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## *New Light on the Buddhist Era in Ceylon and Early Sinhalese Chronology*

AS an Appendix to my edition of the Tāmgoḍa-vihāra pillar-inscription, I have included an essay on the Chronology of Ceylon kings from Mahāscena to Mahinda V, in which I have examined all the data having a bearing on the subject available to me at that time, and endeavoured to fix the dates of these sovereigns as accurately as possible.<sup>1</sup> I am now in a position to bring forward important new evidence which, while supporting the position that I had taken up in that essay with regard to Sinhalese chronology during the early centuries of the Christian era, particularly with regard to the Buddhist era, makes it necessary to effect slight adjustments in the dates of kings up to the sixth century, and imparts exactness to many of these dates.

This new evidence is furnished by an inscription which, as a matter of fact, had been discovered before I wrote the essay mentioned above, but had not been fully and correctly read. The record is indited on a rock in a private land about a quarter of a mile to the north of the spill of the Basavakkuḷama at Anurādhapura. It covers an area of 4 ft. 7 in. by 2 ft. 9 in. of the rock surface, and comprises eleven lines of writing, the height of individual letters varying between 1½ in. and 4 in. The discovery of the inscription was made by Reverend Pandit T. Sri Dipananda Thera of Śrī Bhāratīndrāśrama, Anurādhapura, who conveyed the information to me, and I had an estampage of it prepared in 1952. Reference has been made to the inscription at page 33 of the Administration Report of the Archaeological Survey of Ceylon for 1952. It is included as No. 2 in the List of Inscriptions copied during that year, forming Appendix II of that Report (p. 40). The first line of the inscription refers to the king who was the donor as son of the great king Budadasa (Buddhadāsa), after which the

1. *Epigraphia Zeylanica (EZ)*, Vol. V, pp. 86-111.

letters forming the name of the king himself are not quite well preserved, but the last two letters of the king's name, before the word *maha-rajā*, occurring at the beginning of line 2, can be distinctly read as *namī*. It was therefore assumed at that time that the record is one of Mahānāma, who was a son of Buddhadāsa, and the indistinct letters were restored to conform to a title of Mahānāma known from that monarch's inscriptions.

The inscription is badly weathered in places, and some of the letters in the last five lines have become altogether illegible. The execution of the record has been done in a slovenly manner. The lines are not of equal length, and the individual letters not of uniform size. The script is rather cursive and there is considerable variation in the forms of individual letters. The record also contains, as is apparent even from a cursory examination, words and phrases not found in other epigraphs of the period. All these circumstances make the satisfactory decipherment of this inscription a very laborious task, requiring many days of concentrated attention. At the time of its discovery, I was not only busy with administrative duties of pressing urgency, but was also engaged in the onerous task of seeing the *Sigiri Graffiti* through the press, and writing some sections of that voluminous monograph. I had therefore to defer the study of this inscription to a more leisurely time which I, however, did not get before I relinquished the post of Archaeological Commissioner.

Recently, in the course of an epigraphical study in which I am at present engaged, this record came to my notice once again, and I could afford the time necessary for its satisfactory decipherment. At my request, Dr. C. E. Godakumbure has been kind enough to furnish me with a fresh estampage prepared by Mr. T. K. Jayasundara, in which some of the letters are clearer than in the earlier one, while others, perhaps due to the deterioration of the rock in the interval, are not so clear. As a result, it has now been ascertained that the record is not of Mahānāma, but of his elder brother Upatissa, and that it is dated in the twenty-eighth year of that monarch. In addition, the record also gives the year 941 from the Parinirvāṇa of the Buddha as the equivalent of the regnal year. The day of the grant is given as Duratu new-moon and, though this detail is not quite so certain as the others, this new-moon day is said to have fallen on a Tuesday. The record, thus, is one of capital importance for the study of Ceylon history. Before discussing these points, it is necessary to give the text of the inscription, as deciphered, and its translation.

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## TEXT

- 1 Sidam[<sup>\*</sup>]Budadasa-ma[ha<sup>\*</sup>]rajaha puta Upati[sa-Sirimeka]<sup>2</sup>-
- 2 nami-maharaja kirivita nekeri-dora t[o]raṇa-dora aṭa -
- 3 -la-dora kiḷa koha=da=ga Upatisa-raja-maha-vihara kara-
- 4 -va Kana-ketehi varu-pota Nakara-gala Keḷela-amit[i]h=ṭa
- 5 di Dirati-gama Dasa-gama pohatakarata [ca] Boya-geyata
- 6 Kabota-agaṇahi Mahanelaka-vaḷina saṭi karihi-kubura akaḍa-
- 7 tana gaṇaya Doraka-vaharata dinc [<sup>\*</sup>] Cata lagita-
- 8 -k=ṭa-visiya-[avanaka-vasahi] . . . . . cada-[avamasi]
- 9 Duratu kaḷakara-pohata[-divasa] Kuja-[varc] Ba[gavata-Bu]daha  
piri-[nivita]-
- 10 kale nava-sata-cka- catari[sa]- vana-[vasahi].....
- 11 .....

## TRANSLATION

Success! The great king Upatisa, bearing the name of Sirimeka<sup>3</sup>, son of the great king Budadasa,<sup>4</sup> having founded the Upatisa-raja-maha-vihara<sup>5</sup> (at a place) half a *krośa*<sup>6</sup> ahead of the city gate, the gate of the archway, the gate of the watch-tower<sup>7</sup> and the monumental column<sup>8</sup>, which he himself had caused to be constructed, granted to this Doraka-vihara<sup>9</sup>, (the villages

2. In this name, the first *akṣara u* is clear enough; of the *pa*, the right-hand vertical stroke is damaged, but what is preserved of it is enough to identify it. Of the *akṣara ti*, the *i* sign has to be supplied conjecturally. Of the four letters read as *Sirimeka*, there are enough traces to justify the reading. The name or title of *Sirimeka* (P. *Sirimegha*) was borne by Jetthatissa II, the grandfather of Upatissa I, and there is evidence to establish that the kings of Ceylon during this period at times bore the names of their grandfathers (*EZ*, Vol. IV, pp. 122ff).

3. P. *Upatissa Sirimegha*; Skt. *Upatiṣya Śrimegha*.

4. P. and Skt. *Buddhadāsa*.

5. P. *Upatissa-rāja-mahā-vihāra*.

6. *Koha=ad=aga* :—*Kohada*=Skt. *krośārdha*; *aga* = Skt. *agre*. A *krośa* is half of a *gavyūti* (*S.gavu*), four of which made a *yojana*. A Sinhalese *gavu* was about 2½ miles; half a *krośa* would thus be little over half a mile in length. See H.W. Codrington in *Ceylon Journal of Science, Section G (CJSG)*, Vol. II, p. 134, and J. F. Fleet, 'Imaginative Yojanas,' in the *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland (JRAS)* for 1912, pp. 229 ff.

7. *Nekeri-dora* = Skt. *nagara-dvāra*. The form *nekeri* in the inscription perhaps goes back to Skt. *nagarī* rather than *nagara*. *Toraṇa-dora* = Skt. *torāṇa-dvāra*. *Aṭala-dora* : *aṭala* = Skt. *aṭṭāla*.

8. *Kiḷa* is taken to be the same as *khīla* in P. *inda-khīla*, for which see P.T.S. Pali Dictionary, *s.v.* It was a pillar set up at a city gate.

9. *Doraka-vihara* = Skt. *Dvāraka-vihāra*. This is obviously the same as *Upatissa-rāja-mahā-vihāra*, mentioned earlier, and was given the alternative designation as it was in the proximity of the city gate.

of) Diratigama and Dasagama for the benefit of the *uposatha*-house<sup>10</sup> and sixty *karīsas* of field from Mahanelaka-vaḷa in (the village of) Kabota-agaṇa<sup>11</sup> for the benefit of the Bodhi-shrine<sup>12</sup> (having had these) acquired from the minister Nakaragala Keḷela<sup>13</sup>, giving him the *varupota*<sup>14</sup> of Kanaketa, and having (the grant) registered as perpetual in the administrative offices<sup>15</sup>, on Tuesday the fast day of the Duratu new-moon<sup>16</sup> in the month of ..... in the twenty-eighth year of the raising of the umbrella, (being) the year Nine-hundred and forty-one in the era of the Parinirvāṇa of the Blessed Buddha.....

\* \* \* \* \*

This inscription is the earliest document so far known in which a date is given in the Buddhist era, reckoned from the Parinirvāṇa. This date can be made use of for chronological purposes as it is equated with the regnal year of the king reigning at the time—the twenty-eighth of Upatissa I. Furthermore, this date is sufficiently close to a synchronism with Chinese history, namely the embassy of Mahānāma<sup>17</sup>, the successor of Upatissa I, which was received by the Chinese emperor in 428, so that the Sinhalese chronology can be brought into relationship with the well-established

10. *Pohatakara*. See *EZ*, Vol. III, p. 168.

11. *Kabota-agaṇa* would be *Kapotāṅgaṇa* in Pali. In modern Sinhalese it would be Kobeyi-gaṇē. A village of this name is mentioned in the long but fragmentary rock inscription of Bhātika-Abhaya, close to the summit of Mihintalē (Müller, *AIC*, No. 20).

12. *Boya-geya* = P. *bodhi-geha*. See University of Ceylon, *History of Ceylon (UHC)*, Vol. I, p. 308.

