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AUGUSTUS AND THE BUTTING «BULLS» OF THURII

The Roman emperor Augustus once had the name «Thurinus», and some coins issued in his name had the image of a charging or butting bull on their reverse. The image is very similar to that found on the coinage of the Greek settlement of Thurioi / Thurii which was founded in the middle of the 5th century. Is it possible that the Thurian image was copied on the Augustan coins?

The Greek colonies established in South Italy prospered, as the area was very fertile; its prosperity was also increased by trade with the Greek mainland and with other Greek, Italian, and Etruscan cities. The prosperity is evident from the prolific amounts of coinage they each produced¹. Sybaris, for example, founded from Achaea and Troezen *c.* 710, became a by-word for its riches and opulent style of living. Following its destruction, however, by the nearby city of Kroton in *c.* 510, the inhabitants were involved in a series of movements and new settlements in South Italy. Their attempt to resettle the original site in 452 was again thwarted by the Krotonians who expelled the settlers five years later, jealous of their renewed prosperity. An appeal to mainland Greeks was successful when the Athenians, on Perikles' advice, sent out a pan-Hellenic group of colonists², who established a new foundation together with remnants of the Sybarites. The colonists chose at first the old site of Sybaris, but subsequently moved to a new location a short distance away by the river Krathis, where there was a spring named «Thuria», from which the new city derived its name – Thurioi (sometimes Thurion).³

There were early disagreements between the descendants of the original Sybarites and the new settlers, which eventually ended in revolution, and in the Sybarites being expelled from the city and establishing themselves elsewhere in South Italy. The remaining history of the city need not concern us: it came into conflict with the local Italian tribes, the Lucanians and the Bruttians, and was eventually absorbed into Rome's sphere of control by the first quarter or so of the 3rd century, becoming Thurii (or Thurium) in Latin⁴.

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² The number of Athenian citizens was small, and the greater part of the colonists was collected from various other parts of Greece. This colony is dated to either 446/5 (Diod. *Sic.* 12.10.5) or, more likely, 444/3 (Strabo 6.263).

³ The plural form Thurioi (Gk Θυρίοι) in the genitive case is found frequently on the city's coins. See *Figs. 1* and *3* for examples. For a discussion of the form of the name, see HN³ Italy, p. 145.

⁴ For a recent account of the later history of Magna Graecia including Thurioi/Thurii, see LOMAS 2018, pp. 254-61; TERRENATO 2019, esp. chap. 6.

Because the Sybarites had been involved in a number of settlements, their designs had a strong influence on the coinage of other western Greek colonies, in particular the image of a bull (*Fig. 2*). It is very noticeable on the coins of Thurii (*Figs. 1, 3, and 4*)⁵, so many that they should perhaps be nicknamed «bulls», just as Athenian drachmas are called «owls» and the coins of Corinth are called «pegasi» (from the use of Pegasos on the obverse).



Fig. 1 stater of Thurioi, c. 410–400
[BM: 1921,0309.1; cf. SNG Gale: 760]



Fig. 2 incuse stater of Sybaris, c. 550–510
[BM: 1949,0411.108; cf. SNG Gale: 730–733]

It is the image of a charging or butting bull on the coins of Thurii which is of interest here, because it was used on a number of *aurei* and *denarii* issued under Augustus. They were issued almost entirely in the precious metals, and only for a relatively short period, from c. 15 to c. 10; the reverse legend is either IMP X or IMP XII in the exergue⁶. Questions are raised: did the die-engravers of the Augustan types copy the bull image from the very common images on the coins of Thurii (or of some other South Italian Greek colonies), and is there a reason that they did this? Was there a connection between Thurii and Augustus? Is there an explanation why the type was used only for a restricted period?

The bull appeared on the Greek coins as a way of representing a river-god⁷. Among their various movements to resettle after the first destruction of their city, the Sybarites founded the new settlements of Laüs and Poseidonia (later Paestum).

⁵ SELTMAN 1955, pp. 115 and 119, draws attention to Athenian artistic influence on the quality of die-engravers' work on the Thurian coins of the period soon after the settlement. Examples of this can be seen particularly on both the obverse and reverse of *Figs. 1* and *3*.

