

**The uṣṇīṣa as a Physical Characteristic
of the Buddha's Relatives and Successors**

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as a Physical Characteristic
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In memory of
Prof. Maurizio Taddei
and our last conversation
in which we could not
answer the question why
non-Buddhas have *uṣṇīṣa*

In this paper I shall discuss the depiction of individuals with characteristics normally reserved for the Buddha. The fact that many images exist which show individuals with a variety of *lakṣaṇas*, and particularly the most recognisable one, the *uṣṇīṣa*, indicates that such representations are not the result of a mistake on the part of the artists, but reflect a widely held belief.

The thirty-two *lakṣaṇas*, the physical attributes by which a person can be recognised as a Great Man (*mahāpuruṣa*), are often listed in the Buddhist literature. The canonical story about how the presence of *lakṣaṇas* made it possible to recognise the two paths the new-born baby might take, either the path of a Buddha or the path of a universal monarch (*cakravartin*), is about a Buddha of a past time named *Vipaśyin*.¹ The story lists the thirty-two *lakṣaṇas* which any Buddha will have.² The *lakṣaṇas* were held to be a visualisation of the higher moral stature attained during earlier births.³

The conventional forms used to portray the Buddha can be understood as the result of efforts to create the visual counterparts of the attributes ascribed to him in the literature⁴; these attributes were sometimes misunderstood. Not all the *lakṣaṇas* have the same iconographic significance. Some are of lesser importance because they are attributes which ordinary people can have and are not distinctive marks of a Buddha – straight teeth or dark blue (*nīla*) eyes, for example. Others are of lesser importance because they cannot be represented: the forty teeth, each hair on the body having its own pore, genitals covered by a sheath like an elephant's, or a

¹ *Mahāpadānasutta*, *Dīghanikāya* XIV.1.31-33, ed. Vol.2, p.16-19; transl. p.13-16; for parallel texts in Sanskrit with translation from the Chinese texts and comparative analysis cf. WALDSCHMIDT 1953: 101-13.

² Further lists of *lakṣaṇas* in the Buddhist literature are detailed in: EDGERTON, *BHSD*: 458-60; cf. WALDSCHMIDT 1930: 272.

³ *Dīghanikāya* XXX explains every *lakṣaṇa* as the result of the attainment of moral perfection. Wherever possible, each individual mark is linked to the aspect of moral perfection that was attained in connection with the corresponding part of the body or sensory organ. For example, the Buddha's extremely long tongue and his voice are interpreted as a sign of his rejection of rough language (*pharuṣam vācam*) in his past lives (*Dīghanikāya* XXX.2.22). The explanation that the Sūtra offers for the presence of the *uṣṇīṣa* mark on the Buddha's body is that in the past he had attained the role of a leader with perfect moral qualities; *Dīghanikāya* XXX.2.13 (ed. Vol.3, p.169): *pubbe manussabhūto samāno bahujanapubbhāṅgamo ahoṣi kusalesu dhammesu bahujanapāṃmokkho kāyasucarite vacīsucarite manosucarite dānaśamvibhāge silasamādāne uposathūpavāse metteyyatāya petteyyatāya sāmāññatāya brahmaññatāya kulejēṭhāpacāyitāya aññataraññataresu adhiḥkulesu dhammesu (...) so tato cute itthattam āgato samāno imaṃ mahāpurisalakkhaṇaṃ paṭilabhati uphīṣasiso hoti/* transl. (p.158-59): then being human, became leader among men in goodness, foremost in virtuous deed and word and thought, in dispensing gifts, in conformity to morals, in attending religious festivals, in filial duties, in honouring recluses and brahmins, in deferring to the head of the family, and in order and sundry righteous observances (...) Deceasing thence and attaining life as ye know it, he acquired this Mark of the Superman, to wit, a head like a turban.

⁴ For the not uncommon view that the descriptions of the *lakṣaṇas* were written later in time and are secondary with respect to their visual depictions cf. WALEY 1931-32: 352.

long tongue. This means that of the thirty-two marks only a few are relevant for depictions of the Buddha: the symbols of good fortune on the feet; *jālalakṣaṇa*, which was represented as a web between the fingers; *ūrṇā*, the tuft of wool between the eyebrows; and above all the most visible of the *lakṣaṇas*, the *uṣṇīṣa*.

uṣṇīṣa means 'turban'. The canonical texts only say that the Buddha was born with a *uṣṇīṣasīrṣa*, "turban head".⁵ The attribute *uṣṇīṣa* was represented as hair tied up in a bun, and later, when the head of the Buddha was depicted as covered with small curls of hair, the *uṣṇīṣa* was shown as a protuberance on the top of his head also covered with rows of curls (KRISHAN 1966, citing sources and referring to earlier research; TADDEI 1996). It became a convention, a cliché, to represent the *uṣṇīṣa* in this way, even though it in no way corresponded to the Buddha's appearance as a shaven-headed monk (TADDEI 1999). In some devotional sculptures the *uṣṇīṣa* was modelled with particular care and there was a hole in it (KLIMBURG-SALTER / TADDEI 1991). In the devotional sculptures and the narrative accounts it is above all the *uṣṇīṣa* which most clearly distinguishes the Buddha from other people and other monks.

Since these are all well-known facts, it is all the more surprising to find that in some depictions other people are also portrayed as having *lakṣaṇas*.

These depictions can be divided into two groups. The one group comprises scenes from the Buddha legend in which the people shown are members of the Śākya family. The other group comprises scenes from the distant past in which the people shown will only attain Buddhahood in the future.⁶

1. Depictions of members of the Buddha's family with the *uṣṇīṣa*

The peculiarity of the narrative depictions in which *dramatis personae* from the Buddha legend are shown as having *lakṣaṇas* can best be seen in the paintings at Ajanta. It can however also be found in paintings in Central Asia and in reliefs from Gandhara, as well as in several works in other regions.

One of the paintings on the veranda of Cave XVII at Ajanta shows the story of the elephant Dhanapāla. The last scene of the surviving pictures, the taming of the elephant which had gone wild (Drawing 1 = fig. 1: for references cf. "List of Drawings and Figures" on the end of this paper), shows the Buddha, distinguished by his nimbus and standing on a lotus flower, with his right hand against the forehead of the elephant. In accordance with the textual accounts, the Buddha is holding a food bowl, since he encountered the elephant as he and the other monks were on their way to eat. The monk accompanying the Buddha can be identified, since the texts (cf. SCHLINGLOFF 2000: No.77) name him and comment on his conduct with a story from an earlier life (*Haṃsajātaka*).

It is the Buddha's servant-monk, his cousin Ānanda, who remained by the Buddha's side despite the danger. In the painting Ānanda is smaller than the Buddha and is standing behind him. He is wearing a monk's robe covering both his shoulders and is holding a food bowl and a rattle-staff, *khakkharaka*, with which monks made a noise as they walked around asking for

⁵ *Dīghanikāya* XIV.1.32 (ed. Vol.2, p.19): *ayaṃ hi deva kumāro uṣṇīṣasīso/ yam pāyaṃ deva kumāro uṣṇīṣasīso/ idaṃ pi 'ssa mahāpurisassa mahāpurisalakkhaṇaṃ bhavati/*; transl. (p.16): His head is like a royal turban. This too counts to him as one of the marks of a Great Man. For Sanskrit text and comparative analysis cf. WALDSCHMIDT 1953: 112; further sources in: EDGERTON, *BHSD*: 460, No.32.

⁶ For the theory that the Mahāyāna monks (= the future Buddhas) considered themselves to be members of the Buddha's family cf. COHEN 1995: 234ff. The theory has not been proven and the present paper can be understood as an argument to in support of it.

food (von HINÜBER 1992: 35ff). In this picture, his head is not shaved, but covered in black hair like the Buddha's, and clearly bears the *uṣṇīṣa*.

