Technologies of servitude: Governmentality and Indonesian transnational labor migration

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Abstract

This paper examines the techniques and networks that enable the transnational movement of migrant laborers from Indonesia. Theoretically, the paper argues that governmentality is an effective concept through which to understand political economic relations ***across*** *national borders and* ***outside*** *state institutions. The concept is useful not only in analysis of abstract policy prescriptions, but also in the apparently mundane methods that are intended to rationalize the training, delivery and security of migrant laborers. The intervention herein is in part methodological, in so far as the paper argues that the concept is useful in analyzing the everyday practices that are a frequent focus of ethnographic practice. Empirically grounded in interviews and observational fieldwork in Indonesia, the paper describes the networks that facilitate transnational labor migration from the country and demonstrates the interconnection of the "global" economy with localized moral economies. Thus, the paper argues that transnational flows of migrant laborers are in fact dependent upon supposedly traditional patron-client networks. Furthermore, I suggest that some NGOs advocating for the rights of migrant workers are not inimical to state power, but in fact work to enhance it. Strategies to protect the rights of migrant laborers may bring about greater state intervention in their lives. The paper proposes two technologies deployed by non-state entities, specifically human resources companies and NGOs, that facilitate transnational labor migration. The first are termed technologies of servitude and are intended to impart the skills and attitudes necessary to conduct domestic labor. The latter are technologies for rationalizing labor flows to wealthier countries of the Indian and Pacific Ocean regions.*

Introduction

The entrance to PT Samudra Cahaya Raya[1] is through a small iron door in a high metal wall topped with several feet of barbed wire. This human resources company (*perusahaan jasa tenaga kerja--PJTK*), located in the Kampung Melayu section of East Jakarta, trains and sends women to work abroad as domestic servants. The barrier effectively restricts the physical mobility of some 320 trainees who aspire to serve as domestic workers in other countries in Southeast Asia and the Arabian Gulf region. These women inhabit what Sari Warsilah, a trainer for the company, referred to as *pergabungan* (which she later translated into English as "camp") and are allowed to leave only at specified times. The austere three-story building is constructed of concrete blocks and spartanly decorated with peeling shades of now dingy pastels. The complex of buildings in which this facility is situated was originally constructed as a dormitory for *hajj* pilgrims. In the years after World War II, devout Muslims would assemble at this way station before embarking on a steamship to make the yearly pilgrimage to Mecca. In fact, the family that owns PT Samudra was historically involved in the business of sending pilgrims to Mecca. However, in recent years another lucrative traffic in human beings between the Middle East and Indonesia has emerged. Now the family is engaged in the business of sending female domestic workers overseas. This dormitory no longer serves the purpose for which it was originally constructed and now new travelers move through similar transnational circuits for different purposes.

This complex has been reconfigured to facilitate circuits that have similar formal characteristics as their spatial and temporal predecessor, but are part of a different transnational economic arrangement. As in the heyday of the maritime *hajj*, travelers from widely disparate parts of the archipelago assemble in Jakarta prior to departure for the Arabian peninsula. But whereas previous travelers along these circuits were predominately men seeking to undertake a journey of spiritual devotion, perhaps supplemented by peddling trade along the way, the subjects of this contemporary migration pass through Jakarta with

substantially different aspirations. These mostly young, mostly poor women from rural parts of Java, Lombok, and Sumatra seek to improve their living conditions by obtaining two-year assignments as maids in middle and upper-class households in Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Malaysia, or Singapore. It is the radical juxtaposition of present patterns of mobility (and its limitations) superimposed over similar historical circuits that motivates the present inquiry into the practices that make transnational labor flows from Indonesia possible. Thus, this paper focuses not so much on the effects or experience of such mobility, but on the conditions through which it is enabled and the initiatives intended to reform it.

Remittances from overseas migrant labor are an increasingly important source of revenue in Indonesia, particularly in the rural areas from which most migrants hail. Over the last fifteen years Indonesia has become one of the largest migrant labor sending countries in the world, with an estimated 2.6 million Indonesians currently working abroad (Hugo 2001: 114). Jacob Nuwawea, the Minister of Manpower and Transmigration, has explicitly advocated migrant labor to alleviate Indonesia's high jobless rate, which stands at about 40 million unemployed. He stated that the "government will continue focusing on two main strategies [to reduce unemployment]: sending more maids overseas and maximizing domestic sectors to create more vacancies." Furthermore, Nuwawea asserted that the Indonesian government intends to discontinue the domestic transmigration program[2] "because more and more people are able to migrate on their own" (Jakarta *Post* 2001).

However, labor migration has been the subject of intense public debate in Indonesia and scintillating cases of exploitation and abuse pursued by NGOs resonate loudly in the Indonesian press. Frequent stories in major newspapers focus on the abuses suffered by migrant laborers from Indonesia. These articles express indignation at such abuse and the unscrupulous human resources companies that attract women duplicitously and train them in substandard conditions. However, the NGO activists that I interviewed are not in favor of terminating these labor flows through a wholesale cessation of labor migration from the

archipelago. Given the inadequacy of development initiatives in many parts of rural Indonesia, the income generated from migrant labor is a panacea to poverty in areas otherwise bereft of employment opportunities. Thus, a primary demand of NGOs has been to encourage greater governmental oversight and intervention in the transnational labor migration process. Some NGOs advocate greater technological and institutional means to rationalize the training and transit of migrant laborers and to ensure their physical and economic well being. This paper describes both the technologies that make transnational migration of Indonesian domestic workers possible and the technologies intended toward its reform.

