
Crossing Kings and Monks: The Internal Consistency of the *Dīpavaṃsa* Reconsidered

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Abstract

*As is well known, the oldest extant chronicle of Sri Lanka, the *Dīpavaṃsa*,¹ has preserved a succession line of the foremost teachers who transmitted and taught the vinaya in India: Upāli, Dāsaka, Soṇaka, Siggava and Moggaliputta Tissa; the length of time they have been regarded as vinayapāṃokkha; the dates when they ordained the next in line and when they entered parinirvāṇa. An intriguing range of dates has been inferred from an interpretation of these figures, especially for dating the death of the historical Buddha. I do not intend to rehearse the whole discussion here but cordially refer to the proceedings of the grand symposium organised by H. Bechert in 1988 at the University of Göttingen.²*

There is disagreement about how to interpret the figures for the *vinaya* teachers in the *Dīpavaṃsa*. These numbers are either interpreted as seniority in years since ordination,³ or as real ages.⁴ The problem lies in the fact that this different interpretation results in a radically altered dating of the second council and of Asoka's inauguration. R. Gombrich argued most recently, based on the above mentioned figures from the *Dīpavaṃsa*, that the second

¹The *Dīpavaṃsa*, the oldest extant chronicle of Sri Lanka, has been handed down anonymously and is likely to have been composed not long after 350 AD. O. von Hinüber, *A Handbook of Pāli Literature* (Berlin and New York, 1996), p. 89.

²H. Bechert (ed.), *The Dating of the Historical Buddha* (Symposien zur Buddhismusforschung, Volume 1) (Göttingen, 1991), *Ibid.* Volume 2 (1992), *Ibid.* Volume 3 (1997).

³For example, W. Geiger, *The Mahavamsa or The Great Chronicle of Ceylon* (New Delhi and Chennai, [1912] 2003), p. 1; E. Frauwallner, *The Earliest Vinaya and the Beginnings of Buddhist Literature* (Rome, 1956), p. 170; E. Lamotte, *History of Indian Buddhism from the Origins to the Saka Era* (Louvain and Paris, [1958] 1988), pp. 203–205 came to the following conclusions: Upāli was ordained 44 years before Buddha died. He was Vinaya Chief from 1 until 30 AB. He ordained Dāsaka in 16 AB. Dāsaka succeeded Upāli on the latter's death and was Vinaya Chief for 50 years from 30 to 80 AB. Soṇaka was ordained in 60 AB. He succeeded Dāsaka as Vinaya Chief and remained in authority for 44 years from 80 to 124 AB. Siggava was ordained in 100 AB. He was Vinaya Chief for 52 years from 124 to 176 AB. Moggaliputtatissa was ordained in 164 AB. On the death of Siggava, he became Vinaya Chief and remained in authority for 68 years, from 176 to 244 AB. He ordained Mahinda in 224 AB. Mahinda died in 284 AB. Asoka's consecration is dated in 218 AB.

⁴For example, T.W. Rhys Davids, "On the Ceylon date of Gautama's death", in *On the Ancient Coins and Measures of Ceylon, with a Discussion of the Ceylon Date of the Buddha's Death* (London, 1877), reprinted in H. Bechert (ed.) (1992), pp. 401–421, p. [46] 410; H. Kern, *Manual of Indian Buddhism* (Strasbourg, 1898), p. 109; K.R. Norman, "Observations on the dates of the Jina and the Buddha", in H. Bechert (ed.) (1991), pp. 300–312, p. 309. The most recent and extensive research on this issue was made by R. Gombrich, "Dating the Buddha: A red herring revealed", in H. Bechert (ed.) (1992), pp. 237–59 and R. Gombrich, "Discovering the Buddha's date", in Lakshmi S. Perera (ed.), *Buddhism for the New Millennium* (London, 2000), pp. 9–25. He came to the following conclusions: Upāli died in 30 AB, Dāsaka was ordained in 16 and died in 60 AB, Soṇaka was ordained in 41 and also died in 60 AB, Siggava was ordained in 58 and died in 114 AB, Moggaliputta Tissa was ordained in 102 AB and Mahinda in 142 AB. Gombrich (1992), pp. 246, 251 and (2000), p. 19.

council took place 60 years after the Buddha died (from here on, AB⁵) and that Asoka was inaugurated in 136 AB.⁶ This is very different from the traditional Theravāda dating of these events which regards them as having taken place in 100 and 218 AB, respectively.

Recently C. Prebish published an article in which he emphasises the consequences that such an alteration of dates might have, especially when so many theories have been based on these dates in connection with our knowledge of early Indian history in general and of early Buddhism in particular.⁷

Opinions may differ, but it seems highly unlikely that the same set of figures can result in such a wide variety of dates. My contribution lies in offering a method that sheds new light on this controversy and that can be helpful in settling it. I believe we can find out objectively – by means of a purely mathematical proof – what the author of the *Dīpavaṃsa* most probably meant when he recorded these concrete numbers in his account. The figures of the lineage of *vinaya* teachers in the *Dīpavaṃsa* will be re-examined as follows. As a first step, a new method will be presented to determine whether the figures from the *Dīpavaṃsa* are to be considered as seniority years following ordination or as real ages. Since the now extant text of the *Dīpavaṃsa* contains data that seem to contradict each other, as a next step, an attempt will be made to resolve these discrepancies and to find out what the original account of the lineage of the *vinaya* teachers in this Sinhalese chronicle most probably was. Furthermore, new evidence will be presented that shows that Saṅghabhadra's *Shanjian lü piposha* (T.1462)⁸ and not its alleged source text, the Pāli *Samantapāsādikā*,⁹ has preserved elements of this original account from the lineage of *vinaya* teachers in the *Dīpavaṃsa*, *Resumé of the Data*.

To summarise the concrete results of the two positions described above, let us start with the numbers from the *Dīpavaṃsa* that will be most relevant for the present inquiry

Table 1 Starting point

	A ¹⁰	B ¹¹	C ¹²
Upāli	all the time	60	74
Dāsaka	50	40–45 ¹³	64
Soṇaka	44	40	66
Siggava	55	64	76
Moggaliputta Tissa	68	60–66 ¹⁴	80–86 ¹⁵

⁵Following Gombrich (1992), p. 246.

