

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

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# 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.

# Defeat of Ebih

My Queen batters the Mountain,

Plants her heels hard

Rubs dagger's edge on a whet stone.

Grabs Ebih by the neck

As she would a sheaf of rushes.

In ear-splitting waves, her shrill cries pierce

Ebih's failing heart.

With stones from its own slopes she pelts, she pounds, thud dub, thud dub, storms of stones crack its sides...

Damp and writhing snakes tangled in braches drop at her drear bidding, spitting deadly venom; and her tongue's poison hurls a green-wilting curse over forest and fruit-bearing trees:

She shows no mercy to it green plant rows.

A parching drought she blows, dust dry air in her pitiless wake gusts over stems of verdant growth—not a moist drop stays.

# Vaunting Over EbiH

- Holy Inanna...

Stands the victor at its base: MOUNTAIN!

She cries, “EBIH!”

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!

# Temple To Her Victory

- Stone upon stone, I build a temple.

Mark out my estate, stone upon stone.

Finish it in splendor, standing hard on bedrock.

Grand is the throne there...

I build this splendid temple:

Who dared attack the mountain,

Now stands victorious...

Mountain, I have triumphed!

Ebih! I have triumphed!

Eldest daughter of the Moon:

That you destroyed Ebih, O maiden, Inanna,

Be praised!

And praise be to Nisaba, goddess of writing.

# Unitary, Supreme Goddess

- Works of Her proud heart, The Queen alone creates them.

Most exalted of the assembly, she sits on the honored throne, spread out right and left...

She wears the carved out ground-plan of Heaven and Earth.

Who seek her word, does not look to An.

The great god assembly prattles in confusion: cannot fathom her plan's execution.

She holds the life of heaven with her single hand.

# 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

# 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

# Conclusions and Implications

- Defeat of Ebih when no other god would help elevates her status to most powerful of Gods.
- Looks toward Great Death and Dying Gods: Persephone/Proserpina, Mysteries of Demeter; Motif of Descent: Gilgamesh, Odysseus, Aeneas, Dante
- Sacrificial Substitution: Dumuzi takes Inanna's place in underworld; Geshtinanna takes her brother's place
- Harmony between natural world, human world, and divine world: Cycle of Death and Rebirth