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Prosopographical Notes on *Praesides Arabiae* (ca. AD 356–363): A Reconsideration of Libanius' Letters to the Governors of Arabia

Introduction

We know only a dozen or so of the several hundred governors of Arabia during the entire Byzantine period (11 from the 4th century, 6 from the 5th century, and 4 from the 6th century; Sartre 1982: 100–15).¹ Even for the best-documented century—the 4th century—the bulk of the information concerns a very narrow slice of time, ca. AD 356–363. For this period, we derive our information almost exclusively from the letters of the famous Antiochene Rhetorician Libanius.² In an unusually

extensive correspondence (1,544 letters have survived), written in an intricate, ambiguous language full of rhetorical devices, we find 25 epistles addressed to the governors of Arabia.³ Thanks mainly to these texts, Maurice Sartre (1982: 103–4) prepared the list of the governors of Arabia that looks like this for the period of interest (AD 356–364):

Andronicus [AD 356–357]
Maximus [AD 357]
Belaeus [AD 363]
Ulpianus [AD 364]

The goal of this article is to reinterpret Libanius' letters by asking

¹ The average period of provincial governorship lasted customarily (it was never regulated by imperial law) from several months to about two years (Slootjes 2006: 26).

² For the latest biography of Libanius, along with a very comprehensive list of source editions and modern literature on the subject, see Janiszewski 2014: 290–4; Van Hoof 2014. For the most significant monographs on Libanius, see Petit 1866; Sievers 1868; Seeck 1906; Petit 1959; Petit 1994; Wiemer

1995; Wintjes 2005; Cribiore 2009.

³ For the most extensive study of the letters, see Foerster 1927: 49–241; for a commentary on translations into modern languages, see Norman 1992: 17–43; Cabouret 2000: 16–25; Bradbury 2004: 19–27; Cabouret 2014: 143–59.

new questions and providing new answers to questions already asked. The re-examination of Libanius's work I present offers ways of interpretation that move beyond those generated by the previous research. I will present the first three governors, and introduce a new one, Orion [AD 363], who is absent from M. Sartre's list. I am omitting Ulpianus, whose biography I intend to elaborate on a separate article due to the particular abundance of source material.⁴

Below I present revised biographical notes consisting essentially of two parts: paraphrases of the respective letters and a commentary (due to the ambiguity of the sources, I consider this to be the best solution). I have arranged the biographical notes in chronological order, and because the chronology of terms of office is based on the dating of the letters, I have adopted P. Petit's (1994) findings as the most up-to-date in this regard. Throughout the text, I have numbered the letters according to the publication by Richard Foerster (1921; 1922).

Andronicus

At the turn of 356 to 357, Libanius sent a letter to one Andronicus (*Ἀνδρονίκῳ*).⁵ The letter concerned the sophist Gaudentios (Janiszewski 2014a: 203–5), a teacher at the school of rhetoric led by Libanius in Antioch. Since Gaudentios was an Arab, his entire clan also came from Arabia (*Ἀράβιος δὲ οὗτος καὶ ἔστιν αὐτῷ γένος ἐκεῖ*; Libanius *Epistles* 543.1.1–2 [ed. Foerster 1921]). He knew that Andronicus was a friend of Libanius

(*γνοὺς οὖν ὡς εἶη μοι φίλος*; *Epistles* 543.1. 3) and therefore, through the latter, he intended to resolve his problem. The relatives of Gaudentios suffered from a total lack of dignity (*πενόμενοι παρὰ τὴν ἀξίαν*; *Epistles* 543.1. 2–3), and two of them had even gone bankrupt (*Epistles* 543.1.5–7). To redress their ill fate, it is enough for Andronicus to issue appropriate laws (*λύσας δὲ αὐτοῖς τὸ κακὸν τοὺς νόμους τε βεβαιώσεις*; *Epistles* 543.2.1–2).

Nowhere does Libanius refer to Andronicus as a governor (this situation will be repeated many times in subsequent letters). Instead, we conclude that he was a governor from indirect information: those 'dignities' that, if I understand correctly, were the offices and resulting benefits most at the disposal of the provincial governor (and this may have concerned the position in his *officium*); the passing and observance of laws in a province are also a sphere of gubernatorial responsibility; finally, the 'action' of this letter is unquestionably set in Arabia, since that is where Gaudentios' family came from—this is the only basis for identifying the province governed by Andronicus. O. Seeck (1906: 75) does not hesitate to name Andronicus *praeses Arabiae*.

