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ARTICLE



After the Buddha's Nirvāṇa: the *Mofa* concept of Chinese Buddhism and its rise to prominence

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ABSTRACT

The 'concept of *mofa* 末法 [latter dharma]' had a tremendous impact upon East Asian Buddhism. Formerly, it was widely believed that the *mofa* concept originated from Indian Buddhism and was a complete set of concepts involving the three periods of *zhengfa* 正法 [true dharma], *xiangfa* 像法 [semblance dharma], and *mofa* 末法 [final dharma]. Jan Nattier previously noticed that, within the original Indian Sanskrit canon, a corresponding word for the Chinese word '*mofa*' seemingly cannot be found. This article builds upon the foundation of her research to confirm that Indian Buddhism originally only contained the concept of '*famie*' 法滅 [extinction of dharma] that includes the two periods of *zhengfa* and *xiangfa*. Starting from the middle of the sixth century ce, after Indian Buddhism's 500 years of *zhengfa* and 1,000 years of *xiangfa* had ended, Chinese Buddhism added a new period: the '10,000 years of *mofa*.' It can be said that the '*mofa* concept' is an invention of Chinese Buddhism.

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1. Preface

Yabuki Keiki's revelation of the '*Mofa* Perspective' 末法觀 that spanned from the end of the Northern Dynasty clear into the Sui and Tang era, shows that the idea of *mofa* 末法 [final dharma] was widely known throughout Buddhism during this time.¹ In fact, the notion came to constitute one of the ideological underpinnings of that period in Chinese Buddhist history. Both Monk Shi Xinxing's 信行 (540–594) Sanjiejiao 三階教 (Cult of Three Stages) and Tanluan 曇鸞 (c. 476–542) and Daochuo's 道綽 (562–645) Pure Land Buddhism can be considered results of *mofa* as a concept – as can when Monk Jingwan 靜琬 (540–639) went to Fangshan's 房山 Mount Shijing 石經 (Mount

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Originally, the main part of this article was titled "*Famie* and *Mofa*: Two Kinds of Eschatology After the Buddha Attained Nirvāṇa." It was submitted to a workshop on the topic "Review and Prospects for the Historical Study of Medieval Religions," convened by Professor Sun Yinggang 孫英剛 at Zhejiang University 浙江大学 in November 2016. It was split into several papers that were published one after another. In May 2017, I participated in the 'Religious Academic Lecture' at Renmin University of China 中國人民大學 with the first draft of this article and received comments and corrections from Professors He Jianming 何建明 and Wang Song 王頌. In November 2017, I took the second draft of this article to participate in the International Seminar on the New Frontiers of Medieval Research Regarding China in the Middle Ages Where Textuality and Materiality are Intertwined, which was hosted by Professors Lu Yang 陸揚 and Ye Wei 葉偉 of Peking University. I also had received comments and corrections from Professor Rong Xinjiang 榮新江, Dr. Chen Zhiyuan 陳志遠, and others. I would like to express my gratitude to all them.

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Baidai 白帶) to engrave scripture in the rock faces. What is referred to as the ‘*mofa* concept’ is not only a Buddhist historical prophecy; it is also part of Buddhism’s theory of historical decline. To use prophetic words from the Buddha himself: The time while the Buddha is in this world is the time of a pure, unadulterated Dharma; after the Buddha reaches nirvāṇa, the Sangha becomes degraded, Buddha Dharma withers, and in the end Buddhism will die out.² Such a progression indicates that after the Buddha reaches nirvāṇa, Dharma will gradually decline over the course of three continuous, distinct stages: *zhengfa* 正法 (true dharma), *xiangfa* 像法 (semblance dharma), and *mofa* – hence the fact that these three terms are often grouped together as the ‘Three Periods’ 正像末三時說.³ Definitions and explanations of the Three Periods in Buddhist literature are of complicated origins and comprise a rather large amount of abstract teachings. Put simply, *zhengfa* is the period wherein people’s belief in Buddhism is the firmest and purest. The *xiangfa* period is the point where people only have appearances that are akin to *zhengfa*; people can only use such appearances to maintain a belief in the superficial elements of Buddhism. Come the *mofa* stage, Dharma is about to die out but has not yet done so. At this time, teaching styles and the general mood of society are filthy, and people do not believe in Dharma. After the *mofa* period, Buddhism dies out, and it is only with the coming of the Maitreya Buddha to the realm that Dharma will once again flourish.

The academic world generally points to Huisi’s 558 ce publication of *Lishi yuanwen* 立誓願文 (Tract of Vow) as symbolic of Chinese Buddhism’s formation of the *mofa* concept.⁴ In the text, Huisi says:

Śākyamuni spent more than 80 years in the secular realm expounding Buddha Dharma. He used the wisdom of Dharma to guide and benefit people, but once his Nidana with the world ended he decided to attain nirvāṇa. After reaching nirvāṇa, his *Zhengfa* remained in the world for 500 years; after *zhengfa* left, *xiangfa* came to the world for 1,000 years; and after this is *mofa*, which shall remain for 10,000. I, Huisi, was born in the 82nd year of the *mofa* period (*yiwei* 乙未 Year) in the Great Wei, Nanyu Province 南豫州, Ruyang Prefecture 汝陽郡, Wujin County 武津縣.⁵

From Huisi’s perspective, after the Buddha reached nirvāṇa, the 500-year-long stage of *Zhengfa* began, and it was followed by the 1000-year-long period of *xiangfa*, which finally gave way to the 10,000-year-long *mofa* Period. Huisi’s most recent *yiwei* year was 515 CE, which was simultaneously the year he was born and the 82nd year of the *mofa*. Accordingly, the first year of the *mofa* time should be considered 433 CE, indicating that Huisi recognised 1067 BCE as the year in which the Buddha attained nirvāṇa. The rationale as to why Huisi recognised this year is to this date unclear, and it is certainly not the agreed upon conjecture of everyone who accepted the *mofa* concept at the end of the Northern and Southern dynasty periods. The principal reasons for this are firstly that wordings like ‘500 years’ or ‘1,000 years’ vary when concerning the two periods of *zhengfa* and *xiangfa* dharma, and secondly that there are differing opinions as to the year when the Buddha attained nirvāṇa. As a result, a number of different approximations regarding when the *mofa* period began simultaneously existed during the end of the Northern and Southern dynasties.⁶ After the Tang Dynasty began, however, the opinion that the Buddha reached nirvāṇa during the 52nd or 53rd year of King Mu of the Zhou Dynasty’s reign – roughly 948 BCE – became more widely accepted, relatively

speaking.⁷ Using this as a starting point to make a chronological calculation, and then adding the 1,500 years that constitute the *zhengfa* and *xiangfa* periods, the time during which the *mofa* period began should be 552 CE. When Jingwan made inscriptions at Mount Shijing, at any rate, he recorded the second year of Zhenguan 貞觀 (628 CE) as the 75th year of the *mofa* period, meaning that he posited 552 CE as its beginning.⁸

The *mofa* concept was primarily popular in China during the sixth to seventh centuries. During the Southern and Northern dynasties up to the early Sui and early Tang dynasties, the concept was mainly propagated by two Buddhist traditions – that is, the Sanjiejiao and Pure Land Buddhism. Although both sects spoke of *mofa*, the strategies they considered appropriate for responding to it differed. These differences ultimately resulted in major contradictions. After the middle Tang Dynasty period, the Sanjiejiao gradually disappeared while Pure Land Buddhism, on the other hand, not only continues to this day but has also spread to Japan and the Korean Peninsula during the sixth century. Both Japanese and Korean Buddhism have recognised either the 52nd or 53rd year of King Mu of the Zhou Dynasty's reign as the year in which the Buddha attained *nirvāṇa*.⁹ That said, they also believe that the *zhengfa* and *xiangfa* periods both last 1,000 years and, accordingly, Japanese and Korean Buddhism consider 1052 CE to be the first year of the *mofa* period.¹⁰ This seemingly hints that the so-called *mofa* concept and its implications are tremendously flexible and that it is certainly not a concept that was set in stone and clarified by early Indian Buddhist scripture.

It is a fact that the two periods of *zhengfa* and *xiangfa* that precede the period of *mofa* are a set ideological category in Indian Buddhism referred to as *famie* 法滅 (extinction of dharma). Superficially, the *famie* concept and the *mofa* concept seem to be little more than the difference between the 'Two Periods' 二時 and 'Three Periods' 三時, yet behind these notions is some important historical information. Because the academic world has inextricably mixed the concepts of *famie* and *mofa* for such a long period of time, many valuable historical clues have constantly been forgotten. For example, the Three Periods concept mentioning *mofa* contains the two stages of *zhengfa* and *xiangfa*, yet a good deal of academics directly equate the *famie* concept – which only involves the two stages of *zhengfa* and *xiangfa* – with the *mofa* concept, which contains the three periods of *zhengfa*, *xiangfa*, and *mofa*. Or they take the *mofa* concept to include the *famie* concept so that they come to attribute any instance of the fading of Dharma or the persecution of Buddhism by secular forces to be an example of *mofa*, without exception.¹¹ There are also some scholars who advocate for a distinction between the *famie* and *mofa* concepts.¹² Yet none of these opinions seem to have garnered enough attention from the Chinese academic world. So, should we ultimately differentiate between *famie* and *mofa*? If we do decide to distinguish between the two, what new perspectives and viewpoints will this bring to our study of Buddhist history in the Middle Ages? This article seeks to explore that question.

2. *Famie*: historical prophecies in early Indian Buddhism

In the early years, Japanese and Western Buddhist scholars mostly translated the Chinese word *mofa* into Sanskrit as *saddharma-vipralopa*. Strictly speaking, *saddharma* means a 'Wonderful Dharma' or 'Genuine Dharma,' while *vipralopa* means 'destruction' or 'extinction.'¹³ Looking at their literal meaning, the Sanskrit should

literally be translated into Chinese as ‘*zhengfa* dies out’ 正法消亡; that is, *famie*. Such a corresponding translation is obviously founded upon the premise that *mofa* and *famie* are the same and allows a comparison to be made. Étienne Lamotte disagrees with this traditional corresponding translation. He proposed that the Chinese word for *mofa* should be translated into Sanskrit as *paścima-dharma*. The English translation of his book also rendered *saddharma-vipralopa* as ‘the disappearance of the Good Law.’¹⁴ This meaning obviously does not directly correspond to the Chinese noun phrase ‘*mofa*.’

Jan Nattier believes that there is no such thing as *paścima-dharma* or any other similar words in Sanskrit or Pāli literature. Moreover, Lamotte himself has never provided concrete evidence of a corresponding translation of this in Sanskrit and Chinese. Therefore, Jan Nattier did not accept Lamotte’s new, corresponding Sanskrit translation of *mofa*. She found three corresponding texts between Sanskrit and Chinese (none of these Sanskrit texts were compiled before the eleventh century) and even referred to six Tibetan scriptures to prove that the corresponding words for *mofa* in Sanskrit could be neither *saddharma-vipralopa* nor *paścima-dharma*, as Lamotte had posited. She even believes that no Sanskrit or Tibetan word has a fixed meaning that corresponds with that of the Chinese word *mofa*. However, within the different expressions of Sanskrit, the Chinese word *mofa* generally has the meaning of the Sanskrit phrase *paścimakāle*, which means ‘in the latter time.’ Accordingly, the Chinese idea of *mofa* should mean ‘the age after [*xiangfa*]’ or ‘[Buddha Dharma’s] final stage.’¹⁵ Being understood from this perspective, this word is sometimes translated as ‘latter days of the law’ in English.¹⁶ This disagreement between Lamotte and Jan Nattier has highlighted the fact that *famie* and *mofa* are originally two words with two different meanings and that *mofa* probably cannot be found in original Indian Buddhist scriptures. Of course, the majority of the surviving Sanskrit Buddhist scriptures were produced later than the Buddhist scriptures in Chinese translation, and some were even rendered in Sanskrit according to their Chinese translations.¹⁷ There is the possibility that a corresponding Sanskrit word for *mofa* cannot be found because we are yet to discover the scripture that contains this word; however, the possibility that the word *mofa* does not appear in any Indian Buddhist scriptures at all can also not be ruled out.

