



On the Reading of the Coins of Cunobelin

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ON THE READING OF THE COINS OF CUNOBELIN.



No 1.

No. 2.

COINS OF CUNOBELIN, FOUND AT CHESTERFORD.

WHEN upon a former occasion an inspection of the coins of Cunobelin had led me to enunciate a theory relative to the meaning of the obscure word Tascio or Tasciovani, upon the reverse, I was not insensible that the novel idea suggested by the reading of these legends would be a subject for discussion. The newly discovered coins represented above, found at Chesterford, and now in the possession of the Hon. Richard Neville, who has kindly communicated them to the Archæological Institute, however, settle the question, and support in a gratifying and unexpected manner the conjecture upon which Mr. Wigan's specimen, owing to the indifferent preservation of the last letters, threw a slight doubt: the most sceptical cannot now fail to be convinced that TASC. FIL is Tasciovani filius, and that through this name a clue is obtained for the decipherment of the inscriptions of several other coins of the British and the Gallic series.

I should have considered it unnecessary to retrace my steps upon this numismatic point, but that a recent writer, the Rev. Mr. Beale Post, has not only disputed my explanation of the legend, but actually proposed another far more untenable. Forced to abandon the crude conjectures of the past school of antiquaries, he has taken up a position founded upon the same imperfect philological basis, and consequently equally wrong, and he cannot therefore be surprised if numismatists do not recognise in CVNOBELINVS TASC' FIL', Cunobelin the Tasciovanus the Fercombretus.

In order to place the question in as concise a form as possible, it will be necessary to re-describe the four coins on which it is founded.

No. 1. CVNO in a square, or on a tessera; all within a laurel wreath and engraved ring.

R. TASC' F. Pegasus galloping to the r. Ar. 1. *British Museum*^a.

^a Engraved and described in the *Numismatic Chronicle*, vol. vii. Pl. V. No. 1. p. 78.

2. CUNOBEL, unbearded head and bust in armour, galeated to the r.

R. TASC · FIL. Boar biting a branch, or ear of corn, facing to the left.
Æ 3½. Mr. Wigan's cabinet, Clare House, East Malling. Mr. Neville's coin found at Chesterford^b.

3. CUNOBELIN, unbearded head galeated to the r.^c

R. TASCIOVANIF. Boar running to the left. Æ 2½.—*British Museum*.

4. CUNOBELINI. Head, laureated to the left.

R. TACIOVANI · F. Centaur gradient to the r. and blowing a horn. Æ 3½.
—*British Museum*^d.

Now it is evident from an inspection of these legends, that TASC No. 1, 2, is a contraction for TASCIOVANI. No. 3, 4; and this is the correct form of the inscription read TASIOVANIT · both by Combe^e, and Ruding, who although he found on Mr. Rebellos' coin^f TASCIOVAIF, and on another specimen TASCIOVAN^g, was yet unable to combine the proper reading of his two legends, and restore the inscription as he might have done to its true form TASCIOVANI. F. But he preferred following his predecessors and contemporaries in either attempting to etymologize the word, or referring it to towns in the Narbonnese Gaul or in Spain. This spirit is not yet altogether abandoned: but it is necessary to return to the second part of the inscription. This is F and on No. 2, FIL; Mr. Neville's coin enabling us to pronounce certainly on the last letters, which Mr. Wigan's, owing to its rather honey-combed condition, did not. Some doubt existed whether the last letter might not be an R, but not only on some coins of Cunobelin does the L much resemble the R in its form r, which might account for the appearance of Mr. Wigan's coin, but Mr. Neville's, as already stated, removes all doubt as to the reading of this last letter, and confirms what was already evident from the form F, that the contraction is for *filius*, and that Cunobelin, for certain reasons subsequently touched on, called himself Cunobelin the son of Tasciovan, thus restoring to the series of British monarchs one whose existence is only known numismatically, and resolving what for two centuries has been an inexplicable problem in this branch of numismatics. It will be instructive for future enquirers, and at the same time a literary exer-

^b Ibid., No. 2, p. 79.

