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THE OLDEST VITA OF ST. PAUL OF XEROPOTAMOU

Saint Paul of Xeropotamou is regarded as one of the most important ascetic figures of Mount Athos in the 10th century. Until now, it was considered that the oldest version of his vita was the one included in the *Neon Eklogion* of Nikodemos the Hagiorite, which was published in 1803. It was, however, overlooked that in 1967 the Soviet scholar Sigurd Schmidt published an article on four texts concerning Mount Athos from a Russian Slavonic codex of 1557/8, which was copied at the monastery of the Archangel Michael Skovorodskiy in Novgorod, with the fourth text being a brief account of the life of Paul of Xeropotamou. This proves the existence of a vita considerably older than that of the 18th-century version. In this paper, I compare the two versions, suggesting that the original form of the vita, as it is found in the Novgorod manuscript, may have been formed during the early 15th century and written in the milieu of two Protoi of Mount Athos, Serapheim and Gabriel, after 1500 in Karyes.

Keywords: Paul of Xeropotamou, Xeropotamou monastery, Hagiou Pavlou monastery, Athonite hagiography, 10th century, 16th century, Karyes, Serafeim Protos, Gabriel Protos, Đorđe Branković

Paul of Xeropotamou is considered one of the most prominent ascetic figures of Mount Athos in the 10th century, next to Athanasios, the founder of the Lavra, and Peter the Athonite.¹ Although Paul has been revered as a saint and ascetic role model since Byzantine times, there is no surviving vita older than the 18th century. In this paper, we will try to shed new light on the vita of Paul of Xeropotamou, given a 16th-century Russian version in a manuscript originating from Novgorod.

In the life of Athanasios the Athonite we read that when the saint attended the Athonite assembly in Karyes in 958 for the first time, the elders stood up and paid

¹ For a brief overview of what is known today about St. Paul of Xeropotamou, see *Paschalidēs*, Pavlos Xēropotaminos.

him their respects, acknowledging him as an important spiritual figure.² One of their leaders (τὰ πρῶτα παρ' αὐτοῖς ταπτομένων), prophesied that this Athanasios would emerge as a distinguished figure, a leader of Mount Athos and a builder (πολιστής), and that all would follow him. The elder who foretold these events is said, in the *vita*, to have been a certain Paul of Xeropotamou, about whom nothing more is mentioned.

Apart from the *vita* of Athanasios, in the *typikon* of Mount Athos issued by Emperor John I Tzimiskes in 972, there is mention of a “reverend monk Paul” who accompanied the then Protos of Athos to Constantinople to complain to the emperor about Athanasios, and to ask to take action against him.³ He is portrayed as one of the most renowned monks of Athos, given that only he and Athanasios are mentioned by name. Furthermore, he was allowed to attend the gatherings at Karyes twice a year, bringing with him one disciple, while Athanasios was allowed to bring two and the Protos, whoever he may be, three.⁴

We also come across a certain Paul in the life of St. Fantinus, which was written around the same time with both versions of the life of Athanasios, and definitely before the year 1050.⁵ In this text it is stated that Fantinus, while walking in Thessaloniki together with his disciple Antipas, met two elders from Mount Athos and, after deep prostrations, asked for their blessing. The elders, thinking that he was a fool, continued their way, ignoring him. Then Fantinus turned to Antipas saying that “one was the great Athanasios, and the other, the eunuch, was Paul, the saint. Both are torches that illuminate the desert”. The life of Fantinus does not offer any other epithet for Paul, e.g., Xeropotamites, but mentions that he was a eunuch, a characteristic attributed to the saint both in his later *vita* and his depictions on murals. The oldest such portrayal can be found in the south-west corner section of the church of the Protaton, dating to the late 13th century and attributed to Manuel Panselinos.⁶ Other such depictions until the 16th century can be found at the *lite* (esonarthex) of the main churches of Hilandariou monastery (1321/2) and Dionysiou (1546/7), as well as the narthex of the chapel of St. George at Hagiou Pavlou monastery, dated 1552.⁷ All these murals depict St. Paul of Xeropotamou as a beardless man with white hair, an image that most probably describes a mature eunuch.⁸

Thus, in the aforementioned early sources, we come across the name of a certain Paul, who appears to be an important figure, but there is not enough evidence to

² *Vitae Duae Athanasii Athonitae*, A 50, ll. 7–11; B 18–19.

³ *Actes du Prôtaton*, 7, l. 2.

⁴ *Actes du Prôtaton*, 7, ll. 28–29.

⁵ *Vita di San Fantino*, 446. On the dating of the *vita* see also *Papachrysanthou*, *Ho Athōnikos Monachismos*, 189.

⁶ *Toutos – Fousterēs*, Heuretērion, 47 and 53. Cf. *Tsigaridas*, Manouël Panselēnos. For the depiction of Paul before and after the preservation works, see *Kanonidēs*, Prôtato II, 451. For the reasons of the depiction of Paul in the church of the Protaton, see *Djurić*, *Les conceptions hagioritiques*, 57–58.

⁷ On the dating of the mural, see *Tsigaridas*, *Hoi Toihographies*, 73.

⁸ On the certainty of Paul being a eunuch, see *Noret*, *S. Paul I^{er}*, 387–390.

support the idea that all these three Pauls are meant to represent the same person. In the vitae of both Athanasios the Athonite and Fantinus, a certain Paul, appears having a positive stance towards Athanasios, prophesizing his greatness in one case and traveling with him in the other. On the other hand, the typikon of Tzimiskes depicts a certain Paul who was in such contempt of Athanasios that he accompanied the Protos of Mount Athos to the Emperor in Constantinople to complain about him.

