**Appendix 1**

**The ‘dying and rising god’ in the post-Ugaritic Levant**

The destruction of Ugarit and Hatti towards the end of the second millennium BCE, and the more or less simultaneous transition from a cuneiform script written on clay to a linear alphabetic script written on perishable materials, have led to a dramatic break in our knowledge of Syro-Levantine cultures, literatures, and rituals. The same disruption applies to evidence for the mythologem of the “dying and rising god” during the first millennium BCE, towards the end of Late Antiquity. Moreover, biblical literature – which is often used to represent the Levantine literature of the first millennium BCE due to the loss of almost all other corpora – has largely rejected (like the Mesopotamian culture) the mythologem of dying and rising gods.[[1]](#footnote-1) Despite these difficulties, there is evidence to suggest that this mythologem continued to be prevalent in the west Semitic cultures of this period, not only as a literary theme but as a ritual one as well.

Since T.N.D. Mettinger[[2]](#footnote-2) has recently discussed this issue in full, and in any case, its scope extends beyond the focus of this book on the writings from the second millennium BCE, I will provide only a few examples attesting to the continuity of this mythologem in the ancient cultures of the Levant. The first two examples discussed below present the ritualistic aspect of the dying and rising god in the local languages of Phoenician and Hebrew. Although these examples lack a complete narrative framework and they survive in a very fragmented state, they are nevertheless significant as they preserve traces of a custom from a period of which almost no epigraphic literary texts have been preserved..[[3]](#footnote-3) The latter examples in this appendix reference some of the literary traditions regarding the death and resurrection of the god, which were committed to writing in Greek by the pagans in Late Antiquity. At the time, the local literary traditions began to be preserved again thanks to the interest of Christian writers. These traditions add to the impressions from approximately the same period of the Church Fathers, whose writings were discussed at the beginning of Chapter A.

The first instance of the ritualistic expression of this mythologem in the first millennium BCE is the cultic functionary referred to as the *mqmˀlm* who served in Phoenician and Punic temples, and is cited in inscriptions from the 4th century BCE and onward.[[4]](#footnote-4) The literal meaning of *mqmˀlm* is “the raiser (Phoenician *q-w-m* in the H conjugation) of the deity.”[[5]](#footnote-5) Inlight of the Greek translation of this function – ἐγερσε[ίτης] –which is preserved in inscriptions from Philadelphia/Amman and Ramleh, the meaning of “the awakener of the deity” might be even more appropriate.[[6]](#footnote-6)In several occurrences, the “awakened” god is called *mtrḥˁštrny*, namely “the husband of Astronoe,” an appellation that befits the Late Antiquity traditions about Astronoe, who revived her lover (see, e.g., Damascius, cited below).[[7]](#footnote-7) While two inscriptions, one Phoenician and the other Greek, refer further to the functionary as “the awakener (*mqm*/ἐγερσε[ίτης]) of Ml(qr)t/Herakles,” this role does not necessarily relate to Melqart in other occurrences.[[8]](#footnote-8)

Remarkably, an echo of this role might be found in Tanaaitic sources (m. *Ma**ˁ.Šen*. 5:15; m. *Soṭ*. 9:10 ) that mentions a group named המעוררים(the *meˁorerim*), literally “the awakeners” (Hebrew *ˁ-w-r* in the D/Polelconjugation),[[9]](#footnote-9) who served in the second Jerusalemite Temple until John Hyrcanus discontinued them. In later sources—in the Tosefta (*Soṭ.*13:9) and in the Jerusalem Talmud (44b [9:10])—it is explained that the awakeners were the Levites who recited in the Temple the words “Rouse Yourself; why do You sleep, O Lord?” While the Sages interpreted the ancient Mishnah according to their familiarity with the service of the Levites in the Temple, it is possible that here, as in other cases, the ancient Mishnah preserves a tradition whose origins are similar to those of the Phoenician role described above.[[10]](#footnote-10)

The second instance of the Levantine cultic use of the dying and rising god’s mythologem is echoed in biblical literature. As mentioned above, while most biblical texts rejected the mythologem itself, , traces of the agricultural rituals underlying it have nevertheless been found in Psalms 126:5-6:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| 5 Those who sow in tears do reap with songs of joy |  |
| 6The one who carries the seed-bag weeps as he goes; the one who carries his sheaves comes with songs of joy. |  |