⁶ IMP X provides the date c. 15, and IMP XII the date c. 10. See below, n. 32. There is an isolated example of a *quadrans* in bronze (RIC I² 228; BM 1924,0308.16). It has the bare head of Augustus on the obverse, and a bull butting left on the reverse, with the legend AVGVSTVS above and DIVI F in the exergue. RIC I² classifies its frequency as R (= «rare»), dates it to c. 15 to after 10, and attributes it to the mint at Lugdunum, like the precious-metal types. The latter are classified respectively as R2 to R4 in frequency.

⁷ See SELTMAN 1955, p. 75. ROWAN 2020, pp. 184–185 with n. 32, refers to a doctoral dissertation WOLF 2021, which contains a comprehensive list of all the Italian and Sicilian river-gods. The bull with a man's bearded head, seen for example on coins of Laüs, Gela, and Neapolis, is a further instance of this wide-spread river-god imaging. DESNIER 1993, p. 121; RUTTER 2012, p. 139; and ROWAN 2020, p. 185, point out that the first Roman coin (RRC 1/1) has the image of a man-faced bull; it was probably minted for the Romans at Neapolis. On this first Roman coin, see now SHEEDY 2024.

The coinage of Laüs shows Sybarite influence: a bull looking over its shoulder and sometimes human-headed (*Fig. 6; cf. Fig. 2*). The settlers in Poseidonia issued double-sided coins⁸, with Poseidon on the obverse, and a Sybarite bull on the reverse, sometimes with a dolphin under the god's foot or under the bull (*e.g.* BM 1946,0101.441, dated 410–350). The direct influence can be seen in the Sybarite initials **MI** (= **Σ** sideways) appearing on some of their coins (*e.g.* BM 1910,0704.1). Sybarite influence can also be seen in the coins of the new Thurii with the bull image on their reverse. The bull is shown in a variety of positions: head down, head turned to the side, four legs straight, one foreleg turned back indicating movement. It mostly faces right, but sometimes left. The tail is usually curved over the back, but occasionally more curled or straight down. In the exergue there is often a dolphin (or sometimes two) (*Figs. 1 and 4*), similar to the coins of Poseidonia as noted above, and occasionally a flying Victory holding a wreath; sometimes the flying Victory is at the top of the reverse placing the wreath on the bull's head (*Fig. 3*)⁹. The obverse has a head of Athena, sometimes facing right, sometimes left, at first in an Attic helmet usually decorated with a wreath (as in *Fig. 3*), and later with a sphinx, Scylla, or griffin (note the prominent coils on the helmet in *Figs. 1 and 4*).



Fig. 3 stater of Thurioi, c. 350–300
[BM: 1995,1107.7; *cf.* SNG Gale: 817]



Fig. 4 stater of Thurioi, c. 350–300
[SNG Gale: 760; *cf.* BM: 1908,0408.2]

Indeed the bull is a very common image on the coins of the South Italian and Sicilian Greek colonies, and it seems likely that the types all influenced each other¹⁰.

⁸ Unlike other early Greek colonies in this South Italian area which issued a unique form of incuse fabric: *cf. Fig. 2*. On this fabric see SELTMAN 1955, pp. 76–77; RUTTER 2012, pp. 128–131.

⁹ The flying Victory is also found on coins of a number of the South Italian and Sicilian colonies: *e.g.* Gela (on the obverse, *Fig. 7*). *Cf.* below *Fig. 16* (Neapolis) with n. 25.

¹⁰ The image of a bull, as noted, appears on coins of Sybaris (*Fig. 2*), and its offshoots Laüs and Poseidonia. It also appears on coins of Kroton (*e.g.* BM 1949,1202.3, with bull's head turned back), Gela, Rhegion, a number of other western Greek colonies, and even of distant Massalia (*Fig. 8*). In Sicily, Gela and Rhegion also have a unique image: a monstrous half-bull with a bearded man's head (*e.g. Fig. 7*). On this type from Gela, see SELTMAN 1955, p. 75; FISCHER-BOSSERT 2012, p. 148.



