

DAVID R. SEAR

Certificate of Authenticity

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This coin has been personally inspected and authenticated by

Issued to: Jens Georg Feierabend

On: February 8, 2018

David R. Sear

State: Roman Empire

Ruler: Macrinus (AD 217-218)

Denomination: orichalcum sestertius

Mint: Rome

Date: AD 217 (October-December)

Weight: 20.51 grams

Maximum Diameter: 32.10 millimeters

Die Axis: ↑

Obverse: IMP CAES M OPEL SEV MACRINVS AVG, laureate and cuirassed bust of Macrinus right, with beard of intermediate length.

Reverse: PONTIF MAX TR P COS P [P] around, S — C in field, Felicitas standing left, holding long caduceus and cornucopiae.

References: Clay (*The Roman Coinage of Macrinus and Diadumenian*), obv. die 2, rev. die 42 (*this coin cited*); RIC 139; BMC 120, note; Cohen 66; Sear (*RCTV II*) 7386.

Grade: a most handsome good VF, with beautifully toned natural orichalcum colour, striking-split in edge at 1 o'clock

Pedigree: ex collection of Friedrich Karl August, Prince of Waldeck and Pyrmont, 1763-1812 (Münzhandlung Basel Auction 3, 1935, lot 730).

Historical & Numismatic Note: Marcus Opellius Macrinus was born at Caesarea in Mauretania in AD 164 and is reputed to have had a most varied early career before becoming legal adviser to Plautianus, praetorian prefect under Septimius Severus from 197 to 205. In 212, he was himself appointed to the praetorian prefecture by Caracalla and in this capacity accompanied the emperor on the Parthian expedition of 216-17. He was implicated in the conspiracy which led to Caracalla's assassination on 8 April 217 and soon afterwards was hailed as emperor by the army. During his 14-month reign, spent entirely in the East, he had to face the wrath of the Parthians, provoked by his predecessor's treacherous behavior. Having concluded a somewhat ignominious peace, he was then confronted by a revolt engineered by the late emperor's aunt Julia Maesa, elder sister of Julia Domna. This led to Macrinus' overthrow and execution and the restoration of the Severan dynasty in the person of Maesa's grandson Elagabalus. In an effort to give some legitimacy to his regime, Macrinus had adopted the name of Severus and added it to his own, as attested by his coin inscriptions. He had also promoted his young son Diadumenian to the rank of Caesar and given him the additional name of Antoninus, but the unfortunate boy shared his father's fate following their defeat by the forces of Elagabalus. The regular coinage of Macrinus was all produced by the Rome mint, though the emperor never visited the capital during his reign. The first Roman emperor who had not previously been a senator, Macrinus' appearance was not well known in Rome and his early coin portraits are simply modifications of Caracalla's effigy. However, on receipt of the official portrait bust of the emperor the mint was able to render a more realistic likeness on the coinage with a much fuller beard. The existence of these two different portrait styles has led some cataloguers to attribute the latter type to the Syrian mint of Antioch. However, the style of the series is clearly uniform throughout and must be attributed to Rome in its entirety. The reverse inscription of this rare and handsome sestertius records the emperor's official titles, indicating that the coin was struck towards the close of AD 217. In reality, not being a senator Macrinus had never held the consulship prior to his accession. This embarrassing shortcoming was corrected by the granting of the *ornamenta consularia* and on January 1, 218, he became COS II. The reverse type depicts the goddess Felicitas, personifying happiness and prosperity, a frequent representation on the Imperial coinage from the second to the fourth century, the emperors always being anxious to advertise the benefits of their enlightened rule. This piece has an exceptionally interesting pedigree, having been sold in 1935 in a Münzhandlung Basel Auction as coming from the Waldeck Collection in the late 1700s, presumably that of Prince Friedrich Karl August, Prince of Waldeck and Pyrmont, 1763-1812.

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