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Understanding Egyptianizing Obelisks: Appropriation in Early Imperial Rome

by

Katharine Hoare

Thesis for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

May 2017

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UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHAMPTON

ABSTRACT

FACULTY OF HUMANITIES

Archaeology

Thesis for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

UNDERSTANDING EGYPTIANIZING OBELISKS: APPROPRIATION IN EARLY IMPERIAL ROME

by Katharine Hoare

Re-use of ancient Egyptian architectural styles outside Egypt began in the time of the pharaohs and continues to the present day. The style draws on the structures, elements and motifs of ancient Egypt using both ancient and replica/pastiche pieces. I will argue that appropriation of the style should be seen as an active process designed to create a cultural object with specific meaning within the coeval social world. Drawing on the tenets of reception theory, I aim to explore the appropriation of Egyptian obelisks to early imperial Rome by considering the social circumstances, possible producer motivation and potential audience responses to the monuments. I will propose that the appropriation of Egyptian obelisks to Rome is a creative negotiation that prioritises particular aspects of the monument to address specific economic, political and religious circumstances within the appropriating society. At the same time it is important to consider the coeval perceptions of Egypt circulating in Rome and how these perceptions impact on the selection and reception of obelisks in the city. Central to my research is the presentation of a data set relating to fourteen obelisks appropriated to Rome, a detailed discussion of the 'transfer vehicles' which carried crucial information about ancient Egypt and obelisks from Egypt into the Roman world, and the identification of clusters of appropriation points within the imperial period; all of which help to create a more nuanced picture of why at least fifty obelisks were raised in Rome and how we might start to understand these acts of appropriation two thousand years later.

‘Spend your day writing with your fingers and read at night!

Be close to the roll and the palette - they are sweeter than pomegranate-wine.

Writing, for she who knows it, is more excellent than any office.

It is sweeter than provisions and beer, than clothing, than ointment.

It is more precious than a heritage in Egypt, than a chapel in the West.’

Extract from papyrus roll BM EA 9994

Thebes, 1187-1064 BC

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Academic Thesis: Declaration of Authorship

I, Katharine Hoare declare that this thesis and the work presented in it are my own and has been generated by me as a result of my own original research.

Understanding Egyptianizing Obelisks:
Appropriation in Early Imperial Rome

I confirm that:

1. This work was done wholly or mainly while in candidature for a research degree at this University;
2. Where any part of this thesis has previously been submitted for a degree or other qualification at this University or any other institution, this has been clearly stated;
3. Where I have consulted the published work of others, this is always clearly attributed;
4. Where I have quoted from the work of others, the source is always given. With the exception of such quotations, this thesis is entirely my own work;
5. I have acknowledged all main sources of help;
6. Where the thesis is based on work done by myself jointly with others, I have made clear exactly what was done by others and what I have contributed myself;
7. None of this work has been published before submission.

Signed: *K. Hoare*

Date: 15 May 2017

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Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Introduction

The appropriation of ancient Egyptian architectural styles outside the Nile Valley began in the time of the pharaohs and continues to the present day (Elliott 2012:8; Rice and MacDonald 2003:3; Ucko et al. 2006:51-57). Architecture which draws on ancient Egyptian structures is commonly referred to as 'Egyptianizing' architecture. This 'Egyptian style' draws on ancient structures, elements and motifs and has been used at different times in many places around the world. Such usage is often known as a 'revival' of the style. The Egyptian style can involve the use of authentic pieces of ancient material culture, as well as replica/pastiche pieces. Identification of such architecture is supported by 'visual grammars' of key elements; although there can be considerable variation in how these rules are applied. Whilst it is probably fair to say that few people nowadays would not recognise, for example, a pyramid however detached from its original context it may be, the understanding and deployment of such architecture has varied over time during different revival periods.

In this research I will argue that during a revival, the style is selected in order to create an 'Egyptianized' cultural object which has a particular meaning for those who produce, and those who view the object. Each such appropriation of ancient Egyptian architecture takes place within a specific context informed by the political, religious, social and economic factors affecting that world. My research will give careful consideration to this social world together with the contemporary perceptions of ancient Egypt, since I believe that both are crucial factors in helping us to understand more fully the appropriation of Egyptianizing architecture; how the style is used, the impact of the style on material culture and the built environment which hosts it and the significance of the style for the social world in which it is created and viewed.

I will argue that the creation and reception of Egyptianized pieces in one era can become part of the way in which ancient Egypt is understood in a later period. Hence information about ancient Egypt, together with extant and/or documented Egyptianized pieces, can work in combination to create a vision of ancient Egyptian

culture for each new generation. This process, whereby particular aspects of an ancient culture are given priority and the manner in which these aspects then influence how the culture as a whole is seen, continues into the present day. As Lupton (2003:23) notes, the culture of ancient Egypt has been 'refigured' in many different ways at different times in the past. Careful examination of how a culture has been represented over time can help us not only to understand how others have seen it, but also how our own views of the very same culture have been directed and shaped.

Perceptions of ancient Egypt held by those living alongside this Nile Valley civilisation were first documented in antiquity, and today Egypt continues to evoke a range of responses. For MacDonald and Rice (2003:1-2) ancient Egypt's physical remains have prompted responses from scholars, scientists, archaeologists, artists, writers, film makers and the public which have been expressed through a wide range of art works, architecture, products, designs and entertainment. Indeed, MacDonald (2003:87) warns that interest in the artefacts, sites and history of ancient Egypt is so considerable that it is often taken for granted. This assumption that ancient Egypt is somehow a 'natural' source of interest reflects the idea that the country's pharaonic past exerts such a powerful sense of attraction that it leads to 'Egyptomania'. Both these positions fail to acknowledge the complexity of the situation, and the manner in which the study of ancient Egypt and Egyptianizing architecture has been approached is an issue I will consider more fully in my literature review (Chapter 2). It is also a situation which prompts my own considerations around how the Egyptian style has been seen, selected and deployed by those living outside the Nile Valley, and I will discuss how I intend to approach this in the methodology chapter of this research (Chapter 4).

Individual pieces of Egyptianized architecture have a material presence. This material form provides data relating to their appearance, and any subsequent modifications to this appearance become part of the biography of a piece. This biography is played out within a social context encompassing the person/people who create the object and those who view and respond to the object. This social context forms the historical background for my research which considers the Egyptian style

as it emerges on a number of specific occasions in the public landscape of early imperial Rome. By considering each of these occasions in detail, I aim to elucidate why a cultural object in the Egyptian style was produced and how we might start to understand audience reaction to the object, both at the time of its initial introduction to the built landscape and later on as the social world and the topography around it changes.

Central to my research is a data set which enables the comparison of key aspects of the objects under scrutiny over time. The data for my research is a set of obelisks erected as monuments in Rome, including an example appropriated in early Roman Egypt by the Roman authorities which is later re-appropriated out of Egypt to the city of Rome. A unique feature of this research is the creation of a data set around the core objects which aims to address inconsistencies and discrepancies within the extant information for each obelisk. Clarifying the circumstances of an obelisk can be a complex task since modern accounts of obelisks during the imperial period can offer conflicting information, particularly for those where a robust ancient account does not exist; for example the two obelisks (numbered 4 and 5 in this research) which were raised in front of the Mausoleum of Augustus in Rome. Identification of the point of initial, and on occasion subsequent, appropriation for each obelisk is crucial to the identification of revival periods (as shown in Table 2) and where necessary I will provide an overview of any discussions around the biography of an obelisk in order to clarify how I have determined a producer and date as shown in the data listing for that obelisk (Appendix A).

An overview of the historical background to ancient Egyptian obelisks is presented in the data chapter (Chapter 3). The dating and spelling conventions I have followed in relation to this overview, and the data set listings, are laid out in Appendix B which also includes a reference listing of rulers during the ancient Egyptian Ptolemaic dynasty (305-30 BC) and the Roman emperors from 31 BC to AD 363. A summary of the historical background for the early imperial period of Rome's history is included as part of the social world chapter (Chapter 6).

1.2 Research aims

My research aim is to consider how the appropriation of material culture from one culture to another can be understood through analysis of the data using a theoretical approach based on reception theory which emphasises consideration of the social world context, producer motivation and audience understanding as they relate to a particular cultural object. The broad context for the research is Egyptianizing architecture; a revival style based on the re-use of pharaonic architectural structures, be they original, modified or replica, outside pharaonic Egypt. My particular data focus is the Egyptian obelisk. I will draw my data from contemporary classical accounts of obelisks, modern publications on Egyptianizing architecture, and archaeological accounts. The collated results will inform the analysis and discussion presented in this research.

To help understand why these objects were appropriated and how they were understood in their new locations, I will consider the social, economic and political issues shaping the society which selected and viewed the obelisks. I will argue that it is important to consider the understanding of ancient Egypt held by this society. Analysis of the vehicles disseminating information about Egypt is a key part of my research process; I will consider the nature and impact of the transfer vehicles which circulated information about ancient Egypt within the appropriating culture and the extent to which this can help us to gain a better understanding of how the appropriated material culture operated in its new social world.

There has been a flow of information about ancient Egypt to other cultures over many thousands of years. Evidence of access to the culture of ancient Egypt by the classical world can be seen in the sixth century BC graffiti inscribed by Greek mercenaries on statues of Rameses II at Abu Simbel (Hurwit 1990:182). It is a mode of interaction repeated in the Valley of the Kings where over 2,100 pieces of graffiti in both Greek and Latin, dating from 278 BC to AD 537, have so far been discovered (Strudwick and Strudwick 1999:205). Such examples are an indication of non-inhabitants interacting with Egyptian culture in Egypt itself. This interaction can generate bodies of knowledge which are then transferred out of Egypt. Much of this flow of information probably occurred on an individual oral level, for example

as visitors returned home with their impressions, be they positive or negative, of the people, landscape and customs of Egypt. On other occasions these impressions were captured in a more permanent written or visual format. For example, the Greek historian and geographer Hecataeus of Miletus (c. 550-490 BC) is credited with writing *Journey Round the Earth* (or *World Survey*), a work which included a detailed description of Thebes and the nearby Valley of the Kings; an account later referenced by the Greek historian Herodotus (Fowler 2006:35-36). A key theme of my research is considering how these bodies of knowledge serve to create an impression of Egypt in the minds of people who interact with examples of the Egyptian style in their home environment.

This flow of information can fluctuate over time. An example is the exponential growth in the amount of information available about Egypt (ancient and modern) in Western Europe after 1800. This growth was greatly facilitated by the French expedition of 1798 and the various publications arising from this expedition. Then, over a hundred years later increased public interest in Egypt's ancient past, which lasted throughout the 1920s and into the 1930s across Europe and America, was prompted by the 1922 discovery of Tutankhamun's tomb and the subsequent work emptying and recording the tomb. This fluctuation in the availability and circulation of information can be a factor in the occurrence of revivals and will be discussed in relation to Roman appropriation.

I will also consider which particular aspects of ancient Egyptian culture are highlighted or emphasised within these information sources and how this might influence public perception of the culture. For example, Warner (2003:75-104) discusses the role of paintings with an ancient Egyptian setting in Victorian Britain and the Biblical associations such compositions often promoted. By creating a link in the public mind between ancient Egypt and Old Testament narratives from the Christian Bible, the paintings positioned ancient Egypt within a nineteenth century Biblical paradigm. This perceived link between ancient Egypt and the Bible served to enhance the acceptability of using non-Christian symbols in a Christian context, for example the Egyptianizing motifs seen in the architectural and burial markers of nineteenth century garden cemeteries (Curl 1975, 1980). At the same time, it is

important to be aware of any bias within the information sources which may affect how Egypt, and consequently Egyptianizing architecture, is perceived. For example, the nineteenth century debate about pyramids which drew in medieval explanations of the pyramids as the granaries of the Biblical figure Joseph on one hand and archaeological arguments that the pyramids were royal tombs on the other (Moshenska 2008). This issue of potential bias within sources of evidence is something I will return to when considering the ancient texts and images informing both us and their coeval audience about ancient Egypt, obelisks as monuments and Egyptian obelisks in Rome.

I am also interested in how the revival of a particular style can re-occur over time. I am keen to examine whether relationships exist between different points of revival and whether a particular revival episode can itself become a source of appropriation for later revivals. I aim to address this issue by considering the development of layered meanings around the appropriated obelisks such that the ancient meaning can become wrapped in later interpretations which either obscure the original meaning or interact with it to generate a new meaning. I am also interested in how perceived meaning can be manipulated by the producer to address the particular needs of a later context.

I aim to consider whether the temporal relationship between ancient Egypt and a revival period affects the way in which the past is viewed. For example, Kemp (2007:6) in reviewing modern discussion of the ancient Egyptian belief system argues that the passage of time and changes in religious practices, in particular a shift from polytheistic to monotheistic paradigms, means that 'the modern world views Egyptian religion from an external perspective, as an interesting if difficult aspect of another society's culture, one that is long dead'. A similar, if considerably shorter, temporal shift occurs within my research as the interactions of a late Republican Rome with an established pharaonic system of royal government are superseded by the emergence of Rome itself as the ruling authority in Egypt, alongside a shift in Rome's own political structures as the Republic ends and imperial Rome is established.

The monuments I discuss were created (i.e. Egyptianized) and viewed by people outside Egypt. This differentiates them from Roman objects created for display in post-pharaonic Egypt which were intended to be viewed by the resident population. Riggs (2002:97) argues that material culture such as this, which incorporates visual styles from two discrete systems of representation, creates a dual-system object. This implies that the object can be understood equally well by viewers from both cultures. I would suggest that the Egyptian obelisks in Rome are not best understood as dual-system objects, since they are primarily meant to be read from a Roman viewpoint. This viewpoint may be aware of Egyptian visual language but primarily reads the monument through a Roman 'lens', shaped by the sources of information informing Roman society about Egypt. Thus any discussion of Egyptian obelisks appropriated in early Roman Egypt will relate directly to how these appropriations help to elucidate our understanding of the later appropriations of obelisks out of Egypt to Rome.

1.3 Research context

The starting point for this research was an interest in the extensive catalogues of the Egyptian style, alongside a body of articles and books which seek to explain the adoption of the style, generated by the study of Egyptianizing architecture as a scholarly subject. From the initial academic stimulus offered by Pevsner and Lang's 1956 article 'The Egyptian Revival', the material culture created in this style has been catalogued by architectural historians such as Curl (2005) and Roullet (1972), studied as a world-wide phenomenon by Humbert and Price (2003), examined as a national phenomenon in nineteenth century North America by Carrot (1978), and inspired in-depth narratives around particular examples of the style, such as Curran et al's (2009) history of the obelisk. A review of this literature will be presented in Chapter 2.

Those authors inspired to study examples within the modern world, have usually aimed to explain the Egyptian style in terms of how it manifests at a particular time, in a particular location or in a particular form. Explanations for the emergence of the style often look to specific trigger events relating to Western encounters with ancient Egypt, such as Napoleon's expedition to Egypt in 1798 or the discovery of

Tutankhamun's tomb in 1922. I am interested in challenging the established view that such events act as the key trigger which prompts the emergence of the Egyptian style in a particular period. I believe that critical examination of the wider social world context at the time of a particular revival will enable a more nuanced assessment of why appropriation of the style took place and how it might be understood.

Within my research I take a specific form (the obelisk) and location (Rome) as the context for my exploration of Egyptianizing architecture. From this starting point, I intend to approach the subject by applying a theoretical model inspired by reception theory to the data in order to investigate possible patterns behind the appropriation of Egyptian obelisks over a number of appropriation points. I aim to present a discursive analysis of the data which clarifies and refines the current broad chronologies offered for the style, elucidates relationships between different examples of appropriation and explores the key role of the contemporary social world and its understanding of ancient Egypt in the selection, presentation and reading of objects created in an Egyptianized style. Drawing on this analysis, I will argue that Egyptianizing architecture is best understood as a deliberate act of appropriation influenced by a number of factors relating to the person employing the style, the people expected to see the style, the wider social and built landscape within which the style is presented and the physical details of the object carrying the style. Thus revivals should be seen as significant historical events, not simply filtered, inconsequential uses of the past.

1.4 Data selection

In this research ancient (pharaonic) Egypt stands as the default culture from which material culture, and the style which it inspires, is appropriated. I have taken the end of pharaonic Egypt to be 30 BC when the reign of the last independent ruler of Egypt, Cleopatra VII, ends and the Ptolemaic Kingdom of Egypt is annexed to the Roman Empire as a province. Appropriation of the Egyptian style has occurred on many occasions throughout history, and I have selected the city of Rome as the appropriating culture. My investigation of the appropriation of ancient Egyptian architecture by Rome will focus on a period of Egyptianizing activity in the city post

30 BC: namely imperial Rome. Since chronological distance transforms any relationship to Egypt as a past culture, I will examine how ancient Egypt was viewed by the Romans together with any understanding of particular architectural structures and styles. Examples of appropriation identified during the imperial period will provide the architectural data and historical context needed to evaluate revival patterning for the style in accordance with the key principles of reception theory.

My core data set obelisks include examples raised in imperial Rome between 10 BC and AD 357 alongside extant fragments and lost examples. Those obelisks, referenced as fragments or lost, will include material which survives within the archaeological record as spoilia and examples for which traces remain in text or images only. A full record of this data set is given in the appendices and a discussion of the material selected for analysis can be found in Chapter 3. This data acts as the starting point for my identification of specific points of appropriation in imperial Rome up to AD 400, as shown in Table 2. My original intention was to discuss all these examples but during the course of my research the methodology applied to the data created a greater volume of analytical narrative than I had envisaged, or even hoped for, at the start of the process. It is an issue which I will reflect on in greater detail in my conclusion (Chapter 9) but as a result the analysis which I will present in this thesis (Chapters 5-8) will focus on Egyptian obelisks erected in Rome between 10 BC and AD 37 (Appendix A:1-5).

1.5 Reception theory

A key aspect of my research is an exploration of how reception theory might offer a theoretical framework for understanding how cultural objects are perceived within a society. The development of my methodology will be discussed in greater detail in the methodology chapter (Chapter 4), but I would like to take a moment to provide a brief introduction to reception theory here in my introduction, since the tenets of this particular approach have played a crucial role in shaping my research.

Reception theory is a version of reader response literary theory, an approach which emphasises the need to look at reader reception of a literary text in order to

understand that text. Three major influences on the development of reception studies were the work of Gadamer, Jauss and Iser; each of whom advocated the approach in relation to literary texts. Writing in the 1960s, Gadamer (1965) theorised that the meaning attributed to a text was not waiting to be drawn out but was instead actively constructed through the amalgamation of past and present understandings of the text. He argued that any meaning attributed to an ancient text was shaped by the historical impact of its subsequent receptions. Jauss, whose work is probably the best known of the three, focused on what he saw as the 'horizon of life experiences' which rooted the reader's mind-set in their social and cultural context. Jauss (1970:171) argued that literary history should not to be based on the 'literary facts' which arise from the production process or the formal properties of written works. Instead, he believed that emphasis should be put on the changing receptions of a text by different readers at different times, including reception by the authors themselves and literary critics. It was an idea taken up by Iser (1974, 1978) who focused on reader-response as a trigger for the construction of meaning in literary texts. For Isler, a text could only become, and be understood as, a literary work when the substance of the text and the realisation of that text through the act of being read were considered in combination. In addition, Isler emphasised that readers approached a text with a personal set of life experiences which produced a different reading and value judgment of that text for each reader.

What emerged from these discussions was an approach proposing that any text - be it a book, film, or other creative work - is not simply passively accepted but is subject to interpretation by the members of an audience based on their individual cultural background and life experiences. Thus there is no single standard reading of a text but rather scope for negotiation on the part of the audience leading to a range of varied responses over time. The tenets of reception theory were picked up by other disciplines and for some subjects such as film studies became a prevailing approach to the source material. Paul (2008:304), when discussing the application of reception theory to the study of films set in the classical world, emphasises that a film will appropriate and re-configure ancient sources for particular ends and should never be taken as an unmediated representation of the past however much attention it apparently pays to the ancient evidence. This gets to the heart of what I aim to

consider, i.e. what are the ‘particular ends’ and to what extent are the ‘primary sources’ actually acting as a lens through which the past is viewed.

My proposed use of reception theory in relation to archaeological material culture is timely in light of the current academic interest in reception theory and its deployment in ancient world studies (Hardwick 2003:2). Use of reception theory within Classics has blossomed with Classicists such as Porter (2008:469) arguing that reception is crucial to classical studies since the classical past cannot exist without it being received. Indeed, Porter believes that acknowledging/analysing this reception is fundamental to the study of the past, not only in terms of how we understand the past but in order to avoid the illusion that classical studies and their objects are timeless and eternal. It is a view previously advocated for archaeological studies by Olsen (1990:197-202) who proposed that archaeologists should not attempt to recover the original meaning of past processes or archaeological remains, but should instead focus on what these processes or remains meant to people in various receptions and under different conditions. Although as Moser (2015:1264) notes reception studies have not yet achieved the level of ‘institutional recognition’ in archaeology that it has in Classics.

Hardwick (2003:2-4; 2010:1-3) notes the growing interest in considering the ways in which aspects of a culture were selected and used in order to give value and status to subsequent cultures and societies. She argues that reception theory is invaluable in distinguishing between the ideas and values expressed in ancient texts and those of the societies that appropriated them. It is an approach which she believes encourages an increased sense of discrimination in examining the interfaces between cultures; an examination in which analysis of the principles and assumptions underlying selectivity and contextual comparisons between source and receiving conditions are vital tools. She argues that reception is not just the study of the relationship between ancient and modern but should also aim to study contexts separated by time in antiquity. It is an argument which, as I will demonstrate within my research, helps to illuminate how people in the past responded in changing ways to material culture over time and how in order to understand these changing responses one needs to look not just at the piece of material culture itself (which

may make repeated appearances across several periods) but the discrete social conditions of each occasion.

The exploration of how society operates, and the interdependent relationships perceived to exist within a society, has long been an area of interest in the social sciences. Within this field of study, sociologist Wendy Griswold (1986, 2008) has a particular interest in how cultural objects operate within society using an approach which draws on many elements of reception theory. In particular, her approach encourages the analysis of cultural objects as part of a wider network of social concerns and needs, into which these objects are actively drawn, manipulated and viewed. It is an approach which I believe moves study of the Egyptian style away from the narrative based investigation of specific episodes of the style which is strongly represented in modern works, as discussed in my literature review, by applying a reception based approach to the study of the appropriation of Egyptian obelisks. The manner in which I constructed a unique methodology out of the field of reception studies, and the work of Griswold in particular, will be discussed in detail in my methodology chapter while the success and limitations of this approach form part of my concluding discussion presented in Chapter 9. By applying an approach which originates outside the discipline of archaeology, I aim to generate some original conclusions about the use of Egyptianizing architecture which build on and extend current thoughts and findings in this field.

At the same time, it is important to be caution of any potential bias in current assumptions around reception, and works are emerging which challenge what are often seen as self-evident 'truths' about the reception of texts/objects in the past. For example, Bednarski (2005) has traced the reception of the famous *Description de l'Égypte* in nineteenth century Britain. He argues that the impact of this work has been exaggerated by modern scholars and that its size and cost rendered it far less accessible to the public than more popular travelogues of the time by Denon (1802) and Belzoni (1820). In relation to modern curation of ancient artefacts, Moser (2006, 2009, 2015) considers how the manner in which the objects are collected and displayed by a museum can create a 'history' of an ancient culture which influences public understanding of that culture. Such work demonstrates the importance of

questioning the ‘traditional’ narratives and explanations offered for past cultures and furthermore the need to look for possible bias in the works of classical writers.

In seeking to join this debate, and with the aim of contributing to our understanding of the impact and perception of ancient cultures in later times, I believe that it is critical to undertake detailed research looking at why the appropriation of a style occurred, how it was presented and how it was received. Hardwick (2003:10) argues this very point when she states that receptions within antiquity need to be considered within the same enquiry framework as subsequent receptions, in order that the impact of ancient reception on later interpretations can be investigated. This suggests the need for a clear analytical framework which creates standard points of comparison between periods in order to establish patterns of continuity and change across a number of revival periods. It is a need recognised by Moser (2015:1264) when she says that one aim of her work is ‘to more fully establish reception analysis in archaeology and to promote theoretical and methodological rigour for the field’. It is a need which I have sought to address by developing an approach which, I believe, offers methodological innovation through the development and application of an analytical framework underpinned by a network of factors whose identification and analysis are crucial to our understanding of an act of appropriation from one culture to another. A detailed discussion of my methodology will be presented in Chapter 4.

Griswold (2008:90-91) believes that a cultural object is more likely to resonate with an audience if it draws on a conceptual framework of the contemporary world (local and distant) already held by the audience; in effect an object which suits their expectations. Leading on from this, I will argue that when considering an episode of appropriation this ‘horizon of expectations’ offers an opportunity to examine the major issues and concerns of the audience’s own cultural/social world and their assumptions about the cultural/social world from which the appropriated object is drawn. Embedded within this approach is the idea that the process by which the contemporary perception of ancient Egypt is generated is crucial in helping us understand Egyptianizing architecture.

A seminal aspect of my methodology is the analysis of the information about Egypt circulating in the Roman world and the impact this had on the emergence and nature of specific Egyptianizing revivals in Rome. In addition, I aim to highlight the role of presentation platforms, such as a published text or coins, in hosting a particular set of ideas, assumed knowledge and attitudes towards another culture. Edwards (2008:358) refers to a similar process taking place nowadays when she comments that modern visitors to Rome, as they tour the city in the company of published guide books, create their own personal idea of ancient Rome from the text and images they experience in these books, which in turn draw on other books and images. I believe that this process of information transfer, and the generation of a particular understanding of the past at both a personal and community level, deserve greater emphasis and exploration in reception studies. Within my research I will consider in detail the manner in which information entering one society shapes what people assume they know/understand about another society. In my research I will refer to these as 'transfer vehicles'; a generic term I have created to refer to host formats such as objects, written texts and images which carry information and enable its circulation.

I will argue that regardless of the format of the transfer vehicle, the information carried from Egypt to Rome played a crucial role in shaping how the people of Rome thought about and understood ancient Egypt. Within these transfer vehicles accuracy is less important than attitude. The information provided via the writings of a natural historian like Pliny, a geographer like Strabo or an historian such as Cassius Dio might be the only way in which the majority of the citizens of Rome experienced the culture and environment of Egypt. As such the receiver is reliant on the assumed authority of the writer and subject to filtration of knowledge through the constructed text. These transfer vehicles which brought information from Egypt to Rome can be seen to act as primary transfer vehicles. In addition, I will consider what could be called secondary transfer vehicles. These were transfer vehicles which were created in Rome and which circulated 'status updates' for Egyptianizing activity, providing readily accessible information about how the Egyptian style was being used. An example would be the range of portable, low value objects such as coins and lamps, which carried an image of the Circus Maximus and the first obelisk

(obelisk 2 in this research) erected in this structure. Such a motif can be seen on a small Roman pottery lamp (figure 1.1) dating to AD 30-70. The bowl of the lamp shows a victorious four-horse chariot team, proudly parading with the winner's palm along one side of the arena. Behind the team runs the spina, with an obelisk standing at the mid-point between other architecture associated with the central barrier.



Figure 1.1 Pottery lamp showing a winning chariot team and obelisk in a circus, AD 30-70 (British Museum, G&R 1868,0804.1 Lamp Q920)

It is important to be aware that the information carried by these transfer vehicles is not necessarily without bias. Indeed, while classical writers were keen to promote the unbiased nature of their own work, they took pains to point it out in the works of others (Luce1989:16). A written work might show bias in relation to the points of information selected for recording, and the manner in which these 'facts' were both presented to, and interpreted for, the expected audience. For example, at the start of his *Natural History,* Pliny (1.dedication) states that he has consulted two thousand earlier works. This statement which is intended to highlight the careful research undertaken by the author, also suggests that across such a wide range of sources a personal evaluation by the author of the 'facts' to be included and arranged within his own work must have been part of the writing process.

The interest of ancient historians was often directed towards political history, and their narratives often took for granted the coeval economic conditions and political organisation (Crawford 1983:ix). Gabba (1983: 10) comments that starting in antiquity 'imperial history became the history of the emperors and has remained so to this day'. Meanwhile, Fornara (1983:34, 36) argues that the centrality of leading individuals led to histories which were 'coterminous' with the deeds of a single individual and which focused on well known events. In relation to my own research this potentially affords information relating directly to the emperors responsible for appropriating obelisks to Rome, while at the same time situating this information in sources which were written with a particular focus on the elite politics and in accordance with a coeval set of conventions relating to 'historical' writing.

On a final note of caution, only a tiny amount of what once existed survives. Thus the modern scholar, even before they begin, is extrapolating and hypothesising from a small sub-group of the written material potentially circulating in the past. In addition, few works from the classical world are preserved in their original form and the copies consulted today potentially carry mistakes which occurred in the course of copying texts in antiquity or during the European Middle Ages (Gabba 1983:1). Works by classical writers such as Pliny and Strabo afford this research an opportunity to consider how the appropriation of obelisks in Rome might have appeared within the coeval audience's horizon of assumptions. At the same time it is important to acknowledge that these works are carefully constructed narratives, available today as copies, sometimes fragmentary in their coverage, of the orginal texts. As a consequence, it is advisable to view these texts as secondary, rather than primary, sources of evidence for the modern scholar.

In addition to the transfer vehicles which carry new information about Egypt/obelisks into the Roman cultural ken, there are vehicles which serve to elaborate and re-enforce preconceptions and inherited ideas from the past; for example a text which records the past from a contemporary viewpoint. Thus, the consequent conceptual background of 'assumptions' against which Egyptian cultural objects are viewed may not accurately reflect ancient Egypt, but for those who interact with the Egyptian style these assumptions play a key role in both directing

producers to select Egyptianizing objects and influencing how the viewing public interpret these objects.

Revivals in the Egyptian style warrant closer scrutiny because they are part of the 'knowledge bank' held in relation to ancient Egypt. Within this I am particularly interested in how this bank of knowledge evolves over time, how it draws in not only fresh sources of information about Egypt but also the very examples of Egyptianizing architecture to which it gives rise and how these created pieces are granted a significance which enables them to act as reference points for future appropriations. Leading on from this is the important idea that in studying how past societies have responded to ancient Egypt we can begin to see how similar processes remain in action today as the twenty-first century creates its own vision of ancient Egypt. Thus, this research is more than a study in the application of reception theory, but rather an innovative addition to the current academic interest in the reception of the ancient world.

I will argue that this approach not only makes a valuable contribution to our understanding of the appropriation of Egyptian obelisks but also has significant potential for the study of other manifestations of the Egyptian style. Although other approaches to the Egyptian style can be found in current literature they all rely on the presentation of obelisks as monuments with a single biography rather than allowing each to re-emerge as an object subject to later re-appropriation. One of the unique elements of this research is the identification of very specific clusters of appropriation within what is traditionally treated as a single, largely homogenous, revival period enabling the patterns which emerge through a comparative analysis of these clusters to become more explicit. I intend to show how applying a reception theory approach to the data enables me to propose not only an alternative approach to Egyptianized material culture but also draw out some alternative explanations for the emergence and success of the style in Rome during the early imperial period.

1.6 Study structure

I will present my research over nine chapters. Following on from this introduction, Chapter 2 will present a literature review of the material already

published around the subject of Egyptianizing architecture. The background and theoretical context for the research objectives are laid out in Chapter 3, and in Chapter 4 I will outline the methodology employed in this research and the role played by early imperial Rome in framing the discussion of how we might understand the appropriation of Egyptian obelisks during this historical period, which I will go on to present in Chapters 5-8. The study concludes with a discussion, Chapter 9, in which I consider how the methodology contributes to the current understanding of Egyptianizing architecture and to what extent it offers an additional perspective on the selection and reception of Egyptian obelisks raised in the city of Rome. I will outline some of the problems encountered in this research and consider some future research questions and objectives for the study of Egyptianizing architecture that this research project has highlighted. The appendices at the end of the work will include the data for the material culture discussed in this research together with additional bodies of information which support specific points of discussion across the research.

1.7 Summary

The central aim of this research is to explore how the application of reception theory can help to explain the appropriation of material culture by one society from another. My methodological approach will draw on Griswold's work (2008) explaining the emergence of cultural phenomena from a sociological perspective. Of particular relevance to my research is her work on explaining revival patterns; the time distribution of revivals, the specific elements which get revived in each revival period and the cultural meaning attributed to them. The specific context for this research is the Roman appropriation of ancient Egyptian obelisks during the early imperial period of the city's history. Using data generated by a discrete set of Egyptian monuments, I aim to consider the role of original material, existing revival traditions and the contemporary cultural context as contributory factors to the appropriation of the ancient Egyptian style. Consideration will be given to the dissemination of knowledge about ancient Egyptian architectural styles through the vehicles used to convey information and contemporary Roman social understanding of extant Egyptianized material in the city.

Chapter 2: Literature review

2.1 Introduction

The literature covered in this review includes general works on Egyptianizing architecture together with works which look at a specific context (functional or geographical), a distinct element (structure or motif) or a particular chronological period. As part of this review I will consider the published material relating to Egyptianizing architecture in imperial Rome - the historical period which will form the background to my data analysis - with a particular focus on works which include discussion of Egyptian obelisks. I will discuss key generic themes, such as chronology and terminology/vocabulary, which run across all these categories of work and consider how they relate to my own research which aims to look at why the Egyptian style was selected during a particular period and how we might start to understand the meaning attributed to it. Leading on from this, I will also consider the approaches employed by modern scholars as they seek to explain the selection, application and meaning of Egyptianizing architecture in their chosen time period/geographical location and how this might relate to my research in the same field. I am particularly interested in identifying approaches which make links between different periods of use and which seek to explain the use of the style across a number of appropriation points.

2.2 Defining Egyptianizing architecture

Use of Egyptian architecture - original material or new pieces inspired by ancient forms - outside the Nile Valley is commonly referred to as the 'Egyptian Style', an 'Egyptian Revival' or 'Egyptianizing architecture'. At a basic level this may involve a complete structure (such as a pyramid or an obelisk) or the inclusion of this structure (usually on a smaller scale) in combination with other architectural elements. In its broadest sense, the style extends to encompass Egyptian motifs and architectural detail (such as a winged scarab beetle or an Egyptian cornice) or the production of complete architectural elements (such as wall paintings or statues). This broad school of interpretation is reflected in works on the subject which apply diverse criteria in order to determine what may be counted as Egyptianizing architecture.

The vocabulary used in relation to Egyptianizing architecture is often a useful mechanism for gauging an author's ideas about, and personal notion of, the style and also a way for the writer to lead the reader through the same thought process. In addition, this vocabulary is currently non-standard leaving particular terms and phrases open, not only to the interpretation of the author, but also the reader. A key point of tension lies between the very terms 'Egyptian' and 'Egyptianizing' whereby different authors group objects using a seemingly simple binary division which, due to non-standard definitions and application, can make comparison of collected data problematic in terms of the material selected for inclusion, but fascinating in terms of the author's priorities and assumptions. Some authors seek to create sub-groups within Egyptianized material while others see the very notion of what may be considered an Egyptianized piece as inherently problematic. As Hohendahl and Silberman (1977:47) observe, 'the meta-language of scholarship cannot be excluded as neutral' and this is certainly true within the study of the Egyptian style.

An example of how modern scholars have attempted to clarify the issue is offered by Malaise, who has worked on the nature and impact of Egyptian cults in the Roman world for over thirty years. Malaise rejects the umbrella term 'Aegyptiaca Romana' which is often used to cover Egyptian and Egyptianizing objects and monuments in a Roman context. Instead, Malaise (2005:201-220, 2007:19-39) proposes that such material should be grouped under four headings: 'Aegyptiaca' (imported Egyptian objects which are not involved in the cult of Isis); 'Pharaonica' (Egyptian pieces found in locations associated with the cult of Isis); 'Nilotica' (Nilotic landscapes); 'Aegyptomania' (a piece created in an ancient style but used for a purpose unrelated to that of the original object). These suggested categories not only reflect the personal interest of Malaise (for example the creation of a single category for Nilotic scenes regardless of origin or use) but also indicate an academic concern over how to group authentic and pastiche material which will emerge a number of times in this literature review, and which is crucial to how I propose to group and discuss my own data.

The call to define more clearly the types of objects covered by Egyptianizing studies reflects discussion of the style dating back to the pioneering work of Pevsner

and Lang (1956) whose work I will return to shortly. A more recent example of the process in action is offered by Ashton (2002:2) in her discussion of how best to classify Egyptianized pieces from the ‘Greco-Roman’ period, which concludes with her decision to group Roman products into two categories; sculptures which aim to copy an earlier work of art (for example the sanctuary statues of Egyptian deities at the temple of Isis, Benevento) and those which offer an interpretation of a tradition (such as the Egyptianizing sculptures from Hadrian’s villa at Tivoli). It is a theme which academics often expound on in their individual discussions of the Egyptian style; how they decide to settle the matter is something I will explore in greater detail below.

The specific issue of how ancient Egyptian material was understood, by both contemporaries and modern scholars, is discussed by Swetnam-Burland (2007). She is concerned in particular by what she refers to as the 'Egyptianizing problem'; whereby there are no widely recognised definitions (ancient or modern) which govern the diverse material culture associated with the Egyptian style. As a consequence, Swetnam-Burland (113-116) observes that within modern works objects are usually classed as either 'Egyptian' - objects imported from Egypt - or 'Egyptianizing' - objects inspired by such material but created in Italy. She argues that the very use of the word ‘Egyptianizing’ impedes study since it is frequently used to describe a perceived artistic style which is ‘Egyptian-like’ but not genuinely ‘Egyptian’. Such a division she believes, beyond the attempt to define where a particular piece was manufactured, is used by modern scholars to suggest that Roman ‘Egyptianizing’ pieces are 'incorrect' or poor copies and that the Romans did not understand the significance of such Egyptian themed works. It is an attitude seen in the surprise expressed by Bierbrier (2003:69) that the non-classical nature of Egyptian art works did not deter the Roman emperors from making use of these works for ‘decorative purposes’ in Rome and Constantinople.

This argument is pertinent to my exploration of why producers chose to appropriate particular obelisks and how the audience might have understood them within the landscape of Rome. With regard to original material imported from Egypt, Swetnam-Burland (2007:121) says that many of these objects are assumed to have

been selected with little regard to their original function and no understanding of the accompanying hieroglyphic text. It is an attitude inherent in Alfano's (2001:287) statement that 'There was no grasp of any artistic or religious meaning behind the choice of a statue of a priest for decorating a temple in a Roman ambience'. This notion of poor or no understanding amongst those selecting and viewing Egyptian(izing) pieces is something I aim to challenge directly in my research.

Swetnam-Burland (2007:122-123) suggests that to a Roman all such objects would look Egyptian, and that Roman viewers did not rely on the distinction between Egyptian and Egyptianizing found in modern works. She takes as an example two sphinxes (one real, one replica) which probably stood with other sphinxes, both original and new pieces, near the Temple of Isis in Rome. Swetnam-Burland argues that the sphinxes, taken as a group, would remind the Roman viewer of the Egyptian origins of the goddess Isis and at the same time draw on commonly held Roman ideas within which the sphinx was seen as a powerful guardian figure. She concludes that such objects would have been seen as a 'cohesive set of symbols' and calls for a contextual approach towards such material which enables the reconstruction of the experience of Roman viewers in relation to the objects. In essence, for Swetnam-Burland (2015:307-308) both Egyptian and Egyptian-looking sculpture in Italy is best understood within the context of Roman material culture rather than as a form of 'pharaonica' or 'exotica' to be approached as an 'imperial fad'. Such an approach is in line with my own thoughts and the methodology I intend to develop for my research (see Chapter 4).

Any definition of Egyptianizing architecture is open to being fairly capricious or differentiated given the range of possibilities mentioned above. A review of the examples included in works on the style leads me to conclude that in terms of my own research, any use of an object beyond its original Egyptian context represents an act of Egyptianizing in relation to that object, be it original or replica. It is the act of selecting, producing (either by moving an original piece or creating a new piece in the style) and imbuing it with meaning which constitutes the focus of my research. This reflects the thoughts of Vout (2003:187) who argues that the fact that Egyptianizing architecture exists at all, regardless of how close or otherwise to the

original it is, means that the piece is resonant with manifold meanings be they positive or negative. It is these manifold meanings which I aim to explore in my research. I will suggest that the attributes of the object (in terms of origin, date and appearance) act as elements which help us to understand why particular pieces were selected and how they were understood within a specific context and that we should see all aspects of an object's biography as working in combination to create meaning.

2.3 Literature on Egyptianizing architecture

Interest in Egyptianizing architecture has resulted in the compilation of many inventory works detailing examples from around the world (Barberi et al. 1995; Curl 2005; Roullet 1972), alongside works which mine the history of individual elements and record the emergence of the style at specific times in particular places (Barnes 2004; Curran et al. 2009; Elliott 2012). The literature also includes typologies of the style which seek to apply formal rules, known as 'grammars', to the identification of Egyptianizing architecture and establish the style as arising from, and yet distinct from, the architecture of the ancient Egyptians (Carrot 1966, 1978). Such works provide a basis for assessing the scope appropriate to my research in terms of chronological range, geographical area and the types of monument to be considered. The works also demonstrate how Egyptianizing architecture has been explained as it emerged in a particular time and place, and the range of motivations ascribed to these revivals. Some of the works make reference to Egyptianizing architecture in imperial Rome; others aim to explain Egyptianizing architecture at a later date and outside Europe, for example Carrot's (1978) seminal work on the style in nineteenth century North America. By encompassing this wide range of works, I aim to elucidate the approaches taken to researching Egyptianizing architecture and the understanding of the style offered by the authors. All these approaches form the background to my own decisions about the most appropriate methodology for my research which I present in Chapter 4.

Pevsner and Lang (1956) produced one of the earliest modern surveys of Egyptianizing architecture. Approaching the subject from the perspective of architectural history, they traced interest in ancient Egyptian design back to Roman times. Amongst the examples discussed, Pevsner and Lang drew a clear distinction

between what they termed ‘Egyptianizing’ and ‘Egyptianesque’ pieces whereby ‘Egyptianizing’ was applied to pieces created by the Romans while ‘Egyptianesque’ referred to the use of authentic ancient Egyptian objects in a Roman setting. Pevsner and Lang (242) believed that the former category was ‘nearer the spirit of the times’ implying that for them the key to understanding the style in any revival period lay in the analysis of replica pieces in their geographical and cultural context.

Interestingly, sphinxes, lions, obelisks and pyramids were excluded from this rule suggesting that Pevsner and Lang believed that these forms were able to operate across both groups (i.e. as an original or a copy). This is particularly pertinent to my research on obelisks since the examples I analyse include obelisks produced in Egypt during the pharaonic period and obelisks of Egyptian granite quarried in Roman Egypt. It will be interesting to see whether the date when it was manufactured has any impact on the manner in which a monument is received by its Roman audience or whether, as Pevsner and Lang believe, the form (i.e. being immediately recognisable as an ‘obelisk’) supersedes any chronological considerations. Pevsner and Lang concluded that the Egyptian style had no single meaning and that even within one period it could stand for many things, for example Egypt as a land of wisdom or Egypt as a culture with a great funerary tradition.

Pevsner and Lang (1956) saw themselves as working within the field of architectural studies. This helps to explain their interest in examples of the Egyptian style which were inspired by ancient Egyptian architecture in a manner similar to other ‘historical revival’ architectural styles such as Neo-classical and the Gothic Revival. They raise the issue of what is understood by the word ‘Egyptianizing’ but take an uncritical approach when they discuss the question of what the style represented. As such Pevsner and Lang encouraged later scholars to continue discussing how the style could be identified and categorised but failed to set down any expectation that meaning should be explored or indeed could be understood.

One of the most well-known works on Egyptianizing objects in Rome was compiled by Roullet (1972); a book which continues to be cited as a standard reference for this type of material in modern works on the subject. The book was

published as part of the series *Etudes Preliminaires Aux Religions Orientales Dans L'Empire Romain* which set out to identify and record examples of religious practice originating to the east of Rome, which later came to operate within the Roman empire. Roullet (1972:xv) herself starts from the premise that while the importance of Alexandrian cults (specifically the cults of Isis and Serapis) in the Roman empire had been established by modern scholars, the material culture associated with these cults had not been subject to the same systematic study. She therefore set out to present a 'catalogue raisonné' which brought together the 'Egyptian' and 'Egyptianizing' monuments of imperial Rome. The nature of her interest and positioning of her work within a series exploring ancient cults means that her primary explanation for the presence of these objects in Rome is religion.

In her discussion of the Egyptian style in imperial Rome, Roullet makes an initial distinction between pieces exported from Egypt and pieces produced in Rome. She then makes a further division between those pieces which she believes were created as 'duplicates' to balance existing genuine objects and 'mere imitations' which may have been based on a genuine object but were intended for use away from the parent piece. This approach proved highly influential and the impact of this distinction on how other scholars thought about 'authentic' and 'copy' pieces fuelled the concerns of academics such as Swetnam-Burland (2007, 2015) as discussed earlier.

Roullet (1972:13-15) makes special mention of the obelisks brought to Rome as part of the imperial Egyptianizing movement. Drawing on the explanation offered by the Roman writer Pliny in *Natural History* (36.14-15*)*, Roullet states that these monuments should be understood as symbols of the sun and the power of the ruler in both their original Egyptian and later Roman settings. This notion that obelisks evoke religious and imperial connotations continues to influence interpretations today as can be seen in recent works by Curran et al. (2009:37-40) and Versluys (2010:19). When discussing the selection of the monuments brought to Rome, Roullet (15) assumes expediency as one of the key motives, and misleadingly states that most were sourced from the Delta area of Egypt and were of a late pharaonic date. In addition, she believes that the relationship of pieces to a famous site (based on their Egyptian location) or a famous ruler (based on the presence of a royal

cartouche amongst the hieroglyphs inscribed on the obelisk) were key criteria in the process of deciding which material was removed by the Romans.

For Roullet (1972:18), the large number of Egyptian style objects created in Rome is the result of demand from the city's aristocrats, a demand driven by the growing fame of the Egyptian cults in the city and the popularity of the style in domestic architecture. She also returns to the issue of availability, noting that acquiring objects from Egypt involved the transport of large, heavy monuments and that manufacture in Rome offered an easier, quicker option. This is a questionable interpretation in relation to the obelisks covered in this research since while most were pharaonic in date, together with a number produced in imperial Rome, *all* of the monuments were constructed from Egyptian granite from the Aswan quarries. Thus, I suggest, ease of acquisition may not have always be the main motivation for the selection of a particular monument and that conversely, in some cases, the difficulty and labour involved in moving an obelisk can become part of how the monument is expected to be read by the audience in Rome.

The architectural historian J.S. Curl is a leading authority in the field of Egyptian revivals and has surveyed the emergence of the style across the western world in a variety of contexts, including interior design, jewellery and furniture as well as outdoor structures (1980, 1991, 2005). His key work in this field, now in its third edition (2005), seeks to demonstrate the importance of Egyptian design within Western European architecture and design by charting the course of the style from the classical world up to the present day. Although Curl states that his work should not be seen as a catalogue (a reference to Roullet's well-known typological volume) he also makes it clear that he is not 'concerned with the wider aspects of social conditions of each period covered' (2005:xxvi). Curl believes that the obelisks of imperial Rome were expected to act as both religious and political monuments (22), while later use by the Renaissance Popes drew the monuments into the aggrandisement of Rome and the service of the Christian church (126-127). Curl's interpretations of specific Egyptian style elements are often presented as a 'bundle' of possible readings without specific reference to either the contemporary context or previous periods of use. Thus, when he introduces obelisks he states they are

expressions of ‘divine radiance and political clout’ (22) regardless of whether they stood in a circus, in front of temples and tombs, or at the centre of a giant sundial. While in another work he says that ‘obelisks were associated with the sun, were both phallic and gnomons, and were symbols of continuity, power, regeneration, and stability' (1991:242).

Curl differs from Roullet (1972) in believing that Egyptianizing objects in Rome, although they might be inspired by Egyptian religious iconography, should not be seen solely as an expression of religious devotion to Egyptian cults amongst those who acquired them (2005:xxi). Instead, he stresses the secular nature of Roman interest in the Egyptian style and argues that ‘Nilotic’ and ‘Isaiac’ imagery was more likely to appeal to the Romans as ‘exotic’ symbols (xxi). ‘Exotic’ is a problematic term which I will discuss later as part of my review of the vocabulary used to describe and explain the Egyptian style. It is a notion Curl (xxii) returns to when seeking to explain the arrival of obelisks in Rome which, he argues, were imported partly to demonstrate that Egypt was now a subordinate province of the Roman empire and partly because obelisks were seen as aesthetically pleasing, monumental, mysterious and exotic. Curl’s main reference at this point is the material brought to Rome by Augustus. He goes on to say that once these first obelisks had been erected within the urban landscape of Rome, the obelisk gradually became a familiar motif which took on new associations, though he offers no further detail here, or later in the text, about how meaning may have evolved in relation to any later examples in the city.

What Curl does offer is an approach which acknowledges the importance of the process of information distribution about the style in one period, in supporting the subsequent re-emergence of the style. For example, he believes that material from the Roman period informed later aesthetic interest in Egypt, and became the main source for Egyptianizing design in the first half of the eighteenth century as represented in the works of, amongst others, Piranesi (2005:112). He identifies reference works, such as Pignorius’s 1608 *Characteres Aegyptii* which contained illustrations of known pieces in Italy, as a key mechanism for making information about the ancient Egyptian style available across Europe (2005:115-116).

The works of Roullet and Curl were seminal in opening up, and indeed populating, the modern debate about the use of ancient Egyptian architecture as an architectural style worthy of consideration and discussion. Roullet's 'catalogue raisonné' aimed to create an exhaustive list of works in the style accompanied by a description of each piece which would enable it to be identified by others. In contrast, Curl (2005:xxvi) made it clear that he was not producing a catalogue since he did not aim to include all known examples of the style. Instead, he was keen to describe what he considered to be the most important forms and images associated with the style, in particular jewellery, furniture and interior design, and document their appearance in a European context.

Curl's (2005) main interest lies in exploring the Egyptian style from medieval times onwards and the majority (82%) of the text is devoted to the period after AD 1200. He believes that ancient Egyptian religion, art and architecture profoundly affected Roman and Christian civilisations to a degree significantly underestimated by modern scholars and proposes, like Roullet (1972) and Whitehouse (1997:160-161), that the style has been neglected within European design histories. Curl's work thus seeks to highlight Egyptian influence on Western European design by identifying the key forms of the style. In his work, as with Roullet, obelisks are discussed as only one example of the Egyptian style in Rome. I would now like to turn to a number of volumes which deal exclusively with this type of Egyptianizing monument.

2.4 Literature on Egyptianizing obelisks

Arguably, one of the best known modern works on Egyptianized obelisks is Iversen's (1968) two volume *Obelisks in Exile,* which presents a detailed biography for a number of obelisks raised outside Egypt. Iversen draws principally on classical texts, Renaissance sources and the modern work *Gli Obelischi di Rome* by D'Onofrio, the second edition of which had been published the previous year in 1967. Iversen's first volume covers obelisks raised in Rome while the second includes examples from other parts of the world. In his preface, Iversen states that he intends the two volumes to act as a 'catalogue' of all existing obelisks, though he makes no distinction at this point between those created during the pharaonic period

and post-pharaonic monuments. The first volume is a key source of citation in my own research, and it is this volume to which all future references will relate.

The order in which Iversen (1968) presents the history of each obelisk in Rome reflects the narrative of papal interaction with the obelisks after AD 1500 (Appendix C). This suggests that Iversen sees obelisks primarily as European rather than Egyptian monuments and his account emphasises the later papal revival period and obscures the chronological narrative of the earlier imperial period. A consequence of this decision is that, of the fourteen obelisks with the greatest amount of evidence currently available for the imperial period, only thirteen are covered in Volume 1; the missing one being excluded as a result of it having been moved to Florence (i.e. outside Rome) during the papal period. The approach of presenting all known information about an obelisk at a single point in its history influenced many later works in terms of how they organised their material and generates a 'biography' for each monument which opens out from a particular point in its life.

Habachi (1977) also adopts a chronological approach to his consideration of the obelisks of Rome (Appendix C). He approaches the monuments from an Egyptologist's point of view and begins by dividing them into two groups based on the date of manufacture: Egyptian or Roman. The order of the first group (Egyptian) is determined by the pharaonic date of each piece. This means that Habachi's account focuses on the creation of the monuments as cultural objects in ancient Egypt, obscuring the narrative for their later appropriation by the emperors and popes of Rome. A striking example is the obelisk which currently stands in the Piazza S. Giovanni in Laterano. Based on its date of manufacture under the New Kingdom pharaoh Thutmose III (1479-1425 BC), Habachi discusses this obelisk first, whereas in later revival periods it was the last obelisk to leave Egypt for Rome under the Roman emperors and the third example appropriated by the Popes in Rome. The obelisks quarried under the Romans are considered second. This group is itself divided into two, with the uninscribed examples surveyed before the inscribed ones. Again, this means that the imperial and papal narratives are obscured. It also suggests that a key element in the creation and reading of a Roman period obelisk is the decision to leave the surface of the shaft blank or inscribe it with

hieroglyphic text. The role that writing (in any script) plays in the appropriation of obelisks is something I discuss later in relation to my chosen examples.

In contrast, Curl's (2005) description of the obelisks in Rome (Appendix C) adheres to no single criterion. Instead, he groups the obelisks under a number of headings which means that they are present within his narrative in the order of their arrival in Rome, their location in ancient Rome, their papal history, their modern history and finally whether they were inscribed or not. It is an approach which, in a similar fashion to his explanation of obelisks, serves to bundle the obelisks of Rome together as a single group thus obscuring the chronology of their appropriation and making it difficult to see any pattern within individual revival periods.

A major recent work on obelisks in Rome is presented by Curran, Grafton, Long and Weiss in *Obelisk: A History* (2009). As the title suggests the work seeks to draw together the story of obelisks as a monument in ancient Egypt, Europe and around the world. The focus is primarily the re-use of obelisks in Europe and within this the story of obelisks in Rome. The level of detail ascribed to different revivals reflects the extent of the historical sources available for each period. Thus within a work of 295 pages: 18 pages are devoted to the obelisks of Rome in the Roman period; 40 pages to the medieval period from the end of imperial Rome to the first papal appropriation by Sixtus V in 1586; and 124 pages to cover the period of papal appropriation up to the French invasion of Egypt in 1798. The authors discuss the obelisks in an order which broadly reflects the arrival of the obelisks in Rome though there is a division between pharaonic and Roman examples. This means that not all of the obelisks associated with the Temple of Isis on the Campus Martius, which are mainly Roman in origin, are given an imperial biography. In addition, pairs of obelisks raised in imperial Rome are discussed in the order of their discovery post AD 400, which was not always simultaneous, and any obelisk which was appropriated twice within a period has its biography presented all in one place within the text (Appendix C).

Within their discussion of imperial Rome, Curran et al. (2009) begin by considering the appropriation of obelisks by the emperor Augustus. To these

examples they ascribe a dual role of imperial trophy and religious totem (37-40). It is an explanation which draws on the work of Iversen and Curl and one which Curran et al. ascribe to the obelisk's original function as a royal and solar monument. Following this initial analysis, which presents early appropriation as a matching exercise, Curran et al. go on to suggest that after the death of Augustus the obelisk he had raised in the Circus Maximus took on 'another layer of meaning' as it came to be seen by the Romans as a memorial to the deified emperor and a symbol of his increasingly idealised rule (40).

By tracking how the meaning attached to an obelisk can change over time, Curran et al. (2009) begin to hint at the way in which appropriation needs to be seen as more than a single act of acquisition and how the new context in which an object is presented can start to generate meaning which might facilitate later appropriations. Unfortunately, the history of the subsequent obelisks raised in Rome is not as nuanced. Having set up a context for obelisks being used as meaning markers in the city landscape, all later appropriations are described as following the precedent set by Augustus (44). In addition, the division between those of Egyptian and Roman manufacture (used as a means of ordering the narrative of the text) is explained as a response to the high level of imperial 'demand' (46) rather than a deliberate choice within an individual act of appropriation. Thus, whilst the work of Curran et al. includes some examples of drawing out the meaning of obelisks in relation to the changing social world, as a whole it offers a broadly cultural-historical approach to revivals of the Egyptian style in the specific form of the obelisk.

One danger inherent in taking a purely chronological approach to discussing a set of similar objects is the possibility that the first objects discussed are assumed to establish an interpretative framework for all subsequent examples. An example is the approach taken by Elsner (2006:271-272) who argues that the Egyptian style should be seen as part of a wider Roman tradition of 'emulating' earlier art forms, alongside examples which draw on a Greek tradition, the Etruscan legacy or eastern influence. Elsner believes that these styles share an assertion of empire since they are all drawn from parts of the Roman empire. Looking at obelisks in particular, he combines this idea of empire with the account given by Pliny (36.15), for the early

imperial period to propose that most of the obelisks were imported as 'booty' and displayed as trophies. This assumption that early meaning can be applied across all later appropriations is an issue which I will be exploring later alongside an investigation into whether it is helpful, or indeed accurate, to view the whole of the imperial period as a single revival period.

Elsner's use of Pliny as a source for his interpretation also raises the question of how modern explanations follow the historiography of the time. For example, histories of Rome are usually written within a framework of imperial power so naturally its monuments are often read by the modern scholar within the same framework. It is a question which I will address as I examine the transfer vehicles operating during the early imperial period; an examination which necessitates balancing extant readings of these vehicles, such as the supposed negative image of Egypt in early imperial Rome, with other themes which can be seen within the works, such as an appreciation of the fertility and wealth of the Nile Valley.

Sorek's volume on Egyptian obelisks, published in 2010, offers a description of the movement of obelisks from Egypt to Rome with additional information on examples raised in France and Britain. Her work owes much to the previous coverage of the subject by Iversen (1968) and Habachi (1977) with additional information from earlier writers on the subject; notably Parker (1876) and Budge (1926). Interestingly, Sorek discusses the obelisks in the order in which she believes they arrived in Rome (Appendix C). Since some imperial appropriations are not currently ascribed to a particular emperor, for example the pair raised in front of the Mausoleum of Augustus, this order remains open to debate. I also propose to discuss the appropriation of obelisks to Rome based on the date when they were raised in the city's landscape and it is an issue I will cover during my discussion of the obelisks as cultural objects.

Sorek (2010) gives the complete biography for each obelisk from the date of its arrival in Rome through to the present day (Appendix C). As with Curran et al. (2009) this means that examples which were appropriated twice in the imperial period are presented at a single point in the narrative thus negating the fact that a

single obelisk can be the subject of two quite disparate acts of appropriation. Again, this narrative approach obscures the exact order of appropriation within a particular revival and presents examples of papal appropriation in an incorrect order. By focusing on individual points of appropriation I hope to provide a clearer picture of the narrative of appropriation and by allowing certain obelisks to enter the discussion as part of two discrete appropriations, draw out the role of the extant urban landscape and the layers of meaning built up around individual obelisks in shaping the process of appropriation and the meaning this action aimed to construct on each occasion.

2.5 Explaining Egyptianizing architecture

My research aims to analyse the Egyptian style as a cultural phenomenon. There has been recent academic interest in exploring the role of Egyptian material outside Egypt in new ways with Vout (2003) calling for a more complex and nuanced approach to Egyptian material within Roman visual culture, and Swetnam-Burland (2010:135) lamenting that obelisks in Roman and Renaissance contexts are usually treated as more or less interchangeable. In seeking to examine current approaches to explaining Egyptianizing architecture, I will consider works which cover the Egyptian style in contexts beyond that which I propose to cover in my case-study. In reviewing these works I intend to identify the different ways in which Egyptianizing architecture has been positioned within academic debate, unpick the manner in which these works create a framework for analysing the style and reflect on how this has influenced my own approach to the subject which I will apply to my chosen data set of obelisks.

