**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 familiarity with Syro-Levantine cultures, literatures, and rituals. 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 and despite its relatively-late extant manuscripts – 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 the first millennium BCE and forwards, not only as a literary theme but as a ritual one as well.

Since T.N.D. Mettinger has fully discussed this issue,[[2]](#footnote-2) whose scope extends beyond this book’s focus on the writings from the second millennium BCE, I will provide only a few examples attesting to the continuity of this mythologem in the Levantine cultures. 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 survive in a very fragmented state, they significantly attest to traces of a custom from a period of which almost no epigraphic literary texts have been preserved.[[3]](#footnote-3) The examples in this appendix reference some of the literary traditions regarding the dying and rising gods, which were committed to writing in Greek by the Levantine pagans of the Late Antiquity. At that time, the local literary traditions began to be preserved again thanks to the interest of Christian writers. While examples of the patristic texts have already been discussed in Chapter A, I will discuss a number of texts by the pagans themselves that were eventually saved by the Church Fathers.

The first instance of the ritualistic expression of this mythologem in the first millennium BCE is the cultic functionary referred to as the *mqmˀlm* (מקם אלם) 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) In light 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 mention a group named The *Meˁorerim* (המעוררים), literally “the awakeners” (Hebrew *ˁ-w-r* in the D/Polel conjugation),[[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 Palestinian Talmud (44b [9:10])—it is explained that the awakeners were the Levites who recited the phrase “Rouse Yourself; why do You sleep, O Lord (עוּרָה, לָמָּה תִישַׁן אֲדֹנָי)?” (Ps. 44:24) in the Temple. 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 | הַזֹּרְעִים בְּדִמְעָה בְּרִנָּה יִקְצֹרוּ. |
| 6The one who carries the seed-bag weeps as he goes; the one who carries his sheaves comes with songs of joy. | הָלוֹךְ יֵלֵךְ וּבָכֹה נֹשֵׂא מֶשֶׁךְ-הַזָּרַע; בֹּא-יָבֹא בְרִנָּה נֹשֵׂא אֲלֻמֹּתָיו. |

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 were performed by the pagan residents of Syria-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:

[They] say that Adonis is a symbol of the fruits of the earth, which are mourned when they [i.e., the farmers] sow, but which rise from the dead, and therefore give joy to the farmers when they [i.e., the crops] grow (ἀνισταμένων δὲ, καὶ διὰτοῦτο χαίρειν ποιούντωντοὺςγεωργοὺςὅτεφύονται) (Origen, *Selecta in Ezechielem* VIII).[[11]](#footnote-11)

Paganism of this sort… honor[s] the death and resurrection of Adonis by mourning and rejoicing, the former of which is shown in seeds that die in the earth, the latter in the harvest that the dead seed are reborn (Jerome, *Commentariorum in Ezechielemprophetam* III).[[12]](#footnote-12)

An earlier testimony for that ritual is documented by 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).[[13]](#footnote-13)

As stated in Chapter A, at the end of the period of Late Antiquity Osiris was also considered a dying and rising god, and it is therefore 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 the 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. This is 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. *Pirqei de Rabbi Eliezer* 33), which liken the death and resurrection of human beings to the sowing of grains.[[14]](#footnote-14) Although 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, whose traces happened to be found first in Psalms only due to their random preservation from that period.[[15]](#footnote-15)

As mentioned, the relatively scant 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[[16]](#footnote-16):

I also saw in Byblos a large temple of Byblian Aphrodite, in which they perform the ritual to Adonis. I also learnt the rites. They say that the affair of Adonis and the boar took place in their country, and in memory of the sad event they beat their breasts each year and lament and perform the rites, and there is much mourning throughout the country. after they have finished beating their breasts and lamenting, they first make offerings to Adonis as to the dead, and afterwards, on the next day, they claim that he lives and send him into the air (*de Dea Syria* 6).[[17]](#footnote-17)

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

The Asclepius of Berytus is neither Greek nor Egyptian but a local Phoenician […]. Being an extremely beautiful young man, ravishing to the eye, he was loved, according to the myth, by the Phoenician goddess Astronoe, the mother of the gods. He was hunting, as was his custom, in these glens when he saw the goddess chasing after him; as she continued her pursuit and was about to catch him, he fell into a state of frenzy and cut of his own organs of procreation with an axe. Devastated by grief at this misfortune, the goddess summoned paean and, reviving the youth with her life-giving warmth, she made him a god, called by the Phoenicians Eshmun after the warmth of life (*Vita Isidori* frag. 142 B).[[18]](#footnote-18)

These pagan writings complete our survey of the mythologem of the dying and rising god in the Levant and of the history of its modern research. Together with the writings of Origen, Jerome, Cyril, and Aristides, which were referenced at the beginning of this study, 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,” see Robertson-Smith 1887, 307, and earlier bibliography there, followed by Frazer 1894, 280.For an additional example, which usually are missing from review as such, see below. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Mettinger 2001 and see also Cook 2018. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. 3For the biblical references to the death of the foreign gods Tammuz and Hadad-Rimōn, 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 Clermont-Ganneau 1906;1924a; 1924b; Lipiński 1970, 31, 56; 1995, 238-243; Mettinger 2001, 90-91; Cook 2018, 126-127.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. See Boehm and Eck 2012; Cook 2018, 127, n. 387. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Cf. de Vaux 1971, 248 (first published in 1941).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 the 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. Cf. Zamora 2017, 82-83. For a different view, see Lipiński 1970, 33; Bonnet 1986, 215-216. 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 who was 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 Mettinger 2001, 89-90; Cook 2018, 126-127. [↑](#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 up and remove the dust from upon your eyes. Praised are you, Lord, who makes the dead live [היודע מספרכם הוא יעורר אתכם הוא יגלה העפר מעל עיניכם. בא"י מחיה המתים]”) as well as tombstone inscriptions (such as in Zoar on the Dead Sea coast, tombstone 20: “May the soul of Jacob rest …May he wake up to the voice of the announcer of peace [תנוח נפשה דיעקב... יתעוריר לקול משמיע שלום],” see Wilfand 2009). [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. Cf. de Vaux 1971, 248 (=1941); Liberman 1962, 254-256; Uffenheimer 1966. Lieberman links the *Meˁorerim* of 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. Migne (ed.), *PatrologiaeGraeca* 13, cols. 797–800. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. Migne (ed.) *Patrologiae Latina* 25, cols. 85–86. The translation follows (with modifications) Scheck 2017, 96. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. Plut. *Moralia, Volume V: Isis and Osiris.* trans. F.C. Babbitt, Loeb Classical Library 306, 1936, p. 136-137 (377B), p. 162-163 (379B). 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.” trans. E. Evans, *Tertullian: Adversus Marcionem*. Oxford Early Christian Texts, 1972, p. 34-35. Cf.Frazer…; Weiser 1962, 762–763; Hvidberg 1962, 132–134; Anderson 1981, 865–866. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. For the sources, cf. Monnickendam 2013, 110-111, and further bibliography there.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 Matt.13. By contrast, Clement the Roman, a contemporary of Justin Martyr, while seeking in his 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 coastal Mediterranean convention that views the grain as a dead entity. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. The following table illustrates the similarities between the various aforementioned texts:

    |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
    | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
    | Sources | 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-15)
16. 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. Cf. Burkert 1979, 101 and n. ‎10; Reed 2002, 220 and n. ‎4. For a discussion of these sources and further bibliography, see Mettinger 2001, 131-137, 155-164. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. Lightfoot 2003, 250-251. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. Athanassiadi 1999, 315. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)