

Teaching Sinai Module

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Epistyle beam/Templon beam



Wood

12th-13th centuries (possibly 11th?)

dimensions unknowns

Was originally designed for a templon, but not necessarily used on one

Brief description

This is a rectangular wooden beam depicting the twelve feasts of the Orthodox church with a Deesis scene presiding in the center. Each feast scene is separated from the adjacent one by arches, thus creating a continuous architectural framework across the beam.

Teaching exercise

For graduate students and undergraduates alike:

1. Identify the feast scenes and examine which ones are usually repeated in church interiors (squinces, walls) or liminal spaces of the church (narthex, around doorways, etc).
2. Explore the diverse potential effects of visual repetition, following from the above point. Does the effect of the feast/s change depending on spatial and material variations?
3. Think about the implications of the beam when displayed as part of Orthodox ritual in a templon, and when displayed within a sacred space (a church) but detached from the templon.
4. Think about the implications of photography and viewership: do scholarly approaches change when we look at a digital reproduction, a photographic reproduction, and/or the real object in situ?

Further Reading

- Evans, Helen C., and William D. Wixom. *The Glory of Byzantium*. New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1997. pp. 377–79.
- Chatterjee, Paroma. *The Living Icon in Byzantium and Italy: The Vita Image, Eleventh to Thirteenth Centuries*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014. pp. 72–73.