



Inside the Gümrük Hanı Museum, located in the Şahinbey district of Gaziantep

GÜMRÜK HANI: A MUSEUM OF CRAFTSMANSHIP

Handcrafted items are products of labor. They include many details of life; sometimes, you can discern pain, joy, sadness or other particular moments of life. The Gümrük Hanı museum does the same; it takes you on a journey accompanied by these emotions. Sometimes a rug or sometimes the calluses on the hands of a headscarf maker tells us everything about our values.

Traditional arts are also considered great social assets conveying the cultural codes, emotions and lifestyles of a society. This is the case particularly when the craftsman's labor carries sadness, hope and longing. These feelings are included in the final products; they are labored over and crafted carefully in paintings, carvings and calligraphies. However, these traditional arts are fading away in face of the growing impact of technological advances in the world. Such arts are also regarded as unnecessary in our daily lives as well.

Aware of this grave situation, the Şahinbey Municipality decided to focus on traditional arts in Gaziantep. In addition to exhibiting the works of traditional artists, the municipality opened a museum to ensure that those who are interested in these arts can find out more about them and that these arts are preserved for future generations. The "Living Museum: Historic Gümrük Hanı," the restored version of the historic Gümrük Hanı, awaits such visitors. The building, constructed between 1873 and 1878, was restored in 2011 under the sponsorship of the municipality.

The goals of the museum include offering training courses and the promotion of rare handicrafts. The historic building surrounded by stone walls resembles a huge temple. Your journey inside starts with a door that squeaks open. The moment you set your foot inside, you feel like you have entered a colorful page of history. This can be either a silversmith in a workshop or a wood laborer in another.



Every workshop weaves the cultural codes of the city of Gaziantep into visitors' minds. The artworks become even more magnificent as you enjoy your tour. You feel like your heart is beating in a mosaic painting; in another moment, it beats along with the lines carved on a copper plate or the designs of a rug. It is as though love is hidden in the curves of an Antep work. This museum is alive and is trying to ensure that the Anatolian beauties remain alive in a lovely atmosphere. The best part is that this museum recognizes the value of handicrafts which are trying to stay alive in the face of the impact of technology. Gümrük Hanı attracts locals as well as visitors from all around Turkey and offers local artists a great opportunity to present their own work.

We hear from the residents of this historic building. Sedat Parlak has been involved in handcrafted inlaid-pearl items for 33 years. He works on furniture items using mother of pearl. "We are trying to promote our craftsmanship here," he says, adding that they are very pleased with the interest and attention by visitors. We move to the store next door. Hatice Akdeniz is working on rugs. She notes that they are working on a project to revive rare traditions and craftsmanship and restore old items. She is happy to be a resident in Gümrük Hanı, noting that they are also glad to receive such huge attention. It is also a source of happiness for them to see women make money by selling their craftsmanship. Ayda Demirkan, a silversmith, learnt this profession

from her husband. Demirkan, whose husband trained her in silver workshops, says that she merges quality and elegance in her pieces while working in this historic place. Noting that they are working on Ottoman and antique artistic motifs, Demirkan stresses that the growing attention on rare arts makes them more eager to excel in their profession.

Long-forgotten kutnu-making promoted in the building

Kutnu-making is another rare art and craftsmanship. Muhittin Demir is a third-generation representative of this profession. This weaving style is popular in Tokat, Sivas, Konya, Edremit, Balıkesir and in many other Anatolian cities. This art has attracted attention because of the benefits of kutnu cloth; the cloth is very healthy because it is made of silk and cotton. Demir, noting that kutnu is not something that the newer generations are aware of, says: "In the past, local clothes were used by our fathers and mothers. However, the newer generation views this as a rare art or as an almost forgotten tradition. It is hard for us to promote and introduce this to the newer generation because of a lack of opportunities. But now that we have this place to perform this art, we are able to promote it to visitors. This is an important medium for us to promote and introduce our art and display it for future generations. We needed such a place for our art and profession."

Mehmet Yılmaz, a retired history teacher, is involved in mosaic art. He says that he is trying to emphasize the ancient side of Gaziantep in the workplace. Noting that he has been doing mosaic art for many years, he says: "I am trying to show that mosaic art is an ancient value and asset of the city of Gaziantep. People can receive training here. We are also able to sell our products in this place." Those who visit this place hold similar constructive thoughts and views. Visitors to Gümrük Hanı all say that they enjoy the beauty and history in the building.

10,538 newborns welcomed through home visits by municipality



Şahinbey Mayor Mehmet Tahmazoğlu is seen during one of his visits to a newborn baby as part of the Welcome Baby project being carried out by his municipality.

