The Politics of Humanitarianism:
States, Reformers, and the International Movement to Combat the Traffic in Women,
1875-1960

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by

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Chapter. 3: The Internationalization of Prostitution and Emergence of the Traffic

The moniker of the “world’s oldest occupation” implies a kind of timelessness to prostitution, as if its organization and meaning have varied little over the centuries and across cultures. Like other forms of social organization such as gender and sexuality (Weeks 1989), however, prostitution should be considered in historical perspective so that its continuities and differences in various contexts may be better understood. One important aspect of the history of prostitution is its development from pre-modern, small-scale forms to a modernized, bureaucratized, and international industry in the 1800s. I suggest that this happened not only as a by-product of increased globalization involving colonial expansion, economic interconnectedness and international migration, but also, in part, due to the institutionalization of prostitution by state officials around the world.

Globalization created possibilities for the expansion and internationalization of prostitution markets in the 1800s, but they were not simply the result of spontaneous entrepreneurship across the world. Rather, state officials routinely set up regulated systems of prostitution and sought to control the type of women (indigenous and foreign) who were in the brothels. The growth of prostitution was not a “natural” outcome of increased migration, nor were state officials necessarily reacting to an informal growth of prostitution in their areas; in many cases, it was state officials, especially military officials, who set up brothels in locations where they had not been previously. Viewing state officials only as “responders” to prostitution markets overlooks their role in organizing and benefiting from prostitution and fails to recognize them as active
participants. They both promoted and sought to constrain prostitution in service of men, nation, and empire.

State officials were particularly concerned about organizing the sexual relations of military men and laborers, especially in situations where large groups of men were needed for extended periods of service. Gender ideology in most European countries held that neither abstinence nor any sexual gratification outside of heterosexual relations was a possibility for single men or married men away from their wives for extended periods of time. Such alternatives were widely thought to be physically and morally deleterious. State officials therefore believed that they needed to provide appropriate sexual outlets involving migration of wives and families, concubinage, or controlled prostitution.

The latter was sometimes pursued instead of these other strategies and at other times in conjunction with them. For example, Stoler (1997) notes that prostitution and marriage replaced concubinage in colonial Sumatra and Java from 1900-1920s, while Manderson (1997) observes that marriage was used to help replace prostitution in British Malaya and other British colonial holdings. Part of the process of saving and reforming Chinese prostitutes in these areas, often supported by local Chinese elites, was to marry them off to Chinese laborers.

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1 This is true today as well. State officials have been implicated in trafficking schemes in some countries. See, for example, (Human Rights Watch 2002) on the complicity of judges and prosecutors and the active involvement of police in trafficking women in Bosnia.

2 The Po Leung Kuk Society, which aimed to prevent Chinese women and girls from falling into or continuing in prostitution, endorsed this strategy. It had branches in Singapore, Hong Kong, and Canton (Abalahin 2003, p.406-7). Former prostitutes were desirable as wives because men did not have to pay a bride-price for them.
Modernization, State Formation, and Prostitution

Historians have pointed to the existence of different forms of prostitution in different countries prior to the 1800s: Ancient Greece had a graded prostitution system in place, from the lowest streetwalkers to courtesans (hetairas) in upper-class brothels; India had a well-known systems of temple prostitution, and camp followers have long serviced armies (Bullough and Bullough 1987; Roberts 1992). In arguing that prostitution modernized and bureaucratized in the 1800s, I am not suggesting that organized systems did not exist prior to this time period. Municipal brothels existed in ancient times, as noted above, and they were found in medieval Europe prior to prostitution being targeted for repression by ecclesiastical laws.

