

**Zeitschrift:** Schweizerische numismatische Rundschau = Revue suisse de numismatique = Rivista svizzera di numismatica  
**Herausgeber:** Schweizerische Numismatische Gesellschaft  
**Band:** 93 (2014)  
  
**Artikel:** Caninius Gallus on Agrippa the comes Augusti  
**Autor:** Woods, David  
**DOI:** <https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-515033>

### **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:** 18.02.2026

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

---

DAVID WOODS

CANINIUS GALLUS ON AGRIPPA THE *COMES AUGUSTI*

PLATE 6

L. Caninius Gallus was one of the *IIIviri monetales* for 12 BC together with Cossus Cornelius Lentulus and L. Lentulus.<sup>1</sup> He issued one type of aureus and three different types of denarius, all displaying the same obverse type depicting a bare-headed Augustus facing right. However, this was paired with a very different reverse type in each case. The reverse of the aureus depicts an oak-leaf crown between the letters OB and CS above a closed double door flanked by laurel-branches, the reverse of one denarius depicts a kneeling barbarian holding up a *vexillum* in his right hand, the reverse of another depicts the legend TR POT above an empty *bisellium* flanked by an apparitor's staff to the right, and the reverse of a third depicts a *cippus* inscribed C·C / AVG / VS / TI (*Pl. 6, 1*).<sup>2</sup> The purpose of this note is to suggest a new expansion and interpretation of this last legend.

Three possible expansions seem to have enjoyed most support during the modern era.<sup>3</sup> Babelon supported the expansion of it to read C(*aii*) C(*aesaris*) AVGVSTI “Of Gaius Caesar Augustus”, as if to mark the erection of the *cippus* by Augustus himself.<sup>4</sup> Alternatively, Grueber supported the expansion of it to read C(*aio*) C(*aesari*) AVGVSTI (*filio*) “To Gaius Caesar, the son of Augustus”, as if to mark the dedication of the *cippus* in honour of Augustus’ grandson and adopted

<sup>1</sup> See e.g. H. MATTINGLY, *Coins of the Roman Empire in the British Museum* 1 (London 1923), p. xcvi; C. H. V. SUTHERLAND, *The Roman Imperial Coinage* I<sup>2</sup> (London, 1984), pp. 72–74; M. D. FULLERTON, *The Domus Augusti in Imperial Iconography of 13–12 BC*, *American Journal of Archaeology* 89 (1985), pp. 473–83. The dating of Gallus and his colleagues to 12 BC is occasionally challenged. See e.g. C. B. ROSE, “Princes” and Barbarians on the Ara Pacis, *American Journal of Archaeology* 94 (1990), pp. 453–67, at 453, who wants to reverse the colleges of 13 and 12 BC as reconstructed by the above authors. However, this would not substantially affect the present proposal.

<sup>2</sup> See RIC I<sup>2</sup>, p. 74, nos. 419 (aureus) and 416–18 (denarii).

<sup>3</sup> J.-C. SCHOTT, *Explication d’une médaille énigmatique d’Auguste* (Berlin 1711) rejects earlier expansions of it to read C(*aii*) C(*aesaris*) AVGVSTI or C(*ircenses*) C(*aesaris*) AVGVSTI in favour of the expansion *ducenarii* AVGVSTI, in reference to a new court of jurors created by Augustus from men whose property only amounted to 200,000 sesterces (Suetonius, *Augustus* 32.3). However, these were not imperial officials, and would not have been called by the title *ducenarii Augusti*.

<sup>4</sup> E. BABELON, *Monnaies de la république romaine* I (Paris 1885), p. 312.

son, Gaius Caesar.<sup>5</sup> Finally, Mattingly expanded it to read C(omitia) C(aesaris) Augusti “The election of Caesar Augustus”, as if to mark the erection of the *cippus* in commemoration of the election of Augustus as the Pontifex Maximus in 12 BC following the death of M. Aemilius Lepidus, the previous holder of this office.<sup>6</sup> None of these expansions are entirely convincing.

