Remaking the Saint: Antonius’ Life of Symeon the Elder and the Cult of Symeon the Younger

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The cults of Symeon the Elder (d. 459 CE) and Symeon the Younger (d. 592) were linked in the minds of many late antique Christians. People, objects, and stories moved fluidly between the two communities. This presentation explores connections between Antonius’ Life of Symeon the Stylite the Elder and the anonymous Life of Symeon the Stylite the Younger. It argues that Antonius made use of the Life of the younger stylite as well as other textual and archaeological material pertaining to Symeon the Younger’s cult. Whereas previous studies of Symeon the Younger have examined the influence of the elder stylite on the younger, this presentation shows that influence was not unidirectional. Symeon the Elders’s cult-keepers reshaped the saint and devotion to him in light of growing veneration to his successor. By examining these two cults from the perspective of collaboration rather than competition, this paper illuminates the multifaceted symbolic world of devotion to saints.

Dina Boero holds a B.A. in Religion from the University of California: San Diego and a M.A. and Ph.D. in Classics from the University of Southern California. Her current book project, The Anatomy of a Cult, traces the history of Symeon the Stylite the Elder’s (d. 459) cult in the fifth and sixth centuries. In fall of 2017, she will take up the post of Assistant Professor of History at The College of New Jersey.

Thursday, April 27, 2017
4:30 p.m.
Scheide Caldwell House, Room 103