Another story in which Ānanda is depicted in the same manner is recounted in the paintings in Cave XVI at Ajanta. They tell the story of the conversion of the Buddha's half-brother Nanda. The events are depicted here in the sequence recorded in the literature (cf. SCHLINGLOFF 2000: No.73): we first find the Buddha and his servant-monk Ānanda standing in front of Nanda's palace (Drawing 2), where they were given no food and are about to move on. The Buddha is a little larger and is in the foreground; Ānanda is standing behind him. They are both wearing a monk's robe and carrying a food bowl. Their heads are depicted in the same manner. Both in this scene and the next (Drawing 3 = fig.2), Ānanda also has the *uṣṇīṣa*: Nanda, who has been informed by his servants that they had not given the two monks any food, goes after the Buddha and catches up with him on the road. The Buddha gives him his food bowl to carry. Here too the Buddha's companion, Ānanda, is to be seen behind him, with the *uṣṇīṣa* on his head. We next see the monk Ānanda in the monastery (Drawing 4 = fig.3): Nanda, who has followed the Buddha into the monastery, is being shaved and is preparing himself for the life of a monk. Ānanda is sitting on some steps and watching, the *uṣṇīṣa* on his head can be clearly seen. His head is painted black and covered in small regular bumps, which indicate rows of small curls. The protuberance on the top of his head is also covered by these small bumps. This corresponds exactly to depictions of the head of the Buddha. The person portrayed here is certainly not the Buddha himself; the proof of that is the fact that behind and above the monk there is another person, sitting on a chair with a low stool under his feet, who can be definitely identified as the Buddha, even though his head is missing. Ānanda is depicted once again in these paintings: here he is standing beside the Buddha who is talking to Nanda seated on the ground (Drawing 5). In this scene the *uṣṇīṣa* cannot be seen on the head of either the Buddha or Ānanda but on that of Nanda.

The walls of the *caitya* Cave XIX are painted with rather conventional rows of Buddhas in panels framed by slender pillars. Part of the painting on the left side-wall differs from the rest: here the Buddha is depicted in scenes from the Buddha legend (Drawing 6). Directly to the left of a panel depicting the Rāhula episode, there is a scene showing the Buddha standing under a ceremonial umbrella held by a richly adorned servant and looking at someone wearing a crown who is cowering on the ground. To the right there is a monk, and on his head the *uṣṇīṣa* can be seen. This scene probably shows the Nanda episode, although the bowl cannot, or can no longer, be seen in Nanda's hands.

At Ajanta there is another image of monks with the *uṣṇīṣa* on their heads. It is more of an unfinished sketch than a completed painting (Drawing 7). It is on a plastered surface above the famous Mahāparinirvāṇa sculpture in Cave XXVI. The person on the left, next to an unidentified object, is probably the Buddha, since he is larger than the other figures and has the *uṣṇīṣa* on his head. Since he is holding a food bowl in front of his face and since this picture is directly above a sculpture of the Parinirvāṇa scene, one might conclude that the sketch and the sculpture have something to do with each other: according to legend, the Buddha died of food poisoning. To the right of the presumed Buddha, the heads of two monks can be seen, each with an identical small *uṣṇīṣa*. Further evidence that the paintings are about events that have to do with the death of the Buddha is that the monks who figure in the Parinirvāṇa relief beneath the recumbent Buddha also have *uṣṇīṣas* (Drawing 8). The painter probably wanted to show the same individuals in his sketch. There are, as we have seen, several depictions of monks with the *uṣṇīṣa* at Ajanta. But even if more examples are found, their number will remain small in comparison to the hundreds of images of monks without a protuberance on the head, and they appear only in a few narrative paintings. In the depictions

for which the textual basis has been determined, the monks with the *uṣṇīṣa* are Ānanda and Nanda.

In the reliefs from Gandhara it is not so easy to discern *lakṣaṇas* on figures who are not Buddhas, but here too a monk who is accompanying the Buddha is occasionally shown with the *uṣṇīṣa* (Drawing 9 = fig.4). In light of the paintings at Ajanta one might infer that the monk is Ānanda.

The *uṣṇīṣas* in Gandharan art are hard to make out because they can be confused with hair tied into a bun. But a few times in the narrative reliefs someone is shown next to the Buddha whose head has exactly the same shape as his. One example is in a scene depicting the struggle of Devadatta with the future Buddha (Drawing 10 = fig.5).

As in Ajanta, the reliefs in Gandhara also show the half-brother of the Buddha, Nanda, as having the same shape head as the Buddha himself (Drawing 11 = fig.6).

In Gandhara, as in Ajanta, depictions of people with the *uṣṇīṣa* are rare; the only monk with the protuberance on the head is the companion of the Buddha, and he is probably to be identified as Ānanda. Ānanda is, however, only represented in this way on rare occasions; his *uṣṇīṣa* is not shown in pictures of the Parinirvāṇa of the Buddha or of his own Parinirvāṇa (VOGEL 1905).

A survey of the paintings in the monasteries of Central Asia yields similar findings to those in Ajanta and Gandhara: occasionally a monk who is next to the Buddha – evidently his companion Ānanda – is shown with the *uṣṇīṣa* (Drawing 12 = fig.7, Drawing 13 = fig.8), while the great majority of monks are depicted with shaved heads. Although it is extremely hard to examine the paintings on the basis of photographs because the *uṣṇīṣas* are only visible in enlargements and not in photographs of larger sections of the walls and vaults, several persons can be discerned who look exactly like the Buddha.⁷ An example is one of the monks who is present at the Parinirvāṇa (Drawing 14).

This phenomenon, the depiction of non-Buddhas with the *uṣṇīṣa*, cannot be observed in the reliefs of the Mathura school, but the reason for that might be that there are so few pictures of monks. In the art of other regions – though not, it would appear, in the south – companions of the Buddha are occasionally depicted as having the *uṣṇīṣa*. For example, in a relief from the Gupta period in Sanchi depicting the Dhanapāla story, there is a protuberance covered with small curls on Ānanda's head (Drawing 15). Although the narrative depiction here became part of a devotional sculpture, Ānanda was depicted as he was at Ajanta (cf. fig.1) – holding a staff and a food bowl and bearing a clearly visible *uṣṇīṣa-lakṣaṇa*.

The observation that depictions of monks with the *uṣṇīṣa* are rare but do indeed exist holds true for all the regions discussed here. The clearest examples are to be found in the paintings at Ajanta and in Central Asia. Where it has been possible to identify the scenes, it turns out that such depictions are restricted to certain scenes with members of the Buddha's family. In other scenes, even ones which show several monks, the monks do not have the *lakṣaṇa*. So, for example, there is not a single *uṣṇīṣa* in illustrations of the sermon to the first five monks or in depictions of monks performing miracles (WALDSCHMIDT 1930).

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⁷ The *uṣṇīṣa* can, for example, be clearly seen on the head of the Buddha's companion in the following images: Kizil, Cave 14, ill.: XU WANYIN 1983-85, 1: Pl.45; Cave 38, ill.: *ibid.*: Pl.121-22.

As stated above, the *lakṣaṇas* are physical characteristics which permitted the interpreters of signs to identify a person as a Great Man (*mahāpuruṣa*). When the works of art in geographically remote regions depicted someone who was not a *mahāpuruṣa* as having one of the iconographically important *lakṣaṇas*, there will certainly have been some traditional or textual basis for doing so. Such depictions can indeed be reconciled with the literature, since there too members of the Śākya family are said to bear a physical resemblance to the Buddha.

Most such assertions are to be found in the texts about the appearance of Nanda, the half-brother of the Buddha. The Vinayas say that Nanda resembled the Buddha and was just four *aṅgulis* shorter than him, and that that is why he was mistaken for the Buddha. This led to the rule that monks had to wear shorter robes than the Buddha⁸ (*Suttavibhaṅga* V.92.1)⁹.

