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TURNING POINTS IN ROMAN HISTORY: THE CASE OF CAESAR'S ELEPHANT DENARIUS

DEBRA L. NOUSEK

IT IS PERHAPS NATURAL TO THINK OF AUGUSTUS as the founder of Roman imperial ideology, but the idea of an ideological program designed to promote an individual's career or political cause developed consistently over the course of the last century of the republic.¹ One example of just such self-promotion occurs at the beginning of the civil war of 49–46, when Caesar, Pompey, and other strong-willed *nobiles* clashed in a contest for political supremacy. The civil war can be seen as the culmination of a decades-long increase in the exertion of personal influence upon the will of the *populus Romanus*. This personal “stamp” on state affairs was given concrete expression early in 49, since one of Caesar's first acts upon arrival in Rome was to issue coins in his own name without the approval of the Roman senate.

This paper examines a well-known, sometimes overlooked, yet politically complex coin issued by Caesar in 49.² This coin, the so-called “elephant *denarius*” (*RRC* no. 443), shows on the obverse the religious implements associated with Caesar's office of *pontifex maximus*, and on the reverse an elephant facing right, stepping on a snake, with the legend “CAESAR” in the exergue (Fig. 1).³ Despite this coin's extraordinary imagery, the standard catalogues of Roman coins fail to

¹ Earlier versions of this paper were presented at the 2002 Societas Conference in Cuma, Italy and at the 2006 University of Western Ontario Classical Studies Colloquium. I am grateful to my fellow participants and the audiences at these venues for their insightful comments, especially Kathryn Welch, Martin Stone, Peter van Alfen, and Robert Wallace. Parts of the argument originated in work completed for the Summer Graduate Seminar at the American Numismatic Society; my thanks to Kenneth W. Harl for his excellent numismatic instruction. Special thanks are due to T. Corey Brennan, who read and commented on an early draft, and the anonymous readers for *Phoenix*, whose suggestions greatly improved the argument. Any remaining infelicities are of course my own.

All dates are B.C., except where indicated.

² The date of this coin has been much discussed. Crawford (1974: 89 [cited in the text as *RRC*]) assigned it to 49–48, based primarily on hoard evidence; Sydenham (1952: 167) assigned it to 54–51 on the basis of the iconography; Grueber (1970: 2.390–391) assigned the issue to 50, following earlier French scholars. Both Sydenham and Grueber catalogued the issue with the coins of Gaul, which may well be correct; as it stands, the evidence is inconclusive, although we should do well to consider the similar coin issued by Hirtius in Gaul (Burnett *et al.* 1992: no. 501). On the whole, Crawford's dating seems to me the most plausible and the least dependent on arguments from style.

³ There has been some debate about the labeling of the obverse and reverse of this coin. Indeed, the majority of catalogues of Roman coins, including Sydenham, Grueber, and Babelon 1885–86: 2.10–11, list the elephant face as the obverse, while Crawford lists it as the reverse (for references, see above, n. 2). Sear (1998: 9) takes Crawford to task for describing the coin as such, but I believe the reasons, though not listed by Crawford, are reasonably straightforward. It is true that most other augural symbols appear on what must be the reverse of the coin, given the presence of a head on what is traditionally the obverse (e.g., *RRC* no. 374/2, a *denarius* of Q. Caecilius Metellus Pius [cos. 80]). Nevertheless, the presence of Caesar's *cognomen* in the exergue is strong evidence that the

offer a clear and cogent explanation of it.⁴ For example, Crawford in his *Roman Republican Coinage* rightly argues that the obverse refers to the emblems of the pontificate, but the reverse, he claims, “was intended to symbolise victory over evil.”⁵ The elephant iconography in particular has been the subject of some debate. Among numismatists, it has most commonly been suggested that the elephant’s presence is a reference to Caesar’s campaigns in Gaul, specifically to the defeat of Ariovistus in 58. In part this explanation results from classifying this coin among the provincial coinage of Gaul,⁶ and from a belief that the coin should be assigned to the late 50s instead of after the civil war had begun.⁷ Crawford’s association of the elephant with victory over evil is, in my opinion, anachronistic at best. While it is true that victorious generals such as L. Domitius Ahenobarbus and Pompey used elephants to celebrate their triumphs,⁸ this should not be taken to mean that the elephant had any special association with victory in Roman rituals in the republican period.⁹

elephant face was meant as the reverse. While a coin’s legend may appear on the obverse in vertical, horizontal, or curving script, there is no example of a strict exergue, with the traditional horizontal line as divider, on the obverse of a republican coin. On this evidence, it would seem logical to count the coin face with a traditional exergue, i.e., the elephant face, as the reverse, no matter the iconography of the obverse. For other coins where the obverse/reverse distinction is difficult to make, see (among many others) *RRC* nos. 386 (Head of Liber/Head of Libera, issued in 78), 433/2 (Head of L. Iunius Brutus, *cos.* 509/Head of C. Servilius Ahala, *Mag. Eq.* 439, issued in 54), 434/1 (Head of Sulla/Head of Q. Pompeius Rufus, *cos.* 88, issued in 54), 456/1a (Axe and *culullus*/Jug and *lituus*, issued in 47).

⁴In numismatic scholarship, there are two brief studies of the elephant iconography, Granger 1948 and Kirkpatrick 1969; these studies are very narrowly focused and descriptive in nature, however, and fail to take account of the full historical and political implications of the iconography. Swindler (1923: 306–312) discusses the presence of elephants on Roman coinage as a function of the cult of Venus Pompeiana. Although her main focus is peripheral to this discussion, the survey is nevertheless still useful.

⁵Crawford 1974: 735: “The coinage of Caesar himself is not particularly diverse. His first issue (no. 443) alludes on the obverse to his possession of the office of Pontifex Maximus; the significance of the reverse, portraying an elephant trampling a dragon [sic], is more obscure, but I believe that it was intended to symbolise victory over evil.”

⁶Grueber 1970: 2.390–391; cf. Sydenham 1952: 167, with note.

⁷Grueber thought that, based on the evidence of the San Cesario and Cadriano hoards, the elephant coin should be attributed to the year 50. Sydenham back-dated the coin even further, to 54, based on the enormous extent of the minting. Crawford (1974: 89–91) rejects this earlier date: “The status of no. 443 as the first military issue of Caesar is established beyond all possible doubt by its occurrence as the only military issue of Caesar not only in the Cadriano and San Cesario hoards, but also in the Carbonara and San Giuliano hoards and by the greater degree of wear which it displays in later hoards, compared with other military issues by Caesar.” The decisive San Giuliano hoard was not discovered until 1964 and was therefore not available to Grueber and Sydenham. For details on the hoards themselves, see Crawford 1969: 112–113.

