



## Summary :

Sculptor and architect of the mid 6th c. BC from Magnesia ad Maeandrum. The famous throne of Apollo at Amyclae in Laconia was his creation.

## Date and Place of Birth

Mid 6<sup>th</sup> century BC – Magnesia ad Maeandrum

## Main Role

Sculptor

## 1. Biographical evidence

Bathycles was a sculptor and architect from [Magnesia ad Maeandrum](#). He is possibly identified with an Arcadian sculptor bearing the same name. By the 5th c. BC he was already connected with the myth of the Seven Sages, which refers to individuals who lived at the end of the 7th and during the 6th c. BC.<sup>1</sup> It is reported that at young age, Bathycles had worked for the Lydian king [Croesus](#). His possible stay in Arcadia can be connected with the only known episode about his life, namely that he was the creator of the famous throne of [Apollo](#) at Amyclae in Laconia.<sup>2</sup> It was an impressive, lavishly adorned architectural complex in the shape of a throne, designed to include the god's old cult statue<sup>3</sup> which was placed on top of [Hyacinthus](#)' altar-tomb.

## 2. The throne of Apollo

This edifice, which was seen and described in detail by [Pausanias](#)<sup>4</sup> during the 2nd c. AD, is of great interest both for its unusual design and its rich sculptural decoration. Unfortunately this monument has not survived.<sup>5</sup> The impression one forms, however, is that it was a marble building with gilded parts which exhibited certain clearly Asia Minor characteristics.<sup>6</sup> It was directly connected both to a series of renowned Asia Minor monumental altars<sup>7</sup> as well as with the [heroic monuments or funerary monuments](#) of the 5th and 4th c. BC in [Lycia](#)<sup>8</sup> and [Caria](#).<sup>9</sup> Moreover, the throne at Amyclae is the earliest known example which employed relief [friezes](#) on a high podium. Bathycles already by the mid 6th c. BC had introduced this technique from the Asia Minor coast to the heart of the Doric territory, Sparta in Laconia.

The surviving architectural fragments from the throne at Amyclae<sup>10</sup> present also elements of the [Ionic order](#), sometimes in combination with [Doric](#) elements. Bathycles seems to have created an orientaling building which, however, responded to the needs of the local cult and the preferences of local priests.<sup>11</sup> Such a large project must have demanded the involvement of many skilled craftsmen. According to Pausanias the throne depicted Bathycles' Magnesians compatriots and co-workers in a dance-scene.<sup>12</sup> The representation of mortal craftsmen or artists on public monuments does not keep up with a purely Greek tradition.<sup>13</sup>

The depiction, however, of people going about their everyday activities is fairly common in Asia Minor. We find such depictions during the 5th c. BC on the Lycian friezes at Gölbaşı-Trysa or at [Xanthos](#). Rows of dancers are often seen on monuments in Asia Minor and also remind one of the dance of the Phaeacians with singing Domodokos, a scene from [Homer](#), which was also depicted on the throne of Bathycles. According to Pausanias' description, the monument bore 45 mythological representations in relief, which, although at first sight seemed unconnected to each other and irrelevant to the worship of Apollo Amyclaeus, they reflected, according to a recent opinion, a specific and fairly complex iconographic program with powerful political content, directly connected to Sparta's mythical past.<sup>14</sup>

This is evident both from the choice of specific, although unknown from other sources, myths which relate to the town's history,<sup>15</sup> as well as from the peculiar and unusual elements observed in the representation of generally well-known myths.<sup>16</sup> Overall there appears



to be an obvious preference for [Heracles](#),<sup>17</sup> mythical ancestor of the Doric tribe, as well as for the Theban and Thessalian epic cycles rather than the Trojan one.<sup>18</sup> There is, however, a group of representations of Olympian deities in completely unusual erotic scenes, which is an innovation and is probably due to Bathycles' Ionian descent.<sup>19</sup> The altar-tomb of Hycinthus was also adorned by Bathycles with relief plaques in a continuous frieze, which depicts the gods of Olympus and mortals being led to them.<sup>20</sup>

The conventional date of the throne based on its architectural decoration is the late 6th c. BC (c. 530 BC). Dating the monument in the mid 6th c. BC seems to be in accord with both the iconographic program and the typology of its representations as well as the historical and political circumstances which led to its creation. It seems possible that the throne at Amyclae was dedicated by the Spartan royal family of the Aigeids during the reign of the Agiad king of Sparta Anaxandrides (mid 6th c. BC) and functioned as a monument which demonstrated the political and strategic alliance between the two royal families of Sparta, the Aigeids and the Agiads, under the protection of Apollo.

