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Araştırma Makalesi
Research Article

FROM PAST TO PRESENT: A SOCIOCULTURAL PERSPECTIVE ON JEWS OF URFA

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GEÇMİŞTEN GÜNÜMÜZE URFA YAHUDİLERİNE SOSYOKÜLTÜREL BİR BAKIŞ

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ABSTRACT: The expulsion from Spain led to the Ottoman State becoming a peaceful refuge for Jewish communities. Over time, Ottoman Jewry evolved into one of the most culturally diverse religious minority groups and was widely dispersed throughout the State. Additionally, Jewish communities thrived in various Arab provinces and different regions of Anatolia. Notably, there were ancient Jewish settlements in the eastern part of the initial Ottoman State, which later became Turkey. The Jewish community of Urfa, residing in the eastern part of the country, was one of the oldest religious minority groups in the region. This study aims to thoroughly examine the historical background, social and cultural relationships, and the migration process of the Urfa Jewish Community, which transitioned from the eastern region of Turkey to settle in Israel. Furthermore, the study seeks to shed light on aspects of their lifestyle, religious beliefs, and interactions with other local groups and cultures within the multicultural environment of Urfa. This research has entailed anthropological fieldwork conducted in Israel between the years 2011-2012, with a focus on a socio-cultural perspective. Ultimately, the objective is to elevate the visibility of these historically overlooked local people of Urfa and bring attention to their unique cultural heritage within the academic discourse.

Keywords: Jews, Ethnography, Urfa, Culture, Migration, Memory

ÖZ: *İspanya'dan gönderildikten sonra, Osmanlı Devleti Yahudiler için barışçıl bir sığınaktı. Osmanlı Yahudileri zamanla kültürel bakımdan çok farklı dini azınlık gruplarından biri haline geldi. Yahudiler, aynı zamanda devletin çeşitli yerlerine dağılmış topluluklardan biriydi. Yahudi cemaati Arap vilayetlerinin çoğunda ve Anadolu'nun farklı yerlerinde dağılmış bir şekilde varlıklarını sürdürmekteydiler. Bununla birlikte, önceleri Osmanlı Devleti'nin sonrasında Türkiye'nin Doğu ve Güneydoğu Anadolu bölgesinde yaşayan Yahudi cemaatler de vardı. Bu anlamda, Urfa Yahudilerinin ülkenin güneydoğusundaki en eski dini azınlık gruplarından birisini teşkil ettiği ifade edilebilir. Bu çalışma, bir zamanlar Türkiye'nin doğusunda yaşayan ve daha sonra İsrail'e göç edip yerleşen Urfa Yahudi Cemaati'nin tarihsel geçmişini, sosyal ve kültürel ilişkilerini ve göç sürecini incelemeyi amaçlamaktadır. Buna ek olarak, Urfa şehrinin çok kültürlü ortamında yaşam tarzlarına, dini inançlarına ve diğer yerel grup ve kültürlerle olan ilişkilerine ışık tutmaya çalışmaktadır. Araştırmanın verilerinin bir kısmı 2011-2012 yılları arasında İsrail'de yürütülen bir alan araştırmasında dayanmaktadır. Araştırma sosyo-kültürel bir perspektifle ele alınmaktadır. Bu bağlamda, Urfa şehrinin göz ardı edilen eski sakinlerinin daha görünür hale getirilmesi beklenmektedir.*

Anahtar Kelimeler: *Yahudiler, Etnografya, Urfa, Kültür, Göç, Hafıza*

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Introduction

Leslie Peirce mentions that in 1526, one-fourth of the taxpayers in Urfa were Armenian, and there was no Jewish population listed in the city at the time (Peirce, 2003:58). However, this does not necessarily mean that Jews never lived in Urfa. George Percy Badger, in his travel accounts between 1842-1844, mentioned Jews in the nearby district of Birecik, indicating their presence in the region. He writes that there are 1800 Armenian families residing within the walls of Urfa, along with 18 priests in the city. Additionally, there are 12,000 Muslim families in Urfa. When he visited Birecik, he mentioned a population of 1500 families made up of Turks, Turcomans, Arabs, Christians, and a few Jewish dwellers (Badger, 1969: 329-350).