Although these verses predate the writings of Origen and Jerome by hundreds of years, they portray the exact same practices of weeping during the sowing and a display of joy during the harvest that wereperformed by the pagan residents of Palestine, as reported by these patristic authors(cited in Chapter A, and see below in brief). While the psalmist did not – or could not –explain the mythological ideas underlying the ritual, the comments of the patristic authors disclose its mythical roots. For convenience, here are once again the shortened citations of Origen and Jerome about this practice:

[citations]

An earlier testimony for the ritual than that of these Church Fathers is found in the writings of the pagan Plutarch, who attributes it to the Egyptian god Osiris in the first century CE:

In this way we shall undertake to deal with the numerous and tiresome people, whether they be such as [to?] take pleasure in associating theological problems with the seasonal changes in the surrounding atmosphere, or with the growth of the crops and seedtimes and ploughing; and also those who say that Osiris is being buried at the time when the grain is sown and covered in the earth and that he comes to life and reappears when plants begin to sprout… (Plutarch, *de Iside et Osiride* 65).

The men of later times accepted this blindly, and in their ignorance referred to the gods the behaviour of the crops and the presence and disappearance of necessities, not only calling them the births and deaths of the gods, but even believing that they are so (ibid, 70).[[11]](#footnote-11)

As stated in Chapter One, at the end of Late Antiquity Osiris was also considered a dying and rising god and therefore it is not surprising that this ritual was also connected with him. In fact, on account of such a reference —as due to similar evidence from that period (see below)—Frazer and his contemporaries were persuaded that even thousands of years prior to Late Antiquity, Osiris was considered a dying and rising god.

The mythical idea underlying the agricultural ritual that likens the sowing of grains and other crops to the burial of the god, and the ripening of the grain to his resurrection, continued to be prevalent also among the monotheistic societies of Late Antiquity, as evidenced by the parables quoted in the New Testament and Christian sources (*John* 12: 24- 25; *Cor* 1 15: 35-37, 42-44; Justin Martyr, 1 *Apol*. 19.1), and in the Talmud and other Jewish sources (*b Sanh*. 90b; *b Ket*. 111b; *Ecclesiastes Rabbah* 5.1 10. *PirqeideRabbi Eliezer* 33) that liken the death and resurrection of human beings to the sowing of grains.[[12]](#footnote-12) While these parables no longer refer to the dying and rising god, but rather to the resurrection of the dead; they constitute a further development of the same ancient ritual, which we find first in Psalms only due to the fact that what has been preserved from the period is essentially random.[[13]](#footnote-13)

As mentioned, the relatively cant literary evidence from the Levant of the first millennium BCE changes abruptly in Late Antiquity, around the rise of Christianity, when pagan texts and patristic polemics against pagans were beginning to be preserved, copied, and transmitted. Then we are once again treated to a wealth of evidence recording the literary traditions of dying and rising gods that prevailed in the Syro-Levantine region. As we began with the patristic accounts of pagan practices, it would only be fitting to conclude with two examples from the accounts of pagans themselves attesting to their own customs and literature. Lucian of Samosata (c.125 – after 180 CE) writes the following about the cult of Adonis in Byblos[[14]](#footnote-14):

[citation]

Likewise, Damascius (c. 458 – after 538 CE), the last scholar of the Neoplatonic academy in Athens, writes the following about the Phoenician Eshmun:

[citation]

These pagan writings complete our survey of the mythologem of the “dying and rising god” in the Levant and of the history of its research. Together with the writings of Origen, Jerome, Cyril, and Aristides, which opened the present research, these pagan writings are the very same ones that led James Frazer and his contemporaries to speculate that the mythologem of the dying and rising god was shared by *all* the peoples of the ancient Near East.

