

A Comparative Study of Buddhist Stories from Korea and Sri Lanka containing the karma motif

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This is an introductory study on Buddhist stories of both Korea and Sri Lanka. A comparative analysis of a Korean Buddhist story selected from a medieval historic text with a Sri Lankan story from an important Sinhala literary canon. For this purpose, a preliminary survey to the both source books is going to be made focusing on characteristics of texts and the manner of composing stories. Expected outcomes through this study are summarized in three below: (1) an introduction to the source books for the researchers of both Korea and Sri Lanka; (2) an introductory analysis and comparison of Buddhist stories of both Korea and Sri Lanka for succeeding further researches; (3) a comparative appreciation of the role of the karma motif in the earlier Buddhist narrative literature of both countries. The *Samgukyusa*(三國遺事), published in the 13th century by the monk Ilyeon, and the *Saddharmaratnavaliya*, also from the 13th century are the object of this study. Both are records of an oral tradition committed to writing by erudite Buddhist monks, now considered classics of the Buddhist literary canon. The study will focus on the motif of Karma through a comparative analysis of both texts. This motif, originating from the Buddhist concept of the cycle of reincarnation, or Samsara, is employed as a narrative device in these texts to describe the influence of previous lives on the present life, thus appearing in Buddhist texts in both Sri Lanka and Korea. However, the role played of the Karma motif appears to differ somewhat in the two texts. It is assumed that it is caused by the differences in intentions of the two scholar monks who recorded these oral tales. A comparison of the narrative structure and the plots of the two texts will also be undertaken. While the plots are of structure is of significance in the understanding of the role of Karma in the two texts, the study reveals that the narrative structure shares similarities with the features of the picaresque novel.