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## Biographic Entries on the Governors of Arabia (c. 356–363 AD). An Attempt in Reconsideration of Libanius' Letters

*Biogramy namiestników Arabii (ok. 356–363 n.e.).  
Próba reinterpretacji listów retora Libaniasza<sup>1</sup>*

### ABSTRACT

The surviving sources provide very little detail on the governors of Arabia in Late Antiquity (AD 284–641). The best documented period is the late 350s and early 360s, for which most information comes from several letters of Libanius of Antioch; a number of writings by that renowned rhetorician are at the core of all present-day lists and biographical notes on the governors of Arabia in that period. A closer look at Libanius' letters, for all their

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ambiguity, does nevertheless invite a revision of the current state of knowledge, either through confirming earlier findings, or correcting and supplementing them.

**Key words:** Libanius, Arabia, province, governor

## INTRODUCTION

We are only aware of a measly group of slightly over ten persons from among the several hundred who served in the office of Governor of Arabia in the Byzantine era<sup>2</sup> (i.e. eleven governors from the 4th century, six from the 5th century, and four from the 6th century)<sup>3</sup>. Even in the case of the best documented 4th century, the sources cast most light on the period of 356–364. Our information come almost exclusively from the letters of the famous Antiochian rhetor, Libanius<sup>4</sup>. In his exceptionally extensive correspondence (1,544 letters extant today), we find twenty-five epistles addressed to governors of Arabia. These texts are written in an ambiguous language, filled with rhetorical devices<sup>5</sup>.

On the basis of such source material, Gottfried Sievers<sup>6</sup>, Otto Seeck<sup>7</sup> and Paul Petit<sup>8</sup> were able to develop biographical entries for various officials, including the Governors of Arabia. Their biographical entries were also featured in volume one of *Prosopography of the Later Roman Empire* (edited

<sup>2</sup> Assuming that an average term of office for a province governor lasted traditionally (never legally stipulated) between one and two years; cf. D. Slootjes, *The Governor and His Subjects in the Later Roman Empire*, Leiden–Boston 2006, p. 26.

<sup>3</sup> M. Sartre, *Trois études sur l'Arabie romaine et byzantine*, Bruxelles 1982, pp. 100–115.

<sup>4</sup> The most recent biographic entry on Libanius, alongside an exhaustive list of source editions and contemporary literature on the matter, cf. P. Janiszewski, *Libanios 1*, in: *Sofiści i retorzy greccy w cesarstwie rzymskim (I–VII w. n.e.)*. Słownik biograficzny, eds. P. Janiszewski, K. Stebnicka, E. Szabat, Warszawa 2011, pp. 290–294; *Libanius. A Critical Introduction*, ed. L. Van Hoof, Cambridge 2014.

<sup>5</sup> The most extensive edition of the letters, cf. *Libanii Opera*, ed. R. Foerster, vol. IX (*Prolegomena ad epistulas*), Lipsiae 1927 (reprint: Hildesheim 1963), pp. 49–241; cf. also commentaries to the translations to modern languages: Libanius, *Autobiography and Selected Letters*, vol. 1, ed. and transl. A.F. Norman, *Loeb Classical Library*, no. 478, Cambridge–London 1992, pp. 17–43; *Libanios. Lettres aux hommes de son temps*, choisies, traduites et commentées par B. Cabouret, Paris 2000, pp. 16–25; *Selected Letters of Libanius from the Age of Constantine and Julian*, transl., introd., notes S. Bradbury, Liverpool 2004, pp. 19–27; B. Cabouret, *Libanius' Letters*, in: *Libanius. A Critical*, pp. 143–159.

<sup>6</sup> G.R. Sievers, *Das Leben des Libanius*, Berlin 1868.

<sup>7</sup> O. Seeck, *Die Briefe des Libanius*, Leipzig 1906.

<sup>8</sup> P. Petit, *Les fonctionnaires dans l'oeuvre de Libanius. Analyse prosopographique*, Paris 1994; (the text prepared for publication by A. Chastagnol, on the basis of materials collected and edited by P. Petit between 1960 and 1970).

by A.H.M. Jones, J. Martindale, and J. Morris)<sup>9</sup>. Maurice Sartre developed and furnished with a commentary a particularly precise list of Governors of Arabia between the second and the 4th century AD, on the basis of various sources, including the writings by Libanius<sup>10</sup>. The works of all the above authors serve as the foundation for our current knowledge on the Governors of Arabia – every contemporary study has to inevitably refer to their findings. Such is the case in my article as well. I attempt to extend the biographical entries, encyclopedic in their nature, sharpen the image contained therein, and correct them, where necessary. I present the entries of the first four governors, as well as of a new one – Orion – absent from M. Sartre's list. Concurrently, I omit Ulpian, about whom I have written extensively in one of my earlier articles<sup>11</sup>. Each biographical entry presented below comprises in principle two sections, a paraphrase of Libanius' letter and my commentary. I consider such a solution to be optimal due to the equivocal character of the sources. I ordered the entries chronologically, and due to the fact that the chronology of persons serving in the office is based upon the dating of the letters, I adopted the findings of P. Petit, as they are the most recent<sup>12</sup>. In the entire text, I use the numbering of the letters established in the edition by Richard Foerster<sup>13</sup>.

#### ANDRONICUS<sup>14</sup>

At the turn of 356 and 357, Libanius sent a letter to a certain Andronicus (Ἀνδρονίκω). The letter concerned a sophist named Gaudentios<sup>15</sup>, a teacher working in a school of rhetoric run by Libanius in Antioch. Gaudentios

<sup>9</sup> The volume was published in Cambridge, in 1971, however it was based on the old research performed by Theodor Mommsen, never published due to the outbreak of both World Wars. *The Prosopography of the Later Roman Empire* [hereinafter: *PLRE*], vol. I, eds. A.H.M. Jones, J.R. Martindale, J. Morris, Cambridge 1971.

<sup>10</sup> M. Sartre, *Trois*, pp. 77–120 (for the period of 356–363, pp. 103–104).

<sup>11</sup> Cf. P. Filipczak, *Arabs in the Syrian City of Antioch as evidenced by Libanius*, 'Aram. Periodical' 2018, 30, pp. 569–579.

