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### Η πρόσβαση του Αμυκλαίου

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## The Access to Amyklaion

IT IS MORE THAN APPROPRIATE that the preface to the brief paper that follows will be this clarification: This volume is the Proceedings of a meeting considering the activity records on Amyklaion, between the years 2005-2010. Arguably, our contribution could be thought to be rather odd, since it is in fact the preliminary and the announcement for a research that is going to take place. In reality, though, the realization of our project is based on the data of long-lasting research early on from the beginning of 1980s, when Pikoulas began the research of the road system of Sparta.<sup>1</sup> In this paper, however, we have included as well the results of the research that took place in the summer of 2011.<sup>2</sup>

The subject of the research is the access to Amyklaion from the North, namely Sparta, which could be considered as “*iera odos*” (sacred road) and which is identical to the central cart-road that heads to the South. The southern axis was the natural extension of the *intra muros Aphetais* road, which was the most important road in Sparta. The road commenced from the Agora, at Palaiokastro plateau, on the eastern slopes of the Acropolis, it crossed the city and ended-up in the southern gate, at the left/northern bank of Magoulitsa torrent. After the results of Kourinou’s research, the identification of *Aphetais* became unquestionable;<sup>3</sup> furthermore, the safe placement of Poseidon Tainarios’s sanctuary at the junction of Dioskouroi and Gortsologou streets,<sup>4</sup> proved the fact that *Aphetais* coincided with Gortsologou street, which ends-up, just like its ancestor, at the modern bridge of St Nikolaos; the bridge of St Nikolaos is the same bridge that was described by Leake,<sup>5</sup> while this is where we have

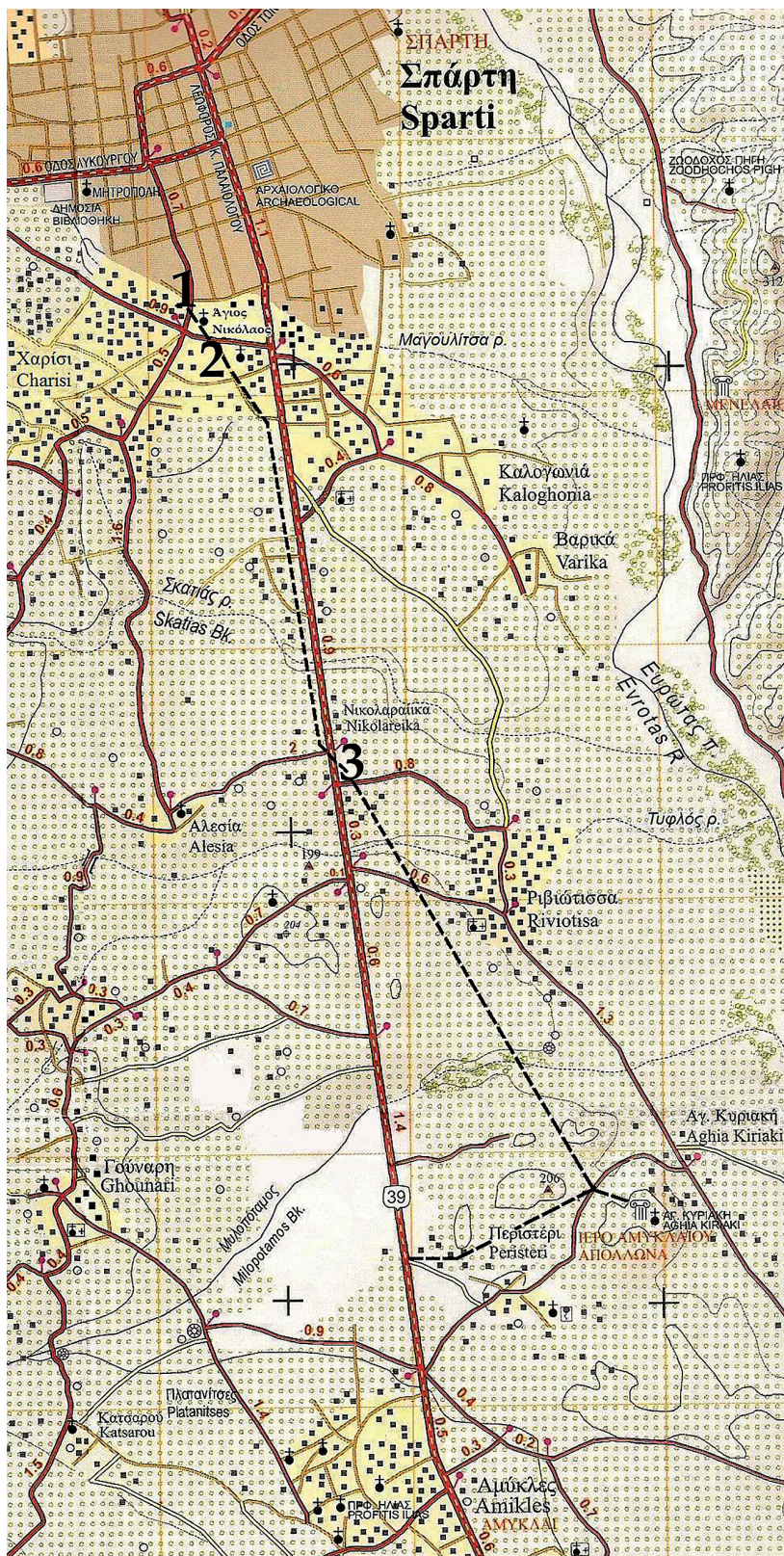
to place the ancient bridge-crossing of Magoulitsa—there are no remains nowadays, despite what C. M. Stibbe supported<sup>6</sup>—on the way to the southern suburbs of Sparta and *Koile Lakedaimon*.

