

THE ORIGIN AND GROWTH OF THE FU CHI¹

by

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I. INTRODUCTION

The Chinese use a kind of planchette as a medium between men and gods. The performance of it is called *fu chi* (扶箕 or 扶乩) or *fu luan* (扶鸞). The instrument is not shaped like the one used in the west. Originally it was a sieve to which was attached a short stick. It was held generally by two persons at either side to trace characters on sand or ashes with the lower end of the short stick. The characters were supposed to have been produced by the gods. Now, in most cases, the sieve has been replaced by a stick about a yard long with a shorter bent stick coming out from the middle of one side at right angles to it. It is also held up by two persons, at one end by a man with his left hand and at the other end by a man with his right hand, so that it traces characters on sand or ashes with the tip of the bent stick. Writings and pictures can be obtained also by fastening a brush to the short stick of the planchette. The writings and pictures are made on long sheets of paper instead of on sand.

In the strict sense the term *fu chi* should be applied only to the performance of the planchette as described above, because it originally means 'to uphold (扶) a sieve' (箕). However, there is another kind of performance, that is also thus called. This kind of performance was originally called *hsüan chi* (懸箕 or 懸乩), meaning 'to hang (懸) a sieve' (箕), because the sieve is hung on a rope instead of being held by persons. At the present time the sieve is no longer used; it has become

1) In preparing this article, Fr. M. Eder and Mr. Zeisberger gave me some good suggestions. Fr. A. J. Hotze corrected my English. Thanks are due to them.

merely an iron pencil hanging on a rope; the other end of the rope is fastened to the string of a bow and the back of the bow hangs from the ceiling. Beneath the tip of the pencil is spread sand or ashes. On the whole the hsüan chi is rarely performed.

When the fu chi is performed, incense is first burned, spells are recited and a written charm to invite a god or goddess is burned. Sometimes the written charm is replaced by a piece of certain kind of yellow paper, which is called *piao* (表), and no spells are recited at all. When the god or goddess has been invited, some questions are asked, the planchette is held so as to move over the sand, and the god is supposed to answer by writing through it. *F.S. Drake* has a detailed description of the fu chi as it is performed in the Tao Yüan (道院), a modern Chinese religious society². Some paragraphs are reproduced below in order to give an idea of the nature of the ceremony:

"On April 17th (1923), six members of the staff of The Arts and Theological Schools of The Shantung Christian University visited the Tao Yüan to discuss matters of common interest with some of the members of that institution. We were permitted to witness the planchette at work..."

"The planchette stick was held at either end by men standing one at each side of the table. Near by stood another, whose duty it was to call out the characters as they were written in the sand, while on the opposite side, at a small desk, stood one with pen and ink ready to write down the characters upon yellow paper. At first the planchette merely made circles, first slowly, then at a great rate. One of the writers held a piece of wood in his free hand, with which he smoothed out the sand again, and immediately the first character appeared. Character followed character at a surprising rate."

"After the writing of each character, the sand was rapidly smoothed in preparation for the next one which was to be dashed from the tip of the planchette, turning and twisting impatiently in the hands of the writers."

"The walls of the reception rooms are hung with scrolls, quaint writings and beautifully executed pictures: the work of the planchette... Many are signed by Buddha himself; and some by Christ..."

In the books after the Sung Dynasty, especially in the essays and short stories, we can find many passages relating the fu chi. In some cases it was performed as a kind of literary play. Some deceased poets were supposed to write poems with the planchette. In other cases it was for inquiring into the future or giving a final decision on certain matters. Instances of the first kind are too numerous to be mentioned. Of the second kind, we may cite the Emperor Shih-tsung (世宗) of the Ming

2) *F. S. Drake, The Tao Yüan, A New Religious And Spiritualistic Movement, Chinese Recorder, March, 1923. p. 139.*

Dynasty as an example. In the *History of The Ming Dynasty*³ we read, "The Emperor built an altar for the chi immortals (乩仙臺) in the forbidden city and occasionally gave rewards or penalties to his subjects according to the words recorded from fu chi"⁴. In the same book we read again, "Lan Tao-hsing (藍道行) was in favour with the Emperor on account of the fu luan art", and "Lan T'ien-yü (藍田玉) and Lo Wan-hsiang (羅萬象) served the Emperor in the Western Palace in the fu luan art"⁵.

At present the fu chi is very popular among some Chinese secret or half-secret religious societies, such as the T'ung-shan Shê (同善社), the Wu-shan Shê (悟善社), the Tao Yüan (namely the Red Swastika Society 紅卍字會), Chiu-shih Hsin Chiao (救世新教), etc⁶. It is regarded as a way of connecting the human world with the gods. They have an explanation of it. They say, the action of the fu chi is the 'contact of the spirit force' between the gods and men. During the performance, 'the gods procure the assistance of the spirit of the men and the men procure the assistance of the spirit of the gods'⁷. In other words, the planchette is neither moved by the gods themselves, nor by the men who hold it. The gods and men cooperate through the contact of spirit force.

As to the rôle that the fu chi plays in the Chinese popular religion in the past and present, I shall not go into details. In the following sections an attempt is made to show only the origin and growth of the fu chi, especially the fu chi by holding a sieve.

II. THE INVITATION OF TZU-KU

The fu chi comes directly from the invitation of Tzū-ku (請紫姑 or 迎紫姑). Therefore, in order to find the origin of the fu chi, we must first deal with the invitation of Tzū-ku in detail. The invitation of Tzū-ku is also called Tzū-ku divination (紫姑卜). It is a kind of divination practised by the people on the fifteenth night of the first month.

3) *The History of The Ming Dynasty* 明史, 336 chüan, was written by a group of scholars under the imperial order at the beginning of the Ch'ing Dynasty from 1645 to 1779.

