



# HERAKLION

Gates of History  
Gates of Civilization





## HERAKLION

### Gates of History Gates of Civilization

Ancient Heraklion, the successor of Gortys in the 9th century AD, later renamed to Chandakas, inevitably followed the historical course of all great cities that flourished in the eastern Mediterranean. Venetian Candia in all Renaissance era maps is depicted as a heavily fortified city. An important naval port since ancient times, it was a “bone of contention” for all great powers. The new fortified enceinte constructed by the Venetians (mid 15th-late 16th century) was the largest project undertaken in Crete in centuries. It encompasses both the ancient and the modern core of the city. This presentation aims to motivate and intrigue visitors to seek out and experience the magnitude and significance of this important Renaissance work. These gates are an exciting destination for sightseeing, offering a unique and memorable experience for regular city residents and visitors alike, because the fortification has inadvertently sealed the identity of the city and became its symbol throughout its history.

In the mid 17th century, Chandakas was inhabited by about 17,000 Venetians, Greeks, Armenians, Jews and members of other ethnicities, like all major trade cities in the Mediterranean. This is when one of the most powerful and remarkable works of all times in the eastern Mediterranean was complet-

ed: the new fortified enceinte.

The previous Byzantine wall covered only one third of the city, which had already expanded to the suburbs since the 13th century. In the 15th century it was decided that the old wall was insufficient to protect and defend the city. It was demolished or repurposed into barracks, powder magazines, barns and an aqueduct. The most important gates along the Byzantine walls were the imposing Voltone Gate found in modern “Meidani”, which collapsed after the earthquake of 1856, and the Gate of Molos in the harbour, which was bombarded by the British in the events of August 1898.

The design of the new wall followed the principles of the bastion system (also known as trace italienne) and its construction lasted nearly one century (1462-1570). The city was surrounded by a huge rock-armoured embankment fortified with heart-shaped or triangular bastions. It was purposely built to absorb the impact of cannon warfare. A wide dry moat was surrounded the fortification and a system of outside fortifications and underground tunnels that were still being built up to the final year of the Cretan War in 1645-1669.



Bethlehem, Pantocrator, San Andrea) are built at intervals and linked to the wall via a “neck”. Inside each bastion, the “neck” is flanked by two identical “low squares” or piazze basse. These “low squares” were constructed at the sides, below the level of the bastion. Each had two casemates to defend the public-civil gates, the moat, the wall curtains between the bastions and the outside fortifications.

Access to the level of the “low squares” from the city was possible through the Gates and the stone-built galleries running underneath the huge embankments. From the level of the “low squares”, sloping galleries were crossing the bastions, leading up to the moat. These gates served exclusively military purposes. Eight still survive: the Vitturi Gate, the southeastern and southwestern military gate of Jesus, the southern Makasi military gate (Martinengo), the northern and southern military gate of Bethlehem, the northern and southern military gate of Pantocrator.

The city communicated with the countryside and the sea through public-civil gates. Inland gates opened where the main thoroughfares of the city were heading: to the east, the

Gate of St. George or Lazaretto; to the south, the Gate of Jesus or Kainourgia Porta (New Gate); to the west, the Gate of Pantocrator or Panigkra. On the outside, the gates were narrow for safety reasons, while the city-facing aspect exhibited a monumental design style. They were decorated with enwalled medallions, coats of arms and reliefs in the Renaissance style. There were also secondary gates, e.g. the Dermata Gate, the Neoria Gate, the Sabbionara Gate.

Photo: The early-century photographs (by G. Gerola) are courtesy of the Vikelaia Public Library.

Map: The city and the Venetian fortification in the mid 17th century (Hans Rudolf Werdmüller, Historical Museum of Crete, © EKIM)

# Sabbionara Gate

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Inside view of the vaulted gallery, leading from the exit (at the current KTEL bus terminal) to the inner city



Southern inside view of the vaulted gallery, leading out of the inner city to the exit (at the current KTEL bus terminal)



The front face of the exit to the KTEL bus terminal



View from Doukos Beaufort street. The gabled façade of the Sabbionara Gate towards the inner city.

