



# Francqui Foundation Conference

## Long-Term Quantification in Ancient Mediterranean History

### Josiah Ober (Stanford University), *Explaining performance in the polis system*

Thanks to some recent quantitative projects (e.g. Morris 2005, Kron 2005, Hansen 2006), it is now tolerably clear that in the half-millennium ca. 800-300 B.C., the world of the Greek poleis experienced not only demographic growth, but also sustained growth in per capita consumption. The Greek world was also unusual in being a long-lived and influential civilization organized not as an empire, but as a city-state culture in which competition among many culturally-similar states was constant, and political authority remained highly dispersed. Finally, the Greek world was historically remarkable for its capacity to develop new institutions of great interest to modernity, including egalitarian social relations and republican/democratic forms of state government. At Stanford (in collaboration with other centers), we are assembling several data-bases intended to allow us to better understand how the polis system worked by looking at the distribution and circulation of people, goods, and institutions within the polis system.

-Polis database: derived from Hansen and Nielsen IACP (2004). Codes 1035 poleis according to variables derived from IACP indices, including geographic coordinates, size (area), and institutions. Future work on this data base should focus on a subset of relatively well documented poleis, in order to code institutional features by date.

-Coin hoard database: derived from Thompson, Mørkholm and Kraay IGCH (1973). Codes coins of 80 leading poleis found in ca. 850 archaic/classical hoards, by date of hoard. This is only a proto-type of what we hope will be a much more complete and accurate coin hoard database centered at the ANS.

-Culture-leader database: derived from OCD3 (1999). Codes ca 2600 relatively well known individuals, according to birthplace, workplaces, occupations, and date (all Greco-Roman antiquity). This is a proto-type of what we hope will one day be a more comprehensive data-base, derived from the New Pauly and other sources for ancient biography.