

Doi: [10.5281/zenodo.22282030](https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.22282030)

Evaluation of Gaziantep and Aleppo as Twin Cities

Gouran HASAN¹, Canan KOÇ^{2*}

¹ Dicle University, Institute of Science, Department of Architecture, Diyarbakır, Türkiye.

ORCID:0000-0003-3099-9612, E-mail: gouran_hasan@hotmail.com

²Dicle University, Faculty of Architecture, Diyarbakır, Türkiye.

ORCID:0000-0003-0992-2290, E-mail: canan.koca@dicle.edu.tr

(Alınış/Arrival: 01.04.2026, Kabul/Acceptance: 27.07.2026, Yayınlanma/Published: 25.08.2026)

Abstract

The study evaluates Gaziantep and Aleppo as twin cities due to their proximity on both sides of the Turkish-Syrian border, as well as their close economic, social, and cultural ties. In this study, the impact of the mutual relationship on the history and urban development processes of the two cities was examined, with a focus on comparing urban expansion during the Ottoman period to the period following the two towns' split. By conducting a detailed literature review, the concepts of twin city and twinning were emphasized, and the similarities were revealed by evaluating the historical development of the two cities. After revealing the unique relationship between the cities of Gaziantep and Aleppo, as well as the challenges faced in establishing effective collaboration between them, it has become apparent that there is a requirement for joint urban, economic, and cultural initiatives to enhance the regional standing of both cities. To address this, a twinning project model has been developed by proposing a range of solutions in this direction. The proposed twinning project between Gaziantep and Aleppo will offer many advantages, but if it is not well organized, problems such as workforce imbalance are likely to arise. Therefore, matching should be thoroughly researched and matching-related issues should be regularly monitored to achieve common goals.

Keywords: Cross-border, cities cooperation, twinning, twin cities.

Gaziantep ve Halep'in İkiz Şehir Olarak Değerlendirilmesi

Özet

Çalışma, ekonomik, sosyal ve kültürel bağları nedeniyle Türkiye-Suriye sınırının her iki yakasında yer alan Gaziantep ve Halep kentlerini “ikiz şehir” olarak değerlendirmektedir. Çalışmada, Osmanlı dönemindeki kentsel genişleme ile iki şehrin bölünmesini takip eden dönemin karşılaştırılmasına odaklanılarak, karşılıklı ilişkinin iki şehrin tarihi ve kentsel gelişim süreçleri üzerindeki etkisi incelenmiştir. Detaylı literatür taraması yapılarak ikiz kent ve ikizleme kavramları üzerinde durulmuş, iki kentin tarihsel süreçteki gelişimleri değerlendirilerek benzerlikler ortaya konmuştur. Gaziantep ve Halep şehirleri arasındaki benzersiz ilişkinin ve aralarında etkili işbirliği kurma konusunda karşılaşılan zorlukların değerlendirilmesinin ardından, Halep'in bölgesel konumunu güçlendirecek ortak kentsel, ekonomik ve kültürel girişimlere ihtiyaç olduğu ortaya konmuştur. Bu duruma çözüm bulmak amacıyla eşleştirme (ikizleme) projesi modeli geliştirilmiştir. Gaziantep-Halep arasında önerilen eşleştirme projesi birçok avantaj sunacaktır, ancak iyi organize edilmezse iş gücü dengesizliği gibi sorunların ortaya çıkması muhtemeldir. Bu nedenle, ortak hedeflere ulaşmak için eşleştirme kapsamlı bir şekilde araştırılmalı ve eşleştirmeye ilgili konular düzenli olarak takip edilmelidir.

* Corresponding author/Sorumlu yazar

Anahtar Kelimeler: Sınır ötesi, kent işbirlikleri, ikizleme, ikiz şehir.

1. INTRODUCTION

At the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century, world maps began to change, and large countries and empires were divided into countries with smaller areas. The border areas that separated countries from each other have turned into more precise, durable, manageable, and complex borderlines. As a result of the obstacles caused by new borders, such as preventing and reducing freedom of movement between interconnected and unified regions for centuries, the need for cross-border cooperation or regional connectivity has emerged. In addition, the process of globalization has also encouraged spatial restructuring, the formation of cross-border regions, and new forms of regional integration [1].

In the 1990s, city twinning emerged in European countries as one of the important ways of cross-border cooperation. This phenomenon has developed through urban regeneration projects to facilitate communication and cooperation and accelerate the movement of people and goods between nearby cities. Then, other regions in East Asia and North America began to emulate sister city projects, as these projects provided positive results and economic prosperity in Europe.

Twin cities are two cities located near one other, separated by natural or manmade borders [2], that share a common history [3]. Twinning, on the other hand, refers to the cooperative relationship between these twin cities in a variety of areas, including urban development, economics, tourism, infrastructure, public services, the environment, and social care [4-5]. This collaboration strives to reduce the impact of the two cities' borders while maximizing the benefits of their connections.

Despite its strategic location linking three continents, cross-border relations between Middle Eastern countries remain limited. Relations between the twin cities in this region are considered spontaneous, stemming from innate need and lacking strategic planning. Turkey and Syria are considered among the most important of these countries and are linked to each other by a border approximately 877 km long [6]. Despite the importance of the location of the Turkish-Syrian border, which constitutes the most important land link between Europe and Asia on the one hand, and the Arabian Peninsula and Africa on the other hand, cross-border relations and projects remain weak and limited. The twin cities on both sides of this border have also been neglected, and their potential has not been properly exploited. The most important twin cities on this border are Gaziantep in Turkey and Aleppo in Syria.

The relationship between the cities of Gaziantep and Aleppo is a unique case, as it has features such as geographical proximity, common history and culture, social relations, urban similarity, and commercial and industrial relations. In this context, Gaziantep and Aleppo are evaluated within the framework of twin cities in this research.

This research discusses how twinning between Gaziantep and Aleppo can be implemented, seeking answers to the following questions:

- Do Gaziantep and Aleppo possess all the characteristics of twin cities? What are the characteristics of the relationship between the two cities, and how strong are these relationships?
- Is the urban development of Gaziantep and Aleppo, and the characteristics of the region between the two cities, suitable for twinning projects?
- What is the feasibility of twinning projects between Gaziantep and Aleppo, and how can the potential be utilized to realize twinning between the two cities?

Within this scope, the study examines the twin cities of Gaziantep and Aleppo in line with the questions mentioned above and develops a "twinning project proposal".

2. MATERIALS AND METHOD

Twin cities are presented as a new development strategy aimed at strengthening economic ties between two neighboring countries [7]. Twin cities exist all over the world, whether within a single country or across international borders. They differ in shape, size, the borders separating them, and the relationships between them. Cities on opposite sides of international borders sometimes share a cultural and historical identity that can be considered twins. For example; Haparanda (Sweden) and Tornio (Finland); Leticia (Colombia) and Tabatinga (Brazil); Valga (Estonia) and Valka (Latvia).

