Introduction

Religion was a central part of life in most Roman provinces and an important aspect that shaped who people were and the daily practices they carried out (Alcock 1980; Henig 1984; Scheid 2003; Rüpke 2011; Kajava 2015). In British and European scholarship, monumental statuary has long been a way to study the religious and social beliefs and attitudes of people in the Roman world. The majority of these studies have focussed on the elites of Roman society, such as the emperor and eminent benefactors, and on the artistic and religious significance of statues depicting powerful gods and goddesses (e.g. Friedland *et al*. 2015). Yet little attention has been given to smaller, more portable forms of statuary, which had a similar role to play for the more culturally mixed populations of the Roman provinces (e.g. Durham 2012, 2014; Fittock 2015, 2020; Osborne & Vout 2016). This book therefore presents and examines the collection of mould-made terracotta (or pipeclay) objects that have been found in Britain. In doing so it will present not just a catalogue of these objects, but also carry out a typo-chronological and distributional analysis of them that analyses their consumption and contexts to discuss the different beliefs, practices and identities of the people that used them throughout the province.

Pipeclay figurines, busts, animal vessels and shrines (Fig. I.1) are relatively small clay objects (usually between 50-200mm in height) that were produced in both Central Gaul, primarily in the Allier Valley, and the Rhine-Moselle region, mainly in and around Cologne, from the first to third centuries AD (Higgins 1976; van Boekel 1987: 217-30). Masks that were mainly produced in the Rhine-Moselle region during the same period, are more life-size given they were intended to be worn. Most figurines, busts, animal vessels and shrines are thought to have been mass-produced objects that were exported widely across the Continent and to Britain (Jenkins 1977: 418) where they had several uses, including possibly as toys but more likely as religious items for domestic worship in the home and as dedicatory votives in temples and graves, while masks were probably some kind of adornment for theatrical purposes, some of which may well have been religious in nature. Though as we will see, the proportional use and popularity of each form varied considerably both within and between the Roman provinces.

In Britain the term 'pipeclay figurines' is usually used to encompass all these objects, except the masks, without differentiating between different forms (i.e. figurines, busts, animal vessels and shrines), with the term 'pipeclay' no doubt a retrospective term applied from the later Post-Medieval 'pipeclay' pipes that are made from the same white coloured fabric. On the Continent, however, the same range of objects are simply known as 'terracottas'. Although this term is more inclusive of the different forms available, it is also problematic considering it is confusingly widely applied to other clay figurative objects, such as Italian figurines of darker redder iron-rich clays that were also produced during the Roman period. Generally speaking, the obviously distinctive clay characteristics and overall style of 'pipeclay' figurines has meant that the term 'terracotta' has been applied to the Continental material with little problem, and even

Fig. I.1. Pipeclay figurines, busts, animal vessels and shrines from Britain. From left to right: Venus Type 1 no. 438, from Upper Thames Street, London (80.333), height 15.5cm. Copyright London Museum. Cockerel no. 297, from Bishopsgate Street, London (2110), height 10.1cm. Copyright London Museum; Risus no. 257, from Fishergate, York (YORYM: H859), height 12.7cm. Courtesy of Yorkshire Museum; Monkey animal vessel no. 317, from Beverley Road, Colchester (COLEM:JOS.1123), height 10cm. Photography by Douglas Atfield. Courtesy of Colchester Museums; Aedicula Type 1 no. 468, from Bloomberg, London (6337), height 15.3cm. Copyright London Museum.

in Britain, Jenkins (e.g. 1977) often uses the two terms interchangeably throughout his work. Nevertheless, for the sake of maintaining convention and in-line with how they are usually referred to in British site reports, this book will continue to use the term 'pipeclay' to describe the British finds but will clearly differentiate between their various forms throughout.

