THE GOVERNOR AS BENEFACTOR IN LATE ANTIQUITY*

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Upon his arrival in Edessa as the new governor of Osrhoene in the year 497, Alexander (*PLRE* II, Alexander 14) launched his term of office with a series of benefactions, as Joshua the Stylite tells us in his *Syriac Chronicle*.¹ Alexander cleaned up the mess in the streets of the city. He put up a wooden 'suggestion' box in front of his residence in which people could drop him a note with a request in case they did not feel comfortable expressing their wish in public.² Every Friday he would settle lawsuits free of charge, and even uninvestigated cases going back more than fifty years would be brought before him and settled. In addition, he built a walkway at one of the city's gates, and began the construction of a public hall, which apparently had already been in the planning for many years. These measures give the impression that Alexander took his office as governor very seriously and cared a great deal for his subjects. What did they think of all of this? Did Alexander do more than they hoped for? Were his efforts beyond their expectations? And, from Alexander's point of view, what did he gain from his endeavors?

In this paper I take a closer look at the relationship between governors and provincials: more precisely, I concentrate on the responsibility of governors as 'benefactors' in the Later Roman Empire, in particular in the

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¹ Pseudo-Joshua the Stylite, *Chronicle* 29.

² See comments by F.R. Trombley and J.W. Watt, *The Chronicle of Pseudo-Joshua the Stylite* (Liverpool 2000), 27: "Alexander may have been reviving an old north Syrian custom in soliciting anonymous complaints and adjudicating them on Fridays without a fee". The commentators suspect that this custom even continued into the Islamic period at Aleppo. In the *Chronicle of Qirtay al-'Izzi Khaznadari* (d. AD 1333) an identical custom is found; Trombley and Watt argue that the Mongols might have taken this practice from the locals during their occupation of Syria in AD 1258-1260: "When Hulegu camped before Aleppo ... I sought [his] camp. It was part of the justice of the Mongols that when they made camp, they set up a pole near the king's encampment. From the top of the pole a small box was hung with a string, and around the pole was a guard of the most trusted Mongols. If a man had a complaint or had suffered an injustice, he would write his grievance in a petition, seal it, and place it in this box. When Friday came, the king would have the box brought to him and would open it with a key and thus discover the injustices suffered by people".

period between 284 and 500, with a focus on the eastern provinces of the empire.

Benefactions, perhaps in essence a phenomenon of ‘voluntary gift-giving,’ played a prominent role in the socio-political organization of the ancient world. People were accustomed to emperors, Roman officials, and wealthy private citizens bestowing favors upon individuals and communities, be it the construction of public buildings, the organization of lavish games, or the writing of letters of recommendation.³ A governor, as one of the more prominent Roman officials in provincial communities, was expected to grant benefactions as well, though as will be demonstrated, certain benefactions were prescribed by law and can almost be regarded as part of governors’ official duties, while others were voluntary and it depended on an individual governor if he chose to grant them.

Provincials had certain expectations of what kind of benefactions governors would and should bestow upon them, while at the same time governors also had expectations of how provincials would and should act as a result of their benefactions. Though governors had the more formal responsibility of benefactors, I argue that provincials also took on the role of benefactors for governors. A benefaction never occurred in isolation, but was part of a chain of benefactions. As a result, the reciprocity of benefactions became crucial for a rewarding relationship between provincials and governors. Provincials were aware of this reciprocal element in the relationship, as Libanius noted when he praised a governor for benefactions which were gratefully received by a provincial family: “How can one not grant as many favors as possible, like seeds on the rich earth, to the sort of man who takes care to recall a favor?”⁴

In this paper I use the following two categories of benefactions of governors: material benefactions which led to tangible objects such as Alexander’s construction of a public hall or the restoration of walls; and non-material benefactions such as the use of a governor’s personal and political

³ See R. MacMullen, *Corruption and the Decline of Rome* (New Haven-London 1988), especially 96-118, chapter 2.4: “How power worked: through favor”, for an extensive discussion of the use of favors and power in relationships between people of equal and different status.

⁴ Libanius, *Epistula* 651 [=Bradbury 100] of 361, addressed to the governor of Galatia, Acacius (*PLRE* I, Acacius 8); ὅτω μέλει τοῦ μεμνησθαι χάριτος, πῶς οὐχ ὅτι πλείστας τῷ τοιοῦτῳ δοτέον, ὥσπερ πείρα γῆ σπέρματα. Where indicated translations are by S. Bradbury, *Selected Letters of Libanius from the Age of Constantius and Julian* (Liverpool 2003).

influence to help provincials; either individuals, whole communities, or a province in its entirety.

In respect to material benefactions, provincials could expect their governor to carry out so-called ‘public works’ (*opera publica*), which were projects serving the general public, for instance the restoration of walls and gates, the improvement of bad roads, or the construction of new public buildings. Many regulations in the 15th book of the Theodosian Code demonstrate that a governor by law was expected to play a key role in the undertaking of many of these civic projects, and to do so voluntarily.⁵ First of all, he decided on which projects he wanted to complete. This step presents the interesting issue of how a governor would pick the projects he wanted to pursue. Would a city council give him advice? Was a governor, upon his arrival in the province – after a pleasant reception with the appropriate welcome speeches – updated on the state of public buildings, roads and other projects, and was he then presented with a wish list of what the province or a particular city would like to see accomplished?⁶ As a rule, a

⁵ *CTh* 15.1.18 of 374, “If governors (*rectores*) of provinces should see that any public works should necessarily be commenced in any municipality, they shall not hesitate to undertake such works immediately”. *Rectores provinciarum quodcumque opus inchoandum esse necessario viderint in aliqua civitate, id arripere not dubitent.* See also 15.1.28 of 390, “If any person, more audaciously than wisely, should undertake to erect any new public works in any municipality, he shall know that he must furnish the expense from his own property and that he must complete what he commenced. We shall not credit to paymasters any sum that is so used. On the other hand, the office staff and the judge himself shall be obliged to pay ten pounds of gold each, so that they will at least through fear, as they should have done voluntarily, devote their efforts to the repair of the older works”. *Si quis novum opus in qualibet civitate sustollere audacius quam consultius molietur, de proprio se conlaturum sumptus et perfecturum quod coeperit noscat. Nihil quippe dispensatoribus ex hoc usu feremus accepto, et contra officium adque ipsum iudicem auri pondo dena constringent, ut saltem metu, quod facere sponte debuerant, reficiendis vestustioribus impendant laborem.* Text by T. Mommsen, P.M. Meyer, *Theodosiani libri XVI* (Berlin 1905), translation by C. Pharr, *The Theodosian Code and Novels* (Princeton 1952).

