs to the second half of the 6th century (1988, 35-37). If we accept the chronologies of the pairs of slabs of Gyroulas and Drosiani as accurate, this means they can be inscribed in the same historical context.

The composition of a christogram in combination with Latin crosses was a common and widely distributed iconographical theme during Late Antiquity, especially in the 5th and 6th centuries. It is found more frequently on the front of monolith sarcophagi as well as on closure slabs (Farioli 1969, 72-74, n.135-136; 1983, 235-243, figs 28-35). The composition with several variations was created by the sculpture workshops of Constantinople (Tsigonaki 2004, 1153). Marble closure slabs of this type sculpted on both sides were mass produced by Constantinople’s sculpture workshops (Peschlow 2007, 298-299, 320-321, n.102-107) in order to
decorate not only the churches of the capital but also newly-erected provincial basilicas (for the large diffusion of this type see Sodini 1989, 183, fig.11; characteristic examples are presented by Russo 1968, 322-329; Barsanti 1989, 197-199; Bonacasa Carra 1992, 322-324, Tsigonaki 2004, 1153-1154, figs 11-12). Recent studies have shown that fragments of Proconnesus marble slabs decorated with this composition belong to the shipwreck of Marzamemi (Castagnino Berlinghieri & Guzzardi 2011, 70, figs 8-9; 2015, 1035, fig.9). The back side of the Constantinopolitan examples are normally decorated with a large Latin cross, simple or inscribed in a medallion, or with a composition of concentric rhomboi. The broad geographical diffusion of the different variations of this type appears to have had an impact on the production of the regional sculpture workshops. In some cases local craftsmen sought to imitate the Constantinopolitan patterns, either by following the initial composition or by adding new elements and creating local variations. Characteristic examples constitute two closure slabs from the island of Crete. The first slab copies the Constantinopolitan prototype and was discovered in the mountainous city of Eleftherna while the second slab was unearthed in the Roman capital of the island the city of Gortyn and provides a local variation of the type (Tsigonaki 2004, 1158-1159, figs 25-26).

In this general context, it is quite reasonable to assume that the closure slabs of Gyroulas, due to the iconographic pattern and high technical quality of the front sides in connection with the possible provenance of the marble from Proconnesus, might have been imported to Naxos from the imperial centre in order to adorn the 6th century basilica. The difference in the quality of workmanship between the front and the back sides is a very unusual phenomenon for a Constantinopolitan sculpture. Additionally, the fish-scale decoration and the imitation of cancelli never appear as an iconographic pattern on the back side of this type of slabs. However, a convincing interpretation of this paradox is given by the comparison of the back side of the slabs with the lateral closure slabs of the basilica at Gyroula’s chancel screen. The four marble slabs, different in size and decoration, which blocked the access from the side aisles to the Holy Bema form an interesting heterogeneous group and are only sculpted on the front side. Two of them (one in the north and one on the south side) are decorated with fish-scale ornaments and imitation of cancelli similar with the decoration of the back sides of the slabs of the main facade (Fig. 5.44). The two other slabs, one in the north and one on the south side, are decorated with pomegranates. Regarding the technical quality, all examples are characterised by rough workmanship of the decorative elements which are given in a highly stylised manner. As is observed on the back sides of the slabs of the main facade, they give the impression of clumsy and extremely speedy execution whilst the surface of the marble is not polished so there are visible marks of the chisel.

Having considered all the information mentioned above, we can make some tantalising hypotheses. The marble slabs with the composition of a christogram in combination with Latin crosses were imported to Naxos in order to decorate the basilica of Gyroulas’s main facade of the chancel screen. The heterogeneity of the other closure slabs of this liturgical installation suggest that for the north and south sides of the screen either some closure slabs which belonged to the first phase of the temple conversion in the 5th century or newly carved sculptures by local craftsmen were used. In order to achieve relevant homogeneity of this unusual group of sculptures, Naxian sculptors, presumably, locally re-carved the back sides of both imported slabs using the iconographic patterns of the lateral closure slabs. In any case, the pair of closure slabs from Gyroulas reflects the work of experienced Constantinopolitan sculptors and at the same time the operation of local craftsmen suggesting that during the 6th century prefabricated sculptures were transported by sea from the imperial centre to Naxos, as it is observed in the case of Paros and other Cycladic islands.
Finally, we can identify the impact of Constantinopolitan models on the local sculpture production of this far-away province of the empire in the pair of closure slabs from Drosiani. As is observed in the aforementioned Cretan examples, it is clear the local sculptors who carved the slabs of Drosiani were well-informed about the imperial centre’s stylistic trends. They were aware of this particular iconographic pattern and they created a local variation, changing some details of the Constantinopolitan model. Both examples from Naxos testify to the large diffusion of Constantinopolitan models and products in this Empire’s far-away province reflecting an active local insular community which participated in wide commercial networks and interacted culturally with broader worlds.

5.3.8 The region of Marathos

Close to the southwest foothills of the fortress of Apalirou, approximately 3.6 km south east of Gyroulas and 4 km northeast of the nearest west coast, in the area of Kato Marathos (Lower Marathos) is located the chapel of Agios Stefanos (Fig. 5.45) (AD 1967, 30-31; Mastoropoulos 2006, 152-154, fig.114; Aslanidis 2014a, 88-90, pl.24, figs 27-28). The present-day small chapel is a barrel-vaulted single-aisled church which initially belonged to a larger religious complex probably a two- or three-aisled basilica. According to Aslanidis, Agios Stefanos is dated to the 8th century on the basis of architectural observations and specific construction details (2014a, 89).

The site was surveyed in 2006 in the context of the Naxos Survey Project (radius 200 m around the church) producing ceramic evidence dating over the course of Late Antiquity (AD 2006, 1113-1114; Vionis forthcoming). The concentration of pottery sherds suggests the site could be classified as a small village. During Late Antiquity this rural settlement occupied an area immediately west and south of the later church. The erection of the chapel, probably during the 8th century, in connection with surface ceramic material produces evidence that this rural community remained active during the turbulent Byzantine Early Middle Ages despite its proximity to the sea.

The church is surrounded by rich cultivable land which forms a relatively flat and large productive farming zone with direct and easy access to the sea, since the shallow bay of Ayiassos is situated a few kilometres to the southwest (Fig. 5.45). This bay is strategically located along Naxo’s south-western coastline facing the south entrance of the maritime zone between the islands of Paros, Naxos and Ios (Fig. 5.21). This interesting micro-landscape consisted of a low hillside (alt. 215 m) a few metres south of the church which stands isolated amidst the plain, and partially blocks the visibility to the sea. Once again, it is apparent that the development of a settlement in the lowland landscape of western Naxos during Late Antiquity corresponds to areas with more fertile soils, showing a general trend for intensification of the agricultural exploitation during this period (Fig. 5.46).

In this case, it appears that the correlation between land productivity and settlement patterns did not change from Late Antiquity to the Early Middle Ages, as the settlement remained inhabited. Presumably, it benefited by its proximity to the new administrative centre of the island, the fortress of Apalirou. In topographical terms, the regions of Marathos and Ayiassos form a specific geographical space through which the fortress of Apalirou had the quicker and easier access to the

Fig. 5.45: View of the region Kato Marathos with chapel of Agios Stefanos. The bay of Ayiassos is in the background.
west coastline of Naxos. This settlement could have served as a point for unloading merchandise and goods on donkeys and mules and transporting them up to Kastro Apalirou. A possible road could have passed through the region of Marathos before climbing up to the village of Kato Apalirou (see next Chapter) and then to the last and steepest part up the fortified town (Ødegård 2016).

5.3.9 The Kastro Apalirou

The progressive transformations in the coastal ancient city of Naxos (see Chapter 5.2.6) coincided with the emergence of the Kastro Apalirou on the south-western part of the island (Fig. 5.47). Kastro Apalirou is a fortified settlement erected on a steep, mountainous site 474 m above sea level on
the south-western approach to Mt Zas between the areas of Saggri, Marathos and Ayiassos (Fig. 5.54). The summit of the mountain lacks natural water sources (Fig. 5.48). Despite its great importance Kastro Apalirou remains preliminarily studied and published (Eberhard 1974-1978; Vionis 2012, 87-88). However, in 2010 the Norwegian Naxos Survey Project started as a campaign to examine and record the architectural remains of Kastro Apalirou (Hill & Roland 2016; Hill et al. 2017). The results of this ongoing research project will shed more light on this important site for the history and archaeology of the Cyclades.

The Norwegian survey has been able to document and plan houses, streets, churches and other structures within and around the walled area of this mountain-top settlement. The intramural built environment measures approximately 250 m in length and 50 m in width and has an organised plan. It consists of the remains of: a) a strong fortification wall (Figs 5.48, 5.49 & 5.50), b) a large ecclesiastical complex (Fig. 5.51), c) an “official” section separated towards the north, d) a complex terraced street plan, with 70 houses documented so far, which is the settlement’s larger section (that number is expected to at least double as many buildings lie underneath their ruins and cannot be clearly documented), e) a communal hydraulic network that leads water from across the site through a system of gutters into large community cisterns at the lowest part of the site, f) numerous smaller private cisterns connected to the individual domestic structures (Fig. 5.52), and g) an olive/wine press installation. Just outside the walls, the system of cultivation terraces with a threshing floor has been considered contemporary with the site, suggesting the community probably produced food in order to cover part of its own needs. Recently a new, relatively large church complex was unearthed on an artificial terrace immediately outside the gate to the southwest. According to the excavators this is probably an indication of the importance of the main road towards the town (Hill & Roland 2016).

Concerning the foundation of this fortified settlement nothing is disclosed by the literary sources. New evidence from the Norwegian survey, on the basis of preliminary interpretations of the historical and regional context, as well as unstratified surface ceramic material suggests that the main period of this fortified urban foundation extended from the middle 7th to the early 13th
Fig. 5.49: Kastro Apalirou: View of the surviving west defensive wall (left). View of the masonry of the fortification wall (right). the masonry of the wall (right).

Fig. 5.50: Kastro Apalirou: View of the west semi-circular tower.

Fig. 5.51: Kastro Apalirou: View of the ruined church complex within the defensive wall.

Fig. 5.52: Kastro Apalirou: Ruined cistern within the defensive wall.
century (Hill & Roland 2016; Hill et al. 2017). There is a clear terminus post quem for the total abandonment of the settlement. In 1206 or 1207 after the 4th Crusade the Venetian Marco I Sanudo besieged and conquered Kastro Apalirou which presumably still was an important Byzantine fortress on the island during that time, establishing a Venetian Duchy in the central Cyclades. Sanudo transferred the economic and administrative centre of Naxos to the area of the former ancient city, erecting the medieval Kastro of Chora (Fig. 5.9).

In the wake of the rich archaeological material recorded so far, many questions are raised concerning the definition and function of this fortified settlement. The placement of this settlement on a steep and inaccessible mountain top approximately 6 km from the coastline indicates militaristic and defensives purposes, suggesting that Apalirou could have functioned as a refuge and kastron. Parameters such as the steepness of the landscape, the strong fortification wall, the high altitude, the location being in the interior south south-western part of the island, the distance from the coast, and the lack of natural water sources on the summit of the mountain suggest the site was selected for defensive purposes. In geographical terms western and south-western parts of Naxos were more vulnerable to external dangers because of the relatively flat and mild coastal landscape. In contrast, the northern, central and eastern parts of Naxos always remained naturally well protected because of the extremely steep and hard mountain landscape. In this context, in the case of Kastro Apalirou a priority seems to be given to ensure the security of the western part of Naxos.

On the other hand, the site is quite large and its built environment has an organised plan with important communal infrastructures and buildings, religious complexes and private domestic structures. All these features mainly reflect a medieval urban environment. The distinct “official” and religious sectors indicates the existence of administrative, military and ecclesiastical elites within the walls. The large numbers of domestic structures documented so far probably show a considerable number of inhabitants both inside and immediately outside Kastro Apalirou. In this respect, although Kastro Apalirou differs from the typical large urban centres (Mistras, Trebizond, Thessalonica), during the Byzantine Early Middle Ages it remains as the only settlement not only on Naxos but also the Cyclades bringing together many specific features of a medieval town.

At the same time, a careful consideration of some geographical parameters makes the multiple functions of this fortified settlement clear. One potential avenue for investigating Apalirou’s function within regional or inter-regional communication networks can be offered by the analysis of the possible visual relationships between the site and the surrounding landscapes, seascapes, islands and other settlements. In this context, multiple viewshed analysis was conducted in GIS in order to assess what other sites or regions could be seen from the towers of the fortification wall. Nine observation points were selected along all sides of the circuit of the wall, which correspond to the circular, semi-circular and rectangular towers that are visible in the satellite image of the site (Fig. 5.53).

First of all, the results of this spatial analysis show that Kastro Apalirou certainly had a western orientation (Figs 5.54 & 5.55). Apart from Naxos’s high mountain tops nothing was visible from this site in the central, east, southeast and north parts of the island (Fig. 5.56). In contrast, Apalirou has commanding views over the most fertile agricultural productive zones of western lowland Naxos (Fig. 5.54), such as Saggri, Livadia (Fig. 5.57), Marathos and Ayiassos (Fig. 5.58). Additionally, it overlooks the most important rural sites of these areas. The territory’s visibility from a settlement as well as the intervisibility between neighbouring settlements constitutes highly important features (Antrop 1988). These aspects are reflected the region’s specific settlement patterns and can be partially interpreted as having visible control over productive farming zones (Sevenant & Antrop 2007, 363).

In this respect, the fortified town of Apalirou held a unique position within the settlement pattern of western Naxos, and presumably emerged as a local dominant centre for controlling western Naxos’s fertile countryside and the exploitation of the rural landscapes in order to preserve sustainability (Fig. 5.54). Thus the placement of this extensive settlement within this landscape may
indicate an effort to manage internal agricultural productivity of western Naxos. In this respect, in contrast with the neighbouring island of Paros, this medieval town shows a state of relevant affluence, a stable economy and a continuing system of agricultural production on the island of Naxos during the Byzantine Early Middle Ages despite Arab threat. Therefore, there is a strong relationship between settlement patterns, land use zoning and landscape visibility. The existence of an olive/wine press installation in the Kastro Apalirou further supports this interpretation.
Fig. 5.54: Viewshed analysis showing what is visible from the Kastro Apalirou in the island of Naxos. Visible areas marked with turquoise.
Fig. 5.55: Viewshed analysis showing the visibility from Kastro Apalirou. Visible areas marked with turquoise.
Secondly, Apalirou certainly has commanding views over some parts of the coastlines of western Naxos as well as over the surrounding maritime zones and the adjacent islands. More specifically, it provides good long range visibility over the important for seafaring maritime channel of Paronaxia (Fig. 5.57). At the same time, it offers long distant views over the western and southern coasts of Naxos (Figs 5.57 & 5.58), the eastern coastal zone of Paros and the north-eastern shoreline of Ios (Figs 5.58 & 5.59).

Additionally, the application of spatial analysis produced some interesting evidence concerning the relationship between Naxos and the neighbouring islands of Paros (and its off-shore islet of Viokastro) and Ios. Kastro Apalirou was contemporary with two sea-oriented defensive sites in the central Cyclades (Fig. 5.60): the naval fortress on the off-shore islet of Viokastro (Vionis 2012, 125-132) discussed above (see more in Chapter 4.3.5) and the fortified installation of Palaiokastro on Ios. The latter is only preliminary studied and published (Eberhard 1974-1978, 552-554; Mitsani 2003). The placement of the fortresses of Apalirou, Viokastro and Palaiokastro in this maritime region cannot be considered coincidental. The application of viewshed analysis from Apalirou (Fig. 5.55), Viokastro (Fig. 4.70) and Palaiokastro (Fig. 5.61) show that these sites were mutually visible. The intervisibility between the fortresses of Apalirou,
Fig. 5.58 Kastro Apalirou: view towards the southwest (plain of Marathos, the small shallow bay of Ayiassos, the Palaiokastro of los, and the maritime space between Naxos, Paros and los).

Fig. 5.59 Kastro Apalirou: view towards the south-western coastline of Naxos and the maritime space between Naxos, Paros and los.
Fig. 5.60: Map with the Byzantine forts in central Cyclades.