## Sabbionara Gate

The Sabbionara Gate is built on the northeastern side of the fortified enceinte, on Doukos Beaufort street. Through a sloping gallery, it led out of the inner city to the long sandy beach stretching across the coastal front. The Sabbionara bastion was one of the weak points of the wall, because it was founded on sandy grounds. The sand did not allow for the normal construction of “mines”, i.e. the underground tunnels used for underground warfare. As a result defense was lagging significantly. The Sabbionara bastion, just as the San Andrea bastion on the northwestern side, was nearly razed by the Ottoman forces in the last phase of the Cretan War. Greeks from the islands of Zante and Cephallenia, and

later on French, Italians and Cretans participated in its defense. After the conquest in 1669, it was rebuilt by the Turks. The city-facing aspect of the gate bears a gabled façade. The gallery is paved with cobbles. In recent years, the surrounding area was brought back to light and landscaped.



Early 20th century, exit to the sandy beach outside the walls (Photo: G. Gerola)



# Gate of St. George



Exit of the Gate of St. George to Ikarou Avenue. To the right, the Chianali fountain (1709). To the upper left side of the wall, several escutcheons of Venetian officials are visible.



Entrance of the Gate of St. George, modern addition.



Inside view. Photo taken from the circular vaulted chamber.



Modern vaulted gallery built to exit the surviving gallery towards Eleftheria Square



Circular vaulted chamber with lighting and ventilation opening; the exit to the moat (Ikarou Avenue) is seen to the right, while the gallery leading to Eleftheria Square is seen to the left.

## Gate of St. George

The Gate of St. George was built on the eastern side of the city; it is also known as Maroula or Lazzaretto. A 98-meter long gallery led east out of the city, to the pest house (or Lazzaretto) and the Forte di San Demetrio, now housing the “Kapetanakio” school. The gate was named “Lazzaretto” after the pest house on the city’s eastern side. It was also called “Maroulas”, named after an extended settlement on the northeast of the city. The city-side façade, of the Gate of St. George has not survived; it was built close to where the bust of Nikos Kazantzakis now stands, at Eleftheria Square. The city-side face of the gate was opened in the middle of a pentagonal façade structure, flanked by two columns supporting an inscription bearing the coat of arms of Zorzi. The façade was decorated with medallions depicting the figure of an equestrian St. George, the winged lion of Venice and various escutcheons. According to testimonials “... pedestrians, horseback riders, carts and wagons would cross through this gate. A slanted cobbled sloping street led all the way to the foot of the fortress. There, another enormous door led to the road for Trypiti, Trypito Haraki, Kako Oros and the eastern provinces...”. In the

years of the Ottoman rule, just like at the times of the Venetians, the guards or Nizamis would collect the muleteers tax, known as “emiri”. The patron saint of the Gate (or evliya) was found just before the gallery exit, similar to other castle bars. However, some residents of the city, driven by nationalistic fervour, demanded that the Gate be demolished, thus eliminating any monuments left behind by Venetian and Turkish conquerors. An evening in 1917, the gate was blown up and demolished, and its sculptures were scattered. Some of these sculptures are now exhibited in the Historical Museum of Crete. The outside gate and part of the gallery still survive on Ikarou street. The exit is 2.35m wide and dated 1565. It was here that the French troops, under the command of the Duke of Beaufort, attempted their disastrous charge against the Turks in June 1669.

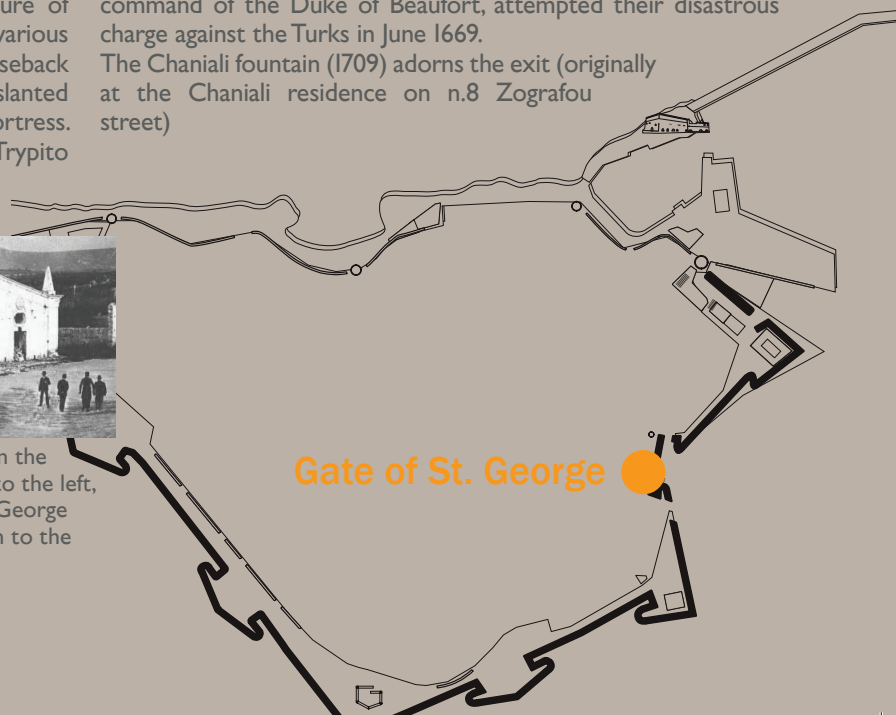
The Chaniali fountain (1709) adorns the exit (originally at the Chaniali residence on n.8 Zografou street)