⁶ Cf. *Dig.* 1.16.7 (Ulpian), “He (proconsul) should go on a tour of inspection of sacred buildings and public works to check whether they are sound in walls and roofs or are in need of any rebuilding. He should see to it that whatever works have been started, they are finished as fully as the resources of that municipality permit, he should with full formality appoint attentive people as overseers of the works, and he should also in case of need provide military attachés for the assistance of the overseers”. *Aedes sacras et opera publica circumire inspiciendi gratia, an sarta tectaque sint vel an aliqua refectione indigeant, et si qua coepta sunt ut consummentur, prout vires eius rei publicae permittunt, curare debet curatoresque operum diligentes sollemniter praeponere, ministeria quoque militaria, si opus fuerit, ad curatores adiuvandos dare.*

governor did not come from the province he governed, so he would not be aware of the (current) state of affairs. One can only speculate on these arrangements in the Later Roman Empire, but it is likely that provincials made their wishes known as soon as a governor arrived, either in the province or in a particular community.⁷

Several laws indicate that emperors were involved as well in the decision-making of which projects to undertake, because they wanted to be consulted about the most important projects in a province, and ultimately they were the ones in whose name governors as their representatives carried out these projects.⁸

⁷ An example from the Early Empire can possibly shed some light on this issue. When C. Terentius Tullius Geminus, imperial legate of the emperor Claudius arrived in the province of Moesia Inferior for a term of three years in AD 50, a provincial delegation met him with a welcome and a request from the people and city council of Histria which demonstrates that governors upon arrival could be presented with requests: “Your representatives Demetrios, Eschriion, Ota[...], Meidias, Dionysodorus, Hegesagoras, Aristagoras and Metrodorus met me in Tomis, and delivered your decree; after they demonstrated their goodwill toward the emperor, they rejoiced together for our health and arrival, holding the most serious possible conversation about those things you ordered them to discuss. Acknowledging therefore the attitude your city demonstrated toward us, I shall always try to become the creator of a benefaction to you” (IScM 1, 68, ll. 52-60). οἱ πρέσβεις ὑμῶν Δημήτριος, Ἑσχροῖων, Ὠτα. 3, [Μειδίας] / Διονυσόδωρος, Ἠγησαγόρας, Ἀρισταγόρας, [Μητροδόωρος ἐν]τυχόν-τες μοι ἐν Τόμει τὸ ψήφισμα ὑμῶν ἐπέδωσαν κα[ὶ τὴν εἰς τὸν Σεβασ]τὸν ἡμῶν ἐπιδειξάμενοι εὖνοιαν συνήσθησαν ἐπὶ τῇ ἡμετέρᾳ ὑγίει/α καὶ παρουσίᾳ σπουδεστάτην <π>οιησάμενοι τ[ὴν περὶ ὧν ἐνετείλασ]θε αὐτοῖς ὁμειλίαν· ἐπιγνούς οὖν ἦν καὶ πρὸς [ἡμᾶς ἐνεφάνισαν τῆς] πόλεως ὑμῶν διάθεσιν πειράσομαι ἀεὶ τινος ὑμῶν ἀγαθοῦ/ γενέσθαι παραίτιος. With thanks to Tom Elliott who generously shared this material with me.

⁸ CTh 15.1.2 of 321, “Judges, moreover, who must restore public works, shall be admonished to report to Our knowledge works that have been completed rather than those that have been commenced, unless, perhaps, upon just ground, a petition must be presented that provision should be made for the accounts of certain expenditures, if perchance the funds for such expenditures should be lacking. Furthermore, the judges must call on Our advice in connection with the most important and largest works, not in connection with every trivial work”. *monendi autem iudices sunt, qui instaurare publica opera debent, ut de effectis eis potius quam inchoatis ad nostram scientiam referant, nisi forte iusta ratione petendum sit aliquos, si forte defuerint, inpensarum titulos provideri. De rebus autem praecipuis maximisque, non de quibuscumque vilissimis nostrum debent interpellare consilium.* See also 15.1.37 of 398, “No judge shall burst forth into such rash lawlessness as to suppose that he should begin any public work without consulting Our Piety, or that he should dare to tear from any structure any ornament of bronze or marble or any other material, which can be proved to have been in serviceable use or to constitute an ornamentation in any municipality, or that he should dare to transfer such material to some

A governor's relatively short term of office, perhaps on average less than two years, seriously limited how much he could do, and must have influenced the decisions he made about projects he wanted to endorse.⁹ If, however, a project was not finished under a certain governor, his successor was expected to finish the old project first, before starting something anew.¹⁰ Though a time frame needed to be set up for the completion of a project, there could be several reasons why a project would not be finished during one governor's term.¹¹ Perhaps his departure was premature, perhaps a natural disaster such as an earthquake had done so much damage to a city that the restoration took many years, or perhaps the project he had started was simply too large. In addition, governors were not allowed to start a new building if there were old buildings that needed restoration.¹² The frequency with which

other place without the order of Your Sublimity. If any person should violate this regulation, he shall be punished by a fine of three pounds of gold". *Nemo iudicem in id temeritatis erumpat, ut inconsulta pietate nostra aliquid operas existimet inchoandum vel ex diversis operibus 'aeramen' aut marmora vel quamlibet speciem, quae fuisse in usu vel ornatu probabitur civitatis, eripere vel alio transferre sine iussu tuae sublimitatis audeat. Etenim si quis contra fecerit, 'tribus' libris auri multabitur.*

⁹ See A.H.M. Jones, *The Later Roman Empire 284-602* (Baltimore 1964), 381. For Africa (in the period between 357-417) the average was little more than a year, and for Egypt (328-73, when the prefects of Egypt were mere provincial governors) well under two years, perhaps even 18 months. See also J.H.W.G. Liebeschuetz, *Antioch. City and Imperial Administration in the Later Roman Empire* (Oxford 1972), 111-112.

