



HARVARD HISTORY AND ARCHAEOLOGY OF ANCIENT NEAR EASTERN SOCIETIES WORKSHOP

presents a lecture by:

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A DOOR MUST EITHER BE SHUT OR OPEN

THE PRODUCTION OF IMPERIAL SPACE ON THE NEO-ASSYRIAN
MONUMENTAL DOORS FROM BALAWAT

Wednesday February 7th at 5:15 pm
Semitic Museum, Room 201
6 Divinity Avenue, Cambridge, MA

Three bronze-banded doors from Balawat – two belonging to Ashurnasirpal II (883-859 BCE) and one to his son Shalmaneser III (859-824 BCE) – constitute a remarkable group of Assyrian monuments. In the past, we have been used to looking at these doors as “picture planes” when closed, but how would they have looked, and what would they have presented to the viewers when open? With these questions in mind, I propose a new reading of the door-band decorative programs by establishing a “spatial schema” that differs in an “open” or “closed” perspective. The “spatiality” of the Balawat doors, i.e., their specific properties relating to or occupying space, will then be analyzed by examining the combined and connected properties of visual, architectural, and social spaces, as they were designed, built and experienced by the Assyrians. The hope is that by opening and closing the doors, the bronze bands from Balawat can be understood in a more comprehensive context, and thus be properly viewed as cultural phenomena both “in space,” and forming a “production of space.”