Viokastro and Palaiokastro indicates the existence of a regional maritime communication network, probably for administrative and protection purposes. Each of these three sites held strategic and unique position within this maritime zone’s seascape. A series of parameters, such as the selection of the site, the commanding views towards the surrounding landscape/seascape, and the clear archaeological evidence of a medieval urban organisation, suggests that Kastro Apalirou had a key role in this network. Viokastro and Palaiokastro, probably, held auxiliary but crucial role, since they overlooked the entrances of this vital maritime space in the central Cyclades (Paronaxia) and some places which could not be seen from the towers of Apalirou (Fig. 5.62). Viokastro controls the north entrance of the channel.
Fig. 5.61: Viewshed analysis showing the visibility from Palaiokastro. Visible areas marked with grey.
Fig. 5.62: Multiple viewshed analysis showing the visibility from Kastro Apalirou, Viokastro and Palaiokastro.
of Paronaxia, the small section in the middle of this naval channel which is non-visible from Apalirou, and the maritime zone between Paros, Naxos, Mykonos, Delos and Ikaria, an important part of which (north and northeast of Naxos) is also non-visible from Apalirou (Fig. 4.70). Palaiokastro overlooks the south entrance of Paronaxia and the maritime zone of the Small Cyclades which is non-visible from Apalirou (Fig. 5.61). Thus, the visual relationship of this sea-oriented communication network shows an effort to control and secure maritime mobility not only for military but also for commercial purposes through the naval channel of Paronaxia which was, probably, a crucial part of inter-regional sea routes that passed through the Aegean Sea. According to Vionis, ceramic evidence from Naxos shows the populations of the western lowland part participated in maritime trade during the late 7th and 8th centuries that connected the Aegean and parts of the eastern Mediterranean to Constantinople (2013, 30-31). This communication network reflects a wider strategy created by the central government for the
re-organisation of the administration, defence and protection of the Cyclades.

Regional communication networks are not uncommon pattern in the broader context of the Early and Middle Byzantine Empire. Their existence is testified by the textual sources (Haldon 1990, 132-135, n. 254-255) and the archaeological evidence. They can be found in landscapes different in character ranging from mountainous highlands to maritime regions. Recent studies, for example, identified a similar communication network in the highlands of eastern Phrygia at the heart of central Anatolia (Roussos 2017; forthcoming). It consisted of the thematic capital of Amorium, which was the main military centre of the Anatolikon theme, the small fortress or watch-tower of Boztepe, the so-called “byzantine castle” of Pessinus and the byzantine castle on the summit of Mt Sivrihisar (Fig. 5.63). This military communication network reflects a wider strategy created by the imperial government in order to strengthen the defence of central Asia Minor, which was easily exposed to Arab threat. It can be viewed in the context of defensive activity that occurred across Anatolia during the Early and Middle Byzantine periods in order to provide a strategic advantage to the army and improve its efficiency. It possibly held auxiliary but crucial role, supporting Amorium and Ancyra, the two major military headquarters of the Anatolian plateau. At the same time, this network reflects an effort to control and secure the mobility through the major road system of this highly interactive region not only for military but also for commercial purposes.

Although these regional communication networks have been developed in completely different natural environments, they were based on some common parameters. These systems consisted of various sites and the key role played by a small or large fortified urban centre while a number of forts, watchtowers and strongholds were developed in the surrounding landscape. Additionally, they reflect an attempt to re-organise the protection of regions and maritime or land routes, which were of great importance for the interests of the Empire. Finally, they show an effort to protect the rural population and the agricultural production.

In this context, it seems reasonable to assume that the fortress of Apalirou and the island of Naxos in general, held a dominant position within a defensive network set in place by the central administration for the re-organisation of the protection of the sea routes and the Cycladic islands. From this point of view, this organised naval defensive system reflects the strong presence of the imperial administration in the central Cyclades during the Byzantine Early Middle Ages. It is most likely then, that the island of Naxos held a unique position in this process serving as an important regional administrative centre during the turbulent period of the Byzantine-Arabic struggle for control over the Aegean, especially in the first period of Arab conquest in the Aegean before the conquest of Crete (824-828). The naval protection of the south Aegean must have been of vital importance for the Empire, as this maritime zone emerged as the forefront of the defence of the Capital. We cannot be very accurate when discussing the efficiency of this naval defensive system after the Arab conquest of Crete, as according to Ioannes Caminiates in 904, the island of Naxos paid tribute to the Moslems of Crete.

The different aspects discussed above strongly support the view regarding the multifaceted functionality of Kastro Apalirou. In the context of the Cycladic islands this relatively large fortified settlement can be classified as a regional mountain medieval town. This town might have served as a local administrative, economic and ecclesiastical centre to ensure the defence of Naxos, and to preserve its self-sufficiency. At the same time, it might have functioned as a regional administrative and military centre for the protection of the Cycladic islands and this maritime zone of vital importance for the interest of the Byzantine state. Thus, it becomes reasonable to assume that the emergence of the Kastro Apalirou was not only related to military and defensive aspects but also to a re-organisation of the local production of Naxos and the Cyclades’s regional administration.

5. Since 2013, the Amorium Urban Archaeology Project, an ongoing side-project conducted by the Institute for Mediterranean Studies – Foundation for Research & Technology (Hellas – Crete – Rethymno) under Dr N. Tsivikis as part of the greater Amorium Excavations Project of Anadolu University (Eskisehir – Turkey), focused on analysing the historical landscape of Amorium. “Tracing landscape dynamics of Amorium and its territory” is a study, which is conducted by the author, as a part of this larger project initiative.
5.3.10 Apalirou environs

Apart from the study of the fortified town of Apalirou, an ongoing systematic field survey intends to reconstruct habitation and land use patterns in the immediate periphery outside the walls on the western slope below the Kastro (Crow & Turner 2016). In the context of this project, an extensive village has been recently discovered on the west flank of the mountainside, which has been called Kato Apalirou (Fig. 5.67).

Concerning the region’s micro-topography, the mountainside immediately to the west of Apalirou drops steeply into a shallow bowl before sloping down sharply towards the south-eastern parts of the basin of Saggri. The area of Kato Apalirou is delimited by the fertile productive zones of Lathrinou, Adisarou and Marathos to the west and south by a series of rocky knolls. A dense network of building blogs set on stepped and braided terraces was discovered. It is most likely the majority of them can be identified as domestic structures. Some of these houses are seen to be approximately square and laid out in rows, with clear internal subdivisions. At the moment, there is no evidence for cisterns associated with this settlement. The architectural remnants of four small churches were discovered and clearly related to the village. Based on preliminary observations of the surface ceramic material, it has been suggested that the main period of occupation of the area of Kato Apalirou extended from the late 6th to the 9th or 10th centuries (Crow & Turner 2016).

What is important in the case of Kato Apalirou is that this extensive open settlement was contemporary with the fortified town. This discovery expands our knowledge about the extramural topography of this medieval town, shedding more light on the settled landscape of western Naxos during the turbulent Byzantine Early Middle Ages. The Apalirou Environs Project began in 2015. It is an ongoing systematic ceramic survey of the wider region of Kastro with the collaboration between the Oslo University and the Ephorate of Antiquities of Cyclades.

5.3.11 Placing western Naxos in a wider Aegean context

Six regions of the western part of Naxos have been presented and studied in order to offer the ground upon which settlement pattern in this specific Naxian landscape can be interpreted from the 4th to the early 9th centuries. The main characteristic of this lowland landscape, which occupies some 30% of the total geographical area of the island, is the abundance of well-watered coastal or inland productive farming zones, suitable for intensive cultivation.

The picture about the settled landscape during Late Antiquity emerging through the multiple data discussed above, becomes more clear and suggests a relationship between settlement patterns, land use zoning and in most cases landscape visibility (Fig. 5.64). Based on geographical, spatial and archaeological site analysis, it appears the location of the settlement sites in the course of Late Antiquity within the lowland landscape of western Naxos is mainly related to the availability of arable land and a close supply of water. In all cases (Eggares, Faneromeni, Plaka, Kechrees, Polichni, Saggri, Kato Marathos) settlements correspond to well-watered coastal or inland geological formations with more fertile soils, where there is an abundance of the best cultivable land on western Naxos (Fig. 5.65).

The application of multiple viewshed analysis from the Late Antique rural sites of western lowland Naxos clearly shows that each one had the visual control of a specific fertile productive zone (Fig. 5.66). In other worlds, the visibility from each rural site was almost restricted within the borders of the coastal or inland geological formation in which it is located.

Some of them were also offered a partial view to the maritime channel of Paronaxia, but it was not the main aspect concerning the selection of the settlements’ site. Thus, the emerging picture suggests that during Late Antiquity all the productive zones on western Naxos were inhabited and cultivated. The non-urban areas on western Naxos, especially between the 6th and late 7th centuries, present a picture of extremely active small or large communities, which despite their proximity to the sea were more oriented towards rural rather than maritime activities. As a matter of fact, all these sites were apparently classified as rural in character. During the period from the 6th
Fig. 5.64: Distribution of sites on western Naxos during Late Antiquity.
Fig. 5.65: Slope map of western Naxos showing the relationship between settlement patterns and land use zoning during Late Antiquity.
Fig. 5.66: Multiple viewshed analysis of the Late Antique rural sites on western Naxos.
to the early 8th century the correlation between land productivity and settlement density is the strongest and most significant, as indicated by the erection of at least three basilicas (Plaka, Polichni, Saggri) in the wider region, all related to settlement sites.

The consistent association between settlement density and best quality land suggests an intensification of agricultural exploitation during Late Antiquity on western Naxos. In addition, the evidence from the production site of Gyroulas suggests the commercialisation of local production on western Naxos, especially from the middle 6th century. Similar picture of agriculturally intensified use of the rural landscape with market orientation emerges from several regions of the Aegean world especially after the middle 6th century onwards (Renfrew & Wagstaff 1982; Cherry et al. 1991; Mee & Forbes 1997; Bintliff et al. 2007; Bintliff 2000a; 2012b, 355-358). The problems in supplying Constantinople and the frontier armies after the progressive loss of the rich Eastern provinces have resulted in intensification of land use in many regions of the Aegean world for commercial purposes. Areas with large rural production were specialised in the cultivation of a single product, produced in vast quantities for export (Poulou-Papadimitriou forthcoming). The evidence of intensive land-use on western Naxos can be integrated into this general context.

Naxos was famous in the antiquity for its wine production that was exported all over Greece and the Mediterranean (see more about the ancient sources and the Naxian wine in Voutsinou-Kikilia 1994, 488 with n. 6). Even the early 15th century, Buondelmonti was impressed by the fact that the extensive plain around the ancient city (probably refers to the plain of Livadia) was full of vineyards extended very close to the sea and produced a high-quality wine (Voutsinou-Kikilia 1994, 485). It makes sense to assume that, the wine of Naxos maintained to the Late Antique centuries its ancient reputation and was intensively cultivated across western Naxos constituting its main exportable produce in the context of the unified Mediterranean economy. However, in contrast with the neighbouring island of Paros, at the moment, there is no evidence of mass production of amphorae along the coastline of western Naxos during Late Antiquity. This could be a research gap, but also it might be an indication that amphorae were imported from the production sites along the opposite coasts of Paros (Naoussa Bay and Glifades) to cover the needs for transport vessels of western Naxos in order to export its agricultural surpluses to wider markets (see more in Chapter 4.3.6). The Late Antique city of Naxos in which the safest commercial harbour of the island’s west shoreline was located might have functioned as collection points for the primary exportable produce of the area. From this standpoint, the rural communities in the productive farming zones on western Naxos were closely connected with the nearby urban centre. Moreover, intra-island connectivity was easiest between the various productive zones and landscapes on western lowland of Naxos compared to the mountainous hinterland. All coastal or inland regions of western Naxos that correspond to specific geological formations were accessible from the urban centre and the coasts.

On the other hand, the newly erected basilicas dated to the 6th century in the rural various landscapes on western Naxos not only reflect a burst of church-building but also ambitious and flourishing local rural communities. These communities were able to undertake and fund building projects with recycled architectural members built into their walls from abandoned pagan monuments, locally produced marble sculptures and, in some cases, imported pieces from Constantinople. These monuments emerged as the main rural landmarks visible from almost any point of the surrounding micro-landscapes. On the other hand, it becomes evident that Christian basilicas became the centres of great activity with multifaceted functionality by the 6th century, serving as meeting, production and commercial places for rural communities.

The growing number of archaeological records from western Naxos constantly expands our knowledge concerning the turbulent Byzantine Early Middle Ages in the Cyclades and allows us to draw an overall conclusion about settlement patterns on this island’s varied lowland landscape. Despite the fact that many questions remain open, some general trends can be recognised. In any case, the emerging picture is much more concrete compared to the neighbouring island of Paros.

Archaeological evidence from western Naxos suggests that the picture of economic vitality with market orientation that characterised Late Antiquity
changed progressively from the late 7th and more intensively from the early 8th century. This fact however, does not in itself mean that economic and social activities ceased to exist in the coastal and inland landscapes of western Naxos. Despite major socioeconomic changes in the broader Eastern Mediterranean world, surface ceramic material dated to the late 7th, 8th and 9th centuries in conjunction with the erection of small churches with aniconic frescoes testify to a continuity of habitation at several sites on western Naxos from Late Antiquity through the Early Middle Ages, supporting the existence of a dense network of small or large rural settlements across the western Naxos (Fig. 5.67).

An important change with major impact on the settled landscape of western Naxos is the foundation of the medieval town of Kastro Apalirou in the interior of western Naxos. Archaeological evidence suggests a relatively busy landscape in the immediate lower periphery of Apalirou during the Early Middle Ages. It seems that a dense network of rural satellite sites existed and functioned on the lower hills and the lowland fertile productive zones around this medieval urban foundation. Some of these sites, such as Kato Apalirou, were contemporary with Kastro while some of them, such Agios Stefanos at Kato Marathos, Agios Ioannis Theologos at Adisarou, and possibly, Gyroulas survived from Late Antiquity.

What is more clear in the case of western Naxos is that settlement sites from the Byzantine Early Middle Ages are not only withdrawn to the mountainous hinterland of the island but have also been located very close to the coastline (Vionis 2013, 30-31; forthcoming). This pattern sharply contradicts traditional historical views about the abandonment of coastal zones in the late 7th century as a result of Arab hostility followed by a “movement” of populations towards the islands’ mountainous hinterlands (Malamut 1988, 67-68). The survival of the former ancient city as a small coastal settlement, the construction of the church of Agios Stefanos at Kato Marathos, probably, in the 8th century, the chapels of Agia Kyriaki at Kechrees, Agios Ioannis Theologos at Adisarou, Monastiriotissa at Eggares and Agios Artemios at Sagri decorated with aniconic frescoes in the 8th-9th century in connection with the continuous and uninterrupted use of the basilica of Agios Akepsimas at Polichni provide valuable evidence supporting the continuity of habitation in both coastal and inland landscapes of western Naxos.

The changes that occurred in the site of Gyroulas after the early 8th century is probably connected to important transformations that took place in the inter-regional maritime trade networks during the turbulent “Dark Ages”. In contrast, the survival of small rural sites such as the settlements at Kechrees, Adisarou, Kato Marathos, Eggares and Polichni, which correspond to important productive farming zones on western Naxos, suggests that the patterns of settlement distribution in relation to soil productivity did not change dramatically from Late Antiquity to the Byzantine Early Middle Ages. On the other hand, it appears that after the 8th century a more regional economy was progressively developed, with products circulating mainly internally or just across the neighbouring regions. Nevertheless, according to Vionis, ceramic evidence from Naxos suggests that over the course of the late 7th and 8th centuries island populations were actively involved in the maritime commerce that connected the Aegean and parts of the eastern Mediterranean to Constantinople and southern Italy, on a lesser scale compared to the previous centuries (2013, 30-31).

On the other hand however, the Early Byzantine rural settlements on western Naxos were different in form, and probably, in size, compared to their Late Antique predecessor. The large Early Christian basilicas ceased functioning as the landscape’s main landmarks, as they were ruined, serving in most cases as quarries. The newly-erected small churches emerged as the new rural reference points functioning to this day as integral parts of the historic landscape of western Naxos. What seems consistent in both periods is the fact that, only with few exceptions, religious monuments (large basilicas or later small and humble churches) were associated with the existence of rural communities around them. In Late Antiquity and the subsequent Early Byzantine centuries they functioned as the central point of nucleated agricultural settlements.

The settlement pattern of western Naxos reflects the socioeconomic transformation from the end of Late Antiquity to the Middle Ages and the
Fig. 5.67: Distribution of sites on western Naxos during the Byzantine Early Middle Ages.
transition to a new model of habitation and financial system, illustrating important economic and political changes. The example of western Naxos suggests the transition from Late Antiquity to the Early Middle Ages was a gradual and smooth process from ‘antique’ to ‘medieval’ life-ways and mentalities in some regions of the Aegean.

5.4 MOUNTAINOUS CENTRAL NAXOS

5.4.1 Landscape and micro-topography

What makes Naxos a unique island among the Cyclades is its rich mountainous hinterland, occupying almost 70% of the island’s total surface and characterized by great diversity in micro-landscapes (Figs 5.3 & 5.7: III). The most important part of this landscape is located at the heart of the island and divided into the regions of Potamia, Tragea, Danakos and Apiranthos (Fig. 5.68). A few kilometres eastward of the lowland coastal western part of Naxos a variety of mountain landscapes emerges, with a plethora of geological formations in the central hinterland of the island, similar to those of Mainland Greece, to the point that one can almost forget the proximity of the sea.

