

Brown University
Department of Classics
LECTURE



Part of the Hellenistic History Group series of Lectures:

Reassessing the Ptolemaic settlement policies: Another look at the “poleis”

Christelle Fischer-Bovet

University of Southern California Dornsife

Tuesday, March 21st, 5:30pm

Rhode Island Hall, Room 108

For a long time, the view was that the Ptolemies were not active in founding *polis*-like settlements, especially in comparison to the Seleucids, and the whole interpretative framework was that of rulers with little imperial ambition. Building on recent studies that challenge such a view, this paper first assesses third-century Ptolemaic settlements in the Eastern Mediterranean and in the Red Sea basin, with a focus on those called “poleis” in the sources. It then compares them to second-century Upper Egypt and Southern border “poleis,” examining the strategical and political reasons for their foundation and their location, the identity of the settlers and founders, arguing that the latter were mediators between the kings and the population rather than usurpers of the kings’ functions. Finally, it suggests that the Ptolemaic imperial administration did not reject the idea of founding poleis but “re-invented” the concept in the Egyptian context, where what could be called the “Greco-Egyptian poleis” developed.

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Please contact the Classics Department at classics_department@brown.edu or 401.863.1267 with any questions.