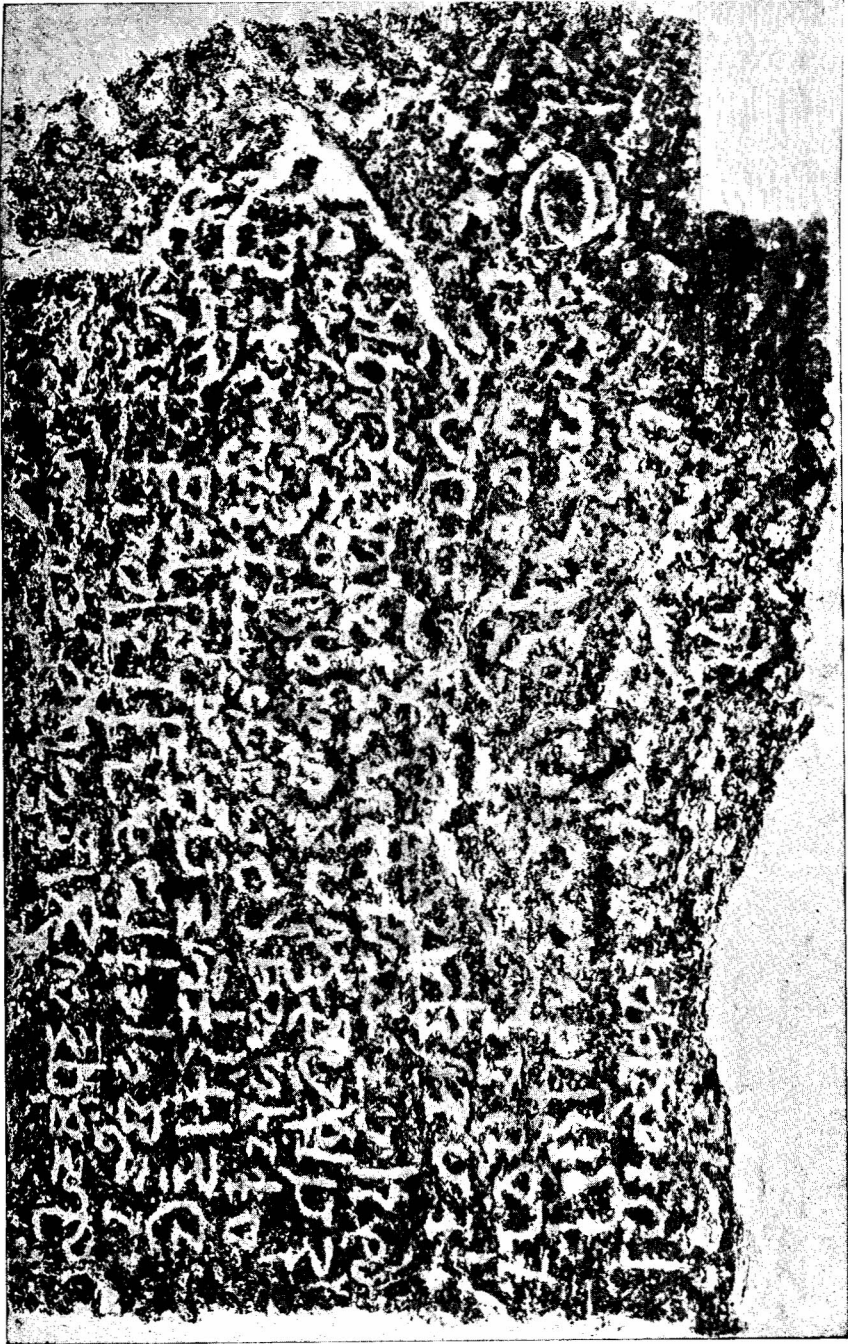
13. *Nakaragala* is the title which occurs in inscriptions of the tenth and twelfth centuries as *Nuvaragal*. See *Epigraphia Zeylanica*, Vol. II, pp. 57 and 254 and Vol. III, p. 325.

14. *Varu-pota* is obviously the same as the later *varupeta*. This word occurs in the Anurādhapura slab-inscription of Līlāvati (*EZ*, Vol. I, p. 180) and in the *Pūjāvālī*, 34th chapter, in the phrase *Talavatu-āḷa diya pāvā visi-dahasak kuṁburu-kiri karavā Denā-nakayehi saṅghayāta dan-varupet karavā* (Mabopitiya Medhankara Thera's edition, p. 15). From these contexts it is clear that the word denotes an irrigated tract of rice fields. Perhaps it is derived from a compound of Skt. *vāri* and *prāpta*.

15. *Akaḍa-tana gaṇaya* :— *Akaḍa* (Skt. *akhaṇḍam*), 'not ceasing,' is taken to have been used adverbially, modifying *gaṇaya*, the absolutive of the verb *gaṇa*, Skt. *grhṇāti*. *Tana* (Skt. *sthāna*) means an office or administrative centre in such words as *de-kam-tān* and *kam-tān-ledaru* occurring in tenth-century inscriptions (*EZ*, Vol. I, p. 96 and Vol. II, p. 31). Similar phraseology is not uncommon in inscriptions of the third to fifth centuries. An unpublished inscription of the reign of Bhātiya II from a place called Nelugala in Tamankaḍu has *akaḍa-tanahi-gaṇavaya*.

16. *Kaḷakara* is the prototype of the later *kaḷuvara* (dark), which is the equivalent of Skt. *kṛṣṇa* in *kṛṣṇa-pakṣa*, 'the dark fortnight.' *Pohata* is P. *uposatha*. *Duratu* (Durutu) is the same as Skt. *Pauṣa*. The origin of the Sinhalese name for this month has not yet been ascertained.

17. *Journal of the Ceylon Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society (JCBRAS)*, Vol. XXIV (No. 68), p. 83.



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*Courtesy: Archaeological Commission*

Anurādhapura: Rock-inscription of Upatissa I

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chronology of China. And, what is more significant, the record itself furnishes details of the date—if the reading *Kujavare* in 1. 9 be accepted—enabling its exact verification, so that the validity of the conclusions arrived at from other lines of evidence with regard to the date can be tested.

Taking first the traditional date of the king mentioned in this inscription and that of his successor for consideration in the light of this evidence, Turnour, computing from data in the *Mahāvamsa*, gives 911 of the Buddhist era as the date of Upatissa's accession, and 953 as that of Mahānāma<sup>18</sup>; Sumangala and Batuvantudave are in agreement with Turnour.<sup>19</sup> Wijesinha's dates for the accession of these two monarchs are 370 and 412 A.C. respectively,<sup>20</sup> which, according to the equation, date in the Christian era + 543, are 913 and 955 B.E., respectively. Wikremasinghe's date<sup>21</sup> in the Buddhist era of 544-3 B.C. for Upatissa is 909 and for Mahānāma 951. Geiger's date for Mahānāma is 409 A.C. (952 B.E.)<sup>22</sup>; that scholar's treatment of Upatissa will be referred to later. According to Mabopitiye Medhankara Thera<sup>23</sup>, Upatissa came to the throne in 912 B.E. and Mahānāma in 954. My own dates in the Buddhist era for the accession of these two kings are 908 and 949 respectively.<sup>24</sup> The evidence of the present inscription establishes that the real date of the accession of Upatissa I was 913, and of Mahānāma 955 of the Buddhist era. It will be seen that Wijesinha's dates for these events are in complete accord with the contemporary evidence of the inscription. The others are from one to six years earlier than the actual dates.

The discrepancies are due to adjustments for possible current years at the close of the reigns of some kings, and the variations in the received texts of the Sinhalese chronicles in the sum total of the number of years that is said to have elapsed from the Parinirvāṇa to the end of Mahāsena's reign. According to B. Gunasekara's text of the *Pūjāvalī* (34th chapter), 844 years 9 months and 25 days had elapsed between the Parinirvāṇa and the close of

18. G. Turnour, *The Mahāvamsa, with the Translation subjoined*. Cotta Mission Press, 1837, p. lxii.

19. *Mahāvamsa*, Sinhalese translation, Part II, from the 37th chapter, Colombo, Government Press, 1917, p. xx.

20. *Mahāvamsa*, translation into English, Government Printer, Colombo, 1909 (Mt. W), p. x.

21. *EZ*, Vol. III, p. 12.

22. *Cūlavamsa*, English translation (*Cv. T.*), part ii, p. xi.

23. *Pūjāvalīya*, 34th chapter, edited by Pandit Mabopitiye Medhankara Thera, Mahabodhi Press, Colombo, 1932, (Pv. xxxiv, M), p. iv.

24. *EZ*, Vol. IV, p. 109.