^c Ibid., No. 3, p. 79. Ruding, *Annals of the Coinage*, Pl. V. fig. 23.

^d Ibid., No. 4, p. 78. Ruding, loc. cit. No. 17. Taylor Combe, *Num. Vet. Pop. et*

Urb. 4to. Lond. 1814. p. 25. No. 25.

^e l. c. No. 27.

^f Ann. III. 236.

^g Ibid.

citation not devoid of interest, to trace the hypotheses which have been successively applied to these coins, the earlier of which will be found in the learned dissertation of Dr. Pegge, who diligently collected the errors of his predecessors while adding another to the list. The first English antiquary who published the coins of Cunobelin, was Camden, who to the honour of his sagacity assigned them to England, but conjectured that they were struck expressly for the payment of the Roman tribute; that those with the horse, hog, tree, and ear of corn respectively, were destined as the payment *vice* cattle, forest and corn lands; this extraordinary notion, although supported by the eminent authority of Cardinal Baron, (who added the idea of a fluctuating tribute currency made for the occasion co-existent with a fixed ordinary coinage,) was amply confuted by Casaubon. The antiquary Thoresby did not much advance the question by supposing that these pieces were amulets, concurring with Bishop Nicholson, and misled by the work of Bartholinus. Wise, the author of the Bodleian Catalogue, justly considered them to be coins, but conjectured they were not British, a rather pardonable error in the numismatic learning of that day. *CUN* he imagined was the name of the Iberian Cunei of Spain, or the Tascodunitari Cononiensis. Yet he might have been convinced by the recurrence of these coins in the island from the time of Camden, that they were essentially British. A step in advance was however made by Dr. Pettingal in a dissertation, elaborate for its day, read before the Society of Antiquaries in 1769; he restored the coins to Britain, a conclusion to which he was necessarily led by the fact of their frequent discovery in the island. Cunobelin he supposed was the name of the prince by whose authority they were struck, who indeed is mentioned by Dio and Suetonius, two of the most read of classical authorities; but he signally failed in his explanation of the reverse, he returned to the exploded notion of Camden, that they were struck to pay tribute; an argument the most inconclusive, for it is as well known to have been paid in kind, as that the Britons had a currency prior to the invasion of Cæsar; while the old refutation was in full force, that such a fact as the issue of a currency to pay a tax is almost unheard of in the history of the world; the beard-money of Peter the Great of Russia being probably the solitary exception. Pettingal supposed the word *Tascia* to be derived

from *Tag* a prince, and that it represented the idea *tax* in Celtic, and the equivalent of the Latin *taxatio*, a word indeed barbarous enough, but derived from the Greek *τάξις*. The subject lay dormant in this state for some time, till Dr. Pegge, a man of some classical learning and attainments, wrote his dissertation, embodying all the notions of his predecessors, and critically examining their historical pretensions: he even classified the coins into five divisions; 1. those with the king's name full or abbreviated; 2. those with name and place of coinage; 3. those with Tascia full or abridged; 4. those with Tascia only; 5. those with Tascia and place of coinage. He still continued, however, to confound the legends altogether, and even wavered whether CUN might not mean Cunetio or Marlborough: but it is due to Pegge to state that he established something like order in his system, and classed the Tascia and Ver together, which last he rightly called Verulamium, or St. Alban's, while he identified Cam with Camalodunum or Colchester, which has been subsequently confirmed by the reading of two coins. The complete legends of Tasciovani f. he does not appear to have seen. The legend *Tascio* or *Tascia*, for both occur, he supposed to be the name of King Cunobelin's moneyer, which he supported by the fact of the names of moneyers occurring on coins of Augustus. Although this interpretation was not correct, there was in it thus far an approach to truth, that the coins were distinctly assigned to Britain, and that they were supposed to be copied after a Roman model. The opinions of writers continued to oscillate between the hypotheses of Wise, Pettingal, and Pegge, as late as the appearance of the work of Ruding, although that writer, and his successors, as I have already stated, possessed ample means of rectifying the errors of preceding enquiries, and had in fact all the elements of the true reading. Even the cold and accurate Combe, in his Catalogue of the Museum, misread the legend of No. 4, and thus continued to perpetuate the notion that some inexplicable enigma lay hid in the word *Tasciovanit*. Yet the Museum specimen is remarkably distinct, and on another type in the Museum, reading TAZCHIOVANIIF, if the last letter could not have been necessarily identified as an F at all events it was not a T. Whitaker in his History of Manchester, a book of rather apocryphal character, had however proposed another theory, to which it will be necessary to refer, as it has