The Gaziantep Şahinbey Municipality, which has attracted a great deal of attention for its efforts and results in the social and cultural fields, visits every newborn baby as part of its Welcome Baby project. As part of this initiative, the municipality has visited 10,538 parents so far. The Şahinbey Municipality launched the Welcome Baby project to increase parents' awareness and ensure that babies lead healthier lives via home visits.

As part of the project coordinated by the municipality and the local health directorate, two teams visit parents who recently had a baby in Gaziantep. The nurses provide extensive information on childcare, child development, the mother's health, the importance of breast milk and breastfeeding and vaccination during

the visit. In addition, some presents are given to the parents during the visit.

Noting that public service should encompass entire lifespans from birth to death, Şahinbey Mayor Mehmet Tahmazoğlu says that they support locals in every stage of their lives, from birth -- through the Welcome Baby project -- and marriage until death. Noting that they also share in parents' joy, Tahmazoğlu says: "Only one team used to do this before. Now we assign two teams for this project. The local health directorate appoints one nurse to the team. They provide information on childcare, breastfeeding and vaccination. We also hand out some gifts as well. Our real goal is to advise parents what needs to be done for the health of the mother and the newborn."

ŞAHİNBEY TO BE HOME TO FIRST SPORTS VILLAGE IN EAST, SOUTHEAST ANATOLIA



The province of Gaziantep has moved into action to tackle the lack of sports facilities in the region, and the Municipality of Şahinbey has taken a leading role in addressing the problem by taking on the construction of the Akkent Sports Village, which is being built on 86,000 square meters of land.

The Akkent Sports Village is the first of its kind in the Eastern and Southeastern Anatolian region. The foundation for this new sports village were put down in October 2012 at a ceremony attended by minister for Youth and Sports, Suat Kılıç. It is widely expected that this sports village will play an important role in promoting and supporting sports in the region.

With football fields and the covered swimming pool already completed, work on the construction of the sports village is continuing rapidly. Expected to be open to serve the public by the end of 2013, these facilities are set to dramatically reduce the load on current facilities that do not have the capacity to serve the large Gaziantep population.

In the meantime, construction is almost finished on a covered swimming pool designed for people with physical disabilities. Boasting a gym and sauna, the swimming pool will soon open for service as well. The sports village will

include walking paths, picnic areas, indoor football fields, basketball courts, tennis courts and volleyball courts and cafeterias. The areas will open in stages as each one is completed.

Şahinbey Mayor Mehmet Tahmazoğlu noted that this new sports facility will be open for use seven days a week, 24 hours a day. "The swimming pool has a budget of TL 4.3 million the gym, TL 4.1 million," he added. Tahmazoğlu noted that the opening ceremonies will be attended by Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan when it is finished.

Noting that the first part of the Akkent Sports Village to be finished was the football fields, Tahmazoğlu said, "As for our covered swimming pool, which includes a pool for physically disabled citizens, this is also about to be completed. With its gym and sauna it will be a complex integrated facility, our pools will be open to the public soon. We have also begun construction on the closed sports gym, which will take up a full 6,000 square meters of space within the larger Akkent Sports Village. This too will be completed soon."

While around 4,000 students are receiving swim training at the current facilities, it is estimated that these numbers will rise to 10,000 when the project is finished. The total cost of the project is estimated to be TL 120 million.

The sports village will include walking paths; picnic areas; indoor football fields; basketball, tennis and volleyball courts; and cafeterias. The areas will open in stages as each one is completed. Boasting a gym and sauna, the swimming pool will soon open to the public as well



The distinctive market, where cash is not used, plays a key role in the lives of 2,675 families in the area.

Not money but 'compassion' available at these markets

The Gaziantep Şahinbey Municipality Social Market offers everything from food to cleaning items, but all the items here are purchased with special "compassion cards" handed out to those in need.

Citizens who shop at the Social Market are able to personally purchase all their needs using these compassion cards instead of money. This distinctive market, where cash is not used, plays a key role in the lives of 2,675 families in the area. With credit added to their compassion cards on a monthly basis, these families are able to shop for anything they need at the market until their credit is used up. Şahinbey Mayor Mehmet Tahmazoğlu noted that careful studies were done on this rather unusual project to determine the families that needed this assistance. "Teams from our municipality's Social Assistance Directorate went from neighborhood to neighborhood to ensure that these cards were given to the right people. Up until now, we have handed out 2,675 of these cards to families. We add credit into these cards ourselves. Thus, those who have these cards can do as much shopping as their limits allow. These people are able to purchase many of their key needs from this market. We didn't include things like ovens and refrigerators; these are the types of items that we give directly to those in need," the mayor said.

