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The deal the dog made

NEW evidence has been discovered which indicates that the Iceni of Norfolk, Queen Boudica's tribe, had close political ties with their bellicose neighbours north of the Thames—the Catuvellauni ("Men who Excel in Battle") of Hertfordshire and the Trinovantes ("Battle Slayers") of Essex.

On August 14, 2017, an extremely rare gold stater of the Iceni was found in Norfolk. It is only the second example recorded and is called the "Talbot Type", named after Dr John Talbot, author of *Made for Trade* (see COIN NEWS, November 2017, p. 83), who published the first known specimen in 2003. Struck circa 20–1 BC, this Talbot Type stater closely resembles an earlier gold stater of Addeddomaros ("Great in Chariots") who ruled in the North Thames region c. 40–25 BC. Was this an isolated instance of "artistic borrowing"? Far from it. For about 70 years Icenian coins carried symbols most commonly identified with North Thames tribes.

As the English novelist Barry Pain said, "Imitation is the sincerest form of flattery". So why were the Iceni flattering North Thames rulers so obviously and for so long? I believe it was because the Iceni felt threatened by their southern neighbours who for generations were pursuing a policy of expansion backed, if necessary, by military force. Indeed I fancy that the Iceni felt so pressured by aggressive North Thames rulers that they first of all formed political and commercial alliances with them and then, when the Catuvellauni became stronger and more demanding, were finally forced to become a "client state"—self governing and retaining a degree of independence, but actually under the regal and commercial control of the



ABC 1483

ABC 1591

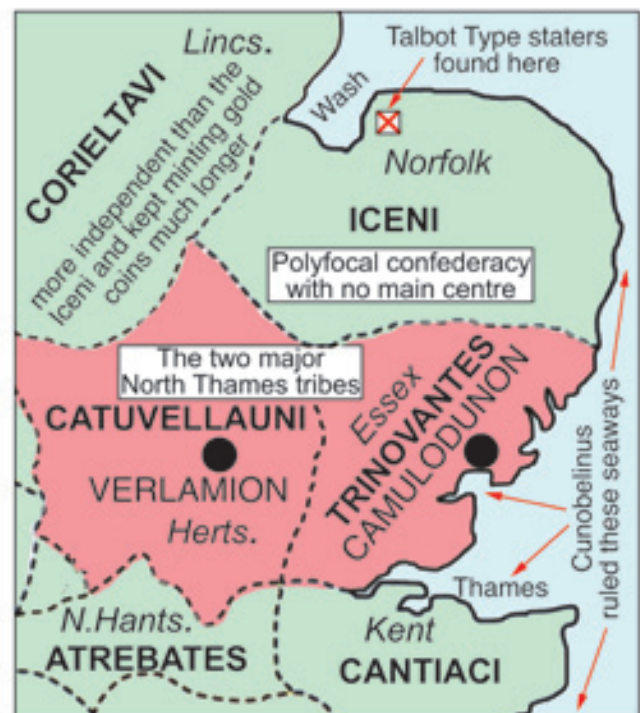
ABC 1606

These other coins of the "Talbot Type" ruler were also copied from North Thames coins.

Catuvellauni. This process of "clientage", whereby Icenian local rulers eventually became "clients" of a more powerful "patron-king", was in my view a gradual development which may be divided into three phases: free state, ally state and client state. I think that the gradual erosion of Icenian independence may have happened something like this.

Free state

Our story begins in the mid 1st century BC when the Iceni, recorded by Caesar as the Cenimagni ("The Great Icenii"), appears to have been a large, loose-knit confederacy of maybe three or four small tribes—a polyfocal confederacy with no single tribal centre and no overall tribal leader. At this time the Iceni were a free state—independent, self-governing and without any obvious hierarchical structure. Their main external threat at the time of the Gallic War (58–51 BC) was



Why was an Icenian ruler copying the gold stater of a North Thames ruler?

The Iceni seem to have been dominated by the two major North Thames tribes, particularly the Catuvellauni.



