Cure and Cult

in Ancient Corinth

A GUIDE TO THE ASKLEPIEION

American Excavations in Old Corinth

Corinth Notes No. 1

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Cover: Asklepios mask
Title page: Votive terracotta cock

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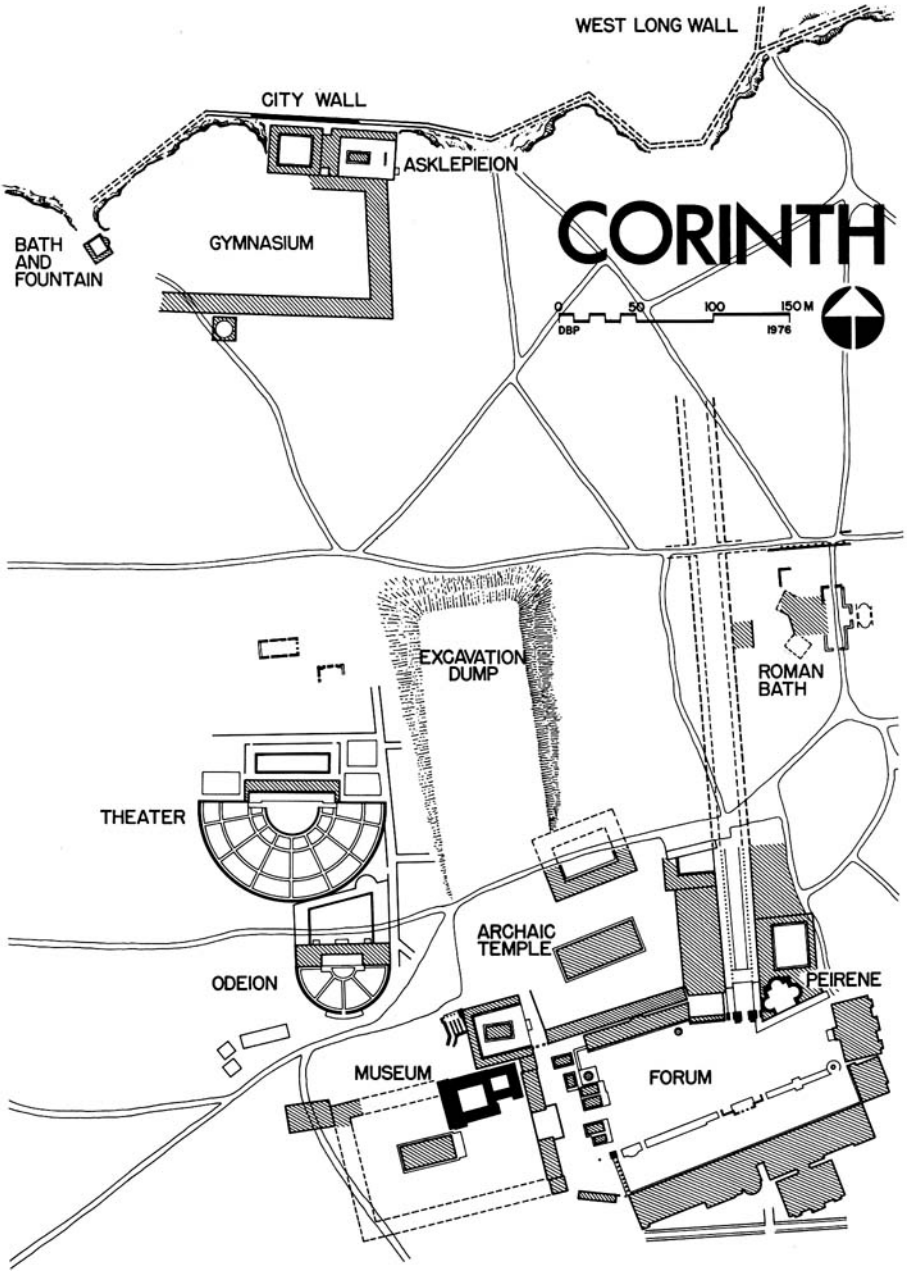
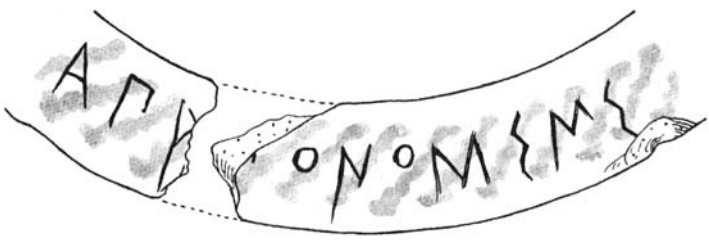


1. Corinth city center and north side. The Asklepieion is more than half a kilometer by the most direct route from the Agora or Forum.

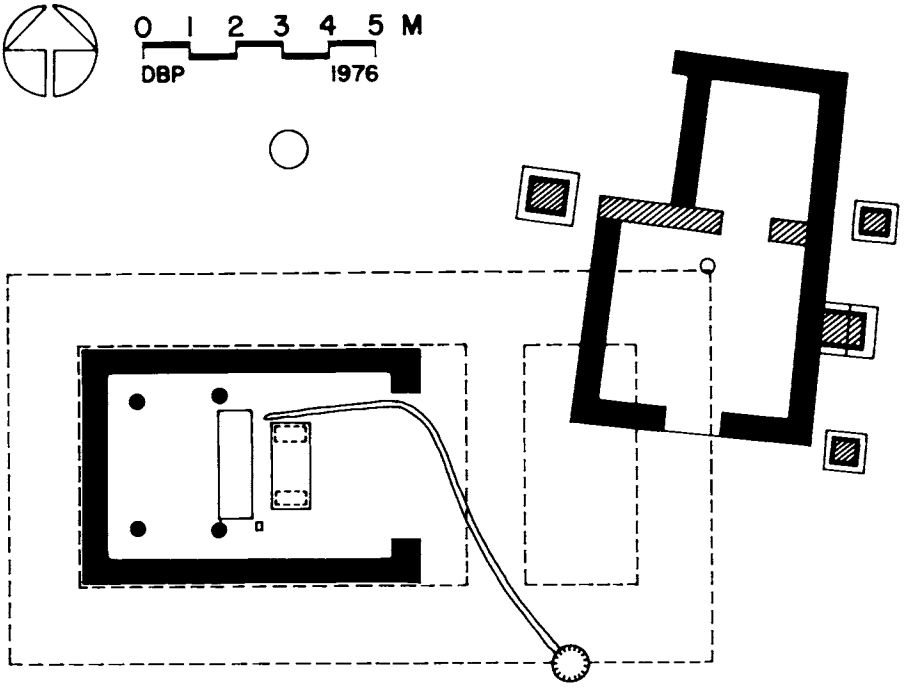
In Corinth, as often elsewhere in Greece, the shrine of Asklepios was set apart from city-center traffic and bustle (1). Plutarch (*Moralia* 286D) asks, "Why is the shrine of Asklepios outside the city?" and wonders in answer, "Is it that they considered the way of life more healthful than that in town?" Indeed, a god of healing might be expected to have divine sense enough to practice his art in natural circumstances which would contribute as much as possible to his success. Even Vitruvius in his treatise *On Architecture* (1.2.7) recommended that "the healthiest regions and suitable springs of water therein be chosen first for all temples and particularly for Asclepius, Hygeia and those gods by whose medical art very many of the sick seem to be cured. For when sick bodies are transferred from a pestilent to a healthy spot and are treated with water from wholesome fountains, they will recover more quickly."

Anticipating Plutarch and Vitruvius by several centuries, Corinth's Asklepieion was located just inside the city wall, a fair distance from the center of town and immediately adjacent to a spring, perhaps to be identified with the one called Lerna, presumably because the exuberance of its waters was reminiscent of the nine-headed Lernaian Hydra (Water Serpent) which even Herakles needed help to subdue. In this quarter of the city too were a large gymnasium, theater and odeion, recreational facilities which could also contribute to the god's work of achieving *mens sana in corpore sano*. And yet it soon became apparent in the excavation of the temple site that Asklepios was not its first tenant but had in some way taken over from Apollo, traces of whose occupancy include a small fragmentary column-krater with the inscription: "I am (the possession) of Apollo" (2).

Remaining traces of Apollo's shrine are few and hard to read because the architects of the later Asklepios temple cleared the ground and set their walls



2. Ἀπέλ[λ]*ονός ἰμι*. Note the Corinthian B-shaped epsilon, the M-shaped sigma or san and the broken-barred iota.



3. Restored plan of early shrine. Dotted lines show walls of later temple. The drain from the sacrificial table empties into a settling basin.

in deeper cuttings just outside those of the earlier structure (3). The wide, gateway-like entrance and holes for posts to support a baldachino over the cult statue suggest that this was an open-air shrine. The cuttings in front of the statue would have been for an altar and a sacrificial table.

