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The Model of the *Pamphilius* Obelisk of Madrid from an Egyptological Perspective

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The Royal Palace of Madrid houses in its collections a superb *modellino* in bronze of the Obelisk of Piazza Navona (*Fontana dei Quattro Fiumi*, Roma) made in the *Seicento*, both *fontana* and bronze model, by the Baroque artist G. L. Bernini. Extensive research has been done about the historical vicissitudes of this piece previous to this paper. However, under the eyes of the Egyptologist, this bronze obelisk provides new information. Bernini did not copy the Egyptian hieroglyphs directly from the original stone obelisk. In fact, he copied on his scaled model the hieroglyphs drawn by A. Kircher in his book devoted to the *Obeliscus Pamphilius*. Furthermore, the restoration of the stone obelisk was a cooperative work done by both Bernini and Kircher, with the German Jesuit scholar using specifically his own conceptions about Egyptian hieroglyphs to cover (in an interesting way) the epigraphic *lacunae* on the stone obelisk. A date for this excellent bronze *guglia*, is also proposed at the end of the present paper.

En el Palacio Real de Madrid se encuentra una espléndida maqueta de bronce del obelisco de Piazza Navona (Fuente de los Cuatro Ríos, Roma) realizada por Bernini. La pieza ha sido objeto de varios estudios desde hace algo más de una década, realizados siempre por historiadores del Arte. Sin embargo, a cualquier egiptólogo le llamará la atención la extraña forma en que fueron copiados los jeroglíficos en la maqueta. Nuestro trabajo desvela que dichos signos no se copiaron del original (o sea, del obelisco de piedra) sino de un documento intermedio, en el que aparecían desvirtuados: el libro dedicado por A. Kircher al *Obeliscus Pamphilius*. La maqueta se hizo, además, eco de signos usados por Kircher para llenar lagunas del original fracturado, permitiéndonos conocer mejor el pensamiento del jesuita egiptólogo. Por último, proponemos una fecha de elaboración de la pieza.

Keywords: G.L. Bernini, Athanasius Kircher, Obelisks in Rome, Piazza Navona, Royal Palace of Madrid, modern hieroglyphs, Egyptomania, obelisk's models.

Palabras clave: G.L. Bernini, Athanasius Kircher, obeliscos en Roma, Piazza Navona, Palacio Real de Madrid, jeroglíficos modernos, Egiptomanía, maquetas de obeliscos.

The Royal Palace in Madrid¹ houses a magnificent model of the *Pamphilius* obelisk of Rome. It was made in gilded bronze, to scale, in the mid-17th century. Its measurements are: 156 cm height, with an elliptical base of 91 x 80 cm. The inventory number is: Palacio Real de Madrid 10086546 (fig. 1).

On its four faces a text was copied that, apparently, was the hieroglyphic composition that decorated the original obelisk. The Baroque pedestal of the bronze model as well as that of the stone obelisk are both inscribed with Latin texts. It is well known, the real monument has presided since the 17th century at the *Fontana dei Quattro Fiumi* in *piazza*

Acknowledgements: I am grateful to Dr. Lucía E. Díaz-Iglesias Llanos for her help in translating this paper into English. It goes without saying that any error is solely attributable to the undersigned of the present work.

1 Sanz-Pastor, 1986: 341; Garrido *et al.*, 1990: 110-115.



Figure 1. The bronze model of the Palacio Real de Madrid, in its current state. Herrero, 2009: 151.

Navona in Rome. The bronze sculpture was executed by Bernini and his workshop². We are therefore faced with one of the copies to scale, done by the great Neapolitan artist (in different materials and periods)³ of the fountain and the obelisk. The original fountain and several replicas to scale, one of which is housed in the Royal Palace of Madrid and is the subject of this article, are the product of the same artist workshop. The obelisk of Madrid has lost the figures of the four rivers in its base, but preserves some representations of animals, plants and rocks⁴.

