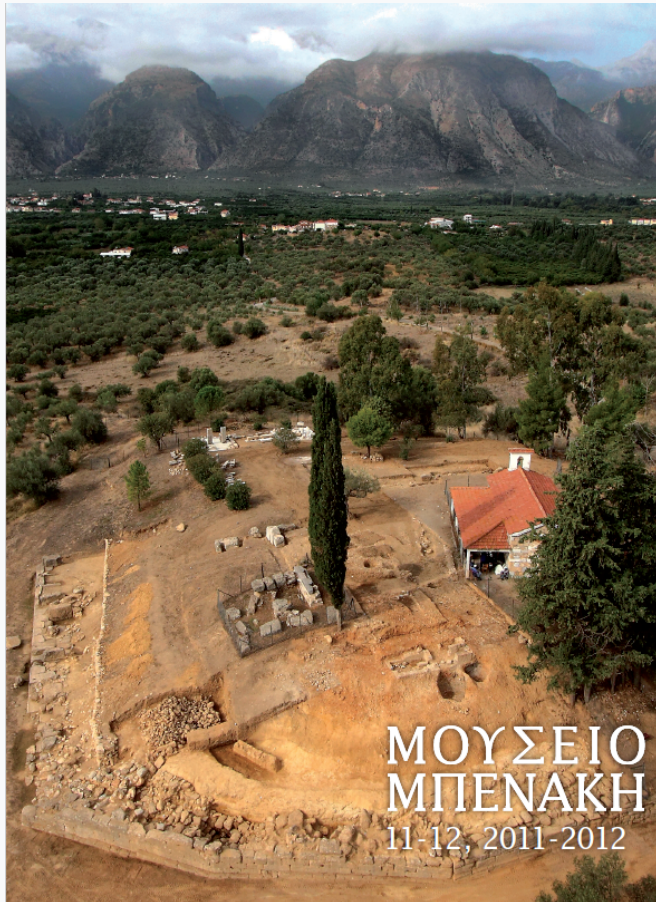


Mouseio Benaki Journal

Vol 1, No 11-12 (2012)



Searching for the Amyklaion: For a History of the 'Discovery' of the Sanctuary in the Modern Era

Paraskevas Matalas

doi: [10.12681/benaki.17807](https://doi.org/10.12681/benaki.17807)

Copyright © 2018, Paraskevas Matalas



This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/).

To cite this article:

Matalas, P. (2012). Searching for the Amyklaion: For a History of the 'Discovery' of the Sanctuary in the Modern Era. *Mouseio Benaki Journal*, 1(11-12), 169–178. <https://doi.org/10.12681/benaki.17807>

PARASKEVAS MATALAS

Searching for the Amyklaion: For a History of the ‘Discovery’ of the Sanctuary in the Modern Era

THE END OF ANTIQUITY meant the complete oblivion regarding the actual location of Amykles and Amyklaion. The state of confusion that prevailed around these names was not to end until the 19th century, and decidedly only in 1890. What follows is a small selection of elements for a history—or rather a ‘prehistory’—of this discovery, that is a quest full of mysteries, misunderstandings, misconceptions, and fabrications. The chronological table of the writers-travellers (see following page) who pass through the region and mention «Amykles» serves as a sort of diagram for this story.

A WANDERING TOPONYM

The destruction of the sanctuary was followed by the destruction of the very memory of it. The name of Amykles was preserved in the scholarly tradition, but as a mere word, deviated from its initial meaning. At some time during the Middle Ages (perhaps in the 9th century), the name *Amykles* or *Amyklion* appears as synonymous with the Arcadian Nikli, successor of the ancient city of Tegea.

At this point, I should make reference to the *Life* of St Nikon, since it is argued that the *Amyklion* mentioned there was indeed the original Amyklaion.¹ Indeed, in the *Life* and in the *Testament* of Nikon, is mentioned the *Σθλαβοχώριον* (the ‘Village of the Slavs’), where Nikon built churches-*metochia*. And in the same texts we see that Nikon, coming from Corinth to Sparta, stops at *Amyklion* or *Amykles*.² This *Amyklion*, however, had no relation either to the medieval *Sthlavochorion* or the

classical Amykles. When, in the year 1082, the Diocese of Lacedaemon was promoted to a Metropolis, was also established the «Diocese of Amykles», dependent to Lacedaemon. The seat of the Diocese was already known as *Amyklion*, and to this place refers, of course, the *Testament* (circa 1000) and the *Life* (1042) of St Nikon. The area of Tegea belonged to the Bishop of Lacedaemon at least since 903, as indicated by epigraphical evidence; and as it was a bone of contention between Lacedaemon and Patras, we could suppose that an ancient Laconic toponyme served to emphasize its subjection to the former.