<sup>12</sup> P. Petit, *Les fonctionnaires*, passim.

<sup>13</sup> *Libanii Opera*, ed. R. Foerster, vol. X, *Epistulae 1–839*, Lipsiae 1921 (reprint: Hildesheim 1963) [hereinafter: *Libanius, Epistulae*] and vol. XI, *Epistulae 840–1544 una cum pseudepigraphis et Basilii cum Libanio commercio epistolico fragmenta*, Lipsiae 1922 (reprint: Hildesheim 1963) [hereinafter: *Libanius, Epistulae*].

<sup>14</sup> Biographical entries: O. Seeck, *Die Briefe*, Leipzig 1906, p. 75 [s.v. Andronicus III]; *PLRE*, vol. I, p. 64 [s.v. Andronicus 2]; M. Sartre, *Trois*, p. 103 [s.v. Andronicus]; P. Petit, *Les fonctionnaires*, 41 [s.v. Andronicus III].

<sup>15</sup> Cf. P. Janiszewski, *Gaudentios zwany Heortiosesem? [Γαυδέντιος Ἐόρτιος]*, in: *Sofisci*, pp. 203–205.

was an Arab – his entire clan also originated from Arabia (Ἀράβιος δὲ οὐτοσί καὶ ἔστιν αὐτῷ γένος ἐκεῖ)<sup>16</sup>. He was aware that Andronicus was Libanius' friend (γνοῦς οὖν ὡς εἴης μοι φίλος)<sup>17</sup>, that is why he wanted to take care of his issue through the latter as an intermediary, for the relatives of Gaudentios suffered from an entire lack of dignities (πενόμενοι παρὰ τὴν ἀξίαν)<sup>18</sup>, with two of them even ending up bankrupt<sup>19</sup>. In order to overturn their fates, it was enough for Andronicus to issue appropriate laws (λύσας δὲ αὐτοῖς τὸ κακὸν τοὺς νόμους τε βεβαιώσεις)<sup>20</sup>.

At no point does Libanius address Andronicus as Governor (such a situation will reoccur in the following letters). We infer his status from indirect data: the said dignities, if I understand correctly, mean offices and the appanages stemming therefrom, largely at the disposal of the governor of the province (perhaps it concerned the positions in his *officium*); executing and establishing the law in the province also constituted the prerogative of governors; lastly, the letter is indubitably 'set' in Arabia, for it was the place of origin of Gaudentios' family – it is the sole basis for the identification of the province governed by Andronicus. O. Seeck does not hesitate to refer to Andronicus as the President of Arabia (*praeses Arabiae*).

Nothing more do we know for certain. According to P. Petit '*respectueux de lois*'. O. Seeck on the basis of an account by the historian Zosimos<sup>21</sup> claims that Andronicus may have been a philosopher from Caria, sentenced to death in 372 because of (false) accusations of an attempted coup. This hypothesis is based on an obvious sharing of name and the chronology. Andronicus knew Greek, he had a Greek name, he was a friend of Libanius (I assume here that the phrase referring to friendship is not a mere polite expression, but does refer to the actual situation); hence, his origin in the Greek part of the Empire seems decisive. Meanwhile, the people of Caria besides their local languages used Greek, because of an old and numerous Greek community who lived there. All these pieces of circumstantial evidence render the thesis put forth by O. Seeck very plausible (P. Petit expresses his doubt as to the identity of both figures; however, he does not provide any arguments).

Between the lines, another piece of information can be read – in Arabia, much like in any other province of the Roman Empire, an administrative office guaranteed a relatively affluent life. It is for that reason that Libanius

<sup>16</sup> Libanius, *Epistulae*, 543, 1, 1–2.

<sup>17</sup> Libanius, *Epistulae*, 543, 1, 3.

<sup>18</sup> Libanius, *Epistulae*, 543, 1, 2–3.

<sup>19</sup> Libanius, *Epistulae*, 543, 1, 5–7.

<sup>20</sup> Libanius, *Epistulae*, 543, 2, 1–2.

<sup>21</sup> Zosime, *Histoire Nouvelle*, ed. and transl. F. Paschoud, vol. II, part 2, Paris 1979, IV, 15.

expected the Governor to grant dignities to the relatives of Gaudentios and sought a form of financial ‘getting even’ for the latter’s two relatives. And the final conclusion. Here we have a well-known and respected Antiochian rhetor hoping to push forward an issue with a Governor of Arabia, meaning it must have been possible for him to pressurize the official in order to attain a specific, private benefit. However, we know nothing of the decisions made by Andronicus.

### MAXIMUS<sup>22</sup>

In 357 and 358, Libanius wrote four letters to Maximus (Μαξίμου). In the first of those (*ep.* 320), he addresses Maximus as his friend (φίλον)<sup>23</sup>. He also asks whether Maximus would be able to return Arabia to prosperity, impoverished as it was because of those who appropriated the country’s riches and took them home (ἐγίγνωσκες δὲ ἄρα τὴν Ἀραβίαν εὐδαίμονα ποιεῖν πάνυ φαύλως ἔχουσιν ὑπὸ τῶν οἰκαδε τὰκείνης ἐλκόντων ἀγαθά)<sup>24</sup>. The addressee would get poorer in the office (τῆς ἀρχῆς) if he strove for glory rather than wealth<sup>25</sup>. And concludes his words with a request: a nephew of the rhetor Magnos, employed in Antioch, hopes to regain his wealth robbed by his uncles – his only chance is Maximus<sup>26</sup>.

We cannot be certain who Libanius had in mind, when he wrote in the opening of the letter about those who plundered Arabia, in the Spanish translation by González Gálvez we read of ‘*los gobernadores*’ – governors<sup>27</sup>. It is possible that he does indeed mean them, after all it was the governors who bore responsibility for the abuses of Roman administration in the provinces – in this case of Arabia, as directly indicated. Besides, only by ‘beating about the bush’ would Libanius be able to criticize the people in power without a risk. Therefore, it seems all the more likely that Maximus’ *arché* means quite simply his government of Arabia. Both O. Seeck and P. Petit use the title *praeses Arabiae*.