This replica has been described as “una obra admirable e importantísima por las pocas obras de Bernini conservadas en España”⁵ [an admirable and very important piece, due to the fact that very few of Bernini’s works were kept in Spain]. The aim of this study is to show how an Egyptological analysis can contribute specifically to point out important details of the monument and the precise date of its execution.

1 | The obelisk of *piazza Navona*. A short historical outline

It may well be asked from the outset if the obelisk situated in *piazza Navona* is Egyptian. Many researchers agree with this state-

ment⁶. It was long believed (by Marucchi and Iversen, for instance) that the monument was erected in Rome by the Emperor Titus Flavius Domitianus (Domitian) around the year 81 AD in order to decorate the *Iseum Campensis*⁷. However, the accuracy of this information is called into question today. Curran recalls that, even though the obelisk’s inscription mentions Isis and a restoration (which occurred after the destruction), the main dedicatory inscription of the monument refers to the god Re-Horakhty. “It is quite possible that, as it appears to be the case with the later obelisk of Antinous, the Pamphilius was originally commissioned for an Egyptian context, and only later found its way to Rome”⁸. According to this author, the monolith was Egyptian in origin and subsequently transferred to Rome.

The monument commemorates the access to power of the already mentioned Roman Emperor Domitian, after the death of his elder brother, Titus⁹. The material of which the obelisk is made, pink granite¹⁰, certainly comes from Aswan. There are scholars that defend, as I have pointed out above, that it could have been originally located located at the entrance of one of the great Egyptian temples, perhaps at Alexandria or at Aswan (where there once stood a tem-

2 Herrero, 2009: *passim*.

3 Fagiolo, 2014: 45-51.

4 Garnica, 2006: 167.

5 Herrero, 2009: 151.

6 See Humphrey, 1986: 285.

7 Lollio Barberi *et al.*, 1995: 61.

8 Curran, 2007: 31. The inscriptions mention Isis and allude to the emperor’s restoration of “that which had been destroyed”.

9 Humphrey, 1986: 285.

10 Ciampini, 2004: 157.

ple erected by Domitian¹¹) before traveling to Rome¹².

Once in the Urbs and according to the traditional interpretation, it could have been placed in the *Iseum Campi Martis*. There, it would have presided over the great courtyard that separated the two sacred areas: the sanctuary of Isis, that had an elongated plan, and the *Serapeum*, in the form of an exedra¹³. A second hypothesis, formulated later, holds that it could have been erected by Domitian in the temple of the *gens Flavia*¹⁴, in the Quirinal, given that the monolith is not devoted to Isis. The imposing stone needle is 16,54 m height and weights 93 tones¹⁵.

A brief review of the *Historia Obelisci Pamphili a prima eiusdem in Aegypto erectione usque ad ultimam Romae* (*verbatim* quote

of Alberto Cassio) is necessary. According to Habachi, this obelisk and some others must have reached Rome without being carved with texts. It was inscribed upon arrival after an imperial command, with the columns of hieroglyphs that are seen today¹⁶. The obelisk exhibits just a single vertical line of text on each of its four faces. According to Ciampini, “la legittimazione del potere è il nucleo fondante anche delle iscrizioni de Domiziano sull’Obelisco di Piazza Navona, uno dei pochi esempli di titolatura faraonica completa di un imperatore romano”¹⁷. The throne name in this case is *Autokrator*; *Caesar* is added as a title, and *Sebastos* (= Augustus) is written linked to his personal name. Thus, *praenomen* and *nomen* are given as: Lord of the Two Lands [followed by several epithets] *Autokrator*, Son of Re, Lord of Crowns, *Kaisaros Domi-*

