

Insight from Translating the Sutra of the Buddha Proclaiming the Names of Buddhas.

從翻譯佛說佛名經說起

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◎ 引子

要聽聞萬佛寶懺難，要拜萬佛寶懺更難，要到萬佛聖城拜萬佛寶懺加倍的難，要完整拜完三週的萬佛寶懺那更是不知道怎麼說的難。那……要翻譯《萬佛寶懺》更是前面加幾個「難」的總和。2012年，我稱之為「佛名翻譯年」，何以故？那就得從我們在這一整年都進行《佛說佛名經》的中翻英工作說起。

◎ 萬佛寶懺

◎ 懺本比較

除了「大悲懺」外，中國自古以來佛教懺儀多數以「梁皇寶懺」、「慈悲三昧水懺」、「藥師懺」為主；其他的如「法華懺」和「華嚴懺」則較少聽說有人拜，而「萬佛寶懺」就更少聽聞了。那麼最早開始拜萬佛懺是始自何時？何人所倡？現已不可考了。從明朝雲南省明心法師所作的《禮佛名經卷首事儀》看，這一法門早在明朝時就有人修。至於唐、宋、元三朝，應亦不乏其人，但迄今尚未找到確鑿的資料。

無論是「梁皇寶懺」或是「慈悲三昧水懺」，都迥異於「萬佛

I. Preface

It is difficult to hear about the 10,000 Buddhas Repentance; it is even more difficult to bow the 10,000 Buddhas Repentance. It is much more difficult to bow the 10,000 Buddhas Repentance at the City of Ten Thousand Buddhas (CTTB), and it is difficult beyond words to bow the entire three-week 10,000 Buddhas Repentance at CTTB. Then...to translate the book of 10,000 Buddhas Repentance into English—the difficulty of this task far surpasses all the difficulties mentioned previously totalled. I called the year 2012 “year of the Buddha names translation.” Why is this? I can explain from our undertaking the task of doing the translation of *The Buddha Speaks the Buddha's Name's Sutra* from Chinese to English for this whole year of 2012.

II. The 10,000 Buddhas Repentance

◎ Some Comparisons of the Repentance Books

Apart from the Great Compassion Repentance, the most popular repentances in China are Repentance of Emperor Liang, Water Repentance of Kindness Samadhi, and the Medicine Master Repentance. Other repentances, such as the Dharma Flower Repentance, and the Flower Adornment Repentance are less known, much the less the 10,000 Buddhas Repentance. Then when was the first 10,000 Buddhas Repentance ever bowed? Who started this practice or who were among the earliest advocates of bowing this Repentance? There are no ways for us to find out now. However, if we look at *the Preface to the Repentance Based on the*



寶懺」。前兩者都有一段很動人而真實的緣起公案。尤其是「梁皇寶懺」，更是大多數漢傳寺院所重視揀選的法會。而「萬佛寶懺」用的是《佛說佛名經》，世尊當初說這部經的本懷也不是為了後世拜懺用的，而是後人為了禮佛拜懺而找到這部經的，因此添加了些許與拜懺相應的元素，如讚佛偈等。所以《萬佛寶懺》懺本的編彙，很自然與《梁皇寶懺》一開始就為著拜懺而寫的是很不同——《萬佛寶懺》就沒有《梁皇寶懺》那種辭語上的雍容華麗以及其享譽度。

◎ 寶懺制度化

萬佛聖城購於1976年，開光於1979年，次年1980年萬佛城就開始拜萬佛寶懺了。早期拜懺，一切因陋就簡，人少少，規模小小，有時白天，有時晚上。晚上是為了讓那些白天上班的人有時間來參加晚上的拜懺，後來才正式確立為白天拜，且定下時間為廿一天或廿二天，後來方便法會拜懺的拼音版藍色懺本也出版了。由是一套完整的萬佛寶懺制度就這樣年年傳承下來，而且最終成為建立起自己口碑，且具有聖城特色的一個大型法會。

要全程拜完三週廿一天的寶懺，是相當困難的一件事情，在家人、出家人皆然。因為在家人需要工作養家糊口，出家人有廟上執事以維持道場。越洋來的居士們可能還得面對簽證一次又一次被拒的考驗，更是增加來聖城參加拜懺的困難。雖然困難重重，但四眾弟子們對這一寶懺的踴躍依舊不變；這一切都與宣公上人對這一法門的推動，以及參拜者從中修習這一法門所獲得真實利益有直接關係。

