

DAVID R. SEAR

Certificate of Authenticity

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Issued to: Jens G. Feierabend

On: April 1, 2019

David R. Sear

State: Roman Empire

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

Denomination: orichalcum sestertius

Mint: Rome

Date: AD 238, March-April

Weight: 17.20 grams

Maximum Diameter: 30.52 millimeters

Die Axis: ↑

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

Reverse: VICTORIA AVGG S C, Victory advancing left, holding wreath in extended right hand and palm at her side in left.

References: RIC 7 and pl. XII, 4 (*same obverse die*); BMCRE 29* and pl. 42 (citing specimen in Naples, *same obverse die*); Cohen 13 (citing specimen in Paris); Banti (*I Grandi Bronzi Imperiali*) p. 238, 6 (4 specimens cited, **this coin** illustrated from the Charles Dupriez Catalogue, 1913, lot 1527); Sear (*Roman Coins & Their Values III*) 8472.

Grade: nearly VF and rare, an unusual reverse type for this very brief reign

Pedigree: formerly in the collection of Richard van de Vyvere-Colens, 1837-1912 (Charles Dupriez Catalogue, no. 112bis, 7 April 1913, lot 1527); ex Philip C. Peck Collection, New York.

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 that 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 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 rarer today than is actually the case. This attractive sestertius of Gordian II depicts him with the heavy features and balding forehead that distinguish his portrait from that of his father. The reverse proclaims "the victory of the emperors" (*Victoria Augustorum*) which was an optimistic prediction in view of the overwhelming strength of Maximinus. This reverse type is more typical of the coinage struck in the name of the elder Gordian, of which 46 specimens were cited by Banti. Interestingly, all 7 known examples of the issue for Gordian II share the same obverse die.

DAVID R. SEAR / A.C.C.S. P. O. Box 7314, Porter Ranch, CA. 91327, U.S.A.

Phone (818) 993-7363 **Mobile** (818) 312-4903 **E-mail** david@davidrsear.com **Web site** www.davidrsear.com

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