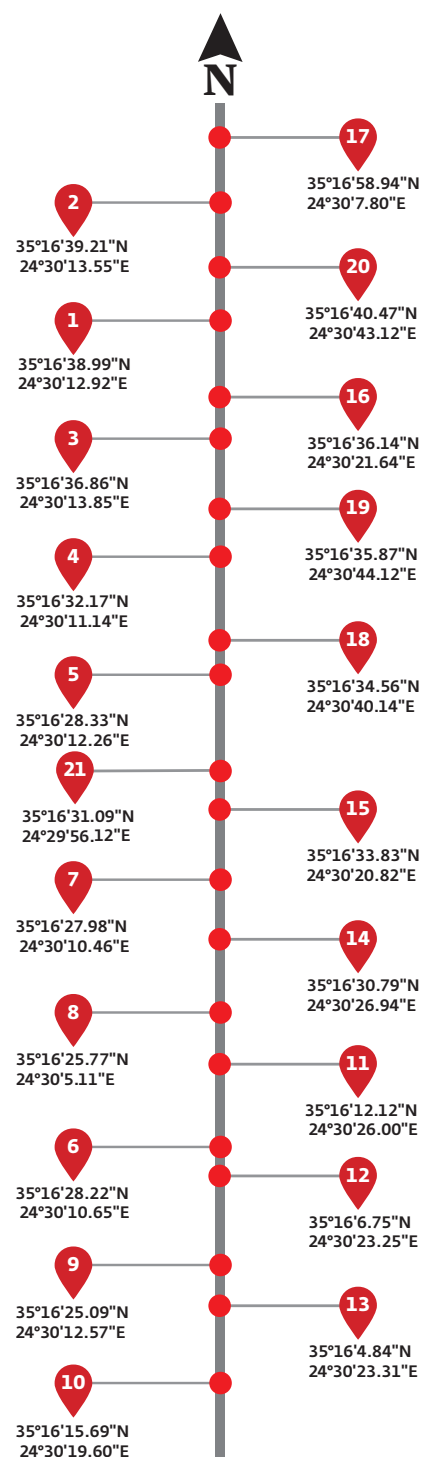


recesses, in the form of arcosolia (arched rock-cut burial cells). The tomb was probably constructed in Early Christian times (if not in the Roman period), as the last resting place of an eminent figure in the local society.

* The numbers correspond to the diagram.

Front cover: Bronze head of a Kore, found near the "Cave of Vasilis". Herakleion Archaeological Museum.

Below: the church of the Life-giving Source.



You can tour the site by using the diagram. To listen to or download the file of the audio-guide, scan with your cell phone the QR code on the left or type in the link: <http://www.archaeology.wiki/innoetics/988o6.mp3>

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ONITHÉ GOULEDIANA

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In the area of Onithé, 18 kilometres southeast of the town of Rethymnon, lie the remains of an ancient city of unknown name, which seems to have been located in the southeast part of the territory of ancient Rithymna.

At various times the ruins at Onithé have been identified with the ancient cities of Osmida and Phalanna. The city evidently enjoyed its heyday in the Archaic period (7th-6th century BC), but traces of human presence go back to the Neolithic Age (4th millennium BC) and, with some hiatuses, continue to this day.

Onithé can be reached by the regional road network leading from Rethymnon to the village of Goulediana and from there by a rural road along the north side of the Onithé Plateau.

This plateau has the shape of a triangle, the apex of which is to the south, where it also reaches its maximum altitude. It is in effect a spur in the southern foothills of Mount Vrysinas, the massif dominating the wider area of Rethymnon. To south, east and west, the area of Onithé ends in very precipitous slopes, making it a naturally fortified site.

The church of St Eleousa and the fountain (1, 2)*

The first building the visitor comes across is the single-aisle church of St Eleousa, which dates from the fifteenth century. Close by are a spring and a modern fountain-house.