¹⁰ *CTh* 15.1.3 of 326/362, "We direct that judges (=governors) of the provinces shall be admonished that they must know that they shall not arrange for any new work until they have completed those works which were commenced by their predecessors, excepting only the construction of temples". *Provinciarum iudices commoneri praecipimus, ut nihil se novi operas ordinare ante debere cognoscant, quam ea conpleverint, quae a decessoribus inchoata sunt, exceptis dumtaxat templorum aedificationibus.*

¹¹ *CTh* 9.17.2 of 349 to the Praetorian Prefect, "The following rule must be observed in the future, that in the provinces the judges of the respective districts and in the City of Rome Your Eminence, together with the pontiffs, shall inspect to see whether any monument should be restored by repairs, provided that, if permission should be finally granted, a time shall also be fixed for the completion of the work". *Hoc in posterum observando, ut in provinciis locorum iudices, in urbe Roma cum pontificibus tua celsitudo inspiciat, si per sarturas succurrendum sit alicui monumento, ut ita demum data licentia tempus etiam consummando operi statuatur.*

¹² *CTh* 15.1.15 of 365, "By Our sanction a law has been promulgated, which, by its edict and authority, restrains all judges and governors (*rectores*) of provinces from hastily undertaking any new works before they repair those which have been overcome by old age and have fallen apart". *Lex sanctibus nobis rogata est, quae iudices omnes et rectores provinciarum edicto suo adque auctoritate cohibet aliquid novi operas adripere, priusquam*

laws forbidding this practice appear, seems to indicate, though, that in practice governors started new buildings without consideration for the restoration of old buildings. Of course, from a governor's point of view, restoration seemed less prestigious than the initiation of a brand new building project.

One could argue then that it did not matter if a governor took on a project, which could not possibly be completed during his term of office, but of course, if a governor did not finish a project, he could not put it on his 'record' as an accomplishment either, or even be publicly praised for it. Emperors did realize that new works would bring fame and glory to governors, and by law they permitted governors to take on certain projects of their own, as long as they had done a certain amount of restoration first.¹³

Second, a governor needed to allocate money for public works, because he himself would not finance a project, although some exceptional examples exist of governors who used some of their own money.¹⁴ Money came from three potential sources. Civic revenues like taxes were the first source to turn to, and it was decreed by law that one third of them needed to be put aside for financing the repair of public works.¹⁵ Second, wealthy locals were expected to pay for or be involved in certain undertakings, if necessary in the form of one of the compulsory services, which the upper

ea, quae victa senio fatiscerent, repararent. Quae nunc etiam credidimus repetenda. See also 15.1.14; 15.1.16; 15.1.17; 15.1.21; 15.1.29.

¹³ *CTh* 15.1.20 of 380, "If a judge (=governor) should be sent to a province, he shall restore to their former state of splendor two thirds of the works which have crumbled through neglect or old age, and he shall construct as new a third thereof, if he wishes to provide for his own fame and glory". *Iudex, qui ad provinciam destinatus, duas partes vel incuria vel vetustate conlapsas ad statum pristinum nitoris adducat adque tertiam construat novitatis, si tamen famae et propriis cupit laudibus providere.*

¹⁴ See for instance, Libanius, *Oratio* 46.44, in which he denounces the governor Florentius (*PLRE* I, Florentius 9) for extravagant building, though paid for by himself. Cf. *CTh* 15.1.35 of 396, "We direct that if any palace, official residence of a judge, State storehouse, or stable and sheltering place for public animals should fall into ruin, such structure shall be repaired out of the resources of the governors (*rectores*) who have administered the judicial power from the time of the first consulship of Our sainted father to the present time". *Quidquid de palatiis aut praetoriis iudicum aut horreis aut stabulis et receptaculis animalium publicorum ruina labsum fuerit, id rectorum facultatibus reparari praecipimus, qui a primo consultatu divi genitoris nostri usque praesens tempus gesserunt iudiciariam potestatem.*

¹⁵ *CTh* 15.1.32, 15.1.33, both of 395.

classes were supposed to fulfill for their community.¹⁶ People always tried to avoid this burden by obtaining exemption from governors. When too many people were granted these exemptions, especially when they were obtained illicitly from a governor who wanted to exempt powerful individuals by way of benefaction, fewer resources were available for the completion of these projects. Emperors tried to stop this development with strict regulations.¹⁷ On the other hand, emperors also showed understanding for rich locals who were pressured into unlawful compulsory services by governors.¹⁸ Third, if local communities were not able to finance projects completely, governors could appeal to the emperor for some special imperial funds.¹⁹

One could argue that a governor was not really a ‘benefactor’ in respect to public works, because he was simply fulfilling his duty as

¹⁶ Libanius, *Epistula* 1392 (=Bradbury 97), “So work on his greatness, not by making Auxentius a syndikos (think of the tears at Daphne), but by promoting the rebuilding of the temples or some similar project through him, for which you will find that the man raises up greater things at less expense”. Ἐργάζου δὴ τὸ ὕψος σύνδικον μὲν τὸν Αὐξεντίου μὴ ποιῶν μεμνημένος τῶν ἐν Δάφνῃ δακρύων, ἱερῶν δὲ ἀνάστασιν ἢ τι τοιοῦτον δι’ αὐτοῦ θεραπεύων, οὗ τὸν ἄνδρα εὐρήσεις μείζονα ἀπ’ ἐλάττονος ἐγείροντα δαπάνης.

¹⁷ CTh 15.1.5 of 361, “Very many persons, by the concessions of judges, have received exemption in connection with the construction of public works. We therefore order that inquiry shall be made as to all such persons, so that Our Clemency may know their names, and also such private grants of exemption. [...] We now order, however, that if it should be learned that exemptions have been elicited contrary to justice and to the detriment of the public, the recipients shall cease to have such exemptions as gain. Hereafter access shall be denied to those persons who seek similar privileges”. *Plurimi immunitates operum publicorum concessione iudicum adepti sunt. Itaque omnes iubemus inquiri, ut eorum nomina adque etiam privatas indulgentias lenitudo nostra cognoscat. [...] Iam nunc tamen iussimus, ut adversus fas elicitas immunitates per detrimenta conperissent et in lucro habere desistant. In posterum aditus similia cupientibus obstruatur.*

