

© 2008

Andrew G. Scott

ALL RIGHTS RESERVED

CHANGE AND DISCONTINUITY WITHIN THE SEVERAN DYNASTY:

THE CASE OF MACRINUS

By

ANDREW G. SCOTT

A Dissertation submitted to the
Graduate School-New Brunswick
Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey
in partial fulfillment of the requirements

for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Graduate Program in Classics

written under the direction of

Dr. T. Corey Brennan

and approved by

New Brunswick, New Jersey

May 2008

ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Change and Discontinuity within the Severan Dynasty: the case of Macrinus

By ANDREW G. SCOTT

Dissertation Director:

T. Corey Brennan

This dissertation examines the figure of Macrinus and his relationship to the Severan dynasty and the third century. As a usurper and non-aristocratic *equus*, Macrinus presents a problem of continuity within the Severan dynasty and in many ways was the precursor to the so-called “Third Century Crisis” of 235-285.

The opening chapters of this dissertation examine the state of Caracalla’s foreign and domestic policy at the end of his reign (primarily 215-217), Caracalla’s assassination, and Macrinus’ accession. There is also a discussion of Macrinus’ career prior to his accession and his initial consolidation of power.

A central question is how Macrinus legitimized his reign. The evidence, which includes literary, epigraphic, and numismatic sources, shows that he planned a familial succession that would be passed down to his son Diadumenian. Determining how Macrinus expressed his relationship both with the Severans and with his own son is critical for understanding how he tried to situate himself, as usurper, within the ruling family.

A further area of importance is Macrinus’ program. Though detractors have suggested that the brevity of Macrinus’ reign made it impossible to have a coherent program, even in a short reign development can be traced. Macrinus was left with a variety of problems due to the failed policies of Caracalla, and it will be the purpose of

this study to assess how he attempted to correct these missteps and how he developed his own policies.

Finally, Macrinus was a victim of the struggle for power among the army, the equestrian bureaucracy, and the imperial family. An aspect of the illegitimate nature of Macrinus' reign was the almost instantaneous competition from the Syrian half of the house of Severus, orchestrated by the female relatives of Julia Domna. An investigation into the characters surrounding this power struggle, with particular emphasis on the women of the Severan line, will illuminate the inner workings of imperial families in this period and the power that women could wield.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

This dissertation owes a great deal to many people. I would first like to acknowledge the debt to my advisor, T. Corey Brennan, who was crucial at all points of not only the process of writing this dissertation, but of my graduate career at Rutgers in general. Likewise, Thomas J. Figueira and Sarolta A. Takács have provided guidance over the past five years at Rutgers, and their extensive comments as readers of this dissertation have helped the final draft immensely. William E. Metcalf, acting as the outside reader, has also aided the writing of this dissertation in a great way and provided much needed guidance on various aspects of this study.

Beyond the committee proper, many others have helped me along the way. I must thank the professors, students, and staff of the Classics Department at Rutgers for all of their support. The library staff at Alexander Library was very helpful, especially the office of Interlibrary Loan. Outside of Rutgers, Alan M. Stahl provided me with a wonderful introduction to numismatics in a seminar at Princeton University during the Spring 2007 semester.

I would like also to acknowledge the support of my family, especially my parents, Richard Scott and Barbara Scott, and my siblings Peter, Richard, and Caroline. Finally, I would not have been able to bring this dissertation and degree to completion without the love, support, and patience of Alissa Vaillancourt.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract		ii
Acknowledge		iv
Abbreviations		vi
List of tables		viii
List of illustrations		ix
Introduction		1
Chapter One	From Caracalla to Macrinus	19
Chapter Two	Macrinus, his background and career	48
Chapter Three	The Legitimization of Macrinus' Reign	72
Chapter Four	Macrinus' Program	104
Chapter Five	The Severan Woman, Elagabalus, and the End of Macrinus	136
Epilogue	Macrinus in the Third Century	162
Appendix I	A Historical and Historiographic Commentary on Dio 78	180
Appendix II	Macrinus' trip to the Danube?	292
Bibliography		307
Curriculum Vitae		317

ABBREVIATIONS

<i>AE</i>	<i>L'Année épigraphique</i>
<i>Albo</i>	G. Barbieri, <i>L'albo Senatorio da Settimio Severo a Carino</i>
Bellinger	A.R. Bellinger, <i>The Syrian tetradrachms of Caracalla and Macrinus</i>
<i>BMC</i>	<i>Catalogue of Greek Coins in the British Museum</i>
Boissevain	U.P. Boissevain, ed. <i>Cassii Dionis Cocceiani Historiarum Romanarum Quae Supersunt</i> , vols. 1-3
<i>CIL</i>	<i>Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum</i>
Cohen	H. Cohen, <i>Description Historique des Monnaies Frappées sous l'Empire Romain</i>
<i>D</i>	Dessau, <i>Inscriptiones Latinae Selectae</i>
<i>HA</i>	<i>Historia Augusta</i>
<i>LSJ</i>	H.G. Liddell & R. Scott, <i>Greek-English Lexicon</i> . Revised by H.S. Jones
Mouchmov	N. Mouchmov, <i>Ancient Coins of the Balkan Peninsula</i>
<i>OED</i>	<i>Oxford English Dictionary</i>
<i>OLD</i>	<i>Oxford Latin Dictionary</i>
<i>PIR</i>	<i>Prosopographia Imperii Romani</i>
<i>RIC</i>	<i>Roman Imperial Coinage</i>
SNGvA	<i>Sylloge Nummorum Graecorum Deutschland: Sammlung von Aulock</i>
SNGCop	<i>Sylloge Nummorum Graecorum: The Royal Collections of Coins and Medals in the Danish National Museum</i>
SNGFr	<i>Sylloge Nummorum Graecorum: Cabinet des Médailles, Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris, France</i>
Sydenham	E.A. Sydenham, <i>The Coinage of Caesarea in Cappadocia</i>

Abbreviations for the biographies in the *Historia Augusta* follow Lessing:

A	Aurelianus
AC	Avidius Cassius
Ael.	Aelius
AP	Antoninus Pius
AS	Alexander Severus
C	Commodus
Car.	Carus, Numerianus, Carinus
Cc.	Caracallus
Cl.	Cladius
CIA	Clodius Albinus
Dd.	Diadumenianus
DI	Didius Julianus
G	Geta
Gall.	Gallieni duo
Gd.	Gordiani tres
H	Hadrianus
Hel.	Heliogabalus
MA	Marcus Aurelius
Max.	Maximini duo
MB	Maximus et Balbinus
OM	Opilius Macrinus
P	Pertinax
PN	Pescenius Niger
Pr.	Probus
Q	Quadrigae tyrannorum, i.e. Firmus Saturninus Proculus et Bonosus
S	Severus
T	Tyranni triginta
Tac.	Tacitus
V	Verus
Val.	Valeriani duo

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1: Legions and their locations, 217/218	41
Table 2: Legions by geographic area, 217/218	43
Table 3: Datable extracts from Dio Book 78	64

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

Image 1: <i>RIC</i> 4.2 Macrinus 3	82
Image 2: <i>RIC</i> 4.2 Macrinus 55b	83
Image 3: <i>RIC</i> 4.2 Macrinus 30	84
Image 4: <i>RIC</i> 4.1 Caracalla 13b	91
Image 5: <i>RIC</i> 4.2 Macrinus 102	91
Image 6: Bellinger 150	93
Image 7: Bellinger 92	94
Image 8: SNGFr 2347	101

Introduction

On April 8, 217 the emperor Marcus Aurelius Antoninus, better known today as Caracalla according to his preferred mode of dress, was murdered. For several days there was a power vacuum in the Roman empire. The army was seemingly in control, and there was no immediate successor to the throne. The threat of advancing Parthians only added to the danger of this situation. Oclatinus Adventus, one of the praetorian prefects, was at first chosen to be the successor to Caracalla, but he turned down the position on account of his advanced age (Dio 78.14.2; Herod. 4.14.2). The successor to the throne then became the other praetorian prefect, an *eques* named Marcus Opellius Macrinus. Such a beginning could hardly be viewed as a precursor for future success.¹ But nevertheless Macrinus was saluted as Augustus by his troops and became the first non-senatorial emperor. Herodian's words seem fitting: "Macrinus obtained the principate not so much through the love and loyalty of the soldiers as through necessity and the demands of the immediate situation."² As such a surprising successor on account of his rank and background, Macrinus' rise to emperor was not only the byproduct of the organization of power in the Roman empire at the time, but it would also provide a model for the succession of emperors throughout the rest of the third century.

The succession of Roman emperors had now achieved such instability through the confluence of an intolerable emperor and the rise of Roman army's power. Caracalla had become emperor as the son and successor of Septimius Severus. Severus' accession was novel in many ways, but his plan was not to break with the established norms of ruling

¹ Gibbon (1926: 153): "His rash ambition had climbed a height where it was difficult to stand with firmness, and impossible to fall without instant destruction."

² Herod. 4.14.1-3; Dio 78.11.6. "on account of his advanced age": cf. Dio 78.14.2. The translation is by Whittaker (1969v2: 455-456).

the Roman empire. It was his plan to establish a familial dynasty (in fact, to attempt a continuation of the Antonine dynasty), and power was passed to his sons Caracalla and Geta upon his death. This unhappy division of power quickly resulted in the murder of the younger Geta by the elder Caracalla; hardly surprising, for the enmity between them had been deep-seated. Thus the hated Caracalla carried out his rule for six years, which culminated in his seemingly inevitable assassination. However undignified and ludicrous the assassination of Caracalla might be (he was killed while relieving himself on the side of the road), the manner in which it was carried is of great importance. Caracalla's assassination can only partly be blamed on his erratic and destructive behavior, especially towards the end of his life. Additionally, for this murder, there had to be a person or group powerful enough to carry it out. Caracalla was often faulted by Cassius Dio, an eyewitness to his reign, for elevating the importance of the army and the equestrian bureaucracy while reducing the power of the senate. Clearly Caracalla favored the army in order to provide security for his own position. It is ironic, therefore, that members of the army, so important in all of Caracalla's domestic and foreign policy, turned against him, and a praetorian prefect, for the first time ever in the history of Rome, became his successor.

Macrinus was an *eques* from North Africa. According to Dio, Macrinus was a Moor by nationality; he came from Caesarea in Mauretania and his parents were of humble birth. He even had one of his ears pierced, which, according to Dio, marked his nationality and social status therein. Macrinus' background remains something of an unsolved question: was he a native Berber or the child of Italians who moved to the

colony of Caesarea?³ Dio also makes much of the fact that Macrinus was from Mauretania and had a physical mark to prove it. This confusion surrounding Macrinus' origins is exacerbated by the literary tradition, which is influenced by the attitudes towards people deriving from the outskirts of the Roman world. After his defeat at the hands of Elagabalus, all sorts of rumors about his low birth spread; he was accused of being a freedman, a prostitute, and a gladiator.⁴

While it may be tempting to see him following in the successes experienced by North Africans over the previous twenty-five years and more,⁵ Macrinus does indeed seem to be different. A Moor did not have the same prestige as, for example, a man coming from Africa Proconsularis; and while it must be said that Macrinus could never have succeeded without Septimius Severus preceding him, Macrinus' rise to power is no less remarkable in itself, and there is a need for an investigation into his background. It will be necessary during the course of this study to look closely at Mauretania and to trace Macrinus' background as far as possible in order to assess how he ever came to power. Although Caesarea was becoming a fairly romanized city under Juba, the perception of the natives of this region by the Roman sources is severe.⁶ In Dio's account the character flaws associated with Macrinus' background are apparent; he claims that Macrinus possessed the natural cowardice of a Moor (78.27.1). Herodian and

³ Bassett (1920: 14-15) believes Macrinus' family was of Italian extraction, having come to Caesarea after the colonization of the region under Claudius; Potter (2004: 146) takes a stronger view: "Opellius Macrinus came from North Africa, and indeed, from a family that traced its ancestors to the Berber tribes of the region. He had a pierced ear, as was traditional for men of his heritage."

⁴ *HA, OM* 4.1-8 tells the various rumors surrounding the emperor's early life. The sources for Macrinus' career will be discussed below, while his career itself will be examined in chapter 2.

⁵ Birley (1972: 133-134) points out the rise in power of Africans in Roman government prior to the assassination of Commodus; at the time when Septimius Severus became governor of Upper Pannonia in 191, Africans controlled eight of the northern legions.

⁶ On the romanization of Caesarea, see Roller 2003: 119-162; on the character of Numidians, cf. Sall. *Jug.* 46.3: "genus Numidarum infidum, ingenio mobili, novarum rerum avidum" with note in Paul 1984: 140. In this passage, Sallust is referring to the native Berber tribes of North Africa.

the *Historia Augusta* are even harsher. A fuller assessment of this area of North Africa and attitudes towards it will clarify the overall picture of Macrinus.

Other questions need to be answered as well. How Macrinus legitimized his reign will comprise an important portion of this dissertation. The surviving evidence shows that he had in mind right at the beginning of his reign a familial succession that would be passed down to his son Diadumenian. How did Macrinus make connections with the past and his proposed future for the Roman empire? It will be necessary to look at the surviving literary, numismatic, and epigraphic evidence in order to judge Macrinus' activities in this area.

Another area of importance is Macrinus' program, both foreign and domestic. He inherited from Caracalla a complex foreign relations situation, particularly in the East and with the kingdom of Parthia. Whether or not Macrinus had a coherent plan in place for dealing with these problems must be investigated. Though detractors may find this impossible on account of the brevity of his reign, I am of the opinion that even in such a short reign a line of development can be traced. Macrinus was left with a variety of problems because of the neglect and failed policies of Caracalla, and it will be the purpose of this study to assess the ways in which he attempted to correct these missteps and how he developed his own policies.

Finally, Macrinus himself was a victim of the power of the Roman army. In order to assess his reign from start to finish, it will be necessary to include the rise of Elagabalus.⁷ An aspect of the perceived illegitimacy of Macrinus' tenure of the throne was the almost instantaneous competition from the Syrian half of the house of Severus,

⁷ Though an intriguing character in his own right, it will not be the purpose of this study to travel too far into the life of Elagabalus, but simply far enough for a proper treatment of his predecessor.

orchestrated by the female relatives of Julia Domna. Pressure from this house, which would eventually result in the accession of Elagabalus in 218, had to have been felt by Macrinus immediately. As he was quickly attempting to establish his rule, the sense of a power void must have been apparent, especially to families vying for control over the empire. An investigation into the characters surrounding this power struggle, with particular emphasis on the women of the Severan line, will illuminate the inner workings of imperial families in this period and highlight the power that women could wield.

Ironically, one of the major problems of Macrinus' reign is how we are to refer to it. The sources on Macrinus provide no definition for his position. For example, the *vita Macrini* states in its preface that the author will record the lives of the emperors, whether usurpers or Caesars.⁸ Into which category does Macrinus fall? Can his reign be defined simply as an "interregnum", separating the not so well connected halves of the Severan dynasty? Did he truly benefit from the crisis at hand, as Herodian claims? Is he the first of many brief reigns during the third century? This study views at Macrinus as a true Roman emperor, not simply as a shortsighted usurper, on account of the fact that his program for the empire can be traced. Rather than seeing Macrinus as the temporary answer to a crisis without solution, it is more beneficial to understand him as a skillful and responsive opportunist who attempted to correct the corruption of power caused by his predecessors. At any event, the accession of Elagabalus was hardly a natural denouement, but in its own way was an anomalous as the elevation of Macrinus.

Macrinus ruled the Roman empire for a mere fourteen months, and his reign was spent entirely in the East. He was the first emperor not to come from senatorial stock.

⁸ *HA, OM* 1.1: "vitae illorum principum seu tyrannorum sive Caesarum."

Macrinus' rise to power was atypical in every aspect; his actual reign, however, attempted to bring a sense of normality to the Roman world. Macrinus is often dismissed as a minor or inconsequential emperor, yet he set the parameters for reigns throughout the third century. Despite the reconstruction of the Severan dynasty after the death of Macrinus, it is Macrinus, in his uncertain grasp upon imperial authority and his tightrope walk of policies, who seems to be the precursor to the period of anarchy beginning in 235 and lasting until the reorganization of the Roman empire under Diocletian. He stands as the first usurper in the third century to be able to consolidate power for a significant period of time, although he was not really able to control the army, a misadventure of many subsequent emperors throughout the same century. A re-evaluation of Macrinus can lead to a re-thinking of his reign as well as the subsequent political climate of the third century.

The Literary Sources

Three major literary sources that treat the reign of Macrinus have survived: Cassius Dio, Herodian, and the relevant biographies in the *Historia Augusta*. Each of these sources presents a different set of problems that must be considered before the investigation is undertaken.

Cassius Dio, a native of Bithynia in Asia Minor and most likely born in 163 or 164, was a member of the Roman senate.⁹ He follows in the tradition of the senatorial historian, a tradition established at Rome since Fabius Pictor, and like Pictor, Dio wrote his Roman history in Greek. The differences, however, between Dio and Fabius Pictor show how the Roman world had evolved in the approximately 400 years that separate the

⁹ Millar 1964: 13.

two. Fabius Pictor was a Roman writing in Greek; Dio was a Greek serving in the Roman senate and writing in his native tongue.

If we follow the dating of Millar, Dio began work on his Roman history, which was to cover the beginnings of the city of Rome up to his time, most likely during the summer of 197; the years 197 to 207 were a period of note-taking, while actual composition lasted from 207-219.¹⁰ This dating is based upon the following notice given by Dio (72.23.5):

συνέλεξα δὲ πάντα τὰ ἀπ' ἀρχῆς τοῖς Ῥωμαίοις μέχρι τῆς Σεουήρου μεταλλαγῆς πραχθέντα ἐν ἔτεσι δέκα, καὶ συνέγραψα ἐν ἄλλοις δώδεκα· τὰ γὰρ λοιπά, ὅπου ἂν καὶ προχωρήσῃ, γεγράψεται.

I compiled all of the events from the beginning of Rome up to the death of Severus over a period of ten years, and I wrote them up in another twelve; now the rest will be recorded as long as it is possible for me.

The work that Dio completed in 219 covers the whole of Roman history through the reign of Septimius Severus. Once this narrative was completed, Dio continued his work until 229, when he served his second consulship. As he approached the end of the reign of Caracalla, Dio explains how it came to be that he would continue his writing beyond the death of Severus:

ἐμοὶ δὲ δὴ, καὶ πρὶν ἐς τὴν μοναρχίαν καταστῆναι, προεδηλώθη τρόπον τινὰ παρὰ τοῦ πατρὸς αὐτοῦ ὅτι καὶ ταῦτα γράψοιμι.

But for, before coming into power, it was made clear to me in a certain way by his father [Severus] that I should record these matters as well.

This extension of the work covered the reigns of Caracalla, Macrinus, Elagabalus, and a brief account of the reign of Severus Alexander.¹¹

From the time of Commodus, Dio himself was an eyewitness at Rome to the majority of the events he records, a fact that makes his contemporary history extremely

¹⁰ Millar 1964: 30; cf. Barnes 1984.

¹¹ Millar 1964: 30.

valuable. As Millar (1964: 119) points out, “in spite of its fragmentary condition, Dio’s account of his own time still occupies nearly 200 pages in Boissevain’s edition and is thus the longest and fullest contemporary narrative we have of any period of the early Empire.” The text of Dio presents many problems, and a brief overview of how it has been reconstructed is necessary here.

A great deal of Dio’s Roman history has been preserved through the work of excerptors and epitomators. While it is not necessary here to give a full account of these intermediaries and the problems associated with each one, it will be convenient to briefly define the work of each individual briefly (cf. also Appendix 1, 78.2.2). In the tenth century CE, by order of the emperor Constantine Porphyrogenitus, excerpts were made from Dio and other Greek historians and arranged according to theme; these excerpts seem to be reliable evidence for Dio’s text.¹² The next epitomator was Ioannes Xiphilinus of Trapezus, who worked in the second half of the eleventh century A.D. and completed an epitome of Books 36-80. He divided his work by reigns, beginning with Pompey and Julius Caesar. Finally, Ioannes Zonaras, working about half a century after Xiphilinus, wrote an *Ἐπιτομή ἱστοριῶν* from the Creation to 1118. He used Dio for the beginnings of Rome up to 146 B.C., and his work is consequently valuable for what it preserves from the first quarter of Dio’s history. The work of Zonaras is considered to be of higher quality than that of Xiphilinus, both on account of the coherence of Zonaras’ epitome and because Zonaras’ seems to have preserved the structure of the first twenty books of Dio.

¹² For the historical overview, see Millar 1964: 1-4, including full citations.

Of the sources noted above, Cassius Dio is the best for the reign of Macrinus. Owing to the preservation of a Vatican codex (*Codex Vaticanus* 1288), the entire reign of Macrinus has survived in its original form (though mutilated in some sections), a fortunate circumstance given the problems briefly outlined above in the sketch of the remainder of Dio's text. Towards the beginning of Book 78, the epitome of Xiphilinus breaks off and Dio's text resumes, constituting a stretch of text preserved by this single manuscript.¹³ This section begins with the end of the reign of Caracalla and extends throughout the reign of Macrinus and into the middle of the reign of Elagabalus (78.2.2 – 79.8.3). The consequences of having actual Dio throughout this period of Roman history are truly outstanding.¹⁴ In this portion of Dio's history there has been preserved the eyewitness account of a Roman senator recording events in almost real time. For the modern historian this provides a unique opportunity to see both the immediate personal and public reaction to such a controversial period in Roman history.¹⁵

The preservation of this portion of Dio's text is extremely important. One reason is that the excerptors and epitomators are often poor transcribers of Dio's history; Millar, for example, judges Xiphilinus as "exceptionally inadequate for the reign of Caracalla,"¹⁶ the section directly preceding 78.2.2-79.8.3. The change that occurs at 78.2.2 is fairly drastic. Millar (1964: 160) has written on the importance of this text:

Dio's treatment of the reign of Macrinus is in many ways the most important and revealing part of his contemporary history. This is not solely because for the whole of it

¹³ Traditional numbering of these books is 78 & 79, which are equivalent to Books 79 & 80 in Boissvain's edition of Dio's Roman History; citations of Dio will follow the traditional divisions that existed before Boissvain produced his text.

¹⁴ Millar (1964: 160): "Dio's treatment of the reign of Macrinus is in many ways the most important and revealing part of his contemporary history."

¹⁵ Millar (1964: 159) points out another benefit of having Dio's original text here: "It is valuable not only for what it contains itself, but especially because it makes clear that the reconstructed text of the other parts of Dio's contemporary history does not grossly misrepresent what he originally wrote."

¹⁶ Millar 1964: 155.

we have the (fairly complete) original text. Two accidents combine to give it a force and accuracy unknown to the rest of the narrative: the arrival of an *eques* on the throne was a severe shock to conservative sentiment and called forth in Dio a more analytical attitude to the conduct of affairs than he shows elsewhere.... A further valuable element which the situation brings into Dio's text is his reports of senatorial and popular reactions in Rome, which form a commentary on the events of the reign.

The combination of an eyewitness account and a groundbreaking accession to the throne provide a unique opportunity for a thorough investigation of such an important, albeit brief, portion of Roman imperial history. For the present study, Dio will be considered the primary and most reliable literary source.

Dio will have to be supplemented by the other two major literary sources on Macrinus, Herodian and the *HA* biographies. Herodian, like Dio, is a contemporary historian of this period, though he is generally considered to be not as rigorous or dependable.¹⁷ Less is known of the life of Herodian as compared to the present knowledge of the life of Dio. It seems that Herodian was born before 178, according to his alleged eyewitness account of the games of Commodus in 192, at which time he most likely would have had to possess the *toga virilis* for admittance to the games.¹⁸ The career of Herodian is also in doubt, and he has variously been identified as a senator and a freedman, and everything in between.¹⁹ At 1.2.5 Herodian speaks vaguely of his position in public service:

ἃ δὲ μετὰ τὴν Μάρκου τελευτὴν παρὰ πάντα τὸν ἑμαυτοῦ βίον εἰδὼν τε καὶ ἤκουσα—ἔστι δ' ὧν καὶ πείρα μετέσχον ἐν βασιλικαῖς ἢ δημοσίαις ὑπηρεσίαις γενόμενος—ταῦτα συνέγραψα.

I wrote these events which I saw and heard during my own life after the death of Marcus – those which I also experienced having been in royal and domestic service.

¹⁷ For criticism of Herodian, see Bowersock 1975: 229 and his comment “No reasonable person, on the evidence now available, will argue that Herodian is a historian of any great merit, nor will it be denied that in general Dio's narrative, where it overlaps with Herodian's, is the more trustworthy”. For a recent rehabilitation of Herodian, see Sidebottom 1998.

¹⁸ Whittaker (1969v1: xi-xii) explains that younger children were usually not permitted to attend these games.

¹⁹ See Whittaker (1969v1: xix-xiv) for a review of bibliography.

Minimally it can be said that Herodian served as a minor official; it cannot be confirmed that he is following in the tradition of the senatorial historian. In fact, even if the latter were the case, he would seem to possess a different outlook than Dio. Taking the account of the reign of Macrinus as an example, Dio's treatment is uneasy over Macrinus' social status; Herodian finds fault with his character. Herodian does not feel an offense in an *eques* taking the throne, nor does he seem to mind the implied diminution of senatorial power. If he were a Roman senator, he would most likely be part of the new senate that rose in power under the Severans. Herodian's attitude toward Macrinus will be examined in greater detail below. In a recent study of Herodian, Sidebottom (1998: 2827) assesses Herodian's social position:

Herodian himself may have been from the lower class, but both the attitude and audience of his text are to be understood in a Greek élite context. Herodian's text is not particularly well-disposed to Rome; which is treated as an alien thing needing explanation. The text's reconstruction of the Roman empire with the centralization of Greek *paideia* allows the text to fulfill two political functions for the Greek élite: to make their subservience to Rome more acceptable, and to justify their position as the élite in Greek society.

While this position affects to a certain extent the way one reads Herodian, it does not in any way diminish his worth as a source for that period.

As for the date of composition for Herodian's history, some commentators have proposed 240, after the final events of Book 8 taking place in 238; others favor a date subsequent to 244.²⁰ It seems that the work is unrevised and probably unfinished.²¹

Herodian's sources are also an issue, and much of the scholarship on Herodian is concerned with this question. It seems that Herodian used a number of sources to write his history, but because of the existence of Dio's Roman history, comment must at least

²⁰ Whittaker 1969v1: xii-xiv.

²¹ Sidebottom 1998: 2812-2813.

be made here regarding the historian's use of Dio. Herodian knew Dio and sometimes used Dio,²² but arguments claiming Dio as his *Hauptquelle* have generally been deemed unacceptable.²³ The intricacies of the arguments are not necessary here; what is important is that Herodian was an eyewitness, during his adult years, of the reign of Macrinus and can thus provide another useful account of the emperor's rule. Individual passages will be assessed in terms of the sources used when it is appropriate.

Unlike Dio, Herodian did not have as his aim a complete history of Rome, but rather only the history of his period. Herodian will not accept any unreliable or unwitnessed information, and he will only include those events which are in the recent memory of his readers: ἐγὼ δ' ἱστορίαν οὐ παρ' ἄλλων παραδεξάμενος ἄγνωστόν τε καὶ ἀμάρτυρον, ὑπὸ νεαρᾷ δὲ τῇ τῶν ἐντευξομένων μνήμῃ (1.1.3). This statement at least provides a promising start. What Herodian does record is a history covering the years 180-238, roughly equivalent to the span of time referenced in the preface to his work (1.1.5):²⁴

μερισθεῖσα γὰρ ἡ Ῥωμαίων ἀρχὴ ἐν ἔτεσιν ἐξήκοντα ἐς πλείους δυνάστας ἢ ὁ χρόνος ἀπῆτει, πολλὰ καὶ ποικίλα ἤνεγκε καὶ θαύματος ἄξια.

In sixty years the Roman Empire was divided among more rulers than time permitted, and there were many different events worthy of awe.

In this passage Herodian references the rapid and various changes of power and the various strange occurrences. Hence, this passage is directly applicable to the subject of

²² Roos 1915.

²³ Sidebottom 1998: 2781-2785.

²⁴ The discrepancy of two years here has not caused as much criticism as the reference at 2.15.7 where Herodian claims that his history will cover a period of seventy years: ἐμοὶ δὲ σκοπὸς ὑπάρχει ἐτῶν ἐβδομήκοντα πράξεις πολλῶν βασιλέων συντάξαντι γράψαι, ἃς αὐτὸς οἶδα. (The aim is for me, arranging it in the proper order, to write the deeds of the many kings, which I myself know, during a period of seventy years.) As Whittaker (1969: xi) has pointed out, however, the passages do not necessarily disagree; while the passage at 1.1.5 says that the history will cover sixty years, the passage at 2.15.7 states that the subject of the work fell within the lifetime of the author, which lasted seventy years. Sidebottom (see n. 23 above), however, suggests that the work was unfinished.

this study. While the civil wars of the 190s and the accession of Severus may have been the first events to move the empire into a period of instability, the rise of Macrinus, with his low birth and short period of rule, seems to be the first of many such changes of power that were to destabilize the Roman empire throughout the third century. That Herodian has viewed this period as a departure from prior practice at the very least demonstrates his attention to the great change that was occurring in the Roman world at that time.

The final major literary sources are the relevant biographies in the *Historia Augusta*; perhaps the most telling opinion of the work as a whole is given by Millar (1964: 124): “the problem of the *Historia Augusta* is one into which sane men refrain from entering.” There is no argument with that statement here, as it is not the purpose of this study to give an assessment of the *HA*, but rather to understand its use as a historical source. For the purposes of this study, the relevant *vitae* are of Caracalla, Macrinus, Diadumenianus, and Elagabalus.

The general consensus is that the *vitae* of Macrinus and his son Diadumenianus (called Diadumenus in the *HA*), which of course are the most important for the present study, are of poor quality. Syme classes the *vita Macrini* among the “secondary *vitae*,” the biographies written after the primary source for the previous *vitae* had run out.²⁵ The consequences of this assertion are difficult to ascertain. I am hesitant to think that the author of the *vita Macrini* was unaware of a good source for Macrinus, though he could come up with one for the previous lives and then another for the subsequent life of Elagabalus (see discussion of this point below). In any case, it is true that the *vita*

²⁵ Syme (1971: 57): “The *Macrinus* proclaims a break with the what went before: composition and sources as well as accuracy. It is diffuse as well as careless and cynical.”

Macrini (as well as the *vita Diadumeni*) is full of inaccuracies, and for this reason it will not be considered of fundamental importance for the study of Macrinus. There is some hope, however, for utilization of the *vitae* of Caracalla and Elagabalus. The *vita Caracallae* has been classed among the primary *vitae*, though it is the final biography in this group, whose “author, tired with the task of compiling, compresses six years ruthlessly.”²⁶ There is reasonably good information condensed to the point of occlusion, but perhaps there can be hope for proper extraction. As for the biography of Elagabalus, expectations can be a bit higher. Summing up Barnes, Bowersock states that the *vita* of Elagabalus “exhibits a high degree of accuracy in factual reporting, unlike both the *vita Macrini* and the *vita Diadumeni*.”²⁷ The *vita Elagabali*, therefore, will hopefully shed light on the final part of the Macrinus’ reign.

All in all the problems associated with the *Historia Augusta* are numerous and complex. Specific problems with the biographies will be addressed where they are relevant, but as a whole the *HA* will not be (and need not be) worked over as in a literary study. All information coming from these biographies will have to be treated with the greatest caution.

Numismatic and Epigraphic Evidence

During the reign of Macrinus there was an extremely high output of coin. Bassett (1920: 9) claims over 900 extant examples in 1920, and an examination of coin collections and current auctions shows that well over 1,000 examples can be found today. The major collections of this material are the *Roman Imperial Coinage* and *Coins of the*

²⁶ Syme 1971: 57.

²⁷ Barnes 1972; Bowersock 1975: 231.

Roman Empire in the British Museum, which both cover Macrinus and Diadumenianus. Cohen's major numismatic survey, *Description Historique des Monnaies Frappées sous l'Empire Romain*, is also very useful. There are also various articles on the numismatic evidence that deal with more specific aspects of the coinage.²⁸

The brevity of Macrinus' reign is extremely helpful in accurately dating the extant coins to within a period of a few months. It will be beneficial here to discuss the imperial and provincial coinage separately. The imperial coinage of Macrinus and Diadumenianus can be divided into four issues (the first three are considered major issues);²⁹ these issues comprise over fifty types. According to the two most recent modern collections, *RIC* and *BMC*, both of which were originally published by Dr. Harold Mattingly, all of this coinage came from the mints of Rome and Antioch, the latter of the two cities having served as Macrinus' major base of operations. Although this point of view is not particularly problematic, it leaves some issues to be ironed out in terms of chronology and the distinction between the two mints, a point that is made in the revised edition of *BMC*.³⁰ In the assessment of the coinage that will be made in the present study, there will be an attempt to clarify some of the problems that have arisen from Mattingly's view and to secure a more accurate picture of the minting of coins under Macrinus.

A large number of the surviving coins for Macrinus come from provincial mints in the East. A number of these coins are included in both Cohen and *BMC*, but the relevant portion of *Roman Provincial Coinage* has not yet been completed.³¹ Because

²⁸ e.g. Bellinger 1940; Chiha 1963; Clay 1979; Georgiadis 1999; Gilmore 1978, 1979, 1987; Klawans 1985; Lusnia 1995.

²⁹ Mattingly 1953: 966, corrected by Clay 1979: 22.

³⁰ *BMC* V: ccxiii n. 1; see also chapter 3.

³¹ Volumes I & II of *RPC* have been published, which cover through Domitian; the edition of *RPC* relevant to the Antonines has recently been published with an online version at <http://rpc.ashmus.ox.ac.uk/project/>.

there is not an organized and digested collection of information on the provincial coinage, questions still remain in large number. Given the sheer volume of provincial mintings during the Severan period, it is beyond the scope of this study to include all of the relevant material; however, as full a study as necessary for this reign will be carried out. The provincial coinage will be of great help in tracing the emperor's movements in the East. Furthermore, all of the numismatic material will be used to trace the development of coinage from Caracalla's issues into Macrinus' own use of the medium and to study how Macrinus employed it to consolidate his authority. The coinage will also be of great use in establishing as exact a chronology as possible for the reign of Macrinus, which is often distorted in the literary sources.

The epigraphic evidence for Macrinus is fairly rich as well, especially considering the brevity of his reign and in many instances the erasure of his name after his fall.³² Bassett employs this evidence to a great extent in his study, and various articles on certain aspects of the epigraphy have been written.³³ There can be found over forty inscriptions bearing the name of Macrinus and/or Diadumenianus which derive from almost all areas of the Roman empire. These inscriptions provide information regarding the titulature of the emperor and his son, the commemoration of buildings, the erection of milestones, and the emperor's election into various religious bodies. Individual inscriptions come from Rome, Latium, Spain, Germany, Gaul, Asia, and Africa. These inscriptions will supplement the literary and numismatic evidence throughout the study.

³² Bassett 1920: 5.

³³ e.g. Lovenjak 2004; Pintaudi 1987; Riedl 1999.

Scholarship

Though there seems to be no shortage of questions surrounding the figure of Macrinus, modern scholarship has been slow to give the emperor a full treatment. In English the bibliography is particularly thin. There is a dissertation from the first half of the twentieth century entitled *Macrinus and Diadumenianus*,³⁴ which runs only ninety-two pages and gives more than reasonable credit to the historical reliability of the *Historia Augusta*. Naturally, it is antiquated and needs to be updated. Cuvuto (1983) has also published a brief study (77 pages) of Macrinus and his reign. Beyond these works, Mattingly's (1953) short article *The Reign of Macrinus* stands as the other major work in English to deal with some aspects of the reign and policy of Macrinus; it is a mere eight pages. Baharal's more recent articles deal with Macrinus' attempts at association with the *gens Aurelia*.³⁵

To speak simply of the extant literary sources, there is no major study or modern commentary in English on the relevant sections of Dio; the study of Cassius Dio by Fergus Millar (1964) is extremely informative, but it does not place any particular emphasis on the figure of Macrinus. Other than a few recent articles (such as those contained in *ANRW* II.34.4), modern assessment of Herodian has focused almost exclusively on *Quellenforschung*; there is no commentary in English.³⁶ There is an Italian commentary on the *HA* life of Macrinus,³⁷ but this work hardly covers all of the relevant issues.

³⁴ Bassett 1920; cf. Syme (1972: 279n6): "The study of H.J. Bassett... is obsolete on various counts."

³⁵ Baharal 1996; 1999.

³⁶ In *ANRW* II.34.4, see Sidebottom 1998, Marasco 1998.

³⁷ Pasoli 1968.

The accession of Elagabalus, which dovetails with the latter portions of the study of the reign of Macrinus, has been covered in some detail. A particular emphasis can be isolated in considering the various studies of the Severan women, who make up perhaps one the most intriguing families in all of Roman history.³⁸ These examinations will be helpful for understanding the end of Macrinus' reign and will shed light on the machinations of the Syrian half of the Severan dynasty.

What this survey leaves, then, is ample space for a full-length study of Macrinus. I stress that this project has been undertaken through direct investigation of the ancient sources: literary, numismatic, and epigraphic. This period of Roman history is rich with sources, which make the study of what is generally considered a minor reign possible. Moreover, this abundance of information can even allow this very notion of a "minor" reign to be challenged, as it shows that moment of Macrinus marks a major point of transition in the history of the Roman empire. As *eques*, Moor, and usurper, Macrinus combines three seemingly irreconcilable qualities in an emperor, yet he succeeds for a time in establishing a legitimate supremacy. This dissertation will be of interest and use to those studying the political history of this period, those looking for a detailed analysis of the coins and inscriptions of this emperor, and those with an interest in the historiographic traditions of Cassius Dio, Herodian, and the *Historia Augusta*.

³⁸ e.g. Bowersock 1969; Cleve 1982, 1988; Commucci Biscardi 1987; Kuhoff 1993; Lusnia 1995; Raepsaet-Charlier 1983; Williams 1902, 1904.

Chapter 1 – From Caracalla to Macrinus

Macrinus' reign cannot be viewed or well understood in isolation, and it is therefore necessary to review the conditions of the empire under his predecessor. The literary sources indicate that Caracalla was a reckless leader, and a great deal of Macrinus' reign was spent responding to the confusion that Caracalla left in his wake. The following overview will provide a sufficient background for understanding what exactly Macrinus had to manage.

1.1. Caracalla's domestic policy

It is difficult to judge the reign of Caracalla in terms of a consistent domestic or foreign policy. According to Dio and Herodian, Caracalla seems to have operated on the basis of greed, power, and self-preservation; to say that he had a coherent domestic or foreign policy may perhaps be overstating the case. Simply put, on the domestic front Caracalla was interested in consolidating power upon himself and the army; in foreign affairs he attempted domination and expansion for personal glory. Nevertheless, his six-year reign has provided the modern historian with sufficient information for tracing the emperor's policies, and an outline a description of those policies will follow.

The Roman army was by far the most important government body functioning under Caracalla and that distinction gives it pride of place in this summation of Caracalla's domestic and foreign policies. Under Caracalla the strength of the army had grown immeasurably. Writing from the position of a senator and a member of an institution whose power and influence had perhaps reached its lowest point, Cassius Dio is quick to point out the emperor's inclination towards the army and the gifts that he

lavished upon it.³⁹ These two points run throughout Dio's account of Caracalla's reign, and it is for these reasons that Dio was naturally hostile towards the emperor. There are a number of stories to illustrate this point. Caracalla openly confirmed his low opinion of the senate through a letter to that body in which he praised a certain Pandion and the army, ranking the importance of the senate below them (77.13.6).⁴⁰ In another story, Caracalla, while in Antioch indulging his vices, wrote a letter to the senate. In this particular letter Caracalla explained that he knew of the senate's displeasure with his current actions, but that his reason for having the army was so that he did not have to deal with the senate's complaints (77.20.1-2).

Caracalla's favor towards the army was out of necessity, as well as following his father's last words: "Be happy, make the soldiers rich, and hate all others" (Dio 76.15.2). Dio records the words of Caracalla directly following the assassination of Geta. At this time Caracalla must have felt it necessary to please the army in whichever way he could; he had dissolved the joint rule that he and Geta had received from their father, an action that might very well have upset the army a great deal, given that body's prior allegiance and loyalty to Septimius Severus. He reportedly spoke to the army in the following way (Dio [Xiph.] 77.3.1-2):⁴¹

³⁹ Caracalla had inherited this mode of ruling from his father, Septimius Severus, who, as a usurper, received his power from the army and was forced to grind down senatorial power until it was negligible; the actions of Severus set the tone for rule of the Roman empire that precipitated the so-called "crisis" of 238-285. Cf. Rostovtzeff 1957: 401-403, especially his comment, "Beyond doubt Septimius was the first to base his power firmly and permanently on the army."

⁴⁰ Caracalla had become close with this Pandion, who used to be a charioteer's assistant, but later in the war against the Alamanni he drove Caracalla's chariot. The letter to the Senate explained that Pandion had saved Caracalla from danger, and for this reason he gave more thanks to Pandion than even to the soldiers; but the soldiers he still, as always, considered better than the senate.

⁴¹ These stories in Dio are corroborated by the similar (if not identical) content in the *HA*. Caracalla is reported to have bestowed gifts upon the murderers of his brother Geta as a sign of thanks (*Cc.* 2.5).

“χαίρετε,” εἶπεν, “ὦ ἄνδρες συστρατιῶται· καὶ γὰρ ἤδη ἔξεστι μοι εὐεργετεῖν ὑμᾶς.” “...εἷς,” ἔφησεν, “ἐξ ὑμῶν εἰμι, καὶ δι’ ὑμᾶς μόνους ζῆν ἐθέλω, ἵν’ ὑμῖν πολλὰ χαρίζωμαι· ὑμέτεροι γὰρ οἱ θησαυροὶ πάντες εἰσὶ.”

“Be glad,” he said, “my comrades; for now it is possible for me to show you kindness.” “... I am one of you,” he said, “and you alone are the reason that I wish to live, so that I may greatly indulge you; for you possess all the treasures.”

The dating of this supposed address must of course be 212. The attempt to guarantee his own supremacy and safety led Caracalla to hand over almost all power to the army. This passage also demonstrates Caracalla’s intention to fashion himself as a soldier emperor, which will later be ridiculed by Dio. Dio has placed this passage in a most meaningful position in his account, for it directly precedes Caracalla’s address to the senate after the murder of his brother. The very position shows that in Dio’s opinion the army occupied the most important rank as a governing body in the empire, and that the senate was a mere afterthought, a formality to be dispensed with expeditiously.⁴²

The way that Caracalla kept the army happy and under his sway was simply by paying out vast sums of cash on a regular basis, either at the expense of the state or at the expense of the senate, as Dio and Herodian often point out.⁴³ In a passage which falls into the chronology of 212, following Dio’s text, the senator complains, among other things, of the great amount of money that Caracalla was using to pay the army and that he was often making demands upon the senate for this money (77.9.1-3). Herodian relates a similar story, explaining that after Caracalla murdered Geta, he ordered the palace guards to take him to the military camp; upon arrival he claimed to have escaped a great danger and bestowed a donative of 2500 Attic drachmae upon each of the soldiers (Herod. 4.4.4-

⁴² In fact, the only words from this address that Dio records regard Caracalla’s restoration of condemned exiles. It should be added that to this account from the epitome of Xiphilinus, one might compare the relevant passage in Patricius (Exc. Vat. 136), which states that Caracalla sought the senate’s indulgence not on account of the murder of his brother, but because of a sore throat, ὅτι βραγχᾶ καὶ οὐ βούλεται δημηγορεῖν.

⁴³ Caracalla’s economic policies will be more specifically examined in chapter 4.

7). According to Herodian, the desperation of the measure can be seen in the great amount of money doled out at once; it equaled all of the money that Severus had saved over an eighteen-year period.⁴⁴ In a note Whittaker (1969v1: 394n2) also points out the relevance of the amount. He states that the sum, given in Attic drachmae on account of the fluctuating real value of the denarius (but in fact equal to the true value of a denarius), was less than half the amount given by Didius Julianus and half the amount given by Marcus Aurelius at their respective accessions, but more than ten times the amount of any donative given by Severus. So while Severus may have strengthened the army during his reign, he had at the same time reduced their greed; Caracalla, on the other hand, threw this temperance out the window on his first day of sole rule.

In fact, Dio cannot speak of Caracalla spending any money without mentioning a sum given over to the army. When describing the emperor's obsession with buying animals for himself to slay, Dio explains that this expenditure (which was often the responsibility of the senate) was only rivaled by his desire to pay the soldiers (77.10.1). Furthermore, Dio (77.10.4) has Caracalla claim that "it is necessary for no one to have money except for me, in order that I may spend it on the soldiers."⁴⁵ Finally, in the same passage, when cautioned by Julia Domna that they were running out of money, he responded that they would have money as long as they had the sword.

The army under Caracalla was overpaid, diverse, and expecting of constant donatives from the emperor. It had become powerful enough to affect significantly the course of political life in the Roman empire. Macrinus, as praetorian prefect, was in a

⁴⁴ Of course an extreme exaggeration, but worth noting in terms of the perception of his extravagance. Also, it seems to be part of the negative tradition against Caracalla to exaggerate the surpluses left by Severus in order to highlight the son's profligate spending.

⁴⁵ οὐδένα ἀνθρώπων πλὴν ἐμοῦ ἀργύριον ἔχειν δεῖ, ἵνα αὐτὸ τοῖς στρατιώταις χαρίζωμαι.

position at the outset of his reign to deal with these problems, but, as will be seen later, his attempts at military reform would eventually be undermined by a threat from the East, among other pressing issues.

Financially speaking, Caracalla caused other problems, but they were often connected to his administration of the army. The huge donatives that Caracalla was constantly paying out seem to have put a strain on the finances of the Roman state, which can be seen in the passage cited above in which Julia Domna warns her son about spending too freely (as well as in his response). Caracalla carried out a few measures in order to raise money, though their effectiveness is a point of speculation. Dio recognized this crisis and reports Caracalla's financial plans (77.9.3-5). First, the emperor demanded gifts and money from the senate and wealthy inhabitants of various cities. He carried out the regular system of taxation, but added the 10% tax in place of the 5% tax on the emancipation of slaves, bequests, and all legacies. Furthermore, there was the inheritance tax. Finally, Dio claims that Caracalla made all people of the empire Roman citizens, so that he might bring in more money by taxation.⁴⁶ As Rostovtzeff has pointed out, these financial strains were for the most part placed upon the wealthy, land-owning class, while the lower classes would have been affected only to a small a degree.⁴⁷ This action against the wealthy classes is in keeping with his alienation of and harsh treatment towards them, as well as his favor to the lower classes who would have supplied most of the men for the army.

Other aspects of Caracalla's domestic policy did not necessarily present problems but did affect the administration of the empire under him. First, Caracalla seems to have

⁴⁶ The *constitutio Antoniniana* is referenced here because of Dio's opinion that it was meant to serve as a means for greater tax revenues; for further details on the constitution, see below.

⁴⁷ Rostovtzeff 1957: 417, but compare the findings of Gilliam 1952.

been enjoyed elevating men of low status, such as freedmen, to positions of power normally reserved for those of senatorial or at least equestrian rank. Dio makes note of a number of such men. A certain Theocritus, a mediocre actor and dance instructor of Caracalla, was promoted by the emperor as commander of an army and prefect; he gained so much power that even the two praetorian prefects were below him. Another man, Epagathus, rose to equal power, though Dio does not discuss the offices he held (Dio 77.21.2 = Exc. Val. 391). Festus was a favored freedman who had served as a secretary to Caracalla and who, upon his death at Ilium, was given a funeral like that of Patroclus (Herod. 4.8.4-5).⁴⁸

The other major development during the reign of Caracalla was the *constitutio antoniniana*. The grant of citizenship to all free inhabitants of the Roman empire is reported by Dio (77.9.5):

οὗ ἕνεκα καὶ Ῥωμαίους πάντας τοὺς ἐν τῇ ἀρχῇ αὐτοῦ, λόγῳ μὲν τιμῶν,
ἔργῳ δὲ ὅπως πλείω αὐτῷ καὶ ἐκ τοῦ τοιοῦτου προσίη διὰ τὸ τοὺς ξένους τὰ
πολλὰ αὐτῶν μὴ συντελεῖν, ἀπέδειξεν

For this reason he allowed all people under his rule to be Roman citizens; in word it was honor, but in deed it was so that he might receive a large amount of money from this action, since foreigners were exempt from paying a large portion of the taxes.⁴⁹

The complicated nature of the fragmentary text of *P. Gissen* 40 needn't be a concern here.⁵⁰ More importantly, it is worthwhile to suggest some explanations for Caracalla's actions. Dio's assessment, mentioned above, that the edict was a tax-raising measure, cannot be thrown out entirely, but for the implementation of such a major change more

⁴⁸ Whittaker (1969v1: 417n3) believes this man to be Marcus Festus, who is attested by *CIL* 14, 2638 to have held the position *a cubiculo et a memoria*.

⁴⁹ This edict is recorded by Ulpian as well (*Dig.* 1.5.17, *In orbe romano qui sunt ex constitutione imperatoris antonini cives romani effecti sunt*), and it is generally agreed that the contents of *P. Gissen* 40 I-III report the edict in Greek form. Later texts also preserve the action in one way or another; e.g. Aur. Vict. *Caes.* 16.12; *S* 1.1-2, August. *De civ. D.* 5.17.

⁵⁰ For a clear and sober review of the scholarship on the text, up to 1973, see Sherwin-White 1973: 380-386.

sophisticated explanations have been attempted. The following has been suggested by Potter (2004: 144-145): “It might be possible to read the *constitutio Antoniniana* and his passion for Alexander as signs of a universalizing ideology that aimed at creating a ‘national’ feeling among the diverse peoples of the empire.” Perhaps Caracalla’s brutal reputation and seeming lack of forethought on most issues makes this opinion slightly dubious, but it is not absurd. As will be discussed below, Caracalla spent most of his reign abroad; he had very little use for Rome or the senate and perhaps was willing to extend the citizenship out of a feeling of solidarity with the provinces. Given the financial strains he was putting on the empire, Dio’s suggestion that the move was politically motivated is attractive as well; the financial situation inherited by Macrinus, which is examined in chapter 4, will also make clear why the move could potentially be economically motivated. The financial problems of this period seem to make Dio’s hypothesis credible, but they do not need to be accepted absolutely.

1.2. *Caracalla’s foreign policy*

At the outset, the sources indicate that Caracalla’s foreign policy was one of lowering expectations for an aggressive foreign policy. Dio reports that following the murder of Geta Caracalla made treaties with hostile states and removed his forces from their territories (77.1.1). Dio unfortunately does not specify who these enemies were, but the *HA* (*Cc.* 5.1-2) indicates that he traveled to Gaul after the murder of Geta and proscriptions had been carried out; there he put the governor of Gallia Narbonensis to death. He seems to have returned to Rome,⁵¹ but by early 213 he had left again. From 213-217, however, Caracalla embarked on a long campaign throughout central and

⁵¹ *Cod. Iust.* 7.16.2 is dated February 5, 213 from Rome, though this date could be inaccurate. The visit is recorded by Philostratus (*VS* 2.32.625) and the evidence from milestones given by Okamura 1984: 63-67 supports it. See Meckler 1994: 137-138 for a discussion of the evidence, including the *Cod. Iust.*.

eastern Europe and the Near East. In this phase of the emperor's foreign policy, it seems that Caracalla conducted his interactions with the territories and empires surrounding Rome's dominion with an eye to expansion. The motive for his actions can also be seen as unchecked and unreasoned aggression.

Herodian (4.7.1-3) also states that Caracalla grew tired of life in Rome sometime in 213 and set out for the German frontier on the Danube. Once in Germany he made friends with the Germans (most likely the source for his German bodyguard reported by Dio at 78.6.1) and at times adopted German dress and customs. During this year he led campaigns against the Alamanni (Dio [Xiph.] 77.13.4-5),⁵² and the Cenni, whose defeat Caracalla secured by a cash payment (Dio [Xiph.] 77.14.1-3).⁵³ After finishing up on the Danube, in 214 Caracalla moved towards Thrace, at which point he is reported to have fully adopted the image of Alexander as his own (Herod. 4.8.1; cf. *HA*, *Cc.* 5.8). Confrontations occurred along the way with the Dacians (*Cc.* 5.4), but a settlement was reached; Caracalla returned hostages and a treaty was signed (Dio 77.27.5). Prior to hostilities with the Dacians, Dio makes reference to Caracalla stirring up the Marcomanni, Vandili, and Quadi.

The events in the East during the years 213-215 can be seen as Caracalla's first attempts to harass the Parthian empire and would eventually lead to his weak attempt to

⁵² *CIL* 6, 2086 (= *D* 451) is vague as to the reasons for the expedition, stating only that Caracalla entered the land of barbarians for the purpose of defeating enemies: *dominus n(oster) Imp(erator) sanctissim(us) / Pius M(arcus) Aurelius Antoninus Aug(ustus) pont(ifex) max(imus) per limitem Raetiae ad hostes extirpandos barbarorum (terram) introi(tur)us est*. While in Dio's account Caracalla has some problems with the Alamanni, Aurelius Victor (*Caes.* 21.2) has Caracalla as a victorious conqueror (Drinkwater 2007: 43, 51).

⁵³ In this passage, the fierceness of the Cenni is described in some detail. Caracalla had apparently passed outside of the province of Germany and needed to pay off the Cenni to allow him to retreat with some dignity and re-enter Roman territory. Dio ([Xiph.] 77.14.3-4) also explains that many others engaged Caracalla on his journey in order that they might extract money from him. Dio also complains that Caracalla was in the habit of giving the foreigners real gold, while he distributed debased coinage to the people of the Roman empire. This last point will be touched on again in chapter 4.

conquer it in 216. As the sources indicate, civil strife between Vologaesius VI and Artabanus V, brothers and rival kings in Parthia, brought great volatility to the areas of the Osroeni, Armenians, and Parthians at that time, and Caracalla was looking to take advantage of it. The situation is explained by Dio at 77.12. Abgarus (Severus Abgarus X), king of the Osroeni, had been ruling his people harshly and trying to make them more Roman, and Caracalla used the displeasure of the local population as a pretext to unseating Abgarus. Caracalla called the king to him as if as a friend but imprisoned him upon his arrival; after there was no king, Caracalla overcame the land and made the area a province. A colony was also set up at Edessa. This annexation most likely took place in 213. This move by Caracalla was certainly premeditated and fit into a plan to encroach on the border of Parthia.

The situation in Armenia appears more convoluted in Dio. Caracalla did not take further action in this area until the spring of 216, directly prior to his attack of Parthia itself. Caracalla wished to take advantage of civil strife there between the king of Armenia, Valarsh, and his two sons, one of whom was Tiridates. Offering help to settle their quarrel, Caracalla tricked the king and imprisoned him and his sons.⁵⁴ The Armenians naturally were angry at the imprisonment of their king and an uprising began; according to Dio, Caracalla sent the freedman Theocritus to deal with the situation, but he was defeated (77.21.1). Despite Dio's suggestion that Theocritus was leading a military attack against the Armenians, Mackenzie (1949: 43) has suggested that, since he had previously held the position of *procurator annonae*, Theocritus was most likely sent ahead into Armenia to secure provisions for the impending campaign against Parthia.

⁵⁴ Dio says that Caracalla treated the father of Tiridates the same way as Abgarus, king of the Osroeni, which presumably means that he imprisoned him (77.12.1-2).

While this suggestion is far from certain, it is tempting to mitigate Caracalla's ostensible recklessness and thus refrain from supposing he sent an inexperienced freedman to Armenia in the role of general. In any case, the Armenians became incensed, either at the imprisonment of their king or from the demands made by Theocritus, and they revolted. At the time of his death, it seems that Caracalla had not yet dealt with the Armenian uprising in any constructive way.

The motivation for Caracalla's actions against the Osroeni and the Armenians is fairly clear. Caracalla obviously viewed a victory in Parthia as a crowning achievement for his reign, and he no doubt was enticed by the glory that a sustained domination of that region could bring. By annexing Osroene he was chipping away at the outskirts of the Parthian kingdom. As for Armenia, that state had vacillated between a Roman and Parthian client state for about a century and a half, and it was clearly viewed here as a stepping stone toward conquering the Parthian state. Holding power in both areas could contribute to an easier defeat of Parthia.

To return to his campaigns, Caracalla crossed from Thrace into Asia in 214/5. He visited Pergamum, and it was at this time that he received treatment for an undisclosed medical condition (Herod. 4.8.3).⁵⁵ He left Pergamum in 215 and stopped at Ilium, where he visited the tomb of Achilles and held funeral games for one of his favorite freedman, Festus, who died at Ilium but may have been poisoned by Caracalla for the occasion. Caracalla then traveled throughout Asia and Bithynia before reaching Antioch (Herod. 4.8.6),⁵⁶ which would serve as his *de facto* capital for the remainder of his

⁵⁵ See Nollé 2003.

⁵⁶ On Caracalla's trip through Asia, see Levick 1969 and Johnston 1983; the route is still far from certain.

reign.⁵⁷ In Antioch, Caracalla was accused of luxurious living, a clear sign of the mounting discontent with his reign (Dio 77.20.1-2).

From Antioch he traveled to Alexandria. His pretext for visiting the city was to honor Alexander and the local population, but instead he carried out a most terrible mass murder of the youths of the city (Dio 77.22-23; Herod. 4.8-9; *HA, Cc.* 6.2-3). Herodian states that Caracalla had suddenly “become Alexander” when he marched from Thrace from Macedonia on his way to Asia and consequently ordered statues and other honors for Alexander both at Rome and abroad. The explanation for this immense slaughter is unclear, but it must be more complexly motivated than simply outrage at the insults against him by the local population, as reported by Dio.

The winter of 215/6 seems to have been spent in Nicomedia with the army preparing for a campaign against the Armenians and Parthians (Dio 77.18.1). As for the Parthian situation, Caracalla was hoping to make the most out of the discord between the sons of Vologaesius after the king’s death in 213, as has already been mentioned above. The actions against the Parthians become at this point a bit muddled in Dio. Dio reports the pretext for war was that Vologaesius did not release two hostages. The two men that Caracalla wanted to be sent to him were Tiridates, of the ruling Arsacid family of Armenia, and Antiochus, a Cynic philosopher (Dio 77.19). Vologaesius refused the demand initially, but when he was overthrown by his brother Artabanus, the pair were sent to Caracalla and remained in Roman custody until after the death of Caracalla. When they were finally released by the Parthians, the expedition was temporarily put aside and a new pretext for war had to be found (Dio 77.21). It should be noted here that

⁵⁷ At this time Caracalla also declared Antioch a *colonia* with the *ius Italicum* and restored its Olympic games; Downey 1937: 142n6 & 152 and Potter 2004: 143.

Artabanus, at the outset of his reign, was willing to be compliant with Roman demands, and it is not until provoked by Caracalla that he reversed this policy.

In search of a *casus belli*,⁵⁸ and apparently desiring to bear the title *Parthicus*, Caracalla insisted that he had been denied the hand of the daughter of Artabanus, king of Parthia, in marriage (Dio 78.1.1; Herod. 4.10.1). Caracalla had asked the Parthian king Artabanus for his daughter in marriage; Artabanus refused, knowing that Caracalla's intention was to annex Parthia (Dio 78.1.1-78.2.1). Herodian's version of the story differs from that of Dio. Herodian states that Artabanus was finally worn down by the requests of Caracalla and agreed to offer his daughter in marriage. After the celebration of Caracalla's arrival in Parthia, presumably at the royal palace at Arbela (Whittaker 1969v1: 436n1), had commenced, Caracalla ordered his troops to slaughter the barbarians; he continued to rampage through the Parthian territory and notified the senate by letter that Parthia had been defeated (4.11.1-9). Herodian's account may be a parallel story to the immense slaughter carried out at Alexandria during a public gathering.

While it can be said that Dio's version should be preferred, it is clear that Caracalla used this marriage as an excuse to make an unjustified and unsuspected attack against Parthia. The emperor even used these events as justification for showing off his victory, as can be seen by the title *Parthicus* on his later coinage.⁵⁹ This event must be considered the last important foreign relations action that he took. Following this destruction in Parthia, which must have ended some time in late 216, the army wintered at Edessa. Shortly afterwards, Caracalla was assassinated.

⁵⁸ Debevoise 1938: 265.

⁵⁹ *RIC* 4.1 Caracalla 297a-299e.

Did Caracalla have a plan throughout all of these wars and battles? A positive view of the emperor's actions has been suggested (but not necessarily endorsed) by Potter, as was noted above. While it is not possible (or entirely necessary) to rule out this explanation, it is clear that Caracalla's attempts at "unity" were very often through force, trickery, and outright destruction. Although the years 213-216/7 were full of misguided attempts at conquest and triumph, the final campaign (if it can be termed as such) left the greatest problem to be solved. Indeed, Macrinus would be forced to deal with this Parthian crisis, with detrimental effect for the consolidation of his power. Dio's account, and to a lesser extent Herodian's and the *HA*'s, complicate the problem of understanding Caracalla's intentions to a certain degree. Dio's narrative is more or less a polemic against Caracalla, and the events from 213-217 fit into two categories. In the early part of the campaign, Caracalla is faulted for making too many cash settlements (which fit in with his penchant for overspending). In the second half, which dealt with Armenia, Osroene, and Parthia, Caracalla is portrayed as a reckless and violent conqueror. In any case, the actions recounted above were all performed in a disruptive and at times foolish manner. How Macrinus dealt with the various foreign threats will show his skill as a negotiator and practical thinker in a time of crisis.

1.3. The assassination of Caracalla

The assassination of Caracalla was carried out by a small group of men led by Macrinus. Macrinus was at the time serving as the juridical praetorian prefect; his colleague was the elderly Oclatinus Adventus. Macrinus' motives for carrying out the coup are somewhat simplified in the text of Dio, though his role as main conspirator is clear. The purpose of this section will be to explore the omens associated with the

assassination, to examine the men involved in the plot, and to untangle the story of the actual murder. By doing these three things, it will also be possible to observe how the coup came about and what Macrinus' objectives were in carrying it out.

To Dio, who consistently reports these omens, the power of a prophetic event or person was great, and he clearly believed in these signs. They also serve a literary purpose as either a lead up or prologue to a major historical event (Millar 1964: 77). The reporting of prodigies for his contemporary history presents a problem of interpretation for the modern reader. Dio reports not only omens that he could very well have observed himself, but also others that must derive from current rumors. Clearly they must be *post eventum* explanations for major historical events, but it is not possible to fully understand the author's attitude toward and use of the omens. Since Dio very seldom provides his own analysis of historical events (Millar 1964: 76), it may very well be that he used the omens as explanations for what was happening around him.

Dio presents the omens at 78.4.1-5, interspersed with the main events of his narrative. A seer from Africa had made it known that Macrinus and Diadumenian were destined for the throne; upon being sent to Rome this man repeated his prophecy to Flavius Maternianus, who was in charge of the city at the time.⁶⁰ This prompted Maternianus to immediately write a letter to Caracalla in order to alert him of the prophecy. The letter ended up in the hands of Julia Domna, who was in Antioch and was in charge of the emperor's mail. Ulpian, who at the time was serving as *a censibus* under Caracalla (see Appendix 1, 78.4.3), wished to alert Macrinus of the omen and possible reaction to it by Caracalla; he was able to send the letter directly to Macrinus

⁶⁰ Though he was most likely not *praefectus urbi*; see Appendix 1, 78.4.2.

by separate couriers, as Dio reports. Thus, while the letter to Caracalla was delayed, Macrinus received his letter on time. According to Dio, this letter aroused great fear in Macrinus.⁶¹

Despite remaining unaware of the contents of the letter from Maternianus, Caracalla received a number of other signs of his impending doom. He was told to his face by the Egyptian seer Serapio that his life was nearly over and that Macrinus would succeed him (Dio 78.4.5). Once he finishes narrating the assassination of Caracalla, Dio lists more events that aroused astonishment in him. He reports a dream of Caracalla that occurred to the emperor just prior to setting out on the Parthian campaign from Antioch. In this dream, Severus appeared to his son and claimed that he would slay Caracalla just as Caracalla had slain Geta. In addition to dreams, the soothsayers that Caracalla had consulted returned to him bad news; these *haruspices* told Caracalla that the gates of the liver were shut and that he should beware. The lion that he was accustomed to keep as a table and bed companion attacked him and ripped his clothes. The temple of Serapis at Alexander, which held the sword with which Caracalla had killed Geta, burned, but nothing was damaged except for the sword, which was destroyed. After the fire, many stars appeared in the sky. At Rome, an apparition in the form of a man approached the Capitol with an ass. He said the ass was looking for its master and that Caracalla was dead and Jupiter was ruler. When he was sent to Caracalla by Maternianus, he told the

⁶¹ Herodian's (4.12.4-8) slightly different version of the events has one letter sent by Maternianus, who had been ordered to specifically seek out prophecies of this sort, directly to Caracalla. As praetorian prefect Macrinus was in charge of sorting the emperor's mail, and he intercepted the letter himself. In any case, Caracalla was not ready to pay attention to the letter since he was preparing for a chariot race. Herodian does not relate Ulpius Julianus' involvement, but Julianus' promotion to praetorian prefect under Macrinus seems to confirm it, assuming that the appointment has not been used to justify the story,

emperor that he would not come to this same emperor but to another (78.7). Dio later equates that ass with Macrinus (78.11.1).

Dio continues the omens in the following chapter. A statue of Mars fell down at the horse race honoring Severus' accession, which Dio links with the following event. At the circus on a day on which the Green faction was defeated, a bird was greeted as "Martialis" by the crowd, the same name as the assassin of Caracalla. Some even thought Caracalla had predicted his death, telling the senate not to say that they hoped he would reign for a hundred years, as he had previously wished that they so do. When Dio had been with Caracalla at Nicomedia, the emperor quoted ominous words of Euripides to him. Finally, Zeus Belus at Apamea in Syria told him of the destruction of his house (Dio 78.8).

Dio disregards chronology throughout this report of the omens, and no doubt they constituted a *post eventum* explanation for the murder of Caracalla. But it is clear that Dio believes all of these omens, and according to his report, Caracalla should have as well. Faith in these phenomena no doubt seems strange to the modern reader, but they carried great weight in the ancient world; Dio need not be considered an overly superstitious man. Dio's faith in the omens, however, does obscure his point of view as a historian, as will be seen in his (and others') story of the background of Caracalla's assassination.

1.4. The conspirators

It would have been impossible for Macrinus to carry out such a bold plan without the help of a number of individuals in certain positions of power. The most complete

(though not completely unproblematic) list of conspirators is provided by the *HA* (*Cc.*

6.6):

conscii caedis fuerunt Nemesianus et frater eius Apollinaris Triccianusque, qui praefectus legionis secundae Parthicae militabat et qui equitibus extraordinariis praeerat, non ignorantibus Marcio Agrippa, qui classi praeerat, et praeterea plerisque officialium impulsu Martialis.

Those with knowledge of the murder were Nemesianus and his brother Apollinaris and Triccianus, who was commanding the second Parthian legion as prefect and who was in charge of the *equites extraordinarii*. Marcus Agrippa, who commanded the navy, knew of the plan, and so were many others of the emperor's staff, on account of Martialis' urging.

It will be necessary to add Ulpus Julianus to the list, given his involvement in the sending of letters in Dio's version of the events.

Ulpus Julianus will be considered before the others because of his appearance in Dio prior to the execution of coup. His involvement in the conspiracy is not included in Herodian's account, though its absence in that text does not prove Dio's unreliability on the matter. It is difficult to discern Julianus' motives, and Dio does not state them outright. One can imagine either hatred for Caracalla or sympathy towards Macrinus; personal safety was probably also a factor. In any case he soon found himself promoted to praetorian prefect under Macrinus (Dio 78.15.1; *HA*, *OM* 10.2), and thus he should be included in the list of conspirators, despite the omission in the *HA* (for doubts of this view, see Appendix 1, 78.4.3). At the time of the murder he was a *consensus*, having earlier served as "commander of the messengers," which Howe suggests might be either *centuriones frumentarii* or *principes peregrinorum* (Howe 1942: 73 no. 27). Howe also points out that a *consensus* was an important office, which shows involvement in the conspiracy by high-ranking officials. Macrinus of course had access to such men on account of his position as praetorian prefect.