⁶Gombrich (1992), pp. 246, 251.

⁷C. Prebish, "Cooking the Buddhist books: The implications of the new dating of the Buddha for the history of early Indian Buddhism", *Journal of Buddhist Ethics*, 15 (2008), pp. 1–21.

⁸The 開元釋教錄 *Kaiyuan shijiao lu*, 'A Buddhist catalogue of the Kaiyuan period', compiled by Zhisheng in 730 and considered a standard reference, records that the *Shanjian lü piposha* was translated into Chinese between 488 and 489 AD, in Canton by the monk 僧伽跋陀羅 *Sengqiebatuoluo*, Saṅghabhadra. T55n2154, p. 535c22.

⁹The *Samantapāsādikā* is a commentary on the *Theravādivinaya*, written at the end of the fourth or the beginning of the fifth century in Pāli and traditionally ascribed to the commentator Buddhaghosa. It can be dated in 369/370 AD or in 429/430 AD. Von Hinüber (1996), p. 104.

¹⁰A: length of time they were regarded as *vinayapāṃokkha*, leading expert on the *vinaya*. Cf. *Dīpavaṃsa*, v.96.

¹¹B: the time when they ordained the next in line. Cf. *Dīpavaṃsa*, iv.27–46 continued at v.69 and v.72 and *Dīpavaṃsa*, v. 76–82.

¹²C: the time when they entered *parinirvāṇa*. Cf. *Dīpavaṃsa*, v.89–95 repeated at v.103–107.

¹³*Dīpavaṃsa*, iv.41 states that Dāsaka ordained Soṇaka when he had completed 45 years. v.78, on the other hand, states 40 years for the same event.

¹⁴*Dīpavaṃsa*, vii.24 states that Moggaliputta Tissa ordained Mahinda when he had completed 60 years, while v.82 states 66 years for the same event.

¹⁵*Dīpavaṃsa*, v.94 states 86 years. In v.95, the number 80 is given, which is repeated at v.107. The date of Moggaliputta's death is moreover linked to Asoka's 26th year on the throne, in v.102.

The *Dīpavaṃsa* literally states that the numbers given for the time they died (column C), are the years they lived after their ordination.

Dīp. v.95: catusattati Upāli ca, catusatṭhi ca Dāsako,
chasaṭṭhi Sonako thero, Siggavo tu chasattati,
asīti Moggaliputto, sabbesaṃ upasampadā.

Seventy-four years of Upāli, sixty-four of Dāsaka, sixty-six of Thera Soṇaka, seventy-six of Siggava, eighty of Moggaliputta: this is the *upasampadā* of them all.¹⁶

In spite of this clear explanation, it has been conjectured that the figures in view are not seniority years since ordination but refer to the age of the *vinaya* teachers. It has even been suggested that the quoted sentence is untrustworthy, because the text at the end of chapter five was possibly damaged.¹⁷ The main reason not to accept this literally quoted premise, that the numbers from the *Dīpavaṃsa* are years since ordination, has been that this would result in implausible life spans.¹⁸

Aside from the above quoted figures (Table 1), the *Dīpavaṃsa* provides more numbers. Upāli taught the *vinaya* for 30 years after the Buddha died (iv.39). He ordained Dāsaka in the 16th year AB (v.76). Asoka's coronation is dated as 218 AB. Mahinda is said to have been born in 204 AB (vi.20). He was 14 years old when his father was inaugurated (vi.22). At that time, Moggaliputta Tissa had completed 54 years (vii.24). Six years after that, Moggaliputta Tissa ordained Mahinda (v.82), who was then thus 20 years old. Moggaliputta Tissa at that time had completed 60 years (vii.24). Eighteen years after the coronation of his father, Mahinda arrived in Sri Lanka (xii.42). Mahinda thus arrived in Sri Lanka after 12 years had been completed. He died when 60 years had passed (xvii.95).

In fact, we can determine from this last statement that the *Dīpavaṃsa* does contain figures that may be interpreted as seniority since ordination. *Dīpavaṃsa*, xvii.95 reads:

*paripuṇṇadvādasavasso Mahindo ca idhāgato,
satṭhivasse paripuṇṇe nibutto Cetiyaṃpabbate*

Even in 1879, H. Oldenberg interpreted this passage as if these figures were referring to seniority years since ordination: “When the twelfth year (after his *upasampadā*) had been completed, Mahinda came hither [i.e to Sri Lanka], at the end of his sixtieth year he attained *Nibbāna* on the Cetiya mountain”.¹⁹

When we examine the content of the quoted verse, it seems unlikely that the first number (12) would refer to the age of Mahinda and the second one (60) to his seniority since ordination, or the other way round. Surely the author intended to use both numbers in the same way: either both referring to age, or both referring to seniority. I therefore agree with Oldenberg and believe it is much more implausible to think that Mahinda was 12 years old when he arrived in Sri Lanka than to believe it possible that he would have died aged 80. If we combine this with the previous information that Mahinda had been ordained six years after the coronation of his father, and that he arrived in Sri Lanka 18 years after that

¹⁶H. Oldenberg, *The Dipavamsa, An Ancient Buddhist Historical Record* (New Delhi – Madras, [1879] 2001), p. 145.

¹⁷Gombrich (2000), p. 20.

¹⁸H. Bechert, “The origin and the spread of the *Theravāda* chronology”, in Bechert (ed.) (1991), pp. 329–343, p. 338 ; Gen'ichi Yamazaki, “The lists of the patriarchs in the northern and southern legends” in *ibid.*, pp. 313–328, p. 316 ; Norman (1992), p. 302 ; Gombrich (2000), p. 19.

¹⁹Oldenberg ([1879] 2001), pp. 95 and 202.

coronation, it becomes rather straightforward that the figures given in the *Dīpavaṃsa* surely *can* mean years from ordination.

Mahinda was ordained six years after his father's coronation: $218+6 = 224$ AB

Mahinda arrived in Sri Laṅka 18 years after his father's coronation: $218+18 = 236$ AB

Mahinda came to Sri Laṅka when the 12th year had been completed: $236-224 = 12$

The quoted verse may thus be seen as irrefutable proof that figures used in the *Dīpavaṃsa* can point to seniority since ordination. It may be evident now that it is not at all absurd to reconsider the possibility that the figures given for the succession of the *vinaya* teachers might well be interpreted in the same way – even more so when the text actually states that these numbers are to be seen as years since ordination, despite those theories that seem to have eliminated this possibility.