While there is evidence of a small Jewish community in and around Urfa, it is clear that Jews did live in the city. There are historical records indicating the presence of a Jewish community and a Jewish sanctuary in the area, and it is noted that the site of the Hasan Pasha Mosque in the city center was once a synagogue (Segal, 1970:27). According to Bar Hebraeus, a Syrian scholar and Bishop of the Eastern Jacobite Church in the thirteenth century, likely mentioned by Segal, a mosque was built by Muhammad b. Tahir on a site that was previously occupied by a synagogue (Ashtor and Makovetsky, 2007:146-147; Ashtor and Makovetsky, 2007:151). Additionally, when Imad ad-Din Zenghi, the founder of the Zengid dynasty, captured Ruha in 1146, he settled 300 Jewish families there (Demirkent, 1987:152).

The ancient city of Edessa, located in Turkey and now known as Urfa or Şanlıurfa, has a history dating back to around the second millennium (2000 BC). Originally a Hurrian city known as Orrhoe, Orhai, or Osrhoene, it was later conquered by the Romans and remained under their rule until 216 AD (Shimon, 2007:146). According to Segal, the Roman suppression of Parthian resistance also resulted in the subjugation of the city's Jewish population (Segal, 1970:27). By the end of the second century CE, Edessa had evolved into a center of Christianity, with a growing Jewish influence extending throughout the region (Shimon, 2007:146).

In the medieval era, Al Harizi (1952 [2001]), a Spanish Jewish traveler, visited the Muslim East, including Iraq, and resided in Aleppo, Syria, where he eventually passed away. In his book Tahkemoni, Harizi noted the Jewish community in Urfa and described them as "polite and cultured" (Ashtor and Makovetsky, 2007:147; Harizi, 2001). During the Ottoman Empire's rule, Jews continued to live in Urfa. Another traveler, Joseph Israel Benjamin, also known as Benjamin II, journeyed through Asia and Africa between 1846 and 1855 (Benjamin II, 1859:54). He visited Urfa in eastern Turkey and mentioned 150 Jewish families living there in prosperity, with the majority being illiterate. Only 50 of them were capable of performing ritual prayers in Hebrew (Benjamin II, 1859:54). Benjamin II also referred to a cave believed to be the birthplace of Abraham and the site where Nimrod had

been thrown, which was visited by both Jews and Muslims (Benjamin II, 1859:54). In the early 19th century, the population of Urfa consisted of an estimated 500 Jews (Buckingham, 1827). However, by the 20th century, the number of Jews began to decline gradually, with many immigrating to Jerusalem (Ashtor and Makovetsky, 2007:147). The statistical figures in the Ottoman Yearbooks of the district support these estimates.

Table 1- Yearbook of Halep Province, Urfa District Population Registers, (Halep Vilayet Salnamesi, Urfa Sancağı Nüfus Cetveli)

Year	1288/1870		1308/1887		1314/1896		1319-20/1902		1326/1908	
	Household	Number	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male
Jews	29	124	128	138	158	172	255	209	243	241
Total	153		266		330		464		484	

Source: Kapaklı, 2012: 30-69; Eroğlu, et al. 2012: 243

1288/1870 of total households 14.333 and population 113.582; 153 people are Jewish. (1288 tarihli Halep Vilayet Salnamesi, 183)

1308/1887 of total female 29.956 and male 29.768 population, 266 people are Jewish. (1308 tarihli Halep Vilayet Salnamesi, 240)

1314/1896 of total female 30.893 and male 32.787 population, 330 people are Jewish. (1314 tarihli Halep Vilayet Salnamesi, 269)

1319-20/1901-2 of total female 32.740 and male 31.439 population, 464 people are Jewish. (1319 tarihli Halep Vilayet Salnamesi, 329 and 1320 tarihli Halep Vilayet Salnamesi, 32)

