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Chapter 6
Paros and Naxos in context

6.1 A COMPARATIVE VIEW OF THE SETTLED LANDSCAPES OF PAROS AND NAXOS DURING LATE ANTIQUITY

Over the course of the Late Antique centuries the settled landscapes of Paros and Naxos consisted of urban centres and a busy countryside, characterised by density and variety of site types on all levels (Fig. 6.1). In general terms, however, a difference in settlement patterns has been recorded between the islands of Naxos and Paros. The latter shows a clear trend for sites of higher intensity along the island’s coastal zone. This distinct coastal bias in the distribution of habitation has created an imbalanced settlement pattern consisting of sites oriented towards the sea and towards the interior of the flat fertile coastal zone (radius of 5 km from the shoreline). In contrast, Naxos developed a mixed and more balanced settlement pattern with sites distributed in the coastal zones close to the sea or along the shoreline and across the island’s rich mountainous hinterland. Thus, Naxos provides an ideal opportunity for studying a relatively complete agrarian insular rural landscape during Late Antiquity.

This is a reflection of how localised environmental advantages of different landscapes influence human behaviour and the evolution of settlement patterns throughout centuries, even in such neighbouring insular communities. In terms of natural environment, Naxos differs from Paros in four important respects that have had some bearing on the development of specific social, economic and habitation trends: a) the landscape’s rich relief, b) the distribution of fertile productive zones throughout almost the entire island (agricultural and grazing land), c) the limited but strategically located small natural ports along its coastline, and d) the abundance of water sources. Hence, the habitation was distributed throughout the whole island, in regions which, on the one hand, could offer self-sufficiency and a more stable internal production system while on the other hand, could provide potential and opportunities for exporting the produced surplus through maritime trade. A similar pattern with sites located both in coastal and inland regions has been recorded on Keos (Cherry et al. 1991), Melos (Renfrew & Wagstaff 1982), and the quasi-island of Methana (Mee & Forbes 1997, 88-89).

In contrast, the landscape of Paros differs from Naxos in four other important respects that had a great impact on the historical trajectory of the island: a) the concentration of a greater percentage of arable land along the flat coastal zone, b) the high distribution of small or large natural ports along the coastline which provided numerous safe shelters for ships, c) the lowland and gentle coastal landscape that facilitates the internal mobility of people and goods, and d) the barren and dry mountainous hinterland. Regarding land use and habitation patterns, the Parian landscape has created a diachronically strong contradiction between the low sustainability of the barren island’s interior and the fertile coastal zone’s great economic potential. This “coastal” settlement pattern created a local system open to contacts and external influences, offering more potential and opportunities for prosperity through trade by receiving great support from the sea. This insular system was relied less and less on its self-sufficiency and was undoubtedly increasingly dependent on its role within the trade patterns and sea routes, especially in the highly interactive Late Antique Mediterranean world.

6.1.1 Urban landscape

Despite differences arising from the diverse natural features of Parian and Naxian landscape, a comparative study of the settlement systems on both islands shows that many common trends deriving from their integration into the same circumstances pertaining to the Aegean during Late Antiquity can be recognised.
A common pattern in both case-studies was the double role played by the ancient city-port within regional and inter-regional networks. On the one hand, they acted as the largest leading centres within the internal network of each island while, concurrently, served as regional nodes within broader Mediterranean maritime communication networks. The ancient cities of Paros and Naxos, both placed almost in the middle of each island’s west coastline, played a central role as the regional socioeconomic, administrative and religious centres for local insular communities. At the same time, a number of imported wares and marble sculptures suggest high connectivity with Mainland Greece, North Africa, Asia Minor, Cyprus, Palestine, and Constantinople. The same phenomenon is observed in many other cases of coastal Aegean urban centres in several regions, such as Melos (Renfrew & Wagstaff 1982, 145), Keos (Cherry et al. 1991), Andros (Palaiokrassa 2013), Methana (Mee & Forbes 1997, 88-89), Kythnos (Mazarakis-Ainian 2013) and the Dodecanese (Deligiannakis 2006, 151-155, 170-173; 2008).

Nonetheless, they represent two different models regarding the urban space’s transformation over the course of the Roman and the Late Antique periods. The city of Paros reflects the progressive transformation of a pagan Aegean urban centre to a Christian coastal city of commercial importance. The position of large early Christian basilicas within the urban grid became the Late Antique urban environment’s most prominent reference.
point. The erection of the giant religious complex of Ekatontapiliani in the middle 6th century illustrates the new focus on Christian churches and the articulation of the urban space around them, which can be seen in many other of the Empire’s cities during the course of Late Antiquity (Saradi 2006, 385-406). The dominant and advantageous position of this magnificent complex in close proximity to the port not only indicates the great importance of this coastal city as a maritime node for the interests of the Eastern Roman Empire but also reflects the strong bonds between the two poles of the new emerging bipolar model of local power, the state representatives and the local bishops and clergy, which progressively have replaced the old Roman urban authorities from the 4th century (Bintliff 2012b, 360). The construction of such a magnificent and ambitious building programme can be viewed as an act of propaganda from the central imperial authority in the context of the Mediterranean’s highly interactive and well-connected world, and as an indication of the local ecclesiastical elite’s growing civic power and its new role in influencing regional building projects and city management.

The fact that some districts from the Hellenistic and Early Roman intramural urban tissue (Kastrovouni and Tholakia) show no traces of human activity in Late Antiquity (Hasaki 2010; Kourayos 2015, 31) in conjunction with the extensive reuse of ancient building material in the erection of the complex of Ekatontapiliani, the basilica of Tris Ekklisies and the apsidal building at Krios suggest: a) a possible shrinkage of the city, b) an abandonment of certain public or private ancient buildings, and c) a radical re-organisation of the public space in order to create space in the intramural town planning for the new era’s landmarks. The city of Paros, can thus be placed in the wider Eastern Mediterranean framework where the phenomenon of giant new religious buildings in shrinking towns was visible during Late Antiquity (Bintliff 2014b, 326). When taking into account the evidence from Paros, it is made clear that over the course of the 6th century the citizens of the city lived in a completely different urban environment from that of the 4th or, perhaps the 5th century, a widely attested phenomenon in the Aegean world (Saradi 2006, 148-185). During the 6th century the “most splendid city of Paros” underwent radical changes, retaining however a new Christian monumental character and an urban status at least until the late 7th or early 8th century. Therefore, an urban landscape largely defined by its pagan monuments gave way to a new one that was instead characterised by Christian churches and activity.

In contrast, the ancient city of Naxos underwent a phase of enlargement and renewal of town planning from the 2nd and more intensely during the 4th century. Archaeological evidence relating to private architecture has revealed a significant building activity in the erection of new private residences, testifying that the city expanded beyond its previous limits towards the north along the undeveloped non-urban coastal zone. At the same time, the ancient urban tissue shows evidence of re-organisation for the setting of new houses with the privatisation of former public spaces, a general phenomenon found in many excavated cities in the East (Saradi 2006, 186-207). It is quite interesting that this evolution is clearly reflected on the operation of the city’s aqueduct, a structure of vital importance for the sustainability and quality of life of urban population.

Thus, in contrast to the period’s general trend, the Late Antique city of Naxos appears to have been larger in size compared to its Hellenistic and Early Roman predecessor. Archaeological evidence from the Aegean world suggests that enlargement and renewal of cities is not a consistent pattern in the evolution of the urban spaces across the East Mediterranean. Most of the excavated urban contexts have presented a contradictory picture: on the one hand traces of economic growth with the erection of extensive religious monuments; on the other, clear radical evidence of the urban landscape’s reduction. The cities of Hyettos and Thespiae in Boeotia (Bintliff & Snodgrass 1988b; Bintliff et al. 2007; Bintliff 2014b), the provincial capital of Corinth, and nearby Sikyon in Peloponnese (Slane & Sanders 2005; Tzavella et al. 2014, 95), for instance, shrank dramatically during Late Antiquity. In the wider Mediterranean context however, the pattern of enlargement and renewal of the urban environment is not a totally unknown phenomenon. The nearby ancient city of Melos has produced evidence of possible expansion of the town planning beyond its previous limits (Renfrew & Wagstaff 1982, 145), while the same pattern, between the end of the 2nd
and the 4th century, has been recorded in some coastal cities of North Africa and Rome (see more details about the Late Antique cities of North Africa in Leone 2007, 45-66).

A convincing interpretation of this almost unique pattern of renewal and expansion of the urban buildup over the Aegean cannot be attributed to a single factor, since complex socioeconomic phenomena are related to multiple parameters. The building of new houses in urban environments can be explained as a need to redefine the ancient urban network and to expand and enlarge the urban area. It seems this process on Naxos was a constant and continuous pattern from the Early to the Late Roman periods. This enlargement and redefinition of the city’s urban environment developed in the Middle Roman period and continued well into the 4th century. In other words, it seems that in the case of Naxos a continuing phase of investment in the urban landscape and its immediate periphery (restoration of the aqueduct) is reflected, extending into Late Antiquity. On the other hand, the intensification of this process during the 4th century may reflect the new circumstances pertaining to the Aegean Sea after the foundation of Constantinople and a local need to recreate a regular urban network taking the needs of the new emerging era into account. Apart from the urban environment’s redefinition, the periphery of the city of Naxos reflects a process of Christianising the landscape as evidenced by a series of temple conversions in the 5th century and newly erected basilicas in the 6th century. These Christian monuments that dominated the cities’ immediate surroundings held unique positions in the landscape.

