

Ze'ev Safrai, *The Economy of Roman Palestine*. London and New York: Routledge, 1994, pp. xii + 500.

The Province of Judaea, an administrative unit of the Roman empire, was established in 6 CE after the deposition, by Augustus, of Archelaus, Herod's son, who had ruled Judaea and Samaria for the previous ten years. The official name of the province was changed to Palaestina or Syria-Palaestina after the suppression of the Bar-Kokhba Revolt in 135 CE. The boundaries of the province changed several times in the first century; the Sinai and the Negev sections of the province of Arabia, as well as the area south of R. Zered east of the Araba valley, were organized as Palaestina Salutaris c.390, if not earlier (for the chronological problem see P. Mayerson, *ZPE* 64, 1984, 223-30; idem, *BASOR* 263, 1988, 65-71). A tripartite division of Palestine took place by 409: Palaestina Prima, Palaestina Secunda, and Palaestina Tertia/Salutaris (*Cod. Theod.* 7.4.30; 16.8.99; *Not.Dig.Or.*XXII). The Arab conquest of the 630s put an end to these Roman provinces of Palestine. Of these more than six centuries of the existence of Roman Palestine, the present book is designed to deal with the period "from the destruction of the Second Temple until the mid-fourth century" (p. 3). No reasons or explanation are given for the drastic limitation of the period covered in this study, contrary to what one might expect from the title. The author does, however, use Byzantine sources and on several occasions does deal with the first century and the Byzantine period, which makes all the more odd and questionable the decision to eschew the treatment of the whole period of Roman rule of Palestine.

Although here and there trends, developments and changes are noted or even discussed, and on rare occasions historical treatment of a subject is presented, e.g. urbanization (pp. 20-27), the title of the book is probably intentional: this is not an economic history of Roman Palestine (p. 1: "The study of the economic history of Judaea during the Roman period" is probably a slip of the pen). For a fair understanding of the character of this study a summary of its contents is here in place. Chapter one discusses settlement patterns, the basic forms recognized and analysed being the polis, the town, the village and the villa. Chapter two professes to deal with modes of production, particularly in agriculture, crafts and industry. In fact it is a descriptive survey of the crops cultivated (grains, olives, grapes, flax etc., including a discussion of yields and prices), fishing and grazing; the production of textiles, glass, pottery and quarrying. Trade is discussed in chapter three: local (rural), regional, inter-regional and international. Here are also included accounts of roads, means of transportation, moneychangers, Jewish commercial law, as well as rabbinic thought on economic matters, basically utopian according to the author.

Chapter four is entitled "the organizational framework of farming" and studies private estates, imperial lands, small farmsteads, the employment of slaves in agriculture, tenancy, size of farms etc. Oddly enough it also deals with the role of the Roman army in the economy of Palestine, taxation, import and export and the currency. Chapter five is devoted to the question whether the economy of the country was open or closed during the Roman period. The author's basic conclusion is that as the economy of Judaea depended on both internal and external trade, it was for the most part an open one during the period under discussion (p. 429). The final chapter examines the relationship between demographic expansion, which reached its peak in the Byzantine period, and the supposed economic growth. The author concludes that "it was

population increase which resulted in economic stress and it was this stress which in the final analysis brought about economic growth" (p.458). As against this assumption, one may refer to Jones' explanation of the fall of Rome, namely, overtaxation (= economic stress), which caused "a progressive decline in agriculture and indirectly a shrinkage in population" (*The Later Roman Empire 284-602*, 1964, p. 1067). Now Safrai may or may not be right, but the trouble is that he has not tried to support his claim by any real evidence, and this is just one example of the tendency to throw out sweeping statements and generalizations without proper presentation and analysis of the evidence.

