

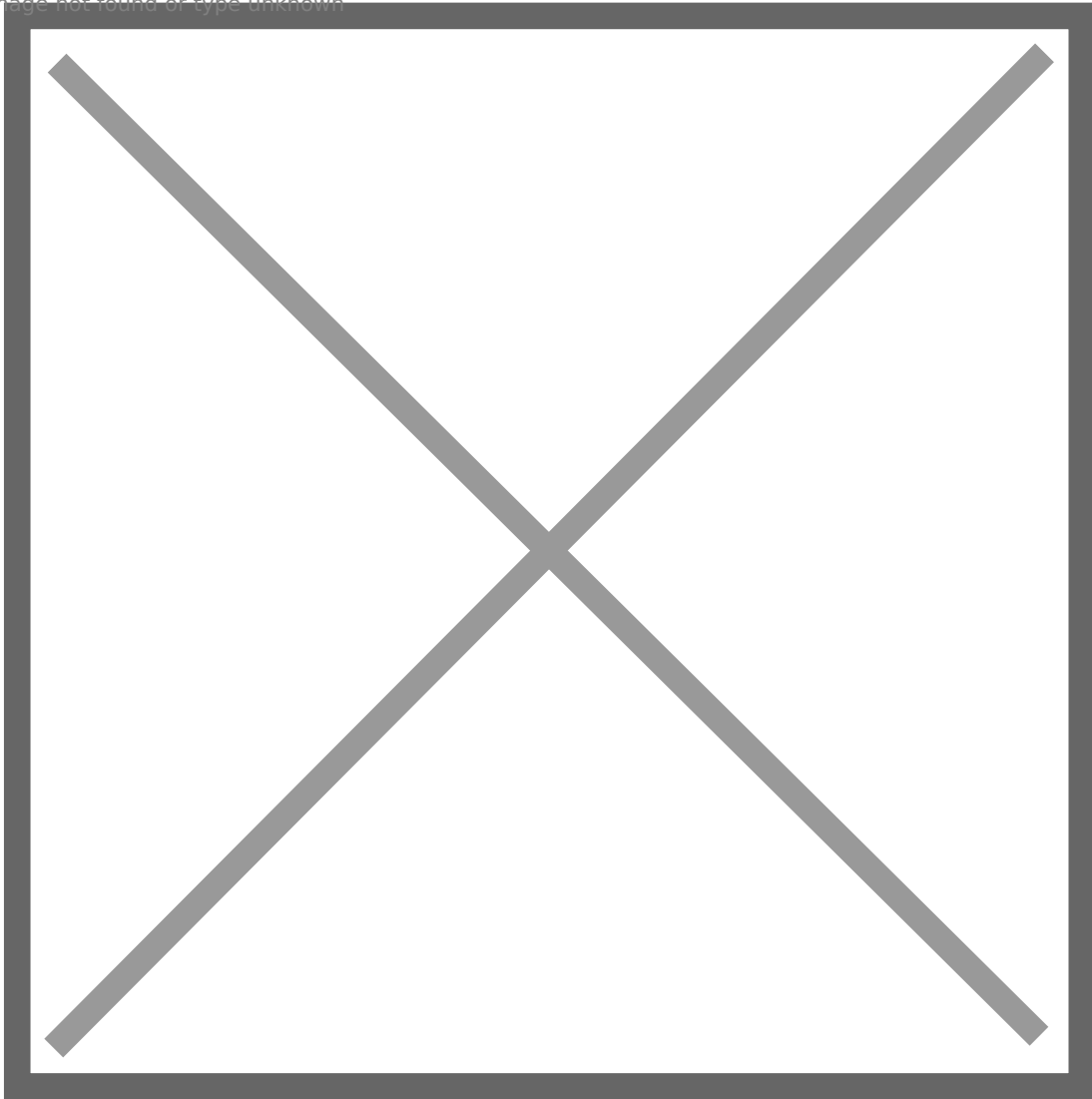
Epitaphios of the Voivode Basile Lupu, 1651/2 (Maria Theocharis)

[Ξένες γλώσσες / In English](#)



Dimensions of icon with inscription: 184 x 166 cm.

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The epitaphios is of the narrative type which became usual from the time of the Fall of Constantinople, following the introduction into the service of the short hymns called *encomia*. It bears a depiction of the dead Christ lying in the larnax surrounded by the figures of the *Epitaphios Threnos* (Lamentation for the Dead Christ) and usually has these words inscribed on it. However, in the monastery workshops the liturgical character of the ornament was not entirely discarded. The two types – liturgical and narrative – were amalgamated, as here, and in many cases the prophets were added on the border. These, together with the Evangelists, who appeared in the corners, symbolise the Church Triumphant.

This epitaphios is embroidered on red velvet and is sewn on to a lining of a later date in order to preserve it. In the middle, the dead Christ lies on the stone on which He was anointed for burial. In Constantinople, in the Church of the Pantocrator, the “*red stone*”, of the length of a man, on which Christ was wrapped in linen after the descent from the cross, was devoutly venerated. The stone was

originally in a church in Ephesus. From there, we are informed by Nicetas Acominatus, it was brought by the Emperor Manuel Comnenus to Constantinople. A Russian pilgrim in the year 1200 wrote of the tears of the Blessed Virgin which had dried on the stone, "*white as drops of wax*". The place where Joseph of Arimathaea and Nicodemus laid the body in the Holy Sepulchre was afterwards covered with marble, speckled with other colours, as we see it today.