Archaeological evidence makes it clear that most urban domestic structures in the city of Naxos remained occupied for many centuries, showing a general trend to restore, refurbish or rebuild houses. It has been demonstrated by excavations that there is continuity of use of many of these structures from the 4th to the late 7th or in some case the early 8th century (Lambrinoudakis 1979, 251; 1993, 162-163; Bourmias 2014). In contrast to Paros, it seems, then, that in the case of Naxos urban planning did not undergo important changes after the 4th century, in general terms retaining the same structural organisation until the end of Late Antiquity. The building of new housing complexes and the continuous care for restoration and refurbishment of these structures throughout the next centuries had a great impact on Naxos’s urban landscape. It is also noteworthy that no evidence survived for the setting of Christian monuments within the urban tissue.

A synthetic approach on the material culture from both Aegean urban centres (pottery, architecture, sculpture) has provided important evidence for better understanding the social and economic behaviour and the extent to which Paros and Naxos were integrated into the wider Mediterranean trade system during Late Antiquity. The presence of a relatively good number of imported wares and marble sculptures suggests connections between the two islands and Mainland Greece, North Africa, Asia Minor, Cyprus, Palestine and Constantinople, testifying intensive trade and exchange activities in both port-cities. Especially the new ceramic material from the port area of the city of Paros gives the impression of a highly interactive and well-connected harbour, which would have functioned as a regional trade-station for the distribution of merchandise and as a secondary warehouse or transhipment node within the unified Late Antique economic system. On the other hand, these imports indicate that both urban centres also functioned as smaller markets for the products manufactured in famous distant Mediterranean production centres.

It seems the coastal cities of both islands functioned within long distance trade networks in an effective way, especially between the 5th and middle/late 7th century. The connectivity among the highly interactive Aegean Archipelago is not only evidenced by the plethora of excavations and surface surveys on many islands and coastal areas, such as Melos, Keos, Andros, Thera, Antikythera, Schinoussa, Kythnos, Skyros, Crete, Samos, Skyros, Lesvos, the Dodecanese, Asia Minor etc., but also by the Late Antique graffiti discovered on the island of Syros and Tenos (Kiourtzian 2000, 134-200; 2001, 11-12). During the Late Antique centuries there was high internal connectivity between the Cyclades but also a dense network of inter-regional communication between the southern Aegean islands and Constantinople as well as the important Mediterranean cultural and economic centres, such as Asia Minor, Cyprus, Syro-Palestine and Egypt. It is also noteworthy that among the inscriptions on
Syros, sailors from many Cycladic islands such as Melos, Naxos, Andros, Paros, Thera, and Gyaros are mentioned.

Looking at the overall evidence from both cities in combination with similar data from other urban contexts in the Cyclades, one gains the impression that among the Cycladic Late Antique cities (especially among those that referred to Synekdemos and are archaeologically visible today such as Andros, Tenos, Naxos, Sifnos, Melos, Ios, Thera and Amorgos), Paros would have held a prominent position on a strategic and economic level during the 6th and 7th centuries. Localised environmental advantages of the Parian landscape, such as the spacious, and well-protected from the strong winds, bay of Parikia in which large and safe harbour installations can be developed, and the prominent location of the island in the southern Aegean, proved significant for the interests of the central government which made itself visible from all directions with the erection of the complex of Ekatontapiliani. In contrast, the location of the city of Naxos does not possess any naturally protected port. In any case, all evidence suggests these two Aegean urban centres continued to function and flourish throughout the entire Roman period, until at least the end of Late Antiquity. When many ancient Greek cities lost their urban status during the centuries of Late Antiquity transforming into village-like and rural sites, the coastal centres of Paros and Naxos retained their urban character and adjusted to the needs of the new era, at least until the late 7th or early 8th century.

6.1.2. Rural landscape

In the countryside of the two islands, the general picture of Late antiquity emerging through the synthetic analysis of the evidence discussed above is similar to that prevailing in many other regions of the Aegean world. Looking at the overall archaeological evidence from Paros and Naxos, common settlement trends can be recognised during Late Antiquity and summarised under five headings (Fig. 6.1): a) a wide range of agricultural and industrial sites existed and functioned in all types of landscapes (inland, coastal, mountainous, lowland), b) a dense network of port infrastructures and maritime settlements developed along the coastline serving as collection and export points or small safe anchorages, c) intensive exploitation of the rural landscape (coastal and inland), d) mass production, specialisation and commercialisation of local production, and e) active integration of the Parian and Naxian countryside into inter-regional trade patterns and sea routes.

It is noteworthy that rural landscapes in the Aegean world (insular, coastal or inland areas) have received more careful archaeological investigation during recent decades. In many regions, a plethora of regional surface survey projects, rescue or systematic excavations and individual studies mark a peak in the countryside’s activity during the Classical period, a decline during Late Hellenistic and Early Roman periods, and an increase in the number of multiple sites over the course of Late Antiquity. In general terms, the Late Antique Aegean countryside gives the impression of a vibrant rural world which has been mostly approached through the boom and bust pattern (for the general pattern see Chavarria & Lewit 2004). However, this interpretation model has been recently challenged on the basis of the high diagnosticity of the Classical and Late Roman ceramics in contrast to the low recognition of the material dated to the Late Hellenistic and the Early or Middle Roman periods (Pettegrew 2007; 2010).

Nonetheless, despite different interpretation models and local variations, a common feature in this fruitful broader discussion about the end of the Roman world is that during the period between the 4th and 6th or in some cases the 7th century the rural landscape of many regions of Greece appeared to have been very busy, characterised by high density and wide range of site types. Regardless of whether this phenomenon was a constant and continuous pattern from the Early to the Late Roman periods or a result of a dramatic recovery and explosion in Late Antiquity, many regions from central and southern Greece to the Aegean islands have presented a picture of an intensively exploited rural landscape (for the general pattern see Bintliff 2012b, 353-360), but there are a few exceptions (Laconia: Cavanagh et al. 2005, 10; Patra: Petropoulos & Rizakis 1994).

Despite regional variations, this picture of the Late Antique countryside is, more or less, persistent in many archaeological studies of Melos (Renfrew & Wagstaff 1982, 145-146), Keos (Cherry et al. 1991), Andros (Veikou 2015a), Thera (Kiourtzian...
productive zones is a widely attested pattern in many other regions of the Aegean world. Even on the small island of Antikythera, the Late Antique period is represented in abundance, as a wide range of larger and smaller settlements with agricultural orientation is recorded across the countryside, mainly at the heart of the most productive zones showing a clear connection between the sites and the fertile land around them (Bevan & Conolly 2013, 143-148). Additionally the existence of various rural sites across the best agricultural land of southern Argolid shows evidence of considerable activity throughout the countryside, especially in zones suitable for oil cultivation (Jameson et al. 1994, 400-403). Intensive cultivation of the peninsula of Methana’s fertile plains has been recorded, as indicated by the presence of sites with agricultural character, storage establishments and no residential function (Mee & Forbes 1997, 88-90, 257). The fertile coastal and inland region around the Messenian gulf until the middle 6th century was occupied by dispersed rural villas, indicating an intensive exploitation of this landscape (McDonald et al. 1983, 337-338, 354, 422-423).

Due to the high recognition of Late Roman ceramics (mostly amphora types and red-slip wares) in connection with the incapacity in identifying material dated to the earlier Roman periods which characterised the former studies of both islands, it is difficult, at the moment, to suggest an explosion or rise of rural settlements after the 4th century or to identify a continuing phase extending from Early and Middle into the Late Roman times. In any case, what is clear is that the rural landscape of Paros and Naxos appears to have been intensively exploited and occupied during Late Antiquity. It is possible that a number of sites made their appearance during Late Antiquity. On the other hand however, ceramic and architectural material form Tris Ekklesies, Voutakos, Marathi, Protoria and Naoussa on the island of Paros (Vionis 2006) as well as Gyroulas, Yria, Adisarou, Pyrgos Chinarrou and Panormos on Naxos (Simantoni-Bournia 2001; Lambrinoudakis et al. 2002) give the impression of multi-period sites with previous occupation, notably during the Classical, Hellenistic and Roman centuries. This phenomenon was also noticed in many other regions, e.g. Keos (Cherry et al. 1991), Melos (Renfrew & Wagstaff 1982), Skyros (Karambinis 2015, 217, 230), Rhodes, Kos (Deligiannakis 2006, 2000, 212-240; 2001, 11; Gerousi 2001), Skyros (Karambinis 2015, 213-243), Antikythera (Bevan & Conolly 2013, 143-148), southern Argolid (Jameson et al. 1994, 400-403), the peninsula of Methana (Mee & Forbes 1997, 88-90, 257), Messenia (McDonald et al. 1983, 337-338, 354, 422-423), Boeotia (Bintliff & Snodgrass 1988b; Bintliff 2007; 2013a), Corinthia (Pettergrew 2007), Nemean Valley (Wright et al. 1990), Berbati-Limnes (Forsell 1996), Asea Valley (Forsén & Forsén 2003) and Megalopolis (Lloyd et al. 1985; Roy et al. 1988; 1989) in Arcadia, Pylos (Zangger et al. 1997), Skourta plain (Munn & Munn 1990), Oropos (Cosmopoulos 2001), southern Euboea (Keller 1985), Attica (Lohmann 1993, Tzavella 2014), Crete (Watrous 1974; Bintliff 1997; Raab 2001; Tsigonaki & Sarris 2016; Tsigonaki 2017), the Dodecanese (Deligiannakis 2006, 235-247; 2008), and Cyprus (Rautman 2000). In this wide Mediterranean context of intensively exploited agricultural landscape during Late Antiquity, Paros and Naxos presents new evidence and additional case-studies for the investigation of the insular rural communities in the Aegean.

