



**Deniz Coşan Eke and Eric M. Trinkka (eds).- *Religion, Religious Groups and Migration* (London: Transnational Press London, 2023), 163p.**

The intricate interplay between religion, religious communities and migration has stood as a pivotal issue in contemporary debates across disciplines. Dislocated people undergo several challenges, for the impact of migration reverberates across various aspects of their lives, including religion. Indeed, religion and religious identity form maze-like aspects of individuals' experiences. They constitute essential threads woven into cultural, social, and political issues especially among diasporic communities. It is within this framework that Deniz Coşan Eke and Eric M. Trinkka's *Religion, Religious Groups and Migration* can be inscribed. This book offers a rich tableau of life of dislocated people attempting to navigate the conflicts of religious identities in an unfamiliar milieu. It also sheds light on the impact of mobility on religious traditions and cultures. Specifically, it attempts to empirically analyse "discourses on practices of local, national, and transnational religious groups" and explore how current changes could influence religion and migration in various ways politically, culturally, and socially.

The book opens with an introduction devoted to mapping the role of religion across various types of displacement. The papers in the book analyse the subject matter from micro to macro levels by adopting different approaches, including literature review, interviews, group discussions, and textual analysis. What enriches the scope of the book is the use of different methodologies and case studies of religious groups from copious historical and regional contexts. Moreover, the book brings together academics and practitioners from various contexts, all addressing a variety of religious perspectives. That being so, the book not only sets out to analyse conflicts and solidarities among religious groups but also aims to boost the readers' understanding of religious diversity, particularly in relation with experiences of dislocated people.

The book consists of seven essays. Titled "The World is Without Shelter, Without Protector": Buddhism, the Protection of Displaced People, and International Humanitarian Law, Christina A. Kilby's essay outlines the diverse intellectual resources provided by the Buddhist cultural beliefs for examining the roots of migration, protecting displaced people, and evaluating the responsibility of the government. Indeed, her study dusts off a project initiated by the International Committee of the Red Cross and offers a critical analysis of Buddhist texts to explore the intersection between Buddhism and International Humanitarian Law (IHL). Deploying a critical-constructive approach to analyse select Buddhist texts, Kilby lays the groundwork for readers to understand the intersections of IHL, internally

displaced people (IDP) and migrants. She argues that IHL, as a universal body of law that aims at protecting the disadvantaged during times of war, often struggles to provide assistance or prevent the unnecessary displacement when people are internally displaced. In her essay, she explores a variety of resources within the Buddhist cultural beliefs and traditions, examining the political ethics that aim to protect dislocated people and their implications for IHL. Indeed, these Buddhist traditions constitute a significant aspect of national identity in many Asian states, immensely influencing the policy sphere. Concepts like displacements, refuges, and suffering are deeply rooted in Buddhist values. These beliefs have a hefty influence on governance in many Southeast Asian nations. The project brings together academic researchers, government and military officers, and Buddhist monks and nuns, with the goal of broadening the scope of IHL and enriching it with insights from religious and cultural traditions such as Buddhism. Often, these cultural beliefs stand as humanity's pioneering and powerful source of humanitarian principles.

The complex notion of border crossing and people on the move with its debatable relation with religion is tackled by Ehsan Sheikholharam. In her essay "Borders Within Borders: Superkilen as the Site of Assimilation," she deals with the recurrent question posed about Muslim immigrant's integration in Europe. She is interested in deciphering whether assimilation is crucial for socio-economic integration. In so doing, she tacks together studies of space and religion to scrutinize an urban renewal project in a neighbourhood in Copenhagen. Her aim is to divulge some integration policies and explore how design contributes to fostering the notion of "otherness," particularly in cases where immigrants are susceptible to segregation. Sheikholharam further contends that this failure of integration often becomes a pretext for justifying anti-Muslim policies. This unsuccessful integration is reflected in the mushrooming of isolated neighbourhoods, particularly in big cities, which become ghettoized spaces. This phenomenon creates internal borders, both physical and metaphorical. Such spaces fall easy prey to fundamentalist ideologies and radical groups. She further argues that this "community withdrawal" is used by policies that aim to instrumentalise religion. To her, the main reason for the reluctance to embrace and integrate into mainstream society is that incompatibility between religion and the secular and liberal values. Therefore, cultural assimilation becomes crucial to economic integration within Muslim communities. This is reflected in Sheikholharam's case study of Superkilen park, a public space in Copenhagen designed to address the marginalisation of the working-class neighbourhood especially after the social instabilities following the *Jyllands-Posten's* cartoons and veil controversy in France, which sparked distress and protest. The project transformed the space into a theme park with three color-coded zones. Instead of representing solely Danish elements, diverse objects from numerous locations familiar to non-national inhabitants of the neighbourhood were incorporated. Additionally, residents living nearby were asked to express their desires for the park. This initiative aimed to break social isolation among the immigrants by allowing

them to identify with and see familiar aspects of their origins, thereby serving as a site for negotiating identities and blurring the lines between self and other.

