Tammuz

I. Introduction. Mesopotamian god, T., the Hebrew rendering of the Sumerian DN Dumuzi, is mentioned in the Bible only in Ezek 8:14, bewailed by women in the temple of Jerusalem shortly before its destruction in 587/586. Some biblical texts (e.g. Is 17:10; Zech 12:11; Dan 11:37) are considered by some to refer to the cult of T.

“Although the god did not belong to the leading deities in any period of Mesopotamian history, Dumuzi has played a major role in discussions of ancient Near Eastern religion” (ALSTER 1999: 828; see also PSI 2001: 50), whereas FRTZ 2003: 347, n. 1498 interprets this as display of burial objects (see SCURLOCK 1991). According to a New Babylonian ritual text from Uruk a figure of Dumuzi was cast down outside the temple and symbolically revived (FALKENSTEIN 1931: no. 51, lines 28-31; see COHEN 1993: 318; FRTZ 2003: 237f). A Dumuzi figure was also used in a healing ritual (FARBER 1977; SCHWEMER 2003: 215-217).

The only known image of T., identified by inscription is a Roman period tessera from Palmyra that represents a mummy-like body outstretched on a bed with the caption tawz’ (see INGHIOL et al. 1955: no. 342; SERVAIS-SOYEZ 1981: no. 42).

III. Identifications proposed.

Many propositions have been made to identify T. iconographically, e.g., a child on the knees of a goddess (VANDERBURG 1911: 319 referring to MENANT 1888, pl. 9:83; see BAUDISSIN 1912: 187, n. 1), animal combat scenes (HEIDENREICH 1925; see KEE 1992: 14-16), or the naked hero with long spikes of hair (FRANKFORT 1939: 59, pl. XII c; LAMBERT 1997: 4, fig. 8; see GREEN 1997: 574). MOORTGAT’S monograph of 1949, which was heavily criticized (see KRAUS 1953), was the peak of a “T. iconography” that identified numerous “timeless” motifs of Mesopotamian iconography (i.e., the tree flanked by animals, the hero fighting wild animals, banquet scenes) as illustrations of the Sumerian myth of Inanna and Dumuzi. An example of the arbitrariness of MOORTGAT’S urge to explain all motifs as iconography of T. may be his fig. 46 with a “nicht leicht deutbaren Tammuz-Paar, das mit je einem Dolch in der Hand, sich gegenseitig zu töten versucht” (1949: 86). More recent proposals for a visual identification of T. include the Urk vases representing the hieros gamos of Inanna and Dumuzi (JACOBS 176: 24; 26; see ALSTER 1999: 830; PSI 2001: 39; for further proposals on hieros gamos scenes see HERLES 2006: 124, 209), or the depiction of a god in fetters on a 3rd mill. cylinder seal (COLLON 1987: no. 838; see GREEN 1997: 578). WIGGEMANN (2010: 332-341) identified T., with “the god with the whip” on Akkadian and Neo-Sumerian seals and on Old Babylonian terracotta plaques. On the latter he is sometimes depicted together with a goddess.

AMIRAN opted for a veneration of T. in Palestine in early times. She identified a scene with two “matchstick-figures” on a stela from Early Bronze Age (3000-2700) Arad with “Dumuzi-of-the-Grain” (AMIRAN 2003).

understands the expression taklimtu in this ritual as display of the god’s statue (see also PSI 2001: 50), whereas FRTZ 2003: 347, n. 1498 interprets this as display of burial objects (see SCURLOCK 1991). According to a New Babylonian ritual text from Uruk a figure of Dumuzi was cast down outside the temple and symbolically revived (FALKENSTEIN 1931: no. 51, lines 28-31; see COHEN 1993: 318; FRTZ 2003: 237f). A Dumuzi figure was also used in a healing ritual (FARBER 1977; SCHWEMER 2003: 215-217).

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1972a; see AMIRAN/ILAN 1993: 82; AMIRAN/ILAN 1996: 36, 142; SCHROER/KEEL 2005: no. 208) and the Early Bronze Age temple in Ai as a temple of Bilulu and Dumuzi (AMIRAN 1972b). However, these hypotheses are very uncertain (see METTINGER 2001: 205).

**IV. Conclusions.** According to the mythological material relating to T. several iconographical phenotypes of T. are imaginable: love scenes (see GREEN 1995: 1844; 1997: 579), a shepherd, a ruler, a dying or dead youth, or a god of the netherworld (→ God in sarcophagus, →Nergal). Possible interactions with representations of dying (and rising) gods in the West (→Adon, Ugaritic →Baal, →Melqart [§ II.1.A.2.3]) require further study (see METTINGER 2001: 205-214).

In 1st mill. Palestine the mention of T. in Ezek 8:14 (with no hint of an iconographic representation) is isolated, unless it is to be understood as the imaginary transfer of Babylonian cults to Jerusalem by the prophet, or as an *Interpretatio Babylonica* of some unidentified West Semitic cult.

**Selected bibliography**
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Réné Schurte
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