The synthetic consideration of the archaeological evidence suggests a busy countryside occupied by a wide range of agricultural and industrial sites. Despite problems of site classification that studies of rural landscapes face (for an overview see Stewart 2014) and the limitations posed by the material evidence, the Late Antique sites recorded in the Parian and Naxian countryside can be generally classified as villages (large or small, coastal or inland), rural villas, estate-centres, farmsteads and industrial centres. A closer examination of the natural features of the majority of the sites makes it clear there was a consistent correlation between settlement density and land use zoning, showing greater preference for fertile arable or grazing (mostly for the most mountainous island of Naxos) land. It seems most of the settlement sites’ location within the landscape (coastal or inland) was related to the availability of arable and (or) grazing land as well as a close supply of water. In several cases viewshed analysis of the Late Antique rural sites has shown a visual control over specific fertile productive zones. Thus, in many cases landscape visibility is added to the correlation discussed above.

The existence of various types of sites across the countryside and their association with fertile
201, 210), the peninsula of Methana (Mee & Forbes 1997, 90) and southern Argolid (Jameson et al. 1994, 113). Especially, on the island of Keos settlement expansion begun in the 2nd and 4th centuries and continued throughout Late Antiquity (Cherry et al. 1991). On Skyros there was no considerable change of the settlement pattern from the Greco-Roman period to Late Antiquity (Karambinis 2015).

The various sites with strong agricultural nature scattered across the countryside of Paros and Naxos, coexisted with a number of sea oriented sites (along the shoreline of both islands), such as ceramic production centres, coastal settlements and small anchorages, which served as collecting, processing and exporting points for the produced agricultural surplus. As evidenced by several regional surveys, agricultural surpluses from many regions of the Aegean were destined mainly for wider markets rather than for the sustenance of local populations (Bintliff 2012b, 357-358). This high commercialisation of the production has resulted in the emergence of new regional areas of production in almost every corner of the Aegean, specialising in specific commercial crop production intended for export, such as olive oil, wine and cereals. These were essential products in the Mediterranean way of life and emerged as the most commercially successful merchandises. The vast majority of eastern regions were producers and above all exporters of wine and oil (Piéri 2012, 28, 32). In order to support the lucrative trade of these products, a plethora of ceramic production centres for the manufacture of appropriate transport amphora types emerged along the complex coastline of the mainland and islands (Bintliff 2012b, 357-358). The Late Roman amphora types, which were mass produced in the East, were intended for large scale commerce. Thus, the process of manufacturing the commercially successful containers was in direct relationship with regional specialised agricultural production (Piéri 2012, 32). Additionally, numerous coastal sites with harbour installations developed across the Aegean either serving as staging points for the exportable produce of particular areas or as safe anchorages facilitating commercial navigation.

The islands of Paros and Naxos have produced tangible evidence of specialisation and commercialisation of the local agricultural production. This also reflects a distinction between different settlement and land use strategies. Evidence from the bay of Naoussa suggests that from the 6th century an important industrial centre for the manufacture of transport amphora (LR 1 and 2/13 types) flourished along the coastline, enriching our knowledge regarding the Aegean pottery production centres during Late Antiquity. The spatial relationship between the pottery workshops of Naoussa, a number of rural sites at the heart of the productive farming zones of northern and north-eastern Paros and several port installations scattered along the shoreline reflects a strong connection between the manufacture of amphorae, the production of goods, and the inter-regional commercial networks. In this respect, the northern and north-eastern part of Paros shows evidence of high specialisation in pottery and agricultural production as well as a distinct market orientation. The superabundance of amphora fragments of the LR 1 and 2/13 types along the coastline of the bay reflects a mass production which can be explained as being oriented to external markets. It seems this regional coastal industrial centre was not only developed for the manufacture of commercial amphora types suitable as containers of oil, wine and grain, but also for assembling such cargoes and exporting them to wider markets. Both types were some of the most famous and commercially successful eastern transport containers with high percentage of penetration in the regions of the Eastern Roman Empire (Piéri 2012, 29; Karagiorgou 2001, 146). It has been suggested that they contained mostly wine and olive oil (Karagiorgou 2001, 146; Decker 2001). The Parian workshops started the production of both types approximately at the same time as many other coastal sites in the East Mediterranean, such as on the islands of Kos (see more about the Koan workshops in Deligiannakis 2008; Diamanti 2010a; Didioumi 2014a; 2014b; Papavasileiou et al. 2014; Papavasileiou & Didioumi forthcoming; Poulou-Papadimitriou & Didioumi 2010) and Cyprus (Demesticha 2003). The stamped amphorae fragments discovered in the workshops on Paros and Kos (Diamanti forthcoming) indicate a state control over local ceramic productions and the distribution of the agricultural surplus. This phenomenon is probably connected to the creation of the quaestura exercitus and links the islands of the Cyclades and Dodecanese to the provision of the
troops on the lower Danube with food supplies (for more see Chapter 6.1.4).

Two more characteristic examples showing the specialisation and market orientation of the Parian and Naxian production system during Late Antiquity are offered by the important industrial installation discovered around the Hellenistic tower of Chimarros and the site of Gyroulas at Saggri. Especially in the case of Chimarros, the discovery of substantial pressing equipment indicates a specialisation in olive oil cultivation throughout the south-eastern part of Naxos. Archaeological evidence from many regions of the Eastern Mediterranean has produced evidence that specific regions were specialised in viticulture or oil cultivation, constituting a large proportion of their exportable surplus. A remarkable amount of pressing equipment has been attested in the peninsula of Methana (Mee & Forbes 1997, 257-263). It seems the rural landscape was exploited by nucleated settlements and dispersed farmsteads which were highly specialised in oil production. The special nature of this landscape’s exploitation suggests the local surpluses were destined for wider markets. In the case of Throni, the site with the pressing equipment may be associated with three other sites with strong agricultural character in the immediate vicinity (Mee & Forbes 1997, 88-89). Traces of olive oil cultivation and pressing equipment were also discovered in many other regions, such as southern Argolid (Runnels & van Andel 1987), Keos (Cherry et al. 1991), and Antikythera (Bevan & Conolly 2013, 148-149) etc.

Despite differences, a comparison of the case of Chimarros with the example of Methana makes it possible that the regional Naxian industrial centre for olive oil processing was associated with a number of smaller rural sites scattered in the most productive zones of the south-eastern part of Naxos and specialised mainly in olive oil cultivation. In the case of Chimarros, however, it seems it was more efficient for tenants to convey their production as raw crops to central facilities. From this viewpoint, the tower of Chimarros and Gyroulas at Saggri emerged as important local leading centres during the course of Late Antiquity for collecting and controlling the rural production of Naxos. Due to the fact the tower of Chimarros was located comparatively far away from Naxos’s main export point on the west coastline while, in topographic terms, this region was isolated from the central and western parts of the island, a second commercial harbour was developed along the south-eastern edge of Naxos in the small bay of Panormos since antiquity. During Late Antiquity, the natural harbour of Panormos played a key role serving as the export point for the agricultural production of south-eastern Naxos.

In parallel with these industrial centres, a number of smaller production sites and safe anchorages with market orientation existed and functioned along the coastline. This is clearer on the island of Paros as evidenced by archaeological material found in the areas of Voutakos, Kantouma, Glifadès and Piso Livadi along the island’s eastern coastline. Smaller pottery production sites and harbour facilities were also found in many other coastal regions of the Aegean such as Melos (Renfrew & Wagstaff 1982, 145-146), the peninsula of Methana (Mee & Forbes 1997, 90), the southern Argolid (Jameson et al. 1994, 402) which are explained as being oriented to external markets. On the nearby island of Melos at least 10 coastal sites can be classified as small coastal stations for mining, processing and exporting a variety of the island’s mineral products (Bintliff 1977; Renfrew & Wagstaff 1982, 145-146).

