Transnational religious movement
The Turkish Süleymanlı in Indonesia

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Introduction
Indonesia is a Muslim majority country saturated with Islamic movements. With a population of over 250 million, approximately 80% of whom are Muslim, Indonesia represents a huge market for promoters of Islamic piety, not only from within the region but also from across the globe. Indonesian graduates of Saudi Arabia’s universities and Al Azhar Universities of Egypt have established the link between the Middle East and Indonesia and extended religious influences from the Middle East (Abaza 1994; Azra 2004; Laffan 2011; Subhan 2012).

While global linkages between the Arab Middle East and Indonesia are well documented (see, for example, Bryner (2013); Machmudi (2008); Mandaville (2009); Zulkifi (2013), relatively little academic attention has been given to the Turkish-based movements established in Indonesia since the late 1990s and early 2000s. Turkish organizations show different characteristics from the previously mentioned scripturalist, Salafist, and Islamist transnational movements and newly salient groups. The newly arrived Turkish movements exhibit a more peaceful and accommodating approach to Islamic renewal and life in multi-religion societies (Wajdi 2018).

This chapter focuses on the Süleymanlıs, little known as a transnational movement and previously under-studied in Indonesia. The establishment of the Süleymanlı’s United Islamic Cultural Centre of Indonesia (UICCI) in Jakarta in 2005 signalled a widening of Turkish Muslim outreach to Indonesia. It is distinctive among the Turkish transnational organizations in that it maintains links with the Nakşibendi Sufi order as well as provides a transnational Islamic boarding system. This newcomer, with its distinct way of offering hizmet (religious services), enriches the diversity of Indonesian Islam.

Concepts
Although it focuses on the Indonesian branch of the Süleymanlı, the UICCI, this chapter seeks to understand that organization as part of a transnational movement. This ethnographic
study of the Turkish Süleymanlı movement in Indonesia seeks to contribute to the growing understanding of religious movements that take shape in the form of transnational organizations supported by electronic communications and travel. It also aims to understand the UICCI as a new development in global Islamic movements in the Indonesian context. Utilizing the framework of transnationalism, it will also draw on further concepts to explain the UICCI’s development and adaptation, including the theory of ‘opportunity spaces’ developed by Hakan Yavuz (2004), and that of ‘glocalization’ introduced by Roland Robertson (1995). The goals of this case study are thus to document the development of the UICCI in Indonesia and extend knowledge of Turkish transnational Islamic organizations by recognizing the UICCI in Indonesia as a distinctive element in the expanding array of transnational religious movements, and to contribute to a more comprehensive picture of transnational organizations in late modernity.

Context and state of the art

Religious communities are among the oldest transnational actors. They began centuries ago, with the proselytizing led by universal or ‘world’ religions, even before the formation of nation states. However, scholarly studies of transnational religious movements only became significant in the 1990s, when a considerable number of academic studies began to focus on religious groups as key participants in transnationalism (Rudolph 1997). Nowadays, many religious organizations are transnational. They are particularly evident in diasporic communities that have resulted from globalization, the collapse of empires, and major wars. Moreover, the improvement in communications, which accompanies and facilitates globalization, increases the ability of religious organizations to find new audiences, both home and abroad. Transnational religious movements are able to coordinate and integrate outposts across the world as never before and they are therefore likely to continue to develop and to play a significant role in global society (Schiller et al. 1992; Vertovec 2009).

An important development in the study of religion in society is the recognition that many religious movements are transnational, and transnational in a new way. This section presents a brief discussion of scholarly definitions of the term ‘transnationalism’ (Schiller et al. 1992; Vertovec 2009) and examines transnationalism in relation to religious movements, with particular emphasis on Muslim transnational organizations. It then reviews the literature on two other theoretical approaches: ‘opportunity space’ (Yavuz 2004) theory, and ‘glocalization’ (Robertson 1995) theory.

