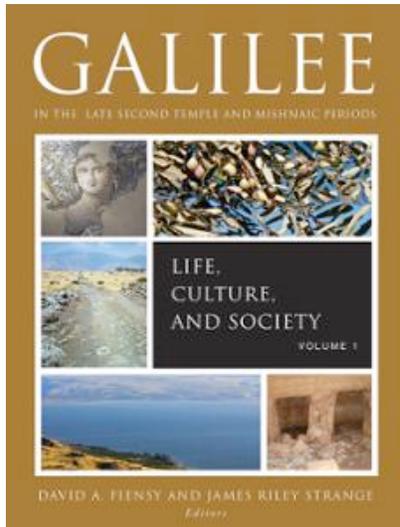


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David A. Fiensy and James Riley Strange, eds.

Galilee in the Late Second Temple and Mishnaic Periods, Volume 1: Life, Culture, and Society

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This book is the first of a two-volume set on “everything Galilean” between the Late Hellenistic and Early Roman periods. While the second volume will cover individual sites, the first one prepares the ground by offering a wide range of analytical articles on Galilean “Life, Culture and Society.”

Eighteen contributions form the body of the book, all written by internationally renowned experts in their respective fields. The wide range of articles, each with ample references and bibliographies, make this publication an excellent reference tool for seasoned scholars as well as an inspiring study book for advanced students of history, religious studies, or archaeology.

The first section offers an “Overview of Galilean Studies” and includes the editors’ “Introduction to *Galilee: Volumes 1 and 2*” (3–10), followed by a long reflection on “Galilee and the Historical Jesus in Recent Research,” by Roland Deines (11–48). Deines emphasizes the tremendous role that “Galilee” continues to play for modern Jesus studies and rightly reminds scholars of the “constant task of questioning the respective heuristic value of the designation ‘Galilean’ in the ongoing research” (37). Indeed! In my opinion, the best way to avoid the danger of first creating one’s favorite Galilee and then confront or combine it with one’s preferred image of Jesus (or the sages, for that matter) is just *not* to treat Galilean studies as a spinoff of Jesus or rabbinic research but to acknowledge that

Galilean studies have different roots and stands on its own as an independent discipline employing different methodologies and pursuing various approaches (also see Horsley's remarks on 167).

The next section, "History," consists of six essays. Morten Horning Jensen sketches "The Political History in Galilee from the First Century BCE to the End of the Second Century CE" (51–77). Jensen begins his excellent and detailed essay by stating that Jewish groups from the south had already been infiltrating Galilee before the full-scale conquest under Aristobulos in 103/4 BCE. The Galileans were "newcomers to a large extent, rather than full Israelites or forcefully converted Itureans" (56). "In short," Jensen concludes, "the Hasmoneans re-judaized Galilee through settlement and investment" (57). While Jensen certainly is right to describe the Hasmoneans' crucial role as conquerors, colonizers, and investors, I do not think that "re-judaization" or "Galilee Reborn" (thus the section header) are proper ways to describe this process. By taking over and fundamentally changing the cultural character of the region sandwiched between the coast and the south Syrian high plateau and populated by different Semitic groups, the Hasmonenas in a sense "invented" a new Galilee. Before the Hasmoneans, there was no "Galilee" that they could *re*-Judaize, or that was *reborn* through them. Hasmonean Galilee was smaller and culturally much more homogeneous than the region before but nevertheless retained its geographical position and remained open to outside influences. Though Jensen does not comment on these implications of the Hasmonean conquest too extensively, the bipolar framework of relative cultural homogeneity *and* geographical openness, in my opinion, lies at the roots of the inevitable conflicts within Galilean (Jewish!) society during the first century BCE and CE decades. Jensen then continues with the Roman reorganization of the Galilee, its history under Herod and his son Antipas, and its role in the First Revolt. After the catastrophe of 70 CE, the Galilee may indeed have been "reborn," but not "yet again" as Jensen calls it; instead, post-70 Galilee followed quite different lines in a fundamentally transformed, now fully Roman environment that did not leave unchanged what continued to be called "Galilee." But ultimately Jensen is right: history and its cultural implications do indeed matter (51–52). His article provides a first prerequisite to avoid shaping Galilee according to one's needs about which Deines warned us.

