



**Information about the Environment and for travellers in Crete:**

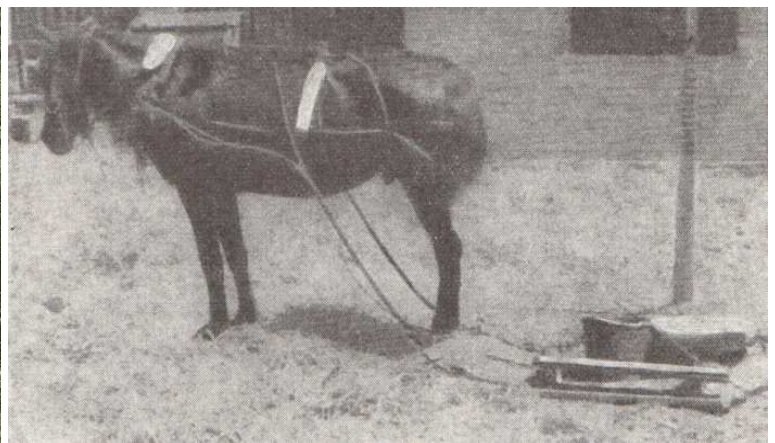
## Threshing machines have a tradition at Crete!

### An old tool to husk grain



Since the earliest grain processing in the Neolithic (Early Stone Age) the question about the devices to husk arises. Known are the threshing stick, the threshing flail, the threshing roll and the threshing board. The oldest images of threshing boards are from the 4<sup>th</sup> Century BC (Uruk). In the modern times these devices were replaced by threshing machines (see fig. left: Combine harvester at the Lassithi Plateau; 35° 17,6424 N, 25° 50,4919 E), which finally led in the development of today's, mobile combine.

Under the program of a traditional celebration (in July) the threshing of grain with a threshing board within a “Aloni” (roundly bordered barn-/threshing floor, see fig. right: Picture by *Stephanie Violin Sfiraki*) is shown annually in Kalamafka. The second picture row show an old “Aloni” at Agios Ioannis, South Crete (fig. left) and fig right a historical picture “donkey hitched up to a threshing board” (1957).





The threshing board (Greek: doukhani) is a tool to husk grain already used in prehistory and also has tradition at Crete.

The threshing board has blade-shaped flakes of flint stone at its underside, later also serrated metal stripes, and is vats like bent upwards at the front part, to guide the cornstalk underneath the sledge. In order to increase the pressure to the stems by his weight on the sledge, usually drawn by a donkey through the “Aloni”, the farmer drives. The stone points thresh thereby not only the ears out, but cut and shred also the straw, which serves as fodder. For details to the thresh board see the following pictures; from left to right: sketch of a thresh board – Cretan thresh board: about 160 cm in length and 70 – 90 cm wide, at a plank thickness of 5 to 7 cm – detailed view of the underside with flint flakes; usually 26 to 30 rows.



For the winnow and cleaning of the out-threshed grain there are many appliances and methods. First bouncing was accomplished with a wooden shovel, as the grain was high-thrown and the wind carried the chaff away; „to separate the wheat from the chaff“. The grain remained on the soil.

Translated by *Michael Bloechinger-Daeumling*

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Two old postcards on the subject from the Greek isle Tinos

