

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

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# Inanna as Unitary Goddess

- Polytheism, Monotheism
- Henotheism: 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.

# Inanna, Enki and the Me

- Inanna prepares for visit
- Inanna place the shugurra, the crown of the steppe, on her head. She went to the sheepfold, to the shepherd. She leaned back against the apple tree; her vulva was wondrous to behold. Rejoicing at her wondrous vulva the young woman Inanna applauded herself.

# Hospitality Motif

- Enki directs his servant, Isimud, to treat Inanna like a guest
- “Come, my sukkul, the young woman is about to enter the Abzu. When Inanna enters the holy shrine give her butter cake to eat. Pour cold water to refresh her heart. Offer her beer before the stature of the lion. Treat her like an equal. Greet Inanna at the holy table, the table of heaven.”

# Drinking and Oaths

- Enki and Inanna drank beer together.

They drank more beer together.

They drank more and 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 offers her Me and she Accepts

- 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!”

# 14 me He gives her

- Kingship and Godship; Symbols of Ruling
- Priestess and Priests
- Truth: Descent into Underworld and Ascent from the Underworld; Power over weapons and clothing
- Sexual seduction; Speech; Music and holy shrines
- Art of Mastery; Deceit; Crafts
- Attention and Listening; Fire
- Strife and Counseling

# Regret of Enki

- When the beer had gone out from the one who had drunk beer,
- When the beer had gone from Father Enki,
- When the beer had gone out from the great God of Wisdom,
- Enki look about the Abzu.
- The eyes of the King of the Abzu searched Eridu: “The high priesthood? Godship? The noble enduring crown? Where are they?”

# Pursuit and Defeat

- Enki directs Isimud to send various monsters after “The Boat of Heaven,” which is carrying Inanna and the Me toward Uruk.
- She calls on her servant, Ninshubur, to save the Boat of Heaven
- “Ninshubur sliced the air with her hand. She uttered an earth-shattering cry. The enkum-creatures were sent hurtling back to Eridu.”
- This happens 7 times.

# The Boat of Heaven Arrives in Uruk

Inanna: On the day the Boat of Heaven enters the Nigulla Gate of Uruk, let high water sweep over the streets; let high water flow over the paths. Let the old men give counsel; let the old women offer heart-soothing...Let all of Uruk be festive! Let the high priest greet the Boat of Heaven with song. Let him utter great prayers. Let the king slaughter oxen and sheep. Let him pour beer out of the cup. Let the drum and tambourine resound. Let the sweet titi-music be played. Let all the lands proclaim my noble name. Let my people sing my praises.”

# More Me Arrive Than Were Given!

- Then more me appeared—more me than Enki had given Inanna.

And these too were announced,

And these too were presented to the people of Uruk:

Inanna brought the me: She brought the placing of the garment on the ground. She brought allure. She brought the art of women. She brought the perfect execution of the me. She brought the tigi- and lilis-drums. She brought the ub, the meze, and the ala tambourines.”

# Alliance with Eriku and Uruk

- Enki arrives and praises Inanna and pledges alliance.
- “In the name of my power! In the name of my holy shrine!

Let the me you have taken with you remain in the holy shrine of your city, Let the high priest spend his days at the holy shrine in song, Let the citizens of your city prosper, Let the children of Uruk rejoice.

The people of Uruk are allies of the people of Eridu.

Let the city of Uruk be restored to its great place.”

# Discussion of Enki and Inanna

- What is the significance of this story in terms of Inanna's divinity?
- What is the significance of the story politically?
- What does the story tell you about the character of both Enki and Inanna?
- Why did she have more Me than she was given?

# 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.

• Utu: Young Lady, the flax in its fullness is lovely.

Inanna, the grain is glistening in the furrow.

I will hoe it for you. I will bring it to you.

A piece of linen, big or small, is always needed.

Inanna I will bring it to you.”

Inanna: After you've brought me the flax, who will comb it for me?

# Marriage and Sex

Inanna: Brother, after you've brought my bridal sheet to me,

Who will go to bed with me?

Utu, who will go to bed with me?

Utu: Sister, your bridegroom will go to bed with you.

He who was born from a fertile womb,

He who was conceived on the sacred marriage throne,

Dumuzi, the shepherd! He will go to bed with you.

# Farmer vs Shepherd

- Inanna prefer the farmer:
- “No, brother! The man of my heart works the hoe. The farmer! He is the man of my heart! He gathers the grain into great heaps. He brings the grain regularly in my storehouses.”
- The two are evaluated on what they can give to her
- In the end, she agrees to marry the Shepherd because her mother convinces her.

# 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

- Inanna takes and nurtures what is disregarded by other gods—the tree
- Female sexuality is a power and it is celebrated and not vilified
- Agricultural Society; Associated Human Fertility and Fertility of Earth
- Inanna as a Goddess who embodies a wide range of powers; While not Monotheistic, she becomes Supreme God.
- Inanna empowers the King—he rules through her choice.