Other works by Bathycles also existed in the temple of Apollo Amyclaeus; a statue of [Artemis Leucophryene](#), patron goddess of his birthplace Magnesia ad Maeandrum, as well as statues of the Graces. These were expensive votive statues offered by the sculptor himself as a sign of gratitude for the successful completion of the large project of the throne.<sup>21</sup> It has been suggested that Bathycles, like other sculptors from Ionia, migrated to mainland Greece after the fall of the Lydian kingdom in 546 BC and the subjugation of his birthplace Magnesia ad Maeandrum to the [Persians](#). According to another theory, Bathycles was connected to Croesus and it is believed that he was sent by him to Sparta on occasion of the transportation of gold for the gilding of the statue of Apollo Pythius<sup>22</sup> or Apollo Amyclaeus.<sup>23</sup> The gilding was not restricted to the face of the statue, as suggested by the historian Theopompus,<sup>24</sup> but was applied to the entire throne. The relationship, however, between the sculptor and the fate of the Lydian kingdom is hypothetical.

### 3. Evaluation of his work

Bathycles appears as a very important and talented artist of his time and one of the pioneers of the [art of Ionia](#), who undertook an important and expensive commission in Laconia during an era, when many workshops in the Peloponnese were falling into decline. His work was of exquisite quality, as one can discern from the surviving fragments of the architectural decoration of the throne at Amyclae, with its rich floral ornamentation. However, despite the particular refinement and craftsmanship in the finishing of the surfaces, typical of archaic Ionic marble sculpture, the figures are inferior in their plasticity. Similar elements appear in the better known Ionic treasures at Delphi: adornment is not confined to necessity, but there is an intense artistic intention which pays particular attention to detail, regardless of its stylistic incorporation into the overall composition. Notwithstanding, the individual style of the artist is obvious.

Many researchers recognize an intense Samian influence in the architectural decoration of the throne at Amyclae and believe that Bathycles belonged to the [Samian sculptural school](#) like Theodoros, a sculptor and architect from [Samos](#), while his work is paralleled with the great altar of the Heraion at Samos, created by Roikos. It is more likely, however, that he is connected with the Ionic marble workshops of [Miletus](#) and [Ephesus](#) which created the relief columns of the [Artemision at Ephesus](#) and the seated statues of the [Branchidae](#) on the Sacred Way (Hiera Odos) from Miletus to [Didymaion](#).<sup>25</sup> Bathycles definitely played a very important role in the transmission of Ionic elements to areas traditionally dedicated to the Doric order, primarily in mainland Greece. Thus, the throne at Amyclae is among the first examples of the combination of the Doric and Ionic orders, which were predominant during the 5th c. BC in Athens.

---

1. Athen. 11.495 D; Diog. L.. 1.28; Plout., *Life of Solon* 4.

2. Amyclae was an ancient town of Laconia, present-day Sklavochori or Slavochori, approx. 5 kms. south of Sparta. The acropolis with its famous temple of Hyacinthus and Apollo Amykleos was situated on a hill NE of the town, nowadays known as the hill of Aghia Kyriaki, SW of the village with the same name, and is considered as important as the acropolis in Sparta. For Amyclae see: Papachatzis, N. (ed.), *Πανσάνιου Ελλάδος περιηγήσις: Κορινθιακά-Λακωνικά* (Athens 1994), p. 383-389.