4) chüan 197, *The Biography of Hsiung Chia* 熊浹傳.

5) chüan 307, *The Biography of T'ao Chung-wen* 陶仲文傳.

6) Detailed information about the first three societies can be found in P. D. Twinem, *Journal of Religion*, September, 1925; F. S. Drake, *The Tao Yüan*; D. W. Edwards, *The Syncretic Mind in Chinese Religions*, Chinese Recorder, June, 1926.

7) "神假人靈，人假神靈。"

In written sources this practice was first recorded in the Liu Sung Dynasty (420-474) of the Period of Division Between South and North Dynasties. In *I yüan*⁸ we find the following description:

“In the world there is a goddess called Tzū-ku. According to the tradition from old time, she was a concubine of a family. The legitimate wife, being envious of her, often gave her dirty work to do. On the fifteenth day of the first month she was dead of grief. Therefore, on this day the people make an image of her and in the night they go to invite her to the latrine or beside the pigsties, saying, ‘Tzū Hsü (子胥) is not at home and Ts’ao-ku (曹姑) has gone also. Pretty Lady, you may come out to play’. Tzū Hsü was the name of her husband, Ts’ao-ku that of the legitimate wife. When the image becomes heavy it is a sign that the goddess has come. Wine and fruits are offered to her. Then the image seems to glow brightly, jumping and jumping unceasingly. The people may make divinations as to the silkworm and mulberry leaves of the coming year and about other matters. If what they divine is to be good, Tzū-ku dances unceasingly; if bad, she will lie asleep. In P’ing-ch’ang (平昌) a woman of the Mêng family (孟氏) did not believe this and tried to hold the image. She herself jumped out of the room and was nowhere to be found afterwards.”

In the *Ching-ch’u sui-shih-chi*⁹, it is also written that in the evening of the fifteenth day of the first month Tzū-ku was invited to divine the silkworm and mulberry leaves of the coming year and other matters.

In the T’ang Dynasty this custom still existed. It is mentioned in *Shi-hua chi li*¹⁰, *Pei-hu lu*¹¹ and in some poems of *Li Shang-yin*¹². However, only the term Tzū-ku divination or Tzū-ku is mentioned; no details can be found.

In the Sung Dynasty the invitation of Tzū-ku made great advance. In the T’ang Dynasty and before, it was mainly practised by the country people. Li Shang-yin has a line of a poem, meaning, ‘I am ashamed to

8) *I yüan*, or A Collection of Essays on Strange Things, 異苑, 10 chüan, was written by Liu Chin-shu 劉敬叔, who became the huang-men chi-shih-chung 黃門給事中 in the third year of Yüan-chia 元嘉 (426) and was dead in T’ai-shih 泰始 (465-471). chüan 5.

9) *Ching-ch’u sui-shih-chi*, or Annual Customs And Festivals in Ching and Ch’u 荆楚歲時記, by Tsung Lin 宗懔 (ca. 500-ca. 560).

10) *Sui-hua chi-li* 歲華紀麗, by Han Ngê 韓鄂, 4 chüan. A description of the customs and festivals throughout the year; chüan 1.

11) *Pei-hu lu* 北戶錄, by Tuan Kung-lu 段公路 (ca. 860-870).

12) Li Shang-yin 李商隱 (813-858).

follow the country people to play the invitation of Tzū-ku¹³. In the Sung Dynasty the learned class also practised it. When the goddess was supposed to arrive she could not only dance as before, but also write and paint. She had newly acquired the ability of writing and painting. In the books of that time we can find many passages regarding the fact that Tzū-ku wrote literary compositions. Some of them are quoted below as examples:

"In recent years the invitation of Tzū-ku is often performed. In most cases the goddess can compose prose and verse. Some of her writings are extremely skilful. I often see them"¹⁴.

"A person from Chin-ling (Nanking), whose surname is Hsia (夏), can summon the Tzū-ku goddess. The goddess can write literary compositions. Her style of writing and painting is like that of the T'ang Dynasty. She answers some questions wittily and quickly"¹⁵.

"In many cases, poems can be obtained from the invitation of Tzū-ku. But her poems are not much superior to those of the common writers"¹⁶.

"In the second year of Chen-ho (政和 1212) the people of Hsiang-i (襄邑), Honan, invited Tzū-ku for amusement. When the goddess had begun to write, the characters were as large as one foot square"¹⁷.

The name Tzū-ku is generally written as 紫姑, but sometimes also as 子姑. *Su Shih* (蘇軾 1036-1101), a great writer of the Sung Dynasty, has a long account of the invitation of Tzū-ku¹⁸, in which the name is written in the latter way. A complete translation of his narration is given at the end of this section. From the above quotations and *Su Shih's* narration, we can see that the invitation of Tzū-ku in the Sung Dynasty was developed into a kind of superstitious literary game in the hands of the learned class. A step further and it would become the fu chi.

13) *Poetical Works of Li I-shan* 李義山詩集, chüan 6. The text is "羞逐鄉人賽紫姑." (正月十五日開京有燈恨不得觀.)

14) *Mêng-hsi pi-t'an* 夢溪筆談, by Shen K'uo 沈括 (1030-1074), 26 chüan. A collection of essays on various subjects. chüan 21.

15) *T'an yüan* 談苑, by K'ung P'ing-chung 孔平仲 (?-ca. 1110). A collection of essays.

16) *Yen-chou shih-hua* 彥周詩話, by Hsü Ch'i 許顥 (ca. 1111). A discourse on poetry.

17) *Ch'un-chu chi-wen* 春渚紀聞, by Ho Wei 何遜 (ca. 1094), 10 chüan. In the first 5 chüan are essays on supernatural occurrence and other subjects. Chüan 4.

