

BRADLEY W. ROOT

First Century Galilee

*Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen
zum Neuen Testament 2. Reihe*

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Mohr Siebeck

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378



Bradley W. Root

First Century Galilee

A Fresh Examination of the Sources

Mohr Siebeck

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Printed in Germany.

This book is dedicated to my wife, Shannon.

Preface

My research on first century Galilee began almost a decade ago with a series of research papers I wrote for the Ancient History/Judaic Studies graduate seminar at the University of California, San Diego. My first paper for this seminar focused on the provenance of the Synoptic Sayings Source (Q), challenging the common view that the document was composed in Galilee. While conducting research for this paper, I developed an interest in studying Early Roman Galilee in its own right. My subsequent papers for the graduate seminar investigated Galilee's socio-economic conditions, and I eventually decided to make this subject the focus of my PhD dissertation, *From Antipas to Agrippa II: Galilee in the First Century CE*. This book is a substantially revised, updated, and expanded version of that dissertation.

I would like to express my gratitude to everyone who helped me with my research – providing me with unpublished research, taking the time to discuss important issues with me, or offering critiques one or more chapters of the manuscript. These scholars include Jonathan L. Reed, Morten Hørning Jensen, Danny Syon, Mordechai Aviam, Uzi Leibner, Milton Moreland, Stefano De Luca, Yoav Arbel, Anthony J. Blasi, William H.C. Propp, David Noel Freedman, Richard Elliott Friedman, David Miano, Alden Mosshammer, Thomas E. Levy, and Dayna S. Kalleres.

Special thanks go to my doctoral adviser, David Goodblatt, whose advice and direction I relied upon at every stage of this project. I simply could not have asked for a better mentor.

I would also like to thank the editors of WUNT II – Jörg Frey, Markus Bockmuehl, James A. Kelhoffer, Hans-Josef Klauck, Tobias Nicklas and J. Ross Wagner – for accepting my manuscript and Morten Jensen for bringing my work to Dr. Frey's attention. In addition, I deeply appreciate the professionalism with which Henning Ziebritzki, Jana Trispel, Kendra Mäschke, and the rest of the staff at Mohr Siebeck guided me through the publication process and answered my many questions.

I also wish to express my gratitude to the faculty, staff, and students at St. Mary's University for all of the support they have given me over the past four years. I am especially grateful for the hard work done by three St. Mary's students – Matthew Finnie, Erica Cortez, and Jason Maupin – who assisted

my research and helped me as I revised this manuscript and prepared the book for publication.

My research would not have been possible without financial support provided by the Waitt Foundation Dissertation Fellowship in Biblical Studies and Archeology, the Wexler Family Judaic Studies Fellowship, the Dorot Travel Grant, and the UCSD History Department's Dissertation Writing Fellowship.

I would also like to thank my family. My parents, Walter and Debra, taught me to ask questions, to seek answers, and to be intellectually unconventional. My mother also read and provided a thorough critique of the entire book manuscript. My children, Caitlin and Jonathan, have been an immense source of joy in my life; they serve as a constant reminder that there are more important things in life than academic pursuits.

Most importantly, I am thankful for my wife, Shannon, who has supported me throughout our thirteen years of marriage. I cannot express in words how much her love and encouragement mean to me.