Did Cuno ("The Dog") make an offer the Icenii could not refuse? Silver unit with dog, a visual pun on CVN (ABC 2846). Bronze dog from shrine at Lydney, Glos. (Image courtesy Lord Bledisloe © Lydney Park Estate.)

Cassivellaunos, the most powerful military commander in southeast Britain, who attacked the Icenii's near neighbour, the Trinovantes of Essex, and killed their king. Perhaps fearing Cassivellaunos more than Julius Caesar, the Icenii surrendered to Caesar when he invaded Britain for the second time in 54 BC. He will doubtless have taken Icenian hostages and demanded the annual payment of tribute, which could have been the reason why the Icenii's first Norfolk Wolf gold staters (ABC 1393) were minted. However, their troubles were far from over.

Ally state

After Caesar left Britain in 54 BC, Cassivellaunos seems to have got rid of his Trinovantian rival Mandubracios (son of the king he'd previously killed) and expanded his territory to include the whole of the North Thames region. This again must have felt very threatening to the Icenii, who no longer had the near-at-hand protection of Rome. Worse was to follow. Addedomaros, king of the Catuvellauni (or a smaller tribe to the east of them), appears to have raided and occupied Trinovantian territory and then, like his predecessor Cassivellaunos, taken over the whole of the North Thames region, absorbing all the smaller tribes and making himself king of Herts as well as king of Essex. It was at this point, maybe some time around 30 BC, that I think the rulers of the Icenii may have decided to form some kind of alliance with Addedomaros, in order to deter him from pushing northwards into Norfolk. This alliance may have been cemented with hostages, annual payments or tribute and possibly a royal marriage or two. After the death of Addedomaros this alliance (if it existed) seems to have been honoured by Tasciovanos who became king of the Catuvellauni and by Dubnovellaunos who became king of the Trinovantes. Both were aggressively ambitious rulers, especially Tasciovanos. What stopped them from attacking the Icenii? One might well argue that it was the threat of Roman intervention that curbed them. But my guess is that it was because both had made (or renewed) mutually profitable trading agreements with Icenian rulers.

Client state

Early in the first decade of the first century AD, Cunobelinus ("Hound of Belenus") replaced Dubnovellaunos as king of the Trinovantes. Shortly afterwards, when his father Tasciovanos died, Cunobelinus assumed control not only of the Catuvellauni, but also of the Cantiaci of Kent. His brother Epaticcus later invaded the Atrebates of north Hampshire, thus making Cunobelinus and his family the undisputed masters of the richest tribes of southeast Britain. So why didn't Cunobelinus, the most powerful king in pre-Roman Britain, take his cavalry into Suffolk and Norfolk and take control of the Icenii? Because, in my opinion, he realised that there was a much easier and much cheaper way of conquering this comparatively weak confederacy, and that was by turning it into a client state.

Soon after Cunobelinus captured Camulodunon (Colchester), capital of the Trinovantes, I think he "invited" the rulers of the Icenii to rule on his behalf, in exchange for his protection and commercial patronage. I fancy that such an offer, were it made by Cunobelinus, must have been very hard to refuse, especially if backed by personal bribery and the threat of military intervention. Inspired by the example of Augustus, his Roman role model, I think the deal that Cuno ("The Dog") struck with the rulers of the Icenii was dead simple: "You rule, but you now rule for me. You can keep your position of power and prestige, but I now take the lion's share of your profit. Don't like my deal? You're a dead man, mate!" Amongst other things, Cunobelinus probably had an interest in acquiring the Icenii's finest horses and horsegear for his personal cavalry.

The coins of both Tasciovanos and Cunobelinus flaunt military imagery, especially warriors on horseback, and the Icenii must have had a strong reputation at that time for horse-breeding and horse-trading. More late iron age horsegear has been found in Norfolk than any other county in Britain. Is there any numismatic evidence that supports my theory that the Icenii, once a free state, became closely allied to North Thames rulers and then became a client state of "top dog" Cunobelinus? Yes, lots.