The research aims to identify the common aspects between the two cities, known as the twin cities due to their geographical, cultural, and architectural similarity. It also aims to evaluate the state of bilateral relations and discuss ways to enhance cooperation. The fact that Aleppo and Gaziantep are adjacent and are referred to as “twin cities” in various sources was instrumental in identifying these cities as an area for research. Although they have different definitions, twin cities are a special case of two adjacent cities or urban centers that have merged over time into one unified city or symmetrical nearby urban areas on either side of a border. The importance of the research lies in the scarcity of national publications on the subject of cooperation between the cities of Gaziantep and Aleppo as twin cities, despite the importance of the region regionally and internationally in the economic, industrial, and cultural fields and the necessity of strengthening cooperation, developing communication, and reducing the strictness of the borders separating them.

Gaziantep is located in southwestern Turkey, between 36°28' and 38°01' eastern longitudes and 36°38' and 37°32' northern latitudes. Kahramanmaraş borders it in the north, the Syrian border (Aleppo) in the south, Şanlıurfa in the east, and Hatay and Osmaniye in the west. Aleppo, located in the northwest of Syria, is located at 12° 36 north latitude and 10° 37 east longitudes. It is bordered by Turkey's borders in the east and north (Hatay in the east, Gaziantep and Kilis in the north), Idlib and Hama regions in the south, and Raqqa in the east (Figure 1).



Figure 1. Location of Gaziantep and Aleppo [8]

This research adopts a qualitative research approach, utilizing a combination of historical review, document analysis, comparative spatial analysis, and design proposal methods (Figure 2).

The first stage involved a comprehensive literature review; scientific theses, research articles, books, reports prepared by public institutions and organizations, and information found on websites were utilized.

The second stage involved a comparative analysis to evaluate the characteristics of the two cities. This evaluation was conducted using diagrams, maps, plans, and reports illustrating the historical and spatial development process of the research area. The analysis examined urban, economic, and cultural similarities, as well as economic and commercial relations, between Aleppo and Gaziantep. The situation of the Turkish-Syrian border and the roads connecting the two cities were also assessed. The conditions of cooperation between the two cities were compared from the late Ottoman period to the present day. The current situation and proposed twinning project in the study was evaluated within the scope of the following twinning criteria:

Urban Development

Economy

Tourism

Infrastructure and public services

Ecology

Social structure.

The final stage examined the feasibility of implementing twin city projects in Gaziantep and Aleppo, based on current and future conditions. Practical steps were proposed for the phased implementation of such projects, aiming to ensure their sustainability and develop relations between the two cities in a way that benefits both cities and the entire region. Based on the findings, a design-oriented proposal model has been developed. A twinning project has been proposed in the Öncüpınar area to improve and maintain the relationship between the two cities. This area was deemed suitable for developing the twinning project due to its advanced technical infrastructure and strategic location. Archicad 16 and Lumion 10 programs were used in the design phase.

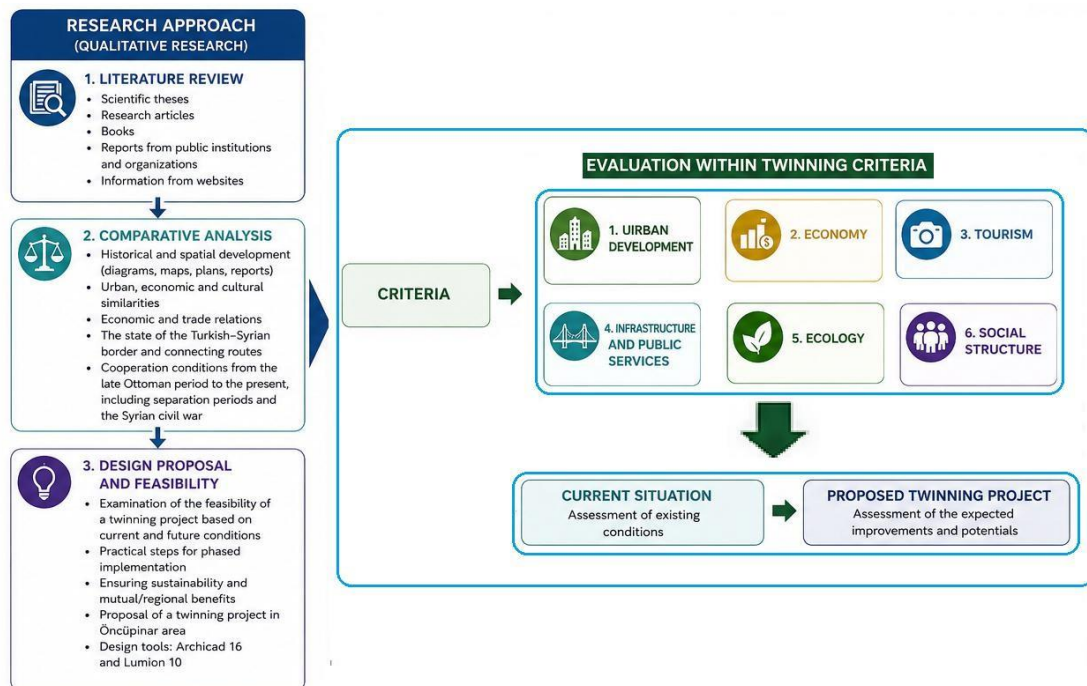


Figure 2. Method diagram

Within this scope, the existing relations between Gaziantep and Aleppo have been holistically examined from a spatial planning and urban design perspective throughout history; a scientific framework has been established for developing a feasible and long-term twin city model between the two cities.

2.1. Features of Aleppo and Gaziantep as Twin Cities

The cities facing each other on both sides of the Turkish-Syrian border have gained special importance because the border area is an important region linking the Asian continent on the one hand and the Arabian Peninsula and Africa on the other. The cities of Aleppo and Gaziantep are considered among the most important twin cities between Turkey and Syria due to their geographical location and economic and industrial status. They are also considered important crossing points linking the three continents. The research examines the geographical proximity, historical background, economic and commercial relations, and urban similarities of Aleppo and Gaziantep, revealing them as twin cities.

Geographical Proximity: Aleppo and Gaziantep are two important Middle East trade and industry centers. The proximity between these two cities is important in understanding the region's development, as it directly impacts their economies. The distance between Aleppo and Gaziantep is about 100 kilometers. This proximity provides easy access to resources from both places, contributes to the development of urbanization in both cities, facilitates communication between the citizens, and enables them to interact more easily. This relationship has benefited companies operating in cities and individuals who need to travel between them regularly.

Two main roads link the cities of Aleppo and Gaziantep, passing through the Syrian-Turkish border. One is the Salama Road (Carchemish - Öncüpınar - Kobani) and the other is the Aleppo - Jarabulus - Gaziantep Road (Carchemish crossing road). The Salama Road is the direct and shortest route between the two cities and is 122 kilometers long. It passes through the cities of Azaz, Öncüpınar, and Kilis. Aleppo-Jarablus-Gaziantep Road or Carchemish crossing road; is a 170 km long road that passes through the cities of Al-Bab, Manbij, and Jarabulus on the Syrian side, and then Carchemish and Gaziantep on the Turkish side (Figure 3).