In the case of the first suggested expansion, one may simply object that one would more naturally have expected the legend to refer to the name of the person who had erected the *cippus* in the nominative rather than in the genitive case. Alternatively, if the *cippus* had been erected in honour of rather than by Augustus, then one would more naturally have expected it to refer to him in the dative case. The second proposed expansion does at least meet this last objection in that it does indeed refer to the proposed honorand in the dative case. However, it provokes two other objections instead. The first is that this expansion requires the reading into the legend of a final, and key, term for which there is no evidence whatsoever – *filio*. One ought to compare the length of the legend upon this *cippus* to that of those legends upon other *cippi* depicted on the coinage just a little earlier – whether the legends IMP / CAES / AVG / LVD / SAEC (*Pl.* 6, 2) and IMP / CAES / AVGV / COMM / CONS upon *cippi* depicted on types issued by L. Mescinius Rufus in 16 BC or the legend S·P·Q·R / IMP·CAE / QVOD·V / M·S·EX / EA·P·Q IS / AD·A·DE upon *cippi* depicted on types issued by his colleague L. Vinicius (*Pl.* 6, 3).<sup>7</sup> The length of these legends suggests that Gallus could have included many more words within a much longer legend upon his *cippus* had he so wished, by depicting five or even six lines of legend rather than four, and including up to six letters within each line rather than a mere two or three. The most natural conclusion to draw from this comparison, therefore, is that Gallus felt that his legend was already complete in itself, so that no term should have to be assumed in order for it to make sense. This is not to claim that it represents a full sentence, only that it preserves every element of the relevant phrase.

The second reason to object to this expansion is that it requires that the coin was struck in honour of Gaius Caesar alone and not in association with his

<sup>5</sup> See H. A. GRUEBER, *Coins of the Roman Republic in the British Museum II* (London 1910), pp. 103–04, no. 4677, followed by FULLERTON (*supra*, note 1), p. 478.

<sup>6</sup> See MATTINGLY (*supra*, note 1), pp. cvii–cviii, followed by e.g. J. NEWBY, *A Numismatic Commentary on the Res Gestae of Augustus* (Iowa City 1938), p. 45, and C. FOSS, *Roman Historical Coins* (London 1990), p. 53. SUTHERLAND (*supra*, n. 1), p. 74, cites Mattingly without comment. Similarly, J.-B. GIARD, *Catalogue des monnaies de l’empire romain I* (Paris 1976), p. 116, refers to both Schott and Mattingly, but without comment.

<sup>7</sup> For the *cippus* inscribed IMP / CAES / AVG / LVD / SAEC, see RIC I<sup>2</sup>, p. 68, nos. 354–55; for the *cippus* inscribed IMP / CAES / AVGV / COMM / CONS, see RIC I<sup>2</sup>, p. 68, nos. 357–58. The former expands to read IMP(erator) CAES(ar) AVG(ustus) LVD(os) SAEC(ulares) (fecit), whereas the latter expands to read IMP(eratori) CAES(ari) AVGV(sto) COMM(uni) CONS(ensu). For the *cippus* inscribed S·P·Q·R / IMP·CAE / QVOD·V / M·S·EX / EA·P·Q IS / AD·A·DE, see RIC I<sup>2</sup>, p. 68, nos. 360–62. This expands to read S(enatus) P(opulus) Q(ue) R(omanus) / IMP(eratori) CAE(sari) / QVOD V(iae) / M(unitae) S(unt) EX / EA P(ecunia) Q(uod) I(ussu) S(enatus) / AD A(erarium) DE(lata est), although the last part has also been expanded Q(uam) IS / AD A(erarium) DE(tulit).

