M. P. J. DILLON

THE DIDACTIC NATURE OF THE EPIDAURIAN IAMATA

aus: Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik 101 (1994) 239–260

THE DIDACTIC NATURE OF THE EPIDAURIAN IAMATA

Sickness affects everyone, and it is only natural to call upon the gods for assistance;[1] as Burkert states: "the most oppressive crisis for the individual is sickness".[2] In the classical period many cities and towns had sanctuaries dedicated to Asklepios, the main Greek god of healing. There were, however, some Asklepiad sanctuaries which had a prominence greater than others. The temples of healing, the Asklepieia, at the sites of Epidauros, Kos, and Pergamon, achieved status as Panhellenic sanctuaries, and the Asklepieion at Lebena was also

---

1 This article is a revised version of a paper delivered to the *Australian Society for Classical Studies* Conference in 1991. I would like to thank all those participants who made comments. The following abbreviations are employed in this article:

Alt. v. Perg. VIII 3 = C. Habicht, *Altertümer von Pergamon. VIII 3: Die Inschriften des Asklepieions*, Berlin 1969.

AB = *Analecta Bollandiana*

Burkert *Greek Religion* = W. Burkert, *Greek Religion*, Oxford 1985.

Deubner *De incubatione* = L. Deubner, *De incubatione*, Leipzig 1900.

Edelstein *Asclepius* = E. J. & L. Edelstein, *Asclepius: A Collection and Interpretation of the Testimonies* I-II, Baltimore 1945.

Ferguson = J. Ferguson, *Among the Gods: an Archaeological Exploration of Ancient Greek Religion*, London 1989.

Festugière = A.-J. Festugière, *Personal Religion among the Greeks*, California 1954, 85-104.

Guarducci = M. Guarducci, *Epigrafia greca* 4, Rome 1978, 143-66.

Habicht = C. Habicht, *Pausanias' Guide to Ancient Greece*, Berkeley 1985.

Hamilton = M. Hamilton, *Incubation, or the Cure of Disease in Pagan Temples and Christian Churches*, London 1906.

Herzog = R. Herzog, *Die Wunderheilungen von Epidauros*, Leipzig 1931.

I.K. = *Die Inschriften von Erythrai und Klazomenai. Inschriften griechischer Städte aus Kleinasien*, 2, hrsg. von H. Engelmann & R. Merkelbach, Bonn 1973.

Krug = A. Krug, *Heilkunst und Heilkult. Medizin in der Antike*, Munich 1984.

LSCG = F. Sokolowski, *Lois sacrées des cités grecques*, Paris 1969.

LSCG Suppl. = F. Sokolowski, *Lois sacrées des cités grecques. Supplément*, Paris 1962.

Parker = R. Parker, *Miasma. Pollution and Purification in Early Greek Religion*, Oxford 1983.

Peek = W. Peek, *Fünf Wundergeschichten aus dem Asklepieion von Epidauros*, Berlin 1963 = G. Pfohl (ed.) *Inschriften der Griechen. Epigraphische Quellen zur Geschichte der Antiken Medizin,* Darmstadt 1977, 66-77, with addendum "Nachtrag 1975", 77-78.

Roebuck *Corinth* = C. Roebuck, *Corinth XIV. The Asklepieion and Lerna*, Princeton 1941.

Siefert = H. Siefert, "Inkubation, Imagination und Kommunikation im antiken Asklepioskult" *Katathymes Bilderleben*, Wien 1980.

Tomlinson = R. A. Tomlinson, *Epidauros*, London 1983.

van Straten *Gifts for the Gods* = F. T. van Straten, *Gifts for the Gods* in H. S. Versnel, *Faith, Hope and Worship: Aspects of Religious Mentality in the Ancient World,* Leiden 1981.

Weinreich = O. Weinreich, *Antike Heilungswunder. Untersuchungen zum Wunderglauben der Griechen und Römer*, Giessen 1909.

2 Burkert *Greek Religion* 267; cf. Krug 120.

important, serving the island of Crete (the Amphiaraion at Oropos, dedicated to the healing deity Amphiaraos, was also quite significant). These Asklepieia attracted the sick and dying from all over the Hellenic world, and the ill individuals, who travelled considerable distances in many cases, constituted a special type of pilgrim. At Epidauros, there are inscriptions which purport to be the record of the cures which pilgrims experienced at this healing sanctuary of the god Asklepios. The records of these cures, iamata, are often dismissed for their fantastic nature. The iamata, however, deserve attention because of the light which the inscribed cures can throw on the nature of the healing cult at Epidauros.[3] The iamata served a specific didactic purpose, encouraging the ill that they too, like others before them, could be cured. In addition, although the iamata do not constitute a set of specific cult regulations, they made clear what the temple authorities expected of the pilgrims who came to this site.

An individual who was sick would go to a local Asklepieion if there were one. The spread of Asklepieia throughout the world occurred because, as one source states, if an individual is sick, it is best if one can have the benefit of Asklepios' cures near at hand.[4] This, however, did not detract from the popularity of sites such as Epidauros, Pergamon and Kos. Obviously, if individuals could afford it, or felt the need strongly enough, they would travel to one of the more important healing sanctuaries. Philostratos wrote that just as the whole of Asia flocked to Pergamon to be cured by Asklepios, so did all of Crete flock to the shrine of Asklepios at Lebena;[5] the iamata at Epidauros indicate a Hellenic wide clientèle.

---

3 The stelai which have survived are published as *IG* IV^2 1, 121-24 (these are presumably amongst the six stelai which Pausanias saw in his own day, and he notes that there were once more, Paus. 2.27.3). The text of the iamata is also printed in G. Delling, *Antike Wundertexte*, Berlin 1960, 24; C. D. Buck, *The Greek Dialects*, Chicago 1928, repr. 1955, 90; Dittenberger-Hiller, *Sylloge*^{3} 1168/69 (O. Weinrich); Guarducci, vol. 4, 149. There is also *IG* IV^2 1, 127, a cure inscription of Roman times. English translations of *IG* IV^2 1, 121-22 and 127 can be found in Edelstein *Asclepius* I, 221-38; G. H. R. Horsley, *New Documents Illustrating Early Christianity: A Review of the Greek Inscriptions and Papyri Published in 1977*, Sydney 1982, 22-23 gives a translation for *IG* IV^2 1, 123, iamata 44-48; see Herzog 8-35 for a German translation of the iamata. Little sense can be made of *IG* IV^2 1, 124, except to state that it contains a list of iamata. The cures of *IG* IV^2 1, 121-23 are each given a number by the editors of *IG* IV; these are used by most modern authors, and in referring to individual iamata this iama number will be given. *IG* IV^2 1, 121-23 are fairly well preserved, and there is little controversy about the readings. The main exception is iama 47 (for which, see n.73 below). Note that several *SEG* entries deal with the inscriptions, ie: *SEG* 34.299, 34.1702, cf. *SEG* 36.1571. For Pausanias and the stelai, see Herzog 2; Siefert 326; that Pausanias had read the inscriptions at Epidauros carefully, see Habicht 155, with nn.60-61, and 32 for a general comment on the accuracy of Pausanias' description of the site. Cf. Burkert *Greek Religion* 215 who notes that the cures were displayed "to attract and to reassure" those who came to the shrine; see also Siefert 333, 335; O. Kern, *Die Religion der Griechen* vol. 3, Berlin 1938, 155.

4 Themistius *Oratio* 27. For the locations of Asklepieia in the Greek world, consult A. Semeria, "Per un censimento degli Asklepieia della Grecia continentale e delle Isole", *ASNP* 16, 1986, 931-58.

5 Philostr. *Apoll.* 4.34.

Epidauros itself embarked on an ambitious building program at the sanctuary of Asklepios in the fourth century, at the very time that Asklepieia had spread throughout the Hellenic world.[6]

At the healing sanctuaries, the sick, after performing set rituals, bedded down for the night in the abaton, the sleeping place, and going to sleep hoped that the god Asklepios would appear to them and cure them; the god was believed to appear in the night and cure the sick individual. Reliefs depict Asklepios appearing to sick individuals while they slept, and curing them, while anxious relatives or friends looked on.[7] In Aristophanes' *Ploutos*, there is a comic description of a night spent in an Asklepieion.[8] In this, the god Ploutos is cured of his blindness, so that in future he will distribute wealth only to those deserving it.

At the Asklepieion at Epidauros there was a tradition that grateful pilgrims who had been cured by Asklepios would record the cures which they had received from the god. In the fourth century, the temple authorities erected stelai with long inscriptions which were described as iamata, records of the cures which had been carried out by Apollo and Asklepios.[9] Strabo records that there were iamata at the Asklepieion on Kos,[10] but these have not survived.[11] At Lebena, similar cure inscriptions have survived, but set up by private individuals.[12] At other Asklepieia, particularly at Corinth, no iamata have survived, but the patients there have left behind testimonies of a different type: votive offerings in the form of that part of the body which the god had cured.[13]

---

6 For Epidauros, see A. Burford, *The Greek Temple Builders at Epidauros. A Social and Economic Study of Building in the Asklepian Sanctuary,* Liverpool 1969, 15, cf. 21. For the spread of Asklepieia throughout the classical period, see Krug 120.

