



Anālayo

Buddhapada and the Bodhisattva Path



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Series Editors:

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Numata Center
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Foreword

About *Hamburg Buddhist Studies*

Ever since the birth of Buddhist Studies in Germany more than 100 years ago, Buddhism has enjoyed a prominent place in the study of Asian religions. The University of Hamburg continues this tradition by focusing research capacities on the religious dimensions of South, Central, and East Asia and making Buddhism a core subject for students of the Asien-Afrika-Institut. The Numata Center for Buddhist Studies is proud to have found a home at one of Europe's pioneering academic institutions. With its *Hamburg Buddhist Studies* book series it honours the University's long-standing commitment to research in the field of Buddhist Studies and aims to share its results with both the academic community and the wider public.

Today, Buddhist Studies as an academic discipline makes use of a broad spectrum of approaches and methods. The field covers contemporary issues as much as it delves into the historical aspects of Buddhism. Similarly, the questions shaping the field of Buddhist Studies have broadened. Understanding present-day Buddhist phenomena – and how such phenomena are rooted in and informed by a distant past – is not at all an idle scholarly exercise. Rather, it has become clear that fostering the understanding of one of the world's major religious traditions is a crucial obligation for modern multicultural societies in a globalized world.

Accordingly, *Hamburg Buddhist Studies* addresses Buddhism as one of the great humanistic traditions of philosophical thought, religious praxis, and social life. Its discussions will undoubtedly be of interest to scholars of religious studies and specialists of Buddhism, but also aim at confronting Buddhism's rich heritage with questions the answers to which might not easily be deduced by the exclusive use of historical and philological research methods. Such issues require the penetrating insight of scholars who approach Buddhism from a broad range of disciplines, building upon and yet going beyond the solid study of texts and historical evidence.

We are convinced that *Hamburg Buddhist Studies* will contribute to opening up the field to those who may have no training in the classical source languages of the Buddhist traditions but approach the topic against the background of their own disciplinary interests. With this book series, we would like to also encourage a wider audience to take an interest in the academic study of the Buddhist traditions.

About this Volume

It is our great pleasure to introduce with the present study, *Buddhapada and the Bodhisattva Path* by Bhikkhu Anālayo, the eighth volume in the *Hamburg Buddhist Studies* series. Building on his ground-breaking *The Genesis of the Bodhisattva Ideal*, with the present monograph he approaches a closely related topic from the perspective of the bodily dimension as evident in the thirty-two marks with which, according to tradition, the Buddha was endowed. The study begins by proposing that a cross-fertilization between text and art has influenced the conception of one of these marks, namely the wheel-marks on the soles of the Buddha's feet. By way of a comparative study of the early discourses, Anālayo proceeds to show how the thirty-two marks – initially nearly imperceptible features – came to be more clearly visible and acquired salvific power. Eventually, he argues, these turned into a psycho-somatic chart for the bodhisattva path and thereby set a precedent for the prediction (commonplace in later Buddhist doctrine) that assures an aspiring bodhisattva of becoming a Buddha in the future.

Michael Zimmermann and Steffen Döll

Introduction

Theme

This study is a follow-up to my earlier exploration of *The Genesis of the Bodhisattva Ideal* in the same *Hamburg Buddhist Studies* series, in which I employed the historical-critical method of comparative study of the early discourses to trace different elements that appear to have contributed to the coming into being of the bodhisattva ideal.¹ With the present study I turn to the bodily dimension of the same trajectory, in particular to the thirty-two marks (*lakṣaṇa*) as the embodiment of Buddhahood.

The chief source material for my present exploration remains the early discourses, found in the four main Pāli *Nikāyas* and their counterparts in Sanskrit fragments, the Chinese *Āgamas*, and at times parallels preserved in Tibetan and even Uighur translation.

A distinct case is the *Ekottarika-āgama* preserved in Chinese translation (T 125). This collection has had a rather chequered history and it seems clear that material was added in China and that the whole collection underwent considerable reworking.² Discourses in the *Ekottarika-āgama* can at

¹ Anālayo 2010a, in relation to which I would like to note a few corrections. Adopting suggestions by Silk 2013, I wish to change my translation p. 18 note 9 line 4f (MĀ 72 and MĀ 73) to: “at the time when I had not yet attained realization of the unsurpassable, right and true awakening”, and my translation p. 82 note 86 line 3 (EĀ 38.4) to: “I saw an ancient place”; also on p. 21 note 23 line 2 the last term should be corrected to *paryeseyyam* (due to font conversion by the publisher, some diacritics were lost and I missed this one when proof reading). Another mistake occurs p. 18 note 10 line 2, where I unfortunately followed Lamotte 1980: 122 in stating that SĀ 285 and SĀ 287 “actually speak of a previous life of the Buddha”. This remark should be deleted. Closer study has in the meantime shown that they rather speak of the Buddha’s recollection of his past lives (presumably in the night of his awakening) as the occasion for his cultivation of insight into dependent arising. In addition, following an observation by Tournier (forthcoming note 57), the reference to “at an even earlier time” on p. 76 line 7 should be deleted, as in the *Mahāvastu* scheme the Buddha Sarvābhībhū is posterior to Dīpamkara. None of these corrections affects any of my conclusions.

² Anālayo 2013c, 2014/2015, and 2015d.

times document more evolved stages of development which in the early discourses of other collections manifest only in an embryonic form.

In what follows my presentation falls into four parts, each of which is based on a translation of a discourse or a substantial portion of it, followed by a comparative study and further discussion. The focal reference point around which the whole study revolves is one of the thirty-two extraordinary physical marks of a Buddha, namely the wheel-marks on the soles of his feet and the resultant footprints they leave on the ground.

The brahmin Drona's vision of a footprint of the Buddha is the theme of chapter 1, in which I argue that the different descriptions of this footprint reflect stages in a development best understood as the result of a cross-fertilization between text and art.

A brahmin by the name of Brahmāyus and his keen interest in the Buddha Gautama's possession of the thirty-two marks feature in chapter 2, in which I explore in particular the function of these thirty-two *lakṣaṇas* as means of conversion. Another topic I take up is the significance of the at times hyperbolic description of the marks in early Buddhist discourse.

Gautama's predecessors come up for study in chapter 3, in which I am in particular concerned with the Buddha Vipaśyin. The description of miraculous events and qualities related to his birth shows the gradual integration of the thirty-two marks into the conception of Buddhahood.

With chapter 4 the full integration of the thirty-two *lakṣaṇas* into Buddhist doctrine comes to the forefront. This takes place by way of endowing them with a karmic background, in the sense of delineating the type of deeds performed in former lives that will lead to the acquisition of the thirty-two marks. I argue that this sets the stage for their function in other texts as a chart for the bodhisattva path and also reflects the centrally important shift of attention towards the type of conduct required for progress to Buddhahood as well as encouraging the arising of the idea that a bodhisattva at some point during his career receives a prediction of his future success in becoming a Buddha.

In short, I begin by examining the Buddhapada itself (chapter 1), then place it in the context of the thirty-two marks (chapter 2), next relate it to Buddhahood (in chapter 3), and finally proceed from the Buddhapada to the bodhisattva path (chapter 4). Readers solely interested in the topic of

the bodhisattva path might proceed directly to chapter 4, having read just the summaries of the preceding chapters.³

Similarly to my exploration of the bodhisattva ideal, the present survey documents the worth of comparative study of the early discourses for constructing informed hypotheses regarding early stages in the development of Buddhist thought.

Acknowledgement

I am indebted to Mark Allon, Adam Clarke, Bhikkhunī Dhammadinnā, Lilian Handlin, Christian Luczanits, Michael Running, Lambert Schmitzhausen, and Giovanni Verardi for commenting on this work, or parts of it, in the various stages of its evolution.

³ Cf. below p. 41, 68f, and 101.

1 Seeing the Footprint

1.1 Introduction

In this chapter I examine textual descriptions of a footprint of the Buddha. Comparative study of these descriptions offers a window on the stages in the development of the conception of the Buddha's foot as one of the thirty-two physical marks of a "great person", *mahāpuruṣa*.

The episode in question reports how a brahmin by the name of Drona chances on an actual footprint of the Buddha, which can be considered a natural Buddhapada. The exceptional nature of this footprint makes him pursue and eventually meet its owner, leading to a conversation with the Buddha and in some accounts of this episode to the brahmin's conversion. The versions of the discourse to be studied are as follows:

- a discourse version preserved in Gāndhārī belonging to the British Library Kharoṣṭhī fragments,¹ which with considerable probability can be assigned to a Dharmaguptaka textual tradition;²
- the Discourse to Doṇa found among the Fours of the *Āṅguttaranikāya* of the Theravāda tradition;³
- a discourse extant in the Chinese translation of the completely preserved *Samyukta-āgama* (T 99), probably stemming from a Mūlasarvāstivāda transmission lineage, the discourse being lo-

¹ The Gāndhārī fragment version has been edited and studied in detail, in comparison with its parallels, by Allon 2001.

² Salomon 1999: 166–178; cf. also the discussion below p. 84.

³ AN 4.36 at AN II 37,22 to 39,9; the allocation to the Fours would reflect the circumstance that Doṇa asks if the Buddha belongs to one out of four categories of beings, namely if he is a *deva*, a *gandhabba*, a *yakkha*, or a human. Although the *uddāna* at AN II 44,15 (E^e) refers to AN 4.36 with the term *loke* (presumably in reference to AN II 39,1: *loke jāto loka san̄vadḍho lokam abhibhuya viharāmi anupalitto lokena*, which reports the Buddha's explanation that, although he was born in the world and grew up in the world, having overcome the world he dwells unstained by the world), for the discourse's title I follow the *uddānas* in the Asian editions (B^e, C^e, and S^e), which instead mention the name of the brahmin protagonist Doṇa; cf. also the discussion in Allon 2001: 131.

- cated in what according to the reconstructed order of this collection would be the Section on Brahmins;⁴
- a discourse extant in Chinese from the partially preserved *Samyukta-āgama* (T 100), whose supposed Kāśyapīya affiliation has in recent times been criticized with arguments in favour of a Mūlasarvāstivāda provenance instead (although this would have to be of a different transmission lineage within the wider Mūlasarvāstivāda than the completely preserved *Samyukta-āgama*);⁵
 - a discourse extant in Chinese from the Sixes of the *Ekottarika-āgama* (T 125),⁶ whose school affiliation remains elusive due to the fact, already mentioned briefly above in the introduction, that the collection has been reworked and expanded by incorporating additional material after the arrival of its original in China.⁷ Nev-

⁴ SĀ 101 at T II 28a20 to 28b18; the collection has been assigned to a Mūlasarvāstivāda reciter tradition by, e.g., Lü 1963: 242, Waldschmidt 1980: 136, Mayeda 1985: 99, Enomoto 1986: 23, Hirakawa 1987: 513, Schmithausen 1987: 306, Choong 2000: 6 note 18, Hiraoka 2000, Oberlies 2003: 64, Bucknell 2006: 685, Glass 2010, and Anālayo 2015a: 55. For the reconstruction of the order of the collection cf. the survey by Anesaki 1908: 68–138 and the edition by Yinshùn 1983a, 1983b, and 1983c; on the provenance of the manuscript used for the translation Glass 2010; and on the underlying Indic original being in Sanskrit de Jong 1981: 108.

⁵ SĀ² 267 at T II 467a26 to 467b24; for arguments in favour of a Mūlasarvāstivāda school affiliation cf. Bingenheimer 2011: 23–44 and Bucknell 2011. In the case of the Mūlasarvāstivāda *Vinaya* it seems clear that the situation is best captured in terms of the “existence of multiple Mūlasarvāstivāda *Vinayas*”, as pointed out by Clarke 2015: 73. Thus for T 100 to show at times substantial divergences from T 99 (for an example cf. Anālayo 2011c: 25) would not in itself be sufficient to exclude a Mūlasarvāstivāda affiliation of the collection. Be that as it may, the *uddāna* at T II 467b26 refers to SĀ² 267 as the discourse on “the wheel-mark”, 輪相.

⁶ EĀ 38.3 at T II 717c18 to 718a12; since in this version Drona asks if the Buddha belongs to one of five categories of beings, the allocation to the Sixes could not be related to his questions, but rather would reflect the insight teaching given by the Buddha to his visitor subsequently, which takes up the six sense-spheres.

⁷ For a clear case of integration of an entire discourse into T 125 that must have happened in China cf. Anālayo 2013c, and for similarly clear evidence of constructing discourses by combining originally unrelated material Anālayo 2014/2015 and 2015d. The detailed study by Palumbo 2013 has not yet solved the complexity surrounding this collection in a way that accommodates such findings; cf. in more detail Anālayo 2015d: 23–31. On the debated question of the translator of T 125 cf. Hung and Anālayo 2017, Radich 2017, and Radich and Anālayo 2017.

ertheless, it seems possible that the Indic original itself stemmed from a Mahāsāṅghika reciter lineage.⁸

These five versions would thus represent two distinct transmission lineages within the Mūlasarvāstivāda fold as well as texts passed on by reciters of the Dharmaguptaka, perhaps Mahāsāṅghika, and quite definitely Theravāda traditions.⁹ Comparative study of the five parallels can reveal variations that might shed a light on the evolution of the different versions during their transmission.

By way of introduction, in what follows I translate the *Ekottarika-āgama* version, which as far as I am able to tell does not show evident signs of being a product of the afore-mentioned reworking of the collection in China and thus could still be a fair reflection of the Indic original of the present discourse (to the extent possible within the confines of the abilities of its translator).

1.2 Translation

Thus have I heard. At one time the Buddha was in the Magadha country in Yōujīzhī,¹⁰ by the side of a river. At that time the Blessed One had gone to the foot of a tree. Having himself spread his sitting mat, he sat down with upright body and upright intention, and with mindfulness collected in front [of himself].

At that time a brahmin approached that place. Then the brah-

⁸ A Mahāsāṅghika affiliation, besides being according to Mayeda 1985: 102f an opinion often proposed by Japanese scholars (whose research I am unfortunately unable to consult, due to my ignorance of Japanese), has been argued by Pāsādīka 2010, Kuan 2012, 2013a, 2013b, and 2013c. For an assessment of the finding by Hiraoka 2013 of narrative affinities between the *Ekottarika-āgama* collection and Sarvāstivāda texts cf. Anālayo 2016b: 211–214. In fact, as already stated by Harrison 2002: 19, “T. 125 … whatever it is, it can hardly be Sarvāstivādin”.

⁹ On my reasons for having no qualms in employing the term Theravāda cf. Anālayo 2013b.

¹⁰ EA 38.3 at T II 717c18: 褒迦支; which Akanuma 1930/1994: 705 and the editors of the Taishō edition (note 26) identify as a transcription of Ukkatthā, a place name found in the parallel AN 4.36 at AN II 37,22. A problem with this identification is that this location was apparently rather in the Kosala country; cf. Malalasekera 1937/1995: 329. The other two parallels, SĀ 101 at T II 28a20 and SĀ² 267 at T II 467a26, are indeed located in Kośala.

min saw that the Blessed One's footprints were sublime.¹¹ Having seen it, he in turn gave rise to the thought: "Are these the footprints of a human? Or rather of a *deva*, *nāga*, *yakṣa*, *gandharva*, or *asura*? Are they of a human or a non-human? Are they of our ancestor Brahmā?"¹²

Then, on proceeding in pursuit of the footprints, the brahmin saw from afar that the Blessed One was seated at the foot of a tree with straight body and straight intention, and with mindfulness collected in front [of himself]. Having seen him, he said this: "Are you a *deva*?"

The Blessed One said: "I am not a *deva*."

[The brahmin asked]: "Are you a *gandharva*?"

The Blessed One said: "I am not a *gandharva*."

[The brahmin asked]: "Are you a *nāga*?"

[The Blessed One] replied: "I am not a *nāga*."

[The brahmin asked]: "Are you a *yakṣa*?"

The Buddha replied to the brahmin: "I am not a *yakṣa*."

[The brahmin asked]: "Are you Brahmā?"¹³

The Buddha replied: "I am not Brahmā."¹⁴_[718a]

Then the brahmin asked the Blessed One: "Now, who are you?"

The Blessed One said: "When there is craving, there is clinging; and when there is clinging, there is craving. In their condi-

¹¹ AN 4.36 at AN II 37,26, the British Library Kharosthī fragment 12 line 5, Allon 2001: 120, SĀ 101 at T II 28a23, and SĀ² 267 at T II 467a29 refer to wheel-marks on the footprints; cf. the discussion below and on a variant in EĀ 38.3 p. 23 note 25.

¹² A reference to Brahmā is not found in the parallels. The qualification "ancestor" would reflect the notion of Brahmā as the creator of sentient beings, referred to in the discourses in terms of his being the "father" of sentient beings; cf., e.g., MN 49 at MN I 327,2 and its parallel MĀ 78 at T I 547b14. In the present case, the use of this qualification by the brahmin Drona would probably also reflect the belief of brahmins that they are the true heirs and offspring of Brahmā. Although Brahmā is not mentioned in the parallels, additional references do occur in SA 101 at T II 28b1 and SĀ² 267 at T II 467b6, where the brahmin's enquiry mentions the possibility that the owner of the footprint might be a *kinnara* or a *mahoraga*, to which SĀ 101 adds also a *garuda*. A reference to Mahābrahmā can be found in a comparable tale in the *Apadāna*, Ap 482.5 at Ap 423,28, where a protagonist by the name of Canda, having seen the Buddha's footprint with wheel-marks and a thousand spokes, asks whether he is a *deva*, a *gandhabba*, Sakka, or Mahābrahmā (for an abbreviated quote of this passage cf. Th-a II 44,26).

¹³ EĀ 38.3 at T II 717c29 here shifts from the earlier rendering of Brahmā as 梵天 (T II 717c23) to employing 祖父 instead, literally "grandfather".

tioned combination, they give rise to each other in this way.¹⁴ This being so, at such a time the fivefold *duhkha* of the aggregates of clinging will not be severed.

By having understood craving, having understood the five sense pleasures, and also having understood the six external objects and the six internal spheres, one knows the beginning and end of these aggregates of clinging.”¹⁵

Then the Blessed One in turn spoke this poem:

“In the world there are five sense pleasures,
Mind manifests as the sixth.

By understanding the six internal and external [realms of experience],

One will mindfully eradicate and [make an] end of *duhkha*.¹⁶

“Therefore you should seek the means to the cessation of the six internal and external realms [of experience], brahmin, in this way should you train.”

At that time that brahmin, on hearing the Buddha instruct him like this, gave attention to it, studied, and harboured it in his mind without discarding it. On that very seat he eradicated all dust and

¹⁴ Such a presentation of craving and clinging as mutually conditioning is unusual. In the standard expositions of dependent arising it is craving which conditions clinging, not the other way round.

¹⁵ An exposition of insight-related themes is not found in the parallels. In reply to the brahmin’s questions, after having explained that he has abandoned the influxes (*āsava*) that could lead to becoming any of the types of being mentioned by the brahmin, and after having illustrated his nature with the example of a lotus that has emerged from the water, in AN 4.36 at AN II 39,3 the Buddha clarifies that he should be borne in mind as a Buddha, *buddho ti maṇi brāhmaṇa dhārehī ti*. In the Gāndhārī version the Buddha directly affirms that he is a Buddha, British Library Kharoṣṭhī fragment 12 line 15, Allon 2001: 121: *budho mi b[r]amaṇa budho [mi]*. SĀ 101 and SĀ² 267 continue at this juncture directly with verses, for which cf. the next footnote.

¹⁶ In AN 4.36 at AN II 39,4 the Buddha repeats in verse what he has said in prose. Similar to AN 4.36, the verses in the British Library Kharoṣṭhī fragment 12 lines 16–20, Allon 2001: 121, and the verses in SĀ 101 at T II 28b6 to 28b16 and SĀ² 267 at T II 467b12 to 467b22, describe in detail the Buddha’s liberated nature, whereby he is beyond any of the categories mentioned by the brahmin. The main difference is that these themes have not been mentioned earlier in their prose parts. As part of the description of the nature of the Buddha, a to some extent insight-related theme comes up in SĀ 101 at T II 28b14 in the form of a reference to the rise and fall of all conditioned formations.

attained the pure Dharma eye.¹⁷ At that time that brahmin, having heard what the Buddha had said, was delighted and received it respectfully.

1.3 The Nature of an Awakened One

The main message common to the different versions of the discourse appears to be that the Buddha is beyond being classed in any of the ways the brahmin had thought.

The episode of the footprints reveals the limitations of the brahmin's reliance on external physical marks in order to be able to assess the Buddha. The footprints had correctly alerted the brahmin to the fact that someone unusual had been treading the ground, and the different versions do not in any way express a negative attitude towards a concern with physical marks as such. However, the physical evidence correctly identified by the brahmin did not suffice to lead him to a proper understanding of who had left these footprints. The Buddha then provides the required additional perspective by explaining that his nature calls for an assessment not only of his physical form, but also, and even more so, of his awakened mind.

This explanation is in line with the definition of a “great person”, *mahāpuruṣa*, as referring to someone whose mind is liberated, offered in a discourse in the *Samyutta-nikāya* and its *Samyukta-āgama* parallel. The relevant passage in the latter version states: “[whose] mind has attained liberation and eradicated all the influxes (*āśrava*), such a one I call a *mahāpuruṣa*.¹⁸

¹⁷ AN 4.36 concludes after the Buddha's verses and does not report any conversion or attainment. According to the commentary, Mp III 79,17, the brahmin attained not only stream-entry but even non-return, referred to in terms of his attainment of three paths and fruits, *tīṇi maggaphalāni*. British Library Kharoṣṭhī fragment 12 line 24f, Allon 2001: 121, reports his taking refuge as a lay disciple. In SA 101 at T II 28b17 and SĀ² 267 at T II 467b23 the brahmin just rejoices and then leaves. Notably, in the verses spoken by the Buddha, SĀ² 267 at T II 467b21 has a reference to being free of dust, 遠塵離垢, which bears some similarity to the description of the brahmin's stream-entry in EĀ 38.3 at T II 718a11 as involving the eradication of all dust, 諸塵垢盡.

¹⁸ SĀ 614 at T II 172a19, with its counterpart in SN 47.11 at SN V 158,14. My survey in what follows only takes up passages found in more than one reciter tradition.

A discourse in the *Anguttara-nikāya* and its *Samyukta-āgama* parallel quote a verse from the *Pārā�ana-vagga* of the *Sutta-nipāta* that conveys a similar equation of the *mahāpuruṣa* with a liberated one, expressed in a poetic manner. The *Samyukta-āgama* version reads as follows:

If one understands both ends,
And never attaches to the middle,
Such a one I call a *mahāpuruṣa*.¹⁹

Another *Anguttara-nikāya* passage and its *Madhyama-āgama* parallel delineate the path of practice to reach such freedom from attachment. Anuruddha has been reflecting in seclusion that the Buddha's Dharma is for one who has few desires and is contented, for one who delights in seclusion and is energetic, mindful, concentrated, as well as wise. The Buddha approves the reflection and then adds an eighth thought of a great person, *mahāpuruṣa*, regarding the need to avoid conceptual proliferation, *prapañca*. The *Madhyama-āgama* presents this in this way:

Anuruddha, you shall further receive from the Tathāgata an eighth thought of a great man. Having received it, reflect on it in turn:

“The path is attained through non-proliferation, delighting in non-proliferation, and engaging in non-proliferation; not by proliferation, not by delighting in proliferation, not by engaging in proliferation.”²⁰

These passages point in complementary ways to the gaining of awakening as what makes one a *mahāpuruṣa*. The same is also the import of the refusal by the Buddha in the different versions of the discourse to Drona to be classified in any of the ways his brahmin visitor had thought of.

Another passage of relevance to the episode in the discourse to Drona can be found in the *Cūlahatthipadopama-sutta* and its *Madhyama-āgama*

¹⁹ SĀ 1164 at T II 310b24f, with its counterpart in AN 6.61 at AN III 399,22; cf. Sn 1042. References to the *Pārā�ana* have been discussed already by Lévi 1915; cf. also Lamotte 1956.

²⁰ MĀ 74 at T I 541a10 to 541a12, paralleling AN 8.3 at AN IV 229,25 (the parallels T 46 at T I 835c22 and EĀ 42.6 at T II 754b15 formulate the nature of the eighth thought differently). The eight thoughts of a *mahāpuruṣa* are listed again in DN 34 at DN III 287,16 and its parallels in Sanskrit fragments, Mittal 1957: 94, and in DĀ 10 at T I 55c22 and T 13 at T I 238b3. For a study of the significance of the notion of *prapañca* cf. Nāñananda 1971/1986.

parallel. The brahmin protagonist of the discourse has heard a favourable report about the Buddha, whose exceptional nature is illustrated in a simile concerned with an elephant's footprint. According to this simile, seeing an elephant's large footprint leads to drawing the conclusion that this must have been caused by a large elephant.

The brahmin approaches the Buddha and relates the favourable report and the simile he has heard. The Buddha then takes up the simile of the elephant's footprint to make the point that just seeing a large footprint does not suffice to draw the definite conclusion that the elephant must be large. This warning reminds one of the discourse to Drona, where somewhat similarly it becomes clear that an assessment of a footprint on its own does not yet suffice to draw a definite conclusion regarding the one who left the footprint.

Comparable to Drona going in pursuit of the Buddha's footprints, in the simile in the *Cūlahaṭṭipadopama-sutta* and its *Madhyama-āgama* parallel the person goes in pursuit of the footprints he has seen. In the Buddha's improved version of the simile, this person only comes to a definite conclusion that this is indeed a large elephant when he finally sees the animal itself.

By way of applying this simile, the Buddha then reckons attainment of the four absorptions, after successful practice of the gradual path to liberation, to be the footprint of the Tathāgata.²¹ The vision of the elephant itself, however, comes only when full awakening is attained.²² In this way the *Cūlahaṭṭipadopama-sutta* and its *Madhyama-āgama* parallel

²¹ MN 27 at MN I 181,²⁹ qualifies the first absorption as a *tathāgatapada*. This has its counterpart in MĀ 146 at T I 657c23 in 如來所行 which, although it conveys a similar idea, does not seem to be a rendering of the same Indic expression, for which one would have expected 跡 instead of 行. Bollée 2008: 84 explains that “the four elephant footsteps (*haṭṭi-pada*) compared to feet or footprints of the Buddha in MN I 176,³ seem also allegorically meant, for the Buddha is called a *nāga* in Sn 522, etc.; here *pada* may be taken as ‘characteristic, mark’.” A nuance related to absorption as characteristic of a Tathāgata emerges in AN 4.244 at AN II 244,³¹ according to which a sensualist sleeps lying on the left side (the opposite of the “lion's posture” which the discourses usually depict the Buddha as adopting when reclining). The “posture” of the Tathāgata in AN 4.244 at AN II 245,¹² is then the attainment of the four absorptions.

²² For a discussion of minor differences between the two versions cf. Anālayo 2011a: 189–192.

help to relate the imagery of pursuing a footprint to the *mahāpuruṣa* notion and its allusion to the realization of awakening. The two versions report that the Buddha's exposition motivated the brahmin to take refuge.²³

In the case of the encounter between the Buddha and Drona, the parallel versions differ on the outcome of this meeting. In the two *Samyukta-āgama* versions Drona rejoices in the exposition and leaves. The Gāndhārī fragment reports his taking refuge, and in the *Ekottarika-āgama* version translated above he attains stream-entry. Although the *Aṅguttara-nikāya* discourse does not report any attainment, according to the Pāli commentary Drona even attained the third level of awakening.²⁴

1.4 The Different Footprints

From the viewpoint of the main topic in the present chapter, of particular interest are variations between the parallel versions in relation to the footprints. The *Ekottarika-āgama* version translated above describes them as being “sublime”, and a variant reading adds to this that they were “very special”.²⁵ This description lacks any reference to the wheel-mark mentioned in the other versions.

One of the two *Samyukta-āgama* discourses depicts “in the midst of the [foot]prints the mark of a wheel with a thousand spokes, which was extraordinary and never seen before.”²⁶ The other of the two *Samyukta-āgama* discourses speaks of “the appearance of the refined impression of the mark of a wheel with a thousand spokes in the footprints, with straight spokes and round rim, complete with abundant beauty”.²⁷ The *Aṅguttara-nikāya* version reports that there were in the Buddha's “footprints wheel-marks with a thousand spokes, complete with rim and hub”.²⁸ The Gāndhārī fragment version has preserved a reference to a

²³ This is one of numerous instances in which this particular brahmin reportedly took refuge; cf. Anālayo 2011a: 41 note 78.

²⁴ Cf. above p. 20 note 17.

²⁵ EĀ 38.3 at T II 717c21: 妙; with the variant reading adding 極為殊.

²⁶ SĀ² 267 at T II 467a29: 跡中千輻輪相, 怪未曾有.

²⁷ SĀ 101 at T II 28a23: 脚跡千輻輪相, 印文顯現, 齊輻圓轉, 眾好滿足.

²⁸ AN 4.36 at AN II 37,26: *padesu cakkāni sahassārāni sanemikāni sanābhikāni sab-bākāraparipūrāni*.

“wheel with thousand spokes in the footprints” and to a qualification of the footprints as being “with all parts complete, brilliant and resplendent”, to which with considerable probability a reference to rim and hub should be added for what is a lacuna in the fragment.²⁹

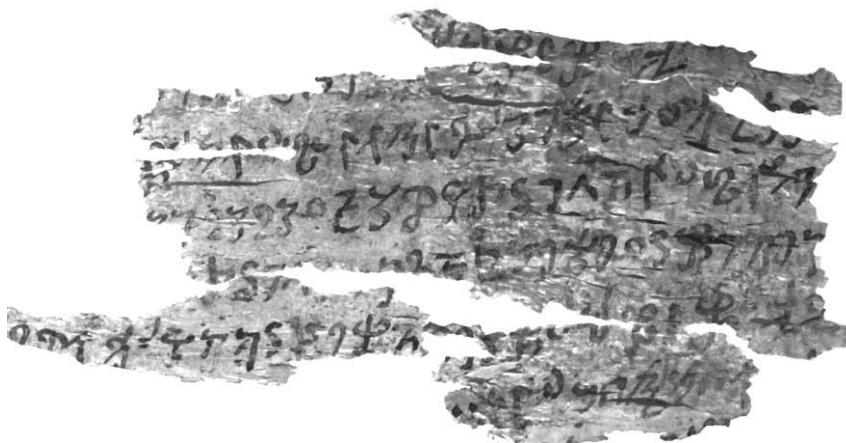


Figure 1 Fragment Description of Footprint

In sum, the *Ekottarika-āgama* version (EĀ) has only the footprint itself. One of the *Samyukta-āgama* discourses (SĀ²) adds to this the wheel with a thousand spokes, to which the other *Samyukta-āgama* discourse (SĀ) adds the rim. The *Anguttara-nikāya* version (AN) then has the thousand-spoked wheel with both rim and hub. The same is found in the Gāndhārī fragment version (GĀ), on the assumption that its lacuna did refer to rim and hub,³⁰ with the addition of the brilliance of the wheel. Presented in a summary fashion in figure 2 below, the increasingly detailed descriptions of the footprint involve the following elements in the parallel versions:

²⁹ Figure 1 shows the relevant part of British Library Kharosthī fragment 12; courtesy of Mark Allon. The relevant part of the fragment is line 4, Allon 2001: 120: *padeṣu cakra sahasahara [s]*, and line 5: *savarovaghada aceata prabh.[śp].ra*, reconstructed by Allon 2001: 124 as *padeṣu cakra sahasahara s(*anemia saṇabha) savarovaghada aceata prabh(*a)śp(*a)ra*.

³⁰ Cf. the discussion in Allon 2001: 146f.

EĀ	SĀ ²	SĀ	AN	Gā	footprint
	SĀ ²	SĀ	AN	Gā	+ wheel with thousand spokes
		SĀ	AN	Gā	+ rim
			AN	Gā	+ hub
				Gā	+ brilliance

Figure 2 Different Footprints

For an evaluation of these differences, depictions of the Buddha's footprints in ancient Indian art can be consulted. Here of particular relevance is the fact that early representations tend to be rather simple and, if marked at all, just carry the wheel. Examples can be found in Bhārhut,³¹ or else Sāñcī, the site of the pillar from which the pair of footprints found on the cover of this book have been extracted.³² In later times, footprints tend to become considerably more complex, with various additional symbols being added.³³

The same type of development can also be seen in different historical layers of Pāli literature. The *Mahāpadāna-sutta* (to be studied in chapter 3) just describes the feet of the Buddha Vipaśyin as endowed with wheel-marks, to which its commentary then adds a list of about forty additional marks.³⁴ In still later Pāli texts the feet of a Buddha come to be adorned with 108 marks.³⁵

Given this evident tendency towards proliferation in texts and art, it seems fair to assume, as a first working hypothesis, that the less detailed textual descriptions of the footprints seen by Drona stand a chance of being earlier than their more complex counterparts. This would mean

³¹ Cunningham 1879: 112.

³² Courtesy of Jinah Kim; for the complete pillar cf. below p. 39.

³³ Surveys can be found in Skilling 1992, 1996, and 2013a.

³⁴ Sv II 445,30, given as part of a gloss on the qualification of the wheel in DN 14 at DN II 17,14 as “complete in all respects”, a qualification also found in the present instance in AN 4.36; cf. above p. 23 note 28.

