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The Open Court

A MONTHLY MAGAZINE

Devoted to the Science of Religion, the Religion of Science, and the
Extension of the Religious Parliament Idea

Founded by EDWARD C. HEGELER.



FUDO, THE JAPANESE GOD OF WILL-POWER.

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JIKOKUTEN, GUARDIAN OF THE EAST.

From a terra cotta in the Todaji temple at Nara (8th century).

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FUDO-MYOWO.

BY DAISETZ TEITARO SUZUKI.

FROM the earliest days of Buddhism in Japan, one of the most popular gods is found to be Fudō, whose Sanskrit name is Achala, the Immovable. His name and his general features and attitude suggest the fierceness of his original character. One might think that such a terrible-looking god could represent only evil, destroying every vestige of goodness in the world. But in fact he is worshiped as one who will grant his devotees all the worldly advantages that they may ask of him. Hence his extreme popularity.

According to the Shingon sect, he is the central figure of the five Vidyārājas (lords of magic¹) or Krodharājas (gods of wrath), and is considered a manifestation of Vairochana Buddha himself (Dainichi²). His original vow, that is, his *samaya*, (every supernatural being is supposed to have made some kind of vow in the beginning of his existence,) was to remove all possible obstacles which lie in the way of Buddhism.

¹ Ordinarily, five or eight Vidyārājas are mentioned, though there are some more belonging to this class of gods. The five most commonly grouped are Yamāntaka (Dai-itok), Trailokyavijaya (Gōsanzé), Achala (Fudō), Vajrayaksha (Kongo-yasha), and Kundali (Gundari). They all seem to represent Shiva in his destructive form. Theoretically speaking, every Buddha or Bodhisattva has his Krodhakāya, his angry expression, as well as his female counterpart; but the number of the known gods of wrath is less than that of the Buddhas.

² Dainichi, the great illuminator of the universe, is, according to the Shingon, the central figure of the world-system. It is through him that all existence is made possible, and that life can be enjoyed in its purity though filled with various defilements. That Fudō came to play such an important role in the pantheon of Buddhism is probably due to the fact of his being an incarnation of this all-powerful godhead, Vairochana. But some sutras consider him a manifestation of another Buddha.



AN IMAGE OF DAINICHI (VAIROCHANA).

The Buddha is here attended by Fudō (Achala) and Kwannon (Avalokiteshvara). From the Shimpuku-ji, Kyoto.

In one of the *kalpas*³ concerning the worship of this god, we are told how to represent him in a picture: "Paint Achala the Messenger⁴ on good silk,⁵ put on him a red garment worn across the body, and his skirt too should be red. One braid of his hair hangs down over his left ear. He looks somewhat squintingly with his left eye. A rope is in his left hand, and a sword is held upright in his right. The top of the sword resembles a lotus-flower, and on its handle there is a jeweled decoration.⁶ He sits on a rock made of precious stones. His eyebrows are lifted, and his eyes expressing anger are such as to frighten all sentient beings. The color of his body is red and yellow. When you have thus painted the god, take the picture to the bank of a river or to the seashore,⁷ where he should be enshrined according to the established formula."⁸

³ Rules of ritual, forming a special class in the body of Buddhist literature. They are known in Japan as *Himitsu-Giki*, mystic rules of worship.

⁴ His title is sometimes "messenger," sometimes "lord of magic," but sometimes simply "the honorable." In these may be traced various stages of the historical development of the god.

⁵ This is not always required. To make the prayer especially efficacious for the suppression of evil doers, the devotee may paint the god with his own blood on cloth taken from a grave. It is sometimes recommended to paint him on any good cloth.

⁶ In none of his pictures so far I have come across is this observed.

⁷ Hence his association with waterfalls and springs.

