



Summary :

The Tatavla district is located on the European coast of Constantinople (Istanbul). The first settlements date back to the middle of the 16th century during the reign of the Sultan Süleyman I the Magnificent (1520-1566), when the location there of Orthodox former captives of the Ottoman fleet is documented. During the 19th and the early 20th century, it was a numerous community, the inhabitants of which belonged to the middle strata of the Greek-Orthodox Istanbul society. Since the 1960s, however, the local community followed the decline of the rest Constantinopolitan Orthodox communities.

Other Names

Kurtuluş

Geographical Location

Constantinople (İstanbul)

Historical Region

Constantinople (İstanbul)

Administrative Dependence

İstanbul Metropolitan Municipality

1. The district from the 16th to the 18th centuries

The Tatavla district is geographically located on the European coast of [Constantinople](#) (Istanbul), over the Kasım Paşa district – which itself is located over the northern shore of the Golden Horn – and north of the [Stavrodromi](#) district.¹ The area extended to the sides and peaks of the hill of the same name and until the 18th century it constituted a scarcely inhabited suburb.

1.1. The district's formation

The area developed after the [Fall of Constantinople](#), as documented by most of the sources and as indicated by the lack of reference during the [Byzantine period](#). The first settlement is estimated around the middle of the 16th century during the reign of the Sultan Süleyman I the Magnificent (1520-1566), when the location there of Orthodox former captives of the Ottoman fleet originating from the Aegean and the Ionian Islands as well as the Peloponnese, is documented.² Most of these captives were seamen, used as workers in the shipyards of the Golden Horn. After their release some of these men started to re-locate over the Kasım Paşa district, in the area that was to be later called Tatavla.³ Some time later and after the conquest of [Chios](#), many islanders, both merchants and workers, settled in several Constantinopolitan areas; a significant percentage selected Tatavla as their residence.⁴ Christodoulos Melissinos remarks that the local population gradually increased due to the protection received by the Arch-Admiral of the Ottoman fleet (kapudan paşa), a fact that affected both the district and the shipyard workers that inhabited it.⁵ Moreover, the area was famed for its mild climate.⁶

1.2. The inhabitants

Consequently, Tatavla became from the beginning a district where Orthodox population originating from several parts of Greece located. In fact, some writers mention that towards the end of the 18th century – around 1793 – an imperial decree prohibited the location there of other ethnicities or populations practicing a different religion, after a request filed by the residents; the prohibition is supposed to have been active in most part until the early 20th century.⁷ The characterization of the area as Gavur Tatavla (unbelieving Tatavla) or Küçük Atina (Little Athens) indicate the composition of the population and the dominance of the Orthodox Christians. According to Skarlatos Vyzantios, the name “Tatavla” derives from the mansions or the stables the [Genoese](#) of [Galata](#) kept there,



called “tavla” in Turkish.⁸ The word was incorporated into Greek with the addition of the article “ta” (“the” in plural), hence the name “Tatavla”.⁹ However, until the late 18th century European travellers state that the small village of Agios Dimitrios (Ayios Dimitrios, Ay Dimitri, St Dimitri, St Dimitre),¹⁰ was located there, named after the local Orthodox church. From the saint to whom the church was dedicated, the hill in the area was also initially named.¹¹

1.3. The district’s church

The St Dimitrios church was the oldest in the area and the first parish church of the Tatavla Orthodox community until the middle of the 19th century. No specific data are available regarding its construction; scattered references, however, allow the assumption that it existed as early as the late 16th century,¹² though it was probably dedicated to [St Athanasios](#) initially. mentions that when the Christian shipyard workers started to relocate further north in the Tatavla area, a St Dimitrios church in the Golden Horn dockyard was transformed into a mosque and that both the icon of the saint and several liturgical utensils were transported to the St Athanasios church that already existed in Tatavla and was re-named St Dimitrios.¹³ Christodoulos Melissinos, on the other hand, regards the piece of information provided by Skarlatos Vyzantios – that St Dimitrios church in the dockyards was transformed into a mosque – as false and assumes that the church was gradually deserted after the move up north.¹⁴ In any case the St Dimitrios church existed in Tatavla in the late 16th century and was totally renovated about 150 years later, in 1726.

