
Pieter Broucke
Middlebury College

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Recommended Citation
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“Steps make uneven terrain convenient for humans” (3) is the opening sentence of this book. This signals a pragmatic approach to the subject at hand: the function of monumental steps in ancient Greek public settings such as sanctuaries and agoras, and their relationship to architecture. Within the scholarship on ancient Greek architecture and topography, “[b]road steps for public use are rarely considered as significant […] components” (3), the author rightly observes. Yet in what follows, she makes a compelling case as to why that scholarly blind spot should be addressed: monumental, permanent stairs at sanctuaries and other public places clearly go beyond merely easing access to uneven topography.

The book consists of two major parts: one part explores the biomechanical aspects of the human body interacting with sloping terrain and stepped paths; considers steps’ relationship to architecture, agency, and ritual; and looks at the socio-political aspects of steps in the public sphere. Together, they set the stage for the second part, a chronological discussion of a number of case studies.

As architectural features steps are participatory and therefore intrinsically linked to the size and biomechanics of the human form. The author discerns three functions for ancient Greek steps: as retaining walls (e.g. at Selinus) that assumed other functions; as pathways up and down that became expressions of ritual processions (e.g. at the Athenian Acropolis); and as grandstands (e.g. at Morgantina) that became manifestations of community. In all cases she considers steps first and foremost in a phenomenological manner, as architectural features that are visually observed and physically experienced, individually as well as in groups. In addition to the evidence provided by archaeological remains, pictorial evidence coming from vase painting, epigraphy, and literary sources are brought to bear upon the discussion.

By tracing the use of steps as three-dimensional and therefore highly visible paths, constructed from stone and thus readily recognizable in the archaeological record, the author seizes the opportunity to read the development of public, monumental stairs as a history of ceremony. Whereas initially steps were used for “taming terrain” (81), the author notes that over time steep sites became favored, precisely be-
cause steps made it possible to manifest the *promenade architecturale*, as Le Corbusier would call it, of processions and rituals. In sanctuaries these would be religious in nature, in agoras and other secular sites they would pertain to government and group identity. In chronicling that development, she discerns a number of phases in the way in which the ancient Greeks considered space, architecture, procession, and ritual. These phases, each roughly corresponding to a century from the sixth to the second century BCE, provide the structure for the hands-on discussion of steps at ancient Greek sites large and small, in Greece, Asia Minor, and Southern Italy.

Unlike for Greek architectural forms, the author sees no need to look for origins in other cultures or even at Bronze Age precedents—steps are a commonplace solution to navigating steep terrain. But, as is clear from sites such as Perachora or Selinus, from the sixth century BCE onwards, steps do more than provide access and accommodate spectators in a prescribed theatrical fashion. Likewise, contemporary stepped pathways seen at Athens, Aegina, and Corinth are deliberately created to accommodate processions.

For the fifth century, the most famous steps are undoubtedly those leading up to Mnesikles’ Propylaia in Athens, but it is at sanctuaries like the Argive Heraion and at the Sanctuary of Demeter and Kore at Corinth that deliberate landscaping, involving massive earth moving, retaining walls and steps, was undertaken. These major projects brought monumentality and order, all the while clarifying the organization of these sites into clearly delineated areas for ritual dining, processional parades, sacrificial offering, and spectating.

Steps evolve into permanent stone theatres during the fourth century, a phenomenon famously exemplified by Epidauros, but in that case sets of steps are turned into a distinct building type. As architecture, they thus fall outside the scope of this study. More often, the author sees fourth-century spatial theatricality achieved by manipulating the terrain between buildings, as is the case at Olympia with the long stepped retaining wall just south of the row of treasuries and north of the Heraion and Metroon. Those steps, constructed anew or combining previously existing stretches, visually framed the northern part of the Altis and clarified its organization by separating the treasuries, now on a terrace, from the cult spaces below. All the while, the steps provided a long grandstand for spectators beholding ceremonies and rituals pertaining to Olympia’s various cults and festivals.