The region of Potamia is located in the western part of central Naxos, north of the plain of Saggri, south of the area of Melanes and east of the present-day Chora. The micro-landscape of Potamia is dominated by a large green valley (the so-called valley of Potamia) which cuts into the gentle hills with its river lined by plane trees. Small and picturesque villages lie beside the well-watered valley floor, surrounded by gardens and olive groves. Potamia is actually divided into three settlements: Ano Potamia (Upper Riverside), Mesi Potamia (Middle Riverside) and Kato Potamia (Lower Riverside). The name derived from the river that crosses these three inhabited areas forming a small but fertile productive farming zone. It is a mild mountainous landscape with plenty of water resources, limited but fertile arable fields organised in terraces, and an abundance of grazing land. Nowadays the region has about 360 permanent residents who mainly deal with agriculture and livestock farming.

The heart of central Naxos, east of Potamia, at a distance of 16 km from Chora is dominated by the extensive highland verdant plateau of Tragea at about 300 to 400 m above sea level. It is surrounded by the Mt Koronos and Fanari to the north and by the Mt Zas to the northeast. It contains the villages

![Map of central Naxos with regions discussed in the chapter.](image-url)
of Chalki, Damarions, Damalas, Koutsocherado, Vourvouria, Tsikalaria, Kerami, Metochi, Kaloxyllos, Monitsia (Rachi), Akadimoi, and Moni, which despite the local diversities and peculiarities are always considered as a unity as they are all located close to each other within this micro-landscape. The plateau is well-watered and is now fully planted with olive trees, giving the impression of an olive forest. Nowadays the permanent residents of the region mainly deal with agriculture and livestock farming.

The regions of Apiranthos (or Apeiranthos) and Danakos are located east of Tragea, in the eastern part of central Naxos. The landscape becomes steeper with astonishing alternation of landscapes, combining mountainous villages, high mountains, barren and steep slopes, and deep lush valleys with dense vegetation. The modern village of Apiranthos is the largest of the area built amphitheatrically in a valley at an altitude of 650 m at the foothills of Mount Fanari and 32 km from Chora. The residents mainly deal with livestock farming and to a much smaller extent with agriculture. In the past, emery mining used to be the inhabitant’s main activity. The valley’s slopes are organised in terraces and planted with vineyards, fruit trees or vegetable gardens. The region of Danakos is located a few kilometres south of Apiranthos. The small present-day village of Danakos is built into a ravine between the mountains. The region’s landscape is mountainous with many valleys that carve the landscape from the interior to the sea, areas full of lush flora, natural water sources, limited but fertile arable land organised in terraces, and an abundance of grazing fields.

5.4.2 The region of Potamia

A number of archaeological evidence such as marble sculptures, epigraphic material and surface ceramics in conjunction with the application of spatial analysis methods can provide important information about the settled landscape of the Potamia valley during Late Antiquity.

On the foothills of Mt Kokimas within the wider area of Potamia valley and approximately 1 km southwest of the small modern settlement of Kato Potamia is located the Middle Byzantine church of Agios Mamas at the site called “Metropolou” (Figs 5.69 & 5.70). This important Naxian monument is well-studied and published (Dimitrokallis 1962; 1968a; Mastoropoulos 2006, 112-113, figs 70-72; Ohnesorg 2012, 114-115; Aslanidis 2014a, 191-200, pl.56-58, figs 78-81). It belongs to the transitional type of domed cross-in-square church, most probably dated to the late 10th or first half of the 11th century (Aslanidis 2014a, 197). The initial building underwent several construction phases through the centuries of its history.

Mastoropoulos expressed the hypothesis that the Middle Byzantine church could have been erected at the site of a pre-existing Late Antique basilica (2006, 112). Due to the lack of tangible architectural traces, at the moment, it is not possible to confirm the existence of a Late Antique religious monument at the site. However, sculptural and epigraphic material found in the Middle Byzantine church can be related to the existence of a Late Antique religious
monument, either at this site or somewhere in the wider region. More specifically, two Late Antique marble impost blocks and a mullion in secondary use supporting the two lobes are well-preserved in the large north window of the Middle Byzantine church. In addition, an interesting marble stele which bears the inscription: «ὅροι τῶν ἁγίων ἁποστώλων» (“limits of Saint Apostles”) discovered in the later church of Agios Mamas (Dimitrokallis 1962, 42. fig.6; Kiourtzian 2000, 102, n.30). According to Kiourtzian, it is dated to the 6th or 7th century and served as a boundary in order to mark the area that belonged to a church, dedicated to Agii Apostoli (2000, 102). It provides, then, information about the existence of a Late Antique church, probably a parish one, totally unknown from other sources. However, all these indirect traces do not provide secure evidence for the exact position of the Late Antique basilica. The only strong archaeological evidence comes from a scatter of surface ceramics around the Middle Byzantine church that are securely dated to the Late Antique centuries (personal communication with A. Vionis). This valuable material evidence testifies to the existence of a small inland community at this site during the period in question.

Combing all the archaeological evidence discussed above, it makes sense to assume that, during Late Antiquity a small nucleated village had developed at the site of Metropolou, possibly around a basilica, dedicated to Agii Apostoli. Having considered the natural environment of the valley, it seems most likely that the Late Antique site’s location within this mountainous landscape is related to the availability of arable and grazing land, as well as a close supply of water (Fig. 5.70). Accordingly, it makes sense to assume that this small Late Antique inland community could have included pastoralist and agricultural activities as part of the site function (see more about the discussion of pastoralism in Chapter 5.4.). Moreover, the dedication of the later Middle Byzantine church to Agios Mamas cannot be considered coincidental as he is the patron saint of shepherds.

In geomorphological terms the Late Antique settlement gives the impression of a relatively isolated inland community. mainly because of the physically enclosed character of this mountainous valley. The site lies on the slopes of the mountain surrounded by a terraced landscape which is today cultivated by the inhabitants of the neighbouring villages of Potamia (Fig. 5.70). However a close examination of the micro-geomorphology and the location of the region of Potamia in the wider Naxian context suggest that it, probably, held a crucial and strategic role concerning intra-island connectivity (Figs 5.71 & 5.72). Spatial analysis methods (least cost path and viewshed analysis) offer some interesting evidence about the relationships between the region of Potamia and other areas of lowland and mountainous Naxos. More specifically, the application of least cost path principles suggests that a possible complex network of land routes passed nearby the Late Antique settlement (Fig. 5.73). If we consider that the ancient road networks connecting the inland areas mainly followed physiographic constraints, the paths created using least cost path analysis seem quite accurate. More specifically, a path extends northward through the cavity of the valley of Potamia and the plain of Livadia connecting the Late Antique site with the ancient city of Naxos. Another path extends southward and leads to the basin of Saggri (Gyroulas) or the region of Kechrees (Agia Kyriaki). Finally, a third path extends eastwards following the physiographic constraints of the valley (Fig. 5.72) and leads to the plateau of Tragea (Protothronos-Chalki). It is possible the valley of Potamia was a crossroad that connected the regions of western lowland Naxos with the mountainous hinterland of the island. Additionally, the application of viewshed analysis from the site of the Late Antique settlement shows that it has good views of important sections of the network of land routes.

Although at the moment only one Late Antique settlement has been identified in the valley, it is quite probable that more than one small site in this interactive region could exist, especially in the areas of Potamia’s modern settlements. A future intensive survey centred on this particular region would contribute more evidence to support this view. Unfortunately, as yet there is no direct evidence of occupation at the site of Agios Mamas during the Byzantine Early Middle Ages. In
**Fig. 5.71:** View to the northeast from the Middle Byzantine church of Agios Mamas. The modern village of Kato Potamia is in the background.

**Fig. 5.72:** View to the southeast from the Middle Byzantine church of Agios Mamas. This small gorge leads to the region of Tragea. The Mt Zas is in the background.
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contrast, there is a high concentration of Middle and Late Byzantine surface ceramics around the church. The relatively large dimensions of the Middle Byzantine church of Agios Mamas compared to other contemporary Naxian monuments as well as its structural features, which are unusual in the architectural context of Naxos (Aslanidis 2014a, 197), might indicate the importance of this region for the intra-island connectivity through time. On the other hand, the erection of the small church of Profitis Ilias a few meters south of Mesi Potamia during the period of Iconoclasm (early 9th century), on the basis of a possible aniconic decoration (Aslanidis 2014a, 143-145, pl.41, figs 54-55) suggests human activity during the Byzantine Early Middle Ages within the valley (Fig. 5.73).

5.4.3 The region of Tragea

In geomorphologic terms the region of Tragea gives the impression of a relatively isolated area mainly because of the physically enclosed character of this mountain basin (Fig. 5.74). However, despite the fact that it was not visible from the sea and was hardly accessible from other parts of the island, especially western lowland Naxos, a culturally active highland community developed through time within this micro-landscape. In or around Tragea’s fertile inland plateau, which forms a particular geo-cultural entity, the densest concentration of Byzantine churches on the island of Naxos can be observed. Apart from the apparent importance of these monuments in Byzantine architecture and art history it is essential...
**Fig. 5.74**: View of the upland valley of Tragea with sites discussed in the chapter.

**Fig. 5.75**: Distribution of sites in the Tragea plain during Late Antiquity.
to deal with other parameters; such as their possible association with settlements in Late Antiquity and the Byzantine Early Middle Ages, their relationship with the landscape, the importance of location-choice and their meaning to the humans who erected it. It is an attempt to place sites and monuments within their contexts in the landscape. Thus, it is necessary to emphasise the importance of studying this particular region’s material culture in order to provide a fresh view about the settlement pattern, the land use and economy of central Naxos as well as the interaction between humans and the natural environment.

The large church of Protothronos, which is dedicated to the Annunciation of the Virgin, is located in the small historic village of Chalki (Figs 5.75 & 5.76). It is a religious monument of great importance not only for the region of Tragea but also for the entire island of Naxos, presenting a complicated building history and long-term use. The church was initially erected in the late 6th or 7th century as a relatively large three-aisled Early Christian basilica. From the initial building only the synthronon with the episcopal throne in the apse are preserved. During the Middle Byzantine period the basilica underwent a radical reconstruction and was converted into a transitional cross-in-square church. Due to the long and uninterrupted use of the monument to the present day, and the numerous restorations and modifications of its architectural form, there is a continuous open debate regarding the chronology of the different later phases of Protothronos, which is beyond the aims of this study (for an overview and a detailed bibliographical survey see Aslanidis 2014a, 201-211, pl.59-61, figs 82-85). The church interior was decorated in five successive layers of fresco paintings dating to the early Christian period, the 9th century (aniconic decoration), the 10th, and the 11th and 13th centuries (Zias 1989).

The site was surveyed in 2006 in the context of the Naxos Survey Project (radius 200 m around the church) producing ceramic evidence dating over the course of Late Antiquity (AD 2006, 1113-1114; Vionis forthcoming). The concentration of surface pottery sherds suggests the site can be classified as a nucleated village. This settlement occupied an area immediately east of the church and possibly a part of the present-day village. The non-figurative decoration of the 9th century in connection with the successive wall painting layers between the 10th and 13th centuries not only suggest the continuity of use of the church but also indicate that this rural community remained active throughout the Early and Middle Byzantine periods. Unfortunately, due to modern building activity it is difficult to ascertain how large this community was at different periods in time. In topographical terms, the Late Antique settlement of Chalki occupied a dominant position within this highland micro-landscape, as it was set on a slightly elevated site amidst this extensive land use intensity zone (Fig. 5.74). It is surrounded by fields with fertile soil suggesting a direct association between the best quality land and the settlement’s location.

The Early Christian basilica of Protothronos and the associated Late Antique settlement around it, however, were not developed in isolation. Approximately 680 m northwest of the basilica of Protothronos is located the church of Taxiarchis at Rachi or Monikia (Figs 5.77 & 5.78). The church, which was recently restored by the Archaeological Service of Cyclades (Figs 5.77 & 5.78), was initially erected as a relatively small three-aisled barrel-vaulted basilica during the early 8th century, based on architectural observations and the existence of possible pre-iconoclastic wall paintings (Dimitrokallis 2000, 34-35; Mastoropoulos 2006, 184-185, 194, fig.13, 130; Ohnesorg 2012, 118, Aslanidis 2014a, 46-47, pl.11, figs 14-15). Furthermore, less than 700 m northeast of Taxiarchis...
and the village of Rachi is located the church of Agios Isidoros (Figs 5.74 & 5.75). It is a three-aisled basilica (Fig. 5.79), probably dated to the 6th or 7th century which underwent several restorations and alterations concerning its architecture, which changed the initial building’s form (Dimitrokallis 1995, Mastoropoulos 2006, 171, 173-174, fig.83; Aslanidis 2014a, 26-28, pl.5-7, figs 3-5).

Nowadays both churches stand like isolated religious landmarks within the characteristic rural highland landscape of Naxos (Fig. 5.74). The two neighbouring monuments of Taxiarchis and Agios Isidoros have been erected at slightly elevated sites, on the lower slopes of the mountain that delimitates to the west the Tragea plain (Figs 5.78 & 5.79). Taxiarchis is situated less than 180 m west of the present-day tiny village of Rachi (Monikia), while Agios Isidoros is placed approximately 1270 m northwest of Protothronos. In topographical terms, it is apparent they lie along the western limits of the fertile plateau of Tragea, between best agricultural fields and grazing land. A small stream flows less than 60 m east of each church. From each site there is good visibility of the plain’s interior and of the central village of Chalki (Fig. 5.77). Both sites were also surveyed in 2006 in the context of the Naxos Survey Project (radius 200 m around the church) producing similar valuable ceramic evidence dating to Late Antiquity (AD 2006, 1113-1114; Vionis forthcoming). The concentration of surface pottery around the churches shows a high proportion of sherds dated to Late Antiquity. It seems that both sites can be classified as small villages or farmsteads and occupied limited areas immediately south of the churches. These small sites probably pre-existed the erection of the churches (Taxiarchis and Agios Isidoros), which have been survived to the present day.

Finally, the church complex of Panagia Drosiani (Fig. 5.80) is located in the small deep and lush valley in the northern part of the plateau of Tragea, approximately 2.5 km northeast of Chalki and only a few metres southwest of the present-day village of Moni, and at about 500 m above sea level (Drandakis 1988; Mastoropoulos 2006, 194-195, figs 148-150; Aslanidis 2014a, 39-40, pl.9, figs 8-10). The initial building belongs to the architectural type of a tri-conch church with dome dating to the 6th or most probably to the middle 7th century (see more about the discussion of the
chronology of the church in Aslanidis 2014a, 39-40). Three adjoining chapels were added to the initial church in the course of the Middle Byzantine centuries. The religious complex is decorated with wall paintings in different phases dated from the 7th to the 14th centuries. The church's site lies on the slopes of the mountain surrounded by a terraced landscape which is today fully planted with olive trees, fruit trees and vineyards, forming a small but fertile productive farming zone. It provides a partial view of the northeast plain of Tragea while connected to the region of Apiranthos in the east. No surface surveys or systematic excavations have been conducted at the site so it is difficult to ascertain any possible association with a settlement during Late Antiquity. According to written sources of the Post-Byzantine period, Drosiani is referred to as a monastery. A close examination of the area’s micro-geomorphology suggests Drosiani is located on the slopes of the mountain that delimitates to the north the Tragea plain. This parameter can be proved important for the interpretation of the function of the site (see below).

The general picture about settlement pattern during Late Antiquity in the plateau of Tragea, emerging through the archaeological material discussed above, shows a high density of various sites scattered within this productive farming zone on central Naxos (Fig. 5.75). The dominant and central position of the Late Antique nucleated village of Chalki in this landscape makes it reasonable to assume that it progressively became the leading centre of this productive zone. Moreover, the setting of the large basilica of Protothronos in the 6th or 7th century, presumably, at the heart of this village cannot be considered coincidental, allowing us to argue that it emerged as the main reference point in this highland rural community. Thus, the importance of the village is also related to the actual presence of this regional religious landmark. Furthermore, a number of smaller sites existed and functioned in close proximity to Chalki within the landscape of Tragea. This gives the impression of a native highland community organised into a dense network of small units around a relatively large central settlement. These satellite sites were not located in the central fertile ground of this significant agricultural zone, but instead were placed along its perimeter, lying on the slopes of the mountains that delimitates to the plateau the Tragea.