younger brother Lucius also. This is inconsistent with the evidence otherwise that Augustus wanted his two young sons to be honoured equally. For example, the moneyer C. Marius depicted three busts on one of his reverse types in 13 BC, the bust of Agrippa's wife, who was also Augustus' daughter, Julia, between those of both of her sons, Gaius and Lucius.<sup>8</sup> Similarly, the mint at Lyons depicted both brothers together on a reverse type issued c.2 BC – AD 4.<sup>9</sup> Next, Augustus reprimanded Tiberius when, at a festival offered in thanks for the safe return of Augustus to Rome in 13 BC, he gave undue prominence to Gaius alone.<sup>10</sup> Finally, one notes that Augustus was holding gladiatorial contests in the names of both of his adopted sons when he learned the news of Agrippa's death in 12 BC.<sup>11</sup> For these reasons, therefore, it does not convince that Gallus should have struck a coin in honour of Gaius without also striking a similar coin in honour of Lucius. However, there is no evidence for such a coin.

As for the third proposed expansion of this legend to read *C(omitia) C(aesaris) Augusti* in apparent reference to the election of Augustus as Pontifex Maximus, one may first object that one would more naturally have expected it to be introduced by either the conjunction *quod* or the preposition *ob* if the *cippus* had really been intended to commemorate this event. More importantly, however, this proposed expansion seems an unduly indirect and allusive means by which to refer this election. It had been the custom to allude to the office of Pontifex Maximus by means of symbols such as the *simpulum*, *aspergillum*, axe, or *apex*, with or without the accompanying legend PONT MAX, and the depiction of some combination of these elements would have been the most obvious and recognisable way by which to allude to Augustus' election as such.<sup>12</sup> One might perhaps be persuaded by Mattingly's expansion of the legend in this manner if there were any other evidence for the numismatic commemoration of Augustus' election to this office by this college of moneyers, but there is none. True, Mattingly does suggest that the aureus issued by Gallus depicting an oak-leaf crown above a closed double door flanked by laurel-branches, a clear reference to Augustus' house, as the Senate had granted him the right to decorate his doorway in this manner in 27 BC, alludes to Augustus' donation of part of his house to the state in order to accord with the tradition requiring the Pontifex Maximus to live in a public property.<sup>13</sup> Hence one could interpret this type as a rather indirect allusion once more to his election as Pontifex Maximus. However, the focus of this type is clearly on the crown above the doorway whose identity as the *corona civica* traditionally awarded to any soldier who had saved the life of a citizen in battle is made absolutely clear

<sup>8</sup> RIC I<sup>2</sup>, p. 72, nos. 404–05.

<sup>9</sup> RIC I<sup>2</sup>, pp. 55–6, nos. 205–12.

<sup>10</sup> Dio 54.27.1.

<sup>11</sup> Dio 54.28.3.

<sup>12</sup> See e.g. RRC, p. 471, no. 456 (47 BC); p. 478, no. 467 (46 BC); p. 496, no. 484/1 (43 BC); pp. 498–9, no. 489/1–3 (42 BC); p. 514, no. 500/6 (42 BC).

<sup>13</sup> See MATTINGLY (*supra*, note 1), p. cvii, followed by FULLERTON (*supra*, note 1), pp. 478–79. On the Senate's grant of the privilege of decorating his doorway in this way to Augustus, see Dio 53.16.4; *Res Gestae Divi Augusti* 34.2. On Augustus' donation of part of his house to the state, see Dio 54.27.3.

by the associated legend, OB C(*ives*) S(*ervatos*).<sup>14</sup> Furthermore, the only other aureus issued this year, by Cornelius Lentulus, depicts a standing Augustus offering his right hand to a figure identified as *Res Publica* kneeling before him.<sup>15</sup> Hence the only two aurei struck by this college of moneyers celebrate a common theme, that of Augustus as the saviour of the state and its citizens, and there is no need to read an allusion to the election of Augustus as Pontifex Maximus into that struck by Gallus.

