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Indonesian Migrants in Taiwan. Religion and Life-style

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CLA:	Council of Labor Affairs in Taiwan
ISA:	Indonesian Student Association (know called NTUST-ISA)
IETO:	Indonesian Economic and Trade Office
NTUST:	National Taiwan University of Science and Technology
NU:	Nahdlatul Ulama, the major organization of the traditionalist <i>santri</i> in Indonesia
AIST:	Association of Islam and Science in Taiwan

1. Introduction

In 2014, the number of short-term migrants around the globe that had left their country of origin has been estimated to exceed 100 million. The decreasing costs of international travel and global communication now offer this new possibility to the societies of those nations that had previously been excluded from overseas travel. Today, special programs for temporary foreign workers have been established in order to meet the labor needs of industrial countries everywhere (Lenard 2014: 158).

From the 1980s onwards, a system of short-term migration began to establish throughout the Asian Pacific region that turned developing regions into sending countries and emerging economies into receiving states. The OECD called this region the “newest international migration system” (Athukorala/ Manning 1999: 1). Lenard points out that these migration structures are especially beneficial for the developing countries in that area (Lenard 2014: 159).

However, the increasing economic efficiency of the sending states is accompanied by a high degree of exploitation of the mostly low-skilled migrant workers, who often face exclusion from social welfare programs and other institutes of protection, low wages in comparison to the main society, and the continuing threat of human trafficking. Furthermore, even though the system of migration in the area of Southeast Asia has increased during the last decades, a regional cooperation in terms of policy and law is still missing in the great majority of cases. These risks are primarily affecting short-term migrants, since their temporary status prevents them from being regarded as full members of the host societies (Lenard 2014: 160; Tierney 2008: 159; Wickramasekara 2002: 36, 38).

One of the emerging countries that are highly dependent on foreign unskilled labor but nevertheless has only weak mechanisms to prevent exploitation and discrimination of their migrant laborers is Taiwan. Through the adoption of industrialization and the increasing entry of women into the labor market during the last decades, the need for domestic, construction, and factory workers had risen to a degree that finally convinced the Taiwanese government in the 1990s to open the borders for short-term migration from Southeast Asia (Athukorala/ Manning 1999: 57, 86).

Conversely, one of the developing countries in the region that suffers from high unemployment, especially in the aftermath of the Asian financial crisis in the late 1990s, is Indonesia. The possibility of social mobility through migration encouraged especially the young adults of the Indonesian society to travel to Malaysia and Saudi Arabia, and later on also to other East and Southeast Asian countries (Firdausy 2006: 142; Nazara 2002: 215).

Taiwan is neither the major destination of migrants in Asia, nor is it especially favored by Indonesians. Malaysia and Saudi Arabia still host the largest number of

Indonesian migrant workers. However, Indonesian maids in Taiwan already outnumber other foreign workers, especially those from the Philippines, in the island nation. One reason for this is the Taiwanese minimum wage, which exceeds those of other Southeast Asian countries to a small degree. Furthermore, Taiwan implemented several protection laws in the last decades and can thus provide a working environment that is a little more humane and less exploitative than those of many other Asian states. Still, since these policies are without regular supervision, the disregard of labor laws still is common among many Taiwanese employers (Lan 2006: 10, 51, 54). On this account, the foreign workers in Taiwan started to engage in social associations that aim to inform the international wage earners about their labor rights and to assist them in the successful enforcement of these rights within their working environment (Loveband 2009: 246-247).

The analysis of the working conditions of the Indonesian foreign workers in Taiwan as well as their social activities represents the starting point of the present thesis¹. Its framework is completed by one other group of Indonesians; those that started studying at various Taiwanese universities in recent years. Even though the majority of Indonesian students are of the same age as the Indonesian workers and also originate from Java, both groups differ from each other significantly in terms of education, religious thinking and lifestyle. This duality of Indonesian community in Taiwan as well as their relationship to each other constitutes the focus of this paper.

In order to understand the background on which the relationship between students and workers is based, the next chapter will describe the religious landscape of Indonesia in general and of Java in particular. The unifying as well as the separating factors of religion shall be exhibited with a special focus on Islam, since this religion plays a crucial role in Indonesian society.

In the context of the migration structure of Southeast Asia, this paper will subsequently ask for the push and pull factors that compel migrants to move away from their home country in order to choose a country like Taiwan as their destination. The history of Indonesian migration to Taiwan is also illustrated in the third chapter, together with the actual working conditions, the lifestyles, and the social associations of Indonesian foreign workers.

Finally, the fourth chapter will deal with the Indonesian students. After a description of the short history of Indonesian students in Taiwan, the chapter will depict their social and religious points of view in comparison to those of the Indonesian foreign workers, but also in relation to Indonesian society. In this way, the chapter aims to illustrate the ideas and goals of the students in relation to the

¹ The experiences and activities of Filipina migrant workers are partly added to these descriptions since they had once been the largest group of migrants in Taiwan. In addition, their living and working conditions are mostly the same, while some significant differences between Filipina and Indonesian workers exhibit the cultural particularities that can explain the special position of the Indonesian workers in relation to Taiwanese society and other Indonesian migrants.

Indonesian workers in order to explain the contents and activities of their organizations.

The study shows that one difference between both groups of Indonesians is religion. Indonesian students are characterized by a close connection to Islamic thought, while those Indonesian workers that chose Taiwan as their destination instead of Saudi Arabia or Malaysia often do so in order to experience the morally and sexually liberated society of Taiwan, which offers consumerist lifestyle possibilities rarely available in Indonesia. Since Indonesian students consider this life-style as a threat to the values and expectations of their home society, they try to intervene in the lifestyles of the Indonesian workers while simultaneously supporting them in their struggle for better working conditions. The strategies and goals of the students as well as the wishes and needs of the workers shall be observed in order to understand the structure and motivations of the relationship between both groups. Finally, the conclusion examines the way in which the relationship between Indonesian workers and students in Taiwan represents a national discourse that is about to take place within Indonesian society in general. The final question to answer focuses on the fact that migration does not only have an effect on the host country, but also on the home society.

The data used for this paper is based on the fieldwork that I conducted in Taiwan between November 2012 and March 2013, while an ongoing written contact with both the Indonesian students and the workers enabled me to collect further insights into the continuing biographies of my informants while I completed this paper. The information gathered in this way is supplemented by similar studies of other anthropologists and further reading on the migration system of Southeast Asia.

2. The Religious Communities of Java

The religious system of Java is not as fragmented as first explanations about the different labels used by the Javanese may imply. Though several streams and motivations exist that are partly even connected to political claims, there is one religion that serves as an element to unify the Javanese society more than the island itself does. Islam is the key concept that needs to be taken into account in order to understand the relations of the different cosmological ideas to each other, since Islamic ideas or at least a nominal adherence to Islam binds together a large majority of the Javanese society. For this reason, the Javanese religious categories as found by Geertz offer a first orientation only, while their limits are not as exclusive as earlier studies led to expect (Beatty 1999: 28-29; Frealy/ Hooker/ White 2006: 39; Wessing 1978: 14, 18). Geertz was the first researcher who observed and described the religions of Java, which he divided into several more or less separate categories. The three groups identified by him are called “*abangan*”, “*santri*”, and “*priyayi*” (Beatty 1999: 28).

While “*abangan*” refers to a mostly rural population that lives by to traditional animistic ideas influenced by Hindu-Buddhist traditions, the term “*santri*” arose as a name for a movement of Muslims that aimed to purify Islam from all “Javanese” (“*abangan*”) traditions in order to assimilate to the Arabic Sunni Islam. Furthermore, the term “*priyayi*” labels a category of people who mainly belong to the upper class of the society that focuses on Hindu-Buddhist rituals.

However, other scientists later claimed that the *priyayi* are predominantly separable from the *abangan* through social standing rather than through religious thinking (Beatty 1999: 20, 28; Geertz 1964: 5-6; Wessing 1978: 14, 18). More recently, scholars such as Wessing pronounce that these categories are tendencies rather than clearly separate groups or streams with diverged lives: "While there are persons who practice a pure form of Islam or who are mainly concerned with the higher forms of Hindu-Buddhist mysticism, it is questionable whether such ideal types give an accurate picture of Javanese [...] religious life" (Wessing 1978: 14).

Even though many scholars regret these categories, they are still used at least as points of reference in relation to the religious orientation of the Javanese society which partly still identifies and labels itself with these terms (Beatty 1999: 3; Machmudi 2008: 22; Wessing 1978: 14). For this reason, the next subchapters describe the different categories as they have been mentioned by Geertz for the first time. *Abangan* and *priyayi* will be explained first in order to illustrate the traditional belief system that later became influenced by Islam. The second subchapter deals with the *Slametan*, since this ritual constitutes a crucial connection between all religions existent on Java. Together with the illustration of the differences and disputes that came up between the more or less separate groups, the last subchapter tries to establish a link between the various cosmological tendencies and their local sub-divisions on the island of Java.

The Abangan and the *Priyayi*

The term “*abangan*” was introduced into the scientific literature on religion in Indonesia by Clifford Geertz, who endeavored to use the names and descriptions his Javanese informants themselves applied to their own society (Geertz 1964: 6). It addresses the old, pre-Islamic cosmological system of Java that nowadays is blended with a basic notion of Islam. The term *abangan* refers to the religion itself as well as to the people who follow it.

The word “*adat*” can be translated as ‘custom’ and refers to the traditional practices that constitute the core of the cosmological system of *abangan*. These practices mirror the way of life of the ancestors and prescribe the need to continue their habits and beliefs. As Wessing points out: “*Adat*, which includes all rituals, usages, obligations, and prohibitions, is the guide to proper life. One’s primary responsibility is to know *adat* and to live by it” (Wessing 1978: 77, emphasis in original).

No written behavioral forms or any kind of institutionalized church are part of *abangan*. Instead, the most important unit for the *abangan* is the household. Besides, the *abangan* believe in a world of spirits and ancestors that have to be respected and cared for, and due to Islamic influence, an almighty power called ‘Allah’ is the highest deity to pray to (Geertz 1964: 128; Wessing 1978: 76, 90, 95).

The Muslim belief in Allah was adopted by the *abangan* with a special supplement based on a notion of hierarchy that accompanies the Javanese traditional society. Within this hierarchy, it would be inappropriate, impolite or even dangerous for an ordinary human to talk directly to a person or even a deity of much higher social status. For this reason, the *abangan* prefer to deal with the god Allah only through their ancestors, who function as intermediaries in their special position that connects the world of the living with the afterlife. Furthermore, Allah is not solely perceived as a benevolent god, but also as an unpredictable power that needs to be addressed only from a safe distance.

Hence, the *abangan* do not have the intention to regret Islamic beliefs, but feel the need to retain a self-defined relationship to it (Brenner: 234; Wessing 1978: 86, 95). Only a small amount of people in West Java have migrated to nearby mountains in order to stay untouched by Islamic influences. For the majority of the *abangan* that stayed in the cities, it is acceptable to incorporate Islamic practices into their own religious actions as long as the people in the hills continue to perform the ‘pure’ duties of *adat* (Wessing 1978: 78). This identification with *adat* is labelled as “*kejawèn*”, translated by Beatty as “Javanism”. As Beatty explains, this term does not solely encompass all *abangan*, but also the “*priyayi*” (Beatty 1999: 299). While Geertz had categorized the *priyayi* as a separate religion, later scholars like Beatty have rejected this view, since both groups share the same spiritual ideas. The term ‘*Javanism*’ thus refers to the originality of *adat* in contrast to Islam and the *santri* movement that came from outside and have started to oppose *adat* practices. These two opposing tendencies are not only in

conflict with each other in religious matters, but also in claims for political power (Beatty 1999: 29, 150; Wessing 1978: 15). Furthermore, since the word *priyayi* mainly represents a social standing rather than a religious tendency, a certain number of *priyayi* have in fact been found to be Muslim (Smith-Heffner 2007: 393).

Members of the *priyayi* mainly belong to the urban gentry or work as bureaucrats. Even though their religious beliefs and practices are not to be distinguished from *adat* traditions, they still insist on a separation from the *abangan* since the latter are often of low social status. Because of this, conflicts do not only appear between the *santri* and the *abangan*, but also between the *priyayi* and the *abangan* (Beatty 1999: 28; Brenner 1998: 140; Geertz 1964: 360).

While conflicts between the different tendencies are a regular part of the Javanese society, there is one unifying ceremony called "*Slametan*" that is conducted by a great majority of all Javanese, independent of their actual religious background. Initially, the *Slametan* belonged to the believing system of the *abangan*, since all other *adat* rituals are based on it or are a variation of it (Beatty 1999: 36, 38; Geertz 1964: 14-15). However, the *Slametan* is important not only in the lives of the *abangan*, but is a precondition for the social harmony in Javanese villages. In spite of many conflicts, the Javanese society is in general very tolerant in religious matters. Thus, the *Slametan* allows a temporary aggregation of the different religious streams (Beatty 1999: 36, 49-50).

The *Slametan*

The details of this ceremony may vary in dependence of the religion of the individual families, since the *Slametan* is not restricted to the *abangan*. As Beatty illustrates, every member of the society has their own interpretation of the *Slametan* and its elements, so that a person can bring its own needs and interests into the point of view without the requirement to accept the full range of symbols and beliefs (ibid.: 38, 49-50): "As a ritual frame adaptable to diverse faiths and ideologies, it [the *Slametan*, editor's note] remains at the heart of Javanese religion. As an example of religious syncretism, it shows how - and with what inventive grace - people can come to terms with their differences" (Beatty 1999: 50).

The *Slametan* means to gather all people, living or dead, spirits or gods who are part of the environment of the family who conducts the ritual for a certain purpose. Whenever a child has been born, a wedding or a funeral is about to take place, a family member leaves for a longer journey or a new occupation, a *Slametan* will be conducted (ibid.: 30; Geertz 1964: 11). On the evening on which the ritual will be performed, all male neighbors gather in the house of the host for a ceremonial meal. Before eating, all guests, dead and alive, are greeted in a ritual speech that includes several specific Islamic prayers. Afterwards, one of the visitors presents all dishes that have been brought for the meal and explains their symbolic meaning

(Beatty 1999: 31-32; Geertz 1964: 12-13). The Islamic prayers may be part of the speech or constitute the largest or exclusive segment of the ritual, depending on the religious background of the host. After the speech and some further prayers, the meal will be eaten and the guests will leave soon after (Beatty 1999: 31, 38; Geertz 1964: 12-13).

The *Slametan* serves to maintain harmony inside the village and defines social order in times of change and new beginnings. It embodies the moment in which the current situation has been verified as harmonic and characterizes the village society as a peaceful unit in which "*gak ana apa-apa*", 'nothing is going to happen' (Geertz 1964: 14). This peacefulness is not limited to the living, it also involves the world of the ancestors and wild spirits (Geertz 1964: 11-12, 15).

In this way, *adat* is present in any important moment in the life of a person and is not restricted to the behavioral norm of one religion (Wessing 1978: 76). The harmony represented in this ritual matters not only to the *abangan*, but creates a "fictional kinship" between the villagers independently of their cosmological beliefs (Beatty 1999: 36). On this account, the *Slametan* is closely connected to the concepts of *adat* and *abangan*, though the other religions of Java are not excluded. The unifying character of the *Slametan* constitutes an important factor within the existing debates and conflicts between the different religious streams (Beatty 1999: 30, 38, 43).

Nevertheless, *abangan* is often understood as the direct opposite of the *santri* movement in terms of religious tendencies and self-descriptions. The latter claims the purification of Islam from all influences perceived as 'foreign' (meaning non-Muslim), while aspiring to the Islamic model of the Middle East. Diverse schools of thought within this movement provide differentiated opinions about how to deal with *adat* while following 'pure' Islam (Geertz 1964: 5, 127; Wessing 1978: 14, 17-18). On this account, it is worth discussing the entry of Islam into the Indonesian island of Java and to illustrate the different religious tendencies that are to be found in Java cumulated under the label 'Islam'.

