

Sex Work and Migration: The Case of Tel Aviv and Jaffa, 1918–2010

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Introduction

This chapter will examine sex work as it developed and changed in Jaffa and Tel Aviv during the twentieth century. Jaffa and Tel Aviv are located on the Mediterranean coast of what is now the State of Israel. Jaffa is an ancient port town. Tel Aviv was established in 1909 by Jewish residents of Jaffa, as a suburb to the north of Jaffa. By 1921 new Jewish neighborhoods emerged which were granted the status of an autonomous township by the new British colonial rule (the British mandate granted by the League of Nations). Jaffa was a predominantly Arab town with a Jewish minority, while Tel Aviv was an almost exclusively Jewish town which became an independent municipality in 1934. Both Tel Aviv and Jaffa were important urban centres for the national Jewish and national Palestinian communities, respectively. During the war of 1948 and the establishment of the State of Israel, the majority of the Arab population of Jaffa left, fled, or were expelled. Jaffa was then populated mainly by new Jewish immigrants, with a minority of Palestinian Arabs. In 1949 the two towns were united as Tel Aviv/Jaffa.

We argue in this chapter that the case of Israel, as represented by the urban centres of Tel Aviv and Jaffa, is a prime example of the centrality of migration for the formation and shaping of society, and of the link between migration and sex work. We shall attempt to show that sex work has been linked to migration through different associations shaped by the particular features of migration and the state's responses to such movements of people. Indeed that was the case under British colonial rule in Palestine and after the establishment of a sovereign Jewish state in 1948. We begin by briefly presenting the theoretical links between sex work and migration, after which, in the following section, we discuss the different periods and waves of migration to Israel (to Palestine prior to 1948) and their particularities. In the chapter's subsequent sections we elaborate on the connection between these waves of migration and the forms and characteristics of sex work/prostitution.

The close link between migration and sex work has been noted in the sociological and historical literature for several decades. Migration, which has

assumed numerous forms, can result in sex work, and conversely sex work can initiate migration. Three types of associations between migration and sex work are relevant for this chapter. The first is women who migrate, often as part of a large migration wave, and opt for sex work owing to difficulties in making a living in the destination country. An inability to speak the local language, lack of knowledge concerning the formal and informal rules in the destination country, and a lack of skills suitable for the given labour market can lead to short-term involvement in sex work. In some cases, if difficulties are aggravated by various personal and familial conditions, or if individual women find this work to be a preferred option, such involvement has the potential to become long term. The second form is women who move from one place to another specifically to engage in sex work at their new destination. Some of them search independently for new markets and new clients. This can result in women migrating from one country to another, or moving around in their original country from small outlying towns to larger cities, where greater anonymity can be assured. Some women have experienced severe economic hardships which propelled them into sex work in search of real or promised improved economic options, while still others were coerced physically by people on whom they depended. Thirdly, the link between migration/migrants and prostitution is also one of stigmatization. Migrant women are generally prone to stereotyping. As foreigners who can be ethnically different, they are often perceived by the host society as immoral, sexually loose, and/or vulnerable to exploitation. As a result they may be more frequently labelled as sex workers, regardless of the actual circumstances of their lives and occupations. Such stigmatization can have a dual effect: it might create a false impression of the over-representation of specific groups of migrant women among sex workers, and on the other hand it might draw the attention of the police, social workers, and judges, thereby reinforcing both the stigma and women's vulnerability.

Israeli Society, Migration and Sex Work

Israeli society is predominantly Jewish, and since the late nineteenth century it has consisted of immigrants from the large concentrations of Jewish communities in eastern and central Europe, North African and Middle Eastern countries, and later once again from eastern Europe, especially the former Soviet Union (FSU). Over time, second and third generations of earlier immigrants have become an important component of the Jewish population. Prior to 1948 under the British Mandate, the majority of the population was Palestinian Arab, a point to which we shall return. The circumstances surrounding the

recurrent waves of Jewish migration were related to both push and pull factors, predominantly global and local, respectively.

In the first half of the twentieth century (1918–1948) Palestine was under British colonial rule as stipulated by the mandate granted to Britain by the League of Nations following World War I. The country witnessed rapid demographic growth among both the Arab and Jewish populations, with Tel Aviv and Jaffa on the Mediterranean coast being the foci of this development. The main factor affecting Jewish migration to Palestine was worsening conditions for Jewish communities in eastern and central Europe and the closure of the major previous destination, the United States, to Jewish immigration. There were also pull factors, above all the emergence of a well-organized and highly ideological national collective.

Under British colonial rule Tel Aviv was the fastest growing urban centre in the region; it was very much a Europe-style town-cum-city, which eventually developed its own core and periphery.¹ Jaffa was a rapidly growing urban hub of Palestinian Arab society, one of the country's two major ports, and the heart of the Palestinian national movement.²

The development of these two related yet separate urban centres changed drastically with the establishment of the State of Israel and the ensuing war of 1948. The Arab population in much of Palestine dispersed as the result of eviction and/or flight immediately prior to the formal creation of the state and during the ensuing war. Jaffa quickly fell into ruin. From being the urban heart of Arab Palestine (“The Bride of the Sea”) it became a run-down appendage of Tel Aviv, inhabited by a small Arab population and a majority of Jews, arrivals who were part of the new large-scale post-state migration. As we shall see, these dramatic developments led to both continuity and change concerning sex work.

The establishment of the State of Israel changed patterns of migration. The state planned and controlled migration, as it was no longer dependent on the colonial government. The state legislated the Law of Return, which granted immigration rights and citizenship to all Jews worldwide. This led to mass Jewish migration, doubling the size of the Jewish population in less than a decade and transforming the balance of Jews and Arabs. While the earlier migration consisted predominantly of Jews from Europe, the new wave of migration in the 1950s and early '60s was composed predominantly of Jews from North Africa and the Middle East. In those early years of statehood, this huge influx

1 Ilan Troen and Maoz Azaryahu (eds), *Tel Aviv, The First Century: Vision, Designs, Actualities* (Indiana, 2011).

2 Mark LeVine, *Overthrowing Geography: Jaffa, Tel Aviv, and the Struggle for Palestine, 1880–1948* (Berkeley, 2005).

created severe hardship for immigrants and for the state, which had to ensure that their basic needs were met. The magnitude of migration, the new arrivals' lack of adequate cultural, educational, and economic resources, and a dearth of accommodation and employment drove many immigrants to the periphery of the existing veteran Israeli Jewish society. This was clearly evident in the case of Tel Aviv. The city remained the social, cultural, and political core of Israeli society, with new peripheries developing on its boundaries, both near and far.

