

Segert, Stanislav

[Smith, Mark S. The Ugaritic Baal cycle. Volume 1, Introduction with text, translation and commentary of KTU 1.1-1.2]

Religio. 1996, vol. 4, iss. 2, pp. [201]-203

ISSN 1210-3640 (print); ISSN 2336-4475 (online)

Stable URL (handle): <https://hdl.handle.net/11222.digilib/124770>

Access Date: 28. 11. 2024

Version: 20220831

Terms of use: Digital Library of the Faculty of Arts, Masaryk University provides access to digitized documents strictly for personal use, unless otherwise specified.

Mark S. Smith,
The Ugaritic Baal Cycle I,
Leiden – New York – Köln 1994,
xxxvi + 446 pp., 47 plates

In this journal the ancient Canaanite religion, important for the study of the Hebrew Bible, receives due attention. Translations of Ugaritic texts with introductions and comments were published recently, poem on the birth of twin gods (*KTU* 1.23) translated by Stanislav Segert (2, 1994, 53-69), and poem on love of Baal and Anat (*KTU* 1.10-11) translated by Ondřej Stehlík (3, 1995, 143-151).

The abbreviation *KTU* stands also in this review for the edition prepared by M. Dietrich, O. Loretz and J. Samartín, *Die keilalphabetischen Texte aus Ugarit*. Teil 1. (Kevelaer – Neukirchen – Vluyn 1976). (An updated edition of these texts was published in 1995.)

The book under review is published within the edition "Supplements to Vetus Testamentum 55" with the subtitle "Introduction with text, translation and commentary of *KTU* 1.1 – 1.2". It is devoted to the largest corpus of Ugaritic texts, the Baal Cycle. Only the introduction and the first two cuneiform tablets are dealt with in the first volume of this detailed study, the other four tablets have to be presented in the second volume.

Mark S. Smith, Professor at Saint Joseph's University in Philadelphia dedicated this volume to his teacher Marvin H. Pope. Contribution of institutions and individuals helpful in preparing the magnificent volume are acknowledged (xii-xiv).

In the preface (xxii-xxxvi) first the story of the Baal Cycle is explained, with special attention to the modification of the prevailing opinions (xxii-xxviii). Smith in his study follows the usual format of biblical commentaries, he explains main features of his volume (xxviii-xxxvi): introduction, bibliographies, examination of text, textual notes, translation conveying the overall effect, presentation of vocalized text, commentary, general bibliography at the end of the volume, and photographs of the tablets on plates.

The survey of the volume may begin with this last item. On 47 plates both tablets *KTU* 1.1 and 1.2 are reproduced on well legible photographs. They were made in the Musée du Louvre by Bruce Zuckermann, Professor at the University of Southern California in Los Angeles, and his brother Kenneth.

In the introduction (1-114) the information about the order of the tablets and their columns is presented (2-26). For the literary classification (26-28) the term „myth“ is used in its formal definition. The hypothetical development of the Cycle in its oral and written stages is followed up (29-36). The date of the tablets can be indicated as the first half of the 14th century B. C. (1) while the grammatical dating (36-58) appears quite archaic.

Various interpretations of the Baal cycle (58-114) will be discussed in detail later in this review.

Text, translation and commentary (115-361) is presented in the following sequence: *KTU* 1.1, columns V, IV, III, II; *KTU* 1.2, columns III, I, II, IV. Those columns which are not well preserved are presented in transliteration of letters and translation, followed by textual notes and commentaries. For the better preserved texts, 1.1 III and three columns of 1.2 a more detailed presentation is used. First text in transliteration accompanied by notes on reading, then translation and vocalized text; in the commentary the poetic structures are characterized according to semantic parallelism and count of words and syllables. Detailed comments characterized as introduction provide besides the analysis of text many references to ancient literature and to modern interpretations.

At the beginning of each section there are bibliographical references to editions, translations and studies. A general bibliography (363-401) gives good information about publications; often quoted books are listed on pp. xv-xix.