Transnationalism has a broad meaning, referring to multiple ties and interactions that link people and institutions across the borders of nation states (Jackson et al. 2004). Among its many definitions, transnationalism can be said to refer to ‘communities of outlook that include persons and organizations that share common world views, purposes, interests, and practices which they communicate and act across national borders and jurisdictions’ (Juergensmeyer 2005). In addition, Portes argues that ‘the concept of transnationalism provides new perspectives on contemporary migratory movements and offers hypotheses about the patterns of settlement and adaptation of immigrants in the new land’ (Portes 2001).

There are at least three reasons, aside from their universalistic framing, why world religions continue to be so active across community and national boundaries. First, they have a tendency toward missionary expansion and intensive penetration of social life. Second, world religions always contain some competitive impulse. Thus, according to Juergensmeyer (2003), ‘they are “religions of expansion” despite their geographical and cultural roots being
in one locality.’ In addition, all world religions have traditions of pilgrimage to the sites of their historical origins or to places associated with figures and events of significance to believers, such as Shalosh Regalim for Jews and Hajj for Muslims (Kitiarsa 2010).

The second major impetus to the study of transnational religion was post-World War II migration to North America and Western Europe. This was seen as a phenomenon of transnationalism (Roudometof 2005). Indeed, migration in the post-war era has been a major subject of transnationalism studies in general. However, transnationalism is not limited to the movements of migrants. It is a broad category that refers to a wide range of practices relating to the activities of migrants, their interactions with other people, and organizations linking their host lands and homelands (Portes et al. 2007; Vertovec 2009).

Although immigrants and refugees from predominantly Muslim countries have been migrating to and settling in Europe in substantial numbers since the end of World War II, their religious affiliations were not noted by scholars prior to the mid-1980s (Tiesler 2009). In the early post-World War II days, immigrants were seen in terms of their economic function (for example, as guest workers), their legal status (for example, as refugees), and above all, their ethnic-national category (as Turks, Pakistanis, Bangladeshis, Afghans, and so on). One reason for this is that they did not display many public signs of religiousness (Kettani 1996). Another reason is that the public and those academics in post-war and post-colonial Europe who discussed the topic of migrants did not see themselves as scholars of religious studies (Nielsen 1992).

This situation changed significantly after the mid-1980s when religious activities became more obvious among the diaspora communities. In addition, at that time scholars began to introduce new academic topics, such as ‘the new Islamic presence in Europe,’ ‘Muslims in Europe,’ and ‘Islam in the West,’ which appeared more frequently and so became recognized (Tiesler 2009). Immigrants’ religious affiliations came to be seen as a significant feature of their social adaptation.

The third advance in the study of transnationalism was in the 1990s, when the technical facilitators of globalization, such as electronic communication technology and rapid transportation, enabled diasporic communities to be more intensely involved with their countries of origin, and to develop ever more effective transnational networks supporting their religious groups (Brettell and Hollifield 2000; Vertovec 2009). This development helps to explain the contrast scholars have observed between older and younger or more recent migrants.

In summary, studies show that religious movements have long been transnational. Now, in the modern era of globalization, with sophisticated communications, transport, and bureaucratic structures, religions are manifesting this feature in new ways.

**Methods**

In this research, the detailed ethnographic study of Süleymani UICCI branches in Indonesia was complemented with a ‘micro-ethnographic’ (Bryman 2008) study of Süleymanlı branches in other parts of the world. This included the study of two Turkish branches in Istanbul (Yavuz Selim and Zeytinburnu), one in Frankfurt (Verband der Islamischen Kulturzentren e.V. Islam Kultur Merkezleri Birliği, Frankfurt Şubesi), and one in Melbourne (Meadow Heights). This approach proved particularly important, and indeed crucial, for understanding how the Süleymani have adapted in different countries. Turkey was chosen because it is the home of the Süleymani movement. Germany is home to the oldest and largest late twentieth-century Turkish diaspora community. Australia is home to a smaller,
and different, diaspora community within a multi-ethnic and multi-religious settler society. Both the German and Australian Süleymanlı movements played significant roles in the establishment of the Indonesian Süleymanlı. Finally, Indonesia is home to a Muslim majority population with a limited Turkish diaspora community.