Fig. 5 stater of Poseidonia, c. 450–350
[BM: 1946,0101.441; cf. SNG Gale: 702–716]



Fig. 6 stater of Laüs, c. 510–500
[SNG Gale: 1131; cf. BM: 1867,0101.211]



Fig. 7 stater of Gela, c. 490
[BM: 1947,0406.132]



Fig. 8: bronze coin of Massalia (rev.),
c. 220–210 [Numista N#356101]

To deal with one of the questions: there was a link between Thurii and Augustus. C. Octavius, in the future to take the name C. Iulius Caesar (since the Dictator had expressed a wish in his will that his grand-nephew adopt his name)¹¹, and to later be awarded the name Augustus¹², was born into the *gens Octavia* on 23rd September 63, the day on which there was debate in the Senate about the supposed Catilinarian «conspiracy» – with a certain irony, as we shall see. His family originated from Velitrae, and may have had earlier connections with Thurii (Suet. *Aug.* 2.2, 7.1), and was not considered totally acceptable¹³. His grandfather was a *nummularius* or *argentarius*, or rather a banker who actually handled cash. His father, however, was wealthy and reputable enough to work his way up the *cursus honorum* in Rome, though a *novus homo*: twice a military tribune, quaestor c. 73, plebeian aedile in 64 (?), a *iudex quaestionis* in 63 (?), and praetor in 61¹⁴.

Following his praetorship, Octavius was sent to take up the governorship of Macedonia, but he was also commissioned by the Senate to divert on his way to the

¹¹ On testamentary adoption, see SCHMITHENNER 1973; JUDGE 2019, pp. 46–47.

¹² On the award of the name Augustus, see *Aug. RGI* 34.2; Suet. *Aug.* 2.2, 4.2; Nic. Dam. fr. 128 (*FGrH* §30); Dio 53.16.2. Cf. CARTER 1982, pp. 95–96.

¹³ His grandfather was a banker, and his maternal great-grandfather is said variously to have been a freedman from Africa and a rope-maker, or a perfumier, or a baker (Suet. *Aug.* 2.2, 4.2). For the family's *ignobilitas* and *novitas*, see WISEMAN 1971, p. 246, no. 287; NICOLET 1974, p. 963, no. 249; CARTER 1982, p. 92. On Marcus Antonius' quip about the young Caesar's background, see n. 17 below.

¹⁴ His career is set out in an inscription, *CIL* VI 1311 = *ILLRP* 1046. For his career, see WISEMAN 1971, no. 287; NICOLET 1974, no. 249.

area around Thurii and undertake a police action against groups of bandits who had occupied part of the country there and had been harassing the local people. These armed groups were said to be remnants of the slave revolt of Spartacus and of the Catilinarian rebellion. Octavius operated successfully against them and then proceeded to his command in Macedonia¹⁵.

Because of this success, he gave his son, then just two years old, the additional name «Thurinus»¹⁶. This additional name was obviously still known in the period after Julius Caesar's assassination, since it was used apparently by M. Antonius to taunt the young Caesar¹⁷. Does this additional name explain why the image of a bull was used on some of his coins? Was it perhaps the work of a die-engraver with an antiquarian interest? Or one who knew that Augustus had had the additional name «Thurinus» earlier in life and had seen some of the Thurian coins and decided to use the image of a bull on the Augustan coins to reflect this? That in turn raises the question how they may have seen such a Thurian coin. These further questions are considered below.

On the «bull» coins of Augustus the obverse has a head of Augustus, sometimes facing right, sometimes left, with the legend AVGVSTVS DIVI F around. The head is bare in the first group with the reverse legend IMP X (Figs. 9–10), and mainly laureate, but occasionally bare, in the group with the reverse legend IMP XII (Figs. 11–12). There are no examples of «bull» coins with the legend IMP XI¹⁸.

¹⁵ Details of this action: Suet. *Aug.* 7. See now STEWART 1995, pp. 74–76, who examines the banditry from the Italian farmers' point of view. Octavius was successful with his campaigns in Macedonia, and was hailed as *imperator* by his troops. He died suddenly on his way back from Macedonia (Suet. *Aug.* 4.1). It is thought that he would have been awarded a triumph for his success in Macedonia, and even to have gone on to a consulship.

