

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 14, 2023

David R. Sear

State: Roman Empire

Ruler: Julia Mamaea (mother of Severus Alexander)

Denomination: orichalcum sestertius

Mint: Rome

Date: circa AD 228

Weight: 21.68 grams

Maximum Diameter: 30.42 millimeters

Die Axis: ↗

Obverse: IVLIA MAMAEA AVGVSTA, diademed and draped bust of Julia Mamaea right.

Reverse: FELICITAS PVBLICA (around), S — C (in field), Felicitas standing facing, looking left, her legs crossed, holding caduceus in raised right hand and resting left arm on low column at her side.

References: RIC 676; BMCRE 487 and pl. 17; Cohen 21; Hunter iii, p. 165, 18 and pl. 50; Sear (*Roman Coins & Their Values II*) 8228.

Grade: nearly VF

Historical & Numismatic Note: Julia Avita Mamaea was the younger daughter of Julia Maesa, sister of Julia Domna. She was married to Gessius Marcianus, a knight of Arca Caesarea in Syria, by whom, in A.D. 208, she had a son, Alexianus — the future Emperor Severus Alexander. She remained in the background during the reign of her nephew Elagabalus (A.D. 218-222), son of her elder sister Julia Soaemias. But when it became apparent that the young emperor's outrageous behavior was threatening the very survival of the dynasty Julia Mamaea and her mother engineered the overthrow of the regime and the elevation to the imperial throne of Alexianus, now called Marcus Aurelius Severus Alexander. The new emperor was only 13 at the time of his accession and the political power wielded by the Empress Julia Mamaea was enormous, especially after the death of her mother circa A.D. 225. She cultivated good relations with the Senate and the Empire enjoyed its last period of stable government before the cataclysmic events which were to engulf the Roman world in the coming decades. Gradually, disaffection began to grow in the army which resented the rule of a woman and was disgusted by the seemingly weak and unwarlike character of the young emperor. Matters came to a head in March of A.D. 235 during the course of military operations against the German tribes on the Rhine frontier. Alexander's overtures of peace to the barbarians aroused so much anger in the Roman army that open mutiny broke out. This resulted in the assassinations of both the emperor and his mother, thus bringing to an end four decades of rule by the Severan dynasty and ushering in an age of military anarchy. The coinage of Julia Mamaea is on a large scale and appears to have been issued on a regular basis throughout her son's reign. This brass sestertius (worth one-quarter of the silver denarius) is from the middle years of the reign and features on the reverse the goddess Felicitas in a relaxed pose resting on a column, symbolic of the 'Happiness of the State' (Felicitas Publica) under the secure rule of mother and son.

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