

AN ARCHETYPAL ANALYSIS OF THE QUEEN MOTHER OF THE WEST IN CHINESE MYTHOLOGY

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Abstract: Amongst all the goddesses in ancient China, the Queen Mother of the West (Xiwangmu) represents the most multi-layered mother archetype with the richest connotations. Through a longitudinal literature review, this paper aims to explore different facets of the Queen Mother of the West as a representation of the Great Mother archetype in Jungian psychology. In ancient China, she was a supreme goddess controlling the order of the universe. Her residence, Mount Kunlun, is capable of nourishing and devouring life. She possesses the elixir of life and controls the punishments of the world. Thus, the Queen Mother of the West is transformed into a deity of both life and death. In the funeral rituals of the Han and Tang dynasties, she was a goddess who summoned the dead and led their spirits to heaven, while in folklore she was a mythical Muse for many emperors and the anima of many intellectuals. She is the mother of reincarnation and the eternal spirit. As a symbol for instinct, archetype and femininity in the collective unconscious, the Queen Mother of the West embodies both the positive and negative aspects of the mother archetype: the positive being the persona of the Great Mother and the negative being the shadow. At the ultimate stage of spiritual development, she acts as the anima and the transcendent Holy Virgin in ancient Chinese culture.

Keywords: Queen Mother of the West, myth, archetypal theory, the Great Mother

INTRODUCTION

The Queen Mother of the West (Xiwangmu), a complex divinity in Chinese folk culture, has been acclaimed as the first goddess of China by scholars at home and abroad (Chi 2009). The emergence and development of related myths and beliefs do not only reflect the psychology of primitive peoples, but also mirror the Chinese social and cultural background of different historical periods. According to Neumann (2015 [1955]), the primordial image or archetype of the Great Mother in analytical psychology is not a specific image in any particular time or space, but an inner image functioning in the human psyche. The Great Goddesses appear in many different depictions in mythology and artworks as symbolic representations of this psychological phenomena. The Queen Mother of the West, as the Great Mother in Chinese mythology, is a unity of yin and yang, the physical and the psychic, the material and the spiritual. She has been endowed with all the typical characteristics of the mother archetype.

Previous studies have shown that the Queen Mother of the West is the Great Mother of various clans, ethnic groups and even all of China (Zhang 2005; Wang 2001). The belief in the Queen Mother of the West originates from the first Great Mother whose original deity is motherhood (Zhao 2012). Cui and Liang (2017) explore the Queen Mother of the West as a goddess of life and draw attention to her role as a mother of death. Her dual nature as a goddess of good and evil has been preliminarily examined by a few other researchers (Wang 2001). Until now, little attention has been paid to the spiritual side of the Queen Mother of the West. This paper attempts to interpret related myths in a more in-depth and systematic way, hoping to gain a comprehensive understanding of the historical development of the image of the Queen Mother of the West in folklore and the psychological connotations behind this cultural phenomenon.

During the primitive period, the Queen Mother of the West was a half-human, half-animal goddess; later, in the reign of King Mu of the Zhou Dynasty (1027–922 B.C.), she was a tribal leader and an empress; after the Han and Tang dynasties (202–907 B.C.), she evolved into the mother of all immortals in Taoism. After becoming a part of mainstream Chinese culture, the image of the Queen Mother of the West, an ethnic western goddess, gradually became differentiated and refined during the process of localization and secularization. According to Yuan Ke (2015: 49–50), the Queen Mother of the West shows different faces in different societies. In a primitive society, she was a weird goddess while in a slave society she naturally became a queen. In a feudal society, she turned into an immortal again. In actuality, the three different incarnations of the Queen Mother of the West create a unified whole.

An ancient book named *The Classic of Mountains and Seas* (Anonymous 1999, 2009) records that the Queen Mother of the West lives on Mount Kunlun in Western China. She has a leopard tail and the teeth of a tigress. She possesses the elixir of life and takes control of the five destructive forces and catastrophes from the sky. In later myths and folklore, the Queen Mother of the West developed into a series of images including a nine-tailed fox, a toad, a jade rabbit, a *Ganoderma lucidum*,¹ a feathered man, Fuxi and Nüwa,² money tree, and so on, all of which can be divided into three categories based on their symbolic meaning: symbols of birth represented by Mount Kunlun, symbols of death represented by the West, and the immortal symbol represented by the elixir of life. They signify three different aspects of the Queen Mother of the West as a positive, negative, and spiritual Great Mother, which also implies a three-layer structure of the persona, the shadow, and the animus in analytical psychology.

