

Asklepieion of Kos

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Entry tags: Roman Religions, Temenos, Greek Cult, Sacred Enclosure, Aegean, Graeco-Roman, Ancient Mediterranean, Archaeological Site, Shrine, Hellenistic Religions, Greek Religions, Temple, Religious Place, Religious Group, Sacred Land

The sanctuary of Asklepios, the Greek god of medicine and healing, of Kos is located on a hill approximately 3-4 km outside the ancient city of Kos. This city was founded in 366 BC after synoecism. The sanctuary was excavated by Rudolf Herzog in the beginning of the twentieth century. The excavations were continued by Italian archaeologists. Consisting of three main terraces, this sanctuary overlooks the city of Kos. There are four main building phases: 1) third century BC; 2) second century BC; 3) first century AD; 4) second-third century AD. Lamps found on the middle terrace date up until the fourth century AD (Interdonato, 2013, 116). The island was throughout its history hit by earthquakes that also damaged the sanctuary. It is very likely that the massive earthquake of 554 AD, that ravaged Kos, destroyed the sanctuary. An altar found on the second terrace dates to the mid-late fourth century BC (IG XII,4 1: 397) and is the earliest evidence of activity on the site, although the sacred grove might have been used earlier for worship of Apollo Kyparissos.



Date Range: 366 BCE - 400 CE

Region: Asklepieion of Kos

Region tags: Europe, Greece, Aegean

The archaeological site of the sanctuary Asklepios (Asklepieion) of Kos.

Status of Participants:

✓ Elite ✓ Religious Specialists ✓ Non-elite (common people, general populace)

General Variables

Sources and Excavations

Print Sources

Print sources used for understanding this subject:

- Source 1: Herzog, Rudolf, and Paul Schazmann. *Kos : Ergebnisse Der Deutschen Ausgrabungen Und Forschungen*. Berlin: Verlag von Heinrich Keller, 1932.
- Source 2: Herzog, Rudolf. *Heilige Gesetze Von Kos. Abhandlungen Der Preussischen Akademie Der Wissenschaften*, Jahrg. 1928. Philosophisch-Historische Klasse. Nr. 6. Berlin: Verlag der Akademie der wissenschaften, in kommission bei Walter de Gruyter u, 1928.
- Source 3: Interdonato, Elisabetta. *L'asklepieion Di Kos : Archeologia Del Culto. Supplementi E Monografie Della Rivista "Archeologia Classica"*, 12 = N.s. 9. Roma: "L'Erma" di Bretschneider, 2013.

Notes: Berve, Helmut, Gottfried Gruben, and Max Hirmer. *Griechische Tempel Und Heiligtümer*. München: Hirmer, 1961. Edelstein, Emma J, and Ludwig Edelstein. *Asclepius: A Collection and Interpretation of the Testimonies*. Ancient Religion and Mythology. New York: Arno Press,

1945/1975/1998. Herzog, Rudolf, and Klaffenbach Günther. *Asylieurkunden Aus Kos* [Von] Rudolf Herzog Und Güther Klaffenbach. *Abhandlungen Der Deutschen Akademie Der Wissenschaften Zu Berlin, Klasse Für Sprachen, Literatur Und Kunst*, Jahrg. 1952, Nr. 1. Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1952. Herzog, Rudolf. *Koische Forschungen Und Funde*. Leipzig: Dieterich, 1899. Höghammar Kerstin. *Sculpture and Society : A Study of the Connection between the Free-Standing Sculpture and Society on Kos in the Hellenistic and Augustan Periods*. *Acta Universitatis Upsaliensis*, 23. Uppsala: University of Uppsala, 1993. Krug, Antje. *Heilkunst Und Heilkult : Medizin in Der Antike*. 2., Durchges. und erw. Aufl ed. München: Beck, 1993. Müller, Asja. "Hellenistic Built Space and Human Action: The Asclepieion of Cos." In A. Haug and S. Merten (eds.), *Urban Practices. Repopulating the Ancient City, Studies in Classical Archaeology 8* (Turnhout 2020) 149-165 Paul Stéphanie. *Cultes Et Sanctuaires De L'île De Cos*. *Kernos, Supplément ; 28*. Liège: Centre International d'Étude de la Religion Grecque Antique, Presses Universitaires de Liège, 2013. Riethmüller Jürgen W. *Asklepios : Heiligtümer Und Kulte*. Vol. Bd. 2. *Studien Zu Antiken Heiligtümern*, 2'2. Heidelberg: Verlag Archäologie und Geschichte, 2005. Segre, Mario, and Dina Peppas Delmousou. *Iscrizioni Di Cos*. *Monografie Della Scuola Archeologica Di Atene E Delle Missioni Italiane in Oriente*, 6. Roma: "L'Erma" di Bretschneider, 1993. Sherwin-White, Susan M. *Ancient Cos : An Historical Study from the Dorian Settlement to the Imperial Period*. *Hypomnemata*, H. 51. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1978. Ploeg, Ghislaine E. van der. *The Impact of the Roman Empire on the Cult of Asclepius*. *Impact of Empire : Roman Empire, C. 200 B.c.-A.d. 476*, Volume 30. Leiden: Brill, 2018. Bosnakis, D. *To Ασκληπιείο Τησ Κω*. *Archaeological Institute of Aegean Studies* 2014 This list is by no means exhaustive, but includes the major works on Asklepios, the sanctuary and the island of Kos

