# The Resurrection of Dumuzi in Light of the Evidence from Mari: A Reevaluation

The years 1987 to 2001 saw the publication and reinterpretation of three documents from Mari, attesting to the mythologem of Dumuzi as a dying and rising god. One of the documents is a letter dated to the twelfth year of Zimri-līm (first half of the eighteenth-century BCE). Composed by the head of a semi-nomadic Amorite tribe, it mentions in passing the death and return of Dumuzi. The other two records are economic in nature: one of them, from the fourth year of Zimri-līm, notes the calendar-date of Dumuzi’s burial, the other the day of his return. Since prior to the publication of these records, only a single cuneiform reference clearly to Dumuzi’s ascent from the netherworld was extant – standing in stark contrast to the innumerable accounts of his death – this new evidence from Mari should in theory have an important bearing on the Mesopotamian mythologem of Dumuzi.[[1]](#footnote-2)

However, the provenance of these three records, and the fact that the most decisive piece of evidence was included in a letter written by the head of an Amorite tribe (and not, for instance, by an ambassador or a priest) raises questions about the origin of this mythic pattern at Mari. Does the use of the Mesopotamian appellation Dumuzi in the Mari records necessarily point to an origin in Mesopotamian culture? Or perhaps – by reading this appellation as an ideogram – this mythic pattern can to be traced back the Amorite tribes that migrated from Western-Semitic regions to Mari towards the end of the third millennium BCE. Scholars have long drawn attention to the Western-Semitic characteristics of Mari’s Amorite culture, such as the intuitive prophecy, the “*qatālum ḫayaram*” treaty ritual, the Zukrum festival and acquaintance with the myth of the Storm-god vs. Sea;[[2]](#footnote-3) might this be another of those characteristics?

In order to broach this question, I will survey in brief the available evidence for the mythologem of dying and rising gods in the cultures neighboring Mari to the East and the West: beginning with Mesopotamian records, some of which belong to the earliest discoveries of cuneiform scholarship; proceeding to the relatively new records from Mari; and concluding by examining records from the Levant. In light of these findings, I will suggest a new perspective on the question of dying and rising gods in general, and the resurrection of Dumuzi in particular, questions that have engaged scholars since the late nineteenth century CE.

## A. Dumuzi as a dying and rising god in Mesopotamia: A brief overview of the textual evidence and related scholarship

References to Dumuzi’s death and the mourning rituals dedicated to him have been preserved in textual traditions from outside of Mesopotamia – such as the Jerusalemite women “bewailing the Thammuz” in Ezekiel 8, and pagan women weeping over Tāwuz in An-Nadīm’s *Fihrist*.[[3]](#footnote-4) Therefore, when modern scholars of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries first encountered cuneiform texts lamenting the death of Dumuzi, they rightfully connected them with those extra-Mesopotamian texts*.* Another set of non-Mesopotamian texts which refer to Tammuz, familiar to Western scholars for generations, was the patristic writings of the first centuries CE, which identify the biblical Tammuz with the resurrected god Adonis.[[4]](#footnote-5)

Influential examples include the commentaries of Origen (c. 185-253 CE) and Jerome (c. (345-419 CE). Both residents of Palestine, they comment upon the women who weep over Tammuz in Ezek 8:14, likening the “god Tammuz of the Jews and Syrians” to “Adonis of the Greeks” both of whom die and arise from the dead, in step with the agricultural calendar:

The one whom the Greeks call Adonis, is called Tammouz by the Hebrews and the Syrians, as they say… It seems that they perform a sort of rite every year: first they mourn him as dead, second they rejoice for him as if he had risen from the dead (δεύτερον δὲ ὅτι χαίρουσιν ἐπ’ αὐτῷ ὡς ἀπὸ νεκρῶν ἀναστάντι)… Those who understand the principle of the Greek myths… 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 διὰ τοῦτο χαίρειν ποιούντων τοὺς γεωργοὺς ὅτε φύονται) (Origen, *Selecta in Ezechielem* VIII).[[5]](#footnote-6)

What we have translated as Adonis,[[6]](#footnote-7) both Hebrew and Syrian speech calls Thamuz… They celebrate a solemn anniversary festival to him, in which women mourn for him as a dead man, and after he comes back to life, they sing of him and praise him… 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 Ezechielem prophetam* III).[[7]](#footnote-8)