1. THE POSITIVE GREAT MOTHER: CONTAINER, CREATOR, PROTECTOR, AND PERSONA

“All the positives of survival, such as nourishment, food, warmth, safety, etc., are tied to the Great Mother imagery... The Great Mother actually delivers all these positives” (Neumann 2015 [1955]: 65–66). Originally as a totemic deity for some tribes in western China, the Queen Mother of the West gradually became a goddess worshipped by the masses during the Warring States period (403–221 B.C.) and the Han Dynasty (206 B.C.–220 A.D.) when her value as a symbol of positive motherhood was enriched. Positive functions, such as containing and nurturing life and supporting and protecting children, are the most important responsibilities of the Great Mother, all of which are reflected in the image group of the Queen Mother of the West. The positive aspects are oriented, on the one hand, by the expectations of the environment and, on the other hand, are influenced by the objectives of society and the efforts of its citizens (Jung 2014a: 353). These functions are valued in the collective culture of human civilization, and as a result, come to represent the persona of the Great Mother.

1.1 The residence of the Queen Mother of the West as a container

The Great Mother is primarily a goddess of space that contains and nourishes life. A core quality of femininity is its maternal identity, whose primary symbolic manifestation is a huge circle, a large container, which houses life itself, i.e.,

woman = body = container = world (Neumann 2015 [1955]: 93). The original state of the Mother Goddess is often represented as a vessel – a womb or mother’s belly symbolizing conception (Ye 2004). The hip, the abdomen and the breasts are usually exaggerated as emblems of birth in many early sculptures and paintings of goddesses discovered by archaeologists. In some regions, such as the ancient Mediterranean areas, jars as a kind of container were worshipped as goddesses (Neumann 2015 [1955]). Other containers in nature, such as abysses, ravines, caves, canyons, mountains, etc., represent the womb of Mother Earth. Mount Kunlun, the abode of the Queen Mother of the West, is a giant vessel. Kunlun is also written as muddle or chaos, referring to a sphere like the dome of heaven. *The Classic of Mountains and Seas* (Anonymous 1999) makes more than 20 references to Kunlun, many of which connect Mount Kunlun and the Queen Mother of the West directly or indirectly.

Covering about 160,000 square kilometers, the ten-thousand-foot-high Kunlun is a holy site of the gods guarded by the mountain god Luwu and the Beast of Enlightenment. In Chinese mythology, Kunlun is also a site for various auspicious birds and beasts. According to *Erya*, the earliest Chinese dictionary, Kunlun refers to a three-layer mound (Anonymous 2012). The layers symbolize cosmic hierarchy, while Kunlun represents the universe in miniature. The womb, vagina, and entire belly, which are mythical symbols of femininity and maternity, constitute the archetype of Kunlun. “The navel as center of the world is also archetypal. ...The earth, in a sense, is the womb of a reality seen as feminine, the navel and center from which the universe is nourished” (Neumann 2015 [1955]: 186). In Taoism, Mount Kunlun is the navel of the universe. The ancient Chinese had a cosmological view of the Five Great Mountains in which Mount Kunlun was the center of the world and the belly of Mother Earth (Konanyitirou 2006). This is consistent with the basic maternal characteristics of the Queen Mother of the West as the Great Mother.

Moreover, surrounded by *black water*³ and *weak water*,⁴ Mount Kunlun is rich in tall cereal plants named Muhe and holy trees named Jianmu. Both are sacred trees of life reaching heaven as well as links between the natural and supernatural world. Trees and water are representative images of motherhood. The maternal significance of water is one of the most straightforward interpretations in many mythologies. Water is the source of life. We are all born from the water of our mother’s womb and even the sun emerges from water at dawn and submerges into it at dusk (Jung 2014b). Another typical mother-symbol is the tree of life which may have been a fruit-bearing genealogical tree and hence akin to a tribe mother (ibid.).