Theoretically, this paper engages with an emerging ensemble of social science research that utilizes Michel Foucault's concept of governmentality to comprehend contemporary political economic processes. I argue that governmentality is an effective concept with which to understand political and economic relations *across* national borders and *outside* state institutions. Governmentality and Foucault's supplementary work on political technologies is a generative lens through which to apprehend the discursive and material means through which transnational laboring subjects are elicited. I focus on specific technologies that are visible in the practices and discourses of NGOs and businesses. Methodologically, I demonstrate the utility of governmentality and Foucault's supplementary writings on political technologies for ethnographic practice. I further argue that so-called globalization is in some cases dependent on supposedly traditional patron-client networks. In the final section of the paper I argue that some NGO activities augment government capacity and are not necessarily opposed to state power.

Governmentality and the Technologies of Transnational Labor Migration

This paper builds on two recent efforts by social scientists to utilize the concept of governmentality to analyze political economic relations in Asia. However, whereas previous

uses stress the role of top-down state policy prescriptions, I endeavor to demonstrate the concept's utility beyond a focus on strictly the policies of state and supra-state entities. In so doing I am indebted to Foucault's conceptualization of governmentality as a specifically modern practice of politics that acts on action. It involves the application of knowledge toward a population in order to achieve effects that are deemed simultaneously beneficial for an individual, a collectivity, and a state. Governmentality may be visible in the techniques, theories, and strategies intended to elicit certain skills and attitudes (Foucault 1991; Foucault 2000). I thus supplement the work of Donald Nonini and Michael Goldman, both of whom use the concept to understand contemporary political-economic processes in Southeast Asia. However, these two accounts depict governmentality as a top-down strategy imposed by either a state or supra-state entity. In contrast, I examine the technologies deployed by non-state entities (human resources companies and NGOs) that enable transnational labor migration. The first are what I call technologies of servitude; these are intended to impart the skills and attitudes necessary to conduct domestic labor. The second are technologies for rationalizing labor flows to wealthier countries of the Indian and Pacific Ocean regions.

Recent efforts to deploy Foucault's concept of governmentality focus on political power imposed from above by either a state or supra-state entity. Thus, Michael Goldman describes World Bank environmental conservation and development projects in Laos as examples of what he calls "eco-governmentality" or "new global regulatory regimes for the environment" (Goldman 2001: 499-500). However, Goldman takes the reforms described in World Bank planning documents and other reports as *fait accompli*. He shows how the institution rewrites laws, restructures state agencies, and finances environmental initiatives. Goldman suggests that these abstract policies are all transparently implemented, resulting in the complete obliteration of old political forms by the radically new rationality of governmentality. His readers are left with little empirical, ethnographic description of their actual application and the process of implementation. Furthermore, one is left with the impression that the Lao state

itself is irrelevant and transformed through eco-governmentality into a mere effect of World Bank intervention.

Donald Nonini adroitly demonstrates how certain policy prescriptions issued by national governments are effective across national boundaries. Nonini notes the strategies that states use to calibrate transnational migration with national labor demands in the Asia-Pacific-Indian Ocean region. He invokes examples of the United States and Japanese governments which calibrate the demands of domestic labor markets with extramural populations regarded as particularly suited to certain labor practices. However, like Goldman, Nonini's use of the concept governmentality equates it with the top-down policies of state or state-like entities. He asserts that "state policies toward migrants identify and hierarchize segments of the immigrant working population, convey on each segment its own essence of racial and national character suited to a particular kind of work, and impose practices of regulation and discipline accordingly" (Nonini 2002: 15). State policies are the mechanism through which migrant laborers are managed. Taken together, the accounts offered by Goldman and Nonini suggest that social scientists interested in analyzing contemporary political economy need look no further than state or supra-state policy initiatives in order to understand modern political formations.

I build on these accounts by using Foucault's analytics of governmentality to explore process of regulation, discipline, and subject-making that are not directly animated by governmental institutions, but rather in the more mundane, everyday practices involved in producing subjects capable of domestic labor transnationally. This is not to say that the state is no longer relevant, analytically or empirically, as some perhaps prematurely celebratory accounts might suggest (Appadurai 1990). My approach suggests that governmentality is not only useful in analysis of policy prescriptions or other documentary evidence, but rather the everyday practices that ethnographers observe during fieldwork. As such, the intervention herein is, in part, methodological. I argue that social scientific analyses of contemporary

political economy are well served by looking at the everyday practices and discourses of NGOs, businesses and other institutions in addition to state and supra-state policy interventions in order to better comprehend transnational processes.

This paper draws on the concept of governmentality in examination of two technologies that facilitate transnational labor migration. I supplement Foucault's formulation of governmentality with his other writings that suggest that governable subjects are created through specific technologies. Foucault writes that these technologies involve "modes of training and modification of individuals, not only in the obvious sense of acquiring certain skills but also in the sense of acquiring certain attitudes" (Foucault 1997: 225). Technologies are not only intended to endow one with specific capacities but are also intended to elicit certain dispositions toward others and oneself.[3] Thus, in *The History of Sexuality* the confession is a specific technology through which sex is transformed into discourse and its "truth" is affirmed (Foucault 1978: 20-21). Or in *Discipline and Punish*, the panopticon is a particular architectural technology that elicits governable subjects through the disciplining effects of continuous surveillance (Foucault 1977). In focusing on the critical role of various technologies in enabling the formation of subjects this paper is likewise indebted to two critical interventions in the study of Southeast Asian politics. Benedict Anderson's landmark account of the formation of new nationalist identities distinguishes the printing press as a critical technology that enables these broad, supra-local political solidarities to emerge (Anderson 1983). Similarly, Thongchai Winichakul describes how cartographic technologies produce a Thai nationalist subjectivity (Thongchai 1994). These accounts highlight the specific technologies that enable particular political subjectivities to emerge.

