

Preface

WHEN I FIRST BECAME INTERESTED IN THE TOPIC OF TRAFFICKING, very little academic research had been done, and what research existed was dominated by an often vitriolic feminist debate over the normalization and legalization of prostitution. This literature often treated trafficking as a discursive construction or moral panic about prostitution, and drew broad conclusions about the repressive motivations of anti-trafficking reformers. Seeking to learn more about trafficking, I began to peruse the historical literature on prostitution, which, although small, provided a much richer, more complicated picture of the social organization of prostitution and the first anti-trafficking movement. It seemed important to me to situate trafficking for prostitution as a process intertwined with globalization and nation-state development, to look at the global and comparative reach of anti-trafficking activities, examining the rise of migratory prostitution, the development of the international anti-trafficking movement, and the specific implementation of anti-trafficking efforts within countries and empires.

Trafficking is now rapidly developing into a topic of widespread interdisciplinary interest, drawing scholars from law, political science, criminal justice, sociology, and women's studies. Although many of these scholars note the existence of the earlier anti-trafficking movement, historians have not yet fully documented it, and most scholars in other disciplines have overlooked the potential insights that an analysis of the movement could provide. Among other things, for sociologists, political scientists, and those interested in women's studies, a study of early anti-trafficking efforts could furnish information on the dynamics of international social movements and the origins of humanitarianism

and human rights efforts; it could also offer possibilities for understanding the national and international politics of gender, race, class, and nationality. For legal scholars, it could not only supply a context for the origins of national and international anti-trafficking and prostitution law, but also offer lessons on how those laws were implemented and whether they worked as intended. Using primary data drawn from the archives of the League of Nations and the involved international voluntary associations, including uncatalogued material, this book provides a unique historical, ethnographic account of the first anti-trafficking movement that helps to illuminate all of the issues just listed, especially the role of gender and sexuality in international politics.

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