



FILOZOFICKÁ FAKULTA  
UNIVERZITY KARLOVY  
V PRAZE



Ústav světových dějin

## Master's Thesis Review

Student's name and surname: Muhammet Sami Bayram

Title of the thesis:

Transformation of Pera into the Cultural District of Istanbul in the Second Half of the Nineteenth Century

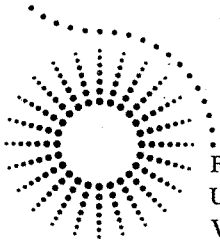
Reviewer's name and surname: Darina Martykáňová, Ph.D.; lecturer (profesora ayudante doctora) at the Universidad Autónoma de Madrid, Spain

**1. Heuristics** (please, evaluate by grade 1, 2, 3, 4 – in case of grading 3 and 4, the reviewer is required to explain his/her objections)

1.1 Evaluation of the selection of literature and sources	3
1.2 Complexity of used sources from the perspective of the state of the art	3

Short evaluation:

The author manages a variety of secondary sources, and supports his narrative via selected primary sources, some of them visual ones. Nonetheless, he leaves aside a great part of key bibliography. He does not support his sweeping generalisations on eighteenth- and nineteenth century Ottoman history by references to relevant works on this period, which is striking particularly when he introduced debates on „hot“ topics of Ottomanist historiography such as modernisation and westernisation. What is even more striking, the author does not profit much from current bibliography on Ottoman and Turkish urban history, a field that is very rich, being cultivated by excellent researchers working in history of architecture and in social and cultural history. There are a few shocking absences of easily available fundamental works, such as Shirine Hamadeh's discussion of the presence of „European“ elements in the Ottoman architecture in the Early Modern Era (<http://www.umich.edu/~hksa/rfour.pdf>) or Steven Rosenthal's and Stéphane Yerasimos's works on urban reform in nineteenth century Constantiople. In general, he quotes online sources, while more reliable academic works (also



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available online, for example on academia.edu) are not mentioned to the same extent. Novels would have been an important and easily available primary source (a source that would be easily accessible to the author thanks to his ability to read Turkish), but they are left largely unexplored.

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**2. Research problem and its solution** (please, evaluate by grade 1, 2, 3, 4 – in case of grading 3 and 4 the reviewer is required to explain his/her objections)

2.1 The way in which the research problem is outline is in accordance with the task given to the student	1
2.2 The relevance of the goal from the perspective of research area methodology	1

Short evaluation:

The aim of the thesis is clearly established and it is extremely relevant. The way the author carries out the analysis is a different issue, but I have no objections to the definition of the topic itself.

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**3. Thesis' structure evaluation** (please, evaluate by grade 1, 2, 3, 4 – in case of grading 3 and 4 the reviewer is required to explain his/her objections)

3.1 Is the structure of the thesis logical?	2
3.2 Does the thesis' structure work along the methodology and methods declared in the introduction	3

Short evaluation:

The structure of the work is logical, but due to the hypothesis of the whole work – that of Pera as a creative city due to its cosmopolitan (or multicultural?) nature -, it should have included much heavier socio-cultural analysis, either interwoven into the one dealing with architectural and institutional aspects aspects of Pera's transformations, or carried out in separate sections. The author has not done much to prove his hypothesis beyond describing different spaces of



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intercultural interaction. He did not explore the interaction itself, in spite of existing primary and secondary sources. He did not explore tensions and power relationships in these spaces.

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**4. Text quality evaluation** (please, evaluate by grade 1, 2, 3, 4 – in case of grading 3 and 4 the reviewer is obliged formulate critical points)

4.1 Analysis of primary and secondary sources	3
4.2 Interpretation of primary and secondary sources and their interaction	3

Short evaluation:

The author provides a thorough, competent description of new-style spaces of sociability in the nineteenth-century Pera. Nonetheless, the following step towards interpreting Pera as a creative city thanks to the interaction of peoples of different ethno-religious adscirptions mostly relies on the wishful thinking of the author and of some of the interviewees and authors of online secondary sources he has used. For instance, he quotes an interview with a man called Rinaldo Marmara who is not well-identified and whose opinions on the Ottoman Empire in general, and Pera in particular ressembling the EU, are of dubious relevance for Bayram's work on the second half of the nineteenth century. While I consider Bayram's hypothesis a strong one, I would argue that it should have been tested using easily available primary and secondary sources focusing on the interaction of people in these spaces. He should have also acknowledged existing tensions, conflicts and hierarchies that characterised the interactions of people of different origins, sexes and allegiances in Pera. For example, prostitution, one of the key activities in the neighbourhood, that often implied mixing of ethnoreligious groups, would be a good case study for testing the hypothesis of the relevance of enthoreligious boundries in place like Pera. As the studies of the sexual interaction of black women with white men in colonial contexts have shown, the willingness of upper class men of particular privileged ethnicity or religion to enter in commercial sexual relationships with women of other, subaltern ethnicity/religion does not necessarily mean the reduction of racial/enthnical/religious boundaries, and can, quite to the contrary, lead to strengthening and reproduction of privilege, particularly if the upper class women of the privileged race are denied such interaction and can thus be construed as pure and chaste in contrast to these „available“ subaltern women. I wonder whether this might have been the case of the Ottoman



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Muslim upper class men „socialising“ with Greek women of poor origins in the neighbourhood of Pera.

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**5. Quality of the text** (please, evaluate by grade 1, 2, 3, 4 – in case of grading 3 and 4 the reviewer is obliged formulate critical points)

5.1 Style and grammar	2
5.2 Use of terminology	2

Short evaluation:

While the author's English is not always correct, he is mostly capable of making himself understood. There are some issues in the use of terminology; the author should have taken more time to define or discuss widely used categories such as *cosmopolitan* or *multicultural*, which are essential for his analysis. This is key, because he sometimes tends to use multicultural and cosmopolitan as synonyms, when such understanding is by no means the most common one.

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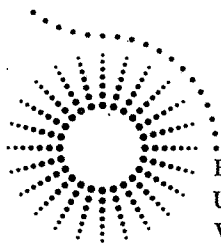
**6. Overall evaluation ( 500 signs):**

The author has attempted at showing that in the context of a „Westernising“ modernity, the multiethnic and multinational neighbourhood of Pera became a „creative city“ in the second half of the nineteenth century, partially through the interaction of different ethnoreligious and national groups. The author has successfully described the new spaces of such interaction and formulated, though not proved, an attractive hypothesis of a cosmopolitan culture being articulated in these spaces.

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**7. Questions and comments which the candidate should answer and discuss during the defense:**

Does mixing and interaction in public venues spaces necessarily mean less relevance of ethnoreligious or racial adscription of individuals?



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**Suggested grade:** 3

**Date:** 9th of June 2016

**Signature:**