1326/1908 of total female 34.431 and male 37.281 population, 484 people are Jewish. (1326 tarihli Halep Vilayet Salnamesi, 413)

In the early 20th century, the city of Urfa had a population of 30,335 people, with Muslims making up 70 percent and non-Muslims making up 30 percent. Of the non-Muslim population, 73 percent were Armenian, 12 percent were Assyrian, 6 percent were Protestant, 5 percent were Catholic, and 3.5 percent were Jewish. However, there have been no Jews in Urfa since 1965 (Bayraktar, 2007:125-250).

Table 2- Population of Jews of Şanlıurfa, 1927-1965

Year	1927	1945	1955	1960	1965
Number of Jews	318	234	11	2	14

Source:

1927. Türkiye Cumhuriyeti Başvekâlet İstatistik Umum Müdürlüğü: 61-62; 1945. Türkiye Cumhuriyeti Başbakanlık İstatistik Genel Müdürlüğü: 46; 1955-1960-1965.Türkiye Cumhuriyeti Devlet İstatistik Enstitüsü. 1945.Türkiye Cumhuriyeti Başbakanlık İstatistik Genel Müdürlüğü, *21 Ekim 1945 Genel Nüfus Sayımı*, Türkiye İstatistik Yıllığı / Annuaire Statisque de Turquie, 18 (328), 46 (Ankara 1950).

1955-1960-1965.Türkiye Cumhuriyeti Devlet İstatistik Enstitüsü *Türkiye İstatistik Yıllığı 1964-65 / Statisque de la Turquie,* 510, (Ankara no date)

Migration

The immigration of a family of Eastern Jews from Turkey typically did not occur all at once. Initially, one or more relatives would immigrate, sometimes leading to rifts in family ties. However, after settling and living in Israel, they would arrange for those who remained behind to join them in order to reunite the family. Established settlers assisted the new immigrants in finding jobs or housing (Şanlı, 2015; Şanlı, 2019).

The immigration of a family of Eastern Jews from Turkey typically did not occur all at once. Initially, one or more relatives would immigrate, sometimes leading to temporary fractures in family ties. However, after establishing themselves and settling in Israel, they would undertake efforts to facilitate the immigration of those who had remained in Turkey, in order to reunite the family. Coexisting settlers assisted the new immigrants in finding jobs or housing (Interview notes; cited by Şanlı, 2015; Şanlı, 2019; Şanlı; 2020).

The immigration process for a family of Eastern Jews from Turkey often unfolded gradually, marked by successive stages. Typically, one or more relatives would initiate the migration, occasionally resulting in temporary fractures within the family unit. Subsequently, upon establishing residence in Israel, concerted efforts were made to facilitate the immigration of those who had remained in Turkey, with the overarching aim of reuniting the family. Notably, established settlers played an instrumental role in providing support and assistance to the new immigrants, aiding them in securing viable employment opportunities and suitable housing (Interview notes; cited by Şanlı, 2015; Şanlı, 2019; Şanlı; 2020).

The emigration of non-Muslim minorities was influenced by various events, such as the Capital Tax in 1942 and the Thracian incidents in 1934 (Toktaş, 2006:505-519). Interestingly, it seems that these events did not impact the migration of Jews in eastern Turkey to the same extent as they did in other parts of the country. Only one interviewee from Urfa mentioned the wealth tax. Yoseph Hıdır (later Yeşil) mentioned paying 6,000 liras in wealth taxes, while others, including Azur Bozo, the wealthiest Jew in Urfa, paid 48,000 liras along with his friends Nissim Elfiye and Selim Anter (interview KK-1, Jerusalem, 29 May 2012; cited by Şanlı, 2015; Şanlı, 2019).

