

Zeitschrift: Schweizer Münzblätter = Gazette numismatique suisse = Gazzetta numismatica svizzera
Herausgeber: Schweizerische Numismatische Gesellschaft
Band: 18-22 (1968-1972)
Heft: 71

Artikel: The PNR type of Claudius
Autor: Mac Dowall, David W.
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-170874>

Nutzungsbedingungen

Die ETH-Bibliothek ist die Anbieterin der digitalisierten Zeitschriften auf E-Periodica. Sie besitzt keine Urheberrechte an den Zeitschriften und ist nicht verantwortlich für deren Inhalte. Die Rechte liegen in der Regel bei den Herausgebern beziehungsweise den externen Rechteinhabern. Das Veröffentlichen von Bildern in Print- und Online-Publikationen sowie auf Social Media-Kanälen oder Webseiten ist nur mit vorheriger Genehmigung der Rechteinhaber erlaubt. [Mehr erfahren](#)

Conditions d'utilisation

L'ETH Library est le fournisseur des revues numérisées. Elle ne détient aucun droit d'auteur sur les revues et n'est pas responsable de leur contenu. En règle générale, les droits sont détenus par les éditeurs ou les détenteurs de droits externes. La reproduction d'images dans des publications imprimées ou en ligne ainsi que sur des canaux de médias sociaux ou des sites web n'est autorisée qu'avec l'accord préalable des détenteurs des droits. [En savoir plus](#)

Terms of use

The ETH Library is the provider of the digitised journals. It does not own any copyrights to the journals and is not responsible for their content. The rights usually lie with the publishers or the external rights holders. Publishing images in print and online publications, as well as on social media channels or websites, is only permitted with the prior consent of the rights holders. [Find out more](#)

Download PDF: 31.12.2025

ETH-Bibliothek Zürich, E-Periodica, <https://www.e-periodica.ch>

die ersten autonomen Prägungen von Amisos und Sinope unter pontischer Herrschaft. Es ist auch nicht einzusehen, daß die wirtschaftlich bedeutendsten Städte des pontischen Staates in der ersten Hälfte des zweiten Jahrhunderts keine Bronzemünzen geprägt haben sollen, während doch für diese Zeit Prägungen von Amastris und Pharnakeia bezeugt sind.

Abbildungen

1. Mithradates Eupator, Knabenporträt, gegen 120 v. Chr.
Amisos. 20,45 g Oktachalkon, Privatsammlung.
2. Mithradates Eupator, Jünglingsporträt, gegen 118 v. Chr.
Amisos. 20,17 g Oktachalkon, Privatsammlung.
3. Mithradates Eupator, Jünglingsporträt, gegen 115 v. Chr.
Amisos. 20,43 g Oktachalkon, Privatsammlung.
4. Mithradates Eupator als junger Mann, gegen 112 v. Chr.
Amisos. 20,30 g Oktachalkon, Privatsammlung.
5. Mithradates Eupator als junger Mann, gegen 110 v. Chr.
Chersonesos. 20,53 g Oktachalkon, unpublizierte Variante, Privatsammlung.
6. Mithradates Eupator, Perseushelmtyp, gegen 100 v. Chr.
Amisos. Hexachalkon 11,70 g, im Kunsthandel.
7. Mithradates V. Euergetes, 150 bis 121/20 v. Chr.
Amisos. 19,64 g Oktachalkon, Privatsammlung.
8. Mithradates V. Euergetes
Amisos. 20,04 g Oktachalkon, Privatsammlung.
9. Wolfshelmtyp, unter Mithradates IV. Philopator Philadelphos 169–150 v. Chr. geprägt.
Amisos. 6,96 g Dichalkon, Privatsammlung.
10. Wolfshelmtyp, zusammen mit 9 erworben.
Amisos. 6,78 g Dichalkon.

THE PNR TYPE OF CLAUDIUS

David W. Mac Dowall

Various suggestions have been put forward to explain the type used on the quadrantes of Claudius of a hand holding a balance with the letters PNR in the field (Fig. 1 a and 1 b). The type is used in A.D. 41 and 42, and in each year it is accompanied by a parallel issue of quadrantes with the type of a modius.

Issue of A.D. 41 TRP COS DES IT

Obv.	Rev.
1 Hand l. holding balance, PNR TI CLAVDIVS CAESAR AVG BMC 189 no. 174 ff.	SC in centre PON M TRP COS DES IT
2 Modius standing on three legs TI CLAVDIVS CAESAR AVG BMC 189 no. 179 f.	as 1

- | | |
|---|--|
| <p>3 Hand l. holding balance, PNR
 TI CLAVDIVS CAESAR AVG
 BMC 190 no. 181</p> | <p>SC in centre
 PON M TRP IMP PP COS II</p> |
| <p>4 Modius standing on three legs
 TI CLAVDIVS CAESAR AVG
 BMC 190 no. 182 ff.</p> | <p>as 3</p> |



The use of two types in these two principal issues of quadrantes probably served the functional purpose of distinguishing the product of the two officinae that struck the quadrantes; but the types themselves will equally have had a topical reference. The modius is usually taken to refer to the imperial corn supply, the *cura annonae* in which Claudius is known to have had a special interest¹; the reference of the hand holding the balance with PNR is disputed.