I am suggesting, however, that in Europe, prostitution was organized on a small-scale just prior to the development of modern states and it often involved in-kind exchanges and/or a more expansive relationship in which women might also provide food, bathing, conversation, etc. in addition to a sexual act (Gilfoyle 1999). States also changed the organization of prostitution in colonial areas and protectorates, tending to expand and commercialize women’s sexual labor in ways that had not been the case before. Historians of Africa, for example, have noted that indigenous women ran brew houses and provided ongoing sexual services to small groups of men, but that this practice was usurped by colonial state regulation, which turned prostitution into a commercial enterprise devoid of other aspects of domestic labor (Barrera 1996:25; Spaulding and Beswick 1995).
It was in the 1800s that prostitution was organized on a standardized, large-scale by state officials. A conscious component of militarization and state formation, state-regulated prostitution was organized first for the military and then for general populations. Some historians locate the expansion of prostitution during this time period as a result of demand only: middle-class demand and the demand of migrating laborers and peasants ultimately created conditions that generated some similar structural patterns of prostitution in Europe, Asia, and the Americas (Gilfoyle 1999). Trafficking then occurred when women were moved to meet the demand of large groups of laborers in colonial and frontier areas (Scully 2001).

This view is too narrow. It is important to also understand the role of the state in this expansion, on both the demand and supply sides. Regarding demand, brothels were set up by military officials in port cities and garrison towns to service military men (Enloe 2000); regarding supply, political upheaval, pogroms, and war created conditions for mass migrations of women throughout western Europe and overseas. Women fleeing such conditions were likely to have become involved in prostitution. For example, Russian and Polish Jewish women were disproportionately likely to be found in foreign brothels from the late 1800s through the interwar period (Bristow 1982). State officials were therefore implicated both in organizing and institutionalizing prostitution and in conditions which fostered the movement of women into regulated prostitution markets around the world.

Moreover, prostitution was a fundamental form of female labor that state officials employed to support imperial ambitions. For example, Warren (1993) argues that
prostitution formed part of an economic advancement strategy that Japanese officials supported prior to their political and military advancement into Southeast Asia. Prostitution was a state-regulated and well-established industry in Japan. Prostitutes were allowed to migrate because businesses could be set up around brothel districts; kimono shops, pharmacies, restaurants, and laundries thrived in such areas. This helped to secure economic bases in new territories at least until the interwar period.

The institutionalization of prostitution solved some problems for state officials, but it created new dilemmas as well. The question of which women should be housed in state-regulated brothels was one problem that dogged state officials, potentially bringing state and nation-building projects into conflict where interracial mixing was a concern. When prostitution was thought to be a requirement for European military men and laborers, and containing sexual relations within racial categories was also a concern, European women were necessary for brothels. Yet, European women were supposed to act as moral bearers of the nation. This contradiction created difficulties for state officials, particularly in colonial areas, who worried about imperial prestige. They sometimes opted for indigenous women, as in the case of India (Levine 1994; Levine 2001), and at other times oversaw brothels in which European women serviced European men.³

The Global Spread of Regulated Prostitution

In the 1800s, small-scale, culturally varied, indigenous forms of prostitution in different countries were overlaid by a modern, western approach to its organization. Initiated originally by Napoleon, who was concerned about the health of his military during the height of the empire, the “French model” of regulation began in Paris in 1802 and expanded from a focus on military prostitution to prostitution in the general population. Not just European countries, but those throughout the world adopted the system: for example, Russia began regulating prostitution in 1843, while the Netherlands did so in 1852, Sweden in 1859, Italy in 1860, England in 1864, Japan in 1871, and Argentina in 1875. Imperial states also instituted regulation in the colonies; for example, regulation systems were put into place by the French in Syria and Lebanon, and in Algeria, Tunisia and Morocco, while the British set up military brothels in Palestine (Neilans 1932; Taraud 2003).

Regulation entailed the licensing or toleration of brothels, the compulsory registration of prostitutes, obligatory examination of prostitutes for venereal disease, and their enforced treatment in confinement. Administrative oversight was usually taken care of by “morals police” who ensured registration, collections of fees, compliance with physical exams, and adherence to brothel regulations, such as when inmates could be seen outside of them.