¹⁶ Suetonius (*Aug.* 7.1) suggests an alternative explanation, that Octavius gave his son the additional name in memory of the home of his ancestors from Thurii: *infanti cognomen Thurino inditum est, in memoriam maiorum originis, vel quod regione Thurina recens eo nato pater Octavius adversus fugitivos rem prospere gesserat*. («In his infancy he was given the surname Thurinus in memory of the home of his ancestors, or else because it was in the area of Thurii that his father Octavius, shortly after the birth of his son, had conducted a successful operation against runaway slaves»).

¹⁷ Marcus Antonius is supposed to have quipped that Octavius' great-grandfather was a freedman and a rope-maker from the country about Thurii, while his grandfather was a money-changer (Suet. *Aug.* 2.2), and that on his mother's side his great-grandfather was of African birth, who kept first a perfumery shop and then a bakery at Aricia (*ibid.*, 4.2). Suetonius adds (*ibid.*, 7.1) that Antonius often called him «Thurinus» in his letters by way of insult; to which Caesar merely replied that he was surprised that his former name was thrown in his face as a reproach. None of Antonius' letters have survived.

¹⁸ The common reverse image on Augustan *aurei* and *denarii* with the legend IMP XI in the exergue is a capricorn: e.g. RIC I², 125–130 (BM 1864,1128.17). All of these coins were produced by the mint at Lugdunum (mod. Lyons), which starting around this time became the principal mint in the West, because of its strategic and economically advantageous location: RIC I², pp. 27–28. It is also cautiously suggested there that the bull on the Augustan coins may represent the river-god of the Rhodanus (mod. Rhône), which flows through Lugdunum.



Fig. 9 *aureus* of Augustus, c. 15
[BM: 1995,0401.1]



Fig. 10 *denarius* of Augustus, c. 15
[BM: R.6122]



Fig. 11 *aureus* of Augustus, c. 10
[BM: 1841,0726.1083]



Fig. 12 *denarius* of Augustus, c. 10
[BM: R.6131]

Two other types with the legends IMP X and IMP XII were issued: one has a reverse showing Diana in a short hunting tunic, with a bow and accompanying dog, and with SICIL(I) in the exergue, and the other has Apollo with a lyre on the reverse and ACT in the exergue. These refer, of course, to Caesar's defeat of Sex. Pompeius at Naulochus in 36 (for which he celebrated an *ovatio*), and to the great victory at Actium in 31 (when he received his sixth acclamation). These victories occurred 21 and 16 years respectively before the issue of the *aurei* and *denarii* with the bull reverses. An unusual time gap. Another type with the legend IMP X has a reverse showing two soldiers presenting (laurel?) branches to Augustus (?) seated on a stool. Giard plausibly suggests that the two soldiers represent Augustus' stepsons, Tiberius and Drusus, who had systematically pacified Raetia and Vindelicia in the central Alps at the time of the coin's issue (RIC I² 164 and 165)¹⁹.

The bull images on the reverse show a range of positions, as noted above for the Thurian coins: head down and turned to the side (the most common), head more straight, four legs straight, one inside foreleg turned back indicating movement. It sometimes faces right, sometimes left. The tail is usually curved over the back, but occasionally more curled or straight down, and it has either a smooth tip or a tasseled tip.

¹⁹ GIARD, in RIC I², p. 52, n. on no. 164. There is also a type with only one soldier handing over a branch, which may represent Tiberius or Drusus (*ibid.*, n. on no. 162). KRAFT 1969, pp. 226 and 234–235, draws attention to the time-gap before the «bull» coins were minted.

There are only two examples of a bull image from the very late republic in Crawford's RRC, the second likely a copy of the earlier one: 316/1, a *denarius* signed by L. Thorius Balbus c. 105 (Fig. 13), and 494/24, a *denarius* signed by L. Livineius Regulus (one of the college of moneyers increased to four by Julius Caesar) and issued in 42 (Fig. 14). The latter has on the obverse a laureate head of Caesar facing right, with a laurel branch behind and a caduceus in front, and on the reverse a leaping bull to the right, with the issuer's name above and below²⁰. In both cases the bull shown on the reverse is leaping, with both forelegs off the ground. There is no equivalent of this sort of leaping bull in any of the later Augustan coins.