Access to the rich material contained in this volume is facilitated by indexes (403-446). Ugaritic citations (405-419) refer to texts, to grammar and to the vocabulary. Among other texts cited (420-429) there are Akkadian and Sumerian, biblical, intertestamental and Dead Sea Scrolls, rabbinic

sources, Greek and Roman texts, Egyptian, Hittite and Indian texts. At the end there is the index of authors (437-446).

In this book on the Ugaritic Baal cycle Smith shows clearly how the philology is important for the study of religion. This relevance can be observed on a few examples.

Some words can be understood differently. For the verbal form *yšr* (352-354; *KTU* 1.2 V 27) not less than four substantiated interpretations are quoted. Sometimes the meanings can be understood differently such as those of the noun *mḥmt* as „warfare“ or „food“ (202-203; 1.1 II 19).

The use of kinship terms in Semitic languages helps to find proper meaning of the epithet of the god *El ab šnm*; it is exactly rendered as "Father of Years" (161); it means a being of advanced age (185-186).

Philological phenomena are also used for dating of the Cycle (36-58). Alphabet, spelling, syntax and vocabulary are of rather archaic character. Most attention is devoted to the function of verbal forms with prefixes and with affirmatives (38-57). As it is usual in Semitic philology, these forms are indicated by the 3rd singular masculine. In the poetic narrative the /qatala/ forms express mostly past actions or states. More frequent in Ugaritic poetry is the prefix form /yaqtulu/, indicating mostly preterite. The problematic form /yaqtul/ is considered by Smith an archaic feature, also for preterite. (The Slavic notion of verbal aspect could explain some of these phenomena more appropriately than the traditional categorization of these forms as tenses.)

Smith contributes to appropriate interpretation of the poetic text by careful analyses of verses. He indicates parallelistic semantic relations between words and characterizes resulting contacts between cola. Besides dealing with syntactical and semantical parallelistic features Smith points to sonant parallelism; by this term identity or similarity between sounds is indicated. The appropriate understanding of parallelistic verses and relations between their cola is indispensable for the interpretation of Ugaritic poetry.

The interpretation of verses is basic for tracing their sequence and thus for following actions and conversations.

The content of first two tablets of the Baal cycle can be presented with help of Smith's indications of verse paragraphs as follows: the old god *El* talks with the god of sea *Yamm*. Messengers connect *El* with the god *Kothar* and then with the goddess *Anat*. The god *Athtar* and the sun *Shapshu* address *El*. Then the fight between *Baal* and *Yamm* is described, which ends with *Yamm*'s death.

In the commentary Smith presents many relevant observations, many of them can be applied in also to other topics of the study of religion. Important general statements are presented in sections within the commentary, entitled as excursus.

One of them deals with the concept of *mrzḥ* (140-144). Various characterizations of this social association, attested also in Old Testament, are discussed. In the other excursus various locations of the home of *El* and of the divine council are presented (225-234). The etymology of the name *Athtar* cannot be safely established: he was an astral god who became divine warrior (240-250).

Important contributions to the study of ancient Canaanite religion are contained in the section on the interpretations of the Baal cycle (58-114). Various opinions are discussed there. Ritual and seasonal theories focus rather on the common character of the genre. The cosmogonic interpretations contribute to better understanding of the Baal cycle. Historical and political views point to the rise of the Amorites or appearance of a new dynasty in Ugarit; *Baal*'s kingship can be related to these events. Quoting both ancient sources and opinions of modern scholars Smith shows the limited exaltation of *Baal*.

The application of these general interpretations to the explanation of the mythical text can significantly contribute to the understanding of some details and also of the general message. The first volume on the Baal cycle will be effectively and gratefully used for interpretations of details and of general matters, also those going beyond the time and space of this text.

A few rather marginal comments may be mentioned. It would be convenient to print all transliterations of the Ugaritic alphabetic text in italics, and leave the Roman letters for reconstructions. In difference to usual rendering of signs indicating combinations of

glottal stop with vowels by simple letters *a*, *i* and *u*, Smith puts the half circle sign of glotal stop before the vowel. This system is more complicated graphically, and it does not take in consideration the combination of vowel followed by glotal stop. This can be shown on the word *tuhd* (1.2 I 40) which is transliterated with the glottal stop sign before *u* (260) and correctly reconstructed as *tu'hud* (260), „(she) seizes“.