³⁵ For a survey of the 108 marks in the *Jinālankāra-tikā* and *Anāgatavaṇṇa-aṭṭhakathā* cf. Perera 1973: 452f. Niwa 1992: 48 comments that “it is clear that the Dharmic Wheel was the key symbol of the footprints, and that others were only added later.” Cicuzza 2010: xxv observes that gradually “the other symbols became more important than the wheel itself ... and their number increased until they reached the common sacred number one hundred and eight.”

that perhaps the *Ekottarika-āgama* version translated above might testify to an earlier stage in the conception of the Buddha's footprints than its parallels, at a time when the special nature of the footprints had not yet found its expression in any particular mark. In turn the British Library Kharoṣṭī fragment, whose manuscript is probably dateable to the first century of the present era,³⁶ would then be a testimony to the most evolved version.

The coming into being of the wheel imagery must have taken place at a relatively early period in the history of Indian Buddhism, as evident from the Bhārhut and Sāñcī sculptures, leaving sufficient time for the whole development described above to take place long before the date of the Gāndhārī fragment. By the time of the closure of the Pāli commentaries, the conception of the footprints had clearly evolved further.

Needless to say, the contents of a whole textual collection cannot be dated to its closing date. Instead, the transmission of texts is probably best conceived of as a process comparable to a river,³⁷ which from its source keeps flowing to the ocean, all the time receiving additional water from its tributaries. However long its course and however many its tributaries, by the time the river reaches the ocean there will still be some of its water that has come all the way down from its source; it would not be correct to assume that all of the water at that time must be from the river's last tributary.

Similarly, in the present case there is no *a priori* reason why the *Ekottarika-āgama* could not have preserved an early element. In fact the significance of the dating of the Gāndhārī fragment is not that its entire content must be the earliest of the extant versions. Instead, this dating only implies that by the time the fragment was committed to writing the development discussed here had already reached the point in this particular reciter tradition when the imprint of the wheel with a thousand spokes (as well as rim and hub) was considered invested with brilliance.

³⁶ On the dating of the British Library Kharoṣṭī fragments cf. Salomon 1999: 151–155.

³⁷ I owe the idea of employing the motif of a river to Harrison 1990: xxxiv who, in order to illustrate that the Chinese and Tibetan translations of the *Pratyutpanna-buddhasammukhāvasthitasamādhi-sūtra* should not be considered as being based on a single and fixed Sanskrit original, speaks of an ever-changing Sanskrit textual transmission that is comparable to a river.

1.5 Problems with Marks on the Footprint

In support of the working hypothesis that the simple footprint without any wheel-mark might be reflecting an early stage in the evolution of the present episode, the Pāli commentary to the *Aṅguttara-nikāya* discourse to the brahmin Drona can be consulted, which shows how the present episode was seen within the tradition. The commentary struggles to reconcile the description of the footprints in the Pāli discourse with the canonical description of another in the set of the thirty-two physical marks of the Buddha (to be studied in chapter 2), according to which his feet were soft and tender.³⁸ The problem seen from the viewpoint of the tradition, in the way this is reflected in the Pāli commentary, is: if the feet were soft and tender, how could they leave such a clearly marked imprint on the ground? And if they somehow did leave such imprints, why is this the only occasion reported in the discourses that someone noticed them?³⁹

The Pāli commentary solves the dilemma it has identified by taking the position that, whenever the Buddha steps on the ground, this does not result in a footprint, because the feet of Buddhas are as soft as the touch of cotton.⁴⁰ In this way the commentary is able to preserve confor-

³⁸ Cf. below p. 48 note 21. Skilling 2013a: 53 surveys the description of the Buddha's marks in the Tibetan version of the *Bodhisattvagocaropāyavivayavikurvānairdeśa-sūtra*, which qualifies even the wheel-marks themselves as soft: "there are soft wheels on the hands and the feet", Skilling 2013a: 59 note 33: *phyag dang zhabs la 'khor lo 'jam pa mnga'* (cf. D 146 *pa* 120b1 or Q 813 *nu* 78a6). This appears to be the result of a conflation of two marks in the Tibetan version, as the Chinese parallels first take up the wheels on the feet only, without qualifying them in a comparable way, and then turn to softness with the next mark, concerned with the softness of the hands and feet; cf. T 271 at T IX 308c23 and T 272 at T IX 342c16.

³⁹ The suggestion by Neumann 1896/1995: 1114 note 242 that the thousand-spoked wheel refers to the imprint left by the heel on dusty or wet ground does not solve the problem spotted by the commentary. As long as the description itself is taken literally, on such an interpretation either one is left with the feet being too soft to be able to leave such an imprint or else, if they do leave such an imprint, whenever the ground in ancient India would have been either dusty or wet, the mark should have been noticeable.

⁴⁰ Mp III 77,15. In the same vein, DĀ 1 at T I 5b19 reports that the Buddha Vipaśyin had soft feet which did not leave any imprint on the ground, 柔軟足, 不踏地跡現 (the next line then describes the feet adorned with a wheel with a thousand spokes and brilliance). The commentary on the *Apadāna*, Ap-a 394,24, goes a step further

mity with the canonical description of the thirty-two marks and to explain why the Buddha's footprints are not noticed more often.

In order to account for the description of the footprints in the discourse to Drona in the *Anguttara-nikāya*, the Pāli commentary reasons that it is only when the Buddha determines beforehand that his footprints should become visible to a particular person (for purposes of conversion) that they will indeed become visible.⁴¹

The need for explanation holds for all of the above footprints that have the clearly discernible mark of a wheel with a thousand spokes. Only with a mere footprint this problem does not arise, which is the case for the description given in the *Ekottarika-āgama* version translated above.

From the viewpoint of the whole narrative episode, a footprint without any mark would suffice for the story to work, as long as its overall form and the way it has imprinted itself on the ground, presumably reflecting the consummate way its owner walks, can be reckoned as remarkable.

The function in this respect of bare footprints without a wheel-mark can be seen in relation to another event involving another brahmin. This event forms part of a narrative that leads up to an exchange between this brahmin and the Buddha. Records of this exchange can be found in verses in the *Sutta-nipāta*.⁴² A Chinese parallel combines prose narration and verse, whereas the Pāli prose narration is found in the commentary on the *Sutta-nipāta*. This reflects a recurrent feature, namely the gradual integration of originally commentarial stories and explanations into the discourse itself.⁴³ The opposite holds for the *Udāna*, where it is the Pāli version that combines prose narration and verse, whereas most parallel

by asserting that all Buddhas walk at a distance of four fingers above the ground, yet leave a footprint if they determine for it to be seen. In relation to Kāśyapa Buddha the *Mahāvastu* takes a similar position, stressing that the imprints of his feet with a wheel complete with a thousand spokes and hub were nevertheless visible, Senart 1882b: 308,13: *caturangulena ca bhūmīm asaṃsprśanto gacchatī dharanītale ca padacakrāṇī prādurbhavanti sahaśrārāṇī sanābhikāni sarvākāraparipūrṇāni*. On the idea that a Buddha's feet do not even touch the ground but still leave footprints cf. also, e.g., T 807 at T XVII 751c6 (Harrison 1995: 4f) and Bollée 2008: 65.

⁴¹ Mp III 78,4; cf. also Endo 1997/2002: 164. This explanation holds not only for the present case, but also in relation to another brahmin, whom I discuss next.

⁴² Sn 835 to 847 reports the exchange between the Buddha and this brahmin.

⁴³ For a study of such integration of commentarial material cf. Anālayo 2010b.

versions have only the verses. I will come back to this particular feature in chapter 4.

According to the introductory prose narration, the brahmin Mākandika has seen the Buddha's footprints and come to the conclusion that their bearer must be the right bridegroom for his beautiful daughter. His wife disagrees; having examined the Buddha's footprints she is convinced that the Buddha will not want their daughter. When explaining how she came to this conclusion, the wife describes in what way a bare footprint reflects the way its owner steps and thereby can reveal the presence of mental defilements. Here is the Chinese version:

A person with sexual desire walks dragging the feet,
 One who has anger steps with contracted toes,
 A deluded person tramples with the feet on the ground.⁴⁴

This suggests that, according to the ancient Indian art of prognostication, a bare footprint can reveal, on close inspection, if the person responsible for this footprint is under the influence of sensuality, anger, or delusion.⁴⁵ The passage also implies that to ascertain the implications of such a footprint requires considerable expertise, as the brahmin Mākandika on his own had been unable to reach the correct assessment made by his wife.

A relationship between a certain way of walking as reflective of the presence or absence of mental defilements and a bare footprint would fade in importance once the footprint came to be adorned with a wheel-mark, whereby naturally attention would have shifted to the mark and its features.

⁴⁴ T 198 at T IV 180a26f (adopting the variant 踣 instead of 跺). The counterpart in Pj II 544,1 differs in the associations it proposes; particularly noteworthy is that in its presentation the angry person is the one who drags the feet, *duṭṭhassa hoti anukaddhitam padam*. Support for the presentation in the Chinese version could perhaps be found in the circumstance that *Udānavarga* 29.37, Bernhard 1965: 382, in agreement with its parallel Dhp 251, states that there is no seizure or grip like anger. This seems to convey the idea that anger makes a person cramped, which would then fit the notion that parts of the body, such as the toes, are being contracted. Bodhi (forthcoming) points out that in Dhp-a I 201,6 and Dhp-a III 195,2 "the forceful footprints are ascribed to the hating type"; cf. also the Sanskrit fragment parallel in Hoernle 1916b: 715, the *Divyāvadāna*, Cowell and Neil 1886: 517,18, and the discussion in Bapat 1945: 205 note 6.

⁴⁵ For references in Indic texts to experts in the lore of footprints cf. Bollée 2008: 67.

In the case of the discourse on Drona, from the viewpoint of narrative logic it seems that at an early stage the story could indeed have been concerned only with the Buddha's sublime footprints as such, which to the keen observer trained in the lore of footsteps would in some way convey the transcendent nature of the one who has trodden the ground, leading to Drona's speculations on the nature of its owner.

The problem spotted by the Pāli commentary becomes even more pronounced with the Gāndhārī version, as here the footprint itself is additionally invested with brilliance. Allon (2001: 149) reasons that the idea of brilliance would at first have developed in relation to the wheel-treasure of a *cakravartin* and,

by extension, epithets meaning “bright” and “shining” were then applied to the wheel-marks on the Buddha’s feet ... [and] to the impression left by them on the road, as seen in our Gāndhārī sūtra, even though it appears a little odd to describe such impressions in the dust of the road as being “brilliant” and “resplendent”.

1.6 The Thousand Spokes

The close interrelation between the concept of a Buddha and that of a *cakravartin*, which will be a recurrent theme in subsequent chapters of my exploration, makes it indeed natural to examine the *cakravartin* myth for material related to the wheel-imagery. Standard descriptions in the discourses depict the arising of the wheel-treasure of a *cakravartin* as heralding the manifestation of the remaining six treasures, which together have the function of signalling that someone is a wheel-turning king. The wheel is also central for the conception of the treasures of the wheel-turning king in other Indian traditions, where the lists of such treasures differ, but the wheel keeps being mentioned in first place.⁴⁶

As an example of the narrative depiction of the arising of the wheel-treasure, here is a passage from the Discourse on the Wheel-turning

⁴⁶ The Jain *Thānanga*, Jambūvijaya 1985: 232,9 (§558), begins its listing of two sets of seven treasures with the wheel. The wheel also comes in first position in listings of the treasures in the *Matsyapurāṇa* 142.63, Joshi 2007: 500, and the *Vāyupurāṇa* 57.68, Sharma 2008: 377; cf. also Zin 2012: 150.

King in the *Dīrgha-āgama*, which reports the reflection of the king on seeing that the wheel has just manifested in front of him:

I once heard from the ancients that if a head-anointed warrior king, during the period of the full moon on the fifteenth [of the month], having bathed and anointed himself, ascends to the top of the precious palace, surrounded by his women, and the golden wheel-treasure spontaneously manifests in front of him, a wheel with a thousand spokes and endowed with brilliant colour, which is made by a divine artisan and does not exist anywhere in the world, the wheel being made of real gold and measuring forty feet across, then he is called a noble wheel-turning king. This wheel has now manifested.⁴⁷

The narrative continues by describing that the golden-coloured wheel proceeds from the east via the south and the west to the north, with the king and his army following suit and conquering all territories in the respective directions without any battle or bloodshed, as all inhabitants and their rulers happily welcome the wheel-turning king and submit to his rule.⁴⁸

This description forms part of a fairly evident symbolism and even humour inherent in the description of the wheel and the other treasures. An ancient Indian audience probably well acquainted with the horrors of real warfare can be expected to have appreciated the description of the wheel heralding a peaceful conquest of neighbouring reigns, whose

⁴⁷ DĀ 6 at T I 40a1 to 40a6; the parallels DN 26 at DN III 61,27 and MĀ 70 at T I 521b1 do not specify the size or the material of the wheel, nor do they refer to a divine artisan.

⁴⁸ For a study of the *cakravartin* motif and its narrative function cf. Anālayo 2011d: 53–60 (also 2012b and 2014e). In the case of a detailed description of the arising of the wheel-treasure and the other treasures in MN 129 at MN III 172,15, the parallel MĀ 199 at T I 762b29 only briefly refers to the seven treasures as a set, without giving further details. A detailed description can be found in another discourse in the same collection, MĀ 67 at T I 512a6, in which case the parallel MN 83 does not refer to the treasures of a wheel-turning king at all (another parallel to MN 83 that does have the full description is EĀ 50.4 at T II 807a7, a discourse that appears to have been added to the *Ekottarika-āgama* collection only in China; cf. Anālayo 2013c). Given that such detailed descriptions are not invariably part of the common core of discourse parallels, their appearance perhaps reflects an increasing interest among the reciters and their audience in this topic.

rulers come forward to greet the invading army and put themselves at the command of the enemy king, rather than fight him.⁴⁹

Other treasures mentioned in full descriptions of the manifestations of the wheel-treasure are an elephant and a horse, both of which are able to fly at incredible speed and tour the whole world, offering modes of locomotion in stark contrast to those available in ancient India. Another treasure is a magical gem that illuminates night as if it were day, a marvel for an audience that did not yet know the wonders of modern-day electricity. The woman-treasure is of supreme beauty, in winter her body is warm and in summer cool, and at all times she smells of sandalwood. Two other human treasures are a steward who has the ability to provide wealth at will and a general or counsellor who does everything exactly in the way the king would wish.

It is in the context of such a description with clear symbolic and humorous intent that the wheel-treasure has its function as a counterpart to the sun. The description of the wheel in the passage translated above and the first parts of its route mirror a sunrise, as the sun similarly manifests to the east, before proceeding to the south and then to the west.⁵⁰ In this context, the thousand spokes of the wheel correspond to the thousands of golden rays of sunshine.

⁴⁹ Tambiah 1976: 46 comments that “one cannot help but wonder whether this account of the rolling celestial wheel is not meant to be at least partly an ironical commentary and a parody of the mode of warfare by force and bloodshed and stratagem practiced by the kings of that time”; cf. also Rhys Davids and Rhys Davids 1921: 63 note 2, who speak of “a parody on the ordinary methods of conquest”, and Gethin 2006: 101 on a dimension of the symbolism of the wheel-treasure related to meditation (in DN 17 specifically). Collins 1996: 429 concludes that the whole description of the peaceful conquest “strikes me as obvious and superb deadpan humor”; cf. also Anālayo 2011d: 57–60 on the symbolism of the treasures described in EA 50.4 and Palumbo 2012: 304f on the allegorical significance of the wheel-turning king.

⁵⁰ The sun symbolism of the wheel has already been discussed by Senart 1882a: 15f and 138–141; cf. also, e.g., Coomaraswamy 1935/1998: 25 and Scharfe 1987: 302. Rhys Davids 1910: 202 note 3 comments, in relation to the wheel-treasure in DN 17, that “this is the disk of the sun.” Rhys Davids 1922: 736 adds that “it should be noticed that the wondrous Wheel of the Buddhist legend is not really a chariot wheel. The idea of sovereignty is no doubt linked up with it. The Wheel, however, is a single disk, not one of a pair. And it is very clear that it is really a reminiscence, not of a chariot wheel, but of the disk of the sun.” Horsch 1957: 79 sums up that in the general Indian context “the symbolism of the wheel … represents

The expression *sahasrāra*, employed in the *Lalitavistara* and the *Mūlasarvāstivāda Vinaya* to describe the “thousand spokes” of the wheel-treasure,⁵¹ recurs in the *Mahāvastu* as part of a description of the brilliance of a past Buddha, who outshone a multitude of suns by his “thousand rays”.⁵² In a gloss on the corresponding Pāli term *sahassāra*, the Pāli commentary explains that the thousand spokes of the wheel-treasure are endowed with brilliance comparable to the rays of the sun,⁵³ and the *Vimānavatthu* qualifies the sun itself as having a thousand rays.⁵⁴ In another passage the *Mahāvastu* then directly compares the thousand-spoked wheel-treasure to the rising sun.⁵⁵

Clearly the notion of a thousand rays or spokes has its natural home in the context of the wheel-treasure and its similarity to the sun. In contrast, it is not natural to depict a human foot having a mark or even leaving the imprint of a wheel that has a thousand separate spokes. In sculpture to portray distinctly anything reasonably resembling the idea

primarily the sun (round shape), its course through the sky (movement), its uniform recurrence (year=time) and regularity (order, law), its all-encompassing dominion (completeness), and the sovereign influence over all creatures (sacred power)”; although Wijesekera 1957: 267 argues that, in as much as pre-Buddhist literature is concerned, “the solar aspect of the wheel symbol seems to be a secondary development.” As far as Buddhist texts are concerned, however, it can be concluded with Brown 1990: 96 that, regarding “the symbolism of the wheel ... certainly it has solar implications”; cf. also Auboyer 1987: 125 (with a critical reply in Bollée 2008: 41 note 10). A relationship to the sun is in fact a cross-cultural aspect of the symbol of the wheel. Thus Cirlot 1971/2002: 370 notes that “one of the elementary forms of wheel-symbolism consists of the sun as a wheel, and of ornamental wheels as solar emblems”, and Litvinskii 1987: 519 concludes that “the concept of the ‘solar wheel’ is widespread in Indo-European thought”; cf. also, e.g., Bram 1987: 134.

⁵¹ The *Lalitavistara*, Lefmann 1902: 14,10, and the *Mūlasarvāstivāda Vinaya*, Dutt 1984: 31,20: *sahasrāram* (which has its counterpart in *rtsibs stong* in D 95 *kha* 10a1 or Q 763 *ku* 11b6 and in D 1 *kha* 137a6 or Q 1030 *ge* 125b7); cf. also the so-called *Yogalehrbuch*, Schlingloff 1964: 131 (146R2), which describes a wheel adorned with various jewels that has a thousand spokes and an immeasurable brilliance, *cānaṇṭabhbhāṣurāṇ nānāratnacitaṇ sahasrāracakam*.

⁵² Senart 1882b: 250,8: *kotiśūryaprabhām hatvā sahasrāraiḥ virocate*.

⁵³ Sv II 618,7: *sahassārañ ti ... suriyarasmiyo viya pabhāsampannā honti*.

⁵⁴ Vv 35.2 at Vv 51,5: *suriyo ... sahassaramśī*.

⁵⁵ Senart 1882b: 108,9: *taruṇaravimandalañibham pravaradaśaśatārasamcayamano-jñām cakraratanam*.

of such a multitude of spokes would be quite a challenge and would require a rather large wheel, far beyond the size of a foot. In the case of the footprints on the cover of this book, in spite of being of a size that exceeds that of a normal human foot, the wheels have only twenty-eight and thirty spokes respectively. In sum, it seems improbable that the idea of a thousand spokes would have arisen from artistic depictions of the feet of a Buddha.

This impression finds further support in a Buddhist work on iconometry, the *Pratimālakṣaṇa*. The Sanskrit and Tibetan versions of the work start by reporting that the Buddha had returned from a sojourn in the Heaven of the Thirty-three (to which I turn in chapter 2).⁵⁶ Śāriputra wants to know how one is to worship the Buddha when he is absent or after he has passed away. The Buddha's reply provides detailed instructions on the proportions and measurements for the construction of a Buddha image. In spite of otherwise giving a wealth of detail, this work just mentions the wheel to be depicted on the soles of the feet, without specifying any number of spokes.⁵⁷ This accords with the impression that it is improbable that the idea of a thousand spokes had its origin in the depiction of a foot or its imprint.

The same holds also from a doctrinal perspective. Had the point at stake been to convey a relation to what according to tradition was the Buddha's first discourse with which he turned the wheel of Dharma, for example, one might expect perhaps four spokes to allude to the four noble truths, or eight spokes to signify the noble eightfold path, or twelve spokes to express the three turnings to be applied to each of the four noble truths.⁵⁸ But the notion of a thousand spokes clearly has its natural home in sun imagery.

⁵⁶ As already pointed out by Willemen 2007: 154, in the Chinese version the Buddha is rather about to depart for the Heaven of the Thirty-three; cf. T 1419 at T XXI 941b8. On the Buddha's stay in this heaven cf. also below p. 55ff.

⁵⁷ Banerjea 1933: 19,3 and Banārasī Lāl 2003: 131,3, T 1419 at T XXI 945a4, and Q 5804 go 7a4 (the text is not found in the Derge edition, cf. de Jong 1968: 180); although notably for the wheel-mark on the hands T 1419 at T XXI 943c29 does mention a thousand spokes, 千輻輪相.

⁵⁸ On the twelve turnings cf. Anālayo 2013a: 33. For the Vedic tradition, Snodgrass 1985/1992: 81 notes that “Sūrya, the Sun, is figured by a chariot wheel of 5, 12 or 360 spokes, which are the seasons, the months, and the days of the solar year.”

The assumption that the motif of the thousand spokes originates from a comparison to the sun would also explain the increasingly detailed descriptions of the wheel in the footprints seen by Drona in the parallel versions discussed above, where the rim and the hub are only mentioned in some versions. The same pattern recurs when comparing descriptions of the wheel-treasure of a *cakravartin* in other early discourses, where a reference to the thousand spokes is standard, but such reference is not invariably accompanied by the rim and the hub.⁵⁹

In *Madhyama-āgama* discourses, probably representing a Sarvāstivāda transmission lineage,⁶⁰ and in *Ekottarika-āgama* discourses, only the completeness of the thousand spokes finds explicit mention.⁶¹ Theravāda discourses in the *Dīgha-nikāya* and *Majjhima-nikāya* and Mūlasarvāstivāda discourses in the complete *Samyukta-āgama* (T 99) then mention the hub and rim of such a wheel.⁶² *Dīrgha-āgama* discourses, part of a collection probably transmitted by reciters of the Dharmaguptaka tradition,⁶³ tend to describe a wheel with a thousand spokes and endowed with brilliance, but without mentioning rim and hub.⁶⁴

⁵⁹ No reference to the thousand spokes is found in a passage from the *Mahāparinirvāna-sūtra*, Waldschmidt 1948/1967: 146f, which compares the wheel-treasures of rulers over a single continent, two, three, and all four continents, describing their respective material and circumference. Due to the context, the wheel-treasure of a universal monarch is described without a reference to its thousand spokes.

⁶⁰ The general consensus among scholars on the school affiliation of this *Āgama* has recently been called into question by Chung and Fukita 2011: 13–34, as well as Chung 2014 and 2017 (cf. also Fukita 2017); for critical replies cf. Anālayo 2012a: 516–521 and 2017. On the underlying language cf. Karashima 2017.

⁶¹ MA 67 at T I 512a8, MA 70 at T I 520c29, EA 39.8 at T II 731c26, and EA 50.4 at T II 807a9 (here and below I list only one occurrence in a particular discourse; on EA 50.4 cf. above p. 31 note 48).

⁶² DN 17 at DN II 172,16, DN 26 at DN III 61,31, MN 129 at MN III 172,16, SĀ 721 at T II 194a10, and SĀ 722 at T II 194a28; the same also holds for a discourse quotation in Pradhan 1967: 184,13 (3.96) and D 4094 *ju* 188a5 or Q 5595 *tu* 215a3.

⁶³ T 1 has been assigned to a Dharmaguptaka reciter tradition by, e.g., Demiéville 1951: 252f, Brough 1962/2001: 50, Lü 1963: 242, Bureau 1966, Waldschmidt 1980: 136, Mayeda 1985: 97, Enomoto 1986: 25, Hirakawa 1987: 513, Schmitthausen 1987: 318, Oberlies 2003: 44, Salomon 2007: 354 note 14, Willemen 2008: 60, and Anālayo 2015a: 50.

⁶⁴ DĀ 2 at T I 21c15, DĀ 6 at T I 39c3, and DĀ 30 at T I 119c3. An exception is DĀ 1 at T I 5a6, where the occurrence is in verse and does not mention the brilliance, but does refer to rim and hub.

Whereas a wheel of the type used in ancient India would require rim and hub in order to function, once the motif is taken from the sun and its thousand rays, it becomes understandable that the thousand spokes are invariably mentioned, since this is the most prominent aspect of the imagery.

In line with the depiction of the Buddha in some texts as having a resplendent appearance,⁶⁵ the brilliance of the sun would have led to associating not only the wheel-treasure but also the wheel-mark on the Buddha's foot or in his footprints with brilliance, as evident in the Gāndhārī fragment version of the discourse to Drona.

The above considerations make it fairly safe to conclude that the idea of a wheel with a thousand spokes (and the motif of its brilliance) originate in the description of the wheel-treasure of a *cakravartin*, where they naturally fit as an illustration of the thousand rays of the sun. This concords with a close thematic and symbolic relationship between the wheel-turning king and the Buddha, which are the two possible destinies open to one who is endowed with the thirty-two marks (one of which is precisely the wheel-mark on the soles of their feet). Due to such close relationship, portions of text from one type of description could easily have become part of the description of the other during transmission.

1.7 The Wheel

Now proceeding with the same type of enquiry beyond the thousand spokes and the brilliance, even the very idea of a wheel in textual depictions of the feet or footprints of the Buddha is not entirely natural. In order to appreciate the occurrence of this motif, the viewpoint of the history of ancient Indian art can be of help. Rhi (2013: 1) explains:

[with] the emergence of Buddha images in the middle Gangetic valley around the fifth to sixth century CE ... image types present the Buddha clearly engaged in two important events from his life: the First Sermon and the Enlightenment. This is in stark contrast to earlier forms of the Buddha in iconic images, which feature little in the way of narrative.

⁶⁵ For a survey and discussion cf. Endo 1997/2002: 146 and Anālayo 2015b: 18f.

The early period of iconic representation seems to reflect instead a need to convey a sense of presence in particular, and Rhi (2013: 2) notes that “this is most symptomatic in the prevalent use of the so-called *abhaya-mudrā* for images from this period.” It seems fair to assume that a similar need to fill an absence was also felt in an aniconic setting of the type that appears to have been influential in the early period of Buddhist sculpture and paintings.⁶⁶

Such an acutely felt absence to be filled is exemplified in a textual episode that involves the arhat Upagupta and Māra. Upagupta has been born too late to see the Buddha with his own eyes. After having just overcome Māra, in recompense for letting him go free he asks Māra to reveal to him the Buddha’s visual appearance. Since Māra has met the Buddha, he knows what the Buddha looked like and with the help of his magical abilities is able to transform himself into the likeness of the Buddha. When Māra performs this feat, Upagupta is so thrilled that he cannot help himself but fall at the feet of Māra in worship,⁶⁷ even though he had earlier been warned precisely not to do this.

If even an arhat cannot help but yearn to have a vision of the Blessed One and, when this happens, is so overwhelmed that he forgets who is in front of him and ends up worshipping Māra, what to expect from those who have not yet reached the lofty degree of detachment of an arhat?

⁶⁶ Regarding aniconism I follow Dehejia 1991 and Linrothe 1993. As for the need to fill a sensed absence, Rotman 2009: 157 formulates the decisive question as follows: “what does one do after the Buddha’s physical body has been cremated and the desire to see his physical form arises? How can one engage with the Buddha’s physical form if it is no more than ash and bones ensconced in various stūpas?” Strong 1983: 106f notes that after cremation the Buddha’s body “could no longer be seen, in any ordinary sense. This, however, did not stop devotees from trying to visualize this physical form of the Buddha.” On the development of visualization as part of recollection of the Buddha cf. also Harrison 1992/1993.

⁶⁷ Cf., e.g., the *Divyāvadāna*, Cowell and Neil 1886: 362,17, the *Lokapaññatti*, Duroiselle 1904: 421,10, Tāranātha’s *History of Buddhism*, Schieffner 1868: 13,3, T 201 at T IV 309b11, T 202 at T IV 443b22 and D 341 a 292a1 or Q 1008 hu 296a2, T 2042 at T L 120a13, and T 2043 at T L 160c13. Gangoly 1938: 50 comments that “the object of the legend, whatever its date, was to prove the efficacy of Images”, cf. also the discussion in, e.g., Dutt 1957: 234–236, Bloss 1978: 166f, Myer 1986: 107f, Strong 1992: 109–116, and Kinnard 1999: 30–41. For another tale in which Māra also transforms himself into the likeness of the Buddha cf. Mp I 397,18.

In an aniconic setting, the Buddha needs to be made present in some way without portraying him directly. To convey an acute sense of his presence, ideally a sense of his having been actually present in the past in this place (combined with a hint at his present absence),⁶⁸ something directly related to his body would be most effective.

This could perhaps in principle also be done with the help of his shadow. Yet a shadow is not easily portrayed and, if one succeeds in such an endeavour, the final result risks coming close to an actual depiction of the Buddha, hence one is left with footprints.⁶⁹ Footprints as an object of devotion are in fact a cross-cultural phenomenon, found not only in India among its various religious traditions, but also in Christianity, Islam, and Judaism.⁷⁰

In aniconic representations of the Buddha, footprints have the additional advantage of inviting devotion in line with the standard procedure observed by disciples, according to the way this is recorded in the early discourses, on meeting the Buddha while he was still alive, namely paying their respects with their heads at his feet. Even though the Blessed One has passed away, expressing one's devotion by paying one's respects to his footprints is as close as one could come to emulating such earlier behaviour and thereby emulating the entering into a direct relationship with the Buddha that the paying of one's respects usually heralded when he was still alive.

In order to make it unmistakeably clear that the owner of these footprints is indeed the one who set in motion the wheel of Dharma, the idea of adding to the depiction of the footprints the symbol of the wheel of

⁶⁸ Kinnard 2000: 36 points out that “a footprint is not a foot but rather simply the empty mark left by a foot; it is thus a kind of empty signifier, a most graphic marker of an absence.”

⁶⁹ Quagliotti 1998: 163 notes that “as the artistic production of Bharhut demonstrates, *buddhapadas* ... were essentially elements in aniconic representation of the Buddha right from the very early times”; cf. also the survey in de Guerny 2014: 11f of possible reasons recommending the employment of the Buddha's footprint in artistic depiction.

⁷⁰ For a survey of references to footprints in Christianity, Islam, and Judaism cf. Cicuzza 2010: xvii–xix (cf. also Quagliotti 1998: 166f). For literature on Jain footprints cf. Flügel 2011: 1 note 4 and Bollée 2008: 68; for a listing of the marks associated with a particular *tīrthaikara* cf. de Clercq 2013: 146; and on *vishnupāda* cf. Kinnard 2000.

Dharma is obvious.⁷¹ In this way, in an aniconic setting footprints marked with a wheel are about the most simple and straightforward way to go about conveying the sense of the Buddha's presence, as well as to invite expressions of devotion. Needless to say, such a wheel would not have to be one with a thousand spokes, as mentioned earlier, as this aspect only appears to have entered the scene, so to say, when textual descriptions copied the description of the wheel from the *cakravartin* myth.

The footprints from Sāñcī on the cover of this book are located on the bottom part of the gateway pillar (see figure 3) and thus in a position that to some extent mirrors the place of the feet of the Buddha to whom one pays worship.⁷² Of relevance to the act of paying one's respects to the Buddha is also a feature of textual descriptions of his thirty-two marks,



Figure 3 Footprints with Wheel

⁷¹ Niwa 1992: 29 explains the reasoning he considers to stand behind marking the Buddha's footprints with wheels as follows: "these are the footprints of Buddha; of course they are different from the average person's ... [thus] the dharma-cakra was inscribed to make their meaning perfectly clear."

⁷² Courtesy of Jinah Kim. Chutiwongs 1990: 61 comments on slabs with footprints in general that "the worship given to these objects conforms to the traditional Indian way of paying humblest respect and devotion by ... worshipping the feet of the venerated personage ... a number of such slabs ... have been found near the entrance to stupa-precincts and it is probably (sic) that devotees were meant to pay their homage to them on entering and leaving the sacred areas." Niwa 1992: 12 describes how "to worship before an imprint of the Buddha's feet, believers kneel and touch their heads to the stone."

which I examine in more detail in the next chapter, namely that in the early discourses such descriptions proceed from the feet to the head.⁷³ A poetic description of female beauty in the *Therīgāthā* instead starts with the head.⁷⁴ The order adopted for descriptions of the Buddha's thirty-two marks might reflect the idea that the marks are being discerned by those who have come close to pay their respects at his feet and who naturally start off such discerning with the feet right in front of them.⁷⁵



Figure 4 Worshipping the Buddha's Footprints

⁷³ For an example cf. below p. 47. Bollée 2008: 80 explains that “persons deserving respect are looked at from the feet upwards because the looker lies prostrate before” them. Waddell 1914/1915: 138 notes that texts like the *Lalitavistara* adopt the opposite sequence; cf. Lefmann 1902: 105,11, T 186 at T III 496a20, T 187 at T III 557a13, and D 95 *kha* 57a2 or Q 763 *ku* 66a4. Dietz 2006: 153 comments that the same also holds for the *Mahāvyutpatti*, Sakaki 1916/1962: 22–24 (§236–267). As pointed out by Waldschmidt 1930: 271 and Weber 1994: 43, this sequence must be later than the one starting from the feet; cf. also the surveys in Burnouf 1852/1925: 577 and Edgerton 1953/1998: 458–460. On the same sequence in Greek and Indian texts on physiognomy cf. Zysk 2016: 46–48.