It is fascinating that the development of port infrastructures along the coastline of both islands, associated with small or large industrial centres and various rural sites, suggests that the Parian and Naxian countryside was fully integrated into the inter-regional trade patterns and sea routes. Despite the major role played by the cities of Paros and Naxos in the internal settlement network, the local agricultural surpluses from the island’s productive zones were not only concentrated on the urban centres in order to be exported. It seems that only the production from the immediate periphery of the urban centres and the neighbouring areas was transported to the ports. The main harbours of each island, especially the Late Antique port of Paros, functioned mostly as hubs for long distance commercial activities and secondarily as export points for the local production. Consequently, the majority of the agricultural produce on Paros and Naxos was exported to the wider markets directly through the regional export points along their shorelines, which functioned as gateways for communication and economic, cultural as well as social interaction.
In addition, apart from the high specialization in manufacturing transport amphorae as well as in viticulture and olive oil cultivation, a number of secondary activities are attested on the islands of Paros and Naxos on a smaller scale. Material evidence from the of Gyroulas industrial centre on Naxos suggests that in parallel with local production of wine and oil, between the late 6th and early 8th centuries, the production of lamps, wool-processing and honey-making is confirmed (Simantoni-Bournia 2001, 30-31, fig.34; Bournias 2014, 788-789). Honey making seems to also be important in the case of Kato Marathi on Paros, as evidenced by the existence of surface fragments from Late Antique beehives. Beekeeping was, probably, a major activity during Late Antiquity in the countryside of both mainland and insular regions, as indicated by the cases of Boeotia (Vroom 2003) and Rhodes (Deligiannakis 2006, 209). Livestock farming appears to be more important for the island of Naxos, because of the local landscape’s mountainous nature and the abundance of grazing land. The settlement pattern on central Naxos (Potamia, Tragea, Apiranthos and Danakos) indicates communities based on mixed farming, an agrarian system that mixes arable farming with the raising of livestock at the same time. Despite the fact that evidence is scanty, it seems that mountainous Naxos produced and, probably, exported a good deal of cheese during Late Antiquity. It seems that, in the case of Naxos the uncultivated landscape was a crucial economic sources. The development of commercial sheep and goat herding is also documented in the countryside of Attica (Lohmann 1993).

6.1.3. Aspects of social life in the insular societies of Paros and Naxos

Apart from the information concerning economic aspects, the study of settlement patterning can also contribute to the reconstruction of social relationships. Thus, a crucial topic is also the investigation of the pattern of land ownership and the status of agricultural labour which is reflected in this settlement pattern.

It is generally accepted that a shift in exploitation of the countryside is attested during Late Antiquity showing an increase in the role played by the wealthier classes of landowners (for an overview see Bintliff 2012b, 353-361). Despite the fact that local variations in the relationship between landowners and tenants have been observed, the general trend for the Eastern Roman Empire during Late Antiquity suggests that wealth produced by the extensive exploitation of land was concentrated on the upper-classes. A number of surface surveys in many regions of the Aegean have shown a rural landscape occupied by fewer but larger estate centres compared to Classical and Hellenistic periods, as well as a continuing number of village foci. These commercial estates were developed to cover the large cities’ increasing needs and the frontier military forces (Bintliff 2012b, 353-354). In central Greece, and more specifically in Boeotia, a number of estate-centres have been recognised across the rural landscape with farm-managers, a limited permanent stuff of slaves and a number of tied tenants reflecting a market orientation (Bintliff et al. 2007). The Berbati Survey 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 countryside of Keos a plethora of rural sites appeared across the landscape during Late Antiquity (Cherry et al. 1991). The majority of the sites were small whilst a limited number can be classified as larger estates centres, in which the absence of clear traces of villa life (wall-painting fragments, mosaics, etc.) indicates that wealthier landowners were not in residence (Bintliff 2012b, 354). It is quite possible that managers, tenants or wage-labourers were charged with exploitation of both site-types, on behalf of absentee landowners. In the Dodecanese a small group of landlords has been identified residing in the cities while land was exploited by labourers and tenants on behalf of this local aristocracy (Deligiannakis 2006, 244-245).

Apart from the valuable evidence from the archaeological surveys, important information is offered by a group of fragmentary preserved inscriptions of census records (cadaster) discovered on the islands of Thera, Astypalaia, Kos, Chios, Mytilene and west Asia Minor (Jones 1953; Erxleben 1969; Kiourtzian 2000, 212-240; 2001, 11; Deligiannakis 2006, 241-242). Despite the fact they are dated to the late 3rd or early 4th century, this material can provide the ground upon which social relations can be studied and interpreted during the
following centuries. The cadaster of Thera gives a glimpse of the importance and nature of rural communities in the Late Antique Cyclades, offering tangible evidence concerning land ownership, the density of rural population and the status of peasantry in the 4th century (Kiourtzian 2000, 212-240; 2001, 11). What makes a greater impression is that on such a small island like Thera (76 m²) approximately 50 large agricultural units (estates) have been recorded. In terms of social stratification: a) landlords, b) peasants, and c) slaves (it provides the names of at least 162 slaves) are mentioned in the cadaster of Thera. Similar picture emerges from the study of census records (cadastre) discovered on other Aegean islands (Astypalaia, Kos, Chios, Mytilene). It seems highly probable that the cadaster of Thera reflects an agricultural exploitation of the countryside based on large estates. Although there is no clear mention about whether this production covered the needs of the local market or flowed to the large urban centres of the Empire, it is most likely that this system of land ownership had a market orientation.

The relatively limited information derived from the analysis of the sites of Paros and Naxos and the limitations posed by the material itself do not allow us to be very accurate when talking about social relations on the two islands during Late Antiquity. Although at the moment it is not possible to offer a concrete picture, a combination of new data from the two islands with the results of regional surveys, personal studies and epigraphic witnesses, allow us to make some possible hypotheses.

As indicated by archaeological and epigraphic evidence, the coastal cities of Paros and Naxos were the residential centres of the upper-class. The discovery of the 4th century urban villa in Aplomata hill, which was decorated with mosaic pavements and frescoes (Kontoleon 1961, 196-200, pl.151-153; 1963, 153-155; Lambrinoudakis 1993, 162-163; 1994, 171-172) attests the presence of a wealthy community within the city of Naxos, the members of which were able to make themselves visible from all directions with the erection of such luxurious structures expressing their power and richness. It seems that luxurious complexes were located at the most prominent sites of the town whilst regular housing complexes were situated in the centre of the city. The existence of wealthy town houses in Late Roman cities was a common pattern in the urban environment of the East Mediterranean (Bintliff 2012b 369, 371), reflecting the rise of imperial administrators and military officers or presence of rich landowners (Grammenos 2003; Leone 2007, 60). In other coastal urban centres of the province of the Islands (provincia insularum), such as Rhodes and Kos, the remains of luxurious secular buildings suggest the presence of local city-based elites. It is suggested that their prosperity derived from the exploitation of large estates on the island’s countryside (Deligiannakis 2006, 239-240). The same pattern based on estates which supported substantial urban elites during Late Antiquity is also attested in Cyprus (Given 2004, 14).

The available evidence from Naxos and Paros in Late Antiquity seems to probably be in accordance with the picture discussed above. The ancient city of Naxos is surrounded by a plethora of smaller or larger productive zones scattered across the lowland western part, where the majority of the best agricultural land on the island is located. As has been demonstrated above, the numerous rural sites, which were set at the heart of these land use intensity zones on western Naxos, were culturally and economically associated with the urban centre. It is most likely that the distribution of rural sites on western Naxos reflects an intensive estate-based cultivation of the land with clear market orientation. Presumably, the land was mostly owned by a few wealthy owners, who resided in the town (or in the larger villages), whilst managers, tenants or slaves ran these establishments on behalf of the absentee landlords. It is noteworthy that, possibly, due to the lack of numerous safe natural ports along Naxos’s west coastline and the good circulation across this lowland landscape, it was sufficient to convey the commercial production to the island’s central harbour in the urban centre in order to be exported. In constant, evidence from the regions of central Naxos provides a different picture. Due to the extremely steep mountainous landscape, which creates small isolated productive zones, a network of small dispersed and remote communities dealing with mixed farming developed in Apiranthos. Parameters, such as the long distances between the settlements and the steepness of the landscape, possibly, reflect a pattern of more independent peasants and shepherds.
across the periphery of Apiranthos, which may have also benefited from the economic growth of Late Antiquity.

Archaeological evidence suggests that over the course of Late Antiquity Parian society was composed of the local ecclesiastical (bishop and clergy) and administrative (state representatives) elite, landowners, merchants, peasants, pottery makers and probably slaves. Evidence from the sculpture decoration of the main church of Ekatontapiliani in conjunction with information from ecclesiastical councils, make it evident that the city of Paros was the seat of a local Church with increasing power over the local community during Late Antiquity. Members of the local ecclesiastical elite appeared to have been actively involved in the island’s regional management, especially during the 6th century, as they were able to accomplish, possibly, the most ambitious building project undertaken on the islands of the Aegean during Late Antiquity. In addition, Parian bishops participated in the discussions for addressing the early controversies of the church through Ecumenical and other smaller councils. The clear correlation between the city’s two new landmarks, the religious complex of Ekatontapiliani and the harbour, which both formed the centre of the Late Antique town, illustrates the new dipole of regional authority.