⁸Or, in the case of Domitius, a “pseudo-triumph.” See below, 301.

⁹In fact, the account in Plut. *Pomp.* 14 reveals that the presence of elephants in a Roman triumph was extraordinary (and not entirely successful). When his attempt to enter the city in a chariot drawn by four elephants failed on account of the narrowness of the Roman gate, Pompey was forced to revert to the traditional horses. The increased use of elephants in triumphal processions, such as those

In the corpus of coins issued by Caesar, the elephant makes only this one appearance. Of other elephants appearing on Roman republican coinage, none appears with an obverse of pontifical or augural emblems.¹⁰ The only coin type which is similar to the one presently under discussion is that of Q. Caecilius Metellus Pius (*cos.* 80), which consists of two separate issues of *denarii* with similar obverses. An obverse type with pontifical implements, such as that on Caesar's coin, is also rare; other than the elephant *denarius*, only *RRC* no. 456, issued by Caesar in the East in 47, carries pontifical implements on its obverse, and that has religious emblems on both sides.¹¹ This is not to suggest that religious symbols are infrequent on Caesar's coinage. The *lituus*, notably, appears behind the head of the portrait issues (e.g., *RRC* no. 480/3), and augural symbols in general appear on four separate issues between 49 and 44.¹² Other than these, the majority of types issued by Caesar portray Victory, on either face of the coin, in the form of trophies (e.g., *RRC* no. 482/1) or of the goddess herself (*RRC* no. 465/3).¹³ It is surely surprising, therefore, to see an elephant on a coin of Caesar, particularly at such an important point in his political career. In addition to the claim of modern scholars that the elephant here alludes to Caesar's victories in Gaul, there is evidence in some ancient sources that the association of the two could be explained etymologically by deriving the name "Caesar" from the Punic word for elephant. Both of these explanations must be rejected, however. It is more likely that Caesar chose the image of the elephant for immediate political advantage. As I shall attempt to show, by placing the elephant on a widely distributed and tangible medium such as a *denarius*, Caesar could launch a biting personal attack on not one but three of his fiercest opponents: L. Domitius Ahenobarbus, Q. Caecilius Metellus Pius Scipio Nasica, and, most obviously, Cn. Pompeius Magnus.

The iconography of this coin is significant partly because it adds to our knowledge of the motives and aims of the major factions at the outset of hostilities.¹⁴ Caesar's position in 49 was precarious: on the one hand he had repeatedly tried to reach a compromise with his opponents; on the other, it was

used in Caesar's triumphs in 46, should be attributed to the greater extravagance of public shows in general.

¹⁰ Scullard (1974: pls. XIII–XVI and XXI–XXIV) surveys the range of elephant appearances on both hellenistic and Roman coins.

¹¹ Crawford (1974: 471) describes this coin as follows: "456/1a; Aureus; OBV: Axe and *culullus*; on r. CAESAR downwards; on l, DICT upwards. Border of dots. REV: Jug and *lituus*; below, ITER. Laurel-wreath as border."

¹² *RRC* nos. 456, 466, 467, 475. On the non-Caesarian issues of this period, the augural symbols appear on the reverse of coins issued by Q. Caecilius Metellus Pius Scipio (*RRC* no. 460/3). Metellus Scipio also issued his own elephant coin (*RRC* no. 459/1) in Africa in 47–46.

¹³ For further examples of trophies, see, for example, *RRC* nos. 472 and 476; Victory appears on the obverse of nos. 472/3, 475, 476, 480/25, and is shown on the reverse of nos. 448, 449/4, 453, 454/3, 462, 464/4, 465, 473/3, 474/6. For general discussion of the type, see Crawford 1974: 736.

¹⁴ For a new assessment of Caesar's political strategy during the conflict, see Raafaub 2003.

Caesar who had transgressed the boundaries of his province and the provisions of his own law by invading Italian soil.¹⁵ His opponents could, with good reason, claim to be occupying the moral high ground. Caesar's decision to mint a coin with these unusual images, then, may be interpreted plausibly as part of a plan designed not just to remind Romans of his own achievements, but also to emphasize his opponents' shortcomings.

The importance of the coin goes beyond its iconography, however, for it also represents the first directly attested minting of coins on the Caesarian side during the civil war.¹⁶ Crawford's die estimates suggest that this issue was the third-largest in all of Roman republican coinage, with approximately 750 obverse dies.¹⁷ In practical terms, this estimate would produce some 22.5 million pieces, equivalent to about 2500 talents.¹⁸ While the size of such a minting surely raises eyebrows, it must of course be remembered that at the end of his tenure in Gaul Caesar had no fewer than eight legions expecting payment. Indeed, the necessity of securing his legionaries' loyalty should not be underestimated. Still, minting 22.5 million coins required vast amounts of silver bullion, and, as evidence of a proposed minting date in early 49, one need not look far to find a probable source. On April 1st, 49, Caesar addressed the remnants of the senate and the popular assembly in Rome,¹⁹ promising grain distribution and a gift of 75 *denarii* per man (Dio Cass. 41.16.1). He then proceeded to the treasury at the Temple of Saturn and demanded access to the *aerarium sanctius*, where Rome's public wealth was stored. Although he met with stubborn opposition, Caesar managed to make off with 15,000 bars of gold, 30,000 of silver, and, we are told, a great quantity of silver coins.²⁰

¹⁵ As consul in 59 Caesar had had passed an extortion law (*lex Iulia de pecuniis repetundis*) in which it was expressly forbidden for a promagistrate to leave his province, wage war, or enter any other realm without the permission of the senate and people (Cic. *Pis.* 50).

¹⁶ Crawford (1974: 89, n. 1) hints at the significance of the coin: "It is worth drawing attention to the fact that the main sequence of military issues of Caesar in this period tends to have the simple legend 'CAESAR,' while issues struck for him use a fuller titulature."

¹⁷ After that of L. Calpurnius Piso (*RRC* no. 340/1: issued in 90, 864 obverse dies) and C. Vibius Pansa (*RRC* no. 342/3: issued in 90, 960 obverse dies; see Crawford 1974: 640–695 for full details). These coins too were likely minted for paying the vast numbers of men under arms during the Social War, a fitting parallel for the situation that produced Caesar's coin.

