

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: February 13, 2023

David R. Sear

State: Roman Empire

Ruler: Septimius Severus (AD 193-211)

Denomination: orichalcum sestertius

Mint: Rome

Date: AD 195 (January-early summer)

Weight: 23.49 grams

Maximum Diameter: 31.73 millimeters

Die Axis: ↑

Obverse: L SEPT SEV PERT AVG IMP V, laureate head of Septimius Severus right.

Reverse: SAECVLI FELICITAS S C (around) S — C (in field), Fortuna Felix standing left, right foot on prow, holding caduceus and cornucopiae.

References: RIC 692a; BMCRE 560-61 and pl. 24, 3; Cohen 630; Banti 145; Cayón 213; Hill 163; Sear (*Roman Coins & their Values II*) 6439.

Grade: good F/nearly F, patch of corrosion in lower field

Historical & Numismatic Note: A native of Leptis Magna in North Africa, Lucius Septimius Severus was born in AD 145, entered the Roman Senate *circa* 173 and, by the end of Commodus' reign, was governor of Upper Pannonia. On the murder of Pertinax by the praetorian guard and the disgraceful elevation to the imperial throne of Didius Julianus, Severus was one of three provincial governors proclaimed emperor by their soldiers (the other two being Clodius Albinus in Britain and Pescennius Niger in Syria). Severus was closest to Italy and quickly descended on Rome, easily eliminating Julianus. He neutralized one rival, Albinus, by offering him the title of Caesar leaving him free to attack and destroy Niger in the East (AD 195). It was then Albinus' turn to be eradicated and the hapless Caesar was declared a public enemy, falling in battle near Lugdunum early in 196. Severus was now able to turn his attention to foreign wars and departed for the eastern frontier where, in 198, he defeated the Parthians and captured their capital city of Ctesiphon on the river Tigris. Returning to Rome in 202, he devoted most of his attention over the following six years to domestic affairs and an ambitious building program was undertaken in the capital. This included the Arch of Severus in the Roman Forum, which is commemorated on the coinage and still stands to this day; a palace on the Palatine; and the Septizodium, a freestanding ornamental façade, screening the southeast corner of the Palatine Hill, which closed the view of the Via Appia like a stage backdrop. In AD 208 Severus and the entire imperial family — his wife Julia Domna and his sons Caracalla and Geta — set out for Britain where the situation on the northern frontier demanded urgent attention. He was to spend the last two and a half years of his life in the island province and was destined never to return to Rome. Together with his elder son, the co-emperor Caracalla, the old emperor campaigned vigorously, penetrating deep into barbarian territory. The line of his marching-camps can still be detected today by aerial photography. He also restored Hadrian's Wall, the northern barrier to the province first constructed more than 80 years before. Although little is known of the success of these operations, they were to bring peace to the area for the remainder of the 3rd century. Exhausted by these exertions the 65-year-old emperor fell fatally ill at the legionary fortress of Eburacum (York) where he died on February 4, AD 211. His policy had been to pamper the legions who had brought him to power and on whom the security of his regime depended. He increased their pay from 375 to 500 denarii a year and his dying advice to his two sons was to "keep on good terms with each other, be generous to the soldiers, and take no heed of anyone else". This brass sestertius, worth one quarter of the silver denarius, belongs to the first half of the year AD 195. The reverse type is a revival of a sestertius issued in the final year of his reign (AD 192). In the context of the upcoming conflict with Clodius Albinus, it presumably conveys the message that Fortuna will again favor Severus and thus restore normal life in the Empire following the years of civil war following the assassination of Commodus.

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