

Identity Crisis The Horus *Cippi* Campana Reliefs at the Temple of Apollo Palatinus

Many architectural terracotta decorative figural panels, commonly referred to as Campana reliefs, have been excavated from the Augustan Palatine Complex, including a significant number of high-quality reliefs currently housed and displayed in the Museo Palatino (Tomei 1997). These reliefs are typically believed to have been displayed as part of the decorative artistic program of the Temple of Apollo precinct, often specifically attributed to the Portico of the Danaids. One specific type of Palatine Campana relief recovered from the area and attributed to the Temple of Apollo precinct has yet to receive proper scrutiny. Often referred to as the “Bes between Sphinxes” type (Strazzulla 1990; Perry 1997; Pensabene 2017), this relief depicts two crouching sphinxes flanking a central, frontal image of a male nude anthropomorphic figure with the face or head of the Egyptian deity Bes. Unsurprisingly, scholars to date have thus identified the central figure of the relief as being Bes (Strazzulla 1990; Perry 1997).

In the publication *Scavi del Palatino*, Patrizio Pensabene attributes at least two fragments of this Campana relief type to the area around the *Domus Augusti* and provides a thorough discussion of the reliefs’ iconography (Pensabene 2017). Notably, Pensabene suggests that the central figure may not actually be Bes, but rather the nude figure of a boy wearing a Bes mask. Identifying the flanking sphinxes as Isis-Aphrodite and Osiris-Serapis, Pensabene suggests that the presence of a young boy between Isis and Osiris leads a viewer to associate the central figure with Horus the Child (as the offspring of Isis and Osiris). But Pensabene falls short of fully reinterpreting the central figure as being Horus, and the evidence provided by Pensabene for reinterpreting the figure rests solely upon associating the flanking figures with Isis and Osiris.

Taking Pensabene’s suggestion further, I propose that the central figure on the relief is best viewed as a depiction of Horus the Child (known by the Greek name Harpocrates) rather than a depiction of the deity Bes himself. Further, a novel comparison of the Campana relief fragments

with the many Horus *cippi* recovered from Egypt reveal undeniable parallels in iconography and composition, a relationship previously unacknowledged in the available scholarship. While key differences in the two depictions of Horus exist (namely, the Bes mask is worn by Horus on the Campana relief, whereas on the stela it hovers over him), these alterations are easily explained by changes in the physical artistic medium from stela to terracotta revetment, as well as by Augustan period stylistic imperatives.

Subsequently, a reinterpretation of the relief's iconography is needed in order to better understand the purpose of the relief and its relationship to the overall artistic program of the Portico of the Danaids and wider Temple of Apollo precinct. I submit that the relief is a deliberate utilization of a Horus *cippus* and not a product of the appropriative and prejudicial Egyptomania more common in the late- and post-Augustan periods. Further, the placement of a series of Horus *cippi* atop the roofs of a temple precinct designed as a symbol of cultural rebirth, renewal, and restoration is especially significant, since Horus cippi were thought to produce blessed water with healing and restorative properties when water was poured over them. Finally, I will suggest that associations with Horus/Harpocrates were politically and culturally desirable for the Princeps, and that the Temple of Apollo precinct was an ideal location to promote such associations.

Works Cited

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