

A NOTE ON THE DISAPPEARANCE OF THE DHAMMA ACCORDING TO THE MANORATHAPŪRAṆĪ

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Amongst the voluminous commentaries (*aṭṭhakathās*) on the Pāli canon is a series of predictions concerning the end of Buddhism. Some of these passages are terse and merely state that the teaching (*sāsana*) will last five thousand years (e.g. As 27,30–32 ≈ Sp 30,6–8 = Sv 25,15–17),¹ while others are extended descriptions of the manner in which it will gradually disappear (e.g. Ps IV 115,10–17,17 ≈ Sv 898,18–900,10 ≈ Vibh-a 431,27–33,22). Many Theravāda Buddhists up to the present time have taken these predictions very seriously and their concerns have motivated and shaped a great deal of religious activity. For example, a number of recent studies have shed light on the ways in which such predictions have influenced Burmese Buddhism during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries (e.g. Carbine 2011; Braun 2013; Turner 2014; Clark 2015). An accurate understanding of them is therefore important, not only for Pāli scholarship in particular, but Buddhist studies in general.

One of the most frequently cited and discussed passages containing such a prediction belongs to the Manorathapūraṇī (Mp I 87–92), Buddhaghosa’s commentary on the Aṅguttara-nikāya. This passage provides a particularly detailed description of the way in which the good doctrine (*saddhamma*) will disappear and, because of its importance, it has been summarised by a number of scholars, including Lamotte (French original: 1958: 216; English translation: 1988: 197), Griswold and Prasert ṇa Nagara (1973: 98–99, n. 40), Chappell (1980: 131),

¹ “Because of Elder Mahākassapa, this teaching of [the Buddha] with the ten powers has been made capable of continuing for a period of five thousand years” (*idaṃ Mahākassapattherena dasabalassa sāsanaṃ pañcavassasahassaparimāṇaṃ kālaṃ pavattanasamatthaṃ katan ti*, Sp 30,6–8 = Sv 25,15–17 ≈ As 27,30–32). In this article, Pāli texts are cited using the abbreviations and system given in the Epilegomena of *CPD*. All translations of Pāli are my own.

Nattier (1991: 56–58), Strong (2004: 222–25), Lopez (2008: 211–12) and Anālayo (2010: 80, n. 61). These summaries state that the religion will disappear during five successive one-thousand-year stages, namely, the disappearance of realisation (*adhigama*) during the first millennium, the disappearance of practice (*paṭipatti*) during the second millennium, the disappearance of scripture (*pariyatti*) during the third millennium, the disappearance of monastic signs (*līṅga*) during the fourth millennium and the disappearance of the Buddha’s relics (*dhātu*) during the fifth millennium. A close examination of this passage reveals that these summaries are inaccurate and this article is primarily intended to correct a number of misunderstandings.

Firstly, unlike several other prediction passages found in the commentaries (e.g. As 27,30–32 ≈ Sp 30,6–8 = Sv 25,15–17), Mp I 87–92 does not specify that the good doctrine will disappear after five thousand years;¹ nor does it divide the period of disappearance into five one-thousand-year stages. In fact, its only quantification of time is found towards the beginning of the description of the disappearance of realisation, which states, “For only a thousand years after the complete quenching of a Buddha are beings able to produce the analytical insights” (*buddhānaṃ hi parinibbānato vassasahassam eva paṭisambhidā nibbattetuṃ sakkonti*, Mp I 87,8–10).² The text goes on to describe how, following these one thousand years, the analytical insights can no longer be produced. The disappearance of realisation was therefore not predicted to take place in the millennium immediately following the death of the Buddha, but rather to begin only after that millennium elapsed.

Secondly, while Mp I 87–92 does indeed describe the disappearance of five aspects of the good doctrine, it does not specify the exact temporal order in which these aspects will disappear. It does not, for instance, state that realisation will disappear first, followed by practice,

¹ In pointing this out, I do not want to suggest that Mp I 87–92 is incompatible with the five-thousand-year chronology.

