**Archetypes Woman of Power**

A universal archetype featured in the **Queen of Sheba** myth is that of the Great Mother, or founder of a people. Many cultures have a powerful female goddess as the Great Mother. Often this Great Mother has an equal for a mate, as did **Sheba**, or is even the dominant one. The Japanese Shinto creation myth features **Izanagi** and **Izanami**, who were brother and sister, as were **Osiris** and **Isis**, of Egypt. The Greek deities **Gaia**, mother earth, and **Ouranos**, the sky god, were so enamored of each other that their continued lovemaking trapped their children in Gaia’s womb. This was also true for the Maori primal couple, **Papa** and **Rangi**. Rather than slay their parents, the baby gods and goddesses trapped in **Papa**’s womb eventually forced them apart. **Ouranos** fared worse. **Gaia** made a sickle for her other son, **Kronos**, who castrated his father, and freed his brothers and sisters.

Stories of powerful women often feature a female with an air of supernatural mystery who mates with another powerful ruler and is a mother to her nation. Some mythical powerful women are actually goddesses. This is true of the powerful women of Greek myth, such as **Hera**, **Athena**, **Artemis** and **Aphrodite**, who all have supernatural powers. Many myths of powerful women imply that they are witches, demonic, or have some connection with the supernatural that explains their power. The supernatural aspect of these women is usually represented by an animal. Thus, the**Queen of Sheba**'s leg was cloven like a goat, an animal associated with the Devil. **Eve** took her bad advice from a serpent and **Baba Yaga**, a horrible Russian woman, was part snake, as was **Medusa** of Greek legend.

Sometimes mythical powerful women are warrior queens, like **Hippolyta**, the Queen of the Amazons. In an interesting twist of life imitating art, the stories of real life warrior queens who fascinate are often retold through the mythical archetype. Thus, the real life stories of**Boudica**, the first Queen of Britain, **Joan of Arc** of France, **Catherine of the Great** of Russia and**Cleopatra** of Egypt were enhanced, until they featured elements of the classical powerful woman story: trickery, sexuality, otherworldly influence and ambition.

**The Queen of Sheba**

The story of the Queen of Sheba appears in religious texts sacred to Jews, Christians, and Muslims. Described in the Bible as simply a Queen of the East, modern scholars believe she came from the Kingdom of Axum in Ethiopia, the Kingdom of Saba in Yemen, or both. Their main clue is that she brought bales of incense with her as a gift; frankincense only grows in these two areas. Both countries claim her as theirs. Given that they are separated by only 25 kilometers of water, both could be right.

In these tales the Queen of Sheba is a seeker of truth and wisdom and she has heard that King Solomon of Israel is a very wise man. She travels on camel to Jerusalem to meet him and test his knowledge with questions and riddles. With her she brings frankincense, myrrh, gold and precious jewels.

King Solomon has heard of Sheba and her great kingdom. He has also heard that she has a strange feature, a left foot that is cloven like that of a goat and a hairy leg. Eager to see if the story is true, he has the floor of his court polished until it is like glass. When the Queen of Sheba walks across the floor, Solomon sees the reflection of her cloven foot. Right in front of his eyes, it transforms and becomes normal.

Queen of Sheba tests Solomon's wisdom, asking him many questions and giving him riddles to solve. He answers to her satisfaction and then he teaches her about his god Yahweh and she becomes a follower. This is how some Ethiopians believe Christianity came to their county. The Queen agrees to stay with King Solomon as a guest. An unmarried woman, she warns the King not to touch her. He replies that in exchange she should not take anything of his. He has tricked her, however. In the middle of her first night she is thirsty and she takes a glass of water. He confronts her and tells her that by breaking her agreement she has released him from his. They spend the night together and when she returns home from his kingdom, she is pregnant with a son.

She raises her son Menelik on her own. When he grows up, Menelik decides that he wants to meet his father and travels to Israel to meet King Solomon. When he returns, he takes with him the Ark of the Covenant, the sacred container that contained the Ten Commandments. In Ethiopian legend, the Ark has remained in Ethiopia ever since and Ethiopians see Menelik as the first in an unbroken line of Ethiopian kings that stretches into the 20th century.