Jewish migration to Israel declined greatly in the 1970s and '80s, decades which were mainly a time of consolidation. By the mid-1960s mass migration had become integrated into a hierarchical structure, often referred to as the "first Israel"—mainly the veteran population of European origin, and the "second Israel"—mainly new immigrants from North Africa and the Middle East. In the 1970s a small wave of migration from the Soviet Union took place, and these migrants were principally Jews who fought to leave the Soviet Union, driven by their ideological Zionist commitment.

A much larger wave arrived two decades later in the 1990s after the disintegration of the Soviet Union and changes in its policy on emigration. This massive influx from the FSU was made up primarily of Jews taking advantage of the Law of Return, but also non-Jews as well. This influx significantly changed the composition of Israeli society, bringing in over one million people predominantly Jewish and of Russian, Ukrainian, Lithuanian, and central Asian origin; it also changed many of the features of sex work, as will be discussed later.

Four main phases of migration can be identified here: pre-state Jewish migration (mostly from Europe and to a lesser extent from the Middle East) during the British mandate; mass migration in the decade and a half after statehood (1948); a steep fall in migration in the 1970s and '80s; and the large-scale migration of the 1990s from the FSU, which included Jewish and non-Jewish migrants. Each of these resulted in sex work and sex workers with varying characteristics.

Before turning to the impact of migration on sex work, we shall briefly note several other factors which were also significant. The first of these is the inequality of women in the Israeli labour market. Despite an image of equality, relatively high rates of labour market participation of women, and progressive anti-discrimination legislation and policies, women generally remain a disadvantaged group in the Israeli labour market. Low wages are especially characteristic of unskilled jobs frequently held by women, and of casual labour which is often the lot of immigrant women regardless of their previous status in their countries of origin. Secondly, as with most wars, Israel's wars impacted the demand for sexual services. While these conflicts did not have major impacts, at least not after the end of World War II and colonial rule, some demand was created by soldiers coming home on leave. Thirdly, state policy, especially in

the early statehood years and later at the beginning of the twenty-first century, was affected by Israel's desire to establish itself globally and win respect in the international arena.

Before discussing each of these four periods and the characteristics of sex work, we would like to draw attention to several features common to all. Throughout the period under study, except partially in the 1990s, we have little concrete, detailed, and substantiated information. It is necessary to carefully piece together newspaper articles, state and NGO reports, court cases, and archival material to be able to note some major trends and shifts. We know even less about the Arab women in the State of Israel.³ Also, in all periods, despite changes in the labour market and women's position within it, the earnings of sex workers have been higher than those of unskilled and often semi-skilled women workers. In the case of upper-class sex work, the pay may be higher than that of most working women of the middle class, perhaps even of the upper middle class.

Finally, a number of methodological points should be raised regarding both our definitions and sources. We can distinguish legal definitions of prostitution from the popular definitions of this occupation that exist in the Jewish and the Arab/Muslim communities. Initially the penal code contained no clear legal definition of prostitution. By implication, the legal understanding of prostitution was the provision of sexual intercourse in return for monetary pay, an act which in itself was in most cases not criminalized. Under the abolitionist approach introduced by the British and later adopted by the Israeli penal code, those who benefitted from a sex worker's income were to be criminalized rather than the sex worker herself. Likewise public soliciting was criminalized as a public disturbance.

Within both Jewish and Muslim (and probably more generally Arab) society there were other definitions which did not cancel out the definition given above.⁴ In the Jewish community, a woman who associated with a man who was foreign to the Jewish collective was often referred to as a "whore" (Hebrew: *zona*), and she did not necessarily have any connections with commercial sex. In the Arab-Muslim community, in our case in Jaffa, the terms prostitute/whore were used even more broadly to refer to women who had sex outside marriage, regardless of monetary returns or any other commercial aspects. Note that "sex

3 The one survey which referred explicitly to Arab sex workers (compiled in 1960) claimed that they comprised only 1 per cent of all sex workers, much below their percentage of the population. Yehuda Rimmerman and Shlomo Shoham, *Seker HaZnut [Survey of Prostitution]* (Jerusalem, Ministry of Welfare, Probation Services, 1962), p. 69.

4 Deborah Bernstein, "Gender, Nationalism and Colonial Policy: Prostitution in the Jewish Settlement of Mandate Palestine, 1918–1948", *Women's History Review*, 21 (2012), pp. 81–100.

work” and “sex workers” are not prevalent terms in Israeli discourse whether official, popular, or academic.⁵

Sex Work during the British Mandate Period

In the first half of the twentieth century, sex work in Tel Aviv and Jaffa was affected by the political and social changes taking place. The change from Ottoman to British colonial rule affected the legislation on prostitution. Large-scale Jewish migration resulted in large numbers of immigrants seeking employment and income, and newcomers were finding it difficult to find a place in the existing labour market. The urbanization of Palestinian society resulted in internal migration from rural areas, as well as the development of an urban centre on the seacoast which offered some of the same attractions as Beirut and Alexandria, albeit in a far more humble form. Colonial rule and the national clash between Jews and Arabs in Palestine created recurrent unrest and at times violent confrontation. This in turn brought in a concentration of British imperial forces, which greatly enlarged sex workers’ clientele. The demand for commercial sex services was further reinforced by the five years of World War II when Palestine served as the location of numerous military camps and was a destination for troops all across the Middle East when they went on leave.

Jewish sex workers (according to the only comprehensive report for the Tel Aviv area) were mainly new female immigrants⁶ in their twenties or older. They were primarily from eastern and central Europe and had arrived in Palestine in the 1920s and in larger numbers in the ‘30s. There was a much smaller number of teenage Jewish girls, most of whom were from Middle Eastern and North African immigrant families. Jewish migration to Palestine was strictly controlled. Migration permits were allocated to applicants from European countries. One of the regulations stipulated that people considered to be a danger to the public good, among them those who pursued “radical” (i.e., communist) politics

5 There are few secondary sources, academic or otherwise. Reports about prostitution have been written for and submitted to international organizations, and recently also to the United States. Other reports were initiated by the Knesset or by government ministries. Numerous reports have been written since the 1990s by local and international NGOs. We also made use of the daily press, especially after 1948. Archival sources, mainly the Israel State Archive, include criminal legislation and related debates, court cases, Knesset debates, policy-oriented committees, ministerial correspondences and policy, and attorney-general directives.