A series of books, which sought to address both the role of theory in Egyptology and criticism that the discipline tended to be too insular, was published in 2003 under the title *Encounters with Ancient Egypt*. Within this eight volume series, the title which most closely reflects the focus of my own research is *Imhotep Today: Egyptianizing Architecture* edited by Price and Humbert (2003). This work examines the Egyptianizing style through a number of case-studies which consider the style in specific locations at particular times. In their introduction (2003:1-24) the editors express the hope that these case-studies will address the issues of whether

it is possible to determine if a particular feature is truly derived from ancient Egypt, why the style has been adopted across the world and what triggers have led to the adoption of the style in a variety of different circumstances. This approach represented a contrast to the mainly catalogue and listing type works on Egyptianizing architecture which had been produced previously and aimed to open up discussion around the issues listed above which Price and Humbert believe had not 'been sufficiently addressed before' (2).

Within this work, an emphasis on individual elements, such as pyramids and sphinx, specific locations, such as London, Paris and Melbourne, and particular periods, from the eighteenth to the twentieth century, enables the scholars to focus on an Egyptianizing motif in a specific context. It is an approach I plan to adopt in my own research. Another important aspect of the work is the explanation offered for the use of the style in each case. For example, Fazzini and McKercher (2003:153) argue that the 'Egyptomania' evident in the built environment of the American city of Memphis, aimed to evoke the city's ancient namesake and re-enforce the aspiration of the city's founders that it would become a centre of political power. Later in the volume Rosati (2003:222) suggests that developments in the fifty year period from 1800, when Egyptian style ornaments came to adorn the gardens of Florence, can be attributed to the 1808 publication of an Italian edition of Denon's *Voyage dans la Basse et la Haute Égypte* in combination with a renewed interest in ancient architecture prompted by the contemporary debate about the origins of classical architecture.

These explanations include approaches to Egyptianizing architecture which I believe offer a way to gain a better understanding of why revivals of the Egyptian style emerge. Thus, consideration is given to how the contemporary society understood ancient Egypt, how it came to find out about Egypt and what contemporary social concerns the style might have mediated. Whilst some of the case-studies seek to consider the style over a span of two hundred years, the emphasis within the volume on the Egyptian style from 1700 onwards means that there is little opportunity to present a study of any individual element over a longer span of time with the associated opportunities this offers to compare usage in

different periods and consider the role of both previous use and changing contemporary factors in the continued use or re-emergence of the style.

Price and Humbert (2003:6) were concerned that the Egyptian style had not been studied in terms of the degree to which it copied original examples and the effect this had on whether objects could be included in the canon of Egyptianized pieces. While it is certainly true that previous works on the subject had assumed an understanding that a piece such as the Washington Monument in the United States of America can be classed as Egyptianized architecture due to its replication of an obelisk in form, if not in function and construction, it is not made clear what additional understanding would be elucidated by the identification, and cataloguing, of any degree of derivation.

Instead, I would suggest that the identification of the style is binary – yes or no – based on the ability of the viewer to understand the piece as being Egyptian in style. On this basis, the proposition that degree of derivation is crucial to the study of the style would potentially reveal instances of unsuccessful attempts to create a piece whereby viewers fail to read something as 'Egyptian'. Leading on from this, I would argue that for a piece to be seen as Egyptianized depends not on the degree of derivation demonstrated by the piece, but whether the final authentic object, accurate copy or adapted pastiche makes sense to the viewer in terms of their perception of Egypt shaped by the transfer vehicles carrying information about Egypt into the viewer's social world, the extant traditions of presenting the style, and the impact of the contemporary social world.

The comments made by Price and Humbert (2003) in relation to original and pastiche material within an Egyptianizing project indicate that they see a clear division between the 'value' of these two types of object relative to 'realness'. Thus, they propose that the Victorian sphinxes at the foot of Cleopatra's Needle in London are Egyptianizing, whilst the authentic obelisk itself is 'merely' Egyptian (17). This division is reflected in Curran et al. (2009:51) when artefacts of Egyptian heritage in Roman religious contexts are described as 'some genuinely Egyptian, others just Egyptianizing' while Roullet (1972:18) states that a careful distinction must be

made between ‘duplicates created to balance an isolated genuine monument, and mere imitations created after a genuine piece, but used independently of it’. Such distinctions overlook the fact that the Embankment obelisk and sphinxes were deliberately placed together to create a *single* Egyptianizing structure. I would argue that it is the reading generated by the whole structure, a combination of the messages which may be carried by discrete elements within the structure, which should be the focus of any attempt to elucidate the potential meaning of the structure for its initial and later audiences.

A common gap in discussions about Egyptianizing architecture is the lack of acknowledgment that copies are often based on a third-party account (in graphic or textual form) of the source material. For example, before the publication of the multi volume *Description de l’Egypte* (1809-1828) which drew together the scholarly study undertaken during the Napoleonic expedition to Egypt, much of the information about the country’s monuments was based on written accounts rather than observational sketches; thus visual understanding of the monuments had to pass through the additional mediation of the reader’s imagination. Instead, there is often a bundling together of sources for any particular period with no consideration of the possible bias and filtering inherent in these sources. This means that the actual vehicles used to disseminate information about ancient Egyptian architecture are often overlooked. Such vehicles are crucial to the study of Egyptianizing pieces because what is being replicated is often a cultural construct of Egypt (several times removed) not ancient Egypt itself. Within my research I will refer to sources which carry information about Egypt to an audience outside the Nile Valley as ‘transfer vehicles’. For example, Pliny’s *Natural History* and the information it includes on the nature and role of the obelisk in Egypt (36.14-15), can be seen to circulate information about this type of ancient Egyptian monument within Roman society while simultaneously suggesting ways in which Roman society might understand an obelisk in their own city. This concept is central to my analysis of Egyptianizing obelisks and I will discuss it in greater depth in the methodology chapter. In addition, extant Egyptianizing objects can themselves become a source which inform later emergences of the style, either as acknowledged revival pieces or when perceived as directly representing ancient forms.

The issue of how Egyptianizing architecture may be understood by the viewer is a key component of my research and is noted by Price and Humbert (2003:15) when they comment that literature on the subject has tended to assume a 'universal' understanding of ancient Egypt amongst the viewing audience. Instead I will argue that there is a process of active interpretation taking place both on the part of the person creating the piece and the people viewing it and rather than being 'universal', understanding of Egyptianized pieces can be different at different times and between different groups of people. Such a process has already been considered by Barthes.

Starting from the idea that an understanding of Saussure's notion of 'the sign' is central to any act of interpretation; Barthes (1972:110) combines this with a Marxist critique to argue that interpretations (which he refers to as 'myths') are imposed on neutral events and objects to perform a particular ideological function, namely the perpetuation of the extant social order. He states that any object or material can 'arbitrarily be endowed with meaning' and emphasises the distinction between the meaning (denotation) of an object and its ideological signification (connotation). Thus a monument's meaning may be 'an ancient Egyptian obelisk' but its ideological significance may go beyond this historical context to address contemporary social, economic or political issues. For example, in a privately-run Victorian garden cemetery the association of ancient Egypt with reverence for the dead meant that grave markers in the shape of an ancient Egyptian obelisk could be used to bolster the idea of a burial company offering greater respect and security than an overcrowded, insecure church graveyard dominated by the slab gravestone and Christian cross. For Barthes, the manipulation of an object's meaning whereby it is 'deprived of memory, not of existence' enables the object to be used as a 'gesture' (122). This approach is central to my research around the deployment of Egyptianizing architecture over time. Interestingly, Barthes suggests that a copy lends itself more to signification than an original (110).

While Barthes (1972) is interested in studying the 'repetition of the concept through different forms' (120) in order to reveal the underlying myth, I will look at the repetition of a form and the different myths it supports at any one particular time. This builds on Barthes's suggestion that 'some objects become the prey of mythical

speech for a while, then they disappear' and that no object is 'inevitably a source of suggestiveness' (110). An item of Egyptian architecture can thus carry a message for a time before this message shifts to another constructed carrier – leading towards the idea of cultural revivals proposed by Griswold (1986) whereby an object moves on and off centre stage as it is needed to express/support a particular social need/issue. It is a situation which I will be exploring in relation to Egyptian obelisks through my discussion of their appropriation in early imperial Rome.

The notion of Egyptian architecture inspiring a sense of awe is often put forward as a way to explain how the style is viewed in its original context and why it is re-used in later contexts. This approach tends to divorce interpretation of the style from any notion of functionality. For example, Price and Humbert (2003:17) when discussing the use of an obelisk as a commemorative structure overlay any notion of functionality (in terms of flat surfaces and original use) with an interpretation based on perceived charm and esotericism. Thus they suggest that 'a significant part of Egyptomania is to do with enjoyment of its exuberance, its acceptance of the flight of fancy, and its sheer fun'. This notion is extended back to the source material itself through the implication that the impact of ancient architecture is fuelled by a sense of astonishment leading to a sense of mystery and exoticism which has influenced the imagination of architects and those who commission their work. As a consequence, Egyptianizing architecture is seen to generate an exotic cultural self-image which drives its continued use.

Roullet (1972:18) makes use of similar terminology when she refers to a 'fashion for exotic Egyptian décor among the Roman aristocracy' during her discussion of the style in domestic interiors following the assimilation of Egypt into the empire. Such wording suggests a response to Egyptian architecture which is primarily driven by emotional understanding. It is an approach which marginalises the social and political factors which may have been involved in the selection of an Egyptianizing device. Similarly, for Curl (2005:10) the movement of obelisks enabled Augustus to 'beautify' Alexandria and Rome; an explanation which accords with the notion that the use of Egyptian material culture was driven mainly by aesthetic considerations.

Another approach followed by general overviews is the application of a single interpretative theory to the Egyptian style across all periods. This is demonstrated by Curran et al. (2009:8-10) who state early on that all obelisks moved out of Egypt served 'no practical function' but instead acted as a useful symbol for empires wishing to make a statement about their power, particularly when this power was at a point of change. They argue that this is an 'obvious' association generated by the perceived importance of any ruler able to cause the movement and erection of such a large stone object. In effect, they see obelisks acting as a 'Rorschach test' for civilisations; taking on new readings around the exercise of power over time. Consequently, for ancient Rome the obelisk embodied Rome's coming of age as an empire, to the Renaissance popes it represented the triumph of Christianity over pagan beliefs, to nineteenth century Paris it demonstrated French engineering and scholarly prowess and acted as a reminder of recent French politics, while in New York it became a symbol of the United States of America's growing power overseas.

This notion of appropriation as a process inherently imperial in its operation is also proposed by Hassan (2003:19-20) who believes that imperial powers aim to legitimate their rule by 'cannibalizing' other civilisations in order to assume a supreme position in the order of the world. In the course of inventing an imperialist narrative, the imperialists seize and show off memorials, monuments and mementos of other civilisations. Hassan applies this to the appropriation of Egyptian obelisks, arguing that the obelisk acted as an icon of imperial power and was seen as a symbol of 'cultural hegemony and dominance'.

Hobbs-Halmay (1992:1) introduces a chronological aspect to her interpretation of the Egyptian style as a decorative device when she refers to the 'fad' for Egyptian architecture in the 1800s. Her approach suggests that the style can best be understood as a fashion craze which is short-lived, emerges over-night and fades in the face of a new interest. To a certain extend this is supported by examples such as the opening of Tutankhamun's tomb in 1922 which led to a surge in public interest fed by the information available through the popular press (2). Although, looking at the tomb from an archaeological point of view there is a ten year period of emptying and recording the contents. The approach encourages a narrative which tracks

changes in how the style is presented rather than considering the underlying circumstances which might prompt the deployment of an appropriated style within a particular society.

The other danger inherent in using terms such as ‘decorative’ is that it hinders attempts to determine any meaning implied by the selection of the Egyptian style and its reception as an incoming culture based style. For example, Elsner (2006:272) argues that once Egyptian style pieces entered the Roman visual world they became divorced from any original function or meaning to become ‘one further option in an empire-wide range of decorative choices’. In relation to obelisks, Bierbrier (2003:69) attributes the interest of Roman emperors in this type of monument to a wish to ‘decorate’ Rome and later Constantinople. It is a sentiment shared by Holt (1986:60) who refers to the decoration of Rome with imported obelisks as the act of imperial ‘Egyptomaniacs’. The use of such a phrase to describe the motives of those who engaged with the style reflects the issue discussed earlier around how modern scholars value Egyptianized pieces artistically. It is an approach which suggests an irrational motivation for the use of the style, an emotive response likened to a type of ‘mania’. The use of such terminology occurs in the work of Humbert et al. (1994:15) and Malaise (2005:201-220, 2007:19-39) and continues to operate as an interpretative approach in current works. The work of Brier (1992, 2004, 2013) provides a good example of how this approach plays out in terms of how the style, and the rational for its use, is explained to the modern reader.

Brier (2013:19) believes that Rome was the birthplace of ‘Egyptomania’ and says that Roman ‘infatuation’ lasted for centuries (31) although the whole imperial period is only afforded 15 pages (19-33) in a volume running to 256 pages. Brier’s main interest in the style is post 1800, when a clear narrative of the logistics and personnel involved can be established, and he gives a detailed account of the obelisks moved after this date to France, London and New York (2013:69-150). Brier (2004:16-22; 2013:32, 58, 160) follows the established tradition of ascribing ‘episodes of Egyptomania’ to specific events; citing the examples of Sixtus V’s erection of an Egyptian obelisk in 1586 as the trigger for Renaissance interest with later episodes triggered by the activities of Napoleon and Howard Carter respectively. Moving on

to why people were interested in the style, Brier (2004:16-22) proposes that Egyptomania in each of these periods was fuelled by a desire to emulate the Egyptian pursuit of immortality, a belief that the Egyptians had secret or profound knowledge, or simple escapism. Overall Brier's approach relies heavily on the agency of events and emotional motivation. Both interpretations are not unique to the work of Brier. They are however, interpretations of the style which I seek to challenge in my own research.

When looking at revival causation, Humbert and Price (2003) also emphasise the role of individuals in triggering a revival. For example, they give Belzoni credit for the English revival of the 1800s; an explanation which overlooks the need to contextualise agency. Overall, they suggest a model of discrete revivals linked to a single instigator, a particular geographical location or a specific timeframe. It is an approach reflected by Hobbs-Halmay (1992:1-2) who comments that the Egyptianizing architecture of nineteenth century North America was sparked by the discovery of the Rosetta Stone. I would argue that such an approach fails to consider the underlying social landscape which provides the fertile ground within which the revival successfully takes root. I would suggest that it is better to see such individual events, not as isolated aesthetic driven incidents, but as part of a continuing interest in ancient Egypt which is 'fed' by specific occasions to create a surge in public awareness which renews popular interest and causes the style to emerge in the public domain. As such, within an ongoing Western interest in ancient Egyptian mummified bodies, the discovery of Tutankhamun's tomb 'gave fresh impetus to this fascination' (Hornung 2001:169) and should be seen in terms of previous Victorian mummy unwrapping spectacles and modern museum exhibitions (Daly 1994; Rice and MacDonald 2003).

The use of chronology in the study of Egyptianizing architecture raises some interesting issues around perceived starting points for the style, and potential chronological links between different revivals. While some works focus on a specific time period (Carrot 1978; Curran 2007; Hobbs-Halmay 1992) and others take a more general overview (Curl 2005; Curran et al. 2009), all seek to determine chronological boundaries for revival periods and identify key events which are

presented as the trigger for these revivals. In relation to my own research I am especially interested in studies which position a single revival period within a sequence of revival traditions and consider how a later revival interprets an earlier occurrence of the style.

Humbert et al. (1994:15), by beginning their survey of the Egyptian style in 1730, make clear their intention to de-emphasise the impact of the Napoleonic Egyptian campaign of 1798-1801, an event which is often considered the principal catalyst for Egyptomania in the modern world. Instead, they refer back to Roman use of Egyptian architecture, which they see as a natural process arising from Roman occupation of Egypt, and argue that these examples became the first pieces of 'Egyptian material' discovered by European artists and antiquarians during the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries through mechanisms such as the Grand Tour. Curl (2005:xx) also disputes what he calls the 'commonly held belief that the Egyptian Revival was a short-lived aberration in a period of eclectic revivals following the Napoleonic Campaigns in Egypt'. Instead, he proposes that the true origin of the style goes back to the rise of Hellenistic culture in Egypt. Curran et al. (2009:230-236) draw a link between the Roman and nineteenth century movement of obelisks, suggesting that on both occasions the incursion of outside powers into the government of the country triggered appropriation.

Such approaches accord with my own ideas that appropriation of the Egyptian style should be seen as a long-term process occurring in the ancient through to the modern world. In this respect, Humbert's (2003) discussion of Egyptianizing pyramids demonstrates some interesting approaches to citing the impact of earlier uses on later examples. Humbert's focus on a single element is similar to my own proposal to track the style through a single example, in my case the obelisk, and although he begins his survey with the arrival of the French in 1798, he acknowledges that visitors to Egypt had interacted with the pyramids prior to this, resulting in the first century BC Roman copy known as the tomb of Caius Cestius (25). However, Humbert does not attempt to sequence the periods he considers into a coherent narrative and proposes a sharp divide between the ancient pyramids and the pyramids constructed post AD 1700, which he believes represent a new

generation no longer connected to those of antiquity (36-38). In contrast I will follow a chronology which begins by looking at interaction with the living traditions of ancient Egypt, as it became part of the Hellenistic and Roman worlds, and go on to consider how the style manifested once ancient Egypt became an historical tradition in order to build a narrative structure which aims to explain the Egyptian style as a sequence of connected appropriations.

Constructing a narrative for Egyptianizing architecture, with a widening chronological gap between original and later use, in conjunction with the notion that transfer vehicles are crucial to this process, leads to the reflection that revivals were as likely to be based on perceptions of ancient Egypt as archaeological facts. This is illustrated by the role of ancient inscriptions on obelisks which was often based on assumptions of what the hieroglyphs said at a time when the ability to translate the language had been lost. Roullet (1972), Curl (2005) and Curran et al. (2009) all refer to the various strands of information circulating at any one time when they point to the accounts of monumental remains collected in the field by eighteenth century travellers to Egypt co-existing with a stream of information which related solely to the Egyptian/Egyptianized monuments already in Europe.

Direct access to the extant ancient archaeological record, afforded by the Napoleonic expedition raises an interesting question around the extent to which access to ancient Egyptian material culture in situ cuts across the influence of any previous emergence of the style. Did the French expedition, and dissemination of related knowledge, have a greater influence on subsequent revivals than existing examples of appropriation and information sources already available in Europe? While this event falls outside my chosen case-study period, a review of how scholars have tackled this question helps to illuminate the wider issue of how selection of the Egyptian style is usually explained.

Curran et al. (2009:230-236) see the French campaign as a significant historical occasion as power in Egypt shifts away from the Islamic states - Fatimid, Ayyubid, Mamluk and Ottoman - towards Europe, culminating in Egypt becoming a ‘protectorate’ of the British Empire by 1900. Curran et al. argue that this movement

of authority in the region from the east to the west acts as a trigger for obelisks to start leaving Egypt - one each for Paris, London and New York respectively. Equally significant, they argue, was the scholarly legacy of the campaign (as embodied in *Description de l'Egypte*) which created an intellectual framework for the study of ancient Egypt.

Nine out of twenty-three volumes (Imperial Edition) of the grandly titled *Description de l'Egypte, ou, Receuil des Observations et des Recherches qui ont été faites en Egypte pendant l'expédition de l'armée Française, Publié par les Ordres de Sa Majesté l'empereur Napoleon le Grand* (1809-1828) were dedicated to the antiquities of ancient Egypt (five books of plates, two books of memoirs and two books of descriptions) and there is an established tradition that the work was a seminal point in the development of British Egyptology (Bednarski 2005:18). For Curl (2005:196), the work of the French scholars and artists who accompanied the French military expedition provided Europe with accurate source material for ancient Egyptian architecture. However, he sees this particular release of information as part of a continuum of interest in the Egyptian style which already embraced three distinct attitudes: firstly a 'playful' use similar to Chinoiserie or Gothic, secondly a more formal picturesque usage as part of Neo-Classicism and thirdly design work which drew on 'archaeological' observed and measured records. Curl (2005:204-205, 226) believes that the fresh source material presented in the *Description de l'Égypte* acted as a catalyst for the nineteenth century Egyptian Revival and generated scientific interest in ancient Egypt.

It is a view currently subject to revision. Bednarski (2005:21) argues that the multi-volume *Description de l'Égypte* was only ever intended for, and ultimately acquired by, the wealthy elite of Europe. Instead Bednarski (2005:53-54) proposes that Denon's two volume work *Voyage dans la Basse et la Haute Egypte pendant les Campagnes du Général Bonaparte* (one volume of text, one of plates) published in 1802 proved the more popular, going on to became available in English and German and running to some forty editions. In contrast the *Description* never achieved the same level of circulation. Bednarski (2005:10) also points out that the *Description* was itself influenced by two earlier French works of 1787 by Savary

and Chasseboeuf Volney respectively. Predating both the *Description* and the works of 1787 were the European travel accounts of Egypt published in the 1740s; namely those of the Danish naval officer Norden in 1741 and the British traveller Pococke 1743 (Hornung 2001:137). Then in 1760, Frederick V of Denmark sponsored a Danish expedition to Egypt, Arabia and Syria. In 1772, Niebuhr published his account of the expedition which had set sail in January 1761, landed at Alexandria and travelled up the Nile. Norden's work in particular provided Europe with maps, descriptions and representations of ancient monuments 60 years before the Napoleonic campaign to Egypt (Buhl et al. 1986:37).

A longer term flow of information about the Egyptian style is also proposed by Curl (2005:112) who believes that material from the Roman period informed aesthetic interest in Egypt, and became the main source for Egyptianizing design in the first half of the eighteenth century as seen in the works of, amongst others, Piranesi. In addition, Curl (2005:115-116) identifies the publication of reference works, such as Pignorius's *Characteres Aegyptii* (1608) which made graphic records of known pieces in Italy available throughout Western Europe, as a key mechanism for the dissemination of information about ancient Egypt. These works predate volumes where information was collected in the field, for example Jean de Thévenot's 1664 book on the Levant which included his observation, and measurement, of the Great Pyramid of Giza (Curl 2005:140) and the major archaeological discoveries and recording of the later 1700s and the 1800s which Curl (2005:xxvii) acknowledges would impact on the 'accuracy' of later uses of the style in funerary, interior and factory architecture.

Hornung (2001:195) believes that ancient Egypt was a major source of religious inspiration and influence. He suggests this role began as early as the second millennium BC when symbols such as the winged sun disk and the ankh along with forms such as the scarab and the sphinx were borrowed by societies in Western Asia. He goes on to say that it was the Phoenicians who spread the knowledge and worship of the Egyptian deities throughout the Mediterranean world and that this process continued, rather than started, under the Greeks and the Romans.

In his study of the Egyptian style in nineteenth century North America, Carrot (1978) sets out to consider why a particular style is revived at a particular time by analysing the attitudes towards the past and the present expressed through that style. He argues that the American revival had an 'eclectic bias' which demonstrated many meanings and attitudes towards Egypt (22). He points to a sense of mystery and hidden wisdom, fuelled by knowledge of the lost Library of Alexandria and the presumed secrets of hieroglyphs, combined with a notion of Egypt as a land of great antiquity, durability and strength. Carrot believes that these perceptions made it the ideal style for buildings whose function linked to an aspect of this public perception: cemetery gates (death), prisons and law courts (justice and wisdom), bridges and railway stations (durability), libraries (wisdom), places of worship (antiquity and early wisdom) and fraternal lodges (mystery). In the same way Grant (1988:237) suggests that the idea of ancient wisdom was applied to institutional buildings whilst a notion of the 'massiveness and horizontality' of Egyptian architecture was used to convey dependability in civil engineering works such as bridges.

The idea of an association between perceptions of a past Egypt and the needs of the present is also explored by Trafton (2005) in his own discussion of the style in 1800s North America. He argues that a binary notion of ancient Egypt as both classically 'near' and exotically 'far' lays the ground for an inherent dichotomy within perceptions of the style. He suggests that this is demonstrated by the use of the style for prisons and cemeteries wherein it expresses: 'an interest in containment joined with a fear of escape, a desire for entombment combined with a fascination with excavation, a relief at internment mixed with a hope of resurrection' (149).

Hobbs-Halmay (1992:2-4) also considers the social concerns and aspirations which formed the background for a possible revival of the Egyptian style in 1920s North America. Looking beyond the initial 'King Tut excitement', she comments that the 1920s was a period when architects and designers were looking to break with the immediate past and express the rapid changes to the American lifestyle following the First World War. They were attracted by the clean lines and strong geometric qualities of ancient Egyptian architecture while the use of stone by the Egyptians fitted well with the concrete and stucco construction materials of an

industrial building trade. I would suggest that these needs were themselves fulfilled by an 'artificial' vision of ancient Egypt due to process of archaeological 'filtering' through which the mud brick architecture which dominated the ancient built environment had been mainly lost to the elements over time leaving surviving stone structures, mostly of a religious and royal nature, available to early travellers and archaeologists.

The relationship between archaeological information and Egyptianizing accuracy is mediated not just by the physical aspects of the archaeological record but also the manner in which this record is accessed and then represented. Renfrew (2000) argues that the most important product of archaeology is the information that a controlled and comprehensively published excavation can provide about a human past. In contrast, clandestine and unpublished digs destroy the context and any opportunity for producing site information. Interestingly many of the objects which influence Egyptianizing architecture lacked much of their archaeological context by the time they arrived in Rome and it is important to bear this in mind when considering the role of transfer vehicles in informing public opinion and establishing how these objects should be understood by the viewing audience. Thus, Humbert (2003:24) comments that the pyramids at Giza are known by those who have seen them *and* those who, having never seen them, have heard about them or seen images of them.

Hobbs-Halmay (1992:2) credits continued press reports relating to the ongoing work at the tomb of Tutankhamun right up into the fourth season of work in 1928, for maintaining public interest after the initial excitement surrounding the discovery of the tomb subsided. She goes on to consider how a wider interest in all things ancient Egypt is supported during the same period by constructed narrative pieces such as the film *The Ten Commandments* with its lavish sets and 'exotic' locations (3). Thus analysing the transfer vehicles which carry information about Egypt and enable this information to reach and circulate within an appropriating society, helps us to understand the perceptions held by the people of that social world as the Egyptianized pieces emerge in the public sphere. It is a concept I will discuss further in the methodology chapter.

Curran et al. (2009:42) argue that the process of moving monuments held greater symbolic meaning than any association with their original fabrication and erection. They suggest that the Romans were motivated to move obelisks 'precisely because they were difficult to move' and that movement was a demonstration of imperial power and skill which had greater longevity than the traditional parading of captives through the streets of Rome (229). Indeed, the very vocabulary they use to describe the process of moving obelisks imbues the act with latent power as they describe how an obelisk was 'torn from its original location' and 'subjected to a variety of changes' (49). It is an idea which has an intertextual echo in the work of some of the classical writers, the probable source for this interpretation by Curran et al., and it is an idea I will return to when I discuss these classical texts in relation to the social world of early imperial Rome.

At this point I would like to sound a note of caution regarding any attempt to determine the objectives and understanding communicated by an architect via a structure they create and whether these are always 'correctly' read by the viewer. For example, Leoh Ming Pei, the architect responsible for the 1989 *Pyramide du Louvre* at the centre of the main courtyard and co-designer of *La Pyramide Inversée* (installed at the Louvre in 1993), has always refused to acknowledge any Egyptian affiliation with the pyramids despite the public's views to the contrary. Instead he stresses use of transparency (it is constructed with a steel frame and glass panel walls), the structure's interior vacuum and its absence of mass (Humbert 2003:36). For the architect it is a structure which marks the entrance to the Louvre ticket foyer and an underground shopping mall and has no function beyond a transit point for visitors through security and onto the escalators taking them down. For him it is the shape 'most compatible' with the existing architecture of the Louvre (Boehm 2000:84). For the public, its form links it to other Egyptianizing architecture in the city, the Napoleonic period (it stands in the *Cour Napoléon*) and the Louvre's extensive Egyptian collections.

The same issue arises with the sphinxes at the foot of Cleopatra's Needle in London which the architect originally intended to face outward from the Needle, and which the contractors installed facing the opposite direction, i.e. looking directly at

the foot of the obelisk (Harley 2005:28). Does this really matter or does the perception of the viewing public supersede and even replace that of the architect or person who commissions the piece? What these examples suggest is the need to be clear that intention is not always the same as outcome. As Griswold (1986:7) comments a work once created should be seen as 'veined with ambiguity, multivocality and significance beyond the author's conscious intention'.

Each of the objects which make up the core data set for this research consist of a monolithic granite obelisk with additional elements, such as a base, pedestal and/or apex fitting, presented as a single architectural monument within the urban landscape of Rome. My starting point for talking about 'Egyptian' obelisks appropriated to Rome has been the idea that obelisks, as a monumental form, were seen as coming from Egypt. However, without the hindsight of modern archaeological knowledge, it must be acknowledged that the Roman audience viewing these objects was reliant on the transfer vehicles, such as Pliny, which told them they were Egyptian. In the same way, if the act of Egyptianizing means to make Egyptian by assigning Egyptian origin or characteristics to a cultural object, transfer vehicles and extant examples play a crucial role in building the audience's horizon of assumptions about the qualities and traits of this type of material culture.

2.6 Summary

Current works on the Egyptian style often focus on a particular time period (usually a century, sometimes as short as a decade) to create a detailed account of the resultant architecture. An example is Humbert and Price (2003) who look at the adaptation and use of the style in modern times through a number of individually authored chapters which examine specific examples in great detail. However, there is little cross-reference to examples discussed in other chapters which might provide a longer term overview of generic issues such the role of producer motivation, the generation of public perceptions of the style across time and possible links between revival periods.

Another approach followed by general overviews is the application of a single interpretative theory to the style across all periods. For obelisks removed from Egypt,

meaning tied to the exercise of power and imperial expansion is often ascribed to the monument regardless of the location or revival period involved. The opposite approach would be to take a single monument and look at how meaning has been re-ascribed at different times in response, not only on the perceived symbolism of the monument but the contemporary 'world view'. Recent approaches to obelisks, particularly those appropriated several times (from the Roman period to the Renaissance through to the present day), stress the individual histories of these objects, rather than looking at how a group of obelisks relate to each other within a period. Thus the story of the individual monument through time gains prominence at the expense of the story of a group of objects within a single period.

While scholars may differ in how they interpret the Egyptian style and how they seek to explain why it has been deployed at certain times or in particular locations, there is a general understanding across the current literature that a revival style can be manipulated to express an idea beyond its original raison d'être, such that the actions of those mediating the object can 'transform, translate, distort, and modify the meaning of that element' (Latour 2005:24). In line with this, I propose to analyse why people may have chosen to adopt the Egyptian style for a particular location, structure or time and also how the audience viewing this architecture might be expected to read it. In the next chapter I will discuss the methodology I intend to follow in order to investigate this issue through an in-depth consideration of the appropriation of Egyptian obelisks in early imperial Rome.

Chapter 3: Data

3.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the data set which I have assembled as part of my research, and which I aim to analyse in order to elucidate a clearer understanding of the Roman appropriation of ancient Egyptian obelisks. I begin by introducing my chosen monument: the obelisk. I then discuss the collection and construction of an appropriate data set; looking in detail at how I assembled the data and how I chose to present it. I finish with a discussion of the historical period I have selected as the context for my discussion: imperial Rome.

3.2 Data set

My research data consists of a set of obelisks raised in the city of Rome between 10 BC and AD 360. This set includes obelisks originally raised by pharaonic rulers of Egypt, as well as pieces manufactured in Roman Egypt for export to Italy. The complete data set consists of fourteen standing obelisks each with an established biography in modern literature, seven fragmentary obelisks and six lost obelisks. I will refer to the fourteen obelisks offering the most comprehensive data as the 'core' data set. Unfortunately, the limited evidence currently available for most of the fragmentary and lost examples means that it is not always possible to ascribe exact locations or dates to these pieces during their history. Fragments and lost examples will be cited in the discussion where the information attributed to these pieces enables them to provide supporting evidence for a particular point or line of argument. These three sets of obelisks act as a pool of potential data for in depth analysis of the appropriation of Egyptian obelisks to imperial Rome.

All of the data gathered is listed in Appendix A. This listing includes the following information for each of the core set of obelisks: current location in Rome, initial producer, date of manufacture, material, height, any Egyptian inscriptions, original Egyptian location, details of any subsequent move within Egypt, details of when and by whom it was moved out of Egypt, initial location in Rome, any modifications, any additional inscriptions, details of any subsequent movement in Rome. Fragmentary and lost obelisks are listed with a brief description of all the

currently known information for each piece. At this point I would like to set out my definition of an obelisk as applied to the monuments discussed, and provide a brief overview of the Egyptian origins of the obelisk before discussing the specific examples included in my data set.

3.3 Obelisks

An obelisk is a tall, thin, four-sided, tapering monument with a pyramid shaped apex. I will use the term ‘shaft’ to refer to the lower section of the monument below the apex. Each of the four faces of this shaft is rhombus in shape. The shaft narrows from the base toward the top where it meets the square based pyramid shaped apex which I will refer to as the ‘pyramidion’. Ancient Egyptian obelisks were quarried and erected as monoliths. Most ancient obelisks were granite with a few cut from quartzite or basalt (Habachi 1977:15). Obelisks were usually inscribed with hieroglyphic text on all four faces of the shaft, and some have scenes carved on the shaft and, more usually, the pyramidion. Obelisks were often raised in pairs (Arnold 2003:165; Iversen 1968:15; Shaw and Nicholson 1995:208; Wilkinson 2000:57). Obelisks which made up a pair were not necessarily the same height. For example, the obelisks of Ramessess II at ancient Thebes have a height difference of 2m between the taller eastern monument and the shorter western one (Niedziólka 2003:408). A range of heights has been recorded across known examples of the monument. The height for each of the core data set obelisks is shown in Table 1 and will be discussed in greater detail below.

The English word ‘obelisk’, as applied to this type of monument, derives from the Greek word ὀβελίσκος (*obeliskos*) meaning a 'small spit' (Liddell and Scott 1996) in reference to its shape. The word is a diminutive of ὀβελός (*obelos*) (Smith 1875:816) which occurs in the original Greek phrase ὀβελός λίθινος, meaning a ‘pointed square pillar’ (Liddell and Scott 1996), first used by the ancient Greek writer Herodotus (2.111.4). In Latin the word was written as *obeliscus* and both the Greek and Latin words were used in classical texts - for example Diodorus Siculus (1.46), Pliny (36.14) and Strabo (17.1.27). The Latin term is the basis for most modern European language vocabulary relating to this type of ancient monument.

The ancient Egyptian term for an obelisk was  *thn/tekhen* with the final glyph acting as a determinative (Gardiner 1957: sign O35). Since obelisks were typically raised in pairs, Egyptian texts usually refer to *tekhenui* ('the two obelisks'). The exact etymology of the Egyptian term is unknown (Quirke 2001:135). Pliny (36.14) suggests that the obelisk was shaped and named in recognition of rays of sunshine associated with the Egyptian solar deities and uses the Latin word *trabes* (beam) when introducing the monument to his readers. In modern times, Shaw and Nicholson (1995:208) have suggested that the word *tekhen* may relate to the ancient Egyptian verb *weben* ('to shine'). The Arabic term used in modern Egypt is الخنجرية *messalah* meaning a large darning needle, again in reference to the shape of the monument (Habachi 1977:3). Throughout this research I will use the word 'obelisk' when referring to these monuments.

3.3.1 The obelisk in ancient Egypt

The obelisk seems to have originated, or at least become established, at Iunu  *iwnw* (Gardiner 1957: signs O28, W24, O49 meaning 'place of pillars') before spreading across ancient Egypt (Wilkinson 2000:57). Iunu was the capital city for the fifteenth nome (province) of Lower Egypt and the main cult centre for the sun god Atum-Ra. The city is more commonly known as Heliopolis, a name which derives from the Greek ηλιούπολις meaning 'city of the sun' (Habachi 1977:5; Quirke 2001:73). I will use the place name 'Heliopolis' in relation to this site.

The obelisk is currently considered to be a monumental development of the sacred *benben* stone of Heliopolis (Arnold 2003:165). According to ancient Egyptian creation mythology, the *benben* stone represented the mound that rose from the primordial waters on which the creator god Atum settled (Watterson 1998:36-37). The inscription on an obelisk erected by the pharaoh Hatshepsut (c. 1473-1458 BC) at Karnak says that nothing had been made like this since the 'primeval time of the earth' (Niedziólka 2003:410). The *benben* stone was also considered sacred to the sun god and a type of pyramidal stone monument seems to have been revered as part of the sun cult from the Predynastic period (c. 5500-3100 BC) onwards. In particular, these stones were associated with the god Atum, the setting sun, and the god Ra, the rising sun (Habachi 1977:4-5; Quirke 2001:73).

Kemp (2006:137-140) suggests an alliterative connection between the sun, the *benben* stone and the *benu* bird (heron/phoenix) around the sound of the ancient Egyptian vocabulary used to describe the rising sun sending its rays (*weben*) towards the *benben* stone on which the *benu* bird lived. During the Old Kingdom (c. 2686-2125 BC) this association was documented in the Pyramid Texts in which Utterance 600 begins 'O Atum-Khepri you are exalted as Height. You shine forth as the *benben* stone in the House of the Phoenix in Heliopolis' (Faulkner 1969:246-247).

During the 5th dynasty (c. 2494-2345 BC) 'sun temples' dedicated to the sun god Ra began to be built near pyramid complexes. The names of six such structures are known from ancient records, and two have so far been found at Abusir near Saqqara (Malek 2000:108; Wilkinson 2000:120). The first was built by Userkaf (c. 2494-2487 BC), the first pharaoh of the 5th dynasty. The second, and the most complete surviving example, was constructed by Nyuserra (c. 2445-2421 BC) a later pharaoh of the same dynasty. The site of Nyuserra's complex has been interpreted as a valley temple linked by a long causeway to an upper temple area containing a large masonry structure (figure 3.1). This stone structure, which stood on a large pedestal within an enclosed courtyard, is believed to represent the sacred *benben* stone at Heliopolis. These structures are regarded as the first examples of obelisks in ancient Egypt (Forman and Quirke 1996:50; Wilkinson 2000:112, 120-121).

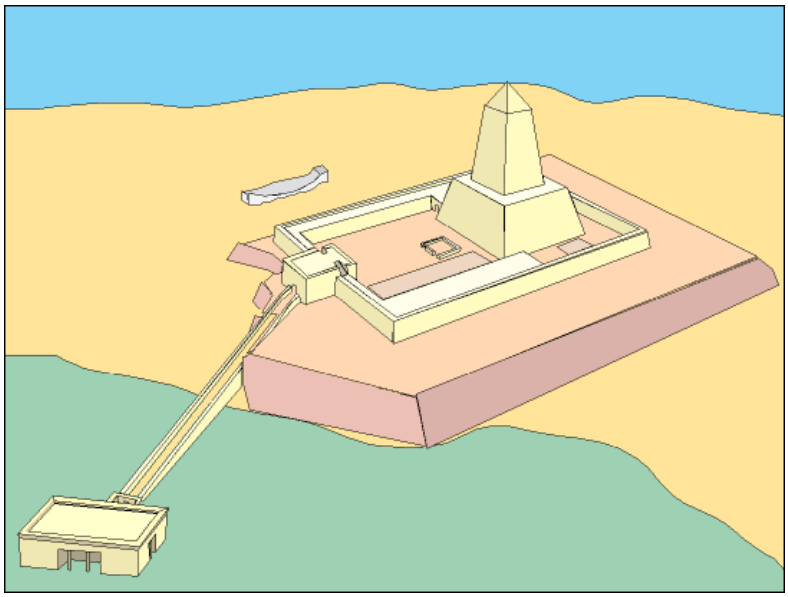


Figure 3.1 Reconstruction of the sun temple of Nyuserra at Abusir (Drawing by P. Winton)

These 5th dynasty obelisks were squat in form, having as they did a relatively close ratio between the overall height and the base measurement of each face. There is also evidence from the Old Kingdom of a tall, thin type of obelisk in the form of a tip found at Abusir and a fragment from Heliopolis. The fragment consists of the pyramidion and upper shaft of the monument with enough surviving inscription to identify it with Teti (c. 2345-2323 BC), the first pharaoh of the 6th dynasty (Quirke 2001:84). The dimensions of the fragment suggest an overall height which is much greater in ratio to the base measurement of each face of the shaft. In addition, an inscription, dating from the 6th dynasty, records the transport of a pair of obelisks for Pepy II (c. 2278-2184 BC). The text describes how each monument was carried from Aswan down the Nile on its own barge; an arrangement which Quirke (2001:85, 136) thinks could indicate that these obelisks were on a similar scale to later colossal examples.

Towards the end of the Old Kingdom, smaller obelisks were occasionally erected in front of tombs belonging to nobles; inscribed on the front face with the name and main title of the tomb owner (Quirke 2001:85, 135-136). This use of an obelisk in a private burial context possibly drew on the monument's solar association. It may have referred to the sun god Ra who was believed to sail through the underworld each night in his solar barge, and whose reappearance/rejuvenation each morning in the form of the rising sun was an important aspect of the tomb owner's hoped for re-birth into an eternal afterlife (Taylor 2001:198, 2010:19). Thus although the early sun temples had declined in use, the ideological values they expressed continued to be communicated in other contexts (Nuzzolo 2007:240). Obelisks were also depicted in tomb interiors as part of the funeral scene or in association with the god Osiris (Habachi 1977:12-13). This association was long lived and during the Late Period, the Old Kingdom practice of placing small stone obelisks on either side of the tomb door was revived (Andrews 2004:18). During the 26th Dynasty (664-525 BC) the obelisk motif emerged as a new form of burial amulet (Müller-Winkler 1987:319; Quirke 2001:138; figure 3.2). The use of the obelisk as an iconographic motif is something I will consider as part of the social world assumptions in my analysis of Egyptian obelisks in Rome.



Figure 3.2 Burial amulet in the shape of an obelisk (Petrie Museum, UCL, UC52203)

Tall obelisks continued to be commissioned during the Middle Kingdom (c. 2055-1650 BC). The 12th dynasty pharaoh Senusret I (c. 1956-1911 BC) erected two obelisks in front of the Temple of Ra at Heliopolis (Callender 2000:162; Quirke 1992:22, 2015:81). One of these remains in situ today; the earliest complete example still standing in Egypt (figure 3.3). This particular ancient pair demonstrated that alongside their primary function as cult objects within the topography of solar temples, these monuments could also carry subsidiary meanings. In this instance, part of the inscribed text records that the surviving obelisk, and presumably its pair, was raised on 'The first occasion of Sed Festival' suggesting a commemorative role linked to royal jubilees. The Sed Festival (or Heb-Sed Festival) traditionally took place during the thirtieth year of a pharaoh's reign to mark a royal jubilee and a ritual renewal of the pharaoh's power (Quirke 1992:90, 2001:140). The genesis, and renewal, of royal power as a gift from the solar gods is implied in the wording found on other obelisks which describe the pharaoh as 'appearing like Harakhti, beautiful as king of the Two Lands of Atum' and as 'the one whom Atum made to be King of the Two Lands and to whom [Atum] gave Egypt, the desert and foreign lands' (Habachi 1977:8).

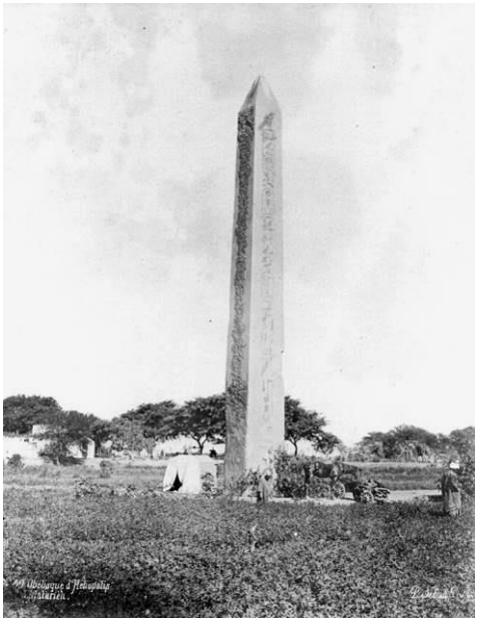


Figure 3.3 Obelisk of Senusret I at Heliopolis (Photographed by P. Sébah before 1874. Phot. No.39. Obélisque d'Héliopolis à Matariéh. Griffith Institute Archive, Oxford. Gr. Inst. 453A)

Another example of subsidiary function occurs around the two obelisks set up by Thutmose III at Karnak. On this pair, the wording praises the pharaoh as 'the lord of victory'. Habachi (1977:8-9) suggests that the inclusion of information relating to Thutmose's military campaigns, including his crossing of the River Euphrates, within the inscription carved on each obelisk appears to have been the main motive for their erection. The notion that an appropriated obelisk carries layers of meaning relating to its ancient function(s), as conveyed through contemporary transfer vehicles, the immediate concerns and intended message of the producer, and the audience's reading of the monument within its new landscape is something I will discuss in detail during my analysis of Egyptian obelisks in imperial Rome.

Whilst for the ancient Egyptians the obelisk had emerged as a sacred monument raised as part of the material culture associated with the solar deities (Redford 2001:561-164), there is no doubt that the ability of the pharaoh to commission such colossal pieces together with the close relationship they suggested between the pharaoh and the powerful solar deities meant that the obelisk, alongside other colossal royal statuary, served to underline the position of the pharaoh as a religious and political authority. Indeed, temple obelisks could only be commissioned by a pharaoh as 'son' of the god Amun and high priest of the solar cult (Wilkinson

2000:58). This link between the commissioning/erection of obelisks and the establishment/exercise of power by the ruler is something I will return to when discussing how obelisks were used in Rome.

Obelisks produced as a pair were inscribed in a manner which related to their individual orientation in front of the temple entrance. This orientation can be determined from the direction and content of the hieroglyphic text inscribed on each side of the shaft. Hieroglyphic inscriptions could be written in horizontal lines or vertical columns, both of which can read either from left to right or from right to left. Within any inscription individual hieroglyphs usually face the start of the inscription. On obelisks the dedicatory inscription was usually carved on the front of the shaft. In addition, the hieroglyphs on the front and back of the shaft faced towards the temple entrance while those on the sides faced away from the front of the temple. Such an arrangement meant that each obelisk could only have one correct orientation and position in relation to the entrance by which it stood (Habachi 1977:11-12). The positioning of new inscriptions as part of the appropriation process is a feature of the obelisks raised in Rome and the orientation of these later inscriptions often bears a direct relationship to the surrounding topography and the assumed location of the audience.

By the New Kingdom (c. 1550-1069 BC) the taller, slender obelisk had become the dominant form. These monuments usually bore dedicatory inscriptions and were often carved with scenes showing the pharaoh and appropriate deities (Arnold 2003:165-166). On some obelisks the surface of the pyramidion was gilded in emulation of their solar patrons and so that this, the highest point of the monument, would catch the first and last rays of the rising and setting sun. A carved sandstone block from Karnak (figure 3.4), showing Hatshepsut presenting two obelisks to the god Amun, carries an inscription which specifically notes this aspect of the monument: ‘The king himself erected two great obelisks to her father Amun-Ra, before the chief columned hall, made with much electrum [gilded with a gold/silver alloy]. Their heads pierce the sky and illuminate the two lands like the sun disc’ (Wilkinson 2000:58). This celebration of the gilded apex of the obelisk emulating the actions of the sun is noted again on the western face of obelisk raised by

Hatshepsut which still stands at Karnak. The inscription describes how being ‘made [encased] with fine gold, they illuminate the two lands like the sun disc’ (Wilkinson 2000:159). During the process of appropriation, the top of an obelisk was often a focus for modification either by the addition of new fixtures to the apex or the removal of the pyramidion to enable a new pinnacle to be affixed.

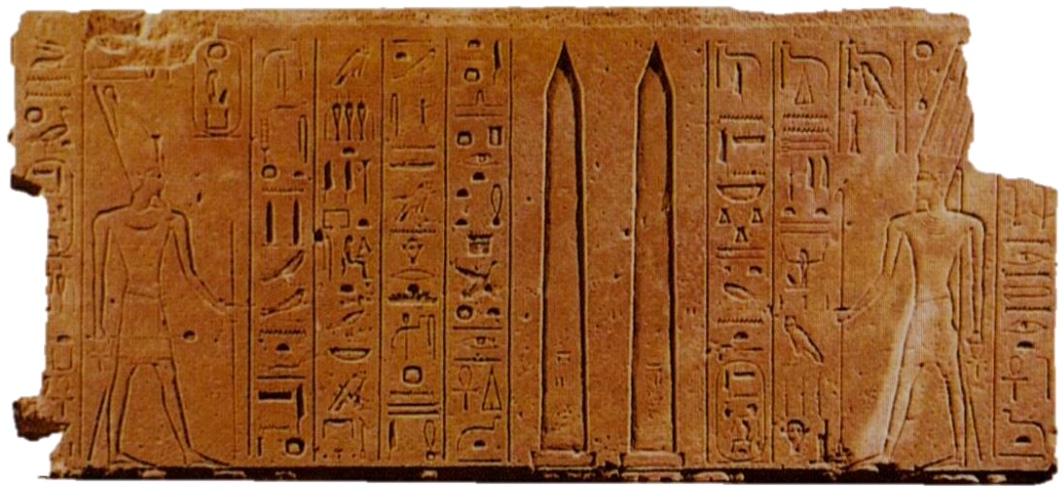


Figure 3.4 Sandstone relief from Karnak showing Hatshepsut (left) presenting a pair of obelisks to the god Amun-Re (Luxor Museum)

The close link between the obelisk and the ancient Egyptian solar gods was expressed in sacred texts where obelisks were included as iconographic motifs. An example is a scene on a New Kingdom funerary roll which shows two priests making offerings before two obelisks, accompanied by the wording ‘Adoring Ra-Harakhti when he rises from the eastern horizon of the sky’ (Habachi 1977:10-11). Meanwhile phrasing in the *Hymn to the Sun* in Spell 15 of the ancient Egyptian funerary papyri *Book of Coming Forth by Day* (known today as *The Book of the Dead*), mirrors that used in the text for Hatshepsut’s obelisks discussed above whereby the solar god Horakhty is praised with the words ‘How beautiful is your shining forth from the horizon when you illuminate the Two Lands with your rays’. A hymn to Osiris in the same spell includes the instruction to ‘Turn your face to the West that you may illuminate the Two Lands with fine gold’ (Faulkner 1985:40-41). This common phrasing suggests that Egyptian understanding of obelisks draws on a well established solar liturgy. An association with solar deities is an aspect of

imperial appropriation which I will discuss in relation to both the producers and the audience for the early examples of obelisks appropriated into the landscape of Rome.

While obelisks were usually initially erected in front of a temple to stand as the first monuments encountered on the journey toward the heart of the temple, they could subsequently become enclosed within the complex as the precinct grew and new entrance pylons (sometimes with their own pair of obelisks) were constructed (Wilkinson 2000:57). The immediate topography of the obelisks would thus change without any movement of the monuments themselves. A notable exception was the two obelisks erected by Hatshepsut at Karnak between the existing fourth and fifth pylons. Strudwick and Strudwick (1999:52) in noting this unusual positioning, suggest that the location may have been selected to draw attention to work Hatshepsut had commissioned on the inner areas of the temple. In addition, single obelisks were occasionally erected on the central axis of a temple (Wilkinson 2000:57). For example, Thutmose IV (c. 1400-1390 BC) erected a single obelisk at the eastern end of the precinct at Karnak on the main temple axis (figure 3.5). It became a focus for the solar cult founded by his grandfather Thutmose III (c. 1479-1425 BC) during whose reign the monument had been quarried but never erected (Bryan 2000:257). It is striking that the majority of appropriated obelisks to Rome were erected as single monuments and the relationship of each obelisk to its new topography will be discussed as part of how the producer hoped to make meaning and how the audience may have responded to an obelisk as it stood in the city.

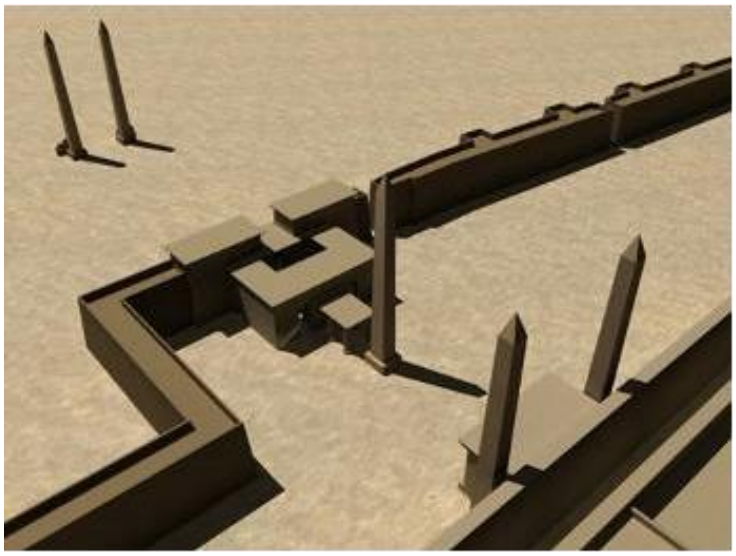


Figure 3.5 Reconstruction of the eastern end of the sun temple at Karnak (Digital Karnak)

During the New Kingdom obelisks were set up within the temple complex at Karnak near the ancient city of Thebes in Upper Egypt. Known to the ancient Egyptians as Usat ('the sceptre') or Iunu Shemayit ('the southern pillar' or 'the Iunu of the south'), the name 'Thebes' was given to the area by the ancient Greeks. From its origins in the Old Kingdom period, the city grew to embrace the largest religious complex in Egypt which covered over 247 acres (Habachi 1977:6; Quirke 2001:136; Strudwick and Strudwick 1999:10; Wilkinson 2000:154-156). The east-west orientation of the courtyard gateways at Karnak meant that the inner sloping sides of the pylons framed the rising/setting sun and evoked the hieroglyph for 'horizon'  (Gardiner 1957; sign N27). This solar focus was enhanced by the obelisks which stood immediately in front of each side of the gateway and whose gilded tips would shine as they caught the rays of the sun (Davies and Friedman 1998:155-157; Quirke 1992:77, 2001:137-138; Strudwick and Strudwick 1999:45-46). Some of the obelisks raised in the temple complex have been mentioned above and during the New Kingdom the complex was the focus for work by, amongst others, the pharaohs Hatshepsut, who raised four obelisks, Thutmose III, who raised at least seven (one of which was later moved to Rome, obelisk 13 in this research), and Akhenaten, for whom one obelisk fragment has so far been discovered at Karnak (Habachi 1977: 60, 73, 82).

Obelisks are also known from a number of sites in the Delta region of Lower Egypt. During the early Ramesside Period, the rulers of the 19th dynasty (c. 1295-1186 BC) enlarged an existing settlement in the eastern Delta to create a new royal residence and capital known as Piramesse (Van Dijk 2000:300). As part of the building programme a number of obelisks were commissioned and raised in the city. Most of these monuments were erected by Rameses II (c. 1279-1213 BC) including three pairs of obelisks in front of the 'Halls of Jubilee', the venue for the celebration of the pharaoh's Heb-Sed ceremony (Tyldesley 2000:98). During the 20th dynasty (c. 1186-1069 BC) royal favour transferred to nearby Tanis (Manning 2012:20). Here the pharaohs of the 21st dynasty (c. 1069-945 BC) developed a religious centre honouring the god Amun to create a northern Thebes (Taylor 2000:333; Uphill 1969:15). To this end monuments standing in Piramesse were moved to adorn Tanis,

including no fewer than five pairs of obelisks originally inscribed to Rameses II which were set up at the temple of Amun (Uphill 1969:15).

Modern excavation at the temple site indicates that four of these pairs were set up in front of three gateways along the west-east axis of the temple: one pair by the first gate, one pair by the second and two pairs by the third gateway. The fifth pair was erected at the eastern end of the temple sanctuary (Quirke 2001:139-140). These monuments continued the tradition of placing paired obelisks in association with temple gateways. In addition, they represent an example of re-use within pharaonic Egypt itself, a process which I will return to in my discussion of Roman Egypt. This re-appropriation of earlier local monuments also occurred in Rome as producers start to move obelisks raised by their imperial predecessors in the city.

The rulers of the 19th dynasty, who had commissioned the obelisks for Piramesse, also set up smaller obelisks in other parts of Egypt. These monuments, up to 7m in height, were raised near sun temples. Examples include two pairs set up in a solar chapel at Elephantine dedicated to the god Khnum; associated with Ra as Khunum-Ra. Likewise a pair of Ptolemaic obelisks from Philae dedicated to Isis also carried dedications to the solar gods Atum and Amun-Ra. The traditional home of the obelisk was not forgotten and Psamtek II (595-589 BC) set up at least one new tall obelisk at Heliopolis (Habachi 1977:6-7; Quirke 2001:140-141).

3.3.2 Quarrying obelisks

Just over 200 ancient quarries are known in Egypt, dating from the Late Predynastic to the Late Roman period (Harrell and Storemyr 2009:9). Limestone and sandstone were the main building materials of ancient Egypt and these stones were also used for statuary. From the Old Kingdom granite was used as an architectural stone for structures such as door lintels, thresholds, temple columns and small shrines (Harrell and Storemyr 2009:9, 17). Granite, the common term for a range of granitoid rocks, was also used for monumental obelisks. The most widely used was the coarse grained Aswan red/pink granite, alongside a fine grained red/grey granite and occasionally a medium grained black granite flecked with pink/white phenocrysts (Aston et al. 2000:35-37; Kelany et al. 2009:87-88). While most New

Kingdom obelisks were cut from Aswan granite, some examples have been identified which were cut from metagraywacke, a grey/green sandstone containing granules of blue quartz, and silicified sandstone (Harrell and Storemyr 2009:17).

The Aswan stone quarries in Upper Egypt were in operation throughout, and beyond, the pharaonic period. The site developed over time into a large, complex quarry landscape where granite, quartzite and sandstone were worked (Storemyr 2009:114). Surfaced roads were laid across the complex using layers of local rubble. Most of the roads were constructed during the New Kingdom to ensure ease of access to the areas of the quarry complex being exploited at this time (Kelany et al. 2009:91). The established and well maintained quarry infrastructure at Aswan enabled the Romans to continue production at the site; providing material for their own building programme in Egypt and producing architectural pieces for export back to Rome. Among these exports were a number of obelisks commissioned by emperors such as Caligula and Domitian. The nature of these 'Roman' obelisks, which had no pharaonic history and were manufactured as Egyptianized objects from the start, is something I will consider later as these examples enter the landscape of Rome.

The extraction of an obelisk from the granite beds at Aswan was a lengthy and labour intensive process. Working marks on the unfinished obelisk (figure 3.6) indicate that around one hundred and thirty workers were employed for twelve months on the attempt to quarry the monument. Meanwhile, an inscription on the obelisk of Hatshepsut at Karnak (which stands 10m shorter than the proposed height of the unfinished obelisk) records that it took seven months to complete (Arnold 2003:165-166). Quarrying stone also drew in a range of other natural resources which might be directly applied to the production process, such as stone, metal and wood tools, or indirectly for sustaining the workforce, such as the materials needed for settlements and sustenance (Heldal 2009:128).

Not all efforts, however, resulted in a final product and not all available seams of bedrock offered up workable material. This wasted labour and its abortive outcomes added to the economic cost of production and the value of any completed pieces. For

example, in the northern quarries at Aswan many large unfinished pharaonic objects have been found, probably abandoned due to cracks or other geological features which made the blocks unusable. Similarly a number of Roman period column capitals, bases, millstones and basins were left unfinished in the quarries due to flaws in the stone which only became apparent part way through manufacture (Kelany et al. 2009:91-93). The first obelisks to arrive in Rome were produced for the pharaohs and thus available to the Romans as complete monuments. In addition, several emperors commissioned new obelisks and the opportunities in each case to create meaning around an individual object's history and the levels of labour invested in the sourcing and transport of a monument will be discussed in detail in my analysis of these monuments.



