

# A study on the daily life and coffeehouse culture in Gaziantep: Tahmis Coffeehouse

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## Abstract

The nineteenth century may be seen as a rupture in the field of history regarding its changing focus from glorious narratives of empires, wars and treatises to lives of ordinary people and individual stories. The actors of historical narrative ignored up to that time came to the forefront with the new micro-historical approach and individual stories gained importance in historical process. By using oral history, the very beginning of the social structures of societies can be revealed and a new historical narrative can be constructed upon daily life events and micro-histories.

In a parallel vein, in the twentieth century, researchers studied individuals and their role in construction of society to re-interpret social and cultural conditions under the title of cultural studies. Importantly, culture is handled as an accumulation of shared values and daily life praxis and public spaces are regarded as valuable cores where collectively shared values are spatialized in the urban context.

In this paper, the historical Tahmis Coffeehouse in Gaziantep is determined as case and micro-historical and cultural studies are combined to construct a connection between past and present by intertwining oral narratives of Coffeehouse regulars to written evidence. This interconnection is found precious because Tahmis Coffeehouse is a public space involved in daily life routine of the city lively with its traces from the history carried by the building itself and its regulars by revealing how it was used as a political and social space connecting its regulars to social, cultural and political context of the time.

## Keywords

Daily life, Gaziantep, Micro-history, Oral history, Tahmis Coffeehouse.



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## 1. Introduction

In her study titled *Geçmişin İzleri: Yanbaşımızdaki Tarih için Bir Kılavuz (Traces of the Past: A Guide for History Right Beside)*, Danacıoğlu elaborates changing historical perspective and new focus points of historiography in the late nineteenth century with reference to the key figures of historical narratives. According to her, throughout the centuries, wars, glorious victories and successful figures such as leaders, politicians and emperors were considered as the main subjects of historical narration. But in the nineteenth century, the field of history and historiography transformed according to the changing understanding of new era, and besides significant events and bright victories, activities of daily living, ordinary people and their life stories came into prominence as valuable components of history (Danacıoğlu, 2001).

The focus of the new historiographical approach has been changed from victories and famous figures to societies, cultural and social structure of communities and ordinary people that constituted the background of dominant historical narratives. As one of the main instruments of the new historical standpoint, oral history is used to gather information about societies and it is aimed to show the importance of micro-histories which are constructed via narratives of people who lived or connected in some way to the focused historical time period (Danacıoğlu, 2001).

Changing historical standpoint which emphasizes micro-histories is firstly proposed by German historian Leopold van Ranke in the nineteenth century and according to Ranke, history is not only the glorious voices of ceremonies but a notion that fed from the daily life activities and experiences of all people living in a society (Danacıoğlu, 2001). Then, in the twentieth century, the importance attached to the micro-history and oral history studies that depend on individual narratives had increased and oral history gained importance in the works of American historian Joseph Gould. According to Gould, the existing historiographic approach which based on the wars, leaders, emperors and treaties has to be

changed into the narratives of ordinary people and their life-stories. In order to re-construct historical understanding from macro scale to micro, Gould offers oral history as a main methodology (Danacıoğlu, 2001).

Similarly, in his study, *Tarihyazımında Yeni Yaklaşımlar: Küreselleşme ve Yerelleşme (New Approaches in Historiography: Globalisation and Localisation)*, micro-historical approach, life stories of individuals and daily life activities are defined as the key issues of the twentieth century historiography by Tekeli and, the new historiographical approach is fed from personal narratives and expressions of individual feelings. According to Tekeli, this new perspective aimed to emphasize the importance of multi-cultural structures of societies is consisted of different individual stories and focused on the neglected actors of ongoing historical approach shaping around the glorious actors and great wars (Tekeli, 2000).

In a parallel vein, Iggers explains changing historical approach in the twentieth century via two main concerns in his book *Historiography in the Twentieth Century: From Scientific Objectivity to the Postmodern Challenge*. The first is the emergence of a new “social-science oriented history” which changes the focus of historiography from great events to individual narratives and their social contexts. As the second concern, Iggers mentions on changing time perception and rejection of “a universal and unilinear history” which resulted in concentration on “multiplicity of histories” (Iggers, 2005, p: 3). In this way, not only glorious events but also their individual actors and, social, political and cultural contexts gain importance in order to get a comprehensive historical understanding. Thus, the term “a history from below” is emerged to define micro-historical approach which is fed from neglected issues such as stories of minorities, individual narratives and personal memories which were thought as unimportant parts of historical flow (Iggers, 2005, p:7).

In this way, under the light of micro-historical approach, daily routines, social lives and individual stories be-

<sup>1</sup> “Burada mimari açıdan senin dikkatini çekecek şey şu tavan... Buna tekne tavan deniyor. Dikkat edersen, normal bir teknenin ters döndürülmüş bir hali... Bu, o yapıya benzer.” (Siddikoğlu, personal interview, 2011).

<sup>2</sup> “Mesela bu tavan komple söküldü, yapıldı, sanki yağ emilmiş bir ahşap gibi... Tekrar bu yapıldı yeni malzemelerle... Nefes alması için de, dikkat et, verniklenmedi bu... Şu duvardaki ahşap malzeme vernikli, bunda vernik yok...” (Siddikoğlu, personal interview, 2011).

<sup>3</sup> “Şu yan taraftaki pencereler de hava sirkülasyonunun, mesela Sultanahmet’te de vardır bu, Ayasofya’da da vardır bu, hava sirkülasyonunun çok rahat olabilmesi için bu şekil örülmüştür. Ayrıca bir başka özelliği de, şu andaki izolasyon malzemeleri ve ya yapının tersine ağaç sürekli yaşayan bir malzemedir, nefes alır verir dolayısıyla bunun hava kirliliğine çok büyük etkisi vardır. Zaman içinde süreli dumanın içindeki atık maddeleri, dumanı absorbe eder.” (Siddikoğlu, personal interview, 2011).