Nemesianus and Apollinaris (Appendix 1, 78.5.1-2) were brothers from the Aurelian gens and tribunes in the praetorian guard at the time of the assassination. Presumably this position gave Macrinus access to them, and perhaps they felt a certain loyalty to the prefect. They are not named as conspirators in the account of Herodian. Other than having knowledge of the plot, their role in the conspiracy is unclear. In Dio they are closely connected with Julius Martialis, so it is perhaps possible that they were present at the time of the assassination, traveling in Caracalla's retinue.

Aelius Decius Triccius and Marcus Agrippa round out the group named in the *HA* as conspirators in the plot. While it does not seem that they actively participated in the murder, they at least had some knowledge of it beforehand. Their involvement in the plot can be confirmed by both Dio and the inscriptional evidence. After Macrinus took power, Triccius, who had been in command of *legio II Parthica* at the time of the conspiracy, was named governor of Pannonia Inferior (Dio 78.13; *AE* 1953, 11). Triccius' role in the conspiracy was most likely to keep the *legio II Parthica* under control while the shift in power took place. Dio reports that, in addition to currently having charge of the Alban legion, Triccius had previously served as a soldier in Pannonia and a *θυρωρόν* of the governor there. Agrippa became governor of Dacia, having previously served in many capacities in the Roman government (Dio 78.13; see more specifically Appendix 1, 78.13.3-4).

Julius Martialis was the man who agreed to carry out the murder. The ability of Macrinus to convince Martialis to undertake such a daring plan came from a grudge that Martialis held against Caracalla, which is reported in both Dio and Herodian. Dio mentions it briefly, simply stating that Martialis felt slighted because he had not been

promoted to centurion (78.5.3). Herodian (4.13.1) tells a different story: Martialis' brother had been executed by Caracalla only a few days prior on an unproven charge. In addition, Caracalla had been in the habit of insulting his low birth and of being a friend of Macrinus. Dio's version is to be preferred for a number of reasons. First, Dio lists Martialis as an *evocatus*; Herodian has him as a centurion, the same post that Dio claims he was frustrated in not having obtained. Second, according to Herodian, Martialis' involvement in the plot was based on the recent murder of his brother, which in consequence made the conspiracy only a few days old. The intricacy of the conspiracy and the public relations display afterwards rules out the possibility that the plot was a last minute arrangement.⁶²

The list of conspirators assembled here shows that Macrinus was able to recruit a sufficient number of high ranking officials, as well as a fall man, to carry out the conspiracy. No doubt the plot was also known by others, whom the sources do not name. One might suggest, however, that carrying out the conspiracy is easy, while surviving the aftermath is the difficult part, especially when surrounded by an army that by all accounts was favorable to the emperor on account of his indulgence of it. After a discussion of exactly how the plot was executed, it will be necessary to examine how Macrinus dealt with potential anarchy after the murder of Caracalla.

⁶² Herodian has also repeated the motive of Macrinus to kill Caracalla for Martialis; for just as Macrinus was angered at Caracalla's insults regarding his low birth and accusations of his effeminacy (4.12.1-2), so Martialis was driven to kill the man on account of very similar abuse (cowardice and low birth) heaped on him (4.13.1) by the emperor.

1.5. *The murder of Caracalla and the accession of Macrinus*

The actual plot against Caracalla was carried out on April 8, 217.⁶³ The location of the murder is vague. Dio reports that Caracalla was traveling from Edessa to Carrhae (78.5.4), while Herodian has him based in Carrhae and traveling just outside of this city (4.13.3). The *HA* follows Dio and has him traveling from Edessa to Carrhae (*Cc.* 6.6). It seems that Caracalla had stayed at Edessa during the winter of 216-217 and was traveling to Carrhae in order to renew hostilities with the Parthians. The Parthians seem to have already been on the offensive at this point, for Herodian has a report announcing their advance directly following the murder of Caracalla (4.14.1; cf. Debevoise 1938: 266).

Herodian and the *HA* are in virtual agreement as to where the emperor was going: Caracalla had desired to visit the temple of the moon goddess in that region. Herodian states that Caracalla was making a short journey to the temple of Selene, which Whittaker explains is stated in confusion for the moon god Sîn (Herod. 4.13.3; Whittaker 1969v1: 449n2). The *HA* seems to conflate these two stories, stating that Caracalla was traveling to Carrhae in order to honor the moon god there. Dio makes no mention of the reasons for Caracalla's travel. The emperor was traveling with a small retinue composed of Roman officers as well as his customary German and Scythian bodyguard. At some point during the trip he felt the need to relieve himself (only Herodian explicitly states that the emperor was suffering from diarrhea) and he had the company stop so that he could relieve himself. While in the act, Julius Martialis seized the opportunity and approached the vulnerable emperor. He stabbed Caracalla with a small dagger, but was

⁶³ The *HA* (*Cc.* 10.6) has the assassination during the feast of the Magna Mater (celebrated April 4-10), on the emperor's birthday, which Dio agrees is April 4 (78.6.5).

detected by the Scythian guard and was immediately felled by a spear. Both Martialis and Caracalla died.

Upon the murder of an emperor, one might expect complete chaos, but it does not seem to have been the case in this situation. Dio's narrative, in fact, makes a long pause before returning to the action; in the interim he discusses the omens mentioned above, some final words for Caracalla, and the background of Macrinus. Only at 78.11.4 does he mention the succession of Macrinus, and then only briefly. Herodian, on the other hand, reports the accession of Macrinus immediately, but he stresses that the army was at a loss and that the Parthians were quickly advancing (the chronology of this period will be discussed below). Both Dio and Herodian can be seen as agreeing that two days passed without an emperor (see Appendix 1, 78.11.4). In all accounts, there does not seem to have been a great amount of unrest, which perhaps attests to the intricate planning of the scheme.

The choice of a new emperor was left entirely up to the army, which seems to have been controlled by the machinations of Macrinus. The senate was never given a chance to appoint an emperor, and in fact did not confirm Macrinus' rule until some time in May 217 (Dio 78.17.1). At first Oclatinus Adventus, Macrinus' fellow prefect, either claimed the position for himself or was proposed for the job, but he was considered too old and stepped aside (according to the differing reports of Dio 78.14.2 and Herod. 4.14.2). It is difficult to believe that Adventus, though his age may have been advanced, would have turned down the office; in any case, he was still serving as praetorian prefect, so his age could not have been considered such a detriment. What seems to have happened is that Macrinus made a deal with his fellow prefect: Adventus would be

innocently proposed as emperor so that accusations of the crime might be deflected from Macrinus himself. This idea is further enhanced by the span of time that elapsed between the assassination and the accession; Macrinus did not want to seize the throne at once, for it would have been an express admission of guilt.

There is further evidence of Adventus' role in such a plan; also, he most likely knew of the plot against Caracalla in advance, though it may be going too far to classify him as an actual conspirator. After Adventus conveniently stepped aside and allowed Macrinus to be proclaimed emperor, he experienced a swift and surprising career advancement. Macrinus adlected Adventus to the senate and made him co-consul and prefect of the city. Previously Adventus had served as a mercenary, courier, and procurator. Macrinus was greatly criticized for such advancements, for Adventus was old, illiterate, and inexperienced (Dio 78.14.1). Dio also reports that Adventus was not smart enough to carry on a conversation with anyone in the senate and faked a sickness on the day of elections, and in general was completely unworthy of receiving the great honor of being a member of the senate (78.14.2).

1.6. Macrinus' initial consolidation of power

At this point it is worth looking backwards and acknowledging the somewhat unprecedented situation in which Macrinus found himself. Generally speaking, the murder of an emperor brought about many claims to the throne and usually civil war, during which pretenders had to be ousted. To point out the most obvious examples, Nero and Commodus might be mentioned as emperors whose assassinations led to extended civil strife. Given the recent history of Septimius Severus' rise to power, especially considering the enhanced power of the army during this period, one might expect

Macrinus to have had to fight off other aspirants to the throne. The reasons why such an engagement never arose need to be examined.

In the previous civil war following the death of Pertinax, several men, all in charge of significant military forces, made a claim to the throne; at this time the legions were spread across the empire. Because of his foreign policy, the end goal of which was the subjugation of Parthia, Caracalla had been relying on the legions in strategic places in the eastern provinces. Macrinus was able to take advantage of this concentration of the army. No pretenders were forthcoming, and he made sure of this by taking certain men into his plan for the assassination. Macrinus, in fact, used his own position and his ability to make crucial appointments to reduce the risk of an uprising from the army. The locations of the following legions are known rather exactly in the Severan period, as can be seen in Table 1.

Table 1: Legions and their locations, 217 / 218 ⁶⁴

Legion	Location	Legion	Location
I Adiutrix	Upper Pannonia	VI Ferrata	Judaea
I Italica	Lower Moesia	VI Victrix	Britain
I Minervia	Lower Germany	VII Claudia	Upper Moesia
I Parthica	Mesopotamia	VII Gemina	Spain
II Adiutrix	Lower Pannonia	VIII Augusta	Upper Germany
II Augusta	Britain	X Fretensis	Judaea
II Italica	Noricum	X Gemina	Upper Pannonia
II Parthica	Syria	XI Claudia	Lower Moesia
II Trajana	Egypt	XII Fulminata	Cappadocia
III Augusta	Africa-Numidia	XIII Gemina	Pannonia
III Cyrenaica	Arabia	XIV Gemina	Upper Pannonia
III Gallica	Syria	XV Apollinaris	Cappadocia
III Italica	Raetia	XVI Flavia	Syria
III Parthica	Mesopotamia	XX Valeria Victrix	Britain
IV Flavia	Upper Moesia	XXII Primigenia	Lower Germany
IV Scythica	Syria	XXX Ulpia	Upper Germany
V Macedonica	Dacia		

⁶⁴ Compiled from Le Bohec (1994: 26, 205-206), Webster (1969: 110-113), and Parker (1971: 160-168).

This list includes the thirty legions that were in existence at the time of death of Commodus, in addition to the three Parthian legions (I-III) that were raised by Septimius Severus.⁶⁵

It is perhaps also worthwhile not only to look at the thirty-three legions as a whole but also to divide them up into roughly geographic groupings, as in Table 2. From these two tables, it is clear that the largest number of legions was located in the area near Antioch on the Orontes in Syria, which Macrinus made the headquarters for his reign. The majority of the legions are found in the eastern Roman provinces and the lower Danube region of Moesia, Dacia, and Pannonia. The point is not that Macrinus had anything to do with the positioning of the legions, but that he had to deal with them in a constructive way, given the immense power of the army that has been outlined above.

Dio indirectly indicates how Macrinus went about keeping the army in check and prevented any uprising of a usurper by listing several provincial appointments made by Macrinus at 78.13. It is Dio's intention to censure Macrinus for the appointment of unworthy men to high positions, but in fact he is implicitly detailing for our benefit Macrinus' attempt to ensure his own safety. Dio (78.13.2) states that Macrinus immediately (πρότερον) recalled the governors of Pannonia and Dacia, Sabinus and Castinus, who were partisans of Caracalla. He replaced them initially with Marcus Agrippa in Pannonia. Agrippa was later moved to Dacia, and Decius Triccianus took his place in Pannonia. It has already been mentioned that Aelius Decius Triccianus, a conspirator, had led the *legio II Parthica*, a strong and important legion, a helpful

⁶⁵ Parker (1971: 168): "No changes were made by Commodus in the positions of the legions, and in 193 A.D. they numbered 30, which, with the exception of the transfer of V Maced. from Lower Moesia to Dacia and the posting of Marcus' new legions to Rhaetia and Noricum, occupied the same camps as they were garrisoning on the death of Hadrian."

addition to the conspiracy for his sway over that group of soldiers. This move would have left these two men, who had sided with Macrinus, in charge of those legions, preempting a coup from the Danubian armies, and it worked to provide support from a not too distant region.

Table 2: Legions by geographic area, 217 / 218

Geographic Area	Legions positioned there	No. of Legions
Syria Mesopotamia Judaea Cappadocia Arabia	II Parthica, III Gallica, IV Scythica, XVI Flavia I Parthica, III Parthica VI Ferrata, X Fretensis XII Fulminata, XV Apollinaris III Cyrenaica	11
Moesia Dacia Pannonia	I Italica, IV Flavia, VII Claudia, XI Claudia V Macedonica I Adiutrix, II Adiutrix, X Gemina, XIII Gemina, XIV Gemina	10
Germany Noricum Raetia	I Minervia, VIII Augusta, XXII Primigenia, XXX Ulpia II Italica III Italica	6
Egypt Africa-Numidia	II Trajana III Augusta	2
Spain	VII Gemina	1
Britain	II Augusta, VI Victrix, XX Valeria Victrix	3

Later, Dio (78.35) details the situation in Egypt and discusses two men, Bassianus and Marius Secundus, both partisans of Macrinus (καὶ ἦσαν κατὰ ταῦτα ἀμφότεροι αὐτῶ [i.e. Μακρίνῳ] προσκείμενοι). Basilianus was governor of Egypt (cf. also *AE* 1905, 54), while Secundus managed affairs in Phoenicia, and their appointments secured two further legions, *II Trajana* and *III Augusta*, which were located in Egypt and North Africa.

The largest number of legions remained in the area of Asia Minor, Syria, Judaea, and Mesopotamia. Clearly Macrinus' presence in the area was to a certain extent meant to manage the legions, and therefore was a measure taken for personal security and not only a safeguard against an attack from Parthia. There is also some evidence that Macrinus made a brief trip around various cities in Syria to canvas support for his regime (discussed below in chapter 2). In any case, his continued presence there was most likely meant as a security measure, though in the end it would eventually fail.

The initial control of a large number of legions in Syria also would have helped deter usurpers from other parts of the empire. In the two days between Caracalla's murder and his own accession, Macrinus must have been monitoring the feeling of the army towards him before assuming the crown. Once he felt secure, and once he and Adventus had gone through their ruse, Macrinus accepted the power and with it the backing of the large number of surrounding legions. The assassination was clearly well planned and well timed, with a specific successor mind. This helps to explain why matters did not devolve into civil war, as they did in 193 after the plot against Pertinax. One of the major differences is that there was no plan for a successor to Pertinax, just discontent among the praetorian guard. The lack of a planned successor led to Didius Julianus purchasing the throne in the senate chamber (Dio 74.11.2-6), while Septimius Severus and Pescennius Niger began their march on Rome, from Pannonia and Syria, respectively. Macrinus wisely planned for military approval first, while almost disregarding the opinion of the weakened senate.

Aside from his own actions in initially securing his rule, other historical *comparanda* help to clarify how Macrinus was able to take power. One accession with

which Macrinus' coup has several points of contact is that of Nerva, and a brief examination of that unproblematic succession will throw light on that of Macrinus. Nerva had successfully aligned himself with the Flavians after the assassination of Nero and was rewarded with imperial posts, including a consulship in 71 (the only time Vespasian and Titus did not hold the consulship together). Again in 90 he held a consulship with Domitian, and on the day of Domitian's assassination he was named emperor.⁶⁶ Although he was not a part of the senatorial class as Nerva was, Macrinus quietly made his way to the top of his possible *cursus*, holding the praetorian prefecture under Caracalla and in general avoiding trouble under a harsh and unpredictable emperor.⁶⁷ Furthermore, the power among the government bodies in the Roman empire had shifted in the 120 years separating Nerva and Macrinus. Nerva gained the crown through the power and approval of the senate, while Macrinus needed military approval to secure his rule. The difference, however, is not in the way each gained power; both Nerva and Macrinus had to appeal to the most powerful governing body at the time. It is simply that the balance of power had shifted so far away from the senate by the early third century that they simply rubber-stamped his accession while the soldiers proclaimed Macrinus and Diadumenian as Augustus and Caesar, respectively.

The question of Caracalla's heir also needs consideration. One of the major problems with Caracalla's reign was the way that it ended, or rather, the lack of forethought that he put into setting up the proper mechanism for the accession of a

⁶⁶ For a collection of the ancient sources stressing a palace plot: Gephardt 1922: 89. For the most complete account: Suet. *Dom.* 14. In Suetonius' account, Domitian's death has much in common with Caracalla's: astrological prediction, extreme paranoia, quotations of poetry, and attempts to kill off suspicious characters surrounding him, which perhaps shows how Dio's account is influenced by historiographical conventions as much as driven by the historical events.

⁶⁷ Macrinus' career is examined with greater detail in chapter 2.

chosen successor. It is clear, even from the tainted version of events that is filtered through the hatred of Dio, however that attitude may be understandable, that Caracalla could not psychologically process the concept of arranging for an heir, any more than he was prepared to tolerate any other sort of competitor. Thus Geta was killed off very early in his reign, and his memory was erased to the greatest extent possible. Furthermore, Caracalla seems to have thought that he might reign for an extremely long period of time, despite knowing the final outcomes of predecessors such as Domitian or Commodus. His wish that the senate proclaim that he might be emperor for a hundred years would appear to make this delusion clear (Dio 78.8.3). Perhaps his insistence on being identified with Alexander only enhanced this recklessness; he cared only for his own glory in the future, while the continuation of the dynasty was not a concern at all. It is known that he was married Plautilla, the daughter of Plautianus, in 203 (Dio 76.1.2), but having hated her since their marriage he had her banished to Lipara (Dio 76.6.3) and finally killed her off in the proscriptions following Geta's murder (Dio 77.1.1). It does not appear that he and Plautilla had any children, nor does he seem to have married again. The lack of a wife after Plautilla perhaps gave rise to the accusations of incest between him and Julia Domna (*HA, Cc.* 10.4).

Macrinus' reaction to his succession, and perhaps to Caracalla's lack of a successor as well, was to name an heir as quickly as possible and to make him known in various ways throughout the empire. His young son Diadumenian, perhaps nine or ten years old at the time, was named Caesar almost immediately and his portrait and name shows up on coins and inscriptions throughout Macrinus' reign (a point which will be considered in greater detail in chapter 3). Macrinus was interested in styling himself with

some connection to the Severans but also wanted to establish a dynasty of his own.

Perhaps he felt the tenuous nature of his hold on power, or he had analyzed the lack of a successor as a failure of Caracalla's rule.

Despite his initial success in securing power, Macrinus was hardly a typical emperor. What makes Macrinus stand out is his unusual position as the first non-senatorial emperor ever to rule the Roman empire. Macrinus' background as an *eques* was deemed extremely insulting to the office he held, according to Dio's account (78.11.1). He was from most undistinguished parents (γονέων ἀδοξοτάτων ἦν); Dio likens him to the ass that had been led up the Capitol by that monitory spirit, reported as an attendant omen to the murder of Caracalla. He came from Mauretania, and Dio claims that he is a Moor by nationality. Macrinus' background is a significant aspect of his reign and must be considered in order to straighten out some vague details in the sources and to better understand how he made his way to the throne.

Chapter 2 – Macrinus, his background and career

2.1. *Macrinus and Mauretania*

Macrinus reportedly came from Mauretania Caesariensis (Dio 78.11). The area referred to as Mauretania, west of Numidia and north of Gaetulia, lies in modern day Algeria and Morocco, and it was virtually unknown to the Romans until the second Punic War. Later during the Jugurthine War at the end of the second century BCE, Bocchus, king of Mauretania, after originally opposing Rome and siding with Jugurtha, eventually surrendered Jugurtha to the Romans by the persuasion of Sulla. As a result he handed down his kingdom to his sons Bocchus II and Bogud, confirmed by Julius Caesar in 49 BCE. Bocchus II and Bogud sided with Octavian and Antony respectively. Bocchus II usurped his brother's land and was supported by Octavian. In the eight years following Bocchus' death in 33 BCE, Octavian set up twelve Roman colonies there (Mackie 1983); in 25 BCE, Octavian handed over to Juba II and his wife Cleopatra Selene, daughter of Antony and Cleopatra, all of Mauretania, which had previously been ruled by Bocchus II and Bogud, as a client kingdom (Dio 53.26.2). In return Octavian received Numidia, which was made a Roman province. Caligula killed Ptolemy, son of Juba II, in 40 CE for unknown reasons. After the ensuing uprisings were quelled, Claudius in 42 CE divided Mauretania into two parts, separated by the river Mulucha, calling them Mauretania Tingitana (to the west) and Mauretania Caesariensis (to the east) (Dio 60.8; Pliny *HN* 5.1).⁶⁸

Macrinus' hometown, Caesarea in Mauretania Caesariensis, had previously been Iol under Juba II and Cleopatra Selene, and it served the capital of their kingdom. Prior

⁶⁸ The events are confusing in the literary sources; cf. Fishwick's (1971: 467) comment: "The circumstances under which Mauretania was incorporated within the Roman Empire are notoriously uncertain."

to Roman occupation, the city had been a Punic settlement (Lawless 1978: 161), but even during the Roman period the indigenous people, Berbers and Numidians, made up a significant part of its population (Mommsen 1909: 334). Octavian and Claudius were responsible for its colonization and the subsequent influx of Italian inhabitants. The multiple cultural groups residing in this city are complex and make the determination of Macrinus' ethnicity difficult.⁶⁹ I intend to lay out the evidence available for determining Macrinus' ethnicity and then discuss the more important issue, Dio's motivation for including such information in his narrative.

Macrinus' ethnicity is described in the following passage from Dio (78.11.1):

ὁ δὲ δὴ Μακρίνος τὸ μὲν γένος Μαῦρος, ἀπὸ Καισαρείας, γονέων ἀδοξοτάτων ἦν, ὥστε καὶ σφόδρα εἰκότως αὐτὸν τῷ ὄντι <τῷ> ἐς τὸ παλάτιον ὑπὸ τοῦ δαιμονίου ἐσαχθέντι εἰκασθῆναι· τὰ τε γὰρ ἄλλα καὶ τὸ οὖς τὸ ἕτερον κατὰ τὸ τοῖς πολλοῖς τῶν Μαύρων ἐπιχώριον διετέτρητο·

Indeed Macrinus was a Moor by nationality, from Caesarea, of the most undistinguished parents; and so he was very suitably compared to the ass that was lead up to the capital by the ghost. And in addition one of his ears was pierced, according to the custom of many of the Moors.

Basset (1920: 14), however, has paraphrased the passage thus:

Dio (78, 11 , 1) tells us that Macrinus was a Moor of very low birth, and that his ear had been bored as a mark of his servile condition, that being a custom among many of the Moors.

While Bassett's paraphrase is essentially correct, it is clear that Dio does not absolutely mean to designate Macrinus' pierced ear as a sign of servility, though that may be implied. Furthermore, the use of the term "Moor" can be misleading. A closer examination of the passage will perhaps be useful for clarification.

⁶⁹ In a recent article dealing with the "Romanization" of North Africa during the Republic, Fentress (2006: 5) provides a useful point of view for not drawing strict ethnic distinctions in this region: "I intend to avoid a simple opposition between the Numidian, or indigenous, Berber peoples, and the Punic settlers who had gradually colonized the coast since the seventh century BC, with their capital at Carthage. Such an opposition fails to grasp the much more complex linkages between the two societies which characterized pre-conquest North Africa."

Dio indicates that Macrinus himself was a Moor, which insinuates to the modern reader that he was from one of the native Berber tribes of the region. Taking this piece of evidence, it is possible to glean some information from other passages in Dio.⁷⁰ On two other occasions Dio points out that certain men are Mauretanians: Bogud (mentioned above) and Lusius Quietus, praetorian prefect under Trajan. Bogud is ὁ Βογούας ὁ Μαῦρος, “Bogud the Moor” (Dio 48.45.1). Lusius Quietus, meanwhile, is described as Κυῆτος Λούσιος Μαῦρος μὲν ἦν, “Lusius Quietus was a Moor” (Dio 68.32.4).⁷¹ Each of these men seems to be a Moor by their *ethnicity*, as opposed to their *regional identity* or *nationality*, if one can draw such a distinction in the ancient world. In both of these expressions, Dio refrains from using the word γένος, suggesting that its usage in his description of Macrinus is perhaps significant.

The use of γένος in this passage is defined in the *Index Graecitatis* as “populus, natio” and various *comparanda* are listed. It will be helpful here to examine several examples of its usage in Dio. At 77.17.2 Sempronius Rufus is καὶ εὐνοῦχος ἡμῶν, τὸ γένος Ἰβηρ, τὸ δὲ ὄνομα Σεμπρώνιος Ῥοῦφος, “He, a native of Spain, was named Sempronius Rufus.” At 79.21.2, Αὐρήλιος Εὐβουλος, ὃς Ἐμεσηνὸς μὲν τὸ γένος ἦν, “Aurelius Eubolos, an Emesenan by birth.” This description of Macrinus can easily be translated “a Moor by birth” or “Moor by nationality;” one might suspect that if Dio

⁷⁰ The peril of comparing epitomized Dio with actual Dio is here realized, but it is believed that the epitomators have been largely faithful to Dio’s text.

⁷¹ Lusius Quietus (*PIR* L 439) was in charge of the Moorish cavalry but dishonorably dismissed from the position, probably during the reign of Domitian. He volunteered to help Trajan against the Dacians and later fought with Trajan against the Parthians. In 116 he put down a Jewish revolt in Mesopotamia. As a reward for his service, he was adlected to the senate in 117, serving as suffect consul and later as governor of Judaea. Under Hadrian he was removed from his governorship and executed, having been accused in a conspiracy against the emperor. Dio (68.32) states that his rapid promotion led to jealousy among the senators.

was referring to his nationality rather than ethnicity, he might have used language more similar to his descriptions of Bogud and Lusius Quietus, cited above.

While a distinction can be made based on Dio's use of γένος, a piece of evidence from the imperial period is useful here. By the time of Tacitus the designation *maurus* referred generally to any inhabitant of the two Roman provinces of Mauretania; at *Ann.* 14.28, Tacitus tells the story of Vibius Secundus, who was convicted of extortion, a charge brought by the Moors (*accusantibus Mauris*).⁷² The usage of *maurus* from Tacitus seems to share the same usage as Μαῦρος in Dio, and thus seems to suggest that Macrinus is only being identified by Dio as someone hailing from Mauretania.

In the second piece of evidence presented above, Dio explains that Macrinus bore a physical mark of his nationality: he had a pierced ear. It is noteworthy that Dio refers to only one pierced ear, though not using the plural does not necessarily have to indicate that both ears were not pierced. Dio points out this physical feature because it was not Roman practice for men to wear earrings, the custom being suitable only for women. For this reason, then we can perhaps rule out the possibility that Macrinus was the offspring of Italian colonists who came to Caesarea perhaps in the time of Claudius, when the city became a colony.⁷³

There is plenty of evidence for ear piercing among provincial or foreign men. Pliny reports that in the East it was a sign of status for men to wear an earring,⁷⁴ and one might believe that this extends to Macrinus' cultural background as well. In reports from other ancient sources, it seems more than common for a man from north Africa or the

⁷² This passage is cited by Gozalbes 1991: 38.

⁷³ Bassett (1920: 14) makes such an argument, and it is rejected here.

⁷⁴ Pliny *HN* 11.50: "In the East, too, it is thought highly becoming for the men, even, to wear gold rings in their ears."

East to have either one or both of his ears pierced. Most importantly, however, it will be clear that the pierced ear can not be viewed as a definite mark of nationality or ethnicity, as its usage was far too widespread to be considered specific to just one nationality or ethnicity. A sampling of several relevant passages will be instructive.

Plautus (*Poen.* 5.2.21) cites the Punic practice of having pierced ears:

AGOR. Qui scis? MIL. Viden homines sarcinatos consequi?
atque ut opinor digitos in manibus non habent.

AGOR. Quid iam? MIL. Quia incedunt cum anulatis auribus.

HAN. Adibo hosce atque appellabo Punice.

si respondebunt, Punice pergam loqui;

si non, tum ad horum mores linguam vertero.

MIL. Quid ais tu? ecquid commeministi Punice?

AGOR. How do you know?

MIL. Do you see that the burdened men [i.e. slave] follow? I think they don't have fingers on their hands.

AGOR. So what?

MIL. Because they walk around with pierced ears.

HAN. I will approach these guys and speak with them in Punic. If they respond, I will continue to speak Punic; if not, then I will change my language to their custom.

MIL. What do you say? Can you remember any Punic?

In the passage above, the slave has the pierced ear, and that fact is perhaps noteworthy.

Juvenal (1.104) mentions ear piercing, in a passage spoken by a freedman:

cur timeam dubitemur locum defendere, quamuis
natus ad Euphraten, molles quod in aure fenestrae
arguerint, licet ipse negem?

Why should I be afraid to defend this place, although I was born by the Euphrates, which the effeminate holes in my ears might prove, even though I myself might deny it.

The point of this passage is clearly to show the effeminacy associated with wearing pierced ears, but Juvenal also shows that he saw this practice as typically Eastern. Just as in Plautus, it is also the mark of a man of lower social status. A passage from Macrobius (*Sat.* 7.3.7) is of interest as well:

Octavius, qui natu nobilis videbatur, Ciceroni recitanti ait: Non audio quae dicis. Ille respondit: Certe solebas bene foratas habere aures. Hoc eo dictum est quia Octavius Libys oriundus dicebatur, quibus mos est aurem forare.

Octavius, who seems noble by birth, said to Cicero, who was reading aloud: I can't hear

what you are saying. Cicero responded: Certainly you are accustomed to have pierced ears. This was said to Octavius because he was said to have been risen from Libya, where it is customary to pierce one's ear.

Macrobius locates ear piercing among men in north Africa, but here he cites the practice as being Libyan. Libyans were traditionally viewed as the indigenous peoples of western north Africa, which seems to differ from the passage from Plautus above, which states that it was a Punic practice. The point is not that the two geographic areas are distinct (for Punic and indigenous African tribes often inhabited the same areas), but that it is not a cultural phenomenon specific to one cultural group. Mayor (1979: 138), in his note on the passage from Juvenal above, has cited passages from all periods of Latin and Greek literature which show a great variation in the origin of this practice, and the above citations are a sampling of the range of answers that they can provide. It is clear that Macrinus was not "Roman" and that he hailed from the provinces, either African or Eastern. On the basis of this examination, Macrinus appears to be of mixed extraction, containing Punic or Punicized elements.

One more area can be assessed for its reception of Macrinus, and that is his homeland of Mauretania. The support that he received there can further strengthen the already accepted theory that he came from this area. Several dedicatory inscriptions were set up in Mauretania Caesariensis during Macrinus' reign, and in general they show dedications to both the emperor and his son, Diadumenian. A particularly unique inscription comes from Sour el Ghazlane, the ancient Auzia (*AE* 1964, 229):

[[Imp(eratori) Caes(ari) M(arco) Opellio Seve]]/[[ro Macrino Pio Felici]] / [[Aug(usto) Parthico max(imo) pon]]/[[tifici max(imo) p(atri) p(atriae) co(n)s(uli) II pro]]/[[co(n)s(uli) et]] / [[M(arco) Opellio Antonino]] / [[Diadumeniano no]]/[[bilissimo Caesari prin]]/[[cipi iuventutis Aug(usto)]] / [[Imp(eratoris) Macrini Aug(usti) fil(io)]]

This heavily restored inscription is exceptional because it includes the title "Parthicus maximus" for Macrinus, though it is known from Dio (78.27.3) that Macrinus refused

this distinction. Local pride most likely accounts for its inclusion. Similarly, *CIL* 8, 22562 from the ancient city of Tipasa in Mauretania Caesariensis refers to both Macrinus and Diadumenian as *imperatores*, a title not applied to Diadumenian until late in Macrinus' reign (most likely not until May 218, Dio 78.37.5-6, though numismatic evidence from the provinces also shows the infelicity):

Imp[p(eratoribus)] C[a]es[s(aribus)] / M(arco) Opellio Se/vero Ma[cri]/no Pio Fel(ici)
 Au[g(usto)] / II / p(ontifici) m(aximo) tr(ibunicia) p(otestate) co(n)[s(uli)] / II p(atri)
 p(atriae) proco(n)s(uli) [et] / M(arco) Opellio Ant[oni]/no Diadumen[ia]/no Pio Fel(ici)
 A[u(gusto)] / Tip(asitani) / m(ilia) p(assuum) II

Dedicatory inscriptions turn up in Mauretania Tingitana and Numidia as well, perhaps also attesting to some local pride.⁷⁵ Furthermore, the construction of a road in Mauretania Caesariensis may show Macrinus' favoritism to his homeland, as is attested in several inscriptions.⁷⁶ Finally, Dio (78.32.1) reports that the Mauretanian soldiers fought well for Macrinus against Elagabalus, since he was their fellow countryman.

As to Macrinus' ethnic or national background, Dio has perhaps provided all the information that is really important. Macrinus was perhaps seen as an "indigenous" north African,⁷⁷ but it is unclear exactly what that meant in the early third century CE. The evidence, as it is thus assembled, seems to point in one direction. Macrinus is called a Moor by nationality, and it is perhaps more proper to call him simply a "Mauretanian." This designation was enough for Dio to include several insults tied to his nationality, including the accusation of cowardice sprung from being a Moor (78.27.1). In reality, however, Dio had plenty of opportunities in his history to discuss the negative aspects of Moors, if he held a prejudice against them, but he never does so. Book 43 deals with the

⁷⁵ Mauretania Tingitana: *AE* 1925, 30 (Volubilis), *ILM* 45 (Ain Chkour), *AE* 1987, 1129 (Dechra Jdid); Numidia: *CIL* 8, 4598 (Mergueb ez Zana).

⁷⁶ *AE* 1938, 49; *AE* 1967, 652; *CIL* 8, 22628 (= *AE* 1893, 68)

⁷⁷ Just as Potter (2004: 146): "Opellius Macrinus was from North Africa, and, indeed, from a family that traced its ancestors to the Berber tribes of the region."

civil war between Caesar and Pompey and Mauretania comes into play often, but Dio never takes the opportunity to insult. His reporting of its occupation by Octavian and Claudius also goes by without a negative word. Perhaps if the book including the history of Antoninus Pius' reign still survived there might be some ill word there, on account of an uprising in Mauretania Tingitana, but that is hardly definite. At most Dio is attempting to call to the reader's mind some prejudice or bias, but it does not seem to be a strong one or one that he specifically points out elsewhere. Thus Dio does not seem much exercised by the supposed ethnic deficiencies of the Moors, except when confronted with the temerity of Macrinus' assumption of the imperial office.

Dio's insistence on calling Macrinus a Moor (i.e. one of the Mauri) must be seen as his effort to undermine any credibility Macrinus might have had and possibly to portray him as a foreign and unfamiliar character. Perhaps most importantly, Herodian and the *HA* focus on his national or ethnic background, most likely because they did not find it to be truly important. The pierced ear may even have the servile connotation, suggested by Mayor, and Dio probably meant it to be a reflection of Macrinus' lower social status.⁷⁸

Was such a background for an emperor shocking to the Roman elite? According to Dio it was, and his point of view can perhaps be accepted for a significant portion of the senate. This opinion, however, needs to be tempered by Dio's great distaste for an *eques* gaining the throne, and it is this aspect of Macrinus' background that is the most

⁷⁸ Bassett notes his may be an "unwarranted inference" (1920: 14n19), but there may in fact be something to it. Bassett's idea seems to come from reading Mayor's note on Juv. 1.104, which simply states that certain Hebrew slaves had their ears bored to show their status as slaves for life. While there is no evidence that Dio knew of or was referencing this practice, clearly he understood that it marked Macrinus as a foreigner or outsider. Therefore, the "servile" designation may be going too far, but its use as an indication of a lower social status could be real.

troubling for him. Dio is obsessed with the fact that a man of such ostensibly low rank might become emperor, and he directly mentions or alludes to it multiple times. Such a background can only be the cause of the false career description attributed to Macrinus in the *HA* (*OM* 4.1-8). Herodian does not mention the low birth as often as the other two sources, perhaps because of his own position within the social hierarchy of the Roman empire. Even in Dio's account, however, it is not clear that he cares more about a Mauretanian rising to gain the throne than an *eques*. In fact, the opposite seems to be true.

Dio's point of view is of course not the same as the average inhabitant in Rome, and it must be asked whether or not it is possible to gauge the interest of the general population in Macrinus' ethnicity or nationality. Dio's history is extremely useful here, since he was at Rome during Macrinus' reign and reports on more than one occasion the current public opinion there. At 78.9.3 he reports that slander against Caracalla after his murder and at 78.15.2 tells of the generally favorable public opinion towards Macrinus. These two passages seem to preserve the general feeling at Rome directly following on Caracalla's assassination, when most likely anyone would have been accepted as a better alternative. It was only after several months of absence from Rome that people began to turn on Macrinus, and Dio specifically cites an uproar in September (78.20). So whereas the senatorial elite may have found the accession of an *eques* to the throne appalling, in general it seems that the public did not take Macrinus' background into consideration when expressing approval or disapproval. More important to the general public seem to have been the actions of the emperor, not his pedigree.

Macrinus' specific background, therefore, seems to be more or less a non-issue. The importance lies in general in his Mauretanian extraction. Coming from Mauretania, Macrinus faced some difficulty in rising to a high rank in the Roman bureaucracy, though the cause was not necessarily prejudice or racism. While Macrinus was not the first emperor to hail from north Africa, it should be noted that he was hardly following a career path similar to that of Septimius Severus, the figure who provides the closest point of comparison. Severus had come from a family that included Italian colonists on his mother's side and several men who has been senators (Birley 1972: 21, 35). Macrinus' early life is so obscure that none of his family members are known, and it is only the *HA* (*Dd.* 7.5) that provides the name of his wife, Nonia Celsa. That his career was not similar to Severus' means only that he was from an entirely different class and from a more remote area of the empire. Indeed it can be seen, in retrospect as most likely it was at that time, that it was not a frequent occurrence for a man from this area of the Roman world to rise to prominence. As a provincial from a somewhat recently founded province, Macrinus' rise through the Roman bureaucracy is notable.

By the time of the third century, Mauretania was still not producing a large number of high-ranking officials in Roman government. In fact, according to the listing included in *Epigrafia e Ordine Senatorio* (v2: 776-777), a mere six men of senatorial rank who came from Caesarea in Mauretania can now be counted.⁷⁹ This evidence alone shows that Mauretania was a something of a political backwater, and it was difficult for a man from this locale to gain admission to the senate. Perhaps the most famous Mauretanian prior to Macrinus was Lusius Quietus, mentioned above as a favored

⁷⁹ L. Annius Fabianus (*PIR* A 643) and his son L. Annius Fabianus (*PIR* A 644); M. Aurelius Zeno Ianuarius (*PIR* A 1639); Sex. Cornelius Clemens (*PIR* C 1340) and Sex. Cornelius Eucaerianus (*PIR* C 1353); L. F[---Ge]mellus Latronianus (*PIR* G 141).

general under Trajan, although his ignominious end cast a pall of disgrace about his career. Macrinus, then, was hardly following along numerous or distinguished paths upward, and the success that he achieved must be attributed to the connections that he made within the Roman governmental system and the quality of services that he performed.

2.2. The career of Macrinus, prior to his accession

Macrinus seems to have been born *ca.* 165 (and probably in 164) (Dio 78.40.4). Given his position as praetorian prefect prior to his accession, his family must have been of equestrian rank. It is difficult to say anything with great certainty regarding his early life, but the type of education he received can perhaps be gleaned from his work as a Roman bureaucrat and his well-reported skill as a lawyer. For his study of the law, two options can perhaps be suggested. Macrinus most likely have moved to Rome to study law; since the sources report that Plautianus noticed him on account of his legal skill, this option may be probable. The other, but more remotely possible in the case of Macrinus, option for a legal education in the third century was to attend a law school in Berytus, Syria (Atkinson 1970: 43). There is no evidence for Macrinus having ever attended this school, and its existence during the period in which he would have been training for a legal career is also questionable.

Why or when Macrinus moved to Rome is unknown. Dio summarizes Macrinus' professional career there in 78.11.2-3. His initial employment was as a lawyer, and his success in this field brought him to the attention of Plautianus. The relationship with Plautianus, however, almost put Macrinus into peril. Plautianus had been one of the most powerful men in the empire during the reign of Septimius Severus, and by 197 he was

praetorian prefect under Severus; he also managed to have his daughter wed to Caracalla in 202 (Dio 76.1.2). He was later admitted to the senate and held the consulship in 203. Dio (76.14-16) reports that Plautianus had gained a great amount of power under Severus, but that Caracalla, perhaps threatened by Plautianus' position, began to hate the prefect. Caracalla's hatred was not unreturned; Plautianus felt that Caracalla had been treating his daughter, Plautilla, in an outrageous and shameful manner (Dio 77.2.5). Caracalla finally succeeded in plotting against Plautianus, with the implicit assent of Septimius Severus, and Plautianus was murdered in 205 (Dio 77.4-5).⁸⁰

Macrinus survived this crisis through L. Fabius Cilo's intercession. Cilo was a prominent figure under Severus and Caracalla; he held consulships in 193 and 204, was prefect of the city under Caracalla, and rumor had it that Caracalla referred to him as "father" (see Appendix 1, 78.11.2). Accordingly, Macrinus chose a powerful patron after the fall of Plautianus. Perhaps through the influence of Cilo (or so it seems), Macrinus became superintendent of the Flaminian Way under Severus (πρὸς μὲν τοῦ Σεουήρου τοῖς ὀχήμασι τοῖς κατὰ τὴν Φλαμινίαν ὁδὸν διαθέουσιν ἐπετάχθη, Dio 78.11.3). This position seems to have been a member of the four man commission that made up the *quattuorviri viis in urbe purgandis* (Homo 1962: 312). After holding several procuratorships (unnamed by Dio, 78.11.3), he became praetorian prefect. His position as praetorian prefect may have been as early as 214, if he is the unnamed praetorian prefect mentioned in the *HA* (*Cc.* 5.8) who accompanied Caracalla to Thrace in that year (Howe 1942: 73).

⁸⁰ Additionally, Plautianus was constantly harassing Julia Domna; see Appendix 1, 78.24.1.

Leaving aside the difficulties of assessing an equestrian career as typical,⁸¹ Macrinus' progress through the imperial bureaucracy must be considered a success. He achieved the highest position possible for his social rank and even was able to go beyond that. As Dio makes clear, his advancement through several positions in Rome was owed to his ability to attach himself to prominent men, and he no doubt benefited from the expansion of equestrian positions that was continuing during the Severan dynasty.

2.3. *Questionable aspects of Macrinus' career*

After Macrinus' death is recounted in the *HA*, a number of rumors regarding his earlier life are reported. The version of Macrinus' *cursus* that Dio presents is to be much preferred, but these reports of his earlier life are worth mentioning in order to appreciate fully the negative literary portrait that he received posthumously. Throughout *OM* 4.1-8, Macrinus is said to have been a freedman, a prostitute, and a gladiator. The *HA* biographer cites his source as Aurelius Victor with the surname Pinius, of whom nothing is known and there is certainly nothing to recommend him as a historical figure.⁸² Macrinus' base nature reportedly caused Severus to banish him to Africa (and thus explaining his connection to Mauretania, which is mentioned nowhere else in the *OM*). After this banishment he devoted himself to careful study of the law, rose to the equestrian rank, and became *advocatus fisci* under Lucius Verus, which clearly is a chronological impossibility.⁸³ It should be noted that even the *HA* biographer doubts

⁸¹ Millar (1963: 197): "... there was never a common core of posts held by all *equites* or a common point of entry to equestrian posts."

⁸² The use of the surname Pinius with Aurelius Victor is simply included to mislead; in the known works of Aurelius Victor (including *Caesares* and *Epitome de Caesaribus*), there is only brief mention of Macrinus and none of the above rumors are reported.

⁸³ Syme (1971: 81-82) notes the impossibility of the situation and suggests that it "recalls, and perhaps derives from, the fable in the *Geta* that Severus held the office under Antoninus Pius (*Geta* 2.4)." Syme goes on to cite the improbability of Severus holding this minor equestrian post. See also Barnes 1967b.

these rumors. But such rumors were reported elsewhere, according to Macrinus' biographer, though he does not cite these other sources. According to these unnamed sources, Macrinus was said to have hunted and fought as a gladiator in the arena; he was later a notary (*tabellio*) and *advocatus fisci*, and finally praetorian prefect under Caracalla. He murdered Caracalla, hid his crime under the guise of a military conspiracy, and was later hated as emperor because of his fratricide and incest.

How can this passage be explained? Clearly most of the information presented here is incorrect or simply fabricated, though there are some nuggets of truth. In general, all reports of such extreme negativity should be dismissed; he was most likely never a freedman, prostitute, or any kind of performer in the arena. He may, however, have held the position of *advocatus fisci*, as it was the first post held by many men ascending the equestrian *cursus* in an administrative, rather than military, role (Homo 1962: 347). As for the position of *tabellio*, it may be ascribed to him here simply on account of his future work in law. In any case, the passage at least confirms Macrinus' African origin, his equestrian background, and his effort to avoid and success in avoiding blame for the murder of Caracalla. In its particulars, however, there is much to be doubted.

2.4. *Macrinus the praetorian prefect*

Little is known of Macrinus' actions during his time as praetorian prefect. Judging by the notices in Dio and Herodian, he represented the juridical side of the prefecture. It seems clear, however, that he held a great deal of power as prefect, and it was this power that put him in a position to overthrow the emperor.

During the years of accord among the governing bodies of the Roman empire in the second century, no great amount of power accrued to the praetorian prefect.⁸⁴ The praetorian prefect simply served as commander of the praetorian cohorts, though in the third century the prefecture reached its height of power (Howe 1942: 11). Nonetheless, several strong praetorian prefects preceded Macrinus who held imperial ambitions; from the early empire these include Sejanus, prefect under Tiberius, and Nymphidius Sabinus, who claimed to be the successor to Nero. Perhaps not surprisingly, Herodian (5.1.2) puts the following words into the mouth of Macrinus, included in a letter sent to Rome from Antioch after his accession:⁸⁵

ἐν εἰδόσι μὲν ὑμῖν τοῦ τε βίου μου τὴν ἐξ ἀρχῆς προαίρεσιν τοῦ τε τρόπου τὸ πρὸς χρηστότητα ἐπιρρεπές, καὶ τὸ πρᾶον τῆς διοικηθείσης πρότερον πράξεως, οὐ πολὺ τι ἐξουσίας καὶ δυνάμεως βασιλικῆς ἀποδεύσης, ὅπου γε καὶ αὐτὸς ὁ βασιλεὺς τοῖς ἐπάρχουσι τῶν στρατοπέδων πεπίστευται, περιττὸν νομίζω μακρηγορεῖν.

Since it is clear to you that in the habits of my life from the beginning the inclination of my manner leans toward what is most becoming. Also you know that there previously was a mildness to my administration, which is not much different from the imperial office and power, whenever the emperor himself trusts the military prefects. Therefore, I do not think it is necessary to give a speech longer than necessary.

Perhaps Herodian crafted these words carefully, given their application to this particular situation, but there is also ample evidence that the power of praetorian prefect grew drastically from the time of Commodus. Howe (1942: 11-14) takes the view that once the concord between emperor and senate, which had existed under the Antonines, unraveled, the praetorian prefect stepped in to fill the void. Though powerful prefects owed some of their authority to imperial favor, men such as Sejanus, Perennis, Plautianus, and Timesitheus stretched their influence beyond its normal bounds in order

⁸⁴ Exceptions such as Sejanus will be discussed briefly below and in the epilogue.

⁸⁵ A similar sentiment is expressed by Dio 52.24 in the speech of Maecenas regarding the form of government Octavian should employ. It is quite clear in that chapter that Dio felt the praetorian prefects too powerful.

to increase their power.

It is not justified to group Macrinus with the men listed above, for not enough is known of his prefecture, and it does not seem that he tried to overstep his bounds at any point prior to the assassination of Caracalla. Quite the opposite is actually the case, as Dio praises him for his strict adherence to the duties of his office. The point, however, is that Macrinus was able to use the power of the prefecture, expanded in the third century, to influence a greater number of people and orchestrate a successful overthrow of the emperor. Had he been more constrained by his office, Caracalla might never have met his death in such a way. As Caracalla gathered more power to himself and shunned the senate, it was natural that the prefect, an organ of the imperial administration, would become more powerful.⁸⁶

2.5. The Chronology of Macrinus' Reign

The chronology of Macrinus' brief reign is difficult to untangle with great precision. While the general outline is clear, past conjectures have left several portions out of place. The evidence from Dio, supplemented by the numismatic and epigraphic evidence, will help to sort it all out. Table 3 is a list of references in Dio that appear to provide chronological notices; it is important to remember that Dio did not compose book 78 with a view to exact chronology, though this framework will provide a good basis for smoothing out some inconsistencies.

First of all, the date of Caracalla's murder and Macrinus' accession are beyond question; the dates are April 8 and April 11, respectively. Macrinus seems to have had his son declared Caesar and Antoninus by the troops near Zeugma, according to the

⁸⁶ Howe (1942: 15) makes this point in a general sense, though he admits that it is not clear why the praetorian prefect would be the one to gain the power. He suggests that the praetorian prefect, as a constant companion to the emperor, was a natural recipient of increased responsibility.

notice at 78.40.1; Diadumenian was captured near Zeugma, and Dio notes the irony of the situation.

Table 3: Datable extracts from Dio Book 78

Passage	Action
78.5.1	Caracalla, on the day before his birthday (= April 3), removed men closely associated with Macrinus; Macrinus perceived this move as a threat.
78.5.4	On April 8, Caracalla set out from Edessa and was murdered during his journey (cf. 78.6.5: Caracalla died, having lived 29 years, 4 days and having ruled 6 years, 2 months, and 2 days).
78.11.4	Macrinus did not take power on the day of Caracalla's death or on the following two days (cf. 78.11.6: On the fourth day after Caracalla's murder, which was Severus' birthday, Macrinus was hailed emperor by the troops = April 11, 217).
78.13.1	Macrinus refused title of COS II in the following year (= January 218).
78.16.2	Dio reports Macrinus' first letter to the senate, in which he calls himself Caesar, imperator, Severus, Pius, Felix, Augustus, and proconsul
78.17.1	Reading of Macrinus' first letter in the senate, in which Diadumenian is called patrician, Caesar, and <i>princeps iuventutis</i> .
78.18.3	People in Rome knew of Caracalla's death and Macrinus' accession by the <i>ludi Martiales</i> (= May 14, 217).
78.19.1	People in Rome learned of Diadumenian's titles, Caesar and Antoninus, given by the troops at the behest of Macrinus.
78.20.1	People in Rome raise outcry against Macrinus' absence on Diadumenian's birthday (=Sept. 14, 217).
78.25.2	Colosseum was struck by lightning during Vulcanalia (= August 23, 217).
78.26.4-5	Macrinus, who had no time for preparations, encountered Parthians near Nisibis.
78.26.8	During autumn and winter, negotiations between Macrinus and Artabanus.
78.27.3	Macrinus voted sacrifices and title "Parthicus" on account of Parthian victory.
78.28.2	Army winters in Syria on account of war with Parthians.
78.31.4	Elagabalus brought into camp on May 16, 218.
78.34.2	In reaction to the events of May 16, 218, Macrinus hastily went to Apamea.
78.34.5	Macrinus returned to Antioch.
78.37.5-6	In letter to senate, Macrinus had not written Diadumenian's name in preface, but he named him both Caesar and emperor, though not Antoninus
78.38.1	Macrinus' letter to senate; war declared on Elagabalus, his uncle, mother, and grandmother.
78.39.1	Macrinus, defeated on June 8, 218, sent Diadumenian to Artabanus and he himself entered Antioch.
78.40.1	Diadumenian captured at Zeugma.
78.40.3	Macrinus died an old man, being 54 years old minus three or five months.
78.41.4	Macrinus ruled 1 year and 2 months, minus three days, to the date of the battle (= June 8, 218).

It might be suggested that father and son were traveling among the cities near the Parthian border after Macrinus' accession in order to rally support. Since Diadumenian played such a large role in Macrinus' public image, which will be examined the

following chapter, this may very well have been the case. Petrikovitz's (1938: 104) suggestion that Diadumenian's proclamation at Zeugma occurred much later than June or July 217 seems unreasonable. He claims that the proclamation there coincided with him taking the name Antoninus, based on Dio's assertion at 78.19.1 that he was called Caesar and Antoninus by the troops at the urging of Macrinus. It could not have happened later than May 217, for that name appears on first issue coins of Macrinus' reign (Clay 1979: 22). The appearance of the title on coins means that the granting of titles had occurred at Rome by May, suggesting that the titles had been given in the East about a month earlier. It should be thought, then, that Macrinus had Diadumenian named Caesar and Antoninus as soon as possible, and prior to the engagement with Artabanus. The titles were bestowed as a way to give his reign legitimacy and to win over the troops, previously loyal to Caracalla.

At about the same time Macrinus seems to have sent his first letter to the senate, after which Diadumenian officially received various honors, including the title Caesar (Dio 78.17.1). The date of the first letter can perhaps be placed sometime in early May 217 (Whittaker 1969v2: 2n2), though Macrinus would not have received a response until sometime in early summer of that year. According to the Roman imperial coinage, Diadumenian was being called Caesar on coins of Macrinus' first issue, which Clay (1979: 34) dates to April and May 217.

Dio's narrative confuses the issue because he splits the two separate instances of news becoming public at Rome. He reports at 78.18.3 that the public learned of Macrinus' accession by May 14; at 78.19.1 the public is informed of Diadumenian's titles. It seems that these passages must be read together, especially since they form a

cohesive narrative in which Dio explains how the public was learning about the new emperor. The population of Rome knew of Macrinus' accession by May 14, 217, the date of the *ludi Martiales*, at which they urged that Martialis might be praised for his actions against Caracalla. Learning of the accession at this time (allowing time for the first letter of Macrinus to travel to Rome), they also knew that Macrinus and Diadumenian had received the titles enumerated above. Macrinus had preempted the senate by not waiting for the official proclamation but had simply given his son various titles on his own. He obviously felt that this was an important move towards establishing his rule among the troops and could not wait for the senate's approval. After all, it was the army, not the senate, that was truly endorsing or denying his right to rule.

Despite Herodian's notice that the Parthians were approaching quickly for attack, all other indications suggest that there was a lag between Caracalla's assassination and Macrinus' confrontation with Artabanus, though it is not necessarily as long as some scholars have suggested. Dio's lack of chronological order in his narrative still allows at 78.26 that Macrinus had little time to prepare, and an engagement in early summer 217 seems likely.⁸⁷ The battle that is recorded by both Dio and Herodian that took place near Nisibis almost certainly was not the only fighting between the two sides, but it does seem that this battle was the last before peace negotiations started up in the autumn and winter of 217/8 (Dio 78.26.8).

These peace negotiations kept Macrinus away from Rome for a long enough period of time to cause some public outcry there by September. Dio reports public discontent on Diadumenian's birthday, September 14. Macrinus, however, was still in no

⁸⁷ The engagement need not be as late as autumn, as Petrikovitz (1938: 105) has suggested, though there can be no exact dating of these events.

position to make his way to Rome, as the Parthian threat must still have loomed. He was hardly idle, however, and the accusations that he lived in luxury in Antioch (Dio 78.15.3; Herod. 4.15.9, 5.2.3-6; *HA*, *OM* 8.4) can be attributed to the subsequent negative literary tradition against him. During the fall he was perhaps carrying on peace negotiations with the Armenians as well, though these may have taken place after the Parthian settlement; many economic reforms were also taking place during this period.⁸⁸

As the numismatic evidence shows, Macrinus did not come to a settlement with the Parthians until 218.⁸⁹ Dio (78.28) reports the need for Macrinus to have wintered in Syria during the winter of 218 on account of the Parthian situation, having given the details of the settlement in 78.27. Perhaps it can be suggested that the settlement took place some time around February 218. It may appear that Macrinus was then free to travel to Rome and present himself as emperor there, but his inaction at the time suggests that the revolt of Elagabalus was at least underway, if not yet in full force. Dio's narrative (78.31.4), after reporting the omens associated with Macrinus' demise and the beginnings of the revolt, jumps all the way to May 16, 218, when Elagabalus was brought into the camp at Raphanaea, home of *legio III Gallica*, and was proclaimed the son of Caracalla and emperor.

Dio's narrative, though not necessarily connected chronologically, certainly connects thematically. At 78.27 Dio begins to tell of the beginning of the soldiers' unrest under Macrinus. Chapter 78.28 naturally leads into Macrinus' attempted military reforms, the cause of even greater unrest among the army. The following chapter (78.30)

⁸⁸ See chapter 4 for a discussion.

⁸⁹ Clay (1979: 34) states that it was only after January 1, 218 that coins in Macrinus' second issue began advertising a Parthian victory.

includes the omens associated with Macrinus' overthrow,⁹⁰ and 78.30-31 begin the story of the plot of the Syrian women against Macrinus with its natural end, the presentation of Elagabalus in the camp on May 16, 218 (78.32). Obviously an absolute chronology is not possible, since Dio's text cannot possibly be considered exactly chronologically correct, though the reforms of Macrinus most likely would not have been put in motion until after the Parthian settlement. Any time prior to that would still have been too volatile.

It is also known from Dio (78.39.1) that Macrinus and Diadumenian were defeated on June 8, 218 outside of Antioch. In response to the Syrian threat, Macrinus went immediately to Apamea in order to secure the loyalty of the *legio II Parthica* by declaring Diadumenian emperor, handing out a donative (part was in fact paid on the spot), and holding a feast for the troops in honor of his son (Dio 78.34). Meanwhile, Julianus Nestor, one of Macrinus' praetorian prefects, was overcome in an attempt to secure the camp of *legio III Gallica* at Raphanaea. His head was presented to Macrinus during the feast at Apamea. Macrinus then went back to Antioch, but the troops of *legio II Parthica* revolted. Joined with the army of Elagabalus and Julianus' troops, they met Macrinus and his army nearby Antioch and the battle of June 8 was fought.⁹¹

Macrinus and Diadumenian then went on the run for an unspecified period of time, as Dio (78.39-40) explains. Macrinus attempted to make his way to Rome, traveling through Cilicia, Cappadocia, Galatia, and Bithynia before being captured at Chalcedon. Diadumenian, on the other hand, was to be sent into the care of Artabanus

⁹⁰ One omen, a solar eclipse, has been discussed at some length by both Bassett and Petrikovitz. Bassett (1920: 66) dates the eclipse April 4, 218, only five weeks prior to Elagabalus presentation in the camp; Petrikovitz (1938: 105) prefers the date of October 10, 218 and attributes a chronological oversight to Dio. Attempting to explain Dio's use of omens is risky business, since the omen lists in the books of events to which he was an eyewitness are clearly *post eventum* justifications for certain major events.

⁹¹ See Petrikovitz (1938: 105-106) for more precise dating; his conclusion, that Dio's chronology for the end of Macrinus' reign is trustworthy, is accepted here.

but was captured en route. Macrinus was brought back to Antioch and slain, though his body remained unburied until it was viewed by Elagabalus during his trip from Syria to Bithynia (Dio 78.40).

A final point that needs to be ironed out is when and where Macrinus presented *donativa* and *congiaria* during his reign. At 78.19.2 Dio seems to state that Macrinus presented the soldiers with a donative of 3,000 sesterces more when Diadumenian was made Antoninus, sometime around May 217.⁹² The statement, though ambiguous, suggests that Macrinus gave a donative to the soldiers upon his accession as well, most likely of the same amount. The final donative offered to the soldiers, and paid in part, is the one mentioned above, given at Apamea in order to try to secure their allegiance in response to the threat from Elagabalus. The *HA* (*Dd.* 2.9, cf. Dio 78.19.2-3) mentions a *congiarium* distributed to the people at Rome, and Petrikovitz (1938: 105) links this with two *Annona* issues (one seated, the other standing) bearing the reverse inscriptions *PONTIF MAX TR P COS P P* and *ANNONA AUG*, respectively.⁹³

2.6. Macrinus' titulature

The advancement of Macrinus' titulature has been well studied by both Cuvuoto and Clay and can be summarized here.⁹⁴ Macrinus' full title was *Imperator Caesar M.*

Opellius Severus Macrinus Pius Felix Augustus (Cuvuoto 1982: 336). During his first

⁹² ... τὸ δὲ ἵνα ἄλλας ἑπτακοσίας καὶ πεντήκοντα αὐτοῖς δραχμὰς προσυπόσχηται, ἐποίησεν. The donative is also mentioned in Macrinus letter to the senate at *OM* 6.5.

⁹³ Clay (1979: 22) identifies these two types as falling within Macrinus' Issue 2, which lasted from about September 217 until about February 218. Downey (1961: 248), following Mattingly (*BMCRE* 5.ccxxiii), records a *congiarium* distributed to the population of Antioch; this hypothesis is based on coins of Macrinus bearing *Liberalitas*. Mattingly sees *Liberalitas* as a sign of largesse and cites the above passage from the *HA* (*Dd.* 2.9); such a *congiarium* is in question, however, because it is based on Mattingly's theory of two mints, in Rome and Antioch, under Macrinus, which has been rejected since its original publication. The coins bearing *Liberalitas* are most likely connected to a distribution of cash at Rome rather than Antioch.

⁹⁴ Diadumenian's titulature has already been discussed above within the chronology of Macrinus' reign.

year as emperor, he carried the titles *Pontif(ex) Max(imus) Tr(ibunicia) P(otestate) Co(n)s(ul) P(ater) P(atriae)*. These titles ran from his accession on April 11 until the end of 217.⁹⁵ Two later titulatures make the dating of these titles difficult. There appears *TR(ibunicia) P(otestate) II CO(n)S(ul)* as well as *TR(ibunicia) P(otestate) II CO(n)S(ul) II*. It has often been thought that the former title fell between December 10, 217 (the assumed date for the renewal of tribunician power) and December 31, 217 (the date of the renewal of the consular power). It is known, however, from Dio (78.13.1) that Macrinus did not take the title “consular for a second time” in the second year of his reign, but instead he chose to follow the example of Severus and Caracalla. Macrinus had received the *ornamenta consularia* from Caracalla, and if Dio is to be believed (and there is no indication that he should not be), then Macrinus never in fact held the title *CO(n)S(ul) II*, despite its appearance on coins minted at Rome in 218. Clay (1979: 26-28) seems to understand the situation correctly: it was assumed by the mint that Macrinus would take the second consulship beginning in 218, but that it suspended the title *CO(n)S(ul) II* when news reached Rome from the east that Macrinus in fact rejected the title.

2.7. Conclusion

The purpose of this chapter has been to attempt to illuminate the background of Macrinus and situate it within the larger historical picture of the development of the Roman empire. It seems to be the case that although Macrinus hailed from Mauretania, it cannot be said with certainty what his exact ethnic background was, and it is questionable that it was even of any importance. Though somewhat unique for a man in a position of power in the Roman empire, his nationality does not seem to have been shocking to

⁹⁵ *Contra* Cuvuoto (1982: 338), who dates this titlature April 11 to December 9, 217.

anyone but the senatorial elite, which appears to show its disgust due to a fear of erosion of its power. The population at Rome did not care about Macrinus' background, and among the army, the presence of Mauretanians had been substantial for some time prior to his accession. After his accession, Macrinus ruled for just a brief period, but the precision of dating has been hampered by the quality of the sources; I do not profess to have solved the problems here, though the dating given seems reasonable. The overview of the major events of his reign, as well as a brief explication of his titulature, will allow for a more thorough investigation of how Macrinus consolidated his power and of his major actions in both foreign and domestic policy.

Chapter 3 – The legitimization of Macrinus' reign

3.1 Introduction

Macrinus' accession has been dealt with in the previous chapters, and it will be the purpose of this chapter to understand how Macrinus established his rule. As a newcomer to the imperial power with no connection to a previous administration, Macrinus had to present himself and his reign as a continuation of one of his predecessors. This problem was complicated by Caracalla's miserable reign and reputation. This chapter will first examine with which predecessors Macrinus wished to associate himself.

In terms of understanding an empire-wide information program, a convenient and effective way of assessing how Macrinus established his rule in such a short reign is through a study based largely on the numismatic evidence, used in combination with literary and epigraphical evidence.⁹⁶ On account of the brevity of his reign, the numismatic evidence, both imperial and provincial, can be well organized chronologically and thematically. This chapter will briefly examine Macrinus' imperial coinage before looking more closely at how he was received in the provinces, primarily in the East where he spent his entire reign. Finally, there will be a study of the role that his son, Diadumenian, played in this imperial message, with particular emphasis placed on provincial issues.

⁹⁶ I am aware of the pitfalls of such an approach, and I do not plan to undertake the reception of images and messages displayed on coins. For the purposes of this examination it is sufficient to say that the emperor understood that coins saw a wide distribution and that historically coins were used as a medium for expression in the highly competitive Roman empire. This study of Macrinus' coinage will allow for a temperature of the political climate during his reign to be taken. Crawford (1983: 59) makes the point that no emperor personally inspected the designs of all coin types minted during his reign, and it is preposterous to think that this was the case for Macrinus' reign. What I imagine, however, is a mint that is in touch with the wishes of the emperor drawing its images and designs from the store that had been built up under the previous emperors.

3.2. *Macrinus' reaction to Caracalla's death*

Despite the fact that Caracalla was generally viewed as an unpopular emperor, Macrinus' accession was complicated by Caracalla's indulgence of the army. For the general population, however, it is clear that another Caracalla was not desired, and in fact Macrinus was preferred, even if the endorsement from Dio is not particularly strong (Dio 78.18.3-4):

οὔτε τῷ Μακρίνῳ ὡς καὶ ἀχθόμενοι τι τότε ἐνεδείξαντο. αἴτιον δ' ὅτι προκαταληφθέντες τῇ διὰ τὸν τοῦ Ταραύτου θάνατον χαρᾷ οὐδὲ ἐννοῆσαι τι περὶ τῆς ταπεινότητος αὐτοῦ ἐσχόλασαν, ἀλλ' ἀγαπητῶς αὐτὸν ἐς τὴν ἀρχὴν ἐδέξαντο, οὐχ οὕτως ᾧτινι δουλεύουσιν ὡς οὐ ἐστέρηντο ἐνθυμούμενοι, καὶ πάντα τινά, καὶ τὸν τυχόντα, αἰρετώτερον αὐτοῦ νομίζοντες ἔσεσθαι.

And so at that time they did not object to Macrinus. The reason was that since they were preoccupied with their delight at the death of Tarautas [Caracalla] that did not take the time to think anything about his [Macrinus'] great lowliness, but they received him as emperor happily. For they did not care to whom they would be slaves as they did of whom they had been deprived. They thought that anyone else, even one who happened upon it, was more preferable than him.

Macrinus was still not in a position to completely damn Caracalla, and in fact he also refrained from declaring Caracalla an enemy of the state (78.17.2-4). Dio is of the opinion that such an act would have been too dangerous while in the midst of the army. Even the senate and the general public in Rome were too timorous to condemn Caracalla out of fear of the soldiers that were in Rome at the time. In this same passage, however, Dio does suggest that there was considerable public outrage against Caracalla, and certain actions, such as reading lists of his evil deeds and expenses, were taken. Dio (78.19.2) also reports that Macrinus ordered statues of Caracalla and Alexander to be destroyed at Rome, though these reports are more rumor and hearsay than verifiable truth. Dio even admits that this action was taken “secretly” (λάθρᾳ). When this report is coupled with Dio's statement (78.17.2) that Macrinus took no action against Caracalla, either positive or negative, but only continued to call him emperor after his death, it appears that

Macrinus never communicated to the senate an order to throw down statues at Rome and that Dio is reporting a common rumor going around at the time.

In terms of Caracalla's afterlife, Macrinus had little choice. Macrinus was allowing the character of Caracalla to live on; for although there was not an official condemnation, one was perhaps hardly necessary among the general public. Even the troops, whom Dio portrays as loving Caracalla, were equally content with any emperor, as long as their privileges remained intact. It is not certain that the death of Caracalla provoked a feeling of loss. Instead, it most likely aroused anxiety over the possibility of reform. That Macrinus more or less came from the ranks of the praetorian guard probably assuaged some fears, at least initially. Dio (78.19.2) assumes the granting of the title *Antoninus* to Diadumenian was meant to appease the soldiers, but he also points out the large donative that went along with it. Of these two actions, it is not difficult to discern which one the soldiers cared for more. Although the granting of the title *Antoninus* can perhaps be considered as showing honor to Caracalla, the use of the title to a greater extent marks a continuation of rule.⁹⁷ Dio (78.9.2) also points out the soldiers' unhappiness with the constant campaigning under Caracalla and their desire to obtain peace under Macrinus. Therefore, there was much at the outset to recommend Macrinus' accession, and his plan was to transition as quickly as possible into a reign that he could connect with a predecessor without overly acknowledging the unfortunate reign of Caracalla.