The deserted settlement (3)

At the entrance to the plateau (in its northwest part) is a hamlet of scattered stone-built houses, which were lived in seasonally until the mid-twentieth century. These dwellings are examples of vernacular architecture, with features from the Venetian and the Ottoman period. Most of them, like the large farmstead or country house (4), include outbuildings and threshing floors cut in the bedrock. The small settlement is thought to have been established in the late Middle Ages (16th-17th century).

The fountain (site "Plakes") (6)

The fountain is situated on the wide rocky

terrace, just beyond the entrance to the plateau, which is called "Plakes" (5). The ancient part of it was formed in Archaic times, while the modern dates from the twentieth century. The ancient fountain is located on the west side of a trench, with three small spouts on its rocky front. This type of fountain building is considered rather rare in Crete, since such water-supply constructions were never particularly preferred. In the corner formed with ancient fountain there was probably a sanctuary (7), as the unearthing of a statue of a seated female figure attests.

House A (site "Tsigounas") (10)

At the "Tsigounas" site, the heart of the ancient settlement, one of the most interesting examples of early building development in Crete has been uncovered. Named conventionally "House A", this is a complex of eight rooms which was constructed in the late seventh century BC and continued in use into Classical times (5th century BC). Both the large size of the complex and its rich content suggest that it was of public character, like that recognized in the andreia or the prytaneia.

Foundations of buildings of the ancient city are visible in several places on the plateau. Among the most characteristic cases are the "gymnasium" (9), where foundations and walls are linked with a large vertically-cut rock face, and the "Cave of Vasilis" (tou Vasili o spilios) (11), where corresponding cuttings and robust walls are associated with a cavern.

Acropolis (site "Pyrgos") (13)

The acropolis, which dates from Hellenistic times, has been laid out on the highest point of the plateau. To the south it is delimited by a sheer scarp and thus had no need of fortification. The other two sides, each 12 m long, form a right angle and are defined by a fortification wall of pseudo-isodomic masonry. At a lower level, the acropolis is girt by a fortified enceinte which was constructed in earlier times. (12)

Early Christian basilica (site "Kera") (18)

The basilica is located in the northwest part



01 The country house or farmstead.

02 Mosaic floor.

03 Part of a bronze helmet. Archaeological Museum of Rethymno.

04 Bronze figurine group, most probably of an animal suckling its young. Archaeological Museum of Rethymno.

05 Bronze spout from House A. Archaeological Museum of Rethymno.

of the Onithé Plateau. Built on a hillslope, it measures 31x15 m, excluding the outbuildings. It is a three-aisle basilica with narthex, which is the commonest type of ecclesiastical building in the Early Byzantine period. The naos is of rectangular plan, with the narthex at the west end and the projecting semi-circular sanctuary apse at the east end. On the north side of the naos are two rooms, the larger of which was probably the Baptistry.

Two stylobates divide the naos in to three aisles, the middle one of which (nave) is the most spacious. Neither the colonnades nor the sculptural decoration of the basilica have survived. The narthex, the nave, the holy bema and the north pastophorium had impressive mosaic floors with geometric and vegetal patterns. The basilica is dated to the late fifth-early sixth century.

Han (site "Kera") (19)

About 100 m east of the basilica stands a vaulted-roofed, stone-built edifice, the interior of which is a single hall. The building dates probably from the sixteenth or the seventeenth century. Although it could be the country house or farmstead of a local landowner, it seems more likely that it served as a han or hostelry. This hypothesis is boosted by its central position on the northeast pass over the Onithé Plateau and its proximity to an abundant water source.

Venetian church of the Life-giving Source (Zoodochos Pege) (site "Kera") (20)

A stream immediately below the hostelry marks the east boundary of the Onithé Plateau. Within this small ravine, 200 m northeast of the han, stands the church of the Life-giving Source. This is a small, single-aisle vaulted church with pitched tiled roof, which is dated to the early fifteenth century.

Burial chamber (site "Sykidi") (21)

In the area of "Sykidi", at the northwest edge of the plateau, two tombs have been brought to light, one of them well-preserved. It comprises a chamber cut in the limestone bedrock, of square plan, with the entrance on its east side. On the three sides of its interior are blind arched