

BETWEEN MODERNISATION AND CONSERVATISM:  
THE ŐANLIURFA CASE

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İSTANBUL BİLGİ ÜNİVERSİTESİ  
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BETWEEN MODERNISATION AND CONSERVATISM:  
THE ŐANLIURFA CASE

(MODERNLEŐME VE MUHAFAZAKARLIK ARASINDA:  
ŐANLIURFA RNEĐİ)

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## **ABSTRACT**

I intend to explain the “conservative” image of Urfa, and discuss about the reason and consequences of this image. Therefore, conservatism will be argued in the first part briefly. Additionally, construction of this image will be discussed considering the effect of the state and Urfalıs on the construction process. Additionally Turkish modernism and Turkish conservatism will be studied to see their effect on Urfa’s conservative image. Thus, conservatism, Turkish conservatism and their relevance with Urfa’s conservative image will be discussed to understand conservatism in Urfa. Furthermore, the interpretation of Urfalıs of this image and their struggle with conservatism of Urfa and conservatism of Turkish state will be discussed to see the meaning of conservatism and modernism in Urfa, and for Urfalıs. Therefore, the survival tactics of Urfalıs with the politics of the state and the life conditions in Urfa will be studied. As a result, the possibilities for individual’s to resist to the social and political structure will be investigated in Urfa case.

## **ÖZET**

Çalışmada Şanlıurfa’nın “muhafazakar” imajını, ve bu imajın neden ve sonuçlarını tartışmayı hedefliyorum. Bunun için öncelikle kısaca muhafazakarlık teorisi açıklanacak. Ayrıca Urfalıların ve devletin bu imajın oluşmasındaki etkileri göz önüne alınarak bu imajın oluşması tartışılacak. Türk modernleşmesi ve Türk muhafazakarlığı, Urfa’nın muhafazakar imajı üzerindeki etkilerini görebilmek için incelenecek. Böylece muhafazakarlık, Türk muhafazakarlığı ve Türk modernleşmesi, Urfa’da muhafazakarlığı anlamak için tartışılacak. Bunun yanı sıra, Urfalıların bu imajı nasıl yorumladıkları, Urfa ve devlet muhafazakarlığıyla nasıl mücadele ettikleri; Urfa’da ve Urfalı için muhafazakarlık, ve modernliğin anlamlarını anlayabilmek için incelenecek. Böylece devlet politikaları ve Urfa’nın koşulları karşısında Urfalıların yaşamda kalma mücadeleleri tartışılacak.

Sonu olarak, bireylerin sosyal ve politik yapıyla mcadele etme imkanları  
Urfa rneğinde incelenecektir.

To my Mother Emine, and my Father Mehmet Ali Coşandal,

With All My Loving...

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## TABLE OF CONTENT:

Introduction.....	1
Method.....	14
Layout of the study.....	19
Part 1: Conservatism.....	21
1.1. Institutions.....	23
1.2. Human Nature.....	25
1.3. Reason.....	26
1.4. Society.....	27
1. 5. Freedom and equality.....	28
1. 6. Government and Democracy.....	29
1. 7. Change.....	30
Part 2: Turkish Conservatism.....	32
2. 1. Statist(im) as Conservatism.....	33
2. 2. Conservatism Perceived as Reactionism by Modernizing State.....	39
2. 3. Traditionalism.....	43
2. 4. Nationalism.....	52
2. 5. Islamism.....	56



2. 6. 1980s and changing perceptions of conservatism.....57

Part 3: Urfa: 47

3.1 “I am Forever Urfalı”.....68

3.1.1. “They do not Believe that I am Indeed Urfalı” .....68

3.1.2. Definition of Urfa and  
The Essence of Being Urfalı.....73

3. 1. 3. Is Urfa Conservative?.....83

3.2 Change is Necessary But How to Change?..... 87

3. 2. 1. Family as the Home of Conservatism in Urfa...88

3. 2. 2. Change is Women’s Change.....92

3. 2. 3. Change is Education’s Change.....98

- Harran University: 10-year-old institution carrying the  
torch of 1,000-year-old legacy.....103

3. 2. 4. Changing Traditions, New Traditions.....106

3. 2. 5. What Change, Are We Really Changing?.....117

3. 3. “Thank God I am Muslim”: On Religion in Urfa.....112

3. 3. 1. People Obey Society  
More Than God: Religion and Society.....126

3. 3. 2. Piety is Increasing, We are Developing.....134

3. 3. 3. Religion and State.....140

Conclusion.....	147
Bibliography.....	159
Appendix: List of Interviewees.....	169

## INTRODUCTION

Conservatism has been discussed in Turkey in recent years, especially after the government of The Justice and Development Party (AK Party) - established in 2001 to define its philosophy as “conservative democracy”. People who are represented by AK Party has been in conflict with modernist approached; consequently, they have been defined as conservative. Conservatism has mostly been considered as a reaction against the modernization project in Turkey; therefore, conservatism should be studied with its relation with what is called “modern”. I have chosen Urfa<sup>1</sup> a sample since it can be good example for

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<sup>1</sup> Şanlıurfa has been the official name of the city since 1984. “Şanlı” (the glorious) was prefixed to the name by the state as an indicator of the success of Urfa citizens in the War of Independence. Urfa is one of a few cities (the others being Gaziantep, “Gazi” being the adjective given by the state, and Kahramanmaraş, “Kahraman” being the adjective given by the state) of Turkey that defeated the enemy without any support from the Army of Independence led by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk. Urfa was first given the nickname “Kahraman” when a poet called it in one of his poems “Kahraman’urfa.” The name changed to “Şanlı’urfa” and the citizens reacted negatively to this change. The city’s current official name is “Şanlıurfa.” Additionally, the public popularly uses the name “Urfa.” Additionally, people define themselves as “Urfalı” and not as “Şanlıurfalı,” to mean “a person from Urfa.” The double name change and the public’s discarding the first nickname demonstrates the arbitrariness of the words and changes. People, upon encountering such changes, either accept, reject or adapt to them. Accepting the state’s decision to amend the city’s name was compulsory and the change was seen as positive; the people, therefore, accepted new names even through they were “conservative” and from a “conservative” city. Additionally, although people accept and use the name Şanlıurfa, in daily affairs they use “Urfa” and “Urfalı” for practical reasons and out of historical habit. This paper uses the name “Urfa” instead of “Şanlıurfa” because it is more practical and residents of the city prefer it.

this conflict, because is one of the eastern- Anatolian cities of Turkey that is known as “conservative” as well as non modern”. However, Urfalis are discontent with this conservative image since they want to be “modern” and known so. That is to say, conservative image of Urfa is argumentative and it is not independent from modernism project of Turkey.

Urfa’s image within Turkey is that of nostalgia, authenticity, a small Anatolian city. The city is presented as a “conservative, religious, undeveloped and Eastern” city, a museum city with little opportunity to change due to its locale, natives and natural and socio-economic opportunities. Additionally, “conservative” (*muhafazakar*) is considered to be synonymous with “being religious,” though in recent years some have argued that the two are not the same. “Conservative” is also defined “reactionist<sup>2</sup>” and as an insult to “conservative people”.

Urfalis usually claim that Urfa is presented as only a historic site and that its modern face is entirely ignored. They complain about only rural areas of Urfa being photographed and only historical places, villages and villagers shown on TV. Urfalis argue that Urfa is a developing and

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<sup>2</sup> Reactionist is *Gericici* in Turkish. It means “a person who does not want any ‘useful’ and ‘modern’ development.”

modern city with a rich historical background that benefits the city. Urfa's image as an underdeveloped and conservative city and its residents' rejection of this image is the basis of this thesis. The Urfalis' answer to the city's conservative image is the origin of this argument as it includes many claims about the characteristics of Urfa and Urfalis.

Although Turkey is an Asian and Middle Eastern country, since the establishment of the republic, the state's aim has been "Westernization." With this came the bifurcation of the state into "Western" (desired, developed) and "Eastern" (undesired, undeveloped). Furthermore, Urfa is "one of the others" of Turkish state ideology that helps to build itself against it. It is not modern and the state rejects becoming like it. It is the counter-image for Turkish state. Therefore, this ideology avoids being "as Urfa", or another "conservative Anatolian city". Additionally, the city is discussed through arguments related to conservatism and underdevelopment such as blood feuds, honor crimes, *berdel*,<sup>3</sup> polygamy and poverty -- all issues Urfalis consider "inappropriate" and "insulting" issues to discuss about Urfa. This study will look at if Urfa can be defined as "conservative" and the reason this definition is advised to define Urfa.

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<sup>3</sup> This type of marriage involves the marriage of a woman to the brother or father of a woman with whom her own father or brother wants to get married. (This "exchange marriage" has harsh rules, including that if one of the couples divorces, the other couple must also divorce.)

The choice to focus on conservatism in Urfa is influenced by the fact that “conservative Urfa” is a popular image in Turkey and provides an opportunity to investigate the relationship between state power and the citizenry of a city in their daily life. The objective is to examine the ideas of Urfalis about this image and their relation with state discourse and conservatism.

In order to make the prejudices and images of Urfa visible, we can give some examples demonstrating conservative image of Urfa. The following is a representation in the media and the popular discourse about Urfalis. A tourist guide on Urfa provides an example of this image:

“There is a great noisy confusion in the city center, and it is not known who is doing what. There is no order; the vehicles, the sellers, the horns are intermingled, there is chaos. The city is dusty and very muddy. We think: ‘Is this the city of the prophets? What is the municipality doing here?’ When the evening arrives, the doors of the shops are locked and a mystical atmosphere fills the city and you with peace.”<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> <http://www.sihirlitur.com/gezi/urfa/yorum.html>. accessed on Sept. 20, 2008.

In this text, Urfa is portrayed as an idealistic, imaginary and undeveloped Eastern city. These lines are the accumulation of stereotypical characteristics attributed to an “Eastern, mystical” city such as Urfa. The name of the city does not matter; these claims have no relevance to Urfa’s real condition; they only mention “expected views.”

Demiray Oral (a columnist in newspaper *Taraf*) gives some interesting details about his trip to Urfa. He mentions about a traditional café in the historical bazaar, and says there are only men, men with traditional headscarves and some young men “hanging around as if they are modern”. In this picture, only traditional details are explained.

Furthermore, according to writer, young people are not “modern”, they just “try to be modern”. In the article, another significant issue is having child. Oral adds that all of the men in the café have children, but they count only their sons, not daughters.<sup>5</sup> Therefore, sons are superior to daughters, and daughters are not even called as children, they are not taken in to consideration. This also emphasizes that Urfalı people do not give any value to their women, men are their ultimate leader. That means, in Urfa, there is no modern relationship between men and

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<sup>5</sup> Oral, Demiray, <http://www.taraf.com.tr/makale/5253.htm> (April 28, 2009; accessed on May 1, 2009)

women. However, Urfalis do not want to be mentioned in this way, when they are asked if they agree with this opinion.

Urfa is described in many funny ways in internet and online dictionaries, such as the following entry:

“Sanliurfa (Urfa) is such a city that its understanding and some traditions will be exactly the same even after 100 years, it is unchangeable. Urfalis do not ask for money for coffee or tea in cinema, it is a shame to ask it. If you do not finish your meal in a restaurant, cooker considers it as an insult for him. Briefly, it is a very special city.”

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As it is seen, Urfa is “unchangeable” and it has some strange traditions even they are not true. These strange “traditions” represent a highly folkloric image of Urfa.

Urfa is also a popular topic for investigations concentrating on eastern Turkey. A research carried out by Hacettepe University is an example of this.<sup>7</sup> This research is on family structure in Urfa’s rural areas and it is undertaken in villages located in Urfa province (*Karaali, Kısas, Sağlık* and

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<http://sozluk.sourtimes.org/show.asp?t=%C5%9Fanl%C4%B1urfa&nr=y&pt=%24anl%C4%B1urfa>

<sup>7</sup> Ökten, Şevket, GAP Bölgesi’nin Sosyo- Kültürel Yapısının Aile Yapısına Etkileri” *Aile ve Toplum*, January- February, March, 2006, no: 9.



*Yardımcı*). According to the results of the research, polygamy, that is a traditional and conservative marriage style is not common in these areas. Rules of marriage are regulated by the *aşiret* (tribe, clan) the family and relatives. Dependency on this traditional institution (*aşiret*) signs a conservative lifestyle. Sixty-three percent of all spouses are related through kinship (intermarriage)<sup>8</sup>. Such marriages arise from social and economical concerns of the individuals. The study further concludes that 64.3 percent of the heads of households think that the role of women is to be “mothers, give birth to children and raise them.”<sup>9</sup>

This research supports the premise that family structure in Urfa is patriarchal and explains the frequency of intermarriage. The frequency of polygamy is, however, not addressed by this research, leading two parliamentarians from Urfa to criticize the results. They think the research is an insult to Urfalis. Justice and Development Party (AK Party) Urfa deputy Mehmet Atilla Maraş has said: “There are intermarriages in the villages, but they are not very common. This is an insult to Urfa.”

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid, p.31

<sup>9</sup> Ibid, p.32

An Urfalı writer, Mehmet Özlek, disagrees with the percentage of women involved in intermarriages and the situation of women. He estimates that 10 percent of all marriages in the region involves intermarriage, but does not explain how he arrived to this conclusion. He also thinks that Urfalis do not regard women as “mothers” but instead says women for Urfalis are precious. However, he does not explain why it is an insult to define a woman as a “mother.” Furthermore, neither of the parliamentarians explain how they arrived at the intermarriage percentage figures they cite nor why they oppose the conclusions of the research. They oppose the research because it lends support to the undeveloped image of Urfa, an image they reject. They oppose scientific research instead of discussing its reliability, intentions and representativeness.

Furthermore, many Urfalı writers oppose to Urfa’s image as “undeveloped” and “village” as Mehmet Kurtoğlu and Mehmet Sarmış. Sarmış claims that Urfa is known “wrong” and he thinks that non- Urfalis can understand the real Urfa when they arrive at there.<sup>10</sup> Kurtoglu also thinks that Urfalis are not fundamentalist religious people and they have

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<sup>10</sup>

[http://www.urfahayat.com/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=1808&Itemid=108](http://www.urfahayat.com/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=1808&Itemid=108).

never been.<sup>11</sup> Gülistan Çiftçi criticizes the Urfalı image in the movies and TV serials. She claims that even the popularity of Urfalı characters in the movies and serials, they do not reflect the real Urfalıs. These characters are just rural, funny people, and urban dwellers, common Urfalıs, educated Urfalıs are never shown in them.<sup>12</sup> Some other Urfalıs who write especially in local internet sites and who are concerned about the image of Urfalıs are Tahir Coşandal, Faruk Habiboğlu, and Mehmet Oymak.

Urfalıs' rejection of the image of Urfa is seen above the examples. As was seen in these examples, they primarily emphasize how they stand out and wish to define Urfa objectively. They want to demonstrate change and development in Urfa as well as its historical heritage and importance. With this in mind, I will discuss conservatism and conservatism in Urfa considering Urfa and Urfalıs' definitions of the city.

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<sup>11</sup>

[http://www.urfahayat.com/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=2147&Itemid=111](http://www.urfahayat.com/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=2147&Itemid=111).

<sup>12</sup> [http://www.sanliurfa.com/author\\_article\\_detail.php?article\\_id=1379](http://www.sanliurfa.com/author_article_detail.php?article_id=1379). (February 28, 2009), accessed on February 28, 2009.

Urfa cannot be reduced to a few simple ideas and prejudices. It is a complex city with a long history, a diverse population and its own identity. Undeniably, however, the identity of Urfalis is also tied to how the city is perceived from outside. These arguments about Urfa are where power relations between Urfalis and Urfa's conservative image and Urfalis' identity occur and where Urfalis innovate for their life within this struggle.

Certeau terms of "strategy" and "tactics" may help us better understand the power relations between the state and individuals. Strategy is the politics of the powerful, the state, or the nomic and cultural order of a specific place, Urfa for example. Tactics are the response of individuals to strategy, their struggle with the rules in their own daily life through small but significant effort. That is to say, people live their daily life under the control of the state (within the strategy of the state), but may change and shape their life through small changes and alternatives to the strategy, through tactics. The tactics are the politics that are produced as answers of people to strategy, even they are not completely against for strategy. It benefits from the deficiencies of strategy; thus, we can see the problems and deficiencies of strategy. Additionally, tactics are the chances to change strategy in the long or short term. Strategy emphasis on "place", and tactic stresses on "time". That is to say, strategy supports the present rules and suggests that they are necessary because of the characteristics of this place. However, tactics

wants changes considering the change of time and world. To sum, everyday life is a political sphere where conflicts occur. Furthermore, it is a sphere with various meanings with a specific unity in itself and it can be studied as a sociological subject.<sup>13</sup> Thus, with the terms of Certeau about everyday life, it is hoped that the source defining the image of Urfa will be illustrated as well as the power of the state to construct this image and Urfals reactions to this image, with strategy of Turkey and Urfa and people's tactics to sustain their life within it. Therefore, we can see individualistic solutions and suggestions toward state and ideology with these terms, observing the tactics of Urfals and the effect of strategy on them.

Therefore, this thesis also aims to investigate the opportunity of Urfals to define and construct their own identity considering the power of the state on its citizens. This opportunity is the source of change and allows people to survive as it helps people satisfy their vital needs. State law and ideology are strict and absolute. However, daily life is full of unanticipated surprises, needs, problems and solutions. Therefore, people must suggest individual styles and novel solutions to adapt to the changing world.

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<sup>13</sup> De Certeau, Michael, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, California: University of California Press, 1984.

In order to understand conservatism in Urfa, further questions will need to be answered, including: Is Urfa conservative? How do Urfalıs describe being conservative and how do they relate it to being Urfalı? How can people become conservative? What are the consequences of being conservative? This leads to further questions, including: What is conservatism? Does it allow for change and development? How can people sustain their daily life and adapt to the world if they are conservative?

To conclude, I want to study Urfa and its relation with conservatism to see the meaning of conservatism and Turkish conservatism and their effects in building of Urfalıs' image. Therefore, the study starts with a part defining conservatism and summarizing its characteristics through history. The interpretation and evolution of conservatism in Turkey has been discussed in the second part, with the title of "Turkish Conservatism". Additionally, daily life of Urfalıs are effected by this image making process; thus, this process may help us to understand lifestyle and life struggle of Urfalıs. Therefore, the last part is about the thoughts of Urfalıs on conservatism in Urfa. That is to say, the study aims to investigate daily life of Urfalıs and their relation with

conservatism, to see their life style, their struggle with power of state and see opportunities to struggle with power, state, and ideologies. Thus, in this study we can see individuals' fight, rules, solutions with the power, powerful and ideology.

As a result, the study aims to understand the meaning of conservatism, to analyse Urfa through interviews of Urfalis and through a review of literature on the representation of Urfa. This paper will investigate Urfa's conservative image, Urfa's general image and the meaning of being conservative for Urfalis. The effect of state politics and power on this conservative image and responses of citizens will be another concern of this study.

## METHOD

I investigate this issue through a qualitative research approach as this is the most appropriate approach for my chosen topic. The method is an in-depth interview. The interviews are conducted with Urfa locals.

The claims of Urfalis about their definition and the conservatism of Urfa are the main concerns of this study. In-depth interviews allow us to find out from a number of local sources their own view of the city and themselves. This method gives them the chance to express their ideas about Urfa's "false image" and provide a "correct" image of their city. This method also allows the interviewee to explain in his or her own words their own ideas and life with details they choose to disclose.

The method chosen has disadvantages, including the interviewer effect and representativity. Interviewees may be hesitant to speak frankly since their speech is recorded. In order to avoid this, the interviewees' names were altered and they were informed that this would be the case.

Additionally, interviewees may not be sure if they can trust the interviewer. In order to establish trust, their ideas were summarized to



them and various questions and ideas were discussed with them in an interactive way.

Additionally, representativeness may not be achieved in an absolute way because this interview study depends on a limited number of people.

Although a larger sample would have been beneficial, it was not feasible for a research of this size and type. Twenty-six (13 female, 13 male) people were interviewed. Their ages range from 22 to 78. All of the interviewed are Urfa residents. All come from an urban background and all live in the provincial capital. To be more representative, the interviewees come from various socio-economic backgrounds. All of the interviewees I know personally or was advised to speak with; thus, the interviewee pool is not entirely random. The interviewees include illiterate individuals, elementary school graduates, high school graduates, university graduates, housewives, professors, shopkeepers and students. All of the interviewees define themselves as “Muslim,” but define Urfa in various ways. A complete rejection of Islam is considered an extremely radical stance in Urfa, though levels of religious practice vary. Some of the interviewees are Kurdish, but choose to see themselves as Kurdish speaking citizens of the Turkish Republic and the native language of all but one interviewee is Turkish; one interviewee listed Kurdish as his/her native language. An appointment was made with each interviewee and meetings lasted between half an hour and two hours, depending on the interviewee’s answers. A set questionnaire was

used to begin the conversation, but further questions were asked depending on interviewee answers.

In order to have an efficient and reliable interview, meetings took place in private, within a group or with two interviewees at a time, whichever made the interviewee(s) more comfortable. Additionally, a group interview made in a “sıra”<sup>14</sup> of women was conducted, and various interesting ideas and dialogues have been observed during the meeting. The interviews were conducted in Urfa between November 2007 and June 2008. All the names of the interviewees have been altered and last names deleted to ensure the privacy of interviewees, as mentioned above. A list of interviewees with short biographies is included in an appendix of this thesis. Most of the interviewees were opposed to being recorded, necessitating notes to be taken instead. Some even tried intervening in my note taking and prevented me from taking notes on matters that concerned some family issues. All recordings were analyzed by me.

Most interviewees did not accept being recorded. They did not feel comfortable with the technology and were afraid their recorded speeches may be used again. The findings and conclusions were not solely based

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<sup>14</sup> A traditional, regular meeting of women.

on interviews. Academic research, articles, newspapers, popular TV shows, etc. were consulted in order to ensure greater reliability. Written materials may be summarized as follows:

- folkloric studies (on language, accent, traditions, architecture, proverbs)
- seminars (documents used in seminars) on Urfa's history, present and cultural heritage
- city annuals
- presentation books on Urfa prepared by the Republic of Turkey Ministry of Culture and Tourism
- literature on conservatism theory and Turkish conservatism

All interviews were conducted in Turkish. Translations are mine. Translation may result interpretation problems. In order to reduce mistranslation, expressions and local dialectal differences were considered carefully in rendering the meaning of sentences during translation.

The *Sociology of Everyday Life* served as the basis for the interpretation of these data as it has been mentioned in introduction.