¹⁸ Crawford (1974: 694) estimated ca 30,000 coins per die. The figure of 2500 talents is based on a rough estimate of Roman weight standards for *denarius* coinage of the period: if one assumes a typical *denarius* weight of ca 3.7 g, the cumulative weight of these coins is approximately 83,250 kg. That amount is the equivalent of 254,237.28 Roman *librae*, which in turn equals approximately 2542 talents. For more on Roman weight standards, see Crawford 1974: 590–597; Harl 1996: 315–318.

¹⁹ Dio Cass. 41.15.2–16.1; cf. Cic. *Att.* 10.3a.2, *Fam.* 4.1.1; Caes. *B Civ.* 1.32; Vell. Pat. 2.50.1–2. For a narrative summary of these events, see Gelzer 1968: 208–210.

²⁰ The incident was widely recorded: Plin. *HN* 33.46; cf. Cic. *Att.* 10.4.8; Caes. *B Civ.* 1.33.3; Luc. 3.114–168; Plut. *Pomp.* 62; Caes. 35.3–4; App. *B Civ.* 2.41; Dio Cass. 41.17.2. For modern discussions, see Broughton 1951–86: 2.259 and Gelzer 1968: 209–210. Harl (1996: 55 and n. 52) explicitly links the seizing of the treasury and the minting of the elephant *denarius*.

This purloined bullion is likely to be the source of silver for the elephant issue.²¹

Caesar may thus be assumed to have acquired the silver bullion for the very practical purpose of paying his legions at a turning point in their service to him. A careful study of the coin's iconography will show that he took advantage of that opportunity by selecting an unusual type for the *denarius* minted for this purpose. The combined effect of that iconography was to promote Caesar's position as the lawful head of Roman religion and to reveal to both supporters and rivals that he expected to emerge victorious from the conflict.

I. THE OBERSE TYPE

The implements on the obverse of this coin are quite clearly those of the office of *pontifex maximus*, with which Caesar had been invested since 63.²² These pontifical tools are the *culullus*, *aspergillum*, axe, and apex, each of which had a specific function in priestly rituals.²³ Augural symbols had occasionally appeared on republican coins, beginning with Sulla's *denarius* of 82²⁴ (*RRC* no. 359/2) (Fig. 2), and with symbols such as the jug and *lituus* on the reverse of Q. Caecilius Metellus Pius' *denarius* of 81 (*RRC* no. 374/2 [Fig. 3, right]).²⁵ Upon closer examination, it is noticeable that these precedents for the religious symbols on the elephant *denarius* were all minted by men who were later connected to the rivals of Caesar in the civil war, namely Q. Caecilius Metellus Pius, Cn. Pompeius Magnus, and Faustus Cornelius Sulla, son of the dictator.²⁶ As we shall see, an almost "intertextual" network of numismatic iconography is thus established through the repeated use of such symbols in the years between Sulla and the civil war of 49–46.

Returning to Caesar's coin, it is immediately evident that the implements portrayed are those of the pontificate, not the augurate, thereby representing

²¹ It is possible that Caesar used instead silver collected from the Gallic booty for minting the coins. Two factors, however, suggest that he did not: both the grandeur of Caesar's triumphs in 46, and the large issues of coins in that year (see *RRC* nos. 463–468) suggest that he had not been siphoning off silver for minting during the civil war. Second, and more immediately, if Caesar had had very large amounts of silver on hand, why force a conflict with the tribune over access to the treasury?

²² Suet. *Iul.* 13; Plut. *Caes.* 7.1–4; Dio Cass. 37.37.1–3; Sall. *Cat.* 49.2; Vell. Pat. 2.43.3; cf. Gelzer 1968: 46–47.

²³ For more detailed information about the functions of the *pontifex maximus*, see Wissowa 1912: 503–508 and Latte 1960: 400–402.

²⁴ The date of Sulla's augurate is controversial. For the purposes of this paper, however, it is the use of the symbols on the coins that is of most interest. For a discussion of their meaning, see now Stewart 1997. For a useful summary of the stages in the debate, see Keaveney 1982: 150–154, with n. 1.

²⁵ Cf. *RRC* no. 428/3, a *denarius* issued by Q. Cassius Longinus, which has on its reverse the *lituus* and jug, together with an eagle on a thunderbolt.

²⁶ For the augural symbols on Pompey's coins, see *RRC* no. 402, which has the jug and *lituus* on the obverse. Compare the coins issued by Sulla's son Faustus (*RRC* no. 426), which have the *lituus* on either the obverse behind the head or to the side of the reverse.

Caesar's most important priesthood. This detail also supports a minting date early in the war, for in 47 Caesar became augur in addition to *pontifex maximus*, an honor which is duly noted on later coins by the appearance of specifically augural symbols.²⁷ Caesar took the office of *pontifex maximus* seriously, or at least affected to do so when it was politically convenient. The prominence of these religious symbols on the coin suggests that Caesar wished to emphasize his relationship with the gods even while transgressing the boundaries of his *imperium*. Pontifical symbols are relatively rare on Roman coins prior to this issue, making their appearance on Caesar's coin all the more striking. In fact, there is only one known example, a *denarius* minted by P. Sulpicius Galba in 69, with a reverse type of "knife, *culullus*, and axe" (*RRC* no. 406/1). In considering Caesar's pontificate, it is essential to remember that he had engineered his election in 63 much to the chagrin of *pontifices* from more established families. Perhaps more intriguing, Caesar's election came about after the death of none other than Q. Caecilius Metellus Pius (*cos.* 80), whose coins seem to be models for the elephant *denarius*. It is of some consequence as well that throughout this period the Metelli were active in securing ties with other prominent families through marriage connections. Men such as C. Marius, M. Aemilius Scaurus, Sulla, and later Pompey had all been married to Metellan women at some time (Seager 2002: 26). Clearly, this family had a prominent role in Roman politics, even when its own members were not office holders.

