

## Ancient Towers on Naxos Island, Greece: A Sustainable Environment

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### Abstract

This paper discusses the organization, distribution and architectural elements of Venetian towers on Naxos Island, the largest island of the Cyclades in the Aegean Sea in Greece, most of which date to the Venetian rule. These stone-built towers are found in diverse fertile landscapes and natural resources in different geographic areas throughout the island and are closely integrated with the distinctive natural landscape. They form an integral part of the surviving historic pattern of the landscape and embody a rich and valuable heritage fulfilling a variety of roles over time, the most important being the defensive and the agricultural one. The primary function of these towers was to offer inhabitants security while living near agricultural fields. Their agricultural role is apparent since they were primarily used as private elite-owned residences that provided a storage facility for their agricultural products. Changes in their architectural form and distribution help to understand how the rural landscape of Naxos was exploited under different political and economic regimes. As a consequence, many cultural and historical processes took place and foreign influences were incorporated into the local cultural building fabric. Moreover, they can be imagined as living organisms which are the outcome of centuries of optimization of material use, construction techniques and climate considerations. In this study, ancient towers on Naxos Island are surveyed, studied and analysed to determine their function in the ancient landscape of Naxos and their response to climate, in terms of site and building design. The main outcome of this research suggests that ancient towers in this region of Greece are highly vernacular and multifunctional architectural structures, which are integral structural elements of the agricultural system of terraces connected with agricultural production, are considered important monuments of cultural heritage as well as complete sustainable environments.

**Keywords:** architecture, landscape, historic, culture, agricultural terraces