



Epitaphios

Place of origin: Greece (made)

Date: 1407 (made)

Artist/Maker: Unknown

Materials and Techniques: Embroidered silk and silver threads on silk ground; linen or canvas lining

Museum number: 8278-1863

Gallery location: In store

Public access description

This large embroidered crimson silk twill cloth is an epitaphios. An epitaphios is a large cloth carried in procession in the Good Friday services and for which the early term was Great Aër. The decoration, with the body of the dead Christ accompanied by angels with fans and with the symbols or figures of the evangelists in the corners, is of conventional form. In this example, the verses from the troparion emphasise the Good Friday theme. The dedication also mentions Prayer of the servant of God Nicholas Eudaimonoioannes with his wife and children in the year 6915 [1407]. The Nicholas mentioned here may well be the Nicholas Eudaimonoioannes who acted as Manuel II's ambassador to the Venetians in 1416 and was one of his delegates to the Council of Constantine in 1414-17 AD.

The Eudaimonoioannes family held an important place in the history of the Morea (the Peloponnese), as archons of Monemvasia from the 13th century until the Turkish conquest. The epitaphios was probably commissioned for donation to a church in Nicholas' native Morea. It is likely to have been made somewhere in the Greek peninsula but was possibly a product of the capital, Constantinople.

Descriptive line

Large crimson silk twill embroidered in gold, silver and coloured silk showing dead Christ.

Physical description

Embroidered silk and silver threads on crimson silk ground. Linen or canvas lining. The dead Christ figure lying at the centre on a stone slab, two angels with liturgical fans to his left and right; in the corners, busts of the four Evangelists. A Greek inscription runs around the outside in gold thread.

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Object history note

The donors, the Eudaimonoioannes family, held an important place in the history of the Morea (the Peloponnese), as archons of Monemvasia from the 13th century until the Turkish conquest. The Nicholas mentioned here in the dedication may well be the Nicholas Eudaimonoioannes who acted as Manuel II's ambassador to the Venetians in 1416 and one of his delegates to the Council of Constantine in 1414-17. In 1756 recorded as being in the monastery of the Santi Apostoli in Naples. According to Cajetani, it had been brought to Naples in 1628 from 'Calata' in Sicily.

URL

<http://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O83863/epitaphios/>