18) *An Account of The Tzū-ku Goddess* 子姑神記, *Tung-po hsü ch'i* 東坡續集 chüan 12.

An Account of The Tzū-ku Goddess

"I left the Capital for Huang-chou (黃州), Hupei, on the first day of the first month of the third year of Yüan-feng (元豐 1080) and arrived in the district on the first day of the second month.

In the next year P'an Ping (潘丙), a chin shih, told me: 'When you were first appointed to the office of the magistrate of this district, the people did not know it. A goddess descended in the home of the immigrant Kuo (郭) family. She could talk to the people with pen and was skilful in composing poems. She said, 'Mr. Su will come, but I cannot stay until I could see him.' Afterwards you really came on the same day as she went.'

The next year in the first month P'an Ping told me again that the goddess descended in the home of the Kuo family the second time and I went to see her. Straws and sticks were dressed in clothes as a woman. A chopstick was put in the hand. Two boys held it to draw characters with the chopstick, saying, 'I was born in Lai-yang (萊陽), Shantung. My family name was Ho (何), my own name Mei (媚), my second name Li-ch'ing (麗卿). After having studied with success during my youth, I became the wife of an actor. In one year of Ch'ui-kung (垂拱 685-689) of the T'ang Dynasty the prefect of Shou-yang (壽陽), Shansi, murdered my husband and took me to be his concubine. His wife, being greatly envious, killed me in the latrine. Although I was put to death, I dared not make a complaint. But a messenger from heaven saw the case; he redressed my grievance and, moreover, appointed me to an office in the world. The so-called Tzū-ku goddesses are various in the world, but none is so excellent as I. Sir, will you stay for a while. I shall compose poems and dance for your amusement.'

She composed ten poems at once in a short time, each of which had beautiful ideas, mixed with humorous expressions. Some questions were asked about the knowledge of the change of the gods, immortals and ghosts. All answers were beyond what we thought of, and when a question was answered all attendants would laugh. Then the tune Liang-chou (梁州) was performed and she rose up to dance in accordance with the time of the music.

When the music was finished, she bowed twice and said, 'Your writings are famous all over the world. Why do you not spare a little piece of paper and make my name known?' In view of the fact that, when she was living, she was captured by an oppressive official and murdered by a shrew and that, although really she had great resentment, she did not tell the name of the prefect, it seems to me that she was well-bred. Before a guest came, she could foresee his life, but she did not tell one's secret and future. Hence, we may say she was wise. She liked literature and was ashamed to be unknown. Twofold were her merits. Therefore, an account is roughly written to answer her request.'

III. HOW THE INVITATION IS PERFORMED

Before we come to the analysis of the connexion between the fu chi and the invitation of Tzū-ku, we insert here a few paragraphs about how

the invitation is performed. In general, there are two kinds of performances: (1) a broom is employed, (2) a sieve is employed. The principal features of each kind will be elucidated. Upon them we shall base the analysis of the connection between the fu chi and the invitation of Tzū-ku and the investigation of the origin of the invitation itself.

(1) A broom is employed. In *I yüan* it is said that on the fifteenth night of the first month the people made an image to invite Tzū-ku. When the goddess had arrived, the image jumped and jumped. But the author does not tell us how the image was made. Su Shih's account gives more details. He says, straws and sticks were dressed in clothes as a woman, a chopstick was put in the hand, and two boys held it to write with the chopstick. We have pointed out that writing characters was an addition of the Sung Dynasty. Originally the image possessed by the goddess could only jump, and omens were taken from it. This original feature is still preserved in the account. It says that after the answering of some curious questions the tune Liang-chou was performed and the goddess rose up to dance in accordance with the tempo of the music.

Although the invitation of Tzū-ku was adopted by the literati and underwent some modification in the Sung Dynasty, its original form was handed down to the common people of later times. For example, in *Ti-ching ching-wu-lüeh*¹⁹, a book of the Ming Dynasty, we find a passage about it: "In the first month around the full moon, at night, the ladies bind a straw image, the face of which is made of paper painted with powder; and put veil and shirt on it. To it is offered the dung of horse. Then they beat the drum and sing the song 'The dung of horse smells sweet'. When they have prayed three times, the image jumps and jumps. If it bows its head and raises its folded hands unceasingly, it is a good omen. If it lies on the ground and does not get up, it is a bad one. When a man comes, it would fall on the ground."

In the three instances cited above, a straw image is generally used. In fact it is used in place of a broom, because it is more like a woman. Originally a broom was used. The writers of the Sung Dynasty clearly knew this fact. In their eyes the straw image was the broom. In another narration of Su Shih, *T'ien-chuan chi*²⁰, we read, "In the region between the Yangtze River and the Huai River the people customarily venerated the ghosts. Every year in the first month they would dress the sieve or broom as the Tzū-ku goddess. She could either write or count. The

19) *Ti-ching ching-wu-lüeh*, or *A Brief Description of The Views in The Capital*, 帝京景物略, by Liu T'ung 劉侗 and Yü I-cheng 于奕正, 8 chüan, 1635; chüan 3, chapter ch'un-ch'ang 春場.

20) *T'ien chuan chi* 天篆記, Tung-po hsü ch'i, chüan 12.

goddess of the Kuo family in Huang-chou was most mysterious. Last year I wrote an account of her entitled *Ho-shih lu* (何氏錄).” The goddess of the Kuo family was the one he described in the *Account of The Tzū-ku Goddess*, *Ho-shih lu* was, in fact, the Account, but he says that they dressed the sieve or broom as the Tzū-ku goddess.