Mahāsenā's reign<sup>25</sup> and the later works, the *Nikāya-saṅgraha* and the *Rājāvalī*, are in accord with this<sup>26</sup>. Geiger has accepted this as 'one of those single dates which rest on a sure traditional basis.'<sup>27</sup> Wickremasinghe, too, has made his chronology conform to it so far as his dates in the Buddhist era are concerned.<sup>28</sup> I have myself followed these two scholars in this matter<sup>29</sup>. Some manuscripts of the *Pūjāvalī*, indeed, give the reading *aṭa-siya-susālis* (844) in enumerating the number of years, while others have the reading *aṭa-siya-sasālis* (846). In Mabopitiye Medhankara Thera's critical edition of the *Pūjāvalī* (34th chapter), the reading adopted is the latter, as it is supported by the majority of the manuscripts that he consulted.<sup>30</sup> And this reading of *sasālis* instead of *susālis* is in accord with the present inscription which equates the twenty-eighth year of Upatissa with 941 from the Parinirvāna. The total lengths of the reigns of Sirimeghavaṇṇa, Jetṭhātissa I and Buddhādāsa, who came between Mahāsenā and Upatissa I, add to 66 years which, together with 28 years of Upatissa up to the time of the record, amount to 94 years. Subtracting this from 941, the year of the Buddhist era corresponding to the 28th of Upatissa, we get 847, which tallies with 846 years 9 months and 25 days of Medhankara Thera's text of the *Pūjāvalī*, rounding off the 9 months and 25 days as one year. It is also noteworthy that, in order to arrive at this agreement, no allowance is necessary for current years at the close of any one reign, and that the twenty-eighth year of Upatissa has also to be included. It is therefore possible that, at the time the present record was indited, the 28th year was drawing to a close, or that the year 941 of the Buddhist era had not run much of its course.

If the Buddhist era of this record was computed from the same starting point as that era has at present in Ceylon, Burma and Siam, and as it has been among Sinhalese Buddhists at least as far back as 1200 A.C., and if the year given is an expired one<sup>31</sup>, the date is equivalent to 398 A.C. But it is well-known that the present Buddhist era is in error for the time of Asoka

25. B. Gunasekara, *A Contribution to the History of Ceylon, translated from the Pūjāvaliya*, Colombo, 1895, p. 25.

26. *Nikāya-saṅgraha*, English translation by C. M. Fernando, Colombo, 1908, p. 14. *Rājāvaliya*, English translation by B. Gunasekara, Reprint, 1954, p. 45. The *Nikāya-saṅgraha* gives the date of Mahāsenā's accession as 818 B.E. This king reigned twenty-seven years.

27. *Cv. T.*, part ii, p. xvii.

28. *EZ*, Vol. III, p. 11.

29. *EZ*, Vol. V, p. 88.

30. *Pv.* xxxiv, M, p. 16.

31. *EZ*, Vol. II, p. 220.

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whose date can be ascertained within narrow limits from the references to a number of Greek kings in his inscriptions.<sup>32</sup> Computing from this base of the true date of Asoka, various attempts have been made by distinguished scholars to ascertain the correct date of the Buddha's Parinirvāṇa. Of these dates, 483 B.C., determined by J. F. Fleet after an exhaustive study of the evidence supplied by various sources, is the one that is accepted by most Orientalists.<sup>33</sup>

Devānāmpīya Tissa of Ceylon being a contemporary of Asoka, the date of that monarch has to be adjusted to be in conformity with that of Asoka, and not in terms of the Buddhist era now current in Ceylon. And this adjustment was continued by Fleet right down to the time of Mahānāma, the successor of the king mentioned in our inscription.<sup>34</sup> Wickremasinghe fully endorsed Fleet's views and claimed to have discovered evidence in the inscriptions of South India to prove that a Buddhist era with 483 B.C. as the starting point prevailed in Ceylon up to the eleventh century.<sup>35</sup> This view of Wickremasinghe was accepted by Geiger in his translation of the *Mahāvamsa* published in 1912.<sup>36</sup> E. Hultzsch, however, pointed out that the premise on which Wickremasinghe based his theory of a Buddhist era of 483 B.C. prevailing up to the eleventh century, namely, a supposed synchronism with South Indian history, was faulty, as he had relied on an erroneous translation by Wijesinha of a passage in the *Cūḷavamsa* (Chap. 53, v. 44)<sup>37</sup>. Wickremasinghe, thereupon, modified his view, and was not certain whether a Buddhist era with 483 B.C. as its epoch was prevalent in Ceylon in the eighth to eleventh centuries, but clung on to the position that such an era prevailed up to the beginning of the eighth century, in spite of the evidence against it from the Chinese synchronisms pointed out by Sylvain Levi.<sup>38</sup> I have demonstrated in detail the untenability of Wickremasinghe's position, and need not recapitulate the arguments here.<sup>39</sup>

32. P. H. L. Eggermont, *The Chronology of the Reign of Asoka Moriya*, Leiden, 1956, p. 180.

33. J. F. Fleet, 'The Day on which the Buddha Died,' in the *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland (JRAS)* for 1909, pp. 1-34.

34. J. F. Fleet, 'The Origin of the Buddhavaṛsa, the Ceylonese Reckoning from the Death of Buddha' in *JRAS* for 1909, pp. 323-356.

35. *EZ*, Vol. I, pp. 155 ff.

36. *Mahāvamsa*, translated into English by Wilhelm Geiger, Reprint, Colombo, 1950, pp. xxviii ff.

37. E. Hultzsch, 'Contributions to Sinhalese Chronology' in *JRAS*, 1913, pp. 517-531.

38. Sylvain Levi in *Journal Asiatique*, 1900, pp. 297 ff, 401 ff. English translation by John M. Seneveratne of relevant parts of Sylvain Levi's paper in *JCBRAS*, Vol. XXIV, (No. 68), pp. 82-102.

39. *EZ*, Vol. V, pp. 88 ff.

Geiger was alive to the significance of the Chinese synchronism referring to the reign of Mahānāma<sup>40</sup>; in his translation of the *Cūlavamsa*, he therefore accepted the position that the traditional Buddhist era from the time of that monarch onwards has to be taken as starting from 544 B.C. But, Geiger insisted that up to the end of the reign of Mahāsena, the era was to be computed as starting from 483 B.C. In order to provide for the transition from one era to the other, he left the chronology between the end of Mahāsena's reign and the accession of Mahānāma in an indefinite manner, and proposed that the interval between these two events, which, according to the *Cūlavamsa* and the *Pūjāvalī*, comprised 108 years, be reduced to 49 years.<sup>41</sup> He even proposed a measure so drastic as to entirely discard Upatissa I with his 42 years. 'He may be purely fictitious or perhaps a prince who reigned along with his father and either never came to the throne himself or if so, only for a short period,' says Geiger. But, in addition to the present inscription, Upatissa has left another record dated in his 24th regnal year, where he is called Jeṭṭhisa Upatissa.<sup>42</sup> With regard to Geiger's reduction of the period between the death of Mahāsena and the accession of Mahānāma to 49 years, the present record is evidence that Upatissa reigned at least for 28 years, and the 20th year of his father Buddhadāsa is referred to in another record.<sup>43</sup> Three inscriptions of Jeṭṭhatissa II, the father of Buddhadāsa, are known; one of these is dated in the second year.<sup>44</sup> There are many records of Sirimeghavaṇṇa; the twentieth regnal year is mentioned in one of them.<sup>45</sup> It is thus clear that the number of years allowed by Geiger for the interval between the death of Mahāsena and the accession of Mahānāma is quite inadequate. There is nothing incredible in the lengths of reigns, given in the chronicle, of Sirimeghavaṇṇa, Jeṭṭhatissa II, Buddhadāsa, Upatissa I and Mahānāma. These five monarchs, belonging to three generations, reigned, one after the other, for 130 years. Mahānāma, most probably, was past the fiftieth year of his age when he was raised to the throne.

As has been stated already, Sinhalese envoys of Mahānāma were at the Chinese court in 428 A.C. If the date of the present inscription is converted into the Christian era on the basis of 483 as the starting point of the Buddhist

40. *Cv. T.*, part II, pp. v ff.

41. *Cv. T.*, part II, p. xi.

42. *Cv. T.*, part II, p. vii, *Ceylon Journal of Science, Section A (CJSG)*, Vol. II, p. 103.

43. *Ceylon Antiquary and Literary Register (CALR)*, Vol. III, p. 207.

44. *CJSG*, Vol. II, p. 102. 'Brāhmī Inscriptions in the Yala East Wild Life Reserve' by C. W. Nicholas in *Sir Paul Pieris Felicitation Volume*, Colombo, 1956, p. 67.

45. In an unpublished inscription at Kāraṇbagala in the Hambantōṭa District.

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era, it would be equivalent to 458 A.C., which would mean that Upatissa's reign of 42 years ended and Mahānāma ascended the throne in 472 A.C., 44 years after the envoys of the latter had reached China. It is therefore clear that the theory of 483 B.C. as the epoch for the Buddhist era does not hold good for this period. On the other hand, if the Buddhist era had the same starting point as it has today, the date of our inscription, assuming that the year is an expired one, would be 398 A.C., and Mahānāma's accession would have been in 412 A.C. He reigned for 22 years; his envoys could therefore have been in China in 428 A.C.

But, from this Chinese evidence, one cannot say with certainty that the epoch of the Buddhist era on the date of this inscription was exactly the same as it was in the beginning of the thirteenth century. Even if the epoch of the Buddhist era was six years earlier or sixteen years later than 544 B.C., Mahānāma could have come to the throne on a date enabling his envoys to be in China in 528 A.C. Such circumpection is all the more justified when we consider that it is only after the lapse of nearly 800 years from the date of this record that we find in Ceylon another inscription in which reference is made to the Buddhist era,<sup>46</sup> though the prevalence of the era in Burma is known from inscriptions of Kyanzittha<sup>47</sup> whose reign began in 1084: that, too, nearly 700 years after the date of our epigraph. It is quite conceivable that the Buddhist era went out of vogue some time after the time of Upatissa, and that it was re-introduced in the eleventh century either in Burma or in Ceylon. And the computation of details on which the initial point of the era was then decided might have given a result differing from that in the time of our inscription. It is on these considerations that the mention of the week-day coupled with the *tīthi*, enabling the exact verification of the date given in our record, is of capital importance.

