

Title of MA: TRANSFORMATION OF PERA INTO THE CULTURAL DISTRICT OF ISTANBUL IN THE SECOND HALF OF THE 19TH CENTURY

Student: M. SAMI BAYRAM

M. Sami Bayram's original research topic was the cinema structure of Istanbul. Then he began to examine the development of the Western type theatres of Istanbul. In the final version of his MA he concentrates on the transformation of Pera into a Western type cultural district. This change in focus was a good decision, because this way he could examine a more complex urban network, paying attention to different important urban factors and functions (banks, lighting, routes, theatre buildings, passages, cultural activities.) The structure of the MA is based on the descriptive presentation of these components. Although the composition is logical, but it is not clear, why he puts the presentation of the notion of cultural district to the end of the MA. ("In this chapter I will present some theoretical concepts related to the cultural district field." p. 81). This decision already signals the main problem of the MA: lack of primary sources, corpus, and methodology. It contains a good general representation of the secondary literature related to the different aspects of the topic, but the author can't rely on the results of his own research. Because of this descriptive character, sometimes it is difficult to separate the statements of the author from those of the secondary literature.

Acknowledging the great progress M. Sami Bayram made in English academic writing, let me list some problems related to the MA:

There are often very general statements, without footnote references: for example "Later on, many opera composers settled in Pera. p. 16."

There are some incomprehensible sentences: for example: "The casino was becoming a meeting point for Europeans and it was taking the gaining the attention of the elites." 47 or "A brief explanation on photographic history is needed before I move on to the history of the photographic houses in Pera in order to provide *anachronistic clarity*." p. 56

There are some spelling mistakes, for example: "...endroits *où* je passais. (...) Il y avait toujours quelques personnes qui, presque étouffées par *lapresse*, se mettaient à faire de hauts cris et je voyais même venir devant moi *desfemmes évanouies*» "p. 19

He uses the maps in the text without explanation.

In his conclusion he emphasizes the positive influence of the interactions between the West and the Ottoman Society in Pera and considers the ethnic diversity, the multilingual, multicultural influences a positive force for the city development. Accepting this interpretation, I think that the twice cited and not criticized comparison between Pera and EU is highly exaggerated: ('Pera was a kind of specific state and union in the Ottoman state, and it pioneered the idea of today's European Union in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century).

Proposed mark for the MA: 3 - C

Questions for M. Sami Bayram: What were the most serious ethnic, religious conflicts in Pera during your research period? In which archives are the primary sources related to the topic examined in your MA?

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