

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: February 2, 2021

David R. Sear

State: Roman Empire

Ruler: Augustus (27 BC — AD 14)

Denomination: orichalcum sestertius

Mint: uncertain (possibly Ephesus or Pergamum)

Date: c. 25 BC

Weight: 24.86 grams

Maximum Diameter: 33.80 millimeters

Die Axis: ↑

Obverse: AVGVSTVS behind bare head of Augustus right.

Reverse: C A in circle of dots within laurel-wreath.

References: RPC I, p. 381, 2233 and pl. 99 (citing 18 specimens); Howgego (*Num. Chron.* 1982, p. 3, 2a and pl. I, 9); RIC 501; BMCRE 713-720 and pl. 21, 6; CBN I, p. 149, 956-8; AMC 696-700; cf. Cohen 790-91; Sutherland (*The Emperor and The Coinage*) pp. 55 ff. and pl. V, 72; Grant (*The Six Main Aes Coinages of Augustus*) p. 8 and pl. XII, 1-3.

Grade: F/good F, above average for specimens of this enigmatic series

Historical & Numismatic Note: the remarkable political career of Rome's first emperor spanned almost six decades. Adopted as heir by his great-uncle Julius Caesar, Gaius Octavius was only 18 at the time of the dictator's assassination on the Ides of March 44 BC. By astute political maneuverings he managed to hold his own against his principal rival, Marcus Antonius (Mark Antony), and the two ultimately formed an alliance (the Second Triumvirate) which included M. Aemilius Lepidus (43 BC). By 31 BC, Octavius, now known as Gaius Julius Caesar Octavianus, had achieved a position of supreme power in the Roman world by his famous naval victory over the forces of Antony and Queen Cleopatra of Egypt (battle of Actium, September 2). Under the terms of the constitutional reorganization of 27 BC, at which time he was named Augustus, he in effect became emperor of Rome, though in deference to senatorial sensibilities his precise position was only vaguely defined and his powers were expressed in terms of traditional republican magistracies. His extensive program of reforms covered all aspects of life in the Empire but was enacted with great patience over a period of many years, thus avoiding the possible adverse consequences of sudden change. This included a complete overhaul of the Roman monetary system, which had been sadly neglected in the final turbulent decades of the Republic. The gold aureus now became an integral part of the system and a plentiful *aes* coinage, in a range of denominations, was reintroduced utilizing two metals — orichalcum (brass) and copper. Many mints had been active during the decades of civil war and this situation prevailed in the initial years of Augustus' principate. Gradually, however, the production of precious metal coinage came to be concentrated at the great Gallic mint of Lugdunum (modern Lyon) while the regular *aes* denominations were issued principally from Rome, with the supply augmented by several provincial establishments. This imposing orichalcum sestertius is of eastern origin, but its precise place of mintage has been the subject of much scholarly speculation despite which no consensus has yet been achieved. Even the interpretation of the enigmatic abbreviation 'C A' has not been firmly resolved, though CAESAR AVGVSTVS or COMMVNE ASIAE appear to be the most likely. If the latter is correct then the mint is likely to have been Pergamum or Ephesus, though the matter cannot be regarded as settled. A tentative date of *circa* 25 BC has been assigned to this issue by the authors of *Roman Provincial Coinage, Volume I* (London and Paris, 1992).

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