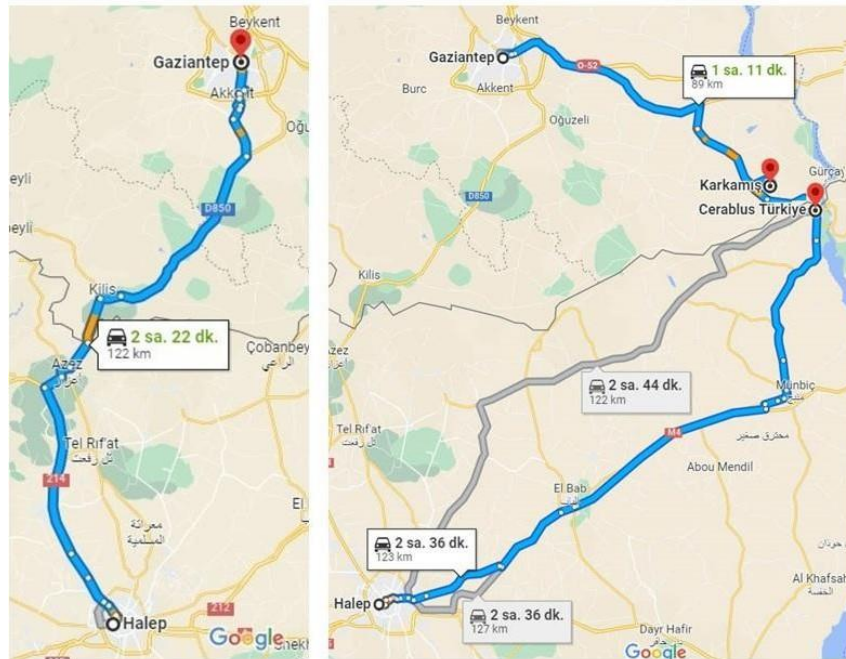


Figure 3. The Salama Road (left) and Carchemish Crossing Road (right) [9]

Due to the geographical proximity of the two cities and climatic similarity, the agricultural products (olives - lemons - pistachios, etc.) of the two cities are also similar.

Historical Connections: There are traces and effects of Gaziantep's close relations with Aleppo, not only geographically but also historically and culturally [10]. Gaziantep and Aleppo have been an inseparable whole throughout history in every sense [11]. These regions, which came under Ottoman rule after the war in Marj Dabiq, a location between Antep and Aleppo,

in 1516, remained within the borders of the Ottoman Empire until before World War I and were the constant area of interest of powerful states such as England, France, Germany, and Russia[12].

The province of Aleppo covered several regions during the Ottoman Period. These regions later turned into "Gaziantep - Urfa - Hatay - Kilis - Maraş" provinces in Turkey and "Aleppo - Raqqa - Idlib" provinces in Syria [13].

Aleppo Province was established in March 1866, and its new borders expanded northward to include the cities of Maraş, Antep, and Urfa [14] (Figure 4). Gaziantep was one of the regions of the Aleppo Province, according to the Aleppo Governorate Yearbook dated 1908, i.e. 1326 AH [15]. After the signing of the Sykes-Picot Agreement between England and France in Leningrad (St. Petersburg) in 1916, Northern Syria and Cilicia were left to France [16]. At the end of World War I, the Treaty of Sèvres made most of the Province of Aleppo part of the newly formed Kingdom of Syria. However, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk annexed most of the Province of Aleppo, including Gaziantep, to the Republic of Turkey in the War of Independence. When Alexandretta was annexed to Turkey in 1939, Aleppo remained isolated within Syria [17].

Economic Relations: The location of Aleppo and Gaziantep on the Silk Road connecting the Middle East and the Far East has been effective in their trade and economic centers since the beginning of history [18] (Figure 4). Their geopolitical locations have made Gaziantep and Aleppo two cities that are complementary to each other [19].

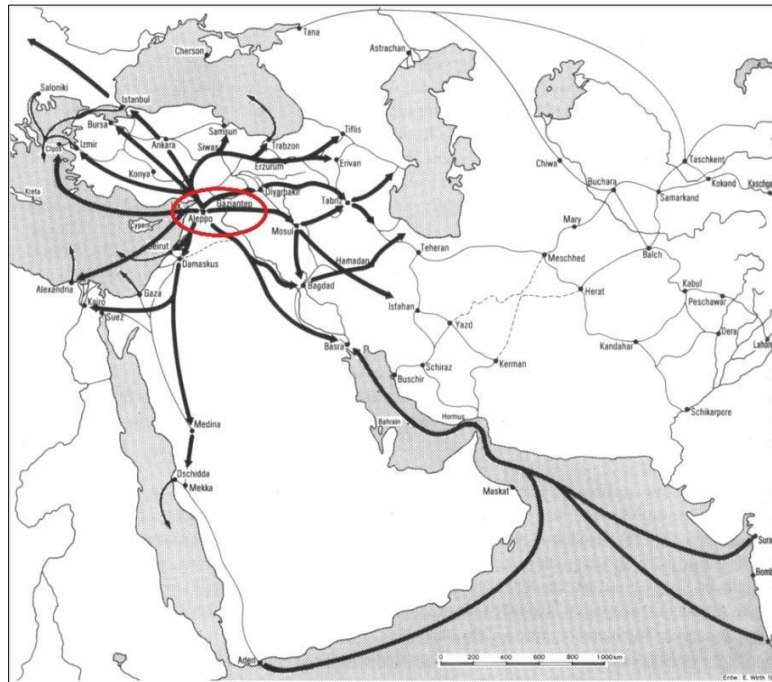


Figure 4. Ancient Trade Routes (Silk Road) Showing Aleppo and Gaziantep in the Center [20]

In the 16th century, goods produced in Damascus and Aleppo were supplied to Anatolia via Antep. By adding new ones to the existing major trade routes and making them safer, an important trade and logistics center has been formed in the region and Turkey-Middle East trade. The historical Berlin-Baghdad railway line, established in the last period of the Ottoman Empire, passed through the Islahiye district of Gaziantep and was connected to Aleppo. This line provided Gaziantep's connections with the inner parts of Anatolia and the Middle East [21]. Before the Republic, Gaziantep continued to be an important trade center with its economic structure intertwined with Aleppo [21].

In 2005, a "sister cities" agreement was made between the municipalities of Aleppo and Gaziantep, providing economic and commercial relations. Agreements have been signed between the two cities in many areas, including taxation avoidance, investment promotion, and free trade. The rehabilitation of the border gates and railways between the two countries, which provides convenience to both parties, for passenger and goods transportation, has been completed [22]. In 2010, interchange train services with Aleppo and Gaziantep began. However recent bad developments in Syria led to its disruption and cancellation [21]. The period between 2005 and 2011 was years of cooperation between Aleppo and Gaziantep in many fields such as trade, economy, health, and education (Table 1).

