

Research Seminar  
*The Connected Sea:  
 Migration and Mobility in  
 the Ancient Mediterranean*  
 | Faculty of Arts

## Beyond Marble, Medicants & Myth

### Epidaurus' History, Material Culture, Purpose and Place in the Greater Mediterranean Area

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The most famous of sanctuaries of Asclepius had their origin from Epidaurus', Pausanias writes in his *Hellados Periegesis* ('Description of Greece').<sup>1</sup> All across the Aegean and beyond, word of the salutary reputation of Epidaurian divinity had spread. And as tales of Epidaurus' sanctuary of Asclepius travelled the lands and crossed the seas, so did the urge to ensure that the Epidaurian success formula was, as we say, *coming soon to a place near you*. Either by means of Asclepieian healers from Epidaurus operating like brand ambassadors in faraway

places such as Cyrenaica<sup>2</sup>, or previous visitors of Epidaurus seeking to establish their own franchise. As Pausanias attests to one such visitor's review of his stay: 'When Archias (...) was healed in Epidauria after spraining himself, (...) he brought the cult to Pergamus.'<sup>3</sup> So we know Epidaurus had managed to make a name for itself: all the way from the Argolid Peninsula to Asia Minor and the shores of Northern Africa. But what exactly had led to its rise in prominence? What about Epidaurus allowed for it to transcend its local cult-status? And how did its celebrated reputation and meaning change

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<sup>1</sup> Pausanias, Book 2, XXVI, 8.

<sup>2</sup> Pausanias, Book 2, XXVI, 9.

<sup>3</sup> Pausanias, Book 2, XXVI, 8.

across places and time? *What*, in other words, is the story of what is often simply referred to as the *sanctuary of Asclepius at Epidaurus*?

In this essay, I will formulate answers to these questions as I go along exploring, inspecting and discussing the material anatomy and meaning of some of this historical site's key features, the role said meaning played in the emergence of a trans-Mediterranean cultural and economic network and its importance in the context of having become almost inseparable from the legacy of the ancient Greek cult phenomenon. In that order, this will involve firstly, an examination of the Epidaurian site, its main structures, monuments and purpose.

Resuming with the testimony of our second century geographer Pausanias, it is inferred that the Hieron<sup>4</sup> at Epidaurus 'possessed almost as great a variety of buildings as Olympia.'<sup>5</sup> Pausanias mentions everything from rooms to accommodate priests, athletes and guests, a gymnasium, a wrestling-ground, a library, various shrines, a race-course, temples to Artemis and Aphrodite, the sanctuary's *propylaea*<sup>6</sup>, multiple baths, roman

cisterns and of course the grounds' chief attractions: Epidaurus' theatre and the enclosure<sup>7</sup> of Asclepius itself, containing the temple of Asclepius, a *tholos*<sup>8</sup> and a *portico*—the latter in this case being tantamount to what is referred to as the 'abaton'.<sup>9</sup> To get an idea of these structures' respective locations and appearance, I have provided a map<sup>10</sup> and outline<sup>11</sup> of the site at Epidaurus down below.

Epidaurus' sanctuary is located in the valley near and on the slopes of mount Kynortion, six miles inland from its namesake town on the coast of the Saronic Gulf—although that's not where it all began.<sup>12</sup> An earlier sanctuary, also devoted to the cult of healing, was established as far back as the 16<sup>th</sup> century BC on the Northern side of mount Kynortion. What succeeded it was yet another sanctuary, this time devoted to the god Apollo.

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<sup>7</sup> 'Enclosure', as strictly speaking 'sanctuary' would refer to the entire site, including the theatre that's 1.300 feet away.

<sup>8</sup> Greek: θόλος, meaning 'dome'.

<sup>9</sup> Wilbert M. Gesler, *Healing Places* (Lanham, United States: Rowman & Littlefield, 2003), 29-30.

<sup>10</sup> Athanasios Angelopoulos, *Metron Ariston* (Athens: Aeropos Publications, 2003).

<sup>11</sup> Richard Caton, *The Temples and Ritual of Asklepios at Epidaurus and Athens. Two Lectures Delivered at the Royal Institution of Great Britain* (London: C.J. Clay and sons, 1900), 3.

<sup>12</sup> Olga Psychogiou, "Sanctuary of Asklepios at Epidaurus," *Greek Ministry of Culture and Sports* (2012), [http://odysseus.culture.gr/h/3/eh351.jsp?obj\\_id=2374](http://odysseus.culture.gr/h/3/eh351.jsp?obj_id=2374).

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<sup>4</sup> Meaning 'sacred place', in this case used interchangeably with 'sanctuary of Asclepius'.

<sup>5</sup> R. E. Wycherley, *Description of Greece V: Maps, Plans, Illustrations, and General Index*, XXXVIII, 18.