6 Report submitted to the Rabbinical Authority in Tel Aviv, 18 April 1945, Tel Aviv Municipal Archive [henceforth TAMA], pp. 8–887.

and prostitutes, were not to be admitted.⁷ Furthermore, the Jewish settlement, with its recurring economic downturns and political unrest, was hardly an attractive place for sex workers (or procurers) seeking out a profitable destination. On the other hand, studies have shown that there were high levels of unemployment among women and they struggled to enter the organized labour market. Neither the colonial state nor the Jewish community could provide adequate social services for families, single parents, or single adults in need, despite some elementary aid provided by Jewish municipal, national, and private institutions.⁸ Jews from Middle Eastern and North African countries were in the lowest socio-economic strata, and girls (as well as boys) often dropped out of school after two or three elementary grades because they were expected to contribute to the family income through domestic service or forms of apprenticeship.⁹ Sex workers were mainly somewhat older women who had difficulty securing an income for themselves and their children, and younger women who preferred to leave highly exploitative domestic work. At the same time, the presence of soldiers and officers who went to Tel Aviv with the money they had saved up for their leave was attractive, offering the “promise” of luxuries in the form of money and gifts.

The Arab women involved in commercial sex, mainly in Jaffa, appear to have had a different history. The reports sent by the colonial administration to the League of Nations indicate that most of the prostitutes were from Lebanon and Syria, where commercial sex was regulated and licensed.¹⁰ The workers in the registered brothels were in some cases local Arab women, and in others they were women from mainly southern Mediterranean countries. The reports from Palestine noted that women who had worked for some time in the registered brothels in countries to the north of Palestine but were no longer considered sufficiently attractive made their way south on their own initiative, usually illegally, to Palestine to continue working in Jaffa (and in Haifa and Jerusalem).¹¹ Other sex workers were women who had left their homes in rural settlements in Palestine or in neighbouring countries owing to domestic

7 Henrietta Szold to the National Executive (*Va'ad leumi*), 24 October 1934, Central Zionist Archive, J1/4013.

8 Deborah Bernstein, *Nashim BaShula'yim (Women on the Margins)* (Jerusalem, 2008), pp. 115–128.

9 Tammy Razi, *Yaldei HaHefker (Forsaken Children: The Backyard of Mandate Tel Aviv)* (Tel Aviv, 2009), pp. 116–122.

10 Samir Khalaf, *Prostitution in a Changing Society* (Beirut, 1965).

11 Government of Palestine, Chief Secretary's Office, *Report on Traffic in Women and Children for the Calendar Year of 1937* and *Report on Traffic in Women and Children for the Calendar Year of 1942*, Israel State Archive [henceforth ISA], CT/1299/41.

strife. There was little opportunity for single Arab women to live on their own and provide for themselves, and those with no familial support would turn to commercial sex work (or would be suspected of doing so). Commercial sex was concentrated in a number of areas in the Tel Aviv-Jaffa urban complex, as seen in Map 13.1. Sexual services were sold along the seafront, as is often the case in coastal towns. That was the case in Jaffa at the turn of the century and



MAP 13.1 *Areas of sexual commerce in the Tel Aviv-Jaffa urban complex in the early twentieth century.*

continued to be so according to the reports to the League of Nations.¹² Prostitution was also carried out on the beach of Tel Aviv, which is the northern continuation of the Jaffa coast. Other locales of sold sex were the Herbert Samuel Promenade and on nearby alleys, both outdoors and indoors. Yet another location was the boundary between Jewish Tel Aviv and Arab Jaffa, on the margins of both towns.¹³

Sex work was done in a wide range of settings, especially in Tel Aviv. In Jaffa commercial sex was available mainly in brothels, some of which were situated in hotels and cafés. In Tel Aviv, due to women's far greater presence in the public sphere, commercial sex was provided outdoors along the seafront, in brothels (though there appear not to have been many, and those few were closed down owing to community and neighbourhood pressure), in the back rooms of cafés, in women's rented rooms and jointly-rented apartments, and in taxis roaming the streets; prostitutes at this time were mainly in search of soldiers on leave.

It is difficult to determine how independent the sex workers were or if they were part of a hierarchical network that controlled their conditions of work and income. The piecemeal evidence points to both situations. Most Jewish sex workers, especially adult women, seem to have been able to determine their own conditions of work and were not restricted to establishments that kept them against their will. As for monetary arrangements, when work was done in an apartment or a house run or rented by someone else, sex workers received about half the clients' payment. As noted above, wages for sex work were much higher than the wages for other forms of women's work.

Legislation changed with the transition from Ottoman to British rule. Under the former there was no legislation on prostitution or the management of brothels. The British, upon their takeover of Palestine in 1917–18 and the granting of the mandate by the League of Nations in 1923, introduced legislation on sold sex, at first in line with the directives of the League. Later, however, legislation and overall policies on prostitution implemented in the British metropolis were applied in Palestine. In most colonial countries the administration tended to accept the army's demands for regulation and medical supervision of prostitution.¹⁴ In contrast, the Palestine government,

12 *Report on Traffic in Women and Children for the Calendar Year of 1937 and Report on Traffic in Women and Children for the Calendar Year of 1942.*

13 Deborah Bernstein, "Contested Contact: Proximity and Social Control in pre-1948 Jaffa and Tel-Aviv", in Daniel Monterescu and Dan Rabinowitz (eds), *Mixed Cities, Trapped Communities* (Oxford, 2007), pp. 215–242.

14 Philippa Levine, *Prostitution, Race and Politics* (London, 2003).

following public opinion in Britain, which had rejected previous forms of the state regulation of prostitution for being immoral and contributing to the trafficking of women,¹⁵ rejected registration, compulsory medical examinations, and hospitalization, which would have controlled, but also legitimated, prostitution. Accordingly, in the early years of civil government two ordinances regarding prostitution were passed, the first in 1925 (under High Commissioner Herbert Samuel) and the second in 1927 (under H.C. Herbert Onslow Plumer). Together they amounted to the wholesale introduction of British legislation. Hence the amendments, later included in the new Palestine Penal Code of 1936, contained a range of prohibitions, among them keeping or managing a brothel, living off the earnings of a prostitute, and soliciting in public.¹⁶ In this way, prostitution, if carried out in private by a woman living on her own, was not considered an offence. There are also some indications that during World War II the British army in Palestine was able to regulate and medically supervise a number of brothels for soldiers in Jaffa, while Tel Aviv remained unregulated, and all forms of brothel management and soliciting were illegal.