¹⁸ CTh 15.1.7 of 361, “Since various judges (governors) deem it proper to have some buildings erected in certain cities, they shall not call on the property of Senators for this compulsory service. It is fitting that those Senators to whom such responsibility has been entrusted in the different provinces shall rely on Our sanction and steadfastly resist such attempt so that Senatorial property may not be harassed in consideration of such matters”. *Quoniam diversi iudices nonnulla opera in quibusdam aestimant urbibus extruenda, ad huiusmodi necessitatem senatorum substantia non vocetur. Eos quoque senatores, quibus per diversas provincias fuerit sollicitudo commissa, fretos sanctione nostra huiuscemodi temptamenti decet constanter obsistere, ne senatoriae facultates harum rerum contemplatione vexentur.*

¹⁹ CTh 15.1.2 of 321, “... unless, perhaps, upon just ground, a petition must be presented that provision should be made for the accounts of certain expenditures, if perchance the funds for such expenditures should be lacking”. *...nisi forte iusta ratione petendum sit aliquos, si forte defuerint, impensarum titulos provideri.*

governor, prescribed by law, and with money from the provincials themselves. I would argue that this perception is justified from a formal point of view, but that a governor's benefaction consisted in how he pleased provincials in his choice of the projects, and how he used his sense of justice to allocate the money for these projects.²⁰ It was particularly important when the governor chose to finance a civic project with the assistance of wealthy provincials that he was able to convince the provincials that he made the right choice of project and was in fact bestowing a benefaction upon the citizens as a whole.

Once a public work was finished, a governor was not allowed to attach his own name to it and could even be punished if he did, because officially he acted in the emperor's name: "If any of the governors (=judges) should inscribe their own names, rather than the name of Our Eternity, on any completed public work, they shall be held guilty of high treason".²¹

Provincials, on the other hand, were not restricted by the imperial regulations, and could publicly praise governors for the accomplishment of these projects. Flavius Areianus Alypius (*PLRE* I, Alypius 12) governor of Pamphylia in the late third or early fourth century was praised for repairing the harbour and city of Side.²² In the mid-fifth century, the people of Cyprus honored their governor Claudius Leontichus (*PLRE* II, Leontichus 2) with an inscription for rebuilding the walls of the city of Lapethus.²³

Apart from his anticipated involvement in public works, a governor could also initiate projects, especially in the case of natural disasters. In times of need, when famine broke out, an earthquake occurred, or war had caused destruction, provincials could expect a governor to step in and help,

²⁰ According to Menander Rhetor (416), governors' encouragement of city development (τὸ πόλεις ἐγείρειν) was part of their virtue of justice, D.A. Russell, and N.G. Wilson, eds., *Menander Rhetor* (Oxford 1981). See also C. Roueché, 'The functions of the Roman governor in late Antiquity: some observations', *Antiquité Tardive* 6 (1998), 33.

²¹ *CTh* 15.1.31 of 394: *si qui iudices perfecto operi suum potius nomen quam nostrae perennitatis scribserint, maiestatis teneantur obnoxii.*

²² AE 1958, 201: Φλ. Ἀρηιανὸν Ἀλύπιον τὸν διασημ(ότατον) ἡγεμόνα τὸν κτίστην τοῦ λιμένος καὶ τῆς πόλεως Εὐρηκλῆς ὁ καὶ Καύστριος τὸν ἑαυτοῦ καὶ τῆς πατρίδος εὐεργέτην.

²³ T.B. Mitford, 'New inscriptions from early Christian Cyprus', *Byzantion* 20 (1953), no 10, 136: ἐκτίσθη τὰ τεῖχην/ ἐπὶ Κλ(αυδίου) Λεοντίχου/ τοῦ λαμπροτάτου/ ὑπατικοῦ ἀπὸ θε/μελίων τῇ λαμπρᾷ/Λαπηθίων πόλει./ Εὐτύχει, Ἰλλύρι. See for changes in epigraphic practice in the Later Roman Empire, C. Roueché, 'Benefactors in the late Roman period: the eastern empire', in M. Christol, O. Masson, eds., *Actes du Xe Congrès International d'Épigraphie Grecque et Latine* (Paris 1997), 357.

though, again, he would not necessarily spend his own money, but the expectation was that he as an official with authority would try to solve the problems. To return again to Edessa in Oshroene, when famine ravaged the city, the governor Demosthenes (*PLRE* II, Demosthenes 3) went to the emperor to ask for help, and got a considerable sum of money to divide among the poor.²⁴ He also put down mattresses in the bathhouses so that people could use them as shelters, and the nobles of the city played a role in the relief efforts as well.

A few years later, in 505, after a plague, destruction of war and more famine in Edessa, the new governor Eulogius (*PLRE* II, Eulogius 7) “was diligent in rebuilding it, [and the emperor gave] him two hundred pounds for the expenses of reconstruction. He rebuilt and renewed the [entire] outer wall encircling the city, and also renewed and restored the two aqueducts coming into (it) and completed the public hall which had collapsed, renewed his own residence (*praetorium*), and did a great deal of restoration throughout the city.”²⁵ It is important to bear in mind that the governor then would be praised for trying to solve the problems. This suggests that his involvement can be regarded as a benefaction. It is equally important to bear in mind that these ‘extra’ projects were not unique to governors, but were often carried out by members of the elite or bishops as well. This is illustrated by the case of Demosthenes in Edessa where nobles followed Demosthenes’s example by setting up sick-rooms for the poor to bring some relief. In the case of Eulogius, the emperor gave him money for restoration, but the “emperor also gave twenty pounds to the bishop for expenses and the renewal of the wall”.²⁶

²⁴ Pseudo-Joshua the Stylite, *Chronicle* 42-43, “(42) When Demosthenes the governor went up to the emperor, he told him about this distress, and the emperor gave him a considerable sum of money to divide among the poor. When he got (back) from him to Edessa, he marked many of them on their necks with seals and gave each of them a pound of bread per day. However, they could not live (on this), for they had been debilitated by the distress of hunger that consumed them. [...] (43) The governor blocked the gates of the porticoes (*basilikai*) at the winter bathhouse (*demosion*) and put down straw and matting in it. (People) slept there, but it was not enough for them. When the nobles of the city saw this, they also set up <sick-rooms>, and many went in and found shelter in them”. For *demosion* see Trombley and Watt 2000, op. cit. (n. 2), glossary, p. 138.