4 "...her tepede bir kilit taşı vardır. Kilit taşı koniktir, kesik bir koniktir... Yaprak gibi taş çıkarılırdı... Bu ilk kesildiğinde yumuşak bir taştır fakat oksijenle temas ettiğinde sertleşir. Bunun bir yumuşağı vardır bir sertti vardır. Serti genellikle böyle kapı ve pencere noktalarında kullanılır. Bak dikkat et, oradaki taşla duvardaki taş arasında yapım farkı vardır. O sarı bir taştır, daha serttir, sertleşmiş böyle biraz daha mermer formuna doğru giden bir tarzı var. Duvardakiler daha beyaz, daha yumuşak, çok yumuşak... Bu işte çok yumuşağına Havara denir... Bu taş da işte nefes alıp verdiğimiz bahar aylarında yüzünde bir pamukçuk oluşur, o da Güherçile dediğimiz eski barutun hammaddesi... Bu pamukçular toplanır, onun bir şekilde barut yaparlardı ama Kıymık'tan çıkmaz o, Havara Taş'tan... Burda az görünür, belki karşıdaki handa (Pürsefa Hanı) görebilirsin. Bir de o karataşa ne diyorduk... Bazen bu Kıymık Taşla karataş kullanılır ki Antep'in Karataş bölgesini biliyorum, dünyanın en kaliteli karataşının çıktığı bölge burasıdır. Karataş'ta da 2 unsur var. Birisi, süngerimsi yapılı ve sıcak-soğukça çok dayanabilen bir malzeme... Süngerimsi yapılı, boşlukludur o... Öbürüsü, hiç boşluğu olmayan taş... O, sıcak ve soğukça dayanmaz ama statik açıdan çok güçlü bir malzeme... Çok çok çok eskiden de yollarda taş döşenmiş olurdu, şimdi de bu kesilerek döşeme yapılıyor." (Sıddıkoğlu, personal interview, 2011).

came important information storages which illuminate the social and cultural context of a society and the glorious historical narrative is replaced by a new micro-historical understanding consisted of daily live activities and active participants of the society.

Cultural studies, as well as the micro-historical approach, are also used to construct a new focus on society. When cultural studies had emerged in 1960s, the main aim of its pioneers was to resolve the problems of existing studies in humanities and to unmask the ignored aspects of conventional assumptions (Hall, 1990). Hall describes cultural studies as "intersect the humanities... They are a series of interruptions in the peaceful life of humanities" and according to Hall, cultural studies are distinctive in every field of research and could be achieved with an interdisciplinary work (Hall, 1990, p: 23). In other words, cultural studies are re-interpretations of social, political and anthropological contexts and their decentralization in a new manner as the critique of the humanist tradition itself (Hall, 1990).

On the one hand, Hall handles cultural studies as interdisciplinary work consisted of every field of humanities, Ray focuses on the "culture" itself. According to Ray, the culture of a society consists of the fragmentations of its individuals who have a desire to be unique in their own fragmented lives and culture is a representation of shared values which is "collectively embodied" and a "self-conscious endeavor to be different" is created by individuals themselves (Ray, 2001, p. 42).

The collective embodiment of culture and its spatial representation can be observed in urban context. In order to elaborate the relationship between the collective memory and society, Lowenthal focuses on personal and collective character of memory which is composed by the elimination of certain memories and recollection of the others under the effect of social context. On the one hand, memory is completely personal and untouchable; on the other hand, it has a collective aspect that strengthens its existence with society and other individual's recollections (Lowenthal, 2005). In

larger scale, individual memories are connected to each other in the form of "collective self-awareness" and history emerges as collective memory of a certain group or society (Lowenthal, 2005, p: 213). While personal memories are largely intrinsic to individuals, history is shared by community. In this respect, Lowenthal's approach may be directly associated with the construction of micro-histories through individual memories (Lowenthal, 2005).

From this point of view, the micro-historical approach of this study is supported by the cultural studies and it is aimed to analyze a public space and its relation to the daily life experiments learned through the oral narratives of its users. In other words, the micro-historical approach is intertwined with cultural studies and similarly, spaces are related to memory and material culture. Thus, the social praxis constitutes the cultural foundations of the micro-historical approach of this study and the personal experiments are used as key points. Combining micro-historical approach with cultural studies, coffeehouses are determined as important social cores where the social and daily life activities can be observed through coffeehouse regulars. The historical Tahmis Coffeehouse is analyzed as a case study, which stayed in use from its construction in the seventeenth century in Gaziantep and the written historical information on Tahmis is intertwined with the oral narratives and personal memories of the regulars. It is aimed to analyze Tahmis Coffeehouse not only as a physical structure remained from the seventeenth century, but also its social and cultural importance for Gaziantep is studied in order to achieve an interconnected relation between the past and the present.

Due to the climatic and geographical advantageous location on the southeastern region, Gaziantep is one of the oldest settlement areas of Anatolia dates back to the 4000 BC. Although it is not clear, the first urban development of the area dates back to the late fifteenth century on the slopes of the hill housing the Gaziantep castle. From that time to the mid-twentieth century, the city developed around the hill and

in the 1950s development proceeded toward south. Due to the geographical boundaries on the north and east, the ongoing enlargement of the city has been continuing towards west, including industrial and residential areas (Gaziantep Kent Bütünü Analitik Etüdleri, 1972).

The historical commerce areas of Gaziantep has been located on the southern slopes of the castle hill, where it is now open for public visit with its historical streets, inns and bazaars. Today, the immediate vicinity of Tahmis Coffeehouse, called *Buğday Arasası* (Wheat Bazaar), is one of the most popular touristical regions of the city because of numerous historical buildings restored according to the original structure and converted into museum. This area housed numerous coffeehouses, winter-cinemas and bars as primary public spaces of the city and in this way, became a major meeting point for domestic and foreign people mostly gathered for commercial activity (Gaziantep İl Yıllığı, 1968). Amongst these public spaces, Tahmis comes into prominence as the most preferred coffeehouses which has stayed in use from the seventeenth century up to today without changing its public function. Thus, Tahmis Coffeehouse is determined as a visible trace from the historical city which connects past and present with its regulars and their personal narratives who lived in four hundred years old public space.

## 2. Methodological approach and data gathering

As a qualitative research which is based on the intertwining of written and oral historical narratives on Tahmis Coffeehouse, the data collection for this study has initiated from a literature review. In order to understand micro-historical approach, Danacıoğlu, Tekeli and Iggers are used as major secondary sources and, the emergence and importance of micro-historical approach is explained. Being at the heart of public core where the social and cultural conditions of time can be observed in daily life routine, coffeehouse is determined as the case study. Then, references of Lowenthal, Hall and Ray constitute the cultural framework of

this study. In this way, it is aimed to constitute a relationship between the micro-history, memory, culture and public space.

Determining the coffeehouse as the core for this relationship, the literature review is continued with the history of coffee in order to understand the importance of coffeehouses in social life. Then, the establishment of coffeehouses in Ottoman cities and their social and political role in daily life are studied in order to understand the evolution of coffeehouses from the beginning of its history in the seventeenth century.