He was 'respectueux de lois', in the opinion of P. Petit, but it seems to me that the last Greek phrase quoted above proves the instrumental use of Andronicus' entitlements. Libanius counted on settling the case with the governor, which means that it was possible to put pressure on this official to achieve some concrete, private benefit. In Arabia, as in all other provinces of the Roman Empire, service in state administration was a guarantee of a reasonably steady life. And that is why Libanius expected

⁴ See also Filipczak 2018 with a large part based on Libanius' letters to Ulpianus.

⁵ Biographical notes: Seeck 1906: 75 [s.v. Andronicus III]; PLRE I: 64 (s.v. Andronicus 2); Sartre 1982: 103 (s.v. Andronicus); Petit 1994: 41 (s.v. Andronicus III).

the governor to bestow a dignity on Gaudentios' relatives and was looking for some form of financial bail-out for two of his relatives.

Based on the accounts of the historian Zosimos (4.15), O. Seeck (1906: 75) claims that Andronicus may have been a philosopher from Caria condemned to death in 372 because of (false) suspicion of attempted sedition. This hypothesis is based on the obvious accordance of names and chronology. Andronicus knew Greek, he bore a Greek name, he was friends with Libanius (I assume that the sentence speaking of friendship does not result from a polite letter-writing style, but reflects the actual state), and it is thus plainly clear that he must have originated from the Greek-speaking part of the empire. In Caria, however, in addition to local languages, Greek was certainly spoken, due to the presence of a long-established and populous Greek community. All this evidence is circumstantial, but makes O. Seeck's thesis very probable (P. Petit doubts the identity of both figures, but without presenting any arguments; 1994: 41).

Maximus

In 357 and 358, Libanius wrote four letters to Maximus (*Μαξιμῶ*).⁶ In the first (*Epistles* 320), he calls Maximus his friend (*φίλον*: *Epistles* 320.1.2). He asks whether Maximus will restore prosperity to Arabia, which is poor thanks to those who have taken local goods to their homes (*ἐγίγνωσκες δὲ ἄρα τὴν Ἀραβίαν εὐδαίμονα ποιεῖν πάνυ φαύλως ἔχουσαν ὑπὸ τῶν οἴκαδε τάκείνης ἐλκόντων ἀγαθὰ*: *Epistles* 320.2.1–4).

⁶ Biographical notes: Seeck 1906: 207 [s.v. Maximus IV]; Ensslin 1931: 671 [s.v. Maximus 61]; PLRE I: 582 [s.v. Maximus 14]; Sartre 1982: 104 [s.v. Maximus]; Petit 1994: 159 [s.v. Maximus IV]; Janiszewski 2014b: 313 [s.v. Maksimos 7].

He is becoming impoverished in office (*τῆς ἀρχῆς*), applying himself more to achieving glory than money (*Epistles* 320.2.4–5). Finally, there is a request: the nephew of the rhetorician Magnos, who works in Antioch, is counting on recovering his estate, which was stolen by his uncles—Maximus could provide a chance for him to do so (*Epistles* 320.3 i 4).

We are not sure who Libanius meant when he wrote in the initial parts of the letter about the people who were plundering Arabia. In the Spanish translation by González Gálvez we read about the 'gobernadores'—the governors (González Gálvez 2005). It cannot be ruled out this was indeed referring to them since, after all, it was the governors who were responsible for the abuses by the Roman administration in the provinces, which in this case was in Arabia, as is expressly stated. After all, only by 'beating about the bush' could Libanius criticise those in power without taking risks. It seems all the more that Maximus' *arché* is simply the governorship of Arabia. O. Seeck (1906: 207) and P. Petit (1994: 159) use the title *praeses Arabiae*.

The image of Maximus stands in clear opposition to the image of these governor-plunderers. Maximus is a just and honest governor (P. Petit writes: 'justice' and 'integrity'), and for precisely this reason, the rhetorician Magnos and his nephew seek help through Libanius. The question remains open for now as to whether this is a stylised, exaggerated portrait simply aiming to ensure Maximus' favour or whether it is a faithful image. And this time Libanius calls him his friend, thus giving himself license to ask Maximus for another favour.

