Emplacement Processes of Syrian Refugees in the Context of Migration, Religion and Space

Asst. Prof. Hasan Ali Yılmaz | ORCID: 0000-0003-3105-6691| hayilmaz@sinop.edu.tr

Sinop University, Faculty of Theology, Sociology of Religion, Sinop, Türkiye

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Abstract

The article analyses the mass movement of Syrians caused by the 2011 protests and civil war. Turkey hosts millions because of its proximity and an open-door policy. Migration studies generally look at the issue from the host society's or state's perspective, using the concepts of adaptation and integration. This research uses the concept of "emplacement" as an analytic framework, focusing on the migrants/refugees' experiences to understand how religious resources function during the refugee resettlement process. The data for this study came from 20 articles in the TR Index on Syrian refugees and religion, using a qualitative method. The data was analyzed using content analysis. The research questions were: What is the role of spaces in the process of "emplacement" of refugees? And, what is the role of religious resources in transforming spaces? The study shows how refugees change spaces such as mosques, associations, and homes through religious resources in their new environment, but prejudicial attitudes and discrimination make the "emplacement" process harder. This article aims to contribute to the field of migration studies by highlighting the interplay between religious resources and the process of refugee "emplacement".

Keywords: Sociology of Religion, Migration, Refugee, Religion, Emplacement, Space

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Göç, Din ve Mekân Bağlamında Suriyeli Mültecilerin Yerleşme Süreçleri

Dr. Öğretim Üyesi Hasan Ali Yılmaz | ORCID: 0000-0003-3105-6691 | hayilmaz@sinop.edu.tr

Sinop Üniversitesi, İlahiyat Fakültesi, Din Sosyolojisi, Sinop, Türkiye

ROR ID: https://ror.org/05ptwtz25

Öz

Bu makale, 2011 yılında Suriye'de başlayan protestoların iç savaşa dönüşmesinin sonucunda milyonlarca Suriyelinin yerinden edilmesiyle ortaya çıkan göç olgusunu incelemektedir. Türkiye dini, kültürel ve coğrafi yakınlığı ve açık kapı politikası nedeniyle milyonlarca Suriyeli mülteciye ev sahipliği yapmaktadır. Genellikle göç çalışmaları konuya ev sahibi toplum veya devlet açısından bakarak uyum ve entegrasyon kavramlarını esas almaktadır. Bu araştırma ise analitik bir çerçeve olarak "yerleşme" kavramını kullanmaktadır. Bu, göçmen deneyimine odaklanarak göçmen merkezli bir yaklaşıma olanak tanımaktadır. Bu bağlamda mültecilerin yerleşme sürecinde mekânlara odaklanmak suretiyle dini kaynakların (kimlik, bilgi, ilişki ve pratik) nasıl bir işlev gördüğünü ve göçmenlerin yaşam deneyimlerini anlamak önem arz etmektedir. Araştırmanın verileri, Suriyeli mülteciler ile din konusuna odaklanan ve nitel yöntemle yürütülen TR Dizin indeksinde taranan 20 makalenin bulgular kısmından elde edilmiştir. Toplanan veriler içerik analizi yöntemiyle değerlendirilmiştir. Çalışmanın araştırma soruları şu şekildedir: Göçmenlerin "yerleşme" sürecinde mekanların rolü nedir? Mekanların dönüşümünde dini kaynakların işlevi nedir? Çalışma, göçmenlerin yeni ortamında dini kaynaklar (kimlik, bilgi, ilişkiler ve uygulamalar) aracılığıyla camiler, dernekler ve evler gibi mekanları dönüştürdüğünü ortaya koymaktadır. Ancak, ev sahibi toplumdaki önyargılı tutumlar ve mülteciler ve yaşanan ayrımcılık deneyimleri yerleşme sürecini zorlaştırmaktadır. Bu makale, mültecilerin "yerleşme" sürecinde dini kaynakların oynadığı önemli rolü vurgulayarak göç/mülteci çalışmaları alanına önemli bir teorik ve pratik katkı sağlamayı amaçlamaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Din Sosyolojisi, Göç, Din, Yerleşme, Mekân

Introduction

The Syrian civil war has caused millions of Syrians to flee the country, with Türkiye being a popular destination due to cultural and geographical similarities, and the government's open-door policy. In response to this influx, Türkiye has formally designated "Temporary Protection Status" to Syrian refugees, facilitating access to essential services. According to data from the Presidency of Migration Management in February 2025, the total number of Syrians under Temporary Protection in Türkiye is 2,838,292.[1] The rapid increase in the refugee population, along with the economic challenges since 2018, has caused anxiety and concern among the host population.[2] Social scientists are interested in the refugee situation from various perspectives, including psychology, economics, history, and Islamic law. This research examines the interplays between religion and the "emplacement" process of Syrian refugees. The study adds to the discussion in the field of migration and religion studies by suggesting "emplacement" as a holistic alternative to the traditional linear integration models. It addresses a notable gap in the literature by exploring how religion mediates identity, spatial belonging, and access to resources— dimensions that hasn't been explored much in the context of Turkish refugee communities.

Academic studies in fields such as Religious Education, the Psychology of Religion, and the Sociology of Religion have also explored this issue. A review of Turkish literature is vital to understanding knowledge, identifying gaps, applying ideas, and testing ideas. As Erdoğan says, "integration" studies of Syrian refugees provide the opportunity for new discussions, which are essential, too.[3]

Literature on migration and religion indicates that religion plays a significant role in helping refugees adapt to life in host societies. In this literature, "adaptation" is defined as mutual acceptance,[4] socialisation,[5] voluntary coexistence based on shared identity and respect.[6] An analysis of 20 articles on

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[1] T.C. İçişleri Bakanlığı Göç İdaresi Başkanlığı (GİB), "Geçici Koruma" (Erişim 03 Mart 2025).