⁸ This is taken from the book containing the "Mystic Rites of the Dhāraṇi of Achala the Messenger." A little further down, however, we have a somewhat different description of the god. He is now to be reddish-yellow, wearing a blue garment across the body, but still with a red skirt. His left-side braid is the color of a black cloud. The features are boyish. A *vajra* (thunderbolt) is in his right hand and a rope in his left. From both ends of his mouth his tusks are slightly visible. His angry eyes are red. Enveloped in flames he sits on a hill of stone.

In the *Trisamaya-achala-kalpa* (there are two versions of this book, one in three volumes and the other in one), the god is supposed to wear a skirt of the color of red earth and sits on a lotus-flower. In another place he holds a *vajra*, not a sword, in his right hand and a sacred staff in his left. The eyes are somewhat reddish, and his whole person is enveloped in flames.

These representations, though differing more or less in detail, are essentially alike. Quite another form of the god is described in the "Book of Rites concerning the Ten Gods of Wrath" as follows: "He has a squinting eye boyish features, six arms and three faces each of which has three eyes, and he wears boyish personal ornaments. The front face is smiling; the right is yellowish, with the tongue sticking out, the color of which is bloody; the left face is white, has an angry expression, uttering the sound "hūm." The color of the body is blue; the feet rest on a lotus-flower and on the hill of precious stones. He stands with a dancer's attitude, and has power to keep away all evil ones. The entire person wrapped in flames has a circle of rays about it like the sun. The first right hand has a sword, the second a *vajra*, the third an arrow. Of the left hands the first holds a rope with the thumb standing, the second the Prajñāpāramitā Sūtra, and the third a bow. The god wears a Buddha crown which is the symbol of Akshobhya Buddha.

There are some other forms of the god, more or less unlike the foregoing ones, but I will not go into details here. Suffice it to state in a general way that he assumes different features according to the different purposes for

This is the way Fudō is generally painted, and in most modern pictures or images of him we see flames enveloping his whole body, which is blue;⁹ and the seat on which he sits or stands is not always decorated with gems; it may be merely a huge block of stone, or a sort of tiled pedestal. His forehead has in most cases some wrinkles in the form of waves, which is in accord with the description in the "Vairochana Sūtra."

The meaning of all these various symbols is explained as follows in the introductory part of the *Trisamaya-achala-kalpa* (the three-volume version): "There is a deep significance in his being one-eyed,¹⁰ for this is the symbol of the utmost ugliness, and compels Achala to think of his own shortcomings and defects which stand in such contrast to the noble, perfect and superior features of the Buddha. Furthermore, this ugliness tends to frighten away evil beings. The seven knots on the top of his head signify the seven branches of *bodhi*, wisdom. One braid of hair hanging down his left shoulder typifies his merciful heart, which is sensitive to the sufferings of all lowly and much-neglected beings. . . . The sword in his right hand is meant to wage war against evils in the same way as a worldly warrior fights against his enemy. The rope in his left is to bind those devils whose unruly spirits have to be kept under control by the Buddha's restraining hands. The rock on which he sits is the symbol of his character, that is, immovability. Like the mountain pacifying the tumultuous waves of the great ocean, the rock represents the eternal calmness of the mind. It also represents spiritual treasure as the mine conceals in its bosom precious metals and stones. The fire enveloping the deity signifies the burning up of all the impurities that are attached to the human heart."

Another interpretation of Fudō appears in I-Hsing's "Commentary on the Vairochana Sūtra" (Vol. V, pp. 46f.): "This god has in a long past attained his Buddhahood upon the lotus pedestal of Vairochana; but owing to his original vow he now manifests himself in his early imperfect form, which he had at the time of the first awakening of his great heart. Becoming the

which his help is invoked. For instance, when he is requested to suppress the enemy, his body is to be painted yellow, with four faces and four arms. Sharp tusks are protruding from the mouth. His expression of anger is most intense, and encircled in burning flames his attitude is such as to make one think that he is going at once to devour an entire army of the enemy.

⁹ This tallies with the "Rites of the Ten Gods" as well as with Vajrapāni's description of the god in his "Sūtra on the Baptism of Light."