Islam and the *santri*

While *adat* refers to the traditional customs of Java, the "*sunna*", the Arabic custom, constitutes the basis of Sunni Islam that originated in the Middle East and now also exists in Indonesia (Frealy/ Hooker/ White 2006: 41; Geertz 1964: 122). For centuries the great majority of the Javanese population belongs to the group of confessed Sunnites. When obligatory religious registration for every citizen was implemented in the 1980s, more than ninety percent of Javanese citizens registered as Muslim (Brenner 1998: 230; Geertz 1964: 123; Frealy/ Hooker/ White 2006: 39). However, this data deserves a careful interpretation, since only a certain amount of Indonesian religions are recognized as such by the state, excluding *abangan* and the cosmologies of ethnic minorities. Hence, the official registration is not taken all too seriously by many citizens, who tend to register as

Muslims in order to belong to the societal majority (Frealy/ Hooker/ White 2006: 39; Machmudi 2008: 51; Wessing 1978: 20-21).

Not solely because of the inaccurate records, but also in terms of belief and practice, *abangan* is not completely separable from Islam in Indonesia. It can rather be said that Islam is the connecting element that unifies Javanese society instead of the island of Java itself (Beatty 1999: 28-29; Frealy/ Hooker/ White 2006: 39). For this reason, it is helpful to distinguish between nominal and devout Muslims.

Nominal Muslims have adopted the Islamic thinking without a great interest in a pious life or regular Islamic prayers. This group may also encompass *abangan* or other minority groups that are officially registered as Muslims. In contrast, devout Muslims follow the Islamic thought and practice in an orthodox way and partly try to convince the nominal Muslims to adopt this behavior. This latter group calls itself “*santri*” in contrast to the *abangan* and other religions (Beatty 1999: 28-29; Geertz 1964: 6; Machmudi 20098: 22).

Though the *santri* are a phenomenon of more recent history, Islam reached Indonesia much earlier. The first evidence of Islamic culture in Indonesia have been found in North Sumatra and East Java in the form of Islamic gravestones that may originate from 1082, but it is assumed that the first Muslim traders arrived at Indonesian borders much earlier (Frealy/ Hooker/ White 2006: 41-42; Machmudi 2008: 52). A greater number of conversions to Islam only happened five hundred years later, after Muslim traders from the Middle East had attached a new association of higher social class to Islam through their own success. Between the fifteenth and the eighteenth century, as one effect of the extended trading relations between Indonesia and the Middle East, the number of followers of Islam increased remarkably, especially on the northern coast of Java. However, several scholars suspected that most of these new followers had converted mainly for economic reasons (Machmudi 2008: 53; Pringle 2010: 23, 57).

The first embrace of Islam had been limited to the renaming of kings, spirits, and Buddhist practices with Arabic terms and names. Through the distance between Indonesia and the Middle East, more detailed cosmological knowledge about Islam was not accessible to Javanese society. However, a process of religious rethinking had started to take place within Javanese society during the eighteenth century, since some political leaders were forced to adopt Arabic names in order to retain their authority. For other rulers, conversion to Islam was just another method to obtain access to further supernatural power, as conversion to Hindu-Buddhism had been some centuries before (Geertz 1964: 125). At the very least, since Muslim Arabic traders were able to intermarry with noble families and thus introduce Islam into the realms of local kings, Islam came to be a symbol of political power and economic prosperity in Java (Pringle 2010: 29-30).

Around that time, the first Indonesian pilgrims travelled to Mecca and where taught by popular scholars who originated not only in the Middle East, but also in

India and China (Houben 2003: 153; Machmudi 2008: 52-53; Pringle 2010: 33-34; Wessing 1978: 15). For this reason, the blending of Islam with other religions like Hinduism and Buddhism was observable in Java from the very beginning. During its slow and mostly nonviolent spread through the islands of Indonesia, Islam adopted modes of syncretism that allowed very different rituals and beliefs of foreign and local origin to culminate in a unique form of Islam as it is only known in Indonesia (Houben 2003: 153-154; Machmudi 2008: 52-53).

With the increasing number of pilgrims who were able to reach Mecca as a consequence of the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869, Indonesian knowledge of Islam became more detailed and the followers became more able to differentiate between pure Islamic teachings and foreign influences. In this way, Javanese Muslims were able to become Islamic scholars, sharing their knowledge in newly-opened Quran schools. The community of the *santri* arose out of the environment of these first Muslim schools in Java (Geertz 1964: 125, 149; Frealy/ Hooker/ White 2006: 39, 43; Machmudi 2008: 22).

The *santri* have been introduced into the scientific debate by Geertz. These believers not only claim to be Muslim by virtue of economic benefits, tradition or official registration, but also practice Islam actively and piously. They condemn the veneration of ancestors and the praying to Allah through spiritual intermediaries as impure and un-Islamic (Brenner 1998: 231-232; Geertz 1964: 5-6, 125; Frealy/ Hooker/ White 2006: 39, 43; Machmudi 2008: 22).

However, the *santri* movement itself is divided into several tendencies likewise because of different basic assumptions about Islamic inheritance and Javanese traditions. Though not all *santri* are members of one of these groups, two tendencies came to be highly influential within Indonesian society and partly also implement political parties (Machmudi 2008: 21).

The main differentiation is made between the 'traditionalist' and the 'modernist' *santri*. The 'traditionalist' ("*kolot*") *santri* movement focuses on the teachings of medieval scholars and tolerates non-Muslim influences and local customs to a certain degree, while still being concerned with an orthodox and purged version of Islam. Javanese traditions are accepted in order to prevent the cultural or social disruption of society. For this reason, the traditionalists support the continuing existence of *adat* while dissociating clearly from the *abangan*. Conversely, the 'modernist' ("*moderen*") *santri* movement is more consistent in the unconditional denouncement of non-Islamic elements and aspires to assimilate the nominal Muslims into their pious Islam (Geertz 1964: 149, 153, 160; Frealy/ Hooker/ White 2006: 40; Machmudi 2008: 56, 58).

Both of these tendencies established large organizations that were focused on the social and cultural welfare of Indonesian society, and thus gained national importance. One aspect that motivated both groups to initiate change within the society was the technological advancement of the West that had spread through the Indonesian islands, together with the spread of public media and Western

education by 1938. While the traditional *santri* have divided opinions about the meaning of industrial modernization and Western thinking, the modernist *santri* appreciate the opportunities and search for methods to integrate them into their own lifestyle. This point of view was influenced by a further episode of increased journeys to Mecca after 1924, since Egyptian scholars were and still are the most important point of reference for the modernist *santri* movement. Hence, a notion of industrial development and westernization is part of the *santri* idea, though it is mainly to be found in modernist circles. Frealy, Hooker and White describe this new relation to industrialization as the ‘neomodern’ movement (Frealy/ Hooker/ White 2006: 40-41, 42-43; Machmudi 2008: 58, 61; Pringle 2010: 55-56). On this account, both groups established organizations that were partly involved in politics and partly implemented Muslim schools that focused not solely on Islamic teaching, but also on Western education. The modernists started this development with the establishment of an organization called “Muhammadiyah”.

Muhammadiyah was founded in 1912 in Yogyakarta and still is the most important of a range of mainstream modernist organizations that have been established in the twentieth century. It enabled the growth of an educated Islamic middle class on Java through the establishment of modern schools called “*madrasah*”, in which Western education is blended with religious teachings (Machmudi 2008: 61; Pringle 2010: 57; van Wichelen 2007: 94). Since the modernists prefer to adapt Islam to the requirements of modern life and mostly do not insist on a purification and Islamization of the social or political sphere, Muhammadiyah has been able to adapt to the social changes of the last decades and has never lost its importance (Machmudi 2008: 61).

In response to this, the traditionalists founded their own organizations and schools. From the traditionalist point of view, Muhammadiyah was the ground of ill-education, since no teaching of Arabic was included in the curriculum, and the Islamic scholars represented in the teachings were criticized as uninformed. The traditionalist organization that is of major importance in Indonesia is “Nahdlatul Ulama” (NU), the “Revival of the Religious Scholars”, established in 1926 (Pringle 2010: 57-58). In their beginning, their schools, called “*pesantren*”, were exclusively focused on religious teaching, but in 1975 Western-oriented state curriculum was added to the syllabus. *Pesantren* operate as boarding schools that are sometimes connected to a *madrasah* in order to provide non-religious teaching. The name “*pesantren*” literally means “place of the *santri*” and offers monastery-like education (Pringle 2010: 118, 120, 122; van Wichelen 2007: 94).

While in the beginning the *pesantren* have been a solely Javanese phenomenon, they can now be found all over Indonesia, as are the *madrasah* and the corresponding organizations. About 14,000 *pesantren* and 38,000 *madrasah* are present on the Indonesian islands, and the respective organizations monitor a range of schools, universities, and hospitals. More than a quarter of the Javanese society is a member of one for both *santri* organizations. In a survey from 2004, 42 percent of the Indonesian society identified themselves with Nahdlatul Ulama,

while only 12 percent associate themselves with Muhammadiyah. This may in part be due to the tolerant attitude of the traditionalists towards the *abangan* and other religious minorities (Pringle 2010: 115, 120).

Compared to Islamic welfare organizations in other Muslim states, *Nahdlatul Ulama* and Muhammadiyah are unique in their size and structural organization. The extent of collaboration with the government in order to increase social and educational development and the influence that both organizations have upon it is also unrivaled. A voter education program was established by the associations in order to support the democratic movement. Almost every political party in Indonesia has relations with at least one of the organizations, while *Nahdlatul Ulama* is represented by a few more parliamentarians than Muhammadiyah. Until today, both streams compose a major force within the social and political life in Indonesia (Pringle 2010: 58, 117-118).

Hence, Wessing stresses the importance of differentiating between the religious category of Islam and the “power network” that Muslims have established in Indonesia (Wessing 1978: 18). The influence of modernist or reform Islam made its most obvious changes through the implementation of political claims during the time after Suharto had installed the New Order in 1966. Even though none of the Muslim groups were allowed to establish Islamic parties and were highly suppressed by the government, the effects within society increased remarkably (Brenner 1998: 229-230).

During the 1970s, the cultural and social activities of the modernist groups improved the Islamic consciousness within the society and participated in the fall of the New Order. When, in the 1980s, still during Suharto’s regime, citizens had to register as members of one of the officially recognized religions, a large number of people chose to register as Muslim (Brenner 1998: 230; Freally/ Hooker/ White 2006: 45; Houben 2003: 162).

Although many of these nominal Muslims did not necessarily follow Islamic practices, the reputation of Muslims within society was perceived as beneficial for an individual’s own role in society, and thus led to a high number of registered followers. This impression was strengthened by the personnel of the Religious Courts, who were mainly selected from the realms of traditionalist or modernist *santri*. However, many conflicts that occurred between Muslims and non-Muslims, especially during the Suharto era, illustrate that the power network established by the Muslim movements was not appreciated by all members of Indonesian society (Beatty 1999: 242; Freally/ Hooker / Withe 2006: 46-47).

Independently of the shared ideals of the two Muslim movements, conflicts also appear regularly between the different *santri* streams. Since the differences between these tendencies are to a certain degree related to locality, it is worth explaining how the different religious tendencies are distributed throughout Java and in which way the local differences are to be understood in terms of historical

developments. The main differences in relation to this are to be found between the eastern and the western parts of Java (Geertz 1964: 112; Machmudi 2008: 59).

Differences between East and West Java

Even though the *Slametan* is of central importance to the religious practices of both East and West Java, substantial differences can be found in the additional meanings and the surrounding ceremonies connected to the core ritual in these areas. These distinctions can mostly be attributed to the various religious backgrounds of the partakers, while local discrepancies are recognizable additionally. This becomes most evident when examining the history of the two parts of the island.

While West Java was ruled by several kings that had converted to Islam from the thirteenth century onwards, the Eastern Empire of Majapahit, established in 1292, was influenced and supported by Hindu-Buddhist Bali, even though its society had already been composed of mixed religious tendencies during the fourteenth and fifteenth century (Beatty 1999: 11-12; Pringle 2010: 21-22). In this way, the Eastern Empire of Java had for a long time been able to defend itself in several holy wars instigated by the western part and also against the colonial Dutch, and thus came to be the border between the Islamic West and the Hindu-Buddhist East. Only in 1743 were the areas of the two important cities Majapahit and Banyuwangi (opposite Bali) captured by the Dutch, who forced Islam onto the citizens in order to cut off Java from Bali's influence (Beatty 1999: 12, 14).

Because of the long political and cultural separation of Java into an eastern and a western part, Beatty calls into question the assumption that Java is representable as an island that constitutes a cultural and religious congruent society, especially during the area of Majapahit. However, the concept of Java as a uniform community was promoted by the Dutch in order to oppose political divisions and by Suharto to legalize a centralized leadership (Beatty 1999: 9-10).

Even though cultural and also religious interpenetrations are observable in both the eastern and the western communities, Beatty mentions the differences between the idealized concepts and the realities of everyday life in the villages. Thus, the high culture of West and Central Java became the archetype of Javanese society, while the eastern part of the island stayed focused on the traditional values and practices of the villages (Beatty 1999: 9-10, 19-20). Islam still represented the conjunctive between the two areas, though the teaching in the *pesantren* schools of Nahdlatul Ulama in the east was different and referred to a "simple, untemperative" version of Islam, as Beatty describes it (ibid.: 20). The rules of Islamic ethics are still perceived as man-made and thus unimportant for the daily life among those parts of the eastern community that do not belong the *santri*. In addition, mass conversions to Hinduism took place in the east after the Second World War (ibid.: 20, 182).

In contrast, West Java developed a hybrid society with various religions and local languages, in which the influence of Hinduist traditions was still observable while Islam was a central and dominating element that was involved in every realm of everyday life (Beatty 1999: 9; Geertz 1964: 125). Through the rise of printing and international literature, further knowledge of newly emerged ideas concerning Islam became to be accessible to a greater Indonesian audience. In this way, local differences of thinking and practicing diminished further, while Islam became to be a common element from which many features were adopted and united (Houben 2003: 156).

During this formation of Islam as a major religion on Java, the two different sections of Muslims, the modernists and the traditionalists, increased in importance and later became institutionalized in the form of the two associations called Muhammadiyah and *Nahdlatul Ulama* (Wessing 1978: 18-19). Besides the contrasting social and religious views of both associations, local influence was another feature that governed the development of the groups. The traditionalists under *Nahdlatul Ulama* originate from East Java, as do the majority of their large number of followers. Thus, their activities and efforts refer to the East in particular. Their acceptance of local variations and the incorporation of Islam into *adat* traditions affiliates the group with the nominal Muslims and *abangan* of the east (Beatty 1999: 132; Geertz 1964: 148).

In contrast, one of the goals of Muhammadiyah is to unify the eastern and the western part of Java on a religious level along their spiritual preferences. In addition, Beatty emphasizes that the followers of Muhammadiyah are much fewer in number and mainly belong to the urban, western part of society (Beatty 1999: 20, 132; Geertz 1964: 148-149). When Brenner describes the 'Islamization' in the rural areas of Central Java during the 1980s, she mentions that the old people especially regretted following the 'advanced' version of Indonesian Islam. In this area, people with Muslim clothing have been branded as fanatics, and Muhammadiyah was perceived as too progressive in thinking and lifestyle. At the same time, Allah was part of the religious belief of the people, together with ancestors and spirits, without any conflict emerging between these two concepts. She illustrates a process in which the connection between the population and the ancestors was more and more weakened by Islamic ideas about death and the afterlife (Brenner 1998: 230-232). However, Beatty mentions that the process of Islamization was, at least in the eastern part of the island, accompanied by mass conversions to Hinduism and *abangan* (Beatty 1999: 150).