[2] Murat Erdoğan, *Suriyeliler Barometresi: Suriyelilerle Uyum İçinde Yaşamın Çerçevesi* (İstanbul: Orion Kitabevi, 2020), 208.

[3] Erdoğan, *Suriyelilerle Uyum İçinde Yaşamın Çerçevesi*, 12.

[4] Muhammed Emin Şimşek, "Göçmenlerin Sosyo-Kültürel Uyumu ve Din Eğitimi", *Bingöl Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi Dergisi* 21 (2023), 149.

[5] Ramazan Akkır, "Din, Sosyalleşme ve Toplumsal Uyum: Suriyeli Mülteciler Örneği", *e-Şarkiyat İlmi Araştırmalar Dergisi* 11/2 (2019), 953.

[6] Erdoğan, *Suriyelilerle Uyum İçinde Yaşamın Çerçevesi*, 53.

religion's role in Syrian refugees' integration reveals two key themes. The first, *The Role of Religion in Integration and Adaptation*, highlights how religion fosters interaction, builds networks, and reduces prejudice, though linguistic, political, and religious differences can hinder integration.[7] The second, *Activities of Religious Institutions and Their Contributions to Adaptation*, explores how religious institutions support refugees.[8] For instance, Imam Hatip High Schools play a pivotal role in facilitating the "adaptation" of refugees by preserving their religious identities, offering education in a conservative environment, and addressing their need for religious education.[9] Nevertheless, it is noteworthy that sure researchers have also posited that the presence of linguistic, political, and religious differences can impede the process of "integration".[10] These findings offer a valuable resource for comprehending the role of religion in the "adaptation" process of Syrian refugees in Türkiye. This research expands the conventional concepts of "adaptation" and "integration" by introducing the idea of "emplacement", focusing on how refugees use religious resources and establish emotional, religious, and social ties with both their past and their new environment.

The study uses a qualitative methodology, employing a phenomenological design to examine experiences. Data were obtained from quotations in 20 articles scanned from 2011 in the TR Index journals and examining 'Syrian refugees and religion'. The data were analysed for the concepts of "emplacement" in relation to feelings of belonging, social relations, and discourses on space. The study seeks to answer the following research

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[7] Ayşe Şallı, "'Kriz'den 'Uyum'a Türkiye'deki Suriyeli Göçmenler Ve Sosyo-Kültürel Boyutları Bağlamında Din", *Bingöl Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi Dergisi* 19 (2022), 24; Hıdır Apak, "Suriyeli Göçmenlerin Kente Uyumları: Mardin Örneği", *Mukaddime* 5/2 (2014), 53; Yusuf Adıgüzel, *Göç Sosyolojisi* (Ankara: Nobel Yayınları, 2018); Osman Ülker - İbrahim Efe, "Göç Teolojisi: Kilis Örneğinde Dinin Toplumsal Kabule Etkisinin İncelenmes", *Ortadoğu Etütleri* 13/2 (2021), 255.

[8] Tim Jacoby vd., "Islam, the State and Türkiye's Syrian Refugees: The Vaiz of Bursa", *Journal of Refugee Studies* 32/2 (2019), 237-256; Erol Erkan, "Suriyeli Sığınmacıların Entegrasyonunda Dinî Grupların Rolü: Haznevî Tarikatı Örneği", *Gaziantep Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi* 22/3 (2023), 685.

[9] Yusuf Yaralıoğlu - Özcan Güngör, "Suriyeli Sığınmacılarda Yapısal Uyum, Dini Sosyalleşme Bağlamında Sosyolojik Bir Değerlendirme: Kilis Örneği", *Dini Araştırmalar* 23/57 (2020), 143; Nedim Öz, "Suriyeli Göçmen Ailelerin Çocukları İçin Çoğunlukla İmam Hatip Liseleri ve İmam Hatip Ortaokullarını Tercih Etme Sebepleri", *Kilis 7 Aralık Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi Dergisi* 9/2 (2022), 563.

[10] Ali Baltacı vd., "Suriyeli Sığınmacı Öğrencilerin Din Eğitimi Sorunları: Din Kültürü ve Ahlak Bilgisi Öğretmenleri Üzerine Nitel Bir Araştırma", *Darulfünun Ilahiyat* 30/2 (2019), 383-405; Mahmut Kaya, "Suriyeli Çocukların Eğitiminde Alternatif Eğitim Mekânları: Kurslar", *Gaziantep University Journal of Social Sciences* 21/3 (2022), 1667.

questions: What is the role of spaces in the 'emplacement' process of refugees? Also, it looks at how religious ideas (who we are, what we know, things we believe in, and how we act) can change places.

The study is to be organised in the following manner: firstly, a detailed discussion of the concept of "emplacement" will be presented, alongside the conceptual framework; secondly, the research design, data collection tools and analysis methods will be included in the method section; and finally, the data obtained regarding physical spaces such as associations, mosques and houses will be evaluated in the findings section. The discussion and conclusion sections will then present a comprehensive overview of the findings within the framework of the concept of "emplacement".