Early 20th century, Gate of St. George, to the inner city. Gabled façade with a central arched gate, flanked by two smaller gates used by the garrison. (Photo: G. Gerola)



Vitturi Bastion, view from the north; the moat is seen to the left, while the exit of the St. George Gate to the moat is seen to the right. (Photo: G. Gerola)



Gate of St. George

# Vitturi Military Gate

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The Vitturi gate entrance on Padiados street.



The vaulted gallery from the inner city to the low square.



The façade of the outward gallery to the moat.



An outward gallery, view from the moat to the low square of the Vitturi Gate. The "mina" (mine) is seen to the right, part of an underground network of tunnels designed for sabotage warfare.



Inside view of the outward gallery.





“Low square”, view from the southeast. Two casemates are discernible; the gate leading to the inner city is seen to the right

## Vitturi Military Gate

The restored Vitturi gate is found on the eastern side of the walls; it was built exclusively for military purposes. Originally the Vitturi bastion was called Angle Kalergis, then it was renamed to St. Eleftherios in honour of the church which has not survived and eventually in 1540, it was named Vitturi after the General Intendant of Crete, who completed its construction. The entrance of the Vitturi gate is located on PEDIADOS Street, in Vigla. An arched gallery leads to the low square; the date 1565 is discernible between the cannon holes. Out of the “low square”, a sloping outward gallery or *sortita* leads to the moat. At its end,

a “mina” carved vertically into the wall heading south. In World War II, the gallery from PEDIADOS street to the “low square” was used as a shelter.



Early 20th century, a view of the southeastern side of the walls. Point of the Vitturi bastion, where the Georgiadis park is now located. In the background, the surviving “Kastrinaki Mills”. (Photo: G. Gerola).



# Gate of Jesus



Gate of Jesus view of the inside façade completed in 1587. Influenced by the Renaissance, it bears a Doric-style entablature.



View of the interior of the Jesus gate, exhibition dedicated to Nikos Kazantzakis.



View from the northwestern vaulted chamber to the inside of the gate which communicates with the central passage through an arched opening. The northeastern chamber is seen in the background.



The southeastern military gate of Jesus, temporarily used as storage.



The public gate of Jesus, view of the outside façade. The coats of arms of Venetian officials can be seen, as well as a medallion bearing the monogram VHS, meaning Jesus.

## Gate of Jesus

The public-civil Kainourgia Porta (New Gate) or Gate of Jesus is contemporary to the other gates (dated 1587). It is considered to be the most harmonious and impressive. Today it hosts an exhibition on Nikos Kazantzakis. It was named after the small church dedicated to Christ that was built right outside the wall. On the outside, just above the entrance, there is an enwalled medallion bearing the Gothic monogram of Jesus, a relief plaque with the coats of arms of Venetian officials and the date 1567. A flat gallery measuring 42m long and 5.5m wide leads to the inner city. The Renaissance city-side façade is crowned with an entablature bearing triglyphs and metopes (lions of St. Mark, weapons, rosettes, bucrania). The inscription on the lintel mentions the date 1587 and bears the name of Duke Giovanni Mocenigo who

