

# A Sustainable Cultural Heritage in Gaziantep, the Silk Road city in Anatolia: The Historical Texture of Gümrük Avenue

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## ABSTRACT:

Gümrük Avenue, in the historical texture of Şekeroğlu Neighborhood, Gaziantep, is an important cultural heritage element with historic role in the commercial and cultural life. The first texture formation started with the Gaziantep Castle during the Roman period (30 BC - 395 AD) and then the Byzantine, Islamic, Seljuk, Emirates-Memlük, Ottoman and Republican periods. It did not develop during the Islamic and Seljuk periods, yet experienced the most important formation and development during the Ottomans where buildings such as mosques, baths, bedesten, and inns put historic marks on the texture. The Republican period differentiated traditional style with commercial multi-storey reinforced concrete buildings and completed the texture formation. Through qualitative method based on literature review and fieldwork, this study aims to examine and document the formations reflecting the cultural, social and economic evolution of different historical periods since the emergence of Gümrük Avenue in the historical texture of Gaziantep, one of the important cities of the historical Anatolian Silk Road, and reveal the position of the avenue in shaping the historical identity of the city. In the absence of previous studies, it is considered as significant, which will shed light on future studies on the relevant topic.

*Keywords: Gaziantep, historical environment, historical texture, Şekeroğlu neighbourhood, Gümrük Avenue*

## 1. Introduction

Texture is the perceptible visual or tactile qualities of an object or its surface and is formed by the combination of similar units (Altaban, 2013). Historical urban texture is one of the most important elements that carry the traces of the past to the present and make cultural heritage visible while shaping the identities of cities, they have become a unique reservoir of cultural heritage by reflecting the social, economic and aesthetic values of different civilizations throughout history. Urban texture refers to a complex pattern that includes not only physical structures, but also the spatial relationships between these structures and their interconnected harmony with cultural, natural and social contexts (Köksaldı & Turkan, 2023). Historic environments contribute to the preservation of cultural identity by carrying the aesthetic and architectural features of the past (Koçan & Çorbacı, 2012).

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The concept of preservation is a process that has been developing since the 19<sup>th</sup> century with regard to the protection of historical environments with maintaining buildings or areas of cultural value alive through processes such as preservation, maintenance, repair, renovation and change of function. With the aim to ensure adaptation to the needs of modern cities based on sustainability principles, conservation strategies are updated through the enhancement techniques improving energy efficiency in historic buildings and textures. Historical buildings preserve their cultural identities with the adaptable reuse approaches while becoming an important element of urban life with modern functions. Smart city practices and digital cities support the preservation of historical textures as they allow the integration with modern infrastructure and accessibility. Moreover, conservation strategies developed with local administration and social participation aim to nourish historical spaces in terms of aesthetics, social and economic perspectives (Ahunbay, 2019). The modern use of conserved spaces preserves the original nature of buildings yet designed with adaptable use methods to address commercial demands. Such balance is possible with the inclusion of economic functions and revitalization of spaces based on local community needs without disrupting the originality of historical texture (Orhan & Yaldız, 2021). Attempts to protect historical buildings in the world first started in religious buildings and cities were protected as works of art in the Roman Empire, but some buildings were damaged in the post-Christian period. After World War II, the concept of urban preservation gained importance in Europe, and the standards for the protection of historic environments were developed through international preservation documents and an "integrated preservation" approach was adopted respectively. In the nineteenth century, the documents of international organizations such as UNESCO and ICOMOS shaped the understanding of urban preservation (Erder, 1999).

On the other hand, Gaziantep is an important settlement located between Mesopotamia and the Mediterranean, historically dating back to the stone age ruins found in the village of Dülük, estimated to have been created around 300 BC. The city, which had strategic importance during the Roman, Byzantine, Islamic, Seljuk, Seljuk, Emirates-Memlük and Ottoman periods, has developed under the influence of many civilizations (Uğur, 2004). The city of Antep was awarded the title of "Gazi" (means 'veteran' in Turkish) in 1921 for its heroism during the National Struggle (Arslan, 2017).

Within the scope of this study, qualitative method was used to examine the introduction and progress in the historic texture of Gümrük Avenue in Gaziantep, and literature review and field study were conducted accordingly. Therefore, information was collected from sources related to texture, urban texture, historical urban texture, historical environment, preservation, the purpose and importance of preservation, urban preservation, preservation studies in the world, and the historical development of Gaziantep since its foundation; and the texture formation of the avenue was elaborated with on-site examinations and observations. Buildings were assessed in consideration with the architectural features of construction date, building materials, original function in primary construction and current function respectively. The historical relations between buildings, their influence on urban commercial and social life and functional variations between buildings shaped the observations accordingly.

The buildings on Gümrük Avenue were assessed by the historical periods in which they were built, and the formation of its rich historical texture, which emphasizes its significance in the social and commercial life of the city, was revealed.

Gümrük Avenue is a historical point in Şekeroğlu Neighborhood in Gaziantep. With its constant development since the Roman period, the avenue is one of the important trade routes of Gaziantep. The avenue, which has hosted many buildings for centuries, has been shaped by important buildings from Roman, Byzantine, Principalities-Memluk, Ottoman and Republican periods. Gaziantep Castle from the Romans and Alauddevle Mosque from the Principalities-Memluk Period are among the significant buildings of the street. Moreover, buildings such as Yeni Inn, Tahtani Mosque, Göymen Bath, Yüzükçü Inn, Zincirli Bedesten, Millet Inn, Gümrük Inn and İmam Çağdaş restaurant on Gümrük Avenue are among the important buildings bearing the traces of the Ottomans. Other buildings that contributed the shaping of the street include single-storey shops built in the Republican Period and multi-storey reinforced concrete buildings with shops on the lower floors and workplaces on the high levels of buildings. Such buildings played a vital role in the formation of the historical texture of Gümrük Avenue and still exist today, reflecting the cultural and commercial life of Gaziantep.

Gaziantep's historic urban texture is characterized by streets dating back to the Roman period (30 BC - 395 AD) and enriched with architectural monuments from many different historical periods. Gümrük Avenue is an important part of Gaziantep's historical texture and plays a central role in shaping the commercial and cultural life. The first formation of the street was initiated with the construction of Gaziantep Castle during the Roman Period. The Ottoman period is the most important period in terms of the development of the avenue where buildings such as baths, bedestens, mosques and inns were built, giving the street an important identity. In the Republican Period, reinforced concrete buildings were added and the street was re-functionalized while preserving its historical texture. Today, historical buildings are used as cafes, restaurants and souvenir outlets, contributing to both the social and commercial life of the street. Gümrük Avenue contributes to the cultural heritage of the city by bringing together the traces of the past and modern life.

