

STUDIES IN PHYSICAL CULTURE AND TOURISM

Vol. 15, No. 2, 2008

ALEXANDROS KRITIKOS<sup>1</sup>, ALEXANDRA BEKIARI<sup>1</sup>, KONSTANTINOS FAMISSIS<sup>1</sup>, NIKITAS NIKITARAS<sup>2</sup>, KIMON SAKELLARIOU<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>University of Thessaly, Department of Physical Education and Sports Science

<sup>2</sup>Kapodistrian University of Athens, Department of Physical Education and Sports Science

**ASCLEPIUS. THE “ANAX OF TRIKKI” AS A SYMBOL  
OF SPORTS EDUCATION**

**Key words:** Asclepius, Trikki, Greek mythology, body culture, sports education.

ABSTRACT

The article examines the relationships between Asclepius and Trikki, Asclepius' place in Greek mythology and history, and Asclepius' significance for sports education. The research focuses on the discovery of the Trikkeos Asclepius sanctuary, the most ancient sanctuary in Greece, and description of rituals and cults related to diagnostic and therapeutic medicine, prayers, dreams, divination, gymnastics and nutrition. These issues were also related to the sources of athletics and sports pedagogy. The research was based on literary, archaeological, monetary and mythological sources and works on religious studies, in particular, L. Preller (1964) and R. Graves (1998).

THE LINK BETWEEN ASCLEPIUS  
AND TRIKKI

“Not only was Thessaly the cradle and the anchor point of Hellenism, but it was also the birthplace of medicine, because medicine as a science prospered for the first time in Thessaly. The first medical personalities appeared in this area, such as the wisest Centaur Chiron and the illustrious son of Thessalian Trikki, the doctors' first ancestor, the Divine Asclepius. Asclepius was Chiron's student, practiced medicine systematically in Trikki and bequeathed it to all the Greeks” [17].

According to literary sources, e.g. Pausanias' *Description of Greece* [25], mentioned by Preller and Thomson [35, 42]: “Δείκνυται δ' εν τη Γερηνία Τρικκαίον ιερόν Ασκληπιού αμφίδρυμα του εν τη Θεσσαλική Τρίκκη” (“They show a sanctuary dedicated to Asclepius in Gerinia, a ‘replica’ of the sanctuary situated in Thessalian Trikki”) [39].

The acknowledgment of the aforementioned sources by Preller and Thomson, as well as by other researchers make them most accurate and credible. According to the excerpt by Strabo above (also referred to by Thomson) there are three important contexts of Asclepius: a) Asclepius Sanctuary; b) Asclepius Cult and c) Trikkeos Asclepius [42].

The mentioned sanctuary dedicated to Asclepius (a temple, oracle or any other type of sacred place), is still being searched for. So far archeological excavations run by the Archaeological Service of Trikki have revealed only a small part of it. Thus, the cult of Trikkeos Asclepius can be best reconstructed on the basis of Greek mythology and other Asclepius' sanctuaries in Greece.

The sanctuary dedicated to Trikkeos Asclepius is regarded as the “αρχαιότατον και επιφανέστατον”, i.e. “the most ancient and most renowned” [36]. Preller emphasizes that among Asclepius' numerous worship and therapeutic

places, the oldest one was Trikki in Ano Thessaly [35, 38]. In the epic myths, Trikki is the famous birthplace of the two warriors-Asclepiads (Asclepius' sons and members of his retinue), Podalirios and Machaon, who were diligent doctors [10]. Later on, according to various narratives, Asclepius' birth took place in Trikki. Strabo mentions the Litheos river as Asclepius' birthplace: "Ἐτερος δ' ἐστὶ Ληθαῖος ποταμός οὗ περὶ τὴν Τρίκκην, ἐφ' ᾧ ὁ Ἀσκληπιὸς γεννηθῆναι λέγεται" ("There is another river Litheos around Trikki, where it is said that Asclepius was born") [40]. Moreover, the sanctuaries and infirmaries in the Trikki area, which are interrelated, have always been frequently visited, according to the evidence provided both by Strabo and descriptions on local coins.

Apart from Trikki, there were also other areas of Asclepius worship in Thessaly, as shown on coins, such as Krannon, Ferres and the Magnesia peninsula. Thus Trikkeos Asclepius could be both a sanctuary dedicated to Asclepius and the cult of Asclepius [35].