Overall, one of the main aims of this book is to present an up-to-date catalogue of all the pipeclay objects that have been found in Britain that in doing so records almost 1000 (974) objects, roughly doubling the corpus known from when the first catalogue was compiled in the late 1970s (Jenkins 1977). The majority of the catalogue was collected during 2014 to 2017, with some additions made in the years thereafter up until 2020. These objects depict a variety of different forms and types, mainly consisting of figurines of deities, but also figurines of animals, humans and composite figures, and busts of what are mainly human women and children. There are also a number of shrines, animal vessels, and masks, a small range of other miscellaneous objects in the form of eggs, and numerous bases and fragments from one or other of these various compositions.

Large collections of pipeclay objects have been found in most of the Roman Western Provinces covering the modern countries of Belgium (De Beenhouwer 2005), France (e.g. Rouvier-Jeanlin 1972; Bémont *et al*. 1993), Germany (e.g. Rüger 1980), the Netherlands (van Boekel 1987), Switzerland (Lange 1989, 1990; Von Gonzenbach 1986, 1995) and, of course, Britain (e.g. Jenkins 1957a, 1958, 1962a, 1969a, 1977 for his full catalogue, and 1978a). Most regions on the Continent now have their own catalogue of pipeclay objects, several of which have been supplemented with later additions, but the collection from Britain has not been significantly updated since Jenkins (1977) completed his unpublished thesis, *Clay Statuettes of the Roman Western Provinces* in the late 1970s. Additionally, none of these catalogues, in amongst their varied degrees of analysis, provide any insight into how the use of different pipeclay forms and types varied between Roman regions. One of the main objectives of this book is thus to carry out this kind of inter-regional comparative analysis to highlight the extent of these differences and highlight how the supply, consumption and religious beliefs and practices associated with different pipeclay forms and types varied between the provinces.

Although often regarded as religious objects for private domestic worship, a lot of the ideas about the function of pipeclay objects are based on their iconography. Despite Blanchet (1891, 1901, 1902) identifying early on that different pipeclay forms and types may well have had specific religious roles in different urban and rural provincial communities, most of the subsequent scholarly interpretations remained focussed on the fact that a large proportion of the objects depict females and children that in turn was taken to suggest that they may well specifically reflect the religious views and practices of women (e.g. Rouvier-Jeanlin 1972: 63; van Boekel 1987: 238; Bristow 2012: 16). Others have interpreted certain chronological patterns in this respect. Von Gonzenbach (1995: 387-428), for example, quantifies and dates all of the pipeclay objects in Switzerland to suggest that the production of all of the Classical male motifs was perhaps intended for the military market whereas the later 'non-Classical' female forms typically of the second century potentially had a non-military use (Drinkwater & Vertet 1992: 27; Vertet 1984; Eckardt 1999: 61). Animal figurines, meanwhile, have also been regarded as having some sort of religious significance in that they are often associated with specific gods: horses with Epona and cockerels with Mercury, for example (see generally Green, M. J. 1986, 1989), while animal vessels and masks are usually thought to have had different uses as part of other religious practices: animal vessels – also with their possible iconographic links to gods and goddesses – potentially for storing liquids and powders that were used during them, and masks for associated theatrical performances (e.g. van Boekel 1987: 776-7, 814-6; and Martelli 2013a: 160 for other clay examples produced in Italy). The detailed contextual analysis of the pipeclay objects from Britain carried out in this book both supports and challenges some of these interpretations, and also provides several new ones.

In the late 1980s and 1990s typological-quantitative analysis started to recognise associations between some pipeclay objects and their use on specific types of site (e.g. van Boekel 1987; Bémont *et al*. 1993*;* Lintz 1993; Von Gonzenbach 1995; see also Fulford 1994). Bémont *et al.* (1993), for example, showed that while figurines in Gaul are relatively evenly distributed between settlements, sanctuaries and cemeteries, deity and human types are strongly associated with settlements, as well as burials. Patterns of distribution like this – as well as further subtle nuances – have yet to be fully investigated in Britain and only a handful of small-scale studies by the likes of Bristow (2012) in Hampshire and Fittock (2015, on the large group of pipeclay objects from London, and 2020 for an assessment of all the Venus figurines known from Britain) have been attempted. A province-wide study of all of these objects in Britain will therefore undoubtedly help us to better understand the nuances of their consumption and reveal more about their meaning and how they were used throughout the province.