It is therefore very regrettable that the inscription has not been well preserved at the point where the week-day is mentioned. But there is no reasonable doubt about the identity of the two syllables reading *Kuja*, the name of the week-day; only the sign for the medieval vowel *u* has to be read conjecturally. And these two letters cannot form a word either taken together or separately, with those which precede or follow them. Between *ku* and the last word legible before it, there is room for three *aḥṣaras* which, as they follow the word *pohata* (*P.uposatha*), must have formed, on the

46. Inscription from Mādagama in the Vāudavili Hatpattu, *CJSG*, Vol. II, pp. 186 and 212. This inscription, dated in the 17th year of Parākramabāhu I, gives the year 1696 of the Buddhist era as the date of that monarch's accession.

47. *Epigraphia Birmanica* (*Ep. Bir.*), Vol. I, pp. 51 and 115.

analogy of other inscriptions of the period, the word *davasa*, 'day.' Following *Kuja* is a letter which is somewhat blurred, but can be read as *va*; the next letter is clearly *re*. The reading *Kujavare* is thus quite certain. After *re*, the *akṣara ba* is quite clear. Three letters following this are illegible. The next letter, *bu*, is partly damaged, but the four *akṣaras* after them admit of no doubt, and read—*daha piri*. Two or three letters at the end of this line, the ninth, have been completely worn away. The first two letters of the tenth line read *kale*; these are followed by the enumeration of the date in words. Taking into consideration the stage of phonetical development of the Sinhalese language represented by the rest of the inscription, that portion of the ninth line following *Kujavare*, with the first two letters of the tenth line, may be read *Ba[gavataBu]daha piri[nivita] kale*, 'in the era of the Parinirvāṇa of the Blessed Buddha'.

It might also be questioned whether the name of a planetary week-day could have been mentioned in a Ceylon inscription of the close of the fourth century, when the earliest known epigraph from India itself, containing the name of a week-day, is the Eran inscription of Budhagupta dated in the (Gupta) year 165 (484 A.C.), over ninety years after the date of our record.<sup>48</sup> The adoption by the Hindus of the Jewish-Christian calendrical week beginning with Sunday was a result of the contact of India with the West, and it cannot be definitely stated when this took place. There is literary evidence for the use of week-days in India<sup>49</sup> in about the first or second century A.C. As Ceylon and South India had direct relations with the Roman empire from the first to fourth centuries, the names of the week-days could possibly have been adopted by the Sinhalese and the Tamils directly from the traders of the Roman empire, and not introduced from North India. Consequently, there is nothing improbable in the mention of a week-day in an ancient Sinhalese document of the last decade of the fourth century A.C. To meet with a week-day again in a Sinhalese document, we have to wait until the reign of Vijayabāhu I.<sup>50</sup>

Having thus concluded that there is justification for taking that, according to this record, the new-moon of Durutu in the Buddhist year 941

48. J. F. Fleet, *Gupta Inscriptions (Corpus Inscriptionum Indicarum, Vol. III)*, p. 89. See also 'The Use of the Planetary Week in India' by J. F. Fleet in *JRAS* for 1912, pp. 1039-1046. I am not aware whether an inscription of an earlier date mentioning a week-day has been discovered in India after the publication of Fleet's article in 1912.

49. K. P. Jayaswal, 'The Week-days and Vikrama' in *Indian Antiquary*, Vol. XLVII, 1912, p. 112.

50. An unpublished inscription from Periyakūlama or Nātanār-kōvil. *Annual Report of the Archaeological Survey of Ceylon (ASCAR)* for 1953, p. 22.

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fell on a Tuesday, we have to ascertain the year in the Christian era which satisfies these details. Fortunately, the scope of our research is restricted within narrow limits by the circumstance that this year, the twenty-eighth of Upatissa I, can be roughly ascertained by the evidence of the dates of the Sinhalese missions which arrived in China in 428 and 527. The Sinhalese embassy to China in 428 was despatched in the reign of Mahānāma who ascended the throne fourteen years after the date of the present inscription, and reigned for twenty-two years. The envoys could have left Ceylon even in the last year of Mahānāma, and arrived in China actually after the death of that king. Assuming that the voyage from Ceylon to China took a year, the envoys would have left Ceylon in any year between 405 and 427 A.C., within which dates must have fallen the first year of Mahānāma's reign. The 28th year of Upatissa would thus have fallen between 391 and 413 A.C. The Sinhalese mission which reached China in 527 was despatched by a ruler named Kia-che Kia-lo-ha-li-ya, who has been identified by Sylvain Levi with Kassapa, the son of Upatissa II.<sup>51</sup> I have given reasons for taking him as Silākāla<sup>52</sup> who succeeded Upatissa II. The reign of Silākāla, according to the chronicle, lasted for 13 years; it must have commenced between 513 and 527 if the envoys sent by him arrived in China in 527. The interval which separated the accession of Silākāla from the twenty-eighth year of Upatissa I, according to the details in the *Cūlavamsa*, was 130 years 3 months and 25 days, i.e. 130 years in a round number. According to the evidence of this synchronism with Chinese history, the 28th year of Upatissa I was between the years 513 - 130 and 527 - 130, i.e. 383 and 397 A.C. Taking the years common to the calculations based on the dates of the two missions, we get 391 and 397 as the limits of the period in which the 28th year of Upatissa I fell. And, if the above arguments with regard to the mention of the week-day in the present inscription and the calculations combining the details of the *Cūlavamsa* with the Chinese synchronisms are valid, there should have been a Durutu (Pauṣa) new-moon which fell on a Tuesday within these six years.

Before we apply this test, some remarks on another matter are also necessary. The Sinhalese month Duratu (modern Durutu), the new-moon of which is referred to in the details of the date, is the equivalent of the lunar month called Pauṣa in Sanskrit. Lunar months in Ceylon today, as they have been for some centuries past, follow the *amānta* system, i.e. they end with the new-moon, as is the usage in South India. But the other system,

51. *JCBRAS*, Vol. XXIV (No. 68), p. 91 f.

52. *EZ*, Vol. V, pp. 98-99.

*pūrṇimānta*, according to which the lunar month ended with the full-moon, was not unknown in ancient Ceylon. The Alutvāva pillar-inscription furnishes evidence of the use of a *pūrṇimānta* month in the tenth century,<sup>53</sup> and the Panākaḍuva copper-plates indicate its usage in the eleventh.<sup>54</sup> The definition of the seasons in the *Sikhavalaṇḍa-vinisa* of the tenth century<sup>55</sup> is on the basis of *pūrṇimānta* lunar months. 'In the *pūrṇimānta* system each month beginning with a full-moon is named after the next *amānta* month, but takes in the dark fortnight preceding each new moon.'<sup>56</sup> Thus, if the *pūrṇimānta* system was followed by the writer of this epigraph, the new-moon (*amāvāsyā*) of Durutu (Pauṣa) would have been the new-moon of the month of Mārgaśīrṣa (Sinhalese Uṇḍuvap) according to the *amānta* system. 'The new-moon is called sometimes by the name of the month of which it marks the end, and sometimes by the name of the following month.'<sup>57</sup> Our record, in addition to calling the new-moon by the month of Durutu, has the mention of a month preceding it. The name of this month is not legible, but it is possible that the writer of the record followed the practice of calling the new-moon by the name of the month which followed it. In effect, this would result in the same day as if the *pūrṇimānta* system of naming lunar months were followed. We thus have to test the date having in view both the *amānta* and the *pūrṇimānta* systems.

Referring now to the Table of Solar Years and New-moons from 1 B.C. to A.D. 500 in Swamikannu Pillai's *Indian Ephemeris*,<sup>58</sup> we find that between 391 and 397 A.C., between which the 28th year of Upatissa I must fall according to Chinese synchronisms, there was no *amānta* month of Paṣa (Durutu) of which the new-moon fell on a Tuesday. But if the month be taken as *pūrṇimānta*, the new-moon of the month of Pauṣa in 396 A.C. was on the 16th of December, which was a Tuesday. If the practice of calling the new-moon of an *amānta* month by the name of the following month be adopted, this day was a Pauṣa *amāvāsyā*, and Swamikannu Pillai, in fact, following this practice, has called it by that name. Consequently, the equivalent in the Christian calendar of the date given in our record has to be taken as Tuesday, 16 December, 396 A.C.

53. *EZ*, Vol. II, p. 231.

54. *EZ*, Vol. V, pp. 9-10.

55. *Sikhavalaṇḍa-vinisa*, edited by Sir D. B. Jayatilaka, p. 15. The rainy season, for instance, began with the first of the dark fortnight of Āsālhī and ended with the full-moon of Kattika.

56. Diwan Bahadur L. D. Swamikannu Pillai, *Indian Ephemeris*, (*Ind. Eph.*), Vol. I, part I, p. 52.

57. *Ind. Eph.*, Vol. I, part I, p. 31.

58. *Ind. Eph.*, Vol. I, part I, pp. 214-215.