Countries with varying state structures adopted and maintained regulation systems: absolute monarchies (e.g. Russia), unifying states (e.g., Italy), countries with weak central governments (e.g., Switzerland), and those with comparatively stronger
ones (e.g., France). Sometimes regulation was introduced town by town (e.g., Netherlands and Switzerland), sometimes by central government (e.g., Italy, England). In all of these countries, however, police and doctors worked in conjunction to enforce the system at the local level.  

The regulation system was actively promoted within countries by coalitions of military administrators, medical doctors and conservative politicians, often with the tacit approval of the dominant religious organizations. Internationally, medical men concerned about venereal disease organized to diffuse the regulationist model to other countries. At the International Medical Congress of 1867 in Brussels, for example, there was a vote to form a commission to share Belgium’s model of regulation with all other governments in order to combat disease on an international basis (Butler 1898).

Part of the increased infrastructural power of states during this period (Mann 1993), regulation was implemented by numerous government officials who saw it as a secular, rational, and progressive way to deal with prostitution. It should also be noted that governments often benefited financially from fees and taxes generated under regulation. In France, for example, local authorities began to donate their excess income to rescue homes for prostitutes after having been caught pocketing the profit (Harsin

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4 Even where regulation was by national law or imperial decree, local police were in charge of enforcing regulation. In most cases, both brothel and “independent” prostitutes working on the streets or in other venues were registered (e.g., France, Italy, Netherlands, Russia). In a few cases, brothels themselves were not licensed, but the registration and medical regulation of prostitutes was in force (e.g., England, Germany between 1871-1891). This latter system was termed “neo-regulationism”. In Japan, regulation of brothel prostitutes only was allowed and independent prostitutes were criminalized.

5 The Anglican Church and Catholic Church were both generally silent on the issue of regulation, leaving abolition to an assortment of evangelical, Quaker, Unitarian and other reform groups. See, e.g., Walkowitz (1983:80) on the former and Gibson (1986) on the latter.
1985). In Japan, prostitution-related taxes and fees generated enormous sums (Fujime 1997).

The methods of regulation were analogous to the ones described by Foucault (1979) in the administration of 19th century prisons: enclosure, surveillance, and the disciplining of (women’s) bodies. Regulation has been widely noted by historians as a gendered system that functioned to control women’s bodies rather than men’s: prostitutes were registered, segregated into brothels, and medically examined, but male customers were not. In some countries, police reportedly registered women against their will as a means of recruitment. The regulation of prostitution was, in short, a prime example of the way that gender and sexuality “make politics” (Gal and Kligman 2000), intertwined as it was with processes of state-building and claims for states’ moral legitimacy based on this “progressive” system for handling prostitution. Regulating prostitution was part of the overall growth of state intervention into matters of sexuality, moving it from the religious realm into a secular one.

The Emergence of the International Traffic and its Patterns

As a subset of an overall growth in prostitution that occurred in the 1800s, the traffic in women also increased.6 European states, their colonies, some South American countries, China, and Japan were all involved in the movement of women across borders for the purposes of prostitution. The main European supply states were Italy, Poland,

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6 I define trafficking here as the movement of women across territorial borders for the purposes of prostitution; I do not make a distinction as to the voluntary nature of this movement because the sources of data for the trends noted here do not make this distinction. (See Chapter 1 on data and definitions of trafficking). In chapter 4, I discuss the historical difficulties in defining what is meant by “trafficking” and its use by IVAs.
Russia, and to a lesser extent, France and Germany. China and Japan were also sending countries. The primary destinations at this time were Argentina and Brazil, Egypt, Singapore, Shanghai, and Indochina and to a lesser extent, countries of the Middle East and the United States.

Drawing from international voluntary association documents and LON reports, I outline the common methods of trafficking noted by activists and state officials and the major trafficking patterns from the turn of the century through the early interwar period. Unless otherwise noted, I draw from these sources. Though the data on post-World War II trafficking trends are sparse, I do also briefly outline what is known about them.