**Archetypes Paradise**

Myths about a lost paradise often fall into three categories. First, a paradise on earth which is difficult to find. Second, a place on earth that is nearby, but that it is in an alternate reality. Third, not a place, but an enlightened state of being. In these paradises, or states of being, there is no need for war, or toil and humankind lives in happiness and fulfillment. These myths express hope that the paradise can be regained, either by finding its earthly location, or by waiting for a future time when mankind shall redeem itself.

Cultures that feature a remote, inaccessible paradise often place it on a distant mountain, like the Tibetan myth of **Shangri-La**, or the myth of the **Land of the Kachinas**, the lost paradise of the Hopi people of North America. The invisible Celtic paradiscal other worlds, on the other hand, are located nearby. These other worlds are separated from man's world by thin veils, such as the veil between the English town of Glastonbury and the mythical **Avalon**.

A central feature of paradise myths is that man loses his innocence and, as a result, is cast from paradise. Thus, **Eden** was lost to Adam and Eve when they partook of the tree of knowledge. The Hopis believe that man once lived in an underworld paradise, until licentiousness caused the waters to rise and flood him out. The Hindis believe that the earth has had four progressively worse ages. The first was **Kriti Yuga**, the First and **Perfect Age**, lost to man due to his actions.

Most North American Native cultures also believe in four or five ages, starting with a Golden Age. In Greek classical mythology, the **reign of Cronus**, the father of Zeus, had peace and harmony, and humans did not grow old, but died peacefully. This was lost when Prometheus gave the secret of fire to men, and Zeus allowed Pandora to open her box, unleashing evil.

In many cultures, an individual's personal qualities and actions are his ticket to paradise. Thus, for the Tibetans it is only the enlightened who are on the path to **Shangri-La**. Christians see a good life and forgiveness of sins as the path to paradise. The Germanic otherworld is open only to specially chosen warriors. The Celtic paradisical other worlds are only open to seers, bards, and heroes who have proven great worthiness. The one exception is October 31st of each year, when the gates to the other worlds are open. This tradition eventually became Halloween!

Most cultures saw the lost paradise or otherworld as the home of their gods. In Germanic mythology, **Asgard** was the divine stronghold of the Aesir, the younger and stronger branch of the gods. **Vanaheim** was the home of the Vanir, the other branch. **Asgard** was a mighty castle-city, housing Valhalla, the enormous hall, where slain warriors who were chosen by the god Odin to fight the final apocalyptic battle would go to wait. In order to enter the great hall of Valhalla, the newly slain warriors had to enter through a sacred gate, after passing through several obstacles.

**Shangri-La**

The mythical land of Shangri-La is the novelist James Hilton's fictional account of the legendary Tibetan paradise Shambala. In Hilton's 1933 novel, Lost Horizon, he changes the name of the paradise to Shangri-La. This lost Tibetan paradise is a valley cut off from the world. The wisdom of the human race is being conserved there against the threat of imminent catastrophe. Hilton's novel was turned into a hit Hollywood movie and the name Shangri-La came to mean a lost paradise.

The legend of this lost valley is one of the most ancient Tibetan myths, and one of the most striking myths of a sacred landscape, a landscape that inspires stories itself. Traditionally, Shambala is located in the Himalayas, in the remotest part of Tibet, on a high plateau, surrounded by a ring of mountain peaks.

The myth of a lost Tibetan paradise came to the notice of Europeans in the 1580s, when travellers to the court of the court of the Moghul Emperor Akbar heard strange and wondrous tales of a remote Himalayan world. Although the story is told in a Buddhist text and is considered Tibetan, the tale seems to have been recorded first in India in AD 962. The tale is that there is a land behind the Himalayas full of peace and harmony where an isolated people live in accordance with Buddhist precepts preparing for the day when the world will be ready to live in peace. The kingdom is in the shadow of a white crystal mountain, approachable only through a ring of peaks. Next to the mountain are a lake and a palace. Here the wisdom of humanity is conserved, ready to save the world when needed.