The density of different types of sites within the micro-topography of Tragea suggests an intensively exploited landscape during Late Antiquity. As is also observed in the lowland landscapes of western Naxos, in the highland region of Tragea there is a consistent association between settlements’ location, best quality of land and abundance of water sources. However, apart from the soils fertility, another important factor is that these sites (Agios Isidoros and Taxiarchis) were being located close to substantial areas of grazing land (Figs 5.78 & 5.79). Although this issue will be thoroughly discussed in the Chapter 5.4.6, which combines all the available data from central Naxos (Potamia, Tragea, Apiranthos, Danakos), it is safe to assume that the region’s population mainly dealt with agricultural and pastoralist activities during the period in question. Thus, as is observed in the valley of Potamia, it appears the location of the Late Antique sites within this landscape is related to the availability of arable and grazing land and a close water supply. This may be a major factor in the development of the settlement pattern of Tragea suggesting that especially the small satellite sites of Taxiarchis and Agios Isidoros, lying at the intersection between arable and grazing land, functioned as marginal places between the two important economic activities of this highland community: the agriculture and the pastoralism.

The small satellite rural/pastoral sites of Tragea were certainly associated and dependent on the
central village of Chalki. This strengthens the view that Chalki emerged, presumably, as a local centre for controlling this highland mixed farming productive zone over the course of Late Antiquity. From this point of view, it might have acted as a place from which the satellite rural sites of Tragea were easily controlled. A similar pattern can be recognised in the peninsula of Methana where at the plain of Throni a site with pressing equipment may be associated with three other sites with strong agricultural character in the immediate vicinity (Mee & Forbes 1997, 88-89). In addition, the Berbati Survey in the Argolid has suggested that only one large estate exploited the valley by Late Antiquity, consisting of a villa and a cluster of sites around it (Wells & Runnels 1996). In the case of the valley of Tragea in the islands of Naxos the continuous and special care of this mountain community to restore and decorate the main religious landmark of the area constitutes tangible signs of village life, suggesting the Late Antique settlement of Chalki was, presumably, the local landowners’ main residence.

Additionally, the application of least cost path analysis and a close examination of the area’s micro-geomorphology suggests the church of Drosiani was presumably located along land routes which were important for intra-island connectivity (Fig. 5.81). Bearing in mind that the ancient and medieval road networks connecting the inland areas mainly followed physiographic constraints, the paths created
using least cost analysis are once more quite accurate. A path extends northward and connects the basin of Tragea with areas of northern Naxos through the region of Sifones. A second path extends eastward connecting the regions of Tragea and Apiranthos, which were two of the most significant productive zones on central Naxos. It seems that Drosiani was placed at a crucial point along these routes. This may be an important factor in the selection of the church’s location, as Drosiani could have a key role functioning not only as a boundary point that marks the northern limits of the fertile basin of Tragea but also as a place for mobility control. Finally, we should not forget that the churches of Taxiarchis, Agios Isidoros and Drosiani probably reflect an attempt to sacralise this mountainous landscape. Additionally, only a few kilometres north of the plateau of Tragea is located the church of Agios Ioannis at the site Sifones (Fig. 5.82). On the basis of architectural similarities with other Naxian churches, it is dated to the 8th or 9th century (Aslanidis 2014a. 170-173, pl.50, figs 67-68). The chapel has been placed amid a narrow fertile basin with available arable land and water sources surrounded by high mountains. The plateau of Sifones is situated between the regions of Tragea and Koronos. It is most likely the church of Agios Ioannis was associated with a land route that

![Distribution of sites in the region of Tragea during the Byzantine Early Middle Ages.](image)

**Fig. 5.82:** Distribution of sites in the region of Tragea during the Byzantine Early Middle Ages.
connected central Naxos (region of Tragea) to areas of north Naxos, such as Keramoti and Koronos (Fig. 5.81). The church is located about 2.5 km northwest of Drosiani which was presumably located along the svame route before the exit of the large plateau of Tragea.

This rural world at the heart of Naxos continued to be vibrant even during the turbulent Byzantine Dark Ages (Fig. 5.82). On the basis of the aniconic decoration, the church of Taxiarchis at Rachi discussed above and the church of Agios Ioannis at Kaloxyllos can be dated to the 8th or 9th century (Aslanidis 2014a, 119-122, pl.32, figs 42-43). The construction of new churches in connection with the continuous use of the main religious landmark of Protothronos as well as the smaller monuments of Agios Isidoros and Drosiani suggest a continuation of intensive agricultural and pastoralist practices in the region of Tragea in the course of the Byzantine Early Middle Ages. Thus, in the case of Tragea the patterns of settlement distribution in relation to soil productivity and availability of grazing land did not change from Late Antiquity to the Byzantine Early Middle Ages. This correlation is positive and persistent through time regardless of the new socioeconomic changes that occurred in the Aegean during the turbulent Dark Ages.

On the basis of the evidence discussed above it becomes apparent that the Late Antique and Medieval landscape of Tragea has been very busy. As has been observed in many other areas of Naxos (Apiranthos, Chimarros), substantial traces of Early Medieval activity suggests the habitation patterns appear to have been as intensive as that of Late Antiquity. The continuity of habitation reflects that this productive zone has been settled, actively exploited and in other ways modified by humans from Late Antiquity through the Middle Ages.

5.4.4 The regions of Apiranthos and Danakos

In contrast with the plateau of Tragea, the regions of Apiranthos and Danakos are characterised by a steep and “fragmented” landscape, which is carved by various small fertile plains or valleys. This landscape creates scattered and remote highland productive zones (Figs 5.3 & 5.68). In both regions a dense concentration of Late Antique and Byzantine churches can be observed (Figs 5.83 & 5.84). Unfortunately archaeological investigations have focussed only on the architecture of these specific monuments with no attempt to place sites and landscapes within their contexts in the landscape. The systematic study of the archaeological material from the regions of Apiranthos and Danakos in conjunction with the consideration of the localised environmental advantages of this Naxian mountainous landscape reveals valuable information about the settled landscape during the periods in question.

The group of two independent adjacent churches of Agios Georgios and Agios Pachomios is located approximately 800 m south of the present-day mountain village of Apiranthos (Fig. 5.85). The church complex has a complicated building history due to the numerous restorations and alterations of its initial architecture, making it difficult to precisely assess the chronology of the different phases (AD 545-547, figs 686-689; AD 1969, 405-406, fig.417; Dimitrokallis 1976, 106; 2000, 46; Mastoropoulos 2006, 216-217, fig.170, 174; Aslanidis 2014a, 180-186, pl.53-54, figs 73-74). On the basis of the evidence from the aniconic decoration, the larger church of Agios Georgios has been considered as the complex’s initial building dating to the 9th century. The erection of the smaller chapel of Agios Pachomios in the northwest corner of the pre-existing church can be dated to the second half of the 11th or 12th century (Aslanidis 2014a, 182-184).

The church complex is located at the heart of the largest and most fertile productive farming zone in the region of Apiranthos (Fig. 5.85). It is surrounded by a hilly and terraced landscape, which at a higher altitude become steeper with plenty of rough grazing ground. This small well-watered highland basin is delimited to the west by Mt Fanari and to the east by Mt Korakia. Despite its proximity to the east coastline of Naxos, it does not have easy and direct access to the sea, as the mountain slope drops extremely steeply down to the shore. As a result of this, the region is well-protected, hardly accessible and not visible from the sea, forming a specific mountainous geo-cultural entity.

Surface ceramic and architectural records give the impression of a multi-period site. The surrounding area of the church was surveyed in 2006
in the context of the Naxos Survey Project (radius 200 m) producing valuable ceramic evidence dating from Late Antiquity to the Middle Byzantine period (AD 2006, 1113-1114; Vionis forthcoming). The surface ceramics suggest that a village community occupied an area around the later church complex during Late Antiquity (Fig. 5.83). This settlement survived well into the Byzantine Early Middle Ages as evidenced by surface pottery and the non-figurative frescoes of the early 9th century in the initial church of Agios Georgios (Fig. 5.84). Human activity is also attested during the Middle Byzantine period as indicated by successive layers of wall paintings and the erection of the later chapel of Agios Pachomios in the 11th-12th century. The site’s setting in this landscape shows a correlation between settlement, best quality land, water supply, and rough grazing ground, suggesting an intensified exploitation of this landscape. This association did not change from Late Antiquity to the Early and Middle Byzantine periods. Thus, it is safe to assume that, the region’s population mainly dealt with agricultural and pastoralist activities during the periods in question (see more in Chapter 5.4.6).

The application of viewshed analysis of the churches of Agios Georgios and Agios Pachomios shows that the visibility of the site is mostly restricted within the borders of this fertile basin (Fig. 5.86). Moreover, during the period of Iconoclasm, probably,
in the early 9th century another small chapel was constructed at the site Kakavas, only a few meters east of the churches of Agios Georgios and Agios Pachomios (Mastoropoulos 2006, 218-219; Aslanidis 2014a, 105-107, pl.29, figs 36-37) (Fig. 5.84). The church of Stavros or Agios Ermolaos in the shape of a free cross with a dome resting on four arches is decorated with aniconic frescoes, and was probably associated with the nearby village community.

The small church of Agia Kyriaki is located approximately 3 km northeast of the village of Apiranthos, at the site called Kalloni (Fig. 5.87). The religious complex consists of the main church, the narthex, and a chapel to the south while further south the ruins of a second chapel are preserved (Vasilaki 1962-1963; Dimitrokallis 1983; 2000, 36, 44-45; AD
The initial building belongs to the type of single-aisled domed church decorated with aniconic wall paintings. Fragments of a second later layer were also found dating to the 13th century. On the basis of the evidence of the non-figurative decoration in connection with architectural observations, the erection of the church has been placed in the early 9th century. Shortly thereafter, in a second construction phase, the narthex and side-chapel were added to the initial building (Aslanidis 2014a, 154; 2014b, 227).

The micro-landscape in which this church is placed, presents some peculiar features compared to the other rural sites from central Naxos analysed above. Today the church appears as a small religious landmark in a deserted spot close to a tiny highland basin surrounded by Mt Pastelas to the west and Mt Stavromenies to the east (Fig. 5.87). It lies on the lower western slope of Mt Stavromenies amidst a barren, steep and mountainous landscape with limited available terraced arable fields and water sources, but plenty of rough grazing ground. At first sight, the location seems isolated due to being hardly accessible. However, less than 2 km north, on the opposite slopes of Mt Amomaxis, about 50 emery mines have been operating in the Early Modern period constituting the local economy’s major contributors until the 20th century.

The church was included among the surveyed sites of the Naxos Survey Project (AD 2006, 1113-1114; Crow et al. 2011, 128-129; Vionis 2013, 30; forthcoming). Despite the steep and deserted location, the analysis of surface ceramics data suggests a multi-period occupation of the site. A scatter of Late Antique pottery sherds suggests a small village was located at the site of Kalloni, occupying an area southeast and southwest of the later church complex (Fig. 5.83). According to Vionis, the site bears evidence of a continuous and uninterrupted occupation from Late Antiquity to the Early Middle Ages (Fig. 5.84) (2013, 33; forthcoming). The vast majority (up to 70%) of the surface ceramics collected during this survey are dated to the period between the 7th and 9th centuries and mostly contains vessels related to rural activities and transport, such as pithoi, jars and amphorae (Crow et al. 2011, 128-129; Vionis forthcoming). From this viewpoint, the Early Medieval settlement appears to have been larger than its Late Antique predecessor. This large nucleated village was associated with the contemporary ecclesiastical monument decorated with aniconic fresco paintings.

The Late Antique and Medieval village at the site of Kalloni was related to a small highland community of peasants and shepherds, suggesting that during the periods in question the majority of the available productive zones on Naxos were settled, actively exploited and in many ways modified by humans, regardless of the steep and mountainous character of the landscape (see more in Chapter 5.4.6). The ceramic, architectural and painting evidence from Kalloni reflects a continuous intensified exploitation.
of this micro-landscape from Late Antiquity to, at least, the 13th century.

Additionally, another major factor that we need to bear in mind in the case of Kalloni is the possible existence of ancient and medieval communication land routes through this landscape which were associated with this small site. In the hinterland of Naxos due to the extremely steep and rough topography the interconnection between the most significant productive zones of the central part of the island could be possible mainly through the various geological formations, such as gorges, valleys and small basins that carved the landscape. The application of least cost path analysis and a close examination of the area’s micro-geomorphology shows that the settlement of Kalloni was associated with a dense of land routes which were important for the intra-island connectivity (Fig. 5.88).

A path extends southward and connects the settlement of Kalloni with the region of the small basin of Apiranthos (where the Late Antique and Early Byzantine settlement around the church of Agios Georgios and Pachomios is located) through a narrow accessible green valley. It is worth mentioning that there is significant overlap between the modelled path and the known well-preserved paved footpath that connected the modern village of Apiranthos, which is the region’s largest settlement involved with the exploitation of emery, within the heart of the area of mining activity. This path was for many years a major and busy land route, since every day workers from this village and the surrounding areas followed this itinerary to reach their workplace. However after the closure of the emery mines this road lost its importance. In this respect, it remains open an question if the emery mines were in use during the periods under study. A future study would contribute more evidence to this issue. This modelled path is also linked with the vertical route (E-W) that connects the wider regions of Tragea and Apiranthos through Mt Fanari and the church of Drosiani.

A second path extends eastward and connects the area of Kalloni with the coastal bay of Azala through the river valley of Pnichtis. Additionally, a third path extends westward linking the region of Kalloni with the area of Sifones. The application of viewshed analysis from the church of Agia Kyriaki shows the site has good views over the land route.
that linked Apiranthos with Kalloni (Fig. 5.88). Having considered all the evidence discussed above, it is possible the settlement of Kalloni was located at a crucial point along a network of land routes that connected the regions of Apiranthos and Danakos with the central and north-eastern mountainous parts of Naxos as well as with the island’s east coastline. Thus, the small rural settlement would have functioned throughout the centuries as a locus of mobility control.

Apart from this important site, three Early Byzantine monuments can be seen in the wider region of Apiranthos (Fig. 5.84): the churches of Agios Ioannis at Afikli (Mastoropoulos 2006, 218-219; Aslanidis 2014a, 42-45, pl.10, figs 11-13 with further bibliography), Theotokos at Demos (Mastoropoulos 2006, 230-231; Aslanidis 2014a, 92-96, pl.25-26, figs 29-30), and Agios Mamas at Ntriti (Mastoropoulos 2006, 227, 231; Aslanidis 2014a, 128-132, pl.36, figs 48-49). The basilica of Agios Ioannis Theologos at Afikli is located about 1 km northeast of Apiranthos and less than 900 m southeast of Theotokos at Demos. On the basis of architectural observations and similarities with other Naxian churches it is dated to the late 7th or early 8th century (Aslanidis 2014a, 43). The church of Theotokos at the site called Demos is located approximately 2 km northeast of the fertile basin of Apiranthos amid a small but fertile plateau. On the basis of similarities with other Naxian examples, it has been dated to the 8th or 9th centuries (Aslanidis 2014a, 94). The church of Agios Mamas at Ntriti is located approximately 2.5 km northeast of Apiranthos along the modern way that leads to the coastal area of Moutsouna. Based on architectural observations it has been dated to the period of Iconoclasm (Aslanidis 2014a, 131).

At the moment no survey has been conducted around these churches and therefore, there is no evidence regarding their association with settlements. The basilica at Afikli is located along the previously discussed major path that connected the basin of Apiranthos with the region of Kalloni and the emery mines. In addition, the application of viewshed analysis from the church of Agia Kyriaki shows Agios Ioannis was visible from Kalloni (Fig. 5.88). It is quite reasonable, then, to assume that this church at Afikli was associated with the road that linked the region of Apiranthos with the previously discussed area of Kalloni. In addition, the placement of Theotokos at Demos in a small but fertile productive zone also makes its association with a rural/pastoral Early Medieval settlement possible. Finally, the church of Agios Mamas at Ntriti might be connected to a land route that linked the region of Apiranthos to the coastal area of Moutsouna. The consideration of the religious monuments discussed above makes it clear that the wider region of Apiranthos appeared to have been well-connected through a dense network of itineraries during Late Antiquity and the Byzantine Early Middle Ages, despite its mountainous character.

Cape Stavros is located approximately 6 km east of Kalloni; set almost in the middle of the east coastline of Naxos (Fig. 5.68). The cape’s shoreline is characterised by complexity, as it is flanked by several tiny bays – the most important of them are the bays of Azalas and Agios Dimitrios to the north and the bay of Moutsouna to the south. From west and northwest Stavros is surrounded by a small coastal plain which is the only productive farming zone along the east coastline of Naxos. Two river valleys (one of which is the aforementioned river valley of Pnichtis) that carve the landscape from the mountainous interior to the sea, cross the plain flowing into the beaches of Azalas and Agios Dimitrios. This interesting mild and lowland coastal landscape creates a strong contradiction with the mountainous area of Apiranthos and the steepness of the remainder of the east coastline of Naxos. In modern times the bay of Moutsouna was the main exit to the sea for the area of Apiranthos, and its small commercial port functioned as an emery export point until 1978.