1. Conceptual Framework: Migrants/Refugees, Emplacement and Religion

Recent tech and transport advancements have made it easier for migrants to move around, enabling them to navigate different geographical, temporal, and societal spaces.[11] This has changed how they connect and integrate these spaces, challenging ideas about their mobility and sense of belonging. In this context, migrants are defined as "reflexive" actors who strive to achieve well-being in an uncertain environment, considering the past, the present situation, and the desired future.[12] While migrants are often nostalgic for a "mythologised" past and feel separated, they also want to emplace in a new environment.[13] Evaluating migrants' placement experiences exclusively in the present and within a limited geographical area is insufficient. To understand placement, consider how migrants create and redefine places across networks of power and people. Also, migrants' efforts to establish themselves and build networks in a particular place should be considered.[14] "Emplacement" can be defined by local and trans-local interactions and relations, cultural and religious resources (identity, knowledge, relations and practices) from home, and power conflicts with the host society. In

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[11] Datta Brickell - Ayona Datta (ed.), *Translocal Geographies Spaces, Places, Connections* (Farnham and Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2011), 18.

[12] Sarah Ann Tobin, "Self-Making in Exile: Moral Emplacement by Syrian Refugee Women in Jordan", *Journal of Religious Ethics* 48/4 (2020), 667.

[13] Amenda Wise, "You Would Not Know What's in There Would You? Homeliness And 'Foreign' Signs in Ashfield", *Translocal Geographies Spaces, Places, Connections*, ed. Katherine Brickell - Ayona Datta (Farnham: Ashgate, 2011), 106; Tobin, "Self-Making in Exile", 665.

[14] Nina Glick Schiller - Ayşe Çağlar, "Displacement, Emplacement and Migrant Newcomers: Rethinking Urban Sociabilities within Multiscalar Power", *Identities* 23 (2016), 21.

short, the relationships of the above elements are evaluated in this study of migrants.

In the context of "emplacement", migrants have been shown to transform the physical, social, and emotional fabric of their new environment through various interactions. In the context of emplacement, Glick-Schiller and Çağlar, three types of sociality: The first of these is "Proximal Sociality", which consists of the close relationships established with family, friends, and neighbours. The second type of this is "Workplace Sociality", which refers to the ties established with colleagues and employers. Finally, "Institutional Sociality" is based on interaction with people pursuing similar goals in institutions such as schools, mosques, and NGOs, indicating the potential for social networks to span multiple locations.[15] In the contemporary context, modern technology has significantly facilitated communication between source and destination regions, consequently resulting in a simultaneous impact on both locales.[16] In summary, local and trans-local interactions are critical in establishing a new life by enabling migrants to maintain their sense of belonging to their place of origin.

The migrants' religious resources can influence their "emplacement" process. Migrants embody their sense of origin and identity in the new place with the food, music, religious beliefs, and traditions they bring. For example, Arabic signs in migrant workplaces make a foreign place familiar.[17] These activities are influenced by prior experiences and reflect "desire" to 'be at home' in a novel environment.[18] For migrants, place-making practices blend the past and the future.[19] They help migrants cope with feelings and emotions, such as separation, longing, and sadness associated with displacement. These emotions are compounded by alienation, dislocation, and lack of belonging are experienced in the new environment.[20]

Furthermore, migrants' sense of belonging varies according to factors such as temporality and spatiality as they adapt to their new environment. Indeed,

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[15] Glick Schiller - Çağlar, "Displacement, Emplacement and Migrant Newcomers", 26-28.

[16] Wise, "Homeliness and 'foreign' Signs in Ashfield", 108.

[17] Hasan Ali Yılmaz, "Mekan Arayışından Mekan Kaybetme Kaygısına: Samsun Çiftlik Mahallesi Örneği", *Şehir, Toplum ve Kimlik*, ed. Musa Öztürk (Ankara: Bem-Bir-Sen, 2023), 217.

[18] Avtar Brah, *Cartographies of Diaspora: Contesting Identities* (London and New York: Routledge, 1996), 192; Anne-Marie Fortier, "Community, Belonging and Intimate Ethnicity", *Modern Italy* 11/1 (2006), 63-77.

[19] Ghassan Hage. "At Home in the Entrails of the West: Multiculturalism, Ethnic Food and Migrant Home-building'. *Home/World: Space, Community and Marginality in Sydney's West*. ed. Helen Grace vd. (Annandale: Pluto Press, 1997), 105; Svetlana Boym, "On Diasporic Intimacy: Ilya Kabakov's Installations and Immigrant Homes", *Critical Inquiry* 24/2 (1998), 516.

[20] Alison Blunt - Robin M. Dowling, *Home 2006* (London: Routledge, 2006).

the process of place-making is a social practice that is constantly reshaped through social relations and identities.[21] For instance, Arabic signs used by Syrian refugees in the workplace are perceived as an attempt to establish a sense of belonging to the host society. However, these signs can also cause tensions and questions about the nature of 'place'.[22] Discrimination, like being excluded and marginalised, can lead to feelings of insecurity and anxiety for migrants. However, in migration studies, these bad experiences are important parts of the "emplacement" process. The relationship between migrants and the host society is expected to develop over time.[23] The research also examines the discrimination Syrian refugees encounter due to their past. As discussed, the focus was on cultural elements that facilitate "emplacement", independent of the host society and state expectations. The discussion will be about establishing a place within the context of religion.

A body of research has been conducted on the role of religion in the "adaptation and integration" of Syrian refugees. The findings indicate that religious practices and spaces are important in the post-migration context.[24] It has been observed that Syrian refugees employ religious place-making practices to establish their own identity and create a sense of belonging in the host society.[25] Consequently, religion has been identified as a crucial factor in facilitating a connection with the past and fostering a sense of belonging in a new environment.

