

# 1 Introduction

*[T]here is a regular trade in young girls who are bought and sold, imported and exported, to and from the ports and cities of Europe. . . . It will naturally occur to remark that such a traffic involves slavery. . . . The business is an international trade, kept up very much by the movement of girls from one country to another, and in a very large number of cases the movement [does not have] the nature of emigration, or free voluntary movement of adults, but of export, that is, movement of persons under stress of fear or fraud, often minors incapable of consent.*

—P. Bunting

*We want to destroy this traffic. Well, a traffic consists of three parts; first, there is the supply; second, there are the traffickers; and third, there must be a demand. . . . [E]verything that can be done . . . to improve women's position . . . will cut off the supply. . . . [S]trike at the supply, strike at the traffickers, but strike also at the demand for the victims.*

—Henry J. Wilson

**THE TRAFFIC IN WOMEN AND GIRLS FOR PROSTITUTION** has captured the attention of academics, activists, politicians, and reporters around the world, spurring an energetic movement to help those involved in the international sex trade. As the introductory quotes suggest, women and girls may be moved across borders into situations of coercive prostitution tantamount to slavery. What may surprise those who think of trafficking as a recent phenomenon, however, is that the introductory quotes are actually from reformers at an international anti-trafficking congress in 1899.<sup>1</sup>

It was well over a century ago, amid increasing globalization and the rise of nation-building and imperialism, that the emergence of traffic in women

and girls for prostitution alarmed reformers and state officials in European and other countries throughout the world.<sup>2</sup> They formed anti-trafficking committees within countries and worked to incorporate anti-trafficking activities first into the League of Nations and then into the United Nations. They also developed a variety of international anti-trafficking accords from 1904 through 1949, before the movement began to lose momentum. Trafficking was actually the first women's issue taken up in international accords, well before other issues that were advocated during the same period, including suffrage, education, and married women's citizenship.<sup>3</sup>

This book traces the construction and diffusion of the first anti-trafficking movement from its beginnings in Great Britain to key European countries, including the Netherlands, France, and Italy, where local anti-trafficking movements varied in their agendas and in their successes. Initially conceived of as a global humanitarian effort to protect women from sexual exploitation, the movement's international feminist-inspired vision failed to achieve its universal goal. Instead, in both international settings and in local areas, it gradually gave way to nationalist concerns about protecting states from certain groups of "undesirable" migrants and led to increased social control of women.

Why did the movement lose its original vision and turn against the very women it sought to protect? The core theme and argument of this book is that the movement was limited by the central role of women's sexual labor in both nation/state- and empire-building. State officials sought to defend and preserve their right to maintain and regulate prostitution in metropolitan and colonial areas in support of militaries and migrant laborers, and as a means of maintaining ethnic hierarchies. They were able to do so largely because the international voluntary associations who initiated the first anti-trafficking movement were divided in their approaches to prostitution, in their views about the proper role of state involvement in sexual relations, and in their imperial and national biases.

Using archival and secondary historical sources, the first part of the book examines the overall development of the movement as it was promoted by two key international voluntary associations that competed to define the issue of trafficking in both international settings, such as at the League of Nations, and local areas. One of the associations, composed of emerging feminist groups, challenged state sovereignty in matters of prostitution; the other, which was organized by purity reformers, sought to reinforce that sovereignty. This broad level of analysis from a global vantage point allows us to see the workings of international governmental and nongovernmental organizations, and the often contradictory outcomes

of humanitarian efforts in international governance. The anti-trafficking movement ended up reinforcing rather than challenging state power as state officials selectively used reforms as mechanisms to realize their own interests in maintaining and controlling women's mobility and sexual labor.

This process was mediated to some degree by the interactions of voluntary associations and state officials in particular locales, and by the importance of women's sexual labor in empire-building. In the second part of the book I highlight the efforts of the international voluntary associations in specific countries where their relative influence, along with the perceived importance of prostitution to nation-building and imperial projects, led to differences between specific anti-trafficking projects in the Netherlands, France, and Italy. Only the Netherlands applied anti-trafficking measures throughout its territories and addressed the traffic in non-European women. Officials in France, in contrast, sought to maintain the state's right to permit immigrant women in state-regulated prostitution and refused to apply anti-trafficking measures in colonial areas. In Italy, state officials used the issue of trafficking as a proxy for controlling migration as part of Fascist population policy, and tried unsuccessfully to import European, but not Italian, women for prostitution in colonial areas.