11 Habachi, 1984: 141. For this temple of Domitian in Aswan, today practically destroyed, see Jaritz, 1975. It is a building composed of three rooms and with a T-inverted shape. The first room is a transversal hypostyle vestibule, with intercolumnar walls on its façade, whose width was larger than the rest of the building. Its central part opens to a second rear room, maybe the *sancta sanctorum*, and finally to a last space sometimes described as an *adyton*. In other occasions, the two rooms placed behind the hypostyle vestibule are considered to be a bipartite *naos*, similar to the one of the temple of Arensnuphis in Philae (Jaritz, 1975: 242 and 249). The god to whom the temple was consecrated rests unknown, given the state of decay in which the building is nowadays. However, on the ground of epigraphic reasons, some have brought forward the possibility that it was dedicated to Khnum. This still remains a highly conjectural idea (Jaritz, 1975: 250). In any case, the reduced dimensions of the temple make improbable the existence of an obelisk, like the one in *Piazza Navona*, in its *temenos*.

12 Sorek, 2010: 79.

13 Roulet, 1972: 25-26, Lollo Barberi *et al.*, 1995: plan in p. 66.

14 The *Templum Gentis Flaviae* was erected by Domitian on the place where the Emperor was born (that is, where the house of Vespasian was located), in the Quirinal Hill, and specifically in the *regione urbis sexta ad Malum Punicum*. It had probably a circular plan, was decorated with Pentelic marble sculptures and was the place where the apotheosis of the members of this Imperial family and their military successes were commemorated. At the same time, it acted as place of cult and mausoleum for the Flavians. As regards its date of construction, it is known that in 91 AD, it was being built and in 96 AD, when Domitian was murdered, it was already finished.

15 The measurement is taken from Ciampini, 2004: 157. Cf. Selim, 1991: I, 259, who gives a height of 17,60 m.

16 Habachi, 1984: 139.

17 Ciampini, 2004: 43.

*tianos Sebastos*¹⁸. The inscription of the obelisk attempts to gather, in hieroglyphic script, some expression of the ideological rhetoric of the Roman Imperial power, such as *pax* and *securitas*¹⁹. Some graphic peculiarities of the Egyptian script have led some researchers to think that the text of this *guglia* was composed by scholars linked to a certain extent to a hypothetical “Panopolite school” (i.e., from Akhmin) based at Rome²⁰.

In conclusion, the obelisk, whose peculiar typology is, according to some scholars, “mid-way between the architecture and the sculpture”²¹, was in this case dedicated by Domitian to *his father*, the god Re-Horakhty. It was located during several centuries somewhere in the *Urbs* (be it in the *Iseum Campensis* or in the Temple of the *Gens Flavia*), until the Emperor Maxentius decided to move it to the *euripus*²² of the Circus of Romulus (thus called in honor of his son, who died in 309 AD)²³ at the beginning of the 4th century AD²⁴.

The monument was known and admired during the 15th century by the Florentine writers Poggio Bracciolini and Filarete, as

well as by the Pope Pius II²⁵, as a masterpiece that had fallen onto the floor of the Circus in the Appian Way, broken into fragments and decayed (*inter circi castrensium rudera iacentem fractumque* –as can be read in the Latin inscription that in the Baroque Age was carved on the pedestal–, *mole sua iacuit semisepulta*²⁶). It was finally re-erected at the command of Pope Innocent X (Giovanni Battista Pamphili), and probably following the suggestion of Kircher²⁷ in the modern *piazza Navona*, in front of *Palazzo Pamphili* as the central element of a magnificent ornamental fountain (fig. 2).

Bernini was well acquainted with this monolith, since he was the artist chosen to execute the *Fountain of the Four Rivers*, the center of which had to be the obelisk. By this time, it was fragmented in five parts and was taken to *piazza Navona* in 1648 being restored by Bernini himself in 1649. The *pyramidion* of the needle, which was also broken into pieces, was not placed on top, but substituted; several of its fragments are housed in the *Musei Vaticani*²⁸.

18 Ciampini, 2004: 53 and Von Beckerath, 1999²: 256-257. The text in italics corresponds to what was written inside the cartouches.