At this point, looking at Tweed's views would be appropriate. Tweed states that religious people use metaphors, narratives and rituals when creating space, crossing boundaries and mapping their lives.[26] In search of a definition of religion suitable for migration literature, Tweed defines religion as "confluences of organic-cultural flows that intensify joy and confront suffering by drawing on human and superhuman forces to make homes and cross boundaries."[27] According to this definition, religions have been shown to be effective in positioning migrants in new places. In this context, the spatial, mobile, and

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[21] Doreen Massey, *For Space* (London: Sage, 2008), 9.

[22] Yılmaz, "Mekan Arayışından Mekan Kaybetme Kaygısına, 217.

[23] Tobin, "Self-Making in Exile", 665.

[24] Erol Erkan, "Suriyeli Göçmenler ve Dini Hayat: Uyum, Karşılaşma, Benzeşme Gaziantep Örneği", *Dinbilimleri Akademik Araştırma Dergisi* 16/2 (2016), 87; Mehmet Ali Kirman - İlbey Dölek (Ankara: Astana Yayınları, 2020).

[25] Tobin, "Self-Making in Exile", 661

[26] Thomas A. Tweed, *Crossing and dwelling: A Theory of Religion* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006), 20.

[27] Tweed, *Crossing and Dwelling*, 54.

guiding elements of religion are given particular emphasis. Tweed, who considers the concept of space not as a static container but as a structure that can be produced, differentiated, and related, argues that spaces are kinetic, productive and interrelated. He also claims that religious sources position the religious within four basic time-spaces: body, home, homeland, and cosmos. The three types of boundary crossings that religions offer—terrestrial, physical, and cosmic—also explain how the religious operate within spatial and temporal contexts.[28] Tweed's approach can be summarized as follows: migrants establish new living spaces for themselves through religious practices, and they do so by crossing borders. This process is related to feelings and emotions. Within the framework of this approach, the present article will focus on examining how religion plays a role in refugees' space-building processes and what function it assumes in crossing borders. The next section will comprehensively explain the data collection tools, analysis process and study design employed in this research.

2. Methodology

The present article employs a qualitative methodology to investigate religion's impact on the "emplacement" process of Syrian refugees living in Türkiye. To deeply understand the experiences, perceptions, and feelings of refugees during the "emplacement" process, phenomenology research design was utilised from the qualitative methods framework. Phenomenon can be "in various forms such as events, experiences, perceptions, orientations, concepts, and situations".[29] Phenomenology is an approach that allows a phenomenon to be understood from the perspective of the individuals who experience it.[30]

Articles using interviews and observations analyse the religious experiences of refugees during the "emplacement" process. The data collection method is document review, which involves the systematic analysis of written materials that contain information about the phenomenon being investigated. This method is often used by historians, archaeologists, and social scientists facing financial, linguistic, or professional obstacles.[31]

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[28] Tweed, *Crossing and Dwelling*, 116-122.
[29] Ali Yıldırım - Hasan Şimşek, *Sosyal Bilimlerde Nitel Araştırma Yöntemleri* (Ankara: Seçkin, 2021), 66.
[30] John W. Creswell, *Qualitative Inquiry & Research Design Choosing Among Five Approaches* (London and New Delhi: Sage, 2007), 60.
[31] Yıldırım - Şimşek, *Sosyal Bilimlerde Nitel Araştırma Yöntemleri*, 190.

This study used literature in two ways. Firstly, relevant literature was used as a data source, and interview excerpts were analysed. Secondly, literature was used to reveal existing knowledge, identify gaps and clarify the research's purpose and questions. The selection of studies used various criteria, including interview and observation methods, the experiences of Syrian refugees, and an examination of religion in the "integration"/"adaptation" process. The search was conducted within TR Index, a database of relevant scientific articles. The 23 articles examined between 2011–25 covered education of religion, sociology of religion and psychology of religion. Rigorous data analysis identified 20 as suitable sources. The studies were chosen for using interview and observational methods, focusing on refugees' experiences, and examining the role of religion in the "integration"/"adaptation" process. This approach created a data set suitable for the research objectives and systematically examined the existing literature.

However, it should be noted that certain limitations two factors need to be considered. First, the absence of methods such as interviews and observations has made it difficult to thoroughly examine and understand the participants' experiences. Second, the inability to verify the findings by consulting the participants have limited the in-depth understanding of the phenomenon and raised questions about the validity and reliability of the research. The nature of phenomenological research is such that findings are interpretive and cannot be generalised or claimed as definitively accurate.[32]

Despite these limitations, the discussion section draws on the theoretical framework and relevant literature to provide a deeper analysis within the context of emplacement. The inclusion of direct quotes in the finding section enhances the transparency of the research and aims to ensure the reproducibility of the results.[33] These strategies were employed to increase the validity and reliability of the study.

The study used a content analysis method to describe the experiences of refugees. This approach integrates and classifies data. During the analysis process, the quotations were read until familiarity was gained, then the data were coded and classified. The themes that emerged from these codes were then created. Finally, the coded data were re-examined, and the themes were reviewed and re-classified.[34] In the study, the interplays between religion and

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[32] Yıldırım - Şimşek, *Sosyal Bilimlerde Nitel Araştırma Yöntemleri*, 264.
[33] Creswell, *Qualitative Inquiry & Research Design Choosing Among Five Approaches*, 207-209.
[34] Baltacı vd., "Suriyeli Sığınmacı Öğrencilerin Din Eğitimi Sorunları", 377-379.

