

A male genital oblation defining hidradenitis suppurativa*

Hidradenitis Suppurativa Tanımlayan Bir Erkek Genital Adak

Ekrem Günerⁱ, Zeynep Topkarciⁱⁱ, Şebnem İzmir Günerⁱⁱⁱ

ⁱDr. Health Science University, Bakirkoy Dr Sadi Konuk Training and Research Hospital, Department of Urology
<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-4770-7535>

ⁱⁱDr. Health Science University, Bakirkoy Dr Sadi Konuk Training and Research Hospital, Department of Dermatology and
Venereology <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-3847-0695>

ⁱⁱⁱAssist.Prof.Dr. Şişli Memorial Hospital, Department of Internal Medicine and Hematology
<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6326-9424>

Dear Editor,

In the ancient ages, many Gods and Goddesses were believed to have healing powers. Gods and Goddesses such as Zeus, Apollon, Asklepius, Artemis, Eileithia in Ancient Greece, and, Jupiter, Apollo, Aesculapius, Diana, Minerva, Liber and Juno in Ancient Rome were believed to heal patients in their temples built on their own name. Undoubtedly the most famous of them was Asclepius (Greek: Asclepios, Latin: Aesculapius), who had attained the rank of God of health and medicine. The cult and health centers, founded in the name of the Health God Asclepius, were called Asclepion, and they served as an ancient age hospital.^{1,3}

People used to leave various gifts or anatomical oblations, made in the form of organs or limbs which symbolize their sick organs, to these temples to attract the attention of the Gods (**Figure 1**) In the temple treatment model, the patients were treated by clergymen physicians in temples which were built on behalf of Gods or Goddesses.⁴ In addition to the religious and mystical treatments given in the temples under the supervision of the Gods, some somatic and physical diseases were also treated, which could be understood from the works of ancient writers and from the various anatomical organ offerings found in the temples.^{4,5} concomitant treatment of physical and organic diseases in the temples, where religious and mystical medicine practices were performed mainly for psychological and psychosomatic diseases, can be possibly explained by influences of popular folk medicine and scientific, secular Hippocratic medicine practices of the period on the religious temple medicine.⁶ Spa hydrotherapies, dietary cures, exercises, blood collection (phlebotomy, cupping), vomiting, enema, various oral or topical drug applications, and fracture detection methods were among the treatment methods in physical diseases.^{7,8} Surgical interventions were also performed in healing temples if necessary.⁹

Information about ancient age diseases, Gods and temple medicine was collected, and organ oblations, which represent a disease, in archaeological museums in Turkey and abroad were researched and studied by visiting and searching on the web. In the research that we did in the light of this ancient age facts, a male genital oblation, which is exhibited at the Altes Museum in Berlin with an inventory number of Y 581, found in central Italy and dated to the 4th century BC, attracted attention with its different form.¹⁰ (**Figure 2**) In

*Lokman Hekim Dergisi, 2019; 9 (2):144-146

DOI: 10.31020/mutfd.553493

e-ISSN: 1309-8004

Geliş Tarihi – Received:13 Nisan 2019; Kabul Tarihi - Accepted: 15 Nisan2019

İletişim - Correspondence Author: Zeynep Topkarci <ztopkarci@yahoo.com>

the pubic region of the male genital oblation made from terra-cotta, expressing wish for the remedy from the God, it was observed that there were many structures similar to Lesions what we call today as hidradenitis suppurativa. **(Figure 3)** Many male genital oblations discovered in archaeological excavations at temple healing centers are known to be healthy and normal. **(Figure 4)** However, the details of the health problem of the dedicants had been formed on these examined genital oblations. This indicates proof that patients leave better-expressed organ oblations to the temples, which will express the specific disease and attract the attention of the Gods.

When the oblations presented to the Gods in the temples of the polytheistic ancient Greece and Rome were examined, and the majority of them appeared to be healthy and normal. However, it was seen that very few of these oblations point out to some diseases. Examples of such rare oblations have attracted attention as very specific examples and provide important information to understand what our ancient diseases might be.



Figure 1. Anatomic oblations of various organs and extremities, terra-cotta, Corinth Asclepion, Archaeological Museum of Corinth, Greece



Figure 2. Male genital oblations indicating Hidradenitis suppurativa lesions, terra-cotta, Altes Museum, Berlin, Germany



Figure 3. Hidradenitis suppurativa lesions on a terracotta oblation, and Hidradenitis suppurativa lesions on the pubic and axillary regions at the present time



Figure 4. Numerous normal-looking genital oblations, terracotta, Archaeological settlement of Cales/Caserta, Naples Archaeological Museum, Italy

References:

1. Versnel HS. God: the question of divine omnipotence. In: Frankfurter D, Hahn J, Versnel HS, editors. *Coping with the Gods: Wayward Readings in Greek Theology*. Boston: Brill; 2011. pp:400-421.
2. Oberhelman SM. Anatomical Votive Reliefs as Evidence for Specialization at Healing Sanctuaries in the Ancient Mediterranean World. *Athens Journal of Health* 2014; 1(1): 47-62.
3. Kellie SM. Cult of Asclepius. *The Lancet* 1999;354(18):1038.
4. Van Straten F. Votives and Votaries in Greek Sanctuaries. In: Buxton RGA, editor. *Greek Religion*. London: Oxford University Press, 2000. pp:247-290.
5. Retief FP, Cilliers L. Medical Dreams in Graeco-Roman Times. *SAMJ* 2005;95(11):841-844.
6. Bronwen WL. *Asklepios, Medicine, and the Politics of Healing in Fifth-century Greece: Between Craft and Cult*. 1st ed. Bronwen WL, editor. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press; 2008.
7. Israelowich I. *Society, Medicine and Religion in the Sacred Tales of Aelius Aristides*. (Mnemosyne, Supplements). Leiden, Boston: Brill; 2012.-7
8. Hamilton M. *Incubation: The Cure of Disease in Pagan Temples and Christian Churches*. California: CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform; 2016.
9. Boehringer E. *Altertümer On Pergamon*. Band VIII 3. Die Inschriften des Asklepieions: Walter de Gruyter and Co: Berlin. 1969.
10. Eagles L. Warburg's Etruscan Florentines. *Sequitur*. 2018; 4 (2): 3-8. Available from: <http://www.bu.edu/sequitur/files/2018/Eagles-Florentines-2.pdf>.