Figure 3.6 The unfinished obelisk at the quarries at Aswan, Egypt

3.4 Obelisks included in the research data set

Extant fragments, together with textual references to currently lost obelisks, indicate that the number of obelisks raised in imperial Rome was considerably greater than the number currently standing in the city (Habachi 1977:109). Modern scholars suggest that about fifty obelisks of various heights stood in imperial Rome (Curl 2005:30; Curran et al. 2009:44; Iversen 1968:178; Roullet 1972:14). This number is drawn from a list of obelisks included in the *Curiosum urbis Romae regionum XIV cum breviariis suis*; a civic document listing major architectural features across the fourteen regions of classical Rome. The first appendix to the document includes a number of entries relating to particular types of structure; the

second of which is a list of the city's obelisks. This entry specifically records two obelisks in the Circus Maximus, one on the Vatican Hill, one on the Campus Martius, two at the Mausoleum of Augustus and suggests that at least a further forty-two obelisks were standing elsewhere across the city. Inclusion of the second obelisk (13) erected in the Circus Maximus suggests a compilation date post AD 357 and the content overall suggests that the *Curiosum* may have been complied by AD 400-420. The entry reflects that included in another, closely related, city catalogue known as the *Notitia regionum urbis (Romae) XIV*. This inventory only mentions one obelisk in the Circus Maximus and is thus ascribed a compilation date by modern scholars of AD 337-357 (Dyson 2010: 360; Richardson 1992:xx). The text of both entries is shown below. To aid comparison of the two lists, an additional line break has been included in the *Notitia* entry.

Notitia regionum urbis (Romae) XIV	*Curiosum urbis Romae regionum XIV cum breviariis suis*
OBOLISCI VI in circo maximo unus altus pedes LXXXVIII s. in Vaticano unus altus LXXV in campo Martio unus altus pedes LXXII s. in mausuleo Augusti duo singuli pedum XLII s.	OBVLISCI VI in circo maximo duo, minor habet pedes LXXXVII s. maior habet pedes CXXII s. in Vaticano una alta LXXV in campo Martio una alta pedes LXXII s. in musileo Augusti duo alta singuli pedes XLII s.

From this pool of approximately fifty obelisks a set of fourteen obelisks are consistently noted across classical sources as standing in imperial Rome. This group of monuments consists of nine pharaonic obelisks, taken from Egypt to Rome after 30 BC, and five obelisks destined for the city which were produced in Roman Egypt. This number includes all the examples mentioned in the *Curiosum* as 'major' obelisks. This 'major' category appears to be defined by height since the obelisks

included are all over 40 Roman feet/15.84m tall (Richardson 1992:224). Another two obelisks would have been the ones currently standing in the Piazza della Rotonda and the grounds of the Villa Celimontana respectively; originally a pair standing near the Temple of Isis with a shaft height of around 7.34m each. Even taking into account the additional height of a Roman base, both obelisks would have been considerably shorter than the other 'major' obelisks in the classical inventory. This leaves an additional six obelisks - one pair and four single monuments- which make up the pool of fourteen. This final six consist of three obelisks which originally stood near the Temple of Isis, two which ended their imperial histories in the Circus Maxentius and Varianus respectively, and one in the Gardens of Sallust.

These fourteen obelisks are well attested in textual and archaeological sources and will form the core of my data set. Alongside these I will consider a number of fragments and lost obelisks which, while no longer extant as complete monuments, help inform our understanding of how and why obelisks were used by the Romans by offering additional evidence on the types and locations of these monuments in imperial Rome. The 'fragment' data set consists of pieces with extant physical remains while the 'lost' obelisks consist of monuments for which only a textual reference remains. Data gathered for the fragmentary remains listed in Appendix A suggest a further seven obelisks standing in Rome in various locations. Meanwhile, the details included for lost examples suggest at least another six obelisks. Altogether this makes a total of 27 obelisks for which archaeological and/or textual evidence currently exists, out of the total pool of approximately 50 obelisks suggested across ancient and later texts.

Within Appendix A, the data for each of the fourteen core obelisks is ascribed a title which refers to the current location of the obelisk, and reflects the name most commonly used in modern works. Each obelisk has also been assigned a number which is used within the main text, appendices and image captions to aid cross-referencing within this research. I have chosen to use this numbering system as the main reference for each of the obelisks since the titles/names given to the obelisks are not consistent across ancient and modern works and usually relate to only one of the locations in which an obelisk has stood. I have numbered the core set of fourteen

obelisks according to the chronological order in which they were first erected in Rome after 30 BC. This ordering reflects conclusions I have reached about the origins of those obelisks whose exact point of arrival in Rome is currently a matter of debate. I will include an overview of the reasons behind each decision at the point when I discuss the obelisk as a cultural object. Again, for clarity of identification, the fragments included in Appendix A are assigned a Roman numeral and the lost examples a Greek numeral.

3.4.1 Evidence for the data set obelisks

Information on the obelisks discussed in this research has been gathered from published archaeological evidence and classical texts. A brief summary of the known data for each of the obelisks discussed will be included in the cultural object chapter and information about all of the core data set obelisks is listed in detail in Appendix A. Details of location and modification in the city of Rome will be discussed across the producer, social world and audience chapters. Archaeological investigation of the obelisks in Rome is an on-going process and subject to re-interpretation. I have noted the main themes of this re-interpretation as it pertains to my own discussion of each obelisk while being aware that further discoveries and new insights will render my conclusions ripe for re-consideration over time. Classical texts include information on obelisks in Egypt, the transport of a number of these obelisks to Rome and their subsequent history in the city. For the modern scholar these texts provide information on the monuments during the imperial period and can also aid understanding of how the monuments were viewed at the time. In relation to the second function I will be considering how obelisks operate as a literary topos and how this helps to illuminate the horizon of assumptions for these monuments in the past. In this role the texts will be discussed as part of the social world aspect of the case-study alongside more general works which help create a wider conceptual framework supporting public perception of ancient Egypt and Egyptianizing activity in Rome.

3.5 Appropriation to Rome

The historical context for the appropriation of the core data set obelisks is imperial Rome from 10 BC to AD 357. The point(s) of appropriation for each of the

these obelisks will be plotted against a timeline which will serve to highlight any pattern to this appropriation and any appropriation clusters which might be seen to act as discrete imperial sub-revival periods. This aspect of my analysis represents one of the key points of originality within my research and seeks to challenge the idea that the use of obelisks in imperial Rome can be seen as a single episode of appropriation across nearly four hundred years of history.

The results of this plotting exercise are shown in Table 2. Where an individual obelisk has been re-appropriated following its initial erection in Rome, this subsequent appropriation point(s) is also marked on the table. Incidences of re-appropriation within the city are indicated by a change of colour for that appropriation point on the upper part of the table. The timeline used runs from 25 BC to AD 399 which covers the arrival of the first obelisks in 10 BC and all subsequent appropriations of the core data set obelisks up until the final appropriation in AD 375. The timeline is divided into blocks of 25 year which makes it is possible to plot all the appropriation points on one table. The exact date I have assigned for each appropriation is covered in the detailed discussion of each obelisk in the cultural objects chapter and listed in Appendix A. I will return to the importance of identifying appropriation points and discuss the pattern of appropriation suggested by Table 2 in the next chapter.

The lower part of Table 2 indicates whether an individual obelisk was visible in the urban landscape. On occasion an extant example will be visible from the location where a new arrival is raised and this will be discussed as part of how the topography of an obelisk can help us to understand why it was raised there and how the audience might respond to it in that particular location. Where an obelisk is re-appropriated within the city the change in location within the landscape is indicated by a change of colour for that particular obelisk on the lower part of the table.

A case-study focus on the appropriation of obelisks in early imperial Rome (31 BC-AD 41) means that the key monuments discussed in my research are obelisks 1, 2, 3 ,4 and 5 from my core data set. These five obelisks were all raised in public spaces to the west and north-west of the traditional centre of Rome. Obelisks 1, 4

and 5 were raised on the Campus Martius, obelisk 2 in the Circus Maximus and obelisk 3 in the Circus Vaticanus which lay to the west of the river Tiber. The natural landscape of these areas influenced the use of these spaces as the built environment of the settlement grew from its prehistoric origins to the capital city of a burgeoning empire. Both the natural and built landscape also had the potentially to impact on the locations selected for obelisks 1-5 and the immediate viewing context for the audience. With this in mind, I would like to make a moment to set the topographical scene for my early imperial case-study (chapters 4-8)

3.6 Topography of Rome

Rome was a city famously spread across seven hills immediately to the east of the river Tiber: namely the Aventine, Caelian, Capitoline, Esquiline, Palatine, Quirinal and Viminal Hills (figure 3.7). This tradition was, in reality, more geographical nuanced with the Vatican Hill to the northwest of the Tiber, the Janiculum Hill to the west of the river and the Pincian Hill to the northeast of the heart of the early city. These three hills, which fell outside the original boundaries of the ancient city of Rome, were drawn into the built environment of Rome by the late imperial period of the city's development (Platner and Asby 1929; 274, 391, 546).

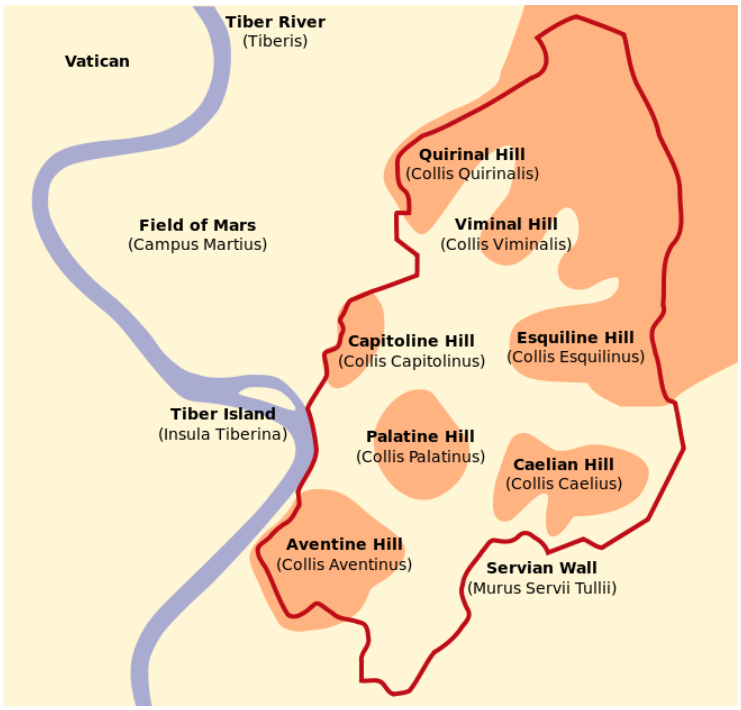


Figure 3.7 Map of the traditional Seven Hills of Rome

The river Tiber flowed to the west of the seven hills in a roughly north-south direction with two large meanders bending the river first away and then back towards the hills These hills, the valleys which lay between them and the local course of the river had an impact on the topography of the city's build landscape (figure 3.8). The river Tiber continued to flow in a generally southerly direction away from Rome until it discharged into the Mediterranean Sea on the west coast of the Italian peninsula. The river served as both a boon to the city's prosperity, forming as it did a natural highway to and from the coast, but also a threat with frequent flooding of the city by the Tiber (Aldrete 2007:4).

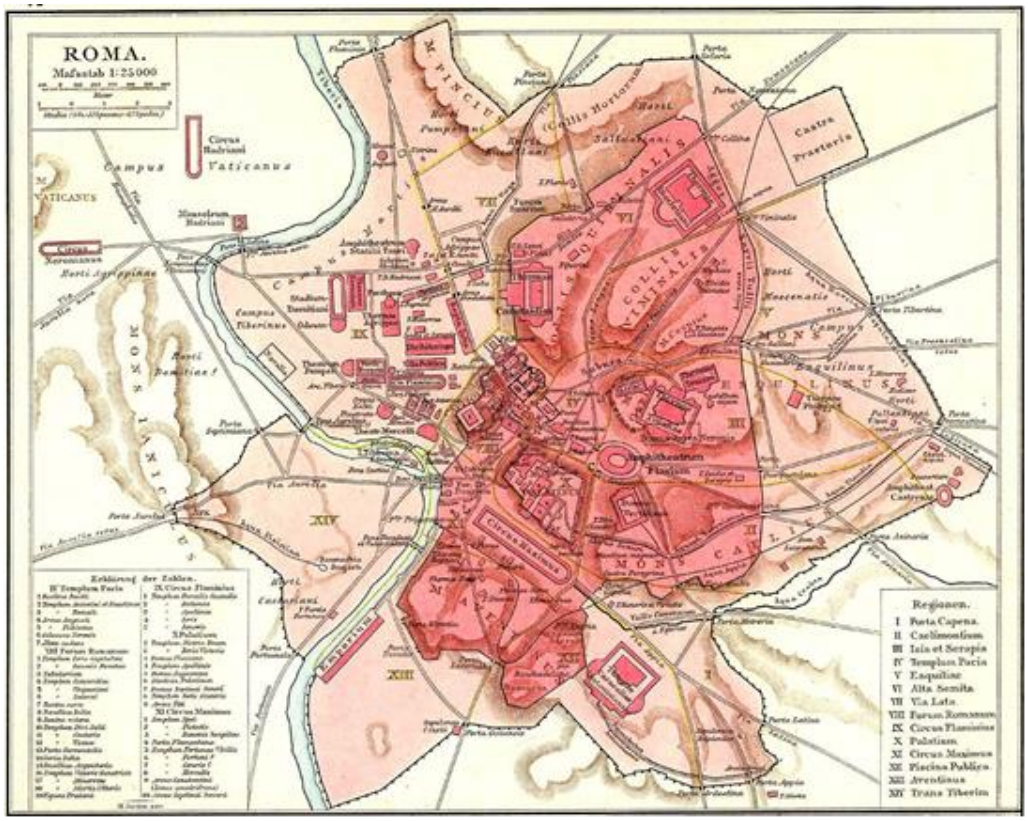


Figure 3.8 Map of ancient Rome (Platner and Ashby 1929)

The natural contours of the area are shown in figure 3.9. The flood plain of the river Tiber can clearly be seen to the east of both river meanders. The one to the north was the location of the Campus Martius (host to obelisks 1, 4 and 5). The sharp change in gradient to the east of the Campus Martius would have emphasised the open and mainly flat nature of this area. This flatter land continued across to the west of the river (host to obelisk 3) and would have created the potential for a high

degree of inter-visibility between the two spaces in the absence of any intervening built structures. Immediately to the south-east of the second meander was a large valley running between two high ridges of land, later known as the Aventine and Palatine Hills. This valley was the location of the Circus Maximus (host to obelisk 2) whose long oval structure followed the natural contours of the land. While the valley floor cradled the arena structure, the rising land on either side again created potential lines of sight not only across the valley but from the hillsides down into the Circus.

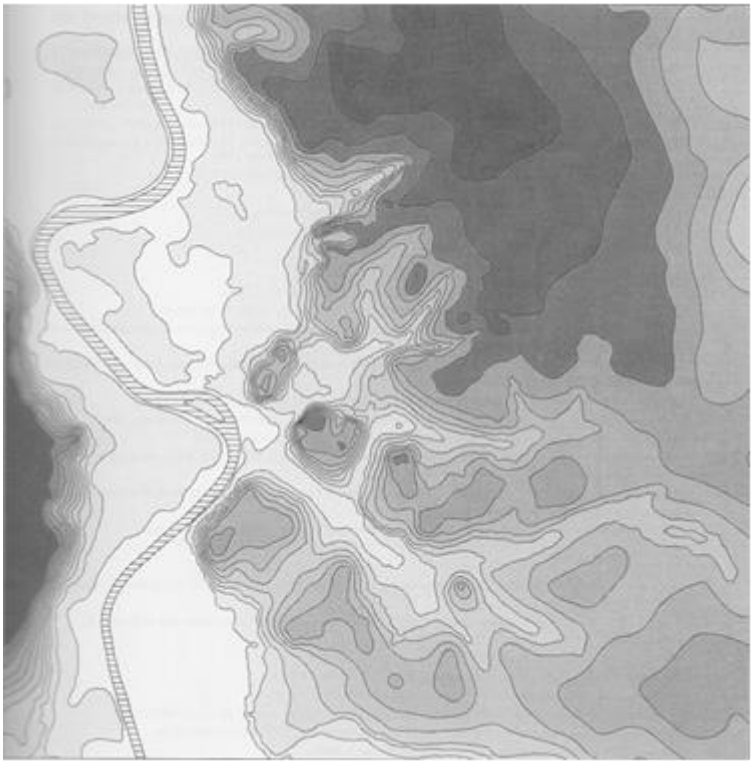


Figure 3.9 Contour map of Augustan Rome (Digital Augustan Rome)

3.7 Summary

The obelisk was a distinctive monumental structure which emerged in ancient Egypt during the 5th dynasty (c. 2494-2345 BC). Examples continued to be set up through to the Ptolemaic Dynasty (305-30 BC). My research data draws on examples of Egyptian obelisks erected in the city of Rome after 10 BC. This data is arranged around a core set of fourteen obelisks supported by information on known fragmentary and lost obelisks. A detailed listing for each of these obelisks has been collated from ancient and modern texts and discrepancies in the biography of particular examples will be discussed, particularly issues relating to the date of

appropriation and thus the potential producer responsible. The appropriation of the core data set obelisks to Rome between 10 BC and AD 360 has been plotted against a timeline and the results are shown on Table 2. The historical focus for my research case-study is early imperial Rome with a consequent focus on obelisks 1-5 from my core data set. Alongside any discussion of the historical events which may play a role in the appropriation of the obelisks, consideration will also be given to the geographical nature of the local landscape and the impact this might have on the immediate topography of the monuments.

Chapter 4: Methodology

4.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the methodology which I will use for my research into the appropriation of Egyptian obelisks in imperial Rome. I will consider some of the possible approaches available and discuss the process by which I have selected and refined the methodology I intend to apply to my data set. I will then consider how the elements of my methodology will support analysis of the data and structure my discussion chapters.

4.2 Reception theory approaches to material culture

When considering possible approaches to developing a better understanding of the Egyptianizing architecture represented by the collected data, I was keen to avoid a cultural historical approach likely to encourage an episodic account of the Egyptian style and direct focus towards the material manifestation of the style. It is a concern which has been raised by others. For example, Malafouris and Renfrew (2010:4) believe that archaeologists need to move beyond analysing material culture as a set of fixed and isolated categories of objects, proposing instead that objects should be positioned within a network of heterogeneous elements, objects and people; an approach which they argue prompts closer scrutiny of the changing relationships between these elements. My aim to analyse objects which had been appropriated from one such cultural network into another, meant that I would need to consider additional layers of meaning relating to why the object style was initially selected and how this appropriated style was understood by the new audience.

An example of an approach which emphasises the need to look at how a set of objects is received, in order to understand why an 'alien' style starts to circulate successfully within a society, is Miller's (1997) study of the appropriation of aspects of Archaemenid Persian culture in fifth century BC Athens. Miller (135-239) details a range of examples of the style such as the imitation of Persian metal ware in Attic pottery forms, adoption of Persian clothing styles, an emulation of a luxurious life-style associated with Persian culture and the growth of imperial aspirations. She proposes that these acts of appropriation seem to contradict the hostility expressed

towards Persian/eastern cultures in Athenian public rhetoric. It is this apparent dichotomy which prompts Miller (243) to consider the particular social, political and economic circumstances which enabled ‘Perserie’ to emerge and flourish in Athens at this point in its history. Miller (246-247) argues that Athenian reception of elite Persian culture offers a perfect example of interaction between two complex societies which ultimately reveals more about the receivers than the donors. Miller also notes that any society is made up of a number of different social strata, something which she refers to as the ‘social texture’ of a society, and that this texture can result in a variety of responses to an incoming trait across a society.

For Miller (1997:243-245) the crucial factor in the process of cultural reception is the state of the recipient. She believes that it is the circumstances and needs of the recipient, rather than the status of the donor culture, which determines what is borrowed, when this takes place and how prevalent the appropriation becomes across the borrowing society. Thus, it is primarily factors internal to the recipient society which lead to any selective and context specific adoption of objects/traits from another culture. This notion of active selection is something I plan to explore especially since obelisks by their very nature clearly fall outside the bounds of eminently portable or easy to replicate traits such as personal adornment, hand-held vessels or clothing styles.

Central to the ethos of literary reception studies is the emphasis placed on the reader rather than the author. Indeed, according to reception theory, the readers' receptions of a text occur completely independent of the author’s original intentions or the literary critics’ interpretations of the text. As such, the meaning of a text is defined by the readers’ receptions since readers, not authors, are seen as the key makers of meaning (Crosman 1980:149-164). In essence, meaning is created through the relationship between text and reader. A basic acceptance of the meaning of a text tends to occur when a group of readers have a shared cultural background and thus interpret the text in a similar way. The less shared heritage a reader has with the author, the less likely it is that they will recognise the author's intended meaning, while two readers with different cultural and personal experiences will vary in how they read the text (Suleiman 1980; Holub 1984). In reception theory

there is no single pre-determined reception of a given text, instead, all actual receptions in the past and the present are valid, and the particular characteristics of these varied receptions become the focus of study to generate a reception history.

Reception theory can be applied to archaeology whereby the ‘text’ is the archaeological record and its objects, and the ‘readers’ become the people interacting with these objects. Within the field of archaeological theory an emphasis on the importance of different ‘readers’ and multiple interpretations of objects, rather than single ‘authors and their individual intentions, can be seen in post-processual archaeology. This school of thought argues that material culture is a material form of text which can only be adequately interpreted in relation to the historical meanings which it manipulates and the social context in which it was ‘written’ (Hodder 1988). The attempt by post-processual archaeology to draw out the ‘meaning’ of the archaeological record, as opposed to the narratives created by a cultural historical approach or the interest in ‘function’ demonstrated by processual archaeology, builds on ideas developed in anthropology.

A seminal exponent of this approach was the anthropologist Geertz who proposed that culture was semiotic and could be read as text. He saw culture as ‘a system of inherited conceptions expressed in symbolic forms by means of which men communicate, perpetuate, and develop their knowledge about and attitudes toward life’ (1973:89). Geertz aimed to access the conceptual world of a culture by studying the core symbols around which it was organised; these symbols being a concrete expression of the underlying structure and ideological principles upon which the culture was based. He referred to ‘webs of significance’ and the need to isolate the elements of this web and specify the relationships between them.

I am interested in the approach taken by semiotics because it aims to understand how culture and landscape have a significant impact on actions; actions which are all too often explained as happening unconsciously. This assumption that the use of an object can be seen as ‘automatic’ or ‘natural’ occurs within Egyptianizing architecture literature. For example, as discussed in the literature review, Humbert et al. (1994:15) see the Roman use of Egyptian architecture as a ‘natural’ process

arising from Roman occupation of Egypt, Instead, I intend to argue that actions and thoughts explained as 'automatic' are usually governed by a complex set of cultural messages and conventions, and that their success is dependent upon people's ability to interpret them. Thus, people react to a symbol because that symbol has been established within society and become part of that society's cultural knowledge. Indeed, if the 'unconscious/natural' is to exist at all then it must be created, maintained and modified by a flow of experiences and received wisdoms. Thus the 'unconscious/natural' is no longer without explanation but rather exists as a body of background information against which people react; a body of background information which can itself be analysed. This idea lies behind my aim to analyse the information about ancient Egypt/obelisk being transferred from Egypt to Rome via a number of coeval transfer vehicles such as texts and images.

In rejecting the notion of 'unconscious' or 'natural' response to cultural objects, I also aim to consider how the reuse of a particular monument or revival of a style is driven not by the cultural object but by the needs of the producer and the potential receptiveness of the audience. It is an issue discussed by Assmann (1997:22) who believes that the most important implication of reception theory for the history of archaeological monuments is the recognition of a receptive audience across time, which ensures that monuments can potentially remain socially and personally relevant within each new historical culture. Assmann argues that the study of these receptions is important since it enables us to better understand how the historical memory held by a society – be it factual or fictional – influences future interpretations of the past.

This idea that a monument can act as a totem for a perceived past and at the same time be cast as a marker of current cultural identity is directly relevant to my own research. As well as being interested in looking at how each revival of a style exists within the context of a specific set of social conditions and concerns, I also aim to look at why a particular cultural object (in this case the Egyptian obelisk) is considered appropriate for appropriation not only in terms of the new layer of meaning which can be attached to it but also because of the previous layers of meaning which it is seen to carry with it.

4.3 Griswold's cultural diamond

Sociologist Wendy Griswold has a particular interest in examining how cultural objects can be understood to operate within a society by considering the different responses to, and varied understanding of, a single cultural object by different sectors of that society. Her approach draws on reception theory and proposes that cultural objects should be analysed as part of a wider network of social concerns and needs, into which they are actively drawn, manipulated and viewed. Griswold (1986) initially applied her approach to theatrical revivals of Renaissance plays in London between 1576 and 1980. In this work she proposed that the four factors crucial to any attempt to understand these revivals – artist, audience, cultural object and world (1986:8) – should be seen to sit at the four corners of a 'cultural diamond'; a concept she refined in later works to create a visual schema with the four cardinal points marked as 'cultural object', 'producers', 'receivers' and 'social world' (figure 4.1). This revised cultural diamond is a major influence on my own approach and forms the basis for the following discussion.

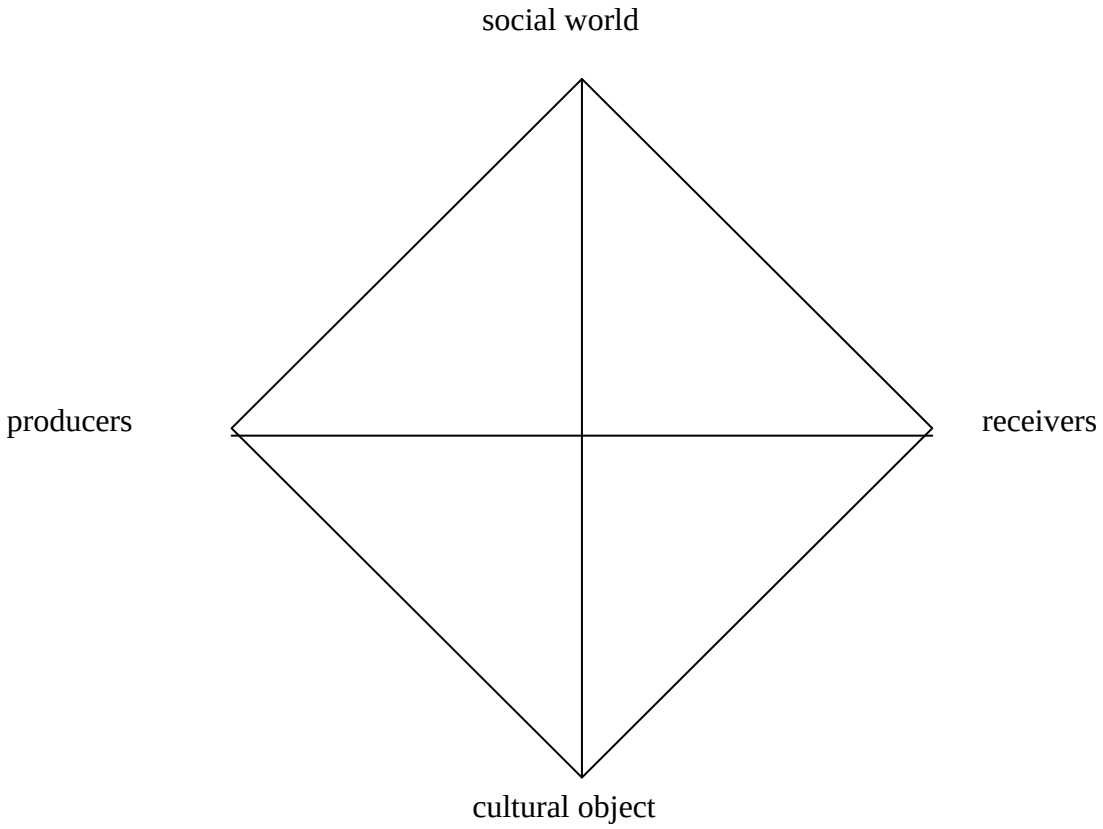


Figure 4.1 Griswold's cultural diamond

For Griswold, an object does not become a 'cultural' object until it enters 'the circuit of human discourse' (2008:14) since all cultural objects must have people who receive them and formulate a personal understanding of them. It is argument which clearly draws on the work of cultural theorist Stuart Hall (1980:128-138), a leading proponent of reception theory within the social sciences, who argues that any message carried by an object must first be seen by the audience to offer meaningful discourse and then de-coded in a meaningful manner before it can have any effect. Moreover, Griswold proposes that cultural objects, producers and receivers are all anchored in a world composed of the economic, political and social patterns and exigencies that exist at any given time. She notes that the cultural diamond 'does not say what the relationship between any of the points should be, only that there is a relationship' (2008:16). It is an important point since I anticipate that the nature of this relationship in terms of the coeval state of knowledge about Egypt or the primary social world concerns will vary across time.

In essence, Griswold (2008:14-17) argues that cultural objects, and those who interact with them, all exist within a particular chronological, economic, political, social context, with associated demands and requirements. This notion of a social context within which both producers and receivers operate has also been identified in the discipline of art history by Baxandall (1972:108) who uses the term 'cognitive style' to acknowledge the ability of the contemporary social world, in combination with personal experience, to shape the 'perception' of the viewer. Griswold (2008:89-91) refers to this background perception as an 'horizon of expectations'; something which both producers and viewers draw on as they interact with, and create meaning around, a cultural object. This horizon of expectations can be used by the producer to ensure that a cultural object is read in a particular way. However, as an object moves away from the motivation of the producer towards reception by an audience, so the interpretation of this audience may replicate, reflect or reject that of the producer as the receivers themselves become individual 'active meaning makers' (Griswold 2008:14-17).

Such a situation raises the question of intended and actual receivers. Baxandall (1972:38-46) refers to this issue when he suggests that it is important to ask 'Whose

response … was important to the artist', a question which within the context of the cultural diamond becomes, whose response was important to the producer? Baxandall goes on to say that an audience is never homogenous and will contain 'sub groups' who respond to a cultural object in different ways; as also noted by Miller (1997:246-247). This, Baxandall argues, means that the producer has to work to the greatest common factor within the audience. I would suggest that this can also affect which object is chosen by the producer as they seek to ensure that the majority of the intended audience is able to read the main intended meaning of this cultural object.

Taking Baxandall's idea a stage further, I would suggest that when such sub-groups are identified before the cultural object is produced, a producer may consciously reject a notion of appealing to the highest common denominator and instead select a priority audience or deliberately create layers of meaning around an object which serve to convey different messages to different segments of the audience. An example is the Rosetta Stone (British Museum EA 24); an ancient Egyptian black granite stele created to display a decree issued by priests at Memphis. The decree affirmed the royal cult of Ptolemy V and was issued in 196 BC - a year after Ptolemy ascended the throne. Copies of the decree, of which the Rosetta Stone is one, were placed in temples across Egypt. The inscription on the Stone carries the same message in three different scripts. Each of these individual scripts would have had a resonance with a particular section of the Egyptian elite: hieroglyphic script used by royal and religious authorities, demotic script used for everyday writing, and Greek, the language used for official administration purposes. The diversity of scripts suggests a message intended for all sectors of the educated elite. At the same time the wording and production of the decree indicates that it was also intended to speak directly to the pharaoh and his court. Decrees in hieroglyphs were usually set up by the pharaoh and the fact that this one was issued by priests speaks to the ongoing tension between royal and religious authorities at the time. In addition, the decree lists a number of deeds performed by the pharaoh for the temples which not only suggests the way in which Ptolemy V won the support of the priests but also acts as a reminder to the pharaoh that he has to negotiate power with the religious authorities (Parkinson 2005:31; Stephens 2005:225-226).

The cultural object I aim to explore is the Egyptian obelisk and the specific social world against which I aim to investigate its appropriation is imperial Rome. My initial analysis of the data suggests that use of obelisks during this period occurs around a number of clusters of appropriation points (Table 2). Griswold (1986:9) proposes that the cultural diamond supports examination of the various producers, receivers and social contexts for a cultural object throughout its history; becoming in the process a 'cultural parallelepiped' (figure 4.2). Examining the longitudinal aspects of a style revival will hopefully elucidate how, as the people who encounter a cultural object and the social world within which they interact with the object changes, meaning can be seen to evolve in terms of both continuity and change. Thus while 'the cultural object … may appear static, its meaning never is' (Griswold 1986:4).

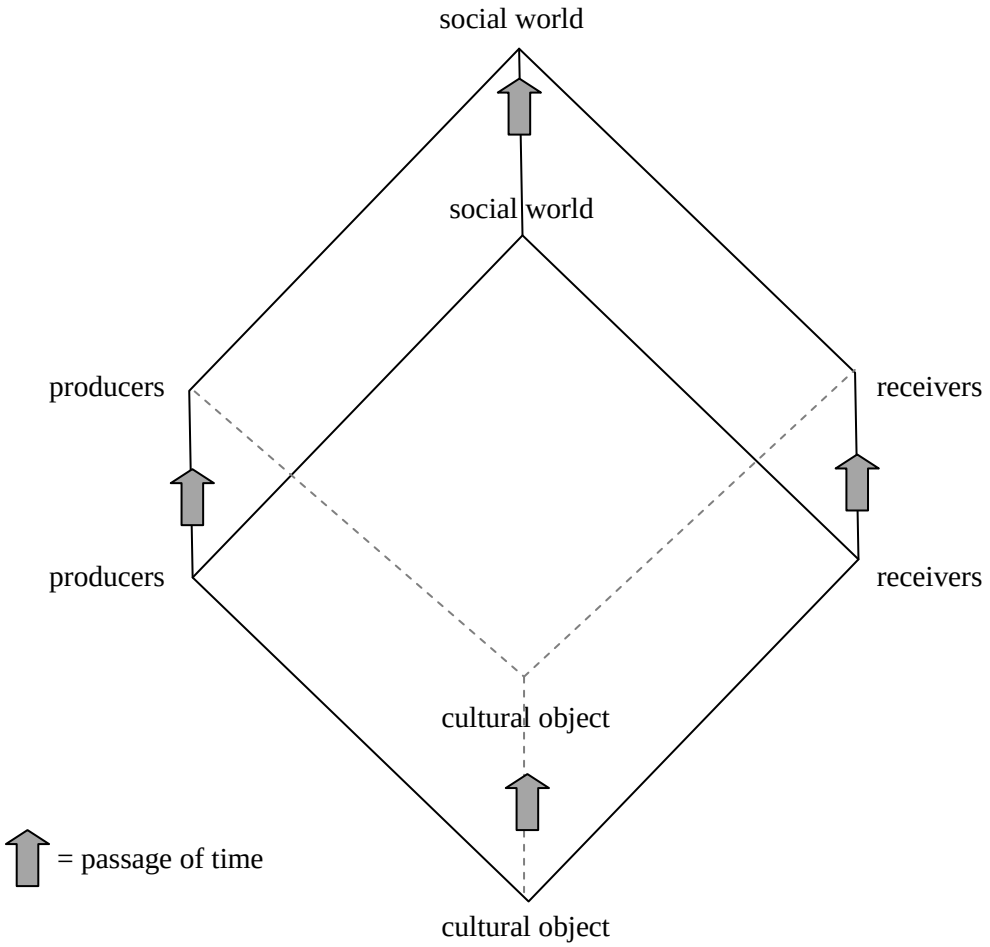


Figure 4.2 Griswold's cultural diamond through time

Within this research a degree of inter-changeability exists between some of the core vocabulary. For example, I would argue that the terms ‘audience’ and ‘viewer’, whilst each carrying a particular notion of number/size, offer enough common understanding to work as interchangeable terms. On the other hand the term ‘receiver’ can suggest a passive receiving of presented information rather than an active engagement on the part of the person looking at the object which is better suggested by the term ‘viewer’. The issue of agency implied by the distinction between ‘receiver’ and ‘viewer’ had a considerable impact on the development of my thinking around the notion of ‘influence’. The term ‘influence’ initially seemed to offer an appropriate term for talking about the relationship between two uses of Egyptian architectural style, and is a term traditionally used when cultures interact. However, I believe that the term ‘appropriation’ actually offers greater scope for understanding non-pharaonic use of obelisks. Within art history the term ‘appropriation’ as an alternative to ‘influence’ has been moved centre stage by scholars such as Nelson (2003:172) who argue that ‘the notion of appropriation allows the art object’s social utility in the past or the present to be reaffirmed openly, not covertly’. This notion of context, and the social agency discernible to the researcher, as material culture moves between social worlds is also explored by Baxandall who presents a powerful argument for the limitations, and indeed bias, of the term ‘influence’.

Baxandall (1985:58-59) is unconvinced that the term ‘influence’ is helpful. He is particularly concerned by the sense of agency implied by the term suggesting that it ‘seems to reverse the active/passive relation which the historical actor experiences and the inferential beholder will wish to take into account’. He argues that in saying that X ‘influenced’ Y, the researcher is suggesting that X did something to Y rather than that Y did something to X; that the ‘influence’ flows from the past to the present. However, to Baxandall’s mind when considering works of art that draw on the past it is more likely that Y is actively choosing to engage with X which occupies a passive position as an example from the past or the contemporary elsewhere. As an alternative to ‘influence’ Baxandall prefers terms such as ‘reacts to’, ‘adapts’, ‘aligns with’, ‘emulates’, ‘rejects’ or ‘extracts from’ which confer an active role on Y and open up the possibility of looking at why Y chooses to borrow

from another as part of the act of creating something. This discussion reflects my own concerns around the term ‘influence’ and throughout this research I instead use the term ‘appropriation’. Some of these vocabulary modifications will emerge in greater detail as I discuss my augmentation of the cultural diamond as part of the development of my research methodology.

4.4 Augmenting the cultural diamond

Griswold’s cultural diamond (1986, 2008) offers a broad framework for exploring cultural objects. As a model it proposes that in order to better understand an object it is necessary to consider the highly interdependent relationships that exist between the object, the producer, the receiver and the social world. I have taken this model as the starting point for my research methodology. Figure 4.3 shows how I believe this broad framework can be applied specifically to the appropriation of Egyptian obelisks and demonstrates where I have made adjustments and additions to the framework. This ‘augmented’ cultural diamond represents an original approach to analysing Egyptianizing objects and I will discuss the specific aspects of the revised model below. A critical review of how this model worked in practice when applied to my chosen case-study looking at the appropriation of obelisk to imperial Rome will be included in Chapter 9.

The issue of vocabulary impacts on the development of my methodology in relation to how I have chosen to label particular analytic factors which sit at the four points of the diamond. For a social scientist such as Griswold, the term ‘cultural object’ can be applied to a wide range of phenomena which can be seen, heard or experienced, such as an item of clothing, a song or a traditional belief. In a sense the word ‘object’ merely serves to identify the particular aspect of a culture under examination. In an archaeological sense the word ‘object’ has a traditional role as the all-encompassing term which can be applied to any piece of material culture before the process of interpretation serves to name it as, for example, a hand axe, a religious statue or a piece of personal adornment.

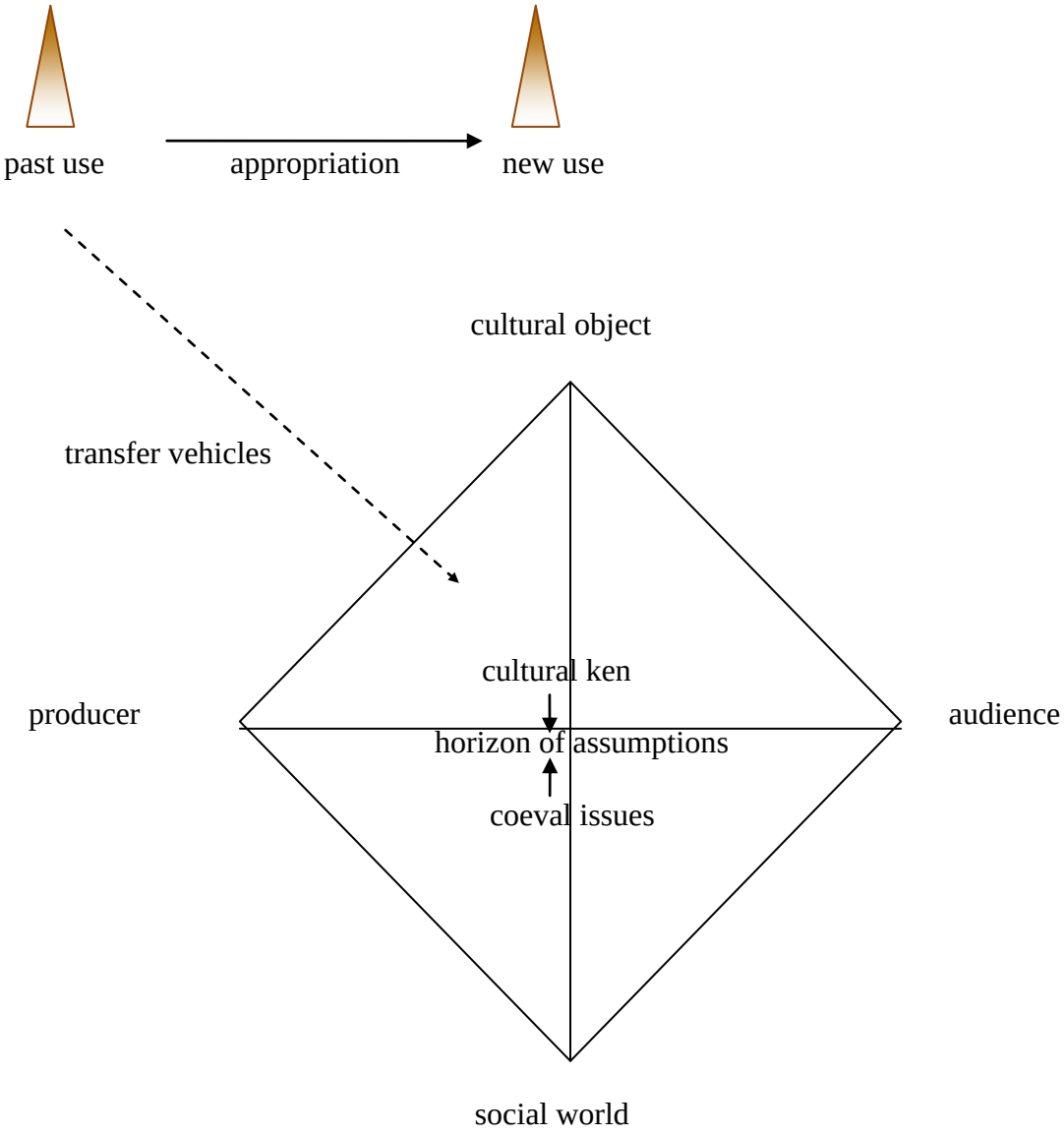


Figure 4.3 Understanding the appropriation of obelisks through an augmented cultural diamond

In terms of my own research, the focus on Egyptian obelisks renders the term ‘cultural object’ doubly appropriate as being indicative of my focus on an object, and the cultural meaning ascribed to it. This cultural meaning is shaped by pertinent aspects of the social world within which it exists. In my research the term ‘social world’ covers all aspects of a society including political, economic, religious and social affairs. Over time Griswold amended her original term ‘artist’, first to ‘creator’ and then ‘producer’. In relation to my own research I have retained the idea of a ‘producer’ as the person who is ultimately seen to have enabled an Egyptian

obelisk to exist as a monument within the urban landscape of Rome. I have noted above my concerns that the term 'receivers' is too passive and I have therefore chosen to use the term 'audience'. I feel the word is particularly relevant as it suggests a group of people within which there will be whole group, sub-group and individual responses to a cultural object, a producer or the exigencies of the immediate social world.

Egyptian obelisks as cultural objects are appropriated from their role as monuments in the past. On the augmented cultural diamond, past use may refer to how the obelisk was used in ancient Egypt or how it came to be used as a monument in Rome. Appropriation can potentially occur several times in the history of an individual obelisk, and can lead to the development of layers of meaning around the obelisk which draw in producer and audience understanding of the monument's role/significance from a previous use. An example of this is the re-appropriation of the obelisk (Appendix A:3) which remained standing in its original Roman location on the site of the Circus Vaticanus following the sack of Rome in AD 410. Pope Nicolas V (1447-1455) planned to move this monument to the square in front of St. Peter's, although the actual move did not occur until 1586. Curran et al. (2009:185) propose that initial interest in the obelisk was driven by its role in the early history of Rome, as described in the classical sources, rather than its ancient Egyptian connections.

Any understanding of an obelisk's past is carried via transfer vehicles, which may be textual or visual in format. In all cases the transfer vehicles carry information about the past history of the obelisk which informs the cultural ken - the understanding of the obelisk as a cultural object - held by those who encounter the monument within their social world. This cultural ken, in combination with coeval political, economic, cultural and social issues, creates the 'horizon of assumptions' held by the producer and audience. This horizon forms the cognitive environment within which the producer selects and presents an Egyptian obelisk and the audience begins to create meaning around it. Examining this horizon of assumptions enables us to start understanding possible producer motivation and potential audience responses.

Griswold (1986:7-8, 2008:15) says that the cultural diamond was constructed, and should be understood, with no sense of hierarchy across the four cardinal points. The layout of the cultural diamond enables all four points to be connected; creating a network of six links. At the same time, the shape of the cultural diamond enables the points to be equally spaced, avoiding any suggestion of an inherent order or ranking across the four elements. As such the cultural diamond operates as a heterarchy – an organisational system whereby the elements of the organisation are unranked (non-hierarchical) or possess the potential to be ranked in a number of different ways. While exact definitions of the term 'heterarchy' vary across disciplines, in the social sciences heterarchies are seen as networks of elements in which each element shares the same 'horizontal' position of power/authority, such that each plays a theoretically equal role. In contrast, a 'hierarchy' would be seen as the arrangement of items whereby the items are represented as being 'above', 'at the same level' or 'below' one another.

Griswold (1986:8) proposes that academic analysis can designate any point or link on the cultural diamond as the phenomenon to be explained. As such my current research seeks to explore the appropriation of a specific cultural object – the Egyptian obelisk. Applying the tenets of the cultural diamond means that any analysis of the obelisk as a cultural phenomenon can only be considered complete when the other three points – social world, producer and audience – are also studied as part of the analytical process. Within archaeology different theoretical schools have emphasised particular aspects of the past (such as people, places, products or processes) to draw to the foreground of their research, with overlaying assumptions about relative importance and interpretation outcomes. For example, archaeologists following a processualist tradition tend to conceptualise historical change as occurring largely without the explicit and intentional contributions of people, while post-processual archaeology focuses on meaning and representation with an emphasis on the subjectivity of archaeological interpretation (Van Dyke and Bernbeck 2015:257).

In terms of my own research, my entry point to the cultural diamond is the cultural object: the Egyptian obelisk. If we acknowledge that leading on from this

there is a need to draw in the other three points of the diamond, the question arises of how to best deal with the obvious tension between a theoretical approach which its author declares to be heterarchial in nature, and the demands of an analytical narrative which inherently suggests the need to sequence the discussion of each point on the diamond. Thus starting with the cultural object, the remaining points need to be covered in a sequence which ensures that the exploration of each element best supports any potential readings of the others. This sequence does not seek to ascribe any notion of hierarchy or relative importance across the four elements. Indeed, the priority given to particular aspects within the biography of Egyptian obelisks in Rome, as discussed in the literature review, can serve to obscure the wider social context for these monuments and direct attention towards a single aspect of the process of appropriation, usually the motivation of the producer. Therefore, based on the aim of the research to elucidate how we might better understand the appropriation of a set of cultural objects (Egyptian obelisks) within a specific social world (early imperial Rome) at the behest of a producer (in this case the ruling emperor) in order that the objects may be seen and read by an audience (the Roman public), I will be discussing the elements in the following order: cultural object, social world, producer, audience. I would now like to cover each of the four points in turn and introduce how I plan to approach each one.

4.4.1 Cultural object

As has already been noted, the starting point for this research is the analysis of a set of cultural objects. These ‘cultural objects’ accord with the archaeological notion of ‘material culture’; one of the main sources of evidence used in the discipline of archaeology to form interpretations and hypothesises about the past (Pearce 1994:126; Prown 1994:134). In seeking to draw the approaches offered by the social sciences and literary reception theory into an archaeological research project, it is perhaps no surprise therefore that the focus of the core and supplementary data sets (Appendix A), and the first footfall of the research into the cultural diamond, should be the cultural object.

Within this research the cultural objects are a set of Egyptian obelisks raised in the city of Rome. The case-study chapter covering these monuments as cultural

objects (Chapter 5) will open with an introductory statement about the relevant obelisks as they arrive in Rome, undergo modification and are raised in the city landscape. Information relating to the main characteristics of these cultural objects will be included in the detailed listing for each obelisk in Appendix A. This information has been drawn from a number of published sources, and the majority of identifying features are noted across a range of works. Archaeological investigation has also provided a wide range of evidence relating to the physical remains of obelisks and the ancient city of Rome. In turn this evidence has generated modern interpretation of these monuments and the built environments within which they stood. These interpretations may relate to the history of an obelisk in terms of who appropriated it and when they did so, or may attempt to determine the exact nature/function of the obelisk in its new Roman location. Where there is continuing debate about a particular aspect of an obelisk, such as its specific Roman producer or its location in Egypt/Rome, the identification I have given in Appendix A will be discussed in the main text.

Griswold (1986:5) argues that 'once a form [cultural object] is understood by a group, the meaning is conveyed even when the form is imperfectly reproduced'. Thus, the cultural object becomes a 'cultural convention' whereby, even if the form is modified, 'the original form and its attendant meaning are evoked by the modified version, and the latter is comprehended with respect to the former'. This means that an obelisk can continue to be used as a cultural object, with ongoing modifications in terms of presentation or location, and will continue to be read over time both in terms of its original and contemporary contexts. Thus, I will contend that Egyptianizing architecture includes any architectural piece representative of the style, regardless of whether that piece is original (created in Egypt) or replica (created in Rome).

Authenticity can become an attribute used to convey meaning, but is not necessarily the key criterion for enabling an object to be seen as Egyptianizing in the first place. I would argue therefore that the concern of modern scholars to establish binary divisions around real/replica, authentic/pastiche within this group of material does not reflect a distinction made by the producer or viewer in terms of how they

read the object. It is at this point that the role of transfer vehicles becomes crucial in determining how the audience understood an Egyptianized object. The term 'authentic' suggests a reliability and undisputed origin for an object. Ascribing authenticity can be seen as a human construct, a presumption based on personal experience and the coeval levels of knowledge available to support identification of an object. An example of this is the Mensa Isiaca (figure 4.4) which was discovered in Rome at the start of the 1500s, purchased by Cardinal Bembo around 1520 for his collection at Padua and first published in 1559. The bronze tablet is incised with hieroglyphs, Nilotic flora and figures of pharaohs and Egyptian deities, all inlaid with silver and enamel. From 1600 the tablet was used as a source for Egyptological studies until in the 1800s, it was shown to be a Roman Egyptianizing work (Curl 2005:110-112). Thus, when describing the object Curl (110) is able to describe it as 'an authentic work of Antiquity, but … not pharaonic'.



Figure 4.4 The Mensa Isiaca, AD 41-54 (Museo Egizio, Turin No. 7155)

As an appropriated object, the obelisk can be seen to carry meaning relating to its original use, constructed against the audience's horizon of assumptions about ancient Egypt, together with any meaning relating to any modifications which take place as part of its re-display in Rome. Modifications can establish their own patterns of use, and over time these new patterns may themselves become subject to appropriation and serve as sources of uniquely Roman 'Egyptian'/Egyptianized material culture informing a later appropriation. Indeed, the acts of initial

appropriation and later modification are central to the notion of an Egyptian obelisk standing in imperial Rome, and it is the result of these combined acts which I argue generates the meaning for the audience.

In order to understand Egyptianizing architecture it is not enough to simply identify relevant Egyptianized elements outside Egypt. It is also necessary to consider the extent to which knowledge of the elements in their original context was available to later viewers, and how this was transmitted. Thus identifying and reviewing transfer vehicles operating in the coeval social world, needs to take place as part of an approach which sees selection as an active process; whereby the object has a perceived significance which offers the producer the opportunity to appropriate the object and present it as a meaningful cultural object.

A common term used in art history to distinguish particular visual motifs incorporated within an art work is ‘symbol’. In relation to my research this term can be understand to apply to any discrete aspect of the original monument or any modification to the monument upon its erection in Rome. Thus, the Latin inscriptions added in imperial Rome can be understood as both a piece of text and a symbolic act in terms of its relationship to the ancient Egyptian language represented by the hieroglyphs carved onto the shaft of the monument. At this point it is important to remember that whilst a symbol can be useful to present a message on behalf of the producer, this only works if the audience holds a common understanding of that symbol.

Baxandall (1972:29) speaks of a ‘period eye’; the idea that at different times and places, the particular knowledge, cultures and experience of the viewer attunes them to aspects of an image which would not naturally be picked up outside that time and/or place, but which the historian, with the help of context, can elucidate and recover. It is a situation which poses a challenge for researchers as they view material with their own period eye. Therefore, an important strand of my research is the notion of how I can make the use of obelisks ‘more fully legible to and in the present’ (Preziosi 2009:7) whilst at the same time examining this usage firmly within the context of the time during which they were appropriated. When it comes

to the longitudinal aspect of my research this idea of the period eye means that those viewing the previous use of an object will understand that use within their own understanding of the past. For example, in later imperial Rome the erection of an obelisk in a circus setting might call on a historiographic concept of the glory of Rome's first emperors in much the same way that for early emperors the obelisks could allow them to call on the glory of Egypt's pharaonic past.

The issue of modern interpretations based on modern sensibilities emerges in the literature review and serves to highlight the importance of exploring the horizon of assumptions held by the appropriating society. This horizon offers the opportunity to determine the dominant interpretations and representations of the cultural object circulating at the point of appropriation. An understanding of this horizon of assumptions helps us to guard against ascribing meanings which were clearly not available to the coeval audience at either a conscious or subconscious level.

4.4.2 Producer

Embedded within the cultural diamond is the notion that all cultural objects must have a creator/producer - be that a single person or multiple creators (Griswold 2008:15). The producer is the person or persons responsible for selecting and then presenting the object to the audience. Within this research I will propose a single producer for each of the Egyptian obelisks in imperial Rome. Whilst the role of craftspeople in manufacturing an object should not be overlooked, I suggest that this role can be seen as facilitating the producer to translate their thoughts into material form. Arising out of this is the assumption that any notion of agency lies with the producer, not the object. Thus, without the motivation of the producer to make use of the Egyptian style, the role of those who make, transport and erect the monument would not be called upon and the object would not exist in a form capable of conveying meaning to an audience. It is the motivation of the producer which shapes the final appearance and location of the cultural object so that the monument can carry an intended message to an intended audience.

In relation to my core data set, the producer in each case is the reigning emperor. In terms of analysing the data there will be outcomes which relate to one particular

individual (e.g. the possible motives of Augustus as a producer) and others which relate to a generic concern across all the producers (e.g. the possible motives of an emperor as a producer). Griswold (2008:74) stresses that revivals should not be seen as a 'natural' outcome of a particular social context and that it is necessary to identify the particular circumstances of the social world and the people within it in order to fully explain the presence of a cultural object. I agree and will argue that the deployment of the Egyptian style should be seen as an active attempt on the part of the producer to construct meaning at a specific point in time through a carefully selected and 'dressed' cultural object; in this case an obelisk.

This concept of a single producer is not without issue. The role of craftworkers in the production process has already been noted. In addition, an emperor never ruled alone and relied on people experienced in administration and public affairs to maintain the functions and efficiency of government. Under the emperors, the senate continued to meet, albeit with less authority (Scarre1995a:19-20), and the great aristocratic households of the late Republic became members of the early imperial court (Winterling 2009:4). So how safe is it to propose the emperor as sole producer? Certainly, coeval sources such as Pliny ascribe the act of appropriation to the emperor, but how applicable is this in the context of current understanding of the period. What do we need to consider in terms of the political organisation of early imperial Rome, to enable us to present the holder of the imperial office as the ultimate point of agency within the process of appropriation?

A major consideration in foregrounding the emperor as producer is the need to see the emperor as part of an evolving political system which was subject to subtle negotiation as Rome went from a republican to an imperial form of government. The political settlement of 23 BC meant that Augustus moved away from two key principles of republican government. First, the system whereby a republican official could only hold a particular office for a year before submitting to the election process again, and second a political structure whereby for every republican official there was at least one colleague with duplicate functions and power of an equal nature (Gruen 2005:40). Winterling (2009:28) believes that the advent of the Principate created a complex and paradoxical socio-political landscape in Rome

characterised by the introduction of a new political order, based on military and economic power, into a society where social order and values remained basically the same. Thus, the emperor existed as 'a monarchic element in an aristocratic society'. Lobur (2008:4-8) meanwhile speaks of an 'Augustan transformation'; a real and complete restructuring of political power. Part of this ideation was the creation of products which fostered a belief in the legitimacy of the ruler's power among the governed. In this respect the appropriation of Egyptian obelisks can be seen as part of a political negotiation, via material culture, relating to how the office of emperor could be understood by the people of Rome.

In relation to the actions of the emperor as producer, I suggest that the act of appropriating obelisks can be divided into two distinct types: external and internal. Incidents whereby obelisks are moved from Egypt to Rome I will class as 'external', using as they do material culture imported to Rome from an external source. Thus obelisk 1, which was appropriated directly from Heliopolis where it had been raised by the pharaoh Psamtek II, can be seen as an example of external appropriation. Leading on from this I will argue that a process of 'internal' appropriation can also be seen in operation as the Roman use of obelisks begins to establish patterns referenced by later emperors, and provides individual monuments available for re-appropriation within the city of Rome. For example, the placing of obelisk 2 on the spina (central barrier) of the Circus Maximus by the emperor Augustus established a motif of obelisk and circus subsequently appropriated by other emperors. Meanwhile the obelisk raised c. AD 130 by Hadrian at his imperial estate at Tivoli was re-appropriated seventy years later by the emperor Varius who had it added to the spina of the Circus Varianus (Iversen 1968:166).

4.4.3 Social world

The social world element of the cultural diamond is concerned with the social, economic, political and religious issues of the society within which the cultural object is produced and viewed. Griswold (2008:240) argues that this social world is crucial to how a cultural object is understood since the object can only generate meaning when it is embedded in a social world. In this research the city of Rome during the early imperial period forms the social context for my exploration of the

Roman appropriation of obelisks. The government of the Roman empire had a physical centre, a specific space where social and political relations were created, a centre that was superimposed over the traditional domains of the domus and *res publica* (Winterling 2009:1-3). This was Rome. Thus the city's social, political, religious and economic history creates the world within which obelisks were appropriated (moved to Rome, modified and erected by imperial producers) and received (viewed and understood by the public in Rome). Within this social world a number of coeval social, political, religious or economic factors may combine to create a context which actively prompts use of the obelisk as a cultural object.

At the same time it is important to remember that the viewpoint of the audience is informed not just by these social 'realities' but also by the horizon of assumptions which exist within the social world. As Hornung (2001:191) comments 'every period of history has had an Egypt of its own, onto which it has projected its fears and its hopes'. Therefore, I will also consider the transfer vehicles circulating in the social world which feed the horizon of assumptions about Egypt and the Egyptian style. I will consider how this horizon might help to explain producer motivation in deciding to appropriate an Egyptian obelisk and how the audience might be expected to read this obelisk as it stands in their local landscape.