Despite the fact that, at the moment there is no evidence of housing in the urban centre of Paros, since the remains of domestic structures may have been lost or obliterated during earlier excavations focused on monumental architecture, it is quite possible that, as is observed in the case of Naxos, there was a city-based elite of landowners. On the remainder of the island, despite poor evidence, the emerging picture from the areas of Marathi, Naoussa, Stavros, Archilochos and Marpissa is similar to that prevailing on Naxos and other Aegean islands, suggesting an economy based on estates. It is most likely that the inner basin of Marathi was exploited by one estate, which was associated with Naoussa’s pottery production and distribution centre. Naoussa’s interior and areas of Archilochos and Marpissa present a picture of clusters of small sites around a central village. It is possible that the settlement at Protoria functioned as a main village of the Naoussa region surrounded by a number of smaller satellite rural sites. The sites Kravga, and possibly, Milos tou Avraam, have produced evidence of smaller establishments probably fully dependent on the larger village.

The consideration of archaeological evidence from Voutakos, a mid-sized settlement with monumental architecture and cultic structures since antiquity, makes the double function of this Late Antique site clear. There is a spatial relationship between this coastal settlement and southwest Paros’s rich cultivable land whilst, at the same time, it seems fully integrated into maritime trade networks. The settlement of Voutakos presents a picture of a semi-urban environment, as evidenced by the architectural traces of the basilica, the local and imported marble sculptures, and the fragments of domestic pottery on the surface ceramics. The local society could consist of merchants, landowners (large landowners, smallholders or tenant farmers), craftsmen, fishermen, as well as religious and state officials. Thus, it is possible that landlords resided in the settlement at Voutakos, for controlling their own land, which was cultivated by managers, tenants or wage-labourers on behalf of them. Moreover, surface ceramics and high quality Classical, Hellenistic and Roman marble sculptures scattered in the area of Voutakos, suggest the site was occupied by an important large settlement with monumental buildings since antiquity.

6.1.4. Paros, Naxos and the Cyclades within the highly interactive Mediterranean world during Late Antiquity

Archaeological evidence from Paros and Naxos dated to Late Antiquity, especially during the 6th and 7th centuries, presents a picture of economically active coastal cities in parallel with a dense network of various sites in the countryside (coastal and inland landscapes) which fits well with comparative material from other Cycladic islands such as Melos, Keos, Andros, and Thera. These complex settlement trends in the insular communities of the Cyclades can be understood and interpreted in the general framework of the political and economic circumstances pertaining to the Eastern Mediterranean world and the Aegean Sea, during Late Antiquity in particular.

After the re-orientation of the Empire to the East and the establishment of Constantinople as the
new growing metropolis, the broader Aegean world (Greece, Aegean Islands and the coastal zone of Asia Minor) has assumed a crucial role in the context of the Mediterranean world between the 4th and 7th centuries. In terms of commercial and military navigation, the Aegean Archipelago emerged as the busiest maritime zone within the highly interactive environment of the Eastern Mediterranean basin (Abadie-Reynal 1989) over the course of Late Antiquity. The large eastern urban centres, such as Constantinople, Antioch and Alexandria, as well as the numerous Roman frontier armies needed considerable amounts of food supplies and other materials. Hence, the Late Antique economic system of the Eastern Roman Empire was developed as a unified economic space divided into compartments in order to serve these increasing needs (Carriè 2012). Accordingly, a dense network of inter-regional sailing trade routes was developed, in which the Aegean islands played a central role functioning as principal or secondary commercial stations. A plethora of economic, social and cultural sub-regions were created and flourished through this complex network.

Consequently, in this general context, the growth of maritime commercial economy during Late Antiquity proved very beneficial for the Aegean’s insular, coastal and inland communities. As Deligiannakis pointed out, the Aegean islands were directly involved with large scale state-commandeered shipment of Egyptian grains (2008, 213-125). The progressive loss of the rich Eastern provinces and the subsequent problems in supplying of the Constantinople have resulted in an intensification of land use in many regions of Greece, mainly for commercial purposes as indicated by the archaeological evidence derived mainly from intensive surface surveys (Bintliff 2012b, 358). Especially in the 6th and 7th century, it is quite possible that the most fertile Aegean islands contributed to fill the gap in the rural production after the progressive loss of the wealthy provinces. These agricultural surpluses were destined to cover the increasing needs of the Capital, and the frontier and interior Roman military forces rather than regional markets for subsistence of local populations. The establishment of the quaestura exercitus represents a special context in which Aegean islands were connected with the supply of the military forces on the lower Danube with foodstuffs. According to Deligiannakis, the association of the Aegean islands, Asia Minor and Cyprus in this new administrative unit may indicate the involvement of these regions in the exchange network (2008, 217-220).

The Cycladic islands formed a dynamic sub-zone of economic, cultural and social interaction within the Eastern Mediterranean world. In this sub-zone, the diversity and distinctiveness of each island resulted in the creation of small but highly interactive microcosms which were integral links in the chain of the broader Late Antique socioeconomic system. The large involvement of the Cyclades’s insular communities in trade patterns and sea routes as well as the effect of the economic activities over the Eastern Mediterranean’s unified economic space during Late Antiquity had, therefore, a strong impact on the daily life of the islands, progressively transforming living standards between the 4th and 7th centuries. This is clearly reflected on the settlement pattern of Paros and Naxos, suggesting the development of a productive system mainly based on the specialisation and commercialisation of local production. Hence, in both case-studies as well as on many other islands of the southern Aegean Sea a complex settlement pattern was developed, with economically active urban centres and a dense network of rural (or pastoral) sites, industrial centres and port installations in order to support their role, as smaller links in the chain of Late Antiquity’s unified economic system.

Paros and Naxos, then, show evidence of commercial success, since they have exported their surpluses to wider markets. The geographically and commercially advantaged islands of Paros and Naxos were fully incorporated into Late Antiquity’s new political, cultural and economic environment, since they benefited from their position along major trade and distribution routes as well as from the potential and opportunities offered by the natural features of their landscapes, experiencing a period of economic vitality from the 4th to the 7th or early 8th centuries. Both settlement patterns and material evidence suggest that this economically vibrant situation reaches its peak between the 6th and 7th centuries. During this period, transport amphorae had become a dominant feature of the Late Antiquite
material culture on Paros and Naxos, once again representing the commercial success of these insular communities.

Comparing this thriving picture of the 6th and 7th centuries deriving from the archaeological material from many island communities of the Southern Aegean (Cyclades, Dodecanese, Crete) with contemporary evidence from the Greek Peninsula, one gains the impression that there is a contradiction between the insular and mainland regions of the Aegean world at the end of Late Antiquity. At a time when the Cyclades and the Dodecanese appear to present economically active communities in both urban and rural landscapes, with high level of rural productivity and market orientation, the Late Antique cities and the countryside of Mainland Greece during the 6th and 7th centuries suffered from a series of catastrophes; such as plagues and earthquakes, and the penetration of Slavic tribes (Bintliff 2012b, 384-388). Many small or large cities in Mainland Greece lost their urban status in the 6th or early 7th century (Corinth, cities of Boeotia). In contrast, evidence from Late Antique urban centres of the Cyclades such as Paros, Naxos and Melos (Renfrew & Wagstaff 1982), as well as from larger coastal settlements such as Perissa and Oia in Thera (Gerousi 2001; Efthathiou 2001), and Voutakos on Paros present a picture of economically active communities until the late 7th and, sometimes the early 8th century. It is most likely that some small or large Cycladic cities retained their urban or semi-urban character by then.

In the countryside of Mainland Greece important changes can be seen in the settlement pattern during the 7th centuries as a result of the Slav penetration and the possible appearance of Slavic settlements across the rural landscape, as indicated by place names and cemeteries. According to Bintliff: “essentially the Mainland Greek countryside left imperial control for much of the period 600-800 AD and came under the dominance of Slav tribes” (2012b, 383-388). At the same time, the Cycladic countryside is characterised by economically active communities, stability of the settlement pattern and highly intensified commercial farming at least until the middle/late 7th century, as indicated by the examples of Paros, Naxos, Keos and Melos. A similar picture emerges from some coastal regions of Mainland Greece, such as the peninsula of Methana (Mee & Forbes 1997) and southern Argolid (Jameson et al. 1994) where Late Antique sites survived well into the 7th century. It seems the vibrant rural world continued into the 7th and 8th centuries as well in many regions of the Eastern Roman Empire (Bowden et al. 2004).

6.2 PAROS AND NAXOS IN THE TRANSITION TO THE BYZANTINE EARLY MIDDLE AGES: TWO DIFFERENT STORIES

6.2.1 The Early Byzantine Aegean world from a different perspective

A great challenge the reconstruction of insular societies of the Aegean faces is to shed light on the settled landscape in the transition between Late Antiquity and the Byzantine Early Middle Ages. It is generally accepted that after the end of Late Antiquity in the beginning of the medieval period most of the Aegean world appeared to enter a period of fundamental changes in settlement pattern, material culture and everyday life. In this general context, the discussion about continuity and discontinuity of the Aegean settlements from Late Antiquity through the Early Middle Ages has been given much scholarly attention in the fields of history and archaeology over the recent decades.