Finally, in four Athonite documents from 980 to 996, we come across the signatures of a certain Paul, hegoumenos of Xeropotamou, two of which, in 991 and 996, are limited to the sign of a cross,⁹ contrary to those of 980 and 985, which bear a full signature.¹⁰ Although it would seem rational that the two earlier documents were signed by one person and the two later ones by another, as suggested by Germaine Da Costa-Louillet in 1936,¹¹ Stéphane Binon posits that they are all signed by the same person, explaining this discrepancy with the assumption that in the 990s Paul was of advanced age, nearly 80 years old and probably ill, and limited his signature to a cross.¹² This assumption was also accepted later on by Denise Papachryssanthou.¹³ Six other documents signed by a certain Paul of Xeropotamou dating from 1007 to 1018 are considered to belong to another Paul, who is most probably the former's successor as hegoumenos of Xeropotamou/Hagiou Pavlou.¹⁴ Finally, it is unclear which of the two Pauls in question signed a document in 1001 as Protos of Mount Athos.¹⁵

It is therefore accepted that a certain Paul Xeropotamites, who was a renowned ascetic in 958 and prophesied the greatness of Athanasios, had founded the monastery today known as Xeropotamou, which bore this name from 980 to approx. 1000, and henceforth Hagiou Nikephorou, of which he never became hegoumenos.¹⁶

⁹ Actes de Lavra I, no. 9, l. 41 and no. 12, l. 26 respectively.

¹⁰ Actes de Zographou, no. 1, l. 37 and Actes d'Iviron I, no. 7, ll. 5 and 63 respectively.

¹¹ *Da Costa Louillet*, La vie de S. Paul de Xéropotamos, 209.

¹² *Binon*, Les origines légendaires, 92–93.

¹³ *Papachryssanthou*, Ho Athōnikos Monahismos, 189, n.55; Actes de Lavra 9, l. 41.

¹⁴ Actes d'Iviron I, 14, l.43 (1007); Actes de Lavra I, 17, l.49 (1012); Actes d'Iviron I, 20, l.55 (1015); Actes de Chilandar I, 1, l.26 (Apr. 1018); Actes de Vatopedi I, 4, l.52 (Apr. 1018) and Actes de Vatopedi I, 5, l.44 (Dec. 1018). Paris Gounaridēs (*Gounaridēs*, Ho Hagios Pavlos, 141) posits that all the documents from 980 to 1018 are signed by the same Paul. *Papachryssanthou*, Ho Athōnikos Monahismos, 187 n. 50, 189 n. 55, and 190, refutes Gounaridēs' argument, based on the fact that Vita A of Athanasios names Paul in 958 as 'this elder' (οὗτος ὁ γέρον) (Vitae Duae Athanasii Athonitae, 51, l.20), while mentioning that he had a disciple (φοιτητής) with the same name (Vitae Duae Athanasii Athonitae, 51, l.24–25), who was the second Paul. On the history of Hagiou Pavlou based on the recent research, see *Chryssochoidēs*, Hē Monē Hagiou Pavlou.

¹⁵ Actes de Vatopedi I, no.3, ll. 19 and 42.

¹⁶ *Binon*, Les origines légendaires, 97; Actes du Prôtaton, p. 66; and *Chryssochoidēs*, Hē Monē Hagiou Pavlou, 15. *Papachryssanthou*, Ho Athōnikos Monahismos, 186, although earlier agreeing, appears reluctant in her book to fully accept that he was the founder of Xeropotamou/Hagiou Nikephorou (i.e., modern-day Xeropotamou). This monastery was dedicated to St. Nikephoros until the end of the 13th century, after which it was dedicated to the Forty Martyrs of Sebasteia; see Actes de Xéropotamou p.21 and *Papachryssanthou*, Ho Athōnikos Monahismos, 187 n. 52.

By 972, he had turned against Athanasios, supporting the view that the latter, by constructing the Lavra and attracting a large number of monks, had exceeded the size of the constructions on Athos at the time and placed the ascetic peninsula in danger.¹⁷ This Paul later also founded the monastery of Hagiou Pavlou, of which, however, he became hegoumenos.¹⁸ This Paul signed the four documents dated from 980 to 996, after which he must have died at an old age. Given that the typikon of Tzimiskes gave him the privilege to participate in the meetings at Karyes with one assistant, it is highly probable that he had connections with the imperial court.¹⁹ Another Paul is believed to have succeeded the first as hegoumenos of Xeropotamou/Hagiou Pavlou, and it was he who signed the documents dating from 1007 to 1018.

This knowledge, however, is a result of modern research, as on Mount Athos, Paul of Xeropotamou, a eunuch and renowned ascetic, founder of the monasteries of Xeropotamou and Hagiou Pavlou, has from early times been revered as a saint, and, judging by his depiction in the 13th century in the church of the Protaton and later in other churches, he has been considered as one of the three main figures of early Athonite asceticism, next to Peter and Athanasios the Athonites. The striking difference, though, between Paul and the two other saints is that he does not have a surviving vita from the Byzantine era. Although it had been generally accepted that the extant vita of Paul is more or less a modern construct, this is not fully the case, as we shall demonstrate followingly.

In 1701, Ioannes Komnenos, later Hierotheos bishop of Drystra, writes in his *Proskynetarion of Mount Athos* that Paul was a eunuch, and son of Emperor Maurice (582–602).²⁰ However, Komnenos limits his information only to this detail concerning the saint as part of his description of Hagiou Pavlou monastery.²¹ Thus, until today, the oldest known text relating the saint's life, BHG 1475, was to be found in the hagiographical collection entitled *Neon Eklogion*, which was first published in Venice in 1803.²² This is a compilation that includes a total of thirty-six hagiographical

¹⁷ The allegations of the Athonites towards Athanasios the Athonite are echoed in the opening statement of the typikon of Tzimiskes, Actes du Prôtaton 7, ll. 1–5.

¹⁸ When Xeropotamou monastery became known as Hagiou Nikephorou, the newly founded monastery, which today is Hagiou Pavlou, became known as Xeropotamou.

¹⁹ *Gounaridēs*, Ho Hagios Pavlos, 141. This privilege, however, concerned him personally and not his monastery, as in the case of Athanasios and the Lavra, judging from the fact that in the typikon of Monomachos in 1046 (Actes du Prôtaton, 8, ll. 147–150), only the abbots of the three major monasteries, i.e., Lavra, Vatopedi and Iviron, could participate with more than one assistant at the synaxis of Karyes, and there is no mention of any of the two monasteries founded by Paul.

²⁰ *Komnēnos*, *Proskynetarion*, 94. On Komnēnos and his works, see *Pantos*, Iōannēs Komnēnos.