This «Diocese of Amykles» could not be located in the original Amykles, in such a small distance from the Metropolis; nor exists any relevant archaeology there. In contrast, at Tegea there is a large Middle Byzantine church, known until now as *Παλαιά Επισκοπή*. In the Chronicle of the Morea the names of *Amyklion* and *Nikli* are appearing alternately, depending on the needs of the lyrics, sometimes within the same sentence. In 1296, when, according to the Aragonese Chronicle, the Byzantines recaptured Nikli by the Franks, destroyed it and built the castle of Mouchli, a few kilometers further north, the diocese of «Amykles», ‘moved’ also in Mouchli, together with the inhabitants. And when, in the Ottoman era, the castle of Mouchli was destroyed in his turn, the Diocese seat moved again, to Tripolitsa, preserving always the title of «Amykles».

This wandering toponym would give to the European antiquarians one more opportunity to laugh at the ignorant locals. In 1805 William Gell met the Bishop of Mis-

Chronological table
Writers-travellers who mention «Amykles» (1700-1900)

Date of the travel	Writer-traveller	he passes through :		identifies		
		Sclavochori	Agia Kyriaki	Amykles as	Amyklaion as	«Acropolis» (if mentioned specifically) as
10 th – 17 th cent.	(various sources)			Nikli-Amyklion (Tégea) Mouchli Vordonia		
1703	Pini			Mistra		
1730	Fourmont	+	+	Sclavochori	(Kalivia)	
1754	Le Roy	+		Sclavochori		
1787	Fauvel	+	?	Sclavochori		
1785	Villoison	+		Sclavochori		
1784 ?	Scrofani	?		Vordonia		
1795	Sibthorp	+		-		
1803	Aberdeen	+		Sclavochori		
	Bartholdy	+		Sclavochori		
1805	Leake	+	+	Agia Kyriaki	?	
	Gell	+	+	Sclavochori		Kalivia (castle)
1806	Dodwell	+		Sclavochori		Kalivia (castle)
	Chateaubriand			Sclavochori		
1811	Cockerell	+	+	-		
1812	Brøndsted	?	?	?		
1817 ?	Beaujour	+		Sclavochori (near to)		
1819	Széchenyi	+		Sclavochori		
1818-1819	Laurent	+		Sclavochori		
1820	Lebrun	+	+	Sclavochori		
1828	Post	+		Sclavochori		
1829	Anderson	+		Sclavochori		
	Quinet	+	+	Sclavochori		
1829	Lenormant	+	+	Sclavochori	Agia Kyriaki	Agia Kyriaki
	Bory	+		Sclavochori		
	Puillon Boblaye	+		Kalami - Gounari		
	Blouet	+		Sclavochori		
	Vietty	?	?	?		
1832	Thiersch	+	+		Agia Kyriaki ?	Agia Kyriaki
1834	Ross	+	+	-		
1836	Pückler-Muskau	+		closer to Sparta		
1837-1840	Curtius	+	+		Sclavochori ?	Agia Kyriaki ?
1838	Koepfen	+	+	Sclavochori		Agia Kyriaki
	Mure	+		Agia Kyriaki		
1841	Buchon	+		Sclavochori		
1842	Welcker	+	?	Agia Kyriaki		
1843	Le Bas	+		Sclavochori		
	Stauffert	+		Sclavochori		
1845	Phiraios	+		Sclavochori		
1849	Gandar	+	+	-		
1850	Mézières	+	+	Sclav. or Agia Kyriaki		
1856	Clark	+	+	Agia Kyriaki		
1853	Vischer	+	+	Agia Kyriaki	Sclavochori	
1855-1856	Bursian	+	+	Agia Kyriaki	Agia Kyriaki	
1856	Clark	+	+		near Sparta	Agia Kyriaki
1858	Wyse		+	Agia Kyriaki		
1860	Conze-Michaelis	+	+	Agia Kyriaki	Godena	
1878	Furtwängler	+	+	Agia Kyriaki	Agia Kyriaki	
1883	Sayce- Kastriotis	+	+	Agia Kyriaki	Agia Kyriaki	
1890	Tsountas	+	+	Agia Kyriaki	Agia Kyriaki	

tra «who glories in the titles of Sparta and Amyclae, yet had so little idea of the spot whence he drew his second title, that he affirmed the little village of Mouchla, in the plain of Tripolitza, was the original seat of his bishopric. This sort of ignorance seems quite incredible to an English school-boy, particularly when the ruins of Amyclae are at so little a distance; but the fact is so».³