As early examples from an international humanitarian movement, these first anti-trafficking efforts need to be considered as part of global politics, replete with power struggles and contradictions of their own. To understand the dynamics and outcomes of the movement, then, we must critically examine not only the international voluntary associations that founded and fostered the movement, but also the actions of involved state officials as well as the relations between the different actors. This examination also requires that we consider the movement in its historical context, as part of a period characterized by economic globalization; by the consolidation of Western European nation-states, their increasing infrastructural development, and the creation of the international state system; by the rise of women's activism as they struggled to define new positions within nation-states; by ongoing but embattled colonialism; and by the rise of ethnonationalism.

### **Gender, International Politics, and Women's Sexuality**

Women's bodies and sexuality are central to the making of nation-states and empires.<sup>4</sup> Women's potential as childbearers and mothers, as well as workers and settlers, positions them in unique relation to state-building projects and as markers of ethnonational boundaries; they are integral to the physical

and cultural reproduction of the nation-state and empire.<sup>5</sup> This material and symbolic importance provides a clue as to why trafficking for prostitution became the focus of the first international conventions pertaining to women, and why the problem was addressed by state officials before other issues of importance to feminist social reformers, including women's suffrage. Trafficking was catapulted into the international realm not only because feminists and purity reformers lobbied for change; it was taken up by state officials precisely because of their concern with the regulation of women's sexuality.

Gender, sexuality, and race and ethnicity, in many intertwined configurations, have been important in the discursive delineation of imperial and national boundaries.<sup>6</sup> In constructing the nation, women are evoked as mothers, as symbols of "the national hearth and home," and as wives and daughters who are the bearers of masculine honor.<sup>7</sup> The sexuality of women in any of these roles can become central preoccupations of state officials, who have often sought to ensure women's sexual respectability, that is, their availability to men of their own nation and not of others. Sexual relationships that transgress this boundary have been understood as endangering the very bounds of the nation, whether the women involved had voluntary or involuntary sexual relations with ethnic or national "others" or, in the case of this study, were involved in prostitution across racial, ethnic, or national boundaries. Unbounded female sexual activities have been seen as dangerous and unpatriotic, a threat to the strength of the nation and the honor of men.<sup>8</sup>

Such preoccupation with women's bodies and sexual relationships is strongly tied to the masculinity of nationalism and imperialism.<sup>9</sup> Nation-state and imperial projects have been masculine endeavors and have both constructed and reflected male interests, assumptions, and anxieties.<sup>10</sup> It is not just that men have historically dominated state institutions, but also that nationalism, as a source of identity and action, has been intertwined with a certain type of masculinity, one that has dominated other, alternative forms.<sup>11</sup> If women are the mothers of empire and nation, then men have been cast as their leaders and protectors, ensuring their defense. Thus militarization has been central to the masculinization of nationalism and imperialism.<sup>12</sup>

Racial and ethnic dynamics have also been at work in the protection of national and imperial boundaries, and they have often been sexualized.<sup>13</sup> As Ann Stoler has argued, sexual contracts—whether through cohabitation, marriage, or prostitution—have shaped the boundaries of European membership and the interior frontiers of the colonial state.<sup>14</sup> Colonial "politics of exclusion" con-

structed who was subject or citizen, using sex, race, and class as central markers.<sup>15</sup> Not only was colonial authority bolstered in this manner, but so too was European sexuality, which was constituted partly by sexual arrangements in particular colonial formations.<sup>16</sup> Non-Europeans in colonial areas took part in this process as well as in their own constructions of sexuality, a point to which we will return in the case studies in Chapters Five through Seven.

Although women's sexual relations have been of central symbolic importance in constructing the boundaries of nation and empire, this book also reminds us about the need to understand and analyze women's sexual labor as an important part of modern state-building. The physical reproduction of the nation-state or empire, after all, depends on women's reproductive labor, and the health of the state has long been linked to the reproduction of its inhabitants.<sup>17</sup> More than that, women's paid and unpaid sexual relations with men have been important for the business of nation and empire. Colonization schemes have been organized around sexual arrangements.<sup>18</sup> In many parts of the world, single men or married men apart from their families were the officers, administrators, laborers, and military men on imperial projects.<sup>19</sup> Given the masculinity of nation and empire, the sexual and domestic needs of such men were presumed, and authorities did their best to regulate those needs using women's sexual labor.