The present Dalai Lama says this about Shambala:

Nowadays, no one knows where Shambala is. Although it is said to exist, people cannot see it, or communicate with it in an ordinary way. Some people say it is located in another world, others that it is an ideal land, a place of the imagination. Some say it was a real place, which cannot now be found. Some believe there are openings into that world which may be accessed from this. Whatever the truth of that, the search for Shambala traditionally begins as an outer journey that becomes a journey of inner exploration and discovery.

Today, Shangri-La is seen both as a place, and as an era of enlightened consciousness. The Tibetans say that the need to find paradise elsewhere is it what keeps us from having it. Wherever Shangri-La is, the search for it continues.

**Archetypes Hero**

While many heroic figures perform quests and daring tasks, only a few rise to the level of superhero. These heroes represent the best attributes of their people and often preside over a golden age. Examples are **King Arthur** of Britain, **King Solomon** of Israel and the mysterious Christian priest **Prestor John**. Prestor John was supposedly king of a hidden Christian kingdom that was a wealthy paradise. In the Middle Ages, especially, many searched for this kingdom in Asia and Africa.

These heroic characters typically have supernatural births, like the Christian **Jesus** and the Aztec/Toltec snake god, **Quetzlcoatl**, who were born to virgins. **Quetzlcoatl** was the Aztec's most important god. Like Arthur, when he left his people he promised to return. The Aztecs believed that his return would herald the apocalypse. The Native American Blackfoot tribe has a hero named **Kutoyis**, who was born of a blood clot from a wounded buffalo. **Kutoyis** made it his mission to travel from village to village, freeing those who were being treated unjustly. **Herakles** the Greek (also known as Hercules), was fathered by the god Zeus. **Buddha** was born from his mother's dreams.

The reign of these world heroes is often foretold or ordained by the gods or the seers, as is true for **King Arthur** and **Jesus**. They often have lineages linking them to the gods, or to past heroic kings. Some mature very early, like **Arthur**, the **Buddha**, **Herakles**, and the Babylonian **Gilgamesh**, who was part god.

Many have their lives threatened from birth. The threat may come from kings, monsters, or jealous relatives as in the case of **Jesus**, **Kutoyis**, and **Herakles**. Often, they are hidden and raised by people other than their families. **Moses** is hidden in a basket, until rescued. **Herakles** is left in the wild, until Hera, Queen of the Gods, is fooled into suckling him, guaranteeing him immortality. Some have supernatural protection, like **Arthur**, who was protected by Merlin.

Some heroes have a following of fellow heroes who rally around them, serve them, and protect them like the Irish **Finn MacCool**'s Fianna (from whom modern Irish patriots derive the name Fenian). Other examples include **Arthur**'s knights and **Jesus**' Apostles.

Most often these mythical heroes require special weapons. **Arthur** had the magical sword Excalibur.**Beowulf**, the Danish hero who slew Grendel the dragon, had a similarly magical sword. **Thor**, the Norse god of Thunder, had the hammer Mjollnir, which returned to him like a boomerang. He also had a magic belt which doubled his strength. One time the frost giants stole Thor's hammer and demanded a bride in return. Thor disguised himself as a woman and travelled to the wedding. The frost giants were surprised to see the bride eat a whole ox, eight salmon, and three barrels of wine. Thor got his hammer back! **Odin**, favorite god of the Vikings, had an infallible spear named Gungnir, made by dwarfs.

At the end of their story, many of these heroes become immortal, like **Herakles**, who rises to Mount Olympus, home of the gods. In some cases, they rise from death and come again, like **Jesus**. **Quetzlcoatl** and **Arthur** announce their intention to return again. And the Blackfoot hero **Kutoyis** repeatedly resurrects himself from a bag of bones. Sometimes these heroes are men of peace and inspire new religions, like **Jesus** and the **Buddha**, but more often they are, by necessity, men of war. They are valiant, inspiring, and wise, although not without flaws.