In making these arguments I work within Foucault's formulation of the concept of governmentality as a modern form of power that draws on previously existing political rationalities rather then completely replacing them with new forms. Foucault suggests that modern governance is not characterized by the wholesale displacement of past institutions but

rather by combinations of previously existing forms. For example, modern states combine two modalities of governing that historically were separate and distinct: a Christian model premised on the relationship of the shepherd and his flock and a Classical model premised on the relationship of the city and the citizen (Foucault 2000: 311).[4] In this paper I demonstrate that supposedly traditional moral economies based on patron-client networks facilitate contemporary transnational labor migration. Indonesian NGOs seek to reform these patron-client networks and rationalize labor migration through the enhanced oversight and intervention of the Indonesian government.

Recent studies of transnational labor migration focus on the experiences of migrant laborers. These provide descriptions of the travails of transnational travel (Lindquist 2001) and the overseas treatment and experiences of migrant laborers (Chin 1998; Constable 1997). The perspective taken in this article is different, in that I examine the norms and forms that enable this set of transnational economic relations (Rabinow 1989). I am not so much interested in the effects or experience of transnational migrant labor, as in the technologies that make it possible. Thus, I do not argue that these mechanisms actually turn young, female Indonesians into different types of human beings. Rather, I am interested in the intended effects of these technologies, both in terms of inculcating skills and attitudes and in terms of rationalizing flows of migrant labor.

Enabling Transnationalism: Patron-client Networks and Making Migrant Laborers

While there is no centralized organization or government ministry that effectively oversees the process of transforming and transporting migrant laborers from Indonesia, there is a set of regularized steps that many prospective domestic laborers must undertake. An examination of these steps demonstrates that localized patron-client networks in some cases actually enable transnational economic relations in so far as they serve as a critical means

through which rural Indonesian women become enmeshed in a transnational domestic labor market.

Previous social science research in Southeast Asia and elsewhere stresses the importance of patron-client networks in the absence of strong state institutions (Geertz 1965; Scott & Kerkvliet 1977; Wolf 1966). These networks are integral parts of a "moral economy" in which clients willingly consent to exploitation by higher-status patrons, with the expectation that the patron will provide for the client in the event of hardship (Scott 1976; Thompson 1971). In their classic formulation, these relationships are epitomized by peasants who consent to labor exploitation by wealthy landholders in the expectation that the patron will provide for the client in the event of a calamity, such as crop failure or famine. Subsequent analyses have noted the historical contingency of these relationships. For example, during times of enhanced state power local elites in Southeast Asia have cultivated relationships with state officials reducing their reliance on clients for political and economic support (Hart 1986; Kerkvliet 1990).

Crucially important in facilitating transnational labor migration from Indonesia is a local "broker." This is a local patronage figure who is usually respected in a community, such as a village head, a successful local businessman or even a religious leader. In Cianjur (the West Java regency in which some of this research took place), a significant obstacle to becoming a migrant laborer is finding initial funds to travel to Jakarta to register with a human resources company, like Samudra Cahaya Raya. If a prospective migrant cannot borrow the capital necessary to finance such a journey from a family member they will turn to a broker. The broker provides small loans to migrants and contact with a human resources company in Jakarta.

In so far as brokers are well known, usually respected in their communities, and provide small scale loans to prospective migrants, they resemble the benefactors of patron-client theory. Several returned migrants told me that the individual who provided their initial

capital and contact with a human resources company was a prior acquaintance of their families. The broker who helped Siti, who returned from a two-year stint in Saudi Arabia, was a local businessman, a respected returned *haji*, and active in an influential local political party. She said, "he had helped a friend and my family thought he could help out, so I asked for a loan too (*dia sudah menolong teman dan keluarga saya pikir dia mampu, jadi saya juga minta pinjaman*)." Based on the broker's reputation within a rural community and previous family connections, the prospective migrant may feel more comfortable entrusting their physical and financial welfare to such a broker.

While in some respects the relationship between brokers and prospective migrant laborers resembles those described in conventional patron-client analyses, there are some important differences. For example, the migrant may implicitly expect provision for their welfare during training and placement overseas based on the personal relationship with the broker and the broker's reputation and contacts with the human resources company. However, if there is a problem these brokers may not be as accountable as patrons in conventional localized relations of reciprocity. Asep, a local NGO activist with the group Cianjur Watch remarked that "after a broker lends the money and sends them to Jakarta, that's it. If there is a problem they do not know what to do (*setelah uang dipinjam dan dikirimkannya ke Jakarta, itu semua. Kalau ada masalah mereka tidak tahu apa yang bisa dilakukan*)." He told me that there had been an instance in which a migrant from Cianjur had been abused and the family tried to seek compensation from the broker who provided the initial funds and contacts. The family was partially successfully in obtaining reparations but the woman returned mentally scarred, such that "she was not able to work any more (*tidak bisa bekerja lagi*)." Thus, the "moral economy" between brokers and migrant laborers characterized by an ethic of reciprocity distinctive to patron-client networks may not be quite as pronounced as that described in other previous studies of agrarian social relations. While prospective

migrants and their families may assume the broker will provide for her security, the broker's ability to do so is by no means guaranteed.