Table 1. Cooperations between the cities of Aleppo and Gaziantep

Economy and Commercial	The Gaziantep-Aleppo Road was activated in 2005 for trade relations, immediately after the sister cities agreement was signed between them. The railway project between Aleppo and Gaziantep was also started, but it was not completed due to the civil war in Syria [23-24]. Conferences for businessmen were organized to develop economic relations between the two countries through the implementation of the cooperation program between the chambers of commerce of the two cities [25-26]. Results were obtained such as facilitating transport and trade between the two cities, opening transit corridors, implementing joint investment projects, and organizing economic and tourism exhibitions [27].
Culture	After the sister cities agreement and the development of relations between Turkey and Syria, many conferences, agreements, and joint cultural meetings were organized [11].
Education	In 1999, the Department of Turkish Language Teaching was opened at the University of Aleppo, affiliated with Gaziantep University, and then the Department of Turkish Language and Literature was opened in 2003 [27]. The presidency of Gaziantep University also opened the Arabic Language Teaching Center (ADOM) within the framework of the regional cooperation program between Turkey and Syria [27]. The cooperation between Aleppo and Gaziantep universities continued until 2011. Many projects and studies were implemented to develop scientific and educational cooperation between them and to establish student exchange projects, research centers, and joint scientific conferences.
Health	Since 2005, Gaziantep has become a gateway for medical tourism from Syria. In 2009, the Aleppo Information and Referral Office affiliated with Gaziantep University Şahinbey Research and Practice Hospital was opened to direct patients from Aleppo to the appropriate departments in the hospital and provide the necessary care.

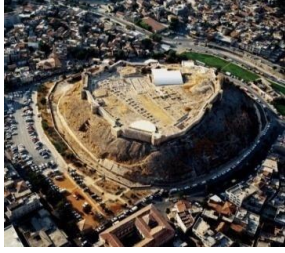
The main aim of cooperation projects between Aleppo and Gaziantep is to revitalize historical relations by taking advantage of the social, economic, and cultural ties between the two cities, making them a regional economic and commercial center. However, the outbreak of civil war in Syria caused relations to break down and prevented cooperation.

Urban and architectural similarity: The cities of Gaziantep and Aleppo have many common points of urban and architectural texture. Gaziantep Citadel resembles the "Citadel of Aleppo" as it is surrounded by a 10-meter-deep moat and many walls and watchtowers [28]. The bazaars and inns surrounding Gaziantep Castle are reminiscent of the castle and markets of Aleppo [29]. The houses of Gaziantep and Hatay are similar to those of Aleppo in terms of plan, interior rooms, materials, and the relationship between the street and the courtyard [30] (Table 2).

Table 2. Urban similarities between Aleppo and Gaziantep cities [31]

	ALEPPO	GAZIANTEP
--	--------	-----------

Traditional Urban Texture		
		
		
	Abbara	Abbara
Traditional Houses		
	Central Hotel (Iwan Courtyard)	Şhreküstü Palace (Iwan courtyard)
		
	Türas Hotel	Melek Lara Hotel
Traditional Bazaar		
	Souk Elmadinah	Old Bazaar

Citadel		
	Aerial view of Aleppo Citadel	Aerial view of Gaziantep Citadel
		
	Aleppo Citadel	Gaziantep Citadel
Religious Building		
	Saffahiyah Mosque	Hacı veli Mosque
Khans		
	Sabun Khan	Millet Khan

The similarity between Aleppo and Gaziantep begins with the general shape of the city: the citadel, public buildings, mosques, and the central market in the middle, followed by streets and traditional houses. This similarity appears in the elements of traditional houses and the shape of narrow streets, ferries, and mosques. It is also evident in the smallest details, represented by the decorations surrounding the entrances, doors, and windows of houses and mosques. The similarity between the two cities is not only due to their geographical location or construction materials and methods, but also to the culture, common relations, similar traditions, and historical and economic conditions that affected them.

2.2. The Effect of the Transportation System on the Development of Gaziantep and Aleppo

The mutual influence manifests itself not only in the similarity of the two cities but also in the relationship between the two cities and the effort of each city to reach the other at the different stages of the development of these two cities. The relationship between the settlement of the cities of Beria (Aleppo) and Dülük (Antep) is seen in archaeological discoveries and ancient Greek manuscripts dating back to the Seleucid period [32]. Yaqut al-Hamwi mentions in his

book Mu'jam al-Buldan in 1228 that Gaziantep is a fortified castle on the road to Aleppo and Antakya, and this castle is followed by a walled village (Rustaq), known as Dülük [33]. This indicates that Gaziantep Castle is linked to the existence of the Aleppo-Antakya Road.

Gaziantep Citadel served as the main gateway to control Aleppo in previous eras. The fact that Hulagu, Timur, and the Crusaders could not control Aleppo without capturing Gaziantep [34] shows that the Gaziantep Road was the main supply artery for the city of Aleppo. According to the Ottoman plans for the Aleppo province in the 19th century, the main road between the two cities was parallel to the Queiq River, which originates from the Gaziantep Hill and passes through Aleppo. The main reason for locating the road is that it is the shortest route between the two cities, as well as the topographic smoothness of the river valley and water availability along the road.

The influence of this road can also be seen in the plan of the old city of Gaziantep, which is surrounded by shops and public buildings. Trade has always been an important factor in the development of the city of Gaziantep. The commercial life in the city enabled the formation of a trading axis starting from the south of Antep Castle and continuing towards Aleppo, and the construction of many bazaars and inns on this axis (Figure 5).

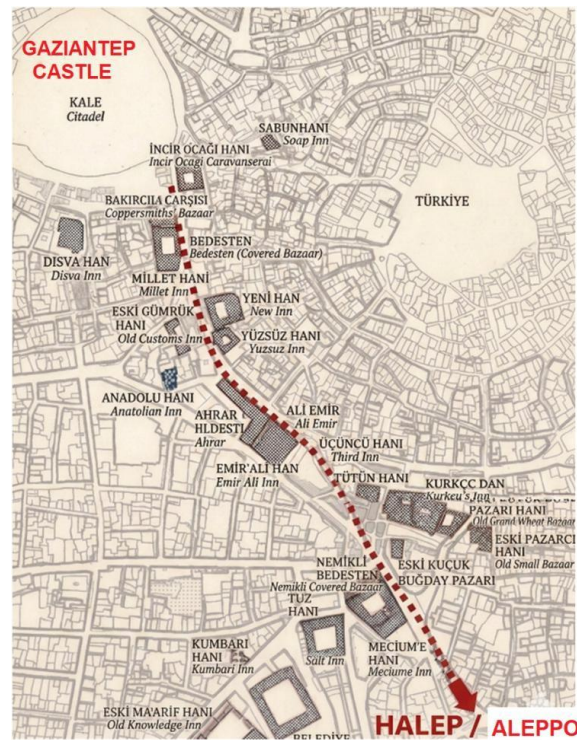


Figure 5. Antep Castle and Aleppo Road Axis [35]

In Aleppo, the road from Antep reached the northern part of the city, especially Bab al-Faraj, which was the general center of trade and transportation of goods. At the end of the 19th century, the Roman moat in the northeast was destroyed and Hendek Street was built, connecting the north of Aleppo with Bab al-Hadid, Bab al-Nasru and Bab al-Faraj, and the Antep Road (Figure 6). Then, Hendek Street became the most important street in Aleppo city and the main axis connecting the new city to the old city.