St. Mary's University
San Antonio, Texas
August 2014

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Abbreviations

<i>AJP</i>	<i>American Journal of Philology</i>
<i>AncSoc</i>	<i>Ancient Society</i>
<i>ANRW</i>	<i>Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt: Geschichte und Kultur Roms im Spiegel der neueren Forschung</i> . Edited by H. Temporini and W. Haase. Berlin, 1972–
ASOR	American Schools of Oriental Research
<i>BA</i>	<i>Biblical Archaeologist</i>
<i>BAR</i>	<i>Biblical Archaeology Review</i>
<i>BASOR</i>	<i>Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research</i>
<i>Bib</i>	<i>Biblica</i>
BJS	Brown Judaic Studies
<i>BTB</i>	<i>Biblical Theology Bulletin</i>
<i>CBQ</i>	<i>Catholic Biblical Quarterly</i>
<i>CQ</i>	<i>Classical Quarterly</i>
<i>ErIsr</i>	<i>Eretz-Israel</i>
ESA	Eastern Sigillata A
<i>ESI</i>	<i>Excavations and Surveys in Israel</i>
GCW	Galilean Coarse Ware
<i>HA-ESI</i>	<i>Hadashot Arkheologiyot/Excavations and Surveys in Israel</i>
<i>HSCP</i>	<i>Harvard Studies in Classical Philology</i>
<i>HTR</i>	<i>The Harvard Theological Review</i>
IAA	Israel Antiquities Authority
<i>IEJ</i>	<i>Israel Exploration Journal</i>
IJS	Institute of Jewish Studies
IQP	International Q Project
<i>JBL</i>	<i>Journal of Biblical Literature</i>
<i>JFA</i>	<i>Journal of Field Archaeology</i>
<i>JJS</i>	<i>Journal of Jewish Studies</i>
<i>JRA</i>	<i>Journal of Roman Archaeology</i>
<i>JRS</i>	<i>The Journal of Roman Studies</i>
<i>JSHJ</i>	<i>Journal for the Study of the Historical Jesus</i>
<i>JSJ</i>	<i>Journal for the Study of Judaism in the Persian, Hellenistic and Roman Period</i>
JSOTSup	Journal for the Study of the Old Testament: Supplement Series
<i>JTS</i>	<i>The Journal of Theological Studies</i>
KHW	Kefar Hananya Ware
<i>NEA</i>	<i>Near Eastern Archaeology</i>
<i>NovT</i>	<i>Novum Testamentum</i>
<i>NTS</i>	<i>New Testament Studies</i>
<i>PEQ</i>	<i>Palestine Exploration Quarterly</i>

SBEC	Studies in the Bible and Early Christianity
SBL	Society of Biblical Literature
SBLCS	Society of Biblical Literature Septuagint and Cognate Studies
<i>SBLSP</i>	<i>Society of Biblical Literature Seminar Papers</i>
ScrHier	Scripta hierosolymitana
<i>SJT</i>	<i>Scottish Journal of Theology</i>
SNTSMS	Society for New Testament Studies Monograph Series
SW	Shikhin Ware
TSAJ	Texts and Studies in Ancient Judaism
WUNT	Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament
ZNW	<i>Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft und die Kunde der älteren Kirche</i>

Chapter 1

Aims, Method, and Procedure

Scholarly interest in the social history of Early Roman Galilee is a relatively recent development. Although Galilee served as the birthplace for both Christianity in the first century CE and rabbinic Judaism in the second century CE, members of both faiths generally ignored the region's history until the twentieth century.¹

The current fascination with first century Galilee is mostly a byproduct of the "third quest" for the historical Jesus, which emphasized the importance of insights from archaeology, anthropology, and other social sciences. One of the third quest's basic goals was to understand how Jesus functioned as part of his specific social, cultural, political, and economic environment.² Consequently, Galilee's social history has now become an integral part of historical Jesus research, and the number of archaeological excavations conducted in the region has increased dramatically over the past few decades. All of these developments have greatly expanded our knowledge of first century Galilee's history and culture.³

¹ Even in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, when New Testament scholarship was engaged in the so-called "first quest" and "second quest" for the historical Jesus, Galilee's social history was not a major concern. For a detailed discussion of the relationship between the various quests for the historical Jesus and Galilean studies, see J.L. Reed, *Archaeology and the Galilean Jesus: A Re-Examination of the Evidence* (Harrisburg: Trinity Press International, 2000), 4–22.