Furthermore, historically clients have typically been male heads of households, whereas the vast majority of Indonesians who work abroad as domestic laborers are women. The initial loans given to the women are relatively low risk since the broker is paid back upon acceptance of the prospective migrant by the human resources company. The wide-ranging political-economic changes in Indonesia since the Green Revolution, including the emergence of an overseas demand for female labor, may suggest that women in some rural areas have greater access to local patronage than has historically been the case.[5]

A human resources company will accept the candidate based on a successful interview and cursory visual health inspection. Sari Warsilah explained to me that an important criterion for selecting a candidate was "the ease with which their mind could be opened (*kalau bisa buka pikiran mereka dengan mudah*)." She further explained that some women who enlisted with her company did have the "mental capacity (*kapasitas mental*)" to be domestic laborers. Sari herself spent a total of seven months working in Saudi Arabia as a domestic worker and now works for Samudra Cahaya Raya as a trainer and Arabic teacher. If the candidate is deemed suitable and accepted by the human resources company, the broker will receive a commission. This commission is usually paid on placement of the candidate in a working situation abroad. It is also common practice for the company to pay back the initial small loan that the broker made to the candidate in order to consolidate and clarify the candidate's obligation to the company. The transfer of patronage from the broker to the human resources company marks a significant transition in the making and transport of migrant laborers. Rachma, a 30-year old returned migrant worker, told me that she felt "bewildered (*bingung*)" and "lonely (*kesepian*)" when she initially arrived at the human resources company that eventually sent her to Saudi Arabia. She further informed me that it was the first time in her life she had been away from people whom she knew well. It is here,

where patron-client networks are conjoined to a human resources company, that the interdependence of the so-called "global economy" and localized moral economies is apparent.

Returned migrant laborers from the Cianjur region[6] with whom I spoke gave a range of answers when asked as to their motivations to work abroad as domestic servants (*pembantu*). To some degree all spoke of a commitment to improving the living standards of their families. Repairing or building a home, sending one's children to school, or purchasing agricultural land serve as important motivating factors. Many invoked the vast differential in wages between working domestically and overseas. Whereas wages for a new, minimally-skilled domestic servant in Jakarta or another large Indonesian city are between ten and twenty dollars a month plus room and board, wages in Saudi Arabia or Malaysia are at least five, and possibly twenty times, as high ($100 to $200 per month plus room and board). However, these women were not motivated by financial factors to the degree that proponents of rational choice theory might suppose. Several of those I interviewed mentioned that they wished to work overseas because they could accumulate enough savings so that when they returned to Indonesia they would not have to work further and could thus spend more time with their relatives and friends.[7] A further incentive for Muslim women to work in the Middle East is the opportunity, given their proximity, to complete the *hajj* pilgrimage and return to their home communities with enhanced status as a *hajjah* (female pilgrim to Mecca). The option of working as a migrant laborer is conveyed informally and the companies involved in sending migrants abroad rarely recruit workers themselves. Often the material benefits displayed by a returned migrant laborer in a village inspire new prospective workers. The relative wealth of a returned migrant is conspicuous amidst the underdevelopment of many villages and towns in rural areas like Cianjur regency. Many of the homes of the returned migrants that I interviewed stood out prominently with bright coats of fresh paint and newly tiled roofs. With few employment opportunities available in many parts of rural

Indonesia, a condition exacerbated in the wake of the 1998 Asian financial crisis, the nicely appointed houses of returned migrants serve as alluring beacons to other prospective migrant laborers.

At human resources companies like Samudra Cahaya Raya (SCR), potential domestic workers spend between one and three months obtaining necessary immigration documents and health certifications. Usually only one week of this period includes direct interaction with the various ministries of the Indonesian state involved in administering transnational labor migration. The remainder is spent waiting for papers to be processed and an overseas assignment. While waiting prospective migrants are trained to acquire the skills and dispositions expected of domestic workers. This training requires far and away the largest investment of the entire process and binds the worker to the company in a debt relationship. The capital advanced by the company serves to pay for requisite bureaucratic documentation, training activities, living expenses during training, and air transportation to the country of placement. According to Amien Gunawan, the manager of SCR's training facility, the company typically lends funds to a candidate domestic worker in order to meet these expenses. After placement overseas, the first six months of a migrant laborer's earnings are sent directly to the human resources company to resolve these obligations. It can take up to three months to obtain a placement during which time the candidate is not allowed to return to their home village or even to wander too far from SCR's complex. "We don't want them running off and getting pregnant, you know! (*Kami tidak mau mereka melarikan diri dan menjadi hamil, kan!*)," Sari said to me with a grin and a twinkle in her eye. During this period, the human resources company provides further training in domestic work to prospective migrants.

Although the Indonesian state is not entirely absent, the candidate's contact with branches of the government is minimal. Typically, the day after arrival in Jakarta the candidate is subjected to a medical exam that determines whether she is pregnant or ill. If the candidate

tests positive on either count, she is immediately sent home. This medical certification is required to obtain the necessary immigration documents from both the Indonesian government and the consular office of the destination country. Upon passing the medical exam, the following day the candidate is brought to the Bureau of Labor Training (*Balai Latihan Kerja, BLK*) a branch of the Department of Manpower and Transmigration (*Departemen Tenaga Kerja and Transmigrasi*) for a short state run training program. This training is supposed to certify that the candidate possesses a minimum of basic skills to undertake domestic work overseas. Sari said that it was extremely rare for a candidate to be rejected by the Bureau of Labor Training. After several days of instruction at the Bureau of Labor Training the candidate is deemed capable of serving as a domestic worker overseas. Upon receipt of certification from the Bureau of Labor Training, the candidate can receive a passport from the Department of Immigration (*Departemen Imigrasi*) and a visa from the embassy of the destination country. After receiving the requisite immigration documents they are eligible to travel and thus are considered for placement overseas. NGO representatives told me that these procedures are oftentimes evaded as human resources companies use bribes and other informal arrangements to obtain required documents and clearences. They cite cases in which women as young as 14 years old have been sent abroad by unscrupulous companies that use fake identity cards to obtain required travel permissions. The informal relationship between human resources companies and the various offices of the Indonesian government is a primary target by NGOs seeking increased government oversight and rationalization of the migrant labor process.

