

The boar *signum* in the Museo Arqueológico Nacional and the *boar* (lying) and *boar* (skull) Clunia countermarks: legionary symbol or image of town proclaiming Galba emperor?

Las contramarcas *jabalí* (tumbado) y *jabalí* (cráneo) de Clunia: ¿símbolo legionario o imagen del pronunciamiento ciudadano en favor del emperador Galba?

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Abstract: The boar on the seal from the Museo Arqueológico Nacional shows the originality of this countermark device on the obverse of Clunia issue. The animal is neither erect nor in motion but lying with its legs under its body. The lying posture seems to bear no relation to portrayals from the legionary milieu as found on seals, emblems, standards, and so forth. This unprecedented countermark device, struck only on the obverse, is associated with an image on the reverse of the coinage showing the animal's cranium. The image has always been described as a «boar's head», although its shape and detail depict the animal's skinless skull. No plausible explanation has been given. What is certain is the relationship between the two types, always paired, the former on the obverse, the latter on the reverse. The two countermarks were struck at Clunia in the spring of 68 CE in the context of events culminating with Galba's acclamation. They represent the whole series of propitiatory rites, from initial animal sacrifice, with victim depicted prone, to the ritual banquet that wraps up the ceremonies, where the skinned skull is trophy and loot. The countermarks' application exclusively to Clunia issue shows that the events of spring 68 CE directly involved not only the legionary milieu, which was responsible for Galba's acclamation, but also the whole community of citizens called upon to take active part in the political process.

Keywords: *Legio* VI. *Legio* X. Legions. Local coinage. Coins circulation.

Resumen: La figura del jabalí del *signum* del Museo Arqueológico Nacional permite apreciar la originalidad de la postura del animal representado en las contramarcas aplicadas en los anversos de las emisiones provinciales tiberianas de la ceca de Clunia (Coruña del Conde, Burgos): no erguido ni en movimiento, sino tumbado, con las patas dobladas bajo el cuerpo. No parece por lo tanto posible poner en relación esta particular postura tumbada del animal con las representaciones habituales, y frecuentes, del jabalí empleadas en el ámbito legionario para decorar *signa*, emblemas, estandartes, etc. A esta original figura de las contramarcas, aplicada solo en el anverso de las monedas, se encuentra siempre asociada en el reverso de las emisiones de Clunia el cráneo del animal: la imagen ha sido siempre descrita como «cabeza de jabalí», aunque forma y detalles descriptivos indican la voluntad de los artesanos antiguos de reproducir la «calavera» descarnada del jabalí. El uso de la imagen no ha encontrado hasta ahora una explicación plausible, siendo innegable solo la estrecha relación entre las

dos tipologías, siempre asociadas entre sí, y la coordinación constante en su colocación, la primera en el anverso, la segunda en el reverso. Las dos contramarcas, jabalí (tumbado) y jabalí (cráneo), fueron estampadas en Clunia en la primavera del 68 d. C., en el período comprendido entre la sublevación de Vindex (marzo) y la muerte de Nerón y la aclamación imperial de Galba (junio), que vio cómo la ciudad obtenía el estatus de colonia latina y se convertía en sede de la capital del Imperio. Ambas contramarcas se insertan en el complejo contexto de las celebraciones y ceremonias religiosas que acompañaron a los acontecimientos políticos culminados con la aclamación imperial de Galba. Las dos representaciones del jabalí concuerdan con presentar idealmente el recorrido completo de los ritos propiciatorios, desde la ofrenda inicial del animal, representado en posición «tumbada» listo para ser sacrificado, hasta el final de la ceremonia, terminada con el banquete, evocada con el despojo-trofeo del jabalí, el cráneo descarnado. La elección de usar solo emisiones de la ceca de Clunia evidencia cómo la rápida sucesión de acontecimientos en la primavera del 68 d. C. había implicado y comprometido de manera directa no solo al ambiente legionario, responsable de la aclamación imperial de Galba, sino a toda la estructura ciudadana, llamada a participar activamente en la acción política.

Palabras clave: *Legio VI. Legio X.* Legiones. Moneda local. Circulación de monedas.