The overstressed historical validity of written sources has resulted, until recently, in perceiving external threats (the Slav and Arab hostility) and natural disasters (earthquakes and plagues) as the most popular phenomena for explaining the historical trajectory of the Early Medieval Balkans and the Eastern Mediterranean, shaping our perspective in a negative way. On the other hand, in terms of archaeological records, the period after the middle 7th century is characterised by low visibility of material culture (with the exception of churches and frescoes), a phenomenon which deeply influenced the interpretative models of several scholars. The contradiction between the superabundance of ceramic finds, mainly commercial amphorae and red slip wares, which became the dominant features of Late Antique material culture, and the difficulties faced by the archaeologists to identify material evidence (pottery, sculptures etc.) securely dated between the late 7th and 9th centuries, has been approached
through the pattern of a peak in prosperity followed by absolute disaster. Thus, the ongoing debate concerning this transitional period between the late 7th and 9th centuries has, mostly, been based on the interpretative model of crisis with the economic decline, ruralisation and demographic decrease that followed after the prosperity of Late Antiquity. This model is well-known through a series of case-studies in Asia Minor, Cyprus, mainland Greece and the Aegean islands (Dally & Ratté 2011).

However, those complex socioeconomic phenomena are related to multiple parameters so that a convincing interpretation cannot be given only by external threats or natural disasters. The sharp contrast between the evidence from insular or coastal regions and the Greek Mainland discussed above, suggests there might be local variations and different parameters in the beginning and the extent of this transitional period among the areas of the Aegean world. More recent studies and ongoing projects have set a new framework for the discussion and examination of the transition from Late Antiquity to the Byzantine Early Middle Ages, approaching the radical shifts as a sum of multiple factors that changed the nature of the economy and the system of exchange after the late 7th century (Vionis 2016). In this respect, a re-evaluation of the available archaeological material is needed under the light of a more optimistic angle. The new evidence from Paros and Naxos offers an alternative interpretative approach to material culture and settlement patterns of the Cyclades in the transition to the Byzantine Early Middle Ages, at least for the first period of Arab hostility before the conquest of Crete. What is interesting for our study is the completely different reaction from the two islands under the same circumstances pertaining to the Aegean during the 8th and 9th centuries. In other words, from the 8th century Naxos had a different history from that of Paros, despite their setting in the same geographical space.

6.2.2 Naxos: an example of gradual and smooth transition to the Byzantine Early Middle Ages

Starting with Naxos, the emerging picture, through the synthetic and comparative analysis of the archaeological data discussed above, shows the island’s gradual and creative adaptation to the new circumstances pertaining to the Aegean after the late 7th century. The major characteristics of the Naxian settlement pattern during the Byzantine Early Middle Ages can be summarised under five headings (Fig. 6.3): a) changes in urban context with the capital’s relocation and the emergence of the Medieval urban centre of Apalirou, b) the strong presence of the imperial administration on the island of Naxos, which probably emerged as an administrative and military node of great importance for the Empire’s maritime defensive system, c) settlements were not only withdrawn to the mountainous hinterland but were also located in lowland localities very close to the shoreline, d) the mountainous interior presents a picture of more intensive habitation compared to the previous period, and e) gradual changes in the character of the industrial centres and the secondary export points.

The consideration of the archaeological material evidence from the excavations in the Late Antique city of Naxos makes the dramatic changes that occurred in the urban landscape until the middle 8th century clear. It seems the Late Antique city-port progressively lost its urban status and shrank in size into a small coastal settlement throughout the 8th century. This is reflected in the ceased functioning of the city’s aqueduct of during this period after a long and uninterrupted function for many centuries. However, numismatic evidence and the discovery of an artisanal unit (tannery) along the shoreline of Grotta, probably dated to the 8th or 9th centuries (Lambrinoudakis 1978, 211-217; 1980, 259-262; 1981, 293-294; 1982, 253-255), suggests that life and small scale economic activities continued to exist throughout the Byzantine Early Middle ages in this coastal landscape despite the Arab threat.

Major transformations in small or large coastal city-ports is a widely attested phenomenon in the Eastern Mediterranean during the late 7th/early 8th centuries, as evidenced by the ancient urban centres of Melos (Renfrew & Wagstaff 1982, 146), Keos (Cherry et al. 1991, 340), Andros (Palaiokrassa 2013; Veikou 2015a), Kythnos (Mazarakis-Ainian 2013), Skyros (Karambinis 2015, 203), Cyprus (Veikou 2015a), the coastal settlements in Thera (Efstathiou 2001; Gerousi 2001), Kos (Kalopissi-Verti & Panayotidi 2013), Schinoussa (Chatzilazarou 2008),
and Crete (Tsigonaki 2007; Tsigonaki & Sarris 2016). Additionally, on Mainland Greece the emerging picture suggests a pattern of shrinking ancient cities which served as refuge spots for Byzantine Greek populations (Bintliff 2001, 38; 2012b, 384–88). In the case of Naxos the strong economic and cultural links that connected the ancient coastal urban centre to the island’s countryside and the commercial maritime networks appeared to be broken after the late 7th and early 8th century. A similar picture has emerged for the islands of Keos (Cherry et al. 1991, 340) and Skyros (Karambinis 2015, 203).

In parallel with this process, a new settlement type, the fortified medieval town of Apalirou, made its appearance in the interior of the western part of the island during the 7th-8th centuries, when political and socio-economic conditions changed in the south Aegean with the emergence of the Arabs. This fundamental change in the settlement pattern of Naxos with the relocation of the island’s centre reflects socioeconomic and political transformation from the end of Late Antiquity to the Middle Ages, shedding light on the relationship between settlement patterns, political authority and the economy of the Cyclades. A similar pattern of the capital’s relocation has been recently suggested during the same period for smaller or larger islands of the Eastern Mediterranean, such as Andros and Cyprus (Veikou 2015a, 379). In both cases the phenomenon of the foundation of new capitals in the interior of the islands (from Palaiopolis to the region of Mesaria in Andros and from Constantia to Nicosia in Cyprus) has been connected to defensive strategies in the light of the increasing Arab hostility. However, new evidence from Kastro Apalirou has shown that this phenomenon is related to multiple parameters, suggesting this fortified town’s multifaceted functionality.

The west orientation and the good long distance views of the fortress to both sea and land show an effort to potentially control and manage the internal production across the fertile lowland Naxos in order to preserve self-sufficiency, and at the same time, a special care to ensure the safe maritime circulation through the naval channel of Paronaxia for military or commercial purposes. The establishment of the fortified installations on the islet of Viokastro close to Paros, Palaiokastro on Ios, and Kaloyeroς on southeast Naxos during the same period reflects a network of communication in which Apalirou held a central position. Hence, in terms of internal function, it emerged as the new local administrative, economic and ecclesiastical centre of Naxos. In a wider Cycladic context, it possibly served as the largest node within a regional maritime defensive network created by the imperial administration. From this point of view, this reflects Constantinople’s organised effort to redefine the administration and management of the Cyclades and to secure the maritime routes, indicating a strong imperial presence on the island of Naxos and the central Cyclades during the Byzantine Early Middle Ages, at least until the Arab conquest of Crete (824-828), which was a turning point for insular history.

Furthermore, sigilographic evidence from the 7th-8th centuries provides additional evidence for the extent of the Byzantine administrative and military presence in the southern Aegean during this period. A series of four lead seals dated between the 730-731 and 738-739 mentioned the existence of the *vasilika kommerkia* on many Cycladic islands, such as Melos, Andros, Thera, Anafi, Ios and Amorgos (Oikonomidou 1964, 559; Zacos-Veglery 1972, no. 242; Brandes 2002, 379). The seal of *vasilika kommerkia* of Melos, Thera, Anafi, Ios and Amorgos could potentially be connected to the role of Thera as a station in the maritime trade of the Byzantines and the Arabs - but on the other hand could also indicate internal trade of indigenous products (Katsone 2008, 107-108 with n. 111). Additionally, more than 50 lead seals of ecclesiastical, administrative or military officers are dated to the 7th-8th centuries on the strategically positioned island of Crete (Roussos 2015), while a number of fortifications can be placed in the 7th or 8th centuries (Tsigonaki 2007). Combining all the archaeological and historical evidence discussed above, the emerging picture suggests a strong Byzantine presence in the maritime space of the South Aegean, and the Cyclades in particular, during the first period of Arab presence (until the early 9th century), reflecting a durable effort from the Empire for economic and military management of the insular world in the rapidly changing context. In this respect, larger Cycladic islands, such as Naxos, Andros and Melos have acquired a central position in administrative, economic and military terms. It seems this lasted
until the turning point of the Arab conquest of Crete, since in the early 10th century, according to Ioannes Caminiates, Naxos paid tribute to the Muslims of Crete. However, there is no evidence of any destruction inflicted by the Arabs and the island of Naxos possibly experienced good relation with them (see Chapter 6.3).

