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

Dr. Monika Zin
Universität München
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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 usṇiṣa

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 usṇiṣa, 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 literature; 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

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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 tongvge and his voice are interpreted as a sign of his rejection of rough language (pharusam vācam) in his past lives (Dīghanikāya XXX.2.22). The explanation that the Sūtra offers for the presence of the usṇiṣa 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 manusassabhūto samāno bahujaṇapubbangamo ahosi kusaḷesu dhāmmesu bahujaṇapāmokkho kāyasyacarite vaciścarite manośucarite dānasamvībhāge silasamādāne uposathavāvāse metteyyatīya petteyyatīya sāmaṇṇhatīya brahmaṇṇhatīya kulejīṭṭhacāyāśīya aṭṭharāṭṭhataresu adhiṭṭhalesu dhāmmesu (...) so tato cute itthattam ākato samāṇo inam mahāpurisalakhaṇam paṭṭibhāti unhiṣasiso 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 brahmans, 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 laksanas, the usṇīṣa.

usṇīṣa means 'turban'. The canonical texts only say that the Buddha was born with a usṇiṣaśīrṣa, "turban head". The attribute usṇīṣa 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 usṇīṣa 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 usṇīṣa 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 usṇīṣa 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 usṇīṣa 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 laksanas.

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 usṇīṣa

The peculiarity of the narrative depictions in which dramatis personae from the Buddha legend are shown as having laksanas 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 Dhanapāḷa. 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 (Hamsajātaka).

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

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5 Dīghanikāya XIV.1.32 (ed. Vol.2, p.19): ayam hi deva kumāro unhisasiso/ yam pāyaṃ deva kumāro unhisasiso/ idam pi 'ssa mahāpurisassa mahāpurisalakṣhanam 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 *usnīṣa*.

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 *usnīṣa*: 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 *usnīṣa* 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 *usnīṣa* 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 *usnīṣa* 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 *usnīṣa* 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 *usnīṣa* 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 *usnīṣa* 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 *usnīṣa*. 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 *usnīṣas* (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 *usnīṣa* 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 \textit{uṣṇīśa} are Ānanda and Nanda.

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

The \textit{uṣṇīśas} 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 \textit{uṣṇīśa} 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 \textit{uṣṇīśa} is not shown in pictures of the Parinirvāṇa of the Buddha or of his own Parinirvāṇa (VÖGEL 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 \textit{uṣṇīśa} (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 \textit{uṣṇīśas} 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.\footnote{The \textit{uṣṇīśa} 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.: \textit{ibid.} 1: Pl.121-22.} An example is one of the monks who is present at the Parinirvāṇa (Drawing 14).

This phenomenon, the depiction of non-Buddhas with the \textit{uṣṇīśa}, 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 \textit{uṣṇīśa}. 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 \textit{uṣṇīśa-lakṣaṇa}.

The observation that depictions of monks with the \textit{uṣṇīśa} 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 \textit{lakṣaṇa}. So, for example, there is not a single \textit{uṣṇīśa} in illustrations of the sermon to the first five monks or in depictions of monks performing miracles (WALDSCHMIDT 1930).

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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 *aṅgulīs* shorter than him, and that that is why he was mistaken for the Buddha. This lead to the rule that monks had to wear shorter robes than the Buddha, 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, *suvarṇavarna*, because in an earlier life he had invited the Buddha Vipaśyin and his monks to take a bath (*T 1451 = Vinaya of the Mūlasarvāstivādin*¹¹; *Mahākarmavibhanga*¹²); it is even said that he received no fewer than thirty *lakṣaṇas* for his good deeds (*T 1451 = Vinaya of the Mūlasarvāstivādin*¹³; *Panglung* 1981: 176).

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¹⁰ *This rule was evidently the result of a misunderstanding* (SCHLINGLOFF 1963: 544): The old *Prātimokṣa*-śūtra only said that a monk’s robe should not be larger than *sugata*-cīvara-pamāṇa, 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.