Numismatic evidence

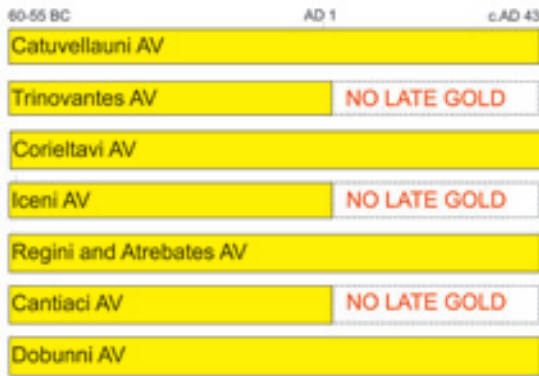
PHASE	STATE OF ICENIA	NORTH THAMES RULERS CATUVELLAUNI TRINOVANTES		ICENIAN COIN TYPES <i>(not types of each phase)</i>	ABC No.
1 c.55 - 30 BC	FREE STATE confederacy of local Icenii rulers	Cassivellaunos	Mandubracios	Norfolk Wolf Bury Types	AV 1393-99 AR 1495 - 1501
2 c.30 BC - AD1	ALLY STATE under threat from and in alliance with North Thames rulers	Addedomaros		Freckenham Instead Boar Types	AV 1414-50 AR 1471-80 AR 1570-85
		Tasciovanos	Dubnovellaunos		
3 c.AD2 - 43	CLIENT STATE self-ruling but controlled from Camulodunon, Essex	Cunobelinus and his family		Anted and Ecen Norfolk God	AR 1642-48 AR 1657-96 AR 1664-67

Three conjectural political phases of the Icenii confederacy of three (or four) sub-tribes, from Caesar's Gallic War to the Claudian invasion.

The Icenii minted coins for about 100 years, from c. 55 BC to AD 43 (some say the Icenii were minting until AD 60, but I consider this highly unlikely). For about the first quarter-century, most Icenian coins carried mostly Icenian images. Indeed their Norfolk Wolf gold staters (*Ancient British Coins* [ABC] 1393-99) are among the most distinctive British staters ever struck. However, over the following three-quarters of a century the coins of the Icenii increasingly adopt the imagery of the two main North Thames tribes, the Catuvellauni and the Trinovantes. The three principal North Thames motifs copied by the Icenii are crossed wreaths, back-to-back crescents and



Three main North Thames icons with Icenii coins that copied them. Gold from ally state phase, silver from client state phase.



Why did three once gold-rich tribes all stop minting gold at the same time? Because they'd run out of gold and because Cunobelinus stopped them.



corn ears. Please look at my photos of North Thames coins and Icenian coins and you cannot fail to see how similar they are. Icenian copying of the three main North Thames icons—cross, crescents, corn ear—is so close, so consistent and so continuous that it cannot possibly be accidental. The rulers of the Icenii—all of them—deliberately hijacked the heraldry of North Thames rulers for a period of over 70 years. The only reasonable conclusion we can draw from this prolonged policy of imitation is that the rulers of the Icenii and the rulers of the Catuvellauni and Trinovantes were closely linked—politically and commercially—throughout this period of 70 years.

In 2003 Dr John Talbot said: "These linkages are clear and are becoming more numerous as more types emerge . . . It has been suggested that mobile moneymen or die cutters may account for such connections, but this is not well supported by the evidence of consistency in the East Anglian coins themselves. My own suspicion is that the answer is more likely to lie in politics and power [my emphasis] rather than in the mechanics of manufacture". Well said, John! I share the same suspicion. Shortly after the Catuvellaunian prince Cunobelinus replaced Dubnovellaunos at Camulodunon in Trinovantia, some surprising things happened in the heart of Icenia, only 50 miles away:

From c. 30 BC to c. AD 43 the Icenii cribbed images of North Thames coins. (Drawing courtesy of Jane Bottomley.)