The question remains whether the term "Trikkeos" is an attributive adjective referring to the sanctuary and the cult, or the name of Asclepius' birthplace. According to ancient traditions of Trikki, the term "Trikkeos" had both meanings. As a matter of fact, "Trikkeos" as the name of Asclepius' birthplace has served as the oldest explanation for Asclepius' sanctuary in Trikki. The term Asclepius' "sanctuary" is an age-old term known in archaeology, mythology, science of religion and literature of ancient Greece. Since the Trikki sanctuary seems to be age-old, the term "Sanctuary" seems to be related to the term "Temeno" (temple) found on the ceramic tablets from Pilos and Knossos from the Cretan-Mycenaean period. The evolution of ancient Greek sanctuaries and, more specifically, of other Asclepius' sanctuaries, began with the construction of small sanctuaries which yielded large clusters of buildings, including altars, temples, dormitories and shelters and, in Asclepius' case, places of physical and mental therapy, with baths, gymnasiums, walks and other therapeutic facilities. Consequently, it was possible that a sort of large "Sanctuary" existed in Trikki, but it still must be investigated by the Archaeological Service of Trikki. The term "cult" concerns local and general devotional celebrations of Asclepius, but also worship associated with healing.

The aforementioned assumptions seem valid and substantiated in literature [35]. Strabo writes [37] that "ἡ ἑσθλὴ Πάϊον, ὅς μιν ἐκ Τρίκκης" ("and Asclepius who came here from Trikki"), "Χαίροις ἀναξ Πάϊον, ὅς μιν ἐκ Τρίκκης" ("Be well, 'anax' Paion, protector of Trikki"), "εἴτε σε Τρικκαῖοι δαίμων ἔχουσι λόφοι ἢ Ρόδος ἢ Βούρινα" ("whether the hills of Trikki have you as a protector or Rhodes or Vourina" – the latter being the name of a mineral water spring on the island of Kos), "καὶ ἀγχιάλη Ἐπίδουρος" ("or seaside Epidauros") "εἴτ' ἐφέπεις Τρίκκης ἱερῆς ἔδος εἴτ' ἐρατεινὴν Πέργαμον εἴτ' ἐπὶ τοῖσιν Ἰαονίαν Ἐπίδουρον" ("whether you govern the land of sacred Trikki or beloved Pergamon or some places of Epidauros in Ionia").

According to Herodas [9], there was a devotional invocation to Asclepius, which indicates the existence of the cult of Asclepius at the "sanctuary" of Trikki. In this glorifying invocation Asclepius is mentioned as a) Anax, b) Paion, or c) "Protector of Trikki". The term "Anax" is, according to Gazis's dictionary (1839), a title given to a god, earthly king, king's son or spouse, leader, ruler, nobleman, chief of a town, host, master of a slave, supervisor, ephor, governor or anyone with power over people. The term "Anax" is directly related to the word WANAKA (WANAX) = Ἀναξ found on the ceramic tablets from Pilos. This term was used for Apollo, whose relationship with Asclepius is known. It indicated an oracle, in the well-known excerpt by Heraclitus [8]: "Ἀναξ, οὐ, το μαντεῖον ἐστὶ το ἐν Δελφοῖς, οὔτε λέγει οὔτε κρύπτει ἀλλὰ σημαίνει" ("Anax (King) Apollo, whose Oracle is in Delphi, neither says overtly nor secretly, but gives indications"). Therefore, the invocation to Asclepius of Trikki using the name Anax leads to an assumption that there may have been an oracle at the seat of the Trikki sanctuary.

The term "Paion", according to Gazis's dictionary (1839), means "doctor, healer, Apollo as god of Medicine, assistant, saviour, the adjective of every doctor". It can also be found on the ceramic tablets from Knossos-Pilos from the Cretan-Mycenaean period and it signifies an attendant doctor, assistant, or Saviour, and is connected with the local cult of Asclepius, cures and infirmaries.

In the expression "Protector of Trikki", the noun "protector" derives from the verb "protect", which in ancient Greek was "medo" (the verb "medis" in the text is second person singular of the verb and means, "to rule, reign, care for, lead,

progress, govern, dominate” according to Gazis’s dictionary; and “prevail over mortals and gods”, according to Homer.) The origin of the noun “mitis” is the verb “medo”, and “mitis” means “care, wisdom, occupation, interest, brilliance, etc.” It indicates the relationships between Anax and Hestia, similar to those of a community or society with a patron saint.