Although Lamotte and Nattier disagree about what the corresponding Sanskrit translation for the Chinese word *mofa* should be, they do share the common opinion that the initially identified Sanskrit term of *saddharma-vipralopa* is absolutely not the corresponding translation for *mofa*.¹⁸ After Jan Nattier, more and more scholars have come to believe that not only do the Chinese words *famie* and *mofa* have different meanings, but they also do not share the same corresponding Sanskrit vocabulary. The term *famie* can be traced back to a clear Sanskrit term, but *mofa* can only be shown to be similar in meaning to a variety of different Sanskrit terms. In other words, *mofa* is a word that does not have a fixed translation in Sanskrit. Accordingly, there are already scholars who have begun to regard *famie* – instead of *mofa* – as an important, original concept of Indian Buddhism.¹⁹

Lamotte did not carefully investigate the differences between the Chinese words *mofa* and *famie*, but he did realise that *famie* has a different meaning than *mofa*. As for Jan Nattier, on one hand, she inherited and expanded upon Lamotte’s doubt over the Sanskrit origins of the word *mofa*, but on the other she neglects the ideas about how different iterations of Sanskrit can lead to the words *mofa* and *famie*, as proposed by

Lamotte. However, Nattier still does not make clear distinctions between the *mofa* concept and the *famie* concept. Why is this? It is likely because Nattier attaches special importance to proving that, from a linguistic studies standpoint, the Sanskrit for *mofa* is merely a variant from the Sanskrit for *moshi* 末世 (age of the decline of the Dharma). She contends that when Buddhist texts speak about *xiangfa*, they more often than not mention the word *moshi*; furthermore, from a linguistic standpoint, the Sanskrit word *moshi* can also easily morph into the word *mofa*. *Moshi zhi fa* 末世之法 (dharma of the latter age) can even be understood to mean *moshi*. As a result, when she uses etymology and etyma to discuss the history of the word *mofa*, she believes that *moshi[fa]* 末世 [法] typically appears together along with *zhengfa* and *xiangfa*. From her perspective, Buddhism's *mofa[shi]* possess all elements of the Three Ages (*zhengfa*, *xiangfa*, and *mofa*). Therefore, the *famie* concept that only speaks of *zhengfa* and *xiangfa* is one and the same as the *famie* concept that includes all Three Periods.²⁰ However, *mofa* and *moshi* cannot be simply regarded as the same. According to the *mofa* concept, *mofa* is merely the stage when Buddhism enters the period of withering away and is certainly different from *moshi*, which points to the world being extinguished. If considered from a historical standpoint, such doubts can perhaps be raised; for example: given that the Sanskrit for the words *mofa* and *famie* is different, the meaning of the original two cannot be the same. Why does the *famie* concept only encompass the two ages of *zhengfa* and *xiangfa* while the *mofa* concept encompasses all three ages? Why does *mofa* need to be added to follow the *zhengfa* and *xiangfa* ages? And, also, when did the concept of Two Periods morph into the Three Periods?

According to what is known from Chinese translations of Buddhist scriptures, when the *famie* concept prevails, there is at most language indicating the Two Periods of *zhengfa* and *xiangfa*, but there is certainly no mention of the third stage of *mofa*. The *famie* concept is undoubtedly an inherent element of traditional Indian Buddhism. Within Indian Buddhist scriptures, the Buddha used many metaphors to illustrate that before and after Śākyamuni's life there were many past Buddhas, and there will be many future Buddhas as well. It was explained that the Dharma they propagated in the world would sooner or later be degraded after they attained nirvāṇa and that no Dharma could persist forever. Śākyamuni's Dharma also ultimately must decline and come to an end – for as long as there is Dharma, it will face the conclusion of *famie*.²¹ Such is determined by the two fundamental doctrines of Buddhism – that all *sajskāra* are impermanent and that the world is in a ceaseless state of reincarnation. Buddhism believes that every world and everything in each world will not exist forever without being extinguished. Everything has a stage of generation and extinction. Dharma must not only go with the arising and extinguishing *kalpa* 劫 but also with *nidāna*'s arising and extinguishing. *Nidāna* (*yinyuan* 因缘 [causes and conditions]) is impermanent and changing, so Dharma thus cannot be endlessly without change. Moreover, when one *kalpa* ends, everything in the world is destroyed, and Dharma will certainly be no exception. In the next *kalpa*, another Buddha will emerge in the world and teach people of the Buddhist *zhengfa*. Of course, this is just the beginning of another cycle of creation and eradication.

Given that *famie* is unavoidable and can only occur after the Buddha reaches nirvāṇa, the descriptions of *famie* in Buddhist scriptures all consider the Buddha's nirvāṇa to be a prerequisite. The time when the Buddha was in the world and the time

after he attained nirvāṇa naturally came to constitute the two distinguished phases of the *famie* concept. Both the words *zhengfa* and *xiangfa* appear in the four Āgama sutras that are thought to best reflect original Buddhist thought and appearances. The word *zhengfa* is widely seen throughout the four sutras of Āgama, including *Ārgha-āgama*, *Madhyama-āgama*, *Saṃyukta-āgama*, and *Ekottara-āgama*. In the Chinese translations of these Buddhist scriptures, when the word *zhengfa* is used by itself, it typically refers to ‘Genuine Dharma’ 真正之法. This is a fancy moniker for Dharma used to distinguish it from the *fa* of non-Buddhist doctrines. However, these scriptures still make no comparisons with *xiangfa*, and there are no indications that *zhengfa* and *xiangfa* are two sequential stages. The word *xiangfa* only appears in the *Saṃyukta-āgama* (which includes the *Bieyi Za ahan jing* 別譯雜阿含經), and this is rather intriguing. Considering the time before and after this work was completed, the word *xiangfa* in *Saṃyukta-āgama* is undoubtedly the earliest usage in the initial stage of Buddhism.²² The example of *xiangfa* that appears in the *Saṃyukta-āgama* – and means a Dharma similar to the *zhengfa* – is even closer to the original meaning from the early period of Indian Buddhism.

The 32nd *juan* of the *Saṃyukta-āgama* reads:

The Buddha said: such is the way things are, Kāśyapa 迦葉! There is the turbidity of fate, the turbidity of afflictions, the turbidity of *kalpa*, and the turbidity of sentient beings. These five causes lead to the decline of people’s virtuous cultivation: they have bad results from flawed cognition, and they treat false insights as truth; their master enacts many precepts, but they have little respect for learning. Kāśyapa! Take when a *kalpa* is nearing its end, for example. The true treasure has not died, but many false treasures have appeared in the world that resemble it. Once these false treasures appear in the world, the true treasure has disappeared. Such is the way things are, Kāśyapa! When the *zhengfa* is near dying out, there will be the Semblance Dharma 相似像法; when Semblance Dharma enters the world, *zhengfa* has died out. Take a ship in the ocean, for example. If a ship bearing many treasures sinks, the treasures quickly sink. But *zhengfa* is not like this ship; rather, it disappears gradually. The Buddha’s *zhengfa* cannot be hurt by the element of earth, nor can it be harmed by the elements of wind, water, or fire. At the point when evil sentient beings are born unto the world and they take pleasure in, want to, and actually perform multitudes of evil things, they will come to say that *zhengfa* is a false Dharma and that their false Dharmas are *zhengfa*; they will deem false precepts true precepts and consider the true precepts to be false. Such Semblance Dharma is imbued with confusion, so the *zhengfa* will hide away. Kāśyapa! Such are the five *nidāna* that can make the Buddha’s *zhengfa* disappear.²³

The Dharma similar to *zhengfa* is the original meaning of the so-called ‘Semblance Dharma’ 相似像法. After the Buddha attains nirvāṇa, *zhengfa* will invariably be thoroughly destroyed, but it will not immediately vanish; rather, this will slowly happen according to a process. The stage where Buddha Dharma gradually moves towards a point of dying out is precisely the Semblance Dharma stage. During this process, the Buddha’s *zhengfa* will gradually sink as the ‘Semblance Dharma’ emerges – this is termed ‘Extinguishment of Zhengfa’ 正法則滅. It is apparent that *xiangfa* is near a designated stage that directly follows *zhengfa*. Furthermore, words such as *zhenbao* 真寶 and *weibao* 偽寶 here are used as metaphors, while Semblance Dharma points to a form of Dharma that merely seems similar to Dharma – one that is a false imitation of *zhengfa*.²⁴ The *zhengfa* and *xiangfa* here are merely two continuous phases that come successively before

and after one another, but there is no clear-cut talk of a *zhengfa* of 500 years or a *xiangfa* of 1,000 – this can be regarded as a prototype for the Two Periods Concept 正像二時說. The fifth *juan* of the *Chu sanzang ji ji* 出三藏記集 [Collection of Documents related to the Translation of *Tipiṭaka*] contains ‘Yuyi’ 喻疑 [Clarifying Doubts], which was written by Kumārajīva’s disciple, Sengrui 僧叡 (355–439), and states, ‘In the [previous] 500 years, there are many people who attained enlightenment, and there were very few who were unable to. A time when the majority attained enlightenment can be referred to as *zhengfa*. Over the following 500 years, people only discussed right and wrong, each insisting on various viewpoints; few attained enlightenment, and most did not. A time when a small minority attained enlightenment can be referred to as *xiangfa*; it is similar but not genuine, vanished on account of people.’²⁵ Along with serving as circumstantial proof for the Semblance Dharma as stated in *Samyukta-āgama*, this also shows that the concept of *mofa* is still yet to appear. In the age of *xiangfa* only people of the ‘Five Impurities’ will enter the world.²⁶

In the 25th *juan* of the *Samyukta-āgama*, the story of Aśoka is used to provide the backdrop for a detailed portrayal of the Buddha’s prediction that Dharma will be destroyed one millennium after he attains nirvāṇa. It also details how in the future state of Kauśāmbī there will be all manner of improper behaviour occurring within the Sangha that undermines Dharma. During this time, only two people will be able to inherit the Buddha’s *zhengfa*: one is an *arhat* called Xiuluotuo 修羅陀, and the other is a *trepitaka*-master 三藏 by the name of *dizi* 弟子. But both of these inheritors of *zhengfa* die in an internal conflict between Buddhist sects, and from this point on there is never again another capable of passing on genuine Buddha Dharma.²⁷ As a result, Dharma is completely destroyed.