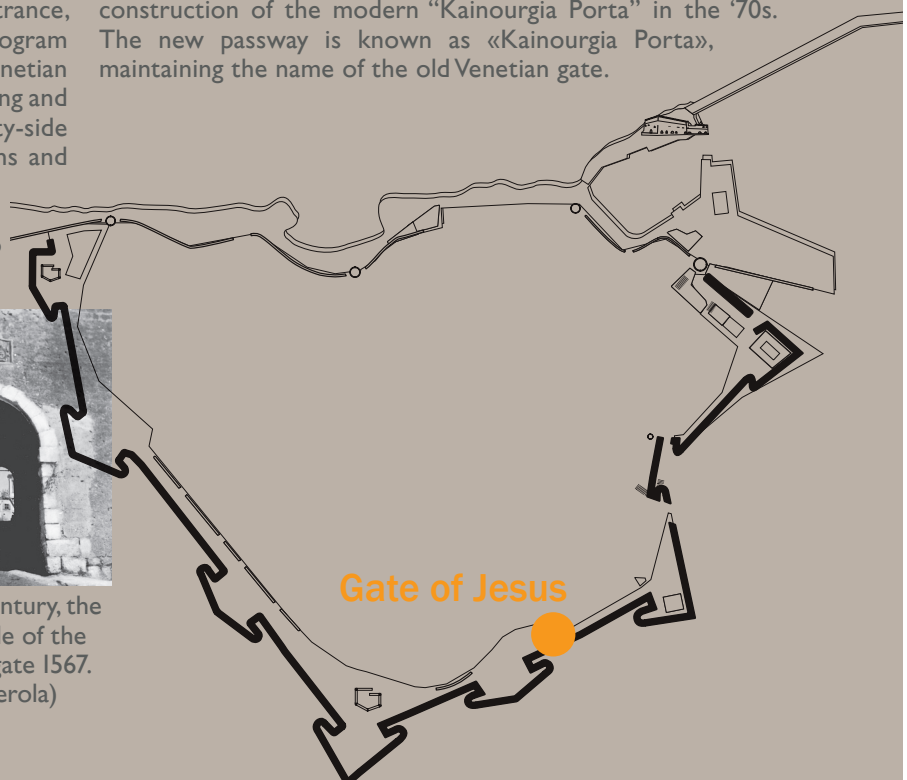
completed the gate. On either sides there are two smaller gates leading to vaulted chambers. Originally at the site of the present Kainourgia Porta, the Venetian wall was continuous. Part of the wall was pulled down in the early 20th century to make way for a new road. The gap was bridged with the construction of the modern “Kainourgia Porta” in the ‘70s. The new passway is known as «Kainourgia Porta», maintaining the name of the old Venetian gate.



Early 20th century, the inside façade of the Jesus public gate 1587. (Photo: G. Gerola)



Early 20th century, the outside façade of the Jesus public gate 1567. (Photo: G. Gerola)



# Military gate of Jesus “Garden Theatre Manos Hatzidakis”



The façade of the southwestern military gate of Jesus, now hosting the “Garden Theatre Manos Hatzidakis”.



View of the “low square” and the “Garden Theatre Manos Hatzidakis”, reached from the southwestern military gate of Jesus. Photo taken from the level of the Jesus bastion.



Inside the vaulted gallery leading out of the inner city to the “Garden Theatre Manos Hatzidakis”.



The interior of the *sortita* leading out the garden theatre “Manos Hatzidakis” to the moat



The outside façade of the *sortita* to the moat.