Another great aspect of the Social Market is that university students have begun working here, bearing the first fruits of a contract signed between the Şahinbey Municipality and the Hasan Kalyoncu University as part of a social sensitivity project. Thirty students studying at this university are working in the market, helping to make sure that families are able to shop easily.

One such student is İrem Tannöver, who studies in the university's psychology department. She notes that she is working as a volunteer in this special market as part of the social sensitivity project. "With this project, we are able to fulfill our responsibilities towards society and experience the joys of making others happy. We really want to extend our gratitude to our mayor, Mehmet Tahmazoğlu, and to our university rector Dr. İbrahim Özdemir for the opportunities they have provided us."



The Women's Swimming, Sports and Culture Center offers women and children the chance to use their own swimming pool.

First swimming pool just for women opens in Şahinbey

The first swimming pool in Turkey intended solely for the use of women opened in April in Gaziantep's Şahinbey Municipality. The Women's Swimming, Sports and Culture Center offers women and children the chance to use a swimming pool, gym, Turkish hamam, sauna, meeting rooms, classrooms and event rooms for occasions such as henna nights. The center also has cafeterias and beauty centers. The complex is located on the Karatas road in the Yeditepe neighborhood and is a first in Turkey. Part of the aim of this particular project was to get women out of their homes and more integrated in the rest of society.

Şahinbey Mayor Mehmet Tahmazoğlu notes that a great deal of importance has been placed on this project with the hope that it will fulfill many of the needs that women in Gaziantep have. Tahmazoğlu says: "Our project was built on an area of 7,900 square meters and completed rapidly. It was completed in April and has been open to Gaziantep citizens since then. Women shoulder so many of society's problems. Some of them are stuck within the four walls of their homes, so this place can be considered a place for them to come and relax and rid themselves of stress. This in fact helps all of society."

Tahmazoğlu asserted that this particular project is especially aimed at families, saying: "When the women at home are happy, the men and the children are happy, too. By supporting happy families, we will hopefully be achieving societal goals." He highlighted that the facility includes a swimming pool for women, a pool for children, a gym, meeting and greeting rooms, rooms where professional courses are offered and special events rooms for women.



Construction of the sports village and a covered swimming pool designed for people with physical disabilities is almost finished.

Turkey's largest park under construction

The Şahinbey Municipality has started a huge project to create the largest park, Yesilvadi, in Turkey and hopes to serve as a model to other cities. Along with its park, the Yesilvadi project will introduce a whole new approach to the housing concept and will help enrich people's lives thanks to its social and natural facilities.

About 35,000 housing units for 150,000 people are being created on top of an area of 7 million square meters in Yesilvadi. The project aims to provide opportunities for people to have access to greater employment, a modern lifestyle and nature. As part of the project for "changing Gaziantep" (as it's referred to by Şahinbey's Mayor Mehmet Tahmazoğlu), expropriation works are also taking place to incorporate a lake in the park.

One of the things that Tahmazoğlu is paying attention to is the construction of conceptual playgrounds for children. These include a "traffic training park," "world of animals," "pirate's bay" and other themes. A closed playground, one of the first in Turkey, will be made in Yesilvadi to al-

low children to play games in the winter as well.

The municipality sponsors social facilities as well as youth centers that offer great opportunities for young people to improve on basic skills. The Yesilvadi Project will help the city become a new district of peace and serenity.

The project will also include walking paths, fitness areas and other recreational services to provide residents and visitors with healthy outlets. A botanical garden, variety of plantations, "Ottoman garden," Japanese garden and other nature attractions will ensure that park visitors have a "heavenly" experience.

"This is an important project that will ensure planned development in the city. We are making serious in-

vestments here," Tahmazoğlu says. Justice and Development Party (AK Party) Gaziantep deputy Halil Mazcıoğlu notes that the Şahinbey Municipality, which is attracting attention with its urban transformation efforts, is improving the social life of its people via different projects. Noting that measures to create modern residential areas are part of an ambitious endeavor, AK Party Gaziantep deputy Mehmet Erdoğan says: "The Şahinbey mayor does this pretty successfully; so successfully, in fact, that this serves as a model for all of Turkey. I would like to congratulate him for his efforts and works."



Environment and Urban Planning Minister Erdoğan Bayraktar recently praised Şahinbey, which is viewed as a model of urban transformation for the entire country. The urban transformation of Şahinbey is expected to be completed in 20 years.