Fig. 13 *denarius* of L. Thorius Balbus, c. 105, RRC 316/1 [BM: 2002,0102.1342]



Fig. 14 *denarius* of L. Livineius Regulus, 42, RRC 494/24 [BM: 1867,0101.1285]

The detailing of folds on the necks of bulls on some of the Augustan coins, which can be seen, for example, on the coins in Figs. 10 and 12, are very similar to the Thurian types (e.g. Figs. 1 and 3). The depiction of the bull's rump is also remarkably similar: compare, for example, the Thurian *stater* in Figs. 1 and 4, with the shape and hollows on the rear of the bulls in Figs. 9 and 12. The neck folds and rump become stylised on some of the Augustan coins. This almost exact copying of bull images from Thurian coins on the Augustan *aurei* and *denarii* suggests that the Roman die-engravers were working with the original South Italian coins in front of them. The Augustan coins were produced up to 250 years later than the Thurian *staters*. How was that possible²¹? The reverse images on the Augustan coins do, however, all suggest that there was a deliberate connection between Augustus' name «Thurinus» and the copying of Thurian images on them.

²⁰ Woods 2013, pp. 67–76, suggests that the bull image on Regulus' *denarius* probably represents Brutus, depicted as an animal in a play on his *cognomen* Brutus, often used in description of «brutish» animals. There is an additional dimension to the play on his name in that it reminds the viewer of the correspondence between the meaning of his name «devoid of feeling» and his behaviour in assassinating one who had shown him so much favour. The bull is depicted galloping in flight, referring either to Brutus' flight from Italy in 44 or, more probably, to the retreat of republican forces before triumviral forces during the summer of 42. This interpretation seems too sophisticated and complex to be accepted.

²¹ HN³ Italy, pp. 146 and 153, points out that the minting of silver coins by Thurii probably ended c. 280. That would lessen the time-gap, which is discussed further below.

While alluding to the possible view that the butting bull is reminiscent of the similar images on coins of Thurii, Kraft lists some problems with that interpretation. Would Augustus have drawn attention to a name which was disparaged by Antonius²²? The naming of a son Thurinus by his father to mark success against brigands around Thurii would be without precedent. To counter the first point, one could say that Antonius' taunt would clearly have been recognised as disparaging at the time, part of the rhetoric of abuse; Caesar (as he was named then) paid it little attention; and at the time of the minting of the coins Antonius had long ago been defeated. On the second point, one could suggest that it was a nickname for an infant boy, and not a formal *cognomen*, like Scipio Africanus or Metellus Macedonicus. Kraft also points out that the image of a butting bull is not restricted to Thurii, but occurs in the coinage of many other South Italian settlements. True, but the similarity of the images together with the nickname narrows the source of the borrowing down. Kraft also argues that the Augustan coins were produced many years after those of Thurii, and hardly a Roman of the Augustan period could have encountered the Thurian coins in the normal circulation of money. Again possibly true; it therefore remains as one of the questions to be answered (see below).

Did Augustus himself perhaps choose the image, to emphasise his Thurian links, through his father's origins and his own additional name? There is a (probably insoluble) debate whether coin types were dictated from above or chosen by lower officials to carry an «official» message²³. Cicero remarked on the false triumphs and inflated number of consulships fabricated by aristocratic families (Cic. *Brut.* 62: *falsi triumphi, plures consulatus*). Augustus' family could claim no triumphs, but he could claim his father's imperial acclamation and perhaps a triumph denied by his death (see above, n. 15). It is probably too long a stretch to suggest that these types, drawing attention to Augustus' own imperial acclamations, may have been capable of a subtle interpretation that his father had received one also. A possible answer to some of the questions might be provided by one particular type. Unique among early Augustan coin images is that of a bull with a human head turned to the front and a Victory flying above crowning the bull with a wreath (Fig. 15). This *denarius* is signed by M. Durmius, one of the college of

²² KRAFT 1969, pp. 227–228. He refers to the view of BLANCHET 1919 and 1947, the latter with *Resumée* in *Numismatic Literature* 5, 1948, p. 137 [I have not been able to access either of these publications.] On the young Caesar's reaction to Antonius' disparaging comments, see above, n. 17. LUKE 2015, pp 244–246 critically examines the naming of the infant Octavius as «Thurinus» and considers some of the problems with Suetonius' two explanations. Cf. above, n. 16.