"emplacement" process of refugees was analysed within the framework of the central theme of "emplacement" and the subthemes of "Association", "Mosque", and "Home/neighbourhood". These themes were presented by presenting the quotations about the experiences of refugees directly to the reader with a descriptive narrative. The overarching objective of this study was to make an original contribution to the extant literature by providing an in-depth understanding of the role of religion in the "emplacement" process of refugees.

3. Findings

3.1. Associations:

This section focuses on the role of associations, which can be considered as the initial step of emplacement process of Syrian refugees. An examination of the naming, activities of associations and the forms of interactions at the associations reveals that religion is a founding and meaning-producing element in these structures. Associations represent not only areas of solidarity for migrants, but also spaces in which religion facilitates the re-establishment of both individual and collective identities for migrants, as well as the creation of meaning in the face of the ruptures caused by the migratory experience. It is evident that the relationship between migrants and the memories they hold of their past, as well as their future aspirations, is embodied in the space of the association. This renders the association a space of belonging among refugees, in which migrants simultaneously experience a sense of belonging to both their origin and their new homeland. It can thus be concluded that an understanding of the religious identities, activities and memories of migrants is pivotal to an understanding of how associations enable refugees to establish themselves in the neighbourhood.

> When we first came to Kilis, we used to meet and chat in mosques. However, after a while, some members of the mosque congregations got uncomfortable with this. In Syria, the mosques were always open, so it was customary to meet there. As a result, we decided to establish associations. Respected Syrian teachers started giving lessons there. Some of these associations are named *Al-Fatih, Ikr-a, Salahuddin,* among others. In these associations, we, as Syrians, attend sermons (*sohbet*) on certain days of the week. I think there are 8 to10 such associations in Kilis. (E2, 56 Years, 10.02.2019).[35]

This excerpt explores the interactions between religion and space in migration by analysing how Syrian refugees form associations, their activities,

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[35] Yaralıoğlu - Güngör, "Suriyeli Sığınmacılarda Yapısal Uyum", 161.

and the naming of these associations. Despite local resistance, refugees initially gather in mosques, underscoring religion's importance in their emplacement. Tensions in religious spaces highlight potential conflicts, yet refugees' preference for such spaces reflects their need for belonging, identity expression, and cultural continuity.[36] With numerous associations, the vibrant religious environment in Kilis shows refugees actively create meaningful spaces through practices and relationships. In conclusion, this quote reveals that Syrian refugees create meaningful spaces in their new "emplacements" through activities, practices and relationships in associations, and religion plays a central role in this process.

> We had a lodge in Aleppo, associated with our other known as *Haznevi*, and I was responsible for that lodge. Our association has been established here, and we continue our sermons using the same methods, guided by the principles of the same lodge and order. Through this association, I give my talks and lessons. Syrians come every week and it has become a wonderful environment for socialising and community building. (E15, 55 Years, 05.04.2019).[37]

The excerpt examines how religious practices and community structures aid refugees' "emplacement." Associations provide spaces for religious practice, social interaction, and cultural continuity, fostering a sense of belonging and identity. Refugees use familiar religious practices and artifacts to adapt. While weekly rituals create a spiritual environment that helps them cope with displacement trauma.[38] In other words, the relational dimension of space helps refugees cope with the trauma of displacement by providing religious continuity through religious practices and leaders. In Türkiye, legal restrictions on religious orders lead refugees to continue activities through associations, highlighting the influence of legal and social frameworks on their emplacement. Religion's temporal and spatial dimensions play a key role in this process, demonstrating the resilience of displaced religious communities.

> This calamity and migration we experienced have deepened our connection to the Quran and strengthened our faith in religion… I sometimes attend the sermons (*sohbet*) of the Süleymancılar community, located near my house. They are very close to where I live and, and have also helped us financially. We are grateful for their support (E10, 60 Years,04.02.2019).[39]

[36] Tweed, *Crossing and Dwelling*, 121.
[37] Yaralıoğlu - Güngör, "Suriyeli Sığınmacılarda Yapısal Uyum", 161.
[38] Fortier, "Community, Belonging and Intimate Ethnicity", 63
[39] Yaralıoğlu - Güngör, "Suriyeli Sığınmacılarda Yapısal Uyum", 158.

The challenges faced by refugees, including displacement, have led to an increase in religious commitment. Many refugees turn to religion for comfort and guidance when facing loss and uncertainty. Tobin notes that hardship is a natural part of migration and that refugees adapt their religion when engaging with the host society, influencing the emplacement process. Religion and religious institutions provide a spiritual refuge and a source of meaning in uncertain times.[40] The excerpt shows how religious groups like *Süleymancılar* are accessible and popular with refugees. This highlights the importance of associations for displaced people with limited resources and mobility. Participants are satisfied with the financial support provided by religious groups. Religious groups help people feel at home by providing social and religious ties.

> I have Turkish relatives… I go to sermons with them once a week, and I am very impressed. There are a few other *dhikr* groups that I participate in. (E13, Years 50, 02.02.2019).[41]

> When my mother passed away, I organized a dinner for her soul. I invited people from many [religious] congregations. (K9).[42]

The role of social relations, religious practices and religious groups in refugee "emplacement" in Türkiye is significant. The direction of this process is determined by religious communities, who act as a bridge for refugees to develop a sense of belonging to the host society.[43] For example, refugees invite local people to religious events, participate in practices such as sermons and dhikr, and express their "very impressed" by these experiences. This suggests that interactions with religious communities can foster positive emotional experiences, potentially aiding in the process of "emplacement" by offering a sense of routine and stability. These interactions can also help refugees cope with feelings of loneliness and alienation, potentially facilitating a more seamless integration into their new environment. Karagöz also points out that this process is compatible with fostering "place attachment," which involves emotional and social ties to a new place.[44] As can be seen, religious activities in associations help refugees to negotiate their identities between their origins and their latest "emplacement's and to develop a sense of belonging.