Technologies of Servitude: Disciplining Domestics

Future domestic workers are rigidly trained at SCR while they await processing of their medical and immigration papers and an overseas assignment. Although domestic labor is oftentimes considered “unskilled,” the training process illustrates the skills and attitudes that

employment as a domestic servant requires. This is especially true for women who have spent most of their lives in rural villages and are thought to be unfamiliar with the complexities of what Sari called "modern" households. Technologies of servitude, refer to the rationalities that are intended to endow these women with the capacities necessary to conduct domestic labor in countries outside Indonesia. These include training schedules, score sheets and forms of speech with which trainers address trainees.

The training facility/dormitory in which the trainees live, learn, and labor for up to three months while they await an overseas assignment illustrates the austerity of the training. On each of its three stories the building contains a large, high-ceilinged hall lined with wooden crates that contain the few personal belongings that trainees have brought from their rural homes. These spaces serve as classrooms, dining areas, and sleeping quarters for the trainees. I saw sleeping mats and bedding amongst other personal belongings stuffed haphazardly into the open crates. These would be taken out and unrolled after nightfall.

While waiting for an assignment they are trained to operate household appliances, properly press clothing with an electric iron, and cook food particular to the country in which they will serve. Sari bemoaned the lack of sophistication of those she called "village children (*anak desa*)" who had no idea how to operate even a "common vacuum cleaner (*vakum biasa*)." She then proudly showed me the demonstration electric range, washing machine and other mechanical tools that SCR uses to instruct trainees in the proper operation of "modern appliances (*alat-alat moderen*)." Sari lamented the different standards of cleanliness that characterized trainees who had "just arrived from the villages (*baru saja sampai dari desa*)." She assured me that at SCR these "village children" were educated in how to keep a "truly clean (*benar-benar bersih*)" house. However, the training program placed heavy emphasis on instilling a sense of obedience in future domestic laborers. Sari said that a key function of the month long training program was "brain washing" (*cuci otak*) in which these women were "emotionally prepared (*mempersiapkan mental*)" in order "to be given the proper attitude to

work well (*kasih pandangan untuk kerja bagus*)." The quick jump from her description of training prospective migrants to wash clothes with an automatic laundry to her figurative laundering the minds of trainees, revealed the obsession with cleanliness in the project of transforming these women into modern laboring bodies capable of domestic work transnationally.[8]

Figure 1: Daily Schedule for Trainees at PT Samudra Cahaya Raya

5:00-6:00 am	Morning exercises
6:00-7:00	Bathe and dress
7:00-8:00	Prepare and eat breakfast
8:00-9:00	Lectures [by trainers on proper practices of domestic service]
9:00-12:00	Appliance lessons [cooking, ironing, cleaning, taking care of children and elderly, and using appliances]
12:00-1:00 pm	Prepare and eat lunch
1:00-2:00	Break
2:00-5:00	Language lessons [Arabic, Chinese, or English dependent on the country of future placement]
5:00-6:00	Prepare and eat dinner
7:00-10:00	Language study and practice household skills
10:00-5:00	Sleep

This project draws on multiple techniques, including score sheets and schedules, but also forms of speech and bodily discipline. At SCR trainers barked commands at these domestic laborers in a harsh (*kasar*) form of Indonesian. For example, trainees are always addressed in the informal second person pronominal form "*kamu"* rather than the formal "*Anda.*" The use of this form establishes the hierarchy between the trainer and the trainee, marking the latter as inferior. Trainees are further instructed to only speak up to their superiors from a kneeling or stooping position.[9] Additionally, I observed trainers consistently criticize the bodily posture

of trainees, reminding them to avoid looking their superiors in the eye and rather keep their gaze directed downwards, toward the floor. They were also admonished if they raised their voices or otherwise spoke in a manner considered disobedient. Sari pointed out a tightly regimented timetable taped to a wall in SCR's facility. The schedule is intended to mimic "the actual schedules" that they will undertake once they begin to serve as overseas domestics (see figure 1). Several of the trainees with whom I spoke lamented that the precisely controlled daily regime was "much harsher (*lebih keras*)," compared to the social environment in their home villages and towns.

Figure 3: Translation of PT Samudra Cahaya Raya's Score Sheet

	Indonesian Term	**English Translation**
	Hasil Observasi, Interview, dan Evaluasi	Results of Observation, Interview and Evaluation
1	*Daya Tangkap*	Alacrity
2	*Konsentrasi*	Concentration
3	*Kemampuan Dalam Penerimaan Instruksi*	Ability to Follow Instructions
4	*Ketelitian*	Attention to Detail
5	*Bertindak Cepat*	Responsiveness
6	*Ketekunan*	Diligence
7	*Penyesuaian Diri*	Adaptability
8	*Kemampuan Kerjasama*	Ability to Work Collaboratively
9	*Motivasi Kerja*	Work Motivation
10	*Membuat Keputusan*	Decision Making
11	*Emosi*	Emotions
12	*Kepercayaan Diri*	Self-Confidence
13	*Tingkah Laku*	Behavior
14	*Materi Bahasa*	Language Learning
15	*Meteri* (sic) *Keterampilan*	Practical Learning
16	*Skor Akhir*	Final Score

