# The ‘Dying and Rising God’ in Mesopotamia and the Evolution of Research

As I will conclude at the end of this chapter, tThe sheer amount of information hailing from Mesopotamia—with no parallels among other ancient civilizations—yields only a single reference to Dumuzi’s return from the netherworld. All other cuneiform texts from Mesopotamia either ignore this quality of Dumuzi’s character (or that of any similar gods) or polemicize against it. It is important to address why, from the dawn of modern Assyriology, Dumuzi has been deemed the paragon of a dying and rising god? Moreover, as this single piece of evidence was discovered only in the 1960s, how did this notion develop as early as the late nineteenth century? The present chapter addresses these questions by surveying the evolution of scholarship from its inception to contemporary studies, concluding by citing the extant cuneiform evidence that bolsters the aforementioned view.

Inana’s Descent and related compositions: a discussion

Given the dating of *Inana’s Descent* to the eighteenth-century BCE at the latest, one would expect additional Mesopotamian texts composed in subsequent millennia to refer to Dumuzi’s resurrection in one way or another. However, despite the vast amount of extant Mesopotamian materials – outstripping the remains of any other ancient Near Eastern civilization – and despite the many Mesopotamian texts which mention Dumuzi in particular, no other evidence has been found to date. This holds true even for those works that seem to be familiar with some version of *Inana’s Descent*—e..g., *Dumuzi and Geštinana, The Death of Dumuzi* and *Ištar’s Descent*.[[1]](#footnote-2) These works also either omit any mention of Dumuzi’s rising from the netherworld, or interpret the return as a temporary participation in a burial ritual in which dead souls ascend from the netherworld for the occasion. For this reason, these works are particularly relevant for our current discussion as they demonstrate that the absence of additional descriptions of Dumuzi’s return from the netherworld is more than coincidence; to the contrary, these kinds of works prove that Mesopotamian authors were unfamiliar with the notion of Dumuzi’s resurrection, or even were resistant to it.

## Dumuzi and Geštinana

The conjecture that the composer of *Dumuzi and Geštinana* was familiar with *Inana’s Descent* is based, among other things, on a passage at the beginning of the former which tells how Dumuzi was consigned to the *galla*-demons by Inana, in her stead. This theme is exceptional among the compositions portraying the events which led to Dumuzi’s death. In most works, the god’s demise is described either as resulting from the inevitable hand of fate or from a chance encounter with bandits or wicked men as opposed to Dumuzi’s own actions or Inana’s decisions which play no role.[[2]](#footnote-3) *Inana’s Descent* seems to have been the first account to formulate this theme, namely, attributing responsibility for Dumuzi’s descent into the netherworld to Inana– a theme produced after distinct traditions were conflated. Innovative in its use of this theme, *Inana’s Descent* explicitly justifies the change to the traditional narrative (see further below). *Dumuzi and Geštinana*,by contrast, seems to treat the change to the traditional narrative as obvious, requiring no justification – indicating its indebtedness to *Inana’s Descent*.[[3]](#footnote-4) Nevertheless, the reliance on *Inana’s Descent* is not comprehensive. The end of the extant section of *Dumuzi and Geštinana* offers a portrayal of Dumuzi’s sister, Geštinana, who wishes to visit Dumuzi’s abode in the netherworld:[[4]](#footnote-5)

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|  | 72His sister wandered about the city like a bird because of her brother: |
|  | 73"My brother, let me take the great misfortune, come, let me…" |

Given that the author of *Dumuzi and Geštinana* was indeed familiar with *Inana’s Descent,* we would expect him to tell how Geštinana arrived in the netherworld and alternated with her brother in the netherworld every half year, just as is recounted in *Inana’s Descent*. While some scholars have indeed suggested interpreting the end of this composition in this way,[[5]](#footnote-6) the extant text simply tells of Geštinana’s journey to the netherworld, using motifs evident in other works about the search of Dumuzi’s mother and sister for his dead body in order to be at his side, or to bring him clothes, food, or medicine. [[6]](#footnote-7) No reference to a rotation connected to Dumuzi’s periodical rise from the netherworld is implied.