Online Sources

Online sources used for understanding this subject:

– Source 1 URL: http://odysseus.culture.gr/h/3/eh351.jsp?obj_id=2395

– Source 1 Description: The Hellenic Ministry of Culture's description of the site

– Source 2 URL: http://cgrn.ulg.ac.be/browse/location/aegean_islands/provenance/kos/?pagination=1

– Source 2 Description: This website gives translated inscriptions for several inscriptions found in the Asklepieion

Has this place been the focus of excavation (pre-modern, illicit, or scientific):

Answer 'Yes' for each period or type of excavation.

– Yes



Type of excavation:

– Scientific



Years of excavation:

– Year range: Primary excavations: 1899-1905; 1912-1948; 2010-present

Notes: The excavation reports of 1899-1905 contain preliminary finds. The following book is therefore most useful: Herzog, Rudolf, and Paul Schazmann. *Kos : Ergebnisse Der Deutschen Ausgrabungen Und Forschungen*. Berlin: Verlag von Heinrich Keller, 1932. For the Italian excavations see: Livadiotti, Monica, and Giorgio Rocco. *La presenza italiana nel Dodecaneso tra il 1912 e il 1948: la ricerca archeologica, la conservazione, la scelte progettuali*. Catania: Edizioni del Prisma, 1996. For a summary of the excavations see chapter one in Interdonato, Elisabetta.

L'asklepieion Di Kos : Archeologia Del Culto. Supplementi E Monografie Della Rivista "Archeologia Classica", 12 = N.s. 9. Roma: "L'Erma" di Bretschneider, 2013. For the most recent excavations see the website of the University of Cologne: DFG-Project "Investigation on the Stratigraphy and Chronology of the Asklepieion of Kos" <https://archaeologie.phil-fak.uni-koeln.de/en/research/research-projects/finished/dfg-project-investigation-on-the-stratigraphy-and-chronology-of-the-asklepieion-of-kos>



Name of excavation

– Official or descriptive name: The excavation reports of 1899-1905 contain preliminary finds. The following book is therefore most useful: Herzog, Rudolf, and Paul Schazmann. Kos : Ergebnisse Der Deutschen Ausgrabungen Und Forschungen. Berlin: Verlag von Heinrich Keller, 1932. For the Italian excavations see: Livadiotti, Monica, and Giorgio Rocco. La presenza italiana nel Dodecaneso tra il 1912 e il 1948: la ricerca archeologica, la conservazione, la scelte progettuali. Catania: Edizioni del Prisma, 1996. For a summary of the excavations see chapter one in Interdonato, Elisabetta. L'asklepieion Di Kos : Archeologia Del Culto. Supplementi E Monografie Della Rivista "Archeologia Classica", 12 = N.s. 9. Roma: "L'Erma" di Bretschneider, 2013. For the most recent excavations see the website of the University of Cologne: DFG-Project "Investigation on the Stratigraphy and Chronology of the Asklepieion of Kos" <https://archaeologie.phil-fak.uni-koeln.de/en/research/research-projects/finished/dfg-project-investigation-on-the-stratigraphy-and-chronology-of-the-asklepieion-of-kos>

Topographical Context

Is the place associated with a feature in the landscape

- Elevation
- Tree, grove, or forest
- Water source



Type of elevation

- Hill

Does the place involve human-made features besides structure:

Other features might be ground clearing, terracing, other modifications of the local environment.

- Yes



Type of feature

- Terracing

Is the place situated in an urban or significantly urbanized area:

- No

Notes: ca. 3-4 km outside of the city of Kos

Is the place situated in a rural setting:

– Yes

↳ Are there settlements in close proximity to the place:

– Yes

↳ Are there routes of travel in close proximity to the place:

– Yes

Notes: Processional route from the city of Kos to the sanctuary

Is the place situated far removed from non-religious places of habitation:

– No

Structures Present

Are there structures or features present:

Instructions: Answer once for each structure/feature or group that can be differentiated.