In another letter (*Epistles* 332), we return to the case of Gaudentios of

Arabia, a rhetorician and a co-worker with Libanius. This time, Libanius asks Maximus to look favourably (*ιδεῖν ἡδέως*) on two relatives of Gaudentios (*Epistles* 329.1.3–4): to help because he is, after all, a rhetorician (*ρήτορος*; *Epistles* 329.2.2–3). If he had taken office for a reason other than his ability to use words, he would have reason not to value rhetoric (*καὶ γὰρ εἰ μὲν ἀπ' ἄλλου του πρὸς τὸ ἄρχειν ἐληλύθει, ἴσως ἂν ἦν λόγος ἀμελοῦντι τῶν λόγων*). Now he must take care of those who have mastered that through which he had also achieved greatness (*νῦν δέ, οὗτοι γὰρ σε τοσοῦτον ἔθηκαν, φαίνου σπουδάζων περὶ τοὺς κεκτημένους ὑφ' οὗ γεγένησαι μέγας*; *Epistles* 329.3). Keeping to a literal interpretation of the Greek text, and there is no reason to do otherwise in this particular case, we can conclude that rhetorical skills were decisive in taking on the office of governor. This proves the still-great role that classical values played in the selection of administrative staff in this period. According to O. Seeck (1906: 207) and P. Petit (1994: 159), Maximus must have previously been an advocate.

Once again, we see the governor being pressed with a request from Libanius. In order to achieve his goal, the famous rhetorician referred to what we today call professional solidarity or socio-cultural particularity—in this case, of rhetoricians.

In the next letter (*Epistles* 337), Libanius lobbies for the rhetorician Tiberinus (Janiszewski 2014c: 586 [s.v. Tiberinos 2]), his colleague. The case concerns that rhetorician's son, Archelaos. He works (*ποιεῖ*) 'among us' (*παρ' ἡμῶν*), as Libanius writes, therefore in Antioch, but he is also valued in his homelands: in serving (*ὠφελῶν*) our inhabitants, he exalts his homeland (*Epistles* 337.1). Maximus should help

him, and in this manner he will be helping the cities, both ours, as Libanius writes, and the one that man comes from (*ταῖς πόλεσι τῇ τε ἡμετέρῃ καὶ ἐξ ἧς ἐστίν*; *Epistles* 337.2).

We are not sure what this action was or what the service to the Antiochians was, but it was related to the neglect of some other city. In the opinion of González Gálvez (2005), Archelaos, who lived in Antioch, was subject to an attempt by his hometown to force him into curial duties, or perhaps he was even being put on trial. There had probably been an intercession with the provincial governor, Maximus, which is why Libanius was trying to settle the whole matter through him. We do not know what the outcome was.

In another letter (*Epistles* 357), Libanius asks for help for the family of his friend, a co-worker, the rhetorician Uranios (Janiszewski 2014d: 588–9 [s.v. Uranios]). Even a small gesture would help these poor people in their relations with the rich (*τοῖς ἀσθενέσι πρὸς τοὺς εὐπόρους*; *Epistles* 357.3–4). If he does not help those whom we consider worthy, he will not be behaving like a Hellen (*Εἴτε μὴ βοηθεῖς οἷς ἀξιοῦμεν, οὐχ Ἑλληνικὸν τοῦτο ποιεῖς*; *Epistles* 357.1).

This may be about the legal protection of people of humble origin (known as *humiliores* in the legislation of the period) against abuse by influential people (*honestiores*). However, we do not know the details, and Libanius' words are not precise enough in this case to go beyond hypotheticals. Less affluent citizens could have less potential to operate (perhaps more modest *sportulae* to give to officials), and perhaps little chance of taking a job in public administration. This is another way to explain Libanius' words. If, however, this was about protecting the poor from

the rich, then that was the duty of a special official (*defensor civitatis*; Frakes 2001: *passim*, mainly 130–47). Does this mean that Maximus held that position at that time, and not the provincial governorship? Did Libanius, without knowing that defender, send a letter to the only person among the provincial authorities with whom he maintained friendly relations, *i.e.*, Maximus? Does ‘Hellen’ mean a pagan, or a person who has been classically raised and educated?