Eckhel² suggests that PNR stands for «pondus nummi restitutum». Kubitschek³ suggests «portorium nundinarium remissum» quoting Suetonius, Caligula 40, for the introduction of market dues by Caligula. Mowat⁴ challenges this explanation with the evidence that the dues imposed by Claudius were abolished not by Claudius but by Galba. Willers⁵ suggests «ponderum norma restituta» and quotes distinct though fragmentary evidence for a general revision of weights and measures under Claudius. Mattingly⁶ argues appositely that the points which most strongly favour Willers view also support that of Eckhel. He quotes Dio's statement of the Senate's order to melt down all the *aes* of Caligula⁷, and the disparaging remark in Statius, *Silvae*⁸ of an article bought «plus minus asse Gaiano». Noting that extant asses of Caligula show no marked falling off in weight standard, he suggests that these are the better pieces that escaped the melting down; he is inclined to admit that Caligula's coins were really, as they normally circulated, underweight, and in consequence to accept Eckhel's view.

But an analysis of the metrology of the *aes* of Tiberius, Caligula and Claudius and of the changes which they introduced yields no evidence at all that Caligula reduced the weight standard of any of the *aes* denominations. On the contrary, where there is any difference from the standard of Tiberius, Caligula's *aes* standards are consistently better. When plotted in a frequency table⁹ copper asses of Caligula fall

¹ Cf. Suetonius, Divus Claudius, 18 and Tacitus, *Annales* 12, 43.

² *Doctrina Nummorum Veterum* VI.

³ *Jahreshefte des Österreichischen Archäologischen Institutes* 3, 1900 72 ff.

⁴ *RN* 1909, 75 ff.

⁵ *Römische Kupferprägung*, 1909, 203.

⁶ *BMC I*, CLVIII.

⁷ Dio Cassius 60, 22. 3.

⁸ Statius *Silvae* 4, 9. 22.

⁹ See p. 84 below.

between 10 and 12 g, the same range as the asses of Tiberius; those of Claudius are no better than this. Orichalcum dupondii of Caligula fall mostly between 15 and 17 g, whereas those of Tiberius fall between 13 and 15 g and dupondii of Claudius are slightly lower than Caligula's at 15 to 16 g. Orichalcum sestertii of Caligula fall between 26 and 30 g, whereas Tiberius' issue falls between 26 and 29 g; sestertii of Claudius cover the same weight range as those of Caligula though there is probably a denser concentration of coins at 28 to 30 g. In fact Caligula retained the same weight for the copper As, and actually increased the weight of the orichalcum dupondius and sestertius, and the minor modifications of Claudius did not return to the standards of Tiberius.

There is, however, clear numismatic evidence that the withdrawal of Caligula's *aes* described by Dio Cassius was indeed fully effective – at least in Italy. The large *aes* hoard from Pozzarello near Bolsena ¹⁰, which contains 719 copper and orichalcum coins from the Republic down to the time of Nerva contains no *aes* of Caligula in any denomination. The common countermark NCAPR, which can now be attributed with some confidence to the middle years of Nero and localised to a centre of application in northern Italy, is found on orichalcum sestertii from the beginning of Tiberius' principate to the latest issues of Claudius with PP; but it is never found on sestertii and dupondii which have the name of Caligula ¹¹. The clear inference is that sestertii of Caligula had either been withdrawn by the time the countermark was applied or had been demonetised, and so were regarded as being in a different category from these denominations of Tiberius and Claudius. There is further evidence of the way in which action was taken against *aes* of Caligula in the countermarks of Claudius that obliterate Caligula's features ¹² and give the coins a new authority with the initial letters of Claudius titulature; and in the restriking of Caligula's asses with the PROVIDENT type of Divus Augustus Pater ¹³ and with the Pallas type of Claudius ¹⁴. All this leaves in little doubt the explanation of the disparaging remarks about Caligula's As in Statius *Silvae*. The coin has virtually no value, because it has been demonetised. But the reason for this is not the supposed light weight standard of Caligula's *aes*, which cannot be substantiated. It must therefore have been a political act associated with Caligula's *damnatio memoriae* as Dio suggests.