²³ For a summary of differing views on this question, see HOWGEGO 1995, pp. 70–71; MCINTYRE 2023, pp. 140–141. BUTTREY 1972, p. 109, in his analysis of the coins of Vespasian, can be taken as an example of the view that the mint officials had influence on the choice of designs; cf. WALLACE-HADRILL 1986, pp. 67–68. WOODS 2020, pp. 199 and 206, examining the coins of the *tresviri monetales* in 19/18 (see below), provides an example of the view that the ruler (in this case Augustus) controlled the designs and types.

moneyers of 19/18²⁴. It is very reminiscent of a *stater* of Thurioi (Fig. 3; cf. SNG Gale 757 and 840), which has a Nike flying above the head of a bull, and of coins of Laüs and Poseidonia²⁵; and is generally agreed to have been copied from a *didrachm* of Neapolis (Naples) (Fig. 16)²⁶. Although it is unclear why this unique Augustan type was issued when it was, it surely could not have been produced by a die-engraver without some knowledge of the South Italian Greek originals. It is separated in time from the Neapolitan original by something like 275 years.



Fig. 15 *denarius* of M. Durmius, c. 19
[BM: 2002.0102.4959]



Fig. 16 *didrachm* of Neapolis, 300–275
[ANS: 1957.172.54]

A question was raised earlier: how did die-engravers manage to see a Thurian «bull» to use as an exemplar for the Augustan types? There are three possible answers. One, a Thurian coin was found in a hoard, and became known. This is a solution suggested by Burnett and Howgego²⁷. Two, Thurian coins could still have been in circulation. That is unlikely, since there is a gap of at least 250 years

²⁴ This was the first college of *monetales* appointed under Augustus, when the mint in Rome was re-opened. It had more or less closed in the late 40s after the assassination of Caesar, as the minting of coins moved around with army commanders needing to produce coins to pay their troops: see RIC I², pp. 30–31; ROWAN 2019, pp. 131–133; WOODS 2020, p. 193. This first college was made up of three *monetales* (the college had been briefly increased to four under Julius Caesar): P. Petronius Turpilianus, L. Aquillius Florus, and M. Durmius (RIC I², pp. 61–64).

²⁵ The Sybarites had settled Laüs and Poseidonia and been involved in the settlement of Thurioi, and the bull image was used prolifically in the coinage of all of these cities under the Sybarites' influence (see above). There is a unique variation on the coin of Durmius: the figure flying above is unclothed. WOODS 2020, pp. 205–206, convincingly argues that the figure is therefore a Cupid, not a Victory. Perhaps an oblique reference to the descent from Venus of the Iulii Caesares, the family to which the young Caesar now belonged?

²⁶ RIC I², p. 28; DESNIER 1993, p. 121; ROWAN 2020, pp. 184–185. The bull is taken by some to represent Acheloös, the archetypal river-god for the longest river in mainland Greece, who was personified early and became wide-spread. In Roman mythology he is said to have been the father of the Sirens (appropriate therefore to a South Italian setting). Others think it represents the god of the river Sarnus (mod. Sarno) near Neapolis. See SELTMAN 1955, p. 122; RUTTER 2012, p. 133.

²⁷ BURNETT, in RIC I², p. 64, n. on nos 318–319, and in a personal communication (16.12.23). HOWGEGO (in a personal communication of 21.11.23) supports BURNETT's view that an exemplar turned up in a hoard.

between the two issues: the minting of Thurian coins probably came to an end c. 250 as the Romans continued their expansion into South Italy and started «an aggressive policy of taking all previous silver out of circulation» in favour of Roman coinage²⁸. Yet coins from mints like Neapolis probably continued to circulate in local markets for some time²⁹. Noted above was the Roman copying of a Neapolitan *didrachm* 275 years after the original (*Figs. 15 and 16*). This original must have been available in some way for the Roman die-engravers to copy it.

