



The Myth of Sacred Prostitution in Antiquity

Stephanie Lynn Budin

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Stephanie 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. 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.

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