– Yes

↳ A group of structures:

– Yes

↳ Are they part of a single design/construction stage:

– Yes

Notes: The Asklepieion has two primary building phases in the Hellenistic period: the first dating to the late fourth/third century BC. During this phase, the sanctuary as a whole was constructed as a unified complex. This included the terracing, the enclosing of the structure with at first wooden pi-like structures. On the second terrace the main cultic buildings were constructed: the main temple (temple B), altar, Building D (a banquet hall, sometimes also interpreted as an old abaton), Building E where votives/statues could be displayed and an exedra. Furthermore, the main waterfacilities (fountains, cisterns etc.) were constructed on various terraces. The sacred grove on top did not have any buildings except the surrounding wooden pi-like stoa until the second building phase. The second building phase dates to the second century BC and consisted of monumentalisation of the sacred space and adding several new buildings, such as staircases and a large new temple on the highest terrace. This second building phase is likely made more urgent due to a devastating earthquake in 198 BC. There are various inscriptions referring to repairs IG XII.4 311; CGRN 218; IG XII.4 294; IG XII.4 295. In the Roman imperial period, several new structures were added to the complex, of which most (except a new temple) is located on the edges of the temenos and just outside. A major addition were bathing facilities, that unfortunately made extensive use of older Greek inscriptions as its building material.

↳ A group of features:

– No

↳ Is it part of a larger place/sanctuary:

– No

Notes: The Asklepieion was not part of a larger sanctuary, but within the Asklepieion more deities than only Asklepios were honoured. His family: Apollo, Hygieia, Epione, Machaon and Podaleirius are attested to. Hekate, Helios and Hemera are found on the altar as well. There is a law concerning the fountain of the Nymphs. Several boundary stones (horoi) attest to some cultic function within the Asklepieion for various civic subdivisions. There is one Hellenistic dedication to Demeter and another to Hermes. Ruler cult for Hellenistic kings was present on Kos, but its place is disputed. A connection between Asklepios and Roman imperial cult is also attested to, but it is unclear if that cult was located in the Asklepieion.

↳ What is the function of the structure/feature or group:

Answer "Yes" once for each distinct function

– Worship

↳ Worship:

– Other [specify]: Both communal and more individual forms of worship coexist.

Notes: Large festivals and processions during these festivals would have included a sacrifice in the Asklepieion. There are also other processions like those of youths (ephebes) attested to. Incubation, sleeping in the hope of receiving a healing dream, is both communal - i.e. one becomes part of a special group of worshippers - but also individual - i.e. the dream and cure reflects personal concerns. The worship at the boundary stones (horoi) for ancestral gods for various civic subdivisions is communal, but it could have been a small community for each of the gods mentioned in the horoi.

↳ Is the structure/feature finished:

– Yes

↳ Was the structure/feature intended to last beyond a generation:

– Yes

↳ Was the structure/feature modified through time:

– Yes

Notes: see above on the building phases

↳ Was the structure/feature destroyed:

– Yes

↳ How was the structure/feature destroyed
–Other [specify]: Various earthquakes hit Kos in Antiquity and in later periods

↳ Was it destroyed deliberately:
–As the result of pillage
–Other [specify]: Re-use of inscriptions for the Roman baths
Notes: Pillage is primarily re-use of material for fortifications by the Knights of St. John

↳ Was it destroyed by accident/natural phenomena:
–Natural phenomena
Notes: Earthquakes

↳ Has the structure/feature been reconstructed:
– Yes

↳ In antiquity
– More than once
Notes: After the 198 BC earthquake, there is evidence of repairs taking place as well as the monumentalisation of the second century BC.

↳ In modernity
– Post-Renaissance

Reasons for Creation/Construction/Consecration

Is the place used for the worship of/communication with non-human supernatural beings:
– Yes

↳ Dedicated to a supernatural being:
– Yes [specify]: The main deity was Asklepios

↳ Dedicated to more than one supernatural being:
– Yes [specify]: Asklepios is the main deity. The grove was also sacred to Apollo Kyparissos. The sanctuary included fountains of Nymphs, the family of Asklepios (Hygieia, Epione, Podaleirius and Machaon). Helios, Hemera and Hekate were found on the altar; Demeter and Hermes on two separate dedications. Ancestral gods are attested to on the boundary stones, reserved for specific civic subdivisions.

Is the place used for the worship of a semi-divine human being:

– I don't know

Notes: Hellenistic kings and Roman emperors received worship on the island, but there is only circumstantial evidence for it.

Is the place used for the worship of non-divine ancestors:

– No

Was the place commissioned/built by an official political entity:

A political entity is a local power structure that leverages a workforce.

– Yes



Specify

– King or emperor

– Other [specify]: The Demos of Kos after synnoecism

Notes: The first building phase might have been sponsored to a degree by the Ptolemies; the second phase of the Hellenistic period by the Attalid dynasty.

Were the Structures built by specific groups of people:

– I don't know

Notes: The sanctuary was constructed as a cohesive building plan, thus it seems unlikely that there were specific groups of people involved in one building but not in the other. A redundant answer would be: builders and contractors. For other ancient sanctuaries there are in some instances building inscriptions that explicitly name contractors and where they came from, but for Kos, as far as I am aware, this is not the case.