²¹ The older so-called “Patria of Mount Athos”, which date to the end of the 15th century or early 16th, make no reference to Paul in the narrative about the miracle of the mushroom and the Forty Martyrs of Sebasteia at Xeropotamou monastery; *Lampros*, *Ta Patria tou Hagiou Orous*, 132.

²² *Νέον Εκλόγιον*, 179–183. On the publication, see *Ēliou*, *Hellēnikē Vivliografia tou 19^{ou} aiōna*, 1803.55; *Ginēs*, *Mexas*, *Anagrafē vivliōn kai entypōn*, 221. On the author of the book and its sources, see *Kaklamanos*, *To Neon Eklogion*.

texts and five spiritually beneficial tales ascribed to saint Nikodemos the Hagiorite, a leading figure of the so-called *Kollyvades*, a spiritual movement of the late 18th and early 19th centuries that strived for a revival of the Orthodox tradition.²³

According to the 1803 vita of the Neon Eklogion, the saint originated from Constantinople and was the son of Emperor Michael I Rangabé (811–13, †844) and the maternal nephew of Emperor Staurakios. His secular name was Prokopios. From a young age, he had a great aptitude for letters and was known for his wisdom. When his father abdicated, according to the vita, his successor Leo V the Armenian (813–20) castrated young Prokopios so that he would have no aspirations to the throne. With the desire to leave the mundane, Prokopios put on torn clothes and went to the “monastery of Pulcheria”, i.e., Xeropotamou, on Mount Athos, and was tonsured by a certain hermit Kosmas taking the name Paul. He had told him that he was poor and that he came from a village called Xeropotamos, which later gave the name to the monastery. The vita includes an extensive passage from an alleged chrysobull by Romanos I Lekapenos (920–44), in which it is mentioned that the saint cured the emperor of a serious illness and that the latter promised him in return all the wealth he desired, although the saint only requested that the monastery of Xeropotamou be renovated. Followingly, the vita relates that Paul abandoned the monastery where the saint dwelled (Xeropotamou) because many gathered around him, and he fled into the desert where he lived as a hermit. Later, at the foothills of Athos, he founded a new monastery honoring St. George, which was later named Hagiou Pavlou (i.e., of St. Paul).

The vita ends with the narration of the saint’s dormition. When he reached an advanced age, it is written, he foresaw his demise, and indeed, one day he passed away in peace. The monks put him on a boat, as he had requested, to take him to Longos (today’s Sykia in Chalkidike) to bury him. The boat traveled all night, but in the morning, it miraculously arrived in Constantinople. On hearing this, the emperor and the patriarch paid great tribute to the saint in the church of Hagia Sophia. The monks that had accompanied the saint in the boat, upon their return, took with them warm bread from Constantinople and, having appeared miraculously at their monastery, showed the warm bread to the abbot and the brotherhood as proof of the miracle.

This modern vita relates that Paul was the son of Emperor Michael I Rangabé (9th c.), but in Komnenos’ Proskynetarion, it is mentioned that Paul was the son of Emperor Maurice (6th c.). The fact that Komnenos ascribes imperial descent to Paul may hint towards the possibility of an older, possibly Byzantine, narrative of the saint’s life, which may not have survived.²⁴ Nikodemos, who was acquainted with the

²³ On Nikodemos the Hagiorite, the Neon Eklogion and the role of the so-called ‘Kollyvades’, see mainly *Paschalidēs*, *To Hymnagogikō ergo tōn Kollyvadōn*, 199–214, with relevant bibliography until 2007.

²⁴ When Komnēnos gives the information about Paul being the son of Emperor Maurice, he uses the phrase “as it is said” (ὡς λέγουσιν), which could imply the absence of an official vita; *Komnēnos*, *Proskynetarion*, 94.

chronicles of Theophanes and his *Continuatus* that narrate the events of Leo's reign and the fate of the family of Michael I, presents Paul as one of this emperor's children.²⁵ Of course, nowhere in the Byzantine extant sources is it mentioned that Michael I Rangabé had a son named Prokopios, yet we know that his wife was named Prokopia. Nikodemos, or his unknown source, in an effort to devise a credible lay name for the saint that begins with the letter P to match the name of Paul, probably came up with a non-existing son named Prokopios, influenced by Michael's real wife, Prokopia.²⁶ Later renditions of the vita, which we will not discuss in this paper, produced changes to the text, accommodating the narrative to the historical facts.²⁷

Another interesting aspect of the vita of Paul in the Neon Eklogion is the partial reproduction of the fake chrysobull of Romanos I Lekapenos.²⁸ This is not the original document dated 934 in the archive of the Protaton, with which the emperor ratified the chrysobulls of his predecessors and reminded all parties that the cathedra of the elders was exempted from any financial burden.²⁹ As research has shown, the text attributed to Romanos and quoted in the vita was forged in the late 17th or first half of the 18th century, given that its earliest mention is in the account of Vasiliy Barskiy's journey to Mount Athos in 1744.³⁰ Worth noting is that during the same period, a number of other documents were also forged, including a chrysobull of Theodosios II, a sigillion of Patriarch Theophylaktos, a chrysobull of Constantine Porphyrogennetos, and a sigillion of Patriarch Timotheos II of 1611.³¹ This group of fake documents apparently served to create a glorious past for the monastery of Xeropotamou and to trace it back to Pulcheria, the daughter of Emperor Arkadios, in the 5th century.³²

Thus, the extant literature on the vita of Paul of Xeropotamou, based on the absence of a text prior to Nikodemos' Neon Eklogion of 1803, points towards the supposition that the narrative of the saint's life cannot extend before the end of the 17th century, at the most, when the fake chrysobull of Romanos Lekapenos was forged, with the exception of the detail of the saint's imperial ancestry, which

²⁵ On the family members of Michael I Rangabé and the events concerning their fate after Leo V assumed power, see Theophanis Continuatus, 1.10.

²⁶ Binon, *Les origines légendaires*, 60. It was – and still is – customary, yet not compulsory, for a monk to choose his monastic name starting from the same letter as his lay name, hence Prokopios/Pavlos (Paul).