In this context, the picture emerging from the countryside of Naxos on the one hand contradicts the almost blank rural landscapes of other Aegean islands, while one the other, disputes the pattern of total abandonment of coastal zones and the retreat of habitation only to the hinterland (Fig. 6.2). A number of regional surveys (based on surface material), excavations, and individual studies offered either blank or low level activity landscapes during the Byzantine Early Middle Ages in many insular, coastal and inland regions of the Aegean world, such as Melos (Renfrew & Wagstaff 1982), Keos (Cherry et al. 1991, 369-370) etc. However, we need to be very sceptical when we take into account the results of these archaeological surveys concerning the Byzantine Early Middle Ages. It is worth mentioning that, most of these archaeological projects were conducted at a period during which researchers were not able to recognise material culture on the field securely dated between the middle 7th and the early 9th centuries. Therefore, the archaeological gap which occurs in the Aegean landscape, to an extent, is a result of a research gap rather than a real absence of material culture and human activity.

Regarding the coastal zones and insular communities the period after the late 7th century has been approached through the interpretative model of the decline and abandonment of coastal sites and the withdrawal of habitation in inland regions under the increasing pressure of the Arab threat (Malamut 1988, 67-68). The evidence from Naxos suggests that this picture needs re-evaluation, since variations can be seen in the scale and effects of the impact of the Arab sea raids in the insular and coastal communities of the Aegean.

Looking at the overall picture from Naxos, during the Early Byzantine centuries the settled landscape was characterised by stability and balance, since the pattern of settlement distribution in relation to soil productivity did not changed from Late Antiquity to the Early Middle Ages (Fig. 6.2). In the lowland coastal landscape of the western part of the island, settlements were situated close to the shoreline (up to 5 km away from the sea), as evidenced by the examples of Chora, Kechrees, Saggri, Kato Marathos, Eggares and Polichni. At the same time, the mountainous interior of Naxos presents a picture of more intensive habitation compared to the previous period. The vast majority of the Late Antique rural and pastoral sites continued through the 7th, 8th and 9th centuries, while new sites emerged, as evidenced by surface ceramics and the density of small churches with aniconic decoration. The analysis of the surface ceramics around the church of Kalloni, which is located at a remote site north-east of Apiranthos, suggests that 70% of the total finds belonged to the period between the 7th and 9th centuries (Crow et al. 2011, 128-129; Vionis forthcoming).

The new archaeological evidence from Naxos provides us with a different picture from that prevailing in other coastal and insular regions of the Aegean. In Methana for example, a considerable decline and abandonment of coastal settlements has been recorded from the second half of the 7th to 9th century and the population was confined to more secure sites in the hinterland of the peninsula (Mee & Forbes 1997, 91-100). Thus, according to the researchers, the local populations, probably for protection purposes related to the Arab threat, found it more convenient to live at inland sites, which could offer potential to preserve self-sustainability (mixed farming), avoiding the relatively dangerous life of the coastal zone. The retreat of coastal sites and withdrawal of habitation in the interior has also been proposed for the islands of Andros and Cyprus (Veikou 2015a, 377). In the case of Naxos, it seems that both coastal and inland landscapes remained settled, cultivated and in other ways modified by humans between the 7th and 9th centuries.

What changed in the settled landscape of Naxos during the Byzantine Early Middle Ages was the character of the large or small Late Antique production centres and the secondary port infrastructures. It seems the high specialised industrial site of Chimarros with a market orientation was transformed into a local production and storage centre for agricultural goods from southeast Naxos in the second half of the 7th century (Vionis 2016). This shift reflects changes in the nature of the economy and the broader system.
of exchange during the Byzantine Early Middle Ages in the Aegean Archipelagos.

This phenomenon, however, does not reflect absence of regional or inter-regional economic and commercial activities on the island Naxos and the Aegean Sea in general during the Early Middle centuries. It seems that after the late 7th century in the Aegean an economic system progressively developed more regional characteristic and products mainly circulating internally or just across the neighbouring regions. This system of production and distribution of goods had the island’s self-sufficiency a top priority. The numerous rural and pastoral sites of Early Medieval Naxos could probably sustain a considerable number of permanent inhabitants between the 7th and 9th centuries. In addition, the fact that Naxos retained its Episcopal status during this period is an aspect which also must be taken into consideration.

The regional dimension of economy, however, does not preclude the participation of the islands of the Aegean in inter-regional exchange on a much smaller scale compared to the previous period. Recent studies have argued that maritime trade continued in the Aegean and the Eastern Mediterranean during the Arab invasions in the 7th-8th centuries (Poulou-Papadimitriou 1995; 2001; Armstrong 2009; Vionis 2013; 2016). In this context, ceramic evidence from Naxos suggests the island’s population was actively involved in maritime commercial networks, integrated into sea routes that connected the Aegean world to parts of Eastern Mediterranean, Constantinople and southern Italy (Vionis 2013, 30-31). Thus, despite the Arab presence in the southern Aegean, Naxos and many other islands continued to function as active and open insular communities interacting with broader worlds during the Byzantine
Early Middle Ages. In a period characterised by the absence of 7th, 8th and 9th century coins on several sites in Greece and Asia Minor, numismatic evidence from several islands of the Cyclades, such as Naxos, Thera, Amorgos, Delos etc., dated to the Byzantine Dark centuries (Penna 2001) offer additional support for this theory, showing that daily life and economic activities continued to exist despite the Arab threat. It seems the landscapes of many Cycladic islands continued to be occupied and exploited continuously throughout the Early Middle Ages.

6.2.3 Paros: a diametrically opposed story

In contrast to the economic vitality of Naxos discussed above, material culture form Paros during the Byzantine Early Middle Ages tells a different story, particularly with regards to the countryside. In general terms, after a period of economic vitality, which probably lasted until the middle/late 7th century, from the early 8th century the majority of the Late Antique sites on the island have provided evidence of low levels of human activity, mainly reflected in the dramatic reduction or absence of the ceramic finds (Fig. 6.2).

In the urban context, the ancient city of Paros presents a picture similar to that prevailing in the urban centre of Naxos. It is most likely that it retained its urban character until the late 7th or early 8th century. A combination of recent and older archaeological material indicates a continuity of life in this coastal landscape during the 8th century. The 7th-8th century dedicatory wall painting in the chapel of Agios Nikolaos (Ekatontapiliani complex) indicates the existence of a local aristocracy, able to finance such small scale projects (Drossoyianni 1995, 729-731; 1998, 63). At the same time, the settlement’s port was economically active as evidenced by ceramic material dated to the 7th-8th century. However, the analysis of the ceramic material from the recent rescue excavations at Ekatontapiliani and Agios Konstantinos at Kastro show a gradual decline of imported pottery after the middle 7th century (Diamanti forthcoming). This is an indication the city has progressively ceased functioning as a regional maritime commercial node as a result of changes in the broader economic system discussed above. Thus, it is most likely that it lost its urban status during the 8th century and survived as a small coastal settlement, like the city of Naxos. The fact however that the religious complex of Ekatontapiliani remained upright from the 6th century to this day offers tangible evidence for the continuity of life during Byzantine Early Middle Ages. The local community was able at least to preserve this spacious and elaborate structure throughout the 8th, 9th and 10th centuries. Nevertheless, in contrast to the cases of Naxos and other islands, there are no traces of the capital’s relocation on Paros, since its hinterland lacks sufficient land to support a considerable number of people. In addition, the possible dating of the fortification of the city during the 6th or, most probably during the 7th century may suggest the settlement was well-protected.

The coastal zone of the island, where the vast majority of the sites were located, shows a discontinuity in pottery material between the late 7th and 10th centuries. In general, the period between the late 7th and 9th centuries is characterised by extremely limited archaeological knowledge concerning the material culture from many regions of the Aegean. This emerging picture from Paros is similar to that resulting from many regional surface surveys in other coastal or insular regions of the Aegean, which were only based on the study of pottery material, such as Keos (Cherry et al. 1991, 369-370), Antikythera (Bevan & Conolly 2013, 149-150), Methana (Mee & Forbes 1997, 91-100) and southern Argolid (Jameson et al. 1994, 404-410). This phenomenon can have multiple explanations as it can be considered as a result of the archaeologist’s inability to recognise material from that period, evidence of total abandonment of the coastal localities, or an indication of archaeologically low visible communities with extremely limited cultural production. On the small island of Antikythera for example, a discontinuity in the islands’ settlement pattern has been attested between the 7th and 11th centuries (Bevan & Connolly 2013, 149-150). This has been interpreted either as a possible large scale abandonment or extremely limited human activity on all levels from the middle 7th century, possibly as a result of Arab hostility. However, researchers point out that there are some small parts of the landscape where human presence is documented in almost every period (Bevan & Connolly 2013, 220).
The seeming “emptiness” of Paros’s coastal landscape in conjunction with the information derived from the *Life of Saint Theoktiste* can easily support the view that the island was progressively abandoned from the early 8th century as a result of Arab raids. However, as has been demonstrated above, if we add other types of material culture to the discussion, such as architectural traces, religious wall paintings, sigilographic and monetary evidence, as well as other kind of ecclesiastical sources (*Taktikon*), the emerging picture from the Cyclades contradicts the empty landscapes provided by many regional surveys. In this respect, it is difficult to accept the pattern of total abandonment of such a large Cycladic island like Paros. Bearing in mind that lack of material evidence does not mean absence of human activity in all cases, during our personal field observations a small amount of ceramic material evidence dated to the Byzantine Early Middle Ages was identified on the basis of similarities with the well-published Early Byzantine pottery from the Saraçane excavation in Constantinople (Hayes 1992). This limited but extremely valuable archaeological data from the bay of Naoussa and the areas of Kantouna and Glifades in conjunction with the evidence from Piso Livadi (AD 2004, 209-210) provide a different picture, suggesting low levels of human activity along Paros’s north and east coastline after the early 8th century.