As an important axis for the city identity, Gümrük Avenue, which is in the historical urban texture of Gaziantep with very rich heritage as well as its cultural richness and traditional architecture, has played an important role in shaping the cultural and commercial life in the city. Today, the avenue has become very active in Gaziantep's historical texture with the re-functioning and reuse of the street. However, studies on this street are limited, making it difficult to fully understand its historical evolution and the changes. Despite of many previous studies, a comprehensive evaluation on the emergence and development in the historical texture of city supported with structural analysis would provide concrete information for future regional and urban studies. Understanding the history of the street and the changes there provides important guidance on how it can be integrated into today's modern needs while preserving the city's historic identity. The historical buildings and architectural details on Gümrük Avenue provide important clues about the commercial and social life in the past. Hence, it is important to conduct detailed studies on the street, to examine the changes in different periods in depth and to preserve its historical heritage.

Gümrük Avenue has been chosen as the subject of our research since no study has yet been conducted on the formation and development of the entire avenue.

Historic urban textures reflect the city's past and offer a valuable heritage with their important buildings and traditional architectural elements. These buildings are not only traces of the city's past, but also indicators of its social, cultural and economic development. Gümrük Avenue, one of the main streets of Gaziantep, is today a very active transportation route and has become one of the important centers of trade and social life over time. This street is an area where Gaziantep's cultural and economic activities are concentrated, as it is a transit route for both locals and tourists visiting the city. The historical texture of Gümrük Avenue, which has become one of the important commercial centers of the city with the changes and developments in different historical periods of Gaziantep, still preserves its importance. The aim of this study is to examine and document the formation and development of Gümrük Avenue, which is an important component of Gaziantep's historical urban texture and hosts many cultural heritage artifacts, from past to present, in chronological order of the periods belonging to the architectural works in its historical texture.

Urban textures exhibit lifestyles, commercial and social relations, cultural background and architectural development in different periods. They not only help us connect with the past but also play a decisive role in shaping the future identity of the city. The preservation and proper utilization of urban textures is the most effective way of transferring a city's cultural heritage and historical richness to future generations. This study reflects on the physical and functional transformations of Gümrük Avenue from past to present through analyzing its effects on historical buildings and its contribution to the aesthetic value of the region. The research will contribute to the historical identity of Gaziantep but will also be an important source for future research for the protection and preservation of the city's cultural heritage. The lack of a detailed study on the introduction and emergence in the historical texture of Gümrük Avenue makes this study significant respectively. Additionally, this study creates an infrastructure for the future use of the buildings in the texture contributes to the study and increases its importance.

Following the introduction section, the study is followed information about the concept of texture, historical urban texture, preservation concept and preservation studies in the world and the history of Gaziantep since its foundation within the scope of conceptual foundations based on literature review and then the method of the research and Byzantine, Islamic, Seljuk, Seljuk, Beylikler-Mamluk, Ottoman and Republic of Turkey periods from the Roman period belonging to the first formation of the historical texture of Gümrük Street located in the historical urban texture of Gaziantep, the findings about the Byzantine, Islamic, Seljuk, Beylikler-Mamluk, Ottoman and Republic of Turkey periods within the scope of the findings about the formation and development in the historical process, and finally the evaluation and conclusion section about the texture constitute the limitations of the research.

## 2. Theoretical Background

### 2.1 Historical urban texture

Texture is defined as the perceptible tactile or visual features of an object or object surface. In the most general sense, texture is formed by the combination of similar or complementary units in certain systems (Altaban, 2013).

The concept of urban texture can be defined as the sum of the patterns formed by the elements of urban physical space, which vary and develop due to factors such as space, time, climate, culture and geography. It defines the relationships between open and closed spaces in terms of scale and proportion. In other words, the urban texture is a pattern or composition that emerges due to the mutual interaction of the physical structure with buildings and transportation axes and the formal characteristics of buildings guided by the natural structure and the social structure including economic structure, lifestyles, traditions, etc. (Gündoğan 2020). The legibility or perceptibility of this composition is one of the most important factors in determining the unique character of the settlement. The perception of the urban texture is directly related to cultural and personal lifestyles and perception filters, as well as its harmony with the local conditions provided by natural building components (Karademir & Topcu, 2021). The urban texture contributes to the overall character and liveability of a city by reflecting the history, culture and functional design of a region. In historic areas, the urban texture usually includes traditional architecture and settlement patterns, while in modern areas it can reflect contemporary design principles and planning approaches (Erkan & Akin, 2015).

Historic urban textures are cultural values that have evolved under the influence of various civilizations since the foundation of cities and have survived to the present day. The evolution of these textures varies depending on the physical and geographical conditions of the region as well as the styles of past periods. Historical buildings come together to form squares and streets. These streets and squares, in turn, shape the historic urban texture (Köksaldı & Turkan, 2023). Historical urban textures carry cultural heritage value by reflecting the social, economic and aesthetic characteristics of past civilizations. These areas, shaped by the influence of different civilizations, stand out with their instructive and interesting features. These textures, which carry the traces of various periods by layering over time, reflect the evolution of urban identity (Erkan & Akin, 2015). Cultural identity is transformed over time by economic, cultural and social factors. While the physical structures of cities are changing rapidly, people interact within the historic texture, influencing each other and establishing a connection between the past and the present. The continuity of this connection is ensured by preserving the historical texture and making it functional (Arabacıoğlu & Aydemir, 2007).

The historic environment is the environment consisting of streets or groups of streets, including historical features, architectural structures and monumental elements in a particular region. It is a comprehensive evaluation of all the features that constitute the unique identities of places with traditional, aesthetic and historical values, which are not monuments in themselves, but gain meaning through the elements with which they are associated.

These environments shed light on the perceptibility and readability of space and time by functioning as a cultural bridge between the past and the future by carrying the feelings and thoughts of the period in which they were built to the present (Koçan & Çorbacı, 2012). Historic environments stand out with their impressive features, design, style, form and construction techniques and carefully constructed buildings. They are like open-air museums where elements and details of past civilizations and lived experiences are exhibited. The urban spaces and environments created by each society in different historical periods bear the traces of the cultural structure of those societies (Koç & Koç, 2021). They can be identified by evaluating the building texture and the existing road together with the elements they contain. The form of the streets in the settlement area, their connections, the spatial relations of these elements and their façade relations with the buildings are important factors that determine the characteristics of the settlement. The diversity of street forms in a settlement area reflects the characteristics of different periods. The fact that the street forms in a settlement area are different from each other shows the characteristics of different periods (Arabacıoğlu & Aydemir, 2007).