The communal attitude to prostitution in the nationally-oriented Jewish society in Palestine reflected a broad definition and understanding of the occupation, unlike the more restricted and focused perspective of the penal legislation. In Jewish tradition women were considered the embodiment of personal and social purity. They were the guardians of the family, the basic building block of society, and by extension, at least metaphorically, the guardians of the larger collective. This view was incorporated into the national ideology. The concept of a prostitute, of a woman who sold sex for money, was absorbed into a wider perception of the “promiscuous” woman. Thus, all “boundary-crossing” behaviours were associated with prostitution; women who “crossed boundaries” were thus seen as “whores” whether they were engaged in commercial sex or not. We don’t have adequate information, however, concerning attitudes regarding prostitution in the Palestinian Arab community. Considering the very strong condemnation of Arab women suspected of extra-marital sex, it is quite likely that female prostitutes were likewise condemned. In this context we eschew the term “sex workers” as it is too remote from the discourse of the time and place. The consumption of commercial sex by Arab men was accepted as part of urban leisure.

15 Trevor Fisher, *Prostitution and the Victorians* (New York, 1997), pp. 133–136.

16 Supplement No. 1 to the Palestine Gazette Extraordinary No. 625 of 14 December, 1936, Ch. xvii, “Offences against Morality”.

Sex Work in the Early Years of Israeli Statehood: The 1950s and '60s

The massive waves of Jewish migration that followed the establishment of the sovereign state of Israel brought about changes which affected sex work and workers. The new state experienced severe difficulties in providing employment and accommodation for the newcomers. Most of them lived in transit camps, in temporary accommodations usually erected on the outskirts of veteran Jewish cities and small towns. Many of the men from North African and Middle Eastern countries had worked as craftsmen and traders, while most of the women had not been previously employed. The inability of many men to continue in their role as family providers imposed extra responsibilities on women and caused them great hardship; many of them became the sole or the chief provider. Their distress was exacerbated by the large number of children per family, which was much higher than in Jewish families from European countries. Immigrant women who entered the labour market took on casual, informal work, temporary jobs with low pay and little financial security. They tackled these difficulties in various ways, sex work being one of them. In other words, among sex workers a relatively high proportion of women immigrants could presumably be found who had to fend for themselves, had lost their earlier support systems, and found it very difficult to obtain sufficient employment in the formal or informal labour market in their new location. Thus we conclude that Jewish women immigrated to Israel as part of the large waves of migration of Jewish communities, not in order to work in prostitution. They did so because of the hardship and difficulties faced by female immigrants, and they took advantage of this option either as a preference or because of economic hardship.

The scarcity of information available from that period prevents us from making any assessments regarding the women who turned to sex work in comparison with women who did not. The main source for these years is the Inter-Ministerial report submitted in 1955 to the Ministry of Justice, complemented by articles in the daily press.¹⁷ While the report was not meant for publication, which may add to its credibility, it might well have been affected by the stereotyping of immigrants in general and those from North Africa and the Middle East in particular, who were at times labelled immoral and primitive.¹⁸ The greater visibility of immigrants, concentrated as they were in temporary accommodation and new urban slums, most probably attracted greater attention in the press and among social workers than did veteran sex workers. There are

17 See Ministry of Justice, *Din VeHeshbon Pnimi BeBe'ayat HaZnut (Internal Report Concerning the Problem of Prostitution)* (Jerusalem, 1955).

18 Shlomo Shoham and Giora Rahav, "Social Stigma and Prostitution", *International Annals of Criminology*, 6 (1967), pp. 479–513.

also initial indications that many sex workers in the 1940s abandoned such work, leaving most of it to the new immigrants.

According to the Inter-Ministerial report, the change in the demographic composition of Jewish society in Palestine was reflected, and even highlighted, in sex work. Before 1948 about 90 per cent of the Jewish population was from eastern and central Europe; among Jewish sex workers the proportion was only slightly lower, a point discussed in the previous section. By the mid-1950s, and still more by the early '60s, the composition of the Jewish population had fallen to about 60 per cent from Europe and 40 per cent from North Africa and the Middle East. Among sex workers (as claimed in the Inter-Ministerial report as well as the press), the majority were immigrant women from North Africa and the Middle East, and only a minority were from European countries.¹⁹ The migration of young teenagers, mainly from North Africa without their families, was another route to sex work. The youngsters, both boys and girls, were directed by the state authorities to collective agricultural settlements (*kibbutzim*) where they both studied and worked. Those who found the discipline too strict and missed their home communities left the secure setting of the kibbutz and went to the cities, hoping to fend for themselves. Some of these youngsters became underaged sex workers, sometimes only until their families immigrated to Israel but in other cases for longer periods as well. According to the Inter-Ministerial report, many of the younger sex workers, aged approximately 15 to 17, were from broken families. This may well have been a result of the process of migration, or the difficulty young girls experienced reuniting with their families after having been independent for some time.

The sex workers were from a wide range of family circumstances: married, divorced, widowed, and single, with or without children. Higher-class prostitutes sometimes worked in other professions as well, or went in and out of sex work according to the availability of other options. Those who engaged in lower-class prostitution often had no other sources of income or occupational alternatives. This was the case especially among younger and somewhat older women addicted to drugs. Some of the women and teenagers working in the Tel Aviv/Jaffa area had migrated there from outlying small towns. This again was especially the case with immigrants who had been directed by the state to reside in peripheral settlements and who preferred to move of their own accord to the urban centres in the hope of finding more affluent clientele.

Prostitution in the Tel Aviv and Jaffa area continued to operate as before, along the seafront of both towns and in the adjacent back alleys, but also in some new places (Map 13.2.). While sex work took place both in the open and

19 A similar conclusion was reached by a survey conducted in 1960 (Rimmerman and Shoham, *Sefer HaZnut*) even before the end of the large-scale immigration from North Africa.



MAP 13.2 Other areas where prostitution began to be carried out in Tel Aviv-Jaffa.

indoors, according to the 1960 survey mentioned above most of it was conducted outside, with brothels accounting for only a small share.²⁰ Soliciting also took place in cafés, as it had under the British mandate, but now cafés and clubs provided various forms of commercial sex, far more than before statehood. Two significant changes impacted Jaffa and the immigrant transit camps. During the 1948 war, which led to the eviction of most of the Palestinian Arabs from the subsequent territory of the State of Israel, Jaffa was left almost in ruins. The town centre became a “no man’s land” where the underworld, both Jewish and Arab, thrived, and there were night clubs and brothels, as well as various other kinds of commercial sex. Only a small Arab population remained in Jaffa, which was now populated by new Jewish immigrants, and we have no data on the relative composition of Arab and Jewish sex work in the town. Newspaper items do indicate that there was some cooperation between Arab men sometimes serving as the pimps of Jewish women and Arab women managing brothels where both Jewish and Arab women were employed.²¹ Furthermore, the immigrant transit camps were a location for the provision and consumption of sex services. There were large camps on the periphery of Tel Aviv, and male procurers brought clients from the nearby city to the sex workers in the camp. Regrettably we do not know whether the women who worked in the transit camps had special characteristics, or whether they continued with this work after moving out of the camps to their permanent settlements.

