

DAVID R. SEAR

Certificate of Authenticity

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This coin has been personally inspected and authenticated by

Issued to: Jens Georg Feierabend

On: September 25, 2017

David R. Sear

State: Roman Empire

Ruler: Claudius (AD 41-54)

Denomination: orichalcum sestertius

Mint: irregular, probably in Gaul

Date: circa AD 43

Weight: 23.49 grams

Maximum Diameter: 34.75 millimeters

Die Axis: ↙

Obverse: [TI] CLAVDIVS CAESAR AVG P M T[R P IMP], laureate head of Claudius right, traces of oblong countermark PROB in front of emperor's neck.

Reverse: EX SC / OB / CIVES / SERVATOS in four lines within oak-wreath.

References: RIC 96, note; BMCRE 120; CBN 155 and pl. XXV; cf. Cohen 39.

Grade: good F and unpatinated, bold portrait of provincial style with uplifted gaze

Historical & Numismatic Note: Tiberius Claudius Drusus was born on August 1, 10 BC, at Lugdunum (Lyon) in Gaul on the very day that Augustus dedicated the great Altar of Lugdunum. He was the youngest son of Nero Claudius Drusus, younger brother of Tiberius, and Antonia, daughter of Mark Antony. Because of serious ill health involving some form of paralysis he was kept out of the public eye. However, despite an apparent uncouthness in his manner Claudius was by no means mentally retarded. Ignored or ridiculed by the other members of his family, he devoted himself to scholarship, authoring histories of Etruria and Carthage as well as a continuation of Livy. Unfortunately, none of these works has survived. On the assassination of his nephew Gaius (Caligula) early in AD 41 Claudius was proclaimed emperor by the soldiers of the Praetorian Guard. Remarkably, despite his disabilities he proved himself a surprisingly competent ruler, even adding to the territory of the Empire by the invasion and conquest of the southern part of Britain. However, in his marital affairs he was less fortunate. His third wife, Valeria Messallina, was notorious for her promiscuity and Claudius ordered her execution in AD 48. He then married his own niece, the younger Agrippina, and adopted her son Nero as his heir. Claudius' own son Britannicus was thus disinherited, presumably because of the disgrace of his mother Messallina. Claudius died in AD 54 at the age of 63, possibly the victim by poisoning of his politically ambitious fourth wife. He was succeeded by Nero who was to be the last of the Julio-Claudian line of emperors. The coinage of Claudius' reign is of considerable interest, with precious metal types relating to the circumstances of his accession (PRAETOR RECEPT, IMPER RECEPT) and his invasion of Britain in AD 43 (DE BRITANN). The memory of his deceased parents was honored with issues in gold, silver and *aes*, and his late brother Germanicus and sister-in-law Agrippina Senior both appear on *aes* denominations. Towards the end of the reign Agrippina Junior and her young son Nero also receive notice. This sestertius type depicts on the reverse the civic crown of oak (*corona civica*) bestowed on the emperor by the Senate at the outset of his reign to honor him as the new "Saviour of Society". The style of the engraving on this specimen is rather careless (note especially the clumsy lettering in the obverse inscription) and is not up to the standard of the regular issues from the mint of Rome. There seems little doubt that it belongs to a large class of imitative coinage possibly struck in Gaul with government sanction in order to provide additional currency during the military build-up prior to the invasion of Britain in AD 43. Some other examples of 'irregular' coins of Claudius are very crudely made and may well have been produced in Britain itself following the Claudian invasion in an attempt to make good the shortage of currency in the newly conquered province. Although it is only faintly discernible, this specimen seems to have a weakly applied countermark placed before the emperor's neck on obverse. This may read "PROB" which would indicate that the coin had been approved (*probatus*) to remain in circulation despite its irregular appearance. This and other countermarks are well known on base metal coins of this period, their purpose being to reauthorize the currency of coins that might otherwise have been deemed unsuitable for circulation due to excessive wear or their unofficial origin.

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