In 1896, the first major migration of eastern Jews from Urfa took place. Forty-two people, comprising ten families, immigrated to the land of Israel. According to the community elders, they traveled from Urfa to Aleppo to prepare for their journey. From Aleppo, they embarked on a grueling trip to Jerusalem, traveling in a convoy with donkeys. The first immigrants were impoverished, as they had used most of their belongings to fund their journey and to cover expenses such as purchasing water and food, paying taxes and protection fees as they traveled between provinces. Upon arriving

in Jerusalem, they settled on the outskirts of the Nahalat Zion neighborhood, where they constructed a makeshift "neighborhood" using cloth, wood, and tin (Israel and Beldgreen, 2013:189).

The Jewish community in the eastern part of Turkey employed various routes to immigrate to Israel, demonstrating resilience and adaptability. The Iskenderun port served as a crucial gateway for transporting hundreds of Eastern Turkish Jews to Israel, showcasing the resourcefulness of the community. It's worth noting that despite the unconventional mode of transportation via cargo ships, the journey was undertaken with determination and hope for a better future. Notably, a significant number of Jewish individuals from Diyarbakır, Gaziantep, Urfa, and Siverek opted for this route as a means of realizing their aspirations in Israel (Şanlı, 2015; Şanlı, 2019; Şanlı, 2020).

The decision of the Jewish community of Urfa to relocate from their birthplace can be better understood through a letter sent from the offices of the Alliance Israelite Universelle in Jerusalem. This communication, dated December 13, 1896, and directed to the Chief Rabbi of Paris and France, authored by Nissim Bachar and Albert Antebi, provides a constructive exploration of the motivations behind their immigration. By considering the factors outlined in the letter, we can gain insight into the circumstances that influenced this significant decision and work towards a better understanding of this historical event.

> "*I asked them why they left their country." Our state there was very good" they replied. "We cultivated the Muslims' fields, which were very fertile. We gave an eighth to the owners and an eighth in taxes. Our peace was taken from us since the Armenian riots, because the Muslims went wild and when they began massacring, they sometimes couldn't tell us apart from the Armenians. In one family a daughter was massacred, an in another family a sister or a son were massacred, so we had to leave and find shelter here. We want to work in our land no one is poor and everyone works".*

As understood from the information provided in the letter the immigration of Jews from Urfa was influenced by the events of the nth century, which had a significant impact on their decision to leave.

One of my oldest interviewees whom I had the pleasure of interviewing, Rafael Yıldız, was born in Urfa in 1922. At the age of ten, Rafael and his family, along with five other families, embarked on a journey from Urfa to Israel, passing through Aleppo and Damascus, Syria. Their decision to leave their homeland was driven by dire economic circumstances, as they were living in poverty and struggling to sustain themselves. Their aspiration in moving to Israel was to seek employment opportunities and a better standard of living (KK-2, Jerusalem, 05 June 2012). The migration of Jews from Urfa was significantly influenced by the Urfa incidents, specifically the Şorkaya Event of 1947 (Şanlı, 2015; Şanlı, 2019).

I had the opportunity to interview the Şorkaya family during my fieldwork. The family tragically had seven members who were murdered while living in Urfa. My interviewee, Malke Hıdır (later Yeşil), was just five years old when this devastating event took place. Yitzhak Hayim Şorkaya, the head of the murdered family, was her uncle. It was heartwarming that Malke and her husband, Yoseph Hıdır (later Yeşil), were willing to open up to me, especially since they had never shared these incidents with anyone since moving to Israel. I appreciated their hospitality as I spent two full days with them, during which they cooked traditional foods from their time in Urfa, such as çiğ köfte and lahmacun. It's sad to note that after this tragedy, no Jews remained in the city. However, according to the 1965 census, there were still 14 Jews in Urfa (Şanlı, 2015; Şanlı, 2019).

Following the Şorkaya Family incident, a tragic event that deeply affected the Jewish community in Urfa, some Jewish individuals made the difficult decision to quietly leave the city out of concern for their safety. Their departure was conducted discreetly to avoid drawing attention and potential harm. In the aftermath of the Şorkaya incident, many Jewish residents of Urfa sold their houses as they left, however, they left their workplaces without selling them, leaving behind their established businesses and livelihoods (Şanlı, 2015; Şanlı, 2019). This event had a significant impact on the Jewish community and the city as a whole.

