

Metal Workshops, Production and Infrastructure of the Sanctuary: The Case of the Spartan Amyklaion

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The low hill, today called “Ayia Kyriaki”, where the fertile sacred place of Apollo Amyklaios is located, lies about 5 km south of Sparta, almost in the middle of the Eurotas valley, at a point from where all the natural borders of Laconia can be controlled.¹ The following paper will focus on recent evidence, by which the activity of a metal workshop in the northern half of the sanctuary can be detected (fig. 1).²

In the Amyklaion, as in other sanctuaries, for example in Athens, Isthmia or Olympia, as well as in public areas of various Greek cities, working metal workshops in the Late Geometric and Archaic periods are attested by smelting furnaces, foundry pits, tools, slag, missing casts, semifinished products, etc.³ Unlike sanctuaries of a certain size, which had fixed workshops, it can be assumed that at the Amyklaion, due to the structure of the area and the lack of space, an ephemeral workplace was established.⁴ These are simple depressions in the natural rock, which could be dismantled and filled in again without difficulty. It can be assumed that at the Amyklaion too, as in Olympia,



Fig. 1: Metalworking facilities in the northern half of Amyklaion.

one person was responsible for the artistic design and another for the technical preparations and coordination of the work processes: i.e. an artist and a casting master.⁵ One of these artists was certainly Bathykles, who was allowed to consecrate four statues in the sanctuary because of his successful *Thronos*: the *Charites* and an *Artemis Leukophryene*, which he most likely made himself. Furthermore, also Kallon of Aigina made a bronze tripod for the sanctuary.

According to recent studies, the raw material probably came from the mines on the east coast of Laconia.⁶

These workshops, together with the numerous metal votive offerings from the 8th century on and the decoration of the *Thronos* of bronze plates, attest to the new prosperity at the Amyklaion and Sparta, as well as the trade exchange with other places. This increase of votive offerings can be attributed on the one hand to a significant increase in the population and the greater availability of metal. On the other hand, it is a change in attitude toward the community and the common sanctuary. According to S. Hodkinson, the Spartans had also directly assumed the responsibility of art production by the end of the 6th century, and thus dictated the function of the sanctuary also in an economic sense.⁷ Thus, the new find, together with the other new discoveries, fills the gaps of the picture of the amyklaion both in terms of its appearance and in terms of its function. In the context of the discussion on the austerity of Lacedaimonia, Sparta and the Amyklaion can thereby make a clear contribution to interpreting this phenomenon in the context of local circumstances.⁸

Notes

¹ Vlzos 2017, 72.

² Vlzos 2017.

³ Cf. Heilmeyer 1969; Mattusch 1977, 340–379; Rostoker – Gebhard 1980, 350. 361. For a general interpretation see Heilmeyer 1981, 440–453; Zimmer 1990, 17–54.

⁴ Cf. ThesCRA IV (2005) 22 s.v. *Ergasterion* (U. Sinn), and Rostoker – Gebhard 1980, 361.

⁵ Cf. Heilmeyer 1969; Zimmer 1983, 57–80.

⁶ Grigorakakis 2014.

⁷ Hodkinson 1998, 55.

⁸ Cf. Cartledge 2002, 94; Ulf 2009, 231–234.

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Fig. 1: Copyrights Amykles Research Project.

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