The third moneyer, L. Lentulus, seems to have struck only one type, a denarius with reverse depicting a laureate and togate figure standing with one hand outstretched towards a star at or above the head of a second figure standing semi-nude with a Victoriola in his outstretched right hand.<sup>16</sup> The togate figure is clearly identifiable as Augustus, since he stands behind a shield marked CV in reference to the *clipeus virtutis* which the Senate had awarded him in 26 BC.<sup>17</sup> However, controversy surrounds the second figure which has been variously identified as either Agrippa or Julius Caesar.<sup>18</sup> Fullerton identifies this figure as Julius Caesar, and proceeds to argue that this type commemorates the fact that Augustus had succeeded to the post of Pontifex Maximus which Caesar had held during the period 63–44 BC. However, there are two problems with this interpretation. First, the complete absence of any priestly symbols in association with either figure seriously undermines it. Here one needs to remember that the full title of the *clipeus virtutis* was actually the *clipeus virtutis clementiae iustitiae pietatis erga deos patriamque*. Hence the presence of this shield here within a type apparently depicting Augustus honouring Caesar in some way suggests that the main purpose of this type is to celebrate his piety as demonstrated not just by his veneration of the gods in general, but by his veneration of the one god in particular who also happened to be his father. Secondly, this type ought not to be considered in isolation as if it was unusual or of particular significance should a coin seem to celebrate Augustus' relationship to Julius Caesar. This type emphasizes the *sidus Iulium*, the comet that was seen for several days at Rome shortly after the death of Caesar and which was interpreted by the common people as the soul of Caesar ascending among the gods.<sup>19</sup> However, a mint in Spain struck a reverse

<sup>14</sup> On the *corona civica*, see V. A. MAXFIELD, *The Military Decorations of the Roman Army* (London 1981), pp. 70–74.

<sup>15</sup> RIC I<sup>2</sup>, p. 73, no. 413.

<sup>16</sup> RIC I<sup>2</sup>, Augustus, p. 74, no. 415.

<sup>17</sup> The date depends on a copy of the shield found at Arles. For a full discussion of the evidence for this shield, see A. E. COOLEY, *Res Gestae Divi Augusti: Text, Translation and Commentary* (Cambridge 2009), pp. 266–71.

<sup>18</sup> BABELON (*supra*, n. 4), p. 431, followed by MATTINGLY (*supra*, n. 1), p. cvii, argues that this second figure represents a statue of Agrippa placed in the temple of Mars Ultor. GRUEBER (*supra*, n. 5), p. 102, identifies it as the statue of Caesar which Augustus had erected in the temple of Venus. See now M. KOORTBOJIAN, *The Bringer of Victory: Imagery and Institution at the Advent of Empire*, in S. DILLON and K. E. WELCH (eds.), *Representations of War in Ancient Rome* (Cambridge 2006), pp. 184–217, at 191–94, in favour of identifying it as a statue of Caesar.

<sup>19</sup> Pliny, *NH* 2.94. In general, see J. T. RAMSEY and A. L. LIGHT, *The Comet of 44 BC and Caesar's Funeral Games* (Atlanta 1997).

type depicting the comet alone c. 19–18 BC, and the moneyer M. Sanquinius struck a reverse type depicting a youthful bust of Caesar with a comet above it at Rome in 17 BC.<sup>20</sup> Hence there is no need to interpret Lentulus' type except in continuation of this general theme, and it need contain no more allusion to the office of Pontifex Maximus than they do.