In M. Sartre’s (1982: 104) opinion, it is not known whether letters 337 and 357 were addressed to Maximus while he was governor of Arabia. Indeed, neither of these letters expressly mentions Arabia. However, the matter that Libanius addressed in his letter 337—the observance of civic duties to one’s hometown—was the responsibility of provincial governors. According to P. Petit (1994: 159), letter 337 was written in 357, when, in the light of two earlier letters (320 and 329), Maximus governed Arabia. The chronological agreement suggests that letter 337 was also addressed to the governor of the province. Letter 357 comes from the year 358, which means that either at that time Maximus was already in another office, maybe precisely *defensor civitatis*, or that Maximus was governor of Arabia in 357 and 358, when he dealt with the difficult-to-define case of Uranios’ family.⁷ The second option seems to me the more likely. All four letters coincide not only in the time they were written, but also in a shared motif,

that of helping the immediate family of three rhetoricians friendly with Libanius: Gaudentios, Tiberinus, and Uranios. This was therefore a ‘series’ of letters sent at almost the same time, and addressed to the same official, in very similar cases.

Recent studies on Libanius’ vocabulary presented by I. Sandwell (2007), prove that, unlike the Christian authors of this period, Libanius did not use a simple language qualifier (Hellen=Pagan), but used a number of other words and expressions to denote the followers of old cults.⁸ Maximus would have been a man from a classical Greek cultural circle (‘le possesseur d’une culture littéraire’, as P. Petit 1994: 159 writes), but not a pagan. It is true that M. Sartre (1982: 104), based on hagiographic literature, suggests that Maximus may have been the same Maximus as an official persecuting Christians in Petra, but the source (*Passio sanctorum* 77: 84–7 [comment] and 88–101 [source] [ed. Blake and Peters 1926]) that evidences this is describing the persecution of Maximinus Daia’s time, *i.e.*, events from before 313. It seems to me unlikely, on account of the excessive time difference, that the high-ranking imperial official from the beginning of the 4th century could have been the governor of Arabia of almost half a century later.

Orion

A figure known from two letters to the governor of Arabia is that of

⁷ Prosopographic studies mention another Maximus who was in office in 358; he was the governor of Cilicia, see Seeck 1906: 207 [s.v. Maximus V]; *PLRE* I: 582 [s.v. Maximus 15]. Both publications clearly distinguish Maximus the governor of Arabia from Maximus governor of Cilicia (*contra* Sartre 1982: 104—‘O. Seeck, *Briefe*, p. 207 pense qu’il peut s’agir du même Maximus qui fut praeses Ciliciae fin 358. .’).

⁸ Sandwell 2007: 63 *ff.* (analysis of John Chrisostom’s terminology), 92–3 (words and phrases used by Libanius to describe pagans), 99–100 (correction to Petit 1994 on the religious affiliation of some officials, with the ultimate conclusion that it was not, in most cases, the goal of Libanius to clearly distinguish between Christians and pagans); 177–9 (for various theories in the meaning of the word ‘Hellen’).

Belaeus (*vide infra*).⁹ The first of the letters (*Epistles* 763), dated to mid-362, certifies that Orion (*Ὠρίων*) is an old friend of Libanius (*φίλος ἐπὶ τῶν προτέρων χρόνων*), that he is an honest man (*χρηστός*: *Epistles* 763.1), and that his rule was benign (*πραότατα ... τὴν ἀρχὴν*). Orion neither demolished temples nor fought with priests, as Libanius heard from the residents of Bostra (*τὴν Βόστραν οἰκούντων*: *Epistles* 763.2). Orion barely escaped from those who had never been in any way wronged by him (*μόλις τὰς τῶν εὖ παθόντων ὑπ' ἐμοῦ διαπέφευγα χεῖρας λυπήσας μὲν οὐδένα οὐδέν*: *Epistles* 763.3). The whole family, including his brother, had to leave their lands, and lost their property (*καὶ προσετίθει φυγὴν ἀδελφοῦ καὶ γένους ὄλου πλάνην καὶ γῆν ἄσπορον καὶ σκευῶν ἀρπαγὴν*: *Epistles* 763.3.5–7). Now Libanius sees (*τοῦτον νῦν εἶδον*) and listens to Orion walking with his head bent, despairing (*Epistles* 763.3.1–2). Such behaviour, Libanius points out, is not pleasing to the emperor (the rhetorician quotes Julian's words calling for peace in the cities, such as are preserved in a letter to the inhabitants of Bostra, *vide infra*). Those who coveted the others' property pretended they were doing so in service to the gods (*ἐν τῷ τοῖς θεοῖς προσποιεῖσθαι βοηθεῖν*: *Epistles* 763.6).