## The Death of Dumuzi

The author of the *Death of Dumuzi* seems to also have been familiar with *Inana’s Descent*. This is evidenced by ll. 51-52 in the former which recounts how Ušumgalanna (identified in this work with Dumuzi) was surrendered to the netherworld by his wife in her stead. Here too the author offers no rationale or explanation for the motif. Since this description is prefaced by Inana’s lament for her beloved, which contradicts the theme that it is she herself who hands over her husband to the netherworld in the first place (l. 33), it seems that the author of this work borrowed materials both from *Inana’s Descent* and other sources. The work concludes by noting that Dumuzi was left in the netherworld, without edible food or potable water. This is followed by an independent description of a burial rite.[[7]](#footnote-8)

## Ištar’s Descent

*Ištar’s Descent—* as mentioned, a late adaptation of *Inana’s Descent—*also concludes with an excerpt from a burial rite. The major section of this work, which recounts how Ištar’s descended into the netherworld and reascended (assisted by Ea), corresponds to the first part of *Inana’s Descent*: a description of Inana’s descent into the netherworld and her subsequent rise (assisted by Enki). In the final lines of this section, we find a description of how Namtar poured the waters of life upon Ištar and led her out of the netherworld through each of its seven gates. There is also an allusion to a ransom (*napṭiru/ipṭiru*) brought in Inana’s stead—a theme similar to that found at the beginning of the second section of *Inana’s Descent.* Then, however, the narrative section of *Ištar’s Descent* comes to an abrupt end; before Dumuzi has been mentioned even once. In the next lines, the author proceeds to quote passages from a burial rite connected to Dumuzi.

The rite begins with instructions to wash Dumuzi, anoint him with oil, and dress him in red clothes; this is to be followed by flute-playing and the arrival of the *Šamḫātu*s (cultic prostitutes):[[8]](#footnote-9)

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|  | 127Regarding Dumuzi, the lover of her youth, |
|  | 128Wash him with pure water. Anoint him with fine oil. |
|  | 129Dress him in a red garment. Let the lapis-lazuli pipe play [for him?]. |
|  | 130Let the *Šamḫātu*s appease his heart. |

The author then proceeds to cite a narrative passage about Dumuzi’s sister: donning her jewelry, she hears her brother’s cries (or hears the lamentations over his death), and insists that he not be snatched away from her:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|  | 131[Lady] Belili lifted up her jewelry, |
|  | 132(and) [her] lap was filled with ornamental stones. |
|  | 133(When) she heard the scream of/for her brother, Belili struck off her bodily jewelry, |
|  | 134(and also) her ornamental stone which filled her bosom, |
|  | 135(saying:) “Do not take my one and only brother from me!” |

The author concludes with a citation in the first person, describing the desire of an unidentified speaker to raise Dumuzi up from the netherworld along with the dead and lamenters:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|  | 136When Dumuzi will rise to me, the lapis lazuli pipe and the carnelian ring will rise with him to me; |
|  | 137The male and female mourners will rise with him to me; |
|  | 138May the dead rise to me and smell the incense. |