However, in the context of a French surface survey on Naxos in 1982 (Treuil 1983, 60, map 2) some important traces of human activity during the Roman period and Late Antiquity were discovered in the area of the small modern chapel of Agios Dimitrios (Fig. 5.89). According to researchers, the large quantity of Roman surface ceramics in conjunction with remains of ancient structures suggests human occupation during the period in question. A closer examination of the micro-landscape shows the wider region of Azalas and Agios Dimitrios is connected to the areas of the Late Antique and Early Medieval settlements of Kalloni and Apiranthos through river valleys (Fig. 5.88). Thus, presumably, this lowland
coastal zone would have functioned as the main exit to the sea for the wider region of Apiranthos. In this context the setting of a possible settlement in the tiny bay of Agios Dimitrios can be interpreted as a small coastal settlement with a safe anchorage (Fig. 5.83). The site corresponds to an area with fertile soils which could sustain a small number of inhabitants.

The small church of Agios Panteleimon is located at the site called Lakkomersina; approximately 2.3 km southeast of the village of Apiranthos and less than 2 km northeast of Danakos. It is a small two-aisled barrel-vaulted church (Fig. 5.90) with successive layers of fresco paintings, the most important of them are dated to the 9th (aniconic) and 13th centuries (Acheimastou-Potamianou 1984, 376; Drandakis 1985-1990, 32-37; Dimitrokallos 2000, 42; Mastoropoulos 2006, 224, 231; fig.176; Aslanidis 2014a, 139-141, pl.40, figs 52-53). On the basis of the evidence from the aniconic decoration in conjunction with architectural observations, the church is dated to the 9th century. Today the church of Agios Panteleimon is abandoned and accessible only by local shepherds (Fig. 5.78). The selection of its location bears many similarities with the aforementioned area of Kalloni. It lies on the slopes of a low hill within the large valley of Lakkomersina and is surrounded by a hilly and heavily terraced landscape with limited arable land but plenty of rough grazing ground.

Despite the fact the location seems deserted today; this micro-landscape appears to be busy during Late Antiquity and mostly the Early Middle Ages. Ceramic evidence from the Naxos Survey Project suggests that immediately east of the church a small village developed between the 5th and 7th centuries (Fig. 5.83) (AD 2006, 1113-1114; Crow et al. 2011, 128-129; Vionis forthcoming). This site, as is observed in the case of Kalloni, is most likely related to a local community of peasants and shepherds. In the course of the following Early and Middle Byzantine periods, this mountain village remained active, as indicated by the ceramic evidence and the erection of the church of Agios Panteleimon which reflects the continuous care of the local community for the renewal of its painted decoration (Fig. 5.84). Furthermore, in this case it is also possible the settlement was located nearby a land route, which passed through the valley of Lakkomersina connecting the areas of the modern villages of Apiranthos and Danakos to Naxos’s east coastline.

At the moment, this is the only known Late Antique site in this area. The possible existence of another site dated to this period (Fig. 5.83) is indicated by the sculptural decoration found in the church of Fotodotis (Aslanidis 2014a, 68, n.58, figs 21, 22 & 25γ). The church has a complex building history and its initial phase has been recently dated to the period of Iconoclasm (after the middle 8th century) on the basis of architectural observations and the existence of aniconic decoration (Aslanidis 2014a, 74-75). However, a number of sculptures, such as a fragment of an ambo with relief decoration and several column shafts testify to the existence of
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a monumental Late Antique basilica at the same site or at a nearby location. The fragment of the *ambo* has been incorrectly identified as a closure slab of a *templon* (see Aslanidis 2014a, 68). Nevertheless, on the basis of similarities with relevant material from many regions of the Empire, this piece can be securely identified as a marble screen of the *ambo*'s balcony, decorated with a cross with expanding ends on globe (see a close parallel in Djobadze 1984). More specifically, it belongs to an *ambo* with two stairways on either side of a relatively high platform supported by piers or colonnettes. This type of *ambo* manufactured in Constantinopolitan workshops and exported thought the Empire during the 6th century (see more in Sodini et al. 1998). Concerning the columns, the large grained white marble with grey bands appears to be proconnesian. Therefore, all these marble sculptures were products of Constantinopolitan workshops and imported to Naxos in order to decorate a monumental Late Antique basilica. A future study of this material would contribute more supplementary evidence to support this view.

In contrast, this mountainous landscape appeared to have been very busy during the Byzantine Early Middle Ages (Fig. 5.84) as evidenced by the erection of the churches of Fotodotis (Aslanidis 2014a, 60-87, pl.16-23, figs 19-26 with further bibliography) and Agios Ioannis at Danakos (Aslanidis 2014a, 127-129, pl.35, figs 46-47), Agios Ioannis Theologos at Grammata (Aslanidis 2014a, 97-101, pl.27, figs 31-33) and Agios Georgios at Ropiki (Aslanidis 2014a, 133-138, pl.37-39, figs 50-51) during the 8th and 9th centuries. At the moment no survey has been conducted around these churches and therefore there is no evidence regarding their association with settlements. However, they indicate intensive human activity in the area during the Early Middle Ages.

The picture about settlements in the regions of Apiranthos and Danakos during Late Antiquity, emerging through the evidence discussed above, shows a dense network of rural/pastoral sites scattered around the most productive farming zones (Fig. 5.83). The settled landscape consists of both larger nucleated villages and smaller dispersed remote settlements placed within the numerous valleys and basins of east central Naxos. The density of agro/pastoral sites suggests an intensification of land use in almost every corner of the region during Late Antiquity, regardless of the landscape’s steepness. On the other hand, these rural settlements on elevated sites within valleys and basins could have played a regional role in the network of intra-island connectivity. Thus, another factor in the development of the settlement pattern may be the setting of several sites along the land routes that connected the mountainous areas of Naxos (Fig. 5.88). Furthermore, the discovery of the coastal site of Agios Dimitrios in the middle of the eastern coastline suggests the mountainous area of central Naxos, and most notably the region of Apiranthos, was not a closed highland community but an open microcosm interacting with broader worlds integrated into the trade networks of Late Antiquity.

What is more important in the cases of Apiranthos and Danakos is the fascinating picture of continuity in both habitation and land use patterns from Late Antiquity into the Byzantine Early Middle Ages. The patterns of settlement distribution in relation to the availability of grazing and arable land as well as the proximity to land routes remained persistent from Late Antiquity to Middle Ages. This mountainous region suggests a picture of more intensive habitation compared to the previous period (Fig. 5.84). All types of settlements present tangible evidence of village life (erection of churches with aniconic decoration, a special care for restoration or enlargement of the initial buildings, a continuous care for renewal of their painting decoration, and the valuable surface ceramic evidence) suggesting a continuity of use of the sites throughout Early and Middle Byzantine centuries. There are no indications of abandonment, decline, or relocation of sites in order to secure more favourable conditions. Contrariwise, the study of the surface pottery from Kalloni shows a remarkable increase in ceramic finds between the 7th and 9th centuries compared to Late Antiquity (Crow et al. 2011, 128-129; Vionis forthcoming).

Additionally apart from the previously discussed churches with aniconic decoration, a large number of small churches were constructed between the 7th and 9th centuries in almost every corner in the regions of Apiranthos and Danakos. The small churches of Agios Ioannis Theologos at Afikli, Theotokos at Dimo, Agios Ioannis Theologos at Grammata, Agios Mamas at Driti, Agios Georgios at Ropiki and, possibly, the initial phase of the monastery of...
Fotodotis at Danakos have generally been dated to the period of the Iconoclast controversy (Fig. 5.84) (see more details regarding the chronology of each church in Aslanidis 2014a). Unfortunately, the study of these sites was not included in the context of the Naxos Survey Project, so at the moment there is no evidence regarding their possible association with settlements during the Early Byzantine period or if Late Antique occupations pre-existed at the same sites. In any case the erection of at least 9 small churches in the wider areas of Apiranthos and Danakos between the 7th-9th centuries not only reflects a building boom but also an increase in occupations. A future intensive survey around these humble chapels would contribute more evidence to support this theory.

From our study of the settlement pattern of the regions of Apiranthos and Danakos it appears this rough highland landscape has been inhabited, cultivated and in many ways modified by humans from Late Antiquity to the 9th century. All the evidence indicates a state of relevant affluence, a stable mixed economy, and most importantly, a continuing system of stockfarm and agricultural exploitation. Thus, in the case of Apiranthos, as is observed in the region of Tragea, intensive exploitation of the local landscape is not only a characteristic of the Late Antique period but also the following turbulent Byzantine Early Middle Ages. This vibrant rural world lasted at least to the Middle Byzantine period.

5.4.5 A comparative view of the settled landscapes of central Naxos

The comparative study of the settlements of the regions of Tragea, Apiranthos and Danakos from Late Antiquity to Early Middle Ages shows that differences in settlement patterns on the same island are presented not only between different periods of time, but also between different areas during the same centuries (Figs 5.91 & 5.92). Both case-studies show the extent to which the diversities of local natural

Fig. 5.91: A comparative picture of the settlement patterns in the regions of central Naxos (Tragea and Apiranthos) during Late Antiquity.
environment influenced the internal evolution of the settlement pattern on the island of Naxos, creating different models of habitation in neighbouring areas.

As has been demonstrated above, the natural environment of the regions of Apiranthos and Danakos are characterised by an extremely steep landscape which is carved by various geological formations, creating small isolated mountainous productive zones. In this “fragmented” landscape, the development of settlements was adjusted to the landscape’s peculiar traits, forming a network of small remote rural communities. The settlements around the churches of Agios Georgios-Agios Pachomios and Agia Kyriaki might have functioned as regional leading centres due to their size and key position in the landscape. However, parameters such as the long distances between settlements and the landscape’s steepness suggest that the scattered remote communities of peasants and shepherds across the periphery of Apiranthos and Danakos were less dependent on them.

In contrast, the region of Tragea is dominated by a lush gentle valley with dense vegetation and abundant water sources, forming a large single terrain for habitation. However, this large fertile productive farming zone was hardly accessible from almost any direction, creating a local system. In this “unified” and mild mountainous landscape, only a few kilometres westward of Apiranthos, a different settlement pattern developed during Late Antiquity and Early Middle Ages, consisting of a cluster of small rural settlements around a central leading centre. As opposed to the dispersed communities of Apiranthos and Danakos, the satellite rural sites of Tragea were fully dependent on the central settlement around the church of Protothronos in the present-day village of Chalki. It seems the inhabitants of Tragea basin, due to the peculiar traits of this micro-landscape since antiquity, had a sense of common regional identity simultaneously with their identity as Naxians, forming a small geo-cultural entity within the island of Naxos. A similar case we have seen in the region of Saggri.
The consideration of the examples of Tragea, Apiranthos and Danakos makes it evident that despite the fact that in both cases the settlements’ location was, mostly, related to the availability of arable and grazing land and a close supply of water, they developed, however, different settlement networks as a result of the diversities of their micro-landscapes. Patterns of settlement distribution were adjusted to the specific geographical spaces. Thus, the concept studying the micro-geography of the settlement’s territory can be set as a key-element in the interpretation of settlement patterns of the insular communities in the Eastern Mediterranean.

5.4.6 Evidence of a mixed agro/pastoral economy on central Naxos

As has been demonstrated above, archaeology has revealed an increasing number of Late Antique and Early Byzantine sites across the mountainous landscape of central and east central Naxos. The density of different types of sites within the micro-topographies of Potamia, Tragea, Apiranthos and Danakos suggests an intensively exploited landscape during the periods in question. Nonetheless, the nature of this “exploitation” and the exact function of these highland sites are not fully understood. This study, despite many limitations, attempts to offer a number of new and interesting keys to a better understanding of the settled landscape of mountainous Naxos during Late Antiquity and the Byzantine Early Middle Ages integrating this evidence to the most recent discussions of pastoralism in antiquity.

The difficulties of identifying pastoral sites are well-known and are based on the fact that the characteristic artefacts associated with pastoralism are mostly invisible archaeologically because they would have been made of organic materials. Due to the fact that pastoralist activities leave little if any trace, an alternative way of identifying them is offered by the analysis of a site’s location in its micro-landscape, which may be an important parameter to its function (see more about the discussion of pastoralism in Antiquity in Forbes 1995).

In the case of central Naxos, we do not have any material evidence that can prove the existence of livestock farming in the periods in question. The only secure information comes from the production site at Saggri in the interior of the lowland western Naxos where small finds testify wool-processing (Simantoni-Bournia 2001, 30-31, fig.34). The landscape of central Naxos is characterised by a plethora of well-watered, small but fertile productive zones (plateaus, valleys) scattered in mountainous areas which are surrounded by abundant grazing land. Thus, a common feature shared by the various sites of central Naxos (Potamia, Tragea, Apiranthos, Danakos) is that they are generally located close both to well-watered and fertile soils as well as to steep rocky slopes.

In the plateau of Tragea some Late Antique sites are lying at the intersection between arable and grazing land (Taxiarchis and Agios Isidoros). The decision to place such small village communities or farmsteads along these marginal places (Fig. 5.78 & 5.79) strongly suggests that extensive areas of steep hill-slopes that surround the fertile basin were economically extremely important for the local community, but for some activity other than olive cultivation, which appeared within this fertile basin (Fig. 5.74). The erection at these sites of churches with no elaborate decorative elements on the edge of this unified region during the end of Late Antiquity or the Byzantine Early Middle Ages gave the community a shared identity linking it with its surrounding landscape (Vionis 2017, 172-173). The placement of these sites in this landscape would have allowed particularly easy exploitation of uncultivated land bordering on the cultivated areas. Archaeological remains (churches and surface ceramics) suggest that these sites have a continuous use for many centuries. They possibly signify both the arable and pastoral arm to the local economy, showing that the community’s vital territory extended beyond the limits of the fertile basin and included the mountains above as well. In this context, the settled landscape of Tragea reflects a pattern of a mixed agro/pastoral economy during Late Antiquity and the Byzantine Early Middle Ages which through time remained consistent and stable.

A comparative situation can be found today in same region of Naxos (Tragea) as well as in many other highland communities of Greece, such as the Lasithi plain in Crete. In these cases, villagers interact with the landscape in multiple levels, since
they cultivate the arable fields of these upland basins and at the same time as they exploit the mountainous areas above. They traditionally own arable land within these basins and keep substantial flocks of sheep and goats as well. Thus, pastoralist activities are closely integrated with the management of olive trees or vineyards. Additionally, in the early 13th century Marco Sanudo distributed the mountainous pastures of Naxos to Latin nobles who were established on the island. The new rulers rented the grazing land to local shepherds while, concurrently, they agriculturally exploited the fertile soil of the highland productive zones which are scattered across mountainous Naxos (Zei 2008, 267-268).

Furthermore, the dispersed and seemingly isolated sites with surface ceramic evidence and small churches in Potamia, Apiranthos and Danakos, apart from their association with important land routes, are located in places where one would expect to find shepherds. Thus, it makes sense to assign a pastoralist function to such sites. Herding sheep and goats in the steep slopes was a major element in these economies. The placement of these sites in this “fragmented” landscape reflects a similar pattern to the Tragea basin and would have allowed particularly easy exploitation of uncultivated land. Sites, such as Agia Kyriaki at Kalloni, Agios Georgios and Pachomios at Apiranthos, Agios Panteleimon at Lakkomersina, Agios Ioannis at Afikli and Theotokos at Demos could take advantage both of the uncultivated slopes that could support sizable flocks of sheep and goats and of the small but fertile basins and valleys that could support a number of inhabitants. At the same time, the location of some sites, as such Agios Mamas at Ntriti and Agios Georgios at Ropoki may suggest that they were occasionally occupied by shepherds who moved their flocks in order to exploit all the available grazing land of this landscape.

A similar pattern is represented on Methana (Mee & Forbes 1997), the southern Argolid (Jameson et al. 1994) and Attica (Lohmann 1993). According to Forbes, on Methana and the southern Argolid the location evidence of small Late Roman sites with evidence of olive processing, possibly farmsteads, indicates that they could have included pastoralism as part of their function (1995, 336-337).

Despite the absence of distinctive artefacts, the localised environmental advantages of the Naxian landscape have been conducive to the development and preservation of pastoralist activities, especially in the mountainous part of the island. It seems both cultivated and uncultivated parts of this landscape were intensively exploited and were crucial economic sources during Late Antiquity and the Byzantine Early Middle Ages. The highland communities of Naxos also exploited the abundant natural grazing resources beyond cultivable areas. An economic system of mixed agrarian activities was developed in which animal husbandry was closely integrated with arable agriculture. The plethora of agro/pastoral sites makes it reasonable to assume that part of the livestock products was exported to wider markets, especially during the Late Antique centuries. Moreover, the development of commercial sheep and goat herding is also documented in the countryside of Attica (Lohmann 1993).