While the important religious role of pipeclay objects such as figurines at temples and sanctuaries has been explored in detail on the Continent (e.g. van Boekel 1987: 239-40, 903-5), this is not the case in Britain despite the several known published examples from sites such as Lowbury Hill in Berkshire (Atkinson 1916; Fulford & Rippon 1994), Harlow (Bartlett 1988a/b), Heybridge (Atkinson & Preston 1998, 2015) and Kelvedon (Rodwell 1988) in Essex, Nettleton in Wiltshire (Toynbee 1982), and a notable collection of figurines at the important temple complex site at Springhead in Kent (e.g. Penn 1958, 1959, 1964). Some of these could tell us more about the specific deities each temple was dedicated to. The importance of

Mercury, for example, has been suggested at the Balkerne Hill temple complex at Colchester where the various animal figurines linked to the god are tentatively identified as personal votive offerings (Crummy 2006). However, a more thorough investigation of which specific pipeclay forms and types were used at temples in Britain would be useful and is provided as part of this book.

The recovery of several finds from cemeteries and the graves of both adults and children across Britain (e.g. Taylor 1993, 1997; Eckardt 1999) (Fig. I.2) and the Continent (e.g. Von Gonzenbach 1995: 420; Carroll 2018: 114-16) likewise suggests that some pipeclay objects had important funerary functions. Several ideas have been put forward about the meaning of such objects based on their various forms. For example, busts of women and figurines of mother-goddesses placed in graves are often regarded as dedications representing family members and ancestors accompanying and protecting the deceased in the afterlife. Figurines of animals, meanwhile, are often seen as depictions of sacrificial animals that formed part of an associated funerary practice. At the same time, the occurrence of pipeclay figurines and other objects in the graves of children has often led some to postulate that some may well have been toys, and that those with adults were therefore the deceased's childhood possessions (e.g. Kyll 1966: 52-3, 67; Rouvier-Jeanlin 1972: 29; Jenkins 1977: 418, 523; Rüger 1980: 33, 90*; cf*. Eckardt 1999: 60). Some pipeclay objects, usually figurines, might have been used as toys. A small number with attached wheels may fall into this category, while others containing small clay pellets have been interpreted as rattles on the Continent (e.g. van Boekel 1987: 239-40). Yet there are no examples of this kind of thing in Britain. Moreover, the use of ceramic objects as toys can likewise be questioned considering that a vast array of objects made of more suitable 'child-friendly' materials, such as leather, wax and wood, some with moving parts, are known throughout the Roman world that are more likely toys based on their form and associated contextual evidence (e.g. Dasen 2011, 2012; Harlow 2013). With this in mind, this book will consequently closely examine all of the pipeclay objects from temples and burials from Britain in typological and contextual detail to try and better understand their potential religious use and meaning in these contexts, as well as determine to what extent they are likely to be toys. Yet in doing so it is important to consider that some pipeclay objects may well have had multiple functions and that a single object may well have been both a toy and a religious object at different stages of its life. It is also possible that in many cases the contextual evidence available, or the lack of it, may not give any indication as to whether a particular object was even used as an object of play or not.

Fig. I.2. Drawing of the pipeclay figurines from the 'Child's Grave' cremation burial at Colchester. Drawing by Josiah Parish for the Essex Archaeological Society 1866 (COLEM.1989.70). Courtesy of Colchester Museums.

