

DAVID R. SEAR

Certificate of Authenticity

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This coin has been personally inspected and authenticated by

Issued to: Jens Feierabend

On: June 1, 2017

David R. Sear

State: Roman Empire

Ruler: Gordian I Africanus (AD 238, March-April)

Denomination: orichalcum sestertius

Mint: Rome

Date: AD 238, March-April

Weight: 21.42 grams

Maximum Diameter: 30.04 millimeters

Die Axis: ↑

Obverse: IMP CAES M ANT GORDIANVS AFR AVG, laureate, draped and cuirassed bust of Gordian I Africanus right.

Reverse: ROMAE AETERNAE S C, Roma enthroned left, holding Victory on extended right hand and resting on scepter held in left, shield at side.

References: RIC 10; BMCRE 10; Cohen 9; Sear (*Roman Coins & Their Values III*) 8451.

Grade: nearly VF with clean surfaces, a nice example of this brief issue

Historical & Numismatic Note: At the opening of the year AD 238 the imperial throne was occupied by the emperor Maximinus. This giant of a man was of Thracian peasant stock and had gained rapid promotion through the ranks of the Roman army after having attracted the attention of the emperor Septimius Severus (193-211). Maximinus was the first emperor of Rome to have risen from such lowly origins, his success being due to his brilliance as a military commander. He had ascended the throne in 235 following an army coup in Germany, which had toppled the pacifist emperor Severus Alexander (222-235), the last representative of the Severan dynasty. During a series of brilliant and daring campaigns beyond the German frontier, Maximinus gained a reputation for savage cruelty, which made him feared by friend and foe alike. Opposition to his tyrannical regime began to grow both in Rome and in the provinces and towards the end of March 238 the octogenarian governor of Africa, Marcus Antonius Gordianus, raised the standards of rebellion. This action must have been taken with the full connivance of the Roman Senate, for a considerable coinage in the names of the emperors Gordian I Africanus and his son Gordian II was produced by the Rome mint, even though it took a mere twenty-one days for the rebel regime to be overthrown. Capellianus, governor of neighboring Numidia, had remained loyal to Maximinus and had marched against the Gordiani with vastly superior forces. The younger Gordian was killed in the ensuing battle and his father committed suicide on receiving news of the disaster. The realism of the distinctive portraiture of the usurping emperors Gordian I and Gordian II is a clear indication of the Senate's involvement in the plotting which led to the north African rebellion. The dies for this coinage had obviously been prepared well in advance and even the coins themselves may have been struck before the rebellion took place. Otherwise, the issues of a mere 3-week reign would surely be much scarcer than is actually the case. This sestertius of the elder Gordian depicts him with the slender features and full head of hair that distinguish his portrait from that of his son. The reverse celebrates "Eternal Rome" (*Romae Aeternae*), an appropriate message for a rebel regime with strong support in the capital that was attempting to overthrow the rule of a brutal tyrant.

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