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We now proceed to consider the bearing which the date in the present inscription has on the Buddhist era as it has been in use in Ceylon from the twelfth century up to modern times. The Polonnaru inscription of Sāhasamalla gives Wednesday, the 12th day of the waxing moon in the month of Binara (Sanskrit Bhādrapada) after the expiration of 1743 years, 3 months and 27 days of the Buddhist era as the date of the accession of that monarch.<sup>59</sup> The details work correctly to Wednesday, 23 August, 1200 A.C.<sup>60</sup> This document establishes that, in the Polonnaru period, the years in the Buddhist era, as those of the Śaka era, were expired ones (*gata*), and that the year began on the full-moon day of the month of Vaiśākha. The starting point of the era, according to these details, was in 544 B.C., so that the formula for the conversion of a date in the Buddhist era to one in the Christian year is—543 if the day was before the end of December and—542 if it was after January 1, and before the day of the Vaiśākha full-moon. H. W. Codrington has shown that the dates in the Buddhist era available from Kandy times conform to this formula.<sup>61</sup> The details in the only date in the Buddhist era found in India, Kārttika waning moon 1, Wednesday, in the Buddhist year 1813, given in an inscription of a king named Aśokavalla found at Buddhagayā are correct, as pointed out by J. F. Fleet, for Wednesday, 1 October, 1270 A.C., if the Buddhist era is taken as having its initial point in 544 B.C.<sup>62</sup>

If the Buddhist era had the same starting point in the fourth century as in the twelfth century and later, the year 941 given in our record, taken as expired, would have run from 17 April, 398 to 6 April, 399. If the year be taken as current, its limits would have been between 28 April, 397 and 16 April, 398. In neither of these two years was there a Durutu new-moon, whether according to the *amānta* or the *pūrṇimānta* reckoning, which fell on a Tuesday.<sup>63</sup> If the year in our epigraph was an expired one, there is thus a difference of two years between the starting point of the Buddhist era in the fourth century, and that in the twelfth. The wording of our inscription makes it more likely that the year was current (*vartamāna*); in that case, the discrepancy in the starting point of the era was only one year.

59. *EZ*, Vol. II, pp. 223 and 228. *Buddha-varṣa ek-dahas sat-siya tesālis-havurudu tun-mas sat-ṣiṣi dawasak giya tena Binerā puru doḥos-vak lada Badā-dawas.*

60. See Fleet, in *JRAS* for 1909, p. 331 and *Ind. Eph.*, Vol. IV, p. 3.

61. H. W. Codrington, 'The Buddha-varsha in the Kandyan Period,' in *CALR*, Vol. II, pp. 51-53.

62. *JRAS* for 1909, p. 347. The inscription in question is published in the *Indian Antiquary*, Vol. X, p. 342.

63. *Ind. Eph.*, Vol. I, part I, p. 215.

It may be argued, particularly in view of the fact that no document dated in the Buddhist era is available, either from Ceylon or any other Buddhist country, for nearly 700 years after the date of our inscription, that the Buddhist era went out of use some time after the date of our record, and was re-introduced in the eleventh century, calculating the starting point from details found in the *Dīpavaṇīsa* and the *Mahāvāṇīsa*, and the lengths of reigns of the kings who came after Mahāsenā. But, if a re-introduction of the era based on fresh calculations was effected, one would expect the discrepancy between the starting points to be much more than a year or two. On the other hand, C. O. Blagden has pointed out that certain of the dates in the Buddhist era occurring in Burmese inscriptions before 1300 A.C. indicate a starting point for the era some two years earlier than 544 B.C.<sup>64</sup> One of these dates quoted by Blagden refers to Thursday, the 6th waning of Tazaungon (Kārttika) in 654 of the Burmese Sakkarāj era and in 1837 of the Buddhist era. The Burmese Sakkarāj era begins in 638 A.C.; therefore, the year 654 of that era is equivalent to 1292 A.C., between which number and that of the Buddhist year given in the inscription, the difference is 545 and not 544 or 543. Swamikannu Pillai who has verified this date has pointed out that, in this instance, the Sakkarāj year has to be taken as expired and not current, as usual with that era, in order to make the 6th waning of Tazaungon fall on a Thursday. His equivalent in the Christian era for this date is Thursday, 22 October, 1293 A.C.<sup>65</sup> If the year of the Buddhist era was an expired one, the initial point of that era would fall in 545 B.C. As this document uses expired years for an era which normally quotes current years, the probability is that the Buddhist year referred to was also an expired one.

Two dates in the Buddhist era with a difference of two between them have been given in Burmese inscriptions for the same event. In an inscription set up by his son some time after the death of the famous Burmese king Kyanzittha, that monarch is said to have begun his reign when 1628 years had elapsed after the Parinirvāṇa of the Buddha,<sup>66</sup> while in an inscription of Kyanzittha himself, that event is said to have taken place in 1630 B.E.<sup>67</sup> This difference has been explained by taking 1630 B.E. as the date of the king's coronation, and the earlier date as that of his accession.<sup>68</sup> But precisely the same difference will be found between the date of the accession

64. 'The Revised Buddhist Era in Burma' in the *JRAS* for 1910, pp. 474-6.

65. *Ind. Eph.*, Vol. I, part 2, p. 132, No. 54.

66. *Ep. Bir.*, Vol. I, p. 51.

67. *Ep. Bir.*, Vol. I, p. 141.

68. *Ep. Bir.*, Vol. I, p. 4.

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of Sāhasamalla as stated in that monarch's inscription, and if it were stated in the Buddhist era continued down to that time, according to the reckoning in this inscription. It is therefore very probable that, among the Burmese Buddhists in the eleventh century, there were two different methods of the reckoning of the Buddhist era, between which a difference of two years was possible for some dates.

Of these two years, one can be explained as the difference between expired (*gata*) and current (*vartamāna*) reckonings. A consideration of the interval between the death of Mahāsenā and the twenty-eighth year of Upātissa I has led us to infer the possibility of a new year in the Buddhist era having started shortly before the date given in the present inscription, i.e. the new moon of Duratu, in other words that the beginning of the Buddhist year was not then on the full-moon day of Vaiśākha. And, in fact, Fleet has established that, in the *Dīpavaṃsa*, there is evidence to prove that the Buddhist year at the time of the writing of that chronicle did not begin with the full-moon day of Vaiśākha.<sup>69</sup> It is said in the *Dīpavaṃsa*<sup>70</sup> that Devānaṃpiya Tissa was anointed as king 236 years after the death of the Buddha, that is in the 237th year, seventeen years and not quite six months after the anointment of Asoka. The reference here is clearly to his first coronation, for the statement is followed by an account of the precious things which miraculously appeared after his first coronation. The first coronation was in the month of Maggasira (Skt. Mārgaśīrṣa, Sin. Uñduvap). The *Dīpavaṃsa* also states that Mahinda arrived in Ceylon on the full-moon day of Jetṭha (Skt. Jyeṣṭha, Sin. Poson), 236 years after the Parinirvāṇa of the Buddha,<sup>70</sup> that is in the year 237 of the Buddhist era. If an year of the Buddhist era ended on the day before the full-moon of Vaiśākha, and another began on the full-moon day, the year of Mahinda's arrival in Ceylon should have been 238 B.E. current, for there was a Vaiśākha full-moon intervening between that event and the first coronation of Devānaṃpiya Tissa.

The *Dīpavaṃsa* informs us that Devānaṃpiya Tissa was anointed for the first time on a day in the second month of the Hemanta Season (Maggasira) when the constellation Āsāḷhi (Skt. Āśāḍha) was in the ascendant (1st or 2nd of the waxing moon) in the seventeenth year of Asoka, not quite six months after the commencement of that year. Full seven months after the first anointment of Devānaṃpiya Tissa, the same authority states, and in the

69. *JRAS* for 1909, pp. 10 ff.

70. Chapter XVII, v. 78.

cighteenth year of Asoka, Mahinda arrived in Ceylon on the full-moon day of Jetṭha.<sup>71</sup> From these statements it can be inferred that the anniversary of the anointment of Asoka was shortly after the first day of the bright fortnight of Jetṭha. The *Dīpavaṃsa* also informs us that Asoka was anointed 218 years after the death of the Buddha, that is in the 219th year. Then, on the basis of the full-moon of Vaiśākha as the commencement of the Buddhist year, 'the seventeenth anniversary of the anointment of Asoka came about three weeks after the end of the year 235; and the first anointment of Devānaṃpiya Tissa, when the 236th had elapsed, was not six months, but eighteen months after that.'<sup>72</sup>

These seeming errors in the chronology of the *Dīpavaṃsa*, Fleet has pointed out, disappear if the commencement of the Buddhist year were taken to have been on Kārttika, śukla 8th, which, according to the Sarvāstivādins, was the day of the Buddha's Parinirvāṇa, not the full-moon day of Vaiśākha. Fleet has further argued that the details given in the Mahāparinibbāṇa-sutta are more in favour of Kārttika, śukla 8, than of Vaiśākha full-moon as the day of the Buddha's death.<sup>73</sup> The Mahāparinibbāṇa-sutta certainly does not support the belief that the Buddha's Parinirvāṇa took place on a Vaiśākha full-moon day, but the account of the First Council at Rājagaha given in the *Cullavagga* apparently takes for granted that this great event fell on that day.<sup>74</sup> Buddhaghosa in the *Samantapāsādikā* and the *Mahāvamsa* categorically state that the full-moon of Vaiśākha was the day on which the Buddha died.<sup>75</sup> It is possible that there were two schools of opinion among the Buddhists of ancient Ceylon on this matter. The *Samantapāsādikā* and the *Mahāvamsa* give of course the view of orthodoxy held by the Mahāvihāra. The Abhayagiri and the Jetavana sects possibly held a different view, and the chronology of the *Dīpavaṃsa* could have been influenced by that.