An example of how transfer vehicles can influence coeval understanding of ancient Egypt is given by Elliott (2008:121) in relation to the impact of the discovery of Tutankhamun's tomb on the Egyptian revival of the late 1920s and 1930s. Elliott notes that some 1,800 photographs were taken by Harry Burton, the official photographer on the excavation team. Burton had trained in Hollywood, and often angled shots and cropped objects to create a sense of 'strangeness' (figure 4.5). Thus the photographs acted as transfer vehicles within which information was 'staged' for the viewing audience and imbued with a particular message. The discovery of Tutankhamun's tomb is also linked to one of the most infamous examples of how a transfer vehicle can create a long standing, yet inaccurate, reading of an event. In this case, despite no evidence to substantiate a curse of any kind, newspapers of the time created the curse of Tutankhamun. Thus when Lord Carnarvon, who had been present at the opening of the tomb, died in April 1923

from an infected insect bite, his death was attributed to the curse and when one alleged expedition member was merely injured in a traffic accident in 1970, the event was noted by *The Times* newspaper under the heading 'A Pharaoh's Curse' (Holt 1986:62-63).



Figure 4.5 Figure of Anubis on shrine, tomb of Tutankhamun (Burton photograph p1092-2. Griffith Institute Archive, Oxford).

In my own research, I am interested in considering an apparently similar situation whereby there appears to be a difference between the coeval literary sources and the material culture recovered. The classical literary sources which speak of Egypt are traditionally seen as presenting a negative perception of Egypt (Versluys 2010:16-17). Such an interpretation would seem to be at odds with Roman appropriation of Egyptian objects, since the archaeological sources seem to show that in both public and private contexts 'Egypt' was everywhere. I am also interested in returning to the texts and images operating within the Roman horizon of assumptions to see whether other, more positive, aspects of ancient Egypt can be detected; aspects which may have contributed to the active appropriation of Egyptian obelisks.

From the corpus of classical works which include information on Egypt and Egyptian architecture, I have selected two texts which will act as key exemplars of written transfer vehicles operating in early imperial Rome. These texts have been chosen because they offer significant information about Egypt and contain specific

references to obelisks. In each case this information falls within a body of writing which reflects the coeval Roman understanding/concept of the wider world. The account given in these texts, concerning the Egyptian life of the obelisks as the writers understood it, and as they asked their readers to understand it, helps to elucidate how obelisks carried meaning as Roman monuments. At this point I would like to offer a brief introduction to the works and consider how the material they cover relates to the obelisks I have selected as my core data set.

The first text is Strabo's *Geography* which discusses obelisks in ancient Egypt and Rome. Strabo's account covers the period up to AD 24 which means that his text includes the Egyptianizing activity of Augustus. This relates to obelisks 1, 2 (in Rome) and 3 (in Alexandria) together with the two obelisks erected in association with the Caesareum in Alexandria - all of which are discussed in my research. The second text is Pliny's *Natural History* which again discusses pharaonic use of obelisks together with Roman use in Alexandria and Rome. Pliny's account goes up to AD 79 which means that he covers the activity of Augustus and Caligula. This potentially relates to all the obelisks covered by Strabo, with additional material on obelisk 3 as it arrives in Rome under Caligula. There is ongoing debate about the exact identification of the Alexandrian obelisks Pliny discusses and I will return to this issue later. In addition to these two key texts, I will make use of references to obelisks which occur in a number of other written sources. In these texts obelisks cannot be said to form a specific focus of the narrative, but occur as part of a wider discussion around a particular structure or the actions of an individual emperor. I will also make use of literature, such as Virgil's *Aeneid* and Plutarch's *Moralia*, where it helps to illuminate the social context within which the obelisks are viewed.

Visual evidence for obelisks is available on Roman material culture such as mosaics, coins, glassware (figure 4.6) and lamps (figure 4.7). As with texts, these images are helpful in informing us about the appearance of an individual obelisk and its local topography. In addition, as the Roman audience interacted with these objects, the visual information they carried informed the audience's horizon of assumptions about obelisks. In this way objects carried information about Egypt out of Egypt - as with the arrival of Nilotic scenes from Alexandria - or circulated

information about the Roman context for an obelisk - as with the depiction of obelisk 2 in the Circus Maximus on coins issued by the emperor Trajan (see figure 8.11).



Figure 4.6 Glass beaker with chariot racing scene, AD 43-100 (British Museum, P&EE 1870.2-24.3)



Figure 4.7 Pottery lamp showing a race in the Circus Maximus, AD 175-225 (British Museum, GR 1814.7-4.106, Lamps Q1349)

Over time extant obelisks formed part of the audience's horizon of assumptions. Where obelisks already stood in the public landscape, as shown in the lower part of Table 2, and where these obelisks were reproduced on small portable objects, they became part of the background against which the audience viewed and constructed meaning around later examples. The obelisks I will be analysing did not operate in

isolation but existed within a wider context of other Egyptianizing pieces which were part of the environment, both public and private, of the city. Such works located within the public domain provide evidence of contemporaneous pieces in the style and occasionally operate as companion pieces to the obelisks. Whilst it is difficult to say how many of these Egyptianizing pieces any one viewer or indeed producer saw, there is no doubt that their impact on the audience is significant and I will address this in the social world and audience chapters.

4.4.4 Audience

For Griswold (2008:15) the audience is an essential part of the cultural diamond since it is only when an object enters the public world that it becomes a cultural object. Any object which is unseen therefore remains a 'potential' rather than an 'actual' cultural object. Similarly, literary reception theory argues that meaning should not be seen as inherent to the text itself, but as an understanding created through the relationship between text and reader (Crosman 1980; Holub 1984; Suleiman 1980). Thus, in order for an obelisk to convey meaning it needs to be viewed by an audience. This audience will respond to and read meaning from the obelisk against the coeval horizon of assumptions.

For a cultural object to be successful in its immediate social world it must carry a core of common meaning for both producer and viewer. This meaning can be multi-layered, and different facets may be directed toward different sub-groups within the audience. However, once the cultural object enters the social world its meaning moves beyond the producer's control as viewers begin to respond to the object. The meaning generated by the viewer may concur with, reject or oppose that intended by the producer as the viewers become active meaning makers in their own right. The role of active meaning makers is central to how meaning can evolve between and across revival periods. For example, how a later audience might re-interpret a cultural object or select an aspect of its perceived meaning to emphasise. Thus while a producer may seek to prioritise a particular meaning or attempt to anticipate the meanings currently held by the audience, a cultural object itself can support different readings - some intentional, others unintended - generated by the audience once the object has entered the public domain.

The obelisks discussed in this research were all raised, at some point in their history, in the city of Rome. In some cases the built landscape around an obelisk was created in tandem with the monument (for example the obelisk erected on the northern section of the Campus Martius as part of Augustus's building programme in this region of Rome) while other pieces were raised in existing structures (for example the obelisks raised on the spina of the Circus Maximus). Versluys (2010:9) believes that a lack of analyses of the 'archaeological context' of Egyptianized material has hampered our current understanding of these objects. As part of my discussion I will therefore consider how the urban landscape of Rome formed a specific visual backdrop for each obelisk, and how topographical factors might have affected the way the audience viewed and understood the monuments.

The appearance of imperial Rome was continually evolving due to imperial intervention and the changing needs of a growing capital city. Thus, each obelisk arrived in the city in association with a specific time-bonded topography. As Birksted (2004:9) points out the initial design of any landscape will encompass the expected route of the viewer through that landscape and determine the viewer's perspective. Thus local topography can suggest ways in which the audience might be expected to visually encounter and then interact physically with an object. It is therefore important to consider the local topography of each obelisk as it enters the public landscape of Rome and how this topographical setting changes over time; either due to the obelisk being re-positioned or because the urban environment around it changes.

An example of this are the changes which occurred over time in the northern Campus Martius; host to obelisks 1, 4 and 5. In the eighth century BC (figure 4.8) the area consisted of a wide floodplain next to the river Tiber with raising land to the west. Water courses running across the lower part of the area indicated the low lying and marshy nature of the land. By 146 BC (figure 4.9), buildings started to appear and an infrastructure of routeways traversed the Campus demonstrating its emerging role as a public open space during the late Republic. By AD 14 (figure 4.10) a denser built environment had developed to the south while to the north lay the building projects which form part of the social world context for obelisk 1. The three

key Augustan monuments built by this time (figure 4.10 -1: Mausoleum of Augustus; 2: obelisk 1; 3: Ara Pacis) all lay in the narrower part of the Campus between the Pincian Hill and an eastward bend in the course of the river Tiber.

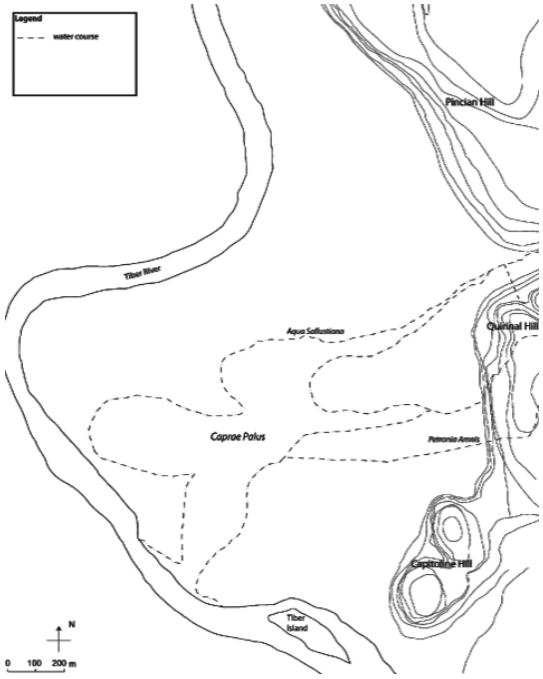


Figure 4.8 Campus Martius eighth century BC (Ancient World Mapping Centre)

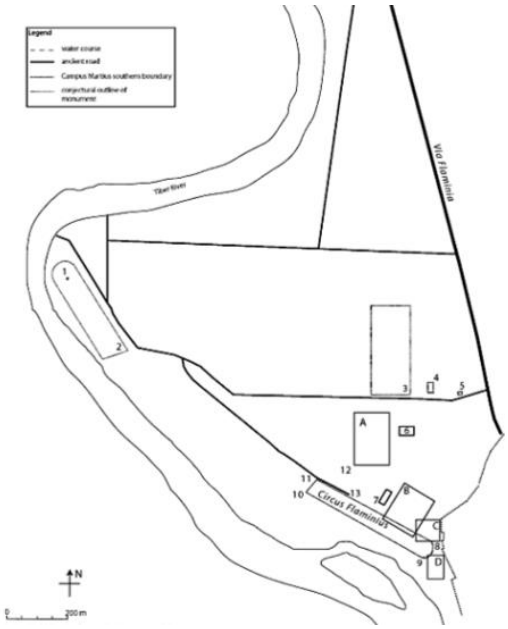


Figure 4.9 Campus Martius monuments 146 BC (Ancient World Mapping Centre)

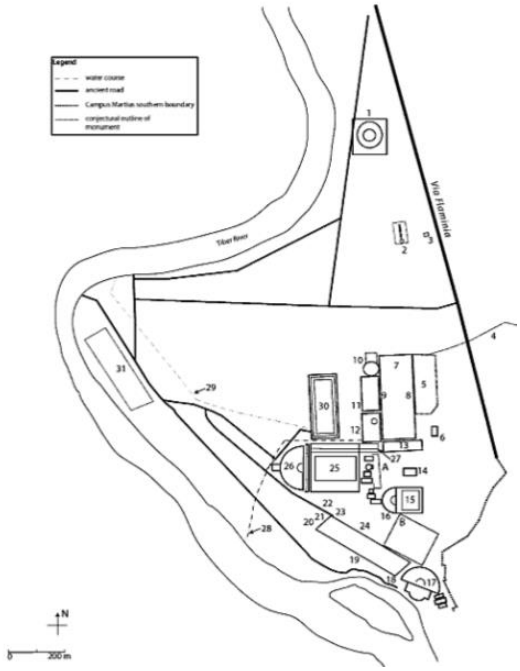


Figure 4.10 Campus Martius monuments AD 14 (Ancient World Mapping Centre)
1: Mausoleum of Augustus; 2: obelisk 1; 3: Ara Pacis

The evolving topography of the Campus Martius (figures 4.8, 4.9 and 4.10) also demonstrates the role of spatial relatedness in directing where a producer might choose to site an obelisk and how the audience might then be expected to encounter and respond to the monument. Frischer (2017:12) talks of two variants within the concept of spatial relatedness; the first being intervisibility, the second, interpositionality. Applying this to obelisk 1 and its neighbouring built structure, the Ara Pacis, an intervisible view would include both the obelisk and the Ara Pacis. To achieve an interpositional view, the viewer would need to be standing between the two monuments while looking at one of them. Frischer (2017:12) believes that the most convincing explanations about the relationship of the obelisk and the Ara Pacis, covered in greater detail in Chapter 5, are those that put both monuments in a direct line of sight with each other or else require the observer to be positioned between the monuments. An example of this is Buchner's (1976, 1980, 1982) interest in how the obelisk's shadow projected onto the west facade of the Ara Pacis; a phenomenon best seen by someone standing with the obelisk close to their back in the area between the obelisk and the Ara Pacis (Hannah 2011:91). The role of the audience's viewpoint and the interaction of the local, and sometimes distant, built landscape on

the resultant view is an issue I will explore in detail for all five obelisks considered in this study.

Swetnam-Burland (2009:443) believes that the location chosen for a monument can be used to posit who might be expected to see that monument. All five obelisks in this research stood in open spaces. Although they were often raised in association with nearby structures, none of them were totally enclosed within a structure or building. In addition, the current topographical evidence suggests that all the obelisks would have been visually accessible from both a near and distant standpoint. As such they appear to have been positioned so as to enable a large public audience to encounter them within the city's landscape. So how can we start to quantify the nature of this potential public audience?

Winterling (2009:5) proposes that ancient Rome should be seen as a 'premodern society' with a distinction between top and bottom at the heart of its organisational structure. He goes on, however, to note the difficulties of attempting to create a single working model of hierarchy within this society, based on modern notions of rank or class. Similar issues arise in relation to determining the diversity of audience encountering and engaging with an obelisk in Rome. For example, the manner of presentation applied to a monument can suggest distinct audiences intended/expected to take meaning from the monument. Thus, the use of common inscription forms within the Latin text added to the bases of obelisks 1 and 2 (Appendix A:1, 2) can be seen to widen the intended audience by taking into account the varied reading levels across the population and deliberately adopting written formats familiar from other Roman material culture such as coins. However, such a device cannot be taken as an indication of rank across the intended audience since, within Roman society, a slave working in the imperial administration might read as well as a senator.

Coeval text, pictorial and architectural evidence would all seem to offer potential sources of insight into how the Roman audience responded to Egyptian obelisks. Surviving texts however, tend to be written by the elite for the elite. As such they may speak to producer motivation but provide a less clear picture of audience

response. In addition, texts need to be seen as presenting an account of audience reaction within the context of firstly, who is writing the text and secondly, who is expected to read it. Similarly with images, discussing the style and design of an image does not inherently suggest how the viewer(s) understood or responded to that image. As Swetnam-Burland (2009:113) comments when reflecting on this very issue in relation to later Nilotic scenes in Rome, 'for the most part, viewer responses to pygmy [Nilotic] scenes must be theorised'.

So, how does one start to address the issue of gauging public reaction to the obelisks and how the viewer(s) understood them? One possible way to access audience response is to consider how producers made use of existing practice to facilitate audience understanding and how this in turn helps us to surmise audience response. For example, emperors often extrapolated freely from the extant role of public statues when they presented an obelisk to the Roman public. One aspect of this was to place the obelisk on a pedestal, an arrangement which helped to make the unfamiliar obelisk familiar and enabled the audience to start reading it in the same way as they might an elite statue. In addition, Latin inscriptions were often carved into the new base, again borrowing from existing statuary practice, and meant that the audience were primed to interact with the inscription as part of the way in which they read the whole monument.

Another way to access audience understanding is to consider where a particular Roman modification is repeated over several obelisks. This suggests that the initial meaning intended by the producer was successfully transmitted to the audience and that on this basis the modification is taken over by later producers to evoke a similar response. An example is the topping of the obelisk's pyramidion with a Roman motif - usually of gilded bronze - a practice established by Augustus and repeated by later producers. This is an example of the process of internal appropriation whereby the producer is able to build on existing audience response/understanding and seek to replicate it through copying an established practice.

Finally, the audience's own horizon of assumptions will offer a set of possible ways in which they might be expected to respond to an obelisk in Rome. The

information carried into and circulated within the Roman social world by the various transfer vehicles operating in any particular period will serve to generate a public understanding of ancient Egypt and obelisks. This understanding weaves its way through the motivation of the producer and the response of the viewer. Although there is not necessarily a direct correlation between the horizon of assumptions and viewer response, in that a producer may hope to imbue a monument with a particular meaning drawn from this horizon which is in the event modified or rejected by the viewer, the horizon offers a spectrum of possible responses against which to begin investigating potential receptions for each obelisk.

4.5 Point of appropriation

The entrance of each obelisk into my analytical narrative occurs at what I refer to as the 'point of appropriation'. Identifying this point of appropriation is crucial for determining any chronological pattern to the use of obelisks in Rome. I will therefore explain how I have endeavoured to identify this all important point of appropriation for each monument. Cultural appropriation, as viewed through the prism of reception studies, is a process driven by the actions of the people who create and receive a cultural object. These actions take place within a social world and occur within a conceptual framework of assumptions held by both parties. But how does one determine the exact point at which the act of appropriation occurs and what relationship does this point have with the actions of the producer, in terms of their selection/modification of the object, and the viewer, in terms of how they view/interpret the object?

Reception theory states that the role of the viewer is crucial in creating a cultural object since it is the interaction of object and viewer, regardless of viewer understanding of that object, which marks the 'reception', as opposed to the 'creation', of a cultural object. I would argue that this interface between producer and viewer is also central to the ability of an Egyptian obelisk to be classed as an appropriated cultural object. For an obelisk the point at which it becomes part of the public urban landscape marks the point at which the producer is able to present a message and the audience is able to respond to that message. Griswold (2008:15) reflects this notion in her belief that an object only becomes a 'cultural object' when

it becomes active in the social world. Thus, I will record the point of appropriation as occurring when the obelisk is formally introduced into the built landscape with the intention on the producer's part that it should generate meaning for the audience. An example would be obelisk 1 for which the point of appropriation falls in 10 BC, the year when it was raised on the orders of the emperor Augustus to stand on the Campus Martius as part of the public landscape of Rome east of the River Tiber.

Whilst the point of appropriation is central to the identification of revivals, it is important to note that an obelisk will subsequently form part of the urban landscape beyond its specific revival period. During this part of their history the obelisks form an important part of the horizon of assumptions for later producers and viewers. An example is the manner in which, during the imperial period, the erection of obelisk 2 in the Circus Maximus acted as a key monumental motif within the coeval horizon of assumptions and can be seen to inform the actions/reactions of later producers and viewers of obelisks 3, 10, 11 and 13 - all of which stood as part of a circus structure during their individual histories. In addition, I will argue that the ability of obelisk 2 to act as a motif for the circus is achieved not only through its reception by the crowds attending the circus, but also through its use as a motif on small portable objects such as coins, glassware and lamps which serve to make the obelisk/circus association accessible beyond the immediate audience.

The ability of an obelisk/group of obelisks to establish a particular association can also influence the interpretation of obelisks offered by modern scholars. For example, the exact history and purpose of obelisk 11 – which stood in the Gardens of Sallust during the imperial period - has generated a variety of modern interpretations and it is possible to see how the association of obelisks with a circus setting influenced Budge's (1926:212-213) proposal that the obelisk was erected in a circus located within the Gardens. This suggestion is in line with early antiquarian interpretation of the area which presumed, based on other examples of obelisk raised in a circus setting that the obelisk must have been raised in a circus, although subsequent archaeological investigation has proved that no evidence for such a circus exists (Humphrey 1986:557). The idea of the circus obelisk as an imperial revival topos is something I will discuss in the case-study.

The pre-appropriation history of an obelisk can also be seen to affect later understanding of that monument. Thus obelisks which have begun, but not completed, their journey towards a point of appropriation can nevertheless have a presence in the social world and the coeval horizon of assumptions. An example of this is seen during the later history of obelisk 1 when, in 1748, the fallen and buried pieces of the monument were excavated and moved to the courtyard of the nearby Palazzo della Vignaccia by Pope Benedict XIV. Here the pieces lay horizontal, forming part of the courtyard 'architecture' until they were repaired and raised by Pius VI in 1792 in Piazza Montecitorio. In some cases this 'period in waiting' can form a crucial part of the appropriation story as with obelisk 13 whose initial 'Roman' history from AD 330-337 under Constantine I became part of the 'mythology' constructed for the monument during its appropriation by Constantius II, the emperor who brought the obelisk to Rome in AD 357 and erected it in the Circus Maximus.

A single obelisk can have a number of appropriation points within its history. An example is obelisk 10 which was manufactured and exported from Roman Egypt by the Emperor Domitian around AD 81. It was re-appropriated by the emperor Maxentius who moved it to the Circus Maxentius around AD 309-312. This process of 'multiple-appropriation' suggests a horizon of assumptions around certain obelisks which relates not just to their origins in ancient Egypt, but which draws on assumptions about the social world of earlier imperial revivals. Modes of cultural appropriation are varied and take place through a range of processes (Ziff and Rao 1997:3). In this research the appropriation process centres on the selection, transport and erection of a number of obelisks. However, the appropriation of an obelisk as a piece of material culture may include the simultaneous appropriation of other aspects of ancient Egyptian culture such as the hieroglyphic script. The way in which such auxiliary appropriations support the main act of appropriation, for example the role of hieroglyphs as a visual symbol of ancient Egypt rather than a linguistic device, and the way in which contemporary counterparts, for example the Latin script, are drawn into the act of appropriation is something I will discuss in the case-study.

4.6 Summary

The methodology which I will be using in my research is a version of Griswold's cultural diamond (figure 4.1); a theoretical framework which draws on the field of reception studies. I have augmented the diamond (figure 4.3) to make the role of the horizon of expectations, which I term the horizon of assumptions, more explicit and I have added the processes of appropriation and information transfer (through the transfer vehicles) to show how they can be seen to interact with the points of the diamond. The four points of the cultural diamond – cultural object, social world, producer and audience – will frame my analytical discussion of the appropriation of Egyptian obelisks in imperial Rome. I will consider how these four factors help us to understand this appropriation and the development of layers of meaning around each monument. I also intend to look at how over time the obelisks come to be understood not only as cultural objects from an 'outside' culture (i.e. pharaonic Egypt) but also as cultural objects from their own 'inside' culture (i.e. Rome's past).

Chapter 5: Cultural objects

5.1 Introduction

Each obelisk discussed in this research consists of a core monolith (either pharaonic or Roman in date) together with any Roman modifications to this core. These elements of material culture, in combination, constitute the Roman cultural object. The earliest appropriation of obelisks from Egypt to Rome occurred under the Julio-Claudian dynasty of Roman emperors. Appropriation began with Augustus, founder of the dynasty, who transferred two obelisks to Rome. Prior to this, Augustus had erected several obelisks in Alexandria shortly after the former kingdom of Egypt became a Roman province. The other Julio-Claudian emperor to erect obelisks in Rome was Caligula, who moved one of the obelisks which had begun its imperial history as part of Augustus's activity in Alexandria and also commissioned two new monuments for Rome. These obelisks form the cultural objects for my early imperial case-study and I will also consider the Alexandrian examples to see if they establish any patterns of use which continued once obelisks started to arrive in Rome.

5.2 Cultural objects

The five obelisks (Appendix A:1-5) being considered all made the journey overseas from the imperial province of Egypt to the city of Rome. The initial three obelisks to arrive were of pharaonic date, the latter two were Roman. Of the first three, the two obelisks (1 and 2) moved by Augustus were transferred from their original location at a temple site, whilst that moved by Caligula (3) came from Alexandria where it had already been appropriated by Augustus. In this respect Augustus was appropriating externally from the pharaohs and Caligula internally from Augustus. This suggests that the actions of Augustus were successful enough to establish a pattern of use and meaning which Caligula was able to appropriate thirty years later. This is supported by the fact that the first two obelisks were carved with hieroglyphs - enabling Augustus to appropriate the writing/name of the pharaohs - whilst the blank surface of the third obelisk inscribed with a Latin inscription suggests that Caligula was negotiating a relationship with his imperial predecessors rather than the pharaohs. The final two obelisks (4 and 5) were

commissioned by Caligula from the granite quarries at Aswan in Egypt. They arrived in Rome un-inscribed and with no pharaonic history. The opportunity this offered, in conjunction with the placement of the pair in front of the Mausoleum of Augustus, is I suggest another example of the use of Egyptian objects to address internal issues. I will return to this during the discussion of producer motivation (Chapter 7).

Obelisks 1 and 2 (figure 5.1) were both pharaonic monuments from Heliopolis, moved out of Egypt by Augustus in 10 BC (Ammianus Marcellinus 17.4.12; Pliny 36.14). The obelisks do not appear to have been selected as an existing pair since they date from different pharaonic dynasties and stood in different areas of the sanctuary. Once in Rome they were erected as single monuments in separate locations on the Campus Martius. They were a similar height - currently 21.79m and 23.2m - and were both inscribed with hieroglyphs (Pliny 36.14).



Figure 5.1 Obelisks 1 (left) and 2 (right) in their current locations in Rome

Obelisk 3 (figure 5.2) was brought over from Alexandria by Caligula and erected in the Circus Vaticanus. The monument was quarried on royal orders but, with no hieroglyphic text, the pharaoh responsible for this act remains a matter of debate (Habachi 1977:130-131; Iversen 1968:19) and the reason for its blank surface is lost in the ancient biography of the monument. Iversen (1968:19) suggests that obelisk 3 was commissioned as a cult-object for the sun temple at Heliopolis. This suggestion fits a pattern established under many pharaohs. Habachi (1977:130-131) however is doubtful, and points out that no obelisk at Heliopolis has so far been found uninscribed. Roullet (1972:134) believes that obelisk 3 may be the one Pliny (36.14) says was quarried on the orders of 'Necthebis' [Nectanebo]. Pliny (36.14) goes on to explain that this monument remained at the quarry until transported to Alexandria by Ptolemy [II] Philadelphus (283-246 BC). On arrival in the city the obelisk was erected in the Arsinoeum as a tribute to Ptolemy's wife/sister Arsinoe II who had been deified by Ptolemy after her death in 270 BC (Gutzwiller 1992:366).



Figure 5.2 Obelisk 3 in its current location in Rome

The issue is complicated by the fact that Pliny's narrative makes no explicit link between this obelisk and one he says was moved by the Romans due to the inconvenience of having a large obelisk near the busy docks (36.14). Recent opinion

has followed Alföldy's (1990) argument that there are two distinct obelisks in Pliny's account. Alföldy believes that the first monument was appropriated by the Romans in Alexandria and subsequently transferred to Rome. The second, moved by the Romans as an act of infrastructural convenience (see above), does not appear to re-emerge in the later history of Roman obelisks. So if obelisk 3 is not the one which stood near the docks, usually equated with the Arsinoeion monument, what does Alföldy suggest is its history? Alföldy (1990:66-67) proposes that the obelisk was brought to Alexandria by Cleopatra VII to stand near a temple, known as the Caesareum, she ordered built soon after 34 BC. Behind the temple a monumental square was laid out, at the centre of which stood the recently quarried obelisk following the earlier Arsinoeion example to the west.

The square was completed by Cornelius Gallus as the Julian Forum around 31 BC and the obelisk appropriated as part of the new landscape. The Latin inscription (Appendix A:3 and below) added to the obelisk at this point in its history has been reconstructed from the marks left in the stone by the bronze staples attaching the letters to the obelisk (Curran et al. 2009:36; Iversen 1965:149; Roullet 1972:68).

IVSSV IMP. CAESARIS DIVI F. C.
CORNELIVS CN. F. GALLVS PRAEF. FABR.
CAEESARIS DIVI F. FORVM IVLIVM FECIT

By order of the emperor [Augustus], son of the deified Caesar [Julius Caesar],
Caius Cornelius Gallus, overseer of works
for the emperor, son of the deified Caesar, built the Julian Forum

The immediate role of the inscription appears to be the announcement that the obelisk now stood in the Julian Forum as laid out by Cornelius Gallus, first imperial prefect of Egypt. However, a closer examination of the inscription suggests further meaning beyond this seemingly simple statement of current affairs. I would argue that the inscription should be seen as a key part of the appropriation of the monument and I will begin by looking at the physical presence of the inscription before considering the nature of the text itself.

The absence of any hieroglyphic text on obelisk 3 means that the Latin text cannot be seen to supersede the sacred written language of the former ruling elite with that of the new ruling authorities. However, it should be remembered that the main language in Alexandria at this time was Greek so this level of appropriation may not have been so important in this particular instance. In fact, the imposition of Latin text onto an obelisk may have been more pertinent in Rome where the Roman audience would have associated hieroglyphs with Egypt; an action I will return to later. What is notable about the first Latin inscription on obelisk 3 is the use of bronze lettering to 'apply' the script so that it stood proud of the stone, rather than replicating the traditional technique of carving into the surface of the stone. This may be due to the speed afforded by attaching pre-cast letters, but it also strengthens the notion of an alien text hosted by alien technology on a native object in its own land. This Latin inscription was in turn subject to the exercise of imperial authority when its producer fell from power (Cassius Dio 53.23.7; Suetonius *Augustus* 66) and the bronze lettering was removed (Iversen 1968:20). The replacement inscription, carved as it was into the stone surface, perhaps indicates a declaration of imperial permanence over the transitory nature of government officials.

The text hosted by the bronze letters also suggests a negotiation of status between those involved in the appropriation of the obelisk. Iversen (1965:152) comments that 'according to imperial etiquette it would probably have been considered improper, especially in the provinces, to allow the name of an officer to appear conjointly with that of his imperial master on a monument consecrated to the latter'. Thus, it was both impertinent and a challenge to imperial authority for Gallus to do exactly this within the inscription applied to obelisk 3. It is probable that Gallus held a high opinion of his position in this, the newest Roman province since he had led the army into Egypt from the west in 30 BC (Bowman 1986:25; Flower 2006:cxlix) and later suppressed a major revolt in the south of the country (Strabo 17.1.53). It is possible that his military role led him to look back to the foundation of the Ptolemaic kingdom by Alexander the Great's general Ptolemy in 305 BC. In the case of Gallus, the intimate link between officer and emperor was strengthened by the particular nature of his post in Egypt which reported directly to the emperor and whose holder was chosen from outside the Senate. Gallus may have been further emboldened by

the notion that the Prefect stood equivalent to the rank of king within the province of Egypt (Strabo 17.1.12; Tacitus *Histories* 1.11). Cassius Dio (53.23.5) tells us that Gallus set up images of himself across Egypt and had 'inscribed upon the pyramids a list of his achievements', an account repeated by Suetonius (*Augustus* 66).

This portrait of an over-mighty, potentially ambitious, provincial governor would not have sat well with Augustus. Manning (2012:97) suggests that the actions of Gallus in 29 BC, when he commissioned a trilingual (Egyptian, Greek and Latin) stela commemorating his own success in ending a revolt in the south, to stand before the Temple of Augustus at Philae, would have served as an unwanted reminder to Augustus of Ptolemaic practice. As well as recording a number of military victories ascribed to Gallus, the inscription spoke of how he had received envoys from the king of Ethiopia (Herklotz 2012:13, 17; Lewis and Reinhold 1990:66). It was most likely this, in combination with the example provided by Mark Antony of how Egypt could become a power base for an ambitious member of the military, that precipitated the downfall of Gallus who, condemned by Augustus and the Senate, committed suicide in 27 BC rather than return to Rome in disgrace (Cassius Dio 53.23.5-7). His fall from power was marked shortly after 26 BC when the bronze lettering was stripped from obelisk 3. Never again would the name of an official appear alongside that of an emperor in any Latin text added to an obelisk and when, around 13/12 BC, two obelisks (known today as Cleopatra's Needles and currently standing in London and New York respectively) were moved from Heliopolis to Alexandria on the orders of Augustus by the Prefect P. Rubrius Barbarus, the inscription does not mention him. The negotiation of power through the physical manipulation of inscription text was to continue however among later emperors.

The political context within which obelisk 3 was appropriated in Alexandria was complicated by the manner in which Egypt was established as a province with special status. Bowman (1986:37-38) believes that Augustus set up control of Egypt in such a way as to prevent any attempt to claim power by the person running Egypt. In other Roman provinces this was a senator who, from 27 BC, was appointed by the Senate or by the emperor as his legate responsible to the Senate and the people of Rome. In contrast, Augustus created the position of a vice regal governor holding

the title of prefect for the new province of Egypt. The prefect could not be a senator and was appointed by, and directly responsible to, the emperor. Thus, the emperor stood as a substitute state to which the prefect was responsible rather than the Senate. Perhaps, to Augustus, the actions and attitude of Gallus seemed to confirm the need for such an arrangement and certainly the fate of the initial inscription on obelisk 3 suggests a decisive response which aimed to demonstrate imperial hierarchy.

Obelisk 3 remained in Alexandria without an inscription until the reign of the emperor Tiberius (AD 14-37), when a second Latin inscription (Appendix A:3 and below) dedicating the obelisk to Tiberius and Augustus was carved directly into the stone shaft of the obelisk (Iversen 1968:20).

DIVO CAESARI DIVI IVLII F. AVGVSTO
TI. CAESARI DIVI AVGVSTI F. AVGVSTO
SACRVM

To the divine Caesar Augustus, son of the divine Julius,
and to Tiberius Caesar Augustus, son of the divine Augustus

For Tiberius, the new dedication appropriated both the monument and the memory of his immediate predecessor. The epigraphic union of Tiberius as the living emperor and Augustus as the previous holder of this title served to confirm Tiberius as the heir of Augustus, a relationship previously established by Augustus's formal adoption of his step-son Tiberius, the marriage of Tiberius to Augustus's only child Julia, and the taking by Tiberius of the Julian family name (Suetonius *Tiberius* 8.15).

The topography of obelisk 3 in Alexandria demonstrated the ability of the new rulers of Egypt to manipulate the urban landscape in their own style by re-modelling the existing landscape as a Roman forum. In this context the obelisk, which was already extant within this landscape, was not appropriated by being brought into a Roman landscape but appropriated by the act of re-purposing the landscape around it. In this sense, the process differs to that occurring in Rome where obelisks were moved into existing Roman landscapes. However, I would argue that this early

Alexandrian example should be seen as a major precursor to the act of appropriating obelisks to Rome and that other Roman activity in Alexandria demonstrates how interaction with this type of Egyptian material culture laid the way for large-scale appropriation across the Mediterranean.

In his account of Alexandria, Pliny (36.14) also speaks of the two obelisks (figure 5.3) in front of the Caesareum; a Ptolemaic temple complex completed by, and consecrated to, Augustus (Hölbl 2001:292). The obelisks had originally been erected by Tuthmosis III (1479-1425 BC) at Heliopolis from where they were moved in 13/12 BC to mark the entrance to the now imperial sanctuary (Curran et al. 2009:36-37; Empereur 1998:89). The transport of these monuments down the Nile to Alexandria may have served as a logistical pilot for the movement of obelisks to Rome. Although the sanctuary building did not survive, ancient accounts and archaeological evidence suggest a courtyard complex housing a cult centre built in the Greek style (Stanwick 2002:18). This combination of an obelisk and a Hellenistic setting is something I will return to when considering the Palestrina Mosaic and the example it offered to the Roman horizon of assumptions of how obelisks could be integrated into a classical architectural landscape.



Figure 5.3 The obelisk currently in New York standing in Alexandria in the late 1850s (Photographed by Francis Frith between AD 1856 and 1860. Library of Congress, 1770)

Each obelisk at the Caesareum stood on four crab-shaped bronze supports (Iversen 1968:65-66; Vogel 1973:27). Grimal and Woloch (1983:88) suggest that these bronze crabs (figure 5.4) may relate to the zodiac sign of Cancer and thus reference the beginning of the annual Nile flood and Julius Caesar's birthday on 12/13 July. The crabs carried Greek and Latin inscriptions which commemorated the transport and re-erection of the obelisks; Greek being the language of the elite and officialdom in Egypt at the time (Lloyd 2000:417; Stephens 2005:230). The use of text to mark ownership of a monument was a long established practice in Egypt and, as we shall see later, was used in Rome in a similar manner. In an Egyptian context the use of both Latin and Greek is noteworthy since it indicates that the audience for the text is the existing Greek-speaking elite while the Latin marks the presence of a new incoming elite and the start of the 'Romanisation' of the land.



Figure 5.4 Bronze crab supports for the obelisk known as Cleopatra's Needle (Metropolitan Museum, New York, 81.2.1 and 81.2.2)

The architectural activity of Augustus in the city and the positioning of monuments on the shoreline were noted by Philo of Alexandria (*On the Embassy to Gaius* 150-151) who says that the buildings raised to Augustus in Alexandria 'surpass' those in all other Egyptian cities. Philo mentions in particular the temple erected opposite the harbour in honour of the disembarkation of Caesar which he

claimed acted as a symbol of hope and a beacon of safety for those leaving or arriving in Alexandria. Similarly, the Caesareum obelisks stood on a ridge of land which rose immediately behind the harbour waters (Haas 1997:28). Such a position gave them a high degree of visibility from the sea route into the port of Alexandria which was the main point of entry to Roman Egypt; an example of recent imperial architectural activity visible to all who arrived in Egypt from the sea. It is probably safe to assume that Augustus did not intend to move these shoreline monuments onward to Rome since they stood in Alexandria throughout his reign; remaining there until the nineteenth century when they were moved to London and New York respectively. In contrast, obelisk 3 was transferred to Rome in AD 37 where it became part of the Egyptianizing activities of the emperor Caligula; a phase of its history which I will discuss later. Meanwhile, Augustus continued his appropriation of Egyptian obelisks by moving two obelisks (1 and 2) from Heliopolis, along the River Nile, through the city of Alexandria and across the Mediterranean to Rome.

5.2.1 Obelisks 1 and 2

Obelisks 1 and 2 arrived in Rome simultaneously in 10 BC. Obelisk 1 was erected on the northern part of the Campus Martius where it cast a shadow across the nearby paving (Pliny 36.15), while obelisk 2 was erected further south in the Circus Maximus which lay in the valley between the Aventine and Palatine Hills. In their new locations both obelisks were topped with a gilded bronze ball and carried identical Latin inscriptions (Appendix A:1, 2) carved onto the north and south sides of their respective bases. Iversen (1968:65) dates the erection of obelisk 2 to the year 10 BC. The date of AD 10 given in the same work for obelisk 1 (1968:142) is an obvious typographic error and the accompanying footnote directs the reader to the account relating to the arrival of the obelisks which is correctly dated to 10 BC. A date of 10 BC for the erection of both obelisks is supported by Buchner's (1982:10) observation that the titles given to Augustus in the inscription added to both bases were valid from 27 June 10 BC to 27 June 9 BC and 10 BC is the date followed in modern literature (Curl 2005:24; Curran et al. 2009:37; Habachi 1977:119, 128).

10 BC was the twentieth anniversary of the conquest of Egypt. Curran et al. (2009:37) and Sorek (2010:45) suggest that the dedication of obelisks 1 and 2 in this

year could have been planned to commemorate the occasion. Interestingly, obelisk 1 was originally commissioned by the pharaoh Psamtek II (595-589 BC) to celebrate his *Sed* Festival, thirty-year jubilee, as recorded in the hieroglyphic text inscribed on the shaft (Habachi 1977:128). However, as Trimble (2007:21) notes, there is no evidence that anyone in Rome knew this so any attempt by Augustus to appropriate this feature of the obelisk and link it to a regnal celebration of his own time in power must remain purely speculative. The issue of exactly what level of information about Egypt and its obelisks was present in the Roman horizon of assumptions at this time is something I will return to later, but an examination of the urban landscape in which the obelisks were raised offers some initial insight into this particular appropriation from Egypt to Rome.

In its new location on the Campus Martius obelisk 1 stood at the edge of a paved area measuring approximately 75m by 160m (Grimal and Woloch 1983:62). In the northern hemisphere the shadow cast by any object always falls to the north of that object (Grimal and Woloch 1983:68). Thus, the paving immediately to the north of obelisk 1 acted as a surface across which the obelisk's shadow moved, west to east, during the course of the day. Fragments from the paving (figure 5.5) have been found beneath the basements of houses in Via di Campo Marzio, approximately 6m below the present ground level. Academic debate is ongoing about the overall design of this paved area and its history as part of either the Augustan or Flavian ground levels around the obelisk (Albèri Auber 2014:68-69; Baiocchi et al. 2016:529-530; Haselberger 2011:54-56).



Figure 5.5 Fragments of pavement below Via di Campo Marzio

At the time Pliny (36.15) explained that Augustus erected the obelisk to mark the shadow cast by the sun and so measure the length of the day, adding that bronze rods set into the pavement tracked the changing length of the obelisk's shadow across the seasons. There has been vigorous modern debate (Buchner 1982; Schütz 1990) about the exact function of this arrangement and its relationship to two nearby structures also built by Augustus, namely the Ara Pacis (Altar of Peace) and the Mausoleum of Augustus (figure 5.6). The interpretations offered, which seek to define the exact nature of the 'sundial' described by Pliny, have an impact on how we interpret Augustus's motivation in erecting the obelisk and how the emperor might have expected it to be understood by the Roman audience. Much of the modern debate has focused on the physical and visual links between the three structures, in particular the supposed ability of the obelisk to cast a connecting shadow which stretched across the paving towards, and indeed onto, the other two structures. These perceived visual links and also prompted academics to examine the assumed ideological and symbolic connections between obelisk 1 and the Ara Pacis (Pollini and Cipolla 2014:57).

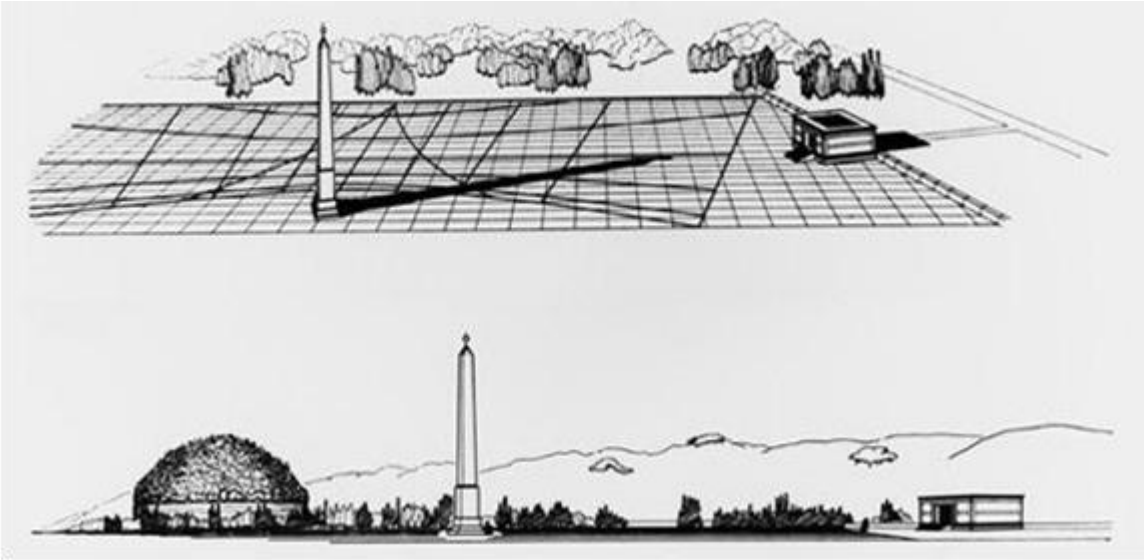


Figure 5.6 Reconstruction of obelisk 1 (Drawings by E. Buchner)

Buchner (1976, 1980, 1982) reconstructed obelisk 1 as the pointer of a vast sundial. He proposed that the obelisk's position and function connected it spatially and symbolically to the Ara Pacis and the Mausoleum of Augustus through the themes of cosmic time and the emperor's birthday. This interpretation has been

challenged by Schütz (1990) who concluded that the obelisk was part of a meridian instrument showing the position of the sun in the zodiac cycle. Schütz believed that the obelisk's shadow, as it fell across a line set into the nearby paving, measured the civil year in conjunction with Augustus's correction of the Julian calendar. He argued that its orientation did not geometrically link the Ara Pacis and Mausoleum of Augustus and that the obelisk could not have cast a shadow as far as the Ara Pacis on the emperor's birthday or any other day; especially since the original height is unknown due to its broken state. He disputed the grid system suggested for the pavement by Buchner, proposing instead a single meridian line which the obelisk's shadow would cross, at varying points throughout the year, at 12 noon daily.

Recent works remain divided over the correct interpretation. For example, Sorek (2010:49) follows Buchner's model while Curran et al. (2009:40) make it clear that they are more convinced by the arguments put forward by Schütz, as do Grimal and Woloch (1983:63) who believe obelisk 1 was set up to measure time based on the Roman concept of cyclical time (cycling through the year, the seasons and the zodiac signs). Although current archaeological uncertainty about the site makes it difficult to decide the issue (Favro 1996:308; Haselberger 2011:47), common to both interpretations is the acknowledgment of clear inter-visibility between the three structures on the northern Campus Martius and the notion of the obelisk interacting with the sun to create a shadow which indicates the passage of time. It is these two points of commonality which I plan to take forward into my continuing discussion around obelisk 1.

Obelisk 2 was erected in 10 BC in the southern sector of the Campus Martius on the spina of the Circus Maximus. The spina lay at the centre of the arena, dividing it lengthwise to create the race circuit. At each end of the spina were columns, around which the chariots lapped, while the section between was adorned with statues and shrines. Obelisk 2 was to stand here until at least AD 750 (Richardson 1992:xxi). Each face of the shaft had been inscribed in pharaonic times with columns of hieroglyphs and all four faces of the pyramidion carried carved scenes. On arrival in Rome it was topped with a gilded bronze ball, and two identical Latin inscriptions (Appendix A:2) were added on the opposite sides of the new base (Habachi

1977:117-119; Iversen 1968:65,142). The obelisk was *de facto* the first obelisk to stand as part of a Roman circus structure and this aspect of its topography became a motif on terracotta reliefs (figure 5.7) and a range of small, portable objects such as coins, lamps and glassware. Obelisk 2 was joined by a second obelisk (13) in AD 357 (Iversen 1968:65, 56) and the topos of circus obelisks will emerge with the very next known example (obelisk 3) to arrive in Rome.



Figure 5.7 First century AD relief showing the Circus Maximus with obelisk 2 on the spina (Museo della Civilta Romana, Rome, XIR158843)

5.2.2 Obelisk 3

The Alexandrian history of obelisk 3 has already been discussed though some modern works omit this part of its journey from Heliopolis to Rome (for example Beacham 1999:271). Pliny (36.14-15) says that obelisk 3 was broken during its removal. In fact the obelisk, which has been moved three times in its history, remains as a monolith and Pliny's comment may be simple inaccuracy or may refer to the fact that the obelisk was removed from its Roman base of three stones when the forum in which it stood in Alexandria was demolished. These three stones were transported with the obelisk to Rome and reused when it was re-erected (Humphrey 1986:549). In AD 37 obelisk 3 was brought to Rome on the orders of Caligula and erected on the spina of the Circus Vaticanus (figure 5.8). This circus had been built by Caligula as a chariot racecourse soon after AD 33 when the Horti Agrippinae, his mother's gardens on the west bank of the Tiber, passed into his ownership (Platner

and Ashby 1929:113, 264-265). The obelisk was to remain standing in this location until 1586 (Iversen 1968:20-21; figure 5.9).

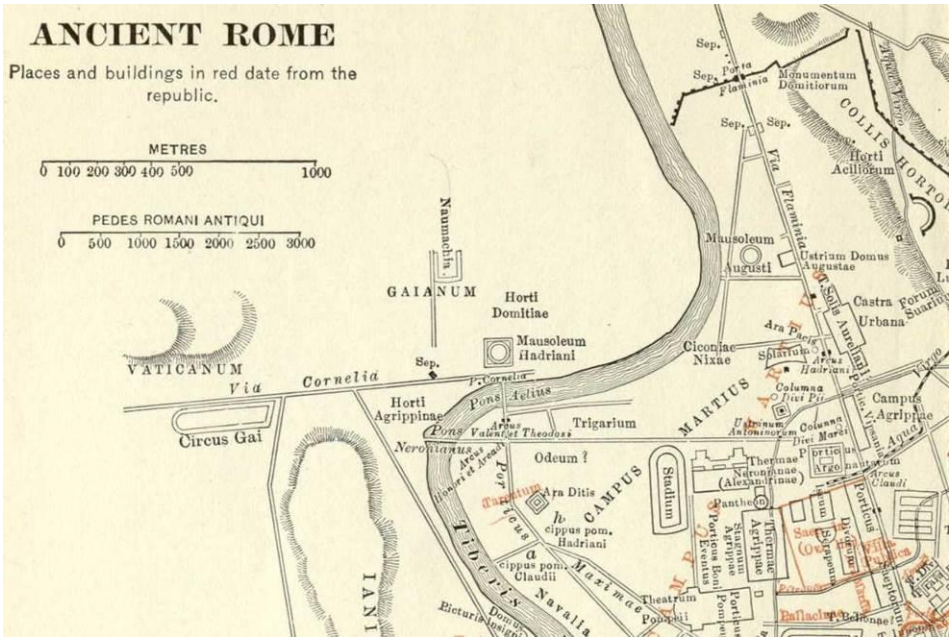


Figure 5.8 Map of the northern Campus Martius and the Vaticanum (Platner 1911).
The Circus Vaticanus (site of obelisk 3) is marked as 'Circus Gai' and the site of obelisk 1 as 'Solarium'.

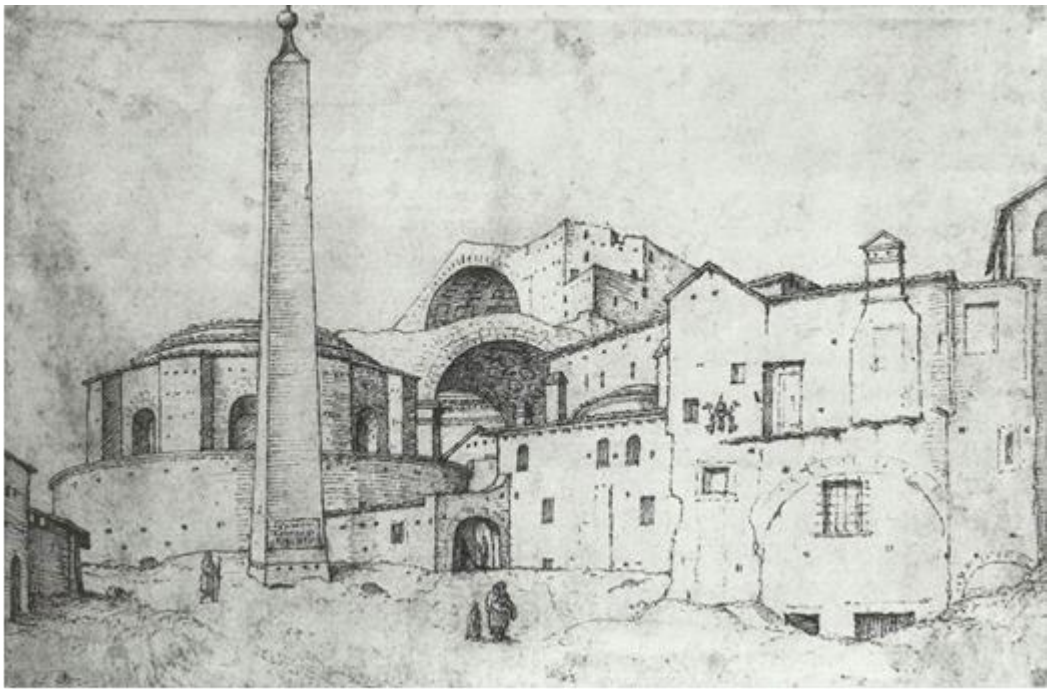


Figure 5.9 Obelisk 3 standing to the south of Old St Peter's Basilica c. 1535 (Maarten van Heemskerch. *Roman Sketchbook II*, Kupferstichkabinett, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Berlin.)

On the arrival of the obelisk in Rome, Caligula ordered the inscription to Augustus and Tiberius (Appendix A:3) removed, although this had been only partly achieved by the time of his assassination in AD 41. It is possible that Caligula intended to add his own inscription; however there is no evidence of this on the stonework. The top of the obelisk was fitted with bronze acanthus leaves and a gilded bronze ball. The lower part of the shaft was covered with plates of gilded bronze and all four sides of the lower shaft now carry shallow depressions cut into the face of the stone with rows of holes (probably for nails) indicating where the plates were fitted. This would have created a highly reflective surface. It is possible that the intention was to emphasise the solar/light attributes of the monument and the circus landscape in which it stood, an ideological relationship which I will return to later. It is also possible that this modification was a direct emulation of examples standing in Egypt at the time. Lacau and Chevrier (1977:232) observe that there were thin deep grooves in the shaft of a pair of Hatshepsut's obelisks erected at Karnak and surmise that these grooves were most probably for fixing electrum foil over the monument's sides from the pyramidion to half-way down the shaft. The hieroglyphic inscription on Hatshepsut's obelisk supports this by stating that it had been 'worked very greatly with electrum'. In Rome, obelisk 3 stood on four bronze astragali (knucklebone shaped supports) weighing around 272 kg each. These supports rested on a granite base set on top of a marble slab. Modern excavation shows that the whole structure was set directly on to the soil surface of the arena (Humphrey 1986:549; Iversen 1968:26).

5.2.3 Obelisks 4 and 5

Ammianus Marcellinus (17.4.16) records that obelisks 4 and 5 (figure 5.10) were raised as a pair near the Mausoleum of Augustus, a location confirmed by modern excavation. The pair stood 22m from the Mausoleum entrance flanking two bronze pillars inscribed with Augustus's *Res Gestae* (Davies 2000:15). The obelisks were cut from Egyptian pink granite. They have near vertical rather than tapering shafts, no pyramidions and are uninscribed (Rehak 2009:52). Modern scholars (Iversen 1968:47; Platner and Ashby 1929:367; Roullet 1972:78) suggest that the pair were quarried in Roman Egypt and raised in Rome during the first century AD although the difficulty of determining an exact chronology for their arrival and erection noted

by Cordingley and Richmond (1927:29) remains. Since the obelisks arrived in Rome uninscribed and carry no imperial Latin inscription (Iversen 1968:47) two of the main sources for dating the early history of an obelisk are unavailable.



Figure 5.10 Obelisks 4 (left) and 5 (right) in their current locations in Rome

A survey of the key classical texts noted for their discussion of the obelisks of imperial Rome provides little conclusive information regarding the date at which the obelisks fronting the Mausoleum of Augustus were erected. The earliest of these texts, Strabo's *Geography*, does not mention obelisks 4 and 5 when describing the Mausoleum (5.3.8). This account was published no later than AD 23 suggesting that the obelisks were not part of the original plan for the structure. Pliny (36.15) also makes no mention of 4 or 5, although he gives a detailed description of the other two obelisks on the Campus Martius at the time (i.e. 1 and 2), and could be expected to mention 4 and 5 if they were standing before AD 79 if only to note their presence.

It is not until AD 360 that the obelisks receive a definite mention in the work of Ammianus Marcellinus (17.4.16). In his text, Ammianus Marcellinus details the two obelisks erected by Augustus (1 and 2) before concluding that 'Subsequently others were transferred. One was erected on the Vatican [obelisk 3], another in the gardens of Sallust [obelisk 11] and two at the Mausoleum of Augustus [obelisks 4 and 5]'. Although the description contains no reference to who was responsible for raising 4

and 5 the opening Latin phrase ‘Secutaeque aetates’ appears to lead the reader into the period after the reign of Augustus, which Ammianus Marcellinus had previously been speaking about 4in the text. Such a reading would suggest that the obelisks were placed in front of the Mausoleum after the reign of Augustus. It is impossible to determine whether Ammianus Marcellinus lists the other obelisks in chronological order, i.e. 1 and 2 under Augustus followed later by 3, 11 and then 4 and 5. If so, it suggests that 4 and 5 were raised during or after the reign of Caligula who is known to have brought 3 to Rome in AD 37 to stand on the spina of the Circus Vaticanus. If not, then the erection could have occurred at any time after Augustus up to the publication of the text i.e. AD 14-360. Thus, while the text confirms the erection of obelisks 4 and 5 as an imperial act it offers little basis for narrowing down the date when this took place to any specific period which, even factoring in Pliny, still leaves a potential time span of nearly three hundred years from AD 79 to 360.

Turning to the thoughts of modern scholars, Iversen (1968:47) offers no suggestions about which emperor was responsible for raising obelisks 4 and 5 in front of the Mausoleum of Augustus. Meanwhile, Habachi (1977:131, 135) suggests that they were quarried by a Roman emperor and believes they were placed there in the second half of the first century while the Mausoleum was still in use. Based on excavation findings Buchner (1996:161-168) has argued that the foundations for obelisks 4 and 5 were contemporary with the Mausoleum, seated as they are at the Augustan ground level which is significantly lower than the Flavian level. Quirke (2001:141), Curran et al. (2009:46) and Sorek (2010:57) suggest that the obelisks may have been set up by Augustus himself as part of the original plans for the Mausoleum. The Mausoleum was built around 28 BC (Suetonius *Augustus* 100) and was first used for the ashes of a member of the imperial family in 23 BC (Cassius Dio 53.30). Both these events we know took place before obelisks 1 and 2 arrived in Rome and the classical texts suggest that the Mausoleum obelisks were erected after obelisks 1 and 2. Thus, if the theory that the obelisks were erected by Augustus is applied to the narrative implied by the classical texts the possible period of erection narrows to between 10 BC and AD 14. Whilst this would allow enough time for the obelisks to travel from Egypt to Rome, I would argue that factors relating to the

obelisks themselves make it unlikely that Augustus was responsible for erecting them.

The first factor making a link with Augustus unlikely is that obelisks 4 and 5 have no obvious pharaonic association. This is in marked contrast to obelisks 1 and 2 which were from Heliopolis and inscribed with the names of the pharaohs Psamtek II, Sety I and Rameses II. Additionally the two obelisks Augustus moved from Heliopolis to Alexandria to stand in front of the Caesareum (often seen in modern work as the prototype of those outside the entrance to the Mausoleum) were also pharaonic having been commissioned by Tuthmosis III (1479-1425 BC). Obelisks 4 and 5 meanwhile bear no obvious pharaonic association in relation to their origin. Whilst this does not render it impossible that they were erected by Augustus, it does not fit his previous policy of appropriating material with a clear pharaonic heritage as part of his message about the assimilation of Egypt into the Roman empire and the succession of imperial Rome to the royal throne of Egypt (as discussed in Chapter 7). If Augustus aimed to create an apotheosis landscape in the northern Campus Martius to promote the emerging imperial cult, obelisks 1 and 2 would support this with their known link to the divine pharaoh, whilst obelisks 4 and 5 would not.

Secondly, obelisks 4 and 5 are considerably shorter than Augustus's two obelisks in Rome (Table 1). Their current height of 14.64m and 14.75m respectively renders them substantially shorter than the two examples (obelisks 1 and 2) already standing in the public landscape of Rome which were both over 20m tall (Iversen 1968:65). Roman modifications to obelisks 4 and 5 suggest that there was an attempt to compensate for their shorter height by resting the bottom of each obelisk on a postament (mount) of bronze to give them greater height than that offered by the usual astragali (Iversen 1968:51). This modification would have rendered them less of a visual contrast to the extant examples and would mean that they were more in proportion to the 40m height of the Mausoleum next to which they stood. I would suggest that such adjustment would not have been necessary if they were part of a planned building programme under Augustus, in which case taller examples could

have been sourced from existing Egyptian examples or quarried to the required height in Roman Egypt.