The omnipresence of Islam in the western part of Java defines the self-description of the citizens as well as the contents of the *Slametan*, the most unifying of all Javanese rituals. Only a minority follows the goal of Muhammadiyah to abolish the *Slametan*. But the *Slametan* is nevertheless not conducted as often in West Java as it is in the eastern part of the island. Wessing states that in West Java, nearly everybody identifies as Muslim (Beatty 1999: 116; Wessing 1978: 18-20). While this, in East Java the practice of the *Slametan* remains popular, but is reduced to

its core procedure, where the content of the prayers may differ depending on the religious attitudes of the host family. This diminution can be explained with the huge amount of religious variety within the villages of the eastern area. As Beatty describes, village harmony in such a diverse environment can only be retained through a certain amount of tolerance towards other religious tendencies that may be discovered during the *Slametan* (Beatty 1999: 49-50).

Against this background, it is an interesting observation that a large number of the students that leave Indonesia for Taiwan are from the western part of Java, while the majority of Indonesian migrant workers originate from East Java (Lan 2006: 49). Thus, the differences between East and West Java are to be taken into account when observing the relationship between Indonesian workers and students in Taiwan. As Lan points out, migrant agencies that establish contacts between Indonesian workers and Taiwanese employers favor women from east Java as maids, since ethnic stereotypes describe this part of Indonesian society as “obedient, hardworking, plain, and simple” (Lan 2006: 83). In contrast, women from West Java are perceived as more pretty and civilized, but therefore also more militant and lazy (Lan 2006: 83). My own findings tend to confirm these strategies of selection, since the majority of the workers that I observed originated from the east, while many of the Indonesian students came from West Java. The deep connection of West Java to Islam is mirrored in the way the students attempt to influence the Indonesian migrant workers.

Hence, the character of the relationship between the students and the workers seems to also illustrate the differences between East and West Java. This becomes even more evident when observing the details of the lifestyles of the Indonesian wage earners as well as the religious and social work of the Indonesian students. For this reason, the following chapter deals with the situation of the Indonesian workers in Taiwan. It describes the history of migration to Taiwan and explains how the lifestyle and the working conditions of the workers are shaped by governmental prescriptions and the treatment of the workers by Taiwanese society.

3. Indonesian Migrant Workers in Taiwan

Temporary labor migration is closely connected to the development of emerging countries, especially in Asia. The decreasing costs of travel and communication open up new possibilities for employment and allow the migration of low-skilled workers. However, although these migrants are the driving force of development and economic growth, the receiving states accept foreign labor only under conditions that pull down working conditions and human rights. This attitude is strengthened by the temporary aspect of this modern form of migration, since short-term members of society are hardly perceived as such. This becomes especially evident when national borders also reflect ethnic divisions, as is common in Chinese and East Asian countries (Lan 2006: 57). In addition, the emerging economies of this area are so dependent on foreign workers that any legislation amendments regarding worker's rights are only implemented with delays (Athukorala/ Manning 1999: 2-3; Lenard 2014: 158, 160).

Before the living conditions and the activities performed by Indonesian workers in Taiwan are outlined in detail, the next subchapter outlines the history of migration from the viewpoint of Indonesia and Taiwan, respectively. It explains the social and economic processes that led to increased emigration from Indonesia as well as the changing immigration policy in Taiwan.

History of Indonesian Migration to Taiwan

The Asian 'four tigers' – Singapore, Hong Kong, South Korea, and Taiwan – are the major destinations for migrant workers from all over Southeast Asia (a large amount of migration flow is also directed towards Saudi Arabia). These economically successful nations had themselves transitioned from emigration to immigration societies through accelerated industrialization during the 1980s and 1990s (Lan 2006: 30).

The trend of Southeast Asian migration was highly influenced by the Asian financial crisis in 1997. It paralyzed the economic development as well as the availability of labor in Indonesia for a longer term than in Taiwan, one of the countries of faster industrial growth. The social safety net established by the Indonesian government, equipped with employment offices and subsidies, only reached 10-20 percent of its citizens. Since the economy and the labor market never completely recovered from the effects of the financial crisis, emigration remained at a high level (Athukorala/ Manning 1999: 4; Iguchi 2002: 24-25).

History of Indonesian Migration

Migration from Indonesia, especially from Java, to the neighboring Asian states is not a phenomenon of modern times. The Dutch colonial government already proposed the migration from Java to other areas of Indonesia and the neighboring

states in order to prevent overcrowding. Since 1825, Indonesian migrants traveled to Singapore in order to work as smallholders, in construction, or as plantation workers, and the majority of them originated from Java. In a second period, under Japanese rule, Indonesian forced laborers were settled to Singapore. In Malaysia, an unregulated immigration of Indonesians met the needs of the colonial construction plans of the British since 1911. Also in this case the majority of foreign laborers came from Java. Javanese migration only declined in the years following World War II, but rose again in the 1970s (Lan 2006: 48; Spaan 1994: 94-95, 98, 100).

Considerable changes appeared in the 1980s, when economic expansion initiated the development of migration policies and border controls. The Suharto regime was the first in Indonesia to regulate migration and establish supervisory authorities. This was a consequence of the oil boom in the 1980s, which brought many Indonesian workers, again mostly Javanese, to Saudi Arabia. In 1984, the Indonesian government established AKAN, the Centre for Overseas Employment², in order to regulate migration on a broader scale (Lenard 2014: 157; Lan 2006: 48; Spaan 1994: 105).

With the beginning of the Asian financial crisis, the labor market situation of Indonesia became more severe and forced even more citizens into emigration. In the time between 1997 and 1998, 5.1 million Indonesian citizens lost their employment and 4.2 million more had to stop working. Since there is no benefit system in Indonesia, being unemployed is a luxury and many individuals in precarious living and working situations were stuck between several employments and were not included in the statistics (Nazara 2001: 213).

Furthermore, employment in the informal sector also started to flourish. This situation was exacerbated through the influx of skilled workers into the informal sector, so that competition increased and pushed more and more unskilled workers, especially females, into precarious situations. In 2003, 2.7 million people were still registered as unemployed, and 64.2 million people were employed in the informal sector (Firdausy 2006: 141-142). While in 1996, in the time just before the crisis, 11.3 percent of the population were below the official poverty line, 19.6 percent of the Indonesian population were categorized under this definition in 2003 (Firdausy 2006: 140).

Thus as a response to this situation, emigration of unskilled workers was encouraged by the government in order to reduce the pressure on the labor market, while the deficit of skilled labor is reduced through immigration. Even though the Indonesian government not only endorses the travel of these women, but positively encourages it, the emigration of young, mainly unmarried women is accompanied by a strong discussion about the role of the women in the Indonesian

² “*Angkatan Kerja Antar Negeri*”, translated as „Labor Movement Between Countries“ by Lan and “Center for Overseas Employment” by Spaan (Lan 2006: 48; Spaan 1994: 105). I apply the translation of Spaan in order to pronounce the governmental background of this institution in its aim to regulate migration.

nation in terms of economy as well as in terms of religion and national pride (Lan 2006: 8; Nazara 2001: 214).

On several occasions, a temporary ban for women to leave the country for an overseas low-skilled occupation was discussed or even enacted in the parliament in order to prevent the threat to the women's respectability and moral status. Some of these bans have been the result of criminal incidents in the neighboring countries or Saudi Arabia, in which domestic workers appeared to be the victims or the perpetrators of violent acts. Female workers now need to be at least 22 years of age and require a letter of permission from their father or husband when they apply to an agency to work abroad. However, falsified, borrowed or stolen passports still allow a large number of young workers to emigrate to other Southeast Asian countries regardless of the newly installed laws (Lan 2006: 50, 52-53).

Besides this national discourse about women overseas, unemployed residents are seen as a threat to economy and are thus encouraged to leave the country. On this account, migrants have been labelled as "*pahlawan devisa*", 'foreign exchange heroes', since the beginning of the New Order and also by later presidents, as they constitute a major source of income for the national economy in the form of remittances (Kloppenborg/ Peters 2012: 535; Lan 2006: 48; Loveband 2009: 259).

History of Domestic Work in Taiwan

From the Taiwanese point of view, the migration of young women to the island of Taiwan as domestic workers has its origin in the Ching Dynasty. Young girls aged eight years or younger followed the housemothers to Taiwan as dowry slaves, called "Chaboukan" in the Hoklo³ language (Lan 2006: 5-6, 259). After the abolishment of slavery by the Japanese colonialists in the 1920s, the tradition was perpetuated in Taiwanese families by voluntary domestic workers from the rural areas, who mainly served the Taiwanese gentry or Japanese officials. These servants called 'shijonins' in Japanese were the first in Taiwan to be involved in housework and childcare as an occupation. The system extended with the growing prosperity and education of women in the cities, but declined again when domestic work came to be seen as an occupation of lower standard, unattractive for the growing group of well-educated females (Athukorala/ Manning 1999: 2; Lan 2006: 6). As in the construction or manufacturing sectors, domestic work started to become an unpopular occupation and faced labor deficits that were filled by a migrant work force (Lan 2006: 34).

The Taiwanese domestic workers of the present are mainly widows or middle-aged women called "*obasans*". These women prefer not to live in the house of their employers and are criticized as arrogant, authoritarian and difficult to deal with

³ The 'Hoklo' and the 'Hakka' are the two major ethnic groups of Taiwan which are often outlined as the 'original Taiwanese' who migrated from Fujien, Southern China to Taiwan in the 17th century. In contrast, the term 'Mainland Chinese' refers to those Chinese people who only arrived in Taiwan in 1949. 'Hoklo' and 'Hakka' also label the Chinese dialects of these groups (Lan 2003: 104; Lan 2006: 61).

as their behavior mirrors the demands of the unloved and authoritarian mothers-in-law, whose influence still is high in the patrilineal Chinese society (Lan 2006: 7, 96-97). The unwillingness to be assisted by the mothers-in-law in matters of childcare and household was repeated by many of the mothers Lan had interviewed in 2006. They described a conflict between the contradictory expectations of fulfilling the social role of a caring wife and mother on the one side and working for a second income in addition to their husband's in order to maintain middle class status on the other side (Lan 2006: 9, 35).

The high employment rate of females was the result of the economic development process which started in Taiwan in the 1950s and 1960s. Taiwan was the first developing country that employed significant numbers of women in order to respond to the needs of the newly emerged export-oriented economy. Even though the real wages grew rapidly in the 1960s, the gender wage differentials were still large, so that the employment of females had been a solution for many struggling companies since the 1970s (Athukorala/ Manning 1999: 58, 74, 77-78; Lan 2006: 35).

In the 1990s, general labor shortages in all growing industries appeared as the result of a population decline that may be explained by the increased schooling of women and rising incomes. The additional difficulties to recruit young people for the less desirable blue-collar sectors led to the recruitment of foreign workers from other Asian countries (Athukorala/ Manning 1999: 80-82).

Occasional migrants were already present on the island since the 1970s, and in significant numbers since the 1980s, when they exceeded 50,000 (Lan 2003: 101; Lan 2006: 39). The majority of these were Malaysian males working in the construction sector; Indonesians made up only eleven percent of migrants in 1990 (Athukorala/ Manning 1999: 85). Female foreign workers were already hired as maids and waitresses then, since at this time, *obasans* were hard to find, for the very same reasons that the younger generation preferred to distance themselves from 3D (dirty, dangerous, and demeaning) occupations. Furthermore, live-in migrants came closer to the ideal of an obedient and subordinate caretaker (Lan 2006: 34-35).

The first governmental regulation of immigration took place when the Council for Labor Affairs (CLA) legalized foreign construction workers in October 1989 in order to meet the labor demands of several national construction projects (Athukorala/ Manning 1999: 86; Lan 2006: 33; Loveband 2004: 337). It adapted a quota control and point system from Hong Kong and Singapore, which had opened their borders some decades earlier, in order to regulate the number of migrants as well as their distribution (Lan 2006: 34-36). Only in 1992, the fundamental and durable legalization of immigrants was established through the implementation of the Employment Service Law, which also allowed the first work permits to be issued to domestic caretakers (Athukorala/ Manning 1999: 86-87, 99; Lan 2006: 8; Loveband 2004: 337). These contracts were only available to citizens of countries that signed bilateral agreements with Taiwan; 11,000 illegal migrants

from other countries where deported at the same time. A minimum wage was installed as well as training agencies in order to organize the replacement of native workers with foreign labor forces (Athukorala/ Manning 1999: 99; Lan 2003: 101).

In the time between 1992 and 1994, Taiwan experienced a large wave of immigration from the neighboring countries. The number of migrants was relatively stable at up to 250,000 foreign workers throughout the 1990s (Athukorala/ Manning 1999: 86). While in 1991, Indonesian workers numbered only 10,000 people, 90,000 Indonesians were listed in the statistics of 2001. The majority of them came from East Java and were employed in private households (Lan 2006: 49).

Today, Taiwan is heavily dependent on the labor force of foreign workers, since the population decrease is continuing and compounds the need for social care. More than half a million foreign workers working in Taiwanese productive industries and social welfare have been counted in August 2014; 223,000 of these are Indonesian, 176,000 of them are female, and nearly all of the latter, 167,000, are working as family nurses. Even though Taiwan is not the major destination of Indonesian migrant workers, it is still a highly appreciated destination since the minimum wage is higher than in most other Asian countries that are reliant upon migrant domestic work (Lan 2006: 51; Loveband 2004: 338; Mackenzie 2006: 226, 228).

Working Conditions of Migrants in Taiwan

Several researchers have already observed the varieties of exploitation that low-skilled workers from a range of Southeast-Asian countries may face while working in Taiwan. Work contracts are limited to three years, with the possibility of extension for three more years. They are excluded from the welfare programs for which they are mostly working, are banned from permanent visas or naturalization, and are prohibited from being joined by family members (Lan 2006: 9; Lenard 2014: 159-160; Loveband 2004: 338).

In addition, the naturalization ban is restricted to low-skilled workers only, who for example work in Taiwanese households, on fishing boats or in construction, and do not apply to so-called white collar workers, who can easily obtain naturalized status after some years of residence in Taiwan. Moreover, migrants are permitted to work solely in their prescribed kind of occupation, defined in the visa and the first contract, excluding them from professional advancement and the chance to apply for naturalization later. Thus, the short-term residence of the foreign workers characterizes their membership in society as minor and unequal from the start, which increases the potential for mistreatment and exploitation (Lan 2006: 9, 42, 108; Lenard 2014: 159-160).

However, the system of introducing Indonesian migrants into Taiwanese households, fishing boats, and construction sites is by now well-structured at the grassroots level. This goes hand in hand with a commercialization of the migrating

process, around which an “immigration industry” was established (Spaan 1994: 94). Kloppenburg and Peters claim that Indonesian migrant workers who are integrated into this process continuously belong to others without self-determination (Kloppenbug/ Peters 2012: 536). The recruiting of young – especially female – workers from Indonesian villages is organized by local sponsors who are mostly known to the families and are thus trusted to accompany the young women to the cities and overseas. These sponsors are often village heads, local businessmen, or religious leaders, and the parents are often involved in the decision-making. The women are mostly enticed to emigrate by the stories of returning workers, who often leave their bad experiences unmentioned, and by the money of former migrants who are able to establish big houses and gardens after returning. A photograph taken in East Java by Lan Pei-Chia (see figure 1) shows the obvious difference between the houses of former migrants compared to those of their neighbors (Firdausy 2006: 146-147; Lan 2006: 82, 193, 245-246).