Christ wears only a cloth about His waist, while the cross inscribed in the nimbus bears on its arms the inscription "HE WHO IS". There is a figure at each end of the stone: on the left, seated on the edge of the slab, with the head of her Son in her lap, is His Mother. On the right, Joseph holds the legs of Jesus, ready to wrap them in the linen. Behind the dead Christ, John, his grief written on his face, stoops to kiss His hand. Next to John are the two holy women Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of Jesus¹¹, shown mourning. In the first band, in front of the dead Christ, kneeling and on a scale smaller than the other figures, are four angels, two of whom are holding flabella. Similarly, on the upper part of the scene there are four more angels, kneeling, with two of them holding flabella, while yet another angel, flying, holds a cloth with which to wipe away its tears. In the corners, in arches, are the symbols of the four Evangelists, from left to right and from top to bottom: John, Luke, Mark, and Matthew.

The background has scattered stars, and among them are the two cosmic symbols, the sun and the moon¹². On the background, behind John, is the inscription: "THE ENTOMBMENT". On the small bands which form the arches of the Evangelists are the words of the triumphal hymn of the Liturgy: "SINGING, CRYING ALOUD, PROCLAIMING AND SAYING".

The scene is surrounded first by a narrow border, on which there is an inscription in capitals, preceded by a cross on a base and abbreviations: "IC. XC. NI. KA. BY THE WILL OF THE FATHER FROM ALL ETERNITY AND THE GRACE OF THE ONLY-BEGOTTEN SON AND THE CO-OPERATION OF THE HOLY SP[IRIT] I HAVE WILLED / WITH MY OWN GOOD WILL AND BETTER THOUGHT I IO[ANNIS] VAS[ILEIOS] VOIVOD / BY THE MERCY OF GOD OF ALL MOLDO-WALLACHIA WITH MY CONSORT DOMNA AIKATERINI WE HAVE MADE¹³ THIS EPITAPHIOS IN THE NAME OF OUR L[ORD] AND GOD AND S[AVIOUR] J[ESUS] CHRIST / AND WE HAVE DEDICATED IT IN OUR MONASTERY OF THE TH[EOTOKOS] IN JASSY HONOURED IN THE NAME OF THE ASCENSION , ἄΖΡ•ἄ".

The date ἄ·ÚÍἄ from the creation of the world gives us the year 1651/2 from the birth of Christ.

The Monastery of the Ascension is that commonly called the Golia Monastery after its foundress. The widow of Ion Golia, formerly Great Logothete (Chancellor) of Moldavia (1572-1580), who was put to death by the Voivode Iancu the Saxon, donated her estates at Jassy to the monks of Mount Athos. The Monastery of the Ascension was given to Vatopaidi before 20 January 1606. A document issued by the Metropolitan of Moldavia and the three chorepiscopi* ratifies this gift, made together with items of silverware, liturgical vestments and sacred books, houses and vineyards. The Prince of Moldavia Ieremias Movila issued, on 30 March of the same year, another document which confirmed the ownership of the monks of Vatopaidi of all the land of the new *metochi**. The monks were under the obligation to commemorate Kyra Anna Golia and to look after her if she fell ill¹⁴.

The layout of the composition retains the arrangement in bands as on older epitaphioi, such as those of the Transfiguration at the Great Meteoron (14th century) or of Alexander the Good (1428), indeed, it shares the same inscription with the latter: "THE ENTOMBMENT". In terms of iconography, this is a faithful copy of the epitaphios of the Church of the Three Hierarchs* in Jassy (1638)¹⁵. Apart from the figures of the Lamentation, the rest of the iconography of the Golia epitaphios follows, both as to the subject-matter and the floral decoration, the epitaphios of the Three Hierarchs in Jassy. In terms of style, however, it does not have the subtlety possessed by the Jassy ornament. It lacks the perfection of design and the idealised features, the inspired composition in the arrangement of the figures, the harmony of the shades of colour. For the faces and unclothed parts of the body grey silk in *riza* stitch has been used, for the garments *karfoto*, and for the folds *riza* with silk. The wealth of stones which adorn all the nimbuses and the cloth worn by Christ is an imitation of Byzantine models.

The donor, Vasileios Loupos, was a distinguished Prince of Moldavia¹⁶, who came from a Thessalian family. He received a Greek education and signed his name in Greek characters: "*I, Marele Vornik*". His accent in speaking was somewhat imperfect, like that of the Greeks of Moldavia; however, the fact that he used the language of his country in his private correspondence shows that his soul belonged to the country over which he ruled. He managed to seize the throne in the spring of 1643. After the first difficult years of his rule, Moldavia enjoyed internal peace. He set up a printing press at the Monastery of the Three Hierarchs, where the *Didactic* – as it was called – *Gospel*, translated from Greek into Romanian, was printed. He also founded Greek monasteries and a Latin school. He restored direct relations between the Church of Moldavia and the Ecumenical Patriarchate, all of whose debts he paid, to rid the Church "*of such shame*". He had the '*Nomocanon**' translated from Greek into Romanian and printed in 1646. In 1639 he inaugurated

the magnificent Church of the Three Hierarchs* in Jassy, one of Romania's finest monuments, to which he, together with his wife Tudosca, dedicated the epitaphios which we have discussed above.