

**ЛЕКЦИИ В РАМКИТЕ НА ПОСТОЯНИЯ ТЕМАТИЧЕН
СЕМИНАР НА ДЕПАРТАМЕНТ “ИСТОРИЯ” –
“ИСТОРИЯ И СЪВРЕМЕННОСТ”**

с гост-лектор:

д-р Димитър АНГЕЛОВ от Университета в Бирмингам

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Д-р Димитър Ангелов запозна академичната общност на Нов български университет с най-новите си научни постижения в областта на медиевистиката. Лекциите предизвикаха изключителен интерес, а студентското участие в дискусиите впечатлиха приятно лектора.

Представяме резюмета на изнесените лекции

Byzantine Society, 11th-15th Century
Dimitar Angelov



This lecture examines several features of Byzantine society and Byzantine social groups as they evolved after the eleventh century. The long reign of Emperor Basil II (976-1025) was a transitional period: the last time in middle Byzantium when an emperor attempted to undermine the economic powers of the big landholding families; the culmination of a process

of military expansion which led to the conquest of Tsar Samuel's Bulgarian principality; the first concession of trade privileges to Venice; the appearance of new families in the military aristocracy of the empire. The imperial office throughout the period tended to strike alliances with aristocratic factions. The usurpation of Emperor Alexios I Komnenos (1081-1118) gave rise to well-known reforms of the court hierarchy aimed at consolidating the power of the ruling aristocratic clans of the Komnenoi and the Doukai. The practice of government by privilege, which gathered momentum during the Komnenian period, had

significant long-term consequences for the power and economic well-being of the aristocracy, which remained, for the most part, an imperial and city-based aristocracy. The *pronoia* system was a symptom of the practice of government by privilege; it disrupted the traditionally close relationship between provincial soldiers and the land. The wealth of the Byzantine city was rising throughout the period, with individual cities experiencing different economic factors behind their prosperity. Self-governing urban institutions were very rare in Byzantium, a situation which contrasts with the antique poleis and some Western towns after the twelfth century. The general tendency in the history of the Byzantine peasantry throughout this period was the emergence of a large proportion of dependent peasants (*paroikoi*), who were under the economic power of large lay or ecclesiastical landlords, but who were not serfs bound to the land in the medieval sense of this word. The power and prestige of the Byzantine Church were steadily on the ascendant in the period, at both a central and a local level.

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**Political Thought and Imperial Ideology in Byzantium,
13th -14th Century**
Dimitar Angelov



The year 1204 was a turning point in Byzantium's history: the empire collapsed; the city of Constantinople fell under Latin occupation; and several states began soon thereafter to raise rival claims to being Byzantium's true successor until one of them, the empire of Nicaea, recaptured Constantinople from the Latins in 1261. Political

thought in Byzantium always encompassed official as well as semi-official (or unofficial) voices. The period after 1204 – when the empire was oftentimes in financial and political crisis and its propaganda machinery was weak – saw a

number of important new developments. At an official level, the level of Byzantine court rhetoric, there was no radical departure from the imperial idea (the *Kaiseridee*) as known from previous centuries. The power of the emperor remained God-given, sacred and universalist, even though after 1261 the city of Constantinople, New Rome, became the chief carrier of the ideology of universalism. Outside the sphere of court rhetoric and propaganda, however, five reformist currents of thought went against the spirit of the official imperial ideology. A quasi-feudal current of thought; a current of thought based on Roman notions of public power; an anti-taxation current of thought and hierocratic thinking challenged old ideological attributes and rights of the imperial office. Many of the anti-authoritarian ideas were first formulated in the period after 1204. Only the fifth reformist current of political thinking was autocratic in essence and centralizing in spirit: the Machiavellian ideas of the Nicaean crown prince and emperor Theodore II Laskaris. The late Byzantine literati and intellectuals were, thus, more socially engaged and politically imaginative than it has traditionally been assumed.