On the other hand a careful analysis of the weights of the precious metals reveals the interesting fact that Caligula reduced their weight standard but that Claudius returned to standards that has been used during the principate of Tiberius. The general character of these changes can be seen clearly in the weights of successive issues of the silver. Mattingly ¹⁵ gives the average weight of denarii as 3,75 g at Lugdunum under Augustus, 3,76 g under Tiberius, 3,72 g under Caligula but 3,75 g again under Claudius. When plotted in a frequency table ¹⁶ the weights of denarii show the same pattern with a reduced weight range under Caligula and a return to the earlier standard under Claudius. The full significance of this restoration has not been appreciated, largely because Claudius' comparable measure for the gold has

¹⁰ Callu et Rosati, Le Dépôt monétaire du Pozzarello, Mélanges d'Archéologie et d'Histoire 1964, 51 ff.

¹¹ Cf. BMC I, XXXIV.

¹² RN 1903, 118 ff.

¹³ Cf. T. Pekáry, Zur Datierung der Divus Augustus Pater/Providentia-Prägungen, SM 13/14, 1965, 128 ff., and C. M. Kraay, Die Münzfunde von Vindonissa, 1962, 107 no. 4237.

¹⁴ On an As in Munich.

¹⁵ BMC I, LII.

¹⁶ See p. 84 below.

not been recognised. Bahrfeldt¹⁷ gives the average weight of aurei at 7,75 g under Augustus (AD 2–14), 7,72 g under Tiberius and 7,70 g under Caligula. He fails to recognise the return by Claudius to the Tiberian weight standard, because he does not calculate separately the weight of the only issues in which the restored standard was employed on the gold. Instead he groups together the aurei of AD 41–45 which have an average weight of 7,71 g and which he suggests were struck to a heavier standard than the subsequent issues of AD 46–54 with an average weight of 7,67 g. But if the weights cited by Bahrfeldt are considered separately for the aurei with TI CLAVD CAESAR AVG (GERM) PM TR P their average weight is in fact 7,75 g – the same as the average weight of the PONTIF MAXIM issue of Tiberius. When plotted in a frequency table¹⁸ aurei show the same clear pattern with a reduction in weight under Caligula, a return to the earlier standard in the issues of Claudius dated TRP, but a reduced weight standard in subsequent issues of Claudius. As a result of this, the more of the later issues of Claudius that are included in any average, the lower the resultant average weight becomes; and unless the TRP issues of the gold are considered separately, Claudius' return to the Tiberian gold weight standard will not be appreciated.

This in fact seems to be the reason why Mattingly¹⁹ did not detect Claudius' action – because in his average weights he merely quoted one figure for the whole of the principate of Claudius. It is more surprising that West²⁰, who gives the weights of aurei issue by issue did not recognise these changes. In this case the explanation probably lies in the additional examples cited by West – sometimes more worn aurei and aurei from hoards which may show different degrees of wear. This is certainly responsible for the secondary point of concentration which West postulates in post reform aurei of Nero²¹, and which is in fact merely due to the inclusion in his table of a large number of worn aurei from the Rome hoard²². Aurei of Tiberius and Claudius are found in later hoards whereas those of Caligula are generally absent. The Civil War hoard from Langres²³ has 36 Tiberius, 6 Claudius and only one Caligula. The Civil War hoard from Utrecht²⁴ has 4 Tiberius, 8 Claudius but no Caligula; and the Flavian hoard from Zirkowitz²⁵ has 7 Tiberius, 9 Claudius and no Caligula. No doubt aurei of Caligula suffered the same withdrawal as the *aes* after Caligula's *damnatio memoriae*. Hoard material and minor collections are therefore likely to contain more worn aurei of Tiberius and Claudius but fewer of Caligula; and this seems to be the real explanation for the narrower band of Caligula's weights that was noted in West's table. Even in West's material, however, a close inspection reveals the same pattern – a reduction in the aureus weight under Caligula, and a return to the Tiberian standard in the first issue of Claudius. And there is good reason to prefer the sharper changes shown by a frequency table constructed from the aurei cited by Bahrfeldt²⁶ from major collections.

¹⁷ M. v. Bahrfeldt, *Die Römische Goldmünzenprägung während der Republik und unter Augustus*, 1923, 185.

¹⁸ See p. 84 below.

¹⁹ BMC I, LI.

²⁰ L. C. West, *Gold and Silver Coin Standards in the Roman Empire* NNM 94, 1941, 48 ff.

²¹ NNM 94, 1941, 55.

²² *Bolletino della Commissione Archeologica Comunale di Roma*, 1930.

²³ *Mémoires de l'académie, arts et belles-lettres de Dijon* 1772, XLI.

²⁴ *Opgravingen op het dompe in te Utrecht*, Haarlem 1934, 49 ff.