<sup>6</sup> Plural of 'propylaeum'; a monumental gateway (into a sanctuary).

Fig 1. Metric overview of the Sanctuary at Epidaurus.

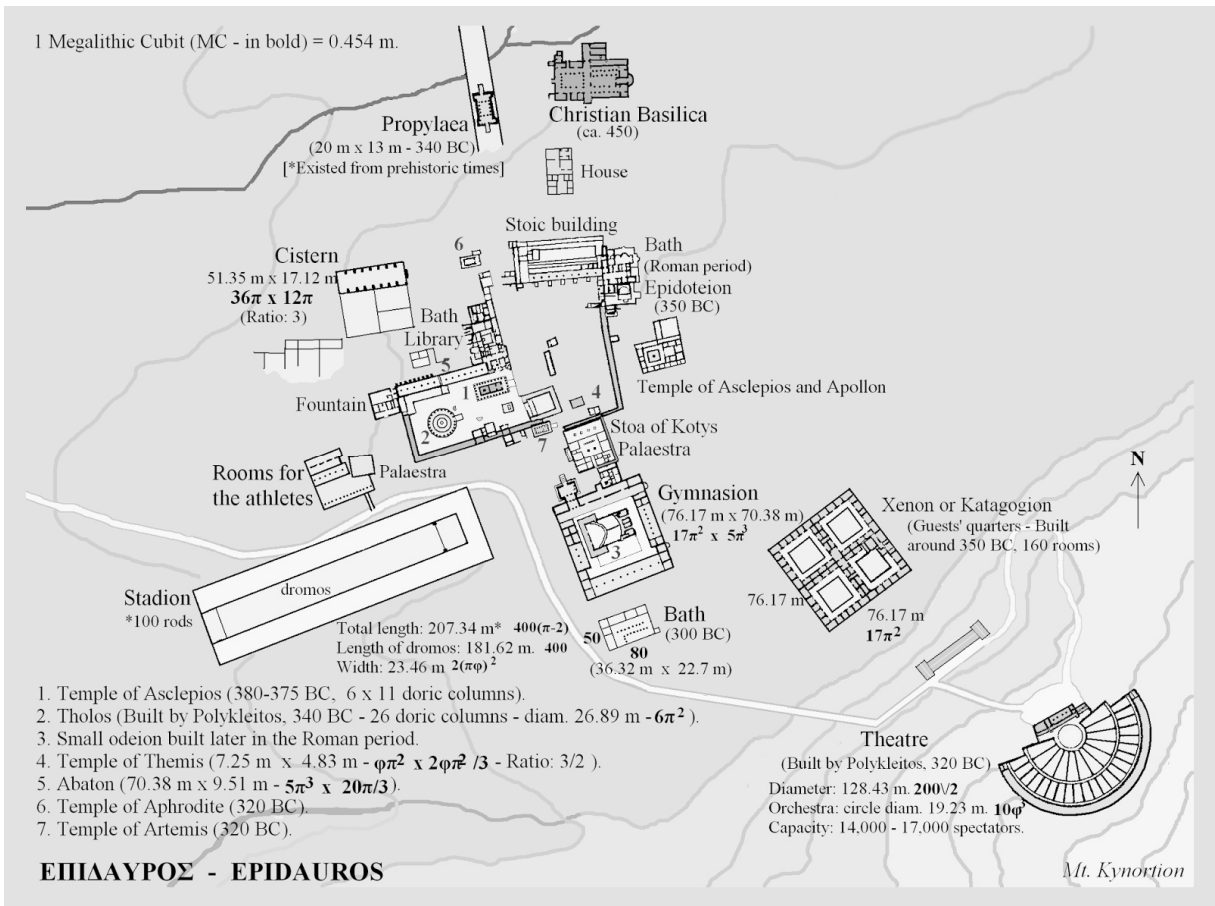
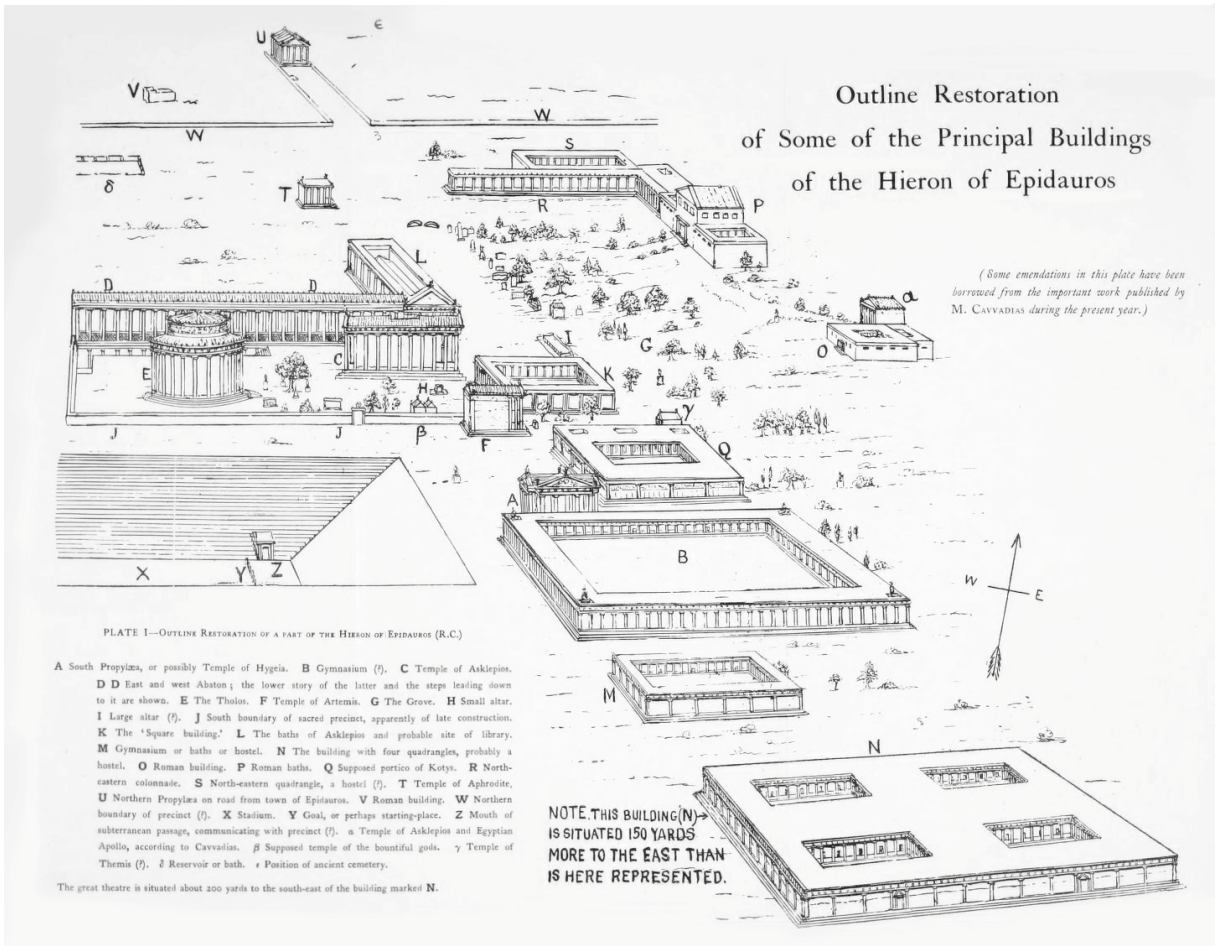