When taken to Jakarta or Surabaya by the sponsors, were the majority of all agencies of Indonesia are located, the women have to stay in overcrowded dorms while participating in special training sessions that are supposed to prepare them for domestic activities such as household work and geriatric or children’s care (Lan 2006: 80). At the latest, the exploitation of the migrants starts within these training centers, where the females are forced to get boyish haircuts in order to prevent jealousy within of the employer’s household. Furthermore, even basic living conditions inside of the training centers are only available since a policy was established in 2003 after cases of abuse and mysterious deaths became publically known. As Lan reports, most of the migrants she observed in the period between 2002 and 2006 had still reported substandard living conditions without beds and sanitary facilities or the permission to leave the training center on free days. At the same time, the workers are characterized as ‘backward’ so that the agencies see the need to ‘civilize’ the prospective migrants. Thus, lectures about discipline, basic hygiene and table manners are included to the timetable (Lan 2006: 80-81, 83-84, 85, 244).

In fact, while this training is required to last between two and six month, most of the workers interviewed by myself stated that they only stayed in the training centers for a few weeks, and were transported to Taiwan as soon as an employer was found by the agency (partly due to the excessive demand in geriatric and child care). Nazara points out that some of the training centers provide no classes at all, but only a dorm in which to await departure (Nazara 2002: 221).

In general, the fees paid to the agencies by the migrants payments regularly exceed the governmental prescriptions, starting with the fee a migrant worker has to pay to be put into contact with a family or company overseas. Workers usually have to spend the salary they earned in the first twelve to eighteen months overseas in order to pay back their debts to the agency (Lan 2006: 51; Loveband 2004: 338).

Migrant workers in Taiwan are bound to a minimum wage that was last increased in 2007. The minimum wage is fixed and does not take double shifts into account.

The monthly wage for a foreign domestic caretakers thus amounts to NT\$15,840, compared to the average NT\$30,000–35,000 that a Taiwanese worker earns in a month (Athukorala 1999: 99; Loveband 2004: 338; Tierney 2008: 485). The paycheck of one of the workers observed by myself listed NT\$528 for one day of work, regardless of the actual working hours. Also, the total expenses for hiring and housing a migrant worker are lower than those of employing a Taiwanese national (Lan 2006: 54).

Even though the Employment Service Act in Taiwan regulates the rights and welfare of foreign workers through the Labor Standards Law, which is concerned with regulations such as the minimum wage and the maximum daily working hours, a lack of monitoring causes these policies to be ineffective: “Taiwan’s migrant labor policy can be characterized as a strange mix of strong intervention and weak regulation” (Lan 2006: 53). Furthermore, domestic workers employed in private homes are not protected by these laws (Lan 2003: 105-106; Loveband 2004: 338).

Regulations concerning foreign maids mostly follow the government’s desire to control the immigration of low-skilled laborers. A national quota restricts the number of annual newcomers. For this reason, families have to prove their requirement for private assistance in order to obtain the permission to hire a worker from overseas. Contracts that deal with the working conditions of domestic workers distinguish between ‘caretakers’ of severely ill or disabled persons and ‘helpers’, who are responsible for households with young children or old people. Families who require a domestic caretaker have to obtain a medical certificate made out by a doctor in order to demonstrate an actual need. The definitions in the contract therefore often remain meaningless, as falsified medical certificates allow Taiwanese families to employ one domestic worker for a range of exercises and tasks. Many of the workers have to care for old or ill persons and children while also being responsible for the household. They often experience long working hours and little time to sleep (Lan 2003: 101-102; Lan 2006: 36, 53; Loveband 2004: 342; Loveband 2009: 23).

Loveband has observed that many Indonesian females outside of Taipei are lent out to neighbors and friends. She documented the slang word “*yong ren*”, “use people”, that refers to migrant workers who are borrowed from another country and can thus be lent to others if required. Many Indonesians working as helpers in restaurants, schools, and kindergartens have to additionally care for a household with children or old people. For unknown reasons, Filipina maids have rarely been found to be in such a situation (Loveband 2004: 341-342).

My findings from interviews with domestic workers in this matter are consistent with the information other researchers obtained during fieldwork. While I have met only one Indonesian foreign worker who was employed in a restaurant in Taipei, some of the workers I interviewed were only allowed to leave the household every second Sunday, or only one day per month. In one case observed by myself, a domestic worker had to care for an old and mentally ill man and twin babies in

addition to household work in a violent environment with no vacation days. Because of the constant requirements of the people she took care of, the sleeping hours of the worker were reduced to two to four hours each night for several months. The severely reduced sleeping hours that some maids experience have also been recognized by Loveband (Loveband 2004: 342).

In the case I observed, the old man died and the worker's contract was terminated. The consequences of the work contract being terminated for whatever reason are far reaching, since the visas of low-skilled foreign workers end with the expiry of the contract. For domestic workers, visa and work contract will disappear together with the place to sleep, which leaves domestic workers homeless in the case of contract termination (Wickramasekara 2002: 38).

In this case, the informal possibilities of the immigration agencies are beneficial for the workers. The maid I interviewed was allowed to sleep in the house of the owner of an Indonesian restaurant known by the majority of the Indonesian workers until the agency, silenced by means of a special fee, brokered a new occupation. The ability of immigrant agencies to place illegal workers into a new employment was also observed by Loveband (Loveband 2004: 346).

Hence, it is common for domestic workers to be prevented from taking vacation days or to be bound by contract to work for weeks or months without vacation. Because of this, small opportunities to work outside of the employer's home are used by the migrants to meet with other maids from the neighborhood or to call their family via mobile phone. Events that make this possible are garbage collection or visits to parks with the elderly people that are cared for (Lan 2003: 121; Loveband 2004: 338).

Garbage collection takes place almost daily at the central intersections to which the garbage has to be brought. While waiting for the garbage trucks to arrive, domestic helpers are able to gather for some minutes, partly with the help of external arrangement. For some of the workers, these exceptions are the only way to enjoy some leisure time. Also, the various small parks in the city are mainly used by elderly people during the week, who get wheeled along the narrow paths by their migrant caretakers. Thus, foreign maids are additionally able to meet each other in these parks, which may expand the leisure time of the caretakers. Beside these exceptions, the working hours of domestic helpers often exceed those of other migrant wage earners very significantly (Lan 2003: 12).

Foreign workers who are not working as maids are mostly hired by factories, the construction industry, or the fishing sector. The majority of them are male, although a certain number of female laborers from overseas has also found employment in factories. (Firdausy 2006: 143). The domestic caretakers I interviewed preferred to work in households since the placement fee of the agencies for factory workers are the highest, while the minimum wage for this occupation is the same. However, factory workers are thought to have the best work conditions, with a full weekend off and dorms to dwell in. The exploitation

factory workers suffer therefore affects different aspects than that of the maids. The factory workers I met demonstrated a lack of safety training and protective clothing and thus suffered from burns and other injuries.

Workplaces that are less accessible to observation seem to be most likely to create an environment for exploitation and human trafficking. Domestic workers become victims of human trafficking mostly through cases in which the expected private household turns out to be a brothel. Next to this, the Indonesian workers as well as the students both identified work in the fishing industry as that occupation with the highest risk of exploitation and human trafficking. The young fishermen from Indonesia that I met personally on several small fishing cutters had to live on the boats for several years without vacation days and were not allowed to leave the boats even in the stormy season. During a working day of fourteen hours, the fishermen were able to pause and leave the boat only for a moment while the employer left in order to transport the fish to the nearby restaurants. According to the leader of those Indonesian students that are concerned with the worker's exploitation, a salary of only NT\$5000 per month is budgeted for a foreign fisherman, while in general national health insurance is not provided for them.

Additionally, compared to other occupations available to low-skilled workers from Southeast Asia in Taiwan, fishermen are the most likely to be forced to leave Taiwan without payment at the end of their work contract. On the day the visa expires, some employers abandon their workers at the airport while completely withholding the salary that was never paid. Although this practice is also known occur with foreign maids, fishermen seem to be most likely to be exploited using this method, as estimated by the Indonesian students.

But even if the workers have the opportunity to seek help or to report exploitation, many workers keep silent for several reasons. Firstly, most of the low-skilled migrants are not aware of the Taiwanese labor rights or the possibilities to seek legal help. The content of the National Labor Standards Law is not part of the curriculum in the training centers of Jakarta. This seems to be actually requested by the help-seeking households of Taiwan. Lan's interviews with private entrepreneurs exhibited that naivety and unawareness are explicitly desired, since they prefer to shape their domestic helpers along their personal needs (Lan 2006: 74).

Secondly, many migrants feel the need to exhibit their personal capacity as well as their loyalty towards the family of their employer in order to tackle the competition by foreign workers from other nations. This competition was created by the agencies, which sort the helpers from overseas according to suitability grounded in ethnic stereotypes. Based on this thinking, Indonesians are perceived as 'simple-minded' but 'loyal', 'slow' but 'obedient' and satisfied without days off. As Lan has found, local recruiters favor migrants from East and Central Java in particular, since these characteristics are especially attributed to them. Also, Indonesian workers are thought to be more accepting in general because of their Muslim background (Lan 2006: 76-77, 83; Loveband 2004: 339-340).

In comparison, Filipina maids are described as ‘well-educated’ and ‘autonomous’ as well as ‘difficult to manage’. These descriptions of Filipina workers refer to their English language abilities, since this often skews the hierarchy between employer and employee. Thus, Indonesians have been valued as more the suitable helpers for the household and the caretaking of the elderly, while Filipina migrants are recommended only to those families who wish to gain competence in the English language (Lan 2006: 77-78).

The application of national stereotypes is not restricted to workers in the social welfare sector. Foreign men also become the victims of prejudice. The most standard assumption about male foreign workers is their criminal inclination, which makes the Taiwanese general public afraid of them gathering in public places or of their flirtations with foreign maids (Lan 2003: 110; Lan 2006: 62, 66; Loveband 2009: 15). Men are also sorted into specific kinds of occupation by ethnic stereotypes. For example, Thai men are proposed for hard work in the construction of manufacturing sector, while Filipino men are appreciated for the more demanding jobs in the factories because of their command of the English language (Loveband 2004: 339; Tierney 2008: 486-487).

Lan and Loveband observed that foreign workers from different nations have also adopted these stereotypes when talking about each other. Lan explains this phenomenon with competition for labor as well as with “self-racialization”, by which the migrants try to marginalize other minority groups while also marginalizing themselves (Lan 2003: 112; Lan 2006: 92). Though I never witnessed such stereotyping to be present in the Indonesian workers, they seem to be well aware of the negative assumptions that Taiwanese people have about them. Furthermore, concerning the collective struggle for labor rights, the workers of different origin seem to unite at least for special events like the “International Migrant’s Day”.

Immigration agencies not only in Taiwan seem to promote foreign workers along ethnic lines in order to recommend a specific type of migrant to an appropriate occupation. The real reasons for this, as Lan has pointed out, are the different fees that are paid by immigrants from the various nations. For domestic labor in Taiwan, the placement fees Indonesian workers have to pay are twice as high as the fees paid by Filipina maids. Lan assumes that Indonesians are proposed as suitable domestic helpers or caretakers because of this reason (Lan 2003: 112).

The agency fees also constitute the third reason for immigrant wage earners to avoid conflicts with their employers, even in cases of severe exploitation. Since many of the low-skilled foreign workers are faced with a period of twelve to eighteen month to pay the agency fees, the risk of becoming jobless during this time discourages many workers from arguing or from seeking help (Lan 2006: 55).

A national problem that arises from this silenced exploitation is the high amount of runaway-cases that private households in particular suffer from. Separated from

equality and legal advice while imprisoned in the workplace, fleeing from the engaging family often appears to be the only solution to many foreign maids.

This is a topic discussed in Taiwanese media and politics since years. As Lan points out, the Taiwanese government makes use of the Southeast Asian foreign worker industry as a diplomatic tool, and the problem of the runaways is involved in that strategy. When in the recent years Indonesian maids were found to have the highest runaway rate compared to migrants from other nations, Indonesian migrants were banned from entry in 2002 for two years as a warning sign for the Indonesian government (Lan 2006: 40-41).

Some years earlier, Indonesian maids were less likely to run away from their employers than their Filipina counterparts. This again is explained with the ethnic stereotypes that the agencies have brought into the discourse. The autonomous and militant character that Filipina migrants are supposed to possess naturally was stated as the reason for their likeliness to escape from the household of the employer (Lan 2006: 79). The frequency of by Filipina runaways was verified by several statistics, until Indonesian runaways started to outnumber the Filipina ones, which led to the already mentioned bans (during which time the Vietnamese emerged as the group with the highest likeliness to flee from the workplace). Thus, it becomes apparent that the occupation as a domestic worker, rather than the nationality or ethnic 'character' of a maid, causes the employee to run away from the workplace (Lan 2003: 112-113; Lan 2006: 79-60).

In order to settle the management costs of these cases without accepting responsibility, the government established an "employer stabilization fee". This fee is calculated as two-month's salary of the domestic worker that the employer has to pay to the government as a kind of deposit. This fee is to be paid for a further two months even if the domestic worker runs away. Furthermore, employers with a high 'runaway-rate' are excluded from the foreign caretaker program (Lan 2003: 107-108; Lan 2006: 56, 266). From the side of the employers, "forced savings" on bank accounts which are accessible by the workers only at the end of their contract shall prevent migrant workers from running away. This "forced savings" became legal in 1998 and illegal again in 2002, while being constantly applied by the employers (Lan 2003: 108).

Independent of the laws installed to meet the interests of the government or the employers, the party with the most precarious insurance against exploitation and losses remains to workers themselves. As several informants told me, migrants often have to subscribe blank sheets of paper or contracts written in Chinese so that the content of the agreement stays to be unknown. Many contracts include a voluntary renunciation on holidays or paid overtime. A migrant worker who has become illegal for whatever reason is unable to claim his or her rights regarding ill-treatment or the non-payments of wages. Even those migrants who escaped human trafficking and forced prostitution will be imprisoned in a detention center until they are able to pay for a flight back to their home country (Loveband 2004: 342). On the Indonesian side, a Protection Fund was established in 1989 that

claimed to serve migrants who had been victims of exploitation during their overseas stays. Even though a large amount of money is still collected from every migrant worker who leaves the country through an official channel, no information is available about the money's final destination (Nazara 2002: 222).

As one of my informants has mentioned, private households that employ a caretaker or helper in Taiwan are now visited by a government representative within the first three months. The domestic worker interviewed said that this representative observes the working environment and talks to the worker in private in order to find out about possible rights violations. However, other migrant workers or written sources have never mentioned such visits. One explanation for this might be the high number of illegal migrants who are missing from state statistics or governmental observations. For many, illegal migration is advantageous as the procedure is less bureaucratic and the fees of the agencies are lower (Lan 2006: 52-53; Nazara 2002: 219-220; Spaan 1994: 104).

In their purpose to raise their own living standard at home, many migrants seem to be willing to tolerate the ill-treatment and exploitation that they are facing overseas. Several people interviewed by Loveband and also by myself have stated that long working hours and exploitation is acceptable as long as the salary gets paid (Loveband 2004: 342). In fact, although the minimum wage does not allow abundance within Taiwanese society, the "foreign revenue heroes" are able to reach prosperity after their return to Indonesia (Lan 2006: 127).

Additionally, during their vacation days, the workers collect a large number of photos from their enjoyable experiences in order to share them some years later with their friends and families at home. Since going abroad is an adventure not accessible to everyone in Indonesia or the Philippines, photos from experiences in foreign countries can open doors to social status in the home country (Lan 2006: 129-130). Thus, the only stories that are told about Southeast Asian migration in the sending countries are those of success and exploration, while the negative incidents mostly remain unmentioned. This is also true for those migrants who return home unpaid, as the shame felt over this experience often results in secrecy (Lan 2006: 128, 245).

However, those migrants who are able to meet and connect to each other during their vacation days have partly begun to establish non-governmental organizations in order to improve their living standards and working conditions, and not only in Taiwan.