However, the southern suburban part of modern Sparta, which is found at the right/southern bank of Magoulitsa, is characterized by dense urban construction, which in combination with the numerous distortions in the land, mostly alluvium, make it very difficult to research the route of the road.<sup>7</sup> The two sole indications that exist until the present day came to the light after excavating research, while the soil-relief, and especially the riparian system of Eurotas river, offer some indications. Obviously, any future excavations will bring to the light more evidence. Additionally, it must be noted that the ancient literature provides us with no useful information. What is not to be neglected is the fact that when it comes to the early travellers’ written accounts, there is the danger of misinterpretation, because there was no (modern) Sparta at the time and most often the access to Amyklaion was done from Mystras.

### EVIDENCE

The first one of the fixed sites that we can define in the route towards Amyklaion is that of the bridging of Magoulitsa close to St Nikolaos, namely the point where *Aphetais* road ended-up. The coordinates in the eastern parapet of the modern bridge are 37°E 04 094 - 022°E 25 746 (±199 m), while in the adjacent bridge of the provin-





Map 1. The access from Sparta to Amyklaion (1:25.000). Numbers 1, 2, 3 indicate the fixed points of the route of the road. The dotted line designates a possible route of the road.



cial road of Sparta - Gytheio (western parapet) they are 37°E 04 131 - 022°E 25 915 (±193 m). See map no. 1.

It was a matter of pure luck that a second fixed site of the route was located immediately south of St Nikolaos, approximately 250 m, as the result of a rescue excavation: The excavations in block Γ 256, the plot for the erecting of the new TEL (Technical High-School) of Sparta, brought to the light at least four chronological strata of a main road leading south, the latter of which the excavators correctly assumed that it must be identified with the route that led to Amyklaion.<sup>8</sup> The width of the road ranges from 3.20 to 4.05 m, while that of the chronologically former stratum (unknown when) 2.16 m, with a much more elaborate construction. The photographs indicate that the alluvium is not great (approx. 1-1.50 m?). The coordinates are approximately: 37°E 03 921 - 022°E 25 902 (±187 m). See map no. 2.

The second evidence, which is the third fixed point in designating the route, also resulted from a rescue excavation in Riviotissa village: actually, there are two such points, in G. Demakou (north of the street that leads to the village)<sup>9</sup> and Ch. Demetropoulou (south of the street)<sup>10</sup> plots respectively. The ancient road was paved, with a width of 5.80 m, direction N-S and strong embankments. The depth of the alluvium ranged from 0.75-0.90 (E) to 1.10-1.40 m (W). It was difficult though to date it; the late Hellenistic period is perhaps the most probable date. The two plots are located respectively at the two sides of the road, which is the first (informal) access from Sparta to Riviotissa village, left/eastern junction opposite the abandoned Papadimitrakopoulos's juice-factory 'Sparta Hellas'. The coordinates are: 37°E 03 096 - 022°E 26 177 (±172 m). See map no. 3.

## INDICATIONS

The soil-relief itself between Sparta and Amyklaion provides us with indications of the road, always western of Eurotas river, which are catalogued among the above mentioned evidence. The diverse riparian system of Eurotas, almost labyrinthine, consists of constant torrents. These begin from the foothills of Taygetos mountain and they merge at the right/western bank of the river. There are four main torrents, while the clarification of the modern names is quite difficult: from N to S these are 1) Trypi-

otiko/Magoulitsa torrent 2) Mystriotiko/Skatias, which is united with Paroritiko<sup>11</sup> 3) Tyflos or Potami of Riviotissa, which merges with that of Marouso, Gourtina (Ai-Yianis's Kefalari) and Xeria<sup>12</sup> and 4) Mylopotamos torrent, which flows directly north of Amyklaion.<sup>13</sup>