Methods of Trafficking: The methods of trafficking most often identified by IVAs and state officials involved using fake (i.e., legally invalid) marriages, promises of marriage, and recruitment via employment agencies for domestic or other types of service work abroad. Women who accompanied procurers abroad under such circumstances were subsequently sold to brothels. There was also acknowledgement that women who were already prostitutes were procured for brothels abroad and that some moved to and from brothels in different countries (e.g., France to her colonies and back; Europe to Argentina; the colonies to the Middle East, etc.). For the most part, traffickers were thought to be individual men and women (sometimes husband and wife teams), or part of

7 Data collected by state officials and IVAs did not include clandestine prostitutes, but because regulation systems were implemented and maintained in many countries, there is some solid data on licensed/registered prostitutes (most often in brothels, but sometimes independent). Some information can be drawn from these alone. The nationality of clandestine prostitutes may well have been different from registered ones, but since the practice of banning foreign prostitutes from registration was not a commonly accepted practice until the late interwar period, we cannot infer that foreign prostitutes would necessarily avoid it more than others.
small networks of traffickers who tended to procure women of their own race/ethnicity/nationality.

**Trafficking patterns:**

(a) **Movement of European women between European states:** Belgium received French prostitutes while France received mostly Italian and Spanish prostitutes and a smaller amount of German, Swiss, Belgian and Algerian women (Corbin 1990). Switzerland received French, German, and Italian prostitutes. Italy had Austrian, French, Yugoslavian, Hungarian, German, and Czech prostitutes; Holland had German, French, Belgian, Polish and Austrian prostitutes; Germany had Polish and Hungarian prostitutes and so on.

The proportion of overall prostitutes from other European countries is difficult to ascertain, given that many countries had only recently begun to categorize immigrants and attempt to control migration at the turn of the century (Torpey 2000), but the registers of regulated brothels show up to 25% foreign prostitutes in some areas of France and Italy (Corbin 1990; Gibson 1986). Portugal had about 20% foreign prostitutes in 1924, mostly from Spain and France (League of Nations 1927a). These were small percentages compared to other receiving countries that were overseas, such as Argentina. For the most part, this type of movement of prostitutes was regional.

(b) **Movement of European women to the Americas, particularly Argentina and Brazil:** Russian, Polish, French, and Italian women at times comprised the majority of Argentine and Brazilian prostitutes. Foreign prostitutes in Argentina increased from a reported 25% in 1913 (Bristow 1982) to a high of 75% in the interwar period (League of
Nations 1927a). By the late interwar period, the traffic to South America began to slow (Guy 1991).

(c) **Small movement of European women to colonial holdings, mandated areas etc.** Some colonial territories boasted a large array of nationalities including European women. Shanghai had an estimated 2,000 non-Chinese prostitutes in the early 1900s, mostly Russian, Eastern European, and Japanese (Scully 2001). What we would now call sex tourism in Algeria was a thriving business in the interwar period, with French as well as German, Italian, Spanish, Lebanese, Armenian and Turkish prostitutes. Egypt, a winter sex tourist destination for Europeans, had around 40% foreign prostitutes in 1924 (League of Nations 1927a). They were mainly French, Italian, and Greek with a smaller number of Syrian, Turkish, and Russian prostitutes. Other colonial holdings sported a smaller array of European foreign prostitutes in the interwar period. Indochina, for example, had some French and Russian prostitutes, though these were expelled in 1923. However, some French prostitutes in Saigon continued to service European men (League of Nations 1927a). In Syria and Lebanon, foreign prostitutes were mainly Greek, Italian, and French, but they were not large numbers: only about 6% of the registered prostitutes in Beirut were foreign in 1931.