Fig 2. Outline of the site at Epidaurus.



This ‘Sanctuary of Apollo Maleatas’ is what preceded the sacred grove that we’ve come to know as the sanctuary of Asclepius or *Asklepieion* at Epidaurus, established during the 6<sup>th</sup> century<sup>13,14</sup> BC, this time adjacent to the northwestern side of mount Kynortion, in what is also called the ‘Valley of Dreams’. A location that was chosen as according to a certain myth, this had been the place of Asclepius’ birth.<sup>15</sup>

Whichever is the case, Pausanias reports, the place was sacred and, appropriately, ‘surrounded on all sides by boundary marks’. In this domain of the god-healer it was such that once within these boundaries, one was neither allowed to meet one’s death *or* give birth to new life—whether to grant, prolong or take: *presiding over life* was Asclepius’ prerogative.<sup>16</sup> And while he was first and most famously ever recorded to exert that prerogative in Tricca<sup>17,18</sup> as Strabo suggests, it was Epidauria<sup>19</sup> that managed to

assert itself most successfully as home to the god of healing and, indeed, come to be called the ‘most celebrated healing center of the classical world’ to this day.<sup>20,21</sup> And the sizable shade that the Epidaurian healing cult cast was to be appropriately reflected in the aesthetic and layout of its sanctuary—and in the architecture of its enclosure and theatre in particular. Even though the former—designated ‘C’ to ‘E’ in *fig. 2*—houses Asclepius’ temple which, according to W.M. Gesler, was actually quite ‘conventional’ and ‘modest in size’.<sup>22</sup> The statue of Epidauria’s patron deity inside however, certainly makes up for this Doric temple’s modesty. Towering as high as at least half the height of the Olympieion<sup>23</sup> at Athens, Pausanias writes, the chryselephantine<sup>24</sup> god of healing, seated atop a throne, holding a staff<sup>25</sup> in one hand and a snake in the other, must have been an impressive sight to see.<sup>26</sup>

<sup>13</sup> “Sanctuary of Asklepios at Epidaurus,” *UNESCO*, accessed April 4, 2020, <https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/491/>.