Reshaping daily life is a significant aim of the Turkish modernization process as it is an indispensable aim for modernism also. Modernism is a project and an idea with a philosophical basis and defined daily routines. Therefore, the socio-political characteristics and politics affect daily life as well as its interaction with modernism in Turkey. Thus, conservatism -- as a political discourse, as a sensitivity to traditions, as a characteristic of the Turkish state, as a critique of modernism -- is also interpreted and judged by people in their daily life. They consider the negative and positive attributes of conservatism and its various functions. The power relationship between people and state politics is asymmetric; the interaction between the state and people is always meaningful, as can be seen in the modernization and change Turkey underwent.

Thus, the sociology of everyday life is an efficient method to investigate the conservative image of the city, its relationship with the discourse of the state and the interpretation of conservatism and the state ideology by the people.

## LAYOUT OF STUDY

In the first part of the study, the term “conservatism” is discussed. The definition of the term and the basic topics raised by it are explained to be institutions, family, religion, human nature, reason, society, freedom, equality, government, democracy and change. The ideas of conservatism on society and social order are the other topics argued in this part.

In the second part, conservatism in Turkey is discussed. The characteristics of Turkish conservatism is explained to explore the relationship between Turkey and conservatism. I look into three different branches of conservative thought -- right wing, traditionalist and statist -- that manifest themselves without calling themselves conservative: statism, backwardness, traditionalism, right wing, nationalism, Islamism, 1980s and changing perceptions on being conservative.

In the third part, conservatism in Urfa is explored through the ideas of Urfalis. In the onset, Urfa’s history and present characteristics are briefly introduced. Additionally, Urfalis’ self-definition is explained; Urfalis

define themselves and criticize the ideas of non-Urfalis<sup>15</sup> of the city. The “essence” of being Urfalı and the argument on Urfalis’ conservative characteristics are inquired into next. The possibility of change of Urfa and Urfalis’ ideas on its change are studied regarding discussions on changes in women, education, clothing and traditions. Religion, an important topic in conservatism, is discussed by Urfalis, who argue whether Urfalis are getting religious or conservative and explain the relationship between the state and religion in Urfa.

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<sup>15</sup> Non-Urfalı: a person who is not from Urfa.

## PART. 1: CONSERVATISM

Conservatism as a thought may be as old as human history, if we define it as “the attitude to conserve what is present.”<sup>16</sup> Following this idea, we can see that conservatism is not a new idea in Turkey or in Urfa. Thus, I need to explain the main characteristics of conservatism, and a brief history of it. That is a wide ideology with a long history and there is not just one solid, homogenous conservatism. I cannot cover all the types on conservatism, but a general overview. The main factors that led to the birth of contemporary conservatism may be understood through the lenses of four factors: the Enlightenment, socialist movements, the French Revolution and the Industrial Revolution. All have in one way or another contributed to conservative thought. However, conservatism as a term was first used by Edmund Burke. He used the term in his letters and books to mean “preserve.” Concerned with the destructive nature of the French Revolution (1789), he advised natural change and proposed the protection of traditions and values. Louis de Bonald (1754-1840), Edmund Burke (1729-1797) and Joseph de Maistre (1753- 1821) may be

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<sup>16</sup> Mannheim, Karl, *Conservatism: a contribution to the sociology of knowledge* Translated by Volker Meja and David Kettler, Routledge and Kegan Paul, London : 1986.

called the classical conservatives who shaped the first frame of the theory.

Two main streams are evident in conservative thought. Burke, an English thinker, represents the first stream of conservatism. This stream is seen in present conservatism and neo-conservatism. Burke labeled this type of conservatism “liberal conservatism.”<sup>17</sup> Burke criticized the French revolution and the Enlightenment and considered both extreme changes. Additionally, unlike Bonald and Maistre, Burke defended a parliamentary and moderate government. Burke thinks that conservatism means becoming cautious about the speed of change, and appreciation of old institutions while changing. Therefore, destruction of change and modernism must be controlled in a conservative attitude.<sup>18</sup> In this study, the definition of conservatism is especially based on the school of Edmund Burke.

On the other hand, French thinkers Louis de Bonald and Joseph de Maistre were against the Enlightenment and the French Revolution and ardently defended the monarchy. Therefore, French conservatism

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<sup>17</sup> Beneton, Philippe, *Muhafazakarlık* İletişim Yayınları, İstanbul: 1998 ( first published in 1991).

<sup>18</sup> Özipek, Bekir Berat *Muhafazakarlık: Akıl, Toplum, Siyaset* Ankara: Liberte Yayınları, 2004, p.8



became strict to preserve the elements of the old system, including the church, the monarchy and social classes since there is a “great danger,” i.e., revolution, against the order. They were less critical after the revolution began and a new order was introduced.

As these thinkers treated any kind of change with suspicion, they were deeply concerned with the results of these changes. Significant changes came about as a result of these major historical events, including human reason and individuality becoming the center of the universe; the distribution of wealth and the social hierarchy were questioned to the extent that established order had to transform itself and to share what a privileged few had. What followed was a change in social order and hierarchy. Finally, irreversible changes came to economic life production means.

“In addition to various specialties and views of conservatism in different periods, two characteristics have generally defined conservatism: The first one is distrust of human nature and tasteless and rootless inventions. The second is the trust of historical continuity and a traditional frame.”<sup>19</sup>

It is important to look at these premises because they enable us to

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<sup>19</sup> Ibid, p. 118.

explore the concept of conservatism. We will next explore these characteristics.

### 1.1. Institutions

Conservatism treats family, religion and church (institutionalized religion) as basic institutions of the society and the state.<sup>20</sup> Conservatism defends social solidarity and institutions for the sake of the order and safety of the community. The structure and definition of family may change, but its primary role as the basis of society is inevitable according to conservatism. Religion is also supposed to keep people together in a common order. The church, as organized religion, is seen as the defender of the common interests and the order of morality more than the real defender of true religion.

The preservation of old institutions is significant for conservatism to be able to sustain balance and order in society and keep the society connected and healthy. Balance is among the main aims of conservatism.

The social harmony of an organic society means the balance and order of the society. Institutions are the main structures of social life. Family,

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<sup>20</sup> The church represents institutionalized religion for Christianity while in Turkey the *Başbakanlık Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı* (Directorate of Religious Affairs) is the head of institutionalized religion for Muslims.

community, church and religion are examples of traditional institutions. Additionally, conservatism is afraid of government tyranny as it may lead to the abolition of old institutions. Conservatism considers old institutions as stabilizers between the people and the state. The abolition or weakening of the institutions leads people to lose power in their relationship with the state and destroys social order and harmony. On the other hand, the birth of new institutions can be defined as a result of new needs and new social orders. Therefore, institutions and traditions prove their worth with the passage of time.

## **1.2. Human Nature**

Assumptions on human nature as well as institutions are significant to demonstrate the main foundations of conservatism. To a conservative, human nature has a tendency toward evil from the very beginning. People are naturally born selfish and destructive linking to the doctrine of Original Sin.<sup>21</sup> The first thing that a conservative learns about the human is that every member of the human family is unique. Conservatives believe that economic and spiritual dimensions are intermingled and inseparable from one another. Additionally,

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<sup>21</sup> Honderich, Ted, *Conservatism*, New York, Penguin, 1991, p.45.

conservatives believe a human's physical and spiritual development cannot be directed by external powers. Every person is responsible for his or her essential development that is to benefit him or herself and the society. The choices that can direct humans are his or her choices alone.<sup>22</sup> This demonstrates the reason why conservatism pays attention to the social order and institutions. As Özipek also explains, people can live a good life only when they learn through cultural and historical accumulation; they cannot be successful when they live in an atomized and individual way.<sup>23</sup>

### 1.3. Reason

After summarizing the thoughts of conservatism on human nature, we can investigate the ideas of conservatism on the definition and functions of "reason". Conservatism is critical of "modernist reason." Modernism defines human reason as the main source of knowledge. On the other hand, conservatism argues that the source of knowledge is historical and traditional accumulation. Therefore, conservatism defends reason as "per se" instead of as "tabula rasa." A conservative is against social engineering and thinks that society is an organic entity (as explained in the text

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<sup>22</sup> Özipek, Bekir Berat *Muhafazakarlık: Akıl, Toplum, Siyaset*, Ankara: Liberte Yayınları, 2004, p.72-73 .

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

above) and that external intervention ruins its health. Abstract, inexperienced plans, programs, ideas, ideologies and theories are inconvenient for the society. Useful knowledge is practical knowledge, knowledge obtained from traditions and experiences as a result of specific problems and needs. Proving that practical knowledge is useful depends on the efficiency and persistence of institutions. Finally, conservatives are against theoretical knowledge as they find it “abstract, unreal and incapable of dealing with the complexity of society.”<sup>24</sup>

#### **1.4. Society:**

Deficiencies in human nature, limits of human reason and imperfections of humans necessitate a society with solidarity.<sup>25</sup> Conservative thought conceives of society as an organic being. Society is therefore something that has grown rather than being constructed<sup>26</sup> and it is natural in the sense of being informed by a certain system of inheritance.<sup>27</sup> Thus, institutions mentioned above (as family, religion and traditions) are necessary to keep the society together.

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<sup>24</sup> Ibid, p. 17.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid, p. 72–73.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid, p. 156.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid, p.158 .

According to the organic society concept, social groups do not exist as a result of a conscious and voluntary contract but have naturally evolved. As Özipek says, a society's body and institutions are shaped by natural powers; therefore, the tissue of the society is supposed to be preserved by the individuals living in the society.<sup>28</sup> Society is therefore more than the sum of all its parts.<sup>29</sup> Each unit of this organic society (family, business, government, religion) has its own tasks to run the society in a healthy and efficient way. What is important here is that the society comes before the individual and, in fact, shapes the characteristics and personality of the individual.

### 1.5. Freedom and equality

Thoughts of conservatism on freedom and equality are also related with its views about "freedom and equality". Conservatives do not assume that people are "naturally equal." Differences between people are inevitable. An organic society necessitates different abilities and qualifications among its members. Therefore, individuals are supposed to have different roles and different positions in a social hierarchy. That is to say, conservative thought presupposes that all occupations are almost equally

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<sup>28</sup> Erdoğan, Mustafa, "Muhafazakarlık: Ana temalar." *Liberal Düşünce*. 34 (Bahar 2004): 6-7.

<sup>29</sup> Honderich, Ted, *Conservatism*, New York, Penguin, 1991, p.153.

important and necessary; however, individuals engaged in specific work are superior to others. Conservatism may respond that social ranks are also natural and that all professions are important but that some necessitate better performance and ability and that people engaged in them be more important. However, this does not justify inequality between people in contrast to the equal necessity of all occupations.<sup>30</sup>

Additionally, conservatism defends the freedom to acquire and hold private property as a significant right. Conservatism defines freedom as the self-determination of the individual in the natural order of the society with the guidance of human history and the traditional order. Therefore, equal property for everyone is unacceptable and unjustifiable according to conservative thought.

## 1.6. Government and Democracy

As we have also seen its concerns on equality and freedom, conservatism is mainly a political doctrine<sup>31</sup>. Although conservative politics are diverse in time and place, it is significant to study the theoretical basis of conservative politics. Conservatism opposes democracy and advises an

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<sup>30</sup> Honderich, Ted, *Conservatism*, New York, Penguin, 1991.

<sup>31</sup> Özipek, Bekir Berat *Muhafazakarlık: Akıl, Toplum, Siyaset*, Ankara: Liberte Yayınları, 2004.

elite ruling class on the one hand and aims to defend the citizens from the tyranny of the state on the other. According to conservatives, popular enthusiasm and the tyranny of the majority must be avoided by the government. (Conservatism is afraid that democracy will lead to the tyranny of the unqualified, low-class majority.) Thus, in order to prevent absolute tyranny, conservatives have proposed an anti-democratic and elitist state model. Conservatism has not trusted democracy and the decision making of the majority in the first place. However, conservative thought survives in political parties through new politics and concepts today.

### **1.7. Change**

One of the basic characteristics of conservatism is its suspicious attitude to “change.” Conservatism has been accused of being reactionary, but it is not against change. Conservatism proposes a steady change instead a radical rupture. Conservatism defends old institutions as organic parts of society that were shaped by the society and became a natural part of it. Thus, “conservatism prefers the familiar to the unknown”<sup>32</sup> and defends the practical knowledge and experience as the main proof of the essential

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<sup>32</sup> Mannheim, Karl, *Conservatism: a Contribution to the Sociology of Knowledge*, Trans., Volker Meja and David Kettler, Routledge and Kegan Paul, London : 1986.



necessity for institutions and regulation. Additionally, Funda Gençoğlu Onbaşı cites that, Robert Nisbet thinks about the role of change for conservatism as “Change is possible as well as necessary.”<sup>33</sup> “Conservatism is not the absolute defender of the familiar. There is a distinction between what is familiar and good, and what is familiar and bad; hence, there is a distinction between what is unfamiliar and good, and what is unfamiliar and bad. Anything can become familiar: confusion, torture and boredom can.”<sup>34</sup> Thus, conservatism defends the good and familiar; it defends the “good traditions.”

To sum up, conservatism cannot be identified as opposition to change where change is not (1) just the ending of the familiar, or (2) the alteration of the fundamental, or (3) the destruction of the good, or (4) what affects our identities or self-conceptions, or (5) defaulting on a long contract.”<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> G ng rmez, Beng l. “Muhafazakar paradigma: ‘Dogma’ ve ‘ nyargı’.” In *Muhafazakar D ş nce*. 1 (yaz 2004), p. 25.

<sup>34</sup> Honderich, Ted, *Conservatism*, New York, Penguin, 1991, p. 2.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid, p. 15.

## PART. 2: TURKISH CONSERVATISM

After a brief introduction on conservatism, this part will explore Turkish conservatism and its link with the ideology of conservatism. Studying Turkish conservatism will help us to understand Urfa's identity as "conservative" since it is also a city of Turkey, affected from the politics of the state.

In order to comprehend the notion of conservatism in Turkey, it is necessary to investigate its relationship with the establishment of the Republic of Turkey. It is therefore useful to take a glance to the Turkish nation-state and its historical and ideological background. By doing so, I intend to explore the ways in which the very conceptualization of conservatism differs and adapts itself in Turkish thought and praxis. However, this part cannot cover every dynamics of conservatism and its whole historical background.

The following is an investigation of conservatism in Turkish thought in relation to state-led change and transformation in adapting to modern life and its dictates. In line with this, I will look into three branches of conservative thought -- right wing, traditionalist and statist -- that

manifest themselves without calling themselves conservative but belonging to the same conservative nebula. While doing this, I will also explain the conservative characteristic of Turkish conservatism, in addition to the thoughts accepted by conservative thinkers in Turkey about women and family. This will enable us to understand conservatism in the Turkish context.

### **2.1. Statist(im) as Conservatism**

When Sultan Mahmud II declared the *Tanzimat Fermanı* (Declaration of Ordering) in 1839, it caused an irreversible change of reaction in the history of Turkish modernization. The declaration was the start of an official modernization process to rescue the Ottoman Empire from perishing. The aim was to prevent the defeat of the Ottoman Empire by Western countries through the importation of “useful” developments in the West. While technical developments in the army were the first markers of decline in the state, the equality of people was seen as a significant concern and a measure to keep minorities loyal to the state. A series of changes were introduced to the system ranging from a new administrative system with provincial representative assemblies, a standardized system of taxation (equal taxes for Muslims and non-

Muslims), a new recruitment system based on the Prussian model and the opening of secular schools to securing the rights of individual, regardless of ethnicity or religion. These regulations are the core of the social, economic, administrative and judicial institutions that a modern and secular state needs.

Following a brief suspension, the process continued with the *First Meşrutiyet* (The First Constitutional Era, 1876) and then the *Second Meşrutiyet* ( The Second Constitutional Era, 1908) following interruptions. In 1906, Sultan Abdulhamid II suspended both Parliament and the constitution citing concerns with the “safety and stability of the *Devlet-i Aliye-i Osmaniye.*” (The Sublime Ottoman State) <sup>36</sup>

After the defeat of the Ottoman Empire in World War I, the empire collapsed and the War of Independence commenced. A new state emerged from the War of Independence and became known as the “Republic of Turkey.” In 1923, under the leadership of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, the newly established republic set its foundation as a modern and secular nation-state. This state was formed following radical changes and reforms in the areas of social life and administrative and judiciary

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<sup>36</sup> Berkes, Niyazi, Türkiye’de Çağdaşlaşma, YKY, İstanbul: 2002, p. 412.

systems under a Parliament constrained by a democratic system of government. All these changes were termed “revolutions” in official state history. However, as paradoxical as it may seem, these revolutions soon became “unchangeable and natural” changes. That is, after the establishment of the contemporary Turkish nation-state, changes made to social, political and judicial areas were then preserved. In doing so, the new order was consolidated. It is reasonable to conclude that the revolution process used a top-down approach. Change from the bottom never seemed to be the case. Change had its roots in the *Tanzimat Fermanı* and concluded its painstaking development with the establishment of the new Turkish Republic.

What is so paradoxical in modern Turkish political thought about change and its nature? While the new order is deemed to be “natural” and “unchangeable,” the characteristics of the Turkish Republic are in need of being addressed where problems arise. It is quite common to define the Turkish state and people as modern, nationalistic and conservative. However, what lies behind this?

When the Turkish Republic was established, the notion of a nation-state was significant in the discourse; namely, the notion of “one nation, one

language, one flag.” Contrary to past state experience the new state was about to face minority problems and non-Turkish and non-Muslim communities contesting the ideal of a homogenous, (secular) nation. Moreover, religion has always been of great significance to Turkey’s state ideology even though it defines itself as secular. The state has always kept religion under control, declared Sunni Islam as the only true interpretation of Islam and Islam as the only religion in Turkey. The Directorate of Religious Affairs was established in 1924 as the primary institution of religion<sup>37</sup> and all alternate sects and their needs for religious education consistently dismissed and ignored in the religious affairs of the Turkish public.

Turkish modern approach defends an authoritarian state more than democracy, as conservatism ideology itself. Consequently, Turkish State aims to build a modern nation and state; whereas, it is conservative while defending its own values.

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<sup>37</sup> <http://www.diyamet.gov.tr/english/default.asp>. accessed on January 1, 2009.

Kandiyoti <sup>38</sup>thinks that these changes were regarded as “modernization and nation building with progress and the irresistible forward march of civilization.” She adds that:

“The new national education was instituted throughout the country and teachers were supposed to bring enlightenment where obscurantism and superstition prevailed. As a result, perspectives emanating from official Kemalism equate modernization and nation building with progress and the irresistible forward march of civilization, the heroic figures of the idealist *kaymakam* (district officer) and the village teacher bringing enlightenment where obscurantism and superstition prevailed.”<sup>39</sup>

To her, as the quote indicates, the Turkish state has been an authoritarian and conservative project. This project, therefore, also has disadvantages.

She adds:

“Critics of modernization think that this project marginalizes and even destroys the life-worlds of those purported to represent the ‘traditional.’ The Western orientation of reformist elites has lent substance to the notion that state-led modernization is an alien and alienating project, inviting local attempts of resistance or subversion.”<sup>40</sup>

This top-down approach to change has created resistance in the Turkish public; in turn, the public has always tried to conserve its identity and cultural and religious thoughts while encountering state-led modernization. People have defended their non-Turkish national origins and national languages as well as their religious beliefs and their

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<sup>38</sup> Kandiyoti, Deniz, “Gendering the modern: on missing dimensions in the study of Turkish modernity.” In *Rethinking Modernity and National Identity in Turkey*. Ed. Sibel Bozdoğan, Reşat Kasaba, Seattle : University of Washington, 1997, p.113-114.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid, 113.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid, 113- 114.

traditions. People speak many languages (Kurdish, Arabic, etc) for example, as a first language even the bans on speaking non- Turkish languages. Additionally, state proposes an “ideal and modern woman identity”, a woman who can work and get educated as a “modern person” but who is “dignified and has good moral character” and who does not wear headscarf. She has to be soldier of the modern state, not a “free female” as a “spoiled western woman”. Nevertheless, women have worn headscarves and asked to get education and work wearing them even Turkish State has never approved headscarf and always labelled it as a non-modern wearing style.

Despite the state having a unique and authoritarian understanding of modernism, the modernism process has benefited the people in such areas as mass education, standardization of common life and practices, citizenship rights and so on. The state’s unquestionable authority and existence and the discourse of appointed civil officers were defended by three interruptions in Turkish political life. Three coups d’état were definite military interventions underlying the state’s real owners and sovereigns, even if power was returned to the elected bodies after each restoration of public disorder. The residue of each coup was significantly seen in legislation and appointments/elections of top civil servants in the



bureaucracy. These coups have defended an elitist governing class and this (an elitist governing class, instead of democracy) has been also suggestion of conservative thought in its first existence.

## **2. 2. Conservatism Perceived as Reactionism by Modernizing State**

As people disobeyed and defied the state as we have mentioned above (on headscarf ban and resistance to the disagreement on the national variety in Turkey), its official and military duress, conservatism has been labeled as reactionism by modern Turkish State. People who suffer from rapid change and want a steady change are labelled as “conservative”, and they are criticized by state and labeled as “reactionist”<sup>41</sup>. Urfalıs’ are also defined as conservative since their traditional lifestyle still survives. Many people in Turkey and Urfa have attempted to preserve their lifestyle and values against the reforms made by Atatürk. They have considered that modernization has been an extreme change and it has been harmful for their lives. It is, therefore, important to look into reactionism. The primary meaning of “reactionism” is not contradicting official state ideology. The aims of the state are taken as the main criteria for being right and contemporary because the power to legitimize is

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<sup>41</sup> “Gericici” in Turkish. This is a serious critics in Turkish, and mostly use as an insult for people who are accused for being non-modern and who do not want any good development or change.

the privilege of the state. According to Güler,<sup>42</sup> reactionism is a kind of criticism of the idea of linear history, positivism and modernism, all defended by the Turkish state. Thus, according to the state, being critical of the dominant ideology is enough to be branded as reactionary. Somel<sup>43</sup> also emphasizes that ideas and ideologies have their aims and cannot be inherently reactionist, but may be regarded as reactionist by opposing ideologies. If the ideologies have different targets, the other targets are interpreted as “useless” and “harmful” -- in other words, reactionist. That is why Islam, and political ideology of Islamism are defined as reactionist. That is also the reason for Islam and Islamism (as a political movement challenging secularist regime) are defined as reactionist. Therefore, “conservative” is used as an insult when it is referred to “common people” meaning “reactionist” as referring Urfalı’ as conservative. However, “conservative” may be used with good references “conserving values of the state and nation”. Additionally, on the “conservative” individuals’ side, “conservative” is used as “an individual preserving her/his values.”