The writings of Cyril of Alexandria (c. 376-444 CE) and Aristides the Athenian (2nd century CE) represent a variation of this type of comparison. While they too identify the biblical Tammuz with Adonis, they point not to shared agricultural rituals but rather to the account of Adonis’ descent to the netherworld and Aphrodite’s attempt to save him. Thus Cyril, commenting that “Tammuz is interpreted as Adonis (Διερμηνεύεται δὲ ὁ Θαμμοὺζ ὁ Ἄδωνις)”, elaborates upon the story as follows:

Then, they say, Aphrodite… fell in love with him (=Adonis), kept him company and was always caressing him. At this, Ares, a rival for Aphrodite’s affections, was upset; he took the form of a boar, attacked him when he was hunting and immediately did away with him, something that proved the occasion of lament for Aphrodite, they say. She fell into such depth of distress and grief as to descend into Hades to him with the intention of bringing her lover back (Καθίκετο δὲ δυσθυμίας εἰς τοῦτο καὶ λύπης, ὥστε καὶ εἰς αὐτὸν καταφοιτῆσαι τὸν ᾅδην, ἀνακομίσαι θέλουσα τὸν ἐρώμενον). But when the wife of Pluto made a strong claim to the young man and would not release someone of such wonderful aspect, they made an agreement to divide the course of the year and keep him for half of it (ὥστε μερίσασθαι τοῦ ἐνιαυτοῦ τὸν κύκλον· καὶ ἐξ ἡμισείας ἔχειν αὐτόν). When Aphrodite returned and announced this to her familiars, friends or attendants, a festival and celebration was held. So the Greeks developed such a festival for this occasion, pretending to grieve and lament with Aphrodite in her mourning on account of the death of Adonis, and to rejoice with her and to leap for joy when she claimed to have found the object of her search (καὶ μὴν καὶ ηὑρῆσθαι λεγούσης τὸν ζητούμενον, συνήδεσθαι καὶ ἀνασκιρτᾷν). Until our day this farce used to be celebrated by the priests in Alexandria (*Commentarius in Isaiam Prophetam* XVIII). [[8]](#footnote-9)

An earlier version of this plot appears in the Syriac translation of Aristides’s Greek work *The Apology.* While the work was discovered only towards the end of the nineteenth century, its contents were long known (without the parallels to Dumuzi) through the medieval composition *Barlaam and Ioasaph*:

Again they say of Aphrodite that she is a goddess; sometimes she dwells with their gods, and sometimes she commits adultery with men. But sometimes she has Ares for her lover and sometimes Adonis, who is Tammuz (*ˀdwks d-ˀytwhy Tmuzˀ*). And sometimes Aphrodite herself was wailing and weeping the death of Tammuz. And they say that she went down to Sheol in order that she might ransom Adonis from Persephone (*d-nḥtt l-šywl ak d-tzbnywhy l-ˀdnws mn Pryspwnws / καὶ εἰς ᾅδου καταβαίνειν ὅπως ἐξαγοράσῃ τὸν Ἄδωνιν ἀπὸ τῆς Περσεφόνης*), who was the daughter of Sheol (*Apology of Aristides* [Codex Sinaiticus 16] XI 3).[[9]](#footnote-10)

It was with such texts in mind that late nineteenth and early twentieth century scholars, such as Mannhardt, Sayce, and Zimmern, approached the Akkadian work *Ištar*’*s Descent to the Netherworld*, which has just been deciphered*.*[[10]](#footnote-11)They assumed they were reading a Mesopotamian version of the story of Adonis and Aphrodite and were quick to draw parallels between Ishtar’sdescent into the netherworld and Aphrodite’s descent to Hades to save Adonis. Although no evidence for such a plot in the Akkadian composition was forthcoming, this interpretation became standard for many years, both because no explanation is provided for Ishtar’s decision to descend into netherworld, and because Dumuzi is mentioned at the very end of the work, immediately after Ishtar’s reemergence – two details which left the text open to multiple interpretations. This is how Sayce, one of the first scholars to subscribe to this approach, characterized the work:

On the one hand, we now know who was that Tammuz in whose honour Ezekiel saw the women of Jerusalem weeping at the gate of “the Lord’s house.” On the other hand, it is clear that the Tammuz and Ištar of the Babylonian legend [i.e. *The Descent of Ištar*] are the Adonis and Aphrodite of Greek mythology. Like Tammuz, Adonis, the beloved one of Aphrodite, is slain by the boar’s tusk of winter,[[11]](#footnote-12) but eventually ransomed from Hades by the prayers of the goddess…

Sayce could adduce no textual evidence to support the notion of Dumuzi’s return. Nevertheless, he assumed that the only possible explanation for Ištar’s descent to the netherworld was to save Dumuzi. Going a step further, Sayce assumed – again based on the parallel to Aphrodite and Adonis, but without any internal, textual evidence – that the Babylonians must have held celebratory rituals for Dumuzi’s return:

It is clear that the Babylonian poet who sang of the descent of Ištar into Hades had no conception of a festival of joy that followed immediately upon a festival of mourning. Nevertheless, the whole burden of his poem is the successful journey of the goddess into the under-world for the sake of the precious waters which should restore her beloved one to life. Even in Babylonia, therefore, there must have been a season when the name of Tammuz was commemorated, not with words of woe, but with joy and rejoicing.[[12]](#footnote-13)

Had this misinterpretation remained within the purview of Assyriology it might have been soon forgotten, since no textual evidence was forthcoming until the 1960s. Toward the end of the nineteenth century CE, however, James George Frazer used the then-accepted interpretation of *Ištar’s Descent* as one of his main proofs for characterizing the Mesopotamian Dumuzi as a dying and rising god. This theory appears at length already in the first edition of his book *The Golden Bough* (1894):

In a Babylonian legend, the goddess Istar (Astarte, Aphrodite) descends to Hades to fetch the water of life with which to restore to life the dead Thammuz, and it appears that the water was thrown over him at a great mourning ceremony, at which men and women stood round the funeral pyre of Thammuz lamenting. This legend, as Mannhardt points out, is probably a mythical explanation of a Babylonian festival resembling the Syrian festival of Adonis. At this festival, which doubtless took place in the month Thammuz (June- July) and therefore about midsummer, the dead Thammuz was probably represented in effigy, water was poured over him, and he came to life again. This Babylonian legend is, therefore, of importance, since it confirms the view that the purpose for which the images and gardens of Adonis were thrown into the water was to effect the resurrection of the god, that is to secure the revival of vegetation.[[13]](#footnote-14)

Thus, along with the significant impact of Frazer’s book on the humanities and social sciences of the time, the concept of Dumuzi’s resurrection, which was based on a misinterpretation, became commonplace.[[14]](#footnote-15)

Up to the mid-twentieth century, dozens of cuneiform texts referring to Dumuzi had been deciphered. Many of them – belonging either to literary or administrative genres – reference Dumuzi’s death, but not even one mentions his resurrection. Nonetheless, these findings proved insufficient to uproot the prevailing theory. It was only in the early 1950s, with the partial publication of the Sumerian *Inana’s Descent to the Netherworld* by Samuel Kramer,[[15]](#footnote-16) that scholars began to rapidly disassociate themselves from the erstwhile consensus.

*Inana’s Descent*, its earliest copies dated to the Old Babylonian period, was considered an earlier and more extensive version of *Ištar’s Descent* (the latter having been composed in the Middle Assyrian period).[[16]](#footnote-17) Like the Akkadian work, the Sumerian one tells of the goddess descending into and ascending from the netherworld. Like the Akkadian work, it also lacks an explanation of the motivations for the descent. However, while *Ištar’s Descent* concludes by mentioning Dumuzi with no discernible connection to the narrative, *Inana’s Descent* – as it was known to scholars in 1951 – ends with Inana herself handing Dumuzi over to the netherworld. Since in the 1950s *Ištar’s Descent* still (allegedly) remained the only textual evidence for Dumuzi’s characterization as a dying and rising god, the partial publication of *Inana’s Descent* proved devastating to the prevailing theory. It became clear to scholars that Inana did not descend to netherworld to find Dumuzi, but to the contrary, it was she who had been responsible for putting him there in the first place. Kramer, who had published the text of *Inana’s Descent* at the time, presented the issue as follows:

The prevalent view that Dumuzi is resurrected every spring is quite without basis in fact. To judge from the available evidence – it is to be noted that we find only laments for the god’s death, but no songs of joy for the god’s return – the Sumerians believed that once Dumuzi had died, he ‘stayed dead’ in the Nether World and never ‘rose’ again.[[17]](#footnote-18)

A more scathing assessment was offered by scholar of Greek religion, Walter Burkert:

And it was an unexpected shock to Frazerism when in 1951 the hitherto missing conclusion of the Sumerian myth of Inanna and Dumuzi was published. Scholars had been sure that Inanna, or Ishtar, by her Babylonian name, goes down to the nether world in order to bring the ‘god of vegetation’ back to life; now quite the contrary was seen to happen: Inanna comes back from the nether world to kill Dumuzi, who had been alive and prosperous on his throne among the living; Inanna hands him over to her demoniac retinue, the *gallu*, to be put to death as a Substitute for herself. This is anything but an allegory of vegetation .[[18]](#footnote-19)

As Kramer notes, the fact that scholars were so quick to dismiss the prevailing characterization of Dumuzi stemmed from the fact that all extant texts at the time merely characterize him as a dying god, or perhaps better-put a ‘dead god,’ much like Ningišzida, Damu, and others.[[19]](#footnote-20) This corpus includes the literary works and laments dedicated to Dumuzi’s death and which describe his relatives’ mourning and searching for him;[[20]](#footnote-21) literary works which mention funerary rituals for Dumuzi in passing or which count him among the denizens of the netherworld;[[21]](#footnote-22) and funerary rituals mentioned in letters, calendars, and ritual texts.[[22]](#footnote-23) Moreover, as mentioned above, those non-Mesopotamian texts related to Dumuzi which do not draw the explicit parallel to Adonis (such as Ezek 8 and the *Fihrist*) refer only to his death, but never to his resurrection. Thus, in the early 1950s, a new consensus was reached: no evidence could support the notion that Dumuzi, or any other Mesopotamian god for that matter, had ever been considered a resurrected god.[[23]](#footnote-24)

Then, in 1965 the scholarly consensus would shift once again. Two years earlier, Kramer had published the final lines of *Inana’s Descent*, housed in the British Museum, which relate Dumuzi’s fate after he is delivered to the netherworld at the hands of demons (UET 6/1 10: 10-12 = ETCSL 1.4.1 407-409). Kramer proposed the following reading and translation:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| 10Your […] half the year, your sister half the year. | [ .. ]-zu mu-maš-àm nin9-zu mu-maš-àm |
| 11 [The day your…] comes, that day […], | [u4 ..-zu] al-di-di-e u4-bi íb-ba?-[…] |
| 12The day your sister comes, that day […]. | u4 nin9-zu al-di-di-e u4-bi íb-[…] |

Kramer, already convinced that Dumuzi was not a resurrected god, asserted that “Line 10 seems to say that Dumuzi will have two visitors the year round in the Nether world; one is his sister (presumably Geštinanna) while the identity of the other is uncertain.”[[24]](#footnote-25) This approach was based on the use of the root di in the verb al-di-di-e, meaning “to come” – sometimes Dumuzi’s sister will come to visit him, sometimes another member of the god’s family.

But two years later Falkenstein suggested that the same word should be read as a compound verb: al-dug, meaning “to want.” In addition, he proposed a reconstruction of the partially broken cuneiform signs at the beginnings of lines 10 and 11 as the second person pronoun za-e (“you”), and of the broken signs at the end of lines 11 and 12 – as “to rise.”[[25]](#footnote-26) This yielded his translation:

Du (=dumuzi) ein halbes Jahr, deine Schwester (=Gestinanna) ein halbes Jahr!

Am Tage, an dem du es wünscht, (an) diesem Tage wirst du dar[aus?...].

 Am Tage, an dem deine Schwester wünscht, (an) diesem Tage wird sie dar[aus?...].

