

*Young and Old, Male and Female, Local and Foreign: Issues of Hierarchical
Accessibility to Greek Sanctuaries and Their Ritual Lives*

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“It is forbidden to foreigners to enter the sanctuary” announces one out of a significant number of inscriptions (*LSCG Suppl.* 49), which make clear that Greek religion was anything but inclusive. There can be no doubt that a Greek sanctuary represented a very sophisticated spatial system of inclusion and exclusion. For some worshippers, the visit to a sanctuary already ended, for ethnic or gender reasons, at the entrance to the *temenos*. Others would be allowed to enter the sanctuary, but would be excluded from entering specific parts of it. Others would be permitted to enter even the temple, although within the architectural context of the temple the existence of screen walls in the *pronaos* and/or in the *ptera* and/or in the *cella* would have created an intricate system of differentiated levels of accessibility. Based on ample epigraphic, literary, and archaeological evidence scholarship has shown that Greek cult sites were often reserved either completely or on specific occasions to groups defined by gender, ethnicity, degrees of initiation, and to a lesser degree age. The paper will study the at times extremely exclusive nature of Greek cults and rituals and examine the reflection of this exclusivity upon the architectural fabric of sanctuaries. Special light will be shed on the differences and similarities between the strategies of hierarchical accessibility to the sanctuaries of Mainland Greece and those to the cult sites in the Greek colonies in Southern Italy and Sicily.