Ancient notices of the Greek colony of Pithekousai, the present island of Ithaca in the Bay of Naples, are surprisingly scanty and often contradictory. Its early history seems to have been as obscure to ancient writers as it was to modern scholars before systematic archaeological exploration began there in recent years. Even the significance of its name was a point of contention in antiquity, the geographer Strabo claiming, with impeachable philology, that it derived from the Greek for monkey (pithakes), while Pliny drew attention to the extensive pottery workings on the island in his own time (Greek pithos, pithakes, a large storage vessel). It was further alleged that the early colonists disappeared because of their gold mines and the fertility of the island's soil. But apes certainly never were on "Monkey Island," nor was gold geologically possible. Flat, cultivable land, moreover, is almost totally lacking on Ithaca, although vineyards now thrive on its heights.

Wine, in fact, used to be the island's gold, and it has amply confirmed the ancient tradition that Pithekousai was the oldest Greek colony in Italy or Sicily (see Expedition, Summer 1966). What is more, excavation has demonstrated that the town had an importance and prosperity far out of proportion to the brief remarks about it by ancient authors.

But the Greeks, unlike their modern counterparts, could hardly have been drawn to this small island so far from their homes in search of good wine and sandy beaches. Therian lies the main question dividing modern archaeologists and historians: What were the motives which first led the Greeks to come and settle on Ithaca? As Pithekousai was their earliest colonial venture, the answer is not merely of local interest, but bears on the origins of Greek expansion to the West.

Some scholars contend that the Greeks were driven westward in search of new farmland by overcrowding and overpopulation at home. Pithekousai is thus explained as an agricultural settlement founded on an offshore island for protection from the local barbarians. But this theory is not without its difficulties, for hungry Greeks would have sought, above all, areas suitable for the cultivation of grain, and would hardly have bypassed the rich corn lands of southern Italy and Sicily in favor of a hilly volcanic island much farther away. Moreover, the cosmopolitan nature of the finds from the necropolis of San Montano rules out any thought of the colony as a simple farming community.

Others insist on the idea of commercial interests in the Ithaca of the early colonists. We know, for example, that the Euboeans of Eretria and Chalkis who jointly sailed the island had earlier participated in merchant activity at Al Mina, a Greek emporion on the coast of Syria. And, further, Ithaca is ideally situated for trade with the peoples of central Italy. For although good harbors are particularly rare along the west coast of Italy, there is an excellent sheltered inlet by the acropolis of Monte Vico as well as a long, sandy beach on the opposite side. This arrangement was one especially prized by ancient sailors as it allowed them a secure landing regardless of the wind direction. The hill itself is steep and surmounted by two small peaks above the modern town.

This was the situation when, in 1959, under the same sponsorship it was decided to open trial excavations on the ridge of Mezzalaca, across the Valley of San Montano from the acropolis. The site lies on a series of modern terraces descending toward the sea between two steep, rocky peaks. It is, in effect, very much like a Greek theater, blissfully hidden above the noisy tourist battle of modern Lacco Ameno. Lush vineyards and a colorful tangle of wildflowers among the rocks and terrace walls enhance the natural beauty of the place. The view spans to the west as well as the distance from the opposite, the island's shallow coast stretches north into the haze below the Alban Hills of Latium on the west beyond Monte Vico, the Tyrrhenian Sea spreads out to the horizon.

The loveliness of this spot was somewhat marred in the summer of 1965 when vines were uprooted and the ground cleared for an initial test trench, but this was soon justified by the exciting results. Eighty century house walls were struck almost immediately and by the end of the first season two complete structures had been uncovered, as well as enough evidence to show that the settlement extended in all directions.

But, especially in the northern and eastern parts of the site where we wanted to expand the excavation, the ancient remains were overlain by a deep fill resulting from terracing in modern times. It was therefore decided in 1970 to use a small bulldozer to remove the upper three meters or so of earth, while workers helped the machine operator to keep the scars even and allow a minimum of damage to fall to the previously excavated area. The operation was a great success. Strict precautions prevented any damage to the site and it was estimated that the work accomplished in two days what it would have taken our workmen alone a full month to dig. Two more complete structures were excavated that year. Finally, in the 1970 summer season, one more building had been cleared as well as parts of three others.

The plan shows that the site is so far composed of three ancient terraces running southeast...
1. Bulldozer clears away modern fill from the site. Workmen at the left help to keep the excavation open. Even while another man is clearing the fallen ear. The author sits at the center of the excavated site to study the layers of debris.

2. The Mazzara site, looking north, with Monte Vicin in the background. On the left and where the surface with Structures I and II has already been removed. To the right is the lower terrace. The structure is level, all of the eighth century B.C. and later.

3. Plan of the site.

4. The Blacksmith's Shop: Earliest period of Structure III, showing the workbench with some charcoal deposits. To the left is a later terrace wall. In the background is part of another structure.

5. Metalworking at Pithikousa. Clockwise from the upper left: Songline, lump of iron (black area), and large pile of charcoal from Structure III. The lower left is a fire pit with charcoal and fragments of bronze. The lower right is a second structure from Structure IV with an iron core in the lower center. Bronze and lead deposits from Structure IV. Some of the charcoal and iron deposits are separated from the sparks generated by the smith's hammer.

6. Unfinished "misdossed" bronze bodies from the site of Structure IV. These bodies were partially fashioned into objects but were never completed.