been lately reproduced; he conjectured that the legend of the reverse was a translation of the inscription on the obverse, and that Tasciovani was the Romanized British word for prince: in order to establish this, he recurred to the old philological argument of *Tag* prince, and its derivations. In April 1845, I gave my analysis of the inscription founded on an impression of three coins in the national cabinet, but No. 2. in Mr. Wigan's collection, who most kindly forwarded it to me, left a transient doubt on the subject, the last letter being apparently uncertain; yet I felt so convinced that F. after a genitive name must be filius, that I read a short paper on the subject. About the month of June 1846, I received a cast of, and subsequently saw, Mr. Neville's coin, which entirely confirmed what I had advanced, because on this excellently preserved specimen the last letter was decidedly an L, and consequently TASC·FIL. could be no other than Tasciovani filius, the son of Tasciovanus. Mr. Akerman in his work on the "Ancient Coins of Cities and Princes," not only recognised the reading as applicable to Cunobelin and Tasciovanus, but also adopted it as proposed by me for Eppillus, and extended it proprio motu to two other princes. The Rev. Mr. Beale Post recurs to the old system of supposing the name of the reverse to be Tasciovanus fircombretus, "the monarch the legislator;" here he closely follows Whitaker, the portion that is his own being the doubtful explanation of FIR on Mr. Wigan's coin. He observes that Fircombretus appears on a coin of Lexovium, which cannot be doubted, but as the Romans never mistook or interchanged the v and f, nor the not too learned moneyers of Gaul, they wrote it Vercombretos. The difficulty which he experienced in the admission of filius was the doubt that Cunobelin could claim the crown in right of his father, but why not? Although Tasciovanus may as one of the reguli of Britain have escaped the pages of the Roman historians, it is evident that he was a prince in the strictest alliance with Rome, and we know, from a passage in the Anecdota of Dr. Cramer, that the British princes enjoyed their respective thrones by the right of hereditary descent. The sons of Cunobelin, who fled to Rome at the time of Caligula, gave their father trouble enough, and paved the way for the subsequent expedition of Claudius, yet this at least implies an hereditary principle. As for the difficulty of the name of Tasciovanus, it is of inferior consequence. How should we