In addition to the literature review, interviews and participatory observations are held in the coffeehouse. The answers to how and when the regulars experience Tahmis Coffeehouse are searched in order to clarify whether a social and political usage continuation exists from the construction of the coffeehouse in the seventeenth century. The consistency between the literary information and the memories learned from the regulars are also compared under the light of interviews. In order to develop a daily conversation between the observer and the participants, open-ended interview questions are prepared and the regulars are requested to tell their personal memories about Tahmis Coffeehouse. According to the Creswell's table on the qualitative data collection types, the author can be classified as "observer as participant" for this study and in this way, the untold/unwritten conditions of the coffeehouse can be observed firsthand (Creswell, 2003).

According to Groat and Wang, interpretation of the gathered data is the key point in the field of cultural and historical studies and the evaluation of data can be conducted in different manners during the research process (Groat and Wang, 2002). As Groat and Wang mentioned, the contextual and recollective evidences are used as major ways of data gathering for this study. In the former, the research object is placed in its context and the interpretation of the gathered data is made regarding its relation to its social, cultural or political environment (Groat and Wang, 2002). From this point of view, the literary

<sup>5</sup> "Şu kırmızı taş, eski Antep taşıdır. Yani Antep'te çıkan, çok sertliği mermer gibi olmayan, biraz düşük bir taş... Bu genelde bej dediğimiz, bordür olarak kullanılan koyu kırmızıya benzer taşın biraz daha yumuşağı bir taş, Kıymık'tan biraz daha sert... Bir de şunu söylemek lazım, bu tür yapılar dışarıya çok açık değilse çok aşırı sıcak ve soğuk olmaz. Isı absorpsiyonu fazla... Mesela burası dışarıya açılmasa (ana kapıyı gösteriyor), 3-4 dükkan içerde olsa yani soğuk bu kadar etkilemez. Ama burada şu anda sirkülasyon çok fazla... Yukardaki yer önemli... Havalandırmayı sağlamak için, dikkat et, orda bir kot farkı var. O kot farkı, sıcak hava yukarı çıktığı için, burada ısınan hava yukarı çıkıp oradan kayboluyor. Burdaki duman da ordan gidiyor. Bak dikkat et, o bölge küçücük bir bölge olmasına rağmen kaç tane pencere var orda... Böyle Hatay'da var bir tane, Ankara'da var, Mersin'de bir han var..." (Siddikoğlu, personal interview, 2011).

<sup>6</sup> "İşte burada, modern ve klasik bir birine birleştirmeye çalışmışlar. Biraz da çağın gerekliliği... Şu anda burada internet var, serbest kullanabiliyorsun. Ne kadar otantik olursa olsun bu lazım artık... Belki biraz ısıtmayı farklı yapabilirlerdi burada... Eskiden soba vardı. Çok eskiden, aslında burada değil de bilmiyorum köylerdeki yapıları biliyorsun, ocaklık dediğimiz yapılar vardı. Sonra burası çok büyük... Belki buranın ısıtması farklı yapılabilirdi." (Siddikoğlu, personal interview, 2011).

<sup>7</sup> “Şimdi modern bir şekilde getirdiler. Şeyi mesela... Bu hafta şey bu bayramda bizim Antep’in geleneksel bir şeyi, nedir? Kurban Bayramı’nda kalaycılar, demirciler kelle üter (Kesilen kurbanın başı ateşte çevrilir ki tüyü gitsin). Bu geleneksel bir şey... Zabıtalara göz açtırmamış bu kelle ütenlere... Efendim turistler! Turist buraya geliyorsa bu şehrin örf ve ananelerini, geleneklerini görmeye geliyor...” (Çete, personal interview, 2011).

<sup>8</sup> “Burası da önceden Antep’in komple buğday ticaretinin yapıldığı bölgeydi. Şu karşıdaki dükkanlar falan küçük küçük komisyoncuların dükkanlarıydı ve burada numuneler işte yazın dışarda, kışın içerde tepsilerde, küçük tepsilerde sergilenirdi. Esnaf da oturur, önlerine tepsiler gelir, onlara fiyat tespit edilir sonra da işte indirir kaldırır günün koşullarına göre imalata girerdi. İşte bu kahvenin esnaf kahvesi olma özelliği bu... Bazen de... Antep’in çok önce ticaretinin olduğu yer; Elmacıpazarı, Şirehanı, Bakırçılar Çarşısı... Sanatkarlığım ve ticaretin olduğu bölge burası olduğu için burası klasik esnaf kahvesi...” (Sıddıkoğlu, personal interview, 2011).

information and the oral narrative of the regulars are connected to the social condition and the gathered data is evaluated in their cultural context. In order to achieve such a contextual approach, the individual narratives, mostly based on the historical use of Tahmis, are related to the current use of the public space. In this way, it is aimed to establish a mutual relation between the past and present via individual’s social praxis in the cultural context.

In the latter evaluative category, the recollective evidence, which is based on the gathering of historical information from an individual who is the witness in person of narrated event or its audience, is used (Groat and Wang, 2002). According to Groat and Wang, the recollection of evidence can be mostly provided from the secondary witnesses of the events. In this paper, recollection of evidence is used in order to classify the individual oral narratives about the spatial practices of the interviewee’s father, grandfather or an acquaintance.

As an ethical responsibility, the participants/the coffeehouse regulars are informed about the scope of the study and their participation degree is determined according to each participant’s individual preference. There are four interviewees participated this study at the ages between fifty to sixty and in order to encourage the participants, it is offered to conceal their names in the study but all regulars accepted to use their real names during the research process. As an important factor to enhance the participant’s oral narratives, it is advantageous to study on their one of the most important social space from their childhood to old age and all participants especially pointed to their pleasure in enlarging historical data on their hometown, Gaziantep. Also, being their townsman is quite advantageous in the research process because most of the participants felt intimate while sharing their life stories in Tahmis Coffeehouse. This resulted in a mutual trust between the author and regulars and some interviewees offered their friends who also have memories and information about the coffeehouse. Thus, some interviews are made out of Tahmis. Since, Tahmis Coffe-

house was built as a source of income for the Mevlevihane in the seventeenth century, another interview is held with the director of Mevlevihane Museum in order to understand the relationship between Tahmis and its social context.