One of the other prominent general assumptions made in both antiquarian and modern literature is that as objects made of clay, pipeclay figurines, busts and shrines were less valuable, cheaper and more widely available alternatives to more valuable, expensive and rarer metal figurines that were used for similar purposes. One of the fundamental principles of this view is that objects made of clay were typically low value objects. However, this notion has recently been questioned, not least by Glinister (2006: 27-30) who suggests that terracotta figurines from republican Italy were not necessarily easy or cheap to produce, but also others who now question the social status of the people that used them. Recke (2013: 1074), for example, has pointed out that we should be wary about unequivocally associating such clay objects with people of lower social status based upon the lower value of the material and its perceivably less costly production process, while Scopacasa (2015) has noted that not all clay figurines in central Italy made from the fourth to second centuries BC were exclusively used as dedications and gifts by common people or the poor. As such, while the pipeclay objects from Britain and the Continent have all traditionally been interpreted as 'low value' objects, it is now time to reconsider whether this was entirely the case and try to perhaps reveal a more nuanced picture about their value and the social status of their users.

Ascribing economic and social value to pipeclay objects is very difficult by analysing their clays, styles and spatial and contextual distributions alone, but one way to get a better idea of this is to directly compare the updated corpus of pipeclay objects from Britain to the *c.* 1000 metal figurines from the province (see Durham 2010, 2012, 2014). Taking this kind of detailed approach makes it possible to attain a more accurate and nuanced picture about their different respective social values, as well as their different functions and associated practices. In doing so I also hope to differentiate between the religious beliefs and status (i.e. age, gender, ethnicities) of the individuals and social groups that used each type of object in Britain.

As one of the largest collections from any of the Roman provinces, the significant quantity of 974 pipeclay objects from Britain additionally offer the chance to quantify the distributions of various production centres, thereby giving an insight into how production and export were organised in relation to the British market. Doing so allows us to explore some important questions, such as how pipeclay objects were supplied and transported to the province, and if availability in Britain was a reflection of consumer preferences or selective export choices. Whether producers, merchants or consumers had more influence in terms of the products 'selected' for the British market may never be known, but what we can do is assess their availability in the province and how the British market changed through time by comparing the different proportions and distributions of specific pipeclay products (i.e. forms and types) and considering what might have affected any changes. As a result, this book concentrates on the consumption of pipeclay objects in Britain but it also gives a useful insight into the dynamics behind their production, supply and availability to people in the province.

Overall then, the emphasis of this book is to examine the consumption and context of pipeclay objects in Britain. While most pipeclay objects across the Roman world probably have multiple interrelated functions as small ritual objects, votive offerings, funerary objects and possibly toys, previous work on the subject has not assessed whether there are any subtler patterns of use and practice between different social groups throughout the province. There are also sweeping generalisations that need reconsideration, such as the ideas that all pipeclay objects were of low economic and social value, that iconographically those depicting females were possessions and therefore reflect the practices of women, and that many of the pipeclay objects from the graves of children were used as toys. The systematic analysis of contexts associated with pipeclay objects in Britain provided in this book redresses the validity of these kinds of interpretations and provides a more nuanced understanding of their function and use.

Although roughly half of the pipeclay objects in Britain are antiquarian finds, the other half are more modern discoveries that are particularly suited to this kind of detailed contextual analysis because of the well-recorded excavation information they come with. The full database of finds and associated data are available here: https://doi.org/10.30861/9781407362281-Appendix2. This large collection of material provides a rich source of data for detailed typological, chronological and spatial and social analyses to give a valuable insight into the nature of religious belief in Roman Britain. This information, and the subsequent analyses it is used for, can also highlight which pipeclay forms and types were used where, who used them (e.g. military, urban and/or rural populations), and how these groups used them throughout the province. Specific detailed analysis of the objects from habitation and ritual contexts, such as temples and burials, can also highlight subtle differences in the religious practices of certain individuals and social groups.

