



Summary :

Proti belongs to the Princes' Islands complex, being the closest one to Constantinople (Istanbul). In the middle of the 18th century the island was almost deserted, only to become re-inhabited in the 19th century. Nowadays, Proti's Greek Orthodox community is comprised of very few permanent residents.

Other Names

Akonai, Akonitis, Kinaliada

Geographical Location

Princes' Islands

Historical Region

Sea of Marmara (Propontis)

Administrative Dependence

İstanbul Büyükşehir Belediyesi

1. Location

Proti belongs to the Princes' Islands, being the closest one to Istanbul ([Constantinople](#)). Hence the name Proti, meaning *first* in Greek. It lies 6,5 miles from the port of Constantinople and only 3.5 miles from the Asian coast. It is smaller in size compared to the other three Princes' Islands, and the most meagre in vegetation. Its area does not extend over 1,400 square metres. The largest part of its surface is bare and barren and the land is rocky. In the past they used to cultivate olive trees there. Because of its rocky ground, the island was called Akonai or Akonitis in antiquity.¹

2. History

During the Byzantine period the history of Proti is closely related to the history of its three monasteries. Especially during the period of [iconoclasm](#), but also later on, the island was used as a place of exile.

Petrus Gyllius in the 16th century records Proti and the island's coastal settlement.² Eremya Çelebi Kömürçiyân notes that the Princes' Islands villages had been deserted many times, because they stood in the way of the Ottoman fleet.³ Evliya Çelebi in 1641 mentions about 100 houses with vineyards and cultivations.⁴

In the beginning of the 18th century, the community faced grave financial problems. The only surviving of the island's historical monasteries was indebted; consequently, the supervision and administration of its estate, meaning almost the whole island, was assigned to [Chian](#) merchants.

In the middle of the 18th century, however, the island was deserted and the village almost vacated. The anonymous author of *Konstantinias* records in 1824: "So, first is the two-peaked island called Proti, whose port was filled some years ago, while its sea-coast village frequented by men murderous and vile, has completely vanished".⁵ On the depopulation of Proti, Skarlatos Vyzantios notes the following: "Its port was filled years ago; the village, on the other hand, located over the port and by the sea on the East coast of the island, the prettiest part of the place and still thriving at the time of Gyllius, is no more; this is due to the fact that vile men of Constantinople visited the island daily, and only some traces of the village's ruins exist, among them two round cisterns, located over the village."⁶



A few years later the Patriarch Ioannikios III Karatzas sold Proti, along with the monastery of the Transfiguration of the Saviour, to lord Pitaris Kyritzis Diamantis, son of Georgakis, who after a while sold it to the Prince of Wallachia Alexandros Ypsilantis, son of Ioannis, who in turn ceded it to the monastery of Virgin Mary Kamariotissa in [Chalki](#). Consequently, the island remained a dependency of the Kamariotissa Monastery until the outbreak of the Greek War of Independence. In the *Historical and Geographical Dictionary* of Voutyras and Karydis the following are mentioned: "The monastery of the Transfiguration of the Saviour, which owned apparently the whole island, had come into the charge and proprietorship of certain Chian merchants around the beginning of the 18th century, while under the jurisdiction of the [Patriarchate](#); after its renovation and embellishment, however, it passed into the hands of the Monastery of Panachrantos (or St. Panteleimon) in [Andros](#), which, unable to manage it, ceded it to the Patriarchate; in 1746 the Metropolitan of Chalkedon Gabriel, after redeeming its debts and with synodic approval, claimed the monastery of the Transfiguration of the Saviour for the Chalkedon see; his successor Ioannikios Karatzas, on the other hand, arrogated it as his own. He collected the revenues and, finally, appropriated it with synodic deed when elected Patriarch. The monastery was liberated by the following Patriarch, Samuel; he having received, if we are not mistaken, heavy pressure consequently ceded it back to his predecessor Ioannikios, who again, because it was burdened by debt [...] ceded it to Prince Alexandros Ypsilantis, who in turn donated it to the monastery of Virgin Mary Kamariotissa in Chalki; afterwards it came under the jurisdiction of the Great Church".⁷

The deserted main settlement was repopulated by Protestant Armenians between 1828 and 1830. Skarlatos Vyzantios remarks: "Years ago, several Armenian Protestant families settled around the location of the old village and managed to buy it from the *maliye* [the finance office], after the Virgin Mary Kamariotissa monastery lost its rights on it due to the loss of title deeds".⁸ These few inhabitants were followed by many Greek-Orthodox who would constitute the island's Orthodox community. According to Millas, the first Greek-Orthodox family migrating to Proti was that of Ilias Saris Konstantoglou, who supplied the few residents of the island with his boats. A few years later, these islanders built their parish church and dedicated it to the Nativity of the Virgin Mary.⁹ So, in 1881 "two or three Greek families attend service in the small church of the Transfiguration of the Saviour – nowadays, the island is mainly populated by Armenians who own the church of St Gregory the Illuminator".¹⁰

When regular boat routes were introduced in 1846, the island was connected to Istanbul (Constantinople). Consequently, with the arrival of the steamboat and the establishment of regular routes, the area was incorporated to the urban nexus. However, even though the island is the closest one to Constantinople, its barren land and bad climate prevented its development for several years. Proti was connected to the electric power system in 1947.¹¹ According to estimates by the newspaper *Makedonia*, in 1951 the local Greek-Orthodox community was comprised of 58 families.¹² The number of Greek-Orthodox on the island, however, was drastically reduced after the 1964 expulsions. The Greek orthodox community of Proti nowadays numbers just a few permanent residents.

3. Religion – Cemetery

In 1924 the Princes' Islands were disengaged from the [diocese of Chalkedon](#) and constituted a separate diocese.¹³

The monastery of the Transfiguration of the Saviour was constructed in the modern period and, since the beginning of the 20th century, housed the All-Girls Orphanage of Proti. This specific orphan asylum had been built with a subsidy bequeathed by Symeonakis Siniosoglou and was established in 1906 during the tenure of Patriarch Ioakeim III.¹⁴

Until 1863, when the communal Prophet Elias cemetery was founded after a cholera epidemic, the islanders buried their dead under their houses and in their gardens. Another cemetery was located inside the precinct of the Christ Saviour monastery.¹⁵ Significant holy water fountains ([agiasmata](#)) on the island were Agiasmataki on the south of the Jarden area, and St Photeini's on the road leading from the monastery of the Transfiguration of the Saviour to the rear of the island. Neither of the two fountains exist any more.¹⁶

4. Education - Associations

In the communal school of Proti 23 students were registered in 1923, while in 1925-1926 16 children in total were registered in the



three-grade elementary school. During the school year 1961-1962, a four-grade school operated, attended by 20 students. In 1971-1972, however, the number of students was reduced to 5, resulting to the school's closure in 1975.¹⁷

In 1955, according to data provided by Christophoros Christidis from his personal archive, a communal philanthropic association was also recorded.¹⁸

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Glossary :

	agiasma
The holy water (as well as the sacred place from where the water spurts), which the faithful drink, sprinkle or wash themselves in order to be healed.	

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