² Here and throughout much of Mp I 87–92, the word “Buddha” appears in a plural form, indicating that this is a process which occurs following the death of all Buddhas, not just Gotama Buddha. My translation “a Buddha” is intended to reflect this generality.

scripture, monastic signs and, lastly, relics, as claimed by the aforementioned summaries. This simply happens to be the order in which the five aspects are described in the Manorathapūraṇī. In fact, the text states, “It is the disappearance of scripture that is the cause of this fivefold disappearance. For when scripture disappears, practice disappears. [But] when scripture remains, [practice] remains” (*imassa pañca-vidhassa antaradhānassa pariyatti-antaradhānam eva mūlaṃ. pariyattiyā hi antarahitāya paṭipatti antaradhāyati. pariyattiyā ṭhitāya tiṭṭhati*, Mp I 91,22–92,2). Therefore, the disappearance of scripture must begin before the disappearance of practice, and, indeed, all other aspects. The summaries are, however, at least correct to state that the disappearance of realisation is predicted to begin before the disappearance of practice. This may be inferred from the following statement in the description of the disappearance of practice:

Being unable to produce the meditative absorptions, insight, the path or fruit (i.e. components of realisation), they observe merely the virtuous conduct that consists of the four kinds of purity (i.e. a component of practice).¹ As time goes on they give up, [thinking,] “Having fulfilled virtuous conduct, we observe [it] and practise exertion. [But] we are able to realise neither the path nor fruit. Realisation (*paṭivedha*) of the noble doctrine no longer exists.”

jhānavipassanāmaggaḥalāni nibbattetuṃ asakkontā catupārisuddhi-sīlamattaṃ rakkhanti. gacchante gacchante kāle sīlaṃ paripuṇṇaṃ katvā rakkhāma padhānañ ca anuyuñjāma na maggaṃ vā phalaṃ vā sacchikātuṃ sakkoma. n’ atthi dāni ariyadhammapaṭivedho ti. Mp I 87,17–22

A more accurate summary of Mp I 87–92 is thus required. This passage describes the disappearance of five aspects of the good doctrine, namely, realisation, practice, scripture, monastic signs and relics. It predicts the following: (1) scripture will be the first aspect to begin to disappear, (2) realisation will begin to disappear a millennium after the death of the Buddha and (3) practice will begin to disappear after realisation has partially or fully disappeared. The passage does not specify a time-frame for the complete disappearance of any aspect and is ambiguous as to whether the five aspects will disappear one after the other,

¹ For the virtuous conduct that consists of the four kinds of purity, see e.g. Vism 15–46.

or whether some aspects will disappear concurrently.¹ Therefore, the timing and sequence of the predictions contained in Mp I 87–92 are far less specific and clear-cut than previous scholarship has suggested.

The inaccuracies reproduced in the aforementioned summaries appear to have stemmed from an article about the 2,500-year anniversary of the death of the Buddha written by Cœdès (French original: 1956a; English translation: 1956b). This article presents the five disappearances of Mp I 87–92 as sequential stages (Cœdès 1956b: 98–100) and states, “If one is to assume that the five disappearances are equally spaced out in time, one arrives at a duration of 5,000 years” (Cœdès 1956b: 101). In order to demonstrate a basis for making this assumption, Cœdès (1956b: 101) claimed that five disappearances spaced one thousand years apart are described in a thirteenth- or fourteenth-century Pāli text called the *Sāra(ttha)saṅgaha* (Sasaki 1992: 28–32)² and a fifteenth-century Sinhala text called the *Saddharmaratnākaraya* (Gunawardhana 2001: 211–17),³ and he implied that they are also described in a passage belonging to the *Anāgatavaṃsa* genre of texts (Minayeff 1886: 34–36). An inspection of each of these sources revealed that, as with Mp I 87–92, all describe the five disappearances yet none actually

¹ Mp IV 137,8–10 = Sp 1291,23–25, for instance, predicts that scripture will last for exactly the same length of time as realisation (*paṭivedha*), namely, five thousand years. Monastic signs, however, are predicted to last a long time after the disappearance of scripture (Mp IV 137,11–12 = Sp 1291,25–26). See below for further details on this passage.