1.2. The Queen Mother of the West as a creator and protector

Mount Kunlun has a magic power of transformation since it is the center of the universe and the sacred mountain of the gods, which corresponds to the symbolic meaning of the Queen Mother of the West. According to a stone portrait from the Han dynasty, unearthed in Sichuan (see Fig. 1), the Queen Mother of the West sits in the middle of a dragon and tiger seat. The dragon and tiger serve as her guardians and signify that spirits of the deceased can ascend to heaven, which is related to the belief of the ancient kingdoms of Ba and Shu where dragons and tigers were worshipped as their totems by some clans (Wang 2005). During the Warring States period (475–221 B.C.), the clans in Ba and Shu gradually became integrated through social and economic interactions (Chi 2009). In the late Eastern Han Dynasty (25–220 A.D.), the Queen Mother of the West underwent a transformation from an idol of longevity to a savior and creator, which was influenced by the image of Fuxi and Nüwa. The dragon and tiger seat at this stage symbolized the creation of human beings, rebirth, and the reincarnation of life (Zheng 2008).

Figure 1. A stone portrait of the Queen Mother of the West on a dragon and tiger seat from Han Dynasty (206 B.C.–220 A.D.) (Chi 2009: 326).



It was common, in early myths and folklore from all around the world, for the gods and goddesses to unite in order to maintain cosmic order and create human beings. For example, in Italy and other European countries, various rituals for the divine union of gods and goddesses are performed to pray for a good harvest (Frazer 2009 [1890]). A symbolic image associated with the harvest is the sheng worn as a hair stick by the Queen Mother of the West. The sheng is a kind of weaving spool. According to Yin Rongfang (2003), the Queen Mother of the West was closely related to the breeding of silkworms and weaving. She was not only the goddess of grain but also the goddess of silkworms and weaving, ensuring the long-term prosperity of her descendants by providing them

with food and clothing. After the Ming dynasty, the Queen Mother of the West was transformed in folklore into a creator of various mountains, rivers, flowers, and trees and even the universe and human beings (Zhao 2012).

The activities of nurturing life, nourishing creatures, and protecting people are instinctive on the biological level and archetypal on the psychic level as symbolized by the Queen Mother of the West. As Jacobi (1976: 42) opined, the development of the persona often involves three factors: the physical and psychic structure, the individual ideal, and the collective ideal. The collective expectations of human beings for the role of mother are first and foremost positive and active, and thus the kind and positive aspects of the Queen Mother of the West serve as personas of the collective mother in Chinese society.

2. THE NEGATIVE GREAT MOTHER: DEATH, CONTROL, AND SHADOW

Living on Mount Kunlun, the Queen Mother of the West made her first appearance in *The Classic of Mountains and Seas* (Anonymous 2009) as a fierce goddess in charge of death and punishment. She later became Queen Mother – an obstructionist and controller in folklore. These are the dark and immoral aspects of the Great Mother archetype, which are in opposition to the persona and are rejected by collective culture and consciousness. They can be regarded as the shadow of the Great Mother.

The Great Mother is the giver not only of life but also of death. Withdrawal of love can appear as a withdrawal of all the functions constituting the positive side of the elementary character. Thus, hunger and thirst may take the place of food, cold of warmth, defenselessness of protection, nakedness of shelter and clothing, and distress of contentment. (Neumann 2015 [1955]: 117)

According to Robert H. Hopcke (1995), the shadow expresses what the persona suppresses. It is usually unacceptable, unpleasant, and frightening. These denied and suppressed parts, however, are the most important elements of the collective unconsciousness, for the shadow contains much of the instinctive content and energy, the primitive and infantile psyche, and the subtleties of the darkness (Shen 2012). The negative sides of death and control, together with the positive sides of nurturing and support, constitute the basic complementary facets of the Great Mother.

