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TSUMURA, D. – Creation and Destruction. A Reappraisal of the Chaoskopf Theory in the Old Testament. Eisenbrauns, Winona Lake, 2005. (23,5 cm, XVIII, 214). ISBN 1-57506-106-6. \$ 32,50.

This is a revised edition of *The Earth and the Waters. A Linguistic Investigation*. Sheffield Academic Press, Sheffield, 1989 (JSOT Suppl. 83), which was reviewed in *BiOr* 52 (1995), 107-109. Whereas Tsumura restricted his evaluation of Gunkel's Chaoskopf theory in his 1989 monograph to a discussion of the interpretation of Genesis 1-2 against the background of ancient Near Eastern mythology, he has now followed the suggestion of one of the reviewers, J.C.L. Gibson, to add a discussion of the function of waters and flood in biblical poetry. In this second part, which takes a good quarter of the total length, he investigates the alleged influence of especially Ugaritic conceptions on Psalms 18, 29, 46 and Habakkuk 3.

In the first part of the book Tsumura has – compared to the edition of 1989 – rephrased some statements, slightly reordered the chapters (making it more easy to follow his reasoning by offering more translations of the ancient texts and recapitulations of his arguments) and added references to recent secondary literature. In some cases he also takes up the discussion, for instance on p. 86, n. 5 about the in his view wrong translation of Hebrew 'ed with 'dew'. In other cases he merely mentions some of the many studies that have been published in this field since 1990. Some of these certainly deserved more attention. Tsumura refers to the article on Tiamat by B. Alster in the *Dictionary of Deities and Demons* (citing from the first edition of 1995 and not from the extensively revised edition of 1999). He reckons Alster to his supporters by quoting his statement that "the parallels are not sufficiently specific to warrant the conclusion that *Enuma Elish* was the source of the biblical account" (p. 53). However, Tsumura fails to note that – opposed to his own theories – Alster sees many parallels between the Mesopotamian and Biblical accounts of creation and also remarks that Hebrew *tehom* is translated 'the deep' and is etymologically related to Akkadian *tiamat* (*DDD*, 2nd ed., p. 867). One would have expected at least some kind of criticism by Tsumura on this opinion ventured in a recent authoritative handbook.

The most important thing Tsumura added in the first part of his monograph is a short and compared to the rest of the book rather superficial discussion of the exegetical problems of *ruach elohim* in Genesis 1:2 (pp. 74-76). His conclusions, primarily on etymological and linguistic grounds, remain the same: the account of the creation as it is given in Genesis is not influenced by Mesopotamian conceptions as found in *Enuma Elish*. A comparison with Canaanite, especially Ugaritic texts is more to the point, but this also shows that Gunkel and his

many followers are wrong: there are no hints to any kind of battle between God and powers of chaos in the form of waters or whatever.

The second part start with some considerations concerning methodological principles. These concern especially the problems with relating ancient Near Eastern texts to the Old Testament. It would have been more logical to place these general statements in this matter at the beginning of the book, but one can also regard them as one of the results of the first part of the book. According to Tsumura it has become clear that Gunkel and many scholars with him make the connection too easily. With Sasson he even speaks of a tendency to “biblicize ancient Near Eastern documents before they are compared with OT materials” (p. 146). The ancient Near Eastern texts should have the chance to speak for themselves. The same holds true for Biblical texts, as Tsumura notes the questionable tendency to interpret them mythologically.

Just as with Genesis 1-2 Tsumura now also attempts to free a number of poetic texts in the Hebrew Bible from the in his eyes wrongful relation with Canaanite mythology. Again, he pays much attention to a sound linguistic analysis with special emphasis on the structure of the text. In most cases he can rely on earlier research done by himself: an article on Psalm 18 in *Exegetica* 3 (1992), 57-64 (in Japanese); articles on Psalm 46 in *AJBI* 6 (1980), 29-55, and *JQR* 71 (1981), 167-175; and articles on Habakkuk 3 in *JSS* 31 (1986), 11-16, and in the Festschrift for D.W. Young (1996), 357-365. This may explain why, as in the first part of the book, the handling of the recent secondary literature leaves much to be desired. Sometimes Tsumura merely mentions a publication without entering into a discussion, even though its conclusions are contradicting his own. For instance, the article by T. Podella, ‘Der “Chaoskampf” im Alten Testament: Eine Problemanzeige’ (Festschrift K. Bergerhof, 1993, 313-318), deserved more than only a reference in a footnote. What was remarked above about the article of Alster in *DDD* can be repeated with regard to my article on Rahab. I was happy to see it mentioned by Tsumura, but surprised that he passes over my statement that the references in the Old Testament to Rahab point to a conception of a battle between YHWH and chaos preceding the creation of heaven and earth” (*DDD*, p. 685).

In his conclusions Tsumura goes even further than in the first part of his book: he denies any reference to the idea of some kind of battle between God and the flood. He seems to overstate his case, however, when he tries to prove that we should translate *lammabbul* in Psalm 29:10 with ‘(the Lord sits enthroned) before the flood’, that is: ‘from time immemorial’ (p. 155), and that in Psalm 46 the reference to the ‘raging sea’ is only metaphorical (p. 163): the words used would refer to foaming wine and not to a primordial battle. He may be right in maintaining that the many possible parallels in Habakkuk with Ugaritic mythology can all be explained without assuming a direct connection (p. 181), but it is precisely the extraordinary quantity of allusions in this chapter that makes this connection very likely. On the one hand Tsumura is certainly right that each text (both the biblical and the one taken from other Near

Eastern literatures) should be carefully studied in its own context in order to prevent a mixing up of different concepts. On the other hand his criticism on other scholars as being too optimistic in finding the clue to the interpretation of Old Testament text in Mesopotamian mythology, may have made him too cautious. It is good to be produce sound etymologies and to distinguish between different concepts, but one should also leave open the possibility that in ancient thinking and writing things were more confused than we would like them to be. Moreover, our definitions, for instance of what we call ‘primordial’ of ‘mythological’, would probably not be shared by the ancient writers whose texts we try to put in our systems.

In the end, it can be welcomed that Tsumura’s precise and cautious treatment of this topic is updated and expanded in a well edited book (although there are some irritating recurring misprints in the transcription and in the headings). One does not have to share his views to appreciate his clarifying contribution to the discussion about the comparison of ancient texts. One would have wished, however, that he had paid more attention to recent literature. Next to what is said about this above, one can point here to some not all too recent publications that should have been taken into account: M.A. Klopfenstein, ‘Wenn der Schöpfer die Chaosmächte anherrst’, *ThZ* 53 (1997), 33-43; J.C. de Moor, *The Rise of Yahwism*, 2nd edition, Leuven 1997 (pp. 198-206, about the relation between Ugaritic conceptions and Habakkuk 3); and M. Buks, *Die Welt am Anfang. Zum Verhältnis von Vorwelt und Weltentstehung in Gen 1 und in der altorientalischen Literatur*, WMANT 74, Neukirchen 1997. In a recent publication, that came too late to be noticed by Tsumura, R.S. Watson takes the same minimalist view as Tsumura opposing the opinions of Gunkel and Day. Her book (*Chaos Created. A Reassessment of the Theme of “Chaos” in the Hebrew Bible*, BZAW 341, Berlin 2005) also shows that there far more relevant texts concerning this theme in the Old Testament to be discussed than is done by Tsumura.

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