

Buddhist Monks' Contribution in Cultural Relations between Ancient China and Sri Lanka

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Abstract: According to the literary sources, relationship between China and Sri Lanka has been commenced since 2nd Century BCE. Literary sources of both countries clearly depict, that the economic, political, and even religious relations have been consecutively continued since a long period between the two countries. By studying the context of relations between ancient China and Sri Lanka, it can be vividly noticed that the cultural context transmission that began to fulfil basic needs mutually, has strongly influenced the religious relations between the ancient Sri Lanka and China. Undoubting, Buddhist monks were the pioneers in continuing these relations between the two countries. Though there is a lack of evidence in written literary sources about the Buddhist monks' contribution in religious affairs even in a country like Sri Lanka, where history has been written continuously, Royal Historical records of China and other religious records provide fine examples in this regards. This information has been hidden from the research world because they have been written in Chinese language. Not only the monks but also nuns have supported in establishing religious interactions between the two countries. Buddhist monks who played vital role in religious relations can be identified in four types as follows.

- Sri Lankan monks travelled to China
- Indian monks who visited Sri Lanka first and then travelled to China
- Chinese monks who visited Sri Lanka
- Chinese monks who reported details on Sri Lanka not visiting the country but staying in India.

This research paper basically focused on the identification of the monks and their dedicated in religious relations between ancient China and Sri Lanka during 2nd century BCE to 10th Century CE. Chinese historical sources and comprehensive reports written in Chinese were referred during the research.