SCR uses a further technology intended to produce workers capable of domestic labor. In response to my queries about the way in which candidates that are sent to SCR are deemed suitable for overseas work, Amein Gunawan gave me a copy of a score sheet with which trainers evaluate a candidate's aptitude for domestic work (see figure 2, a copy of the score sheet). Titled "Results of Observation, Interview and Evaluation," the poorly photocopied

grid closely resembles the table I use as a teaching assistant for undergraduate anthropology courses. Rows were to be filled with the names of individual candidates and columns denoted categories of evaluation. The categories from left to right are: date of entry, name, level of education, destination country, and then sixteen categories that score personal characteristics on a scale of one to five (see figure 3 for translation of the categories). The trainers observe the candidates and record their performance in each of these categories through calculations made on this sheet at the end of each day. If after a week, the trainee's scores are repeatedly low and show no improvement, they will be sent back to their home village. The score sheet also serves as an audit to evaluate the individual members of the networks of brokers maintained by SCR. The company will drop brokers who consistently supply candidates that receive low marks.

The score sheet is a technology intended to facilitate transnational labor migration and Amein was unabashedly proud of its apparent effectiveness. In his eyes it provided a rational, almost scientific method of evaluating the suitability of candidates. Furthermore, he added, this method enhanced the efficiency and productivity of the company itself. He emphasized that SCR's credibility with its overseas agents in the Middle East and other parts of Southeast Asia is contingent upon reliably sending abroad domestic workers who perform effectively. The score sheet is one means through which he could rationalize the process of selection, training, and placement. Apparently objective knowledge about an individual candidate is generated and then applied to them to forecast their aptitude for domestic labor. The score sheet may elicit the very qualities that it is purported to objectively evaluate, by making favored behavior and characteristics explicit to the trainees. Like the accounting techniques analyzed by Marilyn Strathern and others, the score sheet serves as an audit that ascribes value to an individual candidate's propensity for overseas domestic labor and enables the company to winnow those who exhibit the desired conduct from those who do not (Strathern 2000). The score sheet is a technology of servitude that simultaneously evaluates

the broker, the candidate, and the company's own effectiveness at producing competent migrant laborers.

Rationalizing Labor Flows: NGOs and the Management of Migrant Labor

Recent highly publicized incidents in which Indonesian domestic workers were severely abused by their overseas employers have sparked an intense public debate among human resources companies, migrant laborers themselves, national and regional governments, and NGOs.[10] In the political space enabled by the end of the Suharto regime, NGOs are an emerging voice in Indonesia's nascent "civil society" (Heryanto and Mandal 2003). Overseas development aid has played a strong role in fostering the profusion of these NGOs, which now number more than 5000 in the country. The United States Agency for International Development, among other overseas donors, has particularly targeted civil society as a critical domain for intervention and development (Masters 2004). NGOs advocating gender and labor issues have stressed not so much the abolition of transnational migrant labor, as its reform. Thus, NGOs are increasingly vocal in demanding that the Indonesian national government take greater responsibility in ensuring legal safeguards for overseas migrant laborers. These demands are spurred by several cases in which Indonesians overseas have been falsely accused of committing crimes or subjected to physical or sexual abuse. Some have even died. NGOs seek to rationalize the procedure of sending migrant laborers abroad. In so doing they seek to replace the moral economy, constituted by the patron-client networks upon which the current process is based, with a more rationalized relationship that ensures the physical and legal security of overseas migrant laborers. Thus, they endeavor to implement legal protections and closer scrutiny of the private companies and government agencies involved in the training and transport of migrants. In so doing they spur the development of technologies for rationalizing flows of transnational migrant labor from Indonesia.

Several returned migrant workers I interviewed were skeptical that representatives of the Indonesian government might guarantee their security. They instead spoke proudly of their ability to protect themselves. Nuria, a 32-year-old mother of two, told me that while she was working in Saudi Arabia as a domestic laborer her boss repeatedly withheld her wages. She finally quit and reported the employer to the police, but they instead jailed her for six days. When I asked her why she had not appealed to the Indonesian embassy for help she scoffed at the idea. "They won't help unless you bribe them (*mereka tidak menolong tanpa uang suap*)," she exclaimed. She said that she had heard that Indonesian domestic workers who sought help from the Indonesian embassy officials to redress abuse by employers were asked to pay a bribe equivalent to six months of their wages in exchange for assistance.

The abuse of domestic laborers in Saudi Arabia is a complicated problem for the Indonesian government because it is entwined with the international politics of the Muslim *hajj* pilgrimage. The Department of Foreign Affairs is hesitant to pressure the Saudi government too heavily to improve protection for Indonesians working in the country out of fear that to do so would raise Saudi ire and result in a reduction of Indonesia's quota of annual *hajj* pilgrims. A decrease in the number of Indonesians to receive visas from the Saudi government to make the annual journey to Mecca would incite criticism by Muslim political parties domestically. Thus, frequently Indonesian domestic servants working in Saudi Arabia are effectively left to fend for themselves. Upon her release, Nuria found another household in which to work through a local Saudi broker, but handled all the salary negotiations herself. She worked in Saudi Arabia for a year and half more before returning to Indonesia. When I asked her if she would like to return to Saudi Arabia to work again, she unhesitatingly replied affirmatively.

