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# Jewish Pimps, Prostitutes and Campaigners in a Transnational German and British Context, 1875-1940

Lead Research Organisation: [Queen Mary University of London](#)

Department Name: History

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## Abstract

### [Funding details](#)

This research project will draw on the expertise of a project group specializing in the study of gender, antisemitism and migration to investigate the phenomenon of Jewish involvement in the sex trade. While in the late nineteenth century up until the Second World War, Jews were consistently demonized by antisemites because of their role in the trade as prostitutes, pimps and brothel owners, they have featured only marginally in recent studies of prostitution that in recent years has experienced a renewed interest. Over a period of thirty-one months, two postdoctoral researchers will explore Jews and the sex trade, 1875-1940, in British, German and transnational contexts. Largely neglected by historians of Jewish history, and the history of Antisemitism this research project will look beyond institutional frameworks that governed the everyday lives of Jewish prostitutes in the age of the great Jewish migration to expose a new understanding of international mobility in the era of modern globalization. Our research project will show that Jewish prostitutes were never merely passive objects. This study of Jewish prostitutes will place the women center

stage and will unravel their agency behind moral politics, criminalization, and male fantasies. Such an approach will allow us to recast the focus away from politicians, state reformers and national anti-trafficking campaigners, to consider the Jewish women's experiences as historical actors as they navigated unfamiliar relationships with men (pimps, physicians, judges and the police) who exercised control over their bodies. Both the UK and Germany housed ports and other spatial sites that are key to analysing Jews' interaction with the sex trade. An understanding of how Jewish women navigated the gendered spaces and the metaphorical codings of Bremen, Hamburg, Portsmouth and Southampton will reveal their power of negotiation and highlight their agency.

Daniel Lee (PI), Stefanie Fischer (PI), Daniel Wildmann and Stefanie Schüler-Springorum (German Co-I) will mentor the postdoctoral historians who will use unpublished and recently-released sources and testimonies. Our main objective is to produce a more nuanced interpretation of the ties between sex work, migration and trafficking in persons and to build a UK-German network that helps fight human trafficking. Through network meetings, training sessions, and public workshops, the research project aims to communicate its findings beyond traditional academic circles so that it will, ultimately, have an impact on law and law enforcement, and help reduce vulnerabilities for sex workers and victims of human trafficking.

**Funded Value:**

£283,993

**Funded Period:**

Feb 20 - Jul 24

**Funder:**

AHRC

**Project Status:**

Closed

**Project Category:**

Research Grant

**Project Reference:**

AH/T013028/1

**Principal Investigator:**

[Daniel Lee](#)

**Research Subject:**

History (70%)

Social Anthropology (28%)

## Research Topic:

[Economic & Social History \(70%\)](#)

[Kinship Health & relatedness \(28%\)](#)

## Organisations

- [Queen Mary University of London \(Lead Research Organisation\)](#)
- [Italian Cultural Institute, London \(Collaboration\)](#)

## People

## ORCID iD

[Daniel Lee \(Principal Investigator\)](#)

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[Stefanie Fischer \(Co-Investigator\)](#)

## Publications

The following are buttons which change the sort order, pressing the active button will toggle the sort order

[Author Name](#)

[descending \(press to sort ascending\)](#)

[Title](#) [Publication Date](#) [Published](#)

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Daniel Lee [Sex Work and Jewish History](#)



Finden A (2021) [Introduction to the Special Issue on Hygiene, Coloniality and Law](#) in Australian Feminist Law Journal



Paola Zichi (2022) [Jahrbuch für Antisemitismusforschung](#)



Zichi P (2021) [Prostitution and Moral and Sexual Hygiene in Mandatory Palestine: The Criminal Code for Palestine \(1921-1936\)](#) in Australian Feminist Law Journal



Zichi P (2023) [\*The Irish Yearbook of International Law, Volume 15, 2020\*](#)

- Key Findings
- Collaboration

### Description

It remains too early to say. We held a very successful - closed - conference in Berlin in spring 2023. We are delighted that we will publish a book on the subject with a major academic press. In the same vein, we are in advanced discussions to rehouse/reschedule our exhibition which was, regrettably, pulled by a partner.

### Exploitation Route

Given the edited collection and the exhibition will appear after the award has ended, it is too soon to speculate on the achievements. We will include further details in our final report.

We remain hopeful that a rescheduled exhibition coupled with our important edited collection will be of significance to policy makers interested in current debates on migration and sex work.

### Sectors

Education  
Healthcare  
Government  
Democracy and Justice  
Culture  
Heritage  
Museums and Collections

### Description

### Organisation

### Country

### Sector

Collaboration with the ICI (London)

Italian Cultural Institute, London

United Kingdom

Public

### PI Contribution

The postdoc on this project, Dr Paola Zichi (QMUL), has designed an entire exhibition, based on her research in Italian archival collections, that will take place at the ICI (London). The exhibition - on Jews, philanthropy, and sex work in Modern Italian history - will be open to the public and will take place in January 2023. A series of events will accompany the exhibition. It is hoped that we will be hold this exhibition at other Italian Cultural Institutes (such as Berlin) in the months that follow.

### Collaborator Contribution

Dr Paola Zichi (QMUL), has undertaken extensive research in archives in Milan and Trieste. During the course of this work, she uncovered a series of

documents that have never been shown to the public. Dr Zichi approached the Italian Cultural Institute in London, which in recent years has produced a number of excellent exhibitions, to see whether they would be interested in showcasing these documents, objects and images. Naturally they jumped at the chance. Dr Paola Zichi has designed the entire exhibition. She has also been in touch with multiple sex work organisations in the UK and Italy in regards to the public events that will accompany the exhibition.

**Impact**

Too early.

**Start Year**

2022

**Data**

[The Data](#) on this website provides information about publications, people, organisations and outcomes relating to research projects

**APIs**

A set of REST [API's](#) enable programmatic access to the data. Refer to the application programming interfaces [GtR](#) and [GtR-2](#)

**Contact**

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