The vast quantity of numbers that are handed down in the *Dīpavaṃsa* seem to contradict one another on some points. Even for the five *vinaya* teachers above, we can already see multiple data for Dāsaka and Moggaliputta Tissa. This makes it hard to gain a clear picture of the tradition handed down by the *Dīpavaṃsa*. In what follows, I will try to reconstruct what I believe is the original account of the lineage of the *vinaya* teachers in the *Dīpavaṃsa*. As will be shown next, traces from this tradition have been preserved, not in the extant *Samantaṭṭhāśādikā*, but in Saṅghabhadra's *Shanjian lü piposha*.

Premises

For the mathematical deduction that is about to follow, we will have to start from a set of two clearly defined premises. Many scholars have assumed that the *vinaya* teachers from this lineage had to be 20 years old when they received the *upasampadā* ordination²⁰. When 20 is added to the numbers given in the *Dīpavaṃsa*, one gets rather implausibly long life spans. However, I believe that the earliest disciples did not have to be 20. I think instead that the sophisticated ordination procedure – that distinguishes between admonition and ordination, between *pravrajā* and *upasampadā*,²¹ and the insistence on a minimum age of 20 years from birth (or even from conception in exceptional circumstances) – simply did not exist in the first centuries of Buddhism. I think these specific rules were only developed many centuries later. The often invoked reason for not believing these figures, because they would be incredible in itself, is in my opinion therefore not tenable. This assumption is undoubtedly connected with, for example, the 65th *pācittika* rule of the Pāli *Vinaya*,²² which states that a person under the age of 20 cannot be given the higher ordination. Curiously enough, the

²⁰For example Kern (1898), p. 108; Rhys Davids (1877), p. [54] 418; Gombrich (1992), pp. 238, 243; Gombrich (2000), p. 19.

²¹The *Dīpavaṃsa* gives 37 (iv.40) for the time when Dāsaka admitted Soṅaka into the order (Pāli *pabbājesī*) and the number 45 (iv.41) when he ordained him (Pāli: *upasampanno*). This directly contradicts my presumption that the two ordination procedures did not exist in the early years. However, this is the only example I have seen in the *Dīpavaṃsa* that explicitly differentiates between these two procedures; I see two possible explanations for this discrepancy. Either it is a later interpolation, or the difference between admittance and ordination did exist, but a minimum age of 20 was not necessarily prescribed.

²²H. Oldenberg, *The Vinaya Piṭakaṃ: One of the Principal Buddhist Holy Scriptures in the Pāli Language*. Vol. IV (Oxford, [1882] 1993), pp. 128–130 and I.B. Horner, *The Book of the Discipline* (Vinaya-Piṭaka), Vol. III (Oxford, [1942] 2004), pp. 10–14.

foundation story that accompanies that rule precisely relates how Upāli was ordained as a young boy, long before he was 20 years old. I therefore suggest as a first provisional axiom the mere *possibility* that novices did not have to be 20 years old at ordination in the first centuries of Buddhism.

Another major point of disagreement has been the meaning of the term *vinayapāṃokkha* that is closely connected to this lineage of the very first *vinaya* teachers of India. It has long been regarded as some sort of office during which the respective teacher acted as some kind of patriarch. R. Gombrich has argued convincingly that there was no such office at all²³ and that this designation simply means that those monks knew the *vinaya* by heart and were therefore experts in their field.²⁴ Although I agree that this term does not imply the existence of a special office or patriarchy, I am still convinced that the designation *vinayapāṃokkha* is used exclusively. From the context of the *Dīpavaṃsa*, it is quite clear that *vinayapāṃokkha* is a term for designating *the* expert: not only someone who is skilled in monastic rules and regulations but the chief, the best, the most learned, the expert on monastic discipline. Consequently, I believe that only one could be *the* best, *the* expert on *vinaya*. This is also quite logical if you imagine that for as long as Upāli lived, no one excelled his knowledge of *vinaya*, not even his own pupil Dāsaka. However good Dāsaka might have become in his studies, it is very unlikely that he would have been able to surpass his own teacher. Once Upāli died, the situation changed. It is entirely plausible that Dāsaka became the best once his teacher had died. He had now become the next expert, whose task was to make sure that he too found clever and skilful disciples to whom he could transmit his own perfect knowledge of the *vinaya*. Perhaps many of his disciples were able to learn from him, building up a very good knowledge of the *vinaya* in the course of time; some might even have succeeded in learning the whole *vinaya* by heart. However, among his many pupils, only one really excelled in knowledge and understanding and this was Soṇaka. Once Dāsaka had died, Soṇaka became the best, chief, leading expert on *vinaya*. Soṇaka trained both Caṇḍavajji and Siggava in *vinaya* matters, but it was Siggava who was regarded as the next *vinayapāṃokkha* when Soṇaka died. The fact that, according to the *Dīpavaṃsa*, Caṇḍavajji taught the *vinaya* to Moggaliputta Tissa means indirectly that he too must have had a very good knowledge of the *vinaya* and most probably knew it by heart. Still, Siggava must have excelled him in expertise over the years, since he alone was regarded as *vinayapāṃokkha* at the moment their teacher died. The second premise I would therefore like to suggest is that the designation *vinayapāṃokkha* was seen as something *exclusive*.

For the calculation below, these two axioms are crucial. I would like to ask the reader to keep an open mind regarding the mere possibilities that a minimum age of 20 at ordination was not necessary in the first centuries of Buddhism and that the designation *vinayapāṃokkha* was used exclusively – only one person at the time could be *the* leading expert on *vinaya*.

²³Gombrich (1992), p. 247: “Although the term *vinaya-pāṃokkha* occurs several times in *Dīp.*, it does not occur in any of the other relevant primary sources: *P.*, *Sp.* and *Mhv.* It must strike us as odd, if these monks held so important an office, that those sources never mention the fact. The reason, however, is simple: there was no such office.”

²⁴Gombrich (2000), p. 21.