A number of NGOs operate in the new political space has emerged with the fall of the authoritarian Suharto regime. A number of NGOs concerned with labor and gender issues have projects specifically dedicated to improving the plight of migrant laborers. Wahyu

Susilo, former director of the Consortium for the Defense of Indonesian Migrant Workers (Kopbumi or *Konsorsium Pembela Buruh Migran Indonesia*), regretted the failure of the Indonesian government to adequately protect the rights of Indonesians working abroad. Kopbumi advocates implementation of new legal requirements and closer monitoring of the human resources companies engaged in the migrant labor economy. Wahyu said that "the government wants to tax migrant labor, but does not do anything to protect the migrant workers…the current process is not legal because the human resources companies don't pay any taxes (*tidak sah karena PJTKI tidak bayar pajak*)." Wahyu expressed frustration that although many Asian countries have already done so "Indonesia has not ratified the UN convention for the protection for the rights of migrant workers and their families…The Philippines is much better, they have a comprehensive policy for the protection of migrant workers (*mempunyai kebijakan komprehensip untuk perlindungan buruh migran*)…They prioritize their welfare (*mengutamakan kesejahteraan*)." Kopbumi is lobbying the Indonesian parliament to pass new laws to protect migrant workers from unscrupulous brokers, abusive human resources companies, and corrupt bureaucrats.

Several human resources companies in the Cianjur region are responding to NGO criticism and inflammatory media accounts of the abuses migrant workers suffer by introducing innovations with which to track migrant laborers who are working overseas. The Association of Manpower Service Companies of Cianjur (*Assosiasi Perusahaan Tenaga Kerja Cianjur*) is an organization funded by four businesses in the Cianjur region. Syahruddin, an officer of the association, explained that by entering the records of all local migrants in a computer system he hoped to bring about the "rationalization (*rationalisasi*)" of migrant labor flows from Cianjur. He proudly showed me several reams of forms printed from a pirated version of the Microsoft Access database program. Among the information contained on each page was: the migrant worker's name, home address, husband's or father's name, departing flight number, overseas employer's name, and so on. He explained to me

that none of the various state institutions involved in administering Indonesian labor migration systematically collected this data.

Syahruddin was well versed in the rhetoric and practice of "reinventing government" and even invoked ideas he attributed to former United States vice president Al Gore on how the "state, business, and civil society could work together." He was unfailing in his optimism that the computer systems he was developing would improve conditions for migrant laborers from Cianjur. Syahruddin asserted that improving protection for migrant laborers would not only ensure their welfare, but would improve the fortunes of the Cianjur region as a whole.[11] He told me "if overseas migrant labor is arranged well, then the revenue of the region is certain to increase (*kalau tenaga kerja Indonesia diatur dengan baik, penghasilan asli daerah pasti akan naik*)."

Syahruddin's optimism in technological solutions to the problems faced by migrant laborers stretched from mundane to fantastic. He assured me that not all problems faced by migrant laborers occurred while they were abroad, noting that relatively affluent returnees are prime targets for deception upon return to Indonesia. The Indonesian media is replete with stories about how returning migrant workers are duped and sometimes spectacularly taken advantage of. In these narratives, returned migrants loose substantial portions of their earnings at the infamous Terminal 3 of Soekarno-Hatta international airport or on bus rides from the airport to their home villages. In these accounts, that echo Siegel's description of criminality as a recurrent preoccupation in Indonesian popular media (Siegel 1998), return bus journeys are mobile sites suffused with danger. Calamities range from small scale extortion in which returnees are forced to purchase bus tickets at four or five times market value to the alleged disappearance of whole bus loads of returnees into disreputable corners of Jakarta. These unfortunate returnees are then held hostage until they agree to part with ample portions of their overseas earnings. Syahruddin cheerfully described a technological solution that he had conceived to alleviate these problems. Relying on the "latest high-tech

equipment (*peralatan teknologi paling canggih*)" he proposed establishing a satellite tracking system that would enable the vehicles in which returning migrant laborers travel to be followed, thus ensuring their safe return to Cianjur. This system would enable officials of the Cianjur Department of Manpower to make certain that returning buses did not stray from their assigned routes.

A central demand made by activist NGOs is that migrant laborers be protected from physical abuse and financial exploitation and that human resource companies be made more accountable for the laborers that they train and send abroad. To this end they are pressuring the government for new laws and forms of enforcement. Women's and labor rights NGOs are aware of the economic benefit of migrant labor in poor regions across Indonesia. These NGOs present the problem of migrant labor in a manner that is simultaneously technical and political. The goal is not the wholesale termination of migrant labor, but rather making it more "rational." Human resources companies are responding to critiques through the introduction of technological solutions intended to rationalize and enhance surveillance of migrants and audits of their own business practices. The solutions that Syahruddin proposed are examples of this response. NGOs formulate the problem of migrant labor as one of better *management* of this transnational economy. The goal is to create a form of migrant labor that simultaneously benefits the individual laborer, the laborer's community, and the Indonesian government. This will be achieved by ensuring the physical and fiscal security of the migrant, maintaining an ongoing flow of remittances to rural regions, and perpetuating a steady stream of revenue into government coffers through issuing immigration and other necessary documents. In this sense NGOs do not stand in opposition to the state or represent a necessary diminishing of state power. Quite the contrary, in demanding that the Indonesian state take a greater role in guaranteeing the well being of migrant laborers, these NGOs augment the capacity of the state. This enhancement is achieved through technologies

that seek to rationalize the flow of migrant labor from Indonesia and enable a more effective and ultimately more profitable transnational economy for all involved.