**Substantive discussion**

Süleyman Hilmi Tunahan’s proselytizing (*dakwah*) began in 1924, when the early Kemalists implemented their secularist policy limiting religious expression. So, the early years of the S yeikh’s *dakwah* were difficult, as such activities were treated as ‘forbidden’ (T. *yasak*) and could be severely punished. At this time, however, according to Abi Zaitin Burnu, the S yeikh demonstrated his courage in reviving Islam in Turkey. Due to the security issue, Süleyman performed ‘hidden’ or ‘silent’ *dakwah*, teaching religion to Muslims by just going from one house to another. It is said that in the beginning he taught just one student, and that this student later brought two other students, and then the pattern continued until the students grew into a community (*jamaah*).

In 1959, the Süleymanlı movement first established branches outside Turkey. For the Süleymanlı this was a point of transition from a national to a transnational movement. According to Abi Zaitin Burnu, the first outreach of the Süleymanlı abroad was to Germany, where there was a large Turkish migrant community. Then followed outreach to Turkish migrant communities in the Netherlands and other European countries. This was followed, in the 1970s, by their expansion to the Balkan countries and, at about the same time, to the United States and Australia, where there were also Turkish migrants. Later in the 1990s Süleymanlı began a new kind of outreach: not to Turks living outside Turkey but to Muslims of any ethnic or national background in foreign countries. Thus, they started establishing schools in substantially Muslim areas of the former Soviet Union countries (Russia and Kazakhstan) and then in Africa and Asia after the turn of the century. The Süleymanlı trace this impetus to carry their religious service abroad to their S yeikh, who early on predicted that the *jamaah* he formed would become an international movement. Tunahan is said to have been aware of this possibility when he predicted: ‘You will be flown to other countries to give lectures.’

So, for the Süleymanlı, going overseas to perform *dakwah* is a *jihad*, and a part of the Islamic teaching they believe needs to be done. If one dies during the *hizmet*, then he dies as *syahid* (a martyr).

While religious motivation has clearly been important in driving the overseas expansion, so also have social factors. These include recognition of the market for religious services in non-Muslim majority countries where Turkish migrant workers have established substantial communities. Also, the Turkish Islamic revival movements that had moved into the public sphere since the 1970s and had grown rapidly in their home country, including the Süleymanlı and the Fethullah Gülen and the Nurcu movements, were in a position with newly developed management and business structures to extend themselves overseas.

Thus, the pull of the need for religious instruction in Muslim communities abroad and the ensuing outreach response by the movements reinforced pressures within them to formalize their organizational structures. The Süleymanlı have gone the farthest in developing hierarchical bureaucratic structures to coordinate their domestic and international activities.
Here, one could argue that the Süleymanlı, when they became transnational, extended their original aim (which was to preserve the Islamic religion in Turkey in the face of what they saw as the threat of secularism), to global Islamic revivalism and purification of the religion according to the Hanafi, Shafi, Hanbali, and Maliki schools of law.

In sum, by the 1970s, the Süleymanlı movement had changed from a small, mostly face-to-face jamaah into a formally constituted bureaucratic organization. This stage in the lifecycle of a social movement, defined by Blumer as ‘formalization’ (Blumer 1951), is characterized by multiple levels of organizational management and formally defined offices and areas of authority. This stage was achieved by the Süleymanlı movement after the death of its founder, under the direction of abimist Kemal Kacar. The movement is presently under the direction of abimist Arif Denizolgun. Both leaders have promoted awareness that a coordinated strategy is necessary across all of the Süleymanlı’s branches. Therefore, the Süleymanlı’s transnational management works through five bolge (regions) across the globe, and stratified levels of management within those regions. The Süleymanlı also select abis for management positions according to their skills and abilities to assume the responsibility of running the schools and businesses.

After successfully developing their Qur’an education institutions in Turkey, the Süleymanlı then developed their hizmet outside of Turkey. The following section gives examples of Süleymanlı branches in two countries with significant Turkish migrant communities. The need for religious education and leadership in these communities represents an ‘opportunity space’ for the organization (Yavuz 2004).