The symbolic significance of this story lies in the fact that the Buddha believed that the direct cause of the disaster that would lead to the extermination of Buddha Dharma would come from within the Buddhist religion and not from without. *Samyukta-āgama* was translated in 443 CE by Guṇabhadra during the Liu Song Dynasty. It is generally believed that the content of the 25th *juan* of the *Samyukta-āgama* is likely supplemented by content from several other smaller scriptures related to the Āgama after the original *juan* was lost. However, the story of *famie* in Kauśāmbī was first added into *Shijia Famiejin Yuanji* No. 33 釋迦法滅盡緣記第三十三, the fifth *juan* of *Shijia pu* 釋迦譜 [Genealogy of Śākyamuni], written by Sengyou. It was later incorporated into *Famiejin* No. 23 法滅盡二十三, the sixth *juan* of *Jinglü yixiang* 經律異相 [Varying Forms of Scriptures and Vinaya Texts], by Baochang 寶唱 (d.u.).²⁸ This proves that, at the latest, the Chinese Buddhist world began to regard the ‘story of the ruin of the Dharma’ as the content of the *Samyukta-āgama* by the beginning of the sixth century. Even if the 25th *juan* cannot be directly considered part of the original Indian compilation of the *Samyukta-āgama*, from essentially the very beginning it can doubtlessly be considered a part of the Chinese translation of the *Samyukta-āgama*.²⁹

Jan Nattier compared the ‘story of *famie* in Kauśāmbī’ with 13 texts by Chinese, Tibetan, and Khotanese sources, and she believes that the earliest existing text should be regarded as that of an anonymous translator during the Western Jin Dynasty, titled *Foshi biqu Jiazhanyan shuofa mojinjie 120 zhang* 佛使比丘迦旃延說法沒盡偈百二十章 [120 *Famojin* Verses of Kātyāyana spoken by the Buddha’s envoys].³⁰ It is relatively clear that in 306 CE, during the Western Jin Dynasty, An Faqin 安法欽 (d.u.) translated the same story

of ‘*famie* in Kauśāmbī’ in the work *Ayuwang zhuan* 阿育王傳 (Skt. *Asokāvadāna*).³¹ The idea that after the Buddha is extinguished his prophecy that Dharma will also die out in Kauśāmbī became a relatively fixed notion of ‘[total] *famie*’ and came to constitute a major, representative theme of *famie* throughout Buddhist circles during the Northern and Southern dynasties. It was not until the middle of the sixth century that the newly translated Buddhist scriptures continued this tradition of *famie*.³²

Although a Chinese translation of the *Samyukta-āgama* is not available until the Liu Song Dynasty, it is generally believed that roughly 100 years after the Buddha attained nirvāṇa there were schisms between Buddhist sects, and a second Buddhist council formed. The *Samyukta-āgama* was principally passed on by Theravada of the early Buddhist schools and Sarvāstivāda, which later broke off from Theravada.³³ Furthermore, although *Abidamo da piposhan lun* 阿毘達磨大毘婆沙論 [Skt. *Abhidharma-mahā-vibhāṣā-sāstra*] was translated in the time of Xuanzang 玄奘 (602–664), it is generally believed that the work first appeared around 150 ce and is also a treatise of Sarvāstivāda. The *Abhidharma-mahā-vibhāṣā-sāstra* uses the words that Buddha said to Ānanda before his death, wherein he stated that the Zhengfa of Buddhism could be disseminated for a millennium, and perhaps even longer, but continued to say, ‘Because women will be allowed to join the Sangha, my *zhengfa* will be shortened by 500 years.’³⁴ In addition, within the text, it clearly states that Buddhism has never been able to stay in a given world eternally. Among the many past Buddhas, *zhengfa* died out as soon as some of them attained nirvāṇa; for others, *zhengfa* was extinguished seven days after they reached nirvāṇa. After the Śākyamuni Buddha attained nirvāṇa, *zhengfa* could be passed on for a millennium before it died out. Such is already a remarkable feat.

Looking at a combination of the *Samyukta-āgama* and *Abhidharma Mahāvibhāṣā Sāstra*, Sarvāstivāda – which broke off from the original Buddhist Theravada School – pays special attention to the question of *famie*. Sarvāstivāda is also very likely the first school to use the *xiangfa* concept.³⁵ According to their conception, after the Buddha went away, Dharma gradually declined, leading to the *xiangfa* phase. Furthermore, approximately 1,000 years after the Buddha’s attainment of nirvāṇa, the Buddha’s *zhengfa* will be extinguished. This is the original *famie* Concept of Indian Buddhism. There is no clear concept within the Āgama indicating that *zhengfa* will last for 500 or 1,000 years and *xiangfa* will last for 1,000 years. Later works of Buddhist *abhidharma* and *vinaya* have gradually clarified both phases and their respective lengths.³⁶ It’s evident that the prophecy of *famie* is not necessarily one that the Buddha stressed in particular. It is rather an outcome that early Buddhism developed into fixed stages. However, judging from descriptions in Buddhist scriptures, *famie* is an early prophecy of the Buddha himself, who stated that after he attained nirvāṇa, Buddhism would develop in accordance with a trend that is irreparable and irreversible.

3. The *Famie* and *Mofa* concepts

As mentioned earlier, Jan Nattier believes that Sanskrit’s *paścimakāle* (Ch. *moshi*) could have morphed into the word *mofa* as a result of linguistic evolution.³⁷ That is to say, the *moshi* and *mofa* in Buddhist scriptures sometimes bear the same meaning. Nattier paid attention to the fact that Buddhist scriptures translated by Dharmarakṣa

(Zhu Fahu 竺法護 [230?–316]) in the late third and fourth centuries of the Western Jin Dynasty began using the Chinese word *moshi*. There are many examples of this in his translations of scriptures; such phrases, for example, as ‘future *moshi*,’ ‘coming *moshi*,’ ‘*moshi* after the Buddha’s nirvāṇa,’ and ‘final *moshi*’ are frequently seen throughout his translation. Dharmarakṣa uses the term *moshi* to express the idea that after the Buddha attains nirvāṇa, Dharma will begin a state of decline. This is also the final stage before Dharma is extinguished. It can even be said that the world following the Buddha’s nirvāṇa has already entered a state of *moshi*. Furthermore, the term *mofa* was first seen in the *Lotus Sutra* as translated by Kumārajīva (Jiumoluoshi 鳩摩羅什; 344–413) in 406 ce. Dharmarakṣa’s translation of *Anxingpin* 安行品, the seventh *juan* of *Saddharmapuṇḍarika Sūtra*, *Zheng fahua jing* 正法華經 (*Lotus Sutra*), reads, ‘After attaining nirvāṇa, the Buddha desired to announce the scripture. He then returned to a state of peace and ease.’³⁸ The corresponding text in the ‘Anle xing pin’ 安樂行品, fifth *juan* of Kumārajīva’s translation of the *Saddharmapuṇḍarika Sūtra*, *Miaofa lianhua jing* 妙法蓮華經 (*Lotus Sutra*), reads, ‘After attaining nirvāṇa, the world entered *mofa*, and the Buddha desired to announce the scripture. He then returned to a state of peace and ease.’³⁹ By comparing the two translations, it is obvious that Kumārajīva’s translation has the additional phrase ‘the world entered *mofa*,’ which Dharmarakṣa’s lacks.

In Classical Chinese, the original meaning of the word *mo* 末 is ‘the top of a tree,’ and is an antonym of the word *ben* 本. Besides its meaning of ‘situated at the last place of a line,’ the word *mo* also contains a kind of value judgement indicating ‘certainly not important.’ In the context of Classical Chinese, *mofa* and *moshi* are two completely different words. *Mofa* 末法 can be understood as ‘low level,’ ‘low quality,’ or ‘the last law.’ For example, Duan Ye 段業 (302–401) of the Sixteen Kingdoms Period once advised Lü Guang 呂光 (337–399) not to ‘rule this divine land of morality by the *mofa* of Shang Yang 商鞅 (390–338 BCE) and Shen Buhai 申不害 (385–337 BCE).’⁴⁰ In other words, the draconian laws of Shang Yang and Shen Buhai are regarded as a low-level or low-quality method of governing when trying to resolve fundamental problems. The meaning of *mofa* here is also found in some Buddhist literature. For example, the ninth *juan* of the *Foshuo Guanfo sanmeihai jing* 佛說觀佛三昧海經 (The Buddha-preached Sutra on the Ocean-Like Samādhi of the Visualization of the Buddha), translated by Buddhahadra during the Eastern Jin Dynasty, reads, ‘Great Buddha [Maitreya]! He takes pity on sentient beings born in the *mofa* period.’⁴¹ Kumārajīva’s translation of *Mahāprajñāpāramitāsāstra* in 406 ce, *Da zhidu lun* 大智度論 (Commentary on the *Mahāprajñāpāramitā-sūtra*), states the following in its 67th *juan*: ‘The people of the North are in the *mofa* period; their afflictions have not been eradicated.’⁴² At the end of the fifth century, Daosheng 道盛 (active in the fifth century) said to the Emperor Wu of the Southern Qi Dynasty (r. 482–493), ‘Now that we are using *mofa*, how can we ever recover our lost ground?’⁴³ The application of *mofa* in these three examples is very likely similar to Duan Ye’s meaning when he used the word ‘*mofa*’ to admonish Lü Guang; he means it cannot solve problems at their roots, and it is certainly not an important method of ruling. It is instead a low-level, low-quality way of ruling. In Buddhist scriptures, it is doctrine outside of the Buddha’s *zhengfa*. Similarly, when the phrase ‘the world entered *mofa*’ appears in Kumārajīva’s translation of the *Lotus Sutra*, we seemingly cannot completely rule out an understanding of *mofa* here that is derived

from the original Chinese meaning of the word. Moreover, this is an instance in which foreign scholars have not paid enough attention to the usage of this crucial word.

The word *moshi* appears frequently in Classical Chinese texts – for example, ‘*moshi* of the Yin Dynasty’ and ‘*moshi* of the Qin Dynasty’ – and refers to dynasties such as the Shang Dynasty and Qin Dynasty with clearly understood parameters for the duration they lasted before entering their terminal periods. It is thus only with words that indicate historical periods of specific, well-defined quantities of years such as *monian* 末年 (Final Year) and *moji* 末季 (Final Season) that we can see the original meaning of *moshi* as it exists in Classical Chinese.⁴⁴ For a period of time that is not limited to and lasts longer than the few hundred years typical of a single dynasty – a period that is marked by a gradual tendency towards decline – Classical Chinese usually uses the word *shuaishi* 衰世 (declining age), which literally means ‘era of upheaval and decline.’ The connotation of *shuaishi* is only forged via comparisons it makes with other words; for example, it is the antonym of the words *zhishi* 治世 (governed period) and *shengshi* 盛世 (prosperous period).

Whether we are discussing *moshi* or *shuaishi*, both original meanings are without ‘eschatological’ notions that the world will end, and this is because Classical Chinese typically believes that the world is eternal and will never end. Take Bian Shao’s 邊韶 (active in the second century) ‘Laozi Epigraph’ (Laozi ming 老子銘) for example, which reads, ‘Heaven and Earth have the capacity to last forever’ (天地所以能長且久者) and so on and so forth. This proves that directly up until that time, few in China imagined Heaven and Earth would fall apart, the world would come to an end, or other notions to this effect.⁴⁵ Therefore, before Buddhism was transmitted to China, *mofa* indicated a method of ruling that was decidedly not important, *moshi* pointed to the terminal period of a dynasty, and *shuaishi* indicated types of political evaluations. These words are fundamentally unrelated to any imaginings about the ending of the world.