⁷⁴ Collins 2007: 673 notes that “the description of a woman’s beauty, starting from the head and going downwards, [is] a standard form in later poetry”, citing as an example Ambapālī’s verses, Thī 252ff.

⁷⁵ Bollée 2005: 23 explains that “in the lists of the thirty-two bodily marks (*lakṣanas*) of a *mahāpuruṣa* the feet are dealt with first, [since] gods as well as great men like kings [are] being looked up to from below, for the viewer is lying at his feet.”

That an invitation to pay one's respects is indeed one of the intended functions of footprints with wheels in art can be seen, for example, in the relief from Amarāvatī on the previous page (figure 4), which shows the seat of awakening surrounded by worshippers; the footprints found in front of the seat carry wheel-marks.⁷⁶ Another image from the same location brings out this dimension with even more clarity, since here the footprints are the main object of worship.⁷⁷

1.8 Summary

Based on the above discussion, the following hypothetical reconstruction suggests itself regarding the evolution of textual descriptions in early discourse literature of the footprints of a Buddha:

The discourse to Drona would originally have been concerned only with the Buddha's footprints as such, whose sublime nature attracted the attention of the brahmin protagonist. In the aniconic period of Indian art, a footprint adorned with a wheel would have served as a convenient marker of the Buddha's presence (or the presence of his absence) and as a focus for devotion. Such depictions seem to have influenced textual accounts, which apparently took over the existing description of a *cakravartin*'s wheel-treasure with a thousand spokes, reflecting the thousand shining rays of the sun, and applied this description to the Buddha's footprints.

From having examined the development of the conception of the footprint, in the next chapters I turn to the corresponding sole of the Buddha's foot in order to contextualize the hypothesis formulated above.

⁷⁶ Chennai Government Museum, no. 297; courtesy of Wojtek Oczkowski.

⁷⁷ Anālayo 2010a: 52.

2 A Vision of the Thirty-two Marks

2.1 Introduction

In this chapter I examine descriptions of the Buddha's feet within the standard context of listings of the thirty-two physical marks, *lakṣana*, of a *mahāpuruṣa*, so as to contextualize my suggestion in the previous chapter that the idea of a wheel-mark would be the result of visual depictions influencing textual accounts. For a study of the thirty-two marks I turn to the discourse on Brahmāyus, which is extant in the following versions:

- a Pāli version in the form of the *Brahmāyu-sutta* located in the Chapter on Brahmins of the Theravāda *Majjhima-nikāya* collection;¹
- a Chinese parallel entitled Discourse to Brahmā[yus] and found in the Chapter on Brahmins in the *Madhyama-āgama* (T 26), which can probably be assigned to the Sarvāstivāda tradition;²
- another Chinese discourse parallel preserved as an individual translation under the title Discourse to Brahmāyus (T 76).³

The narrative setting of the *Brahmāyu-sutta* and its parallels is an examination of the Buddha undertaken by the brahmin student Uttara at the behest of his teacher Brahmāyus. In what follows, I translate the part of the *Madhyama-āgama* version that begins with Brahmāyus telling his student about the Buddha and ends with the report given by Uttara to his teacher that the Buddha indeed possesses these thirty-two marks.⁴ In order to avoid tiring the reader, I abbreviate parts that merely repeat what has already been described.

¹ MN 91 at MN II 133,9 to 146,21; for a comparative study cf. Anālayo 2011a: 527–545.

² MĀ 161 at T I 685a5 to 690a5; on the school affiliation cf. above p. 35 note 60.

³ T 76 at T I 883b7 to 886a20, which according to the information given in the Taishō edition was translated by Zhī Qiān (支謙); judging from the discussion in Nattier 2008: 129f, this attribution should be correct.

⁴ The translation is based on MĀ 161 at T I 685b13 to 686c17, which parallels MN 91 at MN II 134,6 to 137,12 and T 76 at T I 883b25 to 884a11.

The actual listing of the marks in the *Madhyama-āgama* version also contains a repetitive element which I do not abbreviate.⁵ The description of each mark concludes with the proclamation that the Buddha, who is referred to as “the recluse Gautama”, is a great man. Such emphatic repetition would have quite an impact in an oral setting, driving home again and again the main message that underlies the whole concern with these marks, and by dint of repetition making it easy for the audience to keep this crucial statement well in mind.

2.2 Translation

[The brahmin said]: “Uttara, [I heard] that the recluse Gautama is endowed with the thirty-two marks of a great man. If someone is endowed with the marks of a great man, there are certainly two possibilities, which are true and not false.

“If he stays in the home life, he will certainly become a wheel-turning king, intelligent and wise, possessing a fourfold army to reign over the whole world, at his ease and unimpeded. Being a righteous king according to Dharma, he will acquire the seven treasures. These seven treasures are: the wheel-treasure, the elephant-treasure, the horse-treasure, the jewel-treasure, the woman-treasure, the steward-treasure, and the general-treasure – these are reckoned to be the seven.

“He will possess a thousand sons, handsome, brave, fearless, and able to overcome the troops of others. He will certainly rule over this whole earth, as far as the great ocean, without relying on sword or club, just by teaching the Dharma; bringing peace and happiness.

“If [however] he shaves off his hair and beard, dons the ochre robes, leaves home out of faith, and goes forth to train in the path, he will certainly become a Tathāgata, free from attachment and fully awakened. His fame will spread and be known throughout the ten directions.⁶

⁵ A comparable statement can be found at the beginning and end of the list in MN 91 at MN II 136,7 and 137,10, apparently to be supplemented for each mark during oral recitation, whereas T 76 at T I 883c23 just lists the marks as such.

⁶ Instead of a reference to the Buddha’s fame spreading in the ten directions, MN 91 at MN II 134,28 notes that he will withdraw the veil (of ignorance) from the world.

“Uttara, you have received and retained the *sūtras* on the thirty-two marks of a great man.⁷ If someone acquires the marks of a great man, there are certainly two possibilities, which are true and not false ...”⁸ [685c]

Uttara replied: “Yes indeed, honourable sir,⁹ I have received and retained the *sūtras* on the thirty-two marks of a great man. If someone acquires the marks of a great man, there are certainly two possibilities, which are true and not false ...”

The brahmin Brahmā[yus] said: “Uttara, approach the recluse Gautama and examine whether the recluse Gautama is like this or is not like this. Does he truly have the thirty-two marks of a great man?”

Having heard this, the young brahmin Uttara paid homage with his head at the feet of the brahmin Brahmā[yus], circumambulated him three times, and left.¹⁰ He approached the Buddha, exchanged polite greetings, sat back to one side, and examined the Blessed One’s body for the thirty-two marks. He saw that the Blessed One’s body had thirty of the marks. He was in doubt about two of the marks: that which is concealed being [like] the hidden [parts] of a horse and the long wide tongue.¹¹

The Blessed One thought: “This Uttara is examining my body for the thirty-two marks. He sees that it has thirty of the marks. He is in doubt about two of the marks: that which is concealed being

The corresponding part in T 76 at T I 883c2 is rather short; it just mentions that one with the thirty-two marks will become a wheel-turning king (without mentioning any of the treasures or his sons, etc.) and if he goes forth he will become a Buddha.

⁷ MA 161 at T I 685b24 refers to the repository of the lore of the thirty-two marks as 諸經, which has its counterpart in MN 91 at MN II 134,16 in the expression *amhākaṇ mantesu*, literally “in our *mantras*”. In MN 91 this forms part of a reply given by Brahmāyus to a question by Uttara, as to how he should verify the Buddha’s accomplishment.

⁸ Here and below, the original text repeats the full description of the two destinies. A counterpart to the description of the two destinies open to one who is endowed with the thirty-two marks occurs in MN 91 at MN I 134,17.

⁹ Adopting a variant without 世.

¹⁰ The triple circumambulation is a recurrent difference between *Madhyama-āgama* discourses and their Pāli parallels, which tend to mention only single circumambulations; cf. Analayo 2011a: 21 note 126.

¹¹ The first of these two refers to the male organ; cf. also below p. 131f.

[like] the hidden [parts] of a horse and the long wide tongue. Let me now remove his doubt ...”¹²

Then the Blessed One performed an appropriate psychic feat. The appropriate psychic feat having been performed, the young brahmin Uttara saw that the Blessed One’s body had that which is concealed [like] the hidden [parts] of a horse and that his tongue was long and wide. On being extended from the mouth, the long wide tongue completely covered [any spot on] the face.¹³

Having seen it, the young brahmin Uttara thought: [686a] “The recluse Gautama has acquired the thirty-two marks of a great man. If someone acquires the marks of a great man, there are certainly two possibilities, which are true and not false ...”¹⁴

The young brahmin Uttara further thought: “Let me now closely examine his bearing and decorum, and examine the inclinations of his behaviour.” Then the young brahmin Uttara closely followed the Buddha’s activities. For the four months of the summer he examined [the Buddha’s] bearing and decorum, and examined the inclinations of his behaviour.¹⁵

The four months of the summer having passed, the young brahmin Uttara was pleased with the Blessed One’s bearing and decorum and with the inclinations of [the Buddha’s] behaviour he had examined. He said: “Gautama, I now have matters [to attend to]. I wish to return and request to take my leave.”¹⁶

The Blessed One said: “Uttara, you may leave according to your wish.”

The young brahmin Uttara, having heard what the Blessed One had said, having received it well and retained it well, rose from his

¹² The text continues with the Buddha planning what he will do next and then repeats the same description when reporting what he did. For ease of reading, I abbreviate the planning stage and only translate the actual report of what the Buddha did.

¹³ According to T 76 at T I 883c8, after the demonstration of the two marks a five-coloured light emerged, circumambulated the Buddha’s body three times, and then disappeared into the top of his head.

¹⁴ The text repeats the full description of the two destinies.

¹⁵ In MN 91 at MN II 135,23 he follows the Buddha for seven months, and in T 76 at T I 883c14 he does so for six months.

¹⁶ MN 91 and T 76 do not report that Uttara asked permission from the Buddha to leave, although T 76 at T I 883c15 does mention that he paid his respects before departing.

seat, circumambulated [the Buddha] three times, and left. He approached the brahmin Brahmā[yus]. He paid homage with his head at the feet of the brahmin Brahmā[yus] and sat back to one side.

The brahmin Brahmā[yus] asked him: “Uttara, is it true what I have heard about the great reputation of the recluse Gautama that has spread in the ten directions? Is he like this or is he not like this? Does he truly have the thirty-two marks of a great man?”

The brahmin youth Uttara replied: “Indeed, honourable sir, it is true what you have heard about the great reputation of the recluse Gautama that has spread in the ten directions. The recluse Gautama is like this and he is not unlike this. He truly has the thirty-two marks of a great man.”

1)¹⁷ “Honourable sir, the recluse Gautama stands with feet well-placed.¹⁸ Honourable sir, this is reckoned a mark of a great man; the recluse Gautama is a great man.

2) “Again, honourable sir, on the soles of the feet of the recluse Gautama a wheel has manifested, a wheel that has a thousand spokes, all complete.¹⁹ Honourable sir, this is reckoned a mark of a great man; the recluse Gautama is a great man.

3) “Again, honourable sir, the toes of the recluse Gautama are long and slender. Honourable sir, this is reckoned a mark of a great man; the recluse Gautama is a great man.

4) “Again, honourable sir, [686b] the recluse Gautama’s feet are straight all around. Honourable sir, this is reckoned a mark of a great man; the recluse Gautama is a great man.

5) “Again, honourable sir, the heels and ankles of the recluse Gautama are evenly filled on both sides. Honourable sir, this is reckoned a mark of a great man; the recluse Gautama is a great man.

¹⁷ The original does not number the marks and at times lists more than one of them together. In order to facilitate reading, I have added numbers.

¹⁸ Regarding a remark by Minh Chau 1964/1991: 168 on this quality cf. Anālayo 2011a: 529 note 11.

¹⁹ MN 91 at MN II 136,10 adds that the wheel is “with rim and hub”. Subsequent to the actual listing of the marks, T 76 at T I 884a19 offers the additional specification that though the Buddha’s “feet do not tread the ground, a wheel-mark appears that keeps shining and sparkling with light for seven days and only then disappears”. The original listing of the wheel-mark as one of the thirty-two characteristics in T 76 at T I 883c23 just mentions the thousand spokes.

6) “Again, honourable sir, both ankles of the recluse Gautama are balanced. Honourable sir, this is reckoned a mark of a great man; the recluse Gautama is a great man.

7) “Again, honourable sir, the body-hairs of the recluse Gautama turn upwards. Honourable sir, this is reckoned a mark of a great man; the recluse Gautama is a great man.

8) “Again, honourable sir, the recluse Gautama has webbed hands and feet, like a king of geese.²⁰ Honourable sir, this is reckoned a mark of a great man; the recluse Gautama is a great man.

9) “Again, honourable sir, the hands and feet of the recluse Gautama are superbly tender and soft like cotton flower.²¹ Honourable sir, this is reckoned a mark of a great man; the recluse Gautama is a great man.

10) “Again, honourable sir, the skin of the recluse Gautama is soft and fine; dust and water do not adhere to it.²² Honourable sir, this is reckoned a mark of a great man; the recluse Gautama is a great man.

11–12) “Again, honourable sir, the recluse Gautama has each hair singly, each single hair on his body has each a single pore, and each hair, being of a dark blue colour, grows by curling to the right like a spiral shell. Honourable sir, these are reckoned marks of a great man; the recluse Gautama is a great man.

13) “Again, honourable sir, the thighs of the recluse Gautama are like those of a king of antelopes. Honourable sir, this is reckoned a mark of a great man; the recluse Gautama is a great man.

14) “Again, honourable sir, of the recluse Gautama that which is concealed is [like] the hidden [parts] of a horse; it is like that of

²⁰ MN 91 at MN II 136,13 and T 76 at T I 883c25 do not illustrate the nature of the netted hands and feet with the example of a goose. Such a comparison does occur in a listing of the thirty-two marks in DĀ 1 at T I 5b1 and in the corresponding Sanskrit fragments Waldschmidt 1956: 103,8 (§6b7) and Fukita 2003: 78,13 (cf. also Or 15009/329 v3, Fukita 2009: 313). These are parallels to DN 14 at DN II 17,23, which does not refer to a goose. For a study of the goose motif in Indian lore cf. Vogel 1962.

²¹ The softness of both hands and feet is mentioned similarly in the parallels, MN 91 at MN II 136,12 and T 76 at T I 883c25, although neither employs a simile. This mark relates to the discussion in chapter 1 regarding the type of footprint that such a foot could produce; cf. above p. 27.

²² MN 91 at MN II 136,20 does not refer to water, which is mentioned in T 76 at T I 883c28.

an excellent king of horses.²³ Honourable sir, this is reckoned a mark of a great man; the recluse Gautama is a great man.

15) “Again, honourable sir, the bodily shape of the recluse Gautama is well rounded, rounded above and below in proper proportion, like a Banyan tree.²⁴ Honourable sir, this is reckoned a mark of a great man; the recluse Gautama is a great man.

16) “Again, honourable sir, with his body not being bent and standing erect the recluse Gautama can touch his knees with his hands, without bending his body. Honourable sir, this is reckoned a mark of a great man; the recluse Gautama is a great man.

17) “Again, honourable sir, the body of the recluse Gautama is of a golden-coloured hue, like polished gold. Honourable sir, this is reckoned a mark of a great man; the recluse Gautama is a great man.

18) “Again, honourable sir, the body of the recluse Gautama is complete in the seven parts. The seven complete parts are the two hands, the two feet, the two shoulders, and the neck. Honourable sir, this is reckoned a mark of a great man; the recluse Gautama is a great man.

19) “Again, honourable sir, the upper part of the recluse Gautama’s body is large like that of a lion. Honourable sir, this is reckoned a mark of a great man; the recluse Gautama is a great man.

20) “Again, honourable sir, the recluse Gautama is lion-jawed. Honourable sir, this is reckoned a mark of a great man; the recluse Gautama is a great man.

21) “Again, honourable sir, the recluse Gautama has an evenly straight spine and back. Honourable sir, this is reckoned a mark of a great man; the recluse Gautama is a great man. [686c]

22) “Again, honourable sir, the two shoulders of the recluse Gautama are connected with the neck evenly and fully. Honourable sir, this is reckoned a mark of a great man; the recluse Gautama is a great man.

²³ MN 91 at MN II 136,17 and T 76 at T I 883c26 do not employ the image of a king of horses to illustrate this quality.

²⁴ T 76 at T I 883c29 does not refer to a Banyan tree. On the Banyan tree in Indian thought cf., e.g., Emeneau 1949/1988 (on the Banyan tree in Pāli literature cf. Dhammadika 2015: 107).

23–26) “Again, honourable sir, the recluse Gautama has forty teeth,²⁵ which are even,²⁶ his teeth are not widely spaced, his teeth are white, his teeth are adjacent, and his taste [buds] are foremost in [the ability] to taste. Honourable sir, these are reckoned marks of a great man; the recluse Gautama is a great man.

27) “Again, honourable sir, the recluse Gautama has the endearing voice of a Brahmā with a sound like that of a cuckoo.²⁷ Honourable sir, this is reckoned a mark of a great man; the recluse Gautama is a great man.

28) “Again, honourable sir, the recluse Gautama has a long wide tongue. When he extends this long wide tongue from his mouth, the tongue [can] cover every spot on his face.²⁸ Honourable sir, this is reckoned a mark of a great man; the recluse Gautama is a great man.

29) “Again, honourable sir, the eyelashes of the recluse Gautama are full, like those of a king of cows. Honourable sir, this is reckoned a mark of a great man; the recluse Gautama is a great man.

30) “Again, honourable sir, the eyes of the recluse Gautama are of dark blue colour. Honourable sir, this is reckoned a mark of a great man; the recluse Gautama is a great man.

²⁵ Taken literally, the number forty would imply having eight teeth more than usual in human dentition. Neumann 1896/1995: 1115 note 248 suggests that the reference to forty teeth could simply represent the beginning of the fourth series of ten and therefore mean over thirty teeth. A rationale for a symbolic description would be that, according to Wimalaratana 1994: 115, “in ancient India the possession of more than the common number of teeth was regarded as an auspicious characteristics” (sic); cf. also Myer 1986: 129, who includes the count of teeth among marks “that may well have been considered auspicious.”

²⁶ Adopting the variant 平 instead of 牙.

²⁷ The comparison with a cuckoo is not found in T 76 at T I 884a6.

²⁸ MN 91 at MN II 137,4 and T 76 at T I 884a5 do not describe the reach of the tongue as part of their listing of thirty-two marks. This is not a difference in principle, however, as both report that Uttara had verified this ability before giving the present account; cf. MN 91 at MN II 135,17 and T 76 at T I 883c8, where the Buddha performs the feat of stretching out his tongue to cover the whole face and reach both ears. The *Divyāvadāna*, Cowell and Neil 1886: 71,14, reports an occasion when the Buddha made a demonstration of his long tongue to a brahmin who was under the impression that the Buddha had spoken a falsehood. In this context, the display of the tongue’s ability to touch the whole face stands for truthfulness, confirming that it was impossible for a bearer of this mark to speak a lie intentionally.

31) “Again, honourable sir, the recluse Gautama has on the crown of his head a fleshy topknot that is round and in proportion,²⁹ with the hairs curling to the right. Honourable sir, this is reckoned a mark of a great man; the recluse Gautama is a great man.

32) “Again, honourable sir, between the eyebrows of the recluse Gautama white hair grows that curls to the right. Honourable sir, this is reckoned a mark of a great man; the recluse Gautama is a great man.

“Honourable sir, the recluse Gautama has acquired the thirty-two marks of a great man. If someone acquires the marks of a great man, there are certainly two possibilities, which are true and not false ...”³⁰

2.3 The Webbed Feet and the Protuberance

My suggestion in the previous chapter that the idea of a wheel-mark on the Buddha’s feet would be the result of visual representations influencing textual accounts has a precedent in suggestions by other scholars of similar influence in the case of other marks. One of these cases also concerns the nature of the Buddha’s feet, along with his hands, namely that they are “netted” or “webbed”, which the *Madhyama-āgama* discourse translated above compares to those of a goose (a comparison not found in the parallels, where the idea of webbed hands need not yet carry the significance that it acquires with this comparison). The image of a goose gives the impression that the description in this version, or at least the understanding of the translator(s) or the scribe(s) involved in rendering the discourse into Chinese, concerns some sort of skin connection between the Buddha’s toes as well as his fingers.

The Pāli commentary argues that this characteristic should not be taken literally, given that according to the Pāli *Vinaya* someone whose toes or fingers are webbed together should not be given the going forth.³¹

²⁹ T 76 at T I 884a9 adds that this fleshy protuberance shines with light such that it holds in check the (light of the) sun and interrupts that of the moon.

³⁰ The text repeats the full description of the two destinies.

³¹ Ps III 376,17; the regulation is found in Vin I 91,11. Horner 1957/1970: 321 note 2 reasons that “a person whose fingers are ‘webbed’ ... is not even fit to go forth ... so how could a ‘webbed finger’ be a mark of a Great Man?” For symbolic inter-

In view of such a regulation it would indeed be curious for the Buddha to be depicted with the same physical abnormality.

According to the **Mahāprajñāpāramitopadeśa*, this characteristic is only visible when the fingers are stretched apart.³² This indication leaves open the possibility that perhaps at some stage the idea of this mark was related to the skin at the base of the fingers, which in the case of a Buddha was presumably held to be in some way distinct from that of average human beings.³³

Scholars studying ancient Indian art have suggested an explanation according to which the idea of actually webbed fingers or toes, implicit at least when this mark is compared to a goose, might have been inspired by Buddha statues, as sculptors tend to weld fingers and toes together so that they do not break off.³⁴ This can be seen, for example, in the case of

pretations of this mark cf., e.g., Senart 1882a: 146, Neumann 1896/1995: 1146f note 478 (cf. below note 33), Stutterheim 1929: 236, Coomaraswamy 1931: 21 (with a reply in Banerjea 1931b), and Wimalaratana 1994: 89f.

³² T 1509 at T XXV 90b9: 張指則現, 不張則不現, translated by Lamotte 1944/1981: 273 as: “quand il écarte les doigts, la membrane apparaît; quand il n'écarte pas les doigts elle n'apparaît pas” (for a survey of the thirty-two marks cf. also Lamotte 1944/1981: 271f note 2).

³³ Neumann 1896/1995: 1146f note 478 refers to a comparison in Indian epic of this mark with a blossoming lotus bud, whose slender petals compare to the fingers and whose calyx, which keeps the petals together, compares to the skin at the base of the fingers.

³⁴ Banerjea 1930: 725 concludes that the idea that the Buddha had a sort of skin between his fingers and toes is due to being misled by “a simple craftsman's device”; cf. also Foucher 1918: 308 and Lamotte 1946: 66. Van Lohuizen-de Leeuw 1949/ 1995: 214 notes that the same characteristic can already be found in early painted Buddha images. As in the case of paintings the fingers would not need any support to prevent breaking off, this implies that by that time the Buddha was already held to have had some type of skin or web between his fingers. A literal interpretation of this characteristic seems to be also reflected in the *Divyāvadāna*, the *Lalitavistara*, and the *Mahāvastu*, according to which the fingers and toes were *avanaddha*, “connected” by a net; cf. Cowell and Neil 1886: 56,21, Lefmann 1902: 318,14, and Senart 1890: 304,14. Wimalaratana 1994: 87 argues that this additional specification in these versions serves “to explain the webbed fingers in ... statues ... this device led to later misunderstanding of the *jāla lakkhana*”. The Sanskrit and Tibetan versions of the *Sanghabhedavastu* employ the goose imagery in relation to this mark, Gnoli 1977: 50,9 and D 1 ga 283a6 or Q 1030 nge 266a5, clearly reflecting a literal reading of its implications, although the goose motif is not found in the description of

a Sārnāth sculpture of the Buddha, (see figure 5) where the right hand clearly shows the tendency to connect the fingers, as well as documenting the fact that nevertheless these tend to break off.³⁵

Another example for the apparent influence of art is the description in the *Madhyama-āgama* discourse translated above that the Buddha had “on the crown of his head a fleshy topknot that is round and in proportion”. This has its counterpart in the *Brahmāyu-sutta* in the Pāli expression *uṇhiśasātīso*, which presumably qualifies the head as being (shaped like) a turban.

Scholars of Indian art have argued that this feature is best appreciated in the light of a tendency in ancient Indian art to portray gods and spiritual teachers with long hair, often worn in a topknot, independent of the actual appearance of these teachers.³⁶



Figure 5 Buddha with Webbed Hand

this mark in the Chinese counterpart, T 1450 at T XXIV 108c28; for further occurrences of the comparison to a goose cf. Lamotte 1944/1981: 274 note 1.

³⁵ Courtesy of Eric R. and John C. Huntington, The Huntington Archive at The Ohio State University.

³⁶ Coomaraswamy 1928: 835 points out the late nature of the notion that the *uṣṇīṣa* stands for some sort of a protuberance. Banerjea 1931a: 510 explains that “wearing of long hair in different modes was a common custom among the males ... they not only carried these luxuriant locks on their own heads in different shapes, but endowed their gods with this same characteristic. Thus the various gods depicted in the early Indian monuments of the pre-Christian period ... are shown with luxuriant hair dressed in various ways”, with the hair worn in a topknot as “one of their most prominent adornments”. Banerjea 1931a: 512 concludes that therefore “in the anthropomorphic representation of the Bhagavat, the depiction

Even Jain saints are depicted with hair, although this stands in contrast to the literary sources of the Jain tradition, according to which they plucked out their hair when going forth.³⁷ An example of this feature on a Buddha statue can be seen in the next chapter, figure 8.³⁸ This mode of depiction in ancient Indian art would then presumably have influenced understandings of this physical mark of the Buddha reflected in textual accounts, eventually resulting in the idea that he had an actual protuberance on his head.³⁹

The *Madhyama-āgama* discourse translated above refers to this mark as a “fleshy topknot”, a translation also found in a *Dīrgha-āgama* discourse to which I turn in chapter 3.⁴⁰ The terminological choice of the translators into Chinese is in line with the suggestion by scholars of ancient Indian art that the idea of a protuberance would have had its origin in the depiction of a topknot. Cosmological understandings of the protuberance as representing the *axis mundi*, proposed by some scholars,⁴¹ would then presumably be a secondary aspect of the development under discussion.⁴²

of the flowing tresses was quite natural.” Kramrisch 1935: 157 adds that “the manifested power of divinity is shown in the growth of hair.” Van Lohuizen-de Leeuw 1949/1995: 164f concludes that “not only the Buddha but also gods show the *usnīṣa* … there is no doubt that it was intended to reproduce a hair-knot on top of the head … not until *much* later was it understood as a protuberance of the skull.” For a survey of the scholarly discussion concerned with this mark cf. also Lopez 2005: 20–33.

³⁷ Krishan 1966: 281.

³⁸ Cf. below p. 73.

³⁹ On the arising of the idea of a protuberance cf., e.g., Foucher 1918: 296f and Waldschmidt 1930: 274f. Wikramagamage 2005: 293 points out that early Buddha images in Sri Lanka “have no abnormal protuberance on top of their heads”, but “from about the second century” B.C. onwards one can find instances of the “Buddha Image with a slight bump on the top of the head” (cf. also Chutiwongs 1990: 66, Niwa 1992: 42, and de Guerry 2014: 61f on the related topic of unadorned Buddhapadas in Sri Lanka). From being seen as a characteristic of the Buddha, the protuberance was then also applied to members of his family and to monks in general; cf. Zin 2003 and Zhu 2015.

⁴⁰ DĀ 1 at T I 5b18 and MĀ 161 at T I 686c13 (as well as its parallel T 76 at T I 884a9) agree on using the expression 肉髻.

⁴¹ Cf., e.g., Mus 1968: 561f or Verardi 1988: 1535.

⁴² Cf., e.g., Spagnoli 1994: 773.

2.4 The Buddha's Footprints on the Stairs from Heaven

A process of cross-fertilization between text and art can also be seen in relation to another episode whose artistic depiction involves the Buddha's footprint.⁴³ The episode in question describes the Buddha's return from a prolonged stay in the Heaven of the Thirty-three. A description of this descent in a *Samyukta-āgama* discourse just mentions that "the Blessed One came down from the Heaven of the Thirty-three to the city of Sāṃkāśya in Jambudvīpa, to the foot of the Udumbara tree."⁴⁴ A version of this episode in the Sanskrit and Tibetan texts of the *Avadānaśataka* is similarly brief and does not provide further details.⁴⁵

A range of other sources depicts the construction of three stairs, so that the Buddha could descend the middle flight of stairs, flanked by Brahmā and Śakra on each side.⁴⁶ Some textual accounts then show signs of struggling with what they apparently perceive as problematic, namely why the Buddha needs stairs to descend from heaven, given that he earlier reached it easily with the help of his supernormal abilities.⁴⁷

A version of the episode in the *Ekottarika-āgama* brings in Śakra, who has stairs constructed so that the Buddha need not employ supernormal means for his descent.⁴⁸ Another version in the *Mūlasarvāstivada Vinaya* goes a step further in the same direction, as here Śakra first enquires from the Buddha whether he will descend to Jambudvīpa by supernormal means or on foot.⁴⁹ The Buddha opts for the latter, which

⁴³ The following discussion is based on excerpts from Anālayo 2012c.

⁴⁴ SA 506 at T II 134c19.

⁴⁵ Speyer 1909/1970: 94,15 and D 343 *am* 234b2 or Q 1012 *u* 243a1; cf. also T 156 at T III 137b4.

⁴⁶ EA 36,5 at T II 707a28, T 198 at T IV 185c2, T 200 at T IV 247a5, T 694 at T XVI 792b18, T 1451 at T XXIV 347a1 and D 6 *da* 91b2 or Q 1035 *ne* 88b5, and Dhp-a III 225,3; cf. also Jā 483 at Jā IV 266,1 and Vism 392,2. Stairs are also mentioned in fragment SHT III 835, Waldschmidt et al. 1971: 56f, as well as in the *Book of Zambasta*, Emmerick 1968: 360 (23.142).

⁴⁷ Strong 2010: 970 formulates the puzzling aspect of the textual accounts in this manner: "why does the Buddha ... need (or appear to need) a set of stairs to come down again to earth? Why does he not just fly or float down?"

⁴⁸ EA 36,5 at T II 707a27.

⁴⁹ T 1451 at T XXIV 346c28 and D 6 *da* 91b1 or Q 1035 *ne* 88b4.

then motivates Śakra to have stairs built. In the Mūlasarvāstivada *Vinaya* the Buddha then reflects that non-Buddhists might think he has lost his abilities, which motivates him to descend halfway to Jambudvīpa by supernormal means and only use the stairs for the second half.⁵⁰

The solution for understanding the introduction of the stair motif into the tale of the Buddha's sojourn in the Heaven of the Thirty-three can be found by turning to art. In aniconic portrayal, the most convenient way to convey the idea of a descent is by depicting a flight of stairs with footsteps. An example is the middle one of three panels on a Bhārhut relief on the so-called Ajātaśatru Pillar (see figure 6), depicting the Buddha's descent from the Heaven of the Thirty-three. The middle flight of the three stairs depicts the Buddha's footsteps on the first and last step.⁵¹

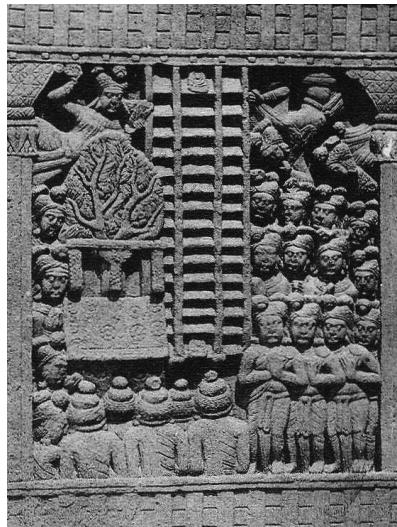


Figure 6 The Buddha's Descent from Heaven

Once such depictions had come into existence, this would in turn have influenced textual accounts, even though the resultant motif of stairs was felt within the tradition as not natural, leading to attempts at explanation. In this way a cross-fertilization between text and art results in a literal reading of what in its inception would have had only a symbolic function. Such literal reading is evident in the descriptions given by the pilgrims Fǎxiǎn (法顯) and Xuánzàng (玄奘) of the remains of the stairs that were believed to have been used by the Buddha on this occasion.⁵²

⁵⁰ T 1451 at T XXIV 347a10 and D 6 da 91b6 or Q 1035 ne 89a2.

⁵¹ After Coomaraswamy 1956 plate XI figure 31; cf. also Cunningham 1879 plate XVII middle section. For a survey of early representations of the same scene cf., e.g., Fáбри 1930: 289, Lamotte 1958: 372, Schlingloff 2000: 478f, and Skilling 2008a: 42; and for a specimen among the recent Kanaganahalli discoveries cf. plate 103 in Poonacha 2011: 409.