The legionary *signum* with the image of a boar published by Morillo Cerdan and García Díez¹ (fig. 1A), provides an opportunity for more complete and holistic analysis of the two countermarks depicting the boar from the mint of Clunia (Peñalba de Castro, Burgos) (fig. 1A). Previously, these had been noted only on the sidelines of discussion of the **L X G / eagle** (head) type².

The Museo Arqueológico Nacional (MAN) legionary signum portrays a standing boar (fig. 1A), at attention, its hooves planted in the ground, ready to pounce be it offensively or defensively. The upright position, tense but set, is also elaborated on in other images that show the animal ‘in motion,’ obviously caught while charging (fig. 1B), often associated with legends that relate to specific legions. Such is the case of the antefix from Holt dedicated to the *Legio XX, L(egio) XX Valeriana Victrix*³. Thus, the specimen illustrated is dedicated to the *X Legio, L(egio) X F(retensis)*⁴ (fig. 1B), a type usually struck on provincial bronze issue from mints in the Syro-Palestinian region and especially frequent on series minted in Sebaste in the name of Domitianus Caesar⁵.

The Clunia countermark boar differs from this model. The animal is in a completely different position, lying down or «tumbado»⁶, with its front and rear paws folded (fig. 2)⁷, its back horizontal and not arched, its head level at rest, neither arched nor tense. As noted above, the punching technique common to the **eagle** (head) and **boar** types from Hispania amounts to the easy method for applying countermarks, compared to striking them with a negative carving of the image to be reproduced. However, it subjected the punches to rapid wear, which is especially evident in image details⁸, in this case the legs folded under the animal’s body, shown as thin stretched lines (fig. 2). The obvious delicacy of this descriptive detail leads to the conclusion that the ancient moneyers were using the

¹ MORILLO, y GARCÍA, 2000: 397-401.

² MARTINI, 2019: 219-220.

³ Cf. London, British Museum, antefix from Holt, Wales (PE 1911, 0206.1).

⁴ HOWEGO, 1985: n. 410.

⁵ Private collection; cf. RPC II, 2226.

⁶ GARCÍA-BELLIDO, 2006: 591.

⁷ *Classical Numismatic Group* E436, n. 324.

⁸ Cf. MARTINI, 2019: § 8.1. The *eagle* (head) countermark.



Fig. 1. Standing boar. **A.** *Signum* (Madrid, MAN), n.º inv. 10349. Foto: Ángel Martínez Levas, Archivo Fotografía MAN. **B.** *Leu Numismatik* 5, No. 294 (enlarg.)

folded legs to emphasize a precise, specific meaning of the boar image, a meaning at variance both with that of the legionary *signum* in the MAN and with the Syro-Palestinian countermark.

Issues from the Clunia mint bear three countermark types, all related to the same animal: type (a) **boar** (lying) (ACIP, No. 103); type (b) **boar** (lying) with the letters **CLV** in the middle of its body (ACIP, No. 105), a variant found only on very few specimens⁹; and type (c) **boar** (skull)¹⁰ (ACIP, No. 104). The three countermarks are found almost solely on the mint's bronze issue¹¹, with a certain variation in application. Types (a) and (b), found solely on the obverse, are struck on the neck of the emperor's portrait. Type (a) is much more common than type (b), which may merely be a variant of the former, given the meager number of specimens. Type (c) was employed on the reverse of coin issues, in the center of the planchet, appearing slightly more often than type (a), since so far we know of some specimens with no countermark on the obverse, though the **boar** (lying) type has been found only paired with the **boar** (skull) type on the reverse¹².

García-Bellido had attributed the two types with boar images to the period of the Civil Wars (68-69 CE)¹³ but the chronology was later called into question by the find of a countermarked specimen in a layer deemed Tiberian¹⁴, although with reasonable doubt over the appearance in the San Millán VC (HP/6/51) layer of coins from the first and second centuries CE¹⁵. She also believed, with findings subsequently reaffirmed, that type (a) and type (c) referred to the *Legio X Gemina*, thus wondering about the actual meaning to the attribute to the two countermarks, *Jabalí y cabeza de jabalí: militar y civil?*¹⁶ and theorizing two separate meanings. Type (a) would have been struck earlier and would refer to the presence of a legionary detachment in Clunia. Type (c) would have come later and could be considered the city's reaction to systematic «military» countermarking on issue from the mint¹⁷.