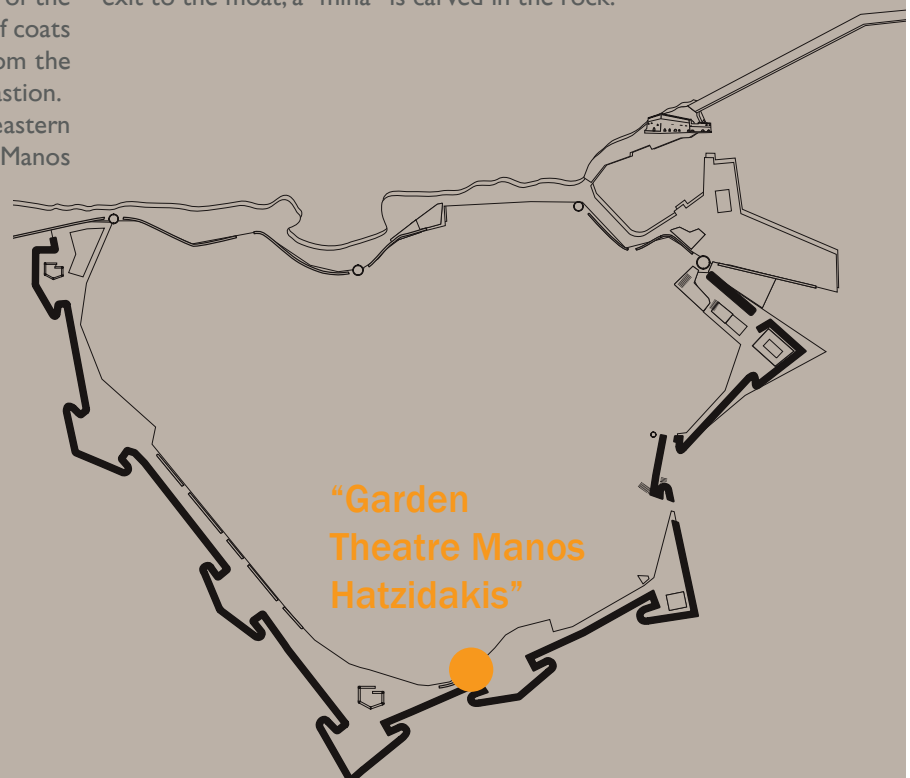


The interior of the *sortita* to the moat.

## Military gate of Jesus “Garden Theatre Manos Hatzidakis”

The heart-shaped bastion of Jesus features one civil gate and two military gates, one east and one west. The eastern military gate, currently housing the warehouse of the Antiquities Ephorate, leads to the eastern “low square”. The façade of the gate is arched and adorned above the entrance with relief coats of arms of Venetian officials. The low square is visible from the outside of the gate of Jesus and above the level of the bastion. The western military gate of Jesus is identical to the eastern one. The low square now hosts the “Garden Theatre Manos

Hatzidakis”. Like all “low squares”, it has two casemates and a *sortita* leading to the moat and the “Agrokipio”, the municipal plant nursery of the Municipality of Heraklion. Just before the exit to the moat, a “mina” is carved in the rock.



# Makasi Gate



The façade of the Makasi military gate towards the city. To the left, the marble slabs with the names of prisoners captured by the Germans during World War II.



Inside the Makasi Gate, votive columns with the names of prisoners captured by the Germans during World War II.



The interior of the Makasi Gate. View from the low square”.



View of low square reached from the Makasi military gate.

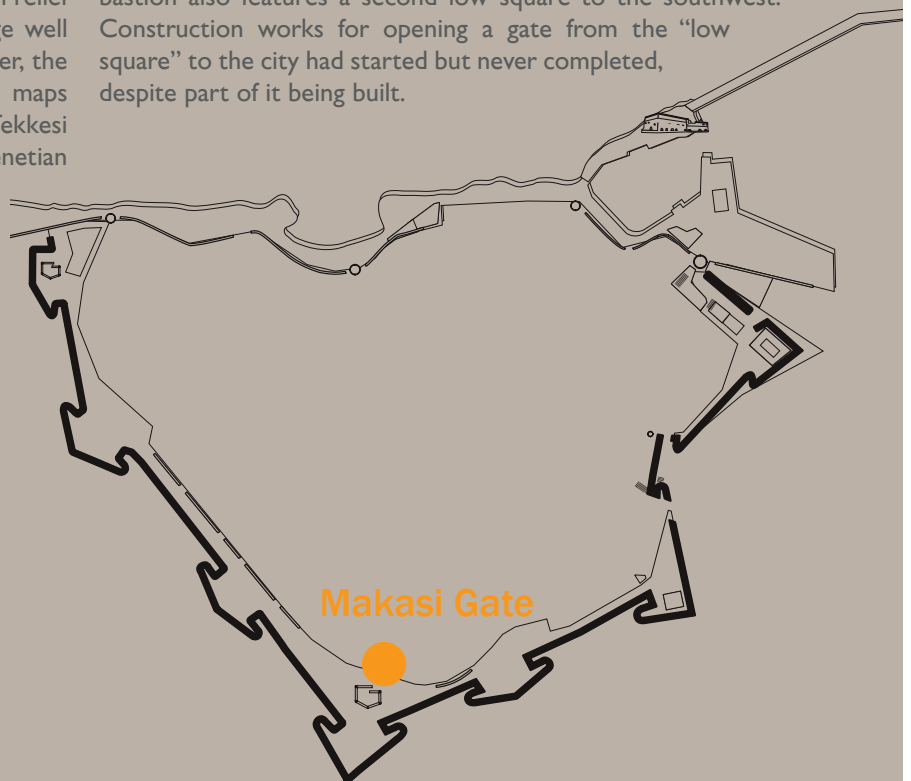
## Makasi Gate

The Martinengo military gate or Makasi gallery leads to the southeastern “low square” and then to the moat through a *sortita*. The façade of the gate has been destroyed; it was of monumental style, featuring the winged lion of St. Mark in relief above the lintel. Inside, facing the city, there was a large well irrigating the orchards and supplying the area with water, the so-called “pigaida”, which is also depicted in Venetian maps since 1573. To the west, to the location known as Üç er Tekkesi (Tekke of Dervishes of the Order of Three Men), Venetian maps show the church of Panagia Erimitissa. A place of martyrdom, the Makasi gallery was used as a temporary