One issue that needs to be considered is the deification of Caracalla. Unfortunately, the sources vary on this issue and it cannot be said with absolute certainty

⁹⁷ Baharal 1999: 58, 60; see further below in terms of Diadumenian's provincial coinage.

when the deification occurred. There are indications, however, that it occurred during the reign of Macrinus. It is known that Caracalla was declared *divus* after his death, and Dio (78.9.2) insists that it was a move advanced by the soldiers. This action was ratified by the senate, though Dio shows his disgust with his comment “καὶ τοῦτο καὶ τῇ βουλῇ δῆλον ὅτι ἐψηφίσθη” (“and the decree was of course passed by the senate”). The deification of Caracalla under Macrinus is also supported several times in the *HA* (*Cc.* 11.5-6):

Hic tamen omnium durissimus et, ut uno complectamur verbo, parricida et incestus, patris, matris, fratris inimicus, a Macrino, qui eum occiderat, timore militum et maxime praetorianorum inter deos relatus est.

Nevertheless, this emperor, who was the harshest of all men, and, in order that I might include it all in one sentence, a parricide and a practitioner of incest, the enemy of his father, mother, and brother. He was placed among the gods by Macrinus, who had killed him, on account fear of the soldiers, and especially of the praetorians.

The advertisement of Caracalla as *divus* (as well as of Julia Domna) occurs on coins, though they are generally thought to be later than Macrinus. *RIC* 4.2 Severus Alexander 717-720 show an obverse of Caracalla with head bare and the inscription *DIVO ANTONINO MAGNO*; the reverses bear the inscription *CONSECRATIO*. Mattingly and Sydenham (*RIC* 4.2 p.128) admit that the dating of these coins is uncertain, but that they are mostly likely minted under Severus Alexander, though possibly under Elagabalus. It would of course make sense for any of Caracalla’s successors to mint such a coin, and for Macrinus as well, though judging by the reports from Dio, Macrinus was not willing to honor Caracalla in any other similar way, despite Caracalla having been made *divus* during his reign.⁹⁸

⁹⁸ On *divi* in this period, see Gilliam 1969.

3.3. *Macrinus and his predecessors*

Because Macrinus had no legitimate claim to the throne, he attempted to make connections with previous administrations. As has just been discussed, a close association with Caracalla was not an option. An interesting passage in Herodian (5.1.8), in which Herodian fabricates a letter of Macrinus to the senate, indicates that Macrinus wished to follow in the footsteps of Marcus Aurelius or Pertinax, not Severus or Caracalla:⁹⁹

ἐμοὶ δὲ σκοπὸς μηδὲν τι πράττειν ἄνευ τῆς ὑμετέρας γνώμης, κοινωνοὺς τε καὶ συμβούλους ἔχειν τῆς τῶν πραγμάτων διοικήσεως. ὑμεῖς δὲ ἐν ἀδείᾳ καὶ ἐλευθερίᾳ βιώσεσθε, ὧν ἀφηρέθητε μὲν ὑπὸ τῶν εὐπατριδῶν βασιλέων, ἀποδοῦναι δὲ ὑμῖν ἐπειράθησαν πρότερον μὲν Μάρκος ὕστερον δὲ Περτίναξ, ἐξ ἰδιωτικῶν σπαργάνων ἐπὶ τοῦτο ἐλθόντες. γένους γὰρ ἔνδοξον ἀρχὴν αὐτὸν παρασχεῖν καὶ τῷ ὑστέρω γένει ἄμεινον ἢ κλέος προγονικὸν παραλαμβάνοντα τρόπου φαυλότητι καταισχύναι.

It is not my aim to do anything without your opinion, and I will consider you as colleagues and counselors for the management of affairs. You will live in freedom of fear and in security. You lost these rights under the noble emperors, but Marcus first and then Pertinax, who came into this from common families, tried to give back to you. It is better that one be an honorable founder of a familial line and to leave it behind to one's descendant than to receive inherited glory and dishonor it by an evilness of character.

The problems of interpretation of this passage are severe. Clearly the letter is fictitious, and there are infelicities with the historical record. For example, it is known from Dio that Macrinus actually cared little for the senate's input, such as when he took titles for himself and his son, more or less expecting senate approval (78.17). The entire speech, in fact, is a diatribe against inherited rule, and Herodian seems to have seized on Macrinus' situation for his own needs. There are, however, some interesting parallels to Macrinus' reign.

In another passage, Herodian (5.2.3) also refers to Macrinus' desire to emulate Marcus Aurelius:

⁹⁹ Marasco (1996) deals with this passage in greater detail.

...ἐν δὲ τῇ Ἀντιοχείᾳ διέτριβε γένειόν τε ἄσκων, βαδίζων τε πλέον τοῦ δέοντος ἡρεμαίως, βραδύτατά τε καὶ μόλις τοῖς προσιοῦσιν ἀποκρινόμενος ὥς μὴδ' ἀκούεσθαι πολλάκις διὰ τὸ καθειμένον τῆς φωνῆς. ἐζήλου δὲ ταῦτα ὥς δὴ Μάρκου ἐπιτηδεύματα, τὸν δὲ λοιπὸν βίον οὐκ ἐμιμήσατο...

In Antioch he wasted time growing his beard, walking around quietly more than was necessary and answering those who were present excessively slowly with the result that very often he could not be heard on account of the lowness of his voice. He mimicked these supposed characteristics of Marcus, but he did not copy the rest of his life.

There is not much evidence to tie Macrinus to Marcus Aurelius, and these passages from Herodian have led modern scholars astray. It has been thought that the emperor's portraits might provide a connection between Marcus Aurelius and Macrinus. Baharal (1996: 423) has studied Macrinus' portraits and has made the following observations.¹⁰⁰ First, one portrait type of Macrinus shows similarities, perhaps not surprisingly, to the "later type" of Caracalla's portraits. This portrait is in more of a military style, with short hair, curly beard, and a grim countenance. Second, other portraits of Macrinus are similar to those of Marcus Aurelius and Septimius Severus. These types have a longer beard and a long face and chin. Baharal (1996: 424), however, has decided to leave aside a discussion of these different coin portraits aside, since "any explanation could be hypothetical."

Baharal's hesitation in this matter is based on her belief that Mattingly's original designation of two mints for Macrinus, one in Rome and the other in Antioch, is correct.¹⁰¹ This hypothesis, however, has been discounted (see a discussion below in chapter 3.4). Rather, the explanation for the difference in portraiture is quite simple. The initial issues of coinage under Macrinus most likely were made in haste and were simply

¹⁰⁰ Salzmann (1983) also provided an earlier analysis of the material.

¹⁰¹ Mattingly's hypothesis for two mints is outlined in *RIC* (4.2: 3-4) and the first edition of *BMCRE* (5: ccxiii).

modified versions of the late issues of Caracalla's reign.¹⁰² As Macrinus' reign progressed, there was time for an overhaul of the imperial portrait, and the emperor could designate his preferred form of representation.¹⁰³ Just by way of example, an obverse of an *antoninianus* (*RIC* 4.2 Macrinus 77) shows the emperor with a short beard. This coin must have been minted during the first few months of the reign, for it is known that Macrinus suspended the minting of the *antoninianus* by the fall of 217 (see chapter 4). A different portrait type occurs, for example, on an *aureus* (*RIC* 4.2 Macrinus 48). Macrinus here wears a longer beard, and the fact that it is a later issue is confirmed by the reverse, depicting Macrinus in a *quadriga* and being crowned by Victory, which celebrates the conclusion of peace with the Parthians in early 218.¹⁰⁴ The short beard is very similar to the one commonly worn by Caracalla, while the longer beard can be seen consistently on the coin portraits of Septimius Severus.

Several questions remain regarding the associations that Macrinus made with previous dynasties. Baharal (1999: 60) asks why Macrinus did not call himself son of Severus, as Severus had previously called himself son of Marcus.¹⁰⁵ She suggests that Macrinus was not in power long enough, since Severus did not make his proclamation

¹⁰² An excellent example of the quick production of coins after Macrinus' accession comes from Bellinger's examination of tetradrachms coming from provincial mints in the East. A large number of these coins bear an obverse bust of Macrinus with reverse inscriptions describing his fourth consulship (e.g. Bellinger 85-86, 88, 90 [Beroea]; 121-122 [Cyrrhus]; 165 [Carrhae]; 177 [Rhesaena]; 315 [Tyre]); such a mistake demonstrates the re-use of a reverse die of Caracalla with a new obverse for Macrinus.

¹⁰³ I cannot conclude, with Baharal (1999: 55), that the two different portrait types of Macrinus that exist (one that resembles Caracalla and a second that is more similar to the portrait of Marcus Aurelius or Septimius Severus) "reinforce the explanation that two versions of his portrait were distributed throughout the empire."

¹⁰⁴ Clay (1979: 24-25) puts the transition from short beard to long beard on Macrinus' coinage in the middle of the second issue, which ran from July 217-February 218.

¹⁰⁵ Baharal does not take into consideration the reaction of the senate to Severus' proclaiming himself the son of Marcus and the consequent praising of Commodus. Dio (75.7.4): "It was especially troubling for us that he said he was the son of Marcus and the brother of Commodus, and that he gave divine honors to Commodus, whom he had previously been insulting."

until two years into his reign. It is clear from the imperial coinage and from Dio's account (78.16.2) that Macrinus did in fact adopt the name *Severus* for himself and gave the title *Antoninus* to his son. One might suggest that marking himself as son of Severus would have equated Macrinus with Caracalla in the eyes of the people; instead the more conservative acquisition of titles was preferred.¹⁰⁶ In other ways as well did Macrinus associate himself with Severus. Since his date of accession was the same as Severus' birthday, he declined further celebration for himself, insisting that the games already in place honoring Severus were sufficient (Dio 78.17.1). Macrinus followed Severus on various policy matters, including the pay of the praetorian guard (78.12.7) and the terms of enlistment for new recruits to the army (78.28.3).¹⁰⁷ Generally speaking, there is not enough evidence to trace an attempt by Macrinus to associate himself with Marcus Aurelius; rather, a more immediate connection seems to have been made between Macrinus and Septimius Severus.

3.4. *The Roman Imperial Coinage of Macrinus*

The Roman imperial coinage can be viewed as the official coinage of the Roman empire, and as such the images and inscriptions that it carried were tied to the current ruling power. By viewing the imperial coinage in this way, it is possible to see it as a medium for the distribution of information and perhaps the ideology of the imperial

¹⁰⁶ This possible connection with Caracalla brings up the vexing coin types that advertise Caracalla and Julia Domna as *divus*. *RIC* 4.2 Severus Alexander 715-716 show an obverse inscription of *DIVA IULIA AUGUSTA*, while 717-720 have *DIVO ANTONINO AUGUSTO*; both types include a reverse inscription of *CONSECRATIO (S.C.)*. Dio (78.9.3) seems to state that Caracalla was declared *divus* after his death, but he does not give an exact date for this action. It may be the case that Macrinus had the senate pass such a decree in order to appease the soldiers, but judging by his attitude towards his predecessor, it is unlikely that Macrinus would have issued coins advertising his deification. Though it is not impossible for Macrinus to have issued such coins, it is more likely that Elagabalus or Severus Alexander was responsible for them, especially given the importance which they tied to their connection with him.

¹⁰⁷ Chapter 4 will examine in greater detail the connections between the imperial policies of Severus and Macrinus.

house. Although the mechanisms of minting and distribution in the Roman world are not fully understood, it is clear from Macrinus' coins (as well as from the coins of other reigns) that the imperial coinage was seen as a way of advertising certain concepts and ideas.

The issue of two mints under Macrinus has been touched upon above. In *RIC* (4.2: 3-4) and the first edition of *BMCRE* (5: ccxiii), Mattingly attributed the imperial coinage of Macrinus to two mints, one in Rome and the other in Antioch, separating the two mints by the style of Macrinus' portrait.¹⁰⁸ The second edition of *BMCRE* (5: ccxiii-ccxxvii) again prints Mattingly's original hypothesis, but with the caveat that "new evidence, particularly of die-links between the coinage of the supposed two mints, indicates that the two groups represent a chronological rather than a mint distinction." Clay (1979: 30-32) offers a more complete refutation of Mattingly's hypothesis. Given the lack of evidence for a functioning imperial mint at Antioch and the links between dies of coins previously considered to have come from the two different mints, it is prudent to consider Rome as the primary mint during the reign of Macrinus and to see all issues as having been produced there. Having only one mint at Rome is not insignificant. If the imperial coinage is viewed as an extension of Macrinus' imperial ideology, the result is that the mint at Rome, the city which Macrinus never visited while emperor, was in some kind of contact with Macrinus and functioned according to his will. This point will become clearer when the types of coins are examined in greater detail.

¹⁰⁸ For a list of reviewers rejecting this hypothesis, see Clay (1979: 29n40).

While Macrinus' imperial coinage can perhaps be considered conservative,¹⁰⁹ it should also be viewed as the medium for a very tightly controlled message that he wished to spread. The potential instability following the assassination of Caracalla has been highlighted in the preceding chapters, and the imperial coinage under Macrinus reflects that feeling of insecurity. Taking his first issue as an example (as identified by Clay 1979: 22), ten inscriptions appear on the reverses of coins bearing Macrinus' image and the inscription *IMP(erator) C(AES)(ar) M(arcus) OPEL(lius) SEV(erus) MACRINUS AVG(ustus)* on the obverse; those ten inscriptions are:

VOTA PVBL(ica) P(ontifex) M(aximus) TR(ibunicia) P(otestate) (with the images of
Felicitas, Fides, Jupiter, Salus, Securitas)
 FIDES MIL(itum) P(ontifex) M(aximus) TR(ibunicia) P(otestate)
 IOVI CONS(ervatori) P(ontifex) M(aximus) TR(ibunicia) P(otestate)
 SALVS PVBL(ica) P(ontifex) M(aximus) TR(ibunicia) P(otestate)
 PONT(ifex) MAX(imus) TR(ibunicia) P(otestate) (Fides)
 FELICITAS TEMPORVM
 FIDES MILITVM
 IOVI CONSERVATORI
 SALVS PVBLICA
 SECVRITAS TEMPORVM

With the exception of the reverse of *PONT(ifex) MAX(imus) TR(ibunicia) P(otestate)*, each of these inscriptions reflects Macrinus' intention to calm any public or military fear regarding his accession; even the exception bears the figure of *Fides* (*RIC* 4.2 Macrinus 3; Image 1). Clay (1979: 34) dates this first issue from April to July of 217, which seems to correspond to the period beginning with Macrinus' accession up until his first conflict with the Parthians in the summer of 217 (as suggested in chapter 2), during which he was most likely canvassing for support of himself and his son. Dio states at 78.19.2 that Macrinus gave a donative to his soldiers around May 217 when Diadumenian became *Antoninus*. The focus on the trust of the military that is reflected on these coins of

¹⁰⁹ For a more negative view, compare the opinion of *RIC* (4.2: 2): "The coins of Macrinus... present few types of interest."

Macrinus' first issue can perhaps be connected to the fact that Macrinus could have distributed these very coins to his soldiers for the payment of the donative.

Image 1. RIC 4.2 Macrinus 3.
Image courtesy of Gorny & Mosch (www.gmcoinart.de)



It should also be noted that Macrinus' first issue is not simply a repetition of Caracalla's last issue of 217. Comparing Macrinus' first issue with Caracalla's final issue from the mint of Rome, there are a number of differences. For the reverse inscriptions and images, there can be found Diana (*RIC* 4.1 Caracalla 284a-d); Jupiter in various depictions (*RIC* 4.1 Caracalla 285a-d, 286-288); Serapis in various depictions (*RIC* 4.1 Caracalla 289e-f, 290, 291a-c, 292); Sol (*RIC* 4.1 Caracalla 293a-f, 294a-c); Victory (*RIC* 4.1 Caracalla 295a-b, 297a-e) and Parthian Victory (*RIC* 4.1 Caracalla 298a-b, 299a-e); and Lion (*RIC* 4.1 Caracalla 296a-c). The only holdover from Caracalla's reign are the types featuring Jupiter on the reverse, though Macrinus includes a different inscription, showing him as *Jupiter Conservator*, a significant change considering the transfer of power that had occurred.

In his second issue, Macrinus includes the types above, but adds *ANNONA AUG(usti)* (as in *RIC* 4.2 Macrinus 55b, Image 2) and *VICTORIA PARTHICA* (with three types). Furthermore, he is more insistent on advertising himself on the reverse, including inscriptions that quantify his titles:

PONTIF(ex) MAX(imus) TR(ibunicia) P(otestate) P(ater) P(atriae)

PONTIF(ex) MAX(imus) TR(ibunicia) P(otestate) CO(n)S(ul) P(ater) P(atriae)
 P(ontifex) M(aximus) TR(ibunicia) P(otestate) II CO(n)S(ul) II P(ater) P(atriae)
 PONTIF(ex) MAX(imus) TR(ibunicia) P(otestate) II CO(n)S(ul) P(ater) P(atriae)

As his honors from the senate increased (for he was by this time *pontifex maximus* and *pater patriae*), Macrinus seems to have felt comfortable making his message more focused on himself as emperor; whereas the first issue was aimed at proclaiming peace and security, the second issue is more typical of an established rule.

Image 2. *RIC 4.2 Macrinus 55b.*

Image courtesy Numismatica Ars Classica (www.arsclassicacoins.com)



Macrinus also had reason to praise himself. He had settled the war with the Parthians, and despite Dio's insistence that it was a terrible deal for the Romans and virtually a loss for Macrinus, the advertisement of the treaty certainly leans towards its portrayal as a Roman victory. In addition to the type proclaiming victory through the inscription *VICTORIA PARTHICA*, the type bearing the inscription *P(ontifex) M(aximus) TR(ibunicia) P(otestate) II CO(n)S(ul) II P(ater) P(atriae)* showed Macrinus in a *quadriga* (*RIC 4.2 Macrinus 47-48*) as well as three *VICT(oria) PART(hica)* types (*RIC 4.2 Macrinus 49-50*). Likewise the *ANNONA AUG(usti)* type (*RIC 4.2 Macrinus 54-56*) showed Macrinus in a positive light as the provider of sustenance to the Roman people.¹¹⁰

¹¹⁰ *Annona* also appeared on the types bearing variations of the inscription *PONTIF(ex) MAX(imus) TR(ibunicia) P(otestate) CO(n)S(ul) P(ater) P(atriae)*, as on *RIC 4.2 Macrinus 25-26, 29-30, 38*.

In this issue Macrinus seems to have balanced the need for security and trust displayed in the first issue with positive self-advertisement that was customary for an emperor.

To round out the imperial coinage of Macrinus, the third issue, which was brief and has been dated by Clay (1979: 34) from about March until June 218, dispensed with the emphasis on stability and security and touted the rule and beneficence of Macrinus.

The following types occur (Clay 1979: 22):

P(ontifex) M(aximus) TR(ibunicia) P(otestate) II CO(n)S(ul) P(ater) P(atriae) (Annona standing, emperor seated)
AEQVITAS AUG(usti)
PROVIDENTIA DEORVM
LIBERALITAS AVG(VSTI) (2 types)

The emphasis on *Annona* and *Liberalitas* are meant to demonstrate Macrinus' generosity, and the latter most likely commemorates a donative. Of these types, rather significant is the appearance of *PROVIDENTIA DEORVM* (e.g. *RIC* 4.2 Macrinus 80, Image 3). The use of *Providentia* on a coin inscription had previously been seen upon accession and added a sense of legitimacy to the recipients' reign (Howgego 1995: 81). This inscription had been used on the coins of Hadrian (e.g. *RIC* 2 Hadrian 589a-b), perhaps as a result of the confused and suspicious circumstances surrounding the death of Trajan.

Image 3. *RIC* 4.2 Macrinus 30.

Image courtesy Classical Numismatic Group (www.cngcoins.com)



Despite being dismissed as an uninspired medium during his reign, it has been seen thus far that Macrinus' imperial coinage mirrored the major events and public

perception of his reign. While questions of the reception of these messages will be summarized here, since it is almost impossible to know how such images were received, it is clear that Macrinus was using this medium for a purpose. The progression of images and inscriptions shows an uncertain beginning followed by a growth of confidence and the assumption of typical imperial images and messages. It is not clear how far this coinage traveled or to whom it went, and a discussion of Macrinus' relationship with the provinces, which would not have necessarily had access to this medium, is necessary.

3.5. *Macrinus and the provinces*

In assessing the relationship that Macrinus had with the provincial cities, there is recourse to a wide array of sources, though none of them state the relationship in exact terms. Literary sources, and in particular Dio's history, as well as coins and inscriptions all figure into the analysis.

Macrinus was well received by several eastern cities, as is advertised on their civic coinage. Such an advertisement is not surprising, since there was a fierce competition among them to gain the emperor's attention. Several cities in the eastern provinces were quick to adopt Macrinus and his name. It appears that Edessa minted a coin with the Greek inscription *OMEDESSA*, in which the *OM* presumably stood for *Opellia Makriniana* (*BMC Arabia etc.* p. 98 nos. 47-51). This phenomenon can also be seen in two cities in Cilicia, Aegeae and Tarsus. On its bronze coinage Aegeae advertises itself *Makreinoupo(leōn)* (SNGvA 5455). Similarly, Tarsus calls itself *Makreinianēs* (SNGvA 6020, 6021). It is not shocking that Macrinus' name was incorporated into the city name in these two places, as there was a great competition among them, and they had previously acted in such a manner under previous rulers (*BMC Cilicia*, cxiv). While it is

not necessarily surprising to see provincial coins with such inscriptions, it is significant that Macrinus spread his name to these places and that they wished to honor him. Such an action by these cities show that both the emperor and the cities themselves were in tune to the possibilities that such advertisement presented.

Further evidence comes from another Cilician city, Anazarbus. An inscription from a milestone found near Anazarbus shows that the city also adopted Macrinus' name; the relevant lines of the restored inscription show the advertisement:

ἀπὸ [Μακρῆνιανῆς Σ]επτιμῖανῆς
Σεουηριανῆς Ἀντωνεινιανῆς Καίσαρείας τῆς πρὸς τῷ
Ἀναζάρβῳ τῆς ἐνδόξου μητροπόλεως...¹¹¹

There are further examples of Anazarbus' support of Macrinus. Coins from this city advertise Macrinus' images on the obverse with a reverse inscription stating *ROMAION TROPAlOPHOROS* (*BMC Lycaonia* p. 34 no. 16). There is further evidence that the city set up a triumphal arch in honor of Macrinus' Parthian victory. Harl (1987: 51) has suggested the following explanation: "Cities in Roman Mesopotamia and Cilicia, close to the Parthian frontier, so consistently proclaimed the victory of the much-maligned Macrinus (217-18) that the ruling classes of these cities no doubt genuinely appreciated his peace with Parthia." This suggestion is reasonable, and one might also take into account the cities' proximity to Antioch, Macrinus' headquarters in Syria.

Dedicatory inscriptions, to both Macrinus and Diadumenian, have been found across the empire; several examples should serve as a sufficient overview. In Egypt centurion of *legio II Trajana Fortis*, Furnius Diabo, honored Diadumenian as *principi iuventutis / Aug(usti) n(ostri) filio* (*AE* 1905, 54). In Africa Proconsularis, Lucius Nonius Rogatianus Honoratianus made a dedication to both Macrinus and Diadumenian on

¹¹¹ Sayar 2000, no. 11 (= Gough 1952, no. 16; *SEG* 12: 516)

account of receiving the title *flamen perpetuus* (*AE* 1968, 591). Several inscriptions from Mauretania, previously discussed in chapter 2, honor both father and son and seem to attest to local pride there. A heavily restored and still fragmentary inscription from Sicily (*CIL* 10, 7280) is a dedication to Diadumenian and names him both Caesar and *princeps iuventutis*. Similarly in Umbria (*CIL* 11, 6116) a dedication was set up to the boy by public decree. In Germany (*CIL* 13, 7379) the situation is the same; there Diadumenian is also honored as *nobil[issimo] / Caes(ari) pr[incipi iu]/ventuti[s]*. Further west, Spain has produced several dedicatory inscriptions to both Macrinus and Diadumenian, primarily from *miliaria* in Hispania Citerior.¹¹² Even Cyprus (*AE* 1940, 104) has produced a dedicatory inscription to both Macrinus and Diadumenian. The wide geographical distribution of inscriptions, as well as the use of titles from early in Macrinus' reign, suggest that the provincial cities of the empire quickly recognized and advertised Macrinus' accession and reign, as well as the position that Diadumenian held in his imperial ideology. This position will be considered in the following section.

3.6. *Diadumenian*

Macrinus' son played a significant part in the emperor's advertisement of his reign, despite being a minor figure at best in the greater picture of Roman history. His presence in the literary accounts of the period is confined to his status as the son of the emperor Macrinus and the various names, titles, and honors bestowed upon him.¹¹³ His position in these accounts can perhaps be superficially judged by the fact that most of them refer to him as Diadumenus, despite the fact that inscriptions and coins call him by his true name Diadumenianus. For the brief reign of Macrinus, however, he was an

¹¹² Rodríguez Colmenero 2004, nos. 95, 96, 100, 127, 530.

¹¹³ For the derivation of the name "Diadumenianus," see Appendix 1, 78.5.1-2.

important figure for what he represented; he was portrayed as the heir to the throne, though still a boy.

Macrinus' predecessor Caracalla had been either not sufficiently forward-thinking or too self-involved to name an heir. The latter is more likely; Caracalla had been in the habit of having the senate address him as emperor who would reign for a hundred years (Dio 78.8). Macrinus understood the weakness of not having an heir, and like so many of his predecessors, he began a campaign of self-advertisement that aimed to reach many of the inhabitants of the empire, and which was successful in doing so, as the evidence above suggests. One aspect of Macrinus' plan was to quickly assert his dynastic intentions. The most important role in this plan was of course played by his son, Diadumenian, who quickly became Caesar and Antoninus. Macrinus, who had taken the name Severus, attached himself to Septimius Severus and his son to the Antonine dynasty as well.

Diadumenian received five titles in all, though not necessarily at the same time. The chronology of when, where, and how Diadumenian received his various titles is muddled in the literary sources, but from Dio's account (78.19.1) it seems that upon Macrinus' accession he was immediately called Caesar by the troops and by Macrinus, and that this title was confirmed by the senate after Macrinus' first correspondence with that body, in conjunction with the granting of the titles patrician and *princeps iuventutis* (78.17.1).¹¹⁴ At some point early on he also adopted the name *Antoninus*, most likely rather early in Macrinus' reign (see chapter 2.5 above). When Macrinus was directly

¹¹⁴ For a proposed chronology of Macrinus' reign, see chapter 2. Petrikovitz (1938: 104) thinks that Diadumenian did not receive the title of Caesar officially until June or July 217, but this date must be too late, considering that the title appears on the first issue of Roman imperial coinage for Macrinus (Clay 1979: 22, 34).

threatened by Elagabalus and the treachery of his Syrian family in the spring of 218, he quickly raised Diadumenian to *Augustus* and *Imperator* (Dio 78.34.1). The final title was granted in May 218, about a month before the fall of Macrinus and Diadumenian.

Among the various titles, the name *Antoninus* continually shows itself to be the most important in the provinces.

The provincial coinage for Diadumenian will allow the reception of his position as Macrinus' heir to be evaluated. In order to put the evidence from the provincial coinage in context, it is perhaps best to look quickly again at Roman imperial coinage. The Roman imperial coinage for Diadumenian is well documented and, while presenting a clear dynastic message, offers simply a conservative picture of the young boy's role in Macrinus' reign. Macrinus is seen as having four issues during his reign (the three major issues have been outlined above); for each issue there is at least one type of Diadumenian (Clay 1979: 22). Diadumenian is immediately seen as *princeps iuventutis*, and this reverse inscription is present on the first two issues. In the third issue, the reverse inscription reads *spes publica*, replacing the earlier *princeps iuventutis*. Finally, the fourth issue bears the reverse inscription *felicitas temporum*. In each of the first three issues, the obverse inscription generally refers to Diadumenian as Antoninus and Caesar. Some early coins of the first issue lack the title Antoninus, but it was quickly picked up and appears on all subsequent issues; the granting of the title Antoninus, therefore, does not seem to have occurred immediately upon Macrinus' accession. From the imperial coinage, three major ways of expressing Diadumenian's position, with all of his titles, can be discerned. The first phase saw the boy titled as *M(arcus) Opel(lius) Diadumenianus Caes(ar)*. The title *Antoninus* was quickly added, most likely sometime

in the summer of 217: *M(arcus) Opel(lius) Ant(oninus) Diadumenian(us) Caes(ar)*.

Finally, the third and brief titlature was *Imp(erator) C(aesar) M(arcus) Opel(lius)*

Ant(oninus) Diadumen(ianus) Aug(ustus).¹¹⁵ The Roman imperial issues for

Diadumenian are not ambitious, but they did send a clear message. Macrinus was setting up his son as heir, not to a new dynasty that he was forming, but rather to the Severan dynasty (and by extension the Antonine dynasty) that had preceded them; in fact, the title *Antoninus* had become a way of expressing the imperial nature of its bearer.

Through the design and inscription of his coinage, Macrinus seems to have been looking directly to the Severan dynasty for inspiration, which is not surprising given the connections between Macrinus and Severus noted earlier. When Caracalla was still young, Septimius Severus displayed his image on coins in much the same way. To provide just a few examples, there is an issue from 196-198 with an obverse bust of Caracalla and a reverse inscription of *Destinato Imperat[ori]* (RIC 4.1 Caracalla 6) and another type with on obverse of Caracalla and a reverse bearing the inscription *Principi Iuventutis* (RIC 4.1 Caracalla 13b, Image) from the same period. Latter is very similar to a type of Diadumenian mentioned above, specifically RIC 4.2 Diadumenian 102 (Image 5). It should be kept in mind also that Severus was hoping to hand down his power to both of his sons, Caracalla and Geta, as is evident on a number of coins from his reign. There is an example of an obverse bearing the bust of Severus with a reverse showing the confronted busts of Caracalla and Geta and ironically bearing the inscription *Aeternit(as) Imperi* (RIC 4.1 Severus 155b).

¹¹⁵ Clay 1979: 32.

Image 4. *RIC* 4.1 Caracalla 13b.

Image courtesy Numismatica Ars Classica (www.arsclassicacoins.com)



Image 5. *RIC* 4.2 Macrinus 102.

Image courtesy Classical Numismatic Group (www.cngcoins.com)



With Roman imperial coinage having been briefly considered, it will be now be possible to take a look at the provincial coinage. As was noted above, the title *Antoninus* was important and it figures prominently on the provincial coins of Diadumenian. The importance of the name Antoninus can be gleaned from the *Historia Augusta*. In fact, having the name *Antoninus* was the only reason that Diadumenian was given a biography at all;¹¹⁶ otherwise his biography would have been combined with that of Macrinus.¹¹⁷

After Diadumenian had received the name Antoninus, the biographer reports that a coin

¹¹⁶ On the *nomen Antoninorum*, see Syme 1971: 78-88.

¹¹⁷ *Dd.* 6.1: Haec sunt quae digna memoratu in Antonino Diadumeno esse videantur. cuius vitam iunxissem patris gestis, nisi Antoninorum nomen me ad edendam puerilis specialem expositionem vitae coegisset.

was immediately struck at Antioch bearing the name *Antoninus Diadumenianus*, but that Macrinus' coinage was delayed until the senate ordered it (*Dd.* 2.6).¹¹⁸

With this mention of a coin of Diadumenian minted at Antioch, a convenient way to consider the provincial coinage may be through the tetradrachms of Syria, which have conveniently been collected by Bellinger (1940). These coins can be seen as a small but characteristic sample of how the emperor and his heir were represented in the eastern provinces.¹¹⁹ This coinage falls into the category of "provincial coinage," that is, it was meant for use throughout the province in which it was minted. Some regularity was therefore required. The "provincial coinage" can be contrasted with two other types, called *koina*, which were minted by leagues, and *civic*, coins minted by individual cities for local use, which will be discussed more generally below.

Generally speaking, the tetradrachms all follow the same pattern: obverse bust of Diadumenian with inscription and reverse of an eagle, usually with an inscription proclaiming tribunician power. Both inscriptions were in Greek. There is some variation among the obverse inscriptions that is worth noting. Almost all of the tetradrachms bear the praenomen *Marcus* and nomen *Opellius*. Few give the name *Diadumenian*, instead using the title *Antoninus*; such examples can be seen in Bellinger 150 and 151 from Edessa (M Opel Antōneinos Kaisar, Image 6) and Bellinger 169 from Carrhae (Kais M Opel Antōninos). The inclusion of the title Caesar was also an important aspect of the inscription, and almost all cities minting tetradrachms for Diadumenian included it.¹²⁰

¹¹⁸ This anecdote is clearly a fabrication, but it does support the idea that Macrinus' dynastic message was extremely important to him in establishing a legitimate reign.

¹¹⁹ The economic aspects of the Syrian tetradrachms will be considered in greater detail in chapter 4.

¹²⁰ It can be noted, however, the title did not occur in the same position or in the same form for all of the cities. For example, in these two examples from Edessa and Carrhae the difference can be seen. At Edessa

Image 6. Bellinger 150.
Image courtesy Classical Numismatic Group (www.cngcoins.com)



A large number of the Syrian tetradrachms grant Diadumenian the title *autokratōr*, the Greek word for the Latin *imperator*. These include Aradus (Bellinger 247-250), Hierapolis (107-108), and Cyrrhus (127). Technically speaking, this title does not seem to have been properly applied to Diadumenian. Such a title would only have been applicable after he became Augustus near the end of Macrinus' reign in May 218. It is generally thought, however, that Macrinus had most likely suspended the minting of Syrian tetradrachms by the fall of 217 (Clay 1979: 34). A fuller explanation for this phenomenon will be offered below.¹²¹

Another peculiarity exists on several tetradrachms from Beroea (90-92, Image 7), Hierapolis (107-18), Cyrrhus (127), and Aradus (247-251). On these coins Diadumenian is depicted with a radiate head. On the Roman imperial coinage, Diadumenian is always

the title occurs at the end, while at Carrhae at the beginning; at Edessa, *Kaisar* is spelled out, at Carrhae the abbreviation *K* is used.

¹²¹ One exception to all other titulatures listed is from Rhessaena (Bellinger 177), though it may possibly be related to the issue just discussed. This tetradrachm seems to include the letter *S*, maybe for *Severus*, a name adopted by Macrinus and according to the mint there by his son as well. The other possibility is that the *S* is an abbreviation for *Sebastos*, or *Augustus*. It should be noted that Diadumenian was not elevated to *Augustus* until May 218, so if it is truly the use of the title here, it preceded that date.

portrayed with a bare head, as was befitting to his position as Caesar, but not as Augustus (at least prior to May 218).¹²² These mints, however, did not use the radiate head for

Image 7. Bellinger 92.

Image courtesy Classical Numismatic Group (www.cngcoins.com).



Diadumenian alone. Earlier issues for Caracalla showed the same radiate crown (e.g. Bellinger 84). No examples of Macrinus with a radiate head appear in Bellinger; instead he wears the laureate crown.

These provincial mints used the radiate crown in a different way than the Roman imperial mints. It is generally believed that the radiate crown marked the coin as a double denomination on the Roman imperial coins, and it can therefore be seen on coins such as dupondius or, more recent to this period, the *antoninianus*. Alternatively, it seems to have been used earlier on Roman imperial coinage to mark divinity.¹²³ The Roman imperial coinage seems to have exerted some influence on the way emperors were portrayed on provincial coins. The new *antoniniani* showed Caracalla with the radiate crown and it was perhaps considered acceptable for the provincial mints to include this crown on tetradrachms bearing his image. This crown was then passed down to Diadumenian after Caracalla. What this idea does not explain is why the radiate crown

¹²² The only exceptions are the *antoniniani* that bear the portrait of Diadumenian, on which the radiate crown marks the coin as a double denomination.

¹²³ e.g. *RIC* Gaius 1, with an obverse of Gaius and a reverse of radiate bust of Divus Augustus / Tiberius; *RIC* Titus 69, with an obverse of Titus and a reverse of a radiate bust of Divus Vespasianus.

would have skipped Macrinus in the imperial issues, as it does in all of these cities.¹²⁴

The radiate crown was perhaps perceived by these Syrian mints as a sign of hereditary or dynastic rule; thus Caracalla, as heir to Severus, and Diadumenian, heir to Macrinus, wears it on these Syrian tetradrachms.¹²⁵ In this way it would mark both characters as princes, further showing the effectiveness of Macrinus' dynastic message.

Although the preceding has amounted to a list of the variations among these tetradrachms, it cannot be denied that there is a simple, fairly consistent message. Diadumenian is portrayed in an elevated position by the inclusion of the title *Caesar*, or at times *autokratōr*. The most significant aspect of his titulature, judging by the obverse inscriptions, is his adoption of the title *Antoninus*; it seems to be absent from only one tetradrachm, which comes from Byblus (Bellinger 277). In fact, this title is more important than any other, as other aspects of Diadumenian's name are often left out, most frequently his actual name Diadumenian. Not unlike the Roman imperial coinage, these tetradrachms stress a connection, through *nomina* and the title *Caesar*, to Macrinus as his heir and a connection to previous dynasties as an Antonine. The consistency of the message is not absolute, but it is uniform enough to demonstrate the effectiveness of Macrinus' dynastic message. Although it is nearly impossible to understand how the message was perceived, it can be known that these cities wished to display the information and seem to have done so on an autonomous basis.

¹²⁴ This holds true only for the Syrian tetradrachms; Macrinus can be seen wearing a radiate crown on other provincial bronzes, e.g. of Aegeae (SNGFr 2347).

¹²⁵ This hypothesis cannot extend to all provincial mints, since Macrinus does appear at times with a radiate crown, as on a coin from Aegeae in Cilicia (*BMC Lycaonia, etc.* p. 24, #27). On this coin, Macrinus and Diadumenian are depicted with confronted busts on the obverse. Macrinus wears the radiate crown, while Diadumenian has a bare head.

So far only one type of coinage from a controlled geographic area has been considered, but it must be remembered that hundreds of other cities were minting provincial coinage, usually in bronze, at the same time all across the Roman East. In the following sections the fuller extent of Diadumenian's provincial coinage will be investigated in order to judge just how far and how well Macrinus' son was received throughout the empire.¹²⁶

It may first be worthwhile to discuss briefly the distribution of the provincial coinage. As was noted earlier, provincial coinage for Macrinus or Diadumenian appeared in almost one hundred cities.¹²⁷ The following point will be noted in the next chapter, but it needs to be mentioned here as well. The *Roman Provincial Coinage* series has shown that in Asian cities the length of rule directly affected the number of cities minting under that emperor. During the Flavian period, 93 Asian cities produced civic bronzes (*RPC* 2.1: 14). Later, during the reign of Alexander Severus, 96 Asian cities produced civic bronzes (*RPC* 7.1: 57). This specific dynasty and that individual reign were lengthy, covering 27 and 13 years, respectively, and they show similar results. When shorter reigns are considered, the numbers are much less uniform. For example, Maximinus Thrax, ruling for only three years, saw only 57 Asian cities mint civic bronzes in his name; the two year reigns of Trajan Decius and Trebonius Gallus had only 31 and 19 minting cities, respectively (*RPC* 7.2: 57). These latter reigns are closer in length to Macrinus' period of rule, which saw only 21 cities in the province of Asia produce civic

¹²⁶ Although the above study of the Syrian tetradrachms was able to yield some profitable results, the existence of Diadumenian coinage there was not surprising, for a number of reasons. First, all of the cities minted these tetradrachms under Caracalla, and Macrinus and his son simply inherited this production. Second, Macrinus had his base of operations throughout his reign in Antioch, so it would not have been a challenge for the Syrian cities to respond to his accession.

¹²⁷ The information was collected from Münsterberg 1926, Franke et al. 1981, and my own research, done primarily with various volumes of the *Sylloge Nummorum Graecorum*.

bronzes in his name, to the best of my knowledge. So it does in fact seem to be true that Asian cities did not always immediately respond to an accession with coin production, perhaps on account of their minting cycle. Since the evidence has not been completely collected, it is impossible to say with great certainty that these trends were consistent throughout the eastern provinces. It is possible, however, to suggest that had Macrinus and Diadumenian reigned for a longer period, more cities would have minted in their names. As it stands, almost one hundred cities in all still seems like a large number for a reign of just over one year.

Diadumenian's coinage does not always show up in cities where Macrinus' coins can be found; in fact, Diadumenian's coinage has been found only in about two-thirds of the cities.¹²⁸ It can still be seen, however, that coins of Diadumenian saw a wide distribution throughout the eastern Roman provinces; the distribution was almost as wide as those of Macrinus, which is significant. The numbers outlined above also do not take into account the identities of the cities to which the coins have been attributed or the number of coins found in each city. For example, the province of Moesia Inferior shows only two cities (Nicopolis ad Istrum and Marcianopolis), but these two cities account for a large percentage of the total coins identified for Diadumenian (over 350 types).

For the most part the provincial bronze coins mirror what was previously seen on the obverses of the Syrian tetradrachms. In general, they portray Diadumenian with an inscription bearing the titles *Caesar* and *Antoninus*. All of the variations seen on those tetradrachms are present, though it is impossible here to enumerate them. Instead, it will

¹²⁸ It should be noted that for some cities only coins of Diadumenian remain; in these cases, coins of Macrinus are assumed, even if none have been found. The lack of a comprehensive volume on the provincial coinage of the Severan period makes distribution figures risky, but it seems that a large enough sample of coins was surveyed to at least give a general impression of the situation.

be worthwhile to consider one particular irregularity: the coins on which Diadumenian has been granted the title *autokratōr*, a title that he did not officially hold until very late in Macrinus' reign. The following cities give him this title (including provincial, *koina*, and civic issues), listed alphabetically by province:¹²⁹

Heraclea (Bithynia-Pontus) (Leake *Numism. Hellenica*, Asiatic Greece, Suppl.. 58)
 Trapezus (Bithynia-Pontus) (Mionnet, Suppl. 7, p. 452)
 Tavium (Galatia) (Mionnet 4, p. 401)
 Aspendus (Lycia-Pamphylia) (*Journal international d'Archeologie numismatique* 6: 196)
 Perga (cited by Gaebler 1904: 294-295n2 as "Berlin, noch nicht veröffentlicht")
 Sardis (Lydia) (*BMC Lydia* p. 264 #169)
 Thyatira (Lydia) (Mionnet Suppl. 7, p. 452, 624)
 Cyzicus (Mysia) (Mionnet Suppl. 5, p. 341, 386)
 Macedonia *koinon* (Macedonia) (3, 88, per Muensterberg)
 Edessa (a.k.a. Aegae, Macedonia) (Leake, *Numism. hellenica*, Europ. Greece p. 48)
 Antioch (Syria) (*BMC Galatia* p. 201, 415, cf. McLean 9390)
 Aradus (Syria) (Bellinger 248-250)
 Gabala (Syria) (Gilmore 1987)
 Hierapolis (Syria) (Bellinger 107-108)

It is perhaps unfair to group all of these coins together, since they represent different denominations, have different functions, etc. For example, the coins from Syria are all silver tetradrachms that could travel throughout the province and were most likely minted to pay troops, while the others were bronze issues meant for more local use. The same question, however, needs to be asked of all of them: why did they give Diadumenian the title of *autokratōr*? Taken as a whole, this group shows great geographical diversity, and an explanation why they used this title is not easy to discern.¹³⁰ It may be an actual mistake on the part of the minting authority in these cities, which were unaware that the boy did not actually have this title. Since Diadumenian did not become *imperator* until

¹²⁹ The following list has been compiled from Gaebler (1904), Münsterberg (1926), and, secondarily, Bassett (1920), as well as from my own research. I admit skepticism over several of these citations, since they have come from old publications that can often be found to have mistakes (cf. the comments of Johnston 1983). My own research, however, has uncovered several other cities, previously not cited by Gaebler, Münsterberg, or Bassett, which called Diadumenian *autokratōr* prior to his official designation as such. Furthermore, there must still be other cities that participated in this practice, whose coins have not yet come to light.

¹³⁰ The argument made by Gaebler (1904) and Basset (1920) for a trip to the Danube by Macrinus and Diadumenian will not be discussed here; see a Appendix 2 for a refutation of his argument.

very late in Macrinus' reign, probably in April 218 after the first rumblings from Elagabalus, it seems almost certain that these cities had minted coins calling the boy *autokratōr* before that time.¹³¹ What makes the situation more difficult to understand, however, is that Macrinus was residing in the East for all of his reign and had made Antioch his capital. Although the home base of Macrinus, Antioch also used this title for Diadumenian prior to its official granting.

The question of minting authority is difficult to deal with, but it seems that Macrinus himself was not the one with direct oversight of the mints.¹³² The inconsistencies among the provincial issues seem to tell us that there was no official directive coming from Rome, but that the provincial mints all tended to follow a somewhat consistent pattern. Differences in titulature and portrait, to the point of error, show that the cities had some flexibility in the creation of these coins.¹³³ Also, although Macrinus had a great deal of success in spreading his dynastic message, as can be seen by the wide distribution of coins bearing the image of his son, it cannot be said with any certainty that the minting authority in each city understood fully the type of political dispensation that Macrinus was setting up. Clearly, though, there is an interaction

¹³¹ In reference to the Syrian tetradrachms, this argument, which was made by Clay (1979: 34), is accepted here, *contra* Bellinger (1940: 7) and more recently, Gilmore (1987: 5-6). In general it seems that minting cycles of the other cities would not have occurred coins in the one month that Diadumenian officially held that title.

¹³² The same observation has been made regarding the provincial coinage from 238-244 (*RPC* 7.1: 33).

¹³³ An intriguing coin comes from Alexandria in Egypt. Published by Metcalf (1979: 182 no. 30), this billon tetradrachm shows a bust of Diadumenian with the inscription *M O[] Diadoumenianos K Seb*; the last portion of the inscription thus clearly describes Diadumenian as Augustus (Sebastos). This coin is dated to the first year of Macrinus' reign, indeed prior to August 28, 217. As was seen earlier, our literary sources state that Diadumenian was not Augustus until May 218. Metcalf suggests that Diadumenian may in fact have been *Augustus* earlier in his father's reign. I am not ready to follow Metcalf's suggestion. First of all, there is not enough extant evidence to deviate from Dio's assertion that Diadumenian officially became Augustus in May 218. The mint at Alexandria was a provincial mint just like those in Syria that were studied above, and one should therefore not be surprised that there exists variation and perhaps incorrect information within the coin inscriptions.

between emperor and city in each of these cases, and the cities seem to be driven to mint coins honoring an emperor or his heir in order to curry favor with him.¹³⁴ Because the emperor could honor or dishonor a city, it was in the city's best interest to attempt to show their respect to him, and coinage was one medium for achieving this goal. What results is a symbiotic relationship between the two parties, and in this way Macrinus could advance his dynastic message. Regardless of whether the cities thought Macrinus was setting up his son as a joint ruler (which does not seem to have been the case), they understood his dynastic intentions and advertised them on his behalf. Macrinus would most likely not have had a problem with this flattery, and the situation in the provinces, with some cities granting Diadumenian the title of *autokratōr* early, foretold the eventual outcome of the boy's final titlature.

The section has so far considered only coin inscriptions and distribution; looking at one type of coin, found in various cities throughout the eastern provinces, will shed further light on the spread of Macrinus' dynastic message. This one type is the double coin, bearing the portraits of both Macrinus and Diadumenian, either confronted on the obverse or alternatively with Macrinus on the obverse and his son on the reverse. These types seem to be the most explicit representation of the dynastic message.

Coins from Aegeae in Cilicia (SNGFr 2347, Image 8), show confronted busts of Macrinus and Diadumenian; on these coins, mentioned above, Macrinus wears a radiate crown, while Diadumenian is bareheaded. Cibyra (SNGvA 3738) minted a large bronze double coin with confronted busts bearing the inscription *Auto(kratōr) Kai(sar) M(arkos) Opel(lios) Seb(astos) Makreinos M(arkos) Opel(lios) Antōnino(s) [Dia K?]*. Caesarea in

¹³⁴ I am ignoring here the religious aspect of placing an imperial portrait on a coin in favor of a more practical understanding of such an action.

Cappadocia (SNGvA 6498; Sydenham 507; *BMC Galatia, etc.* p. 282-284, 83) also mints a similar piece, bearing the confronted busts of Macrinus and Diadumenian and the inscription *Au(tokratōr) K(aisar) M(arkos) Op(ellios) Seu(ēros) Makreinos, M(arkos) Op(ellios) Diadou(menianos) Antō[nei](nos)*.

Image 8. SNGFr 2347.

Image courtesy Classical Numismatic Group (www.cngcoins.com)



An extremely large number of similar coins survive from the city of Marcianopolis in Moesia Inferior. In this series, the obverse shows the confronted busts of Macrinus and Diadumenian and includes an inscription that includes both. Generally speaking the obverse inscriptions are quite full. For Macrinus, the inscription is some form of *Aut(okratōr) K(aisar) M(arkos) Opel(lios) Seu(ēros) Makreinos*. For Diadumenian, the description is some form of *K(aisar) M(arkos) Opel(lios) Antōneinos*; some include a form of *Diadoumenos*.

Other double coins come from Asia Minor, but of a different type that shows Macrinus on the obverse and Diadumenian on the reverse. Antioch shows several examples (*BMC Galatia, etc.* p. 200, #403-406) which bear the obverse inscription *Au(tokratōr) K(aisar) M(arkos) O(pellios) Se(ouēros) Makrinos* with a laureate bust of Macrinus; the reverse shows a bare-headed bust of Diadumenian and the inscription *Kai(sar) M(arkos) O(pellios) Dia(doumenianos) Antōninos*. With these examples of

double coins, it is clear that cities in the eastern provinces were paying attention to the emperor and his dynastic message.

These three categories (inscriptions, distribution, and type) show the range of devices used in distributing Macrinus' dynastic message. It must be said that this message was well known throughout the Eastern provinces. The provincial towns picked up this message and displayed it in a reasonably consistent manner, not only through inscriptions but also through coins types. The wide distribution shows the message's success; the inconsistencies demonstrate each city's desire to associate itself with the emperor; and the double coins shows the possible variations in displaying the dynastic message. The interaction between the Roman imperial coinage and the provincial coinage can be seen in certain areas, such as in the use of the radiate crown or the double coins. In a brief, fourteen-month rule, the spread of such information is extremely impressive and shows a close connection between the emperor and the provincial cities and towns.

3.7. Conclusion

Several conclusions can be drawn from the evidence presented so far. In terms of an imperial message, Macrinus stressed stability and fidelity at the beginning of his reign and eventually included messages of self-praise, focusing on his generosity and acquisition of titles. This development works well with the report from Dio that Macrinus was favored at the outset of his reign and did not begin to hear complaints from the population at Rome until September 217. There is also a good deal of evidence showing that Macrinus was well received in the provinces; several cities added his name to their list of titles and the distribution of coinage, either in his name or Diadumenian's,

demonstrates how well many cities were in tune with the political changes in the empire. This evidence is further supported by the wide distribution of dedicatory inscriptions. Furthermore, the dynastic message that Macrinus presented was well understood and was an important part of his imperial statement. In terms of following a predecessor, Macrinus seems to have chosen Severus, and in many ways he attempted to have his reign be a continuation of the Severan dynasty. Macrinus was therefore sensitive to Caracalla's memory, though he attempted to downplay this aspect of the Severan dynasty as much as possible. Many more connections between Macrinus and Severus will be found through an investigation of Macrinus' imperial policies.

Chapter 4 – Macrinus’ Program

4.1. *The Negative Literary Tradition*

Macrinus’ reign is often viewed with negativity both by ancient and modern writers, and particular emphasis is placed on the perceived failures of his foreign policy. Dio (78.27.1), for example, constantly complains that Macrinus gave in to Parthian demands and sees his actions as the product of a weak Moorish character. Modern opinions have not shown much deviation from this perspective. Mackenzie (1949: 48), for example, comments on Macrinus’ actions in the East after Caracalla’s assassination:

The importance of Caracalla’s leadership was shown by the disorganization of the army under his successor; the campaign of 217 was abandoned, and when a skirmish with the advancing forces of Artabanus developed into a battle, the Romans were defeated in their own territory. Macrinus, whose flight had contributed to the disaster, was forced to conclude an ignominious peace with Parthia. Such was the end of the campaign begun so hopefully in imitation of the great Macedonian.

Caracalla’s actions against Rome’s neighbors in the latter years of his reign have already been recounted in the first chapter, which paints a picture of unchecked aggression.

While it is not the intention of this section to make an apology for the actions of Macrinus, it will be shown that Macrinus inherited a bad situation from his successor and that he pursued a reasonable course of action, given the circumstances in which he found himself. Furthermore, it will be clear that Macrinus in fact had a plan for the empire and was able to institute a number of reforms that might have helped pull the empire out the predicament in which Caracalla had left it.¹³⁵ His foreign and domestic/economic policy will be treated in the following sections.

¹³⁵ Contra Mattingly (1953: 969), who gives Macrinus no credit: “Macrinus had no time to develop a clear policy of his own.”

4.2. *Macrinus and the Parthians*

Macrinus' reign was dominated by the problems left behind by Caracalla; the number of nations outraged during Caracalla's trip to the East in the latter years of his reign has been enumerated in chapter 2. Macrinus' major concern at the outset of his reign was the Parthian threat, stirred up by Caracalla directly prior to his assassination. While it is perhaps stretching the evidence too thin, one might suggest that Macrinus carried out his plot against Caracalla because that emperor had put the empire (or at least the army) in great peril. As has been argued earlier, the idea that Macrinus carried out the plot on the spur of the moment is not a tenable position. The plot was clearly a well-organized plan.

How imminent was the Parthian threat? The two reasonably reliable sources, Dio and Herodian, seem on the surface to disagree. Dio's Book 78 often values narrative over chronology, and his work on the reign has many chronological lapses.¹³⁶ It seems to be the case that he suffered one here with reference to a Parthian attack. It is thus most probable that Herodian's account is truer, at least in terms of chronology, though not necessarily exact. Herodian states that the Parthians attacked Macrinus almost immediately. At 4.14.1 he even attributes Macrinus' accession to this threat, claiming that the army was hurried into choosing an emperor on account of the Parthians; from all of the available sources, however, it seems that Macrinus had the situation under control and was not rushed. Herodian stresses the immediacy of the Parthian attack, while Dio does not get around to it until he has narrated Macrinus' accession, appointments, honors conferred, and public perception, followed by a description of the death of Julia Domna.

¹³⁶ Syme (1972: 277): "Excellent in so many ways, Dio's account of the reign is confused and marred by defects of structure. Also, he is guilty of a lapse of memory, as can happen all the more easily when a writer is narrating the history of his own times, not copying a source."

It is not until 78.26 that Dio takes up the issue of the Parthian war, and the chronology is confused to an even greater extent because he clearly relates events from as late as September 217 before turning to any foreign affairs. Dio's account, however, is manifestly not written with the events in chronological order, so the postponement of his discussion of foreign affairs until later in the book does not necessarily mean that they occurred later chronologically in Macrinus' reign.

The first battle with the Parthians during Macrinus' reign therefore most likely took place in early summer 217, only a few months at most after the murder of Caracalla.¹³⁷ The battle took place near Nisibis, often a site for Roman and Parthian conflict, over a period of two days and appears to have ended in a draw (Herod. 4.15).¹³⁸ Dio's suggestion (78.26) that the result of the battle was a loss for the Romans can only be explained by his projection of the final outcome. The two sides then retreated, and though the sources report no further fighting between the two sides, some battles must have taken place throughout the summer and early fall of 217. Most likely by mid-fall the two sides had suspended full military engagements and had entered into peace negotiations.

In the months between his accession and the battle at Nisibis, it can be assumed that Macrinus was gathering military support for future battle. In the nearby area were stationed several important legions, most prominently *legio II Parthica* at Apamea and *legio II Gallica* in Rhabanaea. At least seven legions were located in the greater area of

¹³⁷ Petrikovitz's (1938: 104) suggestion that the battle at Nisibis took place in June or July 217 is reasonable.

¹³⁸ Herodian's suggestion that Artabanus only wished to fight for so long because he thought he was still fighting Caracalla is absurd, but it does perhaps show that the battle occurred not long after Caracalla's death.

Syria and Mesopotamia.¹³⁹ Because of Caracalla's popularity with the soldiers, Macrinus most likely would have had to pay a visit to each of these bivouacs to canvass support. The position of these legions is of course important, since they were strategically placed for a Parthian invasion. That Macrinus made his headquarters at Antioch strengthens the impression of a Parthian threat. Dio may even allude to a sort of public relations tour made by Macrinus and Diadumenian; from 78.19.1 and 78.40.1 it is known that Diadumenian was made Caesar by the soldiers and that the action took place at Zeugma.¹⁴⁰ A small tour of Syria and Mesopotamia can perhaps be suggested then for Macrinus at the beginning of his reign in order to drum up support.

During the winter of 217/218 Macrinus was still obviously uncomfortable with the Parthian situation, as his stay in Antioch makes clear. Politically speaking, the best move for him to make would have been to travel to Rome, where even by September 217 the people were publicly commenting on his absence (Dio 78.20). It is not clear what exactly kept him in the East. Perhaps the Parthian threat was indeed too great to ignore, but it should also be remembered that he faced the threat of problems with Armenia and Dacia (which will receive comment below), as well as the demands of a large part of the army stationed in the eastern provinces; his absence could have thrown matters into disarray. Likewise, the distance back from Rome would have been too great were a problem to occur. The need to counter intrigues of Severan loyalists must also be considered for his decision to stay in Antioch.

¹³⁹ A full list of legions and their locations during Macrinus' reign can be found in chapter 1, Table 1.

¹⁴⁰ *Contra* Petrikovitz (1938: 104) and Syme (1972: 277), who think that the conferment of Caesar on Diadumenian occurred after the battle with the Parthians, though Syme allows that "those operations continue to baffle precision of dating." The *RIC* certainly bears it out that Diadumenian received this title early in Macrinus' reign, and one must assume that the army had accepted the title by the time the senate was able to rubber-stamp Macrinus' request for it.

Herodian (4.15.9) concludes his fourth book with the peace agreement between Rome and Parthia, which he places at the end of the battle of Nisibis. This position is not tenable. Dio, along with the numismatic evidence, brings the situation into sharper focus. In the last chapter of 78.26, Dio states that the fall and winter were given over to peace negotiations between the two sides, and 78.27.1 picks up with the peace agreement. The peace was most likely concluded in first months 218, for Dio writes that after the agreement Macrinus was voted the title *Parthicus* by the senate; despite the fact that Macrinus refused the title, coins with the reverse inscription *VICT(oria) PART(hica)* started to appear in 218 (Clay 1979: 34).

According to the sources, Macrinus' settlement was of great economic detriment to the Roman state and was perceived as unacceptable. Dio (78.27.1) blames Macrinus' unwillingness to fight on his Moorish cowardice and on the lack of discipline among the soldiers. The former is simply part of the negative tradition surrounding Macrinus' background that Dio propagates to a great extent; the latter must be an insult to the management of the army under Caracalla, for Macrinus had not yet had time to implement any new strategy for controlling that body. The Parthians, he concedes, also wished to make a pact with the Romans, since they were far from home and were low on supplies. Dio sets the payout to the Parthians at ὥστε καὶ ἐς πεντακισχιλίας μυριάδας τὸ σύμπαν ἀνάλωμα γενέσθαι.¹⁴¹ This amount means 50,000,000 drachmae / denarii, which is equal to 200,000,000 sesterces, at a ratio of 4 sesterces : 1 drachma / denarius. Obviously, this sum is quite large, and for the most part it has been

¹⁴¹ Herodian and the *HA* do not mention the payment. The *HA* barely describes the conflict with Parthia at all, stating only that Macrinus wished to use the victory to remove his prior infamy; Herodian relates the story, mentioned above, of Macrinus and Artabanus wishing to be friends, now that Caracalla had been killed. Such a story may be the result to Herodian knowing that Macrinus sent Diadumenian into the care of Artabanus when he learned of the uprising of Elagabalus.

taken at face value.¹⁴² It will be helpful here to put the payout in relative terms. Duncan-Jones (1994: 45, Table 3.7) has estimated the annual budget of the empire for 215; he reckons the budget to be between 1,462,000,000 and 1,613,000,000 sesterces. A payout of 200,000,000 sesterces would therefore account for about 12-13% of the entire annual budget.¹⁴³

It is worthwhile to ask whether Dio's figure for Macrinus' payout to the Parthians can be seen as reliable. The text surrounding this figure must be examined. First, chapter 27 commences with Dio's opinion regarding Macrinus' cowardice, which is a natural outgrowth of his Moorish background.¹⁴⁴ Second, Dio explicitly states that Macrinus did not send a full report of the settlement to the senate in Rome,¹⁴⁵ confirming that the large, round number that he reports is hearsay. There is also some evidence that by this number Dio may have simply meant to convey that large sum of money was paid over. When Dio (76.1.1) describes Severus' actions at the celebration of the tenth anniversary of his accession, he states that Severus gave a largesse to the people and a donative to the praetorian guard. The total cost was 200 million sesterces, and the vocabulary of this passage closely mirrors that of Macrinus: ἐς γὰρ τὴν δωρεὰν ταύτην πεντακισχίλιαι μυριάδες δραχμῶν ἀναλώθησαν. It is not necessarily the case that

¹⁴² Mattingly (1953: 965): "Macrinus restored prisoners and paid a large indemnity, but surrendered no prisoners;" Bassett (1920: 35) follows Dio without question: "Dio... states that the total amount of the 'gifts' sent by Macrinus to the Persian king and his allies was 50,000,000 drachmas;" Cavuoto (1983: 28-29): "Macrino dovette pagare comunque una forte somma..."

¹⁴³ While Duncan-Jones' numbers are not definite, there is good information for military expenditures, which make up about 70% of the estimate. His numbers, then, can at least be accepted as a rough guide.

¹⁴⁴ "ὁ γὰρ Μακρίνος ὑπὸ τε δειλίας ἐμφύτου (καὶ γὰρ Μαῦρος ὦν δεινῶς ἐδείμαινεν)... / For Macrinus, on account of his inborn cowardice (for since he was a Moor he was excessively fearful)." That this comment is simply unabashed prejudice is confirmed by Dio's later compliment to the Moorish auxiliary that fought bravely for Macrinus against Elagabalus (78.32.1).

¹⁴⁵ οὐ μέντοι καὶ πάντα τὰ πραχθέντα αὐτοῖς ἀκριβῶς ὁ Μακρίνος τῇ [τε] βουλῇ ἐπέστειλεν / "Indeed Macrinus did not write in detail to the senate regarding all the matters settled by them."

Dio could not have known the exact amount, but the similarity in content and language between the two passages perhaps suggests that he only wanted to express that the sum was enormous, not necessarily the exact amount.

Furthermore, Dio's unreliability on financial matters in general can be considered. An examination of Caracalla's reign should suffice. At 77.11.1, Dio reports that Caracalla paid Junius Paulus, a court performer, 1 million sesterces for making a joke; though not impossible, the sum seems enormous. At 77.14.4, Dio reports that Caracalla distributed gold plated lead coins to the general population, for which there is no evidence. The passages in which Dio talks about Caracalla's overpayment of the army have already been cited in chapter 1. In sum, it can be seen that Dio uses money and its payment in the narratives of ill-favored emperors to show their extravagance and lack of moral fiber, and there is good reason to believe that he included Macrinus in this category as well. The last point is that, although there may have been some payment for reparations for the damage Caracalla had brought on Parthia, the Parthians were in an equally weak position for negotiation, as the harassment of the Sassanids had begun by this time. In all, Dio's sum may be overstated for effect and perhaps did not reflect the actual reality of the Parthian settlement.

None of the literary sources address the real reasons for Macrinus' settlement with the Parthians. Suggestions can be made here, but should avoid mere speculation. Dio's statement that the army was out of control may be partially right; the soldiers had been on campaign for several years in a row and were perhaps restless. That much is noted by Dio in an earlier passage, when he states that the troops had been hoping for peace under Macrinus (78.9.2). This reason for the settlement is perhaps the simplest: Macrinus was

most likely taking the best available option. At that time, he was facing threats from Parthia, probably from Dacia and Armenia as well, and possibly the beginnings of the revolt under Elagabalus. If it could be afforded, a settlement with the Parthians was the best choice (though the size of the cash payout can be doubted). Macrinus seems to have been able to secure a true friendship with Artabanus and to seal the Roman border to the east, which did not need to be expanded.¹⁴⁶ Such a peace was most likely desirable to the Parthians as well, since they were under pressure from the Sassanids, which intensified around 220 (Debevoise 1938: 268-269). The pact with Parthia was beneficial in at least one way to Macrinus' reign, despite the lengthy negotiations, for it allowed him to be relieved of the Parthian threat when the Syrian revolt began. The decision, however, was poorly received in Rome (according to Dio's account) and the length of the negotiations prevented him from traveling there and consolidating a power base in the capital in a timely manner. In these ways it was possibly detrimental.

Macrinus' decision to settle with the Parthians is difficult to gauge for its long term effect on the Roman state. The Parthians, a constant threat to the Romans over hundreds of years, were now allies (or at least no longer were they adversaries). The Parthian state, however, was under attack from the Sassanids, and this fact may provide a clue regarding Artabanus' inclination towards settlement with the Romans. Although this period of Parthian history is difficult to discern, it is clear that it was becoming weakened just as the Roman state.¹⁴⁷

¹⁴⁶ The friendship with Artabanus is confirmed by the fact that Macrinus sent Diadumenian into his custody when the threat from Elagabalus became too dire (Dio 78.39.1).

¹⁴⁷ Debevoise (1938: 268-269) describes the conflict between Parthians and Sassanids as "shrouded in uncertainty."

In these negotiations with the Parthians, Macrinus can be seen as trying to recover from the damage brought about by Caracalla in a very immediate way. The aggressive stance that Caracalla took towards Parthia was truly not sustainable, given the current positioning of the legions and the fact that disputes remained in other border areas; such aggression was in fact a catalyst for the crisis of the third century. Macrinus recognized his untenable position and also exhibited his preference for restraint and the reining in of unnecessary expansion. Macrinus' background as a bureaucrat may have helped with his decision. His policy with Parthia was very conservative and most likely was the most beneficial course of action for the Roman state, though perhaps not for his own fortune.

4.3. Other foreign policy measures

On the heels of his description of Macrinus' Parthian settlement, Dio includes two additional situations that Macrinus had to handle, specifically with the Armenians and Dacians.¹⁴⁸ The events in Armenia can be dealt with first. The relevant passages from Dio in book 77 describing earlier activities in these regions do not adequately take into account Caracalla's motives for fighting the Armenians and Parthians. In each of the situations, Dio asserts that family in-fighting attracted Caracalla to each situation. The king of the Armenians, who must be Tiridates, was fighting with his sons ([Xiph.] 77.12.2) and in Parthia the death of king Vologaesius led to strife between the king's sons ([Xiph.] 77.12.2a-3). Dio obviously takes great pleasure in these situations, which clearly have close parallels to the problems within the Severan family from just a few years prior. Dio reports that Caracalla wrote to the senate, saying that a fight between brothers would destroy Parthia, despite the fact that it had saved Rome – though in Dio's

¹⁴⁸ The *HA* (OM 12.5) briefly references Macrinus' conflict with the Armenians.

opinion quite the opposite had been the case ([Xiph.] 77.12.3). Furthermore, Caracalla took great joy in the fighting between the brothers ([Xiph.] 77.13.3). Dio ([Xiph.] 77.19.1) does go on later to explain that Caracalla's pretext for war was that Vologaesius had not handed over Tiridates, king of Armenia, and Antiochus, a make-believe Cynic who was in some way aiding the soldiers in battle. Clearly, however, Caracalla was trying foment strife in Armenia so that he might weaken indigenous regime, gaining control of them prior to attacking Parthia. In this way he might stabilize the surrounding territories prior to his attempt at a conquest of Parthia.

The uprising in Armenia seems to have lingered beyond the assassination of Caracalla, and it marks another failure of Caracalla's foreign policy. Macrinus again agreed to make a settlement, but the pact with the Armenians included the return of the crown to Tiridates, the release of his mother from prison, and the return of booty; thus Armenia again was a client kingdom of Rome. Tiridates furthermore wished for land in Cappadocia to be given back to him and for payment from the Romans to recommence (Dio 78.27.3) Dio does not state whether these last two wishes were granted, but the phrasing in his text suggests that they were not.