The next chapter gives an overview of existent worker's associations in Taiwan, their goals and exercises. It shows the difficulty of keeping movements alive that are characterized by political weakness and shifting memberships. Nevertheless, it also exhibits advancements and successes that have been reached so far.

Indonesian Worker's Associations and Activities

The Social Associations established by the Indonesian workers in Taiwan seem to be a new phenomenon. When Lan observed domestic workers in Taiwan between 1999 and 2003, she estimated that 20 social institutions were concerned with the support of migrant workers. Furthermore, she found a small number of non-governmental organizations in the environment of local churches, which devoted themselves to the migrants from the Philippines. In comparison, Indonesian migrant workers gained obviously less institutional support:

"Indonesian workers have few affiliations with outside institutions offering legal assistance or counseling, unlike Filipina migrants who make contacts through local Catholic churches and church-based NGOs. The Manila Economic and Cultural Office [...] has also played a relatively active role in the protection of their overseas citizens compared to the overseas office of the Indonesian government in Taiwan" (Lan 2003: 113).

These conditions are explained by the large amount of Filipina migrants that arrived in Taiwan long before they were outnumbered by Indonesian workers. Additionally, Taiwanese social workers are more likely to speak English than Indonesian. As Loveband found out, some of the church-based organizations have implemented some Indonesian translators in order to reach the Indonesian maids as well. However, the majority of workers who have access to the assistance of non-governmental organizations still are from the Philippines, even though they have already been outnumbered by Indonesian laborers (Loveband 2009: 253).

In the meantime, Indonesian workers are supported by the Taipei Grand Mosque as well as by the "*Kantor Dagang dan Ekonomi Indonesia di Taipei*", the Indonesian Economic and Trade Office (IETO)⁴ in Taipei. However, as far as I found out, the link between the IETO and the workers is mainly facilitated through the Indonesian students. According to them, they have been asked by the IETO to mediate and connect the workers to the embassy in case of irregular incidents. However, from 2000 onwards the Indonesian migrants began to establish their own associations, mainly through the help of one national union, called the "Taiwan International Workers Association" (TIWA).

In general, TIWA remains to be the most powerful organization for the rights of foreign workers in Taiwan. It was established in 1999 by Taiwanese social workers and migrant workers and aims to improve the working conditions as well as the social status of migrant workers within Taiwanese society. On this account, it tries to establish relations between the foreign workers and the local community. Furthermore, it aspires to support the migrant laborers in the establishment of

⁴ Since Taiwan is not recognized as a sovereign state by the majority of the world's nations, the 'Kantor Dagang dan Ekonomi Indonesia di Taipei', translated as 'Indonesian Economic Trade Office' established in 1967, operates as an embassy in terms of the Indonesian migrants in Taiwan (Lan 2003: 113; Kantor Dagang dan Ekonomi Indonesia di Taipei, <http://www2.IETO-taipei.org/index.php/2014-08-11-03-58-09/sejarah-singkat>, accessed on 9 November 2014).

their own unions and networks in order to also improve the solidarity between workers of the different nations⁵.

At the end of her research in 2003, Lan was able to identify two migrant worker associations that had just emerged. One was established by the Filipina workers, called “*Kapulungan ng Samahang*” (KaSaPi), the other one was founded by Indonesians, “*Taiwan Indonesian Migrant Worker Association*” (TIMWA) (Lan 2006: 22, 274). Both have been established through the mediation and support of TIWA and are located in the same building⁶. During the fieldwork of Loveband between 2002 and 2004, both of these newly implemented groups were still characterized by a loose support structure and little political influence (Loveband 2009: 248). But while KaSaPi have been able to become influential through the organization of mass demonstrations in Taipei, TIMWA stayed to be weak and apparently have vanished before the beginning of my fieldwork in 2012.

By now, TIMWA was replaced by “*Ikatan Pekerja Indonesia di Taiwan*” (IPIT), the association that is valued the most by the Indonesian workers who I interviewed. At an event commemorating International Migrants Day that I attended in 2012, which was jointly organized by all of the migrant workers associations mentioned here, the applause of the audience was greatest when IPIT was numerated in one speech. Based on my insights, IPIT is the association that is mentioned first by Indonesian foreign workers when asked about non-governmental organizations in Taiwan.

IPIT was already founded in 2002 and was reactivated again in 2008, also with the help of TIWA. Its main goal is to connect Indonesian workers with each other and to inform them about their rights and duties during their stay in Taiwan⁷. On their webpage and in their classes, IPIT informs about the National Labor Standards Law and additional regulations that focus on domestic workers. IPIT is also popular for the offering of Chinese and English classes as well as computer courses. Even a music class is incorporated into the offered training, plus regular weekend and holiday trips⁸. Loveband points out that cultural events organized by the migrant labor movements are intended to weaken discrimination through the creation of positive images of Indonesian culture (Loveband 2009: 248).

Another feature included into the training prepared by IPIT deals not only with knowledge that is beneficial for residing in Taiwan, but is also concerned with the improvement of a prospective life in Indonesia. Classes that inform about freelance work and the establishing of businesses shall enable the migrant workers to improve their life continuously without being forced to revisit Taiwan after a few

⁵ Taiwan International Workers Association, <http://www.tiwa.org.tw/index.php?itemid=296&catid=1>, accessed on 19 December 2014.

⁶ Taiwan International Workers Association, <http://www.tiwa.org.tw/index.php?catid=7>, accessed on 19 December 2014.

⁷ Taiwan International Workers Association, <http://www.tiwa.org.tw/index.php?itemid=273&catid=18>, accessed on 13 December 2014.

⁸ Ikatan Pekerja Indonesia di Taiwan, <http://ipito8.wordpress.com/jadwal-kegiatan-ipit/>, accessed on 20 December 2014.

years when the profit earned there is expended. Through the competence of investing money into sustainable endeavors, the formerly unskilled workers can avoid further exploitative migration experiences. Regular workshops organized by IPIT that teach the migrants about the breeding and preparation of catfish as well as the cultivation of mushrooms and other vegetables aim to form the basis of this goal.

One further association that is worth mentioning is the “*Assosiasi Tenaga Kerja Indonsia*” (ATKI). It was originally established by Indonesian migrant workers in Hong Kong in 2001 and has been adopted by the workers in Taiwan and Macau some years later. The focus of this association is on public demonstrations that aim to bring an improvement of the working conditions and of the National Labor Standards Law. In addition, ATKI is also concerned with the assistance of Indonesian migrant workers who struggle with their conditions of employment, as well as with victims of natural disasters in Indonesia, for which occasional fundraisers have been organized⁹. Even though this association is smaller and is not as closely connected to the other unions as these are among themselves, ATKI still is one major point of contact for Indonesian workers in Taiwan.

In general, when attending the activities or lectures introduced by the migrant workers, the outer limits of the different associations are not always easy to define. Many of the events are organized by several unions at the same time, while their members often do not belong to more than just one of them. In addition to the members, the rooms are also shared between the associations just introduced, since TIWA, KaSaPi and IPIT are all located in the same building.

One general problem that all associations of short-term migrants have to deal with, regardless of whether their organizers are students or workers, is the regular replacement of nearly all members. Since the foreign laborers are bound to contracts and working visas that expire after six years at the latest, old activists leave and new ones have to be found at regular intervals. The only permanent Indonesian partakers of migrant associations in Taiwan are individual Taiwanese social workers or foreigners who have married into the main society.

When the successes and statistics of some workers associations were published at the International Migrants Day by Dave Chang, the President of “Migrante International Taiwan”, it became obvious that four fifths of the enlisted members of the majority of all unions are inactive¹⁰. The disappearance of TIMWA as well as the necessary reactivation of IPIT in 2008 are further examples of this obstacle. This fact exhibits the great flexibility that migrant associations of unskilled workers, who are excluded from permanent residence in Taiwan, have to muster in

⁹ Asosiasi Tenaga Kerja Indonesia, https://www.facebook.com/pages/ATKI-TAIWAN-Asosiasi-Tenaga-Kerja-Indonesia-/219145974768771?sk=info&tab=page_info, accessed on 20 December 2014.

¹⁰ “Migrante International Taiwan” is a Filipina Association established in 1996. Out of around 250 enlisted members, only 50 were mentioned to participate actively in the organized events. The statistics of other associations have been similar. Migrante International Taiwan, <http://migranteinternational.org/about/>, accessed on 21 December 2014.

order to obtain their capability to act. Lan adds that on this account, many migrant workers exclude themselves from participation, since the potential risk of inciting trouble with their own employer is often higher than the benefit achieved by the associations during their temporary stay (Lan 2006: 119-120). Thus, the continuing reactivation of members remains one of the most important exercises for every migrant association in Taiwan.

It might be on this account that networking is one of the activities mentioned by every union on their webpages or in interviews. One further reason for this is the high degree of unawareness on the side of newly arriving foreign workers. To many migrants, especially to those without vacation days or the permission to leave the workplace, the associations are completely unknown. Hence, the non-governmental associations attempt to reach these workers in particular in order to involve them in their activities and in their worker's rights awareness training¹¹.

Independent of the difficulties that the non-governmental associations of foreign workers in Taiwan are confronted with, the activities of these associations are not without effect. This became obvious when Dave Chang, the president of Migrante International Taiwan already mentioned above, listed the achievements that had been reached by the associations so far. As he described, the taxes that had to be paid by foreign workers were reduced from 20 percent to 6 percent through the pressure of migrant associations.

Additionally, the groups had been able to bring cases of human trafficking into the open that could be investigated by the police afterwards. Through efficient fundraising within their own group of prospering workers, some associations have been able to send sponsored foodstuffs and clothing to those parts of Indonesia that had been affected by natural disasters. Furthermore, Lan mentions that the compulsory pregnancy test, which threatened international maids with immediate deportation, was lifted after protests of Indonesian and Filipina associations in 2002 (Lan 2003: 106).

In 2009, the Council of Labor Affairs in Taiwan established a national hotline accessible at all times for all foreign workers who face struggles with their employer or have questions about their work contract. Since former hotlines had been more difficult to remember, the newly established number is "1955" (Huang 2009: 3). The Indonesian workers and their associations that I observed endeavored to share this information with other foreign workers and recognized it as effective and helpful. However, as with all options and rights implemented for the worker's needs, many of them are still unaware of this hotline, especially if their contact to other migrants is prevented through the absence of vacation days. However, the installation of this hotline indicates that the national pressure employed by the worker's associations for more than a decade has led to a greater consciousness about the migrant's working conditions within society and politics.

¹¹ Ikatan Pekerja Indonesia di Taiwan, <http://ipito8.wordpress.com/visi-dan-misi-ipit/>; Taiwan International Workers Association, <http://www.tiwa.org.tw/index.php?catid=7>, both accessed on 20 December 2014.

The government seems to accept the worker's need to be involved in Taiwanese society at least to a degree in which the benefits to the employers are not to be counterbalanced by the exploitation the foreign workers are suffering from.

While the activities of the Indonesian associations are mostly focused on Taiwan and the enforcement of the National Labor Standards Law, the newest movements also began to take into account the stories about the experiences that migrant workers make overseas that reach the Indonesian villages. As I was told during my research, an association called "UNIMIG" has just implemented awareness training for prospective migrant workers in Indonesian villages. The actual working conditions and the risks that accompany short-term migration to Taiwan and other East Asian countries shall be explained to those young people who wish to imitate the successful migration experiences of their neighbors. UNIMIG is also concerned with the continuing training of former migrants in Indonesia in order to assist them in the investment of the salary earned in Taiwan in order to prevent them from a continuing reliance on migration that threatens many foreign workers from poorer states (Lenard 2014: 159).

Through her interviews with many employers of domestic workers, Lan was able to document the views of the madams of foreign maids on worker's participation in non-governmental organizations. Apparently, as the employers favor domestic workers who are without external influence and are thus easily shaped according to the employer's personal needs, they mostly try to prevent social contacts between the workers and their fellow migrants. Some domestic workers are encouraged by their employers to choose another day than Sunday as a vacation day in order to distance the workers from each other to prevent the exchange of information about labor laws. Others pay overtime to their maids, who are thereby obliged to spend their leisure time at home (Lan 2003: 108-109; Lan 2006: 165).

Additionally, the activities of domestic workers in associations that are concerned with the labor rights of the foreign maids are rejected by the employers for understandable reasons, since the uninterrupted access to the help of a domestic worker who is not regulated by the prescribed working hours is an appreciated feature of the employer's daily life. Hence, employers interviewed by Lan stated their effort to prevent the Filipina workers from "be[ing] polluted in the church", referring less to the religious contents of the Mass but rather to the legal knowledge shared by the church-based associations (Lan 2003: 109-110, editor's note; Lan 2006: 165).

The meaning of religious institutions in the views of the foreign workers in Taiwan differs between the various places of origin. For Filipina workers, the mostly Presbyterian churches constitute the main access to information and legal help regarding their work and living conditions. In comparison, the organizations implemented by Indonesian workers have majorly been created independently of the mosques or any other kind of religious institution. In order to understand the worker's interest to stay somewhat distanced to Islam during their stay in Taiwan it is helpful to focus on the worker's intentions to leave Indonesia and to spend

their leisure time in a non-Muslim country. Thus, the next chapter deals with the lifestyle of the Indonesian workers in Taiwan and the relevance of religion during their abidance.

The Relevance of Religion in the Lifestyle of the Workers

The Indonesian workers in Taiwan neither reject Islam nor claim not to be religious. In fact, I was able to identify a group of twenty workers spending their Sunday afternoon in the Taipei Grand Mosque in order to perform Arabic prayers. As I was informed, this group usually consists of less than twenty members and meets irregularly in the mosque in order to pray together. Even though this was the only religious activity organized by Indonesian workers that I was able to observe and visitors may have been more numerous because of a marriage that was also performed on that day, the remaining Indonesians do not regret being Muslims. They belong to the large group of Indonesian nominal Muslims that assimilate themselves under the social rules of the Indonesian society without a greater interest or need for religious piousness. Instead, they seem to perceive Islam as a taken-for-granted part of their identity, and the desires the Indonesian foreign workers tend to follow during their leisure time while working overseas are focused on different ideas.

The lifestyle activities of the workers are observable only on Sundays in the great majority of cases. From my fieldwork, I only know about one domestic worker who was allowed to go out every afternoon, when the old couple that she had to care for would sleep. All other domestic workers are used to concentrating their leisure time and all the needs and wishes they plan to fulfil during it into one day, mostly Sunday (Lan 2003: 114).

From the worker's point of view, the foreign maid who dwells in the house of the employer and cares for the household and its members merely constitutes an acting role played by the migrants during the week. The Indonesian migrant women disconnect from their own character for this role, and changes dress and make-up as soon as they leave the house on Sundays, "just like Cinderella" (Lan 2006: 161).

The private space occupied by the helpers or caretakers during the week are invaded by some employers, who spy on the worker's belongings and phone bills in order to prevent the migrants from pregnancy or from running away (Lan 2003: 109-110). For the maids, the workplace constitutes an environment of exploitation and mistrust, in which migrants are perceived as uncivilized and uneducated and are forced to hide their real character, beauty and intelligence in order to prevent jealousy and other conflicts. In contrast, on Sunday the workers appreciate dressing in modern clothes, meeting with friends, buying consumer goods, and exchanging opinions about the experiences of the week. Usually, these days begin early in the morning and will end late in the evening, since many activities are gathered into this one day. On this account, Lan describes the Sunday activities

and dress of the foreign workers as a day of “carnivalization”. The utopian character of the Sunday activities leads many domestic workers to live a life from one Sunday to the next (Lan 2006: 168-169, 245).