Looking to the history of the Mausoleum itself, the structure continued to receive imperial ashes up until January AD 98 when the ashes of the emperor Nerva were interred there (Platner and Ashby 1929:334; Vogel 1973:27). The next emperor, Trajan (AD 98-117), died at Cilcia (modern Turkey) and on arrival in Rome his ashes were laid below his eponymous column built as an honorific monument to the emperor by the Senate and the people of Rome (Stamper 2005:180). That the Mausoleum of Augustus was now seen as having gone out of active use was confirmed by the actions of the emperor Hadrian (AD 117-138). Hadrian began an extensive building programme which aimed to transform Rome and demonstrate his imperial status and authority (Opper 2008:23, 208). As part of this he commissioned a new imperial mausoleum on the Campus Vaticanus (Cassius Dio 69.23.1; Historia Augusta *Hadrian* 19.1). Conceived as the resting place for Hadrian and his family, the mausoleum continued to receive imperial ashes up until the deposition of the emperor Caracalla's ashes in AD 217. Thus, as new structures emerged to receive imperial remains and to act as a public focus for the imperial cult, it seems unlikely that significant architectural additions would have been made to the existing but 'closed' Mausoleum of Augustus after AD 79.

Returning to the period before AD 79, two other emperors are suggested in modern works as possible producers for obelisks 4 and 5, namely Claudius and Domitian. Claudius is suggested by Vasi and Nibby (1841:197-201) during their account of twelve of the obelisks raised in Rome, though they offer no evidence for this assertion. In addition, there is no mention in the classical texts of Claudius erecting any obelisks in Rome. Whilst this lack of evidence makes it impossible to eliminate Claudius, he is not a strong candidate. Domitian's involvement was suggested as far back as 1589 by Mercati due to the known interest in Egyptian cults under this emperor. Mercati's idea is dismissed as 'pure conjecture' by Iversen (1968:47) and I am inclined to agree. Whilst Suetonius (*Domitian* 5.1) records that Domitian restored many buildings, he emphasises that the intention was to glorify Domitian who ensured that restoration inscriptions were in his name only with no

mention of the original builder. It thus seems unlikely that Domitian would seek to augment a structure so strongly associated with another emperor. Additionally, the evidence we have for Domitian's Egyptianizing activity suggests that his attention was unlikely to fall in the direction of the Mausoleum of Augustus. Although his father and brother were buried in the Mausoleum, when Domitian sought to honour his family and enhance the status of the Flavian dynasty he did so by placing an obelisk (obelisk 10) in front of the Flavian family temple, a structure associated solely with his dynasty. This obelisk was carved with references to Domitian and one would expect this to be the case with any monument raised in association with the family place of burial. Obelisks 4 and 5, however, stood blank.

Instead, I would suggest that obelisks 4 and 5 were erected by the emperor Caligula (AD 37-41) around the time that he brought obelisk 3 over from Alexandria. Suetonius (*Caligula* 21.1) mentions building work which Caligula completed including 'the temple of Augustus and the theatre of Pompey' though there is no direct reference to the obelisks in his text. It is possible that the completion of the Mausoleum, which Suetonius (*Tiberius* 47) remarks was half-finished at the time of Tiberius's death, was both a means for Caligula to demonstrate his architectural superiority over Tiberius and a way to associate himself directly with Augustus. If Caligula was the producer, Pliny's silence is problematic, although it is possible that their shorter statue meant that he did not consider them worthy of mention alongside the considerably taller examples in the area. Caligula's motivation in erecting the obelisks is a subject I will explore in the producer chapter.

5.3 Summary

The first Egyptian obelisks arrived in Rome between 10 BC and AD 41. This period of 50 years bequeathed at least five major obelisks to the city's landscape, all of which were to remain part of the built landscape for the next 360 years. The five obelisks were all transported from Egypt to stand in Rome. While some were monuments with an ancient history, commissioned by pharaohs to stand in Egyptian temple complexes, and others were quarried in Roman Egypt from the same granite beds but on the orders of a new imperial authority, all were received by the Roman audience as objects which had made the journey across the Mediterranean from an

imperial province to the imperial capital. This forms a topos within the written and visual environment of Rome around the issue of the economic and political command of Rome at the heart of a thriving empire conquered for the benefit of the Roman people. I look at this social world in more detail next.

Chapter 6: Social world

6.1 Introduction

The social world element of my discussion encompasses early imperial Rome and the newly conquered province of Egypt. During this period Rome was moving from a republican to an imperial system of government and I will argue that this forms a key dimension of the social world context for the appropriations taking place at this time. Linked to this is the changing relationship between Rome and Egypt, as the latter moves from an independent kingdom with close connections to Rome's rulers, to become a province of the Roman empire with special status as the emperor's personal estate.

Events in this social world, in combination with information about Egypt and obelisks carried by coeval transfer vehicles, created the horizon of assumptions which guided audience understanding of Egyptian obelisks. The contemporary social world and events of the period speak directly to producer motivation and I will consider how existing popular assumptions can be seen to prompt use of the Egyptian style, and how producers made use of the horizon to ensure that their message was easily understood by the audience. As we shall see, bringing an obelisk to Rome generated multi-layered meaning around that obelisk; meaning which drew on Roman understanding of the obelisk as an Egyptian artefact alongside understanding of how a monument operated in the Roman social world.

6.2 Early imperial Rome

Rome developed as an urban centre under the Etruscans who took control of the existing hill settlement in 616 BC. A marshy area between the hills was drained to enable the construction of a public square together with a palace, temples and city walls (Hintzen-Bohlen 2005:65; Stamburgh 1988:14). A key moment in the history of Rome came in 510 BC when the city moved from royal rule to a republican political system. The Republic operated through an assembly of leading citizens known as the Senate with two consuls, chosen annually from the Senate, as heads of government (Le Glay et al. 2009:8). The increasingly powerful city extended its control across the whole Italian peninsula through political alliances and direct

conquest and began to take control of territory overseas. Victory against Carthage won Rome control of Sicily, coastal areas in North Africa and land around the western Mediterranean Sea, while the defeat of Greece in 146 BC opened up the eastern Mediterranean and meant that Rome now controlled most of the region (Hintzen-Bohlen 2005:13; Rawson 1986:51; Scarre 1995a:8).

By the mid first century BC, Rome's growing size and wealth encouraged various internal attempts to take control of the city and its territories. By 44 BC, the Roman general Julius Caesar had taken over as sole ruler though senatorial concerns that he would declare himself king lead to his assassination that year. In the aftermath, power was held by a triumvirate of Augustus, Mark Antony and Marcus Aemilius Lepidus (Stockton 1986:147). When this political agreement collapsed in 33 BC, civil war broke out between the two most powerful members - Antony and Augustus - during which Antony created a power base in Egypt where he had already established a political and personal alliance with the ruler Cleopatra VII (51-30 BC).

Cleopatra had herself emerged triumphant from civil war with her brother and co-ruler Ptolemy XIII. With the support of Julius Caesar she had gained sole control of the Egyptian throne in 47 BC and travelled to Rome the following year to receive recognition as an allied monarch (Cassius Dio 42.44; Suetonius *Caesar* 35.1). Her subsequent alliance with Antony gave her Roman support in extending her kingdom and from 34 BC this alliance drew her into the power struggle between Antony and Augustus, culminating in Augustus declaring war on her in 32 BC. Augustus made good propaganda use of Egypt and Cleopatra in his struggle with Antony. In particular he exploited the Roman opinion that Egyptian (and more broadly oriental) influence corrupted the best of Roman citizens (for example Antony) and that a powerful ruler to the east (in this case Cleopatra) must be a military/political threat to the Roman state (Alston 1995:20; Maehler 2003:205; Roller 2010:4-5). When Antony's forces were defeated during the Battle of Actium in 31 BC and his main power base at Alexandria was captured the following year, he and Cleopatra committed suicide leaving Augustus as sole ruler (Scarre 1995b:17-18; Stockton 1986:148-151). The Egyptian Ptolemaic empire was disassembled; the main areas taken under Roman control with smaller areas passing to neighbouring allied kings

(Roller 2010:115). Augustus's victory meant the end of an independent Egypt and dissipated fears of the potential threat posed by the country.

As a former regional power, what Augustus did with Egypt after the conquest mattered greatly to the burgeoning Roman empire. Augustus declared Egypt his personal estate and placed the province under the rule of a vice regal governor who held the title 'prefect'. This post could not be held by a senator and was appointed by, and solely responsible to, the emperor. Furthermore, senators and other leading Roman citizens were unable to enter Egypt without imperial permission (Bowman 1986:37-38). In contrast to Antony's move in 40 BC from Rome to Egypt and his wish, made public by Augustus in 32 BC, that should he die in Italy his body be taken to Egypt (Scarre 1995b:17-18), Augustus immediately made use of Egyptian material culture to demonstrate the transfer of power from Egypt to Rome. He began appropriating Egyptian monuments, including obelisks, into Roman style spaces in Alexandria and transferred the portable treasures of the Ptolemies to Rome for distribution (Suetonius *Augustus* 41.1). Popular, satirical accounts of Cleopatra circulated in Rome after her death and became part of the Roman horizon of assumptions about all matters Egyptian.

At the same time the nature of government in Rome was changing as Augustus consolidated power as an imperial rather than republican leader. As part of this process Augustus presented the victory at Actium as the end of civil war and the beginning of a new era when a newly imperial Rome would rise above all other cities in the empire (Favro 1996:3-4). The city was 'rebuilt' with new building projects running alongside the restoration of buildings neglected during the civil war (Scarre 1995b:20). Egypt as a recently conquered wealth province presented Augustus with an opportunity to demonstrate the advantages of having an emperor as ruler whilst control of Alexandria, seen by contemporaries as a major Hellenistic capital, meant Rome could establish its position as the new military, political and cultural power in the eastern Mediterranean.

The reign of Augustus (27 BC-AD 14) founded the first imperial Roman dynasty. He was followed by his adopted son Tiberius (AD 14-37) before the title of emperor

passed to three further family members - Caligula (AD 37-41), Claudius (AD 41-54) and Nero (AD 54-68). The emperor Caligula was the other member of the Julio-Claudian dynasty to appropriate obelisks (3, 4 and 5). When Caligula came to the throne, imperial rule had been established for over 60 years and he took power following two lengthy and successful reigns by family members. By this time the notion of inherited family rule had become part of the political iconography of the imperial regime (Cassius Dio 59.1; Suetonius *Caligula* 14-15) although there were often several family members manoeuvring to gain the position of nominated heir and plots, both political and personal, by one branch of the imperial family against another were common. I would suggest that to a large extent Caligula's motivation for erecting obelisk 3 was associated with the process of acquiring and maintaining imperial rule. Notably, this appropriation occurred during the first year of his rule and is discussed in further detail in the producer chapter.

6.3 Egypt becomes Roman

The fourteen obelisks which form the core data set of this research were either fully worked pharaonic monuments or newly commissioned Roman pieces from the Aswan quarries in Egypt. Aspects of ancient Egypt's culture contributed to the social world and audience reception of these cultural objects, while the country's relationship with Rome provided the opportunity for Roman appropriation. The first appropriation of obelisks out of Egypt took place under the Roman ruler who had made Egypt part of the empire and this change in status formed a crucial aspect of the background to these transfers.

Formal political relations between the Roman state and the kingdom of Egypt had been in place since the Republican period when Ptolemy Philadelphus sent a diplomatic embassy to Rome (Witt 1971:70). As Rome's territory expanded, Egypt fell more directly into its sphere of influence until the declaration by the Roman envoy Gaius Popillius Laenas in 168 BC that the Seleucid king Antiochus IV Epiphanes should withdraw from Egypt (Livy 45.12) meant that the country became in effect a Roman protectorate (Herklotz 2012:11; Meyboom 1995:85). Roman troops were stationed in Egypt from 55 BC (Diodorus Siculus 1.83) and after the fall of Cleopatra VII they became an occupation force as control of the country passed to

Rome. As the political situation stabilised the garrison was reduced, until by AD 23 it consisted of two legions based just outside Alexandria (Alston 1995:23).

The initial transfer of political power from Egypt to Rome in 30 BC occurred as the Roman political system was itself changing. The Senate, anxious to demonstrate to the new imperial authorities that it did not pose a threat, passed a decree which made the date of Augustus's entry into Alexandria a public holiday and Egypt was formally ceded to Augustus's personal control as part of the constitutional settlement of 27 BC (Trimble 2007:45). Augustus created a special status for the country which was subject to direct rule by the emperor rather than the Senate (Bowman 1986:37-38). Senators were forbidden from entering Egypt; a prohibition which extended to members of the imperial family. Thus, when Germanicus, nephew and adopted heir of Tiberius, visited Egypt in AD 19 he incurred censure from the emperor (Tacitus *Annals* Book 2.59). Given Tiberius's fears that Germanicus might attempt to take imperial power for himself (Cassius Dio 57.5, 13; Suetonius *Tiberius* 25) and knowing that Egypt had previously afforded Antony a power base as he sought to gain control of Rome, it would appear that Egypt at this time remained a potent personal symbol of imperial authority.

Egypt was a prosperous province. Its export wealth was largely agricultural (Peacock 2000:428) and Egyptian grain was exported to Rome. In addition, the country produced papyrus, glass and minor arts exported via Alexandria (Bowman 1986:90, 219; Gibbs 2012:40; Haas 1997:21). The topos of Egypt's 'fertility' is something I will return to when I look at some of the transfer vehicles operating in this period. The Romans exploited Egypt's mineral and stone resources and opened up at least twenty-one new quarries in the eastern desert (Jackson 2001:35). Most of the stone from these quarries was exported to Rome where the granodiorite and porphyry were used to adorn public and imperial venues (Jackson 2001:30-31; Maxfield 2011:165). Stone from the long established quarry complex at Aswan was taken down the river Nile to Alexandria for export across the Mediterranean (Bowman 1986:40-42; Haas 1997:36; Peacock 2000:430). This quarry was the source for the majority of the obelisks produced under the pharaohs and the post-pharaonic obelisks commissioned by the emperors, including all fourteen

monuments in the core data set. The relationship between appropriating existing monuments and commissioning 'new' obelisks is something I return to later.

6.4 Transfer vehicles

Crucial to the formation of the social world horizon of assumptions about Egypt and obelisks are the transfer vehicles which moved information about Egypt to Rome and later maintained or modified existing assumptions about the country. Consideration of the transfer vehicles operating during the early imperial period, and the content they carried, can help us understand the reasons why a producer selected the Egyptian style and how the audience might read it. Within the discussion I have grouped the key transfer vehicles under two headings: text and image. Each mode offers a platform for information to be transferred from Egypt into the Roman social world. In combination, this information shapes public understanding of Egypt and feeds the horizon of assumptions about Egypt's history, culture and architecture.

6.4.1 Texts

Contemporary texts offer primary evidence of Roman interpretative horizons. The aspects of Egypt and obelisks covered help to determine the level of understanding around these two topics within the Roman social world. At the same time, texts offer information about the original role of obelisks which could be appropriated as part of their Roman use. Both Egypt and obelisks occur as textual topoi in classical writing. As well as considering the specific contexts for any mention of Egypt/obelisks and the image of both suggested by the writer, I will also consider the extent to which Egypt/obelisks were used as a narrative device to establish/demonstrate a concept, such as the ability of Rome to acquire material wealth. For the early imperial period the works of Strabo and Pliny were two core texts carrying information about Egypt/obelisks. In contrast, the famous text of Ammianus Marcellinus which also includes information about obelisks in Rome was not written until the fourth century AD and therefore becomes relevant to the Roman horizon of assumptions only during the late imperial period. Individual texts will be introduced at the point when they start to inform the horizon of assumptions and will continue to form part of the discussion where they remain relevant in later periods.

Roman perception of Egypt in the early imperial period did not emerge in isolation but rather built on existing approaches to the land and its culture. A prime example is the Greek historian Diodorus Siculus who spent time in Egypt around 60-56 BC and wrote about the country in his 40 volume *Bibliotheca Historica* (Library of History) of which books 1-5 and 11-20 survive. Although his account deals with historical events up to around 60 BC, the latest revisions to the text and final publication are thought to have occurred around 30 BC (Rubincam 1998b:229). Thus his work became available just as Egypt became part of the Roman empire. Within his work particular themes emerge, such as the role of animal iconography in the Egyptian belief system (1.86), which continued as points of interest for later writers and the manner in which he records his thoughts are clearly intended to develop a very specific understanding of Egypt among his readers.

It is important to note that the *Bibliotheca Historica*, in common with other classical texts, drew on a number of existing literary sources. Identification of the sources used by different classical authors and the degree of replication between works is a point of on-going debate. Burton (1972:1-20) and Rubincam (1998a:67-87) have proposed a range of probable sources for Diodorus Siculus including the work of earlier Greek, and possibly Egyptian, writers together with the author's personal observations. Within this research I will approach written texts as a way to assess what information about, and attitudes towards, Egypt they are feeding into the horizon of assumptions. Any bias within this information helps us to understand the conceptual framework held by producer and audience. As Sacks (1990:5) points out whilst acknowledging the debt Diodorus Siculus owed to previous sources, his work clearly demonstrates the prevalent political and intellectual attitude of the late Hellenistic world.

Book 1 of *Bibliotheca Historica* contained Diodorus Siculus's account of Egypt. It aimed to familiarise the reader with the material culture of the country and clearly ascribes it economic, aesthetic and intellectual value. Within his commentary, a number of key themes are identifiable which I believe are useful in helping us to understand the appropriation of obelisks, and which are particularly pertinent to understanding how Roman producers and audiences might have responded to

Egyptian obelisks. Firstly, Diodorus Siculus talks about the economic value of Egypt and points in particular to the importance of the Nile which he says 'surpasses all the rivers of the inhabited world in its benefactions to mankind' (1.36). This interest in the economic aspects of the Nile Valley is reflected by other classical writers, such as Tibullus (*Elegies* 1.7) who focused on the agricultural fertility and wealth of the country, and it developed into an established viewpoint whereby Romans perceived Egypt as an economic asset captured for the benefit of the empire and the capital city in particular.

Secondly, Diodorus Siculus emphasises the Hellenistic heritage of Egypt and proposes that 'The city [Alexandria] in general has grown so much in later times that many reckon it to be the first city of the civilised world, and it is certainly far ahead of all the rest in elegance and extent and riches and luxury'(1.52.6). In addition, he uses the apocryphal tradition of Greeks studying under Egyptian masters to suggest that Egyptian customs and learning are worthy of consideration before listing those Greeks whom the Romans should seek to emulate including Orpheus, Homer, Solon, Plato, Pythagoras and Eudoxus and concluding that 'all the things admired among the Greeks were transferred from Egypt'(1.96).

This view of Egypt as a country with an intellectual history equal to that of other Hellenistic cultures is in contrast to the view of Egypt as an 'oriental' culture liable to debase the Roman nature. However, looking closer it emerges that the reverence accorded to 'ancient Egypt' in the text is not extended to 'Ptolemaic Egypt'. In particular Diodorus Siculus seeks to discredit any claim by the Egyptians that they are an imperial, rather than merely royal, power (1.29). This emphasis on the insular, royal nature of Egyptian authority was a recurring theme in Roman reflections on the Ptolemaic state. Furthermore the recent role of Ptolemaic Egypt as a theatre for both Roman civil war and Roman military expansion was critical to Roman perceptions of Egypt in the early imperial period and formed the immediate historical background to the arrival of the first obelisks in Rome. Bowman (1986:34-35) refers to the information circulated between 35 and 30 BC as a propaganda war whereby Augustus sought to discredit his political rivals. Such material would have generated a negative view amongst the Roman public and while military conflict led

to Augustus's eventual victory over Cleopatra and Anthony in 30 BC, a hostile attitude towards Egypt remained.

More worrying to the Roman mind was the prospect offered by Cassius Dio (50.5) of a Rome assimilated by Egypt when he described how Antony had posed with Cleopatra for paintings and statues in the guise of Osiris and Isis. It was an attitude which was to persist across the first century AD. When Lucan described Egypt in his work *Civil War* (Book 10) he emphasised the wiles of Cleopatra. Indeed, most commentators on the conflict, including Virgil, Horace and Propertius, focused their dislike on Cleopatra - her political and military aspirations together with her religious ambition to be seen as the living Isis (Hardie 1998:85; Maehler 2003:207-210). Appropriating obelisks offered a way to demonstrate the superiority of Rome over the thoroughly un-Roman menace of Egypt and the neutralisation of this threat by the assimilation of Egyptian material culture into the Roman landscape. This idea was strengthened by the modifications made when obelisks were erected in Rome. Thus, obelisks 1 and 2 were raised on pedestals inscribed with Latin text, practices which drew on existing Roman traditions. In a more literal sense the bronze fittings added to the apex of each obelisk could demonstrate an Egypt subordinate to, indeed topped by, the Roman world. The nature and intent of these modifications will be explored in greater detail in the producer and audience chapters.

The process of appropriation is spoken of by Diodorus Siculus who noted that it was part of an established response to Egypt's culture, citing the Greek appropriation of Egyptian heroes and gods (1.23). In addition, Diodorus Siculus provides information on the very monuments which feature so prominently in the early imperial response to Egypt – the obelisk. The obelisk had been described as a ritual monument from Herodotus (2.111.1-4) onwards. Diodorus Siculus also places it in a sacred context when he records that obelisks stood at Thebes in conjunction with beautiful, vast and wealthy temples (1.46); a remark which again pays a compliment to the aesthetic and economic power of Egypt. Pliny (36.14) later recorded that obelisks were sacred to the sun and that the tapered shape of the monument sought to replicate a ray of sun, an explanation which continued into the fourth century AD (Ammianus Marcellinus 17.4.7). The monument's origins were

often ascribed to mythical events. Herodotus (2.111.1-4) wrote that the pharaoh Pheros dedicated two obelisks to the sun in thanks for his recovery from blindness while Pliny (36.14) recorded that the pharaoh Mesphres 'who reigned in the City of the Sun' erected an obelisk in response to a dream.

The work of Diodorus Siculus took the Roman reader up to the time when Rome emerged as an imperial power extending and consolidating its presence in the eastern Mediterranean. This change is reflected in texts written after Egypt lost its status as an independent kingdom and became a Roman province. The shift can be seen in the work of the natural historian Pliny (AD 23-79) whose encyclopedic *Natural History* has been described by Carey (2000:1, 2006:2, 9) as an attempt to 'catalogue' the Roman empire using natural materials as a device. Pliny's work operates as a key transfer vehicle providing information to the Roman reader on Egypt and obelisks. In addition, Pliny covers the arrival of the first obelisks in Rome; information which feeds into Roman assumptions about these monuments and specifically establishes a framework for how these newly arrived monuments are to be seen by the Roman audience as they start to appear in the city's urban landscape.

After an introduction to their form, Pliny presents a list of obelisks commissioned by Egyptian pharaohs, Ptolemaic monarchs, and Roman emperors. In one sense, his report is comprehensive, discussing all the tall examples on view in the Rome of his day. In another sense, it is selective. Pliny lists, of those still standing in Egypt, only the obelisks particularly notable to him because of their provenance, their size (the largest) or their symbolic relationship with kingship. In relation to those which stood in Rome the tone of his narrative is instructive as it follows the journey of the monuments beginning in Heliopolis, travelling down river to Alexandria and finally transferring across the sea to Rome. In tracing this journey, Pliny moves the obelisks forward through time and space from their ancient and remote origins in Egypt to their location and use in present-day Rome.

Throughout his text, Pliny treats obelisks as monuments that put kingship on display, even acting as a display of competition among kings. In addition, Pliny asks his readers to see obelisks as symbols of imperial undertaking, the end products of a

technical process that required command of great forces and historical circumstances. To Swetnam-Burland's mind (2010:142) Pliny casts both the initial erection of an obelisk and its later transplant as 'opera, great works'; one by ancient Egypt, the other by Rome. However, looking closely at Pliny's text a subtle elevation of one act over the other emerges. For example, during his discussion of the pharaoh Rameses' work at Heliopolis, Pliny (36.14.66; 36.16.67) deems the moving of an obelisk to be an act greater than its quarrying. By casting emphasis on the act of moving and raising an obelisk within his discussion of pharaonic examples, Pliny is able to transfer this concept to the work of Augustus, not only by the inherent suggestion of Augustus as successor to the office of pharaoh but also to bolster the Roman act of moving obelisks from Egypt to Rome. If Augustus cannot claim credit for the initial manufacture of obelisks 1 and 2, Pliny's narrative suggests to the reader that this is of little matter compared to the task of transporting such monuments to Rome.

Returning to the information available to the Roman audience about the life of an obelisk in Egypt, the sacred complex at Heliopolis (source site for obelisks 1 and 2 and at least four of the other obelisks moved to Rome before AD 100) was mentioned by both Greek and Roman writers including Ptolemy (4.5.54), Strabo (17.1.29) and Pliny (5.11, 36.14). In classical texts the site is presented as a traditional centre for the worship of the sun gods (Strabo 17.1.27; Pliny 36.14). The solar attributes of the obelisk was a theme appropriated by Augustus and is discussed in greater depth in the producer chapter. In addition, the relationship between obelisks and circuses (a Roman structure which carried its own solar association) will become part of the discussion around how a Roman audience might have understood these monuments.

Strabo (17.1.29, 17.8.46) says that Heliopolis was also considered a centre of knowledge about the calendar and talks about temple priests holding knowledge about time when he describes Thebes, another key centre for obelisks in Egypt. Obelisks from Heliopolis and Thebes were thus endowed with age, solar association and temporal knowledge by classical writers and offered longevity as one of pharaonic Egypt's acknowledged assets (Diodorus Siculus 1.44). Diodorus Siculus (1.50.1-2) even notes that the Egyptians claimed to be the earliest people. Thus,

when Pliny (36.15) speaks of obelisk 1 casting a shadow to mark time either side of the winter solstice, as well as explaining the function of this new monument to the reader, he also suggests how the obelisk now stores and measures time (present and future) for the people of Rome. The role of time in stable government is referenced in the Latin inscription (Appendix A:1) added to obelisks 1 and 2, which records Augustus as 'imperator for the 12th time, consul for the 11th time, holder of the tribunician power for the 14th time'. This announcement of Augustus's offices is standard in Roman inscriptions and on coins. Additionally, official documents were dated with the names of consuls, of municipal magistrates or the successive numbered grants of tribunician power which served as regnal years for the early emperors (Woolf 1996:29). By attaching this formula to an obelisk, Augustus can locate his 'new' imperial role in the extended time frame offered by ancient Egypt and suggest to the audience that the obelisks are now counting time for the emperor.

The story of Egypt as a Roman province is included in the work of the classical geographer Strabo. Strabo journeyed to Egypt in the mid-20s BC in the company of the prefect Aelius Gallus and possibly lived there around 25-19 BC (Clarke 1999:193; Delia 1988:278). His description of the people and places of Egypt was published in *Geography*. The work covers the period 31-7 BC with a gap from 6 BC to AD 14, probably an interval after first publication in 7 BC, before a second edition in AD 24 (Dueck 2000:145-146). His account of Egypt takes the reader from the city of Alexandria, through the Delta region, south along the Nile to Philea and on into Ethiopia. Informed by a combination of direct observation and received knowledge, the text includes information on social customs, the role of the Nile and its flood in the country's agriculture, administrative information on nomes and cities, and forms of worship. Pharaonic Egypt is presented as impressive yet firmly located in the past and Strabo (17.1.12-13) casts imperial Rome as the natural and superior successor to the Ptolemaic dynasty which Trimble (2007:35) suggests imbues the text with a sense of 'evolutionary time'. Alongside the notion of Rome as the recipient of resources and wealth from other regions, Strabo makes frequent mention of cultural assets making the same journey. Examples include the statue of Hercules moved from Tarentum (a former Greek colony on the Italian peninsula) to the Capitol in Rome (6.3.1) and *The Fallen Lion* painting taken by Agrippa from

Lampsacus to Rome (13.1.19). Strabo also writes about cultural acquisition as part of the conquest of a territory, for example, the removal of Apellicon's library of Aristotelian works by Sulla following the capture of Athens (13.1.54). He offers clear justification for such acts when he comments that removing the *Labours of Hercules* from Acarnania saved it from neglect (10.2.21).

Strabo's viewpoint emphasises the centrality of the Mediterranean within the inhabited world (Clarke 1999:206). His account of Egypt is presented in a manner which takes the reader from Alexandria up the Nile away from Rome. In contrast, obelisks make the same journey in reverse as they travel from Egypt to the heart of the Roman world; a journey which reflects Strabo's portrayal of Rome as a recipient of resources. The movement of the obelisks is also framed by the accounts of other cultural objects which made the same journey (6.3.1, 13.1.19) and the assumption that this is part and parcel of territorial conquest (10.2.21, 13.1.54). Thus, the journey of obelisks 1 and 2 serves to update the notion of Rome as the home of the known world's cultural assets, arriving as they do on the orders of the very emperor who made Egypt part of the empire. The justification for such an act having already been suggested by Strabo (8.17.27) within the picture he presents earlier in the text of a decaying Heliopolis already destroyed by the Persians which underscores the notion of Rome 'curating' Egypt's heritage as the new custodian of the land. At the same time Strabo (17.8.46) is careful to ensure that the obelisks are seen as symbols of the might of the Egyptian empire. He places this might in the past and locates the obelisks themselves 'among the tombs' yet makes it clear to the reader that the inscriptions on these monuments speak to the wealth, military might and dominion of the former kings of Egypt. If obelisks are to be appropriated back to the heart of the Roman empire then Strabo's text seeks to establish this as a natural imperial process which bolsters the self-image of Rome as an imperial power. At the same time he makes the monuments themselves worth the effort of such acquisition.

6.4.2 Images

Alongside a general interest in Egypt, many Roman texts show a specific interest in the river Nile. Cassius Dio (76:13), for example, whilst stating that he has no intention of writing about Egypt is eager to record information he has uncovered

about the source of the Nile. It is an interest mirrored in Roman images of the country and in particular Nilotic scenes. These artistic landscapes inspired by the Nile occurred across the Roman world from the late second century BC into late antiquity (Hachlili 2009:108; Meyboom and Versluys 2007:171; Polański 2009:172; Walker 2003:200). The earliest Roman examples were part of an established artistic tradition and included Hellenistic hybrid elements. Roman scenes usually showed the Nile during the annual flood; an event seen as the key to Egyptian agricultural prosperity. The scenes were produced in a variety of formats including carved stone and terracotta reliefs, wall paintings and mosaics.

Little mosaic floor work, and no Nilotic scenes, survives from late Republican Rome but nearby examples, such as the Nilotic floor mosaic at Palestrina (35 km east of Rome), probably reflect pieces created for the capital's urban villas in this period (Dunbabin 1999:49; Meyboom 1995:84). Modern debate continues over the exact date of the Palestrina mosaic with suggestions ranging between 175 and 20 BC (Dunbabin 1999:49; King 2002:430; Schrijvers 2007:226; Versluys 2002:28), though the trend in recent works has been towards a later date. If so, the existence of a major Nilotic mosaic at a time when Egypt was experiencing a shift from being part of Rome's sphere of influence to direct Roman control illuminates existing perceptions of the country as the first obelisks arrived in Rome.

The Palestrina mosaic (figure 6.1) is an important piece in the process of transferring information from Egypt to Rome since it is indicative of the type of Nilotic scene and style of representation common at this time. The imagery is generally agreed to have originated in Alexandria (Meyboom 1995:86; Versluys 2002:14) and is thus an example of a transfer vehicle which develops in Egypt and is later exported to Rome. The fusion of Hellenistic and Egyptian styles reflects a heritage within Egypt itself of cultural phenomena from outside the Nile Valley (a subject which falls outside the scope of this research; see Schneider (2003) for an overview). The vision embedded in the mosaic of an organised, civilised Egypt as part of the Mediterranean world makes it particularly relevant for appropriation by a Roman world which sought to embrace such territories within its growing empire.



Figure 6.1 Palestrina Nile mosaic (Museo Nazionale Prenestino, Palazzo Barberini Colonna, Palestrina, Italy)

The Palestrina mosaic (6.5m by 5.3m) offers a panoramic view of the Nile as it flows from the 'wild' environment of Ethiopia towards an 'ordered' Mediterranean foreground (Moffitt 1997:228). Préaux (1971:340) emphasises the 'escapist' nature of the scenery, but imagery does not need to be accurate in order to provoke a sense of place for the viewer. Indeed, the very nature of the mosaic's created landscape suggests how the scene should be read based on the central theme of the festival associated with the annual flooding of the Nile shown in the lower part of the mosaic (Walker 2003:202). The landscape is shown as a fertile land with abundant water, wildlife and vegetation and emphasises the ability of Egypt to produce grain as noted by Pliny (18.21) and others. The imperial conquest of this land meant that access to its economic wealth, especially its grain harvest, could be claimed as an act of acquisition by the emperor on behalf of the people. Augustus and the emperors who followed him would have been well aware that an imperial power which could guarantee a supply of bread was sure to be popular. As we have seen in the text of writers such as Strabo, the concept of Rome as the central beneficiary of an imperial hinterland was an established topos and the imagery of a fertile Nile helped to confirm one of the main benefits for Rome in taking control of the region.

Obelisks are shown in the mosaic, standing near a Greek style temple (figure 6.2). This suggests an association between obelisks and religion which continued to be acknowledged by the Romans as they coupled obelisks with solar gods (1, 2, 11) and religious structures (6a, 6b, 7, 8). Additionally, the image of obelisks next to a Greek style temple suggests a way in which religious architecture can co-exist in a manner established in the Hellenistic world, particularly since obelisks are not shown next to the pylon fronted Egyptian-style temple on the far right of the scene. The Nilotic obelisks are shown starting on bases in a manner similar to how they may have been presented at Roman Hellenistic temple sites in Alexandria (for example obelisks 14 and 15 at the Caesareum) and in exactly the same manner in which the earliest examples to arrive in Rome were staged.



Figure 6.2 Detail from the Palestrina Nile mosaic showing obelisks (Museo Nazionale Prenestino, Palazzo Barberini Colonna, Palestrina, Italy)

It is difficult to say how far reaching these transfer vehicles were in their original forms. The works of the classical authors were aimed at an educated audience as were the Nilotic mosaics chosen by the elite to adorn their villas. As such they can be seen to feed directly into the horizon of assumptions about Egypt held by the upper echelons of Roman society. An argument could be made for a wider audience in relation to items such as a domestic Nilotic mosaic; potentially viewed by all members of the household beyond the core family. However, greater audience diversity is better accessed by drawing in small, portable objects such as lamps. An example is a small pottery lamp (figure 6.3) with an Egyptianizing scene on the handle. At the centre of the scene is an obelisk, with hieroglyphs including a royal

cartouche, flanked by two Egyptian deities (Seshat, goddess of writing and the recording of history, and Harpocrates). The fabric and mass production of such pieces, suggests an inexpensive domestic object. A similar image of an obelisk with hieroglyphs occurs on a small flask (figure 6.4). This time the material and method of production (hand-cut cameo glass) suggest an object unlikely to be owned as widely as the lamp. In both cases, however, the objects have the potential to operate as transfer vehicles drawing information about Egyptian obelisks into Roman society and also, especially given their date (AD 40-70 and 25 BC-AD 25 respectively), to act as transfer vehicles circulating a concept of Egypt as obelisks 1-5 arrive in the city's landscape.



Figure 6.3 Pottery lamp with an Egyptianizing scene, AD 40-90 (British Museum, G&R 1836,0224.455 Lamp Q1021)



Figure 6.4 Cameo glass flask, 25 BC-AD 25 (J. Paul Getty Museum, inv. 85.AF.84)

I suggest that when one draws out the themes which emerge in these transfer vehicles – the all-conquering might of the Roman empire, the superiority of Roman ways balanced by appreciation of the antiquity of Egyptian civilisation and the inherent abundance offered by the fertile Nile Valley – it is possible to conceive of a broad framework shared by Roman society as to how Egypt could, or indeed should, be understood. In addition, sections of descriptive text and artistic images offer information on the form of Egyptian material culture. In the next two chapters I will consider how we might understand producer motivation in relation to the appropriation of obelisks from Egypt to Rome and how the audience in Rome might have responded to these Egyptian monuments once they stood as part of the local urban landscape. As part of these discussions I will refer back to the social world context presented here as well as looking at how further text and imagery emerged in response to the obelisks to create a new set of transfer vehicles which circulated information within Roman society and helped to inform future appropriations.

6.5 Summary

As the first Egyptian obelisks arrived in Rome, the city was undergoing a transformation from a republican to an imperial political system with associated changes to the offices of authority within the government. At the same time, the kingdom of Egypt, once an ally of late Republican Rome, found itself at the centre of the civil war between Mark Antony and Augustus before the defeat of the former and the death of Cleopatra VII saw the country become a province of the Roman empire. Throughout this time information about Egypt was carried to Rome via graphic and text based transfer vehicles which helped to inform the Roman horizon of assumptions in relation to the first obelisks to arrive in the city under Augustus.

Chapter 7: Producers

7.1 Introduction

The producer of a cultural object is the person or persons responsible for selecting and then presenting the object to the audience. In relation to my core data set, the producer in each case was the reigning emperor. Egyptianizing architecture was not however an automatic action on the part of an emperor. Tiberius, for example, appears not to have removed any artefacts from Egypt (Sorek 2010:59) and banned the practice of Egyptian rites in Rome before deporting the priests of the Egyptian cults to Sardinia in AD 19 (Suetonius *Tiberius* 36). Other emperors varied in the degree to which they utilized the style; Domitian, for example, is known to have erected at least six obelisks in Rome. In this chapter I will consider how producer motivation can be understood in terms of issues around the imperial office and the personal lives of the two holders of this office responsible for appropriating obelisk in the early imperial period; Augustus and Caligula respectively.

7.2 Producers

The producers in this case-study are the emperors Augustus and Caligula who were responsible for raising at least five obelisks in Rome. The producer section of the research offers an opportunity to consider the motivation which prompted the appropriation of a specific cultural object. As part of this discussion I will also consider whether there are aspects of the contemporary social world which help to explain a producer's decision to appropriate from pharaonic Egypt in general and in the form of an obelisk in particular. Another interesting point for consideration is the motivation of a producer in terms of their status as an emperor and in terms of their own personal history and whether a process of internal appropriation can be seen to develop as emperors begin to draw on the Egyptianizing activities of their predecessors.

7.2.1 Augustus

In modern sources Augustus is also referred to as Octavius and Octavian; it being usual to use the name Octavius when referring to events between 63 and 44 BC; Octavian (or Octavianus) when referring to events between 44 and 27 BC and

Augustus when referring to events after 27 BC. For ease, I refer to him as Augustus throughout this study. Augustus was the first Roman ruler to appropriate obelisks - from his initial movement of these monuments within Egypt to his transfer of two obelisks from Egypt to Rome in 10 BC. At the time Strabo (17.1.27) wrote that obelisk 2 was brought to Rome as a symbol of the conquest of Egypt and its assimilation into the Roman empire; an explanation which has influenced many modern works in which obelisks 1 and 2 are frequently referred to as monuments of 'annexation' (Curran et al. 2009:37; Habachi 1977:119; Iversen 1968:65, 142; Sorek 2010:45-46).

Egypt certainly played an important role in Augustus's path to power, and his success in the country represented a dual victory over the Ptolemaic monarchy and his Roman political rival, Mark Antony. The conquest of Egypt occurred simultaneously with the emergence of imperial rule in Rome and the former offered an opportunity to demonstrate the authority and advantages of the latter. What Augustus did with Egypt would speak not only to his role as the ruler who gave Rome the gift of a new territory, but also his role as the ruler of a Roman people who were now citizens of an imperial state. Appropriation of obelisks formed part of this strategy and I will argue that Augustus's motivation for raising obelisks 1 and 2 in Rome combined political, religious and economic considerations in an attempt to mark not only how his reign had begun but also how it was going to evolve.

The Roman authorities had initially sought to extend their power in the eastern Mediterranean through diplomacy (Lampela 1998:56), but this process was derailed when Egypt emerged as a theatre of Roman civil war during the late first century BC. The exercise of military power in the region continued in the immediate aftermath of Augustus's victory and the new province was initially heavily garrisoned (Keppie1984:158). Material culture offered an alternative way to demonstrate and confirm the new relationship between Rome and Egypt. Thus, appropriation of Egyptian objects and the Egyptian style offered a peaceful mechanism for Augustus to signal that Roman authorities now exercised the power previously held by the pharaohs not only in Egypt, as seen in his manipulation of material culture and urban landscapes in Alexandria, but also at home in Rome.

Obelisks 1 and 2 both came from Heliopolis. Writing three centuries later, Ammianus Marcellinus (17.4) suggested that Augustus decided to acquire objects from this location due to his fear of upsetting the Egyptians by removing objects from an extant sanctuary. Interestingly, while accounts from nearer the time confirm the fact that, by the early imperial period, Heliopolis no longer functioned as an active cult centre they do not link this to the action taken by Augustus. When Strabo (17.1.27) travelled in Egypt around 25 BC he found the site deserted. He commented that the ancient temple had, on the orders of the Persian king Cambyses, been badly damaged by force and fire, noting that the temple obelisks had also suffered with several now lying on the ground. Pliny (36.14) similarly described Heliopolis as a ruin, badly affected by the Persian conquest of 525 BC.

Whilst these accounts confirm that, from a theological point of view, removal of monuments from Heliopolis may have been seen as less of an intrusion than appropriating from an active sacred site, the idea of acquiring objects from such a site fitted the notion discussed above of the Romans 'rescuing' and 'conserving' the treasures of another culture. I would also suggest that appropriation from Heliopolis was motivated by logistical considerations since an abandoned site would enable the work of removing large monuments to take place without interruption. Indeed, the Ptolemies had already moved material from this sanctuary to Alexandria (Stanwick 2002:19) and Strabo (17.1.27) comments that some of the obelisks formerly raised at the sanctuary now stood at Thebes though he provides no further information about when this transfer took place. This pharaonic interaction not only established a precedent for appropriating from the sanctuary but indicates that the infrastructure for such movement was in all likelihood already in place locally.

On arrival in Rome, obelisks 1 and 2 were raised in spaces which formed part of the public landscape of the city. As part of this process a number of modifications were made to both obelisks. These modifications meant that the existing understanding of an obelisk, as established through the horizon of assumptions, could be emphasised, augmented or adjusted to best suit the immediate needs of the Roman producer. The nature of these modifications offers one way to explore

possible producer motivation for selecting an obelisk as a cultural object worth appropriating into a particular space at a particular time.

A key modification to these, and later examples, was the addition of a Latin inscription. In the case of obelisks 1 and 2 an identical inscription was added to the base of each. In this inscription Augustus was titled 'Caesar, emperor, son of the deified Julius Augustus' (Appendix A:1, 2). The wording, which attributes divine status to a previous ruler and suggests the concept of inherited rule within the new imperial office, reflected actual events whereby Augustus, a great-nephew of Julius Caesar, was formally adopted as his heir in 44 BC. Two years later, Julius Caesar was deified and Augustus assumed the title of 'Gaius Julius Caesar Divi filius Imperator' (Scarre 1995a:17). Thus, in one phrase, Augustus takes the opportunity to inform the Roman people that his authority to rule is inherited and that this office has acquired divine qualities, in the form of a posthumous 'upgrade'. Although the wording is not unique to obelisk inscriptions and the concept of the divine emperor was being explored in literature of the time, for example when Virgil (*Georgics* 1.24-42) refers to Augustus as a future god, it is interesting to consider why Augustus chose to include this message on an item of material culture appropriated from outside Rome which was associated with royal rule (Diodorus Siculus 1.46) and whether by doing so he hoped to address particular issues in the minds of those he sought to rule.

The first of these issues was the evolution of the office of emperor. Augustus in holding imperial authority demonstrated a clear break with the former republican nature of Roman government. One emerging aspect of this new imperial rule was the role played by family and the associated notion of an inherited right to rule. Severy (2003:96) believes that the year 17 BC marked a change in the family politics of the first emperor. She argues that although Augustus was not seeking at this stage to establish a dynasty, he deliberately drew on aspects of family such as marriage, his position as head of the family and the public role played by family members to consolidate his imperial position. Similarly, Trimble (2007:28) believes that Augustus introduced the role of family into imperial rule as he sought to move away from the overwhelmingly adult male identity of Republican rule. From around

13 BC this strategy began to be manifest in material culture, such as coins and public buildings which honoured individual members of the imperial family, and the notion of an imperial dynasty started to emerge. Obelisks 1 and 2 entered the Roman landscape just as this shift was taking place; one to stand on the Campus Martius in association with Augustus's family mausoleum and both carrying inscriptions which highlighted the family nature of the new imperial order. So what did Augustus hope to achieve by linking the idea of inherited rule in Rome with monuments which were themselves closely associated with a royal model of government under the pharaohs?

Ancient Egyptian rule was dynastic in nature, with royal power passing to members of the same familial group or seized by powerful individuals who sought to establish their own dynasty. In his discussion of the last dynasty to rule Egypt, Strabo (17.1), emphasised that succession between the Ptolemaic pharaohs was determined by a close family relationship and the foundation of the dynasty by Ptolemy, a general who served Alexander, was also noted. It was a situation which foreshadowed future events in Rome but, at the end of the first century BC, it was not necessarily a model acceptable to the Roman people who had the succession of the Republic over the ancient kings of Rome (Livy 1.59) as part of their history. There was also contemporary propaganda against Antony which played on his position in the Egyptian royal hierarchy and his personal relationship with Cleopatra VII. Such a situation, urges a return to the contemporary texts which describe and judge the rule of the pharaohs to see how the appropriation of their material culture served Augustus as he sought to establish imperial rule, and nurture the idea of rule by the individual (the emperor) rather than rule by the collective (the Senate).

Closer examination of Strabo's text reveals that his main criticism of the Ptolemies relates not to their royal status but to their decadent lifestyle and rule by 'drunken violence'; both of which he claims Augustus ended by his defeat of Antony and Cleopatra (17.11). Strabo continues by explaining that Egypt is now a province ruled by 'prudent men' (17.12). Interestingly, he notes that the rank of prefect in Egypt is equivalent to king and that it is re-organisation by the Romans rather than any change to the traditional offices which has ensured good rule in the province; implying that it is the qualities of the office holder, not the office itself,

which ensures sound government. Similarly, the account of Egyptian history given by Diodorus Siculus on the whole speaks well of the 'native' kings (1.45-68).

Augustus made use of the dichotomy between the notion of a corrupt contemporary Egypt and a favourable view of the pre-Ptolemaic pharaohs as he selected monuments from the new province to demonstrate the recent Roman victory to the east and simultaneously associate the new political order with an established tradition. It is a strategy noted by Trimble (2007:32-34) who comments that control over Egypt gave the Romans access to physical space and an established historical heritage. Gregory (2012:23) also comments that placing monuments such as obelisks in the Roman architectural landscape enabled Augustus to draw on the idea of an authority to rule which extended, via the Egyptian royal line, far back in time. Interestingly, the first two obelisks in Rome came not from the northern Delta region of Egypt, but were drawn from further south in the province. By appropriating from Heliopolis, Augustus drew on a location much removed from Hellenistic Alexandria or the recent past of the Ptolemaic era. It is a selection understood by the audience through written accounts, Pliny (36.14) for example specifically noting the two ancient pharaohs responsible for commissioning each of the obelisks appropriated by Augustus. The ability of imperial Rome to reach far beyond its own history and geography and how this was woven into the audience's horizon of assumptions will be explored in greater detail in the audience chapter.

The notion of Rome as a *superior* successor, rather than a fellow authority, is driven home by the very wording imposed on the newly formed body (Roman base and finial together with the Egyptian shaft) of the appropriated obelisk. Swetnam-Burland (2010:149) believes that the phrase 'Egypt has been brought under the power of the Roman people' inscribed on the bases of obelisks 1 and 2 goes beyond praising military victory to 'express an idiom signifying the co-option of territories as new provinces brought within the sphere of Roman control'. As such the obelisks act as totems, symbols of Egypt, taken from their former location, assimilated into a new Roman landscape and subjugated by the Latin inscription applied to them as they are raised in that landscape. This inscription speaks in no uncertain terms of the might of the Roman state. In particular Swetnam-Burland (2010:135) believes that

the inclusion of the Latin word *redactus* implies the 'irrevocable co-option of one region by another'. In addition, the text carved on the bases of obelisks 1 and 2 showcases Augustus's public honours and emphasises his office as *pontifex maximus* which he had assumed two years previously. If the obelisks are to be seen as symbols of a territory brought under the command of Rome, the 'historical' references in the inscription serve to make it clear that the obelisks enter an *established* political field as supporters, rather than being called upon to help set-up this field of authority. Fischler (1994:116) proposes that within societies, existing dominant groups develop images which speak to the relationships between those who hold power within a defined area of society and those who do not. As such, the obelisks act as monuments which help to describe and justify the power relationship between the emperor and the imperial citizens of Rome.

The granite from which obelisks 1 and 2 - and indeed obelisks 3, 4 and 5 together with the other nine twelve examples in the core data set - were cut came from the vast stone quarries near Aswan in Upper Egypt. Of particular relevance to the two obelisks moved by Augustus was the fact that the quarries were situated near a border which, during the Augustan period, became one of the most contested in the Roman empire. Historically, Ptolemaic Egypt extended to the region of the first cataract on the river Nile, with the area beyond Aswan governed jointly by the Ptolemies and the rulers of Nubia. In 25 BC, Nubian forces took advantage of the fact that the locally stationed Roman legion had recently been deployed to Arabia, and sent troops to occupy the region of the first cataract. The garrison at Syene (near Aswan) was stormed and statues of the emperor were torn down. Conflict between Meroe, the Nubian capital city, and Rome lasted until 20 BC when Augustus received an embassy from Meroe and the border was re-established beyond the first cataract (Herklotz 2012:17). Swetnam-Burland (2010:147-149) believes that this period of conflict is as relevant to our interpretation of the obelisks as Augustus's earlier triumph over Cleopatra and Antony. Certainly the most comprehensive classical account of the events (Strabo 17.53-34) makes clear the tension of the situation as the southern border of a new province was tested by an established local power.

The broader motif of the ability to draw the resources of the Roman empire from the very peripheries of this territory right back to the centre, as seen in the work of Pliny and Strabo, becomes active through the transport of material from the Aswan quarries back to the city of Rome. However, these first two obelisks, whilst made of Aswan granite, were not quarried in Roman times and did not begin their journey to Rome from the quarries of Upper Egypt. Instead they continued a journey from further up the Nile which they had started in pharaonic times. Perhaps of more direct relevance is the fact that during the military operations against Nubia the Roman army moved as far up the Nile as the fourth cataract (Herklotz 2012:17). Thus, the movement of two obelisks along the Nile through the province of Egypt can be seen as a demonstration of the ability of the Roman authorities not only to establish but also maintain a frontier; being able to move confidently on *both* sides of a border, moving as easily into the land of others to defend the border as it could move from that border back to the heartland of the empire.

The other crucial element of the Latin inscription added to obelisks 1 and 2 was the reference to the Roman solar deity Sol (Appendix A:1, 2). The religious meaning attributed to Egyptian obelisks was known to the Romans through the works of Pliny (36.14) who recorded the obelisk's association with the Egyptian solar deities and noted that the monument was shaped to resemble a ray of sun. On one level therefore, the dedication of the obelisks to the Roman Sol fitted the Roman practice of assimilating deities from other belief systems, just as they had previously done with deities from the Greek pantheon (King 2003:285). Thus, as Habachi (1977:119) and Curran et al. (2009:37) both note, the known religious nature of obelisks 1 and 2 offered Augustus an opportunity to appropriate this aspect of the monument on behalf of the Roman pantheon. The inscription proclaims the dedication of the obelisk to Sol, translating into terms easily understood by the Roman audience the original function of the obelisk as an earthly embodiment of the sun's rays. At the same time, I would suggest that this process of identifying the obelisks as sacred objects of the sun cult and partnering them with a Roman solar deity carried political meaning. As such the neutralisation/assimilation of the cosmic power of 'other' gods for the benefit of Rome became a metaphor for the ability of the Roman state to absorb the territories and authority of other more early powers into its empire.

Augustus was also able to appropriate the divine qualities of the obelisk to his own cause. Indeed the manner in which the obelisk acted as a symbol of the Egyptian sun cult rendered this monument type of particular interest to an emperor who had elevated Apollo, god of sun and light, within the Roman pantheon (Liebeschuetz 1979:82-85) and declared Apollo god of the new saeculum (Orlin 2008:245; Rehak 2009:92). The battle of Actium - the key event in the led up to Rome taking control of Egypt - was fought near a sanctuary of Apollo. After his victory Augustus enlarged this temple, dedicated a portion of the spoils to the god, instituted quinquennial games in Apollo's honour and erected a new temple to the god on the Palatine Hill in Rome (Cassius Dio 51.1.1-3; Suetonius *Augustus* 18.2). In 16 BC, coins circulated with a portrait of Augustus on one side and Apollo on the other (figure 7.1). The named god (APOLLINI) is shown standing on a low platform dressed in a stola and pouring a libation over a lit and garlanded altar. Thus a Greek solar god is shown in an act of worship, familiar in form to the Roman people, on the coin of a Roman emperor. In addition, Apollo had been given an Egyptian provenance by Strabo (17.1) who noted that the god was worshipped in Egypt.



Figure 7.1 Silver coin (observe and reverse) issued in Rome, 16 BC (British Museum, C&M 1846,0910.177)

For Augustus, the solar associations of the obelisk reached out to encompass the solar god Apollo and drew the solar nature of the monument into the service of the emperor. On a personal level, Augustus adopted Apollo as his patron deity (Hintzen-Bohlen 2005:134) and cultivated the idea of the new emperor as the sun bringing a golden age to Rome (Horace *Carmen Saeculare, Odes* 1.21, 4.5). This association of

emperor and sun, mediated in part through his appropriation of obelisks, also enabled Augustus to hint at the extent of his political power. This appropriation in combination with the contemporary understanding of the sun as a male star which burnt up and absorbed everything in its vicinity (Pliny 2.103), suggests the ability of the emperor to exact a parallel political power. This idea of the cosmic extent of Augustus's power can be seen in the writings of Virgil (*Aeneid* 1.286-288) who speaks of the universal imperial rule of Augustus which will extend from the earth up to the stars. By evoking Apollo, Augustus makes it seem as though the conquest of Egypt and the reign of Augustus are both sanctioned by the gods.

The association between the Egyptian sun cult and the Roman solar deities was signalled not only through the inscription added to obelisk 1, but by the whole space in which it stood. On arrival in Rome obelisk 1 was raised on the Campus Martius in association with two other prominent Augustan structures - the Mausoleum of Augustus and the Ara Pacis (figure 7.2). The modern debate (Buchner 1982; Schütz 1990) about the exact relationship between these three structures has been covered in the cultural object chapter. Whatever the perceived ability of obelisk 1 to cast a shadow which 'touched' other structures in the area, I suggest that these three structures would have formed a striking visual group with clear sight lines between them across the open civic space of the Campus Martius (figure 7.3).

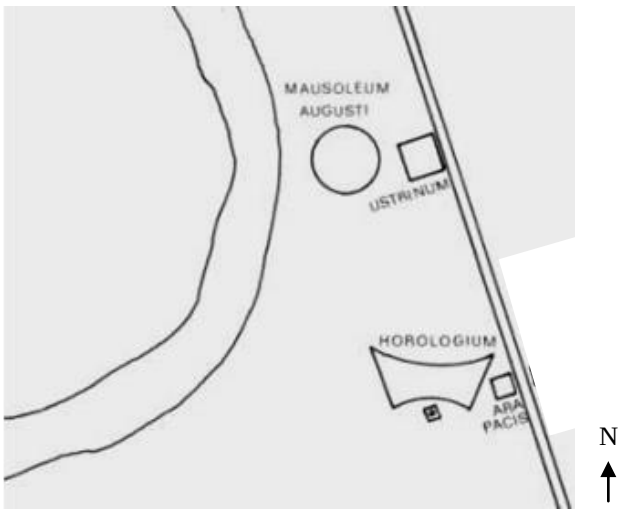


Figure 7.2 Plan of the northern Campus Martuis around AD 12
The map shows the position of the Mausoleum of Augustus with neighbouring ustrinum, the Ara Pacis and obelisk 1 which stood immediately south of the area marked Horologium.

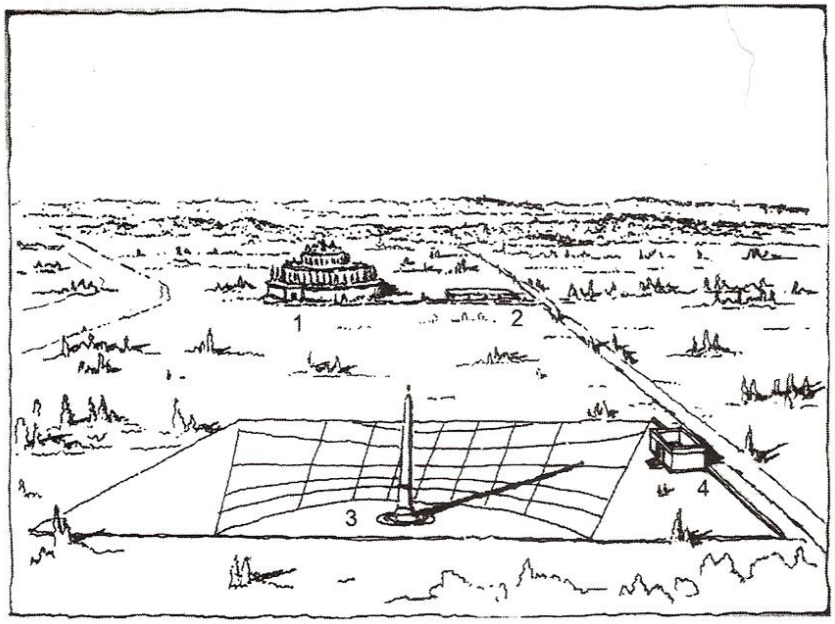


Figure 7.3 Reconstruction of northern Campus Martius10-1 BC
The reconstruction shows 1. Mausoleum of Augustus; 2. Ustrinum; 3. Obelisk 1 and associated paving; 4. Ara Pacis (Drawing by D. Abernathy and D. Favro)

Examination of this space throws up links between key monuments in the area, of which the obelisk is just one, which indicate how these structures were intended to have a symbolic and spatial relationship with each other in order to deliver a religious message around the solar cult and a political message marking the foundation of an imperial age. Another example of solar association on the Campus Martius was Augustus's ustrinum. This marble walled cremation enclosure was built in association with the Mausoleum to form a funerary ensemble (Favro1996:170). Strabo (5.3.8) notes that the ustrinum was planted with black poplars. This tree was sacred to the sun god Helios (Rehak 2009:34) while swans, also sacred to the god Apollo, appear on the nearby Ara Pacis (Anderson 1987:44).

To the south of these structures stood the Pantheon temple, commissioned by the Roman consul Marcus Agrippa and dedicated around 27 BC (Favro 2005:242). La Rocca (2014:131-132) believes that the almost perfect alignment of the axis of the Mausoleum of Augustus and the Pantheon, together with a correspondence in proportion between the diameter of the Pantheon and the similarly shaped Mausoleum of Augustus, strongly suggests that both buildings were part of a 'unitary urban programme' for this open area to the north-west of the traditional

heart of Rome. La Rocca (133) argues that the space between these two buildings was kept intentionally empty, until 10 years later when obelisk 1 and the Ara Pacis were placed approximately half way between the two structures. This proposal that the Mausoleum of Augustus, the Pantheon temple, obelisk 1 and the Ara Pacis in the northern and central Campus Martius should be seen as part of a grand imperial vision laid out across the landscape, is something I will return to when I consider the role of local topography in audience understanding of the obelisks (Chapter 8). For now I would like to return to the three structures in the northern section of the Campus Martius - the obelisk, mausoleum and altar - and look at possible reasons for the appropriation of an Egyptian obelisk into this monumental grouping.

