

## Xiropotamou

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The Holy Monastery of Xeropotamou is in the South-East of the Athos peninsula at a walking distance of 2 hours by feet from Daphni.

Xeropotamou is one of the oldest monasteries on Mount Athos, but its early history remains obscure. Oral tradition identifies the Empress Pulcheria as a founder of the monastery, who lived in the 5th century, while another version regards the founders as the 10th century Emperors Constantine VI Porphyrogenetus and Romanus I Lecapenus.

In the manuscripts and various documents there is some obscurity about the name of the Monastery and the personality of Blessed Paul, probably Xeropotamou's principal founder. Paul was an ascetic who was highly respected on the Mount Athos, according to the myth he was the son of Michael I Rhanghaves.

The Monastery flourished until the 13th century, when in the years of Frankish rule, it suffered from financial difficulties and pirate raids. However, it soon obtained the assistance of Byzantine Emperors, particularly after the fire of 1280, and with donations and chrysobulls rights of ownership of the Monastery was consolidated (13th - 14th centuries). Other donations from the principalities of Wallachia and Hungro-Walachia were the means of renewal and prolonged prosperity in the life of Xeropotamou, and among its benefactors must be numbered the Sultan Selim I. Like the other monasteries, Xeropotamou has had periods of decline. Two catastrophic fires in the early 16th and 17th centuries and the burden of debt in the 18th brought it to a low point. Between 1821 and 1830 the Monastery was occupied by Turkish troops, while in more modern times, in 1950 and 1973, it was again damaged by fires.

Today the Monastery of Xeropotamou occupies eighth place in the hierarchy of coenobia. In its ownership are the port of Dafni and its six cells. The Monastery has seven chapels inside its precinct and nine outside.

Treasures help within the monastery

The library contains 409 manuscripts and some 6,000 printed books. Among the treasures of Xeropotamou are the paten of Pulcheria, made of steatite, relics of saints, goldembroidered vestments, and priceless episcopal staffs, but its greatest treasure consists of two pieces of the True

Cross, the largest anywhere in the world, which have a hole made by one of the nails of the Crucifixion. At present the Monastery has about 25 benevolent and peace-loving monks.

Miracle-working icons within the monastery

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According to the myth Theotokos of Tikhvin started to shed tears on the 17th of February 1876. The Tsar Alexey II who was informed about the icon's miraculous qualities took it to the front during during Russian-Turkish war.