3. The now lost statue of Apollo Amyclaeus was wooden, with bronze inlays, while its face was gilded. It was 30 cubits tall, i.e. 14,76 m. based on the Attic cubit or 13,32 m. based on the Hellenic-Roman cubit. It dated in the end of the 7th or the beginning of the 6th c. BC and already existed for at least half a century before the construction of the throne. Paus. 3.10.8, 3.19.2; Theopomp. *Hist.*, in Athen. 6. 232 A.
4. Paus. 3.18.9-3.19.5.
5. There have however been many attempts to reconstruct its design, but none of these was unproblematic; see: Fiechter, E., "Amyklai, Der Thron des Apollon", *Jdl* 33 (1918), tab. 19-20; Buschor, E. – Massow, W. von, "Vom Amyklaion", *MDAI(A)* 52 (1927), p. 19; Martin, R., "Bathyklès de Magnésie et le trône d' Apollo à Amyklæe", in *Études sur les relations entre Grèce et Anatolie offertes à Pierre Damargne 2* (RA 1976), p. 215, pic. 6 and p. 217, pic. 7; Romano, I.B., *Early Greek Cult Images* (Diss. University of Pennsylvania 1980), p. 99-114; Vries, K. de, "The Throne of Apollo at Amyklai", *AJA* 86 (1982), p. 262.
6. High base with funerary space in the shape of an altar in its interior which was externally decorated with relief friezes, abutments of the Caryatid type (Pausanias names them Hours and Graces) and relief friezes with mythological representations which run along the monument's walls.
7. See the altar of Artemis in Ephesus from the mid 6th c. BC, perhaps an immediate predecessor of the throne of Bathykles, the altar of Priene from the 6th c. BC, the altar of Magnesia ad Maeandrum and finally the Great Altar of Pergamum from the 2nd c. BC.
8. See the Nereid monument and other Lycian funerary monuments in Xanthos and Limyra.
9. See the Mausoleum of Halicarnassus.
10. These include blocks from the foundation, the crepidoma, the staircase, the pedestal, the walls, and the orthostates, floor slabs, column drums of three kinds (full columns, semicolumns and columns), column capitals also of three kinds (purely Doric column capitals, Doric capitals with necking adorned with a series of leaves and astragal and mixed Doric-Ionic column capitals combining the Ionic volute with the Doric echinus), door jambs, with tenons for rails, parts of the architrave and sima with floral decoration, and roof slabs.
11. This building functioned, generally, as a temple to Apollo and was built to enclose in a type of architectural complex the cult statue of the god which had been placed on the Amykles acropolis long before Bathykles constructed the throne and, because of its colossal dimensions could not be housed in a temple.
12. Paus. 3.18.15. Moreover based on the dance of the Magnesians on the throne of Bathykles in 1433-1445 the Florentine bronze sculptor Antonio Averlino, known as "il Filarete", created on the back part of the left door of the bronze doors of St. Peter's in Rome a relief which represents himself and his assistants dancing with their arms linked, holding sculpture and engraving tools; the artist's signature.
13. See the consequences for Phidias when he depicted himself and Pericles on the underside of the shield of Athena Parthenos.
14. Faustoferri, A., "The Throne of Apollo at Amyklai: its Significance and Chronology", in Palagia, O. – Coulson, W. (ed.), *Sculpture from Arcadia and Laconia* (Oxford 1993), p. 159-166; Faustoferri, A., *Il trono die Amyklai e Sparta. BATHYKLES al servizio del potere* (Aucnus 2, Napoli 1996).
15. Menelaus in a confrontation with Proteus, Theseus kidnapping Helen, the Dioskouroi alone and with the Lefkipptides, their sons Anaxis and Mnasinos on horseback, the sons of Melenaus on horseback and Tyndareos fighting the son of Ippokoontos, Evrytos.
16. Depicted are all the pan-Hellenic heroes (Hercules, Theseus, Perseus, Bellerophon). Theseus is shown killing of kidnapping the Minotaur. The myths which include many heroes include the hunt of the Calydonian boar, scenes from the Argonautic campaign (such as the myth of the Boreads and the Harpies and the funerary games in honor of Pelias, a performance known only from early archaic art) and the Seven against Thebes. Admetus, who took part in the hunt of the Calydonian boar and the Argonautic campaign, is depicted harnessing a wild boar and a lion to his chariot, a rare scene. The founder of Thebes Cadmus is depicted at his wedding



with Harmony in the presence of the gods of Olympus, another rare subject.

