

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: March 31, 2020

David R. Sear

State: Roman Empire

Ruler: Vitellius (AD 69, January-December)

Denomination: orichalcum sestertius

Mint: Rome

Date: September-October, AD 69

Weight: 24.29 grams

Maximum Diameter: 35.64 millimeters

Die Axis: ↓

Obverse: A VITELLIVS GERMAN IMP AVG P M TR P, laureate and draped bust of Vitellius right.

Reverse: S C, Mars, naked but for helmet and cloak over shoulders, advancing right, holding spear in right hand and legionary standard (*aquila*) over shoulder in left.

References: RIC 141 var. (trophy instead of *aquila* over Mars' shoulder) = BMCRE 58 = RCTV I 2208; CBN 108 var. (trophy) = Cohen 79; CBN 104 var. (trophy and legend ends P M TR) = Cohen 79; Mazzini 80 var. (Mars holds *aquila*, but obv. legend ends P M TR) = Cayon (*Los Sestercios del Imperio Romano*) 29.

Grade: nearly F and rare, a previously unrecorded variant of this type

Historical & Numismatic Note: Aulus Vitellius was the son of the illustrious Lucius Vitellius who had been one of Claudius' principal advisers. Towards the close of AD 68 Galba appointed Aulus Vitellius to the important military command of Lower Germany. At the beginning of the New Year (69) the legions of the German frontier refused to take the oath of loyalty to Galba and on January 2nd Vitellius was proclaimed emperor by his troops. Two weeks later Galba was overthrown in Rome and his place taken by M. Salvius Otho. The army of Vitellius, under the command of two of his principal generals, advanced slowly on Rome and was eventually victorious against the forces of Otho at the battle of Bedriacum. Vitellius was now undisputed master of the Empire and proceeded in a leisurely manner to the capital, not arriving there until July. It was only then that he assumed the title of Augustus appearing on this orichalcum sestertius of the Rome mint. The reverse celebrates Mars, god of war, who clearly had been instrumental in Vitellius' successful assumption of imperial power. In the meantime, however, Vespasian had been proclaimed emperor by the legions in the East (July 1st) and Vitellius' unpopular regime was easily overthrown when forces loyal to Vespasian invaded Italy. Vitellius was deposed on December 20th only five months after his arrival in Rome. He was captured in his palace by soldiers who took him to the Forum where he was publicly abused and then brutally murdered. This variety combines the obverse abbreviation 'GERMAN' with the reverse variety showing Mars holding an *aquila* instead of a trophy over his left shoulder. Other varieties have previously been recorded with the obverse legend ending 'P M TR' (CBN 104) or with 'GERMANICVS' instead of 'GERMAN' (BMC 60).

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