

Greeks 'discover Odysseus' palace in Ithaca, proving Homer's hero was real'

An 8th BC century palace which Greek archaeologists claim was the home of Odysseus has been discovered in Ithaca, fuelling theories that the hero of Homer's epic poem was real.

Odysseus – known to the ancient Romans as Ulysses – famously took 10 years to return home to Ithaca after the fall of Troy.

On his journey, he was twice shipwrecked and encountered a cyclops, the spirit of his mother and tempting Sirens before returning to Ithaca, where he found his wife, Penelope, under pressure to remarry from a host of suitors who had invaded the royal palace.

With the help of his father, Laertes, and his son, Telemachus, he slaughtered his rivals and re-established his rule.

But despite the fantastical details in the Greek epic, a team of archaeologists has claimed the tale is anchored in truth - and that they have discovered his home on the island of Ithaca, in the Ionian sea off the north-west coast of Greece.

Nearly 3,000 years after Odysseus returned from his journey, the team from the University of Ioannina said they found the remains of an extensive three-storey building, with steps carved out of rock and fragments of pottery.



Odysseus is tempted by the Sirens on his journey back to Ithaca Photo: CORBIS

The complex also features a well from the 8th century BC, roughly the period in which Odysseus is believed to have been king of Ithaca.

The location "fits like a glove" with Homer's description of the view from the fabled palace, the archaeologists claim.

The layout of the complex, where

Professor Thanassis Papadopoulos and his team have been digging for 16 years, is very similar to palaces discovered at Mycenae, Pylos and other ancient sites.

The claim will be greeted with scepticism by the many scholars who believe that Odysseus, along with other key characters from the Homer's epic such

as Hector and Achilles, were purely fictional.

"Whether this find has a connection with Ulysses or not is interesting up to a certain point, but more important is the discovery of the royal palace," said Adriano La Regina, an Italian archaeologist.

Further complicating the identification of the site is the doubt over whether the ancient kingdom of Ithaca was located on its modern day namesake, Ithaki.

A British researcher, Robert Bittlestone, has said Homer's descriptions bear little resemblance to the island and that ancient Ithaca was in fact located on the Paliki peninsula, on the island of Cephalonia.

He believes that Paliki was once an island, separated from the rest of Cephalonia by a marine channel that has since been filled in by rock falls triggered by earthquakes.

Enlisting the help of geologists and ancient historians, he documented the controversial theory in a 2005 book, *Odysseus Unbound – The Search for Homer's Ithaca*.

By Nick Squires
Article from *Telegraph.co.uk*

On this day...

August 26

• Events

1057: Armies loyal of Isaac I Komnenos defeat the imperial forces of Byzantine emperor Michael VI at Nicaea.

1071: The Battle of Manzikert takes place between Byzantines, under emperor Romanus IV, and Seljuk Turks.

1854: Makarios I is ordained Archbishop of Cyprus.

2004: Fani Halkia wins gold in the 400m hurdles at the Athens Olympic Games.

• Sports

2009: APOEL FC defeat FC Kobenhavn 3-1 and advance to the group stage of the Champions' League for the first time in their history.

• Births

1943: Dakis, pop singer.

1980: Manolis Papamakarios, basketball player

1981: Vangelis Moras, footballer

Below is an article by Theokli Kotsifaki which was published in the English section of Kathimerini. It is worth a read.

Computers vs traditional play

I went to my sister's house the other day and was surprised to see my two nephews – aged 9 and 7 – spending their free time in front of their computer. They were so absorbed in their Web explorations, that they didn't say a single word or look at me even once.

Unfortunately, my nephews are not alone. According to a recent study published by the University of Athens, youngsters spend more and more time surfing the Internet and become so engrossed in online games that they often forget to eat, sleep, play and associate with other children.

According to the same study, some of these children are very likely to display behavior similar to social withdrawal and introversion. Similar research conducted at schools in the Thessaly region revealed that one in 12 children has shown symptoms of addiction, while as many as 70 children between the ages



of 12 to 16 were diagnosed last winter with serious disorders related to pathological Internet use and underwent treatment at the Adolescent Health Unit at the Aglaia Kyriakou Children's Hospital.

What was most alarming to me was the fact that, although it was summer, my nephews preferred to remain in front of the computer rather than go outside to play. They seem to have forgotten that the summer is about relaxing and grab-

bing every opportunity do everything they do not have the time to do in the winter because of school.

It seems that computers have largely replaced play as an inner impulse and a biological drive, which allows children to develop social skills, test their limits and explore their natural environment.

According to experts, play is one of the most important factors for children to grow up to be physically and mentally healthy. Can playing computer games or Web surfing substitute for the benefits of traditional play and personal contact? Perhaps – but to a much lesser degree.

I am neither old-fashioned nor do I reject new technol-

ogy but I am afraid that children are overdoing it in terms of computer and Internet use. There is no doubt that computers are a vital tool for their homework, to communicate with each other and – why not – to occasionally play online games. It is a tool, however, of which they should make reasonable use.

On the other hand, parents should not panic nor should they discourage their children from developing their computer skills. They should, however, be wary of the hidden dangers of excessive use. Experts advise parents to try to draw their child away from computers and toward more active and creative outdoor activities. As for young Internet users, they should be reminded that while they're watching the world through the computer screen, they might just miss the chance to experience the fun for real.

COMMENTARY
BY THEOKLI KOTSIFAKI