17. Hercules' labours are by far the commonest subject. Hercules is depicted confronting the lion of Nemea, the Lernaean Hydra, the Centaurs on Mount Pholoe, Achelous, Cycnus, Nessos, Diomedes, the Aktoriones (twin sons of Aktor and Poseidon which were killed by Hercules, also called Moliones by their mother). He is also shown driving the ox of Giryonis, fetching Cerberus from hades and being driven to Olympus by Athena. Pausanias however also mentions scenes in which Hercules' rivals are unknown from other sources (fight against the centaur Oreios and the giant Thurius).

18. Achilles confronting Memnonas or being surrendered to the centaur Cheiron by his father, the Trojans before the dead Hector, the judgment of Paris, the lament of Ekavi, Andromache, Astyanactus and perhaps of Helen for Hector.

19. For example, Zeus and Poseidon are depicted kidnapping the daughters of Atlas Taygeti (nymph from nearby Mount Taygetus) and Alkyoni and Athena being chased by Hephaestus, an Attic subject matter. Another Attic myth is the rape of Cefalus by Io. We can also discern Hera and Io who was turned into a cow, and Dionysus as a child being transported by Hermes to Olympus. Such scenes are not depicted in archaic art but became popular later; the throne of Amykles is at the start of ornate classical series.

20. Amongst others are depicted Zeus, Poseidon and Amphitrite, Pluto with Demeter and Kore, Hermes, Iris, Aphrodite, Athena and Artemis lead Hyacinthus and his sister Polyvoia to Olympus accompanied by Hercules. Also present are Dionysus, Semeli and Ino, the Hours, the Fates and the Muses, daughters of Zeus.

21. Paus. 3.18.9.

22. According to Herod. 1.69.








23. According to Paus. 3.10.8.

24. Athin. 6.232 A.

25. We can get an idea of Bathykles' art from a marble relief dating from 540/530 BC in the Museum of Sparta (numb. 5380), which is attributed to the cycle of Bathykles and is either the work of a Laconian artist influenced by Bathykles or one of his fellow artists. See Lorenz, T., "Iaonisches Relief aus der Werkstatt des Bathykles", in *Stips votive. Papers presented to C.M. Stibbe* (Amsterdam 1991), p. 103-109, pic. 1-3.

---

### Bibliography :

	<b>Stewart A.</b> , <i>Greek Sculpture. An Exploration</i> , Yale University Press, New Haven – London 1990
	<b>Romano I.B.</b> , <i>Early Greek Cult Images</i> , Ann Arbor 1982
	<b>Politt J.J.</b> , <i>The art of ancient Greece: sources and documents</i> , Cambridge 1990
	<b>Buschor E., Massow W. von</b> , "Vom Amyklaion", <i>MDAI(A)</i> , 52, 1927, 1-85, 18-21, 65-85
	<b>Δεληβορριάς Α.</b> , "Ειδήσεις εκ Σπάρτης", <i>AAA</i> , 1, 1968, 42-44
	<b>Amorelli M.T.</b> , "Bathykles", <i>EAA</i> 2, 1959, 17-18
	<b>Bermond Montanari G.</b> , "Amyklai", <i>EAA</i> 1, 1958, 332-333



