

# CAC, a Claudian countermark from lower Germany

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## CAC — A CLAUDIAN COUNTERMARK FROM LOWER GERMANY <sup>1</sup>

David W. Mac Dowall

In the collection of the National Museum of Ireland in Dublin, there is a copper As of the Marcus Agrippa/Neptune type (weight 8,42 g) with the obverse countermark CAC (fig. 1). The As seems to belong to Miss Jameson's type (b), which she attributes to the principate of Claudius <sup>2</sup>. Close inspection of this coin in Dublin reveals the extremely interesting fact that it has been restruck, and the counter-

<sup>1</sup> I am indebted to the curators of the collections cited below for the facilities they afforded me to study the coins in their collections. My thanks are due in particular to the Mlle Mainjonet, Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris, for sending me casts, to the late Prof. Jongkees and Miss Isings for permission to study the unpublished material from Vechten in Utrecht and Dr. Hubrecht for permission to study the unpublished finds in the Rijksmuseum G. M. Kam in Nijmegen. Dr. Colin Kraay has kindly given me a note of the coins with this countermark in the ANS collection in New York.

<sup>2</sup> Shelagh Jameson, The date of the Asses of M. Agrippa, NC 1966, 95 ff.

mark CAC was already on the flan when it was restruck with the Marcus Agrippa/ Neptune types. The sequence of striking is clear from the way in which the countermark has suffered. C in the left field is clear, but the next letter A and the final letter C are both marred by the line of Agrippa's chin. Where the field below Agrippa's chin was raised in the overstriking obverse die, this has had the effect of flattening the bottom of the AC of the countermark. But where the area above Agrippa's chin was lower in the overstriking obverse die, the upper part of



1

the letters are less flattened. We have therefore a *terminus ante quem* for the application of the countermark in this particular issue of Agrippa asses — Miss Jameson's type (b); and from this and the range of coins to which the countermark is applied, we can establish fairly closely the chronological context in which it was applied.

The countermark is comparatively rare, and is only known to me from some 15 examples of which the find spots of six are known.

*Moneyers of Augustus asses*

RIC	195	Obv.	Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris	Fig. 2
	196	Rev.	Museum, Utrecht found at Vechten	Fig. 3
	uncertain		Found in Neuss Lager	

*M. Agrippa asses*

RIC	32	Obv.	Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris, 2 examples	Fig. 4
	32	Obv.	National Museum, Dublin — an As that has been restruck with the Agrippa types of Miss Jameson's type (b)	Fig. 1

<sup>3</sup> Bonner Jahrbücher 1904, 246 ff.

*Caligula asses*

RIC	30	Obv.	British Museum, London	Fig. 5
	30	Obv.	Rijksmuseum G. M. Kam, Nijmegen	
	30	—	3 examples found in Nijmegen <sup>4</sup>	
	30	—	American Numismatic Society, Holzer Collection, 2 examples	
	44	—	Found in Gué de St. Leonard, Mayenne <sup>5</sup>	
	44	Obv.	American Numismatic Society, Holzer Collection	



The countermark seems to be restricted to copper asses. There are three examples on moneyers' asses of Augustus but the principal groups countermarked belong to the period of Caligula. The countermark is found on seven of the Caligula/Vesta asses and on two Caligula/Germanicus asses — both from Caligula's issue with TRPOT — and on three Agrippa asses which span the period from late Tiberius to early Claudius <sup>6</sup>.

The *terminus post quem* for the application of the countermark is therefore AD 37/8, the first year of Caligula's tribunicia potestas. It should however be borne in mind that most of the *aes* of Caligula found in the western provinces was dated TRPOT. Finds of coins dated TRP III and TRP IIII are much rarer. At Mayenne for example there are 77 Vesta asses of Caligula with TRPOT and only 13 with TRP III and TRP IIII <sup>7</sup>. This makes the countermark later than the major substantive issue of asses under Caligula in the western provinces.

The *terminus ante quem* for the application of the countermark is given by the As in Dublin countermarked CAC which we have seen was subsequently restruck

<sup>4</sup> Oudheidkundige Mededelingen uit het Rijksmuseum van Oudheden te Leiden, xxxi, 30.


<sup>5</sup> Bulletin de la Société d'Archéologie, Sciences, Arts et Belles-Lettres de la Mayenne 1865, 30 no. 64.

<sup>6</sup> NC 1966, 95 ff.

<sup>7</sup> Bulletin de la Société d'Archéologie, Sciences, Arts et Belles-Lettres de la Mayenne 1865, 31 nos. 76 and 77.

with the Agrippa/Neptune types of Miss Jameson's type (b) — a group that seems to be of Claudian date <sup>8</sup>.

Except for the find from Mayenne on one of the Vesta asses of Caligula, all the examples with a known provenance come from Lower Germany — Neuss, Nijmegen and Vechten. The countermark is absent from the well documented finds along the upper Rhine and at Vindonissa. Although in this instance we cannot point to a site where 50 % or so of the eligible coins are countermarked, as in the case of some of the commoner Julio-Claudian countermarks, there can be little doubt that the countermark itself belongs to Lower Germany.