7 See, for example, the relief from the Asklepieion at the Piraeus, *PM* 405: Krug fig. 57; van Straten *Gifts for the Gods* 98, 124-25, pl. 41; U. Hausmann, *Kunst und Heiltum*: *Untersuchungen zu den Griechischen Asklepiosreliefs*, Potsdam 1948, 46-48, Abb. K1; F. T. van Straten, "Daikrates' dream. A Votive Relief from Kos, and some other *kat'onar* Dedications" *BABesch*. 51, 1976, 3, pl. 6. For a similar relief of Amphiaraos curing Arkhinos at Oropos (*NM 3369*), inscribed with ΑΡΧΙΝΟΣ ΑΜΦΙΑΡΑΩΙ ΑΝΕΘΗΚΕΝ: "Arkhinos dedicated to Amphiaraos", see Herzog 55, 88-91; Hausmann 55, Abb. K13; Siefert 330-32, Abb. 2; Krug 154-55, Abb. 70; G. Neumann, *Probleme des Griechischen Weihreliefs*, Tübingen 1979, 51, 67, Abb. 28; N. Himmelmann-Wildschütz, *Theoleptos*, Marburg-Lahn 1957, 19, Abb.7; van Straten *BABesch*. 51, 1976, 4, pl. 10; van Straten *Gifts for the Gods* 125.

8 Ar. *Plout.* 410-12, 633-747.

9 *IG* IV^2 1, 121, line 1: [Ἰά]ματα τοῦ Ἀπόλλωνος καὶ τοῦ Ἀσκλαπιοῦ. At the Asklepieion at Erythrai, provisions were made to include Apollo in the thanksgiving to Asklepios for a cure: I. K. 2, 205, 30-38

10 Strabo 8.6.15 (and also for the Asklepieion at Trikka and Epidauros).

11 S. M. Sherwin-White, *Ancient Cos: An Historical Study from the Dorian Settlement to the Imperial Period*, Göttingen 1978, 275-76.

12 *I. Cret.* I xvii 9, 17, 18, 19, 24, translated in Edelstein *Asclepius* I, 239-40, 252-54; see also R. F. Willetts, *Cretan Cults and Festivals*, London 1962, 224-27.

13 At the museum at Corinth there is an impressive collection of votive body parts: Roebuck *Corinth* 114-28 catalogues these, with photographs at pls. 33-46. Van Straten *Gifts for the Gods* 105-46 catalogues votive offerings in the form of human body parts from throughout the Greek world. On votive offerings at Corinth and Athens, cf. Ferguson 92-93. In general, note Hamilton 85-86; Siefert 328.

The Asklepieion at Epidauros claimed primacy over all other Asklepieia, even over the one at Trikka, the original birthplace of Asklepios, a claim to fame which was usurped by Epidauros. Strabo states that the earliest and most famous temple of Asklepios was at Trikka and that Asklepios was born at Trikka.[14] One of the iamata (no. 23), fantastic in nature, illustrates this primacy, both of the god and his special sacred place. It does not concern a pilgrim at Epidauros, but a woman, Aristagora of Troizen, who had sought the aid of the god at the local Asklepieion. Suffering from a tapeworm in her stomach, she incubated, and dreamed that the sons of Asklepios operated upon her, cutting off her head; Asklepios himself was away at Epidauros. This explains why he had not conducted the "operation" personally. But the sons of Asklepios could not put the head back on again, and they had to send a message to Epidauros for the god to come. He came, stitched her head back, then, slitting open her stomach, took out the tapeworm, the original cause of her sickness and the reason why she was incubating, stitched up her stomach again, and made her well. This iama clearly served to remind those who read it of the primacy of Epidauros, and to assert Epidauros' position as the home of Asklepios.[15]

The iamata from Epidauros have attracted a fair degree of scholarly interest. These cure inscriptions reveal much about what was expected of Asklepios, and the experiences which pilgrims underwent at the shrine. Some of these inscriptions record miracles of a most extraordinary kind: such as the case of Aristagora noted above, and especially the cases of women who had had unusually lengthy pregnancies and came to Epidauros to see if the god would help them. One woman, Kleo, after a five year pregnancy (no. 1, cf. no. 2), gave birth to a child who immediately walked and went and washed himself in the fountain at the shrine: a logical event, perhaps, from the ancients' point of view, given that the child would have been a little more than four years old when he was finally born.

The god, according to the iamata, cured a wide range of other ailments: not only lengthy pregnancies, but also paralysed limbs, blindness, gall stones, baldness, dropsy, worms, lice, headache, pus, sterility, tumours, abcesses, and those who were dumb.[16] He could also

---

14 Strabo 9.5.17, 14.1.39, cf. 8.4.4. An epitaph dedicated to Podaleirios and Makhaon is recorded by Ps. Aristotle *Peplos* 20. Other sources also give Trikka as the birthplace (Hyginus *Fabulae* 14.21; Euseb. *Praep. Evan.* 3.14.6), or less specifically in Thessaly (Hom. *Hymn Ask.* 1-3; Apoll. Rhod. *Argon.* 4. 616-17). According to Theod. *Graec. Affect. Cur.* 8.19-23, Asklepios first gave proof of his art at Trikka and Epidauros. For Asklepios' birth at Epidauros: Paus. 2.26.7 (Delphi supporting Epidauros' claim, note 2.26 *passim*); *IG* IV^2 1, 128 iv 40-50 (Hymn of Isyllos); see on these myths of Asklepios' birthplace: F. Robert, *Épidaure*, Paris 1935, 9-14; Tomlinson 14-15; Krug 121-22, 129-30; Edelstein *Asclepius* II, 1-76; Siefert 338-39; Burkert *Greek Religion* 215.

15 Cf. Krug 145. For the Asklepieion at Troizen, see Habicht 31-32, esp. 31 n.11 with references; cf. C. Benedum, "Asklepios und Demeter: zur Bedeutung weiblicher Gottheiten" *Jahrb. dt. arch. Inst.* 101, 1986, 141 & nn.19-20 with references.

16 *IG* IV^2 1, 121-23.

provide the occasional oracle, and sent a father a dream which helped him find his lost son (no. 24). Such was the power of this god.[17]

The scholars who have dealt with these inscriptions have come up with a variety of opinions as to their veracity. Some accept them as genuine cures, as miracles; among these are the Edelsteins, who have produced the most detailed account in English on the cult of Asklepios.[18] Others believe that the priests at Epidauros were trained in medicine, and interpreted the dreams which the ill had dreamed in the night, and, by crediting the cures which they worked by their skills to the god, sought to increase the fame of their sanctuary. The priests, by this interpretation which was accepted by most scholars late last century, and early in this, were charlatans, their miracles frauds;[19] this is indeed a harsh verdict, and an undeserved one.

In all of these interpretations, however, there lies a flawed assumption, that *all* of the iamata record cures that actually took place. This was not necessarily the case. Some of the cures are too fantastic for any credence at all to be placed in them, such as the account of the five year pregnancy mentioned above. Rather, these iamata are a record of some sort, but their true nature has not been appreciated by scholars. In fact, the iamata can be taken as indications of the beliefs held about Asklepios, and they can be used, in conjunction with other evidence, to describe the experiences which individuals underwent at Epidauros and other healing sanctuaries.

The Epidaurian iamata indicate that those seeking cure came from a variety of places. The inscriptions record that pilgrims came from all over the Hellenic world, attesting to the popularity of the cult. Pilgrims came, to give several examples, from Aigina, Argos, Athens, Epeiros, Halieis, Herakleia, Hermione, Kaphyiai, Keos, Khios, Kirrha, Knidos, Lampsakos, Messene, Mytilene, Pellene, Pherai, Sparta, Thasos, Thebes, Thessaly, Torone, and Troizen.[20] These inscriptions, as preserved, record forty-eight extant cures (records of other cures are fragmentary), and if the sample were larger, pilgrims from other areas would

---

17 Asklepios also provided an oracle to a woman who was seeking a lost treasure (no. 46), and to a man about some missing money (no. 63). These cases are discussed by R. Dodds, *The Ancient Concept of Progress*, Oxford 1973, 168-70.

18 Edelstein *Asclepius* I, 142-45, esp. 143. Other detailed discussions of Asklepios include: C. Kerényi, *Asklepios: Archetypal Image of the Physician's Existence*, London 1960; A. Walton, *The Cult of Asklepios*, New York 1894; J. Schouten, *The Rod and the Serpent of Asklepios: Symbol of Medicine*, Amsterdam 1967; Krug 120-87; C. A. Meier, *Ancient Incubation and Modern Psychotherapy*, Illinois 1967, 23-41.

19 Early verdicts on the iamata were adverse (Edelstein *Asclepius* II, 143, with n.10 for references). Thraemer *RE* 2.1686-90, esp. 1690, claimed that the patients did dream but that there were priest doctors who, on the basis of the dreams, provided medical care for the sick. U. von Wilamowitz-Moellendorff, *Isyllos von Epidauros*, Berlin 1886, 37 states that there was medicine at the Asklepieion at Kos but not at Epidauros, where the cures were the work of "quacks"; cf. Ferguson 89. Edelstein *Asclepius* II, 142-45, esp. 143; Herzog 1; Tomlinson 20-21; Krug 121, 135, are sympathetic in their discussion of the iamata.