Similarly, chapter four and five analyse the impact of religious identity on Muslim immigrants. In “In the Intersection of Religion, Identity, and Education: The Perception of Sunni Muslim Parents Regarding Islam Courses in Austria,” Ece Cihan Erdem demonstrates some of the ways children of Muslim immigrant communities hold onto their religion and roots in their hostland. Her study is grounded in accounts of daily religious practices and examines discriminatory experiences towards Turkish parents and Muslim Sunni groups in Austria who opt to enrol their kids in Islamic courses at schools. This decision plays a pivotal role in the lives of children, as it allows them to maintain their cultural heritage and their Turkish and Muslim identities. These lessons impart knowledge about Islamic traditions and its history, equipping children with values of mutual understanding and respect of people regardless of their cultural background. The findings of the research reveal that the Turkish Muslim Sunni community is not homogeneous. While some opt for Islamic schools, others might prefer Catholic courses, and some may even opt for homeschooling. Likewise, Deniz Coşan Eke’s “Alevism as a Political-Theological Concept and its Representation in Austria” examines the salient representation of religion within communities on the move, for it guarantees the intergenerational transmission of this religious knowledge. In her work on the Alevi community in Austria, she explores the traditions and collective behaviours of the religious group in relation to its political, legal, and socio-cultural perspectives. Her aim is to shed light on the impact of representations of religion on religious groups. She argues that although Alevism is still not officially defined as a distinct faith in Turkey, the increasing debate over the difference in religious practices with the Sunni and the Alvi in the diaspora have supported the claim that Alevism constitutes a faith separate from Islam. Consequently, Alevis continue to grapple with efforts to be recognised as a religious community in Europe. Indeed, it has started to be regarded as a political and theological concept. Therefore, according to Eke, adopting a perspective of religious pluralism is necessary to shift the discourse on Alevi faith from a contentious one into a more conciliatory debate.

Building upon the discussion on policies and religion, the sixth essay, “The role of interreligious Dialogue and Outreach in Building and Strengthening Social Inclusion in Europe: The case of Network for Dialogue,” attempts to foster harmonious integration between refugees, migrants, and local host communities in Europe following the migration crisis of 2015. Aleksandra Djuric Milovanovic and Amjad Mohamed-Saleem explore the potential for immigrants to promote tolerance and mutual understanding. They also examine how policymakers could increase awareness regarding the possible role of faith-based organizations in promoting social cohesion. In the final essay, Eric M. Trinkka foregrounds the importance of the religious texts in contexts of mobility and migration. Titled “Textual Placemaking and Migration Memories in Psalm 137,” Trinkka provides an overview on Psalmic literature by focusing on Psalm 137. This text serves both as a record of collective

memory and a response to traumatic displacement. According to Trinka, textual productions are regarded as “mnemonic cultural productions” generated by religious individuals on the move. He argues that analysing biblical sources can address many inquiries about textual creations within the context of displacement and exile. He further states that text-making serves as a religious coping mechanism that comforts subsequent generations of migrants. These narratives present competing and complementary interpretations of cultural trauma resulting. Trinka claims that Psalm 137 exemplifies one biblical perspective of dislocation. It prescribes selective memory events, preserving them as the authentic account of the past. Additionally, it also represents a resource for those who have endured similar anguish, such as those in Babylonia, and serves as a source of imaginative commitment to the city of Jerusalem and Judah, along with the divine protection associated with Zion. Trinka views Psalm as a complimentary text to Exodus and Deuteronomy. While serving as memory, it also serves as a reminder that the land holds theological, physical, and metaphorical significance.

*Religion, Religious Groups, and Migration* offers a kaleidoscope of perspectives regarding religion and displaced people. It explores different experiences of various religious groups in different contexts. Focusing on a variety of data, including theoretical or empirical analyses such as fieldwork, examination of textual resources, and scrutiny of international law and policies, the essays in this book are well grounded and well-documented with references. They provide novice researchers in the field of religious studies with a clear understanding through background information, figures, and a cohesive development of arguments. The diversity and enriching methodologies employed by the authors make the book a pioneering contribution in the field of religion studies. This enables readers to gain a comprehensive overview of different religions and their impact on immigrants’ religious and cultural identity. Thus, the book opens the horizon for new prospective research endeavors for students and researchers interested in the field of religion, law, and migration. The book qualifies as an original contribution because of exploration of issues, countries, and religions that have received limited scholarly attention, thus making it a highly recommended reference.

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