

# *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

# Inanna as Unitary Goddess

- Polytheism vs. Monotheism
- Unitary God is not the Only God; but is a God who transcends the power of all others.
- Inanna acquires Me, Power, from other Gods
- In Inanna and Ebih she displays greater Power than the Sky God, An
- In Inanna's Descent, she Conquers Death and the Underworld

# The Huluppu-Tree: Creation Story

- Creation Stories tell about origins of world, people, gods
- What does the Huluppu tree symbolize?
- While Inanna is not the oldest or first god, she has a special place in this creation story: what is Inanna's relationship to Creation?

# Arrival of Huluppu Tree

- He set sail; the Father set sail, Enki, the God of Wisdom, set sail for the underworld.

Small windstones were tossed up against him; large hailstones were hurled up against him; like onrushing turtles,

They charged the keel of Enki's boat.



# The Huluppu Tree is Carried Away by the Euphrates

The waters of the sea devoured the bow of his boat like wolves; the waters of the sea struck the stern of his boat like lion. At that time, a tree, a single tree, a huluppu-tree was planted by the banks of the Euphrates. The tree was nurtured by the water of the Euphrates. The whirling South Wind arose, pulling at its roots and ripping at its branches

Until the water of the Euphrates carried it away.

# Stylistic Observations and more Questions

- Oral Compositional Style
- Repetition
- Use of similes: hailstones hurled against his boat “like onrushing turtles” and waters “devoured the bow of his boat like wolves” and “struck the stern of his boat like lions.”
- Why is the natural world opposing Enki?
- How does tree appear?
- Why is it ripped from the ground by the Euphrates?

# Inanna rescues the Tree

- A woman who walked in fear of the world of the Sky God, An, who walked in fear of the word of the Air God, Enlil, plucked the tree from the river and spoke:
- “I shall bring this tree to Uruk. I shall plant this tree in my holy garden.”
- Inanna cared for the tree with her hand. She settled the earth around the tree with her foot.
- She wondered: ‘how long will it be until I have a shining throne to sit upon? How long will it be until I have a shining bed to lie upon?’

# Observations on Inanna and Tree

- Inanna appears here as a woman, not a goddess.
- She fears the elemental gods of Sky and Air (storm)
- She takes something that is cast off and disregarded and makes it her own
- She has a plan: she wants to grow the tree to become her throne and bed in time.

# Nature Re-Possesses the Tree

- The years passed; five years, then ten years.
- The tree grew thick, but its bark did not split.
- Then a serpent who could not be charmed made its nest in the roots of the huluppu-tree. The Anzu-bird sets his young in the branches of the tree. And the dark maid Lilith built her home in the trunk.
- The young woman who loved to laugh, wept.
- How Inanna wept!
- (yet they would not leave her tree.)

# Inanna Appeals for Help

- She appeals to Utu, her brother, the Sun god to help cleanse the tree; but he would not help her.
- She appeals to Gilgamesh, repeating word for word, and he did.
- “Gilgamesh struck the serpent who could not be charmed. The Anzu-bird flew with his young to the mountains; And Lilith smashed her home and fled to the wild uninhabited places.

# The Tree Becomes Holy Objects

- From the trunk of the tree he carved a throne for his holy sister.
- From the trunk of the tree Gilgamesh carved a bed for Inanna.
- From the roots of the tree she fashioned a *pukka* for her brother.
- From the crown of the tree Inanna fashioned a *mikku* for Gilgamesh, the hero of Uruk.

# 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 of Shepherd
- Counsel of Mother, Ningal
- Giving of Gifts by Suitor
- Agricultural Metaphors for Sex

# Agricultural Metaphors

“He has sprouted; he has burgeoned;  
He is lettuce planted by the water.  
He is the one my womb loves best.

My well-stocked garden of the plain,  
My barley growing high in its furrow,  
My apple tree which bears fruit up to its crown,  
He is lettuce planted by the water.

My honey-man, my honey-man sweetenes me always.  
My lord, the honey-man of the gods,  
He is the one my womb loves best.  
His hand is honey, his foot is honey,  
He sweetens me always.”

# Inanna Endows Dumuzi with Kingship

Ninshubar, the faithful servant of the holy shrine of Uruk, led Dumuzi to the sweet thighs of Inanna and spoke:

“My queen, here is the choice of your heart,  
The king, your beloved bridegroom.

May he spend long days in the sweetness of your holy loins.

Give him a favorable and glorious reign.

Grant him the king’s throne, firm in its foundations.

Grant him the shepherd’s staff of judgment.

Grant him the enduring crown with the radiant and noble diadem.”

# Conclusions and Implications

- Role of Women was prominent and respected; Female Sexuality was Positive
- Agricultural Society; Associated Human Fertility and Fertility of Earth
- Descent Motif (Jesus; Persephone; Greek heroes; Odysseus; Aeneas; Dante) and Conquest of Death
- Inanna as a Goddess who embodies a wide range of powers; While not Monotheistic, she becomes Supreme God.