19 Ciampini, 2004: 43, n. 85.

20 Ciampini, 2004: 44, n. 86. About hieroglyphs written by Egyptians in the *Urbs* for Roman obelisks, Klotz, 2012: 563 (“new inscriptions were commissioned for obelisks in Rome”) and 567.

21 Thus goes the definition of the philosopher Hegel of the Egyptian obelisks (Hegel, 1981: 51). Kircher defines them, using Geometry, as “columnae hieroglyphicae quadrilaterae sensim versus apicem gracilescentes et deinde in parvam pyramidem truncatae”.

22 The plan of this *euripus* can be seen in Humphrey, 1986: 283, fig. 133. Ciampini designates, in a traditional manner, *spina* the place in the Circus of Romulus where the obelisk was located (Ciampini, 2004: 157). *Spina* or *euripus* are, in fact, the same architectural element of the hippodrome: the central axis that separated the parallel running tracks.

23 Also called Circus of Maxentius (e.g. Coarelli, 1985: 224-227).

24 Humphrey, 1986: 285.

25 Curran, 2007: 152.

26 Taken from the text of Silos dedicated to the obelisk; Cancellieri, 1811: 44.

27 Rouillet, 1972: 73.

28 De Rachewiltz and Partini, 1999: 113 and n. 16.

Pope Innocent X opted for Bernini, against other artists as Rainaldi or Borromini, after having seen a model in silver of 120 cm of height of the project, i.e. a prototype of the future fountain that could be similar to the original piece in the Royal Palace in Madrid²⁹. It was then admiring this pristine model of the fountain in the house of a relative, that the Pope exclaimed: “The

only way to resist executing his [=Bernini] works is not to see them”³⁰. Thus, the monumental *Fontana* was erected between 1648 and 1651. Bernini had conceived the impressive project as “an exuberant piece of stagecraft”³¹, a jewel of Baroque. “The resurrected pagan obelisk, originally in a temple dedicated to Isis, rises in obeisance to the Pamphili church”³².



Figure 2. Giovanni Battista Piranesi, *Veduta di Piazza Navona sopra le rovine del Circo Agonale, Roma* (circa 1750). This print was made one century after the re-erection of the Obeliscus Pamphilius.

29 Garnica, 2006: 165. According to this author, the model in silver is owned by a private Swiss collector (Garnica, 2006: 166).

30 Hibbard, 1965: 120-121.

31 Hibbard, 1965: 122.

32 Hibbard, 1965: 122. The temple of Isis to which reference is made is the *Iseum Campensis* of Rome.

The restoration of the needle in the middle of the fountain was executed with extreme care and perfection by the Neapolitan artist. A. Kircher, the famous Jesuit and German scholar from the *Collegio Romano*, states that Bernini reconstructed the obelisk with fragments of the same stone, bringing the monument back to its integrity. Kircher was even entrusted by the Pope to collaborate with the artist in restoring the hieroglyphic text, lost by the effect of the cracks³³. He also worked on the hieroglyphic signs which he interpreted in his own way (i.e. identifying each sign with a metaphysical idea, since for him, they were less graphemes than a whole *doctrina hieroglyphica*³⁴) and were published in his work *Obeliscus Pamphilius* (Rome, 1650)³⁵. In any case, the scholar was right at least in one example, in which he interpreted the waving sign as a representation of water.

The fountain was finished in 1651. The obelisk was endowed with a prismatic pedestal in which information was given in Latin about the history of the obelisk (albeit with some inaccuracies³⁶), its re-erection and the meaning of the fountain that accompanies it³⁷.

“Yet for all its magnificence we can also sympathize with Bernini in later years when, passing by, he closed the shutters of

his carriage and said: “How ashamed I am to have done so poorly!”³⁸.