²⁵ Pseudo-Joshua the Stylite, *Chronicle* 87. Two hundred pounds in gold or 14,400 solidi. This public hall is the same as the one Alexander started to build only a few years earlier. See Trombley and Watt 2000, op. cit. (n. 2), 106, n.494.

²⁶ Pseudo-Joshua the Stylite, *Chronicle* 87.

The second type of governors' benefactions was non-material: these benefactions were all those actions that could assist provincials in ways that did not manifest themselves in a material sense and that were not laid down by law. In general, non-material benefactions can be defined as 'favors' that were granted to individuals, groups or communities as a result of an appeal.

Because non-material benefactions were not laid down by law, the successful outcome of a request for them depended strongly on the individual willingness of governors. These benefactions had a more personal character than material ones, because one needed some type of personal contact with a governor if he were to bestow a favor. If one did not know him, then one would look for a patron who would have easier access to him, as the correspondence of Libanius, Basil of Caesarea and Gregory of Nazianzus illustrates. Two categories of non-material benefactions can be identified. First, governors received many letters of introduction and recommendation, although the presentation of such letters was not confined to governors, but was part of the traditions of the Roman upper classes and the system of patronage. During his governorship of Armenia in 361, Maximus (*PLRE* I, Maximus 19) received a letter from Libanius: "Proaresius, who with his eloquence blessed the whole world, has a relative in Cucucus, Philastrius a city councilor. I would be pleased for him to enjoy your goodwill as being a man of worth".²⁷ Then, when Maximus became governor of Galatia, Libanius sent him another letter in 363, this time asking an audience for Encratus whom Libanius knew well and who, "seems to me an excellent fellow, the sort of man who could be trusted and befriended", and expressing the wish that he would "become great through the favor".²⁸ These letters of introduction and recommendation did not need to include more than a few words, and could be fairly standard in expression.

Second, provincials requested help for specific problems in situations in which governors alone could solve the problems. Gregory, for instance, corresponded with several governors to ask for help for provincials. He

²⁷ Libanius, *Epistula* 275 [= Norman 73], τοῦ τὴν οἰκουμένην ἐκ λόγων εὖ ποιούντος Προαιρεσίου συγγενῆς ἐν Κουκουσῶ Φιλάστριος πολιτεύεται. Τοῦτον καὶ ὡς ἄνδρα ἀγαθὸν βουλοίμην ἂν τῆς παρὰ σοῦ τυγχάνειν εὐνοίας. See A.F. Norman, *Libanius. Autobiography and selected letters* (Cambridge Ma. 1992).

²⁸ Libanius, *Epistula* 1381 [= Bradbury 111] μοι ἔδοξε εἶναι χρηστὸς καὶ οἷος εἰκότως ἂν πιστεύεσθαι καὶ φιλεῖσθαι, and γενέσθω διὰ τῆς χάριτος μέγας. Apart from the two letters discussed here briefly, Libanius wrote many other letters of introduction and recommendation. See also *Epistula* 298, 696, 772, and 779. See also Gregory of Nazianzus, *Epistula* 106.

wrote Olympius (*PLRE* I, Olympius 10), the governor of Cappadocia Secunda, to ask for assistance for the widow Philomena in a court case. He wrote to the same governor making another request: to give a different job to the husband of his niece Alypiana, Nicobulus, who could no longer take the loneliness at a remote station of the postal service.²⁹

Governors needed to be cautious about the perception of their benefactions. They would not want to appear to give preference to one provincial town over the other, for instance in assigning building projects, or to favor one particular group of provincials more than another. Emperors were aware of this potential problem, and a law from 365 addressed this specific issue, prohibiting governors from seizing building material from 'obscure' towns in the province to use it for the adornment of the metropolis or other major cities.³⁰

Tisamenes (*PLRE* I, 916-917), governor of Syria in 386, infuriated Libanius when he offended the city of Antioch, proud metropolis of the province.³¹ When it came to filling the voluntary position of Syriarch, whose duty, among other things, it was to organize beast shows, Tisamenes failed to find a decurion in Antioch, although as governor he should have enlisted someone in Antioch, either voluntarily or by force.³² He then turned to an 'outsider' from the neighboring city of Beroea; a slap in the face for the confident metropolis. As its spokesman, Libanius lashed out against Tisamenes and appealed to the emperor:

²⁹ Gregory of Nazianzus, *Epistula* 104 (Philomena), 126 (Nicobulus); both written in 382.

³⁰ *CTh* 15.1.14 of 365, "We forbid further progress of the presumptuous conduct of judges who, to the ruin of the obscure towns, pretend that they are adorning the metropolitan or other very splendid cities, and thus seek the material of statues, marble works, or columns that they may transfer them. It shall not be allowable to commit such deeds with impunity after the issuance of Our law, especially since We have ordered that no new structures shall be begun before the old ones are restored. If, indeed, any work should be commenced, other municipalities must be spared". *Praesumptionem iudicum ulterius prohibemus, qui in eversionem abditorum oppidorum metropoles vel splendidissimas civitates ornare se fingunt transferendorum signorum vel marmorum vel columnarum materiam requirentes. Quod post legem nostram sine poena admittere non licebit, praesertim cum neque novam constitui fabricam iusserimus, antequam vetera reformentur, et, si adeo aliquid fuerit inchoandum, ab aliis civitatibus conveniat temperari.*

³¹ One of Antioch's unique features was the permanent presence of three important Roman officials, the *Comes Orientis*, the *Magister Militum* and the *Consularis Syriae*.

³² *CTh* 12.1.10 of 383, in which the Syriarchate was made a voluntary position. See also A.F. Norman, ed., *Libanius. Selected works*, volume 2 (Cambridge-London 1977), 212-13, and J.H.W.G. Liebeschuetz, 'The Syriarch in the fourth century', *Historia* 8 (1959) 113-26.