1.4. The district’s boundaries and schools

The initial settlement spread on the eastern and southern side of the hill, while gradually, mainly from the late 18th – early 19th century when the population was significantly increased, was extended to the north and to the east. Until the mid-19th century the Tatavla parish included Kerasochori,¹⁵ part of Kasım Paşa and the areas that later constituted the separate parishes of Feriköy and the Virgin Evangelistria of Propodes - Yeni Şehir , as shall be shown further down. The few references on Tatavla before the 19th century indicate that the area was considered a parish of medium significance during the 17th and 18th centuries, as confirmed indirectly by the tax paid by the St Dimitrios parish for the shipyard workers.¹⁶ In the middle of the 18th century the Tatavla parish was served by 4 priests and a deacon. Since the early 17th century schools are also reported to operate in the district.¹⁷ Girls were confined in house-training and a to a sowing school (“teachers of the country’s seamstresses”), run by the community until the beginning of the 19th century instead of an all-girls school.¹⁸

2. The district during the 19th century

2.1. The inhabitants

Until the mid-19th century, Tatavla was regarded as a rather poor district, relatively remote due to the “uphill steep rocky streets”.¹⁹ Hammer, the early 19th century German [traveller](#), describes the area as “a district with narrow streets and sordid houses” and remarks that Tatavla is a place “of entertainment and debauchery for the lower social strata and the most immoral people”.²⁰ Although the picture painted by the German traveller is rather exaggerated in its generalisation, it must be said that several districts in the area such as Papaz-Köprü, Karnavoula and others, were infamous for their wickedness.

The type of the Tatavla rogue standing up for the weak was well-known in Constantinople; among the most celebrated bandits and bullies was Stavris Karakatsanis who, according to a popular story, had killed a police official who was pestering local business-owners, and the infamous Chrysanthos, who during World War I had been known for murdering Turkish policemen.²¹

2.2. Population increase

Generally, the area mostly appealed to the middle-classes compared to neighbouring Pera, which “bathed in light and danced to the



sound of cosmopolitanism”, while “Tatavla made do with the streetlamps that sleepily lighted the dark streets” and “the Tatavlians entertained themselves with small parties thrown in their homes”,²² while the Pera aristocrats visited exclusive clubs and threw grand balls. The local general stores and the itinerant salesmen also posed a striking difference compared to the large trade establishments of upper-class Pera. However, the gradual transfer of the Ottoman administration to the Dolmabahçe, Cirahan and Yıldız palaces on one hand, and the internal migration to the capital on the other, paired with the Orthodox communities’ institutional organisation, boosted and upgraded the Tatavla population. Subsequently, the local community as early as the middle of the 19th century became the second, after Pera, most significant parish of the Constantinople Archdiocese.²³ The population increase is also indicated by the construction of a second church in 1885 dedicated to St Athanasios, as well as the establishment of a local cemetery in 1880 dedicated to St Eleutherios.²⁴ The construction of the Evangelistria church in 1857 and the Agioi Apostoloi church in 1868 signified the creation of two supplement and distinct communities and parishes, the Evangelistria of Propodes/Yeni Şehir and the Feriköy communities, both quarters until then incorporated to the Tatavla district.

2.3. The community’s statute

The first statute of the Tatavla community was drafted in 1864, a few years after the issue of the general rules concerning the Empire’s Greek-Orthodox population. According to the statute, the community was administered by a twelve-strong committee, which elected the church sub-committees, as well as a twelve-strong school **board of schools**.²⁵

2.4. The district’s schools

The community operated a school for boys (the Central School for Boys, as was its formal name), whose building was constructed in 1887 on the site of the older school, opposite the St Dimitrios church; two significant community members, E. Notaris and Dr E. Zemboulis, took the initiative, while Pavlos Stefanovik-Skylitzis donated 100 golden lira.²⁶ The three-storey building, in use until quite recently, was inaugurated on May 31st 1887.²⁷ The school offered 8 classes until 1898, when the 8th grade was omitted due to financial difficulties and the needs were covered by equivalent schools in [Pera](#) and Fanari ([Fener](#)).²⁸ The students’ expenses – they numbered around 500 towards the end of the 19th century – were covered in most part by the community itself.²⁹ The community also ran an all-girls school which replaced “house-training”, and operated between 1859 and 1937, when financial problems led to its closure. The all-girls school offered seven classes and it included a nursing school. There, the daughters of the Tatavla community were taught among others French, sewing and embroidering.³⁰