It is worth mentioning something about the statues in the base of the monument. They were dedicated to the great four rivers of the Earth (Nile, Danube, Ganges and La Plata) and are personifications of these water currents. It is well known that the anthropomorphic way of rendering artistically the rivers is a feature of the Graeco-Roman art. However, it was already an Egyptian creation. In fact, “The river god type which was to become so popular was not a Roman invention and appeared in Hellenistic Egypt long before the beginning of the empire”³⁹. More specifically: “the earliest artistic depiction of a reclining river god still extant is a small statuette of white marble representing the Nile, discovered in Hermopolis Magna”, dated to around 150-100 BC⁴⁰. What the fountain of Bernini owes to ancient Egypt is more than many (including the great Neapolitan artist) would have thought.

2 | The bronze model in Madrid

After the erection of the obelisk in the square, Bernini executed several copies to scale of his fountain. At least one of them,

33 De Rachewiltz and Partini, 1999: 113; Cancellieri, 1811: 43.

34 Kircher, 1650: 99.

35 De Rachewiltz and Partini, 1999: 113.

36 For example, the Latin text of the pedestal mentions, erroneously, that the obelisk was taken to Rome by the Emperor Caracalla.

37 Sorek, 2010: 79-83.

38 Hibbard, 1965: 122-123. Another interpretation of this sentence is to be found in Garnica, 2006: 169.

39 Penders, 2012: 65.

40 Penders, 2012: 6.

the one studied in this article, came to Spain in the reign of Philip IV, as a diplomatic present of the Papacy⁴¹. Already in 1668, it is documented in the private bureau of this King situated in the *Golden Tower* of the *Real Alcázar* in Madrid. Some researchers think that the present was made by the Cardinal Giulio Rospigliosi⁴² in 1665⁴³. “Un altro modello, argenteo, di fontana doveva essere donato da Clemente IX a Luigi XIV”⁴⁴. In 1668, Cosimo III de’Medici could see the bronze *modellino* of the fountain of Bernini in the Alcázar, next to the *Apotheosis of Claudius*⁴⁵.

Under Charles II the piece was taken to the hall called *Galería del Cierzo*, one of the most beautiful of the Alcázar. In this area were located works of Velázquez (*Los Borrachos*), of the Mannerism (El Greco, Veronese, Tintoretto) and the Baroque (Rubens, Carracci), sculptures made of plaster and of marble and “una reducción en bronce de la *Fuente de los Cuatro Ríos*, de la Plaza Navona de Roma, obra de Bernini”⁴⁶. The bronze *modellino* appeared under the following description: “una aguja piramidal del bronce sobre diferentes figuras y animales”⁴⁷ [“a bronze pyramidal needle over different figures and animals”].

The following passage of the researcher J. J. Martín alludes to the location of the bronze of Bernini in the *Galería del Cierzo* of the Austrian Palace in Madrid:

No hay duda de que en esta Galería se quiso dignificar la misión del Pontificado. En esta atmósfera hay que contemplar la colaboración de bronce de la Fuente de los Cuatro Ríos (...) Es un monumento dedicado al triunfo del catolicismo, pero sobre la idea de la salvación de la humanidad al amparo de la luz evangélica⁴⁸. [It is undoubtedly the intention in this hall to dignify the mission of the Papacy. The bronze of the Fountain of the Four Rivers has to be considered in this scenario (...) It is a monument dedicated to the triumph of Catholicism; but above all, the idea of the salvation of humanity in the shelter of Evangelical light]

In the Testament of Charles II (1700) the name of the author of the model, Bernini, is first mentioned. The work was also noted, because a general inventory of the goods of the *Bewitched King* was also undertaken. The fountain (“imitación de la que está en Roma,

41 This deed could have taken place “entre 1664 y 1665, aunque no puede descartarse una fecha anterior” (Rodríguez, 2014: 118).

42 He is the future Pope Clement IX. He was appointed Nuncio for nine years in Spain, since 1644, and Cardinal in 1653. In 1667 he was elected Pope and died in 1669.