Perceptual dimensions of texture mean the mental and emotional observations through physical, visual and audial features in a building or space. Such dimensions reflect the cultural and historical values in a space and guide the personal experience in respective sites. One may feel the influence and traces of time through touching an old wall. Similarly, environmental factors such as shadow, light and sound may affect the spatial perception and disclose the atmosphere and mental state in that space. Perceptual dimensions shape the individual interaction with places with their critical role in the protection of historical texture (Pallasmaa, 2024).

## **2.2 Preservation**

Since the 19th century, various concepts have been introduced, and national and international congresses have been organized on historical environments and their preservation. In the 1800s, the term "historical monument" was prominent in the definitions as it focused on the protection of monumental structures. Over time, the concept of preservation has evolved from the "monument" scale to the "environment" scale while conservation has similar meanings such as "conservation", "protection" and "defense". It involves taking the necessary measures to ensure the survival of buildings or parts of the city that carry cultural value and performing continuous conservation, renovation and maintenance works. Pursuant to another definition, conservation is the preservation, maintenance, repair, function change operations in immovable cultural and natural assets; and conservation, maintenance, repair and restoration works in movable cultural assets (Negiz, 2017; Ahunbay, 2019).

The answers on what to conserve and how to conserve are fundamental steps in developing effective preservation approaches. The answer to the question of "what is to be conserved" can be briefly defined as any kind of texture, structure or organism that is protected in the whole or certain parts of its physical environment, as a result of the values that have emerged due to events affecting the past and future of a society. On the other hand, the answer to the question "how should it be protected" is vital for determining the management approaches and tools required in the urban preservation process (Özen Turan & Aydemir, 2016).

The purpose of preservation is to ensure cultural and historical continuity, preserve the identity of the historical environment while revitalizing it in a healthier way in accordance with contemporary living conditions, evaluate historical structures and preserve the traditional settlement structure. Therefore, preservation is very important in terms of the sustainability of social and physical structure in historical environments undergoing change and transformation (Çelik & Yazgan, 2007).

The significance of preservation ensures that cultural heritage is sustained and preserves humanity's past. Such artifacts have an important place in terms of art, architecture, history and culture allowing future generations to experience and appreciate this rich heritage. The preservation of historical buildings and texture in cities is of great importance in terms of ensuring cultural continuity (Gündoğan, 2020).

Urban conservation is defined as preventing the destruction of the physical structure, which represents the economic and social conditions and cultural values of the society in the past periods, under today's changing economic and social conditions and ensuring its survival by integrating it with current developments (Bostancı, 1989). It is the protection of buildings with historical and architectural value, regions and natural beauties in certain parts of cities from aggressive, harmful and destructive actions. Moreover, it is to ensure that these areas are used in different ways and to establish their ties with the present day, thus preserving their existing values in the most effective way and making them suitable for the needs of the age. In this respect, urban conservation means activating the function of an area or a work and making it functional (Sezik, 2018).

Historically, the first conservation initiatives in the world were in religious buildings such as churches and monasteries under the influence of administration and religion. In Mesopotamian and Ancient Egyptian civilizations, conservation was shaped as per religious beliefs. In the Roman Empire, the city was considered a work of art and protection was given importance, but in the post-Christian period, Hellenic and Roman works were damaged. In the nineteenth century, nationalism supported conservation efforts and emphasized historical heritage as a means of national identity. However, conservation was limited to important buildings and led to the loss of environmental values. After World War II, the concept of urban conservation gained importance with the reconstruction process that developed in the face of destruction in Europe (Erder, 1999). The first international protection document was the UNESCO's "Convention on the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict" signed in Hague on May 14, 1954 that emphasizes the value of cultural assets for all humanity by drawing attention to the danger of wars destroying cultural heritage. The years 1950-1970 were a critical period for urban conservation. The demand for service and industrial buildings and the increase in urban population after World War II encouraged the construction of modern buildings. This led to the destruction of urban centers and initiated conservation initiatives. Conservation movements started in Paris, Baht and Brussels and 1975 was declared as the European Year of Architectural Heritage (Dinçer, 2016). The Venice Charter, adopted in 1964, aimed to establish an international standard for the conservation of historic buildings; it covers issues such as continuity, the use of modern technologies and renovation in archaeological areas. At the 1969 Brussels Conference, conservation was defined as "architectural heritage" and integrated with urban planning and the concept of "integrated conservation" was developed (Bahçeci Başarmak, 2022).

The "European Charter on Architectural Heritage" in 1975 included historical environment and integrated conservation approaches, and the Amsterdam Declaration emphasized architectural heritage as one of the main objectives of urban planning. In addition, repair techniques, methods and training of experts for conservation practices were planned. The Australian ICOMOS Declaration for the Conservation of Sites of Cultural Importance, published in 1979 and re-evaluated in 1981, clarified interventions at the single building level, conservation methods and principles, and set out principles for conservation policy, cultural significance, research and reporting (Erder, 2016). The 1987 "ICOMOS Declaration for the Conservation of Historic Cities and Urban Areas" elaborated on the general principles of the Amsterdam Declaration and defined the values to be protected. The most important contribution of these documents is the detailed definition of the content of the conservation plan. The qualities that should be included in conservation plans are listed:

- The conservation plan will be evaluated in a holistic manner.
- The support to be provided upon the identification of the buildings that need to be protected and demolished.
- Until the conservation plan is implemented, the principles and objectives of the Venice Charter will be respected.
- The proposed new functions will be compatible with the characteristics of the historic area.
- Public services required to ensure that the area to be protected is in compliance with modern laws (Belleyici Köse, 2007).

### **2.3 Sustainability in historical texture**

Historical texture elements are vital in reflecting the urban identity and cultural heritage. However, the conservation of such elements as per sustainability principles are challenging especially in today modern and fast developing cities. Sustainability is a multi-dimensional concept that cover environmental, social, economic and cultural aspects. Sustainability in historical texture considers such factors together and aims to meet the needs of modern societies while protecting cultural heritage. The sustainability strategy in historical texture protects the cultural heritage and ensures the integration of such spaces into modern life in consideration with environmental, social and economic elements (Türkoğlu, 2020). Environmental sustainability deals with environment friendly material and method use in the restoration of historical texture and buildings. Environment friendly innovative techniques together with energy efficiency enhancing systems and selection of reuseable materials prevents the damage on environment.