Was the place thought to have originated as the result of divine intervention:

– I don't know

Notes: There was a sacred grove located on the site, which might have been the original reason to deem this place sacred.

Was the place created to mark or commemorate the birthplace of a supernatural or human being:

– No

Was the place created as the result of an event:

– I don't know

Notes: Indirectly one could argue yes. After the synnoecism of Kos in 366 BC, the earliest evidence for a religious centre also appears. The main building phase, however, only started in the late fourth/early third century BC.

Was the creation of the place sponsored by an external financial/material donation:

– I don't know

Notes: There are scholars who mention the close connection between the Ptolemies and Kos as an argument that they might have sponsored the building of the sanctuary in the late fourth/early third century BC. For the second Hellenistic building phase it seems that connections with the Attalid dynasty might have included some form of euergetism. By various kings and cities the sanctuary was deemed inviolable from 242 BC onwards. Without building inscriptions or direct mention of donations by Hellenistic kings, I left this answer as "I don't know". After the sanctuary was constructed, evidence of sponsoring or donations by private individuals is visible: people donated money to host the large Panhellenic festival in 242 BC. Private individuals are also attested to as providing money for sacrifices in the second century BC. Priests, upon buying their priesthood, could be responsible for repairs or dedications of specific objects. In the Roman period, under the local Koan doctor who became the imperial doctor of Claudius, Xenophon, Kos was granted various privileges. Xenophon built a library, the "Xenophon Niche" and some new water facilities. Here again, however, the main building phase was completed; only repairs, small additions and only a couple of new buildings can be attested to. Therefore, I believe "I don't know", for now, is the best option.

Was the establishment of the place motivated by:

– Other [specify]: Unclear

Notes: There is no motivation mentioned in sources as far as I am aware. The Greek religious system, however, is one of exchange. Honouring the god should give favors in return, but it is unclear if that was the motivation. It is, in fact, still very much under debate on how Asklepios came to be worshipped on the island.

Was the place built specifically for housing scriptures/sacred texts:

– No

Notes: Greek religion did not have a sacred text as, for example, Christianity did.

Design and Material Remains

Overall Structure

Is the place made up of multiple built structures:

– Yes



Are any of the structures attached to or associated with a landscape feature:

– Yes

Notes: The sanctuary was also the place of the sacred grove of Apollo Kyparissos and Asklepios. Moreover, it was built on a slope; the terracing is human-made though.



Are any of the structures attached to other structures:

– Yes

↳ Is there a hierarchy among the structures:

– Yes

Notes: But it also depends on the visitor. The second terrace housed the major cultic buildings for Asklepios worship: the temple and altar. Coming here for worship of Asklepios would place this above the other buildings in the hierarchy. If one came to honour the gods for specific civic subdivisions mentioned in the boundary stones, that would be the focal point of the visitor.

Is monumental architecture present:

Monumental architecture is defined here as a built structure that surpasses average human proportions and in general is larger and more complex than is necessary to fulfill the structure's utilitarian function(s). Examples of monumental architecture include Mesopotamian Ziggurats, Egyptian Pyramids, Greek and Roman temples, Mesoamerican Pyramids, North American and Aegean burial mounds, etc.

– Yes

↳ In the average place, what percentage of area is taken up by built monuments:

– Field doesn't know

Notes: I do not know the percentage. All terraces, however, have buildings. The lowest terrace has the most open space; the second was most clustered with buildings; the highest terrace was open until temple A was constructed in the second century BC, thus limiting the openness of the space.

↳ Footprint of largest single religious monument, square meters:

Please add dimensions in the comments, if known.

– I don't know

↳ Height of largest single religious monument, meters:

– Height, meters: 15

↳ Size of average monument, square meters:

– I don't know

↳ Height of average monument, meters:

– I don't know

Is the structure/feature made out of natural materials:

Answer [Yes] for each material type

– Yes

↳ Earth

– I don't know

↳ Sand

– I don't know

↳ Clay

– I don't know

↳ Plaster

– I don't know

↳ Wood

– Yes

Notes: The portico's were originally built from wood

↳ Is this material sourced locally:

– Yes

↳ Is this material lacking in the local natural environment:

– No

↳ Grass

– No

↳ Stone

– Yes

↳ Is this material sourced locally:

– Yes

↳ Is this material lacking in the local natural environment:

– No

Is the structure/feature made out of human-made materials

– No

Decoration

Is decoration present:

– Yes

↳ Is decoration part of the building (permanent):

– Yes

↳ On the outside:

– Yes

↳ On the inside:

– Yes

↳ Is decoration attached to the building, i.e. movable reliefs or tapestries

– Yes

Notes: Herodas' mime informs us about art inside the temple, but also beautiful statues outside. Strabo mentions that the sanctuary was full of votives and some famous sculptures.