Three, coins could well have been archived. Or possibly they may have been the result of «memory», of «monuments in miniature», as Rowan calls them³⁰? Or they may have been kept by coin collectors. Some Roman emperors are thought to have been collectors. It would seem that the Flavian emperors, Vespasian and Titus, were coin collectors: among their «restoration» coins were copies of republican coins, some from around 170 years earlier, which suggests that there was at least some sort of archive or collection (see below, n. 33). The die-engravers under Nerva, Trajan (particularly), and Hadrian must also have had access in some way to much earlier republican coins, which they copied in large numbers. One can infer from Suetonius (*Aug.* 75.1) that Augustus collected coins from a variety of sources, or at least had access to much older coins³¹. If Augustus was some sort of coin collector, it is probable that he knew of the Thurian «bulls» and would presumably have collected some examples of them out of personal interest because of his nickname «Thurinus».

A further question is why these Augustan coins with bull images were produced for such relatively short periods of time, *c.* 15 and *c.* 10. They do not appear again in the rest of Augustus' principate. Nothing of significance can be gleaned from the reference to the tenth and twelfth imperial acclamations on the reverses of the coins. The campaigns which produced the tenth acclamation were those conducted in Bavaria by Drusus and in Germania by Tiberius to strengthen the

²⁸ BURNETT 2012, p. 308

²⁹ Tens of millions of coins minted in earlier periods of time must have continued to circulate in the Roman world. For example, an analysis of soldiers' «purses» from Kalkriese in Germany (commonly identified as the site of the battle of Teutoberg Forest in AD 9) had in them *denarii* a hundred or more years old: KEMMERS 2016, p. 357; ROWAN 2019, pp. 173–175, and 2020, p. 180. So it is possible that Thurian «bulls» could still have been in circulation, or known about. KEMMERS' analysis of finds as shown in her tables makes it possible that earlier Italian coins were still in circulation. Cf. the tables in DE LISLE 2024, pp. 161–162 and 165.

³⁰ ROWAN 2019, pp. 2 and 57, and 2020, pp. 178–181.

³¹ Suet. *Aug.* 75.1: *festos et solemnes dies profusissime, nonnumquam tantum ioculariter celebrabat. Saturnalibus, et si quando alias libuisset, modo munera dividebat, vestem et aurum et argentum, modo nummos omnis notae, etiam veteres regios ac peregrinos ...* [«He usually celebrated festivals and holidays very lavishly, but sometimes only in a light-hearted way. For the Saturnalia, or at any other time when the fancy took him, he handed out clothes, gold and silver, sometimes coins of all sorts, even of the ancient kings and of foreign nations ...»] As CARTER 1982, p. 195, comments, the coins of ancient kings cannot refer to the kings of Rome, since coinage did not exist then, but to Hellenistic kings. The use of «*peregrinos*» should be taken to include the earlier coinage of Italian allies.

upper Danube frontier (creating the province of Raetia and Vindelicia) in *c.* 15; the campaigns for the twelfth acclamation were those conducted by Drusus in Germany from 12–9 (Dio 54.33.5)³². There is nothing in our sources to suggest any particular interest by Augustus in South Italy at these times. So that question of the coins' short period of production remains insoluble.

It is of some interest that the bull images on the Augustan coins do not appear on the coins of the following Julio-Claudian emperors, when so many Augustan images were copied. There is one coin from the AD 68–69 civil wars (RIC I² Civil Wars 99 and 100). The images do appear again on the coins of the Flavian dynasty. For example, *aurei* and *denarii* of Vespasian and of Titus issued in 75 (BM: 1909,0505.11, and BM: R.10313); none were issued in conjunction with Domitian, nor did he issue any during his emperorship. The bull images on the Flavian coins are almost exactly the same. In contrast to the *aurei* and *denarii* of Augustus, most of which have the bull's head turned to the side, the coins of Vespasian and Titus show the bull's head straight on or only slightly turned, and all four legs on the ground (*cf.* Fig. 17 with Fig. 10 above).