## ASCLEPIUS IN GREEK MYTHOLOGY

Asclepius’ medical training and general education, according to tradition and the myth, was assigned by Apollo to wise Chiron with by way of a special spirit. Under Chiron’s guidance Asclepius perfected his skills in healing human diseases on Mount Pilio, which was regarded as an inexhaustible source of healing herbs. After his studies, he went back to his birthplace, Trikki, where he started the great, universal work of medicine [17].

Asclepius collected his first healing herbs from Mount Kerketion, today’s Mount Koziakas, which, like Mount Pilio, was also abundant in them. Since, however, every intervention of a human with special gifts had a theocratic dependence, the packaging and the processing of those famous herbs had to be kept away from the mortals [43]. Thus, the famous “farmakotrivia” (from the Greek words “farmako” = “drug” and “trivo” = “grind”), i.e. places where medicines were produced, were founded far away in Porta Panagia, in Fiki and mainly in Pialia, and from there they were brought to Trikki, where Asclepius established the first “igiinothrapeftirio” (clinic, hospital, from the Greek “igiinos” = “healthy” and “therapeftirio” = “clinic”, “hospital”). According to the archaeologist Ziakas, forty-three varieties of healing herbs can still be found today on Koziakas, in particular, in the area of Pialia [43].

## TRADITION AND THE MYTH CONCERNING ASCLEPIUS’ TOMB IN PIALIA

According to tradition and the myth, Asclepius’ tomb is situated in Pialia between two streams, at the sites Ftelea and Paleokastro. The excavation at Ftelea and Paleokastro brought to light a relief with Asclepius’ symbols [16]. The relief depicts Artemis sitting in a cave with a dog – Asclepius’ symbol – at her feet and a quiver on her right shoulder. She is accompanied by two nymphs

bearing the same distinctive symbols which give evidence of the existence of a therapeutic centre. Besides a number of ancient writers (Livios, Leak, etc.) referred frequently to the aforementioned sites in the area of Pialia, which can be then confronted with archeological excavations [43]. It all reinforces the views about the existence of the first significant “farmakotrivia” in those places, which greatly contributed to the prosperity and reputation of the “αρχαιότατου και επιφανέστατου του Ασκληπιείου Τρίκης” (“most ancient and most renowned Asclepieion, i.e. sanctuary/cult centre named after Asclepius, of Trikki”). Its association with the great doctor’s therapeutic abilities in all forms of healing (pathological, surgical, psychiatric), gave an impression that he had some kind of divine power. His reputation spread quickly beyond the boundaries of Trikki, all over Thessaly, Greece and the then world known to people.

Thus Trikki became a universal shrine and Asclepius became a great doctor of humanity. He combined his ideas with the knowledge he had obtained from Chiron – the wise and “fairest of all Centaurs” [15] and who, according to Pindarus, “των φαρμάκων μαλακόχειρα νόμων” (“taught the soothing qualities of drugs to Asclepius”) and also taught medicine to heroes [26] and dealt with the whole of empirical medicine “of those who cut the roots of the plants and used them for medical purposes.” According to Plato [34], Asclepius cured people’s illnesses. Moreover, he “προήγαγε την τέχνην επί τοσούτον, ώστε ως αρχηγόν αυτής και κτίστην τιμάσθαι” (“promoted the medical science to such a great extent that he is regarded as its founder and reformer”) and invented “την χειρουργικήν και τας των φαρμάκων σκευασίας και ριζών δυνάμεις” (“surgery, drug doses and the healing qualities of the roots”) [5]. In the 13<sup>th</sup> century B.C. he created the first “Anaklinterio” (from the Greek “anaklinterio” i.e. sofa, couch, bed) in Trikki, i.e. a room with beds for patients, and an “egimitirio” (Greek “kimamai” – “sleep”) for application of psychotherapy. During all that period, he “literally acted as a great doctor and as an excellent master” [33]. The “anaklinterio” of Trikki and more than three hundred other known anaklinteria were founded as an imitation of the first one and were appropriately named Asclepieia in the 7<sup>th</sup> century. The most significant were those of Trikki, Epidauros and Cos. The Asclepiads nursed patients at the Asclepieion of Trikki, by means of

strengthening of the faith and cure with pure methods and drugs [43].