In the light of the weaknesses of the above expansions and interpretations of the legend C·C / AVG / VS / TI, one is encouraged to suggest new possibilities. Even if one assumes that the second C must abbreviate the name Caesar, so that the first C remains the only variable, several possibilities readily suggest themselves. For example, the initial C could abbreviate the terms either C(*lementiae*) or C(*onstantiae*), so that *cippus* celebrates either the clemency or the constancy of Augustus.<sup>21</sup> However, the fact that no other issues under Augustus celebrate his possession of these qualities must raise doubts about such interpretations. Similarly, while it is not impossible that this C could abbreviate either C(*onsensu*) or C(*ura*) in celebration of something done as a result of his agreement or concern, it seems improbable that there should not have been some greater indication as to what exactly this was, or who exactly did it. In the final analysis, any suggestion must be acknowledged as speculative. However, there is one strong possibility that seems to have been strangely overlooked, the possibility that this legend should be expanded to read C(*omiti*) C(*aesaris*) AVG·VSTI "To the companion of Caesar Augustus", so recording the dedication of the *cippus* in honour of Agrippa, the chief advisor and colleague of Augustus.<sup>22</sup> Three arguments may be adduced in support of this expansion.

The first is that this expansion refers to the person in whose honour the monument is being dedicated in the dative case, exactly as one would expect in the case of a dedicatory inscription. The second argument is that it is consistent with the overall emphasis upon Agrippa on the coinage struck in both 13 and 12 BC. In 13 BC, the moneyer C. Marius issued five types of denarius, including one with reverse depicting Augustus and Agrippa standing together, each with a roll and a *capsa* at his feet (*Pl.* 6, 4).<sup>23</sup> His colleague C. Sulpicius Platorinus issued two type of denarius, both celebrating Agrippa, one with reverse depicting Augustus and Agrippa seated together on a *bisellium* raised on a platform decorated with *rostra* (*Pl.* 6, 5), and the other with reverse depicting a bare-headed Agrippa.<sup>24</sup> He also issued a single aureus type pairing the bust of Augustus with a reverse depicting a bust of Agrippa wearing a combined mural and rostral crown.<sup>25</sup> In

<sup>20</sup> RIC I<sup>2</sup>, p. 44, nos. 37–8 and p. 66, nos. 337–40.

<sup>21</sup> On the emperor's clemency as a suitable object of celebration, see e.g. RIC I<sup>2</sup>, p. 97, no. 38; p. 268, nos. 1–3; p. 269, no. 17 and 39. On the emperor's constancy, see e.g. RIC I<sup>2</sup>, p. 121, no. 2; p. 122, nos. 13–14; p. 123, nos. 31–32, 42–43; p. 124, nos. 55, 65; p. 127, no. 95; p. 129, no. 111.

<sup>22</sup> On the life and career of Agrippa, see M. REINHOLD, *Marcus Agrippa: A Biography* (Geneva, NY, 1933); J.-M. RODDAZ, *Marcus Agrippa* (Rome 1984).

<sup>23</sup> RIC I<sup>2</sup>, p. 72, no. 397.

<sup>24</sup> RIC I<sup>2</sup>, p. 73, nos. 406–07 (Agrippa and Augustus), 408 (bust of Agrippa).

<sup>25</sup> RIC I<sup>2</sup>, p. 73, no. 409.



the following year, Cossus Cornelius Lentulus issued two types of denarius, both celebrating Agrippa once more, with the reverse of one depicting an equestrian statue of Agrippa on a pedestal decorated by two prows and the reverse of the other depicting a bust of Agrippa wearing a combined mural and rostral crown.<sup>26</sup> More importantly, the type issued by Gallus depicting the legend TR POT above an empty *bisellium* clearly refers to the death of Agrippa who had shared tribunician power with Augustus since 18 BC (*Pl.* 6, 6).<sup>27</sup> The final argument is that this expansion is consistent with the depiction of Agrippa upon the coinage of 13 BC in particular as a colleague of Augustus, so that they are twice depicted either sitting or standing together, as just noted. Here one notes that the companionship and collegiality between the two reached its natural conclusion when Augustus even decided to bury Agrippa in his own tomb, although Agrippa had already prepared one for himself in the Campus Martius.<sup>28</sup>