As discussed above, early scholarship on *Ištar’s Descent* took note of the mention of mourners and the dead rising and interpreted the entire text as Dumuzi’s burial rite. Because, however, they assumed that Dumuzi was a rising god, they had to find a different passage to describe Dumuzi’s rise, choosing the waters of Ištar for this purpose.[[9]](#footnote-10) However, as Frazer’s view continued to gain wider acceptance, the notion that this passage described a burial rite in Dumuzi’s honor came to be forgotten (alongside the erroneous impression that Ištar gave Dumuzi waters of life). Instead, the final lines of *Ištar’s Descent* came to be understood as a description of Dumuzi’s rise from the netherworld in the sense of a resurrection. Only when most of *Inana’s Descent* had been published in the 1950s and 1960s – giving scholars the impression that Inana plays no role in raising Dumuzi from the netherworld – could the possibility that the conclusion of *Ištar’s Descent* is actually a citation a of burial rite, rather than a description of resurrection, gain currency once again. As such the work represents, so it was argued, yet another example of a writer unfamiliar with the mythologem of Dumuzi’s return from the netherworld.[[10]](#footnote-11) This all changed again with the publication of the final section of *Inana’s Descent* which described the semi-annual rise of Dumuzi from the netherworld. The continuing dilemma between the two possible interpretations—and the attempt to decide between them—is articulated well in Erica Reiner’s book from 1985:[[11]](#footnote-12)

On the two possibilities, one, that these twelve lines condense the action of the Sumerian version, namely Dumuzi’s feasting among courtesans which so angers Ištar that she surrenders him to the nether world demons, the distress of his sister Belili, and the eventual (seasonal) return of Dumuzi; and the other, that we have here a description of the annual lament for Dumuzi when he has to go down to the nether world, I prefer the latter.

Reiner’s conclusion that this was a description of an annual lament for Dumuzi—a ritual in which the god is reburied in order to return to the netherworld—corresponds well to the simple meaning of the text. That work thus appears to represent another example of unfamiliarity with the mythologem of Dumuzi’s return from the netherworld, despite its dependence on the Sumerian source. Nevertheless, the fact that various scholars remain so sharply divided over the final lines of *Ištar’s Descent* raises questions. How is it possible that the same lines can be interpreted in two diametrically opposed ways: a burial rite from the one hand, and a resurrection description – on the other? A possible answer to this, as I wish to show below, is that the author of *Ištar’s Descent* is indeed in dialogue with the last section of *Inana’s Descent—*the section that recounts the raising of Dumuzi from the netherworld. Rather than ignoring it (as is the case for other Mesopotamian works), or closely adapting the Sumerian source (as he did in the major part of the present work), the author seemed to revise this part by inserting excerpts from burial rite(s) and rearranging them to accord with the relevant lines in *Inana’s Descent.*[[12]](#footnote-13) In addition, in order to smooth over the inconsistencies in new sequence and to imbue it with narrative qualities, he merged together separate speeches delivered by distinct characters. Thus, a instance speech given in line 127 now appears as the direct continuation of one appearing in line 126 (only in Nineveh ed.). Likewise a speech in line 136 directly continues from that in line 135. [[13]](#footnote-14) However, as Oppenheim, Sladek, and others have correctly noted, the three parts at the end of *Ištar’s Descent* were quoted from various rituals or from different parts of a single one.[[14]](#footnote-15) And yet, as stated, these independent parts were rearranged in their new place not according to the regular order of burial rite(s), but rather according to the order of events described in the second half of *Inana’s Descent* (beginning with l. 306)—i.e., after Inana has risen from the netherworld with Enki’s assistance.