The form of the invitation of Tzū-ku described in *Ti-ching ching-wu-lieh* is also found in one of the *Miscellaneous Poems on Peking Customs*²¹. It is said that a broom is used instead of the straw image. The poem is as follows:

Bowing to Tzū-ku and singing a song
 The people pray in one accord
 Before an old broom all draped in red:
 “Horses’s dung smells sweet;
 Success unto us mete
 Every day this year,
 Tzū-ku, pray thee, hear!”

To the poem a note is added by the author himself, “In the first month the girls stick flowers on a broom and dress it in a skirt to invite Tzū-ku to divine.”

When a broom is employed, the goddess is also called Chou-ku or Lady Broom (帚姑). One line of *Fan Chih-nêng’s* poem ‘*Thirty-two Rimes Relating The Customs of Wu District During The Lantern Festival*’ (范至能，上元紀吳下節物諱律詩三十二韻)²² is “Lady Broom is beautiful, hanging with a skirt.”

(2) A sieve is employed. We have seen in *Su Shih’s T’ien-chuan chi* that a sieve is also used to invite Tzū-ku. A more detailed description of this kind of invitation is found in *Chi sheng lu*²³: “During the full moon of the first month it is customary for a sieve for keeping rice (飯箕), dressed in clothes and stuck with a chopstick, to be held so as to write on the sand in a tray.” Though the term Tzū-ku is not mentioned, surely this is a description of the same custom. In *Yu-huan chi-wên*²⁴ it is said

21) *Miscellaneous Poems on Peking Customs* 燕京雜詠, by Fan Pin 樊彬 (Ch’ing).

22) Quoted from *Shih-wen lei-tsü* 事文類聚, an encyclopedia edited in the Sung Dynasty; chien ch’i 前集, festivals 時令, shang yüan 上元.

23) *Chi sheng lu* 稽神錄, by Hsü Hsüan 徐鉉 (916-991), 6 chüan. Essays on superstitious occurrences. Chüan 6.

24) *Yu-huan chi-wên* 游宦紀聞, by Chang Shih-nan 張世南, 10 chüan. Information regarding the past gathered by conversation with contemporary scholars. chüan 3.

similarly: "When I was young, I often saw some relatives and friends inviting Tzū-ku by sticking a chopstick on a sieve for washing rice (筲箕) and spreading ashes on a desk; the sieve was held so as to draw on the ashes with the chopstick."

When the goddess is invited with a sieve, she is also called Chi-ku or Lady Sieve (箕姑). This term is found in the author's note of *Fan Chih-nêng's* poem²⁵. The two instances in the last paragraph are both taken from the sources of the Sung Dynasty, when the invitation of Tzū-ku was adopted by the literati. Some older form, as it was performed before the adoption and modification, is handed down among the common people even to the present day. In a recent book, *The New Year Customs*²⁶, we find the same custom is practised in Ning-po (甯波), Chêkiang. "In the first month, in the four days from the eleventh to the fourteenth, the women invite Lady Sieve. They enfold the sieve in a piece of crape and stick a chopstick on it. It is held up by two girls. They can divine their luck by it. It taps the table with the chopstick. A double tap is a good omen." After reading this statement we cannot help thinking that the ability of writing of Tzū-ku comes directly from that of tapping. But most probably the original tapping is first developed to drawing in some circles and then the drawing is developed to writing in some other circles. Because, it is safe to say that the invitation of Tzū-ku is originally only performed by women and girls, and it is very natural that the tapping is first developed to drawing by them. A detailed description of how Tzū-ku is invited to draw flowers on powder is found in the *Folk-song Weekly* (歌謠週刊)²⁷ of the Peking National University (國立北京大學). The following is an abstract of it:

The Invitation of Tzū-ku in San-lin-t'ang²⁸

The invitation is performed by girls. They begin to prepare it from the twelfth month of the last year. They begin to make a shoe about three inches long and a half inch wide and a bonnet of different colours decorated with pearls for The Third Lady (三姑), namely Tzū-ku. But they must finish their work on the New Year's Day, neither earlier nor later.

The ceremony is performed at midnight of the first month, neither earlier than the full moon nor later than the twenty-fourth day. On a square table is spread some powder and on one edge of it are put the burning incense and lighted candles. Four girls bow and kneel to the table solemnly. Afterwards they begin to call:

25) note 22.

26) *The New Year Customs* 新年風俗志, by Lou Tzū-k'uang 婁子匡, Commercial Press, Shanghai, 1935; p. 28.

27) Vol. II, No. 37, March 6th, 1937.

28) San-lin-t'ang 三林塘 is a town near Shanghai.

"Oh, Bridesmaid Chang come!"

"Oh, Bridesmaid Li come!"

"Carry the sedan chair! Carry the sedan chair!"

"Go and carry The Third Lady by the sedan chair!"

The sedan chair is a sieve for washing rice with its mouth downward. On one side of it is stuck a perpendicular bone hair-pin and on the bottom is stuck a pair of long horizontal chopsticks which are said to be the sedan poles. Two girls carry it to the corner of the door. The following dialogue takes place among them:

"Is The First Lady in the room?"

"No, not in the room."

"Is The Second Lady in the room?"

"No, not in the room."

"Is The Third Lady in the room?"

"Yes, she is in the room. For what do you invite her?"

"We invite her to drink the fairy tea and to see the red lanterns on the fifteenth night of the first month."

"Oh, The Third Lady has not yet got up."

"Please ask her to be quick:

The red lanterns will be extinguished,
The fairy tea will be cold,
The sesamum sugar and the baked rice will become soft.

Ask her to comb her hair,
to bind up her foot,
to change her dress.

It will come to the third pair of candles."

She is urged to dress herself quickly and simply. At last the girls sing together:

"Third Lady is an immortal with one leg,
Who teaches us to do good needle-work.
The needle-work, light and heavy, we all learn to do."