When Classical Chinese translations of Buddhist scriptures use the term *moshi*, it occasionally retains its original meaning. Take the two instances in which the word appears in the Kumārajīva translation, for example. But the implications of the word *moshi* as used in Chinese translations of Buddhist scriptures are somewhat different. Nearly all of the usages of *moshi* that occur in such scriptures point to the decline of Dharma that occurs after the Buddha attains nirvāṇa. To some extent, this word carries the meanings of ‘Chaotic Period’ (*luanshi* 亂世) and *shuaishi*, but only in the religious sense. It does not make assessments from a political perspective. *Mofa* in Chinese translations of Buddhist scriptures sometimes refers to the Buddha’s prediction that future generations will enter the state of *moshi* wherein Dharma will not be pure again. As a result, Buddhist cosmological perspective indicates the arising and extinguishing *kalpas* – that after a world is destroyed, it will eventually be reborn again. As a result, in Chinese translations of Buddhist scripture, the word *moshi* only takes on the terminal implications of the ‘ending of the world’ in specific contexts.

Within Kumārajīva’s translations, there are likely only two usages of the word *mofa*, but there are many instances of the word *moshi*. There are several examples of this, such as ‘Dharma reaches *moshi*’ 法末世時, ‘After *moshi* arrives, Dharma will wither’ 於後末世, 法欲滅時, and ‘the 500 years after *Moshi*’ 於後末世, 五百歲時. The ‘*hou*’ 後 here refers to the Buddha after nirvāṇa, and the word *mohou* 末後 is also commonly used in translations by Dharmarakṣa and Kumārajīva. *Mohou* means the time after the Buddha

attained nirvāṇa but not after *mofa* or *moshi*.⁴⁶ Looking at the text surrounding these examples, it becomes apparent that although roughly 100 years separated Dharmarakṣa and Kumārajīva, the meaning of *moshi* when they use it is essentially the same. Namely, it means that the Dharma will wither after the Buddha attains nirvāṇa, and it does not point to the notion that the *mofa* period will arise after the *xiangfa* stage. Additionally, Kumārajīva's translation emphasises that 500 years after the Buddha attains nirvāṇa, *zhengfa* will be extinguished. This *famie* prediction is inconsistent with the Two Periods notion that it will take at least 1,500 years before *zhengfa* is extinguished. Therefore, the instance of *mofa* that appears in the *Lotus Sutra* may bear the original Chinese meaning of the world, but there is also a chance that it can be understood as 'moshi Dharma' 末世之法, in accordance with Nattier's words. That said, it clearly does not already contain the *mofa* concept of the Three Periods notion.

It is evident that *mofa* and *moshi* were both original words in Classical Chinese. When Chinese translators of Buddhist scriptures borrowed these two words, in some contexts the words retained their original Chinese meanings. With the increased translation of Buddhist scriptures into Chinese, the two words were gradually given new Buddhist meanings, but the implications of their Buddhist definitions were not clearly fixed. This background information cannot be avoided when analysing the words *mofa* and *moshi* from a linguistic perspective. In light of this, we should first rule out an understanding wherein *mofa* and *moshi* are unconditionally equated to one another. Second, we must be alert to the reality that assuredly not every usage of the word *mofa* in a Buddhist context can be considered a manifestation of the *mofa* concept. This article intends to explore the different meanings of these words in different contexts, for if we do not make proper distinctions between *moshi* and *mofa*, then we will naturally ignore the differences between *famie* and *mofa*.

In the past, it was generally said that the *mofa* concept's origin was marked by Huisi's *Lishi yuanwen*, but there are still some who believe the concept appeared before this work and already exerted some influence before that time. For example, Tang Yongtong 湯用彤 (1893–1964) believes that by as early as the Northern and Southern dynasties period, there were already people who believed that the world had already entered the era of *mofa*.⁴⁷ Tang's assertion has had a great impact on domestic scholars, and he relied primarily on two materials to make this claim. The first material is the preface to Dharmakṣema's (Tanwuchen 曇無讖, 385–433 CE) translation of the *Mahāparinirvāṇa Sūtra* (*Da bonienpan jing* 大涅槃經) as contained in the *Chu sanzang ji ji*. The preface was written by Daolang 道朗 (d. after 439) of the Northern Liang 北涼 and reads, 'After a millennium, at the end of the *xiangjiao* 像教, although there are scriptures, people's kindness has withered, and they are without reverence and belief. A great many evil people discuss their thoughts, hindering the avenue of truth. It is evident that the remnant Dharma will be extinguished.'⁴⁸ This work also mentions 'at the end of the *xiangjiao*' and 'Dharma headed towards *mie* 遺法將滅.' Although this does mention the future extinguishment (*mie*) of Dharma, it still can only be classified as the *famie* Concept of 正像二時. Even the word 'xiangfa' does not formally appear in the work, not to mention *mofa*. The second material Tang points to is Li Shan's controversial annotation in *Wenxuan* 文選. In 'Inscription on an epitaph' 碑文, the 59th *juan* of *Wenxuan*, there is a work by Wang Jianqi 王簡栖 (d.u.) titled 'Toutuo Temple Tablet Inscription' 頭陀寺碑文 (Inscription for the Toutuo Temple) that reads:

‘Zhengfa has died out, *xiangfa* has faded’ 正法既没，象教陵夷。Li Shan’s 李善 (630–689) annotation of this adds, ‘Dharmakṣema wrote: “Śākyamuni Buddha’s *zhengfa* shall remain in the world for 500 years, his *xiangfa* for 1,000, and his *mofa* for 10,000.”’⁴⁹ If we accept Li Shan’s annotation as true, then it appears that by the Northern Liang state of the early fifth century, Dharmakṣema’s translations already contained all three elements – *zhengfa*, *xiangfa*, and *mofa* – that constitute the Three Periods *mofa* concept. However, the reliability of Li Shan’s annotation is certainly worthy of doubt.⁵⁰

It is worth noting that Daolang’s preface and Wang Jianqi’s ‘Inscription for the Toutuo Temple’ mentioned only the terms *xiangjiao* 像教 or *xiangjiao* 象教 (Resemblance Teaching) but never *xiangfa* or *mofa*. Li Zhouhan 李周翰 (active in the eighth century) of the Tang Dynasty commented on Wang Jianqi’s work, writing: ‘*Xiangjiao* 象教 refers to the use of images to educate people’ (象教，謂為形象以教人). This is the exact meaning of both instances of *xiangjiao* 像教 and *xiangjiao* 象教; moreover, it’s clear that neither of these two words can be equated with *xiangfa*. It is also evident that Li Shan had a misunderstanding of Buddhist terms and subsequently made a false citation. This is because within Dharmakṣema’s translations of Buddhist scriptures, there is indeed a Two Period notion wherein the *xiangfa* period follows the *zhengfa* period. For example, in the seventh *juan* of Dharmakṣema’s translation of the *Karuṇāpūṇḍarika-sūtram* (i.e. *Beihua jing* 悲華經), it is believed that *zhengfa* will last 1,000 years while *xiangfa* will only last 500 years.⁵¹ This is certainly not consistent with the notion of the Two Periods wherein *zhengfa* lasts for 500 years and *xiangfa* lasts for 1,000. It is especially noteworthy that the word *mofa* never appears within Dharmakṣema’s scripture translations. The translation of the *Mahāsaṃnipāta Sūtra*, which was deemed to be the work of Dharmakṣema after his death, does indeed say, ‘Until the *kalpa* is finished, during the *mofa* time.’⁵² However, the currently available version of the *Mahāsaṃnipāta Sūtra* was arranged into 60 *juans*, the compilation having been performed by the monk Sengjiu 僧就 (d.u.) of Zhaoti Monastery 招提寺 during the sixth year of Kaihuang (586 ce), Sui Dynasty, and – according to the *Daji jing* 大集經 (Great Collection Scripture) that compiles translations by monks of different ages such as An Shigao (d.u.), Dharmakṣema, Zhiyan 智嚴 (d.u.), Baoyun 寶雲 (d.u.), and Narēndrayaśas 那連提耶舍 (517–589) – it is clear that the present version of the *Mahāsaṃnipāta Sūtra* is not entirely composed of Dharmakṣema’s translation.⁵³ The portion of the *Mahāsaṃnipāta Sūtra* containing the word *mofa* actually does not come from the translation by Dharmakṣema; rather, it is the work of Narēndrayaśas that did not emerge until the fifth year of Kaihuang (585 CE) in *pin* 品 of ‘Huchi’ 護持 of the *fen* 分 of ‘Rizang’ 日藏, in the *Daji jing*.⁵⁴ Strictly speaking, when Narēndrayaśas says, ‘Until this *kalpa* ends, it is the *mofa* Period,’ it is also not clearly mentioning the Three Periods of the *mofa* concept because this concept assuredly does not contend that the world will have reached a time when the *kalpa* is certainly used up after the 10,000 years of *mofa*. All of these reasons prove that we cannot go along with Li Shan’s annotation and decide that Dharmakṣema’s generation already possessed the Three Periods notion of the *mofa* concept.

It is precisely as a result of the existence of Li Shan’s annotation and the 60 *juan* translation of the *Mahāsaṃnipāta Sūtra*, of which Dharmakṣema was merely one

among several translators, that many scholars have come to indiscriminately believe that during Dharmakṣema's time the *mofa* concept already existed. Moreover, when the words *mofa* and *moshi* appear in the stone pagoda's vow articles (*Fayuan wen* 發願文) of the Northern Liang Dynasty, they gradually came to decide that a consciousness of *mofa* had already emerged before the Northern Liang Dynasty. For example, during the third year of the Northern Liang Dynasty's Yuanhe 緣禾 era (434 CE), the vows of Bai Shuangqie 白雙且 in the stone pagoda read, 'I haven't enough luck, for I was born in the *mofa* ... I have a bitter fate' (自惟薄福, 生值末法, 波流苦深). In the second year of Taiyuan (436 CE), Cheng Duaner's vows in the stone pagoda state, 'I haven't enough luck, for I was born in the *mofa*, and I don't read Buddhist scriptures' (自惟薄福, 生值末世, 不觀佛典).⁵⁵ With Li Shan's annotation, *Daji jing*, and the addition of the Northern Liang stone pagoda comes the notion that the *mofa* concept first appeared in the Northern Liang Period. The notion seems double-confirmed by handed-down literature and archaeological data.⁵⁶ However, by combining the aforementioned examples of *moshi* and *mofa* that appear in the translations by Dharmakṣema and Kumārajīva, it becomes clear that the vows in the stone pagodas of the Northern Liang Dynasty lacked any new meaning exceeding the scope of the Buddhist scriptures translated by Dharmakṣema and Kumārajīva. But when we analyse the contexts in which these statements of *mofa* and *moshi* were made, it is clear that there is simply no trace of the existence of the Three Periods. The *mofa* seen here is more likely a simplification of the term *moshi zhi fa* 末世之法. Around the fifth century CE, large quantities of popular Buddhist scriptures treated prophecies about the time following the Buddha's nirvāṇa as the work's premise. Whether or not these premises were actually translated from the Indian Buddhist scriptures or were derived from the Chinese themselves, they all only contained the *zhengfa* and *xiangfa* elements, and they never mentioned *mofa*. I refer to this batch of scriptures as a 'type of Buddhist scriptures about *famie*'.⁵⁷ Given such a context, it obviously cannot be believed that the usage of *mofa* appearing in the stone tower of the Northern Liang Dynasty already contained the later Buddhist meaning of the word. At that point in Chinese Buddhism, in terms of the existing recognition of Buddhist history after the Buddha attained nirvāṇa, China was still in the midst of a period in which the *famie* concept intrinsic to Indian Buddhism was being directly inherited and followed. The indicator for when a truly explicit *mofa* notion emerged can still be considered the middle sixth century in the work *Lishi yuanwen*.