⁵² Fǎxiǎn (法顯) reports that the three stairs had mostly disappeared into the ground, T 2085 at T LI 859c19, but the last seven steps were still visible, around which a mon-

The above examples are in line with my earlier hypothesis in relation to the wheel on the Buddha's feet and footprints, in that the suggestion that textual descriptions could have been influenced by art has long-standing precedents.⁵³ Except for the welding together of fingers and toes, which could only have happened once sculptural representations of the Buddha had come into existence, such influence could in principle already have taken place at an earlier time with visual presentation of a canvas type, carried around to deliver teachings.⁵⁴

2.5 The Buddha's General Appearance

Coming back to the topic of the Buddha's protuberance, the early textual sources make it clear that they consider the Buddha to have been shaven-headed just like his monastic disciples. The *Ariyapariyesanā-sutta* and its *Madhyama-āgama* parallel report that he shaved off his hair on going forth as a bodhisattva.⁵⁵ That he should be considered to have continued to do so comes up explicitly in a discourse in the *Sam-yutta-nikāya* and its *Samyukta-āgama* parallels, which describe a brahmin seeing the Buddha uncover his head and realizing that the Buddha was shaven-headed.⁵⁶ In a passage in the *Sutta-nipāta* the Buddha himself states that his head-hair is shaven off, and in a passage in the Pāli *Vinaya* he is qualified as shaven-headed.⁵⁷

astery was constructed. Xuánzàng (玄奘) then refers to the monastery which had the triple stairs in its precincts, T 2087 at T LI 893a24.

⁵³ Lamotte 1958: 738 notes: “les artistes se sont inspirés des textes, mais les textes, à leur tour, ont subi l'influence des œuvres créées par les sculpteurs.” Spagnoli 1994: 773 reasons that textual lists of the marks, having informed iconography, would have in turn been enriched with elements from artistic representation. Strong 2001: 8 explains that “what is recounted in story may affect what is sculpted in stone, just as what is sculpted in stone can influence what is recounted in story... the impact of art on narrative is well-known.” In sum, as noted by Handlin 2016: 154, “visual and verbal transmission technologies are not as distinct as it seems” at first sight.

⁵⁴ Cf., e.g., Mair 1988: 17–37, Dehejia 1990: 377, Brown 1997: 81, and Anālayo 2015b: 32 note 85.

⁵⁵ MN 26 at MN I 163,30 and its parallel MĀ 204 at T I 776b4.

⁵⁶ SN 7.9 at SN I 167,33 (= Sn 3.4 at Sn p. 80,7, already noted by Spagnoli 1995: 436f) and its parallels SĀ 1184 at T II 320b28 and SĀ² 99 at T II 409a5.

⁵⁷ Sn 456 and Vin IV 91,20.

This makes it safe to conclude that the textual sources did not envisage the Buddha as having had long hair.⁵⁸ Had he had long hair, or some sort of a protuberance, this would of course have made him easily distinguishable from his shaven-headed monastic followers. In order to explore this further, other early discourses can be consulted to ascertain whether the Buddha was considered to have had physical peculiarities of a type that would have made him easily distinguishable from others.

Several *Vinayas* report that other monks, on seeing the monk Nanda arrive, mistook him for being the Buddha.⁵⁹ According to the *Sāmañña-phala-sutta* and its *Dīrgha-āgama* parallel, a king who had come for a visit on a clear full-moon night was unable to recognize the Buddha from among a congregation of Buddhist monks, and needed to be told who of those seated was the one he wished to meet.⁶⁰ These passages depict the Buddha as looking similar to other monks and thereby without any self-evident externally visible characteristic that would make it easy to distinguish him.

The *Cūlagosinga-sutta* and the *Upakkilesa-sutta*, together with their parallels, report that the guardian of a park did not recognize the Buddha and tried to stop him from entering the park in which three Buddhist monks were dwelling, clearly not realizing that he had their teacher in front of him.⁶¹ In the *Dhātuvibhaṅga-sutta* and its parallels a Buddhist

⁵⁸ Schlingloff 1963: 55 concludes that according to the early tradition the Buddha shaved his hair and beard; cf. also Spagnoli 1999: 383f and Nakamura 2000: 217, who comments that “of course, when he was undertaking severe ascetic exercise by himself he would not have cut his hair, but after he had formed his community he would surely have done so. In outward form, Sakyamuni was no different from other *bhikkhus*.” The assumption by Burnouf 1852/1925: 562 that there is no reference to the Buddha shaving his head, as well as the position taken by Taddei 1996/2003: 429 and 433 that the Buddha was not shaven-headed, a position recently reaffirmed by Quagliotti 2011, does not correctly reflect the canonical information at our disposal.

⁵⁹ This is reported in the Dharmaguptaka *Vinaya*, T 1428 at T XXII 695b15, the Sarvāstivāda *Vinaya*, T 1435 at T XXIII 130c1, and the Theravāda *Vinaya*, Vin IV 173,10; cf. also fragment 108b, Hoernle 1916a: 367.

⁶⁰ DN 2 at DN I 50,16 and its parallel DĀ 27 at T I 108a4.

⁶¹ MN 31 at MN I 205,20, MN 128 at MN III 155,15, MĀ 72 at T I 536b8, MĀ 185 at T I 729c22, and EĀ 24.8 at T II 629b6. This and the next example have already been adduced by Guang Xing 2005: 14f in support of the conclusion that the Buddha was not easily recognizable.

monk does not recognize the Buddha, who has come to stay in the same place as himself.⁶² He only finds out that he is in the presence of his teacher on receiving a long instruction from the Buddha. None of these instances gives the impression that the Buddha was held to have had easily recognizable physical features, such as a protuberance on his head, or being the only one in Buddhist monastic robes with long hair, worn in a topknot, or else having some other distinct physical abnormality. This in turn points to a need to reflect on how literally the depiction of the thirty-two marks should be taken.

Besides these passages related to the Buddha, of relevance here could also be that a wheel-turning king is held to be endowed with the same thirty-two marks. Nevertheless, descriptions of the arising of the wheel-treasure are usually accompanied by reporting the king's reflection that this signifies that he is indeed a wheel-turning king (as in the passage translated in the previous chapter).⁶³ The depiction of such a reflection is less natural if since his birth a wheel-turning king was held to have had such evident physical marks as to make it clear that, unless he were to go forth, he must become a wheel-turning king. In other words, from the viewpoint of such passages even the one endowed with these marks, who in other respects is shown to be well acquainted with what it takes to be a wheel-turning king, does not recognize them with sufficient certainty to be sure about his own future destiny. It is only when the wheel-treasure and the other treasures manifest that his status as a wheel-turning king similarly becomes manifest.

The marks are also not recognized by those who are on record for encountering the recently awakened Buddha. The *Ariyapariyesanā-sutta* and its *Madhyama-āgama* parallel report that the five companions of the

⁶² MN 140 at MN III 238,8 and its parallels MĀ 162 at T I 690a27 and T 511 at T XIV 779c15. In the prose portion of a *Dharmapada* text, T 211 at T IV 581a25, which is similar to the discourse versions, reports that the teaching he had received led to his attainment of a level of awakening, the Buddha thereupon displayed his physical marks. Somewhat along the same lines the Pāli commentary, Ps V 46,21, explains that, before meeting the monk, the Buddha had hidden his thirty-two major and eighty minor physical marks and covered his head so as to avoid being recognized. These two texts reflect a developed conception of the marks as something more easily visible, a topic to which I turn in the next chapter.

⁶³ Cf. above p. 31.

bodhisattva Gautama during his ascetic practices, who had left him when he gave up fasting, did not believe the Buddha's claim that he had reached full awakening and needed quite a lot of convincing to accept it.⁶⁴ Had these texts considered him to have easily recognizable physical marks, whose import as marking him off for being destined to become a wheel-turning king or a Buddha was generally known, the idea of such convincing would be less probable. Given that he had gone forth and thus eschewed the career of a wheel-turning king, recognizing those characteristics should have enabled his five former companions to be certain that this person must be destined to become a Buddha. The same holds for an encounter with the wanderer Upaka reported a little earlier in the same discourses, who similarly is shown to express his lack of belief in the Buddha's claim to be a fully awakened one and in fact just walks off.⁶⁵

In sum, however hyperbolically described, the thirty-two marks must originally have been conceived of as subtle and refined nuances.⁶⁶ Their description is probably best understood in the same way as an English

⁶⁴ MN 26 at MN I 172,7 and MĀ 204 at T I 777c19.

⁶⁵ MN 26 at MN I 171,16 and MĀ 204 at T I 777b28.

⁶⁶ Pace Powers 2009: 227 who, based on a literal reading of the marks, reasons: “the Buddha … probably did not have a fist-sized cranial bump, a sheathed penis, arms reaching down to his knees, and a three-foot-long tuft of hair in the middle of his forehead, among other physical abnormalities. Why, then, did his followers assign such a bizarre physiognomy to him?” At the seventeenth IABS congress in Vienna on the 19th of August 2014 Powers then presented a talk on “Why Don’t Buddhists Want Lumps on Their Heads? Implications of Indian Notions of Masculinity for Contemporary Buddhists”, in which he showed pictures of the legs of antelopes and the torso and teeth of lions to highlight the absurdity of practitioners of the bodhisattva path aspiring to have the body of a Buddha. Yet, rather than assuming that during the entire history of Buddhism those responsible for textual descriptions of the Buddha as well as those who have followed the bodhisattva path have been unaware of the fact that by becoming a Buddha one will become “a freak” (terminology used in Powers 2009: 10 and 58 for a body with the marks), one might question if the relevant texts really have a single predetermined meaning such that they must invariably be read literally. Regarding comparisons with an antelope and a lion, for example, according to Sv II 447,4, 448,20, and 450,1 these are meant to represent fullness of the respective bodily parts and thus not to be taken literally as descriptions of a human body made out of parts of animals. Zysk 2016: 20 explains that in general “animal similes are an important characteristic of the Indian system of marks … [and as such] are applied … to specific body parts.”

expression that describes a human body as “in the bloom of youth”, for example. Such an expression uses the motif of a blooming flower in a symbolic sense and does not signify that the stages of growth of a flower should be applied literally to a human being, that the body in question is growing petals. In the same way, plant and animal motifs in the description of the thirty-two marks are best read as comparisons whose purpose is to illustrate what were considered to be subtle nuances of the body of the Buddha when compared to other human bodies.

The fact that some of these marks are hard to make sense of in the way their description has come down to us needs be considered in the light of the apparent cross-fertilization between art and text. Just as a textual description of a wheel with a thousand spokes on the foot or footprint of a Buddha becomes meaningful once the perspective of ancient Indian art is taken into account, so too the description of other marks are probably best understood as the result of an evolutionary process that, as far as the sources enable us to judge, would have had as its starting point a description with symbolic intent, in the sense of illustrating mere physical nuances.

2.6 The Significance of the Thirty-two Marks

The suggestion that the original conception of the thirty-two marks concerned only nuances also emerges from the *Brahmāyu-sutta* and its parallel in the *Madhyama-āgama*. Both introduce Uttara's ability to recognize the thirty-two marks as a special knowledge that he had learned,⁶⁷ which of course would not be needed if these were plainly evident physical characteristics. After having ascertained that the Buddha is indeed endowed with these thirty-two marks, Uttara still keeps following the Buddha to observe his conduct for several months, conveying the impression that he wanted further confirmation.

⁶⁷ MN 91 at MN II 134,2 (to be supplemented from the description of Brahmāyus at MN II 133,13) introduces Uttara as proficient in the lore of the thirty-two marks, and at MN II 134,15 Brahmāyus reminds Uttara that in their *mantras* the thirty-two marks have been handed down, to which Uttara agrees. In the part translated above from MĀ 161 at T I 685b23, Brahmāyus states that Uttara has received the *sūtras* on the thirty-two marks, to which Uttara agrees; cf. also T 76 at T I 883b24.

If to recognize these thirty-two marks requires previous training and close scrutiny, it follows that, at least in the way these marks were conceived of at the time of these discourses, they could not have been considered to be easily visible physical marks. Instead, they are presented as perceptible only to a keen observer who has been trained in the art of detecting them, which would not be needed for abnormal physical marks that are so plainly evident that one cannot fail to notice them.⁶⁸

In relation to the footprint in the discourse to Drona, the general impression that in the thought-world of the early discourses the marks are not self-evident and require training in order to be detected offers support for the hypothesis that at an early stage the description of the Buddha's footprint did not yet include any special visible marks that would have rendered it easily recognizable. Instead, his footprints would at first have been conceived of as being in their entirety of a sublime nature such that someone trained in the lore of interpreting physical marks, like the brahmin protagonist of the discourse, was able to discern their special nature. In line with their depiction in art, the extraordinary nature of the foot of a Buddha eventually would have found expression in visible markings on his soles and consequently in his footprint.

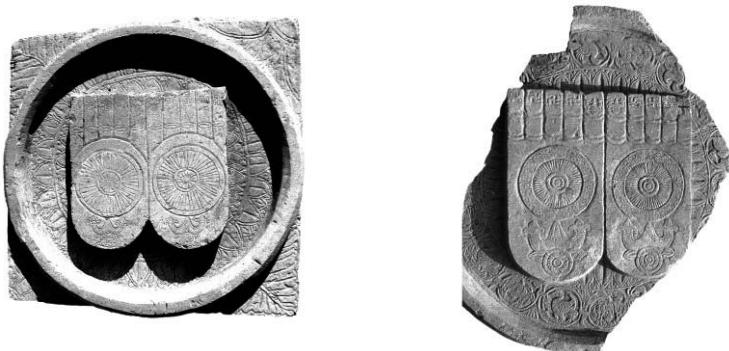


Figure 7 Footprints with *svastikas*

⁶⁸ On a literal interpretation, some of the marks would indeed, as noted by Nitta 2008: 1099, "seem very unnatural, leading us to wonder ... whether ancient Buddhists merely believed in them literally ... [or whether] they were understood symbolically."

A example can be seen in the two sets of footprints in figure 7 from Kanaganahalli where, in addition to the wheel, the omega-motif together with a lotus is depicted on the heel and the big toe, and *svastikas* are shown on the other toes.⁶⁹

2.7 The Thirty-two Marks as Brahminical Lore

Another point that also emerges from the above is that the discourse to Drona and the *Brahmāyu-sutta*, together with their respective parallels, present the science of the footprint or else of the thirty-two marks as brahminical lore. From their perspective, such concern with physical marks is characteristic of brahmans.⁷⁰

⁶⁹ Courtesy of Christian Luczanits. On the omega-motif cf. Quagliotti 1998: 143–167.

⁷⁰ In reply to the suggestion by Radich 2007: 306 that “it seems to me that it is most logical to understand the idea of a *mahāpuruṣa* characterised by (thirty-two) special marks to derive from Buddhism itself”, Levman 2013: 164f argues that “it seems hard to imagine, given the number of times the legend is told in the canon, that there is not some antecedent for it (in the Vedic writings or elsewhere)”, concluding that “it seems impossible to rationalize that the Great Man concept was first invented by the Buddha’s followers.” At least in later times concern with the marks can be seen in brahminical texts; for a comparison of the thirty-two marks with the *Brhat Saṃhitā* cf. McGovern 2013: 583–603, a relationship already recognized by Senart 1882a: 111f; for a comparison of the list of marks in the *Lalitavistara* with marks in *Purāṇa* texts Sastri 1940: 311–314; and for the Jain marks of a *mahāpuruṣa* Shah 1987: 95f. Based on a comparison of Jain and Buddhist conceptions of the marks of a *mahāpuruṣa*, Mette 1973: 23 expresses her impression that both stem from a common earlier source, “lassen ... den Eindruck entstehen, daß beide Quellen auf einem gemeinsamen altertümlichen Substrat fußen.” Zysk 2016: 1 introduces his detailed study of the Indian lore of human marks with the observation that, “like Indian medicine or Āyurveda, the precise origins of the system of human marks are unknown ... the evidence indicates that both were closely related to each other ... it is possible that the two became separated with the rise of the early ascetic movements that became known as Buddhism and Jainism.” Zysk 2016: 164 reasons that “it might well have been ... that the system of thirty-two marks was, at the time of the Buddha, an extra-brahmanic form of useful knowledge, which was at times learned and practised by certain Brahmans, but its origins might well in the beginning have been outside the existing sources of brahmanic knowledge.” Regarding the suggestion by Radich 2007: 313 that the physical conception of the *mahāpuruṣa*, evident in the thirty-two marks, is earlier than discourse passages that employ the term as a way to express superior mental qualities cf. Anālayo 2011a: 544 note 76.

This attribution does not seem to carry any negative evaluation, however. In the *Brahmāyu-sutta* and its parallels recognition of the thirty-two characteristics has the function of inspiring Brahmāyus with sufficient confidence in the Buddha to bring about his successful conversion. Just as was the case with Drona, so too in relation to Brahmāyus the Buddha is shown to build on his visitor's understanding of the significance of physical marks in such a way that the brahmin also realizes the importance of the mental qualities of an awakened one.

The same basic procedure can again be seen, for example, in the *Sela-sutta* and its *Ekottarika-āgama* parallel, where the brahmin protagonist of this episode also ascertains that the Buddha possesses the thirty-two marks, and this then leads to his conversion.⁷¹ The relevant part from the *Ekottarika-āgama* version proceeds as follows, starting with the moment when the brahmin has decided to examine if the Buddha has the thirty-two marks:⁷²

At that time, the brahmin saw only thirty of the marks. He did not discern two of the marks, which aroused his doubt and hesitation. He did not see that the tongue was broad and long and that what is concealed was [like] the hidden [parts] of a horse.

Then the brahmin Sāila asked in verse:⁷³

“I have heard of the thirty-two
Sublime marks of a Great Man,
Now I do not see two of the marks,
Where are they, after all?

⁷¹ Another example would be a reference to a brahmin also qualified as one who knows the thirty-two marks, found in DN 3 at DN I 88,7 (which refers to his student and then indicates that the student's knowledge was equal to that of the teacher) and its parallel DĀ 20 at T I 82a14. At a later point in the discourse's narration the brahmin then ascertains that the Buddha indeed possesses the thirty-two marks, DN 3 at DN I 109,21 and DĀ 20 at T I 87c17, which in turn forms the basis for his conversion. A reference to the thirty-two marks as a brahminical lore can also be found in a parallel Sanskrit fragment 410r8, Melzer 2006: 136. As already noted by Melzer 2006: 93, however, the Sanskrit fragment version does not relate the actual conversion to ascertaining that the Buddha had these thirty-two marks.

⁷² The translated part is taken from EĀ 49.6 at T II 799c8 to 799c27; already translated in Anālayo 2011b: 40f.

⁷³ Sn 3.7 at Sn 107,17 (= MN 92) does not report an enquiry after the two marks, as in its account the Buddha realizes on his own that the brahmin has doubts about them.

“Chaste and pure, it is concealed [like] the hidden [parts] of a horse,
 That mark is very difficult to come to know.
 Do you have a broad and long tongue,
 With which it is possible to lick the ears and cover the face?
 “I wish you would stretch out your broad and long tongue,
 Let me be without doubt!
 Let me see it!
 I will forever be without the bond of doubt and disappointment.”⁷⁴

Then the Blessed One stretched out his tongue, licked his left and right ears, and then withdrew it again.⁷⁵ Then the Blessed One entered into concentration to allow the brahmin to see that what is concealed is [like] the hidden [parts] of a horse.⁷⁶

Then the brahmin saw that the Buddha had the thirty-two marks and the eighty secondary characteristics,⁷⁷ and he was delighted and thrilled, unable to contain himself.

In agreement with its Pāli parallel, the *Ekottarika-āgama* version reports that, having in this way verified the Buddha’s possession of the thirty-two marks, Śaila, together with his following of students, decided to go forth under the Buddha and all of them eventually became arhats.

⁷⁴ Adopting the variant 懈 instead of 緺.

⁷⁵ Sn 3.7 at Sn 108,3 adds that he covered his whole face with the tongue; on the tongue motif in general cf. Skilling 2013b.

⁷⁶ The *Sela-sutta* adopts the opposite sequence, with the display of the tongue coming in second place in Sn 3.7 at Sn 108,1.

⁷⁷ For surveys of the eighty secondary characteristics cf., e.g., Burnouf 1852/1925: 583–615, Edgerton 1953/1998: 34 (*anuvyañjana*), and Karunaratna 1965. Harrison 1992/1993: 233 note 33 comments that “the thirty-two marks were at some point supplemented by the eighty minor characteristics (*anuvyañjana*), which in a sense form a commentary on them”, with reference to Lamotte 1944/1981: 272 note 2, who characterizes the *anuvyañjana* as serving “en quelque sorte de commentaire explicatif”, in the sense that, Lamotte 1970: 1346 note 2, “les 80 *anuvyañjana* servent de complément et de commentaire aux 32 *lakṣaṇa*”; cf. also Endo 1997/2002: 142–146. Based on a comparative study of *avadāna* texts preserved in Chinese translations, Guang Xing 2005: 25 proposes the following stages of development in descriptions of the Buddha’s appearance: with the thirty-two marks forming the first stage, “the second stage is the addition of the eighty minor marks to the list of the Buddha’s physical attributes”, and “it was during the third ... stage that the golden complexion and one-fathom halo were added to the list.”

In the case of Brahmāyus, after ascertaining the Buddha's possession of the thirty-two marks and receiving a teaching, the brahmin is portrayed as being so moved that he publicly expresses his veneration. In the *Madhyama-āgama* version Brahmāyus gets up and tries to pay his respects to the Buddha. According to the *Majjhima-nikāya* account he goes so far as to kiss and caress the Buddha's feet. In the individual translation he does the same and moreover sheds tears and proclaims his taking of refuge.⁷⁸ The three versions agree that the public display of humility by the eminent brahmin Brahmāyus causes amazement among the assembled congregation. Clearly the thirty-two marks have a central role to play in such dramatic depictions of the conversion of brahmins.

Just as with Brahmāyus, in the case of Śaila, too, the Buddha cooperates with the respective brahmin's investigation of his physical form by displaying on purpose the two marks that require such cooperation, his tongue and his genitals. Such concerns are not brushed off as misguided, but rather are made use of so as to enable these brahmins to gain faith.⁷⁹

The same nuance emerges from the *Mahāvastu*'s report that, when the bodhisattva was about to be born, the *devas* of the Pure Abodes taught the thirty-two marks to brahmins in order to enable them to recognize the bodhisattva.⁸⁰ A comparable suggestion can also be found in the Pāli commentarial tradition.⁸¹

In the prologue to the *Pārāyanavagga* the Buddha himself diagnoses the marks of others. A brahmin has sent his students to meet the Buddha. They ask how they are to recognize whether the one they are going to meet is indeed a Buddha. After referring to the thirty-two marks, the brahmin tells his students that they should formulate several questions in their minds to see if the Buddha telepathically understands those questions and is able to reply to them.

As a side note related to the main topic of Buddhapadas it is worth mentioning that, according to the commentary, on arrival at Jeta's Grove

⁷⁸ MĀ 161 at T I 689a13, MN 91 at MN II 144,24, and T 76 at T I 885c9.

⁷⁹ Tsuchida 1991: 74 concludes that the "Brahmins' confirmation of the actual presence of these marks on the Buddha acts as the most decisive factor in their embracing his teaching."

⁸⁰ Senart 1882b: 197,8 and 366,10.

⁸¹ Ps III 364,12.

the brahmin students find that the Buddha has left. Nevertheless, the footprints left by the Buddha serve to convince them that their owner must be a Buddha indeed.⁸²

Returning to the main plot, one of the questions the students are to ask telepathically concerns the brahmin's own marks. When they do so, once they have met the Buddha, he of course understands the question and answers correctly. On being requested telepathically to do so, the Buddha elaborates on the three marks which the brahmin possessed, namely his long tongue, the hair between his eyebrows, and the nature of his private parts.⁸³

Rather than conveying a negative attitude towards concern with the marks, this passage shows the Buddha surpassing brahmins in this lore. Without ever having had a personal meeting, the Buddha knows which marks this brahmin has, two of which brahmins are unable to ascertain on their own even when they are in the presence of the Buddha.

The function of the thirty-two marks as a means to inspire brahmins with faith recurs also in a different mode in other discourses, such as, for example, the *Sonadanda-sutta* and the *Kūṭadanta-sutta* as well as their *Dīrgha-āgama* parallels. In both cases an eminent brahmin wishes to visit the Buddha. He is stopped by other brahmins with the argument that it is beneath his dignity to visit the Buddha. In support of their contention, the other brahmins list various outstanding qualities of the eminent brahmin, among which features his ability to recognize the thirty-two marks.⁸⁴ Since he is such an eminent brahmin, the other brahmins think that Gautama should rather come to visit him. The eminent brah-

⁸² Pj II 584,3: *bhagavato padanikkhepam disvā ... buddho ti niṭṭham gatā*.

⁸³ Sn 1000–1003 has the description of the two destinies for one who has the thirty-two marks, and in Sn 1004 the brahmin recommends that the students should ask questions in their minds. In Sn 1019 the Buddha states that the brahmin has three marks and in Sn 1020 that the brahmin teaches the lore of the marks to his students. Being asked telepathically to elaborate on the three marks, in Sn 1022 the Buddha describes them one by one. A parallel to this interrogation in T 202 at T IV 433b12 differs in so far as the brahmin has only two marks; this version does not refer to the nature of his genitals (the Tibetan counterpart to T 202 does not have this story; cf. Takakusu 1901: 451 no. 57).

⁸⁴ DN 4 at DN I 114,3 and its parallel DĀ 22 at T I 94c9 as well as DN 5 at DN I 130,13 and its parallel DĀ 23 at T I 97b15.

min then replies with a list of the qualities of the recluse Gautama, which explicitly mentions the Buddha's possession of the thirty-two marks. The relevant passage in the *Dirgha-āgama* proceeds as follows:

The recluse Gautama is completely endowed with all of the thirty-two marks. It is proper for me to approach one who is accomplished in this quality, it is not proper for him to come here.⁸⁵

With this and other arguments, the eminent brahmin successfully convinces the other brahmins that it is indeed quite appropriate for him to visit the Buddha. This episode further confirms the role of the thirty-two marks in the early discourses in serving as a means of inspiring faith in brahmins and making them feel that it is not beneath their dignity to pay a visit to the Buddha.

The instances surveyed above follow the basic pattern already evident in the Discourse to Drona, where discerning an aspect of the extraordinary nature of the Buddha's physique sets the stage enabling the Buddha to disclose what from his viewpoint truly makes one a *mahā-puruṣa*, leading to the conversion of his brahmin interlocutor or, in some versions, even to his realization of a stage of awakening.⁸⁶

2.8 Summary

Similarly to the case of the wheel-mark on the soles of the Buddha, the descriptions of several of his other physical marks in the way they have come down to us appear to be the result of a process of cross-fertilization between text and art. In spite of the, at times, hyperbolic descriptions that result from this process, in the early discourses in general the Buddha is not presented as having easily recognizable physical features. This in turn implies that, at least at the stage in the evolution of Bud-

⁸⁵ DĀ 22 at T I 95b27 to 95b29, parallel to DN 4 at DN I 116,8. The other instance is DN 5 at DN I 132,18 and its parallel DĀ 23 at T I 98b1; another such case can be found in MN 95 at MN II 167,18. In relation to DN 4, DN 5, and MN 95, I have not been able to identify a corresponding passage in the Sanskrit fragment parallels. In the case of the relevant part in the fairly well-preserved *Kūṭatāṇḍya-sūtra* fragments, folio 402r2f, von Criegern 2002: 29, the passage on the qualities of the brahmin and the Buddha is unfortunately abbreviated.

⁸⁶ Cf. above p. 23.

dhist thought reflected in these discourses, the thirty-two marks were conceived of as subtle and refined nuances whose identification requires training in the lore of the *lakṣaṇas*.

The same texts present the lore of the *lakṣaṇas* as laudable qualities of a learned brahmin and consider concern with the thirty-two marks as characteristic of brahmins. Nevertheless, such concerns do not receive criticism or censure. Instead, the thirty-two marks are readily made use of as a tool by means of which brahmins can be convinced to have faith in the Buddha, so that they become willing to learn from him. Although this seems to be the prevalent import of the thirty-two marks, in a few instances a tendency can be discerned that more firmly incorporates these marks into Buddhist lore. I examine such incorporation in the next two chapters.

3 The Great Lineage of Buddhas

3.1 Introduction

The discourses involving Drona and Brahmāyus, as well as several other early discourse passages, present an investigation of the footprint or of all the thirty-two marks as a brahminical concern, serving to inspire eminent brahmins to approach the Buddha and lend an ear to his teachings. Although this is a recurrent theme, it is not the only voice that makes itself heard in the early discourses on the topic of these marks.

A distinctly Buddhist employment of the thirty-two marks emerges in the *Mahāvadāna-sūtra* and its parallels, whose main topic is to present a genealogy of Buddhas from Vipaśyin to Gautama. The main versions of the discourse that also feature a description of the soles of the feet and the other marks of a Buddha are as follows:

- the *Mahāvadāna-sūtra* extant in Sanskrit fragments from a Sarvāstivāda/Mūlasarvāstivāda *Dīrgha-āgama*;¹
- the *Mahāpadāna-sutta* in the Great Chapter of the Theravāda *Dīrghanikāya*,²
- the Discourse on the Great Ancestry, the first discourse in the Chinese translation of a Dharmaguptaka *Dīrgha-āgama* (T 1).³

¹ Edited in Waldschmidt 1953 and 1956 and in Fukita 2003. Fragments published subsequent to 2003 are: SHT IX 2032, 2033, 2034, 2172, 2446, and 2995, Bechert and Wille 2004: 60f, 122f, 205f, and 322 (cf. also Bechert and Wille 2004: 393f and 396f); Or 15003/89, 15003/100, and 15003/261, Wille 2006: 94, 98, and 144; SHT X 4175a, Wille 2008: 291f; Or 15004/32, Wille 2009: 80; Or 15009/81, Nagashima 2009: 152f; Or 15009/132 and 15009/138, Kudo 2009: 186f and 190; Or 15009/329 and 15009/339, Fukita 2009: 312f and 320f; SHT XI 4550, 5559, 5592, 5605, and 5629, Wille 2012: 116, 348, 356, 359, and 364; Or 15007/141, 15007/204, 15007/494, 15007/574, 15007/678, 15007/734, 15007/740, and 15007/743, Wille 2015a: 49, 61, 127, 151, 172, 187f, 189, and 190; Or 15008/1, Wille 2015b: 200; Or 15009/404, Hirabayashi 2015: 275f; Or 15009/452, Kudo 2015: 315f; Or 15009/522 and 15009/582, Nagashima 2015: 359f and 405; Or 15009/641, Kudo and Shono 2015: 444f; and Or 15015/255, Wille 2015c: 528f. For Uighur fragments cf. Shōgaito 1998: 374–378.

² DN 14 at DN II 1,1 to 54,8.

³ DĀ 1 at T I 1b11 to 10c29; on the school affiliation cf. above p. 35 note 63.

An additional parallel is a discourse preserved individually in Chinese, although this version does not give any details on the thirty-two marks and thus also has no description of the nature of the foot of a Buddha.⁴

The significance for tradition of the genealogy of Buddhas presented in the *Mahāvadāna-sūtra* and its parallels can be seen in the pride of place accorded to this exposition in each of the three reciter-traditions. The *Mahāpadāna-sutta* is the first discourse in the Great Chapter of the *Dīgha-nikāya*, which according to a recommendation given in the *Saṃtapāśādikā* is the one that should be learned first of the three chapters of the entire discourse collection.⁵ The *Sumārgalavilāsinī* refers to the *Mahāpadāna-sutta* as the “King of Discourses”,⁶ thereby confirming the impression that the giving of pride of place to this discourse is not accidental, but would rather express a sense of its significance.

In the case of the Dharmaguptaka *Dīrgha-āgama*, the corresponding discourse is the first of the entire *Dīrgha-āgama* and thereby the first of all discourses in the Dharmaguptaka *Āgama* collections.⁷

In the Mūlasarvāstivāda tradition(s), the *Mahāvadāna-sūtra* belongs to a set of six discourses that were at times handed down independently of the whole *Dīrgha-āgama* collection, clear evidence of the particular interest and appeal of the members of this group of discourses.⁸ Two of the remaining members of this group of six are of comparable orientation, in that they provide a history of the mission and decease of the Buddha Gautama (the *Catuspariṣat-sūtra* and the *Mahāparinirvāna-sūtra*). The other three discourses are listings of doctrinal terms (the *Daśottara-sūtra*, the *Arthavistara-sūtra*, and the *Saṅgīti-sūtra*).

⁴ T 2 at T I 150a3 to 154b1; parallels to other parts of the discourse are T 3 and T 4.

⁵ Sp IV 789,15.

⁶ Sv II 480,16 concludes its exegesis of DN 14 with the statement: *suttantarājā nāma ayam suttanto editabho*. The conferring of this title is based on the supposed potential of the text to be expanded from three recital sections, *bhāṇavāra*, to 2,600 such *bhāṇavāras*; von Hinüber 1996/1997: 118 note 416 sets this indication into context by noting that the entire *Dīgha-nikāya* collection amounts to sixty-four *bhāṇavāras*.

⁷ The Dharmaguptaka *Vinaya*, T 1428 at T XXII 968b19, mentions the *Dīrgha-āgama* in first place in its account of the compilation of the *Āgamas*.

⁸ The popularity of this group of six discourses has already been noted by Schlingloff 1962: 7; cf. also Skilling 1980: 30f and the discussion in Hartmann 1994 and 2014: 144–148.

The significance of the *Mahāvadāna-sūtra* in the context of such a handy survey of the history and doctrine of Buddhism is to set the activities and teachings of the Buddha Gautama within a broader time frame by providing him with a lineage of predecessors. The same function also holds for the parallel versions. A depiction in Gandhāran art can be taken to convey this visually with the help of a seated Buddha on a pedestal that portrays another six seated Buddhas.⁹



Figure 8 The Buddha and His Six Predecessors

⁹ Chandigarh Government Museum and Art Gallery; courtesy of Christian Luczanits. On Gandhāran Buddha Images cf., e.g., Rhi 2008.