20 *IG* IV^2, 121-22.

probably also be indicated, for Epidauros was popular for well over eight hundred years, and famous throughout the Hellenic world. The willingness of sick individuals to travel long distances to Epidauros indicates the excellent reputation which this healing sanctuary enjoyed throughout this period.

In general, consultation of Asklepios involved preliminary sacrifice and the payment of a consultation fee.[21] At Epidauros, one of the iamata (no. 5) mentions "preliminary sacrifice and customary rites," but gives no details of what these comprised.[22] Sacrifice marks the prelude to incubation, and preliminary sacrifice presupposes sacrificial items. By necessity such items would have been available to the worshipper at the site, and procuring these was facilitated at Epidauros. An inscription of the fourth century from this site instructs the priest of Asklepios to provide to those sacrificing all of the things that are needed for the sacrifice. Grain, wreaths and wood are mentioned, as well as the prices which the priest is to charge the consultants.[23]

Purity regulations are attested for the Asklepieion at Pergamon: there was abstinence from sexual activity for three days prior to consultation, and from the consumption of goat's meat and cheese.[24] The necessity for sexual purity also manifested itself at Oropos, where there was the provision that those who came to sleep in the *koimeterion* seeking a cure were to be sexually segregated: the women were to sleep on one side of the altar, and the men were to sleep on the other.[25] Intercourse in temples, as is obvious from these regulations, was forbidden and, as usual, didactic tales warned of the fate of those who fornicated in the temples.[26] Sexual segregation is not mentioned at other sites. Aristophanes in the *Ploutos*

---

21 At the Asklepieion at Pergamon various sacrifices were to be made prior to incubation and a fee of three obols charged: *Alt. v. Perg.* VIII 3, 161, 8, cf. fr.b, 8 (see also F. Sokolowski, "On the Pergamene Lex Sacra" *GRBS* 14, 1973, 407-13). For the Amphiaraion at Oropos there was a charge of one drakhma which was increased to nine obols, see *LSCG Suppl.* 35.4-6, *LSCG* 69.20-24. A. Petropoulou, "The Eparche Documents and the Early Oracle at Oropus" *GRBS* 22, 1981, 53-54, is mistaken in stating that there was no fee charged at healing sanctuaries, unlike oracular centres, and that the fee at Oropos was "unique". But the evidence of *Alt. v. Perg*. VIII 3, 161, 8 is clear: the three obols are for consultation, and does not represent a thanksgiving. For the Amphiaraion at Oropos, see the collection of testimonia and commentary in A. Schachter, *Cults of Boiotia. 1. Acheloos to Hera*, London 1981, 19-27. For the offertory box from the Asklepieion at Corinth, see Roebuck *Corinth* 28-30.

22 No. 5: ὡς δὲ προεθύσατο καὶ / [ἐπόησε τὰ] νομιζόμενα.

23 *LSCG Suppl.* 22. The wreath, as an accompaniment to all sacrifice, is of course important. For its significance at Pergamon, see below, n. 40.

24 *Alt. v. Perg.* VIII 3, 161, 11-14.

25 *LSCG* 69.43-47: ἐν δὲ τοῖ κοιμητηρίο/ι καθεύδειν χωρὶς μὲν τὸς ἄνδρας χωρὶς / δὲ τὰς γυναῖκας, τοὺς μὲν ἄνδρας ἐν τοῖ πρὸ ἠ/ῶος τοῦ βωμοῦ, τὰς δὲ γυναῖκας ἐν τοῖ πρὸ hεσπέ/ρης. For the terminology of the sleeping chamber, see n. 50 below.

26 For example, Hdt. 9.116-20; Paus. 8.5.12; cf. Parker 74 with n.3 for further references; see also Hdt. 2.64.1, who states that the Greeks and the Egyptians have the same scruples in this respect and that the Egyptians were the first to observe such proprieties: καὶ τὸ μὴ μίσγεσθαι γυναιξὶ ἐν ἱροῖσι μηδὲ ἀλούτους ἀπὸ γυναικῶν ἐς ἱρὰ ἐσιέναι οὗτοί εἰσι οἱ πρῶτοι θρῃσκεύσαντες. For sleeping in temples of non-healing gods (which was generally prohibited), see M. P. J. Dillon, "The House of the Thebans (*FD* iii.1 357-58) and Accommodation for Greek Pilgrims" *ZPE* 83, 1990, 86-87.

paints a picture of male and female suppliants who were together in the abaton, but the comic scene need not preclude segregation. The rule at Oropos can be explained in terms of the fact that sexual purity was a prerequisite for incubation. Sexual abstinence was a common purity rite in Greek cults, [27] and an inscription from Pergamon concerning entry to the temple of Athena gives some precise details concerning sexual purity, which are interesting for comparative purposes.[28]

Clearly women were regular suppliants at Oropos. It can be noted in this context that of the forty-eight extant iamata at Epidauros, thirty-one of the suppliants were men, thirteen were women, and four were children; of the four children, one was female. The sample is small; a little less than a third of these suppliants were women. The number might have been higher, for the iamata were selected by the male temple authorities for inscribing, and they might have selected cures undergone by males in preference to females. It is interesting, however, to note that female suppliants were prominent, and it was probably the case that a pilgrimage in search of a cure was one of the few times when the women of ancient Greece travelled outside the confines of their native polis.[29]

Ritual bathing was also part of the purificatory rites at some Asklepieia. There is a provision requiring ritual bathing in a Pergamene cult inscription, in the context of other required observances,[30] and, at Athens, the Asklepieion in which Ploutos is shown by Aristophanes as being healed required bathing in the sea.[31] Bathing was important as a preliminary rite at some Asklepieia, and is evidenced at the Asklepieion at Peiraieus and the Amphiaraion at Oropos.[32] Bathing as part of the healing process, but without a purificatory role, is according to Parker attested only at the cult of Podalirios in Apulia, but he notes that the archaeology of some Asklepieia, nevertheless, suggests that water therapy was being used there from the fourth century onwards.[33] None of the surviving Epidaurian iamata, however, mention bathing as a part of the curative process. Important too was the dress of

---

27 See Parker 74-77; note also Burkert *Greek Religion* 79 with 378 n.45; Burkert *Mystery Cults*, Harvard 1987, 108. Hesych. *s.v.* ἁγνεύειν· καθαρεύειν, ἀπό τε ἀφροδισίων καὶ ἀπὸ νεκροῦ. For the necessity of purity at Epidauros, note especially Porph. *Abst*. 2.19; cf. Parker 322-23.

28 The relevant inscription is *SIG*^{3} 982.

29 Many women sought help in order to become pregnant, or to be relieved of long pregnancies: nos. 1, 2, 31, 39, 42. See Herzog 71-74; Siefert 329; Weinreich 28-30.

30 F. Sokolowski, *Lois sacrées de l'Asie mineure,* Paris 1955, 14.

31 Ar. *Plout*. 656-8. Ritual bathing is purificatory for obvious reasons; cf. Edelstein *Asclepius* II, 149; Parker 212-13 with nn.27-31. Ferguson 93 notes that the Asklepieion at the Peiraieus was later the site of a church of the healing saints Kosmas and Damian, an interesting example of cult continuity (for Kosmas and Damian, see further below n. 88).

32 Ar. *Plout*. 656-58 (presumably the Peiraieus, due to the proximity of this Asklepieion to the sea); Xen. *Comm*. 3.13.3 (Amphiaraos). Paus. 9.39.7 states that consultants at the oracular incubatory centre of Trophonios at Lebadeia bathed in the river prior to the consultation.

33 Lykoph. *Alex.* 1050, Schol. on same (*FGH* 566 Timaios F 56); Parker 213 n.31.

the suppliant. The clothing of participants in any cult was usually regulated.[34] Just as the god himself dressed in white,[35] so too did the suppliants of Asklepios seeking cure.[36]

Sacrifice was essential to the incubatory procedure,[37] and the cult regulations for the Pergamon Asklepieion, the opening lines of which are lost, commence with the sacrificial procedure which was to be followed. With the consultant dressed in white and wearing a wreath, an animal sacrifice would be made, then cakes decorated with olive sprigs were sacrificed to various gods; the consultant was commanded to put on another wreath when commencing the sacrifice of the cakes. A pig was then sacrificed to Asklepios on the altar, and three obols placed into the *thesauros*. This procedure must have occurred during the day, for the next injunction is to make sacrifices in the evening, that is, immediately prior to incubation. Three cakes decorated as before were to be sacrificed on the altar: two to Tykhe and Mnemosyne, the third to Themis. The incubant then entered the shrine, having abstained from all the things which were previously described in the inscription (this part of the text is lost), including sex and goat's meat and cheese, and a further item which cannot be identified because of the state of the stone.[38] No longer can it be claimed that there is "...no evidence that the suppliants refrained from certain food... as they did in the sanctuaries of other gods...."[39] Wreaths had to be worn because sacrifice was a preliminary to incubation, and after incubation the wreath was to be left on the incubatory bed,[40] presumably as a thanksgiving item.