↳ Is the decoration figural:

A figural representation is defined here as one that contains the depiction of discernible human, anthropomorphic, animal, or zoomorphic forms. In general, it differentiates between animate and inanimate beings, as well as between narrative compositions and still life, landscapes, abstraction, etc. Answer [Yes] for each type of figure depicted

– I don't know

↳ Is the decoration non-figural:

– I don't know

↳ Is the decoration hidden or restricted from view:

– I don't know

↳ Are there statues present:

– Yes

↳ Cult statues:

– Yes

↳ Statues of gods/supernatural beings:

– Yes

↳ Statues of humans:

– Yes

Notes: Various honorific statues and those mentioned in Herodas

↳ Are there reliefs present:

A relief as opposed to sculpture carved on the round is a work of sculpture in which the figures project from a background support, generally a flat surface. Reliefs can be carved out of stone, clay, or a similar material.

– Yes

Notes: At least near a fountain is a relief of Pan; the various votive plaques Strabo mentions (pinakes) might have included images

↳ Reliefs representing the god(s) worshipped at the place:

– Yes

Notes: Pan

↳ Reliefs representing mythological narratives:

– I don't know

↳ Reliefs representing human/historical narratives:

– I don't know

↳ Are there paintings present:

– I don't know

↳ Are there mosaics present:

– Yes

Notes: Temple B had a mosaic floor according to the excavator Herzog

↳ Mosaics representing the god(s) worshipped at the place:

– I don't know

↳ Mosaics representing mythological narratives:

– I don't know

↳ Mosaics representing human/historical narratives:

– I don't know

↳ Abstract mosaics:

– I don't know

↳ Are there inscriptions as part of the decoration:

– No

Notes: However, the sanctuary was a place where many honorific inscriptions were stored. These were often placed in the "most conspicuous" place and certainly meant to be read. Thus, whilst not necessarily serving a decorative function in the modern sense of the word, these inscriptions would have been visible and part of the experiences within the sacred space.

↳ Other type of decoration:

– I don't know

Iconography

Are there distinct features in the places iconography:

– I don't know

Beliefs and Practices

Funerary Associations

Is this place a tomb/burial:

– No

Is this a place for the worship of the dead:

– No

Is this a place for treatment of the corpse:

– No

Are co-sacrifices present in tomb/burial:

Co-sacrifices are animal/human sacrifices prompted by the death of the primary occupant of the tomb/burial.

– No

Are grave goods present:

– No

Are formal burials present:

– No

Supernatural Beings

Is a supreme high god is present:

– Yes

↳ Are they anthropomorphic:

– No

↳ Are they sky deity:

– No

↳ Are they chthonic (underworld)

– No

Notes: Older scholarship does see Asklepios as a chthonic god. During the Hellenistic period (and already before), Asklepios was worshipped as a god like the Olympian gods

↳ Are they fused with king/kingship role (king = high god)

– No

Notes: In other Asklepieia, Zeus-Asklepios Soter appears - primarily in Pergamon. For Kos, I am unaware of this syncretism

↳ Are they the monarch is seen as a manifestation or emanation of the high god:

– No

↳ Are they kin relation to elites:

– No

Notes: Although doctors did call themselves Asklepiads, this name is not hereditary and thus comes with the profession instead of kinship relations.

↳ Are they other type of loyalty or connection to elites:

– Yes

Notes: Doctors called themselves Asklepiads.

↳ Are they unquestionably good:

– Yes

Notes: Although if acting improperly, Asklepios - at least in Epidauros - could punish the worshipper

↳ Are they other:

– Other [specify]: Asklepios is a healing god and protector of health

Does the supreme high god communicate with the living at this place:

– Yes

↳ In waking, everyday life:

– I don't know

Notes: In other sanctuaries, most notably Epidauros, the god or his animals could interact with worshippers during the day. For Kos it is unclear because we do not have healing tales.

↳ In dreams:

– Yes

↳ In trance possession:

– No

↳ Through divination practices:

– Yes

Notes: If incubation is interpreted as a form of divination, yes.

↳ Only through religious specialists:

– No

↳ Only through monarch:

– No

Are previously human spirits present:

– No

Notes: Whilst Asklepios started as a hero, once he became worshipped on Kos he was a god

Do human spirits communicate with the living at this place:

– No

Are nonhuman supernatural beings present:

– Yes

Notes: Nymphs

↳ Nonhuman spirits can be seen:

– No

↳ Nonhuman spirits can be physically felt:

– I don't know

Do nonhuman spirits communicate with the living at this place:

– I don't know

Are mixed human-divine beings present:

– Yes

↳ Mixed human-divine spirits can be seen:

– Yes

Notes: Pan is present in a relief

↳ Mixed human-divine spirits can be physically felt:

– I don't know

Do mixed human-divine beings communicate with the living at this place:

– I don't know

Is the supernatural being/high god present in the form of a cult statue(s):

– Yes

↳ Is the cult statue visible:

– Yes

Notes: If the temple is open. Herodas' mime suggests that worshippers could enter the temple.