As part of their project to present a lineage of seven Buddhas up to the Buddha Gautama, the *Mahāvadāna-sūtra* and its parallels reveal that, alongside individual differences, all past Buddhas had closely similar qualities and undertook the same fundamental actions as Gautama. This serves to endow the Buddha Gautama with the authentication of having had predecessors comparable to the *tīrthankaras* of the Jain tradition or the *paramparā* of Vedic sages of the brahminical traditions.¹⁰ It also puts into perspective the probably acutely felt sense of loss after Gautama's demise by making his life and teaching part of a natural law or pattern, *dharmaṭā*, thereby implicitly giving the assurance that the same law will continue and thus that there will be other Buddhas in the future.

The *Mahāvadāna-sūtra* and its parallels proceed by first highlighting the individuality of the seven Buddhas, reporting their respective names, caste, and lifespan, the tree under which they were believed to have attained awakening, the names of their chief disciples and of their parents, etc. Following such individual information for each of the seven Buddhas, the *Mahāvadāna-sūtra* and its parallels embark on a more detailed description of the first of these seven, the Buddha Vipaśyin, as an exemplification of what forms the *dharmaṭā* for all Buddhas, in the sense of what they all have in common.

It is in the context of this description of the first of the seven Buddhas that the thirty-two marks occur. The *Mahāvadāna-sūtra* and its two parallels in the *Dīgha-nikāya* and the *Dīrgha-āgama* offer a detailed survey of the thirty-two marks, and thereby also of the feet of the previous Buddha Vipaśyin. The description of his foot and other marks forms part of an account that begins with the time of his conception.

In what follows I translate the relevant part of the description of the Buddha Vipaśyin from the Chinese *Dīrgha-āgama* version, up to the reference to his feet.¹¹ This description alternates between prose pas-

¹⁰ Cf. in more detail Anālayo 2010a: 49.

¹¹ The translated text is taken from DĀ 1 at T I 3c13 to 5a29, parallel to DN 14 at DN II 12,3 to 17,18 and to the Sanskrit fragments edited by Waldschmidt 1956: 82–102 (4a1 to 6b3) or Fukita 2003: 52–78. As mentioned above, the first part up to the description of the thirty-two marks has a parallel in T 2 at T I 152b13 to 154a29, which I take into account in my footnotes even though it does not lead up to a description of the feet. Translations of DĀ 1 into French and English can be found in Jin 2011 and Ichimura 2015: 7–61.

sages and verse repetitions of the prose portions, as is also the case for the *Mahāvadāna-sūtra*, whereas the corresponding part of the Pāli version is entirely in prose. The absence of a Pāli counterpart and the content of some of these verses give the impression that the prose part might be earlier than the verses.¹² Given the apparent importance of this discourse, in an oral setting it would have been natural to add verse repetitions to an exposition given in prose. This would enable members of the audience, who might not all have been similarly proficient in the art of memorization, to bear in mind more easily the main points by way of hearing them twice and in two alternative modes. These two alternative modes leave it open to the listener to make an attempt to remember either prose or verse, according to personal predilection and ability.

Since as a result of such concerns, reflecting an oral setting, the passage to be translated is somewhat long, readers preferring to avoid excessive repetition might skip the verses and just stay with the main prose text as sufficient for the ensuing discussion.

3.2 Translation

The Buddha said to the monks: “Listen, listen, and pay proper attention to what I will analyze and explain to you. Monks, you should know that this is an unchanging law for all Buddhas:¹³ [When] the bodhisattva Vipaśyin descended from the Tuṣita Heaven into his mother’s womb, he entered it from the right side,¹⁴ being with right mindfulness and without confusion.

“Right at that time there was an earthquake and a great light illuminated the whole world, a great brilliance covered all the places where the sun and moon do not reach. Sentient beings in darkness were able to see each other and know the place where they had arisen. Then this brilliant light further illuminated

¹² Waldschmidt 1953: 6 comments: “[so] machen die Verspartien des MAV [*Mahāvadāna-sūtra*] eher einen sekundären Eindruck.”

¹³ T 2 does not qualify the different descriptions as conforming to a fixed pattern for Buddhas.

¹⁴ The other versions do not mention that the entry into the womb took place from the right side.

Māra's palace, covering *devas*, Śakra, Brahmā, recluses, brahmins, and other sentient beings with this great brilliance, concealing the natural radiance of all the *devas*.¹⁵

Then the Buddha spoke in verse:

"[Just as when] dense clouds gather in the empty sky
And a flash of lightning illuminates the world,
Similarly shone the brilliant light
At Vipaśyin's descent into the womb.

"Nothing was not covered by the great light,
[Even] places where the sun and moon do not reach.
His abode in the womb was pure and undefiled.

This is a law for all Buddhas, they are all like this."

[The Buddha said]: "Monks, you should know that this is an unchanging law for all Buddhas: When the bodhisattva Vipaśyin was in his mother's womb, [4a] he was with collected mindfulness and without confusion.¹⁶ Four *devas* holding spears in their hands guarded his mother,¹⁷ and humans together with non-humans were not able to come near and disturb her.¹⁸ This is an unchanging law."

Then the Buddha spoke in verse:

"Four *devas* from the four directions,
Renowned for their mighty virtue,
Had been dispatched by Śakra, the ruler of the *devas*
To guard the bodhisattva well.

"Continuously holding spears in their hands
They protected him without leaving,
[So that] humans and non-humans did not disturb him.

This is an unchanging law for all Buddhas.

"He was protected by the power of these *devas*,
Who were like a heavenly nymph's escort in heaven,

¹⁵ The parallels do not refer to Māra's palace.

¹⁶ DN 14 at DN II 12,4 reports that the bodhisattva was endowed with mindfulness and clear comprehension at the time of descending into the womb.

¹⁷ Adopting the variant 母 instead of 人. In T 2 at T I 152c14 the *devas* also hold weapons in their hands, which here are bow and sword.

¹⁸ Adopting the variant 擾 instead of 嬌. The Sanskrit fragment version, Waldschmidt 1956: 83 (§4b1) or Fukita 2003: 54, indicates that these four *devas* had been sent by Śakra; cf. also Or 15009/404 ref, Hirabayashi 2015: 275. According to Sv II 434,17, the divine guardians were the four Heavenly Great Kings.

Her entourage being thrilled with joy.
This is an unchanging law for all Buddhas.”

Again he said to the monks: “This is an unchanging law for all Buddhas: [When] the bodhisattva Vipaśyin had descended from the Tuṣita Heaven into his mother’s womb, with collected mindfulness and without confusion, his mother’s body was at ease, without the many afflictions [of pregnancy]. With her increased wisdom the mother contemplated her own womb,¹⁹ where she observed the bodhisattva’s body completely endowed with all faculties, like polished gold that is without contamination. It is as if a person with eyesight were to contemplate a pure beryl that is clear inside and outside, without the many obstructions.²⁰ Monks, this is an unchanging law for all Buddhas.”

Then the Blessed One spoke in verse:

“Like a pure beryl gem,
That is as bright as the sun and moon,
Was the Benevolent and Honoured One’s abode in his mother’s womb,
His mother not being afflicted.

“With her wisdom being increased
She saw him in her womb like a golden image,
The mother being at ease in her pregnancy.
This is the law for all Buddhas.”

The Buddha said to the monks: “[When] the bodhisattva Vipaśyin had descended from the Tuṣita Heaven into his mother’s womb, with collected mindfulness and without confusion, his mother’s mind was pure, without the many sensual perceptions, not heated up by the fire of sexuality.²¹ This is an unchanging law for all Buddhas.”

Then the Blessed One spoke in verse:

“[When] the bodhisattva dwelled in his mother’s womb
The *devas* in heaven became endowed with good fortune.
His mother’s mind was pure,

¹⁹ The parallels do not mention an increase of the mother’s wisdom.

²⁰ In DN 14 at DN II 13,20 and the Sanskrit fragment version, Walder 1956: 85 (§4d2) or Fukita 2003: 58, the beryl is strung on a string; cf. also Or 15009/522 r4, Nagashima 2015: 359. On the beryl motif cf. also Anālayo 2010a: 29 note 47.

²¹ DN 14 at DN II 13,5 adds that the mother was also beyond becoming the object of the sensual desires of any man.

Without the many sensual perceptions.

“She relinquished all sexual desires,

Not being defiled by them and not pursuing them.

Not being burned by the fire of sensuality,

This is the constant purity of the mothers of all Buddhas.”

The Buddha said to the monks: “This is an unchanging law for all Buddhas: When the bodhisattva Vipaśyin had descended from the Tuṣita Heaven into his mother’s womb, with collected mindfulness and without confusion, his mother reverentially kept the five precepts and pure celibacy, [4b] she was devoted and altruistic, accomplishing all that is wholesome, being at peace and fearless. On passing away, with the breaking up of the body, she was reborn in the Trāyastrīmśa Heaven.²² This is an unchanging law.”

Then the Blessed One spoke in verse:

“Bearing the body of the Honoured One among humans,

Endowed with energy and virtue,

Afterwards she certainly acquired a divine body,

For this reason, she is called the mother of a Buddha.”

The Buddha said to the monks: “This is an unchanging law for all Buddhas: Right when the bodhisattva Vipaśyin was being born, he emerged from the right side [of his mother].²³ There was an earthquake and a light illuminated everything, [as] earlier when entering the womb, covering all dark places with light. This is an unchanging law.”

Then the Blessed One spoke in verse:

“When the prince was born the earth quaked

And a great light shone forth

In this world and other worlds,

Above and below, together with all directions.

“Because the emitted light bestowed its purity²⁴

Completely among those with a divine body,

²² According to DN 14 at DN II 14,4, she was reborn in Tusita (her keeping of the five precepts is mentioned as a distinct quality at DN II 12,28). The Sanskrit fragment version agrees with DĀ 1 on the realm of her rebirth, Waldschmidt 1956: 113 (§6c1) or Fukita 2003: 86, here referred to as *tridaśa*. T 2 at T I 153a17 just mentions rebirth in heaven, without specifying which. On the realm of rebirth of the mother of the Buddha Gautama cf. Anālayo 2012c: 25–27.

²³ T 2 at T I 153b5 also notes that he emerged from the right side of his mother.

²⁴ Adopting the variant 因 instead of 目.

By way of rejoicing with their clear voices,
They passed on the praise of the bodhisattva's name."

The Buddha said to the monks: "This is an unchanging law for all Buddhas: Right when the bodhisattva Vipaśyin was born and emerged from the right side [of his mother], with collected mindfulness and without confusion, at that time the bodhisattva's mother held on to the branch of a tree with her hand;²⁵ she did not sit and did not lie down. Then four *devas*, offering scented water with their hands, stood in front of the mother and said: 'Oh Queen, you have just given birth to a noble son, do not be concerned or worry.'²⁶ This is an unchanging law."

Then the Blessed One spoke in verse:

"The Buddha's mother did not sit or lie down,
She stood in her virtue, having cultivated purity.
Without negligence she gave birth to the Honoured One,
Who was respectfully received by *devas*."

The Buddha said to the monks: "This is an unchanging law for all Buddhas: Right when the bodhisattva Vipaśyin was born and emerged from the right side [of his mother], with collected mindfulness and without confusion, his body was clean; it was not filthy or polluted.²⁷ It is as if a person with eyesight were to cast a white pearl on white silk; the two will not stain each other because both are completely pure.²⁸ The bodhisattva's emerging from the womb was just like that. This is an unchanging law."

²⁵ The detail of holding on to a tree is not mentioned in the parallels; for a survey of other occurrences of this motif cf. Sander 2006.

²⁶ DN 14 at DN II 14,20 does not relate the receiving of the bodhisattva by four *devas* to water for the mother. The Sanskrit fragment version, Waldschmidt 1956: 92 (§5f1) or Fukita 2003: 66, mentions the manifestation of water for the mother, but without referring to *devas* who make an announcement. Waldschmidt 1956: 92 note 3 takes this water to be also meant for the bodhisattva, but from the more fully reconstructed passage in Fukita 2003: 66 it becomes clear that this water manifests in front of the mother and for her use. T 2 at T I 153b7 mentions four *devas* who receive the bodhisattva, without any reference to water or anything they said. Here and in the ensuing verse at T I 153b12, T 2 emphasizes that the four *devas* received the bodhisattva before he stepped on the ground; cf. also DN 14 at DN II 14,19, which similarly notes that the four *devas* took hold of him before he reached the ground.

²⁷ Adopting the variant 染汙 instead of 汚染.

²⁸ DN 14 at DN II 14,27 and the Sanskrit fragment version, Waldschmidt 1956: 85 (§4c2) or Fukita 2003: 56, illustrate the bodhisattva's purity with the example of a

Then the Blessed One spoke in verse:
 “Just as a pure bright pearl
 Cast on silk will not be stained,
 [So], when the bodhisattva emerged from the womb,
 He was pure and unstained.”

The Buddha said to the monks: “This is an unchanging law for all Buddhas: Right when the bodhisattva Vipaśyin was born and had emerged from the right side [of his mother], with collected mindfulness and without confusion, having emerged from the right side [of his mother] and come down to the ground he took seven steps, [4c] without being supported by any person.²⁹ He observed the four directions, raised his hand, and declared: ‘In heaven and on earth, I alone am to be honoured. My aim is to deliver sentient beings from birth, old age, disease, and death.’ This is an unchanging law.”

Then the Blessed One spoke in verse:
 “Like a lion steps,
 Surveying the four directions,
 He took seven steps, on having come down to the ground,
 Being also a lion among humans.

“Like a great *nāga* walks,
 Surveying the four directions,
 He took seven steps, on having come down to the ground,
 Being also a *nāga* among humans.

“When the one honoured among bipeds was born,
 He calmly walked seven steps.

He surveyed the four directions and proclaimed:
 ‘I will eradicate the *duhkha* of birth and death.’

“Right at the time of his birth,
 [He proclaimed]: ‘I am unequalled.’
 Contemplating the root of his own birth and death,
 [He proclaimed]: ‘This is my last body.’”

The Buddha said to the monks: “This is an unchanging law for all Buddhas: Right when the bodhisattva Vipaśyin was born and had emerged from the right side [of his mother], with collected

jewel on a *kāśī* cloth; cf. also Or 15007/743 rb, Wille 2015a: 190, Or 15009/404 vc, Hirabayashi 2015: 276, and Or 15009/522 r1, Nagashima 2015: 359.

²⁹ Adopting the variant 持 instead of 備. DN 14 at DN II 15,9 and the Sanskrit fragment version, Waldschmidt 1956: 90 (§5d2) or Fukita 2003: 64, mention that a white umbrella was held over him.

mindfulness and without confusion, two springs welled up, one warm and one cool, to enable him to take a bath.³⁰ This is an unchanging law.”

Then the Blessed One spoke in verse:

“When the one honoured among bipeds was born,

Two springs welled up on their own

To supply the bodhisattva’s use,

And the one with all-pervasive vision bathed in their clear purity.

“The two springs that had welled up on their own

Had very pure water;

One was warm and one cool,³¹

So as to bathe the Omniscient One.

“When the crown prince had just been born,³² his father, King Bandhu[mat], convened the fortune-tellers who had reached skills in these methods, so that they might examine the crown prince and understand his good and bad fortune. Then the fortune-tellers, who had been appointed to examine him, opened up his clothes and, seeing that he was endowed with the marks, predicted:

“For one who has these marks there will certainly be two destinies, without doubt. If he remains in the household, he will become a noble wheel-turning king, ruling over the four continents, endowed with the fourfold army, governing by way of the right Dharma, without bias or crookedness, his kindness reaching out to the whole world. The seven treasures will arrive on their own. His thousand brave sons will be able to subdue external enemies, without his army needing to give battle,³³ and the whole world will be at peace. If he goes forth to train in the path, he will accomplish right awakening and be endowed with the ten epithets [of a Tathāgata].”

³⁰ The warm and cold waters shower down from the sky in DN 14 at DN II 15,4, in the Sanskrit fragment version, Waldschmidt 1956: 91 (§5e1) or Fukita 2003: 64, and in T 2 at T I 153b23 (where two *devas* are responsible for this).

³¹ Adopting the variant — instead of 二.

³² At this juncture the text shifts from using the expression “bodhisattva” to the term “prince” to refer to Vipaśyin, a shift that similarly occurs in DN 14 at DN II 16,1 and the Sanskrit fragment version, Waldschmidt 1956: 95 (§6a1) or Fukita 2003: 72; cf. also the discussion in Anālayo 2010a: 47f.

³³ Adopting the variant 仗 instead of 杖.

“Then the fortune-tellers said to the king: ‘The son born to the king has the thirty-two marks, there will certainly be two destinies for him, without doubt. Remaining in the household, he will become a noble wheel-turning king. If he goes forth, he will accomplish full awakening and be endowed with the ten epithets [of a Tathāgata].’”

Then the Buddha spoke in verse: [5a]

“When the prince with a hundred merits was born,
The fortune-tellers predicted of him,
According to the classics and the predictions in their texts,
That there are two destinies for him, without doubt.

“If he delights in the household,

He will become a wheel-turning king.

The seven treasures so difficult to gain,

These treasures will come to the king on their own:

“Endowed with a thousand spokes of real gold,
Kept by the circumference of a golden rim,
On being turned, it is able to fly everywhere,
For this reason it is called the divine wheel.

“Established in its seven limbs being well tamed,³⁴

Tall and white like snow,

And well able to fly through the sky,

This is called the second treasure of the elephant.

“The horse that can travel around the whole world
At dawn and be back in time for the meal,
With a red mane like a peacock’s throat,
This is called the third treasure.

“The pure beryl gem,

That illuminates for [the distance of] one league (*yojana*),

Which shines at night just as brightly as if it were day,

This is called the fourth treasure.

“Her complexion, voice, fragrance, taste, and touch,
Are without equal,
Foremost among all women,
She is called the fifth treasure.

“Offering to the king beryl treasures,

Pearls, gems, and many precious things,

³⁴ Adopting the variant 支 instead of 牙.

Delighting in offering them respectfully,
This is called the sixth treasure.

“In keeping with the wheel-turning king’s thought,
The army quickly advances and retreats,
As swiftly as the king’s intention,³⁵
This is called the seventh treasure.

“These are called the seven treasures:

The wheel, the elephant, the horse, pure and spotless,
The steward, the gem, the woman treasure,
And the general treasure, they are the seven.

“Contemplating them without getting sated,
He delights himself with the five sense pleasures.
[But if], like an elephant who breaks his bonds,
He goes forth, he will accomplish full awakening.

“The king has a son like this,
An Honoured One among human bipeds,
Who will abide in the world [or] turn the wheel of Dharma,
Awakened and free from indolence.”

“Then his father the king kept earnestly asking the fortune-tellers again and for a third time: ‘Examine the thirty-two marks of the crown prince further. How are they described?’³⁶

“Then the fortune-tellers opened up the crown prince’s clothes and announced the thirty-two marks:

1) “‘The first is that his feet are level, his feet are even and full underneath and he steps on the ground at ease.

2) “‘The second is that on the soles of his feet there are wheel-marks, endowed with a thousand spokes, which are radiant and each of them is shiny.’”³⁷

³⁵ Adopting the variant 捷 instead of 健.

³⁶ DN 14 and the Sanskrit fragment version do not report that there was a need for the king to enquire further about the thirty-two characteristics in order to elicit their full description. As mentioned above, such a full description is not found at all in T 2, which only has the prediction of the prince’s future destiny, based on his possession of the thirty-two marks; cf. T 2 at T 1 153c27. The absence of a full description of the marks in T 2 could be taken to support the suggestion by Thomas 1927/2003: 222 that in general it is “probable that the actual lists of marks ... have been added as comments to the text.”

³⁷ DN 14 at DN II 17,13 and the Sanskrit fragment version, Waldschmidt 1956: 102 (§6b3) or Fukita 2003: 78, only describe the completeness of the wheel with a

3.3 Visual Elements in the Description of Vipaśyin

A special feature of the feet of the Buddha Vipaśyin in the *Dīrgha-āgama* version is their radiant and shiny nature, not mentioned in the other versions.³⁸ This echoes a qualification of the wheel-mark in the footprint of the Buddha Gautama in the British Library Kharoṣṭhī fragment version of the discourse to Droṇa, discussed in chapter 1. The fragment describes the footprint as “brilliant and resplendent”.³⁹

The investing of the Buddha in various ways with luminescence or a halo is of course a pan-Buddhist phenomenon,⁴⁰ but as a motif manifesting among the early discourses the parallelism in this respect is striking. This correspondence between British Library Kharoṣṭhī fragment 12 and the *Dīrgha-āgama* preserved in Chinese is in line with another instance of parallelism noted by Salomon (1999: 172f) between British Library Kharoṣṭhī fragment 15 of the *Saṅgūti-sūtra* and the version of this discourse found in the Chinese *Dīrgha-āgama*.⁴¹ Both support the attribution of the British Library Kharoṣṭhī fragments to the Dharmaguptaka tradition.

In relation to the same topic, it is also worthy of note that the Chinese pilgrim Xuánzàng (玄奘) describes a footprint on a rock in the area of Nagarahāra, Gandhāra, that at times displays brilliance.⁴² This asso-

thousand spokes, etc., without mentioning any radiance. Radiance is mentioned in an Uighur fragment, Shōgaito 1998: 374 (line 2).

³⁸ A reference to such brilliance is also found regularly in descriptions of the wheel-treasure in the *Dīrgha-āgama*; cf. above p. 35 note 64.

³⁹ British Library Kharoṣṭhī fragment 12 line 5, Allon 2001: 120: *savarovaghada aceata prabh.[śp].ra*.

⁴⁰ An example of a comparable reference occurs in the *Rāṣtrapālapariprcchā-sūtra*, Finot 1901: 7,10, which, after mentioning the Buddha’s footprints with wheel-marks, indicates that the feet themselves produce light; cf. also D 62 *nga* 230b3 or Q 760.17 *zhi* 195b5 and T 321 at T XII 2b4 (in T 310 at T XI 458c5 the light seems to manifest when people worship the Buddha). Other examples can be found in the Pāli commentarial tradition, where, e.g., Ps III 21,26 even specifies the colour of the light that emanates from the soles of the Buddha’s feet; for a more detailed study of such elements in the Pāli commentaries cf. Endo 2014/2015.

⁴¹ Cf. also Cox 2014: 36–39 and Salomon 2014: 13.

⁴² T 2087 at T LI 879a18: “on top of one rock the subtle mark of a footprint of the Tathāgata with a wheel-mark has appeared, which at times shines with a bright

ciation further supports the relationship that emerges from textual comparison.

The radiant and shiny nature of the feet of the Buddha Vipaśyin fits in with a general tendency of the *Dīrgha-āgama* version translated above to be fairly detailed in its visual imagery.⁴³ In fact the bodhisattva's emergence from his mother's right side, which is not reported in the Pāli and Sanskrit parallels, is mentioned repeatedly in the *Dīrgha-āgama* version. The mother's right side already comes up as the location for the bodhisattva's entry, followed by a reference to his emergence from her right side at birth not only as a quality on its own, but also repeatedly in relation to subsequent qualities. This gives the impression that there was a felt need among those who transmitted this discourse to make sure that this marvellous aspect of his birth would definitely be kept in mind. The specification that the mother held on to a tree and the count of four *devas* who are present at that time are also details that have a visual dimension and which are not found in the Pāli and Sanskrit parallels.

The same details feature in aniconic depictions of the birth of the bodhisattva Gautama, as can be seen, for example, in the picture below in figure 9 from Amarāvatī. Queen Māyā stands holding on to a tree. On the right side of her waist a little swelling can be discerned, marking the place where the bodhisattva has just emerged. Four *devas* are present to receive the bodhisattva,⁴⁴ and on the cloth held by the *deva* closest to the mother the bodhisattva's footprints are depicted.⁴⁵

light." A reference to the Buddha's footprint being at times with light can also be found in the parallel to MN 91, T 76 at T I 884a19, according to which the footprints keep shining and sparkling with light for seven days; cf. above p. 47 note 19. In some versions of the *Lalitavistara* the wheel-mark also shines with light; cf. Lefmann 1902: 106,3 (the relevant part is given in brackets by the editor) and T 187 at T III 557a28.

⁴³ On visual elements in the description of the marvels at the birth of Gautama in MN 123 cf. Anālayo 2010a: 35.

⁴⁴ This detail differs from the description in DĀ 14, where the function of the four *devas* is to provide water for the mother and make a proclamation.

⁴⁵ Courtesy of Trustees of the British Museum. I already used this image in the related discussion of the Buddha's birth in Anālayo 2010a: 31; for a range of articles on this topic, published in the same year, cf. Cüppers et al. 2010 (in relation to the present iconography see among these especially Stoye 2010).



Figure 9 Baby Footprints

The topic of increasing visibility is also of relevance to the whole set of the thirty-two marks in all versions of the *Mahāvadāna-sūtra*. Whereas the discourses surveyed in the previous chapter describe examinations of an adult Buddha in order to ascertain his possession of these marks, examinations in which he has to cooperate actively to enable recognition of two of the marks, in the present case he is only an infant. Nevertheless, the seers are able to ascertain the presence of all thirty-two marks, and that without any active cooperation of their bearer. This gives the impression as if, by the time of the coming into existence of this narrative piece, the thirty-two marks had become to some degree more visible, so much so that they can be recognized even in the only embryonic stage in which they manifest on the body of a baby.

Another noteworthy feature of the same narration is that the actual recognition of the thirty-two marks takes the form of a prediction concerning the future. This is of course inevitable, because the one who is being examined has not yet become a Buddha. Therefore the trope of the two destinies open to someone who has the thirty-two marks, instead of serving as a backdrop for examining someone who *is* a Buddha, naturally concerns someone who *will become* a Buddha. This in itself rather minor shift could have set a precedent for the idea that a bodhisattva at some stage in his prolonged career receives a prediction that he will certainly become a Buddha in a future life. I will return to this topic in the next chapter.

3.4 The Marks and *dharmatā*

In the *Dīrgha-āgama* description the foot of the Buddha, just as the other marks, is not explicitly introduced as an invariable feature of all Buddhas, as their *dharmatā*. This differs from all the other qualities described earlier, which are invariably qualified as examples of “an unchanging law for all Buddhas”. The same pattern occurs in the *Mahāpadāna-sutta*, where the corresponding qualification that this is the rule, *dhammatā*, employed throughout the preceding prose description, is no longer used when it comes to the description of the thirty-two marks.⁴⁶

The Sanskrit fragment version, however, uses *dharmatā* also when introducing the part with the description of the thirty-two marks. The fragment version then continues to employ the qualification *dharmatā* when describing the four outings of the prince during which he saw for the first time someone old, diseased, and dead, as well as someone who had gone forth.⁴⁷

To consider this description a *dharmatā* for all Buddhas results in an internal inconsistency in the Sanskrit fragment version, because each time the bodhisattva comes back from his outings, his worried father,

⁴⁶ I already drew attention to this in Anālayo 2009a: 181f note 54; as mentioned above p. 75 note 13, T 2 does not have such a reference at all.

⁴⁷ I come back to the motif of these four outings below, cf. p. 92f.

the king, is introduced by his name Bandhumat.⁴⁸ Applying the qualification *dharmatā* to this narrative results in making it a rule for all Buddhas to have a father by the name Bandhumat.

Yet, according to an earlier part of the same *Mahāvadāna-sūtra*, Bandhumat was only the name of the father of Vipaśyin, whereas the fathers of the other Buddhas had different names.⁴⁹ The correlations given in the *Mahāvadāna-sūtra* are as follows:

Buddha Vipaśyin:	his father is Bandhumat
Buddha Śikhin:	his father is Aruṇa
Buddha Viśvabhuj:	his father is Supradīpa
Buddha Krakasunda:	his father is Agnidatta
Buddha Kanakamuni:	his father is Yajñadatta
Buddha Kāśyapa:	his father is Brahmadatta
Buddha Śākyamuni:	his father is Śuddhodana

The resulting incoherence between this listing and the application of *dharmatā* to the description of how Bandhumat reacted to the outings of the prince makes it probable that the Sanskrit fragment version has suffered from an error that easily occurs during oral transmission, whereby a phrase that has been used repeatedly up to a certain point is applied similarly to a subsequent textual portion and thereby to a context to which it originally did not belong.

Given that this internal incoherence allows the application of *dharmatā* to the four outings of the prince in the Sanskrit version to be identified as the result of a later development, it seems fair to conclude that the application of *dharmatā* to the thirty-two marks must have come into being as part of the same textual development. This would explain why the thirty-two marks are qualified in this way only in the Sanskrit fragment version and not in its parallels.

This in turn is significant in so far as it implies that, at the stage in the development of the conception of a Buddha reflected in the *Mahā-*

⁴⁸ Cf., e.g., the description of events after the first encounter with an old person, Waldschmidt 1956: 119 (§8b1) or Fukita 2003: 98. This could easily have been avoided by using an expression like “his father, the king”, instead of referring to him as *bandhumān rājā* and thereby using his proper name.

⁴⁹ Waldschmidt 1956: 79 (§3f1–7) or Fukita 2003: 46.

padāna-sutta and its *Dīrgha-āgama* parallel, when various miracles related to conception and birth were already considered to conform to a general pattern that holds for all Buddhas, the same idea of “an unchanging law for all Buddhas” had not yet been applied to the thirty-two marks. In short, at this particular point in the history of Buddhist thought the thirty-two marks apparently were not yet presented as an indispensable requirement for Buddhahood.

Although for one who is endowed with these marks it can be predicted that, if he goes forth, he will definitely become a Buddha, it does not follow automatically from this that all those who become a Buddha must be endowed with the thirty-two marks. The distinction to be drawn here could be illustrated with the example of an arhat in early Buddhist thought. For one who has become an arhat there is only one possibility, which is to live the monastic life. But all who live the monastic life need not necessarily be arhats or even be practising the path to becoming arhats. Similarly, the presentation in the *Mahāpadāna-sutta* and its *Dīrgha-āgama* parallel does not yet explicitly take the position that in order to become a Buddha one must have the thirty-two marks. Such a conclusion only results from the presentation in the Sanskrit fragment version, which with considerable probability can be considered the result of an error in transmission.

3.5 The Birth of a Buddha

In evaluating this difference, it is also noteworthy that the preceding description of various events related to the conception and birth of Vipaśyin bears considerable similarity to a listing of outstanding qualities of the Buddha Gautama given in the *Acchariyabbhutadhamma-sutta* and its *Madhyama-āgama* parallel, which I already studied in my earlier exploration of the genesis of the bodhisattva ideal. A comparison of these two discourses brings to light more divergences than similarities, suggesting a comparatively late date for the coming into being of each version in its final form.⁵⁰ Given that both versions reflect a similar attitude, it can safely be assumed that qualities found in only one of

⁵⁰ Cf. Anālayo 2010a: 28–46.

these two versions stand a good chance of reflecting notions that came into being so late that they no longer made it into the other version.

One of the qualities found only in the *Accchariyabbhutadhamma-sutta* and not in its *Madhyama-āgama* parallel is the bodhisattva Gautama's proclamation that he is supreme in the whole world and that this is his last birth.⁵¹ This proclamation stands in contrast to a broad range of early discourses that report the bodhisattva Gautama's struggle to reach awakening.⁵² From the perspective of these discourses, he could not have made a claim to have reached his last birth at the time when he had just been born. Instead, such a claim has its proper place only after he had reached awakening and become a Buddha. This in turn makes it safe to conclude that this proclamation in the *Accchariyabbhutadhamma-sutta* reflects an advanced stage in the apotheosis of the Buddha, considerably later than the bulk of the early discourses.⁵³

This conclusion similarly holds for the present instance in the *Mahāvadāna-sūtra* and its parallels. In the verses in the *Dīrgha-āgama* account translated above, the newly born bodhisattva Vipaśyin states that "this is my final body."⁵⁴ The prose part of the Sanskrit fragments of the *Mahāvadāna-sūtra* has preserved the same claim by the bodhisattva Vipaśyin, made as soon as he was born, that "this will be my last birth",⁵⁵ and in the *Mahāpadāna-sutta* he similarly proclaims right after his birth that "this will be my last birth, there is no further renewal of becoming for me."⁵⁶

An item found only in the *Dīrgha-āgama* version is the bodhisattva's proclamation that his aim is to deliver sentient beings from birth, old age, disease, and death. This bring in the motif of compassion which

⁵¹ MN 123 at MN III 123,22; the parallel MĀ 32 does not report any such statement.

⁵² For a survey of relevant passages cf. Anālayo 2010a: 15–19.

⁵³ Nakamura 1980/1999: 18 concludes that "the verse claimed to have been proclaimed by the Buddha at his birth was composed very late."

⁵⁴ DĀ 1 at T I 4c11: 此身最後邊; as already noted in Anālayo 2010a: 42 note 73, the presumably earlier prose section does not have a reference to the last body, supporting the impression that this idea is a later element in the account of what a Buddha will proclaim at the time of his birth.

⁵⁵ Waldschmidt 1956: 90 (§5d2) or Fukita 2003: 64: *iyam me bhave(t paśc)imā jā(tiḥ).*

⁵⁶ DN 14 at DN II 15,12: *ayam antimā* (S^e adds *me*) *jāti, n'atthi dāni punabbhavo.*

was to become such a prominent aspect of the bodhisattva path in later times.⁵⁷

Notably, this reference to compassionate motivation concerns only the present life of Vipaśyin. That is, in the present context this proclamation appears to be simply a facet of the overall tendency to attribute qualities of a Buddha to the newly born bodhisattva. The *Dīrgha-āgama* passage does not yet relate a compassionate concern to former lives before the present life of Vipaśyin.

Nevertheless, once the idea of a need to prepare oneself for Buddhahood over a series of past lives had come into existence, the idea that already at birth a bodhisattva has the compassionate concern to deliver sentient being would easily have evolved to become an integral part of a bodhisattva's motivation during previous lives.