On the other hand, social sustainability converts historical textures into live spaces and include society into the process. Thus, historical sites are not only crucial for tourism; therefore, they need to be converted into cultural, business and social activity sites, which would ensure an in-depth connection between society and buildings (Osmanoğlu, 2019). Economic sustainability covers the financial benefit from historical texture conservation. Appropriate functionality on historical sites would introduce major economic benefit to cities. Additionally, cultural activities, local trade, traditional handcrafts may trigger sustainable economic impacts at historical sites.



However, over-commercialization risk should be taken into consideration not to disrupt social balance and damage the authenticity of such spaces (Türkoğlu, 2020). Historical texture elements and sites are not only visual asset, but they also protect cultural identity and social memory. Hence, while sustainability of historical texture may be challenging in terms of creating a balance between preservation and compatibility with today, it is vital in the sustainability of culture and history. Historical buildings generally contradict with trade, modern urbanization and economic development. Rapid urbanization and over-commercialization in particular may cause identity crises and loss of aesthetic values. Hence, sustainable conservation strategies should bear past and present together (Açıcı, 2021).

## 2.4 Short history of Gaziantep (Ayıntab)

It is known that the first settlement in the region where Gaziantep is located was in the village of Dülük (Doliche), where there are remains of the stone age present. Today, Gaziantep, one of the largest cities in the southeast of Anatolia and located between Mesopotamia and the Mediterranean, has hosted many civilizations in its history. It is estimated that this city, which is located on the historical Silk Road route and has strategic military importance, was founded around 300 BC (Uğur, 2004). Archaeological excavations in Gaziantep revealed remains from the Chalcolithic, Bronze Age, Neolithic and Paleolithic periods, proving that the city is one of the oldest settlements in Anatolia (Özdeğer, 1996).

In 1750 BC, the Hittite State dominated this region, and then the small settlement states that emerged with the collapse of the Hittites continued their existence within the city limits of Gaziantep. Later, the region, which remained under the sovereignty of the Assyrians, Medes and Commagene State, was ruled by Alexander the Great and Seleucus, one of his important commanders. Gaziantep was annexed to the Roman Empire in the first century BC and to the Byzantine Empire in 395 AD. After the Roman Empire was divided into East and West, Gaziantep region remained within the borders of Eastern Rome. What is known about the history of the city until today increases even more with the Eastern Roman or Byzantine Empire period. During the Roman period, due to the conflicts in the region, a castle was built near Dülük. With the castle, Antep started to gain importance as a settlement area (Uğur, 2004), (Figure 1).

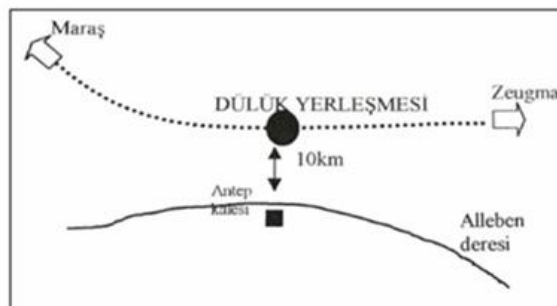


Figure 1: The first settlement area of Gaziantep is the castlsettlement (Uğur, 2004)

Since the VII. century A.D., Ayıntab played an important role in the border wars between the Arab and Byzantine states. During the reign of Konya Seljuk Sultan Masoud in 1149, when the Seljuks regained control of the region, areas for agriculture were opened around the castle and people from different regions were settled here. Destroyed by the Mongol invasion in 1270, the city came under the rule of Dulkadiroğulları in 1389 and Mamluks in 1471 (Altın, 2015). The city (Ayıntab), which witnessed conflicts between the Mamluks and Dulkadiroğulları in the early 16th century, joined the Ottoman Empire in 1516. During the Ottoman period in Gaziantep; many buildings and facilities serving the society such as baths, castels, mosques, bazaars, madrasahs, waterways, bedestens and inns were built through foundations. From 1516 until the Republican Period, this region, which was annexed to the Ottoman lands, was known as "Ayıntâp". Evliya Çelebi visited the city twice in 1641 and 1671 and recorded that there were 22 neighborhoods, about 100 mosques, inns, baths, a covered bazaar, madrasah and 8 thousand houses (Ergeç, 2012).

Ayıntab continued its development from time to time under the province of Maraş and later became part of the province of Aleppo (Köroğlu, 2016). Following Germany's defeat in World War I in 1918, Ayıntab, as a city with a population of 83,000, was occupied by the British on December 17, 1918 within the framework of the Treaty of Sevres. After a year of occupation, the British handed Antep over to the French on November 5, 1919. Due to the heroism shown by the people of Antep during Turkey's national struggle period, the city was given the title of "Gazi" by the Turkish Grand National Assembly on February 8, 1921 (Arslan, 2017).

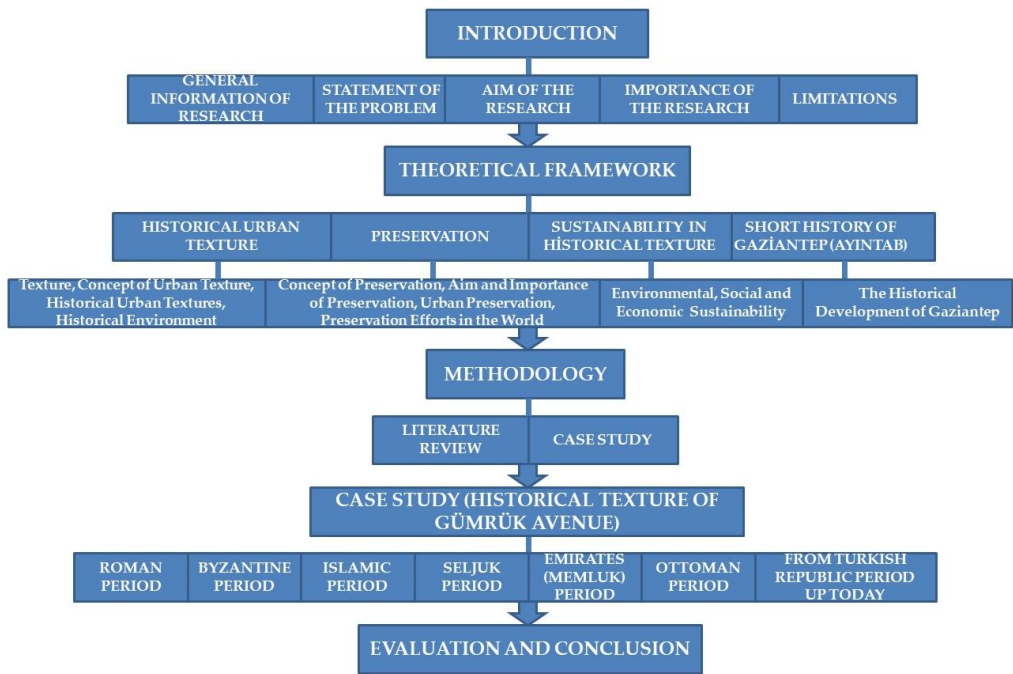
Located in the Southeastern Anatolia geographical region of the Republic of Turkey, Gaziantep was granted the status of Metropolitan Municipality in 1989. With a population of 2,193,363 as of 2024 (TÜİK, 2024), Gaziantep has 9 districts: İslahiye, Nizip, Nurdağı, Oğuzeli, Yavuzeli, Araban, Şahinbey and Şehitkâmil. The passage of the historical Silk Road through Gaziantep has boosted the city's economy and trade and kept it alive until today. Gaziantep's economy is largely based on trade and industry, and it is an important center where the products of the Southeastern Anatolia Region are processed and delivered to both domestic and international markets. Gaziantep, which is also famous for its cuisine today, is known for its flavors such as pistachios and baklava (Ulusoy & Turan, 2016; Karaaslan, 2020).