In the Pali tradition the deeds of Nanda in his earlier births, to which he owed his beautiful appearance, are recounted: for making a gift of clothing, he received golden skin (*Apadāna* II.3.27-34)¹⁰, which is one of the *lakṣaṇas*. In the tradition of northern Sanskrit Buddhism, this is recounted in greater detail, and it is sometimes said that Nanda and the Buddha looked alike because they both had the same *lakṣaṇas*. Nanda received the golden complexion, *suvarṇavarṇa*, because in an earlier life he had invited the Buddha Vipāśyin and his monks to take a bath (*T 1451* = Vinaya of the Mūlasarvāstivādin¹¹; *Mahākarmavibhaṅga*¹²); it is even said that he received no fewer than thirty *lakṣaṇas* for his good deeds (*T 1451* = Vinaya of the Mūlasarvāstivādin¹³, PANGLUNG 1981: 176).

⁸ This rule was evidently the result of a misunderstanding (SCHLINGLOFF 1963: 544): The old *Prātimokṣasūtra* only said that a monk's robe should not be larger than *sugatacivārapramāṇa*, that is to say, should not be cut larger than *sugata* (= good (standard)) measure. In the explanation of this rule *sugata* was taken to be a name for the Buddha and so the rule was taken to mean that a monk's robe should not be larger than that of the Sugata. The story explaining this rule tells of how a monk was mistaken for the Sublime One. Such a mistake was understandable since the monk was a blood relative of the Buddha.

⁹ *Suttavibhaṅga* V.92.1 (ed. Vol.2, p.173): *tena kho pana samayena āyasmā Nando Bhagavato māucchāputto abhirūpo hoti dassaniyo pāsādiko caturāṅgulomako Bhagavato/ so sugatacivārapramāṇaṃ cīvaraṃ dhāretī/ addasamsu kho therā bhikkhū āyasmantaṃ Nandaṃ dūrato 'va āgacchantam/ disvāna Bhagavā āgacchatiī āsanā vūṭṭhahanti/ te upagato jānītvā ujjhāyanti khīyanti vipācentī/ kathaṃ hi nāma āyasmā Nando sugatacivārapramāṇaṃ cīvaraṃ dhāressatiī/ (...) atha kho Bhagavā āyasmantaṃ Nandaṃ paṭipucchī/ saccam kira tvam Nanda sugatacivārapramāṇaṃ cīvaraṃ dhāressitī/ saccam Bhagavā/ vīgarahi Buddho Bhagavā/ kathaṃ hi nāma tvam Nanda sugatacivārapramāṇaṃ cīvaraṃ dhāressasi (...)*

¹⁰ *Apadāna* II.3.27-34 (ed. p.66-67); v.27-29: *Padumuttarassa Bhagavato lokajēṭṭhassa tādino/ vattham khomam mayā diṇṇam sayambhussa mahesino/ tam me Buddho viyākāsi Jalajuttaranāmakō/ iminā vatthadānena hemavaṇṇo bhavissasi/ dve sampattī anubhotvā kusalamūlehi codito/ Gotamassa Bhagavato kaniṭṭho tvam bhavissasi/*

¹¹ *T 1451*, trad. (LAMOTTE 1944-80, 1: 290, Fn.): Bhagavat, je voudrais que le Grand Maître et sa noble assemblée viennent demain chez moi prendre un bain dans ma piscine.

¹² *Mahākarmavibhaṅga* IV (ed. p.38): *yathā ārya-Sundaranandena kila Krakucchande samyaksambuddhe bhīkṣusamghe jentākasnānaṃ kṛtam/ tāms ca dṛṣṭvā citam prasādītam/ bhūyās ca suvarṇena haritālena pratyekabuddhastūpe lepo dattah/ idam api dṛṣṭvā citam prasādītam/ abhirūpatāyām ca pariṇāmītam/ bhūyās ca stūpe kriyamāṇe prathamam chattram kārītam/ yathā paścimabhava sa eva vyākaroṭī jentākasya ca snānena haritālasya lepanena ca/ ekacchattrapradānā ca prāpī me suvarṇavarṇatā/*; trad. (p.115-16): Ainsi le saint Sundara Nanda avait, au temps de Krakucchanda le Bouddha complètement illuminé, donné à la communauté des Mendians un bain de vapeur; et, en les voyant, il avait eu une pensée de pitié. Et de plus il avait donné au stūpa d'un Bouddha-pour-soi une couche d'orpiement; et, en le voyant, il avait eu encore une pensée de pitié. Et de plus, pendant qu'on faisait un stūpa, il avait fait faire le premier parasol. Comme il le proclame lui-même dans sa dernière existence: Par un bain de vapeur, un enduit d'orpiement – un don de parasol, j'ai ce teint d'or charmant. C'est ainsi qu'il était devenu beau. Tel est l'Acte qui aboutit à être gracieux. The *Mahākarmavibhaṅga* does not say anything about 30 *lakṣaṇas* of Nanda.

¹³ According to *T 1451* = *Saṅghabhedavastu* in Mūlasarvāstivādaya Vinaya, Nanda received the *lakṣaṇas* for building and decorating a Stūpa (trad. LAMOTTE 1944-80, 1: 292, Fn.): Il recueillit ses restes, les plaça dans une urne toute neuve, construisit un stūpa et y suspendit des parasol (*chattrā*). Plein d'une foi respectueuse, il

Sarvāstivādin and Mūlasarvāstivādin texts say more about the episode from the *Vinayavibhaṅga* which I presented above as it appears in the Pali tradition. They say that when Nanda arrived, the monks mistook him for the Buddha, adding that Nanda had no fewer than thirty *lakṣaṇas* marks on his body (*T 1435* = Vinaya of the Sarvāstivādin¹⁴; *T 190* = *Abhiniṣkramaṇasūtra*¹⁵). One of them may have been the *uṣṇīṣa*.

Similar statements are made about another blood relative of the Buddha, Devadatta. Although he is said to have done only bad deeds, the texts state that he had the same *lakṣaṇas* as the Buddha except for two (*Si-yu-ki*)¹⁶. The tradition of the Mūlasarvāstivādin school mentions two *lakṣaṇas* which were perhaps understood to be the ones the other text said Devadatta lacked: a story in the *Saṅghabhedavastu*¹⁷ (cf. PANGLUNG 1981: 113) says that Devadatta endured great pain to have his skin gilded and the marks of the wheel applied to his hands and feet.

The tradition of Mahāyāna Buddhism does not question the presence of *lakṣaṇas* on individuals other than the Buddha, and repeats the same information.¹⁸ Perhaps it accords a lesser importance to the *lakṣaṇas*.¹⁹

arrosa [le stūpa] de trante sortes d'eau parfumées en faisant le vœu (*pranidhāna*) de rechercher les Marques [du Grand Homme]; according to *T 1448* Nanda's golden skin was a reward for his gift of a bath house for monks trad. (LAMOTTE 1944-80, 1: 288, Fn.): Nanda raconte qu'au temps du Buddha Vipasyin il avait donné au Saṅgha une maison de bains chauds (ou: des bains d'eau chaude parfumée) ...

¹⁴ Cf. HOERNLE 1916: 367-69. The text is a fragment of the canon of the Sarvāstivādin school in the Kuchean language, (ed. + trad. LÉVI). The fragment contains part of the *Vinayavibhaṅga* of the *Pratimokṣasūtra*, *Pāṭayanika* 90 (= *Suttavibhaṅga* V.92.1, cf. Fn.9; trad. (ed. LÉVI, in: HOERNLE 1916: 367; trad. *ibid.*: 369): Le Bouddha a un frère nommé Nanda. Quand il entre dans l'assemblée, les religieux confus sont partagés en deux: Est-ce le Bouddha qui est entré? ou bien est-ce Nanda? Nanda a deux *lakṣaṇa* de moins que le Bouddha; il a quatre doigts de taille en moins que le Bouddha. Il se fait faire une robe pareille à la robe du Bouddha.

The surviving fragments of the *Vinayavibhaṅga* of the Sarvāstivādin school in Sanskrit only mention Nanda's similarity to the Buddha, but not his *lakṣaṇas*, cf. ROSEN 1959: 214.