At Pergamon, provision was also made for those who wished to undergo a further consultation, on their own behalf or that of someone else, and this involved the sacrifice of another pig. In connection with this procedure, there was also a reference to a smaller incubatory chamber: whoever entered it was to make himself pure, and it is possible that this chamber was for those who wished to have a second consultation. The sacrifices of cakes and the deities involved were the same, and three obols were to be placed into the *thesauros*, but in addition there were to be made sacrifices of honey cakes, with oil and frankincense, and in the evening, again, three cakes, one each to Themis, Tykhe, and Mnemosyne. At Pergamon, therefore, preliminary sacrifices, the payment of a fee for consultation, and

---

34 See H. Mills, "Greek Clothing Regulations: Sacred and Profane" *ZPE* 55, 1984, 255-65; P. Culham, "Again, What Meaning Lies in Colour!" *ZPE* 64, 1986, 235-45.

35 *IG* IV^2 1, 128, ii, 18-19.

36 Contra Edelstein *Asclepius* II, 150. Sokolowski, *Lois sacrées de l'Asie mineure,* 14; Aristeides *Oratio* 48.31, cf. 30 (Pergamon). Note that an Eretrian inscription mentions coloured clothes for a festival of Asklepios (*IG* XII, 9, 194; 3rd century BC), but this is not, of course, for incubation.

37 Cf. Burkert *Greek Religion* 267.

38 *Alt. Perg*. VIII 3, 161, 2-14; cf. Parker 75 n.4.

39 Edelstein *Asclepius* II, 149.

40 *Alt. Perg*. VIII 3, 161, 14-19, esp. 14-15: Τὸν δὲ στέφανον ὁ ἐγκοιμώμενος / [ἀποτιθέμ]ενος καταλειπέτω ἐπὶ τῆς στιβάδος.

incubation, could be followed by a second consultation if required. It seems that the aversion to goats was one which was nearly universal at all the cult places of Asklepios.[41]

At Oropos the deity Amphiaraos effected cures,[42] and the method was also by incubation.[43] Little is known of the preliminary rites, and the relevant inscriptions provide little information,[44] but abstinence from wine for three days and from food for one was prescribed.[45] Preliminary sacrifice was also the rule and whoever wished to seek healing from the god had to offer up sacrifice; given the context, this presumably refers to pre-incubatory sacrifices.[46] The priest, if present, was to say prayers, and put the sacred portion on the altar, and in the case of the priest's absence this was to be the responsibility of whoever was making the sacrifice.[47] At this shrine the ill could supplicate the god in the absence of a priest: any cures effected here could only be given to the credit of the god, without the involvement of human agency.[48]

Pausanias, writing over four hundred years after the Oropan inscriptions, adds details which, if they cannot be taken as further evidence for fourth century practices, can at least be seen as reflecting further development at a later date. He gives specific details regarding the nature of the sacrifice, including the fact that the consultant had to enter into a state of purification, and that this was achieved through sacrifice made to all the gods who were named on the altar in front of the shrine. When this had been done, the consultant sacrificed a ram, and slept on the fleece, and during sleep the dream occurred which would lead to the cure.[49] These practices, then, were similar to those at Epidauros, where the official cure inscriptions record that the incubants received dreams advising them on the treatment to be undertaken.

Accordingly, sick individuals, after performing pre-incubatory rites, would lie down to sleep in the abaton. What was experienced in the abaton, intended purely for the eyes of the consultants, can now become the focus of discussion. An individual known as Aiskhines was punished for his curiosity about what happened there: when the incubants had fallen asleep, he climbed into a tree and attempted to look into the abaton; he fell from the tree, landing on some stakes. His eyes were injured: he slept in the abaton, and his eyes were

---

41 Paus. 2.26.9, 10.32.12.
42 *LSCG Suppl*. 35, 3-4; *LSCG* 69.20-22, 36-43.
43 Pausanias explains the use of dreams at the Amphiaraion: Paus. 1.34.4-5.
44 *LSCG Suppl.* 35; *LSCG* 69.
45 Philostr. *Apoll*. 2.37; cf. Deubner *De incubatione* 14-17.
46 *LSCG* 69.20-22.
47 *LSCG* 69.26-27.
48 *LSCG* 69.25-36.
49 Paus. 1.34.5, which seems to indicate that more than one individual could sleep on the fleece; see A. Petropoulou, "Paus. 1.34.5: Incubation on a Ram Skin" in *La Béotie Antique: Lyon-St. Étienne 16-20 mai 1983: Colloques Internationaux du Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique*, Paris 1985, 169-77.

healed (no. 11).[50] Non-consultants, therefore, were punished for their curiosity. The Epidaurian iamata record personal epiphanies in the abaton, but not the procedure for incubation. Aristophanes in the *Ploutos* gives some details.[51] Present in the abaton, incubating, were Ploutos and many others suffering from every kind of illness.[52] The servant of the god doused the lights and commanded the suppliants to fall asleep, and to behave.[53] The temple servants seem to have been in charge of the incubants (cf. no. 5). A comic scene is then recounted in which the priest is described doing the rounds of the altars in order to gather up the offerings for his own benefit.[54] The god appeared while the suppliants slept, and effected his cures.[55] In the play, the suppliant Ploutos is accompanied by Karion which may be simply for the purposes of the plot, or possibly friends or relatives of the sick could also join the suppliant: perhaps the sick were helped to overcome their anxiety by the presence of friends. Ploutos is blind, and perhaps the badly disabled were helped into the abaton by friends or relatives, who stayed by to provide care if this was needed. Parents of children may have been keen to exercise this function.[56]

The main feature of the night in the abaton, and of the cure, was the dream. The testimonies of the patients at Epidauros make this quite clear. Obtaining a dream in itself could become a matter for anxiety, for the god might fail to appear. Philostratos illustrates the point in his fictional *Life of Apollonios*. He states that Apollonios, arriving at Pergamon, gave advice to the suppliants on what to do in order to obtain "favourable dreams."[57] According to the testimonia surviving from Epidauros it was, in many cases, while the patient was dreaming that the cures were effected.[58] In the iamata surviving from Lebena (Crete), dreams are not mentioned, but the ill were cured while they slept; it was during their sleep that the god acted. This is, in effect, equivalent to the dream testimonies at Epidauros. If

---

50 For references to the abaton at Epidauros in the iamata, see nos. 1, 2, 6, 7, 11, 15, 17, 24, 27, 28, 29, 38 (adyton); referred to as the *enkoimeterion* at Pergamon: *Alt. v. Perg*. VIII 3, 161, 11, 12, 18, 27; as the *koimeterion* at Oropos, see n.25 above. For the Epidaurian abaton, see Tomlinson 67-71; F. Robert *Épidaure* (above, n.14) 29-30; Burford (above, n.6) 50-51, 62-63, 82. Compare the case of the Eleusinian mysteries, where someone who climbed up a rock to see over the walls at Eleusis in order to find out what happened in the Mystery celebrations, the details of which were a secret for initiates only, fell off and died: Aelian fr. 58.8.

51 Ar. *Plout.* 660.

52 Ar. *Plout.* 667-68.

53 Ar. *Plout*. 668-71. For lights in the Asklepieia, see Walton 46.

54 Ar. *Plout.* 676-81.

55 Ar. *Plout*. 708-11.

56 Children were regular suppliants at the Epidaurian Asklepieion: nos. 5, 8, 20, 26; father on behalf of a lost boy: no. 24; mother on behalf of a sick daughter: no. 21.

57 Philostr. *Apoll*. 4.11.

58 Many iamata specifically mention dreams, while others do not record a dream but that the incubant was cured while asleep, dreams: nos. 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 8, 9, 13, 14, 15, 17, 18, 21, 23, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 34, 35, 37, 38, 39, 40, 41, 42, cf. 24, 48, cf. 46; some were cured without sleeping in the abaton: nos. 5, 16, 20, cf. 10, 26, 43, 44, 45.

iamata had survived from other sanctuaries,[59] they too would presumably refer to dreams either directly (as at Epidauros) or indirectly (as at Lebena). At Oropos, the healing deity Amphiaraos also effected cures by dreams.[60]

Some pilgrims to Epidauros, according to the iamata, were disappointed with respect to their dreams. It is recorded that one woman had an "unclear dream", while one man went away not having dreamed at all. Yet the god, if we look at the iamata at Epidauros, did not disappoint his suppliants. The woman who had only an unclear dream (no. 25) departed from Epidauros disappointed (but with no ill-feeling towards the god), only to receive a personal epiphany on the way home, in which she was cured. Thersandros of Halieis saw no dream while sleeping in the abaton, but was cured when he arrived home by one of the sacred serpents which had travelled on the wagon, coiled up on the axle for most of the journey (no. 33).[61] The serpent played a significant role in the cult of Asklepios, and was credited with effecting cures, as in this example, and played an important role in the proselytisation of the cult from Epidauros.