### 3. Methods

Qualitative Research Method was used for the information that will form the basis of our study, based on literature review of written and visual documents and fieldwork related to our research topic. Study information was compiled from sources such as books, articles and theses based on the literature review on texture, urban texture, historical urban texture, historical environment, conservation, the purpose and importance of conservation, urban conservation, conservation studies in the world and the historical development of Gaziantep since its foundation. Moreover, a field study was conducted with on-site examinations and observations, and the formation of the texture was revealed in detail with current visuals.

This study aims to reveal how the avenue has developed from its first structures to the present day and the cultural contributions of these architectural works to the formation of the avenue texture. Thus, all the buildings on the street were evaluated in consideration with their construction dates and the associated historical periods. With all these studies, the formation and development of Gümrük Avenue, which has become one of the important arteries of the city with its active business and social life in the past and has a rich historical texture shaped by architectural works of various historical periods, has been reflected respectively (Table 1).

**Table 1:** Research process



#### 4. Case study (historical texture of Gümrük Avenue)

Gümrük Avenue is between Mehmet Kimya Street to the east, Lale Paşa Avenue to the west, and Torun Street in Şekeroğlu Neighborhood in Gaziantep and extends in north-south direction. The avenue is on the commercial axis of the Kale - Aleppo road, also known as Uzun Çarşı (Long Bazaar) (Figure 2).

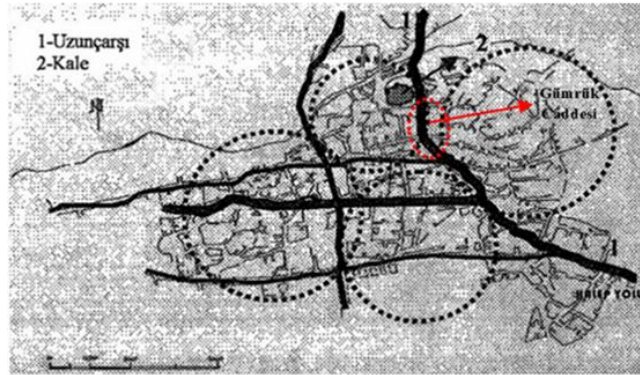


Figure 2: Gümrük Avenue and Gaziantep Castle (Uğur, 2004)

The avenue was named after the customs building that used to be in this area. The avenue is one of the historical avenues of Şekeroğlu Neighborhood, which is used for both pedestrians and vehicles, and hosts sixteen buildings from different periods in Gaziantep's history, lined up opposite each other (Figure 3, 4).



Figure 3: Gümrük Avenue (Google Earth - 2024)



Figure 4: Gümrük Avenue Today (URL 1)

The introduction and emergence of the historical texture of Gümrük Avenue is chronologically given as follows:

#### 4.1 Roman Period (B.C. 30-A.D. 395):

Gaziantep Castle was built as a watchtower in the Roman Period between the 2nd and 4th centuries A.D. on the corner land where the northern end of today's Gümrük Avenue intersects with Lale Paşa Avenue in the west direction, and was expanded over time, as a result of archaeological excavations in and around the castle (Bulut & Şimşek, 2014). The castle, which was built with cut stones supplied from quarries in Gaziantep, has a base circumference of 1200 meters and an inner courtyard of approximately 100 meters in diameter. There are a total of twelve towers on the castle walls (Uğur, 2004).

The castle, which was highly damaged during the War of Independence, was partially repaired by the municipality of the time in the 1950s, the ramparts and body walls were restored, and the ditches, tunnels and rooms that posed a danger were filled. The second repair of the castle was performed again by the municipality of the period in the early 1970s where the body walls that were missing during the repair in 1950 were completed and the castle reached its present appearance. Today, there is the Gaziantep Defense and Panorama Museum (Yıldırım, 2017; Bostancıeri, 2019), which exhibits the epic heroism of the War of Independence in the galleries leading towards the interior of the castle. The formation of the historical texture of Gümrük Avenue started when Gaziantep Castle was constructed during the Roman Period (Figure 5, 6).

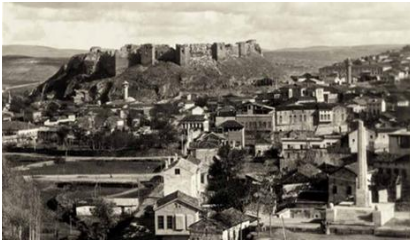


Figure 5: *Gaziantep Castel - XIX. century* (Özgül, 2016)



Figure 6: *Gaziantep Castel Today* (S. Yıldırım'dan)

#### 4.2 Byzantine Period (395- 636):

During the Byzantine period, although there are no works that contribute to the formation of the historical texture of Gümrük Avenue, Gaziantep Castle took its present form in the VI century AD (527-565 AD) during the reign of the Byzantine Emperor Justinian I, known as the architect of castles (Bulut & Şimşek, 2014).

#### 4.3 Islamic Period (636-1071):

In 636 AD, Caliph Omar bin Khattab conquered Gaziantep from the Byzantines to spread Islam and the people of Gaziantep accepted Islam after this date (Altınöz, 1999). During the Islamic Period, there was no change in the texture and development of Gümrük Avenue.

#### 4.4 Seljuk Period (1071-1270):

In 1071, following the victory of Alp Arslan at the Battle of Malazgirt, Gaziantep came under Seljuk rule (Altınöz, 1999). Throughout this period, there were no changes in Gümrük Avenue that would contribute to the creation of the overall historical texture.