In a second article Deines examines "Religious Practices and Religious Movements in Galilee: 100 BCE—200 CE" (78–111). Like many scholars before, Deines concludes: "The religious profile of the territory is ... largely oriented toward Jerusalem" (103). This may indeed account for the great loyalty of many Galileans to Jerusalem and the temple, and sometimes even fanaticism, as Deines shows. But the orientation toward Jerusalem was certainly also the reason for the great social and religious *diversity* within Jewish Galilee, since "Jerusalem" was not a monolith but itself a very complex and pluriform environment.

In “The Ethnicities of Galileans” (112–28), Mark A. Chancey summarizes the changing “ethnic” character of the region. Not many other labels, of course, are more vague, more contested, and more difficult to define than “ethnicity.” Fully aware of such pitfalls, Chancey takes “ethnicity” as a “sense of shared ancestry, common cultural heritage and group identity” (112) and with its help traces fundamental developments of Galilee’s cultural profile from the Assyrian conquest to the Roman period, describing it as transition from a mixed, non-Jewish to a Jewish population—or at least majority. He shows that there is a lot of overlap in material culture between the Galilee and Judea since the Hasmonean period: ritual baths, stoneware vessels, pottery, oil lamps, secondary burial, and synagogues. The Galilean *Ioudaioi* in John or Josephus, he concludes, should be taken as “Jews” rather than simply “Judeans,” and if there were gentiles, they did not begin to shape the regional cultural profile before the early second century CE, despite the fact that Jews remained the prime factor. All this is not new and nicely summarizes the “new Galilean orthodoxy.” One can, of course, describe Galilean history as a transformation from “pagan” to “Jewish” and emphasize its “otherness” in relation to what existed before and outside the Hasmonean Galilee. But that only seems to be half of the story. It would be much more complete if one at the same time realized that the Galilee was part of a much larger Eastern Mediterranean world whose fundamental cultural reference system was continuously transforming since the late fourth century BCE. This process (“Hellenization”) made its impact on *all* local cultures in the East, *including* the pre-Hasmonean Galileans *and* their Hasmonean conquerors, each one in its own way. This observation runs counter to tendencies to see the Galilee as something *genuinely* different because of its religious, either “pagan” or “Jewish,” character—certainly a heritage of the theological origins of Galilean scholarship. It might, therefore, be an attractive experiment to write a contextual history of “Hellenistic Galilee through the Ages.”

In his short but excellent essay “The Synagogues of Galilee,” Lee I. Levine both surveys all available literary references to synagogues or prayer houses in Galilee (Nazareth, Capernaum, Tiberias) and archaeological evidence (Gamla Khirbet Qana, Migdal/Magdala) and puts them into their social and historical context (129–50). An outlook on the “Post-70 CE Era” and an appendix discussing the “Less-Certain Identifications of Galilean Synagogues” (Migdal/Magdala, Capernaum, Chorazin, Nevoraya/Nabratein) conclude the brief but very helpful essay.

In the next essay Thomas Scott Caulley introduces us to thirteen “Notable Galilean Persons,” sketching the wide social and ideological range of options of “how to be a Galilean” (151–66). For good reason, Caulley excludes figures from the New Testament and concentrates on “other heroes who originated from this land” (151): Hezekiah the Bandit, Judas son of Hezekiah, Judas the Galilean, Honi the Circle-Drawer, Hanina ben

Dosa, Antipas, Agrippa I, Agrippa II, Berenice, John of Gischala, Justus of Tiberias, Menahem son of Judas the Galilean, and Jehuda Ha-Nasi. Caulley rightly refrains from drawing any far-reaching conclusions from this list about *the* Galilee as a whole.

To avoid filtering information on Roman Galilee through “synthetic theological constructs of ‘Judaism/Jews,’ and ‘Christianity/Christians,’” Richard Horsley analyzes “the fundamental social form in which people lived” (167; “Social Movements in Galilee,” 167–74). He sees “Banditry and Guerilla Warfare,” “Messianic Movements,” and “Peasant Strike” as grassroots reactions by the suppressed village population against economic exploitation and manifold experiences of violence by the hands of the elite. Resistance, says Horsley, was inspired by old, Israelite models of social justice to which also the Jesus movement referred. Horsley’s brief article is a useful summary of numerous, more detailed publications on social and economic tensions prevailing in Galilee, but they are often criticized for their binary contrast between “the violent elite” and “the abused villagers”: To what extent are resisting villagers indicative for the entire Galilean population? Without denying the existence of such social-revolutionary groups or their perhaps old-Israelite ethos, it seems that the situation in Galilean villages was much more complex, as the articles immediately following Horsley’s make evident.