1730: 'DESTROYING' AMYKLAION

In the above excerpt the «ruins of Amyclae» are meant to be at Sklavochori. This was the common belief among the European travellers in the beginning of the 19th century. I suggest that this identification begins in 1730, which is the first important landmark in our history: Abbé Fourmont, an epigraphist sent by the King of France, proclaimed the spectacular 'discovery' and simultaneous 'destruction' of the Amyklaion at Sklavochori. In his letters from Sparta, Fourmont boasted that he was destroying, with dozens of workers, the sanctuary from its foundations:

«Amyclae estoit trop proche pour que je la néglige; j'y ay des ouvriers comme à Sparte, ils y démolissent les restes de ce fameux temple d'Apollon, ils y trouvent tous les jours. [...] Je suis actuellement occupé à détruire jusqu'à la pierre fondamentale du temple d'Apollon Amyclaeen; l'on y trouve tous les jours des choses qui vous feront bien plaisir à voir.»⁴

Back in Paris, in 1731, in a meeting of *Académie Royale des Inscriptions et des Belles Lettres*, Fourmont, narrated: «Amyclae est trop proche de Sparte, et un lieu trop célèbre pour n'y pas fouiller aussi; M. Fourmont la chercha et la trouva, de même que le temple d'Apollon Amycléen, où il déterra plus de 40 inscriptions, dont une est le catalogue des prêtresses ou Pythies d'Apollon Amycléen.»⁵

Fourmont, in fact found and copied hundreds of inscriptions in the region of Sparta. However, on his return to France, he did not undertake to publish the authentic inscriptions, but rather to forge and publish his own 'inscriptions' and 'evidence'. And nearly all of them were 'discovered' in Amykles. Thereby, even before its actual discovery, Amykles was connected with a bizarre but important chapter in the early history of archaeology and epigraphy.

In 1740 Fourmont spoke at the Academy about some of these 'findings' («*Remarques sur trois inscriptions trouvées*



Fig. 1. One of the forged inscriptions «discovered in Amykles». According to Fourmont, «it was engraved to perpetuate the memory of the decisions of the General Council of the Laconian nation to revenge the death of King Teleklos» [after: Abbé Fourmont, *Remarques sur trois inscriptions trouvées dans la Grèce, Mémoires de Littérature tirez des Registres de l'Académie Royale des Inscriptions et Belles Lettres* 5 (Paris 1743) 397].

dans la Grèce»). It was an imaginative story of a research tour, during which the pioneer archaeologist had the amazing chance to discover, in three different places, three similar ancient inscriptions with lists of Spartan kings and officials. The third, and the most important of these inscriptions was found near Amyklaion, in a very peculiar primeval building, the «temple of Onga» (fig. 1).

In 1742, in a new announcement about three more inscriptions he had found this time inside the Amyklaion («*Explication de trois anciennes Inscriptions qui ont été trouvées dans le Temple d'Apollon Amycléen*») (fig. 2), Fourmont gave more information about the site of the



Fig. 2. «Inscription discovered in Greece, in the Temple of Amykleaen Apollon, near to the altar». Fourmont explains that the kings of Lacedaemon «having achieved, thanks to the protection of Apollo, some victory», dedicated their shields in Amyklaion, and thereafter commended «to be carved in marble, in order to perpetuate their gratitude.» The shields have on them «the symbols of the Herakleid kings», this one a snake along with two falling foxes (symbol of the Messenian), thus symbolizing the conquest of Messenia [after: Abbé Fourmont, Explication de trois anciennes Inscriptions qui ont été trouvées dans le Temple d'Apollon Amycléen, *Mémoires de Littérature tirez des Registres de l'Académie Royale des Inscriptions et Belles Lettres, depuis l'année MDCCXXXVIII jusque & compris l'année MDCCXL 6* (Paris 1751) 104].

sanctuary: «Amycles, autrefois ville de la Laconie, située au pied du mont Taygète dans une plaine, à deux lieues au midi de Sparte, n'est plus qu'un village, que les Grecs appellent aujourd'hui Sclabochorion. M. Fourmont découvrit dans la place principale, devant la Lesché ou juridiction du lieu, les ruines du temple d'Apollon Amycléen, qui a été célèbre dans l'Antiquité, et parmi ces ruines trois pierres, sur chacune desquelles étaient gravées des lettres d'un caractère fort ancien et la figure d'un bouclier.»

When Michel Fourmont died in 1746, he left an archive containing not only the inscriptions he had copied but also those he had forged, some of which would be published by other scholars. One was published in 1750 in the *Nouveau Traité de Diplomatie*, as the «earliest known Greek inscription». In 1756 Jean-Jacques Barthélemy identified it with the «*catalogue des prêtresses ou Pythies d'Apollon Amycléen*» mentioned by Fourmont in 1731, a full catalogue of the priestesses of Amyklaion, from the time of Amyclas to the Roman conquest. The *Recueil d'antiquités égyptiennes, étrusques, grecques et romaines* by Comte de Caylus (1752-1756), which was an important book regarding the history of the archaeology, included even more spectacular 'discoveries' by Fourmont from Amykles: two bas-reliefs 'representing' human sacrifices. All the above would be considered, for a fairly long period, very important evidence of early Greek history, and the Enlightenment's encyclopedias would repeat verbatim Fourmont's descriptions about Amykles and Amyklaion.