So if anyone brings the foremost city to ruin and exalts one that is not even second-rate and allows it to insult its better, is he not also thereby injuring Your household? Yes! The injury is the greatest, if the case is carefully considered. He (Tisamenes) was not sent, Sire, to disturb the order of precedence among the cities, nor yet to debase the prestige which some possessed and to set the lesser upon the greater: he was sent to maintain the existing order, and to supervise each in a fitting manner and by his administration to increase their prosperity. Tisamenes, however, in bringing here that fellow from Beroea for the purpose he did, proclaimed it aloud to all that our city must be subordinated to that other, that it must renounce its title of metropolis, that our council must yield precedence to theirs, our citizens to theirs, and that we must recognize our betters. You could see the insult in this from the pain felt by our well-wishers and the pleasure felt by those who are not.³³

Benefactions, therefore, clearly played an important role in a good relationship between provincials and governors. I have discussed the perspective of the provincials and what they could expect from their governor, but to turn to that of a governor, what could he expect as a reward for being a benefactor to provincials? Communication between provincials and governors was not a one-way street, in which governors were at the giving end, and provincials at the receiving end. Rather, the relationship was reciprocal. If governors bestowed benefactions on provincials, they could expect benefactions in return. Just like the benefactions of governors, the expression of provincials' benefactions could take either a material or a non-material form. Though much can be said about provincials' material benefactions – for example, statues and inscriptions set up to honor governors –, I want to focus on the non-material benefits for governors.

³³ Libanius, *Oratio* 33. 22-23, ὅστις οὖν τὴν μὲν πρώτην καθαιρεῖ, τὴν δὲ οὐδὲ δευτέραν ἐπαίρει καὶ παρέχει προπηλακίζειν τὴν ἑαυτῆς βελτίω, τὸν σὸν οὐδὲν οὗτος οἶκον ἀδικεῖ; τὰ μέγιστα μὲν οὖν, εἴ τις ἀκριβῶς λογίζοιτο. Ἐπέμθη γὰρ οὐ συνταράζων, ὡ βασιλεῦ, τὸν περὶ τὰς πόλεις κόσμον οὐδὲ ταῖς μὲν τὸ ὄν σφισιν ἀξίωμα λυμανούμενος, τὰς δὲ ἐλάττους ἐπάζων ταῖς μείζουσιν, ἀλλὰ τὰ μὲν ὡς εἶχε διατηρήσων, ἐκάστης δὲ ἡ προσήκεν ἐπιμελησόμενος καὶ ποιήσων εὐδαιμονεστέραν προνοία. ὁ δ' ἐν τῷ δεῦρο τὸν ἐκ Βεροίας ἐφ' οἷσπερ ἤγαγεν ἄγειν ἐβόα πρὸς ἅπαντας ὅτι τήνδε τὴν πόλιν ὑπ' ἐκείνη κεῖσθαι δεῖ καὶ τοῦ τῆς μητροπόλεως ὀνόματος ἀποστατέον αὐτῇ καὶ τῇ βουλῇ τὴν βουλὴν ὑπεικτέον καὶ ἄνδρα ἀνδρὶ καὶ γνωστέον τοὺς ἀμείνονας. Γνοίης δ' ἂν ὅτι ταῦθ' ὕβρις ἦν ἐκ τε ἡδονῆς καὶ λύπης, ὧν ἡ μὲν ἦν τῶν πρὸς ἡμᾶς εὐνοικῶς ἐχόντων, ἡ δὲ ἡδονὴ τῶν οὐχ οὕτως. Translation based on Norman 1977, op.cit. (n. 32) with changes where appropriate.

Non-material benefactions of provincials take a variety of forms, some more tangible than others. First, if benefactions of governors were well received, provincials would cooperate with their rule. Of special interest to governors was their relationship with local elites, since they would be in a position to make the temporary stay of governors in their community either much easier, or more difficult.³⁴ It was important for governors to keep them on their side, because governors worked most effectively through alliances with local factions. As stated above, governors did not come from the province they governed, and they might be unfamiliar with the territory, the people and the language of their province.³⁵ Most new governors could use some help upon arrival in a province.

Because of their relatively short term, it was vital for governors' survival to be in touch with the elite, who most likely knew enough Greek to converse with them and be in their company, if only for dinner on cold dark winter nights.³⁶ In a province like Cappadocia, heavy snow would be falling for several months during the winter and one could feel disconnected from the world in this rugged area of the empire.³⁷ If a governor had angered the

³⁴ P. Brown, *Power and Persuasion in Late Antiquity* (Madison 1992), 29.

³⁵ CJ 1.41 of 610, *ut nulli patriae suae administratio sine speciali permissu principis permittatur*. "No man was allowed to become governor of his province of his birth without special permission of the emperor".

³⁶ See the example of the governor of Syria, Celsus (*PLRE* I, Celsus 3) in Libanius, *Epistula* 1113 (= Bradbury 47) 'I was sitting and conversing in the evening with Celsus, the governor of Syria'. Παρὰ Κέλσῳ τῷ τῆς Συρίας ἀρχοντι καθήμενος διελεγόμενῃν ἑσπέρας. Cf. Libanius, *Epistula* 732 (=Bradbury 101) in which Libanius thanks the governor Maximus (*PLRE* I, Maximus 19) the governor of Galatia for frequent dinner invitations for Hyperechius (*PLRE* I, 449-50): "Although they (=Hyperechius and his father) wrote me about those things, Philocles has described all your goodwill toward them, announcing as well that he shared a table with the young man at your house. He claimed that this was a frequent thing and that Hyperechius had recounted it to him. When I heard about the dinners, both after the honor and before the honor, I contemplated that Hyperechius is improving intellectually by your company, for intelligence flows from your mind to those who consort with you, as sleep flows to the onlookers from people yawning". ὑπὲρ ὧν ἔγραψαν μὲν ἐκεῖνοι, μεμῆνυκε δὲ Φιλοκλῆς τὴν τε ὅλην σου πρόνοιαν εἰς αὐτοὺς ἀπαγγέλλων καὶ ὡς κοινωνήσῃε τῷ νεανίσκῳ παρὰ σοὶ τραπέζῃς. Πυκνὸν δὲ ἔφασκε τοῦτ' εἶναι, φράσαι δὲ ἐκεῖνον πρὸς αὐτόν. Ἐγὼ δὲ ἀκούων τὰ δεῖπνα καὶ μετὰ τὴν τιμὴν καὶ πρὸ τῆς τιμῆς ἐνενόουν ὡς βελτίων τὴν διάνοιαν ὑπὸ τῆς <σῆς> συνουσίας Ὑπερέχιος ἐγίνετο. Ῥεῖ γὰρ ἐκ τῶν σῶν φρενῶν ἐπὶ τοὺς ὁμιλοῦντας σύνεσις ὥσπερ ἀπὸ τῶν χασμῶνένων ἐπὶ τοὺς ὀρῶντας ὕπνος.