Even incubation by proxy was possible. One of the inscribed iamata (no. 21) states that a mother went to Epidauros on behalf of her sick daughter. In this case, the god sent the same dream to the proxy in the abaton, and to the sick individual who had stayed at home; the mother, on her return, found her daughter cured (cf. no. 24). Relevant to a discussion of the role of medicine in Asklepiad cult is the ritual which is known to have taken place at Akharaka, between Tralleis and Nysa in Asia Minor, which also included dreams by proxy. Here there was a Ploutonion, which had a sacred precinct and shrine to the chthonic deities Plouton and Kore, and above these, in a hill, was the Kharonion, a cave where cures were effected. Those who were ill and gave credence to the accounts of cures prescribed by these gods went to this site and lived in a village near the cave. They did not have to sleep in the cave in order to be cured, for Strabo states that instead experienced priests would sleep in the cave on their behalf. These would dream, and on the basis of their interpretations of the dreams, would prescribe a cure for the suppliants. Often, however, the priests would take the sick into the cave, and leave them there, without food, for many days, which would

---

59 They are attested for Kos and for Trikka: Strabo 8.6.15.

60 Paus. 1.34.5; *NM* 3369 is clearly a representation of a dream in the Amphiaraion at Oropos; cf. van Straten *BABesch*. 51, 1976, 4.

61 The city consulted the Delphic oracle as to what to do with the serpent; cf. Weinreich 103-04; Benedum (above, n.15) 143. Siefert *Inkubation* 333 states that this is an example of "...der antiken Missionpolitik gerade Priesterschaft von Epidauros...."; it was not, however, the priests at Epidauros but the Delphic oracle which was responsible for the proselytisation in this case. The precise nature of the relationship between the Epidaurian priests and the Delphic oracle is uncertain: cf. Kern *Religion der Griechen*, vol. 3, 156; Krug 129-30. Delphi recommended Epidauros to the Romans: Ovid *Metam*. 15; cf. Kern vol. 3, 156; for the transfer of the cult to Rome, see Kerényi *Asklepios* (above, n.18) 3-17. Note also Paus. 2.10.3 for the role of the serpent in transfering the cult of Asklepios to Sikyon: φασὶ δέ σφισιν ἐξ Ἐπιδαύρου κομισθῆναι τὸν θεὸν ἐπὶ ζεύγους ἡμιόνων δράκοντι εἰκασμένον. For Athens: *IG* II^2 4960a; R. Garland, *Introducing New Gods*, London 1992, 116-35.

certainly be an effective method of dream inducement. Only the priests and the ill were allowed at the site: "to all others the place is forbidden and deadly."[62] Strabo also notes that the sick sometimes "give heed to their own dreams", but whether he means only those who have been taken to the cave, or includes those who remained in the village, is not clear. He does, however, note that even when the ill "heed their own dreams", they still used the priests for advice and help. The priests here interpreted dreams sent to them by the chthonic deities on behalf of the suppliants, or helped to interpret dreams undergone by the sufferers themselves. The priests were experienced, but there is no hint of medical practice here, in that the priests' role is to interpret dreams sent by the gods; that is, the focus was on the interpretation of the dream. Strabo also records that at the shrine of Sarapis at Kanobos in Egypt, individuals slept in the hope of cures, either for themselves or for others. Some of those cured wrote of their cures, while others recorded the oracles, which were also given at the shrine.[63] At Pergamon, incubation was permissible on behalf of someone else.[64] In a similar fashion, oracles could, of course, be gained on behalf of someone else, but there is an interesting case at the time of the Persian wars in the fifth century BC, when Mys, a Karian, had been instructed by the Persian commander Mardonios, wintering in Thessaly, to consult those oracles "which he was able to consult". Mys visited Lebadeia where he had to pay a man to enter the cave of Trophonios, and this is presumably because, as a non-Greek, he was not able to do so on his own account. Mys was able to consult other oracles personally.[65]

Some of the dreams recorded in the iamata involved conversations with the god, while others were more passive, in which the god simply effected the cure while the patient was asleep. Some of the dreams which involved conversation with the god involved the deity giving direction for action to be taken upon waking. One incubant, Hagestratos, suffered from insomnia on account of headaches (no. 29). When he fell asleep (and this seems to be mentioned as an indication that although he had insomnia, in the abaton, where Asklepios worked cures, he was able to sleep) he dreamed that the god cured him of his headaches, and getting him to stand up, naked, taught him the probala (προβαλά), a hold used in the pankration (cf. nos. 35, 37). The following day he was well, and not long after he won a victory in the pankration at the Nemean games.

In return for a cure, through a dream, a thanksgiving offering was considered necessary.[66] At Oropos, there was a spring near the shrine of Amphiaraos, and when someone was cured of a sickness due to the mantic response of the god, the custom was to

---

62 Strabo 14.1.44: τοῖς δ' ἄλλοις ἄδυτός ἐστιν ὁ τόπος καὶ ὀλέθριος. There was, however, an annual festival held at Akharaka, and those who participated in it could both see and hear about the practices at the shrine.

63 Strabo 17.1.17.

64 *Alt. v. Perg.* VIII 3, 161, 17 (discussed above, n. 40).

65 Hdt. 8.133-134.2.

66 Aelian fr.101.

throw silver and gold coins into the spring.[67] At Erythrai, those who had incubated in the shrine were required to make a sacrifice to both Asklepios and Apollo.[68] An epigram of Kallimakhos reveals some anxiety on the part of the individual paying the thanksgiving: Asklepios is reminded that he has received the debt (τὸ χρέος) which Akeson owed to the god because he had made a vow while his wife was ill: if the god forgets that the vow has been paid, and asks again for the vowed offering, the tablet says that it will act as witness. This particular epigram is an example of a votive offering made in order to redeem a vow, though it might have been only a literary production. The central element, however, the necessity of an offering and anxiety that it be noticed, is clear.[69] Such anxiety ought to be understood within the context of the crisis of sickness. The god had rid the individual of a sickness and it was important to thank the god, or he would be angry, and having human traits, as all the gods, he might be forgetful and as a result behave in a vindictive fashion, sending the sickness back to the individual.

The iamata record that some of the pilgrims who came to Epidauros were sceptical of the power of the god. Ambrosia of Athens (no. 4) walked around the temple and scoffed at the cures which were described, but she incubated anyway. In her sleep, she dreamed that the god stood beside her, telling her that he would cure her if she would dedicate to him a silver pig as a testimony of her ignorance of the power of the god. In another case (no. 36), Kaphisias mocked the cures of Asklepios engraved at Epidauros, and was insolent: "The god is speaking falsely by claiming to heal the lame. For, if he has the power, why doesn't he heal Hephaistos [the lame god]?" While riding soon after, he was kicked by his horse, lamed, and was carried into the temple on a stretcher; the iama states that Asklepios was clearly punishing him. Kaphisias, however, when he had "greatly entreated" the god, was made well.[70]

In the Epidaurian iamata, there were examples to warn those who might be inclined to renege on their agreement with the god. This is where the iamata can be seen to be serving the purpose of instructing those who came to Epidauros concerning both the power of the god and the rewards which he expected from those whom he cured. One of the cure

---

67 Paus. 1.34.4; cf. Pliny *NH* 2.103 (Athens).

68 I. K. 2, 205, 30-38.

69 Kallimakhos *Epigrammata* 54; cf. van Straten *Gifts for the Gods* 70-72. The anxiety is understandable: failing to fulfill a vow could lead to serious consequences; the examples of Pandaros and the fishmonger who felt the wrath of Asklepios are discussed below, n.72. The cases in which the god asked for a thanks-offering in return for a cure in the dream of the ill in the abaton (nos. 4, 6, 8) and the case of the little boy who promised the temple attendant to bring an offering within a year might also fit in this category (no. 5). The text of the epigram is:

Τὸ χρέος ὡς ἀπέχεις, Ἀσκληπιέ, τὸ πρὸ γυναικὸς
Δημοδίκης Ἀκέσων ὤφελεν εὐξάμενος,
γινώσκειν. ἢν δ' ἆρα λάθῃ ⟨ποτὲ⟩ καί μιν ἀπαιτῇς,
φησὶ παρέξεσθαι μαρτυρίην ὁ πίναξ.

70 Cf. Krug 136.

inscriptions (no. 22) at Epidauros records that Hermon of Thasos had had his blindness cured by the god. But he did not make a thanks-offering to the god, so Asklepios made him blind again. Coming back to the shrine, Hermon incubated for a second time, and was made well.[71] Presumably, after the second cure, he was sufficiently experienced to make a thanksgiving offering.

The failure to pay a vowed offering, therefore, met the full force of the wrath of the god. The Epidaurian iamata record two other cases which are of relevance. These two would also have been read by the literate pilgrim and been a lesson to those who were tempted not to give the god his due. Pandaros, a Thessalian (nos. 6-7), had come to Epidauros and slept in the abaton, experiencing a vision. His complaint was that he suffered from scars on his forehead. He dreamed that Asklepios bound the scars with a fillet, and commanded him to remove the fillet when he left the abaton and dedicate it in the temple. At daybreak, he removed the fillet and the scars were gone; accordingly he dedicated the fillet, to which the scars had been transferred, to the temple. Pandaros must have returned home, and there he gave money to one Ekhedoros to give to the god at Epidauros. Ekhedoros suffered from scars, as had Pandaros, and Pandaros' cure must have encouraged Ekhedoros to make the journey to Epidauros: it is probable that many pilgrims to Epidauros made their way there because they knew someone, or had heard of someone, in the their local area who had experienced a cure at Epidauros.