2.1 The West and death

There are records of the Eastern Mother and the Western Mother in the oracle bone inscriptions of the Shang dynasty (1751–1111 B.C.). Some scholars believe that both were goddesses of the Sun and goddesses of life and death during that period (Chang 2013). There are more oracle bone inscriptions for the Eastern Mother than for the Western Mother. In the funeral rituals of the Shang dynasty, the deceased's head faced east more often than west, indicating that the East symbolized life and rebirth while the West symbolized death. The Eastern Mother is thus supposed to be the goddess of life and the Western Mother the goddess of death (ibid.). It remains debatable whether the Western Mother and the Queen Mother of the West are the same goddess. However, there is a very close connection between the two, as they are both female goddesses located in the West. The earliest record of the Queen Mother of the West appeared in *The Classic of the Western Mountains*, the second section of *The Classic of Mountains and Seas*. "Three hundred and fifty leagues further west is Mount Jade. This is where the Queen Mother of the West lives" (Anonymous 1999: 25). Whether or not the Queen Mother of the West lives on Mount Kunlun or Mount Jade, it is relatively certain that she comes from the far west (Zhu 1957).

In Chinese mythology, the west is a symbol of darkness. Located in the west, Mount Kunlun represents a place generating darkness and devouring life, which is in accordance with the cultural connotation of the Queen Mother of the West, a deity in charge of life and death.

The west is more: it is the 'place of the women,' the primeval home, where mankind once crawled from the primordial hole of the earth. For before the earth and human consciousness existed, everything was contained in the realm of the dead in the west. This place of the women is not only the dark cave from which mankind issued; it is also the house from which one descends. For underworld, night sky, and unconscious are one and the same: the west is the seat of the primordial gods, the home of the corn, and the original mythical home of the tribes. (Neumann 2015 [1955]: 247)

Death is the beginning of new life. In mythology, death is viewed as a journey back to the womb of Mother Earth. Though horrific to some extent, it implies hope for the future as it makes the continuation of life possible (Ye 2004). The earth, or Kunlun, creates life, nourishes it, and then devours it. It then gives birth to life again, nurtures it, and finally casts it once more into the abyss of death. Life is reincarnated in this way. As a result, the Queen Mother of the West frequently appeared as the main mythological figure in tomb paintings

from the Han dynasty when the living believed her to guide the spirits of the dead to rebirth or to ascend to immortality.

2.2 Penalty and control

The Queen Mother of the West is the goddess of death, symbolizing the origin of all the negative aspects in life, including disease and disaster, death and destruction, terror and danger, etc., as noted by Ye (2004). All of these are the typical shadow aspects of the Great Mother. *The Classic of Mountains and Seas* (Anonymous 2009) depicts the Queen Mother of the West as a human body with a leopard's tail and a tigress's teeth (see Fig. 2). Possessing outstanding strength and speed, both the tiger and leopard are totems of the tribe. She was the mother and leader of the whole tribe, providing food and protection for her people as well as administering punishments and even executing death. Before the Han Dynasty, it was thought that the Queen Mother of the West was a fearsome goddess, half-human, half-animal, in command of celestial penalties. She is recorded to preside over the catastrophes from the sky and the five destructive forces which were forms of cruel corporal punishment in ancient China. The scepter in her hand signifies her authority and severity (Bu 2010: 145). Both punishment and mercy are implemented under the auspices of the Queen Mother of the West to counter and support one another.

The Queen Mother of the West is an embodiment of cosmic order and vitality. When a destructive force upsets this order, she would assume responsibility for it and take action. According to a Chinese folktale known as "The Weaver Maiden and the Cowherd", after the couple got married, the Cowherd stopped herding cattle and the Weaver Maiden stopped weaving, which led to famine and a shortage of cloth all over the world. Consequently, the universe fell into chaos. The Emperor of Heaven and the Queen Mother of the West intervened in order to restore cosmic order. The couple had to return to their respective positions to ensure the proper functioning of the heavens and the earth. "Among later folklore, due to her faithfulness to the duties, the Queen Mother of the West was portrayed as a villain breaking the relationship of the Cowherd and Weaver Maiden" (Konnanyitirou 2006: 115). It is common to see this motif in later myths and legends. The fairies, unwilling to bear loneliness in heaven, descend into mortal marriage. However, they are frequently punished or imprisoned by the Queen Mother and the Jade Emperor if there is even the slightest chance of disturbing the cosmic order.