She is urged three times to be quick. The bridesmaids answer at last: "The Third Lady is to ride in the sedan chair." Then they approach the sedan chair and put the bonnet on the bottom of the sieve and the shoe on one of the chopsticks. The sedan chair is carried to the table by the two girls who are not the bridesmaids. After the chair go the bridesmaids and two younger brothers (two boys) of The Third Lady.

When the sedan chair has arrived, the two brothers bow and kneel to it. The two girls who are not the bridesmaids carry the sedan chair on their fore-fingers over the table and put the downward end of the hair-pin into the powder on the table. After a while The Third Lady begins to draw flowers on the powder with the pin. If they want some light drawing, they will say, "Third Lady, draw lightly and skilfully!" If they want some heavy drawing, they will say, "Third Lady, draw heavily!" When she has finished her drawing, the girls all send her to the corner of the door again and say, "Thank you, Third Lady. Next year we shall come to invite you again."

IV. THE FU CHI AND THE INVITATION OF TZU-KU WITH A SIEVE

Now we turn to the origin of the fu chi. The fu chi comes from the second kind of the invitation of Tzū-ku, namely the invitation of Tzū-ku with a sieve. In the introduction, as we have said, the fu chi uses a sieve on which is stuck a short stick. Two persons hold it up at two sides so as to trace characters on sand or ashes with the short stick. This is exactly the same as the performance of the invitation of Tzū-ku with a sieve as described in the last section. Even though in later days the sieve is no longer used in fu chi and is replaced by a stick, yet the performance, in its main features, is still the same. The stick is held up by two persons at the two ends so as to trace characters on sand with the shorter stick that comes out from the middle of it. The shorter stick is the chopstick stuck on the sieve. The only difference is that the sieve is not used. But the performance is still called fu chi, meaning originally 'to hold up a sieve'.

If the invitation of Tzū-ku with a sieve and the fu chi with the same instrument are exactly same, then the transition from the former to the latter is only a change of name. The period of transition, roughly speaking, is at the end of the Southern Sung Dynasty. In the Sung Dynasty, owing to the fact that the invitation of Tzū-ku was often played by the literati, a new development resulted. It was not only the Tzū-ku goddess, but some other god or goddess also, that descended and took possession of the sieve to write. For examples, in *Mêng-hsi pi-t'an*²⁹ it is said that in one year of Ching-yu (景祐 1034-1037) a goddess descended in the home of Wang Lun (王綸). She confessed that she was one of the girls in the harem of the Heavenly Emperor. In *Ch'ou-chih pi-chi*³⁰ it is said that in the first year of Shao-shêng (紹聖 1094) an immortal girl descended in Canton. In *T'an yüan*³¹, when the performers asked the name of the goddess, she answered that she was the grand-daughter of Chu Fa-ming (竺法明), a man of the Period of Division between South and North Dynasties. In *Kuei-chê chih*³², it is more strange, the invitation of Tzū-ku was performed, but the spirit of Yao Fei (岳飛) came, when he had not been dead very long. In *Yu-huan chi-wen*³³ it is even

29) note 14.

30) *Ch'ou-chih pi-chi* 仇池筆記, by Su Shih. Short sketches.

31) note 15.

32) *Kuei chê chih* 睽車志, by Kuo T'uan 郭象, 6 chüan. A series of statements regarding supernatural occurrences during the time from Chien-yen 建炎 to Ch'ien-tao 乾道 (1127-1173), chüan 1.

33) note 24.

said that when the invitation of Tzū-ku was performed the divinity first wrote his name, and in all cases he was a man of letters recently deceased.

The deity who came was not the so-called Tzū-ku. Hence the term 'invitation of Tzū-ku' was not proper, and a new term was needed. At first the term 'invitation of the great immortal' (請大仙) was used. To the line, "It is astonishing that poems drop from the pen of the sieve", of *Fan Chih-nêng's* poem³⁴, the poet himself adds a note: "This is, namely, the old Tzū-ku. Now she is called the great immortal." The term 'the invitation of the great immortal' is found twice in *I-chien i-chih*³⁵. The term *chi po* or sieve divination (箕卜) was also used in the Southern Sung Dynasty. *Lu yu*³⁶, a great poet of that time, has a poem entitled 'The Sieve Divination'. What he describes in the poem is nothing else but the invitation of Tzū-ku with a sieve. However, the two characters 'fu chi' at last became the fixed term for the performance of inviting some god or goddess with a sieve. As far as I can find, *Cho-kêng lu*³⁷ is the first book in which the term fu chi is found. It was first printed in 1366.

The term fu chi was originally written as 扶箕. From the Ming Dynasty on it was written as 扶乩 also. 乩 is, namely, 稽, meaning 'to divine'. To say 扶乩 is nonsense. It is so used, I think, only to make the term more mysterious. The nonsense of the term fu chi written as 扶乩 has already been pointed out by *Yü Yüeh*³⁸, a scholar at the end of the Ch'ing Dynasty. He says, "In *I-chien chih* in the paragraph Shen Cheng-wu and Tzū-ku (沈承務紫姑) we read, 'The name Tzū-ku immortal was not found in old times but was only occasionally seen in sources of the T'ang Dynasty. Now the people merely stick a pencil on a sieve and two persons hold it. Sometimes it can write characters on sand.' This is the fu chi of the present time. Fu chi is sometimes written as 扶乩. It is a mistake." Though there is something wrong about the history of the invitation of Tzū-ku in his quotation from *I-chien chih*, what he says is quite right.

When the sieve was replaced by a stick, we are not certain, because no Chinese book gives such details. Here I must add that, when 'fu chi' had become a fixed term for the invitation of a god or goddess with a

34) note 22.