⁹ RUIZ, 2000: No. 3220.

¹⁰ Type described in bibliography as *cabeza de jabalí*.

¹¹ GARCÍA-BELLIDO, 2006: 591: «[...] sin embargo es interesante constatar que ellas son casi exclusivas de la ceca de Clunia, con sólo algunas excepciones conocidas [...]» (no doubt interesting to note they are almost exclusively from the Clunia mint, with only a few exceptions known).

¹² Among other examples recently seen for sale with only the boar (skull) type on the reverse: *Hervera - Soler & Llach* 1109, No. 176; *Idem* 1105, No. 3127; *Idem* 1072, No. 2143; cf. RUIZ, 2000: No. 3212 and 3222.

¹³ GARCÍA-BELLIDO, 2004: 244-247.

¹⁴ MORILLO, y GÓMEZ, 2006: 416.

¹⁵ GARCÍA-BELLIDO, 2006: 592; cf. MARTINI, 2019: § 8.2. The *boar* countermark.

¹⁶ GARCÍA-BELLIDO, 2006: 591.

¹⁷ GARCÍA-BELLIDO, 2006: 593: «Se hubiese tratado en ese caso de una reacción municipal a la masiva militarización de las monedas de la ciudad [...]» (As though we were dealing with the city's reaction to the massive militarization of municipal coinage).

I have already shown how the types relate to the *Legio VI Victrix*, which was stationed in Clunia and responsible for Galba's being proclaimed emperor¹⁸, thus making the city the imperial capital for a spell, promoting it to the rank of Roman colony, earning it the epithet *Sulpicia*¹⁹, and establishing veterans' settlements there²⁰.

Detailed analysis of the two countermarks with the image of a boar, type (a) and type (c), allows us to better determine the context for the production and distribution of the the two types and to better grasp their meaning.

There is no doubt that the city of Clunia was the center of application, nor that the period falls between March 68 CE (the elevation of Vindex) and June of the same year (death of Nero and Galba's acclamation as emperor). The countermarks are likely wholly part of the complex scenario of political and social events culminating in Galba's rise to power. García-Bellido's hypothetical timing, with type (a) struck earlier, primarily in military production, followed by type (c), on city authority, as though affirming municipal identity to offset the «militarization» of the coinage, is not borne out by the evidence. At least two specimens apparently bear the **boar** (skull) countermark as subtype to the **boar** (lying) countermark, which therefore must have been struck later²¹. On the specimen from the Instituto de Valencia (No. 3218) the indentation on the obverse made by the striking of type (c) is pushed back out by the outer profile of the type (a) countermark. This also shows its effects on the reverse along the lower margin of a nearly flattened type (c). The counterstriking of type (c) is less marked on the *Neville Numismatics* (No. 165) specimen, although the whole outline of the **boar** (skull) countermark, not too pronounced and in places shaded onto the planchet surface, appears to have been affected by the subsequent striking of type (a) on the obverse.

The features used in the two countermarks' depictions hold clues as to the meaning of the countermarking operation:

Type (a), **boar** (lying) (fig. 2)

Whereas the «in motion» posture (figs. 1A-B) clearly recalls the sphere of activity directly related to legionary life through an image whose immediate effectiveness undoubtedly evokes the aggressiveness of military action, the «lying» position used to portray the boar's body in the countermarks struck on the obverse (fig. 2), contrasting with the image 'in motion,' harks to some other milieu, albeit not immediately apparent. The unmistakably close production relations between type (a) on the obverse of provincial Clunia issue and type (c) on the reverse, with which it is nearly always associated, force upon us the interpretation of a double countermarking operation. This undoubtedly took place in a single location on the same occasion.

Tipo (c), **boar** (skull) (fig. 3A-C)

It is of utmost importance to properly identify the kind of image ancient moneyers meant to depict. Here again, as with type (a), the portrait is clearly distinguished by features that enable its nature and meaning to be recognized. The engraving does not depict the *head* of a boar, as scholars have typically termed it, inasmuch as the *skull* of a boar. First, the device does not show any part

¹⁸ MARTINI, 2019: 212-213.

¹⁹ RIC I, nn, 468-473, on the reverse, HISPANIA CLVNIA SVL(*picia*).