have known, except from the Ancyrean inscription, (cf. Franz in Gerhard's *Archæologische Zeitung*, Feb. 1843, p. 17—26,) of the three kings of Britain, Damno, Bellaunos, and Timcon? The old chroniclers who vamped up a history of Britain prior to the Saxon period from Roman histories, old legends, and such traditionary matters as reached them, have without hesitation called the predecessors of Cunobelinus or Cymbelin, Tenuantius, Themantius, Theomancius, Cennantius, Tenuancius, Tudor Belin, and Tubelin. Is it too much to suppose that they have taken the line of those kings who were in the strictest alliance with Rome, and the recognised native sovereigns at that epoch? Nor is the name of the coins and chroniclers, after all, so widely remote. Those who have to deal with harmonized barbarian names, will readily conceive with Menage's joke upon hippos and cheval, how they are bien changés en passant. As the name of Tasciovanus is not mentioned among the kings who came to Augustus, as Cunobelin died early in the reign of Claudius, and his sons had commenced their political intrigues at the time of Caligula, Tasciovanus must have lived in the age of Tiberius. His coins, which have been confounded by writers with those of his son Cunobelin, are of rather a ruder character; the fullest form in which the name occurs on any of them, is Tasciovan, and it is found in the still more abridged forms, Tasciava, Tascio, and Tasc. The full form of his name Tasciovanus, only occurs in the genitive on the coins of his son, but in many instances the contractions are attributable to the mutilated condition of the coins. It is probable that to the early part of his reign are to be referred those coins which are unaccompanied by any inscription on the reverse; he probably struck subsequently those with Ver on the reverse, which indicated Verulamium, for Verlamio occurs on what must be considered an autonomous coin of that town, issued perhaps during the interregnum which followed the death of Cunobelin. Mr. Haigh has supposed the Sego on the reverse to be Segontium, Mr. Akerman inclines to the idea of Segonax, but in what relation were these two monarchs? Had Tasciovanus another son, or is it possible that, descended from one of the four confederate kings of Kent, he had established his court at Verulamium? But there is another coin presenting no less a difficulty which occurs in this series. This is a gold coin struck like those of Timcon and Eppillus, having on the ob-

verse a horseman, with a sun and a wheel in the area; on the reverse is an inscription of two lines, reading TASCIO-VRICON TASCIOV-RICON, and published by Lambert, p. 146. pl. xi. No. 21. as TASCIERICON, probably misread. It has been conjectured by Mr. Haigh, that the latter portion of the legend is the name of the town Uriconium or Wroxeter: but this would stretch the dominions of Tasciovanus to an almost universal empire. It is probable that the best specimens of this type are those reading Tasciovricon, but I have never seen one so perfectly preserved as I should desire. One I have recently seen offers the following peculiarity; there is a period at the end of the second line RICON, but none between any other of the letters; there might have been one between the v and r, but there is none present on that published by Mr. Haigh. I conclude from this, and the fact of Cunobelin occasionally inscribing his legends in the same manner on his obverse, that Tasciovricon is a contraction for Tasciovriconis, the genitive form of another British regulus, named Tasciovricon, who enjoyed a certain authority in the south of the island, and whose coinage was modelled on that of the Brigantes and Atrebates, under the protection of the Romans. I submit this explanation with all due deference as preferable to supposing the name of a prince and town blended thus together contrary to the analogy of the British and Gaulish series. There is another coin attributable to *Tasciovanus* published in the thirty-three plates of Dr. Stukeley, on which unfortunately no reliance can be placed, and reproduced by Dr. Pegge in his Essay: the reverse of this coin reads Cearatic, and it has been hastily assigned to Caradoc or Caractacus. As the coin has since disappeared it is not possible to take it into consideration; it was probably a mis-read specimen of Cunobelin. This closes the series of the coins of Tasciovanus, whose seat of empire seems to have been placed at St. Alban's, but his son and successor, for reasons which history has not recorded, removed his capital to Colchester. I think two styles of coinage of this monarch, who must have reigned for some period, may be traced. In the earlier one he followed his father's, who had probably obtained the aid of provincial Roman moneyers, but whose currency exhibits a certain native rudeness: in his later coins he seems to have had more efficient assistance, and from the names of native artists on