## ASCLEPIUS IN HISTORICAL SOURCES

There were sanctuaries of Asclepius in Thessaly [35], Krannonia, Ferres, Magnesia, Fokida (Tithorea) where Asclepius was called “Αρχαγέτας” (“Archagetas”) [22], Elatia [23], Stira, Lokrida, Amfissa and in Nafpaktos [24] as well as in Boeotia (Orchomenos) and Ietos. The Asclepieion of Epidauros surpassed all the other sanctuaries in terms of its glory [35]. The cult of Asclepius of Epidauros spread all over Greece, extended up to Sikeona, Athens, Trizina, Killini, Pergamum, Rome and other regions and was associated with the Asclepieion of Trikki. In Epidauros, patients brought many votive offerings, which were paintings or commemorative stones, “iamata” (from the Greek word “iasis”, which means “healing”), which were regarded as part of the treatment. These votive offerings can be also found in Cos, as well as in Trikki. In Messinia in Girinia, a cult of Asclepius of Trikki was found as well as a monument of Asclepiad Machaon. Furthermore, Asclepius enjoyed a cult following in Avia-Aulona and Asclepius [21], as well as in Lakonia, Sparta, Assopos and many other areas [20]. In Athens, the cult of Asclepius was a part of the Eleusinian mysteries [35]. Moreover, there was “Ασκληπιεῖον τῷ ἐν Ἀστει” (“Asclepieion in the city of Athens”) as a sanctuary and memorial. There was a famous Asclepieion in Cos – “the large Asclepieia” [41], which was the center of scientific medicine of Hippocrates’ Asclepiads. There was a sanctuary dedicated to Asclepius in Rhodes as well as in Crete, Libya and Kirini [3]. There was another famous Asclepius’ sanctuary in Pergamon, where he was called “Ζεὺς Ασκληπιός” (“Zeus Asclepius”) and “Σωτήρ Ασκληπιός” (“Saviour Asclepius”) [35]. The Asclepieion of Smyrna had its origins in the Asclepieion of Pergamum.

The basis of the cult of Asclepius was nature, pure air, clean, spring water, mild sunlight, which was actually the original meaning of the name Asclepius (from the Greek adjective “ipios” i.e. “mild”, “soft”, “soothing”) [35]. This is the reason why Asclepius’ sanctuaries were created on knolls with clean waters and healthy air and climate: “καὶ γὰρ Ἕλληνες ἐν τόποις καὶ καθαροῖς καὶ υψηλοῖς

ἐπιεικῶς ἰδρυμένα τὰ Ασκληπιεῖα ἔχουσιν” (“Thus the Greeks build the Asclepieia in clean places and at a medium altitude”) [35]. The treatment that took place at the Asclepieia was based on even earlier traditions and was connected with faith and traditions, i.e. with Asclepius’ sons and descendants as well as with scientific medicine. The most ancient representatives of this tradition were called “Παῖηνες” (“Paiones”), i.e. Saviour Doctors and “Ἱητῆρες” (“Itires”), i.e. “Healers”, just like Asclepius of Trikki [35]. They were surgeons and healers who healed wounds, talked with patients and cared for their souls.

Pindarus described Asclepius’ therapeutics by saying that he healed wounds and fevers by means of “magical songs, charms and psalmodies”, potions, herbs, cataplasms and incisions, i.e. by surgical procedures. Moreover, there was treatment by means of dreams, baths and herbs. The cult of Asclepius itself gave way to therapeutics and Asclepius was called attendant doctor, Saviour, Guardian and Doctor of the body and the soul [35] and “ὁ το παν ἄγων καὶ νέμων σωτήρ τῶν ὅλων καὶ φύλαξ τῶν ἀθανάτων” (“the one who manages everything and becomes the Saviour of all and the Guardian of the immortals”) [35]. Homer said about Asclepius that he acted as “ἀμύμων ἱητὴρ καὶ διδάσκαλος μέγας” (“an impeccable and irreproachable doctor and a great master”) [12], “ἱητρός γὰρ ἀνὴρ πολλῶν ἀντάξιός ἄλλων” (“because a competent doctor is equal to many others”, so that, by means of surgery, he can pull out arrows and powder soothing drugs on the wounds) [13]. Asclepius’ symbol was the snake, a symbol of renewal and the staff, because as a doctor he had to go from place to place. As we know from Plato’s *Defence*, a common sacrifice to Asclepius, was a rooster. Asclepius’ Andreades (statues) in Trikala, Epidauros, Kos and Pergamum are shining works of gold and ivory [35], which depict him sitting on the throne with the Snake; others depict him standing upright and thoughtful. He is usually bearded and looks like Zeus, however he has more friendly characteristics and a better posture and clothes and looks more like a philosopher. In other sanctuaries, he is portrayed as a young man [35]. Asclepius’ retinue is large and includes men and women. The most known female member was Ipioni, considered at times to be his wife and at other times his daughter. There were Igia (igia is the Greek word for “health”), who was also regarded at times as his daughter and at other