detention centre of Greek prisoners before their transfer to concentration camps. This is why it now operates as a “Martyrs and Unsung Heroes Memorial” museum. The Martinengo bastion also features a second low square to the southwest. Construction works for opening a gate from the “low square” to the city had started but never completed, despite part of it being built.



The city-side outside façade of the Makasi gate before its superstructure was destroyed. British soldiers posing in front of the gate, possibly with locals, early 20th century. (Photo: G. Gerola).



# Military Gate of Bethlehem [South]



The city-side façade of the southern Bethlehem military gate.



View of the "low square", now hosting the «Municipal Summer Cinema», reached from the southern Bethlehem military gate. Photo taken from the level of the Bethlehem bastion.

## South Gate

The Bethlehem bastion, just like the two namesake military gates, was named after the small church of Panagia of Bethlehem. It was built in the fields, outside the wall. The southern military gate leads to the corresponding "low square", now hosting the "Municipal Summer Cinema". From there, a second steep sortita descends to the moat. Just like all "low squares", it has two casemates. Defense was conducted from the firing positions of the "low squares", the level of bastions and the external fortifications.



The monumental city-side façade of the northern Bethlehem military gate, early 20th century. (Photo: G. Gerola).



# Military Gate of Bethlehem [North]



The monumental façade to the city of the northern Bethlehem military gate.



View of the “low square”, hosting the “Open Theatre of the Bethlehem Gate”, reached from the northern Bethlehem military gate. Photo taken from the bastion level.

## North Gate

On the northern side of the Bethlehem bastion, there is the northern Bethlehem military gate. The city-facing aspect is of monumental style, featuring an inscribed architrave. Today it hosts an exhibition dedicated to Dominikos Theotokopoulos, better known as El Greco. Just like the southern “low square”, this one also features a sortita to the moat.



# Gate of Pantocrator



The façade of the gate of Pantocrator from inside the city. The left one served public-civic needs and the right one served military purposes. High relief of the winged lion of Venice, the symbol of St. Mark, which is crowned with a medallion, the figure of the Almighty in bust surrounded by the inscription "OMNIPOTENS".



The vaulted chamber inside the gate of Pantocrator, branching off into the galleries leading to the "low square" and the exit out of the city.



View of the outside façade of the gate of Pantocrator bearing the coat of arms of Doge P. Loredan, an embossed winged lion of St. Mark, and a medallion with the figure of Christ in bust surrounded by the inscription "Pantocrator" (i.e. Almighty) in Greek; this is the only inscription in Greek throughout the fortification.



Southern Pantocrator military gate, "low square". View of the gallery exit of the southern Pantocrator military gate.



Northern Pantocrator military gate, the entrance to the gallery leading to the northern "low square".



Northern Pantocrator military gate, the interior of the vaulted gallery, a view from the "low square".



The low square of the northern Pantocrator military gate.



Indoor vaulted chamber of the Pantocrator Gate. To the right, the military use gallery leading to the southern low square; to the left, the public use gallery leading to and from the western suburbs.

## Gate of Pantocrator

The Pantocrator Gate, also known as Panigkra or Chanioporta (1567), which led to the western provinces, served a dual purpose, both military and civic. Strada Panigra led up to the gate. Today, this is the Kalokairinou Avenue. It was named after the nearby church of the Pantocrator. Inside, facing the city, the façade is of monumental style featuring two arched openings, each 3m wide. The openings lead to a vaulted chamber branching off into two vaulted galleries, the left one leading to the countryside (width: 4.5 m, length: 48.72m, height: 5.9m) and the right one leading to the military use gallery, (length: 40m, width: 4.5 m, height: 4,84m), to the southern “low square” of the Pantocrator bastion.

The city-side façade is adorned by a full-bodied winged lion of St. Mark in stride and higher up by a medallion bearing the figure of the Almighty surrounded by the inscription “OMNIPOTENS”.