FOURMONT'S REAL AND INVENTED TOPOGRAPHY OF AMYKLES

However, Fourmont did not only forge false inscriptions, but he copied much more authentic ones, many of them in the area of Sklavochori. On every copy he noted its location, in some cases using the modern name of the village, church, etc., in other cases using the names of his own imaginary Amyclean topography. Several of these inscriptions would be found by subsequent travelers and archaeologists, and thus we can not only detect where Fourmont had actually gone and what he had seen, but also what was hiding behind his imaginative topography— that is, what he actually 'saw' as «temple

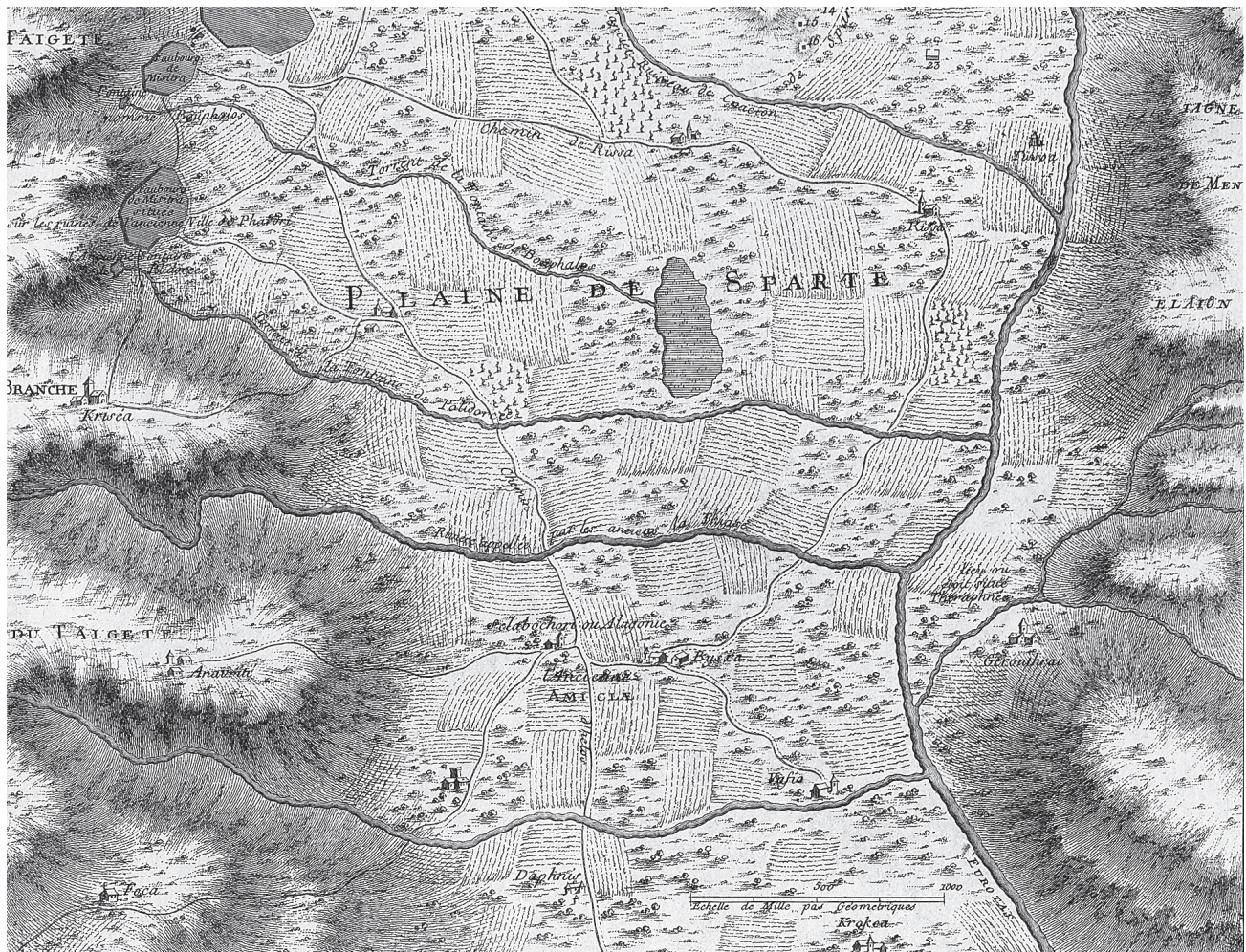


Fig. 3. Detail of the map of the valley of Sparta by Le Roy, who visited it in 1754. Following Fourmont, Amykles is identified with Sclavochori [after: J. D. Le Roy, *Les ruines des plus beaux monuments de la Grèce* (Paris 1758)].

of Apollo» or as «temple of Onga».