In the light of recent debates on the social world of Galilee, it is laudable that the editors offer a separate section on “Village Life,” five substantial articles (see also the section “Economics”). David A. Fiensy starts with a survey of “The Galilean Village in the Late Second Temple and Mishnaic Periods” (177–207), discussing terminology and the size, composite character, and economic basis of Galilean villages (on that topic, cf. the article by Mattila further below). It is true that only a minority of Galileans lived in government-sponsored cities such as Sepphoris, Tiberias, or Magdala (which is not sufficiently discussed here by Fiensy). Though Fiensy rightly mentions many features that blur the traditional line between “villages” and “cities,” he still handles the somewhat antiquated opposition (e.g., on 192, following Peter Richardson). Instead, there was no “standard village”: villages were growing in number, size, and social complexity in the first century BCE and CE; they were dynamic settlements populated by highly adaptable inhabitants. Andrea M. Berlin continues the discussion of village culture with her study of “Household Judaism” (208–15). She convincingly shows how material culture shaped “a distinctive ethnic and religious identity” that fostered internal cohesion and made Galilean Jews recognizable to outsiders (215). How far, however, this material culture contributed to a “sharply delineated worldview, a sense of separation from others” (215), and partly influenced the decision to revolt against Rome in 66 needs further discussion. While I agree that the first centuries BCE and CE were crucial to define and design a typically Palestinian Jewish material culture, the roots of many of its elements are equally grounded in Hellenistic styles and forms (which Berlin herself often emphasizes) *as well*

as in the requirements of Jewish religious practices. Even if the users of this material culture in first-century CE Galilee were not aware of its wider origins, Palestinian Jewish material culture was common to all groups in the region, be they pro- or anti-Roman. I do not think that this culture per se is a witness for a deliberate choice for separation, exclusivism, and ultimately revolt.

In the following article David A. Fiensy describes the various types and architectural elements of the “The Galilean House in the Late Second Temple and Mishnaic Periods” (216–41). Then Jonathan L. Reed assesses “the social stability of Galilee by drawing on the hitherto neglected field of historical demography” (242) by examining life expectancy, mortality rates, and the impact of seasonal diseases such as malaria on Galilean economy and social relations (“Mortality, Morbidity, and Economics in Jesus Galilee,” 242–52). It turns out that “Galilean population growth and construction of cities ... are not themselves evidence of an overall Galilean prosperity.” Even under Antipas, Reed states, “any widespread socioeconomic improvement is questionable” (249). Internal migration, diseases, and high mortality rates made “for a rather unstable environment with volatile households whose compositions were constantly and abruptly changing” (250). Reed’s refreshing approach adds new perspectives to recent debates about Antipas and nicely demonstrates that prosperity often carries the seeds for depravation. Finally, John C. Poirier casts welcome light on “Education/Literacy in Jewish Galilee: Was There Any and at What Level?” (253–60). I very much look forward to see how these important studies connect back to the site reports in volume 2, since archaeological evidence from real late Second Temple through Mishnaic period villages still is quite scant.

The third and last section deals with “Economics,” a topic that necessarily overlaps in many ways with the previous section. In the first essay James F. Strange addresses “The Galilean Road System,” a topic that indeed warrants much more academic attention. While paved roads are a product only of the second century CE, large traffic arteries traversing central Galilee must have existed already in the Persian period and connected sites such as Sepphoris to the coastal cities and other settlements further inland. Even after the Hasmonean conquest, Magdala and Herodian Tiberias only make sense in the context of a transregional road system connecting the Mediterranean with the lake and western Syria to the east. Unfortunately, none of these transregional arteries is mentioned by Strange, who rather discusses the local roads from Nazareth to Cana and from Cana to Capernaum in detail, both examples being inspired by passages from the Gospel of John (263–71). Even if the majority of the road network in the Galilee may have been local paths and trails, as Strange contends, it was the international highways that provided the gates through which the Galilee increasingly turned into an integral part of the larger Mediterranean world.