Dialogues are recorded in a tape and also, notes are taken during the interviews with participant’s own permission for recording. Although some parts of the dialogue seem irrelevant in the flow of conversation regarding the aim of the study, everything is written and recorded. For each different participant, a new note sheet is used which consisted of the date, information about the participant such as birth place, age and job. Since some participants offered their friends who are well-informed and important regulars of Tahmis Coffeehouse and so, additional interviews are made in different places. Thus, the interview location is also added to the recording sheets. Besides the participant narratives, the personal feelings, participant behaviors and the spatial characteristics of the interviewed place are recorded during the interviews in order to get a better understanding of the participants.

In addition to the literature review and interviews, observation is used as an important data gathering method. In order to provide multiplexed interviews, Tahmis Coffeehouse is visited on every week day between 7-13 November of 2011. Some days are used only for observation without interviews and it is aimed to gather data about daily routine of the coffeehouse which are learned from the literature review and the interviews. In this way, first hand observations are made by the authors as a “complete participant” as Creswell mentioned (Creswell, 2003, p.187).

Literary data, interviews and observations are supported with the visual sources such as the photographs taken by the authors and the wall-hung old photos of Tahmis Coffeehouse. In this way, gathered data are grouped as written (literature review), oral (interviews) and visual (photographs) information.

### 3. Data analysis

The data analysis is made during the research process and documenta-

tions are made right after the contacts in order not to miss important points noticed during the interviews. The narratives of participants are transcribed word-by word as they are told. After finishing transcription, all recordings are read in a whole and repetitive points are noted. These keywords are determined as base points for the successive method which consisted of coding, categorizing and describing steps. As Neuman emphasized, concepts provided an elaborative analysis of data which is gained from both the written sources and oral narratives (Lawrence, 2005).

While intertwining the two different evidence, line-by-line coding is used to classify basic concepts. The noted keywords are classified as their relation with time, space and special events such as the commercial importance of Tahmis, social interaction in Tahmis, political arguments held in Tahmis, table games, bairam celebration in Tahmis and relationships between regular costumers of Tahmis.

In addition to the line-by-line coding, the axial coding method is used, also. In order to compare written information with the oral narratives, certain questions are determined according to the written evidence such as “is Tahmis an important place for social gathering? Do regular costumers of Tahmis use the coffeehouse as an important political space as emphasized in written sources? Does the use of Tahmis change in bairam celebrations and special days?” These questions are helpful in understanding the interaction between the Tahmis Coffeehouse and its regulars with the social, cultural and political context.

The personal narratives are written in quotations and each word of the participant is transcribed without change. The interpretation of the observer is noted in a different sheet in order to prevent misunderstandings. Then, the concepts are categorized and each group became an important determiner while intertwining the written and oral information gained from the literature review, interviews and observations about Tahmis Coffeehouse.

In order to provide the validity of data, the categorized concepts are

**Table 2.** Frequently repeated keywords by interviewees.

| Keywords/<br>Interviewee | commerce | socialization | politics | games | bairams | celebrations | meetings |
|--------------------------|----------|---------------|----------|-------|---------|--------------|----------|
| M. O. Taraz              | √        | √             | √        | √     | √       | √            | -        |
| M. H.<br>Siddikoğlu      | √        | √             | -        | √     | √       | √            | √        |
| Y. Bayaz                 | √        | √             | √        | √     | √       | -            | √        |
| M. Çete                  | √        | √             | -        | √     | √       | √            | √        |

re-debated with the participants and it is requested to check the conceptualization of their oral narratives. The misunderstood points are fixed and the coding-categorizing and description line is repeated for each correction. After the completion of participation permissions, the validity of data is controlled again triangulation which is based on the control of data from different types of sources.

#### 4. The history of coffee and the coffee culture in the ottoman daily life

The very beginning of the coffee consumption dates back to the sixteenth century, when the Ethiopian Shazili boiled the coffee beans and served to people. In time, coffee became a merchandise good in Yemen and Mecca, and was used as a pilgrimage gift since it was believed as healing drink. Besides its curative function, coffee symbolized the wealth of people. With shipping trade, coffee was transported from Mecca and Yemen to the Alexandria, and then to Konstantiniyye and especially in the reign of Suleyman the Magnificent (1520-66), coffee became the most important socialization drink, was accepted as healthy and good activity for Muslims who used to gather in early coffee houses established around the mosques in Ottoman cities (Yıldız, 2007).

Kırlı, in his study “*Kahvehaneler: 19. yy Osmanlı İmparatorluğu’nda Kamuoyu*”, explains the changing role of coffee in the Ottoman cities and mentions the evaluation of coffee consumption from being wealth symbol to a social drink which can be accessible by all levels of the Ottoman society (Kırlı, 2010). Thus, the coffee houses were not only established around the mosques, but also diffused all neighborhoods of the Ottoman cities. In time, coffeehouses became political

<sup>9</sup> “...Orda buğday satılırdı... Köyden köylüler buğday getirirler, değişik bazı şeyler; nohut, fasulye, mercimek, peynir satmaya getirirler... Onu oradaki adamlara verir, gelir kendi oturur kahveye... Şimdi sabah şey olur... Öğlene kadar esnaf satışını yapar, köylü gider.” (Çete, personal interview, 2011).

<sup>10</sup> “Köylünün vakti orda geçerdi. Alacağı şeyler de sabun alacak, gaz yağı alacak, mum alacak, kibrit alacak, şeker alacak. Hepsi de ordaydı... Şimdi esnaf sabahleyin gelir dükkanı kaldırır, kiminde daraba var kiminde eskiden daraba yoktu, bir örtüyle... Ondan sonra orda arasanın bir tane beğçisi olurdu, beğçiye emanet edilirdi, dükkanlar falan açık... Öte berilerin üstünde bir örtü, örtüyü kaldırır gelir çay kahve içerdi. Ondan sonra herkes merhabalaşır, konuşur, ondan sonra gider dükkanına köylü gelmiş olur... Köylü geldi miydi zaten herkes dükkanının önünde olmak zorunda... Zaten daha önce çok eskilerde saat 12 den 1 den sonra köylünün şehirde dolaşması yasaktı... Polis, jandarma içeriye koyardı köylüyü...”

Sen burada ne geziyorsun diye... Köylü gezemezdi şehrin içinde... Alışveriş bitmiş, senin bu çarşının içinde ne işin var..." (Taraz, personal interview, 2011).