2.5. The community’s relations with Russia

The Tatavla community had cultivated both ecclesiastical and educational relations with Russia, receiving protection from the Russian embassy in the city. This special association dated back to the Crimean War when a Russian officer along with 162 soldiers, all prisoners of war, had lost their lives after a harsh winter in the Kasım Paşa shipyards; they were all buried with great honours in the St Dimitrios churchyard.³¹ From that moment onwards the Russian embassy contributed financially to the community.

2.6. Community Associations

The Tatavla Philanthropic Society is included among the most assertive community associations and operated under the aegis of the Russian Embassy; in fact, its honorary president at the beginning of the 20th century was Zinoviev, the last Ambassador of the Czar in Istanbul.³² The Society was established in 1842, it administrated a clinic and was quite active.³³ In the context of the societal organisation in town, an “explosion” of associations took place in the Tatavla community from the middle of the 19th century: the St Kyriaki Society (1865-1897), the Ladies’ St Eleutherios Society (1872) and the “Proodos” (Progress) Educational Society (1899) were the most significant associations of the community.³⁴ Among these societies, the Athletic Club “Hercules” (1896) held a special place for having produced two Olympic medallists in the 1906 Athens Intercalated Olympic Games, the brothers Georgios and Nikolaos Aliprandis, thus becoming a legend to young Tatavlian athletes until the period of the Turkish Republic.³⁵ All these



associations and the community in general were certainly supported by its wealthy and notable members, as was the case in all communities, like Vasileios Zacharou and Miltiadis Melachroinos. The former was a significant merchant on whose expenses the building of the Athletic Club was built.³⁶

3. The district in the 20th century

3.1. The inhabitants

Consequently, in the beginning of the 20th century Tatavla was an important and wealthy community. In 1911 it was connected to Pera by tram, thus becoming more accessible.³⁷ Christodoulos Melissinos mentions that in 1913 all the residents, about 20,000 people, were Greek; they inhabited 3,000 wooden two-and three-storey houses and occupied themselves mainly in shops and companies.³⁸ It is true that the Greek-Orthodox element was dominant in town: from the Greek firemen of the time (tulubacı) who rushed to put out the frequent fires in the area, to the church vergers, who also served as town criers and notified the public in Greek about the Ottoman state announcements,³⁹ the Greek presence, if not exclusive, was certainly strong.

3.2. The Shrove Monday fair

Both important and famous was the Shrove Monday fair, called Bakla Horani,⁴⁰ where Orthodox Greeks from all communities and classes gathered: the Christian urban elite of Pera and other districts along with the rogues, foustanela-clad men in disguise, Albanians with their rich moustaches and prostitutes, all flocked the area to celebrate.⁴¹ The fair continued to take place in Tatavla until the period of the Turkish Republic.⁴²

3.3. The community after the Turkish Republic

However, the Greek dominance in the area started to decline in the first years after the establishment of the Turkish Republic. Even though [Greek newspapers](#) regarded the total ignorance of the Turkish language on the part of many families, a fact revealed in the 1927 census, as a great problem,⁴³ the 1929 fire changed the district's residential composition. Fires were frequent in the area; during both the 18th and 19th centuries they occurred often,⁴⁴ but the one of January 17th 1929 almost destroyed the whole district and burned down its wooden houses. From that incident onwards, the area was renamed Kurtuluş, while since 1927 all the street names had been changed by special decree of the Turkish state.⁴⁵