² See Neri 2014 for information on this text and a list of the sources of its many quotations.

³ See Godakumbura 1955: 94–97 for an overview of this text. Unfortunately I do not know the Sinhala language and, to the best of my knowledge, a complete English translation of the *Saddharmaratnākaraya* has not yet been published. The relevant passage was translated by Hardy (1850: 427–30), who used the word “epoch” to describe each disappearance. However, the Sinhala passage (Gunawardhana 2001: 211–17) was very kindly examined for me by Bertram G. Liyanage, a Buddhist studies instructor at the University of Colombo, who informed me that there are no terms in the Sinhala text which correspond to “first epoch”, “second epoch”, etc. Therefore, these appear to be interpretive additions by Hardy.

specify that these disappearances occur during five successive one-thousand-year stages.¹

This assumption by Cœdès ultimately seems to rest upon the text of a royal inscription of Thailand dating to 1357, which he translated and studied (Cœdès 1919; 1924: 77–90) and discussed in his article about the 2,500-year anniversary of the death of the Buddha (Cœdès 1956b: 101, 103–104, n. 21).² This inscription predicts the following: (1) the Tipiṭaka will largely disappear by the end of the second millennium, (2) there will still be some monks who observe four precepts by the end of the third millennium, (3) no monk will wear a robe by the end of the fourth millennium, and (4) the relics will travel to the site of the Buddha's awakening and be consumed by fire at the end of the fifth millennium. These predictions could be interpreted as roughly corresponding to the (1) disappearance of scripture, (2) disappearance of practice, (3) disappearance of monastic signs and (4) disappearance of relics, respectively. Although only four disappearances are listed here and their order is somewhat different from that of Mp I 87–92, there are sufficient similarities to posit a connection to Mp I 87–92; however, the inferences Cœdès drew from the inscription are unsuitable for Mp I 87–92 because they conflict with a number of its details.³

The inaccuracies reproduced in the aforementioned summaries may also have been encouraged by conflation with an important prediction

¹ The Saddharmaratnākara and Anāgatavaṃsa add that at the beginning of the disappearance of relics, the Buddha's teaching will be five thousand years old. If Cœdès's interpretation is correct, we might instead expect these texts to specify that this much time will have elapsed by the *end* of the disappearance of relics.

² This inscription is also the subject of Griswold and Prasert ṇa Nagara 1973: 79–111.

³ Namely, the disappearance of realisation cannot take place during the first millennium because Mp I 87,6–16 predicts that this disappearance will begin only after the first millennium has elapsed. Equally, it cannot be the case that the disappearance of practice will occur during the second millennium and the disappearance of scripture during the third millennium, because Mp I 91,22–92,2 states that the disappearance of scripture is the cause of the disappearance of practice and, in fact, the fivefold disappearance, and must therefore be the first disappearance to commence.

passage from the Samantapāsādikā (Sp 1291), the commentary on the Vinaya-piṭaka. This passage, which both Lamotte (French original: 1958: 215–16; English translation: 1988: 196–97) and Nattier (1991: 58) cited, does describe five one-thousand-year stages within the disappearance of the good doctrine, stating:

And this [statement] *a thousand years* (Vin II 256,12) was said in relation to [*arahats*] whose taints are destroyed and who have attained the various analytical insights.¹ But beyond that, [there will be] a thousand years in relation to [*arahats*] whose taints are destroyed and who have dry insight, a thousand years in relation to non-returners, a thousand years in relation to once-returners, [and] a thousand years in relation to stream-enterers. The good doctrine as realisation will thus remain for five thousand years. The doctrine as scripture also [will remain] for those same [five thousand years]. For neither is there realisation when there is no scripture, nor absence of realisation when there is scripture. But even when scripture has disappeared, [monastic] sign[s] will last a long time.