This new picture makes sense in the wider Cycladic context discussed above, since the maritime zone of Paronaxia appeared to have been well-protected by at least three fortresses between the 7th and 9th centuries (Kastro Apalirou on Naxos, Paliokastro on Ios, and Viokastro). Hence, despite limitations posed by the material evidence, this study suggests continuity of life along Paros’s coastal zone during the Byzantine Early Middle centuries on a lesser scale compared to the previous period. The Byzantine fortress on the islet of Viokastro shows that between the 7th and 9th centuries Paros was not unprotected at the mercy of Arab raids. Nevertheless, it is clear that the considerable decline of pottery material reflects a shift in Paros’s settlement pattern from Late Antiquity to the Early Middle Ages. The settled landscape on Paros begins to change in the late 7th or early 8th century. It is most likely that many sites have lost their importance as smaller links in the chain of the broader commercial networks, resulting in their shrinkage or even abandonment. Thus, the Parian countryside presents low levels of human presence with shrunken economic and cultural activities in contrast to the neighbouring island of Naxos.

### 6.2.4 The involvement of landscape in the contrasting picture between Paros and Naxos

A crucial question which remains open, concerns the interpretation of this contrasting picture between the two neighbouring Cycladic islands during the Byzantine Early Middle Ages (Fig. 6.2). A convincing explanation in this sharp disparity between Paros and Naxos cannot only be given by the hostile activities, such as the Arab raids or natural disasters, since complex socioeconomic phenomena are related to multiple external and internal parameters. It seems the specific natural features of local landscapes played an important role in this process.

The prosperity of Paros during Late Antiquity was based on its landscape’s three localised environmental advantages: a) the lowland and gentle topography that facilitates the internal mobility of people and good, b) the concentration of the most fertile soils along the coastal zone, and c) the numerous small or large bays scattered along the coastline, suitable for loading and unloading merchandise. These characteristics proved to be very beneficial in the context of the unified Late Roman economy, providing Paros with an important regional role within the complex maritime commercial networks of the Eastern Mediterranean. The imbalanced “coastal” settlement pattern with a maritime orientation that Paros developed could have functioned effectively mainly as an open and extrovert insular community fully dependent on the maritime trade networks. The various settlement types and the “linear” production system were mostly based on the high specialisation of the production and exports, rather than on a subsistence economy. The mass amphora production in Naoussa for example, possibly, did not make sense outside the Late Antique trade system. This fragile pattern could only flourish in essentially peaceful and stable general conditions. Any change in trade patterns and sea routes may
have had a strong impact on the island’s role in this network as well as on its economic situation and daily life. In this respect, Paros can be characterised as a fragile place, demographically, culturally and environmentally.

In this context, the island of Paros was more sensitive to the dramatic socioeconomic and political changes in the wider Aegean world after the late 7th or early 8th century. A series of parameters, such as the Byzantine-Arabic struggle for control over the Aegean, the fading of the Late Antique cities, the reduction of the Empire’s economic space and the subsequent decrease of the demand for commercial goods, the considerable transformation of the economic system from market to subsistence economy, and the essential changes in the state’s character, created a new reality during the Byzantine Early Middle Ages, having a huge impact on the islands like Paros. The coastal orientation of the settlement pattern on Paros and the lack of sufficient land in the island’s hinterland to support a farming economic system proved key factors in the local population’s inability to adjust to the new conditions and achieve self-sufficiency. Hence, despite considerable safety offered by the defensive network which was established to protect the naval channel of Paronaxia, the island of Paros presented a picture of low levels of human activity. In this new context, Paros ceased playing an important role for the Empire’s interests and the central government did not make itself visible on the island, as happened during Late Antiquity with the erection of the Ekatontapiliani. Therefore, the picture of low levels human activity on Paros was not a result of insecurity felt by the coastal inhabitants and caused by constant Arab threat. It was, most probably, a natural consequence of inability of the Parian economic system to adjust to the new conditions, which were radically re-organised on a different basis than before.

In contrast, a combination of very localised environmental advantages on Naxos, such as the variety of landscapes, the plethora of fertile productive zones scattered in lowland and mountainous areas which diachronically supported the development of a mixed farming system, the permanently high water table, and a natural defensive character of many regions, has offered potential and opportunity for the island to function effectively within both regional and inter-regional trade networks, working as a closed and open system simultaneously. The development of a more balanced and stable settlement pattern since antiquity within this completely different landscape has ensured the island could retain high levels of human activity under all circumstances pertaining to the Aegean. In this respect, the geographically and militarily advantaged location of the island in the Aegean in conjunction with the potential and opportunities offered by its distinctive landscape character led the central government to select Naxos as one of the southern Aegean’s administrative centres, giving it a prominent position within a regional administrative and defensive network. From this standpoint, the Byzantine State made itself visible from all directions expressing its power and ideology over this maritime area with the erection of the fortress of Apalirou and a number of other defensive structures on the neighbouring islands.

6.3 NAXOS, PAROS AND THE CYCLADES FROM THE MIDDLE 9TH TO THE 12TH CENTURY

The Arab conquest of Crete (sometime between 824 and 828) was a turning point in the history of the southern Aegean. The period that followed this crucial event until, at least, the reacquisition of Crete in 961 by Nikephorus Phokas is a rather problematic one, as historical sources and securely dated archaeological evidence for religious and secular life on the islands of the Cyclades are extremely sparse. As is mentioned earlier, Ioannes Caminiates reveals that in 904 the island of Naxos paid tribute to the Muslims of Crete (Böhlig 1973, 59-60). Additionally, in terms of archaeology, at the moment there are no churches on Naxos that can be securely dated between the middle 9th and middle 10th centuries (Aslanidis 2014a). This is an unusual phenomenon for the case of Naxos if we consider the abundance of religious monuments that have been erected on the island during the previous and subsequent periods. The absence of newly erected religious monuments or painting layers in earlier churches on Naxos does not imply that the island fell to a situation of isolation, destruction or economic decline. In contrast, the information of Caminiates indicates that the Aegean islands progressively served as economic
zones for the Arabs of Crete to extract taxes from them. It seems that the Naxians experienced good relation with the Muslims of Crete. According to Caminiates, in 904 they welcome the Arab fleet by offering gifts to the commanders and supplies to continue their journey to Crete. The fact that the Arab ships stopped for two days in Naxos indicates that the island might have functioned as a naval base of the Muslim fleet. Thus, probably, through time the Arabs of Crete intended to build a new empire, based mainly on an organised plan rather than on raiding, looting and booty (Vionis 2017, 174-175). At the same time, in order to be able to meet its tax obligation the island of Naxos needed cash and agricultural production. Therefore, the Arabs of Crete probably avoided any violence on the island. For an island like Naxos, which represented a small economic unit, financial liquidity could be acquired through regional and inter-regional commercial activities (Vionis 2017, 174-175). This alternative reading of the textual sources may indicate that settlement patterns and production systems remained stable on Naxos, and the island retained its economic vitality despite the absence of archaeological material. What is fascinating for Naxos is that even during this period the island appeared to have functioned as a highly interactive microcosm, well-connected to the external world. The emerging picture of Naxos, through the material discussed above, contradicts the view about Arab violence on the neighbouring island of Paros offered by the Life of Saint Theoktiste. However, in terms of material culture, the adjacent island of Paros continued to present a picture of archaeologically low visible communities.

The period that followed the re-conquest of Crete from the middle 10th to the 12th century has been considered as a time of great Byzantine accomplishments and characterised by fundamental changes in Byzantine society, such as population growth, high levels of rural productivity in the countryside, and an increase in the number and size of towns (for more about the developments in the Middle Byzantine countryside see Bintliff 2012b, 391-394). Southern Aegean islands and the Cyclades in particular, were fully integrated into the Byzantine imperial sphere of political and cultural influence, portraying an image of increased population and a rise of settlement or resettlement.

After a long period of archaeologically low visible communities with extremely limited material culture the island of Paros seems to have been populous and prosperous again. The Parian countryside was occupied by a wide range of small rural sites close to fertile productive farming zones and safe anchorages, as evidenced by surface ceramics and churches from the areas of Voutakos, Protoria and Marathi (Vionis 2006). Once again, the settlement pattern of Paros developed along the coastal zone, since the majority of the agricultural sites were located in this flat landscape very close to the shoreline. On the island of Naxos a considerable number of newly erected churches between the middle/late 10th and the late 12th century (thirty-six in total, nineteen of them decorated with frescoes) and painting decorations dated to this period in earlier churches in connection with surface ceramic material testify to an economically active insular society (Vionis 2017, 176-180). This rich archaeological material evidence suggests the existence of a dense network of rural settlements and an intensified exploitation of all types of landscape. Pottery finds from the Cycladic islands suggest intensification of commercial communication and exchange with the imperial capital (Vionis 2017, 176-180).