¹⁰ In the foregoing descriptions, squinting; but in some images both eyes look in the same direction.

Tathāgata's servant and messenger, he is engaged in various menial works. He holds a sharp sword and a rope in his hands in obedience to the Tathāgata's wrathful commands to destroy all sentient beings.¹¹ The rope represents the four practical methods of preaching, woven out of the heart of knowledge [*bodhichitta*]. The rope will ensnare unruly ones and keep them in check. The sharp sword of wisdom is to cut off the interminable life of karma possessed



FUDO IMAGE AT KOYASAN.

Kōyasan is the sacred place of the Shingon sect.

by unruly spirits, in order to let them obtain a great transcendental existence. When karma's seed of life is removed, all idle windy talk will come to a final end. Therefore the god tightly closes his mouth. The reason why he sees with one eye only, is to show that when the Tathāgata looks about with his eye of sameness¹²

¹¹ Meaning "every evil tendency to be found in us."

¹² In another place this is understood as meaning the uniqueness of the Buddha's spiritual eye-sight which is one, and not two nor three.

there is not a sentient being who is to be forgiven. Therefore, in whatever work this god is concerned, his whole object is to accomplish this. His firm position on the pile of huge stones signifies the immovable spirit with which he works for the confirmation of the pure heart of knowledge."

Fudō in fact is the incarnation of obedience, faithfulness, and loyalty. He becomes the messenger of Vairochana, for he wishes to perform for him the servile duties of transmitting the august orders and messages of his lordship. As he is commanded, he goes among the poor as well as the noble; he makes no discrimination, and his only anxiety is to execute all the offices, whether good or bad, entrusted to him by Vairochana. He therefore symbolizes all the good virtues of a slave. The knots of hair hanging on the left side of his head denote the number of generations of the master whom he has served. The lotus-flower on his head¹³ is the vehicle on which he will convey his master to the other shore of life eternal, that is, to the Pure Land. In his menial capacity he will most faithfully serve his worshippers who are at the same time his masters. I am told that the reason his left eye looks in a different direction from the right, is because this is a noticeable peculiarity among the servile class.

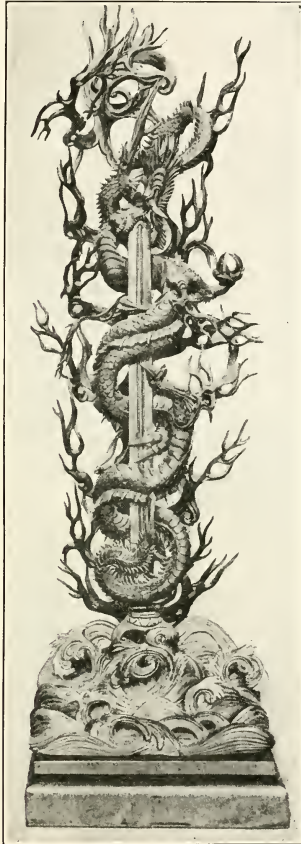
In the *Trisamaya-achala-kalpa* (one-volume version), we are advised to "make an offering to this holy one with a part of our own food and drink. As his original vow is to give himself up to lovingkindness, he is willing to serve all those who hold and recite his *mantrams*;¹⁴ his desire is to enslave himself, as we may see from his one-eyed form. He accepts our left-off food and if we thus remember him at each meal will be sure to protect us against the evil demons including Vināyaka (Ganesha) and will remove for us whatever obstacles or difficulties we may be encountering."

The following story is told of Fudō in I-Hsing's "Commentary on the Vairochana Sūtra" (Vol. IX; Chap. 3, "On the Removal of Obstacles"): When the Tathāgata received enlightenment all the sentient beings in the universe came to greet him, except the great lord of the heavens, Maheshvara, who was too proud to come and salute the Buddha. Thereupon, Achala was despatched to summon him to earth. But the lord of the heavens surrounded himself, though quite unbecoming to his dignity, with all sorts of filthy things so that nobody would dare approach him; for, how-

¹³ This lotus-flower is not mentioned anywhere in the *kalpas* in connection with the worship of this god.