The pontifical implements on *RRC* no. 443 are associated with the augural symbols on earlier coins precisely through this network of family connections. Both Metellus Pius and Faustus Sulla had employed augural symbols on their coins. A *denarius* of Metellus Pius (*RRC* no. 374/2), issued in 81, features on the obverse the head of Pietas, and on the reverse the jug and *lituus*, surrounded by a laurel-wreath border. This issue is in fact a corollary to an elephant issue (*RRC* no. 374/1 [Fig. 3, left]), which shares a similar obverse type. Some years later, in 56, Faustus Sulla also issued a coin with augural symbols (*RRC* no. 426/3) (Fig. 4). The type is most naturally taken to refer to Faustus' own augurate, but also recalls that of his father—the celebrated dictator—and perhaps that of his father-in-law, Pompey. The three trophies on the reverse of this coin have been identified as a reproduction of Pompey's signet ring.²⁸ There is one further coin that carries the augural symbols, a rare *aureus* of Pompey showing on the obverse the head of Africa, wearing an elephant-skin headdress, with jug and

²⁷ See, for example, *RRC* no. 456/1b minted by Caesar in the East in 47, and especially the dual-priesthood coin of 46 (*RRC* no. 467), with the legend "COS. TERT. DICT. ITER. AVGV. PONT. MAX." Cf. *RRC* no. 466, issued by Aulus Hirtius in 46, showing augural symbols on the reverse. The fact the elephant *denarius* does not show augural emblems strongly suggests a *terminus ante quem* for its production. Whether one believes (as I do) that the coin was minted at the start of the civil war or earlier (as did Sydenham and Grueber), Caesar would certainly have included the symbols of the augurate on the coin if he had had any right to them at the time of minting.

²⁸ So Crawford 1974: 450 (s.v. no. 426), following Dio Cass. 42.18.3.

lituus flanking the central image. The coin is understood to have been struck to commemorate Pompey's triumph (the reverse type is a triumphal *quadriga*).²⁹ Two aspects of this coin are noteworthy: first, it appears to refer to an augurate held by Pompey, possibly as early as 71; second, the symbols here are not on the reverse but on the obverse, perhaps offering a precedent for Caesar some twenty years later.

Within this political and iconographical context, then, the obverse of *RRC* no. 443 represents Caesar's attempt to situate himself within the numismatic tradition of displaying religious implements on *denarius* coinage. Caesar's coin alludes to the models of his predecessors while emphasizing his own position as the head of Roman religion. Although it is unlikely that an average Roman would have recognized all the multi-layered allusions evident on the coin, it can be argued that these were identifiable to Caesar's opponents and their supporters, who were the targets of his political program. Given the aristocracy's fascination with and awareness of their ancestral history, together with the vast minting of this particular coin, the effect must have been dramatically tangible.

II. THE REVERSE TYPE

If the obverse type is politically important on a number of levels, the reverse type reiterates and amplifies that significance. The most arresting feature of the reverse of *RRC* no. 443 is of course the elephant, with which Caesar would at first seem to have no connection. There can be little doubt that the choice of iconography was deliberate; since this is a military issue and not one supervised by the senate, it is even likely that Caesar himself oversaw its design and production. Various arguments have been advanced to explain the significance of the elephant on this coin, although none has been entirely convincing. Equally important, if less obvious, is the presence of the snake being trampled underfoot, as well as the striking simplicity of Caesar's cognomen as the legend.

One explanation for the appearance of the elephant on this coin was common in later periods of antiquity and has recently been revived, namely that the Latin *cognomen* "Caesar" resembles the Punic word for elephant.³⁰ Such evidence dates

²⁹ *RRC* no. 402, dated by Crawford to 71. Sydenham (1952: 171) dates this coin to 61, following Grueber (1970: 2.464, n. 1). It is clear from the reverse that the coin commemorates one of Pompey's three triumphs (81, 71, 61), but the question of which one remains insolvable. For a summary of the arguments, see Grueber 1970: 2.464–466, with n. 1. If, following Crawford, we assign the coin to 71, the iconography gains new significance in light of the re-use of the elephant by Caesar in 49. That is, the triumph in 71 over Sertorius in Spain was shared with Q. Caecilius Metellus Pius, whose family, as has been noted above, often employed the elephant on their coins. One possibility for the head of Africa with elephant-skin headdress type, then, is that this image refers to Metellus Pius' part in the campaigns and that the legend in the exergue, *MAGNVS*, refers to Pompey's contributions. Alternatively, Pompey may have adapted the badge of the Metelli to suit his own needs, thus identifying himself with that family as his career advanced.

³⁰ The arguments of Zarrow 2001 were set forth in an oral paper at the Annual Meeting of the American Philological Association in Dallas, Texas in 2001. To my knowledge the paper has not yet

to the imperial period, most reliably in the life of Aelius in the *Historia Augusta* and in Servius' commentary on the *Aeneid*, both dating to the fourth century A.D. In the *Historia Augusta*, the author offers several accounts of the origin of the name—and now title—"Caesar." Of relevance here is the explanation that the first holder of the *cognomen* had killed an elephant in battle and that the elephant in the language of the Mauri is called "*caesai*."³¹ Servius, in his commentary to *Aen.* 1.286, also records several options for the derivation of the name Caesar:

CAESAR hic est qui dicitur Gaius Iulius Caesar, et Gaius praenomen est, Iulius ab Iulo, Caesar vel quod caeso matris ventre natus est vel quod avus eius in Africa manu propria occidit elephantem, qui "caesa" dicitur lingua Poenorum.

This CAESAR is the one who is called Gaius Iulius Caesar; Gaius is his praenomen, Iulius comes from Iulus, and Caesar either because he was born with his mother's abdomen having been cut or because his grandfather had killed an elephant—which is called "*caesa*" in the Punic language—in Africa with his own hand.

In the Servian account, then, one finds slightly fuller details: the slayer of the elephant is identified as Caesar's grandfather and he is said to have accomplished this deed in Africa. Unfortunately, apart from this passage nothing else is known about the life of Caesar's grandfather and Servius' account cannot be verified.³² Even on the basis of conjecture, if one presumes that Caesar's grandfather was born around the middle of the second century, it is difficult to deduce what he might have been doing in Africa in the period after the fall of Carthage that might have earned him this *cognomen*; our sparse knowledge of events in Africa in this period prevents any definite conclusions. Both the Servian etymology and that in the *Historia Augusta* are better understood as folk-etymologies, vague attempts to explain a poorly understood phenomenon by analogy with a known entity. Moreover, linguistic evidence suggests that the *cognomen* is actually Latin and derived from an ancient and no longer used *praenomen*.³³

Thus the etymological argument, while not certainly invalid, remains an unsatisfactory explanation for the elephant on Caesar's coin. It may well be the case that Caesar's *cognomen* resembles the Punic word for elephant, but it is unlikely that such a relationship was sufficiently compelling to warrant the

been published. The abstract, however, is available at <<http://www.apaclassics.org/AnnualMeeting/01mtg/abstracts.zarrow.html>>.