But though Ekhedoros went to Epidauros, he did not give the money entrusted to him to the god. When he slept in the abaton, the god appeared, and asked him if he had received from Pandaros money with which to set up a dedication, *anthema*, in the temple. Ekhedoros denied that he had, but made an offer: if the god would make him well, he would set up a painted image. After this, the god bound the fillet of Pandaros on his forehead, and ordered him to take it off when he had left the abaton, wash his face in the spring, and examine himself in the water. When day came, Ekhedoros left the abaton, removed the fillet, on which the scars were no longer visible: he looked in the water, and saw that he retained his original scars, and had those of Pandaros in addition.[72] The god had exacted vengeance, and displayed a punitive aspect of his personality.

---

71 No. 22: Ἕρμων Θ[άσιος. τοῦτο]ν τυφλὸν ἐόντα ἰάσατο· μετὰ δὲ τοῦτο τὰ ἴατρα οὐκ ἀ/πάγοντ[α ὁ θεός νιν] ἐπόησε τυφλὸν αὖθις· ἀφικόμενον δ' αὐτὸν καὶ πάλιν/ ἐγκαθε̣[ύδοντα ὑγι]ῆ κατέστασε. Cf. Herzog 134, cf. 96.

72 No. 7: ἐγκαθιδὼν δὲ εἰς τὸ ὕδωρ ἐώρη τὸ αὐτοῦ πρόσωπον ποὶ τοῖς ἰδίοις στίγμασιν καὶ τὰ τοῦ Πανδ(ά)ρου γρά[μ]ματα λελαβηκός. See Herzog 133-34, who believes that Pandaros was probably cured through *Autosuggestion*, and that Ekhedoros suffered through *Minderwertigkeitskomplex*, inferiority complex. If a reason must be sought, "Schuldkomplex" might be more appropriate; cf. Herzog 124-25; van Straten *Gifts for the Gods* 72. There is a detailed treatment of the incident in P. Perdrizet, "La miraculeuse histoire de Pandare et d'Echédore, suivie de recherches sur la marque dans l'antiquité" *Archiv für Religionswissenschaft* 14, 1911, 54-129.

The second story (no. 47) along similar lines which is recorded in the iamata is somewhat more complicated. Amphimnastos, a fish carrier, while carrying fish to Arkadia vowed to give one-tenth of the proceeds of the sale to Asklepios. He did not, however, fulfil his vow. While selling the fish at Tegea, fish from everywhere suddenly attacked him. A large crowd gathered at this spectacle and the fish-monger revealed his deceit; the iama presumably records this detail to add credibility to the story, showing that witnesses could testify to the veracity of the account. Amphimnastos entreated the god to relieve him of the attacks; the god made many fish appear, and Amphimnastos dedicated a tenth (presumably of the money from the proceeds of the sale of this fish) to the god.[73] Amphimnastos had probably been passing through Epidauros, incubated, made his vow, and then failed to fulfil it. The story illustrated the fact that vows made to Asklepios needed to be fulfilled. If they were not, punishment could follow, punishment which in this case took a very public form. As in the case of the iamata involving sceptics, it is important to note that the wrong-doer Amphimnastos was forced to acknowledge openly the power of the god. The sceptic Ambrosia also had to make a public retraction of her scepticism by the offering of a silver pig (no. 4), while Kaphisias, who had asked why the god did not cure the lameness of Hephaistos and was then subsequently lamed himself, had to entreat the god greatly before he was cured (no. 36), thereby making an avowal of the god's *dynamis*. Similarly Amphimnastos was also impelled to make a public declaration of the power of the god before he could be cured.

The true nature of the iamata thus begins to be revealed. The iamata are not to be taken simply as records of cures to be explained as faith-healing or the work of "doctor-priests." Rather, it is clear that the iamata are *aretalogiai*, records of cures attesting to the *arete* and *dynamis* of the god.[74] The *arete* of the god is made clear by the way in which he is willing to cure those who have mocked him and been sceptical of his healing power. These iamata were clearly powerful arguments used by the temple authorities to assert Asklepios' right to thanksgiving offerings. In the case of the sceptics who were made to realise the worth of the

---

73 Peek 6-8 (Peek also re-edited nos. 44, 45, 46, 48) proposed a restoration of no. 47 which was rejected by J. & L. Robert *REG* 77, 1964, 162-65 (no. 180). Peek defended himself in an addendum to *Fünf Wundergeschichten* when this article was reprinted in Pfohl *Inschriften der Griechen* 66-77, addendum *Nachtrag 1975* at 77-78; Peek maintains, as did Herzog, that the stone at line 24 reads ἐξαπίνας οἱ ἰχθύες, rather than as von Gaertringen, who failed to read ἰχθύες and restored as ἐξαπίνας [κωνώπια] (Peek includes a majuscule text on the page after 78 where he prints ΙΧΘΥΕΣ). This would mean an attack by fish, rather than von Gaertringen's gnats. See Paus. 10.9.3-4 for another example of a dedication of fish; cf. Herzog *Wunderheilungen* 133, 136; van Straten *Gifts for the Gods* 72. See the provisional text of this iama in the Appendix.

74 On *dynamis* and the Epidaurian iamata, see H. W. Pleket, "Religious History as the History of Mentality" in H. S. Versnel, *Faith, Hope and Worship: Aspects of Religious Mentality in the Ancient World,* Leiden 1981, 180-81, who notes that the mention of *dynamis* (divine power) with respect to Asklepios occurs in only one of the iamata at Epidauros (no. 36), in which Asklepios' healing power is mocked. Elsewhere in the iamata, Asklepios' power is not directly referred to, but it is inherent in all the accounts; his *dynamis* is responsible for the cures of individuals.

god, the argument was presented as so conclusive that even the disbelievers were compelled to acknowledge his power. Asklepios is thus shown as the god who cures even sceptics, but who can punish them so that they realise his worth. In the iamata, there is a case where the god requested thanksgiving offerings personally (no. 25). One woman, Sostrata of Pherai, had failed to receive a clear dream in the abaton. She started back homewards, but at Kornoi there appeared to her and to her companions a fine looking man, who learning about what had happened, asked them to place on the ground the litter in which Sostrata was travelling. He cut open her abdomen and removed many worms - two foot pans full. Having stitched up her stomach, and having made her well, he revealed himself to be Asklepios, and ordered her to send thanksgivings to Epidauros. There is perhaps implicit in this account the assumption that even if one were not cured at the Asklepieion, but later became well, the god was to be credited with the cure. Other iamata record that the god himself was interested in receiving the thanks-offerings: a powerful reminder to the pilgrims of the need for gratitude. A local boy (no. 8), while incubating, was asked in a dream by the god what he would give if he were cured: the lad promised ten dice, and was cured. In another case (no. 15) a paralytic dreamed that he was cured, and that the god ordered him to bring to the shrine as large a stone as he was able: the iama records that he brought the stone that now lay in front of the abaton. The bringing of the stone is symbolic of the man's new strength gained from the use of his limbs, and is to be viewed in the same light as the dedication of votive offerings. The iama could also be seen as providing an explanation for the presence of the large stone outside the abaton, but this would deny the possibility that the stone had in fact been brought by a grateful patient, who did dream that this was what the god required.[75]

In one case at Epidauros, not the god but the temple servant who had charge of the fire demanded a thanks-offering, and was indirectly responsible for a cure (no. 5). A mute boy had come as a suppliant, in the care of his father. After he had performed the preliminary sacrifices and carried out the usual rites, the temple servant requested of the boy's father that if the boy were cured, the father was to make a thanks-offering within the year: "But the boy himself suddenly said *I promise*". His father, startled, asked him to speak again, and he said it again; after this the boy became well.[76] While this sort of overt pressure on pilgrims, to ensure they paid up after the cure, may not always have been the case, the story does serve to illustrate that the temple had a vested interest in making sure that everyone who was cured left behind a memorial of some kind.

In the cult of Asklepios, cocks were the most favoured form of thanksgiving and their use as thanksgiving sacrifices in the cult of Asklepios is easy to explain. Asklepios was a popular deity, and often resorted to, sickness being a problem that often confronts the individual. Many of the suppliants were presumably too poor to afford oxen or pigs, so

---

75 R. Caton, *The Temples and Ritual of Asklepios*, Liverpool 1900, 37, pl. 31 has a photograph of what purports to be the stone of the paralytic, Hermodikos of Lampsakos.