<sup>22</sup> Biographical entries: O. Seeck, *Die Briefe*, p. 207 [s.v. Maximus IV]; W. Ensslin, *Maximus 61*, in: *Paulys Real-Encyclopädie der classischen Aletertumwissenschaft*, vol. XV, part 1, 1931, Suppl. V, col. 671 [s.v. Maximus 61]; *PLRE*, vol. I, p. 582 [s.v. Maximus 14]; M. Sartre, *Trois*, p. 104 [s.v. Maximus]; P. Petit, *Les fonctionnaires*, p. 159 [s.v. Maximus IV]; P. Janiszewski, *Maksimos 7*, in: *Sofiści*, p. 313 [s.v. Maksimos 7].

<sup>23</sup> Libanius, *Epistulae*, 320, 1, 2.

<sup>24</sup> Libanius, *Epistulae*, 320, 2, 1–4.

<sup>25</sup> Libanius, *Epistulae*, 320, 2, 4–5.

<sup>26</sup> Libanius, *Epistulae*, 320, 3 and 4.

<sup>27</sup> *Libanio. Cartas. Libros I–V*, ed. and transl. A. González Gálvez, *Biblioteca Clásica Gredos*, vol. 336, location 4818, Kindle Edition 2005.

The portrait of Maximus is composed in clear opposition to that of those other governors – plunderers. Maximus is a law-abiding and just official (P. Petit speaks of ‘justice’ and ‘integrity’), that is why rhetor Magnos and his nephew seek assistance from him, through Libanius as their intermediary. For the time being, the questions remain unanswered whether this is a stylized, exaggerated picture, aimed at winning Maximus over, or whether this depiction is truthful. Once again, Libanius addresses him as his friend, providing himself with an alibi to ask Maximus for another favor.

In another letter (*ep.* 329), we return to the issue concerning Gaudentios of Arabia, the rhetor and associate of Libanius. This time, Libanius asks Maximus to cast a sympathetic eye (ιδεῖν ἠδέως) on the plight of the two relatives of Gaudentios<sup>28</sup>; to help them for he himself is a rhetor (ρήτορος), too<sup>29</sup>. Had he been appointed to the office for a reason other than his ability to use words, he could disregard rhetoric (καὶ γὰρ εἰ μὲν ἀπ’ ἄλλου του πρὸς τὸ ἄρχειν ἐληλύθει, ἴσως ἂν ἦν λόγος ἀμελοῦντι τῶν λόγων). As it is, he must protect those, who have mastered the thing that earned him his greatness, too (νῦν δέ, οὗτοι γὰρ σε τοσοῦτον ἔθηκαν, φαίνου σπουδάζων περὶ τοὺς κεκτημένους ὑφ’ οὗ γεγένησαι μέγας)<sup>30</sup>.

Adhering to the literal Greek text, as there are no reasons to act otherwise in that particular instance, we can ascertain that rhetorical skills were the thing that decided of being appointed to the office of a governor. It is a testament to the great role played by classical values in the selection of administrative staff during that period. According to O. Seeck and P. Petit, Maximus must have previously been an advocate.

Once again, we can observe the Governor under pressure of Libanius’ requests. In order to achieve his goal, the famous rhetor invoked what we would call today professional solidarity or particularism of a given social group, in this case – of rhetors.

In a subsequent letter (*ep.* 337), Libanius lobbies on behalf of the rhetor Tiberinus<sup>31</sup>, his associate. The matter concerns the rhetor’s son, Archelaus. He is active (ποιεῖ) among us (παρ’ ἡμῖν), writes Libanius, and hence in Antioch, but he is respected elsewhere, too; by serving (ὠφελῶν) our inhabitants, he celebrates his homeland<sup>32</sup>. Maximus should grant his help to the man – this way he would help the cities, both ours, writes Libanius, and the one the man hails from (ταῖς πόλεσι τῇ τε ἡμετέρα καὶ ἐξ ἧς ἐστίν)<sup>33</sup>.

<sup>28</sup> Libanius, *Epistulae*, 329, 1, 3–4.

<sup>29</sup> Libanius, *Epistulae*, 329, 2, 2–3.

<sup>30</sup> Libanius, *Epistulae*, 329, 3.

<sup>31</sup> P. Janiszewski, *Tiberinos 2*, in: *Sofisci*, p. 586 [s.v. Tiberinos 2].

<sup>32</sup> Libanius, *Epistulae*, 337, 1.

<sup>33</sup> Libanius, *Epistulae*, 337, 2.

We have no certainty as to what such an activity consisted in, or that of serving Antiochians while neglecting some other city. According to González Gálvez, the Archelaus living in Antioch was being forced to perform official duties elsewhere, maybe they even brought a case against him<sup>34</sup>. They might have intervened with the governor of the province, Maximus; therefore Libanius attempted to smooth the issue over with him. We do not know with what result.

In another letter (*ep.* 357), Libanius asks for help for the family of his friend and associate, the rhetor Uranius<sup>35</sup>. Even a minor gesture would help those underprivileged people in their relationships with the affluent (τοῖς ἀσθενέσι πρὸς τοὺς εὐπόρους)<sup>36</sup>. If he does not provide help to those who we consider to be worthy, his demeanor would not befit a Hellen (Εἶτε μὴ βοθηεῖς οἷς ἀξιούμεν, οὐχ Ἑλληνικὸν τοῦτο ποιεῖς)<sup>37</sup>.

We might be dealing here with the issue of legal protection of people of humble origins (in the legislation of the period referred to as *humiliores*) against the abuse perpetrated by the affluent and influential (*honestiores*). However, we are not familiar with any details, and the words of Libanius are not precise enough for us to form anything more than a mere hypothesis. Less wealthy citizens may have had more modest opportunities for action (like more limited *sportulae* handed to the officials), perhaps restricted opportunity of taking an office in the state administration. This is one way of explaining Libanius' request. Yet, had he meant the protection of the poor against the rich, there was a special clerk intended for the task (*defensor civitatis*)<sup>38</sup>. Would that mean that at that time Maximus held the latter office, and not the government of the province? Or maybe Libanius, not knowing the defensor, sent a letter to the only person in the province's authorities who he remained on friendly terms with, i.e. to Maximus? Does the Hellen refer here to a pagan, or a person who has received a classical upbringing and education?