Although the *Dīrgha-āgama* version stands alone in referring to compassion, it agrees with the *Mahāpadāna-sutta* and the *Mahāvadāna-sūtra* in reporting that already at the time of his birth the bodhisattva Vipaśyin claimed to have reached his last birth (even though in its version this proclamation is only found in the verse portion), expressed by referring to his “last body”. Only the individually translated version does not report that the bodhisattva Vipaśyin made such a proclamation as soon as he was born.

When evaluated in the light of the *Accchariyabbhutadhamma-sutta* and its *Madhyama-āgama* parallel, this gives the impression that this part of the *Mahāvadāna-sūtra*, the *Mahāpadāna-sutta*, and the *Dīrgha-āgama* version already testifies to a rather evolved stage in the conception of a Buddha.⁵⁸

Nevertheless, as noted above, in the case of the *Mahāpadāna-sutta* and the *Dīrgha-āgama* version even at this evolved stage the thirty-two marks have not yet become fully integrated into what otherwise is an

⁵⁷ On the relative dearth of such references in what appear to be texts reflecting the early stages in the evolution of the bodhisattva path cf. Anālayo 2010a: 26–28; for a detailed study of the dimension of compassion in subsequent stages in the evolution of the bodhisattva path cf. Dhammadinnā (in preparation).

⁵⁸ This has already been pointed out by Winternitz 1920/1968: 32: “einer sehr späten Zeit gehört auch Nr. 14, das *Mahāpadāna-sutta* ... an, in welchem bereits ... die ganze mit zahlreichen Wundern, insbesondere den Wundern der Empfängnis und der Geburt, ausgestattete Buddhalegende vorausgesetzt wird.”

account of the invariable law that applies to all Buddhas, such as that on being born they will make a claim that only fits the time when they have actually reached awakening.

Another point worthy of note is a shift in terminology, where the *Mahāvadāna-sūtra* and its two parallels refer to Vipaśyin as “the bodhisattva” throughout, until they come to the report of his being investigated by the fortune-tellers, at which point they switch to the term “prince” instead.⁵⁹ This confirms the impression that at this juncture two different textual pieces have been joined together, one of which mirrors the description of the marvellous qualities of the Buddha Gautama, whereas the other instead corresponds to the prediction reportedly given to the bodhisattva Gautama.⁶⁰ As a result, the qualification *dharmatā* was initially not applied to the narration of the prediction of the bodhisattva Vipaśyin.

The same holds for the account of the famous four outings. In relation to this account, it is perhaps worth noting briefly that several reports of the same four outings by the bodhisattva Gautama also show internal inconsistencies.

The *Mahāvastu* precedes the four encounters by reporting that the bodhisattva Gautama had already at an earlier time informed his father of his wish to go forth, expressing his insight into the inescapability of old age, disease, and death.⁶¹ If at an early point of time he already had such insight and the wish to go forth, the episode of the four encounters and their impact on the mind of the young prince would be redundant.

⁵⁹ Cf. above p. 81 note 32.

⁶⁰ For the prediction of Gautama’s future attainment of Buddhahood cf., e.g., Sn 693, the *Buddhacarita* 1.69, Johnston 1936/1995: 8, T 192 at T IV 3a25, and T 193 at T IV 61a27, the *Lalitavistara*, Lefmann 1902: 104,9, D 95 *kha* 56a5 or Q 763 *ku* 65a6, T 186 at T III 496b4, and T 187 at T III 557b3, the *Mahāvastu*, Senart 1890: 32,9, the *Saṅghabhedavastu*, Gnoli 1977: 53,21, T 1450 at T XXIV 109b24, and D 1 *ga* 285a7 or Q 1030 *nge* 268a7, and several Buddha-biographies preserved in Chinese translation, such as T 184 at T III 464c14, T 185 at T III 474a23, T 189 at T III 627b21, T 190 at T III 697a3, and T 191 at T III 941a15. An element related to the wheel-mark on the feet then emerges in Pj II 488,2. On being brought to the seer, the infant’s feet miraculously end up on the seer’s head, who then recognizes the wheel-mark on their soles, followed by discerning the other marks, leading to his giving the prediction.

⁶¹ Senart 1890: 141,7 and 146,12; what follows is based on extracts from Anālayo 2007.

The Mahīśāsaka *Vinaya* reports that the bodhisattva Gautama, when still young, had the desire to go forth.⁶² When describing his fourth encounter with a recluse, however, according to the same Mahīśāsaka *Vinaya* account the bodhisattva asked his charioteer to explain what going forth means.⁶³ Such a question would make little sense if at an earlier point of his life he already had the desire to go forth himself.

According to the *Saṅghabhedavastu*, during the first and second encounter the bodhisattva enquired about the implications of being old or sick. His coachman told him in reply that to be old or sick entails that one will soon be dead.⁶⁴ The bodhisattva apparently understood this reply, since rather than asking about the meaning of being dead, he asked if he was also subject to this same predicament. When during the next encounter the bodhisattva saw a corpse, he asked his driver what death meant.⁶⁵ Not knowing this, the replies he had received during the previous outings would have been meaningless for him.

In this way, the accounts of these four outings in these texts show internal inconsistencies similar to the case of the application of *dharmaṭā* to these four outings in the Sanskrit fragment version of the *Mahāvadāna-sūtra*. Such lack of internal consistency echoes the case of the Buddha's descent from the Heaven of the Thirty-three, mentioned in chapter 2.

Another parallelism is the apparent influence of art. In relation to the bodhisattva's outings it has been suggested that the idea for this type of tale might have originated in depictions of the bodhisattva's insight into these predicaments of human life in art, which needed to create symbolic representations in order to render his insight into old age, disease, and death visible.⁶⁶ Whatever may be the final word on the arising of

⁶² T 1421 at T XXII 101b20: 有出家志.

⁶³ T 1421 at T XXII 101c17: 何謂出家? Bareau 1962: 20 concludes that this internal inconsistency shows that the bodhisattva's desire to go forth belongs to an older textual stratum, which remained when the later account of his four encounters was introduced.

⁶⁴ Gnoli 1977: 65,25 and 68,12: *martavyam bhavisyati*, T 1450 at T XXIV 112c16 and 113a18: 當身死 / 當死, and D 1 ga 292a2 and nga 1a3 or Q 1030 nge 274a5 and ce 1b3: 'gum par 'gyur bas / 'gum par 'gyur ba'i.

⁶⁵ Gnoli 1977: 70,21: *ka esa ... mr̥to nāma?*, T 1450 at T XXIV 113b6: 云何名為死人?, and D 1 nga 3a3 or Q 1030 ce 3a5: *shi ba zhes bya ba 'di ci yin?*

⁶⁶ Weller 1928: 169.

this narrative, given its internal inconsistencies in the versions discussed above and combined with the fact that the corresponding Pāli tale is found only in the *Jātaka* commentary,⁶⁷ it seems safe to conclude that the narrative of the four outings of the bodhisattva Gautama is comparatively late. The same would hold for its application to the Buddha Vipaśyin; in fact the much longer lifespan attributed to human beings at the time of Vipaśyin would provide a natural home for the arising of a narrative concerned with not noticing that people age and pass away.

In sum, however much from the viewpoint of later tradition the thirty-two marks are intrinsically related to the very concept of being a Buddha, the above-discussed textual passages show that it must have taken some time before these marks became an integral part of the conception of the nature of Buddhas.

3.6 Seeing the Marks as a Means of Conversion

Once the thirty-two marks have become integral to Buddhahood, however, the emphasis on visual aspects, evident for example in the passage from the *Dīrgha-āgama* translated above, takes on a stronger dimension. The visual impact of seeing the Buddha endowed with the thirty-two marks comes to have a special effect. This can be seen, for example, in descriptions of the conversion of Rāṣtrapāla.

Reports of his conversion can be found in a discourse extant in Sanskrit fragments, in the *Ratthapāla-sutta* of the *Majjhima-nikāya*, in three discourse parallels in Chinese translation, and in a discourse quotation in the *Bhaiṣajyavastu* of the Mūlasarvāstivāda *Vinaya* preserved in Tibetan translation. According to the narration in these versions, young Rāṣtrapāla had come to visit the Buddha together with a group of householders. Hearing the Buddha teach the Dharma has inspired Rāṣtrapāla so much that on the spot he requests to be granted the going forth.⁶⁸ The Buddha informs Rāṣtrapāla that he needs to obtain his parents' permis-

⁶⁷ Jā I 58,31.

⁶⁸ MN 82 at MN II 56,9, with a Sanskrit fragment parallel and a parallel in the Tibetan *Bhaiṣajyavastu* in Matsumura 1985: 43, and Chinese parallels in MĀ 132 at T I 623b11, T 68 at T I 869a24, and T 69 at T II 872b18.

sion. When informed of the plans of their only son, the parents refuse, whereupon Rāṣtrapāla goes on hunger strike. Realizing that he is so intent on going forth that he is willing to put his own life at risk, the parents finally relent.

In all of these versions, it is the impact of the discourse on the Dharma delivered by the Buddha that has had such a deep impact on Rāṣtrapāla and so much inspired him that, even though he is young and from a very wealthy family, his mind is all set on going forth.

A somewhat different perspective emerges with accounts of Rāṣtrapāla's conversion preserved in versions of the *Avadānaśataka* extant in Chinese as well as in Sanskrit and Tibetan.⁶⁹ The Chinese *Avadānaśataka* additionally brings in a visual dimension to this conversion, which is related to the thirty-two characteristics. According to its report, when Rāṣtrapāla approached the Buddha the following happened:⁷⁰

[Rāṣtrapāla] saw the Buddha, the Blessed One, with his thirty-two marks and eighty secondary characteristics, brilliant and completely resplendent, like a hundred-thousand suns, of majestic and dignified appearance,⁷¹ very delightful, and his mind was thrilled with joy.

He paid his respects at the Buddha's feet and stood back to one side. The Buddha gave him a teaching on the four truths.⁷² His mind awakened and he understood, attaining the fruit of stream-entry.

Rāṣtrapāla next returns home, praises the Buddha's virtues to his father and expresses his wish to go forth.

Similarly to the *Dīrgha-āgama* parallel to the *Mahāvadāna-sūtra*, the extract from the Chinese *Avadānaśataka* tale translated above plays on various images involving vision. The *visual* impact of the Buddha's physical perfection and brilliance, his endowment with the marks, thrills Rāṣtrapāla and thereby makes him amenable to instruction. The Buddha's teaching then leads Rāṣtrapāla to a *vision* of the four noble truths

⁶⁹ On the different versions of the *Avadānaśataka* cf. Dhammadinnā 2015: 506f.

⁷⁰ T 200 at T IV 249b18 to 249b22.

⁷¹ Adopting the variant 序 instead of 詳序.

⁷² On the absence of the qualification "noble" in references to the four truths cf. Anālayo 2006.

and he becomes a stream-enterer, one who is characterized in the early discourses as one who is “endowed with vision”.⁷³

With the Sanskrit and Tibetan *Avadānaśataka* versions of the same tale of Rāṣtrapāla’s conversion a further increase in the emphasis on the visual dimension, and in particular on the thirty-two marks and the bodily brilliance, can be discerned. Here the impact of seeing the Buddha’s body takes centre stage. The description of Rāṣtrapāla’s conversion proceeds as follows in the Sanskrit version of the *Avadānaśataka*:⁷⁴

Rāṣtrapāla saw the Buddha, the Blessed One, adorned with the thirty-two marks of a great person and the eighty secondary characteristics, his splendid limbs adorned with brilliance that extended for a fathom, superior to the brilliance of a thousand suns, like a mountain of jewels in motion, beautiful in all respects.

With this vision his mind acquired faithful inspiration in the presence of the Blessed One. With faithful inspiration arisen, he fell at the feet of the Blessed One and requested the going forth.

A significant difference, when compared to the Chinese *Avadānaśataka* version, is that here the visual impact of the Buddha with his physical marks and brilliance suffices to lead to Rāṣtrapāla’s conversion, so that he directly falls at the Buddha’s feet and requests the going forth after this visual impact, without having received any teaching from the Buddha at all.

An almost inevitable consequence of this promotion of the vision of the thirty-two marks as a means of conversion is that these physical characteristics of the Buddha are no longer nuances so subtle that previous training in brahminical lore is required so as to recognize them. Instead, they have become plainly evident to any onlooker, attracting people to the Buddha’s presence and making them receptive to liberating teachings, or else functioning as the main means of a total conversion.

⁷³ Cf., e.g., a reference to the *ariyasāvaka* who is *dīthiśampanna* in SN 13.2 at SN II 134,20, which has its counterpart in 聖弟子具足見諦 in its parallel SĀ 109 at T II 34b7.

⁷⁴ Speyer 1909/1970: 118,11 to 118,14 (no. 90), with the Tibetan parallel D 343 *am* 247b3 or Q 1012 *u* 257a1. On the brilliance that extends for a fathom cf. also above p. 65 note 77.

How a conversion story can undergo a process of gradual change, from giving emphasis to hearing the Buddha teach to the impact of looking at him, can be seen in a tale in the *Ekottarika-āgama* that involves the householder Simha.

Simha's conversion is also the theme of a discourse in the *Ānguttaranikāya*, found similarly in the Theravāda *Vinaya*, and in the Dharmaguptaka and Mahīśasaka *Vinayas*. These versions agree in reporting that Simha attained stream-entry during a gradual instruction given to him by the Buddha.⁷⁵ In the Dharmaguptaka and Theravāda versions the Buddha delivers this gradual instruction after having given Simha a teaching on the topic of giving, *dāna*.⁷⁶

The topic of giving also occurs in the tale of Simha's stream-entry in the *Ekottarika-āgama*. Here he attains stream-entry after the Buddha had commended Simha for engaging in giving with the continuously impartial mental attitude of a bodhisattva.⁷⁷ The actual report of his stream-entry takes the following form:⁷⁸

The householder Simha reflected on the Tathāgata's instruction and looked at the Blessed One intently. With an unperturbed mind he attained the pure eye of the Dharma in that very seat.

In this description, for Simha to look at the Buddha intently seems to function as an aid for reflection, in line with how one might look at someone's face when pondering what that person has just said. That is,

⁷⁵ AN 8.12 at AN IV 186,22 (the corresponding passage in Vin I 237,9 is abbreviated), T 1428 at T XXII 872a14, and T 1421 at T XXII 149c4.

⁷⁶ Another parallel, MĀ 18 at T I 442b14, only reports his taking of refuge, but not his stream-entry. In AN 8.12 and T 1428 his taking of refuge leads on to the Buddha giving him a gradual talk which in turn occasions his stream-entry (T 1421 is comparatively short and does not report his taking refuge). Thus the absence of a reference to his stream-entry in MĀ 18 might be merely the result of the circumstance that this version does not cover events taking place after Simha had taken refuge.

⁷⁷ EĀ 48.5 at T II 792c17: 菩薩所施心恒平等; where the circumstance that according to the preceding narration he has already been making offerings to the Buddha's disciples makes it clear that this episode does not concern his first meeting with the Buddha, as is the case in AN 8.12. For a similar commendation of Simha for giving with the impartial attitude of a bodhisattva cf. EĀ 52.6 at T II 826b25 (cf. also Anālayo 2014/2015: 67).

⁷⁸ EĀ 48.5 at T II 792c24 to 792c25.

although a visual element is present, the main emphasis appears to be still on the audible dimension, on the oral instruction given by the Buddha as the crucial element for bringing about the attainment of stream-entry. After Simha has left, the Buddha informs the monks of what has just happened in the following way:⁷⁹

Because of reflecting on impartial giving and by looking at the Tathāgata from head to foot, the householder Simha attained the pure eye of the Dharma right in that very seat.

A minor but nevertheless significant difference is that here Simha surveys the Buddha's body from head to foot. The difference between this passage and the preceding one is certainly not as pronounced as what emerges from comparing the Chinese *Avadānaśataka* account of Rāṣṭrapāla's conversion with its Sanskrit and Tibetan parallels. Nevertheless, what makes the present instance worthy of note is that the two passages translated above follow each other in close proximity within the same text, at a distance of just two lines in the Taishō edition of this discourse.

In the account of the actual stream-entry, the looking at the Buddha seems to play a secondary role and the prominent feature is still Simha's reflection on the oral instruction he has received. Only two lines later in the same text, the visual dimension becomes considerably more prominent through the additional specification that Simha surveyed the Buddha's body from head to foot. Although this is not explicitly mentioned, in a setting which already reflects developed bodhisattva ideology, as expressed in the idea of giving with the attitude of a bodhisattva, such a survey of the physical form of the Buddha can safely be assumed to imply a survey of his physical marks. In this way the tale of Simha's stream-entry in the *Ekottarika-āgama* can be taken to illustrate how a process of gradual change can result in increasing emphasis on the visual impact of the Buddha's physical form as a means of conversion and teaching.

An increasing emphasis on the impact of the Buddha's physical appearance as a means for teaching and conversion is in itself only to be expected as a by-product of the gradual apotheosis of the Buddha. As part of this trajectory, the Buddha's special appearance and his marks,

⁷⁹ EĀ 48.5 at T II 792c27 to 792c29.

which in the early discourses predominantly had the function of converting brahmins, must soon have come to acquire the same function also in other settings. As a result, as already mentioned above, the Buddha's marks inevitably become more visible, enabling them to exercise their converting function even with those who have no previous training in the lore of the thirty-two marks.

In addition, the need in artistic representation to translate text into vision must have contributed to this development, rendering the Buddha's beauty more visible by increasing degrees. The cranial protuberance is a rather prominent example where a convention of ancient Indian art seems to have had a rather decisive impact.

In a way the evolution of the conception of the marks can be seen to mirror an evolution of devotional practices. As an aspect of the process of increasing visibility, as already mentioned in the first chapter, in artistic depictions the footprint of a Buddha came to be decorated with various symbols. In a footprint from Bodhgayā, shown in figure 10, for example, the heel is adorned with birds.⁸⁰



Figure 10 Footprint with Birds

When it comes to descriptions of the Buddha's body, however, comparisons with animals or plants to illustrate the nature of a particular bodily part are even in later times not to be taken too literally. This can be seen in the *Pratimālakṣaṇa*, which I already mentioned in chapter 2, a text that gives meticulous instructions on the construction of a Buddha image, detailing its various proportions and measurements. Alongside such precise indications, the same work also employs several plant and animal comparisons, such as mentioning a Banyan tree, a lotus, and a tortoise.⁸¹

⁸⁰ Kolkata Museum; courtesy of Jacques de Guerny. For another footprint featuring fish and lotuses cf. below p. 104.

⁸¹ The Sanskrit text in Banerjea 1933: 9,4, 12,8, and 19,1 and Banārasī Lāl 2003: 126,6, 127,13, and 131,1, Q 5804 go 5b1, 6a1, and 7a4, and T 1419 at T XXI

Such comparisons are not aimed at getting artists to copy these features from plants and animals and apply them exactly to the body of a Buddha statue. Instead, they are meant to illustrate what are considered to be nuances of the Buddha's human beauty. In fact the comparison with a tortoise to illustrate the nature of the feet recurs in a Jain description of the beauty of women.⁸² To be sure this description is not meant to depict beautiful women as having feet that are identical to the appearance of those of a tortoise.

3.7 Seeing the Marks as a Means of Healing

Besides serving purposes of conversion, a vision of the beauty of the Buddha, endowed with the thirty-two marks, can also have a healing effect. An example of this function can be found in the tale of the nun Śubhā, reported in the *Therīgāthā* and its commentary.⁸³

On her way into a forest for meditative seclusion, Śubhā is intercepted by a man whose passion has been roused on seeing her beauty. In particular he has become completely infatuated with her lovely eyes. Śubhā replies with a declaration of her total lack of interest in sensuality and physical attraction but, finding that the impassioned male does not relent, she eventually plucks out one of her eyes and hands it to the rogue. He is shocked to his senses by this act and requests to be forgiven. When Śubhā later approaches the Buddha, her eye is magically restored to its former condition on “seeing the one with the marks of excellent merit”.⁸⁴ According to the Pāli commentary this expression refers to the Buddha's endowment with the thirty-two marks as a result of his accumulated merits.⁸⁵

941b15, 942c23, and 944c7 refer to a Banyan tree, a lotus, and a tortoise to illustrate how particular parts of the Buddha statue should be made.

⁸² Mette 1973: 32 no. 3.

⁸³ For a detailed study cf. Anālayo 2014a.

⁸⁴ Thī 399: *passiya varapuññalakkhaṇam cakkhu āsi yathāpurāṇakam*. Trainor 1993: 67 comments that “this verse credits the extraordinary physical appearance of the Buddha's body with the healing of Subhā's eye”; cf. also Mrozik 2007: 105.

⁸⁵ The commentary, Thī-a 241,11, glosses *varapuññalakkhaṇam* by referring to the marks of a great man acquired through his supreme accumulation of merit; on the concept of the Buddha's (*sata*)*puññalakkhana* cf. Endo 1997/2002: 156–163.

This episode also has several visual allusions. The verse exchange between the two contrasts a male *blinded* by passion to Śubhā's insightful *vision* of the unattractive nature of the human body. When words do not suffice to convey this to him, she takes out and hands him her organ of *vision*, which taken out of its socket *visually* conveys to him its unattractive nature. The organ of *vision* damaged by this deed is miraculously restored by the *vision* of the Buddha endowed with his marks as the result of his accumulated merits. It is to the relationship of the thirty-two marks to merit acquired in the past that I turn in the next chapter.

3.8 Summary

Closer inspection of the genealogy of Buddhas in the *Mahāvadāna-sūtra* and its parallels brings to light that, at an advanced stage of evolution in the apotheosis of Buddhas, the thirty-two marks are still only in the process of becoming an invariable endowment of a Buddha and thereby a necessary qualification for Buddhahood.

The almost inevitable result of an increase of interest in the physical endowment of a Buddha with these marks, combined with the need to translate textual description into artistic representation, is that the marks become gradually more visible, so much so that the average onlooker becomes able to discern what other passages present as being only within the range of those trained in the lore of identifying the thirty-two marks.

Once the thirty-two marks have become generally visible, their salvific function naturally expands beyond the range of brahmins to serve as a means of conversion in general, so much so that at times their visual impact replaces the giving of a teaching on the Dharma as the cause for even radical conversion. Besides functioning as a means of conversion in general, the marks also extend their beneficial influence to those already converted, becoming a source of inspiration to such a degree that seeing them can even effect physical healing.

4 The Karma of the Wheel-mark

4.1 Introduction

In addition to the trajectory evident in the *Mahāvadāna-sūtra*, another dimension of the integration of the thirty-two marks into Buddhist doctrine manifests in the Discourse on the Marks. Two versions of this discourse are extant:

- a Pāli discourse in the form of the *Lakkhana-sutta* is found in the last chapter of the Theravāda *Dīgha-nikāya*;¹
- a Chinese parallel, titled the Discourse on the Thirty-two Marks, occurs in the Chapter on Kings in the *Madhyama-āgama* (T 26), probably stemming from a Sarvāstivāda line of transmission.²

The *Lakkhana-sutta* begins with the standard reference to the two destinies open to one who is endowed with the thirty-two marks, then gives a full list of these marks, and after that rounds off its exposition by repeating again that one who has these will become either a wheel-turning king or a Buddha. This mode of presentation corresponds to a standard procedure in the early discourses, in that a statement of a particular type is followed by a more or less detailed exposition, which concludes by repeating the initial statement. Such a procedure reflects the requirements of an oral setting and in particular the need to make sure that the main topic can easily be recalled later.

The *Madhyama-āgama* discourse proceeds similarly and then concludes at this point. In the *Lakkhana-sutta*, however, the Buddha next makes an additional statement that then leads on to another and considerably longer exposition. This additional statement reads as follows:

Of a great man, monks, outside seers also bear in mind these thirty-two marks of a great man, yet they do not know: “by the doing of this deed does one gain this mark.”³

¹ DN 30 at DN III 142,1 to 179,11.

² MĀ 59 at T I 493a24 to 494b7; on the school affiliation cf. above p. 35 note 60.

³ DN 30 at DN III 145,17.

Thus alongside the recognition that knowledge of the thirty-two marks is common among those outside of the fold of the Buddhist tradition, this statement announces a distinctly Buddhist perspective on them, namely an understanding of the karmic conditions that have led to them. With this introductory statement in place, the *Lakkhaṇa-sutta* embarks on a detailed description of the deeds performed by the bodhisattva Gautama in past lives that led to his endowment with these extraordinary physical characteristics. Similarly to the case of the *Dirgha-āgama* version of the *Mahāvadāna-sūtra* translated in the previous chapter, the *Lakkhaṇa-sutta* alternates between prose passages and verse repetitions.⁴

As an example of the karmic perspective introduced in this way, below I translate the prose and verse part of the *Lakkhaṇa-sutta* that concerns the Buddha's feet in particular, each of which, needless to say, is adorned with a wheel that has a thousand spokes.⁵

By way of providing a visual counterpart to such descriptions, figure 11 presents Buddhapadas from Nāgarjunikonda. These depict wheels with a substantial number of spokes, though still falling short of coming anywhere close to a thousand spokes, together with other symbols.⁶



Figure 11 Footprint-Wheels with many Spokes

⁴ As already noted by Warder 1967: 94, Sv III 922,33 explicitly recognizes that these verses have been added subsequently to what tradition reckons to have been the time of the actual delivery of the discourse.

⁵ The translated part is based on DN 30 at DN III 147,25 to 149,19; a bare reference to the Buddha's feet each endowed with a wheel-mark complete with a thousand spokes in the parallel MĀ 59 can be found at T I 493c20 (which has its counterpart in the first part of DN 30 at DN III 143,9). DN 30 has been translated into German by Neumann 1906/2004: 516–539 and into English by Rhys Davids and Rhys Davids 1921: 154–167 and Walshe 1987: 441–460.

⁶ Courtesy of John C. Huntington, The Huntington Archive at The Ohio State University.

4.2 Translation

[The Buddha said]: “As in whatever former birth, former existence, and former abode, having formerly been a human, the Tathāgata was a bringer of happiness to many, a dispeller of their fear, terror, and fright, a provider of rightful protection, safeguarding, and guardianship, and he gave gifts complete with their accompaniments, by doing and accumulating such deeds, by their amassing and abundance, with the breaking up of the body after death he was reborn in a good realm, in a heavenly world. There he surpassed other *devas* in ten respects: divine longevity, divine complexion, divine happiness, divine glory, divine power, and [the experiencing of] divine forms, divine sounds, divine odours, divine flavours, and divine tangibles.

“Passing away from there and coming to this present condition he gains this mark of a great man: On the soles of his feet wheels manifest with a thousand spokes, complete in all respects with rim and hub, and well arranged.

“Being endowed with this mark, if he lives in the household he becomes a wheel-turning king, a righteous Dharma-king, ruler over the four quarters, who has gained the safety of the country, and who is endowed with the seven treasures. He has these seven treasures, namely the wheel-treasure, the elephant-treasure, the horse-treasure, the jewel-treasure, the woman-treasure, the steward-treasure, and the counsellor-treasure as seventh.

“He has more than a thousand sons who are valiant and of heroic build, conquerors of the armies of others. Without a sign of obstruction and without hindrance he presides up to the ocean over this earth, which is flourishing, prosperous, peaceful, safe, and free from trouble, having established his reign by righteousness, without stick and without sword.⁷

“Being a king, what does he gain? He has a great company. Great is his company of brahmin householders, townsmen, villagers, treasurers, guards, gatekeepers, ministers, courtiers, tributary kings, attendants, and pages. Being a king he gains this.

⁷ The translation follows B^e, C^e, and S^e; the parts “without a sign of obstruction and without hindrance” and “flourishing, prosperous, peaceful, safe, and free from trouble” are not found in E^e.

“If he goes forth from the home life to homelessness, he becomes an arhat, a fully awakened one, who withdraws the veil [of ignorance] from the world.

“Being a Buddha what does he gain? He has a great company. Great is his company of monks, nuns, male lay followers, female lay followers, *devas*, humans, *asuras*, *nāgas*, and *gandharvas*. Being a Buddha he gains this.”

This is what the Blessed One said.

This is said in regard to it:

“Formerly, previously, in prior births,

As a human being, he was a bringer of happiness to many,
A dispeller of their fear, terror, and fright,

Eager in their protection, safeguarding, and guardianship.

“By that karma he went to heaven,

Experiencing happiness, enjoyment, and delight.

Having passed away from there he came here,

And wheels are found on both his feet

Complete with rim and a thousand spokes.

“The gathered fortune-tellers predicted him,

Having seen the prince with the marks of a hundred merits:

‘He will have a [great] company and subdue enemies.

Thus, indeed, the wheels complete with rim [imply].

“If such a one does not come to go forth,

He turns the wheel, governing over the earth.

He will be followed by warriors

Of great repute, who will accompany him.

“If such a one does come to go forth,

Desirous for and delighting in renunciation, and discerning,

[Then] *devas*, humans, *asuras*, *śakras*, *rakṣas*,

Gandharvas, *nāgas*, birds, and four-footed beings

Accompany the greatly famed one,

The supreme one, who is worshipped by *devas* and humans.””

4.3 Assessing the *Lakkhana-sutta*

For assessing the presentation in the *Lakkhana-sutta*, the verse portions which summarize the prose can be examined from the viewpoint of Pāli metre. As pointed out by several scholars, the metre shows the verses to

be manifestly late.⁸ Lateness also emerges from a comparative perspective, given that the otherwise similar *Madhyama-āgama* parallel does not have any such exposition concerned with providing a karmic background to the thirty-two marks, be it in prose or in verse.⁹

The idea as such, however, was not foreign to the reciters of the *Madhyama-āgama*. In the case of the *Brahmāyu-sutta*, studied in chapter 2, the *Madhyama-āgama* version repeatedly emphasizes that certain aspects of the Buddha's physical form or behaviour are the outcome of his former wholesome deeds. This holds for the notion that dust does not dirty him when he walks and for his faculties always being composed.¹⁰ A comparable remark is not found in the *Brahmāyu-sutta*.

This goes to show that concern with the karmic background to qualities of the Buddha can be found similarly among the Sarvāstivāda reciters of the *Madhyama-āgama* and the Theravāda reciters of the Pāli tradition, but it has found expression in different ways. In the case of the Theravāda reciters of the *Dīgha-nikāya*, this concern appears to have given rise to a detailed exposition, perhaps originally a commentary that

⁸ Warder 1967: 94 lists the different metres found in the *Lakkhana-sutta* and concludes that “metrical considerations justify the conclusion that this is a late text standing on the threshold of Classical Sanskrit metrics. It is therefore of great interest to note that in content this *sutta* is an elaborate piece of ‘Buddhology’ describing in minute detail the thirty-two physical characteristics of the Buddha. In the histories of the religion this iconographic development has often been supposed to be a late development in Early Buddhism, tending to Mahāyāna, and this more or less subjective argument can now be supported by the objective evidence of the metre.” Thus, as noted by Pande 1957: 112, this discourse, which “contains a variety of metres, belongs manifestly to a very late stratum in the Nikāyas”. Walshe 1987: 611 note 939 sums up that “scholars are agreed on the fairly obvious fact that this is one of the latest texts in the Nikāya”; cf. also, e.g., Barua 1971/2003: 452. For studies of the metre of verses in the *Lakkhana-sutta* cf. Weller 1923: 190–194, Norman 1984/1992, 1987/1993, and 1993/1994.

⁹ Weller 1923: 171–198 offers a detailed comparative study of MĀ 59 and DN 30, in which he comes to the conclusion that the exposition on the karmic background to the marks in DN 30 must be substantially later than the first part shared with MĀ 59. Weller 1923: 196 also notes that the addition of the apparently later text introducing the karmic background to the marks must have furnished the reason for allocating DN 30 to the collection of long discourses, in contrast to the shorter exposition found in MĀ 59, which is rather allocated to a collection of middle length discourses.

¹⁰ MĀ 161 at T 1 687a16, 687a23, and 687b20: 以本善行故.

had its starting point in a remark that outside seers do not understand the karma that leads to these marks. In the course of oral transmission, such a commentary could have become part of the discourse.¹¹ A similar process can be observed in the case of another *Dīgha-nikāya* discourse, the *Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna-sutta*, where a long exposition of a commentarial type appears to have become part of the discourse itself.¹²

Further support for the suggestion that providing a karmic background to the thirty-two marks stems from what originally was a text of commentarial nature comes from another mark closely related to the wheel-marks on the feet and the imprint these can leave on the ground, as they do in the discourse to Drona, discussed in the first chapter. This mark also concerns the nature of the foot of a Buddha. The bare list of marks in the preceding part of the *Lakkhana-sutta* describes his feet as being “well-placed”.¹³ The original sense of this qualification would just have been an evenness of those parts of the feet that usually touch the ground.

Although one might imagine the wheel-mark to be on the heels of his feet, for example, this is not the placing they found in art, where they tend to be in the middle of the feet and thus in the area where a normal foot has arches. Such a placing in turn requires the Buddha’s feet to be flat in order to leave an imprint of the type mentioned in most versions of the discourse to Drona. This is in fact the understanding of the Pāli

¹¹ On the relationship between commentary and discourse in this respect cf. Anālayo 2010b. Although Weller 1923: 186f rightly notices that the sequence of the marks in the first part of DN 30 (which parallels MĀ 59) differs from the sequence of their discussion in the subsequent part, this does not necessarily imply that this later part could not have arisen as a commentary starting off with the statement that outside seers do not understand the karmic background to the marks. A commentary would need to follow the sequence of the marks closely when it offers explanations on the significance of each of the marks individually, as is the case for Sv II 445,15 commenting on the thirty-two marks in DN 14. The passage under discussion, however, has a different function in as much as it introduces a distinct perspective on the thirty-two marks as a whole set. Such a commentary need not invariably follow the sequence of the marks, as its point of reference is the karmic perspective as a whole. In fact the karmic exposition groups several marks together, a grouping related to their supposed karmic relationship and not to their sequential position in the list of the thirty-two marks.