Over the last few decades, similarly well-recorded material has led to a wealth of recent material-based studies on Roman objects in Britain, from Samian (Willis 2011) and lighting equipment (Eckardt 2002a) to cosmetic instruments (Eckardt & Crummy 2008) and metal figurines (Durham 2012), as well as thematic studies on deposit types, such as burials and other funerary contexts (e.g. Swift 2010; Pearce 2013; Pearce *et al*. 2015). How objects relate to and reflect social and cultural identities in relation to age, gender, ethnicity and status are all focal points of social analysis in each of these studies, but these themes have not been addressed in relation to the collection of pipeclay objects in Britain or on the Continent (see Chapter 2 for a review of identity studies in relation to Roman material culture). It is thus argued throughout this book that pipeclay objects and the way that they were used in Britain and elsewhere was another important way in

which certain individuals and social groups constructed and expressed their own specific social status and cultural identities throughout the Western Provinces.

The overall aim of this book is to provide a full contextual analysis of all of the pipeclay objects found in Roman Britain. To do this, Chapter 1 takes a reflective look at the development of pipeclay studies on the Continent and how this material has been studied in Britain, with a focus on how the function and social significance of these objects has been interpreted. Building on this, Chapter 2 goes on to consider how theoretical concepts of identity have more recently been applied to Roman material culture studies and explains how this can also be done in terms of studying pipeclay objects in Britain to learn more about the people that used them. Chapter 3 moves on to outline the methodology for the book overall. This chapter explains which published and unpublished sources were consulted to ensure that as many objects as possible were included in the study, before explaining how each object was recorded, what contextual information was recorded, why this was done, and how the dataset is analysed in this respect.

The subsequent chapters evaluate the assemblage typologically, chronologically and contextually to analyse several aspects, such as how and where the pipeclay objects in Britain were produced and supplied, the social groups that used them, what they were used for, and the various religious practices that different social groups utilised them for across the province. These analyses are based on the catalogue as it was in 2020 and so does not include the more recent discoveries that may have been made over the past few years. Any additions would not be expected to contradict the identified data trends. This begins in Chapter 4, which examines the production evidence for pipeclay objects found in Britain. As no evidence for production has been found in the province, attention instead focuses on how these ceramic objects were made and identifying their production centres in Central Gaul and the Rhine-Moselle region; this also highlights how the market in Britain was supplied. To do this a visual assessment of style and clay colour is first carried out to try and identify how many workshops supplied which pipeclay objects to Britain. The inscriptions and makers' marks on some figurines are also examined to identify any links with known producers and relate the production of pipeclay objects to other forms of mass-produced Roman ceramics, such as Samian pottery. Chemical and portable X-ray fluorescence analysis of fabrics are other techniques that could help better identify the provenance of individual pipeclay forms and types, but on this occasion were not used because of the inconclusive results such methods often provide when applied to ceramics (e.g. Lahanier & Rouvier-Jeanlin 1977; Lahanier *et al*. 1990; see also Hunt & Speakman 2015). Combining this information about production centres, fabric analysis and makers' marks therefore not only establishes which pipeclay goods were made in Central Gaul and the Rhine-Moselle region, but also adds to the picture of how pipeclay objects were produced and supplied to Britain, affecting their availability in the province, and explores how competitive the Romano-British market was between the producers of these regions.

In Chapter 5 a complete typological assessment of all the pipeclay objects is conducted to analyse their consumption in Britain. The more descriptive elements of each form and type are provided in Appendix 1, along with a summary of each depiction's iconography and symbolic significance. It is not the aim of this book to discuss and reconsider pipeclay objects in terms of the wider study of Roman art. As discussed in Chapter 1, this approach has often been used for their study which, although providing useful insights into their iconographic origins and significance, as well as their function, has often been prioritised over a thorough contextual analysis of both specific depictions and the wider British collection overall. In that regard, the contextual information available for each find is provided in the digital catalogue, with data about each individual object and their find circumstances.