76 No. 5: [ὁ δὲ παῖς ἐξ]απίνας "ὑποδέκομαι", ἔφα.

cocks, numerous and cheap, were vowed in return for cures. Sokrates' debt of a cock to Asklepios was well documented in antiquity.[77] The character Kynno in Herondas' fourth mime, in visiting an Asklepieion, offers a cock, regretting that lack of means prevents the offering of a more substantial gift.[78] It is only the avaricious man who claims that the cock is an onerous expense.[79] It is interesting to note, however, that in the Epidaurian iamata there is no mention of the use of cocks as thanksgiving items. This does not mean, however, that more expensive gifts were expected. While the authorities advertised, in the iamata, the gift of a silver pig, a substantial offering (no. 4), the iamata also record the offering of a head-band, and ten dice (nos. 6 & 8). Any form of offering was thus acceptable to the god.

The full cycle of Asklepiad ritual was abstinence, ritual bathing, payment of a fee, sacrifice, incubation, faith, healing, and thanksgiving.[80] Nevertheless, if the supplication of the god were unsuccessful, and the "patient" beyond help, she or he would be removed from the site, for there was a ritual law that no-one was allowed to die (or a woman give birth) within the sanctuary, which was marked off by an enclosure; this was a typical Greek practice. Pausanias notes that it was only in his own day that a building was erected for the use of those who were dying and in childbirth: in this building people could die or give birth without the stain of sacrilege.[81] That there was this provision, even at Epidauros, showed that not everyone was cured there.

One of the main appeals of the god Asklepios was the personal nature of his cult. He appeared in dreams, spoke to specific individuals, and sometimes even joked with them. He was also a forgiving god; in several instances as we have seen, he forgave the sceptical, even Kaphisias (no. 36), who had mocked the *dynamis* of the god. The iamata provide only brief summaries of cures worked on pilgrims, but in the case of Aelios Aristeides, in his *Sacred Tales*, there is a detailed account written by a literate sufferer of his relationship with this god. It is clearly a close and personal relationship as Aristeides believed that the god had a keen interest in his case. Aristeides, who was often ill, dreamed regularly of Asklepios: the god

---

77 Plato *Phaedo* 118a; Luc. *Bis Accusatus* 5; Olympiodorus *In Platonis Phaedonem Commentaria* 205.24, 244.17; Tert. *Apol.* 46.5; Lact. *Div. Inst.* 3.20.16-17; Lact. *Inst. Epit.* 32.4-5; Prud. *Apoth.* 203-06.

78 Herondas IV, 11-18, esp. 14-18: οὐ γάρ τι πολλὴν οὐδ' ἑτοῖμον ἀντλεῦμεν,/ ἐπεὶ τάχ' ἂν βοῦν ἢ νενημένην χοῖρον/ πολλῆς φορίνης, κοὐκ ἀλέκτορ', ἴητρα/ νούσων ἐποιεύμεσθα τὰς ἀπέψησας/ ἐπ' ἠπίας σὺ χεῖρας, ὦ ἄναξ, τείνας.

79 Libanius *Declamationes* 34.36.

80 Cf. Herzog 67: "Die Fassung der Heilberichte erweckt zwar wohl nicht ohne Absicht den Anschein, als ob die Heilung sich sehr flott vollzogen habe: Ankunft, Inkubation, Traum, geheilt Aufwachen, Abreise...."

81 Paus. 2.27.1, who notes that this was also the case on Delos (for which see also Thuc. 1.8.1, 3.104.1-2; 5.11, 5.32.1; Hdt. 1.64.2; Diod. 12.58.6-7). The Greek concern about miasma will have prompted this regulation which sought to avoid the pollution of death and of blood (Parker 33 with n.5, 324 with n.17). The building was erected by the senator Antoninus (Paus. 2.27.7): this is sometimes thought to be a reference to the emperor Antoninus Pius, but Habicht 10 with n.53, cf. 177, argues strongly that this was not the case. For the accommodation of pilgrims at sacred sites, see Dillon (above, n.26) 64-88, esp. 76 n.26 on Paus. 2.27.7.

would appear to him and gave him specific instructions for his illnesses, and also persuaded him to persevere in the treatment he had prescribed, and not to listen to the advice of doctors. Aristeides also had other dreams not involving Asklepios, but which when interpreted also proved to be advice from the god. He followed the advice of the god scrupulously and spent many years, amongst travels to other places, in the Asklepieion at Pergamon (2.70, 3.14, 4.14, 4.43).[82] Aristeides visited various healing centres, amongst them Epidauros, to which the god had directed him (6.1), but his experiences here are unknown. It is clear that at Pergamon he pursued literary and choral pursuits, and had the company of other intellectuals.[83] Yet it should not be assumed that the seekers of cures were limited to an intellectual élite.

The nature of the miracles must now be addressed. Were the priests at Epidauros and other places doctors in disguise who worked wonders which they ascribed to the power of the deity? Or can, as the Edelsteins argue, these miracles be accepted as "historical facts", and evidence for faith-healing? Individuals were cured in the Asklepieia, but that the priests were doctors can be ruled out. At Oropos, incubation could take place without the presence of the priest. Even on Kos, the home of a well developed medical science, there was an Asklepieion which had no connection with the medical fraternity.[84] The ill who revived in the Asklepieia, or soon after, either became better in the natural course of events, or through their faith in the god. That is, it is possible that some form of faith-healing did take place and comparable modern faith-healing is a common enough phenomenon.

The fact that Asklepieia continued to function and to attract clients, in cases such as Epidauros for many hundreds of years, indicates that Asklepieia, while not offering medical attention, were efficacious in their purpose. It is not the purpose of this discussion to speculate as to how people were cured through their belief in Asklepios. Nevertheless many individuals incubated at Epidauros and were cured of their illnesses, while some illnesses could clearly not be cured, as individuals obviously did die at Epidauros. This did not, however, deter others from seeking to encounter the god in a dream state which would, if they were fortunate, lead to their cure.

The sceptic will point to some of the iamata and dismiss them, and rightly so. A few examples will suffice: the case of the five year pregnancy (no. 1) in which the child walked and washed itself immediately after birth; the story about the broken goblet (no. 10), which the god put together again when entreated to do so.[85] There is also the account already mentioned of one of the Epidaurian iamata of the woman who was operated on in her sleep at

---

82 *Hieroi Logoi 1-6, Discourses* xxiii-xxvii, ed. W. Dindorf, I, Leipzig 1829. See for Aristeides at Pergamon, Festugière 85-104; and for a discussion of Aristeides' *Sacred Tales*, see C. A. Behr, *Aelius Aristides and the Sacred Tales*, Amsterdam 1968, 116-28, esp. 121-28 for the chronology of the *Sacred Tales*; cf. Krug 169-71.

83 Festugière 87; note *Sacred Tales* 4.43-47.

84 Sherwin-White 275-78.

85 Cf. P. Perdrizet, "Le miracle du vase brisé" *Archiv für Religionswissenschaft* 8, 1905, 305-09.

the Asklepieion at Troizen by the sons of the god, who cut off her head to get at a stomach tapeworm, but encountering difficulties called on Asklepios who rectified the problem; the next day she left the temple cured (no. 23).

Clearly, some of the miracle cures are inventions, or embellishments of minor cures recounted at the site and exaggerated through continual repetition. The iamata are *aretalogiai*, and the fact that many of the iamata are intentionally instructive to the reader is important. The iamata, as *aretalogiai*, demonstrated that the god was all powerful, that he expected thanks for cures, and that his sceptics had been proven wrong. The accounts of fairly ordinary cures can perhaps be accepted. These would presumably have been the products of "faith-healing". But the temple authorities have also recorded cures which defy credence. In these cases the priests are not guilty of fraud, but rather may be recording almost mythical cures, "tall stories" about the god's prowess. It would have been inevitable that the god was credited with fantastic cures, that *aretalogiai* would be told about him. Priests and pilgrims alike, as *aretalogoi*, presumably exchanged accounts of the miraculous healing power of the god: "Do you remember the time Asklepios put the goblet back together again? When Asklepios cured lameness?" Moreover, these accounts of miraculous cures would have encouraged those pilgrims who were very ill to believe that there was some hope of their recovery. The iamata telling of those who were cured by proxy, by having someone else incubate on their behalf, could induce relatives of those too sick to travel to come to Epidauros and seek a dream on behalf of their sick relative. The iamata portray Asklepios as a god who could be vengeful and punish those who mocked him, but he is also revealed as a god whose role was to relieve suffering, who could be good-humoured with the ill, and who could be approached with any medical problem, no matter how serious. The iamata record that all who sought the god's help were cured. This was clearly not the case, as individuals did die at Epidauros. The iamata, however, with their *aretalogiai* eulogising the god's total success rate and recounting the cures of even the sceptics, served as an encouragement to the ill, and gave them hope that, through their faith in Asklepios, they would be healed.

In myth, Asklepios could resurrect the dead before he was punished by Zeus for doing so. He has obviously retained mythical powers, and legendary cures and actual cures are present side by side in the iamata, with some records of the cures clearly being embellishments on actual cures. The account of the little boy (no. 1) who when born possessed the attributes of a much older child is an example of this. Possibly, the mother had had a lengthy pregnancy and been relieved of this at Epidauros, an explanation which is credible. The details of the boy's post-natal activities, however, are clearly embellishments, but embellishments which are easy to understand as having been added to the story at a later date. For if the boy had been awaiting birth for some period, it was easy to suggest that his development had gone unchecked and that he had emerged at a stage of development commensurate with the period he had been in the womb. Yet the basic premise of the account

is aretalogical: it was the god's power which had brought the pregnancy to a successful termination.