Figure 2. *A Portrait of the Queen Mother of the West in The Classic of Mountains and Seas (Anonymous 2009: 61).*

On a deeper level, this is the Great Mother's early warning of the catastrophic consequences of destruction, much as a mother would firmly reprimand and even punish her children when they disobey moral and legal standards. The divine principle and rule of heaven demonstrate how unconsciousness, represented by the Queen Mother of the West, controls and manages creation. When attempting to get free, the conscious cannot ignore the immense force of the unconscious, otherwise it will soon suffer the consequences. This explains why in mythology the rebellious usually meet a tragic end.

As Neumann (2015 [1955]: 97) points out, the archetypal feminine is both the provider and protector of life as well as the goddess of death at the same time, just as the Great Mother may be both awful and good. The archetypal feminine encompasses opposites of positive and negative features, as symbolized by the black-and-white egg. The universe unites earth and heaven, night and day, death and life. The images related to the Queen Mother of the West also contain pairs of opposing and unified factors such as life and death, give and take, leniency and severity, beauty and ugliness, etc. "Since people tend to reject or ignore the less glorious parts of the personality, the shadow is largely dismissed. However, many of the positive parts of the personality are hidden precisely in the shadow" (Young-Eisendrath & Dawson 1997: 319). The whole Great Mother, made up of both positive and negative features, ensures the reincarnation of life and the operation of the universe.

3. THE SPIRITUAL MOTHER: ETERNITY, VIRGIN MARY, AND ANIMA

The Primordial Goddess, combining elementary and transformative character in one, is an 'eternal presence', wherever the original traits of the elementary or the transformative character appear, her archaic image

will be constellated anew, regardless of time and space. (Neumann 2015 [1955]: 118)

The Queen Mother of the West is an eternal Great Mother transcending the boundaries of time and space. She possesses the elixir of life and transcends the cycle of life and death through transformation and rebirth. She is a mentor and guide for ancient kings, a spiritual faith for common people and a Muse for the literati and artists. In a way, she has become a mother goddess in the spiritual realm of the Chinese.

3.1 Eternal life: The immortality of the individual and the infinite regeneration of the universe

From the viewpoint of filial piety, Confucianism maintains that the value of life is the passing on of blood from one generation to the next. However, in Taoism, individual immortality is seen as the value of life (Gu 2006). Taoists believe that the Queen Mother of the West could fulfill their unending quest to become immortals in the celestial realm. The Queen Mother of the West naturally evolved into the goddess of immortality since her home, Mount Kunlun, is a sacred location rich in the drink of immortality, the tree of immortality, and the elixir of immortality. In some Chinese paintings of the Han Dynasty (see Fig. 1), the jade rabbit next to the Queen Mother of the West is either holding a *Ganoderma lucidum* or pounding immortal medicine while the money tree represents the path that the soul takes to heaven (Chi 2009). Moreover, the feather-man with wings in those paintings has also attained immortality and can fly to heaven at any time. The Queen Mother of the West is a symbol of the fairyland, the immortal world, and the heavenly palace. It is said that by entering the celestial realm of the Queen Mother of the West, which represents the continuation of life, one can reincarnate after passing away. In the Han Dynasty, she was in fact a goddess of happiness, fertility, and eternity (Gu 2006).

The deeper meaning of eternity refers to the infinite reproduction of the human race and the eternal existence of the universe. In popular Chinese legends, Houyi, an archer renowned for his marksmanship, acquired the elixir of life from the Queen Mother of the West; however, he was not fortunate enough to enjoy it as it was secretly consumed by his wife Chang'e, who subsequently ascended to heaven and became the moon goddess. Whilst the invincible First Emperor of China could not obtain the elixir of immortality, Chang'e, a woman, was able to get it easily. Behind this myth lies the archetypal meaning of collective