vassasahassan ti c' etaṃ paṭisambhidappabhedapattakhīṇāsavavasen' eva vuttaṃ. tato pana uttarim pi sukkhavipassakakhīṇāsavavasesena vassasahassam anāgāmiyasena vassasahassam sakadāgāmiyasena vassasahassam sotāpannavasena vassasahassan ti. evaṃ pañca vassasahassāni paṭivedhasaddhammo ṭhassati. pariyattidhammo pi tāni yeva. na hi pariyattiyā asati paṭivedho atthi. nāpi pariyattiyā sati paṭivedho na hoti. līṅgaṃ pana pariyattiyā antarahitāya pi ciraṃ pavattissatī ti, Sp 1291,18–26² ≈ Mp IV 137,3–12

¹ This prediction is consistent with Mp I 87,8–10, which states that for only a thousand years after a Buddha's death will beings be able to produce the analytical insights. The remainder of the description of the disappearance of realisation at Mp I 87 does not specify any further time periods and it is therefore difficult to determine how consistent it is with Sp 1291,18–26. Mp-ṭ B^e III 243, Sārasaṅgaha (Sasaki 1992) 36–37, Sp-ṭ B^e III 439–440 quote a number of commentarial predictions regarding the disappearance of realisation and acknowledge that there are some inconsistencies.

² This is part of a larger passage (Sp 1291) which attempts to reconcile the five-hundred-year chronology put forward by the Buddha at Vin II 256 and the five-thousand-year chronology put forward in the commentaries. Sp 1291,13–18 argues that had the Buddha not laid down the eight principles of respect (*garudhamma*; see Bodhi 2012: 1802–803, n. 1733) for nuns (Vin II 255–56), the good doctrine would have lasted only five hundred years; however, because he did so, the good doctrine will instead last for a thousand years. As the

To the best of my knowledge, a complete English translation of Mp I 87–92 has not yet been published.¹ Given the importance of this passage and the frequency with which inaccurate summaries of it have been reproduced, it seems valuable to provide one here.

Annotated translation of Mp I 87–92²

[87] In regard to what was said at the end of all the *suttas* [in the chapter], namely, *and they cause this good doctrine to disappear* (A I 19,13–14), there are five disappearances: the disappearance of realisation, disappearance of practice, disappearance of scripture, disappearance of [monastic] signs [and] disappearance of relics.

Therein, “realisation” [means] the four paths, four fruits, four analytical insights, three knowledges [and] six supernormal knowledges. When [realisation] deteriorates, it deteriorates beginning with the analytical insight[s]. For only a thousand years after the complete quenching of a Buddha are beings able to produce the analytical insights; then [they are able to produce] the six supernormal knowledges.³ Then, being unable [to produce] even those, they produce the three knowledges. As time goes on, being unable to produce even those, they have dry insight.⁴ In just this way, they are non-returners, once-returners, [then] stream-enterers. While they survive, realisation has not disappeared. But with the last stream-enterer’s death, realisation has disappeared. This is the disappearance of realisation.

translated quote above (Sp 1291,18–26) demonstrates, it is then argued that the “thousand years” mentioned in the root text actually refers to each of five stages, which add up to five thousand years.

¹ Cœdès (1956b: 99–100) and Strong (2004: 224) translated the description of the disappearance of relics (Mp I 91). Additionally, an abridged and modified version of Mp I 87–91 is found in the *Anāgatavaṃsa* genre of texts (Minayeff 1886: 34–36), which was translated by Warren (1922: 482–85) and Horner (1964: 47–50).

² This translation is of the Pali Text Society edition, the page numbers of which are given in square brackets.

³ In other words, after a thousand years have passed beings are still able to produce the six supernormal knowledges yet are no longer able to produce the analytical insights.