³¹ SHA *Ael.* 2.3: *Caesarem vel ab elephanto, qui lingua Maurorum caesai dicitur, in proelio caeso, eum qui primus sic appellatus est doctissimi viri et eruditissimi putant dictum* ("learned and educated men think that the man who was first thus named is called 'Caesar' from an elephant—which is called 'caesai' in the language of the Mauri—which he had killed in battle"). The alternative etymologies suggest (a) birth by what is now known as Caesarian section; (b) a thick head of hair (i.e., *caesaries*) when born; or (c) bright grey eyes (i.e., *oculi caesii*).

³² On the paucity of our sources, see *RE* s.v. Iulius no. 129.

³³ Kajanto 1965: 42; cf. 178: *Lib. de praen.* 3: *quae olim praenomina fuerint nunc cognomina sunt, ut Postumus, Agrippa, Proculus, Caesar* ("those which were once *praenomina* are now *cognomina*, such as Postumus, Agrippa, Proculus [and] Caesar").

iconography so prominently displayed on the coin. This etymological argument may therefore be rejected for the following reasons. First, in order for the iconography of a coin to be meaningful, it had to be easily recognizable. Given that the etymological argument depends heavily on much later sources, and indeed on sources that in turn depend upon a specialized knowledge of the Punic language, it is improbable that an average legionary or other Roman citizen would recognize such a recondite allusion. Second, in the rest of Caesar's coinage there are no further allusions to such an elephant-killing ancestor. Rather, the overwhelming majority of coins reiterate Caesar's claim to be descended from gods and kings through Venus and the *Marcii Reges*.³⁴ Finally, there exists a bronze copy of this elephant *denarius*, issued most probably in 46 by Caesar's former legate, Aulus Hirtius; his coin features iconography similar to that on Caesar's coin.³⁵ On the obverse the same pontifical implements are displayed and on the reverse there is the same scene of an elephant stepping on a serpent. The crucial point of difference is in the legend: instead of "CAESAR" in the exergue, the coin reads "HIRTIVS." If the elephant on the *denarius* was meant to reflect strictly the Punic origin of Caesar's *cognomen*, one would not have expected his lieutenant to reuse that image in conjunction with his own name. If the elephant image does not refer to Caesar's cognomen, then, we must turn elsewhere for a satisfactory explanation.

The elephant's iconographic history was, by the time of the late republic, long and influential, both at Rome and throughout the hellenistic world.³⁶ There are numerous examples of elephants on coins of the hellenistic period. For instance, Alexander the Great's successors used the elephant image to emphasize their own connections to Alexander. These coins anticipate the basic forms that elephant images take on hellenistic coins: the elephant-drawn *quadriga*,³⁷ an elephant head in profile,³⁸ the elephant standing³⁹ or walking to one side of the field

³⁴ Caesar publicly asserted his ancestral superiority in the funeral oration he delivered for his aunt Julia in 69. A substantial fragment of the text has been preserved by Suetonius (*Iul.* 6).

³⁵ Burnett *et al.* 1992: no. 501; cf. Grueber 1970: 1.526. These small bronze coins are found in Gaul and probably date to 49–46. About Hirtius' whereabouts in early 49 little is known, although we do know that he had been sent to meet with Pompey at Rome in December 50 (*Cic. Att.* 7.4.2). In 48 he was tribune of the plebs (although this has been disputed: see Broughton 1951–86: 2.285, n. 3) and, in 46, praetor and governor of Transalpine Gaul. It is plausible that the small bronze coin was struck during his tenure in Gaul in 46 instead of earlier, although his impressive *aurei* in that year (*RRC* no. 466) might seem to preclude this. In any case, the fact that Hirtius could issue coins featuring an elephant and coupled with his name instead of Caesar's weakens the etymological argument considerably.

³⁶ On the elephant in general, see Scullard 1974; and see esp. 64–100 for its use under Alexander and his successors.

³⁷ As in the gold stater of Ptolemy I, issued at Alexandria ca 305–285 (= Svoronos 1904: no. 131).

³⁸ For example, the triple unit coin of Demetrius I, minted in Bactria, ca 200 (= Bopearachchi 1991: no. 5E).

³⁹ Antiochus III's tetradrachm, minted in Syria at Seleucia ad Tigris, 205–203 (= Newell and Mørkholm 1978: no. 252).

(Figs. 5–8).⁴⁰ Although Alexander did not himself employ elephants in battle, the animal soon became associated with him, perhaps because of its majesty and size. In addition, several of Alexander's victories had been over armies that relied upon the strength of their elephant contingents, most notably in the victory over the Indian king Porus. There is only one known example of an elephant coin issued by Alexander, minted late in his campaigns and intended for a specific commemorative purpose.⁴¹ By contrast, the coins issued by his successors frequently depict elephants in the types listed above, with remarkable geographical range.⁴² Not surprisingly, then, as Rome's sphere of influence expanded in the hellenistic period, Roman versions of these types are found throughout the mid- to late republic.

The most conspicuous use of elephants on coins in the late republic comes from the family of the Caecilii Metelli, whose ancestors in the third and second centuries came to be associated with elephants through their military exploits.⁴³ Just as the religious implements of the coins of the Metelli served as a model for Caesar, so, it can be surmised, did the elephants. In the first place, they had adopted the image of the elephant as their family badge.⁴⁴ Indeed, of the coins issued by Metelli in the last century of the republic, an elephant appears no fewer than six times.⁴⁵ According to Livy and Polybius, L. Caecilius Metellus (*cos.* 251) defeated the Carthaginians at Panormus in Sicily and captured some 140 elephants. Upon his return to Rome he awed the city populace with a rich display of the captured animals.⁴⁶ Another Metellus, as praetor in 148, crushed a pretender to the Macedonian throne, resulting in the annexation of Macedonia. In the late second century, when the Caecilii Metelli were producing great numbers of senior magistrates and were very influential, this elephant symbol was reproduced, first as a tiny head portrait below an image of Victory in a *biga*, and then, the following year, as the boss of a Macedonian shield, and again two years later as a full-scale elephant *biga* (Figs. 9–11).⁴⁷ These coin types appear again

⁴⁰ A fine non-Hellenic example is a Hispano-Carthaginian silver coin showing Herakles/Melkart on the obverse and an elephant on the reverse (Villaronga 1973: 146, no. 37; dated to between 237 and 227).

⁴¹ Scullard 1974: 74–76, with Pl. XIIIa and b. It has been traditionally thought that the Porus coinage represented Alexander attacking the Indian king, but this interpretation has been convincingly refuted by Price (1982). For more on the Porus coinage, see Dürr 1974: 33–36; cf. Nicolet-Pierre 1978: 401–403, and Price 1991: 451–453. The most comprehensive study of these pieces is Holt 2003, esp. 146–165.