**King Arthur**

Arthur, a Celtic king born of deceit and adultery, grew to become one of the most famous rulers of Britain. He was a warrior, a knight and a king who killed giants, witches and monsters and led a band of heroes on many daring adventures. He is known for his Knights of the Round Table and for uniting the peoples of his land. Even though his end was tragic, he is still known and celebrated all over the world today. His story is painted on the halls of the British Parliament.

Arthur's story begins with Uther Pendragon, his father. Pendragon is smitten by Igraine, the wife of the Duke of Cornwall. Disguising himself as Igraine's husband he sneaks into her bed and she conceives Arthur. Merlin the wizard raises Arthur away from his parents. It is Merlin who had designed for Arthur's father Uther a great Round Table at which 150 knights could sit. Upon Uther's death, the knights do not know who should take his place. Merlin tells them that whoever could draw a mysterious sword out of a stone should be the next king. Many try but all fail. Then one day Arthur, who is attending his foster brother Sir Kay, is sent to find a sword to replace his brother's broken one. He comes upon the magical sword Excalibur in the stone and, not knowing the prophecy, drew it out. Thus, he is proclaimed the new king.

Arthur unites Britain and drives off the invading Saxons. He becomes a benevolent and well-loved king. His reign is known for its heroic deeds and chivalric romance. In fact the name of his castle, Camelot, has come to signify a golden age. The greatest quest of Arthur and his Knights is the quest for the mythical Holy Grail, the cup from which Jesus drank at the Last Supper. While King Arthur is never to find the Holy Grail himself, his knight Sir Galahad does because of his purity of heart.

King Arthur marries Guinevere, daughter of the King of Scotland. Merlin tries to warn him against the marriage because Guinevere is in love with Sir Lancelot, one of Arthur's knights. When Arthur discovers that his wife and Sir Lancelot are having an affair, Sir Lancelot flees for France and Arthur pursues him. In his absence, Arthur's nephew Mordred seizes power. Arthur returns to Britain and a terrible battle ensures, during which most of his knights die and he is grievously wounded. He has Excalibur thrown back into the lake, and boards a boat for the magical Isle of Avalon. Here, he hopes to be cured of his wounds so that he might return to lead his people again. For this reason, Arthur is called "the once and future king."

**Archetypes Quest**

Joseph Campbell described myths as music we dance to, even when we cannot name the tune. Of all the mythical songs, the hero's quest is one that touches us all profoundly. Campbell believed that we each have a quest and that the hero has a thousand faces. The hero's quest archetype is pervasive and Campbell outlined its model step by step.

The story of the hero's quest typically begins in the hero's ordinary world, when he or she receives a call to adventure from a herald. Many heroes initially refuse the call, until a mentor reassures them that they are capable. After this meeting with the mentor, they must enter the world of the quest. They meet allies and enemies along the way and are tested frequently. As they near the source of their quest, they usually face one final ordeal. Upon their success, they take the object of their quest, and make their way home. The way home is not always easy, but eventually they return to their ordinary world with their prize.

The hero may search for an object or he may search for knowledge for himself or his people. Sometimes his quest is to right a wrong. The hero's quest may be prophesied. **Jason**'s task is to secure the Golden Fleece and thus reclaim his crown. **Percival**, one of King Arthur's knights, searches for the Holy Grail. The Babylonian hero **Gilgamesh**, afraid of death, searches for immortality. **Bran**, the Irish equivalent of the Greek voyager Odysseus, sails for centuries on a quest for the lands beyond the sea.

The hero receives the call to adventure in different ways. **Joan of Arc** hears voices telling her she is to save France. **Moses** is summoned by the burning bush to lead his people on a quest for the Promised Land. Some heroes have the counsel of wise women like **Jason**, who had Aphrodite, and **Gilgamesh**, who was guided by the goddess Saduri. Sometimes they are tempted by femme fatales who do not always mean them well. The sorceress Medea aided **Jason** in his challenges in exchange for marrying her, but later she destroyed his family. **Gilgamesh** rejected the advances of goddess Ianna-Ishtar, which resulted in the death of his best friend.

