

Thirsting for the Divine: Monumental Fountains in Sanctuaries  
Brenda Longfellow (University of Iowa)

In the second century AD, a handful of elites built monumental fountains in sanctuaries throughout Greece and Asia Minor. These imposing edifices contained elaborate sculptural programs that often interacted with the flowing water to create innovative kinetic displays. Such eye-catching exhibitions gave formal expression to the prestige of all involved in the construction: the patron, the sanctuary in which it was built, and the god to whom it was dedicated.

This paper explores how the topographic placement and display elements of these fountains emphasized the role of the patron as guardian of long-standing religious traditions and maximized the impact of the edifices on thirsty worshippers. For instance, the fountain in the sanctuary of Demeter at Eleusis stands near the sacred Kallichoros well, the nymphaeum in the sanctuary of Leto at Xanthos faces an archaizing Hellenistic fountain, and the fountain in the sanctuary of Zeus at Olympia stands with the Archaic treasuries. In each sanctuary, the placement of the fountain can be linked to the patron's desire to align himself with past patrons of the site and to emphasize the historical relevance and sacral nature of the new water source. At the same time, the architectural and display features of the fountains incorporate a number of second-century innovations, so the visual juxtaposition between old and new must have been striking. Taken together, the placement of the Roman fountains and their innovative artistic water displays established the patrons as ultimate benefactors of these sanctuaries.