⁴² These hellenistic coin types represent coinage from Alexandria, Bactria, Syria, and North Africa.

⁴³ On the Caecilii Metelli in general, see van Ooteghem 1967.

⁴⁴ For the details, see Scullard 1974: 151 and nn. 89–90.

⁴⁵ *RRC* nos. 262, 263, 269, 369, 374, 459; cf. Flower 1996: 83. Four issues (*RRC* nos. 211, 256, 284, 335) are non-elephant coins.

⁴⁶ For the story of the battle, see Polyb. 1.39–40; cf. Livy *Per.* 19; Frontin. *Str.* 2.5.4. The elephants were displayed in Metellus' triumph in the following year (sources in Broughton 1951–86: 1.213–214).

⁴⁷ Victory in *biga*: *RRC* no. 262; shield: *RRC* no. 263; elephant *biga*: *RRC* no. 269.

in the 80s. For instance, the elephant head/Macedonian shield type is reused by a certain M. Metellus in 82–80,⁴⁸ and in 81 Q. Metellus Pius struck a *denarius* showing an elephant standing, facing left, with the legend “Q. C. M. P. I.” in the exergue (*RRC* no. 374/1 reverse [Fig. 3, left]). Because of this repetition and the prominence given to the elephant on coins issued by the Caecilii Metelli, it is almost certain that in the eyes of the Roman populace the elephant and the Metelli were inextricably linked.

Pompey had close connections with the Caecilii Metelli, extending through several branches of that family. For example, Pompey and Metellus Pius had both raised private armies for Sulla in the 80s, had shared command in Spain against Sertorius, and two of Pompey’s wives had come from this family. Another Metellus, Q. Caecilius Metellus Pius Scipio Nasica (*cos.* 52), “the noblest man in Rome” (Seager 2002: 141) became Pompey’s father-in-law in 52, after Pompey had rejected Caesar’s offer of a second marriage connection.⁴⁹ The bond between Pompey and Faustus Sulla is also well attested, for the dictator’s son had been betrothed to Pompey’s daughter (Plut. *Caes.* 14.7, *Pomp.* 47.10). All of these relationships combine to suggest several possible intentions behind Caesar’s minting in 49 of a coin which bears the emblem of a rival family, while explicitly advertising Caesar’s own power. Since the marriage between Pompey and Caesar’s daughter Julia had been a cornerstone of the so-called First Triumvirate, Pompey’s decision to seek a wife among the Metelli doubtless reflected his desire to be accepted by the senatorial establishment. With this new marriage in 52, then, Pompey had deliberately turned from Caesar to Scipio (and thus to the Metelli); Against this background, the implications of the imagery on the coin seems to be Caesar’s assertion that this move would prove to be a serious mistake and that Pompey’s new alliance would fall before the power that Caesar still retained.

Indeed, at the time of the civil war, Pompey’s new father-in-law was virulently opposed to Caesar. In the days before the war erupted, Metellus Scipio obstinately refused to brook any concessions to Caesar. His actions sparked the civil war and perhaps for this reason he is a butt of Caesar’s wit in the *Bellum Civile*.⁵⁰ Cicero too mocks him for not being able to keep his family history straight (*Att.* 6.1.17). In addition, a certain L. Metellus, tribune of the plebs for 49, was the very man who barred access to the treasury from which Caesar likely derived his silver for minting the elephant-type coinage. Since the Metelli were no friends to Caesar, it is surprising for Caesar to choose an emblem of his opponents. But he turns it, publicly and visually, against them: Caesar’s elephant faces right, whereas

⁴⁸ Notably *RRC* no. 369.

⁴⁹ For details of this proposed arrangement, see Plut. *Pomp.* 55; cf. Cass. Dio 40.51.3; App. *B Civ.* 2.94–95. Suetonius (*Iul.* 27.1) notes in addition that Caesar’s offer included marrying Pompey’s daughter himself.

⁵⁰ *B Civ.* 3.31: *his temporibus Scipio detrimentis quibusdam circa montem Amanem acceptis imperatorem se appellaverat* (“During this time when Scipio had suffered some losses around Mount Amanus, he had hailed himself as *imperator*”).

the Metellan numismatic elephants generally faced left.⁵² Metaphorically, the message suggests that however influential the Metelli may have been at Rome in the past, Caesar was now the man to beat.

Caesar was able to challenge others too with this elephant symbolism. As is well known from surviving portraits and literary sources, Pompey had styled himself as the new Alexander the Great. During his first triumph in 81,⁵³ Pompey attempted to drive his elephant-drawn chariot through the gates at Rome. The attempt was unsuccessful, and, after much delay, the hero was forced to enter the city in the old-fashioned Roman way.⁵⁴ This embarrassing incident was famous among Romans at the time; recollection of it would presumably have been reinforced when Pompey staged his magnificent triple triumph after returning from the East in 62.⁵⁵ Moreover, Pompey's interest in elephants remained consistent throughout his career. He exhibited them in the extravagant games that accompanied the opening of his theater in 55. Then too the elephants caused him some embarrassment, when one animal put up an unexpectedly glorious fight, and the whole group of elephants at one point moved the crowd to tears of sympathy. Pompey, the man responsible for the piteous plight of the elephants, was cursed by the crowd and deemed vulgar by Cicero, who witnessed the incident.⁵⁶

L. Domitius Ahenobarbus, the consul of 54, was another opponent of Caesar whose prominence could be challenged by the numismatic image of an elephant: Ahenobarbus had vigorously resisted Caesar's attempts to maintain his command in Gaul. This man's grandfather, Cn. Domitius Ahenobarbus (*cos.* 122), was said to have ridden in a procession of elephants through Transalpine Gaul when he had conquered this territory in 121.⁵⁷ Although promoting his own cause will have been the primary purpose of minting the elephant *denarius*, Caesar must have noted that he could get triple value for his numismatic imagery, first taking over the symbol of the Caecilii Metelli, then mocking Pompey's Alexanderism, and finally deriding Ahenobarbus' ancestral pretensions. As Caesar had arrogantly asserted early in his career, by comparison with his own Julian ancestry all others were mere upstarts.

⁵² Interestingly, the first Metellan elephant coin to appear after Caesar's belongs to this same Metellus Scipio (*RRC* no. 459). Here the elephant also faces right, as if to proclaim Metellan superiority in the face of Caesar's numismatic assertions.