¹⁵ *T 190* = *Abhiniṣkramaṇasūtra*, transl. (p.371): Now Nanda was a man of great personal beauty, his body straight and comely and of a golden hue, and just like that of Tathāgata. So he had a Kashāya garment made similar to his master's, and having received it, he put it on. Then all the Bhikṣus, seeing him at a distance gradually approaching the assembly, thought that he was the lord himself, and so proceeded to rise from their places to salute him, and only when they discovered their mistake did they return.

¹⁶ *Si-yu-ki*, transl. (Vol.2, p.8-9): ... he spoke thus: "I possess thirty marks (*of a Buddha*), not much less than Buddha himself; a great company of followers surround me; in what respect do I differ from Tathāgata?"

¹⁷ *Saṅghabhedavastu* (Vinaya of the Mūlasarvāstivādin) ed. (Vol.2, p.164): *anuṣṇin pradēṣe suvarṇavarṇatām abhinivartayati itī/ bhikṣavas taṃ pradēṣaṃ gatāh/ tair asau śruto duḥkhavedanāro vikrośan/ te Bhagavatsakāśam upasankrāntāh/ bhikṣavaḥ saṃśayajātāḥ sarvasaṃśayacchettāraṃ Buddham bhagavantam papracchuḥ/ paśya bhadanta Devadattaḥ suvarṇavarṇatāyā arthe duḥkhāṃ tīvrām kharām kaṭukām amanāpām vedanām vedayate itī/ Bhagavān āha/ na bhikṣava etarhī/ yathā atīte 'py adhvaṇy eṣa suvarṇakholāyā arthe anyena vyasanam āpannaḥ/ tac chrīyatām/*

ibid. (p. 165): *amuṣṇin pradēṣe cākṛāṅkapādacihnatām abhinivartayati itī/ bhikṣavas taṃ pradēṣaṃ gatāh/ tair asau śruto duḥkhavedanāro vikrośan/ te Bhagavatsakāśam upasankrāntāḥ (...)* *paśya bhadanta Devadattaḥ cākṛāṅkapādatalacihnatāyā arthe duḥkhāṃ tīvrām kharām kaṭukām amanāpām vedanām vedayate itī.*

¹⁸ *T 1590* = *Mahāprajñāpāramitāsāstra*, trad. Vol.2: p.874: Il [Devadatta] se dit: "Je possède trente marques du Grand Homme (*mahāpuruṣalakṣaṇa*), un peu moins que le Buddha [qui en a trente-deux]; mais mes disciples ne sont point nombreux."

¹⁹ *T 1509* = *Mahāprajñāpāramitāsāstra*, trad. Vol.1, p.285-87: Le fait d'agir en Buddha, voilà la grande marque. Vous négligez cette marque et vous adoptez les trente-deux marques [du Grand Homme]. Mais, ces trente-deux marques, les rois Cakravartin les possèdent également; les deva, Mahārāja aussi, les produisent par transformation (*nirmāna*); *Nan t'o* (Nanda), *T'i p'o ta* (Devadatta), etc., en possédaient trente; le brāhmane *P'o po li* (Bāvāri) en avait trois; la femme de *Mo ho kia chō* (Mahākāśyapa) avait la marque „colour d'or" (*suvarṇavarṇa*). Même des gens de notre génération possèdent une ou deux de ces marques, comme „les yeux

In contrast to the tradition of northern Buddhism, the Pali canon does not describe Devadatta as looking like the Buddha. He is called *alakkhika* (*alakkṣmika*), unfortunate one (*Cullavagga* VII.3.13), which the commentator Buddhaghosa interprets as *alakkhaṇo* (*alakkṣaṇa*), one with no marks.²⁰ It would appear that only in the northern Buddhism is Devadatta said to be physically similar to the Buddha. In that tradition a similar word, *alakkṣaṇaka*, is used to describe someone else, namely the patriarch Upagupta, who is called a "Buddha without the *lakṣaṇa* marks"²¹ (STRONG 1992: 39).

The fact that the texts of Pali Buddhism do not refer to Nanda and Devadatta as having *lakṣaṇas* does not, however, mean that they only ascribe *lakṣaṇas* to the Great Men. The ancient *Suttanipāta* (1019, 1022) states that a Brahmanic teacher named Bāvari, who sent his students to the Buddha and taught them to recognise him by his thirty-two *lakṣaṇas*, himself had three marks: the *ūrṇā* mark on the forehead, the very long tongue, and the concealed genitals.²² The question of whether people can have some *lakṣaṇas* on their bodies is the subject of a dispute in the *Katthvatthu* (IV.7)²³, which rejects the thesis that someone who has only some marks can be considered a partial Bodhisatva. To my knowledge, neither in the Pali tradition nor in the art of southern India are the characters in the Buddha legend depicted as having *lakṣaṇas*.

The story of the Brahman Bāvari with his three *lakṣaṇas* is accorded a deeper meaning in northern Buddhism. While the *Suttanipāta* merely states that one of his sixteen students was Metteya, the texts of the Sanskrit schools say Maitreya was a member of his family (LÉVI 1936: 371-73; LAMOTTE 1958: 777²⁴, 781). Maitreya, who, as the future Buddha, is entitled to have the *lakṣaṇas*, is thus descended from a family in which at least some of the attributes of a *mahāpuruṣa* are manifested. This is in accordance with other texts which say that these attributes are hereditary or are common to the members of a certain clan. One story tells of an emperor (*cakravartin*) whose 989 sons had at the most thirty-one *lakṣaṇas* and who was therefore still waiting for his successor (*T 207*)²⁵.

noirs foncés" (*abhinīlanetra*), „les bras longs" (*dirghabāhu*), «la partie antérieure du corps semblable à celle du lion" (*siṃhapūrvārdhakāya*), etc. Ces diverses marques se rencontrent plus ou moins nombreuses. Pourquoi y attachez-vous de l'importance?

²⁰ This variant is given as a footnote in the translation of the Vinaya passage (*Cullavagga* VII.3.13, ed. Vol.3, p.250, Fn.1): *Alakkhiko ti ettha na lakketitī alakkhiko na jānātī attho/ Apākatakammaṃ karomīti na jānātīti na lakkitabbo ti alakkhaṇo passitabbo ti attho*. The edition of the commentary (*Samantapāsādikā*, Vol.6, p.1275-76) does not use the word *alakkhaṇo*.

²¹ *Divyavadāna* XXVI, ed. (p.348-49; the Buddha prophesies that Upagupta will live one hundred years after his Parinirvāna in Mathurā): *asyām Ānanda Mathurāyām mama varṣaśataparinirvṛtasya Gupto nāma gāndhiko bhaviṣyati/ tasya putro bhaviṣyati Upagupto nāmālakṣaṇako Buddho yo mama varṣaśataparinirvṛtasya Buddham kāryam bhaviṣyati/*

²² *Suttanipāta* 1022, ed. (p. 186): *mukham jivhāya chādeti/ unṇ' assa bhamukantare/ kosohitam vatthaguyham/ evaṃ jānāti mānava/*; transl. (p.162): He can cover his face with his tongue; there is hair between his eyebrows; his male organ is unsheathed. Know thus, young brahman.

²³ *Kathāvathu* IV.7.1, ed. (p.283-84): *lakkhaṇasamannāgato Bodhisatto/ āmantā/ padesalakkhaṇehi samannāgato padesabodhisatto ti/ na h'evaṃ vattabbe – pe -- lakkhaṇasamannāgato Bodhisatto ti/ āmantā/ tibhāgalakkhaṇehi samannāgato tibhāgabodhisatto ti/ na h'evaṃ vattabbe – pe – lakkhaṇasamannāgato Bodhisatto ti/ āmantā/ upaḍḍhalakkhaṇehi samannāgato upaḍḍhabodhisatto ti/ na h'evaṃ vattabbe (...); transl. (p.166): *Controverted Point*. – That one who is gifted with the Marks is a Bodhisat. (...) *Th*. – By your proposition you must also admit [*a fortiori*] (*a*) that anyone who is gifted with the Marks to a limited extent, with one-third, or one-half of them, is a limited, one-third, or half Bodhisat, respectively – which you deny.*

²⁴ LAMOTTE 1958: 77: Maitreya était né dans la royaume de Vāraṇasī, au village de Kapāli, dans la famille du grand brāhmane Bāvari (trad. from *T 452 = Kouan-Mi-lō*).