About six months later, in the

⁹ Biographical notes: Ensslin 1939: 1087 [*s.v.* Orion 5]; Petit 1994: 185 [*s.v.* Orion]. See also Sievers 1868: 117; Petit 1866: 38–41. According to Petit (1994: 185), Orion is also mentioned in certain letter to the governor of Galatia, Maximus. The name 'Arion' is given in Wolf's 1838 edition of Libanius' letters (*Epistles* 1105.4) and 'Orion' in Foerster's 1922 (*Epistles* 1381.4). The letter speaks of Arion/Orion being freed from some misfortune that had beset him. In the opinion of Bradbury (2004: 151 n. 78) this is about Arion, a philosopher from Ancyra; the recipient of letter 1381 had no jurisdiction over Arabia, nor any other connection with this province that we know of.

summer of 363, Libanius wrote another letter (*Epistles* 819) to Baleus, regarding Orion. Libanius had already interceded personally (*πρὸς παρόντα*) with Maximus, but to no effect (*Epistles* 819.2.2). He differs from Orion regarding gods (*περὶ τὸ θεῖον δόξῃ*)—Orion has been led astray in this matter, but remains so by his own free will (*Epistles* 819.2.4–5). Those who are currently tormenting him (*τοὺς νῦν ἐγκειμένους αὐτῷ*) need to be reminded of how much good they derived from him (*Epistles* 819.3.1–2). However, they had obtained Mysian plunder (*Μυσῶν λείαν*: *Epistles* 819.3.4–5) from Orion's relatives, and had attacked him (*ἐπὶ τὸ τοῦδε σῶμα*: *Epistles* 819.3.5–6), believing that they were thus serving the gods (*τοῖς θεοῖς*: *Epistles* 819.3.6). Following their example, simple people (*τοὺς μὲν πολλοὺς*) had begun acting unwisely (*ἄνευ λογιμοῦ φέρεσθαι*: *Epistles* 819.4). If Orion has taken temple property, he must be tortured; if he is a beggar, torture will only bring him sympathisers (*Epistles* 819.5). If he dies in shackles (*ἀποθανεῖν αὐτῷ δεδεμένῳ*), they will revere him (*Epistles* 819.6). Libanius calls for Orion to be released untouched, even if he has to be submitted to the tribunal (*εἰ δεῖ δίκην αὐτὸν ὑποσχεῖν*: *Epistles* 819.7).

Both letters prove that he held some important office, which is customarily not named explicitly. That it was a provincial governorship is indicated by the content of letter 763 about the benignly administered office and, above all, the scope of the matters that both letters deal with. The implementation of the emperor's religious policy (judging by letter 763, Orion did not attend to this with fervour), but also the upholding of social order and peace, justice, including conducting arrests, interrogations and torture—all these activities fell to provincial governors.

That both letters were addressed to the governor (Belaesus) currently governing the province of Arabia is a sign that the situations described in both letters were going on in precisely this city. Therefore, in spite of some doubts in the literature on the subject,¹⁰ I believe that Orion served as the governor of Arabia (*praeses Arabiae*, according to P. Petit 1994: 185).

In the context of Orion's governorship, and that of his successor, Belaesus, the letter from Emperor Julian to the inhabitants of Bostra dated 1 August 362 is important. The emperor accuses Christians, in particular the clergy, of fomenting riots and plundering estates. It was the Emperor's opinion that, in this illegal manner, the Church was reacting to the abolition of a number of privileges. Julian also received a letter from the Bishop of Bostra, Titus, in which the hierarch stated that local Christians, who were comparable in number to pagans, were being restrained from violent acts by him and his clerics. The Emperor recognised that the letter proved the participation of Christians in the riots, and therefore encouraged the Bostrans to change their bishop.

The letter says nothing about Orion. Is it because the attacks on him came later, after 1 August? Did Julian know the situation with Orion, but not mention him, knowing that the pagans were committing the lawlessness? We do not know the answer to these questions, so we cannot date Orion's term of office by the date of the letter. We must remain with the cautious dating of P. Petit (1994: 185), according to whom Orion held the governorship at the end of Constantius' reign.