43 Fagiolo and Portoghesi, 2006: 204, information to fig. 5. The present was given two years before the Cardinal was appointed Pope. Bernini would execute, during his short Papacy, *il Colonnato* of San Pedro Square. The artist still benefited from the Papacy’s patronage under Clement IX.

44 Fagiolo and Portoghesi, 2006: 204, information to fig. 5. The present was given to the French King in 1668 (Rodríguez, 2014: 120).

45 Rodríguez, 2014: 118. For the *Apotheosis de Claudius* see, Schröder, 2004: 466-477.

46 Martín 1991: 246.

47 Martín 1991: 246: “reduction in bronze of the Fountain of the Four Rivers, from *Piazza Navona* in Rome, by Bernini”.

48 Martín, 1991: 246-247.

en Piazza Navona, del mano del caballero Bernini”⁴⁹ [“a replica of one which is in Rome, in Piazza Navona, made by the hand of the gentleman Bernini”]) was valued in three thousand doubloons. In fact, this work was already recorded in the inventory of 1686, where it was specified that the original was done by “the *caballero* Bernini”. This is an important information to add

“al elenco de obras del Real Palacio, pues pertenece a lo más destacado del barroco italiano y, por otro lado, supone en definitiva otra obra de Bernini en las colecciones españolas”⁵⁰ [“to the group of works of the Royal Palace, since it belongs to the most outstanding pieces of the Italian Baroque, and, on the other hand it shows another masterwork of Bernini in the Spanish collections”].

If it is compared to other objects in the king’s Collection, the model receives a high value.

After several vicissitudes, in the 19th century, the obelisk reached the private library of Isabella II and it may have been temporarily housed in the Palace of Aranjuez⁵¹. For a certain time, the bibliography considered that the monument had an unknown location. For Wittkower, the *crocifisso di bronzo* of the King’s Pantheon at The Escorial (1654) “es la única obra del escultor [referring to Bernini] que posee España, por estimar como falsas otras que se le atribuyen”⁵² [It is the only work kept

in Spain of the sculptor [i.e., Bernini], since it is suggested that the others attributed to him are fallacious]. The piece, housed at present in the Palacio Real of Madrid, stands in a bureau of the north rooms, after being identified by Delfin Rodríguez⁵³ (fig. 3).

3. The Egyptological perspective

This work is currently not on display and, as far as we know, perhaps at least two other later copies of it are kept within the precinct of the Palace. But in them the obelisk would lack the hieroglyphic text and they would be smaller⁵⁴.

The *pyramidion* of the monolith of the replica at Madrid is a simple pyramidal spire decorated according to the Italian Baroque *goût*: four elegant curves, in the manner of a four-faced capsid with a sharp end and crowned by four inverted and juxtaposed molding running along its edges.

It may be wondered to what can the model of Bernini kept in Madrid contribute to the field of Egyptology. The point of view of the Egyptologist can offer new insights, hitherto not taken into account by Art Historians:

First, it provides indirect information in relation to the form in which the hieroglyphic text passed from the stone obelisk of Domitian to the bronze model of Madrid. As shall be discussed, this transference was not done in a direct way. Once the signs of the bronze

49 Martín 1991: 259.

50 Martín, 1991: 259.

51 Herrero, 2009: *passim*.

52 Martín, 1991: 196.

53 Lleó, 2014.

54 Personal communication.



Figure 3. Two sides of the bronze obelisk of Palacio Real de Madrid.