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<sup>42</sup> Güler, İlhami “Gericiliğin Gerçek ve Enstrümental Tabiatı Üzerine,”Doğu Batı, 1998, no: 3, Gericilik.

<sup>43</sup> Somel, Selçuk, “Gericilik,” “İlericilik” ve Aydınlar,”Doğu Batı, 1998, no: 3, Gericilik.

Another idea defined as reactionist in Turkey is piety, specifically the adherence to Islam. Islam is a religion that claims to be the unchangeable Word of God. According to Belge,<sup>44</sup> Islam is considered dogmatic and reactionist because of this holy legitimacy of the religion and its persistence as an unchangeable book. Because of this, the conservation of tradition is inevitable in conserving religion. Tradition is also preserved by conservatism, as previously discussed.

Islam's ability to adapt to change and modernism is defended by many thinkers, including Mehmet Akif Ersoy. Ersoy thinks the Turkish state must follow the West in technology but must conserve the values of Turks, as explained in his poetry collection, *Safahat*.<sup>45</sup> Additionally, Erdoğan<sup>46</sup> discusses how Ersoy takes the Japanese as an example for the modernization process, claiming that they accepted only Western technology and not its morality. Briefly, the so-called "reactionary Islam" defends that Islam is the last and true religion that will be valid till the end of the world; thus, it is the religion of all ages and it will always be contemporary with changes that are suitable to the essence of religion.

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<sup>44</sup> Belge, Murat, "Muhafazakarlık Üzerine", *Modern Türkiye'de Siyasi Düşünce: Muhafazakarlık, İletişim Yayınları, İstanbul: 2004, p:92.*

<sup>45</sup> Ersoy, Mehmet Akif, *Safahat, Timaş Yayınları, İstanbul: 1998.*

<sup>46</sup> Erdoğan, Mustafa, "Safahat'ın temalarından biri: İslami Modernleşme Görüşü" in "Liberal Toplum, Liberal Siyaset," *Siyasal Kitabevi, Ankara: 1993.*

Therefore, as Aydın<sup>47</sup> notes, Islam is defined as reactionist since it is not approved of by the state ideology but is ignored, though it is not reactionary.

On the other hand, change is also a serious theoretical problem with significant practical ramifications with Islamists in their conservative attitudes, too. Islamist thinkers discuss the criteria of change as well as the reasons and consequences of change. Turkish modernization has always shared similar concerns over the modernization process.

Additionally, the first advice of Islamic thought is the same: We must import their technology, but not their culture, as Ersoy suggested.

However, it is evident that the technical improvements suggest a modern lifestyle as well, as İsmet Özel argues.<sup>48</sup> This effect of development is currently being considered and discussed in both modernist and Islamist thought in Turkey. Even Islamist thinkers, such as Özel, consider the technique and ideology of modernization as inseparable and he adds that we have to react to technology, too, if we are against the ideology of modernism. They live their lives with contemporary technology, produce TV programs, publish books and certainly sustain their daily life

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<sup>47</sup> Aydın, Mehmet, "İrticaya İlişkin Bazı düşünceler," in *Doğu Batı*, 1998, sayı:3, Gericilik.

<sup>48</sup> Özel, İsmet, *Üç mesele: teknik medeniyet yabancılaşma*, Düşünce Yayınları, İstanbul: 1978.

with opportunities provided by modern life. These contradictions of Islamist thinkers result in disappointments, pessimism and increasing disagreements among them. The same problems, however, have led to significant arguments over the relationship of modernization and Islam. Therefore, the ideas of Islamist thinkers on change and the essence of change demonstrate yet another example of the contradictory character of Turkish conservative thought.

### **2. 3. Traditionalism**

Another significant group is traditionalist in conservative thought. Conservative thought aims to conserve tradition for the sake of the natural order, stability and societal balance. Therefore, traditions are not rejected by conservatism; instead, conservative thought defends producing and renewing traditions in accordance with their substance and essence. A survey of thoughts espoused by Turkish conservatives on tradition and their traditionalist ideas follow.

İsmayıl Hakkı Baltacıođlu (1932-1978) is considered a “modernist” and “traditionalist” Turkish thinker whose ideas on change and traditions remind us about change in conservative thought. He suggests a

modernization project based on the traditions of a specific culture. Therefore, he is a traditionalist who emphasizes local differences and unchangeable essences of these cultures. As is the case with conservatism, his traditionalist ideas also indicates that traditions such as language, morality, taste, law and habits are an unchangeable essence of a specific culture; changing them changes the society. Thus, according to Baltacıođlu, tradition is the factor that sustains continuity and the foundation through the process of change. He also defends the modernization process of the then newly established Turkish Republic. He calls the new state and Atatürk's reforms an inevitable evolution that does not contradict with Turkish society and writes and works as an adherent intellectual of the new state. Therefore, he is both a modernist and a traditionalist thinker who wants to legitimize the new state with his arguments, which define the reforms as part of Turkish traditions and inevitable consequences of Turkish traditions.<sup>49</sup>

Hilmi Ziya Ülken (1901-1974) is an intellectual who defends the same position. He investigated the roots of the modern Kemalist reforms tracing back the Ottoman intellectual life. He, although critical of the particulars of the reforms, supports them in terms of their historical roots

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<sup>49</sup> Özman, Aylin, "İsmayıl Hakkı Baltacıođlu" in, *Modern Türkiye'de Siyasi Düşünce: Modernleşme ve Batıcılık*, İletişim Yayınları, İstanbul: 2004.

and to build a new traditional background for the new state. He argues that the Kemalist reforms are not foreign regulations to the citizens of Turkey but are another stage of the modernization of the Turkish people that started in the Ottoman period, namely the *Tanzimat* period. In order to support this claim, he investigated and listed attempts at Westernization starting from the *Tanzimat* period up until today.

Ülken emphasized that Mithat Paşa, an Ottoman intellectual who lived in the late Ottoman period, had translated relevant ideas on the civil code many years before its acceptance in Turkey. Additionally, the Turkish state attempted to conduct its own state tradition in administration and executive affairs. Therefore, protocols are ordered in a Western style. To do so, working hours, working clothes, working conditions and legislative regulations of work were adapted to a modern bureaucratic system. Furthermore, “Republic Balls” may be considered an example of new, modern habits of the new state. These balls had a significant role on building the habit and manners of the new modern Turkish men and women where the elites of the state danced and entertained together.<sup>50</sup> Therefore, tradition is also something created and followed, it is not a natural being. As we can see in the previous

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<sup>50</sup> Deren, Seçil, “Kültürel Batılılaşma”, *Modernleşme ve Batıcılık*, İletişim, İstanbul: 2004.

examples, conservatism claims the necessity of traditions without denying that they are “invented” and “made”. Therefore, any “modern” or “contemporary” may be “preserved” in a “conservative” way.

The family is another important topic in the Turkish modernization process. The changing roles of men and women in the Turkish Republic changed the definition of the family and the structure of the family.

Women’s education and employment was encouraged in the Turkish Republic and for the first time, working women were appreciated more than housewives. The fight for women’s rights, which aimed to make women equal to men, has also changed family life in Turkey.

Additionally, the reshaping of economic life in the new country, the modernization of the economic lifestyle and the industrialization of the country enabled the “individualism” of people and “nuclear families” to increase, reducing in number the “grand families.”<sup>51</sup> Individualism increased through the contributions of both men and women to public life.<sup>52</sup> As a matter of fact, the emphasis of Turkish modernization on family is a conservative attitude (or vice versa) since for both modernism

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<sup>51</sup> Duben, A. C. Behar, *Marriage, Family and Fertility, 1880- 1940*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge: 2002 (first published in 1991).

<sup>52</sup> Aytaç, A. M, *Ailenin Serencamı Türkiye’de Aile Fikrinin Oluşması*, Dipnot Yayınları, Ankara: 2007, p. 166.



and conservatism, the family is the core of their social projects. It has been argued that conservatives think that the family is the main social structure of society that reproduces and keeps the values and targets of the ideology. The definition of men and women should be interpreted and their roles accomplished in healthy, stable and content families. The same ideas are valid for the Turkish modernization project; however, the targets of the family are not to preserve the “traditional essence” of the society but to preserve the “modern essence” the new essence of society in modern culture. Thus, both “modern state” and conservative thought want to preserve the family, but they declare it different duties. They suggest projection of “the essence” but their “prior essences” are different.

Turkey’s socio-economic lifestyle may help us understand the conservative base of the Turkish state. This lifestyle still carries the effects of the Ottoman Empire, in which the “land regime” sustained the state system. The political economy of Turkey carried over the agricultural economic system from the Ottomans up until the 1950s.<sup>53</sup> Ottoman bureaucrats and intellectuals were the negotiators between the people and the state. That is to say, they had significant control over the

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<sup>53</sup> İnalçık, Halil, *Osmanlı İmparatorluğu- Toplum ve Ekonomi*, Eren Yayıncılık, İstanbul: 1993.

land and the economy in the Ottoman Empire. Therefore, it is not surprising to see the Ottoman elite as the builders of the Turkish Republic.<sup>54</sup> Following the establishment of the Turkish Republic, the civilian-military bureaucracy has been the indisputable hegemonic power; rusticity was concealed and ignored.<sup>55</sup>

In Turkey urbanites (“citizens”) and villagers (“people”) have been considered separate. Villagers were seen as the authentic, naive and ignorant part of the state that must be educated by the elites.<sup>56</sup> This attitude toward people can be called “the discourse of indigenosity (*yerlilik*)” as Bora does. In Turkey indigenosity is mostly defended by Kemalist thought as well as the conservative-nationalist school. It means to conserve the peculiarity of Turkey’s indigenosity against the West and cosmopolitanism.

Indigenosity is also a construction. It folklorizes local regions, as can be seen in terming Urfa conservative. Conservative also means indigenosity in a sense. The importance of indigenosity lies mainly in the distinction between “people” and “citizens.” “People” consist of villagers who are

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<sup>54</sup> Cem, İsmail, *Tarih Açısından 12 Mart*, Cem Yayınevi, İstanbul: 1977, p. 172-173.

<sup>55</sup> Altan, Mehmet, “Batılılaşmanın Sosyo- politik Temelleri, Düşünsel ve Toplumsal Yapısı,” *Modernleşme ve Batıcılık, İletişim*, İstanbul: 2004, p. 143.

<sup>56</sup> Çiğdem, Ahmet, *Taşra Epiği*, Birikim, İstanbul: 2001.

considered simple, but precious people that carry the essential spirit of Turkish culture because they have not been affected by the Arabic and Persian culture of the Ottomans. On the other hand, as Bora and Canefe claim, they are supposed to be educated by the republican elites.<sup>57</sup> They explain that, according to the Turkish state, the ultimate truth belongs to the governing group (the citizens); thus, the people have no right to give advice on cultural and social politics. It is the pure community that has no ability to produce anything original, but it is supposed to obey what it is told. So, the people have to carry on an ideal identity. They are the protectors of religious and national values. Bora and Canefe criticize these state views and think they lead to anti-intellectualism, also.<sup>58</sup> It has been seen that Urfa is also folklorized above, in introduction part of the thesis.

Thus, the Turkish bureaucracy, “the builder elites,” governs the other partners of the power: the bourgeois, the farmers, the workers and the people. The republic’s bourgeois were under the political control of the bureaucracy in its economic enterprises until the present. However, following industrialization and Turkey’s adaptation to globalization,

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<sup>57</sup> Bora, Tanıl, N. Canefe, “Türkiye’de Popülist Milliyetçilik,” In *Modern Türkiye’de Siyasi Düşünce: Milliyetçilik*, Çağaloğlu, İstanbul: İletişim, p. 635.

<sup>58</sup> Bora, Tanıl, “Muhafazakar Yerlilik Söylemi,” In *Modern Türkiye’de Siyasi Düşünce: Muhafazakarlık*, İstanbul: İletişim, İstanbul: 2008, p. 445

power fell into the hands of more diverse groups, though the state retained most power.<sup>59</sup>

“Women” have been another significant signifier of modernization in Turkey, as we have mentioned previously, and were constructed and interpreted specifically by male actors; thus, according to Göle, women have been considered the “touchstone” of Westernization.<sup>60</sup> According to Kandiyoti, women have been an argumentative image and symbol of Turkish modernization and their role and identity has been an issue of conflict between the opponents and adherents of modernization.<sup>61</sup> The rights of women have been regulated with modern laws and Islamic rules. The Islamic order was changed for the sake of building a new modern state. Schools for women were opened to educate women as teachers, as officers of the Turkish Republic. Modern clothes for women (without headscarves) were encouraged and women were invited to exist in the “public arena” instead of just the house. For the first time, the

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<sup>59</sup> Ibid, p.145

<sup>60</sup> Göle, Nilüfer, *The Forbidden Modern: Civilisation and Veiling*, University of Michigan Press, Ann Arbor: 1999

<sup>61</sup> Kandiyoti, Deniz, “Gendering the modern: on missing dimensions in the study of Turkish modernity.” In *Rethinking Modernity and National Identity in Turkey*. Ed. Sibel Bozdoğan, Reşat Kasaba, Seattle : University of Washington, 1997, p.113-114

women's role in the public arena as a server of the Turkish Republic was considered more valuable than housework.<sup>62</sup>

Islamists and conservatives have criticized this change and claimed that the modern working women with "exaggerated" rights (including, but not limited to, women's right to get divorced, get married, inherit an equal share, work, vote and be elected) threaten the morality of the society and the stability of the family.<sup>63</sup> Tunaya cites that, in 1951, in his speech, Ali Fuat Başgil claimed that the civil code threatened the Turkish family since its rules about issues concerning women, such as divorce, marriage and inheritance, are incompatible with the identity of the Turkish society. Başgil does not consider his claims reactionary, but the reality.<sup>64</sup> Therefore, it is evident that "women" are an argumentative issue of modernization and change in which many values and claims have been attributed by modernist and conservative male actors. Furthermore, the change of the role of women resulted in the change of the Turkish family and society in various ways and degrees.

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<sup>62</sup> Durakbaşı, Ayşe. 1997. *Kemalism as Identity Politics in Turkey*. In *Deconstructing the images of Turkish Woman*, Ed. Zehra F. Arat. New York: St Martin's Kasaba, Reşat and Sibel Bozdoğan. *Rethinking Modernity and National Identity in Turkey*. Seattle: University of Washington Press.

<sup>63</sup> Deren, Seçil, "Kültürel Batılılaşma," *Modern Türkiye'de Siyasi Düşünce: Modernleşme ve Batıcılık*, İletişim, İstanbul: 2004, p. 389.

<sup>64</sup> Tunaya, Tarık Zafer, *Türkiye'nin Siyasi Hayatında Batılılaşma Hareketleri*, Yedigün Matbaası, İstanbul: 1960

The change or preservation of the identity of women has been an argumentative issue because women have been seen as the indicator of a civilization's claim of modernism. The Turkish state has suggested a new woman and man model and changed many of their traditional roles and identities. Thus, the emphasis on the identity of women also indicates the Turkish Republic's role of builder and its attempts to constitute its own tradition and system.

Additionally, clothing has been seen as an indicator of modernism and new models of clothing have been designated for men and women as modern. These regulations were forced on people through rules on "clothing." The issue continues to be a problem in Turkey and its symbolic value produces even more problems. This is visibly seen with the headscarf ban in schools and bureaucratic offices of the state.

#### **2. 4. Nationalism**

The right wing is considered an opponent of leftism. I choose to use the classification of Tanıl Bora for Turkish right since Bora covers and summarizes the recent arguments about conservatism with this

classification. He considers that, conservatism, Islamism and nationalism are branches of Turkish right and Turkish right is basically nationalist. In Turkey, generally, Islamism, nationalism, conservatism and liberalism are the ideologies that are associated with the “right wing.” The common denominator of these ideas is their disagreement with radical change and redistribution suggested by leftism. Therefore, the continuity of the social order and social coherence are the main concerns of these movements. This being said, they are not completely different and isolated; rather, their relationships are intermingled. Furthermore, these movements can coexist in the form of “nationalist conservatism” or “Islamist nationalism.” They can also coexist with leftism. That is to say, “conservative leftism” also exists. We will also look into the relationship between conservatism and other right wing views, such as Islamism and nationalism, to effectively understand conservatism in Turkey. Certainly, right wing conservatism has always had relations with liberalism and liberal politics. However, considering the idea of change in liberalism, it is not considered a primary thought necessary to understand conservatism. The change is an inevitable element of liberalism and liberalist thought suggests change even in extreme scales, in contrast to conservatism, which basically defends change in a moderate speed. Therefore, liberalism will not be investigated further.

All the constitutions of the Turkish Republic have identified the “Turkish” state as a nation state. Therefore, its citizens are considered Turks and its official language is Turkish. This results in a citizen definition based on “race.” Nationalism is an essentialist doctrine and claims some inevitable characteristics for a Turkish nation. According to İsmet Özel (2002), although nationalism is a Western concept, it is acceptable for Turkey. Even if the term is forgotten, according to him, Turkey will remain nationalist in its own way. The term itself is not necessary to be nationalist. “The soul of the earth, and agreement of people will stay in Turkey”; that is to say that the Turkish nation is not an “artificial nationalism,” it is a characteristic peculiar to Turkish people.<sup>65</sup> Furthermore, Mehmet Metiner<sup>66</sup> (1987) also emphasizes the peculiarity of being Turkish. He suggests “an invitation to people, which is appropriate to the objective conditions of Turkey, and includes the land of Turkey.”<sup>67</sup> Other characteristics of Turkey, such as its being a nation of soldiers, its being the defender of civilization and its being virtuous, are also “constructed” by nationalism (Benedict Anderson

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<sup>65</sup> Özel, İsmet, *Medeniyet, Üç mesele : teknik medeniyet yabancılaşma, Düşünce Yayınları*, İstanbul: 1978.

<sup>66</sup> Metiner, Mehmet, *Yeni Bir Dünyaya Uyanmak*, Seçkin Yayıncılık, İstanbul: 1987.

<sup>67</sup> Bora, Tanıl, “Muhafazakar Yerlilik Söylemi” *in Modern Türkiye’de Siyasi Düşünce: Muhafazakarlık*, İstanbul: 2004.



claims that nationalism is a construction).<sup>68</sup> Therefore a Turkish state and the Turkish nation have been constructed. The first phase is a construction process and the later one is the conservation of the constructed image in a specific way; therefore, the conservative feature of nationalism depends on these processes. Furthermore, Turkish state preserves its order and rules in a conservative way with nationalist concerns as well as we have mentioned above, under the title of “Conservatism Perceived as Reactionism by Modernizing State”. The continuity of the state depends on its historical roots and these roots are said to be as old as history in Turkish nationalism as every nationalist thought. Furthermore, Turkish state preserves its order and rules in a conservative way with nationalist concerns as well. This dependency on history and traditions of nationalism consists also in conservative thought, as it has been discussed. With nationalistic concerns, in order to build a nation, to homogenize and to consolidate it, Turkish state preserves its order and rule in a conservative way. Therefore, Turkish State builds a “nation” with institutions as *Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı* (Directorate of Religious Affairs), and national education system as mentioned on the part of “Statist(ım) as Conservatism”.

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<sup>68</sup> Anderson, Benedict, “Imagined Communities,” London; New York; Verso: 1991.

## 2. 5. Islamism

According to Bora, Turkish nationalism has been shaped with Islamist discourse and Turkish-ness has been defined with being Muslim.<sup>69</sup> Then it is necessary to study Islam in relation to conservatism. Islamists have argued that Islam is a significant characteristic of being Turkish and differentiate their nationalist view from the “modern” one with this argument on “sanctity” and “nativity” since Islam is the characteristic of the Turkish nation and not of Western nations.<sup>70</sup> Bora claims that, Islamists believe the essence of being Muslim and Turkish is related; in other words, that nationalism is part of being Muslim. The Turkish nation is defined as the main defender of Islam through history and its contributions to this religion make it inseparable from the roots of Islam. This emphasis Islamism places on essences and historical roots is a way of justification and its emphasis on the “holiness” of being a nation are its conservative characteristics. On the other hand, Islam defends the idea of being an *ummah*, the equality and unity of all Muslims regardless of their ethnicity, language or any other characteristics, but their faith in Islam.

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<sup>69</sup> Op. cit. Bora (2004).

<sup>70</sup> Bora, Tanıl, “Muhafazakar Yerlilik Söylemi” *Modern Türkiye’de Siyasi Düşünce: Muhafazakarlık*, İstanbul: 2008.

The idea of *ummah* has lost much of its meaning in Turkey since the decline of the Ottoman Empire.

To conclude, the thoughts of the right wing -- Nationalism, Islamism and Conservatism -- are intermingled. All three stress the importance of traditions, the essence of a society, social solidarity and history, noting that all must be defended for the sake of order and peace within a society.

## **2. 6. 1980s and changing perceptions of conservatism**

We need to ask the question: Why and when has conservatism become significant for Turkish social and political life? The 1980s saw significant change in Turkey due to a changing political environment in the country. Life of Urfalis also has been affected by this change.

“Modernization” and “Westernization” have always been the core of Turkish politics since the establishment of the state. In the early 1980s, Prime Minister Turgut Özal actively promoted Turkey as a location for joint ventures with foreign investors and a free market economy.

Turkey’s adoption of the global economy and globalization were a new

target of his liberal politics.<sup>71</sup> As a result of supporting a liberal economy, Turkey's economy developed and gave birth to a new class of entrepreneurs, engineers and urban workers, made new groups rich through commerce and gave "conservative" people from Anatolia money and status, supplanting their former basic means of existence: agriculture. Their increasing commercial success has been significant and these Anatolian entrepreneurs have been dubbed the "Anatolian Tigers."<sup>72</sup>

The economic development provided this new bourgeoisie with status and political power as well as educational development. These changes led to social, economic and political consequences, too. The producing class took on consumption practices suitable to their values and lifestyles. Islamic clothing, holidays, cafes, restaurants and the like multiplied. Muslims began working in various sectors, including the media, theatre, TV, music, literature, travel agencies, etc., creating a milieu in which Islam and modernity coexist, as discussed in the article "Islamic Calvinists."<sup>73</sup> This coexistence has been a significant point both modernists and Muslims have criticized. Cihan Aktaş thinks that

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<sup>71</sup> For Ozal period see: Akkır, Ramazan, *Türkiye'de Din ve Muhafazakarlık*, unpublished Master Thesis, Çukurova Üniversitesi, Adviser: Abdullah Alperen, 2006.