Their efforts involved particular patterns of organizing women's sexual labor in plantation and settler colonies, and in militarized areas. The trajectory of colonialism was also important. For example, in the early stages of colonialism, concubinage was often the preferred arrangement for the use of women's sexual labor; later, prostitution was often put into place, especially in areas with large numbers of migrant laborers or military men. Militarization, in particular, led state officials to attempt to control and regulate women's sexual relations in colonial and metropolitan areas through the use of prostitution.<sup>20</sup> Still later, European women were encouraged to emigrate from the metropole in order to settle and "civilize" colonial areas as wives to European men.<sup>21</sup>

Women's bodies and sexuality, then, have long been put to use in service of the nation-state and empire. The need to specify which women should be paired with different groups of men—what Philippa Levine calls the "taxonomic urge" to control who "bed and wed"—was an ongoing project for state officials and for businesses operating in European imperial states and in colonial areas.<sup>22</sup> It occurred directly in nation-state and imperial projects as population and its control became central concerns of state officials and the state's infrastructure and administration increasingly took on the task of policing and

regulating subjects and citizens. Yet just as the politics of women's sexuality led state officials to attempt to channel and regulate women in colonial and metropolitan settings, so too it shaped the international movement to combat trafficking. In its central preoccupation with the protection of women from sexual exploitation, the movement ended up replicating not only national and imperial boundaries, but also gendered ones.

### The First International Anti-Trafficking Movement

International humanitarianism was a newly emerging phenomenon in the 1800s. It arose out of Christian missionary and charitable work, the antislavery movement, and the efforts of Henri Dunant, founder of the International Red Cross, who helped to develop the Geneva Convention of 1864. International humanitarian networks were a product of emerging globalization and imperialism, and a challenge to them, even as they constructed empire and nation.<sup>23</sup> These networks began to form international nongovernmental organizations specifically to alleviate the suffering of "distant others" around the world.<sup>24</sup> Using common tactics such as petition drives and protests to achieve change, they began to target the state as a locus of change.<sup>25</sup>

Voluntary associations concerned about the exploitation of women in prostitution were among the first organizations to develop and internationalize, and they took some terminology and tactics directly from the earlier international movement to abolish slavery. Beginning in 1875, reformers in Great Britain founded what would eventually become the liberal feminist International Abolitionist Federation, which worked to abolish the state regulation of prostitution around the world. Later, in 1899, purity reformers founded the International Bureau for the Suppression of the White Slave Traffic, which eventually changed the latter part of its name to the Traffic in Women and Children, and then to Traffic in Persons. I hereafter refer to it as the International Bureau. Both of these international voluntary associations sought to address what was originally called the "white slave trade," a term meant to evoke sympathy toward and similarities with the earlier abolitionist movement against black slavery by alluding to what were understood to be the coercive and exploitive aspects of commercial sex in European brothels of the time.<sup>26</sup> The movement would come to include a focus on women of color in prostitution, and later on boys as well, and the language used would eventually be changed to "the traffic in women and children," and later to "the traffic in persons."

Scholars have written about the movement and these reformers as an undif-

ferentiated group and thus have failed to distinguish between them or their approaches to trafficking and prostitution.<sup>27</sup> The first anti-trafficking movement has sometimes even been conceptualized as an example of the successful development of a transnational moral framework against the sexual exploitation of women, a framework that some have lauded as a step toward a global norm of women's equality and that many others have seen as sexually repressive and culturally imperialist.<sup>28</sup> The postcolonial critique of reformers is warranted, but humanitarianism was not monolithic.<sup>29</sup> Our task is to distinguish who put forward humanitarian ideas, explore how they framed them, and determine why they did so and with what effects. We can then see, for example, that humanitarianism not only bolstered nationalism and imperialism but also sometimes challenged aspects of colonialist discourse or worked against what were perceived to be national interests.

Such was the case with the anti-trafficking movement. There were important differences in the ways the two main international voluntary associations constructed the problem of trafficking, including their views about gender and individual rights, their relations to state officials, and their beliefs about the role of the state in controlling sexual activity and contributing to trafficking. One key difference was in their positions on state-regulated prostitution systems, which many governments around the world had adopted throughout the 1800s.

Officials engaged in the state and nation-building projects that surged in Europe from the late nineteenth century on saw prostitution as both a necessity and a potential danger for nation and empire.<sup>30</sup> They believed that prostitution was needed to provide sexual outlets for military men and laborers in metropolitan and colonial areas. They also believed that prostitution had to be controlled in order to prevent the spread of venereal disease and the potentially negative consequences of uncontrolled sexual activity. By registering brothels and women who engaged in prostitution, placing requirements on them (such as compulsory health checks), and ensuring police oversight of brothel areas, state officials and their supporters believed they could provide for men's presumed sexual needs, maintain public health and social order, and control unwanted sexual activity, including interracial sexual relations and miscegenation, as well as the potential for homosexuality. Because male heterosexuality and men's need for sexual access to women were taken for granted, state officials concentrated their efforts on controlling female sexual activity.