4. The ascent of the *Mofa* concept in Chinese Buddhism

In light of the distinction between the *famie* concept and the *mofa* concept previously discussed, it is clear that analysis over when the *mofa* concept officially came into being is no longer a question of how an Indian Buddhist concept was accepted in China. The question is rather about how, given a specific historical background, Chinese Buddhism came to transform and innovate upon the ideas of the Indian Buddhist Classics.

Regarding the *mofa* concept's ascent, academic circles initially believed it began as a result of campaigns to eviscerate Buddhism by Emperor Taiwu of the Northern Wei Dynasty and Emperor Wu of the Northern Zhou Dynasty. The latter of these two events in particular caused an unprecedented rise in awareness about the *moshi* crisis

wherein Dharma perishes – 佛法將滅 – among Buddhist circles. They came to believe that in the Northern and Southern dynasty periods they had already reached the *moshi* period of Dharma's coming extinguishment. As a result, the suppression and persecution of Buddhists by external forces seems to have directly caused the ascent of the *mofa* concept.⁵⁸ However, the persecution by Emperor Wu took place in 578, which is 20 years after Huisi's *Lishi yuanwen*. If we deem this work credible, then it means that the Chinese Buddhist community already considered itself to have entered the *mofa* period before Emperor Wu's persecution. Within Indian Buddhism's *famie* concept, the Buddha predicts that Dharma will perish because it becomes corrupted from within the Sangha, not because it is persecuted by outside forces. As a result, the campaigns to rid Dharma by Emperor Taiwu and Emperor Wu at most verified the historical certainty of the *famie* concept, but they aren't necessarily the principal reason as to why the *mofa* concept took shape.

Afterwards, Yamada Ryūjō pointed to the story regarding *famie* from the 566 CE translation of *Yuezang fen* from the *Daji jing* – written by Narēndrayaśas in Yecheng 鄴城, a city in the Northern Qi Dynasty – in which invasions by the Hephthalite Empire and the White Huns during the early sixth century CE against Indians are described. As a result of the invasions, local Indian Buddhism is suppressed and persecuted, causing the formation of the *mofa* concept and the Two Periods notion in Chinese Buddhism.⁵⁹ Such words exerted a considerable influence upon Japanese academic circles.⁶⁰ Perhaps Yamada also believes this proves that the Japanese *mofa* concept wasn't influenced by Chinese Buddhism, and consequently he put great effort in searching through Indian Buddhist scriptures for proof of the existence of the *mofa* concept. Yamada wished to comb through a line of thought that went like this: because of the Hephthalite invasion of Indians in the sixth century, this caused Indian Buddhists to develop a sense of *mofa*; next, as monks like Narēndrayaśas travelled to China from Uttarapatha, this idea was passed on and later spread to Japan.

However, there are also scholars who believe the notions that the story collected in the *Daji jing* that tells of a foreign ethnicity causing Indian Buddhism to experience hardships are inconsistent with historical facts.⁶¹ And it is even more important to note Yamada did not notice that the prototype for the *Yuezang fen*'s *famie* story is based on *Asokāvadāna*, the aforementioned 25th *juan* of the *Samyukta-āgama*, which is a tradition intrinsic to the early period of Indian Buddhism. There are many versions of this story of *famie*, but the word *mofa* has never once appeared in them, not to mention any cognition of the *famie* concept. In other words, in 566 CE Narēndrayaśas translated *Yuezang fen*, and its content merely discusses the 'Famie of Dharma in Kauśāmbī' typical of Indian Buddhism. When *Rizang fen* was translated in 585 CE, although it does mention *mofa*, it doesn't use the word with the background of the Three Periods. It seems that it is not possible to confirm that the *mofa* concept was not one brought into Chinese Buddhism from India by Narēndrayaśas.

If the *mofa* concept was not derived from the Indian Buddhist tradition, then how did it suddenly come into popularity within Chinese Buddhism during the mid-sixth century? The answer is perhaps quite simple. The number of years allotted for the *zhengfa* and *xiangfa* periods does differ within Indian Buddhism, but the Two Periods notion always adds up to 1,500 years, and this number remains, relatively speaking, consistent once Buddhism reaches China. Chinese Buddhism began pointing to strange

astronomical observations recorded in the *Commentary of Zuo* (*Zuo zhuan* 左傳) – a commentary on the *Spring and Autumn Annals* (*Chunqiu* 春秋) – during the seventh year of Duke Lu Zhuang 魯庄公 (706–662 BCE) to verify the year the Buddha attained nirvāṇa. Hence, they used the ‘words of the *Spring and Autumn Annals* regarding the Buddha’s nirvāṇa’ as a means of essentially confirming that the Buddha attained nirvāṇa during the sixth year of King Kuang of the Eastern Zhou Dynasty (607 BCE).⁶² Counting the *zhengfa* and *xiangfa* periods as 1,500 years combined, that means that it would not be until the end of the ninth century CE that *xiangfa* ends. Those writing about Buddhism before the sixth century CE originally had no need to worry about the prophecy of *famie* after 1,500 years as it was not imminent. However, for the sake of debating Daoists over whether the Buddha or Laozi came first, Chinese Buddhists gradually pushed the time of the Buddha’s life back further; accordingly, the point at which the *xiangfa* Period would start and stop was also progressively pushed back. This meant that by the fifth or sixth century, during the Northern and Southern dynasty periods, Chinese Buddhism was already on the verge of, or had already entered, the time prophesied by the Buddha wherein the *xiangfa* Period had come to an end. After this period ended, what was the next one that should succeed it? From the Buddhist conception of history, this concern presented a major problem, because according to the Buddha’s *famie* prophecy, after the *xiangfa* period ended Buddhism should vanish. And yet, despite suffering external persecution such as the calamity of Dharma, as a whole Buddhism was thriving in fifth and sixth century China. This produced a striking contrast between the Indian Buddhist prophecy of *famie* and the actual state of Chinese Buddhism at that time. Obviously, the prophecy made by the Buddha’s own words that *xiangfa* would only last 1,000 years could not be casually changed, so as a result it became necessary to have something follow the *xiangfa* Period that would not entirely violate the Buddha’s historical prediction while also attending to the current state of Buddhism and giving the religion a new period in which to develop. This might be the direct reason for the *mofa* concept’s inception during the middle sixth century. At least, the earliest existent example of the Three Periods – that is, *zhengfa*, *xiangfa*, and *mofa* – which is found in *Lishi yuanwen*, is undoubtedly predicated upon a date (1067 BCE) of the Buddha’s attainment of nirvāṇa that had been pushed back to a considerably earlier time, and it is this figure that is used to determine the start of the *xiangfa* and *mofa* periods.

In short, the time of the Buddha’s attainment of nirvāṇa was artificially pushed back in time, abruptly shifting the end of *xiangfa* from a few hundred years in the future to ‘now’ for sixth century Buddhists. This made it necessary for them to consider the religion’s direction after the end of the *xiangfa* period. By the middle of the sixth century, this had become a common problem for Chinese Buddhists that led them to spontaneously propose endless solutions. The *mofa* concept’s ascent was, at the very least, likely an accepted solution for the difficult question about what to do when *xiangfa* came to an abrupt conclusion. However, because the times when the Buddha attained nirvāṇa are not uniformly agreed upon, the time when *xiangfa* ended was also not clearly defined. As a result, the time when *xiang* was to be replaced by *mo* was also not unified.⁶³ At present, it is not even possible to verify when the *mofa* concept was proposed or who proposed it. We can only say that the occurrence in *Lishi yuanwen* is

a complete, mature incarnation of the Three Period notion (that includes *zheng*, *xiang*, and *mo*) – it certainly is not the concept's first appearance.

From the end of the Northern dynasties to the beginning of the Sui Dynasty, there were a number of Buddhist translations and commentaries on sutras wherein the Three Period concept appeared. For example, Jñānayaśas' (She'nayeshe 闍那耶舍 (active in the latter half of the sixth century) translation of the *Mahāyānābhīṣamaya-sūtra* (i.e. *Dacheng tongxing jing* 大乘同性經) of the Northern Zhou Dynasty said, '[The Buddha] even preserved all *zhengfa*, all *xiangfa*, and all *mofa*.'⁶⁴ The *Zhancha shan'e yebao jing* 占察善惡業報經 (Sutra on the Divination of the Effect of Good and Evil Actions), allegedly translated by Putideng 菩提燈 (*Bodhidīpa; d. u) during the Sui Dynasty, reads, 'Today I act for those in the future evil world when the *xiangfa* Period has ended and they must dwell in *mofa*.'⁶⁵ Compared with the so-called 'Scripture Translations,' discussion of the Three Periods appeared more in Chinese Buddhist sutra commentaries from the end of the Northern and Southern dynasties through the Sui and Tang dynasty periods. For example, Huiyuan 慧遠 (523–592 CE) of the Sui Dynasty wrote in his commentary on a Chinese version of the *Amitāyurdhyāna Sūtra* (i.e. *Wuliangshou jing shu* 無量壽經疏): 'Śākyamuni's *zhengfa* lasts for 500 years, the *xiangfa* lasts for 1,000 years, and *mofa* for 1,000 years. Once this all concludes, it is said Dharma will completely die out.'⁶⁶ Jizang 吉藏 (549–622 CE) wrote in the fifth *juan* of his commentary on the *Lotus Sutra* (i.e. *Fahua yishu* 法華義疏): 'Generally speaking, Dharma can be divided into four periods. First is when the Buddha was in the world. Second is when the Buddha died; during this time, Dharma's prestige did not change, so this period is called *zhengfa*. Third is a long time after the Buddha had died. Dharma was replaced by misconceptions, and this period is called the *xiangfa* Period. The fourth period is when Dharma has been distorted and only a sliver of it remains; this period is called the *mofa* Period.'⁶⁷ Many scholars have already provided specific examples related to this topic, and this article will not enumerate on it any more.