Following the establishment of Israel in 1948, there was an increase in the migration of Jews from the eastern cities. As far as we are aware, there is no significant Jewish population in the eastern part of Turkey or in various towns of Anatolia. This demographic shift was influenced by various historical and geopolitical factors, leading to a notable absence of Jewish communities in these regions.

Culture

The Jewish community in eastern Turkey, despite being a small minority, significantly influenced and integrated with the local society. Their culinary traditions, their way of cooking and dressing was quite similar to those of the local people. In Urfa, the Jewish community primarily spoke Turkish and Arabic and very few Kurdish, and was led by a Hakham who fulfilled various roles within the community including that of hazzan, mohel, shohet, and teacher (Şanlı, 2015; Şanlı, 2019). Their social and cultural life centered around the Yahudi Mahallesi, the Jewish quarter. This harmonious coexistence within mixed neighborhoods showcases the community's resilience and ability to thrive within diverse environments (Şimşek, 2013:47-59).

The Jewish community in Urfa lived within the old city walls, occupying two designated neighborhoods adjacent to the Harran Gate to the east. Yoseph Yeşil and his family lived in the Kendirci Mahallesi, Asker Sokak (Kendirci quarter on Asker Street), right alongside their Muslim neighbors. Yitzhak Khader, resided in another quarter called Şekerci Mahallesi (Şekerci

quarter). Although the size of these neighborhoods wasn't explicitly mentioned by my interviewees, Igal Israel's work suggests that one was larger (Askeriye Mahallesi) and the other smaller (Şekerci Mahallesi). It's interesting to note that the Jewish community had a special day for bathing at Cıncıklı Hammam, with women bathing at noon and men in the evening on Wednesdays. After returning from work (KK-1, Jerusalem, 29 May 2012; cited by Şanlı, 2015; Şanlı, 2019).

Thus, relationships between Muslims and Jews were influenced by the specific context of time and place, leading to a range of dynamics and interactions.

> *"All the entertainment in Urfa was visiting other families. My father was very well-liked in the family as well. Jewish families were friends amongst themselves. They were reluctant to become friends with the Muslim families"*

Harun Bozo, who was a Jew from Urfa, shared this in his memoir." (Modiano and Bozo, 2010: 5).

During my interviews, I discovered an intriguing aspect of Yitzhak Khader's family history. It was remarkable to learn that Yitzhak's mother played a compassionate role in the community by breastfeeding the babies of Muslim mothers in Urfa when they faced difficulties with lactation. This act of kindness transcended religious differences and served as a symbol of unity and empathy. Furthermore, the close-knit relationships extended to business partnerships, as evidenced by Yitzhak's brother, Shlomo, who worked in a jewelry store owned by a local Muslim. This exemplifies the harmonious coexistence and collaboration between the Jewish and Muslim communities in Urfa. Additionally, I learned that joint celebrations and mutual festive visits during religious holidays further strengthened the bond between these communities, fostering mutual respect and understanding (KK-3, Jerusalem, 05 June 2012; cited by Şanlı, 2015; Şanlı, 2019).

In the eastern regions of Turkey, the Jewish community was accorded a respectful and inclusive treatment, as they were not regarded as infidels or non-believers. The religious practices of the eastern Jews were predominantly rooted in the oral transmission of Judaic customs and traditions handed down through generations. Despite the challenges of rural living, they endeavored to uphold the traditions inherited from their forebears. While their ability to regularly attend synagogue services was sometimes hindered by their rural circumstances, the synagogues saw significant attendance during major holidays like Purim and Yom Kippur. The synagogue services during these occasions were well-attended, with the rabbi (Haham) leading the ritual prayers. Hahams fulfilled a variety of responsibilities, often serving as the community's religious leader, ritual slaughterer (Shohet), and cantor (Hazan).

