FELIX IN SAMARIA — A NOTE ON TAC. ANN. 12.54.1
AND SUET. CLAUD. 28.1.

It is not immediately clear what Suetonius meant by saying of Felix that
Claudius ‘(eum) cohortibus et alis provinciae Iudaeae praeposuit’. Dis­
pute has been aroused by Tacitus’ description of his relationship with Ven­
tidius Cumanus, ‘cui pars provinciae habebatur, ita diuisis ut huic Galilae­
orum natio, Felici Samaritae parerent’.

Felix, although a freedman, appears to have governed Judaea from 52
to 58 or 59. The point to be discussed here is the nature of his position in
Judaea (if any) prior to his procuratorship. That he had been in Judaea
before becoming procurator has been deduced from Paul’s reference to his
‘long years’ in the province. Secondly, Josephus (AJ 20.162) says that
Felix owed his appointment to Judaea to a request by the High Priest
Jonathan to Claudius. This may imply that Jonathan had got to know
him in Judaea before his procuratorship.

But the main evidence for his possible previous service is the statement
of Tacitus quoted above, which seems to suggest that Ventidius Cumanus
and he held equal authority, Ventidius in Galilee, Felix in Samaria. Many
regard Tacitus’ statement as erroneous, since Josephus (AJ 20.137) merely
makes Felix Ventidius’ successor. But that he succeeded him does not
preclude previous service in Judaea: he had certainly helped to bring about
Cumanus’ downfall (Tac. Ann. 12.54).

As noted above, authors other than Tacitus may be taken to imply that
Felix had been in Judaea before his procuratorship. Even Josephus’ state­
ment that he was sent out after the fall of Ventidius need not of itself
preclude earlier service in the province. Suetonius’ main interest in Felix is
to use him as an example of the esteem in which Claudius held his freedmen
and to highlight his marriage to three princesses. The remark about his
appointment to what was normally a position held by members of the equestri­
nian order is given less emphasis. Suetonius’ words (quoted above) that
Felix had been placed in charge of auxiliary regiments and of the province
of Judaea may be taken to refer to his governorship only: as procurator he
was in command of the auxiliary units stationed in the province. But it
may also be suggested that the wording could cover two different stages in
Felix' (unjustified) 'equestrian' career: prefectures of auxiliary regiments succeeded by a procuratorship. It may be further conjectured that he was prefect of an auxiliary regiment in Judaea and as such assigned the troubled area of Samaria (while Ventidius Cumanus concentrated on the difficulties in Galilee). It was not uncommon for the Romans to assign administrative duties to prefects of auxiliary units in troublesome districts especially when provinces were being newly developed. It may even be significant that in the Bellum Judaicum (2.247) Josephus says (as he does of no other procurator of Judaea in the wider sense) that Felix was appointed to Judaea, Samaritis, Galilee and Peraea: the areas were apparently still being thought of separately.

Precision in descriptions of minor provincial appointments cannot be expected of imperial authors. But it seems possible to suggest that Suetonius could mean that Felix was commander of auxiliary regiments before his governorship of Judaea, that (at least one of) these commands occurred in Judaea (as Acts and Jonathan's acquaintance with him may confirm) and that he served as a prefect with 'administrative' functions over the large area of Samaria during the critical period at the end of Cumanus' procuratorship (to interpret Tacitus in this way).

NOTES


5. The position has sometimes been described as a joint procuratorship. E.M. Smallwood, op. cit. (n. 2), 266, suggests that the governor of Syria temporarily detached Samaria (where serious troubles had broken out) from Judaea and assigned it to Felix while Ventidius' conduct was being investigated.

6. That the auxiliary regiments are mentioned first and apparently distinguished by the use of 'que' may indicate that Suetonius was thinking of them separately.

7. P.A. Brunt, 'Charges of Provincial Maladministration under the Early Principate', Historia 10 (1961) 214 = Roman Imperial Themes, 1990, 80, has suggested that Felix may conceivably have been a domanial procurator under Cumanus, like Herennius Capito (PIR H 103) under Tiberius. But Suetonius' remark implies military rather than financial activity. N. Kokkinos, 'The Gentilicium of Felix, Procurator of Judaea', Latomus 49 (1990) 140, entertains the possibility that Felix may have been in charge of troops in Samaria.

8. M. Aberbach, 'The Conflicting Accounts of Josephus and Tacitus Concerning Cumanus' and Felix' Terms of Office', JQR 40 (1949–50) 1ff., has argued that Felix was sent, not to Samaria, but to Galilee. He suggests that it was more likely
that Cumanus went to Samaria, since his whole case was bound up with that of the Samaritans, and Felix to Galilee: this was more appropriate as Felix was more sympathetic to the Jewish side of the dispute. But the only evidence he quotes for Felix' sympathy to the Jews is Jonathan's later request that he be appointed procurator. Aberbach's case is tenuous and depends on the assumption that Felix and Cumanus were of equal status at the time.


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NOTIZEN ZU PORPHYRIO


S. 108,26 f. schreibt Holder: *Cetera enim de parenthesi inlata sunt*; die beste Handschrift, der Vaticanus, hat *te* statt *de*. Da nach dem ThLL 10:1,368,69 ff. der gewöhnliche Ausdruck *per parenthesin* ist und *de parenthesi* nur mit dieser Stelle belegt ist, schlage ich vor, auch hier *per parenthesin* zu schreiben.


S. 218,3 *Notum autem historia est* + AcI. Meines Erachtens ist *Nota* statt *Notum* zu schreiben.


S. 288,4 f. *Si non potes gesta Caesaris scribere, at potes iustitiam et fortitudinem, ut Lucilius Scipionis fecit*. Die Verwendung von *fecit* als *verbam vicarium* mit der Konstruktion des ersetzten Verbs ist bemerkenswert,
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