



RECENT RESEARCH IN GRECO-EGYPTIAN INTERACTIONS

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Drawing on both archaeological and textual evidence, my research examines cultural, religious, and trade connections between Egypt and the rest of the ancient Mediterranean world. My recent book, *Egyptianizing Figurines from Delos: A Study in Hellenistic Religion* (Columbia Studies in the Classical Tradition 36; Leiden, 2011), investigates Hellenistic popular religion through an interdisciplinary study of terracotta figurines of Egyptian deities, mostly from domestic contexts, from the trading port of Delos. A comparison of the figurines' iconography to parallels in Egyptian religious texts, temple reliefs, and ritual objects suggests that many figurines depict deities or rituals associated with Egyptian festivals. An analysis of the objects' clay fabrics and manufacturing techniques indicates that most were made on Delos. Additionally, archival research on unpublished notes from early excavations reveals new data on many figurines' archaeological contexts, illuminating their roles in both domestic and temple cults. The results offer a new

perspective on Hellenistic reinterpretations of Egyptian religion, as well as the relationship between "popular" and "official" cults.

I am currently working on a second monograph dealing with "Nilotic scenes" and the Roman reinterpretation of Egyptian religion. The protagonists of Nilotic scenes are often dark-skinned pygmies or dwarfs who do battle with hippopotami and crocodiles or engage in sexual activity. Some scholars interpret these images as ridiculous, suggesting that the artists strove to mock Egyptians as comically exotic "others." However, many of the pygmy-figures' seemingly ludicrous acts actually recall ancient themes from Egyptian religion. Comparing these images to a broad range of Egyptian iconographic and textual parallels, I question current assumptions about the function of Nilotic scenes in Roman society and suggest that these scenes' numerous references to Pharaonic and Ptolemaic prototypes reveal a serious engagement with Egyptian beliefs and practices.