The relational postcolonial migration state: Entrepreneurial sovereign bodies and the competition for migration in Indonesia

Avyanthi Azis

Akademisk avhandling för filosofie doktorsexamen i Freds-och utvecklingsforskning, Göteborgs universitet, som, med vederbörligt tillstånd av Samhällsvetenskapliga fakultetsstyrelsen läggs fram för offentlig granskning 19 oktober, klockan 16.00 i Agnietenkapel, Oudezijds Voorburgwal 229 - 231, 1012 EZ Amsterdam.

SCHOOL OF GLOBAL STUDIES

UNIVERSITY OF GOTHENBURG

Azis, Avyanthi. 2026. *The relational postcolonial migration state: Entrepreneurial sovereign bodies and the competition for migration in Indonesia.* PhD dissertation in Peace and Development Research, School of Global Studies, University of Gothenburg, (P.O Box 700, 405 30 Gothenburg, Sweden)
Language: English, with summary in Swedish
ISBN: 978-91-8115-951-6 (PRINT)
978-91-8115-952-3 (PDF)
http://hdl.handle.net/2077/91611(GUPEA)

Abstract

Following a postcolonial approach that privileges practice, this thesis contributes to the strengthening of the migration state concept and the overall efforts to move theorizations away from the migrant figure and the decentering of Western experience. It draws insights from the migration industry literature to build a disaggregated, non-objectivist account of the postcolonial migration state. Informed by constructivist international relations (IR) scholarship, the thesis works from a contextualized understanding of sovereignty as a hold on population rather than territory. Specifically, it construes sovereignty as the organization of hegemonic violence, which ontologically targets women, and seeks to prevent them from living/migrating autonomously. Building on ethnographic fieldwork in West Java, Indonesia, the thesis expands on manifold forms of organized gendered violence— migrant documentation, financial inclusion, recruitment and protection—as powerful state-making. Alongside the government, the thesis recognizes microfinance providers, brokers, and vigilante groups known as LSMs, as sovereigns in their own right. The thesis argues that instead of a consecutive migration management advanced by a monolithic entity, the postcolonial migration state is enacted by these competing, morally co-constituted sovereigns. The postcolonial migration state arises from the combined power effects that result from their contention, struggle and mutual constitution. It is a violent enterprise where migration control and facilitation are deeply connected to the creation of profit.

Keywords: Indonesia, postcolonial, migration state, sovereignty, violence