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[40] Tobin, "Self-Making in Exile", 665-667; Kirman, *Göç ve Din - Disiplinlerarası Bir Yaklaşım*, 18.

[41] Yaralıoğlu - Güngör, "Suriyeli Sığınmacılarda Yapısal Uyum", 156.

[42] Akkır, "Din, Sosyalleşme ve Toplumsal Uyum", 963.

[43] Erkan, "Suriyeli Sığınmacıların Entegrasyonunda Dinî Grupların Rolü", 695.

[44] Karagöz, *Emplacement Process of Syrians: The Case of Altındağ, Ankara*, 421.

3.2. Mosques

The extant literature on the subject reveals several common findings. Mosques have been found to facilitate community. "They always see me in the mosque, greet me, and talk to me. They often ask if I need anything and encourage me to reach out" (K8, Male, 36 Years, Idlib).[45] This reflects how mosques foster belonging and mutual aid. Positive relationships are further evident in local interactions, such as greetings, offers of help, and solidarity during crises. Another participant said, "The muezzin of the Şehzadebaşı Mosque is my friend. I go there, and we talk. People genuinely enjoy seeing Syrians. They visit our home, and we chat together."[46] Such interactions highlight how shared religious values strengthen bonds between refugees and the host community. The findings suggest that mosques function as communal support centres and as conduits for feelings of belonging that extend beyond the mosque to other spaces, such as people's homes. This underscores the role of religion in fostering "emplacement" and building bridges between groups.

> We have a proverb. 'Smile at me but don't give me food.' Just be cheerful to me. … Our Prophet said, 'A smile is charity.' Thank God, there are people here who smile at us. We go to the mosque; I don't know much Turkish but we still try to connect with the congregation… Sometimes, when the *imam* is busy, I lead the prayer. (K3, Male, 68 years, Aleppo).[47]

Statements highlight how mosques preserve religious values and cultural identity by fostering social interaction and community building. They are inclusive spaces where refugees can connect with others, even when there are language barriers. Sometimes they lead prayers without an imam, reflecting their social acceptance. Mosques facilitate positive relationships between refugees and the local population. Expressions such as "We have a proverb..." and "A smile is charity" reveal how religious values are upheld in new environments. These shared values enable mosques to act as bridges. Furthermore, mosques provide a sense of continuity and identity. One refugee stated, "I witnessed the spirit of Ramadan here... I feel Ramadan spiritually here. (K8)."[48] This statement suggests how mosques allow refugees to remember the spirit of Ramadan,

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[45] Ramazan Çınar - İhsan Çapcıoğlu, "Dinî-Sosyokültürel Yakınlığın Çatışma Dinamiklerine ve Toplumsal Uyum Sürecine Etkisi: Altındağ Olayları Örneği", *Ankara Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi Dergisi* 65/1 (2024), 22.

[46] Akkır, "Din, Sosyalleşme ve Toplumsal Uyum", 965.

[47] Çınar - Çapcıoğlu, "Dinî-Sosyokültürel Yakınlığın Çatışma Dinamiklerine ve Toplumsal Uyum Sürecine Etkisi", 21.

[48] Akkır, "Din, Sosyalleşme ve Toplumsal Uyum", 967.

creating a connection between their past memories of the *Ramadan* in Syria and their present experiences in Türkiye. Such comparisons demonstrate how refugees navigate their identities and sense of belonging across multiple spaces, blending past and present to forge a cohesive understanding of self in their new environment.[49]

It is understood that the mosque and the call to prayer (*ezan*) are practical factors in the decision of refugees to migrate to Turkey, to stay in Turkey and for their children to stay in Turkey. For example, One of the participants states that "We love Türkiye. We want our children to be brought up here. We stay here because it is a Muslim country. We hear the call to prayer here. (K3, Erkek, 68 years, Aleppo)."[50] This shows that standard religious practices, such as the call to prayer, help to make Türkiye a "safe haven" for Syrian refugees.[51] The emphasis on the call to prayer underscores the connection to both geographical location and religious identity, as other studies in Türkiye have shown. Syrian refugees prefer to live in Muslim countries because it makes them feel more at home, safer and helps them settle in.[52] It is clear that religion is an important part of why refugees connect with similar people and practices in other countries. This helps them feel more comfortable in their new environment.

> There is a mosque here, and there is a man—I'm not sure if he's an imam or an employee—who strongly dislikes Syrians. When Syrian children go to the mosque, he chases them away. In the summer, Turkish children attend classes there, but he only drives Syrian children away. The mosque is the house of Allah, and no one should be expelled from it (K2).[53]

The quote above shows that religion and religious places do not always provide positive interactions for refugees during the "emplacement" process. The participant's assertion aligns with Islamic doctrine, which considers mosques to be accessible to everyone. In this context, mosques are regarded as "differentiated spaces".[54] However, observations indicate that the mosque's value is often determined by nationality rather than its inherent qualities. The

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[49] Thomas A. Tweed, "Space", *The Journal of Objects, Art and Belief* 7 (2011), 121.
[50] Çınar - Çapcıoğlu, "Dinî-Sosyokültürel Yakınlığın Çatışma Dinamiklerine ve Toplumsal Uyum Sürecine Etkisi", 17.
[51] Tweed, *Crossing and Dwelling*, 121.
[52] Açıkgöz - Yemenici, "Türkiye'de Bulunan Geçici Koruma Statüsündeki Suriyelilerin Türkiye'deki Din Eğitimi Deneyimlerinin Değerlendirilmesi", *İnsan ve Toplum Bilimleri Araştırmaları Dergisi* 11/4 (2022), 2257.
[53] Akkır, "Din, Sosyalleşme ve Toplumsal Uyum", 965-966.
[54] Tweed, "Space", 120.

incident in which the mosque official expelled Syrian children shows that the mosque and Islam are not inclusive. The official's actions show discrimination based on ethnicity, denying Syrian children their religious and social identity, and this can lead to feelings of alienation.