Although the settlement does not appear to have been monetary (at least Dio does not report is as such), Macrinus' treaty with the Armenians is similar to that with the Parthians in several ways. Macrinus apparently saw the value in making friendly alliances with those inhabiting the borders of the empire. Armenia had in the past been friendly with the Roman state, but had vacillated between Roman and Parthian control depending on which ruler was installed there. By appeasing the Armenians at this time, Macrinus ensured their cooperation and prevented any further hostility towards the

Romans such as Caracalla had induced. It might be assumed that Macrinus' actions were made because of his lack of resources, since his troops and money seem to be stretched thin at this time. On the other hand, it is possible to see Macrinus' actions as an outgrowth of the belief that in a time of weakness allies are better than perpetually threatening enemies. Macrinus took the opportunity to stabilize the borders of the empire and to keep Armenia under Roman control as a client state, rather than insisting on the provocative tactics employed by Caracalla.

It should be noted that the treaty with Armenia could most likely not have been completed had not the pact with Parthia been made first. As mentioned above, Armenia had been vacillating between the two empires, and continued warfare with Parthia most likely would have meant an extension of hostilities with Armenia. The fact that Armenia did make a treaty with the Romans also provides some background into the state of the Parthian empire at the time. Despite Dio's insistence that Macrinus was dealing from a position of weakness, it is known that Parthia itself was threatened by the Sassanids (Debevoise 1938: 268-269). Armenia was most likely hedging its bets regarding Parthia, the Sassanids, and Rome. The situation was positive for Rome and Armenia, as they both found protection against an aggressive force that was about to overtake the longstanding Parthian empire.

The final portion of Dio 78.27 describes the situation with the Dacians in the lower Danube region. Caracalla came into conflict with the Dacians while traveling from Germany to Greece in 214 (*HA, Cc.* 5.4). Dio (77.27.5) reports a treaty between the two sides that involved the return of hostages by Caracalla. Unrest seems to have recurred in Caracalla's absence, and Dio mentions that more hostages were released by Macrinus.

The Dacians may have seized the opportunity to cause an uproar at a time of distraction and weakness for the empire.

In all probability Macrinus did not deal with the Dacians firsthand; in addition to the lack of evidence for an imperial visit there, there is simply not a timeframe that can be constructed for a visit there.¹⁴⁹ Dio (78.13.2) reports the appointment of Marcus Agrippa to the governorship of Dacia and that Decius Triccianus was sent to Pannonia. From Dacia, Sabinus and Castinus, former governors, had been recalled on account of their allegiance to Caracalla. Agrippa's role in the conspiracy against Caracalla has already been noted in chapter 1. Most likely Agrippa alone, or perhaps alongside Triccianus, was responsible for dealing with the problems that had arisen in Dacia.

The possibility also exists that a certain P. Furius Pontianus was responsible for settling the Dacian dispute under Macrinus. Pontianus seems to have been provincial governor of Lower Moesia, as the numismatic evidence from the area suggests.¹⁵⁰ Many issues from Marcianopolis in Lower Moesia appear to celebrate a local victory there during the reign of Macrinus. For example, a bronze coin (Mouchmov 562) shows an obverse with the confronted busts of Macrinus and Diadumenian; the reverse is decorated with Macrinus holding Nike on a globe, and standing on arms. Similar types occur at Nicopolis ad Istrum, also in Moesia Inferior, though a different official is named, either Statius Longinus or Marcus Agrippa. One coin (Mouchmov 1254) has a bust of Macrinus on the obverse, and a reverse depicting Macrinus in a *quadriga*, and a *tropaeum* and two captives appear in the background. Macrinus was depicted as a hero in these

¹⁴⁹ Though Bassett (1920: 38) suggests that he did. See Appendix 2 for a refutation of Bassett's argument based on the available numismatic evidence.

¹⁵⁰ Boteva 1996a & 1996b.

regions, and no doubt his efforts to end hostilities with the Dacians were greatly appreciated by the local population.¹⁵¹

4.4. *Public works in the Lower Danube region*

A large public works project took place in the lower Danube region during Macrinus' reign, specifically throughout Noricum and Pannonia; whether or not there is a connection with the pacification of the Danube region is unclear. A restoration of roads and bridges from Aquincum was carried out in what appears to be the first part of Macrinus' reign; these inscriptions include the titles *consul proconsul tribunicia potestate*.¹⁵² Diadumenian is invariably given the title Caesar, so the project must have carried on during the period from May to December 217. The extent of the work is impressive, as the furthest milestone with a legible inscription reads 137 miles from Aquincum (*CIL* 3, 10647: *ab Aq(uinco) m(ilia) p(assuum) / CXXXVII*). The *legatus Augusti* who carried out these works was Aelius Triccianus, who was previously discussed as having been sent by Macrinus to Pannonia as governor (Dio 78.13.3).

Again in Pannonia, Aelius Triccianus was responsible for another public works project; there was a restoration of roads and bridges, but this one took Brigetione as its starting point (*CIL* 3, 4636 [= *CIL* 3, 10658]; *AE* 1996, 1248). In the latter inscription, Macrinus bears the unusual title *consul II*, discussed above in chapter 3. The use of this title seems to indicate that at least part of the work for this project extended into the early

¹⁵¹ It should not be forgotten, however, that similar types appeared in Issue 2 of Macrinus' Roman imperial coinage; these types presumably celebrated Macrinus' Parthian victory, and the cities in Lower Moesia could simply have been copying them. Given the situation with the Dacians, however, it is possible to assume, with Boteva, that these coins celebrated a more local victory.

¹⁵² *CIL* 3, 10647. *AE* 1953, 11; *AE* 1980, 716; *CIL* 3, 3720; 3, 3724; 3, 3725; 3, 3726 (=3, 10635); 3, 6467 (= 3, 10618); 3, 10629; 3, 10637; and 3, 10644 include *Pius Augustus*; *CIL* 3, 3714 includes *pontifex maximus*.

part of 218, when the local drafter of the inscription must have thought that Macrinus would naturally have assumed that title.

There is further evidence of road and bridge restoration carried out in Noricum, nearby Celeia (*AE* 1980, 664). This project occurred later in Macrinus' reign, most likely in 218, for in the inscription he bears the title *tribunicia potestate II*. Another inscription (*CIL* 3, 5708 [= *D* 464]) also gives Macrinus the title *trib. p. II* and records the restoration of roads and bridges from Agunto. Similar work was carried out from Virunco, again granting Macrinus the same title (*CIL* 3, 5728). Finally, from Solva (*CIL* 17.4.1, 141) and Teurnia (*CIL* 17.4.1, 182), similar projects were carried out. Both of these inscriptions carry the title *tribunicia potestate II* for Macrinus and must date to 218. None of these inscriptions from Noricum bear the name of the Roman official responsible for the project.

It is not clear what spurred on these public works projects. A simple need to update the empire's infrastructure could be the answer. The projects were undertaken by the new administrative team that Macrinus had placed in the Balkan provinces. In any case, the improvement of roads throughout that region can only have made the Roman presence more efficient and may have been perceived as part of the answer to local uprisings there.

4.5. *Summary of Macrinus' foreign policy measures*

Measures taken in the three problematic areas, Parthia, Armenia, and Dacia, comprise Macrinus' actions in regions outside of or on the outskirts of the empire. Although Roman difficulties here cannot now be properly evaluated (there is simply not enough information to gauge their significance), the consistency of Macrinus' actions

makes them meaningful when considered together. Clearly Macrinus was interested in settling disputes on the borders of the empire, and he chose to do this through diplomacy rather than through warfare. While he was most likely forced into this position because of the uncertainty of his position or on account of the lack of resources (both manpower and money) directly available to him at the time, his policy was a departure from the unbridled belligerence of Caracalla, who had personal responsibility for each of these three conflicts.

It is more helpful, however, to see these events not merely in terms of reaction to Caracalla, but as tokens of a consistent, planned, and coherent foreign policy under Macrinus. The expansionistic impulses created intractable challenges and had put in danger most of the eastern borders. Macrinus chose to retrench along these borders, instituting in some places the client kings, such as had ruled there before, but, more significantly, working through negotiation rather than aggression. His actions may well have been motivated by the economic situation, which will be examined in the following section. His intention to follow defensive or even an “anti-war” policy was most likely a forced choice on account of the lack of resources available to him at the time. This situation will become clearer once his fiscal policy has been discussed.

4.6. Economic problems under Caracalla

Caracalla’s profligate spending is consistently attested in the sources and has already been touched upon, in part, in my first chapter. As an introduction to the economic measures taken by Macrinus during his reign, it will first be necessary to examine more specifically Caracalla’s spending practices and his sources of income.

Herodian (4.4.7) provides an excellent example of the literary tradition on Caracalla's spending, in the negativity of which there is probably some truth:

ὑπισχνεῖται δὲ αὐτοῖς ὑπὲρ τῆς ἑαυτοῦ σωτηρίας καὶ μοναρχίας ἐκάστῳ μὲν στρατιώτῃ δισχιλίας καὶ πεντακοσίας δραχμὰς Ἀττικὰς, προστίθῃσι δὲ τῷ σιτηρεσίῳ ἄλλο τοῦ τελουμένου ἥμισυ. κελεύει τε ἀπελθόντας αὐτοὺς ἤδη ὑποδέχεσθαι ἕκ τε τῶν ναῶν καὶ τῶν θησαυρῶν τὰ χρήματα, μιᾶς [τε] ἡμέρας ἀφειδῶς ἐκχέας πάντα ὅσα ἔτεσιν ὀκτωκαίδεκα ὁ Σεβῆρος ἠθροισέ τε καὶ κατέκλεισεν ἐξ ἄλλοτρίων συμφορῶν.

In return for his safety and sovereignty [Caracalla] promised to each of them 2,500 Attic drachmae and he added 50% to their pay. Then he ordered them to go out and take the money from the temples and treasuries. In one day he recklessly squandered everything that Severus had built up over eighteen years and taken on account of others misfortunes.

This passage serves as a good example of Caracalla's fiscal policy: overpay the army and then strip bare whatever sources of money were available. Not only is the inclination toward military disbursements seen here, but also Herodian specifically pinpoints temples as holders of vast sums of money to draw upon. Caracalla seems to have suffered from a shortage of cash from the early part of his reign. Dio (77.12.5) reports that Caracalla recalled coinage bearing the name of Geta after his murder. Such a measure was a convenient way to damn Geta's memory and expand the amount of ready cash in the treasury.

Dio (77.9), remarkably, provides a rather thorough explanation of how Caracalla raised funds during his reign; the lengthy passage can be summarized here:

1. Caracalla enjoyed spending money on the military.
2. He was often making financial demands of the senators:
 - a. Money was demanded and given to soldiers or distributed elsewhere.
 - b. Senators provided funds for the construction of amphitheaters and circuses where Caracalla planned to spend each winter.
3. The *aurum coronarium* was frequently required of cities.
4. Wealthy members of provincial cities were forced to provide gifts.
5. Various taxes were instituted:
 - a. 10% tax replaced the 5% tax on emancipations, bequests, and legacies
 - b. tax exemption for closely related heirs was abolished
 - c. Roman citizenship was extended in order to increase the tax base

The first method for raising cash from cities listed by Dio is through the *aurum coronarium*, which was a payment made to the emperor by the provincial cities. In the Severan period this payment was made at accession and on a regular basis thereafter.¹⁵³ It is difficult to quantify how significant this burden was upon the cities, but it is already known that Caracalla had been making an extended tour of the provinces for the last four years of his reign, which would have put him in a good position to make such demands.

The senatorial stalwart Dio of course bemoans the financial burden put upon the senate, which he couples in this passage with the demands by Caracalla on the wealthy members of certain communities. Of the latter, a letter from Caracalla to Aurelius Julianus, a Philadelphian in Asia Minor, shows Caracalla allowing Julianus to put on the gladiatorial games that he was required to sponsor in his own town and not in Sardis.¹⁵⁴ Compelled to put on the games in honor of Caracalla, Julianus was most likely loth to allow Sardis to gain the prestige for the event. Dio's complaints should perhaps be tempered here a bit, for some residents of the cities of Asia Minor would probably have been happy to pay for buildings, lodgings, and games that Dio cites here in order to bring by their agency a certain amount of glory to their own city. As a senator, however, Dio projects his own feeling that he was being extorted and was gaining no further glory from his donations to the state.¹⁵⁵

Perhaps the most important aspect of Caracalla's economic policy was the increases in taxation. Dio cites the ten-percent tax that took the place of the five-percent tax on slaves, bequests, and legacies. Dio refers here to the *vicesima hereditarium*,

¹⁵³ Duncan-Jones 1994: 7; see also Klauser 1944, Bowman 1967.

¹⁵⁴ Oliver 263.

¹⁵⁵ It might be worth noting here Millar's (1964: 11) statement that Dio did not see himself as one of the richest members of the senate; perhaps he felt the financial demands more acutely than others.

which, prior to Caracalla's reign, put a five-percent tax on estates of the dead, so long as the inheritance was not from a close relative.¹⁵⁶ Gilliam has also clarified the issue somewhat, by his argument that the exemption from the tax was very low. He goes on to suggest (1952: 405) that such a fact supports Dio's contention that the universal citizenship was a ploy to raise money, dressed up in the guise of the symbolism of the universality of the Roman empire. On the basis of all this, Caracalla seems to have been greatly motivated by the need to raise cash. Furthermore, he had no problem assessing whatever was available to him. If the number of parties subject to the taxes could be widened, and he found a way to do just that, it seems that an economic explanation is more than suitable.

The financial policies of Caracalla are difficult to estimate in terms of their actual effect on the Roman economy and society. Even if a hypothetical budget can be calculated (such as offered by Duncan-Jones), the short-term effects of Caracalla's actions cannot be assessed in implementation.¹⁵⁷ All of the measures taken by Caracalla, however, point to a lack of funds, specifically ready cash. It must in fact have been alarming for contemporaries to see that Caracalla was looking towards almost every place from which he could extract more money than before.

Dio mentions other aspects of Caracalla's fiscal policy that are extremely important for understanding Macrinus' methods for reversing his predecessor's actions. Dio (77.14.4) brings up a curious piece of information regarding Caracalla's minting practices:

¹⁵⁶ Gilliam 1952: 397.

¹⁵⁷ Duncan-Jones (1994: 33-46) estimates the imperial budget for two periods (ca. 150 CE and ca. 215 CE), based on expenditures for the Army, Civilian employees, Handouts, Building, Other Items. Duncan-Jones provides both a low and high estimate for each period. Although some of the estimates are speculative, the overall picture seems reasonable. See especially p. 45, Table 3.7.

ἀληθεῖς γὰρ τοὺς χρυσοὺς αὐτοῖς ἐδωρεῖτο. τοῖς δὲ δὴ Ῥωμαίοις κίβδηλον καὶ
τὸ ἀργύριον καὶ τὸ χρυσίον παρείχεν· τὸ μὲν γὰρ ἐκ μολίβδου
καταργυρούμενον, τὸ δὲ ἐκ χαλκοῦ καταχρυσούμενον ἐσκευάζετο.

He indeed gave them [Germans around the mouth of the Elbe] true gold, but to the
Romans he gave debased silver and gold. For he made one out of lead covered in silver,
and another from copper covered in gold.

There is no evidence that Caracalla ever minted any such gold plated coins, and Dio's motivation for including such an error is probably based on his negative view of the emperor (Duncan-Jones 1994: 97-98). Coinage, however, will provide some evidence that can be quantified and compared and will hopefully illuminate the economic situation in 217/218 in a more concrete way.

Dio's comments on this allegedly nefarious minting policy bring up a number of relevant issues for Caracalla's reign. First, it is known that Caracalla reduced the weight of the gold and silver coinage in 215. A comparison for the coins of Septimius Severus and Caracalla show an 11% reduction of silver in the denarius and a 10% reduction of weight in the aureus (Duncan-Jones 1994: 101). Using the figures provided by Duncan-Jones,¹⁵⁸ it is perhaps possible to predict some effect of the usage of these coins by the population of the empire. There had been a period of great stability from Trajan through Marcus Aurelius in the weight of the denarius, which averaged about 96 coins to one pound of silver. This same ratio had also been in use under Nero and Vespasian, prior to the economic crisis in the later Flavian period. After Marcus Aurelius, Commodus greatly increased the number of denarii per pound, but Severus had returned to the ratio prevailing under the Antonines by 197. While the ratio of 96 to the pound is not a guarantee of economic stability, it had during the second century established a somewhat regular weight for the denarius.

¹⁵⁸ Duncan-Jones 1994: 222-228, esp. 223, Figure 15.2.

In what seems to have been an effort to maximize mint output, Caracalla began to issue the debased *antoninianus*, identified by the radiate head of the emperor on the coin's obverse, which apparently acted like as a double denarius.¹⁵⁹ The coin seems to have been introduced in 215, at a time when Caracalla needed more money to pay troops. The issuing of a greatly debased imperial coinage coincided with Caracalla's expansion of the minting of tetradrachms in Syria, which also seems to have been taken up as a measure to pay the troops; this phenomenon will be discussed below.

After its introduction in 215, the *antoninianus* accounted for 50% of Caracalla's silver value by output (Duncan-Jones 1994: 142). The problem, of course, with the denomination is that it was not truly a double denarius, not even by the debased standard of the denarius on which Caracalla was minting. Duncan-Jones (1994: 222) calculates the ratio of *antoninianus* to denarius at 1: 0.634, based on the data from the Viuz hoard. He also points out that there was a substantial minting profit to be made from coining the *antoninianus* rather than the denarius. While those results may be beneficial, at least in the short term, for the imperial administration, the inhabitants of the empire most likely saw otherwise. The public response to the *antoninianus* was to hoard denarii, which were visibly of finer quality; in turn, this hoarding threatened price and exchange stability (Harl 1996: 128).

The primary motivation for the debasement of the denarius and aureus and the minting of the *antoninianus* must have been the need to pay the army amidst a shortage

¹⁵⁹ It is probable, but not certain, that the *antoninianus* was tariffed as a double denarius; cf. Mattingly (*BMCRE* 5.xviii): "(1) the ratio of 2 to 1 is obviously simpler and more natural than 1 ½ or 1 ¼ to 1. (2) The radiate crown differentiates the double piece from the single on both gold and *aes*. Why not then the silver too? The double piece in gold is of course twice the weight of the single; the double piece in *aes* (the dupondius) is nothing like twice the weight of the as. The silver follows the bronze in disregarding the exact weight, and why not, when it was itself virtually a token coinage?" See Duncan-Jones (1994: 222n39) for further citations.

of funds. That government spending was tied to military activity seems to be supported by the fact that Caracalla's reign saw peaks in minting in 213 (the first year of campaigning) and 215 (when weight reduction and the *antoninianus* were introduced into the minting scheme) (Duncan-Jones 1994: 138-139). It has been made clear already in chapter 1 that Caracalla had the army on campaign for the final four years of his reign, and that he was not loth to raise their pay and lavish them with donatives, perhaps even exceeding his father's advice to make the soldiers rich and hate everyone else (Dio 76.15.2).

4.7. *Macrinus' fiscal policy*

Cassius Dio makes many indications throughout book 78 that Macrinus was faced with a difficult administrative situation. The biggest problem seems to have been a lack of both available cash and precious metals, which Dio makes clear at 78.12. Despite the passage's mutilated nature, it is still useful in assessing some financial actions taken by Macrinus. At 78.12.5, Dio seems to state that Macrinus held a sale of imperial goods, including furniture and other possessions (πάμπολλα καὶ ἔπιπλα καὶ κτήματα τῶν αὐτοκρατόρων). Meaning can be gleaned from this passage through another fragment of Dio from book 72, in which Marcus Aurelius is seen selling off imperial goods in the Roman Forum:

ἀλλ' ἐν ἀπορίᾳ ποτὲ γεγονῶς ἀργυρίων, πολέμων ἐπικειμένων οὔτε τέλος καινὸν ἐπενόησεν οὔτ' αἰτῆσαι παρά του ἡνέσχετο χρήματα, ἀλλ' ἐν τῇ ἀγορᾷ πάντα τὰ ἐν τοῖς βασιλείοις κειμήλια θέμενος, καὶ εἴ τι πρὸς κόσμον ἦν τῇ αὐτοῦ γαμετῇ, ὠνεῖσθαι ταῦτα τὸν βουλόμενον προετρέπετο· ὅθεν ἀθροίσας ἀργύρια τοῖς στρατιώταις διέδωκε.¹⁶⁰

When he once came upon a shortage of silver and with wars approaching he lacked money, he did not come up with a new tax nor make demands of anyone. Rather, he put all the imperial treasures and any ornaments of his wife in the Forum and urged anyone who was wishing to buy them. And so collecting money in this way he distributed it to

¹⁶⁰ Zon. 12.1, Boissevain 3.280; this passage is very similar to the fragment of Exc. Salm. n. 117.

the soldiers.

If the passages are in fact parallel, then it is clear that the action taken was a measure for raising cash.

Further in the same chapter, Dio reports that Macrinus placed restrictions on the weight of images that could be made of him. Silver images could not exceed five pounds, while gold images could not exceed three (78.12.7). Such a measure can easily be seen as an attempt to preserve the amount of precious metal that was available.¹⁶¹ One might argue that Caracalla's extended campaigns from 213-217 were in part perversely meant to restock the imperial treasury that he had allegedly emptied. Caracalla, however, met with very little success and may ironically have put the state's finances into even greater peril.

Later, Macrinus, in a letter to the senate, denounced Caracalla for his great expenditures, for putting enormous stress on the treasury, and for paying out too much money to the barbarians (78.17.3). These passages clearly show that Macrinus faced a fiscal crisis upon his accession, and that it was well known that the actions of Caracalla had led to it. They also indicate that Macrinus was hoping to reduce spending without instituting any new taxes or requirements from the inhabitants of the empire. This point seems to be clear from the passage regarding the sale of imperial goods, once it is seen against the fragment from the history of Marcus Aurelius' reign. The following passages from Dio will further make this point clear.

While still reporting the public outcry after news of Caracalla's death was heard

¹⁶¹ It should be noted, however, that Dio (78.18.1) later reports that the people at Rome demanded that all gold and silver statues of Caracalla must be melted down, presumably as a sort of *damnatio*. Although the two passages might be connected, and Macrinus' actions seen as a response to the public outcry, it seems more likely that Macrinus was worried about the availability of precious metal.

at Rome, Dio (78.18.5) records rather specifically what specific economic actions were taken:

καί τι αὐτοὺς καὶ ἡ τῶν ἐπὶ τε τῶν ὑπ' ἐκείνου καταδειχθέντων κατάλυσις
(πάντα γὰρ ὅσα ποτὲ παρὰ τὸ καθεστηκός, οὐχ ὅτι ἐκ τοῦ δημοσίου τοῦ τῶν
Ῥωμαίων, ἀλλὰ καὶ οἰκοθέν τισιν ἐξ ἐπιτροπῆς αὐτοῦ πρὸς τινων δήμων
ἀνηλίσκετο, ἀνετάγη) καὶ ἡ ἐς τὸ ἔπειτα μηδὲν ὅμοιον αὐτοῖς
προσταχθήσεσθαι ἐλπίς ἀνέπεισε στέρξαι τοῖς παροῦσιν.

There was a dissolution of the policies he had introduced (for there was a rehearsal of every expense that he had ever made, not only those from the treasury of the Romans but also at the expense of those from the certain communities under his management) and hope that nothing similar would be ordered in the future persuaded them to embrace the present situation.

Caracalla had thus overly burdened not only the state treasury, but also the communities of the empire; the latter was completed most likely through the *aurum coronarium* mentioned above. Dio here indirectly discusses some economic measures taken by Macrinus, though in a rather oblique way. Dio states that all of these measures of Caracalla were overturned, and there is a connection to a previous passage, in which Dio states (78.12.2) that Macrinus quickly dismissed the taxes on inheritance and emancipation that Caracalla had instituted, which were discussed above.

So far, it can be seen that Macrinus, by getting rid of many of Caracalla's policies, was moving towards an economic policy that mirrored that of Septimius Severus. Further evidence leads us along this same path. It is reported by Dio (78.12.7) that Macrinus fixed the pay of the praetorian guard at the level set by Severus. The fragmentary text reads as the following:

τό τε μέγιστον, τὴν μισθοφορὰν τῶν ἐν τῷ δορυφορικῷ στρατευομένων ἐς
τὸ ταχθὲν ὑπὸ τοῦ Σεουήρου εθε |

Despite the fact that Xiphilinus does not record this fact, it seems almost certain that the meaning can be understood as such. Severus had previously increased the pay of the praetorian guard by two times; most likely the large number of troops forced him to cap

their pay (Smith 1972: 487-488; see Appendix 1, 78.12.7). This passage from Dio must therefore assume a further raise under Caracalla before the lowering under Macrinus.¹⁶²

Macrinus made further reforms, again moving into line with Severan policy, regarding the pay of the army. Unfortunately for Macrinus, this unpopular move would eventually contribute to his downfall, as will be discussed in the following chapter. The military reforms are discussed by Dio at 78.28:

καί σφας ἢ τε τῆς μισθοφορᾶς συντομή καὶ ἡ τῶν γερῶν τῶν τε ἀτελειῶν τῶν ἐν τοῖς στρατιωτικοῖς ὑπηρετήμασιν, ἃ παρὰ τοῦ Ταραύτου εὕρηντο, στέρησις, καίπερ μηδὲν αὐτοὺς μέλλοντάς σφων ἀπολαύσειν, ἐπιπαρώξυνεν, ἢ τε ἐν ταύτῳ τρόπον τινὰ διατριβή, ἣν τοῦ πολέμου ἔνεκα χειμάζοντες ἐν τῇ Συρίᾳ ἐπεποίηντο, προσεπισχύρισεν. ἔδοξεν μὲν γὰρ στρατηγικῶς πῶς καὶ νουνεχόντως ὁ Μακρίνος πεποιηκέναι, τῶν μὲν ἐν τοῖς ὅπλοις ὄντων μηδὲν παρελόμενος, ἀλλ' ἀκέραια αὐτοῖς πάντα τὰ πρὸς ἐκείνου νομισθέντα τηρήσας, τοῖς δ' αὖθις στρατευομένοις προειπὼν ὅτι ἐπὶ τοῖς ἀρχαίοις τοῖς ὑπὸ τοῦ Σεουήρου καταδειχθεῖσιν καταλεχθήσονται.

The reduction of pay and the removal of the privileges and exemptions for military service, which Tarautas [Caracalla] had granted, angered them, despite the fact that they were not going to benefit at all from them. The passing of time in one place, which they made wintering in Syria on account of the war, strengthened their resolve. In fact Macrinus seemed to have acted like a good general and with good sense, since he removed none of the soldiers' present privileges, but rather he completely preserved all of the privileges put in place by Caracalla. On the other hand he announced to those who were planning on joining the military that they would be subject to the old terms introduced by Severus.

This significant, and obviously daring, move could only have been made out of necessity, for Macrinus would hardly have taken such a risk had he been able to keep the *status quo*. A prominent feature of the reforms was a return to the level of privileges granted by Severus, as has just been seen in the case of the praetorian guard as well.¹⁶³ Most likely the budgetary crisis was more severe and could have warranted an even larger pay reduction for the soldiers, but such an action certainly untenable. Dio is right to point out Macrinus' prudence in this measure; he did not slash the pay of current soldiers, but

¹⁶² Caracalla may have raised the pay of the praetorian guard after the murder of Geta, for he sought refuge in their camp and had to contend with the unhappiness of the Alban legion over the murder (*HA, Cc.* 2.4-7). Herodian (4.4.7) relates a similar story and indicates that the raise was by 50%.

¹⁶³ For an overview of the reforms of Severus, see Appendix 1, 78.28.3.

rather only reduced the privileges of new recruits. Such a tactic might have worked with a less powerful group, and Macrinus seems to have underestimated the solidarity of the soldiers. In any case, the move was seen as a threat to military privilege in general.

Considering the examination of Macrinus' personality in the previous chapter, it seems that Macrinus could have been invoking Severus as his predecessor in the various reforms in order to further make connections with him. Holding up Severus as his leader and example, Macrinus might have thought that it was more palatable for the soldiers to accept reform. It had been Severus' policy to extend the privileges of the military, a fact that could not have been lost on the soldiers themselves. By invoking Severus, Macrinus was taking the easiest path towards administrative change; the empire, however, seems to have been at a point of no return. Without a major overhaul of the empire's administration, successful reform of the military was most likely impossible. This fact is born out by the years 235-285 and the subsequent reforms of Diocletian thereafter.

There exists in book 78 another passage connected to Macrinus' military reforms, which details a letter from Macrinus to Marius Maximus, prefect of the city in 218:

καὶ ἵνα γέ τις ἄλλα ὅσα παρὰ τε τοῦ Σεουήρου καὶ τοῦ υἱέος αὐτοῦ πρὸς διαφθορὰν τῆς ἀκριβοῦς στρατείας εὐρηνητο παραλίπη, οὔτε δίδοσθαί σφισι τὴν μισθοφορὰν τὴν ἐντελῇ πρὸς ταῖς ἐπιφοραῖς, ἃς ἐλάβανον, οἷόν τε εἶναι ἔφη (ἐς γὰρ ἑπτακισχιλίας μυριάδας ἐτησίους τὴν αὔξησιν αὐτῆς τὴν ὑπὸ τοῦ Ταραύτου γενομένην τείνειν) οὔτε μὴ δίδοσθαι.... (Dio 78.36.2-3)

And in order to pass over whatever ways were discovered by Severus and his son for the destruction of military order, he said that the usual pay could not be given to the soldiers on top of the donatives that they were receiving (for the increase instituted by Tarautas [Caracalla] reached 80 million sesterces annually), but on the other hand it could not not be given.

This passage perhaps suggests that Macrinus had undertaken the military reforms sometime in late spring 218, for in the previous sentence, Dio reports on a letter that Macrinus sent to the senate regarding Elagabalus. Regardless, the reporting of this letter

reveals that Macrinus simply could not come up with enough cash to make all of the necessary payments, and that the reforms were brought about by a great crisis faced by Macrinus.

4.8. The imperial coinage under Macrinus

The debasement of the imperial coinage under Caracalla, which has been outlined above, was seen by Macrinus as a major problem. The exact motivation, however, for his coinage reform is in general a little hazy. His attempts at reforming the coinage standards could reflect the distrust that the local population had for the imperial currency. Yet there is a very good chance that it was the army itself that was expressing this concern to the emperor, since it is commonly held that they received imperial coinage for their pay. Another possibility is that Macrinus wanted to fit into a monetary tradition that was considered responsible; this point will be clarified below. Likewise, Macrinus most likely felt a desire to distance himself from the policies of his predecessor. Other questions remain regarding imperial economic policy. It is impossible to know for sure who exactly put this coinage reform into effect, but it is likely that Macrinus was its author, given his commitment to fiscal responsibility in other areas, as has been discussed above.

Walker's (1978) study of the Roman silver coinage, which employed a method of examination known as X-ray florescence, has made it possible to assess Macrinus' coinage reform in some detail. While the limitations of X-ray florescence are recognized here, Walker still provides the fullest investigation of the Roman silver coinage.¹⁶⁴ His

¹⁶⁴ For example, this type of study does not take into account surface enrichment and may therefore overestimate the actual silver content of a coin (Howgego 1995: 118). The problems caused by surface enrichment (and the subsequent problems with Walker's study) are explained in some detail in Butcher & Ponting 1995: 75-77 & 1997: 21-26.

findings must be studied with caution, but the outline they provide supplements what is known in other areas regarding Macrinus' fiscal policy. Walker's study allows Macrinus' minting practices to be known with more exactness and put into a historical perspective.

As has already been discussed in the previous chapter, it is now generally accepted that Macrinus employed only one imperial mint, which was the mint at Rome. There is perhaps some significance to this fact. The use of one mint might have allowed for greater quality control, which can perhaps be supported by the suspension of the minting of Syrian tetradrachms, to be discussed below. Another important aspect of imperial minting under Macrinus is the chronology of mint output. During the reign of Macrinus, there can be found two different periods of minting.¹⁶⁵ The first, not surprisingly, followed closely the practices in place under Caracalla and lasted until the fall of 217 at the latest. The second period picked up where the first left off and continued until the end of the reign, in June 218.

A comparison of Macrinus' first period of minting with Caracalla's final period shows these assumptions to be true in terms of the coins' fineness.¹⁶⁶ Of the denarii minted from Macrinus' accession up to the fall of 217, the average coin is made up of 50.50% silver;¹⁶⁷ denarii of Caracalla minted in 217 contain 50.78% silver. To take into account the *antoniniani*, Macrinus' issue contains 60.38% silver while Caracalla's have 51.68% for the period of 215-217. These numbers would presumably be closer, but the sample size for Macrinus' *antoniniani* is small (only four coins) and is skewed by one

¹⁶⁵ This distinction does not have to do with the four issues outlined by Clay (1979) but rather deals with the autonomy of Macrinus' coinage in terms of his predecessor's.

¹⁶⁶ The following figures are derived from Walker 1978v3: 17-23.

¹⁶⁷ It should be noted that the sample size, only four coins, is very small.

coin, which somewhat unbelievably contains 92.50% silver.¹⁶⁸ Taking into account the other three coins alone, there is an average of 49.67% silver.

The second period of Macrinus' reign saw a significant increase in the amount of silver used in the denarius. From the fall of 217 until the end of the reign, denarii under Macrinus increased their fineness to 57.85% silver. Walker's calculation comes from a decent size sample of 23 coins, with only three of those coins exhibiting extremely high or low percentages of silver content.¹⁶⁹ The silver content of these denarii is significant, since it mirrors the percentages found in the denarii of Septimius Severus from the period of 197-209.¹⁷⁰ Finally, the minting of the *antoninianus* apparently was suspended by the fall of 217, which perhaps was the more drastic measure of these two acts of policy.

In connection with the Roman imperial coinage, it is worthwhile to consider a group of coins referred to as "Syrian tetradrachms," following Bellinger's (1940) designation. During his reign Caracalla greatly expanded the number of towns that could mint such coins. Under Severus, only three towns were doing so, but by the latter part of Caracalla's reign some twenty-seven were participating (Bellinger 1940: 6). In general these coins name Caracalla in his fourth consulship (213), but Bellinger (1940: 9) believes most of the them to have been minted from 215-217: "We may start from the hypothesis that the tetradrachms have a connection with the Parthian war and therefore that they belong to the district which was regarded as its military base." Payment of the soldiers must have been the motivation to start such a production of coinage.

A major problem with this coinage was its fineness. Walker conveniently has

¹⁶⁸ The coin of 92.50% silver most likely shows surface enrichment and demonstrates a weakness of X-ray fluorescence.

¹⁶⁹ Three coins register at 78%, 71%, and 39%, respectively; all others fall into the range of 41-69%.

¹⁷⁰ Walker 1978v3: 6-12. In this period, the silver content ranged from 54.75-58.88%.

taken into account these Syrian tetradrachms as well, and his analysis shows a fineness of only 35.59% for a sample of 73 coins (Walker 1978v3: 84-88). Walker (1978v3: 97) connects the debasement carried out by Caracalla for this denomination with the general debasement for the imperial coinage, in 215; even more shocking, Caracalla debasement was a reduction of almost half from the standard employed by Severus at Antioch and Laodicea ad Mare, which were minting at 59.81% and 63% fineness, respectively. This debasement was even more drastic than that carried out on the imperial coinage, and the tetradrachm was undervalued against the denarius (it had previously been slightly overvalued under Severus).

The beginning of Macrinus' reign saw no immediate improvement of the situation, and in fact it saw a worsening of it. Macrinus' tetradrachms fell to 29.23% fineness (Walker 1978v3: 99), but it seems that these coins were struck in the first part of his reign. Since no tetradrachms were minted at Elagabalus' accession, it seems clear that Macrinus abolished their production (Elagabalus would later reinstate production in 219).¹⁷¹ This action by Macrinus is of course in line with the reforms of the imperial coinage detailed above. If this coinage was used for payment of the military, it is reasonable to suggest that the soldiers were rejecting it; an examination of several of these coins shows that some appear to have very little silver content. It is impossible to know to what extent they were accepted or circulated in the East, but the fact that they were discontinued by Macrinus suggests that they were problematic.

4.9. Summary of Macrinus' reforms

The debasement of the silver and gold coinage as well as the introduction of the

¹⁷¹ Bellinger (1940: 7) believed that Macrinus continued minting these tetradrachms throughout his reign and that they were suspended by Elagabalus. This theory is rejected by Walker (1978v3: 99) & Clay (1979: 34).

antoninianus by Caracalla must have been spurred on by a lack of funds suffered by the imperial government, as mentioned above. Walker's (1978v3: 138) general comments on the issue are enlightening:

The debasement of the Roman coinage can almost always be demonstrated to have taken place at time of particularly high state expenditure. This expenditure can be accounted for in a number of ways, but by far the most important cause was warfare, both external and internal. The great majority of debasements can be shown to have taken place during or shortly after times of major conflict.

Walker then specifically cites the two debasements by Caracalla: in 212, for his accession and “extravagance to the soldiers,” and in 215, for the German and Parthians wars and further “extravagance to the soldiers.” Caracalla’s extension of taxes and citizenship support this premise, as has been previously discussed. Presumably, Macrinus’ coinage reform would not have provided an answer to a shortage of cash, but his attempts at raising money in other ways, as well as cutting costs, may have in the long run been successful, though that is indeed far from certain. The fact that he felt it necessary to raise the silver content of coins and get rid of extremely debased denominations (both Roman and Greek) perhaps demonstrates the power of “consumer confidence” in the currency available. It seems that Macrinus was forced to prioritize public faith over the generation of a sufficient amount of cash.

Walker (1978v3: 132) points out that Macrinus’ reforms were actually a simple overturning of the Caracalla’s destructive economic measures; Macrinus “abolished... the debasement of the denarius in 212, the reduction in weight of the aureus in 215 and the introduction of the *antoninianus*.” While Walker here states that Macrinus’ reforms, in a general sense, were similar to those of Pertinax in his attempt to return to the policies of Marcus Aurelius, it is clear from the evidence presented that the point of the reform was the erasure of all measures by Caracalla and a restoration of the conditions in existence

under Severus.

One extremely interesting aspect of Macrinus' economic reforms is the consistent return to the way that Septimius Severus had managed the empire before him. On the one hand, the rates of military pay and the standards on which Severus minted may have been the most tolerable during Macrinus' reign; that is, a reduction of the former and an increase of the latter could only have been reasonably been dealt with by all parties. It is worth noting that Macrinus was minting 96 denarii to the pound, which is the same ratio not only as Severus, but also as the Antonines before him. This connection could perhaps be viewed simply as propaganda, but it should be remembered that this ratio was also the one eventually used by Diocletian, by means of which he achieved economic stability for 50 years after the crisis (Howgego 1995: 116). Perhaps this ratio was something of a "magic number" that did prove to have a stabilizing effect.

Macrinus may have actually remembered Severus' reign as one of relative economic stability, which is not absurd; it was not until Caracalla that the empire seems to have been negatively affected to a great extent by an emperor's fiscal and monetary policies. Macrinus would not have been the only one who held such an opinion. Severus is credited in the literary sources with having left a surplus. Dio (76.16.4) credits him both with huge expenditures and huge savings. His emphasis is most likely is connected with the favor with which he viewed Severus and the disfavor with which he viewed his son, whom Dio accuses of having emptied the treasuries. In this sense it is actually the perception rather than the reality that is more important, and from this point view Macrinus' decision to style himself in the tradition of Severus makes much more sense.

Although it may be possible to view Macrinus as a “good” emperor attempting to making a thorough reform of the state’s financial system, it is impossible to deny that measures he enacted, while not totally impractical, would have some negative side effects. The coinage reform was perhaps tenable, had Macrinus been able to achieve a modicum of stability in face of the army. The increased silver content was clearly beneficial for the state, as it would instill more confidence among its recipients and presumably still inflation. There is no indication that the state could not produce enough coin, though Dio does give some hint that Macrinus perhaps began a conservation effort for precious metals. The major problem, of course, was Macrinus’ attempt at military reform. While necessary, such a measure was, at this point, almost impossible to achieve; it has already been noted above that the army would not stand for a curtailment of privileges, even among new recruits. So while Macrinus’ plan was to slowly establish some semblance of fiscal responsibility in the state, the strength of the army was too great to allow for it. This weakness for Macrinus led to the possibility of an outside force gaining influence over the military, and such an act paved the way for Macrinus’ downfall.

Chapter 5 – The Severan Women, Elagabalus, and the End of Macrinus

5.1 Preliminary Concerns

It has been assumed in the past that Macrinus' lower status and lack of imperial pedigree kept him from engaging the military in a long-term allegiance to himself. A comment by Rostovtseff (1957: 420) can serve as an example:

Indulged by Caracalla and full of confidence in the benevolence of the family of the Severi, the army was not very willing to recognize an outsider as emperor of Rome and to keep its allegiance to him. As soon as a rival appeared in the person of a nephew of Caracalla, the young Bassianus, surnamed Elagabal (or Heliogabalus), chief priest of the god of Emesa, the soldiers preferred him to the unknown Macrinus.

This reading is too close to the biased version of events recorded by Cassius Dio.

Macrinus' initial acceptance by various influential bodies, such as the army and the population of Rome, has already been cited. In particular, this view does not take into account the military reforms of Macrinus as a catalyst for revolution, the fortuitous confluence of circumstances surrounding Macrinus' fall, and the role of various members of Julia Domna's Syrian family who played a large part in the rise of the boy Elagabalus.

The end of Macrinus necessarily begins with Macrinus' reaction to Caracalla's death. Macrinus was hesitant to condemn Caracalla, most likely on account of his popularity with the military; he preferred to allow the people to carry out the condemnation themselves in a sort of unofficial *damnatio memoriae*. This reaction has been discussed in greater detail previously in chapter 3, but one important aspect has been omitted: Julia Domna and her Syrian family. Since an official condemnation of Caracalla was not possible, and since Macrinus himself had adopted the name *Severus* in order to display some sort of continuity with the preceding dynasty, a lenient approach had to be taken with Julia Domna and the rest of the royal family. Dio's version of Julia Domna's actions after the death of her son are confused and the passage itself is partly

mutilated. At 78.23.1 Dio claims that when Julia, who was in Antioch at that time, heard of Caracalla's death she immediately attempted suicide. This report is somewhat in agreement with Herodian (4.13.8), who claims that Julia committed suicide on the spot.¹⁷² Dio (78.23.2) is careful to point out that Macrinus made no change in Julia's guard or retinue, so that she might maintain the illusion of royalty. The following two sections of Dio (78.23.4-5) are lost, and there is only left the brief paragraph at 78.23.6, which states that, when Macrinus ordered Julia to leave Antioch and return to her home in Syria, she committed suicide. The death may have been caused by cancer aggravated by a self-inflicted blow to the breast, as Dio states.

Dio (78.23.3) also reports that, prior to her death, Julia Domna immediately began intriguing with the soldiers at Antioch. According to this account, the soldiers were already unhappy with Macrinus, and Julia took advantage of the situation by spreading around insults against Macrinus and intriguing with the soldiers. Hay (1911: 44) has interpreted this passage to mean that Julia was taking advantage "of the mismanagement of the Parthian campaign, and the insensate strictness with which this pedantic lawyer immediately attempted to reform the manners of his young soldiers." In addition, Dio believes that Julia wished to secure the rule for herself, and he compares her to Semiramis and Nitocris, Assyrian/Babylonian and Egyptian queens, respectively. It is impressive how Dio strikes a note of Asiatic alterity about Julia Domna's heritage, and he perhaps means to be negative here in mindfulness of who would later come from her family line to rule the Roman empire.

¹⁷² For a fuller comparison of the accounts, see Appendix 1, 78.23.1.

This portion of the story regarding Julia's involvement with the soldiers at Antioch is most likely a *post eventum* piece of gossip included by Dio. Julia had no one that could rise up in place of Macrinus, and it does not seem likely that she really thought herself capable of seizing the throne, as Dio suggests. Even with her popularity among the soldiers, it is farfetched to believe that they might have accepted her, especially at her age and in her health, as ruler of the Roman empire. Furthermore, it has been generally accepted that Julia Domna died shortly after the murder of Caracalla, therefore rendering Hay's assertion, which is quite overstated, impossible on the basis of the chronology of Macrinus' reign.¹⁷³

Macrinus must have found it convenient that Julia Domna did away with herself. She had certainly been popular with the military and had been a leading royal figure for decades. By removing herself, Julia allowed Macrinus to continue his reign without the burden of having to deal with such a high profile personality. He could also advertise himself, in a certain sense, as honoring her memory as a part of the Severan dynasty. Since he had been portraying himself as an "heir" to the Severan dynasty, Macrinus was forced to grant Julia a royal and honorific burial in the tomb of Gaius and Lucius, which must have been the mausoleum of Augustus. With Julia Domna out of the way, Macrinus most likely thought that his position was secure. Caracalla's lack of an heir has been discussed already, and Macrinus probably did not assume that some more distant relative of Julia Domna was in a position to challenge him. In this instance, Macrinus greatly underestimated the power and influence of Domna's family. Unfortunately for Macrinus, relatives of Julia Domna's family, long time, if somewhat detached, associates

¹⁷³ Julia Domna most likely was dead by July 217, as asserted most recently by Levick 2007: 106.

in royal power, would not allow the Severan family or the memory of Caracalla to fade away so easily.

There was something of a propaganda battle going on between Macrinus and the surviving relatives of Julia Domna's family. On Macrinus' side there was the attempt to connect himself with Severus, as has been mentioned multiple times before. For Julia Domna's family, the emphasis would lie on a connection between their offspring, Elagabalus, and Macrinus' predecessor, Caracalla. Julia Domna, of course, fell right into the middle of these two claims, as the wife of Severus and the mother of Caracalla. Both sides seem to have realized the importance of this connection. Macrinus found it impossible to do away with Julia or her family, and he had been forced to leave their wealth and protection intact.

After her death, Julia Domna became *diva*, no doubt on account of her own popularity and general Roman custom. There is a good chance that Macrinus made this honorific title official after her death. This topic is controversial, but has been suggested most recently by Levick (2007: 145).¹⁷⁴ It has previously been thought that she was not consecrated until after November 224, though such a dating is difficult to understand,¹⁷⁵ given that empresses had normally been deified immediately after their death.¹⁷⁶ The deification of Julia Domna therefore most likely occurred under Macrinus, and he would have been foolish to have not bestowed the title on her.¹⁷⁷

¹⁷⁴ See further Gilliam 1969; Ghedini 1984: 158-160; Clay 1979; Salzman 1989; Fefjer 1992.

¹⁷⁵ e.g. Mommsen, *Römisches Staatsrecht* (3), II.833, n. 3 (cited by Gilliam 1969: 284).

¹⁷⁶ Gilliam 1969: 286; *CIL* 13, 12042 also gives evidence that Domna held this title at least by the reign of Elagabalus.

¹⁷⁷ This still leaves aside the *consecratio* issues of both Caracalla and Julia Domna. Mattingly, in *BMCRE* (5.531) and *RIC* (4.2: 127-128), places these issue in the reigns of Elagabalus and Severus Alexander, respectively. It is possible that they could have been minted under Macrinus as well, though the use of

It is clear from Dio's narrative that he connected the downfall of Macrinus with Julia Domna's death, for after describing her final days he takes up the omens that signaled the end for Macrinus (78.25). Chronologically this passage might seem out of place, because Julia Domna must have died no later than June 217, about a year prior to the uprising of Elagabalus in Syria. The report of the attendant omens also precedes Dio's discussion of Macrinus' Parthian campaign, which Dio obviously felt was a weak part of his reign and showed his true faults. Dio reports several major omens. The Colosseum was struck by lightning during the Vulcanalia (August 23) and parts of the imperial property burned (it is not clear if these two events are related). The Tiber also flooded. In addition, a huge and scary woman was seen by some people, spreading the word that they would suffer a terrible fate. A final omen is reported by Dio (78.40.4) upon Macrinus' death, but Dio claims that it had previously been foretold to Macrinus. The oracle of Zeus Belus at Apamea, which customarily quoted verses of Greek writers, had earlier in Book 78 predicted the fall of Caracalla (78.8.5-6). Later that same oracle spoke of Macrinus' fall through two verses of Homer.

In the subsequent chapters, Dio quickly connects the omens with an outbreak of evil, which first manifested itself in the defeat of the Romans at the hands of the Parthians (or so Dio reports) and the beginning of civil strife. The chronological compression is severe here, since the omens of late summer are followed by the settlement with the Parthians in early 218, which is in turn followed by the uprising of Elagabalus, which did not begin until April 218. A space of several months separates each event, though Dio makes it seem as if one followed closely on the heels of the other.

Magnus in Caracalla's inscription (*DIVO ANTONINO MAGNO*) may point to a minting under Severus Alexander, as Mattingly (*RIC* 4.2: 128) points out.

This compression may be helpful in trying to establish a more solid date for the Parthian settlement. Assuming that as an eyewitness Dio is a relatively reliable source, the Parthian settlement may in fact have occurred closer to the revolt under Elagabalus in April. If the Parthian settlement is shifted to February and closely followed by the military reforms in the early spring, the uprising in Syria would indeed have followed closely on the heels of these two events. As for his reporting of these omens, as usual Dio simply views the relevant positive or negative events and then reconsiders certain phenomena and rumors to have been premonitions of these events.

The causes for the revolt need to be considered in some detail. To begin, it is rejected here that the presentation of Elagabalus as the actual son of Caracalla was the driving force behind the uprising. Rather, there were other, more important reasons for Macrinus' demise, as even the primary sources point out. Dio (78.28) attributes the long period of hard service by the military as the main impetus for a revolt against Macrinus. Dio had previously provided this reason as an explanation as to why Macrinus was welcomed by the army in the first place; they thought that under a new ruler they would be able to have some peace (78.9.2). Presumably they were not happy with the drawn out peace negotiations with the Parthians. Secondly, Dio correctly identifies Macrinus' proposed military reforms, discussed in the previous chapter, as the cause of his downfall. In Dio's opinion, Macrinus' plan for reform was well thought out and progressive, but unfortunately for Macrinus that opinion was not shared by the soldiers. Macrinus seems to have underestimated their solidarity, even with those who had not yet joined their ranks.

It has recently been suggested that the Parthian settlement did not leave the soldiers favorable to Macrinus (Potter 2004: 150). The idea that the soldiers would have been unhappy with the Parthian settlement is only half correct. Surely they would have welcomed an end to military operations; on the other hand, they must have seen the large payment to the Parthians as the cause for Macrinus' proposed military reform. Furthermore, it seems to have taken a long time for the negotiations to conclude, which kept the soldiers under arms for an even longer period. The combination of these conditions was infelicitous, though it has already been suggested in the previous chapter that Macrinus would never have forced the military reform had it not been necessary. Regardless, this reform, whether necessary or not, provided fertile ground for unrest among the soldiers.

These causes, however, were the only ones that were somewhat in Macrinus' control. He still had to contend with the leaders of the revolt: the Syrian women of Julia Domna's family and their accomplices. While all of the literary sources play up the idea of Elagabalus as the actual son of Caracalla and the incestual relationship between Caracalla and Julia Soaemias as a reason for the major troop defection, one greater method of persuasion remained. Julia Maesa's great wealth and the local celebrity of her family no doubt played an even larger role in gaining adherents to the uprising. Before dealing with these issues, it will be necessary to consider the characters involved.

5.2 The Syrian Women and other conspirators

The sources unanimously see the female relatives of Julia Domna as the instigators of the uprising against Macrinus. The family of Julia Domna hailed from the Syrian city of Emesa on the Orontes. Emesa was ruled by a dynasty of high priest kings

of Elagabalus,¹⁷⁸ who still held some political autonomy, even after the Romans took over the area. The city was not rich, apart from the revenue derived from religious offerings (Hay 1911: 26); clearly, though, there was some favor shown to it by the Severans, for Caracalla had made it a *colonia* (*Dig.* 50.15.8). Julia Domna herself was the daughter of Julius Bassianus, who was a priest of Elagabalus. After her marriage to Septimius Severus and Severus' accession several years after, Julia had her extended family join her in Rome in 193 CE. Julia Domna's sister, Julia Maesa, took up residence in the royal palace and lived with Domna throughout her reign (*Dio* 78.30.3). Prior to moving to Rome, Maesa had married the proconsul Julius Avitus, also of Emesa (see Appendix 1, 78.30.2). Maesa and Julius Avitus had two daughters, Mamaea and Soaemias.

The main conspirator seems to have been Julia Maesa, the sister of Julia Domna and grandmother of Elagabalus and Severus Alexander. Herodian (5.3.2, 11) reports that she had a vast amount of wealth, on account of a long association with the royal house.¹⁷⁹ After Macrinus' accession, she was forced to return to her native city of Emesa,¹⁸⁰ but she kept her wealth intact, a useful tool in securing the military's loyalty (*Herod.* 5.3.3; *HA*, *OM* 9.2). Similar to the sentiment expressed by Julia Domna prior to her death, that she would rather die than become a common person (*Dio* 78.23), Maesa's motivation for starting the revolt was so that she could return to the imperial palace, to which she had grown so accustomed (*Herod.* 5.5.1).

¹⁷⁸ For a study of the early dynasts of Emesa, see Sullivan 1977.

¹⁷⁹ All of the literary sources attest to her retention of her wealth after the deaths of Caracalla and Julia Domna: *Dio* 78.29.3; *Herod.* 5.3.2-4, *HA*, *OM* 9.2.

¹⁸⁰ The sources do not specify whether Maesa was in Rome or Antioch at the time of Macrinus' accession. *Dio* (78.30.3) states that she had always lived with Julia Domna, suggesting that Maesa had been in Antioch prior to her removal to Emesa.

Maesa had two daughters, Soaemias and Mamaea, each of whom bore a son, Avitus and Bassianus, respectively. Julia Soaemias' son, by a certain Sextus Varius Marcellus (see Appendix 1, 78.30.2),¹⁸¹ was to become the emperor Elagabalus. He is called Bassianus by Herodian, though this seems to be a mistake, or perhaps intentional to stress the connection between Elagabalus and Caracalla (see Appendix 1, n. 78.30.3). Bassianus is simply derived from Julia Domna's family name and was in fact the name of Caracalla before he officially became Marcus Aurelius Antoninus. More correctly, the son of Soaemias and Sextus Varius Marcellus was Varius Avitus, the future emperor Elagabalus.

Maesa's other daughter, Mamaea, was married to Gessius Marcianus. Herodian refers to their son as Alexianus, which is not strange, since his name seems to have been Gessius Alexianus Bassianus. He later became Severus Alexander after his adoption by Elagabalus. Herodian points out that the boys were fourteen and nine years of age, respectively, at the time of the uprising. As has been mentioned above, the sources indicate that it was Julia Maesa who was most responsible for the uprising against Macrinus, both through both her wealth and influence.¹⁸² At this point, Soaemias was responsible simply for having given birth to Elagabalus. Mamaea, while perhaps occupying the third position of importance among the Syrian women, would soon see her influence grow when Severus Alexander gained the imperial office. Maesa was so involved in the uprising that it is even reported by Dio (78.38.3) that she and Soaemias actually leapt off their chariots during battle to partake of the fighting.

¹⁸¹ S. Varius Marcellus had perhaps died by 217, which might explain why Soaemias and Elagabalus were in Emesa during Macrinus' reign (Domaszewski 1903: 223).

¹⁸² Butler (1910: 40) even cites several inscriptions that show Soaemias' second position to Julia Maesa after the accession of Elagabalus: *CIL* 6, 1079; 8, 2564; 8, 2715.

Other than these women, several men played a part in the uprising. A certain Eutychianus was a partisan of this Syrian faction. He appears in Dio's account under different names, but seems that he is one and the same man as Comazon, though this identification is not certain; following *PIR* (V 42), his full name was perhaps P. (M.?) Valerius Comazon Eutychianus.¹⁸³ He is first mentioned by Dio at 78.31.1 (cf. also 79.4.1) in a fragmentary passage, though it is clear that Dio derides him for his previous employment as a gymnast and entertainer. After the overthrow of Macrinus he received the post of praetorian prefect under Elagabalus (Dio 79.4.1-2). The *HA* (*Hel.* 12.1) and Herodian (5.7.6) do not mention him by name, but merely say that Elagabalus made a dancer praetorian prefect.¹⁸⁴ He also later became consul and city prefect three times, which had never before been given to one man three times.

Another major player was Gannys, though he has also been thought to possibly be the same man as Eutychianus.¹⁸⁵ Dio possibly identifies Gannys as the main person responsible for initially presenting Elagabalus to the Roman soldiers. Dio (79.6.1) seems to describe Gannys in the following way, though this fragmentary passage does not actually name Gannys (the name of the person described has been lost, but Gannys has been supplied by Boissevain):

..... ν δὲ δὴ τὸν τὴν ἐπανάστασιν κατασκευάσαντα, τὸν ἐς τὸ στρατόπεδον αὐτὸν ἐσαγαγόντα, τὸν τοὺς στρατιώτας προσαποστήσαντα, τὸν τὴν νίκην αὐτῷ τὴν κατὰ τοῦ Μακρίνου παρασχόντα, τὸν τροφέα, τὸν προστάτην, ἐν ἀρχῇ εὐθύς τῆς ἡγεμονίας ἐν τῇ Νικομηδείᾳ ἀποκτείνας ἀνοσιώτατος ἀνδρῶν ἐνομίσθη.

[Gannys] was considered the most profane of men, and was killed at the very beginning of his reign; this man organized the rebellion, led him into the camp, caused the soldiers to revolt, provided him with a victory over Macrinus, he had brought him up and was his

¹⁸³ Eutychianus and Comazon are not always identified as the same man; Boissevain (3.348) thinks that they are different, and he is followed by Howe (1942: 97-100).

¹⁸⁴ Potter (2004: 164) claims that Eutychianus was not a dancer, following Leunissen 1989: 31.

¹⁸⁵ Again, see Boissevain 3.348 & Howe 1942: 97-100.

guardian.

The discrepancy is difficult to decipher, since both Herodian and the *HA* see Maesa as the main instigator of the action. The *HA* (*OM* 9.6) says that Maesa and her household were accepted into the camp at night (*suscepta enim illa noctu in oppidum cum suis*), which is seemingly in direct conflict with Dio's statement. Herodian (5.3.11-12) is in agreement with Macrinus' biographer:

νύκτωρ τε λάθρα τῆς πόλεως ὑπεξῆλθε σὺν ταῖς θυγατράσι καὶ τοῖς ἐγγόνοις.
καταγαγόντων τε αὐτοὺς τῶν προσφυγόντων στρατιωτῶν γενόμενοι πρὸς
τῷ τείχει τοῦ στρατοπέδου ῥᾶστα ὑπεδέχθησαν.

She secretly left the city at night with her daughters and the children. With the soldiers leading them and acting as guards, they came to the walls of the camp and were willingly received there.

The situation is further confused by a related passage in Dio. The uncertainty stems from a fragmentary passage of Dio at 78.31.4. The broken text picks up with the phrase ἔς τε τὸ στρατόπεδον νυκτός, μήτε τῆς μητρὸς αὐτοῦ μήτε τῆς τήθης ἐπισταμένης, ἐσήγαγε: "[he] led him into the camp at night, without his mother or grandmother knowing." The subject of this sentence is unknown, and could perhaps have been Eutychianus or Gannys, assuming that they represent two separate men (as suggested in *PIR* V 42, though that point is not entirely clear, due to the fragmentary nature of Dio's text). The alternate version of the story in Dio, regarding the person who led Elagabalus into the camp, is perhaps a result of Dio's hatred for Gannys as well as the senator's wish to spare Maesa the reputation for treachery, since under the rule of her grandchildren he found significant career advancement. Such an explanation, however, is tenuous at best, and it must simply be accepted that there were two differing traditions, even at the time of Dio and Herodian, or, possibly, that responsibility was shared and confused at so tumultuous a moment.

Dio also later charges Gannys with luxurious living and states that he was raised by Maesa and was almost a husband to Soaemias (79.6.2-3). Gannys also apparently was involved in the upper levels of Elagabalus' administration, although his position is not made clear by Dio (79.3.2). He was later killed by Elagabalus himself (79.6.3). Dio's hatred for Eutychianus and Gannys most likely stemmed from their non-aristocratic background and the fact that they held high governmental positions under Elagabalus, despite their lack of qualifications.

5.3. *Elagabalus*

While it is not the purpose of this study to delve deeply into the character of Elagabalus or his reign, it will be necessary here to assess briefly the young man who would overthrow Macrinus. When introducing the civil war that Macrinus' military reforms caused, Dio (78.29.3) makes the odd statement that "they [i.e. the soldiers] set up another such man, who did nothing which was not evil and ignoble (τοιοῦτον ἕτερον ἐστήσαντο ὑφ' οὗ οὐδὲν ὅ τι οὐ κακὸν καὶ αἰσχρὸν ἐγένετο). It is not odd to have made this comment about Elagabalus, since his reign has very little to recommend; but for Dio to connect Elagabalus so closely with Macrinus is strange. Clearly Dio was blinded by his unhappiness with the situation, a sentiment he continues to express throughout book 79; an examination of Elagabalus will certainly dispel any notion that he and Macrinus had much in common.

Elagabalus' lineage and familial connection to Julia Domna have been considered above. At the time of the revolt, he was just a youth, only about fourteen years old (in reality, not much older than Diadumenian). Dio comments that he was held up as emperor, καίπερ παιδίον ἔτι ὄντα (78.31.2). Herodian (5.3.6-8) goes into great detail

regarding the boy's background in Syria. He states that Elagabalus (Avitus) and his cousin Alexianus were dedicated to the sun god, who was worshipped in Syria under the name Elagabalus, which is a Phoenician name. Even at his young age, Avitus was already a priest of this god, and was in fact in charge of the cult there. Herodian (5.3.3-5) gives a lengthy description of the practices of this cult (cited here only in translation on account of its length):

Both boys were dedicated to the service of the sun god whom the local inhabitants worship under its Phoenician name of Elagabalus. There was a huge temple built there, richly ornamented with gold and silver and valuable stones. The cult extended not just to the local inhabitants either. Satraps of all the adjacent territories and barbarian princes tried to outdo each other in sending costly dedications to the god every year. There was no actual man-made statue of the god, the sort Greeks and Romans put up; but there was an enormous stone, rounded at the base and coming to a point on the top, conical in shape and black. This stone is worshipped as though it were sent from heaven; on it there are some small projecting pieces and markings that are pointed out, which the people would like to believe are a rough picture of the sun, because this is how they see them. Bassianus, the elder of the two boys, was a priest of this god (as the elder of the two he had been put in charge of the cult). He used to appear in public in barbarian clothes, wearing a long-sleeved "chiton" that hung to his feet and was gold and purple. His legs from the waist down to the tips of his toes were completely covered similarly with garments ornamented with gold and purple. On his head he wore a crown of precious stones glowing with different colours. (trans. Whittaker)

Herodian (5.3.9) also reports that there were a large number of troops nearby Emesa during this period, as has been already noted, and the soldiers used to come to the city to view the boy, because they liked watching him perform the cult's rites and because he was part of the imperial family. Some of these troops were even clients of Maesa.

Although Herodian may be exaggerating the amount of attention the soldiers paid to Elagabalus and his family, the general points appear to be true. It is known that Avitus was in fact a priest of Elagabalus in Emesa. Furthermore, there were certainly several legions in Syria at the time. It has been noted in chapter 1, Table 2 that eleven legions were stationed in the greater area of Syria, Mesopotamia, Judaea, Cappadocia, and Arabia at the time of Macrinus' accession, and the sources indicate that little had changed by

May 218. Since the support of the military was obviously key to the success of the revolt, Maesa made a plan to play to their unhappiness with Macrinus and appeal to their sense of loyalty to Caracalla.

When she realized that the soldiers were unhappy with the proposed conditions of Macrinus' military reform, Maesa began to advertise her grandson Avitus as the son and rightful heir of Caracalla; once the boy was presented at the camp, the connection was very obvious. Despite the fragmentary nature of the passage, it is still clear that Dio (78.31.3) such was the case:

τοῦ τε γὰρ Ταράυτου υἱὸν αὐτὸν μοιχίδιον εἶναι πλασάμενος, καὶ τῇ ἐσθῇτι τῇ ἐκείνου, ἣ ποτε ἐν παισὶν ἐχρήτο, κοσμήσας

He was made out to be the very son of Tarautas, and he dressed up in the clothes that Caracalla wore as a child.

This idea is taken further; Dio (78.32.2-3) indicates that it was a major part of the actual campaign among the legions.

τόν τε γὰρ Ἀουῖτον, ὃν Μάρκον Αὐρήλιον Ἀντωνῖνον ἤδη προσηγόρευον, περιφέροντες ὑπὲρ τοῦ τείχους, καὶ εἰκόνας τινὰς τοῦ Καρακάλλου παιδικὰς ὥς καὶ προσφερεῖς αὐτῷ ἀποδεικνύντες, παῖδά τε ὄντως αὐτὸν ἐκείνου καὶ διάδοχον τῆς ἀρχῆς ἀναγκαῖον εἶναι λέγοντες, καὶ “τί ταῦτα ὧ συστρατιῶται ποιεῖτε; τί δὲ οὕτω τῷ τοῦ εὐεργέτου ὑμῶν ὑεὶ μάχεσθε;”

They were carrying around the walls of the camp Avitus, whom they were already calling Marcus Aurelius Antoninus, and they showed some images of Caracalla as a child so that they might be compared to him. And they said that the boy was really Caracalla's son and that he was his rightful successor, asking, “Why are you doing this, comrades? Why do you do battle with the son of your benefactor?”

Herodian (5.3.10) corroborates the story, stating that Maesa herself went about telling the soldiers that Caracalla had intercourse with her daughters while they were living in Rome in the royal palace. Whittaker (1969v2: 24n1) points out that Soaemias probably was in Rome at the time of Elagabalus' birth, as per *AE* 1932, 70. Soaemias perhaps also had the reputation for promiscuity that Maesa could exploit. The *HA* (*Hel.* 2.1) reports that she lived her life like a prostitute and practiced all sorts of outrage in the palace (cum ipsa

meretricio more vivens in aula omnia turpia exerceret). For Caracalla's sexual involvement with his own cousin, Hay (1911: 35) cites the instance of Caracalla's violation of a vestal virgin, reported by Dio (78.16.1) and partially corroborated by Herodian (4.6.4). For both Soaemias and Caracalla, then, there may have been a reputation for lewd behavior.

The tradition of Elagabalus as the actual son of Caracalla is picked up to a certain extent in the later sources. The *HA* (*Cc.* 9.1) reports that Caracalla left a son named Marcus Antoninus Elagabalus. That same author slightly amends this version of the story in the biography of Elagabalus, in which he reports that Elagabalus was merely thought to have been the son of Caracalla (*Hel.* 1.4). There comes further elaboration of the story; Soaemias' promiscuity as well as her love for Caracalla provided the basis for this assumption, as well the reason for Elagabalus having been given the name "Varius," since he was quite possibly the offspring of many men (*Hel.* 2.1). Eutropius (8.22) tells a similar story: *Hic Antonini Caracallae filius putabatur*. Aurelius Victor (*Caes.* 23) reports that Elagabalus was the actual son of Caracalla, and that he had fled to Emesa to take up the priesthood of Elagabalus after his father's death from fear of betrayal (Bird 1994: 115). Clearly Victor chose to report the rumor that was spread by Maesa, though it is generally distrusted in the rest of the sources.

This story, of course, is only a pretext, and it is doubtful (or at least unknowable) that the soldiers would have cared at all whether the boy was or was not the true son of Caracalla. In the case of Macrinus, it does not appear problematic that he did not claim descent from Severus or Caracalla, and the taking of the name *Severus* is more honorific than familial. The reality, as both Dio and Herodian understand to a certain extent, is that

the soldiers were unhappy with their extended tour and proposed reform. Furthermore, they were in a position to band together for an uprising, and Maesa was able to sweeten the deal with cash. Herodian (5.3.11) even reports the following piece of information:

τῇ δὲ Μαίσῃ ἐλέγετο σωροὺς εἶναι χρημάτων, ἐκείνην δὲ ἐτοίμως πάντα προέσθαι τοῖς στρατιώταις, εἰ τὴν βασιλείαν τῷ γένει ἀνανεώσαιντο.

It is said that Maesa possessed large sums of money, and that she was willing to give it all to the soldiers if they returned the throne to her family.

Furthermore, Dio (78.31.4) reports that the soldiers were just looking for an excuse to revolt, though in his account he is much more willing to believe that the soldiers were sympathetic to the alleged familial connection between Caracalla and Elagabalus.

