



BIWEEKLY COLLOQUIUM
Monday, May 12th, 4:15 p.m.

**HELLENISTIC CITIES AND ROMAN CIVIL WAR:
THE GREEK WORLD FROM 43 TO 39 BCE**

Henning Börm
Konstanz University

The establishment of Macedonian hegemony over Hellas in the late 4th century BCE has often been regarded as the end of Greek freedom. This event was most commonly held to be a turning point in the history of the Greek city-states (poleis): Since the ancient world was from then on controlled by Hellenistic monarchies, the cities, it was thought, lost their political importance and turned into mere shadows of their former selves. They still claimed to be democracies, but most scholars believed that they were in fact ruled by oligarchs who were “friends” of a king.

Since about 1990, however, there has been a paradigm shift in the field of classical studies. Today, the Hellenistic world (338 to 30 BCE) is, on the contrary, widely held to have been a time of poleis’ flourishing, many of which were able to take advantage of the rivalries between the monarchies, thus gaining even more freedom of action than before. Moreover, most scholars today think that at least during the first one and a half centuries of the Hellenistic era, there were actual democracies in many cities. On the other hand, the continuance of another phenomenon that had always been “an essential aspect of the polis” (Mogens Hansen) into post-classical times has very often been overlooked: Civil strife (stasis). Since the genesis of the polis in the Archaic period, there had been hundreds, if not thousands of these staseis all over the Greek world and stasis continued to be a problem for Hellenistic poleis as well.

All of this changed, however, with the coming of Rome. While advancing east, the Romans had very often profited from the tendency of their Greek counterparts to fight one another. But after the destruction of the Macedonian kingdom in 167 BCE, there was no alternative left. The Romans made sure that it was their “friends” who ruled the Greek cities, and since this meant that one party had become invincible, this marked in effect the end of stasis as well: Fighting the friends of the Romans would have been suicide.

However, all this was only true as long as the Romans appeared to the Greeks to act as an entity. As soon as Romans started to fight Romans, everything was open again. Exactly this happened after the Ides of March, when Roman civil war broke out again. The aim of my paper is to deal with the effects that this had on the late Hellenistic world.

Venue: Leibnizstraße 1, Seminar Room 204