The local [Greek-Orthodox community](#) continued to be regarded as one of the most significant and demographically strong ones in Constantinople until the 1960s. According to the 1949 patriarchal census, 1,154 families inhabited Tatavla and 300 resided in the Propodes Kurtuluş neighbourhood.⁴⁶ Six years later, according to data provided by Christophoros Christidis from his personal archive, 375 families inhabited Propodes Kurtuluş and 1,975 Tatavla, while the community operated a six-class primary school, a philanthropic and educational association, 2 athletic clubs and a clinic; it also provided students with school meals.⁴⁷ The 1950s demographic increase, partly due to the incidents of September 6th-7th 1955, which caused internal migration from the most remote communities to more central ones like Tatavla, is reflected on the rise of registration in the local public school. In 1955 six grades were taught, with two classes each, while since 1950 the school building had been expanded. Plans to establish a larger modern school nearby were rejected in 1960 by the Ministry of Internal Affairs and the Council of State.⁴⁸ Since 1960, with the annihilation of central community committees and the tension in Greco-Turkish diplomatic relations because of the Cypriot question, the Kurtuluş community followed the other Constantinopolitan Orthodox communities in their decline. Its primary school ceased to operate in 2004, due to lack of students.

1. Skarlatos Vyzantios remarks that the area was separated from Stavrodromi "by the valley, which is intersected by the Kasım Paşa torrent, and whose



western side is covered in the most part by gardens", while the eastern is called Kerasochorion (Cherry village) from the multitude of cherry trees once growing there. Βυζάντιος, Σ., *Η Κωνσταντινούπολις. Περιγραφή Τοπογραφική, Αρχαιολογική και Ιστορική* 2 (Athens 1862, reprint Athens 1993), p. 30.

2. Χριστόδουλος Μελισσηνός, Επίσκοπος Παμφίλου, *Τα Ταταύλα ήτοι Ιστορία των Ταταούλων* (Constantinople 1913), p. 13.
3. Türker, O., *Osmanlı İstanbulu'ndan bir Köşe Tatavla* (İstanbul 1998), p. 13.
4. "[...] after the shipyard workers, Chiot merchants active in Constantinople selected this suburb as their place of residence, because of the lack of Ottoman neighbours". Βυζάντιος, Σ., *Η Κωνσταντινούπολις. Περιγραφή Τοπογραφική, Αρχαιολογική και Ιστορική* 2 (Athens 1862, reprint Athens 1993), p. 31; Χριστόδουλος Μελισσηνός, Επίσκοπος Παμφίλου, *Τα Ταταύλα ήτοι Ιστορία των Ταταούλων* (Constantinople 1913), p. 14.
5. Χριστόδουλος Μελισσηνός, Επίσκοπος Παμφίλου, *Τα Ταταύλα ήτοι Ιστορία των Ταταούλων* (Constantinople 1913), p. 15.
6. Χριστόδουλος Μελισσηνός, Επίσκοπος Παμφίλου, *Τα Ταταύλα ήτοι Ιστορία των Ταταούλων* (Constantinople 1913), p. 13· Καστανάκης, Θ., *Ο Κατζημανουήλ* (Athens 2000).
7. Χριστόδουλος Μελισσηνός, Επίσκοπος Παμφίλου, *Τα Ταταύλα ήτοι Ιστορία των Ταταούλων* (Constantinople 1913), p. 18; Türker, O., *Osmanlı İstanbulu'ndan bir Köşe Tatavla* (İstanbul 1998), p. 16.
8. Σκαρλάτος Βυζάντιος, *Η Κωνσταντινούπολις. Περιγραφή Τοπογραφική, Αρχαιολογική και Ιστορική* 2 (Athens 1862, reprint Athens 1993), p. 29.
9. Türker, O., *Osmanlı İstanbulu'ndan bir Köşe Tatavla* (İstanbul 1998), p. 12.
10. Türker, O., *Osmanlı İstanbulu'ndan bir Köşe Tatavla* (İstanbul 1998), p. 11.
11. Μίχας, Α.Ν., *Τα Ταταύλα. Ο Ιστορικός Λόφος της Πόλης* (Athens 1970), p. 88.
12. Leandros-Nicocles Michas mentions that in 1576, the traveler Gerlach visited the church, see Μίχας, Α.Ν., *Τα Ταταύλα. Ο Ιστορικός Λόφος της Πόλης* (Athens 1970), p. 88.
13. Βυζάντιος, Σ., *Η Κωνσταντινούπολις. Περιγραφή Τοπογραφική, Αρχαιολογική και Ιστορική* 2 (Athens 1862, reprint Athens 1993), p. 29.
14. Χριστόδουλος Μελισσηνός, Επίσκοπος Παμφίλου, *Τα Ταταύλα ήτοι Ιστορία των Ταταούλων* (Constantinople 1913), pp. 117-118.
15. The Kerasochori (Cherry village) quarter lies, essentially, between Pera and Tatavla. Skarlatos Vyzantios comments on its bad reputation as a meeting place for "vile women [...] and the most depraved mob of the capital", hence the corruption of its name to Keratsochorion or Keratohorion ("kerato" meaning horn in Greek and also used as a derogatory remark for the victim of adultery). The 12th century Armenian traveller Eremya Çelebi Kömürçüyan reports that Kerasochori was located close to Beyoğlu and that just across from it one could see the St Dimitrios Church and the Tatavla hill. Kömürçüyan, Ε.Ç., *İstanbul Tarihi, XVII asırda İstanbul* (İstanbul 1952), p. 42. In 1804, when the church dedicated to the Presentation of the Virgin Mary was established in Stavrodromi, the quarter was incorporated into that parish. See Μπόζη, Σ., *Ο Ελληνισμός της Κωνσταντινούπολης* (Athens 2002), pp. 26, 43-45; Χριστόδουλος Μελισσηνός, Επίσκοπος Παμφίλου, *Τα Ταταύλα ήτοι Ιστορία των Ταταούλων* (Constantinople 1913), p. 43.
16. Χριστόδουλος Μελισσηνός, Επίσκοπος Παμφίλου, *Τα Ταταύλα ήτοι Ιστορία των Ταταούλων* (Constantinople 1913), p. 50.
17. Ιστεκλής, Ν. Γ., *Εκπαιδευτήρια Κοινού τητος Ταταούλων* (Athens 2005), p. 66.
18. Χριστόδουλος Μελισσηνός, Επίσκοπος Παμφίλου, *Τα Ταταύλα ήτοι Ιστορία των Ταταούλων* (Constantinople 1913), pp. 140, 183, 206.
19. Καραβία, Ι.Ν., *Άλλοτε και Τώρα* (Constantinople 1933), p. 34.
20. Στο Türker, O., *Osmanlı İstanbulu'ndan bir Köşe Tatavla* (İstanbul 1998), p. 16.