Despite modernisation and tourism development, animal husbandry still plays an important role in the economy of Naxos until the present day, especially in the mountainous parts of the island. Naxos is famed for the production of meat and cheese, which are the most exportable products of the island.

5.5 SOUTHEAST NAXOS

5.5.1 Landscape and micro-topography

A few kilometres south of the region of Tragea and the present-day mountainous village of Filoti the landscape becomes extremely steep and barren as the imposing Mt Zas reaches its highest point. The south-western side of the mountain slopes down steeply to the middle of the western coastline, where cape Katomeri is located, and encloses almost by all sides the south-eastern part of the island, forming a relatively isolated geographical space (Figs 5.1 & 5.7: IV). As a result of this, southeast Naxos was hardly accessible from the remainder of the island. The south-eastern side of Mt Zas, however, gently slopes down to the south coastline creating a typical Mediterranean landscape.

The landscape of the south-eastern part of Naxos has gentle mountainous character carved by several hills and geological formations, mainly small narrow valleys. The bedrock consists mainly of marble and the
region is covered by sparse vegetation, mostly by small trees and tall shrubs, because of the poor water-table conditions compared to the central part of the island. The peaks and slopes of the hills are mainly used as grazing land. Nevertheless, within this relatively dry landscape there are numerous hidden small valleys, forming several scattered productive farming zones. Within these valleys are located the most fertile soils on southeast Naxos. The best agricultural lands are situated around the areas of Chimarros and Kaminos, which are set at the heart of southeast Naxos.

The coastline of that part of the island is more complex forming several small bays with sandy or pebbled beaches well-protected from the strong winds. The most important of them are the bays of Panormos and Kalantos which are set in the southeast and southwest corner of this region, respectively (Fig. 5.93). Panormos forms a natural harbour hidden from the sea as it is surrounded by steep high hills. At the same time, it is adjacent to small valleys, facilitating the direct connection of this coastal zone to the hinterland of southeast Naxos, and especially to the region of Chimarros. The cove of the bay to the east forms a small sandy beach, facing the west entrance. The seascape, only a few nautical miles south of the bay of Panormos, contains the so-called Small Cyclades, a cluster of tiny inhabited or uninhabited islands, the most important of which are Koufonissi, Schinoussa, Iraklia and Keros (Fig. 5.93). It only takes a few minutes to reach these islands by boat. Despite the fact the sea separates them from Naxos, the Small Cyclades were always largely dependent on their larger neighbour. The bay of Kalantos forms a natural well-protected harbour and is adjacent to a small valley, facilitating the direct connection of this coastal zone to the hinterland of southeast Naxos, and especially to the region of Kaminos.
5.5.2 The production centre of Chimarros and the commercial port of Panormos

The Hellenistic tower of Chimarros (the so-called “Pyrgos Cheimarrou”) is located at the heart of the south-eastern part of Naxos, between Mt Zas and the south coastline (Figs 5.93 & 5.94). The monument was restored and excavated by the former 21st Ephorate of Prehistoric and Classical Antiquities between 1997 and 2001 (Naxos 1997, 27-33; Filaniotou 2003). In 2015 the systematic study of the material from Chimarros was started in the context of collaboration between Ephorate of Antiquities of the Cyclades and ArtLandS Lab of the University of Cyprus.

Pyrgos Chimarrou is a fortified circular tower from the 4th century B.C., constructed from white marble, which is preserved up to a height of almost 15 m (Fig. 5.94). The surviving part of the monument consists of a ground floor and three upper storeys, with cantilevered steps leading to the uppermost level of the building (see a more detailed description of the Hellenistic tower in Filaniotou 2003, 73-74). It is surrounded by a roughly square precinct wall up to 2 m high (some 35 m each side), which is well-preserved on the south, west and east sides.

Square and round towers of the Classical and Hellenistic periods have been discovered across Mainland Greece and the wider Aegean Archipelago. In the Cyclades in particular, the towers comprise distinctive monuments of the rural landscape during these periods (Paros, Naxos, Kea, Andros, Amorgos, Sifnos etc.). In the neighbouring island of Paros, for example a similar tower has been discovered in the region of Paliopirgos in the wider area of Naoussa but it is still unpublished (Fig. 4.41). In recent decades, towers have been among the most debated types of sites in antiquity. A number of studies have expanded our understanding of the function of these constructions. In this broader scholarly discussion, towers have been associated with guard stations and communication beacons, fortified farms, outposts for intensive agricultural or other activities, such as slave-driven mining endeavours, and protective installations, possibly, for the storage of rural production (Young 1965a; 1965b; Fracchia 1985; Osborne 1986; 1992; Morris & Papadolpoulos 2005; Penttinen 2005). It is quite possible, then, that the towers had multiple functions largely related to their integration in the micro-landscape of each region.

Fig. 5.94: View of the Hellenistic tower of Chimarros. In the detail: satellite image of the site (view from Google Earth). The architectural remains of different periods are marked.
Most of these towers were reused or reoccupied during the Roman or Late Antique period. In the case of Chimarros, architectural remains, ceramic material and evidence from stratigraphic analysis suggest an olive-press complex was founded along the west side of the circuit wall in the 2nd century (Filaniotou 2003, 79-80). During the excavations at the site a complex of seven adjacent rectangular areas was unearthed (Figs 5.94 & 5.95). The areas of this complex were separated by walls, built vertically. These adjacent spaces remained open and accessible from the east side, since no remains of walls were discovered, while the earlier circuit wall itself acted as exterior wall of the complex. In the seven units of this installation, paved floors, small rectangular cisterns and an olive-press bed were discovered (Fig. 5.95) (Filaniotou 2003, 75-79). On the basis of the ceramic evidence, this well-organised olive-press installation remained in use until the late 6th or 7th century (Vionis 2016). It seems, then, that the tower was reused and the area enclosed by the circuit wall around it functioned throughout the Roman and Late Antique period as an industrial installation (Filaniotou 2003, 80-81). On the east side of this enclosed area a three-aisled (possibly barrel-vaulted) basilica was erected between the 5th and 6th centuries and would have been associated with the olive production units. This situation has similarities with the case of Gyroulas on western Naxos (see more in Chapter 5.3.6).

A well-published example of an ancient tower re-occupied during Late Antiquity is Pyrgouthi in the Berbati valley (Hjohlman 2005, 127-266). From at least the second half of the 6th century to the middle of the 7th century Pyrgouthi tower and its surroundings were incorporated into a large farmhouse with a number of rooms used for various purposes.

A careful reading of local topography of the tower in combination with application of spatial analysis and all currently available archaeological data relating to this site (the ongoing study of the ceramic material will provide more evidence in the future) will shed more light on the Late Antique and Early Byzantine settled landscape of southeastern Naxos. This study seeks to place the tower of Chimarros not only into its local context but also into a broad Mediterranean context.

Concerning the location of the site, this tower and its associated installations lie on a hilltop between two seasonal streams, Chimarros to the east and Petronia to the west, approximately 5 km from the nearest accessible coastline of southeastern Naxos (area of Panormos). It is located at the heart of the south-eastern part of Naxos, surrounded by small fertile valleys, which form several scattered productive farming zones, and by steep hill-slopes that offer substantial areas of grazing land (Fig. 5.96). In this respect, the site’s central position amidst this natural environment makes it suitable for an important local nodal point. Thus, the tower of Chimarros functioned as a diachronic rural landmark for the settlement pattern of this rural landscape.

The prominent location of Pyrgos Chimarrou within the landscape of southeast Naxos can be further established by the application of spatial analysis.
Firstly, viewshed analysis shows that the tower had good views over the surrounding landscape (Fig. 5.97). In other words, the visibility from the tower was almost restricted within the natural borders of the southeast part of the island (see more in Chapter 5.5.1). It overlooks important parts of the productive zones of the landscape from the region of Chimarros up to the area of Kaminos. In contrast, it has only partial visibility towards the maritime channel between Naxos and the Small Cyclades (Fig. 5.97). In this respect, the tower was not sea-oriented and, therefore, it is more likely it was orientated towards the interior of the island. Secondly, the application of least cost path principles suggests the tower was associated with a possible network of land routes (Fig. 5.97). Once more, if we consider that the ancient road networks connecting the inland or coastal areas mainly followed physiographic constraints, the paths created using least cost path analysis seem quite accurate. A path extends south-westward through the cavity of a small valley and connects the tower of Chimarros with the region of Kaminos and the bay of Kalantos. Two possible paths extend south-eastward and connect the production site of Chimaros with the bay of Panormos and the associated ancient port (see below). Walking from Chimarros it is easy to reach Panormos by following these important paths. Viewshed analysis suggests Pyrgos Chimarrou had good views over large parts of these land routes. In this context, it seems the location of the tower was easily accessible from almost any place of southeast Naxos.

Combining all previously discussed information, it makes sense to assume that the site during the
Roman and Late Antique centuries (the tower itself and the associated industrial installation) mainly functioned to facilitate the economic exploitation of the local landscape. The industrial site of Chimarros is surrounded by fertile land and can therefore be easily understood as part of intensive agricultural investment. This Roman and Late Antique production centre benefited from the tower’s strategic location point in the south-eastern part of Naxos.

The intensive activity of this industrial unit evidenced by the plethora of the ceramic material from Pyrgos Chimarrou during Late Antiquity shows that olive cultivation is attested in southeast Naxos. This is an indication that the surrounding slopes and small valleys of the wider region were probably full of olive groves in antiquity, in contrast with the landscape’s current condition. Today, the wider region is uninhabited and is characterised by a terraced landscape planted with a few olive trees and the existence of pastoral enclosures (Fig. 5.96 & 5.98). The extraction of oil from olives is a laborious and time-consuming process with many stages. In the early stages, the process contains fertilising, olive collecting, olive drying, and transporting to olive press. At the second stage, it contains olive crushing, olive pressing and oil collecting. The production of oil during Late Antiquity, which is evidenced by the archaeological data from Chimarros, presupposes the existence of a well-organised regional network of rural sites dealing with the early stages of olive production.

Considering the particularities of the local natural environment discussed above (see Chapter 5.5.1), the fertility of the region during antiquity, the strategically positioned tower of Chimarros within this landscape and the excavated material related to the site, it is possible this industrial unit was not established in isolation. Moreover, according to Filaniotou, unpublished archaeological remains, which are scattered around the southeast Naxos, testify to the existence of intensive human activity during the prehistoric and historical periods (2003, 73). Thus, it is most probable that Pyrgos Chimarrou was associated with a number of satellite small rural sites scattered across southeast Naxos which dealt with olive cultivation. An indication of such a rural site is given by the Late Antique basilica at Kaminos (Fig. 5.93) which is about 4 km southwest of the production centre of Chimarros, beneath the Middle Byzantine church of Agios Ioannis Theologos (Mastoropoulos 2006, 206-207). As is demonstrated above, Chimarros was easy accessible by Kaminos through a land route (Fig. 5.97). From this point of view, the tower of Chimarros emerges as an important regional leading centre during the course of Late Antiquity for collecting and controlling the production in the south-eastern part of Naxos, finding a close parallel in the case of Gyroulas at Sagri (see Chapter 5.3.6). In this respect, the industrial centre of Chimarros can reflect intensification of cultivation as well as expansion of the human control and modification of the landscape during Late Antiquity. A future intensive survey centred on this particular area would contribute more evidence to support this notion.

On the other hand, as has been demonstrated in the Chapter 5.4.6, the analysis of site’s location in its micro-landscape is an important parameter to its function and offers an alternative way of identifying pastoralist activities. The substantial areas of grazing land across southeast Naxos (Fig. 5.96) indicate that animal husbandry could have been included as part of the local population’s activity (Fig. 5.98). It is most probable that, sites, such Pyrgos Chimarrou and Agios Ioannis at Kaminos interacted with the landscape at multiple levels, since their location would have allowed exploitation both of cultivated areas and uncultivated grazing land bordering the fertile soils.

The picture of intensified use of the landscape in the course of Late Antiquity from southeast Naxos fits well with the evidence concerning the remainder of the island. The excavation of important industrial installations suggests that in the Eastern Mediterranean a considerable increase in the number, capacity and complexity of the infrastructures specialised in oil production during Late Antiquity is documented (for a bibliographic overview see Zerbini 2013, 63-66). A comparative situation can be found in the peninsula of Methana where a remarkable amount of pressing equipment has been attested, showing high specialisation in olive oil production destined for wider markets (Mee & Forbes 1997, 257-263). Traces of olive oil cultivation and pressing equipment were also discovered in southern Argolid (Runnels & van Andel 1987), Keos (Cherry et al.
The picture from Chimarros suggests a commercial production of oil in the course of Late Antiquity destined primarily for wider markets rather than regional markets for the subsistence of local populations. Thus, the tower of Chimarros emerges as a regional centre of commercial importance for collecting, processing and distributing oil production to wider markets. According to this outlook, the industrial centre of Chimarros appeared to have been a highly interactive site in the context of the unified Late Antique economy. The systematic consideration of the ceramic material has shown the existence of a group of imported vessels from North Africa, Cyprus, the Levant and the Black Sea, indicating a degree of inter-regional connectivity between Chimarros and other sites in the Eastern Mediterranean (Vionis 2016).

What is most interesting in the case of Chimarros is that the analysis of the ceramic material shows a fascinating picture of continuity in both ceramic types and use of the site from Late Antiquity into the Byzantine Early Middle Ages (Vionis 2016). After the middle 7th century the cisterns were covered with earthen floors and new walls were built closing the east side of the oil production units (Filaniotou 2003, 80). This archaeological evidence suggests important changes in the function of the complex during the Byzantine Early Middle Ages. However, it is quite possible that the use of the site has been as intensive as that of the preceding period. As Vionis points out, all known Late Antique ceramic types, such as jugs, cooking pots and amphorae, are ‘replaced’ in the Byzantine Early Middle Ages by developed or altered pottery forms, in more or less equivalent proportions (2016; 2013, 31, fig.6). This industrial site with market orientation was transformed into a local production and storage centre of agricultural goods in the early/middle 7th century. On the basis of the analysis of the Early Medieval assemblage of Chimarros, it appears that this inland site was not an isolated place but remained an interactive insular community despite major changes occurring in the wider socioeconomic context of the Aegean. According to Vionis, the study of the ceramic material from Chimarros dated to the 8th and 9th centuries testifies connections with Constantinople and neighbouring areas, including Paros and possibly other Cycladic islands, as well as Crete, Rhodes and the eastern Peloponnese (2016).

A crucial question however concerns the place through which this exportable produce from southeast Naxos flowed to wider markets, especially during Late Antiquity. Considering the difficulties in communication between the south-eastern part of Naxos and the remainder of the island, the transportation of this production to the main port of the Late Antique city appears almost impossible. In contrast, the close proximity of the site to the southeast coast of Naxos, which forms many small safe anchorages for ships, makes the existence of a regional commercial port along the island’s southeast shoreline more reasonable. In this context, this study suggests that the industrial centre of Chimarros was closely associated with the bay of Panormos, which is located 5 km southeast (Fig. 5.99). As has been
demonstrated above, the application of least cost path analysis shows that Pyrgos Chimarrou was connected with the bay of Panormos through two possible paths (Fig. 5.97).

The bay of Panormos is well-known in the bibliography, especially for the prehistoric installation at Korfari ton Amygdalion (Angelopoulou 2008). However, the existence of port infrastructures during the historical periods within the small bay is attested by the Stadiasmus of Maris Magni (Müller 1855, 499). The port of Panormos is mentioned as «Νάξιον Πάνορμος» (“Panormos of the Naxians”) whilst the main harbour of the island in the city of Naxos is referred to as «Νάξος» (Naxos). It is placed between the ports of Amorgos and Delos. It seems that in the Stadiasmus the two ports of Naxos are of equal importance. The fact that Panormos is listed among the ports of the Aegean world indicates there were maritime facilities in the small bay which was fully integrated into the commercial maritime routes of antiquity. The existence of more than one important commercial port along the coastline of Naxos should not be surprising. Land transport from the hinterland of the island to the south-eastern part of Naxos would be too expensive and ineffective because of the extremely steep character of this micro-landscape. The port of Panormos is well-situated to take advantage of both the natural harbour and the ancient sea routes that passed through this maritime region.

Despite the fact that we lack a clear picture on the infrastructure of the ancient harbour, a careful in situ examination of the surface pottery material at the bay of Panormos in the context of personal observations, further confirms the existence of port installations with long-term use. A large percentage of this surface material was dated to the Late Antique centuries and comprised, mostly, common storage and transport vessels (Fig. 5.100). The vast majority of potsherds, which are scattered all over the surfaces of the north side of the bay, belongs to body fragments of the most representative and widely produced amphora types of Late Roman 1 and 2. Both types constituted the most common commercial vessels from Late Antiquity in the East Mediterranean Sea. The high percentage of Late Roman amphora sherds suggests the harbour of Panormos was in use over the course of Late Antiquity participating in the maritime commercial networks.