times as his wife, Iasso (from the Greek “iasis” meaning “healing”), Panacea (meaning “all-healing”) and Egli, and Akeso, who were regarded as his daughters. His escorts were called the Asclepiads and included Telesforos, Anesis, Darron and his sons, Podalirios and Machaon. In Athens, the cult of Asclepius was associated with the Cult of Athena and Igia [35].

## ASCLEPIUS IN LITERARY SOURCES

According to literary sources [27], Asclepius was Apollo and Koronida’s son. Koronida, a princess from Epidauros or from another place, was made pregnant by Apollo. When she fell in love with a mortal, Apollo killed her. He entrusted little Asclepius to Centaur Chiron, who taught him medicine. Asclepius, as a doctor, managed to resurrect a dead man by the name of Hippolytus. For his hubris, Zeus killed Asclepius with a thunderbolt. In revenge Apollo killed the Cyclops, Zeus’ sons. Homer refers to Asclepius as a great Doctor and father of Machaon and Podalirios [14], who started from Trikki as commanders with “thirty hollow ships” to fight in Troy [11]. The most ancient cult of Asclepius appeared in Trikki and from the 5<sup>th</sup> century B.C. it became widespread in the rest of Greece, the Peloponnesus, Athens, the Islands and Asia Minor. In Epidauros, Asclepius’ cult replaced Apollo’s cult. It spread to other regions from Epidauros.

The treatment at his sanctuaries started from the patient’s soul. After a long sleep in the Temple, Asclepius showed in the patient’s sleep the drug that he should take in order to be cured. Asclepius’ miracles were also mentioned as well as divinations in his sanctuaries with the characteristics of preventive medicine. Hippocrates’ Asclepiads, representatives of scientific medicine, considered themselves to be successors of Asclepius’ students.

A study of various local mythological cycles and the literary sources reveals the following complex description. Koronida was a title given to Athena [6]. The name “Koronida” comes from the Greek noun “koronida”, which means “coronet” and is a symbol of Apollo of Delphi. Following her infidelity, it became a symbol of the curse. Koronida was killed by Artemis’ arrows and after that Apollo sought to bring her back to life unsuccessfully. With Hermes’ help, he took the child she had in her womb, Asclepius, who was still

alive [32]. Then, Apollo took him to Centaur Chiron, where he was taught Medicine and hunting [1]. Asclepius was even able to resurrect dead people [4]. Lycurgus Kapaneus, Tindarios, Hippolytus and Orion were among those he resurrected [2]. However, Hades complained that his subjects were stolen from him. In fact Asclepius was accused of taking bribes for the miracles he performed. This is why Zeus threw a thunderbolt at him and killed him.

After that Zeus brought Asclepius back to life and in this way the prophecy by Chiron’s daughter, Enippi, came true. According to the prophecy Asclepius would become a God, would die and then he would get his divine nature back, thus renewing his destiny twice. Zeus placed Asclepius’ figure with the therapeutic snake and the staff among the stars [6].

The Thessalians said that Asclepius was born in Trikki, the Arcadians said that he was born in Arcadia and the Epidaurians in Epidauros, on Mount Titthio [19]. Apollo, despite the fact that he cursed the crow and killed Koronida for her illegal affair with Ischi, maintained the crow as an emblem of divination, but his priests found that for the diagnosis of their patients’ diseases, the interpretation of dreams was a simpler and more effective means than the enigmatic cawing of the birds. There are numerous Asclepius’ oracles, where people swarmed for help and cure and where they found out about their drugs in their dreams, following a fast [18]. In Sikeona, there was Asclepius’ idol. The crow, the idol and the snake give evidence that he was a divine, prophetic hero. The Epidaurians kept the snakes as symbols of renewal and they sent such a snake to Rome, with which the cult of Asclepius (known there as Aesculapius) spread.