²⁷ The later variations of the vita are discussed extensively by Binon, *Les origines légendaires*, 63–89.

²⁸ Neon Eklogion, 181; and Actes de Xéropotamou, App. I–β. Cf. *Da Costa Louillet*, *La vie de S. Paul de Xéropotamos*, 194–208 and Binon, *Les origines légendaires*, 10–31.

²⁹ Actes du Prôtaton, 3.

³⁰ Stranstvovaniya Vasilya Grigorovicha – Barskogo, 320–335. The first to demonstrate the falsity of the chrysobull was Theodoretos Lavriotes; *Lampros*, *Ta Patria tou Hagiou Orous*, 229–231. See also Binon, *Les origines légendaires*, 16–17. On the editions of the chrysobull after Barskiy, see *Kourilas*, *Ta hagioreitika archeia*, 219–220, n. 1.

³¹ Discussed in Binon, *Les origines légendaires*, 45–50.

³² *Gounaridēs*, *Ho Hagios Pavlos*, 137.

is documented in the Proskynetarion of Ioannes Komnenos, published in 1701. We do not know what Nikodemos' sources were for writing Paul's vita in the Neon Eklogion.³³ For the account of the saint's death, Stéphane Binon is certain that Nikodemos had no other source at hand, gently implying that it was made up.³⁴ Binon, however, was mistaken on this, as an older source did, in fact, exist.

In 1967, Sigurd Ottovich Schmidt, a Soviet ethnologist and historian, published a group of narrative legends about Mount Athos from a Russian Slavonic manuscript, today in the Yaroslavl State Archives (no. 1265). The manuscript originates from the monastery of the Archangel Michael Skovorodskiy in Novgorod and is dated 7026, i.e., 1557/8.³⁵ According to Schmidt's study, it was commissioned by a certain Grigoriy Nikiforov, copied entirely by one hand, and contains various hagiographical texts as well as legends related to Novgorod. Among these texts, four are related to Mount Athos: a) the legend of the icon of the Theotokos Portaitissa "that arrived flying to Athos from the kingdom of the Iberians" (ff. 328v–332r); b) the legend of the miracle of the Theotokos at the monastery of Vatopediou "that took place on the Saturday of the fifth week of the Holy Lent" (ff. 332r–333v);³⁶ c) the legend of the miracle of Christ Antiphonetes at the kellion of Adein (ff. 333v–334r);³⁷ and d) the legend of the elder Paul the beardless (ff. 334r–335v), which will be discussed in this paper. These texts are important for the study of the arrival of the Athonite tradition in Russia, as they were copied one century before the patriarch of Moscow, Nikon, who orchestrated the arrival of the copy of the icon of the Theotokos Portaitissa in Russia and the founding of Iverskiy monastery, which set alight the dissemination of the Athonite narrative and liturgical tradition throughout the country.³⁸

³³ *Kaklamanos*, To Neon Eklogion, 160, acknowledges that it is impossible to trace the sources on which Nikodemos relied on for writing the vita.

³⁴ *Binon*, Les origines légendaires, 62: "Pour le récit de la mort de Paul, Nicodème ne disposait d'aucune source".

³⁵ *Schmidt*, Skazaniya ob afonskikh monastyryakh. Cf. *Bulanin*, Skazanie ob ikone Bogomateri Iverskoi, 362–365.

³⁶ This is a variation of the Greek legend of the finding of the icon of the Theotokos at the place where the monastery of Vatopedi was to be built, which can be found in the so-called Patria of Mount Athos; *Lampros*, Ta Patria tou Hagiou Orous, 127–9.

³⁷ *Savvas Hagioritēs*, Diēgēsis tou thaumatos, 24–25. On the particular legend and the narrative tradition related with the Protaton, see mainly *Chryssochoidēs*, Paradoseis kai pragmatikotētes, 120–121. See also *Chryssochoidis*, The Protaton, 19–41. According to the legend, a monk was in a dilemma whether to follow the rule concerning the full length of one of the offices, or the will of his spiritual father, who requested that he performed a short version of the office. The monk asked the icon of Christ for guidance, through which Christ responded that he must obey his spiritual father. The legend is an educative text, teaching the monks about the importance of obeying their spiritual father.

³⁸ On the founding of the Russian Iversky monastery by Patriarch Nikon and the arrival of the icon see *Kain – Goldfrank*, Russia's Early Modern Orthodox Patriarchate; *Kain*, New Jerusalem; and *Kain*, Before New Jerusalem. On the extant correspondence in the Russian State Archives concerning the copy of the icon of the Portaitissa sent to Russia in the 17th century, see *Chentsova*, Ikona Iverskoy Bogomateri.

The last of the four texts concerning an elder Paul goes as follows:³⁹

“The same elder Gerasim recited. An elder named Paul arrived at Mount Athos from Constantinople, and no monastery would accept him because he was beardless. All the monasteries of Mount Athos abode to the typikon that prohibited the tonsure of beardless monks. If a monastery would accept such a man, damnation would befall on both the tonsured and the monastery, and when such a beardless monk would die, his bones and flesh were not to decay like everyone else’s and would stench. Thus, this elder Paul requested a kathisma for himself far from the monastery of Xeropotamou or other monasteries and began to live a very ascetic life. His fasting and vigils became famous, and many came to him for confession, while others came to dwell with him. Thus, death began to occupy the elder’s thoughts, and he told the brothers that lived with him that when he died, his body should not be buried on the holy mount of Athos, so that he would not violate the rule. “Swear on our holy Fathers that you will take me to the ocean and throw my body to the bottom of the sea”, he said. Paul had two fleshly brothers who lived in Constantinople. And after many years, the elder died. A monk then received his remains, and as requested, took him at sea in a *sandala*.⁴⁰ When far from the shore, the monk decided to throw his body into the water, but the sandala started off without anyone steering it, and without anyone being able to stop it, guided only by holy providence towards the capital, where it reached the harbor. Two men noticed that a small ship had entered harbor and said “it is probably some merchant from afar who would have something to sell. Let us be the first to buy”. And so they approached the boat, saw the body of saint Paul and asked whose it was. Those in the boat answered that it was Paul and related his life, mentioning that he was born in Constantinople. It was then revealed to all that these two men were Paul’s fleshly brothers, and they rushed to explain everything to the patriarch, who ordered that the relic of the saint was to be buried in the monastery (of Xeropotamou) together with the other monks, with honors. Following his burial, many miracles occurred, and the sick were healed from the saint’s holy relics in the name of the Holy Trinity, and they praised the Lord who works miraculous deeds through His saints. Later, on Mount

³⁹ Schmidt, Skazaniya ob afonskikh monastyryakh, 362–363. Many thanks to Victoria Bolshakova for her assistance with the translation.