Over the course of Late Antiquity an important number of sites along the shoreline of Mainland Greece and the islands were developed, mainly on small or large bays, functioning as coastal trade centres for loading and unloading merchandise (Bintliff 2012b, 357). The vast majority of them could have acted as staging points for the exportable agricultural produce of Greece during the period in question. Several coastal sites of Late Antiquity can be categorised as emporia, a type of maritime settlement that appeared between the 5th and the 7th centuries in coastal areas, and especially along the coastline of the islands. The case of Panormos can be integrated into the broad scholarly discussion concerning emporia (see more about this discussion in Chapter 4.6.3; see also Veikou 2015b, 49-52). Currently, the lack of architectural remnants does not allow us to be very accurate when talking about the status and the extent of the settlement associated with the port of Panormos. Nevertheless, the fact that Panormos was connected with the industrial site at Chimarros and possibly a number of smaller agro/pastoral sites in the hinterland of southeast Naxos, may indicate that it probably functioned as collection point for local agricultural products and as a distribution centre for wider markets. From this point of view, it is reasonable to assume that local oil production from the region’s productive zones was concentrated in the industrial unit of the tower of Chimarros in order to be processed and converted to a commercial product. At a second stage, this exportable surplus was transported to the port of Panormos through the possible land routes that connect the heart of southeast Naxos to the coastline.

In this wide context, the south-eastern part of Naxos emerged as a small link in the chain of the
broader trade networks during Late Antiquity. The region produced important agricultural surpluses, participating in trans-regional exchange and contributing to the economic growth of Naxos. Despite the fact that this part of Naxos was largely isolated from the remainder of the island, it developed an active local community open to contacts and external influence, interacting with broader worlds. The region’s economy was based on the exploitation of commercial crops and the benefits of the Late Antique economy.

Concerning the transition from Late Antiquity to the Early Middle Ages, it has been suggested that, during the 7th and 8th centuries the coastal trade centres, like Panormos, functioned within networks of regional communication (Haldon 2013, 100-101). In this respect, it makes sense to assume that changes which occurred in Pyrgos Chimarrou in the early/middle 7th century and resulted in its transformation into a local production and storage centre of agricultural goods, must have also gone hand in hand with similar changes in the southeast Naxos’ main gateway to the external world, the port of Panormos. The ceramic material of the 8th and 9th centuries from Chimarros that testifies to connections with Constantinople and neighbouring Aegean areas, suggests that the port of Panormos and its associated settlement functioned within a regional communication network during the Byzantine Early Middle Ages. The distance and difficult access to and from Kastro Apalirou and other regions of the island made Panormos the main gateway from southeast Naxos towards the external world, as, due to the steep character of this micro-landscape, intra-island connectivity was challenging. Despite major changes from the late 7th century in maritime routes, moving of goods, markets, ports, commercial networks, and alterations in the nature of trade activities, the port of Panormos, the Pyrgos Chimarrou and the rest of southeast Naxos appeared to have been integrated into regional sea routes and trade patterns, interacting with the Aegean world and the imperial centre during the Byzantine Early Middle Ages.

Another factor that should be considered is the region’s possible relations with the islands of the Small Cyclades (Figs 5.93 & 5.101). Even nowadays this cluster of tiny islands is largely dependent on the island of Naxos. For Late Antiquity little was known until recently about the Small Cyclades.

It is quite interesting that in the small island of Schinoussa, despite its barren landscape, the architectural remains of a Late Antique flourishing coastal settlement were unearthed in the small bay of Livadi (Fig. 5.93) (Chatzilazarou 2008). The ceramic material, dated between the 4th and the 7th century, shows important commercial activities and connections of the island with large production centres in North Africa, Asia Minor and Cyprus. According to the excavator, the settlement was probably abandoned sometime during the second half of the 7th century. The sites’ sea orientation is apparent, since the settlement at Livadia was built in association with an ideally situated harbour. In this respect, it is reasonable to support the view that the settlement was primarily commercial in orientation. The commercial nature of the maritime settlement at Livadia seems strange since it is located only few nautical miles south of the important harbour of Panormos, situated in the southeast corner of Naxos. Additionally, the island’s limited productive capacity makes it logical to assume that it cannot have produced anything of great value and it was not self-sufficient.

Additionally, a few imported lamps from the 6th-7th century from Asia Minor and Constantinople were discovered in Kato Koufonissi, now at the Archaeological Museum of Naxos (Bournias 2014, 788, 791). Finally, a recent study of the tiny uninhabited islet of Dhaskalio (Fig. 5.93), just off the island of Keros and a few miles northeast
of Naxos, provides new evidence for a small site along the south coast which reflects a pattern of occasionally stopping ships in cases of sudden storms during the 6th and 7th centuries (Tzavella 2013).

The archaeological material from the southeast Naxos and the small Cyclades, discussed above, resembles the case of the small islands that lie across the mouth of the Gulf of Corinth (Gregory 1984; 1986b). In general, various islands off the coast of Greece had initially been identified as “Isles of Refuge” when the Slavs invaded Greece in the 6th century (Hood 1970). Nevertheless, more recent studies argue that the settlements on these islands must be viewed as complex socioeconomic phenomena which were results of economic forces or more broadly military and commercial policies (Gregory 1984; 1986b). According to Gregory, the land available for warehouses and other commercial survives at the mainland ports of the Gulf of Corinth (Vathy, Alyki etc.) was extremely limited. Thus, a supportive system of maritime settlements with port infrastructures and other facilities were developed on the off-shore islands (Makronisos, Kouveli) within the Corinthian gulf in order to expand the area used for long distance trade at the large harbours on the mainland (1984, 302-303). It is logical, then, to assume that, in a possibly smaller scale, a system of maritime settlements and port infrastructures were also developed on the satellite islands of small Cyclades in order to support Panormos, the major harbour of this maritime region, during Late Antiquity. The settlement at Diporto on Makronisos (Gregory 1984) resembles the settlement at Livadi on Schinoussa. As on Makronisos, Schinoussa appears to have been a “port of trade”, a place where commercial products from various production centres of the Mediterranean collected and subsequently divided, traded, loaded and continued their journey to broader markets.

In the context of the highly interactive Late Antique Mediterranean economy, trade patterns and sea routes served to connect the small island communities with the broader markets supporting their interaction with the external world. Despite the material’s fragmentary nature, it appears the naval channel between southeast Naxos and the Small Cyclades was fully integrated into the inter-regional networks of moving goods, merchandise, traders and travellers with a system of small commercial ports (Panormos, Livadi, Dhaskalio).

In contrast with the port of Panormos and the Pyrgos Chimarrou, according to the excavator, the settlement at Livadi on Schinoussa the settlement was probably abandoned sometime during the second half of the 7th century (Chatzilazarou 2008). Similar picture emerges from the study of the ceramic material from Dhaskalio (Tzavella 2013). Any change in the Mediterranean trade patterns and sea routes may have had a strong impact on the role of these satellite small and fragile island communities. It makes sense to assume that, due to the major socioeconomic changes that occurred in the Aegean during Byzantine Early Middle Ages, the tiny islands of the Small Cyclades may have had lost their role as places of trade, supportive to the port of Panormos, which now functioned at lesser scale within a regional communication network.

5.6 NORTH NAXOS

5.6.1 Landscape and micro-topography

The northern part of Naxos is the most steep and mountainous region of the island (Fig. 5.102). It is dominated by the central mountain range of Koronos (alt. 992 m). In the northeast and northwest the mountains slope down to the sea very steeply creating an extremely rugged coastline. There are only a few shallow coves that can provide safe shelters for ships. The landscape of northern Naxos is especially varied as there are barren slopes with low vegetation and at the same time several dispersed lush river valleys. Because of the landscape’s steep character there are many high, remote and uninhabited places while the modern settlements are related to the scattered mountainous fertile valleys (alt. around 600 m), such as in Kinidaros, Keramoti, Koronos and Koronida (Komiaki). There is only one coastal settlement in the whole region, the maritime village of Apollonas in the north-eastern part, which is directly connected to the river valley of Potamos. The remainder of the shoreline is barren and uninhabited.
5.6.2 Evidence for settlement pattern on northern Naxos

During the prehistoric and historical periods important human activity has been observed in the northern part of Naxos (Lambrinoudakis 2013). It seems the north-eastern region of Naxos was an area of special economic importance for the island during antiquity as the Naxian white marble was also quarried in the north of Komiaki. The ancient port of Apollonas was located very close to the quarries and functioned as the main export point for Naxian marble in antiquity (Kokkorou-Alevras 2013b). Contrary to the other regions of Naxos however, little is known about the northern part of the island during Late Antiquity and the Byzantine Early Middle Ages.

It makes sense to assume that the important port of Apollonas continued to operate during Late Antiquity. However, currently, the lack of material evidence does not allow us to be very accurate when talking about its function. At the moment, the only available direct evidence for human presence on northern Naxos during Late Antiquity comes from two coastal sites, the bays of Agios Theodoros and Skiros (Fig. 5.102). The tiny bay of Agios Theodoros is located along the northwest coastline of Naxos. In the north part of the small sandy beach around the later church of Agios Theodoros the remains of a Late Antique basilica are visible (Fig. 5.103) (Mastoropoulos 2005, 48-51, figs 16-17; 2006, 98-99, fig.57). The tiny bay of Skiros is located less than a kilometre north of Apollonas, along the northeast coastline of Naxos. Traces of one more Late Antique religious monument have been recognised around the later humble chapel of Agios Fokas (Fig. 5.104) (Mastoropoulos 2005, 39-41; 2006, 244, 247, fig.194). The chapel is surrounded by a terraced landscape and is situated on a slightly elevated site on the slope.
of a low hill. Both sites have not been excavated and it is therefore not possible to offer convincing interpretations regarding their exact dating.

The study of region’s micro-landscape can lead, however, to some possible hypotheses concerning the function of these small isolated sites (Figs 5.105 & 5.106). The bays of Agios Theodoros and Skiros have some localised environmental advantages compared to the other tiny coves, located along the north coastline of Naxos from Apollonas (northeast) up to Abram bay (northwest). In both cases there are no shallows or reefs right outside the bays, while at the same time the shores are sandy and easily accessible from the sea. In contrast, most of the other coves of northern Naxos are extremely rugged and steep. In addition, the bays of Agios Theodoros and Skiros are associated with small narrow valleys carved into the steep and mountainous coastal landscape from the interior to the coast. At the same time, extensive uncultivated grazing land borders on the small cultivated areas. Despite the fact that the availability of fresh water in both cases is limited, the cultivated and uncultivated land was presumably enough to support a small number of inhabitants. On the other hand, the small narrow valleys that carve the landscape from the hinterland to the coast facilitate connectivity between these bays and the island’s interior. However, the interior of north Naxos is extremely steep, barren and rugged, and it seems that none of these bays were associated with large inland productive farming zones. In this respect, it is unlikely these coastal sites would have served as export points for the local agricultural produce, as was the case at the port of Panormos. Moreover, the available space along the bays’ sandy shoreline for the development of a settlement associated with the basilicas is also limited. Having carefully considered the data discussed above it becomes apparent that the
shallow bays of Agios Theodoros and Skiros are the best candidates to serve as temporary anchorages, as both they can offer relatively safe shelter for ships in case of bad weather. These small harbours were possibly associated with small communities.

In ancient navigation, wind direction and sight of a known shore and landmarks must have been important tools to define and fix maritime routes (Arnaud 2014). In the inter-regional trade networks of Late Antiquity numerous small anchorages likely functioned as stopping places in cases of sudden storms and supply stations for ships that passed along the maritime routes. In the Aegean Sea in particular, such anchorages played a key role seafaring (see more in Ginalis 2014, 19-20). These places developed in protected bays with harbour facilities and were associated with important maritime routes.

In this context, the sites within Agios Theodoros and Skiros bays that developed around the basilicas reflect a pattern of occasionally stopping ships. The religious monuments located on slightly elevated places less than 30 m from the shore were being deliberately built within these bays, in order to act as necessary artificial landmarks, which facilitated their identification from the sea. In addition, the diametrically opposed orientation of the bays (Skiros bay is orientated towards northeast while Agios Theodoros bay is orientated towards northwest) may indicate these anchorages were used occasionally by ships as safe shelters according to the different seasons and wind directions. When the west and northwest wind blows against bay of Agios Theodoros or the east and northeast wind blows against Skiros access to the bays from the sea becomes very difficult. In other words, when the west (Pounentes) and northwest (Maistros) wind blows, the bay of Skiros is well-protected offering safer shelter for ships. In contrast, when east (Levantes) and northeast (Gregos) wind blows, the bay of Skiros is well-protected providing the best option for sailors. Thus, they emerged as a suitable anchorages developed along the island’s rugged northeast and northwest coastline during Late Antiquity, where ships could also resupply with water and foodstuffs.

If the hypothesis that the port of Apollonas was active during Late Antiquity is correct, it is quite possible the adjacent smaller bay of Skiros could also have functioned as auxiliary infrastructure to the main harbour of the region. It was suitable to serve as a place for ships waiting to get a mooring place for loading and unloading in main harbour of Apollonas. Furthermore, we should not forget that due the mountainous character of Naxos, a number of auxiliary small anchorages developed along its shoreline in order to facilitate not only inter-regional commercial navigation but also the internal communication between the different coastal and inland parts of the island. As has been demonstrated, despite the small size of Naxos compared to Crete, Euboea or Cyprus, due to the steep character of the Naxian landscape, in some cases maritime transportation was safer and quicker than intra-island connectivity.

Similar patterns of remote stopping places during the same period have been identified in Antikythera for ships that passed through the channel between Antikythera and Crete (Bevan & Conolly 2013, 144), on the tiny uninhabited islet of Dhaskalio (few miles southeast of Naxos in Small Cyclades), providing safe anchorage in case of sudden storms as well as short pilgrimages (Tzavella 2013, 89-90), in the bay of Grammata in Syros, where numerous graffiti suggest a relatively popular Aegean pilgrim site (Kiourtzian 2000), and in the bay of Gastria on Tenos (Feissel 1980). Unfortunately, regarding the sites on northern Naxos nothing is known with regard to the time and reasons of their abandonment.

The picture of settlement patterns during the Early Middle Ages on northern Naxos the picture remains puzzling due to the lack of intensive surface survey. The most valuable and promising source of information comes from the coastal Mt Kaloeros, which lies east of the present-day village of Apollonas, overlooking the adjacent bay (Figs 5.102 & 5.107). On the top of the steep mountain (alt. 357 m.) the remains of a fortress have been discovered. Despite its great importance the fortress of Kaloeros has only been preliminarily studied and published (Eberhard 1974-1977, 517-520). The built environment contains traces of strong fortification walls, churches, cisterns, storage areas, other unidentified buildings and towers. Regarding the chronology, it seems this is a multi-period site, and a systematic archaeological survey is needed in order to clarify the history and function of this installation. Although at the moment it is not possible to offer convincing interpretations, some possible hypotheses can be put forward.
Large segments of the fortification and many structures, such as the cisterns, can be generally dated to the Byzantine period. The fortress of Kaloerous is an exclusively sea oriented defensive structure overlooking the maritime zone of the Ikarian Sea. At the same time, it does not offer visibility of the island’s hinterland. Taking into account the broader Naxian and Aegean context discussed above, it makes sense to assume the fortress of Kaloerous should have existed in parallel with Katro Apalirou in western Naxos, the fortified installation on the islet of Viokastro, and Palaiokastro on Ios (see more in Chapter 5.3.9). In this respect, it can be considered as a smaller link in the chain of a wider defensive system set in place by the central administration from the 7th century onwards for the re-organisation of the protection of the Cycladic islands and the maritime routes of the central Aegean. Thus, on the one hand, the possible erection of two defensive installations (Apalirou and Kaloerous) during the Byzantine Early Middle Ages in strategically located sites of Naxos has strengthened the island’s defence from all sides. On the other hand, their participation in the Empire’s wider maritime defensive network, which consisted of a number of fortified sites on the surrounding islands, shows a clear trend to secure the sea routes that passed through the Cyclades. The south Aegean’s naval protection must have been of vital importance for the Empire as this maritime zone was the forefront of Capital’s defence. From this standpoint, the fortress of Kaloerous did not make sense outside the broader historical context of the turbulent Byzantine Early Middle Ages. A more detail comparative study of those defensive structures will shed more light on the history of the Cyclades during the turbulent Early Byzantine centuries.