上人的開示，我們大都耳熟能詳，其中有一個頗為經典的故事：虛雲老和尚在鼓山閉關獨修期間，堅持拜萬佛寶懺。上人也說，諸佛菩薩在往昔

Sutra of the Buddha Proclaims the Names of the Buddhas, which was written by Master Ming Xin (Enlightened Mind) of Yunnan Province, we know that there were already people practicing this Dharma in the Ming Dynasty. What about people of the earlier dynasties, such as the Tang, Song, and Yuan Dynasties? We assume that there should be people practicing this Dharma as well, but so far we haven't been able to dig up evidences to back our claim.

Both of the Repentance of Emperor Liang and the Water Repentance of Kindness Samadhi differ greatly from the 10,000 Buddhas Repentance. Both of them have stories of how each Repentance came to be composed. The stories themselves were real occurrences in history and extremely touching, especially the Repentance of Emperor Liang. The Emperor Liang Repentance enjoys great popularity among most of the Mahayana monasteries and people take it seriously and choose to join it sincerely. The 10,000 Buddhas Repentance is based upon *the Sutra of the Buddha Proclaims the Names of the Buddhas*. However, when the World-Honored One spoke this Sutra his original intent, I believe, had nothing to do with the later generations' use of it as a book for bowing repentance. Over time, people added more ritual literature elements, such as the hymns in honor of the Buddha. So the 10,000 Buddhas Repentance, in comparison with the repentance books, such as the Emperor Liang Repentance which was specifically written as a repentance, naturally falls short in elegance of language, and consequently popularity, as the latter one.

◎ Repentance System Established at CTTB

The City of Ten Thousand Buddhas was acquired in 1976, and was dedicated in 1979. The Next year in 1980, the first Ten Thousand Buddhas Repentance was held at CTTB. At its beginning, everything was simple, small in scale with few participants, and not up to the standards in many aspects. Sometimes the repentance was held in daytime, sometimes at night because those who were working in daytime and could only come during the night to participate. It was later that the system of bowing the 21- or 22-day Repentance in daytime became established. Later the blue-colored 12 volume Bowing Repentance books with Pinyin was published, which made the bowing more convenient and the ritual more standardized. Eventually it earned recognition from the public and became a large distinguished CTTB-styled Dharma session.

To finish the entire three-weeks session is a very difficult thing—for monastics and laity alike. Lay people need to earn a living outside; monastics have daily monastic duties to attend to in order to keep the monastery running. For overseas lay people, they have another test—they need to face the risk of being declined the visa again and again. All these factors make bowing the full 10,000 Buddhas Repentance even more difficult. However, we see an unflagging enthusiasm in the fourfold assemblies. It must be due to the advocating efforts of the Venerable Master and also due to the direct benefits people have from practicing this Dharma.

Most of us are quite familiar with the Venerable Master's instructional talks; one of these stories was pretty well-known among his Dharma talks. The story goes that when the Venerable Master Hsu Yun was in his seclusion on Mount Gu (Mt. Drum), he practiced 10,000 Buddhas Repentance vigorously. Venerable Master Hua also said, all Buddhas and Bodhisattvas in their past lives bowed the 10,000 Buddhas

生中都是拜萬佛寶懺，他自己也拜萬佛寶懺；如果不是宣公上人的推動，我相信《佛說佛名經》更多的命運是被束之高閣。

◎ 拜不知拜

當藍色懺本出版後，拜萬佛寶懺就容易許多；但是我們這個拜有一個特點，平時我們拜懺的時候翻開來，隨著維那師的唱誦頂禮諸佛，我們亦隨著唱誦頂禮諸佛。速度快，轉眼間已是下一尊佛號。拜完之後，就把懺本合之大吉，不會再為那些佛名操心。為什麼？因為沒人會催促你，更沒人會問你其中佛名的意思。我們頂多會記得較為熟悉又有趣的佛名，例如「南無孔雀聲佛」。因為萬佛城，門外孔雀聲聲，門內佛號陣陣。一旦我們需要坐下來調出每一尊佛名來細細研究，我們就會對許多佛名根本不知所云；不知所云，偏偏還要去查每尊佛名的來歷，那才叫「一個頭三個大」。這些佛名，鮮有人肯去關心，鮮有祖師大德以這來作為講經主題。何以故？盡是佛名而已，怎麼講？一者無故事或敘事情節，二來不涉教相教理，講都不好講。所以從古至今，有以《佛說佛名經》為講經主題的，我們不妨數數，能超過一個手指頭？還是不過三？還是根本沒有？