unconsciousness. The immortal energy of life ultimately fell into the hands of the moon goddess, Chang'e, probably because a classic archetype of rebirth was seen through the waxing and waning of the moon (Konnyanitirou 2006). The moon is usually associated with femininity. The lunar cycle of waxing and waning is similar to the menstrual cycle of women, which implies a possibility of conception. The moon thus became a symbol of birth and rebirth and is frequently worshipped alongside women by people all over the world. An Indian tribe has a painting called *The Woman in the Moon* (see Fig. 3). There are also antique pieces of jewelry decorated with "The Moon as the abode of souls" (see Fig. 4). According to the mythical concept of immortality, it is evil for heroes and emperors to pursue eternity for personal benefit. The life and death of a specific emperor are not important; what matters is the constant regeneration of the universe year after year (Konnyanitirou 2006: 83). Therefore, the elixir of immortality is only available and exclusive to goddesses such as the Queen Mother of the West and Chang'e, by whom eternity is given and controlled.



Figure 3. *The woman in the moon. Tattoo pattern, Haida Indians, Northwest America (Jung 2014b: 487).*



Figure 4. *The moon as the abode of souls. Chalcedon gem, 1st century B.C. (Jung 2014b: 487).*

3.2 Spiritual eternity: Virgin Mary and the anima

The ultimate eternity is spiritual eternity, which is the highest level of transformation for the Great Mother. To attain immortality means one has flown to the spiritual realm of heaven. The ascension into the celestial signifies the unity of earth and sky, the physical and the spiritual. The lofty trees and Mount Kunlun serve as the gateway to heaven in the myth of the Queen Mother of

the West. In Norse mythology, the root of the world tree (Yggdrasil) stretches down to the underworld and the crown up to heaven. In Chinese mythology, the seat of the supreme god is on the top of the world tree reaching up to heaven. According to a stone portrait from the Northern Shan'xi province, northwestern China, it is the Queen Mother of the West that sits on the world tree (see Fig. 5). High places are often associated with sacred pursuits, symbolizing the transcendence, purification, and eternity of souls. Mountain-climbing pilgrimages exist in many ethnic groups and religions, which express a strong human desire to renounce the world, gain enlightenment, and experience spiritual eternity. From a spiritual point of view, mountains are related to a state of complete self-awareness (Mitford 2008). As the point where heaven and earth meet, mountains have come to represent transcendence, eternity, and spiritual sublimation. Mount Kunlun, known in China as the top of the world, is said to be the birthplace of the Yellow River, a symbol of order and harmony, as well as the residence of the immortals (Tresidder 2001: 121). The Queen Mother of the West became a representation of spiritual eternity – the ultimate pursuit for Chinese elite classes.



Figure 5. The Queen Mother of the West sitting on the world tree (Xitaihu 2018).

Having reached the highest level of the Great Mother archetype, the Queen Mother of the West was also the Holy Mother and anima of emperors, intellectuals, and common people in ancient China. It was said that Emperor Yu, Emperor Shun, Emperor Yao, and the Yellow Emperor undertook a long journey to visit the Queen Mother of the West, who reciprocated by paying return

visits to these emperors as well. The kings and emperors learned about the governance of a country through conversations with the Queen Mother of the West, who was their Goddess of Wisdom and Virgin Mary and could inspire them to rule their country effectively. Behind these myths is the idea that the Queen Mother of the West possessed the ability to bring political stability and economic prosperity (Konnanyitirou 2006).

During the Han Dynasty, the Queen Mother of the West became increasingly secular, helping the common people pursue happiness and freedom. In Taoism she was transformed and became the mother of all the female immortals (Gan 2009), which was similar to the Greek primordial deity Gaia – the most highly respected mother goddess. In the late Western Han Dynasty, the entire society indulged in various religious beliefs due to acute social conflicts. The desperately poor masses hoped to get rid of worldly sufferings through religious illusions. The Queen Mother of the West was thus worshiped for various utilitarian purposes. In the folk beliefs of the Han Dynasty, she was able to bestow blessings, bring forth children, joy, and health. In the Ming and Qing dynasties (1368–1912), the belief in the Queen Mother of the West was combined with various other folk religions (Du 2014). The Queen Mother of the West was not only the creator and redeemer, but also the supreme goddess of folk religions (Liu 2011), as well as the almighty goddess who could bring her people longevity, wealth, peace, and well-being (Yu 2016).

