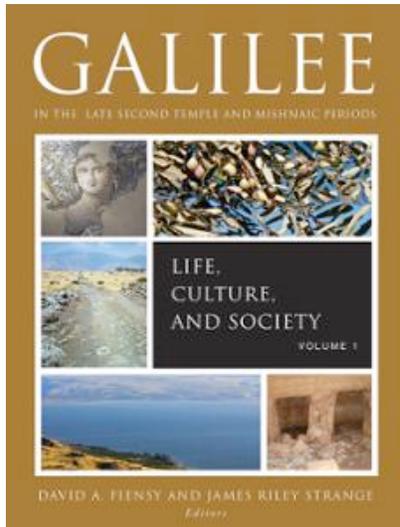


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**David A. Fiensy and James Riley Strange, eds.**

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

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*Galilee in the Late Second Temple and Mishnaic Periods* is a landmark publication that will be a staple for the study of Roman Galilee for years to come. In a brief preface, Fiensy and Strange talk about the evolution of historical and archaeological research on the Galilee from the 1970s until today; they point out that the excavation of Sepphoris marked a turning point in the history of the archaeology of Galilee and also in understanding the shaping of early Judaism and emerging Christianity. They explain, “Because of what they learned about Sepphoris, coupled with their knowledge of Upper Galilee, scholars began to reevaluate their understandings of the origins of Galilee’s population, village and city relations, economy, Jewish social identity, and even how to read the New Testament Gospels, Josephus, the writings of the sages, and other texts that talk about the region” (xvii). Based on these developments, the editors felt that the time was ripe to produce a resource that included both the evidence and the debates related to Galilee between 100 BCE and 200 CE, which they refer to as the late Second Temple period through the Mishnaic period. This significant period spawned “two Judaisms,” including “the one that became the Christianities we know today, and the other that became the Judaisms of the Talmud” (xviii). In this volume Fiensy and Strange present chapters written by leading scholars in the field, many of whom are archaeologists who have excavated the sites they discuss.

The volume begins with the section “Overview of Galilean Studies,” which offers first an “Introduction to *Galilee: Volumes 1 and 2*” (3–10), by the editors. They point to the idyllic description of Galilee by Ernest Renan, the nineteenth-century biographer of Jesus, who portrayed it as a sort of “dreamlike never-never-land,” as evidence of the need for a more realistic assessment. The research carried out on ancient Galilee over the last thirty years has led to contradictory conclusions. They suggest that this state of affairs has “made it a cliché that the quest for the historical Jesus is at the same time a quest for the historical Galilee,” and that “understanding the geography and cultural background of Jesus’ youth “may help us understand his later message and/or his pattern of ministry” (5). In fact, the study of Jesus, the New Testament gospels, and ancient Judaism all demand that we have a state-of-the art appraisal of ancient Galilee. Fiensy and Strange propose to provide such a valuation in the two volumes of *Galilee*. The present volume collects chapters on the life and culture of ancient Galilee; the second volume contains reports on all the excavations in Galilee where substantial remains from the late Second Temple period through the Mishnaic period have been found.

The editors’ introduction is followed by a substantial study of “Galilee and the Historical Jesus in Recent Research,” by Roland Deines (11–48), who demonstrates the importance of the study of ancient Galilee for Jesus studies. He points out that “probably no other element of Jesus’ biography is used more extensively to explain his message, his demeanor, his impact, and his ‘success’” than his Galilean origins, and he concludes that “the present ‘Third Quest for the Historical Jesus’ is to no small extent Galilee research: whoever wants to say something about the earthly Jesus does so with reference to Galilee” (12). Deines proceeds to discuss recent Galilee research as the basis for the quest for the historical Jesus, archaeology and the Jewish Galilee, and the limits of knowledge about Galilee. He concludes that “the special religious and cultural position of Galilee remains in the focus of Jesus research and is used to explain certain elements of his ministry and to identify the oldest (and most reliable) traditions related to him” but points out that this also leads to the danger “that everyone is creating his or her own image of Galilee first, onto which then Jesus and his message can be projected” (37). This leads to “the constant task of questioning the respective heuristic function of the designation ‘Galilean’ in the ongoing research” (37). Indeed, Deines’s study serves both to complete the overview of Galilean studies and to provide caveats for its participants.

The second section of the book contains six chapters on “History.” Morten Hørning Jensen provides an overview of “The Political History in Galilee from the First Century BCE to the End of the Second Century CE” (51–77) and points out five major trends in Galilean studies related to the time frame under consideration. Roland Deines studies “Religious Practices and Religious Movements in Galilee: 100 BCE–200 CE” (78–111). He notes that “the history of Galilee in the three centuries between 100 BCE and 200 CE is

marked by a history of conquest, settlement, wars, and refugees, all of which had their origin in Judean affairs,” which suggests that “the religious profile of the territory is therefore largely oriented toward Jerusalem” (103). Mark A. Chancey considers “The Ethnicities of Galileans” (112–28) and demonstrates that the region became increasingly diverse during the period in question. He concludes that this increased ethnic diversity “contributed to the ongoing process of Jewish self-definition” (125). Lee I. Levine draws on both literary and archaeological data to provide a survey of “The Synagogues of Galilee” (129–50), each of which he locates in its sociohistorical context. Thomas Scott Caulley presents a study of “Notable Galilean Persons” (151–66), including Hezekiah the Bandit, Judas son of Hezekiah, Judas the Galilean, Honi the Circle-Drawer, and others. This section of the book concludes with an essay by Richard Horsley on “Social Movements in Galilee” (167–74), in which he argues that the population was made up predominantly of a peasant population exploited by the elite classes. This oppression led to grassroots reactions by bandits and guerillas, messianic pretenders, and peasant protestors. While such groups certainly existed, Horsley’s reconstruction may be a bit “flat-footed,” as suggested by the essays in the subsequent sections.