#### 4.5 Emirates-Memlük Period (1270-1516):

The texture and development of Gümrük Avenue continued with the mosque built here. After the Gaziantep Castle, the first construction on the street was the Alaüddevle Mosque located on the west of the southern side of the avenue. Alaüddevle Mosque is also popularly known as Ali Dola Mosque. The mosque was built during the reign of Alaüddevle Bozkurt Bey, the ruling Dulkadiroğlu Bey who ruled in Kahramanmaraş.



The exact construction date of the mosque is unknown. Since it is known that Alaüddeve, who built the mosque, died in 1515, it is understood that the mosque was built before this date. The mosque, whose minaret has survived until today, was destroyed in 1898 and its debris was placed in the moat of the castle 270 meters away. In 1901, the mosque was rebuilt with a single dome and a black and white stone entrance. Designed by Armenian architect Ermenak, the mosque was built by master Kirkor, who also built other important buildings in Gaziantep. The minaret of the mosque shows traces of Memlük art (Tiken et al., 2023), (Figure 7, 8).



Figure 7: Alaüddeve Mosque - 1919 (Altun, 1989)



Figure 8: Alaüddeve Mosque today (Sönmez, 2018)

#### 4.6 Ottoman Period (1516-1923):

Yeni Inn, one of the oldest inns, was the first structure built on the avenue during the Ottomans where it is located to the northwest of Alaüddeve Mosque in the eastern direction towards the center of the avenue. There is no exact information about the construction date of Yeni Inn (Yeni Han), which has no inscription. However, the inn is addressed as the inn of Mihaliye Madrasah in Suk'i Tavi in the Sher'iye registry records dated 1531. According to this information, the construction date of the inn was before 1531. Moreover, in the Ayıntab foundation book of 1557, Yeni Inn is named as Han-ı Cedid (Çam, 2006; Çakır, 2015). The west facade of the inn faces the avenue, the south and north facades face the avenue, and there are buildings on the east facade. Built with masonry construction technique, cut stone was used as the material and the roof was designed as a flat roof. The inn with an irregular quadrangular plan has two floors and a central courtyard. The pool in the middle of the rectangular courtyard measuring approximately 20 x 25 meters was added later. The inn does not have any ornamentation except for the crown gate. The courtyard is accessed from the barrel-vaulted entrance corridor on the west wing (Zincirlioğlu, 2018). With the decision of the Board of Monuments dated 23.10.1961 and numbered 1966, the inn was repaired due to the collapse of its roof. On the upper floor, the roof was removed, and a concrete roof was built. During an inspection by the Gaziantep Museum Directorate in 1992, it was determined that the terrace roof of the inn was being used as a parking lot and this practice was stopped with the decision number 1435 dated 12.03.1993 (Köse, 2022), (Figure 9, 10). Yeni Inn, known as Halıcılar Sitesi in the 1990s, is now an active center for carpet trade and the large cave in the southeast part of the ground floor is used as a cafe.



Figure 9: Using the roof of the new inn as a car park-1992 (From Gaziantep Conservation Board)



Figure 10: New Inn in today (From Gaziantep Cultural Inventory)

Tahtani Mosque, which is one of the monuments from the Ottomans that contributed significantly to the formation and evolution of the historical elements in the texture of Gümrük Avenue and still exists with its original function, is located on the north side of the eastern façade of Gümrük Avenue and on the southeast side of Gaziantep Castle. According to Evkaf records, Tahtani Mosque was built before 1541 and restored in 1563 by Osman Pasha, the Governor of Maraş. It is rumored that it was called Tahtalı or Tahtani Mosque because wooden materials were used in its initial construction (Tiken et al., 2023). The last congregation place of the mosque, which has a rectangular plan, was built on four pillars connected by arches, and the front of the mihrab was covered with a dome and the other sections were covered with cross vaults. The minaret in the northwest corner has an impressive architectural design and its polygonal shape is decorated with stars, rosettes and geometric ornaments. Restored by the General Directorate of Foundations in 2011, the original structure of Tahtani Mosque is still preserved (Ataş, 2023). Tahtani Mosque, as an important symbol of the Ottoman period, contributed to the formation of the historical texture of Gümrük Street and continues to exist today as an important element that gives life to the avenue (Figure 11, 12).



Figure 11: Tahtani Mosque - 1923 (Sönmez, 2018)



Figure 12: Tahtani Mosque today (From A. Mıhçıoğlu)

Built during the Ottoman period, the Old Bedesten is located at the northern end of the western side of Gümrük Avenue, on the corner plot where it intersects with Torun Street. The Old Bedesten, also known as Bedesten-i Atik or Karanlık Bedesten, was built in the 16th century during the reigns of Suleiman the Magnificent and Selim II. Bedesten has a square plan and consists of 110 shops. The building, which was used by the alacacı craftsmen who wove and sold the texture known as alaca, which was very popular in the region, was completely demolished in the 19th century (Figure 13).



Figure 13: Old Bedesten - XIX. Centur (From A. Mıhçıoğlu)

Another building from this period is the Göymen Hamam, which is located in the eastern direction towards the middle of Gümrük Avenue and continues to exist today without function. The bath is also called Pazar Hamamı. The exact date of construction of the bath is unknown. However, since it is mentioned in Evliya Çelebi's Travel Book, it is assumed that the bath was built before the 17th century. The bath was designed in accordance with the classical Ottoman bath architecture, in the north-south direction, with cold zone, hot zone, warm zone and furnace sections. Each section is covered with domes and built with smooth cut stone in a cruciform plan. The bath was built 4 meters below ground level. The bath is entered from the street side for women and from the street side for men through two separate doors. Like the other baths in Gaziantep, the interior of the bath is paved with black, white, off-yellow and pink marble. In the early 1950s, the bath was repaired; small changing rooms were added to the dressing section and warm zone and another door was opened on the west side (Ararat, 2018). Today, the Göymen bathhouse remains dysfunctional and there are single-storey shops selling local products on the avenue front (Figure 14, 15).