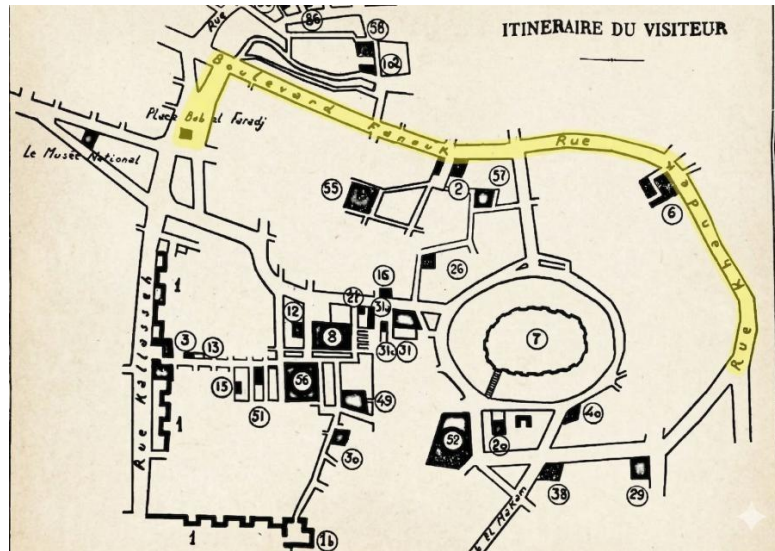


Figure 6. A French Plan for Aleppo, 1951, Showing Hendek Street or France Street on the North and East Sides of the Citadel [31]

The Ottoman Empire began constructing the Baghdad Railway in 1903. This railway connected Baghdad to Konya and, from there, to Berlin. The construction was finished in 1940 (Figure 7). The construction of the Baghdad Railway has increased the commercial and regional significance of Aleppo and Gaziantep cities. This has strengthened the relationship of both cities with each other and with neighboring regions. As a result, both cities have been encouraged to expand towards railway stations [37].



Figure 7. Konya-Baghdad Railway [38]

According to Jansen's plan in the city of Gaziantep, the city expanded from the north and northeast towards the railway line, and this line was separated from the residential fabric in the city center by green areas. The industrial zone has also been strategically located on the railway line to maximize its benefits. This railway line played a crucial role in connecting the city of Gaziantep to other cities in Anatolia and the city of Aleppo (Figure 8).

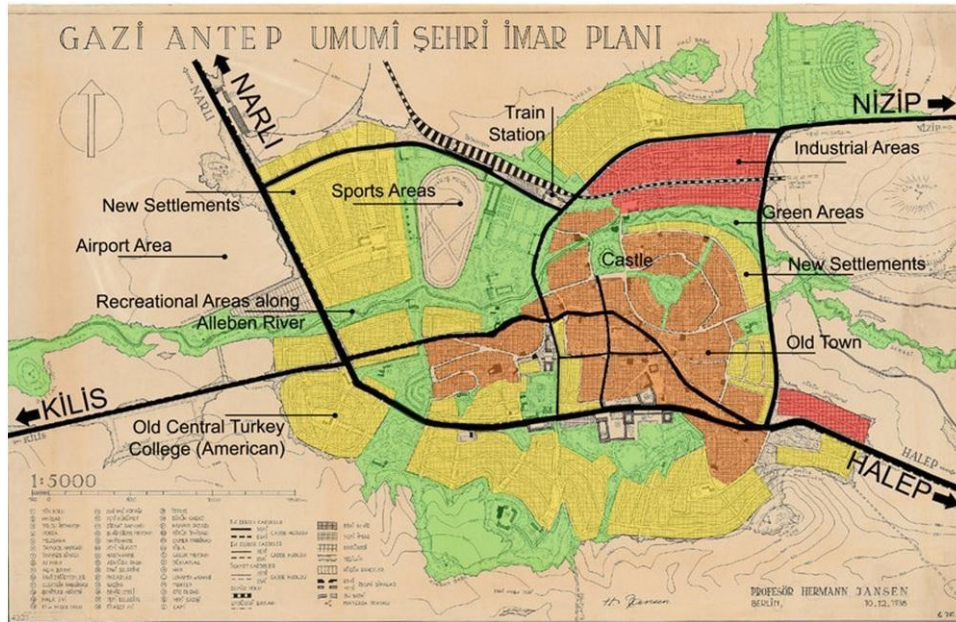


Figure 8. Hermann Jansen's Gaziantep Plan [40]

During the French Mandate period and at the beginning of the independence period, the city of Aleppo expanded towards the railway on the west side. This project played a vital role in strengthening the city's regional position, as it serves as a connection point between the cities of Anatolia in the north, Iraq in the east, Hejaz in the south, and Antakya in the west. The railway has been an important axis for the new city of Aleppo and continues to be so until today (Figure 9).

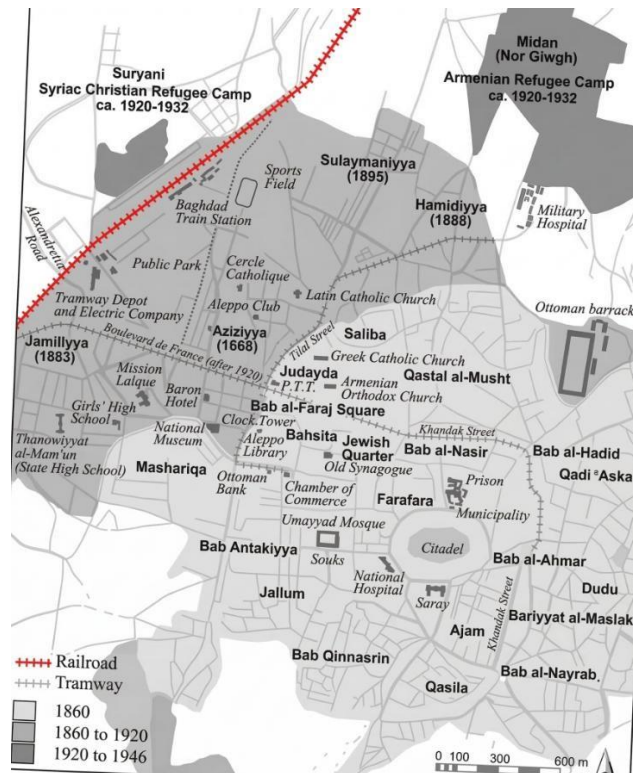


Figure 9. Expansion of Aleppo Towards the Railway Between 1860 and 1946 [40]

During the Ottoman period, the road between Gaziantep-Kilis-Aleppo was transformed from a secondary road into an international highway, which played a significant role in the development of the two cities in the 20th century. This road helped in the growth of the villages and towns located along it, especially between 2005 and 2011. The Gaziantep Road to Aleppo begins from several axes including the Aleppo Road, Bağlarbaşı Road, and Kilis Road, all of which are linked together in the Zeytinli region (Figure 10). This road served as the central point for the development and expansion of Gaziantep city towards the southern direction. As for Aleppo, the Gaziantep Road played a crucial role in the city's growth towards the northeast during the late 20th and early 21st centuries. This development resulted in the creation of the Kafr Hamra and Anadan neighborhoods (Figure 10).

