

Over a thousand years ago, the concubine Wu Zhao set out on the fairytale journey to become China's most powerful woman. Her intelligence and erotic aura, combined with the strategies of Chinese arts of war, paved the way for her to become Empress. She was the only woman who ever officially ruled ancient China. Her faithful adviser was the wise shaman and doctor, Sun Simiao, guardian of the age-old secrets of feminine wisdom and power.

This book reveals what Sun Simiao taught the Empress and how women today can follow the 'Path of the Empress'.

From previously untranslated classical Chinese sources, we learn how women can strengthen their erotic aura, bring determination and flexibility into harmony, use anger strategically, and create alliances. But an empress, according to the authors, also takes good care of herself, just as Wu Zhao did. Women who make room for their 'inner empress' are strong and generous, open and yet mysterious. They know the inner source of their energy, which gives them power over themselves and others.

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The PATH *of the*
EMPERESS

{ How to free your feminine power }

CHRISTINE LI, MD • ULJA KRAUTWALD

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The information in this book cannot take the place of a doctor's advice. In the case of serious health conditions, please consult a doctor at all times. The authors can accept no liability for any damages incurred through the use or misuse of the material presented in this book.

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For our daughters
Jade and Jytte

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Foreword

The Path of the Empress was published in German in 2000. Since then we have received countless letters and emails gratefully recounting how the book has been the catalyst for far-reaching and liberating changes in the lives of women from every walk of life.

The book was translated into Bulgarian and Croatian, and our readers repeatedly asked us when it would be available in English. They asked because they wanted to recommend it and give it as a gift to their friends and loved ones all over the world.

This book propagates itself in a magical and mysterious way, like a root system below the earth. This made a deep impression on us, for there was virtually no official advertisement of our book. Women gave it to their friends, mothers gave it to their daughters, nieces gave it to their aunts, clients gave it to their therapists.

There are few therapeutic practices where women will not find our book. It appears in bibliographies and on bookstalls relating to alternative women's health and TCM (Traditional Chinese Medicine). Many women therapists recommend it to their patients.

This book is the most beautiful gift a daughter can give to her mother, a great-aunt to her niece. Anywhere in the world. And because women have never stopped asking us when the book would finally be available in English, now they have it!

We hope that this English version propagates itself just as widely and independently as the German version, and that it will help many women to follow their own powerful and self-determined path.

To the Imperial Reader

Every woman can be an empress if she so decides, as long as she accepts all the consequences of her decision and is prepared to take control of her own life. At the moment of her birth, every woman is unique and complete. Everything she needs lies within her, as in the seed of a plant. If she succeeds in developing her hidden potential and living it out, she will become empress in her own empire, no matter how large or small that empire may be. Once she has freed herself from conventional views of how a woman should be, then pleasure and power, beauty and wisdom, lie in her hands alone. It is up to each individual woman to choose the imperial path for herself.

But beware: the life of an empress isn't easy. Instead of basing her life on predetermined models, an empress is independent and free. There are no conventions and well-worn paths for her to cling to. Each stage of her life presents problems and questions to which she must find her own solutions and answers. She follows her own visions, instincts and dreams, and thus realises her inner goals. She must roll out the red carpet for herself.

An Imperial Book

This is a book for empresses. Empresses choose their own path, so the book contains no ready answers or sure-fire tips. The ten chapters reflect ten important stages of development in a woman's life, with their typical challenges and life-tasks. Exercises and magical herbal elixirs will help open up the mind and soul to new insights and solutions. But the book begins to take effect even as it's being read, without the reader having to do very much about it. In the same way, large portions of the book virtually took shape with almost no help from us. We simply held our knowledge and experience at the ready, like a set of tools, and pooled our thoughts. In a mysterious way, we then began to encounter people and situations that shed light on our theme. The Chinese call this Wu Wei, when the Unknown moves of its own accord. This is how this book came about. This is how the words of the Empress came to us. The Empress in question is the Empress Wu, who ruled China in the seventh century, according to the Western calendar, and whose impact extends even to us and our time. Wu Zhao was a country girl, a simple concubine, who all by herself took on the whole of Chinese society and battled her way right to the top. She was the only woman who ever officially ruled in China. She was the mother of several children, a passionate lover, an artist and a scholar.