The regular order of burial rites held for Dumuzi can be inferred, for instance, from the Neo-Assyrian *Taklimtu* ritual. Performed at the end of the month of Du’ūzu, the ritual lasted for three days: between 26 and 28 or between 27 and 29. A letter (*LAS* 6) sent to an Assyrian king (either Esarhaddon or Ashurbanipal) regarding the schedule of the *Taklimtu* ritual in various Assyrian cities supplies the names of each day of the ritual: 1) The Day of Screaming 2) The Day of Release and 3) The Day of Dumuzi.[[15]](#footnote-16) Scholars are divided as to who’s scream supplies the name to the first day of the ritual—variously interpreting it as dying scream of Dumuzi, the cry of another god, or perhaps the wailing of the mourners participating in a ritual.[[16]](#footnote-17) As to the name of the second day, The Day of Release—this assumed to refer to the day on which Dumuzi ascends, namely ‘is released’, from the netherworld.[[17]](#footnote-18) The third day—the Day of Dumuzi—is the day upon which Dumuzi returns to the netherworld.[[18]](#footnote-19) Since the *Taklimtu* ritual was performed for the dead, it is assumed that its third day, the day of Dumuzi’s death, represents the ritual’s climax. On that day, as was the practice for dead bodies, Dumuzi’s statue is washed, purified with oil, and then displayed before the sun (Akkadian: *kullumu*). Alternatively, it is not the statue, but rather its burial objects that are displayed.[[19]](#footnote-20) The conjecture that the climax of such rituals was the death of Dumuzi is supported by another Neo-Assyrian ritual held in the same days at the month of Du’uzu (though with a different name). That ritual, known by the name *Ištar ša ḫaramša Dumuzi*, begins with the following temporal sentence: “in the month of Du’ūzu, when Ištar makes the people of the land wail for Dumuzi her spouse…” On the final day of the ritual, Dumuzi—having risen from the netherworld to participate—is buried once again. At this point, those present beseech the god and the dead spirits that have risen with him to take all the diseases down to the netherworld with them.[[20]](#footnote-21)

A comparison between the details of these burial rites and the ritual excerpts cited at the end of *Ištar’s Descent* proves enlightening. The last part of the ritual quoted in *Ištar’s Descent* (above, ll. 136–138), which describes Dumuzi rising up with the spirits of the dead, belongs to the beginning of the burial rite. Dumuzi then rises with the spirits of the dead in order to begin his participation in the ritual taking place outside of the netherworld. By contrast, the first lines of the ritual cited in *Ištar’s Descent* (above ll. 127–130), which describe how Dumuzi is washed and dressed in red garments, appears to refer to the adornment of the statue of Dumuzi in preparation for burial (in the manner of the *Taklimtu* for the dead, as has long been suggested).[[21]](#footnote-22) In other words, these lines record the end of the burial rite, the point at which Dumuzi returns to his grave.

The middle section of the ritual quoted in *Ištar’s Descent* (above, ll. 128-135), sandwiched between the preparation of Dumuzi’s statue for burial and him rising with the dead and lamenters, is exceptional: it is a narrative piece within a ritualistic context, and it mentions a figure named Belili who hears “the screaming of (or: for) her brother,” while in other texts that recount the circumstances of Dumuzi’s death, Belili is characterized as an old woman and not as Dumuzi’s sister.[[22]](#footnote-23) This then seems to represent an otherwise unattested deviant tradition that originally served as a historiola for the ritual from which it was excerpted.As implied by its wording, it may have had strong affinities with the ritual actions that were performed on the first day of the *Taklimtu* held for Dumuzi—that is, on the Day of Screaming.

In light of the foregoing discussion, the sequence of the concluding ritual of *Ištar’s Descent* does not appear to constitute a functional ritual, as it begins with Dumuzi’s burial and ends with his rise from the netherworld. This is in contradistinction to extant ritual burials of Dumuzi—which unfold in the opposite order, i.e., they begin with the rising of Dumuzi and the dead (spirits) from the underworld – in order to participate in the ceremony – and end with their return to their grave. This unnatural order does, however, remarkably correspond to the series of events recounted in *Inana’s Descent*—and this it seems is precisely the key to understanding the inversion of passages.*[[23]](#footnote-24)* Thus the instructions for preparing Dumuzi’s statue for burial (which originally pertain to the beginning of the ritual) are meant to echo the description of Dumuzi donning royal garments as described in *Inana’s Descent* ll. 339–343. Likewise, the cries of Dumuzi correspond to the description of his flight and his cries for help as recounted in *Inana’s Descent* ll. 368–375. Finally, the section that describes Dumuzi’s rise from the netherworld, along with the dead and mourners, in order to participate in a burial rite being held in his honor (which belongs originally to the beginning of the ritual)—corresponds to Dumuzi’s rise from the netherworld as narrated in *Inana’s Descent* ll. 405–407.