The interpretation of the letters CAC poses more of a problem. They have no obvious reference to a denomination or act of approval like DVP(ondius), AS, BON(um) or PROB(atum) <sup>9</sup>. The letters could well refer to the authority of some fiscal procurator or military official <sup>10</sup>. But the other countermarks of this same context seem to contain elements of imperial names or imperial titulature. In its area of application — Lower Germany and its use on asses of the moneyers of Augustus, CAC could have been inspired by or copied from the very common countermark  the Caesar Monogram <sup>11</sup> which is found in quantity at various sites in Lower Germany and is principally used on copper asses of the moneyers of Augustus. But CAC is quite different from the Caesar monogram in that it is normally applied to the copper asses of Caligula. In this respect it is far closer to the Claudian group of countermarks which are normally found on Vesta and Germanicus asses of Caligula and M. Agrippa/Neptune asses (primarily of Miss Jameson's type (c) that she attributes to Caligula). These are:

- |                         |                             |
|-------------------------|-----------------------------|
| a) B <sup>12</sup>      | d) TICNIMIM <sup>15</sup>   |
| b) BCAMP                | e) TICITP <sup>16</sup>     |
| and BCLIP <sup>13</sup> | f) TI · C · A <sup>17</sup> |
| c) TIC A <sup>14</sup>  | g) T · C · A <sup>18</sup>  |

All these countermarks contain various forms of the titulature of Claudius — Tiberius Claudius Caesar Augustus Imperator, as Mowat pointed out. Mowat went on to suggest that this series of countermarks was struck in haste on his predecessor's coins to assert his *imperium*, and that these countermarks formed an integral part of Claudius' issues of *aes*. But there is a far more relevant and direct reason for this action by Claudius. Two of the countermarks b) and d) are often found across Caligula's features and deliberately deface them; and most of these counter-

<sup>8</sup> NC 1966, 108 ff.

<sup>9</sup> BMC I, xxxii ff.

<sup>10</sup> This seems to be the significance of countermarks like VICIN(IVS) and VAR(VS) and its monogrammatic form .

<sup>11</sup> See Kraay, *The Behaviour of Early Imperial Countermarks*, in *Essays in Roman Coinage* presented to Harold Mattingly, 118 ff.

<sup>12</sup> On an unpublished Vesta AS RIC Caligula no. 30 in the BM.

<sup>13</sup> Mowat RN 1909. There are several further examples of this countermark in the BM, Paris, Munich, The Hague and ANS Holzer collections.

<sup>14</sup> On an unpublished sestertius RIC Caligula no. 27 in the BM.

<sup>15</sup> Mowat, loc. cit.

<sup>16</sup> Kraay, *Die Münzfunde von Vindonissa*, 110 no. 4594.

<sup>17</sup> Mowat, loc. cit.

<sup>18</sup> Kraay, op. cit., 109 no. 4434. There is a further example in Paris.

<sup>19</sup> Mowat, loc. cit.

marks are found on *aes* of Caligula alone. We know from Dio Cassius <sup>20</sup> that when the Senate condemned the memory of Caligula it decreed that the *aes* coins of Caligula should be melted down. The edict certainly seems to have been effective in Italy. In the large *aes* hoard from Pozzarello near Bolsena there are no coins of Caligula <sup>21</sup>, and sestertii and dupondii of Caligula are never countermarked NCAPR — the common countermark apparently applied by Nero in AD 64 in northern Italy to orichalcum issues from Tiberius to the Claudius issue with PP <sup>22</sup>. In this group of Claudian countermarks applied to the *aes* of Caligula we seem to have complementary action to the melting down or restriking of Caligula's coins <sup>23</sup> — the use of a countermark with items of Claudius titulature to give a new authority to replace the discredited authority of Caligula, and to give them the (acceptable) status of asses, etc., of Claudius.

In the range of coins countermarked and in its date of application CAC certainly belongs to the same general context and must have served much the same purpose. If its initials equally refer to Claudius' name and titulature, they might perhaps stand for Claudius Augustus Caesar or Claudius Augustus Germanicus. But however we interpret them, there can now be little doubt about the context of the countermark, its early Claudian date and its use in Lower Germany. And the example in Dublin is an interesting addition to the list of early imperial countermarked coins that have been restruck subsequently <sup>24</sup>.

### *Résumé*

La contremarque CAC apparaît sur des as de Caligula, de Germanicus et sur les monétaires d'Auguste; on la rencontre principalement dans les trouvailles du Bas-Rhin. Un as de Dublin contremarqué CAC, et refrappé au coin de Marcus Agrippa, groupe (b), que Miss Jameson attribue à Claude, nous donne un *terminus ante quem* pour cette contremarque. Il semble avoir été un de ceux utilisés au début du principat de Claude, après la *damnatio memoriae* de Caligula.

<sup>20</sup> Dio Cassius 60, 22, 3.

<sup>21</sup> Mélanges d'Archéologie et d'Histoire 1964, 51 ff.

<sup>22</sup> Cf. BMC I, xxxiv.

<sup>23</sup> Examples of restruck asses of Caligula are published by Pekáry, SM 13/14 1965, 128 ff., Kraay, op. cit. 107 no. 4237, Mattingly, BMC I, 185 no. 148.

<sup>24</sup> Cf. Kraay, Gegenstempel auf überprägten römischen Münzen, SM 6, 1956, 4 ff.