<sup>72</sup> For further information on Anatolian tigers see: European Stability Initiative (ESI) "Islamic Calvinists: Change and Conservatism in Central Anatolia", Berlin, Istanbul: 2005, [www.esiweb.org](http://www.esiweb.org).

<sup>73</sup> Ibid.

modernizing Muslims and their new habits are seen as neither Islamic nor modernist enough.<sup>74</sup> On the other hand, the visibility of Muslims in public life with their alternative views on life continue. Islamists attend universities and send their daughters and sons to large cities -- even abroad -- to attend universities. They may prefer going on Umrah<sup>75</sup> and sites of religious significance such as Jerusalem, Damascus and tombs of saints for vacation as well as Islamic hotels providing gender-segregated pools and public areas.<sup>76</sup> Working Islamist women have changed and modernized Islamic families since the role and power of women changed, as Aktaş also indicates.<sup>77</sup> Aktaş adds that more families have become nuclear and people more individualist in Islamist families, too. These changes have also occurred in Urfa. Urfalı people have been trying to adopt with new economical and social order.

The political dimension of conservative thought exists in Turkey. Besides the conservative attitudes of the state and various political parties, AKP-- is the first political party to define its political philosophy as “conservative democracy” as it has been mentioned above. It is currently

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<sup>74</sup> Aktaş, Cihan, *Bacıdan Bayana: İslamcı kadınların Kamusal Alan Tecrübesi*, Pınar Yayınları, İstanbul: 2001.

<sup>75</sup> A pilgrimage to Mecca outside of the pilgrimage season.

<sup>76</sup> For further information see also: Göle, Nilüfer, *Modern Mahrem: medeniyet ve örtünme*, Metis Yayınları, İstanbul: 1998.

<sup>77</sup> Op. cit. Aktaş.

Turkey's governing party. Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan has explained the concept as follows:

“Conservative democracy: A significant part of Turkish society desires to adopt a concept of modernity that does not reject tradition, a belief on universalism that accepts localism, an understanding of rationalism that does not disregard the spiritual meaning of life and a choice for change that is not fundamentalist. The concept of conservative democracy is, in fact, an answer to this desire of the Turkish people.”<sup>78</sup>

As a result, Islamist society in Turkey has aimed to reconcile two apparently conflicting sets of values: its socially conservative and religious attitude to life and its ambitions for rapid growth and modernization. The adaptation of conservatives and Islamists to modernism is not a marginal, uncommon or impossible effort. Turkish conservatism has been protection against change and modernization and not a complete rejection as we can see in the change of conservative and religious segments of the society after the 1980s. Therefore, the speed and style of modernization may differ, but the modernization of Turkey cannot be denied.

Now, I will discuss the representations of conservatism and Turkish conservatism in Urfa, as well as the answers of Urfalis to this ideology.

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<sup>78</sup> Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, *Conservative Democracy and the Globalization of Freedom*, The American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research, January 29, 2004.

### PART. 3: URFA

After investigating conservatism and conservatism in Turkey, in this part, we will focus on conservatism in Turkey. We have made interviews with Urfalis to study conservatism in the city. I will give information about history and socio- economical background of Urfa to see the environment of the city and the interviewees. Additionally, thoughts of Urfalis about Urfa's conservative image will be discussed in further sections.

Urfa is one of the first settlements in the world. It has been home to many cultures and religions. The first human settlement in Urfa dates to 3,000-2,000 B.C. -- the early Bronze Age. Urfa is situated in an area distinguished as the center of world culture and civilization through history, often termed the "Fertile Crescent" in archeological terminology. Many religions, from the earliest to the latest, emerged in this region and the first writing was found here.<sup>79</sup>

In Islamic and Christian literature, the city is also known as "the city of

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<sup>79</sup> Kürkçüoğlu, Cihat, 2000, *Şanlıurfa land of faith*. Trans. Zuhul Karahan Kara. Şanlıurfa Governship Cultural Publications, Ankara: Tisimat basım sanayi. p. 26- 30.

prophets.” The Prophet Abraham, the patriarch of Jewish, Christian and Muslim prophets, was born in Urfa and, according to the Qur’an, was thrown into the fire because he refused to believe and worship the idols worshipped by King Nemrut and his people and broke the idols.<sup>80</sup>

Prophet Lot left Urfa for Sodom when he saw his uncle Abraham thrown into the fire. Prophet Elisha then looked for Prophet Lot and managed to find the village he lived in, but died before he could see him. Prophet Jacob, the grandson of Prophet Abraham and an ancestor of the Israelites, married in Harran.<sup>81</sup> Prophet Job stayed in Urfa during his illness and died here. Prophet Jethro lived in Jethro City, 37 kilometers away from Harran. Prophet Moses met Prophet Jethro in Sogmatar nearby Jethro City. According to one legend, Jesus Christ sent a letter in which he blessed Urfa and a portrait of him miraculously appeared on his handkerchief as he swept away his sweat to Abkar Ukkama, the king of Urfa, as a response to him inviting Christ to Urfa. Afterwards, Christianity was accepted as the official religion in Urfa for the first time in the world.<sup>82</sup>

Urfa is also called “the museum city” especially because of the historical

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<sup>80</sup> Qur’an (21:61-70).

<sup>81</sup> A district of Urfa.

<sup>82</sup> Op. cit. Kürkçüoğlu. P. 37- 38.



tissue of the city center, which has been preserved to the present.<sup>83</sup>

Various historical buildings, deemed holy by some, are a significant part of the city's identity. "*Halilurrahman, Balıklıgöl and Dergah*" are the names of the most famous historical place of Urfa. There is an ancient castle, the *makam* (room, place) of Abraham, the lakes of Anzilha and Balıklıgöl, three old mosques, a cemetery, restored gardens and old madrasah <sup>84</sup> (the *Dergah*) and various bazaars and historical Urfa houses are situated around there. *Balıklıgöl* has visitors year-round from Urfa province itself, from various Turkish provinces and from abroad. For these reasons Şanlıurfa is understood to be one of the most important religious centers in the world apart from Mecca and Jerusalem with regard to the history of religions and religious tourism.

"J.B. Segal has emphasized that, while all the East was pagan or blasphemous, Urfa served only to God under the domination of Christianity."<sup>85</sup> Urfa preserved that characteristics and at the same time, developed in the dominance of various civilizations, has been one of the most efficient/important cities of southeast Turkey.

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<sup>83</sup> Ibid.

<sup>84</sup> Classical institutions teaching Islamic knowledge.

<sup>85</sup> Op. cit. Kürkçüoğlu, p. 38.

In the present, Urfa is connected to its traditions and history; we cannot, however, collect data proving that it still contains different religions today. Although there are various cultures and languages in the city, “being Urfalı” is an important common denominator in the city.

Urfa has a population of approximately 1.2 million,<sup>86</sup> with an approximate population of 300,000<sup>87</sup> in the provincial capital. Most of the population lives in rural areas.<sup>88</sup> Turkey’s urban rate is 70% while this figure is only 58% in Urfa.<sup>89</sup> The city is an overpopulated southeastern city with many problems in education, health and social life and immigration. Additionally, the rights of women are not ensured and poverty and unemployment affect the lives of locals negatively.

Although the illiteracy rate for males is 6% throughout Turkey, in Urfa, it is 17%. Additionally, the illiteracy rate is 19% in Turkey but it is 47% for females in Urfa. Males with a higher education degree in Turkey comprise 6%, but in Urfa this figure is 3%. Furthermore, females with a higher education comprise 4% in Turkey, but only 1% in Urfa.<sup>90</sup>

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<sup>86</sup> Türkiye İstatistik Kurumu,  
[http://www.tuik.gov.tr/VeriBilgi.do?tb\\_id=39&ust\\_id=11](http://www.tuik.gov.tr/VeriBilgi.do?tb_id=39&ust_id=11).

<sup>87</sup> [www.tuik.gov.tr](http://www.tuik.gov.tr).

<sup>88</sup> [www.tuik.gov.tr](http://www.tuik.gov.tr) .

<sup>89</sup> [www.tuik.gov.tr](http://www.tuik.gov.tr).

<sup>90</sup> [www.tuik.gov.tr](http://www.tuik.gov.tr).

The student to teacher ration is very high, making classes overcrowded. In primary schools, the student to teacher ration is approximately 73:1 while in high schools, the figure is 41:1. The number of high school graduates in 2007 reached 8,731<sup>91</sup> -- significantly lower than the number of primary school graduates: 22,613.<sup>92</sup> The drop in the number of students graduating from high school demonstrates that most of the young generation does not have an opportunity to get a high quality education. A number of reasons stand as impediments, including not enough schools, entrance exams students are unable to pass, a lack of motivation to study further on the part of students and family pressure to quit schooling, among others. Furthermore the frequency of changes in teaching staff at these schools is also a problem that reduces the quality of education in the city.

Urfa is also the capital of the Southeastern Anatolia Project (GAP) -- *Güneydoğu Anadolu Projesi*<sup>93</sup> -- which aims to improve the economic and social livelihood of the region. Irrigation projects that are part of GAP include building a number of dams in the region. Irrigation of

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<sup>91</sup> <http://sanliurfa.meb.gov.tr/istatistik/3-genel%20ort>, and; <http://sanliurfa.meb.gov.tr/istatistik/4-mes%20ort.xls>.

<sup>92</sup> <http://sanliurfa.meb.gov.tr/istatistik/2-ilkogretim.xls>.

<sup>93</sup> Southeastern Anatolia Project.

fertile lands provided high profits to villagers and the economy of the province. As a result, Urfa is developing and its population increasing. Historical monuments and areas are protected and restored through various projects that fall within the scope of GAP. Additionally, GAP is an integrated project which also contains investments in education, development, historical buildings, transportation and industry.<sup>94</sup> This project aims to connect the (partly) isolated southeastern part of Turkey to the rest of the country. The changing identity of Urfa and Urfalı demonstrate the peculiar characteristics of the change in Urfa and Urfalı.

The old and new Harran universities are significant factors in the identity of the province. The old Harran University is one of the oldest universities in the world, dating a thousand year, its ruins are in Harran district, Urfa province. It is one of the remnants of the rich civilization of Urfa. The old university is also called the predecessor of the new one. Built in 1992, the new Harran University is the only institution of higher education in Urfa.

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<sup>94</sup> Bağış, Ali İhsan. GAP 2. Urfa-Harran Kalkınma Sempozyumu Şanlıurfa 21-24 Ekim 1998.

Hacettepe Üniversitesi Hidropolitik ve Stratejik Araştırma Merkezi, Ankara: 2002.

Transportation has been renewed, with new roads and highways having been built. New private and public schools are opened every year. These are speedy changes in Urfa and both modernize the province as well as protect its historical characteristics. That means some specific old structures have been labeled “significant” and “historical” and are to be preserved in an effort to build and sustain the identity of the province as both historical and modernizing.

After this summary on the characteristics of Urfa, I will argue about Urfalı thoughts of Urfa. For this, Urfa’s conservative identity is discussed by this study, with the main topics explained by interviewees being: “the wrong perceptions about Urfa,” the “true essence” of Urfa, which will be discussed in the first section of this part. Urfalı think that image of Urfa is “wrong” and there is a “true image of Urfa”. People need to define Urfa in a convenient way to also define themselves in “the true way”, since they are a part of the city. In the next section, change is discussed by the interviewees in the context of the opportunity to change in Urfa and the results of the change. Another section aims to discuss a significant issue, religion (Islam, in this context), being religious and the relationship between religiosity and conservatism. The oppressive State and the reflection of this oppression on people’s lives will be argued at the end of

this part.

### **3.1 “I am Forever Urfalı”: <sup>95</sup>**

Urfalı people define themselves as “true Urfalı”. However, their definitions for this term vary. Urfalı have serious concerns, maybe “obsessions” about how do non-Urfalı see and perceive Urfalı. explain the ideas of non- Urfalı about Urfalı. Urfalı people mostly think that ideas of non-Urfalı usually change before and after they see and know Urfalı. This encounter of non-Urfalı with Urfalı and changing perception of non-Urfalı after is the first question of this section. Furthermore, Urfalı’ concerns to be reflected and recognized as Urfalı, is discussed. “Is Urfa Conservative” is the next question to be asked next.

#### **3.1.1 “They do not Believe that I am Indeed Urfalı”**

Many interviewees think that Urfa is misrepresented outside the city and when non- Urfalı meet Urfalı, they are astonished by the characteristics of Urfalı. That is to say, non-Urfalı have a general image

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<sup>95</sup> In Turkish: “Urfalıyam ezelden.” Lyrics of an Urfa folk song.

about Urfalı and see that no Urfalı fits this image when they meet a real Urfalı.

Kerim (a 32-years-old pharmacy employee) says non-Urfalı do not believe he is Urfalı. This claim was also voiced by several other interviewees. Non-Urfalı usually think they have a general idea about Urfalı; they think they possess knowledge on Urfa and Urfalı; however, they can see that there are over 1 million people living in Urfa and all of them are individuals with their own characteristics in addition to a variety of lifestyles in Urfa, as is the case in many of Turkey's cities. Urfalı rejects stereotypes, overgeneralization and the present perceptions about Urfa.

However, he always criticizes Urfalı for not being religious and decent enough. He likes Urfa and Urfalı, but only good characteristics of them. That is his tactic to the strategy of urfa, he chooses to defend only good characteristics of the city and citizens to protect.

On the other hand, Urfalı sometimes reflect this attitude of overgeneralization on "other Urfalı." Therefore, stereotypes about the identity of Urfa are not defended only outside Urfa but also from within

Urfa. What then is the image of an Urfalı and how does the “real Urfalı image” contrast with the perceived image?

To summarize the image of Urfalı interviews deem incorrect, we came to see that Urfalı are seen as ignorant villagers. People believe modern life and institutions do not exist and that locals only obey their family elders. There is also a perception that Urfalı live in poverty, in mud, in caves or in primitive village houses. Non-Urfalı think Urfalı cannot even speak Turkish, but speak local dialects of Arabic and Kurdish. They think Urfalı wear village dresses and that everyone follows the habits and customs of village life. People therefore think Urfalı usually get married not out of their own will, but with upon the orders of family leaders. For example, young girls are married to old men, provided the men are wealthy and pay a good “bride price” to the girl’s family. Additionally, they think that *berdel*<sup>96</sup> is another common marriage style in Urfa. According to Urfalı, these issues exist in Urfa, but that there is more to Urfa than just these traditions and Urfalı think that the events are rare; *berdel* is very rare in urban areas.

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<sup>96</sup> A traditional marriage as explained above.



However, non-Urfalı assume there are no modern schools, shopping malls, tall buildings, highways or any cultural activities such as concerts, stage theatres and seminars. Interviewees see this image in the press, in movies and in the opinions expressed by people from other parts of Turkey. The interviewees reject this image.

“TV always shows Urfa villagers in traditional clothes. However, Urfalı are better dressed than İstanbulites.” ZELİHA (36, female)

Kerim also agrees with Zeliha:

“They didn’t believe I was Urfalı. Urfa is misrepresented. Urfalı are sincere and benevolent and people who come from other cities see that Urfalı are not as bad as they think.” KERİM (32, male)

Semra, a shopkeeper who is 26 years old, defines Urfa as conservative, but thinks that Urfa’s conservatism does not prevent people from doing what they want to do. Therefore, conservatism is a common truth for Urfalı and is just a superficial character. However, the lives of people are more complicated and hidden than the assumed image of Urfa. It shows that conservatism does not restrict and standardize people in an absolute way. Urfa can be conservative and people may have various ways and means to experience many things as well. Thus, she thinks that Urfalı are misunderstood, as do many other interviewees.

“People from other provinces do not believe that I am Urfalı because they think that we are conservative.” SEMRA (26, female)

She does not agree with this image. She thinks Urfa is conservative but so in its own way. She discusses that conservatism is present in every part of Turkey, but visible in Urfa. She says:

“In Urfa, for example, people eat while they should be fasting, but they do it secretly. They do everything here, but secretly. So, conservatism here is for the most part only for show. This is a very beautiful city. Its food is good and its transportation efficient. Certainly social stigma restricts your life, you can’t act comfortably.” SEMRA (26, female)

People may behave as they want but they have to break some rules of society secretly. This can be seen as the sign of the oppressive atmosphere originating from the conservative manners of the locals.

She argues that people seem conservative but break societal rules secretly. Therefore, in contrast to many parts of Turkey, conservatism is more “visible,” but the frequency at which “the rules are broken” is the same. This secrecy makes life less comfortable for Semra, though she likes the city. Furthermore, people always reinforce one another in perpetuating Urfa’s traditions, such as not breaking the fast in public. The conservative atmosphere is the visible identity, but some behave differently in private.

Zeliha, a 36 years old shopkeeper also complains about people’s

ignorance about Urfa. She says that non-Urfalis do not believe she is

Urfalı when they meet:

“They don’t know Urfa at all. People coming to Urfa from other provinces regret holding their prejudices about Urfa. Our district is very beautiful for example; it has no deficiency when compared to İstanbul. I graduated from Harran University. My university friends were scared about Urfa until they visited. It was only then that they realized how wrong they were. ZELİHA (36, female)

Her words are clear: One must visit a place to truly know it; popular publications misrepresent Urfa.

### **3.1.2 Definition of Urfa and The Essence of Being Urfalı**

As has been seen above, Urfalis disagree with the image of Urfa and have offered an image they believe is closer to reality. Now we will investigate the relationship between the residents and the city in more detail. Urfa and Urfalı are seen as inseparable identities by the residents. Any bad event or circumstance in Urfa is considered a bad characteristic of Urfalis. Therefore, interviewees criticize Urfa but do not want Urfa to be viewed negatively; they are conscious that they are a part of the city and that they are identified by it and shape it.

Oppressive state policies applied to the city and southeast and east

Turkey, including a ban on local languages, have caused the city to remain underdeveloped for years. Additionally, a feudal social order and tough geographical features have made the social order strict and harsh. People get more conservative and traditional when life is hard because of social, economic and political reasons; opportunities are likewise limited. That process shapes the locals. Therefore, as Foucault claims, an individual's life changes only through her/ his experiences, only when she/he defines her life and image in a specific way.<sup>97</sup>

Urfa has an image as an undeveloped city for instance. However, this definition of Urfa is not totally true if it is not accepted by the residents since it is their own life, the life they know and can define best. Additionally, most of the interviewees do not define themselves as conservative and criticize other Urfalıs for being conservative or behaving so.

On the other hand, some of the interviewees define Urfa as conservative. Emin, a 52-years-old professor at Harran University, defines Urfa as conservative and explains Urfa's conservative character with its residents' lifestyles and the area's history. He considers the source of

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<sup>97</sup> Foucault, M, *Özne ve İktidar*, Ayrıntı Yayınları, İstanbul: 2005.

misinformation about Urfa's image Urfa's peculiar structure and characteristics.

Emin says history and the material and spiritual traces of prophets set and change the atmosphere/mood of the city. There have been many cultures in Urfa and some still exist. A number of languages are spoken here, including Arabic, Kurdish and Turkish. He adds that clothing and family life vary as they are related to ethnic differences. This environment is peculiar to Urfa and enriches it. In offering examples,

Emin says:

“In Urfa, people give charity; ‘*sala*’<sup>98</sup> is read aloud from the minarets of mosques on Fridays and on holy nights. Urfalis investigate their culture and history as everybody else. *Balıköl* is the place of ‘physical conservatism’, because it is preserved. Its fish<sup>99</sup> are not eaten. These are the reasons behind Urfa’s conservatism.” EMİN (52, male)

Fevzi, a retired math teacher and currently a shopkeeper, is also aware of Urfa’s difference from other places and agrees with Emin. He thinks that religious sensitivity is no indicator of “backwardness” but an ability to live together in peace and respect. He says it is more comfortable to live

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<sup>98</sup> Sala, better known as ‘salawat’: Blessings sent upon the Prophet Muhammed and his family.

<sup>99</sup> These fish are believed to be holy by the locals. Although there is no religious backing for this belief, locals and visitors alike do not enter the lake or fish there. This, however, was not the case 40 years ago; then, people did swim in the “holy lake.” This change is an indicator of the changing definition of “holiness” and the symbols associated with the city.

as a Muslim in Urfa than in İzmir, for example. He uses gambling, fasting during Ramadan and alcohol consumption as examples to show the difference. Fevzi says that it is impossible to find a restaurant in Urfa that sells alcohol but that it is difficult to find one that does not sell it in other provinces. Compared to other cities, alcohol consumption and gambling are seen less than in other provinces because the locals are more religious.

“In Ramadan,<sup>100</sup> people do not eat or drink in public places and restaurants are either closed during the day or close their curtains because people are respectful to religion.” FEVZİ (52, male)

These unwritten rules about Ramadan and other religious concerns make the city more comfortable for fasting Muslims only, but not others. For example, Fevzi thinks fasting during Ramadan is a mostly accepted and respected ritual for Urfalı. This for him is also a part of the definition of Urfalı. On the other hand, fasting is problematic for Fuat, a doctor, and he is not comfortable in Urfa during Ramadan.

“Fasting is always a problem here. People do not understand when I tell them that I am sick. A woman told me, ‘My husband is blind, but he keeps the fast’. She does not realize that his excuse is not an obstacle to fasting but that some illnesses are. I answered diplomatically and said, ‘May God bless our fast’.” FUAT (70, male)

The peculiar characteristics of Urfa and its conservative concerns are not

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<sup>100</sup> The ninth month of the Islamic lunar calendar. Practicing Muslims abstain from eating, drinking, smoking, etc. from the break of dawn to sunset.

approved of by all in the city. People may define their city according to their own beliefs and lifestyles.

Unlike Fuat, who has reservations about calling the city conservative, Serap, a 22-years-old housewife, agrees with Emin about Urfa's conservatism and is happy with the city's atmosphere.

“This is the city of prophets and this is a very useful feature for the city. There is a mystical atmosphere in *the Place of Prophet Eyüp [Job]*<sup>101</sup> and the *Dergah*<sup>102</sup>.” SERAP (22, female)

Another point in the image of Urfalis is “being eastern.” Urfalis are also aware of the negative connotation of being eastern and differentiate themselves from the east. Although Urfalis cannot deny Urfa's image as an “eastern” and conservative city, they more often than not ascribe these characteristics to other Urfalis and not to themselves. That is to say, they think that there are conservative manners in Urfa, but they attribute these characteristics to other Urfalis, not themselves, since it is usually an attitude that is criticized.

According to many interviewees, eastern Urfa is more “eastern” and that

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<sup>101</sup> The stations of Prophet Eyyub (Job) and Prophet Ibrahim (Abraham) are frequently visited.