needle in Madrid are examined in detail⁵⁵, it can be appreciated that these were *not directly copied* from the original obelisk. Surprisingly, on the bronze of the Palace, no true Egyptian hieroglyphs are found. Did Bernini not copy the signs of the original monument in his model? Why? It must be recalled that the artist was in direct contact with the original obelisk, since he himself re-erected it. However, the glyphs of the bronze replica are familiar to the Egyptologist; and are an exact copy of the distorted hieroglyphs stemming from the scholar (albeit mediocre draftsman), Kircher. More precisely, they are the ones used by the later to illustrate his book on the Pamphilius Obelisk. For some reason that escapes us, Bernini copied the signs of Kircher's plate in his bronze model instead of those of the original stone obelisk. He did not strive (or was not allowed) to achieve an exact copy of the Fountain in his reproduction. This fact has a certain importance, among other questions, to narrow the chronology of the bronze needle in Madrid. It can be concluded that between the original obelisk and its reproduction there was an intermediate document, which was used by Bernini's workshop to copy the signs that decorated the *modello*. Of course, this intermediate source is the copy of the hieroglyphic text done by Kircher to illustrate his book *Obeliscus Pamphilius*, as we previously noted (fig. 4).

Bernini and his workshop would have transferred the signs of Kircher's book to the model. This was a step undertaken by Bernini's workshop draftsmen, given that the signs of the bronze replica reproduced in an accurate and meticulous way those of the Jesuit scholar. It is astonishing that Bernini *copied the hi-*

⁵⁵ The author of this paper undertook a direct analysis of the work on the 3rd of October 2012.

eroglyphs directly from the work of Kircher and not from the original monument that he himself had reconstructed. This fact allows us to consider the great *persuasive power* and influence that the Fuldan scholar was exerting. In truth

it must state that the model housed in the Royal Palace is not exactly a replica to scale of the obelisk in *piazza Navona*. We should rather talk about a model of the version of Kircher's Pamphilius obelisk.