Limiting the number of years that make up *mofa* to 10,000 is also another factor making it obvious that the *mofa* concept has Chinese cultural underpinnings. Although there are people like Huisi who directly used the figure '10,000' for their calculations, it can't be ignored that, in Chinese, the term '10,000 years' bears the notions of 'forever' and 'a limitless length.'⁶⁸ Thus, it is not exactly correct to say that Chinese Buddhism believes the *mofa* period will last for 10,000 years; rather, the usage of the term here more likely means they are more willing to believe that, after *xiangfa*, the *mofa* stage will last for a very long time, clear up to the end of the present *kalpa*. When the number 10,000 is used in relation to *mofa*, it is purely an invention of the Chinese monks' collective imagination. This is because there is fundamentally no logic within Buddhism to support going from 500 years of *zhengfa* to 1,000 years of *xiangfa* and then suddenly making the abrupt jump to '10,000 years' of *mofa*.⁶⁹

In short, the genuine meaning of the *mofa* concept likely only came into prominence within Chinese Buddhism during the middle of the sixth century. Before this, Chinese Buddhism followed the Indian Buddhist *famie* Concept. Although there are different calculations as to when the Buddha attained nirvāṇa, as long as they propose a specific time or have based their recognition on another's proposal, they have inevitably based their 500 years for *zhengfa* and 1,000 years for *xiangfa* upon Indian Buddhism. Additionally, when confronted with the conclusion of this 1,500 years, they inevitably

encountered the question of ‘where do we go from here?’⁷⁰ Whether they were within the *xiangfa* period that was prophesied by the Buddha, or whether it was nearing its conclusion, they could add the new 10,000-year-long *mofa* period. It covered the present and extended far into the future. Not only did this solve the contradiction between the status quo of Buddhism at that time with the Buddha’s prophecy, it also provided a repositioning for the historical trajectory in which Chinese Buddhism could go following the Buddha’s nirvāṇa.

5. Conclusion

In my opinion, the *mofa* concept is an important topic within the history of Chinese Buddhism that is certainly worth being discussed at length. It should be noted that during the fourth and fifth centuries, Chinese Buddhism still possessed a natural reliance on and worship of Indian Buddhism. During the Sixteen Kingdoms of the Eastern Jin Dynasty Period, many Chinese Buddhist monks regarded Ancient India as the ‘Middle Kingdom’ and China as the ‘frontier.’ Among the monks who travelled to the west in search of scripture, there were a considerable number of them who highly praised the solemnity of Indian Buddhism and who even willingly decided not to return and permanently reside in India. Such examples prove that to a certain extent, when compared with Indian Buddhism, the Chinese Buddhism of that time lacked its own sense of autonomy and independent consciousness. It still needed to follow and imitate the principles and concepts provided by Indian Buddhism, and this included the compliance with the Indian *famie* concept through the fourth and fifth centuries. The popularity of notions such as ‘Buddhist Scriptures about Dharma’s Ultimate End’ can be understood through this context. However, the *mofa* concept constitutes a major revision to the Buddhist historical perspective as prophesied by the Buddha himself – it even amounts to a level of recreation akin to completely replacing the structural pillars of a house.

At the point where the Indian *famie* concept of the Two Periods naturally changed to the *mofa* concept of the Three Periods, it seems that the true implications of the *famie* concept had been artificially changed. Originally, Dharma was definitely going to wither after the Buddha attained nirvana; additionally, the main reason for *famie* was corruption and degeneracy emerging from *within* the Sangha. However, with the introduction of the *mofa* concept, Buddhism’s demise was no longer a matter of one or two thousand years after the Buddha’s nirvāṇa; rather, even in a world where the *xiangfa* period had ended, Buddhism could continue to exist in a special form for a very, very long time that extended clear up to the final conclusion of the current *kalpa*. This ‘special form’ refers to the notion that, given the context of a chaotic world imbued with the ‘Five Impurities’ and morals that are increasingly corrupt, considerable changes needed to be made to Buddhism, and the religion could no longer completely comply with the teachings provided by the Buddha while he was living. Scholars have pointed out that the *mofa* concept constitutes the assimilation of Buddhism into Chinese culture and promotes a simplified system of thought and practices.⁷¹ The *mofa* concept no longer points to a fatalistic conclusion wherein Dharma must decline; instead, it emphasises appropriate ways for believers to change their practices so that they can maintain a firm belief in Buddhism despite living in an evil world of the ‘Five Impurities’ in which they

find themselves. Japanese Buddhism is in a similar situation, but the changes to its teachings are more obvious. The original intent of the *famie* notion was to bring an alertness to the Sangha, strengthen the restraint they exercised on themselves, and help them to strictly abide by the teachings of the Buddha. On the other hand, the *mofa* concept indicates that within the evil world of the ‘Five Impurities,’ cultivation can be appropriately simplified and the teachings of the Buddha need not be rigidly adhered to. If Indian Buddhism’s *famie* concept is a tragic, historical fatalism, then the *mofa* concept of Chinese Buddhism can be likened to inspirational historical determinism. It even seems that the implications of the *mofa* concept have exceeded that of its original intention.

Regardless of the actual effect that the *mofa* concept had on Chinese and Japanese Buddhism, the *mofa* concept is still an effective means of reconciling contradictions existing between Indian and Chinese Buddhism with respect to the theoretical level and reality of the *famie* concept. Therefore, notions like the ‘Three Periods of *zhengfa*, *xiangfa*, and *mofa*’ and ‘10,000 Years of *mofa*’ can be deemed Chinese Buddhism’s strategic, transformative developments upon the *famie* concept of Indian Buddhism. If the *famie* Concept of the Two Periods is a feature of Indian Buddhism, then the two notions mentioned above are Chinese Buddhism’s redevelopment and reincarnation of these aspects of Indian Buddhism. From this perspective, the introduction of the *famie* concept into Buddhism can certainly be considered an important step in the China’s assimilation of Buddhism into Chinese culture, and it can also be considered a manifestation of Chinese Buddhism’s formation of an independent character and self-awareness.

Notes

1. Yabuki, *Sangaikyō*, 199–227.
2. Ishida, “Mappō shisō”; Chappell, “Early Forebodings of the Death of Buddhism”; Nattier, “A Prophecy”; Ishida, “Decline of the Dharma.”
3. Matsumoto, “Shō, zō, matsu, sanji no shisō ni tsuite”; Yabuki, *Sangaikyō*, 213–227.
4. Whether or not the *Lishi yuanwen* 立誓願文 was actually written by Huisi has been a controversial topic in the academic world, but it is now generally believed that it is an authentic document. See Chen, “Nanyue dashi Lishi yuanwen Ba”; Yūki, “Shina Bukkyō ni okeru mappō shisō no kōki”; Etani, “Nangaku Eshi no Ryūsei gammon wa gisaku ka”; Magnin, *Huisi*, 104–16; Sato, “Ryūsei gammon no mappō shisō.” Of course, there are also those who believe the *mofa* concept appeared earlier than the *Lishi yuanwen*. See the discussion below.
5. *Nanyue Si dashi Chanshi Lishi yuanwen*, T no. 1933, 46: 786c: 釋迦牟尼說法住世, 八十餘年。導利衆生, 化緣既訖, 便取滅度。滅度之後, 正法住世, 逕五百歲。正法滅已, 像法住世, 逕一千歲。像法滅已, 末法住世, 逕一萬年。我慧思, 即是末法八十二年, 太歲在乙未十一月十一日, 於大魏國南豫州汝陽郡武津縣生。
6. For details, see Zhang, “Mofa yu Foli zhi guanlian chutan”; Idem., “Mofa yu Foli guanlian zaitan.” My thanks to Mr Zhang for providing me with his previously unpublished article.
7. In the first year of the Northern Wei Dynasty of Zhengguang 正光 (520 ce), Tanwuzui 曇無最 (active at the end of the fifth, and start of the sixth, century) and the Daoist Jiang Bin 姜斌 (active at the end of the fifth, and start of the sixth, century) debated in front of emperor Ming of Northern Wei about whether Buddhism or Daoism came first. According to the *Zhoushu yiji* 周書異記 [Singular Events of Zhoushu] and *Han faben neizhuan* 漢法本內傳 [The Dharma Texts and Biography of the Han Dynasty], Tan Wuzui suggested that

Buddha attained nirvāṇa in the 52nd year of the Zhou Dynasty's King Mu. See *Xu gaoseng zhuan*, 900. *Guang Hongming ji*, 100; *Ji gujin foday lunheng*, T no. 2104, 52: 1.369; *Poxie lun*, T no. 2109, 52: 1.478b; *Bianzheng lun*, T no. 2110, 52: 5.521; etc. Within these works, some write about King Mu of Zhou's '52nd year,' and some write '53rd year.' I have done a special examination of the verifiability of the debate between Buddhism and Daoism in 520. I think it is false. At that time, Buddhism could not have pushed back the date at which the Buddha attained nirvāṇa to the Western Zhou Dynasty. The first literature to appear saying the Buddha attained Dharma in the 52nd year of King Mu should be attributed to the *Poxie lun* of the early Tang Dynasty. For details, see my essay, "Muwang wushiernian Fomie shuo de xingcheng."

8. Beijing tushuguan jinshizu & Zhongguo fojiao tushu wenwuguan shijingzu, *Fangshan shijing tiji huibian*, 1.
9. During the early Sui dynasty, Fei Zhangfang 費長房 considered whether using a traditional calculation method would cause the period of Emperor Wen of Sui 隋文帝 (r. 581–604) to be counted as the *mofa* period. In order to avoid seeing Emperor Wen as the 'bad king' of the *mofa* period, he first proposed that the *zhengfa* period after the Buddha's nirvāṇa should be calculated as 1,000 years instead of 500 years. Fei Zhangfang's calculation might be a little earlier than the calculation by Jizang 吉藏 (549–623). Since the beginning of Jizang, many have said that the Two Periods of *zhengfa* and *xiangfa* last 2,000 years. In this way, the beginning of the *mofa* period is postponed 500 years when compared to the differing '1,500 years Two Periods of *zhengfa* and *xiangfa*' period from the Northern and Southern dynasties. The widespread understanding of the year of Buddha's nirvāṇa in the Sui and Tang dynasties later influenced Korean and Japanese Buddhism.
10. Kikuchi, *Miroku shinkō no Aji'a*, 33–37. Regarding the Japanese study of the *mofa* concept, see Tamura, "Mappō shisō no keisei"; Kazue, *Nihon no mappō shisō*; Ozawa, *Mappō to masse no shisō*; Ishida, "Nihon ni okeru mappō shisō"; Marra, "The Development of Mappō Thought in Japan (I)–(II)"; Hayami, *Heian Bukkyō to mappō shisō*; etc.
11. There are many examples wherein no distinction was made between these two concepts, such as Kumoi, "Hōmetsu no genru." In the article, he regards the Three Periods notion as the *famie* concept. There is also Kumoi, "Miroku shinkō to mappō shisō." In these two articles, Kumoi regards the Three Periods notion of *zheng*, *xiang*, and *mo* as the *mofa* concept. He also believes that Indian Buddhism already contains the *mofa* concept, which is detailed in "Indo Bukkyō no mappō shisō."
12. For example, Sasaki Kyōgō ("Hōmetsu shisō ni tsuite") believes that the *famie* concept refers to a point after the Buddha attains nirvāṇa when the decadence of the Sangha leads to the decline of Dharma. He posits that the distinction between this and the *mofa* concept is that the latter points to persecution from the outside world leading to the decline of the Dharma. Nonome Satoshi ("Hōmetsu ni tsuite") emphasised that there is only the *famie* concept of Two Periods notion in the Southern Buddhist classics, and that it wasn't until Northern Buddhism that the Three Periods notion of the *mofa* concept was developed.
13. For example, Mochizuki, *Mochizuki Bukkyō dai jiten*, 5: 4, 747 a/b; Kumoi, "Hōmetsu no genru," 197; Chappell, "Early Forebodings of the Death of Buddhism," 149. Both use this translation.
14. Lamotte, *Histoire du bouhisme indien*, 211 (Webb-Boin [trans.], *History of Indian Buddhism*, 191–92).
15. Nattier, *Once Upon a Future Time*, 90–4.
16. For example, in 1994–95, several museums in the US jointly organised an exhibition of Buddhist art from the Song, Yuan, Ming, and Qing dynasties. They referred to Buddhism in this period as the Mofa Period (Weidner, *Latter Days of the Law*).
17. Karashima (trans. Qiu & Wu), *Hanyi Fodian yuyan yanji*, 14.
18. For example, in Hirakawa (compiled), *Bukkyō Kan-Bon dai jiten*, 642, the *mofa* corresponding to the Sanskrit for *carima-kāla*; this, however, is not an example of ready-made Sanskrit script, but is rather a reconstructed term. The Sanskrit corresponding to the 'time of *mofa*' 末法之時 is *paścima-kāla* or *paścime samaye*; the Sanskrit