<sup>102</sup> The name given to the place around Balıklıgöl as it has been mentioned.

only some, “ignorant” Urfalis are conservative and “eastern,” not the interviewees themselves.

“Compared to Turkey, Urfa is eastern, but compared to the eastern cities, Urfa does not define itself as eastern; it defines itself differently. It feels it is culturally special and different.” HARUN (38, male)

Additionally, Urfa’s identity and the Urfalis’ private characteristics are emphasized by most of the interviewees as Kemal, a geography teacher, does:

“Urfa’s culture is special; others cannot be like Urfalis, both in piety and in eating habits.” KEMAL (29, male)

Some think that change is inseparable from Urfa’s nature. Serap thinks that although Urfa does change, the change complement Urfa’s “characteristics” and “nature.” She attributes an essence to Urfa. She thinks that Urfa and Urfalis interpret the world according to the essence of Urfa and accept new circumstances in a way consonant with this essence.

“The mentality of Urfalis stays the same but the new generation differs more. Urfa has its own structure, one that cannot be easily dismantled or erased. Tradition is like the root of a tree: The branches cannot develop independent of the roots. Even if an Urfali lives in İstanbul, it is evident that she is from Urfa.” SERAP (22, female)

Semra, however, thinks that Urfa is changing. Thus, Urfa is getting less conservative through years.



“Urfa is changing; people are struggling to break taboos. I graduated from Harran University. I am my parents’ eldest child. My family did not let me study in any other province, but my sisters studied in other provinces a few years later.”

As mentioned previously, Fuat is a doctor and his wife a scientist and retired teacher. She does not wear a headscarf. She has never worn it even in times when every woman wore it. Fuat and his family mostly define themselves as modern and enlightened, but as religious as well. His wife was raised in İstanbul and studied agricultural engineering at the university. According to Fuat, his wife completed her MA and Ph.D. degrees in the US. She attended some courses in Europe. She was an assistant at Atatürk University (in Erzurum) when they got married. She lived in Erzurum and Fuat in Urfa for a while. She then moved to Urfa and worked as a teacher at a primary school. She has since retired.

Fuat excuses me as a woman with a headscarf, then criticizes religious people. As a doctor, a profession highly regarded in Urfa, Fuat defines being Urfaî and being consciously religious as inseparable characteristics of his identity. That is to say, for Fuat, the power of an “Urfa identity” is evident.

“If I were not that firm, Urfaîs would have put my wife in a *çarşaf*<sup>103</sup>.”

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<sup>103</sup>

Çarşaf: a garment covering a woman from head to toe.

She is such an educated woman, you see. How can I ask her such a thing?"

His views are significant to see the relationship between a "modernist" with conservatism and Urfalıs. He is suspicious of the religiosity of Urfalıs, as are many other interviewees. He is concerned with both his religiosity and his modernism. He does not want to be judged by people, especially not by the uneducated, for his actions. He sees himself as a real Urfalı and wants to prove that Urfalıs can have a modern and religious life if they want to. He thinks that he is not conservative; he does not force people to obey him, but most Urfalıs are conservative. An example was cited above involving fasting. He says he has never judged his mother for wearing a *çarşaf* even though some of his friends judged their mothers and made them wear a more contemporary coat instead. He says:

"I am not conservative and I don't force people to be like me. People follow their own truth. However, Urfalıs force me to follow their traditional life in the name of piety as if they know and live religion better than me." FUAT (70, male)

The perceived oppression of conservative Urfalı people may be seen in the example of Fuat. Even he does not obey conservative people; he is an example of these people who feels this conservative oppression.

Ahmet, a scholar at Harran University, also has a different image for Urfa. He is aware that being Urfalı is also a construction and that Urfalıs are responsible for this. He gives a significant example on his selectivity while “constructing” the identity of Urfa. He says:

“When I was preparing my book ‘Proverbs and Sayings of Urfa,’ I left 100 proverbs and sayings out. I did not want those ugly words to exist.”  
AHMET (58, male)

Ahmet defines, “repairs” the history of Urfa as we see his choices on his books. He changes the city with his tactics while choosing the proverbs. He is an instructor in the university, a writer. Moreover, he shoots a documentary explaining Urfa. He does not only watch what is happening in the city, he also intervenes it. He regulates Urfa while he is reading, writing, shooting or describing it. He sees city from a point of view and presents this on his videos and books. His tactics are visibly effective.

As we can see on the example above, Urfa’s conservatism is also a choice that can be changed. Additionally, Ahmet works to preserve an image of Urfalıs he himself has helped shape in the first place.

We can say that, traditions and culture are from the essential elements of Urfa. However, the culture and traditions are revived and they loss some of their particularity during the process. We have seen that even

traditional proverbs can be selected or ignored by individuals, as Ahmet does in his book. Additionally, Fuat thinks that Urfalis are ignorant about their own traditions and culture. Therefore, they cannot be traditionalist as they imitate each other and are trying to preserve something they do not know. They do not even know where certain traditions originate, but only preserve that what benefits them, not the values behind the traditions.

“Urfalis talk without any knowledge and are not enthusiastic about learning. Urfa has a significant historical background; those who are ignorant must not talk.” FUAT (70, male)

Fuat thinks that he is one of the owners of the city. He can live in Urfa as he wants and believes, even he may encounter with hardship. He is the educated, clever person with an elit family. He depends and trusts on state and its services and education. Therefore, he has a comfortable relation with the power and strategy. He is the elit of the state and the city and he can success to overcome with the problems and coercion of Urfalis, as in the subjects related with religion and traditions.

Fuat may be seen as also a defender of the state and he uses his own tactics to defend the strategy of the state against the strategy of Urfa. For Fuat, the ignorance and coercion of Urfalis can be controlled and limited if the individual is free minded and educated. He supports leftist and Kemalist politicians and he is concerned of the governance of a conservative- right party. He is from the first educated generation of Turkish Republic.

Therefore, he sees himself and his family as the leader of Urfa. He thinks that he is superior to Urfalıs, he is a doctor, and he is smart, wealthy and respectful. He uses his characteristics as tactics to defend State's strategy, Urfa and himself from the strategy of Urfa.

Everybody has an idea of what Urfa is and what its essential characteristics are. People define and experience the world in a subjective way. Families, socioeconomic status, education and personalities vary. Each individual have his own worldview, life, opportunities and feelings. If we use terminology proposed by Certeau (also referred in introduction with more details), we can see the city as the strategy with all its opportunities and characteristics. The individual responds to the city with her own ways using her own opportunities, feelings and characteristics. The responses of Urfalıs to Urfa are included within the "city," but the choices of the individual make her life special and peculiar.

### **3.1.3 Is Urfa Conservative?**

The question, "Is Urfa conservative?" has so far been addressed to the interviewees through various topics. This title is specifically concerned

with this question. Answers to this question reveal all the contradictory definitions of Urfa and Urfalis since it is a general question on a situation with many variations and faces. The contradictions are the spheres of the struggle of individuals with “strategy” (Certeau). We see the “tactics” in these conflicts and struggles. People demonstrate various definitions and answers for their identity and Urfa’s opportunities. Their daily life is the place they discover their own ways, their specific comments and solutions.

Fuat thinks that Urfa has always been a place where smart and educated people can live in their own style. He argues for the opportunity of individual to change and live a peculiar life in the city while also taking into consideration the city’s conservative image and provides the following example from his life:

“In my youth, we had a social environment in which we could feel comfortable with people like us. I wouldn’t live anywhere where I couldn’t feel safe and comfortable. We used to eat in *Emirgan* [one of Urfa’s first restaurants and public gardens] 50 years ago. My wife was the only woman there. I spoke with the owner of the garden after many years. He said, ‘What you did was a revolution, my brother.’ I smiled and said: ‘What is the matter? Would they have kidnapped my wife?’”  
FUAT (male, 70)

He emphasizes that an individual has a chance to build his own life with the circumstances of the city he is in and in line with his own will. He

demonstrates the importance of an individual's daily life exemplifying each individual to construct a lifestyle with his own choices and environment. This is an example of the relationship between strategy (environment) and tactics (individuals' choices).

Social pressure from conservatism in Urfa is another topic that is discussed. Fevzi thinks Urfa's and Urfalis' characteristics are supposed to be respected and understood. He thinks Urfa is conservative for the sake of its existence. Conservatism means respecting people's lives. He defines conservatism as a natural part of people's life. The natural existence of the society and institutions is also defended by conservative thought. The place called *Dergah* is a religious image that has many holy stories and places and he thinks that people must accept its holiness and watch their behavior there. A funeral convoy is also a ritual that is supposed to be respected and not to be disturbed.

“You cannot sell snails in a Muslim neighborhood.”<sup>104</sup> You have to be respectful when you go to the *Dergah*. You cannot interrupt a funeral convoy and complain about crowdedness. If you become thoughtless, you will certainly be criticized.” FEVZİ (male, 52)

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<sup>104</sup> A Turkish saying (*müslüman mahallesinde salyangoz satılmaz*) meaning one must behave appropriately in the society one lives in.

The *Dergah* and funeral convoys are “inevitable” parts of Urfa. He wants everyone to accept that they are holy. The preservation of these images is also preserving his image of Urfa.

Fuat does not regard conservatism as peculiar to Urfa but underlines Urfa’s special situation. He thinks Urfa has its own private conditions, just as do all other regions of Turkey, and that these characteristics of Urfa lead it down a different path. This path, however, is not radically different from the rest of Turkey.

He argues that Urfa’s unique characteristics are not abnormal; they are unique, but can change. He thinks people change and cities change. Urfa’s characteristics do not make it resistant to change. Thus, Urfa is not conservative in an abnormal or extreme way.

“Urfa is not more conservative than any other city in Turkey.” FUAT

(52, male)

He recalled a memory of Urfa’s “conservative identity” and its effect on his friends and him when they were young:



“When I was attending the university (school of medicine), we went to listen to Zeki Müren in Ankara at the *kadınlar matinesi*<sup>105</sup> with my Urfalı friends. Müren called to a young lady who was being naughty, saying, ‘Urfalı Emine, come, let’s dance.’ My friends and I were affected by this and told our mothers. We were very ashamed and would have left the show had we been close to the exit. However, we were all university students. We were surrounded with traditions as if the lady’s honor was our responsibility. If a similar situation were to happen today, we’d dance together.” FUAT (70, male)

This shows that even educated people are affected by common rules and traditions associated with the city, though they have the opportunity to make the best of resources and develop themselves as Turkish citizens. They have the freedom to choose modern and new entertainment styles. He considers modern structures positive structures that should be followed. He argues that Urfa is a regular city, not marginal, and that change is the choice of individuals even they are not educated.

### 3.2 Change is Necessary But How to Change?

Urfalı people defend change but have concerns about their identity and values. They are glad to change as they want to adapt to developments in the world, but they are suspicious about the change in their daily life and lifestyle. Indeed, technical improvements also bring change to values and

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<sup>105</sup> Daytime entertainment regularly organized especially for women.

lifestyles; they cannot easily be separated. Additionally, change, technical change and effects of technical changes on people's daily lives have been argumentative in the Turkish modernization process. Furthermore, they have been a significant concern of Turkish conservatism, too. In the following section, interviewees share their thoughts on change in Urfa considering family, women's issue, clothing, education, traditions, and critics made by Urfalis on change in the city.

### 3. 2. 1. Family as the Home of Conservatism in Urfa

The emphasis on family is also seen in the survey investigating conservatism in Turkey. According to the survey, family is defined as the main institution of society and the main institution to be preserved.<sup>106</sup>

Marriage and the family is the primary relationship in Turkey and the core of the country's legal system. The state also defines the family as the producer of the values of the state. That is to say, the family is the place where the meanings and lifestyles are produced and reproduced.

Additionally, it is the first school of every individual, the place where they learn about life first. Thus, life, change and the characteristics of the

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<sup>106</sup> Yılmaz, Hakan, et al, Case Study on *Türkiye'de Muhafazakarlık: Aile, Din, Devlet, Batı, Açık Toplum Enstitüsü* and *Boğaziçi Üniversitesi* (Bosphorous University), İstanbul: March 2006.

family are the basic concern of Urfals, who want to construct their own identity and the image of Urfa. Life and survival continues through the family.

We can see the significance of family in “preserving” the city in the ideas of Zeliha:

“Conservatism does not mean religiosity. Families want to keep their customs. It is a small city and people know and check each other.”

ZELİHA (36, female)

Traditions relevant to the family structure are also significant for interviewees. People usually defend only “beneficial traditions” (good traditions) and the ones related to their daily routine, as is the case with Fatma. She mentions her family problems and her old mother living alone:

“I don’t mind any traditions except for those dealing with taking care of one’s old parents. It is a big problem for an old mother to live alone or to live with her kids. Old parents are like useless, unwanted people in the new nuclear families. This shames the entire family. On the other hand, I’m glad that many bad traditions and superstitions have been erased.” FATMA (44, female)

She wants to keep traditions that help maintain the happiness and safety of each individual of the family. She chooses to follow traditions that

protect her and her loved ones. Therefore, her tactics are the traditions that she has chosen to keep in order to sustain a good life for her and people she cares about. That is an example for how people use and change rules of the conservatism in the city.

Additionally, divorce is another topic that conservative thought does not approve since family is accepted as the main institution of the society:

“Urfa has the highest divorce rate. How can it be called conservative under these circumstances? It was extremely difficult to divorce in the past. It was a big shame. There are some basic principles of conservatism and the family is a sacred institution for conservatism.” FEVZİ (52, male)

Objective divorce rate figures for Urfa do not show the rate to be high. In Turkey, 0.8 % of divorce cases take place in Urfa while only 2.15 % of population lives in Urfa.<sup>107</sup> This demonstrates that Fevzi wants to preserve Urfa as he sees it and that he is not aware of whether his concerns and ideas about Urfa are true. He may exaggerate some events to prove that Urfa and Urfalı families are in danger. Thus, he emphasis on the values and institutions of the city in a conservative attitude.

He concludes by defending that even if many people cover their heads,

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<sup>107</sup> [www.tuik.gov.tr](http://www.tuik.gov.tr).

this city cannot be conservative once such a high divorce rate is taken into account. He thinks that marriage is not an easy task, especially with new lives and lifestyles being followed instead of known rules (traditions).

Fevzi also thinks the new family structure he mentions is a threat to the family in general, and not a new variation of it. Thus, essential features of family are not included in the new families of Urfa where the “nuclear family” is emphasized more.

He lists important changes and their effects and says:

“It is a big change to see women drivers in Urfa. These changes are the results of lifestyles and needs. However, there are also unchangeable things, too, such as the family and morality. They must not change -- ever!” FUAT (52, male)

He speaks about the changing family life in Urfa and cites “acceptable changes”:

“In the past, in my childhood, people used to live in big families. Married children were also in the very same house with their families and siblings, in private rooms with their spouses and children. This is a very rare case now, especially in the city. The father of the house was the head of the family.”

Besides family issue, he has concerns on technological change and developments. He thinks that technology is also supposed to be taken

and used for the sake of needs.

“Needs of daily life are important. It is wrong to refuse to drive a car because it is not a part of Urfa’s culture. We are supposed to adapt with the times as we can. We do not have to be rich to use a watch; there are very cheap ones, too. And it is a very important tool. There were no watches in the past; there was no need, either. We did not need to make appointments because everything was close by and we could get anywhere quickly, if needed.”

Thus, he thinks that life changes and that it is necessary to adapt to new life standards and needs. On the other hand, he emphasizes the characteristics of Urfa that cannot change and cites family issue, as seen above. We can see that arguments of Turkish society and intellectuals on technological developments and change are also concerns for Fevzi. As many Turkish thinkers have said, he also think that we can take technology from Europe, but not its morality. Additionally, he talks about a change in conservatism that does not run contrary to conservative thought. That may be interpreted as a conservative attitude on change.

### **3.2.2. Change is Women’s Change**

The woman is considered the representative of the Turkish family. A local saying states, “The female bird builds the home.” Women’s role and

identity change as a result of a changing world. Conservatism's emphasis on the family and the emphasis of conservatives in Turkey lie especially on the family as a basic institution, as seen in the related survey.<sup>108</sup>

Turkish modernization sees women as the representative of change, as do Urfalıs. Preserving the family is a problem related to the preservation of women's roles. Change of women, equality between sexes, and modernization of women are other important issues for image of Urfa, too. Urfa is considered as conservative, also because it is known as a city where equality between sexes is ignored and men oppress women.

Urfalıs defend the change of women and define it as development.

Although, they are concerned about increasing divorce rates and dysfunctional families, not everyone blames working or educated woman for this. Hacı, a 49-years-old retired teacher currently working as a shopkeeper, also gives the increasing rate of working women as an example of change and modernization in Urfa.

“Men prefer working women for marriage now” HACI (49, male)

The rate of working women is also considered an indicator of modernism and women's individuality and freedom. Zeliha, a working woman, does not like working. She thinks working is just an extra burden for women

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<sup>108</sup> Yılmaz, Hakan, et al, Case Study on *Türkiye'de Muhafazakarlık: Aile, Din, Devlet, Batı, Açık Toplum Enstitüsü* and *Boğaziçi Üniversitesi* (Bosphorous University), İstanbul: March 2006.

in addition to housework. On the other hand, she is aware of the significance of work for women if they are in need.

“Women who are in need, work. There are working women from every social class. There are both female cleaners and female officers; people are conscious now.” ZELIHA (36, female)

Women’s issues and working women still face problems in Urfa, as is the case everywhere in Turkey, and there have been developments and fights for women to work and be able to lead a life outside of their homes. Zeliha addresses these issues, as well. She thinks that holding a job does not change a woman’s role in her family. Working women cannot get help from their spouses. She therefore thinks that working is an opportunity for women. If they need to work because of financial needs, it is seen as an extra burden for women.

Zeliha works even she thinks that working is a tough task for women. She dares to work and keeps her struggle with strategy, the facts and hardships of life. She fights, she uses tactics to overcome “these realities” of life. Her working life is her tactic to overcome the strategy of the city (“these realities”).

Going out for a walk, shopping, or for a chore is another significant issue,



especially for women.<sup>109</sup> Traditional life in the city sees women as staying indoors. Their entertainment, meetings, music, dances, celebrations, visits -- all are confined to the house and include only females and children. Men spend all of their lives on the street and are not allowed to be at home during these activities. Women do not become familiar with life outside the home in this social order. Women loitering in the streets and being in public have been condemned. However, women are more educated and can work. This has come to be normal. However, women walking down the street remains problematic for them and may lead to rumors. Women are not fully free to step outside of the home. Furthermore, some women are not given permission by their parents or families to step outside of the home. Being able to walk down the street allows for freedom and joy; it allows women to experience different parts of the city. Fatma, a 44-years-old housewife, thinks that women are comfortable outside of their homes and that people have many options to live a good life,

“Harran University has significantly changed Urfa and the people who came to Urfa and settled from other cities. Uncovered women and alcohol consumption have increased in addition to positive changes. Now women can go everywhere in the city in comfort. This was not possible in the past as it would result in rumors being spread.

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<sup>109</sup> Çur, Arzu, “Kadın: Taşranın Yurtsuzları,” in *Taşraya Bakmak*, İletişim Yayınları, İstanbul: 2006, p.124.

Additionally, there are many options to choose from for social activities, including gardens, movie theatres, 'religious wedding ceremonies'<sup>110</sup> and sightseeing. People's points of view have changed; they are more 'mature' now. Furthermore, educated and conscientious religious university students have changed Urfa in a good way." FATMA (44, female)

On the other hand, Zeliha does not agree with her completely. She states her disagreements and says:

"If you go somewhere twice in Urfa, people judge you." ZELİHA (36, female)

However, she has an optimistic view on the subject. She says even freedom for women to step outside of their homes not good enough but it is getting better.

"Urfa is changing and developing in a good way. In the past, girls, women couldn't go out alone. Now they go out and return home whenever they want." ZELİHA (36, female)

Fevzi cites new forms of "women meetings" as an example of the changing life of women with changing traditions.

"Regular women meetings have changed, too. In the past they were meetings to help housewives in their difficult housework such as seasonal cleaning and preparing food for the winter. Then, they used to make *çiğ köfte*<sup>111</sup> and eat it together. Today, the housekeeper prepares

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<sup>110</sup> Some families choose to hold wedding parties as religious meetings, playing religious songs, poems, lectures, etc.

<sup>111</sup> Çiğ köfte: An uncooked food made from a mixture of bulgur, hot spices and raw meat.

various cakes and food and serves them to visitors all day long. This is just for fun and display. That is the result of uneducated people having money.” FEVZİ (52, male)

That is to say, women still hold meetings in their houses, but with different purposes. This shows us the new meaning of these “traditional” meetings. Referring to Anthony Giddens, we can see the disembedding and reembedding processes here<sup>112</sup>. Giddens suggests these words to explain the changing meanings of the traditions, rules, and terms. According to him, the meaning of an action may change without changing the “name” of the action. The name stays the same, but the meaning and the function of the action disappears, that is disembedding process. Reembedding process follows disembedding and new meanings are attributed the specific situation. If reembedding does not follow disembedding, the action, term or rule becomes meaningless and useless. The women’s meetings continue, but with different purposes and in different ways. Therefore, their meetings have changed due to the processes of disembedding and reembedding. Women change their daily life as their lives and worlds change. Thus, their entertainment styles, their social life and their educational life change and these changes affect the identity and daily life in various forms.

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<sup>112</sup> Giddens, Anthony, *The consequences of modernity*, Polity Press, Cambridge, 1995.

### 3.2.3. Change is Education's Change

Change is also evaluated with the education level of Urfalis. Urfalis do not understand education only as the formal education of government schools, but take into consideration the education of values and manners as well as religious education. They demand quality education and a good change in Urfa. They think that the point is not to change for the sake of change, but to exchange the old with the new if the new is better.

Conservative ideas on change have been discussed and as we can see in conservative thought, education can be used both as the tool of change and preservation. Education is a tool that can be used for progress or corruption. Additionally, insufficiency in education results in weaknesses in society. Therefore, Urfalis know that they need education in any circumstance; however, they are skeptical of whether the school education in Urfa is beneficial and sufficient for Urfa's development.

Fuat is happy with the school education in Urfa. He emphasizes that Urfa has changed with technological improvements, schools and state scholarships.

“Radio, TV, newspapers and magazines have contributed to Urfa in

many ways. Urfa got more integrated with the world after the city's high school was opened. People went to universities to study." FUAT (70, male)

Fuat also comments on the benefits of (formal) school education in Urfa.