The Süleymanlı chose Germany as a suitable country in which to expand, largely because it is home to the world’s largest overseas Turkish diaspora community. The beginning of the organized labor migration from Turkey to Germany was in October 1961, when Turkey and Germany signed a bilateral agreement for the recruitment of Turkish workers to Germany. Before 1961, participation of Turkish workers in post-war labor migration to Western Europe had not—at least officially—taken place (Küçükcan 2004). A Central Recruitment Office was established in Istanbul in that year, and by the year’s end, 7,000 Turkish workers were living in Germany. In 1962 the first Turkish social and political organization in Germany, the Union of Turkish Workers, was established in the Cologne Region, evidencing the large-scale labor migration from Turkey to Western Europe that had already taken place.

The Süleymanlı in Germany are able to run their private boarding schools, teaching Turkish culture and Islamic studies. In Germany, the Süleymanlı claim that their schools work hand in hand with the German government, supporting a policy of integrating Turkish Muslims into German society. They claim that they meet the needs of Turkish Muslims in Germany for religious activities by providing imams and religious teachers. They say that Turkish Muslims therefore need not feel alienated from their adopted country, since their needs are being met by the Süleymanlı, who always encourage an excellent attitude to living in German society. It could be argued that by building the boarding schools in Germany the Süleymanlı have, in fact, helped Turkish immigrants integrate there, as they use these educational institutions not only to teach the religion of Islam and Turkish culture but also to help the students accept Germany as the country where they were born and now live and work. This is evidence of what Ersanilli and Saharso (2011) have argued: that an inclusive government policy has a positive impact on migrants’ settlement country identification.

While the Süleymanlı are free to operate their schools in Germany, they receive no support from the state other than the permit to run their schools. For this reason, they rely heavily on the Turkish diaspora community in Germany, or on their ‘brothers’ in Turkey.
for funds. Nonetheless, they have been able to build up their network of schools over the years through good management and by offering education.

Following a similar pattern to the one they adopted in Germany, the Süleymanlıs have spread their network as far afield as Australia. They began their *hizmet* there in 1971, in Melbourne, Victoria. Once again, they were able to meet the demand for religious education among Turks abroad—in this case Turks who had migrated to Australia or who were born in Australia but had Turkish ancestors.

Evidence of Turks moving to Australia from the island of Cyprus for work is noted in the 1940s; then during the Cyprus conflict, between 1963 and 1974, a number of Turks were forced to migrate to Australia (Yağmur and Van De Vijver 2012). Further, large numbers migrated to Australia after a bilateral agreement was signed between Turkey and Australia in 1967. According to the 2006 census, between 150,000 and 200,000 Turkish citizens were in Australia at that time, and between 40,000 and 60,000 Turkish Cypriots (Yağmur and Van De Vijver 2012). The largest numbers of Turks in Australia are in Melbourne, Sydney, and Wollongong. Australia’s migrant Turkish population, of approximately 90,000, is among the four largest, along with those of Germany (2.5 million), the Netherlands (400,000), and France (390,000) (Yağmur and Van De Vijver 2012).

When the Süleymanlıs chose to offer their *hizmet* in the form of Qur’anic education in Australia in 1971, it seemed obvious to begin in Melbourne, since that city was where the largest concentrations of Turkish immigrants were to be found. The Süleymanlı then set up another branch in Auburn, NSW, where Turkish Muslims had established the Gallipoli Mosque, one of the largest mosques in the Sydney region.

I had the opportunity to visit the headquarters of the Australian Süleymanlı in Melbourne and speak with young abi there about the location of their boarding schools. So far, they have established schools in only two states, Victoria and New South Wales. In Victoria they have two boarding schools for male students and one for female students, and in New South Wales they have just one new school for male students, located in Auburn, NSW.

The Süleymanlı schools in Australia provide boarding facilities for their students so they can sleep and eat there as well as study and receive Islamic teaching just as other Süleymanlı students do in Turkey. During my visit to the Süleymanlı boarding school, Meadow Heights, I was able to witness first-hand what I had read on their website.