- corresponding to the ‘mohou 末後’ is *paścima*. There are several Sanskrit expressions regarding *famie* and *fa miejin* 法灭尽 on p. 717, all of which use the word *saddharma-vipralopa*. It can be seen that the Sanskrit vocabulary of *mofa* and *famie* has been clearly differentiated.
19. See Watanabe, “Indo Bukkyō Hōmetsu shisō I”; Idem., “Indo Bukkyō Hōmetsu shisō II”; Endo, “Pāli chūshaku bunken ni arawareta Hō metsujin shisō”; Nagasaki, “Hōmetsu ni kansuru kai me to kyūsai”; Watanabe, “The Role of ‘Destruction of the Dharma’ and ‘Predictions’ in Mahāyāna Sūtras”; Watanabe, “Daijō Butten ni okeru hōmetsu to juki no yakuwari,” etc.
 20. Nattier, *Once Upon a Future Time*, 90–110. This work by Nattier studies the prophecy that in the future Buddhism is certain to decline. The book discusses the *mofa* concept of the Three Periods notion, but the cover of the book uses the Tibetan that corresponds to the Chinese word ‘*famie*.’ This indicates that she also believes the meanings of *famie* and *mofa* can be interlinked.
 21. The historical figure that is Śākyamuni probably did not use his final dying words to prophesise that Buddhism must necessarily be eviscerated. In the Pkya *Nikāya* classics of the South, there are also some who say the Dharma will last forever. Therefore, the Buddha’s prophecy about *famie* is likely the product of early Buddhism having developed to certain stages. For details, see my article, “Yindu ‘Kauśāmbi famie gushi’ zai zhongguo de chuanbo yu yingxiang.”
 22. The content of Pāli *Nikāya*’s *Samyutta Nikāya* 相應部 corresponds to the Chinese translation of the *Samyukta-āgama* (i.e. *Za Ahan jing* 雜阿含經). Nattier (*Once Upon a Future Time*, 66–89) focuses on the term ‘*xiangfa*.’ On p. 87, C.A.F. Rhys Davids’s English translation of the Pāli text is quoted, which corresponds to the Chinese translation in the *Samyukta-āgama* and the *Bieyi Za Ahan jing*. This proves that the word ‘*xiangfa*’ already exists in Pāli *Nikāya*. For the latest English translation of this part, see Bhikkhu, *The Connected Discourses of the Buddha*, 680–1, 808–9.
 23. *Za ahan jing*, T no. 99, 2: 32.226c2–13: 佛言：如是，迦葉！命濁、煩惱濁、劫濁、衆生濁、見濁，衆生善法退滅故，大師爲諸聲聞，多制禁戒，少樂習學。迦葉！譬如劫欲壞時，真實未滅，有諸相似偽寶，出於世間；偽寶出已，真實則沒。如是，迦葉！如來正法欲滅之時，有相似像法生；相似像法，出世間已，正法則滅。譬如大海中，船載多珍寶，則頓沈沒；如來正法，則不如是，漸漸消滅。如來正法，不爲地界所壞，不爲水、火、風界所壞，乃至惡衆生出世，樂行諸惡、欲行諸惡、成就諸惡，非法言法、法言非法，非律言律、律言非律，以相似法，句味熾然，如來正法，於此則沒。迦葉！有五因緣，能令如來正法沈沒。The approximate content can also be found in *Bieyi Za Ahan jing*, T no. 100, 2: 6.419b–c, in which the sentence corresponding to ‘there are five kinds of causes that can cause *zhengfa* to sink 有五因緣，能令如來正法沈沒’ in the *Bieyi Za Ahan jing* reads, “There are five causes that can cause *famie* 有五因緣，能令法滅’ (*Bieyi Za Ahan jing*, T no. 100, 2: 6.419c4–5). There is currently no Sanskrit text available, but Jan Nattier has provided the Pali translation for reference. The Pali text contains the vocabulary of ‘*zhengfa*’ and ‘*xiangfa*.’ See Nattier, *Once upon a Future Time*, 78 [n. 78]; Wang & Jin (colla. & annot.), *Za ahan jing jiaoshi*, 423–4. For basic information about the *Za Ahan jing* and *Bieyi Za Ahan jing*, see Mizuno, “Za ahan jing de yanjiu yu chuban.”
 24. Nattier (*Once Upon a Future Time*, 66–89) believes that the word ‘*xiangfa*’ cannot be translated into ‘counterfeit Dharma.’ She emphasised that in Buddhist scriptures, *Xiangfa* is often used imply the ‘shadow’ of *zhengfa* and that it is sometimes even a synonym for *zhengfa*. I believe it is necessary to comprehensively examine specific contexts in which the term *xiangfa* is used.
 25. *Chu sanzang jiji*, 234–5: 此（前）五百年中，得道者多，不得者少，以多言之，故曰正法。後五百年，唯相是非，執競盈路，得道者少，不得者多，亦以多目之，名爲像法。像而非真，失之由人。
 26. With respect to the ‘Five Impurities,’ refer to Akanuma, “Gojoku to Hōmetsu no shisō ni tsuite.” The ‘Semblance Dharma’ seen in *Samyukta-āgama* may be the original meaning of

- xiangfa*. At this time, the notion of *xiangfa* had not been calculated to last for 1,000 years, so the *xiangfa* concept must also have gone through a developmental process.
27. For details, see *Za ahan jing*, T no. 99, 2: 6.177b–180a. The second part of Nattier, *Once Upon a Future Time*, provides the specialised study of the Buddha's prophecy regarding the annihilation of the Dharma in Kauśāmbi 憍賞彌國.
 28. *Shijia pu*, T no. 2040, 50: 5.82c–83c; *Jingliu yixiang*, T no. 2121, 53: 6.30c–32a.
 29. Regarding the story of King Aśoka from *juan* 25 of the *Samyukta-āgama*, see my article, “Yindu ‘Kauśāmbi famie gushi’ zai zhongguo de chuanbo yu yingxiang.”
 30. *Jiading biqu shuo danglai bian jing*, T no. 2028, 49: 9c–12c. This scripture takes the *gāthā* form (偈頌體) and was translated into a prose type, *Jiading biqu shuo danglaibian jing* 迦丁比丘說當來變經, translated in the Eastern Jin Dynasty. See *Jiading biqu shuo danglai bian jing*, T no. 2028, 49: 7a–9c; cf. Nattier, *Once Upon a Future Time*, 157–68.
 31. *Ayuwang zhuan*, T no. 2042, 50: 6–7: 126–8. However, my article (“Yindu ‘Kauśāmbi famie gushi’ zai zhongguo de chuanbo yu yingxiang”) argues that An Faqin's interpretation of this scripture is not reliable. Nattier (*Once Upon a Future Time*, 151) believes that in the current version of An Faqin's “Aśoka Biography,” *juan* six and seven were only added at the end of the fifth century.
 32. In 566, Narēndrayaśas 那連提耶舍 (517–589) completed the *Yuezang fen* 月藏分 of *Dafangdeng daji jing* 大方等大集經, as well as the ‘Famiejin pin’ 法滅盡品 [chapter of *Fa miejin*], which is also the story of the demise of Dharma in Kauśāmbi. These Buddhist scriptures that have the main theme of ‘Fa miejin’ do not contain any element of the notion that after *xiangfa* ends *mofa* will emerge.
 33. Mizuno (“Guanyu Bieyi za ahan jing”) states that the *Samyukta-āgama* belongs to the Mūlasarvāstivāda School 根本說一切有部. Hirakawa (*Yindu Fojiao shi*, 121) believes that it belongs to the Sarvāstivāda School 說一切有部 and that the Mūlasarvāstivāda School was in Central India while the Sarvāstivāda School was in Kauśāmbi 憍賞彌.
 34. According to the *Abidamo da piposhan lun* (T no. 1545, 27: 183.918a: 由度女人出家故, 令我正法減五百歲), there was a later saying positing that the Buddha had formulated ‘The Eight Garudhammas’ especially for the females who joined the Sangha and that as long as the *Ba zunzhong fa* 八尊重法 [The Eight Garudhammas] were observed, *zhengfa* could be extended another millennium. This may also be one of the reasons why some people say *zhengfa* is 500 years while others say it could last 1,000.
 35. Due to the fact that there are not many materials about *xiangfa* and *famie* in the *Āgama Sutra*, most scholars look for the origins of the *famie* concept from Mahāyāna Buddhist classics. But the formation of Mahāyāna Buddhist classics comes at a later time than the four *Āgama Sūtras*. The *xiangfa* notion in the *Samyukta-āgama* likely deserves to have more attention paid to it than the Mahāyāna Buddhist scriptures.
 36. Logically speaking, the *zhengfa* for 500 years and *xiangfa* for 1,000 years was likely not be *famie* prophecy at the onset. Only when the *zhengfa*'s prophesised 500 years were on the verge of expiring did it become necessary to propose the *xiangfa* period that would last 1,000 years to continue upon the *zhengfa* one that had ended. Otherwise, had there been a belief from the start that after *zhengfa* there was also a 1,000-year-long *xiangfa* period, then the sense of urgency behind the *famie* concept would undoubtedly have been greatly reduced.
 37. Nattier, *Once Upon a Future Time*, 101–3.
 38. *Zheng fahua jing*, T no. 263 9: 7.108b16–17: 如來滅度之後, 欲說此經, 住於安隱.
 39. *Miaofa lianhua jing*, T no. 262, 9: 5. 37c29–38a1: 如來滅後, 於末法中, 欲說是經, 應住安樂行.
 40. *Jin shu* 122.3058: 以商、申之末法, 臨道義之神州.
 41. *Foshuo Guanfo sanmeihai jing*, T no. 643, 15: 9.690b9–11: 善哉佛子(彌勒菩薩)! 乃能憐愍未來衆生, 生末法者. Buddhahadra (Fotuobatuoluo 佛陀跋陀羅, 358–429) began going to Mount Lu 廬山 to translate Buddhist scriptures during the Eastern Jin Dynasty due to his disagreement with Kumārajīva. Therefore, this instance of the use of *mofa* should be later than the *Miaofa lianhua jing* 妙法蓮華經 [Lotus Sutra]. If the *mofa* here is understood