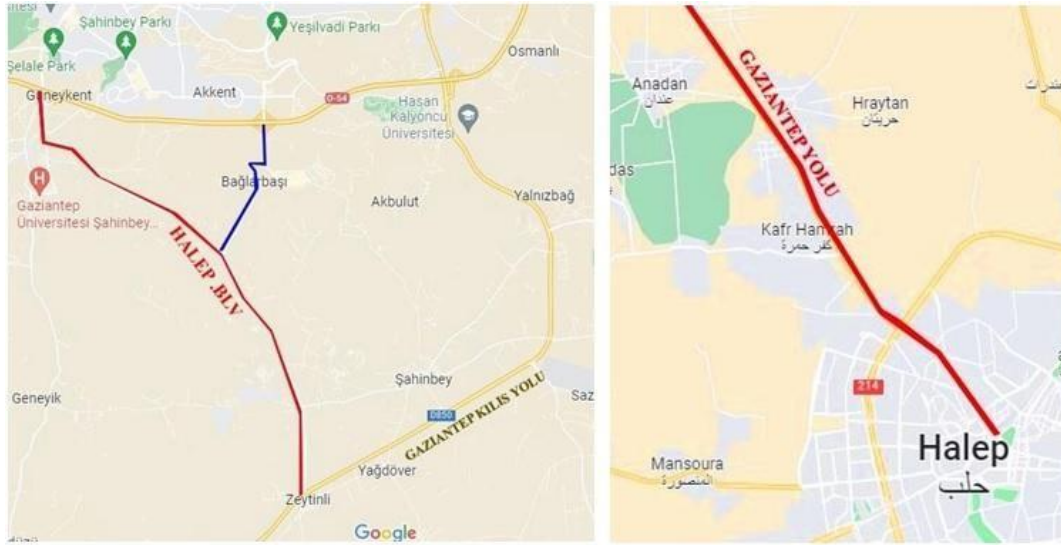


Figure 10. Aleppo Road from Gaziantep (left) and Gaziantep Road from Aleppo (right) [9]

Upon examining Figure 10, it is evident that the road linking the two cities is directly connected to both cities' ring roads, indicating the significance of each city to the other.

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The twin cities have an improved connection between the two city centres. In order to ensure this connection, there are three dimensions that are necessary and related to the flow of goods and human resources between two cities: transportation network (i), cross-border migration (ii) and urban infrastructure (iii) [41]. The twin cities cooperate with each other economically and culturally through transnational centres. In this context, twin cities are new and transboundary urban formations as a result of significant investments in transport infrastructure (bridges, roads, urban gateways) as well as the intervention of actors responsible for the internationalization of local economies [42]. With advancing technology and the increased preference for new means of transportation, transportation has had consequences affecting the entire settlement macroform. The existence and size of cities depend on the density and ease of their relationship with their environment, that is, their transportation facilities [43]. Therefore, an effective transportation system between the twin cities is required.

The cities of Gaziantep and Aleppo share a common historical past and close relationships, which makes it necessary to implement a twinning project between them. This project aims to support the social, economic, and ecological development of both cities and increase their activities at the regional and national levels. It is important to make necessary arrangements to ensure that twinning projects between two cities are inclusive and sustainable. In this context, the study developed proposals for the Gaziantep and Aleppo twinning project under the

headings of "urban development, economy, tourism, infrastructure, public services, ecology, and social welfare," which are the basic criteria of twinning projects (Table 3).

Table 3. Important criteria for an inclusive and sustainable twinning project

Criterion	Explanation
Urban Development	• Conduct a joint analysis of spatial development problems in both cities. • Reduce obstacles and restrictions that hinder cross-border planning cooperation. • Develop guidelines for urban development. • Jointly plan for the development of border areas and cooperate in solving urban planning problems for each city.
Economy	• Facilitating commercial relations between the two cities, • Establishing free trade zones at border gates, • Reducing restrictions on the import and export of goods, • Developing the main trade routes between the two cities, • Establishing temporary shelters on both sides of the border, • Promoting and strengthening industrial cooperation between the two cities in the fields of supply chains, financing and investment, • Facilitating collaborative meetings and conferences for business professionals from both cities.
Tourism	• Facilitating mobility for tourism between the two cities, • Promoting tourism cooperation between private and public tourism companies in both cities, • Demonstrating the shared history and cultural harmony between Aleppo and Gaziantep through cross-border tourist trips to archaeological sites extending between them, • Preparation of joint projects aimed at protecting historical, cultural, and natural tourist areas, • Production and implementation of common accommodation projects
Infrastructure and public services	• Holding periodic joint meetings between local governments of both cities to plan and collaborate on improving infrastructure and public services. • Implementation of joint service projects such as water treatment and distribution projects and energy production projects
Ecology	• Classification of protected areas, biotope networks, transboundary wildlife reserves, transboundary landscape planning, • Preparation of rehabilitation programs to improve the environmental situation,
Social	• Enable smooth and hassle-free cross-border movements on special occasions, official days, and religious holidays, • Enacting laws that will facilitate partnership, investment, and marriage transactions, • Developing social activities, especially youth activities, • Organizing festivals that reflect common socio-cultural characteristics.

In this context, to successfully conclude the twinning project, it is important to carry out and implement it according to the following stages:

Phase 1: Before starting the twinning project, the city of Aleppo needs to be reconstructed with assistance from Gaziantep due to the civil war:

- Opening the borders between the two cities,
- Facilitating the entry of goods, people, and equipment necessary for the reconstruction of Aleppo,
- Assisting residents of Aleppo who are currently living in Gaziantep and wish to rebuild their city,
- Benefiting from the experiences of the city of Gaziantep in the field of urban development and urban regeneration to rebuild the city of Aleppo by leveraging the architectural and urban commonalities of the two cities,

Phase 2: The following actions must be taken to prepare the infrastructure and the road and rail transportation systems before initiating twinning projects:

- Development and reactivation of the old road between the two cities parallel to the Queiq River due to the flat topography of the land, availability of water, and shortness of the road. In addition, the existing road passing through the cities of Azez and Kilis and the Carchemish Road must be protected.
- The double railway between Gaziantep and Aleppo should be reactivated due to its strategic importance and connecting the two cities to the surrounding regions. This railway has a branch that goes through the city of Ar-Rai on the Syrian-Turkish border, and the other passes through Meydanekbes and Tahtaköprü (Figure 11).

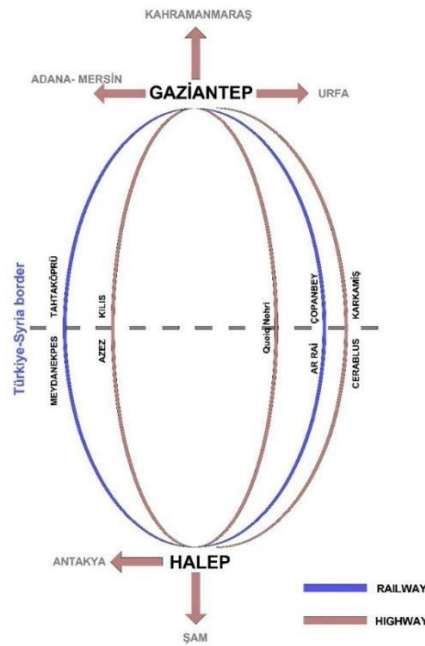


Figure 2 Proposed transportation systems between the two cities

Phase 3: The following application areas should be taken into consideration while arranging border regions between two cities:

- Joint international urban projects should be implemented between the cities of Gaziantep and Aleppo at the intersection of main roads (highways and railways) with the borderline. These projects seek to provide spaces for commercial, industrial, and tourist shopping, such as shops, hotels, temporary housing for workers and craftsmen, warehouses and stores for industrial companies, entertainment areas, parking for vehicles and buses, and gas stations (Figure 12).