Wu followed her path without compromise. Conventions and traditional mores meant nothing to her. In an age that was hostile to women, she created new and better laws; she loved her friends devotedly, particularly her female relatives, and pursued her enemies mercilessly. Wu's special interest was medicine. She ensured that the ancient knowledge of sexual magic and medicine was preserved, and she fostered

the great magician and doctor, Sun Simiao, who is honoured as the ‘God of Medicine’ in China to this day. Because she continued to have young artists and Daoist monks as her lovers until she reached a ripe old age, later Confucian historiographers regarded her as a sex-obsessed monster and ‘unfeminine woman’. We have taken the life story of Empress Wu as a model demonstrating how a woman can achieve an independent lifestyle. The various stages of Wu’s life bring ancient lore, Chinese medicine and strategic action vividly to life for us.

At the beginning of each chapter, we recount part of the Empress’s life story, then we apply the issue in question to the life situation of a modern woman. Regardless of what stage of life she has reached and what problem she faces, an empress reads the signs and signals of her body like a book and uses them to develop her feminine power to the full and deploy it on her own terms. Body and soul are one. For this reason most chapters discuss disorders that are nowadays regarded as medical problems: ‘women’s troubles’ such as lovesickness, menstruation, Pre-Menstrual Syndrome, irritability, depression, listlessness, exhaustion, the menopause and so on, which arise when feminine power is not allowed to develop and instead works against the woman herself. In many of these situations it’s a good idea first of all to release the blocked energy through the systematic use of herbs or specific foodstuffs. The improvement in well-being will lead to new insights and impulses.

The recipes and strategies in this book are all based on the original writings of Sun Simiao and other ancient Chinese scholars and sages. We have adapted them to the needs of the modern empress and have tested them over many years in our own practice.

However, lasting relief can't be achieved without determination and personal expansion. Such changes may not always be kindly received by those around the empress. An empress isn't everybody's darling. In many situations things are exactly the same today as they were in the time of Empress Wu. Being an empress isn't easy – but it's enormously exciting!

Mysterious Effects

This book contains many tips and recipes from ancient times. However, it's not a guidebook; it takes effect of its own accord as it's being read. The imperial reader sits back, opens her eyes and sees.

The essentials hold true throughout our lives, Sun Simiao once said to the Empress: The essentials never change. Thus real wisdom retains its truth and validity. For more than a thousand years. The secrets that paved Wu's path from concubine to Empress can also help the modern woman follow the Path of the Empress. The imperial reader will discover how these secrets can be acquired and utilised. Word by word, sentence by sentence, the ancient wisdom will take effect and permeate the imperial reader.

This book strengthens the empress in every woman. She may be affected in other ways also. There may be changes in the life of the imperial reader. She may notice that the more she reads and the more she sees, the more uncompromising and empress-like she becomes. It's impossible to predict how far this may go. It may concern her lover or her home, perhaps her work or her marriage. Every empress follows her own individual path, known only to her. After she has read the book, a great deal will have changed. It may even be that nothing remains as it was.

The Basics

For this book to be fully effective, it will help if the reader enters into the world-view of the Daoists (old spelling: Taoists). The teaching of the Daoists is not foreign to us, for it tells us that all truth and all wisdom already lie within ourselves. If each of us allows the Unknown to work within us, wisdom and power will be realised. The less we do about it and the less we become involved, the more we will become one with the Unknown. Laozi, author of the *Dao De Jing*¹, also described the Unknown as the Feminine, the Mother of All Things.

Daoists believed that women were more directly connected with the mysterious mechanisms of life than men, and honoured them accordingly. After all, life itself issued from women. In later times, more hostile to women, Chinese scholars repeatedly warned against the power of women, which, once unleashed, would be insuperable.

This book uses Daoist teachings to help modern women unleash these powers.

Essence and Spirit

At conception, all creatures receive everything they need to make them complete. This seed, the Essential in concentrated and material form, is called essence (*Jing*). In the course of a lifetime, essence develops continuously until it becomes entirely spirit, but sometimes, due to a careless lifestyle, it simply seeps away ineffectively. When all available essence has become spirit, life is held to be complete.

A component of essence can be exchanged and refined in the sexual encounter between a man and a woman. Through the refinement and intensification of essence, a new and

¹ Better-known but outdated spelling: Lao Tse and Tao Te Ching

complete being may be generated. If the partners, or one of them, understand the magic of sexuality, she or he can also use the refined essence for themselves and thus in the course of many sexual encounters amass great powers. This isn't easy. It requires an extremely clear, cool spirit and experience in meditation.