	<b>Faustoferri A.</b> , "The Throne of Apollo at Amyklai: its Significance and Chronology.", Palagia, O. – Coulson, W. (eds.), <i>Sculpture from Arcadia and Laconia</i> , Oxford 1993, 159-166
	<b>Faustoferri A.</b> , <i>Il trono di Amyklai e Sparta. Bathykles al servizio del potere</i> , Napoli 1996, Aucus 2
	<b>Fiechter E.R.</b> , "Amyklai, Der Thron des Apollon", <i>Jdl</i> , 33, 1918, 107-245
	<b>King C.</b> , "Filarete's portrait signature of the bronze doors of St. Peter's and the dance of Bathykles and his assistants", <i>JWI</i> , 53, 1990, 296-299
	<b>Klein W.</b> , "Zum Thron des Apollon von Amyklai", <i>AA</i> , 37, 1922, 6-13
	<b>Lorenz T.</b> , "Lakonisches Relief aus der Werkstatt des Bathykles", M. Gnade (ed.), <i>Stips votiva. Papers presented to C.M. Stibbe</i> , Amsterdam 1991, 103-109
	<b>Martin R.</b> , "Bathyklès de Magnésie et le trône d'Apollon à Amyklæe", <i>Etudes sur les relations entre Grèce et Anatolie offertes à Pierre Demargne 2</i> , Trait d'Union, 1976, RA, 205-218
	<b>Neudecker R.</b> , "Bathykles", <i>NPauyl 2</i> , 1997, 493
	<b>Pipili M.</b> , "Hermes and the Child Dionysos: What did Pausanias see on the Amyklai Throne", M. Gnade (ed.), <i>Stips votiva. Papers presented to C.M. Stibbe</i> , Amsterdam 1991, 143
	<b>Pipili M.</b> , <i>Laconian Iconography of the Sixth Century B.C.</i> , Oxford 1987, Oxford University Committee for Archaeology monograph 12
	<i>Πανσανίου Ελλάδος περιήγησις</i> , Παπαχατζής, Ν. (επιμ., σχόλια), <i>Κορινθιακά-Λακωνικά</i> , Εκδοτική Αθηνών, Αθήνα 1994

## Webliography :

**Αμυκλαίον και Ιερό Απόλλωνος Αμυκλαίου**  
[http://odysseus.culture.gr/h/3/gh351.jsp?obj\\_id=2626](http://odysseus.culture.gr/h/3/gh351.jsp?obj_id=2626)

## Glossary :

**doric order, the**

One of the three orders or organizational systems of Ancient Greek originated on the mainland and western Greece. It is characterized by short, faceted, heavy columns with plain, round capitals (tops) and no base. The capital consists of a necking which is of a simple form. The echinus is convex and the abacus is square. Above the capital is a square abacus connecting the capital to the entablature. The Entablature is divided into two horizontal registers, the lower part of which is either smooth or divided by horizontal lines. The upper half is distinctive for the Doric order. The frieze of the Doric entablature is divided into triglyphs and metopes. A triglyph is a unit consisting of three vertical bands which are separated by grooves. Metopes are plain or carved reliefs. The Doric order comes without an individual base. They instead are placed directly on the stylobate. The capital consists of a necking which is of a simple form. The echinus is convex and the abacus is square. Above the capital is a square abacus connecting the capital to the entablature. The Entablature is divided into two horizontal registers, the lower part of which is either smooth or divided by horizontal lines. The upper half is distinctive for the Doric order. The frieze of the Doric entablature is divided into triglyphs and metopes. A triglyph is a unit consisting of three vertical bands which are separated by grooves. Metopes are plain or carved reliefs. The Doric order comes without an individual base. They instead are placed directly on the stylobate.

**frieze (1. architecture), (2. painting)**

1. The part of the entablature resting on the architrave and below the cornice. In the Doric order the frieze is decorated with two alternative motives, namely the triglyph and metope, while in the Ionic order the frieze is a decoratively carved band.
2. Decorative horizontal band that sweeps parts of a vessel or the highest part of the walls in a room.



## Sources

Pausanias, *Description of Greece* 3.10.8., 3.18.9-3.19.5

Herodotus, *Histories* 1.69

Plutarch, *Lives* (Solon, 4)

Diogenis Laertios, *Philosophers' lives* 1.28

## Auxiliary Catalogs

### Known works

Throne of Apollo at Amyclae. Mid 6th c. BC. Paus. 3.18.9-19.5

Statues of the Graces and Artemis Leucophryene, Amyklaion. Mid 6th c. BC. Paus. 3.18.9-9.