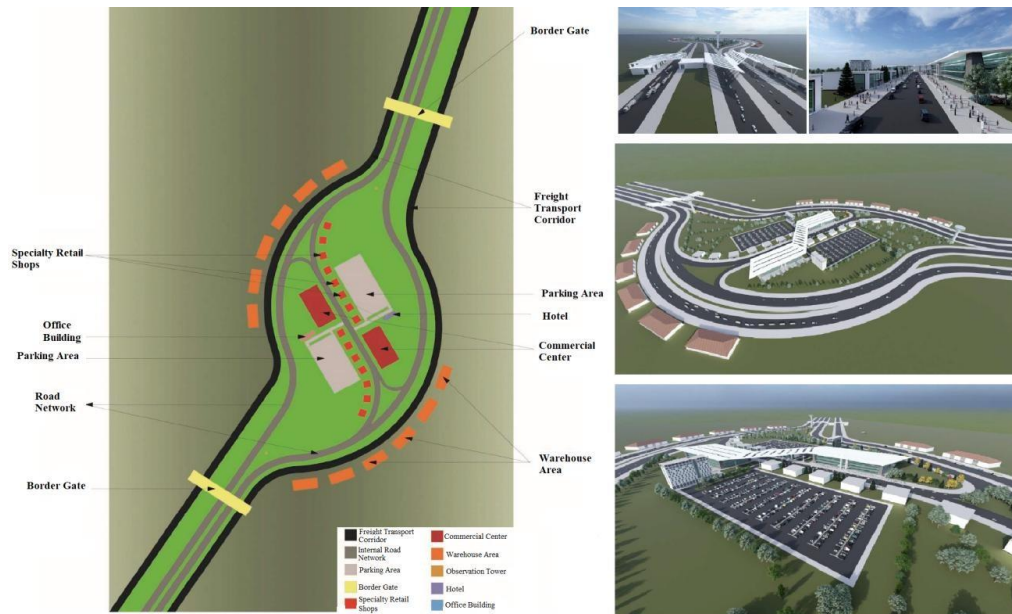


Figure 12. Proposed land use and visuals for the twinning project

Cooperation between twin cities provides many advantages for both parties. The respective economies and border area infrastructure are developing, the welfare of the populations of both cities is increasing, culture and education are being shared, and a sufficient level of mutual understanding and tolerance is established in both societies. As twinning becomes stronger, jointly implemented activities increase. The proposed twinning project between Gaziantep and Aleppo will offer numerous advantages. However, if it is not well organized, issues such as workforce imbalance are likely to arise. Therefore, to achieve common aims with minimal side effects, twinning should be thoroughly researched, the success of these collaborative projects evaluated, and twinning-related issues addressed regularly.

4. RESULT AND SUGGESTIONS

Gaziantep in Turkey and Aleppo in Syria have long been viewed as remarkable examples of twin cities, given their strategic location connecting three continents and their significant commercial and industrial standing in the region. However, despite these attributes, cooperation has historically lacked strategic planning and meaningful regional initiatives, with interactions limited to private and ad hoc projects until the early 20th century.

The Syrian civil war, which began in 2011, caused serious damage to the physical, economic, and social structure of Aleppo, severely damaging its historical fabric, industrial areas, and infrastructure. This situation has significantly weakened Aleppo's development and the socio-economic ties that had developed with Gaziantep over the years. Therefore, re-establishing a twin city model between the two cities depends primarily on ensuring safe living conditions in Aleppo, rebuilding basic infrastructure, and gradually revitalizing its economic production capacity. In this context, it is important to implement the following recommendations:

- The "Twin City Strategic Action Plan" should be prepared between the two cities, including short, medium and long-term goals,
- Twinning projects should be implemented to support cross-border economic cooperation,
- Joint projects should be developed in urban planning, infrastructure, transportation and reconstruction,
- Joint restoration and tourism projects should be implemented to protect cultural heritage,

- Legal and administrative regulations should be made to facilitate border crossings, and joint mechanisms should be developed to accelerate trade, investment and logistics processes,
- A legal and institutional management model should be established to ensure the continuity of sister city relations, and monitoring, evaluation and joint coordination meetings should be held at regular intervals.

To summarize, it is crucial to establish all-encompassing measures that tackle the pros and cons of twinning between Gaziantep and Aleppo to foster the reciprocal growth of these transnational urban hubs. To effectively support and enhance twinning initiatives, it is imperative to enact legislation, establish conducive circumstances, and organize periodic consultations between the involved entities.

5. THANKS

The article produced from Master's Thesis at Dicle University Institute of Science, Department of Architecture in 2023.

REFERENCES

- [1] Bunnell, T., Muzaini, H., Sidaway, J.D. Global city frontiers: Singapore's hinterland and the contested socio-political geographies of Bintan, Indonesia, *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*. 2006; 30(1), 3-22.
- [2] Lapidus, I. M. Middle Eastern cities: A symposium on ancient, Islamic, and contemporary Middle Eastern urbanism. Univ of California Press.1969; 99.
- [3] Zelinsky, W. The twinning of the world: Sister cities in geographic and historical perspective. *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*. 1991; 81(1), 1-31.
- [4] Tambi, S. The contemporary development of the concept of the twin cities: The case of cross-border cooperation between Narva and Ivangorod. Tartu- Estonia: University of Tartu.2016.
- [5] Handley, S. Take Your Partners. The Local Authority Handbook on International Partnerships. London: Local Government International Bureau. Access Address: <http://www.lga.gov.uk/lga/aio/190428>. Access Date: 27.05.2011.
- [6] Atasoy, A., Geçen, R. Korkmaz S.H. Syrian Border In Terms of Political Geograhly. Conference: Tücaum, VII. Coğrafya Sempozyumu, Ankara. 2012; 108-119.
- [7] Anuar, A. R. Mustafa, M. M., Farhat, A. Danok-Bukit-Kayu Hitam, twin border towns on the Thailand-Malaysia's border. *Transnational Dynamics in Southeast Asia: The Greater Mekong Subregion and Malacca Straits Economic Corridors*. 2013; 321-337.
- [8] Google Earth. Turkey and Syria Line. Access Address: <https://earth.google.co.zm/>. Access Date: 23.07.2024.
- [9] Google Map, The Way Between Aleppo and Gaziantep. Access Address: <https://www.google.com/maps/>. Access Date: 04.07.2024.
- [10] Gültekin, M. N. (). Gaziantep'teki Suriyeli mültecilerin toplumsal dayanışma ve etkileşim noktaları, *Electronic Turkish Studies*, 2018; 13(26).
- [11] Altnöz, İ. Uluslararası Antep-Halep Vakıfı Sempozyumu Bildirileri, I-II-II, Gaziantep Üniversitesi Vakıf Bölge Müdürlüğü Yay. İstanbul. 2014; 862.
- [12] Uzun, E., Zaman, S. Savaş alanları turizminin bir çekiciliği olarak Antep savunması mirası: Potansiyeli ve Gaziantep turizmi açısından önemi üzerine coğrafi bir değerlendirme. *Uluslararası Türkçe Edebiyat Kültür Eğitim (Teke) Dergisi*. 2020; 9(2), 919-940.
- [13] Balanche, F. Alep et ses territoires: Une métropole syrienne dans la mondialisation. Alep et ses territoires. Fabrique Et Politique D'une Ville (1868-2011), 2014.