"In 1956, the government intended to send eight students to study in England. Two people from Urfa passed the exams. The person who went did not take much from here, but brought a whole lot back to Urfa." FUAT (70, male)

He thinks that being from Urfa and being in Urfa is not an obstacle to development. He argues that people can be free and live a good life if they are educated and are aware of their life. We can see that he suggests a struggle with "reactionism" in a person's own daily life. He uses an example from his life.

"My wife went to England to attend a course. I entrusted her to my friend. ('I entrust you with my honor,' I said). When my wife was leaving them to return to Turkey, my friend's father-in-law gave her a goodbye kiss by kissing her on her forehead. My wife told me about this and I said, 'Fine, let's have some fun with that.' I called my friend and said, 'Did I entrust my wife to you so that your father-in-law could kiss her?' It was only a joke. If it was anyone else but me, this event would have been a problem. However, we are educated; we were raised differently." FUAT (70, male)

Therefore, he thinks that his and his family's education provides them with a higher quality life and may differentiate them from "common"

Urfalı. He believes that education is very beneficial for Urfalı, as is the case for everyone else.

It can be argued that education affects the lives and thoughts of Urfalı. Some interviewees, however, disagree. Funda, a 35-years-old housewife, is skeptical on the use of school education since people ignore it and continue their life as they wish.

“The mentality of the people does not change. People send their kids to school, but they do what they know anyway.” FUNDA (35, female)

Fevzi does not find the education in Urfa of sufficient quality. According to him, this insufficiency is an indicator of underdevelopment in Urfa, not religiosity or the headscarf.

“Education falls below the mark here. Education is much more than a certificate. Education is very necessary.” FEVZİ (52, male)

Most of the interviewees are critical of the education level of Urfalı and schooling in Urfa. They think the quality and subjects are important in shaping Urfa and Urfalı. People do not trust absolutely the state’s modern educational institutions. They think that the educational system’s quality in science is not sufficient and that the system is mostly useless when it comes to moral and intellectual education. Their concerns relate to the quality of their life and they think that cultural

and moral values and behavior are a great part of conditions of this quality that is not included in school education in Turkey. Thus, people are conservative when it comes to their values and are critical of modern education that emphasizes solely scientific, measurable and rational facts and theories. Conservative thought also signifies the vitality of practical reason instead of theoretical knowledge. Practical knowledge is knowledge extracted from daily life experiments. Therefore, Urfalis are conservative in their ideas on knowledge.

“Urfalis do not get better; they do not develop. School education is insufficient. It consists of science. Manners and culture are taught by the family. The family just imitates what it observes, and so do the children. That is why the society does not improve and why the people are narrow-minded.” KERİM (32, male)

He criticizes Urfalis, he thinks that they are not educated enough.

Additionally, he thinks that he is a good parent who talks with his children at every chance and teaches them what is good and the truth.

He thinks that many Urfalis are getting rich but are not getting any better. He says that they throw their trash from their windows onto the street, that they drive expensive cars worth TL 80,000 but that their cars are as dirty as trash.

Ayşe is critical of the quality of education in Urfa. She points to the difference between change and development. She defines Urfa as

resistant to change.

“Urfa is changing, but not developing. Many new schools have been opened in the last few years. However, the schools cannot develop Urfa without changing their own function. Ignorant people adapt to new conditions without changing. Urfalıs are mostly ignorant.” AYŞE (24, female)

We can say that people who have been exposed to change get affected by the change. Ayşe looks for permanent change, essential change, and calls Urfa’s changes superficial. However, even if the changes are superficial, they affect and change us. Even if parents send their daughter to school just for show, this changes the life of the daughter from that of her housewife mother. She will grow up in a social environment comprising more educated people from higher social classes. She may marry an educated person and may have a more prestigious and different life as well as economic freedom.

Moreover, Ayşe also uses education as a tactic to coercion of Urfalıs to a girl. She considers that she chooses to live Islam in an appropriate way some other interviewees (Kemal and Emin for example). She is a respected adult since she has graduated from university. For Ayşe, school has also been a good excuse for going out as a young girl. Furthermore, she knows her religion and she is aware of modern life; therefore, she can decide on her life consciously. She prefers to be religious and modern and accomplishes



this with her tactics. Therefore, she uses her tactics, her knowledge and education, to struggle with Urfa's strategy (traditions) and strategy of modern state. These arguments on change in Urfa will be investigated in detail in the section titled "What Change, Are We Really Changing?"

- **Harran University: 10-year-old institution carrying the torch of 1,000-year-old legacy**

Urfalis interact with Harran University and its students and instructors. They are mostly glad to have the university and are adapting the change and opportunities which have been provided by the university's opening. The university has been a part and trigger of the process of change in Urfa. On the other hand, critical views also exist about university. Some people think that, university "spoil" Urfa; as a result of non-Urfali students and instructors, more people eat in public, which is not regarded as a good behaviour by most of the Urfalis. However, this discontent is not frequently expressed by many interviewees, they are generally content of university.

Harran University is seen as a significant instigator of change. This university, a new and modern institution, led Urfa to step up its

modernization and to change. Measures of this include increasing literacy rates and education levels among residents, both of which have led to the university, change and development being seen in a positive light. The university is defined as one of the most important signs and supporters of change and development.

As previously noted, the original Harran University was a vibrant center of education 1,000 years ago; only its ruins remain today, however. The present facility was built 10 years ago. It is named in honor of the original and hopes to live up to its namesake. With this relationship between the two universities, a history has been “chosen” for the new university. The new university, however, is not meant to be a continuation of the old Harran University as it focuses on modern science.

The university has changed the city in many ways. Young people and professors have settled in the city with their different habits and manners. For example, young university students go sightseeing and shopping with friends. Their presence on the street enables young Urfalis to go out easier. That is to say, a new and modern institution that roots itself in a 1,000-year-old university but has a modern structure has a

history to live up to and preserve. Urfalıs approve of the university and its old history, but are also aware that it gives them new and modern life opportunities. Thus, they preserve their new university and its “old roots”; this is a tactic of Urfalıs used to build their identity and adapt to new institutions.

Zeliha, as many interviewees, is content with the university, but speaks of “unchangeable old people” in addition to the changing youth.

“People are getting conscious. The university changed the city. The old generation is the same, but the new generation is changing a lot. In our neighborhood, many people go to school, but in poor places of the city, children cannot go to school.” ZELİHA (36, female)

Change is not slow and its speed is increasing as well. The university is a big supporter of this change, as has been discussed. Zeliha implies this importance and discusses the role of the university in her and her family’s life.

“I got graduated from university in 1999. My family did not permit me to go to my graduation ceremony. The ceremony was held on military property and I was the only absent student. However, a few years later, all of my family went to my sister’s graduation, to Maraş.” ZELİHA (36, female)

As can be seen, the university is often cited as the reason for change in the lives of women and youth. Therefore, university changes the

conservative attitude of citizens and it provides a more free life in the Urfa.

#### **3.2.4. Changing Traditions, New Traditions**

Traditions are also defined as the essence of being conservative as well as being Urfa. However, traditions change in Urfa and changing traditions become new traditions. That is a significant issue pointed to by many interviewees. If traditions change and new forms are also called traditions, what is the essence and legacy of traditions? New traditions can have a legacy from their relationship with old traditions and the recognition of old traditions. Defending new and old traditions is a conservative attitude since conservatism stresses the necessity of existing institutions and supports change if convenient and compatible with the essence of existent institutions. Therefore, conservative thought is always ready for encounters with new institutions and values; conservative thought is also ready to reinterpret and integrate the old with the new. As we see, the present traditions are not the same as old ones. They have changed, but new traditions are also recognized as traditions. Understanding traditions requires understanding the meaning and function of traditions. Conservatism also accepts that traditions may

change in need, but advises a steady and cautious change and warns people about every change.

Some interviewees consider traditions to be changing while they may or may not approve of the changes to traditions for a variety of reasons.

Hacı thinks that many traditions, such as *sıra gecesi*<sup>113</sup> and dress codes, differ now from before. Thus, he says Urfa is not traditional and that following traditions do not necessarily mean being conservative and rejecting change.

“Our cultural structure appears conservative from outside. However, we abide by traditions in very different styles. *Sıra gecesi* (nights of conversation) has changed a lot, the food changed; we used to prepare the pepper and bulgur at home. Not many people make them now. Making *çiğ köfte*<sup>114</sup> does not mean conservatism or preserving traditions. Maybe our *çiğ köfte* is better in Urfa; we know the ingredients better. Clothing has changed. In the past, the *çarşaf* was worn, but now coats are. We are more enlightened now -- more girls go to school now; they did not go to school in the past.” Hacı (49, male)

Hacı points out that Urfalis live a traditional life, but term new habits tradition. That is to say, Urfalis change traditions and adapt them to the order of the world. Thus, Urfalis agree with innovations; they also adopt old traditions to the new lifestyles they experience.

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<sup>113</sup> Sıra nights: regular meetings of (male) friends at which participants ate *çiğ köfte*, chatted and sang folk songs.

<sup>114</sup> A traditional food mentioned above.

Kerim also cites *sıra gecesi* as an example of changing traditions. He thinks the meetings have changed significantly and have become some sort of “folkloric” entertainment -- not the traditional *sıra gecesi*. Additionally, he does not approve of the new meaning of the tradition but wants the old one. Thus, he does not consider following new traditions as enough to preserve the “real meanings” of the traditions.

“I’m sick and tired of ‘Urfa’s *sıra* nights.’ Now they consist of eating and singing songs; there is no talking and conversation anymore. They just try to entertain the strangers and be nice to them. The aim of the real *sıra* nights was to talk and resolve communal and personal issues of friends together.” KERİM (31, male)

He wants the *sıra nights* to stay as they were in the past since the new versions have lost their social role and meaning. *Sıra nights* are a traditional and social activity which have a basic role in keeping friends together and helping each other. However, these meetings are famous only for their musical aspect and have become a show for tourists and visitors to Urfa and a way to introduce the city. He thinks *sıra nights* are a part of Urfa’s identity but that their meaning has been lost. Therefore, he thinks that Urfa and its traditions must be preserved and introduced with their traditional values and meanings. He does not approve of the new meaning of *sıra nights* and does not think that following new traditions is enough to protect the real meaning of traditions.

As the women meetings mentioned above, male meetings (*sıra gecesi*) has also disembedded and reembedded through time. People keep on the meetings but they continue their “modern life” in the meetings. Therefore, they eat traditional food, but they do not necessarily solve their social problems in these meetings. Their social life and bonds are modern now, and individuals are not so strictly bonded with their social, traditional, environment and families.

Ahmet defines conservatism as being strict in judgment and approves of conservative thought in specific subjects in this way. He wishes to preserve solely “good” characteristics and traditions of Urfa. That fits with the selective attitude in conservatism.

“Conservatism means to stubbornly preserve previous life experiences and property one owns, ways in which one sees and perceives.” AHMET (58, male)

Ahmet defines, “repairs” the history and culture of Urfa as we see his choices on his books. He changes the city with his tactics while choosing the proverbs. He is an instructor in the university, a writer. Moreover, he shoots a documentary explaining Urfa. He does not only watch what happening in the city is, he also intervenes it. He regulates Urfa while he is

reading, writing, shooting or describing it. He sees city from a point of view and presents this on his videos and books. His tactics are visibly effective.

Furthermore, it is obvious that “good” is a subjective term; therefore, individuals decide their own “good”. However, their decision is also affected by the community and state where they live. A situation, for example women to work, may be approved by someone for the sake of communal order; however, another person may disagree it, even from the same reason. The ideal social order, the role of genders, happiness and satisfaction of people may be defined differently by Urfalis.

Fevzi also explains what traditions he wants to preserve and which he misses. He does not want everything to stay the same. He misses the old family life and houses even though he knows that these hopes are “sweet past dreams.” He adds that some conservative attitudes are just nostalgia now. He gives details of the changing daily life of Urfalis, using houses as an example.

“We used to live in houses with gardens.<sup>115</sup> We could not preserve these houses, but we feel hope and love them. We do not cook *kelle* or *mimbar*<sup>116</sup> in our houses now. We no longer use copper pots. The taste of a meal cooked in a copper dish was very sweet. This means we could

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<sup>115</sup> <sup>98</sup> *Avlulu/ hayatlı ev*: Traditional Urfa houses consisting of rooms surrounding an interior garden.

<sup>116</sup> Traditional food, made from an animal’s head and intestines.



not preserve' many things. I wish we were conservative with our food, clothing and lifestyle instead of claiming conservatism by counting how many women wear headscarves in Urfa." FEVZİ (52, male)

We can summarize the changing character of traditions which many of the interviewees have voiced through İsmail's ideas.

"The traditions have changed. These, what we now experience, are 'new traditions.' Their names are the same, but their content has totally changed." İSMAİL (54, male)

İsmail defines the city with the new traditions. He knows that the new traditions are tactics of locals, they are people's new lifestyles.

Hacı also believes that Urfa is changing along with the world. He notes globalization and its effects on Urfa and the world.

"Not only Urfa, but the world is changing. There is a serious global change. Urfa is affected by this period just as every other place is. Urfa changes every day. Urfa will go further than İstanbul. Even Siverek (a district in Urfa) is like İstanbul. There are all kinds of people. This variety is not superficial or physical; their minds are also different."

People have various perceptions and wishes about change. Urfalıs have some criteria to develop and change and İstanbul is one of them since it is Turkey's financial and cultural hub and the country's largest city.

Therefore, Hacı, as an Urfalı, compares Urfa and İstanbul and he is content with Urfa's similarity, even "superiority" to İstanbul, since İstanbul is accepted as a good city to be similar to. He does not want Urfa to stay the same, but prefers Urfa to be like İstanbul or another city.

Therefore, İstanbul is also included and accepted in the image of Urfa for Hacı.

He wants to have a qualified life in a religious way for himself and for his family, as well as people he knows. He thinks that a good, and meaningful life is possible and he supports people for their education with his mental advices, or paying their private lessons. He thinks that working and studying are the real values and success is to study and to work hard, not to be a doctor or a leader. People he supports may change their life and that is his tactic to change a part of his city, or world. Additionally, he always wants to have a decent and religious life and he believes that a good life is possible in this way. Therefore, he thinks that life is a precious gift given man, and s/he must live it as good as possible and s/he can change her/ his life with working and studying. That is why/ how he thinks that Urfa is changing and it is possible to be well educated and religious while living there.

Moreover, many interviewees think Urfa is changing rapidly and permanently. Some, though, think this change is superficial. Harun thinks Urfa is changing and developing.

“Communication has improved and the quality of education increased. Certainly, these are permanent changes.” HARUN (38, male)

Some people think that change in Urfa is insufficient and slow, preventing Urfa from developing. They say it is not a well-developing

city with many opportunities. The speed of change is an argument of conservatism, and conservative thought defends change at a slow pace.

Emin thinks change in Urfa is slow and that Urfa is therefore conservative.

“Change is very slow, insufficient and basically material, superficial -- like the ripples formed after a stone is thrown into water. There is no courage to change. It is not possible to mention spiritual and intellectual change.” EMİN (52, male)

Emin thinks Urfa is conservative. Additionally, he does not approve of every change. His selective attitude fits with the ideas of conservatism on change since he cares about the speed of change and criticizes some change as spoiling the societal values. This selective attitude on change is not exclusive to conservatism, as discussed.

Furthermore, Emin adds that change is ruining Urfa, it is not development.

“How do the minds change? The society is being spoiled. There is nudity [locals do not cover as required by Islam]. They consider this as change and development.” EMİN (52, male)

Fevzi believes some of Urfa’s “basic” characteristics should not change, including the family structure and moral values.

Serap, on the other hand, does not consider all of Urfa’s traditions useful or necessary.

“Not every Urfa habit or custom is valuable. It has bad characteristics,

too. Women wear clothing considered inappropriate by Islam when they are in women meetings. Gossip is very common. Our manners must improve.” SERAP (22, female)

Serap also thinks that traditions must change if the change is necessary and useful. Therefore, it is an important point that most of the interviewees agree on the thought that Urfalis are loyal to their traditions and that there is an opportunity for change to take place. On the other hand, some interviewees do not think that Urfa can change. This will be discussed in the following section and in particular in the “What Change: Are We Really Changing?” section.

Ayşe’s ideas on traditions are of interest to demonstrate change in Urfa.

“Traditions have changed. I am a master’s student and wear a headscarf. On the other hand, my little sister is an undergraduate student and doesn’t wear it. Being uncovered is more advantageous because of Turkey’s headscarf ban. Not wearing a headscarf is a new tradition for students and working women. There are new traditions now.” AYŞE (24, female)

This is a proof of changing life in Urfa and explains the reasons for change. State politics and the modernization process have affected the lives of two sisters. Urfa’s identity is not solely dependent on Urfalis’ beliefs and traditions. Everyone lives in the same city under the rule of the same state and reacts to new conditions in many ways. Therefore, change in traditions is also connected to the rule of the state.

Additionally, the rule of the state is one of the factors determining the identity of Urfalıs and the construction and continuity of traditions.

Clothing is quite important for some Urfalı interviewees. Fashion and clothing are visible and convincing indicators of modernism. Turkish modernism places a strong emphasis on wearing style. Very strict regulations have been instituted in the foundation of Turkish Republic, in 1925 on dress; they are known as the “clothing revolution” People have been forced to wear “modern, Western” clothes instead of their traditional clothes. Therefore, wearing headscarf, religious clothes and having religious symbols on the clothes have been interpreted as “undevelopment” by the state (that is the strategy/control of the state). On the other hand, in Urfa, most of the women wear headscarf. That is a tradition depending on Islam (That is the strategy of Urfa). In this issue, Urfalı women are under double control of double strategies: Urfa, and the state.

While discussing clothing style of Urfalıs, we can see that, no interviewees agree that Urfalıs wear traditional clothes, but they offer varying explanations. First, Urfalıs think they can be quite modern in terms of consumer practices of a modern society; Semra and Zeliha are of this view. Semra, as many interviewees, also adds that Urfalıs are as well

dressed as İstanbulites or maybe even better. This idea does not contradict with the path of Turkish modernism, as has been discussed. Zeliha wears headscarf; however, she wears it in her own way, not in a traditional style. She wears modern clothes, trousers, she hiding her body with various dresses and jackets in a fashion look.

According to Fevzi, contrary to many other, conservatism is a mentality or behavior which has to be a permanent reference for people. Thus, he approves conservatism, but thinks that Urfalis are not conservative enough. He claims that traditions are emptied in Urfa. Fevzi uses different arguments to assert that Urfalis do not wear traditional clothing. As mentioned, Fevzi differentiates traditional clothes from a traditional lifestyle. He does not define the headscarf or *tesettür*<sup>117</sup> as an indicator of conservatism. He claims that conservatism is an issue related with ideas and not with some clothes. He also says wearing a scarf is not an intentional preservation of values.

On the other hand, Turkish modernism defines all Islamic wearing styles as pre-modern and the reason and result of underdevelopment.

Following the establishment of the republic, modern clothes have been

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<sup>117</sup> Wearing clothes that satisfy rules and obligations introduced by Islam.

defined as the condition of freedom, development and modernism.

Therefore, the headscarf has always been an argumentative issue as it has been mentioned above and it is disapproved of by the state and forbidden in public offices and schools despite the plurality of women who wear a headscarf in Turkey. Fevzi is against the scarf being defined as an indicator of conservatism and underdevelopment.

“There are many people with a scarf in the city, but what does it mean? It does not mean conservatism. Even men wear a scarf in Urfa.”<sup>118</sup>  
FEVZİ (52, male)

Fevzi also says wearing clothes does not require mental effort or an intention to be conservative on the part of the wearer for the action to be defined as a habit. Therefore, wearing a scarf by men and women can be called conservatism if it is common, usual and traditional.

### **3.2.5. What Change, Are We Really Changing?**

As has been discussed, some interviewees claim Urfa is changing and are glad that this is the case; others do not approve of the changes happening in Urfa. Some, however, do not think that Urfa is changing. Therefore, definitions of change and expectations of individuals from Urfa's change

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<sup>118</sup> Fevzi refers to *neçek / puşi*, a scarf mostly used by men from rural areas of southeast Turkey, the Middle East and Arab countries.

differ. Additionally, the definition of change and how much change is required differs depending on the interviewee. It indicates that Urfa is not changing so fast or it is not too conservative to change. There are various changes and different interpretations made by locals for the changes. That means, even Urfa is defined as “conservative” and “unchangeable” by some locals, some other Urfalis think that it is changing fast and fundamentally. Therefore, there is a double sided perception about change of Urfa. Change and non-change are perceived in the same time for the same city by different people. Consequently “the image of Urfa” is broken down, since no single or absolute “image” is possible when people have various ideas on the same place.

Under this title we will focus on criticisms of change in Urfa. Some interviewees (middle aged and elderly) miss the old, traditional, nostalgic Urfa in which they used to live with their families and friends in an intimate setting and with a sense of belonging. People are happy with change in general and evaluate and decide on each change individually. Sevim, a 38-years-old housewife is one of the people who miss the old days of Urfa. She, however, is thankful for the increase in religious knowledge, an amazing claim for modernist thought, which assumes that development means increasing rationality and a decreasing importance



and value of religion. This also demonstrates the different interpretations of change and development.

“Urfa was better in the past. People were more sincere. Visits to relatives and neighbors were more frequent. On the other hand, I am glad that piety has increased with time. Sincerity has not disappeared, it continues a little. On the other hand, the change is increasing religiosity and I want Urfa to change and become more religious.” SEVİM (38, female)

Fadile, a 52-years-old housewife, likes Urfa and wants to keep its spirit.

“Urfa must not change. We are happy with our lives now.” FADILE (female, 52)

Fatma is also critical about change, but approves of “good changes.” For her, “good” becomes “religious”. She finds increasing religiosity a positive development.

“Urfa is changing. This change is mostly based on consumption. Many have awakened to material and spiritual issues [such as development and intellectual thought]. Many people read books. Religious people were backward in the past; they used to verbally attack women who did not wear a headscarf. Now they also read.” FATMA (44, female)

On the other hand, young people in particular do not agree that Urfa is changing; they think Urfa’s change is “fake” and “superficial.” Semra, for example, does not think that Urfa is changing enough. She thinks just some “isolated” groups (confined to their own environment) can change and be free in Urfa. According to her, these groups are people who are from other cities and living in Urfa and comprise families whose women

work.

“If the new generation changes, the old one does not approve of it and does not let it. The old do not change. For example, a girl and boy cannot share the same house even if they have good intentions or if they want to be housemates.” SEMRA (26, female)

On the other hand, Ayşe is not critical only about change in Urfa. She also does not believe that Urfa is changing at all.

