

The Ancient Sumerian Poet

By I. Dupee

Who was Enheduanna?



Fig. 1 Seal depicting Inanna, resting her foot on the back of a lion.

- ★ Enheduanna was the world's first author known by name.
- ★ She was also the daughter of Sargon of Akkad.
- ★ She was the high priestess of the most important temple of Sumer.
- ★ She is also credited with creating the paradigms of poetry, psalms, and prayers used throughout the ancient world.

Where is Enheduanna From?



Fig. 2 Map of the Fertile Crescent

- ★ Enheduanna was from Mesopotamia, which was in the fertile crescent, and present-day Iraq.
- ★ Mesopotamia was the region situated between the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers.
- ★ Enheduanna was from the northern city of Akkad.
- ★ She moved to Ur, the heartland of Sumerian culture.

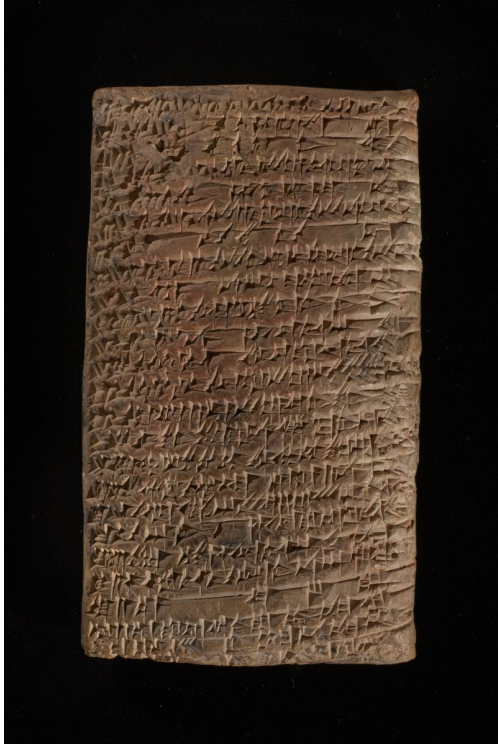
What Did Enheduanna Do?



Fig.3 Stone carving depicting Enheduanna

- ★ Enheduanna wrote hymns and poetry to honor the goddess Inanna.
- ★ She was the one that had to reconcile the Akkadian gods with the Sumerian ones.
- ★ She established the standards of prayer that would influence the Hebrew Bibles and Homeric poems.
- ★ Her monumental task was to combine two deities into a single, all-powerful goddess.

When Was Enheduanna Alive?



- ★ Enheduanna was alive approximately from 2285 to 2250 BCE.
- ★ This is the 23rd century before common era.
- ★ She was alive 4300 years.
- ★ Enheduanna lived in the temple of Giparu.

Fig.4 Clay tablet written in Cuneiform

How Did Enheduanna Die?



Fig5 Ziggurat of Ur

- ★ While Enheduanna was high priestess, there was a coup, and she was forced into exile by a Sumerian rebel.
- ★ It is not known how she died.
- ★ She was buried in the temple complex of Giparu.
- ★ She and her works were discovered in 1927.

Temple Hymn 26

The Zabalani Temple Of Inanna

O house wrapped in beams of light
wearing shining stone jewels wakening great awe
sanctuary of pure Inanna
(where) divine powers the true *me* spread wide
Zabalani
shrine of the shining mountain
shrine that welcomes the morning light
she makes resound with desire
the Holy Woman grounds your hallowed chamber
with desire
your queen Inanna of the sheepfold
that singular woman
the unique one
who speaks hateful words to the wicked
who moves among the bright shining things
who goes against rebel lands
and at twilight makes the firmament beautiful
all on her own
great daughter of Suen
pure Inanna
O house of Zabalani
has built this house on your radiant site
and placed her seat upon your dais

