Change and discontinuity within the Severan dynasty: the case of Macrinus

Description

**Uniform Title**  Change and discontinuity within the Severan dynasty: the case of Macrinus

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**Subject**  Classics, Rome--History--Macrinus, 217-218 Macrinus, Emperor of Rome, 164-218

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**Description**  This dissertation examines the figure of Macrinus and his relationship to the Severan dynasty and the third century. As a usurper and non-aristocratic eques, 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.

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