But there is evidence to indicate that the commencement of the Buddhist era in ancient Ceylon did not tally with what was believed to be the exact date of the Buddha's death. In his sub-commentary on the Vinaya, entitled *Sāratthadīpanī*, the crude Sāriputta-mahāsāmi, commenting on the statement of the *Samantapāsādikā* that Mahinda-thera arrived in Ceylon

71. Chapter XII, vv. 42-43.

72. *JRAS* for 1909, p. 12.

73. *JRAS* for 1909, pp. 15 ff.

74. T. W. Rhys Davids and H. Oldenberg, *Vinaya Piṭaka*, translation, part III, (S.B.E. Vol. XX), pp. 376 ff.

75. *Samanta-pāsādikā*, P.T.S. Edition, Vol. I, p. 4, *Mahāvamsa*, Chapter III, vv. 1 and 2.

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in the year 236 from the Parinirvāṇa of the Buddha, says as follows: “Parinibbāna” means the year of the Parinirvāṇa. The year of the Parinirvāṇa which is the limit should be left out, and the meaning should be taken as that it was in the year 236 after that.<sup>76</sup> The reckoning of the Buddhist era according to the reigns of the Ceylon kings, the first of whom Vijaya, tradition asserts, arrived in Ceylon on the very day of the Buddha’s death, is thus explained by Sāriputta :— ‘Reckoning that the first year of Vijaya here was the year of the Buddha’s Parinirvāṇa, that year should be left out and the two hundred and thirty-six years after the Parinirvāṇa should be made as follows : 37 years of Vijaya, 1 year of interregnum after that, 30 years of Paṇḍuvāsudeva, 20 years of Abhaya, 17 years before the consecration of Paṇḍukābhaya, 70 years after the consecration, sixty years of Muṭṭasiva and the first year of Devānampiyatissa.’<sup>77</sup> Sāriputta also states that 24 years from the 32 years’ reign of Ajātasattu have to be reckoned for the Buddhist era, leaving out eight years, as the Parinirvāṇa took place in the eighth year of that Magadhan king.<sup>78</sup>

From these statements it is clear that there was a tradition among Ceylon scholars to the effect that the commencement of the first year of the Buddhist era coincided with the commencement of the year following that in which the Parinirvāṇa took place. When the Parinirvāṇa itself took place, there was of course no reckoning from that event, and what is meant must have been the commencement either of the regnal year of the king reigning at the time, or of the civil year. In ancient India the civil year commenced either with the month of Caitra or with Kārttika.<sup>79</sup> There is also evidence that, in mediaeval Ceylon, the religious year of Buddhist monasteries began with Kārttika, probably to conform to the civil year.<sup>80</sup> If this practice had come down from the time of our inscription, as seems likely, the commencement of a New Year in the Buddhist era would have been on the first *tithi* of the waxing moon of Kārttika if the *amānta* system

76. *Parinibbānato ti parinibbāna-vassato ; tam avadhi-bhūtaṃ muñcivā tato uddhaṃ dvinnam vassa-satānaṃ upari chaitimsatime vasse ti attho gahetabbo. Sāratthadīpanī, edited by Siri Nāṇissara-thera, Colombo, B.E. 2458, part I, p. 131.*

77. *Sammāsambuddhassa parinibbāna-vassam idha Vijayassa paṭhamam vassam ti katvā tam apanevā parinibbāna-vassato uddham Vijayassa sattatimsa-vassam tato arājikam ekaṃ vassam Paṇḍuvāsudevassa timsa-vassāni Abhayassa visati-vassāni Paṇḍukābhayassa abhisekato pubbe sattarasa vassāni abhisittassa sattati vassāni Muṭṭasivassa satthi-vassāni Devānampiyassa paṭhamam vassam ti evam parinibbānato dvinnam vassasatānaṃ upari chaitimsa-vassāni vedittabbaṃ. Sāratthadīpanī, op. cit., p. 134.*

78. Commenting on Ajātasattu *catuvisati-vassam* in the *Samantapāsādikā* (P.T.S. Edition, p. 72), the *Sāratthadīpanī* says : *Parinibbāna-vassa-samkhātā aṭṭhama-vassam muñcivā vuttaṃ. Sāratthadīpanī, op. cit., p. 134.*

79. *Ind. Eph.*, Vol. I, part I, pp. 53 ff. The Valabhī year, for example, was Kārttikādi.

80. *EZ.*, Vol. III, p. 268, f. n. 4.

was followed, or the first *tithi* of the preceding dark fortnight if the *pūrṇimānta* system was followed, i.e. seven or twenty-two days before Kārttika, śukla 8 which, according to Fleet, was the exact day of the Buddha's death and the commencement of the Buddhist year. The chronological difficulties created for the *Dīpavaṃsa* by taking Vaiśākha full-moon as the commencement of the Buddhist year will be removed just as well by taking the first day of the Buddhist year to have been Kārttika, śukla 1 of the *amānta*, or bahala 1 of the *pūrṇimānta* month. But, in our subsequent discussion, we take śukla 8, as suggested by Fleet; if one of the other two *tithis* suggested above be preferred, the necessary adjustment can be made easily.

Now, according to Sāhasamalla's inscription, the year 1743, expired, of the Buddhist era ran from the Vaiśākha full-moon in 1200 to Vaiśākha, śukla 14 in 1201 A.C. This same period was the Buddhist year 1744, current. Calculating backwards on this basis, 16 December, 396 A.C. would have fallen within B.E. 939 expired, or 940 current, which commenced on 9 April, 396, and continued up to 27 April, 397 A.C.<sup>81</sup> But, if the Buddhist year began at that time on śukla 8 of Kārttika, a new year, i.e. 941 current, would have commenced on 26 October of that year. The date of our inscription, being in December, would thus fall within the Buddhist year 941, and this is what is stated in our inscription. Again, calculating forwards from the date of our epigraph to the year of Sāhasamalla's inscription, if August 396 fell within the Buddhist year 940 current, the Buddhist year current in August 1200 would have been 1744, which, as an expired year, would be 1743, just as it is given in the inscription of Sāhasamalla. Thus there is no difference between the two reckonings for the greater part of the Christian year if the current year is considered. The difference of one is for that part of the Christian year beginning with the day corresponding to Kārttika, śukla 8, up to its end, i.e. roughly from October to December.

This difference has been brought about by the shifting of the commencement of the year from Kārttika, śukla 8, to Vaiśākha full-moon, thereby also shifting the previous starting point of the era from a day in September or October, 545 B.C. to a day in March or April, 544 B.C. Thus it will be seen that, apart from the usual difference created by citing expired or current years—a complication common to many Indian eras—and the shifting of the starting point six months forwards, the Buddhist era

81. These dates have been calculated from the new-moons given in *Ind. Eph.*, Vol. I, part I, pp. 214-215.

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in our inscription is identical with that used in the Sāhasamalla inscription. When this shifting of the starting point from Kārttika to Vaiśākha was effected, we have no means of ascertaining, but the unusual procedure adopted in the Sāhasamalla inscription of giving the number of months and days in B.E. 1743, expired, up to Binara (Bhādrapada), śukla 12, indicates that the writer of the document wished to leave no room in the mind of the reader as regards the day on which the year commenced. If there was only one day of commencement for the year universally accepted, such emphasis on the Vaiśākha full-moon would have served no purpose. The mere mention of Binara, pura 12, would have been quite sufficient. The inference therefore is that, even by the end of the twelfth century, there were schools which postulated a day other than the Vaiśākha full-moon as the commencement of the Buddhist year. That this was so in Burma is proved likely from the evidence we have already discussed.

It is not impossible that, even in the time of our epigraph, there were those who computed the Buddhist year from the full-moon day of Vaiśākha, side by side with others who preferred a day in Kārttika. If the adoption of Vaiśākha full-moon as the commencement of the year was a later development, the change, when decided upon, could have been effected in one of two different methods. The Vaiśākha full-moon of the year current could have been fixed as the commencement of a new year, which was given the number consecutive to that of the current year. Or the current year may have been allowed to run its full course and the Vaiśākha full-moon of the following year could have been reckoned as the commencement of the next year. Apparently, the second method had been adopted, shifting the starting point of the era some six months forward.

How far prior to the time of our inscription a Buddhist era was in use we have no means of determining. Our inscription cannot be far removed in date from the time that the *Dīpavaṃsa* took the shape in which it has come down to us.<sup>82</sup> And, in that chronicle, many events connected with the history of Buddhism and the political history of India and Ceylon are dated in years after the Parinirvāṇa of the Buddha, though this dating has not been continued after the time of Devānaṃpiya Tissa. It is possible that the adoption of the era of the Buddha's Parinirvāṇa was due to that same interest in the history of the Buddhist religion in this Island which resulted in the compilation of the *Dīpavaṃsa*.

82. The *Dīpavaṃsa* gives an account of Mahāsena; it was therefore finally redacted after the reign of that king. It has been quoted by Buddhaghosa who wrote in the reign of Mahānāma, the successor of Upatissa I.

