

Depictions of Apollo in the Roman Empire

Introduction

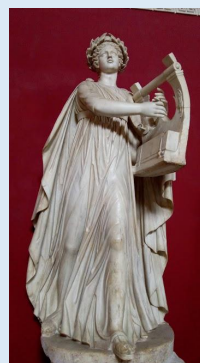
This study seeks to analyse the ways in which the Romans depicted the god Apollo, and to better understand why they might have depicted him in a variety of ways. In this study I visited ancient sites in Rome and Pompeii, as well as conducting my research within museums in Italy and the UK.



Temple of Apollo Palatinus now only survives in ruins on the Palatine Hill next to the House of Augustus. In its time however it was hugely significant to religious and political life in Rome. Standing on the Palatine Hill near the Forum Romanum, Rome's older centre of business and public life, the temple was one of the first to be built by Augustus. Augustus rebuilt or restored many temples but Apollo Palatinus was built with public funds after the defeat of Sextus Pompey.

Augustus closely associated himself with Apollo, naming him his patron god, and solidified this bond by building the temple next to his own residence on the Palatine Hill.

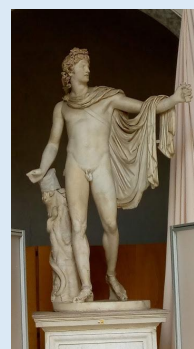
At certain points during the Empire the temple was used to house Senate meetings, specifically in the temple libraries, illustrating the political importance of the temple. Meetings were held there for the convenience of the Emperor, especially during times of ill health, but this also had a psychological affect on the Senate, being on Augustus' territory rather than neutral or their own ground. This custom was continued by Tiberius, Claudius and Nero as a way to ascertain imperial power and dominance.



The **Apollo Citharoedus** located in the Vatican is a Roman statue from 2nd Century AD. This Apollo is dressed in a traditional musician's clothes; long belted chiton with a mantle, and holding a cithara.

The statue is believed to have been displayed as decoration in a Roman villa. The Vatican's Citharode Apollo was found in the Villa of Cassius in Tivoli, along with statues of the Muses. Clothed Apollos alone are not too common in Roman villas, more often in conjunction with other statues, such as Jupiter or Diana. The Citharoedus statue chooses to represent Apollo as his epithet as the god of music. Apollo accompanied by Muses is unusual in Greek art, seeming a more Roman invention, where they are fairly common.

The Citharode Apollo statues are decidedly decorative statues rather than cultic or votive. The purpose of the Apollo Citharoedus in a villa was to show the high class of the owner, presenting them as a person educated and interested in high culture and art. Images of a Citharode Apollo also appear on Neronian coins, possibly referring to Nero's musical interests, and giving an imperial connection to the owner of a Citharode Apollo.



Temple of Apollo at Pompeii stands to the left side of the Forum in Pompeii. Many column bases of the temple remain, around the outside of the temple and on the stylobate. There is also an altar and statues of Apollo and Diana, however these are not the cult statues of the temple.

The temple seems to have Hellenistic and Roman phases and artwork of the Fourth Pompeiian style. Like many buildings in Pompeii, the temple was damaged in an earthquake in 62AD, and was only just cleared of debris when the volcano erupted in 79AD. The temple to Apollo would have been significant for the Pompeiians, as can be seen with its proximity to the Forum-public centre of a Roman city- and by the fact that the temple is one of the oldest in the city. The grandeur and size of the temple also show the local significance of Apollo

Temple of Apollo Sosianus, originally called the Temple of Apollo Medicus and later renamed after its final builder, Gaius Sosius. The temple is located in the Campus Martius near the Temple to Bellona and Theatre of Marcellus. The Temple was first a republican building, built in 431BC after a time of plague, probably as an offering to Apollo, for this time coming to an end. Gaius Sosius took on rebuilding it before the civil war between Octavian and Anthony. Only after Sosius reconciled with Octavian were the building works completed. This temple shows that the epithet of Apollo Medicus was relevant to the Romans enduringly from republican to imperial times. Also, at the time of its initial building, Apollo was considered a foreign cult and so this temple resides outside the Pomerian line. Comparing this to Apollo Palatinus shows the increasing popularity and recognition of Apollo across the Roman timeline until he was considered Octavian's patron god.

Apollo Belvedere, which currently resides in the Vatican, is a Roman copy from the 2nd century AD, of a Greek original by the sculptor Leochares. Apollo appears to have at some point been holding a bow and arrow, the quiver of arrows can be seen on his back. Unlike the Apollo Citharoedus, this Apollo is depicted in some kind of fight, emphasising his attribute as god of archery and highlighting a warlike nature, in opposition to the musical and intellectual Citharoedus.

The positioning of the statue speaks of movement, he seems to be striding forward creating a dynamic image. The cloak, held back at his shoulder, reveals his naked form, a sign of beauty and athleticism in Greek and Roman sculpture. A significant difference between the Greek original and this Roman copy are Apollo's sandals, a specifically Roman style. This shows that the Romans chose certain aspects of the statue to change to fit their ideology better. As Apollo is almost completely naked, the changing of sandals may signify a Roman intent to Romanise Apollo

Conclusion

Across Roman history, Apollo has been a significant god, and his iconography has been adopted by the Romans for specific purposes. As a god with a variety of epithets and attributes, the image of him is highly malleable, and therefore can be used for a variety of purposes. Apollo held great religious and political importance as a god, but also had attributes relating to health, sport, youth and the arts that could give those related to him a specific image.

Works Cited

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