It is clear, for example, that Fourmont climbed the hill of Agia Kyriaki. In the chapel he copied an inscription (the I.G. VI 511, which later would be copied by Leake, Lenormant, Ross and others) and noted: «Στη Γουδένη in ecclesia D. Cyriacae». But it is equally clear that for him Agia Kyriaki was not connected in anyway to the Amyklaion or Amykles.

On the other hand, in the copies of several (authentic) inscriptions Fourmont has noted: «Στω Σκλαβοχωρίω in Apollonis», or «Στω Σκλαβοχωρίω in templo Apollonis», or «prope templum in Apollonis». Some of these inscriptions would be found in the end of 19th century in the village of Kalivia Sochas, in a ruined

church. We can thereby suppose that Fourmont 'saw' in Kalivia («au pied du mont Taygète»), perhaps in this church, the famous «temple of Apollo», that was allegedly destroyed from its foundations.

By the end of the 18th century the authenticity of the Amyclaeon 'discoveries' would be questioned and eventually, after some decades of typical Franco-British controversy, would be definitively refuted. Nevertheless, the identification of Amykles with Sclavochori would last much longer. This identification—reproduced even by travellers who pass through Agia Kyriaki, like William Gell—was fostered by the fact that the main road leading from Mistra to the sea passed closer to the foot of the Taygetos, westwards from Sclavochori.