It is quite possible that the fixing of the starting point of the era was based on data which were not accurate. But, once the era was fixed, the dates in it would be quite reliable for the period after that, if it continued in use without a break. That the Buddhist era continued without a break from the time of Sāhasamalla, or even of Parākramabāhu I, is admitted by all competent scholars. And we hope that we have succeeded in establishing that the era in use in the Polonnaru period was identical with that made use of in the present record. Chinese synchronisms have established that the dates in this era give accurate results for the fifth century. For the period preceding the date of the present inscription, the accuracy of a date in the era would depend on the reliability of the material utilised when it was first computed, namely the regnal years of Ceylon kings as given in the Chronicle. I have elsewhere given reasons for the trustworthiness of these details up to the time of Duṭṭhagāmaṇī.<sup>83</sup> The details of the reigns of kings between Duṭṭhagāmaṇī and Devānaṁpiya Tissa are manifestly unreliable; hence the date that has to be assigned to Devānaṁpiya Tissa based on dates in the Buddhist era does not tally with that assignable to him on the basis of Asoka's date deduced from the mention of Greek kings in his edicts. Thus, the prevalence of the Buddhist era in Ceylon at the close of the fourth century A.C. by no means vouches for the accuracy of the date of the Buddha's Parinirvāṇa that might be arrived at by the determination, from the data given in our record, that the year 941 from that event corresponds to 396 A.C.

We now proceed to arrange the dates of kings of Ceylon from Duṭṭhagāmaṇī to Dāṭhapatissa II in accordance with the evidence supplied by this inscription, i.e. that 16 December, 396 A.C., fell during the currency of the 28th year of Upatissa I. The inscription does not state how far the twenty-eighth year of the king had run its course on that day. The two extremes of possibility are that this day, the new-moon of Durutu in that year, was the first day or the last day of the twenty-eighth year. The twenty-eighth could therefore have commenced on any day from the day after the Durutu new-moon of the preceding year, i.e. 29 November, 395, up to the day recorded in this inscription, 16 December, 396; the end of the year could have been any day from 16 December, 396, to the day before the Durutu new-moon of the following year, i.e. 4 December, 397. The accession of the king would consequently have been any day between the day after the Durutu new-moon of 368 and the day before the Durutu new-moon of 370, i.e. 27 November, 368 and 3 December, 370 A.C.<sup>81</sup> We shall take the mean between these extremes of possibility and fix the date of

83. *EZ*, Vol. V, p. 93.

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the accession of Upatissa I as 369 A.C., and assuming that this monarch's 42nd year was not completed at the time of his murder, take the first year of his successor Mahānāma as 410 A.C.

For fixing the reign periods of the kings who came before Upatissa I, we shall, following Geiger and Wickremasinghe, give due consideration to the number of years which the *Pūjāvalī* and other Sinhalese chronicles state to have elapsed from the Buddha's Parinirvāṇa to the end of Mahāsena's reign, but adopting the number 846, instead of 844, as it accords with the evidence of this inscription. Though Geiger and Wickremasinghe both adopt this number as trustworthy, the periods of reigns which they assign to the kings of Ceylon from Vijaya to Mahāsena do not add up to that number. This is mainly due to the fact that out of the readings of the text of the Chronicle found in manuscripts, in the statements referring to the lengths of the reigns of certain kings, Geiger, in his edition, has adopted readings giving a lower number. An instance is the duration of the reign of Kaniṭṭha Tissa, which according to Geiger is 18 years. But the commentary to the *Mahāvamsa* has expressly noted that the reign lasted for twenty-eight years. This authority states that there is also a reading of the text giving the number of years as eighteen, but that this is an error and that the correct reading is the word meaning twenty-eight found in the ancient *Aṭṭhakathā*.<sup>84</sup> Geiger has paid no heed to the commentator, and has placed more reliance on modern manuscripts than on his statement. All the manuscripts of the *Pūjāvalī* consulted by Mabopitiya Medhankara Thera also agree in giving a word meaning eighteen as the length of Kaniṭṭha Tissa's reign. But the lengths of the reigns of kings from Vijaya to Mahāsena as given in the *Pūjāvalī* add to a number short by thirteen of the total given in that work for the period.

Even when we give twenty-eight years, instead of eighteen, to Kaniṭṭha Tissa, there is yet a deficiency of three in the total. This is due to the fact that the *Pūjāvalī* gives only six years to Iḷanāga, i.e. the period of his rule after his return from exile, and does not take into account the three years of rule of the Lambakaṇṇas and the six months he was on the throne before he was forced into exile, as stated in the *Mahāvamsa*.<sup>85</sup> These three years have to be separately shown as an interregnum, as done by Wijesinha, or added to the six years of Iḷanāga, as done by Geiger and Wickremasinghe.

84. *Vamsatthappakāsīnī*, P.T.S. Edition, p. 659.

*Aṭṭhavisā-samā rajjaṃ ti aṭṭhavisati-vassāni Lanākāṭṭiye rajjaṃ akāraji ; katthaci aṭṭhāvāsa samā ti likhanti, taṃ pamāda-lekham ; evaṃ hi Aṭṭhakathāyaṃ vuttaṃ.*

85. *Mahāvamsa*, chapter XXXV, vv. 15-45.

With these two necessary corrections, the details in the *Pūjāvalī* up to the end of Mahāseṇa's reign, when added up, give the total as stated in that authority.

The *Pūjāvalī* gives for Anuḷā and her paramours 5 years and 4 months, while in the Pāli chronicles the total period of their power was 4 years and three months. The number in the *Pūjāvalī* has to be adopted to get the total up to the end of Mahāseṇa given in that text. Though Geiger and Wickremasinghe, and following them Mendis, have adopted numbers which do not add up to the total required at the close of Mahāseṇa's reign, they adjust matters to tally with that number by making allowances in the case of some reigns for what are called fractions of years after completed years, i.e. in effect they have made the lengths of some reigns exceed by one the numbers given for them in the chronicles.

Just like the total at the end of the reign of Mahāseṇa, the number of years that had elapsed from the Parinirvāṇa to the accession of Duṭṭhagāmaṇī—382—is an important link in the traditional chronology based on the Buddhist era. All previous systems of chronology have adopted this number and we have also followed the same procedure, making adjustments at the ends of three reigns for possible fractions of years after completed years. In order to get this number, it is necessary to allot twenty-two years to Sena and Guttika, as given in some manuscripts of the *Mahāvamsa*, and not twelve, the number of years assigned to them in the *Dīpavamsa*.<sup>86</sup> Assuming that these details in the chronicles are trustworthy, there is always the possibility, as we go further from the time of this inscription, of an error of one to five due to the fractions of years in current years, or after expired years, at the close of reigns. According to the *Mahāvamsa*,<sup>87</sup> the Abhayagiri-vihāra was founded by Vaṭṭagāmaṇī Abhaya in the first year of his restoration, when 217 years, 10 months and 10 days had passed since the founding of the Mahāvihāra. The Gal-vihāra inscription<sup>88</sup> states that this was 454 years after the Parinirvāṇa, i.e. in 89 B.C. if the epoch of the Buddhist era be taken as 544 B.C. The present revised chronology has taken this into consideration and has given 89 B.C. as the year of Vaṭṭagāmaṇī's restoration on the assumption that the year of the Buddhist era was current. But, as the dates for this period can only be approximate, it has not been considered necessary to make adjustments to suit the slight discrepancy in the epoch of the Buddhist era indicated by the present inscription.

86. *Dīpavamsa*, chapter XVIII, v. 47.

87. Chapter XXXIII, v. 80.

88. *EZ.* Vol. II, p. 273-

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For the period before Mahāsena, up to Devānañpiya Tissa, there are no synchronisms with established systems of chronology by means of which the accuracy of the dates assigned to Ceylon kings can be tested. Contact with Rome in the first century A.C., however, appears to be of some significance for early Sinhalese chronology. The commentary of the *Mahāvamsa* tells us that Bhātika Abhaya (or Tissa) sent envoys to Romanukha-rattha and obtained coral therefrom.<sup>89</sup> There is no doubt that the Roman empire is meant by this name. As is well-known, Pliny has told us the story of the freedman of Annius Plocamus, who farmed the Red Sea taxes, being carried out of his course to the coast of Ceylon, hospitably treated by the king of the Island and returning to Rome with Sinhalese envoys in the time of Emperor Claudius.<sup>90</sup> Inscriptions, or rather graffiti, have recently been found in the Eastern Desert of Egypt, containing the name of Lysas, a slave of Publius Annius Plocamus. One of these graffiti, in Greek, is dated in the thirty-fifth year of an Emperor who could have been none but Augustus. Sir Mortimer Wheeler remarks on this : 'Identity of this Annius Plocamus with Pliny's is not proved, and that of the two freedmen is not suggested, but the coincidence of the name in so appropriate a geographical setting amounts to near-proof in respect of Plocamus, and it would be wise to consider the date of his errant freedman in Ceylon as likely to have been appreciably earlier than the reign of Claudius.'<sup>91</sup> If the view so cautiously put forward by Sir Mortimer Wheeler be accepted, it would mean that trade relations were established between Ceylon and Rome in the first or second decade of the Christian era. And Bhātika Abhaya who, according to the Sinhalese historical tradition, sent his envoys to Rome and obtained coral therefrom, reigned, according to the chronology based on our record, from 18 B.C. to 10 A.C. He was thus a contemporary of the great Roman Emperor Augustus, in whose thirty-fifth year (6 A.C.) is dated the graffiti of the freedman of Annius Plocamus.