In the third section of the book, five contributors examine what can be known about “Village Life” in ancient Galilee. David A. Fiensy goes beyond previous studies of life in Galilee in the time of Jesus, which generally relied on Josephus and the Mishnah, to examine “The Galilean Village in the Late Second Temple and Mishnaic Periods” (177–207). Since there were only two cities, Sepphoris and Tiberias, most people would have lived in villages. Drawing on the latest archaeological data, Fiensy examines the size, makeup, and economy of Galilean villages in the late Second Temple and Mishnaic periods. In her essay on “Household Judaism” (208–15), Andrea M. Berlin considers the phenomena of people living in Lower Galilee adopting “identical new household goods that distinguished their homes, and therefore their daily lives, from those of people living in adjacent regions” (208). This strategy, which the people in Lower Galilee shared with those in Judea and southern Gaulanitis, was a means of projecting a shared identity that developed in the household, outside of priestly concerns, and “reflects a broad desire for material possessions that encoded a singular lifestyle and ethnic affiliation” (208). In another contribution David A. Fiensy examines “The Galilean House in the Late Second Temple and Mishnaic Periods” (216–41). Jonathan L. Reed studies “Mortality, Morbidity, and Economics in Jesus’ Galilee” (242–52) and postulates that “overall population growth, newly built cities, considerable migration, and extensive malaria caution against an optimistic view of economic life under Antipas.” He stresses the contribution of the newly built cities of Sepphoris and Tiberias to social instability, since they “fueled internal migration from villages to the cities” (249). This section concludes with a study by John

C. Poirier entitled “Education/Literacy in Jewish Galilee: Was There Any and at What Level?” (253–60).

The fourth section of the book contains seven papers that deal with “Economics.” James F. Strange introduces readers to “The Galilean Road System” (263–71) through a brief study of local roads that led from Nazareth to Cana and from Cana to Capernaum. Though brief, his study shows that, while the Galilee was certainly linked to international highways, the majority of its network was formed of local trails, and “a dense network of trails, tracks, and footpaths probably covered Roman-period Galilee” (269), which would explain how Jesus was able to gather such large crowds. Ze’ev Safrai seeks to elucidate the accuracy of rabbinic portrayals of the relationship between Galilean cities and villages in his study of “Urbanization and Industry in Mishnaic Galilee” (272–96). Agnes Choi presents a somewhat competing perspective in “Never the Two Shall Meet? Urban-Rural Interaction in Lower Galilee” (297–322). Sharon Lea Matilla’s study of “Inner Village Life in Galilee: A Diverse and Complex Phenomenon” (312–45) helps to bridge the gap between those of Safrai and Choi. She surveys a mass of evidence to demonstrate the relative complexity of village life and the comparative wealth of some villagers in the Galilee, beginning as early as Hasmonean times and continuing through the Roman Byzantine periods. She concludes that “the data give no indication that Galilean villagers were ‘peasants,’ innately averse to market exchange with other villagers, other villages, the Galilean towns, or in the earlier periods the city of Jerusalem,” but that they were “ready participants in such market exchange” (339). Two papers are presented as a debate on the question “Was the Galilean Economy Oppressive or Prosperous?” Douglas E. Oakman opens the debate with his essay on “Late Second Temple Galilee: Socio-archaeology and Dimensions of Exploitation in First-Century Palestine” (346–56), and J. Andrew Overman responds in “Late Second Temple Galilee: A Picture of Relative Economic Health” (357–65). This unit concludes with a study by Fabian Udoh on “Taxation and Other Sources of Government Income in the Galilee of Herod and Antipas” (366–87).

The volume contains an archaeological chronology (ix), a chronology of events and rulers in Galilee and Judea in the late Second Temple through Mishnaic periods (xi–xv), and a series of color maps and photos. It concludes with a list of contributors (389–90), abbreviations (391–93), and indices of ancient sources (395–406) and subjects (407–11).

My only criticism of the volume is a minor one, and that is that a concluding chapter synthesizing the contents of the volume or presenting tentative conclusions would be helpful. Aside from this inconsiderable drawback, the volume has many beneficial features, two of which make it particularly valuable. First, it contains chapters by scholars coming at the data from differing vantage points and who reach different conclusions. This allows readers to participate in the conversation, assess the data for themselves, and

draw their own conclusions. Second, each chapter contains a bibliography and, cumulatively, these are a treasure trove of resources for readers who may want to pursue further study of ancient Galilee. This volume is a worthy tribute to Séan Freyne, its honoree, and will serve as an invaluable resource for students, scholars, and lay readers interested in the birth of Judaism and Christianity.