⁵³ Although the date is controversial, 81 seems most likely. See further Badian 1955, esp. 112–116.

⁵⁴ Plut. *Pomp.* 14; cf. Gran. Licin. 36.1–4.

⁵⁵ The attempted elephant triumph is recounted fully by Plutarch (*Pomp.* 14), but is also mentioned by the Elder Pliny (*HN* 8.4), who cites the late-republican antiquarian Proculus. Pompey's triumph in 81 would have been memorable even without the elephants, since it was a rare example of a *privatus* being allowed to triumph.

⁵⁶ Cic. *Fam.* 7.1.3; Plin. *HN* 8.7; Cass. Dio 39.38.2–4; Seneca *Brev. Vit.* 13.6; cf. Scullard 1974: 250. On the use of elephants in public spectacles, see now Shelton 1999; cf. Shelton 2004, esp. 373–378.

⁵⁷ Suet. *Nero* 2.1–2; cf. Scullard 1974: 192.

Caesar was not the first to adapt the iconography of his opponents for his own self-promotion. During the Social War, a group of Rome's Italian allies joined forces in response to Rome's refusal to grant them full Roman citizenship. These states formed an Italian confederation very closely based on the Roman model, to the extent that they had an administrative structure that included a senate and magistrates. More important for my present argument, however, the Italians issued silver coinage in their own name on the Roman weight standard, but with an independent iconographical program.⁵⁸ For example, the Italians issued copies of Roman *denarii* with an obverse type that shows a laureate head of Italia in place of a very similar head of Roma and with an image of the Dioscuri and the legend "ITALIA" replacing "ROMA" on the reverse. In another instance, the Italian confederacy appropriated the oath-taking scene of a Roman *denarius* minted in Italy only a year or two prior to the outbreak of war, altering the oath-taking image to reflect the increased number of confederates in the Italian alliance.⁵⁹ These examples effectively illustrate the use of coins both to promote one's own policy and to subvert the iconography of one's opponents. The model provided by the Italians in the Social War was easily adapted to individual use by Caesar since Roman politics by the early 40s had become a contest between individuals and their factions rather than states. If a man had the material to mint his own coins, he no longer required the approval of the administration.

The elephant image on the coin thus represents Caesar's efforts to promote his political program at the expense of his opponents' reputations. But while the elephant on Caesar's *denarius* has obvious iconographic associations, the snake on the reverse of the coin has so far resisted explanation. Crawford's suggestion that the image represents a triumph of good over evil must be viewed as an anachronistic conjecture. Other standard works do not address the question of the snake at all. One possible explanation is that it alludes to the cult of Juno Sospita, whose iconography on coins regularly shows snakes.⁶⁰ There is, in addition, a curious resemblance in the head of the serpent on no. 443 to that of the snakes pulling the chariot of Ceres on a roughly contemporary coin (*RRC* no. 449/3a; cf. *RRC* no. 385/3). The snakes on these coins have odd tufts of hair, or perhaps horns, issuing from their heads. Of course, the similarity may simply mean that the same die-cutter was employed for both issues; it could also be the case that this particular snake had a specific role in the cult of Ceres. But none of these interpretations offers a compelling explanation for the serpent's presence on Caesar's coin.

⁵⁸ For a full discussion of the coinage of the Social War, see Grueber 1970: 2.317–339.

⁵⁹ Grueber 1970: 2.319. This coin is based on a *denarius* issued by Tiberius Veturius (*RRC* no. 234) in 137, thought by Crawford and others to refer to an early version of the story of the Caudine Forks; see Crawford 1974: 266; cf. Grueber 1970: 2.281–282, with nn. 2–3. Grueber argues convincingly for a much later date of 93–92.

⁶⁰ See further *RRC* no. 412/1, minted by L. Roscius Fabatus, of Lanuvine origin. For Juno Sospita and the snakes, cf. Prop. 4.8.3; Ael. *NA* 11.16. The snake-*biga* reappears on coins of the east in the imperial period: see Kraft 1972: pl. 21.44c; cf. pl. 62.2a and 79.21d.

Perhaps the key to the significance of the serpent should be sought not in numismatic iconography but in the semi-legendary tale of the snake and the elephant as natural enemies. In a long passage describing the nature of elephants, Pliny the Elder recounts the *perpetua discordia* that exists between elephants and snakes. In the course of his discussion, Pliny describes how a snake, presumably a python, attacks the elephant by encircling it with its coils, eventually bringing down the larger animal who in turn crushes the snake with its bulk. Such a struggle elicits comment from the encyclopedist, who describes the *sollertia* ("craftiness") of the snake: faced with the elephant's superior height, the snake slithers up a tree and pounces from above. Pliny recounts a protracted struggle in which each animal counters the moves of the other, with the result that the snake defeats the elephant by lodging its head in the elephant's nostrils and suffocating it.⁶¹ More importantly, Pliny goes on to describe the reaction of a snake that finds itself in the path of an elephant: it rears up and aims especially for the elephant's eyes.⁶²

While it is true that Pliny was writing more than a century after Caesar had issued the elephant *denarius*, it would seem that he was drawing on a well-known tradition. Moreover, the behavior he describes fits well with both the iconography on the coin and his broader discussion of the antagonistic relationship between elephant and snake. But we need not rely on Pliny alone for evidence. The enmity of the serpent and the elephant was represented artistically in sources both earlier and later than Pliny, as well as across a broad geographical area. Lucan, for example, associates the elephant and the snake as natural enemies in a passage which has been thought to derive from the Greek poet Nicander,⁶³ while the conflict between the python and the elephant described by Pliny also appears in a fourth-century A.D. mosaic in North Africa.⁶⁴ In addition, Pliny implies that the natural victor in this struggle is the snake, concluding the chapter with the *pathos*-inducing comment: "thus it happens that many elephants are found blind

⁶¹ Plin. *HN* 8.33.

⁶² Plin. *HN* 8.33: *idem obvii deprehensi in adversos erigunt se oculosque maxime petunt*.

⁶³ The relevant passage in Lucan is 9.727–733, where the poet describes the power of the serpent to crush large animals such as a bull or elephant. Braund (1992: 312–313) suggests that Lucan's catalogue of snakes may derive either directly from Nicander's *Theriaca*, a didactic poem about snakes and other poisonous creatures, or indirectly through the late first-century B.C. didactic poet Aemilius Macer's Latin imitation. The allusion to the elephant in Lucan, if one supposes that it derives from Nicander or Aemilius Macer, at least offers the possibility that Caesar was aware of an antagonistic relationship between serpents and elephants. Unfortunately Macer's poem exists only in meager fragments; one of these, in particular, shows a tantalizing resemblance to Pliny's remark about the snake lodging itself in the elephant's nostrils: Fr. 17 Blänsdorf *saucia naris* ("wounds of the nose") vaguely resembles Pliny's *at hi in ipsas nares caput condunt* (*HN* 8.33: "but [the snakes] bury their heads right into the nostrils").