A heated spirit allows essence to seep away ineffectively. In this case both partners lose essence during their sexual encounter and gain nothing. Since women have direct access to the mysterious mechanisms of life, they can more easily succeed in boosting their essence during a sexual encounter. Assuming they don't lose their heads in the process.

Qi

In the course of a lifetime, essence develops continuously until it becomes entirely spirit. All functions and movements that take place between these two poles are described as Qi (pronounced chee). Essence, spirit and Qi constitute all that is. They're called 'The Three Treasures'.

A person's Qi can be increased, strengthened and regulated through nourishment, breathing and meditation. If this doesn't happen, or happens too late, more essence is expended and the person in question literally lives on substance. The weakening of essence often leads to an illusory feeling of lightness and immateriality, which is why fasting can become a downright addiction for some people. In Daoist teaching, fasting is therefore not regarded as a suitable path for beginners, who don't yet know how to nourish their Qi without sustenance.

As long as Qi can flow free and undisturbed, harmony and health reign. If the flow of Qi is obstructed, it leads in

nature to wind, storms and other disasters, and in the human body to pains, cramps and, directly or indirectly, most other illnesses. For this reason Chinese doctors try to keep Qi flowing freely, for example, with needles in acupuncture. There are also countless other methods, such as Tai Chi Chuan, breathing, meditation, or massage. The generic term for all techniques employed to influence the flow of Qi in human beings is Qigong (pronounced chee gong), meaning 'Work with the Qi'. (The flow of Qi other than in humans is analysed and influenced by Feng Shui specialists, among others.)

Yin and Yang

In the course of a lifetime, essence develops continuously until it becomes entirely spirit. Essence, the innate substance of each person, should be carefully preserved, so that it can develop without haste and without overheating. The process of preserving, cooling and holding Qi together is termed Yin. That of developing, heating and expanding is termed Yang.

Women are, at least until menopause, governed primarily by Yin. For this reason the process of preserving and keeping cool is often easier for them than for men, who are governed by Yang. On the other hand, it's often more difficult for women to come out of themselves and assert their will. A woman's Yin and Yang alter cyclically, like the ebb and flow of the tide. It is therefore supremely important for an empress to learn how she can utilise the cyclical changes in her body in order to purposefully employ her Yang, her assertiveness and aggressive potential. But it can also be important in certain stages of life to strengthen Yin, to go inside herself and protect her innate energies from seeping away senselessly.

The Five Phases of Transformation, or Five Elements

In the course of a lifetime, essence develops continuously until it becomes entirely spirit. In the process, it repeatedly passes through a cycle of five phases. The Five Phases of Transformation are Water, Wood, Fire, Metal and Earth.

Water – Storage

Through Yin, the essence is stored and preserved. Thus genetic traits remain constant down through the generations. Thus the bones and hair remain attached even after death. Thus we preserve what we experience and learn in our memories. Thus, even in sleep, the body stores urine and stools, vaginal fluid and sweat.

Storage is the condition of Water. Water gathers in the depths. In nature this corresponds to winter, when the seeds slumber beneath the earth and all life is apparently frozen.

Wood – Activation

Once Yang awakens in spring, the ice melts. Now essence surges upwards out of the earth towards the light. Plants sprout buds and animals go courting. The eye wanders in search of things that seem worthy of aspiration – spiritually and physically. Imagination rises heavenward, and can get lost there. But quite concrete plans may also be forged or, if things don't run smoothly, a ferocious fit of rage may ensue.

This expansion and running riot is the condition of Wood. Wood grows and expands. Its orientation is from below to above, from inside to outside. It is the movement of Yang.

Fire – Spirit

Once fully developed, essence attains the condition of pure spirit. This is a heated and ephemeral condition which has scarcely any dimension in time, merely flickering briefly. Examples of this condition are laughter, love, orgasm and the fulfilment of the moment of death. In nature this corresponds to the fleeting moment in summer when a plant is fully in bloom. Once Yang attains completion in Fire, the movement reverts to Yin.

In nature the full bloom of summer is followed by autumnal withering. A creature that remains in the condition of Fire will die before its time.

Metal – Turning Back

The heat of summer can't last long, otherwise everything will dry out. Therefore in nature the moment of summer is followed by the condition of autumn. A moment of pure love is inevitably followed by disenchantment. This is sad, but a necessary part of life. If the turnaround does not come off, essence seeps away before its time. Therefore each person must establish boundaries and pronounce: Thus far and no further.