The central meeting point of this ‘carnivalization’ procedure is the Taipei Railway Station, whose main hall is crowded with foreign workers from all over Southeast Asia on Sundays. As Lan points out, the irony of the foreign workers’ private lives lies in the fact that they have to occupy a public place in order to have a space of privacy that is not provided for them in the house of the employer. While doing this, they are mainly concentrated in marginalized underground spaces, like the numerous underground malls attached to the Taipei Railway Station. A municipal survey exhibited that ninety percent of Taiwanese passengers view the migrants in the Railway Station as a dangerous subculture, seen to be criminal and uncivilized¹² (Lan 2003: 119; Lan 2006: 188). Thus, plans have been made to relocate the meeting points for migrants for more than one decade, until society started to accept migrants as long as they gather in marginalized and underground public (Lan 2003: 119; Lan 2006: 62-64, 188).

The underground malls of the Taipei Railway Station host several Indonesian shops and one Indonesian restaurant that emerged as the meeting point of Indonesian workers on Sundays. In this restaurant, Indonesians are able to eat Indonesian food without struggling with chopsticks¹³ and can meet and find friends from their home country. The nearby shops offer Indonesian food, cosmetics, magazines, and clothes. Indonesians usually sit in small groups on the ground of the main hall and on the stairs of the different levels of the large building (see figures 2 and 3).

Lan describes this reinterpretation of foreign land as a “provisional home” the migrants establish for themselves (Lan 2006: 247). As Lan has observed, Filipina migrants also claim a public space for themselves in the direct vicinity of a Christian church that offers an English-language Mass on Sundays. The environment of this church changed more and more into a home for the Filipina migrants, so that it is mainly the Indonesian workers who gather at the Taipei Railway Station, while the Filipina workers spend their leisure time in the shops and restaurants of “Little Manila” or “Filipino town”, as the Taiwanese began to call the area around the church (Lan 2006: 114-115, 117).

The intense celebration of the rarely-available holidays is based on ideas that had persuaded not only the female Indonesians to seek overseas experience. Even

¹² Criminal activities of foreign workers in Taiwan are rare (0.08 percent among all migrant workers in 2003). They consist mainly of theft from the employer’s household. However, on a few occasions tensions between employers and domestic workers reached a point where employers were murdered. Male migrants are mainly considered to be violent robbers, while female foreign workers are rather associated with prostitution and the ill-treatment of the children they care for (Lan 2006: 65-66; 267).

¹³ Indonesians are used to eating with their hands, another feature associated with underdevelopment in the views of the general Taiwanese society. As soon as a Taiwanese costumer steps into the restaurant, which happens rarely enough, all Indonesians will pick up their chopsticks and drop them again in the very instant in which the customer leaves.

though the main reason for working abroad remains the economic situation that many Indonesians face at home, the freedom of a lifestyle removed from the expectations of family and the society are highly appreciated by many. The search for exploration and adventure was listed by many migrants as a reason to leave Indonesia and also the Philippines when asked by Lan and also by myself. This includes sexual liberation as well as material affluence through the availability of modern consumer goods, American and Korean fast food restaurants, and the visiting of local dancing clubs (Lan 2006: 128-129).

This is also true for married women with children. Working abroad as a foreign maid turns the taken-for-granted housewife into a wage earner with more freedom during her leisure time. Furthermore, visiting foreign countries increases their own status in Indonesia and also in the Philippines, so that photos and stories about the experiences made abroad complement the prestige earned with money during short-term migration (Lan 2006: 126-127, 129).

For this reasons, religion is not a point of focus during the overseas experience of the greater part of all migrants. Boredom and weariness had been the majority of all reactions I encountered when I asked about religion and the possibility to pray during work¹⁴. Thus, the attempts of the Indonesian students to bring Indonesian migrants closer to the activities in the mosques, as I will describe in detail in the next chapter, runs contrary to the wishes and ideas the Indonesian workers aim to fulfil in Taiwan and other destinations.

The Indonesian students in Taiwan neither criticize the fact that the workers meet at the Railway Stations, nor do they follow the criminalizing assumptions of the main society. Rather, they disapprove of the dress and lifestyle of the workers during their leisure time. The Sunday outfits of the workers seem to outbalance the need for attractiveness in order to conform to a self-image that cannot be fulfilled in the employer's house. Modest, unrevealing clothes are avoided when workers spend their Sunday evenings in the small dancing bars in the neighborhood of the Taipei Railway Station (Lan 2006: 117). Both are associated with main Chinese culture and do not fit the supposed piousness that especially Indonesian females should display when overseas. Thus, a part of the students' objections is concerned with the clothing styles of the workers in the Taipei Railway Station. In the meantime, in the workers' view the liberation that takes place is not associated with Islam – still a taken-for-granted part of their identity – but with the social expectations that rule the everyday life of a person beyond religious practices.

In order to comprehend the students' point of view and to describe the relationship between both groups of Indonesians in Taiwan, it is helpful to observe the backgrounds and living conditions of the Indonesian students. Thus, the next chapter deals with the origin of the Indonesian students, their religious and

¹⁴ The requirement to let Muslim laborers pray five times a day during work was prescribed by the government some years ago. However, this was unknown to the migrants I interviewed, who were not interested in claiming this right either way.

political tendencies and finally also with their social and religious activities that focus on the Indonesian workers.

4. Indonesian Students in Taiwan

Indonesian students in Taiwan are a social phenomenon that has never been observed before by social researchers to the best of my knowledge. As a major reason for this, one can assume the apparently homogeneity of the students and the workers vastly outnumbering them on the Island when seen in public, and also the fact that most students prefer to spend their leisure time in relatively private locations such as the campus, the mosque, or the home. This preference already gives an indication of the basic differences between the students and the workers, since private living quarters serve as a better environment for a life of religious piety.

But since the lifestyle of the students is not to be understood as retreat but rather as an active partaking and influencing of the life of Indonesians in Taiwan, the setting up of group-owned spaces and institutions implies a self-interpretation of the self that is worth to be demonstrated from the beginning.

History of Indonesian Students in Taiwan

Larger numbers of Indonesian students first appeared in Taiwan between 2000 and 2009, during a time in which the governments of Taiwan and Indonesia established several memoranda of cooperation between the national universities of both countries in order to extend the exchange of students and scientific knowledge¹⁵. According to the students, most of them arrived since then mainly from the urban areas of Surabaya and Jakarta, where the majority of all co-operations had been established. Most of these students are graduated members of the middle class and are supported by PhD and Master Degree scholarships of the Taiwanese government or the mostly privatized Taiwanese universities.

The first generations of Indonesian students in Taiwan were able to encounter each other only when studying at the same university, which was mainly the National Taiwan University of Science and Technology (NTUST) in Taipei. This university emerged as the most important university for Indonesians studying in Taiwan, since Indonesians are the largest group of foreign students studying at this university. As I was informed by the Director of International Student Affairs in NTUST, of around 10,000 students studying at NTUST at the beginning of 2014, 700 were international students, and 300 of these originated from Indonesia. In all of Taiwan there are currently approximately 1,000 students who originate from Indonesia.

The Indonesian students in Taiwan are aware of their accumulation at NTUST and to a certain degree recognize it at their center. In 2004, Indonesian students began to collect data on all Indonesian students registered at NTUST in order to establish

¹⁵ Taipei Economic and Trade Office in Jakarta, <http://www.roc-taiwan.org/ID/ct.asp?xItem=144651&CtNode=9323&mp=292&xp1=>, accessed on 16 December 2014.

an association called 'Indonesian Student Association' (ISA). While the name of the association changed over time to 'NTUST-ISA', the aim of uniting all Indonesian students studying at NTUST is still followed by the group¹⁶

The association established by Indonesian students at NTUST that is of highest importance here is the "Association of Islam and Science in Taiwan" (AIST)¹⁷. This organization started originally from a mailing list that appeared shortly after the collection of data about Indonesian students at NTUST, with the main distinction being that the focus of this organization is on Indonesian NTUST students who are of Muslim belief. The main ambition of the mailing list was to start a network of Muslim students in Taiwan in order to exchange information significant to Muslims, like the locations of mosques and the availability of halal food. This enterprise was extended in March 2006 with the implementation of the "Association of Islam and Science in Taiwan", an association of Muslim students not restricted to members of NTUST, but of all Indonesian Muslim students in Taiwan. The organization excels by having an organization structure that has placed a governmental-type net of responsibilities all over Taiwan. Every area of Taiwan was appointed a "governor" (as term chosen by the students themselves) who is responsible for the operation of the organization in the respective territory. In addition, the organization is divided in various divisions that address specific issues that are of further interest to the organization. Mainly, the organization aspires to deepen the religious belief of the Muslim community and to enable a life along Islamic guidelines in a country in which Muslims are a minority.

According to Ferdian, the president of this organization¹⁸, every Indonesian Muslim student who pursues studies in Taiwan automatically becomes a member of the organization, without being informed. The president is elected in an annual conference in March, as are the governors of the regional partitions of the group and the members of the cabinet. The divisions of the cabinet are dedicated mainly to religious, scientific, and social concerns (in this order), and partly also combine these realms.

Since most Indonesian students are enrolled at NTUST, it is understandable that the unofficial core of AIST lies in Taipei and at NTUST, from which the majority of cabinet members have been elected so far.

For this reason, it was also possible for the Indonesian Muslims students to initiate a discussion about the establishment of facilities that serve the specific needs of Muslim students at NTUST. After a period of discussion, the students achieved the

¹⁶ Indonesian Student Association, <http://ntust-isa.org/>, accessed on 16 November 2014.

¹⁷ I decided to change the name of this association because it is the group of students that has the strongest aim to influence the workers on a religious level and that I observed in closer detail. Furthermore, since the statements of single students that I included to this thesis have been made by members of this group, I intend to preserve their anonymity in this way.

¹⁸ Names are changed in order to guarantee my informants' privacy. As the president of the organization changes annually through election, it is worth mentioning that I interviewed the president who held his office between March 2012 and 2013.

establishment of a Muslim prayer room on campus as well as a special section for halal food in the university canteen in summer 2011¹⁹.

Ideas of Islam and the Nation

The tendency of Indonesians to establish associations and clubs was mentioned by the students themselves several times during my fieldwork. In fact, not only the students, but also the workers are characterized by an active participation in organizations recognizing their needs and interests, as already discussed in the previous chapter. However, the students' activity in such associations may originate from the religious, social, and political involvement of the two main *santri* organizations; Muhammadiyah and Nahdlatul Ulama. The idea of organized social welfare combined with Islamic teaching was adopted by the students together with the goal to advance the social, religious, and economic development and change in Indonesia in line with their own interests. However, the active participation of students in religious and social movements is not a new phenomenon.

Students have played a significant role in the 'Islamization'²⁰ process that Indonesia, especially Java, experienced since the 1970s and after the Suharto era. Even though the *santri* had existed already before this period of change, they started to express their ideas and to become active as a political movement to an extent that was never reached before that time. This chapter deals with the rise of the so-called "Campus Islam" as one result of the implementation of mass education and as a movement with the goal to achieve religious as well as political freedom. Furthermore, national discourse in public media during the past decade gives another insight into modern ideas about Islam as the characterizing basis of the Indonesian nation (Machmudi 2008: 21; Smith-Hefner 2007: 396; van Wichelen 2007: 95, 97).

The traditionalist as well as the modernist *santri* Islam gave birth to a range of Muslim organizations in addition to Muhammadiyah and *Nahdlatul Ulama* that participated in the political sphere, established schools, and partly became highly

¹⁹ Anita Hu from the Office of International Affairs at NTUST via e-mail conversation.

²⁰ The term "Islamization" was questioned by several scientists, since Islam was no new phenomenon in Indonesia at that time. The development of a new national consciousness about Islam in this time period was also labelled as "Islamic turn", "*santrinisation*" or "greening process" (Houben 2003: 62-63; van Wichelen 2007: 95).

influential in certain sectors of society (Machmudi 2008: 21). Since the *santri* Islam of Indonesia was already a movement that was initiated by a young generation that desired to distinguish itself from the values and political points of view of their parents, the emergence of the ‘new’ *santri* during the 1970s meant a further generation bringing its ideas into the national discourse (Machmudi 2008: 21, 23).

Beatty and Machmudi explain that this new generation had found their way to Islam in a different way than their parents, since the newly-arrived education available in ‘Western’ schools effected an alienation from the superstitious beliefs of the old and established a professional specialization of the young that could not unfold appropriately in the weak labor market. The vacuum of possibilities created in this way was filled by the young generation themselves through Islamization, as Beatty interprets it (Beatty 1999: 139; Machmudi 2008: 23).

From the points of view of Pringle and Houben, it was the increased availability of modern literature as well as Middle-Eastern and Western education itself that brought new ideas and values into the mind of the Indonesian youth. The teachings of the Middle East represented an ideal version of Islam to follow, while technical innovations from the West were likely to improve the life of Indonesians in urban and rural areas. The revivalist movement that started in the 1970s had thus brought a new Islamic consciousness to Indonesia (Houben 2003: 156, 162; Pringle 200: 55-56 Pringle 56): “At Gadjah Mada University in the late 1970s, there was a new spirit of Islamic activism that, rather than just emphasizing prayer and religious study, sought to de-privatize Islam by linking it to social and political transformation” (Smith-Hefner 2007: 396).

The political activism of the students that demanded democracy at the time of Suharto’s downfall was not only connected to Islamic thinking, but was even encouraged by the social repressions that Muslims had to deal with at that time. Especially the modernist Muslims were repressed heavily by Suharto, who feared the religious diversity of his country but also the support of the Reformist parties as a threat to his own power. He forced the Islamic parties to unify, ignoring their internal conflicts based on diverse points of view, and restricted their freedom to act. At the same time, “*Normalisasi Kehidupan Kampus*”, the ‘Normalization of Campus Life’ established in 1978 prohibited every kind of political activism of students (Machmudi 2008: 24-25, 108; Pringle 2010: 85; Smith-Hefner 2007: 396).

However, religious and cultural events were mostly ignored by state control. For this reason, the students turned to focus on apolitical activities and thus established several streams of 'cultural Islam' that were involved in social welfare, health and education programs, and the fight against the discrimination of religious minorities. Besides this, the 'Islamization' of the campuses was another important issue for these groups. The most popular among these cultural organizations was called 'Gerakan Tarbiyah', inspired by the Muslim Brotherhood of Egypt. Their political activities began only when national demonstrations, in which they participated, overthrew the Suharto-regime (Frealy/ Hooker/ White 2006: 47-49; Machmudi 2008: 25; Smith-Hefner 2007: 396).

Wearing the veil had already become a part of the activities on campus from the 1970s onwards and went on to become a symbol of moral purpose and a protection from violence at the time of the protests. While at the beginning of the 1970s, only three percent of all female students on campus wore a veil, the development of Islamization on campus increased the amount of veiled women on campus to more than sixty percent between 1999 and 2002 (Smith-Hefner 2007: 396-397; van Wichelen 2007: 390). This development was connected also to the women's increased access to education and the labor market, even though the veil was prohibited for some time during the Suharto era. At that time, veiled women even faced discrimination in public spaces and in the labor market as they were perceived as fanatics (Brenner 1998: 232-233; Smith-Hefner 2007: 395-397). After the restrictions on wearing the veil were abolished, a social pressure to be veiled emerged on campus to an extent that even female students who had never worn the veil before started to do so, at least on campus. This phenomenon was most evident in the time after Suharto (Smith-Hefner 2007: 395, 399).

Through the discrimination of modernist as well as traditionalist *santri* and the rise of cultural Islam, both streams began to merge and leave old disputes behind. A new generation called "*new santri*" distanced itself from organizations like *Nahdlatul Ulama* and Muhammadiyah while focusing on international influences instead. Eventually, some of these Muslims found the political aspect to be neglected within the organization's activism and thus formed the organization "Jema'ah Tarbiyah", which later was implemented as a political party. Jema'ah Tarbiyah is influenced mostly by the Sufi Islam of the Muslim Brotherhood of Egypt and follows the same scholars. The aim of this group was to deepen the understanding of Islam within society and to return to the original sources of

Islam; the Quran and the Hadith. The group appealed to the other Islamic organizations that suffered under the repressions of the New Order to distance themselves from political opposition by focusing on Islamic teaching instead (Machmudi 2008: 61-62).