The Campus Martius was a 25 hectares (600 acres) area enclosed on the west by a bend in the Tiber River, on the east by the Quirinal Hill and to the southeast by the Capitoline Hill (Platner and Ashby 1929:91-92). Of the three Augustan structures which stood in the northern area of the Campus Martius, the Ara Pacis was probably the most conventional in terms of shape and style, consisting as it did of a rectangular marble screen wall covered with friezes, with an internal altar on a stepped platform (Rehak 2009:96-98). It was commissioned by the Roman Senate in July 13 BC to honour Augustus's triumphal return from Hispania and Gaul and finally consecrated in January 9 BC (Kleiner 2005:212). The Ara Pacis commemorated both the Augustan peace and Roman civil religion. Kleiner and Buxton (2008:57-58) suggest that Augustus and the Senate could not afford to use architecture which was unfamiliar for such an important message and therefore chose to present the Roman public with a familiar structure and familiar religious iconography. Chronologically, it was the closest in construction time to obelisk 1 which appeared in the space almost simultaneously. Both structures joined the Mausoleum which Augustus had built as his, and his family's, final resting place nearly twenty years earlier in 28 BC (Suetonius *Augustus* 100.4).

The shape of the Mausoleum of Augustus was based on a traditional funerary tumulus. The circular marble base of the structure had a diameter of over 85m and the earthen mound which rose above it was around 45m in height (Flavo 1996:117; Reeder 1992:268-269). On top was a bronze statue of Augustus (Strabo 5.3.9, 5.5.8).

Built in 28 BC the Mausoleum was first used in 23 BC when Marcellus (Augustus's nephew) died and Augustus himself was buried there in AD 14. Of the three structures, the Mausoleum was the one built closest in time to the conquest of Egypt. Despite this recent triumph, Reeder (1992:271, 277) suggests that to have built a funerary structure in an Egyptian shape such as a pyramid would not have been wise so soon after the civil war with Antony; particularly, I suggest, as the issue of where one wished to be buried had become such an emotive point of public propaganda. Interestingly, within its overall traditional design the Mausoleum carried some Egyptian motifs carved onto the marble cornice; one of which was an Egyptian crown. Reeder (1992:274-275) believes that by using this particular motif Augustus sought to convey the idea that he had inherited the crown of the pharaohs. However, the thirty year gap between this discreet hint at imperial aspiration and the arrival of obelisks 1 and 2 in the area (even allowing for the years of planning and preparation needed) makes it hard to see the obelisks as simple 'trophies of war'.

This returns us to the idea that they were acting not as monuments which established the rule of Augustus but rather as monuments which confirmed it after the fact. It also suggests that Augustus was drawing the obelisks into an ongoing public demonstration of the way in which his role as an imperial leader was evolving and the personal attributes of this role which distinguished it from that of former Roman leaders. Thus, as Augustus sought to boost the divine aspects of the imperial office so the obelisk as a monument already imbued with royal and religious meaning, particularly in relation to solar deities, offered itself as a suitable cultural object to demonstrate this publically in Rome. It is an association which presents a clear entry point for starting to elucidate the location chosen by Augustus for the erection of obelisk 2 in the southern Campus Martius.

Locating obelisk 2 in the Circus Maximus enabled Augustus to position the monument within a space already resonant with solar associations. The obvious opportunity to embellish the structure with another symbol of the sun, in the form of an obelisk, has been noted by modern scholars (Curran et al. 2009:37-40; Iversen 1968:65). The Circus housed a shrine to Sol (Tacitus *Annals* 15.74) and was spoken of at the time as a structure in honour of the sun, standing as it did open to the sky

(Tertullian *De Spectaculis* 8.3-6). The reference to Sol in the Latin inscription added to obelisk 2 speaks to the traditional origins of Roman solar worship, and sits well with the ancient nature of the host obelisk. The late first century BC writer Varro (*De Re Rustica* 1.1.5) mentions Sol as one of the twelve principal agricultural deities and notes the role of the sun in charting the time to plant and harvest. The Roman image of Sol driving a four-horse chariot (quadriga) was derived from his Greek equivalent Helios (Halsberghe 1972:36). The iconography is shown on a Republican coin (figure 7.4) where the helmeted head of Roma is coupled with Sol in a quadriga. The association of the Roman Sol and the Greek Helios extended to the Greek solar deity Apollo (Rehak 2009:92) and by the early imperial period Sol was partially syncretised with Apollo. The poet Horace (*Carmen Saeclare*) refers to Apollo as both Phoebus and Sol. Apollo had been honoured in Rome by the annual *Ludi Apollinares* since 212 BC and during the imperial period became patron god of the Circus Maximus (Humphrey 1986:62, 91) where chariot racing was the main event.



Figure 7.4 Silver coin (observe and reverse) issued in Rome, 118-107 BC (British Museum, C&M, 2002,0102.1222)

The Circus Maximus stood on the site of an Etruscan sports arena, cited by Livy (1.56) as a venue for Roman games from as early as 366 BC. Developed by Julius Caesar around 50 BC, it was the first circus in Rome and remained the largest throughout the imperial period. Badly damaged by fire in 31 BC it was repaired and augmented by Augustus. A key Augustan addition was the *pulvinar*, which was built directly into the existing seating tiers and fronted onto the arena. Principally a shrine where statues of deities could be placed to 'watch' the games (Arena 2007:79), it

also acted as the imperial box from which the emperor and imperial family could watch events in the arena (Humphrey 1986:78-79). It was on the spina of this arena that obelisk 2 was erected in 10 BC.

Added to this subtle triangulation of sun deities, a heliacal emperor and a solar monument was the straightforward allegory of growing imperial power demonstrated through the acquisition of Egypt, the home of the obelisk. In a statement which would have resonated well with how Augustus hoped his imperial rule would be seen, Strabo (17.1.46) reports that the obelisks at Thebes carried inscriptions which recorded the achievements of the pharaohs. In particular he highlights four key aspects of government which the obelisk text spoke of: military might, territorial control, tribute and wealth. It is these last two economic themes which I would like to consider next in relation to how we might best understand the appropriation of Egyptian obelisks to Rome.

Cassius Dio (51.17) suggests that the wealth of Egypt was a key factor in the decision by Augustus to keep the latest Roman province under direct imperial control. Certainly Augustus made sure that the portable wealth of the province flowed back to Rome. Following his Alexandrian triumph, the monetary spoils of the military campaign, in the form of the captured treasure of the Ptolemies, were immediately distributed in Rome ensuring that large amounts of money passed into private hands (Suetonius *Augustus* 41). Augustus also made sure that this wealth was a matter of public display. In 29 BC he placed a golden statue of Victory draped with spoils from Egypt in the Senate House to celebrate Rome's victory over Antony and Cleopatra at Actium in 31 BC (Cassius Dio 51.22). Within this framework of Egyptian assets transferred to Rome, obelisks can be seen to represent the process in material form, a physical reminder of the journey which other goods were taking from Egypt to Rome. The obelisk, I contend, acted as a specific totem for one particular aspect of this trade – the grain trade.

Cassius Dio (51.17) mentions the role which Egypt played in supplying grain to the city of Rome when he discusses Augustan policy in relation to this province. Other classical sources also spoke of Egypt's fertile natural environment and

established agricultural infrastructure. Pliny (18.21) notes areas where the soil offers a high yield and says that this is particularly true of Egypt and its 'prolific wheat'. Strabo (17.1.3) says that the Egyptian soil naturally produced a greater harvest than other lands and that artificial irrigation served to enhance productivity. During the Ptolemaic period there had been a change in the main cereal crop of Egypt as emmer wheat was supplanted by the more productive durum wheat with a simultaneous increase in the area of cultivated land (Bowman 1986:13; Crawford 1979:140). Under the Ptolemies Egypt had been a net exporter of grain; one of the contributory factors to the kingdom's capital wealth. Historically, Rome has already looked to Egypt as a source of grain and as early as 210 BC the Senate had requested a consignment of grain from Ptolemy IV (Bowman 1986:38; Peacock 2000:428). The need for external grain continued, and indeed grew, during the early imperial period.

The acquisition of an adequate and reliable supply of grain was a key issue for Rome due to the fact that the city's grain needs could not be met by the surrounding countryside. Land around the city was taken up by aristocratic villas and parks, while the remaining agricultural land mainly produced perishable food stuffs such as fruit and vegetables. Therefore, as the city's population grew so the city became increasingly reliant on imported grain supplies (Haas 1997:21). Rickman (1980:262) stresses the importance of wheat as a cheap source of calories for the majority of the population of Rome. He suggests that the vital role of wheat in sustaining the population of ancient Rome is a key reason for the state's interest in the grain trade whereby 'the supplying of Rome exerted a gravitational pull on the main grain growing areas of the Mediterranean, and on the organisation of shipping and other resources'.

According to Cicero (*De Imperio Gnaei Pompei* 340) and Plutarch (*Lives, Pompey* 50) Sardinia, Sicily and the province of Africa Proconsularis were the key supply points for grain arriving in Rome in the Late Republic. The exact amount of grain imported to Rome from different parts of the empire has been the subject of much modern debate. Rickman (1980:264) uses the work of Josephus (*The Jewish Wars*) to calculate that 13 million modii of grain were imported from Egypt and 27 million modii from North Africa (with 150 modii of grain being equal to 1 modern

ton). This calculation has been influential on later works such as Kehoe (1988:3) and Mørch (1994:108) who both say that North Africa (Africa Proconsularis) was central to the grain supply for Rome. This view has been challenged by Erdkamp (2005:226-230) who believes that the traditional notion that North Africa was the main supplier of Roman grain, based on passages in Josephus's text, is incorrect and should be read as biased information intended to imply the economic burden imposed on the provinces by their imperial rulers.

Instead Erdkamp (2005:231-234) believes that the emphasis placed on Egypt by Tacitus (*Annals* 12.43.2) and Seneca (*Epistulae Morales ad Lucilium* 77) suggests that once Egypt became a Roman province, it became the main source of grain for Rome. He argues that clear indications of this can be seen in the early involvement of the Roman fleet in safeguarding the supply route from Egypt to the Italian coast, the improvement of shipping routes from ports further west on the African coast under Commodus to ensure other African supply lines in case Egyptian shipments arrived late and the fact that the Romans were able to supply grain to cities in the East out of the grain housed in the Alexandrian granaries. With Rome reliant on grain from beyond the city's immediate hinterland, and indeed the Italian peninsula (Kehoe 1988:1-2, 224; Scheidel 1994:159), the ability to secure and maintain a reliable source of grain was a crucial component of a ruler's continuing popular support.

Augustus was fully aware that control of the grain supply could be used as a political weapon in Rome. During the Republican period, individual senators had distributed food to the poor in order to elicit popular support. By the reign of Augustus, it is estimated that around 200,000 people, out of a population of around one million, were eligible to receive free grain doles (Charles and Ryan 2009:5). With 20% of the population reliant on civic food distributions it is no surprise that the grain dole became more centralised under the emperors and was closely monitored by the imperial authorities. In addition, Augustus had personal experience of the civil unrest caused by any disruption to the city's food supplies. In 38 BC, Romans had rioted at the high cost of grain resulting from the blockade of the Italian coast by Sextus Pompeius during his revolt against the ruling triumvirate; of which

Augustus was a member (Bowman 1986:38). The situation was not helped by the large number of soldiers retained on active duty during the civil war. Provision for the troops depleted the stores of food in Rome and was probably another contributory factor to the food riots of the period. Then, in 22 BC, food rioters threatened the Senate and demanded that control of the grain dole was handed over to Augustus (Cassius Dio 54.1.3). On this occasion Augustus must have not only seen how food supplies could trigger civic disorder, but also how popular trust could be earned through an assumed command of this supply.

The notion that Augustus believed food could act as a powerful catalyst amongst the populace is supported by Suetonius's (*Augustus* 25.2) comment that Augustus only used freedmen to repress unrest in Rome when fires occurred or the price of food had risen. The continuing pressure to provide a reliable supply of grain throughout the early imperial period was demonstrated in AD 6 by the popular disquiet which broke out due to a period of grain scarcity in the city (Cassius Dio 55.27.3). Whilst exact estimates of the amount of grain arriving in Rome from Egypt vary across modern works (Bowman 1986:38; Peacock 2000:428), it is clear that Egyptian grain would have contributed significantly to the grain distributed in the city by the authorities (Clauss 2006:58). Writing around a century later Tacitus (*Annals* 2.59) says that Augustus specifically kept Egypt isolated and under his direct control so that 'Italy might not be subjected to starvation by anyone who contrived, with however slight a garrison against armies however formidable, to occupy the province and its key positions by land and sea'.

This appreciation of the role of Egypt's fertility in power politics seems to be reflected in a cameo known as the Tazza Farnese (figure 7.5) which probably dates to between 30 and 10 BC (Pollini 1992:283-300). A personal link to Augustus himself has been suggested by Pollini (1992:283-300) who believes that the cameo was probably carved by an Alexandrian artist working in Italy for Augustus. The piece carries an Egyptianizing scene showing the god Nilus holding a cornucopia, the goddess Isis leaning on the head of a sphinx and the god Horus-Triptolemus carrying a blade and a bag of seeds (Bowman 1986:64; Dwyer 1992:255-282). The scene draws heavily on Alexandrian Nilotic imagery and its production in an

imperially sponsored workshop suggests that Augustus was well aware of the Nilotic imagery circulating in society at the time and how this could boost public perception of his role in acquiring the province of Egypt, and its agricultural fertility, for the Roman people.



Figure 7.5 Tazza Farnese (Museo Archeologico Nazionale, Naples, 27611)

I would argue that obelisks operated as part of this process due to the symbolic opportunity they offered to remind the people of Rome of the imperial ability to ensure the economic welfare of the city. On a macro scale they were representative of the flow of goods to Rome, as per Strabo's account, while on a micro level they were part of the 'bread and circuses' mechanism for ensuring popular support; so named around AD 100 by Juvenal (*Satire* 10.77-81) in his barbed comments about the continued use of food and entertainment to garner popular support by first republican and now imperial politicians. In this way obelisks became a motif for the new imperial system to demonstrate its ability to pick up the mantle of the former republican authorities. I will return to this idea in the audience chapter when I consider how the people of Rome may have understood this in relation to the obelisks raised by Augustus and Caligula.

It is also possible that Augustus intended the obelisks to serve as a reminder of the work being undertaken by the Roman authorities in Egypt itself to ensure the

grain supply. During the late Ptolemaic period there had been improvements to the canals, dykes, water raising equipment and reservoir basins of the irrigation system. This system needed continuous maintenance and Suetonius (*Augustus* 18.2) records that to make Egypt more fruitful and better adapted to supply the city with grain, Augustus organised the Roman army to clean out the heavily silted irrigation canals which carried water from the river Nile to the arable land. It is an initiative also recorded by Cassius Dio (51.18) and Strabo (17.1.3).

Augustus was keen that the state was seen to command the best expert knowledge (Masterson 2004:387; Wallace-Hadrill 1998:7, 16). Transporting and erecting obelisks offered an opportunity to demonstrate the labour commissioning power of the imperial state, and its ability to marshal the specialist knowledge needed to undertake such an enterprise. The relationship between architecture and the state is expressed in Vitruvius's *De Architectura* (l: Introduction1-2) which opens with an address to Augustus commending his recent military victories and his current building projects. The ability to reshape the built environment was similarly seen as indicators of imperial power in other coeval texts (Strabo 5.3.8; Dionysius of Halicarnassus 3.67.5; Pliny 36.24; Frontinus 16; Statius 4.3). Thus, Augustus's construction programme enabled him to demonstrate the commitment of the new imperial state to continue the Republic's legacy. Augustan monuments spoke to Roman citizens about the way in which the imperial state was ensuring the benefits of urban development, and their identity within this new state (Welch 2004:63).

When Augustus died in AD 14, his ashes were placed in the Mausoleum he had had built 42 years earlier on the Campus Martius, close to the two obelisks he had appropriated from Egypt. The possible reactions to, and reading of, these two monuments within this landscape by the people of Rome will be covered in the audience chapter. Before then I would like to consider the motivation of the other Julio-Claudian emperor to bring obelisks to Rome - Caligula.

7.2.2 Caligula

Caligula was the third emperor of the Julio-Claudian dynasty, ruling the empire from AD 37 to AD 41. His father Germanicus, nephew and adopted son of the

emperor Tiberius (AD 14-37), had died in AD 19 after which Caligula's mother, Agrippina the Elder, advocated for the right of her sons to succeed Tiberius. The resulting feud with Tiberius led to the death of Agrippina and her two eldest sons and thus it fell to Caligula, the third son, to succeed his adoptive grandfather (Scarre 1995a:36-37). During his reign Caligula appropriated a number of obelisks from Egypt to Rome. He is traditionally associated with obelisk 3 and, as I have argued in the cultural object chapter, was most probably responsible for obelisks 4 and 5 as well. I believe that at the heart of Caligula's actions was a public negotiation of the recent history of the imperial family. As such these appropriations should be seen in terms of his perception of his immediate predecessors Augustus and Tiberius; specifically his desire to emulate the former and snub the latter.

The classical sources are clear about the personal enmity which infused the family politics of the imperial household during the reign of Tiberius. According to Suetonius (*Caligula* 12.3, 23.1) Caligula's attitude to his predecessors was less than reverent and he held a particular dislike for his immediate predecessor fuelled by his mother's feud with Tiberius and the negative impact this had had on Caligula's close family. Iversen (1968:22) suggests that the very act of Caligula raising obelisk 3 in a structure built on land that Caligula had inherited from his mother Agrippina can be seen as part of his anti-Tiberian campaign. The fate of the Latin inscription which had been carved onto this obelisk in Alexandria on the orders of Tiberius, and which was removed in Rome, supports such an interpretation.

The inscription (Appendix A:3) carved into the shaft of obelisk 3 dedicated the monument to Tiberius and Augustus. It had been added to the obelisk on the orders of the emperor Tiberius while it still stood in Alexandria. When the obelisk arrived in Rome, Caligula ordered the inscription to be removed. Thus, on the current west side of the obelisk more than half of the outline around the recess carrying the text has disappeared together with several letters from the beginning of the inscription (figure 7.6). Meanwhile, on the east side the beginning of the inscription is intact but the end has been completely erased together with the outline of the recess (Iversen 1965:153, 1968:22). Interestingly, in neither case would this have removed the part of the inscription which contained the name of Tiberius nor was this section of the

inscription targeted for particular attention suggesting that Caligula was anticipating the complete removal of the inscription; although this had only been partly achieved by the time of his death. Indeed, I would suggest that the act of removing the inscription was probably as important as achieving the end result.



Figure 7.6 Tiberian inscription on shaft of obelisk 3 (west side)

There is no evidence to indicate when the work on the inscription took place, but if it occurred once the obelisk was raised in the Circus Vaticanus, or even as it lay in the arena waiting to be raised, the act of chiselling out the inscription would have been seen and heard in an open space. This act would ultimately render the monument symbolically illegible and 'silent' as part of the Roman practice of *damnatio memoriae* whereby the condemnation of emperors and members of the elite after their death resulted in the seizure of property, the erasure of inscribed names and the reworking of statues. Such a process could only be sanctioned by the emperor or the Senate. Historians sometimes use the phrase *de facto damnatio memoriae* when the condemnation is not official (Flower 2006:155-1556; Varner 2004:2) and it seems that Caligula's actions against Tiberius fell into this latter category.

If the removal of the inscription can be seen as a direct attack on Tiberius, this intention was re-enforced by the final orientation of the raised obelisk. The position of the obelisk in relation to the circus structure meant that the two inscribed sides of the shaft faced toward the two narrow ends of the Circus Vaticanus. It is possible that at this time seating stands had not been constructed all the way around the circus race track. Humphrey (1986:550) argues that if so, the likeliest seating areas would have been the central parts of the long sides to give the audience the best

view of the circuit. This would mean that there was no audience to see the two inscribed sides. In addition, the inscription would have been further obscured by the other statues placed on the spina.

The second part of the equation was Caligula's desire to associate himself with Augustus; having already disowned his natural grandfather Agrippa and claimed that his grandfather was in fact Augustus (Suetonius *Caligula* 23.1). Caligula's inheritance of imperial power had not been straightforward. On Tiberius's death a period of uncertainty meant that both Caligula and Tiberius's son Gemellus were seen to hold equally valid claims to the imperial throne (Barrett 1989:79-80). Caligula's use of obelisks also suggests an attempt to associate his reign with that of Augustus, moving as he did obelisk 3 from Egypt to a circus in Rome, in emulation of the actions of Augustus with obelisk 2 in the Circus Maximus, and raising obelisks 4 and 5 in front of the Mausoleum of Augustus. Building familial and monumental connections to Augustus enabled Caligula to emphasise his suitability for the imperial throne. Thus, in AD 37, the year in which obelisk 3 was raised in Rome, rites were carried out to mark the anniversary of the founding of the Ara Pacis by Augustus in 13 BC and Caligula led the dedication of the Temple of Augustus in the city (Barrett 1989:69).

Curran et al. (2009:40, 45) have argued that following the death of Augustus obelisk 2 became a symbol of his idealised reign and point to the manner in which Caligula emulated Augustus by placing a gilded ball on top of obelisk 3 which mirrored the style of bronze fittings added to obelisk 2. Direct emulation can also be seen to reside in the very act of bringing an obelisk to Rome from Egypt and raising it in a circus structure. If the start of his reign was a period of political uncertainty, and a period when Caligula sought to publically demonstrate his affiliation to Augustus, then this may well explain why he selected an obelisk which was already standing near the Alexandrian harbour from where it would start its journey to Rome. Such a monument not only reduced the amount of time needed to bring it to Rome in terms of minimising travel time in Egypt but it also reduced the amount of time needed to prepare the monument for removal since it had already been relocated once and came with a pre-constructed base which was brought to Rome. When

raised in the Circus Vaticanus, the obelisk stood supported by four bronze astragali (knucklebone shaped supports) on the reused base with this whole structure standing on a white marble slab set into the floor of the arena (Castagnoli 1959:97; Humphrey 1986:549).

Obelisks 4 and 5 were raised on the opposite side of the river Tiber in front of the entrance to the Mausoleum of Augustus. Coarelli and Thébert (1988:792) believe that this location draws on ancient Egyptian use of obelisks in temple complexes and in front of tombs. They argue that these two uses merged architecturally during the Hellenistic period and point to the Mausoleum of Alexander, which acted as a tomb and temple within a single complex, and the two obelisks raised in front of the Caesareum in Alexandria as potential inspiration. This had been previously suggested by Iversen (1968:47) who, whilst not ascribing obelisks 4 and 5 to Caligula, also suggested that the arrangement of two obelisks in association with a personal imperial structure imitated the pair erected in 13-12 BC in front of the Caesareum in Alexandria.

In the context of obelisks 4 and 5, the Caesareum is an interesting structure since the complex had itself been appropriated by Augustus after he defeated Antony and Cleopatra. It was originally commissioned by Cleopatra as a cult site in honour of either the late Julius Caesar or the living Mark Antony (the matter of intended dedication remaining open to debate). After the Romans took control of the city, the temple was re-dedicated to Augustus (McKenzie 2007:177). The building is mentioned by Strabo (17.9) while Pliny (36.14) describes the obelisks which stood at the entrance and records that they were ‘42 cubits’ (22m) tall. The Caesareum thus offers an extant example of an imperial cult site with obelisks, albeit overseas, spoken of within the Roman horizon of assumptions. For Caligula, the actions of Augustus in appropriating the building may have provided motivation for him to replicate this arrangement in conjunction with the Mausoleum of Augustus in Rome. In this light, the suggestion that obelisks 4 and 5 emulate those in Alexandria broadens out to become emulation by Caligula of Augustus *through* the device of obelisks and the imperial tomb.

In addition, the Mausoleum of Augustus served as a public stage for Caligula to act out the conclusion to his family dispute with Tiberius. On becoming emperor, Caligula brought his mother's and brother's ashes to Rome and gave them an official burial in the Mausoleum of Augustus. After personally collecting the ashes from the Pontian Islands (in the Tyrrhenian Sea off the west coast of Italy), Caligula had them carried through the streets of Rome in what was obviously meant to be a very public event (Cassius Dio 59.3; Suetonius *Caligula* 15). These actions seem to consciously echo those of his mother Agrippina who, on the refusal of Tiberius to sanction a funeral for Germanicus in Rome, carried her husband's ashes on foot from Brindisi (in south-east Italy) to Rome and publically deposited them in the Mausoleum of Augustus (Cassius Dio 57.18.6-10). The erection of two obelisks in front of the Mausoleum by Caligula would thus augment the structure in which his family, despite the sometime efforts of Tiberius, now lay through an architectural gesture which also served Caligula's attempts to associate himself with Augustus. Ironically, if this was indeed the case, the Mausoleum was also the final resting place of the perceived principal villain in this family saga, Tiberius.

All three obelisks appropriated by Caligula were raised in the northwest region of Rome. Obelisks 4 and 5 joined obelisks 1 and 2 on the Campus Martius, augmenting a region already associated with this type of monument. It was also an area of the city closely associated with Augustus, whose actions Caligula most likely aimed to emulate. By raising obelisk 3 in a circus structure Caligula directly copied the placement of obelisk 2 in a circus structure in the southern sector of the Campus Martius: the Circus Maximus. The Circus Maximus had stood as a wooden structure during the Republican period until it was developed by Julius Caesar into a structure partly constructed in stone. This work was completed by Augustus and it remained the main city venue for chariot racing and gladiatorial shows until the inauguration of the Colosseum in AD 80 (Humphrey 1986:73).

The Circus Vaticanus, where obelisk 3 was to stand, was built by Caligula on the Campus Vaticanus - a level area to the northwest of Rome between the Vatican Hill and the river Tiber. The link between this area and Caligula's family has already been noted, as has the suggestion that the selection of the site was a deliberate part

of Caligula's strategy to promote the memory of his immediate family after the events of the previous imperial reign. Caligula laid out the arena to match the size of the Circus Maximus and probably intended to create a similar large scale circus structure, although the main construction work seems to have taken place during the reigns of Claudius and Nero (Humphrey 1986:550-552). The extent to which the Circus Vaticanus acted as a venue for a public or private audience is discussed in the audience chapter. In relation to Caligula as a producer, I would like to consider how he can be seen to make use of the existing association of the Egyptian obelisk with the Roman circus, as established by obelisk 2 in the Circus Maximus, and how this helps us to understand the appropriation of obelisk 3.

All four sides of the lower part of the shaft of obelisk 3 carry shallow depressions cut into the face of the stone with rows of holes (probably for the nails which fixed the plates) indicating where gilded bronze plates were fitted (Iversen 1968:26). These plates would have made the monument gleam, emphasising its solar association. Obelisk 3 did not have any hieroglyphs carved onto the shaft so the plates would not have obscured any Egyptian text. At the top of the obelisk a gilded bronze ball was held atop the pyramidion by a bronze acanthus leaf fitting. This ball would have gleamed like a mini sun and would have presumably made the obelisk visible over a greater distance on sunny days. The fitting also reflected that on obelisk 2 which was also topped by a gilded bronze ball.

I would suggest that Caligula also selected a circus structure as the location for obelisk 3 to build on the association between obelisks and grain established by Augustus. I will return to the audience response to this particular layer of imperial meaning later, but for now would like to consider how Caligula utilised it. The grain supply remained an important issue for the authorities throughout Caligula's reign. In line with this the placement of obelisk 3 in a circus can be seen as an attempt by Caligula to reinforce the idea of 'bread and circuses' and assure the Roman people of the emperor's concern for their needs. Interestingly, Caligula chose not to add an obelisk to the Circus Maximus but rather to replicate the complete gesture of 'creating' a circus structure and augmenting it with an obelisk.

A practical measure taken by Caligula in response to the city's continued, and growing, need for imported grain was the improvement of the infrastructure supporting the transport of grain, thereby enabling grain imports from Egypt to increase (Josephus *The Antiquities of the Jews* 19.2.5; Suetonius *Caligula* 18.3). Caligula ordered the development of those harbours south of the city which operated as part of the network of routes across the Mediterranean. In light of this the appropriation an obelisk from Egypt to Rome which took the same route as the grain ships mirrors the point already raised for Augustus around the obelisk as a motif for the successful appropriation of provincial assets to support the heartland of the empire. I would also suggest that obelisk 3 served as a totem for the movement of grain not only due to the direction of that journey but also in relation to the bulk/mass of the two types of cargo.

A description of a Roman grain ship is given by the writer Lucian (*The Dream*) who saw the ship docked at the Athenian port of Piraeus. He describes the ship as being 55m long, having a beam of 13.7m and containing a cargo hold which was 13.4m deep. Lucian noted that the ship was capable of carrying 1,200 to 1,300 tons of cargo, a capacity which matches that of the ship carrying obelisk 3 from Alexandria to the Italian coast. Obelisk 3 and its base weighed 496 tons while the ballast needed to balance this load weighed another 800-900 tons. Thus, the entire load weighted around 1,300 tons (Jackson 2001:72-73) reflecting that of a fully laden grain ship. Of additional interest is the fact that the ship seen by Lucian was named *Isis*; a prominent Egyptian goddess whose cult was extant in early imperial Rome (Platner and Ashby 1929:367).

For Caligula, the appropriation of obelisks appears to have been driven by both private and public motives. While all three obelisks can be seen to establish personal links between Caligula and Augustus as part of the new regime's re-negotiation of recent events in the imperial household, they can also be seen as public gestures made by an emperor to his people in terms of the continued glorification of the urban landscape in which they lived and the consolidation of the grain by which they lived. It is the response of the public to these imperial acts which I would like to turn to in the next chapter.

7.3 Summary

The producers responsible for the erection of at least five obelisks in early imperial Rome were both members of the Julio-Claudian dynasty. The conquest of Egypt by the first of these producers, Augustus, opened up the assets of Egypt to Rome and enabled the initial movement of obelisks by the Romans first within Egypt and later out of Egypt to Rome. For Augustus the appropriation of obelisks enabled him to mediate in material form the changing nature of government in Rome alongside the development of the role, status and responsibilities of an imperial ruler. For Caligula, the obelisk acted as a cultural object which enabled him to mediate his position not only as an emperor but also within the Julio-Claudian family; a family subject to much recent turmoil. In both cases obelisks were presented by the producer as part of the public landscape of Rome with the intention that these monuments should be seen and understood by the population of that city.

Chapter 8: Audience

8.1 Introduction

All five obelisks under consideration in this case-study stood in spaces accessible to the public. The potential audience for these cultural objects would have been anyone passing through these spaces, be they residents of Rome or visitors to the city. The diversity of this audience suggests that it is unlikely that any single meaning was taken away from a visual encounter with the obelisks by all those who saw them. Indeed, as we saw in the previous chapter it cannot be assumed that the producers themselves ever intended a single meaning to operate across all monuments of this type appropriated to Rome during the imperial period. Holtorf (2008) proposes that the different types of readers identified by reception theory can also be distinguished in relation to archaeological monuments. Thus the producer can be seen to create a cultural object imbued with the meaning(s) they expect to be read by an intended recipient. However, as reception theory makes clear, once the monument becomes accessible to the viewer a number of other factors come into play. Thus, the audience for a monument will start to make meaning around the monument based for their own assumptions, their own ability to comprehend the intended meaning, their own personal concerns and their own physical experience of the monument in its immediate surroundings.

The audience for the obelisks appropriated in the early imperial period had recently been changed by the actions of the elite from republican to imperial citizens who now lived in a city undergoing major construction projects as it became established as an imperial capital. In order to start to elucidate how this audience might have understood the obelisks raised in the city I aim to pursue a range of possible approaches to determining how the audience understood the obelisks such as examining the local topography in which each obelisk was raised and reviewing any modifications made to the monuments as they arrived in Rome. I will also consider how audience assumptions about the role of monuments in the urban landscape and perceptions of the culture (ancient Egypt) from which these monuments were appropriated can be seen to effect audience response.

8.2 Audience

The number of people who saw the obelisks appropriated to Rome between 10 BC and AD 37 is ultimately unquantifiable, as is any detailed break-down of the public audience in terms of the proportion of residents versus non-residents, women versus men, adults versus children, to name but a few possible categories. The exact composition of the population of ancient Rome remains a matter of much academic debate, and consideration of the particular sub-sections within this populace lies outside the scope of this study. Nevertheless, any attempt at reception theory needs to identify an audience who are in a position to receive and respond to a cultural object.

Any accurate calculation of the number of people living in imperial Rome is hindered by variations in the ancient sources, changing definitions of who was eligible for inclusion in the census and the fact that only male citizens were counted (Dyson 2010:265-266). There is also debate about the demographic development of the city. There is a lack of consensus about the rate at which the overall population figure changed and the balance between natural increase and migratory increase within this overall figure (Cascio 2001:115-116), together with questions about the validity of some methods used to interpret the demographic evidence from the ancient world (Engels 1984; Scheidel 2008). As a consequence, modern attempts to estimate the size of imperial Rome range from 50,000 to over one million residents (Storey 1997:966). These estimates make Rome one of the largest pre-modern cities with a high number of people living in a space of approximately 770 hectares (Favro 1996:21; Morley 2013:29, 36; Witcher 2005:135).

The city of Rome was part of a network of communication which spread across the Roman empire; a network through which individuals, goods and ideas passed rapidly. Many residents originated outside Rome having arrived as migrants from rural areas, auxiliary or legionary recruits, or slaves. As a result the urban communities of Rome and other cities across the empire were amongst the most socially diverse environments in Roman society (Woolf 1996:37). As the imperial capital, Rome was also the residence of the emperor and a focus for imperial architectural interventions. Morley (2013:30) suggests that the size of Rome's

population, together with the fluid nature of a population continually fed by inward migration, meant that there was a wide gap between the political elite and the masses. As a result social interaction with the authorities in the city was largely impersonal and dependent on large scale public occasions and architecture. Within such a context the Egyptian obelisk offered an opportunity for the emperor to communicate with the people of the city through a specific type of monumental architecture. As we shall see, as a monument the obelisk was able to play a well-rehearsed role as a piece of elite 'statuary', as well as affording a new set of possible readings linked specifically to its individual and discrete form. By looking at how a monument might be expected to convey meaning to a Roman audience, and by considering the modifications made to each obelisk in relation to setting, inscriptions and/or structural changes, I hope to start teasing out some suggestions about audience response to Egyptian obelisks.

The audience in Rome would have held a cultural ken around obelisks which drew on existing awareness of Egypt and an understanding of monumental architecture. This cultural ken in combination with coeval social issues and concerns created a public horizon of assumptions; a conceptual framework for those viewing the obelisks within the public landscape of Rome. The framework could also be utilised by the producer to enhance the message(s) carried by an obelisk and to ensure the highest level of common understanding. For example, the Roman audience may not expect to see an obelisk standing in a public urban space, but they would expect to see and respond to statues and architectural elements erected by the elite within this space. The audience would therefore see the public space of Rome as open to monumental negotiation by the elite and would expect to encounter new and re-worked monuments in that space. By presenting the obelisk in the context of an elite monument the producer could appropriate meaning from extant types of material culture and draw on existing levels of understanding about how they 'worked' in public spaces to mediate issues within the contemporary social world. Thus the obelisk could be 'internalised' into a broader culture of monumentality whereby it served to prompt memories of famous events and people (Kraus and Woodman 1997:58).

Having said this, modern scholars have debated the extent to which such monuments were fully understood by all those who viewed them. Favro (1996:10-11) believes that in Augustan Rome communication through physical form would have been 'natural' and 'easy' for the city's population and that 'the connection among people, urban environments, and meaning had an immediacy and strength foreign to modern urban observers'. On the other hand Vout (2005:93) urges caution. She warns that it is often assumed that ancient people had better visual skills, based on the idea that high levels of ancient illiteracy meant that an ability to 'read' graphic rather than text based communication was honed by all. She goes on to comment that even if this is true, some people would have been better at reading images than others and that maybe the best were those who recognised the intertextuality of monuments. I am certainly wary of terms such as 'natural' and 'easy' since they imply that reading a monument is an act which somehow occurs in a vacuum. Instead, I will argue that in attempting to reach any understanding of how the audience responded to obelisks, we need to look carefully at the supporting evidence offered by the coeval horizon of assumptions about Egypt, the role of architecture, the nature of imperial rule and the main social/economic concerns of the time.

8.3 Reading the obelisks

Audience response to Egyptian obelisks in Rome is probably the most difficult aspect of this case-study to elucidate with confidence and the impossibility of reconstructing with any accuracy exactly who saw what, means that creative approaches are needed to answer the question of how the audience in Rome read obelisks. The possible approaches I intend to take all work outwards from highly probable starting points such as the extant role of elite architecture, the coeval horizon of assumptions about Egypt/obelisks, the local topography and the modifications made to the obelisks. At the same time it is important to look for examples of intertextuality where one producer replicates an aspect of an existing Egyptianized obelisk. In this research I refer to this process as 'internal' appropriation, for example a discernible pattern in the type of modification made to obelisks or the specific setting selected for an obelisk. Such a pattern implies that some form of common meaning has become established around an aspect of appropriation which is available for re-use by later producers.

When the first obelisks arrived in Rome, they joined a number of Egyptianizing monuments already extant in the city. A prominent example was the pyramid shaped funerary monument of Caius Cestius, a member of the Roman elite. Built around 12 BC, it stood on a major road alongside the tombs of other wealthy private individuals (Roullet 1972:42; Vout 2003:177-178). Constructed with brick-faced concrete encased in white marble, it measured 29.6 m^2 at the base with a height of 37m. During the construction of the Aurelian Walls between AD 271 and 275, the monument was incorporated directly into the new wall (figure 8.1).



Figure 8.1 Funerary monument of Caius Cestius, Rome

The tomb's size, shape and location all marked it as a 'prestigious and up-to-date display intended for public viewing' (Trimble 2007:32). Zanker (1988:293) suggests that at a time when Rome was moving from a republican to an imperial government, with the elevation of an emperor over the leading citizens of the Senate, the use of a pyramid can be seen as a symbolic reaction by the nobility to the growing autocracy of Augustus. Certainly the tomb stood as a large scale structure of Egyptian origin with an elite producer, even if the supposed power-play was not as clearly nuanced for the general populace of Rome as it was for the ruling authorities or modern scholars. Two years later a further set of Egyptian monuments (obelisks 1 and 2), again commissioned by an elite producer, joined the Roman landscape to the north of the tomb. Although for the audience Egyptianized architecture already had a physical presence within the city environs, what arrived in 10 BC was unique in

both form and material – a tall tapering angular shaft made not of marble but the wholly new red granite of the Aswan quarries (Swetnam-Burland 2010:146).

The other large Egyptianized structure in Rome at this time was the Temple of Isis on the Campus Martius. Dating from the late Republic, the temple was extant during the reign of Augustus, destroyed under Tiberius and probably rebuilt under Caligula (Roullet 1972:23). Modern descriptions of the temple are based on evidence from the Flavian rebuild and the exact nature of the early temple is unclear (Castagnoli 1981:417-418). It has been suggested that any cult statues at the temple were likely to be Hellenistic interpretations of Isis (Gasparro 2007:71; Roullet 1972:32) similar in style to one dating from the early second century AD (figure 8.2); although that is not to say that these statues did not look 'Egyptian' to the Roman public. A second sanctuary to Isis dating from 65 BC stood near the Capitol Hill (Roullet 1972:32). Subject to Senate orders for its destruction in the late Republic period (Cassius Dio 42.26.1-2), it is unclear what state of repair it was in at the start of the imperial period.



Figure 8.2 Marble statue of Isis, early second century AD (Capitoline Museums, Rome, MC0744)

Lack of archaeological evidence makes it impossible to say exactly what Egyptianized visual elements these temples offered to the Roman audience. As with the pyramid funerary monument of Caius Cestius, they indicate that Egyptianized

architectural elements already existed in Rome and caution against the idea that 'Egypt in Rome' arrived with the first obelisks. During the early imperial period obelisks were raised away from extant Egyptianized structures and it is not until around AD 80 under the Flavian emperors that obelisks appeared in association with the Temple of Isis on the Campus Martius (Platner and Ashby1929:369-370).

Obelisks entered the Roman landscape with an existing history, bringing with them a notion of their life in ancient Egypt. From the texts of writers such as Pliny and Strabo we can assume that obelisks were understood by the Romans as a cultural object whose origin lay in Egypt. The explanations offered in these texts, such as Pliny's detailed description of the form, function and history of the monument under the Egyptian pharaohs, would have helped to ensure that the distinctive shape of the obelisk was recognised as a discretely Egyptian monument without, for example, the Greek association of the sphinx. For the audience the obelisks all arrived from Egypt, all shipped out of Alexandria directly to the Italian coast, along the Tiber and into Rome. The difference between Alexandria and Heliopolis as a starting point for this journey was probably not as important as it appears to modern scholars. This shared route also masked the dating distinction between pharaonic and Roman examples and there appears to have been no obvious way for the audience to distinguish between pharaonic and Roman period obelisks. For example, the uniquely Egyptian hieroglyphic script was absent from the pair quarried in Roman Egypt on the orders of Caligula as it was on the shaft of the obelisk he had brought from Alexandria which had been quarried on the orders of an unknown pharaoh. The way in which aspects of manufacture and transport were used as meaning markers for obelisks is something I will consider shortly, but at this point I would suggest that the essence of all the obelisks was seen to be Egyptian and that this meaning acted as the core on which additional meanings were hung.

Information about obelisks as an Egyptian phenomenon was available to the audience as part of the existing horizon of assumptions about Egypt. For example, Strabo's (17.1) account of the obelisks at Thebes described how the obelisks carried inscriptions which spoke of the military might of the pharaohs, the size of their dominion beyond the boundaries of their Nile Valley kingdom, the tribute they

could command from these lands and the great wealth of the royal house. Pliny (36.14) notes that obelisks carry inscriptions in the 'Egyptian language' and an example of Roman visual representation of this language can be seen on a small (1.6cm by 1.3cm) Sardonyx gemstone (figure 8.3) from imperial Rome. The natural colouration within the stone has been used to highlight the obelisk, around which race three biga (two-horse) chariots. The obelisk is shown standing in isolation without any of the circus infrastructure which usually forms a part of such scenes (see figures 8.11, 8.12, 8.14, 8.23). The obelisk itself is engraved with a sistrum, a serpent and an ibis which suggest the role of symbols/signs in the ancient Egyptian written script, and how this might appear on the face of an obelisk in Rome.



Figure 8.3 Gem engraved with chariot race and obelisk (British Museum, G&R 1814,0704.1541)

In his account of obelisks, Pliny (36.14-15) also spoke about the monument's royal connections when he said that obelisks were raised by the pharaoh to demonstrate royal power. He explained how obelisks functioned as religious monuments; formed in the shape of a sunbeam and raised in the precincts of solar temples. Pliny (36.64) again emphasised the solar association when he commented that the pink/red colour of the granite from which obelisks were cut was crucial to how they should be understood since it was the colour of the sun. Such information meant that obelisks arrived in Rome with an existing set of potential meanings attached to them. This offered, for example, an opportunity to demonstrate how the

Egyptian solar deities were now drawn into the Roman pantheon, their sacred monuments re-dedicated to the service of the Roman god Sol.

Obelisks also offered an opportunity for the Roman producer to draw on existing understanding to convey meaning specific to the times, for example as seen in the previous chapter with the use of obelisks by Augustus to signal the conclusion of the recent civil wars in favour of himself and to the advantage of the Roman people on whose behalf he conquered Egypt. Both these actions in turn drew on the practice of using material culture to convey information about the successes and intentions of the governing authority. I will now consider how aspects of this practice, in combination with current social concerns, offer a way to elucidate how the Roman audience responded to obelisks, beginning with the local topography of each obelisk.

8.4 Topography

The landscape within which an obelisk stood, together with public understanding of these spaces, provided a physical context for the viewing audience. Producers were able to make use of this context to emphasise a particular meaning for each obelisk. At the same time, it is important to remember that meanings ascribed to a monument can be 'multilayered and polysemic' (Clarke 2003:17) and as such any reading of a monument has the potential to differ from the intended imperial message. How a viewer responded to an encounter with an obelisk drew on that viewer's prior knowledge and existing self-identity, whilst simultaneously having the ability to add to each of these (Elsner 1995:4-5, 19). Obelisks placed in public spaces played a role in constructing the identity of Rome as a city, an identity which cut across local loyalties or associations (Bert Lott 2004:4-5; Lomas 2003:28), and the specific landscapes in which obelisks stood and the public use of these landscapes had an major impact on how they were understood.

Ancient Rome is often presented as a single continuous urban space (Witcher 2013:205). In reality what Romans would have seen as the urban centre of their city was much smaller than that of the modern city. The ancient urban heartland of Rome was surrounded by a suburban hinterland which only gradually came to be assimilated into the expanding central zone. This distinction between the dense

central area of Rome and the less populated, more open suburban regions which lay on the outskirts of the ancient city is an important one to bear in mind when attempting to elucidate audience understanding of the obelisks and aspects of this distinction arise as part of any consideration of the chosen location for an individual obelisk. For example, the area in which the Ara Pacis and obelisk1 were sited was a large, open space. There is currently no evidence of Augustan urban development in a 600m (NE-SW) x 150m (NW-SE) rectangle around these monuments and this possibly extending much farther, especially in the east-west direction (Frischer 2017:13).

The locations of the first five obelisks raised in Rome were all publically accessible. Obelisks 1, 4 and 5 stood on the Campus Martius in association with recent imperial 'new-builds'. Obelisk 1 occupied a large civic space through which people moved to access other parts of the Campus and which would have carried its own inherent sense of ownership and authority (Smith 2008:220). The vast pavement which lay to the north of the obelisk was inlaid with bronze markers and functioned as the area across which the shadow of the obelisk moved daily. The pavement was open for the passage of people who would have been able to observe and physically walk across the shadow cast by the obelisk. Obelisks 4 and 5 stood in association with the Mausoleum of Augustus, a structure granted public access when Augustus opened the groves and walks around it to the public (Suetonius *Augustus* 100.4). Obelisks 2 and 3 both stood in circus structures subject to recent imperial development. The layout of a circus meant that the audience for these monuments was to some extent determined by the nature of activity in the arena on particular dates, although in both cases the precise circumstances of each circus in the early imperial period meant that a high level of general public visibility was accorded to each of the circus obelisks, as will be discussed in further detail below. In the mind of the producer, the shared experience of encountering obelisks in public spaces would hopefully create a sense of common understanding, elucidated and augmented by the wider landscape in which the obelisk, and indeed the audience itself, stood. I would now like to look at how the immediate topography of each obelisk 'staged' the monuments for the audience.

8.4.1 Campus Martius

Four of the five obelisks raised in the early imperial period stood on the Campus Martius. Originally used for pasture and military training, building plots started to be sold on the southern edge of the Campus around 100 BC By the time of the late Republic the southern area contained temples, porticos, Pompey's theatre and private housing development, much of it unauthorised, while the northern side remained an open civic space (Davies 2000:19; Jacobs and Conlin 2014:11-12; Platner and Ashby 1929:93). Although the area fell within the 14 administrative city regions established by Augustus (Richardson 1992:6; figure 8.4), geographically it lay outside the traditional heart of the city and the city's ancient Servian Wall which was maintained throughout the Republican and early imperial period even as the city started to expand beyond it. The Campus was to remain outside the city walls until enclosed by the Aurelian Walls between AD 271 and 275 (Platner and Ashby 1929:93).

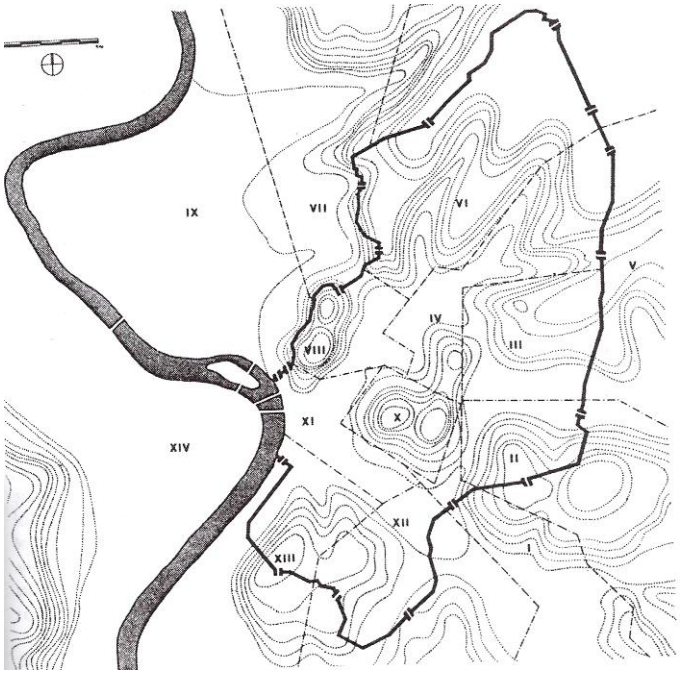


Figure 8.4 Fourteen Augustan regions of Rome (Drawing by R. Reif)
The Campus Martius lay in Region IX

The Campus Martius also lay beyond the religious confines of the city; outside Rome's sacred boundary known as the *pomerium*. In legal terms, Rome only existed within the *pomerium* with everything beyond simply land which belonged to Rome (Livy *Ab urbe condita* 1.44). The *pomerium* was expanded by Claudius in AD 49

(Tacitus *Annals* 12.24) after which it was subject to a number of further expansions until a final extension under the emperor Aurelian around AD 271-275 (Platner and Ashby 1929:393-396). During the Republican period the Campus Martius, with its status as public land outside the *pomerium*, became a place of assembly for Roman citizens (Dionysius of Halicarnassus 4.22; Livy 1.44) in their military capacity as an army and in their civil capacity as the *comitia centuriata* who voted for the city's magistrates (Grandazzi 2013:22). By the late Republic, key public structures were confined to the far south of the Campus Martius with the Theatre of Pompey lying furthest north (figure 8.5).



Figure 8.5 Map of Rome in 52 BC (Drawing by R. Reif and R.H. Abramson)

A coeval account of the Campus Martius is given by Strabo (5.3.8) who comments that it was able to accommodate chariot-races, other equestrian events and a multitude of people 'ball-playing, hoop-trundling, and wrestling'. He likened the Campus to a stage-set in which the natural beauty of the space was augmented by the building work undertaken by Augustus and his family; a notion reflected by modern scholars such as Hope (2000:70) who describes the Campus Martius as the 'perfect display area' for the new regime, while Jacobs and Conlin (2014:4) see it as 'a showcase for imperial architecture'.

Rehak (2009:8) notes that none of the early imperial elements on the Campus Martius were new to Rome; which already contained sundials, tombs and altars. In addition, events held on the Campus often involved the construction of temporary structures such as the stages and arenas build for festival or votive games (Palmer 1990:15-16, 27-28). What was different about the construction projects undertaken by Augustus was the scale and permanence of the structures, which were clearly intended to surpass existing buildings in the area. For example, the pediment of the Temple of Venus Victrix on top of Pompey's Theatre (dedicated in 55 BC) was 40m high making it the tallest structure on the Campus Martius until the construction of the Mausoleum of Augustus to the north (Rehak 2009:19). In addition, if Rome had seen a sundial before, the use an Egyptian obelisk as the gnomon for the one laid out by Augustus ensured that one of such magnitude was unprecedented in the city.

The location chosen for obelisk 1 also placed it close to another prominent Augustan structure in the northern sector of the Campus, the Ara Pacis which stood on the edge of a natural terrace with steps connecting its western entrance to the paved area around obelisk 1 (Kleiner and Buxton 2008:58). The Ara Pacis (figure 8.6), was consecrated on 30 January 9 BC suggesting that construction was taking place as obelisk 1 was raised nearby. For the audience the two monuments entered the public landscape of Rome almost simultaneously, 18 years after the construction of the Mausoleum of Augustus which lay approximately 700m to the north of obelisk 1. The obelisk and Ara Pacis were thus nearer to the city centre but still at this time in an open, unpopulated civic space. The position lay alongside the Via Flaminia, the main route in and out of the city to the north since 220 BC and the road selected by Augustus as a personal project during the road improvement works he ordered across the Italian peninsula (Suetonius *Augustus* 30.1). It therefore seems safe to assume that this particular area of the city's hinterland would be seen by the audience as a focus for recent imperial construction projects which served to create an imperial capital worthy of its position at the centre of a growing empire. The area lay close to the main river route into the city. Despite works undertaken in 54 BC to reinforce the river banks adjacent to the Campus Martius (Palmer 1990:60), the area remained prone to flooding (Suetonius *Augustus* 28.3). The erection of obelisk 1 on low lying, frequently flooded, ground might have been seen by the audience as a

technological achievement. However, Pliny's comment (36.15) that 30 years later its time telling function was no longer accurate suggests subsidence due to the instability of the floodplain on which it stood. I will return to the theme of how obelisks might have engaged the audience with matters of technology later.



Figure 8.6 The reassembled Ara Pacis in its modern museum setting (Museo dell'Ara Pacis, Rome)

In contrast to the 'imported' pink/red granite of obelisk 1, the Ara Pacis was built from marble cut from the quarries at Luna (modern Carrara) which had expanded massively to meet the demands of Augustan construction projects in Rome (Pollini 2012:46). The block colour of the red granite obelisk would have been a visual contrast to the brightly painted surface of the Ara Pacis. The walls around the central altar were 6.1m in height which, even taking into account the three stepped plinth on which the whole structure stood, was a significant difference in height compared to the nearby obelisk which stood at least 21.97m tall. For the audience there would also be an historic and artistic contrast between the traditional Roman style of the newly built Ara Pacis and the discernibly Egyptian style of the newly arrived, yet already ancient, obelisk. Furthermore, each monument spoke to a different religious tradition - the Ara Pacis celebrating Roman civic religion while the obelisk acted as a symbol of Egyptian solar worship.

All these points of diversity were pulled together and given a sense of order for the audience by the arrangement of the contrasting structures within a shared space.

It is likely that the audience would have been expected to read intertextual links between the two monuments. For example, on one of the external walls of the Ara Pacis, Augustus is shown with his family (figure 8.7). Within this group individuals are arranged according to their relative position as an heir to Augustus suggesting the notion of an inherited imperial throne (Zanker 1988:123); an idea which links across to the royal association of the nearby Egyptian obelisk. Meanwhile, the obelisk as a religious monument, the celebration of Roman civic religion on the Ara Pacis and the Latin inscription which dedicated the obelisk to the Roman sun deity Sol, speak to how the audience should see the religions of the provinces being drawn into the embrace of the Roman religious world view.



Figure 8.7 Members of the imperial family on the Ara Pacis (Museo dell'Ara Pacis, Rome)

It seems likely that the marble for the Ara Pacis (shipped down the coast from the north-west of the Italian peninsula) and the Egyptian granite of the obelisk and its base (shipped across the Mediterranean Sea) would have shared a common final stage on their journey up the river Tiber to Rome, heightening the sense that a newly imperial Rome was able to draw in resources from near and far in the service of the imperial capital. Other readings around the transport of obelisks will emerge later when I look at the logistics involved in moving an obelisk from Egypt to Rome.

Obelisks 4 and 5 stood in front of the Mausoleum of Augustus (figure 8.8). Iversen (1968:51) believes that the bottom of each obelisk was set into a bronze

postament atop a marble base. The postament and base gave the obelisks greater height since, at 14.64m and 14.75m respectively, they were noticeably shorter than the nearby obelisk 1 which stood at least 21.79m tall (Iversen 1968:65). This modification would have made the pair more in proportion to the overall scale of the structure before which they stood, and it seems likely that the obelisks on their postaments would have topped the wall which encircled the inner Mausoleum structure. The tapering shape of the obelisks would have mirrored the outline of the black poplar trees planted at the nearby Ustrinum (Strabo 5.3.8); which probably also grew in the groves surrounding the Mausoleum. In addition, the comment by Strabo (17.1) that obelisks stood near the royal tombs at Thebes would have generated a sense amongst the audience that these monuments had existing associations with elite places of burial.

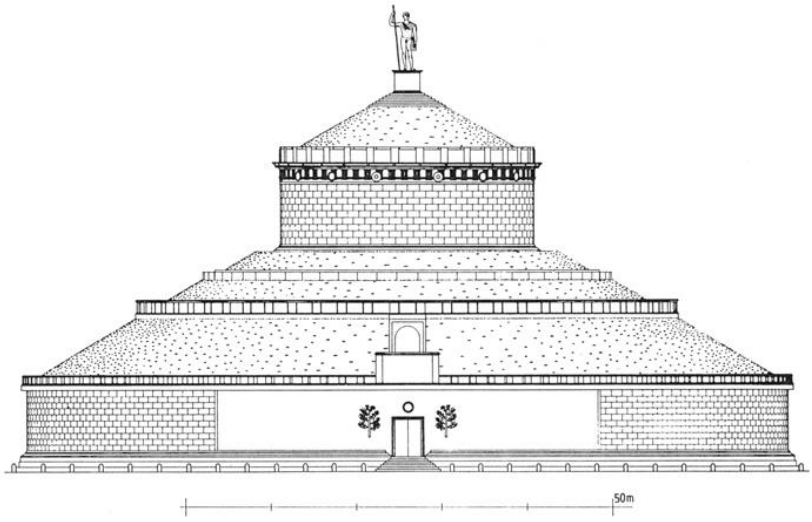


Figure 8.8 Reconstruction of the Mausoleum of Augustus (Drawing by H. Von Hesberg)

Any cognitive relationship between obelisk 1, the Ara Pacis and the Mausoleum of Augustus seems to be reflected in the spatial, and specifically geometric, relationship between the three monuments. Thus, the base of obelisk 1 sat at the apex of a right angle which ran north to the Mausoleum and east to the Ara Pacis (figure 8.9). The lack of other monumental structures in the area during Augustan times (La Rocca 2014:123) would have served to emphasise the lines of sight and intervisibility between the three structures. This intervisibility would have been particularly striking for any viewer standing next to, or between, any of the monuments.