In the opinion of M. Sartre, we ignore whether the letters 337 and 357 were addressed to Maximus during his term as the Governor of Arabia. Indeed, neither of the letters features an *expressis verbis* mention of Arabia. However, the case presented by Libanius in the letter 337 – of respecting civic duties towards one's hometown – was within the remit of provincial governors. Letter 338, according to P. Petit, was written in the year of 357, i.e.

<sup>34</sup> Libanio, *Cartas*, location 5810.

<sup>35</sup> P. Janiszewski, *Uranios*, in: *Sofiści*, pp. 588–589 [s.v. Uranios].

<sup>36</sup> Libanius, *Epistulae*, 357, 3 and 4.

<sup>37</sup> Libanius, *Epistulae*, 357, 1.

<sup>38</sup> Cf. R.M. Frakes, *Contra potentium iniurias: The Defensor Civitatis and Late Roman Justice*, München 2001, *passim* (mainly pp. 130–147).

at a time when Maximus did in fact govern Arabia in light of two previous epistles (320 and 329). The chronological coincidence suggests that also the letter 337 was addressed to the governor of the province. Meanwhile, letter 357 is dated to the year 358, which means that either Maximus was already serving in a different office, perhaps that of *defensor civitatis*; or that Maximus governed Arabia in the year 357 and 358, dealing with the issue (difficult to define precisely) of Uranius' family<sup>39</sup>. The second option, in my opinion, seems more probable. All four letters share not only the time when they were composed, but also the same main motif – assistance of the closest family of three rhetors and friends to Libanius: Gaudentius, Tiberinus, Uranius. Thus, it was a 'series' of letters sent almost at the same instant, addressed to the same official, pertaining to very similar matters.

The recent research on Libanius' vocabulary, presented by I. Sandwell, prove that as opposed to Christian authors of that period, Libanius did not use a simple linguistic qualifier (Hellen = pagan), instead taking a series of other words and phrases meaning the worshippers of old religions<sup>40</sup>. Thus, Maximus would be an adherent of classical Greek culture ('*le possesseur d'une culture littéraire*', as P. Petit phrased it), but not a pagan. Admittedly, M. Sartre suggests on the basis of hagiography that our Maximus may have been the same person as another Maximus, a clerk prosecuting Christians in Petra, but the source to prove that (*Passio sanctorum Theodori, Iuliani, Eubuli, Malcamonis, Mocimi et Salamani*)<sup>41</sup> narrates the story of persecutions in the times of Maximinus Daia, that is before the events of the year 313. Such a wide range of time makes it seem implausible that a high-ranked imperial official from the outset of the 4th century could serve as the Governor of Arabia almost half a century later.

<sup>39</sup> Prosopographical studies mention one more Maximus, in the office in 358 AD; he was the Governor of Cilicia, cf. O. Seeck, *Die Briefe*, p. 207 [s.v. Maximus V]; *PLRE*, vol. I, p. 582 [s.v. Maximus 15]. Both works clearly differentiate Maximus, the Governor of Arabia, from Maximusa, the Governor of Cilicia; contra M. Sartre, *Trois*, p. 104: O. Seeck, *Briefe*, p. 207, 'pense qu'il peut s'agir du meme Maximus que fut praeses Ciliciae fin 358...'.  
<sup>40</sup> I. Sandwell, *Religious Identity in Late Antiquity Antioch. Greeks, Jews and Christians in Antioch*, Cambridge 2007, p. 63 and passim, (the analysis of the terminology of John Chrysostom); pp. 92–93, (the words and phrases used by Libanius to refer to pagans); pp. 99–100, (a correction to P. Petit, *Les fonctionnaires*, regarding the religious affiliation of some officials, with the conclusion that a clear-cut distinction between Christians and pagans in most cases was not intended by Libanius); pp. 177–179 (various theories on the meaning of the word Hellen).

<sup>41</sup> *La passion géorgienne des SS. Théodore, Julien, Eubulus, Malcamon, Mocimus et Salamanes*, eds. R.P. Blake, P. Peters, 'Analecta Bollandiana' 1926, 44, pp. 77, 84–87 (commentary) and pp. 88–101 (source text).

ORION<sup>42</sup>

A figure known from two letters to the Governor of Arabia, Belaeus (see below)<sup>43</sup>. The first of the letters (*ep.* 763), dated to the middle of 362, confirms that Orion (Ὠρίων) is an old friend of Libanius (φίλος ἐπὶ τῶν προτέρων χρόνων), that he is an honest man (χρηστός)<sup>44</sup>, that his rule was mild (πραότατα ... τὴν ἀρχήν). Orion had not demolished temples, fought priests, things that Libanius learned from the inhabitants of Bostra (τὴν Βόστραν οἰκούντων)<sup>45</sup>. He narrowly escaped from the people whom he had done no evil (μόλις τὰς τῶν εὖ παθόντων ὑπ' ἐμοῦ διαπέφευγα χειῖρας λυπήσας μὲν οὐδένα οὐδέεν)<sup>46</sup>. His whole family, including his brother, had to leave their estates and lost their property (καὶ προσετίθει φυγὴν ἀδελφοῦ καὶ γένους ὅλου πλάνην καὶ γῆν ἄσπορον καὶ σκευῶν ἀρπαγὴν)<sup>47</sup>. Now Libanius can see (τοῦτον νῦν εἶδον) and hear Orion walking bent in half and in desperation<sup>48</sup>. Such behavior, reminds him Libanius, is not pleasant to the Emperor (the rhetor cites the words of Julian calling for peace in the cities, preserved in the letter to the inhabitants of Bostra, see below). Those who desired the fortunes of others were pretending they were serving gods by their deeds (ἐν τῷ τοῖς θεοῖς προσποιεῖσθαι βοηθεῖν)<sup>49</sup>.