²⁵ *T 207* trad. (CHAVANNES, No.157, Vol.2, p.3): Autrefois il y avait un saint roi tourneur de la roue (*Chakravartin*); il avait d'abord engendré neuf cent quatre-vingt-neuf fils qui tous parvinrent à l'âge adulte, furent beaux et avenants, furent intelligents et perspicaces et furent doués en même temps des qualités du corps;

T 189 talks of 500 princes who had various numbers of *lakṣaṇas*. Some of them even had all thirty-two though not in a fully developed state. The princes belonged to the Śākya clan, in which only the Buddha had all thirty-two marks in a clearly recognisable form.²⁶

According to this idea, the other Śākyas had some *lakṣaṇa* attributes, which is in line with the depictions discussed above, since Nanda, Ānanda and Devadatta all belonged to the Śākya clan. This interpretation of the *lakṣaṇas* does not consider the marks to be the visualisation either of a person's holiness or of his good deeds in earlier births. Ānanda and Nanda were depicted as having the *uṣṇīṣa* at a time in which they were not Arhats, as was Devadatta, who had committed many bad deeds.

The marks are to be understood as indicating membership of the Śākya clan. So if a companion of the Buddha had the *uṣṇīṣa*, that means he was a member of the Śākya clan.

2. Depictions of future Buddhas with *lakṣaṇas*

Occasionally the marks of the Great Man appear on the bodies of people who will only become Buddhas in the distant future. Here, the *lakṣaṇas* are nothing other than projections back onto an earlier time of the future state of Buddhahood.

It is not surprising that Maitreya is represented as having *lakṣaṇas*: this Bodhisatva often appears in all the glory of a Buddha, in both the literature and the art. Taking such anticipation of the future appearance of the Bodhisatva as the Buddha as my starting point, I wish to discuss a number of depictions of the Buddha Śākyamuni in his earlier births which show him with the *lakṣaṇas* of a Buddha.

One of the rock engravings in the Indus valley depicts the Śibi story (Drawing 16 = fig.9). The scene, which shows a man holding a balance in which there is a dove, can be definitively identified. What is unusual about it is that King Śibi, who is holding the dove in his lap, is depicted as a Buddha: He has long earlobes, he is wearing a monk's robe, rays are emanating from his shoulders, and he has the head of a Buddha with a clearly defined *uṣṇīṣa*. In order to make it even clearer that Śibi is the future

Buddha Śākyamuni, the artist shows his Bodhi tree, *aśvattha*, behind him. In another engraving, which depicts the Vyāghrī story²⁷, the Bodhisatva, who has sacrificed his life for the tiger cubs and is lying on the ground, is portrayed with the *uṣṇīṣa*. These depictions are clearly anticipations of the state of Buddhahood, which might yet be attained, in part through the depicted acts of sacrifice. These rock engravings are certainly not first-class works, but the same kind of representations can also be found elsewhere, which indicates that this way of thinking was common to a number of artists or to those who had commissioned the works.

In Central Asian painting one can find quite a few depictions of the so-called Praṇidhi scenes. Many such scenes were painted in Bezeklik. They show the moment in the distant past in which the person who will eventually become Śākyamuni vows to become a Buddha (*praṇidhi*) and the then Buddha prophesies that that will indeed come to pass (*vyākaraṇa*). The Praṇidhi scenes from Cave IX at Bezeklik, which were brought to Berlin, bear verse inscriptions which, for each scene, name the Buddha of the earlier time and the Bodhisatva and recount the circumstances under which the vow was taken. As LÜDERS (1913) has shown, the verses correspond almost exactly to the *Bahubuddhasūtra* in the *Mahāvastu*²⁸. The

parmi eux, il y en avait qui possédaient vingt-huit marques distinctives (*lakṣaṇas*), d'autres qui en possédaient trente, d'autres qui en possédaient trente et une.

²⁶ T 189, trad. (LAMOTTE 1944-80, 1: 285, Fn.): ... chez le Śākya, au temps du Buddha, cinq cents jeunes princes munis d'un certain nombre de marques: trois, dix, trente et une ou même trente-deux; chez ceux qui en avaient trente-deux, elles n'étaient pas bien distinctes (*vyakta*).

²⁷ Rock engraving at Shatial, ill.: THEWALD 1983: Fig.5, Pl.4-6; JETTMAR 1985: Pl.152-53.

²⁸ *Mahāvastu*, ed. Vol.3, p.224-50; transl. p.219-39.

inscription on one of the Prañidhi scenes states²⁹ that under the Buddha Kāśyapa the Bodhisatva, then a young Brahman named Uttara, took the decision to join the order. At that moment he received the pronouncement from the Buddha. This is how the event is depicted (fig.10): the youth is standing on the right; his status as a Brahman and ascetic is indicated by the panther fur around his calves. Brahman ascetics always wear such leggings in these pictures. Uttara (Drawing 17 = fig.10) is kneeling to the left of the Buddha, who is standing in the centre. Uttara, depicted as a monk, is receiving his *vyākaraṇa*. But he is already represented as a Buddha with *lakṣaṇas*. This depiction can only be understood as an anticipation of the future state Uttara will attain as the Buddha Śākyamuni. Interestingly, the *lakṣaṇas* of the Bodhisatva making the vow are only shown in this one Prañidhi picture in which the Bodhisatva makes his vow as a monk. Evidence that this was not a mistake can be found in another depiction of the same scene in Cave XII at Bezeklik³⁰, which again shows the monk Uttara with the *uṣṇīṣa*.

A number of Buddhas also appear in some other Prañidhi scenes from Central Asia (SANDER 1997). They appear however in the upper part of the pictures and not as those Buddhas towards whom the central Buddha figure turns. They are shown holding small bottles – evidently signs that these are future Buddhas who are currently in heaven. Here too we see the anticipatory visualisation of the future Buddhahood of the Bodhisatvas.

The Prañidhi pictures from Central Asia aid in the identification of a number of Indian reliefs, one of which is to be found in Cave XXVI in Ajanta. It shows a Buddha seated on a throne (Drawing 18). To his left a Bodhisatva is standing, holding a lotus. The place of the second Bodhisatva is, however, occupied by a Buddha. If one compares this picture to the Central Asian paintings, one can make out that this person is a monk who has uttered the Prañidhi vow and is therefore depicted with the *uṣṇīṣa* on his head, in anticipation of his future Buddhahood.

Cases of monks making a Bodhisatva vow as a visionary experience during meditation are recorded in the relevant literature.³¹ In such visions the monk sees himself as the Buddha – wearing all the *lakṣaṇas* of the future Teacher of the World.³²

²⁹ *Uttaro mānavobhūvaṃ Kāśyapo dvīpadottame/ n. . 1 . ālavaca śrutvā pravrajyāyā kṛtā matiḥ/ ṛṭṛiyāsamkheya sarvaṅuṇābhyāsānaḥ//* – ed. in: LÜDERS 1913 = 1940: 256.

³⁰ Bezeklik, Cave XII, New Delhi, Central Asian Antiquities Museum, ill.: ANDREWS 1948: Pl.27; the detail "Kniender Buddha" ill.: HÄRTEL / AUBOYER 1971: Pl.238; the same scene of the *vyākaraṇa* of the monk Uttara is depicted on one Prañidhi scene from Bezeklik in State Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg.