This system of state regulation, which many countries at the time maintained in metropolitan areas, colonies, mandates, and protectorates, raised numerous questions for those involved in the anti-trafficking movement.<sup>31</sup> Did

state regulation encourage trafficking in women and girls to and from brothels in different countries? Would the abolition of state regulation help to eliminate trafficking or would it simply go underground? How old should a woman or girl be in order to register as a prostitute in a foreign territory? Did the police oversight of brothels encourage corruption and further abuse of immigrant women or help to prevent it? The relationship between trafficking across borders and state-regulated prostitution within borders was an ongoing dilemma that plagued all anti-trafficking efforts.

The two international voluntary associations that initiated the movement took very different positions on state regulation. The International Abolitionist Federation believed that the abolition of state-regulated prostitution would help to eliminate the traffic in women and consistently worked toward this goal. Its members attempted to frame the issue in universal terms, by championing the protection of all women from state-regulated prostitution and challenging the right of states to organize prostitution in their territories even as they insisted on the civil rights of women in prostitution. The International Bureau, seeking to increase the state's ability to control various sexual activities that they believed were immoral, chose to sidestep the issue of regulation in favor of working with state officials. They framed the issue of prostitution in national terms, with each national committee concerned about protecting "their women" from foreign men, and they proposed measures to suppress foreign prostitution by criminalizing the women involved. The movement was thus divided from the beginning between a universal agenda for protecting women and an internationalism that served only to reinforce national differences.

European women often failed to interrogate their own racial, ethnic, national, and class privileges while they sought to help women across these categories.<sup>32</sup> Yet when we contrast the efforts of International Abolitionist Federation-affiliated abolitionists to the activities of those associated with the International Bureau, we also see an ongoing effort, imperfect though it was, to mobilize women on the basis of a common gender identity, to combat an issue of gender inequality, and to help all women, including those in the colonies. Women in Europe often supported nationalism, but feminists often did not.<sup>33</sup> At the start of the international anti-trafficking movement, the internationalism that feminists were developing held the potential for truly transnational endeavors—one that would use networks across borders to challenge the policies of individual states and international governmental organizations. As the International Bureau put forward its anti-trafficking agenda, however, efforts



toward a universal humanitarian response to trafficking and prostitution were challenged by a more nationalist view.

For their part, state officials often preferred working with the International Bureau rather than with the International Abolitionist Federation as a means of maintaining state sovereignty over the organization of prostitution in their territories. They saw the possibility of using international anti-trafficking accords to legitimate their authority to import voluntary (as opposed to coerced or forced) prostitutes for state-regulated brothels, to deport foreign women in prostitution as desired, and to criminalize those engaging in unregulated prostitution. Indeed, discussion at international congresses and at the League of Nations sometimes reflected more concern with protecting the state from “undesirable” women than with preventing the exploitation of women in prostitution.

### The International Anti-Trafficking Accords

State officials began to institutionalize the anti-trafficking movement soon after its start by developing a variety of international anti-trafficking accords.<sup>34</sup> These were not binding, but they did outline agreed-upon practices for states to follow. The first international agreement, developed in 1904, established central bureaus for the exchange of information on the traffic, set up aid in ports and railway stations for women and girls, and provided for the government repatriation of foreign women in prostitution and the regulation of employment offices that linked emigrants to situations abroad.<sup>35</sup> A 1910 convention made the prostitution of minors with or without their consent a punishable offense, as well as the prostitution of adult women by means of force or fraud.<sup>36</sup>

An additional convention, held in 1921, was developed under the auspices of the League of Nations, which helped to further legitimize anti-trafficking efforts. This convention extended protection to minors of either sex, raised the age of consent to twenty-one, provided for the extradition of traffickers, and required state legislation or administrative measures to control employment agencies.<sup>37</sup> The League went on to administer all of the international accords, with anti-trafficking efforts constituting a major component of its social and humanitarian work.<sup>38</sup> The League’s Traffic in Women and Children Committee, a special working group consisting of nine delegates and five international voluntary associations, collected reports on trafficking and prostitution from participating states, commissioned two research studies of the international traffic, drafted additional conventions in 1933 and 1937, and worked on all matters pertaining to the accords.