⁴⁰ The *sándalos* or *sandála* or *sandálion* is a type of small boat used for small commerce or fishing during Byzantine times, and survived, in name, until the 20th century. On the *sandálion* in the 13th–15th centuries, see mainly Nystazopoulou-Pelekidou, À nouveau, 548–9. See also Jal, Glossaire nautique, 1315.

Athos, where Paul lived, the Serb Despot George founded a monastery, which attracted up to 500 monks, and they built a church in honor of the Great Martyr St. George, and the monastery is today named after saint Paul, so that our souls may rest in peace.”

Sigurd Schmidt, a Soviet philologist of early Russian literature, and of German origin himself, had not realized that the narrative about the beardless elder Paul was the oldest extant vita of Paul of Xeropotamou. Furthermore, since his article was published in 1967 and the manuscript was found in the minor collection of Yaroslav in the former USSR, almost inaccessible to Western researchers, it is easy to understand why Stéphane Binon, who published his book in 1942, but also Denise Papachryssanthou, a few decades later, would be ignorant of the existence of this version of Paul's vita.

To return to the Novgorod text, the first striking characteristic is that the description of the saint's dormition and the events related to his burial is quite reminiscent of what is described in the Neon Eklogion, albeit with several differences. The two texts agree that Paul was a eunuch, that he originated from Constantinople, that he went to Athos, where he made his own hut, and that his dead body was taken by ship to be buried far from the monastery, and this was miraculously directed to Constantinople, where the saint was revealed to the patriarch.

Given the short length of the Russian narrative, we are not surprised that many details are missing compared to Nikodemos' version of the vita. The lack of any mention of the imperial descent of Paul, which we also find in the Proskynetarion of Komnenos, is perhaps the most striking difference. The Novgorod text only relates that he originated from Constantinople and that there he had two fleshly brothers. A similar absence of Byzantine royalty can also be found in the narrative concerning Vatopediou monastery in the same Novgorod codex. In the 16th-century *Patria* of Mount Athos, it is the young nephew of Theodosios I, the son of Vatos, an imaginary brother of the emperor, who is miraculously saved from a storm and is left by the Theotokos at the place where he later asked his uncle Theodosios to build a monastery named “Vato-paidiou”.⁴¹ In the Novgorod narrative, however, the *pais* (child) is the son of a hunter who lost his son when hunting in the area where later the monastery was built and had to abandon him and return to Constantinople. When the parents returned to search for the boy, they found him alive thanks to the Theotokos, who had been feeding him in a bush (*vatos*).⁴² The absence of Byzantine royalty in the two Novgorod texts may reflect earlier forms of the narrative tradition; however, Schmidt comments that the texts in the Russian manuscript belong to a local

⁴¹ *Lampros*, Ta *Patria* tou Hagiau Orous, 127–129.

⁴² *Schmidt*, *Skazaniya ob afonskikh monastyryakh*, 361–362.

narrative tradition of Novgorod and reflect a characteristic tenet that priesthood is a greater ideal than lay kingship, in an effort to emphasize the close relation between Novgorodian and Byzantine monasticism.⁴³ Thus, the effort to purge the monasteries from any imperial patronage as part of a local Novgorodian ideology may well explain why Paul was not the son of an emperor in the Russian version.

Absent from the version of the Neon Eklogion is the information that the saint was not accepted by any monastery because he was a eunuch, relating that he was received without an issue at the monastery of Xeropotamou. Interestingly, the Novgorod text seems to repeat the main traits of the stipulation in the typikon of Athanasios the Athonite, which strictly forbids the acceptance of eunuchs and children at the Lavra and curses those who disobey the rule with damnation and separation from the Holy Trinity.⁴⁴ The same is to be found in the typikon of Emperor John I Tzimiskes (972), where, instead of damnation, the punishment for breaking the rule is expulsion from Mount Athos.⁴⁵ The typikon of Emperor Constantine IX Monomachos (1042–1055) in 1045 does not make any reference to eunuchs or children but is only preoccupied with the age of tonsure for deacons and priests.⁴⁶ However, this typikon served mostly to regulate affairs between monasteries regarding issues that had undergone important changes since the last one and is not a replacement of the typikon of Tzimiskes.⁴⁷ The rule concerning the eunuchs and the beardless is repeated again, centuries later, in the typikon of Emperor Manuel II Palaiologos (1391–1425), dated 1406.⁴⁸ This document focuses mostly on the internal relationships of the monasteries and makes reference to the dire times that Mount Athos had been through in the previous and current years, stressing the importance of the monks finding their way back to the appropriate way of monastic life, at least at a tolerable level.⁴⁹ We must therefore assume that between 972 and 1406 the prohibition to tonsure eunuchs and children faded. In the 18th-century vita of the Neon Eklogion, the lack of this detail possibly mirrors the fact that, although this prohibition had been very old, the issue was not considered very important. Furthermore, Nikodemos may have chosen not to reproduce the passage concerning the saint's acceptance or not as a eunuch, as it may not have fit into the image of Athonite monasticism that he probably wished to convey at that time.

⁴³ Schmidt, Skazaniya ob afonskikh monastyryakh, 357.

⁴⁴ Typikon Athanasiou tou en tō Athō, 118, l.31 – 119, l.5.

⁴⁵ Actes du Prôtaton 7, ll. 101–106. Unlike that of Athanasios, the typikon of Tzimiskes leaves a window open for the admission of eunuchs or children if, and only if, they are accepted by the Protos and all the hegoumenoi of the monasteries.

⁴⁶ Actes du Prôtaton 8, ll. 163–169.