According to this proposal, which at the time relied primarily on uncertain reconstructions, the final lines of *Inana’s Descent* do not describe relatives visiting Dumuzi in the netherworld, but rather an exchange between Dumuzi and Geštinana every half-year. Falkenstein’s proposal was adopted with enthusiasm by all scholars at the time – including Kramer, who went so far as to retract his previous assessment:

If Falkenstein’s interpretation is correct – and it seems to me most convincing – my conclusion that Dumuzi dies and “stays dead” forever was quite erroneous: Dumuzi, according to the Sumerian mythographers, rises from the dead annually and, after staying on earth for half the year, descends to the Nether World for the other half.

In a footnote, Kramer added: “Note the obvious parallel to the Adonis.”[[26]](#footnote-27) To others however, the reading more closely resembled the Greek story of Demeter and Kore – which ends with Demeter spending half of every year in the underworld .[[27]](#footnote-28)

In subsequent years, further fragments of UET 6/10 were identified, reinforcing Falkenstein’s suggestion. Thus, today, the common reading of the final lines is as follows: [[28]](#footnote-29)

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| You for half the year, and your sister for half the year. | ˹za-e˺ mu maš-àm nin9-zu mu maš-àm |  |
| On the day that you are demanded, on that day you will stay, | ud za-e al di-di-e ud-bi ḫé-tuš-[e] |  |
| On the day that your sister is demanded, on that day you will be released. | ud nin9-zu al di-di-e ud-bi ḫé-búr-[e] |  |

And so, some seventy years after being proposed on the basis of a misinterpretation of an Akkadian text, scholars had finally found the first (and only) piece of evidence to suggest that Dumuzi was not only a dying god, but a rising one as well.

Given the dating of this work to at least the eighteenth century BCE, one would expect additional Mesopotamian texts to refer to Dumuzi’s return in one way or another. However, despite the vast amount of extant Mesopotamian materials – outstripping that of any other ancient Near Eastern civilization – and despite the many Mesopotamian texts which mention Dumuzi in particular,[[29]](#footnote-30) no other accounts have been found to date. This holds true even for those works that seem to be familiar with *Inana’s Descent*; they too either omit any mention of Dumuzi’s rising from the netherworld (this is the case in *Dumuzi and Geštinana*),[[30]](#footnote-31) or interpret the return as an ascent of a dead god with dead souls and mourners for the purpose of a funerary ritual such as the *Taklimtu* (as at the end of *Ištar’s Descent*).[[31]](#footnote-32) Moreover, as Katz and Alster have already noted, even in *Inana’s Descent* – the only account of Dumuzi’s ascent from the netherworld – this theme is mentioned briefly in the work’s final lines, contradicting previous themes recounted in this work, themes that are based on earlier and better substantiated sources.[[32]](#footnote-33) In light of these findings, it seems that the mythologem of Dumuzi’s resurrection, although clearly attested at the end of an eighteenth century Mesopotamian work and despite being considered one of the best-known ancient mythologems, did not strike roots in Mesopotamia, remaining a marginal tradition there.