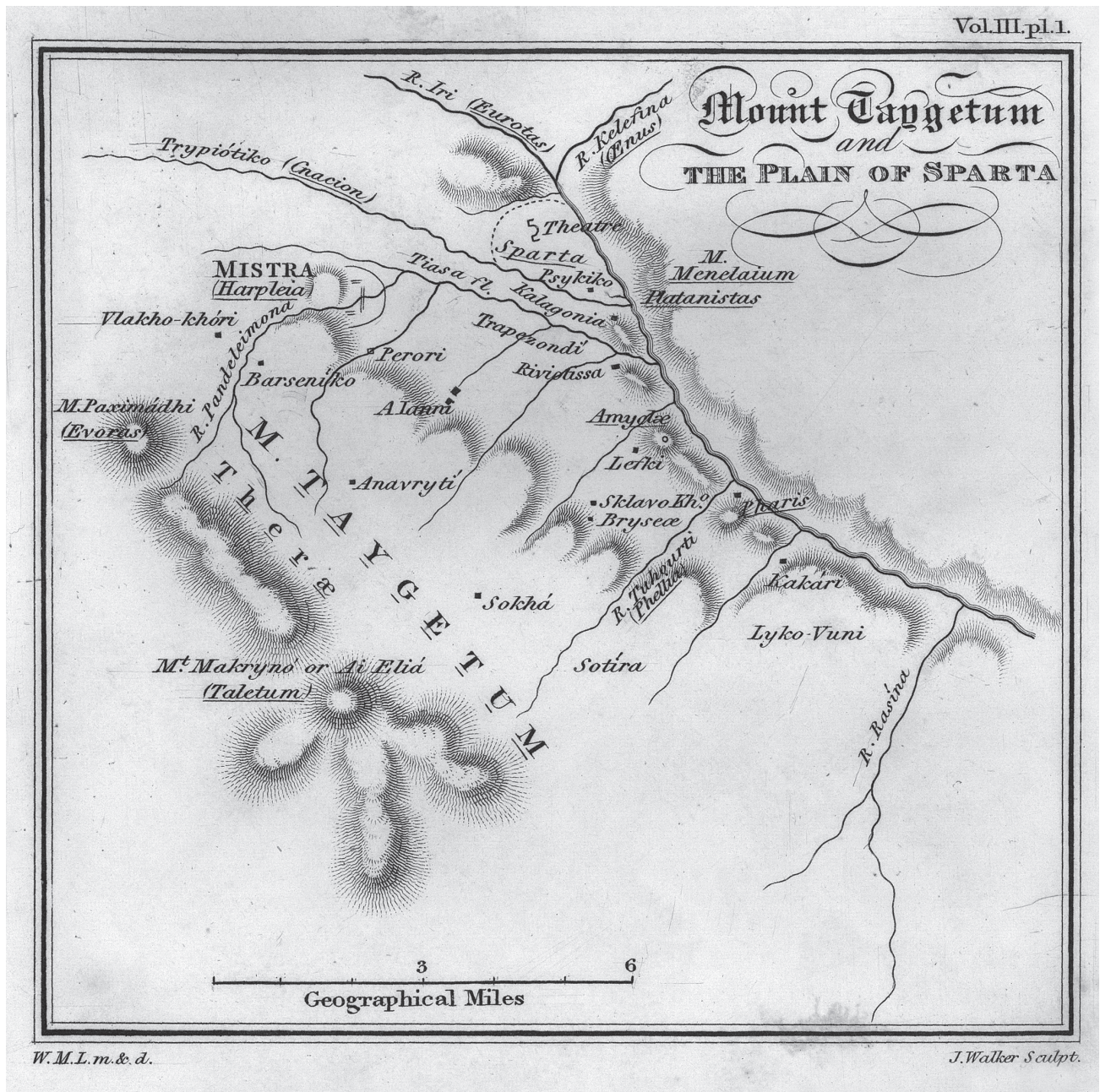


Fig. 4. The map of «Mount Taygetus and the Plain of Sparta» by William Martin Leake. He places Amykles on the hill of Agia Kyriaki (after: Leake 1830).

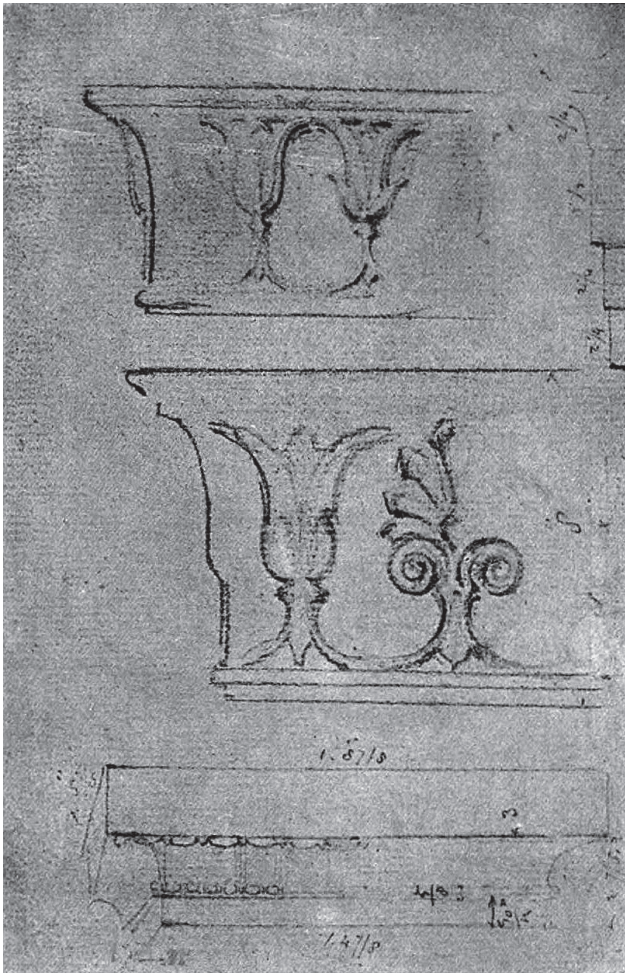
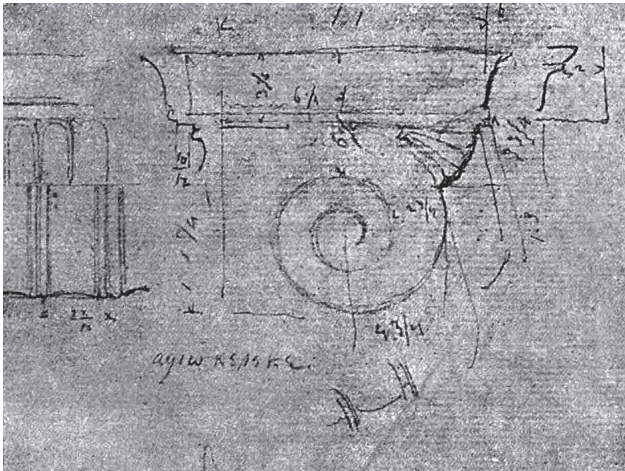


Fig. 5. C. R. Cockerell, *Agia Kyriaki*, 1811. The drawings were found in Cockerell's archive by Furtwängler (after: Fiechter 1918, 147, 155).