↳ Is the cult statue hidden:

– Yes

Notes: If the temple is closed.

Supernatural Interactions

Is supernatural monitoring present:

– Yes

↳ Supernatural monitoring of norm adherence:

– Yes

Notes: One is supposed to act correctly in order to receive a cure

↳ Supernatural beings care about or expect offerings:

– Yes

Notes: Asklepios is generally content with most offers of any monetary value in relation to healing visitors.

↳ Libations:

– Yes [specify]: For public festivals, the priest had to use silver kraters for this

↳ Offerings of food:

– No

Notes: Although cakes were common

↳ Animal sacrifice:

– Yes [specify]: For public festivals, the monetary value of the animals had to be a certain amount.

↳ Human sacrifice:

– Yes [specify]: Not allowed - although never specified, no one could die inside the temenos

↳ Sacred objects:

– I don't know

↳ Daily life objects:

– No

↳ Supernatural beings care about sex:

– Yes

Notes: Generally speaking, no sex was allowed before entering. Although this rule is more general for Asklepieia

↳ Does the worship include sex acts/references:

– No

↳ Supernatural beings care about or expect proper ritual observance:

– Yes

Notes: In order to receive a cure, one has to offer and act correctly

↳ Supernatural beings care about or expect performance of rituals:

– Yes

Notes: In order to receive a cure, one has to offer and act correctly

↳ Supernatural beings care about or expect maintenance of the place:

– I don't know

Notes: But the sacred grove was protected. It was moreover not allowed to throw things into the fountains.

↳ Supernatural beings care about or expect personal hygiene:

– Yes

Notes: In Epidauros one also had to be pure of mind

↳ Supernatural beings care about honoring oaths:

– I don't know

Do visitors communicate with the gods or supernatural beings:

– Yes

↳ Do visitors communicate with gods:

– Yes

Notes: In dreams, prayers and vows

↳ Do visitors communicate with other supernatural beings:

– Yes

Notes: Probably the family of Asklepios.

Ritual and Performance

Sacrifices, Offerings, and Maintenance

Are sacrifices performed at this place:

– Yes



Are there animal sacrifices:

– Yes [specify]: Oxen, cows, roosters, sheep, castrated rams - the one to sacrifice depends on the visit (public festival or personal)



Are there human sacrifices:

– No



Are the sacrificed humans associated in some way:

– No

Are there self-sacrifices present:

– No

Are material offerings present:

– Yes



Are material offerings mandatory:

– Yes

Notes: After healing, a small monetary fee is to be paid. Plaques containing healing tales (pinakes) might have been mandatory, but at least frequent enough that Strabo mentioned that the sanctuary was full of them.



Are material offerings composed of valuable objects:

– Yes

Notes: This does not have to be the case.



Are material offerings composed of daily-life objects:

– I don't know

Notes: It seems likely, but due to the perishable nature of various daily objects (like clothes) these are not found

↳ Are material offerings interred at this place (in caches):

– Yes

Notes: Money could be placed in a thesauros.

Is attendance to worship/sacrifice mandatory:

– Yes

↳ By all the community

– Yes

Notes: At least the community is represented during the major festival of Asklepios. Ephebes went to the sanctuary for sacrifices a couple times a year. Members of various civic subdivisions would likely come here at least once a year to do some ritual.

↳ By specific individuals

– Yes [specify]: The visitor coming for healing has to participate in order to be cured

Is maintenance of the place performed:

– Yes

↳ Is it required:

– Yes

Notes: The priest had, at some point, make sure there was fire burning on the altars and incense burned every day

↳ Is there cleansing (for the maintenance):

– Yes

Notes: The fountains had to be purified if something was thrown into it, which might be physical cleaning as well as cleansing

↳ Are there periodic repairs/reconstructions:

– Yes

Notes: See also the comments on building phases.

↳ Is the maintenance performed by permanent staff:

– I don't know

Pilgrimage and Festivals

Are pilgrimages present:

– Yes

↳ How strict is pilgrimage:
– optional (common)

↳ Are pilgrimages the main reason for construction/establishment of the place:
– No

↳ Are pilgrimages to this place associated with significant life events:
– Yes

↳ Birth

– I don't know

Notes: Questions related to birthing might have been asked to Asklepios here - as was done in Epidaurus. However, actual birth could not take place within the temenos

↳ Transition to adulthood

– I don't know

Notes: The allotment of new citizens into tribes could be recorded here though

↳ Death

– No

↳ Other

– Other [specify]: Health

↳ Does pilgrimage to this place involve following established routes (roads):
– Yes

↳ Are these routes maintained together with the place:
– I don't know

Is this place a venue for feasting:

– Yes

↳ Is feasting connected to the worship/sacrifices performed at this place:

– Yes

↳ Is feasting sponsored by the same entity that built/maintains the place:

– Yes

↳ Priests

– Yes

↳ Local elites

– Yes

↳ Private contributions

– Yes

↳ Does feasting occur in a specific location within the place:

– Yes [specify]: Building D seems to have been the hestiatorion

Are festivals present:

– Yes

↳ Frequency of festivals

– specify: The large Asklepieia is quadrennial; yearly sacrifices or smaller festivities seems likely. Ephebes went to the Asklepieion for sacrifices and some athletic competition

↳ Do all members of the society participate in the festival(s):

– All members

Notes: Concerning non-elites: at least representatives of various civic subdivisions were present; athletes and theoi could come from abroad; part of Koan population consisted of foreigners as well

↳ Are festivals a defining element in the construction/decoration of the place:

– No

↳ On average, how many participants gather at this place:

– number: Unknown

↳ Is feasting part of the festival(s):

– Yes

↳ Is food consumption limited to certain members of the population:

- Elites
- Non-elites
- Religious professionals

Divination and Healing

Is divination present:

– Yes

↳ Divination by examination of the exta:

Animals remains, internal organs, answer this question and subsequent question once for each species

– No

↳ Divination through human communication:

– No

Notes: Although dreams could require interpretation, the main vehicle of communication is between god and mortal

↳ Divination through animal-behavior:

– No

Is healing present/practiced at this place:

– Yes

↳ Incubation

– Yes

↳ Healing magic

– No

↳ Cleansing

– Yes

Notes: But as preliminary ritual for incubation

↳ Offerings of models of body parts:

– Yes

Notes: Although the evidence is limited and disputed, some body-part votives that are likely original are found

↳ Expiation

– No

Do rituals occur at this place:

Rituals are visibly enacted behaviors by one or more people for the purposes of religious observance.

– Yes

↳ Do large-scale rituals take place:

– Yes

↳ Do small-scale rituals take place:

– Yes

↳ On average how many participants are present in large-scale rituals:

– specify: unknown

↳ How often do these rituals take place:

– specify: Daily activity is suggested in Herodas (3rd century BC) and a late second/early third century BC inscription. Large festivals are quadrennial. Yearly rituals might be the civic subdivisions going to the gods mentioned in various boundary stones. More frequent are visits by ephebes as mentioned in a second century BC calendar.

↳ Are there orthodoxy checks:

– I don't know

↳ Are there orthopraxy checks:

– Yes

↳ Are there synchronic practices:

– Yes

Notes: It seems likely that healing visitors would be there at the time, for example, the ephebes visited for their ritual

- ↳ Are there intoxicants used during the ritual:
 - I don't know

Institutions and Scriptures

Religious Specialists

Are religious specialists present/in charge of this place:

Religious specialists are individuals whose primary duties within a population group are not concerned with subsistence or craft production but the maintenance of the religious landscape and culture of the group.

– Yes

- ↳ Present full time

– Yes

Notes: CGRN 218; IG XII.4: 294 is the sale of a priesthood that was stored in the Asklepieion. It does not, however, mention Asklepios specifically. Nevertheless, it is very plausible. This inscription mentions that the priest of Asklepios had to make sure there was fire on the altar, incense burned and that the temple is open daily. This would mean that the priest, or if the priest outsourced such a task another official, had to come here daily.

- ↳ Present part time

– Yes

Notes: Several officials were present in the sanctuary during festivals (even other priests, such as the priest of Homonoia CGRN 208; IG XII,4 1: 315). Hierophylakes (temple-overseers) are also mentioned in inscriptions IG XII 4, 1: 71. A Neokoros (temple-warden) is mentioned in Herodas' fourth mime. If they stayed full-time or part-time is, however, unclear. An agonothete (festival-overseer) would have been present in the sanctuary at least during the procession of the festival. The major Asklepieia were held every five years.

- ↳ Are the religious specialists of specific sex/gender:

– Yes

Notes: The answer is a "yes, but...". In general priests and officials of Asklepios were male. On Kos, however, we find two female priests: Kallistrate and Minnis. Kallistrate: Höghammar (1993), no.65; IG XII,4 2:978. Minnis: IG XII,4 2:838. IG XII 4, 1: 281

- ↳ Are the religious specialists of specific ethnicity:

– I don't know

- ↳ Are the religious specialists of specific class/cast:

– Yes

Notes: Whilst Kos was a democracy (see Sherwin-White 1978), the amount of money required to perform the duties mentioned in the sales of priesthoods make it near impossible for the non-elite to become the priest (Kató 2014). IG XII,4 1: 311 mentions that that, at least in the second century BC, the minimum age for the priest was 14.