<sup>11</sup> "...yani yüzey alanına ve nüfusuna göre hemen hemen en çok han barındıran yer Antep'tir. Alt kat gerek develerin gerek atların yattığı ahırlar, hemen onun üstünde ticaret erbabının yattığı, konaklama ihtiyacını sağladığı yerler... Düşün ki, ortada bir avlu, orda ticari büyüme var. Akşam olduğunda herkes ticaretini yaptı bitirdi. Hayvanlar, yük indirilmiş, hayvanlar ahırlara çekilmiş. Odalar da yukarda. Her şeyi bir yerde... Mesela hemen şu arkada Buğday Hanı var... Yine Kürkçü Hanı var, Leblebici Hanı var... Buradan çıkıyoruz yukarı çıktığında Kürkçü Hanı sola dönüyoruz 10m gidiyoruz Leblebici Hanı var. Yani hanlar dibidibine burada. Neden? İşte İpek Yolu üzerinde olduğu için ticari aktivitenin en yoğun olduğu bölge..." (Sıddıkoğlu, personal interview, 2011).

spaces where people discussed their political tendencies and the general situation of the government and this resulted in their bad reputation as sink of corruption in the seventeenth century. However, this consideration changed in time and in the eighteenth century, coffee houses became important political spaces in which people argued about the politic condition of the Ottoman Empire. According to Kırılı, the Ottoman administration benefited from coffeehouses in terms of their political aspect and the emperor charged spies in the coffee houses in order to learn about the public opinion of his administrative reign (Kırılı, 2010).

### 5. Gaziantep Tekke Mevlevihane Mosque and Tahmis Coffeehouse, 1638

The use of coffeehouses as important public cores in Ottoman cities was observed in Gaziantep from the seventeenth century. On the orders of Mustafa Aga, the flag officer of Antep, Tekke Mevlevihane Mosque was built in 1638 in the Buğday Arasası, where the commercial center of the city was organized (Güzelbey, 1984). The Mevlevihane was a large building complex consisted of *semahane*, prayer room, dervish cells, harem-selam rooms, cemetery and kitchen but most of these units burned in fires at the beginning of the twentieth century. In 2007, Mevlevihane was repaired and converted into a museum (Url-1).

In 1638, Tahmis Coffeehouse was built as a source of income for Tekke Mevlevihane Mosque and became one of the most important commercial centers of the city. In the *Historical Ottoman Phrases and Terms Dictionary (Osmanlı Tarih Deyimleri ve Terimleri Sözlüğü)*, Pakalın explains the lexical meaning of Tahmis as "Tahmis is a word, used to describe market for roasted and ground coffee. Recently, this term is replaced by 'coffeehouse for roasted coffee.' Tahmis means roasting of coffee beans and such like seeds" (Pakalın, 1954, p: 375). From the first establishment of coffeehouses in the seventeenth century, the use of the term *Tahmis* has changed according to the daily use of people in time."

In her book *Osmanlı Kültürü ve*

*Gündelik Yaşam: Ortaçağ'dan Yirminci Yüzyıla (Kunst und alltagsleben im Osmanischen Reich, 1995)*, Faroqhi mentions the emergence of the spatialization of coffeehouses in cities and their importance as centers for gaming, reading and political and cultural debates (Faroqhi, 2008). As a result of their specialization, coffeehouses varied according to their functions such as bazaar, neighborhood, tradesman and early riser coffeehouses (Tokuz, 2004). Amongst these classification, Tahmis can be included in the tradesman coffeehouses regarding its location in the middle of the commercial center of the city.

### 6. Architectonic characteristics of Tahmis Coffeehouse

Tahmis Coffeehouse is one of the oldest buildings in Gaziantep with its stone walls and historical wood ceiling. On the upper storey, place for association meetings is now used for hosting crowded groups. One of the most characteristic architectural materials of Gaziantep, the zinc blende (*karataş*) of the floor covering and the lacunar (*tekne tavan*) is preserved and repaired during the restoration of Tahmis Coffeehouse. "Here, your eyes have to catch the ceiling. It is called lacunar. It looks like an upturned boat."<sup>11</sup> Hasol in his study *Ansiklopedik Mimarlık Sözlüğü* (Encyclopedic Dictionary of Architecture), lacunar is defined as a ceiling type which has difference of levels between the edges and the higher point of the roof (Hasol, 2002).

During the restoration work of the building, the lacunar is re-built as its original structure. Because, the color of the ceiling was changed under the effect of cigarette smoke and turned into brown, the new ceiling is left unpolished to gain its original color with smoke again. "This ceiling was completely removed and re-built. It is made of a material like oil-absorbent wood. Look! In order to provide breathing, the ceiling is left unpolished. The wood on the walls are polished, but the ceiling is not..."<sup>12</sup> The construction materials were selected according to the climate of Gaziantep. "These windows were built in this shape, in order to provide air circulation. The same



Figure 1. The entrance of Tahmis Coffee House and the ground floor.

method is used in Sultanhamet and Hagia Sophia. In contrast to contemporary isolation materials, wood is a living material which is good for the air pollution. It absorbs the harmful gases of cigarette smoke.”<sup>3</sup> “On the top of each arched door, there is a keystone, which is shaped as frusto-conical... When the keystone is cut, it is a soft material and as soon as it comes together with oxygen, it hardens. There are two types of the stone, the soft and the hard. The hard one is used in doors and window openings. Look, there is construction difference between this keystone and the stone on the wall. The latter is a yellow stone, which is harder than the other just like marble. The soft stone is called *havara*, which breathes and cankers in spring. These cankers called *güherçile* and used in making gunpowder. It is rare here but you can see more in Pürsefa Inn. You definitely know the Karataş region of Antep, where the best quality stone quarry is provided. There are two different types of stone quarried in Karataş. The first is a heat-resistant and spongelike stone and the second is a void-free stone. The latter cannot resist change in heat but it is very strong statically. Long ago, the latter was used in streets but nowadays, it is used for floor covering.”<sup>4</sup>

As a result of the natural wealth of Gaziantep, different kinds of stones

are used in constructions. The Black Well of Antep, Bostancık and Topaktaş are among the most important stone quarries near Gaziantep, and sand and gravel are taken from Birecik, Narlı and Yeşilce. Also, brick, tile and lime are provided from Gaziantep. In other words, the city and its neighbors are rich in respect to natural construction material. “This soft, red stone is an old Antep material. Generally we called it *bej* and it is used as curbstone... Importantly, if the building has few openings, it will never be so cold or hot... The heat absorption is very high... For example, if Tahmis has no opening towards outside and located in a more closed area, the cold would not affect so much... But in here, there is a strong air circulation. The ceiling is important to provide ventilation through the level difference. The warmed air is rising and disappearing here... In the same way, the smoke is evacuated. There are similar buildings in Hatay, Ankara and Mersin...”<sup>5</sup>

Although the building is restored properly to the original structure, the regulars are dissatisfied with modernization and they advocate the idea that modern habits should not have to enter the historical buildings. “It is tried to combine the modern and the classic to respond to the necessities of time... Now, there is wireless internet

<sup>12</sup> “Hala birbirini soruştururlar. Ben 2-3 ay buraya gelmedim işte bir defa, beni 2-3 defa aradılar. Var hala... Burda biraz böyle bugünün karmaşık ilişkilerinin dışına çıkıp şehrin içinde, merkezinde ama karmaşık ilişkilerin dışına çıkan hala bir dostluk, bir ilişki var...” (Siddikoğlu, personal interview, 2011).