This creative rearrangement indicates that the author of *Ištar’s Descent* was indeed familiar with the second part of *Inana’s Descent—*including the description of Dumuzi’s descent into the netherworld and his biannual ascent. This being the case, the fact that the author has chosen to rewrite this section by excerpting passages from Dumuzi’s burial rite(s) is particularly surprising. If the author was familiar with the mythologem of Dumuzi’s resurrection, why not simply excerpt a ritual dedicated to Dumuzi’s *rise* from the netherworld? Moreover, why did he prefer to create a patchwork of ritual passages as opposed to simply offering a narrative description of Dumuzi’s descent into the netherworld and biannual re-ascent? This is, after all, precisely what he did in his treatment of Inana’s descent into and ascent from the netherworld in the same text.

The reason seems to be that the Middle Assyrian author of *Ištar’s Descent* was completely unacquainted with the ritual of Dumuzi’s resurrection and did not subscribe to the notion that Dumuzi was a dying and rising god, or even opposed this idea. From the author’s perspective, Dumuzi was only a dying god. Reading the description of Dumuzi’s resurrection at the end of *Inana’s Descent*, he interpreted it the only way he knew how: by excerpting passages from the mourning rituals held for Dumuzi. In these rituals, Dumuzi does indeed rise from the netherworld with the dead, but only to participate in rituals held in his honor. After the ritual has concluded, he returns to the netherworld.[[24]](#footnote-25)

The discussion above demonstrates that Mesopotamian works—both those contemporary with *Inana’s Descent* as well as those composed after it—would eventually come to ignore the mythologem of Dumuzi’s rise from the netherworld. Moreover, even those works that were familiar with the work *Inana’s Descent* either omitted this mythologeme, did not understand the meaning of such a rise, or even polemicized against it by reinterpreting it as a perennial but temporary rise from the netherworld with dead spirits.[[25]](#footnote-26) While it was this very interpretation of Dumuzi’s rising that ultimately enabled modern scholars to mistakenly reinterpret *Ištar’s Descent* as a description of a Dumuzi’s resurrection, for the author of *Ištar’s Descent* Dumuzi was simply participating in a burial rite.

1. *Inana’s Descent*

Finally, considering that the work *Inana’s Descent* appears to be the only extant Mesopotamian source to mention the resurrection of Dumuzi, we must ask to what extent was that idea present in the Sumerian work? A simple reading of *Inana’s Descent* reveals that the mythologem in question (see the citation above) was inserted into just a few lines of the work at its very end with no allusions to it earlier in the work. Moreover, even if the three lines that noted the biannual rotation of Dumuzi had constituted the core of the work, they would still have contradicted the main plot of the second section—i.e., that Inana was taking vengeance upon Dumuzi, surrendering him to the demons of the netherworld for his crimes (ll. 285-406).[[26]](#footnote-27) This is not to mention the disconnection between the final lines and the first section of the work, which recounts the descent of Inana into the netherworld and her ascent from there, assisted by Enki (ll. 1-284). [[27]](#footnote-28)

While there are other themes in *Inana’s Descent* that contradict each other, or are disconnected from each other—all of them are attested in earlier Mesopotamian sources.[[28]](#footnote-29) The appearance of Dumuzi’s rise from the netherworld by contrast is the first and only instance of such a mythologem in a Mesopotamian context.[[29]](#footnote-30)

Conclusions

Based on the survey above, we may conclude that despite the fact that the notion of Dumuzi returning from the netherworld is attested at the end of one Mesopotamian work, the idea did not strike roots in the region, remaining a marginal tradition. Moreover, even if other instances of Dumuzi’s return show up in future discoveries, the fact still remains that the dozens of literary, economic, and administrative texts hitherto discovered in Mesopotamia refer only to the god’s death and are completely silent about his resurrection. This is especially the case for texts that are actually familiar with *Inana’s Descent—*despite this knowledge, they fail to mention Dumuzi’s resurrection. All of these factors demonstrate the extent to which this mythologem was marginal in the literature and culture of Sumerian and Akkadian civilization.