⁴ That is, without the “moisture” of the meditative absorptions (*jhānas*).

The disappearance of practice is as follows. Being unable to produce the meditative absorptions, insight, the path or fruit, they observe merely the virtuous conduct that consists of the four kinds of purity. As time goes on they give up, [thinking,] “Having fulfilled virtuous conduct, we observe [it] and practise exertion. [But] we are able to realise neither the path nor fruit. Realisation of the noble doctrine no longer exists.” With much sloth they neither exhort nor remind each other [and] are without remorse. From then onwards, they neglect the lesser and minor training rules. As time goes on, they commit offences entailing expiation and serious offences; then grave offense[s]. Only the offences entailing expulsion remain. While a hundred or a thousand monks protecting the four offences entailing expulsion survive, practice has not disappeared. But with the last [88] monk’s breaking of virtuous conduct or [his] death, [it] has disappeared. This is the disappearance of practice.

“Scripture” [means] the word[s] of a Buddha consisting of the three baskets, the canon together with the commentaries. So long as these remain, scripture is complete.¹ As time goes on, the kings of the Kali age become unrighteous. When they are unrighteous, royal ministers, etc., become unrighteous; then those living in the kingdom’s country districts. Because of their unrighteousness, the sky god does not rain properly. Then crops do not succeed. When they do not succeed, donors of requisites are not able to give requisites to the Order of monks. Lacking requisites, the monks are not able to accept students. As time goes on, scripture deteriorates. They are not able to preserve it by a command of its meaning;² they preserve it only by a command of [the text of] the canon. Then, as time goes on, they are not able to preserve even the entire canon. Firstly, the Abhidhamma-piṭaka deteriorates. When [the Abhidhamma-piṭaka] deteriorates, it deteriorates beginning with its final part. For firstly, the great work [i.e. Paṭṭhāna] deteriorates.

¹ Here, my translation is of the variant reading, *pariyatti paripuṇṇā*, instead of the problematic base text reading, *pariyatti-paripuṇṇam*.

² An alternative explanation is provided by Mp-ṭ B^e I 119, which glosses *atthavasena* with *aṭṭhakathāvasena*, “by a command of the commentaries”, implying that the commentaries are predicted to disappear before the canonical texts begin to disappear.

When that has deteriorated, the Yamaka, Kathāvatthu, Puggalapaññatti, Dhātukathā, Vibhaṅga, Dhammasaṅgaha [i.e. Dhammasaṅgaṇī] [deteriorates].¹ When the Abhidhamma-piṭaka has thus deteriorated, the Sutta-piṭaka deteriorates beginning with its final part. For firstly, the Aṅguttara-nikāya deteriorates. Within it, firstly the Ekādasā-nipāta [i.e. Ekādasaka-nipāta] [deteriorates], etc.; then the Eka-nipāta. When the Aṅguttara[-nikāya] has thus deteriorated, the Saṃyutta-nikāya deteriorates beginning with its final part. For firstly, the Mahā-vagga deteriorates; then the Saḷāyatana-vagga, Khandhaka-vagga [i.e. Khandhavagga], Nidāna-vagga, [and] Sagātha-vagga. When the Saṃyutta-nikāya has thus deteriorated, the Majjhima-nikāya deteriorates beginning with its final part. For firstly, the Upari-paṇṇāsaka [i.e. Upari-paṇṇāsa] deteriorates; then the Majjhima-paṇṇāsaka [i.e. Majjhima-paṇṇāsa], then the Mūla-paṇṇāsaka [i.e. Mūla-paṇṇāsa]. When the Majjhima-nikāya has thus deteriorated, the Dīgha-nikāya deteriorates beginning with its final part. [89] For firstly, the Pāṭiya-vagga [i.e. Pāṭika-vagga] deteriorates; then the Mahā-vagga, then the Silakkhandha-vagga. When the Dīgha-nikāya has deteriorated, the Suttanta-piṭaka [i.e. Sutta-piṭaka] has deteriorated. And they preserve only the Jātaka together with the Vinaya-piṭaka.² Only the conscientious preserve the Vinaya-piṭaka. But those desiring gain preserve only the Jātaka, [thinking,] “Even when a *sutta* is recited, there are none who recognise [it].” As time goes on, they are not able to preserve even the Jātaka. Then, of those [Jātakas] the Vessantara-jātaka firstly deteriorates; then, in reverse order, the Puṇṇaka-jātaka³ [and] Mahānārada-kassapa-jātaka. In the end, the Apaṇṇaka-jātaka deteriorates. When the Jātaka has thus deteriorated,