As in Germany, the Süleymanlı in Australia primarily offered their *hizmet* to Turkish communities. When I visited the Australian Süleymanlı’s headquarters at Meadow Heights boarding school in Melbourne, I could see that all the *abis* and students were Turkish or had a Turkish background. Although the abi who accompanied me was born in Australia, he also had a Turkish background and began his service as a teacher in the school after completing the *tekamul* level in Turkey.

The above outline shows how the Süleymanlı initially aimed to expand their service beyond Turkey only to Muslim diaspora communities, responding to the significant demand from Turkish families living overseas for religious education. Although the Süleymanlı have become a transnational organization, their Turkish headquarters still coordinates and directs *hizmet* institutions globally.

The history of the Indonesian Süleymanlı dates back to 2004, when a young Süleymanlı member from Turkey, who had served in Africa, touched down in Jakarta. He was Abi Zoltan, the abi now running the UICCI. He arrived in Jakarta with limited knowledge of the Indonesian language, and no companions or relatives, but with a spirit of *hizmet* for serving the community in the way of Süleymanlı. With struggle and hard work, Abi Zoltan successfully established the first branch in Pejaten, South Jakarta. Later,
in 2007, a group of Turkish *abis* came to Indonesia to join in the development of Süleymanlı education there. They eventually took Süleymanlı education to all three major islands: Java, Kalimantan, and Sumatra.

In Turkey the Süleymanlı use the name ‘*Kuran kursu*’ to designate their schools, while in Australia they use the word ‘dormitory,’ and in Indonesia, they have come to use the word ‘*pesantren*.’ Thus, in addition to including the names of Indonesian sympathizers in their deed of foundation, the Süleymanlı in Indonesia have also given their schools the same name as the local traditionalist Islamic education institutions, *pesantren*. This shows that they have been aware of the local social environment and have been willing to adapt or adopt local terms that are suitable to the movement’s activities. This represents an instance of what has been called ‘glocalization’ in a transnational movement.

In Turkey, their country of origin, the Süleymanlı are known as providers of *Kuran kursu* (boarding school Islamic education), or more specifically, ‘*Süleymanlı Yurtlar*’ (Süleymanlı residence or dormitory). This latter name has been translated into Indonesian as ‘*Asrama Sulaimaniyah*’ (Süleymanlı dormitory) and has been used since the establishment of UICCI in Indonesia in 2005. According to Abi Bayram, when the *Süleymanlı Yurtlar* are referred to as ‘*asrama*’ in Turkey, the Turkish initially think that the Süleymanlı provide boarding with an Islamic education, including the Qur’an memorizing program (*tahfidz*) (one of the flagships of the Islamic movement). However, in the Indonesian context, the term ‘*asrama*’ is understood simply to mean residential accommodation for students of any sort.

Indonesia, as a Muslim majority country, has a long history of Islamic education. In terms of traditional Islamic education within a boarding school system, ‘*pesantren*’ is the term with which Indonesians are familiar. So, when the UICCI introduced the term ‘*asrama*,’ claiming to provide Islamic education, this did not meet with much success. Indonesian Muslims regard ‘*asrama*’ as merely referring to a boarding home or shelter, without the provision of a religious education and the opportunity to practice Islam on a daily basis as the term ‘*pesantren*’ suggests. This became an issue for the enrollment of prospective students into UICCI boarding schools. Taking this into account, the management of UICCI eventually changed the name ‘*asrama*’ to ‘*pesantren*.’ In fact, the Süleymanlı went even further to distinguish their specialist *pesantren* type by adding ‘*tahfidz*,’ the Qur’an memorization, to the name, thus showing that, as in Turkey, Qur’an memorization is the flagship program of the residential schools. The name Pondok Pesantren Tahfidz Rawamangun (Rawamangun [district] Qur’an Study Boarding School) is an obvious example of this strategy.