Prof. Safrai has published extensively (mainly in Hebrew) on subjects relevant to the present study, e.g. on the urbanization of Palestine, on the village, fairs, the Galilee, beekeeping and honey production, the problem of the integration of the Jewish nation in the Roman economy, not to mention his various archaeological surveys and reports (see the bibliography listed on p. 486). In fact he refers to and argues from several more unpublished studies or some that are in press, notably surveys (p. 363) and a study of all numismatic findings in Judaea (p. 405). Thanks to his own archaeological work and close acquaintance with the work of other Israeli archaeologists, as well as a thorough knowledge of the rabbinic sources he is well equipped for the study of the Palestinian economy during the period under discussion. Indeed in the introduction to the present work (pp. 3ff.), he discusses the contribution of these two sources of information to economic research and the methodological problems they pose for the researcher. In addition Safrai exploits comparative material from studies of other parts of the Roman empire. It is clear that he is interested in revealing patterns of economic behaviour, agricultural, commercial and industrial structures; and he quite often seeks to interpret the available data according to economic models. The following critical remarks and observations are not written because there is not much of value in this study, but because it is fair to warn readers what should not be expected and what cannot be accepted without further checking or verification.

To begin with, there is no systematic consideration of the influence of major or catastrophic political events on the economy of Palestine. Thus there is no discussion at all of the economic effects of the suppression of the First Jewish Revolt of 66-70 CE and the destruction of the Second Temple, the starting point for this study. Nor, apart from casual references, is there any serious treatment of the destructive results of the Bar-Kokhba Revolt for Judaea, (for some reservations see M. Mor, *The Bar-Kokhba Revolt, its Extent and Effect*, 1991, esp. 241-5 [Hebrew], not mentioned by Safrai). The Persian wars of the third century are completely ignored, and so are the invasions of the Germans and other peoples into Asia Minor, Greece, central and western Europe in the third century, the so-called period of anarchy. This is all puzzling in view of Safrai's attempt to relate basic phenomena and trends in the economy of Palestine to other developments in the Roman empire, and in particular in view of his conclusion that the economy of Palestine depended on both internal and external trade and was an open one. It might well be that he considers all these events irrelevant to his subject, or that he thinks that they had no effects on the economy of Palestine (but see p. 116). As it is, one can only guess.

Next, occasional unsatisfactory use of archaeological findings whose interpretation is problematic or disputed. Four examples will illustrate this point. For Safrai, Tefen, in western Galilee, is a village, "an offshoot settlement with a radical aware-

ness or sensibility to defense" (p. 72, and Fig. 14 on p. 52, with a reference to his book *The Galilee in the Time of the Mishnah and Talmud*, 1985 [Hebrew]). However, according to R. Frankel and N. Gazov who surveyed the site, it was a Hellenistic stronghold, constructed to defend Ptolemais during the Hasmonaean period (*Ze'ev Vilnay's Jubilee Book*, 1987, 163-5 [Hebrew], not mentioned by Safrai). A second example: Safrai discusses at length two interrelated types of settlements: the satellite (or offshoot) village and the mother (or founding) settlement (pp. 67-74). No clear criteria are suggested for how to identify these two types on the basis of archaeological findings, although village roads are taken to be relevant and indicative. Safrai also states that a settlement of 0.7-1.2 hectare might be an independent town, but not necessarily a mother settlement (p. 67). Later on (p. 100-1) he presents data on the spatial structure of city territories, saying that there were 60 mother towns in the territory of Hippos according to D. Urman, *The Golan*, 1985, but only 30 according to Z. Maoz, *Ramat Ha-Golan in Antiquity*, M.A. Diss., 1986 (Hebrew). This short reference is misleading, concealing the problematic nature of the archaeological evidence. First, the boundaries of the territory of Hippos are not known for certain (see the discussion in Maoz, pp.59-64). Secondly, Urman's figure (p. 87 Fig. 16, p. 104 Fig. 43) relates to the total number of settlements surveyed. If all of them were to be regarded as mother settlements, there would be no satellite settlements left, thus undermining the identification of the 60 as mother settlements. Maoz reports that 28 settlements had an area of 2 to 8 hectares apiece, another 2 more than 10 hectares each, and 30 more settlements less than 2 hectares each (p. 85). It would follow that a 2 hectare (or more) settlement should be regarded as a mother settlement according to Safrai. However, if the estimated size of a settlement were to be used as a typological index, there would be only 10 mother settlements, i.e. settlements with more than 2 hectares, according to the data of Urman. In fact, Urman and Maoz do not refer to the typology used by Safrai and no attempt has been made either by them or by Safrai himself to use village roads, to the extent that they are known in the territory ascribed to Hippos, to classify the settlements under discussion according to any typology. One last word on this case, the figures of Urman and Maoz relate to the Byzantine period, which is not mentioned by Safrai.