<sup>14</sup> The temple of Asclepius itself, the tholos in the enclosure and Epidaurus’ theatre followed during the 4<sup>th</sup> century BC.

<sup>15</sup> Pausanias, Book 2, XXVI, 4.

<sup>16</sup> Pausanias, Book 2, XXVII, 1.

<sup>17</sup> A polis in ancient Thessaly.

<sup>18</sup> Strabo, Book IX, 17.

<sup>19</sup> The region’s ancient name, to differentiate from its capital ‘Epidaurus’. Now used interchangeably. See Heinrich Cornelius Agrippa Von Nettesheim and John French, *Three Books of Occult Philosophy* (London: Printed by R.W. for Gregory Moule, 1651 (originally); Woodbury, United States: Llewellyn Worldwide, 1993), 841.

<sup>20</sup> Alfred Ribi, *Turn of an Age: The Spiritual Roots of Jungian Psychology in Hermeticism, Gnosticism and Alchemy* (Gnosis Archive Books, 2019), 224.

<sup>21</sup> J. Harold Ellens, *Seeking the Sacred with Psychoactive Substances: Chemical Paths to Spirituality and to God* (2 volumes) (United States: Praeger Publishers, 2014), 71.

<sup>22</sup> Gesler, *Healing Places*, 29.

<sup>23</sup> Which would have measured up to some 9-odd meters tall. See Mark Cartwright, “Temple of Olympian Zeus, Athens,” *Ancient History Encyclopaedia* (August 2015), accessed April 4, 2020, <https://www.ancient.eu/article/815/temple-of-olympian-zeus-athens/>.

<sup>24</sup> Meaning: decorated with gold and ivory.

<sup>25</sup> Often mistaken for Hermes’ *caduceus*.

<sup>26</sup> The statue has been attributed to Greek sculptor Thrasymedes.

What's more, is the tholos situated right outside the temple: a circular building ('E'), its colonnade Doric on the outside and Corinthian on the inside. This while the thirty-six meters long abaton's colonnade ('D') next to it, was of the Ionic order. It is for that reason that, at first glance, Asclepius' enclosure conforms to the standard practice of what Gesler calls 'the trinity of Grecian styles'. The various architectural styles in which the sanctuary of Asclepius was erected however, were chosen carefully. The sanctuary wasn't just devoted to the god of healing—it was to tell his story. According to Gesler, Greek sanctuaries were subject to 'an ecology of sacred buildings'. Buildings and monuments were uniquely grouped and built to 'embody human aspirations in their architecture', complementing the sacred landscape in which they were placed.<sup>27</sup> This too explains why of *all* structures in the sanctuary, *only* Asclepius' statue, the enclosure's tholos and the nearby theatre, may be described as relatively immodest and adorned, while the rest was simple and practical—in accordance with Asclepius' human scale and modesty', stressing

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<sup>27</sup> Vincent Scully, *The Earth, the Temple, and the Gods: Greek Sacred Architecture* (United States: Trinity University Press, 1969), 1-2. And Matthew P.J. Dillon, "The Ecology of the Greek Sanctuary," *Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik* 118 (1997): 113-127.

the functional purpose of his sanctuary as a house of healing, rather than a place to commemorate divine greatness. Gesler speculates that in this way, the sanctuary's 'building ecology' might explain its location in such a 'soft landscape', hinting at Asclepius' 'gentle nature'.<sup>28</sup> As might it explain the sanctuary being situated *near* a mountain rather than *on top* of one: indicating Asclepius' status as divine, but *beneath* that of the gods of Olympus.<sup>29</sup> In other words the sanctuary at Epidaurus was, in a way, a *representation* of the region's chief deity. And so the ill, injured and weary visitors didn't need a sign to tell them they had reached the domain of the god of healing. The surroundings and buildings communicated that to them on their own—like, as Gesler calls it, 'sermons in stone'.

And as relieved as visitors might have been at their arrival, there was no guarantee the god of medicine would answer their calls for aid. There was a process to it. First, the healing process itself was referred to as the ritual of *enkoimesis* ('incubation'), and was initiated in the aforementioned abaton or

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<sup>28</sup> For a concept of adjacent relevance to Greek healing sanctuaries, but of the Roman period, see the work on 'locotherapy' (examining the relationship between a sanctuary's architecture and location of buildings and the activity of healing): Kim Susan Sexton, ed. *Architecture and the Body, Science and Culture*. Routledge Research in Architecture (Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2018).

<sup>29</sup> Gesler, *Healing Places*, 30-31.