Russian women were a particular concern in the interwar period (Association for Moral and Social Hygiene 1935a; Association for Moral and Social Hygiene 1935b; British National Committee 1938; Sempkins 1935). They were moved to Northern China and especially Manchuria; they migrated in response to the revolution and to service Russian laborers and elite exiles. Russian traffickers helped to move prostitutes to
Harbin (Russian headquarters in the Russo-Japanese war and later for anti-Bolshevists), Tientsin, and Shanghai, and along villages and cities of the Chinese Eastern Railway. Shanghai and Tientsin had British, French, and American men who patronized the brothels.

(d) Movement of women of color regionally and/or to colonial holdings, mandated areas, etc.: This mainly involved the movement of Chinese women to the Malay States, British Hong Kong, Singapore, Dutch East Indies, and Indochina. Japanese women, including women of Korean ethnicity, were moved to Manchuria, Singapore, the Dutch East Indies, and even India until the Japanese government began repatriating its own prostitutes abroad in the interwar period.

Hong Kong, the Straits Settlement, the Federated Malay States, and Shanghai all had regulated prostitution systems with women from other areas. Singapore’s licensed brothels, for example, included some with both Chinese prostitutes and clients, some with Japanese prostitutes for both European and Asian men, and some Thai houses with Thai prostitutes to service European men. Mixed Eurasian prostitutes serviced European men in brothels in this colony as well (League of Nations 1933).

Post World War II Traffic: Post-World War II, the traffic had become mostly regional and the traffic to colonial holdings had moved to North Africa and the Middle East primarily, rather than Asia. French women were moved to brothels in North Africa (e.g., Algeria), and continued to be found in Egypt, as were some other European women. A representative of the Paris police reported in 1958 that French women were being shipped to Spain, South Africa, North Africa, South America (especially Caracas), and
Belgium where 50% of the prostitutes in Antwerp were reportedly French (International Bureau for the Suppression of Traffic in Persons 1958). Overall, however, the UN believed the overall incidence of these forms of trafficking to be low.

Most countries, the UN reported, had few foreign prostitutes in the 1950s; prostitutes were almost all nationals in many different countries including Austria, Egypt, France, Greece, India, Iraq, Italy, Malaya, Philippines, Portugal, South Africa, Turkey, and the UK. This was based on self-reports from these countries (United Nations 1948; United Nations 1949). Only Lebanon openly admitted to having foreign prostitutes post World War II, which they reported as 43% of the prostitutes in their brothels. These were mostly from Syria and Israel. Laos was thought to have a similar percentage, mainly from Thailand, Cambodia, and Vietnam.

There is much less documentation of the post-World War II traffic than of the period from the late-1800s through the interwar years. In the earlier time period, international voluntary associations were active on the traffic and the LON commissioned reports to study the traffic in addition to its other anti-trafficking work. Post-World War II, the voluntary associations were less active in documenting the traffic and there were fewer English-language popular press books on the subject. Based on one journalistic account and another report by an Anti-Slavery Society-affiliated author, we can glean some information on post-World War II trafficking patterns.

Traffickers in Morocco and Algeria left when those countries became independent, but moved to the Middle East (particularly Lebanon) where they procured Lebanese, Danish, Armenian, German, French, Spanish, Italian, and Turkish women for
the trade there. European women were also apparently moved to West Africa and South America (Barlay 1969). In West Africa, the traffic was controlled by an Italian who moved French, Belgian, and Italian women to and through the Congo (O'Callaghan 1965). Barlay also notes a traffic in women from Africa to France.

Gender, Ethnicity, Nationality and the Traffic

Gender, race/ethnicity, class and nationality intersected in myriad ways to determine which women were moved for prostitution markets, sometimes fostering the traffic in women and at other times hindering it. Women were often moved due to proscriptions against mixing: European women in Egypt serviced British troops and European tourists; Chinese women serviced Chinese men in Singapore.