Above the lintel, the gate exit is decorated with the winged lion of St. Mark, the coat of arms of Doge Loredan, the lion of St. Mark, the bust of the Almighty and the inscription “Pantocrator” in Greek. The gate has been restored and is used for exhibitions and events.

On the northern side of the Pantocrator bastion there is the northern military gate of Pantocrator. An oblong vaulted gallery leads to the “low square”, which has two casemates, like all “low squares”. A sloping *sortita* starts from the “low square” to the moat. The gate has been restored and is used for events.



Early 20th century, the façade of the Pantocrator gate, from inside the city. The military gate is covered by a building, featuring a small fountain at the front. The building probably served the needs of the garrison. (Photo: G. Gerola)



Early 20th century, the outside aspect of the Pantocrator Gate. (Photo: G. Gerola).



# Military Gate of San Andrea

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Northeastern view of the surviving section of the vaulted gallery belonging to the military gate of San Andrea. The Turkish cavalier is visible.



View the San Andrea bastion, photo taken from the northwest.

The Turkish cavalier of San Andrea, photo taken from the south

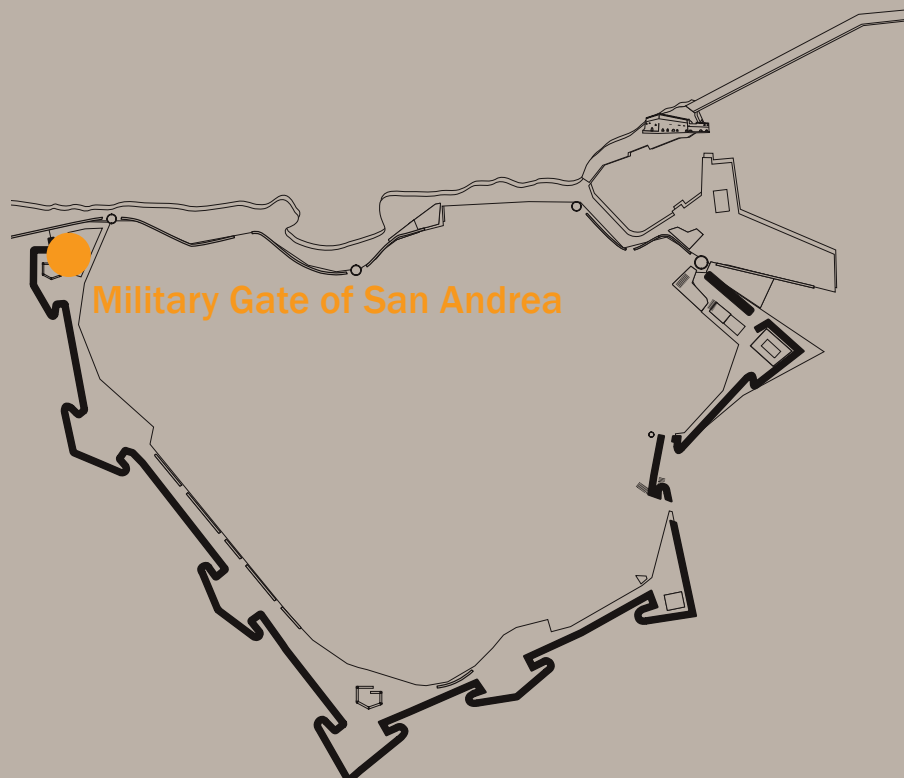




The continuation of the Venetian fortification seawards. Modern restoration interventions are visible, as well as the ditch for the new coastal road.

## Military Gate of San Andrea

The Gate of San Andrea (also known as Gate of Assault or Yürüyüş Kapısı in Turkish) was a secondary military gate named after a nearby church, which has not survived. From inside the San Andrea bastion, a sloping gallery led seawards. The northwestern side of the wall was as vulnerable as the Sabbionara bastion on the northeastern side of the fortified enceinte. The rocky terrain made it difficult to build trenches and underground galleries outside the fortification. At the end of the Cretan War, the bastion of San Andrea saw some fierce battles. As a result, it was nearly razed. In commemoration of the wooden bunkers built inside by the Venetians, today the area is called “Wooden Bastion” (Ksilini Dabia). The Turks named the bastion “Kızıl Dhabı”, i.e. “red bunker” and the gate Yürüyüş Kapısı, i.e. Gate of Assault. After the conquest, the Fetiye mosque was built in 1672, meaning victory. This is where the Ottoman troops entered after the surrender of the city in 1669. Only part of the military gate still survives on the south of the coastal avenue. The heart-shaped bastion and the cavalier seen today on the south of the arch of the Gate of San Andrea are Turkish-era reconstructions.