³¹ *Ein buddhistisches Yogalehrbuch* (= „A Buddhist Yoga Manual“, ed. SCHLINGLOFF 1964: 147): *sa Bhagavatpādāyo pranāmya kathayati/ Bhagav(a)m) syām aham anāga(ṭe 'dhvani sarvasatva)parināyake/ s(ar)v(a)s(a)tv(a)vy(ā)dh(inā)m apaharīta samyaksambuddha iti tato 'sya Bhag(avāṃ) pāni(nā) mūrdhānam parāṃśaiti/ kathayati ca putraka (bhavi)śyasi tvam anāgate 'dhva(ni sarvasatvavyādhihānam apa)harīta samyaksambuddha iti/*; übers. (*ibid.*): [Der Yogin] verneigt sich zu Füßen des Erhabenen und spricht: „O Erhabener, ich möchte in einer zukünftigen Epoche der Führer (aller Wesen) sein; ein Tilger der Gebrechen aller Wesen, ein völlig Erleuchteter.“ Dann berührt der Erhabene sein Haupt (mit der Hand) und spricht: „Mein Sohn, du wirst in einer zukünftigen Epoche ein Tilger (der Gebrechen aller Wesen sein), ein völlig Erleuchteter“.

SCHLINGLOFF (1964: 10) considers the *Yogalehrbuch* as a Sarvāstivāda work; cf. YAMABE 1996.

³² *Ein buddhistisches Yogalehrbuch* (ed. SCHLINGLOFF 1964: 142): (*Bhagavaṃs cāsa śīrasi pa)ṭṭa(m) badhnāti kathayati ca namo 'nāgate 'dhvani bhaviśyajāgatkarmadhārāya devās ca kṛtsnaṃ gaganam āpūrya n. ā bhūtvā nipata(n)ti/ v. (u)tsrjanti tasya prītiprāmodyasamjātasya krameṇa lakṣaṇānuvyaṃjanavirāji(ta) yati candramaṇḍalasaṃkāśo satvā(ṃ)s ca vinaya(tī);* übers. (*ibid.*): (Der Erhabene) bindet ein Seidentuch (um den Kopf) [des Yogin] und spricht: „Verehrung [sei dir], dem in einer zukünftigen Epoche erstandenen Steuermann der Welt.“ Götter erfüllen den gesamten Luftraum und [Diese] fallen, zu geworden, nieder entlassen sie Ist [der Yogin] von Beglückung und

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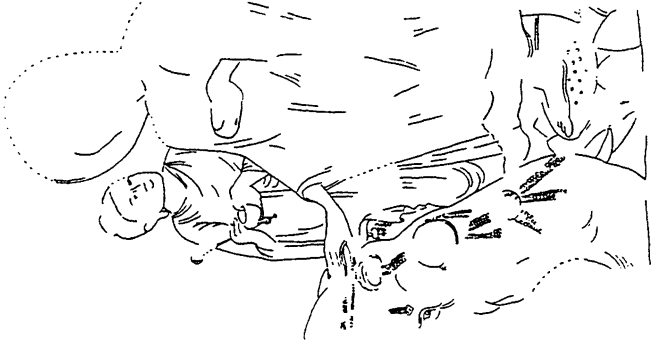
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List of Drawings and Figures

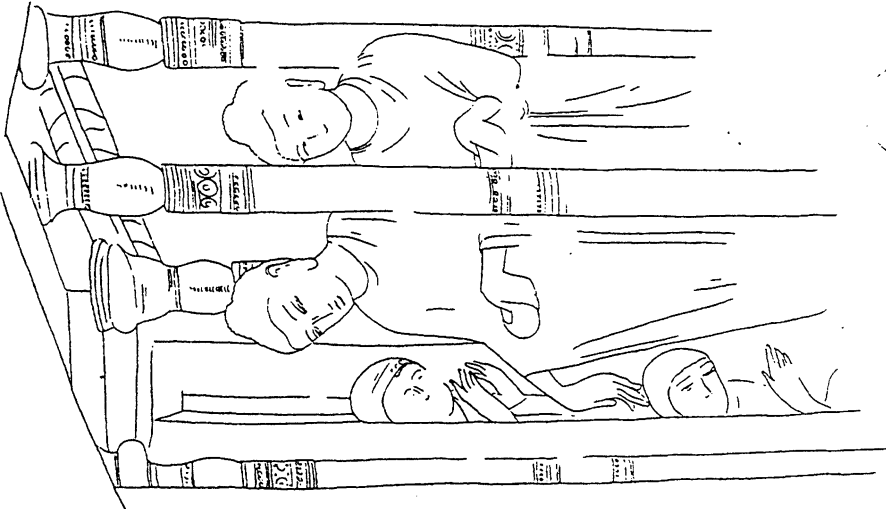
(Drawings by the author except of Drawing 14)

- Drawing 1 = **fig.1** (after BEHL):
Ajanta, Cave XVII, Veranda, right back wall, depiction of the story of the elephant Dhanapāla, cf. SCHLINGLOFF 2000: No.77, scene 77(5)
Copy: GRIFFITHS 17H, kept in the Victoria & Albert Museum, London; photos of the copy: Indian Section of the V&A Museum, 87-1887; India Office (London), Vol.72, No.6037.
ill.: FERGUSSON / BURGESS 1880, No.59 (tracing); YAZDANI 1930-55, 3: Pl.74; GHOSH 1967: Pl.66; BEHL 1998: 173; TAKATA 2000, 3: Pl.C.17-6b; S.A.A.P.C. I-1081.34:34.
- Drawing 2:
Ajanta, Cave XVI, left side-wall, depiction of the story of Nanda, cf. SCHLINGLOFF 2000: No.73, scene 73(2)
Copy: GRIFFITHS 16A1, kept in the Victoria & Albert Museum, London; photos of the copy: Indian Section of the V&A Museum, 76-1887; India Office (London), Vol.71, No.6012.
ill.: YAZDANI 1930-55, 3: Pl.53; TAKATA 2000, 3: Pl.C.16-7b.
- Drawing 3 = **fig.2** (after the copy):
ibid., scene 73(5) – the detail of the painting is no more preserved.
Copy: ibid.
ill.: FERGUSSON / BURGESS 1880, No.59 (tracing).
- Drawing 4 = **fig.3**:
ibid., scene 73(7)
Copy: ibid., India Office (London), Vol.71, No.6014.
ill.: YAZDANI 1930-55, 3: Pl.54; SINGH 1965: Pl.62; GHOSH 1967: Pl.66; TAKATA 1971: Pl.20; OKADA/NOU 1991: 27; TAKATA 2000, 3: Pl.C.16-7d-e; S.A.A.P.C. I-1081.31:30,33; 32:47-48.
- Drawing 5:
ibid., scene 73(12)
Copy: ibid.
ill.: YAZDANI 1930-55, 3: Pl.54; TAKATA 2000, 3: Pl.C.16-7f.
- Drawing 6:
Ajanta, Cave XIX, Veranda, left side-wall, devotional painting, cf. ZIN 2003: No.48, Ill.24.
Copy of the detail: GRIFFITHS 19A, kept in the Victoria & Albert Museum, London; photos of the copy: India Office (London), Vol.76, No.6187.
ill.: GRIFFITHS 1896-97, 1: Pl.89.
- Drawing 7:
Ajanta, Cave XXVI, left side-wall, above the sculpture of the Parinirvāna, cf. ZIN 2003: No.48, Ill.24.
Copy: --
ill.: BEHL 1998: 30; S.A.A.P.C. I-1081.56:6.
- Drawing 8:
Höhle XXVI, left side-wall, detail of the sculpture of the Parinirvāna;
ill.: YAZDANI 1930-55, 4: Pl.80; OKADA/NOU 1991:8; TAKATA 2000: Pl.C.26-4.
- Drawing 9 = **fig.4** (after: INGHOLT):
Gandhara, Lahore Museum, 309;
ill.: INGHOLT 1957: Fig.100.
- Drawing 10 = **fig.5** (after: KLIMBURG-SALTER):
Gandhara, Berlin, Museum für Indische Kunst, I 183;
ill.: KLIMBURG-SALTER 1995: Fig.159.
- Drawing 11 = **fig.6** (after: KURITA):
Gandhara, Hidda, British Museum, 1900.5-22.1;
ill.: FOUCHER 1905-55, 1: Fig.234; BUSSAGLI 1984: 213; TISSOT 1985: Fig.251; KURITA 1988-90, 1: Pl.P3-V.
- Drawing 12 = **fig.7**:
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- Drawing 14:
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- Drawing 15:
Sanchi, Sanchi Museum, 9;
ill.: MARSHALL/FOUCHER 1940, 3: Pl.126b.
- Drawing 16 = **fig.9** (Copyright: Forschungsstelle Felsbilder und Inschriften am Karakorum Highway, Akademie der Wissenschaften Heidelberg):
Shatial on Indus, rock engraving, ill.: THEWALD 1983: Fig.3-4, Pl.2.
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Bezeklik, Höhle IX, Museum für Indische Kunst Berlin MIK 6888 (war loss), ill.: von LECOQ 1913: Pl.26; YALDIZ 1987: Pl.74.
- Drawing 18:
Ajanta, Cave XXVI, relief on the left side-wall, ill.: SPINK 1981: Fig.398; S.A.A.P.C. I-1081.55:13.