Seniority or Age?

Since there has been controversy over whether the figures from column B and C in Table 1 are to be interpreted as years of age or as seniority since ordination, I would like to find out if we can ascertain what precisely these numbers stand for without choosing one side or the other. In the following, I will deduce mathematically, and without prejudice, what the figures from column B and C stand for. They are relative numbers, but whether relative as seen from birth (possibly conception) or from ordination, is something we as yet do not know. So, I will not work with them for now. The figures in column A, on the other hand, indicate duration. This means that these numbers are absolute and thus we can work with them. They indicate how long the respective *vinaya* teachers have been regarded as experts in their field. As explained above, we will start out from the premise that this expertise was something exclusive: no two teachers can be *the* best at the same time. This means that the end of each period also indicates the point of death of that particular teacher. Moreover, we can infer from Table 1 another set of figures that are also absolute and on which we will also be entitled to base our calculation: namely, the difference in years between C and B. For example: although we don't know when Soṇaka ordained Siggava, since we don't know how old either of them were at that time, we do know from the text that Soṇaka ordained Siggava 26 years prior to his own death ($66-40 = 26$). Table 1 can thus be supplemented with a column D:

Table 2 Extra column (C-B = D)

	A	B	C	D ²⁵
Upāli	30 AB	60	74	14
Dāsaka	50	40 or 45	64	24 or 19
Soṇaka	44	40	66	26
Siggava	55	64	76	12
Moggaliputta Tissa	68	60-66	80-86	14 or 20 or 26

Upāli ordains Dāsaka in 16 AB (v.76), when he “is 60”. Upāli taught the *vinaya* for 30 years after the Buddha had died. I believe this means that Upāli died 30 years after the Buddha dies, i.e. in 30 AB, when he “is 74”. Here we can already see that 16 AB is indeed 14 years earlier than 30 AB, and 14 is the figure we inferred above in Table 2, column D.

Dāsaka has been *vinayapāṃokkha* for 50 years. In my view, he is only seen as the best expert from the moment his teacher Upāli has died. So in fact, we know that he is being regarded as *vinayapāṃokkha* from 30 AB onwards and that he remains regarded as such until his own death 50 years later in 80 AB. From Table 2, column D, we know that he ordained Soṇaka, either 24 or 19 years before his death. This means either in 61 or 56 AB, when he “was 40 or 45”.

Soṇaka was regarded as the leading expert in the *vinaya* from the moment his teacher died in 80 AB until 44 years later, when he himself died in 124 AB. When he “was 40”, he ordained Siggava, 26 years prior to his death, this means in 98 AB.

²⁵ $74-60 = 14$; $64-40 = 24$ or $64-45 = 19$; $66-40 = 26$; $76-64 = 12$; $80-60 = 20$ or $80-66 = 14$ or $86-60 = 26$ or $86-66 = 20$.

After his teacher died, Siggava was considered the best expert on *vinaya* for 55 years, so from 124 AB until 179 AB. Twelve years before that, he ordained Moggaliputta Tissa, i.e. in 167 AB.

Moggaliputta Tissa was regarded as the leading expert in *vinaya* for 68 years, this means from the year his teacher Siggava died in 179 AB until his own death in 247 AB. From the four numbers given in the *Dīpavaṃsa* for Moggaliputta Tissa, we get three possibilities for the year in which he ordains Mahinda: 14, 20 or 26 years before he dies, so either in 233 AB, 227 AB or in 221 AB.

We can summarise all these figures in tabular form. Since we can infer when Moggaliputta Tissa ordained Mahinda, I will add him to the list:

Table 3 Mathematical deduction 1

	E ²⁶	F ²⁷
Upāli	?	30 AB
Dāsaka	16 AB	80 AB
Soṇaka	56/61 AB	124 AB
Siggava	98 AB	179 AB
Moggaliputta Tissa	167 AB	247 AB
Mahinda	221 or 227 or 233 AB	

What can we learn from this about the data given in columns B and C from Tables 1 and 2 above? Since we have deduced calendar years (dates AB) for the ordinations of all of them (column E), let us see whether we can find out what the figures from columns B and C above stand for.

Dāsaka ordained Soṇaka either in 56 or in 61 AB. The difference between the ordination year of Soṇaka and that of Dāsaka himself (16 AB) is either 40 or 45 years. These are precisely the numbers given in column B. The difference between the year in which Dāsaka died (80 AB) and the year of his own ordination (16 AB) matches exactly the number 64, which is recorded in the *Dīpavaṃsa* (column C).

According to the deduction above, Soṇaka ordains Siggava in 98 AB. The difference between this and the year of Soṇaka’s own ordination (56 or 61 AB) is either 42 or 37 years. Column B gave the number 40. The difference between the year in which Soṇaka died (124 AB) and the year of his own ordination (56 or 61 AB) results in either 68 or 63. In column C, the number 66 had been given.

Siggava ordained Moggaliputta Tissa in 167 AB. The difference between this year and that of Siggava’s own ordination (98 AB) is 69 years. Column B states 64. The difference between the year in which Siggava died (179 AB) and the year of his own ordination (98 AB), is 81 years, while the number 76 has been given in column C.

The difference between the ordination year of Mahinda (221 or 227 or 233 AB) and that of Moggaliputta (167 AB) is either 66, 60 or 54 years, of which only the first two are given in column B. The difference between the year in which Moggaliputta Tissa died (247 AB) and

²⁶E: The year in which they were ordained.

²⁷F: The date of their death.

the year of his own ordination (167 AB), gives 80 as result, the first of the two possibilities given for this event in column C.

From this it becomes clear that the results gained from a mathematical deduction of the absolute numbers we got from the *Dīpavaṃsa* (summarised in columns G and H below) are very close to the ones from columns B and C which we hitherto did not take into account. The numbers in G and H were obtained by looking at the number of years that lie between two points in time. Column G represents the number of years that lie between the year a teacher has himself been ordained and the year in which he ordains the next in line. Column H provides us with the number of years that have passed from their own ordination until the year in which they died. As such, G and H give the length of time between two separate events. They are thus absolute numbers, since they designate durations.

