

Buddhism, Xuanzang and Sri Lanka

Nadeesha Gunawardana¹

The main objective of this research paper is to identify the authenticity of the historical facts compiled on Sri Lanka, by Xuanzang. He travelled to India in seventh century C.E. Although he wanted to visit Sri Lanka, he could not visit the island owing to a famine and political unrest in Sri Lanka. He visited Kānchipuram, and there he met the chief monks of the Bodhimegehsvar and Abhayadrustra with three hundred other fellow monks. Xuanzang's records of Sri Lanka were based on, what he has heard from the above mentioned monks. In this research attention was given to compare the records of Xuanzang with the chronicles of Sri Lanka, the Divyāvadāna, the records Faxian and the Jātaka stories. Samel Beal's English translation of the Buddhist Records of Western world, (1906) and Li Rongxi's the Great Tang Dynasty Record of the Western Regions (1996) were studied. Max Deeg's unpublished English translation of Xuanzang's document strengthened my knowledge. Xuanzang reveals two stories regarding the origin of Sinhalese people. One of the stories is much more similar with the Mahāvamśa and the other is similar to that of the Divyāvadāna. The two different traditions may have been used by him to compile his records. It is important to study all these literary sources and its influence on the records of Xuanzang and this paper proposes to discuss the significance of all these aspects.

Keywords: *monks, records, chronicles, compilation, history, stories, legend*

¹ Department of History, University of Kelaniya
nadee@kln.ac.lk