The pagan Asklepios readily finds a counterpart in the Christian period. Christian miracles are relevant to this discussion, in that they reveal not only cures similar to those worked by Asklepios, but themes corresponding to those mentioned in the iamata. Christian sources do not deny validity to the cures worked by Asklepios, but viewed them instead as the work of demons. Yet it is clear that the miracles, worked in the ancient Mediterranean world under the influence of Christianity, reveal the same features: a belief in the power of the god involved, similarities in the types of cures effected, and the importance of the stories of past cures in facilitating faith in further cures. The most important source for Christian miracles, excluding the actual *New Testament* material itself, is Augustine's *De civitate dei*, in which he discussed the phenomenon by which miracles are performed, even though Christ was no longer on earth. In fact, the relevant chapter of *De civitate dei* (22.8) has been described as "les premiers <Libelli Miraculorum>".[86] Augustine, who lived AD 354-430, listed various miracles performed through the power of the Christian faith, and had himself been a witness to miracles. He also reported a cure worked through dream instruction: Innocentia dreamed that she was commanded to ask the first woman to be baptised in her church to make the sign of Christ on her cancerous breast. This she did, and was immediately healed. This type of dream, with its instruction, is familiar from Epidauros. Her cure did not excite amazement from her doctor, for why should Christ not be able to cure a cancer, when he could raise the dead? Leaving aside the sceptics at Epidauros, it can be imagined that many of the readers of the iamata held similar views about the cures of Asklepios. The cures which Augustine recorded included blindness, fistulas, cancer, gout, hernia, and paralysis, that is, a whole range of illnesses, as at Epidauros. Augustine even records stories of resurrections of the dead, something which Asklepios only did in myth, and never at Epidauros. He thus indicates that a place could become renowned for cures and attract pilgrims in search of a cure, much as Epidauros attracted the sick and dying.

Augustine mentions that at Hippo records were kept of cures and these read out to the congregation. Clearly such documents, and Augustine's testimonies concerning contemporary miracles, served the same purpose as the Epidaurian iamata, not simply as thanksgivings but as advertisements of the power of God.[87] These Christian *aretalogiai* were clearly important as a witness for the faithful, and an inspiration for further cures.

Moreover, there are collections of miracles recorded as having been performed by the saints, presumably intended to advertise the healing power of faith. Amongst these are the

---

86 H. Delehaye, "Les premiers <Libelli miraculorum>" *AB* 29, 1910, 427-34, where there is discussion of the miracles contemporary with Augustine.

87 Cf. Delehaye, *AB* 29, 1910, 433; for a general comparision of the saints' miracles with the Epidaurian iamata, see Delehaye, "Les recueils antiques de miracles des saints" *AB* 43, 1925, 71.

cures wrought by the holy brothers Kosmas and Damian.[88] This pair of saints healed not only humans but the beasts as well, so inspired were they with the prophetic skill.[89] Not only was a biography of the lives of these saints written, but also a record of the *thaumata* which they effected: the cure of dropsy, cancer, and many other illnesses, each with its own section, in the same tradition as the Epidaurian iamata which include the miracles wrought by the god Asklepios as individual entries. Kosmas and Damian, therefore, as healing agents, fulfilled the same role as Asklepios, and there were other healing saints as well.[90] The records of the pagan and Christian miracles belong to the same genre. They prove, if not the miraculous powers of Asklepios and Christian saints to sceptical moderns, at least the interest which both the pagan and Christian faiths had in propagating the stories of miracles which took place in their respective belief systems.

The reader of the iamata must be prepared, not so much to suspend judgement about them, but to accept the iamata as reflecting beliefs about the power of the god. The sick who travelled to Epidauros believed in the miracles which the iamata recorded. Cynics, according to the iamata, through their own experiences of divine cures, were forced to revise their opinions. For the sick who read the iamata and believed the miracles, the cures recorded had a concrete reality, for they believed that they had taken place. For them, the cures were real, and by encouraging them to hope for recovery, the miracles became a part of their own healing experience.

The priests were not guilty of deliberate falsification in inscribing the iamata, but were recording the semi-mythical deeds of their god, in a way to which partisans of cult are prone. In this they were no doubt assisted by the pilgrims themselves who may well have exaggerated accounts of their own cures. At the same time, the iamata also include cures which can be credibly assigned to the god if the phenomenon of faith-healing is accepted. The miracle inscriptions are a curious mixture of genuine cures, invented cures, and instructional material. The iamata are didactic in nature, being inscribed by the temple authorities to introduce the sick to the powers of the god, and to his expectations concerning thanksgivings if the ill were cured. If an incubant became better, not during the stay at Epidauros but afterwards, the credit still belonged to the god. The iamata were read by pilgrims for over eight hundred years, and provided them with inspiration, that they too, like

---

88 L. Deubner, *Kosmas und Damien*, Leipzig 1907; E. Rupprecht, *Cosmae et Damiani sanctorum medicorum vitam et miracula e codice Londinensi*, Berlin 1935; note the discussions in Delehaye, *AB* 43, 1925, 8-18; Deubner *De incubatione*, 68-79.

89 *Life* 1.1: ἐδιδάχθησαν δὲ ὑπὸ τοῦ ἁγίου πνεύματος τὴν ἰατρικὴν ἐπιστήμην, θεραπεύειν κατὰ τὸ εὐαγγέλλιον πᾶσαν νόσον καὶ πᾶσαν μαλακίαν, οὐ μόνον δὲ τοὺς ἀνθρώπους, ἀλλὰ καὶ τὰ κτήνη, ὡς πληρωθῆναι τὸ προφητικὸν λόγιον.

90 Deubner *De incubatione*, 120-34: a text of the cures of Therapon; G. Dagron, *Les Miracles de Ste. Thècle*, Paris 1972 (non vidi); for several other saints, see Deubner *De incubatione*, 65-103, and A.-J. Festugière, *Collections grecques de miracles*, Paris 1971. For Latin healing saints, see Delehaye, *AB* 43, 1925, 305-25.

hundreds of others could be cured at Epidauros. The incredible nature of some of the iamata ought not to lead us to dismiss the cult of Asklepios. The fact that healing shrines at Epidauros, Kos, and Pergamon prospered for several hundred years indicates that cures, of whatever nature, were effected at these sites, and this is the historical reality about the cult of Asklepios which should be accepted.

APPENDIX: IAMA 47

A provisional text of iama 47, with notes, by R. Merkelbach.

21 ἰχθυοφό-
22 ρος ᾽Αμφίμναστος. Οὗτος ἰχθυοφορῶν εἰς ᾽Αρκαδίαν εὐξάμενος τὰν δε-
23 κάταν ἀνθησεῖν τῶι ᾽Ασκλαπιῶι τᾶς ἐμπολᾶς τῶν ἰχθύων οὐκ ἐπετέ-
24 [λει .....] .... ουν ἐν Τεγέαι ἐξαπίνας οἱ ἰχθύες
25 .. [...] .. [....] ...τε[.] .....κοντο τὸ σῶμα; ὄχλου δὲ πολλοῦ περι-
26 στάντος ε[ἰ]ς τὰν θεωρίαν ὁ ᾽Αμφίμναστος δηλοῖ τὰν ἐξαπάταν ἅπασα[ν]
27 .[.]....[.]..... ....γεγενημέναν· ἐξικετεύσαντος δ᾽ αὐτοῦ τὸν
28 θεὸν .... [.] ... τες π..[.]. ἰχθύες ἔφανεν· καὶ ὁ ᾽Αμφίμναστος ἀνέθηκ[ε]
29 [τ]ὰν [δεκάτα]ν τῶι ᾽Ασκλαπιῶι

23-24 ἐπετέ[λει τὰν εὐχάν·] πέρναντι [δέ] οἱ πληθὺν ἐν T. Herzog (1937),
ἐπετέ[λει ταύταν ὡ]ς ἔοικ᾽; ἐν τᾶι ἀγορᾶι οὖν ἐν T. Peek
24-25 οἱ ἰχθύες [σ]α[πε]δό[νι] κα[τα]ρρυέντες ἐξ[ε]τάκοντο Herzog,
οἱ ἰχθύες κε[ραυ]νῶ[ι πλα]γέντε[ς] περιεπλέκοντο Peek
26-27 ἅπασαν τ[ὰν ἐπὶ τᾶι ἐμπ]ολᾶ[ι] ποιγεγενημέναν Herzog,
ἅπασαν τ[ὰ]μ περ[ὶ] τὸν ᾽Ασκλαπιὸν γεγενημέναν Peek
28 [θ]εὸν [τεθνα]κότες πολλοὶ ἰχθύες Herzog;
Wilhelm wollte das [τεθνα]κότες durch [ἀνεζακ]ότες ersetzen;
Peek schrieb θεὸν βιοτ[ε]ύοντες πάλ[ι]ν ἰχθύες.

Armidale M. P. J. Dillon

ZPE 104 (1994) 22

CORRIGENDUM

S. 251, Anm. 67: statt „2.103“ lies „2.225“.