

Power and Control: Understanding Prostitution in Ancient Times

From the disdain associated with the industry to its inevitable existence within various cultures, prostitution has long garnered the attention of men and women alike. This paper will rely on multiple case studies to analyse the hierarchical nature of the ancient world. These examples will show who the individuals in positions of power were, the enforcement of control in a civic space, how societal expectations influenced behaviour, and how the intricate network responded to its surrounding environment. To better understand mobility and socioeconomic dynamics, we will focus on individual players, such as: who were the women involved in this trade, the role of their clients, and what kinds of legal and social boundaries defined them? In reconstructing these individuals and systems, we see how culture, law, and human behavioral economics come together and better understand how ancient prostitution was a complex phenomenon that continues to challenge our understandings of morality, culture, and institutions.

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