The bridging and the crossing of these four torrents would definitely be the most difficult problem for the Lacedaimonian road-constructors (*hodoipoioi*).<sup>14</sup> We re-researched thoroughly the torrent-beds—a repeated practice since the 1980s—,<sup>15</sup> but with no results: we did not manage to locate any indication of their bridging, in order to make hypotheses for the point, where the street would cross over the torrents. Furthermore, it is noted that the nature of the soil, lowland and alluvial, with not even limestone islets, did not favour the preservation of wheel-ruts: for example, the first wheel-ruts towards the South in *Koile Lakedaimon* have been traced in Dafni.<sup>16</sup>

Thus, before defining the route of the road, it is essential to clarify some points. First of all, the road from Sparta towards Amyklaion could have multiple access choices: it could either be identical with the axis towards the South that crossed *Koile Lakedaimon*, or it could be independent from the latter, so that there would be two roads leading south, almost parallel. With respect, though, to the indications that we have obtained for the work of the Lakedaimonian road-constructors, the second hypothesis must be excluded, because in such a case it would be necessary to have the double number of bridges for the four torrents. The road towards Amyklaion and the one leading towards southern Lakonike must have been identical at the greater part of the first one, securing thus the same bridging for at least the three first torrents. If they were to be divided, this would happen very close to the sanctuary, so that only Mylopotamos torrent would have two bridges. In fact, it would not be the dividing of the road towards Amyklaion, but a diversion/junction (ancient Greek term: *ektrope*) to the SE, namely the sanctuary, from the main road leading south. Apparently, there would be a corresponding *ektrope* in the main road in the SW, for those coming from the South and heading towards the sanctuary (see map). In both diversions the newly-arrived would come to the sanctuary from the soft neck, which is formed by the two peaks of the low hillside—the easternmost is occupied by the sanctuary—almost WNW of the shrine-throne of Apollo, in such a way to justify the corresponding location of the latter, with a fa-

cade towards Taygetos mountain and the West.

The route, thus, of the road from Sparta towards Amyklaion left Sparta behind at the end of Aphetais road, most probably bridge-crossed the Trypiotiko/Magoulitsa torrent in St Nikolaos Chatipi, went by 1st TEL of Sparta (point 2), crossed Mystriotiko/Skatia approximately at the same point with the modern provincial road towards Gytheio, probably with a bridge, slightly deviated SE from the latter in the entrance of Riviotissa (point 3), immediately south crossed Tyflo/Potami of Riviotissa (perhaps from the torrent-bed), west of the homonym village and with south-eastern direction it reached Mylopotamos (maybe here was the diversion from the main road), the crossing of which designated the beginning of the ascent towards the hillside of the sanctuary (see map).

As it has already been mentioned, the ancient literature does not provide any information—at least such that we would wish for—for the specific road. Furthermore, we avoided any reference to ancient hydronyms and we made use of the more recent ones. Indeed, the most difficult subject for the experts of the Laconian topography is exactly

the identification of the ancient hydronyms. There have been many suggestions and every possible combination has been suggested: all of them, though, remain verisimilar, even if they are not documented. The two hydronyms that Pausanias mentions, Tiassa (III 18, 6) and Fellia (III 20, 3) are both female names. They are still controversially identified, the first with Trypiotiko/Magoulitsa, because of the proximity to Sparta and the second with Tyflo/Potami of Riviotissa, or most likely with Mylopotamos, because it is the closest one to Amyklaion. On the other hand, the case of the road towards Amyklaion having a known name would be a great appeal, or better, it would be more appealing for us to provide it with the name *Hyakinthis* that was once noted (Athen. IV 173f): *ἐν τῇ Λακωνικῇ φησὶν ἐπὶ τῆς οδοῦ τῆς καλουμένης Ὑακινθίδος...* In this case, *Hyakinthis* would be the name of the *extra muros* road, as a continuation of *Apheatis* road.

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#### NOTES

1. See Pikoulas 2012.

2. In order to avoid the time consuming procedure of getting permission from the Ministry of Culture for field research between Sparta and Amyklaion, we used the previously existing data base of Pikoulas and we confined ourselves in 'ergasia kafeneiou' for recording minor hydronyms of Eurotas's wider valley, in the receipt of electronical coordinates (GPS) as well as the in the photography. We are deeply thankful for the kind help of the former director of 5th EPCA Mrs Adamantia Vasilogambrou. The research took place in 1-3.7.2011.

3. See Kourinou 2000, 131-39.

4. See Kourinou 2000, 185-92.

5. See. Kourinou 2000, 84-88.

6. See Kourinou 2000, 85-86.

7. On the contrary, the northern suburban part of Sparta, which is found at the left/northern bank of Eurotas river, is absolutely different and almost intact. The best indication for that were the impressive findings at Kladas region (2010 onwards: discovery in many spots of road constructions of

the ancient wheel-rut road), which came to the light with the construction of the new highway between Sparta and Leuktron.