3.3. Home-Neighbourhood Relations

This section focuses on physical housing and neighbourhood relations as an important element of spatial belonging in the emplacement process of Syrian refugees. The study explores the manner in which social interaction fosters the emplacement process, particularly in contexts where religious practices and rituals are shared among refugees and involve the participation of the host society. It is evident that activities such as domestic religious discourse, Quranic recitals and spiritual congregation not only serve to consolidate religious unity, but also facilitate the transformation of the implementation of religious practices belonging to the origin into spaces where a sense of belonging to the religious identity is cultivated. Furthermore, the acceptance of refugees as religious authorities in certain instances serves to strengthen the relationships forged with local communities, thereby reinforcing their emotional connections to their new environment. Furthermore, the discourse of "religious brotherhood" that transcends ethnic and geographical boundaries is also discussed. However, the political and social dynamics affecting these relationships are also taken into consideration. This section examines the impact of relationships formed at the intersection of space and religion, such as house and neighbourhood relations, on the emplacement process.

> Alhamdulillah, most of the time we haven't felt like strangers at all... Recently, we went to a religious gathering, and I gave a talk. Some of the friends there were surprised—they liked it so much that they asked, 'Are there really Syrians like this, or not?'" (Ebubekir, 34 years old, teacher).[55]

These statements suggest that physical homes are transformed into social spaces through religious practices and rituals that enable "emplacement". Sermons, Quran lessons, meals together, and domestic religious and cultural interactions create u, and the community between refugees and the host society. The fact that refugees are accepted and valued as religious authorities because of their ethnic identity: "One day a week, women gather at a neighbour's house.

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[55] Abdullah Tanrıverdi - Mustafa Ulu, "Kayseri'deki Suriyelilerin Vatan Algısı, Savaş Öncesi ve Sonrası Yaşantılarına Dair Görüş ve Düşünceleri", *Erciyes Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü Dergisi* 3/1 (2020), 283.

They read the Koran, talk, and eat. Our neighbours tell my sisters: 'You're Arabs. You know the Koran better. Teach us a little'. (F2, male, 22 years old, Aleppo)."[56] This excerpt shows that cultural and ethnic differences can be overcome. This situation makes the physical spaces, together with the events and activities organized, a hospitable and inclusive environment, while facilitating "emplacement" by reinforcing the sense of belonging of refugees in this environment.

Some quotations demonstrate how shared religious values and cultural affinities can engender a sense of belonging and positive relations between Syrian refugees and the host society: "The neighbours here have never been bad to us. I have neighbours. They are perfect, Mashallah… Only my neighbours here, mashallah, they all pray and have families like ours. (K8, Male, 36 Years, Idlib)."[57] This emphasizes friendly nature of religiously like-minded neighbours, and the subsequent quotation illustrates how refugees feeling contented and emplaced as a result of shared practices and convictions. These commonalities encourage interactions and the creation of a supportive environment. Religious and cultural values are key in resolving ethnic disparities and helping refugees to feel at home.[58]

> My neighbour is very poor but he gave me everything in his house.
> When I went to his house, it was empty. I asked, 'Why, brother?'
> You are my brother. Now I have a full room, and you have a room
> full—we are brothers. (SEE 1).[59]

The act of generosity in the extracts given here is set in the context of religious brotherhood, where a poor person in the host community selflessly shares all that, he has. This suggest that homes function as places of mutual support and religious affirmation.[60] In addition, the emphasis on brotherhood and sharing connects the host and the refugee to a larger community (*ummah*). The social interaction and cooperation that emerges from this sense of connectedness contributes to the refugees' sense of belonging and the "emplacement" process.

It has been demonstrated that home spaces play a positive role in refugee "emplacement". However, some excerpts distinguish between two social spaces:

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[56] Çınar - Çapcıoğlu, "Dinî-Sosyokültürel Yakınlığın Çatışma Dinamiklerine ve Toplumsal Uyum Sürecine Etkisi", 18.
[57] Çınar - Çapcıoğlu, "Dinî-Sosyokültürel Yakınlığın Çatışma Dinamiklerine ve Toplumsal Uyum Sürecine Etkisi", 22.
[58] Tweed, "Space", 121.
[59] Açıkgöz - Yemenici, "Suriyelilerin Türkiye'deki Din Eğitimi Deneyimlerinin Değerlendirilmesi", 2253.
[60] Tweed, "Space", 120.

one with religious individuals and those sharing similar political views, and the other with secular individuals holding different political views. For example, "we do not feel excluded, especially around religious people. However, we feel excluded when we are around those who are not religious and whose political views differ from those of the current government. (Ahmed, Mohamed, Osman)."[61] This distinction between religious and secular spaces in Türkiye significantly influences the "emplacement" process, highlighting how political power dynamics shape spaces and places.[62] In short, "emplacement" is not linear process but rather a complex one.