²⁰ HALEY, 1992, *passim*.

²¹ RUIZ, 2000: No. 3218 and *Neville Numismatics* 38, No. 165 (type RPC 454); see also same boar (skull) undertyped by boar (lying) in *Ibercoin* subasta 30, No. 168.



Fig. 2. Boar (lying). MAN, n.º inv. 1993_67_10146. Fotos: Ángel Martínez Levas, Archivo Fotografía MAN.

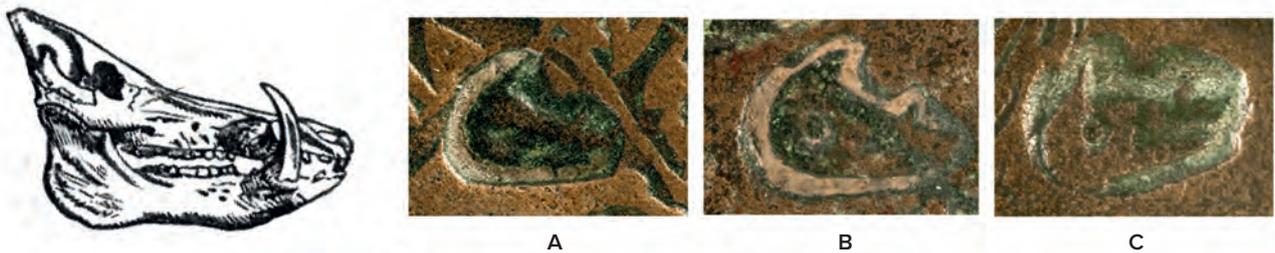


Fig. 3. Boar (skull). **A.** MAN, n.º inv. 1993_67_10088. **B.** MAN, n.º inv. 1993_67_10125. **C.** MAN, n.º inv. 1993_67_10146. Fotos: Ángel Martínez Levas, Archivo Fotografía MAN.

of the animal's neck or back. Second, the image is smooth, skeletal, unadorned by the chiaroscuro of skin or muscle bulk (fig. 3A-C)²². Third, the eye socket is large and sunken. Fourth, the jaws are closed but strikingly separated by an empty linear gap, highlighting the animal's absence of skin to show mere bone. It thus seems reasonable to deem the Roman engravers' intent to have been the depiction of a scraped skull rather than an animal head.

In the spring of 68 CE, following fraught relations with Vindex and the death of Nero, Galba was named emperor of the *Legio VI Victrix* in Clunia, a city that was at the time attaining the rank of Roman colony and imperial «capital». The countermarks must thus be understood as part of the overall context of festivals and religious ceremonies that went along with the series of events from Galba's nomination as *Legatus Senatus ac Populi Romani* (April 68 ce) to his proclamation as emperor (June 68 ce).

The two countermarks, type (a) and type (c), when considered in terms of their relationship, illustrate, albeit in iconographic shorthand, the whole course of events. On the obverse, first of all, we find the recumbent animal earmarked for propitiatory sacrifice. On the reverse, in the second place, what appears is the outcome of the operation, i.e. the boar's peeled skull, which, now that the ceremonies are over, has become a «trophy» and a memento of the events.

«*Jabalí y cabeza de jabalí: militar y civil?*» It would now seem possible to answer the question raised by the anomaly of the two boar and boar's head countermarks, a double exposure of the boar found almost exclusively on provincial issue from the Clunia mint. We have to conclude that

²² Fig. 3: www.wikimedia.org, «PigSkell»; fig. 3A: *Classical Numismatic Group*, E436, 324, R/ (enlarged); fig. 3B: *iNumis*, 6, No. 100, R/ (enlarged); fig. 3C: *Jesus Vico SA*, 132, No. 678, R/ (enlarged).

in the course of events culminating with the proclamation of Emperor Galba the main target of the countermarking operation was the entire urban area, represented by both citizens and legionaries, a social milieu whose various members were by now interconnected by complex relations²³. Type (b) with its **CLV** legend, though less numerous, and the use solely of Clunia coinage, testify to the countermarks' exclusive belonging to celebrations put on by the city at the forefront of the events of spring 68 CE.

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²³ MARTINI (2019), 8. Appendix: Initial comments on eagle (head) and boar countermarks.