Nevertheless, outside of Mesopotamia, in the city of Mari, on the banks of the Euphrates, writers were familiar with the mythologem of Dumuzi’s death and resurrection in the eighteenth-century BCE—as attested by discoveries unearthed in the 1990s. These findings, and their relationship to the single piece of evidence from Mesopotamia will be discussed in the next chapter.

1. The sixth tablet of *Gilgameš* which accuses Ištar of inflicting destruction and death upon her various lovers may also be added to this list. The first of these unfortunate lovers is Dumuzi “the husband of your youth,” whom “you have allotted perpetual weeping, year on year” (Gilg 6: 46-7; trans. by George 2003, 621). However, given the affinities between these lines and the concluding lines of *Ištar’s Descent* (see below), and in light of further parallels between *Ištar’s Descent* and *Gilgameš* (e.g., such as *Ištar’s Descent* ll. 5-10; 17-20 // *Gilg* 7:186-191; 6:97-100, respectively), the latter may be echoing the conclusion of *Ištar’s Descent*, rather than the earlier Sumerian work*.* Regardless, the purpose of these lines in *Gilgameš* is once again to stress Dumuzi’s unfortunate end: he is a god who descended into the netherworld, never to return. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. Cf. Jacobsen 1976, 48; Katz 1996. As to points of contact between the two works, Sladek 1974, 29 has further drawn attention to the words of the demons at the beginning of *Dumuzi and Geštinana* (reminiscent of Neti’s question to Inana in *Inana’s Descent*) as well as the description of Inana’s elaborate robes. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
3. For further discussions of *Dumuzi and Geštinana*’s dependence on motifs first broached in *Inana’s Descent*, see Katz 1996; 2003, 294-300, who correctly argues, contra Sladek 1974 PP, that the two works did not evolve from a shared Vorlage; rather the former is dependent on the latter. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
4. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
5. Since the tablet concludes on line 72, Sladek has proposed that the work originally included an additional tablet which quoted the remainder of Geštinana request: she wishes to alternate with her brother in the netherworld. Alternatively, since such a request would not fill up an entire tablet, Sladek has suggested that the extant version of the text may be nothing more than an excerpt of a larger work. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
6. Kramer 1953 initially interpreted the ending of *Inana’s Descent* in light of such conclusions (see above). For works that describe the family members of Dumuzi wishing to follow him into the netherworld, cf. ... For the later development of this motif, cf. the writings of Cyril of Alexandria cited above ... (p. ...) about Aphrodite’s search for Adonis in the netherworld and her choice to leave him there alive. The Ugaritic and biblical formula – “I shall go after X down to the netherworld,” used by family members mourning their dead – appears to be based on the same idea. See below Chapter C. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
7. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
8. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
9. In addition to the studies mentioned in n. xxx above, cf. also Jeremias 1887, 7-8, who compares [p. 44] the playing of the flute mentioned in these lines to *m Ket*. 4:4: “Rabbi Judah says: even the poorest man in Israel must provide no less than two flutes and one female mourner.” It should be mentioned that the verb *el-la-an-ni* in the last section of the ritual (see below) was not initially understood as being related to the root *elû* (to rise) but was rather connected to the root *alālu* (to play an instrument). According to this interpretation, the verb referred to the dead rising in response to Tammuz’s flute-playing. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
10. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
11. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
12. Prior to their familiarity with the last section of *Inana’s Descent*—and with no parallel forthcoming from any other Sumerian texts—scholars suggested that the ritual at the end of *Ištar’s Descent* represented a late addition by an Assyrian scribe. Gurney 1962, 160 suggested that the addition represents West-Semitic influence. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
13. l. 126 in the Nineveh edition concludes the narrative section as follows:

    |  |  |
    | --- | --- |
    |  | “if she does not give you her ransom, bring her back!” |