1806: LEAKE LOCATES AMYKLES IN AGIA KYRIAKI

The second important landmark in this history is the passage of William Martin Leake in 1805: «From Sklavokhori I ride to Aia Kyriaki, St Sunday, a church standing on a height half a mile from the Eurotas [...]. Nothing is now to be seen at Aia Kyriaki but two imperfect inscriptions, in one of which are the letters TT T following the name TTTT TTTT and leaving little doubt, that the incomplete word was TT TTTT TTTT As far as this evidence goes, therefore, St Kyriaki has as good pretensions to be considered the site of Amyclae as Sklavokhori.»⁶

Leake continues describing the view from Agia Kyriaki and correlating it with the ancient sources, mainly the narrative by Polybius of the Macedonian expedition against Sparta in 218 TT TT thanks to a combination of his historical-archaeological knowledge and his expertise as an artillery officer, Leake was able to 'read' the landscape and identify for the first time, the location of Amykles: «I think, therefore, that notwithstanding its distance, the hill of Aia Kyriaki, being such a commanding position as the early Greeks usually chose for their towns, may have been the site of the more ancient Amyclae.»⁷

Leake made these observations in 1805, but his book on the Morea would be published as late as 1830. So, as you can see in the table, the travellers of the first decades of 19th century would continue to identify Amykles with Sclavochori. Such as the British architect Charles Robert Cockerell, who, in October 1811, drew architectural members (a capital and a cornice) built-in at Agia Kyriaki, without realising their provenance (fig. 5).

It should also be noticed that although Leake locates Amykles in Agia Kyriaki, he nowhere says that the sanctuary of Amyklaion was on the hill. That is why some subsequent travellers and archaeologists, having read his book, would consider Agia Kyriaki as an archaic citadel of Amykles (and the visible remains of the peribolos as fortress walls) and would assume that the sanctuary of Apollo was lying somewhere in the plain (fig. 6).

The first one who places the Amyklaion at Agia Kyriaki is the French archaeologist Charles Lenormant, who passed through Sparta in May 1829. Lenormant was a member of the *Expédition scientifique de Morée*, but he defected from the main body of the Expedition to browse alone in the region. The inscriptions copied by him were

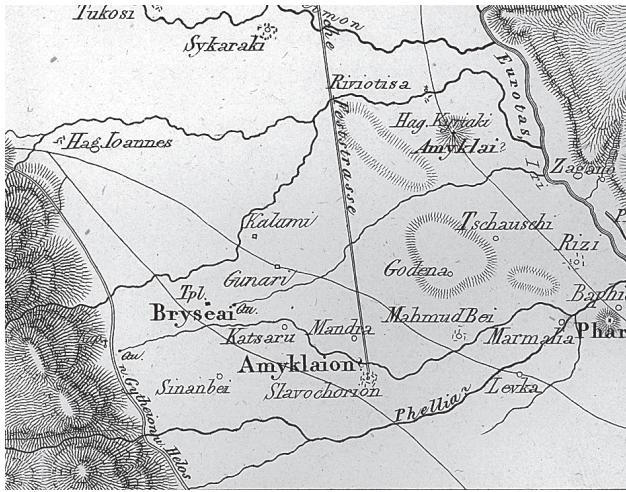


Fig. 6. Detail of the map of «Sparta and the middle of the Eurotas valley» by Curtius. It places Amykles in Agia Kyriaki, with a question mark, whereas Amyklaion in Slavochori, also with a question mark [after: E. Curtius, *Peloponnesos: Eine historisch-geographische Beschreibung der Halbinsel II* (Gotha 1852)].

published by Philippe Le Bas in 1836. Among them was the above mentioned inscription copied by Fourmont in Agia Kyriaki, accompanied by a note in which Lenormant explains how the view from the hill convinced him

that here was not only the «acropolis» of Amykles, but the Amyklaion: «Du haut de la colline isolée sur laquelle s'élève ce débris de monument, on découvre dans toutes les directions de petites églises ruinées [...]. La position de cette colline au milieu des ruines d'Amyclae rappelle d'une manière frappante la manière dont l'acropolis de Sparte s'élève au-dessus de la plaine lacédémonienne; c'est cette comparaison qui m'a fait donner, à la colline d'Amyclae, le nom d'acropolis de cette ville. Le temple de l'Apollon Amycléen devait se trouver sur l'acropolis de la ville d'Amyclae, de la même que celui d'Athéna Chalcioccos ornait celle de Sparte.»⁸

Lenormant was therefore the first to identify Agia Kyriaki as the location of the Amyklaion and without having knowledge of the text of Leake. This, however, would be ignored by all subsequent writers. The reason might be that this note was hidden in an epigraphical footnote, or that Agia Kyriaki is not mentioned verbatim.

Only in 1878, in his first visit in Agia Kyriaki, Adolf Furtwängler would recognise the built-in sculptures as belonging to the Throne. And in 1890, the excavations of Tsountas will prove decidedly that Amyklaion was on the hill, putting an end to the 'prehistory' of its discovery.