Pithikousa:

Mazzara: Area Mazzula

When the last phase of Structure IV began, the ancient town of Pithikousa was abandoned. Unworked boulders from the lava stone were used in the construction of the walls of the town. The volcanic island; mud brick was known but seemingly not used here for walls. Construction itself was generally东hazard, although occasionally a system of inner and outer wall faces with a rubble fill between may be noticed. Sometimes, too, wooden posts were incorporated among the stones for added strength as well as to support the roof beams, but even this measure seems to have been largely ineffective against the frequent earthquakes which must have shaken the island. These were so common that in ancient times the town Typhon was thought to be imprisoned beneath Pithikousa, causing it to shudder with its ceaseless struggle.

The southern corner of the site was no doubt particularly vulnerable to destruction from great boulders rolling down the cliff. A similar site, the town of Pithikousa, appears to be an example of a similar site. The site was clear and unoccupied, no signs of sudden and unexpected collapse. More or less complete walls lay exposed on the floor, and it was not completely reoccupied. Fallen-down walls elsewhere and constant rebuilding are the sad remnants of harrowing natural conditions which, according to ancient sources, drove away many of the original colonists.

Such well-preserved Greek buildings of the eighth century B.C., especially in Italy, would have been reason enough for an architect's satisfaction, but it soon became apparent that these were not all simply private dwellings. Large and small chunks of various sizes, fragments of broken implements and nodules of vitriol slag seemed to occur everywhere in great abundance. What is more, certain features of the buildings themselves could be explained only as evidence for metalworking. Generally the evidence was not enough to prove that this was the area of the ancient settlement almost exclusively over to the processing and manufacture of metal objects. Structure III was the easiest to recognize as a metalworking establishment and was quickly dubbed "the blacksmith's shop". It was apparently roofed only in its western half during the initial period of occupation. Buildings eventually covered the center of an open forecourt at the east. Later, it may have been entirely open to the sky. For a hearth of large pieces of coarse pottery vessels was built near its east wall, and the hearth had clearly been built with a heat so intense and concentrated as to have required the use of a bellows of some sort. Both floors, moreover, yielded countless small fragments of iron and slag and were shiel volumes covered with minute spots of reddish rust deterioration—dust from the sparks generated by the smith's hammer.

Structure IV had two large hearths of imported sandstone on the floor of its middle phase and a mud-brick hearth or oven nearby at the next higher level. This latter we came to recognize as a smith's forge, with the two smooth, flat-topped boulders of very hard, bluish stone on the floor beside it were clearly visible. Evidently that this building was the working of other metals as well as iron came from the debris dumped outside during its occupation. Here were found numerous fragments of bronze axes and knives, several lenses of lead, a fragment of a bronze ingot and finally an unfinished "misdossed" bronze figurines. Not far away, but in a less certain context, lay a small disc-shaped object of bronze with a plain circular medallion at its center, which was 7.9 grams and has been identified to the Euboian stater as known from its coinage. A preliminary investigation shows that the jewelry found in late eighth and early seventh century tombs at Ischia and Camara was made from electrum weighed out on the same standard.

Structure II and the fill outside it were also extraordinarily rich in metal finds. In fact, only aspald Structure I provided no firm evidence for metalworking but seems, instead, to have been a strictly private house. Yet it was never rebuilt after its destruction at about 750 B.C. There seems to be ample justification, then, for calling this part of the ancient town "a metalworking quarter". Given its location on an outlying ridge, it is in perfect accord with the little we know of metallurgy at that period. Early smiths required large amounts of wood for charcoal and would logically have worked outside the main settlement to be near their supply of fuel as well as to take advantage of stronger breezes to fan their flames. In this way, also, the danger of a destructive configuration within the town would be reduced (this is apparent...
1. Locally-made drinking cup imitating a Corinthian krater: goblet of about 700 B.C. This is the earliest type publicly found at the site.

2. Reconstruction drawing of from locally-made amphora. The style is very similar to Attic work of the second half of the eighth century B.C. The sherd shown stepped out is overpainted in buff clay slip. New fragments found in 1971 confirm the restoration.

3. Local Geometric krater: the light blue parts are restored in plaster, but the back (with simpler decoration) is entirely preserved. Most of it was found on the floor of Structure I, but other pieces had been scattered about the excavation by later disturbances. The height of the rim is uncertain, but it has been restored in accordance with certain vases from the necropolis.

4. Horse panel from the local Geometric krater: detailed drawing restored with virtual certainty from the matching one on the opposite side of the vessel and the many other fragmentary examples and similar designs from the excavations.

5. The signature sherd: detail of a fragment of the Geometric krater with painted signature in retrograde (c) ... [unrecognizable] ... nos made ma."—the artist's signature! Little can be said about the painting itself from this and the few other fragments of the same krater that have turned up so far. The layout and filling ornament seem consistent with the rest of the local figured style, although the portrayal of the sphing or sphinx (?), with frontal face is as yet unique on a Geometric vase. In any case, one eagerly awaits the possible discovery of a joining sherd so that this Geometric master can be called by his full name.

6. Warrior fragments with painted signature. Little is known of the painted decoration preserved, but the style is consistent with the local Geometric school.

7. A selection of eight torque shears. clockwise from the upper left: Local imitation of a large flat warrior's head, crudely drawn charioteer, Proto-corinthian kotyle rim, Theban kotyle fragment, original Corinthian kotyle from which the cup (p. 38, fig. 1) was copied, Lydian Geometric kotyle, Corinthian kotyle with Geometric water bird.