The hero's quest is dangerous, and often involves facing death itself. Joseph Campbell posited that this aspect of the hero's journey symbolizes the need to confront one's mortality. The hero may be required to travel into the otherworld in order to face death. Or, he or she may face supernatural creatures. The Greek **Herakles** fights many different monsters. **Gilgamesh** deliberately chooses to face a fire-breathing giant as an adventure, in order to entertain his friend Enkidu, who has become bored by the soft city life. The Native American hero, **Wunzh**, made famous by Henry Longfellow the American poet as **Hiawatha**, confronts monsters in order to discover corn and brings it back to his people.

Once the questing heroes have faced his or her trials successfully, they return to their people, usually transformed by their experience.

**Jason & the Argonauts**

The Greek myth of Jason and the Golden Fleece is one of the oldest myths of a hero's quest. It is a classic story of betrayal and vengeance and like many Greek myths has a tragic ending. It begins when Jason's Uncle Pelias kills Jason's father, the Greek King of Iolkos, and takes his throne. Jason's mother brings him to Cheiron, a centaur (half man, half horse) who hides him away and raises him on the Mountain of Pelion.

When Jason turns 20, he journeys to see Pelias to reclaim his throne. At a nearby river, Hera the Queen of the Gods approaches him disguised as an old woman. While carrying her across the river he loses a sandal and arrives at court wearing only one. Pelias is nervous when he sees Jason missing a sandal, for an oracle has prophesied that a man wearing only one sandal shall usurp his throne.

Jason demands the return of his rightful throne. Pelias replies that Jason should first accomplish a difficult task to prove his worth. The task is for Jason to retrieve the Golden Fleece, kept beyond the edge of the known world in a land called Colchis (modern-day Georgia in Southwest Asia). The story of the fleece is an interesting tale in itself. Zeus, the King of the Gods, had given a golden ram to Jason's ancestor Phrixus. Phrixus later flew on the golden ram from Greece to Colchis, whose king was Aietes, the son of Helios the Sun God. Aietes sacrificed the ram and hung the fleece in a sacred grove guarded by a dragon, as an oracle had foretold that Aietes would lose his kingdom if he lost the fleece.

Determined to reclaim his throne, Jason agrees to retrieve the Golden Fleece. Jason assembles a team of great heroes for his crew and they sail aboard the Argo. The first stop of the Argonauts is the Greek Isle of Lemnos, populated only by women. Unknown to Jason and his crew, the women have murdered their husbands. The Argonauts fare much better though; in fact the women use the occasion as an opportunity to repopulate the island.

After many more adventures, the Argo passes Constantinople, heading for the Straits of Bosphorus. The Straits of Bosphorus are a narrow passageway of water between the Sea of Marmara, the Aegean Sea and the Black Sea. To the ancient Greeks, this was the edge of the known world. The Straits are extremely dangerous due to the currents created by the flow of water from the Black Sea. The ancient Greeks believed that clashing rocks guarded the straits and that the rocks would close together and smash any ship sailing through. Jason had been told by a blind prophet he assisted how to fool the rocks. He was to send a bird ahead of him. The rocks would crash in on it and then reopen, at which point he could successfully sail through.

When Jason finally arrives in Colchis he asks King Aietes to return the golden fleece to him as it belonged to his ancestor. Reluctant, the king suggests yet another series of challenges to Jason. He must yoke fire-breathing bulls, plough and sow a field with dragons' teeth and then overcome the warriors who will rise from the furrows. Aietes is confident the tasks are impossible but unbeknownst to the king, his daughter Medea has taken a liking to Jason. She offers to assist Jason if he will marry her. He agrees. Medea is a powerful sorceress and Jason is successful.

Jason and Medea return to Greece where Jason claims his father's throne, but their success is short-lived. Uncomfortable with Medea's magic, the locals drive Medea and Jason out of Iolkos. They go into exile in Corinth where the king offers Jason his daughter in marriage. He agrees and so violates his vow to the gods to be true only to Medea. Furious, Medea kills the woman, kills Medea and Jason's children and then ascends to Mount Olympus where she eventually marries Achilles. Jason goes back to Iolkos where his boat the Argo is on display. One day, while he sits next to the boat weeping, the decaying beam of his ship the Argo falls off and hits him on the head, killing him outright.