The term "extra-colonic" is sometimes used instead of usual „monocolon“. Smith uses the common term for verse consisting of two cola, "bicolon". This term is a combination of the Greek word for „member“ and the Latin element for the notion of „two“. For such combination of two cola the term *dikolon* is attested in ancient Greek.

It is not uncommon in the study of religions to point to analogies which are distant in time and space. The institution of *mrzh* is characterized by Pope and some other scholars as a funerary feast (143-144). Similar customs survived in some countries until the 20th century.

It will take several years before the second volume dealing with the other four tablets will be published. It can be expected that like the first volume reviewed here it will bring many data and observations relevant for the study of the often difficult Ugaritic texts and their relations to other literatures and religions of the ancient Near East. Both the quantity and quality of Smith's work will be appreciated by scholars and students in various fields. The contribution of this detailed commentary to the ancient Canaanite texts to Old Testament studies (cf. 395, 422-426) would deserve a special evaluation.

STANISLAV SEGERT

Vladimír Podborský,
Náboženství našich
prapředků, Brno: Filozofická
fakulta Masarykovy univerzity
1994, 177 stran, 16 obr.

Od doby brožury Jiřího Neustupného *Náboženství pravěkého lidstva v Čechách a na*

Moravě (Praha 1940) je Podborského knížka první soubornou prací v češtině, která se tímto problémem zabývá v celku, i když o slovanském náboženství vyšla před několika lety zajímavá a podnětná publikace Zdeňka Váni (*Svět slovanských bohů a démonů*, Praha: Odeon 1990). Lze ji tedy přivítat jako pionýrský čin na poli velmi zanedbaném, kde má už tím hodnotu, že obrací pozornost k otázkám, ke kterým byl autor veden jako archeolog jednak podrobným studiem pozdněneolitické lengyelské kultury, resp. její ji-homoravské facies nazývané kultura s moravskou malovanou keramikou, jednak svou pedagogickou činností, neboť tázání nové generace jde často tímto směrem.

V interpretaci paleolitického umění se Podborský přiklání k obvyklému výkladu sběračsko-lovecké magie, ale za pomoci paralel z jiných částí světa připomene, že magie paleolitického náboženství měla velmi úzký vztah k silám přírody, se kterými bylo tehdy lidstvo v daleko intimnějším styku, než jsme my. Ve výkladu neolitu je hypotéza o „proto-theismu“ dnes málo přijímaná, vzhledem k mnohosti a barvitosti etnografického materiálu i z velmi primitivních kultur (s. 39n), ale výrazné zaměření na kultu ženských božstev plodnosti (různých aspektů „Velké Matky“) a božstev astrálních těles je zřejmé. Neolitické rondely, o jejichž zkoumání se Podborský zvláště zasloužil, byly zřejmě svatyněmi souvisejícími především s oním druhým, vesmírným aspektem tehdejšího náboženství (včetně kalendáře), ale jedno jistě nevyklučuje druhé. Ženské figurky neolitické považuje Podborský většinou za kněžky, nikoli za bohyně samy, ale rozšíření onoho „performačního“ náboženství, jak na ně nedávno poukázala zejména Nanno Marinatos (*Minoan Religion, Ritual, Image and Symbol*, Columbia 1993) naznačuje odpověď méně kategorickou. V každém případě šlo o prostředkující roli mezi božstvy a smrtelníky, někdy snad i o sošky Sibyl (viz článek v tomto čísle *Religia*). Soška z Knossu se považuje obvykle také za kněžku (s. 51).

Kruhové i pravouhlé svatyně eneolitické měly zřejmě funkci „astrologickou“, ale snad i další, a abstrakce ve ztvárňování idolů je zřejmě reflexem určité abstrakce myšlení, mající svou obdobu i v abstraktnějším pojetí náboženství.