In Table 4 below, we can see how much these numbers from columns G and H resemble the numbers in columns B and C. From this, we can thus quite safely conclude that the figures in B and C are actually also absolute numbers, which indicate the number of years that have elapsed since the year of ordination. This is extremely interesting. From the fact that these numbers are now also proven to be absolute numbers, we can verify this calculation in detail.

Table 4 Preliminary results

	A ²⁸	B ²⁹	C ³⁰	D ³¹	E ³²	F ³³	G ³⁴	H ³⁵
Upāli	30 AB	60	74	14	?	30 AB	?	?
Dāsaka	50	40 or 45	64	24 or 19	16 AB	80 AB	40 or 45	64
Soṇaka	44	40	66	26	56 or 61 AB	124 AB	37 or 42	63 or 68
Siggava	55	64	76	12	98 AB	179 AB	69	81
Moggaliputta Tissa	68	60 or 66	80 or 86	14 or 20 or 26	167 AB	247 AB	54 or 60 or 66	80
Mahinda					221 or 227 or 233 AB			

Since the mathematical deduction applied above resulted in a justification for accepting the figures from the *Dīpavaṃsa* as seniority years since ordination, it comes as no surprise that these preliminary results resemble those of earlier scholars who made this same interpretation.³⁶ In what follows, these preliminary results will be transposed into a new hypothesis concerning the possible original account of the lineage of *vinaya* teachers in the *Dīpavaṃsa*.

²⁸A: length of time they were regarded as expert in their field.

²⁹B: a point of time when they ordained the next in line.

³⁰C: a point of time when they entered *parinibbāna*.

³¹74-60 = 14 ; 64-40 = 24 or 64-45 = 19 ; 66-40 = 26 ; 76-64 = 12 ; 80-60 = 20 or 80-66 = 14 or 86-60 = 26 or 86-66 = 20.

³²E: year of ordination.

³³F: the year in which they died.

³⁴G: The third entry of column E, diminished by the second entry of the same column gives the result in G.

Thus 56/61-16 = 40/45 ; 98- 56/61 = 37/42 ; 167-98 = 69 ; 221/227/233-167 = 54/60/66.

³⁵H: [F-E = H] Thus: 80-16 = 64 ; 124-56/61 = 63/68 ; 179-98 = 81 ; 247-167 = 80.

³⁶Cf Note 3 above.

Tracing the Original Account

With a fair degree of certainty we have inferred from the deduction above that the numbers given in column B indicate the seniority following ordination until the year in which the respective *vinaya* teacher ordains the next in line. Column C indicates how many years have passed since ordination until death. As a next step, I will repeat the same mathematical exercise, but instead of mathematically inferring and deducing numbers, I will now simply work with the numbers from columns B and C. This will lead to an improved understanding of what could be considered as the original account of the lineage of *vinaya* teachers in the *Dīpavaṃsa*. Let us start anew from Table 2.

Table 5 Starting anew

	A	B	C	D ³⁷
Upāli	30 AB	60	74	14
Dāsaka	50	40 or 45	64	24 or 19
Soṇaka	44	40	66	26
Siggava	55	64	76	12
Moggaliputta Tissa	68	60 or 66	80 or 86	14 or 20 or 26

If Upāli died in 30 AB and this is 74 years after his own ordination, that means that he was ordained ($30-74 = -44$) 44 years before the Buddha died. Sixty years after his own ordination, he ordains Dāsaka, thus in ($-44+60 =$) 16 AB. This is indeed 14 years before his death in ($16+14 =$) 30 AB.

Dāsaka ordains Soṇaka either 40 or 45 years after his own ordination, so either in ($16+40 =$) 56 AB or in ($16+45 =$) 61 AB. This is either 24 or 19 years before he died 64 years after his ordination, ($16+64 =$) in 80 AB. He has been expert in *vinaya* for 50 years, from the moment his teacher Upāli died in 30 AB until his own death in 80 AB.

Soṇaka was the next *vinayapāṃokkha*, from 80 AB until his death 44 years later, in 124 AB. He ordained Siggava 26 years earlier, i.e. in ($124-26 =$) 98 AB. He himself had been ordained 66 years before his death: this means in ($124-66 =$) 58 AB. This figure lies perfectly in the middle of 56 or 61 AB as inferred above. Now it has become clear that Dāsaka did not ordain Soṇaka ($56-16 =$) 40 or ($61-16 =$) 45 years after his own ordination, but exactly 42 years after that event ($58-16 = 42$).

Siggava ordained Moggaliputta Tissa 64 years after his own ordination in 98 AB, this means in ($98+64 =$) 162 AB. He died 76 years later, i.e. in ($98+76 =$) 174 AB. If he had been expert in the *vinaya* from the moment his teacher died in 124 AB until his own death in 174 AB, this means he had been regarded as *vinayapāṃokkha* not for 55 years, but for ($174-124 =$) 50 years. This immediately explains the persistent difference of five years that occurred in the first mathematical deduction.³⁸

Moggaliputta Tissa died 68 years after the death of his teacher Siggava, i.e. in ($174+68 =$) 242 AB. Moreover, the *Dīpavaṃsa* states elsewhere that Moggaliputta Tissa died in the

³⁷D = C-B: $74-60 = 14$; $64-40 = 24$ or $64-45 = 19$; $66-40 = 26$; $76-64 = 12$; $80-60 = 20$ or $80-66 = 14$ or $86-60 = 26$ or $86-66 = 20$.

³⁸Compare Table 4 above, columns G and H to columns B and C concerning Siggava.