> The Ramadan and Eid al-Adha holidays were much better there than here. We don't feel the same spiritual atmosphere here; we have no one to share it with. For us, Eid is just an ordinary day. In fact, it is even worse. We remember the old days and feel a deep sense of loss. No one is happy on Eid. We remember our uncles, relatives and friends who have passed away. We used to gather together, talk, and enjoy wonderful times, but it is very quiet here. Everyone comes and goes to visit their relatives, but we can't do anything. (K4).[63]

Ramadan and Eid al-Adha were more fulfilling in the former location than the current one. The absence of a communal celebration and the inability to engage in traditional practices has resulted in a diminished spiritual atmosphere. The participant makes a comparison between "there" (homeland) and "here" (new place), indicating that the past shapes the "emplacement" process. "There" and "past" are remembered with positive features such as relationships, joy and spiritual atmosphere, while "here" and "now" are characterised by silence and sadness. This does not mean that the refugee does not emplace in a new place; on the contrary, it shows that the "emplacement" process for displaced persons involves feelings of separation, isolation, and loneliness. As a result, it is understood that for this participant, the emotional and spiritual attachment and longing for the homeland and the past. However, it seems to emphasise the past, is an important element of the "emplacement" process with its effect on the structuring of the present.

4. Conclusion

The impact of religion on the "emplacement" experience of refugees has been studied, with Syrian refugees in Türkiye as an example. The concept of

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[61] Erkan, "Suriyeli Göçmenler ve Dini Hayat: Uyum, Karşılaşma, Benzeşme Gaziantep Örneği", 62.
[62] Tweed, "Space", 121.
[63] Akkır, "Din, Sosyalleşme ve Toplumsal Uyum", 966.

"emplacement" involves refugees' efforts to establish a sense of belonging and safety within the host society, transforming spaces such as mosques and homes into places where they feel emplaced. At the same time, it also shows feelings of exclusion and alienation in areas/encounters where religious commitment is less intense. This double effect shows the complicated nature of the "emplacement" process. It benefits the refugees in their current situation, memories and aspirations. The "emplacement" process is good for them, within the triangle of their current situation memories, and desired future. "Emplacement" is a bonding experience socially, culturally, and spiritually.

However, the article suggests that refugees should be seen as active rather than passive actors in the "emplacement" process. Accordingly, it prefers to understand the experiences of Syrian refugees within the framework of the concept of "emplacement" rather than "adaptation" or "integration". The reasons for this can be listed as follows: first, "adaptation" studies generally treat refugees as individuals trying to join a foreign society/culture and direct the researcher to examine the religious life of refugees in line with the expectations of the host society, institutions and the state. However, the concept of "emplacement" allows the practices and interactions of refugees to be understood by observing them in a place.[64] Second, "adaptation" debates may ignore the differences between migrants by adopting a "top-down" approach.[65] On the other hand, the emplacement concept considers differences with a refugee-centered approach to provides understanding by focusing on the shared the experiences of refugees and host societies.[66] Finally, the vague, abstract and complex concept of "adaptation" also supports the preference for the idea of "emplacement".

Distinctive local dynamics must be emphasised to highlight the difference in refugee studies in Türkiye compared to those conducted in other countries. The experiences of Syrian refugees in Türkiye are distinct from those of different refugee groups due to proximity and shared history with the host society. The host society's relationship with refugees differs from that of the West, as demonstrated by various factors. Türkiye has not faced a "migration crisis".[67] However, studies are showing negative perceptions of refugees and that

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[64] Glick Schiller - Çağlar, "Displacement, Emplacement and Migrant Newcomers", 495.
[65] Erdoğan, *Suriyelilerle Uyum İçinde Yaşamın Çerçevesi*, 16.
[66] Şimşek, "Göçmenlerin Sosyo-Kültürel Uyumu ve Din Eğitimi"; Akkır, "Din, Sosyalleşme ve Toplumsal Uyum".
[67] Şallı, "'Kriz'den 'Uyum'a Türkiye'deki Suriyeli Göçmenler ve Sosyo-Kültürel Boyutları Bağlamında Din", 40.

cultural and ethnic differences affect social cohesion.[68] However, studies are showing negative perceptions of refugees and that cultural and ethnic differences affect social cohesion.[69] Therefore, while examining the facilitating role of religion in the emplacement process without overlooking its significance in refugee studies, it is also essential to remember that political ideologies and positions can negatively influence perceptions, attitudes, and behaviours toward refugees.[70]

As can be seen, it is revealed that places such as associations, mosques and houses are transformed by refugees through religious resources and that this process allows them to feel emplaced and secure. This also highlights the importance of using the concept of "emplacement" along with the concepts of "adaptation" and "integration". With this approach, the "emplacement" experiences of Syrian refugees effectively reach deeper meanings by including emotional, social and cultural elements along with the practices that physical spaces contain in relation to making a place. In conclusion, this article makes an essential contribution to traditional "adaptation" and "integration" studies in understanding refugee "emplacement" experiences of refugees and invites future researchers to consider relationship between religion and migration through space.

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[68] İbrahim Efe - Osman Ülker, "Social Media, Politics, and the Rise of the Anti-refugee Far-right in Türkiye", *Journal of Language and Politics* 12/5 (2024).

[69] Baltacı vd., "Suriyeli Sığınmacı Öğrencilerin Din Eğitimi Sorunları"; Efe - Ülker, "Social Media, Politics, and the Rise of the Anti-refugee Far-right in Türkiye".

[70] Erdoğan, *Suriyelilerle Uyum İçinde Yaşamın Çerçevesi*, 17.

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