- as the *mofa* concept, then there is a clear lack of background with respect to *zhengfa* and *xiangfa*. Some scholars have pointed out that this *mofa* is not indicative the *mofa* of the notion of Three Periods. For example, Akanuma Chizen 赤沼智善 (“Gojoku to Hōmetsu no shisō ni tsuite”) believes that the *mofa* here has the meaning of ‘the end of the world.’ Takao Giken 高雄義堅 (“Mappō shisō to Zuitō shoke no taido”) clearly points out that this does not have the meaning of the *mofa* of the Three Periods notion.
42. *Da zhidu lun*, T no. 1509, 25: 67.530b9–10: 北方末法衆生, 漏結未盡.
 43. “Tianbaosi shidaosheng qi qi wuhuangdi lun jianshi sengshi,” *Hongming ji*, T no. 2102, 52: 12.86a10–11: 況今末法比丘, 寧能收失? Takao Giken (“Mappō shisō to Zuitō shoke no taido,” 55) believes that there are no such indications of the Three Periods of *zheng*, *xiang*, and *mo* 正像末三時.
 44. *Moshi* has many different meanings such as ‘lifetime,’ ‘post-life,’ and ‘future generations’; ‘descendants’ and ‘heirs’; etc. These all have little to do with the discussion in this article, and there is no need to cite them.
 45. In China’s indigenous ideological tradition, there was no notion that the heavens and the Earth would periodically destroy each other and be reborn. After the introduction of Buddhism, Daoism borrowed the Buddhist *kalpa* concept to develop the idea of *jieyun* 劫運 that involves the periodic destruction and rebirth of the universe. See Liu, “Kaihuang nianhao yu dao jiao de jieyun sixiang.”
 46. How Buddhism will develop after the Buddha’s nirvāṇa was originally an important topic in Indian Buddhism, and it even formed the Perspective After the Buddha’s nirvāṇa 佛滅後觀. For specifics, see Kariya, *Hokekyō butsumetsugo no shisō*.
 47. Tang, *Hanwei laingjin nanbeichao fojiaoshi*, 588.
 48. *Chu sanzang jiji*, 315: 至於千載, 像教之末, 雖有此經, 人情薄淡, 無心敬信. 遂使群邪競辯, 曠塞玄路, 當知遺法將滅之相.
 49. See *Wenxuan*, 812a: 曇無羅識曰: 釋迦佛正法住世五百年, 像法一千年, 末法一萬年. Regarding *Wenxuan*, note that it is generally believed that Li Shan’s note is better than the *Liuchen zhu* 六臣注 (Notes of the Six Ministers), but the latter is provided here: ‘Li Shan said: Dharmarakṣa 曇無羅識 said: The *zhengfa* of Śākyamuni Buddha remains in the world for 500 years, *Xiangfa* for 1,000 years, and *Mofa* for 10,000 years. The *Analekts* 論語 says: King Wen 文王 of Zhou is dead. The biography of Zhang Shizhi 張釋之 (d.u.) in the *Han shu* 漢書 [The Book of Han] says: The Qin Dynasty was declining. When the second Qin emperor’s time came, the country fell apart. [Li Zhou]han [李周]翰 says: The *Zhengfa* has perished; the Buddha has already attended nirvāṇa. *Xiangfa* means using images to teach people; *lingyi* 陵夷 means decadent.’ See *Wenxuan*, 1089.
 50. For the scholars who indiscriminately use this material, Zhang Zong has raised doubts about the unpublished manuscripts I have previously mentioned. He believes that ‘Li Shan is from the Tang Dynasty. He is distant from the Northern Liang 北涼 period of the Sixteen Kingdoms Period, so quoting such material requires us to pay extra attention.’
 51. *Beihua jing*, T no. 157, 3: 7.211b26–27.
 52. T no. 397, 13: 40.267a2–3: 乃至劫盡, 末法世時.
 53. On the record of the 60-juan *Xinhe daji jing* 新合大集經 [The Newly Compiled Great Collection Scripture], see *Lidai sanbao ji*, T no. 2034, 49: 12.103a9–b19.
 54. *Dafangdeng daji jing*, T no. 397, 13: 40.266c.
 55. Yin, *Beiliang shita yanjiu*, 30–32, 36–38.
 56. For example, Ding, “Beichao Fo jiao shi de zhongyao buzheng”; Yin, “Shilun mofa sixiang yu Beiliang Fo jiao shi de zhongyao buzheng.”
 57. In these classic scriptures, within the content of *famie*, the word *xiangfa* appears the most while the concept of ‘*mofa*’ never appears. Of those recorded in *Chu sanzang jiji*, most of them are considered genuine scriptures 真經. But starting with the beginning of the Sui Dynasty, the majority came to instead be regarded as apocrypha 偽經. This includes but is not limited to: *Fa miejin jing* 法滅盡經, *Fa mojin jing* 法沒盡經, *Xiao fa mojin jing* 小法沒盡經, *Bonihuan hou zhuhui qiu shibian jing* 般泥洹後諸比丘世變經, *Boji jing* 鉢記經, *Wuzhuo eshi jing* 五濁惡世經, *Mohua biqu jing* 魔化比丘經, *Fo shuo fenbie jing* 佛說分

- 別經, etc. For these scriptures, please refer to my aforementioned article, “Yindu ‘Kauśāmbi famie gushi’ zai zhongguo de chuanbo yu yingxiang.”
58. Those who hold this view, in addition to Yabuki’s previously mentioned work, can also refer to Tsukamoto, “Shakkyō san Ungoji to sekikoku Daizōkyō”; Michihata, “Chūgoku ni okeru mappō shisō.” Recently, this perspective is still popular, with reference to Fujii, *Mofa sixiang de xingqi yu zhankai*.
 59. Yamada, “Mappō shisō ni tsuite: *Daijikyō* no seiritsu mondai.”
 60. Before Yamada Ryūjō, other people such as Yoshitaka Tsukamoto had emphasised the *Yuezang fen*’s importance to the Mofa Concept. After Yamada, there is also Hashizume, “Mappō shisō ni kansuru shakai teki yuin”; Kumoi Mentioned in the previous article, “Hōmetsu no genru”; Sato, “Narenteyasha to mappō shisō”; NarēndrayaśasFujiyoshi, “Mappō-ka to shite no Narenteyasha,” etc. These documents all contend that the *mofa* concept is derived from the completion of the translation of the *Yuezang fen*. However, the *Yuezangfen* only contains the story of *famie* in Kauśāmbi – and the corresponding title of this chapter is *Famiejīn pīn* 法滅盡品 – and this does not contain the meaning of *mofa*.
 61. For example, Yu Taishan 余太山 (*Yeda shi yanjiu*, 98) completely denied the notion of Buddhism’s destruction in India when Hephthalites (Yeda 嚙哒) invaded the Gupta Empire 笈多王朝. Kuwayama also doubted that the facts regarding the Hephthalite’s destruction of Buddhism and refuted the statement that NarēndrayaśasNarēndrayaśas brought the *mofa* concept from China to India. See Kuwayama, *Kāpishī*, *Gandāra shi kenkyū*, 132–3, 150–4; *Idem.*, “Nārendorayashasu to habutsu,” 133–177. Jan Nattier refuted Yamada’s argument in her *Once Upon a Future Time*, 110–17. It should be stated that since Hephthalites did not believe in Buddhism, it is inevitable that they had an impact on Indian Buddhism when they conquered North India, but one shouldn’t go so far as to say that the disaster led to the destruction of Buddhism in Indian and spawned the *mofa* concept.
 62. Liu, “Chunqiu jishi yu zhonggu Fodan zhushuo.”
 63. Zhang Zong (“Mofa yu Foli zhi guanlian chutan”) combed the dozens of eras when it was said Buddhism would die out (佛滅) during in the Middle Ages in China, pointing out that although the statement mentioned above by Huisi does not formally appear in Buddhist scriptures, it was nonetheless a widely popular idea at the time. Some of the cliff engravings in Shandong Province accord with the *mofa* notion proposed by Hui Si. Additionally, no basis can be found for the sayings from *Suishu* (35.1096) that read, “The Buddha said, “After I attain nirvāṇa, there will be 500 years of *zhengfa*, 1,000 years of *xiangfa*, and 3,000 years of *Mofa*.”” 然佛所說, 我滅度後, 正法五百年, 像法一千年, 末法三千年.
 64. *Dacheng tongxing jing*, T no. 673, 16: 2.651c13–14: 乃至住持一切正法、一切像法、一切末法. *Dacheng tongxing jing* was translated in the fifth year of Tianhe (570 ce). At that time, Chinese Buddhism had generally accepted the *mofa* concept. Therefore, it is likely that Jñānayaśas (She’nayeshe 闍那耶舍, d.u.) added in the *mofa* concept to the **translation**, though it cannot be found in the original Indian Buddhist scriptures. In the same way, the Buddhist scriptures that were translated during the Zhou and Sui dynasties may be based on the popular *mofa* concept, and as a result they added ‘*mofa*’ into the translation. Currently, people have not discovered whether or not the Indian and Central Asian Buddhist scriptures that predate the Chinese translation provide textual evidence of the *mofa* concept in the original.
 65. *Zhancha shan’e yebao jing*, T no. 839, 17: 1.901c29: 我今爲此未來惡世, 像法向盡, 及末法中.
 66. *Wuliangshou jing shu*, T no. 1745, 37: 2.116a: 釋迦正法, 有五百年. 像法千歲, 末法萬歲. 一切皆過, 名爲滅盡.
 67. *Fahua yishu*, T no. 1721, 34: 5.518a91–12: 大論佛法, 凡有四時: 一、佛在世時; 二、佛雖去世, 法儀未改, 謂正法時; 三、佛去世久, 道化訛替, 謂像法時; 四、轉復微末, 謂末法時.
 68. In *Lishi yuanwen* 立誓願文, Huisi states his belief that after 9,800, Maitreya will come to the world.

69. Jan Nattier (*Once Upon a Future Time*, 61–62) analysed the foundations of the saying ‘*mofa* of 10,000 years’ and concluded that it is entirely derived from Chinese Buddhism’s additions to Indian Buddhist scriptures.
70. Actually, the idea of a 1,000-year *xiangfa* Period following 500 years of *mofa* is likely another concept produced when the prospect of 500 years of *zhengfa* was about to come to an end. In this respect, the Two Period notion of *zhengfa* and *xiangfa* is already a kind of improvement and adaptation made by Indian Buddhism to account for the Buddha’s prophecy.
71. Okimoto, “Jinglu yu yijing,” 309. This is about the impact of the *mofa* concept on the practice of Chinese Buddhism. Speaking in broad strokes, the rise of the Sanjiejiao and the Pure Land School can be regarded as adaptations by Chinese Buddhism to the ‘*mofa* concept’ in the sixth and seventh centuries. Consult Chappell, “Early Forebodings of the Death of Buddhism,” 147–8. From a minor perspective, the *mofa* concept caused Japanese Buddhism to develop the problem of being ambivalent to such notions as ‘Adhere to Discipline’ (*chijie* 持戒) or ‘Breaking Discipline’ (*pojie* 破戒). See Sueki, *Riben Fojaoshi*, 60. Currently, Japanese Buddhist monks can marry and eat meat. It cannot be said that this has nothing to do with the *mofa* concept, but whether or not it has had a similar influence on Chinese Buddhism is another matter that needs to be explored.

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1. Abbreviations

T Taishō shinshū daizōkyō 大正新修大藏經 [see Takakusu and Watanabe, eds.]

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