Table 1.1 shows the states that signed the first three accords, including those that were appointed to participate in the committee.<sup>39</sup> All of the chief imperial powers—Great Britain, France, Spain, Belgium, the Netherlands, and Japan—were represented and indeed were the main actors in the movement both prior to and in the League of Nations. In the years between World Wars I and II, the

**Table 1.1** Adherence to international anti-trafficking accords by country

Country <sup>1</sup>	1904	1910	1921	Date of Adherence to 1921 Accord	On LON TWC <sup>2</sup>
Albania			✓	10/13/1924	
Austria	✓	✓	✓	8/9/1922	
Belgium	✓	✓	✓	6/15/1922	✓
Brazil	✓	✓	✓	8/18/1933	
Bulgaria	✓	✓	✓	4/29/1925	
China	✓	✓	✓	2/24/1926	
Czechoslovakia	✓	✓	✓	9/29/1923	
Denmark	✓	✓	✓	4/23/1931	✓
France	✓	✓	✓	3/1/1926	✓
Germany	✓	✓	✓	7/8/1924	✓
Great Britain	✓	✓	✓	6/28/1922	✓
Greece			✓	4/9/1923	
Hungary	✓	✓	✓	4/25/1925	
Italy	✓	✓	✓	6/30/1924	✓
Japan	✓	✓	✓	12/15/1925	✓
Netherlands	✓	✓	✓	9/19/1923	
Norway	✓	✓	✓	8/16/1922	
Poland	✓	✓	✓	10/8/1924	✓
Portugal	✓	✓	✓	12/1/1923	
Romania			✓	9/5/1923	✓
Russia	✓	✓	✓	12/18/1947	
Siam/Thailand	✓	✓	✓	7/13/1922	
Spain	✓	✓	✓	5/12/1924	✓
Sweden	✓	✓	✓	6/9/1925	
Switzerland	✓	✓	✓	1/20/1926	
Turkey		✓	✓	4/15/1937	
United States	✓			n/a	✓
Uruguay	✓	✓	✓	10/21/1924	✓

SOURCES: League of Nations 1922; 1928a; [http://treaties.un.org/Pages/ViewDetails.aspx?src=TREATY&mtdsg\\_no=VII-3&chapter=7&lang=en](http://treaties.un.org/Pages/ViewDetails.aspx?src=TREATY&mtdsg_no=VII-3&chapter=7&lang=en) (accessed September 13, 2009).

1. This list is not exhaustive in that it does not separate out colonial areas or list countries that adhered after 1950. For a complete list of countries, see the sources cited here.

2. The LON TWC refers to the League of Nations Traffic in Women and Children Committee.

new kingdom of Yugoslavia and the new independent republics of Hungary, Czechoslovakia, and Poland joined the list. Even a cursory glance at the list shows that trafficking proved to be of particular interest to those states that were attempting to affirm their territorial boundaries—states seeking to bolster their rule over colonial holdings, new nation-states, and established states with shifting boundaries engendered by World War I. The potential to use anti-trafficking measures as a means of controlling migration, population, and sexual relations appealed to officials in democratic and authoritarian states alike.<sup>40</sup>

Postcolonial states had their turn as well. After World War II, many of the original imperial European countries who had been most involved in the anti-trafficking movement were no longer interested in the issue. The United Nations picked up anti-trafficking efforts, surveying countries on trafficking activities and developing a 1949 convention that went into force in 1951. This convention made all procurement for prostitution a punishable offense, regardless of the age or consent of the victims. It did not distinguish between internal and international traffic, and it made brothel keeping punishable.<sup>41</sup> Few European countries signed it. Rather, the list of adherents included many postcolonial states in their own processes of state- and nation-building, such as Algeria, India, Pakistan, Morocco, and Myanmar. Socialist states were another group of supporters; most of them took the opportunity to proclaim their superiority over Western countries in stock declaration statements that accompanied their accession. For example, the Soviet Union's statement read, "In the Soviet Union the social conditions which give rise to the offences covered by the Convention have been eliminated," and Bulgaria's read, "The offences referred to in the Convention are unknown under the socialist regime of the People's Republic of Bulgaria, for the conditions favouring them have been eliminated."<sup>42</sup> Socialist states claimed to have made trafficking obsolete.

### **Comparing Imperial States: Different Applications of the International Accords**

Although many governments signed the international accords, the implementation of anti-trafficking measures varied from country to country, primarily in their applications to colonial areas. Modern European imperialism had dominated the globe by the early twentieth century.<sup>43</sup> By 1900, European states had partitioned all of Africa, most of Asia, and the part of the Pacific that had not been claimed by the United States.<sup>44</sup> The British Empire was the largest colonizer in terms of both land and population, followed by France; the Dutch

ruled a long-standing empire that included the Dutch East Indies. Italy, a late colonizer, was engaged in active expansionism in the interwar period.