When and how Asklepios came into the picture here is very uncertain but if we may judge both from what happened elsewhere and from the mythological accounts of their relationship, it seems likely that Asklepios joined Apollo first in a perhaps junior capacity. If, as seems appropriate, the interloper occupied the somewhat unorthodox structure to the east of Apollo's shrine, we may perhaps date his arrival to the 5th century B.C.

It is only from the end of the 6th century B.C. that we have firm evidence for Asklepios-worship anywhere; concerning his previous existence there is only a tangle of myths which seem to reflect conflicting claims and rival theories. Certainly in the *Iliad* Asklepios appears only as the father of the two heroes Machaon and Podalirios, who both share in the fighting and are valued as physicians. So Idomeneus urges Nestor to take Machaon safely out

4. Terracotta figurine of Centaur holding a child, perhaps Asklepios. Found in the Asklepieion.

of the fighting (xi.514–5): "For a physician is a man more worth than many other men, both to cut out arrows and to spread gentle salves." That the heroes' skill came from their father is clear from the description of Machaon's treatment of Menelaus' wound (iv.218–9): "He sucked out the blood and skillfully applied gentle salves which once upon a time kindly Chiron gave to his father."

Homer gives no indication that he thought of Asklepios as the son of a divine father, nor is the so-called *Homeric Hymn to Asklepios* to be dated before the 5th century B.C. (xvi):

> Of Apollo's son, Asklepios, I begin to sing,
> Healer of ills, whom Koronis, fair daughter
> Of Phlegyas, bore upon the Dotian plain,
> A great joy to men and soother of harsh pains.
> Greetings to you lord; I entreat you with song.

Even earlier, Pindar (*Pythian* iii) had told how Koronis, with child by Apollo, turned to a mortal lover and provoked the god to cause her death; he then snatched his unborn son from the dead mother's body and put him in the care of the Centaur Chiron (4). Thus Asklepios became a Hero Physician both by heredity from Apollo the Healer and by environment through Chiron, whom Homer credited with the teaching of medical arts also to Achilles, who both treated his friend Patroklos (5) and shared his skill with

5. Achilles tending Patroklos. Cup by Sosias Painter.

him (*Iliad* xi.829–32: Eurypylos speaks to Patroklos): "Cut out the arrow from my thigh and, washing the black blood from it, spread gentle salves, good ones which they say you learned from Achilles, whom Chiron taught, most righteous of the Centaurs."

Pindar then describes Asklepios' successful career: "All those who came to him with ulcerous sores, with limbs wounded by grisly bronze or far-thrown stones and with bodies ravaged by summer fever or wintry cold, each one he delivered from his special pain, treating some with soothing spells, some with healthful potions or spreading on their limbs ointments from far and near, or making them right again with the knife." But Asklepios was not proof against temptation, and Pindar tells how being seduced by gold he brought back to life one already dead, so that Zeus killed him with a thunderbolt.

This seems to be the raw material out of which the god Asklepios was fashioned: a Savior Hero, son of god and mortal woman, who served mankind, and died in an effort to conquer death.

Although, as was also the case with Homer, many places claimed Asklepios' birth, it is Epidauros that not only has proved to have the oldest sure remains of his worship but also was credited with sending out Asklepios' serpents (6) to establish shrines elsewhere, even as far afield as Rome; Pau-

6. Coin of Epidauros, *ca.* 350–330 B.C. Head of Asklepios on obverse; Asklepios seated on reverse with serpent and scepter; dog lying beneath throne.

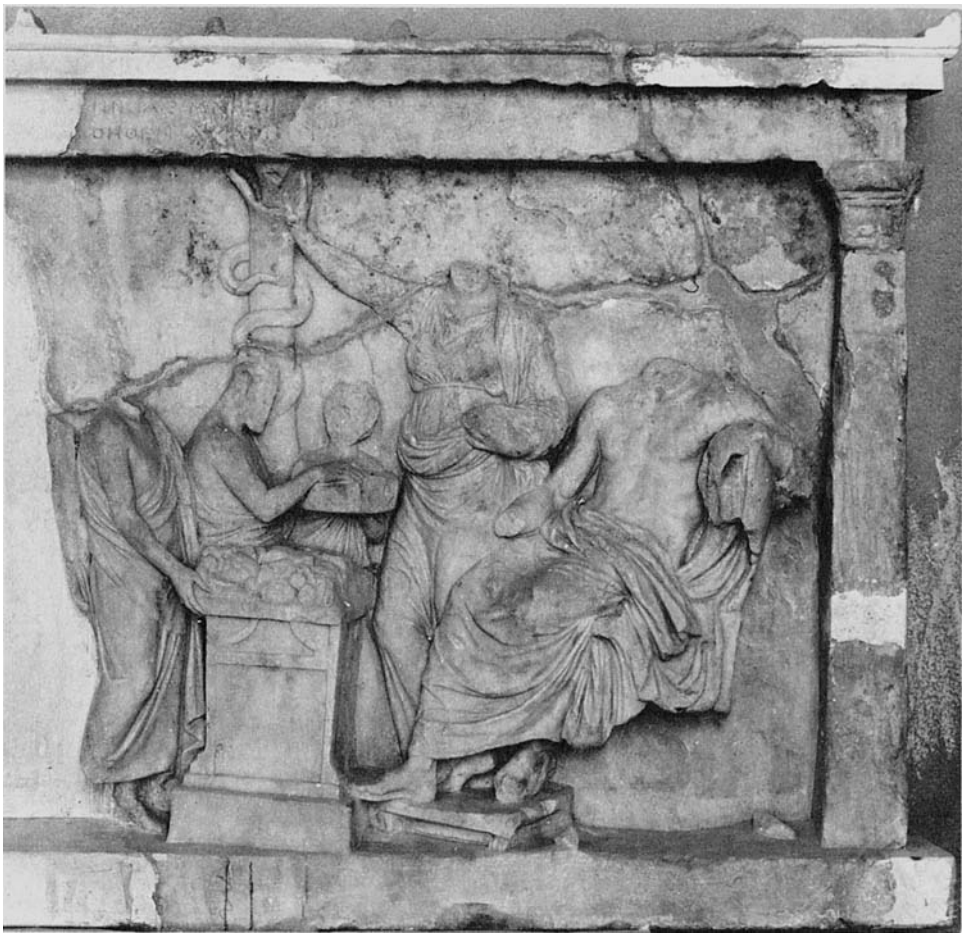
sanias (ii.26.8–9) also lists both Pergamum and Cyrene in addition to Athens, where it was the poet Sophokles who in 420 B.C. received into his home the god (image or serpent?) on his arrival from Epidauros.

We may imagine that Asklepios came to Corinth in the same way, first as an emissary from Epidauros to take up residence in Apollo's precinct and then gradually to take over his father's "practice" and call the shrine his own. He chose wisely, it seems: lovely views all around, looking down to the sparkling Gulf and beyond to the snow-capped peaks of central Greece and looking up to where Acrocorinth towered above the town (7); a splendid

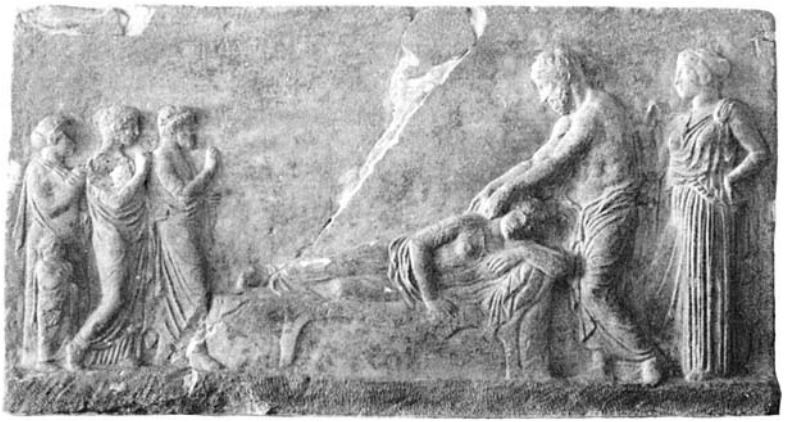
7. View of Corinth about A.D. 1700.

spring next door; all in all, a healthful situation at one of the chief crossroads of Greece.

Corinth's Asklepieion is only one of a great many temples to the Divine Physician; this circumstance not only was convenient for the ancients who thus had less far to travel for treatment but also is fortunate for the study of ancient medical practice since in no one shrine is evidence preserved for all the various aspects of the cult and the cures. Although Corinth has anatomical dedications not found in equal numbers elsewhere and a clear ground plan of both shrine and neighboring fountain, it is mute and illiterate both as far as



8. Relief from the Asklepieion at Athens: family sacrificing to seated Asklepios; Hygeia standing; serpent descending.



9. Relief from Asklepieion in Piraeus: the god, accompanied by Hygeia, treating a patient; family at left.

inscriptions recording cures or thank-offerings and as far as descriptions and accounts in contemporary literary sources are concerned. Nor has it produced any of the sculptured reliefs found elsewhere illustrating cures and visitations of the god. Therefore, the fullest picture of Asklepios' activities here at Corinth requires the importation of literary and epigraphical material from Athens, of inscribed testimonials to the god's power from Asklepieia in Epidauros and Lebena, Crete, and of reliefs from Athens and Piraeus (8, 9).