Some half a year later, in the summer of 363, Libanius wrote another letter (*ep.* 819) to Belaeus in Orion's case. Libanius intervened in person (πρὸς παρόντα) with Maximus, but to no avail<sup>50</sup>. He disagrees with Orion about gods (περὶ τὸ θεῖον δόξῃ) – Orion must have been misinformed, but

<sup>42</sup> Biographical entries: W. Ensslin, *Orion* 5, in: *Paulys Real-Encyclopädie der classischen Aletertumwissenschaft*, vol. XVIII, part 1, 1939, col. 1087 [s.v. Orion 5]; P. Petit, *Les fonctionnaires*, p. 185 [s.v. Orion]. Cf. also: G. Sievers, *Das Leben*, p. 117; L. Petit, *Éssai sur la vie et la correspondance du sophiste Libanius*, Paris 1866, pp. 38–41.

<sup>43</sup> According to P. Petit, *Les fonctionnaires*, p. 185, Orion is also mentioned in the letter 1381 (Libanius, *Ep.* 1381, 4; ed. J. Wolf, *Ep.* 1105, 4) addressed to the Governor of Galatia, Maximus. The edition of J. Wolf has Arion, the edition of R. Foerster – Orion. The letter refers to liberating Arion/Orion from some misfortunes that befell him. According to: *Selected*, p. 151, annotation 78, we are dealing here with Arion, the philosopher from Ancyra; the addressee of the letter 1381 had no jurisdiction over Arabia, nor any other connection to that province that we could know of.

<sup>44</sup> Libanius, *Epistulae*, 763, 1.

<sup>45</sup> Libanius, *Epistulae*, 763, 2.

<sup>46</sup> Libanius, *Epistulae*, 763, 3.

<sup>47</sup> Libanius, *Epistulae*, 763, 3, 5–7.

<sup>48</sup> Libanius, *Epistulae*, 763, 3, 1–2.

<sup>49</sup> Libanius, *Epistulae*, 763, 6.

<sup>50</sup> Libanius, *Epistulae*, 819, 2, 2.

he is stuck in error of his own free will<sup>51</sup>. Those who are now persecuting him (τοὺς νῦν ἐγκειμένους αὐτῷ) should be reminded of the great good he had given them<sup>52</sup>. It was they, however, who seized the Milesian spoils (Μυσῶν λείαν)<sup>53</sup> from Orion's relatives, they attacked him (ἐπὶ τὸ τοῦδε σῶμα)<sup>54</sup>, believing they were serving gods (τοῖς θεοῖς)<sup>55</sup> in that way. It was following their example, the simple folk (τοὺς μὲν πολλοὺς) started to behave unwisely (ἄνευ λογισμοῦ φέρεσθαι)<sup>56</sup>. If Orion had indeed appropriated temple goods, he should be subjected to torture; if he is merely a beggar, torture will only win him sympathisers<sup>57</sup>. If he dies in shackles (ἀποθανεῖν αὐτῷ δεδεμένῳ), they will revere him<sup>58</sup>. Libanius pleads that Orion be left unharmed, even if he would still have to be tried before the tribunal (εἰ δεῖ δίκην αὐτὸν ὑποσχεῖν)<sup>59</sup>.

Both letters provide indications of an important office, and as usual – one not directly named. That it was the government of the province, which may be seen in the passage from the letter 763, of an office held in a benignant manner, and above all in the range of matters touched upon in both epistles. The execution of religious policies of emperors (judging by letter 763, not overzealously adhered to by Orion), but also the keeping of social stability and order, execution of jurisdiction, including arrests, interrogations, and tortures – all these activities were within the remit of provincial governors. As both letters were addressed to the Governor (Belaesus), who ruled the province of Arabia at the time, it is a token that the events described in both letters occurred in that city. I believe, therefore, in spite of certain doubts expressed in source literature<sup>60</sup>, that Orion did serve in the office of the Governor of Arabia (*praeses Arabiae*, according to P. Petit).

In the context of Orion's government, as well as that of his successor, Belaesus, of importance proves the letter of Emperor Julian to the inhabitants of Bostra<sup>61</sup>, dated to 1 August 362. The Emperor accuses Christians,

<sup>51</sup> Libanius, *Epistulae*, 819, 2, 4–5.

<sup>52</sup> Libanius, *Epistulae*, 819, 3, 1–2.

<sup>53</sup> Libanius, *Epistulae*, 819, 3, 4–5.

<sup>54</sup> Libanius, *Epistulae*, 819, 3, 5–6.

<sup>55</sup> Libanius, *Epistulae*, 819, 3, 6.

<sup>56</sup> Libanius, *Epistulae*, 819, 4.

<sup>57</sup> Libanius, *Epistulae*, 819, 5.

<sup>58</sup> Libanius, *Epistulae*, 819, 6.

<sup>59</sup> Libanius, *Epistulae*, 819, 7.

<sup>60</sup> According to: *Selected*, p. 168, annotation 123: 'Orion's post is still unclear'; if he served as the governor of the province, 'he governed his own province', which was against the law; nevertheless, it did happen.

<sup>61</sup> *The Works of Emperor Julian*, vol. III, transl. E.W.C. Wright, London 1913, letter 41.

particularly the clergy, of instigating riots and plundering estates; these illegal actions, according to the Emperor, were how the Church reacted to an abolition of a series of privileges. Additionally, Julian had received a letter from the Bishop of Bostra, Titus, in which the hierarch claimed that it is only himself and his clerics who stopped the local Christians, comparable in their numbers to heathens, from radical riots. The Emperor decided the letter was a proof of Christian involvement in the unrest, and consequently urged the inhabitants of Bostra to replace their Bishop.

The letter does not mention Orion. Is that because the assaults against him occurred later, after 1 August? Was Julian aware of Orion's situation, but failed to mention it, knowing that the misdeed had been perpetrated by pagans? We do not have the answer to the above questions; thus, we are unable to date Orion's term of office with regard to the letter's date of origin. We have to remain within the cautions dating by P. Petit, according to whom Orion served as a governor towards the end of Constantius' rule.

