

Dear Colleagues and Students,

You are kindly invited to the seminar entitled as “Imperial Relatives and Neighbourhood Ties in Early Palaiologan Constantinople” organised by the Department of History.

Date: 14 March 2024, Thursday

Time: 16.30

Avenue: A-Z31 Seminar Room

Title: Imperial Relatives and Neighbourhood Ties in Early Palaiologan Constantinople

Speaker: James Cogbill

Abstract:

It is widely accepted that Constantinople possessed an overwhelming ideological significance within the Byzantine Empire. Despite its symbolic value, however, we know surprisingly little about the city itself in the early Palaiologan period (c. 1258-1341). Our picture of urban governance, administrative and religious structures, professional associations, social interaction, and daily life within Constantinople is partial and impressionistic, and largely reliant on scattered textual references due to limited surviving or accessible material culture. The omnipotence of emperors in textual sources has led to a distinct tendency in modern scholarship to think of early Palaiologan Constantinople through a largely imperial lens: where the emperor went, what he built, how he interacted with his subjects, and how his broader policies affected the city.

This paper explores the ways in which a single branch of the extended imperial family engaged with Constantinople at a local, neighbourhood level through patronal, socio-economic, and charitable networks. In doing so, it suggests a new way of understanding early Palaiologan Constantinople, which recognises the multiplicity of actors involved in shaping the city in this period.

Bio:

James Cogbill is a third-year doctoral candidate in History at the University of Oxford. His thesis examines the political culture of the late thirteenth- and early fourteenth-century Byzantine Empire through the lens of the extended imperial family. This research is supervised by Professor Catherine Holmes and funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council, the Clarendon Scholarship Fund and All Souls College, Oxford. He previously studied for a BA in Ancient and Medieval History at the University of Birmingham and an MPhil in Late Antique and Byzantine Studies at the University of Oxford.