“Urfa changes, but it does not develop. The number of schools increases, but if their mentality and quality do not change, they cannot change. Ignorant people adapt to the environment, but they do not change, Urfalis are ignorant.” AYŞE (24, female)

Zeynep, a 24-years-old math teacher also agrees with Ayşe about change in Urfa. She thinks that Urfalis adapt to “community life” and do not care about personal differences, independence and freedom. They simply imitate one another, but imitation alone is not development. Zeynep, defining Urfa’s social life, criticizes it as “community life” and disregards it since it is pre-modern and does not bring individual happiness, freedom and consciousness. Therefore, she thinks Urfa is conservative and that she herself is modern. She misses a modern life and thinks that Urfa has not changed. The minds are the same even if the city changes. According to her, every new action is in fact adopting traditions and customs of the city. She also claims that education does not develop the city. She adds:

“Educating children is not for development, it is just a ‘new tradition.’ New traditions basically do not differ from old ones; their mentality is the same. All the life in Urfa, religiosity, education, conservatism, all of them are ways of going back to customs; all of them are just for show.”  
ZEYNEP (24, female)

Zeynep has graduated from university and she works as a math teacher. School and work has been her the only change for going out from house, and living in another city on her own. Therefore, dream to be independent has been true with school and work. After graduation she chose to live in Urfa, her home town, and to sustain her dignity and independence, she wanted to work. Thus, she has always used school and work as tactics to fight with strategy of Urfa, even she does not think that it can change lives of people.

On the other hand, various thoughts exist for new traditions. Fevzi and Kerim consider new traditions significantly different from old ones and prefer old version of various traditions.

While change in Urfa is necessary but insufficient according to some Urfalis, others do not at all consider it necessary. Thus, people live in the same city with different expectations. Their personal lives and understandings illustrate this and demonstrates the diversity and difference in the daily life of individuals as has also been seen in previous sections. That is to say, “conservatism” does not affect every individual in

the same way and people may perceive, struggle and reshape conservative thought in various styles.

### **3.3 “Thank God I am Muslim”: On Religion in Urfa**

We will continue with comparison of Urfalis’ dependency on religion and society, in the first section. Increasing piety is the second problem of this issue. The oppressive State and the reflection of this oppression on people’s lives will be argued referring religiosity of Urfa is the last question under this title. Therefore, the conservative image of Urfa will be discussed referring the dependency of the locals to the state authority. Additionally, the religious thoughts and their affects in Urfalis’ life, and its association with the conservatism in the city will be discussed. Thus, the relation of conservatism with state and religion may be revealed.

Conservatism in Turkey is mostly equated to religiosity, as previously mentioned. On the other hand, conservatism argues that not the texts of the religion, but the common understanding of the religion matter since this is what unifies the society, and the aim of religiosity is to unite people, not necessarily to follow the rules of the religion.

According to interviewees, conservative religiosity is to follow the traditional codes of religion, not the “textual facts.” Some of them say Urfals have been conservative religious but that they are now getting more conscious about religion and they learn their religion and follow the rules just for the sake of religion and God, not because of traditions. However, others claim that Urfals are still “conservative, traditionalist” religious.

They think Urfals obey the society and not Islam that they are not informed enough about religion. As far as we listen to the interviewees, we can see that religion and conservatism do not overlap and especially according to religious educated people, conservatism and religion are radically distinct and separated.

Furthermore, Emin and Kemal consider that people are ignorant about religion since they are deprived of reliable religious authorities.

Defending religiosity based on Islamic sources instead of traditions is not a conservative attitude. Urfals do not want to be conservative religious; some even think that most Urfals are conservative religious and that Urfals follow the traditional interpretation of Islam; some consider Urfals as getting more consciously religious and following the texts of

the religion. Emin and Kemal discuss how institutions of religion are required to be a “true Muslim” and this emphasis on institutions is a conservative attitude.

The definition of religiosity and its relationship with conservatism is another topic to be discussed. While the interviewees define themselves as Muslim, their ideas on religiosity and religiosity in Urfa and their ideas on the relationship between conservatism and religiosity differ.

Conservatism is not religiosity for most of the interviewees. They do not reject Islam or being religious, but they define religiosity in different terms. Conservative thought defends religion for the sake of continuing the social order. Urfalı also defend religion but not with a specific concern on the stability of social life. Additionally, in this part, we will see that people have different definitions for religiosity and conservatism. It is therefore not possible to define Urfa as religious or as conservative because not all Urfalı agree. Urfalı mostly emphasize their personal religious experience, as is the case with Serap.

“There is conservatism in Urfa, but this is not religiosity. Conservatism depends on traditions, customs and habits. Urfa is changing and opening up to the outside. Boys and girls can see each other face to face, before marriage, for example. There are people who marry for love; even through they are few in number.” SERAP (22, female)

Kerim thinks that religiosity is a personal experience and that no one can force another to be religious or obey God, for if force is used, it is a useless endeavor that will result in only superficial results. Therefore, in contrast to conservative thought, he does not think religion is a social unifier, but a personal process and experience. He is also one of many interviewees who differentiates religiosity from conservatism.

“People can see the truth in free families better. My sister, for example, worked without a headscarf for one year after her high school graduation. Neither I nor my father asked her to cover her head with a scarf. She then covered herself in a good, appropriate way, in a religious way. If we forced her to wear a headscarf, she would have worn it reluctantly and inappropriately as far as religion is concerned and taken off her headscarf whenever she found an opportunity to do so.” KERİM (31, male)

Semra explains her own understanding of religiosity and defines it in different terms while defining herself as a true Muslim. She says:

“The headscarf is not an obligation for being religious. I do not wear it but I practice my religion well. You are religious if you say so; there is no need to act in a specific way.” SEMRA (26, female)

Semra thinks that she can be religious in her own way. Furthermore, she works and even it may be hard to work for a woman, she adopts with her shop and she is happy there. She believes that it is possible to overcome the conservative atmosphere of Urfa in a person’s private life, even secretly. Therefore, she thinks that tactics always keep on secretly and they can make people free in almost every issue.

Fevzi also thinks that there are various types of conservatism and is not necessarily related to reactionism or religiosity. He says:

“Conservatism and religiosity differ from one another. Wearing a *şalvar*<sup>119</sup> is traditional behavior. Preserving this behavior is preserving tradition and therefore conservatism. However, wearing a *şalvar* is not religiosity by any means. Avoiding watching TV is likewise not religiosity.” FEVZİ (52, male)

Serap thinks that Urfa seems religious but that it is not religious enough.

Urfa does not fulfill Serap’s definition of being religious.

“Urfa appears more religious from the outside than it actually is. It is different from İstanbul, I mean; it is more religious. Gossip is very common in Urfa and it is a serious crime [according to religion], so Urfa is not really religious.” SERAP (22, female)

### 3.3.1. People Obey Society More Than God: Religion and Society

Conservatism is known as being religious, especially in Turkey; however, many interviewees disagree with this idea and claim that being conservative means being “traditional religious,” as seen in the previous section. Some think that Urfa is traditional (conservative) religious and others think that Urfa was traditional (conservative) religious, but is

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<sup>119</sup> A type of traditional male trousers.



changing now as people get more conscious of their religious views.

Traditional (conservative) religiosity is not approved of by Urfalis. This argument aims to investigate if religious views of Urfalis fit with conservative religiosity. This will show us if Urfalis define their religious views with conservative terms and if they think that other Urfalis' thoughts about religion are conservative.

Fuat does not define religiosity as ignorance. However, he thinks that many religious but uneducated people are ignorant, reactionary and conservative and that these people do not know their religion. He also gives examples for people who are both well educated and religious.

“In 1929, Urfa's *mutasarruf* (governor) and *müftü* (the head religious authority) were friends. A radio was sent to the governor by the government. The governor invited the *müftü* to show him the machine and for them to listen to it together. The *müftü* said, “There is a machine like this, but with a picture.” That means the *müftü* already knew about the TV, which was invented in 1926 and used first in 1936.”  
FUAT (70, male)

Ahmet thinks Urfa is traditional religious and that this makes it even more difficult to abide by religion.

“It is difficult to live in a way complementary to the Hadith and the Qur'an. There is a traditionalist religiosity in Urfa and it is more obvious than anywhere else.” AHMET (58, male)

Kemal and Emin are religious and were well educated in Islamic sciences

at a madrasah. They think Urfa is not religious and that it is not very easy to live a religious life in Urfa. They base their concerns on religious thought. They think that old religious institutions and authorities are no longer available. Therefore, Kemal and Emin think that we have changed; change is inevitable and we are deprived of stable, absolute criteria for Islam to control the change. Therefore, they want a solid/safe institution to find a reliable interpretation of religion

Kemal is a 29-years-old geography teacher. He says:

“Islamic communities respect one another. There is no significant contradiction between them. There aren’t many details in the rules of the community. The common point of Islamic communities in Urfa is ‘being from Urfa’.” KEMAL (29, male)

Therefore, he means that being from Urfa is also important even though the communities seem different.

Emin also criticizes people’s religiosity; he thinks people are ignorant about religion because of state politics in Turkey and not only in Urfa. He thinks that religious people do not read or investigate; they follow “group mentality.” The reason for their insufficiency in religious sensibilities is inadequate religious education in Turkey. He thinks that conservatism was in the past dependent on the madrasah and religious

orders (tariqa). There were *ulema and* sheiks.<sup>120</sup> However, the religious sphere is now narrow. Good hocas<sup>121</sup> are not raised. *İmam-hatip* schools<sup>122</sup> and departments of theology at universities are insufficient. Most people have to suffice with the imam at the local mosque. The Ministry of Education provides lessons on religion everywhere: at every school and other educational institute.

In concluding remarks on the religious life in Urfa, he says:

“It is not the religious knowledge but the intention and ideology of the state that matters in Urfalis’ daily life.” EMİN (52, male)

Because of the state politics concerning religious education, for example, he thinks Urfalis’ practice of Islam is insufficient. He also finds Urfa’s change unsatisfactory.

“Conservatism is associated with reactionism because its traditional resources are insufficient and ineffective. In Urfa, material development is pleasing and religious developments are insufficient. Now conservatism does not mean being religious but conserving what is old.” EMİN (52, male)

Emin also defines Urfalis as conservative instead of religious and says:

“Conservatism is basically related with strong family and social bonds. In Urfa, moral norms are cared for, religion is obeyed if its rules suit us;

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<sup>120</sup> Islamic scholars/leaders.

<sup>121</sup> Instructor of religion.

<sup>122</sup> Religious high schools that, in addition to the regular curriculum, teach courses on religion in Turkey.

rules obeyed most are those dealing with moral issues more than those related to rituals.” EMİN (52, male)

Thus, Urfa is not religious but traditional. Urfa maybe conservative, but religiosity is not related to conservatism, according to the interviewees.

Urfa’s religiosity is controlled by state institutions. This is the reason why Emin and Kemal reject the religious and conservative image of Urfa.

They claim that religious thought controlled by the state in Urfa, as is the case in every Turkish city. They find religious education at state schools insufficient. Alternative, traditional institutions of religion are forbidden.

Thus, Urfa may be conservative, but this conservatism is not marginal

religiosity or conservatism. Thus, this is a rejection of Urfa’s

marginalization. They want to represent a true, clear and normal image

for Urfa. The lifestyle of Urfalis is not religious and not significantly

different from the characteristics of the state. Kemal differentiates

between religiosity and Urfalis’ characteristics.

“Conflict occurs if you want to live your religion in a way that differs from tradition.” KEMAL (29, male)

Kemal had education in madrasah as well as in university. Now, he knows his religion and modern life. He has a chance to choose a true and religious life and be a respected teacher. He knows how to live as a religious person; he is not vulnerable to manipulated religious thoughts or regulations. Thus, living as a religious person is his aim. While doing this, he is on the core of

the modern life and culture; therefore, he is powerful and religious. Emin also has a similar story and similar tactics as well. He also had a religious education in Egypt and he is an instructor in the University. Therefore, he has religious education and he is teaching in the university, that he can make tactics to live his religion consciously.

Rifat, a 54-years-old teacher of Turkish at a private course preparing students for the university entrance exam, also thinks that religiosity in Urfa is determined by traditions and not by religion. Thus, he finds Urfa's conservative and thinks that conservatism, religiosity and traditionalism are fashionable in Urfa, that they are temporary situations without any roots. He thinks that wearing a headscarf or not are unconscious behaviors, especially observed among uneducated women, and that their faith is "faith by imitation." He uses an example to illustrate his point:

"A guy says to another, 'Let's believe.' The other one answers, 'How?' The first says, 'I don't know either.' This is the faith of most people in Urfa. They stick to customs without knowing the reason. And they force others to abide by them." RIFAT (57, male)

He also uses the headscarf as an indicator of traditionalist religiosity in Urfa.

"Urfali women live and clothe themselves taking into consideration other people's thoughts. They wear the headscarf here and take it off while on vacation. Many covered women do not pray." RIFAT (57,

male)

Thus, he thinks that the headscarf is a habit for Urfalıs and that they do not see it as an order of Islam. For Urfalıs, religion, like conservatism, is a unifying institution in society. Therefore, they think that religious authorities also care about social rules more than God's orders. We can see the tactics of women to double control of double strategies. Some women prefer to wear headscarf in Urfa, and take it off outside the city. Therefore, they use this wearing behavior as tactic both to state (state wants them to be modern and prefer them without headscarf) and to Urfa (wearing headscarf is a common habit in Urfa).

Ayşe agrees with Rıfat and Kemal about the traditional character of Urfa when she answers the question, "Is it easy to be religious in Urfa?" She thinks it is difficult to be religious in Urfa because the city is primarily conservative and not religious.

"Most women wearing a headscarf cannot answer why they wear the headscarf. I was unknowledgeable about my religion before I studied theology. It is not possible to be very religious in Urfa. You can try, but you will be marginalized and being excluded by people." AYŞE (24, female)

Rıfat is also critical of Urfa's religious authorities and is suspicious of the legacy of religious authorities, as are Emin and Kemal.

“People obey ‘religious men’ if they like their judgments. The religious men also make judgments on behalf of the rich and powerful.” RIFAT (57, male)

On the other hand, they are aware of the different atmosphere of Urfa as the city of prophets, but do not think these characteristics are enough to be truly religious.

“People visit mausoleums of saints even though they do not fast. They pray the *terawih* prayer,<sup>123</sup> the ‘*Id* prayers<sup>124</sup> even though they do not pray the daily *farz* (*obligatory*) prayers.<sup>125</sup> Thus, people obey the society more than God.” HARUN (38, male)

Some interviewees, including Zeynep and Fuat, see the religiosity of Urfalis as ignorance and traditionalism.

“It is easy to live in a religious way in Urfa; the atmosphere is convenient for this because everyone claims that they are religious. Most people go on the pilgrimage just to travel, not for religious reasons.” ZEYNEP (24, female)

Fuat, as a doctor, trusts science greatly and complains about Urfalis because they do not “understand” the doctor and his recommendations. Therefore, he also thinks that Urfalis are conservative and that they

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<sup>123</sup> A supererogatory prayer specific to the month of Ramadan, the ninth month of the Islamic calendar.

<sup>124</sup> Prayers specific to the two official holidays of Islam, ‘*Id* ul-Fitr, which marks the end of Ramadan, and ‘*Id* ul-Adha, which marks the end of the Hajj, the annual Muslim pilgrimage to Mecca.

<sup>125</sup> Fasting in the month of Ramadan and the five daily prayers are obligatory in Islam; the *terawih* prayer and visiting mausoleums are only considered beneficial, but are not obligatory.

follow traditions instead of religion.

“There is no real religiosity in Urfa. Their manners are religious because they care about how people will judge them. You have to say what science orders. However, Urfalis call people, and especially doctors, “irreligious.” However, we cannot explain everything with religion. Religiosity is a virtue, but excessive religiosity is not supposed to be approved.” FUAT (70, male)

As we can see, Urfali people have different views about “religious life in Urfa”. Some of the interviewees consider that Urfalis are more concerned about social rules than the “true religion”, and they define that as a “conservative manner” which most of them do not approve. Thus, some Urfalis may be conservative in religion, but many of them do not approve to be conservative in the issue of religiosity.

### **3.3.2. Piety is Increasing, We are Developing**

The main concern of this part is to investigate if Urfa is changing and getting more conservative or more religious. In the first half of this section, we will discuss the ideas of interviewees who think that Urfa is changing and getting more religious, and who see this as a good development. In the second half, we will look at the idea that Urfa is conservative and getting more conservative.



Firstly, according to some interviewees piety is increasing in Urfa; that means, more people learn about their religion and choose to practice their religion in a conscious way. It is significant that interviewees define “increasing, conscious religiosity” as a development. That claim contradicts with the modernist development argument. Modernism defines religion as a pre-modern institution constructed by men and anticipates its decline and abolishment as a result of modernist development. Thus, according to modernism, the decline of piety is an indicator of development, since “development” is solely a modern concept. Moreover, interviewees use the modern concepts, development and progress for religiosity. Religion is not a concept claiming for an absolute development, at least not in modern terms. Therefore, religious people do not live a religiosity excluded from the modernist atmosphere, strategy they are surrounded. They use a modernist tactic to support their religious life.

Nezihe, a 76-years-old housewife, does not define Urfa as religious.

“Urfa is called religious but don’t believe it. People gossip a lot. God’s laws are not known well. People are ignorant. Ignorant people cannot be religious.” NEZİHE (76, female)

On the other hand, she considers that Urfalıs have changed and that they have learned more about their religion and subsequently practice it more consciously now.

“People now know Islam better. Some people follow the advice they learned; some do not, they just ignore it.” NEZİHE (76, female)

Most of Nezihe’s children had higher education two are engineers and one is a hodja <sup>126</sup>. Nezihe appreciates modern and religious education and she is proud of living in an educated family since her childhood. She considers that, the way to fight against the common wrongdoings of Urfalıs and harmful traditions is to learn, to study and to know religion well. She gives advices to her family and visitors for them to be “good people”. She keeps on doing her these tactics against the strategies of Urfa even she is an old lady living alone.

Hacı, a 49 year-old retired teacher, currently a shopkeeper, claims the following:

“Urfa is a religious place. It is a comfortable city to live in when you’re religious. Even if Urfa changes, its religiosity does not decrease. Religious people are more conscious now.” Hacı (male, 49)

Therefore, interviewees are happy with the religious progress and change in Urfa. As a result of this change, Urfa is getting less conservative on the

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<sup>126</sup> Instructor of Islam.

issue of religiosity and many interviewees prefer being less conservative.

Rukiye is a 45-years-old housewife and thinks that Urfa is developing and getting more religious and conscious. She compares the religious attitude and knowledge of Urfalis in the past with those of today.

“Urfa is a religious city but this is not traditional religiosity. Young people are conscious; they pray and do their religious duties. We used to pray with short skirts on. That clothing is not convenient for prayer. Furthermore, Urfalis are not ‘backward.’ Now the religious people are conscious; they were not in the past. The religious people are more religious, the people who are not religious are more independent and uncovered. Only conscious religious people wear the headscarf, the others do not.”

Here we see another tactic to overcome the traditional headscarf, the strategy. That is to say, wearing headscarf is a tradition in Urfa with religious concerns. However, today more women choose to wear it or not to wear it just for the sake of their religious views. More people question the traditional action and make their own decision. Furthermore, being conscious is significant for muslim people, muslims are more self-confident now in their encounter with modernism. They think that religiosity can be chosen reluctantly, reasoning may be a way to be more religious. Therefore, religion is not being irrational and sensitive.

Rukiye is a good example of a person who is happy with the change in Urfa. She compares her childhood with Urfa of today. She also explains that in the past (in her childhood and early adulthood) everyone used to

wear the headscarf because it was a custom to wear it; not wearing it was seen as shameful. However, she adds that no one taught them their religion, how to read the Qur'an or how to pray. She thinks people were ignorant then and that few used to pray, were all elderly or/ and *haci*.<sup>127</sup> She gives examples of headscarf use in Urfa which was not appropriate according to the rules of the religion.

“Women frequented wedding parties. They used to have fun and were ignorant about religion. They used to wear the headscarf in the street but were uncovered at wedding parties, even male singers and an orchestra was present. However, Urfa is our hometown. We cannot speak badly about it.” RUKIYE (45, female)

As we can see, the interviewees defend their city. They know that their attitudes and actions identify and shape the city. As has been seen, Rukiye also criticizes the city, but then adds:

“We cannot speak badly about Urfa.” RUKIYE (45, female)

Thus, housewives also both criticise the city and support what they like in it, as many other people do. That is their tactic: to approve and to criticize. Among the housewives who have been interviewed are illiterate (Sevim and Rukiye). However, they attend to lectures of hodjas regularly. Furthermore, they have learned to read Quran when they were in their late 30s. They had to study hard, but they never quitted to study. Therefore, they used their

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<sup>127</sup> Lit. pilgrim; the title given to a person who has gone on the annual Muslim pilgrimage to Mecca.

tactics with all their strength. They do not hesitate to study for a “true life”, a life that may be different from the traditional order of Urfa.

On the other hand, according to some interviewees, conservatism as, in their words, “fundamental and intolerant religiosity” is increasing in Urfa. Fuat, for example, does not support the new conservative-democratic government, the Justice and Development Party (AKP). Fuat is concerned about change in Urfa over the past five to 10 years. He thinks that backwardness has increased. Thus, change does not always mean development for him. Additionally, he does not regard increasing religiosity as development.

“Urfa has changed much, but it is returning to how it was five to 10 years ago. Conservatism has increased. Conservatism is different from ‘covering with a headscarf’.”<sup>128</sup>

Therefore, in contrast to other interviewees, Fuat thinks that conservatism is on the rise in Urfa and not religiosity.

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<sup>128</sup>

*Tesettür* in Turkish.

### 3.3.3. Religion and State

As we can see from the interviews and comments of interviewees, the image and daily life is connected with various conditions of Turkey. In this part, interviewees were asked questions to see the effect of the Turkish state on the image and daily life of Urfa and Urfalis. They were then asked what Urfalis do when they disagree with the government and its rules. We wanted to learn if Urfalis are rebels who only preserve their values and essence. The headscarf, for example, is banned in schools and formal government offices. Do conservative and religious Urfalis obey this rule or do they “preserve” wearing the headscarf?

“Urfa” is a strategy, a concept/city under another strategy, Turkish modernism. Urfalis act within Urfa, Urfa is a strategy, a culture and people deal and live with it. On the other hand, Urfa is used against macro- strategy; Urfalis change Urfa; they connect themselves to the bigger strategy in the interpretation of religion or various daily routines. Therefore, strategy of Urfa and state may contradict and people try to adjust this situation also with tactics as we see in the headscarf- wearing strategies of women. Some wear it only in Urfa and obey both Urfa’s rules and become a decent citizen for the state. On the other hand, many

women reject the traditional headscarf and do not use it, while some others use it just for the sake of religion as we have argued above.