Many of the women seem to have had pimps rather than working independently. It is impossible to document this point, but from the piecemeal evidence we would make the claim that in the pre-state British mandate period a majority of the women, especially Jewish women, worked on their own. They kept all their income or shared it with the owner of the apartment or brothel. During early statehood the impression we get is that many more women had pimps. When a pimp operated with only one sex worker, he and she were often married.²² At times pimps were a means of protection for the women, especially those working outdoors. Yet they could also be physically coercive, preventing women from leaving sex work or appropriating their income.

State legislation and policy also exhibited continuity together with change. The new state continued with the penal legislation of the former British law. Changes were introduced only in 1962, as will be discussed later on. Yet the new state also had its own specific priorities, one of which was to establish its position in the international arena as a liberal and socially progressive state.

20 *Survey of Prostitution*, p. 71.

21 *Internal Report Concerning the Problem of Prostitution*.

22 *Survey of Prostitution*, p. 75.

Motivated by this goal, the new State of Israel took its most significant step regarding prostitution by signing the 1949 UN Convention for the Suppression of the Traffic in Persons and of the Exploitation of the Prostitution of Others. Debates took place mainly in the Knesset and the government ministries concerning the legislation that should be passed to implement the convention. But there were internal considerations as well.

The veteran leaders of the new state and its Members of Knesset (MKs) hoped to establish what they considered a just society. The exploitation of sex workers—or to keep to their perspective and terminology, the exploitation of prostitutes—was considered the epitome of injustice, especially in the case of young girls. As a left-wing MK said in a debate concerning changes in the penal code in 1961, “Members of Knesset: The soliciting of a woman, especially a young girl of 16 or 17, and then forcing her to prostitute herself and live off the income of her deeds, is, to my mind, the murder of a human’s soul, and I cannot understand why the murder of a soul is any less significant than the murder of the body.”²³ As a result of the international convention of 1949 and a desire to restrict prostitution as much as possible, an amendment was introduced in 1962. Its foremost purpose was to introduce changes to the penal code which would provide for far more severe punishments for anyone, mainly pimps and brothel managers, living off the earnings of sex workers. One clause of the amendment stated: “Holding or managing a place for the purpose of prostitution will be punished by five years’ imprisonment.”²⁴ This clause, probably unintentionally, affected the status of independent sex workers operating alone in their own homes or other places they rented out. According to the Palestine Criminal Code of 1936, still in effect in the State of Israel at the time of the amendment, “managing a place for the purpose of prostitution” referred only to a place where two or more women were engaged in sex work. Omitting this specification made it possible for both the police and courts to treat independent women working on their own as if they were managing a brothel.

Between Migrations: Consolidation in the 1970s and ‘80s

The large waves of migration to the State of Israel after its declaration of sovereignty and independence came to a halt by the middle of the 1960s, only to be

23 Nahum Nir Reflex, Knesset assembly, no. 273, 16 May 1961.

24 Quoted in the Report of the Committee for the Study of Prostitution, headed by Judge Hadassa Ben-Ito, in Carmel Shalev (ed.), *Ma'amad HaIsha BaHevra VeBaMishpat (The Status of Women in Society and Law)* (Tel Aviv, 1995), p. 179.

renewed on a large scale in the early 1990s. Most of the transit camps had been dismantled, and new settlements, urban and rural, had been established in peripheral areas. These served to accommodate immigrants from North Africa and the Middle East and to a lesser extent from Europe, and to thicken Jewish settlements on the long borders of the state. This transition from a large wave of migration in need of immediate provisions to a society with a more stable socio-economic ethnically-based system of stratification characterized the 1970s. It also characterized some of the main features of sex work. According to the Committee for the Study of Prostitution headed by the judge Hadassa Ben-Ito, most sex workers were from the immigrant families of previous decades. These were mainly women in their twenties, although according to the reports of social work and police authorities, there seemed to be an increase in the proportion of teenage girls. While most of the women came from families suffering from economic hardship, which was their lot as immigrants, they seem to have entered sex work voluntarily and not by force. Some lived in small towns on the outskirts of Tel Aviv and others in new more distant settlements that were built for the immigrants. In the latter case, many of the sex workers moved from the periphery to the central large city where they pursued their occupation. By leaving the new immigrant settlements they hoped to increase their anonymity and take advantage of the greater resources and opportunities of the large urban centre.

In Tel Aviv and Jaffa, sex work became more apparent and visible than before. This was due to changes in police surveillance and law enforcement. The legal penal amendment of 1962, discussed above, prohibited women from taking up sex work in their own homes, even when they were living independently on their own. This led to sex work being conducted predominantly in public spaces outdoors. Concomitantly it led to stricter supervision by the police, who recurrently detained women for a few hours or a few days on grounds of soliciting, often in contradiction to the guidelines of the law. By the mid-1970s the middle-class residents of Tel Aviv started voicing their indignation at the prevalence of sex work, and some politicians, among them MK Shoshana Arbeli-Almoznino, called for the regulation and institutionalization of sex work. As a result, in 1975 the government appointed District Judge Ben-Ito to head a committee that would survey the state of sex work and recommend an appropriate policy.

The Ben-Ito Committee recommended a different balance between the implementation of the law and police supervision.²⁵ The committee strongly

²⁵ The Report of the Committee for the Study of Prostitution, headed by Judge Hadassa Ben-Ito, p. 182.

opposed regulation or institutionalization. It stated that the police had transcended their authority in their frequent arrests. They should, instead, detain clients who had sex with minor sex workers, rather than harass women workers who did not cause public disturbances. It was also recommended that health services should be provided by the state free of charge and state welfare services should also create various institutions to help women who wished to quit sex work. Finally, the Ben-Ito Committee recommended a return to a more tolerant approach, whereby law enforcement authorities would overlook cases of women working independently so long as they were not coerced and did not cause a breach of the peace. Few of these recommendations were put into practice. According to Ben-Ito in her autobiography, the committee's recommendations were never implemented and remained a dead letter, as often happened with the suggestions of state-appointed committees.²⁶

The interim period between the large migration of the early decades of the state and the later migration of the 1990s was coming to an end. This time, sex work was directly shaped by migration from the FSU.

