

The JEREMIAH and HELEN JAMES Lecture in Assyrian Civilization and Culture

Richard Payne



An Iranian Assyria: Empire, Religion, and Social Change in Late Antiquity

The late antique world (ca. 200–800 CE) witnessed both the submerging of ancient Assyria and the emergence of an Assyrian political legacy, both in literature and myth, that endured into the Middle Ages and beyond. The last surviving vestiges of the Assyrian Empire—the city of Assur and its cults—declined as Northern Mesopotamia became a province of the Iranian Empire and the region's elites increasingly embraced Christianity. At the same time, these Christian aristocrats turned to the historical records, mythical memories, and physical remains of ancient Assyria to position themselves as the heirs to a great imperial tradition with respect to their Iranian rulers. The lecture examines the transformations of Assyria, as a historically (dis-)continuous set of political institutions and as an imagined political legacy, in the centuries between the disappearance of the cuneiform tradition and the rise of Islam.

Richard Payne is Associate Professor in the Department of History at the University of Chicago. A historian of the Iranian world in late antiquity, his research focuses primarily on the dynamics of Iranian imperialism. His book *A State of Mixture: Christians, Zoroastrians, and Iranian Political Culture in Late Antiquity* (University of California Press, 2015), was awarded multiple prizes, including the Jacques Barzun Prize in Cultural History (American Philosophical Society) and the Award for Excellence in the Study of Religion (American Academy of Religion).

Wednesday, May 22, 2019 at 7:00p.m.

Guild Lounge • 601 University Place
Northwestern University • Evanston, IL

The lecture is free and open to the public. • No tickets or reservations required.

For additional information,
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JEREMIAH
and HELEN
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Lecture in
Assyrian
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Established in 1999 by
Helen James Schwartzen
with the purpose of
promoting understanding
and scholarship of both
ancient and modern
Assyrian culture.