Example no. 3: Safrai writes "The first constructed road in Palestine was apparently that built by the Hasmonean kings which connected Jerusalem with Lod via Emmaus" (p. 274). His authority for this statement is M. Fischer, "The Jerusalem - Emmaus Road", in A. Kasher, G. Fuks and U. Rappaport (eds.), *Greece and Rome in Palestine*, 1989, 185-206 (Hebrew). However, what Fischer reports is that several road-forts, notably Kh. el - Qasr (= H. Mesad), were occupied along the Jerusalem - Joppa Road during the Hasmonaean period. Of construction works he speaks only in his discussion of the Roman period (p. 202). In brief, Fischer does not say that the Hasmonaean kings had the road constructed, and there is nothing in the archaeological finds presented by him to suggest that they did. The road is discussed in detail in the forthcoming study of M. Fischer, B. Isaac and I. Roll, *Roman Roads in Judea II: Jaffa - Jerusalem Road*, 1995. They have not come across any evidence for Hasmonaean construction (personal communication from Prof. Isaac).

My last example concerns oil-presses. Safrai argues that the Galilee was the major olive-producing region in Palestine, while grapes were cultivated especially in Judaea. He takes this specialization as contributing support to his view that the

economy of Palestine was open in the period under discussion (pp. 97, 121-2, 366-8, 420). The evidence cited consists mainly of midrashic texts, but he admits that oil-presses have been discovered throughout Palestine, with the reservation that such presses have been found only in one village in the Mt. Hebron region (p. 420). However, on one occasion he says that as olive-presses were found in almost all regions of the country, "it would seem that olives were an important crop in almost every region of Palestine" (pp. 118-9), thus contradicting his main conclusion. In point of fact, Safrai has not presented all the archaeological findings. Thus he fails to mention that Hellenistic Marisa was a major oil-producing settlement to judge by the at least 20 oil-presses discovered there in underground installations (A. Klöner, *Qadmoniot*, 95-6, 1991, 71-2 [Hebrew]). These are relevant for his study in the same way that the columbaria installations of Marisa are in his discussion of the raising of doves (pp. 174 ff.). Likewise there is no mention of M. Gichon's study of the upright screw press, which is based mainly on three such presses from Judaea (*SCI* 5, 1979/80, 206-44). Safrai perhaps disagrees with Gichon's interpretation, but there is no justification for ignoring it. Furthermore, the table on production of oil in Palestine (Fig. 33, p. 127) does not include all the oil-presses mentioned by Safrai himself in this book, for instance those at Khirbet Muntar (p. 75) and Khirbet al-Bas (p. 97), both in Iudamaea. For similar reasons Safrai's sweeping conclusions on the cultivation of a few other crops are misleading, and hence the distribution economy map (p. 367) should not be trusted.