The Queen Mother of the West has been recorded as an anima in an ancient book named *A Biography of King Mu in the Zhou Dynasty*. King Mu, the fifth sovereign of the Zhou dynasty (1046–256 B.C.), visited the Western Paradise of the Queen Mother of the West on Mount Kunlun. They parted reluctantly and promised to meet again three years later. Their relationship was much like that of lovers. The Queen Mother of the West, a stunning and intelligent daughter of the Emperor of Heaven, inspired and encouraged King Mu to manage the internal and external affairs of his country. She was his anima, his goddess of inspiration and Sophia. The commoners (even princes and ministers), however, dared not dream of romance with this goddess and could only adore her daughters, giving rise to hundreds of folktales about mortals falling in love with them. These stories, which had particular social and personal significance, reflected the desire of ordinary people to escape the constraints of reality (Sun 2005). In the early Tang dynasty (618–907 A.D.), images related to the Queen Mother of the West became frequent sources of inspiration for poets to express their heroic feelings and affections. A famous poetess named Xue Tao in Tang Dynasty once wrote, “The green bird is flying in the east while the plum blossoms are falling. With a mouth full of flowers, the bird is ascending to the paradise of the Queen Mother of the West” (2014). In this poem, the green bird changes

from a food-provider for the Queen Mother of the West to a conveyor of sincere feelings, which indicates that the Queen is also a symbol of the pursuit of the free spirit and ideals. The images associated with the Queen Mother of the West encourage men to have deep spiritual conversations with their inner world and, as a result, they are richly symbolic of the anima archetype.

CONCLUSION

Ancient Chinese tales and folklore contain a number of images that are strongly tied to the Queen Mother of the West, giving this goddess a deep psychological and archetypal significance. She reveals the following metaphorical significance through her numerous aspects. Firstly, in Chinese mythology, Mount Kunlun is a representation of the abdomen of Mother Earth and symbolizes the female womb. Sacred trees like Jianmu, as well as black water and many other resources in the mountain symbolize the amniotic fluid in the womb and various nutrients for the growth of the fetus. The dragon and tiger seat and the nine-tailed fox have a special meaning concerning mating and fertility in Chinese culture, denoting the continuation of the human race. All these elements constitute the persona and positive aspects of the mother archetype. Secondly, the leopard's tail and tigress's teeth of the Queen Mother of the West represent punishment and death. She has the power to punish both mortals and immortals who have violated the rules of heaven and earth. In addition, her residence, being in the West, serves as a metaphor for the realm of death. The shadow and negative aspects of the mother archetype are represented by the negative characteristics of evil, retribution, devouring, etc. Finally, the immortal medicine named *Ganoderma lucidum* and the sacred peach fruit, which extends life, are also in the possession of the Queen Mother of the West. The feather-man close to her indicates that she is able to lead people to immortality and regenerate the universe from time immemorial. Many emperors in ancient times drew inspiration from the Queen Mother of the West. She and her daughters constitute the mythical Muses that many Chinese emperors and intellectuals have long yearned to encounter. The elements of eternity, wisdom, and anima are the foundations for the spiritual facets of the mother archetype.

All in all, the Queen Mother of the West is kind, tolerant, and beautiful, but also fierce, harsh, and ugly. She nurtures and nourishes everything whilst, at the same time, takes away everything. She is the instinctual, psychic, and spiritual mother of all Chinese people.

NOTES

- ¹ *Ganoderma lucidum* is also called Lingzhi mushroom. It is a Chinese medical mushroom symbolizing well-being, divine power, and longevity.
- ² Fuxi and Nüwa are a brother and a sister who, according to a Chinese foundation myth, were the only survivors of a great flood and the earliest ancestors of human beings. They are acknowledged as the ones who created humanity. In addition, Fuxi is believed to have introduced several innovations that benefited humanity immensely, while Nüwa is said to have saved humanity from a great calamity.
- ³ Black water, named Hei shui in pinyin, is a river recorded in *The Classics of Mountains and Seas*. The location and existence of the river are still in dispute.
- ⁴ Weak water, named Ruo shui in Pinyin, is an important river recorded in ancient China. It is a common image in literary works, often denoting a perilous and remote region or river, an immortal river, or a fairyland.

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