In this book I use case studies of three imperial states to examine the trajectory of anti-trafficking efforts and their consequences. Examining these processes in particular cases provides an opportunity to analyze gender and sexuality comparatively. The cases exemplify the importance of gender and sexuality in defining the parameters of state responsibilities to subject and citizen, creating national boundaries, and ensuring the moral legitimacy of state rule.<sup>45</sup>

The first case is the Netherlands, where women's influence, in part, helped to build a relatively autonomous anti-trafficking movement that succeeded in persuading the state to apply anti-trafficking measures in all Dutch territories, including the colonies. The second case is France, where purity reformers dominated the movement and the government did not apply either the 1904 agreement or the 1910 convention to its protectorates or the 1921 convention to any of its colonies or protectorates. The last case is Italy, where neither international voluntary association made much progress but state officials instituted a top-down movement. The government signed all three accords and applied the 1921 convention to the colonies, but with a reservation lowering the age of consent for indigenous women and children from twenty-one to sixteen. Regardless, Italians did not follow through in applying anti-trafficking measures in colonial areas.

All of these countries had some similar characteristics of colonial rule. All had tolerated interracial sexual relations, particularly in the form of concubinage and prostitution in the colonies to support military men, colonial administrators, and laborers.<sup>46</sup> All had moved away from concubinage in the interwar period and sought other alternatives to provide for men's domestic and sexual needs. All were increasingly concerned with race in the interwar period, both at home and in the colonies, and rising anticolonial nationalism at that time exacerbated tensions about interracial sexual activity and miscegenation.

There were other similarities as well. Each country had implemented state-regulated prostitution in both its home territories and in colonial areas, and both the International Bureau and the International Abolitionist Federation actively organized in all three countries. State officials from each country took part in the anti-trafficking movement both before and after the movement's institutionalization in the League of Nations, and each country had signed the first international anti-trafficking accords.

Yet the responses of state officials to trafficking and prostitution varied: authorities in only one of these countries actually implemented anti-trafficking

measures universally in both metropolitan and colonial areas. The relative influence of feminists affiliated with the International Abolitionist Federation or of conservative reformers associated with the International Bureau along with the perceived importance of prostitution to each state's unique imperial trajectory help to explain the willingness of these countries to abolish the state regulation of prostitution and extend anti-trafficking measures to all of their territories. Given certain conditions, abolitionist goals could be successfully realized, albeit with unintended consequences for the women they were trying to help.

The comparison of the actions of state officials in different empires is meant not to imply that one version of imperialism was more humane or less racially prejudiced than another but to examine how different states addressed trafficking and prostitution in practice, and why. The choice of cases here reflects not only the desire to examine the role of the competing international voluntary associations in each country, but also the wish to contribute to the literature on colonial areas that have been less often studied and presented in English. Great Britain dominates colonial studies, but rather than focus on the country in which the international anti-trafficking movement started, I have chosen to look instead at cases that could demonstrate the effects of the movement as it diffused elsewhere and allow comparison between the countries.

Such comparisons of imperial state policies and practice, particularly policies pertaining to women, are not common.<sup>47</sup> One group of scholars who might do such work, comparative-historical sociologists, have often overlooked gender or focused specifically on gender and modern welfare states; there are also relatively few sociologists who work on imperialism and colonialism.<sup>48</sup> Another group, historians, is only now beginning to look at such policies and practices internationally. As Cooper and Stoler have noted, colonial historiography has been nationally bound, ignoring cross-imperial linkages such as international congresses, and questions about whether such connections provided sites for shared notions of "Europeanness" or perhaps heightened nationalism.<sup>49</sup>

Looking at networks of power comparatively, both within and around the colonial state, can further our understanding of how gender, nation, and empire functioned. It can help us to understand the intent of state officials and the ways in which women's bodies and sexual activity were part and parcel of attempts to delineate boundaries of nation and empire and bolster state-building. It can shed light on international and national linkages, on the ability of international nongovernmental organizations to challenge state power, on the motivations for state involvement in humanitarian issues pertaining to

women, and on the importance of gender and sexual relationships to state officials engaged in nation-state and imperial projects as they negotiated relations with each other in the international realm.