*koimeterion* ('D' in *fig. 2* and '5' in *fig. 1*).<sup>30</sup> A dormitory R. Caton nominated 'the earliest known example of a hospital ward'.<sup>31,32,33</sup> But physician of divine proportions or not, Asclepius' healing powers were limited to the abaton, which could only facilitate up to 120 patients or 'suppliants'.<sup>34</sup> And as visitors to Epidaurus came 'in great numbers' and 'from all parts of the Greek world', one can imagine how suppliants sometimes had to wait their turn.<sup>35</sup> But before said suppliants were prompted to abide their time in the sanctuary's gymnasium ('B' and 'M'), library ('L') or its baths ('L', 'P' and 'M') until space in the abaton had come available, Caton speculates they first would have had to check themselves in with a priest or sanctuary official (called a 'hieromnēmōn') to arrange accommodation on sanctuary grounds as well as to leave an offering that the priests could sacrifice or offer to Asclepius on the

suppliant's behalf—from 'a poor man's cake to a rich man's sheep'.<sup>36</sup> Or indeed anything. What kind of offerings visitors took with them, varied. As M. Cartwright writes, offerings may also have included objects like 'works of art such as statues, pottery vessels and tripods'.<sup>37</sup> And as such, as the popularity of the sanctuary<sup>38</sup> and its material offerings-based healthcare economy increased, so did the amount of objects displaced from across the Mediterranean.

Once an offering was made, and having vested all their hopes of recovery in Asclepius, suppliants could commence their incubation and the healing process could begin. What *exactly* this process entailed, we may infer from the many attestations of successful treatments left inscribed on the now four remaining stone slabs or votive tablets in the enclosure—more commonly known as the *Epidaurian iamata*.<sup>39</sup> These iamata, as Pausanias puts it, give 'the names of both the men and the women who have been healed by Asclepius, the disease also from which each suffered, and the means of

<sup>30</sup> S.M. Oberhelman, "Anatomical Votive Reliefs as Evidence for Specialization at Healing Sanctuaries in the Ancient Mediterranean World," *Athens Journal of Health* 1, no. 1 (2014): 49.

<sup>31</sup> Caton, *The Temples and Ritual*, 9.

<sup>32</sup> Sometimes also called a *sanatorium* in modern sources.

<sup>33</sup> This commonly held view of Asclepius' sanctuary as approximating an ancient Greek version of a school of medicine however, hasn't gone without criticism. Greek archaeologist Panagiotis Kavvadias for one, repudiated the idea. See BMJ, "In The Time Of Æsculapius," *The British Medical Journal* 2, no. 2133 (November 1901): 1489.

<sup>34</sup> Richard Caton, "Two Lectures On The Temples And Ritual Of Asklepios At Epidaurus And Athens," *The British Medical Journal* 1, no. 1955 (June 1898): 1572.

<sup>35</sup> According to Gesler (*Healing Places*, 30) it could sometimes take up to four months before there was either place or that suppliants felt 'their auguries were favourable'.

<sup>36</sup> Caton, "Two Lectures On," *ibid*.

<sup>37</sup> Mark Cartwright, "Epidaurus," *Ancient History Encyclopaedia* (June 2012), accessed April 4, 2020, <https://www.ancient.eu/epidaurus/>.

<sup>38</sup> And its later daughter sanctuaries elsewhere.

<sup>39</sup> For a more detailed discussion of the nature and function of the Epidaurian iamata in particular, see J.-M. van der Molen, "The Language of Asclepius: The Role and Diffusion of the Written Word in—and the Visual Language of—the Cult of Asclepius," part of course *Text, Language & Religion* (Groningen University: Academia, 2019), 1-5.

cure.<sup>40</sup> An example of a patient or suppliant who came to the Epidaurian Asclepeion and whose enkoimesis was recorded on one of the iamata stelai, is that of Alketas.<sup>41,42</sup>

Ἀλκέτας Ἀλικός· οὗτος τυφλὸς ἔὼν ἐνύπνιον εἶδε· ἐδόκει οἱ ὁ θεὸς ποτελθῶν τοῖς δα-κτύλοις διάγειν τὰ ὄμματα καὶ ἰδεῖν τὰ δένδρα πρώτον τὰ ἐν τῷ ἱερῷ. ἀμέρας δὲ γε-νομένης ὑγιῆς ἐξῆλθε.

‘Alketas of Halieis: this man, being blind, saw a dream. It seemed to him that the god came to him and opened his eyes with his fingers, and that he first saw the trees in the sanctuary. When day came he left well.’