⁴⁷ See for example Actes du Prôtaton 8, l. 113, where it is clearly stated that the old typikon is also valid: “τῷ παλαιῷ συνωδᾷ ποιούντες τυπικῶ”.

⁴⁸ Actes du Prôtaton 13, ll. 71–72. See also pp. 107–109.

⁴⁹ Actes du Prôtaton 13, ll. 7–9.

According to the Novgorod vita, the saint was taken by ship with the intention of being thrown into the open sea, while the Neon Eklogion relates that he was taken by ship to Longos, in Sithonia, where the monasteries of Xeropotamou and Hagiou Pavlou had metochia. These metochia, however, were acquired several centuries after Paul's lifetime. Finally, the Russian narrative informs us that it is attributed to an elder named Gerasim. Schmidt offers no information on this person; he may have been an Athonite who settled in Russia or a Russian monk who had visited Mount Athos. Of the known Athonite monks with this name until the beginning of the 16th century, and with possible relations with Russia, there is no one to whom we could attribute the vita. We must, therefore, consider more likely the possibility that this elder Gerasim was a Russian monk who had recited the legends in Russian after having heard them or read them on Mount Athos or, possibly, from Maksim the Greek in Russia, who we know had introduced the Russian ruler Vasiliy III Ivanovich to certain Atonite legends, which did not, however, include that of Paul of Xeropotamou.⁵⁰

Thus, the terminus post quem for the existence of a vita of Paul of Xeropotamou should be, henceforth, the year of the copying of the Novgorod manuscript, i.e., 1557/8. However, taking into consideration the fact that the other three texts in the Novgorod codex are translations of older legends into Russian, we must assume that the one concerning Paul of Xeropotamou is also older than the Novgorod manuscript.

In 1383–4 two Serbian noblemen, Antonije Bagaš and Gerasim Radonja (in Greek sources mentioned as Antonios Pagasis and Gerasimos Radonias), undertook the restoration of the abandoned monastery of Hagiou Pavlou, bearing the name of its initial founder, Paul of Xeropotamou.⁵¹ Within the next few years, they restored the buildings, among them the church and the tower, and proceeded to plant vineyards and a garden. Until then, the small monastery had belonged to Xeropotamou monastery, and the two re-founders engaged in an effort to make it independent, something which they achieved in November 1399, as attested in the relevant document by the Protos of Mount Athos Neophytos, by offering Xeropotamou one hundred ounces of silver.⁵² Hagiou Pavlou was henceforth to become “free and sovereign” (ἐλεύθερον καὶ δεσπότην), and its monks would be entitled to name any kings or archons they wished as ktetors.⁵³ A few years after this document, in June 1405,

⁵⁰ *Ržiga*, Neizdannyye Sochineniya Maksima Greka, 95–9; *Sinitysyna*, Poslaniye Maksima Greka, 128–135. For an overview of the life and work of Maksim the Greek in Russia, see *Sinitysyna*, Maksim Grek.

⁵¹ *Subotić*, Obnova manastira svetog Pavla, 254. On the known constructions of the Serbian founders and later, see *Theoharidēs*, To oikodomiko sygkrotēma; and *Liakos*, Recent Information.

⁵² *Pavlikianov*, Documents of Hagiou Pavlou, 10A (94–98) and its Serbian translation 10B (99–105). See also *Kotzageorgēs*, Archeio tēs I.M. Hagiou Pavlou, 9 (43–44); *Chryssochoidēs*, Katalogos tou arheiou, 16 (267–268); *Hronographikē kai Topographikē Historia tou Hagiou Orous Athō*, 73–76; and *Binon*, Les origines légendaires, 271, Act 12. Stéphane Binon and Kriton Chryssochoidēs date the document to 1392, based on the year mentioned in the Serbian translation, since the relative part in the Greek text is missing. Gojko Subotić, however, (*Subotić*, Obnova manastira svetog Pavla, 232–239) later showed that the year in the Serbian translation is wrong, and that the document should be dated November 6908, i.e., 1399.

⁵³ *Pavlikianov*, Documents of Hagiou Pavlou, Act 10A, ll. 35–36 and 45–48.

Hagiou Pavlou, with Antonije Bagaš as its abbot, received a large donation of land from Radoslav Sabia in the region of Kalamaria, which was ratified with a chrysobull by John VII Palaiologos.⁵⁴ Earlier, before the document of Neophytos, the monastery had acquired in 1385 the monastery of Mesonessiotissa, in the region of Edessa, together with all its possessions.⁵⁵ Year by year, Hagiou Pavlou would continue to accumulate land property and wealth. In 1410, Mara Branković and her two sons, George and Lazar, donated to Hagiou Pavlou the village of Kuzmino, which was exempt from taxes.⁵⁶ From this period on and until 1459, the despot George Branković made many important donations and sponsorships to the monastery, for which he was established as Hagiou Pavlou's most prominent ktetor.⁵⁷ His most impressive contribution to the monastery was, in 1446/7, the funding of the new katholikon, i.e., the main church, dedicated to both the Theotokos and St. George, honoring his name.⁵⁸

Interestingly, although throughout the Novgorod vita the monastery where Paul lived and died was Xeropotamou, in the end, the anonymous author refers to the monastery of Hagiou Pavlou and to George Branković as its only founder. Furthermore, the entire narrative of events in the text is constructed around the prohibition of eunuchs on Mount Athos, with the saint being very cautious as to not attract upon himself and his brethren the damnations mentioned in the typikon of the Lavra by Athanasios the Athonite. As mentioned earlier, in 1406, the typikon of Manuel II restipulated this very prohibition and during the fifteenth century there was an effort to revive this rule. This alone does not indicate that the original text of the Novgorod vita was written around the time of Manuel's typikon, when Antonije Bagaš was still the hegoumenos of Hagiou Pavlou and George Branković was not yet in the picture, but it is highly possible that a certain version of the saint's life had been formulated during this period to assist the veneration of St. Paul of Xeropotamou, after whom the monastery was named. The fact that in the Novgorod version the despot George Branković is mentioned as the sole ktetor of the monastery points to the probability that the original Greek or, possibly, Serbian text that was later rendered into Russian Slavonic had been written some decades after his era and his overwhelming support of the monastery, when the remembrance of the two original Serbian founders, who were of more humble descent, had probably faded under the weight of the despot's fame.⁵⁹

⁵⁴ Pavlikianov, Documents of Hagiou Pavlou, Act 17; *Kotzageorgēs*, Archeio tēs I.M. Hagiou Pavlou, 16; *Chrysochoidēs*, Katalogos tou arheiou, 3 (256).

