

**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: April 2, 2020

*David R. Sear*

State: Roman Empire

Ruler: Commodus (AD 177-192)

Denomination: orichalcum sestertius

Mint: Rome

Date: AD 186

Weight: 20.16 grams

Maximum Diameter: 29.36 millimeters

Die Axis: ↑

Obverse: M COMMODVS ANT P FELIX AVG BRIT, laureate head of Commodus right.

Reverse: CONC MIL (in exergue) P M TR P XI IMP VII [COS V P P] (around), S — C (in field), Concordia Militum standing left, holding vertical standard in each hand.

References: MIR 686; RIC 465(A); BMCRE 576 and pl. 106, 8 (reverse only, different die); Cayón 37; cf. Cohen 57 (COS IIII in error); Sear (*RCTV II*) 5738.

Grade: a strong VF with light brown patina, struck on a typical short flan and with deep cut across emperor's neck

Historical & Numismatic Note: Lucius Aelius Aurelius Commodus was born at Lanuvium in AD 161, the son of Marcus Aurelius and Faustina Junior. He had a twin brother Antoninus who died in infancy. He was given the title of Caesar at the age of only five though his coinage did not commence for another nine years (AD 175). The rebellion of Avidius Cassius in the East seems to have convinced Marcus that the time had now come to make his dynastic intentions clear with the object of discouraging any further attempts at military revolt. Commodus was further elevated to the rank of Augustus and co-emperor in 177 and on the death of Marcus three years later, his accession to sole power was unopposed. For the first time in a century a son had followed his father on the imperial throne, the last occasion being in AD 79 when Titus succeeded Vespasian. The young emperor now changed his name to M. Aurelius Commodus Antoninus, though he reverted to the original form in the final years of the reign. Weak and dissolute in character he soon fell under the influence of worthless favorites, and, like Domitian a hundred years before, his regime gradually degenerated into a reign of terror. Fortunately, there was only one serious frontier problem (an uprising in northern Britain in AD 183) and this was speedily suppressed by the governor Ulpius Marcellus, thus gaining for Commodus the honorary title of "Britannicus" which appears on many of his subsequent coin issues. In his final years, the emperor had delusions of being the reincarnation of Hercules, fought with wild animals in the arena, and even renamed Rome "Colonia Commodiana". The end came on the night of December 31, 192, when he fell victim to a court conspiracy and was strangled by an athlete specially hired for the task. The coinage of Commodus is quite distinctive and has many interesting types, some unique to his reign. This orichalcum sestertius, worth one-quarter of the silver denarius, was struck in the early months of AD 186 following the downfall of the praetorian prefect Perennis and the rise of his rival Cleander. There was some military unrest at this time and the 'war of the deserters' in Gaul and Spain had to be put down by the future emperor Pescennius Niger. The reverse of this issue appeals to 'the harmony of the soldiers' (*concordia militum*) at a time of uncertainty when the emperor was clearly at pains to court the support of the armed forces. It is tempting to see in the deep slash across Commodus' neck an expression of hatred for the regime, possibly following the emperor's murder.

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