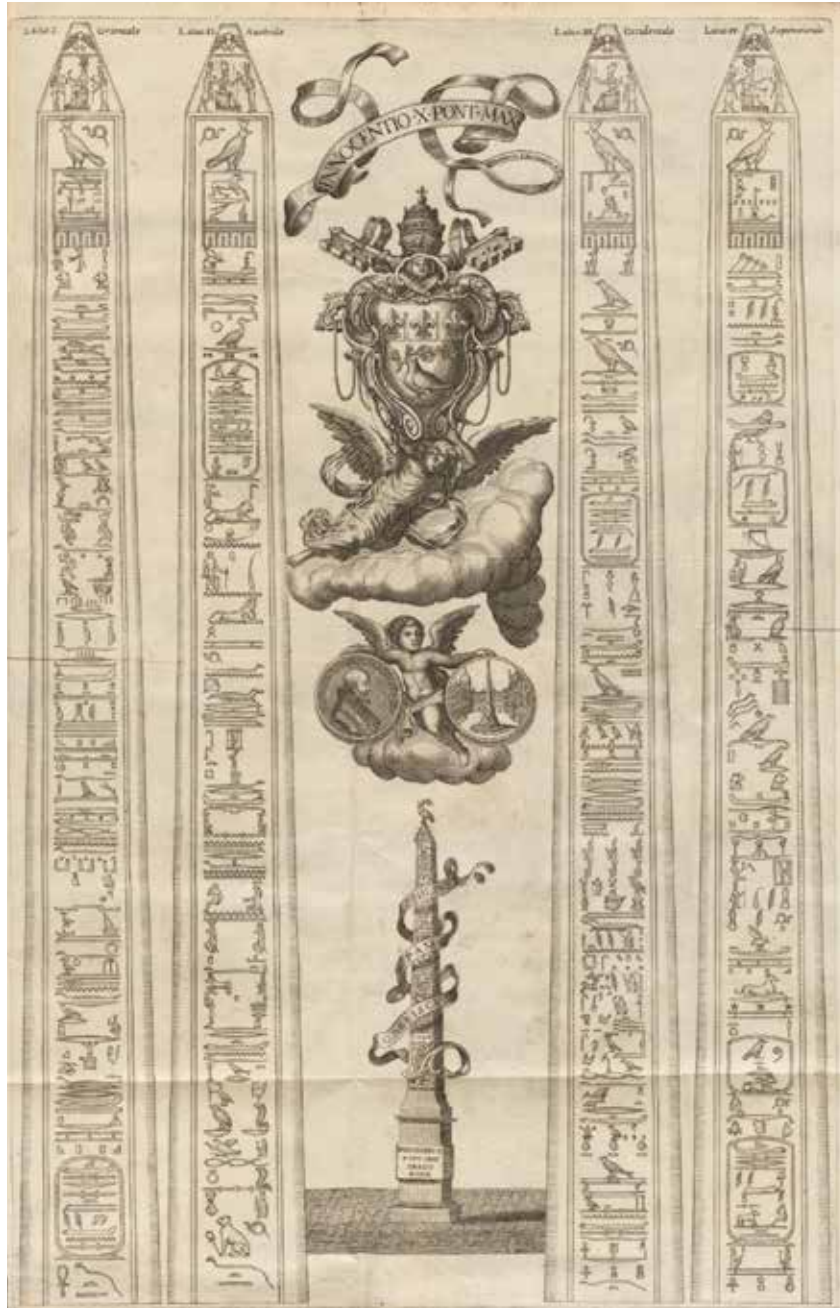


Figure 4. The *Obeliscus Pamphilius* in Kircher's book, 1650.

This comment generates subsequent reflections. For instance, on the text of the western face of the original obelisk, the one looking at Sant'Agnes church, a lacuna created by a crack⁵⁶ has been refilled in the work of Kircher with several signs, among them the figure of "Ptah in his chapel"⁵⁷. The model in Madrid, which faithfully copies Kircher's composition, reproduces the latter. We may well think that this hieroglyph originally stood with others today lost in this place on the obelisk. However, if this was not the case and if Kircher was the one who attempted its restitution, considering the author's thought on hieroglyphics and that he attributed to them a symbolic ideological value, it may be surmised that the scholar would have considered it correct to fill in the obelisk's crack with an exceptional sign. It is represented *precisely* on the opposite face of the needle⁵⁸ a reason that led Kircher to reconstitute the lacuna with it. The lack of knowledge of the hieroglyphic script of the author had thus taken him to refill by *symmetry* the signs that were missing. Incidentally, the Museo Arqueológico Nacional of Madrid houses an Egyptian statue that also suffered a peculiar restitution of some hieroglyphs in the pre-scientific age (perhaps in the 18th century). It received several restoration works of the sculpture⁵⁹; it is the naophorus kneeling statue of the king Nectanebo I⁶⁰.

Last but not least, a chronological conclusion can be drawn. Epigraphy has provided a date for the Bernini's bronze piece in the Royal Palace. Latin epigraphy has offered us a *terminus ante quem* and the ancient Egyptian a *terminus post quem*. As has been previously stated, the work of Kircher on the *Obeliscus Pamphilius* was published in 1650. On the other hand, the Latin inscriptions on the replica of Madrid are not those accompanying the Obelisk when the Fountain was inaugurated on the 12th of June of 1651⁶¹. The model thus bears a Latin text that was projected, but would never be executed on the Fountain since the foreseen inscription was substituted on the inauguration of the monument.

Both arguments taken together, allow suggesting a date for the bronze of Bernini between 1650 and spring 1651⁶².

56 Ciampini, 2004: 166-167, l. H. 31, end part.

57 Gardiner's sign C20 (Gardiner, 1957³: 449).

58 Ciampini, 2004: 164-165, l. H. 26.

59 Elvira 1998: 56-57; in the plate on page 56 can be seen clearly the odd hieroglyphs restorations.

60 Sist 2006: 656-657.

61 Garnica, 2006: 167, recalling the research of D. Rodríguez.

62 The chronological margin 1651-1665, offered by Rodríguez (2014: 118), obviously does not correspond to the date of the execution of the bronze. If the *modellino* had been produced in those dates, it would have been inscribed with the Latin text that is actually written on the pedestal of the Obelisk in *Piazza Navona*.

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