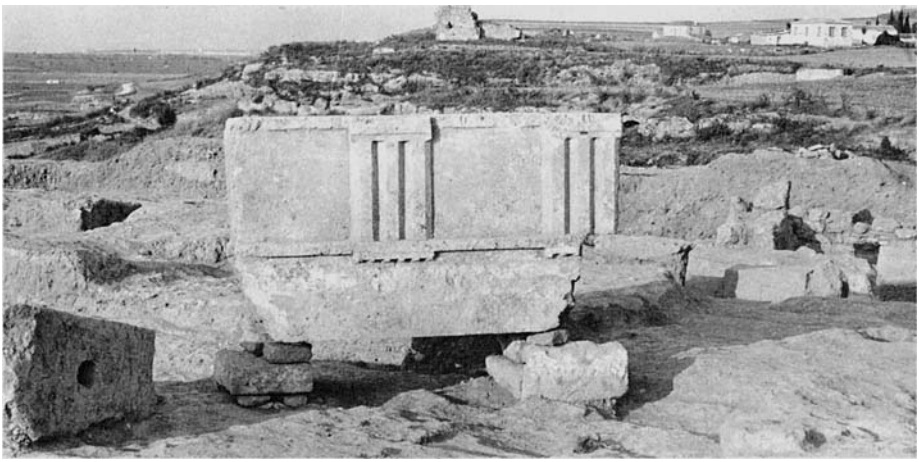
In order to get our bearings it will be helpful first of all to review the results of the excavations carried out by the American School of Classical Studies at Athens under the direction of Professor F. J. de Waele in 1929–34 and fully published by Professor Carl Roebuck in 1951 (*Corinth*, XIV, *The Asclepieion and Lerna*). Although not one stone stands upon another above the ancient ground level, since the sanctuary served as a quarry for later builders roundabout, the care and thoroughness of the archaeologists' and architects' work have given us a picture that is clear and persuasive.

We have already seen the early, perhaps makeshift arrangement which seems to have been made when Asklepios entered into partnership with his father. This continued in use till late in the 4th century B.C. when it was replaced by a whole new complex of healing shrine and fountain house. Instead of the modest temple and awkwardly placed "guest-house" the new plan provided for a large rectangular precinct defined by walls on the south and east sides, on the west by a large building which must have housed the abaton or inner sanctum, and on the north by a colonnade (15). This covered walkway, being built on the edge of the hill, was supported in part by the adjacent section of the city wall, which doubled as a retaining wall here.

Entering the sanctuary through a gateway in the east wall (15A), the visitor was confronted first by a water basin set in a small columned porch (15B); perhaps this token contact with water was all that was expected of those not coming for a cure. Passing from there to the long altar, healthy worshippers might offer honey-cakes and fruit as a form of medical insurance. Among other bases around the altar which must, like those in front of the temple, have supported important statues or dedications, there is a large block (15C) with a rounded cutting into which a hemispherical vessel with a pierced cover-slab would have been set to serve as an offering box for coins.

The fact that the temple itself is set squarely over the original Apollo shrine not only provides a good illustration of religious conservatism but also suggests that Asklepios' worship had come to be concentrated there, even if it had started elsewhere in the older sanctuary. A few pieces of entablature (e.g., 10) survive and make it possible to calculate, along with the foundation-cuttings, that the temple floor was unusually high, necessitating a ramp (for the infirm?) in the center of the front steps. Various small cuttings around the temple may have been for posts to which were attached either tablets recording cures or some of the anatomical thank-offerings for which there was no room in the temple itself. The large, symmetrically placed square cuttings on either side of the temple (15D) might be interpreted in a variety of ways, but in a sanctuary of Asklepios where sacred serpents were a part of the temple furnishings the excavators were tempted to suggest that they might have been kept in these convenient and prominently placed pits.

The abaton building at the west was neatly adjusted both to the edge of the

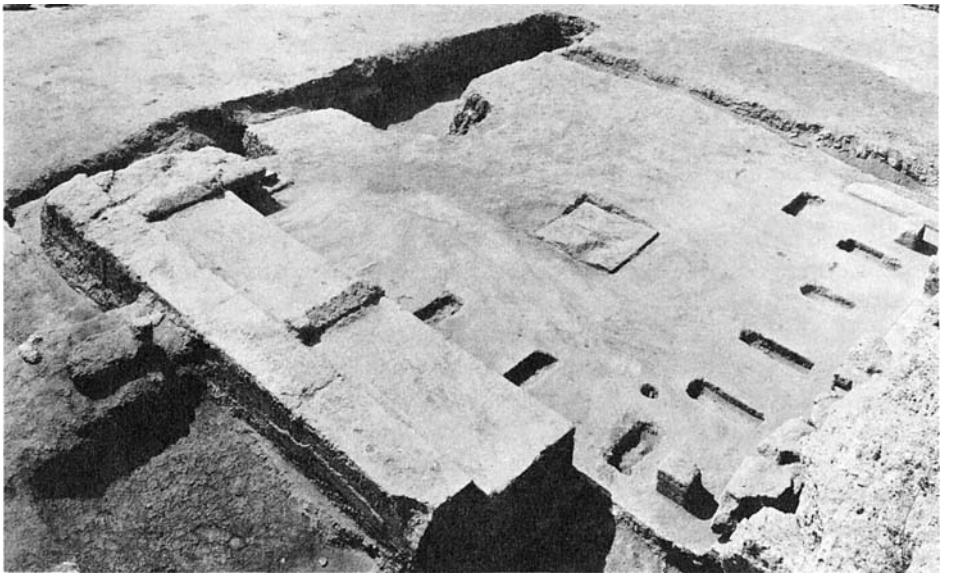


10. Epistyle block (set up in the temple), from which upper measurements of the temple can be derived.

hill and to the Lerna complex in the hollow below. Its eastern part (15E) was a single story on the same level as the temple, except at the north where the curve of the hill made possible a small wing (15F) with a stairway descending to the level of the Lerna court and fountain. The corresponding south wing included a small lustral area (15G) with steps going down to a rectangular, water-proofed basin (11) which was supplied with water by a pressure system coming from the east.

The main hall of the abaton was extended to the west (15H) at the level of the Lerna roof so that the rooms below (13A) were part of the fountain-house complex and were entered from its east colonnade. The floors of these rooms show that they were fitted with couches and tables (12) so that they served as dining rooms for visitors both to the shrine and to Lerna; that the cooking was done on the spot is suggested by the block in the center, cracked and blackened by fire. This provision of facilities for dining is completely consistent with the general air of elegance and luxury that characterizes Lerna as a pleasant resort from the heat and noise of the city. A large court (13) surrounded by colonnades provided an ideal combination of sun and