◎ 懺本翻譯

尼羅河的水天天流，萬佛城的萬佛懺年年拜。這一年年下來，不知不覺，影響了一些西方的佛教徒。一般西方人對於禮佛叩頭是不太喜歡，更少人會正兒八經地來參加一個星期乃至三個星期的禮懺。但是經過我們一次次地拜，我們大概感動了一批西方人來參加萬佛寶懺。隨著他們的參與，他們所需要的懺本就成了問題，過去幾年他們都是隨著中文懺本的音譯跟大眾一起念、一起拜，即使是再誠心的信徒都會感覺到不自然——畢竟唱誦用的不是

Repentance, and he himself also bowed the 10,000 Buddhas Repentance. If it were not for the advocating efforts of Ven. Master Hua, I believe that the Buddha Proclaims the Names of Buddhas would be more or less destined to be sitting high yet lonely on the bookshelves rather than being widely used.

◎ Bowing without Knowing Whom We are Bowing

After the blue-colored Repentance book was published, bowing the 10,000 Buddhas Repentance has been made much easier than before. However, the way we bow the 10,000 Buddhas Repentance has one characteristic: most of time we went through the motion without truly knowing to whom we are bowing. Usually we just follow the cantor in chanting and bowing through the fast motion—after one Buddha, we quickly bow to the next Buddha. When it is over, we close the book without bothering to open it up again to study. We don't worry about those names because no one pressures us or questions us on the meanings of those names. At most, we remember some interesting Buddha names, such as "Namo Peacock Sounds Buddha," because we are impressed by the peacocks' sounds that sometimes echoed outside the Buddha Hall. It is only when we sit down to investigate the meanings of those Buddhas' names, we find ourselves totally lost and having a huge headache. We are clueless about these names because, in the past few people ever cared to investigate these Buddha names, and virtually none of patriarchs or any ancient virtuous one lectured on this Sutra. Why was it like this? I believe first it has to do with the contents of *this Sutra of the Buddha Proclaims the Names of the Buddhas* mostly—it is a compendium of Buddhas' names and contains little stories or descriptions. The second factor, if viewed from its formatting, this Sutra does not directly involve the principles. All of these factors make this Sutra very challenging to expound. We can count our fingers to see how many times that the Sutra of the Buddha Proclaims the Buddha's Names has ever been lectured in the past: five times... three, one, or none?

◎ Translation of the Repentance Book

The Nile River keeps flowing everyday, and we bow the 10,000 Buddhas Repentance every year. Over time, we have influenced some Western Buddhist disciples. It is usually rare for us to see Westerners who are keen on bowing to the Buddhas and even rarer to see Westerners who have bowed formally for one week or two weeks or the entire three weeks. After so many years of bowing, we must have moved and motivated a few Westerners to come to participate in the three-week Repentance. With their participation, there comes the need of having an English Repentance book for the Westerners to bow the Repentance. In the past, they simply followed us using the Chinese Pinyin-version books, bowed and chanted together with us to each of the Buddhas—in Chinese. I believe that the most sincere Western Buddhist disciples felt that great unease because it was not done in their mother tongue—English. With only the Chinese Pinyin version on hand, they were unable to understand the meanings of Buddhas' names. Therefore, it is compellingly urgent for us to translate and

自己的母語，而僅是拼音字母，很難領會出每一尊佛名號的勝義。所以將他們所急需的英文懺本翻譯出來，就被提出而排上工作日程。

拜懺的人目前基本上都是東方人，以馬來西亞、臺灣，中國大陸、法國等地的華人居士為主；他們看中文懺本就可以拜；越南居士們拜的是越南文懺本，但是有趣的是，越南文懺本內的佛名也都是以中式越文列出，一般越南居士照著唸和拜是沒有問題的，可是問他們裏邊是什麼意思他們是不懂的。這也就是說，他們只知道拜，而不知道所拜云何。我相信這也是越南文翻譯將要面臨的一個新課題。