Fig. 17 *aureus* of Titus, (imp VIII) AD 75
[BM: R.10313]

The copying by the Flavian emperors reveals their interest in producing «restoration» coins, from both the republic and early empire, and they too, like Augustus, are considered to be something like coin collectors³³. Another parallel is that the Flavian examples were also issued only for a limited period of time (seemingly only for AD 75), and use an imperial acclamation in the exergue, just like the Augustan types, though the year of a consulship is used in some of the Flavian examples³⁴.

As an infant, with the name then of C. Octavius, the future emperor Augustus, was given the nickname «Thurinus» by his father, either because the family had

³² For these various campaigns, see BARNES 1974, p. 22; CAH² 10.347–51, 357. *Cf.* BRUNT–MOORE 1967, pp. 44 and 73. There is a convenient list (with references) of Caesar's/Augustus' imperial acclamations in COOLEY 2009, p. 122.

³³ See WOYTEK 2022, pp. 255–256; *cf.* MARSHALL 2023, p. 99.

³⁴ Those issued under Vespasian have COS VI (RIC 2².768) and IMP XIII (RIC 2².779); those under Titus have COS III (RIC 2².780) and IMP VIII (RIC 2². 786).

Thurian origins or to mark a successful campaign by the father against brigands around the area of Thurii in 61. Much later for two brief periods *c.* 15 and *c.* 10 *aurei* and *denarii* were issued under Augustus with a reverse image showing a butting bull, very similar to images found on large numbers of coins from the Greek colony of Thurii in South Italy. It is hard to know how die-engravers could have seen the original Thurian coins, minted at least two and a half centuries earlier, but gaps of this extent have been noted in other Roman coins copied from Greek originals and imperial coins copied from earlier republican types. The similarities between the Thurian and Augustan images are so close and, with the knowledge that Augustus once had the nickname «Thurinus», it seems reasonable to suggest that there was some intended connection. But the answers to some other questions arising from this connection remain unanswerable.

Abstract

Some coins issued under Augustus have on their reverse the image of a butting or charging bull. They were issued on two occasions only and have an additional legend on the reverse which alludes to Augustus' 10th and 12th imperial salutations, dating them to *c.*15 BC and *c.*10 BC respectively. The image of a butting bull was very common on the coins of the Greek colonies in southern Italy and Sicily, especially Thurioi (later Thurii under the Romans). It just so happens that C. Octavius, the young man who later became Augustus, had a connection with Thurii. His father, praetor in 61, had a family connection with Thurii, and on his way to his provincial command in Macedonia he was authorised to clear out brigands in the area. For his success in this campaign, or for his family connection, he decided to give his infant son the nickname Thurinus. Could it be that the image of Thurian butting bulls on Augustus' later coins has a link with his infant nickname?

Zusammenfassung

Einige Münzen des Augustus zeigen auf ihrer Rückseite das Bild eines stossenden Bullen. Sie wurden zu nur zwei Gelegenheiten ausgegeben und tragen auf der Rückseite eine zusätzliche Legende, die auf das 10. und 12. *imperium* des Augustus anspielt und sie auf *ca.* 15 v. Chr. bzw. *ca.* 10 v. Chr. datiert. Das Bild eines stossenden Stiers war auf den Münzen der griechischen Kolonien in Süditalien und Sizilien, insbesondere in Thurioi (später Thurii unter den Römern), sehr verbreitet. Tatsächlich hatte C. Octavius, der junge Mann, der später Augustus werden sollte, eine Verbindung zu Thurii. Sein Vater, Prätor im Jahr 61 v. Chr., hatte eine familiäre Verbindung zu Thurii, und auf dem Weg zu seinem Provinzkommando in Makedonien erhielt er den Auftrag, die Räuber in der Gegend zu beseitigen. Wegen seines Erfolgs bei diesem Feldzug oder wegen seiner familiären Verbindung beschloss er, seinem kleinen Sohn den Beinamen Thurinus zu geben. Könnte es sein, dass das Bild des Thurinus, der Stiere stösst, auf den späteren Münzen des Augustus eine Verbindung zu seinem kindlichen Spitznamen hat?

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