² G. Vermes, *Jesus the Jew* (London: William Collins Sons & Co., 1973); E.P. Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985); J.D. Crossan, *The Historical Jesus: The Life of a Mediterranean Jewish Peasant* (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1991); M.J. Borg, *Meeting Jesus Again for the First Time: The Historical Jesus & the Heart of Contemporary Faith* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1994); J.P. Meier, "The Present State of the 'Third Quest' for the Historical Jesus: Loss and Gain," *Bib* 80 (1999).

³ Influential works on first century Galilee are too numerous to list. The following works provide a good overview of the state of the field since the turn of the century: D.A. Fiensy, *Jesus the Galilean: Soundings in a First Century Life* (Piscataway: Gorgias, 2007); S. Freyne, "Galilean Studies: Old Issues and New Questions," in *Religion, Ethnicity, and Identity in Ancient Galilee: A Region in Transition*, ed. J. Zangenberg, H.W. Attridge, and D.B. Martin, WUNT 210 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2007); M.H. Jensen, *Herod Antipas in Galilee: The Literary and Archaeological Sources on the Reign of Herod Antipas and Its Socio-economic Impact on Galilee*, WUNT 2.215 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2006); U. Leibner, *Settlement*

1.1 Aims

Recent research on first century Galilee has largely been shaped by debates about the region's socio-economic conditions, cultural ethos, religious ethos, and political climate.⁴ The current majority view among scholars is that Galilee experienced rapid urbanization and a socio-economic crisis in the first-century CE as a result of major changes initiated by Herod the Great and his successors.⁵ Therefore, Galilee is often seen as an unstable region that was rife with social conflict.

and History in Hellenistic, Roman, and Byzantine Galilee: An Archaeological Survey of the Eastern Galilee, TSAJ 127 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2009); M. Moreland, "The Inhabitants of Galilee in the Hellenistic and Early Roman Periods: Probes into the Archaeological and Literary Evidence," in Zangenberg, *Religion, Ethnicity, and Identity in Ancient Galilee*; Reed, *Galilean Jesus*; Z. Weiss, "Jewish Galilee in the First Century CE: An Archaeological View," in *Flavius Josephus, Vita: Introduction, Hebrew Translation, and Commentary*, ed. D.R. Schwartz (Jerusalem: Yad Ben-Zvi Press, 2007); Zangenberg, *Religion, Ethnicity, and Identity in Ancient Galilee*; J.K. Zangenberg, "Archaeological News from the Galilee: Tiberias, Magdala and Rural Galilee," *Early Christianity* 1 (2010).

⁴ M. Aviam, "Socio-Economic Hierarchy and Its Economic Foundations in First Century Galilee: The Evidence from Yodfat and Gamla," in *Flavius Josephus: Interpretation and History*, ed. J. Pastor, M. Mor, and P. Stern (Leiden: Brill, 2011); D.R. Edwards, "The Socio-Economic and Cultural Ethos of Lower Galilee in the First Century: Implications for the Nascent Jesus Movement," in *Studies on the Galilee in Late Antiquity*, ed. L.I. Levine (New York: Jewish Theological Seminary, 1992); S. Freyne, "Herodian Economics in Galilee: Searching for a Suitable Model," in *Modelling Early Christianity: Social Scientific Studies of the New Testament in Its Context*, ed. P.F. Esler (New York: Routledge, 1995); M. Moreland, "Q and the Economics of Early Roman Galilee," in *The Sayings Source Q and the Historical Jesus*, ed. A. Lindemann (Sterling: Peeters, 2001); D.E. Aune, "Jesus and the Romans in Galilee: Jews and Gentiles in the Decapolis," in *Ancient and Modern Perspectives on the Bible and Culture: Essays in Honor of Hans Dieter Betz*, ed. A.Y. Collins (Atlanta: Scholars, 1998); A.M. Berlin, "Romanization and Anti-Romanization in Pre-Revolt Galilee," in *The First Jewish Revolt: Archaeology, History, and Ideology*, ed. A.M. Berlin and J.A. Overman (New York: Routledge, 2002); M.A. Chancey, *The Myth of a Gentile Galilee* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2002); *Greco-Roman Culture and the Galilee of Jesus* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2005); Fiensy, *Jesus the Galilean*; E.M. Meyers, "The Cultural Setting of Galilee: The Case of Regionalism and Early Judaism," in *ANRW 19.2.1*, ed. W. Haase (New York: de Gruyter, 1979).