The year of Mahānāma's accession, according to the evidence of this inscription, has now to be 410, and not 406 A.C., as I have previously taken. This necessitates a corresponding alteration in the dates, given by me, of the kings who succeeded Mahānāma. As I have pointed out in the essay referred to at the beginning of this paper, the dates given by Wijesinha, Wickremasinghe and Geiger to kings from Kittī Sirimegha have become erroneous as these scholars have assigned to that ruler only nineteen days, whereas, in point of fact, his reign extended to nineteen years. In the essay

89. *Vamsatthappakāsini*. P.T.S. Edition. p. 630.

90. Pliny, VI, 84-91.

91. Sir Mortimer Wheeler. *Rome Beyond Imperial Frontiers*. p. 128.

in question, I have suggested a method of distributing this error of eighteen years without affecting the dates of the kings of the ninth and tenth centuries, which can be decided within narrow limits by the evidence of Coḷa inscriptions. These establish that the thirty-sixth year of Mahinda V, when he was captured by the armies of Rajendra-coḷa, should be 1017.<sup>92</sup> In agreement with this, it can be deduced from the data in the Kapārārāma Sanskrit inscription that the reign of Mahinda V began in 982 A.C.<sup>93</sup> From this date, the chronology can be reliably worked upwards, according to the lengths of reigns given in the Chronicles and the Chinese and South Indian synchronism, to Aggabodhi IV. The difference of four years, referred to above, has therefore to be adjusted before the reign of Aggabodhi IV. And, in my opinion, this can be effected in that period of political confusion between Aggabodhi II and Aggabodhi IV.

The chronology of the *Cūḷavaṁsa* for this interval is not so hopelessly confusing as it appears at first sight. Aggabodhi II reigned for ten years, and was succeeded by Saṁghatissa whose right to the throne was challenged and who was ousted by Moggallāna III. The *Cūḷavaṁsa* does not say how long Saṁghatissa remained in power, but its narrative indicates that he was vanquished by his rival very soon after he came to the throne. According to the *Pūjāvalī*, he reigned for two months only. Moggallāna III reigned for six years, and his successor, Silāmeghavaṇṇa, for nine years. Aggabodhi III, the next king, was forced to flight by Dāṭhopatissa I in the former's twelfth year. Aggabodhi III returned with an army from South India, but was defeated by Dāṭhopatissa I, and fled to Rohaṇa where he died in his sixteenth year. The actual period of the rule of Aggabodhi III at Anurādhapura was therefore twelve years. The last four years of Aggabodhi III and the first four years of Dāṭhopatissa I were therefore concurrent. The *yuvārāja* of Aggabodhi III, Kassapa (the second of that name), forced Dāṭhopatissa I, in his turn, to flight, but the Chronicle does not say exactly how long after his coming to power Dāṭhopatissa was forced to abandon his throne. Dāṭhopatissa returned from India, but was defeated and slain by Kassapa II. At this point, the Chronicle says that twelve years had passed since he became king.<sup>94</sup> Dāṭhopatissa did not actually rule for twelve years from the time he captured power. From the Chronicle itself, it cannot be known for certain when Dāṭhopatissa was forced to flight, and how long he remained in India before he returned to be finally vanquished by

92. *JRAS* for 1913, p. 523.

93. *EZ.* Vol. V, pp. 163 ff.

94. *Cūḷavaṁsa*, chapter 44, vv. 126, 144 and 145.

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his rival. But this seems to be the obvious point at which should be deducted the four years which overlap when we calculate backwards from the certain date of the thirty-sixth year of Mahinda V, and forwards from the equally certain date of the twenty-eighth year of Upatissa I. Dāṭhapatissa I, consequently, has been taken in this revised chronology, as having fled in the eighth year of his reign.

In accordance with the preceding discussion, the dates of the Ceylon kings from Duṭṭhagāmaṇi to Dāṭhapatissa II are given below :

	B.C.
Duṭṭhagāmaṇi (S. Duṭṭugāmuṇu)	161—137
Saddhātissa (S. Sādātis)	137—119
Thūlatthana (S. Tulnā)	119
Lañjatissa (S. Lāmāṇi Tis)	119—109
Khallāṭa Nāga (S. Kalun-nā)	109—103
Vaṭṭagāmaṇi Abhaya (S. Vaḷagam Abā)	103
Pulahattha	
Bāhiya	
Panayamāra	} Pañca-Drāviḍa
Piḷayamāra	
Dāṭhika	
Vaṭṭagāmaṇi (restored)	
Mahācūḷi Mahātissa (S. Mahasiḷu Mahatis)	76— 62
Coranāga	62— 50
Tissa (S. Kuḍā Tissa)	50— 47
Siva (S. Balat Sivu)	
Vaṭuka	
Dārubhatika Tissa	
Niliya (S. Purohita Bamuṇā, Vāsukhī)	
Anuḷā (Queen)	47— 42
Kuṭakaṇṇa Tissa (S. Makalan-tis or Kālakaṇṇi Tissa)	41— 19
Bhātika Abhaya (also called Bhātika Tissa or Bhātiya Tissa)	B.C. 19—9 A.C.
	A.C.
Mahādāṭhika Mahānāga (S. Mahadāḷiyā Mānā)	9— 21
Āmaṇḍa-gāmaṇi Abhaya (S. Aḍa Gāmuṇu)	22— 31
Kaṇirajānu Tissa (S. Kiṇihiradaḷa)	31— 34
Cūḷābhaya (S. Kuḍa Abhā)	34— 35

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Queen Sivali (Revatī)	35
Iḷanāga (S. Eḷunnā)	35—44
Candamukha Siva (S. Saṅdamuhunu)	44—52
Yasalālaka Tissa (S. Yasasilu)	52—59
Sabha (Subha)	59—65
Vasabha (S. Vāhāp)	65—109
Vaṅkanāsika Tissa (Vaknāhā Tis or Vaknāsi Nambapa)	109—112
Gajabāhuka-gāmaṇi (Gajabāhu I, S. Gajabā)	112—134
Mahallaka Nāga (S. Mahalunā or Mahalumānā)	134—140
Bhātika Tissa (S. Bātiya)	140—164
Kaniṭṭha Tissa (S. Cūḷatissa)	164—192
Khujjanāga (S. Kuhunnā)	192—194
Kuṁcanāga (S. Kuḍānā)	194—195
Sirināga I (S. Sirinā or Kuḍā Sirinā)	195—214
Vohārika Tissa (S. Vēra Tissa)	214—236
Abhayanāga (S. Abhā Sen or Abhā Tissa)	236—244
Sirināga II (S. Sirinā)	244—246
Vijaya-kumāra (S. Vijayiṅdu)	246—247
Samghatissa I	247—251
Sirisamghabodhi (S. Dāhāmi Sirisaṅgabō)	251—253
Goṭhābhaya or Meghavaṇṇa Abhaya (S. Goḷu Abā)	253—266
Jeṭṭhatissa I (S. Kalakan Deṭtatis or Makalan Deṭtatis)	266—276
Mahāsena (S. Mahasen)	276—303
Sirimeghavaṇṇa (S. Kit Sirimevan)	303—331
Jeṭṭhatissa II (S. Deṭtatis)	331—340
Buddhadāsa (S. Bujas)	340—368
Upatissa I	368—410
Mahānāma	410—432
Chattagāhaka Jantu (S. Lāmāṇi Tis)	432
Mittasena (Mitsen)	432—433
Paṇḍu	433—438
Pārinda	438—441
Khudda Pārinda	441—456
Tiritara	456
Dāṭhiya	456—459
Pīthiya	459
Dhātusena (S. Dāsen-Kāliya)	459—477
Kassapa I (S. Sīgiri Kasubu)	477—495
Moggallāna I (S. Mugalan)	495—512
Kumāra-Dhātusena (S. Kumāradāsa, Kumaradas)	512—520

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Kittisena (S. Kīrttisena)	520—521
Siva (S. Māṇḍi Siva)	521
Upatissa II (S. Lāmāṇi Upatissa)	521—522
Silākāla, Ambasāmaṇera (S. Lāmāṇi Aṃbaheraṇa Salamevan)	522—535
Dāṭhāpabhuti (S. Dāpuḷu-Sen)	535
Moggallāna II (S. Daḷa-Mugalan)	535—555
Kitti Sirimegha (S. Kuḍā Kitsirimevan)	555—573
Mahānāga (S. Senevi-Mahanā)	573—575
Aggabodhi I (S. Akbō)	575—608
Aggabodhi II (S. Kuḍā-Akbō)	608—618
Sam̄hatissa II	618
Moggallāna III (Dalla Moggāllana, S. Lāmāṇi Bōnā Mugalan)	618—623
Silāmeghavaṇṇa (S. Asiggāhaka)	623—632
Aggabodhi III, Sirisaṃghabodhi (S. Sirisaṅgabō)	632
Jetṭhatissa III (S. Lāmāṇi Kaṭusara Deṭatis)	632
Aggabodhi III (restored)	633—643
Dāṭhopatissa I (S. Lāmāṇi Daḷupatis)	643—650
Kassapa II (S. Pāsulu Kasubu)	650—659
Dappula I (S. Dāpuḷu)	659
Hatthadāṭha (Dāṭhopatissa II, S. Lāmāṇi Daḷupatis)	659—667

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