¹ As mentioned by von Hinüber (1996: 66), Dhammasaṅgaha is an alternative title of the Dhammasaṅgaṇī.

² As noted by von Hinüber (1996: 43) and Strong (2004: 223), this passage does not mention the Khuddaka-nikāya. Interestingly, the Jātaka is not listed as belonging to the Sutta-piṭaka, but instead appears to be regarded as a stand-alone text.

³ This appears to be an alternative title of the Vidhura-paṇḍita-jātaka (Ja VI 255–329), which concerns a *yakkha* named Puṇṇaka. While this is indeed the penultimate *jātaka* in the Chatṭhasaṅgīti Piṭaka edition (as the Vidhura-jātaka), it is the third last *jātaka* in the Pali Text Society edition.

they preserve only the Vinaya-piṭaka. As time goes on, even that deteriorates beginning with its final part. For firstly, the Parivāra deteriorates; then the Khandhaka, Bhikkhunī-vibhaṅga [and] Mahāvibhaṅga. In due course, they preserve only the Uposathakaṇḍa.¹ Even at that time, scripture has not disappeared. And as long as even a verse consisting of four *padas* circulates amongst people, scripture has not disappeared. When a faithful [and] trusting king has a purse with a thousand [coins] placed into a golden box on an elephant's back [and] sends round a drum in the city [with the proclamation, "Anyone] knowing a verse consisting of four *padas* spoken by a Buddha ought to take these thousand [coins]", [but] does not find a taker; [and when he] sends it round up to a third time [thinking,] "When it was sent round one time, there were those who heard and those who did not", [but still] does not find a taker; [and when] the king's men bring the purse with the thousand [coins] back to the king's court — then scripture has disappeared. This is the disappearance of scripture. [90]

As time goes on, holding the robe, holding the bowl, contraction and extension [of limbs], looking forward and looking around is not graceful. Like Jain nuns,² monks wander carrying a bottle-gourd bowl which they place on their forearm [for use] as [an alms] bowl.³ Even then, [monastic] sign[s] have not completely disappeared. But as time goes on, they remove it from their forearm [and] wander holding it either with their hand or with string. And not making their robe the proper colour, they wander having made it the colour of camel bones. As time goes on, there is no dyeing [of robes at all]. They dwell having cut the raw hem edges and sewn the hem and made a spot [required to legitimise the robe].⁴ But [then], having sewn the hem they do not make

¹ According to *CPD* s.v. *uposatha-kaṇḍa-mattam*, *uposatha-kkhandhaka*, the text here, refers to the Uposathakkhandaka (Vin I 101–36). Alternatively, it might refer to the Pātimokkha.

² B^e I 69 instead reads *nigaṇṭha-samaṇā*, "Jain monks". I do not follow the punctuation at this point in the Pali Text Society edition; a full stop ought to be placed after *hoti* instead of after *viya*.

³ My translation assumes that *alābhū-* is an error for *alābu-*, the latter being the reading of B^e I 69. I wish to thank Royce Wiles for advice on this sentence.

⁴ See Sp 863.

the spot [required to legitimise the robe]. Then, like wandering ascetics, they wander without having made either [the sewn hem or spot required to legitimise the robe and] having [simply] cut the raw hem edges. As time goes on, [thinking] “What use is this to us?”, having taken a small fragment¹ of ochre robe they tie it round their neck or attach it to their hair, or, supporting a wife, they wander having ploughed, sowed [and] made a livelihood. Then people giving a donation give it to these [pseudo-monks] for the sake of the Order.