¹² *Apadāna* II.3.27-34 (ed. p.66-67); v.27-29: *Padumuttarassa Bhagavato lokajetthassa tādīno/ vattham khonām mayā dinnam sayambhussa maheśino/ tam me Buddha viyākāsi Jalajuttaranamako/ iminā vatthadānena hemavanṇo bhavissasi/ dve sampatti anubhotvā kusalamālehi codito/ Gotamassa Bhagavato kanītho tvam bhavissasi/ *

¹³ *T 1451*, trad. (LAMOTTE 1944-80, I: 290, Fn.): Bhagavat, je voudrais que le Grand Maître et sa noble assemblée viennent demain chez moi prendre un bain dans ma piscine.

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¹⁰ *Mahākarmavibhanga* IV (ed. p.38): *yathā ārya-Sundaranandena kila Krakucchande samyakambuddhe bhikṣusanghe jentakasānam kṛtam/ tāṃś ca drṣṭvā cītām prasāditām/ bhūyās ca suvarmāna hṛitādīna pratyekabuddhastūpe lepo dattabh/ idam api drṣṭvā cītām prasāditām/ abhirūpāyām ca parināmāntam/ bhūyās ca stūpe kriyāmāne prathamāṃ chaṭṭham kāritām/ yathā paścimabhave sa eva vyākaro/ jentakasya ca snānena hṛitādīsa yapanena ca/ ekacchattrapradānāc ca prāptā me suvarnavarṇatā/; trad. (p.115-16): Ainsi le saint Sundara Nanda avait, au temps de Krakucchanda le Bouddha complètement illuminé, donné à la communauté des Mendicants 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’orpinement; 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’orpinement – 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 *Mahākarmavibhanga* does not say anything about 30 *lakṣaṇas* of Nanda.

¹¹ According to *T 1451* = *Sanghabhedavastu* in *Mūlasarvāstivāda* Vinaya, Nanda received the *lakṣaṇas* for building and decorating a Stūpa (trad. LAMOTTE 1944-80, I: 292, Fn.): Il recueillit ses restes, les plaça dans une urne toute neuve, construisit un stūpa et y suspendit des parasols (*chaṭtra*). 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 lakṣāṇas marks on his body (T 1435 = Vinaya of the Sarvāstivādin14; T 190 = Abhinīkramanāsūtra15). One of them may have been the usṇīṣa.

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 lakṣāṇas as the Buddha except for two (Si-yu-ki)16. The tradition of the Mūlasarvāstivādin school mentions two lakṣāṇas which were perhaps understood to be the ones the other text said Devadatta lacked: a story in the Sanghabhedavastu17 (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 lakṣāṇas on individuals other than the Buddha, and repeats the same information.18 Perhaps it accords a lesser importance to the lakṣāṇas.19
In contrast to the tradition of northern Buddhism, the Pali canon does not describe Devadatta as looking like the Buddha. He is called *alakkhika* (*alakṣmika*), unfortunate one (Cullavagga VII.3.13), which the commentator Buddhaghosa interprets as *alakkhano* (*alaksana*), 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, *alaksanaka*, is used to describe someone else, namely the patriarch Upagupta, who is called a "Buddha without the *laksana* marks"21 (STRONG 1992: 39).

The fact that the texts of Pali Buddhism do not refer to Nanda and Devadatta as having *laksanas* does not, however, mean that they only ascribe *laksanas* 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 *laksanas*, 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 *laksanas* on their bodies is the subject of a dispute in the *Kathāvattu* (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 *laksanas*.

The story of the Brahman Bāvari with his three *laksanas* 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 *laksanas*, 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 *laksanas* and who was therefore still waiting for his successor (*T* 207)25.

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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 lakkhetiti alakkhiko na jānāti atta/ Apakatakammam karomiti na jānāti na lakkhatabbo ti alakkhano passitabbo ti attha. The edition of the commentary (Samantapāśādikā, Vol.6, p.1275-76) does not use the word alakkhano.