    Though the text does not specify the speaker, it is generally identified as Ereškigal who is addressing Namtar. For this reason, some have surmised that the subsequent lines (127–130) are being spoken by Ereškigal as well: the goddess is explaining how Dumuzi can be brought into the netherworld in Ištar’s stead. Among the English translators of these lines, some, like the Akkadian author, merge together the sentences with direct speech, implying that such citations are being narrated by the same speaker. Others, however, separate some of the sentences with the direct speech from each other (e.g., Sladek 1974, 261-262, who separates the quote in line 135 from that in line 136; Yamauchi 1966 separates the quote in line 126 from that in line 127). In the Assur edition of *Ištar’s Descent,* the events described in line 126 take place before Ištar has been led through the seven gates of the netherworld, and thus a narrative context for the ritual is lacking. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
14. It is plausible that during this editorial process, the author/editor of the Nineveh edition transferred the sentence that mentions Ištar ransom to its current place immediately before the ritual (see above n. 13). [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
15. Parpola 1970, 4-5:

    |  |  |
    | --- | --- |
    |  | Rev. 1 The 26th (is “the day of) the wailing/screaming”; the 27th (is “the day of) the release”; |
    |  | 2 the 28th (is “the day of) Dumuzi”. That is how |
    |  | 3 they set the *Taklimtu* in Nineveh. |
    |  | 4 On the 27th and the 28th (they) likewise |
    |  | 5 (set) the *Taklimtu* in Kalhu. |
    |  | 6 On the 27th, the 28th and the 2[9]th, |
    |  | 7 [they set the] *Taklimtus* in [Arbe]la. |

