



Repentance Ritual of the Emperor of Liang

By Buddhist Text Translation Society

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Repentance Ritual of the Emperor of Liang By Buddhist Text Translation Society

Buddhism isn't just about mindfulness and zen meditation. It encompasses many other practices and traditions including chanting mantras, reciting sutras, donating and bowing repentance. Bowing as a form of cultivation is not well known in the West. It is not often practiced in the Theravada tradition. However repentance is emphasized in Mahayana Buddhism, in texts such as the Avatamsaka Sutra. The goal is to bow to purify existing karmic offenses, thus clearing obstructions and paving the way for advancement on the spiritual path.

Emperor Wu of the Liang Dynasty (502-587) in China popularized bowing repentance as a dharma door. This Repentance Ritual was created under his patronage. Because of his enthusiasm in spreading religion, he has been compared to the great Indian ruler Ashoka (304-232 BCE) patron of Buddhism and the Roman emperor Constantine the Great (272-337), patron of Christianity.

This particular repentance is designed to be practiced in a monastery with bhikshus (monks) leading those wishing to repent in a week-long ceremony. The repentance text is divided into ten chapters of forty sections. Each chapter starts with a verse of praise. The main part of each chapter contains sections of texts explaining the principles of repentance interspersed with bowing in full prostration (head, hands and knees to the ground) to various Buddhas and Bodhisattvas. Each chapter concludes with a poem.

Bhikshuni Heng Jen of the Dharma Realm Buddhist Association started the translation of this text into English. Her goal was to introduce this popular East Asian practice to a Western audience. She unfortunately passed away before finishing her work. More than 15 years after her beginning, the Buddhist Text Translation Society has completed the first English translation of Repentance Ritual of the Emperor of Liang.

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Editorial Review

Review

Repentance Ritual of the Emperor of Liang aims to introduce to a Western audience a popular East Asian practice - that of bowing as a ritual form of purification against existing karmic offenses and clearing obstructions on the path to spiritual liberation. Its verses extol the virtue of bringing forward resolve, explain how a person's current suffering is due to previous deeds, and encourage the dedication of merit. --Marie Scarles, *Tricycle*, winter 2016

About the Author

The Buddhist Text Translation Society (BTTS) is dedicated to making the principles of the Buddhadharma available to Western readers in a form that can be directly applied to practice. Since the early 1970s, the Society has been publishing English translations of sutras, instructional handbooks on meditation and moral conduct, and biographies. Many of the Society's sutra translations are accompanied by contemporary commentary, based on lectures by founder Tripitaka Master Hsuan Hua. When Buddhism first came to China from India, one of the most important tasks required for its establishment was the translation of the Buddhist scriptures from Sanskrit into Chinese. This work involved a great many people, such as the renowned monk National Master Kumarajiva (fifth century), who led an assembly of over 800 people to work on the translation of the Tripitaka (Buddhist canon) for over a decade. Because of the work of individuals such as these, nearly the entire Buddhist Tripitaka of over a thousand texts exists to the present day in Chinese. Now the banner of the Buddha's teachings is being firmly planted in Western soil, and the same translation work is being done from Chinese into English. Since the 1970s, the Buddhist Text Translation Society has been making a paramount contribution toward this goal. Aware that the Buddhist Tripitaka is a work of such magnitude that its translation could never be entrusted to a single person, BTTS, emulating the translation assemblies of ancient times, does not publish a work until it has passed through four committees for primary translation, revision, editing, and certification. The leaders of these committees are bhikshus (monks) and bhikshunis (nuns) who have devoted their lives to the study and practice of the Buddha's teachings. For that reason, all of the works of BTTS emphasize the application of the Buddha's teachings in terms of actual practice.

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