From the 1990s Onwards

From the mid-1990s to the late 2000s migration from the FSU brought about a new and clearly visible distinction in the Israel sex industry between Israeli citizens and non-citizens (whether undocumented migrants or trafficked persons). During these two decades, two distinct migration waves reached Israel from the FSU and they affected the Israeli sex industry. The first was a large-scale migration of Jews, who under the Law of Return were granted immediate citizenship. Among them were women who were sex workers. Because the morality of immigrating women in general was deemed suspect, or owing to the higher proportion of women from the FSU in the Israeli sex industry, women from that region were often perceived as “prostitutes” regardless of their employment or way of life.²⁷ The second wave was predominantly of non-Jewish women who did not obtain Israel citizenship and had migrated to Israel to work in the sex industry. Some of these women migrated intentionally, some were smuggled, and others were “trafficked”. It is estimated that each year from 1995 to 2006, 3,000 women entered Israel illegally; some of them were trafficked

26 Hadassa Ben-Ito, *Pninin Vrudot MeShenghai (Pink Pearls from Shanghai)* (Tel Aviv, 2008), pp. 230–235.

27 Deborah Golden, “A National Cautionary Tale: Russian Women Newcomers to Israel Portrayed”, *Nations and Nationalism*, 9 (2003), pp. 83–104.

from FSU countries (Moldova, Russia, and Ukraine) to work in Israel's sex industry.²⁸ Many of the labour migrants incurred large debts in order to travel to Israel, making them particularly vulnerable to exploitation and debt bondage.

These migrations from the FSU transformed the Israeli sex industry. There is disagreement about how many of the women who entered Israel illegally were migrant sex workers and how many were victims of trafficking. Under Israeli law, trafficking is defined as the "selling or purchasing of a person or conducting other transactions via a person, with or without consideration." Trafficking was recognized as a crime in 2001, first only in relation to prostitution and in 2006 in relation to other end purposes, including forced labour, slavery, organ harvesting, and more.²⁹ For the purpose of this article we assume that while some women were indeed trafficked into the Israeli sex industry, or trafficked once in Israel—namely bought and sold between brothels, as NGO reports and court opinions suggest—others were migrants in search of work. We therefore use both terms—migrant sex workers and trafficked women—to describe non-Israeli workers in the Israeli sex industry in those years.

These women entered the country mostly as tourists and overstayed their visas, or entered with false documents, posing as Jewish immigrants. As awareness of sex trafficking increased in the early 2000s, border controls were tightened, and young women arriving from the FSU became subject to suspicion. As a result, migration routes changed, and women were mostly smuggled or trafficked through a third country, mainly across the Egyptian border on the fringes of the Sinai desert. This route usually involved walking long distances in the relentless desert sun with few supplies, and often entailed rape and violence.³⁰

In this period, migrant sex workers and trafficked women replaced Israeli workers in the sex sector and enlarged it. Hardly any research has been done on the scope and nature of prostitution by Israeli workers in these years. Therefore there is no definite answer to the question of what Israeli sex workers did when the industry was flooded by migrants, and how migration influenced the

28 Nomi Levenkron and Yossi Dahan, *Isha Overet LaSoher (Women as Commodities)* (Tel Aviv, 2003), p. 19.

29 Hok LeMeni'at Sahar BiVnei Adam (Tikunei Hakika) (Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons (Legislative Amendments) Law), 5766–2006, SH no. 2067 p. 2 (Isr.); *Hok HaOnshin (Penal Code)* 5737–1977, SH no. 2067 p. 2, 377A (Isr.).

30 Ministry of Public Security, *Din VeHeshbon Shel HaTsevet HaBein-Misradi LaPe'ulot SheNe'esu BeTguva LeShinuy Dfusei HaSahar BeNashim LeMatrut Znut VeAverot Nilvot (Report of the Inter-Ministerial Team on the Actions to be Taken in Response to Changing Patterns in Human Trafficking for the Purpose of Prostitution and Related Crimes)* (Jerusalem: Ministry of Public Security, 2010), p. 3.

market; but it was clear at the time that an overwhelmingly high percentage of all sex work in Israel was conducted by migrant sex workers from the FSU, some of whom were victims of trafficking.³¹ Owing to successful enforcement of anti-trafficking laws, police raids on brothels, deportations, and repatriation, the number of non-Jewish sex workers declined from the mid-2000s onward. Following the removal of migrant sex workers and victims of trafficking from the Israel sex industry, most sex workers were, once again, Israeli citizens of diverse ethnic origin, many of them, as already noted, Jewish immigrants from the FSU.³²

Most of our information about non-Jewish sex workers and their working conditions was obtained by Israeli NGOs through interviews. Their content suggests that the women came to Israel to improve their and their families' economic situation. A minority arrived in Israel not knowing they would provide sexual services, and did so under coercion and because of their dependence on their traffickers and employers. Others, possibly the majority, came to Israel knowing they would engage in sex work, but many of them were put to work under extremely coercive and exploitative conditions, that is, they were subjected to human trafficking according to Israeli law. Some migrant sex workers had previously worked in prostitution, some had been unemployed, and others had worked in middle- to low-range typically female occupations. In their countries of origin they had been promised earnings from sex work in Israel that was at least twenty times higher than their earnings at home.³³

As far as we can tell from the few systematic surveys of women who had been detained prior to deportation, the average education level of non-Jewish migrant sex workers was eleven years of schooling; approximately one quarter were university students or had already completed their studies. There was a small number of minors, but the majority were women in their twenties, mostly single with no children.

31 Levenkron and Dahan, *Women as Commodities*, pp. 26–30.

32 Menachem Amir, a specialist in organized crime in Israel, estimated that 70 per cent of the women involved in prostitution in Tel-Aviv were from former Soviet republics; see Martina Vandenberg, *Havrahah Nashim LeYisrael VeZnut Bekfiya: Din VeHeshbon Shdulat HaNashim BeYisrael (Trafficking of Women into Israel and Forced Prostitution: Report of The Israel Women's Network)* (Tel Aviv, 1997).

33 Hana Safran and Rita Haikin, "Bein Sahar BeNashim LeZnut: Gilgulo Shel Ma'avak Hevra-ti" ("Between Trafficking in Women and Prostitution: The Evolution of a Social Struggle"), in Esther Herzog and Erella Shadmi (eds), *Basar VeDamim: Znut, Sahar BeNashim VePornographia BeYisrael (Blood Money: Prostitution, Trafficking in Women and Pornography in Israel)* (Haifa, 2013), pp. 237–238.