Therefore, in this part, the questions asked are related with the relationship of Urfalis with state authority. Do Urfalis resist state authority? If they do, how and to what extent? Is the identity of being from Urfa dependent on state authority? The aim of the questions is to understand the relationship between Urfa and state authority and to see if Urfa is independent of the identity of the state.

Harun thinks that it is easy to live Islam in Urfa. Even though state-imposed bans and rules hold valid in Urfa, they can be more flexible here. Thus he accepts that Urfa's religiosity is controlled and limited due to state politics and people's flexibility while regulating the rules.

“Every rule that restricts religious obedience is valid in Urfa, too. On the other hand, official bureaus are affected by the traditional structure. The official bureaus are closed at the time of *iftar*.<sup>129</sup> The state ensures loyalty with such gifts (allowing workers to leave before time for *iftar* comes in). Most of the officials are Urfalı or abide by the general rules that govern the lives of Urfalis.” HARUN (38, male)

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<sup>129</sup>

The meal eaten at sunset during Ramadan to break the daylong fast.

Harun uses tactics to defend the rules of state against strategy of Urfa. He is a adherent of Kemalism. Even Urfalı people are not usually fond of Atatürk, and Harun always warn his students if they speak disrespectful to Atatürk. Obeying Atatürk and the rules of the state he has founded is the strategy of the state. Therefore, Harun defends the strategy of he state, using his own tactics against strategy of Urfalı.

As in every Turkish city, Urfalı women either do not wear the headscarf at these institutions or they remove their headscarf while in them or they permanently remove their headscarves. Zeynep chose to permanently remove her headscarf. She says:

“Living a religious life is easy if you are a housewife; it is tough if you work. I am glad I took my headscarf off. (Zeynep used to wear the headscarf, but took it off when she was 16. She does not wear the headscarf today.)” ZEYNEP (24, female)

Urfa, although known as relevantly more religious than other cities, is a city in the Republic of Turkey. As a result of state regulations, it is not easy to be religious. Emin answers the previous question considering the authority of the state and thinks that Urfa is not religious, though maybe conservative and Urfa is a typical Turkish city. He adds that Urfa certainly has its own traditions, customs and aura, but that these do not make Urfa a completely different city of Turkey because Urfa is a city bound to official ideology. He thinks that native Urfalı are religious and



that this is why Urfalis are religious in general. According to him, however, it is not easy to practice your religion in Urfa because of the politics of the state.

“You can not enter the military, university, etc. wearing a headscarf. There is a sign saying ‘No entrance with headscarf’ even at the school of theology. Officers cannot go to pray *Cuma namazi*.<sup>130</sup> There are alcoholic beverages in the DSI guesthouse<sup>131</sup> even though it is a government bureau.” EMİN (52, male)

In fact, most of the interviewees think Urfa is bound to rules set out by the state. Ahmet says:

“There is an effort to comply with authority. The relationship with the authority can be summarized as follows: ‘I can not make it accept me. I cannot even change it. It can only give me gifts.’ AHMET (58, male)

Ahmet also thinks that the relationship between the state and the people is problematic in Turkey. He does not trust the sincerity of the state in its discourse. He thinks that the attention of the state is hypocritical in specific issues such as education. According to statistics, there isn’t a sufficient number of schools and teachers and the schools are usually overcrowded (as we have also mentioned above).

“The public has a problematic relationship with the state. There aren’t enough schools for the population. Thus, the appeals of the state to send children to school are pretentious. If everyone goes to school, it will be

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<sup>130</sup> An obligatory prayer for Muslim men prayed communally (in mosques) every Friday shortly after midday.

<sup>131</sup> <sup>113</sup> *Devlet Su İşleri*, State Waterworks Authority.

obvious how insufficient the number of schools and teachers is. Additionally, the state sends the children to school for them to be obedient citizens of the state, not to give them a good education.” AHMET (58, male)

Rıfat thinks that Urfalı are dependent on the state; they are obedient to it and that they deny their responsibility to their religious views and life.

“People think that we are dependent on the state and that our life is mainly the state’s responsibility. So, people deny their responsibility on the headscarf issue (headscarf ban).” RIFAT (57, male)

The wedding ceremonies are occasions where the traditions, religious views and state authority encounters. In Urfa people make an official marriage contract in the government building for marriage. Additionally, they invite a hodja and he sits by the officer. After the official contract, hodja announces a religious marriage contract while all the guests and the officer are present there. The official marriage is obligatory, it is the strategy. People want also a religious, religious obligations are also strategies. Therefore, Urfalı people produce a tactic to do both services in the same time. They accomplish both their religious duty and the official one and they deal with both strategies with that tactic. Even it is not legal to have a hodja in the ceremony, it is not a problem in Urfa. The rules of the state and religion have conflict, Urfalı may solve it with some tactics as we can see above. That means, there is no single “image” of Urfa, people claim other image for Urfa when they need or want.

Finally, Kerim points to the opportunities and role of democracy. He states the importance of individuals' responsibility to make their life better. He says:

“There are 11 deputies in Parliament, nine of which are from the ruling party. That is a great opportunity for Urfalis to govern Urfa. Steering the government is the responsibility of Urfalis.” KERİM (male, 32)

Therefore, Urfalis have to obey the government since they are members of a common city and subject to the laws and orders of the state. They do not preserve their own values that clearly contradict the views of the state. Urfalis are not marginal, stubborn and conservative people. Urfalis live in conditions faced by Turkey and under its rules. However, they try to find tactics to live in harmony and peace with the rules of state even though they cannot always be successful. They can quit working in government bureaus, but they cannot work at these bureaus while wearing a headscarf. In contrast to the example above, the one that is about wedding ceremonies, where the rules of state and religion conflict and people overcome the conflict with their tactics, Urfalis cannot solve the headscarf ban, they cannot use tactics to let women wear headscarves in the forbidden areas of the state. That demonstrates us the limits of the tactics of Urfalis when they disagree with the state.

Furthermore, we see that ban of headscarf continues in Urfa, and Turkey, even a conservative party is governing Turkey. That shows us, government can not always have the real power, even the government want to stop the ban, the “state” holds the real strategy, and it does not let the government.

## CONCLUSION

The common image of Urfa as an underdeveloped, conservative, reactionary and eastern city and the disagreements of Urfalis have been the basic point of the thesis, and they have been discussed through the thesis with interviews and literature on conservatism theory and Turkish conservatism.

Firstly, Urfa is an ordinary city with its own characteristics. Its historical background is one of the reasons for the variety of its significant characteristics. Additionally, lifestyles and thoughts of people are affected by state politics and state characteristics. Furthermore, locals change the image of Urfa through their everyday life choices.

Furthermore, the authoritarian politics of the Turkish state have aimed to conserve the state's own basis and label people resistant to change "conservative and underdeveloped." The east and southeast are seen as resistant places because of their geographical isolation from Turkey and their heterogeneous structure, comprising various ethnicities and languages. On the other hand, the ideology of the state encompasses all of Turkey with its administrative institutions and offices. The

conservative image of these cities has also been constructed by state claims; that is to say, strategy, because the state itself has labeled these cities conservative due to their resistance to the state's project of change. Thus, the reason for this image is related to Turkish state politics, the life choices of locals and the characteristics of Urfa.

Conservatism is not a new tradition in Turkey and it is also efficient in state politics and in specific ideologies. While labeling people for resisting to change, state also struggles to preserve its order and behaves in a conservative way. Therefore, state wants to conserve the revolutionary changes to the present changes after the following years of revolution. A new interpretation for secularism, religion or modern education and clothing are strictly rejected with a conservative sensibility.

We investigated the questions: How do Urfalis cope with the “conservative” image of Urfa? Indeed, image is something constructed anyway. People disagree with it, and they claim another image for Urfa. They claim their proposal is “real Urfa”, even it is also an image and representation, and their claims for that “truth” is subjective as we see in various ideas of Urfalis on the city.

Another main issue emerging from this research is claims about “Urfa’s essence” and Urfa’s relationship with conservative thought are clothing preferences, women, the family, education, religion, Harran University and traditions. Everyone has concerns about a number of topics in Urfa since they all hold various thoughts on what the essence of Urfa is.

People also want to change and develop and most of them are willing to allow some of the institutions (family, traditions, religion, education system) to change, including religious life, to make them non-conservative. Conservatism is becoming cautious about change brought by modernism and against revolutions. This is as a reaction to modernism controlling its changes, not stopping it. Conservatism aims to protect old institutions for the sake of coherence and social unity in the place we live in, in this case, Urfa. It also defends a steady change to protect the “natural” order of society. These characteristics of conservatism make it appear to be an opponent of change and modernism even though this is not the case. None of the Urfalis interviewed disagree with change; they, mostly the old people, want a selective change in traditions, one that is compatible with the ideas of conservatism on change.

Some older locals (age ranges between 40 and 70) consider Urfa as having changed significantly with the increasing quality of formal and religious education, even though they miss the old, “nostalgic” Urfa. Other elderly people consider Urfa as having changed in a negative way and that specific values must be better preserved. Therefore, older Urfalis are more cautious about conservation of Urfa, while they also want to change or protect specific characteristics and traditions of Urfa and Urfalis. Thus, older people are more conservative.

However, for most of the young (age ranges between 20 and early 30s), Urfa is not changing enough and change cannot come easily there. They consider Urfa “conservative,” the lives of Urfalis and their mentality staying the same even if the city changes and develops. That is to say, they do not think that the “steady change” of Urfa is sufficient for Urfa to change to a better place. That means, they do not want a conservative change. Their hope is to live their own life in a non-conservative fashion -- that is to say, as they want -- as much as possible in Urfa. Thus, for most of the young, Urfa’s change is a “conservative change” and it is not good enough to change the lives of individuals.



As we can see, young people may think that Urfalis are conservative and old people do stay the same forever, they aim to have a “special” life for themselves, a life that is modern, meaningful, and changing . That is their tactics to the strategy of order. According to my observations and interviews, Urfa changes and develops with these different ideas and attitudes. Thus, it can not be said that it is an absolute and strict “conservative” city.

Another issue concerning change is women. Some think that Urfalı women are changing, that they are getting better education and beginning to work. Some think that working is just an extra burden for women, that women’s lives are not improving with work. People also claim that their modern character with their modern, urban dress code, may also include the headscarf. Others believe Urfa is not changing at all.

Wearing headscarf is common in Urfa for women and this clothing is used with various thoughts and intentions and it is interpreted in many ways as we have discussed. Using headscarf is the strategy of Urfa as a rule of Islam. Therefore, some people think that it is too precious to be traditional and wear it just for the sake of religion, and their this attitude is a tactic to the strategy of Urfa. On the other hand, some women wear

it in Urfa and take it out when they are outside the city or when they are in entertainments like weddings. They also use tactics for wearing headscarf and choose places to use it when they want.

Therefore, women change, and their change is an important concern for all strategies, both the strategies of Urfa and modernist approach.

Women have a lot of tactics and they solve their problems in many ways.

Women have their “traditional” household duties like cleaning and cooking even they work in a professional job for example. Additionally, ban of headscarf prevent women to work or get education while state expects women to work as men. Thus, Urfalı women may try to be different and free but they have to compete with plans and limits of State and Urfalı lifestyle. Women do not wear headscarf with absolute conservative concerns. They decide how to and why to wear it. Either they wear it with religious concerns or they wear it only as a traditional cloth and they do not wear it in all the time. That means, women also do not live with an absolute obedience to conservative expectations of Urfa or the rules of state.

Although “Urfa’s way of being” is defined as unchangeable, referring to its “conservative image,” nothing is unchangeable if it is alive. There are various reasons for change in Urfa. The city is reinterpreted everyday and with every action of its residents. Second, being conservative does not equate to being unchangeable but rather being careful about the speed of change and paying good attention to preserving old institutions. As a city within the Republic of Turkey, it is also affected by the free market instituted in the 1980s and globalization taking place throughout the world. Urfalis resist both changing and the conservative image of Urfa; these being grand narratives, they are strategies of power. Urfalis want to adapt to changes in Turkey and in the world; they are resistant to conservatism over time. On the other hand, they want to protect Urfa’s “inevitable” values and resist globalization and change.

We can also see that the locals obey rules set by the state, though with local takes on them. They want the benefits of the state, such as better education and, in particular, technological development. On the other hand, Urfalis preserve their own values and they both obey the state and follow rules of Islam if it is possible as we see in marriage contract. They usually get married with a religious and official announcement.

However, if state has strict rules and bans as the “ban of headscarf in

schools and official bureaus”, they just have to obey the state . People obey the state, the traditions of Urfa, but they always use their own tactics to deal with these strategies, even their tactics are not always completely sufficient to live as they want to.

Thus, the state has contradictory expectations from Urfalis, it wants Urfalis to be “modern”; however, it define them as “eastern, ignorant people, undeveloped” and disregard the modern development in Urfa. These may not be openly declared rules of discourses, but attitudes and image making processes towards eastern cities as well as Urfa. The clamis of the Turkish State to create and provide “single normality”, “single modernity”, “single nation”, “single language” and “single religion” results anomalies and schizophrenic identities of people. There is no “singularity” is possible, every individual and every experience is unique, and people cannot be “the same”. When the have to be “the same”, they are forced to have an abnormal identity with enormous anxieties and hatred for any other “stranger”.

With all these complexities Urfa and Urfalis does not fit the modernist presentation. Consequently, Urfa presents a challenge, a contradicton to the “ideal, modern, contemporary Turkey.

Furthermore, Urfalıs think that the state is powerful and that they are dependent on it. Therefore, Urfalıs are not “marginal citizens” of Turkey and they also protect and obey the authority of the state as far as conservatism approves. The social order and harmony of the state order are defended by conservatism as well as by most of the interviewees.

As we can see, various conservatisms and various “conservation techniques” exist in the city. Most people do not term themselves conservative but instead reserve the label for others because of the negative connotations associated with conservatism. They are not happy about Urfa being known as conservative and mostly prefer Urfalıs to not be conservative. Although they want to be conservative on specific matters, they want to do so on their own terms and do not think Urfa’s conservatism has any benefit now. Additionally, Urfa’s conservatism and its image are related to state politics; with all the various adaptation techniques, Urfa is a city in Turkey and not a radical or exceptional city.

A unique definition of conservatism, religiosity, Eastern-ness, youth, manhood and womanhood cannot be seen in Urfa. This makes Urfa similar to other cities deemed ordinary cities of Turkey. The relation of Urfalıs with the “conservative” image of Urfa, their relation with the

conservatism of the state and the ideology of state and life conditions in Urfa may be defined as “tactics” of locals to the “strategy.”

Therefore, the city changes whether the people approve or not. People can direct the identity and change of the city to an extent. Their discourse on Urfa’s identity is not “common and the same”. The city, Urfa, the meaning of this city is disembedding and re-embedding, as Giddens explains. He thinks that the meaning of a place, a word, a thing may be changed, this is called disembedding; and it can be defined again, this is the re-embedding process. Therefore, the experienced lifestyles become styles and models peculiar to Urfa finally.

This study cannot cover all the claims on the image of Urfa and does not aim to do so. We have tried to demonstrate the answers of Urfalis to their known identity and image and how they reconstruct themselves and the city while doing this. The reconstruction is related with the power of the state and the opportunities of the city as well. Therefore, life itself is an answer to power. Furthermore, neither power nor the individual are completely free and independent from one another.

Thus, Urfalis are known as conservative, and they sometimes have conservative lifestyles. However, that is not a unique, definite, conservative life. People struggle with environmental and political powers and use tactics for this struggle. Furthermore, Urfa is conservative because of its traditional lifestyle and geographical isolation from Turkey. Another reason of Urfa's conservative structure is that State defines Urfalis and Urfa as conservative and calls them so even in a subtle way, with disregarding the developments in the East for example . Additionally, Urfa is "the other" that state does not approve. Urfa is the contradiction of the "ideal, modern, contemporary Turkey".

As a result, all these claims of the interviewees and differences between them demonstrate to us that Urfalis define and built Urfa as a result of all these strategies and tactics in the city. Strategy and tactics are always in a relationship and can turn in to one another because they shape and reshape each other, as seen in the interview results. Additionally, state politics and the characteristics of Urfa are elements that shape Urfa. Urfalis are conservative but this is not independent from the state and state conservatism, nor it is not completely dependant of these politics; Urfalis have their own tactics producing a complex or heterogeneous lifestyle in Urfa under the power and rules of State. This production

works through the tactics under the strategy of a modernist / national representation of the state. The struggle of Urfalis indicate that they have a hidden, subtle war between power and their individualities. They complain about oppressive state politics in Urfa that does not permit Urfa to develop, Urfalis to get educated and let them to live their religion comfortably. But the “war” is not only between the state and individuals; it is working among Urfalis too. Some think that some Urfalis are conservative and ignorant; which makes the change insufficient in Urfa. When one Urfali does not approve the religious attitudes of other Urfalis and find them “conservative” and criticizes Urfa and Urfalis, the reciprocal criticism is oriented towards to the “non-conservatives” too. As a conclusion, Urfalis deal with Urfa’s image, state politics and Urfa’s structure with their own tactics. These may not completely be successful or independent from the rules of the state and Urfa’s conditions, but people produce new ways to survive all the time. This means that they participate to the making of Urfa’s image, departing from their imaginary about Urfa. In other words, Urfalis try to shape and reproduce this image, feeding from the conditions providing this image. Thus, individuals have opportunities to make their own lifestyle even they need to struggle for this and despite of and together with limitations (constraints).



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## APPENDIX : LIST OF INTERVIEWEES

1. İsmail : (male) He is 54 years old. He is married. He and his wife are from Urfa. He is illiterate and works as a mechanic.
2. Nezihe : (female) She is 76 years old and she is from Urfa. She is a widow. She is a mother of five children; two of her boys are engineers, one of her girls is a religious teacher. She is a housewife.
3. Hacı : (male) He is 49 years old. He is from Urfa and a retired teacher. He is married and a father of four children; three of them are university students, one is a secondary school student.
4. Fatma : (female) She is 43 years old and Urfalı. She graduated from secondary school. She is married to Hacı and is a housewife.
5. Ali : (male) He is 59 years old and Urfalı. He graduated from high school. He is a retired shopkeeper. He is married and a father of three children; one is a college student and another an engineer.
6. Ahmet : (male) He is 58 years old and Urfalı. He is a writer and an instructor at Harran University. He has various books and a documentary series focusing on Urfa.
7. Rıfat : (male) He graduated from Atatürk University in Erzurum, department of Turkish language and literature. He is a manager

and a teacher of Turkish in a course preparing students for the university entrance exam.

8. Harun : (male) He is 37 years old. He is from Konya. He has lived in Urfa since 1997. He is married to a social science teacher and is the father of one child. He is a history teacher of a course preparing students for the university entrance exam. He graduated from Ankara University's department of history.
9. Kemal : (male) He 29 years old. He is Urfalı. He graduated from İstanbul University's department of geography. He has also graduated from a madrasah (seminary). He is a grandson of a famous religious scholar. He is a geography teacher at a private school offering preparation courses for the university entrance exam (Student Selection Examination [ÖSS]). He is single.
10. Ayşe : (female) She is 23 years old. She is from Urfa. She is a teacher of theology. She graduated from Harran University's department of theology and received a Master's degree from Selçuk University's department of religion sociology. She is single. Her father died in 1997. He was a teacher of theology and her mother is a housewife.
11. Zeynep : (female) She is 23 years old. She is from Urfa. She is a math teacher. She graduated from Selçuk University's department

of mathematics. She is single. Her father is a shopkeeper in an old bazaar and her mother is a housewife.

12. Hatice : (female) She is 23 years old, she lives in Urfa. She is a teacher of Arabic. She graduated from Ankara University's department of Arabic. She is single. Her father is an instructor at Harran University and her mother is a housewife.
13. Emin: (male) He is 46 years old and is from Urfa. He is ethnically Kurdish and his native language is Kurdish. Turkish is his second language and Arabic his third. He is an instructor of Arabic at Harran University. He is a father of four children, all of them students. His wife is a housewife. He graduated from al-Azhar University, Cairo, and lived and worked in Saudi Arabia with his wife and children.
14. Fuat : (male) He is 70 years old. He is from Urfa. He graduated from Ankara University's school of medicine. He works as a doctor. He is married and has four children. His son is a doctor, as well. His wife is a retired teacher.
15. Serap : (female) She is 22 years old and Urfalı. She is married, with a son. She is a housewife and her husband is a math teacher. She graduated from secondary school.

16. Rukiye : (female) She is 45 years old. She is from Urfa. She is married, with four children. She is illiterate. Her father is a shopkeeper in a bazaar (in the “Old Bazaar”). Her two elder children graduated from primary school and her two younger children are students.
17. Funda : (female) She is 35 years old. She is from Urfa. She graduated from high school. She is married to a shopkeeper with a business in the bazaar (in the “Old Bazaar”). She has three children.
18. Fadile : (female) She is 46 years old. She is Urfalı. She is married. Her husband is retired. She has two sons, both of them teachers. They lived in Germany between 1976 and 1983.
19. Fatma : (female) She is 38 years old. She is Urfalı. She is a widow. Her husband was a bazaar shopkeeper (in the “Old Bazaar”). She has four children, one a shopkeeper and three students.
20. Sevim : (female) She is 38 years old. She is Urfalı. She is married. She is illiterate. She has five daughters; one is married, one graduated from a vocational school, three are students in secondary and primary schools.
21. Kerim : (male) He is 32 years old. He is Urfalı. He left university due to serious health problems that resulted in him losing one

arm. He works at a pharmacy. He is married and has two children.

22. Semra : (female) She is 26 years old. She is Urfalı. She graduated from high school. She works for a shop selling clothes for men. She is single.

23. Zeliha : (female) She is 36 years old. She is Urfalı. She is an agricultural engineer. She graduated from Harran University. She worked at a primary school for a year. She runs her own business, a shop selling children's clothes. She is married, with three children. Her husband also runs a shop selling children's clothing.

24. Fevzi : (male) He is 52 years old. He is Urfalı. He is a retired math teacher. He runs his own shop, a shop for white goods. He is married, with two children. He graduated from Ankara University's department of mathematics.

25. Mehmet: (male) He is 35 years old. He is a teacher of Turkish Language. He I married with two children. He is from Urfa.

26. Murat: (male) He is 30 years old. He works in a shop selling men's clothes. He is married, with one child. He is from Urfa.