# Public Gate of Dermata

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The modern cityward façade of the gate of Dermata. The façade was pulled down to make way for the new road Skordylon. The interior of the gallery is visible, flanked by two vaulted chambers



Southeastern view of the interior.



The gallery entrance from inside the city.



Southeastern view of the gate of Dermata.

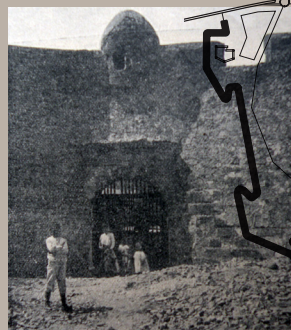
## Public Gate of Dermata

Midway between the San Andrea bastion and the Sabbionara bastion, a section of Koum Kapi, meaning the Gate of Sand, still survives (1595). It is also called gate of Dermata because this is where all the leather craft industries of Chandakas were located. The façade of the gate was probably influenced by the inside façade of the Jesus gate. A central passage flanked by two parallel vaulted chambers led out of the inner city to the namesake sandy cove. The cityward façade was of monumental style. A high arched door was crowned with a pediment and relief with the lion of St. Mark. This is the gate crossed by the

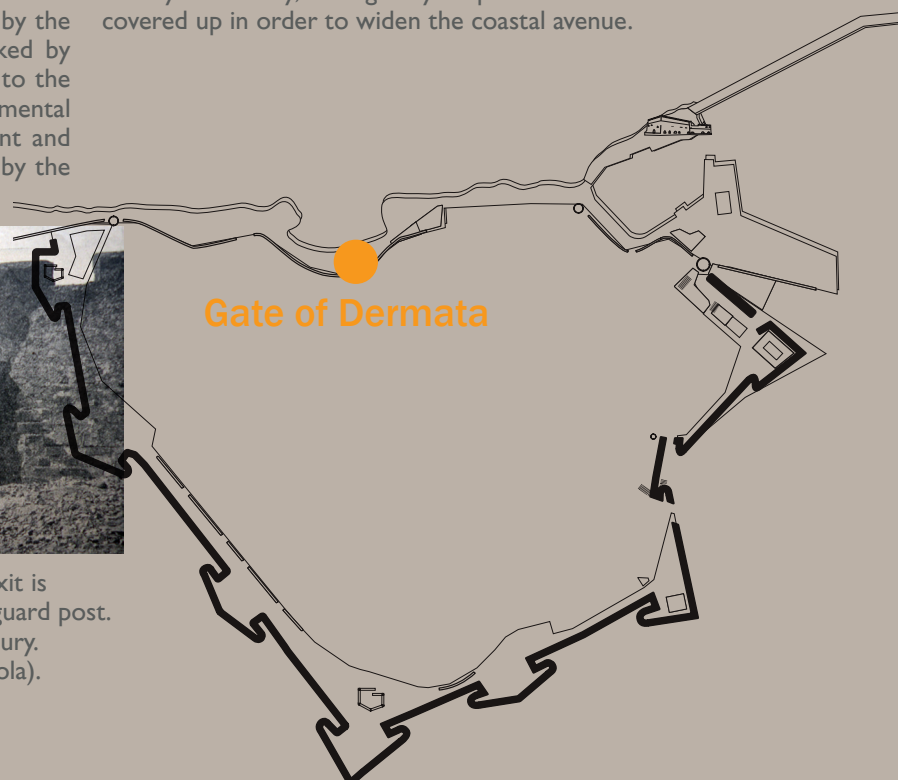
last reinforcements sent to defend Chandakas at the end of the Cretan war in 1668 and 1669. The monumental façade was pulled down after World War II to make way for the new road Skordylon. Finally, the gallery expanded seawards and was covered up in order to widen the coastal avenue.



The inside façade of the gate of Dermata, view from southwest. (Photo: G. Gerola).



The seaward exit is crowned by a guard post. Early 20th century. (Photo: G. Gerola).



Copy editor:  
Zacharias Aletras, Archaeologist

Photography:  
Michalis Christodoulakis

Publication editor:  
Kallia Nikolidaki, Archaeologist,  
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