⁵ W.E. Arnal, "The Rhetoric of Marginality: Apocalypticism, Gnosticism, and Sayings Gospels," *HTR* 88 (1995); "The Parable of the Tenants and the Class Consciousness of the Peasantry," in *Text and Artifact: Religions in Mediterranean Antiquity: Essays in Honour of Peter Richardson*, ed. S.G. Wilson and M. Desjardins, *Studies in Christianity and Judaism* (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier UP, 2000); K.C. Hanson, "The Galilean Fishing Economy and the Jesus Tradition," *BTB* 27 (1997); W. Stegemann, "Vagabond Radicalism in Early Christianity?: A Historical and Theological Discussion of a Thesis Proposed by Gerd Theissen," ed. W. Schottroff and E. Stegemann (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1984); *The Jesus Movement: A Social History of Its First Century*, trans. O.C. Dean (Minneapolis: Fortress,

This work aims to offer a fresh evaluation of Galilee's religious, social, political, and economic character between Herod the Great's death in 4 BCE and the death of Herod's great-grandson, Agrippa II, toward the end of the first century CE.⁶ Since no historical study can be truly comprehensive, I have chosen to investigate nine features of Galilean society that are the subject of frequent scholarly debate:

- 1) Galilee's ethnic makeup
- 2) The extent to which Galilee was urbanized in the first century CE
- 3) The state of Galilee's economy
- 4) Galilee's political climate
- 5) Galilee's religious ethos
- 6) The extent to which Galilean society assimilated to Greco-Roman culture
- 7) The extent to which Galileans supported and participated in the Great Revolt
- 8) Jewish-Gentile relations in Galilee
- 9) The political, economic, cultural, and religious relationship between Galilee and Judea

1.2 Method and Procedure

My method of historical inquiry is significantly influenced by the work of Jacob Neusner, Lester Grabbe, and Steve Mason.⁷ Both Neusner and Mason have criticized the tendency of modern scholars to ask "the historical question" too early in the intellectual process.⁸ Thus, they argue, most scholars begin searching for conclusions before they have a clear sense of what each

1999); J.S. Kloppenborg Verbin, *The Tenants in the Vineyard: Ideology, Economics, and Agrarian Conflict in Jewish Palestine*, WUNT 195 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2006); D.E. Oakman, "Money in the Moral Universe of the New Testament," in *The Social Setting of Jesus and the Gospels*, ed. B.J. Malina, W. Stegemann, and G. Theissen (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2002); P. Trudinger, "Exposing the Depths of Oppression (Luke 16:1b-8a): The Parable of the Unjust Steward," in *Jesus and His Parables: Interpreting the Parables of Jesus Today*, ed. V.G. Shillington (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1997).

⁶ The precise date of Agrippa II's death is not known.

⁷ J. Neusner, *The Rabbinic Traditions About the Pharisees Before 70: The Houses* (Leiden: Brill, 1971), 1-2; *Judaism in the Beginning of Christianity* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1984), 47; S. Mason, "Josephus' Pharisees: the Narratives," in *In Quest of the Historical Pharisees*, ed. J. Neusner and B.D. Chilton (Waco: Baylor UP, 2007), 3-5. This approach is one of the hallmarks of Neusner's scholarship in general, and he has made similar methodological points about other historical quests as well. See J. Neusner, *Three Questions of Formative Judaism: History, Literature, and Religion* (Boston: Brill, 2002), 12.