ŞAHINBEY MUNICIPALITY A MODEL OF URBAN TRANSFORMATION FOR TURKEY

The urban transformation project, which was recently launched in 35 cities across Turkey, also includes the town of Şahinbey, which has a population of 782,889. Eighty percent of the city is unevenly urbanized, and thus far 2,250 housing units out of 11,000 in the town have been demolished

An urban transformation project, ambitiously initiated by Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan in 35 cities despite the political risks involved, is visible in the city of Gaziantep as well. The overall landscape of the city is dramatically changing due to urban transformation which started all over Turkey on Oct. 5 of last year. The overall aim of the project is to address irregular urbanization and the potential problems associated with earthquakes. The urban transformation project includes the town of Şahinbey, with a population of 782,889. Eighty percent of the city is unevenly urbanized and thus far, 2,250 housing units out of 11,000 in the town have been demolished. No unpleasant incidents occurred during the demolitions as the municipality had obtained the owners' consent before starting. This indicates strong support by the people for the project. The Şahinbey Municipality, viewed as a model in urban transformation for the entire country, was recently praised by Environment and Urban Planning Minister Erdoğan Bayraktar.

The urban transformation project in Şahinbey, expected to be completed in 20 years, is being carried out via local sources without any financial support from the

ministry thanks to the personal efforts of Şahinbey Mayor Mehmet Tahmazoğlu. In consideration of these efforts, the project could be completed in 10 years. Mayor Tahmazoğlu, who frequently visits the demolition and construction sites, has offered alternatives to those whose houses have been demolished. For instance, the owners receive cash payments if they want or alternatively, they are asked if they want to move to a housing unit in Etiler and Serinevler. Lastly, they also have the option to live in the new houses that will be constructed very soon. Noting that they are conducting the demolitions with the consent of the people, Tahmazoğlu says: "There are no security forces, police or local units involved in the demolitions. There is no need for all this. We are not afraid of managing the urban transformation project despite the fact that elections are coming." Pointing out that people in other parts of the city also want urban transformation in their areas as well, Tahmazoğlu says that the locals are positive about these efforts and have not opposed or objected to the project.

The city of Gaziantep is one of the victims of irregular urbanization due to a large influx of people from rural areas since the 1980s.

Gaziantep, which appeals to those seeking a better life thanks to its industrial development, is one of the cities suffering extensively from irregular urbanization. The government is taking steps to address the problems associated with this issue and Gaziantep, along with many other cities, now has the opportunity to change its urban landscape after this ambitious initiative. An important step forward in preventing social discrimination, urban transformation is a great opportunity for people to live in decent conditions and lead a quality life. Noting that they are also preserving historic buildings during the urban transformation project, Mayor Tahmazoğlu further says: "Even if we have the power to demolish these houses, we will not do so. We are paying attention to our history and restoring historic houses. We are preserving our historic fabric. We are reviving history without causing any damage to the original fabric."

The Şahinbey Municipality, which has set aside large amount of money for urban transformation, has also spent TL 258 million for expropriations since 2009. The municipality, which made a deal with 98 percent of owners of the expropriated areas, demolishes 20 houses every day and con-

structs new ones in their place. The municipality aims to demolish 5,000 houses by the end of the year. "We have built 5,000 houses and our contractors have acquired permits to construct 15,338 houses in 2012. Work is ongoing. About 296 houses in Etiler and 300 in Serinevler have been completed while 2,340 houses are under construction in Mavikent. We've also started constructing 379 out of a total of 1,071 houses in Nurpazarbas. We are aiming to complete all these by the end of the year," Tahmazoğlu says.

Minister Bayraktar praises transformation efforts

Bayraktar called the urban transformation efforts and efforts by the Şahinbey Municipality as fine examples on every level. Bayraktar spares some time to visit the construction sites every time he is in the city. "The Şahinbey Municipality is conducting urban transformation without receiving any external support, including funds, from the ministry. This is an example for the entire country. I have had the opportunity to see the projects three times now. The municipality is performing well and I would like to congratulate Şahinbey Mayor Mehmet Tahmazoğlu for these successful efforts," the minister said.

ŞAHİNBEY MUNICIPALITY BUILDS INDUSTRIAL ZONE FOR TL 135 MILLION

Finance Minister Mehmet Şimşek praised Şahinbey Mayor Mehmet Tahmazoğlu, stating: 'In terms of fiscal and financial policies, Şahinbey is doing better and is stronger than the state. In contrast with Turkey's credit rating, we see that the municipality has no debt at all. Therefore, it deserves a credit rating that is 10 grades above the current rating. I give its efforts and accomplishments 10 out of 10'

Finance Minister Mehmet Şimşek has praised the local administration in Şahinbey, stating that the financial situation of the municipality is better than that of the state. Recalling that the Şahinbey Municipality has no debt at all, Şimşek says that if a rating were assigned to local administrations, Şahinbey would receive one 10 times greater than the national grade for Turkey.