Machmudi describes the inner structure of Jema'ah Tarbiyah as a strong cadre of elitist Muslims that demand a faultless character and lifestyle in order to remain members of this exclusive group (Machmudi 2008: 61-62). This air of superiority was apparently brought along to Taiwan by the students to a certain degree, who greatly appreciate the work of Jema'ah Tarbiyah. Their knowledge about Islam in combination with a generally high standard of education constitutes the greatest difference between the Indonesian students and the workers in Taiwan. These differences are especially fostered by the students, since a great deal of status can be gained through these attributes.

Most of the students that I have interviewed during my research are concerned with the modernist or *new santri* movement. The pureness of Islam is of great importance to them, and the Islamization of Indonesia is perceived as a process that was completed a long time ago. The latter view is also held by those students who originate from the eastern part of Indonesia and are more closely connected to traditional movements like Nahdlatul Ulama.

When asked about the *Slametan*, the students I interviewed claimed that this ritual should be conducted carefully and strictly along Islamic prescriptions only. In general, it was described as a ritual of ancient origin which is mainly conducted by *abangan* in rural Java or by followers of Hinduism in Bali. Interestingly, those students who were raised in villages or in the eastern part of Java were less critical or differentiating when talking about the *Slametan*. One of the students even described the *Slametan* as one version of prayer to Allah, even though the offerings made during the ritual were intended for the guests.

The Indonesian Muslim students who studied in Taiwan in 2012 and 2013 were influenced by the idea that Indonesia is a Muslim state and should thus host a Muslim society. Islamic thinking as well as a close connection to Allah is perceived as a natural part of every person that belongs to the fictional ethnic and religious group called "the Indonesians". In comparison, when asked about the Taiwanese converts that seem to increase the congregation in the Taipei Grand Mosque every month, it is assumed that their understanding of Islam and their relationship to

Allah could never become as close and deep as the religious consciousness of Indonesians. Since those Taiwanese who were born and raised as Muslims mostly practice a liberal form of Islam comparable to the Islamic influences of *abangan* or nominal Muslims in Indonesia²¹, they are generally perceived as an ethnic group without a connection to Allah that can only attempt to become a “true Muslim”, but will never reach this ideal.

Being Muslim thus is a characteristic that is attached only to those people who can prove their descent from an Islamic society. In another comparison, the children of Muslim migrants in Germany were assumed by the Indonesian students to pray deeply inside, even if they openly claim not to be religious, or at least that they should do so. For the very same reason, the idea shared by the Indonesian Muslim students is that all Indonesians, independent of their cultural background, are Muslims by birth and should behave as such. This is especially important during residence in a foreign country, since the common agreement on societal values should not be violated by those who have started to assimilate into other societies. This view is adopted by the members of the student association called AIST that I have talked to and constitutes one of their main goals that they attempt to reach through their activities aimed at the Indonesian community in Taiwan.

Student's Associations and Activities towards the Workers

Indonesian students with a significant relationship to the Indonesian workers are potentially those who are members of the national organization of Muslim students called AIST.

Since the focus of this association lies on the preservation and consolidation of the Indonesian Muslim community, the strengthening of the ties of the Islamic brotherhood as well as establishing connections with the Indonesian workers. Several divisions of the organization are dedicated to the laborers' working conditions, while others deal with scientific or religious knowledge.

Against this background, one division of AIST, the ‘Economic and Business Division’, serves the dissemination of scientific and entrepreneurial knowledge to Indonesian students and workers, supported in part also by the Indonesian embassy on Taiwan, the ‘Kantor Dagang dan Ekonomi Indonesia di Taipei’ (IETO).

²¹ Muslims came to Taiwan mostly in the form of refugees from Mainland China. The first Chinese Muslims already arrived in the seventeenth century, but their offspring soon turned to traditional Taiwanese/Chinese beliefs, while offering their ancestors *halal* food in remembrance of their religious prescriptions. Later, around 20,000 Muslims were part of those refugees that followed Shiang Kai-shek's democratic party to Taiwan in 1949 (Gowing 1975: 117-118).

In addition to an annual congress of natural science researchers from Indonesia organized by the division and the embassy, Indonesian PhD students are also allowed to teach Indonesian workers in an Open University program that enables Indonesian workers to achieve a Bachelor degree recognized by the Indonesian state while working overseas. Furthermore, the students offer an 'Online University' in which Chinese and Arabic language courses and courses on computer work, entrepreneurship, and leadership can be attended.

Another division is called "*departmen Syi'ar dan pelayanan masyarakat*", translated by the president as 'Public Service Division' and as 'Promotion and Public Service' by another member of the organization. This division focuses on the precarious working and living conditions of the workers and is closely linked to the Indonesian embassy, which encourages the engagement of the students of this topic. The division provides legal advice and advocacies for Indonesian migrants who experienced difficulties with their employers or fell into an illegal status and require legal support. Sent by the embassy and in cooperation with the Taipei Grand Mosque, the members of the Public Service Division visit the detention center of Taipei every two months in order to connect directly to Indonesian migrants who have been imprisoned for overstaying their visas for any reason.

From the point of view of those Indonesian students who are involved in helping migrant workers who fled from their workplace, it is the unawareness of laws and legal rights that strengthens the tendency to run away in cases of conflict. As one student has explained to me, the workers tend to avoid conflicts if they see themselves unable to discuss problems with their employer. Thus, the students campaign for an increasing education of the workers regarding labor rights and Taiwanese laws in order to prevent runaways or even suicide cases, which have also occurred among Indonesian and Filipina domestic workers.

In their work, the students seem to be financially supported by a Pakistani businessman who is concerned with the fate of the Indonesian workers. In cases of imprisonment, he has offered the financial means for a ticket to Indonesia, which is required in order to be released from the detention center for irregular migrants.

When running out of advice, the Indonesian students may contact the Indonesian Economic and Trade Office (IETO). Some of the cases that ended in Taiwanese Detention Centers seem to have been solved by the diplomatic work of the IETO in the recent past. The ability of the students to pass on cases to the IETO widens the scope of possible actions for the students. Furthermore, since a great number of workers are not aware about the activities of the IETO or do not dare to contact the embassy out of fear of being repatriated, the mediation of the students constitutes a crucial element in the increase of legal help available to Indonesian workers.

The Public Service Division of AIST offers, in addition to legal help, a range of the same lessons and workshops that are also provided by the workers' associations. In addition, Chinese and English lessons are supplemented with Arabic and Quran reading courses. Workshops for the planting of vegetables, the breeding of catfish,

and introductions for the investment in Dinar are provided by students who have studied or are still studying agriculture and have already established their own businesses in Indonesia. Even though the students are partly involved in the lectures given by the worker's associations like IPIT, also here mostly as teachers, those courses and workshops that are organized by the Indonesian students usually take place in the Taipei Grand Mosque (see figure 4).

The idea behind these lectures and workshops is adopted from the workers' associations at least in the first instance. In learning how to invest the salary earned in Taiwan in a business that will not disappear after a few years, the workers will be prevented from entering a continuing situation in which they have to leave Indonesia to be exploited in other countries. This is true for the Indonesian students who originate from the villages as well, as the student teacher of a mushroom workshop in the mosque explained to me. He is the son of peasants in East Java, but neither had been interested in finding a job in the urban areas of West Java, nor did he want to stay a jobseeker in the fields of his father. Instead, it was his desire to establish his own business, and this is also what he advises the Indonesian workers to do. He wants to identify himself as a "job creator" rather than a "jobseeker" and consults the workers in following this idea.

However, in addition to this, one further aim of the Indonesian students obviously is the maintenance or enforcement of Islam within the Indonesian community on Taiwan and prevents the adoption of the Taiwanese life style, which is not devaluated in general, but is perceived as being incompatible with Islam. This is why Arabic and Quran lectures are part of the courses offered to the Indonesian workers. This further interest of the students constitutes an important aspect of the charitable work of the Indonesian students in Taiwan. The next chapter therefore focuses on the religious values that influence the social work of the Indonesian students and describes the goals and methods that are used by the students.

Charitable Work and Religious Values

Religious aspects accompany the charitable work of the Indonesian students directed towards the workers without a clear separation from other activities. Since the great majority of all events organized by the Indonesian students at least in Taipei take place in the Taipei Grand Mosque, it is unclear whether Taiwanese Muslims are also involved in these activities. Thus, the following subchapter deals with the Taiwanese community of Muslims and their participation in Islamic activities, before the subsequent chapter focuses on the religious values that the Indonesian students attach to their charitable work and the ideas and goals on which their exercises are based.

Charitable Work of Taiwanese Muslims

Lan and Loveband are correct in stating that the Taiwanese Muslim community does not provide support or advice to the Indonesian workers until now. This passivity seems to go along with a general lack of interest in religious matters.

During my research, I rarely met Taiwanese Muslims in one of the two mosques in Taipei. They rarely seem to participate in public prayers, and the only Chinese visitors of events organized by the Indonesian students have been “*orang kina*”, Indonesians of Chinese origin. Thus, without the engagement of the Indonesian students who arrived in Taiwan only recently, there would be no advocacy by a religious institution for Indonesian migrants in general. In the meantime, the ignorance of the Taiwanese Muslim society may be explained by different reasons.

First, Muslims pose only a minority within Taiwanese society, and second, they are to a great extent nominal. Those Muslims who chose a pious life in close connection with the mosques used to regard religion as a private matter that is not responsible for social activism at all (Loveband 2009: 254).

Furthermore, the social status of the migrants prevents the Taiwanese Muslim community from any engagement in terms of the labor rights of the foreign workers. In Taiwan, Muslims are in general perceived as “strange” to a degree that many of them distance themselves from regular prayers or from the wearing of the veil outside of the mosque. Since the Indonesian migrants are foreigners and also Muslims, they are considered as doubly strange, and are thus ignored even inside of the mosque (Loveband 2009: 254-255).

However, as the students have told me several times, the mosques outside Taipei²² are mostly empty unless Indonesian migrants or students visit them. During the week, the only visitors of the Taipei Grand Mosque that I was able to meet have been Indonesian students or businessmen from Ghana or Pakistan. In addition, Indonesian migrants established their own mosque one year after my return in Taoyuan, an industrial city that hosts the majority of all male foreign workers (Lan 2003: 105).

Charitable and Religious Work of Indonesian Students

From the point of view of the students, the offering of Arabic and Quran courses in the mosques is regarded as just as beneficial to the Indonesian workers as Chinese lectures and legal advice. The idea behind this is that it enables assimilation not only into Taiwanese society during the migration experience, but also into the Indonesian community upon their return. As one of the members of the Public Service Division of AIST explains:

²² There have been six mosques in Taiwan (Loveband 2009: 254), the seventh was installed in Taoyuan in 2013 with the direct help and influence of the Indonesian workers, as I was informed by the leader of AIST.

“[...] the important thing is, we have to encourage them in religion, because the situation in Indonesia and in Taiwan is very, very different. In Indonesia, it is not as free as here; it is not as free as in Taiwan. How to have an interaction between men and girls is different in Indonesia. So here, we have to encourage them to stay in line”

Furthermore, the leader of AIST agreed with this point of view in another interview:

“[...] we try to visit them in their base, so we like to come to them, because they don't come to us. And, by doing that, little by little, we can invite more workers to, again, understand about Islam, learn together about Islam again, and we can try to care about each other so that we don't differ too much from our way of life because, if we already have been through too much change it will be a little bit hard to come back.”

Thus, the students refer to the Indonesian society as a nation that does not offer the same possibilities of lifestyle as more secular societies like Taiwan. The assumption behind this is the taken-for-granted Islam on which Indonesian society is based. Even though this assumption is not completely without basis, as the former chapters have already illustrated, the degree to which Indonesian society conforms to one religious identity is much lower in reality than the Indonesian students seem to estimate. Thus, the students I interviewed suspected a decrease in religious piety rather than an originally nominal point of view or even the belief in another kind of religion.

Additionally, the workers' longing for liberation from the social and religious rules and duties imposed by family and society back home is only indirectly known to the students. They seem to only be aware of the lack of interest in religious matters, and explain this with a level of education, especially, but not solely, Islamic teaching. From the point of view of the students, the workers' desire to assimilate into the Taiwanese way of life is only a consequence of the experiences the workers make in Taiwan, and is not caused by the living conditions and societal expectations in Indonesia. It is the relatively secular urban environment of Taiwan that is perceived as a threat to the relationship between the Indonesian workers and Islam. Thus, attempts to lessen the foreign influence of Taiwanese society are made through collective gatherings in the Taipei Grand Mosque, as one member of the Public Service Division explains:

“[...] we are students so we have the Indonesian Student Associations that also provide us with the knowledge about how to continue to live religiously, how to find halal food, how to pray [...] but for the Indonesian workers, it is maybe because of the environment, one friend invites them to some club or another community [...] but we as an Indonesian Muslim Student's Association still try to encourage them to live religious. So, every Sunday, we have activities in the mosque, we invite all of the workers, that are free to come to the mosque, and we can learn our holy book together, and we can discuss about religion”.

Apparently, as one of the students has told me, some of the workers seem to appreciate the opportunity to learn how to read the Quran in Taiwan, since this was obviously not accessible to them in Indonesia. The small group of self-organized Quran readers I was able to identify in the mosque on Sundays also

demonstrate this. For the great majority of all Indonesian workers I met though, Islam never had been a part of their lifestyle before, and they were involved in other religious or secular thoughts, or the alienation from Islamic duties had been one of the reasons that shaped their motive to leave Indonesia.

Thus, there is a quiet inner conflict between these two groups who share the same origin but not the same idea about their origin. Furthermore, there are many other separating features between both communities that give grounds to conflicts and tend to weaken the effectiveness of the actually purposed charitable work.

The charitable work of the Indonesian students in Taiwan unavoidably centers on the differences between Indonesian students and workers, as their contrary lifestyles and expectations create a contrast in knowledge, power, and hierarchy. However, these contrasts do not place the students in a superior position in every aspect.

Even though the students possess a much greater amount of leisure time, it is the workers who make greater use of the possibilities the urban Taiwanese lifestyle may offer. While the workers are bound to household duties for the majority of the week, they feel an extraordinary need to oppose the directions of their employer and their families back home with new experiences and liberation on Sundays. In contrast, the students, confronted with a freedom that they have never experienced before, perceive a requirement to maintain the moral order they are familiar with from home, as the leader of AIST illustrated:

“[...] I think that, honestly, for me, or maybe for all students, they will feel that, when they live in a non-Muslim country, they need to learn more about Islam, about this way of life. But for the migrant workers, because of their low understanding and their low level of education, their faith or their understanding of Islam will decrease in Taiwan”

Thus, the different handling of leisure time goes along with the different goals and expectations the two groups associate with their stay in Taiwan. Liberation is one of the factors that make Indonesian workers leave for Taiwan, while the students appreciate their abroad experience in terms of career and reputation only. When the decision to study abroad was made, neither was contact with other cultures a matter of desire, and nor was Taiwan the favored destination for the Indonesian students I interviewed²³. By comparison, the workers possess a much greater familiarity with the Chinese language and are more integrated into the major society than the students. Thus, the differences in lifestyle between the Indonesian students and the workers in Taiwan are not merely the result of religious points of view.