<sup>13</sup> “2-3 gün birisi kahveye gelmedimiydi hemen giderler evine, bu adam niye gelmiyor, hasta mı, başında bir iş mi var, niye gelmiyor diye de kahvenin müdavimleri birbirlerini arar sorarlar... Antep’in en eski kahvesi olduğu için Tahmis, diğer kahvelere göre bu durumun biraz daha yaygın olduğu bir yer...” (Taraz, personal interview, 2011).

<sup>14</sup> “Her gün gelen müdavimleri var. Mesela şu gördüğün dört kişi müdavimler... Yani burada tahsilimiz, kültürümüz, cebimizdeki para değil, burada birbirimizden görülen aşinalık önemli... Önemli olan insanın birbirine yakınlığı...” (Siddikoğlu, personal interview, 2011).

<sup>15</sup> “Burda mevki, tahsil, şu bu hiç önemli değil...” (Taraz, personal interview, 2011).



Figure 4. Stairs and floor covering made of Karataş.

connection here... No matter how authentic you are, it is necessary... Maybe the heating system could be made differently... There was a heating stove long time ago... Actually not in here but in villages, maybe you know, there are special structures called fireplace (*ocaklık*)... Tahmis is too big, maybe the heating could be made differently...<sup>6</sup> “Tahmis became modern in recent times... What is our traditional habit in bairams? In the feast of sacrifice, blacksmiths singe the head of the sheep in order to burn hairs... This is a traditional habit... But in this bairam, polices banned this routine... For the sake of tourists! But tourists come here to see out traditional celebration behaviors, routines and rituals...”<sup>7</sup>

Throughout its long-lived existence from the seventeenth century, Tahmis Coffeehouse is accepted one of the most important public cores of Gaziantep and will be examined according to the subchapters titled as *Tahmis Coffeehouse as a Trade Center, a Social Hub, a Political Space, a Game Place and a Storytelling Place* below.

- Tahmis Coffeehouse as a Trade Center

Tahmis Coffeehouse is placed in the Buğday Arasası, where the commercial center of Gaziantep from the seventeenth century has located. This quarter was organized as the housing for tradesmen not only from Gaziantep but also from different cities of the Ottoman Empire and in this way, the social and commercial life of the city arouse from the history onwards. The relationship between the neighboring cities resulted in the rapid improvement of the city. “Here is the place

for all the wheat commerce of Antep. These shops belonged to the brokers and the goods were displayed on trays inside or the outside according to the season. Then, the tradesman comes and looks over the goods and agrees on price after discussion with the broker. This makes Tahmis as a tradesmen coffeehouse. Former commercial centers of Antep were Elmacıpazarı, Şirehanı, Bakırcılar Bazaar... Since this quarter is the center of craftsmanship and commerce, Tahmis is a traditional tradesmen coffeehouse...”<sup>8</sup>

Since it was used actively, Buğday Arasası was one of the liveliest centers of the city and days begun early for the exchange between the villagers and tradesmen. After opening his shop, the tradesman comes to Tahmis and waits for villagers. Similarly, the villager buys his needs from the tradesman and comes back to the Coffeehouse. After finishing the exchange, tradesman goes back to his shop and the villager spends time in Tahmis. “... Wheat was sold there... Villagers brought wheat, chickpea, bean, lentil and cheese and give them to tradesman for their sold. Then, villager comes to Tahmis and spends his time up to the noon. Tradesman finishes the sale and the villager goes back to village...”<sup>9</sup>

The under population of the city resulted in acquaintance and feeling of trust between people. Thus, wardens were sufficient to protect the goods of the shops. “The villagers spent their time in there. All his needs are sold in there. He is going to buy soap, gasoil, candle and sugar... All of them are sold there. The tradesman comes and pulls the covers to open his shop in the early morning. Some of them have shutters and some have not, only a cover. Also, there are a warden of the *arasta*. Tradesmen commit all his goods to the warden and all the shops stay open. The covers on the goods are opened and the tradesman comes to Tahmis to drink tea or coffee. Then, everybody greets each other and began to daily conversation. When the villager comes, tradesman has to be in his shop... Finishing their talk, tradesman comes back to his shop and checks if the villager came. Long time ago, the strolling of the villager in the city was

<sup>16</sup> “Akşam namazından sonra oyun oynarlar, sohbet ederler... O zamanlar partıcilik çok yaygın... Halk Partisi ve Demokrat Parti var. Halk Parti ve Demokrat Parti muhabbeti olur, sert tartışmalar olur ama kavga olmaz... Herkes herkese sataşır Halk Partili Demirgıra'ta (Demir Kırat-Demokrat Partinin sembolünden kaynaklanan bir hitap şekli) sataşır, Demirgıra'tlı Halk Partili'ye sataşır... Sonra Demirgıra'tla Halk Partililer kol kola girerler yürüyerek evlerine doğru giderler...” (Taraz, personal interview, 2011).

forbidden in the afternoon and the policemen had arrested them...”<sup>10</sup>

Gaziantep is one of the most important trade centers of Turkey being on the Silk Road, connecting the east and the southeast regions of the country. This commercial route enables a lively commerce and interaction between the neighborhood cities and provides a transportation link. Besides Tahmis Coffeehouse, there are several inns housing the outsider tradesmen such as Pürsefa, Kürkçü and Leblebici Inns. In these large commercial housing complexes, tradesmen stay under the same roof with his caravans and this provides a continual control of the tradesmen on his goods. Tahmis Coffeehouse was one of the most important public spaces, where the local and outsider tradesmen linked up and merchandised. “... According to its surface area, Antep is the richest city regarding the number of inns. While the downstairs were used for the camels and horses, the upstairs were used for the accommodation of tradesmen. Think of a courtyard in the middle and a commercial development. In the evening, shopping overs. Camels and horses stay in downstairs and the rooms are located in the upstairs. His goods and himself stays under the same roof. It is clear what is done in where... There is Buğday Inn right over there, like Kürkçü Inn or Leblebici Inn... All inns are so close each other. Why? Because they aligned on the Silk Road, where is the brightest commercial area...”<sup>11</sup>

- Tahmis Coffeehouse as a Social Hub

Traditional Ottoman city structure has been developed due to life styles and beliefs of people which is introverted, and thus streets were organized as dead-ends and the houses were quietly enclosed to the inner life. Public spaces and streets were kept in minimum in order to increase the protection. Most of the neighborhood members were closely related with each other and the neighborhood residents controlled the pedestrian movement in order to detect strangers. So, the quarters were consisted of narrow dead-end streets where the protection is kept in maximum by the inhabitants themselves (Faroqhi, 2008).