35) *I-chien i-chih* 夷堅乙志, by Hung Mai 洪邁 (1123-1202); chüan 8 and 13.

36) *Lu Yu* 陸游 (1125-1210), *Chien-nan shih-ch'ao* 劍南詩鈔.

37) *Cho-kêng lu* 輟耕錄, by T'ao Tsung-i 陶宗儀, 30 chüan. Notices on the history of the Yüan Dynasty and information regarding the poetry, painting and literature of that period. Chüan 27.

38) *Yü Yüeh* 俞樾 (1821-1906), *Ch'u-yüan tsa-lu* 曲園雜錄, *Hsiao fan-lu* 小繁錄.

sieve the name Tzū-ku lost its connection with the performance. Now very few know the connection. When the sieve was replaced by the stick, a new interpretation was given to the fu chi. The stick was not said to be possessed by the deity in the same way as the sieve. It was supposed to be a pen with which the deity wrote. Hence, it was called *chi pi* (乚 筆), literally 'divinatory pen'. The men who hold up the stick are now generally called *chi shou* (乚 手), literally 'divinatory hands'. They are supposed to be the hands of the god or goddess, because the god or goddess uses them to write. At the same time the theory of 'the contact of spirit force' is invented.

V. THE SIEVE DIVINATION

In the last section it has been proved that the fu chi comes directly from the invitation of Tzū-ku with a sieve. We may try to go a step further, to find the origin of the latter. There is no question, it seems, that it originates in the sieve divination practised by many peoples. For example, the Greeks called the sieve divination 'coskinomancy' and practised it for the discovery of thieves and other suspected persons. *Potter*, in his *Grecian Antiquities*³⁹, says that they put under the sieve a pair of shears, on which it was held up by two fingers; then they repeated the names of the persons under suspicion, and he or she at whose name the sieve moved was thought to have committed the offence. Such was the rite practised in pagan Greece. It was practised alike by the Romans, Germans, and Slavs⁴⁰. More similar to the Chinese invitation of Lady Sieve is the Indian sieve divination. *W. Crooke*, in his *Popular Religion and Folk-lore in Northern India*⁴¹, says, "The sieve is very commonly used in India as a rude form of the planchette. Through the wicker-work of the raised side or back a strong T-shaped twig is fixed, one end of which rests on the finger. A question is asked and according as the sieve turns to the right or left, the answer is yes or no."

In Scotland the sieve is used for divination in a different way. In the evening of Halloween a boy or girl goes to the barn alone and, secretly taking a sieve or winnowing basket, performs the action of winnowing corn. When it has been repeated twice, the apparition of the future

39) *Potter's Grecian Antiquities* cannot be found in Peking. His words are quoted from *W. Henderson's Notes on Folk-lore of The Northern Countries of England and The Borders*, London, 1879; p. 233.

40) *W. Henderson*, p. 233.

41) *W. Crooke, Popular Religion And Folklore in Northern India*, Westminster, 1896. Vol. II, p. 189.

husband or wife will pass through the barn⁴². This practice shows clearly that the people attributed a magical power to the sieve. A custom of similar nature is also found in China. The following passage occurs in the *Hsü po-wu chih*⁴³: "In Shantung in the first month five girls about ten years old of different surnames slept in the same bed, covered with blankets. They were fanned by a winnowing fan. After a while they fell into a dream: Some liked to do needle work, some liked to write characters, others preferred to play music, etc. A little while passed and they were awaked. This is called 'to fan the heaven divination' (扇天卜). It is performed to ask for skill (乞巧)."

In short, the sieve is invested with marvellous magical powers and it is employed by many peoples for divination. The invitation of Tzū-ku with a sieve, out of which the fu chi comes, is originally one form of the sieve divination. In Europe a pair of shears is put under the sieve and in India a T-shaped twig is fixed through the wicker-work of one side or the back of it. They are exactly correspondent to the chopstick attached to it by the Chinese. The difference is that the Europeans and the Indians hold the sieve up by putting the ring of the shears or one end of the twig on the finger and, therefore, the omen is taken from the movement of the sieve, but the Chinese generally hold the sieve by itself, and the omen is taken from the tapping of the chopstick on a table. Nevertheless, in the main features, the sieve divination in Europe and India is the same as that of China. Consequently, we may safely say that the invitation of Tzū-ku with a sieve has an international origin.

It has been pointed out by some scholars that the magical power of the sieve is first expressed in its being used for rain-making⁴⁴. It is so used even by some primitive peoples, e. g. the Ainus⁴⁵. When rain is needed, some people would take sieves and scatter water with them. Throughout the Greek, Roman and Teutonic mythology, the sieve is seen to be in the hand of the cloud-god or cloud-goddess. Practices based on the same idea are found in China also. In Peking, when rain is urgently needed, the girls cut a human figure out of paper taking a winnowing fan in its hand and hang it under the eaves in the court-yard. This is a method of making rain. However, when an unceasing and continuous

42) J. G. Frazer, *The Golden Bough*, London, 1912. part VII, Vol. I, p. 234-235. Cf. W. Henderson, p. 52.

43) *Hsü po-wu-chih* 續博物志, by Li Shih 李石 (Ming). Almost entirely extracts from the ancient literature concerning various subjects.

44) J. Hastings' *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics*, art. sieve; W. Henderson, p. 233.

45) J. Batcheler, *The Ainu And Their Folklore*, London, 1901; p. 333.

rain is experienced, a human figure with a broom is cut out and hung up. This figure is called 'the lady who will sweep clear the weather' (掃晴娘). It is mentioned in *Ti-ching ching-wu-lüeh*⁴⁶ and *Yen-ching sui-shih-chi*⁴⁷. *Derk Bodde*, the English translator of the latter book, gives a note to it, saying, "She is the Goddess of the star of the broom." The winnowing fan is used for scattering drops of rain, therefore the broom is used to stop the rain. In view of this idea, it seems that Bodde's explanation may not be right.