This turning back and cooling off is designated as the condition of Metal. Metal reflects and separates. Its orientation is from above to below, from outside to inside. It is a Yin movement leading back into the depths.

Earth – Ripeness and Metabolism

In order that these huge transformations can take place steadily and peacefully, there is an intermediate condition devoted to nourishment and prudence. This condition should

be sought over and over again in all life situations. As the saying goes, food and drink hold body and soul together. Just as important as food and drink are reflection, perseverance, silence and meditation. All of these are termed Earth, or centre. Through Earth – nourishment and meditation – all living creatures are provided with Qi. Qi is energy and substance in one. It is Qi that provides the strength for the transition between all stages. Without Qi all life functions would be extinguished.

For a child, the mother assumes the function of Earth – first through the placenta, then through her milk and through the love, steadfast and serene, that she gives her child as she nurtures it. In the course of its development, the child must learn to take over these functions for itself. This isn't always easy, and we'll see that the conscious pursuit of a condition of Earth, also known as 'Earth nurture', is fundamental in many situations.

Earth is the condition of wisdom, the Middle Way, half Yin and half Yang. Those who persevere too long in this state become lethargic and dull. Those who don't seek this state regularly become nervous wrecks.

In the yearly cycle, Earth is most often equated with the condition of late summer, the time when the fruits of the field ripen and everything seems peaceful, abundant and mild.

Further information at: www.path-of-the-empress.com

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ONE

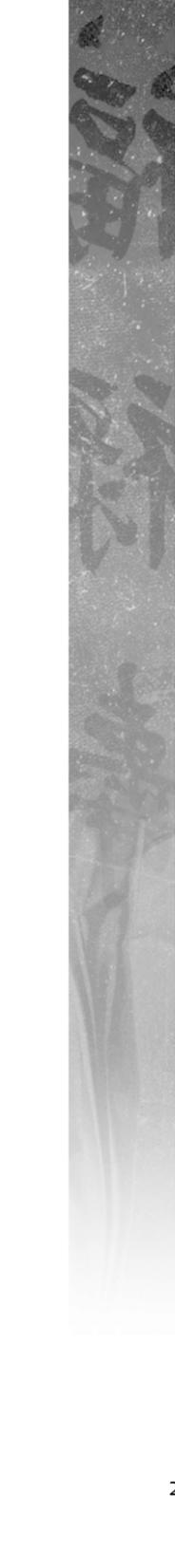
The Prophecy, Earlier Heaven, Ripening

The Kidney – Innate Essence

Sin the year 624², Wu Zhao was born in Sichuan. Her mother was unstinting in her nurture and care. Her father gave her a roof over her head. Both of them left her to herself. Thus passed the first years of the girl who would later be Empress of China, just as it was spoken by the wise Laozi:

*He who is fulfilled by his innate
gift is like the newborn child.
Wasps and snakes will not sting it,
wild beasts will not tear it apart,
birds of prey will not snatch it.
Soft bones, delicate muscles,
but what a strong grip.
The child knows nothing of the
union of the sexes,
yet its sexual power is strong:
this is the fulfilment of essence.
It may cry from morning to evening
yet it does not become hotter:
this is the fulfilment of harmony.*

² 627 according to other sources



One day an astrologer came to the village. Wu Zhao's father, a timber merchant, asked the stargazer for a prophecy about his business. But the astrologer looked at Wu Zhao, in her nurse's arms. She was small, barely three years old.

'This child looks unique and exceptional,' he said. 'It is unfathomable.' When the nurse let her go, the wise man was even more amazed. 'This child has the countenance of a dragon and the neck of a phoenix. These are the marks of an extraordinary personage. If it is a girl, she will one day be ruler of the empire.'

The father laughed dismissively and quoted from the Book of Songs: 'A clever man builds strong dams. A clever woman destroys them. The clever woman is beautiful, but her heart is as ugly as the owl. Women with long tongues are messengers of doom. Perdition is not sent by Heaven. It comes from women.' Having said these words, Wu's father turned away.

But her mother kept the prophecy in her heart and treated the little Empress with all the respect that was due to her.

The unknown works without effort

There is a story of a famous Chinese gardener. When asked why everything grew so well under his care, the old gardener replied: 'I plant the tree and then I leave it in peace. That's the entire secret.'

The more something delicate is allowed to develop without interference, be it a young plant or a child, the more strongly it will grow, the more nature's intentions for it will be realised – as long as it receives sufficient nourishment and protection from harsh winds.