And although each iama that deals with a suppliant’s story is unique, there’s something generic about them. When it comes to the nature of these healing inscriptions, *most* of them describe things that we would now look upon not as the work of a physician, but of a miracle worker. For example, Diodorus Siculus even mentions the Epidaurian sanctuary’s healers as having carried out one of the world’s first procedures to change a person’s sex. Siculus writes: “There was an Epidaurian Callo, (...) who was supposed to be a girl. (...) A certain apothecary, who offered to cure her, cut into the swollen area [genitalia], whereupon a man's privates were protruded. (...) He had received a female

invalid and made her into a healthy young man.”<sup>43</sup> The most recurring theme with the Epidaurian iamata in particular however, is its describing of suppliants being visited by Asclepius in their *dreams* or in a *vision*, to either instruct them on how to rid *themselves* of their ailments or, as in the case of Alketas, cure the patient directly by means of a surgical procedure or simply, by mere touch.

Furthermore, this concept of gods appearing to people in their dreams to either cure or bless them, wasn’t unique to Greece. For example the Egyptian Apollo, *Horus*, or indeed the Greco-Egyptian god Serapis, were also known as ‘healing deities’ or ‘personal gods’ that would present themselves to worshipers in their reveries or dreams, healing them in some form or other.<sup>44</sup> Unlike Horus or Serapis however, Asclepius was *specifically* attuned to the arts of healing. Now, there are, quite plainly, at least three continuously observable historical constants that we can count on to have mobilized members of social, cultural, religious, political or commercial classes across the Aegean or indeed anywhere, to move from one distant place to another.

<sup>40</sup> Pausanias, Book 2, XXVII, 3-4.

<sup>41</sup> Francisco Barrenechea, “Sanctuary Influence in Classical Representations of Incubation: The Motif of the Witness Awake,” *Phoenix* 70, no. 3/4 (Fall-Winter 2016): 257.

<sup>42</sup> *IG IV<sup>2</sup>* 1, 121.120–122 (also designated ‘XVIII’).

<sup>43</sup> Diodorus Siculus, Book XXXII, 11.1-2.

<sup>44</sup> John Evan Stambaugh, *Sarapis Under the Early Ptolemies. Études Préliminaires Aux Religions Orientales Dans L’empire Romain* (Leiden: Brill Archive, 1972), 2.

These constants (or, motives) are the urge to seek *glory through conquest, wealth through commerce* and, relevant to the story of Epidaurus: *wellness and fortune through divinity*. If you were a denizen of say, Cilicia, struck by disease and in desperate need of a medical solution, you would be highly motivated to find your way to one of the Asclepieia you may very well have heard so much about. And if you really wanted to make your survival a sure thing, the *only* place you would want to end up in, was the place with the reputation of being the Asclepeion of Asclepieia, housing the abaton of abata—Epidauria, the land of the god-physician himself.

It is not hard to see why, as Caton said, people from all over the Aegean and perhaps even the entire Hellenistic world, would want to have travelled to Epidaurus' Asclepeion for treatment in its abaton. And that was not even the only reason to visit the sanctuary. Now that we know Asclepieian pilgrims with health concerns had clear motive, the same could perhaps be said of religiously motivated pilgrims, tourists and leisure travelers.<sup>45</sup> Which brings us to the enclosure's tholos. Unlike

<sup>45</sup> After all, there was also a festival of Asclepius, called the *Epidauria*, held right in the middle of the Eleusinian Mysteries, catering to exactly those kinds of audiences.

with the abaton and the temple to Asclepius, the tholos' purpose has yet to become obvious. Pausanias reports on it as a 'building of white marble,' with in it two pictures by Pausias<sup>46</sup>, one of them 'representing Love<sup>47</sup>, who cast aside his bow and arrows, and is carrying instead of them a lyre that he has taken up.'<sup>48</sup> Gesler refers to the tholos as having been 'the most beautiful building in the complex,' and as both 'awe-inspiring and functional.'<sup>49</sup> He refrains however, from speculating as to what that function *was*. A.M. Robinson mentions that besides being there simply to attract sanctuary visitors and suppliants so that they may educate themselves on past medical interventions by Asclepius, the building may have served as a sacrificial altar<sup>50</sup>, or as the place where the god's 'sacred snakes were kept.'<sup>51</sup> Caton adds that Defrasse and Lechat initially thought it a 'drinking-fountain, a pump-room of sorts.'<sup>52</sup> However, Caton

<sup>46</sup> Famous 4<sup>th</sup> century Greek painter.

<sup>47</sup> As 'Love' is spelled with a capital 'L', it may be assumed he refers to the god Eros.

<sup>48</sup> Pausanias, Book 2, XXVII, 3-4.

<sup>49</sup> Gesler, *Healing Places*, 29, 40.

<sup>50</sup> G.W. Elderkin seconds the idea that there was an altar present in the tholos, but goes further to argue that the tholos *is actually the abaton* and the stelai found inside it, a guestbook to record suppliants' dealings with Asclepius at their departure. See George W. Elderkin, "Tholos and Abaton at Epidaurus," *American Journal of Archaeology* 15, no. 2 (April – June 1911): 164-167.