Pindarus, a great lyric poet, described Asclepius’ birth and his therapeutics which, in some extreme situations, was taken as hubris and, as a result led to Asclepius’ punishment by Zeus [28]. The question is whether, with all the things that the greatest lyric poet, Pindarus, writes about Asclepius’ birth, works and punishment, Asclepius’ worship ritual is represented as it could have taken place probably at a sanctuary dedicated to him, for instance, at the “most renowned one” of Trikki.

Our assumption is that “Pindarus’ poetic newspaper” conceals an archaic ritual of Asclepius’ birth, work description, death and re-birth in one of his sanctuaries, like the one of Trikki. Thus

Pindarus [31] conceals an archaic devotional hymnography of the cult of Asclepius. The Pithian Ode provides the readers with the following information:

“I would like Chiron to be alive, who is lost now,... he, who once brought up even-tempered Asclepius, who gave the painless health, that hero who cured all diseases.

Before Flegias’ daughter with the beautiful horses gives birth to him, with Ilithia’s help, who stands by mothers, disciplined by Artemis’ golden arrows, from her room, she went down to Hades, with Apollo’s skills. The anger of the children of Zeus is not vain. But she disregarded him and foolishly went to bed with someone else, secretly, from her father and after she had had intercourse earlier with long-haired Phoebus and had inside her the God’s pure sperm, she waited neither for the wedding banquet nor for the choral wedding songs that her friends of the same age usually sing in the afternoon; she longed for those who were not there, as is the case with many people. There are foolish people among all people, because, by disgracing their family, they want all the things that are away from them and go after fruitless hopes in vain.

Beautiful-veiled Koronida became blind to such a great extent, because she went to bed with a stranger who came from Arcadia. But the God saw everything, the king of the temple, Loxias, as he was in the oracle where sacrifices take place, felt it unmistakingly, he had a symbol for his decision, his omniscient mind is not fooled by lies, no mortal or God fools him with thoughts and actions.

And then, when he realised the wicked deceit and the meeting of the stranger, Ischis, Elatos’ son, he sent to Lakeria his sister, wild with unquenched fury; this is where the maiden lived, at the steep lakeshores of Lake Viviida. Her fate, by turning into bad, disciplined her and many neighbours that were with her, were themselves lost; by a sparkle in the mountain a great flame appears and destroys a great forest.

But when the maiden’s relatives placed her on a pile of wood and wild flames surrounded her, Apollo said: “My soul cannot bear my sperm vanish by means of the cruelest death, along with the mother’s cruel punishment”. He spoke in this way and taking the first step took the baby from

the dead woman and the fire that was flaming up spread in front of him. He took the baby to Magnesia and brought it to the Centaur to teach him how to heal people’s diseases that involve a lot of pain” [29].

At this point, according to Pindarus, reasonable anger is being displayed. This happened, according to the poet, because it referred to Asclepius’ birth, to his mother’s death and the training by Chiron.

With regard to Asclepius’ actions as a doctor, it is mentioned in the second part of the Pindarus’ poetic hymnography that:

“And all those who went with wounds that their body created and of which they wanted to get rid, or annihilated by summer fever and winter freeze, he healed each one of them from different illnesses, others with soothing incantations, by giving to others emollient herbs to drink or by anointing drugs on their body and he healed others with an incision; however, knowledge is enslaved by profit” [30].

He is referring to the treatment of wounds or illnesses caused by summer or winter or other illnesses; and to soothing and emollient herbs, drugs and incantations. Finally, according to Pindarus, the benefits of therapeutics involve one hazard, which in the case of Asclepius, leads to his execution. It is hubris, the dead people’s resurrection, where the principle that the benefits of Medicine must be connected with wisdom and knowledge was violated. This is the reason why Trikkeos Asclepius was called “Ὁς μέδεις Τρίκκης” (“Protector of Trikki”), as he is the one who, with wisdom and sound judgment (“mitis”) leads the sanctuary of Trikki. Pindarus’ exhortation not to violate the link between profit, medical achievements and wisdom is: “Friend soul, do not pursue immortal life but try to achieve whatever can be achieved in real life”.