11. Looking northeast over lustral area toward the temple.

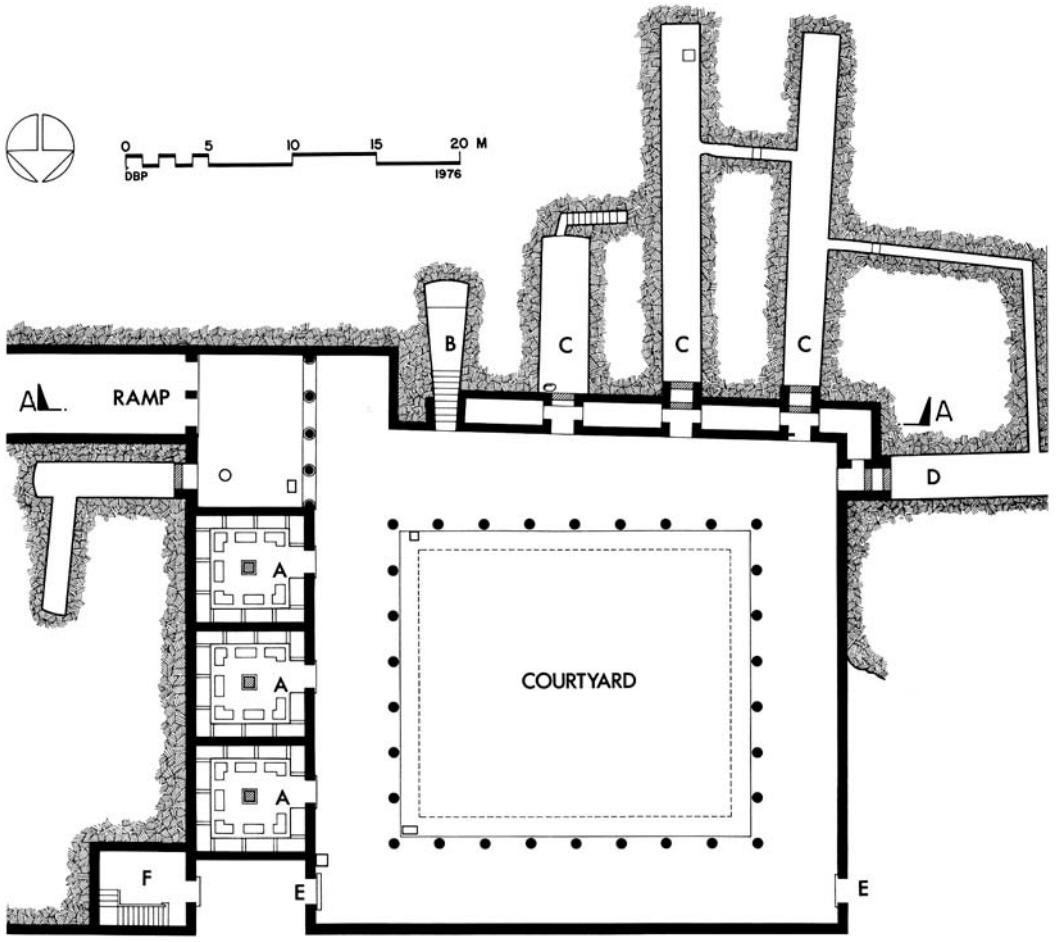


12. Dining room off Lerna east colonnade and beneath abaton.

shade for both patients and casual visitors to lounge and walk. The other essential element of the curative process was water, and Pindar was only the first of many Greeks, both human and divine, to say, "Water is best." Along the south side of the court, where the rear wall of the colonnade was the sheer face of the living rock, were the sources of supply: first at the east were steps leading down to the actual spring (13B); then, symmetrically placed toward the west were three draw-basins fed by long reservoirs (13C) cut back into the hill at the south; these reservoirs and another leading off from the west wall (13D) apparently collected water from the high ground roundabout.

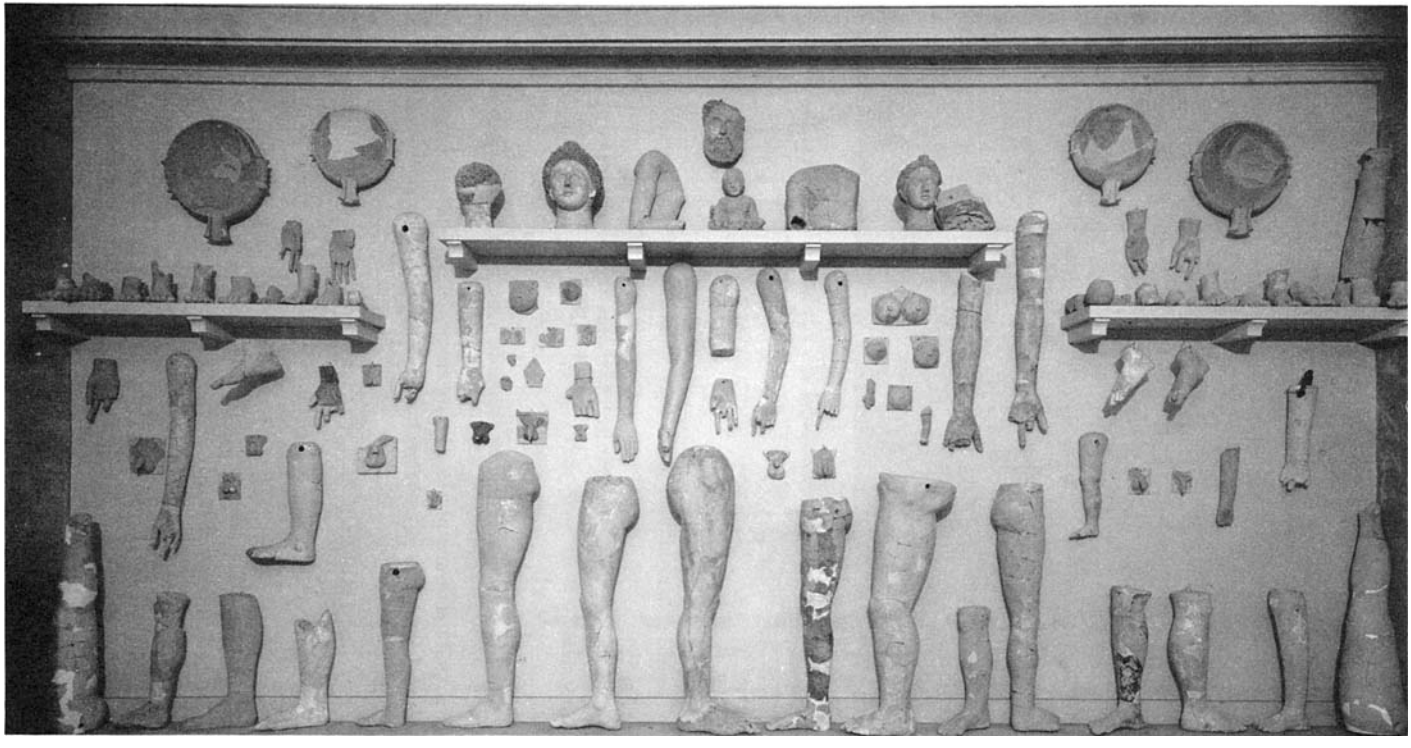
Access to Lerna was not only on the lower level (13E) and by the abaton's north wing stairway (13F), but also by means of a long ramp beginning at the southeast corner of the Asklepieion and descending at a rate suitable for the lame, the halt and the blind to a small courtyard immediately south of the dining rooms (15J).

Now that the architectural stage has been set, we may go back to accompany an ailing worshipper in pursuit of a cure, using as a guide as much of Aristophanes' *Ploutos*, reporting how Wealth was treated for blindness, as is confirmed by more sober accounts. First, a bath in the sea served as the outward symbol of the inner state prescribed at Epidauros(Porphyrius, *De ab-*



13. Plan of Lerna court with colonnades, dining rooms (A), spring (B), water basins and reservoirs (C, D), entrances (E), abaton north wing (F). See 15 for section through AA.

stinentia ii.19): "Going into the fragrant temple, one must be pure; purity is thinking holy thoughts." Then came the offering of honey-cakes at the altar. In the comedy Wealth then went directly to the abaton without visiting the temple, but at Corinth the arrangements suggest that in addition to a sea-bath the patient made token ablutions at the eastern water-basin, proceeded to both altar and temple and then to the lustral area for proper cleansing before entering the main hall of the abaton. There the patient lay down on a pallet on the floor, and presently an attendant put out the lights and urged sleep and silence. Then in the patient's dream the god came with an attendant carrying mortar, pestle and medicine chest, mixing a potion, applying a plaster, using