Food

The culinary traditions of Eastern Jews, including the Urfa Jewish community, center predominantly around meat. They primarily consumed staple foods such as meat, wheat, fruits, and vegetables. It is noteworthy that the consumption of meat was subject to strict guidelines, with only those animals slaughtered by a shochet or rabbi deemed acceptable for consumption. In their adherence to kashrut laws, the Eastern Jews of Turkey diligently maintained separate pots, pans, and knives for meat and dairy products. This meticulous observance of dietary practices showcases the profound impact of cultural influences on the eating habits and food diversity of the Jewish community in this region (interview notes 05.03.2012; cited by Şanlı, 2015; Şanlı, 2019).

The Family

In the eastern and southeastern regions of Turkey, Jews were small non-Muslim minority communities living alongside the Muslim majority. They resided in the same quarter, with their houses facing each other. Their population was relatively small, with the smallest Jewish community consisting of at least fifty families, and the largest comprising between 150 and 200 families.

Interviewees indicated that Jewish families in Urfa consist of large families. They stated that within the Jewish community of Urfa, familial ties were extensive, with a collective recognition among its members and a prevalent sense of kinship. This resulted in a deep understanding among family members. While fathers displayed an authoritarian demeanor, they maintained intimate connections with their sons and the broader family. Sons had a clear understanding of their father's probable reactions to various circumstances (interview notes, Jerusalem, 01 June 2012; cited by Şanlı, 2015; Şanlı, 2019).

In the past, in Jewish families in eastern Turkey, the birth of a baby was a cause for celebration. While there was a preference for boys over girls, especially for the first child, this bias is no longer as openly expressed. As a result, families had many children, with the hope of having at least one son (interview notes 21.03.2012; cited by Şanlı, 2015; Şanlı, 2019).

In the traditional Eastern Jewish communities, marriage was a significant event, often taking place at a relatively young age. Girls would typically marry at fourteen or fifteen, while boys would marry at seventeen or eighteen. Due to the close-knit nature of the communities and the fact that people lived in the same quarter, everyone knew each other and often had familial connections, leading to a lack of formal girlfriend-boyfriend relationships. However, opportunities for young people to interact arose during family visits, holidays, and especially at weddings.

The Jewish community in Urfa had a unique and charming wedding tradition. The ceremonies were held on Fridays, often in a garden setting. The day before the wedding was marked by separate visits to the Hamam,

or bathhouse, with the men attending in the morning and the bride and other Jewish women in the evening. The groom would be accompanied by a barber, who would perform a traditional shave. To add to the special atmosphere, a traditional song, often in Arabic, would be sung upon the barber's arrival. Yoseph Yeşil couldn't recall the original lyrics but remembered the Turkish version.

"Bekle berber bekle!! (wait barber wait)

Bütün akrabalar gelsin (Let all the relatives come)

Ondan sonra çal (Play after that…")

The tradition of drahoma was an important aspect of their customs. As explained by Yoseph Yeşil, families with many daughters and limited financial resources faced challenges in arranging marriages for their daughters until they could afford the drahoma. Marriages typically took place when boys and girls were in their late teens, around seventeen or eighteen years of age. Some young men would get married after completing their military service. Given the custom of no individual dating, the shadchan, matchmaker or marriage broker, played a significant role in introducing prospective couples based on the recommendations of their families. In Urfa, Cemil Mizrahi served as the shadchan for the Jewish community and also worked as a mohel, earning respect within the community for his important role. He was convinced that he was actively engaged in a truly blessed endeavor. Once a match was agreed upon, the potential couple met several times under the supervision of their parents to ascertain compatibility. After the wedding, the bride and groom had little time alone during the first week. In alignment with the customs of various Jewish communities, it is customary for a close friend of the groom, known as the shushvin or best man, to accompany him who would cater to his needs, for seven days following the wedding. In the case of Urfa, the shushvin typically supported the groom after the wedding, not before (KK-4, KK-1 and KK-3, Jerusalem, 29 May 2012; cited by Şanlı, 2015; Şanlı, 2019).