Most locales physically separated their brothels by race/ethnicity and/or religion. In Algeria and Morocco, there were European brothels to service European men. In interwar Hong Kong, Chinese and European brothels were segregated into different parts of the colony. The Governor of Hong Kong reported 296 brothels in the colony in 1923, seven of which were for European men. The proscription against racial mixing was strong. In his words:

The circumstances make it practically impossible to imagine a common brothel and almost as impossible to imagine brothels for the same classes for the different nationalities within reach of each other. It is stated that no such cases exist (Association for Moral and Social Hygiene 1923, p. 1)

Interwar British Malaya also had racial and class segregation of brothels (Manderson 1997). In post-World War II Casablanca there were separate brothels in the Jewish and Arab quarters, and these were also geographically separated from European
brothels. Even within European brothel quarters, care was taken to ensure separate rotations of troops of from different countries so as to avoid conflict between the men (Association for Moral and Social Hygiene 1948). The concern was to make sure that men had sexual encounters with women of their racial/ethnic, religious, or national group.

Failing actual ethnic similarity, as in cases where state officials were reluctant to move their “own” women for prostitution, racial similarity was still preferred. For example, the British branch of IAF reported in 1936 that the Fascist paper, L’Azione Coloniale had quoted the Governor of Somaliland (and then Minister of State) as saying:

> It will be necessary to regulate in all centres of the Italian African colonies a sufficiently large and often renewed supply of white women of another quality than honest women. They must be white women but not Italian – Italian women of that class should never be allowed to pass the frontiers of our Empire: it is an elementary question of prestige in relation to the natives. (Association for Moral and Social Hygiene 1937, pp. 7-8).

Tensions occurred in many cases where this proscription was violated or where there was even a possibility of mixing. This was especially true in the context of war or in occupied areas in the aftermath of war. As mentioned, Russian women were of particular concern, because they were trafficked but also because they were involved in prostitution across race/ethnicity:

One (group of victims) is composed of women refugees who in their flight were stranded, without means of subsistence, in remote parts of Manchuria, where in exchange for the expense of their maintenance they were made use of as prostitutes by local Chinese. The other consists of destitute Russian women of the Railway Zone of Northern Manchuria, both refugees and impoverished residents in that part of the country who today form the source of supply of almost the entire occidental prostitution in the great international commercial centres of China (Association for Moral and Social Hygiene 1935a).
There were class concerns as well, since it was believed that these women would find local conditions of labour “entirely strange” and that they should therefore not be expected to work in domestic service, laundry work, or needlework, but rather given office jobs or simply housed by well-to-do English-speaking families when possible; This was suggested by IB, which was concerned about “…massage establishments; and establishments where unfortunate Russian white women are exposed to the view of coolies who pay a few cents for the sight” (Sempkins 1935, p. 2).

In another example in the aftermath of war, German as well as international activists complained bitterly about the “Horror on the Rhine” i.e., the presence of French troops (about 50% black) in occupied territory in the interwar period and their possible use of German women in brothels (Nelson 1970). A pamphlet penned by E.D. Morel, a British politician and former journalist who campaigned against the continuation of slavery in the Belgian Congo recounted the offenses:8

Many a small German town which never boasted a brothel has been compelled to set one up…..At Wiesbaden, where two brothels for French troops have existed for some time at a cost of 41,000 marks, the French Command has now requisitioned another for African troops in a public-house which has had to be set aside by the Municipality…Last month a brothel for African troops was demanded at Dietz – in this case the order is for the establishment of an “Arabic brothel”…At Kostheim, where there is a large camp of African troops, the brothel (into which some coloured women have been imported) costs the Municipality 130,000 marks (Morel 1921).

The German IB committee protested the issue at IB meetings and to the LON, with a variety of international sympathizers.

