

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: July 28, 2020

David R. Sear

State: Roman Empire

Ruler: Orbiana (wife of Severus Alexander)

Denomination: orichalcum sestertius

Mint: Rome

Date: circa AD 226-7

Weight: 21.88 grams

Maximum Diameter: 30.38 millimeters

Die Axis: ↗

Obverse: SALL BARBIA ORBIANA AVG, diademed and draped bust of Orbiana right.

Reverse: CONCORDIA AVGVSTORVM S C, Concordia seated left, holding patera and double cornucopiae.

References: RIC 655; BMCRE 293; Cohen 4; Sear (*Roman Coins & Their Values II*) 8193.

Grade: nearly VF/good F with brown patina, long diagonal cut behind empress's head, some surface erosion on reverse

Historical & Numismatic Note: the ancient sources are very confused regarding the matter of Severus Alexander's marriage. The numismatic evidence is, therefore, of crucial importance and certain dated provincial issues, such as those of Trapezus, Caesarea in Cappadocia, and Alexandria, all indicate that Gnaea Seia Herennia Sallustia Barbia Orbiana was married to Alexander in the spring or early summer of AD 226 and the union lasted for about a year. The *Historia Augusta*, a notoriously unreliable source, gives the name of Alexander's wife as Memmia (*SHA* 20. 3) and describes her as the "daughter of Macrinus" (*SHA* 49. 3-4, citing the work of the Athenian sophist Dexippus. Herodian's more lucid account unfortunately fails to mention the emperor's wife by name, though he does inform us that she was the daughter of a senator who received considerable honors from his imperial son-in-law (Dexippus goes even further and says that he was granted the title of Caesar). Herodian's account goes on to describe the jealousy of Alexander's mother, Julia Mamaea, for her new daughter-in-law and the intrigues by which she brought about the downfall of both father and daughter who, in final desperation, were forced to seek refuge with the Praetorian Guard. The young empress's father was then executed and she was stripped of her rank and sent into exile to Libya. As Orbiana is the only empress to receive notice on the coinage of Alexander's reign (other than Julia Mamaea and her mother Julia Maesa) it seems reasonable to assume that these stories all refer to her and her father, who may have borne the name Lucius Gnaeus Seius Herennius Sallustius Barbius. Her regular Roman issues are scarce or rare, as might be expected, and comprise just two reverse types: one with the emperor and empress clasping hands (*iunctio dextrarum*), found on sestertii only; the other with a seated figure of Concordia which occurs on a range of denominations from the aureus to the as. The latter, represented by this sestertius, appears to have been produced down to the time of Orbiana's downfall in 227. The provincial coinage, which is also rare, was struck at more than a dozen mints, all in Asia Minor except for Alexandria.

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