⁶⁴ The mosaic, depicting various hunting scenes, is from the Dermech region of Carthage. It features an elephant struggling against a python, which is entwined around it. See Dunbabin 1978: 53–55, with pl. 28; cf. Mahjoubi 1967. A full colour photograph is available in Blanchard-Lemée *et al.* 1995: 212, fig. 157. Pliny's *perpetua discordia* remained an image for artistic production even into the Renaissance: the sixteenth-century artist Jan Van Der Straet designed a series of hunting scenes based on themes from Pliny's *Natural History*, including the image of the serpent attacking the elephant's trunk. See Baroni Vannucci 1997: 371–389.

and exhausted from hunger and wasting away in mourning" (*ita fit ut plerumque caeci ac fame et maeroris tabe confecti reperiantur*). The snake's triumph, however, is not without a mortal cost; except when the conflict arises from the snake meeting the elephant in the road, the snake invariably is crushed by the dying or wounded elephant.⁶⁵

Whether the conflict recorded by Pliny would have been known to Caesar or to members of the senatorial elite of the late republic remains open to question. Nevertheless, Pliny's description at the very least points to a plausible explanation for the iconography on Caesar's elephant *denarius*. The image on the reverse of the coin accurately depicts one example of the conflict between snakes and elephants, with the snake captured in the act of rearing up to attack the elephant's eyes. Normally, according to Pliny, the snake would defeat the elephant in this contest; but because Caesar's coin portrays the moment before battle, the result of the contest is as yet undetermined, not unlike the outcome of the civil war. If Caesar is represented by the elephant, as seems likely given the size and central position of the animal on the coin, as well as the prominence of the legend in the exergue, the snake should symbolize his opponents, whom Caesar terms the *factio paucorum* (*B Civ.* 1.22.5: "the party of the few"). According to Pliny, in the contest depicted on the coin, the snake should emerge as victor. But because Caesar has already subverted the normal signification of the elephant on a Roman coin, it may be surmised that he envisioned a re-interpretation of the confrontation between snake and elephant. It is even possible that Caesar wished to emphasize the futility of civil war by depicting an event from the natural world that was known to end with serious injury to both sets of combatants. In choosing the elephant for his iconographic identity, Caesar thus appropriated the symbol of the Metelli, Pompey, and Domitius Ahenobarbus. The relative position of the animals on the coin (see Fig. 1), showing the elephant as dominant, enabled Caesar to assert that his elephant would not be blinded by the serpent's sting.

The revised date for the issue of the elephant *denarius* also supports the view that it was meant as an ideological riposte to his enemies. The types of coins of the time do not, on the whole, represent personal iconography but instead focus on ideologies that promote the political stance that Caesar or his opponents had taken in the early months of the war. For example, of the eight major coin types issued in the year 49, four show pronounced features that indicate the importance of establishing one's *auctoritas* in a time of civil war. The first coin for this year listed by Crawford (*RRC* no. 440), a *denarius* struck by a certain Q. Sicinius, features the head of Fortuna Populi Romani on the obverse and symbols of victory on the reverse. On the *denarius* of Cn. Nerius, the urban quaestor for 49 (*RRC* no. 441), the head of Saturn graces the obverse, with the legionary eagle and the names of the consuls on the reverse. Remarkably, the

⁶⁵ Pliny (*HN* 8.34) recounts an alternate tale where the snake lies in wait in a river for the elephant, biting the elephant's ear and apparently drinking its blood. The desiccated elephant then collapses in a heap, crushing the "drunken serpent" (*inebriatus draco*) in the process.

consuls themselves also issued coins in 49, showing on the reverse the image of Jupiter with thunderbolt and eagle, with a *triskeles* and the head of Medusa or the head of Apollo on the obverse (*RRC* no. 445). None of these coin types therefore focuses on the personal history of the moneyer. Crawford describes the consular coins of 49 as “military and irregular” (1974: 462), and the same could be said of Caesar’s elephant *denarius*. It is clear that the coins issued by Caesar’s opponents in this critical period focus on themes that claim legitimacy with respect to the governance of the *res publica*. Sicinius’ coin quite clearly portrays the desire of the *boni* to be seen as protectors of the welfare of the Roman people. Nerius’ coin calls attention to the military strength of the senatorial legions, as well as the many military successes of their general, Pompey. In fact, this coin might even be interpreted as a response to Caesar’s *denarius*. Whereas Caesar’s elephant emphasized his opponents’ failures, Nerius’ coin (*RRC* no. 441) stressed the primacy of the consuls and their legions in contrast to the strength of Caesar’s veterans. Finally, the fact that the consuls chose to strike coins in their own names suggests, paradoxically, that their authority needed to be bolstered. The context in which all these coins were struck is that of the current crisis, not previous successes or personal history. Caesar’s *denarius* should therefore not be interpreted as referring to his Gallic victories, the etymology of his *cognomen*, or (especially) the triumph of good over evil.

The evidence of Caesar’s elephant *denarius* indicates that the varied connotations of iconographic symbolism were intended to sway the loyalties of Romans early in the civil war. The fundamental message of the coins was unquestionably a statement of Caesar’s confidence in both his political and military strength. Moreover, in the image of the elephant, Caesar could attack his greatest and, in his view, most pretentious rivals, Q. Caecilius Metellus Pius Scipio Nasica, L. Domitius Ahenobarbus, and Cn. Pompeius. In the initial stages of the war, Caesar shrewdly turned the iconography of his enemies against them, and in minting the coin in such numbers, boldly issued a widespread proclamation of his political program. The message must have been clear: it was Caesar who was responsible for the *pax deorum*, and Caesar who had the financial and military resources to outwit and outmaneuver his enemies. It was a message delivered with considerable panache, and one taken to heart by his successors.

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CAESAR'S ELEPHANT DENARIUS



Fig. 1



Fig. 2



Fig. 3 [left]

PHOENIX



Fig. 3 [right]



Fig. 4



Fig. 5

CAESAR'S ELEPHANT DENARIUS



Fig. 6



Fig. 7



Fig. 8

PHOENIX



Fig. 9



Fig. 10



Fig. 11