Concerning this, the Blessed One said, “Ānanda, in a future time there will be destroyers of the clan² with ochre robe round their necks [and who are] of bad conduct, of bad character. People will give a gift to those of bad conduct for sake of the Order. Ānanda, even then I say a donation to the Order is incalculable, immeasurable.” (M III 256)

Then as time goes on, while performing deeds of various kinds [they think,] “This is a burden. What use is this to us?” [and], having cut off the fragment of ochre robe,³ they throw it away into the wilderness. At this time, [monastic] sign[s] have truly disappeared. [91] Wandering about having dressed in the white clothing of the Ionians is a tradition that reportedly arose beginning from the time of Kassapa [Buddha] with the ten powers.⁴ This is the disappearance of [monastic] signs.

¹ *-kaṇṭham* is an editorial emendation of the received text, which reads *-khaṇḍam* (see Mp I 90, n. 14), perhaps made to agree with the quotation at Mp I 90,19. My translation is of the received text, since the emendation makes little sense.

² For this meaning of the term *gotrabhū*, see von Hinüber 1978/1994; Norman 1987: 37–39.

³ Again, *-kaṇṭham* is an editorial emendation of the received text, which reads *-khaṇḍam* (see Mp I 90, n. 26). Again, my translation is of the received text.

⁴ In another prediction passage, the Papan̄casūdanī states, “[Monastic] sign[s] last a long time. But the lineage of ascetics with white clothing, beginning from the time of Kassapa Buddha, was not able to preserve his teaching” (*līṅgaṃ addhānaṃ gacchati. setavatthasamaṇavaṃso pana Kassapabuddha-kā lato pana paṭṭhāya sāsanaṃ dhāretuṃ nāsakki*, Ps IV 116,22–24 ≈ Sv 899,18–20 ≈ Vibh-a 432, 33–34). Kassapa, of course, was the Buddha who immediately preceded Gotama Buddha. While seemingly incomplete, this statement from the Manorathapūranī appears to be referring to this alleged history.

Then the relics, not receiving worship and honour here and there, by the force of a Buddha's supernatural power,¹ go to place[s] where they receive worship and honour. As time goes on, there is no worship and honour at any of [these] places. All the relics come together at the site of the great awakening, take on a Buddha's form [and] display the glory of a Buddha's body sitting cross-legged at the site of awakening. The thirty-two marks of a great man [and] the eighty minor marks, with a fathom [wide] radiance, are all perfect. Then they perform [and] display a miracle as on the day of the miracle of pairs. There is not a [single] human being who goes there to that place. But all the deities in the [system] of ten thousand worlds come together [and] lament, [saying,] "Today [a Buddha] with the ten powers is completely quenched. Beginning from now there will be darkness". Then, having risen up from the body of relics, a flame sends that body to a state without designation. Then, as on the day on which [the Buddha] was completely quenched, the group of gods worship a Buddha with divine perfumes, garlands² and musical instruments, etc., circumambulate three times, pay homage [and] say "Blessed One, in the future we will get to see [another] Buddha who will come into existence"; [then the gods] go [back] to their own place[s]. This is the disappearance of relics.³ [92]

It is the disappearance of scripture that is the cause of this fivefold disappearance. For when scripture disappears, practice disappears. [But] when scripture remains, [practice] remains.

¹ For this meaning, see Edgerton 1953 s.v. *adhiṣṭhāna*³.

² My translation assumes that *-māla-* is an error for *-mālā-*, the latter being the reading of B^c I 71.

³ For a related description of the disappearance of relics, see Ps IV 116–17 ≈ Sv 899–900 ≈ Vibh-a 433, which specify that relics from Sri Lanka travel to the site of the great awakening.

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