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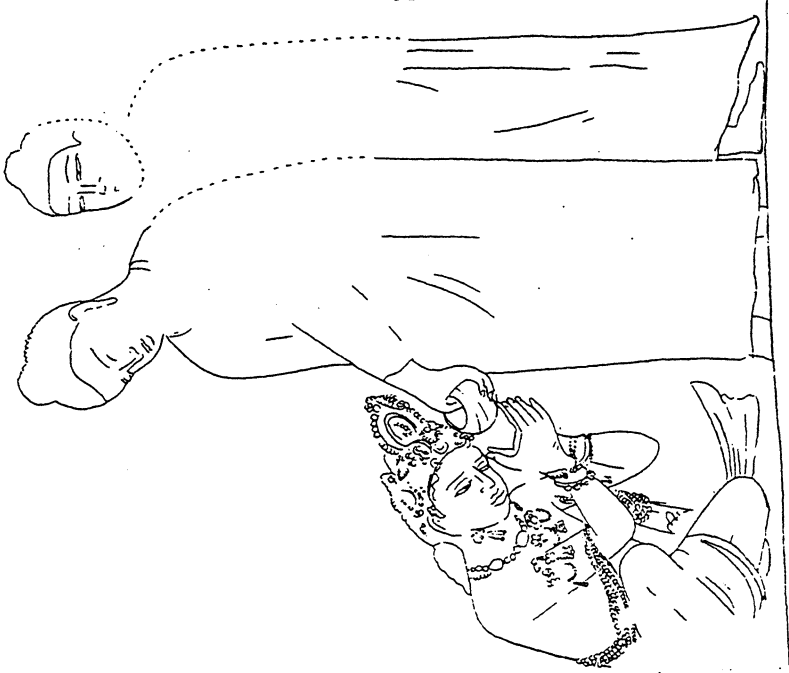


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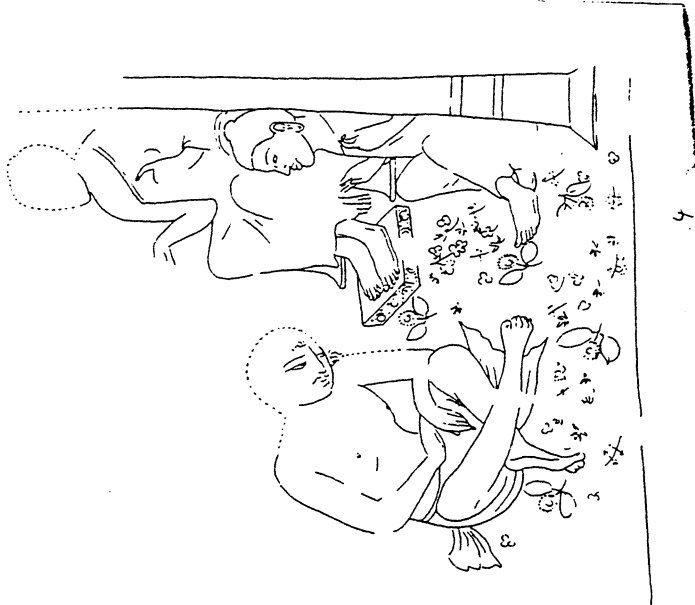


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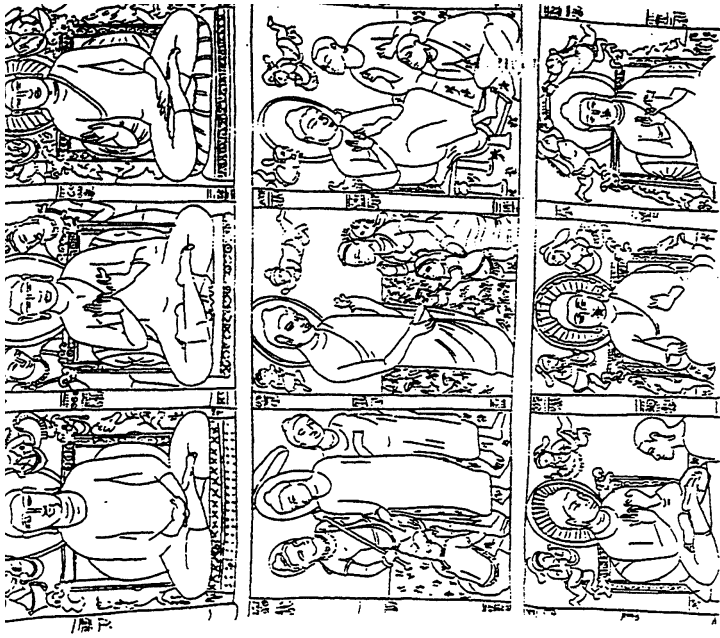
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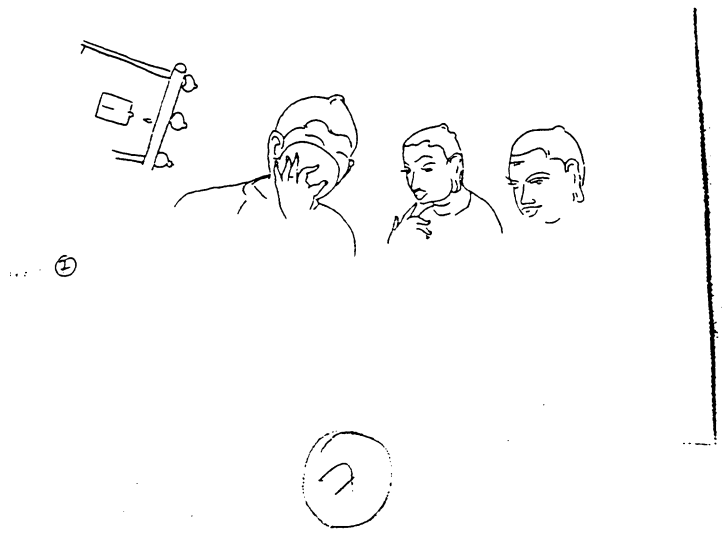


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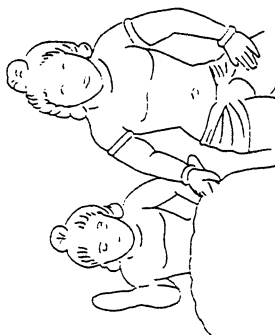
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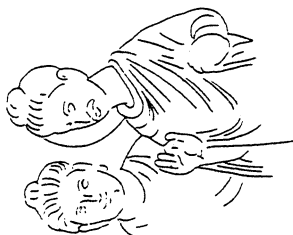