5.4. *The Uprising*

Dio's account of the first movements of the revolt is unfortunately fragmentary, though the other literary sources can be used. Herodian (5.3.11-12) reports the beginning of the uprising in the following way:

νύκτωρ τε λάθρα τῆς πόλεως ὑπεξῆλθε σὺν ταῖς θυγατρᾶσι καὶ τοῖς ἐγγόνοις. καταγαγόντων τε αὐτοὺς τῶν προσφυγόντων στρατιωτῶν γενόμενοι πρὸς τῷ τείχει τοῦ στρατοπέδου ῥᾶστα ὑπεδέχθησαν· εὐθέως τε τὸν παῖδα πᾶν τὸ στρατόπεδον Ἀντωνῖνον προσηγόρευσαν, τῇ τε πορφυρᾷ χλαμύδι περιβαλόντες εἶχον ἔνδον. πάντα δὲ τὰ ἐπιτήδεια καὶ παῖδας καὶ γυναῖκας, ὅσα τε εἶχον ἐν κώμαις ἢ ἀγροῖς τοῖς πλησίον, εἰσκομίσαντες, τὰς τε πύλας ἀποκλείσαντες, παρεσκεύαζον ἑαυτοὺς ὥς, εἰ δέοι, ὑπομενοῦντες πολιορκίαν.

At night she secretly left the city with her daughters and the children. With the soldiers, acting as guards, leading them, they came to the wall of the camp and were received willingly; at once the entire army called the boy Antoninus. They wrapped him in the purple cloak and held him within the camp. They brought into the camp all their belongings and children and wives, which they kept in the villages and surrounding fields, shut the gates of the camp, and prepared themselves to endure a siege, if necessary.

Whittaker (1969v2: 22n1) identifies the camp as the one at Rhapsaneae, where the *legio III Gallica* was garrisoned; this event occurred on May 15, 218. The *HA* account (*OM* 9.6) follows the version of events presented in Herodian.

Dio's account confuses the situation slightly. At 78.31.4 the following fragment

is found, though the subject is lacking:

ἔς τε τὸ στρατόπεδον νυκτός, μήτε τῆς μητρὸς αὐτοῦ μήτε τῆς τήθης
ἐπισταμένης, ἐσήγαγε, καὶ τοὺς στρατιώτας ἅμα τῇ ἑω τῆς τοῦ Μαΐου
ἐκκαιδεκάτης, γλιχομένους τινὰ ἀφορμὴν ἐπαναστάσεως λαβεῖν, ἀνέπεισε
νεοχμῶσαι.

at night [he] led him into the camp, without his mother or grandmother knowing, and at dawn of May 16 persuaded the soldiers, who were anxious for a reason to rebel, to revolt.

The entire chapter is badly damaged, and an absolute restoration is impossible. This tradition, however, is clearly different from that of Herodian, in which Maesa and Soaemias play a more prominent role. In the damaged passage from Dio, Eutychianus seems to be prominent at the beginning of the chapter, and perhaps it can be suggested that he at first brought the boy into the camp. In the tradition that Dio reports the boy does not seem to have been initially presented in the camp by his grandmother and mother. Although there is little know of Eutychianus' earlier career, perhaps he was already a soldier in the army with ties to the Syrian family of Julia Domna and therefore could exert some initial influence over the legion at Rhabaneae. The suggestion, as noted above, has also been made that he could be the same person as Gannys, the tutor of Elagabalus (Howe 1942: 100).

In any case, the troops were easily swayed and accepted Elagabalus as a rival to Macrinus. Ulpius Julianus, serving as praetorian prefect under Macrinus, was the closest to Rhabaneae, and took action against the camp, attacking it with full force (Dio 78.31.4; Herod. 5.4.3; *HA*, *OM* 10.2). Dio states that Julianus' first action was to kill a daughter and son-in-law of Marcianus, who must be Gessius Marcianus, father of Alexianus and uncle of Elagabalus; presumably this action was taken in order to stem the tide of unrest among the troops. At the battle against Rhabaneae, Julianus is said to have had the opportunity to achieve a victory, since the Moorish soldiers were fighting

valiantly on the side of Macrinus, but that he did not seize the opportunity; this chance would be the only one Julianus had at victory there (Dio 78.32.1). Afterwards, as Dio and Herodian both agree, the soldiers who had defected to Elagabalus showed the boy to Julianus' troops, who were swayed to switch their allegiance. The troops turned on their commanders, but Julianus was able to escape safely.

At this time Herodian (5.4.1-2) states that Macrinus was in Antioch, delaying; he also did not take the rumors seriously and continued his life of leisure. This account is clearly part of the negative historical tradition against Macrinus, and in fact he seems to have acted in exactly the opposite manner. News of the uprising at Rhaphaneae probably reached him a few days later (May 18, as per Petrikovitz 1938: 106). While Herodian asserts that Julianus had been sent by Macrinus to check out the situation, it is known from Dio's account that Julianus was already in the area of Rhaphaneae and responded immediately. Macrinus, on the other hand, hurried to Apamea, where the *legio II Parthica* was stationed.

When he arrived at Apamea, Macrinus attempted a number of measures to ensure the allegiance of *legio II Parthica*. Dio (78.34.2-3) reports that Macrinus first elevated Diadumenian to the rank of *imperator*, and on equal footing with himself. Taken at face value, it seems that Macrinus wanted to secure his position by establishing an heir. Upon examination, however, it is clear that this was not exactly the case. Diadumenian's appointment as emperor was simply an excuse to present a donative to the soldiers, a long-standing tradition in the Roman empire at the time of accession. To this end, Macrinus promised the soldiers HS 20,000 each, with HS 4,000 to be paid on the spot. Furthermore, Macrinus was forced to overturn the every provision of his military reform.

Aside from appeasing the military, Macrinus held a dinner for the residents of Apamea, which cost HS 600 per person; honoring Diadumenian was the pretext for the banquet.

Initially it seems that these measures were successful in maintaining the loyalty of these troops, but Macrinus soon had to flee Apamea. At the feast that he held in honor of Diadumenian, Macrinus was presented with the head of his praetorian prefect, Julianus. According to Dio (78.34.4-5), Macrinus no longer felt it safe to stay in Apamea or take military action against the city, and he fled to Antioch. Not surprisingly, the *legio II Parthica* deserted him at this point. Herodian (5.4.4) portrays further defections not as a full-scale desertion of Macrinus, but rather by small groups. There are slightly differing opinions regarding the date when Macrinus returned to Antioch. Whittaker (1969v2: 27n1), judging the trip to last three days each way between the two cities, suggests that Macrinus returned to Antioch from Apamea by May 27; Petrikovitz (1938: 107), on the other hand, thinks the date to be May 23.

Having secured the forces of at least these two legions, Elagabalus' side was ready for a pitched battle against Macrinus. Macrinus, on the other hand, was attempting to garner support at Rome and among the provincial governors (Dio 78.36.1):

ὁ δὲ δὴ Μακρίνος ἔγραψε μὲν καὶ τῇ βουλῇ περὶ τοῦ Ψευδαντωνίνου ὅσα καὶ τοῖς ἐκασταχόθι ἄρχουσι, παιδίον τέ τι ἀποκαλῶν αὐτὸν καὶ ἔμπληκτον εἶναι λέγων, ἔγραψε δὲ καὶ τῷ Μαξιμῷ τῷ πολιάρχῳ....

Macrinus wrote also to the senate about the False Antoninus in the same strain as he did to the governors everywhere, calling him a boy and claiming that he was mad. He wrote a letter also to Maximus, the prefect of the city....

Since Dio's account regarding senatorial opinion can most likely be trusted, Macrinus should have expected little aid from that quarter, since the senate felt slighted by Macrinus' demands for honors while never appearing at Rome himself. Dio (78.38.1) does report that the senate declared war on Elagabalus was a usurper, as well as on his

cousin, their mothers, and grandmother. Marius Maximus occupied the other position of great importance at Rome as prefect of the city and had the power to muster troops if needed. Some of Macrinus' provincial appointments have been discussed in previous chapters, so far as they are known. Had these governors been given more time to respond, one would assume that they might have provided reinforcements to Macrinus. The uprising, however, happened swiftly and Macrinus had few options once legions situated locally had changed sides.

Dio's account becomes less fragmentary towards the end of book 78, and he reports that Macrinus had little time to react to the uprising. In fact, Macrinus was only able to engage Elagabalus' forces nearby Antioch, at a village twenty-four miles outside of the city (Dio 78.37.3). The majority of the praetorian guardsmen, who had done away with their heavy armor in order to be lighter in battle, were still loyal to Macrinus. Still, Elagabalus' forces had become too large, and they overcame Macrinus' troops. Elagabalus' soldiers, led by Gannys (whom Dio describes as being without military experience and having spent his entire life in luxury, as noted above), fought weakly at first and would have lost, had not Maesa and Soaemias jumped from their chariot and helped with the fighting (Dio 78.38.3). Of course, it is Dio's opinion that Macrinus was defeated on account of his own cowardice (τῇ δὲ ἑαυτοῦ δειλίᾳ ἡττήθη, Dio 78.37.4). Dio (78.39.1) dates this battle to June 8, 218, which marks the end of Macrinus' rule and the beginning of Elagabalus' reign.

5.5. The aftermath

Macrinus did not meet his end in the battle of June 8, 218. He made his way back to Antioch, where he pretended to have been the victor (78.39.1). When news made it to

the city that the opposite was in fact the case, Macrinus was forced to flee. Dio reports that he left Antioch at night on horseback, having first shaved his beard. Before re-entering Antioch after the battle with Elagabalus, Macrinus had sent Diadumenian, in the care of Epagathus, an imperial freedman, to the Parthian king Artabanus. This action is the basis for the earlier contention that Dio did not truly understand the nature of Macrinus' pact with Artabanus. In any case Macrinus fled first to Aegeae in Cilicia, then through Cappadocia, Galatia, and Bithynia to the harbor town of Eribolon.

Dio (78.39.3) believes that Macrinus wished to return to Rome, since the senate and the people there had become sympathetic to his position. This assertion may very well be true, but it is worth considering another option. If Macrinus had been able to cross from Eribolon into Thrace and the region of Lower Danube, he might have been able to secure the backing of the troops there. As has been discussed earlier, Macrinus was careful to remove partisans of Caracalla from governorships in this region and replace them with his allies. Aelius Triccius and Marcus Agrippa, co-conspirators in the plot against Caracalla, governed Pannonia Inferior and Dacia, and it has been noted in chapter 1, Table 2 that ten legions were stationed in Dacia, Pannonia, and Moesia. Had Macrinus been able to cross the Hellespont, he might have been able to secure sufficient military backing to make a counter-offensive against the young Elagabalus.

No matter what Macrinus' destination, it was imperative that Elagabalus have him captured while still in Asia Minor so that he could not secure any support elsewhere. Elagabalus was able to carry this out, as Macrinus was captured at Chalcedon, and taken back to Cappadocia (Dio 78.39.5). Diadumenian was also captured early on in his flight at Zeugma by the centurion Claudius Pollio (Dio 78.40.1). Macrinus himself, before he

could be brought back to Antioch for execution, was killed by the centurion Marcianus Taurus. His body was left unburied until Elagabalus passed on his travels from Syria through Bithynia.

There is some debate regarding the actual date of Macrinus' death, based on the dating of an eclipse of the sun that Dio (78.30.1) mentions as a precursor to Macrinus' downfall. Bassett (1920: 66-68) leaves the date of the eclipse in doubt, but tentatively accepts the date of April 12, 218. Petrikovitz (1938: 105) regards this date as impossible and prefers a date of October 10, 218 and a chronological oversight on Dio's part. Some of the contention arises from Dio's use of the phrase ὑπὸ τὰς ἡμέρας ἐκείνας, which seems to mean "on that very day," that is May 15/16, 218. It is clear, however, that Dio was not recording these events in real time, and a mistake in chronology, especially during a recounting of the omens attendant to an event, is hardly unbelievable. There seem to be two options available. First, Dio could have remembered an eclipse from that spring close to the date that he later heard was the first day of mutiny; otherwise, the eclipse could have occurred in October, the date when Macrinus, on the run for a long time according to another tradition, may have finally been captured (Whittaker 1969v2: 34n1).

It was most likely that Macrinus was killed several months after his capture, and it was probably several more until he was buried, which occurred after he had been seen by Elagabalus (Dio 78.40.1 specifically states that it remained unburied for some time). The traditional date of Macrinus' fall is June 8, 217, though this date marks only his defeat in battle at the hands of Elagabalus, after which he fled and spent a certain period of time in flight. Elagabalus did not travel to Rome immediately upon his accession (Dio 79.1-8

describes his actions in the East), and Dio here suggests that Elagabalus was traveling to winter quarters in Bithynia when he saw Macrinus' body; Whittaker (cited above) suggests that Dio's mention of the eclipse at 78.30.1, which seems to have occurred on October 1, 218, may be a reference to Macrinus' actual death. The precise date of Diadumenian's death is uncertain; Dio states simply that it occurred after Macrinus' murder, but most likely it occurred at about the same time as his father's.

Elagabalus also began a negative campaign against Macrinus. He immediately wrote to the senate, insulting Macrinus' low birth and his conspiracy against Caracalla. He also made fun of Macrinus for disapproving of his own young age while at the same time appointing his five-year-old son as emperor (Dio 79.1.2-4). While the latter part is not completely true (for Diadumenian was probably ten at the time), the point was well made. Dio (79.2.6) also reports that Elagabalus' efforts against Macrinus, which included not only the letter just mentioned but also the forwarding to the senate and the legions of Macrinus' records. Elagabalus also sent letters to Marius Maximus, led the senate to hold Macrinus in contempt, and forced the senate to have Caracalla in great praise.¹⁸⁶ Dio claims in this passage that Macrinus was held "in the status of a public enemy" (ἐν πολεμίου μοίρᾳ). Such a distinction is supported by the inscriptional evidence for the reign, where inscriptions often have had the names of Macrinus and Diadumenian erased and therefore require heavy reconstruction in places.

Macrinus and Diadumenian were not the only ones to meet their end, as Elagabalus also got rid of several partisans of Macrinus. One of Macrinus' praetorian prefects, Ulpianus, had already lost his life after the battle at Rhamnus; the

¹⁸⁶ Dio (78.16.4) makes mention of a similar act of Macrinus, who sent to the senate the notebooks and letters of Caracalla.

other, Julianus Nestor, was killed at Elagabalus' order (Dio 79.3.4). In this same passage, Dio mentions the death of the governor of Syria, Fabius Agrippinus, killed in the same fashion as Nestor. Dio had not previously mentioned this governor, but it can only be assumed that he was sympathetic to Macrinus, who had spent his entire reign in Agrippinus' province. Many of the highest ranking equestrian officers under Macrinus were slain as well. Finally, Dio relates the murder of Pica Caerianus,¹⁸⁷ who was the governor of Arabia under Macrinus and did not swear his allegiance to Elagabalus quickly enough.

5.6. *Conclusion*

As was discussed in the first chapter, Macrinus was able to initially establish his position on account of the clustering of legions in the far eastern provinces, specifically in Syria, Mesopotamia, and Judaea. Not surprisingly, it was this same deployment that led to his downfall; as a previous beneficiary of the situation, Macrinus should have realized the danger and implemented a more favorable environment for himself, either by shifting units or by striking preemptively against Julia Maesa. Several difficulties, however, presented themselves. Macrinus was not able to reach a settlement with the Parthians in a timely enough fashion; he also did not seem to anticipate a challenge from Julia Domna's family. This failure led to a prolonged stay in the East for a large number of legions; coupled with the proposed military reform, these events together left a volatile situation, which was easily taken advantage of by Julia Domna's family.

Most important is what both sides of the struggle represented. As Potter (2004: 150) has pointed out, this civil war meant more than a fifty-four year old equestrian

¹⁸⁷ Carey (1927v9: 445n1) notes that the name is most likely incorrect and that Hirschfeld read Caecilianus, while Klein suggested Caesianus.

emperor against a fourteen year old upstart; rather, it was “a conflict between the two most influential wings of government: the equestrian bureaucracy and the court.” The military was caught in the middle, dangerously both for the soldiers and their masters. Posing as the rightful heirs to the Severan dynasty, Maesa and her family showed indulgence to the military, which had been the leading principle of policy for Caracalla and also for Severus before him. This approach was less problematic for them, since they would only have to deal with potential military and economic problems after they had won the throne. On the other hand, Macrinus had proved himself more of an administrator and bureaucrat than a militarily-minded praetorian prefect, a role that he most likely had never assumed. His hand was no doubt forced by the necessities of the state, and he chose to be a reformer and negotiator rather than a lavish and prodigal spender like his predecessor. Coming later in an emerging fiscal crisis, he had naturally less latitude to choose the more expensive option. It must be said, however, that Macrinus greatly underestimated the negative impact that his military reforms would have on the soldiers, and he must be held partially accountable for his downfall. On the one hand, Maesa knew how to take advantage of a bad situation and to restore her position in the royal household. Macrinus had unwittingly enabled her coup. His very success in making peace with Parthia had stopped a drain on resources, some of which could now be redirected to the soldiers. Elagabalus could win ground with the soldiers merely by offering the reversal of Macrinus’ reforms. On the other hand, the connection to tradition and power offered by even a supposititious son prevailed over the novelty of an untraditional reign. Most significantly, however, the strain put on the empire by military prodigality and external war both led an equestrian to the throne and promptly

removed him from it as well.

Epilogue – Macrinus and the Third Century

We shall now attempt to consider Macrinus' position within a definite historical timeframe; specifically, my remarks will endeavor to situate his reign as a successor to the Severans and as a predecessor to the fifty years of instability from 235-285, commonly known as the Third Century Crisis. In doing so, the hope is that this chapter will serve as not only a conclusion to the study, but also as an examination of certain themes that permeate the half-century as outlined above.

6.1. Macrinus and his relation to the Severans

Macrinus' imperial identity has been one topic of discussion throughout this study, and it is necessary to provide an overall analysis of that identity here. Macrinus most clearly made Septimius Severus his model on several issues; this much is clear not only in the adoption of the name Severus by Macrinus, though the use of this name is obviously the greatest indication of it. Macrinus must have looked towards this name as a source of legitimization at the outset of his reign, for he appears to have adopted it quickly; there is also every indication that Macrinus was expected to make a connection with one of his predecessors, as Severus himself had done. The Severans before him been adopted descent from the Antonines (with Severus himself claiming to be the son of Marcus Aurelius), which could be artificially traced all the way back to Nerva. Just as Severus before him, Macrinus also bestowed the name of Antoninus on his son and projected heir, Diadumenian.

Macrinus' difficult relationship with the memory of Caracalla has previously been touched upon, and a review of that relationship can be summarized here. Upon the death of Caracalla and his own accession, Macrinus was hesitant to take a firm stance on how

Caracalla's memory should be treated. Dio is helpful in reporting what happened at Rome, where the people carried out an unofficial *damnatio memoriae*; it must be remembered, however, that no official decree was ever passed officially damning the memory of Caracalla. The situation, however, in the provinces and particularly among the army was quite different, and it seems quite apparent from the sources that Caracalla received his deification under Macrinus. Dio lays out the entire situation rather clearly and succinctly at 78.9. Macrinus does not seem to have taken any further steps to memorialize Caracalla; for example, the *consecratio* issues for both Caracalla and Julia Domna seem to have been minted at a later date, perhaps during the reign of Severus Alexander. One might compare the end of Commodus' reign, which saw that hated emperor also undergo an unofficial *damnatio*, but later saw his memory rehabilitated by Septimius Severus, who was looking for a connection with the Antonine dynasty.

It is perhaps most important then to focus on the connections between Macrinus and Septimius Severus. Macrinus appears to have seen Severus as more than just a convenient connection to a previous dynasty; in a number of his policies, Macrinus seems to have used Severus' reign as a model for his own. It is not clear if the connection to Severus' policies was a essentially product of the rejection and reversal of Caracalla's policies, or if Macrinus truly thought that Severus' plans were reasonable and sustainable in their terms. Macrinus' domestic and economic policies have been shown the greatest connection with those of Severus. Dio (78.12.7) specifically states that Macrinus reduced the pay of the army to the rate established by Severus by cutting the privileges for the military introduced by Caracalla. Macrinus restored only the privileges granted under Severus for new recruits. Macrinus also increased the silver content of the denarius to the

level initially used by Severus, which had been reduced during the latter part of Severus' reign and even further by Caracalla (Walker 1978v3: 6-12).

Macrinus also followed Severus in his intention to establish a familial dynasty. Such a method of succession had not been used from the time of Nerva until the death of Marcus Aurelius, when that emperor permitted his son Commodus to assume the throne. Commodus' reign was considered poor, and downturn into civil war naturally followed his death. When Severus emerged victorious, it was his intention to follow the lead of Marcus Aurelius and have not one but two of his sons assume a joint rule of the empire. Macrinus, still tightly allied to the policies of Severus, attempted to establish his own hereditary dynasty after his accession by quickly granting Diadumenian the title Caesar. Such a dynasty had little hope of survival, but Macrinus must have viewed it as a way for him to consolidate his rule.

It is rather clear that Macrinus did not in any major way attempt a major break with the Severan dynasty. Doing so would most likely have meant a condemnation of Caracalla's reign, a move which he could hardly have afforded. Furthermore, he seems to have felt that Severus' policies were for the most part effective, which was perhaps a product of what Macrinus had himself observed during his career in the imperial bureaucracy under the emperor. Finally, tradition itself urged Macrinus to attempt a continuation of dynasty rather than attempting a break and reformulation; continuity of rule was always more effective than an interruption, which often lead to civil war.

6.2. Macrinus and the development of the praetorian prefecture

While Cassius Dio constantly complains of Macrinus' equestrian status as being unworthy of assuming the throne, it is Macrinus' status as praetorian prefect, an

equestrian office, at the time of his accession that is perhaps most significant in terms of historical development. Somewhat surprisingly, Dio (as well as the other literary sources) does not draw immediate connections between Macrinus and a number of other powerful prefects before him. Perhaps the consolidation of so much power in one office was not a shock to the ancient writers. Perhaps also Macrinus was not viewed with the same awe that a Sejanus or Plautianus was before him. But the reality of the situation is that Macrinus, though less well known as a praetorian prefect, was the first of his kind to succeed in gaining empire for himself, an act which many before him had been accused of either plotting or attempting.

The praetorian prefecture had naturally always been a powerful office; even in the early empire there was the figure of Sejanus;¹⁸⁸ one might also cite the amount of power that Sextus Afranius Burrus held as an overseer of Nero, or the equally powerful though more damaging influence held by Tigellinus, prefect after Burrus' death in 62. During the Flavian dynasty it is clear that Vespasian wished to safeguard himself against the prefect's power when he allowed Titus to assume the position, a clear violation of the normally equestrian status of its holder. A brief examination of several praetorian prefects leading up to Macrinus will illuminate the final stages of development of the office.

It has been noted elsewhere that the actions of the prefects and the developments within that office under Commodus greatly foreshadow many of the events of the third

¹⁸⁸ Tacitus (*Ann.* 4.2) in fact explains that Sejanus was the first to increase the power of the prefecture, which Tacitus originally thought was moderate, by augmenting troop presence in Rome: "vim praefecturae modicam antea intendit, dispersas per urbem cohortis una in castra conducendo...."

century.¹⁸⁹ The move towards a stronger and more ambitious praetorian prefect can be seen in this period with Laetus, the praetorian prefect responsible for Commodus' murder (*HA*, *C* 17.1; Dio 72.22; Herod. 1.16-17).¹⁹⁰ Eclectus, an imperial freedman, and Marcia, Commodus' concubine, were also involved in the murder; they were unhappy with Commodus' manner of rule and also feared for their own lives, having received threats from Commodus when they attempted to curb his actions. The motivations attributed to the conspirators here are similar to those faced by Macrinus. According to Dio's account, Macrinus' initial motivation was self-preservation, but his subsequent actions and reforms suggest that he had been unhappy with Caracalla's management of the empire. A major difference, however, is that after that death of Commodus, Laetus was not in a position to seize the throne. Rather notably, there were many powerful generals in the provinces with their legions. It is most likely also the case that just being at Rome itself made it impossible for Laetus to gain the supreme power, for the senate would never have allowed it. Only by his absence from Rome and his ability to gain the loyalty of the army that Macrinus could ascend to the throne.

Strangely, Septimius Severus was not deterred from placing a powerful man into the office of prefect, but he perhaps used some caution in appointing a fellow countryman who would be loyal, or so he assumed. The stories in both Dio and Herodian dealing with Plautianus' background, career, and downfall exhibit some major differences, but in

¹⁸⁹ Howe (1942: 41): "...in considering the pretorian prefecture under Commodus, that that chapter in the history of the prefecture forms a kind of introduction or prelude to the history of the office in the third century."

¹⁹⁰ Beginning with Laetus of course omits the episode in which Perennis was allegedly plotting against Commodus to make his own son emperor (Dio [Xiph.] 73.9.3) and the strange position of *a pugione* held by the freedman Cleander, acting as a third praetorian prefect (*C* 6.9). This position is attested in *CIL* 6, 41118 (= *AE* 1961, 280): T(ito) Aio Sancto co(n)s(uli) / procur(atori) alimentorum / praef(ecto) aerari(i) preaf(ecto) / Aegypti a rationibus / proc(uratori) ration(is) privatae / ab epistulis Graecis / M(arcus) Aurelius Cleander / a cubicul(o) et a pugione / Imp(eratoris) Commodi Aug(usti) et / Asclepiodotus a rat(ionibus) / et a memoria / heredes / pro voluntate e[ius] / [.

general they follow the same outline. Plautianus had most likely achieved the position of praetorian prefect under Severus by 197, and his power, by all accounts, grew rapidly. Plautianus managed to have his daughter, Plautilla, married to Caracalla (Dio [Xiph.] 75.15.2, 76.1.2; Herod. 3.10.5), a union that Caracalla loathed.¹⁹¹ Plautianus managed to gather so much power under Severus that Dio was able to exclaim, “On account of this someone might not incorrectly say that Plautianus had more power than all, even the emperors themselves.”¹⁹² Dio goes on to state that Plautianus held the position of emperor in place of Severus, on account of the latter’s continued deference to him.¹⁹³ A fragment from Dio also includes the statement that someone dared to address Plautianus as the fourth Caesar.¹⁹⁴ Perhaps most telling, however, is the reference to Plautianus made by Dio in his account of Sejanus’ death: “And so Sejanus died, having possessed a power greater than anyone before or after him holding that position, with the exception of Plautianus.”¹⁹⁵

It is perhaps significant that Dio (78.11.2) records the fact that Macrinus was an associate of Plautianus; he claims that Macrinus managed Plautianus’ estate, after coming to that man’s attention through his work on a court case. Macrinus was almost destroyed along with Plautianus, but was saved by Cilo (see Appendix 1, 78.11.2). No doubt working under the tutelage of both Plautianus and Cilo helped Macrinus advance his own

¹⁹¹ Dio ([Xiph.] 76.3.1) states that Plautilla was “a most shameful woman,” which is significant, given the amount of hatred Dio held for Caracalla; Herodian (3.10.8), on the other hand, states that Caracalla simply hated the girl because it was a forced union.

¹⁹² Dio (Xiph.) 75.14.6: ἀφ’ οὗ δὴ οὐκ ἀπεικώτως ὑπὲρ πάντας τὸν Πλαυτιανόν, καὶ ἐς αὐτοὺς τοὺς αὐτοκράτορας, ἰσχύσαι ἂν τις εἴποι.

¹⁹³ Dio (Xiph.) 76.15.1: αἴτιος δὲ τούτων αὐτὸς ὁ Σεουήρος μάλιστα ἐγένετο, ὃς οὕτως αὐτῷ ὑπέεικεν ἐς πάντα ὥστ’ ἐκείνον μὲν ἐν αὐτοκράτορος αὐτὸν δὲ ἐν ἐπάρχου μοίρᾳ εἶναι.

¹⁹⁴ Petr. Patr. exc. Vat. 132b: ὥστε καὶ τινα τολμῆσαι γράφειν πρὸς αὐτόν, πρὸς τέταρτον Καίσαρα.

¹⁹⁵ Dio 58.14.1: Σεϊανὸς μὲν δὴ μέγιστον τῶν τε πρὸ αὐτοῦ καὶ τῶν μετ’ αὐτόν, πλὴν Πλαυτιανοῦ, τὴν ἡγεμονίαν ταύτην λαβόντων ἰσχύσας οὕτως ἀπήλλαξεν.

career. To return to Plautinaus, however, it is clear that his position under Severus mirrored closely that of Sejanus, as Dio himself observed. Through family alliance and an over-trusting emperor, Plautianus was almost able to gain the supreme power. He was blocked, however, by Severus' sons, and it was Caracalla's hatred for Plautianus that brought about his death.¹⁹⁶ Plautianus again found the same problems that had hampered the rise of previous prefects, such as Sejanus or Laetus. In this case, loyalty to the imperial house was too great, or the consequences of disloyalty too severe, for Plautianus to carry off a coup. Unfortunately the sources do not present a coherent picture of Plautianus' aims and ambitions, so it is impossible to say what his ultimate goal was. It is clear, however, that he was able to gather a great amount of influence under Severus and was ultimately undone by his greed for power. Being at Rome, however, can also be seen as a great impediment to Plautianus' success, especially in conjunction with the authority and goodwill that Severus retained not only in his court but in wider ruling circles.

The rise of the jurist prefect under the Severans must be considered significant as well. Under Septimius Severus legal powers began to accrue to the praetorian prefects which had not previously been in their purview, including a greater power over criminal trials, an extension of power beyond the bounds of Italy, and control over the military *annona* (Howe 1942: 43). As the power over the government became consolidated in the emperor, especially beginning with Severus, it was natural that the lawyers and members of the *consilium* exercised a great influence. In many ways it can be seen why this period

¹⁹⁶ The story in Herodian (3.11) and Dio (76.2-4) differs, though both find him guilty of a plot against the imperial family. Herodian's story tells of Plautianus being betrayed by the potential assassin, Saturninus, while Dio suggests that Caracalla set Plautianus up to look like he was plotting against them. For a comparison of the two accounts, see Hohl 1956.

often saw a division in the prefecture between a jurist and a military man; it was these two sectors of the government that were the most dominant.¹⁹⁷ Likewise, it is not surprising that the equestrian class rose to perhaps its greatest influence in this period, since the strength of the emperor likewise depended on the erosion of senatorial power. This class filled not only the positions of the praetorian prefecture but also many other influential positions in the imperial bureaucracy. As a beneficiary of the growth of influence of this body, as well as having pursued a career in law, Macrinus naturally rose to a position of great importance.¹⁹⁸ The combination of these spheres of influence led him to the situation in which he had a chance at the throne.

The increasing influence of the praetorian prefecture leading up to Macrinus' holding of that office no doubt played an enormous part in his ability to seize the throne. When Macrinus' proposed influence is coupled with his policies, it is tempting to see Macrinus not as a usurper who cared only for personal glory but rather as a man for whom a personal threat exacerbated perceptions that Caracalla had mismanaged the empire. This view is in some ways supported by his adherence to the policies of Severus, which entailed a rolling back of every major policy change enacted by Caracalla. In this vein, Macrinus may have acted according a quotation attributed to Trajan by Dio, when that emperor was appointing his own prefect: "Take this sword, so that you might use it on my behalf if I rule well, and against me, if I rule poorly."¹⁹⁹ Following such an order

¹⁹⁷ The importance of the judicial side of the praetorian prefect can be seen in Plautianus' successor, Papinian. Papinian was dismissed by Caracalla in 211, upon the young man's accession (Dio [Xiph.] 77.1.1) and then later killed by the praetorian guard (Dio [Xiph.] 77.4.1a). In general, see Howe (1942: 71n22). There is no evidence that Papinian had plans to seize the throne, but his appearance in various legal writings shows his influence in that field. See Honoré 1981: 56-59.

¹⁹⁸ Despite the fact that no legal writings of Macrinus survive, it must still be assumed that he exercised a great deal of judicial influence while praetorian prefect.

¹⁹⁹ Dio 68.16.1,2: λαβὲ τοῦτο τὸ ξίφος, ἵνα, ἂν μὲν καλῶς ἄρχω, ὑπὲρ ἐμοῦ, ἂν δὲ κακῶς, κατ'

only explains how Caracalla was killed, for certainly Macrinus was not the first prefect to act against his emperor. His chance to gain the throne, on the other hand, can be seen in the development of the praetorian guard described above, in combination with the erosion of senatorial power and the location of the army on the boundaries of the Roman empire.

6.3. Macrinus and the Third Century

Looking beyond Macrinus' position within the lengthy Severan dynasty, it will now be necessary to discuss how Macrinus fits into the third century as a whole. Although considering his importance within one century may seem arbitrary, it is in fact apt. Macrinus' accession showed not only the power that had accrued to the praetorian prefecture, as discussed above, but also the instability of authority that existed under surface solidity of the reign of Caracalla. The basis if this instability would not be rectified under Macrinus, Elagabalus, and Severus Alexander. By 235 the Roman empire was headed into a period of great turmoil and volatility. Though perhaps contentiously referred to as the "Third Century Crisis," it cannot be denied that the period from 235-285 saw a great amount of unrest, be it politically, militarily, and economically, which threatened to throw the Roman empire into ruin. Macrinus' reign must be seen as foreshadowing these developments, and in fact many comparisons between him and the ephemeral later emperors of the "crisis" period can be made. The following covers will discuss the reigns of Severus Alexander (222-235), Maximinus Thrax (235-238), Philip the Arab (244-249), and Carus, Carinus, and Numerianus (282-284).

Even in the first years of "crisis" there can be found a comparison with Macrinus. Severus Alexander's downfall shares many similarities with Caracalla's. Both emperors

fell following “success” in the East. While Caracalla’s imagined success against the Parthians has been discussed earlier, it seems that Severus Alexander did win some victories in this region (and also suffered some losses), though his enemy was different from that of Caracalla. In 227 the Persians had conquered the Parthians, with Artaxerxes (Ardashir) defeating Artabanus V and establishing the Sassanid dynasty. By 231 incursions into Roman territory by the Sassanids had become too great for Alexander to ignore and he was forced to march against them.

The extent of Alexander’s success against Persia is certainly up for debate. The *HA* insists that Alexander routed Artaxerxes and the Persians (*AS* 55.2, *fuso denique fugatoque tanto rege*). This version is corroborated by Aurelius Victor (*Caes.* 24.2) and Eutropius (*Brev.* 8.23).²⁰⁰ Herodian (6.5-6) on the other hand tells a much different story. He states that the army found initial success when unimpeded, but that they were soon caught off guard, because of Alexander’s failure to show up at a crucial moment. In fact, it was Alexander’s reluctance to fight that caused the disaster for the Romans. Alexander was forced to withdraw with the army, though Herodian concedes that an equal number of men fell on both sides. This seemingly spurious success did not stop Alexander from celebrating his victory in Rome. The *HA* (*AS* 56.1-2) reports that he had a triumph there, which was acclaimed by the senate. Aurelius Victor (*Caes.* 24.2) and Eutropius (8.23) mention a victory as well. Soon after, sometime in 234, Alexander was forced to deal

²⁰⁰ The text of this passage reads *Qui quamquam adolescens, ingenio supra aevum tamen confestim apparatu magno bellum adversum Xerxem, Persarum regem, movet; quo fuso fugatoque in Galliam maturime contendit, quae Germanorum direptionibus tentabatur*. There is a clear textual similarity between the *HA* and Aurelius Victor here, which is perhaps attributable to a common source. The passage from Eutropius reads *Successit huic Aurelius Alexander, ab exercitu Caesar, a senatu Augustus nominatus, invenis admodum, susceptoque adversus Persas bello Xerxen, eorum regem, gloriosissime vicit*. Bird (1994: 177) states that Victor, Eutropius, and Festus (22) all cite Xerxes as the Persian monarch, which is clearly incorrect; he claims that the error came from the *Kaisergeschichte*. Artaxerxes was clipped to become Xerxes at some stage in the transmission of the material.

with an invasion by the Alamanni on the upper Rhine (*HA, AS* 59; Herod. 6.7); the sources agree that he made this trip with great haste. When he arrived and encamped, Alexander found the troops, positioned around Mainz, there ready to revolt.²⁰¹

Herodian (6.7.9-10) reports that the Roman soldiers were already upset with Alexander because he wished to settle with the Germans, since he preferred not to fight and to live luxuriously and chariot race instead. While this sentiment is clearly a reflection of the negative tradition against Alexander, it sets the stage for his overthrow in terms similar to those at the end of Caracalla's reign, when that emperor was too busy chariot racing to pay attention to the missive indicating the danger that Macrinus represented. It also shows similarities to the downfall of Macrinus and the alleged military dissatisfaction with the settlement with the Parthians. The description of the circumstances surrounding Alexander's German campaign naturally leads into a description of successor, Maximinus, and again the episode between Caracalla and Macrinus is recalled.

Maximinus' lowly background was of course pointed out by the sources. Herodian states that he was "from the race of the semi-barbarous tribes of the inner part of Thrace."²⁰² Maximinus had advanced his career through the military, at some point gaining citizenship and reaching equestrian status (Whittaker 1969v2: 131n3). It has been seen that Macrinus himself had progressed in his career as well through an arm of the Roman government, and at the time of their respective accessions, each man held a high position: Macrinus as praetorian prefect and Maximinus likely as *praefectus*

²⁰¹ Potter 2004: 167, citing Halfman, *Itinera principum*, 232.

²⁰² Herod. 6.8.1: τὸ μὲν γένος τῶν ἐνδοτάτῳ Θρακῶν καὶ μιξοβαρβάρων.

castrorum, ranking just one grade below praetorian prefect (Whittaker 1969v2: 133n2, citing *CIL* 3, 99 & Veg. 2.9-10).

Maximinus' accession was aided by the popularity he held among the troops, but also by the soldiers' discontent with the control that Alexander's mother had over him and with Alexander's actions in the East (Herod. 6.8.3-4). This motivation must be compared with the military's displeasure towards an extended tour in the East under Caracalla, an annoyance that seems to have allowed for an uncontested overthrow. Unlike Macrinus, however, Maximinus does not seem to have orchestrated the overthrow removal of Alexander himself, which appears to have been done by the soldiers themselves. Maximinus was forced to take the purple, or be killed (Herod. 6.8.5-6). Alexander was then quickly dispatched, along with his mother (Herod. 8.9.7).

Macrinus' accession would foreshadow a later rise to power even more closely. M. Julius Philippus, more commonly known today as Philip the Arab, became the second praetorian prefect to gain the purple; an event which had been so shocking to Dio just years before was repeated only eighteen years after Macrinus' initial breakthrough. Philip had been praetorian prefect under the young Gordian III, who at the age of thirteen had become emperor after the murder of Balbinus and Pupienus in 238.

The young Gordian III had in many ways easily paved the way for his praetorian prefect to succeed him. When financial and military difficulties mounted, great responsibility fell on the shoulders of Timesitheus and Julius Priscus, Gordian's praetorian prefects; Priscus, in fact, was the brother of Philip. Timesitheus led an invasion of Persia in 242, but he succumbed to illness in 243, when he was replaced by one of his followers, Philip. The *HA* (*Gd.* 28.1, 5-6) even suggests that Philip had a hand

in Timesitheus' murder, though this accusation is not supported by other sources. Philip continued the war against the Persians, but after a setback near Ctesiphon, Gordian III died and left the throne open. Philip seized the opportunity and quickly succeeded him (*Gd.* 29.1).

Philip's accession was not without the suspicion of disloyalty to Gordian, and several sources report that Philip plotted Gordian III's demise. According to the *HA* (*Gd.* 29-30), Philip arranged the troops in such a way that they were unable to secure provisions, for which they naturally blamed Gordian. They then turned hostile toward him. Philip spread the story around the army that Gordian was too young to rule effectively, and after he won over their leaders, Philip had them call for his own accession, at the expense of Gordian. Initially there was an alleged joint rule between Gordian and Philip, but Philip soon after had Gordian slain. Philip's plan was to bring famine upon the soldiers, and claims that the lack of food brought them to murder Gordian themselves (*Zos.* 1.18, though Zosimus does not discuss a joint reign).²⁰³

Further similarities connect Philip and Macrinus. Philip gained the throne during an unsuccessful campaign against the Persians, and he quickly made peace with them (*Zos.* 19.1); this peace had to be made through the concession of Armenia to the Persians.²⁰⁴ Likewise, Macrinus was forced to conclude Caracalla's ill-fated campaign with Parthia and make a large cash settlement. Furthermore, it was important for both men to assert their dynastic intentions at the outset of their reigns, and just as Macrinus made Diadumenian Caesar upon his accession, so did Philip quickly name his son, Philip II, Caesar. Finally, both made a connection with their predecessors, even though they

²⁰³ On the confused tradition, see Oost 1958 and Potter 1990: 204-212.

²⁰⁴ For the source, see Potter 2004: 237 and n. 92 (p.634).

both played a part in their demise. Macrinus carried out the burial and deification of Caracalla, and Philip honored Gordian in the same way (*Gd.* 31.3; Eutrop. 9.2.3).

The final example nearly brings the story full circle. The final years of the Third Century Crisis were ruled by a brief familial dynasty led by Carus, who had two sons, Numerianus and Carinus. As praetorian prefect under Probus, Carus assumed the purple upon Probus' assassination (*HA, Car.* 5.4; *Vict. Caes.* 37.4; Eutrop. 9.17.2); he naturally avenged the death of Probus, but was suspected of having had a hand in the operation (*Zos.* 1.71.4-5; *Zon.* 12.29). By the time of Carus' accession, it can be seen that the Roman empire was beginning to emerge from the previous period of instability. Carus set out to Persia and soon died, but his son Numerianus was able to succeed him without contest (*Car.* 8.1-4). The *HA* biographer suggests that Carus' death might have been caused by his praetorian prefect, Aper; this Aper remained prefect under Numerianus. When Numerianus later died, Aper was accused of murder again, and Diocles stabbed him and was later elected emperor (*Car.* 12-13). The later reforms of Diocletian would greatly change the nature of the office of praetorian prefect, and subsequent reign of Constantine saw the position become entirely civil.

Holding the position of praetorian prefect appears to have put Macrinus in a position to gain the supreme command of the Roman empire. Beginning in the second century, and even prior to the reign of Commodus, the praetorian prefecture began to exert greater influence in the Roman bureaucracy and over the emperor himself. It is not necessarily the individual prefects themselves, though some may have been more ambitious than others, but the nature of that office that invested its holder with a great

deal of influence.²⁰⁵ Macrinus took advantage of this power and was able to seize the throne, and his example was followed by several men after him. The instability that led to Macrinus' accession progressively worsened throughout the course of the third century, and it was not until the reforms of Diocletian and Constantine that the office of the praetorian prefect, which had seen great development since the time of Commodus, was permanently changed. The administration and bureaucracy were made more complex and had their centers of power more widely dispersed in the post-Diocletianic empire.

6.4. Conclusion

It has been seen throughout this study that Macrinus' reign, though brief, can be viewed as a pivotal one for the Roman empire. From the sources, however, the overall picture of Macrinus as a person is obscure. Despite Cassius Dio's insistence on discussing or referring to his background as a Mauretanian, this aspect of his person does not seem to have had much of an impact, either positive or negative, on his public perception or reception. If anything, his "humble beginnings" were only a detriment in that relatives of Caracalla made their own claim for the throne. It can easily be argued, however, that any man, even one from senatorial stock, would have also lost out to those Syrians, on account of the tenacity of the Severan dynasty. Dio's aristocratic bias against Macrinus, though perhaps typical, was significant in the overall picture of his reign.

To return to the issue of his public perception, Macrinus attempted a very usual, if not overly conservative, public relations campaign, which has been discussed in some detail in chapter 3. His attempt to connect himself with a previous dynasty, even though

²⁰⁵ This issue is discussed at some length by Howe (1942: 38-40), and I can agree with his statement that "there has been entirely too much of a tendency to view any power exercised by a specific prefect as 'a power of individual prefects, but not of the prefecture' (Passerini 1939: 233n3) and to treat the prefecture not as a office but 'as a series of praefecti' (Davis 1939: 255)."

he was a usurper, was a move previously employed by Septimius Severus, when he honored Commodus and claimed to be the son of Marcus Aurelius. Macrinus did not go this far, but he does seem to have honored Caracalla and of course assumed the name Severus for himself and Antoninus for his son. Diadumenian also played a large part in the legitimization of his reign, since the establishment of a dynasty was one of the few ways to add stability to an illegitimate assumption of power. As such, Diadumenian became Caesar and the designated heir of Macrinus almost immediately upon his father's accession, and this message was spread not only through official modes of advertisement, such as inscriptions and imperial coinage, but was also quickly picked up by the provincial cities, as can be seen from their coinage.

This study has also hoped to show that even in a brief reign the development of imperial policy can be traced. Upon his death, Caracalla left Macrinus with many problems to solve, on both the domestic and international front. Though the action was unpopular at Rome, Macrinus' withdrawal from Parthia seems to have been the correct move. Macrinus realized that the more pressing issue was reform of the army, since Caracalla, following the lead of his father, had allowed military power to spiral out of control. He also seems to have recognized the problems with the imperial coinage that had begun under Severus and were exacerbated by Caracalla. Macrinus' actions in regard to each of these issues were not popular or helpful for his own security, but they were perhaps "correct" for the overall health of the state. When matters were allowed, after the death of Macrinus, to continue in the manner under Caracalla, it is not surprising to see the crisis that followed the death of Alexander Severus.

The previous discussion regarding Macrinus' role in the development of the praetorian prefecture is perhaps the best example of how his reign was important. His accession represents the first time that a praetorian prefect was able to concentrate enough power in his own hands to be perceived as a strong enough candidate to become emperor. Macrinus' accession largely depended on his acceptance by the army, and he was aided both by his predecessor's rash actions and lack of foresight as well as his assassination away from the capital, where the senate and the Roman people could be avoided. In the aftermath of his accession, the senate merely acted as a rubberstamp for the will of Macrinus and the military. As this process was repeated several times throughout the third century, it can be seen that praetorian prefecture had reached its pinnacle of power, which could only be abated by the reforms of Diocletian and Constantine.

In the end, however, Macrinus' reign cannot be seen as a success. He succumbed to the remaining members of the Severan dynasty and never truly solidified his power. A major problem must have been his absence from Rome, a mistake that later was carefully avoided by others, such as Philip the Arab, who found themselves in a similar situation to Macrinus. Even Macrinus' policy measures, such as the military reform and what appears to have been a coinage reform, were erased either by the end of his reign or soon after by Elagabalus and his successors. Most importantly, Macrinus was not able to balance two powerful groups, the Roman army and the senate and people of Rome. He attempted to appeal to each group in different ways, but his actions were never reconcilable. It was difficult for himself to be Severus and his son Antoninus (clearly an appeal to the army) and at the same time attempt to restrict military privileges (which

would most likely have been pleasing to the senate and people of Rome). Macrinus' rise to the top of the Roman government were based on his skills as an administrator, jurist, or bureaucrat, but he was not able to display the military acumen necessary for sustained success as emperor.

Appendix 1: A Historical and Historiographic Commentary on Dio 78

The text referenced is that of Boissevain, though the tradition numbering system for books and chapters has been retained.

Chapter 1

78.1.1

ὅτι οὐκ ἠθέλησεν αὐτῷ ὁ Ἀρτάβανος τὴν θυγατέρα... συνοικίσαι:

Caracalla had asked the Parthian king Artabanus for the hand of his daughter in marriage; Artabanus refused, knowing that it was Caracalla's intention to annex Parthia. It has been pointed out that, though it may have been Caracalla's wish to unite the two great empires, "more probably it was simply an attempt to secure a *casus belli*" (Debevoise 1938: 265). Herodian's version of the story is much more complicated. Herodian agrees with Dio on the point that Caracalla wished to marry the daughter of Artabanus and that he was initially denied (4.10.1-5). Herodian, however, states that Artabanus was finally worn down by the requests of Caracalla and agreed to offer his daughter in marriage. After the celebration of Caracalla's arrival in Parthia for the marriage had commenced, Caracalla ordered his troops to slaughter the barbarians; he continued to rampage through Parthian territory and notified the Senate by letter that Parthia had been defeated (4.11.1-9). The *vita Caracalli* makes nothing more than passing comment on the issue (Cc. 6.1-5) and does not mention the anger of Artabanus at any point. Dio seems to know nothing of the details of the wedding massacre presented by Herodian, and it is hard to believe that he would have left out such a story, since it is Dio's purpose throughout his history of the reign of Caracalla to show the base nature of the emperor (Millar 1964: 153-154). The possibility does exist that Xiphilinus omitted this episode in his excerpts of Dio; in

the end, however, it is best to treat Herodian's version with caution. As Millar points out, Dio was looking for "colorful incidents to liven up the narrative" and includes the story of two soldiers fighting over a wineskin and Caracalla's encounter with a lion (1964: 158; Dio [Xiph.] 78.1.2-5). Of course, Dio was receiving secondhand information, but the outrageousness of Herodian's story almost ensures that it would have gotten back to Dio in Rome. Herodian's comment at 4.11.9, that the senate learned of Caracalla's actions in Parthia because of the deeds of the emperor cannot be kept secret, seems to suggest that he is trading in hearsay and popular rumors and that the veracity of his account is to be discounted.

78.1.2

τά τε Ἀρβηλα παρεστήσατο: Dio (68.26.4) reports during Trajan's Parthian campaign that Arbela was part of the region of Assyria and was the site of Alexander's victory over Darius. Debevoise (1938: 265n123) states that a coin hoard from Ashur suggests Roman occupation during 216.

78.1.5

ὥς δὲ δὴ καὶ παντελῶς αὐτῶν κεκρατηκῶς ἐσεμνύνετο: Caracalla certainly reported his Parthian "campaign" as a victory, but even Dio (and presumably at least the entire senate at Rome) knew that the emperor had accomplished very little and in fact had never gone face to face with the enemy. The legend *VIC(TORIA)* *PART(HICA)* that appeared on coins in 217 (*RIC* IV Caracalla 257, 297a-299e) celebrated a sneak attack against an unsuspecting foe; while Dio's character assessment here may not be far off, his interpretation of the events with Parthia under Macrinus lack

a discerning eye. Caracalla's actions would leave behind a major international crisis for Macrinus.

Chapter 2

78.2.2

ἀλλ' ἀλήθεια: This interjection signals the beginning of actual Dio, preserved in Codex Vaticanus 1288. This section of Dio's actual text extends until 79.8.8. A great deal of Dio's Roman history was preserved through the work of excerptors and epitomators. In the tenth century CE, by order of the emperor Constantine Porphyrogenitus, excerpts were made from Dio and other Greek historians and arranged according to theme; these excerpts seem to be reliable evidence for Dio's text. The next epitomator was Ioannes Xiphilinus of Trapezus, who worked in the second half of the eleventh century CE and completed an epitome of Books 36-80 of Dio. He divided his work by reigns, beginning with Pompey and Julius Caesar. Finally, Ioannes Zonaras, working about half a century after Xiphilinus, wrote an Ἐπιτομή ἱστοριῶν from the Creation to 1118. He used Dio for the beginnings of Rome up to 146 BCE, and his work is consequently valuable for what it preserves from the first quarter of Dio's history. The work of Zonaras is considered to be of higher quality than that of Xiphilinus, both on account of the coherence of Zonaras' epitome and because Zonaras' seems to have preserved the structure of the first twenty books of Dio. For more detail, see Millar (1964: 1-4). That this section of Dio (essentially all of Book 78 and the beginning of 79) is extant provides great insight to the modern reader because it reports, in Dio's own words, contemporary history of his time and records the current political opinion, both public and senatorial, that existed at Rome during the reign of Macrinus.

τῷ βιβλίῳ...γραφέντι: The αὐτοῦ here seems to have Caracalla as its antecedent; the contents of such a book written by Caracalla are unclear. The break between the text of Xiphilinus and Cod. Vat. 1288 is too abrupt to draw extensive conclusions. Dio seems to mention this book again at 78.16.4, but the text is severely mutilated in that passage as well. In each case, however, it seems that the books were records of Caracalla's paranoia; cf. the comment by Reimar *ad loc.*: "Commentaria Caracalli plena suspicionum & irarum in Senatores." Dio may also make mention of this book at 77.15.1 (Exc. Val. 379); there Dio mentions the publications made by Caracalla of all his evil deeds, which he himself approved of as noble and admirable.

78.2.3

τὰ τῶν ἀστέρων...ἐτεκμαίρετο: Judging by Dio's history, Caracalla relied on astrology and considered it a useful tool for the collection of information and intelligence; in this passage he is interested not in his own horoscope, but rather the horoscopes of other leading men in Rome. Although Dio does not discuss in detail Caracalla's use of astrology, there is ample evidence of his father, Septimius Severus, using it; growing up in such a household would no doubt have left its impression on Caracalla, and, from the examples of Severus' use, it is possible to understand the type of information that one meant to gather from astrology. Dio tells the story that Septimius Severus knew that he would not return from his campaign in Britain since he understood under which stars he had been born (76.11.1). In his *HA* biography Severus is in fact described as "a most expert astrologer" (*ipse quoque matheseos peritissimus*) in the story of how he came to take Julia as his wife; he sought out the horoscopes of marriageable women and took Julia because of her favorable horoscope (S 3.9). Prior to his rise to

power Severus is also said to have consulted an astrologer, who foretold all of his future successes (*S* 2.8-9). While in Sicily (presumably when he was governor there), Severus was indicted for consulting either seers or astrologers, but the charge was dropped (*S* 4.3). Severus, being an African and proficient in such matters, questioned the horoscope of Geta, for he did not foresee his son's elevation to the throne (*HA, G* 2.6-7). Cf. the comment by Birley: "Belief in and practice of astrology was on the increase and Septimius was a prominent addict" (Birley 1972: 72). For the use of astrology in the legal and political life of Rome, see Cramer 1954; for astrology in the *HA*, see Syme 1983: 80-97.

καὶ πολλοὺς...ἀπώλλυεν: This scene serves as but one example of the cruelty and unpredictability with which Caracalla ruled the Roman empire. In his history, Dio's hatred for Caracalla is practically unbounded, and Dio does not hold back his opinions of the emperor at any juncture. At a young age Caracalla (along with Geta) is abusive, greedy, and contentious (77.7.1-2). He had the worst of all three races that were his lineage: Gaul, Africa, and Syria (77.6.1). He had no regard for education (77.11.2). His erratic behavior can be seen the following passage: "When Antoninus arrived at Pergamum and certain persons were debating the authorship of the following verse, he seemed to quote it from some oracle; it ran thus: 'Into Telephus' land the Ausonian beast shall enter.' And because he was called 'beast' he was pleased and proud and put to death great numbers of people at a time" (77.16.8; trans. Cary).

Chapter 3

78.3.1

τῶν δ' οὖν Πάρθων...ἐγένετο: The anger of the Parthians and Medes was of course a product of the ravaging of their land carried out by Caracalla after Artabanus' refusal of his daughter in marriage. See note at 78.1.1 above.

δειλότατος... καὶ ἀσθενέστατος: Throughout these sections in which Dio discusses Rome's interaction with the Parthians, all fault is laid at the foot of the emperor and can be explained through his personal shortcomings (according to Dio). In 78.27.1 Macrinus is described as a coward by nature (ὑπό τε δειλίας ἐμφύτου) and excessively fearful, traits which came from his Moorish background; as something of a side note, Dio includes the unruliness of the soldiers as a reason for military failure. As a result, Macrinus did not engage the Parthians in war. It is obvious that someone who plans the assassination of the emperor, though perhaps reckless, is neither cowardly nor fearful. Herodian points this up with the comment that Macrinus preferred to take action rather than wait around and perish and that "dared to do something" (τολμᾷ δὴ τι τοιοῦτον, 4.13.1).

78.3.2

θώρακος: Here "coat of mail, scale armour" (*LSJ* s.v. θώραξ 2). The need for such an appearance is in following with Caracalla's well-attested preference for living (or giving the impression of living) the life of a soldier (cf. Dio 77.3.2, 77.13.1; Herod. 4.3.4, 4.7.4-7, 4.15.4), even when not in battle, as Dio explains (καὶ αὐτοῖς καὶ ἄνευ μάχης πολλάκις ἐχρῆτο). One wonders if the inability to bear such weight is a sign of physical weakness was owed to the unnamed medical condition for which Caracalla sought treatment at a number of locations (see n. at 78.20.4 below).

78.3.3

ὥσπερ καὶ ἐγὼ εἶδον: Dio is constantly reminding his reader that he is an eyewitness to many of the events in this period, though his narrative is not surprisingly devoid of any admittance of his absence from certain major events. Fortunately modern historians have been able to reconstruct Dio's career well enough to know, for the most part, which events he saw firsthand and for which events he was dependent upon secondhand information. For an overview, see Millar 1964: 5-27 ("The Man and His Career") and 119-173 ("The History of His Own Time").

Καράκαλλος: Dio here gives the reason for the emperor's nickname "Caracallus," after his preferred mode of dress. Cary (*ad loc.*) explains that "*Caracallus* was a Celtic or Germanic word for a short, close-fitting cloak provided with a hood; but as modified by Antoninus it reached to the feet." The *vita Caracalli* states that this garment, which reached down to the heels, was worn especially by the Roman plebs and was commonly referred to as the "Antonine" (*Cc.* 9.7-8). Aurelius Victor claims that Romans were forced to wear it to court (*Epit.* 21). Dio here claims that the army was made to wear it. Herodian makes mention of this garment at 4.7.3, which he states with embroidered with silver; he also says that Caracalla was fond of wearing a blonde, Germanic wig.

Dio does not usually refer to the Emperor as *Caracallus*. The emperor's original name was Lucius Septimius Bassianus; the cognomen was from Julia Domna's Syrian family. Later his father, Septimius Severus, bestowed the name Marcus Aurelius Antoninus on him. Generally speaking, Dio refers to Caracalla as "Antoninus" throughout his history, and at times he contemptuously uses the name "Tarautas," after one of the gladiators famous during this period. For Dio's general ambivalence regarding which name he might use to refer to this man, he provides the comment "Such, then, is

the story of this man, by whatever name he be called.” (καὶ τὰ μὲν ἐκείνου, ὅπως ποτ’ ἂν καὶ ὀνομάσῃ τις αὐτόν, οὕτως ἔσχευ, 78.10.1 trans. Cary).

78.3.4-5: Despite the loss of portions of this passage, Dio’s simplistic and moralistic view of Rome’s foreign relations is clear: the strength of the empire could be sustained by upright rulers, while its decline could be seen in the deficiencies of weaker ones (cf. n. at 78.3.1 above). What Dio has failed to relate to his reader are the underlying reasons for Rome’s failure against the Parthians. The successes that Caracalla experienced against Parthia seem to have been the product of attacks made without war having been declared officially; this much seems clear from his actions, which included the destruction of large parts of Media, the sacking of fortresses and the city of Arbela, and the ravaging of Parthian tombs and scattering of their bones (Dio 78.1). Dio even states outright that the attack against Media came suddenly (ἄτε καὶ ἑξαπιναίως ἐμπεσὼν ἐς αὐτήν) and that the Parthians did not even engage the Roman army during these attacks (οἱ γὰρ Πάρθοι οὐδὲ ἐς χεῖρας αὐτῷ ἦλθον).

ἐν οἰκίαις ἐχειμάζον: That Dio makes this point to show that passing the winter in such quarters was unusual and, most likely, relatively luxurious. The proper winter housing for the Roman army were the *castra hiberna*, which would have been rougher and less comfortable than residence in private housing. This winter was 216/7, which Caracalla and the army passed in Edessa (Dio 78.5.4; Herod. 4.11.8; *Cc.* 6.6) after the widespread looting and destruction that had taken place in Parthia in 216 (see n. at 78.1.1 above).

ἃ πολλὰ... ἐλάβανον: Caracalla’s domestic and foreign policies were predicated on frequently bestowing large donatives on the soldiers; a few examples might be cited.

Following the assassination of Geta, Caracalla greeted the army and claimed that they possessed the treasury (77.3.1-2; cf. Herod. 4.4.4-7). He stated that no man needed money other than he, so that he could spend it on the soldiers (77.10.4); and he also was forever spending money on soldiers, animals, and beasts (77.10.1). The political power of the Roman army, which had reached new heights under Septimius Severus, grew further under the watch of his son and was the greatest domestic problem that Macrinus had to face after the conspiracy against Caracalla in 217. For Macrinus' actions towards military reform, see n. at 78.28.2 below.

78.4.1

Ἀντωνῖνος ἀντιπαρεσκευάζετο: Dio begins here to set up the circumstances under which Caracalla was assassinated. The fact that Caracalla was setting out against the Parthians supports Dio's belief at 78.5.4 that Caracalla was on his way from Edessa to Carrhae when he was killed, though it does not rule out the possibility that he was already near Carrhae and on journey to visit the moon god's temple when the assassination was carried, as Herodian and the *HA* claim (see n. at 78.5.4 below).

Ἀντωνῖνος...κατεσφάγη: Here begins Dio's description of the assassination of Caracalla. The story is complex and many of the aspects seem to be *post eventum* explanations for the actions that took place. One aspect of the assassination that Dio stresses is that the conspiracy was the plan of Macrinus and that Macrinus was not a secondhand beneficiary of the murder, but rather the orchestrator of it. Modern scholars have been slow to grant Macrinus enough foresight to have planned this conspiracy in advance, motivated by his ambition for the throne; rather, he is often seen as acting out of fear (as both Dio and Herodian report). In reality, however, it seems that there were too

many people involved and the public relations campaign following the murder too complex for the conspiracy to be seen simply as the actions of a man who felt that his life was being threatened.

μάντις...εἶπεν: Dio looks for an explanation for almost every major contemporary event in a prophecy or omen. Caracalla's death was preceded by a number of omens (78.7.1-78.8.6); the brevity of Macrinus' life was foretold (78.25.1-26.1) along with omens for the overthrow (78.30.1). Dio even contends that Macrinus' destiny was told on the first day of his rule (78.37.5). That the reign of Macrinus and Diadumenianus was prophesied makes it perhaps more palatable to Dio, who sees the elevation of a man of such low birth to the throne a great insult to the dignity of the Roman state. Millar (1964: 77) states that Dio reports prodigies and portents for many reasons, including enhancement of the narrative, entertainment, or contraposition, though it is clear that he believes in them; he concludes, however, that "his use of prodigies and portents is harmless and trivial, not affecting his treatment of events." The sincerity of Dio's belief in these irruptions of the supernatural into the flow of human events is a remarkable, central feature of his contemporary historical narrative.

τὸν Μακρίνον τὸν ἑπαρχόν: The dates of Macrinus' prefecture are not completely clear. According to Howe (1942: 72-73), Macrinus was most likely not the direct successor to Papinian (*contra HA, Cc.* 8.8); he is first named as prefect during events of 217 (*Cod. Iust.* 9.51.1; Herod. 4.12.1), but he was most likely prefect in 214 and accompanied Caracalla to Thrace at that time (*Cc.* 5.8). Macrinus' earlier career is foggy as well, and little that is included in his *HA* biography (that he was variably a freedman, a

prostitute, and a gladiator) seems believable. See n. at 78.11.2-3 below for a review of Macrinus' likely *cursus*.

υἷὸν αὐτοῦ Διαδουμενιανὸν: Diadumenian, the son of Macrinus, was born September 14 (Dio 78.20.1, though *HA*, *Dd.* 5.4 claims that his birthday was the same as Antoninus Pius, September 19). His exact year of birth is unknown, though he was still a young boy when his father succeeded Caracalla, probably nine or ten years old. In his *HA* biography he is referred to as “Diadumenus,” though inscriptions and coins show his true name to be *Diadumenianus*. The *HA* names his mother as Nonia Celsa (*Dd.* 7.5), though this information comes from a fictitious letter of Macrinus. He became patrician, *princeps iuventutis*, and Caesar shortly after Macrinus took power (Dio 78.17.1, with n. below), and Macrinus gave him the name Antoninus in order to try to win over the soldiers (Dio 78.19.1). He was made Augustus very shortly before the fall of Macrinus, probably in May 218 (78.34.2). When the uprising of Elagabalus began in earnest, Macrinus sent Diadumenian to Artabanus in Parthia, but Diadumenian was intercepted on his way there and put to death (78.39-40; cf. the much abbreviated version at Herod. 5.4.12).

78.4.2

Φλαουίῳ Ματερνιανῷ: Herodian (4.12.3-5) agrees on Maternianus' role in these scenes as a intermediary for prophecies to Caracalla. Herodian claims that Maternianus was currently in charge of all happenings at Rome (〈τῷ〉 τότε πάσας ὑπ' αὐτοῦ τὰς ἐν Ῥώμῃ πράξεις ἐγκεχειρισμένῳ), but Whittaker (1969: 43n3) believes him not to be the actual *praefectus urbi* at the time but rather that he was in charge of the troops at Rome; Domaszewski (1903: 222) thinks he is *vice praef. pr. et urbi functus*, which

would make him an equestrian. He does not make an appearance in the *vita Caracalli*. *PIR* considers him to be of equestrian, rather than senatorial, rank (*PIR* F 317; cf. *Albo* 237).

τὴν μητέρα τὴν Ἰουλίαν: Julia Domna (*PIR* I 663), wife of Septimius Severus and mother of Caracalla, is often considered one of the most influential “first ladies” of the Roman Empire, and her power and prestige seem to have grown under the weakness of Caracalla. According to Dio’s account, she was in residence at Antioch in 216 and 217, serving as a mediator of the emperor’s mail (cf. 77.18.2). It seems from Dio’s statement that she was supervising or filtering the flow of correspondence as though *ab epistulis Latinis et Graecis* and/or *a libellis*. She was scarcely performing the functions herself of all of these positions (which had previously been considered three separate positions); that would most likely have been too great for one person in his or her prime to bear, let alone someone of late middle age with the health problems of the emperor’s mother.

Julia was the daughter of Julius Bassianus, priest of the sun god Elagabal in Emesa in Syria; she was born ca. 170. She seems to have married Septimius Severus in 187 after a favorable horoscope (*Sev.* 3.9, with n. above). She bore Caracalla and Geta in 188 and 189, respectively. She was very interested in literature and philosophy, as Philostratus attests in his *Life of Apollonius* (1.3, cf. Dio 77.18.3; though see Bowersock 1969: 101-109, “The Circle of Julia Domna” for a sober reconstruction of this “circle”). She was naturally upset at the murder of Geta and seems to have opted for a sort of retirement under Caracalla (cf. 78.24.1-2). She did accompany Caracalla to Antioch for

this campaign against the Parthians in 217. For a full study of Julia Domna, see Williams 1902.

78.4.3

Οὐλπίου Ἰουλιανοῦ: *PIR* V 555. At this point in time, Dio has Ulpianus serving under Caracalla in charge of the census (*a censibus*). Julianus alerted Macrinus of Caracalla's intentions to kill him, on account of the prophecy in Africa (see n. at 78.4.1 above). Previously he had been in charge of the couriers (Dio 78.15.1, below; Howe 1942: 73). This office seems to correspond to the position of *ab epistulis* created under Claudius that was in charge of all of the emperor's administrative correspondence. Originally headed by freedmen, under Hadrian the office passed to the equestrian class (Homo 1962: 309). Julianus may have had a previous relationship with Macrinus that could account for his loyalty to the prefect and not to the emperor Caracalla. The promise of career advancement could also have swayed him. He seems to have been later rewarded for this loyalty by being elevated under Macrinus to the position of praetorian prefect (78.15.1, with n. below).

Dio's version of Julianus' involvement is not corroborated by Herodian (4.12) (the account in the *HA* is pathetically brief and not insightful). By Herodian's account, Caracalla had sent Flavius Maternianus out to consult all reliable seers regarding the fortune of his reign, just as in Dio's account. Maternianus wrote a letter to the emperor, which was intercepted by Macrinus himself, whom Caracalla had put in charge of reading his mail while he was preparing for a chariot race. Macrinus concealed the dispatch that was sent by Maternianus, the contents of which spurred him to action against Caracalla, presumably for his own safety. While the lack of corroboration from Herodian is not

damning, the discrepancies in the individual roles in the episodes engender unanswerable questions. Perhaps Dio, understanding the nature of Julianus' position at the time of the plot as well as his career advancement under Macrinus, felt that this role in the conspiracy was suitable to him. This view is perhaps supported by Whittaker, hypothesizing that Macrinus learned the contents of the message from Julianus Nestor, who was currently *princeps peregrinorum*, and that Nestor was thereby promoted to praetorian prefect under Macrinus (Whittaker 1969v1: 445n2).