⁵⁵ Subotić, Le monastère de la Vierge Mésonisiôtissa.

⁵⁶ Pavlikianov, Documents of Hagiou Pavlou, 24 (159–165). See also *Kotzageorgēs*, Hē Athōnikē Monē Hagiou Pavlou, 55.

⁵⁷ For a concise description of the donations by the Branković family to the monastery of Hagiou Pavlou, see *Kotzageorgēs*, Hē Athōnikē Monē Hagiou Pavlou, 55–56.

⁵⁸ Millet – Pargoire – Petit, Recueil des inscriptions, 426. See also *Theoharidēs*, To oikodomiko sygkrotēma, 50; and *Liakos*, Recent Information, 273.

⁵⁹ We should also not rule out the possibility that the oblivion of the two initial founders was due to the events concerning the rivalry between George Branković and Stefan Lazarević. For an overview and the relevant literature concerning this rivalry see *Nikolić*, Vizantijski pisci o Srbiji, 89–114.

There is one last piece of information that may help us better date the original text of the Russian version. As mentioned earlier, the vita of Paul of Xeropotamou is copied in the Novgorod codex together with the narratives of the icon of the Theotokos Portaitissa, the founding of Vatopediou monastery, and the miracle of the icon of Christ Antiphonetes at the kellion of Adein, in Karyes. These legends are documented in manuscripts, none of which date before the early 16th century and are not considered to have been written before the last decade of the 15th century.⁶⁰ The oldest textual form of the legend of the icon of the Theotokos Portaitissa is dated to the early 16th century.⁶¹ Similarly dated is that of Vatopediou monastery.⁶²

The third text in the Russian manuscript is the one concerning the miracle of the icon of Christ Antiphonetes that took place at the kellion of Adein, which shares one interesting aspect with that of the vita of Paul of Xeropotamou; they are both narrated by an unknown elder named Gerasim, a characteristic that may imply that these two texts share a common origin and have been made known through the same channel. Kriton Chryssochoidēs demonstrates that the narrative of the Antiphonetes was written by Serapheim, a monk of Slavic origin who served as Protos of Mount Athos for many years during the first half of the 16th century, starting in the year 1500.⁶³ Serapheim, who lived at the kellion of Kofou at Karyes, has been proven to be the author of a number of hagiographical texts, many of which concern various saints of Mount Athos based on the local oral tradition.⁶⁴ Among these texts, we find that of the miracle of the icon of Christ Antiphonetes, one of the two legends associated with the kellion of Adein at Karyes, the other being the narrative of the miracle of the Archangel Gabriel at the kellion of Adein or Axion Estin.⁶⁵ However, despite his Slavic origin, Serapheim wrote the largest part of his works in Greek,⁶⁶ and there is no mention of the vita of Paul of Xeropotamou in any known manuscript containing his works.

⁶⁰ A detailed study of the five legends belonging to the compilation named *Anamnēsis merikē peri tou Athō orous, ta legomena Patria*, which are simply known as Patria of Mount Athos, has been concluded by the author of this paper and is under publication. Currently, the most thorough list of manuscripts concerning the legend of the Latins on Mount Athos, but with most containing those of the Portaitissa icon and Vatopediou monastery is in *Rigo, La Διήγησις sui monaci Athoniti*, 78. A detailed list of manuscripts of the legends is in print by the author.

⁶¹ *Chryssochoidis*, The Portaitissa icon, 133–141. For the text of the legend of the Portaitissa in its longest version, see *Bury*, Iveron and Our Lady of the Gate, 71–99. For the abridged version in the Patria of Mount Athos, see *Lampros*, Ta Patria tou Hagiou Orous, 129–130.

⁶² *Livanos*, Symvolē stē meletē.

⁶³ *Chryssochoidēs*, Paradoseis kai pragmatikotētes, 112.

⁶⁴ One such text is that of Theophilos the Athonite, at the end of which he signs his name. *Chryssochoidēs*, Paradoseis kai pragmatikotētes, 112.

⁶⁵ Serapheim is also the author of the legend of the miracle of the Archangel Gabriel at the kellion of Adein or Axion Estin, which narrates how the Archangel made known to a monk the highly celebrated hymn to the Theotokos “Axion Estin”.

⁶⁶ For the known works of Serapheim, see *Chryssochoidēs*, Paradoseis kai pragmatikotētes, 110–113, 123–126.

Together with Serapheim, we come across another prominent figure in Karyes, Gabriel the hieromonk who, like Serapheim, had also served as Protos of Mount Athos five times from 1515 until 1538.⁶⁷ Interestingly, Gabriel, a Serb, had translated in 1508 from Greek to Serbian Slavonic the early corpus of the Patria of Mount Athos, which contains the narratives of the visit of Theotokos to Athos, the icon of the Theotokos of Vatopedi, the icon of the Theotokos Portaitissa, the icon of St. George at Zographou monastery, and the miracle of the 40 Martyrs of Sebasteia at Xeropotamou monastery.⁶⁸ The original manuscript of the translation is missing today; however, the text is known through three copies, the oldest of which is dated to the first half of the 16th century.⁶⁹ Moreover, in 1527/8 Gabriel was named *Patriarchal Protosyngellos*, an honorary title that reflects the fact that he was a prominent figure who had close relations with rulers of Wallachia as well as the sanctified Patriarch of Constantinople Nephon II, the vita of whom he later wrote.⁷⁰ Gabriel, who lived in the kellion of Kaprouli, in Karyes, which belonged to Hilandariou monastery, was, as the evidence reveals, a Serb.⁷¹ He would have had a particular personal interest in writing the vita of the founder of a monastery, which in his days was considered to be as Serbian as Hilandariou, and we must assume that he was in close contact with his fellow Serbian monks of Hagiou Pavlou.

