**[Archeologists make historic discovery (Tomb of Odysseus)](http://www.freerepublic.com/focus/news/1490367/posts%22%20%5Ct%20%22_self)**
[**The Madera Tribune ^**](http://www.freerepublic.com/%5Ehttp%3A/maderatribune.1871dev.com/news/newsview.asp?c=167178)| 8/27/05 | Thomas Elias

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POROS, Island of Kefalonia, Greece - The tomb of Odysseus has been found, and the location of his legendary capital city of Ithaca discovered here on this large island across a one-mile channel from the bone-dry islet that modern maps call Ithaca.

This could be the most important archeological discovery of the last 40 years, a find that may eventually equal the German archeologist Heinrich Schliemann’s 19th Century dig at Troy. But the quirky people and politics involved in this achievement have delayed by several years the process of reporting the find to the world.

Yet visitors to Kefalonia, an octopus-shaped island off the west coast of Greece, can see the evidence for themselves at virtually no cost.

The discovery of what is almost certainly his tomb reveals that crafty Odysseus, known as Ulysses in many English renditions of Homer’s “Iliad” and “Odyssey,” was no mere myth, but a real person. Plus, passages in the “Odyssey” itself suggest that modern Ithaca and its main town of Vathi probably were not the city and island of which Homer wrote.

Rather, this small village of Poros on the southeast coast of Kefalonia now occupies part of a site that most likely was the much larger city which served as capital of the multi-island kingdom ruled by Odysseus and his father Laertes.

Archeologists have long and often times looked for evidence of Odysseus on modern Ithaca, but never found anything significant from the Bronze Age. This led many scholars to dismiss Homer’s version of Ionian island geography as strictly a literary creation.

But two pieces of fairly recent evidence suggest archeologists were looking in the wrong place. In 1991, a tomb of the type used to bury ancient Greek royalty was found near the hamlet of Tzannata in the hills outside Poros. It is the largest such tomb in northeastern Greece, with remains of at least 72 persons found in its stone niches.

One find there is particularly telling. In Book XIX of the “Odyssey,” the just-returned and still disguised Odysseus tells his wife (who may or may not realize who she’s talking to; Homer is deliberately ambivalent) that he encountered Odysseus many years earlier on the island of Crete. He describes in detail a gold brooch the king wore on that occasion.

A gold brooch meeting that precise description lies now in the archeological museum at Argostoli, the main city on Kefalonia, 30 miles across the island from Poros. Other gold jewelry and seals carved in precious stones excavated from the tomb offer further proof the grave outside Poros was used to bury kings.

Greek archeologists also found sections of ancient city walls extending for miles through the hills around and well beyond Poros. These surround both the village and a steep adjacent hill which bears evidence it once served as an acropolis, what the Greeks called hilltop forts in most of their major cities. The stones of the walls date to about 1300 B.C., the approximate time of events described in the “Iliad” and “Odyssey.”

Most likely, the royal capital at Ithaca was a much larger city than Poros or any other town on either modern Ithaca or Kefalonia. It would have needed a major source of water. There is none on modern Ithaca, but streams abound near Poros, where there is also a small man-made lake. This area had the necessary water. The island now called Ithaca likely did not.

Several other ancient settlements found elsewhere on Kefalonia also suggest the island was a major population center at the time of Odysseus.

And Homer described two major landmarks near ancient Ithaca: He says it sat beneath an impressive mountain, the “tree-clad Mt. Neriton,” which dominated views from the “wine-dark sea” for many miles around. That description fits Mt. Aenos, just above Poros, the highest peak in the Ionian islands. Homer also describes the legendary Cave of the Nymphs as within a day or two walk from the city of Ithaca. A spacious, dark cave with large stalactites and deep blue water matching Homer’s description is currently a tourist attraction about 15 miles northwest of Poros.

Why hasn’t all this been reported before? Because of local politics and economics. The most active promoter of the Poros area as Homeric Ithaca is the current mayor, who at one time was governor of the prefecture (county or small state) including both Ithaca and Kefalonia.

Gerasimos Metaxas, an author and amateur archeologist who gladly shows visitors remains of the ancient city call and innards of the tomb, was defeated for reelection as governor when he began promoting the Poros-as-Ithaca idea in Greek publications. Why? If Poros is Ithaca, who would ever go to the barren island now using the name? And if tiny Poros ever gets a huge tourist and cruise ship influx, what happens to Argostoli, now the center for those trades on Kefalonia?

As a result, the entire find has never been reported in the non-Greek press. And so far, major world media show little or no interest in the tale. But for lovers of Homer’s sagas, there’s now no place more appealing than Kefalonia.

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