1. Cf. e.g., Frahm 2003; Alster 2005-2006. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. For a discussion of the various Western-Semitic characteristics of Mari Amorite culture, and its relation to the Syro-Levantine cultures of the second and first millennia BCE, see the overview of Malamat, 1998; and cf. Held 1970; Durand 1993; 2008; Fleming 2000. For the Western-Semitic Onomasticon in Mari, see Streck 2000. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
3. Ezekiel 8:14: “Next He brought me to the entrance of the north gate of the House of YHWH; and there sat the women bewailing the Tammuz”; An-Nadīm’s *Fihrist*, Dodge edition, 758: “[The month of] Tammūz: In the middle of this [month] there is the feast of al-Būqāt, that is, of the weeping women. It is the Tāwuz, a feast dedicated to the god Tāwuz. The women weep for him because of how his master killed him and ground his bones in the hand-mill and then winnowed them to the wind. The women do not eat nothing ground in a hand-mill; they only eat moistened wheat, chick-peas, dates, raisins and other similar things.” The translation follows HÄMEEN-ANTTILA 2002, 101. For a discussion of the pagan communities and beliefs in Haran and Iraq during the 10th century CE, see also idem, 2006. For the alteration between kāf and qāf in the appellation al-Būqāt which evidently preserves an old tradition, see Dodge YEAR 758, n. 63 [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
4. Pagan works, such as *de Dea Syria* attributed to Lucian of Samosata, also attest to the resurrection of Adonis (Lightfoot 2003, 250-251, passages 6-8); however, the identification with Tammuz occurs only in patristic writings, whose authors were familiar with the biblical Tammuz. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
5. For the text, see Migne (ed.), *Patrologiae Graeca* 13, cols. 797–800. I am grateful to Dr. Guy Darshan for his assistance in translating this text and the following ones. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
6. The Vulgate renders Tammuz in Ezekiel 8 as Adonis. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
7. For the text, see Migne (ed.) *Patrologiae Latina* 25, cols. 85–86. The translation follows (with modifications) Scheck 2017, 96. Mettinger 2001, 129–130, argues that despite Jerome’s acquaintance with Origen’s writings, it is unlikely that he was basing himself on Origen here given the fact that he adds the etiological tale of Adonis which is missing from Origen. Most scholars, however, do not agree; see, e.g. de Vaux 1972, 227. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
8. For the text, including the identification of Tammuz with Adonis, see Migne (ed.), *Patrologiae Graeca* 70, cols. 440-441. The translation here follows Hill 2008, 34 with the modifications proposed by Cook 2018, 104. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
9. For the Syriac text (dated to the fourth or fifth century BCE), see Rendel Harris 1891, 44; Pouderon and Pierre 2003, 218-219. I am grateful to Dr. Yifat Monnickendam for her assistance in translating this text. For a discussion of the Greek, *Barlaam and Ioasaph*, and its relation to the Syriac work, see Simpson 2015. Note that in the passage cited, the name of Adonis has been corrupted due to scribal errors. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
10. Mannhard 1877, 274-275; Sayce 1887, 178-221; Zimmern 1903, 397-399. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
11. He may have reached this conclusion from works related to Melito, Bishop of Sardes of the second or third century CE (*Oration before Antoninus Caesar* preserved in Ms. Brit. Libr. Add 14,658), that recount how Tammuz (obviously identified with Adonis) was slain by a boar (the following translation is that of Cureton 1885, 44; cf. Brown 1995, 24):

The people of Phoenicia worshipped Balthi (בלתי), queen of Cyprus, because she fell in love with Tamuz, son of Cuthar (מטול לרחמת לתמוזא בר כותר), king of the Phoenicians, and left her own kingdom, and came and dwelt in Gebal, a fortress of the Phoenicians, and at that time she made all the Cyprians subject to the king Cuthar: for before Tamuz she was in love with Ares, and committed adultery with him, and Hephaestus her husband caught her, and was jealous over her, and came and slew Tamuz in Mount Lebanon, while he was hunting the wild boar (ואתא קטל לתמוזא בלבנן טורא כד עבד חזירא בורזא); and from that time Balthi remained in Gebal, and died in the city Aphaca where Tamuz was buried. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
12. Sayce, ibid, 227, 230. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
13. Frazer 1894, 287-288. Regarding the general identification of all the dying and rising gods in antiquity, see pp. 278-279:

But it is in Egypt and Western Asia that the death and resurrection of vegetation appear to have been most widely celebrated with ceremonies like those of modern Europe. Under the names of Osiris, Adonis, Thammuz, Attis, and Dionysus, the Egyptians, Syrians, Babylonians, Phrygians, and Greeks represented the decay and revival of vegetation with rites which, as the ancients themselves recognised were substantially the same, and which find their parallels in the spring and midsummer customs of our European peasantry. …