Şimşek and Family and Social Affairs Minister Fatma Şahin participated in a ceremony held to launch the construction of an industrial zone in the municipality. Şimşek praised Mayor Tahmazoğlu at the ceremony: "In terms of fiscal and financial policies, Mayor Tahmazoğlu's Şahinbey is doing better and is stronger than the state. When comparing it to Turkey's credit rating, we see that the municipality has no debt at all. Therefore, they deserve a credit rating that is 10 grades above the current rating. I am giving his efforts and accomplishments 10 out of 10."

Şimşek, speaking about Tahmazoğlu's accomplishments, also said: "I would like to thank our mayor for completing projects that were so huge that even national governments would not have been able to complete in the past. They have reached a point where they can make huge investments that even many ministries cannot make. Mayor Mehmet Tahmazoğlu is doing better than the state. When comparing credit ratings, they have no debt. It is not possible to have a better financial structure or administration. We are really lucky. I would also like to con-

gratulate him on his service over the last four years."

Noting that she had never been so excited, Şahin said: "We are here to launch the construction of an important economic contribution that is very exciting. We are aware of the problems of the local citizens and merchants. We see that Mehmet Tahmazoğlu is using money wisely on such ambitious projects."

Speaking on irregular housing and urbanization, Tahmazoğlu said: "We have increased our local budget from TL 92 million in 1992 to TL 600 million. This means increased investment in Şahinbey. This year, we have reserved a significant part of the budget for expropriation. We are trying to address the issue of irregular urbanization. We are reserving a huge amount of funds for urban transformation. We have created new residential areas that will house at least 300,000 people. Urban transformation is not easy; but if we offer some attractions, people will like the places and will be willing to move there. The number of residents in the new areas is increasing and there is a decline in the irregularly urbanized areas."

Industrial area will become a model

There will be five different types of businesses in the Şahinbey Industrial Area that will occupy 350,000 square meters. The construction of the site will take 400 days; it will be complete by the end of 2013. Thanks to this project, local businesses from different parts of the city will have the opportunity to operate in a comfortable, modern workplace.



Şimşek and Family and Social Policy Minister Fatma Şahin were among the participants in a ceremony held to launch the construction of an industrial zone in the Şahinbey Municipality.



31,167 Şahinbey residents enrolled in municipal ŞAHMEK courses



Arts, Sport and Vocational Training Courses are offered by the Şahinbey Municipality at youth and leisure centers to 31,167 Şahinbey residents.

Participants in Arts, Sport and Vocational Training Courses (ŞAHMEK), offered by the Şahinbey Municipality at youth and leisure centers, are able to learn new skills and in some cases contribute to their family's income by picking up a new profession or selling the products they make in class.

More and more youth and recreation centers, which also serve as training centers and often become a sort of second home to many people, are being built in Şahinbey. As many as 31,167 Şahinbey residents are currently taking ŞAHMEK courses offered by these centers.

A number of courses are offered at Şahinbey Municipality facilities, including in information technology, music, accounting, cooking, the English language, chess, Ottoman Turkish, mathematics, parenting, folklore, the Arabic language, aerobics and fitness, literature, reading and Quran recitation. Those who take cooking classes often go on to sell cookies and cakes.

Currently, 131 women enrolled in these courses are training to be aestheticians and hairdressers.

Syrians receive education, learn Turkish

Syrian refugees who have fled the domestic war in their country are receiving an education and

learning the Turkish language in Turkey. ŞAHMEK courses offer high-school-level education to 570 Syrians in the town and provide Turkish language education. Şahinbey Mayor Mehmet Tahmazoğlu notes that 570 Syrians are picked up at their front doors and taken to the course five days a week. Tahmazoğlu further says: "We offer high-school education based on the Syrian curricula for numerous students whose studies have been interrupted. Syrian students and teachers continue studying and teaching here as if they are in their native country. A total of 350 people are receiving high school education here. In addition, we offer reading and writing classes for 220 people who want to learn Turkish.

Free training offered to 14,573 students

The youth center and social facilities offering services under the auspices of the ŞAHMEK courses make a huge contribution to education. Students who cannot afford to take private courses receive free lessons to prepare for exams like the Undergraduate Placement Examination (LYS), Level Determination Examination (SBS) and the Transition to Higher Education Examination (YGS) at 15 different social facilities.