Libanius at no point refers to Orion as a Christian; however, from the cited passages of the letter 763, one can infer that Orion indeed was a Christian – although a temperate one, judging by the account of his governance, as reasonably indicated by P. Petit. The anti-pagan legislation adopted by Constantius II (a series of edicts issued after 341, among other things, interdicting public offerings, closing pagan temples, forbidding the practice of magic)<sup>62</sup> was during Orion's reign either entirely not abided by, or the authorities had not performed their duties with regard to it with much zeal. If the Governor himself was not an enthusiastic follower of Christianity, if he did not impose a repressive policy against the local pagans, it was not for religious reason that he was later persecuted. It was pagans who persecuted him, a thing never directly indicated by Libanius, but resulting from several circumstantial (quoted) mentions, above all those when the actions are said to have been carried out under the pretense of serving gods. Religious motivations were therefore a mere pretext, with the actual cause of riots being an opportunity to get rich.

The numerous passages above pertaining to Orion's escape provoke another series of questions. Was Orion forced to leave the office, having been attacked by the local pagans? Did he escape to Antioch, to seek help there from his influential friend, Libanius? Or maybe he was 'merely' expelled from his estate, but was able to remain in Bostra, guarded by the new Governor, Belaeus? We can only answer positively the final

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<sup>62</sup> *Theodosiani Libri XVI cum Constitutionibus Sirmondianis et leges novellae ad theodosianum pertinentes*, eds. T. Mommsen, P. Meyer, vol. I–II, Berolini 1954 [hereinafter: *Theodosiani*], IX, 16, 4; IX, 16, 5; IX, 16, 6; XVI, 10, 2; XVI, 10, 4; XVI, 10, 6.

questions, as only in that case the text (of the letter 819) leaves us without any doubts<sup>63</sup>. A hypothetical answer to the first question would sound as follows: Orion did not lose his office because of being assaulted by pagans, for the reasons that: first of all, Libanius does not mention anywhere such a development, whereas complaining of Orion's misfortunes he should mention his loss of office above all else; secondly, with minor exceptions, we do not know of any riots of the pagan populace that could threaten the local authorities, neither under Julian, nor under any other Emperor of the 4th century (during a later period, state officials would leave their posts, but as a result of great rebellions of the circus factions)<sup>64</sup>. Regarding the second question – Orion's escape to Antioch may only be suggested by a single passage in the letter (763, 3, 1–2), from which it can be inferred that Libanius saw Orion in person (on condition, however, that we will adopt a literal and not metaphorical reading of the used phrase). The strongest argument corroborating the thesis of the escape to Antioch stems rather from the logic of events – Orion, being in danger in Bostra, escapes to the capital of Syria, in order to seek help from his influential friend, Libanius. However, such a scenario cannot be reconciled with an incontrovertible fact – that Orion was held captive, arrested in Bostra<sup>65</sup>.

#### BELAEUS<sup>66</sup>

Between the middle of the year 362 and the outset of 363, Libanius sent five letters to Belaeus (Βηλαίω). In the first of those (*ep.* 747), we can read that Belaeus performed his office with dignity, delivering orations (τῆς σῆς ἀρχῆς ἄξιος τῶν λόγων), that he valued highly the great family of rhetors

<sup>63</sup> Cf. Libanius, *Autobiography and Selected Letters*, vol. 2, *Letters 51–193*, ed. and transl. A.F. Norman, *Loeb Classical Library*, no. 479, Cambridge–London 1992, pp. 158–159, annotation a.

<sup>64</sup> Cf. P. Filipczak, *Władze państwowe wobec zamieszek falkcji cyrkowych w świetle Kroniki Jana Malalasa*, 'Piotrkowskie Zeszyty Historyczne' 2004, 6, pp. 35–48.

<sup>65</sup> Besides, it is possible that Libanius met Orion in Bostra. Considering that, as he wrote (see above, citation: Libanius, *Epistulae*, 819, 2, 2), he intervened in person on behalf of Orion with the Governor of Arabia, so he may have been to Bostra (but such a connotation causes more questions – would Libanius travel to a province or city swept with riots of the populace? If so, why did he not mention it ever again? Other sources remain silent on Libanius' voyage to Arabia).

<sup>66</sup> Biographical entries: O. Seeck, *Belaios 3*, in: *Paulys Real-Encyclopädie der classischen Aletertumwissenschaft*, vol. III, 1899, col. 197 [s.v. Belaios 3]; O. Seeck, *Die Briefe*, p. 97 [s.v. Belaeus]; *PLRE*, vol. I, p. 160 [s.v. Belaeus]; M. Sartre, *Trois*, p. 104 [s.v. Belaeus]; P. Petit, *Les fonctionnaires*, pp. 54–55 [s.v. Belaeus]; P. Janiszewski, *Belaios*, in: *Sofisci*, p. 111 [s.v. Belaios].

(ἅπαν τὸ τῶν σοφιστῶν γένος)<sup>67</sup>, the he led cities to prosperity (ποίει τὰς μὲν πόλεις εὐδαίμονας), that in his period law was ubiquitously abided by (πᾶσι μὲν βεβαίου τοὺς νόμους)<sup>68</sup>. However, Gaudentios, known to both of them, was still awaiting justice (νῦν γε δικαίως ἂν βελτίονος ἐγεύοντο τῆς τύχης)<sup>69</sup>. Meanwhile, two of his relatives required their fortunes to be helped at once (τυχεῖν)<sup>70</sup>.

In two other letters (*ep.* 762 and *ep.* 776), Libanius also pleads on behalf of his acquaintances, rhetors Sopater<sup>71</sup> and Magnos<sup>72</sup>. Towards the former, Libanius felt a debt of gratitude (owing to the familiarity with the authorities of Constantinople, Sopater was able to help Libanius acquire a group of students there)<sup>73</sup>, therefore now he is asking for a sympathetic look (ἡδέως ὀρᾶν) at the case concerning Sopater's parents<sup>74</sup>. Magnos, in turn, school friend of Libanius, is unable to come into his inherited patrimony (πατρῶαν), due to the activity of some adversaries (τοὺς ἀντιπάλους)<sup>75</sup>, and as the case will surely end up before the tribunal, the right decision has to be made (καὶ δικαστηρίου χρῆζοντας εὐμενῶς δέχοιο)<sup>76</sup>.

