

The story of the Bodhisattva's sacrifice of his body to a hungry tigress is one of the most popular *jātakas* among Northern Buddhists. However, this famous story is not included in the canonical Pāli *Jātaka* collection, and so it is not regarded as one belonging to the Theravāda or Southern Buddhist tradition. But the story is, in fact, very popular among the Theravāda Buddhists, too. The presenter saw at least two painted versions of the story in Sri Lanka, and Prof. Peter Skilling has recently pointed out that some of post-canonical *jātaka* stories are also found in the middle-age Pāli works composed in Thailand. How this *jātaka* has come to be known to Theravāda Buddhists is obscure, but there was much intercourse between Southern and Northern Buddhists all through the long history of Buddhism. There is evidence that as long ago as the early 5th century the story was known to Sri Lankans. When Faxian 法顯 (ca. 320-420) stayed in Sri Lanka, during his travels, ca. 410-412 C.E., he witnessed and heard the king's messenger proclaim the meritorious deeds of the Bodhisattva on the occasion of the Tooth Relic Festival, in which the tigress story was included. Although there are numerous versions of this story in Northern Buddhist texts, one very unique text, which was translated into Chinese by the Chinese monk, Fasheng 法盛 (ca. 406-479 C. E.), remained rather unknown and so it slipped from scholars' attention. Fasheng also went on a pilgrimage to India and to Sri Lanka about 20 years after Faxian, taking nearly the same route. Both Faxian and Fasheng visited the place near Taxila where the Bodhisattva sacrificed his life. Fasheng most probably obtained and translated the original text of the story, from the manuscript, or, from an oral source. As for this version, only his Chinese translation is still extant, which may be the version Faxian referred to in his travel account. In this presentation, Fasheng's tigress story will be analyzed, comparing it with other versions of the same story. The presenter will try to elucidate each component of a narrative as having its integral meaning in the context, through which the narrator intended to propagate a certain religious idea or belief, and show that this intent was the cause of the dynamism underlying the production of various versions of Buddhist narratives.