The wisdom of non-intervention in the mysterious mechanisms of the Unknown, the Dao (old spelling: Tao), is called Wu Wei.

Life rises out of the Unknown; it is sustained by the elemental life-force, essence. Whatever is allowed at its outset to unfold and develop undisturbed will later be stable and powerful. The wise do not interfere. They trust the Unknown, the Dao. The Dao has also been compared to the dark and mysterious womb, the source of all life. From here things step forth of their own accord into the light, freely and without interference from outside.

This is how Wu Zhao's mother operated also. When she knew she was expecting a child, she prepared herself to be a vessel for a new life. She was careful not to mix with base and vulgar people, and sought those who were noble. She took care not to allow anything to upset her, and chose fine foods for herself and her child. For she knew that what's good for the mother is good for the child.

Many people think they must constantly challenge and stimulate their child. This begins even in pregnancy. Expectant mothers conduct constant dialogues with their

child or train it aurally with Mozart or audio books. Once the child comes into the world, the pressure is really on. The toy is not simply something to play with, but should develop the child's sense of colour, sense of form, dexterity. In addition to pre-school music lessons, ballet classes and sport training, some parents even feel they must foster early learning of a foreign language through picture books. In the process they overlook the most important thing of all, which is to impart to the child a sense of self and, above all, a sense of security. They think they must steer the child in a particular direction, instead of simply leaving it in peace, nurturing it, and enabling it to take its place in life in its own way.

How the energy works

Earlier Heaven – before birth:

The ten thousand things emerge out of chaos

What remains of a person after all conventions, masks and disguises have been discarded – their fundamental being – is called essence. It is the source of all life processes, the root of spirit and body, and the basis of sexual power. In the course of a lifetime essence is expended, sometimes rapidly, sometimes more slowly. When all essence has been exhausted, the person dies. Therefore throughout life essence must be protected.

After birth, essence can no longer be altered. But it can be variously protected, utilised or wasted. Chinese medicine teaches how this happens. Sometimes the terms primordial energy, kidney energy, the source and the roots of Earlier Heaven, are used, rather than essence. But essence is always what is meant.

Our essence stems from our ancestors. During sexual arousal of the parents, the finest components of the parental essences generate hot vapours that unite in an alchemical process to produce Chaos, the unformed condition. The unformed condition polarises into Yin and Yang. Darkness and light. Cold and hot. Matter and energy. Body and spirit. In the energy field between the two poles, Yin and Yang, the Ten Thousand Things arise out of Chaos. Over the course of ten moons the essence is completed, and in the process all aspects of the child are formed. As long as the future empress resides in the 'Palace of the Child' – the uterus – she is nurtured by her mother's blood.

The essence is completed in accordance with mysterious inner rules, just as crystals form in a solution. The less the vessel is shaken, the bigger and more perfect the crystals; the child develops optimally when left in peace.

An expectant mother must not be upset and should refuse to tolerate any interference! Therefore the mother of a future empress avoids not only unhealthy food, noise and stress, but also, and especially, any dealings with vulgar and stupid people. Where a confrontation is unavoidable, the mother must not allow herself to be disturbed inwardly by it. The essence of an empress is formed in peace.

Later Heaven – after birth: The empress finds her centre

As soon as the child breathes, Later Heaven begins. The essence is complete. The child no longer receives her mother's blood. She must now rely on her own metabolism to strengthen her material and energetic basis. The organs involved in this process are the mouth, stomach and spleen.

In Chinese terms the metabolism is the harmonising and nurturing function of Earth. Earth can assimilate all things and make them part of the child.

If Earth is strong, harmony is complete. Such a child, despite diverse influences and perceptions, is in harmony with herself; she will grow and thrive. This is why they say that Earth is the root of Later Heaven.

At birth all characteristics are established. The essence is complete, but still fragile.

It must now be protected and acquire a material basis. The child grows. The material basis develops only gradually. Initially the harmonising and assimilating Earth element is still very weak. The child can process only a small number of unfamiliar influences at a time and has little resistance to environmental aggression. Extreme cold, heat or wind, and equally any parental attempt to exercise control, will damage the child severely and irrevocably. Therefore the child needs protection.

