NFDI4Objects Community Cluster (CC) Objects as Information Carriers

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The CC within NFDI4Objects

NFDI4Objects is an initiative within the German National Research Data Infrastructure (NFDI) which pursues the establishment of a sustainable research data infrastructure on a national and international level according to the FAIR and CARE principles. NFDI4Objects represents a broad range of disciplines from the humanities, cultural studies and natural sciences with an archaeological and historical focus that deals with the material legacies of past human activities: Artefacts, architecture, archaeological features, anthropogenically shaped landscapes and ecological remains [1]. Community Clusters are devised according to mutual research data management (RDM) needs and made up of individuals from the NFDI4Objects member institutions, specialists from outside and all other interested persons. This cluster aims to establish an open community representing both collecting and editing institutions as well as researchers dealing with text- and image-bearing artefacts from different regions and periods.

Challenges identified – location, relationship and function of features

The key focus of the cluster is the pursuit of an adequate modelling for the research data of both semantic facets of written objects: information from text, letters, signs and from the material design of objects as well as their precise relationship. Key factors for this type of modelling were identified during a workshop in October 2024 [2]. These encompass above all the precise location of written features on the objects, the relationship of the textual information in comparison to the object it is written on, its design or iconography, or external temporal and spatial entities.

The aspect of semantic information of an inscription can be very different within a single object – and may refer to the design of the object, its decoration or iconography as well as to a range of external factors. This can be exemplified by a well-known Roman **denarius of the moneyer Q. Rustius (Fig. 1).** Although at first glance it may look like a continuous inscription, the legend on its obverse refers on the one hand to the issuing magistrate and on the other to two busts of deities depicted on a support frame (ferculum) which it labels as the Fortunae Antiatinae. The function of the inscription in the two cases differs and impacts the understanding of the iconography.

Its **reverse design (Fig. 2)** extends this differentiation to another level. Here we find a decorated altar deliberately depicted as inscribed with the letters FOR(tuna/tunae) RE(dux/ducis/duci) in its central panel. This inscription thus becomes part of the rendering or reference to the (external) altar known from written sources and erected by the senate in 19 BC for the safe return of the emperor Augustus from the east [3]. The inscription around the outer edge of the reverse of the coins refers either simply to the authority under which this coin was minted or to the person for whom the altar was erected.

In the exergue of the reverse, the EX S(enatus) C(onsulto) can also equally be applicable to the decision to erect the altar aswell as the sanction to mint the coin. The obverses of two local coinages from early 2nd cent. Asia Minor illustrate the need to define the character of the legend from a different angle: Both show a male bearded head wearing taenia. The legend of the **Pergamon type (Fig. 3)** labels the depicted as the founder hero (KTICTHC) Pergamos, while the image on the type **from Adramyttion (Fig. 4)** is inscribed with the name of the magistrate Cl. Secundus, which leaves it open to debate as to whether the portrait of a legendary, eponymous founding hero is meant here as well, or whether the magistrate's name is perhaps quite intentionally located near the head, as the honourary title Ktistes was also used for municipal benefactors at this time.