起初我們在翻譯《佛說佛名經》時，本想在碰到困難時借助越南版來交互參照，以便楷定經義。一天早上，我們請來一位如來寺越南裔沙彌，請他在我們作經文英譯時手持一本越文版《佛說佛名經》來對照。翻譯了一會兒，我看他始終未吱聲，就過去看一下狀況，才得知他沒有辦法給出任何建設性的意見；因為越南文懺本也是一本純粹音譯的中式越文唱誦本，還不能稱為真正的越文譯本。在這種情況下，既無上人淺釋以為憑藉，又無祖師大德的註解可供參考，更無其他語言譯本以資參照，《佛說佛名經》中翻英的困難度就更高了。

一般的佛經，尤其是宣公上人淺釋的大乘經典，要翻成英文或西班牙文，越文或日文等，這並不難，因為上人其實已經自己作先遣部隊為我們打下一個基礎，為我們開闢一條捷徑，為我們免去為一些生澀名相頭痛煩惱，如《楞嚴經》、《法華經》與《華嚴經》。其他大乘經典即便上人沒有講過，要翻也不是很難，因為上人或許沒有解釋，但其他高僧祖師大德他們很有可能翻譯過或註釋過。有這些作基礎，我們翻譯起來不會太大困難。但是《佛說佛名經》就不同了，既然它是一部佛名「總集」，佛名之林林總總，本已令人嘆為觀止；何況不少名詞在當時由梵文譯成中文時已經就是音譯，不論它們分屬於「五不翻」中的哪個，都沒有任何說明文字留下，因此到後來就更加不可考了。

publish the English Repentance book for them.

The majority of participants in the Bowing Repentance in the past were Asians, and mostly Chinese. They came from Malaysia, Taiwan, mainland China, or from the Asian communities in France and used the Chinese Pinyin books. There were also Vietnamese disciples who followed the Vietnamese Repentance book. Interestingly, the Vietnamese language therein is Chinese-styled Vietnamese. For simple chanting and bowing for the Vietnamese, it is alright, but if you ask them exactly to what Buddhas they are bowing, they would be totally clueless. So, all in all, they bow, without knowing to whom they are bowing. This is also a pressing issue for the Vietnamese translation.

When we were translating *the Sutra of Buddha Proclaims the Names of Buddhas*, once I thought of using Vietnamese sources for reference and cross-examination so as to ensure the correct meanings of the Sutra. Thus, one morning, I invited a Vietnamese novice monk to join our translation. I asked him to cross-examine the Vietnamese version of the Sutra with the English translation of the Sutra that we were doing. However, after a while, he still remained silent after we had carried on some discussion on translation. Curious, I looked into the situation, and it dawned on me that he was unable to give any constructive suggestion because the Vietnamese Repentance book is a mere transliteration of the Chinese Repentance book—thus it is far from being a complete Vietnamese translation book. Under such circumstances, we felt we were left virtually helpless: We had neither simple explanations of Venerable Master Hua, nor any commentaries from any ancient virtuous eminent monks, nor any other reference books. Translating the Sutra from Chinese to English became even more challenging.

In general, Mahayana Buddhist Sutras, especially ones that the Venerable Master had explained before, are not too difficult to translate into English, Spanish, Vietnamese, Japanese, or other languages. Because the Venerable Master Hua had pioneered and laid a good foundation for translation by carefully explaining their meanings, we were spared the distress of translating obscure terms. This was especially helpful with the translation of *the Shurangama Sutra*, *the Dharma Flower Sutra*, and *the Flower Adornment Sutra*. Even if the Venerable Master Hua had not explained them, there were other eminent monks and Dharma masters who translated or gave commentaries on these Sutras. Using their instructions as a foundation, the work of translating Sutras becomes less daunting. However, when it comes to translating the Sutra of *the Buddha Proclaims the Names of Buddhas*, it becomes a lot more challenging as the Sutra is a compendium of the names of various Buddhas with various meanings. Many of the names, being transliteration of Sanskrit into Chinese, fall into the Five Categories of Terms Not to Be Translated (by Venerable Master Dao An). There were also no translation notes that can verify or show why they were translated in such a manner, making translation into English even harder.