26th year of Asoka's reign (v.102) and that he ordained Mahinda in the 6th year after Asoka's coronation. This means that Moggaliputta Tissa ordained Mahinda (26–6 =) 20 years before his death. In other words, we can strike off the alternatives 14 or 26 for the years that lie in between those two events from our column D. Since we have seen that Moggaliputta Tissa died in 242 AB, and we now know that he ordained Mahinda 20 years earlier, this means Mahinda's ordination took place in (242–20 =) 222 AB. This is 60 years after his ordination, not 66. This means that only the numbers (222–162 =) 60 and (242–162 =) 80 are left in the columns B and C above. We can summarise all these results in tabular form:

Table 6 Results

	A ³⁹	B ⁴⁰	C ⁴¹	D ⁴²	E ⁴³	F ⁴⁴
Upāli	-44 AB	60	74	14	30 AB	30 AB
Dāsaka	16 AB	42	64	22	80 AB	50
Soṇaka	58 AB	40	66	26	124 AB	44
Siggava	98 AB	64	76	12	174 AB	50
Moggaliputta Tissa	162 AB	60	80	20	242 AB	68
Mahinda	222 AB	/	60	/	282 AB	

In conclusion, the multiple variants have now been solved. Dāsaka ordained Soṇaka, not 40 or 45, but 42 years after his own ordination. Siggava has been *vinayapāṃokkha* not for 55 but for 50 years. And the figures for Moggaliputta Tissa are 60 and 80, not the alternatives 66 or 86. This account easily explains the variant numbers we obtained from the first mathematical deduction. Since Siggava's death is five years earlier, the dates for Moggaliputta Tissa and for Mahinda also shift five years.

The Sole Remaining Discrepancy

The mathematical deduction deviates two years from the traditional dates based on Asoka's inauguration in 218 AB. Departing from this date, Mahinda is ordained in 224 and arrives in Sri Lanka in 236 AB. The deduction above on the other hand, results in 222 AB for the first event and in 234, not 236 AB, for the second one. Where does this difference of two years come from? I believe that the key to the answer to this question lies in the dating of the second council.

The *Dīpavaṃsa* links the moment of the ordination of Siggava and Candavajjī by Soṇaka to the second council. The account of this council is ostensibly placed in between the moment when Soṇaka ordains the next *vinaya* teacher in the succession line and the moment at which Siggava in turn ordains Moggaliputta. This council of Vesālī took place a hundred years after the Buddha died.⁴⁵ Immediately following the account of this second council, the chronicle

³⁹ A: date of ordination.

⁴⁰ B: seniority following ordination until the year in which they ordain the next in line.

⁴¹ C: seniority following ordination until death.

⁴² D: the number of years that lie between the moment they ordained the next in line and they died themselves.

⁴³ E: time of death.

⁴⁴ F: the length of time they were regarded as experts in their field.

⁴⁵ *Dīpavaṃsa*, iv.47 and v.16.

states that 118 years later, a royal chief called Asoka will govern at that time in Pāṭaliputta.⁴⁶ The *Samantapāsādikā*, like the *Dīpavaṃsa*, links Asoka's coronation to the second council. This council of Vesālī is here also dated a hundred years after the Buddha has died.⁴⁷ Dhammasoka will arise in Pāṭaliputta 118 years after this event.⁴⁸ The same two interesting dates are mentioned in the *Shanjian lü piposha*:

juan 1, p. 677c14:世尊涅槃已一百歲時○ 毘舍離跋闍子比丘○ 毘舍離中十非法起○

One hundred years after the *nirvāṇa* of the World-Honoured One, the Vajjiputrīya *bhikkhus* of Vesālī, raised in Vesālī the ten *adhammas*, unlawful things.

This is followed by the statement that 118 years after that council a king called Aśoka will arise in Pāṭaliputra.

juan 1, p. 678b02:從此以後百歲○ 又十八年中○ 波咤利弗國阿育王已生世○

In the 118th year from now, King Asoka will rise in Pāṭaliputta.

As stated in the *Dīpavaṃsa*, this council in Vesālī is placed after the ordination of Siggava by Soṇaka and it is associated with that event.⁴⁹ We have found out that this ordination in fact occurred in 98 AB. When we count 118 years past that date, we arrive at 216 AB for Asoka's inauguration and all pieces of the puzzle fall into place. Indeed, six years after 216, is 222 AB, the date we inferred above for Mahinda's ordination. Mahinda arrives in Sri Lanka 18 years after the inauguration of his father, i.e. in (216+18 =) 234 AB. Also Moggaliputta Tissa's death now matches the tradition: 26 years after the coronation, i.e. (216+26 =) 242 AB.

Although the second council is dated as being held “a hundred” years after the Buddha had died, we have shown that this was in fact 98 years later, a number that could simply have been rounded up to “a hundred”. This ‘rounding up’ in turn resulted in a misconceived 218 AB for Asoka's inauguration, and was passed down by later editors. This number clearly originates from 100+118, the first number being a conventional round number, the second one being exact. However, relying on the remarkably exact numbers passed down in connection with the lineage of the *vinaya* teachers, we found out that Asoka was in fact inaugurated in [98+118 =] 216 AB. The number 218 for this event is thus a mere generalisation and over-simplification on which far too many theories have been based without questioning the origin of this number.

In all, the internal consistency of the data from one of the earliest extant sources for our knowledge of early Buddhism is overwhelmingly clear. We have demonstrated what the wording “a hundred” means exactly in reference to the second council. This has led to an improved understanding of the number “218” for the date of Asoka's coronation, a date that occurs in most later works based on the *Dīpavaṃsa* but not derived from the exact data provided in it. Unfortunately, the data from the *Dīpavaṃsa* have too often been ignored, having been regarded as inconsistent and garbled,⁵⁰ while too much credit has been given to the inaccurate later sources that hand down the number 218. Far too little attention has hitherto been paid to the origin of this number 218 and far too many calculations

⁴⁶*Dīpavaṃsa* v.55, v.59.

⁴⁷J. Takakusu and M. Nagai (eds), *Samantapāsādikā, Buddhaghosa's Commentary on the Vinaya Piṭaka*, Vol. I (London, [1924] 1975), p. 33.

⁴⁸*Ibid.*, p. 35.

⁴⁹*Dīpavaṃsa*, iv.46–47.

