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Stephanie Budin. *The Myth of Sacred Prostitution in Antiquity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008. Pp. xi & 366. £50.00 \$90.00. ISBN: 9780521880909 (Hbk.).

Reviewed by Erika D. Johnson
University of Birmingham

The third edition of *The Oxford Classical Dictionary* defines sacred prostitution as 'a strictly modern, not ancient, term and misleading in that it transfers to the institution, or rather a variety of institutions, an adjective which in ancient sources denotes only the status of the personnel involved (sometimes also their earnings, which likewise became sacred on dedication).' In the 26 years between the edition that Budin quotes (2nd ed. 1970) and this one, ideas about sacred prostitution have changed radically; going from having concrete evidence of its existence to it being a misappropriation of terms and possibly a real occurrence, but neither confirmed nor denied by ancient sources.

In her book, Stephanie Budin sets about proving the non-existence of sacred prostitution in antiquity by clearly and succinctly stating her thesis in the first sentence of the introduction: 'Sacred prostitution never existed in the ancient Near East or Mediterranean' (p. 1). In her view, sacred prostitution is 'the sale of a person's body for sexual purposes where some portion (if not all) of the money or goods received for this transaction belongs to a deity' (p. 3). She begins her survey in the ancient Near East (Mesopotamia and Canaan and Israel) and ends with early Christian writers; a vast amount of material to cover indeed.

I would like to first explore the Greek, Roman, and later evidence and then come back to the ancient Near East, even though each subject is taken chronologically in the book. The first, and most major, author Budin discusses is Herodotos. The Babylonian marriage market (1.196) and the sacred prostitution at the temple of Mylitta (1.199) are known to almost all who have studied Classics for any length of time. Budin makes the sweeping assumption that Herodotos may have made these

passages up, as much of his work is in debate since he rarely mentions exactly how he has come upon his information. To back this up, she states, 'Herodotos created the narrative of Babylonian sacred prostitution as an inversion of Greek sacred and sexual moeurs' (p. 71). She then elaborates by supposing the sacred prostitution is an inversion of women's ritual. She elucidates this comparison with a table listing aspects of a women's ritual (the Thesmophoria) on one side and the ideas of passage 1.199 on the other (p. 74), after a thorough discussion. Another implication of the Babylonian ritual is the introduction of foreign blood into the Babylonian gene pool (as the women in the temple are only allowed to have sex with a foreign man). This issue of miasma ('pollution') was paramount for the Greeks, and, by choosing to insist that each Babylonian woman must have sex with a foreign man, Herodotos places the Babylonians even further from traditional Greek customs. Budin argues this was one of the main reasons for the creation of the narrative.

One point of disagreement with the author I have here is on the subject of rape. She purports that the lack of willing participation on the part of the Babylonian women constitutes rape (p. 82-3). Although she does say that the insinuation of rape is subtle, I do not think this kind of broad statement can be applied. The Babylonian women are not bound by law to perform such a rite, so by consenting to go to the temple they are consenting to what they know must happen during the ritual.

In the following chapter (Chapter Five), Budin discusses Lucian and 'Jeremiah' (an author who is believed to be Jeremiah, but may not be). They continue Herodotean tradition, as is seen in Lucian's account particularly; it is just a reworking of Herodotos apart from the movement of the location of the sacred prostitution from Babylon to Byblos. 'Jeremiah' mentions that the girls have cords attached to them, apparently echoing Herodotos' mention of cords surrounding the Babylonian women. Budin then explains that although it is clear this passage has nothing to do with religion and only possibly alludes to it, by mention of the cords it has been connected to Herodotos and the ensuing sacred prostitution debate.

And this is the central point of the book. Most of the texts that are said to refer to sacred prostitution actually do not. When looked at carefully, as she does extremely clearly and completely, these texts may have something to do with prostitution, but not a special form of it and definitely not anything sacred. In the chapters following this one Budin discusses a fragment of Pindar, Strabo, and Klearkhos, Justinus and Valerius Maximus. Each text is explained in great detail, leaving the reader wanting nothing. Budin goes through all possible variations in meaning and context and easily proves her thesis. A short chapter on archaeological evidence provides further evidence for the non-existence of sacred prostitution and a chapter on early Christian rhetoric is as thoroughly explored as previous chapters. In her final chapter, Budin explores previous scholarship in the area to discover where this idea of sacred prostitution came from. This is especially interesting to have at the end since the reader has just concluded that sacred prostitution did not exist and now gets to see the development of the idea.

Now I must return to the chapter on the ancient Near Eastern sources. A major point of contention for this chapter is the use of Pritchard's *Ancient Near Eastern Texts* (published in 1969) as a point of reference. This publication is greatly outdated and has since been replaced by Foster's *Before the Muses* (1996) and Hallo's *The Context of Scripture* (1997). Budin's thesis includes the point that older translations saw the references to sacred prostitution in Greek and Roman texts and translated the Akkadian and Sumerian material accordingly. If this is the case, surely it would be beneficial to compare translations from each era or to use the latest translations.

Another point of interest is in the discussion of various terms for cult functionaries in the Near East. Out of the many terms that exist, Budin clearly surmises, *ḫarimtu* (in Akkadian, KAR.KID in Sumerian) is the only one meaning prostitute. Previously, when discussing the other terms, she makes the point that older dictionaries wanted to associate sacred prostitution with the cultic responsibilities of these offices. She then references *The Concise Dictionary of Akkadian*, published in 2000, as proof of changing tides in the scholarship. In the same volume, *ḫarimtu* is defined as a prostitute, with the word temple in brackets just before it, so her argument becomes

void. If the dictionary can be used to prove her views on one word why is it not a useful source for definitions of other words? Also, *The Pennsylvania Sumerian Dictionary* (accessible online and last updated in 2006) defines the Sumerian KAR.KID as a prostitute. So it seems that Budin's assumption that the work of J. Assante (the main author she cites for the Near Eastern data) has influenced the way these terms are used is wrong. She then goes on to refute the proof of sacred prostitution in the Near East, seen in Gernot Wilhelm's *Marginalien zu Herodot Klio 199*, published in 1990. Again, Budin utilises only Assante's work, which purports to change the *harimtu* from a prostitute into a single woman. Since this argument is not proven by current dictionaries (*The Concise Dictionary of Akkadian* being published in 2000 and the recently published (2007) *Assyrian Dictionary* both list *harimtu* as being a prostitute) her argument, again, is invalid. Such reliance on the work of one scholar (Assante) in a field like Assyriology, in which many things are still debatable, is not an astute way to organise an argument. In this case, it definitely works to her disadvantage to assume the opinions of those who have been working in the field for many years are null and void on the basis of one person's work. In this chapter alone, then, does Budin not prove her thesis. If the same care that had been given to the Greek and Roman sources had been used for the Near Eastern ones, this chapter would have proved a good starting place for those wanting a basis in the study of sacred prostitution.

Throughout most of the book the material is presented well and each avenue is thoroughly explored. It provides a good grounding for students studying Ancient Greece and Rome to explore this hotly debated topic. Her arguments concerning the authors after Herodotos are well researched, but some of her ideas concerning the motives of Herodotos are questionable. The Ancient Near Eastern section of the book, however, is a bit wanting; this could have been resolved with more research into the area and utilising the right resources. Overall, Budin pulls together all the resources at her disposal to adequately demonstrate the tenets of her thesis, only lacking that same conviction in her Near Eastern chapter.