¹² On this aspect of DN 22 cf. Anālayo 2014c: 91–100.

¹³ DN 30 at DN III 143,5: *suppatiṭṭhitapādo hoti*.

commentarial tradition, according to which the Buddha touches the ground with the whole sole of each of his feet, in other words, he had flat feet. This description might well be another example of the influence of depiction in art on textual descriptions.¹⁴

In the part of the *Lakkhana-sutta* that provides the karmic background to each of the thirty-two marks, the description of this particular mark combines the standard phrase “well-placed”, found also in its earlier bare listing of the marks, with further specifications according to which the whole soles of his feet touch the ground.¹⁵ Such an indication is otherwise only found in Pali commentarial literature, not in Pali discourses. This confirms the impression that the part under discussion from the *Lakkhana-sutta* would have its origin in a commentary which during the course of transmission became part of the discourse itself.

In addition to being in general recognized as a discourse that has incorporated late material, however, Rhys Davids and Rhys Davids (1921: 136) also consider the *Lakkhana-sutta* to be “gravely ironic in the contrast it makes between the absurdity of the marks and the beauty of the ethical qualities they are supposed, in the Suttanta, to mean.” Unlike the impression of lateness, this assessment seems to be without support in the text itself, which as far as I am able to ascertain does not provide any clear indication of being intended ironically, nor does its presentation stand in such contrast to other discourses that this could be considered “gravely ironic”.

Rhys Davids and Rhys Davids (1921: 134) take the present discourse to stand in contrast to the *Brahmajāla-sutta*, which “had expressly condemned all sorts of augury and soothsaying practised for gain by some *samaṇas* and by *brahmins*”. Considering this from a comparative perspective shows that such a ‘condemnation’ is not found in all versions

¹⁴ An example is Sv II 445,20: *sakalam pādatalam bhūmim phusati* (commenting on DN 14). I am indebted to Christian Luczanits for drawing my attention to the possibility that the idea that the Buddha had flat feet could be yet another example of the influence of art on textual descriptions.

¹⁵ DN 30 at DN III 146,10: *sabbāvantehi pādatalehi bhūmim phusati*. A step in the same direction, although falling short of definitely depicting flat feet, appears to be discernible in DĀ 1 at T I 5a28 (translated above in chapter 3), where the feet of the Buddha Vipaśyin are described as being “full underneath” such that “he steps on the ground at ease”; cf. above p. 83.

of the *Brahmajāla-sutta*.¹⁶ In fact, even in the relevant part of the Theravāda version of the *Brahmajāla-sutta* the point at stake is improper livelihood, a question of no relevance to the concern with the thirty-two marks in the *Lakkhana-sutta*.

Here as well as in other early discourses where the thirty-two marks occur, a negative evaluation is simply not evident. Although presented as a concern characteristic of brahmins, rather than being disdained, such concerns are shown to be put to good use in order to convert brahmins. Therefore it seems a natural development, rather than a grave irony, if these marks gradually become more integral to Buddhist thought.

4.4 Introducing the Karmic Perspective

In relation to this part of the *Lakkhana-sutta* and its apparently late nature, it is noteworthy that the introductory statement refers to outside seers who are knowledgeable in these marks. This implies that, by the time of the coming into being of this passage, awareness was still current that knowledge of the thirty-two marks was the domain of outside seers, or more specifically brahminical lore, as mentioned in several other discourses surveyed in chapter 2. Even at the time of bringing concern with the thirty-two marks fully into the orbit of Buddhist doctrine, knowledge about them as such is not presented as a distinctly Buddhist feature. Instead, it is the karmic perspective on them that should be considered the specifically Buddhist contribution to this topic.¹⁷

Now for integrating the thirty-two marks within early Buddhist doctrine, the move made in the *Lakkhana-sutta* is an obvious one. The theme of karma is one of the central components of early Buddhist doctrine, and a concern with how certain types of deed are related to certain types of result forms a recurrent topic in the early discourses. In fact the commentary on the *Brahmāyu-sutta* shows a similar tendency in relation to

¹⁶ Although the reference to (predictions made based on) *lakkhanas* in DN 1 at DN I 9,4 does have a counterpart in DĀ 21 at T I 89c9, this is not found in the Mūlasarvāstivāda versions, which do not have the whole expanded section on morality; cf. Weller 1934: 12,6 to 12,30 (§§18 to 21) and D 4094 *ju* 143a1 to 143a2 or Q 5595 *tu* 164a6 to 164a8, as well as the discussion in Anālayo 2014b: 47–50.

¹⁷ Cf. also above p. 63 note 70.

the seven treasures of a wheel-turning king, explaining what type of deed provides the karmic background for the arising of these treasures.¹⁸

The apparent interest aroused by the karmic perspective can also be seen in a series of discourses in the *Lakkhana-samyutta* of the *Samyuttanikāya* and their *Samyukta-āgama* parallels, which report several occasions where Mahāmaudgalyāyana describes the dramatic retribution experienced by living beings for their former deeds. Just to provide one example, in one such discourse he sees a being that moves through the air in great pain,¹⁹ whose existence the Buddha confirms and explains to be the form of rebirth taken by a cow butcher.

A detailed exposition of karmic relationships can be found in the *Cūlakammavibhaṅga-sutta*, a discourse which stands out in the four Pāli *Nikāyas* for having an exceptionally high number of parallels preserved in a variety of languages, testifying to the interest aroused by its exposition.²⁰ The *Cūlakammavibhaṅga-sutta* and its parallels propose, for example, that being prone to anger has its karmic result in ugliness.²¹ The point seems obvious. The arising of anger can easily make someone appear ugly, and by way of extension beyond a single life the tendency to react with anger is then held to result in future ugliness.

Following similar reasoning, in the present instance formerly having been “a bringer of happiness to many, a dispeller of their fear, terror, and fright, a provider of rightful protection, safeguarding and guardianship” leads to the possession of the mark of the wheel with a thousand spokes. This description relates to the *cakravartin* myth, where the mani-

¹⁸ Ps III 366,8 explains that the first three treasures are the outcome of past deeds rooted in the absence of anger, the next three require deeds free from greed, and the seventh those free from delusion.

¹⁹ SN 19.1 at SN II 255,28 and its parallel SĀ 508 at T II 135b6; cf. also SHT IV 30f V8f, Sander and Waldschmidt 1980: 87f (the Pāli *Samyutta* takes its title from the name of the monk who is in the company of Mahāmaudgalyāyana when he sees the retribution happening); on the role of Mahāmaudgalyāyana as one who dis-closes karmic retribution cf. also Gifford 2003.

²⁰ For a listing of the parallels and a comparative study cf. Anālayo 2011a: 767–775.

²¹ MN 135 at MN III 204,18, MĀ 170 at T I 705a29, T 78 at T I 887c27, T 79 at T I 889c27, T 80 at T I 892a28, T 81 at T I 897a9, T 755 at T XVII 589a27, D 339 sa 301a4 or Q 1006 shu 312b8, and the *Karmavibhaṅga*, Kudo 2004: 52,6 and 2007: 98,9, with its Tibetan counterpart in Lévi 1932: 185,25.

festation of the wheel with a thousand spokes heralds the onset of the rightful rule of a wheel-turning king, who reigns fearlessly and without creating fear in others, and whose reign brings happiness to many.

In the ensuing reference to having given gifts in former times, these gifts are qualified to have been *saparivāra*, “with their accompaniments”, presumably in the sense of having been abundant gifts that were complete in all respects. The same term *parivāra* recurs subsequently when introducing “the great company”, *mahāparivāra*, with which either a wheel-turning king or a Buddha will be endowed.²² Similarly to the relationship between giving protection against fear and becoming a universal monarch who protects his subjects against fear, the basic principle of karmic retribution here works by mapping gifts with all their accompaniments onto receiving a great company of followers.

The type of karmic connection drawn in this way in the *Lakkhana-sutta* between former deeds and gaining the wheel-mark on the soles of the feet recurs in texts such as the *Arthaviniścaya-sūtra*, the *Lalitavistara*, the *Pañcavimśatisāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā*, and the *Bodhisattvabhūmi*.²³ In fact the *Bodhisattvabhūmi* explicitly refers to a version of this discourse.²⁴ These texts confirm the significance and impact of the type of presentation found in the *Lakkhana-sutta*.²⁵

²² In this context the term *mahāparivāra* could have been better rendered as his “great retinue” or his “great following”, but I opt for “company” in an attempt to convey the terminological connection between the karmic deed and its fruit.

²³ The *Arthaviniścaya-sūtra*, Samtani 1971: 56,1, agrees in considering the wheel-mark to be the result of giving in former lives. The Sanskrit version of the *Lalitavistara*, Lefmann 1902: 429,3, mentions several qualities leading to the wheel-mark, one of which is *tyāga*, with its counterpart in *gtong ba* in D 95 *kha* 206b7 or Q 763 *ku* 234a3, although this quality is not mentioned in T 187 at T III 609c10 (a reference to giving can be found in yet another text that has a presentation similar to DN 30, namely T 579 at T XIV 955b8). The *Pañcavimśatisāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā*, Conze 1964: 228,4, and the *Bodhisattvabhūmi*, Wogihara 1930: 378,5, also consider a range of qualities to be responsible for the wheel-mark. Conze 1964: 226 comments on the former that “this section of the *Prajñāpāramitā* ... shows many similarities with the *Lakkhana-suttanta*.”

²⁴ Wogihara 1930: 378,3: *yathoktaṁ ca lakṣaṇasūtre*.

²⁵ Wimalaratana 1994: 29 comments that “the importance of the *Lakkhana-sutta* lies in the fact that it combines the concept of the Great Man with some of the fundamental tenets of Buddhism such as the doctrine of *kamma*, rebirth, the law of causation.” Radich 2007: 322 highlights that in this way the *Lakkhana-sutta* “contains in embryo the key features that were to characterise discourse about the marks in

4.5 The Marks in Their Karmic Setting

For an appreciation of the teaching given in the *Lakkhana-sutta* as a whole, in what follows I survey the relationships it establishes for other marks. The *Lakkhana-sutta* combines several of the thirty-two marks in a single karmic explanation. Nevertheless, its treatment is fairly long, wherefore, in order to keep matters short, I have to simplify the presentation and focus just on those aspects that seem to me most relevant for appreciating the underlying rationale of the exposition in the *Lakkhana-sutta*.²⁶

The karmic setting provided in the *Lakkhana-sutta* involves two dimensions. One of these is what deeds from the past led to the mark, the other is what the mark signifies in relation to being a Buddha or a wheel-turning king.

A mark that I will discuss again later in this chapter concerns the nature of the private parts of a wheel-turning king or a Buddha, which according to the *Lakkhana-sutta* is the karmic result of reuniting family members;²⁷ it brings about having more than a thousand sons. Even in relation to the Buddha the text speaks of several thousand “sons”, which is obviously not meant literally. Such a reference is in line with a motif found elsewhere in the early discourses, according to which the Buddha’s monk disciples are “sons of the Śākyan” or “sons of the Buddha”.²⁸

post-Pāli canonical era: a complex allegorical reading of each mark, interpreted in terms of a vast economy of merit ... this doctrine [which] seems so normal in the retrospective view from subsequent developments ... is only found replete with all these elements in this single text.” Skilling 2008b: 68 points out that, in the presentation in the *Lakkhana-sutta*, “it is the relation between the deeds of the Bodhisattva and the resultant marks of the Buddha that is essential to developed Buddhology.” Zysk 2016: 168 notes that this part of the *Lakkhana-sutta* reflects “the specific aim of incorporating the central, pan-Indian doctrine of *karman* and rebirth into the system of human marks.”

²⁶ Besides involving some degree of abbreviation, my presentation also departs from the sequence in which the marks are listed in the discourse.

²⁷ DN 30 at DN III 160,15; here and below, line references are to the beginning of the respective expositions.

²⁸ In AN 10.96 at AN V 196,12 and its parallels SĀ 967 at T II 248b18 and SĀ² 201 at T II 448a29, Ānanda introduces himself as a recluse who is a “son of the Śākyan”; in SN 16.11 at SN II 221,25 and its parallels SĀ 1144 at T II 303c7 and SĀ²

The underlying implication is that, whereas in the case of the wheel-turning king the mark conveys offspring in a physical sense, resulting in the universal ruler having more than a thousand sons, in the case of the Buddha the same only has a metaphorical sense.²⁹ What connects both is the image of a strong and united “family”, which naturally relates to having in the past united the families of others.

This first example already shows that the same mark can stand for quite different functions in the case of a wheel-turning king and a Buddha, even though it is expressed in the same terms. This is significant for assessing the implications of this particular mark in the case of a Buddha, a topic to which I return below. In what follows, however, I leave out the bearing of the marks on the wheel-turning king and focus just on what concerns becoming a Buddha, in line with my main topic.

Of relevance for assessing the significance of the marks are also comparisons with plants and animals which, as I argued earlier, are probably not meant to be taken literally. A body of similar proportions to a Banyan tree, together with the ability to touch the knees with the hands without bending, is according to the *Lakkhana-sutta* the karmic result of having in the past had a balanced assessment of what others deserve;³⁰ it leads to acquiring the qualities of confidence, virtue, a

¹¹⁹ at T II 418c19 Mahākāśyapa qualifies himself as being born from the Buddha’s mouth and therefore as being a son of the Buddha (or a son of the Buddha’s Dharma in SĀ 1144); cf. also, e.g., Cohen 2000: 20f, Freiberger 2000: 221–225, and Cousins 2003: 13f. In relation to such references, it needs to be kept in mind that even the term *bhikṣu* is often used as an umbrella term without its meaning being invariably confined to male monastics; cf. in more detail Collett and Anālayo 2014. In contexts where only nuns are concerned, one can indeed find the expression “daughter of the Śākyan”, Vin IV 235,26ff, or else “daughter of the Buddha”, Thī 46 (cf. also Thī 336), confirming that the sense of family relationship felt by the monastic disciples in relation to the Buddha was not restricted to males.

²⁹ The verse portion at DN 30 at DN III 162,6 clarifies that the expression “sons” refers to those who “follow his voice”.

³⁰ DN 30 at DN III 162,10. That this quality cannot originally have been meant literally suggests itself from the conflict a literal reading would create with the description of another of the Buddha’s marks, his having a body whose height equals the span of his arms; cf. Kramrisch 1935: 164 note 2. Wimalaratana 1994: 94 comments that “in Brahminical literature ... long arms signify heroism ... and leadership in the possessor.”

sense of shame, fear of wrongdoing, learning, generosity, and wisdom, qualities that are introduced as forms of (mental) wealth. In this case the nuance of balance seems to hold together sound judgement from the past, balanced bodily proportions, and qualities conducive to mental balance. In this context the Banyan tree appears to function as an emblem of proper proportions.

The symbolic nature of such descriptions can also be seen with comparisons that involve an antelope or a lion. Having legs like an antelope has according to the *Lakkhaṇa-sutta* its karmic root in quickness in learning; its result is being quick in acquiring requisites as a Buddha.³¹ Here the quality of quickness keeps the different parts together and finds its symbolic expression in the speed of an antelope. Needless to say, the quickness to be illustrated, be it past or present, is of a mental type, and the physical speed of the antelope is only an illustration. The intention of the present description is not to invest the Buddha with sprinting abilities.

The lion motif occurs in two comparisons. A torso like a lion, shoulders without furrow, and an evenly rounded bust are according to the *Lakkhaṇa-sutta* the karmic results of having encouraged in others the qualities of confidence, virtue, learning, generosity, wisdom, etc.;³² this leads to possessing these qualities without loss as a Buddha. The relationship between karma and fruit is obvious, as the qualities one encouraged in others return to become one's own qualities. The marks related to this seem to express the sense of bodily perfection in contrast to any possible deficiency.

The *Lakkhaṇa-sutta* presents having a jaw like a lion as the karmic result of having refrained from idle speech, been a speaker of facts, and spoken to the point;³³ as a result on becoming a Buddha one will not be defeated in debate. This reflects the motif of the lion's roar, which in the early discourses represents the Buddha's ability to stand his ground in debate.³⁴ The relationship drawn to this motif confirms the symbolic

³¹ DN 30 at DN III 156,5.

³² DN 30 at DN III 164,5.

³³ DN 30 at DN III 175,3.

³⁴ For a study of the motif of the Buddha's lion's roar cf. Anālayo 2009b.

character of the comparison to a lion's jaw. The point at stake is not to invest the Buddha with the dentition of a pantherine cat, but to exemplify his fearlessness in debate with the example of the fearlessness of a lion's roar.

As a short digression, it is perhaps worth mentioning that the lion is a recurrent motif in ancient Indian art.³⁵ An example is the lion capital from Sārnāth in figure 12, where four addorsed lions with open jaws, as if about to roar their lion's roar, are on top of a drum adorned with a wheel found right beneath their forefeet.³⁶

Discoveries from Kanaganahalli have brought to light a form of representation where the lion is even found in the middle of the wheel.³⁷

According to the Pāli commentaries, both sides of the hub of the wheel of a *cakravartin* are indeed adorned with lion mouths.³⁸



Figure 12 Lion Capital

³⁵ Cf. also Bareau 1960: 248 (with a reply in Irwin 1973: 716), Pandey 1978: 27, and Deeg 2003: 42; and on the tendency to associate the Buddha with the lion (and the elephant) in art cf. Bautze-Picron 2009. Bareau 1971: 17 comments that, although the lion was "not only rare in India but most likely unknown in the middle basin of the Ganges where Buddha spent all his life, this animal plays an important role in Indian symbolism" and its symbolic usage serves "to claim spiritual supremacy for the Buddha". The same image also plays a role in the Jain tradition, where the lion was the animal chosen to represent Mahāvīra; cf. Schubring 1962/2000: 24f. Deo 1956: 560 notes instances where other Jains, because of their skill at debating, are also acclaimed as lions. On the lion's roar as an epithet of Kumārila Bhaṭṭa cf. also Verardi 2011: 221. As a symbol of kingship, supremacy, etc., the lion is of course a recurrent motif in many cultures.

³⁶ Courtesy of Eric R. Huntington, The Huntington Archive at The Ohio State University; cf. also Huntington 1985/2006: 47.

³⁷ Zin 2015a: 56 or 2015b: 185.

³⁸ Cf., e.g., Sv II 618,25 or Ps IV 216,15: *dvinnam pi nābhipanālīnam anto dve sīha-mukhāni honti.*

Returning to the *Lakkhana-sutta*, the discourse not only relates the lion's jaws to a karmic background related to speech, but does the same also for other marks. High-raised ankles and body-hair that turns upwards have their karmic root in speaking to others about what is beneficial; it results in becoming foremost among beings.³⁹ This appears to revolve around the notion of elevation, the beneficial words in the past elevated others, therefore the ankles are high and the hair turns upwards, and as a Buddha one comes to be the most elevated one.

Having single hairs that grow from a single pore and white hair between the eyebrows are the karmic result of sincerity; on becoming a Buddha this leads to being obeyed by one's disciples.⁴⁰ Sincerity is the opposite of being two-faced and thus finds its expression in the single hairs from single pores.⁴¹ This has its natural counterpart in sincerity of the disciples, which expresses itself in their willingness to obey.

The long tongue and a voice like a cuckoo have according to the presentation in the *Lakkhana-sutta* their karmic root in abstention from harsh speech in the past and speaking in ways that entered people's heart,⁴² this leads to a Buddha having a persuasive voice that enters the hearts of his audience. The relationship between refraining from harsh speech and having a persuasive voice like a cuckoo is obvious.

The teeth are said to number forty and are described as being evenly spaced, which the *Lakkhana-sutta* relates to the karmic root of abstaining from divisive speech;⁴³ this has as its result that one's followers do not become divided. Not dividing others leads to not having one's own following divided, and the sense of absence of such division has its visual counterpart in the evenly spaced teeth.

Besides qualities related entirely to speech, soft speech comes up as one of the four bases of popularity (*samgrahavastu*), which additionally

³⁹ DN 30 at DN III 154,9.

⁴⁰ DN 30 at DN III 170,13.

⁴¹ The verse in DN 30 at DN III 171,10 lists among the deeds of the past *advejjhvāca*, speech that is sincere or more literally “not twofold”, which suggests that the sense of not being twofold is what provides the relationship to the single hair and pores.

⁴² DN 30 at DN III 173,11.

⁴³ DN 30 at DN III 171,25.

comprise generosity, beneficial conduct, and impartiality. The *Lakkhana-sutta* sees these as the karmic deeds responsible for the marks of having soft and netted hands and feet; they lead to a Buddha's followers being well disposed towards him.⁴⁴ The relationship between deeds that make one popular and the quality of having well-disposed followers as a Buddha is straightforward. As for the mark, perhaps the quality of the hands and feet being netted in some way symbolizes that the followers are united and the softness of hands and feet could stand for the softness of attitude that informs the bases of popularity.

The *Lakkhana-sutta* considers eyes of a dark blue colour and eyelashes like those of a cow to have their karmic root in having looked at others in an open and friendly manner,⁴⁵ as a result of which a Buddha will be looked at with affection by others. The relationship between looking, the eyes, and being looked at requires no further comment.

A head (shaped like) a turban is according to the *Lakkhana-sutta* the result of assuming the role of a leader of others in wholesome activities;⁴⁶ it results in being the recipient of the loyalty of one's disciples. The turban features in other early discourses as one of the five royal insignia of a head-anointed king,⁴⁷ which explains why this mark holds together leadership in past and present times.

Even teeth that are of white colour are according to the *Lakkhana-sutta* the karmic result of right livelihood;⁴⁸ this leads to purity among the followers of a Buddha. Here whiteness as a symbol for purity holds past and present ethical qualities and embodiment together.

Having feet with a level tread has according to the *Lakkhana-sutta* its karmic root in steady and unwavering wholesome conduct;⁴⁹ the result is that as a Buddha one will not be obstructed externally or internally. The implication seems to be that with a level tread one walks in a steady

⁴⁴ DN 30 at DN III 152,15.

⁴⁵ DN 30 at DN III 167,7.

⁴⁶ DN 30 at DN III 169,3.

⁴⁷ Cf., e.g., MN 89 at MN II 119,27 and its parallels MĀ 213 at T I 795c13 and T 1451 at T XXIV 237a28.

⁴⁸ DN 30 at DN III 176,13.

⁴⁹ DN 30 at DN III 145,22; Strong 2001: 41 sums up that “just as a *cakravartin* ... will encounter no obstacles or opposition as he conquers the world, so too a buddha will find none who can oppose him as he spreads the Dharma.”

manner, therefore the karmic root to this is to be found in steadiness in one's dedication to wholesomeness in the past, and as a Buddha such steadiness manifests in not being obstructed.

The correlations surveyed so far from the *Lakkhana-sutta* seem to build in various ways on the basic pattern of identifying karmic relationships found in other discourses, such as the *Cūlakammavibhaṅga-sutta* and its parallels. In fact relationships established in this discourse between specific deeds and specific results corresponds to several of the remaining identifications proposed in the *Lakkhaṇa-sutta*. The *Cūlakammavibhaṅga-sutta* and most of its parallels provide the following relationships:⁵⁰

- absence of anger leads to beauty,
- abstaining from killing leads to long life,
- refraining from harming others leads to health,
- giving gifts leads to wealth,
- enquiring about what is beneficial leads to wisdom.

The relationship between anger and ugliness finds a reflection in the presentation in the *Lakkhana-sutta* that golden skin has its karmic root in the absence of anger, and also in giving soft and fine cloth;⁵¹ it leads to receiving soft and fine cloth as a Buddha. The golden skin colour reflects the beauty of being without anger and the soft quality of one's gifts has its recompense in the soft quality of what one receives.

Having projecting heels, long fingers and toes, and divinely straight limbs is according to the *Lakkhaṇa-sutta* the karmic result of compassionate abstention from killing; it leads to long life.⁵² This mirrors the relationship between killing and short life drawn in the *Cūlakammavibhaṅga-sutta* and its parallels. As for the marks, perhaps the length of fingers and toes symbolizes length of life.

Foremost taste has according to the *Lakkhana-sutta* its karmic root in not harming others;⁵³ this has the result that a Buddha has a good diges-

⁵⁰ Cf. the survey in Anālayo 2011a: 770–774; the sequence of deeds has been adjusted.

⁵¹ DN 30 at DN III 159,5.

⁵² DN 30 at DN III 149,20.

⁵³ DN 30 at DN III 166,1; Childers 1875/1993: 401 s.v. *rasaggasā* translates the term *rasaggasaggī* as “having the nerves of sensation meeting at the top”; on the term cf. also Wezler 1978: 53 note 163. Wimalaratana 1994: 113 takes this characteristic to refer to the “sensory taste receptors” found in the mouth. These would then presumably have to be visible or deducible in some way from what can be seen of

tion and is free from disease. The relationship between taste and digestion is obvious, as is the connection between not harming others and being free from disease, which corresponds to the presentation in the *Cūlakammavibhaṅga-sutta* and its parallels.

The *Lakkhana-sutta* presents a body with seven convexities (the back of the four limbs, the two shoulders, and the trunk) as having its karmic root in giving food and drink; this in turn leads to receiving food and drink.⁵⁴ Here again one receives what one has given, and by getting sufficient food and drink the body will not become emaciated. The *Cūlakammavibhaṅga-sutta* and its parallels state the same principle in more general terms by relating past giving to becoming wealthy.

Smooth skin to which dust does not stick has its karmic root according to the *Lakkhana-sutta* in enquiring from recluses and brahmins about what is good and beneficial;⁵⁵ it is productive of great wisdom in a Buddha. The relationship between such enquiry and wisdom is found similarly in the *Cūlakammavibhaṅga-sutta* and its parallels; the motif of being free from dust represents in the early discourses the insight gained with stream-entry and thereby the acquisition of a type of wisdom highly esteemed in early Buddhist thought.⁵⁶

It seems fair to conclude that the relationships established in this way in the *Lakkhana-sutta* build on basic principles already enunciated in the *Cūlakammavibhaṅga-sutta* and its parallels. The *Lakkhana-sutta*'s depiction of what holds together past deed and present retribution is thus just another exposition of karma and its fruits, well in line with the outlook on this matter in other discourses.

The decisive difference and novel perspective in the *Lakkhana-sutta* is not the exposition as such, but rather the integration of the marks into this presentation. Here the commentary on the *Lakkhana-sutta* offers a helpful indication. In a recurrent phrase, the *Sumanigalavilāśinī* emphasizes that the function of the marks is to make known the respective

the tongue when someone speaks, as this is one of the thirty marks that in the standard account brahmins are able to discern on their own, unlike the two marks where the Buddha's cooperation is required.

⁵⁴ DN 30 at DN III 151,7.

⁵⁵ DN 30 at DN III 157,15.

⁵⁶ Cf., e.g., MN 56 at MN I 380,6 and its parallel MĀ 133 at T I 632c16.

quality to *devas* and humans in the world.⁵⁷ This draws attention to the visual dimension that already came to the forefront in relation to the marks in chapter 3 in particular. A central aspect of the thirty-two marks is to function as the visual embodiment of past merits and present qualities; they clearly have an iconic function.

By way of illustration, I propose to compare this function of the marks to a convex lens, which could be used as a burning glass or a magnifying glass. A convex lens can serve as a converging point for the sun's rays such that a fire can be started or else it can make things more easily visible. Similarly, in the type of presentation found in the *Lakkhana-sutta* the thirty-two marks function as a converging point for the bodhisattva's accumulation of merits over countless lives in order to start off his Buddhahood. The marks not only function as an embodiment in the sense of holding together the different past actions in a single body, they also offer a visual summary of what makes a Buddha.⁵⁸ The marks thereby render his accumulation of merits visible to the outside world and at the same time implicitly invite their visual recollection.

As a side note, it is perhaps also worth mentioning that in this rather detailed listing of a profusion of acts and qualities cultivated by the Buddha in previous lives (of which the above is only a rather condensed summary), compassion in the form of *karuṇā* is not mentioned at all and its complement *anukampā* only occurs once as part of a standard phrase used regularly in descriptions of abstention from killing.⁵⁹ This ties in with the observation made in the previous chapter that compassion, however prominent it was to become in later times, is not yet a central fea-

⁵⁷ Taking the wheel-mark as an example, Sv III 925,2: *iminā kāraṇena sadevako loko jānātū ti nibbattam cakkalakkhaṇam*.

⁵⁸ An episode in Pj II 285,9 conveniently exemplifies the importance of this visual dimension of the marks in conjunction with the karmic perspective provided in the *Lakkhana-sutta*. A hermit suspects that the Buddha Kāśyapa has spoken a falsehood. Looking at the Buddha he sees the thirty-two marks, especially the two marks of single hairs that grow from a single pore and of white hair between the eyebrows, which are the outcome of sincerity in past existences (according to DN 30 at DN III 170,13). This makes the hermit realize that his suspicion must be unfounded.

⁵⁹ DN 30 at DN III 149,24: *sabbapāṇabhūtahitānukampī*. Other qualities that could have served as occasions for bringing in compassion more explicitly are being desirous of the welfare of others, DN 30 at DN III 164,7, not harming others, DN 30 at DN III 166,3, and looking at others with kind eyes, DN 30 at DN III 167,10.

ture in those passages among the early discourses that seem to reflect the main elements leading to and foreshadowing the bodhisattva path.⁶⁰

4.6 Aspiring to Be Endowed with the Marks

The karmic reading of the thirty-two marks, in itself an obvious step for bringing them more fully within the domain of Buddhist thought, acquires a rather significant dimension once it is considered in conjunction with the development evident in the *Mahāvadāna-sūtra* and its parallels, which show the gradual integration of these marks into the conception of what defines a Buddha.

These two trajectories in conjunction result in the thirty-two marks becoming a script for the bodhisattva path. With the bodhisattva ideal gradually emerging as a viable path to be pursued, the identification of the relationship between karmic deeds and the marks will almost inevitably turn into a practical injunction. Expressed in terms of the passage from the *Lakkhana-sutta* translated above, in order to acquire the wheel-mark on one's soles in the future, for example, one should at present do one's best to become a "bringer of happiness to many, a dispeller of their fear, terror, and fright, a provider of rightful protection, safeguarding, and guardianship", and, lest this be forgotten, one should of course give "gifts with their accompaniments".

A discourse in the *Ekottarika-āgama* explicitly presents the giving of gifts, *dāna*, as leading to Buddhahood and to being endowed with the thirty-two marks.⁶¹ Another discourse in the same collection reports how the bodhisattva Maitreya approaches the Buddha for instructions on the bodhisattva path, in reply to which he receives a teaching on four qualities that will lead to his accomplishing of the six perfections (*pāramitā*).⁶²

Needless to say, giving is the first of the perfections recognized in both the sixfold and the tenfold listing.⁶³ The early discourses in general do not yet testify to the idea of these perfections, thus here and else-

⁶⁰ Cf. above p. 90f.

⁶¹ EA 10.3 at T II 564b16: 布施成佛道, 三十二相具.

⁶² EA 27.5 at T II 645b1; cf. also Anālayo 2010a: 128.

⁶³ For a survey and discussion cf. the classic by Har Dayal 1932/1970: 168ff.

where the *Ekottarika-āgama*, by dint of having remained open to later ideas and influences to a much higher degree than the other early discourse collections out our disposal, offers a window on developments that would have taken place at a time when they no longer could have a full impact on the discourses found in the four Pāli *Nikāyas* and the other Āgamas.

In line with this same tendency, yet another discourse in the same *Ekottarika-āgama* collection depicts the birth of Maitreya, the future Buddha, endowed with the thirty-two marks and eighty secondary characteristics.⁶⁴

Overall these passages fit in with the impression that the type of exposition found in the *Lakkhana-sutta*, for example, could have provided a point of departure for concern with what one has to do in order to become a Buddha in the future. Even though the presentation in the *Lakkhana-sutta* is retrospective, it does not take much to read the same as a chart for future Buddhahood. Thus the combination of the genealogy of Buddhas in the *Mahāvadāna-sūtra*, which is only concerned with their present lives, and deeds performed by Gautama in past lives as described in the *Lakkhana-sutta* naturally opens the door to conceiving of the career of a bodhisattva over a series of past lives. Such a career requires cultivating the proper conduct described in the *Lakkhana-sutta* and systematized in the forms of the perfections (*pāramitā*), in order to become another member in the genealogy of Buddhas.⁶⁵

Now the idea that to become a Buddha requires preparation over a series of past lives is so integral to Buddhist thought in its different manifestations that it may at first seem odd to enquire into how this idea would have arisen in the first place. Yet this idea, just as the very conception of a set of perfections a bodhisattva has to accomplish, is not attested in the early discourses, except for the *Ekottarika-āgama*.

⁶⁴ EA 48.3 at T II 788b4: 名曰彌勒, 有三十二相, 八十種好。

⁶⁵ The relevance of these two texts to the emerging bodhisattva path has already been recognized to some extent by Katz 1982/1989: 130, who refers to “the canonical *bodhisatta* doctrine, especially as found in the *Mahāpadāna Suttanta*, and the related doctrines about the *mahāpurisa* and his thirty-two marks”, for which he gives in his note 106 a reference to “the *Lakkhana Sutta*, D.xxx.1.2, which deals specifically with this notion” (although his reference is to the list of marks in the first part of the discourse, not to the exposition on the karmic background of the marks).