In order to develop little by little her own resistance – termed Metal in Chinese medicine – the child is dependent on a continuous supply of easily digestible food, warmth, air and love. Continuity is important, for the Earth element, being still weak, cannot yet gather and store in times of abundance for times of scarcity. Every interruption in the supply of food, warmth and love weakens the child. The stronger and more vigorous the child is, the more she will struggle against this debilitation, and cry. According to Chinese thinking a crying child is not playing ‘power games’, she is struggling for her life. For this reason the Chinese believe that a child should never be left crying.

Childhood is a dangerous time for the essence. During this period the fragile creature is easily damaged by excessive control, and the little girl may forget that she was born an empress.

But if the child is left in peace, nurtured and loved, her wishes and preferences respected, then the empress develops all by herself.

If parents really love their child and treasure the empress within her, they will know that an empress is born free. She brings all she needs with her and arrives in this world complete. They will not coach her or train her in one direction like an artfully trimmed and pruned tree. A beech hedge is such a sad sight, compared to a large, free-standing beech tree. This is the precise difference between an empress and a non-empress. If a tree is to develop fully, it needs earth, water, sunlight and protection from storms and damage. The same is true of a young empress. She needs others to respect her personal space and provide her with good nourishment and loving appreciation. If one of these things is lacking, she cannot fully develop.

In the Chinese metaphor of the Five Phases of Transformation – Water, Wood, Fire, Earth and Metal (also called elements) – the child needs above all the following three things:

Fire – sun, love

Left to itself, the child's essence is static and shrouded. In order for all the inbuilt characteristics to reach the light, the essence must be activated. With plants, it is warmth and sunlight that bring forth the tiny seedlings. With people, it is love. If the child lacks love, she will soon wither. Like the sun, love should beam on light and dark sides equally, without making any sort of evaluation. Each tiny leaf of a plant is important. If love is only given as reward for particularly decorative blooms, the child learns that only certain aspects of herself are lovable, and allows all other characteristics to wither.

She hungers for love, seeks recognition, becomes vain, malleable and unsure of herself. She'll spend her entire life searching for something she'll never find.

Earth – nourishment and water

If the child doesn't receive good nourishment, she becomes frail, both in body and in spirit. She fails to develop basis and stability. Nourishment also includes spiritual nurture. Both physical and spiritual nourishment should be enjoyable and varied. But just as a plant should not be over-fertilised, so a child should never be overfed – neither with vitamins nor with information. Overfeeding leads to satiety, confusion, a feeling of toxic accumulation and 'slime' (see below).

Metal – protection and respect

If the child isn't given respect and a protected personal space, she 'closes up' for her own protection, becoming impervious and withdrawn. According to Chinese thinking, she'll tend to have problems later connecting with others, or problems with the lungs or skin. At the same time, she'll be very hard on herself and she'll tend to extremes, seeking danger or possibly even self-destruction.

Respect encompasses trusting the child to make her own choices, and allowing her a clear space and free time if she wants it. A child doesn't need constant stimulation. She's naturally curious anyway.

Excursus: The equipment mother

Some women believe they're worth more if they have a child. They clamour in all directions for notice and regard.

They push a gigantic pram through the crowds like a battering ram or park it so badly that no one can get past it. When these women pay a visit with a small child, it can feel as though they're planning to move in. Bags, nappies, changes of clothes, various cleaning agents and creams, possibly even a travel bed (because the little one can't sleep in anything else), a huge array of jars of baby-food as well as equipment to warm these up. In no time at all the place has been transformed into a crèche, although all that was arranged was an afternoon visit. The hostess gets little out of the visit, for there are precise instructions and directions that must be strictly adhered to by the mother and demand her entire attention. Driven by secret cravings for power, hunger for recognition, and self-doubt, she makes a career out of the love bond between mother and child.

These mothers never miss a health appointment and read every guidebook available. Where in earlier times they would have been guided by female relatives and innate intuition, now they must rely on scientific studies and male authorities. Milk pumps, baby phones, bottle warmers, pacifiers, baby rockers, baby trainers – an entire industry thrives on this mania for baby equipment.

What the empress does

Earlier Heaven

The empress preserves and protects her essence in every stage of life. Throughout her life she remains in touch with her origin, her essence and her ancestors. If she decides to pass on her essence by bringing a child into the world, she supports the little empress in protecting her essence likewise.

The empress knows the Chinese proverb: Whoever wishes to strengthen the child, must strengthen the mother. Through pregnancy, birth and breast-feeding, the mother's centre, her Earth, is taxed to the maximum. Certain signs draw her attention to this. She is sensitive to the slightest influence, or becomes nervous and easily swayed by others. Moreover, many complaints associated with pregnancy, such as nausea and water retention, are signs of a weak centre. Therefore the empress strengthens her centre (see Chapter 7).