1. Isa. 17:10-11 is often mentioned as one of a very few exceptions referring to a resurrection rite, due to the ritual of נטעי נעמנים“planting of Naˁamanim,” occurring there.For an additional example, which usually are missing from review as such, see below. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. 3For the biblical references to the deaths of the foreign gods Tammuz and Hadad-Rimon, see Chapter A, and Appendix 2, respectively. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. For a reevaluation of all the occurrences in Phoenician and Punic inscriptions, see Zamora 2017. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. For a discussion of the Phoenician verb *q-w-m*, denoting “rising after death” (in light of biblical Hebrew), see Greenfield 1987, 397-399. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. The reconstruction and translation of the Greek phrase follow... The same function is apparently also referred to in an inscription from Ascalon, which uses an identical formulation to that appearing in the Ramleh inscription. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Less likely is the possibility that the Phoenician appellation *mtrḥˁštrny* was given to the functionary, implying the context of a sacred marriage, as was suggested, for example, by Lipiński 1970, 33-34.An interesting equivalent for such an appellation (although its relation to our texts is not clear) is the Akkadian *mutibēletšamāmi*, “the husband of the mistress of heaven,” given to an unknown deity in the neo-Assyrian*Nergal and Ereškigal* (1:47; Dalley2000, 177, n.3 suggests identifying this god as Dumuzi)*.* [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. In this context, scholars usually also mention the statement of Josephus (*Ant. Jud.* 8.5.3; and cf. *Contra Ap.,* 1.18) about King Hiram as the first to celebrate the “awakening (ἔγερσις) of Heracles” in the month of Peritius. For a discussion, including the opposing approach which translates (without grounds) the Greek and Phoenician verbs as “the erecter of...,” see… [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. For a discussion of the biblical Hebrew verb*ˁ-w-r*as disturbing the dead, a semantic equivalent of the Phoenician*q-w-m*, see Paul 2009. In post-biblical Hebrew, the verb *ˁ-w-r* was used in the meaning of resurrection from the dead, as is evidenced from prayers (as in *y. Ber.* 65a [9:2]: “He who knows your number will wake you upand remove the dust from upon your eyes. Praised are you, Lord, who makes the dead live,” as well as tombstone inscriptions (such as in Zoar tombstone 20, one of the ancient Jewish tombs found on the Dead Sea coast near Sodom: “May the soul of Jacob rest …May he wake up to the voice of the announcer of peace”). [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. Lieberman links the awakeners in the Jerusalem Temple to the daily Egyptian ritual performed in the Temple of Serapis and the like. However, nowhere do the Jewish sources state that this was a daily rite, and one may suggest any other appropriate date for this worship, as Uffenheimer has noted. For more examples of local pagan traditions reflected in Second Temple customs, see Ayali-Darshan 2013 and the previous bibliography therein. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. cf., also Tertullian, *ad. Marc.* 1.13:“… So also Osiris: that he is for ever being buried, and sought for in the waters, and recovered with rejoicing, they argue is a promise of the return of the grain sown, of the lively elements, and of the reviving year.” [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. It is worth noting that like the Christian sources, all of which were written by residents of Palestine, the Talmudic sources also attribute the parable to Palestinian rabbis. Nevertheless, not every parable of sowing and reaping is necessarily used as an image of death and resurrection, as is evident, for example, from Matthew 13. By contrast, Clement the Roman, a contemporary of Justin Martyr, while seeking in the First Epistle to the Corinthians, 24: 4-5 to quote the parable of the death and resurrection, omitted from it the basic premise on which it relied, i.e., that the grain is considered as dead. Instead, he described it as a barren grain capable of reproduction. It appears that he was not familiar with the Mediterranean coast convention that views the grain as a dead entity. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. The following table illustrates the similarities between the various aforementioned texts:

    |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
    | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
    |  | Sowing | | | Growth/Harvest | | |
    |  | Description of the act: Sowing | Description of the act: Weeping | Explanation: The buried grain is analogous to the dead (god / human beings) | Description of the act:  Growth/ harvest | Description of the act: Rejoicing | Explanation:  The growth of the grains is analogous to resurrected god / human beings | |
    | Psalms 126 | \* | \* |  | \* | \* |  | |
    | Pagan rituals | \* | \* | \* | \* | \* | \* | |
    | Non-pagan parables | \* |  | \* | \* |  | \* | |

    [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. While the influence of the classical Adonis on the following two authors is certain, the resurrection of the protagonist is unique to Near Eastern sources (among pagans and patristic sources alike) and has no record in early classical sources. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)