Since the sieve is used for sifting the grain from the chaff and the seeds are often kept in it, it is also invested with the magical power of giving fertility and fecundity. Therefore, some peoples use it as the cradle of the child and for the marriage ceremony⁴⁸. In Peking, in the wedding procession, before the sedan chair in which the bride sits are a pair of imitation sieves held up on long supports by two persons.

In section III we have said there are two kinds of invitation of Tzū-ku. The first kind is the invitation with a broom. Of this kind we may say the same. It originates in broom divination. The broom is used for divination, probably because it is always in company with the sieve, which has marvellous magical powers. In China there are three kinds of sieve: the sieve for washing rice, the sieve for keeping cooked rice and the sieve for sifting the grain from the chaff. The broom is always a companion of the last kind. Besides, the winnowing fan is also a kind of variant of the sieve. It also is called chi. The broom is always used together with it. Therefore it is also credited with magical power. For example, in the villages in the south part of Hopei, when a man is supposed to be possessed by an evil spirit, another one will sweep over him with a broom from head to foot to expel the spirit. In India it is used for a similar purpose⁴⁹. It is credited with magical powers, therefore it is also employed for divination. The story of Tzū-ku is only a later addition to the divination.

VI. THE SPIRIT-POSSESSION OF THE DIVINATION INSTRUMENT

In the last section we came to a conclusion that the basis of the invitation of Tzū-ku is the sieve and broom divination. The story of

46) chüan 3, chapter Ch'un-ch'ang.

47) *Yen-ching sui-shih-chi* 燕京歲時記, by Tun Li-ch'en 敦禮臣, 1900. Annual customs and festivals in Peking. Translated and annotated by *Derk Bodde*, Peking, 1936; p. 58.

48) *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics*, art. fan, sieve.

49) *W. Crooke*, Vol. II, p. 191.

Tzū-ku is only a later addition to it. But why is the story attached to it? This is a consequence of personification. In this section we shall try to analyze the process of its personification.

We shall begin our analysis with the term Tzū-ku. At first it should be pointed out that 'Tzū-ku' is not the name of a person. In *I yüan*, the first book in which the invitation of Tzū-ku is found, it is said that Tzū-ku, a concubine of a family, died of grief in the latrine. In *Su Shih's Account of The Tzū-ku Goddess* and in *Hsien-i lu*⁵⁰, the story is told similarly, and her name, Ho Mei, is given. Though it is absurdly said that she became the concubine of the prefect of Shou-yang in the T'ang Dynasty, for that was much later than the time of the writing of *I yüan*. Yet we can see, the authors of these two sources clearly knew that Tzū-ku was not the name of a person. Otherwise they would not have given her the name Ho Mei.

If Tzū-ku is not a proper name, then what does it mean? In the books of the Sung Dynasty we find that Tzū-ku is taken as an appellation of the goddess of the latrine. *Mêng-hsi pi-t'an*⁵¹ says, "An old custom is to invite the goddess of the latrine on the fifteenth night of the first month. She is said to be Tzū-ku." *T'an yüan*⁵² says also, "Tzū-ku is, namely, the goddess of the latrine." But it is not said why the appellation of the goddess of the latrine is Tzū-ku and what is the connection between these two terms. I think, Tzū-ku is Tz'ü-ku, Lady Latrine, (廁姑). At first the term Tz'ü-ku was wrongly pronounced as Tzū-ku, later it was also written as 紫姑 instead of 廁姑 to imitate the sound, and at last 紫姑 became the formal name. Proof of this is that the custom of inviting Tzū-ku is still practised in later times. We find it described in the chapter of 'customs and festivals' in many local histories (topographies)⁵³. In some cases the original term Tz'ü-ku is still used. For example, in *Hang-chou-fu chih* (杭州府志)⁵⁴ we find, "On the fifteenth night of the first

50) *Hsien-i lu* 顯異錄, probably a book of the Ming Dynasty, author unknown, no longer exists. Quoted from *T'ien chung chi* 天中記, Vol. IV, an encyclopaedia edited in the Ming Dynasty.

51) note 14.

52) note 15.

53) Many local histories compiled in the Ming Dynasty or at the beginning of the Ch'ing Dynasty are included in the *Ch'in-ting ku-chin t'u-shu ch'i-cheng* 欽定古今圖書集成, an encyclopaedia edited in the fourth year of Yung-cheng 雍正 (1726), 10000 chüan. In the chapters on the customs of various districts in 'chih fang tien' 職方典, we can find many paragraphs regarding the invitation of Tzū-ku. The term Tz'ü is often used.

54) *Ch'in-ting ku-chin t'u-shu ch'i-cheng*, chih fang tien, chüan 946.

month the women and girls in the villages summon Tz'ü-ku to divine their fortunes for the coming year." In *Sung-kiang-fu chih* (松江府志)⁵⁵, "Within the first ten days of the first month after sunset the girls invite tz'ü-ku to divine." In *Yung-ping-fu chih* (永平府志)⁵⁶ it is even said that tz'ü-ku is named Tzū-ku. There are many other examples, too numerous to relate.