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8 The pamphlet was, ironically, filled with racist assumptions about the sexuality of black men, though Morel’s main target was French militarism and conscription.
On the other hand, men in some locations were serviced specifically by women outside of their racial/ethnic and/or national background. Here the traffic was hindered. In Saigon, it was reportedly Vietnamese women dressed in Chinese clothing who serviced Chinese men, because “Chinese sentiment” would not allow Chinese women there (League of Nations 1927a). Likewise, British government and military officials ensured that no British prostitutes would be found abroad while at the same time regulating non-European women for colonial use: Indian and Japanese prostitutes serviced British troops in India (Levine 1994).

This use of indigenous women by foreign men was a concern for European feminists, who critiqued it from a gender point of view, and some purity reformers concerned about racial purity. Indigenous elites also found purchase in the issue, placing prostitution in the center of anti-colonial nationalism in India and Indonesia for example (Abalahin 2003). Indigenous prostitutes could be called upon for their support, as when they refused white patrons in celebration of Sudan’s independence (Spaulding and Beswick 1995), while foreign prostitutes could become targets of anti-colonial nationalists, as reportedly happened in Ethiopia (O'Callaghan 1965).

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9 Contrast this to the traffic in Chinese women to the United States and Shanghai, where they were specifically imported for the Chinese community (Henriot 2001; Hershatter 1989; Hirata 1979; Lee 2003). There was a definite class component at work in these cases. Some Chinese women who were trafficked were reserved only for well-to-do Chinese men, while others serviced laborers and/or sailors of different nationalities.
State-Regulated Prostitution and Trafficking

In regulating prostitution, states not only “captured” more of social life and secularized the means for dealing with prostitution. They also, as abolitionists contended at the time, legitimated prostitution as a profession and provided institutional mechanisms for the traffic in women. This relationship between state-regulated prostitution systems and trafficking posed a problem for states from the start. Almost as soon as state-regulated prostitution systems were adopted around the world, international protest against regulation surfaced. Shortly after, because the growth in migratory prostitution occurred at the same time as the spread of regulation, a major point of contention arose for all who were involved in anti-trafficking work: did regulation contribute to trafficking or did it help to combat it?11

On one side, some reformers contended that state-regulated systems were a major contributor to increasing the traffic in women. In contacting the LON to plea for action in addition to the development of anti-trafficking conventions, the British branch of the International Abolitionist Federation wrote:

…we desire to point out that these agreements cannot destroy the traffic though they many increase its risks and difficulties. The traffickers would not undertake the expense and risk of conveying their victims to foreign countries unless they were assured of a market in which to dispose of the merchandise. That market exists wherever houses of debauchery are licensed and protected by Government (Association for Moral and Social Hygiene 1920, p. 1).

10 See Mann (1993) Chapters 13 and 14 on nineteenth century bureaucratization and the expansion of civilian scope in the rise of the modern European state.

11 This question is central in trafficking debates today with regard to trafficking people as well as drugs, body parts, etc.
They argued that the traffic supplied inmates for recognized brothels, providing fresh women so that customers would not become bored and replacing women who were in lock hospitals due to venereal disease.

They also blurred the lines between state-regulated prostitution and trafficking, suggesting that where brothels were institutionalized, prostitutes were not exercising free choice. They argued that the third-party organization of prostitution set up a system of brothel-keepers, police, procurers and pimps who denied civil rights to prostitutes who were literally sold to brothels, restricted to particular working and living spaces, prevented from being on the streets without being subject to morals police, and kept in debt bondage, etc.