³⁷ R. Van Dam, *Kingdom of Snow. Roman Rule and Greek Culture in Cappadocia* (Philadelphia 2002), 14.

elite to the extent that they would retreat to their own villas for the winter, he would be isolated and left on his own.³⁸

Second, after their term of office, governors could also expect benefactions from their former subjects if they had been content with their performance. Provincials could help their former governors spontaneously or upon request, and different types of aid emerge. For instance, provincials could write letters of recommendation for a governor at the end of his term when he was about to embark upon another governorship or other official post. When Maximus (*PLRE* I, Maximus 19) left for his new appointment as the prefect of Egypt after having been governor of Armenia and of Galatia³⁹, Libanius gave him a letter of recommendation to present to Castricius (*PLRE* I, Castricius 2), a teacher of rhetoric in Egypt. Libanius encouraged the people of Egypt to treat the new governor well:

An opportunity has arrived for you with respect to both honor and rhetoric, to demonstrate the latter and obtain the former! For the noble Maximus is the sort of man who races to an oratorical performance and honors good speakers. He demonstrated both these qualities in the great and noble city of Midas (i.e. Ancyra), which might also be justly called the city of Maximus. For in addition to buildings, springs and fountains, he also enhanced it in the area of wisdom by an addition of teachers, rhetorical competitions, and by honoring the victors as well as encouraging the defeated. So employ your tongue for ears that know how to pass judgment, and if any hesitation grips you, put it aside and do not hide your ability. I can also promise peace concerning the matters now bothering you. Such is the ally Serapis has led to you!⁴⁰

³⁸ Basil of Caesarea, *Epistula* 48, 88, 94; Libanius, *Oratio* 28.5, 42.15-16. See also Brown 1992, op. cit. (n. 34), 23.

³⁹ Maximus was governor of Armenia (361), of Galatia (362-64), of Egypt (364).

⁴⁰ Libanius, *Epistula* 1230 (= Bradbury 112), καιρὸς ἥκει σοι καὶ τιμῶν καὶ λόγων, τοὺς μὲν δεικνύειν, τῶν δ' τυγχάνειν. Τοιοῦτους γὰρ ὁ γενναῖος, Μάξιμος, οἷος τρέχειν τε ἐπ' ἀκρόασιν λόγων καὶ κοσμεῖν ἀγαθοὺς ῥήτορας. Ἔδειξε δὲ ἀμφοτέρω ταῦτα ἐν τῇ δι' αὐτὸν μεγάλῃ τε καὶ καλῇ τοῦ Μίδου πόλει, δικαίως δ' ἂν κληθεῖται καὶ Μαξίμου. Πρὸς γὰρ ταῖς οἰκοδομίαις καὶ κρήναις καὶ νύμφαις καὶ περὶ τὴν σοφίαν ηὔξησεν αὐτὴν διδασκάλων τε προσθήκαις καὶ τοῖς τούτων πρὸς ἀλλήλους ἀγῶσι καὶ τῷ τοὺς μὲν νικῶντας τιμᾶν, τοὺς δ' ἡττηθέντας παρακαλεῖν. Χρῆσαι οὖν τῇ γλώττῃ πρὸς ὅσα ἐπιστάμενα κρίνειν, καὶ εἴ τις ὄκνος κατέχει, τοῦτον ἐκδύς μὴ κρύπτει τὴν δύναμιν· ὑπισχνούμαι δὲ σοι καὶ τῶν νῦν ταραττόντων εἰρήνην· τοιοῦτόν σοι σύμμαχον ὁ Σάραπις ἤγαγεν.

For these letters of recommendation to accompany the arrival of a new governor personal connections were crucial. Not every governor will have been so lucky to count among his supporters someone like Libanius, who had many friends and acquaintances in other parts of the empire.⁴¹ It is noteworthy, though, that Libanius' letter, which can be regarded as an introduction for Maximus upon the start of his governorship in Egypt, also illustrates the reciprocity of the relationship between governors and provincials. While Libanius praised Maximus for his building activities, his sense of justice, and his appreciation for oratory, he simultaneously put pressure on Maximus, for the Egyptians now knew what they could expect, and hope for. Maximus somehow had to live up to these expectations.

If a governor after his term, or even during his term⁴², got in trouble because he was accused of embezzlement or other offences, provincials could also try to help if they believed he was innocent. The correspondence of both Libanius and Basil illustrate this type of 'benefaction'.⁴³ In a letter written in defense of a governor, Libanius pondered the pay off for governors if they were to be accused after their term of office: "it is a fine reward for our governors if, after expending their energies and reducing their private fortunes in the performance of their public duties, they get in exchange outrage, condemnation, disgrace and danger".⁴⁴ Basil emphasized

⁴¹ Cf. Liebeschuetz 1972, op.cit. (n. 9), 18: "Furthermore, if a man had business in a strange town, it was useful to have support from local residents and if possible from an imperial official. For such a man Libanius was a godsend. As soon as it was known that a friend of his had obtained a post Libanius was overwhelmed by demands for letters of recommendation.

⁴² Governors could even be removed from office during their term; note the example of the *consularis Syriae* in 358, Nicentius (*PLRE* I, Nicentius 1), who was removed from office by Hermogenes, the Praetorian Prefect of the Oriens, because he had not fulfilled his duty of supplying a group of soldiers at a post somewhere on the Euphrates.

⁴³ Libanius wrote *Epistula* 83 [= Bradbury 121] for Sabinus (*PLRE* I, Sabinus 5) to take with him to court in Constantinople, in which he asked the officials there, "to stand firm for justice's sake and for my own against these difficult circumstances and to instruct men that it is not for them to tear governors apart when they leave office" (καὶ βουλομένην ἂν σε τοῦ τε δικαίου καὶ ἡμῶν χάριν ἀντισχεῖν πρὸς τὴν τοῦ καιροῦ δυσκολίαν καὶ διδάξει τοὺς ἀνθρώπους, ὥς οὐκ ἐπ' αὐτοῖς ἐστί τοὺς ἄρχοντας, ὅταν λήξωσι τῆς ἀρχῆς, σπαράττειν). See also Libanius, *Epistula* 1350 for Maximus (*PLRE* I, Maximus 19), and 1354 for Ecdicius (*PLRE* I, 276).

