The volume under review is based on the author’s 2011 PhD dissertation, which was completed at Friedrich-Alexander-Universität Erlangen-Nürnberg. In this study Robker examines the literary history of 2 Kgs 9–10 in relation to the Deuteronomistic History. He suggests that this pericope is an independently standing pericope whose pro-Jehuide stance is quite clear and suggests that it should be seen as originating from an eighth-century BCE Israelite (northern kingdom) source. Robker argues this thesis, inter alia, through a close analyses of the Greek textual versions of the biblical narrative, from the time of Jeroboam I to Jeroboam II. He then proceeds to compare what he identifies as the original text of this pericope to sources from other biblical and extrabiblical ancient Near Eastern sources, both archaeological as well as textual, then goes on to utilize this to suggest a rather plausible reconstruction of the history of the Israelite (and Judahite) kingdom in the Iron Age IIA and IIB (ninth–eighth centuries BCE).

The book is divided into eight chapters. In chapter 1 (1–16) Robker introduces the problem that is the central aspect of the book (the reliability of the Jehu narrative for reconstructing Israelite history), his objectives (to reconstruct the textual history of 2 Kgs 9–10 and present a historical reconstruction of the events related to Jehu’s revolt), and his
methodology (a critical examination of the biblical materials and a comparison to extrabiblical sources).

Chapter 2 (17–69) analyzes the text of 2 Kgs 9–10, reaching the conclusion that the core of this text, with its positive assessment of Jehu, is to be dated to the reign of Jeroboam II. Chapter 3 (70–116) deals with other biblical sources on the Jehuide dynasty in which Robker has identified earlier, Israelite texts that in many cases were edited and added to at later stages. In chapter 4 (117–65) Robker identifies the “Israel source” in the book of Kings from the time of Jeroboam until Joram and suggests that this source, along with the Israelite sources noted previously, derives from the reign of Jeroboam II.

Chapter 5 (166–96) is the first of three chapters in which Robker compares the Israel source with other biblical and extrabiblical textual sources. In chapter 5 this is done though a comparison to other sources in the biblical text (in the books of Kings, Chronicles, and prophetic texts) as well as relevant information gleaned from the writings of Josephus.

Chapter 6 (197–231) continues this comparison, in this case with reference to the relevant Assyrian textual materials, starting from the inscriptions of Shalmeneser III (mid-ninth century BCE) and ending with the boundary stone of Shalmeneser IV (ca. 773 BCE).

Chapter 7 (232–84) turns to a comparison with Levantine epigraphic sources. Robker offers analtogether excellent and comprehensive discussion of the relevant textual materials, with particular emphasis on the Tel Dan, Mesha, and Zakur inscriptions, as well as brief reference to the materials from Samaria (a stela fragment and the so-called Samaria Ostraca). One can note that what is missing in this chapter is the relatively recently discovered Aramaic stela from Tel Afis, with a possible reference to Hazael and Jehu (Amadasi Guzzo 2005; Younger 2007), which is clearly of relevance for this discussion.

Chapter 8 (284–302) is the conclusion in which Robker presents his overall thesis and ties together the issues discussed throughout the volume (see introductory paragraph above). Finally, as an appendix (303–14) Robker presents what he identifies as the Israel source, both in the original Hebrew and an English translation. While I am convinced that not all biblical scholars will agree on this identification, providing it in an accessible manner is very convenient for the reader.

All told, this is an excellent study of the biblical and extrabiblical sources relating to the time of Jehu specifically, of the historical background and a suggested historiographical understanding of the development of a biblical text and, in particular, a suggestion for the
definition of a distinct Israel source in the book of Kings. This study fits in with current tendencies in the study of the Iron Age kingdoms of Israel and Judah to define and delineate not only similarities (as often done in the past) but also differences between these related but distinct cultures and polities and how the various traditions, sources, and cultural facets reflecting these two kingdoms that can be found both in the biblical text and in the archaeological remains can contribute to a better understanding of the development of the biblical text and the history of these two kingdoms (see, e.g., Fleming 2012; Maeir 2013). Similarly, Israel Finkelstein’s recent studies (e.g., 2013) have attempted to focus on the importance of the Israelite kingdom in the understanding of the Iron Age Levant, combining between the biblical and extrabiblical data and his interpretation of the relevant archaeological remains. Thus the book under review joins in with the growing volume of research that seeks to flesh out more details and understanding of the Israelite traditions and the Israelite kingdom.

References