She chooses foods that are fresh and rich in Qi, such as cereals, potatoes, sweet potatoes, noodles and rice. She avoids upsets. She protects herself from emotional disturbances. She most certainly does not go to see violent films at the cinema, and it's best if she avoids television altogether. She also avoids confrontations with vulgar people and senseless squabbling; if necessary, she leaves the room and closes the door behind her. Within her own four walls she creates a protected and harmonious space.

Later Heaven

Stoking the Fire – love, attentiveness

Children who constantly beg for attention are actually reacting to the fact that their parents and other adults do not give them recognition or respect and are not really there for them. Deep in their souls they feel disregarded, even if they're constantly cared for. Even little empresses meet a lack of respect and appreciation with mistrust and anger. They become nuisances – and then, of course, they're disregarded all the more or pacified with bribes.

The empress pampers and nurtures her child as the child wishes. The young empress is given the real thing, she's

given recognition and love, not some sort of substitute. The empress treats her child with respect and takes her cares and needs seriously. The more the young empress sees that she's treated with appreciation and love, the more she believes in herself and spontaneously treats other noble people with respect and love. Parents who find their children disrespectful, spoilt or 'naughty' should ask themselves two questions: Have I myself always respected my child and loved her unconditionally? And am I myself noble enough to deserve the respect of a young empress?

Strengthening Earth – nourishment

Whoever strengthens the mother strengthens the child. The imperial mother eats with enjoyment. The little empress eats with her. She receives fresh, healthy food. After she has been weaned, she eats food that strengthens her centre, as a grown-up empress would do. So she prefers foods that are fresh and rich in Qi, such as cereals, potatoes, sweet potatoes, noodles and rice – just like her mother.

Overstimulation overwhelms the assimilating function of the centre. Cloudy substances develop. In Chinese medicine this is called slime. Slime manifests itself as confusion, unclear thinking and digestive problems. If slime gets out of hand, it literally runs out of children's noses and ears. A young empress should get to know individual foodstuffs and flavours gradually, so that she doesn't become confused and full of slime through being confronted by too much choice too soon. She begins with the simple things and feels her way slowly forward. How quickly this goes depends on how strong her Earth is at the time. This in turn depends partly on how well the mother nourished her own centre during pregnancy and partly on whether the little empress is happy and

content or whether she is being overwhelmed by outside influences. Since the whole world is converging on her at once, many different factors may occupy the little empress. The more her centre is being challenged through learning and other stimuli, the simpler and more 'Earthy' her food should be at this time. New foods should be 'learnt' in peace and with enjoyment. The little empress learns this from the example of those around her.

If the empress is later to rely on her intuition, her own voice and her own understanding, she must have the chance to develop these capacities as a child. The potential is in her possession and will develop spontaneously if permitted. To this end the little empress must choose and decide for herself. That is, she must be allowed to try things out in a safe environment, to smell, to taste, to touch – and to reject what she doesn't like. A young empress follows her own preferences.

The young empress is never hastily stuffed to the gills with greasy substances, ready-made purées and jars of baby food. The empress doesn't allow herself to be fobbed off with junk.

Protecting Metal – protection, respect

The essence of a child is completed irrespective of the wishes and illusions of her parents. The child's entire make-up is already present at birth. Some of this may be alien, incomprehensible or even disagreeable to the parents. But no amount of pruning and careful fertilising can turn a yew into a rose – it can, however, become part of a yew hedge.

Even a very small child must be able to do things her parents don't understand or approve of. For example, day-dreaming all by herself, or intensively practising standing on her own two feet without interference. Perhaps she wants

to get herself completely filthy for once; or indeed this may be precisely what she doesn't want, despite having been enrolled in a wonderfully creative mud-therapy session by her well-meaning parents. The more her inner impulses are suppressed in favour of 'more sensible' activities, and the less the specific character of the little empress is respected, the more she'll shut herself off and withdraw into herself. As a result a socially well-adapted appearance may mask mistrust and alienation. The little empress retires into herself and keeps her real life hidden.

Mawkish fuss can mask extremely dangerous manipulation. For love of her Mummy the child must play the flute. It's good to open up the world of music to a child, but she must enter it voluntarily and not 'because otherwise Mummy will be very sad'. This sort of manipulation teaches the child that emotion and love represent an attack on her being, and she learns to be wary of emotions of every kind. The more she longs for real love and regard, the more she'll close down as soon as things get too 'hot' for her. She becomes a Metal person (see Chapter 8).