The term Tz'ü-ku is also wrongly read as Ch'i-ku, written as 戚姑. On this account the story of Empress Ch'i (戚夫人) of the Han Dynasty is also attached to the divination by some writers. In *Yüeh-ling kuang-i*⁵⁷ we read, "In the T'ang Dynasty the people invited the Ch'i-ku goddess on a night of the first month. Probably she was Empress Ch'i of the Han Dynasty. The empress died in the latrine, therefore they went to the latrine to invite her. Nowadays, she is commonly called 七姑, The Seventh Lady, because of the similarity of the sound of the two words." Tzū-ku is also called Kêng San-ku (坑三姑) or only San-ku, because in some places the latrine is called mau kêng (毛坑). This term is found even in the Sung Dynasty. In *T'an yüan*⁵⁸ the goddess is addressed thus.

In the above it has been determined that Tzū-ku is Tsê-ku, meaning the goddess of the latrine. In many books it is said that the people go to the latrine to invite her because she died there and became the goddess of that place. But I think this is exactly contrary to the fact. It is because they go to the latrine to take the sieve or broom, that the story is so told. We have said that the basis of the invitation of Tzū-ku is the sieve and broom divination. But in China in the villages the sieve, especially the dust sieve, and the broom, are often put in the latrine, because the latrine is at the same time a place for keeping the dust. Therefore, they must first go to the latrine to take the sieve or broom before the divination. That the sieve for washing rice or the sieve for keeping cooked rice is used for the divination is only a development of later times. But, the conception of spirit-possession is very strong in the mind of the people. Consequently, the magical power is personified and they say Tzū-ku, the goddess of the latrine, takes possession of the sieve or broom.

However, the conversion of the conception of the divination from the magical power-possession to the spirit-possession does not stop here.

55) *ibid.*, chüan 696.

56) *ibid.*, chüan 61.

57) *Yüeh-ling kuang-i* 月令廣義, by Fêng Ying-ching 馮應京, who became a chin-shih in 1592, 25 chüan. An almanac of the year, containing many legends and strange stories. Chüan 5.

58) note 15.

Hence, the story of Tzū-ku is invented. The ghost of one who has died an unnatural death is generally believed to be most fearful and most powerful. The latrine is a place where an ill-treated woman goes to weep or even to commit suicide. The story in *I yüan* was invented under this condition. In *Su Shih's* account and in other later writings to say she was killed in the latrine is only to make her more pitiful. The idea of rewards for the good is also very strong in the mind of the people, so that it is said that the Heavenly Emperor took pity on her and appointed her as the goddess of the latrine. The story of Ho Mei may be a true one, but anyhow it is attached to the divination under such conditions.

The veil, shirt, skirt and shoe that are used to decorate the sieve or broom, are all results of the personification. So are also the praying, the beating of drum and the singing of the song 'The dung of the horse smells sweet'. The broom is not much like a human figure, therefore a straw figure is made in its place. There is no way of making the sieve like a woman, so that in some places it is supposed to be the sedan chair of the goddess. Nevertheless, the personification still goes on. An extreme expression is found in the fact that the goddess sometimes takes possession of a person. In *Mêng-hsi pi-t'an*⁵⁹ we find an instance of such an extreme case. It is as follows:

"In one year of Ching-yu in the home of Wang Lun, on account of the invitation of Tzū-ku, a goddess descended and took possession of his daughter. The goddess confessed that she was one of the girls in the harem of the Heavenly Emperor. She could write literary compositions, which were rather clear and beautiful. Now some of her writings have been published under the title 'Works of a Girl Immortal' (女仙集). She could write different styles of characters. What she wrote was vigorous and different from the common styles li (the square plain style) or chuan (the seal style). She gave her writing styles altogether more than ten names. Wang Lun was an old friend of my father and his sons are my friends. Therefore, I have personally seen what she wrote. Sometimes even his family could see the appearance of the goddess herself. But only the upper part of the body above the waist could be seen; it was like that of an ordinary girl. Below the waist the body was enfolded by clouds."

VII. SUMMARY

(1) The fu chi, roughly speaking, began at the end of the Southern Sung Dynasty. It is performed in two ways: (a) by holding a sieve; (b) by hanging a sieve. In later days the sieve of the first kind is replaced by a stick.

⁵⁹⁾ note 14.

(2) The fu chi by holding a sieve comes directly from the invitation of Tzū-ku. The Tzū-ku goddess is invited with a broom or a sieve. The fu chi comes from the invitation with a sieve.

(3) The basis of the invitation of Tzū-ku with a sieve is the sieve divination, which is also found in ancient Greece, Scotland, India, etc.

(4) The story of Tzū-ku is only a later addition to the divination due to the influence of the conception of spirit-possession.

(5) In the article we say nothing about the origin of the fu chi by hanging a sieve. Very probably it comes from another form of sieve divination: "The sieve is tied to a thread, by which it is held up"⁶⁰. But this form of sieve divination is not found in Chinese sources. It may be that it directly becomes a form of fu chi under the influence of the other form of fu chi and has no connection with the invitation of Tzū-ku.

A supplement:—Just as the present article went to press, The Museum of Oriental Ethnology received the second volume of *Shina minzoku shi* (支那民俗志), by *Nagao Ryuzo* (永尾龍造), published in March of 1941 in Tokyo. There is a long section in it about the invitation of Tzū-ku (pp. 519-540.). The author puts special stress on the different instruments used in different places for inviting the goddess. He classifies them into five groups: (1) a ladle of willow-branches or a wooden ladle, (2) a washing sieve, a bamboo skimmer or a bamboo basket, (3) a dust sieve or a broom, (4) a gourd ladle or a gourd, (5) a stick of straw. In view of the fact that the sieve is also used for divination in Europe and India in a similar way, we may safely say that the sieve is the original instrument, and the various kinds of ladles, skimmer and basket are used in place of it because of their similar nature. In some places the ladle is used for the head of the goddess, and other material is used for the body. This is to make it look more like a human figure. Therefore, it is not necessary to change what I have said about the invitation of Tzū-ku.

60) W. Henderson, p. 233.