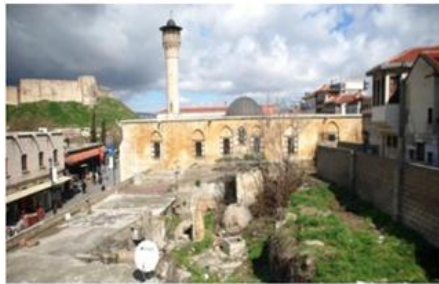


Figure 14: Göymen Bath (URL 2)



Figure 15: Göymen Bath shops (From M. Taşkın)



Yüzükçü Inn is located on the eastern side of the southern end of Gümrük Avenue, opposite Alaüddevle Mosque. The exact date of construction of the Yüzükçü Inn is unknown. However, it is mentioned in Ayıntab Şer'iye registry number 129 dated 1650. This documents that the inn was built before 1650 (Toğrul, 2010). It has an irregular quadrangular plan due to the shape of the land and has a central courtyard. The southern and eastern parts of the building are single storey, the western part is partially and the northern part is completely two storey. The south and east facades of the inn are surrounded by buildings, while the west facade faces the avenue. Built with masonry construction technique, the inn was built using cut stone material and its roof was designed as a hipped roof. The inn is the only inn in Gaziantep where woodwork is used the most among the inns in Gaziantep. The portico of the upper floor is completely covered with wood. The crown door is located on the west facade and is made with a pointed barrel vault. The crown door has black and white stonework (Figure 16, 17). Restored in 2009, the inn was annexed to the Imam Çağdaş restaurant located to the south (Altın, 2015). While the main gate of the inn is not in use, the entrance to the interior is through the Imam Çağdaş restaurant and functions as an additional section of the restaurant.



Figure 16: Yüzükçü Inn - 2001 (From Gaziantep Conservation Board)



Figure 17: Yüzükçü Inn today (Köse, 2022)

Another building that shaped the texture of Gümrük Avenue during the Ottoman Period is Zincirli Bedesten. Built in 1717 by Hüseyin Pasha, Zincirli Bedesten is located at the southern end of Gümrük Avenue, south of Alaüddevle Mosque. Zincirli Bedesten is also known as Bedesten-i Cedid, Yeni Bedesten and Karabasamak Bedesten. Zincirli Bedesten consists of two sections extending from north to south and from east to west. There are 73 shops in total in the bedesten, which has an L-shaped plan structure. The bedesten, of which only three doors are used, has five doors in total. It is rumored that it was called Zincirli Bedesten because the door of the bedesten was tied with a large chain for security purposes. Towards the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the second floor was built and used as a courthouse. The inn, which was damaged by fire in 1957, was renovated between 1964-1968 and started to serve as a butcher and vegetable market (Yıldırım, 2017; Baldıran, 2020). Local products and touristic items are sold in the Bedesten of the Ottoman Period, which continues to exist today (Figure 18. 19).

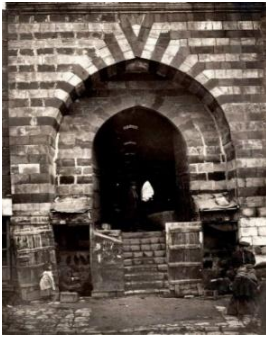


Figure 18: Zincirli Bedesten-XIX. century (URL 3)



Figure 19: Zincirli Bedesten today (URL 4)

One of the Ottoman era buildings that shaped the formation of the historical texture of Gümrük Avenue is Millet Han. The inn is located on the north of the west side of avenue. Based on its inscription, it was built in 1869 by Aşçıoğlu Kesbar Kevork. Since these years coincide with the reign of Sultan Abdülaziz, it is also known as Aziziye Han (Yıldırım, 2017). The inn, which has an irregular quadrangular plan due to the shape of its plot, was built entirely of Keymık stone. Millet Inn has two floors and a rectangular courtyard. The flamboyant stone gate of the inn is made of black and white stonework. The courtyard is reached after passing through the crown door and a vaulted cellar. Unlike other Gaziantep inns, the upper cover of the inn is not a hipped roof, but a flat terrace (Figure 20, 21). The east side of the second floor of the inn was completely destroyed by French artillery during the Battle of Ayntab. The stables in the south were altered in the 1950s and converted into warehouses and shops. The upper floor of the inn, which underwent renovation again in 2011, is reached by the reinforced concrete staircase in the northwest, which was added to the courtyard later. As of 2018, the south wing of the upper floor is used for the production and sale of baklava. While most of the other upstairs shops are not in use, some of them produce rosaries (Çalışkan, 2011; Zincirlioğlu, 2018). Millet Han, which contributed to the formation of the historical texture of Gümrük Avenue, which is considered as an important element from the Ottoman period while still giving life to the street, has undergone various changes with renovations, especially window and door openings have largely lost their original form.



Figure 20: Millet Inn - 1919 (From Gaziantep city archives)



Figure 21: Millet Inn avenue elevation – today (URL 5)

Another building constructed during the Ottoman Period is Gümrük Han, located to the west towards the south of Gümrük Avenue. Its construction date is estimated between 1873-1878 by Hacı Ömer Efendi, the son of Abdülhalik, without an inscription (Özkarci, 1987). The inn was known as Gümrük Han since documents and trade transactions were carried out here for a period. Due to its location on a sloping land from north to south, it does not have a proper plan. The plan resembles a U-shape and has two floors and a courtyard (Köse, 2022). Around the 13 x 8-meter rectangular courtyard, there are stables and warehouses on the lower floor and accommodation rooms on the upper floor. The entrance is through the crown gate on the north side and the courtyard is accessed through a barrel-vaulted passage. Built with masonry construction technique, the inn is made of white cut stones and covered with a hipped roof. A restoration project was prepared for the inn to be reorganized as a boutique hotel in 2006, but it was renovated in 2012 to serve as a handicraft museum and souvenir shop (Zincirlioğlu, 2018). The rooms on the lower and upper floors of the inn are now used as shops, which include workshops, workshops and souvenir sales (Figure 22, 23).



Figure 22: Gümrük Inn - 2006 (Çam, 2006)



Figure 23: Gümrük Inn today (URL 6)

Müftü Inn is a building from this period, yet it has not survived to the present day and today replaced as a restaurant. Müftü Inn is in the eastern direction towards the south of Gümrük Avenue, opposite Alaüddevle Mosque. There is no information about the architecture and construction date of Müftü Inn. Instead of the inn, İmam Çağdaş restaurant, which is one of the most important restaurants in Gaziantep today, was built in 1887 on two floors (Erkara, 2019), (Figure 24). The restaurant, which continues to exist today, is one of the important commercial buildings on Gümrük Avenue.