In 1906 Frazer published a volume dedicated entirely to the subject of dying and rising gods. Once again, he cited the “definitive” evidence from Ishtar’s descent to support the notion of Dumuzi’s resurrection. This volume was eventually added to the third edition of the *Golden Bough*; see Frazer 1914, 8-9. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
14. For a discussion of the *Golden Bough*’s significant influence on the scholarship and Western culture in general, see Vickery 1973. Though Frazer had many detractors, they did not oppose his description of Dumuzi, which was the prevailing interpretation of *Ištar’s Descent* at the time (cf. e.g., de Vaux 1971, 231-232). Among Assyriologists, Langdon (1914) was particularly impressed by Frazer’s analysis, going on to add further Mesopotamian gods to Frazer’s list of dying and rising gods. Marduk was added to the list by Zimmern (1918) – based on his interpretation of *KAR* 143 (see ibid., pp. 2-3). It was only in the 1950s that this interpretation was refuted by von Soden (1955). [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
15. Kramer 1951. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
16. For a discussion of the relation between the Sumerian *Inana’s Descent* and the Akkadian *Ištar’s Descent*, see Sladek 1974, 43-51; Katz 1995. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
17. Kramer 1959, 198, n. 1; 1961, 10. In fact, even earlier, during the publication of isolated fragments of the Sumerian work, scholars noted that Inana emerged from the netherworld by herself, meeting Dumuzi on her way out. Dumuzi’s presence in the netherworld thus could not be presented as Inana’s motivation; see Falkenstein 1941-1944, 138: “Inanna kommt allein aus der Unterwelt, das heisst: sie bringt nicht, wie man vielleicht vermuten könnte, Tamüz auf die Erde zurück. Somit muss für die alten Sumerer der Kernpunkt des Mythos darin bestanden haben, dass es Inanna durch das Eingreifen Enkis möglich geworden ist, den Gesetzen des „Landes ohne Wiederkehr" zum Trotz den Weg nach oben wieder anzutreten.” Falkenstein’s last conjecture would only be revisited by scholars forty years later (cf. Katz 1996; Alster ???). [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
18. Burkert 1979, 101. Burkert’s remarks reflect enthusiasm prompted by Kramer’s discovery, although by the time the former’s book was published the latter had already retracted his original conclusion based on Falkenstein’s corrections (see below). Elsewhere in his book (p. 109) Burkert shows an awareness of this. [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
19. The term “dead god,” as opposed to a dying god, was first coined by Frankort 1978, 185 (first published in 1948), in relation to Osiris who like Dumuzi was defined by Frazer as a dying and rising god; but in light of findings from ancient Egypt, it turns out that he was not a resurrected god. As for Ningišzida – while some Assyriologists (since Langdon 1914 up to by Lambert 1990, 330) took it for granted that he had returned from the netherworld, in this case as well, only laments about his death are extant; cf. Alster and Jacobsen 200, 331 and n. 33. [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
20. Such as *Dumuzi’s Dream* (ETCSL 1.4.3); *Dumuzi and Geštinana* (ETCSL 1.4.1.1); *Dumuzi and His Sisters* (ETCSL 1.4.1.3); *Inana and Bilulu* (ETCSL 1.4.4); *The Most Bitter Cry =* *An Eršemma of Inana and Dumuzi* (no. 97; Cohen, Sumerian Hymnology, 71-84); *An Eršemma of Dumuzi and Ṣirtur* (no. 88; Cohen 1988, 84-87); *An Eršemma of Dumuzi* (no. 165; Cohen 1988, 87-89); *An Eršemma of Dumuzi* (no. 60; Cohen 1988, 89-93); *The Lament of the Reed* = *An Eršemma of Dumuzi* (Bruschweiler 1990); *The Death of Dumuzi* (Kramer 1980), etc. For further compositions, see Fritz 2003. [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
21. Such as *The Death of Gilgameš* (ETCSL 1.8.1.3): version B from Nippur, ll. 8-18; a version from me-Turan, seg. F, ll. 38-41, 82-86, 131-134; *The Death of Urnamma* (ETCSL 2.4.1.1): a version from Nippur, ll. 102-105; a version from Susa, Seg. C., ll. 33-37; *Gilgameš* VI 46-47 (George 2003, 621-621); *Adapa*, the Amarna version, ll. 21’-25’, 41’-45’ (Izre’el 2001, 18-19). [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