    These letters were initially published by Harper (ABL) in 1901, and therefore were well known to earlier scholars of *Ištar’s Descent*. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
16. Scurlock 1992, 59 proposed that the scream is that of Anum, based on a description in SAA 3 38. The latter text, a Neo-Assyrian cultic commentary on the rites of Egašankalamma (= the temple of Ištar of Arbela), refers to the events that took place during the mourning rites for Dumuzi (referred to in this text as Ištaran). *Inter alia*, it recounts the defeat of Enlil, Anum, and Ea by Marduk, and their banishment to the netherworld. In a later passage, the text mentions the Day of Screaming in conjunction with the god Anum. However, the calendar dates of the Day of Screaming as well as those of the next day that is dedicated to Dumuzi were not preserved. According to Cohen 2015, 414, rather than being that of Anun, the scream in question is that of the lamenters bewailing Dumuzi’s death, based on the text SAA 3 16. This text, a Neo-Assyrian elegy mourning Dumuzi’s death, refers to the screaming of the speakers in that elegy. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
17. Note that the Akkadian term *pašāru* corresponds to the Sumerian búr that is used to describe Dumuzi’s emergence from the netherworld in *Inana’s Descent*. See further below, n. xxx. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
18. There is likely some connection between this day and the Day Of The Capture Of Dumuzi, mentioned in a letter from Sippar dated to the reign of the Old-Babylonian king Samsuiluna. The latter day falls on the fifth month (= month of Abu) according to that letter, while in the reign of Tiglath-Pileser I, the fourth month (= month of Du’uzu) is referred to with a similar name: “the month When Dumuzi The Shepherd Was Captured.” On the affinities between the fourth and fifth month in this context, see Cohen 2015, 298-299. For a discussion of the customs practiced in Mari during the fourth month in relation to Dumuzi, see below Chapter 2. [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
19. On the *Taklimtu* rituals held for dead kings during the Neo-Assyrian period, see the letters LAS 4 and 280 as well as the ritual text K 164 (which according to Scurlock 1992 refers to the *Taklimtu* of Dumuzi). See also the discussion of xxx. For the view that it is the dead’s burial items which are displayed, rather than the corpse itself, see Scurlock 1991. For the significance of displaying the burial items before the god Šamaš (the sun-god) in the *Taklimtu* rituals, in order to allow the god to take the items with him during his daily journey down into the netherworld, see xxx. From this perspective, Šamaš’s role in the *Taklimtu* ritual is similar to that of Dumuzi and the dead spirits in the *Ištar ša ḫaramša Dumuzi* ritual(see below) and apparently also in the ritual appearing at the end of *Ištar’s Descent.* For a later adaptation of this ritual in Hellenistic Egypt, where it was associated with Adonis, see xxx. [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
20. [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
21. [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
22. In *Dumuzi’s Dream*, Belili is portrayed as an old woman, while in *Inana and Bilulu* the old woman is called Bilulu. Both names seem to originate in a common tradition. [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
23. For a similar phenomenon in biblical literature (i.e., the intentional inversion of the order of texts), see Ayali-Darshan 2014. [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
24. This approach concords with the assumptions of Falkenstein and Sladek that the purpose of the ritual at the end of *Ištar’s Descent* was to provide a *hieros logos* for the mourning rituals held for Dumuzi. As noted by Yamauchi 1966, 12, it seems that the author of *Ištar’s Descent* generally saw in the rise of the dead from the netherworld something destructive and dangerous, as implied by Ištar’s threat to the guardian of the netherworld: “I will raise up the dead to devour the living” (l. 19). Since a similar threat is voiced in *Gilgameš* IV (l....) as well as in *Nergal and Ereškigal* (l....) in its Neo-Assyrian edition, it appears that this was a prevalent conception at the time. Katz 1995 suggests that the section recounting Dumuzi’s rise—as well as other sections—is omitted because the scribe was primarily interested in “the cosmological meaning of the events.” While this may very well explain some of the discrepancies between *Inana’s Descent* and *Ištar’s Descent*, it cannot account for the author supplanting a description of Dumuzi’s descent and return with a burial ritual. [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
25. This may also be the case inasmuch as the second day of the *Taklimtu* ritual is concerned: “The Day of Release (*pašāru*)”: Dumuzi’s rise from the netherworld to participate in burial ritual is understood in light of Dumuzi’s release (búr) from the netherworld in *Inana’s Descent*. [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
26. Inana decrees that Dumuzi should rise from the netherworld after a fly reveals to her Dumuzi’s location (ll. 407-409, see citation above). [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
27. On the independence of the first unit of *Inana’s Descent*, see Alster 2011 and the bibliography there. For similar traditions that recount how Inana was saved by Enki, see the works *Inana and Šukalletuda*, *Inanan and Ebiḫ, Inana and Enki*, and the hymn *Inana Nin-egala* and see Alster 1975, 30. For other traditions that describe Inana descending and reemerging from the netherworld, see the me-list of Inana in *Inana and Enki* (ETCSL 1.3.1 seg.). 1, ll. 19-20). The second unit in *Inana’s Descent*, which recounts Dumuzi’s descent into the netherworld, is comprised of a different set of traditions. That being said, from a thematic standpoint, it is not surprising that the author utilized the mythologem of Dumuzi’s return in this composition as it creates a parallelism between the narrative’s two protagonists: both Dumuzi and Inana descended into the netherworld and both reemerged. [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
28. Such as Inana’s rescue from the netherworld at the hands of Enki, alongside the demand to bring a substitution in her place in order to emerge from the netherworld; or Dumuzi’s flight from the demons of the netherworld who accosted him due to Inana, alongside his pleas from the sun god to help him in his flight because the latter is Inana’s brother; or Dumuzi being delivered to the demons of the netherworld at Inana’s behest, alongside her pleas from the fly to reveal to her Dumuzi’s place in the netherworld due to her love of him. On the early origins of all these traditions, and others, see Alster 2011. [↑](#footnote-ref-29)
29. [↑](#footnote-ref-30)