Paraskevas Matalas
 parmatalas@gmail.com

T O T E S

1. This was already believed by Furtwängler; it was recently argued in Armstrong 2008, 352-69.
2. Sullivan 1987, 110-11, 146-47.
3. Gell 1823, 335.
4. Omont 1902, 624, 620.

5. *Histoire de l'Académie Royale des Inscriptions et Belles Lettres* 4 (Amsterdam 1736) 561-62.

6. Leake 1830, 135-36.

7. Leake 1830, 145.

8. Le Bas 1836, 160-61.

ΠΑΡΑΣΚΕΥΑΣ ΜΑΤΑΛΑΣ

Αναζητώντας το Αμυκλαίο: για μια ιστορία της “ανακάλυψης” του ιερού στα νεότερα χρόνια

Η ανασκαφή του Τσουντα στην Αγία Κυριακή, το 1890, δεν σήμανε μόνο το ξεκίνημα της αρχαιολογικής έρευνας του Αμυκλαίου, αλλά και τον τερματισμό μιας μακράς φάσης αναζήτησής του, μιας φάσης γεμάτης από μυστήρια, παρεξηγήσεις, παρανοήσεις και επινοήσεις. Το τέλος της αρχαιότητας είχε φέρει και την καταστροφή της ίδιας της μνήμης σχετικά με τη θέση των Αμυκλών και του Αμυκλαίου. Η λέξη διατηρήθηκε, στη λόγια παράδοση, αλλά αποκομμένη από το αρχικό της σημαίνόμενο. Σε κείμενα των μεσαιωνικών χρόνων, όπως στον *Bio* του Οσίου Νίκωνος, το όνομα *Αμύκλες* ή *Αμύκλιον* εμφανίζεται ταυτισμένο με το Νίκλι της Αρκαδίας, στην αρχαία Τεγέα. Στη συνέχεια, σαν έδρα επισκοπής, περιφερόμενη από την Τεγέα στο Μουχλί και στην Τριπολιτσά.

Ο Γάλλος επιγραφολόγος Abbé Fourmont, που ήρθε στην περιοχή της Σπάρτης την άνοιξη του 1730, ισχυρίστηκε ότι βρήκε το Αμυκλαίο στο Σκλαβοχώρι και ότι το «κατάστρεψε». Παρουσίασε επίσης δήθεν πανάρχαιες επιγραφές που «ανακάλυψε» στα ερείπια του ιερού, όπως έναν κατάλογο των ιερειών του Αμυκλαίου, τις οποίες είχε πλαστογραφήσει ο ίδιος. Αυτές οι επιγραφές θα θεωρούνταν αυθεντικές επί πολλές δεκαετίες.

Ο Fourmont πέρασε και από την Αγία Κυριακή, όπου

αντέγραφε μια πραγματική επιγραφή, χωρίς όμως να συνδέσει τη θέση της με το Αμυκλαίο ή τις Αμύκλες. Το δικό του «Αμυκλαίο» το “είδε” στον σημερινό οικισμό Καλύβια Σοχάς, δυτικά από το Σκλαβοχώρι, στη ρίζα του Ταΰγετου. Για ένα μεγάλο διάστημα οι Αμύκλες θα τοποθετούνταν, ασαφώς, κάπου στο Σκλαβοχώρι.

Ο επόμενος σημαντικός σταθμός της ιστορίας είναι το 1805, όταν πέρασε ο Βρετανός στρατιωτικός και αρχαιοδίφης William Martin Leake. Ο Leake, βασισμένος κυρίως στην ερμηνεία αρχαίων πηγών όπως ο Πολύβιος, ήταν ο πρώτος που πρότεινε ότι οι αρχαίες Αμύκλες βρίσκονταν στην Αγία Κυριακή. Παρουσίασε την επιχειρηματολογία στο βιβλίο του για την Πελοπόννησο που εξέδωσε το 1830.

Αλλά ο πρώτος που τοποθέτησε ρητώς το ιερό του Αμυκλαίου Απόλλωνα πάνω στον λόφο της Αγίας Κυριακής ήταν ο Γάλλος αρχαιολόγος Charles Lenormant, μέλος της Γαλλικής Επιστημονικής Αποστολής του Μοριά, που πέρασε από την περιοχή το 1829. Ωστόσο, αυτή η ταύτιση θα έμενε στην αφάνεια, μέχρι το καλοκαίρι του 1878, όταν επισκέφθηκε για πρώτη φορά την Αγία Κυριακή ο Adolf Furtwängler και αναγνώρισε τα εντοιχισμένα στην εκκλησία αρχιτεκτονικά μέλη ως κομμάτια του Θρόνου.

