
This book is Jensen’s slightly revised doctoral dissertation, completed under Per Bilde in the Faculty of Theology at the University of Aarhus. The subtitle accurately captures the study’s purpose, which is to combine literary and archaeological sources in order to evaluate Antipas’ rule, in particular to assess its socio-economic impact on Galilee. In the end, Jensen concludes that “Herod Antipas was a minor ruler with a moderate impact” (254). Why then devote a 316-page study to an insignificant historical figure? Lurking in the background of *Herod Antipas in Galilee* is the historical Jesus, and the intensely-debated and diverse depictions of Galilee proposed by New Testament scholars. Although Jensen refrains from discussing, much less advocating, any particular historical Jesus, his study begins and ends with the current Jesus quest and the role of Antipas’ Galilee in it. In the end, his assessment is negative, since he concludes that “the picture of the historical Jesus as provoked by and opposed to the reign of Antipas cannot be substantiated” (258).

The study is clearly organized into three sections. “Part I: Settings” presents a series of *Forschungsberichte* on Jesus, scholarly characterizations of urban-rural relations in Galilee, and previous studies on Antipas, the latter of which are overly psychological or ignore archaeology (3-49). At the end of this section he proposes a “source-contextual” approach for the rest of his study, in which each bit of evidence about Antipas is first considered within the context in which it is embedded, and later synthesized within an overall picture from various sources. “Part II: Sources” presents both the literature and archaeology relevant to Antipas (51-217). Of the former, Josephus take up the bulk of the discussion, and Jensen concludes that in light of his treatment of all the Herodians, Josephus has a clear redactional agenda “to present Antipas as another example of a bad Herodian ruler who was not able to safeguard the ancient and stable Jewish way of life” (99). Jensen shows less interest in the redactional tendencies of the gospels, and it is unclear how he views their relationships to each other. The latter archaeological sources are primarily the excavations at Tiberias and Sepphoris, as well as Galilee’s numismatic profile. “Part III: Assessment” combines the previously discussed evidence into a description of Antipas and an evaluation of his urbanization program (221-259). Jensen wisely eschews a characterization of Antipas’ personality based on anecdotal stories in Josephus or the New Testament, and instead prefers to focus on the coherent picture of his reign’s impact that emerges collectively from all the sources. He concludes that Antipas was not a *remaker* of Galilee but was a “modest developer”; he was “a minor Roman client ruler, mediocre in both his successes and
failures, and his impact on the archaeological record of Galilee is surprisingly rather elusive” (257). His reign, however, did not result in a socially deteriorated and economically devastated rural Galilee to which Jesus had to react.

This is an important and timely study. It comes as archaeological excavations and studies of relevance to early Roman Galilee are flourishing and as the debate over the urbanization of Galilee has reached maturity. The excavations at Sepphoris which began in the 1980s led to scholarly excesses in various directions: Antipas’ urbanization at that city and Tiberias was described as highly urbane with ridiculously high population sizes by some, others characterized these cities as laden with gentiles, overly Hellenistic, and home to cynic-styled philosophers, while others still stressed their parasitic role in ravishing the Galilean countryside. Jensen not only exposes these extreme positions, he assembles a considerable body of archaeological evidence to speak authoritatively for Antipas’ much more modest impact. He relies to a considerable degree on recent studies and ongoing excavations that are still unpublished, including the late Yizhar Hirschfeld’s fieldwork at Tiberias in which he participated, a study on Galilean numismatic profile by Danny Syon, and an examination of Gamla’s ceramics in its Galilean context by Andrea Berlin. The immense effort behind chapters five (“Herod Antipas and the Archaeology of Galilee,” 126-86) and six (“Message and Minting—The Coins of Herod Antipas,” 187-217) are alone worth the hefty price of the book.

Jensen marshals considerable archaeological evidence to pinpoint two major transformations in Galilee, one under the Hasmoneans in the Late Hellenistic Period and the other after Hadrian and throughout the Middle Roman Period. Under Antipas, however, there is no impact that can be described as dramatic. The conditions in Galilee under Antipas were stable and accompanied by steady growth. Taking a regional approach that looks at the well-excavated villages of Yodefat, Khirbet Cana, Capernaum, and Gamla, Jensen shows that Antipas’ city-building at Sepphoris and Tiberias did not impoverish Galilee. This is complemented with an inter-regional comparison of the Galilean cities to neighboring urban sites, which illustrates the former’s humble urban architecture. In Jensen’s words, “the modesty of Antipas’ achievements is highlighted by comparison with the building activities of Herod the Great in Caesarea Maritima,” and the archaeology of the Decapolis cities “highlights the fact that Antipas, rather than imposing real novelties, brought Galilee up to date with some of the infrastructure already known in the area” (186).

According to Jensen, the numismatic record confirms Antipas’ relative insignificance. Noteworthy changes in the circulation patterns of coins in Galilee are only apparent at two points, under the Hasmoneans (at the beginning of the first century B.C.E.) and during the middle Roman period (after the Bar Kokbah revolt). There is no similar change during the early Roman period, specifically under Antipas, who minted only five series of rather poorly made bronze coins that were not widely distributed. Jensen here relies heavily on Danny Syon’s