

**Power and Non-Manageable Lust:
Prostitution in 18th Century Ottoman Society**

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(Summary)

The paper deals with prostitution in 18th century Ottoman society, Bulgarian lands including. Legislation on prostitution, resting both on the intransigent rules of religious law (*sharia*) and on the more tolerable Ottoman state law (some customary laws included), is taken into consideration.

The paper is based on comparative analyses of literary narratives, “urban legends” and documentary sources from Ottoman archives related to prostitution and its persecution.

The archives dating from the 18th century show that all measures (systematic and accidental) undertaken by the Ottoman authorities to combat and wipe out prostitution – mainly through imprisonment and expulsion of prostitutes and state servants caught in immoral contacts with prostitutes – had but a minimal effect. It was realized in the 19th century that prostitution is nothing but the “necessary evil” and that it is better to control through legalization of brothels and taxation of prostitutes (after the western pattern) than to apply rigorous measures, death penalty including.

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