Chapter 5 thus complements this useful art-historical backdrop, highlighting both the origins and broader religious and cultural significance of the deity, animal and human imagery depicted in pipeclay form. Most of the chapter quantifies the different pipeclay forms and figurine types to highlight the nature of typological trends in the assemblage. This identifies the most common, rare and exotic types in Britain and explores their possible significance. The composition of the British assemblage is then directly compared with that of Continental collections from France (Rouvier-Jeanlin 1972), Belgium (De Beenhouwer 2005), the Netherlands (van Boekel 1987) and Switzerland (Von Gonzenbach 1986, 1995) to highlight the varied character of pipeclay consumption between these different regions during the Roman period.

Completed in 2010 and published in 2012, a study by Durham conducted a detailed analysis of *c.* 1000 metal figurines found in Roman Britain from published and unpublished sources. As well as classifying and quantifying all the deity, animal and human types depicted and in doing so noting a high proportion of male deities, Durham highlights the presence of rare figurine types depicting Eastern deities from London and Colchester and evaluates the unique style and distribution of certain groups, such as the Southbroom figures (Durham 2014) and horse and rider figurines (Durham 2010: 338-56). The second part of Chapter 5 thus compares the typological composition of the metal and pipeclay figurine assemblages from Britain to see if there are any differences between the depictions represented and considers the extent that this might reflect differences in beliefs and social status between the people who used them.

A full chronology of the British pipeclay assemblage is provided in Chapter 6 where stylistic dating is utilised by matching specific forms, types and sub-types of object with identical production moulds and parallel objects from dated contexts on the Continent. Any discrepancies

between the British and Continental finds from dated contexts and where this provides new evidence for earlier use of any given pipeclay form and type is also highlighted by systematically examining the Romano-British context dates. Examining the assemblage in this way reveals the temporal patterns of pipeclay supply to and consumption in Britain, as well as the movement of religious ideas and practices into the province from the Continent.

Contextual analysis of the pipeclay objects in Britain commences in Chapter 7 with a spatial distribution analysis that plots the location of each find on a map and discusses any significant geographic trends both overall and over time from the first to fifth centuries. The spatial distribution is followed by a two-stage social distribution analysis based on the evaluation of the different sites (e.g. military, urban and rural) and deposit types (e.g. burials, temples and occupation deposits) from which pipeclay objects have been recovered. Examination of the social distributions of different forms (e.g. figurines/busts, shrines, animal vessels and masks), depictions (e.g. deities, animals and humans), and representations (e.g. males, females and children, and common and rare types) follows to highlight patterns of regional beliefs and possible practices. The following chapter (Chapter 8) builds upon the analysis in Chapter 5 by directly comparing the distributions of pipeclay objects and metal figurines to examine whether more 'valuable' metal figurines were used any differently geographically and contextually to the 'less valuable' ceramic objects, and by whom.

Finally, a closer look at the ritual use of pipeclay objects in hoards, sanctuaries and burials is carried out in Chapter 9. Here, the different forms and types of pipeclay objects recovered from these contexts are identified and a full evaluation of grave structures and associated grave goods offers valuable insights into the age, gender, status and cultural identities of the people buried with them. Assessing all the pipeclay burials from the province in this way not only reveals the character and regional extent of this practice but also demonstrates how important some pipeclay objects were for certain child funerary rites of foreign incomers in parts of south-eastern Britain throughout the first to fourth centuries. The pipeclay objects from these burials and their associated contextual information are provided in Appendix 2.

This book therefore combines and analyses old and new data to re-evaluate a large dataset of important religious objects in a new, theoretically informed way to shed more light on how pipeclay objects were integral parts of daily religious life, practice and identity construction for people in Roman Britain. It also serves as a further case study in terms of how contextual Romano-British material culture studies produce a more illuminating picture of how people lived their lives in what was a culturally mixed and vibrant province. It is only by examining and comparing surviving archaeological material in this way that we can truly continue to improve our understanding of life in Britain during the Roman period, and hopefully this study goes some way in contributing towards forming a better picture of this.