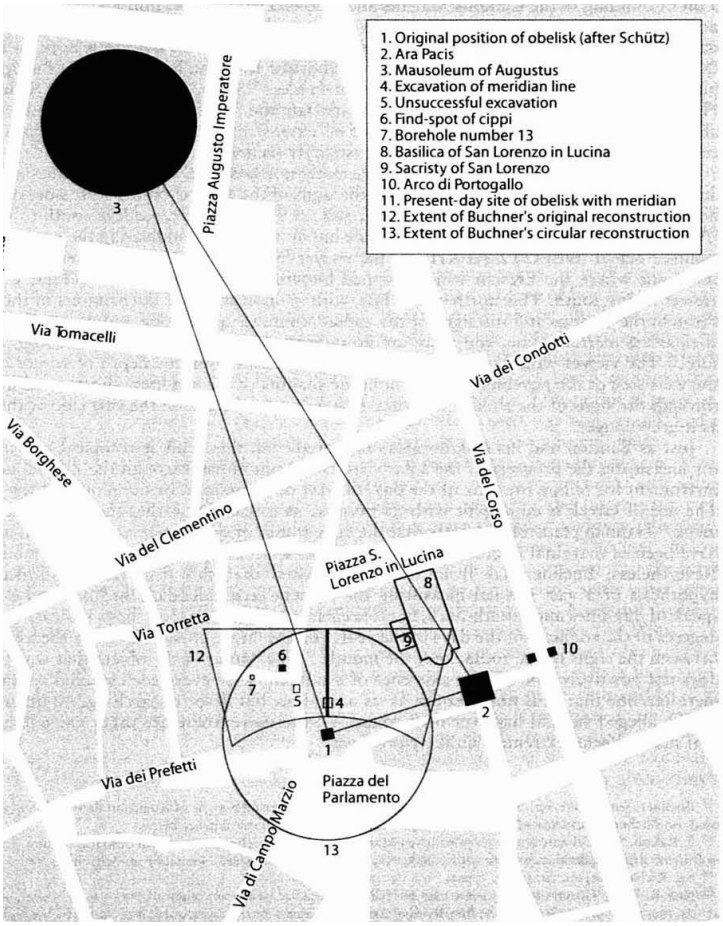


Figure 8.9 Diagram showing the angle of alignment between obelisk 1, the Ara Pacis and the Mausoleum of Augustus (Plan by P. Heslin)

Rocca (2015:125-129) believes that this spatial relationship can be extended southward to draw in the Pantheon temple in the central region of the Campus Martius. The Pantheon was commissioned by Marcus Agrippa, a leading Roman politician and close ally of Augustus, and dedicated around 27 BC (Favro 2005:242). The original Pantheon was destroyed, along with other buildings, in a huge fire in AD 80. The emperor Domitian rebuilt the Pantheon, which was burnt again in AD 110 before a major reconstruction project under the emperor Hadrian (MacDonald 1976:13; Opper 2008:111). La Rocca (2014:132) believes that the area between the Mausoleum of Augustus and the Pantheon was kept intentionally clear of monuments after both buildings were finished (28 and 27 BC respectively) with a relative consistency in ground levels across this area; suggesting that a close connection between the two buildings was intended. The Pantheon was orientated

towards the north facing the Mausoleum of Augustus with the axis of both buildings in approximate alignment (figure 8.10). The entrance porch of the Agrippan Pantheon was about 43m wide and faced towards the entrance of the Mausoleum which stood about 8000m to the north (Opper 2008:112-114). The alignment of the two entrance areas was not perfect, and it is possible that the travertine pavement in front of the Mausoleum of Augustus was laid to enhance the connecting axis running from the Mausoleum to the Pantheon and act as a form of 'optical correction' (La Rocca 2014:128-131).

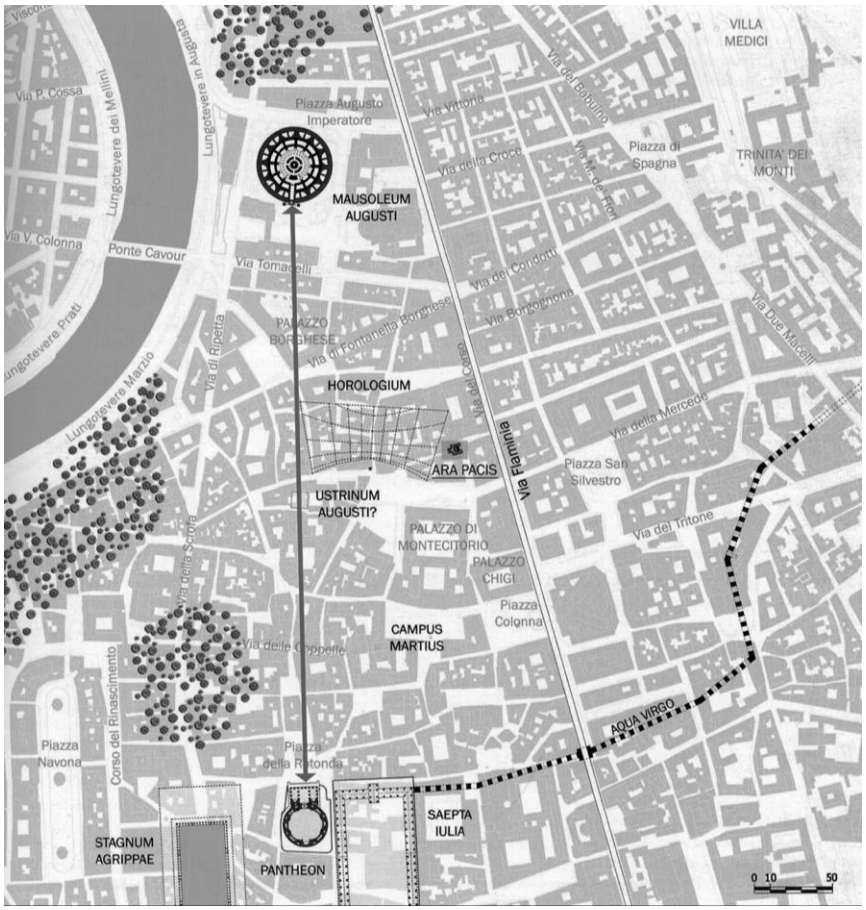


Figure 8.10 Axial alignment of the Pantheon and the Mausoleum of Augustus (Archivio della Sovraintendenza dei Beni Culturali di Roma Capitale)

Obelisk 1 stood approximately 50m to the east of the proposed sightline between the Pantheon and Mausoleum of Augustus. This means that although there is intervisibility between the three structures, the obelisk does not fall on the projected axial alignment of the two earlier buildings. In combination with the Ara Pacis,

obelisk 1 therefore seems to sit as part of a 'sub-group' of monuments in the northern region of the Campus Martius. For the audience this could suggest a distinctly Augustan construction project within the Campus, which was set away from the earlier group of buildings to the south commissioned by Agrippa - the Saepta Julia, the Baths of Agrippa and of course the Pantheon - which all dated to the mid 20s BC (Platner and Ashby 1929: 460, 518).

The other Augustan obelisk, obelisk 2, arrived in Rome at the same time as obelisk 1. It too was raised on the Campus Martius, south of the Augustan period complex discussed above, on the spina of the extant Circus Maximus. Obelisk 3 was also raised in a circus context and I will therefore discuss audience response to both these obelisks in relation to the specific structure with which they were mostly closely associated in the mind of the audience – the Roman circus, specifically the Circus Maximus and the Circus Vaticanus.

8.4.2 Circuses

The Circus Maximus in the southern section of the Campus Maritus was host to obelisk 2. The structure, a sports arena from Etruscan times and a venue for Roman games since 366 BC (Livy 1.56), was the first in Rome and remained the largest of its type throughout the imperial period. The site had sacred associations dating back to the traditional founding of Rome. It seems likely that the cult of the sun was linked with the Circus Maximus from early on and during the imperial period the sun deity Apollo was declared the arena's patron god (Humphrey 1986:63, 91, 260). Obelisk 2 stood on the arena spina in the company of a number of existing shrines and sacred statues. This position, in combination with the dedication of the obelisk to the Roman sun god Sol, would have enabled the audience to read the original role of the obelisk within the Egyptian sun cult as being drawn into the service of the Roman solar deities by an emperor who sought to imbue his own rule with heliacal qualities.

Raised seating was first added around the arena by the late Roman kings (Livy 1.35.8-9). Under Augustus the whole race circuit was enclosed with wooden seating which was later rebuilt in stone by Trajan (Humphrey 1986:73-74). The Augustan

Circus Maximus had a capacity of around 150,000 spectators although the total number of people with sight of the obelisk during a circus event may have reached up to 385,000 if those able to view the arena from the slopes of the Palatine and Aventine Hills are included (Humphrey 1986:76-77, 126). There must have been clear lines of sight since Suetonius (*Augustus* 45.1) notes that Augustus would sometimes watch the games from a friend's house on one of the hills. Furthermore, the location of the Circus at the bottom of a valley which ran several kilometres into the city (Aldrete 2004:14), meant that the structure and its interior would have been permanently visible from some areas of the city. Under Caligula the number of festivals during which races at the Circus took place increased (Barrett 1989:73), with a corresponding rise in the number of occasions on which the audience found themselves in close proximity to obelisk 2.

In addition to being a constant part of the landscape and a venue for high profile events, the Roman circus was also a point of passage for processions (Beacham 1999:20). Dionysius of Halicarnassus (7.72-73) describes how processions to open the games moved through the city from the Capitol Hill, across the Forum and onwards to the circus. The circus thus became a destination space into which the audience flowed after an orchestrated movement of people and objects (such as the statues of deities carried into the arena to 'watch' the games). For obelisk 2 in the Circus Maximus, this process would have resonated with the earlier use of the Campus Martius as the location for audiences given to foreign ambassadors (Livy 30.21.12, 33.24.5) but this time with the obelisk cast as the emissary of a conquered kingdom and the Roman people as the representatives of the conquering imperial power. It would also have reminded the audience of the initial act of moving the obelisk itself into the arena - the logistics and spectacle of which are discussed shortly.

A bronze coin issued in AD 103 to commemorate the emperor Trajan's work on the Circus Maximus, suggests how obelisk 2 would have appeared in relation to the circus structure (figure 8.11). The view on the coin is from the Palatine Hill and emphasises recent work on the northeast wall of the Circus. Within the design the extant obelisk seems to overshadow the new outer wall, suggesting that the height of

the obelisk was a key aspect within the circus structure for the viewing audience. It also suggests that any regulation of the available lines of sight across the arena, as determined by the designation of specific seating to particular social groups (Humphrey 1986:77), would have been of little importance given the size and central position of the obelisk. The design also suggests that the obelisk stood taller than the other upright features on the spina – the metae. These turning posts at each end of the arena consisted of three tufa cones set on a high base to create a clear landmark for the charioteers as they lapped the arena (Humphrey 1986:255). Interestingly, the obelisk appears to be surmounted by a human figure rather than the actual apex of a gilded bronze ball and pointer. It is almost as if the bronze figure of Augustus has moved from the Mausoleum of Augustus to the Circus Maximus and may indicate the degree to which obelisk 2 had become associated with the imperial personage by the time of Trajan.



Figure 8.11 Bronze coin (reverse) issued by Trajan, AD 103 (British Museum, BMC 853)

The motif of an obelisk in a circus setting also featured on other small scale Roman objects. In some cases it would be more accurate to speak of a circus arena featuring an obelisk, since a specific circus was not always named. Instead, the motif of circus and obelisk appears to have become a visual trope representing the concept of the energetic circus arena in Roman city life. This seems particularly apt for a set

of bronze strigils (figure 8.12); objects closely associated with personal grooming after bathing and exercise (regardless of whether that exertion was nominal or actual). On the front of each strigil (length 22.86cm) a charioteer races a two-horse ‘biga’ chariot towards the end of a circus spina (figure 8.13). On the other side (not shown) the spina is shown with a circular domed temple, an altar with the goddess Cybele and a lion, an obelisk and another altar.



Figure 8.12 Set of three bronze strigils (British Museum, G&R 1856.1226.889; 1856.1226.890; 1856.1226.891)



Figure 8.13 Detail of handle of bronze strigil (British Museum, G&R 1856.1226.891)

Another type of personal object which might feature a circus scene was the small gemstone set into finger rings, and pieces engraved with a circus scene were popular throughout the imperial period (Spier1992:5). The oval shaped stone shown in figure 8.14 is cut from jasper and measures 1.5cm by 1.2cm. It is engraved with a race between a group of four-horse ‘quadriga’ chariots. The scene shows the chariots

racing down one side of the circus spina. The spina is shown full length an obelisk standing half way along the barrier. These circus scenes were usually engraved on red, rather than yellow or green, jasper. The association already established between the red/pink of the obelisk granite and the sun may thus extend out into the solar association of the circus and the colour of the gemstone. On this particular piece, the arena architecture reflects the location of obelisk 2 in the Circus Maximus. In addition, the figures on the spina could well represent the statues of Cybele and Nike known to stand in the Circus Maximus, and which therefore potentially identify the specific circus featured (Spier1992:114-115).



Figure 8.14 Gem engraved with circus chariot race scene (British Museum, G&R 1923,0401.265)

The audience for the other obelisk raised as part of a circus structure in the early imperial period is less clear-cut. The Circus Vaticanus in which obelisk 3 stood, was built on the west side of the river Tiber and lay further away from the centre of Rome than any other sporting arena. The Circus appears to have been conceived by Caligula as a chariot racing arena for his personal use and is often described as a 'private' arena in modern works (Humphrey 1986:550; Platner and Ashby 1929:113, 264-265). This suggests that Caligula was engaging in a private dialogue with the elite/imperial household who presumably constituted the majority of his immediate audience at the Circus Vaticanus. This reflects the producer motivation discussed for Caligula in the previous chapter whereby Caligula can be seen to use obelisks to address recent events in the history of the imperial family and establish his own

imperial credentials as the ‘true heir’ of Augustus. At the same time the open nature of the local topography around obelisk 3 would have enabled visual assess to the obelisk to anybody in the locality.

The Circus Vaticanus was located alongside the now lost Via Cornelia which branched off the Via Aurelia, the main route in and out of Rome to the west (Spinola 2014:17-18). The location meant it would have been visually accessible to anybody travelling across the Tiber between Rome and the west coast of the Italian peninsula. In addition, this area of Rome’s hinterland included the gardens of Julius Caesar which had been made public under the terms of his will in 44 BC, and thus a public destination from this year onwards (Cassius Dio 44.35; Suetonius *Caesar* 83). During Caligula’s reign there seems to have been little formal circus architecture associated with the arena. This would have made obelisk 3, the tallest standing in Rome at this time, visible for some distance. In addition, it seems likely that when the obelisk was erected there would have been lines of sight across the river Tiber between it and obelisk 1 on the Campus Martius (figure 8.15, buildings constructed between Vatican Hill and river Tiber post AD 40 removed).

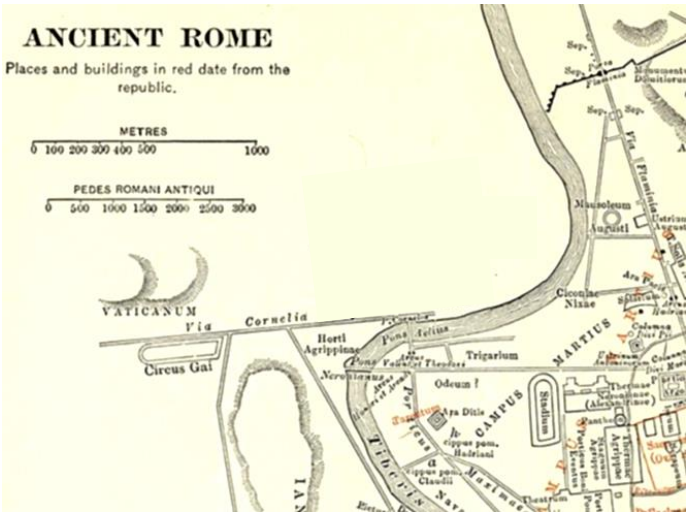


Figure 8.15 Detail of map of ancient Rome showing northwest region of the city (Platner 1911)

Pliny (36.14) claimed that obelisk 3 was made by ‘Nencoreus, son of Sesostris’ although, as the obelisk carries no Egyptian inscription, it is unknown which pharaoh commissioned it. Pliny, however, was obviously keen to ascribe it a

pharaonic creator, presumably to accord with those already named for obelisks 1 and 2 in his narrative. Pliny (36.14) also says that another obelisk quarried on the orders of 'Nencoreus' still stood in Egypt. This obelisk he said was '100 cubits' (45.72m) tall and dedicated to the Egyptian sun god, a clear reference to the solar association of the obelisk in their original location. Once more a coeval account served to emphasise the royal and religious aspects of an obelisk. Thus, for the audience the producer may have changed, but the way in which they might be expected to view any meaning which the obelisk brought with it from Egypt had not. If the core essence of an obelisk during the early imperial period seemed to rest on a dual identity as a political and sacred monument, how might individual elements of an obelisk, in particular any modifications made on its arrival in Rome, have been read by the audience? How did the audience start to understand the obelisk as a Roman monument?

8.5 Obelisks as monuments

The Roman poet Horace (*Odes* 3.30.1-9), writing at the end of the first century BC, suggested that if prominent monuments survived long enough they would preserve the fame of the commemorated and act like mnemonics to trigger memories and speech. This is an interesting point to consider across the whole of the imperial period, particularly as obelisks begin to be re-appropriated by later emperors or extant examples support the appropriation of a new example. But, how can we see this starting to happen as the first obelisks arrive in Rome? How would the audience, as they entered the visual field for each obelisk, start to make sense of what they saw and how would they 'read' the monument(s) before them?

Making use of existing Roman practice offered the producer of a cultural object a shortcut to accessing viewer understanding; an unfamiliar form operating in a familiar role. It could also help integrate monuments into the city landscape. In relation to the obelisk, the nature of this Egyptian object fulfilled many of the criteria expected of any monument in Rome: they stood in public spaces controlled by the ruling authorities, were erected by the elite, and carried inscriptions (Favro 1996:5; Smith 2008:220; Vogel 1973:27). In particular I would suggest that the arrival of an obelisk in a public space would fit with the audience's previous

experience of a common type of city monument - the statue. During the Republic and into the early imperial period, a statue of a particular individual could enter the landscape of Rome on the back of senatorial or popular demand, at the request of an emperor or as the result of a leading citizen commissioning a statue (Francis 2003:586). Statues could also be removed from public areas in order to make space or to obscure an honour conferred on an individual by removing the physical reminder embodied in the statue (Edwards 2003:47-48).

Alongside statues commissioned locally, the audience would also have experienced the arrival of statues from demonstrably, and indeed deliberately, external sources. A key mechanism for this was the Roman triumph whereby military victory was celebrated with a parade of soldiers, captives and war booty. In Republican Rome the focus of the triumph was the victorious general who assumed on the day of the triumph a position close to that of a deity (Beard 2007:30, 72-75). From an assembly point on the Campus Martius the parade moved through the city to the temple of Jupiter on the Capitol Hill where the victory and its spoils were dedicated to the Roman Senate, people and gods. The last triumph in honour of a private citizen was that awarded to Balbus in 19 BC following military success in North Africa. After this, triumphs were reserved for victorious members of the imperial family (Flory 1998:490; Grimal and Woloch 1983:90; Sumi 2005:247-248) with Augustus himself refusing all triumphs awarded to him by the Senate after 29 BC (Hickson 1991:125). During a triumph, statues from the conquered territories were carried through the streets before being publically displayed with an explanatory Latin inscription to remind the audience of Rome's military might and superiority over other peoples (Edwards 2003:49-51). It is a practice which would have supported audience understanding of the first two obelisks to arrive in Rome both in relation to their transport from Egypt to the city of Rome and the subsequent application of Latin inscriptions. In addition, obelisks 1 and 2 both stood on the Campus Martius at the starting point of the triumph route almost as if they awaited entry to the city.

Augustus claimed in the opening line of his *Res Gestae* that he had brought the whole world under Roman rule, and the arrival of foreign objects in Rome has been

seen by modern scholars as a way of demonstrating to a local audience how the territory controlled by the city grew as distant borders expanded. Thus Edwards and Woolf (2003:2) speak of the display of captured objects as a way to show how their homelands were being 'absorbed' while Carey (2000:4) sees it as a process whereby the world was 'replicated' in Rome. Similarly Takács (1995:270-271) believes that the public display of Egyptian style objects was a step in the process of making Egypt part of the 'Roman public world'. Following his military victory in Egypt, Augustus issued a coin (figure 8.16) proclaiming AEGYPTO CAPTA ('Egypt has been captured'). It is important to remember that while the coin was issued in 28 BC, the first obelisks did not arrive in Rome until 9 BC. It has already been suggested that this may well have been more of a commemorative event than a direct response to the immediate aftermath of Roman victory, and again urges caution over seeing the obelisks simply as military trophies. Thus, while one reading of the obelisk was almost certainly linked to military success and territorial expansion, it is important to consider the longer term presence of the obelisks as permanent monuments whose erection in Rome also involved permanent modifications which aimed to augment audience understanding of these cultural objects.



Figure 8.16 Silver coin (observe and reverse) issued by Augustus, 28 BC (British Museum, BM 1866,1201.4189)

8.5.1 Modifications

All five obelisks in this case-study underwent some level of modification as they entered the Roman landscape. In this section I will consider any structural

modifications made as the obelisk was placed in its new location (for example setting it on a base) and any motifs added to the body of the obelisk (such as the bronze fittings added to the top of several obelisks). The use of inscriptions in association with the obelisks will be addressed separately.

Obelisks 1 and 2 were both raised on stone bases. This base carried an inscription in Latin (repeated on opposite sides of the base). These two obelisks already carried hieroglyphic text on all four sides of their shafts and one function of the base must have been to create a stone surface for the Latin text to be 'added' to the monument. The base also acted as a pedestal which served to cast the obelisks as 'displayed' objects in line with the notion of Rome acquiring and curating the world discussed previously. In addition, the use of a base recalled for the audience the manner in which Roman statues were traditionally presented, often with an inscription relating to the statue carved into the monolithic stone base (Højte 2005:19, 28). This can be seen on a silver coin issued in Rome in 16 BC which shows an equestrian statue of Augustus on a base (figure 8.17). The coin's Latin inscription SPQR / IMP / CAES (The Senate and the Roman People; leader of the army; Caesar) has been carefully added to the front face of the base in manner which seeks to replicate the text carried on many statue bases.



Figure 8.17 Silver coin (reverse) issued in Rome, 16 BC (British Museum, C&M 1904,0204.140)

Obelisk 3 was raised on the same set of three granite blocks used as a base when it was first raised by the Romans in Alexandria - the blocks having been transported alongside the obelisk shaft when it was brought to Rome by Caligula. This base was placed on a white marble slab set directly into the surface of the arena of the Circus Vaticanus (Castagnoli 1959:97; Humphrey 1986:549). This marble slab would have presented a strong colour contrast not only to the earth around it but also the pink/red granite of the obelisk and base resting on it. In the case of obelisk 3 no Latin inscription was added to the base by Caligula. Instead, the surface of the obelisk itself was subject to a process of inscription removal, as discussed in the producer chapter. The re-use of the extant base was both logistically expedient and an easy way to replicate the presentation of obelisk 2 in the nearby Circus Maximus. I would suggest that this action can be seen as an early example of internal appropriation. Thus, the audience would have encountered a newly arrived obelisk presented in a manner to which they were already visually accustomed by the nearby example of the same type of monument standing in the same type of structure for the previous thirty years.

This arrangement of standing an 'Egyptian' obelisk on a 'Roman' base can be seen on a fragment of Roman cameo glass (figure 8.18). The surviving piece of glass measures only 3.9cm by 2.1cm and was probably originally part of a small cylindrical drinking vessel. The fragment shows the bottom of what appears to be a vertical, rectangular shaped pillar resting on a square plinth. Immediately below the base, horizontal lines might represent part of a base plinth or the surface on which the base sat. Markings on the pillar are generally interpreted as representing Egyptian hieroglyphs and the pillar itself as an obelisk (Van Aerde 2013:11). If so, the correlation with the presentation of obelisks 1 and 2 as they were raised in Rome is striking. The fragment is currently dated to AD 1-25 which again suggests the possibility that it shows an Augustan period obelisk. The piece would thus act as a transfer vehicle circulating the presence and appearance of Egyptian obelisks in Rome amongst the Roman elite; the sector of society most likely to own such a fine piece of glassware.



Figure 8.18 Cameo glass fragment, AD 1-25 (British Museum, G&R 1982,0404.1)

Obelisks 4 and 5 flanked the entrance of the Mausoleum of Augustus. They each stood on a marble base with a bronze postament supporting the shaft (Iversen 1968:51). This arrangement would have created a tier of three contrasting materials, namely white marble, bronze and red granite. Favro (2005:254) suggests that the use of bronze architectural ornaments would have also conveyed a message of wealth and the superiority of the imperial state. The pyramidions of both obelisks were cut off, presumably to provide a platform for Roman fittings. Since the building before which they stood was topped with a larger than life bronze statue of Augustus, it seems fair to assume that the obelisks might also have been topped with bronze fittings. This would also accord with the bronze fitting added to the top of the nearby obelisk 1 - and indeed obelisks 2 and 3. If so, these fittings no longer exist nor are they recorded in any surviving accounts of the obelisks (Iversen 1968:47).

Obelisk 1 was topped with a gilded bronze ball inspired according to Pliny (36.15) by the shape of the head atop a human shadow. Alternatively, the ball can be read as an ‘appropriation’ symbol in line with Pliny’s comment that the world was a perfect sphere (2.2). In relation to the bronze ball on obelisk 1, Rehak (2009:92) suggests that it might have imitated the globe of the sun moving through the zodiac and thus Augustus exercising power over the cosmos. The audience would certainly have been aware of the motif of a sphere to represent the world. An example was another city monument – a statue of Julius Caesar standing on a bronze globe (Cassius Dio

43.14.6, 43.21.2) which had been erected on the Capitol Hill. The motif was also seen on coins issued by Augustus in Rome. On these the Roman personification of victory was often shown standing on a globe (figure 8.19); suggesting Rome's command over the world. In one case this arrangement is shown at the apex of a temple pediment (figure 8.20) similar to the way in which the bronze ball was mounted at the apex of obelisks 1, 2 and 3. In another design the motif is more closely associated with Augustus himself who is named next to the globe, rather than around the profile portrait, and referenced by his birth sign, the Capricorn (figure 8.21).



Figure 8.19 Gold coin (reserve) issued by Augustus, 27 BC (British Museum, C&M R.6012)



Figure 8.20 Silver coin (reserve) issued by Augustus, 29-27 BC (British Museum, C&M 1904,0203.1)



Figure 8.21 Silver coin (obverse and reverse) issued by Augustus, 29 BC (British Museum, C&M 1865,0809.3)

Obelisk 2 was similarly topped with a gilded bronze ball surmounted by a pointer. The repetition of apex fittings is reflected in the addition of identical inscriptions to the base of both obelisks suggesting that the audience were expected to see the first two obelisks as a pair. At first the pointer on top of obelisk 2 does not appear to have any obvious link to marking the passage of time in the way that the one added to obelisk 1 does. On obelisk 1 the pointer topped the shadow of the obelisk as it moved across the inscribed pavement laid out to the north of the monument. However, I would suggest that the open nature of the Circus Maximus meant that in the course of a day obelisk 2 would have cast a clear shadow across the floor of the arena and probably across some of the lower seating. The Circus itself was orientated north-west/south-east due to the natural contours of the land it occupied (figure 8.22). This meant that the shadow cast by the obelisk would have fallen on the arena to the west of the spina at the start of the day, and then moved clockwise to finish the day falling to the east towards the Palatine Hill. Humphrey (1986:270) and La Rocca (2014:144) suggest that this movement of the obelisk's shadow gave obelisk 2 a role as a gnomon as with obelisk 1. Certainly, on sunny days the shadow of obelisk 2 would have boldly traced the course of the day across the circus structure. On a race day, the day long journey of the shadow from one side of the arena to the other would have been in marked contrast to the rapid movement of the chariots lapping the arena at speed throughout the day (figure 8.23).

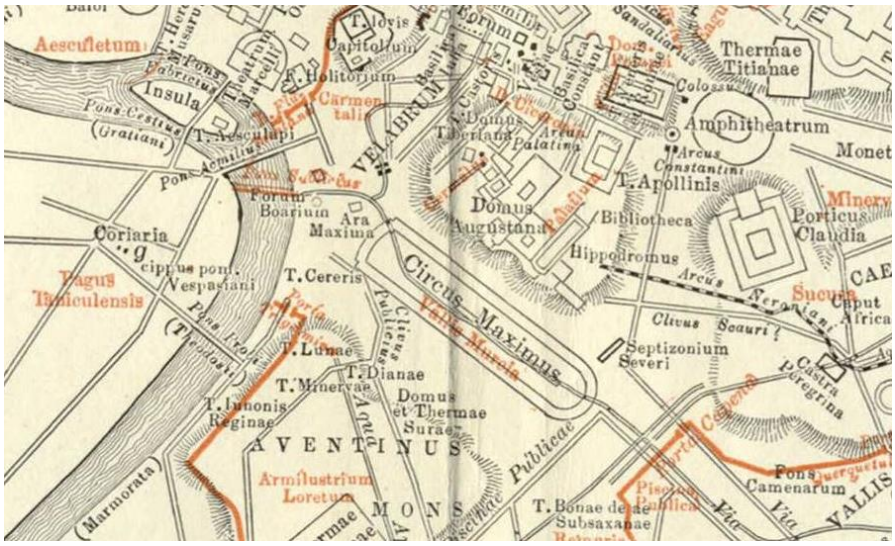


Figure 8.22 Detail of a map of ancient Rome showing location of the Circus Maximus (Platner 1911)



Figure 8.23 Bronze contorniate (reverse) showing a race in the Circus Maximus, AD 300s (British Museum, C&M R.5026)

The Circus Vaticanus meanwhile lay on an east-west orientation which meant that the shadow thrown by obelisk 3 moved clockwise from west to east on the north side of the spina. The orientation of the Circus pre-dated the arrival of the obelisk and when it was raised the structure was associated with little other built environment so it seems unlikely that there was any expectation that the shadow would direct attention toward a particular part of the local topography. Instead, the movement of the shadow would remind the audience of the shadow thrown by

obelisk 2 in the Circus Maximus and referenced the prominence given to the shadow casting role of obelisk 1. It is possible that for an audience who knew the history and function of sundials in their own city, and before that in Greece, (Pliny 7.213; Vitruvius 9) the conventional nodus-style appearance of obelisk 1 enabled the sun tracking possibilities of the other obelisks to be observed and understood despite the unconventional form of the surface that received the shadow in each case.

Obelisk 3 stood on four bronze astragali (knucklebone shaped supports) and was topped with a gilded bronze ball and bronze acanthus leaves. The acanthus leaf was a recurring motif on Corinthian capitals; a Greek style which could already be seen in Rome at the Temple of Mars Ultor, which had been dedicated in 2 BC in the Forum of Augustus (Wilson Jones 1989:47-48; 1991:125). The choice of the style can be seen as further emulation of Augustus by Caligula. For the audience it would 'dress' the obelisk with an apex fitting similar to those on obelisks 1 and 2. The gilded bronze fitting would have reflected light, serving to recall the solar attributes of an Egyptian obelisk and also mark the position of the monument in the landscape by virtue of a steady gleam or flashes of reflected light, as was also the case for obelisks 1 and 2.

This use of gilded bronze in association with a granite obelisk was augmented on obelisk 3 by the gilded bronze plates added to the shaft. All four sides of the shaft carry shallow depressions cut into the stone with rows of holes (probably for the nails which fixed the plates) indicating the position of the metal plates (Iversen 1968:26). It is not known when or where this work was undertaken although I would suggest that it was probably done around the same time as the unfinished work on the inscription since both operations involved cutting into the granite shaft. If so, this work would have taken place in a semi-public space and would have created a high level of noise. For the audience the appropriation of the obelisk was now confirmed by physical incursion which dramatically modified the appearance of the monument. The gilded bronze plates would have reflected light and may have been intended to enhance the solar association of the obelisk and increase the monument's visibility in the immediate locality and from the Campus Martius.

8.5.2 Inscriptions

The large number of Latin inscriptions dating from the late Republic demonstrates that epigraphy already played an important role in Roman culture as imperial rule emerged. Augustus confirmed epigraphy as part of imperial culture and the number of inscriptions set up each year began to rise dramatically during his rule (Alföldy 1991:322; Gordon et al. 1997:210; Woolf 1996:22). These inscriptions sat within the culture of Roman public writing alongside notices painted on walls, imperial decrees posted for public display and inscriptions on everyday objects (Woolf 1996:24). Inscriptions on a monument generated extra-textual cues prompted by the placement and layout of the inscription, the quality of the materials and the lettering, and its relation to other inscriptions or images (Steel 2006:42). So what might have been the 'expected' audience understanding of both the physical presence and the literary content of these inscriptions and how might the audience have responded to the Latin inscriptions associated with some of the obelisks in this period?

Woolf (1996:24-27) cautions against over privileging the written component of inscriptions. Not all Roman monuments were inscribed, and those that were did not necessarily afford the writing a prominent role. Similarly, Egyptian obelisks in Rome carried varied amounts and forms of script. The first two obelisks to arrive were already inscribed with Egyptian hieroglyphic text and both received additional Latin inscriptions on their new bases. Obelisk 3 was uninscribed with any Egyptian text and had already been the subject of Latin interventions before its arrival in Rome. This continued with the planned, if unfinished, erasure of the existing Latin inscription. Obelisks 4 and 5 had probably been recently quarried in Roman Egypt and carried no inscriptions when they left the province. In Rome they received no Latin inscription and stood as anepigraphic monuments throughout the imperial period.

Placing the Latin inscription on the north and south sides of the base of obelisk 1 not only served the interests of architectural symmetry, an important consideration for Roman architects (Vitruvius 3.1.1), but also meant that the inscription faced the audience as they approached from the city and simultaneously faced out across the

pavement where the obelisk's shadow fell. In a circus setting the seating for the senatorial class was at the front (Humphrey 1986:77). Thus the section of the audience most able to read an obelisk inscription (in this case obelisk 2) was allocated the seating nearest to it. However, as Cassiodorus (1.27) commented it was not 'exactly a congregation of Catos' which gathered at the circus and a similarly diverse cross section of the public could be expected to encounter the inscription on obelisk 1. The educated literacy level in the Roman empire was probably under 10% (Harris 1989:8, 22). For the remaining 90%, who could recognise but not fully comprehend Latin, one would expect the inscriptions to convey meaning in other ways. Dyson (2010:273) argues that while the level of literacy needed to read with confidence may have been limited, there was probably a fairly high level of functional literacy which allowed people to understand epigraphy, inscriptions and graffiti. Furthermore these inscriptions may well have been read aloud (Harris 1989:34-35; Steel 2006:25) and thus written information could enter the horizon of assumptions via spoken language.

The Latin text (Appendix A:1, 2; figure 8.24) added to obelisks 1 and 2 included formulaic elements such as ligatures (groups of letters represented with a single symbol) and abbreviations (for example the initials SPQR, the common abbreviation for S*enatus populous que Romanus*). These letter groups acted as symbols in their own right (Woolf 1996:28). Their use aided comprehension by reducing complex text to a standard set of letter based symbols. An example of this can be seen in the fourth line of the inscription which reads IMP.XII.COS.XI.TRIB.POT.XIV. In this line of text each of the three official titles mentioned is indicated by a standard abbreviation, one of which has already occurred in the first line. Including these offices in the text added to obelisks 1 and 2 followed the Roman practice of using monument inscriptions to give honorific titles a public presence. Writing thereby contributed to how a monument was read by communicating things not easily portrayed such as a name, a relationship or a sequence of offices held (Woolf 1996:28-29). In essence, the inscription which Augustus had added to the obelisks enabled him to allude to his existing political position, his dynastic aspirations, his military achievements on behalf of the Roman people and his religious authority all in seven short lines.

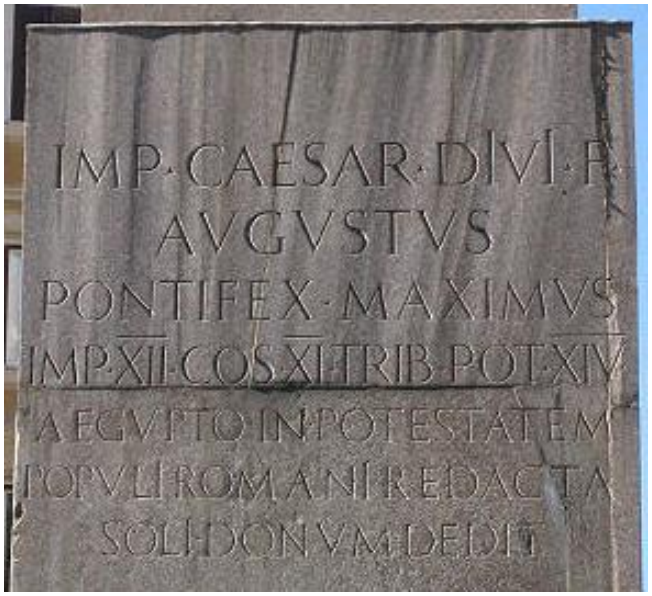


Figure 8.24 Latin inscription added to the base of obelisk 1

The allocation and recording of public office was also a way of marking the passage of time based on the number of occasions a public office had been held by an individual. During the Republic, new consuls took office at the beginning of the Roman year on 1 January and this created a dating system whereby any one year was associated with the office holders for that year (Beard 2013:162). Obelisk 1 thus combines elements of the traditional Roman way of measuring time and the method of measuring of time using natural events (in this case the apparent movement of the sun) with a sense of new times inherent in the creation of a civic space dedicated to a new type of ruler.

Another function of writing was to mark ownership (Harris 1989:26), in this case demonstrated by the application of Latin script to an obelisk/obelisk base as it entered the Roman social world. Key to this was the presence of Latin letters which would be recognised by the majority of the audience and the juxtaposition of hieroglyphic and Latin text - the latter superseding the former. This act reflected the extant practice, common across the ancient world, of re-dedicating objects when a new power gained control in a region. Habinek (1998:5-6) believes that use of the Latin language aimed to maintain Roman political dominance and elite cultural hegemony, if so the addition of Latin wording, regardless of its content, can be seen as an important part of the act of appropriation in its own right.

8.6 Moving the obelisks

Woolf (1996:31) argues that central to the use of monuments are their two qualities of durability and expense. In terms of durability an Egyptian obelisk in Rome was guaranteed to last the test of time. Granite was a hard stone, while the fittings added to some of the obelisks were made from the resilient alloy bronze. The expense of appropriating an obelisk lay not only in the value of these materials but also in the significant investment of skill, time and energy required to procure, transport and display an obelisk. In this way the obelisk could serve as a totem, the physical manipulation of which spoke to wider political actions or social concerns. As Bronkhorst (2013:97-98) comments the transport of an obelisk should not be seen purely as a functional process, but as an act with symbolic social aspects. So how might meaning start to generate around an obelisk even before it arrives at its final location in Rome and to what extent can these meanings remain active once the obelisk itself becomes static?

The city of Rome was a show-case for Roman building technology. The act of construction was intended to be both a source of wonder and a marker of 'civic harmony' (Delaine 2002:205-206) while the ability to reshape the landscape was seen as an indication of imperial power (Dionysius of Halicarnassus 3.67.5; Pliny 36.24; Strabo 5.3.8). Elite building works could involve single structures, large complexes or the re-modelling of whole regions of the city (Bert Lott 2004:4-5; Lomas 2003:28). During the Republic aristocratic families used building works as a form of competitive public display. By concentrating building programmes in the hands of the state, i.e. the emperor and members of the imperial family, Augustus curtailed this type of elite activity. In addition, displays of foreign objects, such as those gathered and displayed by the general Pompey, could suggest personal glorification for those who acquired and owned these objects. Since Egypt was designated as the personal estate of Augustus no senatorial family could move obelisks as he could. For Augustus this was particularly pertinent at a time when he was seeking to diminish the power of the republican elite (Edwards 2003:55-57). The personal inscription added to obelisk 3 in Alexandria was removed when the prefect involved fell from favour and from then on the use of obelisks was controlled by the emperor alone.

Rehak (2009:89) suggests that the Roman transfer of two obelisks to the Caesareum in Alexandria may have been a test run for others moved to Rome by Augustus. Any move to Alexandria would however have been able to call on existing Egyptian transport infrastructure and knowledge. Of greater significance I suggest is the fact that for those monuments moved to Rome, the route now included open sea. To achieve success on this leg of the journey bespoke vessels were constructed to carry obelisks across the Mediterranean. Obelisks were then transported inland via the river Tiber; a feat which enabled Pliny (36.15) to comment with pride that the Tiber was just as deep as the Nile. Remains of a drainage canal, running from near the Mausoleum of Augustus across the Campus Martius to the Tiber, indicate how obelisks 4 and 5 were most probably moved to their final location (Buchner 1996:163; Rehak 2009:52). The arrival of an obelisk in Rome would have been a public spectacle in its own right as the monument was unloaded from the river Tiber, brought across the Campus Martius and re-erected. Not forgetting that before any of this could happen the ground on which the obelisks was to stand needed to be prepared and at some point in the process the bronze apex fitting added to the pyramidion.

Such an occasion enabled classical writers to give a detailed account of the process while at the same time commending the Roman engineering expertise applied to the situation. Pliny (36.14) gives an in-depth description of how the pharaohs moved obelisks along the Nile using barges, before emphasising that these complex operations were superseded by the logistics needed to move obelisks overseas to Rome. He notes in particular that the ships used were considered 'the most amazing thing that had ever been seen at sea' and 'excited the greatest admiration' amongst the people of Rome. Raising an obelisk into its final position was also an opportunity to display the engineering skills of the state and Pliny (36.15) reports that it was commonly believed in Rome that the foundations for obelisk 1 were set into the ground to the same depth as the height of the obelisk which stood on top of them.

The transport of obelisks from Egypt to Rome can also be seen as a logistical motif used by the emperors to reassure the public of the imperial ability to maintain

the needs of a city which was in essence a consumer rather than a producer. This was particularly pertinent in terms of the city's food supply. A hungry city demanded a constant supply of food and Erdkamp (2002:8) believes that food riots were more common in imperial Rome than is suggested by the few instances recorded in the classical sources. Within the public horizon of assumptions, Egypt was seen as a province which serviced the heartland of the empire and which offered a particular form of provincial tribute: grain. The association of obelisks with the concept of 'circuses and games' has been discussed in the producer chapter and I would like to suggest at this point that the very logistics of moving an obelisk became for the audience a totem for the supply of grain flowing into their city.

Good infrastructure to facilitate access to and from Rome was essential for the easy and rapid movement of people and goods. Augustus encouraged the improvement of the roads into the city (Suetonius *Augustus* 30) and personally undertook the repair of the Via Flaminia (Cassius Dio 53.22). In 20 BC he assumed the office of *cura viarum* (care of the highways) for the neighbourhood of Rome (Favro 1996:112). In addition, Augustus ensured easy and quick movement along the Tiber by clearing the river bed and ordering the removal of structures which narrowed access by protruding over the river (Suetonius *Augustus* 30). The use of the river to move obelisks inland from the coast demonstrated the success of these infrastructure improvements and the ability of the 'logistics industry', with the backing of the state, to process large loads. It was a practical demonstration which replicated almost exactly the route of the grain supply from Alexandria to Rome.

For the majority of the imperial period, Rome's main commercial port was Ostia on the west coast of the Italian peninsula at the mouth of the Tiber (Rickman 2003:136). However, it was not until AD 42 that the quay at Ostia was developed to handle large cargoes (Suetonius *Claudius* 20). Thus, the obelisks of Augustus and Caligula most probably sailed across the Mediterranean to the sea port at Puteoli. During the early imperial period there were extensive working docks at Puteoli and it was here that the ships used to carry the obelisks from Egypt were preserved. Pliny (36.14) says that Augustus ordered the ship which carried the first obelisk to

be preserved on public display in the docks as a reminder of 'this marvellous undertaking' although the ship itself was later destroyed by fire.

The ship used to transport obelisk 3 was similarly preserved and Pliny notes that the audience looked on it as 'the most wonderful construction ever beheld upon the seas'. Wirsching (2000, 2003) has argued that the obelisks were transported using an arrangement of three ships consisting of a double ship (each 37m long and 5m wide) which cradled the obelisk between them below the water with a smaller ship at the front to guide the double ship. This differs markedly from Pliny's descriptions which speak of a single ship on each occasion with no implication that these vessels were anything more than a large version of the usual single hulled cargo ships. The ship used to transport obelisk 3 was later moved to Ostia where it was sunk to form the foundation for the harbour improvements ordered by the emperor Claudius (Pliny 36.14; Suetonius *Claudius* 20.3). It is not known when the first ship was destroyed but the order of Pliny's text suggests that the fire occurred before the second ship used to transport obelisks 3, 4 and 5 was moored at Puteoli. For the audience Caligula would thus be seen to replicate the actions of Augustus. This second ship must have remained on public display for the remainder of Caligula's reign before its removal in the first year of his successor's reign. Pliny (36.14) goes on to explain that further vessels were constructed to carry the obelisks up the Tiber thereby emphasising the level of labour/resources committed to the project by the emperors. The preservation of the ships monumentalises the transitory act of transporting the obelisk and marked the point where Egypt met Rome.

The route which the obelisk took in this period followed the route of the grain ships from Alexandria. The safe arrival of the grain ships ensured a plentiful supply of grain to feed the city of Rome. The Roman writer Seneca (*Epistulae Morales ad Lucilium* 77) commented that the crowds at Puteoli were able to identify the fleet of grain ships arriving from Alexandria and would gather to watch their arrival with a mixture of excitement and relief. Roman grain supplies were shipped and stored in bulk and the cargoes arriving at the coast were subsequently divided into smaller quantities for transport on to Rome (Hermansen 1982:228). A second-third century AD tomb fresco discovered in a necropolis to the south of Ostia, shows a grain

lighter (*navis codicaria*) called *Isis Giminiana* used to carry supplies from the coast up the Tiber to Rome (figure 8.25). The scene shows sacks of grain being transferred onto the ship where the contents are then checked for quantity and quality (White 1975:93).

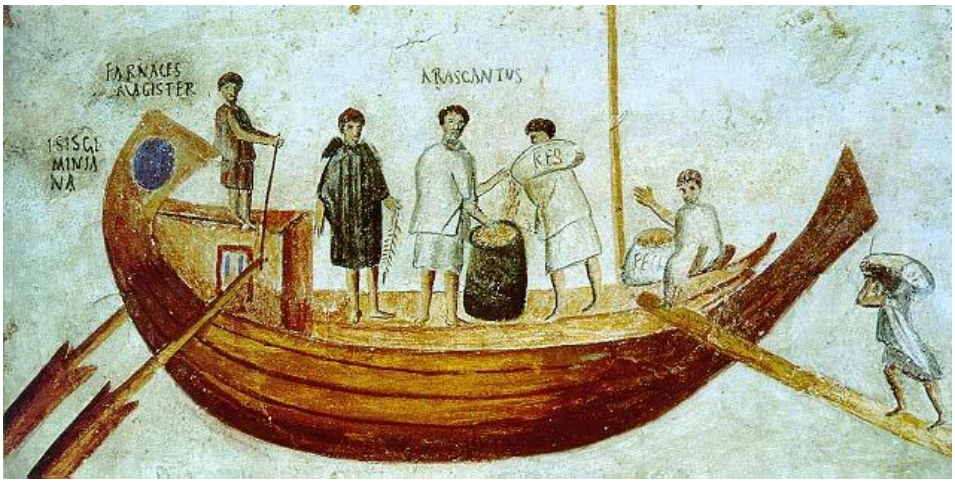


Figure 8.25 Detail from a second-third century AD tomb painting (Vatican Museums, Rome, ex Lat. fresco 825)

The destination for this grain is likely to have been the district outside the Porta Trigemina in Region XIII, the area of Rome with the greatest number of granary warehouses and the most probable point for grain distribution (Coarelli 1977:5-6; Rickman 1980:267-270; Rodriguez-Almeida 1970/71:112-113). This section of the Tiber was close to the Circus Maximus and obelisk 2. None of the classical sources address the issue of how the obelisks were moved from the river Tiber to their final destinations and so the final stage of the journey taken by obelisk 2 is unknown. However, I would suggest that the obelisk was probably brought further up the Tiber than obelisks 1, 3, 4 and 5 possibly to the stretch of river bank known as Portus Tiberinus; a river side quay which acted as the city's river port during the early imperial period (Aldrete 2007:134; Platner and Ashby 1929:430). For the audience, obelisk 2 would therefore have followed the grain route right to the heart of the city before being raised in a nearby structure associated with the notion of imperial benevolence in the form of circuses and bread. Returning to the ships which brought the obelisks across the Mediterranean, a further suggestive link between obelisks and the city's grain supply emerges.

Changes to the coastline around the mouth of the river Tiber mean that the ancient harbour at Ostia now lies 2 miles inland. Excavation at the site has revealed the remains of the sea-going ship, sunk here on the orders of Claudius (Pliny 36.14; Suetonius *Claudius* 20.3) which carried obelisk 3. From these remains it has been estimated that the ship was originally 104m long, measured 90m at the waterline, had a beam of 20m and an overall height of 12.5m (Testaguzza 1970:105). These measurements suggest a vessel considerably bigger than the volume of the obelisk being carried, supporting the emphasis given in Pliny's account of the audience reaction to the ship in a seascape which was amongst the busiest in the Roman world (Olesen 1988:148). Additionally, at this point in the journey the obelisks were being carried horizontally and sat 'within' the ship in the same way that a cargo of grain was carried in the hull of grain ships. A ship travelling from Italy to Egypt could rely on the winds in the eastern Mediterranean to achieve the journey in two to three weeks. The return journey however ran against these winds and as a result of having to take a less direct route while laden with a heavy cargo of grain, the return journey could take up to two months (Rickman 1980:266). Thus the transport of a bulky obelisk, more difficult to move than grain, became a motif for the safe transport of the Egyptian grain which was of such importance to the population of a growing city. For the audience this motif could be understood as a substitute cargo as they watched its initial arrival at the coast and then in the city before it served as a permanent reminder of this journey and its attendant logistics in combination with the other meanings attached to the obelisk.

8.7 Summary

All five obelisks were transported from Egypt to stand in publically accessible areas of Rome; all to the west of the centre of the city and outside the traditional sacred and legal boundary of Rome. The obelisks were the first examples of this type of monument to arrive in Rome as part of an Egyptian style already circulating within Roman culture. Their uniquely Egyptian nature in combination with 'Romanising' modifications enabled their producer, the emperor, to create a set of messages for the audience encountering these monuments. Both the meaning intended by the emperor and the meaning(s) generated by the people of Rome were

framed by the horizon of assumptions created by coeval social concerns and practices in combination with the current cultural ken around Egypt.

While some obelisks had an ancient history, commissioned by pharaohs to stand in Egyptian temple complexes, and others were quarried in Roman Egypt on the orders of a new imperial authority, all were received by the audience in Rome as objects which had been brought across the Mediterranean from an imperial province to the imperial capital. This formed a topos within the written and visual environment of Rome around the economic and political command of Rome at the heart of a thriving empire conquered for the benefit of the Roman people. Meaning was also created for the viewer through physical and visual interactions within the topography in which the monument and the viewer stood. Within this period the combination of obelisk and local landscape appears to have created its own meaning, ripe for re-appropriation as in the case of the two obelisks later raised at the centre of a circus arena. All five obelisks were subject to modification as they were raised in Rome and during this period the idea of obelisks presented on bases, obelisks associated with circus structures, obelisks standing as single monuments and the idea of obelisks being inscribed emerges; some of which were internally appropriated even at this early stage.

Chapter 9: Conclusion

9.1 Introduction

Cultural appropriation as a phenomenon involves both objects and ideas and can result in the re-use of real material together with the creation of replica and pastiche cultural objects. As a process it draws on original material, often with an element of modification as the material is repurposed for its new cultural context. The particular example of cultural appropriation selected for this study was Egyptianizing architecture; a revival style centred on the re-use of pharaonic architectural structures, original, modified or replica, outside pharaonic Egypt from ancient to modern times. Within this diverse and long-lived revival style, my focus was on the Egyptian obelisk and its appropriation from Egypt to Rome during the early imperial period (c. 31 BC-AD 68).

The current literature on Egyptianizing architecture offers a range of approaches to the question of how we might understand use of the Egyptian style, and within this the use of obelisks outside ancient Egypt. My research aimed to consider how the appropriation of material culture from one culture to another might be explored through a theoretical approach based on reception theory. By applying the tenets of reception theory to the data I had gathered, I sought to test the suitability of the approach to this field of study and consider the extent to which it elucidated understanding of the process of appropriation within a specific social context.

Reception theory emphasises the need to reflect on the social context, producer motivation and audience understanding of any cultural object. To understand why Egyptian obelisks were transported to Rome and how they were understood in their new locations, I considered the social context for each appropriation, the potential motivation of the producers, in this case Roman emperors, and the possible responses to the obelisks on the part of the Roman audience viewing them within the city's landscape.

Appropriation of monuments does not take place in a cultural vacuum. The appropriating/receiving culture will already hold a set of social, political and

economic understandings about itself and also, the appropriated culture. Understanding of the other culture is likely to be shaped, amongst other things, by both chronological and geographical considerations. For early imperial Rome, the pharaonic Egypt from which the obelisks emerged as appropriated cultural objects had long been of interest to Roman writers. Building on extant Greek texts, early imperial Roman works on Egypt sought to present a picture of the environmental, religious, political and economic nature of an established kingdom which had recently become part of a growing Roman empire. As such, exploration of the content and role of the sources of information (textual and graphic) circulating in the Roman world is crucial in attempting to understand the possible reasons for the selection of the obelisk as a cultural object to appropriate and also, the potential readings of this cultural object by the audience.

The final form of the Egyptianized obelisks analysed in this thesis was created in Rome for the visual consumption of the city's population. The core of each monument was a granite monolith - some erected in Egypt during the pharaonic period, others quarried in Roman Egypt for immediate export - dressed with a range of Roman style modifications such as a Latin inscription, pedestal base or bronze apex fitting. Thus, although primarily intended for a Roman audience, the Egyptianized obelisks incorporated visual styles from two discrete systems of representation. It is a situation which again emphasises the crucial role of the sources of information informing Roman society about Egypt, which enable these monuments to be read through a uniquely Roman 'lens' - shaped by the coeval circumstances of the city and the audience's informed, though not necessarily unbiased, understanding of Egypt. Conducting the research enabled me to start elucidating some of the potential reasons why appropriation of Egyptian obelisks took place and how the relocation and modifications to these objects were selected and read.

9.2 Concluding discussion

The study of Egyptianizing architecture has generated much material in the genre of object biographies (Curran et al. 2009; Iversen 1968; Roullet 1972). This process of identifying and cataloguing this type of material was seminal in building a basis

for the study of Egyptianizing material. It started to establish criteria for this material - although these remain a matter of discussion in the field - and began to open up the debate around why such material was created in the first place. In turn this enabled the development of a historical-cultural approach which created detailed biographies and catalogues of the style and individual motifs within it (Curran et al. 2009; Iversen 1968; Roullet 1972). These were often site and time specific explorations (Alföldy 1990; Gregory 2012; Grimm, Kessler and Meyer 1994). However, none of these approaches fully explained the selection, modification and presentation of these objects and the layers of meaning that build up around them. As such I felt that the theoretical case for appropriation needed to be revisited in order to better understand how this process operates and how we might understand its impact in the past. My study thus aimed to apply the approaches of reception theory to the material, moving the study beyond object typologies and biographies.

The monuments I discuss were created (i.e. Egyptianized) and viewed by people outside Egypt. This differentiates them from Roman objects created for display in post-pharaonic Egypt which were intended to be viewed by the resident population. Riggs (2002:97) argues that material culture such as this, which incorporates visual styles from two discrete systems of representation, creates a dual-system object; implying that the object can be understood equally well by viewers from both cultures. However, I would suggest that the Egyptian obelisks in Rome are not best understood as dual-system objects, since they are primarily intended to be read by an audience from a Roman viewpoint. Thus whilst the audience may be aware of Egyptian visual language, first and foremost this audience will view the monument through a Roman 'lens', shaped by the sources of information informing Roman society about Egypt.

Analysis of the sources disseminating information about Egypt has been a key part of my research process. Within my methodology I have termed these sources 'transfer vehicles', reflecting their role as visual/textual items which move information about aspects of Egyptian environment and/or culture from Egypt to Rome. The issue of transfer vehicles is underrepresented in the current literature whereby literary texts are often used as a source of evidence in their own right for

the modern scholar without looking at how these texts had an impact on understanding in the past. The sources are usually seen as a natural outcome of interest in Egypt/obelisks rather than a body of information which helped to shape social understanding of the obelisks. Careful consideration of the extent to which these literary sources intentionally or unintentionally curated public perception of Egypt/obelisks is central to starting to elucidate producer motivation and audience response. These sources are not necessarily accurate or unbiased, but central to their role is the fact that they serve to generate a specifically Roman sense of Egypt, a Roman understanding and set of assumptions about Egypt, which act as a cognitive background for the producer who introduces obelisks into the city of Rome, and also the audience who view and respond to these monuments. Considering how contemporary bodies of knowledge served to create an impression of Egypt and noting which particular aspects of ancient Egyptian culture are highlighted or emphasised within these information sources, helps us to elucidate Roman perceptions of Egyptian objects within the Roman landscape.

Revival of a style can re-occur over time and a particular revival episode can itself become a source of appropriation for later revivals. During any appropriation layered meanings develop around the cultural object such that ancient meaning becomes wrapped in later interpretations which either obscure the original meaning or interact with it to generate a new meaning; a process which Nelson (2003:164) describes as maintaining, while simultaneously shifting, ‘former connotations’. This incremental process, which can see an obelisk hosting a meaning that itself becomes a catalyst for a later producer to return to the style for their own needs, is often overlooked in object biographies. Such biographies often follow the story of individual monuments as discrete narratives rather than slicing across a point in time to consider any potential groupings within the evidence for all obelisks appropriated in a period. By investigating the obelisks in a strictly chronological order links between them become clearer. This approach also serves to draw analytical attention to the immediate social world circumstances of an obelisk, drilling down into the context for an appropriation in terms of years/decades rather than centuries or historical periods - i.e. imperial Rome as a whole.

Appropriation should be seen as an active process which enables the producer to make use of a style from outside their own immediate social context to speak to circumstances within their near social world. As such an appropriated cultural object and its intended meaning(s) have a life-span linked to viewer-understanding and the nature of the social world in which the object exists. As the social world changes the cultural object may cease to operate as an active meaning maker or it might take on new meaning as producers manipulate it to address changes in social, economic or political concerns. In the former situation, it should not be assumed that the cultural object loses all meaning to the viewer, rather that the meaning may by obscured by the passage of time or exist as a remembered meaning which has no active role in the current social world. As Trimble (2007:32) points out, appropriation of an object does not necessarily mean continuity of meaning. Thus the temporal relationship between ancient Egypt and a revival period can affect the way in which the past is viewed; in this case as the interactions of a late Republican Rome with an established pharaonic system of royal government are superseded by the emergence of Rome as the ruling authority in Egypt. Alongside this there was a shift in Rome's own political structures as the Republic ended and imperial Rome was established. Within this social context Egyptian obelisks were drawn into the Roman landscape to mediate coeval political and economic exigencies. Additionally if, as Laurence (2009:34) proposes, buildings and monuments acted as mnemonics which stimulated recall of stories from the past, the emperors responsible for the erection of these obelisks were probably looking to their story being available to a future audience. This monumental presence also of course made the obelisks perfect candidates to be drawn into future appropriations, in this study represented by the emulating actions of Caligula inspired by the seminal actions of Augustus.

But if a monument can act as a reminder of past history it is important to consider which version of the past it represents and the extent to which a monument can rework or obscure events by focusing attention on a particular theme or outcome. In the recent history of early imperial Rome, Egypt had acted as both a rival power base and the location for eventual Roman victory. This outcome established a fledgling imperial power structure after a period of political and military unrest which had threatened to destabilise Rome and weaken its role as a regional power.

The relationship between Egypt as a recently conquered nation and Rome as the conqueror is a key element of the social world context for Egyptianizing architecture in the early imperial period.

All the producers in early imperial Rome were emperors, as were the producers for the examples of appropriated Egyptian obelisks identified for the remainder of the imperial period. The appropriating action of the early imperial producers, namely Augustus and Caligula, appears to be prompted by political considerations relating to the imperial office and personal considerations relating to the imperial family. The appropriation of Egyptian obelisks to Rome emerged as the nature of imperial Rome was being established by the first holder of the imperial throne; Augustus. He needed to talk to the people of Rome about how they should see him and how they should see themselves. As part of this discourse Egyptian obelisks were appropriated and dressed to demonstrate to the audience what it meant to be imperial subjects of an imperial state; the benefits and potentially the expectations. Alongside the monumental obelisks themselves, obelisks appeared as a motif across society but not the obelisks themselves (the emperors chose well in terms of something which was hard to replicate) and I would argue that the obelisk iconography on coins and pottery was part of a positive feed-back loop whereby the audience were reminded of the benefits bestowed by the imperial state/producer for which the obelisk acted as a totem.