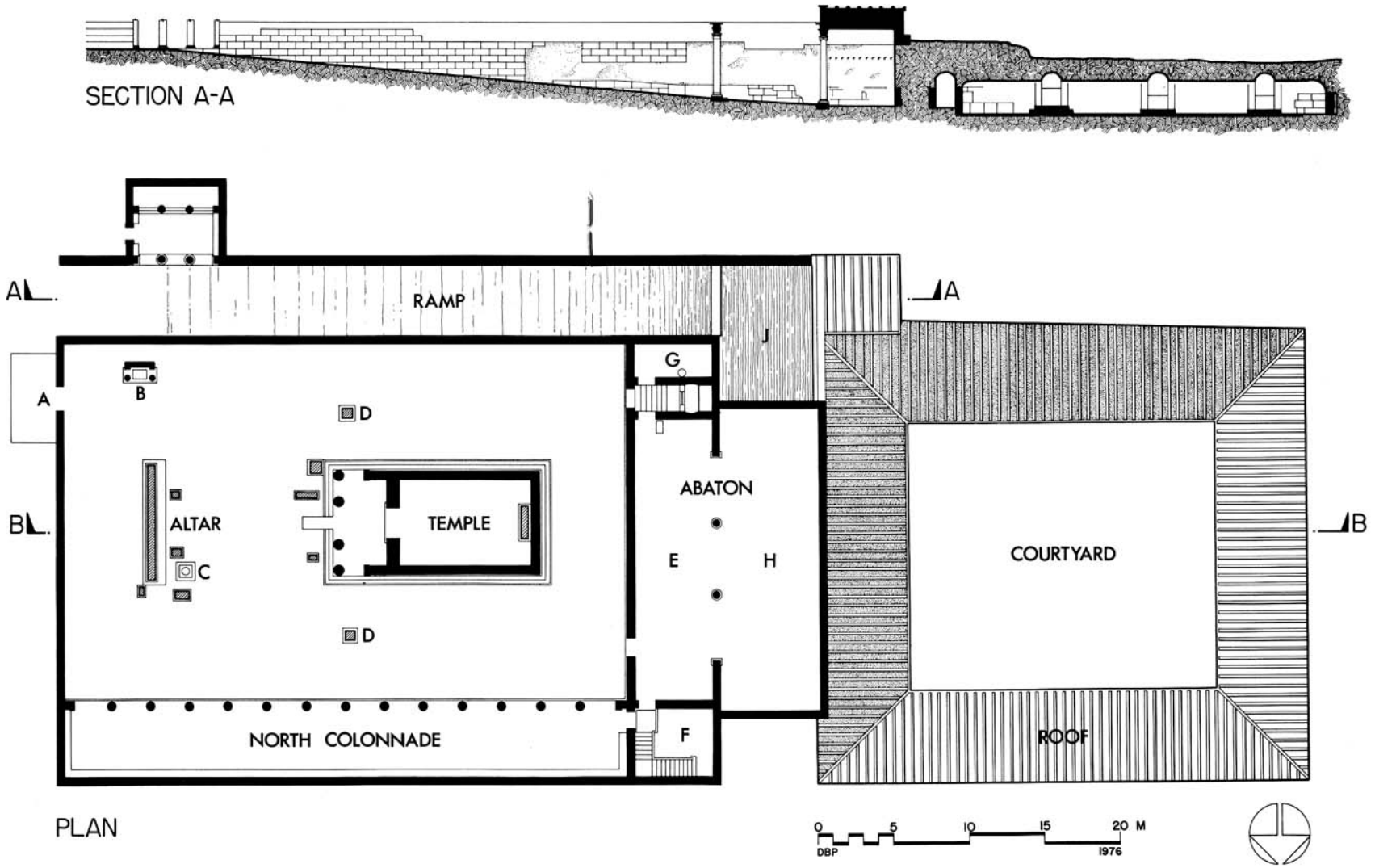
14. An exhibit in the Corinth Museum including a sample of the anatomical votives of the late 5th to late 4th centuries B.C., found in various deposits where they were tidied away when the new temple-complex was built.

the knife or summoning a sacred serpent to lick the afflicted part. If the dream was suggested by an actual priest making his rounds, the cure to which the patient attested on waking was still a thing worthy of wonder and thankfulness.

It is from the expressions of such thankfulness that there has come down to us the most vivid evidence of the treatment undergone and the cures effected. Some ex-patients were eager to describe in detail their miraculous recovery, partly perhaps from the same motives that make survivors nowadays like to talk about their operations, but also from gratitude and the desire to praise the god. Others apparently wished to express their thanks in more substantial form, perhaps on the ground that one limb or organ is worth a thousand words. We may combine the two kinds of testimonial by using the Corinthian terracotta models (14) of the anatomical bits and pieces that were healed to illustrate the "case histories" recorded at Epidauros and elsewhere.

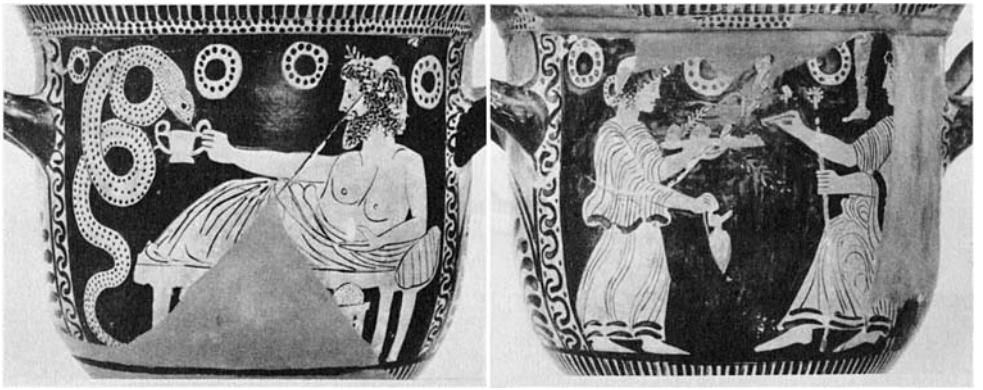
The original excavator estimated that the accumulated mass of life-size votive limbs and organs found in the Asklepieion precinct amounted to some ten cubic meters and included examples of almost all parts of the body. His report continues: "From the huge heap of fragments, our able technician, D. Bakoulis, succeeded in restoring to their original shape some ten legs with thighs, nine feet to the knee, nine entire arms, three hands to the elbow, one upper arm, five feet with their original finished top, some twenty feet probably belonging to larger limbs, and some twenty hands. From the fragments which were not fitted together, the number of similar votives could easily have been doubled or tripled. We possess remains of at least 125 hands. Besides we found the remains of some sixty-five female breasts, offered singly or in pairs, and thirty-five male genitals" (*American Journal of Archaeology* 37, 1941, pp. 442 f.).

The head-count is not so impressive: two complete heads of women (17), four fragmentary heads of men. As with other parts of the body, male flesh is colored red while that of the female is white; all hair is deep red. Again, as with most other pieces, there is no indication of the particular ailment, since it is likely that shops sold them ready-made, but headaches would in any case have been difficult to depict. One such sufferer was treated at Epidauros (*I.G.*, IV^2, 1.122): "Hagestratos: headache. He being oppressed by insomnia because of headache, when he was in the abaton, slept and saw a dream. The god seemed, after curing the pain in his head and standing him up naked, to teach him the attack used in the pancration. When day came he went out well and not much later won the pancration at Nemea." Even more miraculous is the case of Heraieus of Mytilene: "He did not have hair on his head, but a great deal on his chin. Being ashamed because he was laughed at by others, he slept in the shrine. And the god, anointing his head with a drug, made him grow hair" (*I.G.*, IV^2, 1.121).



Key: A East Gateway
B East Water Basin
C Offering Box
D Snake Pits (?)
E East Abaton
F Abaton North W
G Lustral Area
H West Abaton
J Courtyard

15. Plan and sections of Lerna and Asklepicion.

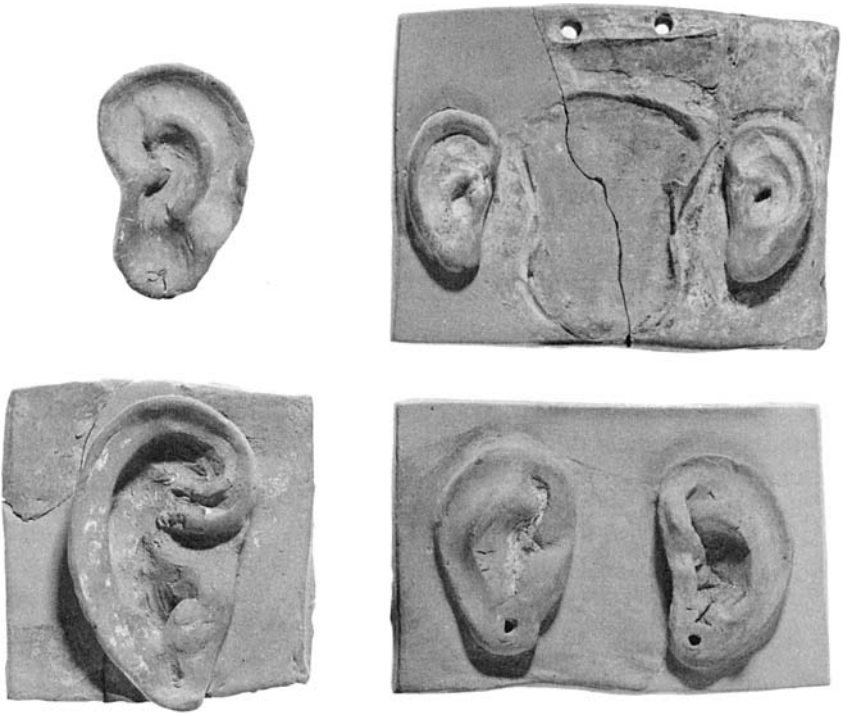


16. A Boiotian vase: the tame serpent on one side and the hanging limbs on the other suggest that the bearded figure is Asklepios and the female figure receiving offerings is Hygeia.