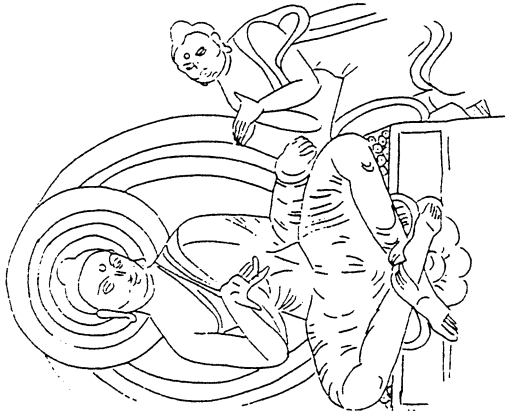
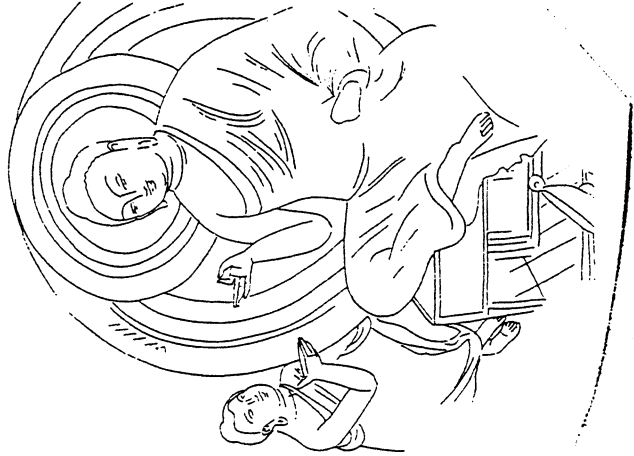
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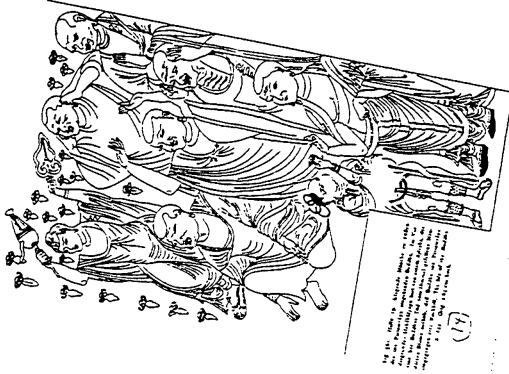


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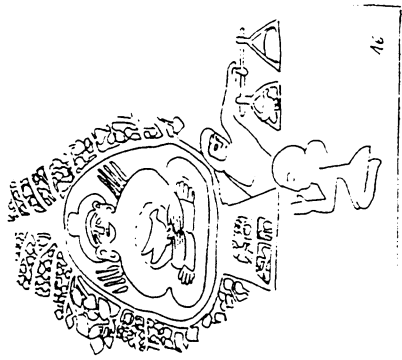
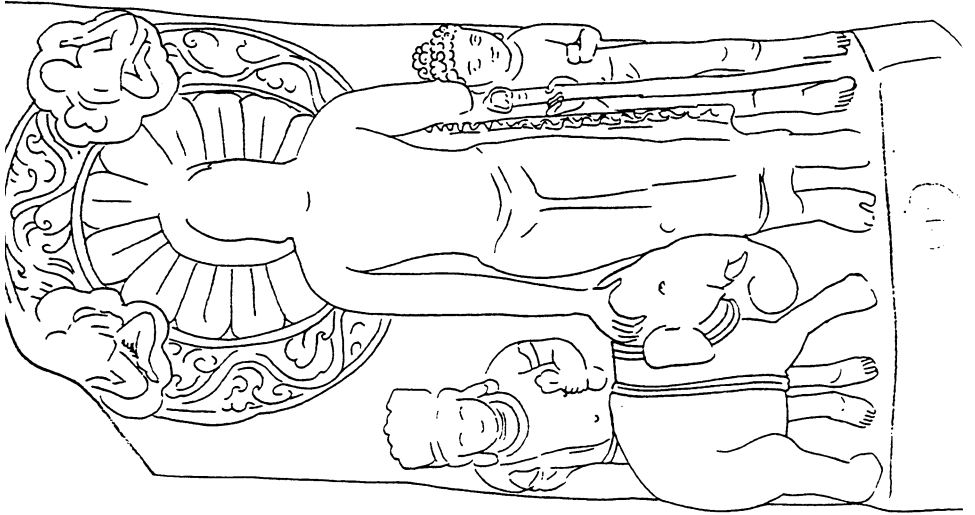








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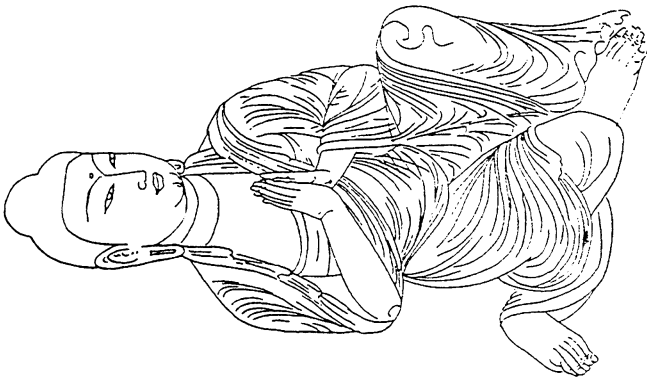
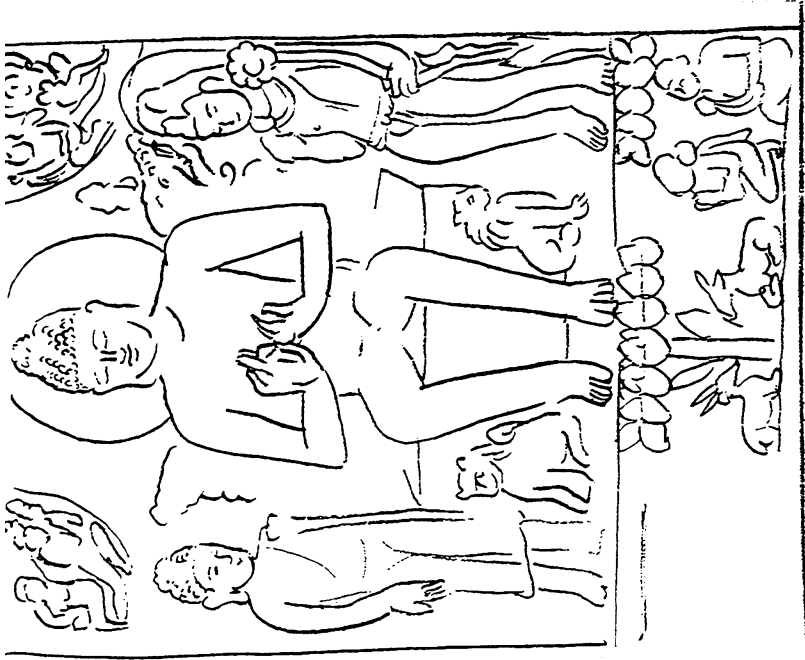




fig. 2



fig. 1



Fig. 3



Fig. 4



fig. 5

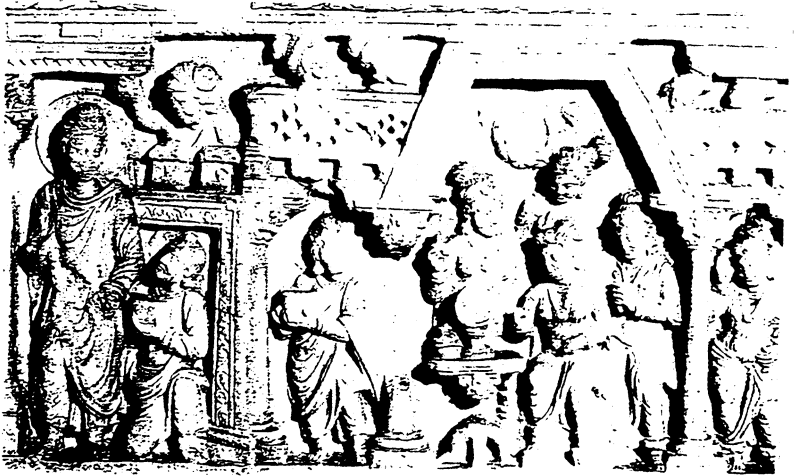


fig. 6



Ar. 8



Ar. 7



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ky. 10