One could wonder why the Süleymanlı agreed to change a globally established name. In fact, they have always made great efforts to respect local terms and blend in locally. When they left Turkey to go to a country with an almost insignificant Turkish population, the Süleymanlı had to ‘sell’ themselves to local people. It would seem logical that they would decide to use the term ‘*pesantren*’ for their boarding school system in Indonesia; the UICCI is evidently willing to ‘glocalize’ in some respects within the local community, and this decision has worked well for it in Indonesia. Since 2009, the UICCI has been successful in gaining support from the Ministry of Religious Affairs and through this association has been able to establish branches in major cities of Indonesia.

**Conclusion**

This chapter has been mainly concerned with the Süleymanlı in Indonesia, who have approached non-Turkish Muslims to recruit them as members. They have shifted their orientation from Turkish diaspora Muslims only to any Muslim willing to accept their
service (hizmet) or participating in it. This gives us clear evidence that one of the ideas of being transnational is changing to the new focus while at the same time holding the connection and maintaining the traditions of the origin country. This is one way that the Süleymanlı assert their branding as transnational Sufi movements (Milani et al. 2017). The Süleymanlı have made it possible by looking at Indonesia as a country with the biggest Muslim population. This is not only to address people who could accept their services but also those who would like to give support and contribute to the management of the Süleymanlı in general. Using their religious term, this expansion is inevitable as religious values and blessings (barakah) need to be shared with everyone, an idea that was once confirmed by their highest leader, Süleyman Hilmi Tunahan.

To make this expansion into reality, the Süleymanlı have made new opportunity spaces. The opportunity spaces are basically the avenues to promote social interaction as suggested by Yavuz. It refers to the ‘social sites and vehicles for activism and the dissemination of meaning, identity, and cultural codes’ (Yavuz 2004). These spaces are sites of social interaction that allow new possibilities for forming networks around shared meanings and enriching associational life. In the Indonesian context, the opportunity spaces take the form of the unique Islamic boarding school, which is free of charge for young Indonesian Muslims. This is proven to be attractive to Indonesian residents who not only accept the service but also are willing to give support and contribute to the development of the Turkish origin transnational organization.

In addition, the Süleymanlı have worked together with the Indonesian government to establish their branches and assist with their international programs. This is a new pattern as the transnational movement tends to distance itself from the state elsewhere. This support did not come from the very beginning of the establishment of the Süleymanlı in Indonesia in 2005. In fact, this positive attitude of the Indonesian government only took shape after the Süleymanlı glocalized themselves to fit into the Indonesian Islamic education system, instead of insisting on the Turkish model and conception. Glocalization (Giulianotti and Robertson 2007; Robertson 1995; Roudometof 2005) took shape by changing the name of the Turkish boarding school (T. yourt, I. asrama) into pesantren. This adoption of the local term while maintaining the advantage of global movement has resulted in gaining formal support from the Ministry of Religious Affairs. This also noted the changing attitude of the Süleymanlı because in their home country, they tried to distance themselves from the Turkish government. Furthermore, the Süleymanlı in Turkey even did not allow any involvement of its followers in politics as Syeikh Süleyman Hilmi Tunahan himself had a difficult experience with the government and politics during his time. Sufi teaching also exhorts the members of the Süleymanlı to maintain some distance from worldly matters such as politics. This attitude has shifted a lot among the Süleymanlı. Although the members of the Süleymanlı did not become involved directly in politics in Indonesia, their willingness to be closer to the government has signalled a shift. The challenge of the Süleymanlı in Indonesia to maintain distance from politics will be put to the test once the movement has gained considerable followers.

Further work might examine Süleymanlı organizations in other Muslim-majority regions that do not have a Turkish diaspora community, to identify other circumstances that have helped or limited the movement’s growth there. In general, there is a need for studies that provide a more complete picture of transnational Islamic movements. At present, studies of Islamic revivalist movements are interested in violence and capturing the state, as in the case of groups originating from Arabia, Central Asia, and South Asia. Further work could redress this imbalance. It would also allow for further theoretical refinement and best appreciation.

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of the cultural and political scope of transnational Islamic movements. This would provide a better understanding of transnational Islamic movements in the contemporary world.

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