THE MYTH OF SACRED PROSTITUTION IN ANTIQUITY

In this study, Stephanie Lynn Budin demonstrates that sacred prostitution, the sale of a person’s body for sex in which some or all of the money earned was devoted to a deity or a temple, did not exist in the ancient world. Reconsidering the evidence from the ancient Near East, the Greco-Roman texts, and the early Christian authors, Budin shows that the majority of sources that have traditionally been understood as pertaining to sacred prostitution actually have nothing to do with this institution. The few texts that are usually invoked on this subject are, moreover, terribly misunderstood. Furthermore, contrary to many current hypotheses, the creation of the myth of sacred prostitution has nothing to do with notions of accusation or the construction of a decadent, Oriental “Other.” Instead, the myth has come into being as a result of more than 2,000 years of misinterpretations, false assumptions, and faulty methodology. The study of sacred prostitution is, effectively, a historiographical reckoning.

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In Loving Memory of A. John Graham

διδάσκαλος καὶ φίλος
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ABBREVIATIONS

AHR  American Historical Review
AJPhil  American Journal of Philology
AJSL  American Journal of Semitic Languages and Literatures
ArchClass  Archeologia Classica
AS  Anatolian Studies
BCH  Bulletin de Correspondence Héllenique
BDB  Brown-Driver-Briggs. Hebrew and English Lexicon
BTB  Biblical Theology Bulletin
CAD  Chicago Assyrian Dictionary
CP  Classical Philology
CQ  Classical Quarterly
HTR  Harvard Theological Review
JA  Journal Asiaticque
JANER  Journal of Ancient Near Eastern Religion
JAOS  Journal of the American Oriental Society
JESHO  Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient
LSJ  Liddell, Scott, and Jones. Greek-English Lexicon
MGR  Miscellanea Greca e Romana
RA  Revue Assyriologique
RB  Revue Biblique
Rend. Pont.  Rendiconti. Pontificia Accademia Romana de Archeologia
RHR  Revue de l’Histoire des Religions
RIA  Reallexikon der Assyriologie
UF  Ugarit-Forschungen
ZA  Zeitschrift für Assyriologie
ŽA  Živa Antike
ZPE  Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik
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