

# Septimius Severus: The African Emperor

Septimius Severus, born Lucius Septimius Severus, was the first Roman emperor of African descent. He rose to power through military prowess and political cunning, and his reign marked a turning point in Roman history, characterized by both stability and upheaval.



## Septimius Severus: The African Emperor (Roman Imperial Biographies) by Daniel A. Strachman

★★★★☆ 4.7 out of 5

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## Early Life and Career

Septimius Severus was born in Lepcis Magna, a Roman city in North Africa, in 145 AD. His father was a Roman knight and his mother was a Libyan Berber. Severus received a traditional Roman education and entered the army in 162 AD. He quickly rose through the ranks, distinguishing himself as a capable military commander.

In 193 AD, Severus was appointed governor of Pannonia Superior, a province on the Danube River. He successfully defended the province against barbarian invasions and gained the favor of the emperor

Commodus. In 197 AD, Severus was named consul, the highest office in the Roman Republic.

## **Rise to Power**

In 193 AD, Commodus was assassinated and the Roman Empire plunged into chaos. Several emperors rose and fell in quick succession, and Severus emerged as a leading contender for the throne.

Severus allied himself with the powerful Praetorian Guard, the elite bodyguard of the emperor. In 197 AD, he marched on Rome and defeated his rival, Emperor Didius Julianus. Severus was proclaimed emperor by the Senate and became the first African to hold the position.

## **Reign**

Severus's reign was marked by both stability and upheaval. He restored order to the empire and strengthened the army. He also launched a number of ambitious building projects, including the construction of the Septimius Severus Arch in Rome and the Baths of Caracalla.

However, Severus's reign was also marked by persecution of Christians. In 202 AD, he issued an edict that banned Christianity and ordered the execution of Christian leaders. This persecution continued throughout his reign.

## **Parthian War**

In 194 AD, Severus led a campaign against the Parthian Empire, which controlled the territories of present-day Iran and Iraq. The war was largely successful, and Severus expanded the Roman Empire's eastern borders.

However, the war also took a heavy toll on the Roman army. Severus was forced to increase taxes to pay for the war, which led to widespread discontent among the Roman people.

## **British Campaign**

In 208 AD, Severus launched a campaign against the Caledonians, a Celtic tribe inhabiting present-day Scotland. The campaign was intended to pacify the northern frontier of the Roman Empire.

Severus's army faced fierce resistance from the Caledonians, led by their chieftain Calgacus. The Romans were eventually able to defeat the Caledonians, but the victory came at a high cost.

## **Death and Legacy**

Septimius Severus died in 211 AD, while campaigning in Britain. He was succeeded by his sons Caracalla and Geta. Severus's reign had a lasting impact on the Roman Empire, and he is considered one of the most important emperors in Roman history.

Severus was a skilled military commander who restored order to the empire. He also initiated a number of ambitious building projects that left a lasting legacy on Rome. However, his reign was also marked by persecution of Christians and heavy taxation.

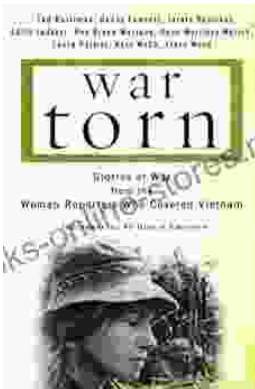
Septimius Severus was a complex and controversial figure. He was a skilled military commander who restored order to the empire, but he also initiated a period of persecution and heavy taxation. His reign marked a turning point in Roman history, characterized by both stability and upheaval.



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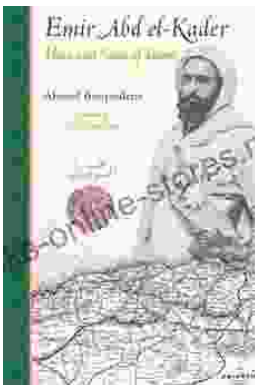
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