Transnational migrant work presents both opportunity and risk. NGOs, human resources companies, and migrant workers themselves seek to maximize the former while minimizing the latter. The Indonesian government is not a single object or even a unified entity, but a contested set of institutions that offer the possibility for intervention by NGOs. In a nation with a history of suppressing civil activism, NGOs are seizing on the emergence of a new political space to pressure the government to enhance the security and welfare of migrant workers. This may be complicit with the broader goals of government officials to increase overseas remittances from migrant laborers, in so far as it enhances the rationalization and efficiency of the broader migrant labor economy.

Conclusion

This paper develops the concept of governmentality in such a way that it might be more productively used to analyze transnational political economic processes occurring in Southeast Asia and beyond. Methodologically, this approach suggests that governmentality is not an abstract concept visible only at the documentary level of policy prescriptions. Rather, by supplementing a formulation of governmentality with Foucault's writings on political technologies, I suggest that the concept is useful in analyzing the everyday discourses and practices that ethnographers observe and engage in while carrying out fieldwork. In making this argument this paper builds on previous efforts to deploy the concept of governmentality in transnational contexts. Further, I argue that there is no clear distinction between the "global economy" and localized moral economies. Thus, supposedly traditional patron-client relations in fact enable transnational labor flows. I demonstrate this by arguing that patron-client networks provide young village women with the means to enlist with human resources companies and thus begin training to become domestic laborers.

Secondly, I assert that governmentality is not simply the promulgation of abstract policy prescriptions, but visible in relatively mundane technologies that are intended to rationalize performance, profitability, and security. The technologies intended to produce docile domestic workers include audits, evaluations, timetables, forms of verbal address, and bodily discipline. Finally, NGOs are not necessarily inimical to the government, but in fact in some cases effectively augment its authority. NGO tactics to protect the rights of migrant laborers in Indonesia can effect greater governmental intervention in their lives. These NGOs are advocating for the rationalization of labor flows by pressing for greater state oversight and intervention. These efforts are partially successful in so far as they prompt new initiatives by human resource companies cited above to reform these flows.

In summary, this paper suggests that rational calculations shape techniques both to constitute servile migrant workers and to ensure their efficient training and delivery to overseas sites. By advocating for greater rationalization and enhanced governmental oversight of the migrant labor process, NGOs highlight the inefficiency of patron-client networks, but also seek to ensure the safety of migrants. The technologies prompted by NGOs facilitate rationalization of labor-exporting networks. Technologies of servitude are intended to elicit the skills and attitudes considered proper to domestic labor, thus making trained laborers more marketable abroad.

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Notes

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[1] With the exception of recognizable public figures and institutions, all proper names referred to in this article are pseudonyms. While I conducted the research for this article a guarantee of anonymity was often a condition of the interviews I was granted.

[2] The transmigration program is an internal state relocation project that historically transferred landless rural agricultural laborers from densely populated Java and Bali to less populated "outer islands" of the archipelago.

[3] Nicholas Rose, working with a Foucaultian framework, defines technologies not simply as mechanical devices, but as "the inculcation of a form of life, the reshaping of various roles for humans, the little body techniques required to use the devices." He further defines a technology as "an assemblage of forms of practical knowledge…practices of calculation, vocabularies, types of authority, forms of judgment, architectural forms, human capacities…traversed and transected by aspirations to achieve certain outcomes in terms of the conduct of the governed (which also requires certain forms of conduct on the part of those who would govern)" (Rose 1999: 52).

[4] Foucault identifies pastoral power as a specific relation between leaders and their followers. It is a positive rather than negative form of power. Thus, it is directed towards maximizing the capacities of subjects rather than repressing them. Pastoral power is anchored in Christian thought and centrally involves the shepherd as the symbolic epitome of a leader. Pastoral power is characterized by a leader whose domain is people rather than land. The leader protects the flock, not through guiding them safely through a cataclysmic event, but through a kind of individualized care that is applied so consistently it appears mundane. Finally, the leader has a responsibility for ensuring the well being of the followers. Thus, the leader is constantly attentive to the needs of the followers, keeping watch over them for their defense, providing food in their times of hunger, and care in the event of illness (Foucault 2000).

[5] This may have larger repercussions for changing social relations and gender roles in rural areas from which many migrants hail. I thank an anonymous reviewer for *Anthropological Quarterly* for drawing my attention to this important point.

[6] The Cianjur regency is located in the province of West Java about midway between Bandung and Jakarta. This regency has one of the highest percentages of Indonesian female migrant laborers who work abroad as domestic servants.

[7] Compare this to Weber's observation that raising piece-rates does not automatically correspond with increased productivity (1990: 59). I find Weber's account of the formation of subjects imbued with skills and attitudes conducive to the spirit of capitalism generative in formulating the arguments in this paper.

[8] See Ong 1987 for examples, from a different Southeast Asian context, of the forms of discipline used to produce bodies capable of performing the labor necessary for high-tech assembly in Japanese, American, and European "runaway" factories operating in Malaysia.

[9] For an excellent study of how speech styles are used to mark hierarchy in Indonesia see James Siegel's (1986) study of Javanese during the New Order.

[10] This controversy has also echoed through the United States as well. See the New York *Times* coverage of the case of Ismiyati Soryono, the Indonesian maid who was pushed down a flight of stairs by her employer, the Saudi Princess Buniah al-Saud, at the princess' Florida condominium (Harden 2002a, Harden 2002b, and New York *Times* 2001).

[11] This resonates with the process of applying knowledge toward a population in order to achieve effects that are deemed simultaneously beneficial for the individual, the collectivity, and the state that is central to Foucault's formulation of governmentality (Foucault 1991).