Pindarus’ poetic hymnography in relation to Asclepius’ hubris, which is connected with immortality on a medical basis, refers to the utmost command that man should not hurry towards immortality but towards whatever is possible for him to achieve in real life, in accordance with the Divine Law. This message by Pindarus, especially if it regards a ritual of Asclepius, is opportune teaching dealing with the contemporary achievements of Medicine.

## ASCLEPIUS' PLACE IN RELIGIOUS SCIENCE

A vivid account of Trikkeos Asclepius also emerges from a review of literary excerpts referring to the cult, from the standpoint of religious science. The account includes a sanctuary, oracle, Anax and attendant Doctor, Saviour, elevated worship place with the relevant climate, pure air and clean springs which “look like women’s breasts and water similar to milk springs from them” [35]. Moreover, there is also a chthonic sacred animal, the snake as Asclepius’ symbol, his staff, rituals in the sanctuary such as visits, purifications, sleep, dream interpretation, votive offerings, statues and a place with Pan-Hellenic characteristics.

The religious image of Trikkeos Asclepius draws significantly from comparative mythology, literature, Asclepius’ aesthetic and artistic processing, and of course Homer and Hesiod. With the help of accurate analysis methods “...the powerful basis of the primitive religious thought... can appear to us from many sources” [7]. There were, in ancient sanctuaries, devilish animals, such as the snake of Trikkeos Asclepius, which showed us the first religious world. Wherever we have similar cults, we also have dormitories for sacred and other human beings, God communities, sacred objects that demonstrate power and reinforcement, such as Asclepius’ staff, rituals, altars and worship [7]. In similar sanctuaries, we have springs and waters, where a ritual purification takes place there. It is related to misdeeds, diseases and offences, even to death, as well as to health, peace and uplift. The purification with water contributes to piety [7]. Almost all the ancient Greek Gods, like Asclepius with the snake as a symbol, featured other animal symbols, e.g. Zeus had the eagle and the bull, Apollo the wolf, Poseidon the horse, Athena the owl, Hera the cow, etc. The relationship between a divine person and a sacred animal is very old and has its origins in the proto-Hellenic era of zoomorphism or zoolatry [7]. Places related to the Sanctuary of Asclepius in Trikki and in other Thessalian places include oracles which are sacred places for divination and prediction of the coming events, ancient rituals, revelations, dream interpretation in the sanctuary by “prophets”, calendars, purifications, sacrifices and worship, alliances, community celebrations, music, dancing and mimicry, for example, the “amfiario” (sanctuary of Amfiaraos at Inoi, Boeotia) [7].

There were many and large adjacent places in these sanctuaries to be used as dormitories etc., where charismatic people and prophets acted and performed their tasks. The purifications in these places were performed not only by individual people but also by families and whole cities during important feasts [7]. These oracles were visited by pilgrims, people suffering from various illnesses, to see the attendant doctor and Saviour God and gain strength, be helped and be healthy again, gain clarity of mind and knowledge as well as political cohesion that contributed to a Pan-Hellenic conscience. During these visits, the Saviour God’s presence was intensely felt and people experienced God’s revelation. Thus the worship of Asclepius combined the worships of the Saviour, God, Health and Medicine during rituals in specific emergency situations [7].

## ASCLEPIUS' SIGNIFICANCE FOR SPORTS EDUCATION

God’s thematisation, in the form of a specific local and Pan-Hellenic hero and attendant doctor, like Trikkeos Asclepius, is an utmost conception of the body culture throughout the period of Ancient Greek civilisation. The thematisation of health, viewing man as the body and spirit in one, rituals, the study of body anatomy and movement physiology, the choice of appropriate places, climate, waters, nutrition and a relevant behaviour, were already known during the proto-Hellenic era in the context of music, dancing, games, entertainment, but also according to recent research, in the context of early games.

Trikkeos Asclepius in the context of Greek origins of sports education is an exemplary model of the relationship between health and body culture. The thematisation (elevation) of these relationships in sports pedagogy not only demonstrates a historical interest but also a systematic one, because the close relationships between health theory, physical exercise and athletics have been known since ancient times. What should be accepted is the overall consideration of the entirety of human existence, as well as their thematisation and understanding, within the framework of sports pedagogy and more generally, sports education. It is not indifferent to the health theory and history, considering the ways people view these issues in modern Europe.

