

*Inanna: Queen of Heaven and
Earth. Her Stories and Hymns
from Sumer*

Lecture: Dr. Alan J. M. Haffa, MPC

Translator: Samuel Noah Kramer

Editor: Diane Wolkstein

Enheduana (ca. 2285-2250 B.C.E.)

<http://www.ancient.eu/Enheduanna/>

- Priestess of Nanna and High Priestess of Inanna
- Wrote down the stories of Inanna
- May have been the first writer we know by name
- Daughter of Sargon the Great
- Seems to have helped to establish Inanna as a supreme god



Enheduana's Poems: "Inanna and Ebih"

- Inanna appears as a paradoxical duality
- Love and War
- Sex goddess and the goddess of violent and destructive Nature
- She is Not a Mother Goddess, although there were mother goddesses in Sumerian religion
- In Inanna and Ebih, she attacks a mountain God, Ebih, and she establishes her autonomy from the Sky God, An.

Structure of Poem

- Exordium to Goddess; Identification of her epithets and description
- Opening address of Goddess in third person; then second person
- Personal identification of Enheduana and Inanna expressed in one section

Personal Connection

- Inanna godly maiden ripened on earth

YOU ARRIVE Your spread-out arms

Wide as the Sun King

When you wear fearsome dread in heaven

Crystal brilliance on earth

When you unfold from the mountains

Your woven net of blue lapis cord...

When you wear the robes of the old, old gods

When you slide heads Like a scythe cuts wheat swaths

Then the black-headed praise you with song

The Sumerians sing in one voice

Everyone sings sweetly a joy song.

Inanna Defeats Ebiḥ

- MOUNTAIN! She cries, Ebiḥ!

Because you puff yourself up

Because you stand so high

Dress up so beautiful

Make yourself so green and luscious

Put on a royal robe

Stretch your hand straight to An

Do not wipe your nose on the ground

Do not flatten your lips in the dust;

I HAVE KILLED YOU

I HAVE STRUCK YOUR HEART WITH SORROW

Winged Inanna and Venus



Inanna and Enki, God of Wisdom

- Preparation for Journey
- Hospitality in the Abzu: Butter cake, cold water, beer
- The “Gift” of the 14 *me*
- Conflict: Enkum creatures, Uru Giants, Lahama monsters, Eunun,
- Arrival in Uruk: Presentation of *me*; Blessing of Enki



Beer and Power

- Enki and Inanna drank beer together.

They drank more beer together.

With their bronze vessels filled to overflowing,

With the vessels of Urash, Mother of the Earth,

They toasted each other; they challenged each other.

Enki swaying with drink, toasted Inanna:

“In the name of my power! In the name of my holy shrine!

TO my daughter Inanna I shall give

The high priesthood! Godship!

The noble, enduring crown! The throne of kingship!”

Inanna replied: “I take them.”

Inanna and Enki: Conclusions

- Political Dimension: Symbolizes the Ascendance of Uruk and continued friendship with Eridu
- Establishes the Power and Importance of Inanna, the Patron Goddess of Uruk, through possession of the *me*
- Highlights the complex play of power in Hospitality ritual



Hieros Gamos: Sacred Marriage

- At setting of Moon on New Years, in August
- Ziggurat
- Ceremonial Union of Priest/King with Priestess/Inanna
- Established the Fertility of the Land and the Coming of the Fertile Season

Courtship of Inanna and Dumuzi

- Preparation of Bridal Sheet with help of Brother Utu: Flax, combing it, spinning, braiding, warping, weaving, bleaching.
- Selection of Husband: Farmer or Shepherd
- Giving of Gifts by Suitor
- Agricultural Metaphors for Sex

Song of Sex and Renewal

- Inanna spoke: “What I tell you

Let the singer wear into song.

What I tell you,

Let it flow from ear to mouth,

Let it pass from old to young:

My vulva, the horn,

The boat of Heaven,

Is full of eagerness like the young moon.

My untilled land lies fallow.

As for me, Inanna, Who will plow my vulva?

Who will plow my high field?

Who will plow my wet ground?

Dumuzi replied: “Great Lady, the king will plow your vulva.

I, Dumuzi the kind, will plow your vulva.”

Descent into the Kur

- Opened Her Ear to Great Below
- Abandoned Her Temples
- Preparation: 7 *me*
- Commands Ninshubar
- Removal of *me*
- Eye of Death, Word of Wrath, Cry of Guilt



Rescue by Ninshubar

- Supplicates Enlil
- Supplicates Nanna
- Supplicates Enki
- Enki forms the Kurgarra and Galatur to get Inanna
- Gift of Sympathy: Gift of Inanna
- Price of Return: A Compensatory Death;

Death and Curse

- Naked and bowed low, Inanna entered the throne room.
Ereshkigal rose from her throne.
Inanna started toward the throne.
The Annuna, the judges of the underworld, surrounded her.
They passed judgement against her.
Then Ereshkigal fastened on Inanna the eye of death.
She spoke against her the world of wrath.
She uttered against her the cry of guilt.
She struck her.
Inanna was turned into a corpse,
A piece of rotting meat,
And was hung from a hook on the wall.

The Substitution

- Galla demand Ninshubur
- Galla Demand Shara, son of Inanna
- Galla Demand Lulal, son of Inanna
- Galla Demand Dumuzi and Inanna Gives Eye of Death, Word of Wrath, and Cry of Guilt
- Dumuzi Supplicates Utu, God of Justice

Inanna Judges Dumuzi

- “In Uruk, by the big apple tree,
Dumuzi, the husband of Inanna, was dressed in his
shining me-garments.
He sat on his magnificent throne; he did not move.
The galla seized him by his thighs.
They poured milk out of his seven churns.
They broke the reed pipe which the shepherd was playing.
Inanna fastened on Dumuzi the eye of death.
She spoke against him the word of wrath.
She uttered against him the cry of guilt:
“Take him! Take Dumuzi away!”

Pursuit and Capture of Dumuzi

- Pursuit of Galla
- Geshtinanna Bribed (Water-gift, grain-gift); Tortured but Loyal
- Friend Tells Galla
- Dumuzi Supplicates Utu (turned into a Gazelle)
- Dumuzi Captured; beaten, stripped



Return of Dumuzi

- People Lament Loss of Dumuzi
- Inanna Weeps and Mourns
- Sirtur, mother-in-law mourns
- Geshtinanna Mourns
- Judgement of Inanna: Six months for Dumuzi and Six for Geshtinanna

Life and Death in Balance

- Inanna took Dumuzi by the hand and said:
“You will go to the underworld half the year.
Your sister, since she has asked,
Will go the other half.
On the day you are called,
That day you will be taken.
On the day Geshtinanna is called,
That day you will be set free.
Inanna place Dumuzi in the hands of the eternal.
Holy Ereshkigal! Great is your renown!
Holy Ereshkigal! I sing your praises!

Conclusions and Implications

- Role of Women was prominent and respected; Female Sexuality was Positive
- Agricultural Society; Associated Human Fertility and Fertility of Earth
- Looks toward Great Death and Dying Gods: Persephone/Proserpina, Mysteries of Demeter; Motif of Descent: Gilgamesh, Odysseus, Aeneas, Dante
- Importance of Hospitality and Supplication