21. Παπαδόπουλος, Σ., Αναμνήσεις από την Πόλη (Athens 1978), p. 34.
22. Καραβία, Ι.Ν., Άλλοτε και Τώρα (Constantinople 1933), p. 34.
23. Χριστόδουλος Μελισσηνός, Επίσκοπος Παμφίλου, Τα Τατάλα ήτοι Ιστορία των Ταταούλων (Constantinople 1913), p. 47.
24. Until then, the dead were buried in churchyards, mostly in the one of St Dimitrios. Μίχας, Α.Ν., Τα Τατάλα. Ο Ιστορικός Λόφος της Πόλης (Athens 1970), p. 89.
25. Χριστόδουλος Μελισσηνός, Επίσκοπος Παμφίλου, Τα Τατάλα ήτοι Ιστορία των Ταταούλων (Constantinople 1913), pp. 102-104.
26. Ιστεκλής, Ν.Γ., Εκπαιδευτήρια Κοινότητας Ταταούλων (Athens 2005), p. 67.
27. Ιστεκλής, Ν.Γ., Εκπαιδευτήρια Κοινότητας Ταταούλων (Athens 2005), p. 67.
28. Ιστεκλής, Ν.Γ., Εκπαιδευτήρια Κοινότητας Ταταούλων (Athens 2005), p. 68.
29. Moreover, between 1868 and 1872 the community ran a senior high boarding school, see Ιστεκλής, Ν.Γ., Εκπαιδευτήρια Κοινότητας Ταταούλων (Athens 2005), pp. 68-69.
30. Ιστεκλής, Ν.Γ., Εκπαιδευτήρια Κοινότητας Ταταούλων (Athens 2005), pp. 69-70.
31. Ιστεκλής, Ν.Γ., Εκπαιδευτήρια Κοινότητας Ταταούλων (Athens 2005), p. 69; Χριστόδουλος Μελισσηνός, Επίσκοπος Παμφίλου, Τα Τατάλα ήτοι Ιστορία των Ταταούλων (Constantinople 1913), pp. 185-191.
32. Παπαδόπουλος, Σ., Αναμνήσεις από την Πόλη (Athens 1978), p. 35.
33. He was awarded, among other things, the Mavrogenion Virtue Prize established by the ambassador and senator of the Ottoman Parliament Alexandros Mavrogenis. See Χριστόδουλος Μελισσηνός, Επίσκοπος Παμφίλου, Τα Τατάλα ήτοι Ιστορία των Ταταούλων (Constantinople 1913), p. 208.
34. Other significant associations in the district were the "Astir" (Star) Football and Musical Club (1908) and the "Amphion" Musical Association (1911). See Χριστόδουλος Μελισσηνός, Επίσκοπος Παμφίλου, Τα Τατάλα ήτοι Ιστορία των Ταταούλων (Constantinople 1913), p. 208.
35. Βαλασιάδης, Γ., Και στα Τατάλα Χιόνι (Athens 2002).
36. Παπαδόπουλος, Σ., Αναμνήσεις από την Πόλη (Athens 1978), p. 33.
37. Χριστόδουλος Μελισσηνός, Επίσκοπος Παμφίλου, Τα Τατάλα ήτοι Ιστορία των Ταταούλων (Constantinople 1913), p. 40.
38. Χριστόδουλος Μελισσηνός, Επίσκοπος Παμφίλου, Τα Τατάλα ήτοι Ιστορία των Ταταούλων (Constantinople 1913), pp. 17, 26.
39. Türker, O., *Osmanlı İstanbulu'ndan bir Köşe Tatavla* (İstanbul 1998), pp. 18-19.
40. The etymology of the word refers to the "beans eater". See Χριστόδουλος Μελισσηνός, Επίσκοπος Παμφίλου, Τα Τατάλα ήτοι Ιστορία των Ταταούλων (Constantinople 1913), pp. 37-39.
41. The fair started from Galata and ended in the Ararat Square in Tatavla. It was celebrated for its fun spirit and tolerance for obscenities and other "vulgarity" that might occur during the day. See Μίχας, Α.Ν., Τα Τατάλα. Ο Ιστορικός Λόφος της Πόλης (Athens 1970), pp. 29-32.
42. According to Charis Spatharis it continued until 1979. See Σπαθάρης, Χ., Τα Κωνσταντινοπολίτικα και άλλα τινά (Athens 1988), p. 81.