On the other side, supporters of regulation argued that regulated brothels were not the source of the traffic. Rather, they suggested, women were trafficked to clandestine houses. State-regulation therefore had little to do with the increased traffic in women and instead, actually provided conditions to safeguard women. An interwar memo by the Governor of Hong Kong defending state regulation summarized:

Such control [of prostitution] takes the line of prevention of actual crime: of enforcing responsibilities (on those in charge of prostitutes): of securing freedom of action to those who are allowed to practice prostitution: and of seeing that those who are for any reason considered unfit (e.g., too young) shall not practise. There is the smallest possible interference with those who are supposed to know their own minds and whose prostitution does not involve others; and Government “regulation” becomes merely a broad supervision against abuse….the Hong Kong “customs are good” is a phrase constantly heard, not from the prostitutes only (when it means that their freedom is assured and that they are accorded consideration in any trouble) but also from responsible Chinese, who speak with a knowledge of the conditions elsewhere and a realisation of the necessity for keeping up the standard of Chinese family life (Association for Moral and Social Hygiene 1923, p. 1).
Data on the history of clandestine prostitution in Europe and its colonies is lacking, but regulationists were very likely correct that women were trafficked to clandestine brothels. Yet, as we can see from the earlier outline of trafficking patterns and the dates of state-regulation in Table 2 on the following page, women were indeed moving from and especially to state-regulated prostitution markets. Even within Europe, countries with state-regulated systems appear to have had a higher array of foreign prostitutes. For example, France and Italy had higher rates of foreign prostitutes compared to the Netherlands (League of Nations 1927b).

The contention over the relation between state regulation and trafficking led to fierce battles between reformers affiliated with the IAF and the IB and different state officials who each sought to define the anti-trafficking movement in their interests. It shaped the anti-trafficking agenda as regulationist countries sought to preserve their autonomy and control over the organization of prostitution in their territories and IVAs sought to define the scope of their reforms. It is to these battles, and the construction of trafficking as an international social problem, that we turn in the next chapter.
### Table 1: The International Spread of Regulated Prostitution Systems

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Approximate Dates of Regulation</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Argentina</td>
<td>1875-1934; reinstated 1954</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Austria/Hungary</td>
<td>Abolished 1921 in Vienna; 1926 in Graz</td>
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<tr>
<td>Belgium</td>
<td>1844-1947</td>
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<tr>
<td>Brazil</td>
<td>Regulationist through at least 1950</td>
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<tr>
<td>China</td>
<td>n/a</td>
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<tr>
<td>Czecho-Slovakia</td>
<td>1918-1922</td>
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<tr>
<td>Denmark</td>
<td>Abolished 1906</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>France</td>
<td>1802-1946</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>1830-1871; 1891-1927; reinstated 1933</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Great Britain</td>
<td>1864-1888</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greece</td>
<td>1922-1955</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hungary</td>
<td>Abolished 1950</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italy</td>
<td>1860-1958</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Japan</td>
<td>1871-1946</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mexico</td>
<td>Abolished 1942-1943</td>
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<tr>
<td>Netherlands</td>
<td>Abolished 1942-1943</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poland</td>
<td>Abolished brothels in 1922; registration 1956</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Portugal</td>
<td>Regulationist through at least 1950</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Romania</td>
<td>Abolition (partial) in 1929</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Russia</td>
<td>1843-1917</td>
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<tr>
<td>Spain</td>
<td>Abolished 1956</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sweden</td>
<td>1859-1919</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Switzerland</td>
<td>Geneva: 1896-1925</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turkey</td>
<td>Regulationist through at least 1950</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Colonial Holdings/Mandates/Protectorates</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Algeria</td>
<td>Abolished 1962</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dutch East Indies</td>
<td>Abolished 1910</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Egypt</td>
<td>1882-85 to1949-51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hong Kong</td>
<td>1857-1932</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>India</td>
<td>1868-1888 (unofficially continued by military)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indochina</td>
<td>Regulationist under France</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lebanon</td>
<td>1920-Post WWII</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Federated Malay States</td>
<td>Abolished 1931</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manchuria (Kwantung)</td>
<td>Regulationist under Japan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Palestine</td>
<td>WWI-1927</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shanghai</td>
<td>Regulationist in French settlement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1869-1919 in the International Settlement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Singapore</td>
<td>1870-1930</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tientsin</td>
<td>Regulationist in the Japanese settlement</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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References


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