Omissions and deficiencies in the presentation and exploitation of the sources, comparative material and scholarly work occur rather too often. Here only a few examples can be given. Safrai begins his survey of urbanization with the inexact, unfounded statement that "the Greeks established colonies along the coast from Achziv in the north to Raphia in the south" (p. 20). He should have paid more attention to what is written about the history of these cities in, e.g., E. Schürer, *A History of the Jewish People in the Age of Jesus Christ (175 BC-AD 135), A New English Version*, revised and edited by G. Vermes *et alii*, II, 1979, 97-125 (listed in his bibliography). For the hellenization of the Phoenician cities he could have used with profit F. Millar, *PC Phs* 209, 1983, 55-71 (not listed in the bibliography). Pompey and Gabinius are said to have restored, i.e. rebuilt, many Greek cities (p. 49), but see B. Isaac, *The Limits of Empire. The Roman Army in the East*, 1990, 336-40 (listed in the bibliography). Safrai also says that Joppa remained then in Jewish hands and did not become a *polis*, referring to M. Avi-Yonah, *Historical Geography of Palestine*, 1963, 49 (Hebrew). On the contrary, Avi-Yonah writes that Joppa, like the other coastal cities, was liberated from Jewish rule. It is strange that in the discussion of the villa (pp. 82 ff.) no mention is made of S. Applebaum, "The problem of the Roman Villa in Eretz-Israel", *EI* 19, 1987, 1-5 (Hebrew). Cato's data are quoted in the discussion of olive yield and consumption (pp. 122 f.); it is then odd that the data of Roman writers (Cato, Columella and Pliny) on wine yield, prices and consumption are ignored in the section on the cultivation of grapes (pp. 126-32). Safrai writes that the *pragmateutes*, a large-scale merchant, used to travel by ship from one coastal city to another and to sell his merchandise from a mobile stall (*sic!*), for which he refers the reader to publications of F. Heichelheim, A.H.M. Jones and D. Sperber (p. 273). Unfortunately none of these scholars confirms this statement. It is a pity that Safrai has

not consulted additional relevant studies for his section on moneychangers (pp. 291-5), notably the extensive work of J. Andreau, *La vie financière dans le monde romain: les métiers de manieurs d'argent*, 1987. In the discussion of the opposition of the sages to the *polis*, Safrai quotes in translation several Talmudic texts, using the term *polis* (p.312). This creates a false impression, as the term *polis* does not appear in the original texts.

For the size of the Roman garrison in Judaea prior to 66 CE a reference is given to a publication of M. Mor, which does not deal with that period at all (p. 339). The section on the Roman army includes several errors, for instance the statement that 25,000 soldiers of the auxiliary units were attached to the two legions of Judaea (p. 339), and the discussion of the economic contribution of the military to the province is far from exhaustive, overlooking such basic work as that of L. Wierschowski, *Herr und Wirtschaft. Das römische Herr der Prinzipatszeit als Wirtschaftsfaktor*, 1984, or more specific studies like the valuable article of D.J.P. Mason on the Prata Legionis (*Britannia* 19, 1988, 163-89), a subject treated by Safrai in a rather perfunctory manner (p.349).

In the short treatment of the economic function of the Temple (p. 425), one misses the exploitation of M. Broshi's article in *JJS* 38, 1987, 32-7. The criticism directed against the calculation of the cost of transport of wheat by Duncan-Jones is ill-based for Safrai deals with transport by donkey (pp. 428-9, 434-5), which is much cheaper than by wagon. At any rate, there is no good basis for the confident generalization of Safrai on this matter. For a different view, based on comparative reports of pre-railway conditions in Turkey, see M. Hendy, *Studies in the Byzantine Monetary Economy c. 300-1450*, 1985, pp. 554-61 (not listed in Safrai's bibliography).

Finally, for Safrai the limes is still "a line of border fortifications", despite Isaac 1990 (listed in the bibliography), Shatzman, *AJAH* 8, 1983, 130-60 and Isaac, *JRS* 78, 1988, 125-47 (not listed).

Prof. Safrai's book aims at presenting an analytical account of economic patterns and structures of organizational frameworks, and of relationships among units of economic activity. There is no doubt about where his interest lies, or that he is well-versed in current trends in research on the economy of the Graeco-Roman world. My criticisms should not obscure the substantial contribution of the work to the study and understanding of the economy of Palestine. The application of new models and concepts is to be recommended. In this respect, one can only regret that in the concluding section on the economy of the *polis* (pp. 370-80), the problem of city-village relations has not been directly addressed in connection with the controversy about the consumer city (see, e.g., C.R. Whittaker, *JRA* 3, 1990, 100-18, listed in Safrai's bibliography). I would venture to predict that Safrai's conclusions will be challenged not so much on the basis of different concepts and methods, but on the basis of a different treatment of the literary and archaeological evidence.