¹⁴ Mystical verse.

ever proficient one may be in magic arts, filth is supposed to be the most efficient means of disenchantment. Achala was not to be



SYMBOLICAL REPRESENTATION OF FUDO.

From a figure in the Musée Guimet.

disheartened. All the filth was immediately devoured and disposed of. Seven times the lord refused to listen to the protest of

Achala, saying that he was the supreme master of the heavens and had no cause to yield to any one's request. But the divine messenger proved to be more than a match for the haughty lord; for he firmly set his left foot upon the half-moon on the forehead of the lord himself, while his right foot was placed on that of the noble consort. Both expired under the pressure, but in the meantime they realized the significance of the holy doctrine as disclosed by the Buddha, and were promised their future attainment of Buddhahood. This explains the meaning of certain pictures of Fudō in which he is depicted as stamping on two figures, male and female.

Fudō is commonly found attended by two figures and less frequently by eight; but his attendants are said sometimes to be as many as thirty-six or forty-eight. When there are two attendants, the one standing on his left, a young boy, is called Kinkara, and the other to the right who looks like a malicious demon is Chetaka. According to the "Mystic Rites concerning the Eight Boy-Attendants to the Holy Lord of the Immovable," Kinkara is a boy of about fifteen years and wears a lotus crown. His body is white. His hands are folded together and between the forefingers and the thumbs he holds a *vajra*¹⁵ crosswise. He wears a celestial garment as well as a Buddhist robe. The other boy, Chetaka, is of a red lotus color, and his hair is tied in five knots. In his left hand there is a *vajra* and in his right a *vajra* staff. As he cherishes anger and evil thoughts, he does not wear a Buddhist robe but a celestial garment only which hangs about his neck and shoulders. But in most of the popular pictures Kinkara holds a lotus-flower. He embodies wisdom whereas Chetaka means bliss.

Fudō sometimes is represented in the form of a sword around which is entwined a dragon or serpent holding the triangular point of the sword in its mouth. This is known as Kurikara Fudō and is supposed to be the symbolical representation of the god. But there is apparently a confusion here, for Kurikara, who is a king of the Nāgas or dragons and who seems to be identical with the Sanskrit Kālīka, is one of the eight attendants and is probably to be identified with Anavadapta.

There are many variations of Fudō partly because various legends are connected with his life, and partly because the artist or worshiper is free to have a figure of the god as he has conceived him in vision or otherwise. Still another cause of variation, and a strong one, is his extreme popularity.

¹⁵ This thunderbolt becomes the magic wand of Tibetan Buddhism.



TRADITIONAL TYPES OF FUDO.

This god is associated with the waterfall, and his image is generally carved in a rock near one. The devotee bathes himself in the flowing water as a token of purification, while devoutly offering his prayers to the flame-enveloped deity. In Tokyo there are many Buddhist temples dedicated to Fudō, and one of the most famous is that at Fukagawa on the south side of the river Sumida. In the midst of the cold season, many earnest followers of the god, men and women, can be seen bathing in the waterfalls which have been artificially constructed there for the purpose. Prayers thus offered during the cold season are considered to be especially efficacious. In former days, all these bathers were naked, but the authorities do not permit this now.

Almost all the temples in Japan issue what is known as an *ofuda*, "an honorable tablet" or slip, or *omamori*, "an honorable guard," of various kinds. This is generally a piece of paper (or sometimes a wooden board), oblong and varying in size, ordinarily from about 1×3 to about 7×15 inches, on which is printed the image of a Buddha, a Bodhisattva or one of the gods, but frequently merely a Sanskrit character or phrase, or some words of prayer which have been offered on behalf of the devotee. This *omamori* is supposed to have the power to ward off evil spirits if a man carries it about him or pastes it up on the entrance door of his residence or on the wall. Some *omamoris* or *ofudas* will even keep burglars away from one's house; some will protect the silkworm from an epidemic, while others may insure the safe delivery of a child. These are only a few of the things promised by the Buddhist gods or rather by the priest. Some sample *Ofudas* are reproduced here, they have come from the Fudō temples.