43. Newspaper Απογευματινή (29/10/1927).

44. Christodoulos Melissinos mentions that the most destructive fires broke out in 1770, 1833, 1847, 1905, 1907, 1909 and 1912. He also notes that pumps had been posted in several parts of the district, some of which were maintained by the church itself. See Χριστόδουλος Μελισσηνός, Επίσκοπος Παμφίλου, Τα Ταταύλα ήτοι Ιστορία των Ταταούλων (Constantinople 1913), p. 33. Leandros-Nikokles Michas regards the unclean chimneys and the religious screens with the flammable lacey decorations in Christian Orthodox homes as the main reasons for the fires. See Μίχας, Α.Ν., Τα Ταταύλα. Ο Ιστορικός Λόφος της Πόλης (Athens 1970), pp. 58-59.

45. Türker, O., *Osmanlı İstanbulu' ndan bir Köşe Tatavla* (İstanbul 1998), p. 9.

46. Σταματόπουλος, Κ., Η Τελευταία Αναλαμπή (Athens 1996), p. 290.

47. Χρηστίδης, Χ., Τα Σεπτεμβριανά (Athens 2000), p. 298.

48. Ιστεκλής, Ν.Γ., Εκπαιδευτήρια Κοινότητας Ταταούλων (Athens 2005), p. 142.

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Glossary :

	board of schools
The board of schools (ephoreia) consisted of members either elected by the community or nominated by a commission. They were authorized to supervise the proper functioning of the educational institutions.	

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