⁴⁴ Libanius, *Epistula* 163 [= Norman 63], καλὰ γε περιμένει τοὺς ἄρχοντας τὰ ἄθλα, εἴγε ταλαιπωρήσονται μὲν καὶ τὰ αὐτῶν χεῖρῳ ποιήσουσι τῶν κοινῶν ἐπιμελούμενοι, λήψονται δὲ ἀμοιβὰς ὕβριν καὶ καταδίκην καὶ ἀτιμίαν καὶ κινδύνους. The governor involved was Thryphonianus (*PLRE* I, Thryphonianus 2).

the outrage of a whole provincial community, when he wrote to the *Magister Officiorum* of the East, Sophronius (*PLRE* I, Sophronius 3), to defend Helias (*PLRE* I, 411), former governor of Cappadocia, after his ‘unjust’ removal from office in 372:

Therefore we are one and all, the entire people, dejected at having been deprived of a governor who alone is able to raise again our city, which had already been brought to its knees, who is a true guardian of justice, easy of access for the victims of injustice, terrible to lawbreakers, fair to both poor and rich, and, greatest of all, who was restoring Christianity to its ancient honor. For the fact that he was the most incorruptible man we know, and that he never granted a favor in violation of justice, we have passed over as of less significance than the man’s other virtues. [...] It will be a sufficient favor to us, and a consolation for our afflictions, if you will recommend him to the Emperor, and will do away with the slanders that have been brought against him.⁴⁵

These accusations, however, were often highly controversial, since different parties in a province might have different opinions about a governor’s conduct, while governors might also have political enemies who were all too happy to accuse someone falsely to get them off the political stage. Several cases are known of governors who were accused, but who were cleared once they appeared in court in Constantinople.⁴⁶ Equally, governors might have

⁴⁵ Basil of Caesarea, *Epistula* 96, διὸ πανδημεὶ πάντες σκυθρωπάζομεν, ζημιωθέντες ἄρχοντα μόνον δυνάμενον εἰς γόνυ κλιθεῖσαν ἤδη τὴν πόλιν ἡμῶν ἀνορθῶσαι, ἀληθῆ φύλακα τοῦ δικαίου, εὐπρόσιτον τοῖς ἀδικουμένοις, φοβερὸν τοῖς παρανομοῦσιν, ἴσον καὶ πένησι καὶ πλουσίοις, καὶ τὸ μέγιστον, τὰ τῶν Χριστιανῶν πράγματα πρὸς τὴν ἀρχαίαν ἐπανάγοντα τιμὴν. Τὸ γὰρ, ὅτι ἀδωρότατος ὢν ἴσμεν ἀνθρώπων, καὶ οὐδενὶ παρὰ τὸ δίκαιον χαριζόμενος, ὥς μικρότερα τῆς λοιπῆς ἀρετῆς τοῦ ἀνδρὸς παρελπίομεν. [...] ἄρκοῦσα δ’ ἡμῖν χάρις καὶ τῶν συμβάντων παραμυθία, ἐὰν καὶ βασιλεῖ συστήσης αὐτόν, καὶ τὰς ἐπενεχθεῖσας αὐτῷ διαβολὰς ἀποσκευάσῃ. Ταῦτά σοι πᾶσαν οἴου τὴν πατρίδα διὰ μιᾶς τῆς ἡμετέρας φωνῆς διαλέγεσθαι, καὶ κοινὴν εἶναι πάντων εὐχὴν, γενέσθαι τι τῷ ἀνδρὶ διὰ τῆς σῆς τελειότητος δεξιόν. Translation based on R.J. Deferrari and M.R.P. McGuire, *The Letters. Saint Basil* (Cambridge Ma. 1961), 70. See also *Epistula* 147-149 for Basil’s support of Maximus (*PLRE* I, Maximus 23) who after an accusation of embezzlement was stripped of his office and property, and forced to flee to Caesarea.

⁴⁶ See the example of Maximus (*PLRE* I, Maximus 19), who in 363 was accused while being the governor of Galatia (362-64), but was acquitted; Libanius, *Epistula* 1350 (=Bradbury 109): “the slander has been cleared away and no longer obscures, like a cloud before the sun’s ray, the report of your fine deeds, instead, from all sides the report is the

powerful friends at the imperial court that could help them to go free, rightly or wrongly, of the accusations.

In the end, be it in the form of an honorary inscription, a statue, a wonderful banquet, or a letter of recommendation upon departure from office, it paid off for the governor to act as benefactor, since benefactions played an important role in the complex relationship between a governor and provincials. Ultimately, though, governors and provincials were part of the same system, depending on each other's support.

To return to Edessa and Alexander one last time, perhaps most noteworthy and exceptional in this situation was that several of his benefactions helped lower class people, who were not in a position to return the favor, pay for an honorary statue, or write a letter of recommendation for him. That did not stop Alexander from being a benefactor for them, so perhaps, unique though he might be, he was a true benefactor purely for the reason that as governor he could be.

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same, that the noble Maximus is the pupil of Rhadamanthus and that neither by safeguarding the laws is he harming his subjects nor by his kindness toward his subjects is he transgressing the laws". Έκκεκάθαρται γὰρ ἡ φήμη οὐδὲν τοῖς καλοῖς, ὥσπερ ἀκτῖνι νέφος, ἔτ' ἐνοχλεῖ, ἀλλὰ πανταχοῦ μία φωνὴ Μάξιμον τὸν καλὸν Ῥαδαμάνθους εἶναι μαθητὴν οὔτε τῇ φυλακῇ τῶν νόμων λυποῦντα τοὺς ἀρχομένους οὔτε τῇ πρὸς ἐκείνους προότῃ παραβαίνοντα τοὺς νόμους. Maximus continued to be the governor of Galatia until 364, when he stepped down to become the prefect of Egypt (for which Libanius wrote *Epistula* 1230 as an introduction for the people of Egypt). In that same year 363, Libanius thanked Maximus for caring about Ecdicius (*PLRE* I, 276), governor of Galatia in 360, who was accused simultaneously with Maximus, and cleared of the accusations as well. Maximus, understanding the situation Ecdicius found himself in, had treated him as "not guilty until proven guilty," which Libanius greatly appreciated.