Who actually intercepted the letter is an interesting question. Julia Domna could have been in the position to do so, but it would have been equally possible for the praetorian prefect, Macrinus, the prefect representing the juridical side of the office, to be receiving and sifting through the emperor's mail. In any case, both stories are too simplistic in their view of the motive for the assassination. While they both claim that Macrinus was the main conspirator, the plot is considered to be an *ad hoc* plan for personal safety. It is clear, however, that too many high ranking government officials were involved for it to have been a spur of the moment event. Rather, the letter may have simply signaled the proper time for the act, an idea that is actually conveyed in the sources.

78.4.4

τὰ δὲ ἐκείνῳ ἐπισταλέντα... αὐτῷ: If there were in fact two letters written by Maternianus and sent from Rome, it stands to figure that Julia Domna would have received the correspondence first, since Caracalla seems to have been somewhere between Carrhae and Edessa at the time, judging by Dio's report of the site of assassination in the following chapter. If this letter did in fact spur Macrinus to act (or to

implement a plan which seems to have already been conceived), then Julia Domna would not have had enough time to act in her son's defense. She cannot be thought of as being complicit in the assassination, given her reaction upon hearing the news of her son's death (see 78.23.1 below).

Herodian's account is quite interesting in that it seems to suggest that Caracalla would ordinarily have dealt with all of his mail personally, and that Macrinus only acted in this capacity at that time because the emperor was preparing up for a chariot race and could pay attention to nothing else. It is almost impossible to believe that Caracalla would normally have dealt with all of his mail, especially considering Macrinus' role as the judicially-minded prefect. Herodian's account also raises questions about Caracalla's whereabouts during this episode, but the inclusion of the chariot racing scene seems to diminish the historical integrity of the passage.

ἐφοβήθη τε ὁ Μακρίνος...διὰ τε τοῦτο: According to Dio Macrinus' fear came from the prophecy (78.4.1-2) by a seer in Africa that Macrinus and Diadumenian were destined for the throne. This reason for Macrinus' fear and his subsequent rush to action against Caracalla are almost certainly *post eventum*, but it is clear from the relevant passage in Herodian that it was generally accepted that Macrinus acted out of fear of death and in order to ensure his own survival. Herodian explains that Caracalla, having learned that Macrinus lived a life of extravagance and effeminacy, often made fun of Macrinus in public and continually threatened to execute him (4.12.1-2). It can be noted here that this story is very similar to the taunts that Caligula tossed upon Cassius Chaerea, described by Suetonius as *tribunus cohortis praetoriae*. Caligula often derided this man as effeminate and mockingly used watchwords such as Priapus or Venus,

whenever Cassius demanded one (Suet. *Gaius* 56). Given the similarity of the stories, as well as of the positions of Macrinus and Cassius Chaerea, one might suspect that Herodian found his inspiration for the story, not reported in Dio, from Suetonius' account of Caligula's assassination.

Herodian goes on to state that Caracalla, on account of his suspicious nature, ordered Maternianus to learn about the end of the emperor's life through seers and prophets. Hence Maternianus learned that Macrinus was plotting against him (4.12.3-5). All of the above portray Macrinus' actions as a means of survival rather than as a plan for seizing power, which is a reflection of the underestimation and negativity present in the literary sources towards Macrinus. The portrayal of Macrinus as acting out of fear rather than ambition is consistent with Dio's perception of him as a Moor; in his dealings with the Parthians Macrinus is described as having the natural cowardice of a Moor (78.27.1). The tradition seems to preserve this prejudice against Macrinus, as the judgments are even harsher in Herodian and the *HA*.

Σεραπίων τις Αιγύπτιος: This Egyptian seer, Serapio, seems to be a different character than the one Maternianus had gotten in touch with at Rome. Dio, being consistent, records the prophecies of one's fall and another's rise.

Chapter 5

78.5.1-2: This very unfortunate lacuna in Dio's text complicates matters for the modern reader. Dio seems here to be giving an explanation of the machinations of both parties leading up to the assassination of Caracalla. He suggests that there was a rumor going around regarding Macrinus' imperial aspirations (perhaps associated with the attendant omens, but not necessarily). Had this passage remained undamaged, it might have shown

to what extent Macrinus' plan was premeditated. Caracalla's paranoid behavior in the end was not unfounded, and he seems to be acting cautiously by removing any men he felt were closely associated with Macrinus and his suspected conspiracy.

τὸ παρωνύμιον...ἐπεποίητο: This reference can be associated, despite the lacuna, with the derivation of the name Diadumenianus from *diadema*. The *HA* biography of Diadumenianus reports that the boy was born with a diadem around his head, instead of a caul (*pilleus*); he was thus called Diadematus, which later in life became Diadumenus [sic] after his mother's father (*Dd.* 3.2-4). It should be noted that according to *OLD* s.v. *pilleus*, this object was also the name for a cap "worn as a mark of manumission"; thus, the *HA* biographer might be making a joke regarding the humble origins of Macrinus' family. Historiographically speaking, there are two ways to consider the mention of this association in Dio and its following explication in the *HA*. This rumor could simply have had long legs, considering its inclusion in the *HA*. Given the briefness of Macrinus' reign and the relative obscurity of such a character as Diadumenian, it is probably better to consider the story in the *HA* as having found its inspiration in Dio, seized as opportunity to invent, and finally come to fruition as an unbelievable tale of origin of Diadumenian's name and its subsequent change. It is also worth mentioning that Suetonius (*Aug.* 94) relates a dream of Octavius regarding his son, in which Augustus was seen with a thunderbolt, scepter, and "the special attributes of a god" (*exuviis*, *OLD* s.v. *exuviae*) of Jupiter Optimus Maximus and was crowned with a radiate crown.

Νεμεσιανόν τε καὶ Ἀπολλινάριον: Aurelius Nemesianus and Aurelius

Apollinarius, brothers from the Aurelian gens and tribunes in the praetorian guard, are

also named as conspirators in the *HA* (*Cc.* 6.6), though not in the account of Herodian. Other than having knowledge of the plot, their role in the conspiracy is unclear. *Cc.* 6.6 also names Aelius Decius Triccianus and Marcus Agrippa as co-conspirators in the plot, or at least having some knowledge beforehand. That this may very well have been the case is borne out by both Dio and the inscriptional evidence. After Macrinus took power, Triccianus, who had been in command of *Legio II Parthica* at the time of the conspiracy, was named governor of Pannonia Inferior (Dio 78.13; *AE* 1953, 11). Agrippa became governor of Dacia, having previously served in many capacities in the Roman government (Dio 78.13, with note below). For Nemesianus, see *PIR* A 1561; for Apollinarius, see the note at *PIR* A 1453.

78.5.3

Ἰούλιον Μαρτιάλιον: Julius Martialis is named by Dio and Herodian (4.13.1-2) as the actual murderer of Caracalla, but in the *HA* (*Cc.* 6.7) simply as an accomplice to the murder. Dio ranks Martialis as an *evocatus* who was holding a grudge against Caracalla for not promoting him to the centurionate. Herodian's account states that Martialis was angry at the murder just a few days earlier of his brother and the insults hurled at him by Caracalla for his low birth and friendliness with Macrinus. Martialis was also previously a client of Macrinus and had received many favors from him. In his account Herodian does hint at the plot against Caracalla having some prior planning when he states that "he persuaded him to plot against Antoninus when he carefully watched for a suitable opportunity" (πείθει τε καιρὸν ἐπιτήδειον παραφυλάξαντα ἐπιβουλεῦσαι τῷ Ἀντωνίνῳ, trans. Whittaker). He is reported by Herodian as being part of the

bodyguard of Caracalla, which may make him an *eques extraordinarius* at the time of the murder (cf. *PIR* I 412).

78.5.4

τῇ ὀγδῷ τοῦ Ἀπριλίου: April 8, 217. The *HA* states that the assassination occurred during the feast of the Magna Mater (celebrated April 4-10) on the emperor's birthday (*Cc.* 10.6), which Dio gives as April 4 (78.6.5). Dio is very specific about the length of Caracalla's life (twenty-nine years and four days) and length of reign (six years, two months, and two days); his dating is plausible and should be accepted.

ἐξ Ἐδέσσης ἐς Κάρρας: Caracalla had wintered at Edessa during the winter of 216-217 and was traveling to Carrhae in order to renew hostilities with the Parthians. In Herodian's account, Caracalla had already been in Carrhae and was leaving the city for a short journey to the temple of Selene, which Whittaker explains is a confusion with the moon god Sîn (Herod. 4.13.3; Whittaker 1969: 449n2). The *HA* seems to conflate these two stories, stating that Caracalla was traveling to Carrhae in order to honor the moon god there (simply referred to as "Lunus" in the text, which is more accurate than the use of Selene in Herodian, *Cc.* 6.6).

ἀποπατήσει: *LSJ* s.v. ἀποπατέω: "retire to ease oneself", "pass with the excrement, void." Attestations in *LSJ* are confined mostly to medical texts (Hippocrates) and comics (Aristophanes, Cratinus, and Eupolis) and one has to wonder if Dio has intentionally added a comic touch to the passage. In any case, the circumstances of the assassination are corroborated by both Herodian and the *HA*. In the *HA* Caracalla had gotten off his horse so that he could lighten his bladder (*levandae vesicae gratia ex equo descendisset*, *Cc.* 7.1), which differs only slightly in detail from Dio's account. Herodian

(4.13.4-5) goes into even greater detail than Dio, stating that Caracalla was suffering from a stomach-ache and had to force all the company to stop so that he could get rid of what was bothering him (ἀποσκευασόμενος τὰ ἐνοχλοῦντα); the murder took place while Caracalla was lowering his clothing from his waist.

καὶ διέλαθεν ἂν εἰ τὸ ξίφος ἀπερρίφει: Dio's assertion here that Martialis would have escaped notice had he dropped the weapon seems, even considering the attendant circumstance and the possibly fictive nature of the story as a whole, farfetched. If it is worth giving credence to the story at all, Herodian's version, which states that Martialis was detected by the bodyguard stationed not far away (4.13.6), is to be preferred. Considering the bodyguard accompanying Caracalla at the time, it would have been impossible for Macrinus to have secured the help of all of its members in the conspiracy. In any case, the date of his death can be accepted as April 8, 217.

78.5.5

τῶν Σκυθῶν: Dio goes on to explain (78.6.1-2) that Caracalla was in the habit of keeping a retinue of Scythians and Germans about him, whom he trusted more than even his most trustworthy soldiers; he referred to them as "lions" (λέοντας τε ἐκάλει). Herodian (4.7.3) claims that during 213-214 Caracalla lived on the Danube, during which time he won the loyalty of the Germans and drew from this population a men of distinguished physique who made up a special bodyguard for the emperor. The Scythians in questions are most likely actually Dacians. Dio (51.22.6-7) explains that those whom he calls Dacians are "Scythians of some sort" (ἐκεῖνοι δὲ δὴ Σκύθαι τρόπον τινά, trans. Cary) and lived on either side of the Ister. Whittaker (1969v1: 451n2) points out that this bodyguard is most likely the same as the *equites extraordinarii* mentioned in *Cc.*

6.7. After the actual murder had taken place, Herodian states that it was the German cavalry that had captured and killed Martialis (4.13.6). This detail represents only a minor difference from Dio, and in any case it is clear that both writers are referring to the same foreign bodyguard.

ἐκεῖνον δὲ ... κατέσφαξαν: There is some confusion here. Cary translates: “As for Antoninus, the tribunes, pretending to come to his rescue, slew him.” Whittaker (1969v1: 451n2) believes this interpretation to be incorrect; rather, Nemesianus and Apollinaris, the tribunes, killed the Scythian who had slain Martialis. The lacuna in this section is indeed not helpful. Against the others, it could be said that Cary’s version is correct and that Nemesianus and Apollinaris simply finished Caracalla off. The interpretation depends on who was being helped, the Scythian guard or Caracalla. Since the emperor had just been stabbed, it seems reasonable to suggest that he needed help. In this version, Martialis had already been struck down with a spear.

Chapter 6

78.6.1

οὐ μόνον ἐλευθέρους ἀλλὰ καὶ δούλους: According to Dio, Caracalla had been in the habit of keeping slaves and freedmen around him at all times, even entrusting to them positions of importance for the Empire. Two freedmen are spoken of in the same passage (77.21.2-3), Theocritus and Epagathus. In a passage from *Exc. Val.* 391 (77.21.2), Theocritus, formally a dancer, became commander of an army and a prefect. This is rendered disputable by the parallel passage from Xiphilinus, which states that he merely gained more power than the prefects. As for Epagathus, he was supposedly equal to Theocritus in power and lawlessness. Dio further claims that, as an insult to the

Senate, Caracalla took most of his meals with freedmen, no longer caring to dine with senators (77.18.4). The Emperor often appointed a freedman as ἀγωνοθέτην, or director of the games (77.10.2).²⁰⁶

78.6.2

ἐπὶ τὴν Ῥώμην ἐλαύνωσιν: Dio's assertion here that Caracalla was in contact with leading men of rival nations (here, the Scythians and Germans), advising them to sack Rome if he were to perish, is complete hearsay and unknowable to Dio, who admits as much ("and to prevent any inkling of his conversation from getting to our ears, he would immediately put to death the interpreters", trans. Cary). His lack of objectivity and dispassion on this point only demonstrates his hatred for Caracalla.

78.6.3

ἀπ' αὐτῶν... ἐμάθομεν: "Nevertheless, we learned of it later from the barbarians themselves...." How the Senate would have heard such stories from these foreigners is rather unclear, although foreigners could doubtless curry favor in Rome by exaggerating the statements of so hated a former leader. Nonetheless, Dio most likely is reporting senatorial hearsay. It should be kept in mind that Dio would have been in Rome at the time of the events, which were taking place in the East.

τὸ τῶν φαρμάκων παρὰ τοῦ Μακρίνου: While the stockpiling of poisons would perhaps fit with Caracalla's deep sense of paranoia, it cannot definitely be asserted that this was the case. By naming Macrinus as his source, Dio may only be revealing a part of Macrinus' plan for justifying the murder of Caracalla, i.e. that many men of high

²⁰⁶The use of ἀγωνοθέτην at 77.10.2 seems to denote an official title, although uses it elsewhere to simply mean "judge" (as in 43.31.3), but elsewhere as "director of games", as in 77.10.2; cf. 63.9.2, 79.14.2). See *LSJ* s.v. ἀγωνοθέτης and Nawijn, *Index Graecitatis* s.v. ἀγωνοθέτης

rank could have been killed by these poisons and may have been under real threat. Dio does not reveal when Macrinus told the Senate about the poisons, and in his description of Macrinus' first letter to the Senate after his accession he only states that Macrinus was hesitant to say anything bad about Caracalla, other than that he was to blame for the present war and the resultant stress on the treasury (78.17). There seems to be some possible corroboration of the story in the *HA*, which states that after the murder of Geta Caracalla forced Laetus to commit suicide by poison, which Caracalla himself provided. There is a possible connection in Dio. An excerpt from *Exec. Val.* 358 states that though Caracalla planned to kill Laetus, he spared him on account of old age. Cary (*ad loc.*) notes that Valesius took "Laenus" as a mistake for Laetus, while Boissevain takes "Laelius" as the correct formation. Compare also the episode at Ilium and the rumors surrounding the death of Festus, freedman and chief secretary to Caracalla (Herod. 4.8.4).

It seems safe to say that there was great fear of poisons during the imperial period, which is attested by the number of instances, in Dio alone, of conspiracies associated with poisons or bad emperors in possession of stocks of drugs. Dio (60.4.5) records that Caligula had stored up a large number of poisons that Claudius had to destroy. Nero is said to have killed Britannicus by poison; later Nero punished an *eques* Antonius for dealing in poisons, burning a large number of poisons publicly (61.7.4-6), just as Macrinus does here. Domitian used poisons to kill men (67.4.5). Paranoia can also be seen in Dio's story of certain men being in the habit of smearing needles with poisons and murdering others in this way in Rome and throughout the entire world (67.11.5).

78.6.5

ἔτη ἑννέα... καὶ ἡμέρας δύο: Caracalla was born Lucius Septimius Bassianus at Lyon on April 4, 188; the name Bassianus was in memory of Julia Domna's Syrian family. In 196 his father, Septimius Severus, changed his name to Antoninus in order better to connect his family with the long-ruling Antonines. As Dio here states, he lived for 29 years, two months, and two days; he ruled the Roman Empire for six years and 24 days. Herodian (4.13.8) dates Caracalla's reign from the death of Geta, which according to this dating runs "with a period of six years" (ἐν ἑξ ἔτεσι). Caracalla, along with his younger brother Geta, succeeded his father to the throne on February 4, 211, the date the Severus' death. At the time Caracalla was 22 years old, while Geta was 21. For the fate of Geta, see n. at 78.7.1 below.

Chapter 7

78.7.1

καὶ μοι... θαυμάσαι πάμπολλα ἐπέρχεται: As discussed in the note to 78.4.1, Dio will explain the end of a reign through the attendant omens and prophecies. According to the modern segmentation, Book 78 commences with Caracalla's campaign against the Parthians, which took place sometime in late 216 / early 217, thus preserving some semblance of an annalistic approach. It should be kept in mind, however, that the modern segmentation was done by Xiphilinus, although it is known that Dio had aimed for eighty books altogether; in his edition, Boissevain has slightly altered the numbering of the books. This Parthian campaign, however, was more or less the beginning of the end for Caracalla and can perhaps be seen as segmentation according to the reigns, since the demise of Caracalla and rise of Macrinus were so intertwined. The assassination of Caracalla takes place at 78.4, with back-story, eulogy, and public reception of the

assassination taking the narrative to 78.10. Dio begins in full with Macrinus at 78.11, which includes personal background, *cursus*, initial appointments, personality, reception by the army and senate, and then proceeds to an overview of his domestic and policy until 78.23. In a way this sequence mixes an annalistic and biographical approach. At the end of 78.23, Dio returns to the death of Caracalla, with the report of the death to Julia Domna in Antioch; this section proceeds to tell of her death at 78.24.1-3. This device, that of a flashback to Caracalla and focus on his Syrian mother, helps Dio focus the narrative on the East as well as provide a bit of foreshadowing for the downfall of Macrinus. This effect can particularly be seen in the actual commencement of the narrative of Macrinus' reign (rather than a prologue and overview of his actions) against various populations in the East, beginning with Armenia and Dacia, the early revelation by prophecy of Macrinus' short life, and then the beginning of activities against the Parthians, with which Dio began the book (78.24-27). Dio continues with Macrinus' attempts at military and financial reform, and this entire section is framed by another prophecy of Macrinus' demise, which is immediately followed by the beginnings of Elagabalus' uprising at the urging of the Syrian women of Julia Domna's family (78.28-31). The conflict with Elagabalus runs from 78.33-41, which covers the overthrow of Macrinus and his death, which occurred in the summer of 218. The preceding description of Book 78 shows aspects of both biographical and annalistic writing. It would not have been strange to segment the books by emperor, but to still keep some annalistic aspects of the narrative: structuring with domestic events, foreign events, and the wrap up of domestic events (in this case the change of emperor). Because the focus has become the emperor, biographical information is important, but Dio does not allow it to dominate the

narrative here (perhaps not so much can be said for the books on Caracalla, which seem to be driven by Dio's hatred for the emperor and thus contain a larger number of anecdotes and opinion). Dio's historiographic method, however, muddles chronology to a certain extent; it is episodic rather than linear.

ὥς σὺ τὸν ἀδελφὸν... ἀποσφάξω: The reference here is of course to Caracalla's murder of his brother Geta. Geta was eleven months younger than Caracalla, having been born March 7, 189. He acceded to the throne with his brother upon the death of their father. By all accounts a great enmity existed between the brothers. The sources even suggest that the proposal was made to split the empire in two (Herod. 4.3.5-7), though this idea does not seem to be endowed with the same calculated forethought that went into the division of the Empire under Diocletian. The ongoing hatred ended in Geta's murder, at the hands of Caracalla, most likely at the end of 211.

78.7.2

ἄντικρυς: Dio stresses the fact that Caracalla had received a number of warning signs of his impending doom, several of which were spoken right to his face; this word occurred in 74.4.4 as well, in the report of the Egyptian seer Serapio, who told Caracalla that his life would be short and predicted the succession of Macrinus. Caracalla had this man unsuccessfully fed to the lions and then put to death.

αἱ τοῦ ἥπατος τοῦ ἱερείου πύλαι κέκλεινται: Dio attributes this statement to the generic οἱ μάντις, a term that can refer to an sort of soothsayer (diviner, seer, prophet; cf. *LSJ* s.v. μάντις). In this case the seers must be haruspices, whose work was the reading of entrails and in this case the inspection of the liver (hepatoscopy).

Haruspices were traditionally of Etruscan origin and could be called upon by the Senate

to interpret portents; *CIL* 6, 32439 attests to an official college of haruspices (the inscription itself dating to the late republic/early empire). Private haruspices also existed, and in the later empire haruspices were often attached to magistrates and emperors, which seems to be the case here (though Dio could be reporting the findings of the haruspices in Rome, while Caracalla was in the East) (*OCD* s.v. “haruspex”). The report that the gates of the liver were shut is obviously a negative sign.

τοῦ λέοντος: Caracalla’s possession and accompaniment of lions are presented as examples of Caracalla’s wantonness. The emperor’s affection for lions went so far as to allow them to appear on coin reverse; cf. *RIC* IV Caracalla 296a-c, in gold and silver, showing a radiate lion, running left, with a thunderbolt in its mouth.

78.7.3

πάντα τὸν τοῦ Σαράπιδος ναόν: The temple of Serapis at Alexandria had special meaning for Caracalla for a number of reasons. He seems to have visited here in order to gain relief from a mysterious ailment, reported by Dio at 77.15.6. During the massacre at Alexandria that he orchestrated, he is said to have lived in and given orders from the temple to Serapis (77.23.1). The fire reported seems to be a reference for Caracalla’s fondness for this temple, and its connection to Alexandria and by extension Alexander. Herodian (4.8.6-4.9.8) writes that Caracalla wished to visit Alexandria in order to see the city in honor of Alexander and too sacrifice to the god there, which presumably is Serapis. There he set up great sacrifices to the god and carried out the massacre mentioned above, for he had heard that the Alexandrians had been making fun of him.

78.7.4

τὸ δὲ δὴ ξίφος... ἔφθειρεν: Despite the omen being clear, it is uncertain what this sword was doing in the temple of Serapis in Alexandria. If it in fact ever resided there, it could have been left as an offering by Caracalla during his visit there in the fall and winter of 215/216.

ἀστέρες πολλοί: Aside from the emperor's interest in astrology (as noted above), stars for Dio often have significance as omens. A star newly seen for a few days presaged disaster (along with various other omens) in 44 B.C.E. (45.17.4) and shooting stars foretold the death of Drusus (55.1.5). The latter citation seems to be the closest in meaning to what Dio is describing here. See Smilda, *Index Historicus* s.v. "prodigia (stellae)," p. 532-533. In this instance, ἀστέρες may perhaps mean "comets," though they are usually named by Dio as ὁ ἀστήρ ὁ κομήτης in one form or another. The determination of these stars as comets here is difficult, therefore, due to the lack of the word κομήτης. Such an identification, however, is supported by the fact that in Dio a comet often accompanied the death of an emperor, either preceding or following the event: Julius Caesar (45.7.1), Augustus (56.29.3), Claudius (60.35.1), Vitellius (65.8.1), Vespasian (66.17.2-3), and Macrinus (78.30.1). For a full list of comets as omens in Dio, see Smilda, *Index Historicus* s.v. "prodigia (cometae)," p. 532.

ὄνον: This story of an ass being led up the Capitoline is explained later, see n. at 78.11.1 below.

λέγων... δὲ Δία ἄρχειν: It is unclear if Dio connects this story with the reaction of the crowds in Rome during the reign of Macrinus, or if the statement that Jupiter was ruling is a reference to the power vacuum that reportedly existed for a few days after the assassination of Caracalla. Dio does relate the story of the unhappiness of the population

at Rome for never having seen Macrinus in person; at the circus on the birthday of Diadumenianus (September 14, a good six months after the accession of Macrinus, and still no sign of him in the capital), the crowd complained of being without a leader and cried that out to Jupiter asking him to be their leader (78.20.1-2, with n. below).

Chapter 8

78.8.1

τῆς τοῦ Σεουήρου ἀρχῆς: If the dating by Dio is correct throughout, the games referenced here were celebrating Severus' *dies imperii*, which was April 9, since he took power on that day in 193 (Dio 74.17.4; Herod. 2.9.11; *HA*, S 5.1 records his accession as the Ides of August, but this is an error) (Cameron 1976: 197n2). At 78.11.4-6 Dio claims a space of three days after the assassination and the accession coming on the fourth day; the dating is thus proven to be correct, since Macrinus became emperor on April 11th, the day of Septimius' birthday. Dio reports this event as an eyewitness; it reportedly occurred one day after the assassination (too early for word to have reached Rome).

78.8.2

οἱ πράσινοι στασιῶται: The Green faction at the circus. The circus was divided between supporters of the Green faction and the Blue faction, with the Red and White playing a lesser role. Dio's report that the Green faction had been defeated signals this event as having been witnessed by Dio himself. On the factions, see in general Cameron 1976. Caracalla himself had been quite a fan of chariot races, even participating in them for the Blue faction, as Dio reports at 77.10.1 (cf. Herod. 4.7.2, 4.12.6). After his accession, Caracalla put to death the charioteer Euprepes for being allied with the opposing (i.e. Green) faction (Dio 77.1.1-2). His rivalry with Geta also forced him to

choose the opposite faction (Dio 77.4.2). At one time Caracalla, enraged at the crowd for making fun of his favorite charioteer, sent soldiers to find the wrongdoers, and the soldiers, unable to distinguish the wrongdoers in the crowd, carried out a great slaughter (Herod. 4.6.4-5).

ἐπ’ ἄκρου τοῦ ὀβελίσκου: The reference seems to be to the obelisk in the Circus Maximus, which was moved by Augustus from Heliopolis and is now located in the Piazza del Popolo in Rome (Platner & Ashby 1929: 115).

Μαρτιάλιε: Julianus Martialis is named as the actual murderer in the plot against Caracalla; see n. at 78.5.3. Dio seems to relate similar stories at two separate times in this book. Here he claims that the crowd called a bird “Martialis” and thus foretold of Caracalla’s death, as this event occurred while Caracalla was still alive. Later at 78.18.3, Dio states that the crowd was calling for Martialis to be honored because of his role as murderer of Caracalla. Either the two events really happened apart from one another (one while Caracalla was alive, one after his death) or Dio is confusing the stories and making two incidents of one occasion in his narrative.

78.8.3

εὐχόμενοί με ἑκατὸν ἔτεσι μοναρχῆσαι: Talbert (1984: 301) cites this passage (along with 76.6.2, also relating praise of the senate to an emperor, in this case Septimius Severus) as possible evidence for formal acclamations made by the senate, but he rejects these as possible occasions for decrees to be passed. For Macrinus’ sake, this acclamation demonstrates one of the reasons why he had little opposition to his accession: Caracalla never named an heir, presumably out of the *hybris* displayed here. It is clear from his relationship with Geta that Caracalla could tolerate no competition to the

throne, so that his lack of an heir, despite the example set by his father, is unsurprising. Macrinus, on the other hand, followed Severus' lead, and quickly named his son Diadumenian Caesar and advertised him widely as his successor (as both the inscriptional and numismatic evidence shows). The numismatic evidence from the eastern provinces is particularly illuminating and shows how both emperor and city were eager to spread a message quickly (see chapter 3).

78.8.4

ἐν τῇ Νικομηδείᾳ: For Dio as companion to Caracalla in Nicomedia, see 77.16.2-3; 77.18.1. Crook (1955: 157 no. 80) cites Dio as an *amicus* of Septimius and Caracalla. This passage serves as evidence for Dio's position among the imperial court under Caracalla as an *amicus*. Evidence for this position under Severus can also be seen in Dio's text. When describing Severus' daily activities, Dio states that the emperor always gave plenty of time for speaking "to us, his advisors" (ἡμῖν τοῖς συνδικάζουσιν αὐτῷ παρρησίαν πολλὴν ἐδίδου, 76.17.2). Millar (1964: 18) sees this passage as a description of an official meeting of *amici* with the emperor, which was a part of the emperor's morning routine. According to Crook, Dio was also a *comes* Severus Alexander. Crook relies on the final chapter of Dio's history, 81.5, in which Dio states that Severus Alexander had made him consul for the second. Dio must have held this office in 229. In this passage Dio states that he met the emperor during this year, and that Severus Alexander allowed him to retire, on account of an ailment to his feet. Millar (1964: 103) doubts that Dio was an advisor to Severus Alexander. Millar bases his argument on Dio's absence from Rome during the greater part of 223-229, the lack of evidence that Dio had ever met the emperor until 229, and on Dio's political attitudes at

the time, which Millar believes are contrary to the ones expressed in the debate between Maecenas and Agrippa portrayed in Book 52 of Dio's history.

ὁ Εὐριπίδης εἶρηκεν: At times Dio, despite attesting to the emperor's education, portrays Caracalla as disinterested in intellectual pursuits: "But, while she [Julia Domna] devoted herself more and more to the study of philosophy with these men, he kept declaring that he needed nothing beyond the necessities of life..." (Dio 77.18.3, trans. Cary). Caracalla is accused by Herodian as having no interest in literary or scholarly endeavors; cf. Herod. 4.3.3-4 (trans. Whittaker): "Antoninus was always a man of grim and violent action who had absolutely nothing to do with the activities mentioned above [i.e. education and sport] and made himself out to be an enthusiast for a soldier's life of war." Caracalla was also reported to have had interest in music (Dio 77.13.7), was trained in philosophy (77.11.3), and could express himself well (77.11.4). For a fuller account of Caracalla's scholarly interests, see Meckler 1999. By recounting an actual conversation that he had with Caracalla, Dio again presents his reader with an insight into his privileged position as a historian, particularly for writing the history of a period to which he was a witness.

πολλὰ μορφὰ τῶν δαιμονίων...: These lines occur as a coda to several of Euripides' tragedies, including *Alcestis*, *Andromache*, *Helen*, *Bacchae*, and *Medea* (with variation in the first line).

78.8.5

ὁ Ζεὺς ὁ Βῆλος: In his description of the city Is, Herodotus explains that Bel is the Babylonian Zeus (1.181); that Belus is from the line of Heraclids, which eventually came down to Candaules (1.7); and that the Persians got their name from the offspring (Perses)

of the marriage of Perseus (son of Zeus and Danae) and Andromeda (daughter of Cephalus, who is in turn the son of Bel) (7.61). See Garstad 2004; Oates 1986: 156-158; 78.40.4 below.

78.8.6

ὄμματα... Ποσειδάωνι: Hom. *Il.* 2.478-479

σὸς... αἵματος: Eur. *Phoen.* 20, καὶ πᾶς σὸς οἶκος βήσεται δι' αἵματος

Chapter 9

78.9.1: Dio reports the opinion of both the senate and the people of Rome, who all seem to be in agreement in their hatred for Caracalla. Dio's account of Macrinus' reign is especially important because it gives an eyewitness account to the end of the reign of a hated ruler and the beginning of the reign of an *eques*, which presented numerous problems for Dio (Millar 1964: 159-160). The public's opinion of Caracalla put Macrinus in a difficult position, which he managed smoothly during his accession. The split between public opinion and the opinion of the army towards Caracalla seem to have marked opposite ends of the spectrum, and Macrinus needed to please both sides. In the end, pleasing the army became more important, and he suffered from negative reaction at Rome. Th *HA* (*OM* 7.4) reports that after the death of Caracalla, the senate "reviled him as a tyrant," which cannot be taken to mean that it took action against his memory, but only that it made public its negative opinion of him; see following note. That document also reports that the senate welcomed Macrinus happily, willing to accept any alternative to Caracalla (*OM* 2.3-4).

σῶμα ἐκαύθη, καὶ τὰ ὅστᾱ ἐν τῷ Ἀντωνινείῳ... ἐτέθη: As Dio here points out, the body of Caracalla was brought secretly to Rome and buried in order to

avoid arousing the anger of the senate and people there. Herodian (4.13.8) says that the ashes were sent to Julia Domna at Antioch for burial, but they did probably make their way to Rome. Dio's version is to be preferred here on the authority of his likely presence in Rome at the time (cf. *HA*, *Cc.* 9.12; *OM* 5.2). Dio 78.23.1-2 confirms Julia Domna's presence in Antioch at the time of Caracalla's death, but makes no mention of the transfer of his ashes there. The tomb of the Antonines is the Mausoleum of Hadrian in the Campus Martius; both passages from *Cc.* and *OM* cited above agree that this was Caracalla's final resting place. This scene, with its lack of extravagance and pomp, is the opposite of the detailed accounts of other funeral ceremonies given by Dio (for Pertinax, 74.4) and Herodian (for Septimius Severus, 4.2). The report in *OM* 5.3-5 that Macrinus ordered Oclatinus Adventus to bury Caracalla with all honor on account of people's love for Caracalla and out of fear for mutiny by soldiers is in direct contrast to the account of Dio and cannot be regarded as correct.

78.9.2

δόγματι μὲν γὰρ οὐκ ἡτιμώθη: It does seem to be the case that Caracalla never underwent any form of official *damnatio memoriae*, though Dio reports that Macrinus secretly ordered his statues and those that he set up of Alexander to be thrown down in Rome (78.19.2). Public opinion, however, called for such a *damnatio* (78.18), though the public seemingly received little satisfaction on this issue. *HA* (*OM* 6.8) reports that the army forced Macrinus to grant honors to Caracalla, including the erection of several statues. The inclusion of this point may be seen as an intentional deviation from the text of Dio, who says quite the opposite regarding the statues of Caracalla.

Macrinus' precarious position as conspirator and present emperor did not allow him to dishonor the memory of Caracalla, which would have been done at the risk of losing support in the army, with which Caracalla had actively curried favor during his reign. Macrinus' position is clear both by his taking of the name Antoninus as well as by the reaction of the soldiers in the East to the arrival of Elagabalus, who was styled as the son of Caracalla and gained favor very quickly. The comment (see following note) that the soldiers controlled Macrinus' destiny is true to a certain extent, but Dio's view is too simplistic: Macrinus needed to keep the appearance of a connection with the previous ruler in order to ensure acceptance of his policies and to appear as if he were following in the footsteps of Caracalla's policies. One might compare Septimius Severus' insistence in attaching the name of the Antonines to the nomenclature of his own family in order to show his solidarity with his predecessors' ideals. Macrinus' move is simply an extension of that.

εἰρήνης, ἥς ἀντήλπισαν παρὰ τοῦ Μακρίνου...: Dio suggests here that the soldiers wanted two things: peace achieved by Macrinus as well as the rewards that they had normally received under Caracalla. Though criticized in the literary sources, Macrinus settled the great war with Parthians, begun by the antagonism and foolishness of Caracalla, through treaty rather than fighting. Furthermore, Macrinus was forced to tie up loose ends with the Armenians, Dacians, and others, all problems inherited from Caracalla. Dio's following statement, that the soldiers wanted more money, seems more correct as a motive for their lack of support for Macrinus. The unhappiness of the soldiers may have been caused by their assumption that a cash payout to Artabanus would have meant less of a reward for themselves. The soldiers were partly correct in

their assumption, for it was not long after the settlement with the Parthians that Macrinus began to institute his military reform.

στερομένους πάλιν αὐτὸν ποθῆσαι: Dio may be getting ahead of his narrative here a little bit, for it does not seem that the soldiers longed to have Caracalla back immediately. They had been strung out on long campaigns for many years, and as the previous clause makes clear, were looking for peace. The first sign of discord among the soldiers towards Macrinus seems to be during his attempted military reforms (see n. at 78.28.3 below).

ἐς τοὺς ἥρωας... ἐσεγράφη: Caracalla was declared *divus* after his death, an honor which Dio claims was pushed through by the soldiers, though one might suspect that Macrinus planned for it in order to keep the soldiers happy. Dio seems to show some disgust that the senate had to pass this decree with his comment “καὶ τοῦτο καὶ τῇ βουλῇ δῆλον ὅτι ἐψηφίσθη.” Cf. also *HA* (*Cc.* 11.5-6): “Nevertheless, this emperor, the most cruel of men, and, to include all in a single phrase, a fratricide and committer of incest, the foe of his father, mother, and brother, was raised to the rank of the gods by Macrinus, his slayer, through fear of the soldiers, especially of the praetorians. He has a temple, he has a board of Salii, he has an Antonine brotherhood, he who himself took from Faustina not only her temple but also her name as a goddess” (trans. Magie). The advertisement of Caracalla as *divus* (as well as of Julia Domna) occurs on coins, though they are generally thought to be later than Macrinus. *RIC* IV.2 Severus Alexander 717-720 show an obverse of Caracalla with head bare and the inscription *DIVO ANTONINO MAGNO*; the reverses bear the inscription *CONSECRATIO*. Mattingly and Sydenham (*RIC* IV.2 p.128) admit that the dating of these coins is uncertain, but that they are mostly

likely minted under Severus Alexander, though possibly under Elagabalus. It would of course make sense for any of Caracalla's successors to mint such a coin, and for Macrinus as well, though judging by the reports from Dio, Macrinus was not willing to honor Caracalla in any other similar way, despite Caracalla having been made *divus* during his reign.

78.9.3

οὐδὲ γὰρ Ἀντωνῖνον ἔτ' αὐτὸν ἐκάλουν: For Caracalla's various names and nicknames, see n. at 78.3.3 above.

Chapter 10

78.10.1

προεδηλώθη: Dreams are very important to Dio as a writer, both personally and in his history. For Dio's use of dreams throughout his history as a whole, see Smilda, *Index historicus* s.v. "somniaum."

ὅτι καὶ ταῦτα γράψοιμι: "That I should write of these events also." According to Dio, Septimius Severus had a great influence over his career as a writer of history. Dio's first work was a book of dreams and portents that foretold the imperial successes of Septimius Severus and was presented to Septimius Severus himself by Dio. Upon receipt of this book, Septimius Severus wrote Dio a note of thanks, and on the night on which Dio read the note he had a dream that told him to write of the reign of Commodus; he then endeavored to write a full history of Rome and incorporate his work on Commodus. The entire work ran from the beginnings of Rome down through Septimius Severus (72.23.1-5).

In this passage it seems that Severus, appearing to Dio in a dream, compelled the historian to write these events, which presumably means that Severus urged Dio to continue his narrative beyond its original scope and to write the contemporary events of the Severan period, which included the reigns of Caracalla, Macrinus, Elagabalus, and Alexander Severus (Books 77-80); his *Roman History* had originally covered events through the reign of Severus, which he gives notice of at 72.23.5. Dio here claims that Severus appeared to him shortly after his death (τεθνηκότος αὐτοῦ ἤδη), which places the phenomenon sometime near 211; from his notices it seems that Dio did not finish his *Roman History*, covering his original plan from the origins of Rome up to Severus, until 219. Following the dating of Millar, Dio began work most likely during the summer of 197; the years 197 to 207 were a period of note-taking, while actual composition lasted from 207-219; on the composition of the history, see also Barnes 1984. From these notices, Dio seems to have been working non-stop until 229, when he served his second consulship, which Alexander Severus allowed him to pass in Italy before retiring home to Bithynia. It is telling that Dio chose the point at which to end his work on account of a dream: “I set out for home, with the intention of spending all the rest of my life in my native land, as, indeed, the Heavenly Power revealed to me most clearly when I was already in Bithynia. For once in a dream I thought I was commanded by it to write at the close of my work these verses: ‘Hector anon did Zeus lead forth out of range of the missiles, / Out of the dust and the slaying of men and the blood and the uproar’” (80.5.2-3, trans. Cary).

From the time of Commodus, Dio himself was an eyewitness at Rome at the majority of the events he records, a fact that makes his contemporary history extremely

valuable. As Millar (1964: 19) points out, “in spite of its fragmentary condition, Dio’s account of his own time still occupies nearly 200 pages in Boissevain’s edition and is thus the longest and fullest contemporary narrative we have of any period of the early Empire.”

78.10.3: Macrinus was naturally forced to carry out proscriptions after the murder of Caracalla so that he could be perceived as avenging his death, rather than causing it. Conveniently Martialis was killed during the conspiracy itself. Macrinus seems also to have taken the opportunity to get rid of a number of Caracalla’s attendants and officials, presumably under the guise of their alleged involvement in the conspiracy (cf. 78.15.3 below).

ὁ τοῦ Παραύτου καὶ βίος καὶ ὄλεθρος: Dio provides here the briefest of necrologies for the dead emperor. The only facts worth relating are the murder and destruction he brought on friend and foe alike. Herodian (4.13.8) barely includes one sentence after the emperor’s death (and pairing it with Julia Domna’s death), simply recording the length of his rule. Compare the somewhat extended notice in the *HA* (*Cc.* 9), which would have been appropriate in a biography, that includes a review of his mode of life, his public works, his names and nicknames, his preferred mode of dress, and his contributions to Roman religion.

It is unclear who was murdered as a conspirator in the plot against Caracalla. Dio has already related the almost immediate capture and murder of Martialis (78.5); it must have been necessary for Macrinus to punish some as conspirators in order to deflect attention from his own role as the main conspirator.

Chapter 11

78.11.1

τὸ μὲν γένος Μαῦρος: It is not completely clear from this passage whether Macrinus was of the native Berber tribe, a descendent of the ancient Carthaginians, or the son of Italian immigrants. Dio's claim that he had one of his ears pierced lends itself to the idea that Macrinus was a native of North Africa (see n. below). Bassett is unwilling to call Macrinus a Berber, though he does allow for "his having Moorish blood in his veins" (1920: 15n20). Potter (2004: 146), on the other hand, claims that Macrinus was "from a family that traced its ancestors to the Berber tribes of the region." Bassett is too apologetic and Potter goes too far in his assertion. This particular use of γένος is defined in the *Index Graecitatis* as "populus, nation" and various *comparanda* are listed. At 77.17.2, Sempronius Rufus (*PIR* S 274) is καὶ εὐνοῦχος ἡμῶν, τὸ γένος Ἰβηρ, τὸ δὲ ὄνομα Σεμπρώνιος Ροῦφος, "He, a native of Spain, was named Sempronius Rufus." At 79.21.2, Αὐρήλιος Εὐβουλος, ὃς Ἐμεσηνὸς μὲν τὸ γένος ἦν, "Aurelius Eubolos, an Emesenan by birth." This description of Macrinus can easily be translated "a Moor by birth," though one might suspect that Dio was referring to his nationality rather than race and meant to call him a Mauretanian by birth. For his actual ethnic background, see note below under "τὸ οὖς... διετέτρητο."

Καισαρείας: Macrinus hailed from Caesarea in Mauretania; Xiphilinus (342) says he comes ἀπὸ Σικελίας Καισαρείας, but judging from the notices in Dio, Caesarea in Mauretania must be correct. Generally speaking, Mauretania referred to the northwestern region of Africa that covered over 1,000 miles from the western limit of Republican Roman territory to the Atlantic (Pliny *HN* 5.21; Roller 2003: 39). The division of this area of N. Africa during the final two centuries BCE is extremely confusing and unclear.

After the defeat Jugurtha in 106 BCE, the territory of Numidia was divided between Bocchus, king of Mauretania; the rest of Numidia was governed by local princes. As Roller (2003: 41) points out, Numidia overlapped Carthaginian and Mauretanian territory and “Numidia” was imprecise because of its descriptive use rather than as a toponym and could be used both ethnically and geographically. After the death of Cato, Numidia became Africa Nova briefly. In 33 Octavian made Mauretania a province (Rheinhold 1988: 81), which in 25 BCE was given to King Juba II, and Numidia was divided between Mauretania and Africa Nova. Mauretania was divided into Mauretania Tingitana and Mauretania Caesariensis under Claudius (cf. Dio 60.9). Caesarea was the major city of Mauretania Caesariensis, the eastern half the Mauretania; it had previously been a Carthaginian settlement and under Juba II and Cleopatra Selene (daughter of Marc Antony and Cleopatra) was the capital of Mauretania Caesariensis (Roller 2003: 41). The local population of Mauretania consisted of Numidians, local Berber tribes, Carthaginians and Carthaginian colonists, and Italian colonists. Iol-Caesarea became a fairly romanized settlement, especially under the watch of Juba II and Cleopatra Selene (see Roller 2003: 119-162).

The Romans regarded the Amazighs or Mauri (both indigenous ethnic groups to N. Africa) highly as soldiers, especially light cavalry. Macrinus is said to have favored these soldiers and to have considered them of high quality as well. Besides Macrinus, this region also produced Lusius Quietus, praetorian prefect under Trajan (Dio 68.32, upon whom Dio also casts scorn an account of his being a Moor). For other prominent Mauretanians (which are few), see *Epigrafia e ordine senatorio* s.v. Mauretania.

γονέων ἀδοξοτάτων: This description in Dio suggests a rather humble extraction from Macrinus, though at this point it is impossible to verify. Macrinus was of equestrian rank and the first man of such a background to ascend to the throne. Dio's comment here as to his low birth is in general a reflection of the negative attitude towards a man of such rank ascending to the throne. Dio will repeat the charge often throughout Book 78.

Despite Dio being horrified at an *eques* taking the throne, the potential for such a development has its roots in the recent evolution of Roman administration. Septimius Severus, in his attempt to militarize the principate, gave men of lower standing the opportunity for advancement through positions in the military or in a militarized administration and in turn raised many of such parvenus to the class of the *equites*. Cf. Rostovtzeff (1957: 402): "But it is clear that the ranks of the aristocracy were filled more and more with the élite of the common soldiers, the non-commissioned officers, all of whom (as well as their descendants) were now members of the equestrian class."

Macrinus' non-aristocratic background does not seem to be a concern for Herodian, which perhaps also says something of that author's position within the Roman social system. The *HA* of course makes note of such a shameful aspect for the emperor:

"Though of humble origin and shameless in spirit as well as in countenance, and though hated by all, both civilians and soldiers, he nevertheless proclaimed himself now Severus and now Antoninus" (*OM* 2.1, trans. Magie; repeated at 5.5 and 7.1). The use of the phrase "shameless countenance" (*oris inuerecundi*) is perhaps a reference to Macrinus' ethnicity. Strangely, however, the *HA* makes no direct mention of Macrinus' African or Moorish background. This apparent omission leads Bassett (1920: 15) to believe that

Macrinus was not a Moor, for if he were the prejudice shown in the *HA* toward would not have allowed such a detail to slip past.

τῷ ὄνῳ... ἔσαχθέντι: “so that he was very appropriately likened to the ass that was led up to the palace by the spirit” (trans. Cary); Dio equates Macrinus’ accession with the omen reported in 78.7.4. The obvious reference here is not only to the omen previously reported, but also to Macrinus’ low birth. Dio at times seems extremely disgusted that an *eques* has risen to the throne, but at others he excuses his non-aristocratic background on account of his work as a jurist and as an administrator in various positions for the empire.

τὸ οὖς... διετέρητο: Dio cites Macrinus’ pierced ear as a sign of his being a Moor.

It was not Roman practice for men to wear earrings; the practice was suitable only for women (*A Dictionary of Greek and Roman Antiquities* s.v. “inauris”). Pliny, however, reports that in the East it was a sign of status for men to wear an earring (Pliny *HN* 11.50), and one might believe that this extends to Macrinus’ cultural background as well. While Bassett (1920: 14) contends that the piercing was “a mark of his servile condition,” he seems to be basing his assumption on the idea that most men with pierced ears encountered by elite Roman in the late republic and early empire would have been slaves. Bassett himself notes his may be an “unwarranted inference” (1920: 14n19). That idea comes out of Dio’s insistence that Macrinus was of the lowest birth, a comment by the Greek senator that must of course be evidence of the current perception of Macrinus by elite Romans and educated Greeks. Dio is no doubt unhappy that Macrinus has ascended to the throne, and he is simply pointing out the emperor’s pierced ear as a sign of his nationality, not his status. In reports from ancient sources, it seems more than common for a man from N. Africa or the East to have either one or both of his ears pierced.

Xenophon (*Ana.* 33.1.31) writes that it is common for a Lydian to have both ears pierced (ὥσπερ Λυδὸν ἀμφοτέρα τὰ ὦτα τετρυπημένον). Plautus (*Poen.* 5.2.21) cites the Punic practice of having pierced ears.²⁰⁷ Macrobius agrees with Xenophon; *Saturnalia* 7.3.7: *Octavius, qui natu nobilis videbatur, Ciceroni recitanti ait: Non audio quae dicis. Ille respondit: Certe solebas bene foratas habere aures. Hoc eo dictum est quia Octavius Libys oriundus dicebatur, quibus mos est aurem forare.* This passage is of particular interest because although it at first mentions the piercing of both ears, the final sentence refers to just one, which is the situation with Macrinus as reported by Dio. There is no corroborating evidence of Macrinus' pierced ear, but since Dio's account is that of an eyewitness, it seems best to take it at face value. If the pierced ear did fit into Macrinus' ethnic background, then he most likely had ancestors with Punic blood who colonized the area.

78.11.2

τά τε νόμιμα... μετεχειρίζετο: Macrinus' legal background is referenced here by Dio, and it is worth noting for several reasons. First, it is cause enough for Dio even to excuse, to a certain extent, Macrinus' lowly background. Macrinus had held the position of praetorian prefect as a legal expert, and he was balanced by his colleague Oclatinus Adventus, whose experience was military. Macrinus can most probably be viewed as a product of the great rise in legal expertise that began under Septimius Severus and can be seen in men such as Papinian, Ulpian, and Paulus, who "were given a free hand to develop their favorite humanitarian ideas of equal law for everybody and of the duty of

²⁰⁷ For the Republican period, R.E.A. Palmer's study (1997: 73-89, esp. 74n7) of the *Vicus Africus* at Rome provides good insight into Roman attitudes towards North African ethnicity, especially with regard to the names applied to each ethnic group.

protecting human life in general and the weak and the poor in particular” (Rostovtzeff 1957: 405).

τῷ Πλαυτιανῷ: Plautianus’ full name was Gaius Fulvius Plautianus (*PIR* F 554), and he was of equestrian stock. Though Roman by origin, he came from Leptis Magna. In 197 he became praetorian prefect under Severus. Plautianus was the father Plautilla and father-in-law of Caracalla. Plautilla and Caracalla were married sometime in 202 (Dio [Xiph.] 76.1.2). He was well respected by Severus, who gave him a place in the senate and the consulship of 203. Plautianus began to fall out of favor when he seemed to be gaining too much power. Indeed his statues outnumbered those of the royal family, and Severus, angered by this, called for some of them to be melted down (Dio [Exc. Val.] 75.14.6). Caracalla hated Plautianus and, according to Dio, devised a plan to make it seem as if Plautianus had been conspiring against his father (Dio 76.3). Severus believed the trick, so Dio says, and put him to death (Dio [Xiph.] 76.4). His titles include *clarissimus vir*, *praefectus praetorio*, and *necessarius dominorum nostrorum* (as in *CIL* 5, 2821; 8, 25526; 11, 1337, *et al.*, see *PIR*).

τοῦ Κίλωνος: Cilo’s full name was L. Fabius Cilo Septimius Catinius Acilianus Lepidus Fulcianus (*PIR* F 27). His full cursus can be seen in *CIL* 6, 1409:

L(ucio) Fabio M(arci) f(ilio) Gal(eria) Ciloni / Septimino co(n)s(uli) praef(ecto) urb(i) / leg(ato) Augg(ustorum) pro pr(aetore) Pannon(iae) / super(ioris) duci vexill(ationum) leg(ato) pro / pr(aetore) provinciar(um) Moesiae super(ioris) / Ponti et Bithyniae / comiti Augg(ustorum) leg(ato) Augg(ustorum) pro / pr(aetore) prov(inciae) Galatiae praef(ecto) / aer(arii) militaris pro/co(n)s(uli) itemq(ue) leg(ato) prov(inciae) Narbonens(is) / leg(ato) leg(ionis) XVI Fl(aviae) F(irmae) Samosate / sodal(i) Hadrianal(i) / pr(aetori) urb(ano) trib(un)o pleb(is) q(uaestori) prov(inciae) / Cretae trib(un)o leg(ionis) XI Cl(audiae) / Xvir(o) stlitib(us) iudicandis / Mediolanenses / patrono.

Cilo was the tutor of Caracalla, who, Dio reports, was *praefectus urbi* under Severus and whom Caracalla had been accustomed to calling “father” (77.4). Caracalla reportedly wished to have him killed but then protected him from soldiers when the deed was about

to be done. This story is repeated in the *HA* (*Cc.* 4.5-6) except that Cilo is there said to have been prefect and consul twice. His full name was L. Fabius Cilo, and he had held various prominent positions under Septimius Severus. He held a consulship in 193, and a second in 204; see *HA*, *C* 20.1. At some point he also was prefect of Rome (*HA*, *Cc.* 4.5-6). His reputation under Septimius Severus was apparently very good, but seems to have fallen slightly out of favor under Caracalla, though his life was spared.

78.11.3

ἐπαρχος ἀπεδείχθη: Throughout 78.11.2-3 Dio summarizes Macrinus' *cursus*, and this passage serves as the best evidence for Macrinus' professional life. He begins with his work as a lawyer, which brought him to the attention of Plautianus. Barnes (1978: 56) takes the phrase *procurator privatae* at *HA*, *OM* 2.1 to mean that Macrinus held the position of procurator of Plautianus' property. Plautianus had a falling out with Severus and was put to death after a trick put on by Caracalla (see n. at 78.11.2 above), but Macrinus survived the crisis through Cilo's intercession. Cilo's influence seems to have helped him secure the position of superintendent of the Flaminian Way. Afterwards he held several procuratorships and then became praetorian prefect perhaps as early as 214, if he is the unnamed praetorian prefect mentioned in *Cc.* 5.8. The version of Macrinus' *cursus* that Dio presents here is to be much preferred to the rumors of Macrinus' earlier misadventures reported after his death in the *HA*; in this passage he is variably a freedman, a prostitute, and a gladiator (*OM* 4.1-8).

78.11.4

αὐξηθεῖς... τὴν τῆς αὐταρχίας ἐλπίδα: The reasons that Dio gives for Macrinus' hopes of ruling are reported in 78.4, and they hardly amount to proving

Macrinus' imperial ambitions. Macrinus' actions are explained as the product of fear of Caracalla and of being put to death. The conspiracy seems, by Dio's account, to have been hastily put together, and Macrinus' accession is not necessarily assumed as a natural consequence of his actions. That Dio now feels willing to state that Macrinus has a "hope of ruling" seems farfetched, given his previous statements, but seems to reflect Dio's true feeling that Macrinus had carried out the assassination not for personal safety, but through ambition (omitting any report of how necessary a change in rule actually was at the time). Macrinus' fear of death simply provided a time when the act had to be carried out.

οὔτε ἐκείνη τῇ ἡμέρᾳ... ἐπεβάτευσεν: Dio's account seems to claim a span of three days without an emperor, with Macrinus' accession coming on the fourth day following the assassination. Herodian claims that there were two days without an emperor (4.14.1), a difference that can be easily reconciled by noting that Herodian must have only counted the days that Rome lacked an emperor, having omitted from his count the day of the assassination and the day of Macrinus' accession. Macrinus' accession occurred on April 11, the birthday of Septimius Severus.

ἵνα μὴ καὶ... ἀπεκτονέναι δόξη: Judging by this statement, Dio believes that Macrinus was the main conspirator in the assassination of Caracalla. On the other hand, he may simply be making note of his aspiration to the throne (easily reported as such, since Macrinus did in fact become emperor), with Macrinus not wishing to seize it too soon in order to avoid suspicion. It seems almost impossible that Macrinus was not responsible for the conspiracy, as all three literary sources point out. If such a view is to be accepted, Macrinus' actions become quite calculated and lend credence to the idea that

he planned Caracalla's murder. In turn, the strategy for securing his reign becomes a bit more clear and his motives for the assassination can move beyond simply ambition and can be focused on his perceived need for a change of leader. This view is supported by his actions as emperor, which in reality attempted to fix all of the problems presented by Caracalla.

78.11.5

τοῦ πολέμου, ᾧ μάλιστα ἐβαρύνοντο: This war with the Parthians is described by Dio at 78.1. As stated above, the war seems to have been carried out strictly for enhancing the reputation of Caracalla; it was ill-timed and not adequately planned out. Fighting the Parthians further would no doubt have been weighing on the Roman soldiers, and it should be kept in mind that Caracalla had been campaigning for the better part of three years, and more or less since he left Rome in 213. War with the Parthians still loomed, and judging by Macrinus' actions to settle the war, this settlement may have been part of his promises to the soldiers.

78.11.6

τῇ τετάρτῃ ἡμέρᾳ: The birthday of Septimius Severus was April 11.

αὐτοκράτωρ: The Roman imperial coinage of Macrinus show this title (as *imperator*) in a obverse inscription that remains consistent in its basic formula throughout his four major issues: *IMP(erator) C(aesar) M(arcus) OPEL(lius) SEV(erus) MACRINUS AUG(ustus)*; other titles would be added throughout his reign (Clay 1980: 22).

ὥς καὶ καταβιασθεῖς: Dio again seems to have no doubt that Macrinus had planned his accession all along, as the grammar of this phrase suggests. The use of ὥς + participle here “expresses a real intention or an avowed plea” (Smyth 1996);

καταβιασθεῖς (*LSJ* s.v. “καταβιάζω” II. *Pass.*) means “to be forced”, rendering the entire phrase “as if he were forced” (cf. Cary’s translation, “after he had made a show of resistance”). Macrinus’ biographer seems to have been of the same opinion as Dio, or perhaps was following Dio closely, when he writes that Macrinus accepted the throne as if he were unwilling (*OM* 5.4, *sed quasi invitus acceperat*).

Chapter 12

78.12.1: It was not uncommon for a new emperor to pardon those punished in the previous reign, just as Caracalla had done on his accession (*HA*, *Cc.* 3.1). The *HA* makes it clear that after the murder of Geta, Caracalla went to great lengths to kill off or banish any supporters of Geta (*Cc.* 4.3-4; *Get.* 6.3), any who wished to follow the policies of Septimius Severus (such as Papinian, *Cc.* 4.1), or those who might have a claim to the throne (such as Helvius Pertinax, son of the emperor, *Cc.* 4.8, or Cornificia, sister of Commodus, Dio 77.16.6). Dio (77.12.4) talks about the accusations of large numbers of people, even those who never had any contact with Caracalla previously.

ἐδημηγόρησε: Dio records no parts of this speech to the troops upon the accession of Macrinus (a not unnatural omission, since Dio was certainly not present when Macrinus became emperor). In Herodian’s account (4.14.4-8), a speech is represented that seems to correspond with the mention of this speech in Dio. The difficulty in stating this with great certainty is the difference in organization between Dio’s and Herodian’s accounts. Herodian combines this accession speech with the speech to the soldiers before the attack of the Parthians. Such a combination may not have been a conflation, but the chronology of the reign seems to suggest otherwise. Dio himself does not take up fighting with Parthians until 78.26, and he spends the intervening chapters describing how Macrinus

secured and asserted his authority, dealing mostly with domestic issues. The structure of the speech in Herodian is as follows: praise for Caracalla and sadness at his death; call to arms against the Parthians; rallying of the troops through an arousal of national pride; praise of Roman order versus barbarian disorder. Herodian concludes the speech with the ironic comment, “You will also prove to Rome and the world (confirming the results of our previous victory) that you did not violate a truce unjustly by trickery and deceit but that you won by superior force of arms” (trans. Whittaker).

78.12.2

τά τε περὶ τοὺς κλήρους καὶ τὰ περὶ τὰς ἐλευθερίας: Dio had previously complained about these measures and portrayed them as a way for Caracalla to raise cash, which would inevitably be spent on donatives to the army; the taxes on inheritance and emancipation were grouped with the *constitutio Antoniniana*, which granted citizenship to all inhabitants of the Roman empire (Dio 77.9.3-5).

78.12.3-6: This greatly mutilated passage finds no help from the epitome of Xiphilinus, who simply records the accession of Macrinus and then moves to the restrictions Macrinus put on precious metals being used to make images of him. Such a gap in Xiphilinus’ text might suggest that the text was mutilated at the time he was writing his epitome, just as was the case for sections of books 70 and 71 (concerning the reigns of Antoninus Pius and Marcus Aurelius, to a lesser extent) by the eleventh century. A glance at the previous mutilated section in this book (78.5.1-2) shows, however, that Xiphilinus was able to fill in gaps here, thus making the idea of an already damaged text rather untenable.

78.12.3

Αὐρηλιανὸν: Little is known of this Aurelianus (*PIR* A 1425). Despite the mutilated passage, it seems that Dio is naming him as the only man of consular or senatorial rank who was present at the death of Caracalla (cf. Boissevain 3.415); he was put to death by Macrinus after his accession (cf. 78.19.1 below).

78.12.5

πάμπολλα... καὶ κτήματα τῶν αὐτοκρατόρων: While it may be strictly conjecture based on the mutilated nature of this passage, it is worth noting that Marcus Aurelius (recorded in a fragment from Book 72) sold off imperial possession in order to raise cash and avoid taxation: “Yet he did not on this account collect money from the subject nations. On one occasion when, with wars impending, he found himself at a loss for funds, he neither devised any new tax nor brought himself to ask anyone for money, but instead exposed in the Forum all the heirlooms of the palace together with any ornaments that belonged to his wife, and urged any who so desired to buy them. In this way he raised funds which he paid to the soldiers. Then, after winning the war and gaining many times the amount in question, he issued a proclamation to the effect that any one of the purchasers of the imperial property who wished might return the article purchased and receive its value. Some did this, but the majority declined; and he compelled no one to return to him any object that had been thus acquired” (trans. Cary).

78.12.7

τάς τε δωρεάς... συλλέξας: While the fragmentary nature of this passage makes it difficult to read, the text that remains seems to suggest that Macrinus, acting on an economically conservative basis, was attempting to stockpile, or even restock, anything available that he could claim was distributed by Caracalla for no reason. Galba

undertook a similar action, nullifying all of Nero's gifts and allowing the beneficiaries to keep only one-tenth (Suet. *Gal.* 15). There may perhaps be a number of explanations for this action, but the most probable is that Macrinus understood that he would soon have a number of expenses (army, grain, war) in the near future and he needed to raise some capital as quickly as possible. Caracalla had left the empire in a bad state of affairs economically (among other things), as Dio makes clear in Book 77. Caracalla had been paying out huge donatives on a regular basis to the troops, an act which seems to have caused the greatest problems for the Roman treasury and economy. In response Caracalla devised several financial measures in order to raise cash: he demanded gifts and money from the senate and wealthy inhabitants of various cities; he began the 10% tax in place of the 5% tax on the emancipation of slaves, bequests, and all legacies; he instituted an inheritance tax; and finally, or so Dio claims, he made all people of the empire Roman citizens, so that he might bring in more money by taxation (77.9.3-5). This last maneuver, which is quite controversial, has been mentioned here because of its inclusion in Dio's text as an economic measure to raise money.

καὶ μηδεμίαν εἰκόνα... ἐκέλευσεν: Limiting the weight of metal that could be made into a statue of the emperor has several possible explanations. The most basic explanation is that Macrinus, following an emperor who lived according to his whim and managed the state in whatever way he pleased, was attempting to demonstrate to the public his humble and perhaps relatively austere nature. His other motive could have been a concern over the availability of precious metals for the production of coinage. Caracalla had recently introduced the coin that is commonly referred to as the *antoninianus*, essentially a double denarius piece (worth two times that of the denarius) in

215. The problem with the *antoninianus* was that its silver content was only 1.5 times that of the denarius, and can thus be viewed as an attempt to preserve metal. Generally speaking, however, debasement of coinage had been happening at Rome since the time of Nero, and perhaps the extremely high levels of debasement under Caracalla forced Macrinus to consider the preservation of gold and silver throughout its usage by the general population by means of a governmental edict. It seems that during the reign of Macrinus the *antoniniani* were struck sparingly, perhaps also reflecting Macrinus' attempt at fiscal responsibility. After Macrinus, however, the *antoninianus* became a staple of Roman coinage throughout the rest of the third century, and in the reigns prior to Diocletian it exhibited an extremely low percentage of silver content.

τὴν μισθοφορὰν τῶν ἐν... ὑπὸ τοῦ Σεουήρου: This measure, the regulation of pay to the praetorian guard, seems to be part of Macrinus' initial fiscal reforms. If the prepositional phrase ὑπὸ τοῦ Σεουήρου is meant to be taken with this sentence regarding the praetorians' pay, then the level would have been set at that which was put in place by Septimius Severus. During his reign Severus had doubled the size of the praetorian guard (Smith 1972: 487-488), and the increased number of troops no doubt led to a capping of their pay. In 202 Severus had raised the pay of army by what is thought to be an increase of one-third (Duncan-Jones 1994: 32). Dio complains about Severus' new expenses for the state and that he entrusted the safety of the state to the army rather than to government officials (75.2.3).

Chapter 13

78.13.1

οὐ μὴν ἀλλ'... παρὰ τῶν ἐμφορόνων ἔσχεν: Despite his lengthy and sustained attack on the military policies of Caracalla regarding his overpayment of the army, Dio can only here give a slight compliment couched in criticism to what certainly had to have been a difficult measure for Macrinus to carry off. At no recent juncture had the army been forced to accept a fixed (or perhaps even lower) rate of pay. Dio shows rather clearly that he is more concerned with the status of his own position and no doubt reflects the conservative feeling of other senators that their status was being undermined by the promotion of men of lower rank to positions of power throughout the empire.

ἔς τε τοὺς ὑπατευκότας... προσέταξεν: Dio of course must be unhappy that Macrinus would hand out consular power in such an indiscriminate way, but this bit of information is more interesting for what it says about Macrinus' management of the empire. Although Dio does not give a thorough account of those who benefited from Macrinus' appointments (though some will be enumerated below), it is clear that Macrinus was following the lead of his predecessors in appointing provincials or equestrians to high ranks. The coveted governorships were no doubt what many members of the senate would have been hoping for, and it is not surprising to see Macrinus criticized for handing them out to others. He was, however, following well-trodden paths by filling positions of military power with those he considered loyalists.

καίτοι μὴ ἐθελήσας... ὑπατευκότων τιμὰς ἔσχήκοι: Though it is not necessary to say that Dio is incorrect here, he perhaps could have been more exact.

During the campaigns of 217, Macrinus had received the *ornamenta consularia*, though he never held a consulship. At no point during his reign does he seem to have refused to bear the title of "consul." Dio may perhaps be saying that, when he became emperor,

Macrinus did not immediately become *CO(n)S(ul) II*, but simply retained the title of consul. In 218, however, he very clearly bears the title *CO(n)S(ul) II*. Macrinus' imperial coinage bears all of this out. Clay, revising the work in both *RIC* and *BMC Rom. Emp.*, clearly shows four major issues of imperial coinage for Macrinus, the dating of which can easily be traced by the offices he held. Issues I included on some coins the title *CO(n)S(ul)*, *P(ontifex) M(aximus)*, and *TR(ibunicia) P(otestate)*; certain types of Issue 2 include the designation of *CO(n)S(ul) II*, *TR(ibunicia) P(otestate) II*, *P(ater) P(atriciae)*, and this issue must therefore fall in 218 (Clay 1980). When Dio states that the practice was begun by Severus and continued by Caracalla, he is referencing Plautianus' consulship of 203 (76.15.1-2). At this time Severus declared that Plautianus should be called consul for the second time, despite never having held the consulship before; he previously, however, had been awarded the *ornamenta consularia*, and Severus used this honor to justify his status as consul II (46.46.3-4).

78.13.2

Μάρκιόν... Ἀγρίππαν: Agrippa's involvement in the assassination of Caracalla has already been noted, and his appointments listed here seem to show that he was rewarded for it.