For the arising of the very idea that there is a need to prepare oneself over a series of lives to become a Buddha, the type of exposition found in the *Lakkhaṇa-sutta* could indeed have served as a source of influence. Given that one who possesses the thirty-two marks at birth will certainly become a Buddha, as long as he goes forth, concern with how to become a Buddha oneself would naturally have focussed on how these marks are to be acquired. This makes it quite possible that the idea of a need for a series of lives of intentional cultivation arose in some way in dialogue with the lore of the thirty-two marks.

Once the karmic perspective on the thirty-two marks has come into being and is perceived within tradition as a distinct Buddhist contribution, as reflected in the statement in the *Lakkhaṇa-sutta* that those outside the fold of the Buddhist tradition are ignorant of the karmic dimension of the marks, it seems almost inevitable that such a presentation should act as a potent stimulant for conceiving of the career of a bodhisattva in terms of particular deeds to be performed over a series of lives. As the *Lakkhaṇa-sutta* states, it is “by doing and accumulating such deeds, by their amassing and abundance” that the qualities and physical marks required for Buddhahood have been accomplished by Gautama. Hence it must be “by doing and accumulating such deeds, by their amassing and abundance” that those same qualities and physical marks are to be accomplished by any Buddha-to-be.

The function of the physical marks as an emblem of certainty of future Buddhahood finds its expression in the prediction given in this respect by fortune tellers after examining the infant bodhisattva, as described, for example, in the *Mahāvadāna-sūtra* and its parallels.⁶⁶ Once the karmic perspective on the thirty-two marks has opened up the view towards a prolonged preparation over a series of past lives, the idea of a prediction to be received would naturally also have moved further back in time to a past life. With such a shift in place it is hardly surprising if the one who gives a prediction to a bodhisattva is a former Buddha, instead of some fortune teller or seer. After all, even in regard to recognition of the thirty-two marks the Buddha Gautama is shown to surpass brahmins in this lore,⁶⁷ exemplifying the fact that a Buddha with

⁶⁶ Cf. above p. 81ff.

⁶⁷ Cf. above p. 66f.

his profound wisdom and knowledge is naturally the one best able to assess someone else's ability to reach Buddhahood.

This is indeed what happens in a *Madhyama-āgama* discourse which I took up in my earlier study of the genesis of the bodhisattva ideal. In this discourse the Buddha Gautama gives a prediction to a monk in the assembly that he will become the future Buddha Maitreya.⁶⁸ Moreover, according to the *Madhyama-āgama* parallel to the *Acchariyabbhutadhamma-sutta*, at the time of the previous Buddha Kāśyapa the bodhisattva Gautama had vowed to become a Buddha himself in the future.⁶⁹ These passages complete the picture that has emerged from a study of the *Lakkhana-sutta* and the *Mahāvadāna-sūtra*.

Once the idea of a preparation over a series of past lives has fallen into place, the connection between the prediction to be received by a bodhisattva and the thirty-two marks inevitably becomes weakened, simply because these marks are only acquired fully in the last life of a Buddha. Therefore in previous lives they cannot be as prominent as they are in the prediction of an infant's potential to become a Buddha (or a wheel-turning king) in the same life, discussed in the previous chapter. With the shift of the prediction towards the more distant past, the element of certainty of future Buddhahood remains, whereas its embodiment in the acquisition of the whole set of thirty-two marks is at that point in time a matter for the distant future.

Nevertheless, although in relation to the prediction the marks are less prominent, their function as markers of progress on the path to Buddhahood remains a continuous theme. This can be seen even in relation to the past life of the Buddha Gautama in which he met the Buddha Kāśyapa. According to a version of this past life in a collection of *Avadānas* extant in Chinese translation, at that time the one who was to become the Buddha Gautama already had thirty of the thirty-two marks.⁷⁰

In a Khotanese fragment, which clearly builds on a version of the *Lakkhana-sutta*, the karmic relationship between the wheel-mark and the corresponding deeds takes the form of an injunction to a bodhisattva

⁶⁸ MA 66 at T I 511a14; cf. the discussion in Anālayo 2010a: 118–128.

⁶⁹ MA 32 at T I 469c24; cf. the discussion in Anālayo 2010a: 84–92.

⁷⁰ T 197 at T IV 172c11: 有三十相; cf. also Anālayo 2010a: 74 note 66 and for a depiction in art Zhu 2015: 19.

to undertake such deeds.⁷¹ The *Ugrapariprcchā* recommends that one take refuge in the Buddha by aspiring to attain the body of a Buddha endowed with the thirty-two marks and then exert oneself to obtain these marks.⁷² The Tibetan version of the *Pratyutpannabuddhasam-mukhāvasthitasamādhi-sūtra* describes a meditative practice of recollecting the physical marks of a Buddha as the result of accumulated merits. Apprehending the beauty of Buddhas, one then reflects that in the future one will also be endowed with a completely perfect body like this, that one will be completely adorned with marks like this.⁷³

The **Mahāvibhāṣā* explains that a function of the marks, besides serving in converting and inspiring faith in people, is to provide for bodhisattvas a design of the type of body required to accommodate the mental qualities it takes to become a Buddha. The reasoning proposed is that superior qualities require a superior body, hence unless the body is pure and well adorned with all of the sublime marks, the qualities previously accumulated by the bodhisattva will not be able to manifest in the body.⁷⁴

Besides such passages as probable pointers to the gradual emergence of the bodhisattva path, the aspiration to have a perfect body like a Buddha can at times also take a comic twist. This holds for an episode in the *Saṅghabhedavastu* of the Mūlasarvāstivāda *Vinaya*. Devadatta wishes to be established by King Ajātaśatru as the successor to the Buddha, to which the king replies that the Buddha had wheel-marks on his feet, unlike Devadatta. In order to become equal with the Buddha in this respect, Devadatta has smiths brand wheel-marks on his feet. As a result, other monks who have come to meet him find Devadatta screaming in agony.⁷⁵

⁷¹ Leumann 1920/1966: 120,10.

⁷² T 310 at T XI 472c22, T 322 at T XXII 15c21, T 323 at T XXII 23b26, D 63 *nga* 259a4 or Q 760.19 *zhi* 298b8; cf. also Nattier 2003: 217.

⁷³ Harrison 1978: 68,21: *bdag kyang ma 'ongs pa'i dus na lus yongs su grub pa 'di lta bu dang ldan par 'gyur ro, mtshan 'di lta bu dag yongs su rdzogs par 'gyur ro* (the transliteration style has been adjusted); cf. also T 416 at T XIII 881a13, T 418 at T XIII 908b24 (which not surprisingly is less explicit), and Harrison 1990: 69 and 1998: 35. On the marks as visual aids for developing meditative recollection of the Buddha cf. also Yamabe 1999: 216–262 and 2009: 50–54. For a survey of occurrences of the thirty-two marks in Mahāyāna texts in general cf. Boucher 2008: 5–12 and Dhammadinnā (in preparation).

⁷⁴ T 1545 at T XXVII 889b6.

⁷⁵ Gnoli 1978: 165,14, T 1450 at T XXIV 192a4, and D 1 *nga* 222a3 or Q 1030 *ce* 206b2.

A central point in this episode is of course to showcase the foolishness of Devadatta, who does not realize that it takes wholesome actions to acquire this and the other marks.⁷⁶ Besides caricaturing Devadatta as the very opposite of the Buddha, the tale also reinforces in a way the importance of the type of exposition given in the *Lakkhana-sutta*, catering for the need to know clearly what type of deeds will lead to acquiring wheel-marks under one's feet, as well as the other marks.

By way of providing a visual counterpart to the entertaining tale of Devadatta's unsuccessful attempt to acquire wheel-marks, figure 13 below shows part of an image which depicts a seated Buddha displaying the soles of his feet.⁷⁷ These carry the wheel-marks to which according to the *MūlasarvāstivādaVinaya* Devadatta so ardently aspired.



Figure 13 Wheel-marks on the Feet of a Seated Buddha

⁷⁶ T 1509 at T XXV 90b1 clarifies that even heavenly artisans are not able to manufacture the sublime wheel-mark.

⁷⁷ Mathurā Museum; courtesy of Jacques de Guerny.

4.7 The Marks and Masculinity

Another dimension related to the type of body required for becoming a Buddha is that such a body is a male one. This already emerges from a listing of five impossibilities for women, found in the *Bahudhātuka-sutta* and its parallels.⁷⁸ Closer inspection of the reference to such impossibilities in the light of their absence from a *Madhyama-āgama* parallel makes it fairly probable that this stipulation is a later addition to a discourse originally not concerned with what is possible or impossible for women.⁷⁹

Nevertheless, for these impossibilities to be mentioned in the *Bahudhātuka-sutta* and in all but one of its parallels shows that this doctrine would have come into being at a comparatively early stage in the evolution of Buddhist thought. In fact the same doctrine is also found in the *Madhyama-āgama*, albeit in a different discourse. In this case, the impossibilities for women are absent from most of the other parallels, including the Pāli version.⁸⁰ Thus when the notion of the five impossibilities of women arose, it was allocated to different contexts, with the Theravāda reciters opting for their version of the *Bahudhātuka-sutta*, whereas the Sarvāstivādins instead gave it a different placing.

According to this doctrine, a woman cannot be a wheel-turning king or a Buddha, and she is also not able to occupy the heavenly position of a Brahmā, Śakra, or Māra. Although in its early manifestations the listing of such impossibilities would have been mainly an expression of leadership conceptions (in fact the option of becoming a Māra would hardly have been of any practical relevance), with the coming into being of the bodhisattva path this stipulation acquires considerably more significance, comparable to the shift from examining the karmic background of the thirty-two marks in the *Lakkhana-sutta* to taking these marks as a script for the path to Buddhahood.

⁷⁸ MN 115 at MN III 65,24, D 297 *sha* 300b1 or Q 963 *lu* 329a5, D 4094 *ju* 32a2 or Q 5595 *tu* 35a4, T 776 at T XVII 713b20, and T 1537 at T XXVI 502b16. The impossibilities for women are not mentioned at all in MĀ 181.

⁷⁹ Cf. the discussion in Anālayo 2009a.

⁸⁰ MĀ 116 at T I 607b10. This is part of the *Madhyama-āgama* account of the foundation of the order of nuns; cf. in more detail Anālayo 2016a: 137–140.

Not only the actual becoming of a Buddha, but even to be an advanced bodhisattva was eventually considered to require a male body. Elsewhere I have argued that this might have been influenced by the evolution of *jātaka* tales.⁸¹ The type of *jātakas* found among the early discourses involve past lives of the Buddha Gautama as a human. Tales that are common heritage to the Pāli discourse tradition and the discourse collections of other traditions involve four past lives as former kings or brahmin chaplains,⁸² and another two lives as an eminent brahmin who makes a lavish offering and as a brahmin student.⁸³ Due to their narrative setting, these past lives are consistently male.⁸⁴

When incorporating various tales from the ancient Indian narrative repertoire, *jātaka* tales of the type found in the Pāli tradition in the commentary on the *Jātaka* verses collected in the fifth *Nikāya*, maleness would have naturally served as a stable characteristic to string together stories that exhibit all kinds of variations, comprising numbers of episodes involving animals, etc. When identifying one of the protagonists of any such tale as a former existence of the Buddha, the choice unsurprisingly will tend to fall on a male protagonist.

⁸¹ The present part is based on an extract from Anālayo 2015c; cf. also Anālayo 2010a: 55–71 and 2014d.

⁸² DN 5 at DN I 143,26 and its parallels in fragment 408r4f, von Criegern 2002: 35, and DĀ 23 at T I 100b26 vary, as DN 5 identifies the Buddha with the brahmin chaplain, DĀ 23 with the king, and the fragment with both (already noted in Anālayo 2010a: 69). The other instances do not exhibit such variations. DN 17 at DN II 196,11 and its parallels in Sanskrit fragments, Waldschmidt 1951: 354,9 (§34.166) and Matsumura 1988: 48,3, as well as DĀ 2 at T I 24b22 (which mentions six past lives as a wheel-turning king in general), T 5 at T I 171a19, T 6 at T I 186c7, T 7 at T I 203a6, and MĀ 68 at T I 518b8 agree on a past life as a king. The remaining examples agree on a past life as a brahmin chaplain. The first of these is DN 19 at DN II 251,9 and its parallels DĀ 3 at T I 34a9 and the *Mahāvastu*, Senart 1897: 224,5; another parallel, T 8 at T I 213c14, does not provide an identification. The other example is MN 83 at MN II 82,22 and its parallels MĀ 67 at T I 515a7, EĀ 50.4 at T II 810a26, and D 1 *kha* 56a2 or Q 1030 *ge* 51b6.

⁸³ AN 9,20 at AN IV 394,11 and its parallels MĀ 155 at T I 678a7, T 73 at T I 879c19, T 74 at T I 882a13, and EĀ 27.3 at T II 645a9; another parallel, T 72 at T I 878c11, gives the tale without identification. MN 81 at MN II 54,18 and its parallels MĀ 63 at T I 503a5, the *Mahāvastu*, Senart 1882b: 335,5, and the *Saṅghabheda-vastu*, Gnoli 1978: 30,14 and D 1 *ga* 10a4 or Q 1030 *nge* 9a7.

⁸⁴ Cf. in more detail Anālayo 2015c: 96–100.

With the coming into being of the bodhisattva path, such stories would in turn have provided a blueprint for the path to Buddhahood, following the lead of the type of exposition found in the *Lakkhana-sutta*.

On its own, however, a story about the Buddha having been a king or brahmin chaplain in the past need not take on a meaningful function in a context of aspiring to Buddhahood. One would hardly think it necessary to have to become a brahmin chaplain or a king and repeat what the Buddha presumably did in the past in order to progress on the path to becoming a Buddha oneself. An aspiration to future Buddhahood, in particular in its bodily dimension, would instead more naturally take its inspiration from a presentation of the type found in the *Lakkhana-sutta*. As the detailed survey above would have shown, the *Lakkhana-sutta* quite explicitly and in much detail depicts specific relationships between particular deeds from the past and bodily marks as well as qualities or endowments of a Buddha. Once such a type of presentation has blazed the trail, however, the quest for further information in order to carve out the details of the bodhisattva path would naturally lead to an increasing interest in *jātaka* tales.

The unfortunate consequence of all this appears to have been the conclusion that one not only has to acquire a male body in the lifetime when one becomes a Buddha, in line with leadership conceptions prevalent in the ancient Indian setting, but one already has to do so during the advanced stages of one's career as a bodhisattva in earlier lives. This is what the predominantly male character of the Buddha in his past lives suggests. Such an explicit conclusion is in fact drawn in the *Bodhisattvabhūmi*, for example, according to which an advanced bodhisattva has left behind womanhood for good and will not be reborn again as a female.⁸⁵ In the same vein, the *Nidānakathā* of the *Jātaka* stipulates possession of a male genital organ as one of eight conditions which a

⁸⁵ Wogihara 1930: 94,4: *bodhisattvah prathamasyaiva kalpasamkhyeyasyātyayāt stribhāvanī vijahāti bodhimandaniśadanam upādāya na punar jātu strī bhavati*; cf. also Har Dayal 1932/1970: 223f and Paul 1979/1985: 212 note 7. Romberg 2002: 164 notes that once “the aim was no longer to become an Arhat, but to become Buddha … this shift made, in fact, the situation for women worse, because a doctrinal foundation was laid for the necessity of changing the sex before being able to become enlightened.” Harrison 1987: 79 aptly sums up: “although both men and women can ride in the Great Vehicle, only men are allowed to drive it.”

bodhisattva must fulfil to be eligible for the prediction of future Buddhahood.⁸⁶

Another point relevant to this topic is the nature of the Buddha's male organ as one of the thirty-two marks, which has been an object of much discussion. The notion that his male organ is in some way "concealed in a sheath", or "enclosed in a sheath",⁸⁷ needs to be considered against the background of the function of the thirty-two marks and the *vita* of the Buddha. This description could hardly refer just to having foreskin, as to have such is normal for a male and would not be worth being explicitly mentioned as one of the thirty-two marks.⁸⁸ It could also not refer to some sort of covering by a sheath that would render the genital organ dysfunctional, because Gautama fathered a son before going forth and wheel-turning kings, who similarly have this mark, father according to the standard description more than a thousand sons.

The *Madhyama-āgama* parallel to the *Brahmāyu-sutta*, translated in chapter 2, explains this characteristic to be similar to that of a king of horses.⁸⁹ The *Dīrgha-āgama* parallel to the *Mahāpadāna-sutta* also refers to a horse in its description of this mark.⁹⁰ The *Ekottarika-āgama* parallel to the *Sela-sutta* employs the same expression, additionally explaining that this stands for chastity and purity.⁹¹

Given that in the case of a horse the male organ is retractable, these comparisons point to a similar implication for the Buddha's private parts.⁹² That is, the perhaps most simple explanation that suggests itself

⁸⁶ Jā I 44,20: *lingasampatti*; cf. also the discussion in Endo 1997/2002: 253f. Ps IV 122,12 and Mp II 15,7 precede such a reference with the indication that a woman is unable to have the (full-fledged) aspiration for Buddhahood, *panidhānamattam pi itthiyā na sampajjati*.

⁸⁷ Translations by Rhys Davids and Rhys Davids 1921: 138 and Walshe 1987: 441 of the term *kosohitavatthaguyha* found in DN 30 at DN III 143,24.

⁸⁸ This has already been pointed out by Egge 2003: 205 note 18, who comments that "the phrase *kosohitavatthaguyham* is usually rendered as 'the genitals (lit. "that which is to be hidden by a cloth") are enclosed in a sheath'. However, because *kosa* can mean foreskin, this mark thus understood is hardly distinctive."

⁸⁹ MĀ 161 at T I 686b16: 猶良馬王.

⁹⁰ DĀ 1 at T I 5b5: 陰馬藏.

⁹¹ EĀ 49.6 at T II 799c13: 貞潔陰馬藏.

⁹² Cf. in more detail Anālayo 2011b: 46. Verardi 1999/2000: 71 comments that this mark indicates also the "sexually indistinct nature" of a superior being, compara-

from the understanding reflected in these *Āgama* passages is that the Buddha was able to retract his genitals.⁹³ This would indeed be a mark that requires an act of demonstration, just as the ability of the tongue to reach the ears, which is what usually happens when brahmins wish to investigate the Buddha's possession of the thirty-two marks.⁹⁴ The need for an act of demonstration pertains only to these two marks, making it fair to assume that both require to be performed in order to be witnessed.

Such an understanding of these two marks results in qualities that can indeed be common to a wheel-turning king and a Buddha and at the same time also reflect the difference between the two. A functional genital organ which can be retracted, but does not need to be in that condition all the time, can fulfil the function of fathering more than a thousand sons in the case of a wheel-turning king. In its retracted condition the same mark can serve as a meaningful expression of the Buddha's aloofness from sexuality.⁹⁵ In turn, whereas the wheel-turning

ble to the retracted penis of a horse or an elephant, whereby "outwardly, its sexual characteristics remain indistinct."

⁹³ During a visit to Uttar Pradesh in early 1990 I had the opportunity to witness this feat being performed by an Indian sadhu, leaving me with the impression that such an explanation for the Buddha's private parts need not conflict with what is physically possible.

⁹⁴ Cf., e.g., MN 91 at MN II 135,14 and 143,19, MĀ 161 at T I 685c26 and 688b27, and T 76 at T I 883c7 and 885b4; this happens twice because the Buddha displays the same two marks first to Uttara and then again to Brahmāyus.

⁹⁵ In fact Waldschmidt 1929/1982: 52 translates this mark as "seine Geschlechtsteile liegen versteckt". Barnes 1987: 120 notes that, according to a common interpretation, "the sheathed penis of the Buddha as mahāpuruṣa is just that: his penis is covered because he has abandoned sexuality completely." Kabil Singh 1991: 27 comments that "the symbolic meaning of a concealed genital is that an enlightened person is no longer at the mercy of sensual appetites"; cf. also Owen 1998: 40, who speaks of a possible emphasis on "the Buddha's asexuality and abstinence". Mrozik 2006: 31 argues against interpretations that "regard this as evidence of the Buddha's masculinity. Yet the sheathed penis marks the Buddha as *different* from other men." The claim by Faure 2003: 104 that this mark is "not so much a sign of androgyny as one of a superlative virility – the capacity to come into full action as suddenly as a horse or an elephant", is presented without any textual support and fails to make sense as an interpretation of a description of someone who according to tradition is no longer capable of engaging in sex, due to the level of full awakening he has reached. This holds not only for accomplished saints in early Buddhism, but also in the Jain tradition; cf., e.g., Roth 1983: 141 note 92, "nach Auffassung der Śvet. [Śvetāmbara] Jainas bleibt dem Tīrthakara

king's use of his long tongue is less prominent in narratives concerning his reign, the Buddha is shown to use his tongue continually to engender "several thousand sons", as stated explicitly in the *Lakkhana-sutta*, namely by way of teaching the Dharma and thereby gathering monk disciples who become the "sons of the Śākyan" or the "sons of the Buddha". In this way, one of the two marks acquires a more active function in the case of each of these two careers open to one who has all the thirty-two marks, namely becoming either a wheel-turning king or a Buddha.

The remaining marks seem to convey to some degree an androgynous impression, presenting the Buddha with masculine and feminine qualities.⁹⁶ Most of the other marks, like the wheel on the soles of the feet, do not fall into either category. Although the comparison of the torso and the teeth to those of a lion conveys masculinity, this needs to be read alongside the description of the softness of his hands and feet, as well as of his skin; and also in conjunction with comparisons of his legs to those of an antelope, his eyelashes to those of a cow, and his voice to that of a cuckoo.⁹⁷ A proper assessment of the entire list of thirty-two marks makes it clear that this is certainly not the description of an epitome of masculinity, a "bull of a man", but rather a depiction that gives room to female qualities alongside masculine ones.⁹⁸

das Geschlechtsmerkmal (*liṅga*) erhalten, während das Geschlechtsbewußtsein (*veda*) schwindet."

⁹⁶ Already Burnouf 1852/1925: 618 noted that, in line with comparable descriptions of human beauty in other Indian texts, the depiction of the marks employ characteristics that, "quoique appartenant à la beauté féminine, sont également attribués à l'homme ... il y a là un mélange de caractères appartenant aux deux sexes."

⁹⁷ The antelope, for example, occurs repeatedly in depictions of female charms in Indic texts, cf. the survey in Wojtilla 2006: 32. A description of the beauty of the courtesan Ambapālī in Thī 261 employs the motif of a cuckoo (*kokila*) to illustrate the attractiveness of her voice. Similarly, as noted by Milewska 2015: 119, the voice of a beautiful courtesan is compared to that of a cuckoo (*pūṇskokila*) in *Mahābhārata* III.112.7; cf. Sukthankar 1942: 375,6. These instances make it indubitably clear that such comparisons were not meant to convey masculinity.

⁹⁸ Pace Powers 2009: 1, who attributes depictions of the Buddha as an androgynous and asexual character to popular Western culture. His depiction of the Buddha as a paragon of masculinity seems to rely on a selective reading of passages and does not reflect what emerges from an unbiased survey of the canonical sources. As already pointed out by Ciurtin 2010/2011: 341–343, even the term employed by Powers as the title for his study, "bull of a man" (*naraśabha* or *puruṣaśabha*),

A more gender-inclusive perspective also emerges from the wheel-mark in the *Lakkhana-sutta*, which predicts in relation to the Buddha that “great is his retinue of monks, nuns, male lay followers, female lay followers.” These are the four assemblies whose establishment, according to the *Mahāparinirvāṇa-sūtra* and its parallels, the Buddha had soon after his awakening considered a task he wanted to complete before passing away.⁹⁹ Thus even at the comparatively late time when the exposition on the karmic relationship of the marks in the *Lakkhana-sutta* came into being, the nuns were still considered an integral part of the Buddha’s mission, rather than being perceived as the cause for the decline of his dispensation.

In sum, although the function of the thirty-two marks as a chart for the bodhisattva path would have contributed to making the advanced stages of this path the sole preserve of males, in their function in the early discourses the thirty-two marks are not yet an emblem of masculinity.

4.8 Summary

The karmic reading in the *Lakkhana-sutta* endows the thirty-two marks with two dimensions by describing what deeds from the past lead to a particular mark and what this mark then signifies in the case of a Buddha or a wheel-turning king. Comparable to a convex lens, the marks as embodiments of accumulated merits hold together the different past actions in a single body and also offer a visual summary of what makes a Buddha, thereby inviting visual recollection.

when examined in context conveys nuances of leadership rather than of mere masculinity.

⁹⁹ DN 16 at DN II 104,18 (the importance apparently accorded to the whole episode in the Theravāda reciter tradition is reflected in it being included in other discourse collections as well: SN 51.10 at SN V 261,1, AN 8.70 at AN IV 310,15, and Ud 6.1 at Ud 63,18), Sanskrit fragment 361 folio 165 R2f, Waldschmidt 1950: 53, DĀ 2 at T I 15c2, T 5 at T I 165a19, T 6 at T I 180b26, T 7 at T I 191b28, the Mūlasarvāstivāda *Vinaya*, T 1451 at T XXIV 387c27, and its Tibetan parallel, Waldschmidt 1951: 209,23 (§16.8); cf. also the *Divyāvadāna*, Cowell and Neil 1886: 202,10, and T 383 at T XII 1010c29. This and other related passages serve to put into perspective the negative attitude attributed to the Buddha in the canonical accounts of the foundation of the nuns’ order; for a study of which cf. Anālayo 2016a.

A combination of the genealogy of Buddhas in the *Mahāvadāna-sūtra* and the *Lakkhana-sutta*'s depiction of deeds performed by Gautama in past lives would have opened the door to conceiving of the career of a bodhisattva over a series of past lives. As a result, the thirty-two marks appear to have become a psycho-somatic script for the bodhisattva path. The notion of certainty of reaching Buddhahood, associated with their acquisition, would have shifted to past lives as well and taken the form of a prediction given by another Buddha.

Conclusion

The description of the Buddha's footprint in the discourse to Drona would originally have been without any marks. In the aniconic period of Indian art, the footprint adorned with a wheel served as a convenient marker of the Buddha's presence and as an appropriate object for expressing devotion. Such depictions would have influenced textual accounts, which appear to have copied the description of the wheel-treasure as endowed with a thousand spokes, mirroring the thousand rays of the sun. This description seems to have been applied to the Buddha's foot and footprint, eventually mentioning explicitly also the rim and hub, as well as in some textual traditions adding the motif of the brilliance of the thousand-spoked wheel.

The original conception of the thirty-two marks of the Buddha appears to have been concerned with subtle physical nuances, the detection of which requires previous training in the corresponding lore and close scrutiny. Although the early discourses present concern with the marks as a brahminical pursuit, such preoccupations are not censured or criticized. Instead, the marks are presented as a convenient tool by means of which brahmins can be converted.

Due to the influence of visualization and depiction in art, the descriptions of some marks seem to have evolved further, comparable to the addition of a thousand-spoked wheel to the simple footprint in the discourse to Drona. As a result, several of the marks, in the way they have come down to us in the texts, are hard to make sense of.

With the starting point in a conception of the thirty-two marks as only recognizable by brahmins trained in the lore of prognostication, visualizing the marks in the context of recollecting the Buddha, and even more so when depicting him in art, inevitably resulted in the marks becoming more visible and evident. As part of the same development, in textual sources the marks increasingly come to feature as something that everyone can see and recognize, alongside the halo of brilliance with which the Buddha comes to be endowed.

With such easy visibility, the salvific function of the thirty-two marks is able to expand beyond brahmins to serve as a means of conversion in general. Besides conversion, the marks also come to function as a source of inspiration and even healing for those already converted.

In the *Mahāvadāna-sūtra* and its parallels the thirty-two marks can be seen to be in the process of becoming a necessary requirement for Buddhahood. This trend to generalization ties in with a trajectory I studied in *The Genesis of the Bodhisattva Ideal*, where various marvels associated with the bodhisattva Gautama, especially his claim, having just been born, to be supreme in the world, become the norm for a bodhisattva in general.¹

The *Lakkhaṇa-sutta* exemplifies the coming into being of the karmic perspective on the marks, showcasing how a particular mark reflects specific wholesome deeds done in the past and in what way this contributes to Buddhahood. In their karmic setting the marks function in a way comparable to a convex lens, becoming an embodiment of accumulated merits from the past and at the same time serving as a visual summary of what makes a Buddha.

In this way the scene appears to be set for the coming into being of the aspiration to become an embodiment of the thirty-two marks, based on the arising of the very idea that a particular form of conduct over a series of past lives is required for the attainment of Buddhahood. This idea might well have had its point of departure in the type of exposition found in the *Lakkhaṇa-sutta*, whose original intent would have been simply to provide a Buddhist doctrinal context for the lore of the thirty-two marks by exploring the karma believed to have led to their acquisition.

It is in particular in combination with the genealogy of Buddhas that this karmic perspective on the marks seems to open the door to conceiving of the career of a bodhisattva over a series of past lives. As part of this trajectory, the karmic perspective on the thirty-two marks would have become a script for the bodhisattva path, an emblem for the certainty of accomplishing Buddhahood.

With the shift of emphasis towards progress on the bodhisattva path over a series of past lives, the narrative of the prediction by fortune tell-

¹ Cf. Anālayo 2010a: 28–46.

ers that the infant bodhisattva will become a Buddha, if he goes forth, could have served as a starting place for the arising of the idea that past Buddhas predict the future success of a bodhisattva.

A step taken in this direction emerges from the *Madhyama-āgama* discourse that depicts the advent of the next Buddha, where the Buddha Gautama gives a prediction to a monk in the assembly that he will be successful in becoming the Buddha Maitreya.² Another dimension of the same development can be discerned in the *Madhyama-āgama* parallel to the *Acchariyabbhutadhamma-sutta*, where during a meeting with the previous Buddha Kāśyapa the bodhisattva Gautama vows to become a Buddha himself in the future.³

In conjunction with my earlier study of *The Genesis of the Bodhisattva Ideal*, in which I already explored the prediction of Maitreya and Gautama's vow under Kāśyapa, the material covered in the present examination shows how central components of the bodhisattva path can be discerned in an embryonic stage among early discourse literature.

Needless to say, the evolution of the bodhisattva ideal is a complex process influenced by a variety of conditions. Thus the early discourses can only offer one of the possible windows on this phenomena. Nevertheless, it seems to me that the passages examined in this and the previous study do help to recognize the continuity of development in Buddhist thought from early to later times and allow the construction of informed hypotheses regarding how essential elements relevant to the arising of the bodhisattva ideal might have come into being.

Both studies in conjunction testify to the worth of comparing versions of the early discourses, extant from different reciter traditions, in order to appreciate early stages in the history of Buddhist doctrine and practice.

² Cf. Anālayo 2010a: 113–128.

³ Cf. Anālayo 2010a: 71–92.

Abbreviations

AN	<i>Āṅguttara-nikāya</i>
Ap	<i>Apadāna</i>
Ap-a	<i>Apadāna-āṭṭhakathā</i>
B ^e	Burmese edition
CBETA	Chinese Buddhist Electronic Text Association
C ^e	Ceylonese edition
D	Derge edition
DĀ	<i>Dīrgha-āgama</i> (T 1)
Dhp	<i>Dhammapada</i>
Dhp-a	<i>Dhammapada-āṭṭhakathā</i>
DN	<i>Dīgha-nikāya</i>
EĀ	<i>Ekottarika-āgama</i> (T 125)
E ^e	PTS edition
Gā	<i>Gāndhārī</i>
Jā	<i>Jātaka</i>
MĀ	<i>Madhyama-āgama</i> (T 26)
MN	<i>Majjhima-nikāya</i>
Mp	<i>Manorathapūrani</i>
Or	Oriental
Pj II	<i>Paramatthajotikā</i>
Ps	<i>Papañcasūdanī</i>
PTS	Pali Text Society
Q	Peking edition
SĀ	<i>Samyukta-āgama</i> (T 99)
SĀ ²	<i>Samyukta-āgama</i> (T 100)
S ^e	Siamese edition
SHT	Sanskrithandschriften aus den Turfanfunden
SN	<i>Samyutta-nikāya</i>
Sn	<i>Sutta-nipāta</i> (reference is to verse number or else to the PTS number and pagination in case of prose)
Sp	<i>Samantapāśādikā</i>
Sv	<i>Sumaṅgalavilāsinī</i>

T	Taishō edition (CBETA)
Th-a	<i>Theragāthā-aṭṭhakathā</i>
Thī	<i>Therīgāthā</i>
Thī-a	<i>Therīgāthā-aṭṭhakathā</i> (ed. 1998)
Ud	<i>Udāna</i>
Vin	<i>Vinaya</i>
Vism	<i>Visuddhimagga</i>
Vv	<i>Vimānavatthu</i>

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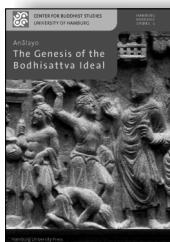
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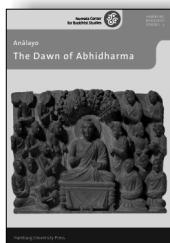
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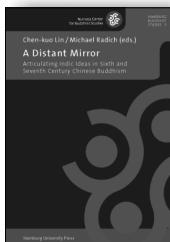
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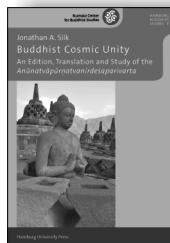
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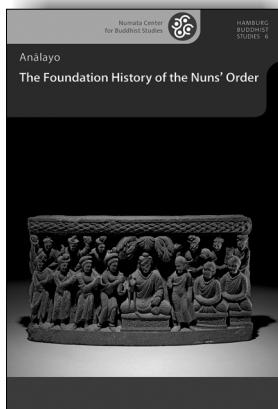
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