In two subsequent letters (*ep.* 763 and *ep.* 819), addressed to Belaeus, Libanius raises the issue of his old friend Orion – as I have already analyzed both these letters, I will focus here only on the three passages significant for the biographic entry concerning Belaeus. Referring to the people attacking Orion and his family, Libanius pleads that no other than Belaeus, the one who replaced teacher's cathedral with the jewel of authority (σὲ δὲ τὸν ἀπὸ τοῦ παιδεύοντος θρόνου πρὸς τὸν ψήφου κύριον), should stop the perpetrators<sup>77</sup>. Meanwhile, regarding the deeds of Orion, a good governor (τὸν δ' αὖ ἄρχοντα καλόν, ἄλλως τε καὶ σέ), i.e. Belaeus, should adopt the law (παρὰ τοὺς νόμους) enabling the exiles to return, and their estates, such as the Milesian spoils, should be restored to their rightful owners<sup>78</sup>.

The cited passages prove that Belaeus did serve as the Governor of Arabia (the text speaks of the events at Bostra, the capital of the province, for the inhabitants of Bostra were the ones who provided Libanius with

<sup>67</sup> Libanius, *Epistulae*, 747, 1.

<sup>68</sup> Libanius, *Epistulae*, 747, 2.

<sup>69</sup> Libanius, *Epistulae*, 747, 3.

<sup>70</sup> Libanius, *Epistulae*, 747, 4.

<sup>71</sup> Cf. P. Janiszewski, *Sopatros 4*, in: *Sofīsci*, p. 412 [s.v. Sopatros 4].

<sup>72</sup> Cf. P. Janiszewski, *Magnos 1*, in: *Sofīsci*, p. 407 [s.v. Magnos 1].

<sup>73</sup> Libanius, *Epistulae*, 762, 1 and 2.

<sup>74</sup> Libanius, *Epistulae*, 762, 4.

<sup>75</sup> Libanius, *Epistulae*, 776, 1.

<sup>76</sup> Libanius, *Epistulae*, 776, 2.

<sup>77</sup> Libanius, *Epistulae*, 819, 4.

<sup>78</sup> Libanius, *Epistulae*, 763, 6.

information about Orion; thus, *arché* would mean the office of the governor of the province, whereas *dikasterion* – its tribunal). O. Seeck, and P. Petit write that he served in the office of *praeses Arabiae*. According to M. Sartre, a zealous pagan, Belaeus had been nominated as the Governor of Arabia by Julian (as indicated in the inscriptions on milestones)<sup>79</sup>, who was thus avenging the rebellion instigated by the local Christians. Later, in March 363, when leaving Antioch, Julian appointed a new Governor of Syria, Alexander, to take revenge for the dishonors he had suffered in the city from Christians. Thus, in both cases he behaved in the same manner.

From the letters of Libanius, it undeniably follows only that Belaeus was in the office during the period when the city witnessed attacks on Orion and his family. As Julian's letter is dated to 1 August 362, it is a testament to the fact that skirmishes between Christians and pagans had been waged for some time; therefore, Belaeus must have taken his office before 1 August. We do not know how long he performed his function (were we to assume the traditional period of a year or, at most, two years, his term would have to end by the middle of the year 363 or 364, at the latest).

Before he was nominated as the Governor, he was a '*professeur d'éloquence*' (P. Petit), considering that during his term in the office he displayed the mastery of the oratory, and the milieu of rhetors was dear to him. It was with him that Libanius would intervene the most frequently, more often than not on behalf of other rhetors (Gaudentius, Sopater, Magnus). These were private matters, and we cannot say whether they were completed as Libanius would have wished it. The instance of Orion, in whose case Libanius intervened three times, and whose fate was in the hands of Belaeus, indicates if not Belaeus' obstinacy, then at least his indifference to Libanius' entreaties (though Orion's case, as a former Governor and a Christian, must have been somewhat special). Both that fact, and the call to Zeus, with a concurrent Libanius' address to Belaeus, are testament to the fact that Belaeus was a pagan.

It is difficult to say whether the indication of prospering cities and the rule of law was an account of the state of affairs (though, from the fact that two other letters mention unrests in Bostra, we may have our doubts as to that), or whether it is the requirement of style for the letter, in which Libanius was forced to evoke the ideal of a just Governor, to be able to expect decisions favorable for his acquaintances. There can be no doubt, however, that Belaeus had at his disposal a certain apparatus of coercion, prison service, able to perform tortures, judging by the words from the letter 819<sup>80</sup>.

<sup>79</sup> *Bostra. Aux portes de l'Arabie*, eds. J. Dentzer et al., Beyrouth 2007, p. 57.

<sup>80</sup> Cf. also P. Filipczak, *Sily policyjne w Antiochii w świetle listów i mów Libaniasza*, in: *Cesarstwo bizantyńskie. Dzieje. Religia. Kultura. Studia ofiarowane profesorowi Waldemarowi*

## CONCLUSIONS

### Titles, Competences

Andronicus, Maximus, Orion and Belaeus – I have no doubt that each one of them served as the Governor of Arabia, even though the identification of the office is not based anywhere on technical terms, but is ‘inferred’ from general vocabulary and, above all, from the context. From 262, the province of Arabia had been ruled by eques governors, granted the title of *praesides*<sup>81</sup>. In line with the reforms adopted by Diocletian and Constantine (3rd/4th century) governors were deprived of authority over the troops, which was transferred to provincial *duces*. However, according to some scholars, in particularly dangerous regions of the country, incl. Arabia, the old system was retained – of the military and civil power united in the hands of the provincial governor<sup>82</sup>. Nevertheless, all the events described in the article pertain to civil cases, either legal or judicial. These most often entailed restoration of estate, appointment to an office, favorable treatment of various issues. There is not a single trace of governing the troops, nor any other military activity performed by the Governors of Arabia in the period of 354–363. My research confirms and compliments the findings of M. Sartre, who on the basis of epigraphic sources (though referring to other governors than the ones I have focused on), established that by the year 367, Arabia had been simultaneously ruled by two officials, *dux* and *praeses*<sup>83</sup>. It was only later, that civilian and military prerogatives may have been united in the hands of *virī spectabilis ducis Arabiae et praesidis* (according to the regulation in the *Notitia Dignitatum*, a source from the 4th/5th century)<sup>84</sup>.