In his work titled “Gönül Arzu Eder

ki: *Toplumsal Cinsiyet, Kentsel Mekan ve Osmanlı Kahvehaneleri*”, Mikhail handles coffeehouses as among the most popular public spaces where everybody knew each other closely and in such a truthful space, the absence of one coffeehouse regular was noticed immediately (Mikhail, 2014). Even if the regular does not come back to Tahmis within a few days, his friends went his home to check his state of health. “Regulars still ask each other. Once, I did not come here for a few months and they called me to inquire my health. There is a warm relation in here ignoring the complex relationships of the modern world.”<sup>12</sup> “If a regular did not come to the Tahmis for two or three days, other regulars call each other, visit the absent regular’s home to ask what is going on. Since Tahmis is the oldest coffee house of Antep, this situation is more prevalent in here...”<sup>13</sup>

Tahmis Coffeehouse became the most important public space of Gaziantep because it was used by every social class of the city. “There are certain regulars who come to Tahmis every day. For example, these four guys are regulars. It is not a matter of who you are, what your education or culture is, or how much money you have, but familiarity is important.”<sup>14</sup> “Your position, education or something else is not important here...”<sup>15</sup>

- Tahmis Coffeehouse as a Political Space

Because all social classes of the city came together in the Coffeehouse, Tahmis housed several arguments and divergence. Although regulars argued feverishly in Tahmis, at the end of the day, all of them went to house in peace, and the day ends in a respectful consensus. Especially in the period of the transition to a multi-party system, Tahmis Coffeehouse became one of the most important political spaces of Gaziantep (Ağcabay, 2011). All phases of change in the regime were followed from Tahmis and the opposing views were argued here. “After the evening prayer, the regulars play games and chat in Tahmis. At that time, partisanship was prevalent... There were Public Party and Democrat Party... Although everybody argue, they never fight... Everybody teases one another. The

<sup>17</sup> *Demokrasinin ne olduğunu bilmedikleri için telaffuz da edemiyorlar, Demirgırat diyorlar... Partinin amblemi de o... Bir at... Zaten birbirlerine şey etmeleri de... Gülmece yaratırlar, siyasi eleştirileri bile ortak bir gülme, eğlence konusu haline getirirler... Yoksa şey yok... Kavga yok... Zaten hepsi birbirine hısım, akrabadır...* (Bayaz, personal interview, 2011).

<sup>18</sup> *Mesela burada bazı toplantılar olurdu. Nedir? Mesela dernek toplantıları, efendime genel kurul yapılırdı, dernekler, kooperatifler gelir burada toplanır... Herkesin geldiği merkezi bir yer burası, yakın olması şart değil...* (Çete, personal interview, 2011).

Public Party supporter teases to Democrat Party, similarly the Democrat Party supporter teases to the other... At the end of the day, they walk arm in arm on the way home..."<sup>16</sup>

"Because they did not know what democracy is, they could not pronounce the word. They say *Demirgürat*. This is what the emblem of the party... A horse... They make humour and convert the political critiques into entertainment... Never fight... Moreover, all of them are relatives..."<sup>17</sup>

Besides its political and social function, Tahmis Coffeehouse was also an important meeting place for the businessmen. Associations and councils were gathered in Tahmis to conduct their regular meetings. "For example, there were certain meetings realized here. What kind of meetings? For example, general assemblies, associations, foundations and cooperatives were gathered here. The distance is not important, everybody comes here from all regions of the city..."<sup>18</sup>

• Tahmis Coffeehouse as a Game Place  
Besides its commercial function, Tahmis Coffeehouse was an important entertainment space where historical table games were played by regulars every day. From the history onwards, *pishti*, 52 and *basra* are among the most popular games played in Tahmis. "There is a game, called *basra*. A version of card game... A scratch pad, made up of automobile tire, is needed. Also, a chalk was brought to write. All scores were written in old Turkish. Then, a wet fabric was brought. *Basra* was played up to mid-afternoon, and then, regulars began to play *domino*. *Basra* was one of the most important games of history... I have never played though..."<sup>19</sup>

Additionally to *basra*, in her study titled *20. Yüzyılda Gaziantep'te Eğlence Hayatı*, Tokuz mentions *domino* as another game played with rectangular tusks, which was not much known except the regulars of Tahmis, (Tokuz, 2004). "I played so much... It was a mind game... Although to a lesser extent with comparison to chess, it was a mind game, too... It was a mind game such as game of draught or chess. You have to follow scores... If necessary, you have to lock the game... If your op-

ponent's scores are higher than yours, you have to lock and finish the game. If you want, you can open the game and you can charge your *domino* tools... It is a game which you have foresight, like chess..."<sup>20</sup>

• Tahmis Coffeehouse as a Storytelling Place

In Ramadan celebrations and bairams, daily routine of Tahmis Coffeehouse changes and a celebrative enthusiasm pervades. Hacivat-Karagöz as the most popular shadow puppetry is displayed in Tahmis and people listen the epic narratives of the storyteller (*meedah*). As it was in the past, during these special days, not only coffee house regulars but also families and friends spend their time in Tahmis in our day.