Nowhere does Libanius call Orion

¹⁰ According to Bradbury (2004: 168 n. 123), 'Orion's post is still unclear, if he was a provincial governor 'he governed his own province', which was against the law, but sometimes happened.

a Christian, but from the quoted passages of letter 763, it appears that Orion was one, though—judging from the description of his government, and as P. Petit (1994: 185) rightly notes—moderately so. The anti-pagan legislation of Emperor Constantius II (a series of edicts issued after 341, that, among other actions, prohibited public sacrifices, closed pagan temples, and banned magical practices)¹¹ was not during Orion's rule, or it was completely disregarded, or the authorities were not zealous in upholding and enforcing it. Since the governor was not a zealous follower of Christianity, and since he did not pursue a repressive policy against local pagans, it was not for religious reasons that he was persecuted. The persecutors were pagans, which Libanius did not explicitly write anywhere, but this follows from a few cautious (quoted) mentions, and principally those that talk about acting under the guise of serving the gods. So the religious motives were just a pretext, and the real reason for the riots was the opportunity for material enrichment.

The numerous quotes above relating to Orion's escape beg several further questions. Did Orion leave office as a result of attacks by local pagans? Did he flee to Antioch to seek help there from his influential friend, Libanius? Or was it that he was 'only' relieved of his property, but remained in Bostra under the protection of the new governor, Belaesus? We can only give a decisive answer to the last question, because only on this subject does the text (*Epistles* 819) leave us in no doubt (Norman 1992: 158–9 n. a). One hypothesised answer to the first question is as follows: Orion did not lose office because of the pagan attacks. We know this for the following

¹¹ *CTh* 9.16.4–6; 16.10.2, 4, 6 (eds. Mommsen and Meyers 1954).

reasons: firstly, nowhere did Libanius write about this (in complaining about Orion's misfortune, he would have above all mentioned him having lost his office); secondly, apart from exceptions, we do not know what the pagans' actions were that would have threatened the local authorities during the rule of either Julian or other 4th-century emperors (later, officials fled office, but as a result of great rebellions by circus factions: Filipczak 2004: 35–48). As for the second question, Orion's escaping to Antioch is only possibly intimated by a letter (763.3.1–2) that says that Libanius saw Orion with his own eyes (but only assuming that the quoted phrase is read literally and not figuratively). The strongest argument for an escape to Antioch stems instead from the logic of events: Orion, being under threat in Bostra, escapes to the Syrian capital to seek help from his influential friend, Libanius. However, this scenario cannot be reconciled with an indisputable fact, namely that Orion was being held in custody in Bostra.¹²

Belaesus

Between mid-362 and the beginning of 363, Libanius sent five letters to Belaesus (*Βηλαίω*).¹³ In the first (*Epistles* 747), we read that Belaesus dignified his office by delivering speeches (*τῆς σῆς ἀρχῆς ἄξιός τῶν λόγων*) on the high regard he had

for the great family of rhetoricians (*ἅπαν τὸ τῶν σοφιστῶν γένος: Epistles* 747.1), that he led the city to prosperity (*ποιεῖ τὰς μὲν πόλεις εὐδαίμονας*), and that the law was then widely observed (*πᾶσι μὲν βεβαίον τοὺς νόμους: Epistles* 747.2). However, Gaudentios, who is known to both of them, is still waiting for justice (*νῦν γε δικαίως ἂν βελτίονος ἐγγέοντο τῆς τύχης: Epistles* 747.3). The fate of two of his relatives would now have to be improved (*τυχεῖν: Epistles* 747.4).

In two other letters (*Epistles* 762, 776), Libanius also intercedes for rhetorician friends Sopater (Janiszewski 2014e: 412 [s.v. Sopatros 4]) and Magnos (Janiszewski 2014g: 407 [s.v. Magnos 1]). Libanius had a debt of gratitude to the former (thanks to contacts among the authorities in Constantinople, Sopater had made it easier for Libanius to acquire local students: *Epistles* 762.1 i 2) and he therefore now asks him to look favourably (*ἡδέως ὀρᾶν*) on the matter concerning Sopater's parents (*Epistles* 762.4). In turn, Magnos, a school friend of Libanius, cannot assume inherited property (*πατρώαν*), because of the actions of some adversaries (*τοὺς ἀντιπάλους: Epistles* 776.1), and because the case will definitely go before the tribunal, the right decision will need to be taken (*καὶ δικαστηρίου χρήζοντας εὐμενῶς δέχοιο: Epistles* 776.2).