### Background, Education

Two of them (Andronicus and Orion) had popular Greek names; one – a Latin one (Maximus), and one – a name of unknown origin (Belaeus).

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*Ceranowi przez uczniów na 70-lecie Jego urodzin*, eds. P. Krupczyński, M.J. Leszka, Łask–Łódź 2006, pp. 53–70.

<sup>81</sup> M. Sartre, *Trois*, pp. 97, 116–117.

<sup>82</sup> A.H.M. Jones, *The Later Roman Empire 284–602. A Social, Economic and Administrative Survey*, vol. 1, Oxford 1964, p. 101.

<sup>83</sup> M. Sartre, *Inscriptions grecques et latines de la Syrie. Bostra*, fasc. 1, *Bibliothèque archéologique et historique*, vol. 113, Paris 1982, XIII, fasc. 1, 134–4.

<sup>84</sup> *La Notitia Dignitatum. Nueva edición crítica y comentario histórico*, ed. N. Faleiro, *Nueva Roma. Bibliotheca Graeca et Latina Aevi Posterioris*, vol. 25, Madrid 2005, Orient, XXXIII, 36, p. 264.

Judging only by their names, the two former ones must have hailed from the Greek, eastern part of the Empire. Maximus as a name appeared in over a score of inscriptions from the region of Bostra, most frequently dating back to the preceding period, at times being the name of soldiers<sup>85</sup>. I doubt that in the case of our Maximus, we are dealing with a man who had only recently arrived from the West to pursue a career in the administration of Arabia. He seems rather to be an offspring of soldiers or veterans, or some other Latin people, who had earlier arrived in Arabia, and became Hellenized there.

All of them must have been able to use Greek fluently, considering that they received the correspondence from Libanius, and he himself refers to the three of them (Andronicus, Maximus, Orion) as his friends. Besides Orion, about whose level of schooling we know nothing, the three other men were well-educated. In my view, Maximus should be listed among the substantial number of governors–rhetors, presiding over various provinces, about whom Libanius wrote in relation to the reign of Julian<sup>86</sup>. Before he became a governor, Belaeus was a sophist; there are grounds to consider Andronicus to have been a philosopher.

### Religious Identity

There is not much that we know about it, but the situation seems to have been varied, as the office of governor was taken by a Christian (Orion) and, perhaps directly after the latter, a pagan (Belaeus). Although the number of Christians governing provinces had increased since Constantine, there were no formal obstacles for pagans willing to serve in the office<sup>87</sup>. In the case of the nearby province of Syria *Coele*, in the period of 324–395, roughly the half of governors known to us worshipped the old gods<sup>88</sup>. Analogical may have been the situation in Arabia, especially because this region must have been less Christianized than that of northern and western Syria.

<sup>85</sup> M. Sartre, *Inscriptions*, inscriptions 9342, 9343, 9002, 9396, 9266, 9415, 9232, 9112, 9358; M. Sartre, A. Sartre-Fauriat, *Inscriptions grecques et latines de la Syrie. Bostra Supplément*, Bibliothèque archéologique et historique, vol. 194, Beyrouth 2011, inscriptions 9536a, 9536b, 9570k, 9595, 9666, 9747, 9750, 9751, 9756, 9757, 9758, 9767, 9865, 9882, 9884, 9888, 9919.

<sup>86</sup> Libanius, *Selected Orations*, vol. 1, *Julianic Orations*, ed. and transl. A.F. Norman, *Loeb Classical Library*, no. 451, Cambridge–London 1969, XVIII, 159.

<sup>87</sup> *Theodosiani*, XVI, 10, 21.

<sup>88</sup> Cf. P. Filipczak, *Przełom konstantyński i funkcjonowanie administracji rzymskiej w Syrii, 'Christianitas Antiqua' 2014, 5, pp. 164–166.*

### The Situation in Arabia During Julian's Reign

The analyzed letters provide one with an insight into the situation of various families, indicating predominantly their financial troubles. Admittedly, we may be able to discover in the correspondence traces of some instances of abuse of power perpetrated by provincial officials, but it cannot serve as a proof of pauperization of the entire province.

Comparing Libanius' accounts of the situation in Bostra with what Emperor Julian wrote about it, we are forced to ask the question who really was responsible for the outbreak of unrest in the capital of the province; whether these were pagans, as indicated by Libanius, or Christians, as reported by Julian. Pagans participated in the riots due to the sense of impunity and willingness to get rich on the estates of Christians (Libanius underscores the fact so many times that it is difficult to retain any doubts as to it); about Christians – we cannot be certain; Julian's argumentation is vague and unconvincing, based on an idiosyncratic and perverse interpretation of the words of Bishop Titus. Libanius, after all a pagan himself, at no point accused Christians of the attacks in Bostra. If Christians did participate in any riots, it may have been merely in acts of self-defense.

(translated by LINGUA LAB)

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#### STRESZCZENIE

Celem artykułu jest *addenda et corrigenda* biogramów namiestników Arabii, z najlepiej oświetlonego źródłami okresu, tj. przełomu lat pięćdziesiątych i sześćdziesiątych IV stulecia n.e. Bazę źródłową stanowią przede wszystkim listy retora Libaniasza, adresowane do namiestników Arabii. Są to teksty niełatwe w interpretacji, choć poddane już gruntowanej analizie (głównie: O. Seeck, W. Ensslin, G. Sievers, P. Petit, M. Sartre), wciąż pozwalają na oryginalne wnioskowanie. W artykule podejmuję próbę skorygowania listy namiestników Arabii, ułożonej przez M. Sartre'a, a także poszerzenia lub skorygowania naszej dotychczasowej wiedzy w zakresie tytułatury i kompetencji, pochodzenia, wykształcenia, tożsamości religijnej oraz przebiegu karier.

**Słowa kluczowe:** Libaniasz, Arabia, prowincja, namiestnik

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