Within the historical background to early imperial Rome, the conquest of Egypt by Augustus in 31 BC appears to act as key factor in initiating the appropriation of obelisks from Egypt to Rome. However, the gap of twenty years between this conquest and the arrival of the first obelisks in Rome means that one should be wary of explaining the monuments simply as trophies of war. The foundation and development of the imperial office which occurred during this twenty year period were crucial to Augustus's decision to appropriate obelisks. The dual regal/divine attributes of the monumental obelisk enabled Augustus to address issues around his own role as the first emperor of Rome and the direction in which the nature of this authority was evolving. Augustus chose to appropriate Egyptian obelisks because they enabled him to demonstrate symbolically how his conquest of Egypt had not

only offered immediate political benefits, in terms of the expansion of the empire and an end to recent civil war, but also offered the people of Rome longer term economic benefits by guaranteeing access to a bountiful grain supply. In doing so the erection and display of Egyptian obelisks in Rome drew not only on Roman understanding of Egypt but also on existing Roman understandings of how to read and respond to a monument within the built landscape.

9.3 Recommendation for future research

This research offers a case-study for the use of reception theory in the field of Egyptianizing architecture; specifically in relation to Egyptian obelisks transported from Egypt and raised in the built landscape of early imperial Rome. As a direct consequence of pursuing this focus, the study encountered a number of limitations which need to be considered. Predominant amongst these was the fact that the story of this appropriation was revealed to be far more complex than even I had anticipated. As such it was not possible to include all the potential case-studies suggested by the appropriation groupings discernible on Table 2. As I began to write up the four analytical studies it became clear that I would not be able to do justice to the material if I followed the data narrative through to AD 357 and the last known appropriation of an Egyptian obelisk to imperial Rome. Instead the emerging case-study focused on the establishment of imperial appropriation of obelisks while later appropriations offered themselves as examples for another study.

Analysis of the data for the early imperial period suggested how a pattern of appropriation was established around Egyptian obelisks. Within the period I was able to identify some possible examples of revival even between the actions of Caligula and Augustus but investigation of longer term links between revival periods was precluded by the very wealth of discursive material generated by the chosen methodology. Extending the application of this methodology to the later appropriation groupings would make it possible to start considering links between revival periods and investigate in greater depth the process of internal appropriation which was starting to emerge within the first revival period. Continuing analysis beyond AD 41 would enable consideration of whether the temporal relationship between ancient Egypt and a revival period affected the way in which the past is

viewed. In addition, transfer vehicles extant for the early imperial period would be joined by newer vehicles which have the potential to incorporate additional information, focus on other aspects of ancient Egypt or present radically different interpretations of the past.

In order to ensure a standard longitudinal aspect to my data I chose to focus on fourteen obelisks. Other obelisks are suggested by classical texts and archaeological investigation but the lack of current evidence for these obelisks meant that I was not able to track them across the whole imperial period. Since the publication of the seminal volumes by Iversen (1968) and Roullet (1972), continued archaeological work on sites known to have hosted an obelisk in Rome has filled in some of the gaps in the known data for a number of monuments, for example the pair which stood in front of the Mausoleum of Augustus, and there is the possibility that future finds will provide additional obelisk fragments or move some known lost examples out of this category. The emergence of new information about the fourteen core obelisks themselves, alongside the discovery of more detailed information for other known obelisks would impact immediately on the findings of my current thesis and on work undertaken on the later imperial revivals.

The potential offered by the application of reception theory to material culture is reflected by a growing academic focus on classical reception. This focus often relates to material from the classical Greek and Roman worlds and looks at responses during the European Renaissance or the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. In contrast, my study has sought to mine deeper into the reception of objects in their coeval and near coeval world. The scale of this debate is extensive and multifaceted even within a specific location and timeframe. To generate meaningful explanations with regard to appropriation, there is a need for more case studies to allow further assessment of the usefulness of this approach. The appropriation of Egyptian obelisks offers the potential to consider whether the process and outcome of appropriation is affected by the change from initial Roman interaction with a living culture to interaction with an increasingly historic culture during the years of Roman Egypt and beyond as appropriated pieces start to act as an archive for the past while carrying new meanings generated outside its original context. Thus the monuments

would retain remembered meaning which, while having no active role in the current social world, could enable it to re-emerge later as an active meaning maker.

The opportunity to explore longitudinal patterns within the appropriation of obelisks is presented not only by extending analysis to encompass all fourteen examples in the core data set, but also through study of the acts of appropriation undertaken in what could be termed papal Rome in the period 1500-1800 when thirteen of the core data set obelisks were re-erected in Rome (Iversen 1968). The producers of papal Rome found themselves engaging with the material legacy of the previous imperial authority within a wholly different cultural context in terms of the coeval social world and the fact that ancient Egypt existed now as a dead civilisation beyond living memory. Applying my methodology to this situation would not only help to draw out the nuances of a changed social world, complete with new producers and a new audience, but it would also establish patterns of appropriation for this papal revival and provide a framework for exploring longitudinal links between the imperial and papal periods.

9.4 Concluding summary

A cultural object is created when shared significance is given form (Griswold 2008:12). Central to its status as a 'cultural object' is the fact that it is the result of a conscious decision by the person/people who produce it and the audience who view it. The process of appropriation draws an object from its culture and context of origin into the social world of another culture via active selection and the ascribing of meaning by producers and viewers in that society. The status of Egyptian obelisks as appropriated cultural objects in Rome is confirmed by their position as public monuments imbued with symbolic significance/meaning as a result of their transfer from Egypt to Rome, their topographical location in Rome and the modifications made to their original form.

Conducting this research has enabled me to start elucidating some of the reasons why appropriation of Egyptian obelisks from Egypt to Rome occurred and how the relocation and modifications made to an obelisk were selected and read. During the imperial period a number of emperors (the producers) made use of the ancient

Egyptian style and the obelisk was a key component in this material culture ‘portfolio’. This appropriation can be termed Egyptianizing since it draws on and modifies ancient Egyptian architecture to create a cultural object relevant to the contemporary social world. As such, coeval issues had an impact on why the obelisk was selected to act as a cultural object and also help to explain the meanings which it was expected to carry. As part of this process the transfer vehicles which disseminated information about Egypt in the Roman social world created a Roman horizon of assumptions about Egypt which the producer was able to rely on to achieve a successful appropriation and which the audience drew on to help read an Egyptian obelisk within its Roman setting. The application of a modified form of reception theory combined with elements of sociological cultural analysis offers the potential to track and analysis the appropriation of Egyptian obelisks. If a large body of extant work has successfully established object biographies for many of these monuments, this theoretical approach aims to elucidate why Egyptian obelisks were appropriated and how they were understood in their new home.

Key to Table 1

colour	indicates
	Julio-Claudian sub-revival
	Flavian sub-revival
	Late imperial sub-revival

Key to Table 2

colour	indicates
	1st point of appropriation
	2nd point of appropriation
	1st appropriation period as an extant obelisk in the landscape
	2nd appropriation period as an extant obelisk in the landscape

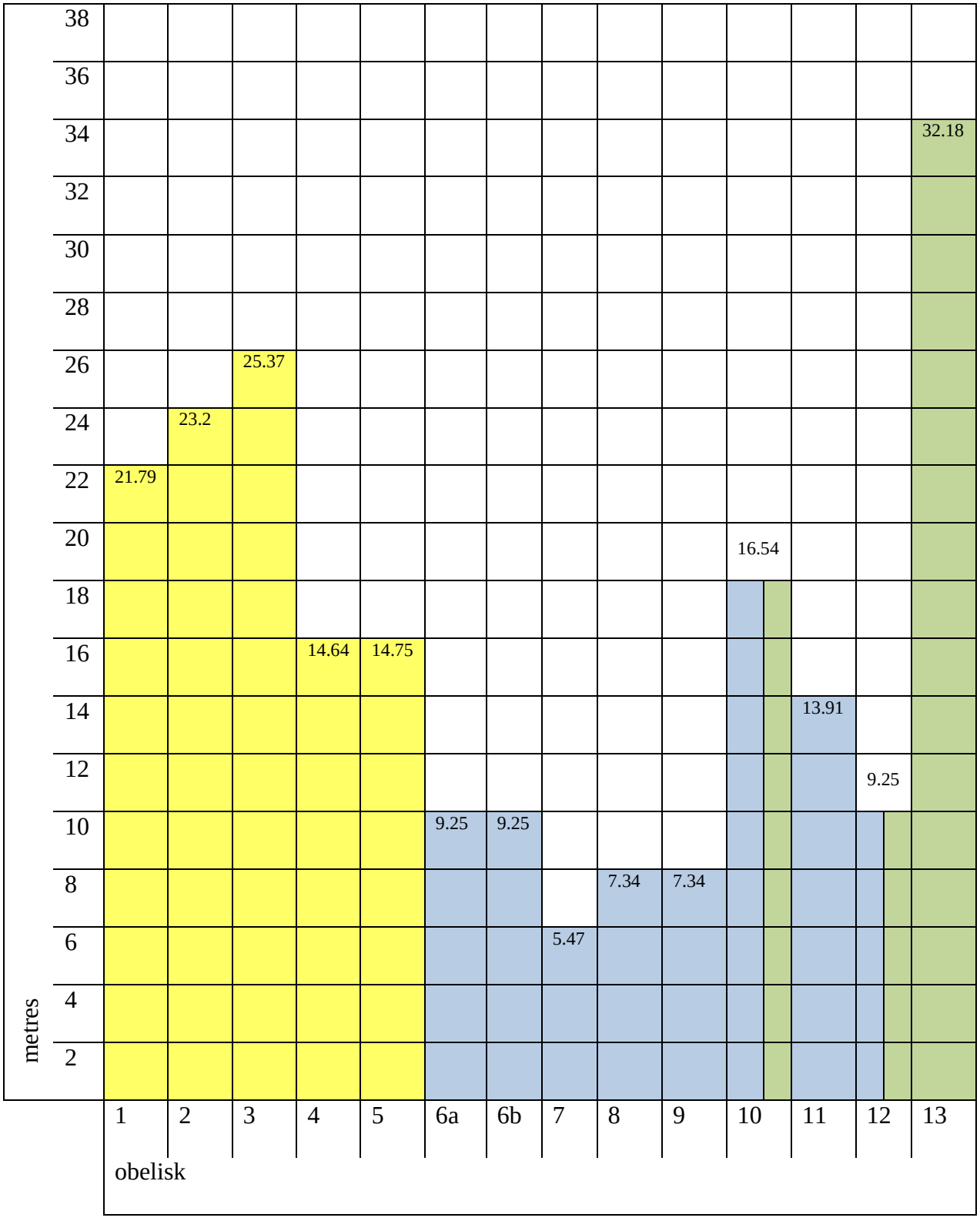


Table 1: Height of core data set obelisks

Erected or modified																13	
							12				12						
					11												
					10									10			
					9												
					8												
					7												
					6b												
					6a												
			5														
			4														
			3														
	2																
	1																
	25 -1 BC	1 -24 AD	25 -49 AD	50 -74 AD	75 -99 AD	100 -124 AD	125 -149 AD	150 -174 AD	175 -199 AD	200 -224 AD	225 -249 AD	250 -274 AD	275 -299 AD	300 -324 AD	325 -349 AD	350 -374 AD	375 -399 AD
Visible in the urban landscape		1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
		2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
				3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
				4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4
				5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5
						6a	6a	6a	6a	6a	6a	6a	6a	6a	6a	6a	6a
						6b	6b	6b	6b	6b	6b	6b	6b	6b	6b	6b	6b
						7	7	7	7	7	7	7	7	7	7	7	7
						8	8	8	8	8	8	8	8	8	8	8	8
						9	9	9	9	9	9	9	9	9	9	9	9
						10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10
						11	11	11	11	11	11	11	11	11	11	11	11
									12	12	12	12	12	12	12	12	12
																	13

Table 2: Obelisks in Rome 25 BC - AD 399

Appendix A: Obelisks in imperial Rome

Names listed below refer to the current location of an obelisk and reflect the name most commonly used for that obelisk in modern works.

Numbers are assigned to the obelisks according to the order in which they were initially erected in Rome. This numbering is unique to this research. It is used throughout the main text, in figure captions and across the tables.

1. Montecitorio
2. Popolo
3. Vatican
4. Quirinale
5. Esquiline

6a. Terme

6b. Boboli

7. Minerva
8. Rotunda
9. Villa Celimontana
10. Navona
11. Trinita dei Monti
12. Monte Pincio
13. Laterano

1. Obelisk known as: Montecitorio

Present location: Piazza di Montecitorio



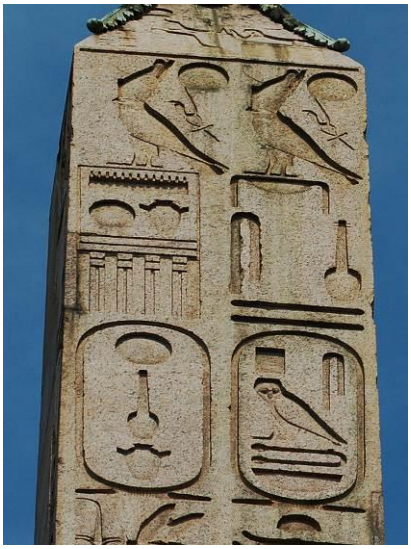
Attributed to: Psamtek II

Date: 595-589 BC

Material: red granite

Current height: 21.79m

Egyptian inscription: the pyramidion is carved with a relief showing the pharaoh (represented as a sphinx) offering to the god Ra-her-aakhuti. Above the pharaoh is the hieroglyphic inscription: 'King of the South and North, Nefer-ab-Ra son of Ra, Psamtek living like Ra forever and ever'. Above the god is the hieroglyphic inscription: 'I give you life, all serenity, all health and all joy of the heart forever'. A winged scarab holding a sun disc is carved in the topmost part of each triangular shaped face of the pyramidion. The hieroglyphs carved in two columns on all four faces of the shaft speak of the pharaoh's relationship to Ra. This includes a standardised list of the pharaoh's titles: 'The golden Horus, beautifying the Two Lands, beloved of Atum, Lord of Heliopolis; the King of Upper and Lower Egypt, Neferibre, beloved of Re-Harakhti; the son of his own body, who seizes the White crown and who unites the Double Crown, Psamtek, beloved of the Souls of Heliopolis. On the first Jubilee' (Habachi 1977:125, 128).



Egyptian location: Heliopolis

Moved in Egypt: N/A

Moved out of Egypt: by the Roman emperor Augustus in 10 BC.

Roman location: erected in 10 BC on the Campus Martius near the Ara Pacis and the Mausoleum of Augustus.

Roman modifications: erected on a red granite base and topped with a gilded bronze ball and pointer designed by the mathematician Novius Facundus (Pliny 36.15). Bronze markers were set into the travertine paving to the north of the obelisk. These markers consisted of a meridian line with cross-bars, seasonal information inscribed in Greek and possibly the signs of the zodiac alongside the meridian line (Iversen 1968:142).

Roman inscription: the same Latin inscription was carved on the north and south side of the granite base.



IMP.CAESAR.DIVI.F

AVGVSTVS

PONTIFEX.MAXIMVS

IMP.XII.COS.XI.TRIB.POT.XIV

AEGYPTO.IN.POTESTATEM

POPVLI.ROMANI.REDACTA

SOLI.DONVM.DEDIT

(Iversen 1968:142)

Son of the divine Caesar

Imperator Augustus

chief priest

imperator for the 12th time, consul for the 11th, holder of tribunician power for the 14th time

Egypt being given to the Roman people

he gave this gift to Sol

(Translation: KH)



Obelisk 1 shown on a scene on the marble base of the Column of Antonius Pius set up on the Campus Martius in AD 161.

All images: public domain

2. Obelisk known as: Popolo

Present location: Piazza del Popolo



Attributed to: Sety I and Rameses II. Sety I intended to raise the obelisk but work was incomplete at his death and the monument was appropriated by Rameses II. Rameses completed the inscription in his own name and raised the obelisk at Heliopolis (Iversen 1968:65).

Date: 1294-1279 BC and then 1279-1213 BC.

Material: red granite

Current height: 23.2m

Egyptian inscription: three faces of the pyramidion carry reliefs showing Sety I as a sphinx offering to Maat, the goddess of truth, and Ra, the sun god. The fourth face shows Rameses II. There are further scenes showing the pharaohs offering to the gods at the top and bottom of the shaft faces immediately above and below the columns of hieroglyphic text. The hieroglyphic inscription consists of one column of text on the south, north and west faces of the shaft. The east face was originally uninscribed. Later, Sety I's son and successor, Rameses II, added two columns of hieroglyphic text - one either side of the existing text - on the three inscribed faces and three on the previously uninscribed face. In the text Sety I is referred to as 'the one who fills Heliopolis with obelisks that their rays may illuminate the temple of

Ra'. Rameses II is referred to as 'making monuments as innumerable as the stars of the heaven. His works join the sky. When Ra shines, he rejoices because of [the obelisks] in his temple of millions of years. His Majesty says I beautify this monument for my father [Sety I] to place his name in the Temple of Ra'. These statements represent standardised inscriptions used on temple obelisks (Habachi 1977:117-119).





Egyptian location: Heliopolis

Moved in Egypt: N/A

Moved out of Egypt: by the Roman emperor Augustus in 10 BC.

Roman location: erected in the southern sector of the Campus Martius on the spina of the Circus Maximus where it continued to stand until at least AD 750 (Habachi 1977:119; Richardson 1992:xxi).

Roman modifications: topped with a gilded bronze ball surmounted by a pointer.

Roman inscription: the same Latin inscription was carved on the north and south sides of the base which faced the two long sides of the circus arena respectively.

IMP.CAESAR.DIVI.F
AVGVSTVS
PONTIFEX.MAXIMVS
IMP.XII.COS.XI.TRIB.POT.XIV
AEGYPTO.IN.POTESTATEM
POPVLI.ROMANI.REDACTA
SOLI.DONVM.DEDIT

(Iversen 1968:142)

Son of the divine Caesar
Imperator Augustus
chief priest
imperator for the 12th time, consul for the 11th, holder of tribunician power for the 14th time
Egypt being given to the Roman people
he gave this gift to Sol

(Translation: KH)

All images: public domain

3. Obelisk known as: Vatican

Present location: St Peter's Square



Image: public domain

Attributed to: unknown pharaoh

Date: unknown

Material: red granite

Current height: 25.37m

Egyptian inscription: no hieroglyphs

Egyptian location: the obelisk was erected during the Ptolemaic period in Alexandria on a base of granite blocks.

Moved in Egypt: the obelisk was raised in the newly constructed Julian Forum in Alexandria by Cornelius Gallus – the first imperial prefect of Egypt. It was standing here in about 30-28 BC on a base of three stones. The Forum was demolished in AD 37 on the orders of the Roman emperor Caligula (Habachi 1977:131).

Moved out of Egypt: the obelisk was moved in AD 37, together with the three blocks of stone which acted as its base, from Alexandria to Rome on the orders of Caligula.

Roman usage: erected as part of the spina of the Circus Vaticanus. The foundations of the obelisk were laid directly into the surface of the arena (Castagnoli 1959:97). The Circus fell out of use around the middle of the second century AD and the area became a necropolis (Humphrey 1986:548).

Roman modifications: the top of the obelisk carried an acanthus leaf fitting holding a gilded bronze ball. The lower part of the obelisk shaft was covered with plates of gilded bronze. At the base were four astragali (knucklebone shaped bronze supports) weighing c. 270 kg each, on which the shaft of the obelisk rested. The original base was reused and placed on a white marble slab (Humphrey 1986:549). All four sides of the lower part of the shaft carry shallow depressions cut into the face of the stone and rows of holes (probably for the nails which fixed the plates) indicating where the gilded bronze plates were fitted (Iversen 1968:26).



Obelisk 3 drawn by Giovanni Marcanova (c. 1465)
Collectio Antiquitatum (MS Garrett 158, fol.6v)
Image: public domain



The Vatican Obelisk to the south of Old St Peter's Maarten van Heemskerck, c. 1535
(Kupferstichkabinett, Berlin, Inv 79.D2)
Image: www.smb.museum/en/research/online-catalogues-database.html

Roman inscription: when erected in Alexandria a Latin inscription was added in bronze letters to the bottom of the shaft. The inscription was reconstructed in 1959 from the marks left by the bronze staples on the face of the stone (Curran et al. 2009:36; Iversen 1965:149; Roullet 1972:68).

IVSSV IMP[eratoris] CAESARIS DIVI F[ilii] C[aius]
CORNELIVS CN[ei] F[ilius] GALLVS PRAEF[ectus] FABR[um]
CAEESARIS DIVI F[ilii] FORVM IVLIVM FECIT

By order of the emperor [Augustus], son of the deified Caesar [Julius Caesar], Caius
Cornelius Gallus, overseer of works
for the emperor, son of the deified Caesar, built the Julian Forum

(Iversen 1968:20)

The bronze letters carrying this inscription were removed from the obelisk soon after 26 BC following the fall from favour, exile and eventual suicide of Cornelius Gallus. A second Latin inscription was added to the obelisk at some point between AD 14 and 37. This second inscription was carved directly into the surface of the stone (Iversen 1965:152).

DIVO CAESARI DIVI IVLII F. AVGVSTO
TI. CAESARI DIVI AVGVSTI F. AVGVSTO
SACRVM

To the divine Caesar Augustus, son of the divine Julius,
and to Tiberius Caesar Augustus, son of the divine Augustus

(Iversen 1968:20)

When the obelisk arrived in Rome, Caligula ordered this second inscription to be erased. This had only been partly achieved by the time of Caligula's death in AD 41 and some of the lettering remained visible (Iversen 1965:153).

4. Obelisk known as: Quirinale

Present location: Piazza del Quirinale



Image: public domain

Attributed to: the Roman emperor Caligula

Date: erected in Rome c. AD 37-41

Material: red granite

Current height: 14.64m

Egyptian inscription: exported from Egypt uninscribed

Egyptian location: never erected in Egypt before export to Rome

Moved in Egypt: N/A

Roman location: erected as one of a pair by the Mausoleum of Augustus (Ammianus Marcellinus 17.4.16; Iversen 1968:47; Platner and Ashby 1929:367; Roullet 1972:78). It probably stood on a marble base.

Roman modification: The pyramidion at the top was cut off to provide a platform for ornamentation which no longer exists nor is it recorded in surviving accounts of the obelisk (Iversen 1968:47). The shaft of the obelisk rested on a postament of bronze which gave it greater height than that offered by astragali (Iversen 1968:51).

Roman inscription: uninscribed

5. Obelisk known as: Esquiline

Present location: Piazza dell'Esquilino



Image: public domain

Attributed to: the Roman emperor Caligula

Date: erected in Rome between c. AD 37-41

Material: red granite

Current height: 14.75m

Egyptian inscription: exported from Egypt uninscribed

Egyptian location: never erected in Egypt before export to Rome

Moved in Egypt: N/A

Roman location: erected as one of a pair by the Mausoleum of Augustus (Ammianus Marcellinus 17.4.16; Iversen 1968:47; Platner and Ashby 1929:367; Roullet 1972:78). It probably stood on a marble base.

Roman modification: The pyramidion at the top was cut off to provide a platform for ornamentation which no longer exists nor is it recorded in surviving accounts of the obelisk (Iversen 1968:47). The shaft of the obelisk rested on a postament of bronze which gave it greater height than that offered by astragali (Iversen 1968:51).

Roman inscription: uninscribed

6a. Obelisk known as: Terme

Present location: Viale delle Terme di Diocleziano (near the Baths of Diocletian)



Image: public domain

Attributed to: Rameses II

Date: 1279-1213 BC

Material: red granite

Current height: 9.25m

Egyptian inscription: On the pyramidion are a winged scarab with a sun disc and two cartouches naming Rameses II. On each side of the shaft is a single column of hieroglyphic inscription listing the pharaoh's names and epithets, which style him as beloved of the solar gods, and recording his offerings at Heliopolis (Habachi 1977:122-124).

Egyptian location: Heliopolis

Moved in Egypt: N/A

Moved out of Egypt: by the Roman emperor Domitian.

Roman location: near the Temple of Isis on the Campus Martius.

Roman modifications: The pyramidion has cuttings, of a Roman date, probably for a bronze gilded topping. It stood on a base (Iversen 1968:174).

Roman inscription: no known Roman period inscription.

6b. Obelisk known as: Boboli

Present location: Boboli Gardens, Florence



Image: public domain

Attributed to: Rameses II

Date: 1279-1213 BC

Material: red granite

Current height: 9.25m

Egyptian inscription: On the pyramidion are a winged scarab with a sun disc and two cartouches naming Rameses II. On each face of the shaft is a single column of hieroglyphic inscription listing the pharaoh's names and epithets, which style him as beloved of the solar gods, and recording his offerings at Heliopolis (Habachi 1977:125).

Egyptian location: Heliopolis

Moved in Egypt: N/A

Moved out of Egypt: by the Roman emperor Domitian.

Roman location: near the Temple of Isis on the Campus Martius (Platner and Ashby1929:369-370).

Roman modifications: the pyramidion has cuttings, of a Roman date, probably for a bronze gilded topping. It stood on a base (Iversen 1968:174).

Roman inscription: no known Roman period inscription

7. Obelisk known as: Minerva

Present location: Santa Maria sopra Minerva, Piazza della Minerva



Image: public domain

Attributed to: Apries

Date: c. 588-569 BC

Material: red granite

Current height: 5.47m

Egyptian inscription: the faces of the pyramidion are blank. Each face of the shaft has a single column of hieroglyphs recording a dedication to the goddess Neith of Sais and Tem of Ta-ankh-t followed by epithets naming Atum of the land of life, the cemetery of Sais and Neit She of the Bee temple in Mehnet, foremost of the land of life – all deities connected with Sais (Habachi 1977:129; Iversen 1968:93)

Egyptian location: one of a pair from the sanctuary of the Lower Egyptian crown which probably formed part of the temple of Neith in Sais (Iversen 1968:93).

Moved in Egypt: N/A

Moved out of Egypt: by the Roman emperor Domitian around AD 81 together with its pair - the remains of which are now in Florence (Iversen 1968:93).

Roman location: near the Temple of Isis on the Campus Martius.

Roman modifications: unknown

Roman inscription: no known Roman period inscription

8. Obelisk known as: Rotunda

Present location: Piazza della Rotonda



Image: public domain

Attributed to: Rameses II

Date: 1279-1213 BC

Material: red granite

Current height: 6.34m (minus c.1m of original height)

Egyptian inscription: on the pyramidion are two cartouches naming Rameses II. Each face carries the king's name followed by 'Excellent son of Re, his sacred image … protector of his creations who multiplies their offerings … builder, great monuments in the House of Re, … great of feasts like Re on the seat of Atum' (Habachi 1977:120).

Egyptian location: One of a pair standing before a pylon at the Temple of Ra in Heliopolis (Habachi 1977:120).

Moved in Egypt: N/A

Moved out of Egypt: by the Roman emperor Domitian in AD 81.

Roman location: near the Temple of Isis on the Campus Martius.

Roman modifications: unknown

Roman inscription: no known Roman period inscription

9. Obelisk known as: Villa Celimontana

Present location: Villa Celimontana



Image: public domain

Attributed to: Rameses II

Date: 1279-1213 BC

Material: red granite

Current height: 2.68m (upper part of obelisk only), original height c. 7.34m

Egyptian inscription: On the pyramidion are two cartouches naming Rameses II. Each face carries the king's name followed by 'Excellent son of Re, his sacred image … protector of his creations who multiplies their offerings … builder, great monuments in the House of Re, … great of feasts like Re on the seat of Atum' (Habachi 1977:120, 122).

Egyptian location: Originally one of a pair standing before a pylon at the Temple of Ra in Heliopolis (Habachi 1977:120).

Moved in Egypt: N/A

Moved out of Egypt: by Domitian

Roman location: near the Temple of Isis on the Campus Martius.

Roman modifications: unknown

Roman inscription: no known Roman period inscription

10. Obelisk known as: Navona

Present location: Piazza Navona



Attributed to: the Roman emperor Domitian

Date: c. AD 81

Material: red granite

Current height: 16.54m

Egyptian inscription: no pre-Roman inscription

Egyptian location: quarried at Syene, Aswan but never raised in Egypt.

Moved in Egypt: N/A

Roman location: initially erected by the Temple of the Gens Flavia on the Quirinal Hill. It was moved between AD 309 and 312 by the emperor Maxentius to stand on the spina of the Circus of Maxentius.

Roman modification: cut from the Aswan quarries in Roman Egypt. Domitian ordered scenes and hieroglyphic script added to each side of the pyramidion and shaft. In the Circus Maxentius the obelisk stood close to the middle of the spina near the winning line. It rested on two rectangular granite blocks, the upper one slightly smaller than the lower which was supported by four metals balls acting as supports on a square foundation block (Iversen 1968:82).

Roman inscription: on each face of the pyramidion, Domitian sits enthroned and worshipped by a goddess, Isis (twice), Nephthys and Hathor accompanied respectively by a hieroglyphic inscription reading ‘The autocrat loved by Isis and Ptah, may he live like Ra’. The principal panel shows the coronation of Domitian with Isis presenting the crowns of Egypt and the royal insignia to the emperor. The hieroglyphic text on the shaft was composed and carved in the Roman period. This text includes a dedication to the sun-god Harakhte who is referred to as the Emperor’s father together with traditional passages which record the complex pharaonic titles attributed to Domitian. These titles are copied directly from inscriptions composed for Ptolemy III Euergetes (256-221 BC). The text also includes mention of episodes specific to the life of Domitian such as his ascension when he is said to be ‘taking over the kingdom of his father, Vespasian, from his elder brother, Titus, when his soul has flown to heaven’. The text also states that the obelisk was raised by Domitian (Iversen 1968:80-81).



All images: public domain

11. Obelisk known as: Trinita dei Monti

Present location: in front of the Church of the Trinita dei Monti at the top of the Scala di Spagna



Image: public domain

Attributed to: the Roman emperor Domitian

Date: AD 79-360

Material: red granite

Current height: 13.91m

Egyptian inscription: no pre-Roman inscription

Egyptian location: never erected in Egypt before export to Rome

Moved in Egypt: N/A

Roman location: the imperial Gardens of Sallust.

Roman modification: raised on a block of red granite measuring 2.50m by 2.55 m which itself stood on a concrete and pozzolana foundation block measuring 4.65m by 5m (Iversen 1968:140).

Roman inscription: inscribed in Rome with hieroglyphs similar to those on obelisk 2 which are of a pharaonic date (Curl 2005:23). Some of the hieroglyphic signs are upside down.

12. Obelisk known as: Monte Pincio

Present location: Monte Pincio



Image: public domain

Attributed to: the Roman emperor Hadrian

Date: AD 130-138

Material: red granite

Current height: 9.25m

Egyptian inscription: no pre-Roman inscription

Egyptian location: never erected in Egypt before export to Rome

Moved in Egypt: N/A

Roman location: raised at the imperial estate at Tivoli near Rome. It was moved between AD 200 and 225 to the spina of the Circus Varianus by the emperor Varius (Iversen 1968:166).

Roman modifications: N/A

Roman inscription: hieroglyphic inscription which was most probably cut in Rome.

East face Salvation plea, put forward by Osiris-Antinous, whose heart is in very great jubilation, since he has recognised his own form after being raised again to life and he has seen his father Re-Harachte [God of the Rising Sun]. His heart speaks: "Oh! Re-Harachte, highest of the gods, who hears the calling of gods and men, of the glorified ones and of the dead. Hear also the cry of one who approaches thee [Hadrian]! Grant him reward for what he did for me, thy beloved son, the King of

Upper- and Lower-Egypt, who has set a precept of worship inside the temple sanctuaries for all men, to the satisfaction of the gods. He that is beloved by Hapi [God of the Nile Inundation, representing fertility & abundance] and all the gods, the Lord of the Crowns [Hadrian Caesar], may he live safe and sound, may he live forever, like Re, with a prosperous and newly risen [rejuvenated] old age. He is the Lord of Prosperity, the Sovereign of every land, the Pre-Eminent [Augustus]. The great of Egypt and the Nine Arches [foreign lands] bow themselves and unite under his feet as Master of Both Lands [Pharaoh of Egypt]. They come into being every day through his word. His might extends to the boundary of this whole land, even to the four corners of the world. The bulls and their cows breed lustily and produce their offspring for him [Hadrian], to gladden his heart and that of his great and beloved royal consort, the Lady of Both Lands [Queen of Egypt] and the cities, Sabina, who lives, is safe and in health, 'Sebaste who lives forever' [Augusta]. Hapi, father of the gods, makes the fields fruitful for them and arranges the inundation at its time, the flooding of the Two Lands [the annual flooding of the Nile valley from July to October, irrigating the Egyptian farmland.]

West face The god Osiris-Antinous, the justified – he grew into a youth with a beautiful countenance and magnificently adorned eyes [...] strength, whose heart rejoices like a demi-god's after he has received a command of the gods at the time of his death. For him is repeated every ritual of the Hours [funerary cult] of Osiris [god of the underworld, regeneration & re-birth], together with each of his ceremonies as a Mystery. He will spread his doctrine in the whole land, benevolent in the instruction and effective in declaration. Nothing comparable has been done for the ancestors until now. And similarly for his altars, his temple and his titles because he breathed the air of life and his esteem arises in the hearts of mankind. Lord of Hermopolis, Thoth! [ibis-headed moon-god], Lord of the Word of God [hieroglyphics], rejuvenate his spirit, as everything in its time, in the night and day, at all times and in every moment! Love of him [Antinous] is in the hearts of his followers and awe of him by all [...] and his praise by all acolytes when they worship him. He takes his seat in the Halls of the Righteous, the Glorified and the Excellent Ones, who are in the company of Osiris in the Realm of the Dead, while the Lord of Eternity gives him absolution. They perpetuate his word on earth, having

gladdened their hearts because of him. He goes to every place, as he wishes. The Gatekeepers of the Underworld say to him “Praise to you!” They loosen their bolts and open their gates before him, daily for millions and millions of years. The duration of his life never elapsing in eternity.

North face The god Osiris-Antinous, the justified, whose place this is; he makes a sports arena in his place in Egypt, which is named after him [Antinoöpolis], for the strong ones [athletes] that are in this land, and for the rowing-teams and the runners of the whole land and for all men who belong to the place of the sacred writings where Thoth is present. They receive the prizes awarded and crowns [garlands of flowers (?)] on their heads, while they are repaid with all sorts of good things. There are daily sacrifices on his [Antinous] altars, as the sacrifices were offered every day in the olden days. He will be praised as the artisans of Thoth respond to his glory. He goes out from his place to the numerous temples of the entire land; he grants the requests of those who call on him and he heals the sickness of those in need, sending them dreams. When his work is completed among the living, he takes every form to his heart, because the seed of the gods came into being in his body [...] the healing body of his mother. He was elevated from his birthplace through [...]

South face The god, who is there [the Hereafter], rests in this place [the Antinoeion at Tivoli], which is situated in the estate of the Lord of Prosperity of Rome [Hadrian]. He is known as a god in the sacred places of Egypt. Temples were erected for him and he is worshipped like a god by the prophets and priests of Upper- and Lower-Egypt, as well as by the Egyptians inhabitants. A city was named after him. Participants in his Grecian cult in Both Lands [of Egypt] and those who are in the temples of Egypt came here from their own districts and are given cultivated land to make their life good beyond measure. A temple of this god is there, he is called Osiris-Antinous, the justified; it is constructed of good white stone, surrounded by statues of the gods and statues, also by numerous columns, made as our forefathers did, and also as the Greeks made them. All the gods and goddesses will give him the breath of life, so that he breathes, eternally rejuvenated.

Based on the German translation of the hieroglyphic text (Grimm et al. 1994:84-88)

13. Obelisk known as: Laterano

Present location: Piazza di San Giovanni



Attributed to: Thutmose III / Thutmose IV

Date: 1479-1425 BC/ 1400-1390 BC

Material: red granite

Current height: 32.18m

Egyptian inscription: on each face of the pyramidion the pharaoh is shown receiving the blessing of the god Amun-Re. On the upper part of the shaft the pharaoh makes offerings to the gods. A column of hieroglyphic inscription down the centre of the shaft names Thutmose III followed by 'He [Thutmose III] made as his monument for his father Amun-Re, Lord of the Thrones of the Two Lands, the setting up for him of a single obelisk in the Upper Court of the Temple in the neighbourhood of Karnak, on the very occasion of setting up a single obelisk in Thebes' (Habachi 1977:112). A column of inscription was added on either side of this column which states that the obelisk lay on its side for 35 years in the hands of the craft workers of the temple workshops, that Thutmose IV embellished Karnak with several buildings and that he erected the obelisk at the Upper Gateway, opposite the city of Thebes. Below these inscriptions are scenes added by Rameses II (Habachi 1977:114).



Egyptian location: commissioned by Thutmose III to stand as a single obelisk in the forecourt of the temple of Amun in Karnak. On the pharaoh's death the stone lay uninscribed to the south of the temple. It was erected 15 years later by his grandson Thutmose IV. It was erected on four large sandstone blocks to the east of the Festival Hall of Thutmose III in the temple of Amun at Karnak (Habachi 1977:114; Iversen 1968:55). It was erected on the axis of the temple behind the jubilee temple so that the statues in the counter temple of Thutmose II and Hatshepsut looked directly towards it (Barguet 1962:241). Akhenaten changed the single obelisk into a *benben* stone by having the obelisk walled in with sandstone and an *hwt-bnbn* built around it (Loeben 1994:42, Redford 1987:72-73). When the temple was rebuilt under Rameses II the monument became an obelisk again. Ptolemy VIII Euergetes II (170-116 BC) altered the structure of this temple so that the worshipper could approach the obelisk in a straight line (Barguet 1962:241).

Moved in Egypt: to Alexandria on its way to Constantinople by Constantine I in AD 330. It remained near the docks from the time of the emperor's death in AD 337.

Moved out of Egypt: Constantius II, a younger son of Constantine I, ordered the obelisk to be transferred from Egypt to Rome. A special barge was built to carry the obelisk across the Mediterranean to the mouth of the Tiber and then up the river to the Villa of Severus, about 3 miles from the city, from where it was unloaded, transported in to the city through the Ostian gate and taken to the Circus Maximus (Ammianus Marcellinus 17.4). It was raised in the Circus Maximus in AD 357.

Roman location: stood on the spina of the Circus Maximus. It joined the obelisk raised in the Circus Maximus by Augustus and was located in the space provided by the growth of the arena in the intervening period. The arena continued in regular use into the AD 400s with the last official race in AD 549 after which the site reverted to fields (Iversen 1968:56-59).

Roman modifications: raised on a base of six blocks of granite. Topped with a gilded bronze ball but this was struck by lightning (Ammianus Marcellinus 17.6-10) and replaced with a gilded bronze torch (Iversen 1968:57).

Roman inscription: An inscription was carved on all four sides of the base composed in six-lined hexametres.

PATRIS OPVS MVNVQE [E SVVM] TIBI ROMA DICAVIT
AVGVSTVS [TOTO CONSTAN]TIVS ORBE RECEPTO
ET QVOD NVLLA TVLIT TELLVS NEC VIDERAT AETAS
CONDIDIT VT CLARIS EXA[EQV]ET DONA TRIVMFIS
HOC DECVS ORNATVM GENITOR COGNOMINIS VRBIS
ESSE VOLENS CAESA THEBIS DE RVPE REVELLIT

SED GRAVIOR DIVVM TANGEBAT CVRA VEHENDI
QVOD NVLLO INGENIO NISVQVE MANVQVE MOVERI
CAVCASEAM MOLEM DISCVRRENS FAMA MONEBAT
AT DOMINVS MVNDI CONSTANTIVS OMNIA FRETVS
CEDERE VIRTVTI TERRIS INCEDERE IVSSIT
HAVT PARTEM EXIGVAM MONTIS PONTOQ. TVMENTI

CREDIDIT ET PLACIDO [VEXERVNT AEQVORA FLV]CTV
LITVS AD HESPERIVM [TIBERI] MIRANTE CARINAM.
INTEREA ROMAN TA[ET]RO VASTANTE TYRANNO
AVGVSTI IACVIT DONVM STVDIVMQVE LOCANDI
NON FASTV SPRETI SED QVOD NON CREDERET VLLVS
TANTAE MOLIS OPVS SVPERAS CONSVRGERE VLLVS
TANTAE MOLIS OPVS SVPERAS CONSVRGERE IN AVRAS
NVNC VELVTI RVRSVS RVF[IS] AVVLSA METALLIS
EMICVIT PVLSATQVE POLOS HAEC GLORIA DVDVM

AVCTORI SERVATA SVO CV[M C]AEDE TYRANNI
REDDITVR ATQVE ADITV RO[MAE VI]RTVTE REPERTO
VICTOR OVANS VRBIQ[VE LOCAT SVBLIM]E TROPAEVM
PRINCIPIS ET MVNVS COND[IGNIS VS]QVE TRIVMFIS.

Won by the son in his fight, and the worldwide fame of the father.
No era could boast of its equal, and Constantine's wish was
That it should stand in the town known to the world as his namesake,
So, with that aim, it was torn from its rock at the temple of Thebai.

Heavily weighed the Herculean task on the mind of the Chosen,
Rumour had whispered of vanity: mountain is stronger than man is,
There is no power on earth which is able to move the colossus;
Godly Constantius, Lord of the earth's ball, trusted the saying:
Virtue shall conquer at last, and commanded this burden of giants
Dragged over land and by sea, placidly ploughed by the keel-plank,

To the Hersperian shore where the Tiber in wonder was waiting.
Meanwhile, when Roma was raped by the vilest of Tyrants
Long lay the gift in its dock-yard, deserted but never disdained,
Nobody dared to believe that this gift of the glorious God could
Ever be raised among mortals again, and as promised, once more
Vie with the heaven in purple and gold as it used to.

But, Lo! After the swift and inglorious death of the tyrant
Soon it returned to the master to whom it by justice belonged
Pure and sublime as when first made to rise from its rose-coloured rock-bed,
Proud to point at the pole star; and the victorious hero
Opened its way unto Rome where he raised it again as a trophy
Never surpassed, and truly the tribute was worthy his triumph.
(Iversen 1968:58)

All images: public domain

Obelisk fragments

i Obelisk currently standing in the Piazza del Duomo in Urbino

Red granite, height 4.7 m, inscribed

The obelisk is composed of five fragments from at least two different obelisks reconstructed into a single monument. Two fragments from an obelisk of Apries (589-570 BC) brought from Sais, one fragment upside down and perhaps re-cut from a fragment of the lower shaft of 6a and two fragments of unknown origin, one of which is uninscribed. All the fragments probably come from obelisks which originally stood near the Temple of Isis (Platner and Ashby1929:369-370; Roullet 1972:76).



Image: public domain

ii Fragment currently used as a doorstep in the church of S. Andrea della Valle

Red granite, currently 4.27 m long and 1.38 m wide.

Found in the area of the modern Via di San Ignazio in the Pigna district, site of the Temple of Isis and is probably from a large temple obelisk (Platner and Ashby1929:369-370; Roullet 1972:77).

iii Fragment currently used as a doorstep at the Palazzo Giustiniani

Current length is 2.93-2.82 m and width is 0.6m-0.635 m indicating the original taper (Roullet 1972:77). No visible inscription. Found in the area of the Via di San

Ignazio near the site of the Temple of Isis. Probably from a small temple obelisk (Platner and Ashby1929:369-370; Roullet 1972:77).

iv Fragments of an obelisk in the Louvre (B46, B47) and Naples Museum (2323)

Made of red granite and brought to Rome uninscribed. Probably stood about 6.4m tall based on the size of the surviving fragments.

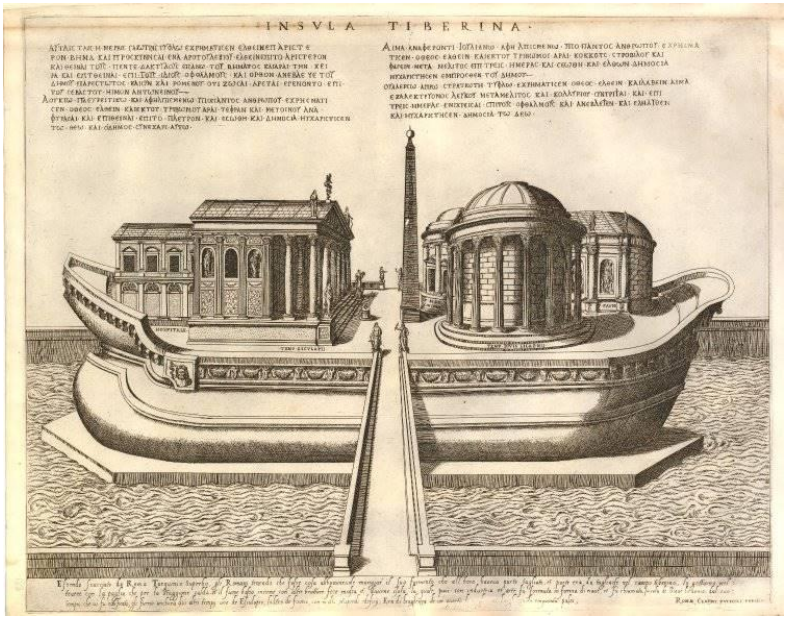
Erected on the Tiber Island - traditionally created by the grain thrown into the Tiber from the fields of the Tarquins after the expulsion of the kings (Livy 2.5; Dionysius of Halicarnassus 5.13) - in front of the third century AD Temple of Aesculapius. The surviving fragments are inscribed with Roman hieroglyphs, a sun disc and two figures - one holding a standard with a falcon on top and the other a standard ending in a *shm* sceptre. Similar figures can be seen on the granite columns of the Temple of Isis (Roullet 1972: figs 40, 42). The figure facing a snake represents a scene associated with the cult of Isis known from other monuments. The obelisk probably dates from c.1-300 AD (Roullet 1972:80-81). Legend said that in 292 BC as the serpent of Aesculapius was being brought to Rome it swam ashore to the island, where a temple was later erected to the god (Platner and Ashby 1929:282). The obelisk stood in front of this temple. The obelisk either collapsed or was taken down after 1569.

Two pieces still in the piazza of San Bartolomeo were collected by Cardinal Borgia and kept in the Museum of Velletri until his death in 1804, when they were joined to fragments from an authentic Egyptian relief and attached to the so-called Borgia obelisk in the Villa Albani. Alternatively, Besnier (1902:43) believes that the fragments had already been mounted on the Borgia obelisk when it was moved to Villa Albani from Velletri. These two pieces were later taken to Paris, where they were placed in association with a monument dedicated to General Desaix in the Place des Victoires, until they were finally transferred to the Louvre where they reside today. The Borgia obelisk went to München (Iversen 1968:181).

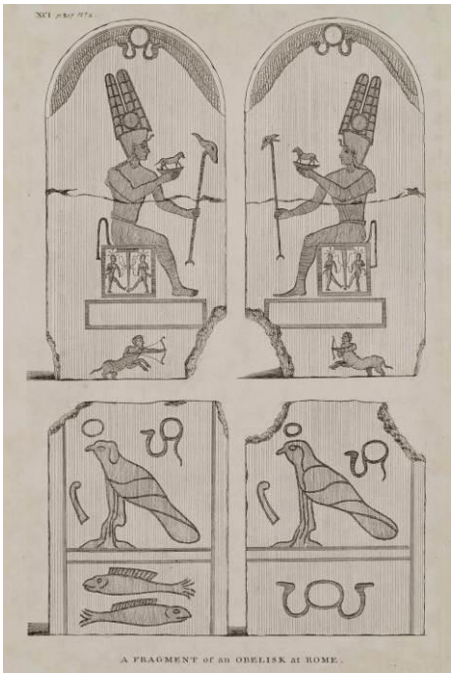
Besnier (1902:43) refers to a third fragment which was brought to Paris from the Villa Albani during the revolution and later moved to the collection of the King of Bavaria in München.

A fourth and final fragment is reported in Naples by Nibby (1838-1841:291).

Platner and Ashby (1929:564) assumed that the third and fourth fragments were pieces from the rounded apex (now missing) sketched by Pococke (see below).



Sixteenth century view of Tiber Island depicted as a ship, showing the Temple of Aesculapius, the obelisk and other monuments from the series *Speculum Romanae Magnificentiae*. 1580-1585. (British Museum P&D 1947,0319.26.64)
Image: www.britishmuseum.org/research/collection_online



Fragment of the obelisk in the court of San Bartolomeo all'Isola Basilica, Rome. (Drawing by Pococke 1743).
Image: Public domain



Model of the ancient Tiber Island (Museo della Civilta Romana, Rome)
Image: http://museociviltaromana.it

v Fragment in the Museo Capitolino, Rome

Red granite. Height 0.25 m. Width 0.34 m. Inscribed with hieroglyphic text. It was found in the Aurelian Wall (Roullet 1972:83). Iversen (1968:90) believes it was originally part of the obelisk now standing in the Piazza Navona.

vi Fragment in Florence Museum (3686)

Black granite. Height 1.73m. Roman creation inscribed with a copy of hieroglyphic text from the New Kingdom and late period including titles and biographical text. Text appears to have been carved by somebody who was familiar with the script but did not understand it. The shape does not taper like a true obelisk (Roullet 1972:83).

vii Fragment in the Glyptothek, Munich

A portion of a small obelisk, possibly from the Temple of Isis, is described and illustrated by Kircher (1652-1654). Originally in the Palazzo Cavalieri-Maffei, Piazza Branca (now Piazza Cairoli) it was later moved to Villa Albani. From here it was sent to Paris and then moved to the Glyptothek, Munich. The inscription is badly damaged, and the T. Sextius Africanus mentioned has not been identified with either of the two known men of this name, one of the time of Claudius and Nero, the other of the time of Trajan. If the two obelisks from the temple of Fortune at Praeneste, which belong to the time of Claudius (one is still there, the other in Naples) can rightly be called counterparts of it, the identification should be with the former (Platner and Ashby1929:369-370).

Lost obelisks

α Lost obelisk from Theatre of Pompey

Current location/condition unknown.

Noted in Rome at the end of the sixteenth century and said to have come from the Theatre of Pompey (built during the late Republican period, dedicated in 52 BC and in active use for 600 years). The obelisk was still standing in the early seventeenth century by the staircase of the Palazzo Orsini in the Campo dei Fiori (Roullet 1972:79).

β Obelisk of S. Angelo

Current location/condition unknown.

Said to be of 'basalt' with a bronze ball on top.

Noted to be in S. Angelo by Pirro Ligorio around AD 1550.

γ Fragment noted in Rome in 1500s

Current location/condition unknown.

Inscribed and possibly dating to 26th dynasty.

δ Small 'basalt' obelisk

Current location/condition unknown.

Noted at Rome in late 1500s at the church of S. Pietro in Montorio on the eastern slope of the Janiculum.

ε Garden obelisk

Current location/condition unknown. Date uncertain.

Known to have been in a garden in Rome during the nineteenth century where it was noted by Parker (1876).

ζ Small buried obelisk

Current condition unknown.

Obelisk buried not far from S. Luigi dei Francesi. It has never been excavated (Platner and Ashby1929:369-370).

Appendix B: Dating and spelling conventions

Ancient Egyptian dynastic periods

Shaw, I. (ed.) 2000. *The Oxford History of Ancient Egypt*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 479-482.

Predynastic Period	**c.5300-3000 BC**
Early Dynastic Period	**c.3000-2686 BC**
1st dynasty	c.3000-2890 BC
2nd Dynasty	2890-2686 BC
Old Kingdom	**2686-2125 BC**
3rd Dynasty	2686-2613 BC
4th Dynasty	2613-2494 BC
5th Dynasty	2494-2345 BC
6th Dynasty	2345-2181 BC
7th and 8th Dynasties	2181-2160 BC
First Intermediate Period	**2160-2055 BC**
9th and 10th Dynasties	2160-2025 BC
11th Dynasty (Thebes)	2125-2055 BC
Middle Kingdom	**2055-1650 BC**
11th Dynasty (all Egypt)	2055-1985 BC
12th Dynasty	1985-1773 BC
13th Dynasty	1773-after 1650 BC
14th Dynasty	1773-1650 BC
(probably contemporary with 13th or 15th Dynasty)	
Second Intermediate Period	**1650-1550 BC**
15th Dynasty (Hyksos)	1650-1550 BC

16th Dynasty	1650-1580 BC
(early Theban rulers contemporary with 15th Dynasty)	
17th Dynasty	c.1580-1550 BC
New Kingdom	**1550-1069 BC**
18th Dynasty	1550-1295 BC
Ramessid Period	**1295-1069 BC**
19th Dynasty	1295-1186 BC
20th Dynasty	1186-1069 BC
Third Intermediate Period	**1069-664 BC**
21st Dynasty	1069-945 BC
22nd Dynasty	945-715 BC
23rd Dynasty	818-715 BC
(contemporary with the late 22nd, 24th and early 25th Dynasties)	
24th Dynasty	727-715 BC
25th Dynasty	747-656 BC
Late Period	**664-332 BC**
26th Dynasty	664-525 BC
27th Dynasty (1st Persian Period)	525-404 BC
28th Dynasty	404-399 BC
29th Dynasty	399-380 BC
30th Dynasty	380-343 BC
2nd Persian Period	343-332 BC
Ptolemaic Period	**332-30 BC**
Roman Period	**30 BC-AD 395**

Ptolemaic rulers

Shaw, I. (ed.) 2000. *The Oxford History of Ancient Egypt*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 482.

Ptolemaic Dynasty	**305-30 BC**
Ptolemy I Soter I	305-285 BC
Ptolemy II Philadelphus	285-246 BC
Ptolemy III Euergetes I	246-221 BC
Ptolemy IV Philopator	221-205 BC
Ptolemy V Epiphanes	205-180 BC
Ptolemy VI Philometor	180-145 BC
Ptolemy VII Neos Philopator	145 BC
Ptolemy VIII Euergetes II	170-116 BC
Ptolemy IX Soter II	116-107 BC
Ptolemy X Alexander I	107-88 BC
Ptolemy IX Soter II (restored)	88-80 BC
Ptolemy XI Alexander II	80 BC
Ptolemy XII Neos Dionysos (Auletes)	80-51 BC
Cleopatra VII Philopator	51-30 BC
Ptolemy XIII	51-47 BC
Ptolemy XIV	47-44 BC
Ptolemy XV Caesarion	44-30 BC

Emperors of Rome	**31 BC-AD 363**

Scarre, C., 1995. *Chronicle of the Roman Emperors: The Reign by Reign Record of the Rulers of Imperial Rome.* London: Thames and Hudson, 15-222.

The Julio-Claudian Dynasty	**31 BC-AD 68**
Augustus	31 BC-AD14
Tiberius	AD 14-37
Caligula	AD 37-41
Claudius	AD 41-54
Nero	AD 54-68

The Civil War of 69	**AD 69**
Galba	AD 68-69
Otho	AD 69
Vitellius	AD 69

The Flavian Dynasty	**AD 69-96**
Vespasian	AD 69-79
Titus	AD 79-81
Domitian	AD 81-96

The Adoptive Emperors	**AD 96-138**
Nerva	AD 96-98
Trajan	AD 98-117
Hadrian	AD 117-138

The Antonine Dynasty	**AD 138-192**
Antoninus Pius	AD 138-161
Marcus Aurelius (with Lucius Verus AD 161-169)	AD 161-180
Commodus	AD 180-192

The Civil War of 193	**AD 193**
Pertinax	AD 193
Didius Julianus	AD 193
The Severan Dynasty	**AD 193-235**
Septimius Severus	AD 193-211
Caracalla	AD 211-217
Geta	AD 211
Macrinus	AD 217-218
Varius (commonly known as Elagabalus)	AD 218-222
Alexander Severus	AD 222-235
Period of third century upheaval	**AD 235-285**
Maximinus Thrax	AD 235-238
Gordian I	AD 238
Gordian II	AD 238
Pupienus and Balbinus	AD 238
Gordian III	AD 238-244
Philip	AD 244-249
Decius	AD 249-251
Thebonianus Gallus	AD 251-253
Aemilius Aemilianus	AD 253
Valerian	AD 253-260
Gallienus	AD 253-268
Claudius II	AD 268-270
Quintillus	AD 270
Aurelian	AD 270-275
Tacitus	AD 275-276
Florianus	AD 276
Probus	AD 276-282
Carus	AD 282-283
Numerian	AD 283-284
Carinus	AD 283-285

Late emperors	**AD 284-363**
Diocletian	AD 284-305
Maximian	AD 286-305, 307-308
Constantius I	AD 305-306
Galerius	AD 305-311
Severus II	AD 306-307
Maxentius	AD 306-312
Maximinus Daia	AD 310-313
Constantine	AD 307-337
Licinius	AD 308-324
Constantine II	AD 337-340
Constans I	AD 337-350
Constantius II	AD 337-361
Julian	AD 360-363

Appendix C: Order of obelisks in current literature

Numbers in brackets correspond to the numbering system used in this research.

Iversen, E., 1968. *Obelisks in Exile. Volume 1*. Copenhagen: G.E.C. GAD.

Piazza di St Pietro (3)

Piazza dell'Esquilino (5)

Piazza S. Giovanni in Laterano (13)

Piazza del Popolo (2)

Piazza Navano (10)

Piazza della Minerva (7)

Piazza della Rotonda (8)

Villa Celimontana (9)

Piazza del Quirinale (4)

Trinita dei Monti (11)

Montecitorio (1)

Monte Pincio (12)

Viale delle Terme di Diocleziano (6a). NB: (6b) is not discussed

Habachi, L., 1977. *The Obelisks of Egypt: Skyscrapers of the Past*. London: J.M. Dent and Sons.

Piazza S. Giovanni in Laterano (13)

Piazza del Popolo (2)

Piazza della Rotonda (8) and Villa Celimontana (9)

Viale delle Terme di Diocleziano (6a) and Boboli (6b)

Montecitorio (1) and Piazza della Minerva (7)

Piazza di St Pietro (3), Piazza dell'Esquilino (5) and Piazza del Quirinale (4)

Trinita dei Monti (11), Piazza Navano (10) and Monte Pincio (12)

Curl, S.J., 2005 (3rd edition). *The Egyptian Revival: Ancient Egypt as the Inspiration for Design Motifs in the West.* London: Routledge.

Piazza del Popolo (2)

Piazza di St Pietro (3)

Piazza S. Giovanni in Laterano (13)

Trinita dei Monti (11)
Piazza dell'Esquilino (5) and Piazza del Quirinale (4)
Montecitorio (1)
Piazza Navano (10), Piazza della Minerva (7) and Piazza della Rotonda (8)
Villa Celimontana (9), Monte Pincio (12), Viale delle Terme di Diocleziano (6a) and Boboli (6b)

Curran, B.A., Grafton, A., Long, P.O. and Weiss, B., 2009. *Obelisk: A History.* Burndy Library Publications. Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press.
Piazza del Popolo (2) and Montecitorio (1)
Piazza di St Pietro (3)
Piazza della Rotonda (8) and Villa Celimontana (9)
Trinita dei Monti (11)
Piazza dell'Esquilino (5) and Piazza del Quirinale (4)
Piazza Navano (10)
Monte Pincio (12)
Piazza S. Giovanni in Laterano (13)
Piazza della Minerva (7)
Viale delle Terme di Diocleziano (6a) and Boboli (6b)

Sorek S., 2010. *The Emperor's Needles: Egyptian Obelisks and Rome.* Bristol: Phoenix Press.
Montecitorio (1)
Piazza del Popolo (2)
Piazza della Minerva (7)
Caligula: Piazza di St Pietro (3)
Viale delle Terme di Diocleziano (6a) and Boboli (6b)
Piazza della Rotonda (8) and Villa Celimontana (9)
Piazza Navano (10)
Piazza del Quirinale (4) and Piazza dell'Esquilino (5)
Monte Pincio (12)
Trinita dei Monti (11)
Piazza S. Giovanni in Laterano (13)

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