

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: August 10, 2018

David R. Sear

State: Roman Empire

Ruler: Severus Alexander (AD 222-235)

Denomination: orichalcum sestertius

Mint: Rome

Date: AD 225

Weight: 21.57 grams

Maximum Diameter: 31.74 millimeters

Die Axis: ↑

Obverse: IMP CAES M AVR SEV ALEXANDER AVG, laureate, draped and cuirassed bust of Severus Alexander right.

Reverse: IOVI VLTORI S C, Jupiter enthroned left, holding Victory and resting on spear.

References: RIC 560; BMCRE 240 and pl. 8; Cohen 98; Sear (*Roman Coins & Their Values II*) 7969.

Grade: VF/nearly VF, unpatinated but attractively toned and with elegant early portrait

Historical & Numismatic Note: Born in Phoenicia in AD 208, M. Julius Gessius Alexianus was the son of Julia Mamaea and Gessius Marcianus. On the elevation of his cousin, Elagabalus, to the imperial throne (AD 218) he came to Rome with the rest of the imperial family but remained very much in the background. However, when his grandmother Julia Maesa perceived that the future of the dynasty was being threatened by the outrageous behavior of Elagabalus the young Alexianus was brought more into the public limelight. His name was changed to Alexander and in AD 221, he was elevated to the rank of Caesar, thus officially designating him as Elagabalus' heir. On the murder of his cousin the following year Alexander, though still only 14, was immediately hailed as emperor under the name of Marcus Aurelius Severus Alexander. His 13-year reign saw a reaction against the wild excesses of the previous regime and an atmosphere of quiet dignity was restored to government circles in Rome. However, the extraordinary influence wielded by the emperor's mother, Julia Mamaea, caused resentment in some circles, especially the military, and boded ill for the long-term prospects of the dynasty. Meanwhile, the storm clouds were gathering on the imperial frontiers and in AD 231 Alexander, hardly a military man, was obliged to proceed to the East where the dynamic new Sassanid dynasty had recently overthrown the Parthian Empire. A moderate degree of success was achieved, but on the emperor's return to Rome in 233 his presence was almost immediately required on the Rhine where the German tribes were threatening the security of the area. His overtures of peace to the barbarians aroused much anger in the Roman army and ultimately led to a mutiny in which both Alexander and his mother, the Empress Julia Mamaea, lost their lives (March, 235). Alexander's coinage is abundant and generally well-produced, most of it coming from the mint of Rome. The designs are varied but have a tendency to become repetitive and somewhat stereotyped, a feature that was to characterize the later 3rd century coinage. This attractive sestertius (worth one-quarter of the silver denarius) is dated by Carson (in *BMCRE*) to AD 225, the year following Alexander's rededication of Elagabalus' temple of Sol Invictus to Jupiter Ultor (the 'Avenger'). It would seem that this structure was actually Domitian's temple of Jupiter Victor in the northeastern corner of the Palatine, which had been rededicated by Elagabalus to the eastern sun god of which he had been the chief priest in his native Emesa. In an attempt to erase the memory of Elagabalus' disgraceful regime, the temple was hurriedly restored to Jupiter early in the reign of his successor, hence the change in the god's title to the 'Avenger'.

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