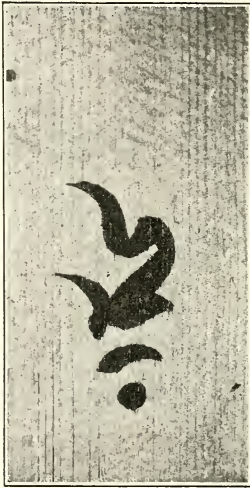
The general masses of people nowadays do not understand the full significance of Fudō worship. They go to his temple merely because he is a Buddhist god and as such is naively supposed to grant them anything they may be in need of. For instance, they may pray to him for success in races and games, or good fortune in their commercial enterprises (especially when much risk is involved, or to be free from accidents in travel. But, judging from the general tendency of his character, he seems to be especially efficient in removing all kinds of obstacles which lie in the way of one's undertaking, religious or otherwise. His qualification is more negative than positive. This is natural, for the very fact that a supreme, perfect being had to incarnate himself in this fierce, abnormal, disquieting form proves the extraordinary character of the god. His other title is "the great destroyer of hindrances."



A FUDO OMAMORI.

The original was issued by a Fudō temple in Tokyo. The stamp on the top of the picture shows that it has been properly consecrated by the priest.

When the worshiper has thoroughly succeeded in identifying himself with the god, we are told, his fire will consume all the worlds and make them one mass of flame shining like seven suns; his mouth will devour like that of the great horse the multiplicity of things; and not the least chance will be left for any evil spirit to work mischief. Thus, he is to be invoked particularly when there are difficulties or obstructions to overcome; for instance, when an epidemic is to be checked, or a drought to be broken, or a personal enemy to be destroyed, or an opposing army to be annihilated, or



御
守

AN OMAMORI ISSUED BY THE SHINSHO-JI, NARITA.

The original is a small piece of wood. The character reads *hām*, one of the symbolical letters for Fudō. The separate Chinese characters were on the paper cover and signify *omamori*.

a building to be insured against fire, storm, earthquake, etc. For the latter case, however, there is a specific ritual to be performed in which Fudō appears in a somewhat different form from the popular one.

In conclusion I will give here three mantrams used in the invocation of Fudō, the Immovable: the short, medium, and unabridged. The short one is: "*Namah samantavajrānām*"; the medium one: "*Namah samantavajrānām chanda-mahāroshana-svātaya*

日護摩供扎鏡照院
 身代山

天
 地
 人
 神
 萬
 物
 皆
 歸
 於
 一
 心
 之
 妙
 也
 此
 鏡
 照
 院
 之
 妙
 也

OFUDA FROM THE KYOSHIN-IN, A FUDO TEMPLE IN TOKYO.

INSCRIPTION ON COVER.
 (Reduced.)

hum trat hām mām"; and the longest one: "*Namah sarva-tathā-gatebhyo vishvamuphebhyaḥ sarvatā trat chanda-mahāroshana kam khadi khadi sarvavighnam hum trat hām mām.*" They have no special meaning.

The one we reproduce is the "medium" form written in the *siddham* style (Japanese, *sittan*). The Japanese way of reading it is: *Nōmaku samanda bazara dan senda makaroshada sabataya un tarata kan mam*. The cover reads, "The daily-burning-ceremony tablet, Kyōshin-in, Migawari-san." *Fudō* is sometimes represented by the characters *hām-mām* or *hām* alone. His *ofuda* is often found to be nothing but this character written in the style known as *siddham*.