In the next two letters to Belaesus (*Epistles* 763, 819), Libanius raises the matter of his old friend Orion: because both letters have already been analysed, here I look only at three fragments relevant to Belaesus' biography. Referring to the people attacking Orion and his family, Libanius makes the appeal that it was he, Belaesus, the man who had turned the teaching department into a jewel of power (*σεῖ δὲ τὸν ἀπὸ τοῦ παιδεύοντος θρόνου πρὸς τὸν ψήφου κύριον*), who had stopped those evildoers (*Epistles* 819.4).

¹² It cannot ultimately be excluded that Libanius saw Orion in Bostra. Since, as he himself wrote (*Epistles* 819.2.2), he interceded in person with the governor of Arabia in the case of Orion, so in Bostra. But such a statement provokes further questions: would Libanius have gone to a province or city experiencing popular unrest? If so, why did he not write anything about it anywhere else? After all, nothing is known of Libanius' journey to Arabia from any other sources.

¹³ Biographical notes: Seeck 1899: 197 [s.v. Belaios 3]; 1906: 97 [s.v. Belaesus]; *PLRE* I: 160 [s.v. Belaesus]; Sartre 1982: 104 [s.v. Belaesus]; Petit 1994: 54–5 [s.v. Belaesus]; Janiszewski 2014e: 111 [s.v. Balaios].

As for the treatment of Orion himself, a good administrator (τὸν δ' αὖ ἄρχοντα καλόν, ἄλλως τε καὶ σέ), Belaeus should arrange the law (παρὰ τομς νόμους) such that those who have fled could return from exile, and their estates, acquired as easily as Mysian plunder, could be returned to their owners (*Epistles* 763.6).

The quoted fragments prove that Belaeus served as governor of Arabia (the text refers to events in Bostra, the provincial capital, since it was the inhabitants of Bostra who had informed Libanius about Orion; the term *arché* thus refers to the office of the governor of the province and *dikasterion* to his tribunal). O. Seeck (1906: 97) and P. Petit (1994: 54–5) write that he held the office of *praeses Arabiae*. According to M. Sartre (2007: 57), the fervent pagan Belaeus was appointed governor of Arabia by Julian (as evidenced by inscriptions on milestones) in response to the actions of local Christians. Later, in March 363, leaving Antioch, Julian appointed the new governor of Syria, Alexander, in revenge for the insults that he suffered from the Christians in this city. In both cases he can be seen to act the same way.

Libanius' letters only make it clear that Belaeus was in office when the attacks against Orion and his family occurred. Because the letter of Julian dated 1 August 362 testifies that riots between Christians and pagans had been going on for some time, Belaeus must have taken office before 1 August. Until when he held office is not known (if he were to have taken the customary year, or two at most, his service would have to have ended in mid-363 or 364 at the latest).

Before becoming governor he was 'professeur d'éloquence' (Petit 1994: 54–5), since during his tenure he showed proficiency in oratory and he

was close to the rhetorical community. Libanius interceded with him most often in regard to other rhetoricians (Gaudentios, Sopater, Magnos). These were private matters, and it is impossible to say whether they ended as Libanius wanted or not. The example of Orion, for whom Libanius interceded three times and whose fate depended on Belaeus, indicates Belaeus' intractability (or at least indifference) to the requests of Libanius (although the case of Orion, a former governor and a Christian, was probably exceptional). Both this fact, and calling out to Zeus while at the same time Libanius turned to Belaeus, prove that Belaeus was a pagan.

It is difficult to say whether the mention of prosperous cities and the rule of law resulted from the actual situation (two other letters talk about riots in Bostra, so one might doubt it) or from the letter-writing convention according to which Libanius had to appeal to the ideal of a just governor, in the hope of decisions in favour of his friends. It is certain that Belaeus had a certain apparatus of coercion and a prison service capable of carrying out torture, judging by the words of letter 819 (Filipczak 2006: 53–70).

Conclusions

Titulature and duties

Andronicus, Maximus, Orion, and Belaeus. We have no doubt that each of them was a governor of Arabia, although the identification of this office is nowhere based on technical terms (from 262, the province was governed by the equestrian *praesides*), but is 'extracted' from general vocabulary and, above all, from context.