- Three gold staterers were struck (ABC 1639, 1651, 1654) inscribed ANTEDEI, ECEN and ECE, with three crescent moons back to back, like the last gold staterer of Addedomaros (ABC 2517), possibly the grandfather of Cunobelinus.
- Around the same time another Icenian gold staterer was struck (ABC 1456) which, like the Talbot Type (ABC 1453), features back-to-back crescents on the obverse. However, the most unusual thing about this staterer is that the reverse is copied from a gold staterer of Cunobelinus (ABC 2771).
- These four staterers (ABC 1453, 1639, 1651, 1654) were the last gold coins ever issued by the Icenii. After over half a century of non-stop Icenian gold coinage, it all suddenly stopped c.AD 10-20, never to start again. Why was that? There are two possible reasons: One, after decades of paying tribute money—first to Caesar via Cassivellaunos, then to North Thames rulers as part of some protection pact—Icenian gold reserves had been drained, sucked out of Norfolk by the kings of Herts and Essex. Two, Icenia had become a client state of Cunobelinus, like Cantion (Kent) had. If the latter, then it is most unlikely that Cunobelinus would have allowed any Icenian ruler to issue gold coins.
- After 60 years of varied and innovative design, the silver coins of the Icenii suddenly became strictly standardised, conspicuously conservative and boringly uniform in their imagery. After Cunobelinus took control of Camulodunon almost all Icenian silver coins carried the Catuvellaunian badge of two back-to-back crescents, plus a horse with a corn-ear mane, the notable exception being the Norfolk God series. In *Made for Trade* Dr John Talbot says that the back-to-back crescent motif "became widespread on Icenian coinage. Motifs such as this could result from political imposition [my emphasis] or be a sign of political allegiance." In this case I'm convinced that it began as "a sign of political allegiance" and ended as a symbol of "political imposition" as Talbot calls it. I call it a "client state".
- For the next three decades almost all major issues of Icenian silver coinage, including the Norfolk God series, displayed a stylised corn ear. Only silver coins were now being minted, which means that virtually all new coins of the Icenii now carried a corn ear. On the coins of Antedios and Ecen the corn ear formed the horse's mane. On Norfolk God coins the corn ear invariably appeared on the obverse behind the head. Why is the ubiquity of this stylised corn ear on Icenian coins so highly significant, especially in the first half of the first century AD? Because the corn ear is the prime symbol of Cunobelinus' gold coinage and of Camulodunon, his capital. For almost 40 years every single gold staterer and every single gold quarter of Cunobelinus, apart from his biga types (ABC 2771, 2807), displayed a bold corn ear inextricably inserted between the letters CA and MV (short for Camulodunon, "Fort of Camulos", the war-god). In my view, the near-universal display of a corn ear on the late coins of the Icenii signalled, albeit very discreetly, that they were issued by courtesy of "top dog" Cuno and under the control of Camulodunon. So why didn't Cunobelinus place his name on these coins alongside that of the local Icenian rulers? I don't know, but I guess it was to preserve the dignity of the local rulers and to maintain the illusion of their independence.

The Norfolk God

By far the largest and the latest series of coins struck by the Icenii are Norfolk God silver units, c. AD 25-43 (ABC 1564, 1567). Dr John Talbot says that more than 200 different dies were engraved to produce Norfolk God units—a staggering number by Ancient British standards. There are eight key points to note about this colossal and crucially important pre-conquest coinage:

1. The styling of the Norfolk God's hair and face, particularly his spiky hair and V-shaped "shouting" mouth, appears to be derived from an early silver coin of Cunobelinus (ABC 2855), which in turn was inspired by a Roman silver



Norfolk God silver units, Iceni's largest and latest series, were inspired from various sources, some North Thames. (Drawing courtesy of Jane Bottomley)



The Catuvellauni wanted horses for cavalry. The Iceni had horses and wanted peace. Was trade the basis of their long alliance?