- [14] Masters, B. The Arabs of the Ottoman Empire, 1516-1918: A social and cultural history. Cambridge University Press. 2013.
- [15] ORSAM (Ortadoğu Stratejik Araştırmalar Merkezi). Osmanlı Vilayet salnamelerinde Halep (Ed. Eroğlu, C., Babuçoğlu, M., Köçer, M.). Ankara: ORSAM Kitapları. 2012.
- [16] GBHTD (T.C.Genelkurmay Başkanlığı Harp Tarihi Dairesi). Türk İstiklal Harbi (TİH) güney cephesi (IV. Cilt). Ankara: Genelkurmay Başkanlığı Harp Tarihi Dairesi Resmi Yayınları. 1966.
- [17] Feferman, K. Where Turkey ends and Syria begins: The geopolitics of ambiguity, 1939–41. Israel Journal of Foreign Affairs. 2025; 19(2), 185-197.
- [18] Çınar, H. 18. yüzyılın ilk yarısında Ayıntab şehrinin sosyal ve ekonomik durumu (Unpublished doctoral thesis). İstanbul University, Institute of Social Sciences, İstanbul. 2000.
- [19] Çekiç, A. Fırat'tan Dicle'ye stratejik bir zafer yürüyüşü: Selahaddin Eyyubi'nin kuzey Suriye politikası ve Halep ile Musul'u zaptı. Tarih Araştırmaları Dergisi. 2020; 39(67), 117-137.
- [20] Miroğlu, E. A. The transformation of urban space at the conjunction of the old and new districts: The city of Aleppo (Master's thesis). Middle East Technical University, Institute of Science, Ankara. 2005.
- [21] Ulusoy, R., Turan, N. Gaziantep ekonomisinin Ortadoğu açısından önemi. Gazi Akademik Bakış. 2016; 9(18), 141-165.
- [22] Esyria. Meeting of sellers and buyers between Gaziantep and Aleppo. 2009. Access Address: <https://www.esyria.sy/2009/06/>. Access Date: 04.07.2024.
- [23] Ekonomi Haber7. High-speed train project between Gaziantep and Aleppo. 2011. Access Address: <https://ekonomi.haber7.com/sektorler/haber/960905-gaziantep-ile-halep-arasina-hizl-tren-projesi>. Access Date: 22.01.2023.
- [24] Arabrailnews.Gaziantep-Aleppo high-speed line. 2012. Access Address: <https://arabrailnews.com/2012/12/Gaziantep-halep>. Access Date: 04.07.2024.
- [25] Aleppobusinesswomen. Twinning agreement between Aleppo and Gaziantep. 2005. Access Address: <https://www.aleppobusinesswomen.org/ar/activity/182>. Access Date: 12.02.2023.
- [26] Syriandays. Activating the interaction between the twins "Aleppo and Gaziantep". 2009. Access Address: <https://syriandays.com/>. Access Date: 25.11.2022.
- [27] Nakipoğlu, F. Türkiye-Suriye ekonomik ilişkilerinde Gaziantep'in yeri (Master's thesis). Gaziantep University, Institute of Science, Gaziantep. 2011.
- [28] Turkpress.. Gaziantep Citadel.A Replica of Aleppo Citadel. 2015. Access Address: <http://www.turkpress.co/node/9916>. Access Date: 12.03.2024.
- [29] Alaraby. A Syrian presence turned it into a second Aleppo. 2019. Access Address: <https://www.alaraby.co.uk/>. Access Date: 04.07.2024.
- [30] Alabadin, M. Z. Halep kenti ve geleneksel evleri (Unpublished doctoral thesis). Fatih Sultan Mehmet Vakıf University, Graduate Education Institute, İstanbul. 2019.
- [31] Pinterest. Access Address: <https://tr.pinterest.com/> Access Date: 20.05.2023.
- [32] Grainger, J. D. The Syrian wars. Leiden Boston: Brill. 2010; 53-72.
- [33] Hamwi, Y. Mu'cemu'l-Buldân. II, Beyrut.1977.
- [34] Kujjah, H. Aleppo in the writings of historians, scholars, visitors and literati, Brill. 2022; 164.
- [35] Yüce, B. Osmanlı son dönemi ile erken cumhuriyet dönemi arasında Gaziantep'te mimari dokunun değişimi (1839-1950) (Master's thesis). İstanbul Technical University, Institute of Science, İstanbul. 2010.
- [36] Digdoc.Historical Digital Documents House. 2023. Access Address: <https://digdoc.org/>. Access Date: 04.07.2024.

- [37] Yıldırım, S.Ö. Anadolu ve Bağdat-C.F.O.A ve Bağdat-Halep-Nusaybin-B.A.N.P demiryolu şirketleri yolcu binaları tip projeler. Beykent Üniversitesi Fen ve Mühendislik Bilimleri Dergisi. 2012; 5(1-2), 69-93.
- [38] Altinoluk. 2013. Access Address: <https://www.altinoluk.com.tr/bagdat-tavlası-ya-da-antep-baklavası.html>. Access Date: 04.07.2024.[39] Ayıcı, H., Özer, D. G., Güleç, A. A spatial analysis of Gaziantep railway and its station throughout history. Periodica Polytechnica Architecture. 2020; 51(2), 196.
- [40] Watenpaugh, K. D. Being modern in the Middle East: Revolution, nationalism, colonialism, and the Arab middle class. Princeton University Press.2006.
- [41] Massoni, H., Abe, M. Fostering cross-border twin cities as instruments for sustainable development, ARTNeT Working Paper Series, No. 186, Asia-Pacific Research and Training Network on Trade (ARTNeT), Bangkok. 2019.
- [42] Franck, M. Twin cities and urban pairs, a new level in urban hierarchies structuring transnational corridors? A case study of the Pekanbaru-Dumai Urban Pair. N. Fau, M.Sirivanh and C.Taillard (Eds.) Regional integration in Southeast Asia, ISEAS. Singapore. 2013; 271-298.
- [43] Naryapragi, S., Polat, E. Kent makroformu ve kent içi ulaşım etkileşimi: Isparta örneği, Journal of Architectural Sciences and Applications. 2020;5(2), 201-220.