According to the reforms of Diocletian and Constantine (3rd/4th century), governors were stripped of power over the army, which was handed over to

provincial *duces*. However, as stated by some scholars, in less secure provinces of the empire (including Arabia), governors still commanded the military units (Jones 1964: 101). All situations discussed in this article refer to civil, legal, or judicial cases. They most often relate to restoring property to its owners, appointments of positions, and favourable treatment in various matters. There is not a single trace that would indicate military command or any other military tasks having been carried out by governors of Arabia between 354 and 363. My research confirms and supplements the findings of M. Sartre, who on the basis of epigraphical sources (but referring to governors other than those I discuss), determined that before the year 367, Arabia was governed by two officials, a *dux* and a *praeses* (IGLS 13/1: 134–135). Later, military and civil authorities may have been brought together in the hands of *virī spectabilis ducis Arabiae et praesidis* (according to the mention of *Notitia Dignitatum*, a source from the 4th/5th century: *Notitia Dignitatum* Orient 33, 36: 264 [ed. Faleiro 2005]).

Origins, Education

Two of them (Andronicus and Orion) bore popular Greek names, one a Latin name (Maximus), and one a name of unknown origin (Belaesus). Judging only by names, the first two must have come from the Greek-speaking, eastern part of the empire. Maximus is a name that appears on several dozen inscriptions from the Bostra region, most often for the earlier period, and sometimes for soldiers (IGLS 13/1: inscriptions 9342, 9343, 9002, 9396, 9266, 9415, 9232, 9112, 9358; IGLS 13/2: inscriptions 9536a, 9536b, 9570k, 9595, 9666, 9747, 9750, 9751, 9756, 9757, 9758, 9767, 9865, 9882, 9884,

9888, 9919). I doubt that our Maximus had recently arrived from the West in order to make an administrative career in Arabia. He is more likely to have been a descendant of soldiers or veterans, or some other Latins who had previously come to Arabia and been Hellenised there.

They must all have used Greek well, since they received correspondence from Libanius, and he himself called three of them (Andronicus, Maximus, Orion) his friends. Apart from Orion, whose education we know nothing about, the three others were well educated. It seems that Maximus should be counted among those few governor-rhetoricians who ruled in various provinces, and about whom Libanius writes during the reign of Julian (*Libanius Orations* 18: 159 [ed. Norman 1969]). Belaesus was a sophist before becoming governor; there are grounds to identify Andronicus as a philosopher.

Religious Identity

We know little about this, but it seems that the situation was varied, since the governorship was held by a Christian (Orion) and, perhaps straight after him, by a pagan (Belaesus). Although since the time of Constantine the number of Christian provincial governors increased, until 416 there were no formal obstacles to pagans holding the office (*CTh.* 16.10.21). In the case of the neighbouring province of *Syria Coele*, in 324–395, more-or-less half of the governors we know of believed in the old gods (Filipczak 2014: 164–6). The situation may have been similar in Arabia, all the more so that the region was probably less Christianised than northern and western Syria.

The Situation in Arabia in Julian's Times

The analysed letters give an

insight into the situation of individual families, mainly attesting to their material problems. It is true that, in the correspondence, we find signs of some abuse, probably by provincial officials, but this cannot be seen as proof of the impoverishment of the entire province.

Comparing Libanius' descriptions of the situation in Bostra with what Emperor Julian wrote on the issue, we must ask who really was responsible for the explosion of provocations in the provincial capital—whether it was pagans, as Libanius writes, or Christians, as Julian claims. Pagans rioted with a sense of impunity and the desire to enrich themselves on the property of Christians (Libanius stresses it so many times that it is hard to doubt); as for Christians, we are not sure. Julian's argument is confused and unconvincing, and is based on a peculiar, twisted interpretation of the words of Bishop Titus. Libanius, who was after all a pagan, did not accuse Christians of rioting in Bostra. If the Christians really took part in some of the events, then it may have been only in self-defence. In any case, Libanius' letters do not attest to any revolt.

Acknowledgements

I am deeply grateful to Professor Maciej Kokoszko for translation of, and consultation on, many of the letters of Libanius used in this article. This article was written as part of a research project financed by the National Science Centre (Poland). Decision number: DEC-2016/23/B/HS3/01891. This article was published in English in *Res Historica. Czasopismo Instytutu Historii UMCS* in 2020.

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