78.13.3-4: Dio here gives an extended biographies of Marcus Agrippa and Decius Triccianus. Dio lists Agrippa's first profession as κομμωτής, which was a dresser, hairdresser, beautifier, or embellisher (*LSJ* s.v. κομμωτής); Cary's translation as "tireman" is perhaps misleading to the modern reader (cf. *OED* s.v. tire 6. tireman, "(a) a man in charge of the costumes at a theatre; (b) a man who assists at the toilet; a dresser or valet; also, a tailor"). It is unclear why he would be charged with a crime for working in

this capacity. After being recalled from exile, he held administrative positions under Caracalla; Cary here takes διαγνώσεις to mean judicial decisions, one might suspect that Macrinus had contact with him in this capacity. If he truly was a former slave, it shows that Macrinus had no problems following the precedents set by his predecessor, who often passed over “worthier” men and raised freedmen to ranks of distinction. Examples of this during the reign of Caracalla include: Theocritus, an actor and dance instructor who became commander of an army and prefect; he gained so much power that even the two praetorian prefects were below him. Epagathus gained power equal to Theocritus (Dio 77.21.2 = Exc. Val. 391). Festus was secretary to Caracalla and was given a funeral like that of Patroclus when he died at Ilium (Herod. 4.8.4-5).

Triccianus is named as a conspirator in the plot against Caracalla in the *HA* (Cc. 6.6). Dio does not name him as a conspirator, but his *cursus* is no doubt listed here to show how ridiculous it was for a man of such low rank to have become a member of the senate (among other distinctions).

Chapter 14

78.14.1

***Ἀδουεντον:** 78.14 is more or less a diatribe on the career and character of Oclatinus Adventus, a man in whom Dio seems to find no worthy attributes. Despite Dio’s negative attitude towards the man, he had a very successful career as an equestrian. As Dio records here, prior to his procuratorship in Britain, Adventus was a *speculator*, *frumentarius*, and *princeps peregrinorum*. See Rankov 1987 for notes on his earlier career. He rose to position of praetorian prefect under Caracalla and consul under Macrinus, after being adlected to the senate.

78.14.2

ἐμοὶ μὲν ἢ μοναρχία... ἐξίσταμαι: That Dio includes this statement from the mouth of Adventus certainly suggests that it was lost on no one that Macrinus was in control of the entire situation surrounding his accession and that Adventus was merely used as a way to deflect attention from Macrinus.

78.14.3

Μαξίμω τῷ Μαρίῳ: *PIR* M 308. His full name was L. Marius Maximus Perpetuus Aurelianus. *PIR* lists the large number of inscriptions that bear his name. He began his career under Marcus Aurelius, fought on the side of Septimius Severus in his wars with Niger and Albinus, remained in favor under Caracalla, holding various proconsulships (Africa and Asia, the latter position held twice), and managed to be in the good graces of Macrinus upon his accession, becoming prefect of Rome under him. He continued his career under Elagabalus and Severus Alexander as well. In addition to his public career, Maximus wrote imperial biographies, continuing from Suetonius, which have often been seen as a source for the *HA* biographies of Hadrian through Caracalla (and perhaps Elagabalus). How much Maximus' biographies were used as a source has been a point of much debate. For a general overview of Marius Maximus' imperial biographies and their use as a source for the *HA*, see Birley, A.R. "Marius Maximus: the consular biographer." *ANRW* 2.34.3: 2678-2757. Barnes (1978: 98-107) also provides a sober account of the debate (with extensive bibliography) regarding Marius Maximus, Ignotus "the good biographer" (most intensively developed by Syme, as in *Emperors and Biography*, 1978: 30-53), and the *Kaisergeschichte* as Latin sources for the *HA* biographies.

78.14.4

ὅτι τὴν αὐτοκράτορα ἀρχὴν ἱππεύων ἔτι ἡρπάκει: Despite enumerating in great detail the benefits conferred upon Adventus by Macrinus after his accession, Dio does not regard the promotions as a reward for his compliance in the conspiracy against Caracalla, but rather sees it as a way for Macrinus to hide his own shortcomings in terms of pedigree (i.e. surrounding himself with lesser men to enhance his own prestige). As has been noted above, Macrinus was unconcerned with the promotion of members of the aristocratic class and followed Caracalla in promoting self-made and patronage-made men including those of the lower classes.

Chapter 15

78.15.1

τῶν ἀγγελιαφόρων: These men may have been selected by Macrinus for help in the assassination of Caracalla because of influence that they might have had over the couriers, having once been in charge of them. For Ulpianus, as well as Julianus Nestor's possible role in the conspiracy, see n. at 78.4.3 above.

78.15.2: Dio somewhat begrudgingly admits that Macrinus was preliminarily welcomed by the citizens of Rome, and his report of public opinion seems to be reserved for the population of the capital. Dio even states later that the people mourned him when he died, leading one to believe that, though they may have been unhappy on account of his absence from Rome, they were either sufficiently appeased by him, or their hatred for Caracalla was so great as to throw any shortcomings of Macrinus into the shade, or even that he legitimately carried out measures that the public found reasonable and necessary.

78.15.3

τρυφερώτερόν πως ζῆν ἤρξατο: Dio partakes here in the negative literary tradition that surrounds Macrinus. The charge of living luxuriously is simply a stock image available intended to lower the perception of the character. Herodian and the *HA* also make the same charge against Macrinus. Herodian's chronology seems to differ from Dio's; in Herodian, it is only after the Parthian campaign that Macrinus made it to Antioch (4.15.9). Dio begins the description of the Parthian campaign. After he made it to Antioch, says Herodian, Macrinus grew his beard long and lived luxuriously, watching mime shows and other performing arts, all the while not carrying out the business of government. He wore eastern dress, and his behavior and dress were fully disapproved of by the soldiers (5.2.3-6). Similarly, the *HA* (*OM* 8.4) has Macrinus living in Antioch after the conflict with the Parthians, living luxuriously and giving the soldiers reason to find him unacceptable.

Ματερνιανόν: For Maternianus and his position under Caracalla, see n. at 78.4.2 above. That he and Datus, of whom we know very little, were put to death by Macrinus proves his allegiance to Caracalla, though it would be interesting to know how Macrinus justified his murder, since Caracalla was at least publicly honored after his death.

Chapter 16

78.16.2, Macrinus' titulature: Dio reports that upon his accession Macrinus took the names *Caesar*, *imperator*, and *Severus*, while adding to his own name the titles *Pius*, *Felix*, *Augustus*, and *proconsul*. Dio is also sure to report that he assumed this names without a vote taken by the senate. These titles are consistent with the epigraphic and numismatic evidence. It should be noted that the *HA* has Macrinus taking the names Antoninus and Pertinax as well, though these are not attested in inscriptions or coins (*OM*

2.1, 3.6, 11.2; at 11.2, however, the author does state that Macrinus *wanted* to have the Pertinax attached to his name, but the senate voted him *Pius* and *Felix*; for full citations regarding these two names, see Cuvuoto 1982: 335n1). Cuvuoto (1982: *passim*) has completed a study of Macrinus' titulature, and his findings can be briefly reported here. Upon his accession, Macrinus assumed a variety of names, and his complete title was: *Imperator Caesar Marcus Opellius Severus Macrinus Pius Felix Augustus*. As Dio reports here, he also took the title *proconsul* upon his accession, to which the inscriptions attest as well. He also later took the titles *pater patriae* and *pontifex maximus*. In 217 he carried the *tribunicia potestas* and the title *consul*, the latter on account of the *ornamenta consularia* that Caracalla had bestowed on him.

It should be noted that, although Macrinus clearly could not fool anyone into believing that he was the actual descendant of Septimius Severus, he made sure to connect himself with this hereditary dynasty by his adoption of the name Severus as well as the grant of the name Antoninus to his son Diadumenianus, who very clearly from the beginning of his reign was styled as his heir and whose status was advertised on inscriptions and coins, both imperial and provincial. This styling can particularly be seen on certain Roman and provincial issues that feature confronted busts of Macrinus and Diadumenianus or coins featuring a Macrinus bust on the obverse and a Diadumenianus bust on the reverse. Provincial coinage with confronted busts includes: Aegea (SNGFr 2347), Cibyra (SNGvA 3738), and Marcianopolis (Mouchmov 532, 535, 552, 559, 568). Provincial issues of the latter type include: Antioch (SGI 2982).

The titulature of Macrinus has been considered the best tool in attributing a chronology to his reign, but the timeline of his fourteen-month rule has remained vexed.

It has been thought that the titulature naming *PONTIF(ex) MAX(imus) TR(ibunica) P(otestate) CO(n)S(ul) P(ater) P(atriae)* refers to the first portion of his reign, namely April 11 – December 9, 217. *PONTIF(ex) MAX(imus) TR(ibunica) P(otestate) II CO(n)S(ul)* seems to refer to the period from December 10, 217 (when the *tribunica potestas* was traditionally renewed) to January 1, 218 (when the second consulship would have been taken up), but it could extend from December 10, 217 until the end of the reign of Macrinus. This leaves the title *PONTIF(ex) MAX(imus) TR(ibunica) P(otestate) II CO(n)S(ul) II P(ater) P(atriae)* (as well as the assumption of the title *VICTORIA PARTHICA*), the explanation of which has been part of a great debate regarding the dating of Macrinus' reign. For a full review of the arguments, see the overview in chapter 2 above.

ἐπιστεῖλαι: Are we to assume that Dio is here reporting the contents of Macrinus' first letter to the senate after his accession? Dio's disregard for chronology has already been seen above. He repeats very little of the letter, despite the fact that he was most likely present at its reading; on the contrary, both Herodian and the *HA* include the contents of fabricated letters in their respective accounts. Herodian's account (5.1) may, in fact, be a response to Dio's view of Macrinus, as it reads like an apology for his rule. Here Macrinus first praises his character and administrative background (also praised, to a certain extent in Dio); he explains the bad situation under Caracalla (in agreement with Dio). In it Macrinus also claims to have always had mildness and moderation (τὸ πραῶν καὶ μέτριον) (rejected, but suggested, by Dio, 78.15.4); he defends his decision to settle with the Parthians (criticized by Dio, 78.27, who claims that Macrinus did not fight on account of a natural Moorish cowardice); he defends his equestrian background

(insulted repeatedly by Dio); and finally, he critiques the form of aristocratic dynastic rule, citing Commodus and Caracalla as examples of its failure. It is only this last portion that causes some problems, for Macrinus clearly styled his own son Diadumenian as his hereditary heir. In assessing Herodian's version of the letter, it is difficult to know if Macrinus would have been so bold. It is possible that he wrote in a somewhat similar vein, for the senate at this point had no power over his accession and was forced to submit to the will of the army; further proof of his boldness can perhaps be seen in Dio's use of ἐτόλμησεν. The senate was simply rubber-stamping his right to rule, so such a letter can perhaps be seen as not out of bounds, although its form in Herodian could bespeak his own socio-political agenda.

The version of the letter included in the *HA* (*OM* 6.1-9) is of quite a different nature. The speech is centered on the unfortunate loss of Caracalla, and Macrinus poses himself as a temporary replacement as emperor (*cuius ego, patres conscripti, interim tutelam recepi*, 6.5). The speech also addresses honors bestowed on Diadumenian and Caracalla. The tone of the letter is one of deference to the senate, quite the opposite of Herodian's (and possibly Dio's) version. Barnes (1978: 55) suggests that there are "evident signs of fabrication," although the letter here does seem to contain some truthful aspects. While both the letters are for the most part fabrications, it is my feeling that Herodian's report comes closer to the truth, based on Dio's account as well as the relationship between emperor and senate at the time.

78.16.4

ὑπομνήματα: These "notebooks" (as translated by Cary) have been suggested to be the book written by Caracalla that is mentioned at 78.2.2 (see n. *ad loc.*). That these are

one and the same (or that these were even written by Caracalla) is conjecture at best, considering the mutilated nature of the passage. It does seem that Macrinus sent some document to the senate for perusal, which may have in fact helped his position if they contained any damning information against the slain emperor. Similarly, after Macrinus had been defeated, Elagabalus sent notebooks and letters of the soldiers and Macrinus to the senate in order that they might find him more detestable. Dio passes no judgment on the writings (79.2.1).

78.16.5

σύγκλητόν τε τότε τὴν βουλήν: As Talbert (1984: 495) explains, the formal Greek word for *senatus* is σύγκλητος, though the second and third century authors, especially Herodian, use the phraseology employed by Dio here, σύγκλητος βουλή. Other terms for *senatus* include βουλή, συνέδριον, and γερουσία. For the most part Dio uses these three terms and does not use the term σύγκλητος; this passage is the only instance where he uses the term σύγκλητος βουλή.

Chapter 17

78.17.1

εὐπατρίδης... ἀπεδείχθη: The preliminary honors voted to Diadumenianus were the rank of patrician and the titles *princeps iuventutis* and Caesar. According to *RIC* 4.2 Diadumenian 13-14, Diadumenian had imperial coinage in both gold and silver that bore one of two obverse legends: *M(arcus) OPEL(lius) DIADVMENIANVS CAES(ar)* or *M(arcus) OPEL(lius) ANT(oninus) DIADVMENIAN(us) CAES(ar)*. Six reverse types bore the legend *PRINC(ipi) IVENTVTIS* or some variation (101-112). In the *aes* coinage, he is always *CAES(ar)* as well, with some variation of the legends above. Two

different reverse types include the legend *PRINC(ipi) IVVENTVTIS S(enatus) C(onsulto)* (211-217). Macrinus, especially with the second type here bore the title *Antoninus*, was clearly attempting to connect himself and his family with the Antonine dynasty, and such an attempt could have a twofold effect. Among the soldiers, who still favored Caracalla, the name Antoninus would clearly show connection to his direct predecessor; among the people, who seem to have despised Caracalla, the name showed a connection to the Antonines of the second century, prior to the reign of Septimius Severus. This passage brings up questions of chronology, which is somewhat muddled by Dio in this section of this book, as has been previously noted. The following problem has arisen among scholars. Here, Dio reports that Diadumenianus received that titles patrician, *princeps iuventutis*, and Caesar by a vote in the senate. Later, in 78.19.1, while reporting the reaction of populace at Rome to the accession of Macrinus, Dio states that Diadumenian had been appointed Caesar by the soldiers, but in reality by Macrinus, when he was taken from Antioch to meet his father, presumably on the accession. At the end of 78.37, Dio reports two letters sent to the senate. In the second of the two letters, Macrinus named Diadumenian both Caesar and emperor, but he left out Antoninus, despite Diadumenian already having this name. This passage has caused confusion, because Dio has already stated that the first letter of Macrinus asked for these names for Diadumenian, and also that Diadumenian was named Caesar not by the senate but by the troops (or rather Macrinus). The final reference is 78.40.1; Dio reports that Diadumenian was captured at Zeugma, where he had previously been given the name Caesar.

τὴν... ἵπποδρομίαν: In 78.8.1 Dio mentions the games that were held in honor of Septimius Severus' *dies imperii* (see n. *ad loc*). Apparently a horse race in honor of

Septimius' birthday had already been set up as well, and since the birthday and Macrinus' accession coincided, Macrinus was given the opportunity to defer to his dynastic predecessor and show his respect for continuing that line.

78.17.3

τῆς τε γερουσίας καὶ τοῦ δήμου: Despite Dio's suggestion that the senate had the power to pass a condemnation of Caracalla, it seems highly unlikely that that body retained enough autonomous power to act outside of the emperor's command. On the other hand the people, though not passing an official measure themselves, had the power of public opinion, and it must have been the hope of Macrinus that they would condemn Caracalla and see his reign as a positive improvement over Caracalla's previous, chaotic one. In the chapter below (78.17.4-18.1), Dio conflates the two groups (senate and people) in order that he might take credit for some of the actions against Caracalla. For though he admits that the senate took no action out of fear of the soldiers in the city, he enumerates the actions of the people in Rome: they insulted him publicly; listed his terrible deeds and victims; compared him to previous awful rulers; asked for the horse race on his birthday be abolished; said all gold and silver statues of him should be abolished; and demanded that all informers who ever worked for Caracalla be punished immediately.

πολέμου αἰτιώτατον... γεγονέναι: Dio's report of Macrinus' comment that Caracalla was the main cause of the war with the Parthians demonstrates what Macrinus expressed officially to the senate (and presumably this idea was noised around Rome as well) that he was leading a war against the Parthians on account of his predecessor and was also in a position to correct the faults of his predecessor. His further comment, that

no one dared to make such a public statement, shows that Dio is revealing information, seemingly unfiltered, directly sent by letter from Macrinus himself.

Chapter 18

78.18.2: Despite this passage being an example of his negativity towards Caracalla, Dio is perhaps providing an insight into the manner by which Caracalla administered the government: he cared less about class or prestige than he did about securing the services of those who could serve him best. While Dio finds this course of action offensive, it is clearly in line with the policy of keeping a weak senate and elevating men (and women here) of lower rank to higher positions in government.

78.18.3

Μαρτιάλιον: Julius Martialis, the assassin of Caracalla, seems to have become popular in Rome on account of his actions. See 78.5.3 above. Dio here claims that the people wished to honor Martialis on account of his deed against Caracalla, disguising their wish by claiming the honor was on account of the similarity of his name with Mars; writing in Greek, however, Dio is forced to use the name Ares (Ἄρεα), thus eliminating the derivative connection. The date of this public celebration of Caracalla's death must be May 12, the date of the *ludi Martiales*, which allowed the crowd to draw the connection between the two names (Millar 1964: 164). By this date, then, the public was aware of the regime change and popular opinion was on Macrinus' side.

οὔτε τῷ Μακρίνῳ ὥς καὶ ἀχθόμενοί: Dio's report must here be coming very early in the reign of Macrinus, most likely prior to November 217 (and probably some time in April or May 217, judging by the opinions of Macrinus expressed). Macrinus seems to have enjoyed a positive reception from the people at Rome, and it seems not to

have been until after the Parthian campaign that the population there began to become restless and annoyed at his absence from the capital (see n. at 78.20.1).

78.18.4: This passage is yet another example of the importance of having an eyewitness account of a period. In one sentence Dio quickly sums up the feeling at Rome upon the accession of Macrinus: happiness at the death of a cruel master and the acceptance of anyone else to take his place. What is particularly notable is Dio's general description of the relationship between emperor and subject in this period. He boldly depicts the relationship as that of master to slave, no doubt reflecting the common feeling at that time in Rome. His own opinion is not left out, for he cannot allow an opportunity to mention Macrinus' low birth to pass. What this passage seems to include then is both a senatorial and popular opinion at Rome *ca.* April or May of 217.

78.18.5: In terms of the fiscal aspects of the reigns of Caracalla and Macrinus, one would hope for more specifics from Dio, though such information is rarely available in great detail from the ancient sources. It is clear, however, that Dio felt Caracalla's financial decisions to be foolish in general and damaging as well. Almost the entirety of book 77 is an extended complaint against Caracalla's insistence on spending huge amounts of money on the army (see chapter 1). More specifically, however, Dio mentions at 77.9.3-5 some of Caracalla's taxational measures, which included the demand of payments from senators and the inhabitants of certain cities. Dio appears to be making reference to this plan here, which Macrinus seems to have suspended. In that same passage Dio mentions the new taxes on emancipations and inheritances, as well as the extension of citizenship to all inhabitants of the empire, which he sees simply as a money-making measure. Judging by this passage, it does not seem that Dio is referencing the emancipation and

inheritance taxes here, and it would be adventurous to assume that Macrinus repealed them (he certainly did not repeal the citizenship measure, which would certainly have been almost impossible). Macrinus found himself in a difficult position, for though he was clearly facing an budgetary crisis, he was forced to carry out some actions to gain goodwill from those who felt slighted by his predecessor.

Chapter 19

78.19.1

τὸ τοῦ Ἀντωνίνου ὄνομα προσειληφότα: As noted above, Diadumenian was quickly given the name Antoninus; Dio's view is that the name was assumed in order to make the soldiers happy, and clearly Macrinus was hesitant to break with and eager to connect himself to the Severan dynasty and the Antonines before him, much the same way that Septimius Severus had done when he assumed power. The story is related at *HA*, *OM* 2.5 as well, and it is followed there by the reasons (*OM* 3) for Diadumenian assuming the name Antoninus. The story is a complete fabrication, and it states that a priestess of Caelestis at Carthage spoke, during the reign of Antoninus Pius, the name "Antoninus" eight times, which the *HA* biographer correctly interprets as eight *Antonini* coming to power over the empire. Diadumenian was the seventh to hold this title (Elagabalus would be the eighth). It also reports the soldiers desire to see someone bear the name Antoninus, as Dio reports here as well.

78.19.2

ἵνα ἄλλας ἐπτακοσίας καὶ πεντήκοντα αὐτοῖς δραχμὰς: The second of Macrinus' moves to win over the soldiers was to grant them a donative, which according to Dio was given in honor of his son; he will later throw a banquet under the pretext that

Diadumenian had been made *imperator*. The donative was most likely given very early in the reign, as was usual for one to coincide with an accession.

78.19.3

ὅτι πρότερον ἐν οὐδενὶ λόγῳ ἐπεποίηντο: Cary's translation of this phrase, that the people in Rome "previously... had held him in no esteem" more likely means that they didn't think about him at all; Macrinus, though having held the position of praetorian prefect prior to becoming emperor, never had held any position of great importance at Rome and how well known he was in Rome is up for debate.

Historiographically speaking, Dio begins to move along in his narrative here, which has centered on the perception of Macrinus at Rome (chapters 13-18), despite the emperor's presence in the East. Judging by the following chapters, however, this report from Dio is still from very early in Macrinus' reign.

78.19.5

οὐ γὰρ ἦν νόμιμον: Despite the fragmentary nature of this passage, Dio seems to be saying that the senate had no power to initiate an investigation, as it was the emperor's decision to undertake such an action. Dio clearly shows the lack of power that the senate held in this period. Talbert (1984: 168) raises the question of Dio's trustworthiness on this matter, but his doubts regarding Dio as a source for procedures in the senate seem to be misplaced, given Dio's presence in the senate at this time.

Chapter 20

78.20.1

ὁ δὲ δῆμος... μέγα ἀνεβόησεν: Despite an earlier lack of chronological grounding, here Dio conveniently provides a date for a turn in popular opinion against Macrinus.

This event took place September 14, the birthday of Diadumenianus, almost exactly four months since Macrinus had been declared emperor in the East. As of this date he had been totally absent from Rome, and it is clear from this passage that the urban population expected his presence by this time. The primary reason for his absence must have been the threats from Parthia, and to a lesser extent Armenia. But one must also take into consideration Macrinus' concern over the family of Julia Domna; she was clearly a powerful figure, and Macrinus was not able to deal with her as strongly as was necessary, especially given her status among the troops. Despite her suicide, the situation at Emesa must have made Macrinus wary.

78.20.3: Dio seems to betray his true intentions in reporting this incident of popular disapproval of Macrinus' absence from Rome. Instead of reporting why Macrinus was absent or even reporting his actions in the East first, Dio proceeds to report the ill will of the people of Rome. He even attributes to all men the power to recognize what is better and what is worse, and he offers this up as an excuse for further criticism of Macrinus' low birth. Is Dio correct in stating that the population of Rome didn't even consider Macrinus and Diadumenian going forward and acted as if they were dead? Though an impossible question to answer definitively, it seems as though Dio is actively seeking to cast the reign of Macrinus in a most negative light, an approach for which he subsequent preferment provides a rationale, and he betrays himself later when he states that Macrinus might have escaped the threat from Elagabalus had he simply returned to Rome and solidified his power there (78.39.3-4).

78.20.4

οἱ στρατιῶται κατεφρόνησαν αὐτοῦ: It is difficult to believe that the soldiers disapproved of Macrinus on account of his low birth, as Dio here suggests; nor does it seem possible that Dio had enough firsthand knowledge to make such a claim. Any unrest among the soldiers must have been the result of Caracalla's death, for they had become accustomed to receiving many favors under that emperor, that Macrinus wished to eliminate.

οἱ Περγαμηνοί: As Dio clearly states here, Caracalla bestowed honors upon Pergamum. Dio (77.15.6-7) and Herodian (4.8.3) claim that Caracalla traveled to Pergamum so that he could take part in the healing powers of the Asclepion; at Pergamum, he experienced such incubation treatment as much as he wanted. During such treatment, the patient would sleep in the temple precinct of the god (in the this case, in the Asclepion), and his dreams that occurred during the stay would then be interpreted. Caracalla was reportedly seeking treatment for his "secret ailments" (πικροῖς τισὶ φαντάσμασι) of both mind and body; rumor had it that he thought Severus and Geta were after him, armed with swords (Dio 77.15.3-5). He could find no cure for these by calling on the spirits Commodus and Severus. Caracalla also visited shrines of Apollo Grannus and Serapis (Dio 77.15.6). Whether it is evidence of hoping for a cure or actually finding one, Caracalla was emperor when the temple at Pergamum was rebuilt, and coins exist which show him sacrificing there. Moreover, on the way to Pergamum he survived a shipwreck and reportedly wrote a poem of thanks to Asclepius for his safety (Whittaker 1969v1: 415-416). A great deal of numismatic evidence for his visit to Pergamum is extant, and various reverse types issued under M. Kairē Attalus and Julius Anthimus show Caracalla honoring Asclepius (cf. Lorber 1985; Nollé 2003). *RIC IV*

(Caracalla 327) also cites a barbarous denarius with an obverse of Caracalla and a reverse showing Asclepius.

What did Macrinus' actions against the Pergamenians entail? Millar (1964: 164) terms it "a general loss of rights," and adds the historiographic note that Dio most likely learned of this loss of privilege during his *cura* of Pergamum and Smyrna in the following year. Burrell (2004: 292-293) tentatively suggests that Macrinus punished the Pergamenes by removing their status as *neocoros*. The argument is based on the lack of coin evidence attesting to Pergamum's status as such during Macrinus' reign. Though it may appear that a suspension of minting had been imposed, it can not be considered definite, as other major Asian cities showed irregularities in minting under Macrinus, including Amaseia, Ephesus, Smyrna, Philadelphia, Laodicea, and Perinthos. Furthermore, the cities that appear to have lost neocorate privileges under Macrinus had them restored under Elagabalus, suggesting that it was the minting cycle, and not Macrinus' policy, that kept the advertisement of *neocoros* off of their coinage during Macrinus' reign.

Chapter 21

78.21.1

τότε δὲ γράμμα... οὔτε ἐσέπεμψεν ἐς τὴν γερουσίαν: It has already been stated above (n. at 78.17.3) that the senate did not have the power to initiate an investigation into the informers who worked for Caracalla, so their desire for a list of them must have simply been so that they could make the names public. As Dio here states, Macrinus refused to send the list; if they did still exist (which is in doubt), Macrinus' refusal may have been to protect those whose names would have appeared. In

any case, it seems clear that Macrinus was happy to disregard the senate almost completely and to converse with them only when it suited his purposes.

78.21.2

τρεῖς δὲ δὴ τῶν βουλευτῶν... ἐκδήλους ἐποίησε: Did Macrinus actually know that these men acted as informers for Caracalla, or did he simply use it as a pretext for their punishment? Dio states that even at the time of the punishments there was no extant evidence of their false charges, since it had been destroyed by Caracalla. Macrinus may have wanted to purge the senate of such men, but the opportunity was there to rid himself of those sympathetic to Caracalla.

Μανίλιον: *PIR* M 128; *Albo* 347 (tentatively associated by Barbieri). The background of why Macrinus found him deserving of scorn is told at 78.22.1. He had come to the position of *praefectus alimentorum* by means of a false accusation of certain Flaccus; for this he was exiled to an island.

Σουλπίκιον Ἀρρηγιανόν: *PIR* S 708-9; he is here charged with making false accusations.

Βάσσον: *PIR* B 77, P 700. A victim of Sulpicius Arrenianus' false accusations, he had previously served as consul in 211 and is most likely the same Pomponius Bassus that Elagabalus killed in or around 220 (Dio 79.5.1, 4). Elagabalus charged him with being unhappy with the emperor's actions, but the reality was that Elagabalus wished to take his wife, Annia Faustina, in marriage, who the great-granddaughter of Marcus Aurelius. As the third wife of Elagabalus, Annia appeared briefly on imperial coinage by herself (*RIC* IV.2 Elagabalus 232-233) and also on the reverse of a double coin with Elagabalus (*RIC* IV.2 Elagabalus 206); there is also an example of a coin with a reverse showing

Elagabalus and Annia Faustina with clasped hands under the inscription *CONCORDIA* (*RIC* IV.2 Elagabalus 399).

Πομπωνίου: *PIR* P 707. C. Pomponius Bassus Terentianus had a long career beginning under Commodus, and he is mentioned here as having been the governor of either superior or inferior Moesia.

ὑπεστρατηγεί: This position is identified by *LSJ* (s.v. “ὑποστρατηγέτης”) as equivalent to the Latin *legatus*. Dio (62.23.6) also employs the verb to describe the position of L. Annius Vinicianus, the son-in-law of Corbulo during an uprising against Nero: γαμβρὸν Ἀννιον ὑποστρατηγοῦντά.

78.21.3

Λούκιος Πρισκιλλιανός: *PIR* L 392. Other than his exploits as a fighter of beasts, he had been adlected to the senate by Caracalla and served as governor of Achaia. As the others above, he had falsely charged many men under Caracalla and was rewarded for it. Like the others, he was punished by Macrinus by exile on an island.

Chapter 22

78.22.1

ὁ Φλάκκος τὴν τῶν τροφῶν διάδοσιν: The Flaccus named here is not otherwise known (*PIR* F 172). Dio reports that Flaccus replaced Manilius (see n. at 78.21.2 above) as supervisor of the “distribution of provisions,” which Carey (1927v9: 389n1) identifies as the position of *praefectus peregrinorum*, in charge of the distribution of funds in support of needy children. *PIR* says he was *praefectus alimentorum ut videtur*. The text is somewhat fragmentary here, but it appears that this distribution of funds was suspended under Macrinus. Such a hypothesis is possible, since it coincides

with the suspension of the distribution of gifts at games given by praetors (with exception of the games given in honor of Flora). Dio perhaps has included information on another measure of Macrinus meant to preserve the state's funds.

δικαιονόμοι οἱ τὴν Ἰταλίαν: Dio notes that the Macrinus returned to Marcus Aurelius' policy regarding judges in Italy, that they stop handing down judgments outside of the boundaries established by Marcus.

Δομίτιός τέ τις Φλῶρος: Domitius Florus had been an associate of Plautianus, and his career was apparently harmed by Plautianus' downfall. Although he was in line for an aedileship, his associations with Plautianus prevented his advancement under Seprimius Severus and Caracalla. He was finally able to gain the position of tribune of the plebs under Macrinus, through the advocacy of his friends. Dio here provides an interesting view into the political climate of the Severan period.

78.22.3-5: Here Dio details several provincial appointments that were somewhat bungled by Macrinus. Macrinus had originally chosen Asper to govern Asia, which had become disorderly; in doing so, however, Macrinus rejected Asper's request for retirement, which Asper had submitted to Caracalla. This rejection brought harsh remarks from Asper against Macrinus, and Macrinus acted as though Asper had made a second request for retirement and replaced him with Anicius Faustus. Because Faustus' first term was so short (less than one year), Macrinus allowed Faustus to retain the post for the following year. The favor towards Faustus, however, caused problems. Fronto (for his career, see following note) was in line for the governorship of Africa, but the people rejected him. Macrinus seems to have then sent him to Asia, but he could not take up the governorship there, since it had been offered to Faustus. To make up for the mistake, Macrinus offered

Fronto the salary that he would have received as governor (which Dio reckons at 1 million sesterces), but Fronto refused it, since he did not want the money but the governorship. Fronto later received the province from Elagabalus. For Dio, Macrinus' decisions in these matters most likely suggested that he was unable to handle the administrative role of the emperor.

78.22.5

Αύφιδίου Φρόντωνος: *PIR* A 1385. M. Aufidius Fronto was consul in 199, as *CIL* 06, 2270 (= *D* 04331) and 6, 1982 (= *CIL* 6, 1983) record, along with P. Cornelius Anullinus II. He was the son of C. Aufidius Victorinus (consul in 183, also recorded in *CIL* 6, 1982) and grandson by marriage of M. Cornelius Fronto, the famous orator and friend of Marcus Aurelius and Lucius Verus. The rest of his career is known only from this passage.

Σαρδαναπάλλου: Often Dio's name for Elagabalus; see n. at 78.34.4 below for others. Sardanapalus was the last king of Babylon. The reference apparently is to Elagabalus' ethnicity and most likely to oriental extravagance in general.

Chapter 23

78.23.1

ἡ δὲ Ἰουλία... ἐν τῇ Ἀντιοχείᾳ οὔσα: Dio previously reported that Julia Domna had been living at Antioch and was dealing with Caracalla's mail from this position (78.4). Dio's placement of this scene gives further evidence of his disregard for chronology; Herodian reports the death of Julia directly following upon the murder of Caracalla (Herod. 4.13.8). Dio's main concern is to report events from Rome, and he is here forced to backtrack and take into consideration events in the provinces. This method

would not always fail, but during a reign that had its headquarters in Antioch and other places in the East, it causes some difficulties in chronological sequence for the reader.

For it has already been shown that Dio covered April – September at Rome, whereas now he is reporting events that seem to have followed closely on the murder of Caracalla, which took place in April 217.

ἀποκατερῆσαι: The versions and timing of Julia Domna’s death differ in the accounts of Dio and Herodian (4.13.8), but both make reference to suicide by starvation by means of the verb ἀποκατερέω. Whittaker (1969v1: 453n2) points out that though this verb usually means “to commit suicide by starvation,” the Suda s.v.

“ἀποκατερῆσαντα” states that it can also mean suicide by hanging. Dio’s version here has Julia Domna put off suicide for a certain period of time in which she felt that she could bring about the overthrow of Macrinus by heaping abuse on him and rallying the troops against him. Herodian, on the other hand, barely takes notice of her death and reports it in just a few sentences, closely attached to the murder of Caracalla.

οὐχ ὅτι ἐκεῖνον ζῆν ἠθέλεν: There is a well established tradition that Julia hated Caracalla and preferred Geta instead. On the other hand, the negative literary tradition also existed that said Caracalla and Julia Domna were involved in a sexual relationship (*HA, Cc.* 10.1-4, though she is also called his stepmother in this passage, which only increases skepticism).

78.23.2

ἔπειθ’ ὥς οὔτε τι τῆς βασιλικῆς... ἡλλοιώθη: It seems that Macrinus was not in a position to punish Julia harshly or to kill her on account of her popularity among the troops. He decided to treat her kindly, but he could hardly have no longer perceived

her as a threat after he became emperor. The mistake may have been allowing her to keep about her part of the imperial guard, and the seeds of the revolt under Elagabalus may have been planted while she was still alive; in reality, however, it took many months for her relatives to set the revolt in motion, and by all accounts Julia was dead shortly after the murder of Caracalla.

78.23.3

Σεμιράμιδι καὶ τῇ Νιτώκριδι: Dio is very attuned to the ethnicity of Julia Domna and her family (compare his insistence on using the name “Sardanapalus” for Elagabalus below). Semiramis was a legendary Assyrian queen (sources for her include Herodotus and Diodorus Siculus); Nitocris was an Egyptian pharaoh, though Herodotus calls a certain Babylonian queen by this name, and the reference made here by Dio may be to the latter.

78.23.4

φοβηθεῖσα μὴ τοῦ τε ὀνόματος τοῦ τῆς Αὐγούστης στερηθῇ: It is perhaps more reasonable to assume that Julia was fearing simply for her life rather than a loss of title. In general Dio seems to paint a negative picture of the woman in this book, as she is depicted as more of a power hungry queen than a mother or private citizen. She had already withdrawn into private life to a certain extent earlier in the reign of her husband on account of Plautianus (see n. at 78.24.1 below), so it is somewhat difficult to believe that she could not have carried on a life away from the palace, as Dio suggests here.

78.23.5

ἐξελθεῖν ὅτι τάχιστα ἐκ τῆς Ἀντιοχείας αὐτήν: The intervening partial lacuna makes this statement difficult to interpret with complete accuracy, but the implication, as Williams (1902: 39) has observed, is that Macrinus had been allowing Julia Domna to carry on for some time at Antioch, most likely on account of being unsure of how to handle the situation. Once he finally forced her to leave from Antioch (still allowing her to go wherever she wished otherwise), Julia then committed herself to death. The date of death most likely was May, and not later than June, 217.

Chapter 24

78.24.1

περιαλγῶς πάνυ διὰ τὸν Πλαυτιανὸν ζήσασα: As has been mentioned above, Plautianus held a great amount of power under Severus, and Dio attests that he hated Julia Domna to a great extent. He was in the habit of treating her poorly, speaking badly of her to Septimius Severus, and investigating her conduct (75.15.6). Dio cites Plautianus as the reason that Julia took to a life of philosophy, in order that she might escape the abuse of that man (καὶ ἡ μὲν αὐτὴ τε φιλοσοφεῖν διὰ ταῦτ' ἤρξατο καὶ σοφισταῖς συνημέρουν, 75.15.7). Caracalla also did not get along well with Plautianus; one time, having been prevented by Severus from killing Plautianus, he pulled a few hairs from his beard and brought them to Julia and Plautilla, who were sitting together, and said “Have a look at your Plautianus!” (ἴδετε τὸν Πλαυτιανὸν ὑμῶν). Despite Plautilla’s shock, Julia was quite pleased to think him dead (Dio 76.4.4).

78.24.3

τό τε σῶμα αὐτῆς ἐς τὴν Ῥώμην ἀναχθὲν: As an “heir” to the Severan dynasty, Macrinus was forced to grant Julia a royal and honorific burial. She most likely

did not, however, undergo deification during the reign of Macrinus, but rather Severus Alexander probably bestowed the honor upon her (cf. the memorial issues minted during his reign, bearing an obverse veiled bust of Julia Domna with the inscription *DIVA IVLIA AUGUSTA*, *RIC* IV.2 Severus Alexander 715-716). The tomb of Gaius and Lucius, which must have been the mausoleum of Augustus; later Julia Maesa had the ashes of Julia and Geta moved to the “precinct of Antoninus” (ἐς τὸ τοῦ Ἀντωνίνου τεμένισμα), which is the mausoleum of Hadrian, where Caracalla had previously been buried (78.9.1, with note).

πρὸς τῆς Μαΐσης: Julia Maesa, *PIR* I 678. Julia Maesa was the grandmother of Elagabalus and Severus Alexander. Upon Macrinus’ accession she was forced to return to Emesa, though with her wealth intact. She seems to have immediately begun to plot Macrinus’ demise, and it was not long before Elagabalus was presented as the heir to Caracalla in the military camp. No doubt her wealth went a long way towards convincing the troops to revolt. Maesa is even seen as directly participating in the battle against Macrinus (see 78.38.4 below). She inherited many of the titles previously given to Julia Domna, including *mater castrorum et senatus* and *avia Aug(usti)*, as was appropriate to her relationship with Elagabalus. See Benario 1959 for her titulature.

Chapter 25

78.25.1

ἐν τῇ ἀγορᾷ τῇ βοαρία: The Forum Boarium was the cattle market of Rome and was located just south of the Forum Romanum. It was bounded on the west by the Tiber, on the southwest by the Circus Maximus, and on the northeast by the Velabrum. It was

part of the eleventh region of Augustus (with a portion extending into the eighth). See Platner & Ashby 1929: 224.

78.25.2

τό τε θέατρον τὸ κυνηγετικὸν: Platner & Ashby (1929: 496) identify this “hunting theater” as the Colosseum (Flavian Amphitheatre). They say that the conflagration occurred in 217 (citing this passage), though it is unclear from the passage in which year (217 or 218) Dio locates these omens pertaining to the fall of Macrinus. Technically speaking Dio is still in 217, for he has not yet discussed Macrinus’ Parthian campaign. On the other hand, he seems to regard Macrinus’ failure on this campaign as a reason for his downfall, which may be the reason for the reporting of negative omens at this point.

τῇ τῶν Ἡφαιστίων ἡμέρᾳ: The Vulcania, celebrated on August 23.

78.25.4

ἐν τῷ σταδίῳ: Platner & Ashby (1929: 496) state that after the fire that caused great destruction to the Colosseum, the gladiatorial shows were forced to be held at the stadium mentioned here, which they identify as the Stadium of Domitian. The gladiatorial games continued to be held here until 224; in this year Alexander Severus had completed repairs on the Colosseum that were begun by Elagabalus (*HA, Hel.* 17; *AS* 24; Platner & Ashby 1929: 6).

78.25.5

ὁ Τίβερις... πληθύσας ἔς τε τὴν ἀγορὰν: Dio reports a number of floods throughout his history, and no doubt the flooding of the Tiber was hardly a rare occurrence. Clearly the flooding of the Tiber is cited here as a negative omen, but such

an interpretation was not always the case. At 53.20.1, Dio reports that the Tiber flooded on the night when Octavian assumed the name Augustus, and the soothsayers took the flood to mean that Augustus would rule widely; on the other hand, in 22 BCE, when Augustus had refused the consulship (cf. *RG* 5, a flood of the Tiber, combined with pestilence and famine, forced the Romans to believe that the evils came upon them since Augustus was not consul (Dio 54.1.1-2). At 54.25.2, however, a flood of the Tiber is reported, again during the reign of Augustus, but in this case it is disregarded completely as any kind of omen, good or bad. These three examples, all occurring under the same emperor and given three different interpretations, are a clear exposition of Dio's fickleness in terms of signs and omens and show that any sign at any time could be interpreted according to the will of the viewer. For a full list citations of floods of the Tiber, see *Index Historicus* s.v. "Tiberis;" for a detailed account and study of Tiber floods as a whole, see Aldrete 2007.

γυνή... βλοσυρά καὶ ὑπέρογκος ὀφθειῖσά: Despite the enormous number of prodigies reported by Dio throughout, humans are not often involved beyond being the viewers of the omens; the *Index Historicus* (s.v. "prodigia, visa et spectra") lists only seven instances in which a specter or human is seen as being ominous. Curiously two of those seven instances occur in this book: the present example and the previous story of the man leading an ass up the Capitolium (78.7.4).

Chapter 26

78.26.1

πρὸς τοὺς βαρβάρους πόλεμον... καὶ στάσει δεινῶς ἐκακώθησαν:

Again, Dio puts the major themes of Macrinus' reign on display: concession to enemies

and unrest among the soldiers. Both are viewed as failings of Macrinus, despite the fact that he did not cause either of the problems, which were symptoms of the mismanagement of the empire under Caracalla. Macrinus was forced to deal with these problems, and he attempted to solve them through diplomacy and military reform, two areas that had been neglected but were much needed for the safety of the empire. He is harshly judged by Dio on account of his low birth, and Dio's lack of historical perspective is unfortunate.

78.26.2

τὸν Ἀρτάβανον σφόδρα... θυμούμενον: This anger of Artabanus is in reference to the treatment that he received at the hands of Caracalla in 216, when the emperor wished to marry Artabanus' daughter in order that he might unite the two powerful empires. Dio (78.1.1) clearly regards this wish of Caracalla as a pretext for war with the Parthians. Herodian considers the wedding a pretext as well, but records the amazing story of the great massacre of Parthians assembled for the wedding ceremony. Whittaker (1969v1: 434-435n1) suggests Herodian may have gotten his information from the *hypomnemata* reported at 78.16.4-5 above, but there is really not enough evidence from this badly mutilated passage to draw such a conclusion safely. In any case, one can agree with Whittaker's more sober conclusion that Artabanus had been expecting Roman support in an alliance against Vologaeses.

Dio finally turns to foreign affairs in these chapters, having covered Macrinus' accession, public opinion (both positive and negative over a five month span), and Macrinus' domestic policy actions, which included for the most part his appointments, upon which Dio has heaped great scorn. Chronologically speaking it is difficult to for the

reader to situate the action. It seems that the summer of 217 saw an incident with the Parthians (most likely the one at Nisibis), and during this period Macrinus was headquartered in Antioch and must have been gathering troops and raising support for himself against the attack from Artabanus and the Parthians. The chronology is not so easy to discern because of the different ways it is reported in the sources. Herodian reports the assassination in 4.13 of his history, and conflict with the Parthians follows quickly on its heels in 4.14; he even writes that Macrinus became emperor because of the Parthian threat: “Macrinus obtained the principate not so much through the love and loyalty of the soldiers as through necessity and the demands of the immediate situation” (Herod. 4.14.3, trans. Whittaker). Likewise in the *HA*, after announcing his accession to the senate, Macrinus immediately set out for battle with the Parthians (*OM* 2.1-2). There needs to be a more accurate reckoning of the chronology of the reign, though some disputes still remain. Most likely the Parthian threat had to be immediately dealt with and the battle at Nisibis probably occurred in May or June of 218. Perhaps there were later battles prior to the two sides entering into peace negotiations, which lasted until early 218. For a fuller explanation of the chronology of the reign, chapter 1.

Because he has conflated the accession of Macrinus and the attack by the Parthians, Herodian takes this opportunity to place a speech to the troops in the mouth of Macrinus (4.14.4-8). The contents of the speech are: 1) honor of Caracalla and the preservation of his memory; 2) the empire depends on your actions against the attacking enemy; 3) Roman discipline can defeat barbarian disorganization; 4) victory will bring glory. The passage is clearly ahistorical.

τὴν αἰτίαν τῶν γεγονότων ἐς τὸν Ταραύταν τρέπων: To lay blame on Caracalla for the outrages committed against the Parthians is a correct line of exculpation, but it hardly serves as a good defense. The statement by Dio is similar to that of Herodian: “Macrinus realized that the only reason Artabanus was putting up such a desperate fight and not giving in was because he thought he was fighting Antoninus” (4.15.6, trans. Whittaker). In Herodian’s version, however, Macrinus did not make his position as emperor known to Artabanus until after the battle at Nisibis, which he describes in great detail (see note at 78.26.5 below).

78.26.3

τὰ φρούρια αὐτὸν τάς τε πόλεις τὰς κατασκαφείσας ἀναστῆσαι:

The forts and demolished cities that Artabanus had demanded be restored must be the ones destroyed by Caracalla during his invasion of Parthian territory in the months prior to his assassination. Dio ([Xiph.] 78.1.2) mentions that Caracalla captured Arbela and dug up the royal tombs in the area.

78.26.4

τῇ τε γὰρ δυνάμει, ἣν πολλὴν ἠθροίκει: Herodian agrees that Artabanus came to battle with a huge army (σὺν μεγίστῳ πλήθει στρατοῦ, 4.15.1), which was made up of many archers and cavalry on both horses and camels with long spears.

τοῦ Μακρίνου ὡς καὶ παρὰ τὴν ἀξίαν αὐταρχοῦντος καταφρονῶν:

Dio’s insistence on insulting Macrinus’ low birth forces him to place the sentiment even in the mind of the Parthian leader. This bias can hardly have been a reason for Artabanus to engage in battle.

οὐδὲ καιρὸν οὐδένα διαβουλεύσασθαι ἔσχεν: This statement by Dio may show that he is more in accord with Herodian and the *HA* than his narrative suggests. He shows a sudden attack from the Parthians, suggesting that the attack occurred only a short time after Macrinus' accession.

78.26.5

πρὸς τὴν Νίσιβιν: The initial battle between Macrinus and Artabanus happened near to Nisibis, which was a city of great antiquity in Mesopotamia. During the Rome period it was a often changing hands between the Romans and Parthians. It was taken by Lucullus (Dio 35.6.7), Trajan (Dio 68.23, and Trajan later became "Parthicus" on account of it), and later subdued by Septimius Severus, who set up a headquarters there (Dio 75.2.3). Its position served as a Roman outpost near the borders of Parthian territory (see Smith, *Dictionary of Greek and Roman Geography* p. 440). While Dio includes almost no detail of the battle at Nisibis in his narrative, Herodian goes into great detail explaining the tactics used by both sides (4.15.1-5). He says that the battle lasted two whole days and that the result was unclear, each side thinking themselves the victor; only on the third day did Macrinus appeal to Artabanus, telling him that Caracalla was no longer emperor. That Artabanus did not know of Caracalla's assassination could only have been possible according to Herodian's timeline, which places the murder and the attack of the Parthians following one upon the other.

οἱ τε ὑπασπισταὶ καὶ οἱ σκευοφόροι: As per *LSJ*, shield bearers / armor bearers and baggage carriers / camp-followers.

78.26.7

τῇ τοῦ Μακρίνου φυγῇ: This sentence, which tells of the flight of Macrinus and its effect upon the army, seems to foreshadow Dio's assertion below (78.27.1) that Macrinus was a coward by nature, as was characteristic of a Moor (καὶ γὰρ Μαῦρος ὢν δεινῶς ἐδείμαιεν).

78.26.8

ἐν δὲ δὴ τῷ μετοπώρῳ τῷ τε χειμῶνι: Dio provides another clue as to the chronology here, that deliberations with the Parthians were taking place in the autumn and winter. The battle of Nisibis seems to have been fought by early summer 217, and as such leaves a large space for which it is unclear what either side was doing. Both sides would have most likely used the intervening period (late spring through most of the summer) to gather troops and/or support. With the inclusion of the phrase, "when Macrinus and Adventus became consuls," it is clear that negotiations extended into the beginning of 218, when those two men served as consuls.

Chapter 27

78.27.1

οὐκ ἐτόλμησε διαπολεμῆσαι: The entirety of 78.27 is extremely useful for its insights into the weakness of the Roman empire at the beginning of the third century. On account of the recklessness of Caracalla, the empire was being threatened by many foreign enemies, mostly concentrated in the East. Early in his reign (213), Caracalla set off on a lengthy military campaign that lasted more or less until his assassination in 217. He began in Germany on the Danube and eventually made his way east. The two biggest threats that he failed to deal with in an effective way were the Armenians and the Parthians. These threats were further compounded by Caracalla's management of the

army, which he preferred to favor with donatives rather than instill any sense of discipline; the army, which had grown in strength under Septimius Severus, became under Caracalla the most powerful political force in the Roman empire, far eclipsing the senate and the people at Rome. For a fuller explication of the conditions of the empire inherited by Macrinus, see chapter 1.

The Parthians caused Macrinus the most problems, not necessarily in terms of the difficulty of taking effective action against them in Mesopotamia, but because they hurt him very much from the standpoint of public relations. One effect is very obvious from this passage in Dio. Because of his low birth and background in Mauretania, Dio was constantly looking for Macrinus' shortcomings. Once he had compiled a catalogue of these shortcomings were manifest, it seemed obvious to Dio to associate them with one of the above defects. Dio's point of view could hardly have been an isolated reading of circumstances, and it is safe to suggest that he offers the majority senatorial view of Macrinus and his reign. The people of Rome need to be accounted for as well in our picture. Although they rejoiced at Caracalla's death and most likely would have been happy with anyone as his replacement, they soon grew angry and impatient on account of Macrinus' absence from the capital. No doubt this feeling was exacerbated by the fact that Antioch had served as the *de facto* capital of the empire since about 215 or so. Even so, our sources understood that Macrinus' overthrow could most likely have been averted by a swift return to Rome after the defeat of the Parthians. It is also clear from this passage that Dio was unwilling to see weakness in the empire emanating from any source other than the emperor, and he therefore attributes the embarrassment caused by concessions made to the Parthians to Macrinus' character.

ἔς πεντακισχιλίας μυριάδας τὸ σύμπαν ἀνάλωμα γενέσθαι: In addition to the 200 million sesterces that Dio reports here that Macrinus paid out to Artabanus, Herodian reports that the money accounted for the damages done by Caracalla and his men to the property in Parthia and that Macrinus was willing to hand over prisoners as well. To put that number into context, it is known that legionary infantry made HS 3600 per year (Campbell 1994: 20). In general Herodian reports that the agreement made between Macrinus and Artabanus depended on the Parthian realizing Caracalla had been killed and punished and that Macrinus was unhappy with his predecessors actions in Parthian territory. In fact, Macrinus wished to make friends with Artabanus, φίλῳ τε ἀντὶ ἐχθροῦ χρῆσθαι (4.15.6-9). In the letter of Macrinus to the senate, Herodian has the emperor explain the treaty in the following way: “Take the Parthian war; this was a very important war and critical for the entire Roman empire. But we have brought it to an end in two ways; by fighting bravely without giving way in the slightest and by signing a treaty with the great king which makes him into a faithful ally instead of a bitter enemy, after he had come against us with a large force” (5.1.4, trans. Whittaker). The *HA* (*OM* 8.3) is a little less positive: “Though defeated in the war which Antoninus had waged – for Artabanus exacted a cruel revenge for the death of his subjects – Macrinus, nevertheless, at first fought stoutly. But later he sent out envoys and sued for peace, which, now that Antoninus was slain, the Parthian granted readily” (trans. Magie).

78.27.2: Dio presents the conflict between Macrinus and Artabanus as ultimately winnable for the Roman side; the Parthian soldiers wished to return home and had no food supplies readily available. As usual, Dio paints the negative portrait of Macrinus’ actions, for it is impossible to think that Macrinus would have denied himself the victory

if he had actually considered it a possibility. He must have realized the impossibility of the situation; either the Roman forces must have been outmatched, or Macrinus would have not been able to sustain a Roman presence in the area.

To put the size of the payout in relative terms, Duncan-Jones (1994: 45, Table 3.7) estimates that the annual budget of the empire in 215 was between 1,462,000,000 and 1,613,000,000 sesterces. Thus, a payout of 200,000,000 sesterces would account for about 12-13% of the entire annual budget, which is clearly a large sum. Duncan-Jones' numbers are not definite, but since there is good information on the army spending, which makes up about 70% of the estimate, they can at least be accepted as a rough guide (Duncan-Jones 1994: 45-46). If the payout to the Parthians is taken at face value, the largeness of the sum suggests that the Romans truly were outmatched, and Macrinus, by settling, was making the best deal that he could have reached. If Macrinus did not inform the senate by letter of the arrangements made with the Parthians, can one take Dio's report of the value of the payout to Artabanus at face value? Herodian, however, places Macrinus' initial letter to the senate after he narrates the battle with the Parthians at Nisibis and the subsequent peace contract.

78.27.3

θυσίαι... ἐψηφίσθησαν καὶ τὸ ὄνομα τὸ Παρθικὸν ἐδόθη: The senate was already well conditioned under Caracalla to grant undeserved titles and celebrations (see n. at 78.1.2 above). For Macrinus' "victory," coins with the reverse inscription *VICT(ORIA) PART(HICA)* appeared in 218. The dating of these issues has been confused by the obverse inscription, which reads *TR(ibunica) P(otestate) II CO(n)S(ul) II*; Mattingly took this inscription to be the latest one of Macrinus' reign and thus dated

the issues to May – June 218, which of course was much later than the time Dio reports here. Clay (1980: 28-29), however, has shown that *TR(ibunica) P(otestate) II CO(n)S(ul) II* was actually the *first* titulature of 218, and that Macrinus later returned to the titulature *TR(ibunica) P(otestate) II CO(n)S(ul)* later in the year, which accords with what Dio reports here about Macrinus' doing away with Severus' use of *ornamenta consularia* in the numbering of consulships.

οὐ μὴν ἐδέξατο: The evidence suggests that Macrinus did in fact refuse the title *Parthicus*. No coins bear this title, and as Clay (1984: 29) notes, the mint at Rome expected the refusal, since it could have added the title immediately. One inscription bears this title *Parthicus* (*AE* 1964, 229). It seems that the inscription was made early in 218 (for it also bears the title *CO(n)S(ul) II*) before the refusal of the title *Parthicus* was public (Clay 1984: 29). It can also be noted that the inscription is a milestone from Mauretania Caesariensis and can reflect a local pride in Macrinus and an inopportune zeal to display the title as quickly as possible.

78.27.4

τὰ κατὰ τὸν Ἀρμένιον πολεμωθέντα... κατέστη: The kingdom of Armenia was variably a Roman or Parthian client state from the time of Lucullus and Pompey; rule of the kingdom often changed hands among rulers installed by either side. Caracalla came into conflict with the Armenians after he subdued the Osroeni, which seems to have taken place sometime in 214. At this time, Dio reports, the king of the Armenians was involved in strife with his sons; Caracalla wrote to him saying that he could help with his problems. When the king committed, Caracalla imprisoned him just as he had previously imprisoned Agbarus, king of the Osroeni (77.12.1-2). The

Armenians were angered by this action, and the unrest that began at that time seems to have extended until it was quelled by Macrinus, as Dio here describes. Caracalla had sent a force against the Armenians that was led by a certain Theocritus, an imperial freedman; the force was defeated (77.21.1). The king of the Armenians who was imprisoned seems to have been the father of Tiridates, with whom Macrinus here makes a pact. The story itself is quite confusing. Dio says that Caracalla treated the father of Tiridates the same way as Abgarus, which presumably means that he imprisoned him. On the other hand Dio explains that Tiridates went over to the king of Parthia (77.19.2). Caracalla demanded that Tiridates be returned to him by Vologaesius (77.19.1), and he finally was (77.21.1).

Yet another concession was made by Macrinus, presumably because his forces were stretched too thin to engage the Armenians directly following on the conclusion of peace with the Parthians, and he was most likely also unwilling to leave the Parthian border for fear of a breach in security there. The more positive view, however, is that Macrinus believed more in a policy of accord than one of subjugation and felt that, during this period of weakness (which he himself seems to have understood) alliances were better than perpetual enmities. Macrinus' conflict with the Armenians is briefly referenced at *HA, OM* 12.5.

78.27.5

οἱ τε Δάκοι... κομισάμενοι: While traveling from Germany to Greece in 214, Caracalla came into conflict with the Dacians on the Danube (*HA, Cc.* 5.4). The two sides came to a settlement at that time; Caracalla returned hostages and a treaty was signed (Dio 77.27.5). In the intervening years unrest may have sprung up among the

Dacians, and by Dio's report here there were still more hostages to be released, which had been taken as part of the previous treaty. It is unclear if the previous treaty had been broken, but it seems that the Dacians were exploiting the death of Caracalla and the present weakness of the empire. Bassett (1920: 38) thinks it probable that Macrinus and Diadumenian made a trip to the Danube prior to retiring to winter quarters in winter of 217/218. He bases his argument to a great extent on the numismatic evidence that is available from the provincial mints. For an assessment of this argument and a counter-argument for its improbability based on the evidence and chronology of the reign, see Appendix 2.

Chapter 28

78.28.1: Before getting into the real reasons for the unrest among the soldiers, Dio must spend time explaining their mental state, lack of training, and all-around laziness.

Despite Dio's focus on how the soldiers had been treated more indulgently than was appropriate by Caracalla and now influenced major policy decisions for the empire, several of the complaints of the army were legitimate. Caracalla had begun his campaign in 213 and had not returned to Rome before his assassination. After Caracalla's death, Macrinus was forced to keep the army ready for the Parthian invasion that was imminent. So, despite the overpay, frequent donatives, and special privileges (such as spending winters in houses instead of the usual winter quarters, as mentioned above), the army had in fact been worked hard and long over the previous five years.

78.28.2

τοῦ πολέμου ἕνεκα χειμάζοντες ἐν τῇ Συρίᾳ: Wintering in Syria was no doubt a security measure against an attack from the Parthians and shows that

international tension was still present, despite the ceasefire, even leading up to the peace agreement. Herodian, however, presents the other side of the coin, namely Macrinus' absence from Rome: "But he was wrong in not disbanding his army at once and posting every man home, and in not making for Rome himself where he was wanted and the people were continually calling for him in noisy demonstrations" (5.2.3, trans. Whittaker).

προσεπισχύρισεν: The main reason for the unrest among the soldiers was the removal of privileges that they had gained under Caracalla. Simply speaking, the measures put in place by Macrinus were for the maintenance of manpower and out of economic necessity.

78.28.3

ἔδοξεν... στρατηγικῶς... νουνεχόντως ὁ Μακρίνος πεποιηκέναι:

Macrinus' military reforms must have been considered to be necessary, for his actions are here complimented by Dio; even his tactics for bringing about the change are praised.

For Macrinus, however, the situation was truly impossible. He was attempting to reform the army, on which his power rested and which Caracalla had indulged to a degree of danger for the empire. The proposed reforms were as follows. For the soldiers currently serving in the army, no change was made regarding their status, service, or pay. On the other hand, all new recruits would be subject not to the terms of service under Caracalla but to those under Severus. The reforms of Severus seem reasonable overall. Severus had not been in the habit of depriving his soldiers of privileges; in fact, quite the opposite had taken place, for a great extension of privileges can be traced during his reign.

Herodian (3.8.4) goes into the greatest detail: Severus raised the standard of living of the

troops, gave them the right to wear gold rings, allowed the soldiers to live with their wives; consequently, he took away the austere and healthy lifestyle and introduced luxurious and soft living. According to E. Birley (1988: 21-22), the privilege of living with wives is commonly seen as the soldiers' ability to marry; furthermore, the following reforms can be confirmed. The soldiers received increased pay and "military friendly societies" were formed (cf. *CIL* 8, 2554; *Dig.* 47.22.1); marriage is in evidence from tombstones; gold rings are supported by the promotion to commissioned rank (called *candidati*). Birley does not necessarily see luxurious living from the other evidence, but he suggests that it may have been true in the capital or in other large cities. Finally it is worth noting here that Severus also reformed the praetorian guard, having basically replaced it with a new one which took its soldiers from the frontier legions (E. Birley 1988: 22; *HA, S* 17.5; Aurel. Vict. *Caes.* 20.1; Dio 75.2.5).

78.28.4

ἡσυχάσειν ἤλπισεν: Based on the new terms of service listed here, it seems that Dio's projection of Macrinus' intention is well founded. Considering the immense greed that is so often attributed to the army, it is easy to see why Macrinus thought his plan would work; the retention of all privileges for the currently enlisted does not seem, on the face of it, such that it would cause an uproar. But the soldiers must have been extremely loyal to their self-image and their comrades (or soon to be comrades); in any case, a feeling that privileges were going to be further reduced must have prevailed.

Chapter 29

78.29.2

ἀλλήλων συχνούς κατέκοψαν: This phrase seems to suggest that some violent unrest was occurring among the soldiers, but the chronology is unclear, for Dio pairs it with the assassination of Caracalla. The statement could also reflect Dio's negative opinion of the army at that time.

ὕφ' οὗ οὐδὲν ὅ τι οὐ κακὸν καὶ αἰσχρὸν ἐγένετο: Despite his extremely recent praise of Macrinus' handling of the military reforms, Dio returns to his hostility against the emperor, and, although he makes no mention of his low birth here, it was clearly one cause of his hatred towards Macrinus. To state that Macrinus was just like Elagabalus (τοιοῦτον ἕτερον ἐστήσαντο) is absurd, but it may reflect popular sentiment in Rome at the time. At the beginning of the reign, all people are reported, by both Dio and Herodian, to be overjoyed at Macrinus' accession; they were simply happy to have been rid of Caracalla. After a long absence from Rome, popular opinion had perhaps turned on Macrinus.

Chapter 30

78.30.1

ἡλίου τε γὰρ ἔκλειψις περιφανεστάτη: Bassett (1920: 66-68) leaves the date of the eclipse in doubt, but tentatively accepts Wirth's date of April 12, 218. Petrikovitz (1938: 105) regards this date as impossible and prefers a date of October 10, 218 and a chronological oversight on Dio's part. Some of the contention arises from Dio's use of the phrase ὑπὸ τὰς ἡμέρας ἐκείνας, which seems to mean "on that very day", that is May 15/16, 218. It is clear, however, that Dio was not recording these events in real time, and a mistake in chronology, especially during a recounting of the omens attendant to an event, is hardly unbelievable. There seem to be two options available. First, Dio

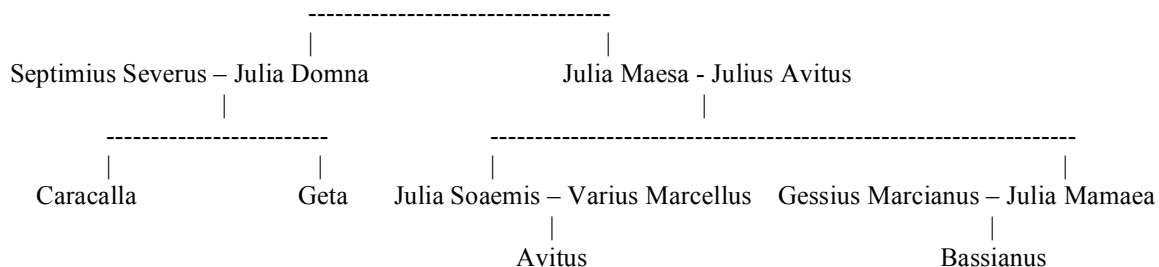
could have remembered an eclipse from that spring close to the date that he later heard was the first day of mutiny; otherwise, the eclipse could have occurred in October, the date when Macrinus, on the run for a long time according to another tradition, may have finally been captured (Whittaker 1969v2: 34n1). See n. at 78.40.2 below.

ἀμφὶ δ' ἑσάλπιγξεν μέγας οὐρανός, αἶε δὲ Ζεὺς: Hom. *Il.* 21.388.

78.30.2

ἡ **Μαῖσα**: On Maesa, see note at 78.24.3. According to Herodian's account, she had been sent back to Emesa, just as her sister Julia Domna had been ordered prior to committing suicide, by Macrinus, where she was permitted to live without any loss of property.

The family of Julia Domna can best be explained through the following family tree:



Ἰουλίου Ἀουίτου ἀνδρὸς ὑπατευκότος: *PIR* I 190. C. Julius Avitus

Alexianus was the husband of Julia Maesa; the father of Julia Soaemis and Julia Mamaea; and the grandfather of Elagabalus and Severus Alexander. The consulship that Dio here states he held was probably under Septimius Severus. Avitus hailed from Emesa and seems to have been of equestrian rank prior to his consulship. He died during the reign of Caracalla (see 78.34.4).

Οὐαρίου Μαρκέλλου: Sextus Varius Marcellus. His career is illuminated by the following inscriptions. *CIL* 10, 6569:

Sex(to) Vario Marcello / proc(uratori) aquar(um) c(entenario) proc(uratori) prov(inciae) Brit(anniae) CC proc(uratori) rationis / privat(ae) CCC vice praeff(ecto) pr(aetorio) et urbi functo / c(larissimo) v(iro) praeff(ecto) aerari(i) militaris leg(ato) leg(ionis) III Aug(ustae) / praesidi provinc(iae) Numidia / Iulia Soaemias Bassiana C(ai) f(ilia) cum fili(i)s / marito et patri amantissimo.

CIL 15, 7326:

Imp(eratorum) Sever(i) et Antonin(i) et G[[eta(e)]] Caes(aris) succur(a) Thrasia(e) / Prisc(i) co(n)s(ulis) c(larissimi) v(iri) et Vari Marcelli proc(uratoris) Augg(ustorum) / off(icin)ator Terentius Cassander.

Butler (1910: 41) thinks he held the position of *procurator aquarum* as early as 196, passed through the proceeding offices without interruption, finally entering the senate, and most likely dying around 217.

Ἀπαμείας: Apamea was a Syrian city by the Orontes; its name came from Apama, the wife of Seleucus I Nicator. In the Roman period, the fortress of Apamea was destroyed by Pompeius (Joseph. *Ant.* 14.3). When Syria revolted under the command of Q. Caecilius Bassus, the soldiers wintering at Apamea did not succumb until the arrival of Cassius (Dio 47.26-28; Joseph *BJ* 1.10). See Smith, *Dictionary of Greek and Roman Geography* 1.152.

78.30.3

Ἀουῖτον... Βασσιανόν: Dio and Herodian use different names for the two boys. In this passage, Avitus is the son of Soaemis and Varius Marcellus; Bassianus is the son of Julia Avita Mamaea (the younger) and Gessius Marcianus. In Herodian's account, Avitus is called Bassianus and Bassianus is called Alexianus. The son of Soaemis and Varius Marcellus was called Varius Avitus, and would become the emperor Elagabalus. Whittaker (1969v2: 18n2) suggests that rather than a mistake on Herodian's part, the

name Bassianus was used for Elagabalus in order to strengthen the connection between himself and Caracalla, whose name had originally been Bassianus (a name from Julia Domna's family) before it was changed to Marcus Aurelius Antoninus. Herodian points out the ages of the boys, fourteen and nine respectively, as the time of the uprising

Chapter 31

78.31.1

Εὐτυχιανός: Boissevain (3.348) suggests that Eutychianus seems to be the same man often referred to as Gannys, though this connection is far from certain. He appears in this passage, despite its fragmentary nature, to be the one who, at first, brought Elagabalus into camp at night (see note below). At 79.6.1 Dio identifies Gannys with the man who brought about the uprising, though that does not necessarily identify those two men as one and the same. See n. at 78.38.3 below.