NGO reports from the early 2000s suggest that the working conditions of at least some of the migrant women who entered Israel were harsh. They were bought and sold, and moved from one brothel to another; their travel documents were taken from them, they incurred huge debts, and they had little or no control over the number of clients they were forced to receive. Some were imprisoned in brothels or apartments, and were victims of frequent rape, violence, and death threats to themselves and their families by traffickers, pimps, and clients. A minority of women received no pay for their work; most received little pay, and some managed to earn a satisfactory living.

In contrast to the abundant reports about migrant sex workers and victims of trafficking, little is known about the characteristics of Israeli sex workers during these years. In the 1990s, as in the earlier periods, most Israeli sex workers apparently chose this occupation. Some did so on account of the few labour market alternatives, while others did so in spite of the fact that they had other alternatives available. Yet others might have been drug addicts and chose sex work to support their addiction. Our general impression is that many Israeli sex workers, especially those who operated outdoors, did not hold any other steady jobs.

While most migrant sex workers worked in brothels, the anti-trafficking campaign of the 2000s resulted in the closure of most well-known brothels and there was a transition to “discreet apartments” scattered in all parts of the town, as well as strip clubs and hotels.³⁴ At present, there is disagreement as to the level of involvement of pimps in the industry. The police claim that following the eradication of sex trafficking most sex workers now work independently and violence is relatively rare. Feminist NGOs, on the other hand, argue that violence is endemic to the sex industry, and now new more sophisticated and perhaps subtler forms of pimping are at work.³⁵

Despite the abolitionist stance in the Penal Code, before public awareness of sex trafficking increased, prostitution in Israel was widely tolerated.³⁶ The main indication of this attitude was the Attorney General’s directive “Investigation and Prosecution Policy in Offences of Prostitution and Trafficking in Persons for the Purpose of Prostitution”.³⁷ The directive asserted that the

34 Levenkron and Dahan, *Women as Commodities*, pp. 12, 20–21, 26–30.

35 Ministry of Public Security, *Changing Patterns Report*, p. 16.

36 *Ibid.*, p. 19.

37 Hila Shamir, “Gishot Feministiyot LaRegulatsia Shel HaZnut: Mabat Ohed Al Hapa’ar SheBein HaMishpat Alei Sefer LaMishpat BiF’uula” (“Feminist Approaches to the Regulation of Sex Work in Israel: A Sympathetic Reading of the Gap between Law on the Books and Law in Action”), in Yishai Blank, David Levi-Faur and Roy Krietner (eds), *Regulatsiot (Regulations)* (Tel Aviv, forthcoming 2016).

police should not investigate “regular” prostitution unless there was suspicion of aggravating circumstances. The latter, according to the directive, included trafficking, underage prostitution, drugs, involvement of known criminal actors, or neighbourhood disturbances. All other forms of prostitution were therefore tolerated—in the sense that the criminal law was not enforced in relation to them—even if it wasn’t fully legalized. Various other state institutions also broadly tolerated sex work. The Labour Court issued rulings granting sex workers full workers’ rights despite claims that under Israeli Criminal Law their contracts of employment violated public policy and therefore should not be enforced. In a similar vein, other institutions also acknowledged sex work as a form of employment, both to sex workers’ benefit and detriment; for example, the Tax Authority regularly collected taxes from sex workers, viewing sex work as a legitimate source of income, and the National Insurance Institute, which granted sex workers their rights as workers while also denying them social security benefits on account of the fact that they made their money from sex.³⁸ Another indication of the high level of tolerance was the existence of distinct urban areas where unofficial “red-light” districts existed, which aside from occasional random raids were generally left undisturbed.

This contradictory yet tolerant approach changed somewhat—but was not wholly abandoned—with the growth of international and national awareness of human trafficking generated by the international Anti-Trafficking Protocol (the Palermo Protocol 2001) and the passage of US legislation, “The Victims of Trafficking and Violence Protection Act of 2000” (TVPA). The TVPA authorized an annual Trafficking in Persons (TIP) Report which categorizes countries’ efforts into one of three tiers of compliance: countries fully complying with the minimum standards (tier one); countries that are not yet fully complying with these standards but are making significant efforts to bring themselves into compliance (tier two); and countries that do not fully comply with the minimum standards and are not taking any significant steps to comply (tier three). A country that receives a noncomplying assessment (tier three) risks the withholding of financial assistance from the United States which is not humanitarian or trade-related, as well as American opposition to the same assistance from the International Monetary Fund and multilateral development banks. In the 2001 US TIP report, Israel was placed in tier three.³⁹ Taking to

38 Medini’yut Ha’Akhifa BeAverot HaNilvot La’Isuk BeZnut, Hanhayot Praklit HaMedina 2.2 (Enforcement Policy in Offences of Prostitution and Trafficking in Persons for the Purpose of Prostitution, 2.2 Attorney General) (amended 2012) (Isr.).

39 *Va’adat HaHakira HaParlamentarit LaMa’avak BaSahar BeNashim: Din VeHeshbon Mesakem (The Parliamentary Commission of Inquiry on the Subject of Trafficking in Women: Final Report)* (Jerusalem: The Knesset, 2005); Gilad Natan, *Siyu’aa HaRashuyot LeKorbanot*

heart the economic consequences, the Israeli government began to treat trafficking more seriously. These efforts bore fruit: in the 2002 report Israel was placed on the second tier, and in 2012 it was upgraded to the desired first tier.⁴⁰

Still, as early as 2000, when it became clear that Israel would fare poorly in the US TIP report, Israeli legislators criminalized the trafficking in women.⁴¹ The amendment continued the abolitionist approach of the Israeli Penal Code and did not require that women consent to migrate for the purpose of sex work, on the assumption that all migrant sex workers were a priori victims of trafficking. The amendment was heavily criticized by NGOs as being too narrow in that it dealt only with trafficking for purposes of prostitution and was concerned with the punishment of the traffickers alone, and not with the rights of victims.

As noted above, in the following years, and owing to the relentless work of Israel NGOs backed by the US threat embodied in the TVPA, Israel established an elaborate anti-trafficking policy, one aspect of which was a victim-centred approach. This included the establishment of a rehabilitative shelter for women victims of trafficking, legal aid funded by the state, and the receipt of visas and work permits—at first in exchange for testimony for the prosecution against traffickers but later without this proviso.⁴²

In recent years, since about 2006, intense enforcement of anti-trafficking laws and strict migration measures have led to general agreement among the authorities and civil society that the migration and trafficking of non-Israeli women into the Israeli sex industry has practically ceased to exist.