In many ways, Ze'ev Safrai's discussion of "Urbanization and Industry in Mishnaic Galilee" is a welcome counterpart to previous chapters on village life (272–96). Using rabbinical sources, Safrai claims that Galilean city–village relations were "exceptional in the Roman Empire" (294) in the way that there was "a significant lack of communication between the polis and the rural sector" (293). "Consequently, the rural sector was independent from the polis in terms of supplying services" (293). Apart from the fact that any claim of "exceptionality" is potentially suspicious, I wonder if this conclusion does not—despite all caution on the side of the author—confuse a specific rabbinic *perspective* on the city (perhaps triggered by a lack of influence on Jews living in urban environments) with "real life on the ground." In any case, Agnes Choi's "Never the Two Shall Meet? Urban-Rural Interaction in Lower Galilee" (297–311) sketches a different, more complex scenario. Based on her analysis of the "agricultural sector of the economy," Choi admits that there was "some level of inter-village trade" (309), but at the same time, trade between villages and cities was much more important, though it was organized in such a way that the rural population bore the brunt of costs while members of the urban elite controlled it. How are the differences between Safrai's and Choi's analyses to be explained? Are they a result of different conditions in the respective periods under consideration or rather of the methods and sources used? Sharon Lea Mattila's thoughtful and rich analysis of "Inner Village Life in Galilee: A Diverse and Complex Phenomenon" (312–45) can help answer these questions and marks a major step forward in research. Mattila questions the common assumption of a city–village divide and the definition of villagers as simple, dependent "peasants." She rightly emphasizes "the relative sophistication of village life and the relative wealth of some villagers in the Galilee starting as early as Hasmonean times" (339) and shows that—despite deep shifts in trade patterns over the centuries—both villagers and members of the urban population participated in the same market economy. Especially interesting, because organized as a "Debate" is the following subsection on "Was the Galilean Economy Oppressive or Prosperous?" that is carried out between Douglas E. Oakman ("Late Second Temple Galilee: Socio-archaeology and Dimensions of Exploitation in First-Century Palestine," 346–56) and J. Andrew Overman ("Late Second Temple Galilee: A Picture of Relative Economic Health," 357–365). Fabian Udoh concludes the book with his analysis of "Taxation and Other Sources of Government Income in the Galilee of Herod and Antipas" (366–87). Instead of offering conclusions, the editors provide a list of contributors and abbreviations at the end of the book, as well as an index of ancient sources and subjects.

The editors have sought "to hear all voices" (7) and impressively succeeded in that purpose. The first volume of *Galilee in the Late Second Temple and Mishnaic Periods* is both comprehensive and detailed; by its broad range of voices and interpretations offered, it opens much room for further discussion and debate. The emphasis on fundamental

social and economic conditions of the Galilee rather than issues of religion follows the recent trends of Galilean research and contextualizes questions of religious identity formation in a welcome way.

A book as rich and inspiring as the one reviewed here always triggers more desires, so here are a few—necessarily subjective—points of critique. First of all, it is striking to see that the “Jesus movement” is not discussed in a separate article, but that topic of course reverberates in almost each article, so that is no major issue. Somewhat more problematic, however, is that the editors followed many mainstream studies on the Galilee by drawing its borders too narrow along the lines of the post-Hasmonean territory. What about the world to the east and the west of the Jewish Galilee? I miss an article on the relationship of the coastal cities such as Ptolemais and the Galilee or the Decapolis and the Galilee. Especially the revolutionary insights from recent work at Magdala would have demanded a more “transregional perspective.” Instead, the editors’ choice of topics indirectly cements the old idea of an “isolated Galilee,” and I can only hope that the second volume will help balance this out. The geographical limitation goes hand in hand with a chronological limitation to the period between 100 BCE and 200 CE (why not 70?), the so-called late Second Temple and Mishnaic periods, which presents Galilean history as a somewhat truncated torso. Would the Mishnaic period not better be understood in conjunction with the Talmudic period (Mattila does that)? And why separate Hasmonean Galilee from its Hellenistic, pre-100 BCE predecessor? In any case, many authors transgress the late Second Temple and Mishnaic periods limitation, and even the editors may have had second thoughts on it since they propose a (perhaps more logical) “Archaeological Chronology” on page ix. Here, too, I have high expectations about the site articles in volume 2, which I hope will show that there was Galilean history before 100 BCE and a history after 200 CE.

Needless to say, my criticism should not distract readers from the tremendous value of *Galilee in the Late Second Temple and Mishnaic Periods*. It is an admirable achievement. The late Séan Freyne, to whose blessed memory this volume is duly dedicated, would have had great pleasure with it, and all future readers will certainly agree with him.