Conference Title

The Materiality of Hellenistic Ruler Cults (Liège, 31/05-01/06/2017)

Paper Title

**Materiality matters: What do we learn from small inscribed objects related to ruler cults?**

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The contribution focuses on small objects such as portable altars, small bases, vessel, stone plaques and blocks inscribed with dedications for rulers in an attempt to provide an in-depth analysis of a type of material that has often been neglected or underexploited, because of its serial nature and the poor textual information it bears. By combining material analysis of scripture and support with archaeological data (when available), the paper aims 1) to set the evidence back in a dynamic historical context and 2) to provide a methodological reflection on the way we can deal with an abundant but often underestimated evidence. The risk for generalization inherent in the treatment of many uncharacterized stones as “altars” emerges from a reassessment of the Cypriot documentation for Ptolemaic rulers. Moreover, Ptolemaic and Attalid case studies allows for a reflection on the role of small ritual objects in the dissemination of ruler cult across social strata and in the integration of cultic honours for rulers in the ritual landscape of the studied communities, in public as in private space, in sanctuaries as along the city streets.