The behavioral patterns of eastern Jewish women in Turkey were deeply influenced by tradition, customs, and religious norms. They lived within an Islamic society and adhered to the expectations and standards set for women in their community. Similarly, to their Muslim neighbors, the Jewish communities upheld a patriarchal family system. While women were not considered inferior, they did not enjoy the same level of societal equality. It was customary for the majority of Jewish women to follow modest dress codes and be accompanied by a male family member when venturing into public spaces. In the Urfa Jewish community, the primary roles of women centered around household duties, childcare, and family support. Due to their heavy domestic workload, a large number of eastern Jewish women did not have access to formal education, as it was not seen as a societal priority for women (interview notes 05.03.2012; cited by Şanlı, 2015; Şanlı, 2019).

In Urfa, like in other cities, the majority of the Jewish residents were poor, with only a small number of wealthy families. While a small number of families enjoyed prosperity, the majority of Jews in Urfa lived in poverty. Among the affluent families were the Anter family (Selim Anter, also known as Shlomo Anter in Hebrew), known for their success in representing an oil company and selling gas, included the Elfiyye (Nissim Elfiyye) and Bozo (Azur Bozo) families. On the other hand, poorer Jewish residents made a living as peddlers, traveling to villages on horseback to sell their goods. Additionally, individuals like Shlomo Khader, brother of Yitzhak Khader (Hıdır), worked in a local Muslim jewelry store. Economic divide was a defining feature of the Jewish community in Urfa (KK-4, KK-1 and KK-3, Jerusalem, 29 May 2012; cited by Şanlı, 2015; Şanlı, 2019).

Conclusion

The Jewish community of Urfa holds a unique place in the historical and cultural landscape of southeastern Turkey. This study has uncovered their remarkable ability to navigate the complexities of coexistence within a multicultural society, all while preserving their distinct religious and cultural identity. As one of the oldest religious minority groups in the region, the Jews of Urfa contributed significantly to the city's rich tapestry of traditions, despite their relatively small population.

The findings emphasize that the Jewish community's integration into the socio-cultural fabric of Urfa was characterized by harmony and mutual respect with their Muslim and Christian neighbors. This coexistence is evident in their shared customs, interfaith collaborations, and even culinary traditions, which drew from the diverse influences of the region. The Jewish quarter and other communal spaces were not just physical locations but symbols of a vibrant and active community that embraced its surroundings while adhering to its heritage.

However, the gradual decline and eventual disappearance of the Jewish population from Urfa highlight the fragility of minority communities in the face of social upheaval and geopolitical changes. The documented migrations, triggered by economic hardships, regional instability, and tragic events such as the Şorkaya Family incident, illustrate the challenges that the Jewish community faced. These migrations, though disruptive, also exemplify the resilience of Urfa's Jews, as they sought better opportunities while striving to preserve familial and cultural ties.

By exploring the oral histories and archival records, this study not only traces the migration patterns of Urfa's Jewish community but also reveals the enduring impact of their legacy. Their departure left a void in Urfa's social and cultural life, marking the end of a centuries-long presence. Nevertheless, the traditions, stories, and memories of this community remain a vital part of Urfa's history, deserving continued scholarly attention.

This research underscores the importance of documenting and preserving the narratives of minority communities to better understand the

intricate mosaic of regional histories. The case of Urfa's Jewish community serves as both a reminder of the richness of diversity and a cautionary tale about the consequences of its loss. It invites future research into the broader implications of minority migrations and their role in shaping cultural and historical landscapes.

As the study concludes, the Jewish community of Urfa emerges not merely as a footnote in history but as an integral component of the city's heritage—a testament to the enduring human spirit in the face of adversity and change. Today, the absence of a Jewish population in Urfa signals the end of a significant chapter in the city's history. However, their legacy endures, serving as a reminder of the city's once-thriving multiculturalism and the shared heritage that shaped its identity over centuries.

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