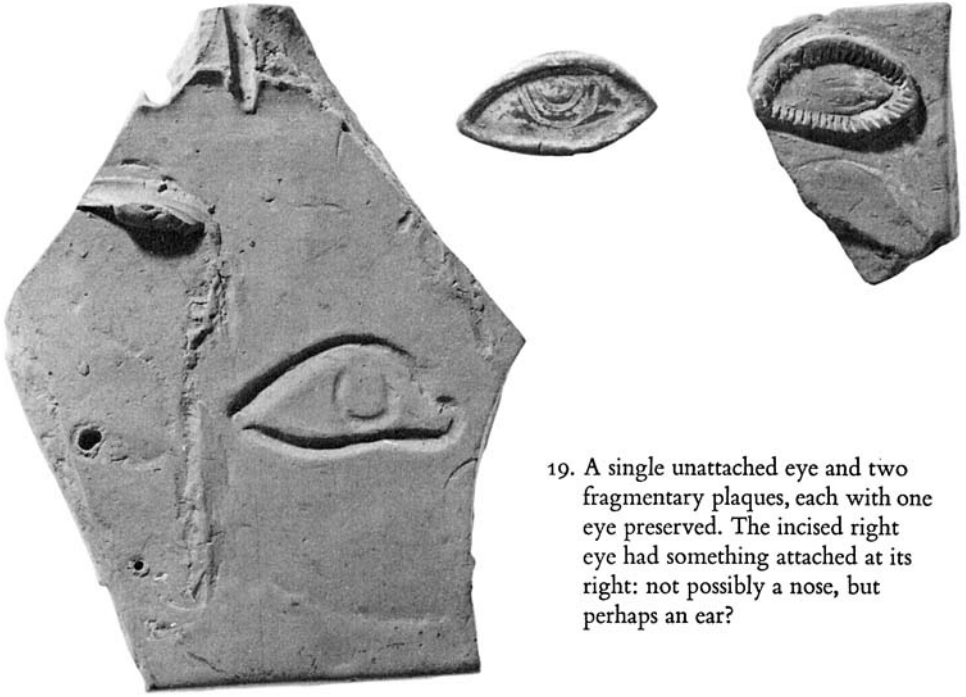
17. Two female heads: one in profile; the other full front.

Ears come singly or in pairs, sometimes affixed to plaques and sometimes completely without evidence of attachment (18). Inventory lists of votives in the Asklepieion at Athens show this same kind of varying representation for both eyes and ears; and one item listed there (*I.G.*, II^2, 1534, 55) may give a clue as to the object broken off between two ears here: "two ears and teeth which Aristagora dedicated." The suggestion that the missing piece represented male genitals is based more on shape (see 23 below) than on likely medical connection. About the pair of ears that are pierced it is perhaps reasonable to assume that the earrings of some precious metal that were included in the dedication to the god may have been appropriated by a temple attendant or workman when the votives were being tidied away.

Only three eyes (19) were found in this large collection of votives. This scarcity is surprising in view both of the Athenian inventories, where they are the most frequently listed item, and of the Epidauros cure-records, where blindness or other eye disease is most often attested. These are typical examples. "There came as a suppliant to the god a man who was so one-eyed that the other had only lids in which there was nothing, but they were com-



18. Life-size terracotta ears.



19. A single unattached eye and two fragmentary plaques, each with one eye preserved. The incised right eye had something attached at its right: not possibly a nose, but perhaps an ear?

pletely empty. Certain people in the temple laughed at his simplicity in thinking that he would see with an eye that was not there. Then a vision appeared to him as he slept; the god seemed to boil some medicine and, drawing apart the lids, to pour it in. When day came, he went out seeing with both eyes" (*I.G.*, IV^2, 1.121).

"Hermon the Thasian. (The god) healed this man who was blind but afterwards when he did not bring the thank-offering the god made him blind again. When he came and again slept in the shrine, the god cured him" (*I.G.*, IV^2, 1.122).

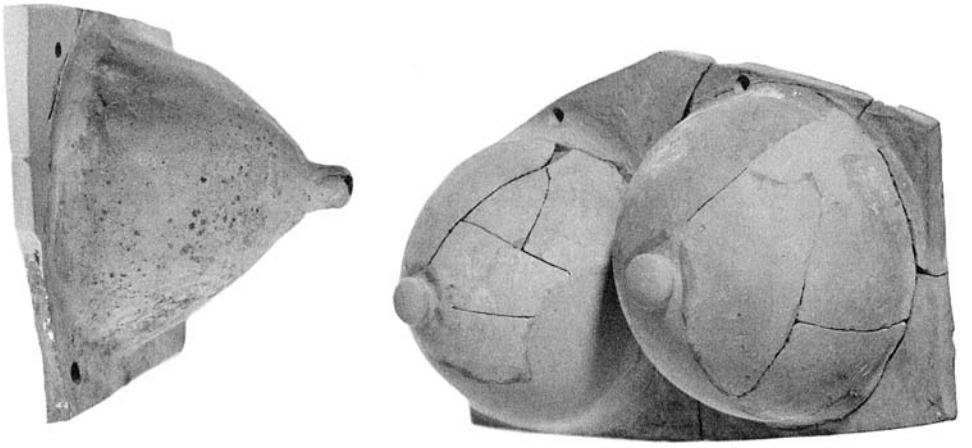
"Ambrosia from Athens, blind of one eye. She came as a suppliant to the god. Going around the shrine she mocked at some of the cures as incredible and impossible, if the lame and blind became whole only by having a dream. But when she slept in the shrine the god, standing over her, seemed to say that he would cure her but that he would require her to give to the temple a silver pig as memorial of her unbelief. Saying this, he cut open her diseased eye and poured in a drug. When day came she went away cured" (*I.G.*, IV^2, 1.121).

"Alketas of Halieis. This one, being blind, saw a dream. It seemed to him that the god came and drew apart his eyelids with his fingers and that he first saw the trees in the shrine. When day came he went out cured" (*I.G.*, IV^2, 1.121).

The possible ailments of the upper body for the cure of which the god might be thanked with a torso (20) are too varied and numerous to encourage conjecture about the three examples found at Corinth. Two possibilities are suggested by the records at Epidauros and Lebena, Crete. "A man from Torone (had) leeches. Sleeping, he saw a dream. It seemed to him that the god cut open his chest with a knife and taking out the leeches put them in his hands and sewed up his chest. When day came, he went out holding the creatures in his hands and was cured. He had swallowed them, having been tricked into drinking a potion into which they had been put by his stepmother" (*I.G.*, IV^2, 1.121).

"To Asclepius, Poplius Granius Rufus, by command. When my right shoulder . . . and the whole . . . from . . . gave me unbearable pains, the god ordered me to persevere and gave me therapy: to apply as a plaster barley-flour with old wine and a pine-cone powdered in olive oil, and at the same time a fig, goat's fat, milk, pepper . . ." (*Inscr. Cret.* I, xvii, 18).

20. Two torsos: one chest and upper right arm; one right shoulder, chest and upper arm.



21. Two of the eleven complete breast votives found in the Corinth Asklepieion. All were mounted on plaques, some singly, others in pairs. The plaques show traces of red or blue paint while the breasts are white with red nipples.

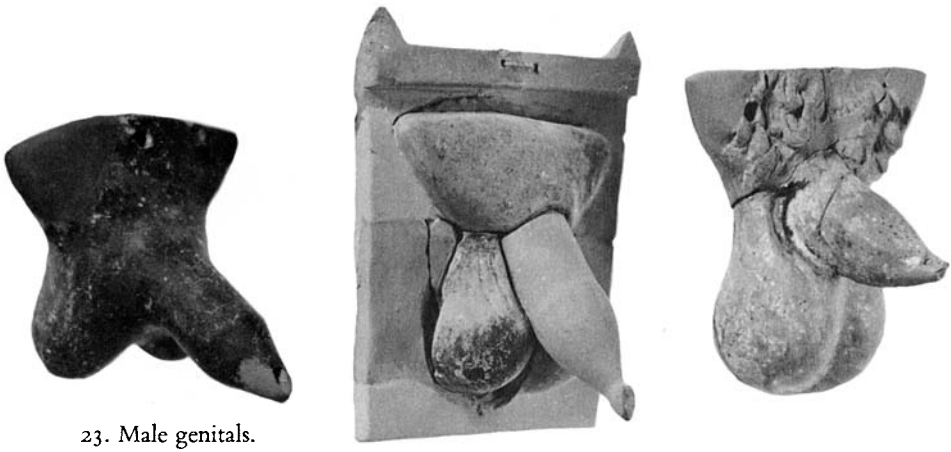
Female breasts (21), at least when dedicated in pairs, may as likely be thank-offerings for successful pregnancies as for a specific disease. None of the organs more immediately involved in birth appears in the Corinth collection, but both uterus and ovary have been identified in Roman Asklepieia (22). Two Epidauros records show the range of birth tales. "Agamede from Keos. She slept in the shrine for the sake of children and saw a dream; a snake

22. Two Etrusco-Italian terracotta uteri and an ovary.

seemed to lie on her belly, and from this five sons were born to her" (*I.G.*, IV^2, 1.122).

"Three-year pregnancy. Ithmonike of Pellene came to the temple about offspring. Sleeping she saw a dream; she seemed to ask the god that she might conceive a girl, and Asklepios said that she would be pregnant and if she should ask anything else he would accomplish this too, but she said she wanted nothing more. Then becoming pregnant she continued so for three years until she came as a suppliant to the god about the birth. And sleeping she saw a dream; it seemed that the god asked her if she was not pregnant and had not had everything she asked for, but that she had asked nothing about birth even when he asked her to say if she would want anything else, since he would do that too. But now since she was present as a suppliant to him for this, he said he would accomplish it also. After this, going out of the abaton in haste, she gave birth when she was outside the shrine" (*I.G.*, IV^2, 1.121). It is amusing to learn that the god had a sense of humor!

