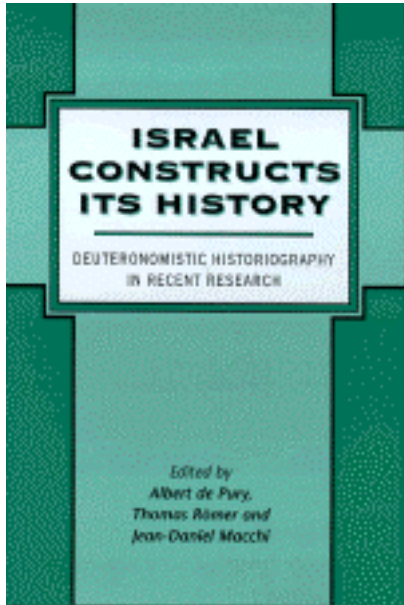


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**de Pury, Albert, Thomas Römer, and Jean-Daniel Macchi, eds.**

*Israel Constructs Its History: Deuteronomistic Historiography in Recent Research*

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Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000. Pp. 504.  
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Iain Provan  
Regent College  
Vancouver, British Columbia V6T 2E4

This book is a reviewer's nightmare. It is 504 pages long and contains fourteen essays; by the time I have finished describing their very diverse contents, I shall in all likelihood have little space to say anything interesting about any of them. I shall therefore offer my two opinions now. First, the volume is informative in various ways, especially where it focuses on broader matters such as comparative historiography or theology. Second, it will otherwise be of great interest especially to readers who share those presuppositions so evident in many of the essays that allow their authors to retain optimism as to the eventual outcome of this kind of research even while displaying the kind of variety of viewpoint that might lead others rather to despair of such a happy ending. Having said that, I shall confine myself to description.

All the essays arose, in some sense, out of a doctoral seminar that took place in 1995 in the universities of Fribourg, Neuchatel, Lausanne, and Geneva. The introductory essay by Römer and de Pury sets the scene with a review of the history of research and the debated issues in the field. It is, predictably, a massively long essay (117 pages!) that closes with (as it has so comprehensively documented) scholarly uncertainty on every important point, including the very existence of a Deuteronomistic History. There follow three essays under the general heading "Ancient Historiography," by Sara Japhet, Marcel

Detienne, and Jean-Jacques Glassner. Japhet examines postexilic historiography (by which she means to refer, conservatively, to Ezra-Nehemiah, Chronicles, and 1 Esdras), contrasting it with its Deuteronomistic antecedent; Detienne explores the different ways in which ancient cultures thought about the past, focusing on ancient Greece; and Glassner writes similarly of Mesopotamia. Two essays, by Adrian Schenker and Stephen Pisano, are then devoted to matters of textual criticism and literary criticism. Schenker returns to the vexed issue of the varying accounts of the reign of Jeroboam I (3 Kgdms 12:24a–z reflects the original Deuteronomistic account), while Pisano wrestles with textual and redactional issues in 2 Sam 5–8 (no firm conclusion).

The next heading is “Diachronic and Synchronic Methods,” and here we find essays by Steven McKenzie, Walter Dietrich, and Françoise Smyth. McKenzie argues (with Noth) that 1 Sam 8–12 is a unified Deuteronomistic composition—indeed, against Noth, that it provides a good example of his compositional techniques overall—but that it is nevertheless not antimonarchical (also against Noth). Dietrich renews his attempts to persuade colleagues of the coherence of his well-known theory of successive Deuteronomistic redactions, while Smyth offers a synchronic reading of 2 Kgs 22:1–23:28. A single essay under the heading of “The Sources of Deuteronomistic Historiography” by Jacques Briand, focusing on Josh 1–12, is then followed by two on “The Milieus of the Deuteronomists.” Ernst Axel Knauf asks, “Does Deuteronomistic historiography exist?” and arrives astonishingly quickly (in just over ten pages) at a negative answer, while Thomas Römer asks, “Is there a Deuteronomistic redaction in the book of Jeremiah?” and after a more leisurely discussion responds in the affirmative. The volume is concluded by two essays on “Deuteronomistic Ideology and the Theology of the Old Testament” by Martin Rose and Andrew Mayes.