21 *Divyavadāna* XXVI, ed. (p.348-49; the Buddha prophesies that Upagupta will live one hundred years after his Parinirvāna in Mathurā): asshí Ánanda Mathurāyām mama varṣaśataparivarṇṛtasya Gupto nāma gāndhiko bhavisyat/ tasya putro bhavisyaty Upagupto nām+laksanako Buddho yo mama varṣaśataparivarṇṛtasya Buddhām kāryam bhavisyat/ *

22 *Suttanipāta* 1022, ed. (p.186): mukham āvishhāya chādethi/ unn’ assa bhamukantare/ kosohitam vattaḥghusham/ evam jānāti mānavā/; 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 *Kathāvattu* IV.7.1, ed. (p.283-84): lakkhasamannāgato Bodhisatto/ amatā/ padesalakkhaṇehi samannāgato padesabhodhisatto tā/ na h’evam vattabbe – pe -- lakkhaṇasamannāgato Bodhisatto tā/ amatā/ tibhāgalakkhaṇehi samannāgato tibhāgaśobodhisatto tā/ na h’evam vattabbe – pe – lakkhaṇasamannāgato Bodhisatto tā/ amatā/ upaddhalakkhaṇehi samannāgato upaddhabodhisatto tā/ na h’ evam 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 royauté de Vāraṇasī, au village de Kapāli, dans la famille du grand brāhmaṇe 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 lakṣānas. Some of them even had all thirty-two though not in a fully developed state. The princes belonged to the Śākyas, 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 lakṣāna attributes, which is in line with the depictions discussed above, since Nanda, Ānanda, and Devadatta all belonged to the Śākyas. This interpretation of the lakṣānas 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 usṇiṣa 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 Śākyas clan. So if a companion of the Buddha had the usṇiṣa, that means he was a member of the Śākyas clan.

2. Depictions of future Buddhas with lakṣānas

Occasionally the marks of the Great Man appear on the bodies of people who will only become Buddhas in the distant future. Here, the lakṣānas 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 lakṣānas: 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 lakṣānas 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 usṇiṣa. 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 usṇiṣa. 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 Pranidhi 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 (pranidhi) and the then Buddha prophesies that that will indeed come to pass (vyākaraṇa). The Pranidhi 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
inscription on one of the Pranidhi scenes states 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 vākaraṇa. But he is already represented as a Buddha with laksānas. This depiction can only be understood as an anticipation of the future state Uttara will attain as the Buddha Śākyamuni. Interestingly, the laksānas of the Bodhisatva making the vow are only shown in this one Pranidhi 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 Bezeklik, which again shows the monk Uttara with the usṇīṣa.

A number of Buddhas also appear in some other Pranidhi 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 Pranidhi 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 Praṇidhi vow and is therefore depicted with the usṇīṣa 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. In such visions the monk sees himself as the Buddha – wearing all the laksānas of the future Teacher of the World.
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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)

Drawing 2:
Ajanta, Cave XVI, left side-wall, depiction of the story of Nanda, cf. SCHLINGLOFF 2000: No.73, scene 73(2)

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)

Drawing 5:
ibid., scene 73(12)
Copy: ibid.
ill.: YAZDANI 1930-55, 3: Pl.54; TAKATA 2000, 3: Pl.C.16-7f.

Drawing 6:
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. 1-1081.56.6.

Drawing 8:
Höhle XXVI, left side-wall, detail of the sculpture of the Parinirvāna;

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, 1 183;
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:
Kizil, Cave 196, barrel vault in the main chamber, right side, ill.: XU WANYIN 1983-85, 3: Pl.99.

Drawing 13 = fig.8:
Kizil, Cave 101, barrel vault in the main chamber, right side, ill.: XU WANYIN 1983-85, 2: Pl.97.

Drawing 14:
Bezeklik, Cave 19 = GRÜNWEDEL 1912: 271, Fig 561.

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.

Drawing 17 = fig.10 (after: LECOQ):

Drawing 18:
Ajanta, Cave XXVI, relief on the left side-wall, ill.: SPINK 1981: Fig.398; S.A.A.P.C. 1-1081.55.13.
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fig. 3

fig. 4