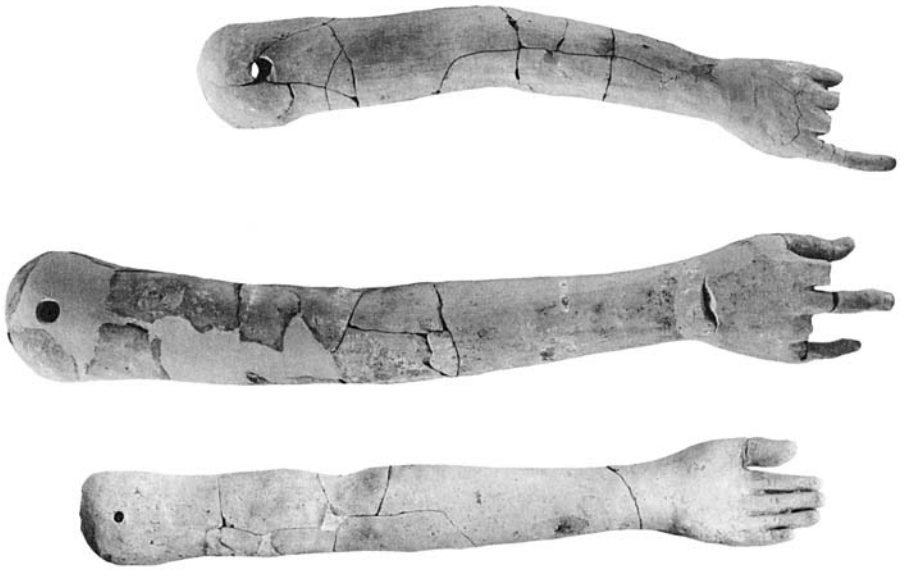
Most of the eighteen complete examples of male genitals (23) found were colored red, but one was gilded, with red, black or blue pubic hair, mounted on white plaques with red or blue borders. The offering of these may most often have been in gratitude for a return of potency, but at least one patient at Epidauros had a different complaint: "A man (had) a stone in his penis. He saw a dream; he seemed to lie with a handsome boy, and having a seminal discharge he ejected the stone and picking it up walked out with it in his hands" (*I.G.*, IV^2, 1.121).



23. Male genitals.

Although complete arms (24) and parts of arms are very well represented among the votives at Corinth, there is very little evidence concerning the kinds of infirmity for the cure of which they were given as thank-offerings. Diseases of the joints would not presumably be limited to an arm, nor would general muscular weakness, but a dedication of a rock by one Hermodikos of Lampsakos suggests something of the sort: "As an example of your goodness, Asklepios, I have dedicated this rock which I lifted up, clear evidence of your art for all to see. For before I came into your hands and those of your sons I was laid low by a hateful disease with an abscess in my chest and paralysis of the arms. But you, Paian, persuading me to raise this rock, made me sound" (*I.G.*, IV^2, 1.125).

Both arms and legs are most likely to have required divine medical treatment in the event of breaks or wounds. But whether it was common practice to go first to the temple with a broken limb we do not know. Certainly Hippokrates' testimony suggests that arms were badly set often enough to give the god some secondhand business: "Setting a broken arm is not a very serious matter and can be done by any doctor, so to speak. But I am forced to write more about it because I know that there are doctors who have got credit for cleverness from ways of setting an arm because of which they ought rather to have been called ignorant" (*On Fractures* i).



24. A sampling of arms.

For legs (25) we have the witness of a sciatica patient of Lebena, Crete, on whom the god used the knife (*Inscr. Cret.*, I, xvii.9). But the personal intervention of the god was not always necessary, if we may judge from the case of one Nikanor, a lame man: "While he was sitting wide-awake, a boy snatched his crutch and ran away. Getting up he pursued the boy and from this became well" (*I.G.*, IV^2, 1.121). The god himself achieved similar results with a suggestive dream given to a lame Epidaurian: "This one came to the shrine as a suppliant on a bed. Sleeping, he saw this dream: the god appeared to break his crutch and order him to bring a ladder and climb as high as possible on the temple; he tried at first, then lost his courage and rested on the cornice; then he balked and came down the ladder little by little; Asklepios, vexed at first by what he did, later laughed at him for being so fearful. But when it was day, having dared to accomplish the feat, he went out healthy" (*I.G.*, IV^2, 1.122).

25. Some legs and feet.

26. Three of the more than one hundred hands.

In a virtually machineless society both hands and feet had to suffer the wear and tear of production and locomotion, so that it is not perhaps surprising that these are among the most numerous dedications. And here for the first time we have a terracotta model with a particular abnormality plainly depicted: one hand (26) with a kind of growth or abscess. It may be that this satisfied patient went to the expense of giving the coroplast a special order, or this kind of growth may have been a sufficiently common complaint for the shops to have such models already made up. Perhaps comparable is a certain Cretan woman who "thanks Asklepios the Savior, having got a severe ulceration on her little finger and being cured when the god ordered her to apply an oyster shell burnt and powdered with rose salve and to anoint it with mallow mixed with olive oil. And so he cured her" (*Inscr. Cret.*, I, xvii.19).

27. Feet and fragments of feet.

Foot trouble was obviously of various kinds. One visitor to the Asklepieion at Athens concluded his prayer of thanks thus: "Three times blessed Paion Asklepios, I, Diophantos, was healed by your art of a painful, incurable wound; no longer do I appear crab-footed or as walking on sharp thorns but quick of step, just as you promised" (*I.G.*, II^2, 4514).

However kindly the god may have been to true believers, he apparently could be vindictive to the sceptics who questioned his power: "Kaphisios . . . mocked at the cures of Asklepios and said, 'The god lies when he says that he cures the lame, since if he had the power, why did he not cure Hephaistos?' The god became manifest in taking vengeance for his arrogance, for Kaphisios while riding was struck by his steed when it was tickled on the seat, so that his foot was damaged and he was carried to the temple on a litter. Later when he had pleaded much the god cured him" (*I.G.*, IV^2, 1.122).

Another example of apparently divine podiatry involved the services of a goose which bit the feet of a man suffering from gout so that they bled and so were healed (*I.G.*, IV^2, 1.122). This cooperation in the work of the god by a

28. Corinthian "hero-relief" of the funeral-banquet type.

goose is unique, but participation by both serpents and dogs is frequently attested. The serpent coiling around the god's staff came to be his chief attribute, and it may be that the presence of a serpent in many of the so-called hero-reliefs (28) combines with their occasional discovery in Asklepieia to suggest a special connection not only with the underworld but also with Asklepios. Already in Aristophanes' *Ploutos* it was a serpent that cured Wealth's blindness by licking his eyes. Perhaps it was the serpent's apparent ability to renew itself by shedding its skin, or its universal reputation for wisdom, or the folk-belief in the healing power of its touch, or a combination of all these that made it appropriate. Apparently less explicable because less universal is the association of the dog with the art of healing, both licking wounds in the temple and lying under the god's chair (6), but perhaps it was because of his role as "man's best friend," faithful to the grave and beyond, and his ability to heal his own wounds by licking.

The cock, too, was closely connected with Asklepios, not as a healing agent but as the most frequent sacrifice. Since the cock was not sacrificed to other gods, perhaps it was as the bird of morning that it came to be especially appropriate to Asklepios. After the night of dreaming in the shrine it was the morning awakening that brought the cure, signaled and symbolized, as it were, by the cock's crow. Surely it is in this sense that we are to take Socrates'

29. Uncertain or unusual votives. From left to right: an indubitable thumb; a questionable stomach; a braid of hair. The thumb is life size; hair and stomach are perhaps half life size.

last words, "Crito, we owe a cock to Asklepios. Pay it and do not neglect it." The philosopher, who asserts that we know nothing about death, "not even if it be the greatest of all goods for a man," confidently expects to awake to a new day, cured of life.

It was all right for Socrates to be "philosophical" about death, but Asklepios, like other immortals, regarded it as contamination, so that no one was permitted to die in any sacred place. About the Asklepieion in Epidauros, Pausanias writes (II.27.1): "Neither do people die nor do women give birth within the enclosure; they have the same custom on the island of Delos." If the god of medicine avoided association with death, so in their way did human practitioners, as may be seen from Hippokrates' summary definition of the art of medicine (*De arte* iii): "the deliverance of the sick from pain, the reduction of diseases' violence, and the refusal to treat those overpowered by their diseases, with the knowledge that medical art is unavailing in these cases." The god may have been motivated by superstition, but the physician had to be realistic.

