

DAVID R. SEAR

Certificate of Authenticity

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This coin has been personally inspected and authenticated by

Issued to: Jens G. Feierabend

On: June 5, 2019

David R. Sear

State: Roman Empire

Rulers: Crispina, wife of Commodus

Denomination: orichalcum sestertius

Mint: Rome

Date: AD 178-182

Weight: 22.21 grams

Maximum Diameter: 30.48 millimeters

Die Axis: ↖

Obverse: CRISPINA AVGVSTA, draped bust of Crispina right, her hair elaborately waved in curls across head and fastened in a chignon behind.

Reverse: SALVS S C, Salus seated left, feeding from patera held in right hand a snake arising from altar at her feet, her left resting on arm of throne.

References: RIC (Commodus) 672a; BMCRE (Commodus) 422; Cohen 33; MIR 18, p. 173, 17; Cayón, p. 387, 11; Sear (*RCTV II*) 6010.

Grade: VF, with attractive portrait and nice glossy brown patina

Historical & Numismatic Note: Bruttia Crispina was born c. AD 164 and was married to the 17-year-old co-emperor Commodus in 178. Marcus Aurelius, alarmed by the abortive uprising in the East of his trusted general Avidius Cassius in 175 and perhaps also concerned about his failing health, wished to secure the imperial succession by raising his son to imperial status and providing him with a suitable bride. Crispina was the daughter of L. Fulvius Bruttius Praesens, consul under Antoninus Pius in AD 153, and granddaughter of C. Bruttius Praesens, a friend of Pliny. As the wife of a reigning emperor, she now took precedence over the other empress, Lucilla, the widow of Lucius Verus and sister of Commodus. This demotion was greatly resented by the older Augusta, a resentment that doubtless contributed to her involvement in a plot to overthrow Commodus in 182. When the conspiracy was revealed Lucilla was banished and later murdered. Because of the antagonism that existed between the two empresses, it is unlikely that Crispina was involved in this affair, though her dated Alexandrian coinage ceases after this date and it seems reasonable to assume that the same holds true of her Roman issues. In fact, there is evidence that she was still alive as late as AD 191 at which time she was accused of adultery and doubtless put to death. The scarce coinage of Crispina commenced at the time of her marriage in 178 and appears to have ceased following the plot against Commodus in 182. It exists in the full range of denominations, though quinarii have not been confirmed in either gold or silver. Some types relate to childbirth (DIS GENITALIBVS, IVNO LVCINA) but this appears to have been an expression of hope rather than reality, as no surviving offspring are known to have resulted from this union. This attractive orichalcum sestertius features a sensitive portrait of the teenage empress combined with a seated figure of Salus, goddess of health. Although a standard reverse type, the appearance of the goddess at this time may relate to an imperial pregnancy.

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