⁵⁰Gombrich (2000), p. 18.

have been based upon just that. This number originated as a mere over-generalisation of two amazingly precise dates that are extant in the *Dīpavaṃsa*. According to my analysis of the data preserved in the *Dīpavaṃsa*, the second council occurred exactly 98 years after the Buddha died, and 118 years later Asoka was inaugurated. By mathematical and logical deduction, a very precise picture has crystallised. Although this new construction agrees roughly with the earliest research on these data in the *Dīpavaṃsa*, I believe it has enhanced and improved upon it. It deviates strongly, however, from the latest research, which dates the second council as occurring in 60 AB and Asoka's inauguration in 136 AB.⁵¹

More Proof

There is even a further link between the numbers from the succession line that proves their internal consistency. Since the figures from the *Dīpavaṃsa* all indicate seniority years following ordination, the number associated with their time of death is the exact sum of the years each member of the succession line spent as a monk together with his teacher and the number of years they were regarded as *vinayapāṃokkha*, the expert in his field:

Table 7 Additional link

	A ⁵²	B ⁵³	C ⁵⁴	D ⁵⁵
Upāli	30 AB	60	74	14
Dāsaka	50	42	64	22
Soṇaka	44	40	66	26
Siggava	50	64	76	12
Moggaliputta Tissa	68	60	80	20

Upāli was ordained 44 years before the Buddha died; this means he spent 44 years as a monk while the Buddha was alive and another 30 after he had died. This results in a total of 74 for the years he spent as a monk.

Upāli ordained Dāsaka 14 years before his death. Dāsaka spent another 50 years in the monastery, regarded as *the* expert on *vinaya*. This results in a total of 64 for the number of years he was a monk, 14 years of which he spent with his teacher Upāli and another 50 without him.

Dāsaka ordained Soṇaka 22 years before his death. In other words, Soṇaka was a monk for 22 years while his teacher Dāsaka was still alive. It took another 44 years before Soṇaka himself died. This means he had spent 66 years as a monk.

Soṇaka ordained Siggava 26 years before his death. Siggava spent another 50 years without his teacher Soṇaka. In other words, he spent 76 years in total as a monk, 26 years with his teacher and 50 without him.

⁵¹Cf. Note 6 above.

⁵²A: length of time they were regarded as *vinaya* expert.

⁵³B: seniority following ordination until the year in which they ordain the next in line.

⁵⁴C: seniority following ordination until death.

⁵⁵D: the number of years that lie between the moment they ordained the next in line and they died themselves.

Siggava ordained Moggaliputta Tissa 12 years before his death. So Moggaliputta Tissa spent 12 years with his teacher and another 68 without him, resulting in a total of 80 years.

In other words, the difference between the numbers given in columns B and C of one teacher, combined with the *vinayapāṃokkha* years of the next member in the succession line, results in the number given in column C for this next *vinaya* teacher. The fact that all these numbers match perfectly confirms that the deduction above is accurate. Hence it has now become quite hard to question what the author of this account in the *Dīpavaṃsa* meant when he recorded these concrete numbers. The fact that my results are mathematically sound and consistent seems to prove beyond any reasonable doubt that the author of the *Dīpavaṃsa* recorded seniority years following ordination. Therefore I would like to plead for a reevaluation of the traditional view on the lineage of the *vinaya* teachers as handed down in the *Dīpavaṃsa* and suggest an approach using the alternative theories that interpret these figures as real ages but, of course, with great caution.

Succession of Indian Kings

Traces of this newly revealed chronology can even be found in Saṅghabhadra's *Shanjian lü piposha*. The *Dīpavaṃsa* links the two most important events in the lives of the early *vinaya* teachers, the moment when they ordain the next in line and the moment of their death, through chronological cross-references to the reigning years of the kings who ruled in India and in Sri Lanka at that time. The *Samantapāsādikā* and the *Shanjian lü piposha* have both preserved a list of these reigning periods.

Table 8 Duration of the reigning periods of the Indian kings

<i>Samantapāsādikā</i> ⁵⁶	<i>Shanjian lü piposha</i> ⁵⁷
Ajātasattu 24 AB	Ajātasattu 24 AB
Udayabhadda 16	Udayabhadda 16
Anuruḍḍha and Muṇḍa 8	Anuruḍḍha 8
	Muṇḍa 8
Nāgadāsaka 24	Nāgadāsaka 14
Susunāga 18	Susunāga 18
Kālāsoka 28	Kālāsoka 28
Ten brothers 22	Ten brothers 22
Nine Nandas 22	Nine Nandas 22
Candagutta 24	Candagutta 24
Bindusāra 28	Bindusāra 28
Asoka 4	Asoka 4
King Asoka 18	King Asoka 18
Mahinda arrives in Sri Lanka	Mahinda arrives in Sri Lanka

These lists of Indian kings differ in two respects. Anuruḍḍha and Muṇḍa reigned for eight years jointly according to the *Samantapāsādikā*, while they are said to have each reigned for

⁵⁶Takakusu and Nagai, Vol. I ([1924] 1975), pp. 72–73.

⁵⁷T24n1462, p. 687.

8 years in the *Shanjian lü piposha*. Nāgadāsaka's reign lasted 24 years in the *Samantapāsādikā*, as against 14 years in the *Shanjian lü piposha*.

The most efficient way to find out the origin of these differences is to start anew with the mathematical aspect of the question. By making a sum of the total duration of the successive reigns, it can be noted that the *Samantapāsādikā* arrives at 236 AB for Mahinda's arrival in Sri Lanka, while the sum of the successive Indian reigns from the account in the *Shanjian lü piposha* results in 234 AB for this event:

Samantapāsādikā : $24+16+8+24+18+28+22+22+24+28+4+18 = 236$ AB for Mahinda's arrival in Sri Lanka

Shanjian lü piposha : $24+16+8+8+14+18+28+22+22+24+28+4+18 = 234$ AB for Mahinda's arrival in Sri Lanka

The difference of two years in these sums of the total reigning years of the kings is exactly the same difference we discovered earlier, the difference that lies between the dates of the first *vinaya* teachers from the *Dīpavaṃsa* and the traditional dating of Asoka's inauguration in 218 AB in all later sources.

Both texts explain that the Buddha died in the 8th regnal year of Ajātasattu and that this king ruled another 24 years after the Buddha died. This means that Ajātasattu ruled in India for 32 years, more specifically between -8 and 24 AB. His 24th regnal year falls precisely in 16 AB, the year in which Upāli ordained Dāsaka. King Ajātasattu is succeeded by Udayabhadda, who ruled for 16 years, from 24 AB until 40 AB. His sixth regnal year falls in 30 AB, the year in which Upāli died and Dāsaka became the next leading expert on *vinaya*.

