

[Back to Exhibition Index](#)

Buddha Nanda ([Image](#))

Metal sculpture Copper with fire gilding

9.5 inches

Tibet, made by Nepalese craftsmen in Lhasa

Ca. 18th century

Nepalese treatment of the central Tibetan style

Museum #: 94.005

By Lin Su-hsing

3 June, 1998

An inscription on the base identifies this masterwork as the Buddha Nanda (T. dGab wo rCal chin), one of a set of thousand Buddhas (T. Sangs-rgyas sTong). In the Aryabadrakalpa Sutra, it is said that during the future Auspicious Age there will be a thousand Buddhas, whose names and characteristics of this aeon are described in detail in this Sutra. The followers of Mahayana had no hesitation in infinitely increasing the number of Buddhas and great bodhisattvas; they conceived at the heart of the cosmos a considerable number of universes, each ruled over by a Buddha assisted by one or more great bodhisattvas (Lamotte, 92). Because the Auspicious Age has not arrived yet, this concept represents the promise of future enlightenment for every being. It is common to find halls in temples and monasteries dedicated to the thousand Buddhas, which serve to reinforce the worshipper's faith in his own future (Bechert, 72)

This image is a masterpiece of Tibetan metal sculpture. Seated with the legs crossed in *padmasana* (the lotus or diamond posture), Nanda shows the *bhumisparsha mudra* (the earth-touching gesture), a mudra responding to the demon Mara's challenge to Buddha Shakyamuni's right to enlightenment. The Buddha's body is characterized by auspicious marks (*lakṣana*), including *urna*, depicted as a circle in the center of the forehead, *usnisa*, the hair knot atop his head, and so on. *Usnisa* is a term that refers to the knot of hair itself and signifies the princely heritage of the Buddha (S. Huntington, 121); however, it is often mistakenly understood as a physical bulge accommodating the supreme wisdom obtained by the Buddha during his Enlightenment.

The flame emanating from the top of the *usnisa* represents his enlightened state. Through yogic practice, energy rises through *chakras*, or the channel centers, of the practitioner's subtle body. That energy emerges from the top of the Buddha's head symbolizes his enlightenment. In addition, the elongated earlobes, not one of the thirty-two *lakṣanas*, seen on this image are a symbol of the Buddha's renunciation of the material world and are an almost universal feature found on Buddha images (S. Huntington, 136).

This WWW server is provided by **The Huntington Archive of Buddhist and Related Art** (<http://kaladarshan.arts.ohio-state.edu/>), College of the Arts, The Ohio State University, Columbus, Ohio, USA.

Updated November 2004

URL http://kaladarshan.arts.ohio-state.edu/exhib/sama/*Essays/AM95.006PadmPar.html

© All images on this site are copyrighted. Unauthorized use or electronic dissemination is prohibited by applicable law.

© Text copyright as noted

© Front graphic copyright Andrew LaMoreaux

This Web page may be linked to any other Web pages; permission is not required. The contents, however, may not be altered. Unauthorized use or electronic dissemination is prohibited by applicable laws. Please contact the maintainer for permission to re-publish any material.