8. See Zavvou *et al.* 2006, 412-14.

9. See. E. Kountouri, *AD* 51 (1996) B1, 128 (the excavator did not realize that this was a road; it was E. Zavvou that correctly interpreted it, see next note).

10. See E. Zavvou, *AD* 53 (1998) B1, 172.

11. In Nikolaraiika there is the merging of Paroritiko torrent and Skatias, between Charissio/Chatipi and Alessia/Lele. Skatias is also referred to as Messiano Potami (in Gavvaris's tennary in Chatipi), as it flows in the middle between Magoulitsa and Paroritiko. It is considered to be the greatest river and crosses the provincial road of Sparta - Gytheio, approximately 150 m before Panagiotopoulos' supermarket (37°E 03 370 - 022°E 26 066, ±175 m). The river-bed is deep and wide. The flow in 1.7.11 was minimum.

12. Tyflos torrent has the most complex water basin: Roudas (Kanellaki's quarry) becomes Xerias torrent with the wide bed and merges in Alessia/Lele with Marouso Rema (or

Mproussos) from kalderimi (cobble-road) Anavrytis, which has already included Gourtsina (or St Yiannis's Kefalari), and then, known as Tyflos or Potami of Riviotissa crosses the provincial road of Sparta - Gytheio, 200m before Lidl supermarket and the ascent towards Kourkoules (37Æ 02 955 - 022Æ 26 147, ±174 m). The bed is narrow and shallow, with minimum water in 1.7.11. Exactly because of the width of the basin and the narrow bed, the torrent floods after Kourkoules every decade and drowns Riviotissa; recently, the flood was so big, that the torrent merged with Mystriotiko/Skatia (bed-width ±1km!).

13. It crosses the provincial road of Sparta - Gytheio, just before the enclosure of the juice-factory 'Laconia' (37Æ 02 405 - 022Æ 26 251, ±175 m). The bed is now an artificial one; it is narrow (±3m) and shallow (±2.5 m), minimum water in 1.7.11.

14. The Lacedaimonians, and in general Greeks, road-constructors avoided river-bridges and preferred the crossing of a torrent from its bed: there are many examples of roads, whose wheel-ruts are preserved inside the river-bed, so that this suggestion is well supported. The construction of a river-bridge (most often made of wood and rarely stone-built) was common in the exit and the suburbs of a city. In the case of the road towards Amyklaion, because of its importance and the great use of it, we consider the bridge-crossing more possible than the crossing through the river-bed.

15. Only once did we come across a stone-built bridge in the suburbs of Sparta, see Kourinou – Pikoulas 2009.

16. See Pikoulas 2012, str. no. 50. The vague (usual phenomenon) reference of Komnenos to Amykles (38: "ἐχούσας δύο περιβόλους Πελασγικούς καὶ ἔχνη ἀμαξοτροχιῶν καὶ ἀπεχούσας τῆς Σπάρτης στάδια τριάκοντα...") is not confirmed.

## ΕΛΕΝΗ ΚΟΥΡΙΝΟΥ – ΓΙΑΝΝΗΣ Α. ΠΙΚΟΥΛΑΣ

### Η πρόσβαση του Αμυκλαίου

Στο άρθρο μας παραθέτουμε τα δεδομένα για την πρόσβαση από τη Σπάρτη στο Αμυκλαίον. Θεωρούμε ότι η διάβαση της Μαγουλίτσας γινόταν σχεδόν στη σημερινή γέφυρα του Αγίου Νικολάου στο Χατίπι, όπου κατέληγε η περίφημη *Αφεταιῖς* οδός· η τελευταία ταυτίζεται ασφαλώς με την οδό Γκορτσολόγου, μετά τον εντοπισμό του ιερού του Ταιναρίου Ποσειδώνος στη συμβολή Διοσκούρων και Γκορτσολόγου.

Στη χάραξη της διαδρομής της προς Αμυκλαίον «ιεράς οδού» δόθηκε ιδιαίτερη έμφαση στη διάσχιση των

από τον Ταῦγετο (δυτικά) παραπόταμων του Ευρώτα, που δημιουργούν ένα πολυσχιδές σύστημα, επιβάλλοντας αντίστοιχες ζεύξεις-γέφυρες. Η αρχαία οδός διεσώθη σε δύο σημεία, όπως απέδειξαν σωστικές ανασκαφές της οικείας Εφορείας, στο ΟΤ Γ 256 (νέο ΤΕΛ Σπάρτης) και στις παρυφές του οικισμού της Ριβιώτισσας (σε δύο παρακείμενα οικόπεδα).

Τέλος, πιθανολογούμε ότι θα μπορούσε η προς Αμυκλαίον, εκ Σπάρτης, οδός να ταυτισθεί με την *Υακινθίδα* (Αθην. IV 173f).