78.31.3

Ταράυτου υἱὸν αὐτὸν μοιχίδιον εἶναι πλασάμενος: Julia Domna's Syrian family based the success of its overthrow of Macrinus on the assertion that Elagabalus was the actual son of Caracalla. This was clearly an important association to make, for Macrinus had explicitly connected himself to Severus and his son Diadumenian to Caracalla by giving him the name Antoninus. The importance of the move demonstrates the great power that still lay in the hands of the army, though it is difficult to discern whether the appearance of Elagabalus as the son of Caracalla or simply the unhappiness that the soldiers felt towards Macrinus was more important in determining Macrinus' fate. The idea is well summarized by Herodian: "After only one year of a life of ease as emperor it was obviously inevitable that Macrinus would lose the empire, and his life too,

whenever chance provided a small, trivial excuse for the soldiers to have their way” (5.3.1, trans. Whittaker). Herodian relates the same story regarding the attempt to call Elagabalus the true son of Caracalla (5.3.10) but adds in more detail. He claims that Maesa herself went about telling the soldiers that Caracalla had intercourse with her daughters while they were living in Rome in the royal palace; Whittaker (1969v2: 24n1) points out that Soaemis probably was in Rome at the time of Elagabalus’ birth, as per *AE* 1932, 70. Such a story calls to mind the rumor that Caracalla and Julia Domna had engaged in an incestuous affair (*HA*, *S* 21.7, *Cc.* 10.4; *Aur. Vict.* 21).

78.31.4

ἔς τε τὸ στρατόπεδον νυκτός... ἐσήγαγε: Dio seems to state here that Eutychianus brought Elagabalus into the camp at night without the knowledge of his mother or grandmother; Herodian (5.3.11) and the *HA* (*OM* 9.6), however, differs in their accounts, saying that the entire household accompanied them. The location of the camp seems to have been in Rhaphaneae; the legion is *legio III Gallica* (Herod. 5.3.9 with Whittaker note).

Chapter 32

78.32.2

ὄν Μάρκον Αὐρήλιον Ἀντωνῖνον ἤδη προσηγόρευον: The entire name is of course important for its link to Caracalla, but Herodian (5.3.12) stresses simply the name “Antoninus.” Elagabalus and his Syrian family actually trumped Macrinus’ attempt to style his own son in the same way; despite the clear familial break between Caracalla and Macrinus, the numismatic evidence bears out that fact that the most important title for Diadumenian to bear, even more so than his own name or the title

Caesar, was Antoninus (see chapter 3). Beginning in the first issue of Roman imperial coinage and throughout almost all of the provincial mints issuing coins in his name, Diadumenian is in almost every case Antoninus.

78.32.4

τὸν Φῆστον: The text is corrupt here; see Boissevain *ad loc.* for emendation suggestions. The previous freedman named Festus under Caracalla was the one who died at Ilium and was funeral games like those of Patroclus.

Chapter 34

78.34.2

Ἀλβανίους στρατιώτας: What Dio refers to here as the “Alban troops” is equivalent to *legio II Parthica*. This legion had been under Macrinus’ command at the time of Caracalla’s assassination and was therefore participating in the Parthian campaign of 217. The legion had been spent the winter of 217/218 at Apamea. *Legio II Parthia* (along with I and III) were established by Septimius Severus in 197; while I and III remained in Mesopotamia after Severus’ Parthian war, *legio II* was moved to the outskirts of Rome, situated on the Alban mount (hence the name used by Dio here) and served as both a police force in Rome and Italy and a reserve force that could be sent about the empire. By Dio’s account, which seems the most reasonable, Macrinus went with great speed (διὰ ταχέων ἦλθε) to this legion immediately upon hearing the news of Elagabalus; the date must be just a few days after the initial uprising of May 16. Herodian’s suggestion (5.4.2) that Macrinus stayed at Antioch and carried on living luxuriously must be discounted.

78.34.2-3: Macrinus' various measures to win over the Alban troops at Apamea included the elevation of Diadumenian to the position of *imperator* (as an alternative to the young Elagabalus?), a donative of 20,000 sesterces per soldier (with 4,000 each given on the spot), and the restoration of all privileges to all other soldiers that he had previously rescinded. The final gift given by Macrinus was an expensive dinner for the people of Apamea, perhaps on account of parts of Elagabalus' family hailing from there, though ostensibly in honor of Diadumenian's new title. In terms of the aforementioned military reform, the revolt under Elagabalus caused Macrinus to overturn every change that he had made and in a sense allowed the system under Caracalla to perpetuate itself (although it is unknown if Macrinus' plan would have been tenable in the long run). As for the elevation of Diadumenian, Dio is reporting the official bestowal of the titles of Augustus and Imperator on the boy, who was still only ten years old at the time. This title Augustus occurs on the Roman imperial coinage of Macrinus' fourth issue. From Diadumenian's provincial coinage, however, it is clear that many cities minting in his name had been including this title of αὐτοκράτωρ in their obverse legends prior to the official bestowal of the title.

78.34.4

τὴν <τοῦ> Ἰουλιανοῦ κεφαλὴν: As previously stated by Dio, Julianus had been at Rhaphaneae when the revolt occurred and had immediately attacked the camp; Dio suggests that he could have even been victorious there, but he held back instead (78.32.1). Petrikovitz (1938: 106) places this attack on May 16, which would allow ample time to get his forces together. As time passed, more of Julianus' soldiers defected (78.32.3), and he is revealed here to Macrinus as dead. Whittaker (1969v2: 29n2)

suggests that Julianus was able to flee Rhaphaneae and get to Apamea, where he was killed; but neither Dio nor Herodian (5.4.4) suggest this, for it seems in both accounts that the soldiers at Apamea had not yet revolt and the head must have been carried into the banquet by one of the soldiers from *legio III Gallica* at Rhaphaneae. Clearly, though, there must have been some prior knowledge of the soldier's intentions, for it is too bold to have been carried out by one soldier alone.

Ψευδαντωνίνου: In addition to Pseudantoninus, Dio refers to Elagabalus as Avitus, Assyrius, Sardanapalus, and Tiberinus (as in 79.1.1). Herodian (5.4.2) refers to him also as the “new Antoninus” (τὸν νέον Ἀντωνῖνον).

78.34.5

ἐς τὴν Ἀντιόχειαν κατὰ τάχος ἀνεκομίσθη: Whittaker (1969v2: 27n1) suggests that Macrinus made it back to Antioch from Apamea by May 27, judging the trip to last three days each way between the two cities; Petrikovitz (1938: 107) gives a date of May 23.

78.34.6

πολλαχόθι... ἐταράχθησαν: “there were disturbances in many places....” It would be interesting to know the extent of these disturbances, and Dio gives some indication in the following chapter, although this is confined to the somewhat immediate area of Egypt and Phoenicia. The extent can perhaps be gleaned by the description of Elagabalus' actions in the East after his accession (Dio 79.1-8).

Chapter 35

78.35.1

ὁ Βασιλιανός: Previously the governor of Egypt, Basilianus became praetorian prefect after the death of Julianus; his position and name, Julius Basilianus, have been preserved in an inscription from Egypt (*AE* 1905, 54).

Μάριος Σεκοῦνδος: *PIR* M 318. Marius Secundus is one of the few men who are mentioned as being adlected into the senate by Macrinus. Unfortunately no further information on him is known that might allow Macrinus' motivation for the adlection to be gleaned. Basilianus and Secundus seem to have led Egypt to hold out for Macrinus until the very end and held the upper hand until Macrinus' defeat.

Chapter 36

78.36.1

ὁ δὲ δὴ Μακρίνος ἔγραψε μὲν καὶ τῇ βουλῇ: Is this letter the same as the one mentioned in 78.37.5-6? Presumably in the letter that Dio refers to here Macrinus called his son *imperator* for the first time (as Dio relates in 78.37.6). There seem to be two letters regarding the titles for Diadumenian. The first letter sent by Macrinus to the senate upon his accession seems to have asked for the title patrician, Caesar, and *princeps iuventutis* (see n. at 78.17.1 above); in this letter Macrinus seems to have simply styled his son as *imperator*, having elevated him just recently to that status at the time of the revolt of Elagabalus. The senate must have approved this title, for it appears on the imperial coinage during Macrinus' fourth and final issue.

ἔγραψε δὲ καὶ τῷ Μαξίμῳ: Did the letter to Marius Maximus come after the revolt began? It appears to be so, judging from Dio's account here. If that is true, it perhaps can be helpful in dating Macrinus' military reforms and in explaining why the revolt under Elagabalus took place when it did. Macrinus would not have been in a

position to institute military reforms while the Parthian danger was present, so the reforms must be dated some time after the conclusion of peace, which is generally date to winter or early spring 218. If the military reforms followed, perhaps in March or April of that year, the Syrian conspirators may have seized on the opportunity to exploit the displeasure of the soldiers. In any case, Macrinus badly misjudged the soldiers' reaction to the reforms, not having guessed that such solidarity would exist between veterans and new recruits.

78.36.3

ἐς γὰρ ἐπτακισχιλίας μυριάδας ἑτησίους τὴν αὕξησιν: Dio here puts a number of increase in pay for the army instituted by Caracalla; Herodian (4.4.7) states that the increase was by 50%. Duncan-Jones (1994: 33-35) has shown that Dio's figure of 280 million sesterces must apply to only a portion of the entire army, which he states is the rank and file and not the officers. 280 million sesterces in 215 would have amounted to 17%-19% of the imperial budget, which is clearly a large number (based on the figures in Duncan-Jones 1994: 45, Table 3.7). It also helps us to understand how large the payout of 200 million sesterces to the Parthians was.

78.36.5

ἐφ' ᾧ δὴ Φούλουιος Διογενιανὸς ἐξεβόησεν ὅτι πάντες εὐξάμεθα:

Fulvius Diogenianus' comment here surely represents the anti-Macrinus faction of the senate. It is unclear, however, what these members of the senate would have wanted instead of Macrinus, for judging by his predecessor and successor, they were most well off with Macrinus. Dio, though given his other comments regarding Macrinus would seem to agree with this one, goes on to refer to the man as "not of sound mind." Not

much is known of this man; Barbieri (*Albo* 251) lists him only as “consolare nell’ estate del 218” based on this and the following passage.

Chapter 37

78.37.1-2: The unfortunate lacuna here is not filled in by Xiphilinus, who skipped down to the content of 78.38.2. In 78.36.5 - 78.37.1 Dio includes an anecdote about the ex-consul Fulvius Diogenianus, who publicly joked of wishing for Macrinus’ demise but was of unsound mind (σφόδρα δ’ οὐ φρενήρης). As can be seen below, the text picks back up with Elagabalus’ swift approach of Antioch. The mutilated text of 78.37.1-2 does not provide a great possibility for reconstruction, but perhaps dealt with Elagabalus’ preparations for his attack on Antioch or his effort to sway public opinion against Macrinus.

78.37.3

ἐν κώμῃ τινὶ τῶν Ἀντιοχέων: As Dio here points out, the first engagement between Macrinus and Elagabalus took place on the outskirts of Antioch, so it is clear that Elagabalus was moving his troops quickly towards Macrinus’ headquarters.

Elagabalus had under his control *legio II Parthica* (obtained at Apamea) and most likely *legio III Gallica*. On his side Macrinus seems to have been relying on the praetorian forces, who remained loyal most likely on account of their position in Antioch and Macrinus’ previous status as praetorian prefect. Cf. Herod. 5.4.6.

78.37.4

τῇ δὲ ἑαυτοῦ δειλίᾳ ἡττήθη: As expected in Dio’ mindset, Macrinus could not overcome his true nature and was defeated by his inborn cowardice (see n. at 78.27.1 above). As for τὸ δαιμόνιον making such an end clear to him, we can refer back to

78.25 and the listing of the omens attendant to Macrinus' downfall. Dio opens this chapter also claiming that Macrinus had been forewarned of his fall, but he recounts only omens occurring in Rome (except for the vague claim that they occurred not only in the city but throughout the entire world, 78.26.1).

78.37.5

περιστερὰ τις ἐπὶ εἰκόνα Σεουήρου: Such an omen could be read either positively or negatively; given Macrinus' defeat, however, Dio must take it negatively. He seems to suggest that Macrinus was wrong for taking the name of Severus, or that a "descendant" of Severus would bring about his downfall. The type of bird seems insignificant; it is a "common pigeon or dove; specifically, *Columba livia domestica*" (*LSJ* s.v. "περιστερὰ").

ὅπερ ἐν τῷ χρόνῳ τρόπον τινὰ ἤδη κατελέλυτο: Dio seems to suggest that convening the senate by an old and out of use custom also foreshadowed Macrinus' fall, though it may have been the contents of the letter which followed. In this letter, Macrinus seems to refer to Diadumenian as *imperator* without asking for it to be officially bestowed or including his name in the heading, as would have been proper. As it has been suggested above (see n. at 78.36.1), this letter seems to have been the one sent by Macrinus at the time of the revolt of Elagabalus and distinct from the one mentioned in the previous sentence, which was the first letter sent by Macrinus upon his succession.

78.38.1: As per Macrinus' letter, the senate declared war not only on Elagabalus, but also on his cousin, mother, and grandmother. Dio includes in this passage the ancient ritual of declaring war. Talbert (1984: 356) cites several instances of an enemy officially being

declared *hostis*, and goes on to include a number of rebels and usurpers declared *hostes* during the principate: Galba, Avidius Cassius, Septimius Severus, and Clodius Albinus.

78.38.2

τὴν ταπεινότητα καὶ τὴν μωρίαν αὐτοῦ πάντες κατέγνωμεν:

Ironically a declaration of war against Elagabalus comes with a condemnation of Macrinus and his actions, though the latter cannot be seen as official, but rather the opinion of certain senators at the time. It is unclear what they considered his “lowness” (ταπεινότητα), though it could be simply another reference to his low birth. As for his “folly” (μωρίαν), it can only be assumed they are referring in general to his handling of the situation with Elagabalus and the troops.

78.38.3

ἀπειρότατος τῶν στρατιωτικῶν ὦν καὶ ἐν τρυφῇ βεβιωκώς: PIR G

74. As noted above, Gannys could speculatively be the same man as Eutychianus, although *PIR* disagrees (and most likely should be followed). Using Boissevain’s reading of the fragmented passage, Dio repeats the charge of luxurious living against Gannys at 79.6.2-3. He also states that Gannys was raised by Maesa and was practically a husband to Soaemis (ὅτι συνῶκει τρόπον τινὰ αὐτῆς). Allegedly Elagabalus wanted to make him Caesar, but he decided to kill him instead, since Gannys was not allowing the emperor to live luxuriously (quite a contradiction considering Dio’s previous statements on Gannys’ lifestyle). Consequently, Gannys was murdered by Elagabalus himself.

78.38.4: Dio levels charges of cowardice on both sides. Herodian (5.4.7-8) makes no mention of the actions in battle of Maesa, Soaemis, and Elagabalus.

Chapter 39

78.39.1

ὁ μὲν οὕτως τῇ Ἰουνίου ὀγδόῃ ἡττηθεὶς: The date of June 8 still refers to the first engagement near Antioch and can be considered the official date for the end of Macrinus' reign, though he and Diadumenian would not die until a few months later.

τὸν μὲν υἱὸν πρὸς τὸν Ἀρτάβανον... ἔπεμψεν: That Macrinus sent his son Diadumenianus into the care of Artabanus in order that he might avoid death seems to suggest that Dio (and presumably the rest of the senate and the people at Rome as well) misunderstood the treaty between Macrinus and Artabanus that was made in winter 217/218. The treaty must not simply have been a ceasefire or tenuous peace agreement, but rather a pact that was meant to be enduring. Unfortunately for both sides, the Parthian empire was under serious attack from the Sassanids (see Debevoise 1938: 268-269, though the events are “shrouded in uncertainty”). Epagathus (*PIR* E 67), an imperial freedman, was put in charge of Diadumenian for his passage to Parthia. He had been favored by Caracalla and, according to Dio, was powerful and lawless (77.21.2). Under Severus Alexander, Epagathus was put to death; he had been thought to be responsible for the death of Ulpian. Dio states that he had to be sent to Egypt as governor (ostensibly) and then to Crete, where he was executed, in order to avoid complications at Rome (Dio 80.2.4).

78.39.2: Macrinus' flight is similarly described by Herodian (5.4.7-8): with shaved head and beard and wearing a dark robe, Macrinus took off by night. Herodian adds the interesting anecdote that Macrinus moved faster than the news of his defeat was traveling, which gives the impression that the uprising of Elagabalus had been contained

fairly well and the nature of the military situation was only otherwise known, outside of Syria and Mesopotamia, to the senate in Rome.

78.39.3: Macrinus' route went from Syria to Aegeae in Cilicia, through Cappadocia, Galatia, and Bithynia and up to Eribolon; as we learn below, he was unwilling to enter Nicomedia out of fear of the governor there. This route seems entirely plausible, for he made a passage from Eribolon to Chalcedon (opposite Byzantium) and could have traveled through Thrace and Macedonia and then on to Rome. Herodian (5.4.11) fairly well corroborates Dio's version, stating that Macrinus made it all the way to Byzantium before an adverse wind blew him back.

γνώμην ἔχων ἐς τὴν Ῥώμην ἀναδραμεῖν: Sentiment at Rome must have been strongly in favor of Macrinus for Dio to make such a concession. The public sentiment against the rebellion in favor of Elagabalus must have been great at the capital as well. A similar statement in Herodian can be compared (5.4.11): "The information has it that he was hurrying to Rome, confident of popular support for himself" (trans. Whittaker).

78.39.4

τοῦ Γάννου καὶ τοῦ Κωμάζοντος: Gannys has been discussed above (see n. at 78.31.1). Comazon (*PIR* V 42) is the other candidate for the identity of Eutychianus, the option which is followed in *PIR*, where his name is P. (M.?) Valerius Comazon Eutychianus. Along with Gannys he was the major conspirator in the elevation of Elagabalus and the overthrow of Macrinus, and he was rewarded by receiving the post of praetorian prefect under Elagabalus (Dio 79.4.1-2). He also later became consul and city prefect three times, an office which had never been given to one man three times prior.

78.39.5

Καϊκίλιον Ἀρίστωνα: As Dio notes here, Caecilius Aristo was the governor of Bithynia in 218. He is described in *CIL* 6, 31338a (= *CIL* 6, 36899) as a *clarissimus vir* and holder of the post of *curator operum publicorum*. Macrinus' fear of him must mean that he was a partisan of Caracalla and by extension most likely of Elagabalus. See *Albo* 94, 971 (the latter context with Barbieri's comment "Con probabilità orientale").

78.39.6

Αὐρηλίου Κέλσου: See *PIR* A 1479; ἑκατοντάρχης = centurion.

Chapter 40**78.40.2**

Μαρκιανοῦ Ταύρου: *PIR* M 211. Other than being the murderer of Macrinus, nothing else is known of this man.

τὸ σῶμα ἄταφον ἔμεινε: It was most likely several months before Macrinus was killed and probably several more until he was buried, which occurred after he had been seen by Elagabalus. The traditional date of Macrinus' fall is June 8, 217, though this date marks only his defeat in battle at the hands of Elagabalus, after which he fled and spent a certain period of time in flight. Elagabalus did not travel to Rome immediately upon his accession (Dio 79.1-8 describe his actions in the East), and Dio here suggests that Elagabalus was traveling to winter quarters in Bithynia when he saw Macrinus' body. Whittaker (1969v2: 34n1) suggests that Dio's mention of the eclipse at 78.30.1, which occurred on October 1, 218, may be a reference to Macrinus' actual death. The date of Diadumenian's death is uncertain; Dio states simply that it occurred after Macrinus' murder, but most likely it occurred at about the same time as his father's demise.

78.40.3: Reporting his death, Dio provides Macrinus with compliments similar to those mentioned in 78.11 regarding his integrity and capability as a leader and administrator.

Dio's only complaint though, made loudly and often, had to do with Macrinus' low birth, which made him unfit to be emperor. Macrinus may have been "cut" on the model of the ruler necessary for Rome at the time, though his social status and inability to effectively deal with the family of Julia Domna spelled out his demise.

78.40.4

Ζεὺς ὁ Βῆλος... ἔφη: Zeus Belus, previously referenced at 78.8.6, was worshipped in Apamea in Syria. Dio's statement may be evidence for Macrinus having made a trip there, but the type of evidence (reporting of an oracle) is not conclusive.

78.40.5: This section simply highlights the pathetic nature of Macrinus' situation as an emperor reduced to acting like a slave and held captive while holding power of the entire empire. Dio again paints a sympathetic portrait of the emperor momentarily, but he quickly reminds us of Macrinus' shortcomings.

78.41: This chapter constitutes Macrinus' necrology. Yet again, Dio cannot allow the compliments in 78.40.3 to go unconditioned and returns to his tiresome chant regarding Macrinus' social status. At the outset of the following book (79.2.6), the *damnatio* of Macrinus and Diadumenian is reported.

Appendix 2: Macrinus' trip to the Danube? The numismatic evidence reconsidered

In his 1920 thesis *Macrinus and Diadumenian*, Henry Bassett, following the lead of Gaebler (1904), makes a case for Macrinus traveling to the Danube region in order to settle some problems with the Dacians.²⁰⁸ Bassett traces a course for Macrinus and Diadumenian from Antioch in Syria to the lower Danube region using some inscriptional, but, for the most part, numismatic evidence from the eastern provinces. Bassett's assertions are based largely on four types of coins: coins of cities which have adopted the name "the city of Macrinus" (or some variation), neocorate coins, double coins showing both Macrinus and Diadumenian, and coins granting Diadumenian the title of *autokratōr*.²⁰⁹ The more recent work by Johnston (1983), which rebuts earlier attempts to trace Caracalla's path from 213-217 based on numismatic and other evidence, has shown the pitfalls associated with such an approach. Bassett's hypothesis has been rejected by other authorities, though a full rebuttal on the basis of the evidence has never been made.²¹⁰ It will be the purpose of this appendix to assess the relevant numismatic evidence for the proposed trip and to critique Bassett's argument.²¹¹

There is no direct literary evidence for the trip, though the following passage from Dio (78.27.4-5) provides the basis for Bassett's supposition:

Moreover, the warfare carried on against the Armenian king, to which I have referred, now came to an end, after Tiridates had accepted the crown sent him by Macrinus and

²⁰⁸ Gaebler focuses on the neocoric cities as evidence for an imperial visit; Bassett expands his study to include other indicators, as will be seen below.

²⁰⁹ Bassett (1920: 39-40): "Their progress seems to have been marked by the coins struck in their honor, and especially in honor of the prince, as they passed through."

²¹⁰ e.g. Magie (1950 [1975]: 1557n3): "the evidence for this journey is very slight."

²¹¹ I will briefly mention here the problems of chronology associated with such a trip; Bassett supposes that it occurred before the troops went to winter quarters for 217/218, which is almost impossible given the fact that peace was not made with the Parthians until some time in early 218. Macrinus would not have been in a position to leave the region of Syria and Mesopotamia with the threat of the Parthians still a possibility. Furthermore, Bassett's route seems strained geographically (see map and explanation below) and such a trip does not seem possible within a span of a few months.

received back his mother (whom Tarautas had imprisoned for eleven months) together with the booty captured in Armenia, and also entertained hopes of obtaining all the territory that his father had possessed in Cappadocia as well as the annual payment that had been made by the Romans. And the Dacians, after ravaging portions of Dacia and showing an eagerness for further war, now desisted, when they got back the hostages that Caracallus, under the name of an alliance, had taken from them.

(trans. Cary, Loeb Classical Library)

Bassett is interested only in the section regarding Dacia, and he proposes the trip despite Dio's lack of direct corroboration.; The absence of such support from any literary source (including Dio, Herodian, and the *HA*) should be noted. Bassett maps Macrinus' trip in the following way:

From Antioch to the Danube

Antioch: headquarters; Diadum. as *autokratōr*
 Aegeae: names itself *Makrinoupolitou*; double coin
 Tarsus: took name *Makreinianēs*
 Perga: Diadum. as *autokratōr*
 Cibyra: double coin
 Hieropolis: Diadum. as *autokratōr*
 Sardis: Diadum. as *autokratōr*; neocory
 Thyatira: Diadum. as *autokratōr*
 Cyzicus: Diadum. as *autokratōr*; neocory
 Beroe (Macedonia): Diadum. as *autokratōr*
 Edessa (Macedonia): Diadum. as *autokratōr*
 Traveled up Danube

Return trip

Nicopolis: many coins; rv. type of trophy with two prisoners; coin of Diad. with rv. of Macr. on horse
 Marcianopolis: many coins, incl. double coins
 Deultum: coin rev. with Diadum on horse
 Hadrianopolis: one coin of Diad
 Byzantium: two coins of Diad.
 Nicomedia: neocory
 Heraclea (Bithynia): Diadum as *autokratōr*
 Caesarea in Cappadocia: double coin
 Aegeae: see above

As is clear from this list, the evidence for an imperial visit to each city varies, with some cities seeming to offer good evidence of a possible imperial visit (such as Aegeae or Sardis) and others showing little reliable evidence (such as Deultum or Hadrianopolis).

Let us begin with the coins of cities that have taken the name of Macrinus; according to Bassett, the taking of the emperor's name required an imperial visit and

direct permission from the emperor to do so.²¹² Bassett cites two cities in Cilicia, Aegeae and Tarsus, that take the name of Macrinus. It needs to be stressed here that these cities were quick to take the name of an emperor, and we can compare the quotation from the relevant *BMC* volume: “In the number of names assumed at various times Aegeae rivals Anazarbus and Tarsus” (*BMC Cilicia*, cxiv). It will also be helpful to list the titles that each of the cities took. First, Aegeae:²¹³

Adrianōn (SNGvA 5453)
Komodianōn (*BMC Lycaonia*, etc. p. 23, #23)
Sevērianōn (SNGvA 5454)
Makreinoupo(leōn) (SNGvA 5455)
Alexandroupolis (SNGvA 5457)

Tarsus’ situation is similar:

Sabeina Sebastē Adri(anē) Tars(os) (SNGvA 5985)
Adrianēs (SNGvA 5988, 5992, 5994, 5998 cf. 5989, *Adrianōn*)
Komodeios (SNGvA 5995)
Adrian(ēs) Komodianēs (SNGvA 5996, cf. 5997)
Adri(anēs) Sevērianēs (SNGvA 5999, cf. 6000, 6001, 6002)
Antōnianēs Sevēr(ēs) Adri(ianēs) (SNGvA 6004, 6006, 6007, 6008, 6014-6019)
Makreinianēs (SNGvA 6020, 6021)

With such a use of imperial names, how significant is it that either city used the name of Macrinus? According to Bassett’s argument, it would be necessary to posit an imperial visit for each one of these names. Such an argument seems to overstate the importance of these names; contrary to Bassett’s argument, it is easier to imagine that the cities took the names hoping for imperial attention (including visits) on account of the rivalry that is well attested between these two cities. Furthermore, Bassett apparently did not come across another Cilician city taking the name of the emperor Macrinus for itself.²¹⁴ Yet a

²¹² Bassett (1920: 40): “We also find two cities that added epithets to their city names as a tribute to the new emperor and both of these lie on his probable route.”

²¹³ This list includes the names only of emperors; Aegeae also adopted the titles *Make(donikēs)* *Eugen(ous)* *Pistēs* *Theophilous* *Neokorou Aigaias* and *Nauarchidos*.

²¹⁴ Bassett (1920: 40): “These are the only cities [i.e. Aegeae and Tarsus] using such titles except Edessa in Mesopotamia, and there is some doubt as to the interpretation of that case.”

coin of Diadumenian from Adana (SNGCop 25) bears the reverse inscription *Makreinianōn Adaneōn*. This further example only strengthens the case for the adoption of such names as the product of a fierce rivalry between cities in this province for imperial favor, not an imperial visit.

The argument for the granting of neocories can be considered next. Coins that advertised a city's position as *neocoros* showed that it had been especially favored by an emperor. After receiving a neocory, the city was able to build and maintain a temple for the imperial cult. In this period the competition for gaining a neocory was intense.²¹⁵ Previously only the major cities of Asia Minor had received the honor, but the institution had been greatly expanded under Caracalla.²¹⁶ In opposition to Bassett, it has been argued that the granting of a neocory did not require the presence of the emperor.²¹⁷ Furthermore, it is not thought that Macrinus created any new neocories.²¹⁸ This idea, however, does not exactly make Macrinus' presence in such cities impossible, so that a further investigation into the neocories is essential. Burrell (2004: 292) cites six cities that claimed neocories under Macrinus and Diadumenian: Nicomedia, Cyzicus, Sardis, Anazarbus, Tarsus, and Caesarea in Cappadocia. Bassett only includes three of these cities: Cyzicus, Sardis, and Nicomedia.

Cyzicus had received its first neocory under Hadrian and its second under Caracalla, at some point during the latter's sole reign (*BMC Mysia* p. 54, #259-260;

²¹⁵ Sherwin-White (1973: 404) points out that the competition was in fact a political reality, which can be seen on coins of Pergamum that claim to be "first city to become thrice neokoros."

²¹⁶ Burrell 2004: 291

²¹⁷ Burrell (2004: 289): "Any assumption that equates an honor such as the neokoria granted to a city with the actual presence of the emperor within that city is not sufficiently nuanced.... Certainly the emperor's presence within an area made it more likely that the cities would receive benefits. But the emperor did not have to be in the city itself to give it gifts or to make it neokoros, as we have already noted."

²¹⁸ Burrell 2004: 292

SNGCop 126; SNGvA 1279). Burrell (2004: 95) suggests that Macrinus withdrew Cyzicus' second neocory, which had previously been granted by Caracalla, for only the title *neokoros* is published on coins of his reign (SNGvA 1279).

Several cities do not change their neocorate status during the transition from Caracalla to Macrinus. Under Macrinus, Sardis seems to have maintained its two neocories that were granted by the time of Antoninus Pius; under Caracalla the advertisement of a double neocory is still present (*BMC Lydia* p. 262-276, #158, 162-167, 214). Similarly, Nicomedia expresses its second neocory, received under Septimius Severus, on the coins of Macrinus: *Neikomodeōn Dis Neōkorōn* (SNGvA 7111).

Bassett missed the neocory of Caesarea in Cappadocia. This city received a neocory under Septimius Severus, which was shown on coins of Caracalla and then on those of Macrinus (SNGvA 6498). Bassett does include Caesarea on the itinerary, but his lack of knowledge on this point perhaps shows the imperfections of the collections he was using. Bassett also does not seem to have known of the neocories granted to two cities in Cilicia, Tarsus (SNGvA 6020) and Anazarbus (SNGvA 5483). He makes no mention of Tarsus' neocories, and he does not include Anazarbus on his itinerary. Tarsus received two neocories by the time of Commodus, while Anazarbus received neocories under Septimius Severus and under Caracalla and possibly Geta, both of which were advertised on coins under Macrinus. Since Bassett has included Tarsus on the itinerary already, it does not make much of a difference for his argument that the city was also a neocorate city; Anazarbus, on the other hand, requires us, by Bassett's criteria, to add another stop on an already crowded tour of Asia Minor.

Of the neocories under Macrinus listed above, there seems to be no evidence that Macrinus himself granted any new neocories (Burrell 2004: 292). The only changes that seem possible would be the removal of neocories by Macrinus, as may have been the case with Cyzicus (though this is far from certain). The loss of a neocory for Cyzicus has not been confirmed, and, even if it were, the event would hardly have merited an imperial visit (quite the opposite, in fact). What appears to be happening during the reign of Macrinus is that the cities assumed a continuation of their neocorate status, unless they were informed otherwise. The renewal of a neocory therefore does not seem to have required the presence of the emperor.

Next, consider the double coins. First and foremost, it must be asked whether or not these coins can carry such significance in and of themselves. The answer seems to lie in the minting traditions of the various cities; the appearance of double coins in the past would seem to suggest that such a coin simply appealed to the minting authority of that city, rather than announcing an imperial visit of some sort. Harl has previously pointed out the proliferation of such coins, which began not long before Macrinus became emperor.²¹⁹ It is also worth noting that the minting of double coins is not restricted to eastern provincial mints, but had occurred on the Roman imperial coinage as recently as in the reign of Septimius Severus. Since Septimius often used the double coin to advertise his family and heirs,²²⁰ it is perhaps not too speculative to think that provincial cities would have picked up on this idea for an emperor who clearly wished to advertise his dynastic intentions through his son Diadumenian.

²¹⁹ Harl (1987: 40): "Starting with the Severan age, many Greek cities stressed dynastic harmony and stability on large coins by portraying obverse portraits of members of the imperial family face to face."

²²⁰ E.g. confronted busts of Caracalla and Geta: *RIC* Severus 155, 174, 178A; of Julia Domna, Caracalla, and Geta: *RIC* Severus 159, 175, 181.

The largest number of double coins come from Marcianopolis in Moesia Inferior, which produces, along with Nicopolis ad Istrum of the same province, the greatest quantity of known coins from the reign of Macrinus and Diadumenian; this province provides over 350 total coin types from their reign, and more than seventy-five of them are these “double coins.”²²¹ It seems that Marcianopolis had a history of minting these types of coins with confronted busts on the obverse. Its first imperial coins do not show up until the reign of Commodus, and no coins exist from the reign of Severus. Under Caracalla minting resumes and the city mints two kinds of coins with confronting busts. The first shows Caracalla and his mother, Julia Domna (*BMC Thrace, etc.* p. 30-31, #17-24); the second shows Caracalla and Geta (*BMC Thrace, etc.* p. 31, #25-26).

The double coin of Caesarea in Cappadocia (SNGvA 6498=Sydenham 507) features the confronted busts of Macrinus and Diadumenian on the obverse, similar to the coins from Marcianopolis; the reverse advertises Caesarea as *mētropolis* as well as its status as neocoros. In the Severan period it is also possible to observe double coins, such as the double coin of Septimius and Caracalla (*BMC Galatia, etc.* p. 74, #277; Sydenham 437-438). These coins also bear a similar reverse inscription, with the title *mētropolis* and the honor of neocory. They are dated to the year 207 by the reverse inscription reading *Etous IE*. The differences between the coins are the metal (bronze and silver, respectively) and the design of the obverse. The coin of Macrinus and Diadumenian shows confronted busts, while that of Septimius and Caracalla shows jugate busts. For both Marcianopolis and Caesarea, the recent precedents under Septimius Severus suggest that the cities were attentive to the dynastic message of an emperor and perhaps felt that

²²¹ Bassett 1920: 8

the double coin was an acceptable and appropriate way to display the message; that the double coin occurs, however, does not necessarily suggest an imperial visit.

As for the double coins of Cibyra and Aegeae, no similar examples under the Severans have come to my attention as of yet, though at least for Cibyra some precedent can be seen. The British Museum catalogue shows double coins from Cibyra of Domitian and Domitia from the Flavian period (*BMC Phrygia* p. 138, #43-46). These coins do not show dynastic pretensions, but they at least display members of the imperial family. After Macrinus, Cibyra mints a double coin of Maximinus and Maximus (*BMC Phrygia* p. 144, #72), which shows attention paid to the dynastic intentions of Maximinus in much the same way as for Macrinus. As for Aegeae, no other double coins have come to my attention from other reigns. This city may have taken the idea from previous Roman imperial issues (as noted above), or its position in Cilicia may attest to its keen sense of competition with other cities of that province, with the double coin being a way to lure imperial favor. It is also worth keeping in mind the statement of Harl (1987: 51): “Cities in Roman Mesopotamia and Cilicia, close to the Parthian frontier, so consistently proclaimed the victory of the much-maligned Macrinus (217-8) that the ruling classes of these cities no doubt genuinely appreciated his peace with Parthia.”

Bassett’s final group of coins, those granting Diadumenian the title *autokratōr*, are the most problematic.²²² It is reported by Dio (78.34.1) that Macrinus gave this title to his son only very late in his reign, and the action seems to have been spurred on by the uprising of Elagabalus. On the basis of this dating, Diadumenian did not receive the titles of *imperator* and *Augustus* officially from the senate until some time in May 218, just

²²² This issue is also discussed in chapter 3.

about one month before his and Macrinus' downfall. On the Roman imperial coinage, the titles *imp(erator)* and *Aug(ustus)* appear only on the brief issue that Clay (1980: 22, 33) calls Issue 4. It is also clear, however, that several provincial cities granted Diadumenian the equivalent Greek title of *autokratōr* at a time that seems to precede the official granting of the title. It will be necessary to investigate where these coins occur and whether they carried any real significance regarding Macrinus' movements in the East.

Bassett (1920: 31) lists the cities that granted the title *autokratōr* to Diadumenian:²²³

Hieropolis (Bithynia?)	Edessa (Macedonia, a.k.a. Aegae)
Sardis	Heracleia (Bithynia)
Antioch (ad Orontes)	Thyatira
Beroe (Macedonia)	Cyzicus
Trapezus	Perga

Regarding the coins bearing the title of *autokratōr* for Diadumenian there are some problems. The significance of such coins is clearly unknown; they seem noteworthy in this instance because Macrinus' reign was so short and the chronology of it seems so exact. Therefore, inconsistencies are easy to discover. One of the difficulties in understanding why they included the title *autokratōr* is that it is impossible to understand fully the minting authority in each city, or to know exactly when these undated coins were minted. It should not be assumed that these coins bearing the title were minted between May and June 218, so it must be conceded that these cities added the title on their own without any "official" order coming down from the central Roman

²²³ Apart from Hieropolis, Sardis, and Antioch, which can be found in the relevant British Museum volumes, the coins from the other cities are naturally also from rather old publications: Mionnet (1807-1837), Leake (1856 & 1859), Imhoof-Blumer (1898), and Waddington (1904-1912). Johnston (1983) expresses some distrust of such volumes, and her concern is noted here.

government;²²⁴ that is hardly surprising, however, since the cities are generally thought to have a certain amount of autonomy in such matters.

Just how confusing the situation is can be seen from the coins of Antioch. Antioch supposedly served as Macrinus' headquarters for his fourteen month reign, and it was the site of a provincial mint and perhaps also an imperial mint (though the last point is unlikely, see Clay 1980). Knowing this, one would suppose that Antioch would carry a precise official message, but the coins do not bear that premise out. Diadumenian appears on several coin types from Antioch, including the *aes* coinage and the silver tetradrachms. On each of these types variation can be seen. On the *aes* coinage, Diadumenian is described as *Kai(sar) M(arkos) O(pellios) Di(adoumenianos) Antōninos Se(bastos?)* (*BMC Galatia, etc.* p. 201, #407-413, with some minor variations); #414 even explicitly reads *Aut(okratōr) K(aisar) M(arkos) O(pellios) D(iadoumenianos) Antō(ninos)*. On the silver coinage he is both *Kais(ar) M(arkos) Opel(lios) Antōninos* (Bellinger 41) and *Autokratōr K(aisar) M(arkos) Op(ellios) S(everos) Antōnino(s)* (*BMC Galatia, etc.* p. 201, #415). The bronze coinage is strange because it consistently refers to the boy as *Autokratōr* or *Sebastos*, though he would only have officially qualified for this title very late in Macrinus' reign, and it is not likely that all of these coins were minted from May 218 until the end of Macrinus' reign, since they comprise all the coins of Diadumenian from Antioch in the British Museum collection. The two tetradrachms,

²²⁴ Such a dating can be rejected from what is known of the Syrian tetradrachms that bear the title *autokratōr* (as in Hieropolis and Aradus), for Macrinus seems to have suspended the minting of these tetradrachms around September 217 (Clay 1980: 34). Since the tetradrachms were not minted at the outset of Elagabalus' reign, they had to have been suspended at some point during the reign of Macrinus. Bellinger's argument (1940: 7), that Macrinus continued minting these tetradrachms throughout his reign, therefore does not hold. Furthermore, as Walker (1978v3: 99) has argued, the suspension of the minting of Syrian tetradrachms would have gone hand in hand with Macrinus' suspension of the *antoninianus* early in his reign. This hypothesis cannot be proved conclusively, but all indications are that Macrinus suspended this highly debased currency early in his reign.

on the other hand, differ in their inscriptions, with the example from the British Museum naming the boy *Autokratōr*; if the hypothesis proposed above is accepted, then Macrinus suspended these tetradrachms early in his reign and these coins therefore prove that Antioch used the title *Autokratōr* for the boy prior to the official granting of it, though perhaps not on a consistent basis.

While it has been suggested that silver coinage in the East was under a governor's control (Weiss 2004: 59), such a suggestion still leaves the minting process unclear. The variation seen at Antioch seems to suggest that the governor did not have consistent direction coming from the emperor. The dating of these types can only be narrowed to the years 217-218, and there can be no knowing if one inscription preceded another. In a sense Antioch is a good test case for the other cities granting Diadumenian the title *autokratōr*; one might expect strict control in the emperor's headquarters, but none seems to be found. Bassett argues that the cities were granted permission by Macrinus to give Diadumenian this title, as the pair passed through each city on their way to the Danube region. Such a suggestion seems to accord too much of the emperor's attention to the coinage of a provincial city. If he was not even dictating the content of the coinage in his own headquarters, Antioch (as seems to have been the case), why would he go out of his way to do so in a town that he was simply passing through? What seems to be the case is that cities were either unsure of the boy's status or they were attempting to flatter Macrinus in order to receive some sort of honor. It is also true that Macrinus could have been advertising his son as his equal in the East prior to official approval by the Roman senate. However, the number of cities using this title for Diadumenian is only a small percentage of the total number of cities minting coins in his name.

There are also some problems with Bassett's citations. The first on his list of cities (p. 31) bearing the title *autokratōr* is Hieropolis in Galatia. He cites *BMC Galatia etc.*, p. 104, which, once followed, turns up no coins for Diadumenian; further inspection of the volume, however, turns up a tetradrachm from Hieropolis Cyrrhestica in Syria with an obverse inscription of *Aut(okratōr) K(aisar) M(arkos) Opel(lios) Antōninos* (*BMC Galatia, etc.* p. 145, #54; cf. Bellinger 107-108). Bassett has placed this city on his map (p. 42) somewhere between Cibyra and Sardis in Phrygia. This is clearly an impossibility.

Bassett also misses at least four other cities bearing the title *autokratōr* for Diadumenian. He should have included Aspendus, Tavium, Aradus, and Trapezus. Bassett included Trapezus on p. 31 of his study but not in his itinerary, presumably on account of the difficulty of explaining how Macrinus and Diadumenian made their way to the Black Sea coast of Anatolia. The point here is that given the current organization of provincial coinage, it is extremely hazardous to draw up such a specific journey strictly on the numismatic evidence, which in and of itself is not known for certain to convey any exact information regarding the emperor's whereabouts. In sum, there is simply not enough information regarding these coins to assume an imperial visit simply by the presence of a title that was not officially granted.

Several cities still need to be accounted for which were on Macrinus' route back to Antioch. The return trip is said to begin with a stop in Nicopolis ad Istrum. The coins from Nicopolis, in large number and with certain reverse types showing a trophy with prisoners, a coin of Diadumenian with a reverse of Macrinus riding on a horse, and two coins showing Macrinus riding in triumph, are simply not informative enough to judge

the emperor's presence there. As Bassett points out, the editors of the volume state that the trophy is a common type in Nicopolis.²²⁵ We can also follow Imhoof-Blumer (1898: 344n6) here, who states that the last examples, of Macrinus riding in triumph, do not actually show the presence of the emperor and are similar to those showing Septimius Severus' presence in Moesia after his Parthian war. It is also worth pointing out that Macrinus was voted honors of a Parthian victory by the senate (Dio 78.27.3), and although he turned down the title "Parthicus," coins were minted advertising his Parthian victory (*RIC* 4.2 Macrinus 49-50, 96-98, 163-166, 208-209). Roman imperial coins bearing the image of Macrinus riding in a quadriga also appear, which perhaps served as an inspiration for some of these coins (*RIC* 4.2 Macrinus 36, 152-153, 160-162).

Deultum, Hadrianopolis, and Byzantium show even weaker evidence. For Deultum, Bassett cites almost thirty coins in Cohen, some of which show either Macrinus or Diadumenian on horseback. Bassett seems to be suggesting (though he does not do so outright) that these represent a type of *adventus* coin. While it is true that types showing an equestrian emperor have been interpreted as celebrating the arrival of an emperor, these two coins are different. On one, Macrinus rides at a gallop (Cohen IV, Macrinus 167); on the other, the figure of Diadumenian rides at a gallop and tossing a javelin (Cohen IV, Diadumenian 36). These pictures differ slightly from the expected scene of *adventus*, "an equestrian *imperator* raising his right hand in an act of salutation" (Harl 1987: 53). Furthermore, Deultum could also be showing how it was influenced by the Roman imperial coinage, which had minted many *adventus* types under the Severans (e.g. *RIC* Severus 177, Caracalla 56, Geta 84).

²²⁵ Imhoof-Blumer 1898: 344-345. For trophy coins, see Imhoof-Blumer 1898, Macrinus no. 1711, Diadumenian no. 1822. Similar issues showing a trophy: Severus no. 1328, Caracalla no. 1560, 1581.

For Hadrianopolis the evidence is simply one coin in Leake (1856: 52).

Byzantium shows two coins of Diadumenian (BMC Thrace p. 104). For the last two cities, the argument can be countered by simply showing the number of cities that minted coins of Diadumenian that could not possibly all have been visited by Macrinus or his son.

Just as today, but perhaps then to an even greater extent, Bassett was hampered by the lack of a full study of the provincial coinage for the reign of Macrinus. Using the data available to him from various sources and collections, he pieced together an itinerary for Macrinus and Diadumenian to travel to the Danube region in order to deal with problems with the Dacians. So far, however, it has been possible to find five other cities (Anazarbus, Aspendus, Tavium, Aradus, and Trapezus) that should have been included on the itinerary if Bassett's criteria are followed. The inclusions of these cities makes for an even longer trip, one which would have taken up a great portion of the Macrinus' brief fourteen month reign. Although some cities could have been along the route, others (Trapezus in particular) would have taken Macrinus and Diadumenian far afield and could not reasonably have been part of such a trip.

More importantly, however, none of the numismatic evidence guarantees completely that Macrinus and Diadumenian set foot in most of the cities on the list; in fact, it is safe to say that only Antioch was definitely visited by the emperor, for it is known that that city served as his headquarters for his reign. Visits to all other cities are speculative. The rejection of the evidence of the neocorate coins removes three cities from the list; the dismissal of Bassett's argument regarding the double coins, which seem to be the product of tradition rather than imperial visit, eliminates four others. The

doubts regarding those bearing the title *autokratōr* for Diadumenian put another ten cities in jeopardy. Several other cities show even weaker evidence. In sum, then, Bassett's theory for Macrinus' trip to the Danube must be rejected completely, and the numismatic evidence needs to be reconsidered with respect to its place in the relationship between the emperor and cities.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Aldrete, G. 2007. *Floods of the Tiber in Ancient Rome*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins.
- Atkinson, K.M.T. 1970. "The education of the lawyer in ancient Rome." *South African Law Journal* 87: 31-59.
- Baharal, Drora. 1996. "The Emperor Marcus Opellius Macrinus and the *Gens Aurelia*." In Katzoff, Ranon, ed. *Classical Studies in Honor of David Sohlberg*. Ramat Gan: Bar Ilan University Press.
- _____. 1999. "The emperor Macrinus." In Dal Covolo, E. & G. Rinaldi, edd. *Gli imperatori Severi*. Roma: LAS.
- Barbieri, G. 1952. *L'albo Senatorio da Settimio Severo a Carino*. Rome: A. Signorelli.
- Barnes, T.D. 1967. "Hadrian and Lucius Verus." *JRS* 57: 65-70.
- _____. 1970. "The Lost *Kaisergeschichte* and the Latin Historical Tradition." *BHAC* 1968-69: 13-43.
- _____. 1972. "Ultimus Antoninorum." *BHAC* 1970: 53-74.
- _____. 1978. *Sources of the Historia Augusta*. Collection Latomus 155. Brussels.
- _____. 1984. "The composition of Cassius Dio's 'Roman History'." *Phoenix* 38: 240-255.
- Bassett, H.J. 1920. *Macrinus and Diadumenianus*. Diss. University of Michigan.
- Bellinger, A.R. 1940. *The Syrian tetradrachms of Caracalla and Macrinus*. New York: American Numismatic Society.
- Benario, H. 1959. "The Titulature of Julia Soaemias and Julia Mamaea: Two Notes." *TAPA* 90: 9-14.
- Bianchi, A. 1988. "Lucilla Augusta. Una rilettura della fonti." *MGR* 13: 129-144.
- Bird, H.W. 1994. *Aurelius Victor: De Caesaribus*. Trans., with introduction and commentary. Liverpool: Liverpool University Press.
- Birley, A.R. 1972. *Septimius Severus, The African Emperor*. New York: Doubleday & Co.

Birley, E. 1988. "Septimius Severus and the Roman Army." In his *The Roman Army: papers 1929-1986*. Amsterdam: J.G. Gieben. 21-40. (= *Epigraphische Studien* 8 [1969], 63-82).

Boissevain, U.P., ed. 1898. *Cassii Dionis Cocceiani Historiarum Romanarum Quae Supersunt*, vols. 1-3. Berlin: Weidmann.

Boteva, D. 1996a. "Legati Augusti pro praetore Maesiae Inferioris A.D. 193-217/8." *ZPE* 110: 239-247.

_____. 1996b. "On the *cursus honorum* of P. Fu... Pontianus (PIR2 F 496), provincial governor of Lower Moesia." *ZPE* 110: 248-252.

Bowersock, G.W. 1969. *Greek Sophists in the Roman Empire*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

_____. 1975. "Herodian and Elagabalus." *YCS* 24: 229-236.

_____. 1994. *Fiction as History: Nero to Julian*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Bowie, E.L. 1970. "Greeks and Their Past in the Second Sophistic." *Past & Present* 46: 3-41.

Bowman, A.K. 1967. "The crown tax in Roman Egypt." *BASP* 4: 59-67.

Burrell, B. 2004. *Neokoroi: Greek cities and Roman emperors*. Leiden: Brill.

Butcher, K. & M. Ponting. 1995. "Rome and the East: production of Roman provincial silver coinage for Caesarea in Cappadocia under Vespasian, AD 69-79." *OJA* 14: 63-77.

_____. 1997. "A study of the chemical composition of Roman silver coinage." *AJN* 9: 17-36.

Butler, O.F. 1910. "Studies in the life of Heliogabalus." In Sanders, H.A. *Roman History and Mythology*. London: Macmillan. 1-169.

Cameron, A. 1976. *Circus Factions*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Carson, R.A.G. 1990. *Coins of the Roman Empire*. New York: Routledge.

Cavuoto, P. 1982. "Nome e titoli di Macrino e Diadumeniano." *Ottava miscellanea greca e romana* 33: 335-350.

_____. 1983. *Macrino*. Naples: M. D'Auria.

- Chiha, H. 1963. "Les rares monnaies alexandrines de l'empereur Macrinus et de son fils Diaduménien." *RBN* 109: 5-10.
- Clay, C.L. 1979. "The Roman coinage of Macrinus and Diadumenian." *NZ* 93: 21-40.
- Cleve, R.L. 1982. *Severus Alexander and the Severan Women*. Diss. UCLA.
- _____. 1988. "Some Male Relatives of the Severan Women." *Historia* 37: 196-206.
- Cohen, H. 1806-1880. *Description Historique des Monnaies Frappées sous l'Empire Romain*. Paris.
- Commucci Biscardi, B.M. 1987. *Donne di rango e donne di popolo nell'età dei Severi*. Florence: Olschki.
- Cramer, F.H. 1954. *Astrology in Roman Law and Politics*. Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society.
- Crawford, M.H. 1983. "Roman imperial coin types and the formation of public opinion." In Brooke, C.N.L. et al., edd. *Studies in Numismatic Method Presented to Philip Grierson*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 47-64.
- Crook, J. 1955. *Consilium Principis*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Davis, G.R.C. 1939. Review of Passerini 1939. *JRS* 49: 255-256.
- Debevoise, N. 1938. *A Political History of Parthia*. Chicago: University of Chicago.
- de Blois, L. 2002. "Monetary policies, the soldiers' pay and the onset of crisis in the first half of the third century AD." In Erdkamp, P., ed. *The Roman Army and the Economy*. Amsterdam: J.C. Gieben.
- Domaszewski, A.v. 1902. "Untersuchungen zur römischen Kaisergeschichte." *RhM* 57: 506-516.
- _____. 1903. "Untersuchungen zur römischen Kaisergeschichte." *RhM* 58: 218-230.
- Downey, G. 1937. "Malalas on the history of Antioch." *TAPA* 68: 141-156.
- _____. 1961. *A History of Antioch in Syria*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Drinkwater, J.F. 2007. *The Alamanni and Rome 213-496*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Duncan-Jones, R. 1994. *Money and Government in the Roman Empire*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Eadie, J. 1996. "One hundred years of rebellion: the eastern army in politics, A.D. 175-272." In Kennedy, D.L., ed. *The Roman Army in the East*. *JRA Suppl.* 18. 136-151.

Edmondson, J.C. 1992. *Dio: The Julio-Claudians, Selections from Books 58-63 of the Roman History of Cassius Dio*. London: LACT.

Epigrafia e ordine senatorio = Atti del Colloquio internazionale AIEGL su epigrafia e ordine senatorio, Roma, 14-20 maggio 1981. Roma : Edizioni di storia e letteratura, 1982. Tituli; 4-5

Fefjer, J. 1992. "Divus Caracalla and Diva Julia Domna – a note." *Acta Hyperborea* 4: 207-219.

Fentress, E. 2006. "Romanizing the Berbers." *P&P* 190: 3-33.

Franke, P.R., W. Leschhorn, & A.U. Stylow. 1981. *Sammlung v. Aulock Index*. Berlin: Gebr. Mann.

Fuchs, H. 1974. "Drei römische Kaiser in Versen ihrer Untertanen." *MH* 31: 179-180.

Gaebler, H. 1904. "Zur Münzkunde Makedoniens. IV." *Zeitschrift für Numismatik* 24: 245-338.

Garstad, B. 2004. "Belus in the *Sacred History* of Euhemerus." *CPh* 99: 246-257.

Georgiadis, N. 1999. "A new coin of Macrinus (217-8) from Soli-Pompeiopolis in Cilicia." *NCirc* 107 (6): 175.

Gephardt, R. F. C. 1922. *C. Suetonii Tranquilli Vita Domitiani: Suetonius' Life of Domitian with Notes and Parallel Passages*. Diss. University of Pennsylvania.

Gibbon, E. 1926. *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* (ed. J.B. Bury, 2nd ed.). London: Methuen & Co., Ltd.

Gilliam, J.F. 1952. "The minimum subject to the *vicesima hereditatium*." *AJP* 73: 397-405.

_____. 1969. "On 'divi' under the Severi." In Bibauw, J., ed. *Hommages à M. Renard II*. Brussels: Latomus. 284-289.

Gilmore, P. 1978. "A tetradrachm of Macrinus from Byblus." *NCirc* 86: 478-479.

_____. 1979. "Two unrecorded tetradrachms from Syria." *NCirc* 78: 129.

_____. 1979. "Syrian *officinae* under Caracalla and Macrinus." *NCirc* 78 : 286-289.

- _____. 1987. "A tetradrachm of the emperor Diadumenian." *NCirc* 95: 5-6.
- Gough, M. 1952. "Anazarbus." *Anatolian Studies* 2: 85-150.
- Gozalbes, E. 1991. "La imagen de los mauri en Roma (siglos III-II a. d. C.)." *Latomus* 50: 38-55.
- Harl, K. 1987. *Civic Coins and Civic Politics in the Roman East, A.D. 180-275*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- _____. 1996. *Coinage in the Roman Economy*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Hay, J.S. 1911. *The Amazing Emperor Heliogabalus*. London: Macmillan & Co.
- Hohl, E. 1956. "Herod. und d. Sturz Plautians." *SDAW* 2: 33-46.
- Homo, L. 1962. *Roman Political Institutions*. New York: Barnes & Noble.
- Howe, L.L. 1942. *The Pretorian Prefect from Commodus to Diocletian*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.
- Howgego, C. 1992. "The supply and use of money in the Roman world 200 B.C. to A.D. 300." *JRS* 82: 1-31.
- _____. 1995. *Ancient History from Coins*. New York: Routledge.
- Howgego, C., V. Heuchert, & A. Burnett, edd. 2004. *Coinage and Identity in the Roman Provinces*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Imhoof-Blumer, F., ed. 1898. *Die antiken Münzen Nord-Griechenlands. Band I: Dacien und Moesien*. Rev. B. Pick. Berlin: Georg Reimer.
- Johnston, A. 1983. "Caracalla's path. The numismatic evidence." *Historia* 32: 58-76.
- Klauser, T. 1944. "Aurum coronarium." *MDAI* 59: 129-153.
- Klawans, Z.H. 1985. "False medallions of the emperor Macrinus." *NCirc* 93: 82-83.
- Kolb, F. 1972. *Literarische Beziehungen zwischen Cassius Dio, Herodian und der Historia Augusta*. Bonn: Habelt.
- Kuhoff, W. 1993. "Iulia Aug. mater Aug. n. et castrorum et senatus et patriae." *ZPE* 97: 259-271.

- Lawless, R. 1978. Romanization and Berber resistance in Mauretania Caesariensis (Western Algeria). *Actes du 2 Congrès internationale d'étude des civilisations méditerranéennes, II*: 161-167.
- Leake, W.M. 1856. *Numismata Hellenica*. London: John Murray.
- Le Bohec, Yann. 1994. *The Imperial Roman Army*. New York: Hippocrene.
- Leunissen, P.M.M. 1989. *Konsuln und Konsulare in der Zeit von Commodus bis Severus Alexander* (180-235 n. Chr.). Amsterdam: Gieben.
- Levick, B. 1969. "Caracalla's path." In J. Bibauw, ed. *Hommages à Marcel Renard. Coll. Latomus* 101: 426-46.
- _____. 2007. *Julia Domna: Syrian Empress*. New York: Routledge.
- Lorber, C.C. 1985. "Greek imperial coins and Roman propaganda. Some issues from the sole reign of Caracalla." *SAN* 16: 45-50.
- Lovenjak, M. 2004. "Die neuen Meilensteine von Celje (« Celeia », Noricum) aus den Jahren 161, 214 und 218 n. Chr." *ZPE* 146: 205-210.
- Lusnia, S. 1995. "Julia Domna's coinage and Severan dynastic propaganda." *Latomus* 54: 119-140.
- Mackenzie, D.C. 1949. *The Reign of Caracalla*. Diss. Princeton University.
- Mackie, N.K. 1983. "Augustan colonies in Mauretania." *Historia* 32: 332-358.
- Magie, D. 1950 [1975]. *Roman Rule in Asia Minor* (2 vols.). New York: Arno Press.
- Marasco, G. 1996. "L'ideologie imperiale de Macrin." *REA* 98: 187-195.
- _____. 1998. "Erodiano e la crisi dell'impero." *ANRW* II.34.4: 2837-2927.
- Mattingly, H. 1953. "The Reign of Macrinus." In Mylonas G. E. & Raymond D., edd. *Studies presented to D. M. Robinson on his seventieth birthday, II*. St. Louis: Washington University Press.
- Mattingly, H. 1950. *Coins of the Roman Empire in the British Museum*. Second edition prepared by R.A.G. Carson & P. V. Hill. 1975. London: British Museum Publications.
- Mattingly, H., E.A. Sydenham, et al. 1923-1994. *The Roman Imperial Coinage*. 10 vol. London.

Meckler, M. 1994. *Caracalla and his late-antique biographer: a historical commentary on the Vita Caracalli in the Historia Augusta*. Diss. Univ. of Michigan.

_____. 1999. "Caracalla the intellectual." In dal Covolo, E. & G. Rinaldi, edd. *Gli Imperatori Severi*. Rome: Biblioteca de Scienze Religiose. 39-46.

Melani, C. 1994. "Roma e le tribù della Mauretania Cesariense nel III sec. d. C.: una difficile convivenza." *Athenaeum* 82: 153-176.

Metcalf, W. 1979. "New and Noteworthy from Roman Alexandria: Pescenius Niger-Diadumenian." In Morkhol, O. & N.M. Waggoner, edd. *Greek Numismatics and Archaeology: Essays in Honor of Margaret Thompson*. Belgium: Wetteren. 173-182.

Millar, F. 1963. Review of Pflaum, *Les Carrieres Procuratoriennes Equestres sous le Haut-Empire Romain I-III*. *JRS* 53: 194-200.

_____. 1964. *A Study of Cassius Dio*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Milne, J.G. 1938. Review of Mattingly & Sydenham, *The Roman Imperial Coinage IV, i*. *JRS* 28: 96-98.

Mionnet, T. E. 1807-1837. *Description de Médailles antiques grecques et romaines*. 15 vols. Paris.

Mitford, T.B. 1980. "Cappadocia and Armenian Minor: historical setting of the *limes*." *ANRW* II.7.2: 1169-1228.

Mouchmov, N.A. 1912. *Ancient Coins of the Balkan Peninsula*.

Mouchová, B. 1983. "Zum literarischen Porträt des Opilius Macrinus in der Historia Augusta." *GLP* 10: 29-34.

Moscovich, M. J. 2004. "Cassius Dio's palace sources for the reign of Septimius Severus." *Historia* 53: 356-368.

Münsterberg, Rudolph. 1926. "Die römischen Kaisernamen der griechischen Münzen." *NZ* 59: 1-50.

Murison, C.L. 1999. *Rebellion and Reconstruction, Galba to Domitian: An Historical Commentary on Cassius Dio's Roman History Books 64-67 (A.D. 68-96)*. Atlanta: Scholars' Press.

Nollé, Johannes. 2003. "Caracallas Kur in Pergamon: Krankheit und Heilung eines römischen Kaisers im Spiegel der Münzen." *AW* 34: 409-417.

Oates, J. 1986. *Babylon* (rev. ed.). London: Thames on Hudson.

- Oliver, J.H. 1989. *Greek Constitutions of Early Roman Emperors from Inscriptions and Papyri*. Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society.
- Oost, S.I. 1958. "The death of the emperor Gordian III." *CPh* 53: 106-107.
- Palmer, R.E.A. 1997. *Rome and Carthage at Peace*. Stuttgart: Steiner.
- Pasoli, E. 1968. *Opilius Macrinus: introduzione, testo critico, traduzione, note*. Bologna: Pàtron.
- Passerini, A. 1939. *Le Coorti Pretorie*. Rome : Angelo Signorelli.
- Paul, G.M. 1984. *A Historical Commentary on Sallust's Bellum Iugurthinum*. Liverpool: Francis Cairns.
- Petrikovits, H. v. 1938. "Die Chronologie der Regierung Macrins." *Klio* 31: 103-107.
- Pintaudi, R. 1987. "Frammento di un documento con la damnatio memoriae di Macrinus e Diadumenianus." *Aegyptus* 67: 95-98.
- Platner, S. & T. Ashby. 1929. *A Topographical Dictionary of Ancient Rome*. London: Oxford University Press.
- Potter, D. 1990. *Prophecy and History in the Crisis of the Roman Empire*. Oxford: Clarendon.
- _____. 2004. *The Roman Empire at Bay, A.D. 180-395*. New York: Routledge.
- Raepsaet-Charlier, M.T. 1983. "A propos de Julia Soaemias, Aelia Gemellina et Vedia Phaedrina." *RIDA* 30: 185-192.
- Rankov, N. 1987. "M. Oclatinus Adventus in Britain." *Britannia* 18: 243-249.
- Reimar, H.S. 1750-1752. *Cassii Dionis Cocceiani Historiae Romanae Quae Supersunt*. 2 vols. Hamburg.
- Reinhold, M. 1988. *From Republic to Principate: An Historical Commentary on Cassius Dio's Roman History Books 49-52*. Atlanta: Scholars' Press.
- Rich, J.W. 1990. *Cassius Dio: The Augustan Settlement (Roman History 53-55.9)*. Warminster: Aris & Phillips.
- Riedl, N. 1999. "Eine neu entdeckte Meilensteingruppe in Nordwestjordanien." *ZPalV* 115: 45-48.

- Rodríguez Colmenero, A. u.a, 2004 *Miliarios e outras inscricións viarias romanas do noroeste Hispánico*. Santiago de Compostela.
- Roller, D.W. 2003. *The world of Juba II and Kleopatra Selene: royal scholarship on Rome's African frontier*. New York: Routledge.
- Roos, A.G. 1915. "Herodian's Method of Composition." *JRS* 5: 191-202.
- Rostovtzeff, M. 1957. *A Social and Economic History of the Roman Empire*, 2nd ed (revised by P.M. Fraser). 2 vols. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Roxan, M. 1973. "The auxilia of Mauretania Tingitana." *Latomus* 32: 838-855.
- Salway, R.W.B. 1997. "A fragment of Severan history." *Chiron* 27: 127-153.
- Salzmann, D. 1983. "Die Bildnisse des Macrinus." *JDAI* 98: 351-381.
- _____. 1989. "Macrinus mit Caracalla und Iulia Domna: zu einer Gemme im Kestner-Museum Hannover." *AA* 1989: 559-568.
- Šasel, J. 1986. "Pro salute Macrini (Šempeter bei Celeia)." *ZPE* 62: 263-266.
- M. H. Sayar. 2000. *Die Inschriften von Anazarbos und Umgebung I*. Inschriften griechischer Städte aus Kleinasien 56.
- Sear, D. 1988. *Roman Coins and Their Values*. London.
- Sherwin-White, A.N. 1973. *The Roman Citizenship*. 2nd ed. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Sidebottom, H. 1998. "Herodian's Historical Methods and Understanding of History." *ANRW* II.34.4: 2775-2836.
- Sijpesteijn, P.J. 1974. "Macrinus' *damnatio memoriae* und die Papyri." *ZPE* 13: 219-227.
- Smith, R.E. 1972. "The army reforms of Septimius Severus." *Historia* 21: 481-501.
- Sturtz, F.W. 1824-1825. *Cassii Dionis Cocceiani Historiae Romanae Quae Supersunt*. 8 vols. Leipzig.
- Sullivan, R.D. 1977. "The Dynasty of Emesa." *ANRW* II.8: 198-219.
- Sydenham, E.A. 1933 [1978]. *The Coinage of Caesarea in Cappadocia*. Suppl. by A.G. Malloy. New York: Attic Books.

- Syme, R. 1971. *Emperors and Biography: Studies in the Historia Augusta*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- _____. 1972. "The son of the emperor Macrinus." *Phoenix* 26: 275-291.
- _____. 1983. *Historia Augusta Papers*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Szaivert, W. 1992. "Der Aufbau der Münzprägung des Macrinus." *LVN* 4: 301-311.
- Talbert, R. 1984. *The Senate of Imperial Rome*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Verzone, P. 1957. "Città ellenistiche e romane dell'Asia Minore: Anazarbus." *Palladio* n.s. 7: 9-25.
- Waddington, W.H. 1904-1912. *Recueil Général des Monnaies Grecques D'Asia Mineure*. Paris: E. Leroux.
- Walker, D.R. 1976-1978. *Metrology of the Roman Silver Coinage*. 3 vols. Oxford: BAR.
- Wallinger, E. 1994. *Die Frauen in der Historia Augusta*. Wien: Österr. Ges. für Archäologie.
- Webster, G. 1969. *The Roman Imperial Army*. London: Adam & Charles Black.
- Weiss, P. 2004. "The Cities and Their Money." In Howgego, C., V. Heuchert, & A. Burnett, edd. *Coinage and Identity in the Roman Provinces*. Oxford: OUP. 57-68.
- Whittaker, C.R. 1969 (reprinted 1995). *Herodian I & II*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Williams, M.G. 1902. "Studies in the Lives of Roman Empresses: I. Julia Domna." *AJA* 6: 259-305.
- _____. 1904. "Studies in the Lives of Roman Empresses: II. Julia Mamaea." In Sanders, H.A. ed. *Roman Historical Studies and Institutions*. New York: Macmillan. 67-100.
- Wood, S. 1983. "A too-successful *damnatio memoriae*. Problems in third century Roman portraiture." *AJA* 87: 489-496.

CURRICULUM VITAE

Andrew G. Scott**Education**

Rutgers University, Ph.D. (Classics/Ancient History)	May 2008
--	----------

College of the Holy Cross, B.A. (Classics)	May 2002
--	----------

Teaching Experience and Related Employment

Rutgers University, Graduate Student / Teaching Assistant	2003-2008
---	-----------

Editorial assistant, <i>American Journal of Ancient History</i>	2004-2008
---	-----------

Publications

“Local consumption of Laconian black-figure pottery.” Proceedings of 2006
International Sparta Seminar. Forthcoming September 2008.

Broughton, T.R.S. 2007. *Autobiography*. Co-editor with T.C. Brennan, T.A. Broughton,
R. Fowler, K. Shea. *AJAH* 5 (2006 [2007]).