Chryssochoidēs has supported the idea that the two Protoi of Mount Athos, who resided together in Karyes, were frontrunners of an ultimate effort to revive the institution of the Protos at the end of the 15th century and the first half of the 16th, which had slowly begun to lose its past luster.⁷² As part of their mission, they both wrote, copied, and translated various lives of Athonite saints and legends, as well as other texts of a hagiographical nature. There is no evidence, though, that any of the two had written or translated the vita of Paul of Xeropotamou. Yet, it is highly probable that one of the two men, or perhaps others within their milieu in Karyes, may have been somehow involved in either the writing of the original text of the Novgorod version or its translation into Slavonic. In favor of this supposition is: a) the fact that the Novgorod vita is connected to the legend of the icon of the Christ

⁶⁷ On Gabriel, see mainly *Chryssochoidēs*, *Paradoseis kai pragmatikotētes*, 128–131; and *Subotić*, *Hē kallitehnikē zōē sto Hagion Oros*, 67–73. For the years Gabriel served as Protos, see *Papachryssanthou*, *Ho Athōnikos Monachismos*, 388–392.

⁶⁸ *Chryssochoidēs*, *Paradoseis kai pragmatikotētes*, 129.

⁶⁹ National Library of Serbia Misc. 733 (Kovacevic Collection). For the other manuscripts, see *Parpulov*, *The Slavonic Patria of Mount Athos*, 5–6 and 7–14 for the actual text.

⁷⁰ For the vita of Nephon by Gabriel and the relevant literature, see *Paun*, *Gabriel of Mount Athos*, 76–84.

⁷¹ In a document of the *Synaxis* of Karyes, his signature is Slavonic, although not autograph. See *Chryssochoidēs*, *Paradoseis kai pragmatikotētes*, 129.

⁷² *Chryssochoidēs*, *Paradoseis kai pragmatikotētes*, 115–122. On the fading of the institution of the Protos of Mount Athos during the 16th and 17th centuries up until the formation of the current system of governance, see *Papachryssanthou*, *Hē Dioikēsē tou Hagiou Orous*.

Antiphonetes written by the Protos Serapheim, b) the lifetime of the two men, which is some decades after the era of George Branković, and c) the fact that Gabriel was a Serb, something also possible for Serapheim. Whoever the author of the original text of the Novgorod variant may be, however, we must assume that when Antonije Bagaš and Gerasim Radonja re-founded the monastery of Hagiou Pavlou, they must have needed a narrative of the life of Paul of Xeropotamou, their monastery's initial founder, which would help them with his commemoration. The main elements of such a life could well have been drawn from the vitae of Athanasios the Athonite and Fanti-nus, as well as the typikon of Tzimiskes, and either remained as an oral narrative until the early 16th century or was written in some form, which is until today unknown.

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НАЈСТАРИЈЕ ЖИТИЈЕ СВ. ПАВЛА КСИРОПОТАМСКОГ

Свети Павле Ксиропотамски, рани светогорски светитељ и оснивач манастира Ксиропотам и манастира светог Павла, чије је постојање документовано у житијима Атанасија Атонског и Фантина, у типикону Јована Цимискија из 972. године, као и у разним документима из периода од 980. до 996. године, прославља се као светац од XIII века. Међутим, најстаријим текстом о Павловом животу сматра се онај у хагиографском зборнику „Неон Еклогион“, који се приписује Никодиму Светогорцу. Совјетски историчар Сигурд Шмидт је 1967. године објавио групу легендарних прича о Светог Гори из једног руско-словенског рукописа који садржи различите хагиографске текстове и легенде о Новгороду. У последњем од та четири текста, приповеда се о голобрадом старешини Павлу, који је из Цариграда дошао на Свету Гору, где су га одбили сви манастири јер је типиконем било забрањено рукополагање ђосавих монаха. Павлови подвизи, пост и бдење, прочули су се. Братији је рекао да када умре његово тело не сахране на Светој Гори. Много година касније, Павлови земни остаци су однети на море. Лађа је сама од себе отпловила у цариградску луку, где су је сачекала два човека, за која се показало да су Павлова рођена браћа. Патријарх је наредио да се његове мошти сахране у манастиру Ксиропотаму, где су свечеве мошти чудотворно излечиле болесне. Новгородски текст и „Неон Еклогион“ на сличан начин описују Павлово упокојење и погреб. Оба текста казују да је Павле био евнух пореклом из Цариграда, да је отишао на Свету Гору и тамо саградио колибу, те да је чудесно одведен у Цариград. У новгородском тексту, међутим, нема детаља о његовом царском пореклу, које се помиње и у комнинском Проскинетару. Са друге стране, у „Неон Еклогиону“ се не наводи да Павла ниједан манастир није прихватио зато што је био евнух. Дакле, као *terminus post quem* за настанак житија Павла Ксиропотамског треба узети 1557. или 1558. годину, јер су остала три текста у новгородском зборнику преводи старијих легенда на руски језик. Трећи текст у руском рукопису, онај о чудотворној икони Христа Антифонита у адеинској келији, има неких сличности са житијем Павла Ксиропотамског. У оба текста приповедач је извесни старац Герасим, што указује на њихово заједничко порекло и исти канал посредовања. Критон Хрисохидес сматра да је приповест о икони Христа Антифонита написао Серафим, монах словенског порекла који је био светогорски прот од 1500. до 1538. године. Србин Гаврило био је прот Свете Горе у пет наврата од 1515. до 1538. године. Веома је вероватно да је један од те двојице или неко други из њихове средине у Кареји учествовао у писању изворног текста у новгородском

зборнику или у његовом превођењу на словенски језик. Новгородско житије стоји у вези са легендом о икони Христа Антифонита, а поменута два монаха живела су у деценијама које су уследиле добу Ђурђа Бранковића, који се помиње у тексту. Гаврилово српско порекло би такође могло ићи у прилог могућности да је он написао изворни текст. Ко год да је био аутор оригиналног текста у новгородској варијанти, када су Антоније Багаш и Герасим Радоња обновили манастир светог Павла, морала се указати се потреба за житијем Павла Ксиропотамског, првог ктитора манастира, ради његовог прослављања.