Research questions such as these – sometimes referred to as Iconotexts – will be addressed within the Academies' Programme projects Kišib and ImagNum [4].
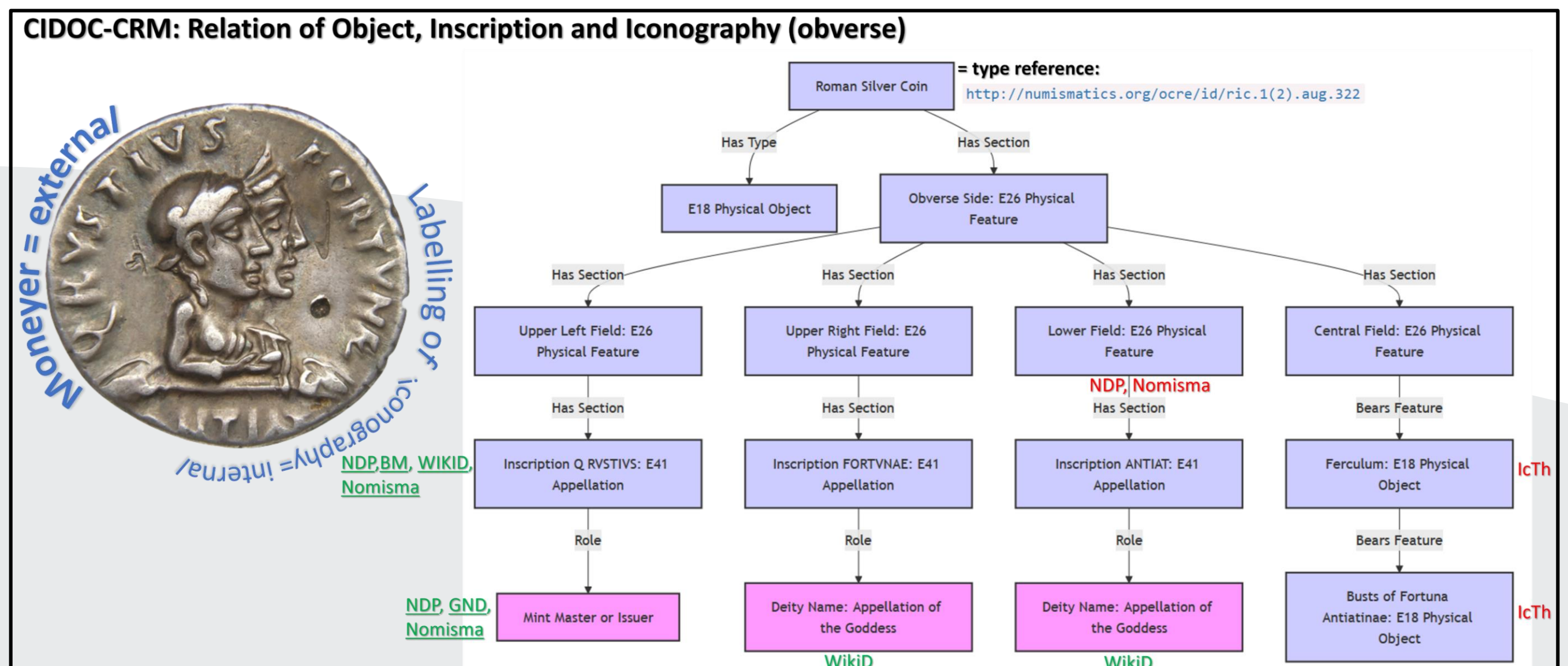

Fig. 1: Obverse of silver denarius by Q. Rutius, ca. 19 BC (MK Berlin 18207783) https://ikmk.smb.museum/object?id=18207783 with graphical visualisation of a CIDOC-CRM based modelling of the relations between the coin, the legend and iconographic features.

Fig. 2: Reverse of silver denarius by Q. Rutius, ca. 19 BC (MK Berlin 18207783) https://ikmk.smb.museum/object?id=18207783 with graphical visualisation of a CIDOC-CRM based modelling of the relations between the coin, the legend and iconographic features.