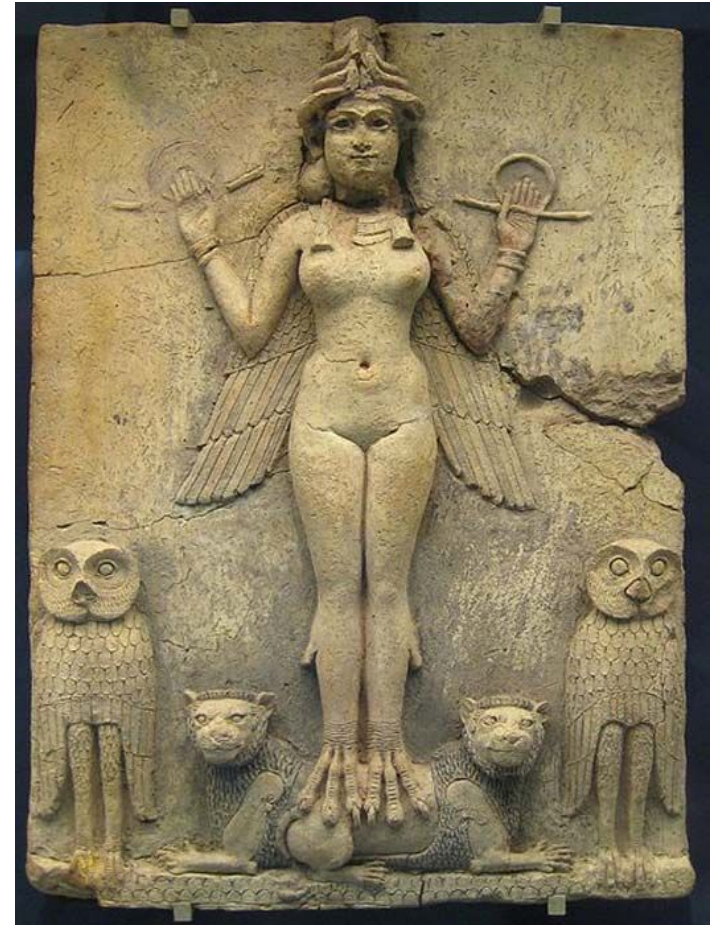


Fig.6 Goddess Inanna carved in stone

Temple Hymn 7

The Kesh Temple Of Ninhursag
high-lying Kesh

The Lofty

in all heaven and earth you are the form-shaping place
spreading fear like a great poisonous snake
O Lady of the Mountains Ninhursag's house
built on a terrifying site
O Kesh like holy Aratta
inside is a womb dark and deep
your outside towers over all
imposing one
great lion of the wildlands stalking the high plains
great mountain
incantations fixed you in place
inside the light is dim
even moonlight (Nanna's light) does not enter
only Nintur Lady Birth
makes it beautiful
O house of Kesh
the brick of birthgiving
your temple tower adorned with a lapis lazuli crown
your princess
Princess of Silence
unfailing great Lady of Heaven
when she speaks heaven shakes
open-mouthed she roars
Aruru sister of Enlil
O house of Kesh
has built this house on your radiant site
and placed her seat upon your dais



Fig.7 Disk of Enheduanna

Temple Hymn 17

The Badtibira Temple Of Dumuzi

Emush

O house

jeweled lapis herbs fleck the shining bed
heart-soothing place of the Lady of the Steppe

Emush brickwork glistening and pure
its burnished clay placed firmly (on the earth)

your sky-rising wall sprawls over the high plain
for the one who tends the ewes
and over the Arali House for the shepherd

your prince radiant one of the Holy Woman
a lion pacing the steppe back and forth
the wonder-causing pure breasted one
the Lord spouse of pure Inanna

Dumuzi master of the Emush
O Badtibira (fortress of the coppersmith)
has built this house on your radiant site
and placed his seat upon your dais



Fig.8 Inanna and Ishtar presenting prisoners of war

Temple Hymn 22

The Sirara Temple Of Nanshe

O house you wild cow
there to conjure signs from divination

you arise splendid to behold
bedecked for your princess

Sirara great and princely place
you dream-opener
highly prized in the shrine

your lady Nanshe

a great storm
strong dark water

born on the shore of the sea

laughing in the sea foam
playing playing in the waves

divine Nanshe mighty Lady
O house of Sirara
has built this house on your radiant site
and placed her seat upon your dais



Fig.9 Inanna and Ereshkigal

The Exaltation of Inanna: Opening Lines, an Excerpt

by Enheduanna

loose translation by Michael R. Burch

Lady of all divine powers,
Lady of the all-resplendent light,
Righteous Lady clothed in heavenly radiance,
Beloved Lady of An and Uraš,
Mistress of heaven with the holy diadem,
Who loves the beautiful headdress befitting the office of her high priestess,
Powerful Mistress who has seized all seven divine powers,
My lady, you are the guardian of the seven divine powers!
You have seized the divine powers,
You hold the divine powers in your hand,
You have gathered up the divine powers,
You have clasped the divine powers to your breast!
Like a dragon you have spewed venom on foreign lands that know you not!
When you roar like Iškur at the earth, nothing can withstand you!
Like a flood descending on alien lands, O Powerful One of heaven and earth, you will teach them to fear Inanna!



Fig. 10 Ereshkigal gives birth, Inanna and Dumuzi look on

Bibliography

- ★ Mark, Joshua J. "Enheduanna." *Ancient History Encyclopedia*, Ancient History Encyclopedia, 24 Mar. 2014, www.ancient.eu/Enheduanna/.
- ★ Sullivan, Kerry. "Enheduanna: A High Priestess of the Moon and the First Known Author in the World." *Ancient Origins*, Ancient Origins, 26 Dec. 2016, www.ancient-origins.net/history-famous-people/enheduanna-high-priestess-moon-and-first-known-author-world-007259.
- ★ Rothenburg, Jerome. "Enheduanna (2300 BCE.): Seven Sumerian Temple Hymns." *Enheduanna (2300 BCE.): Seven Sumerian Temple Hymns / Jacket2*, Jacket 2, 27 June 2017, jacket2.org/commentary/enheduanna-2300-bce-seven-sumerian-temple-hymns.