At the moment nothing is known regarding the site’s previous phases while we are totally ignorant of the period and reasons for its abandonment. Additionally, it is uncertain if it has a medieval urban planning with domestic use, as is observed in the fortress of Apalirou, or if it was only founded for military purposes, as is observed in the fortress of Viokastro. Finally, it is worth mentioning that the existence of the Early Byzantine fortress of Kaloerous must have also gone hand in hand with the operation of the port of Apollonas. The spatial relationship between these two important installations (Figs 5.102 & 5.107) makes it reasonable to assume that the ancient port of Apollonas was active during the Early Middle Ages, and, possibly, functioned as the main gateway towards the external world for the fortress.

Apart from the fortress of Kaloerous and the port of Apollonas, a church dated to the Byzantine Early Middle Ages offers a few information concerning settlement pattern on the coastal zone of northern Naxos. Although, at the moment, surface surveys have not been conducted around it some possible theories can be suggested on the basis of the analysis of its placement within micro-landscape. The church of Panagia at Agia is located along the northwest part of Naxos close to the island’s northern edge, cape Stavri (Fig. 5.102) (Mastoropoulos 2006, 98-99; Aslanidis 2014a, 49-51, pl.12, fig.16). It is built on a steep slope less than 1km from the nearest coastline. On the basis of architectural similarities with other religious monuments on Naxos, it is dated to the 8th century (Aslanidis 2014a, 50). The church of Panagia was part of a monastery and is surrounded by architectural traces from different periods. This coastal mountainous landscape contains water sources, lush vegetation and limited but fertile land; enough to preserve sustainability of a small number of people. The region of Agia, due to northern Naxos’s steep character, is hardly accessible from other areas of the island. The erection of this monument in this coastal mountainous landscape during the 8th century, once again supports the view that habitation (settlements or monasteries) were not merely restricted to the interior of the island but have also been identified very close to the shore.

When considering the evidence discussed above, it is made clear that at this stage of research little can be said concerning the settlement pattern of
north Naxos during the course of the Byzantine Early Middle Ages. In general terms, despite the steep character of the landscape of north Naxos, coastal localities appeared to have been settled with sites of various functions throughout the turbulent Byzantine Early Middle Ages. The preliminary evidence of Apollonas, Kaloeross and Agia strongly contradicts traditional historical views about abandonment of coastal regions during the late 7th century, and withdrawal of populations towards the hinterland.

5.7 CONCLUSIONS

Apart from its strategic position in the Aegean, the island of Naxos is characterised by a remarkably diverse landscape. It represents an interesting microcosm which contains a mixture of different geological formations, habitats and vegetation types. The natural features of the distinct landscape character of Naxos comprise geological data which historically supported the development, the type of material culture and human behaviour on the island.

Starting from the urban environment, it seems that at least until the late 7th or early 8th century the coastal city of Naxos played a central role in the island’s socioeconomic context (Fig. 5.108). In the 4th century the urban topography changed dramatically, showing evidence of re-organisation and enlargement of town planning. A significant building activity with the erection of new private residences is attested, not only in non-urban zones but also in the old urban context with the privatisation of former public spaces. This process is also reflected in the restoration works of the aqueduct of the city, a structure of vital importance for the sustainability and quality of life of urban populations. The Late Antique city appears to have been larger in size than its predecessor, and probably followed a different development model than the one observed in the case of Paros. It seems, then, that the articulation of urban tissue was not focused around a magnificent Christian church or an important public structure, such as the harbour.

In the case of Naxos we observe a pattern of urban renewal with the re-organisation of the old urban tissue and the expansion of the built up area along the shoreline. As is discussed above, this is not a consistent pattern in the Aegean world since most of the Late Antique urban centres appeared to have been smaller in size compared to their predecessor. After the 4th century a clear trend to restore, refurbish or rebuild houses is observed throughout Late Antiquity. Archaeological evidence from the Late Antique centuries gives the impression of a flourishing coastal Aegean urban centre fully integrated into regional and inter-regional maritime trade routes and commercially connected to the most famous production centres in the Eastern Mediterranean such as Asia Minor, Cyprus, North Africa, Egypt and the Middle East. In the periphery of the urban centre a process of Christianisation of the landscape with the conversion of ancient temples is reflected during the 5th century.

In the rural sphere, a plethora of various different types of sites suggests a busy countryside on the island over the course of Late Antiquity. These sites can be classified as small or large rural/pastoral villages, villas/estates, farmsteads, industrial sites, port infrastructures, and sea-oriented settlements. Putting all these dots on the map, it becomes apparent that on the island of Naxos a mixed and more balanced settlement pattern developed during the period in question (Fig. 5.108). Rural settlements were distributed in the coastal zones close to the sea or along the shoreline, while at the same time agricultural and pastoral sites are found across the rich mountainous hinterland of Naxos. A series of important geomorphologic parameters, such as the large size of Naxos, the dispersed in almost every corner of the island small or extensive fertile productive farming zones, the abundance of grazing land, and the permanently high water table, which were integral components of the local natural environment, offered potential and opportunities for self-sufficiency and had a strong impact on the evolution of the habitation model on the island.

The general picture about the settlement pattern of Naxos during Late Antiquity, emerging through the consideration of archaeological and environmental evidence discussed above, suggests a consistent spatial relationship between settlement density, land use zoning, a close supply of water and in many cases land visibility. Throughout the lowland western part of the island – from northwest (Eggares, Faneromeni) to southwest (region of Marathos) and from the middle of the west coastline (Plaka, Polichni) to the eastern end of western Naxos (plain
Fig. 5.108: Distribution of Late Antique sites on the island of Naxos.
Fig. 5.109: Slope map of Naxos showing the relationship between settlement patterns and land use zoning on Naxos during Late Antiquity.
of Saggri) – settlements were related to well-watered and fertile geological formations, such as coastal plains (Plaka, Polichni), inland basins (Kechrees, Saggri, Kato Marathos) and coastal valleys (Eggares, Faneromeni). These geological formations correspond to areas with more fertile soils, where the best cultivable land on western Naxos is located. Thus, the location of the settlements within this lowland landscape is related to the availability of arable land, the high watertable and in some cases the visibility of the productive zone (Fig. 5.93). The application of multiple viewshed analysis of the most Late Antique rural sites on western Naxos has shown that each one overlooks a specific fertile productive zone, reflecting a form of visual control between the settlements and the surrounding fertile land (Fig. 5.66).

Furthermore, on mountainous Naxos – from its western limit (valley of Potamia) to the east (regions of Apiranthos and Danakos) and from the central part (plateau of Tragea) to the southeast corner (areas of Chimarros and Panormos) – the settlements’ location is associated with the availability of arable and grazing land and close supply of water (Fig. 5.93). In some cases however, another key factor in the development of the settlement pattern might be the correlation with land routes (Fig. 5.112).

The extremely diverse landscape of highland Naxos had impacted the internal evolution of the settlement pattern. Therefore, at least four different models of habitation are presented in the neighbouring areas of the mountainous central, north and southeast part of the island. They are all based on the same correlation but developed in different ways because of the diversity of the micro-landscapes. Thus, in the lush gentle valley of Tragea a cluster of small rural/pastoral settlements were developed around a central leading centre with strong boundaries between them. In the more “fragmented” landscape of Apiranthos and Danakos, the settlements’ location was adjusted to the peculiar traits of the natural environment, forming a dispersed network of small isolated rural/pastoral communities. In the remote area of southeast Naxos a regional industrial centre specialised in oil production, with a commercial port at Panormos flourishing during Late Antiquity. Finally, in the steep and barren northern part of Naxos, it seems that a number of small anchorages were developed along the steep coastline in order to facilitate maritime circulation. From this point of view, patterns of settlement distribution were adjusted to the specific geographical spaces.

This consistent association between settlements’ location, fertile soils and substantial areas of grazing land indicates an intensified exploitation of both cultivated and uncultivated landscapes in almost every corner of Naxos during Late Antiquity (Fig. 5.109). The agriculturally intensified use of the rural landscape is also attested in several mainland or insular regions of the Aegean world, such as Boeotia, Methana, Keos, Melos and Paros (Renfrew & Wagstaff 1982; Cherry et al. 1991; Mee & Forbes 1997; Bintliff et al. 2007; Bintliff 2012b, 355-358; 2000a). Thus, the synthetic analysis of the evidence discussed above from the Naxian countryside can be integrated into this general context.

In this respect, it is reasonable to suggest the commercialisation of local production on Naxos, especially from the 5th to the middle 7th century. The development of the industrial units at Chimarros and Saggri, as well as the traces of intense human activity in almost every available productive zone of the island, probably make sense within the Eastern Mediterranean route system and trade patterns of the Late Antique world. The city of Naxos and the bay of Panormos were the island’s safest commercial harbours acting as collection points for the primary exportable produce of the different parts of the island and were important links in the chain of the broader network of exchange. At the same time, small anchorages were also developed at strategically located points along the coastline, functioning as secondary port infrastructures. It seems that Naxos benefited both from its central geographic position in the Aegean and from the strategic and economic potential of its best quality land, producing agricultural surpluses and participating in inter-regional trade. The general picture, derived from the material discussed above, suggests that the island of Naxos was a highly interactive insular microcosm during Late Antiquity. This economic vitality was mainly based on the exportable surplus of agrarian production through trade. Thus, Naxos formed an extroverted and open insular community, culturally interacting with broader worlds.

The analysis of the material culture on Naxos in conjunction with its distinct landscape character
reveals a fascinating representation of continuity in the transition from Late Antiquity to the Byzantine Early Middle Ages compared to the neighbouring island of Paros (Fig. 5.110). In general terms, it appears the transition to the new era was a relatively progressive and smooth process for Naxos. Changes which occurred in the settlement pattern of Naxos after the 7th-8th centuries reflect the wider socioeconomic transformations in the transition to the Middle Ages, an emerging world with different life-ways and mentalities compared to Late Antiquity.

Archaeological evidence suggests that from the late 7th/early 8th century radical transformations are observed in the urban environment. Domestic structures were progressively abandoned after long-term use, marking a period of shrinkage of the urban tissue of the Late Antique city of Naxos. It seems that over the course of the 8th century the ancient coastal city of Naxos was not the economic and administrative centre of the island as it had gradually lost its urban status. However, numismatic evidence and the discovery of an artisanal unit along the shoreline of Grotta strongly support the continuity of life and small-scale economic activities in this coastal landscape, since the former city survived as a small coastal settlement during the 8th and 9th centuries. Yet again, this evolution is reflected in the definitive cessation of the use of the aqueduct during the early 8th century.

The major transformations that occurred in the ancient urban centre took place in parallel with the foundation of the fortress of Apalirou in the interior of the western part of Naxos. Both cases illustrate the economic and political changes that can be seen in the landscape, providing evidence of a better understanding of the relationship between the island’s settlement patterns, political authority and economy. The emergence of the fortified medieval urban centre of Apalirou on Naxos proved to be significant in many ways. Apart from its defensive character, the fortress’s west orientation shows an effort to control and manage internal production across fertile lowland Naxos in order to preserve self-sufficiency. The good long distance views of the sea indicate a special care to ensure the safe maritime circulation through the naval channel of Paronaxia. Apalirou was, presumably, the central point of a defensive system consisting of the fortresses of Kaloeros on southeast Naxos, Viokastro close to Paros and Palaiokastro on Ios. This network overlooked a large maritime zone between Ikaria, Mykonos, Delos, Syros, Paros, Ios, the Small Cyclades and Amorgos, having the island of Naxos as a reference point (Fig. 5.62). Important commercial and military routes passed through this maritime area, connecting many regions of the Aegean Archipelago such as Mainland Greece, Asia Minor, and Crete with the imperial centre. The viewshed analysis substantiated that Kastro Apalirou has the most prominent position since it had a direct view of Viokastro and Palaiokastro (Fig. 5.55). This communication network reflects the strong presence of the central administration on the island of Naxos and the central and eastern Cyclades. Despite paucity of literary sources, the archaeological material make it reasonable to assume the fortress of Apalirou was a basic part of a wider defensive strategy created by the central administration for the organisation of the protection of the south Aegean. From this perspective, the island of Naxos probably emerged as an administrative and military node of great importance for the Empire’s maritime defensive system during the Byzantine Early Middle Ages.

Concerning the settled landscape in the Naxian countryside, although, the distribution and the density of habitation changed, it appears that the percentage of population on Naxos remained, more or less, at the same level as it was during previous period. A combination of surface ceramic evidence and data from churches with aniconic decoration suggest the patterns of settlement distribution in relation to best quality land did not change dramatically from Late Antiquity to the Middle Ages (Fig. 5.111). Settlements were not only withdrawn to the mountainous hinterland but were also located near lowland localities very close to the shoreline between the late 7th and early 9th centuries (Fig. 5.110). Several rural sites which were located across the lowland coastal zone of the island in close proximity to the coast (Chora, Polichni, Kechrees, Sagri, Kato Marathos, Eggares) shows considerable traces of continuity from Late Antiquity to the Middle Ages. Although the levels of habitation might have been lower along the shoreline of the western part of the island compared to the previous period, Naxos presents an excellent example showing that some Cycladic coastal landscapes continued to be settled, cultivated and in many ways interacted with humans during the so-called Byzantine “Dark Ages” (see more in Chapter 6.2.2). At the same time, there
is tangible evidence about continuity of habitation in the majority of the rural sites across the mountainous hinterland. In many cases, a mountainous interior presents a picture of more intensive habitation compared to the previous period. In the regions of Tragea, Apiranthos and Danakos most of the Late Antique rural and pastoral sites continued through the 8th and 9th centuries while new sites emerged. It appears that there is an increase of population and occupation of land with fertile soils during the Byzantine Early Middle Ages across the mountainous interior of the island, as evidenced by the surface ceramic data and the erection of religious monuments at many sites across the Naxian countryside.

It seems that the settlement pattern of Naxos maintained its mixed and more balanced character during the turbulent Byzantine Early Middle Ages. Animal husbandry still was closely integrated with arable agriculture since both cultivated and uncultivated lands were crucial economic sources. The localised environmental advantages of the Naxian landscape has ensured the island could retain high levels of human activity under all circumstances. The advantaged location of the island in the Cyclades in conjunction with the potential and opportunities offered by its distinctive landscape character led the central government to select Naxos as one of the administrative centres in the southern Aegean. Thus, Naxos presents a completely different model of habitation which contradicts previous historical and archaeological views, suggesting the retreat of coastal sites in favour of well-protected inland sites (Malamut 1988, 67-68). The agricultural and pastoral world of Naxos remained vibrant while the rural landscape of the island, both in coastal lowland and mountainous hinterland, continued to be settled, cultivated and in many ways modified by human activity.

What changed in the island’s settlement pattern during the period in question was the transformation of the Late Antique industrial sites with distinct market orientation into local production and storage centres of agricultural goods. This phenomenon is, mainly, related to wider changes in inter-regional trade patterns and sea routes which had strong impacts on the economic system and specialised productions of any specific island. This reflects changes in ports, maritime routes, products, markets and trade networks in the Eastern Mediterranean. However, economic and commercial activities did not cease to exist on the island of Naxos and the Aegean Sea during the Byzantine Early Middle Ages. It appears that after 8th century a more regional economy, with products circulating mainly internally or just across the neighbouring regions progressively developed. This fact, however, does not in itself mean that inter-regional exchange over the Aegean stopped during the Early Middle Ages. Ceramic evidence from Naxos suggest that over the course of the 7th, 8th and 9th centuries the island’s population, both coastal lowland and mountainous, were actively involved in the maritime commercial networks, integrated into sea routes that connected the Aegean world with parts of Eastern Mediterranean, Constantinople and southern Italy (Vionis 2013, 30-31).

Finally, in Naxos important parts of the internal land itineraries of the island during Late Antiquity and the Byzantine Early Middle Ages can be reconstructed, applying least coast path analysis (Fig. 5.112). These land routes mainly followed physiographic constraints and linked important settlements of various types and different regions. A number of regional routes connected coastal regions with the island’s hinterland (Plain of Livadia, Eggares, Azalas, Panormos). Through these roads the main gateway ports and settlements of the island were linked to the mountainous countryside, where important parts of the agro/pastoral production took place. A complex network of paths also connected the most important regions of mountainous Naxos, such as Potamia, Tragea, Apiranthos and Danakos. Some regions and sites, like Potamia, Kalloni and Drosiani emerged as crossroads in the intra-island connectivity. The reconstructed network in conjunction with the previously discussed archaeological evidence reflects relationships among the different local communities (entities with urban, rural/ pastoral or industrial character) that lived on the island during the periods in question. It makes sense to assume that human movement across the Naxian landscape was intense, since people, animals and goods moved back and forth between settlements. The function of this complex road system was crucial for internal stability. It was also a necessary condition to ensure the island could retain high levels of human activity under all circumstances.
Fig. 5.110: Distribution of sites on the island of Naxos during the Byzantine Early Middle Ages.
Fig. 5.111: Slope map of Naxos showing the relationship between settlement pattern and land use zoning in Naxos during Byzantine Early Middle Ages.
Fig. 5.112: Late Antiquity and Early Byzantine road network.