- denarius of 48 BC (Sear RCV 418) which shows the spiky-haired head of a captive Gallic War warrior.
- The fierce warrior-like character of the Norfolk God's head is enhanced by his wide open "shouting" mouth (yelling a blood-curdling battle cry perhaps?) and by his helmet-like cranial crest; a crested helmet is shown on a bronze coin of Cunobelinus (ABC 2933). Apart from the Bury Helmet silver unit (ABC 1498), no other Icenian coin features any item of warfare nor shows such a warlike face.
- The Cunobelinus coin (ABC 2855) which inspired features of the Norfolk God head celebrates a military victory, because it shows a winged Victory on the reverse. The spiky head on the obverse is probably Camulos, the war-god, because the legend reads CAMV. So is the spiky Norfolk God head also Camulos? Or is it an Icenian war-god or corn-god?
- As stated earlier, the Norfolk God head always has a stylised corn ear behind it, a permanent though subtle reminder of the ever-present corn ear on the gold coins of Cunobelinus.
- The Norfolk God coin displays three trefoils—two in front of the "shouting" head, the third forming the horse's head. There is also a triad of dots under the war-god's head and a tricorn in a three-sided cusp above the horse. Might these references to three-ness refer to the three sub-tribes or three rulers in the Icenian confederacy?
- For 20 to 30 years the design of the Norfolk God series

remained unchanged. This was an unprecedented consistency in Icenian coin design and unparalleled in East Anglian tribal minting, except for one other series. This was the corn ear series of gold staters and quarter staters issued by Cunobelinus in Camulodunon, only 50 miles away. The basic obverse design of this corn ear series remained unchanged for over 30 years—the same 30 years during which the long-running Norfolk God-with-corn-ear series was being produced. A coincidental consistency in East Anglian coin design? I don't think so.

- Dr John Talbot reports prolonged periods of weight consistency with late Icenian silver units, the most accurate being Norfolk God units where tolerances of less than one tenth of a gram were recorded. Such phenomenal accuracy is unprecedented for a peripheral tribe and might imply technical aid from Camulodunon (Colchester).
- The most remarkable thing about Norfolk God coins is that they carry no inscription, despite the fact that some earlier and contemporary Icenian coins were inscribed, for example those of Cani Duro, Antedios, Ecen, Saenu, Aesu and Ale Scavo (ABC 1630–65, 1685–90, 1696–1708). Why no ruler's name? Ten years ago I said: "There is a perfectly plausible explanation. If Anted and his co-rulers had been obliged to surrender their sovereignty to Cunobelin, in exchange for personal favours from 'Britannorum rex', then it is entirely reasonable that they would also have surrendered the right to issue coins with their personal names on them. Despite a loss of local dignity, it doubtless looked a good deal to Anted and his fellow chieftains—possibly the only deal on the table. They lost their gold coins and their names on silver coins, but they kept their lives, their lands, their thrones and their regal lifestyles. As puppet kings, they may also have picked up some extra perks they hadn't previously enjoyed" ("Did Cunobelin control the Iceni?", Chris Rudd List 102, November 2008, pp. 2-6).



He could have crushed the Iceni. Instead, to get more juice, he squeezed them as a client state. Cuno "The Dog" in Roman helmet (ABC 2960). (Coin drawing F. W. Fairholt, 1864.)

I've nothing to add except to tell you that these nameless Norfolk God silver coins were struck by the same Icenian mint (Talbot's Mint B) which had struck a nameless gold stater (ABC 1456) imitating the first gold stater of Cunobelinus (ABC 2771).

The recently discovered Talbot Type gold stater, the latest piece of evidence of the Catuvellauni's domination of the Iceni, will be sold on May 20 in Aylsham, Norfolk. For their help I thank Elizabeth Cottam, Dr John Sills and Dr John Talbot, who doesn't buy my client state idea.

Further reading:

TALBOT, John, *Made for Trade: A New View of Icenian Coinage*, Oxbow, 2017.