<sup>51</sup> Alice M. Robinson, "The Cult of Asklepius and the Theatre," *Educational Theatre Journal* 30, no. 4 (December 1978): 534.

<sup>52</sup> Architect Alphonse Defrasse, and archaeologist Henri Lechat, as mentioned by Caton (*The Temples and Ritual*, 11).



submits, this can be ruled out because the labyrinth-like structure beneath, isn't built to hold water, and is more likely to have had some sort of (symbolical) association 'with a mysterious Asclepieian rite'—while the tholos above ground was indeed 'employed for minor sacrifices'. If not, I myself suggest the tholos may have had an additional, secondary purpose. The tholos is the most embellished and architecturally elaborate of the structures in the enclosure, as well as—looking at the outline overview in *fig. 2*—right in the *center* of it. Since it housed at least two of the stone stelai<sup>53</sup> Pausanias speaks of, might it not simply have been the Greek sanctuary's version of an athlete's trophy cabinet? After all, the iamata that tell the success stories of patients that left the Epidaurian sanctuary as cured individuals, could have been more than just records and a collection of testimonials to serve as advertisements. Like the sportsman winning a medal, every suppliant that woke from his incubation ailment-free, was surely a point of pride for Asclepius, and as such an accomplishment for the sanctuary's priests. And why wouldn't *they* want recognition for

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<sup>53</sup> Excavated by Panagiotis Kavvadias at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, published in his *Fouilles d'Epidaure* (1891).

it?<sup>54</sup> Or at least be openly content to have lived up to their reputation? And if so, that *would* make it seem appropriate to have put a part of the inscriptions that attest to the priests' achievements on display at the center of the enclosure.

Whatever this building's purpose was, or however beautiful in shape, the tholos is reported by both Pausanias and contemporary sources as playing second fiddle to the beauty of what *did* survive the test of time: Polyclitus' theatre at Epidaurus (depicted at the bottom-right corner of *fig. 1*). With its 55 semicircular marble rows, approximately 15.000 to 20.000 seats as well as being the *only* theatre left with its round 'dancing circle' completely intact, it's been described as 'well worth seeing'<sup>55</sup>, 'the most beautiful and symmetrically perfect of all of the extant Greek theatres'<sup>56</sup> and, even, 'the most beautiful and best preserved theatre of the ancient world.'<sup>57</sup> And although the theatre may seem less related to the sanctuary grounds as it has itself little to do with the topic of

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<sup>54</sup> According to G.B. Risse, the local priests were 'vigorous' advertisers: even aiming to elevate Asclepius to becoming a 'national god'. Supposedly, all for monetary gains. See Guenter B. Risse, *Asclepius at Epidaurus: The Divine Power of Healing Dreams* (San Francisco: University of California, 2008), accessed April 4, 2020, [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/273440826\\_Asclepius\\_at\\_Epidaurus\\_The\\_Divine\\_Power\\_of\\_Healing](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/273440826_Asclepius_at_Epidaurus_The_Divine_Power_of_Healing).

<sup>55</sup> Pausanias, Book 2, XXVII, 5.

<sup>56</sup> Robinson, "The Cult of Asklepius," 530.

<sup>57</sup> Richard Hornby, "Historic Theatres," *The Hudson Review* 49, no. 4 (Winter 1997): 645.

healing, it was just as connected to the divine immanence of Asclepius as any other building in or outside of Asclepius' enclosure. For example, as the enclosure was 'developed around a sacred well'<sup>58</sup>, so too was the theatre built 'near a spring believed in ancient times to hold wondrous healing powers'.<sup>59</sup>

But, more relevant an answer to the question of why the sanctuary at Epidaurus was decided to be a good place for a theatre is that, according to Robinson, the Epidaurian healing cult saw its prominence peak during the same time<sup>60</sup> the 'great classic dramatists were writing'—of which many referred to Asclepius.<sup>61</sup> Dramatists whose works' observers only added to the Asclepieia's word of mouth marketing. And although on the surface of it this may seem trivial, it does go to show that via such works Epidaurus' patenting of Asclepius as its showpiece asset, was afforded a lot of free name branding. Aristophanes even wrote a play set in Athens, called *Plutus*, involving the god's healing

powers and tolerance for fart jokes.<sup>62</sup> (Indicative of the demigod's commonplace presence in the Greek cultural space.)

At any rate, it may be established that ever since the region of Epidauria's small, pre-15<sup>th</sup> century BC beginnings as a brutal and unremarkable place with a tradition of human sacrifice, it had flourished to become 'a locale for athletic and dramatic performances' and an esteemed healing center and recreational resort, having 'replaced ritual death with the manipulation of toxins in the service of medicine.'<sup>63,64</sup> Epidaurus' rise to prominence seems easily explicable now, from the perspective of it having been somewhat of an innovator or 'disruptor'<sup>65</sup> to the more conventional sanctuary model<sup>66</sup>, successfully *bringing together* wellness, recreation, gymnastics, entertainment, culture and worship into *one* place.