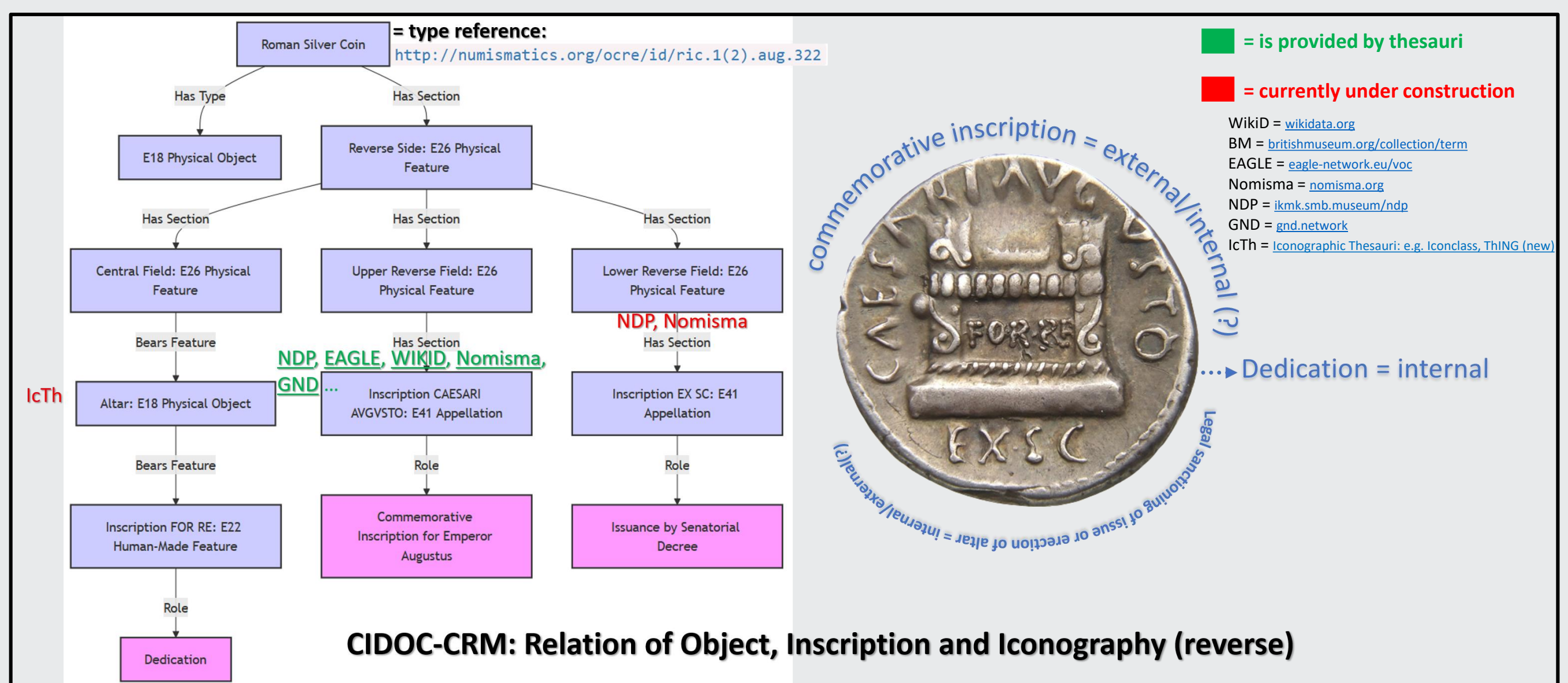## Modelling in CIDOC-CRM

The various types of inscriptions, their role and placement on the object together with its respective pictorial features require accurate tags in the metadata to enable the discoverability of single or combined features. In the world of LOD, referencable concepts of standardised data and authority files are crucial. However, the graphic diagrams of a **trial modelling (Fig. 1 & 2)** using CIDOC-CRM as a reference model demonstrate that corresponding concepts are not available on all levels.

Towards a catalogue of recommendations

Therefore the collection of thesauri and controlled vocabularies for epigraphic objects, begun in a working group of the cluster [5], requires, in particular, an expansion to the scope where the features relevant for the description are not yet sufficient. This could apply to the naming of different object areas, as in the case of numismatics, for example, with the term 'exergue', which has long been established, but for which no referencable concept exists to date.

Another collection that has been started in the working group is the compilation of digital epigraphic tools such as databases and online resources. This is intended to provide an overview for researchers and at the same time an evaluation according to general RDM criteria and specialist communities in order to derive recommendations on how to maintain these important resources and, if necessary, further qualify them for the semantic web.

Join our Community

We appreciate all types of co-operation, partnership and support. New enthusiastic members are always welcome!

Fig. 3 (left): Pergamon, AE, ca. 117–138 AD. Obv.: ΠΕΡΓΑΜΟC ΚΤΙCΤΗC. Bearded head of Pergamos to r. with taenia. Paris, BN 41767684 (CN 23087)
Fig 4 (right): Adramyttion, AE, ca. 138–192 AD
Obv.: CTP ΚΛ CЄΚΟΥΝΔ. Bearded Head of Adramys (?) to r. with taenia. Gotha, MK (CN 28936)

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References

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[4] Kišib – Digital Corpus of Ancient West Asian Seals and Sealings: https://www.bbaw.de/en/research/kisib-digital-corpus-of-ancient-west-asian-seals-and-sealings ; ImagNum: Imagines Nummorum: Thesaurus Iconographicus Nummorum Graecorum Online https://www.imagines-nummorum.eu/de

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