vessels and other objects, it is evident that the Gaulish and Celtic nations had made rapid strides in civilization. Like his imperial patrons he struck a numerous series of types, but not upon the Roman standard, for he was necessarily influenced by the fluctuating standard, which, probably introduced by the Greeks at Marseilles, or after the invasion of Brennus, continued to circulate among the Celtic nations. His gold is often alloyed with silver or copper; his silver currency is smaller and lighter than the denarii, probably originally derived from the drachma, and his copper is always small like the Greek chalcos. The fullest form of his name inscribed on these pieces is Cunobelinus rex, and he contracts it CVNOBELIN, CVNOBELI, CVNOB, CVNO, and CVN; in some instances he uses the genitive Cunobelini, i. e. the money of Cunobelin. Three legends occur on his reverses, 1. those reading TASC, TASCIO, TASCI, TASCIOVA, TASCIOVAN, TASCIOVAI, TASC · F · TASC · FIL · and TASCIOVANI F; but some few of the abbreviated forms are owing to the indifferent manner in which they have been struck. 2. The coins reading CAMU and Camul. On a coin in Mr. Huxtable's cabinet, is the full form CAMULODUNO, which confirms the appropriation to Colchester. 3. Those with the reverse reading SOLIDO, but I believe the correct form is, as on a good specimen also in Mr. Huxtable's cabinet, SOLIDU: it may be the commencement of the name of a town, which the Itineraries have not preserved. I consider it probable that he issued the coins with the name of Colchester on their reverses at the commencement of his reign, from the circumstance of their resembling in style and fabric those of Tasciovanus, who placed the name of St. Alban's, his capital, on his reverses, and that the coin with Solidu is referable to some political change or conquest. The series No. I., on which he claims his descent from Tasciovanus, is generally of finer and improved style, and was probably coined when his sons commenced to trouble him at Rome, and when he wished to recall to the notice of his imperial patrons the fact that he was the son of their old and probably honoured ally. On one coin he writes KVNQBHL, in which case his mint master seems to have been a Greek or Gaul, and the substitute of the H for the E occurs on two or three other specimens. Some of the Gaulish chiefs used Greek or Latin legends, probably for a mixed population; we have Pixtillos in Greek, and Pistillus in Latin,

as the name of a regulus located in the south of France. The value of obtaining the reading of filius is perceived by extending it to other coins of the British and Gaulish series. Epillus Comi · f · is evidently Epillus son of Comius, and Tinc Comi · f · apparently Timco son of the same monarch of the Atrebrates. As Comius was in his government in the time of Julius Cæsar, and as Augustus records in his letter or will at Ancyra, that three kings, Damno, Belinus, and Tim. . . . as the inscription runs, had come on an embassy to him, as mentioned by the Roman authors, it is not improbable that the Tim. . . . of this inscription is for Timcon or Timco. A coin attributed by Combe and others to Indutiomarus, reads GERMANUS INDVTILLI · I ·, but it must be Germanus Indutilli · f · "Germanus, son of Indutillus," and Indutiomarus is inadmissible. From the position of Calle on the coins reading EPPI REX CALLE, I am disposed to think that Calle is placed for Callevæ, as originally proposed, and that this was the seat of the government of Eppillus. I must also observe, that a coin found in the same excavations at Chesterford, has on the obverse a head, rather rudely designed within an engrailed ring, and the inscription VER, perhaps for *Verulamio*; on the reverse a goat going to the right, with a crescent above.

I do not propose to consider here the various readings of all the epigraphical coins of the British series, but there is one set, found in Yorkshire, which has received so extravagant an interpretation that it is necessary to shew what the reading is; they are coins of electrum formed by the union of gold and copper, and of very rude fabric. On the obverse across the field is $\begin{smallmatrix} \text{VO} & \text{LI} \\ \text{SI} & \text{OS} \end{smallmatrix}$ which is apparently Volisios, unless the artist intended an inverted M by the LI, in which case it would be Vosimos. The reverse reads DVMNO CO EPOS. This has been interpreted "*I fly from the war chariots!!*" As the reading [D]VMNO is found on other coins of the same style, I think that we are justified in supposing the name to commence with Dumno, and the final naturally suggests NEPOS, in which case we have *Dumnoco[nis] nepos* grandson of Dumnoco.

With respect to the coin reading EPAT· alluded to by Mr. Akerman, it may be either Gaulish or British; the complete name was probably EPATICCVS, *Epaticcus*, for a person of this name appears among the dedicators of the silver vases found at Bernay.

SAMUEL BIRCH.