⁸ Mason, "Josephus' Pharisees," 3.

source contributes to our knowledge of the past. Consequently, Mason and Neusner have both stressed the need to address the “literary questions” (i.e., to interpret each source by itself without recourse to outside information) before engaging in historical reconstruction.

Most of the recent studies on first century Galilee offer historical reconstructions without determining how each of the literary sources depicts the region. Thus, important inconsistencies among the sources go unrecognized, and it becomes all too easy for the scholar to allow his or her understanding of the entire data set to influence the interpretation of specific sources. Furthermore, current scholarship on Galilee frequently fails to maintain an analogous distinction between the archaeological evidence and the evidence derived from each literary source.⁹

To avoid these problems, this book addresses the literary and archaeological questions discretely before it engages in historical interpretation. Each of the relevant literary sources is analyzed individually without considering outside information.¹⁰ Likewise, the archaeological evidence is first analyzed by itself without reference to any literary material.

⁹ J.D. Crossan and J.L. Reed, *Excavating Jesus: Beneath the Stones, Behind the Texts* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 2001), xvii–xxi; W.G. Dever, “Archeological Method in Israel: A Continuing Revolution,” *BA* 43 (1980); *Recent Archaeological Discoveries and Biblical Research* (University of Washington Press, 1989), 31–36.

¹⁰ I have decided not to use the evidence from the later rabbinic materials because those materials are simply too far removed from the first century to provide reliable information about the socio-economic conditions and religious practices in the first century CE. There are two major reasons that the rabbinic material is considered too unreliable to be a source for the first century CE: 1) The earliest written rabbinic materials (the Mishnah and Tosefta) are universally regarded as products of the third century. 2) The traditions attributed to figures from the first and second centuries were subject to considerable redaction, literary changes, and ideological coloring. For more detailed discussions on the unreliability of the rabbinic material as a source for the first century, see H.A. Fischel, “Story and History: Observations on Greco-Roman Rhetoric and Pharisaism,” in *American Oriental Society, Middle West Branch, Semi-Centennial Volume*, ed. D. Sinor (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1969); J. Neusner, *Development of a Legend: Studies on the Traditions Concerning Yohanan ben Zakkai* (Leiden: Brill, 1970); S. Safrai, “Tales of the Sages in Palestinian Tradition and the Babylonian Talmud,” *ScrHier* 22 (1971); Y. Fraenkel, “Ma’aseh BeR. Shila,” *Tarbiz* 40 (5731 [70–71]); “Hermeneutic Problems in the Study of Aggadic Narrative,” *Tarbiz* 47 (5738 [77–78]); P. Schäfer, *Studien zur Geschichte und Theologie des rabbinischen Judentums* (Leiden: Brill, 1978); W.S. Green, “What’s in a Name?: The Problematic of Rabbinic ‘Biography,’” in *Approaches to Ancient Judaism: Theory and Practice*, ed. W.S. Green (Missoula: Scholars, 1978); “Palestinian Holy Men: Charismatic Leadership and Rabbinic Tradition,” in *ANRW* 2.19.2 (1979); D. Goodblatt, “Towards the Rehabilitation of Talmudic History,” in *History of Judaism: The Next Ten Years*, ed. B.M. Bokser, *BJS* 21 (Chico: Scholars, 1980); S. Freyne, “The Charismatic,” in *Ideal Figures in Ancient Judaism*, ed. J.J. Collins and G.W.E. Nicklesburg, *SBLSCS* (Chico: Scholars, 1980); B.M. Bokser, “Wonder-

1.3 Structure

The rest of this book is divided into four parts. The first two parts analyze each written source individually, answering the literary questions without addressing the historical ones. Archaeological data and historical documents do not speak for themselves, and any interpretation of these sources necessarily involves subjective judgments that also deserve close scrutiny.¹¹

Part One, which includes chapters 2 and 3, focuses solely on Josephus' works. Chapter 2 provides some background information about the historian and explains this book's approach to his accounts as historical sources. Chapter 3 engages the literary questions, determining how Josephus' writings depict Galilee without addressing the historical questions. This chapter is organized according to the nine features of Galilean society described earlier in this chapter.