22. Such as YOS XII 427 (Old Babylonian; cf. Kutscher 1990, 42); CT 58.21 (Old Babylonian; cf. Katz 2003, 162-165); Astrolab B = *KAV* 218 A I 50 (reign of Tiglath Pileser I; cf. Kutscher 1990, 42; Livingstone 1986, 138); *Attī Ištar ša ḫaramša Dumuzi* 3-4 (Neo-Assyrian; cf. Farber 1977, 128, 140-141); VAT 10099 (Neo Assyrian; cf. Livingstone 1986, 116-121); *ABL* 1097 = *LAS* 6; *ABL* 35 = *LAS* 5 (Neo-Assyrian; cf. Livingston 1986, 139-140); *SBH* VIII obv. III 1-4 (Seleucid period; cf. Kutscher 1990, 42; Livingstone 1986, 139); BM 34035 33 (Seleucid period; cf. Livingstone 1986 256). For the rituals from Mari, see below. [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
23. See further, e.g., Witzel 1952; Gurney 1962; Yamauchi 1966. In light of this new consensus, scholars revisited the nineteenth century interpretation of the concluding passage of *Ištar’s Descent*, arguing that it is indeed a funerary text lamenting Dumuzi’s death, and not a description of his ascent from the netherworld. [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
24. Kramer 1963, 514-515. [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
25. Falkenstein 1965, 281; 1968, 107 ff.; and cf. Sladek 1974 who suggests reconstructing the root e11. [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
26. Kramer 1966, and cf. the excerpt from Cyril of Alexandria cited above. In classical sources, no connection is drawn between the death of Adonis, and the division of his time between Aphrodite and Persephone (occurring before his death). See e.g., Pseudo-Apollodorus, *Bibliotheca* 3.14.4, and cf., Reed 2002, 220. [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
27. This plot appears already in the Homeric hymn to Detemer. Cf. Alster 1996, 1, no 3. [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
28. ETCSL 1.4.1, 407-409; and cf. Alster 1996. [↑](#footnote-ref-29)
29. For additional texts, beside those mentioned in n. xxx, see Fritz 2003. [↑](#footnote-ref-30)
30. For *Dumuzi and Geštinana*’s familiarity with motifs first introduced in *Inana’s Descent*, see Katz 1996; 2003, 294-300. [↑](#footnote-ref-31)
31. It is worth noting that prior to the publication of Frazer’s study, scholars had already maintained that the final lines of *Ištar’s Descent* describe a funerary rite, relating to the dead and mourners (in addition to the studies mentioned in n. xxx above, cf. also Jeremias 1887, 7-8, who compares [in p. 44] the playing of the flute mentioned in these lines to Mishnah Ketubot 4:4: “Rabbi Judah says: even the poorest man in Israel must provide no less than two flutes and one female mourner”). This approach was reiterated by scholars from the 1960s and onwards after most of *Inana’s Descent* as well as neo-Assyrian letters (which mention the *Taklimtu* ritual being held at the end of the month of Duzu’u for three days, revolving around the figure of Dumuzi) were published; see Yamauchi 1966, and cf. Sladek 1974, 46-47; Reiner 1985, 47; Dalley 2000, 154; Scurlock 1992 (for the NA letters, see LAS 5 and 6). A comparison of several funerary texts nevertheless indicates that the concluding lines of *Ištar’s Descent* present a reverse order of the funerary ritual: first Dumuzi is dressed and anointed (ll. 127-130) and finally he and the dead are brought up from the netherworld (ll. 136-138). A plausible reason for this reversal might be a sophisticated interpretation of the unique end of *Inana’s Descent* *a-là* funerary rituals. Thus, it begins with the instructions for preparing Dumuzi’s statue for burial – its washing, its anointment, and its dressing in regal clothes, which correspond to the end of the rituals (cf. Reiner 1985, 47; Dalley 2000, 162, n. 21) in accordance with the description of Dumuzi’s wearing of royal robes in *Inana’s Descent* (ll. 339-343). Afterwards it cites a part of the ritual which refers to Dumuzi’s crying out (ll. 131-135), corresponding to Dumuzi’s flight and his call for help in *Inana’s Descent* (ll. 368-375). Finally, it concludes with a passage describing Dumuzi’s ascent from the netherworld, along with the dead and the mourners, in order participate in the annual wailing held in his honor, in accordance with his semi-annual ascent from the netherworld in *Inana’s Descent* (ll. 405-407). The reverse order of the ritual, which was framed according to the event described in *Inana’s Descent*, demonstrates that despite the author of *Ištar’s Descent* being acquainted with the plot of *Inana’s* *Descent*, he did not view Dumuzi as a dying and rising god, but rather a dying god, like almost all the Mesopotamian works that mention Dumuzi. See further in n. xxx below. [↑](#footnote-ref-32)
32. Katz 1996; 2003, 275-284; Alster 2011. [↑](#footnote-ref-33)