

DAVID R. SEAR

Certificate of Authenticity

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This coin has been personally inspected and authenticated by

Issued to: Jens G. Feierabend

On: February 5, 2021

David R. Sear

State: Roman Empire

Ruler: Otacilia Severa (wife of Philip I)

Denomination: bronze sestertius

Mint: Rome

Date: AD 248

Weight: 18.42 grams

Maximum Diameter: 30.25 millimeters

Die Axis: ↙

Obverse: MARCIA OTACIL SEVERA AVG, diademed and draped bust of Otacilia Severa right, her hair in horizontal ridges and looped in plait up back of head.

Reverse: SAECLARES AVGG S C, hippopotamus standing right.

References: RIC IV, iii, p. 93, 200; Hunter III, p. 230, 26 and pl. 73; Cohen 65; Sear (*Roman Coins & Their Values III*) 9170.

Grade: good VF/VF with dark brown patina

Historical & Numismatic Note: little is known of Marcia Otacilia Severa other than that she was the daughter of a certain Severus, sometime governor of Pannonia, and that about AD 234 she married an Arabian, M. Julius Philippus, who was to ascend the imperial throne as Philip I a decade later. She bore a son and a daughter to her husband, the former (born *circa* AD 237) being the future Philip II. Reputedly a Christian, she is said to have been subjected to ecclesiastical penance by the Bishop of Antioch for her part in the death of the emperor Gordian III, but the story must be regarded as highly suspect at best. She was given the rank of *Augusta* soon after her husband's accession in AD 244 and was allowed a substantial share in the coinage, one of the six *officinae* of the Rome mint (apparently the 4th) working exclusively in her name. This sestertius belongs to the 'saeculares' series issued in AD 248 to commemorate the celebration of the thousandth anniversary of Rome's foundation. The hippopotamus was one of the exotic beasts exhibited in the arena at this time for the amusement of the Roman populace. These animals had originally been collected for the Emperor Gordian III's Persian triumph but following his assassination in 244 they were instead kept in readiness for the festivities of the millennium. An interesting feature of the 'saeculares' series was the first appearance of officina marks on the silver antoniniani, indicating which of the workshops of the mint was responsible for the issue of each type. These reveal that six officinae were in operation at this time, four of them (numbers 1, 2, 5, and 6) producing coins in the name of Philip I, with one each for Philip II (officina 3) and Otacilia Severa (officina 4). It is reported that following her husband's downfall in AD 249 Otacilia was forced to witness the murder of her son, the younger Philip, in the praetorian camp to which they had fled for safety. She then retired into private life and nothing further is known of her.

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