As Tokuz mentined, storyteller is a public theater play, which is created and performed by one person's gestures and mimics (Tokuz, 2004). In order to invite people in Tahmis, the storyteller shares a small part of his stories in a day and continues the day after. "My father took me to Tahmis a few times in bairams, when I was a little boy. The storyteller sits to the upstairs of the coffee house with his long stick. For example, he handles Köroğlu story. He re-animates his history with all details and exaggerated descriptions... How many buttons Köroğlu have, what the color of button strands... Tells all of them in detail... 'He handled the *saz*, let see what he says!' Sometimes he uses his stick as an instrument while telling his story and if he notices that people are bored, he hits hard on the table to awake them. Then, stops his narrative and says 'I will continue tomorrow...' One story takes almost a month... We used to go to Tahmis very often... Then I started going there alone when I was seventeen-eighteen years old. Especially in Ramadan, there were special events conducted in Tahmis. The Coffee House were full of people... Just like a wedding house... Musicians play and sing songs... The entertainment lasts up to the *sahur*. Also, storytellers and shadow puppets were played in Tahmis. I can not clearly remember but my elders tell. According to a survey Tahmis is one of the most popular ten coffee houses of Turkey."<sup>21</sup> On the

<sup>19</sup> "Basra diye bir oyun var. Basra bir 52... Yani piştinin bir versiyonu... Basra oynarlar... Basrada bir tane yaz-boz tahtası istenir. Yaz-boz tahtası eskiden araba lastiklerinden yapılırdı. Kenarlık şey olur, böyle bir çerçeve yapılır bir de tebeşir gelir. Rakamlar yazılırken de eski Türkçe yazılırdı... İşte orda bir de ıslak bez getirirler... O doldu muydu o ıslak bezle silinir temizlenir... Ondan sonra ikinci vakti millet kalkar evine gider... Sonra domino oynarlardı... Geçmişin en büyük oyunlarından birisiydi, en yaygın oyunlarından... Ben hiç oynamadım da..." (Taraz, personal interview, 2011).  
<sup>20</sup> "Ben çok oynadım da... Zeka oyunudur yani... O da dama gibi satranç gibi o kadar şey olmasa da zeka oyunudur. Sayıları takip edeceksin... Efendim icabında oyunu kilitleyeceksin. Onun elindeki sayılar daha fazlaysa senin elindeki sayılar daha azsa oyunu kitlersin oyun orda biter, sayılır... İstersen de oyunu açabilirsin... Uzağı görme şeyi... Satranç gibi..." (Bayaz, personal interview, 2011).



Figure 2. Tahmis Coffee House regulars.

one hand, the historical spirit of this public space is refreshed by its regulars, on the other hand, tourists and the young visitors of coffee house increase the fame of Tahmis. The regulars and young tourists share the same table today, listening to the personal memories of the elders<sup>21</sup>.

## 7. Conclusion

This study interrogates the relation of the coffeehouse culture with the daily life activities and the spatial practices in Gaziantep. The study focuses on Tahmis Coffeehouse as one of the most important public spaces of this historical city that reflects this relation obviously. The building has already been integrated with the urban fabric characterized with commerce and managed to be both cultural and political space of the city. The analysis of Tahmis Coffeehouse also contributes to other spatial studies in terms of its methodological approach. In this paper, oral history techniques are related with micro-history studies and the methods used in cultural studies are combined, and thus physical and social features of space are read through the methods of social sciences. In this way, the meaning of space is deciphered through the experiences of actors in real life with a very close look.

In this paper, the written evidence is

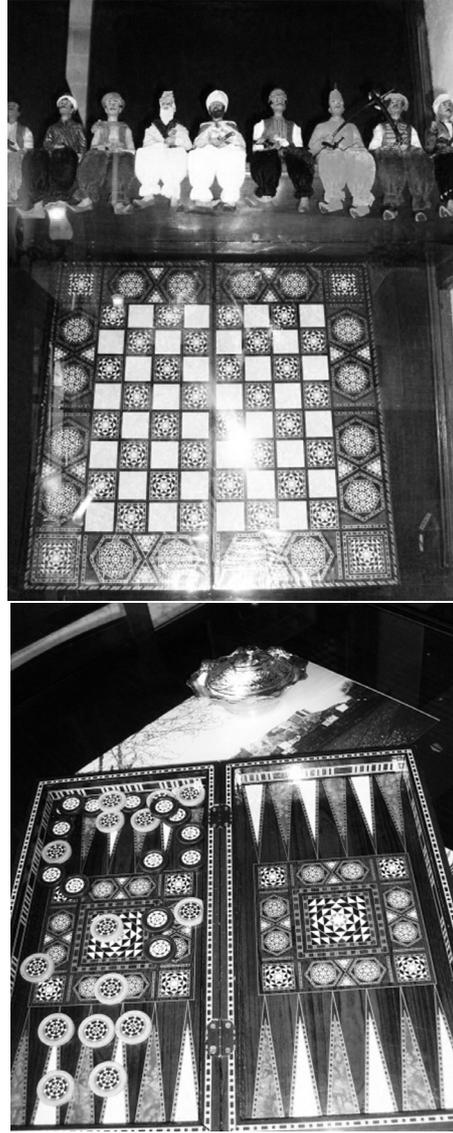


Figure 3. Puppets and pearl inlaid gammon.

intertwined with the oral narratives of Tahmis Coffeehouse regulars in order to understand the spatial practices of the coffeehouse users and the history of coffee culture in Ottoman cities from the very beginning of the coffee consumption in the sixteenth century. At the beginning of their establishments in the Ottoman cities, coffeehouses were used for religious conversations and thus, they were centered around the mosques. But in time, coffeehouses attached importance as public spaces of cities where people socialized and played games as well as spending free time. Also, the coffeehouses were transformed into celebration spaces where bairams were celebrated not only with regulars but also with people from all strata in the city.

As one of the oldest Ottoman Cof-

<sup>21</sup> "Babam beni birkaç sefer götürmüştü... Giderdik, babam götürürdü, küçük çocuktuk... Şimdi Hikayeci, kahvenin üst başında oturur... Uzun bir de sopası olur... Şimdi o sopayı bazen... Mesela Köroğlu hikayesini eline alır. Öyle anlatır ki canlandırır, gözünün önüne gelir. Kaç tane düğme var üzerinde, düğmenin iplikleri ne renk, ayrıntılarıyla anlatır. 'Aldı sazı eline, bakalım ne söyledi!' O değneği alır, saz olarak yapar... Biraz anlatır anlatır, bakarsınkine millette uyku olur... Masanın üstüne vurduğu gibi... Belli bi saatte keser, 'Kissamız burada karar eyledi, arkası yarına...' der... Bir ay sürer yani... O bir hikaye, bir ay boyunca sürer.

feehouses, Tahmis has been in use since its construction in the seventeenth century, in its first location at the commercial core of Gaziantep until now. The written evidence focusing on the social and political importance of Tahmis Coffeehouse is analyzed through regulars' narratives and written sources are supported by the methods of oral history. Certain details and historical information which are not mentioned or ignored in written sources became apparent through the personal narratives of regulars. In this way, the traces of memories and gaps in written evidence are integrated with the historical narrative.

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#### **Interviewee**

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