During these recent years, policy developments occurred in relation to Israeli sex workers as well, some positive and some negative. A positive development is the growing attention paid to their plight by both civil society organizations and the Ministry of Social Services. One outcome has been the establishment of two rehabilitation frameworks for women who want to leave the sex industry. On the negative side, increased police enforcement has led to higher levels of police violence and harassment against sex workers, and to greater surveillance of sex workers operating without pimps, resulting in

Sahar BiVnei Adam Bet'humei HaRevaha VeHaBri'ut (Authorities' Assistance to Victims of Human Trafficking in Welfare and Health) (Jerusalem, 2009).

40 Office of the Under Secretary for Global Affairs, US Dept. of State, *Trafficking in Persons Report* (2001), p. 88.

41 Office of the Under Secretary for Global Affairs, US Dept. of State, *Trafficking in Persons Report* (2002), p. 63; Office of the Under Secretary for Global Affairs, US Dept. of State, *Trafficking in Persons Report* (2012), pp. 194–195.

42 *Hok HaOnshin (Penal Code)* 203A–D (Amendment no. 56), 5760–2000, 1746 S.H. 226 (2000) (Isr.).

public shaming and difficulty in making a living.⁴³ Another policy change looming over the Israeli sex industry is an End Demand Bill, which seeks to criminalize clients who purchase sex services. The bill was proposed in 2008 but to date has not been enacted.⁴⁴

In response to the new circumstances, Israeli sex workers have begun organizing once again after earlier attempts to do so failed. In 2013 a group of sex workers established the Association for the Regulation of Sex Work. Their representatives have begun writing op-eds, giving press interviews, and attending sessions of the appropriate Knesset committee, all in an attempt to present an alternative position to the End Demand Bill.⁴⁵ It remains to be seen whether the voices of sex workers themselves will be heard in a political arena overcrowded with feminist organizations who claim to speak on their behalf.

Concluding Comments

Our case study as set forth in this chapter has indicated that there are three major issues concerning migration for sex work in Palestine/Israel. The first is sex work as a response to problems in the receiving country and community, which drove migrants to engage in sex work upon arrival. This, we have argued, was the major feature in Palestine/Israel until the 1990s. The second association is migration for the specific purpose of sex work, characteristic mainly since the 1990s. The third is the stigmatization of migrant women, as they are thought of as working in prostitution, and more generally as guilty of engaging in immoral sexual behaviour, whether they are or not. Such stigmatization, which due to a lack of space we have not adequately elaborated upon, is characteristic of Jewish and Arab communities alike, past and present.

Some final comments are called for concerning common trends. The various sources used in our study for the colonial period and after the founding

43 Dafna Hacker and Orna Cohen, *Research Report: The Shelters in Israel for Survivors of Human Trafficking* (submitted to the US Department of State, 2012); Maria Rabinovitz, *Skirat Pe'ilut Medinat Yisrael BeT'hum HaMa'avak BaSahar BiVnei Adam: HaTipul BeTofa'at HaSahar BeNashim (Survey of the Actions Taken by Israel to Combat Human Trafficking: Dealing with Trafficking in Women)* (Jerusalem, Knesset Research and Information Center, 2013), pp. 55–57.

44 Nomi Levenkron, "Ma La LaStudentit LeMishpatim BeVeit Zonot?" ("What is a Law Student Doing in a Brothel?"), *Hamishpat*, 17 (2013), pp. 161–208, 190, 198.

45 Hatsa'at Hok: Isur Tsrikhat Znut VeTipul BaKehila (Tikunei Hakika) (Draft Bill: Prohibition of Consumption of Prostitution Services and Community Treatment (Legislative Amendments)) (No. 1), 2013 HH 1, 1(Israel).

of the Israeli state indicate that most women, Jewish as well as Arab, were not forced into sex work by others. In many cases economic and social hardship characterized the women's lives, although we have no way of identifying which of the many women who experienced hardship, through migration or otherwise, chose to engage in sex work and which adopted other means to contend with such difficulties. Also, during the various periods under discussion, in Tel Aviv and Jaffa, as in many other places, most women in the sex industry earned significantly more than they could doing other work, unskilled or even skilled. This factor may be a consideration for entering sex work. Still more, it may deter those contemplating exiting such work from actually taking this step. Thus we conclude that most women were not forcibly coerced into sex work. Nevertheless, we suggest that the distinction between physical coercion and choice is often, perhaps usually, blurred. Economic hardship, being the sole provider for one's family, collapse of support systems, and at times a history of domestic violence and addiction may all make women opt for sex work. Many of these phenomena may be initiated or exacerbated by migration, as we have tried to demonstrate in the case of Israel, focusing on the urban centres of Tel Aviv and Jaffa.

Official policy during the British mandate period and later in the Israeli state was broadly similar. Open and direct regulation of prostitution was clearly avoided, but so was de facto prohibition. The major orientation of legislation, and even more so of enforcement agencies, was toleration of the existence of prostitution, while focusing legal criminalization on those who directly benefited financially from the sex worker's income and on public disturbances. Issues of "disturbances" placed a wide range of law enforcement regulations at the disposal of the police and the courts. From time to time there have been proposals and debates about the possibility of regulation, the prohibition of prostitution, or the criminalization of clients, but to date nothing has come of them.

However, law and order were and are only one aspect of social reactions to prostitution. Historically, society was on the whole far less forgiving. The stigmatization of sex workers was often linked to a much more general and encompassing stigmatization of immigrant women, regardless of their work or source of income. The morality and sexual behaviour of women coming from elsewhere were often suspect, as were women deemed to have crossed normative social and collective boundaries, regardless of the nature and grounds of such crossings. Thus the derogatory popular terms commonly used—the Hebrew *prutsa*, literally "without boundary", and *mufkeret*, "wanton" and "reckless", or the coarse Arabic *sharmuta*, "slut", "loose woman"—created a category of women that was sexually immoral and a threat to the basic patriarchal

order, regardless of whether they actually engaged in commercial sex or not. This vulgar rhetoric, stigmas, and denunciations held true for both the Jewish society of Tel Aviv and the predominantly Arab society of Jaffa. We should point out that the terms “sex worker” and “sex work” have not been used in policy debates, in popular speech (Hebrew or Arabic), or in feminist discourses in Israel. The term commonly used in policy debates is “prostitutes”, and in feminist circles “prostituted women” or more recently “victims of trafficking in women”. The use of these terms in this paper enabled us to study much about “sex work” in Israel, but in a rhetoric that is foreign to the societies discussed.