The regnal period following these two kings differs, in the accounts of the *Samantapāsādikā* and the *Shanjian lü piposha*. According to the *Samantapāsādikā*, Anuruḍḍha and Muṇḍa ruled for eight years between 40 and 48 AB. King Nāgadāsaka succeeded them for 24 years between 48 and 72 AB. Then Susunāga became king for 18 years from 72 until 90 AB. He is succeeded by his son Kālāsoka who ruled for 28 years between 90 and 118 AB. His ten sons ruled together for 22 years, between 118 and 140 AB, followed by the nine Naṇḍas who also reigned for 22 years, between 140 and 162 AB. Then Candagutta became the next king. He ruled for 24 years between 162 and 186 AB. He is succeeded by Bindusāra who ruled 28 years from 186 until 214 AB. Asoka ruled for four years unanointed and is inaugurated in 218 AB.

According to the *Shanjian lü piposha*, Anuruḍḍha ruled for eight years between 40 and 48 AB. He was succeeded by Muṇḍa who in turn ruled for 8 years between 48 and 56 AB. King Nāgadāsaka succeeds him for 14 years between 56 and 70 AB. Then Susunāga becomes king for 18 years from 70 until 88 AB. He is succeeded by his son Kālāsoka who ruled for 28 years between 88 and 116 AB. His ten sons ruled together for 22 years, between 116 and 138 AB, followed by the nine Naṇḍas who also reigned for 22 years, between 138 and 160 AB. Then Candagutta becomes the next king. He ruled for 24 years between 160 and 184 AB. He is succeeded by Bindusāra who ruled 28 years from 184 until 212 AB. Asoka ruled for four years unanointed and is inaugurated in 216 AB.

If we take the cross-references to these kings in the *Dīpavaṃsa* account about the *vinaya* teachers and compare them to the regnal years of the Indian kings as recorded in the *Samantapāsādikā* and the *Shanjian lü piposha* respectively, these are the results:

Table 9 Cross-checking the Indian kings with the *vinaya* teachers

Cross-references to Indian kings in the <i>Dīpavaṃsa</i>	Original timetable (Cf. Table 6 above)	<i>Samantapāsādikā</i>	<i>Shanjian lü piposha</i>
Upāli ordains Dāsaka in Ajātasattu 24 (iv.27)	16 AB	✓ (-8+24 = 16)	✓ (-8+24 = 16)
Upāli dies in Udayabhadda 6 (iv.38, v.97)	30 AB	✓ (24+6 = 30)	✓ (24+6 = 30)
Dāsaka ordains Soṇaka in Nāgadāsaka 10 (iv.41)	58 AB	✓ (48+10 = 58)	✗ (56+10 = 66)
Dāsaka dies in Susunāga 8 (v.98)	80 AB	✓ (72+8 = 80)	✗ (70+8 = 78)
Soṇaka ordains Siggava in Kālāsoka 10 + 1/2 month (iv.44)	98 AB	✗ (90+10 = 100)	✓ (88+10 = 98)
Soṇaka dies in ten brothers 6 (v.99)	124 AB	✓ (118+6 = 124)	✗ (116+6 = 122)
Siggava ordains Moggaliputta in Candagutta 2 (v.81)	162 AB	✗ (162+2 = 164)	✓ (160+2 = 162)
Siggava dies in Candagutta 14 (v.73, v.100)	174 AB	✗ (162+14 = 176)	✓ (160+14 = 174)
Moggaliputta Tissa (54) in Asokadhamma 1 (vii.24)	[162+54 =] 216 AB	✗ (214+4 = 218)	✓ (212+4 = 216)
Moggaliputta (60) ordains Mahinda in Asokadhamma 6 (v.82)	222 AB	✗ (218+6 = 224)	✓ (216+6 = 222)
Mahinda (12) arrives in Sri Lanka in Asokadhamma 18 (vii.41, xvii.95)	[222+12 =] 234 AB	✗ (218+18 = 236)	✓ (216+18 = 234)
Moggaliputta dies in Asokadhamma 26 (v.102)	242 AB	✗ (218+26 = 244)	✓ (216+26 = 242)

This table shows that the *Shanjian lü piposha* has an overwhelming majority of references that match the references from the account in the *Dīpavaṃsa* that links the regnal periods of the kings to the chronology of the *vinaya* teachers. This has led me to the assessment that Saṅghabhadra’s text has in fact preserved an older layer from the original story than the extant *Samantapāsādikā*.

From this overview, we can see very clearly where the difference of two years arose, namely in the date for Siggava’s ordination by Soṇaka. By placing this event in 100 AB instead of 98 AB, all that follows also shifts two years. This leads to the conclusion that we can now ascertain that these deviating lists are the later ones that have been interpolated after someone lost the understanding of the original picture of the lives of these early teachers. They are so obviously based on the over-generalised and over-simplified date for both the second council and for Asoka’s inauguration, that my assessment that these lists are the later ones seems correct. The fact that Saṅghabhadra’s *Shanjian lü piposha* in striking contrast, has preserved so many traces of the exact chronology of the *vinaya* teachers in the *Dīpavaṃsa*, strongly suggests the need for further research.

In conclusion, the examination of the cross-references between the events in the lives of the successive *vinaya* teachers and the kings who ruled in India during the same period, has confirmed that the results of the mathematical deduction above are correct. The *Shanjian lü piposha* has preserved most of the original cross-references to the regnal years of the Indian

kings. This analysis has moreover confirmed once more that the later lists that are present in the *Dīpavaṃsa* itself and in the *Samantapāsādikā* have been made to match the traditional chronology which places the second council in 100 AB and Asoka's inauguration in 218 AB. In sharp contrast, the *Shan'jian lü piposha* has preserved a list of kings that concurs with the alternate chronology, in which the second council took place in 98 AB and Asoka's inauguration was placed 118 years after this event, namely in 216 AB. Only this alternate chronology tallies with the succession of the *vinaya* teachers. The overwhelming evidence from the comparison of their kings' lists, supports this new thesis. I believe therefore that I have successfully reconstructed what could be considered as the original timetable of the lives of the *vinaya* teachers from the *Dīpavaṃsa*. I hope to have demonstrated convincingly that the account of the lineage of *vinaya* teachers in the *Dīpavaṃsa* is internally consistent and that I have pinpointed successfully where and why the discrepancies arose.

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