In conclusion, it is arguable that Gallus depicts a *cippus* inscribed with the legend C·C/AVG/VS/TI in order to commemorate Agrippa as the steadfast companion of Augustus, both in life and death. Indeed, the first two letters of this legend may even have been intended in abbreviation of the phrase C(*onstanti*) C(*omiti*) rather than C(*omiti*) C(*aesaris*), recording a dedication “To the steadfast companion of Augustus” rather than “To the companion of Caesar Augustus”. In the context of 12 BC, it would have been enough for Gallus simply to have referred to the companion of Augustus as such and people would instantly have known whom he meant. He did not have to spell out Agrippa’s name, whether in part or full, in order for people to understand who this *comes* was, and so did not do so. Finally, the fact that the *cippus* was a tombstone as well as a boundary-stone or pillar was probably enough to put the reading of the legend and identification of the honorand beyond any doubt.

<sup>26</sup> RIC I<sup>2</sup>, p. 73, 412 and 414.

<sup>27</sup> On the first award of tribunician power to Agrippa in 18 BC, see Dio 54.12.4; on its renewal in 13 BC, see Dio 54.28.1.

<sup>28</sup> Dio 54.28.5.

*Abstract*

In 12 BC, the moneyer L. Caninius Gallus issued a denarius depicting a bare-headed Augustus on the obverse and a *cippus* inscribed C·C / AVG / VS / TI on the reverse (RIC I<sup>2</sup>, p. 74, no. 418). This paper surveys several earlier interpretations of this inscription before arguing that it should probably be expanded to read C(*omiti*) C(*aesaris*) AVGVSTI “To the companion of Caesar Augustus”, so recording the dedication of the cippus in honour of the recently deceased Agrippa, the former chief advisor and colleague of Augustus.

*Zusammenfassung*

Der Münzmeister L. Caninius Gallus prägte 12 v. Chr. einen Denar mit einem unbekränzten Kopf des Augustus auf der Vorderseite und einem *cippus* mit der Inschrift C·C / AVG / VS / TI auf der Rückseite (RIC I<sup>2</sup>, S. 74, Nr. 418). Der vorliegende Beitrag gibt einen Überblick über verschiedene ältere Interpretationen dieser Inschrift und legt dann dar, dass sie möglicherweise zu C(*omiti*) C(*aesaris*) AVGVSTI «Dem Gefährten des Augustus» zu ergänzen ist und so die Weihung zu Ehren des damals jüngst verstorbenen Agrippa, des engsten Beraters und Kollegen des Augustus festhält.

David Woods  
Department of Ancient Classics  
University College Cork  
Western Road  
Cork  
Ireland  
d.woods@ucc.ie



*Key to Plate 6*

1. Denarius of L. Caninius Gallus, 12 BC (RIC I<sup>2</sup>, p. 74, no. 418): UBS Gold & Numismatics, Auction 78, lot 1356 (9 September 2008).
2. Denarius of L. Mescinius Rufus, 16 BC (RIC I<sup>2</sup>, p. 68, no. 354): UBS Gold & Numismatics, Auction 78, lot 1329 (9 September 2008).
3. Denarius of L. Vinicius, 16 BC (RIC I<sup>2</sup>, p. 68, no. 362): Numismatica Ars Classica, Auction 40, lot 637 (16 May 2007).
4. Denarius of C. Marius, 13 BC (RIC I<sup>2</sup>, p. 72, no. 400): UBS Gold & Numismatics, Auction 78, lot 1349 (9 September 2008).
5. Denarius of C. Sulpicius Platorinus, 13 BC (RIC I<sup>2</sup>, p. 73, no. 407): Numismatica Ars Classica, Auction 59, lot 891 (4 April 2011).
6. Denarius of L. Caninius Gallus, 12 BC (RIC I<sup>2</sup>, p. 74, no. 417): Numismatica Ars Classica, Auction 64, lot 1061 (17 May 2012).

For the photographs of figures 1, 2 and 4 © UBS AG; for those of figures 3, 5 and 6 © Numismatica Ars Classica (NAC) AG.



1



2



3



4



5



6