Indeed perhaps it was often the case that where human skill had been of no avail the patient turned to the god. The orator Aischines testifies to something such in these verses (*Palatine Anthology* VI.330):

> Despairing of human skill but with all hope in the divine,
> Leaving Athens, blessed in her sons, and coming to your grove,
> Asklepios, I was cured in three months of a wound
> In the head that had lasted for a whole year.

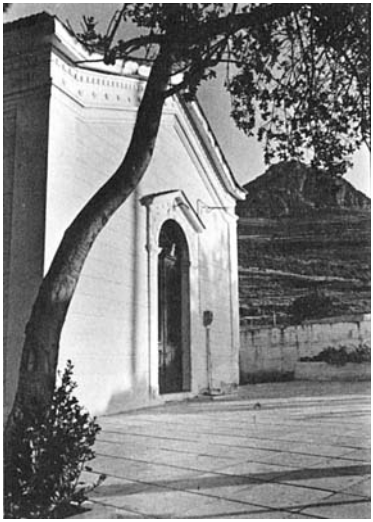
30. Miscellaneous votives from the Asklepieion: small shallow bowl with incised bird; cup fragment with the god's name; rim fragment with painted name of Asklepios' son Podalirios; terracotta dogs and two horses with riders.

There seems to have been no real rivalry between Asklepios and human physicians but a respectful recognition on the part of men like Hippokrates that the god had led the way. Taking their "trade-name" from the god, they were called Asklepiads or sons of Asklepios. And the physician Eryximachos in Plato's *Symposium* paid tribute to the god thus (186D): "Knowing how to instill love and harmony in these (the hostile elements in the body), our ancestor Asklepios established this art of ours."

It is possible to speculate whether the so-called Hippocratic Oath reflects not only the reverence due to the gods by whom one swears but also, in its details concerning teacher and pupil, the relationship felt to exist between the god and human physicians. "I swear by Apollo Physician, and Asclepius, and Health, and Panacea, and all the gods and goddesses, making them my witnesses, that I shall fulfill this oath and this covenant according to my ability and judgment: to regard equally with my parents the one who teaches me this art and to share with him my livelihood; to give him from what I have when he is in need and to consider his family as my brothers and to teach them this art, if they wish to learn it, without charge or contract, to give precept and audience and all other instruction to my sons, to those of my teacher, and to pupils who have agreed and sworn to medical rules of conduct."

31. Late surgical instruments; mortar and pestle; mortar fragment with god's name.

In the true tradition of Hippokrates and other early sons of Asklepios, the science of medicine has through the ages since old Corinth fell into decay made progress far beyond the wildest dreams of those who slept in the old shrines. But still there come times when hope of help from human art and science is lost and the afflicted turn to a Higher Power. That their faith is still rewarded is shown by the anatomical thank-offerings of silver still in this century reverently displayed in the little church of the healing saints Kosmas and Damian (32) which lies close under the shadow of Acrocorinth.



32. Church of Saints Kosmas and Damian.

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

Further information about all Asklepieion scenes and objects from Corinth may be found in C. Roebuck, *Corinth*, XIV, *The Asclepieion and Lerna*; the otherwise undesignated page, plate, figure and catalogue numbers listed below refer to that study. Some additional photographs were taken by Ioannidou and Bartzioti.

Cover. p. 119, no. 1
Title page. p. 143, no. 50
1. Plan by C. K. Williams, II and D. B. Peck
2. p. 15, no. 1, fig. 4
3. Plan by D. B. Peck, after Roebuck, fig. 2 by J. Travlos
4. p. 19, no. 2
5. Courtesy of Staatliche Museen, Berlin
6. Courtesy of American Numismatic Society Museum
7. Courtesy Gennadios Library, Collection of Prints
8. Courtesy of National Museum, Athens, inv. no. 1335
9. Courtesy of Piraeus Museum, inv. no. 405
10. See Roebuck, pl. 10:2
11. pl. 12:1
12. pl. 14:4
13. Plan by D. B. Peck after Roebuck, Plan C by J. Travlos
14. *Hesperia* 16, 1947, pl. 66:33
15. Plan and sections by D. B. Peck after Roebuck, Plans B and D by J. Travlos
16. After Lullies, *Athenische Mitteilungen*, 1940, pl. 26
17. p. 119, nos. 2, 3, pls. 30, 31
18. p. 120, nos. 8–10, 12, pl. 33
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22. Courtesy Danish National Museum, Terracotta inv. nos. 831–833
23. pp. 122 f., nos. 32, 34, 35, pls. 35, 37
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28. Corinth inv. no. S 322
29. pp. 125 ff., nos. 74, 116, 118, pls. 40, 45
30. pp. 133 ff., pottery nos. 20, 67, 69, pls. 47, 51; p. 141, terracotta nos. 27–30, pl. 56
31. p. 135, nos. 61, 66, pl. 50
    G. Davidson, *Corinth*, XII, *The Minor Objects*, pp. 187 f., pl. 84
32. Photograph by C. K. Williams, II
Back Cover. Plan by D. B. Peck

Special acknowledgments are due:

Carl Roebuck, *Corinth*, XIV, *The Asclepieion and Lerna* (1951)

Emma J. Edelstein and Ludwig Edelstein, *Asclepius: A Collection and Interpretation of the Testimonies* (1945)

C. Kerenyi, *Asklepios, Archetypal Image of the Physician's Existence* (tr. by R. Manheim) (1959)

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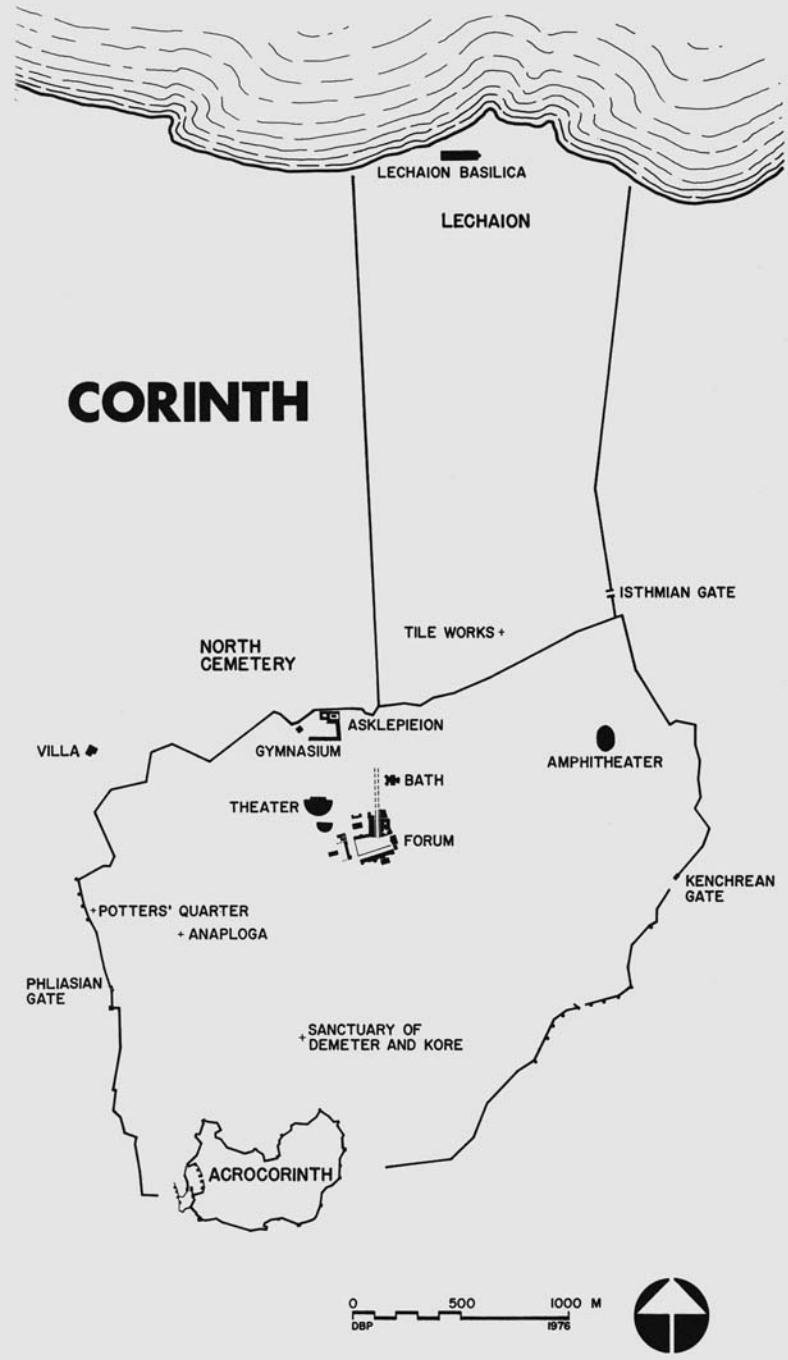

CORINTH NOTES

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