## CONCLUSIONS

Trikkeos Asclepius featured such attributes as “Anax”, “Paion”, “Doctor”, “Saviour”, “Archagetas”, “Zeus” and “God”. Trikkeos Asclepius was related to the most ancient cult of Asclepius in Greece, with a relevant Sanctuary, Oracle and ritual involving worship, sacrifices, purifications, treatment, healing, accommodation and nutrition, community and local and Pan-Hellenic habits. The subject of Trikkeos Asclepius still requires a great deal of research of literary, mythological and religious studies sources. First and foremost, it requires further archaeological research which may reveal the factual role played by the Patron Saint of Trikki, the God of health and medicine. Finally, the objective of this research was to prove that the knowledge about Trikkeos Asclepius is not merely a matter for local historiography.

## REFERENCES

- [1] Apollodoros C 10, 3; Iginos myth 202.
- [2] Apollodoros C 10, 3-4; Iginos myth 49; Pindarus, Pithian Ode C 55.
- [3] Aristides XLV.
- [4] Diodoros Sikeliotis E 74, 6; Apollodoros Γ 10, 3; Euripides Ion, 999 and so on.
- [5] Eodoros Sikeliotis V 74, 6.
- [6] Graves R., ed., *Οι Ελληνικοί μύθοι* (The Greek myths), Kaktos, Athens 1998.
- [7] Heller F., ed., *Die Religionen Der Menschheit* (Religions of Mahnkind), (in:) Kurt Goldammer: *Die religion der Griechen* (Greek Relidion), Reclam-Verlag, Stuttgart 1962.
- [8] Heraclitus, Fr. 93.
- [9] Herodas, IV 1.
- [10] Iliad B 729, Δ 193, Α 833.
- [11] Iliad B 729-733.
- [12] Iliad D 194, 1518.
- [13] Iliad L 514.
- [14] Iliad Ψ 194, 11, 518.
- [15] Iliad, 1832.
- [16] Kastriotis P., ed., *Ασκληπιείο Τρίκκης* (Asklipieion Trikkis), Athens 1903.
- [17] Papastergiou K., ed., *Ασκληπιός-ο πρώτος Γιατρός χωρίς σύνορα* (Asclepius-the first Doctor without frontiers), Cultural Organisation of the Municipality of Trikkeon, Trikala 1998.
- [18] Pausanias A 34, 2; Herodotus H 134.
- [19] Pausanias B 26, 6, H 25, 6, C 14, 7, B 10, 3; Strabo ID 1, 39.
- [20] Pausanias IV 31, 6, 10, IV 30, 1.
- [21] Pausanias IV 36, 1.
- [22] Pausanias X 32, 12.
- [23] Pausanias X 34, 6.
- [24] Pausanias X 38, 13.
- [25] Pausanias, 3, 26, 9.
- [26] Pindarus, Nemean Ode 3 54-55.
- [27] Pindarus, Pithian Ode 3, 8 and so on; Apollodoros, *The Library* 3, 10, 3, and so on.
- [28] Pindarus, Pithian Ode III (Ieroni Sirakosio Keliti).
- [29] Pindarus, Pithian Ode III (Ieroni Sirakosio Keliti).
- [30] Pindarus, Pithian Ode III (Ieroni Sirakosio Keliti).
- [31] Pindarus, Pithian Ode III.
- [32] Pindarus, Pithian Ode Γ 8 and so on; Pausanias B 26, 5; Iginos myth 202; Ovidius *Transformations* II 612 and so on.
- [33] Plato, *Republic* I 599 A, Γ 405-408.
- [34] Plato, *The Banquet* 186 e.
- [35] Preller L., ed., *Griechise Mythologie* (Greek Mythology), Band I. S. AUF, Berlin-Zürich 1964.
- [36] Strabo *Geographica* IX 5, 17, Γ 437.
- [37] Strabo IX 437, Herodas II 97, IV 1.
- [38] Strabo IX 437.
- [39] Strabo VIII, 4, 4.
- [40] Strabo XIV 647.
- [41] Strabo XIV 657; Herodas IV.
- [42] Thomson G., ed., *Forschungen zur Altgriechischen Gesellschaft* (Research in the Ancient Greek Society), Band I Deb-Verlag, Westberlin 1980.
- [43] Ziakas G., ed., *Ο Ασκληπιός και το Ασκληπιείο της Τρίκκης* (Asclepius and the Asklipieion of Trikki), Cultural Organisation of the Municipality of Trikkeon, Trikala 1993.