Excursus: What the young empress does

Nothing is worse for a daughter than a perfect mother. The perfect mother has herself under control, she never shouts, she does only what's best for the child. This mother never misses a health check. She knows all there is to know about nutritional values and supplements in relation to baby food, and is familiar with all the latest theories on bringing up a child. She prefers advisers who teach that children need 'boundaries'. She allocates her daughter the prescribed ratio of attention.

Her child's schoolbooks are always neatly labelled and she never misses a parents' evening – she may even be a Parents' Representative. She gets involved. If her child has a health problem – for example, asthma or eczema – she handles this 'assignment' with the usual efficiency too. She draws up meticulous menu plans and sticks to these with agonising precision. She sets up self-help groups, becomes chairperson and disseminates her increasing knowledge through brochures and the internet. She finds little to laugh about but shows no weakness. Sometimes she asks herself what she of all people has done to deserve such a child. On the other hand, how could a less efficient mother possibly deal with all this?

When her daughter is older, she hauls her off to the gynaecologist in good time and ensures a thorough explanation of all the necessary topics. Hygiene, unwanted pregnancy, AIDs, genital warts. An irregular menstrual cycle will be sorted out with hormone treatment, spots likewise. Whatever happens, mother takes care of everything.

She conceals the absence of love so perfectly that not even she herself notices this profound deficiency.

The daughter does everything she can to satisfy her perfect mother, but never succeeds. And so she feels more and more wretched as she grows older. Either she's not good at sports, or she's not musical enough, or pretty enough, or intellectual enough. She's increasingly aware of the constriction and coldness that rule her life. At the same time, she feels ungrateful. After all, her mother does everything for her. So the daughter escapes into her own world, closes the door, allows no one near her. She may become melancholy and depressive. This feeling of not being good enough, not being worthy, can last for a lifetime and lead to bouts of deep depression. In later life she will pay for the smallest degree of

affection with huge self-sacrifice. Deep inside her, like cancer, the conviction has grown that she's not worth loving unless she offers something in return.

Alternatively the daughter may become a perfectionist, demanding almost superhuman feats of herself. This affirms the mother in her own endeavours. But she still won't love her daughter, because she can't.

But a young empress is also a fighter. So she'll resort to drastic measures to regain control of her life. She may escape to a world of softness and illusory brightness and eternal harmony, the world of alcohol, drugs or sexual addiction. Her mother can't follow her here. This world belongs to her. Here she's free. She may die.

The mother's world falls apart. Why has this happened to me, of all people, she asks self-pityingly, when I put my all into bringing her up? She forms another self-help group and from now on will take the view that drug addiction is a metabolic dysfunction and therefore there are no grounds for false shame. This mother will take action, this mother will never let herself down.

Other daughters choose a different form of control. They decide they're fat, and think that if they were slimmer they'd be sure of love. The young empress gets thinner and thinner, and may even be mildly praised for her good figure. No one realises how little she actually eats. Sometimes she no longer eats at all. Now she alone decides what enters her system. In the ascetic purity of anorexia, she achieves total control. Every bite is paid for with obsessive exercise. But her mother only appears to have lost control. In reality she has lodged herself deep in her daughter's bones, with all her hostility, denial and joylessness. The girl may die. The mother's world falls apart. Why is this happening to me, of all people, she

asks self-pityingly, when I put my all into bringing her up? She forms another self-help group and from now on will take the view that anorexia is a metabolic dysfunction and therefore there are no grounds for false shame. This mother will take action, this mother will never let herself down.

A clever young empress thinks laterally, puts an end to all false hopes of redemption and love, and runs for her life – all the way to New Guinea, if necessary. She doesn't have to justify this to anyone, and she doesn't have to feel like a coward. The ancient Chinese taught: 'Of the Thirty-Six Stratagems, flight is the best.'

An empress knows that she was born an empress and will always be an empress – even if her mother is incapable of acknowledging her as such. She doesn't have to prove anything to anyone, and she doesn't always have to be perfect. Redemption won't come from outside anyway. She finds love within herself and, like the Little Prince, perhaps in a rose, or perhaps in all things.

Empress affirmations

The empress trusts her intuition.

The empress is born free.

Empresses, big and small, recognise and respect one another.

The empress never allows herself to be fobbed off.