## Sources

Primary sources for this project were located in the archives of the two main international voluntary associations involved in the movement, the International Abolitionist Federation and the International Bureau, as well as the League of Nations.<sup>50</sup> The materials include petitions and pamphlets; international voluntary association and League of Nations and United Nations publications; country-specific reports; correspondence within and between the International Abolitionist Federation, the International Bureau, and the League of Nations; notes from the organizations' meetings and conferences; newsletters; and minutes of meetings. Secondary sources, most often country-specific historical narratives of prostitution, provided corroboration and additional details. Such narratives were particularly important for the case studies in fleshing out and verifying information found in the international archives. Because only a few historical scholars have studied prostitution in modern Europe and the colonies, I relied on their work often, especially in the chapters on the Netherlands, France, and Italy.

Data on actual incidences of trafficking are very hard to find, in part because trafficking has been and continues to be an underground process, which makes its documentation difficult.<sup>51</sup> A lack of reliable documentation, disagreement on how to define trafficking, and the difficulties of studying hidden populations, the size and boundaries of which are not known, all contribute to the dearth of knowledge.<sup>52</sup> Furthermore, historians and social science scholars have neglected the subject of prostitution until recently, therefore much work remains to be done before we are able to document the organization of sexual labor historically.<sup>53</sup> There is also a particular need to document the voices of the women who themselves are in prostitution, because they are nearly absent from the historical record.<sup>54</sup>

The participants in the early anti-trafficking movement did little to help clarify the definition of trafficking because those involved in the movement had diverse political agendas that caused them to use the term in very different ways. At times, feminists included discussion of arranged marriage, child marriage, child prostitution, voluntary migratory adult prostitution, involuntary adult prostitution within rather than between countries, and child adoption

and other placement arrangements that left girls in the care of men who could take advantage of them. The term trafficking was often shorthand for any situation in which women and girls did not have assurance that they would be protected from men's unwanted sexual advances. Purity reformers usually defined trafficking more carefully, as forced or coerced adult prostitution, or as child prostitution, in which case consent was not a necessary criterion. However, they also often expanded their concerns to include various forms of sexual relations outside of marriage as part of the "immorality" they were fighting.

Given the lack of specificity in most historical records, I use the term trafficking to refer to the general movement of women across territorial borders for prostitution. The percentage of women voluntarily involved in such movement has been and remains open to debate, but it is important to note that women had very limited rights within most countries in the period examined here, and that there is evidence in the historical literature and from the League of Nations that trafficking agents were active and that women were bought, sold, and contracted to brothels for specified periods.<sup>55</sup> There is also evidence that those who organized prostitution—the pimps, procurers, brothel keepers, and police involved in regulation—used coercive and deceptive practices to exploit women and girls, including those who had already been active in prostitution in their countries of origin.<sup>56</sup> The movement of women across borders for prostitution involved both voluntary and coercive aspects, and these were not necessarily mutually exclusive.

## Layout of Book

In the following chapters I examine the politics of trafficking both internationally and locally. I show that, as a whole, the first international anti-trafficking movement shifted toward a nationalist framework that appealed to state officials and began to focus particularly on the control of women and their sexual activity. Further, the actions of reformers and the importance of prostitution to particular state and nation-building efforts led to unique anti-trafficking movement dynamics and outcomes in various countries. This analysis allows us to understand the rise of the movement internationally as well as variances in state efforts to address it, because both fit within the purview of states attempting to control the boundaries of empire and nation through gendered and racialized sexual relations.

Chapter Two provides background on the modernization and internationalization of prostitution, paying particular attention to the role of the state. In

the late 1800s, prostitution was modernized and bureaucratized, and became migratory in a way that it had not been previously. This was not only a response to labor needs in migrant communities, but also a result of military demand and of state and local officials' desires to manage the sex lives of large groups of men at home and in the colonies through systems of regulated prostitution. I outline particular patterns of migratory prostitution that developed as women were moved between state-regulated brothels to service military men, laborers, and administrators in metropolitan and colonial areas. Ethnonationalism and anticolonial nationalism played a role as officials sought to move women between states and within empires in order to ensure that sexual relations were maintained within particular racial/ethnic groups.

Chapter Three examines the role of the two main international voluntary associations in fostering the movement, paying particular attention to how they framed prostitution and sexual exploitation, to the ways in which they internationalized their agendas, and to their relations to state officials. I show that feminists attempted to organize and frame the issue of exploitative prostitution as a universal social problem that was exacerbated by state regulation. This challenge to the state was countered by an international organization of purity reformers that defined trafficking in nationalist terms and whose members formed close relationships with state officials. State officials in most countries embraced the association formed by purity reformers, incorporating their views as they appropriated the movement. As this process shows, international voluntary associations may sometimes work to increase, rather than oppose, state power.