Figure 24: İmam Çağdaş restaurant today (URL 7)

The last building that shaped the form of the historical elements in the texture of Gümrük Avenue is Büdeyri Inn, located at the eastern end of the street, on the corner parcel where it intersects with Mehmet Kimya Street. Büdeyri Inn, also known as Elbeyli Inn, İncioğlu Inn and Sabunhanesi, was built in 1896 according to the report of the Gaziantep Regional Board for the Protection of Cultural Assets. It served as both a passenger inn and a soap house. The soap house is located to the north and the passenger inn to the south. The inn and the soap house have their own separate crown gates. The lower floor of the inn was used as storage, stables and shops, while the upper floor was used for the accommodation of travelers. The upper floor of the soap house is connected to the inn and was used for the accommodation of travelers, while the ground floor was used for soap production. Büdeyri Inn has a rectangular plan in the north-south direction with an inner courtyard. The covering system is a hipped roof. The inn was built using masonry construction technique and cut stone material. Black stone was used in some parts of the entrance hall and the crown gate of the building, while stone was used completely in other areas. The west facade of the inn is directed towards the street and there are shops on this facade. The rectangular planned shops have barrel vault ceilings (Altın, 2015). In the 2013 roof renovation, the walls were raised five more rows up to the windows and the molding under the roof was moved upwards in its original form. The soap house section, which was used as a garment store in the 2000s, now serves as a delicatessen selling olive oil and olive oil soap under the name Zeytin Inn (Bebekoğlu, 2013), (Figure 25, 26).



Figure 25: Büdeyri Inn - 1890 (From Gaziantep Conservation Board)



Figure 26: Büdeyri Inn today (From Gaziantep City Archive)

#### 4.7 From Turkish Republic Period up today (1923 - ...):

In the Republican Period, there are five buildings that shaped and evolved the historical texture of Gümrük Avenue, first of which is the reinforced concrete shops built by the municipality in the 20<sup>th</sup> century to replace the demolished Old Bedesten (Figure 27).





*Figure 27: Shops built on the site of the (Old Bedesten (URL 8)*

The other three buildings of this period, lined side by side, are in the eastern direction towards the center of Gümrük Avenue. Constructed with reinforced concrete construction technique, the first building has two floors and the other two have three floors (Figure 28). The upper floors of the buildings are used as workplaces and the lower floors as shops, and they continue to function today.



*Figure 28: Two and three-storey buildings built during the Republican Period (From M. Taşkın)*

Another building constructed in the Republican Period is a four-storey building located on the corner parcel where it intersects with Torun Street in the western direction towards the center of Gümrük Avenue. Built with reinforced concrete construction technique, the upper floors of the building are used as workplaces and the lower floors as shops (Figure 29).



*Figure 29: Four-storey building built during the Republican Period (URL 9)*

## 5. Discussion and Conclusion

The historical texture of Gümrük Avenue, which is the subject of our study, constitutes a crucial cultural asset in the historical urban texture of Gaziantep, located on the Silk Road in Anatolia. According to our research, the first emergence of the historical elements in the texture started in the Roman Period (30 BC - 395 AD) with the construction of Gaziantep Castle between the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> centuries AD. The castle, which was previously a Roman watchtower, has been an important symbol in the formation and development of the historical texture of the street.

Throughout the Byzantine administration (395-636 AD), although there were no significant changes on Gümrük Avenue, the expansion and strengthening of Gaziantep Castle during the reign of Justinian I contributed to the formation of the texture. However, throughout the Islamic Period (636-1071 AD) and the Seljuk Period (1071-1270), there was no development that supported to the formation and development of the historical texture of avenue

In the Emirates-Memlük Period (1270-1516), the texture formation of Gümrük Avenue continued with the mosque structure built on the street after Gaziantep Castle. Built before 1515, Alaüddevle Mosque is located on the west façade of the southern tip of the street. Alaüddevle Mosque, which still exists today, is one of the important buildings of the street.

The texture and development of Gümrük Avenue was mostly realized during the Ottoman Period (1516-1923) where there was a great development in the street pattern with the baths, mosques, bedesten and inns built on the street. The first building that contributed to the formation of the street during the Ottoman Period was the Yeni Inn, which was built before 1531 and located in the eastern direction towards the center of the street. The Tahtani Mosque, which was built in this period and still survives with its original function, is located on the north side of the eastern façade of Gümrük Avenue. The mosque, which was built before 1541, is one of the important buildings that contributed to the formation of the texture of avenue. Another building from the Ottoman period is the Göymen Bath, which is known to have been built before the 17<sup>th</sup> century, located in the eastern direction towards the middle of Gümrük Avenue. There are single-storey shops on the street front of the bath, which is not in use today. In this period, the street formation continued with the Yüzükçü Inn, which was built before 1650 and located in the eastern direction of the southern end of Gümrük Avenue. The street formation continued with Zincirli Bedesten and Millet Inn. Built in 1717, Zincirli Bedesten, located at the southern end of the street, continued to serve as a trade center, while Millet Inn, built in 1868-1869 and located in the north of the west side of the avenue, is one of the important works that exhibit the wealth of the period. Another important building of this period is Gümrük Inn, which is estimated to have been built between 1873-1878 and is in the west direction towards the south of the avenue. After the Gümrük Inn, the development of the street in the Ottoman Period continued with the current Imam Çağdaş Restaurant building, which was built in 1887 in place of the Muftü Inn, which was completely demolished. From the given study perspective, the last building to refer is Büdeyri Inn, which is known to have been built in 1896, located at the eastern end of the avenue.

In the Republican Period (1923 and after), five more buildings contributed to the historical texture of Gümrük Avenue. The first building is the single-storey shops located at the northern end of the west side of the street, built by the municipality in the 20<sup>th</sup> century with reinforced concrete construction technique in place of the demolished Old Bedesten. The other three buildings are two-level and two three-level reinforced concrete structures located side by side in the eastern direction towards the middle of the avenue. The last building of this period is a four-level reinforced concrete building located in the west direction towards the center of the avenue.

Consequently, the historical texture of Gümrük Avenue, which started with the Gaziantep Castle built here during the Roman Period and has survived until today with its buildings from different periods, has constituted an important part of the city identity by reflecting the layered historical evolution of Gaziantep. Today, the buildings on the street, which are mostly inns and a bedesten, have become cafes, restaurants, entertainment venues, souvenir production and sales points, and areas where local products are sold through re-functionalization works, and contribute to the general social life of the city with two mosques that are actively used. The restoration and reuse of the historical Göymen Bath located on the street will contribute to the life of the texture. Gümrük Avenue continues to contribute to the cultural and historical heritage of the city by bringing together the traces of the past and today's social and commercial life. In this context, the preservation and re-functionalization of buildings in the historical urban texture serves as a bridge between the past and the future, creating a sustainable cultural heritage by providing identity and continuity while adapting to contemporary living conditions. However, revitalization of historical texture may cause excessive commercial practices, cultural and historical heritage destruction, harm on social values and disappearance of authentic identity. Instead, rearrangement of historical sites in harmony with modern use needs, revitalization with activities that increase social participation and functionality practices based on cultural functions are equally significant for cultural sustainability of urban history and maintenance and transfer of such buildings to the future.

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