As M. Scott puts it, over the 'recent decades (...) there has been a much wider recognition of the flexible and indeed indeterminate nature of sacred spaces and what is necessary for a sanctuary to be a

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<sup>58</sup> Psychogiou, "Sanctuary of Asklepios."

<sup>59</sup> Hornby, *ibid.*

<sup>60</sup> The 4<sup>th</sup> century BC, and indeed during the same time other—though less prominent—healing sanctuaries such as the Amphiareion of Oropos enjoyed increased popularity as well. See F.T. van Straten, "Votives and Votaries in Greek Sanctuaries (with Discussion)," in *La Sanctuarie grec*, ed. Albert Schachter, 247-290. Entretiens sur l'antiquité classique 37 (Geneva, Switzerland: Fondation Hardt, 1990), 257.

<sup>61</sup> Robinson, *ibid.*

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<sup>62</sup> Aristophanes, "Plutus," in *the Internet Classics Archive* (2009).

<sup>63</sup> Ellens, *Seeking the Sacred*, 71.

<sup>64</sup> Caton, *The Temples and Ritual*, 29.

<sup>65</sup> Marketing term referring to an entity creating a service or way of doing things that displaces the existing, industry-standard services or ways of doing things.

<sup>66</sup> Risse, *Asclepius at Epidaurus*.

sanctuary.<sup>67</sup> Moreso, the way we look at sanctuaries such as the one at Epidaurus has also developed from simply confining it to a narrow ‘type’-category, to instead looking at how the multifunctional role of a sanctuary could ‘act as more than one ‘type’ of sanctuary’<sup>68</sup>—in the case of Epidaurus’ Asclepeion, as the local sanctuary literally at the heart of its home region, while simultaneously being an inter-urban<sup>69</sup> ‘Panmediterranean’<sup>70</sup> sanctuary. After all, drawing people in from all around the Aegean, Epidaurus’ sanctuary’s *status inter fana* as being of the greatest renown<sup>71</sup>, had led to the Epidaurian cult’s expansion into such places as ‘Calaenae, between Dyme and Patrae, Kos, Athens, Messene, Lebene, Balagrae and Rome,’<sup>72</sup> resulting in a network of Asclepieia dispersed across the Mediterranean. A *network*, in short, of sanctuaries all devoted to

the *same thing*. And Epidaurus, if not its founding member, would seem to have been its nucleus—inviting travel, athletic contest, trade<sup>73</sup> and cultural, religious and medical tourism.<sup>74</sup>

<sup>67</sup> Mike Scott, “Temples and Sanctuaries,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Ancient Greek Religion*, eds. Esther Eidinow and Julia Kindt (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 228.

<sup>68</sup> Scott, “Temples and Sanctuaries,” 229.

<sup>69</sup> Nanno Marinatos, and Hägg Robin, *Greek Sanctuaries: New Approaches* (London: Routledge, 1995), 179-180.

<sup>70</sup> A term of my own devising. As Delphi was considered ‘Panhellenic’—of meaning and importance to all Greeks or Greece—Epidaurus’ sanctuary was known to and of great inspiration to peoples even beyond the Aegean. As established at the beginning, from the ‘Argolid Peninsula to Asia Minor and the shores of Northern Africa’ (p. 1).

<sup>71</sup> The *Asclepieia* also refer to the religious festivals that were hosted at temples devoted to Asclepius which, testimony to its renown, were also referred to as the *Epidauria*. See Arthur Fairbanks, “On the Festival Epidauria at Athens,” *The Classical Review* 14, no. 8 (November 1900): 424-427.

<sup>72</sup> William Smith, *A Dictionary of Greek and Roman Biography and Mythology* (London, United Kingdom: John Murray, 1880), 45-46.

<sup>73</sup> I suggest an increase in trade as one of the side-effects of Epidaurus’ rise to prominence, as commerce happened to have *already* been of importance to Epidaurus (via its capital’s harbour linking it to the Aegean trade network) long before the Epidaurian cult of Asclepius was. See Cartwright, “Epidaurus.”

<sup>74</sup> Coincidentally of interest here, may be the introductory paper I wrote on tourism in antiquity, which goes not into inter-urban trans-Mediterranean cult-travel, but the further development of tourism in relation to Christian religious travel in the 4<sup>th</sup> century AD. See J.-M. van der Molen, “Travel and Tourism in Late Antiquity: Aspects of the Rapid Development of Christian Religious Travel,” part of research seminar *The Connected Sea: Migration and Mobility in the Ancient Mediterranean* (Groningen University: Academia, 2020), 1-5.

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