Chapter Four explores the efforts of state officials in the League of Nations when they institutionalized the movement, working on issues of prohibiting foreign prostitutes from working in state-regulated brothels and repatriating foreign women working as prostitutes. It is here that one can see state officials increasingly speaking of the need to protect themselves from women rather than protecting women from men or corrupt state officials who were part of prostitution regulation systems. Some state officials and purity reformers took steps to prevent foreign women from registering in state-regulated brothels, or worked to require the compulsory repatriation of foreign women in prostitution, which in effect nationalized it. At the same time, many states did little in practice to address this issue, because officials sometimes preferred to have foreign women rather than nationals in their brothels.

Chapter Five addresses the Netherlands, which developed an anti-trafficking movement influenced initially by women and relatively autonomous from the



state. As such, it worked toward the abolition of state-regulated prostitution as well as the application of anti-trafficking agreements and conventions to all of the country's territories, including the Dutch East Indies. The movement was particularly successful in these goals; the Dutch government signed every anti-trafficking accord from 1904 to 1921 and applied them universally to metropole and colony. I argue that prostitution was less important to the nation-state and empire-building projects of the Netherlands than to the countries in the other cases I detail. Coupled with the strength and autonomy of the Dutch movement, this difference meant that reformers in the Netherlands were more easily able to achieve some feminist-inspired anti-trafficking protections compared to reformers in France or Italy. Even in the Netherlands, however, ethnonational and imperial tensions partly explain the response of the Dutch state, because Indonesian nationalists there also pressured state officials to take action on trafficking.

Chapter Six shows that the French movement was influenced initially by the International Bureau rather than by feminist abolitionists. Although the country started off with prestige as a leader of the anti-trafficking movement, it increasingly withdrew from international efforts when both French and international feminists began to have success in challenging state sovereignty over prostitution policy. Although state officials signed the 1904 agreement and 1910 convention, they did not apply either to French protectorates, and when the French government signed the 1924 convention, it did not apply it to any colonies, protectorates, or mandates. Influenced by Catholic reformers and regulationist supporters affiliated with the International Bureau and tied to the state, anti-trafficking efforts focused mainly on increasing legislative measures to enforce morality and to control individual women in prostitution. Officials not only failed to address the traffic in women throughout the French empire, but also fought to preserve the state's right to maintain foreign women in state-regulated brothels.

Chapter Seven, on Italy, traces the institutionalization of anti-trafficking efforts by the state. The grassroots anti-trafficking movement in the country was weak despite repeated attempts by both international voluntary associations to organize there. In the interwar period, the committees affiliated with international purity reformers were usurped by Mussolini's administration, and anti-trafficking efforts were thereafter a top-down effort. State officials used the anti-trafficking accords to control women's emigration and to justify the repatriation of Italian women within Italy's borders as part of Fascist population policy.

Although Italy signed the first three conventions, state officials did little to combat the traffic in women in colonial areas and were actually involved in trafficking (non-Italian) European and Ethiopian women under fascism. Prostitution was heavily involved in bolstering the colonial administration as well as public order in the metropole. It was also one area in which state officials sought to enforce new racial policies during Fascist rule by attempting to enforce a hierarchy in state-regulated brothels in colonial areas, with white, but not Italian, women as the preferred providers of sexual services for Italian military men.

Chapter Eight analyzes the similarities and differences between the three empirical cases, which suggest that different types or stages of nation-state formation and imperialism are associated with different concerns about organizing women's sexual activity. It concludes by showing that several factors were key to explaining the different responses of state officials to trafficking and prostitution. In addition to being influenced by the international voluntary associations, officials' responses varied according to whether or not the countries were actively engaged in colonial expansion, which affected the importance of militarization in colonial and metropolitan areas, and according to whether or not territories were intended as settler colonies. I then turn to the implications of the analysis and suggest some considerations for contemporary anti-trafficking efforts.

Today, scholars and activists around the world have again become concerned about the international traffic in women. As they try to understand its causes and dynamics, and to determine the best way to combat it, the trajectory and outcomes of the earlier movement can provide some cautions. The analysis of the first anti-trafficking movement calls attention to the potential interests of state officials in maintaining prostitution and in controlling rather than eliminating trafficking, and to the possibility of anti-trafficking measures being used to control women's movement and sexual activity rather than to protect women from abuse. Contemporary scholars and activists can learn much from the history of the earlier anti-trafficking movement and glean many lessons from the past.