In addition, apart from the workers' wish to participate in the Western lifestyle that the Taiwanese have adopted, they furthermore also possess the financial abilities to do so. While the students are excluded from any kinds of earnings

²³ The Indonesian students I interviewed favored America or Japan as their destinations. However, it is the scholarships programs offered by collaborating universities that decide eventually about their place of study.

beside scholarships, the workers have access to new technologies, Western clothing, and costly leisure activities. One related situation that was criticized by several students is the workers' use of the students' consulting services for other than the intended purposes. Apparently, some of the workers had visited the mosque solely for gaining advice about the functions of newly-bought mobile phones. Since the students are unable to invest in such modern technology, their anger about these incidents doubled because the workers' intentions were neither religious nor concerned with their labor rights.

The students also criticize the lack of independence of the workers in general, also when it concerns the negligence to prepare for the overseas experiences appropriately and the subsequent inability of many to solve problems with their employer without external help. However, the access to information is much easier for the students, who enjoy more freedom, a superior status in society, and a direct connection to the Indonesian Economic and Trade Office in Taipei.

Thus, the Indonesian students occupy a better social position in Taiwan and have access to a greater amount of information and the possibility of liberation, while the workers are better-equipped with financial possibilities as well as with cultural and language skills. Still, the Indonesian workers' advantages do not prevent their exploitation and abuse, as a lack of freedom accompanies the salary earned (which may even not always be paid).

Thus, the not always silent conflict between the two parties does not solely focus on religious aspects, even though religion constitutes the general difference between the two groups in terms of values, expectations, and hierarchy. The different levels of hierarchy inherent on the different aspects of life seem to outbalance the conflict without providing a solution to the continuing struggle. When asked about the students, most of the Indonesian workers I have talked to reacted annoyed or bored. They did not seem to share the value of common activities based on religious backgrounds. Some of them even stated that the support and assistance offered by the Indonesian students is not without effect but unnecessary, as the workers are already involved in their own associations and activities. However, the Indonesian workers tend to perceive or at least present their organizations as more useful and influential than they really are. The constant change of members means that the establishment of steady inner structures of the associations is repressed. Eventually, the threat of exploitation at work as well as the insufficient organization of their own associations is accepted more readily than the better-organized intervention of the students, which come with the condition of more influence than the Indonesian workers are willing to accept, especially in terms of religion.

In those few cases in which the Indonesian workers are involved in religious activities during their stay in Taipei, the amount of self-determination is high and the students are mostly reduced to participants rather than functioning as event leaders. The group that I was able to observe during my research was related to the traditionalist movement of *Nahdlatul Ulama*, the local unit of which was called

“*Pengurus Caban Istimewa Nahdlatul Ulama - Taiwan*”, the special administration office of *Nahdlatul Ulama* in Taiwan. This association aims to retain and broaden the Islamic self-identification within the Muslim community in Taiwan and caters especially for the Indonesian workers and students in Taiwan. In regular Quran readings organized by this group, the Indonesian workers are not only the recipients of information provided by the students, but are the organizers who are familiar with the Quran and the Arabic language. Also, this organization is responsible for the regular visits to the Detention Centre by the mosque in order to stay in contact with those Indonesian workers who became irregular migrants for specific reasons. Furthermore, general consulting and legal advice is offered by this group²⁴.

In summary, the associations and support offered by the Indonesian workers for their peers illustrates itself as a young phenomenon that requires further elaboration as well as an inner structure that is less reliant on the duration of stay of singular actors, but more stable in times of personnel changes. The extent of independence that the workers claim to have is not easy to reconcile with their factual need for external support and advice. The assistance offered by the Indonesian students is not rejected by the workers in general, but is criticized for the additional influence the students try to exert. Thus, the conflict based on the helpful but target-exceeding support offered by the students addresses the religious authority that the students claim for themselves. The workers neither criticize Islam nor the support of the students. It is the free choice of lifestyle that attracts the workers to experience an overseas stay in Taiwan as a form of religious liberation that is not intended to abolish religious values or practices.

²⁴ <https://pcinutaiwan.wordpress.com/program-kerja/>, accessed on January 08, 2015.

5. Analysis

First, the situation of the Indonesian migrant workers in Taiwan as well as their relationship to the Indonesian students allows conclusions about the effect of culture-specific aspects, in this case religion in particular, on international short-term migration. Second, the urging prescriptions of the students offer information about their basic assumptions about the Indonesian society and their common religious identity. Both conclusions exhibit that discourses and conflicts against the background of migration do not only have an impact on the host country, but also on the sending state. This seems to be the case also when the duration of individual stays is only temporary, as long as the migration stream itself is of longer consistence.

The System of Short-term Migration in Southeast Asia

The dependence on short-term migration is more severe for the receiving than for the sending states or the migrant workers. Short-term foreign workers may become a crucial part of the economic system, so that the temporary labor import changes into a permanent migration system. This reliance prevents the host nations from law changes towards improving the working conditions for migrant workers, since this could have a negative effect on the economic boom (Athukorala 1999: 3; Lenard 2014: 159-160).

From the point of view of the sending states, it is the foreign exchange imported by the migrant workers after their return that supports the economic recovery, especially in countries like Indonesia, which still suffer from the effects of the economic crisis. Furthermore, the overseas wage laborers reduce the number of unemployed citizens the nation has to deal with (Firdausy 2006: 148, Nazara 2002: 215).

In the meantime, the migrant workers are not only driven by poverty and joblessness, but also by the excitement of new experiences and the desire to gain access to the consumer goods and lifestyles of the technologized world. The living standard that can be achieved in the country of migration gives rise to new habits that are missed in the home country after returning. As Lan states, the restored assimilation into the religious values of the Indonesian society is perceived as easier by the foreign workers than the reintegration into the simplified living conditions in the rural areas of East Java (Lan 2006: 195).

As she points out, Taiwan represents only one stage of a “ladder of host countries” that is climbed by migrant workers in order to achieve economic prosperity (ibid: 196). Saudi Arabia allegorizes the first step on this ladder, while the money earned in this country is invested in the second step of the migration cycle, namely Malaysia and Singapore. These three destinations are favored by migrant workers with limited economic possibilities. Taiwan and Hong Kong frame the third step of

the ladder, while only few workers possess the financial ability to start their migration experiences in Taiwan. The final step, which in my experience is not all too often aspired or reached by the migrant workers, is Canada. This country can end the cycle of migration as migrant workers are allowed to enter every occupation after taking part in the domestic foreign worker program for twenty-four months, so that permanent immigration is possible (Libid: 195-196).

Since the agency fees rise together with the salary that is paid in the countries of the different stages, every stage constitutes a prerequisite for the further stage, unless the maids are able to obtain the sum required by the agency in a different way at home. This could also explain why the majority of all Indonesian migrant workers are still to be found in Saudi Arabia and Malaysia, while an increasing number of maids are able to pay the fees for Taiwanese agencies, so that their number on the island increases continuously. Although Canada was never mentioned as a prospective destination of the Indonesian workers I have talked to, it may be expected that more Indonesian maids will be able to reach this final step together with a general economic increase in the future.

Also, the often expressed plan to establish an own business in Indonesia after returning is almost never realized by the migrant workers, as Lan discovered. The living standards the migrants got used to in Taiwan are not easily retained by the average salary that is paid in Indonesia without taking further emigration into account. Thus, the newly achieved lifestyle becomes connected to permanent migration, through which further money as well as modern consumer goods are imported into the country of origin (Firdausy 2006: 152; Lan 2006: 193, 196-197).

However, one further aspect that goes along with permanent migration is the increasing alienation of the foreign workers from their family and home society. Even though Kloppenburg illustrates that Indonesian maids are often bound by the wishes of their families, the migration agencies and their employers, the liberated lifestyle that is available to the migrant workers on Sundays does not only separate the maids from the social role they have to play in the household during the week, but is also alienating them from the values and lifestyles of their home society (Kloppenbug 2012: 536; Lan 2006: 195, 197).

Thus, the concerns of the Indonesian students are not without cause, even though the disconnection of the workers from Islam is not as sharp as the students assume. The nominal relationship to Islam had already been the point of view of most migrant workers before their migration to Taiwan, so that a decrease of religiosity is not observable among the Indonesian wage earners.

On this account, a change of religious thinking within the Indonesian society because of the influence of returning migrants is less likely than the growth of societal desires for economic and lifestyle advances. The success of the home-comers encourages further villagers from the poorer areas of East Java to invest in their own migration plans. A possible change in religious values is dependent on the kinds of goods and activities that will be imported and reproduced by the

returning migrants. In any case, the fight of the *santri* against non-Islamic influences from within the Indonesian society now becomes redirected against further forces that influence the lifestyle of the population from outside the country because of the emergence of the Southeast Asian migration system.

Religion and Migration

The national discourse about the Indonesian society and migration is mainly enhanced not by the migrant workers themselves, but by the leading majorities. In the case of Taiwan, the students constitute the basis of ethical superiority, who bring along a particular set of ideas about the elements that define the Indonesian society as well as their own expectations and characterizations. The question of whether Indonesia contains a common national and religious identity is supplemented by the question if Islam is in fact the crucial aspect that binds the different social groups together.

As Pringle describes, the Javanese syncretism and the huge amount of religious tolerance on this island is grounded on the Hindu assumption that all religions belong to “one great spiritual stream” (Pringle 2010: 191). Even though diversity is not always experienced as a benefit, the majority of all Indonesian Muslims accept that Islam is practiced in many different ways in Java (ibid.: 192). However, the Indonesian students as observed in Taiwan belong to the special group of *santri* that aspires to assimilate into the Middle Eastern idea of Islam and aims that at least the Javanese society should desist from non-Islamic cosmologies. Some of the members of the student association even seem to believe that the process of purification of the Indonesian society is already completed.

The conflict between the Indonesian workers and the students arises from the fact that the Indonesian society is not as homogenous on a religious level as the students seem to assume or, at least, demand. Even though Islam exists as a taken-for-granted part in the religious minds of the large majority, it seems to be less unifying than the ceremony called *Slametan*, which presupposes not only tolerance but also enforces the active participation of society members of different religious backgrounds in one spiritual event. Thus, the very feature of Javanese culture that is more accepted than cherished by the *santri* students already effectuates the social harmony that is aspired to by the students. In addition, the *Slametan* does so without the requirement to call for religious conformity, leaving conflicts in terms of beliefs behind.

As Beatty exhibits, only a minority of the Javanese citizens follow the ideas of the modernist Muhammadiyah. In Indonesia, the modernist *santri* that are attached to this group usually keep their ideology private (Beatty 1999: 116, 121). In contrast, the social position of the *santri* students in Taiwan is really different. In Taiwan, the nominal and pious Muslims are in direct confrontation with each other, while the public discourse about the importance of Islam was transferred from Indonesia to this migration community in Taiwan by the students. Their

voice and influence is much stronger in Taiwan than it has ever been in Indonesia. Thus, this case study shows that developments within a migration community imply the opportunity to have effect on the home society. This seems also to be true for streams of short-term migration.

Beatty supposes that the younger generation of Java will take over the actual religious discourse in order to deal with traditional practices and beliefs on their own terms (Beatty 1999: 248). However, it seems as if the conflict between the two main tendencies of Muslims and non-Muslims will rather go on or become more threatening than to diminish by an increase of social harmony. While the educated urban upper class tries to involve advanced technologies into their religious approaches to life, the more rural unskilled working class tends to combine the Western influence of consumerism with the Western methods and ideas about the lifestyle that is connected to these new possibilities (Frealy 2006: 42, van Wichelen 2007: 95; Lan 2006: 245).

It seems as if the ideas of the Indonesian foreign workers regarding national religious developments are more likely to decentralize cosmological assumptions while focusing on the adoption of lifestyles and moralities that accompany modern technologies and consumption, without the need to exclude their nominal relation to Islam. The desires of the foreign workers to free themselves from the expectations and moralities of the Indonesian society are not directly referred to Islam, but to the demands for piousness that are raised in specific parts of Java. Furthermore, the Indonesian students in Taiwan fail to recognize that the search for liberation by the workers does not solely refer to the values of Indonesian society, but also to the repression the workers experience from of their Taiwanese employers.

When concerning the “ladder of host countries” that the workers climb during their different migration experiences, it becomes evident that Indonesian workers are not looking for liberation from Islam, but from the living conditions that they had to deal with in Indonesia. It is the desire for a progressive and modern lifestyle that persuades Indonesian workers to take part in the system of continuing short-term migration.

Appendices

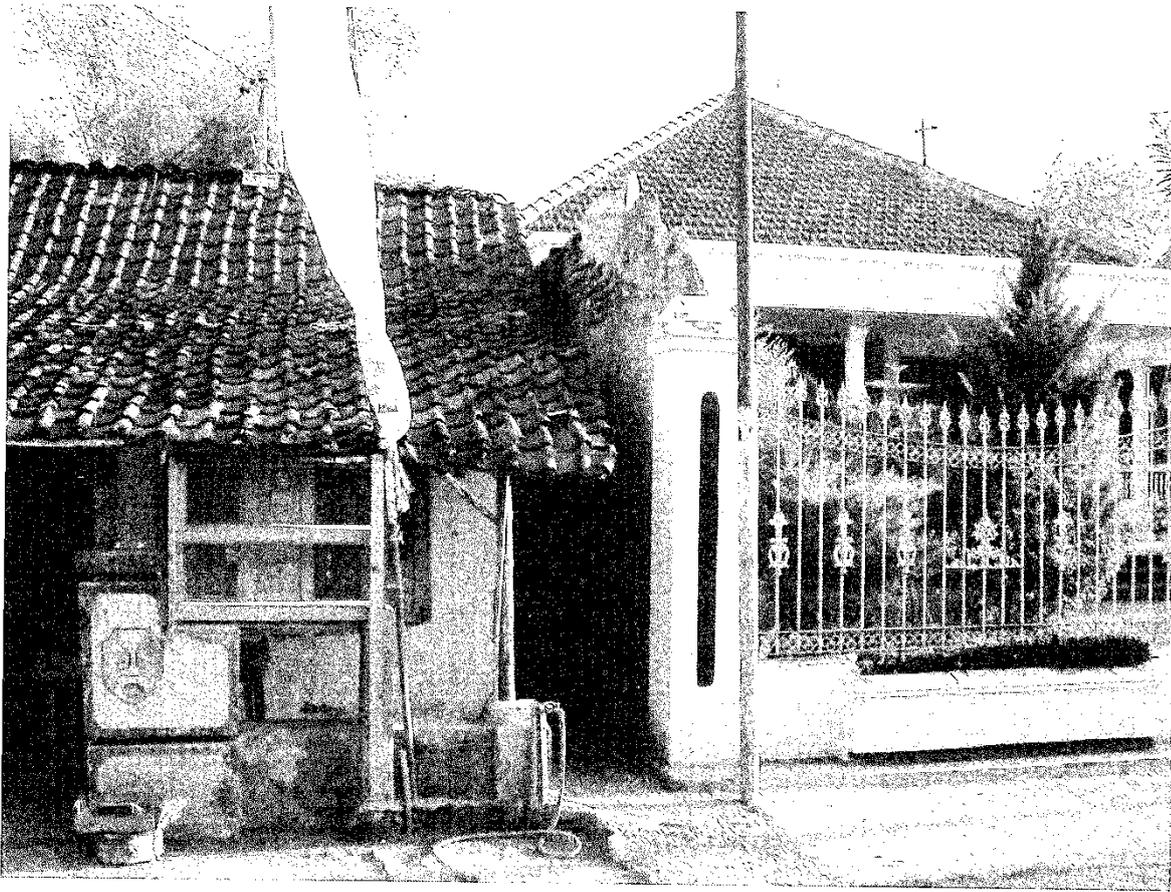


Figure 1: The renovated house of a migrant worker (on the right) next to the old house of a neighbor (Lan 2006: 131)



Figure 2: Migrants from different nations gather in the Taipei Railway Station on Sundays. Source: by author



Figure 3: Migrants from different nations gather in the Taipei Railway Station on Sundays. Source: by author



Figure 4: Lecture about mushroom planting in the social room of the Taipei Grand Mosque. Source: by author

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