↳ Are religious specialists dedicated to the place for life:

– Yes

↳ Are the religious specialists stratified in a hierarchical system:

– Yes

Notes: We see priests, temple-wardens, temple-overseers besides civic officials. This implies a hierarchy of the priest as the highest religious figure in the sanctuary.

↳ Is access within the space segregated by this hierarchy:

– I don't know

Does this place incorporate a living space for religious specialists:

– No

Notes: However, the chambers in the lower and upper terrace might have been used for sleeping. The sanctuary is close to the city, which is the reason why it did not have athletic and musical facilities; a similar reason might be that there was limited need for a living space for priests

Is this place used for the training of religious specialists:

– No

Notes: Possibly in an implicit way. The Asklepieion was a place frequented in several civic and religious festivities as the major sanctuary of the island. There might be some indirect form of "training" through participating (actively or passively) in these festivities. There are later stories that Hippocrates learned his medicine in the temple (Pliny, NH 29.1.4; Strabo, Geography, 14.19), but this should be discarded as myth-making.

Are there formal institutions for the maintenance of the place:

Institutions that are authorized by the religious community or political leaders

– Yes

Notes: IG XII,4 1:71 mentions a thesauros (treasury) that includes how to use the money for the major festival of Asklepios. Asklepieia generally included a monetary iatros fee after being cured. IG XII 4, 1: 311 informs us about the sale of the priesthood. This specific inscription includes a clause on repairs of the temple. More informal are the following: Hellenistic Kings might have had some impact on the sanctuary and might have been involved in the two main Hellenistic building phases. Important individuals, like the doctor for the Roman emperor, Xenophon would be able to provide for repairs if needed.

Bureaucracy

Is there a formal bureaucracy present at this place:

A bureaucracy consists of a hierarchical system of accounting and rule maintenance primarily concerned with material wealth.

– Yes

↳ Is a bureaucracy present permanently:

– Yes

Notes: Priests, supporting personnel and civic magistrates all had various duties

↳ Is a bureaucracy present on a temporary or seasonal basis:

– No

Notes: It seems that the sanctuary was open daily, at least in the late second/early first century BC. In the third century BC, in Herodas's mime, there is a temple-warden present that helps the worshippers instead of the priest. This might suggest that when the priest was unavailable, his duties were taken care of by a temple-warden.

Does this place control economic resources (land, goods, tools):

– Yes

↳ Is this control the primary supporting income of this place:

– I don't know

Notes: It is unclear. The inscription IG XII,4 1: 71 that mentions the building of a thesauros names several sources of income. Income from sacred land and sale of lumber of the sacred grove are mentioned. However, also other forms of receiving money are attested. Asklepieia generally have an iatros fee (after healing), kings might have sponsored buildings, IG XII 4, 1: 70 is a list of donations and rich individuals could also donate (CGRN 161; IG XII 4, 1, 81)

↳ Does this place lease out land:

– I don't know

Notes: No animals were allowed to graze on the land (CGRN 218; IG XII.4: 294), so likely not in the direct vicinity. Another inscription does mention income from land and the sale of lumber from their sacred grove (IG XII 4, 1: 71). This lumber is fascinating, as it was also prohibited to cut the trees in times before IG XII,4 1: 283-IG XII,4 1: 284)

↳ Does this place lease out tools:

– I don't know

Public Works

Does this place serve as a location for services to the community:

– Yes

↳ Public food distribution and/or storage:

– No

↳ Place for civic functions (census, elections, others):

– Yes

Notes: It housed various honorific inscriptions, allotment of citizens in tribes, an oath between Kos and Kalymna after Kalymna was incorporated into the polis of Kos. It is thus a space that housed various important documents for the city.

↳ Place for the practice of justice (trials, executions, etc.):

– No

Notes: You were not allowed to die or give birth in sanctuaries for Asklepios. There is, however, one instance where a person was killed. Turullias, a Roman general of Marc Anthony in the civil war between Anthony and Octavian, cut down the trees of the sacred grove to use for warships. He was killed in the Asklepieion, which is also interpreted as the divine wrath of Asklepios.

↳ Function for water management:

– No

Notes: Water was important for the Asklepieion, but it seems unlikely the sanctuary provided water for the city. The water was used for ritual purposes and for ill people that stayed for a longer period of time

↳ Part of the transportation network:

– No

↳ Other

– Other [specify]: Storage of many civic decrees concerning a variety of topics. Also, they housed Roman refugees during the Mithridaic wars (Tacitus, annals 4.14)

Notes: Honorific decrees for judges and doctors (placed by other cities) for example. Ephebes (adolescents) did have a race to the Cypress grove (IG XII 4, 1: 281) that might have played a civic role in their education.

Writing/Scriptures

Is non-religious writing stored at this place:

Economic documents, records etc.

– Yes

Notes: Various honorific decrees and statues were placed here

Are there scriptures associated with this place:

– No