²⁵ *Mitteilungen C. C. Steiermark* 2, 173. 3, 157. 5, 109.

²⁶ *Op. cit.*

Table of weights – AES denominations

Weight in g	
	<i>Tiberius</i>
31	
30	S
29	SSSSSSS
28	SSSSSS
27	SSSSSSSSSSSSSS
26	SSSSSSSSSSSS
25	SSSS
24	SSSSS
23	SS
22	S
21	SS
18	
17	
16	
15	DDDDDDDDDD
14	DDDDDDDD
13	DDDDDA
12	AAAAAAA
11	AAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAA
10	AAAAAAAAAA
9	

Based on the aes denominations in BMC I and Roman Imperial Coins in the Hunter Coin Cabinet I

Table of weights – Gold and silver

Weight in g	<i>Augustus</i> After c. 2 BC	<i>Tiberius</i>
8,1	x	
8,0	XXXXXXXXXX	
7,9	XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX	XXXXXXX
7,8	XX	XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX
7,7	XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX	XXXXXXXXXXXXXX
7,6	xxx	XXXXXX
7,5		XXX
7,4		x
4,0		x
3,9		xxx
3,8	XXXXXXXXXX	XXXXXXX
3,7	XXXXXXXXXX	XXXXXX
3,6	xxxx	XXXXXXXXXX
3,5	x	
3,4		
3,3		

Based on aurei quoted by Bahrfeldt and on denarii in BMC I

Caligula

Claudius

```

SSSS
SSSSS
SSSSSSSSSSS
SSSSSS
SSSSS
SSS
SS
S

```

```
SS
SSSSSSSS
SSSSSSSSS
SSSSS
SSSS
SSS
SSS
S
S
```

```
DD
DDD
DDDDD
DDDDD
DD

AAAA
AAAAAAAAAAAA
AAAAAA
A
```

DD
DDDDDD
DDDD
DD
DA
DAAA
AAAAAAA
AAAAAAA
AAAAAA

S Sestertii D Dupondii A Asses

Caligula

Claudius

```
X
X
XXXX
XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX
XXXXX
```

```

●X
●●●●●●●●●●XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX
●●●●●●●●XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX
●●XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX
●●XXX
X
```

XXXXXX
XXXXX
XXX

```
XXXXX
XXXXX
XXXXXXXXXXXX
XXXXX
XX
X
XX
```

Aurei of Claudius in the TRP issue are distinguished by ●

The fact that Claudius returned to the earlier weight standard in his initial issues of gold in AD 41 and 42 strongly reinforces the interpretations of PNR on the lines suggested by Eckhel. The significance of the hand holding the scales will therefore be the same as the scales held in the hand of Moneta on the common As type of Domitian ²⁷ (fig. 3) — another emperor who also restored the weight standard of the



3

aureus and returned to the weight that had been employed before Nero's celebrated reduction in A.D. 64 ²⁸. And the fact that Claudius' return to the heavier aureus weight did not survive beyond the initial issues with TRP is in itself sufficient explanation why the issue of quadrantes that so loudly proclaimed the restoration was confined to TRP COS DES ITER and TR P COS II i. e. AD 41 and 42. The quadrantes could hardly have continued to commemorate the restoration after it had been abandoned.

We can therefore with confidence interpret PNR as a reference not to the weight of Claudius *aes* denominations but to the heavy weight standard to which he struck his gold in A.D. 41 and 42, restoring for a short period the weight standard that Caligula had reduced. The letters PNR will therefore be an abbreviation for something like «*pondus nummi restitutum*» or «*probitas nummi restituta*».

²⁷ BMC II, XC and 361 no. 288 ff.

²⁸ BMC II, XIII ff. and Louis C. West, *Gold and Silver Coin Standards in the Roman Empire* NNM 94, 1941, 71 ff.

Les quadrans de Claude, à la légende PNR

Résumé par Colin Martin

Ces pièces montrant une main tenant une balance, avec au-dessous PNR, ont été diversement expliquées. Elles ont été émises en 41 (COS DES IT) et 42 (COS II) en même temps que des *quadrans* représentant un *modius*. Ce dernier rappelle la *cura annonae*, à laquelle Claude vouait une attention particulière. En ce qui concerne la légende PNR l'auteur repousse l'interprétation *portorium nundinarium remissum* avancée par d'aucuns. Au terme d'une sagace analyse des textes et de diverses trouvailles, il se rallie à la thèse d'Eckhel: *pondus nummi restitutum*, opinion qu'il était par une étude métrologique très convaincante. Ces pièces rappellent la réforme introduite par Claude, réaction aussi politique contre la fâcheuse réputation laissée par Caligula et ses monnaies — *damnatio memoriae* écrivait Dion Cassius (60. 22. 3).