The author also links the construction of steps at a number of sanctuaries to the fourth-century phenomenon of *metoikesis*, the deliberate urban displacement. It seems that, as a result of the founding of Megalopolis, Lykosoura was compensat-
...ed for the loss of its political independence by increasing its religious significance, expressed by means of the addition of monumental steps that flank the approach to the shrine of Despoina.

During the third century BCE, the use of steps follows for the most part earlier precedent. Notable instances of innovation are linked to the increase of scale in the Greek political landscape and the realization that steps can be used to express a public image of authority, e.g. at the Sanctuary of Athena at Lindos, or assert communal identity, e.g. in the agora at Morgantina. As in contemporary art and architecture, we see for the construction of steps a multiplication of drivers, some old and some new.

Finally, during the second century, roughly until the ceding of Pergamon to Rome in 133 BCE, epigraphy indicates that many of the large-scale constructions—often re-constructions—are tied to donors ranging from wealthy citizens to kings. For instance, the Asklepieion on Kos, dating to the fourth-century BCE synoikism of the island, was thoroughly refurbished, with a desire for axiaily, alignment, and symmetry underlying the modifications. The resulting unified design is nonetheless the result of a building process phased over several centuries, with the second-century overhaul funded if not by the Ptolemies then probably by Eumenes II—foreign donors all.

An appendix discusses Hellenistic sites in Italy, many of which take full advantage of sometimes deliberately chosen steep terrains to create terraces and steps, dramatic ascents, and theater-like forms. While inspired by Greek models and constructed in an attempt to keep up with their Greek counterparts, Italic sanctuaries like Tivoli and especially Praeneste, created largely ex novo, are planned along Cartesian grids and uniquely combine theaters, manifesting the very notion of spectacle, into their layouts.

In this remarkable book, the author uses steps, a humble architectural feature, to unlock a history of spatial awareness and to chronicle an evolution of the spatial design of ancient Greek public spaces. As a result, several sites are discussed more than once, and therein lies a surprising outcome of this study: sanctuaries such as the Asklepieion on Kos, often considered the pinnacle of cohesive and unified Late Hellenistic sanctuary design, are in reality themselves the result of a process that stretched over time.

This book’s conception is as straightforward as it is successful, and left this reviewer with a more informed understanding of the Greeks’ spatial thinking and its evolution over time. As such, this book makes a meaningful contribution to our understanding of the Classical past. Yet many of its insights may also be applied...
advantageously to understanding spatial and functional aspects of, say, the Spanish Steps in Rome, the (indoor but deliberately public) Grand escalier at the Opéra Garnier in Paris, or, for that matter, of Pre-Columbian sites in the New World.

Jacqueline Fabre-Serris and Alison Keith, eds.,

*Women and War in Antiquity.*


A stimulating collection of papers edited by Jacqueline Fabre-Serris and Alison Keith, *Women and War in Antiquity* explores the role of women in what the ancients regarded as the most masculine of realms. Delivering roughly equal coverage of Greek and Roman topics, this volume’s sixteen chapters are divided into literary (Part I) and historical explorations (Part II), all of which have their origin in the inaugural meeting of the European Network on Gender Studies in Antiquity (Eu-GeStA) in 2009. The scholars in this collection supply thought-provoking interpretations of some of the most central aspects of antiquity from the perspective of gender studies. Although there are moments where one may quibble with a particular point or question a specific approach, the volume provides fresh insight and opens up avenues for further exploration. For those interested in gender studies, the book showcases the potential for gaining new insights through the application of theoretical perspectives, while the energetic readings of particular subjects undertaken in its individual chapters will benefit interested scholars. Since space is limited, my review concentrates on the book’s introduction and representative chapters from its two parts.

Fabre-Serris and Keith divide their introduction between an exposition of the volume’s central questions and a description of its individual chapters. They offer a series of points that distinguish their book’s contents and subtend its arguments: