***Succession of Ancient Empires***

**University of Waterloo, German Reading Room (ML 245) – Fr., Feb. 28, 2020**

**Abstracts**

9:45-10:00 Altay Coşkun, University of Waterloo ON  
**Introduction**

History has no essence in itself, but is a construction and comes into being through human acts of remembering, researching, narrating, writing or enacting on stage. Collection, selection and creative development of information on the past – whether one with an effective likeness to the thus-created historical account or one that is only imagined – is ideally shaped by scholarly methods (‘source criticism’, as the historian would say), but in practice it was and still is most often guided by ideological world views or even more specific political, economic or religious interests. If this is a pertinent description of historical construction in general, then it is particularly pertinent for lists of eras, empires or dynasties ascribed to a past. (Re-) Configurations of preceding time periods are pervasive in the literary productions and cultural memories of any given society, the triplet ‘Antiquity, Middle Ages, Modern Age’ is one of the most established sequences in the Western World. Such sequences usually depend on a mix of received traditions on the one hand and, on the other, on a creative act that is designed to give meaning and purpose to an audience in any given presence.

The basic concept was already known to the Near-Eastern kingdoms of the Bronze-Ages, as a result of which we already find two archetypical variations in highly elaborated versions at the beginning of European literature. In his *Theogony* (116ff.), Hesiod from Boeotian Ascra (ca. 700 BCE) develops his cosmogony into a sequence from the crudest natural powers (Gaia & Uranos) over an intermediate generation (Titans) to the refined order of the Olympian gods under Zeus. In contrast to this optimistic line of succession, Hesiod views the evolution of human civilization with much pessimism in his *Works and Days* (106–201): mankind started in an ideal ‘golden’ age and then gradually deteriorated, going through a ‘silver’, ‘bronze’ and ‘heroic’ age, before ending up in the most depraved ‘iron’ age. 700 years later, the Latin poet Ovid retells the older and simpler version of the myth, which only knows the four ‘metal’ ages (*Metamorphoses* I 89–150).

Obviously, the Greeks and Romans shared the same Near Eastern (Ugaritic?) heritage as the Jewish author, who wrote under the pseudonym ‘Daniel’ by or in the 160s BCE. His ‘visions’ responded to the politics of King Antiochos IV Epiphanes: it was perceived as the harshest attack on the cult of Yahweh – and, with this, on the most defining element of Jewish identity, imagined as the deep point of a series of foreign rules over Judaea. The *Book of Daniel* in its canonical form includes four Succession-of-Empires allegories which became the most influential in Jewish, Christian and Occidental thought for over two millennia. Most recent research questions the traditional attempts to decode those allegories and proposes new keys to unlock the historical construction as intended by its author. The present workshop seeks to discuss these and other findings more broadly in the context of the ideological creation of past dynasties and empires that are meant to give meaning to a present audience.

10:00-10:50 Agnieszka Wojciechowska, University of Wroclaw, Poland:   
**Succession of Empires in Egypt from the 30th Dynasty to Ptolemy I**

Egypt of the 4th century BCE is the prime example of succession of empires, from the last native dynasties, through a short Persian occupation, to the conquest of Alexander and the nascent rule of the Ptolemies, the longest reigning dynasty in Egypt. Unlike most modern academic works (over)reliant on classical authors, this paper tries to investigate the succession of empires in Egypt in the light of Egyptian evidence, archaeological and epigraphic alike. It deals with the royal building patronage and with career choices of the Egyptian elite. Local evidence tells us of some 192 monumental structures erected, repaired and rebuilt by Egyptian and Macedonian rulers, none by the Persian kings. The high point of temple building in the 4th century BCE fell under Nektanebo I and II with 70 and 52 attested built, embellished, or repaired temples. The Macedonian kings largely followed in the footsteps of the pharaohs of the 30th Dynasty (380–343 BCE) with a pronounced concentration on building patronage in Thebes.

Five prominent members of the priestly elite of Egypt stand out in the second half of the 4th century BCE. The most famous man was Somtutenfnakht, who rose to a high position under Nektanebo II and kept it under the Persians. Inscriptions on the walls of the family tomb of Petosiris attest five generations of the high priests of Thoth in Hermopolis Magna, who managed to navigate through changing political rule in Egypt. Wennefer was a physician and priest in the temple of Isis in Bebheit el-Hagar, which was constructed under Nektanebo II; in all probability, he was the father of Harsiesis, an advisor to kings of the 30th dynasty. Wereshnefer performed a stunning number of functions in various parts of Egypt from the age of the 30th dynasty until Ptolemy I. Djedhor the Saviour was a high priest from Athribis whose career lasted from the age of the 30th Dynasty until Philip III Arrhidaios. They were all priests, usually of the highest order, connected with more than one temple each over a long period of time. They were certainly capable of endearing themselves both to native pharaohs and to conquerors of Egypt who often bestowed new titles and dignities on them. For all their elevated position and the roles they played in Persian and Macedonian times, they are never mentioned in classical sources overwhelmingly concerned with Greek history in Egypt.

11:00-11:50 Mac Lewis, University of Waterloo ON:   
**The Sullan Foundation of Roman *Florentia***

The origin of the Roman colony *Florentia* (modern Florence) was questioned as early as Dante (*Paradiso* 16.140-50), who wrote that violent Roman colonization came upon native Etruscan territory. Vasari painted a similar scene two centuries later in his “*La Fondazione di Florèntia*.” The first systematic study on the city’s foundation was by Borghini in the 16th century, who also saw Etruscan origins, though sometimes confusing ancient monuments with Medieval. During the subsequent centuries, scholarship on *Florentia* looked more critically at monuments, inscriptions, and the ancient record. A shift happened in the early 1900s, however, when it became commonly accepted that *Florentia* was founded by Julius Caesar in the mid-40s B.C.E. and was settled as a colony shortly afterward by Augustus. Evidence for this episode is drawn almost exclusively from the fourth century text *Liber Coloniarum* (213.6-7) and this interpretation was solidified during the 1940s and 1950s when significant ideological importance was attached to the view that unified Italy’s first capital and cultural center was founded by a strong, imperial Rome (Capecchi 1996).

More recently, Hardie (1965) advocated for a Triumviral colony founded by Octavian in 41 B.C.E, and Campbell (2000) sought to pinpoint the date of veteran colonization at *Florentia* to Caesar in either 59 B.C.E. or between 47 and 45 B.C.E., to the Triumvirs shortly thereafter, or to Octavian after the battle of Actium. Yet, these interpretations consider only texts that relate to existing evidence of the city’s centuriation, while omitting textual and material evidence that contradict the accepted narrative of imperial foundation.

This paper introduces recent archaeological data, together with textual evidence that seemingly contradicts the account of the *Liber*, to provide an earlier date for and a settlement system of the origin of *Florentia.* In respect to textual testimony, Florus (2.9.27) records that *Florentia* was “put up for auction by Sulla” in the years after the Social War. Since *Florentia* is not supposed to have existed until fifty years later, this passage has been discarded in most treatments of colonial foundation. Similarly, Granius Licinianus (36.34-5) states that in 78 B.C.E. *veterani Sullani* who reportedly had been settled at *Faesulae* (modern Fiesole), the hilltop above present-day Florence, lived in rural *castella*. From their hilltop city, the native *Faesulani* attacked the Sullan colonists, driving them from the land. This passage has also been disregarded in treatments of *Florentia*, since Appian’s longer and more mainstream account of the Social War places these veterans at *Faesulae*.

These previously overlooked textual references are supported by archaeological data published in the last decade (Pagni 2010). For instance, inscriptions from *Faesulae* are only in pre-Social War Etruscan and Flavian-era Latin, with no epigraphy attributable to a Sullan colony. At Florence, excavations in the city center reveal late-second and early-first-century-BCE coins in the forum area under the Capitolium and early-first-century-BCE houses along what would later be the colony’s *cardo*. This paper argues that the city’s origin dates to the settlement of Sullan colonists at a new site in the valley along the Arno River. This nascent city gradually developed into Augustan *Florentia,* akin to Republican-era *fora* that sprang up along other Roman roads, bringing with it houses, commercial buildings, a port facility, and a market center.

12:00-12:50 Krzysztof Nawotka, University of Wroclaw, Poland: **The Epigraphic Habit in Western Asia Minor and the Transition of Empires**

Epigraphic curves in three major cities of Western Asia Minor are very different in their shapes. In Miletos, two distinct maxima fall in the 3rd century BCE and the 2nd century CE. The epigraphic curve of Ephesos is dominated by the maximum in the 2nd century CE. The highest peak of the epigraphic curve of Pergamon falls in the 2nd century BCE. The shapes and components of the epigraphic curves in Western Asia Minor depend on the status of the cities (free or subject to a king), their constitution (democratic or not), to a lesser degree on the local economy. The local peak of the late-6th-century-BCE curve of Miletos is followed by some 150 years of depression related to the interference of Persian and Athenian empires. Democracy brought to Asia Minor by Alexander the Great resulted in a fast pace of inscribing. Epigraphic peaks of the Hellenistic age resulted in Miletos from vigorous inscribing by democratic bodies, while in Pergamon from royal patronage. The transition to empire brought everywhere epigraphic minima, to a degree reflecting the transition from the democratic constitution prevalent in the Hellenistic age to the *régime des notables* of the early Roman Empire. The absolute maxima of the epigraphic curves under the Antonines surely result from unprecedented prosperity of Western Asia Minor in this age. Among the contributing factors is the popularity of Hadrian honored with statues and worshipped on inscribed altars. The large presence of Romans from Italy and the Western provinces in Ephesos, the seat of power and economic centre of imperial Asia Minor, resulted in a high proportion of Latin inscriptions among the epigraphic output in this city from the first until the 4th century CE.

14:00-14:50 Altay Coşkun, University of Waterloo ON:   
**A Giant and Some Beasts in Daniel’s Prophecies – Allegories that Want to Be Decoded**

The protagonist of the *Book of Daniel* is a pious Jew who was taken into captivity in 607/6 BCE. He became an influential advisor of the Babylonian kings Nebuchadnezzar and Belshazzar as well as of the Persian kings Cyrus and Darius (522–486 BCE). In this capacity, he is said to have explained dreams, worked miracles, and seen visions of future events. Common (scholarly) opinion relates many of the dreadful allusions to the challenges of the Jews and their cult under King Antiochos IV Epiphanes: he responded violently after the former high priest Jason had revolted in Jerusalem in 168 BCE; the profanation of the temple of Yahweh (167–164 BCE) is represented as a disaster of cosmic dimension. Four of the book chapters provide allegorical series of empires, the last of which had to fall before the predetermined divine order would be established. Most prominent is the image of the giant with a golden head, silver breast, bronze belly and hips, iron legs and feet partly of iron, partly of clay (*Dan* 2.31–45). This is followed by a list of four beasts: a lioness with wings of an eagle, a bear hungry for flesh, a leopard with four wings and four heads, and the largest beast armed with iron teeth to devour its enemies and with massive feet to trample them down respectively; it also has 11 horns, the last of which represents the worst evildoer of all times (*Dan* 7). Next comes a ram with two uneven horns; it is defeated by a goat with one tremendous horn; after this breaks off, four grow in its stead; from one of these a new one springs that extends into the sky and ends the daily sacrifice to the Lord (*Dan* 8.3–11). The fourth sequence is less allegorical in that it alludes to some Persian kings before their realm is taken over by a heroic king. He is succeeded by four kings, two of which (the Kings of the North and the South) subsequently engage in a series of wars, until the King of the North prevails and desecrates the temple in his arrogance.

From antiquity to the present day, many Jews and Christians have taken the narrative literally: they date the composition of the book into the Babylonian or Persian periods and reconstruct a series of empires that began with the Babylonian and ended with the one they were / are living in, expecting divine salvation to be coming soon. More critical exegetes agree that at least large parts (esp. chs. 7–12) were composed by a contemporary eyewitness of the 160s BCE. Some of them follow Josephus and early Christian commentators in identifying the giant’s feet and the iron-teethed beast with Rome as the last imperial power that Daniel refers to. But this is not an option: the Romans are referred to as a minor and positive player in *Dan* 11.18 and can barely take the role of the most destructive empire of all times in the eyes of the author. More plausibly, other scholars let all the series end with Macedonian kingdoms, mostly with the Seleukids, but still fall short of delivering clear-cut solutions, since they insist that all allegories run parallel and start with the Babylonian Kingdom. This choice results in a lot of obscurity which contrasts with the author’s obsession with clues that lead to straight-forward historical allegoresis. Only if his readers could see for themselves that all predictions from hindsight had already come true would they be confirmed in their determination to remain steadfast in their faith and resist sacrilege.

As a first reliable key to solving the set of riddles, I propose accepting that all four allegories lead up to Seleukid rule and the promise of its demise, without conveying historical knowledge of the long-desired eschatological order to succeed; allegories two, three and four even specifically allude to Antiochos IV as the last and most dreadful king, whose death would be the cosmic turning point. As a second key, I suggest abandoning the idea that the four allegories duplicate identical sequences of empires; they rather deliberately vary details and focus, but they cross-reference each other in subtle ways that allows for decoding each of the implied rules. Critical to overcoming misunderstandings is to identify the four beasts (and not the four-headed leopard) with the four horns of the goat and the four kingdoms coming from the sea: they represent the four major successor kingdoms which to a larger or lesser degree overlap in time.

15:00-15:50 Ben Scolnic, Temple Beth Sholom, Hamden CT and Southern Connecticut State University:   
**The Unfulfilled Vision: *Dan* 11.14 and the Rebellion in Jerusalem during the Fifth Seleukid-Ptolemaic War**

The obscure verse *Dan* 11.14 is found in a *vaticinium ex eventu*, *Dan* 10–12, a purported prophecy from Babylonia in the sixth century BCE that actually is a second-century BCE text from Judaea. The verse is a reference to a Judaean rebellion in Jerusalem against the rule of the Ptolemies during the Fifth Seleukid-Ptolemaic War (202–195 BCE). The rebels may have thought that the time was right to implement a famous, earlier vision of the four kingdoms and bring God’s fifth kingdom into reality. This vision, *Dan* 2.31–45, Judaea’s version of a major Near Eastern motif, may have been written during an early part of the Third Seleukid-Ptolemaic War (246–241), another time of inter-dynastic conflict when new possibilities may have been seen to be emerging. *Dan* 11.14, written c. 167, states, however, that at the time of the rebellion (c. 201–198), the kingdoms were not yet finished; it was not yet time for the establishment of the fifth kingdom. While the rebels did not succeed, the vision of a Fifth Kingdom remained part of the Judaean consciousness.

There are significant clues to the nature and outcome of the rebellion in Jerusalem in Josephus’s citation of three otherwise lost passages of Polybios and from Porphyry’s commentary on *Daniel* as transmitted by Jerome. The writers of *Dan* 11 and the Ptolemaic text on which it is based may have seen this rebellion from a negative perspective, but Antiochos III and Josephus saw it positively because of the rebels’ eventual surrender to the Seleukid king.

16:15-17: 00 Stone Chen, University of Waterloo ON:   
***Tianxia* and *Oikoumene*: Two Conceptions of Empire**

The modern Chinese use of the word for “empire,” *diguo*, is itself likely an instance of *wasei-kango*, i.e. Japanese-made Chinese words that trace back its origin no earlier than the 19th century. The Chinese use of the word, however, differs from Western practices in one critical regard – they almost never refer to the realm, the sovereignty, or the state apparatus of Imperial China as an empire in the same way we speak of the empires of the Romans, the Persians, the Mongols, the Ottomans, or the British. Chinese conception of their history therefore often focuses on dozens of distinctive historical periods distinguished by ruling dynasties. There are the Han Empire, the Tang Empire, and the Qing Empire, but seldom is there talk of a “Chinese Empire,” except for a brief period of royalist restoration in 1916. This is not to say that the Chinese lack a holistic perspective of their country’s past; far from that, civilizational continuity is a theme frequently invoked by Chinese scholars, especially within the context of comparative history. But instead of labelling the subject of this continuation an empire, the Chinese came up with alternative designations, most prominent among which are *tianxia* (all under heaven), *huaxia* (*hua* refers to the grandeur of ceremonial etiquette, *xia* refers to the exquisiteness of clothing), *tianchao* (the celestial kingdom), and *jiuzhou* (the nine provinces). Some of these concepts are still widely in use today.

One may be prompted to draw a comparison between these Chinese concepts and classical notions of *oikoumene* and *orbis terrarum*, but the latter were more expansive in their application (lands beyond the immediate reach of the Greeks and the Romans were sometimes included). They also have a more geographical rather than cultural meaning, at least before the term *oikoumene* was adopted by the Church to denote the entirety of Christian communities. While *oikoumene* became increasingly synonymous with the Roman state itself in imperial times, concepts like *tianxia* never came close to be equated with the Chinese state. In fact, as the name suggests, it is primarily predicated on whichever dynasty carries *tianming*, or the Mandate of Heaven, rather than what ethnic, political, or religious affiliation the rulers subscribed to. Consequently, dynastic successions in Chinese history were seen through the lens of the need to pass on the Mandate of Heaven from one dynasty to another. This identifiably religious emphasis on the continuity of the Mandate of Heaven also renders a mere geographical *oikoumene* / empire redundant.

17:00-17:50 Richard Wenghofer, Nipissing University, North Bay ON:   
**Empire and Culture: Decolonizing the Evidence for the Indo-Greek Kingdoms**

Between 329 and 324 BCE Alexander III of Macedon succeeded in establishing a nominative suzerainty over Baktria and Western India. Almost immediately after Alexander departed for Babylon, revolts in India wrenched the newly acquired Indus conquests from his tenuous grasp. After his death in 323 BCE, revolts in Baktria erupted which had to be ruthlessly suppressed. Subsequent to Alexander’s death, the role played by these ‘upper satrapies’ in the early wars of the diadochi is poorly understood, however, it is reasonably clear that by 305 BCE Seleukos I Nikator had brought the upper satrapies, including Baktria-Sogdiana, firmly under Seleukid suzerainty, while Alexander’s erstwhile gains in India had fallen to Chandragupta Maurya, and a balance of powers in the region was secured by a dynastic marriage between the Seleukid and Mauryan houses. This balance of power appears to have endured until the Sunga dynasty overthrew Mauryan rule in Western India at some point between 190 and 185 BCE. The chaos caused by these upheavals in Western India afforded an opportunity to the now semi-independent Euthydemid dynasty in Baktria to extend their rule over Western India, thus establishing the first ‘Indo-Greek’ kingdom. The subsequent story of Greek rule in India rests primarily upon numismatic evidence, other types of sources being too scant and fragmentary to present a full picture of events in the Hellenistic Far East generally.

Thus far I have summarized the most widely acknowledged narrative for the political geography of the Hellenistic Far East and it is this narrative that I seek to challenge in my discussion. Following the argument laid down in Frank Holt’s *Lost World of the Golden King: In Search of Ancient Afghanistan* (2012), it is my contention that our interpretation of the evidence for Greek suzerainty in India has been distorted by the pioneering work in W.W. Tarn’s *The Greeks in Bactria and India* (1938) and others who proffered readings of the evidence that were favorable to British imperial ambitions in India and Afghanistan. Holt’s observations here are critical and require a reassessment of our understanding of the evidence for the succession of political sovereignties in the Hellenistic Far East. The purpose of this paper is to provide just such a reassessment. There are three main arguments that I will pursue. The first argument is that the Indo-Greek kingdoms were limited mainly to the southern regions of Baktria and the Paropamisus and did not extend as far into India as is commonly thought. The second argument is that the bicultural coinage of the Indo-Greeks cannot be used as indicia for the ethnicity of the kings who minted it or the people among whom it circulated. Instead, I shall argue that the unique bicultural characteristics of the Indo-Greek coinage should be seen as an attempt on the part of the rulers of these march-states to establish their own local dynastic ambitions by advertising on their coinage their connections to the major hegemonic powers hemming them in on their western and eastern borders.