Part Two, which includes chapters 4 through 9, investigates each of the first century Gospels' depiction of Jesus' Galilean environment. Like chapter 3, each of these chapters addresses only the literary questions, and each chapter is organized around the nine features of Galilean society.¹²

Part Three, which includes chapters 10 and 11, examines the archaeological evidence without reference to the literary sources.¹³ Chapter 10 provides a brief summary of the relevant archaeological data, and chapter 11 evaluates the archaeological evidence for each of the features mentioned above.

Part Four (chapter 12) engages the historical questions, analyzing all of the relevant data to provide a comprehensive reconstruction of the nine major features of Galilean society. Part Four incorporates insights from anthropology, sociology, demography, and economics, applying relevant models to the historical information in order to generate a more complete historical reconstruction of first century Galilee.

1.4 Translations

Unless otherwise noted, all English quotations of biblical material come from the New Revised Standard Version.

Working and the Rabbinic Tradition: The Case of Hanina ben Dosa," *JSJ* 16, no. 1 (1985); Crossan, *Historical Jesus*.

¹¹ I anticipate that these chapters will also provide a foundation upon which others can develop their own historical reconstructions.

¹² The introduction to each chapter briefly identifies which cultural features are addressed in each Gospel and which are not.

¹³ I analyze all of the archaeological data collectively in chapter 11.

1.5 Terminology

1.5.1 *Judea and Iudaea*

There is quite a bit of controversy over what modern scholars should call the territory ruled by Herod the Great, especially in the first century CE, when this area was divided into separate political entities. The term “Judea” can refer to either the territory that had formerly comprised Herod’s kingdom (i.e. as a collective reference to Judea, Samaria, Galilee, Idumea, Perea, and Gaulanitis), the province of Judea, or the region of Judea in a stricter sense – excluding Galilee, Samaria, Idumea, etc.

Most scholars have decided to solve this problem by using the term “Judea” to refer to both the province and the region of Judea and then using a more general term – such as “Palestine” or “the Land of Israel” – to refer to the territory that Herod ruled. However, the terms “Palestine” and “the Land of Israel” are both imprecise and politically loaded today. In the first century, the political unit in question was not called Palestine, but Judea. The province of Palestine was the name the Roman government gave the province after the Bar Kokhba War in the second century CE. Given the political connotations associated with the word “Palestine” in modern times, many people, especially Israelis, are offended by its anachronistic use by those who study the Second Temple Period. Unfortunately, the term “the Land of Israel” is also somewhat anachronistic since no political entity called Israel existed in the first century.

In order to avoid anachronism, offense, and ambiguity, I have decided to use three different forms of the word Judea to refer to each of the three possible meanings of this term. For the Roman province, I will always use the Latinized “*Iudaea*.” I will refer to the geographic territory that constituted Herod the Great’s kingdom as “Judea (broad sense).” I will refer to the region of Judea (the term’s strictest sense) simply as “Judea.” Hopefully, this convention will clear up ambiguities without confusing the reader.

1.5.2 *Toponyms*

Although most locals probably referred to Galilean settlements by their Semitic names, it has become common scholarly practice to refer to many Galilean sites by the Greek names used by either Josephus or the Gospels. To avoid confusion, I will always use the Greek names for the following places: Bethsaida, Capernaum, Gamala, Nazareth, Sepphoris, Tiberias, and Magdala/Tarichea. In addition, I will always refer to Jotapata by its Semitic name, Yodefat. For all other sites in Galilee, I will use Semitic names when discussing the archaeological evidence and Greek names when considering the literary evidence.