WAITING FOR MAITREYA: OF GIFTING STATUES, HOPEFUL PRESENTS
AND THE FUTURE TENSE IN FPMT'S TRANSNATIONAL TIBETAN
BUDDHISM

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WAITING FOR MAITREYA: OF GIFTING STATUES, HOPEFUL PRESENTS AND THE FUTURE TENSE IN FPMT'S TRANSNATIONAL TIBETAN BUDDHISM

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In this multi-sited ethnography, I examine the controversial plans and practices of the Maitreya Project, which hopes to offer a multi-million dollar "gift" of the world's biggest statue to India. The Maitreya Project operates under the auspices of FPMT, a transnational Tibetan Buddhist group. My examination of holy objects in FPMT centers in India elucidates how taking the "social life of things" seriously sheds new light onto ritual and social performances of identity construction. During my research period, local Indian farmers in Kushinagar were vehemently protesting against the Maitreya Project; farmers argued that they will be disenfranchised by the state's application of eminent domain to acquire their farmlands for the statue. Thus, I also engage with the emergent grassroots movements and the dynamics of People's Struggles vis-à-vis the current era of rapid globalization and development in India. Writing a "cultural biography" of the giant statue of Maitreya, then, provides a unique opportunity to observe two communities engaging with their many histories and futures through the virtual body of a sacred object.

I first investigate the central, albeit contested, place of the mammoth 500-foot Maitreya Project statue in the development of a transnational Tibetan Buddhist religious community almost exclusively comprised of Western and Asian converts as likely to hail from Switzerland as Singapore. Second, I trace the trajectories of my Buddhist informants' changing notions of hope and temporality regarding Maitreya himself, their
future statue of the future Buddha, and their own karmic futures, especially as regards re-
formulations of Buddhist morals and ethics in the face of various unanticipated "karmic
obstacles" to their desires (such as protests by local Indian farmers). Third, I endeavor to
understand FPMT's practice of gifting holy objects – giant statues, microscopic relics, and
other Buddhist bodies – in terms of both karmic exchanges and socio-economic
development benefits, through a close examination of individual donations, ritual
offerings, and "engaged," Buddhist humanitarian works. My work takes classic ritual, gift
exchange, temporality, and development literatures in new directions by writing them
through both Western academic discourses and Buddhist social theories, such as the
Madhyamika framing of "emptiness."
BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Dr. Falcone was born in 1976 in San Antonio, TX with an innate love of beaches, warm weather, and Spanish moss-draped trees. Growing up in Texas, Kentucky and Pennsylvania, Jessica Falcone grew to love the vagaries of a life in motion and the treasures of disparate subcultures. She graduated with a BA in International Studies from New College of Florida in 1998. After doing a year of fieldwork, coursework and language study in India, and finally writing and defending her MA Thesis on engaged Buddhism in India, Jessica Falcone graduated with her MA in International Development studies (with an Anthropology concentration) in 2001. From 2001-2, she conducted research on Hindu and Sikh Americans for the Pew Charitable Trust's "Religion and the New Immigrants Project." She joined the PhD program in the Department of Anthropology at Cornell University in 2002. While at Cornell University, in addition to conducting doctoral research, she worked on two side-research projects: she studied Gujarati-American folkdance in the diaspora, as well as Tibetan refugee culture in India. Dr. Falcone will be joining the Anthropology faculty of Kansas State University as an Assistant Professor in the fall of 2010.
For My Parents
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First and foremost, I would like to thank each and every one of my informants from New Delhi to New York; whether we spoke just once or several dozen times; my informants gave me the precious gift of their time and their stories, and in exchange I have endeavored to represent their opinions and narratives with care and sensitivity. I would particularly like to extend my gratitude to all of the FPMT center directors who gave me crucial permissions to conduct my research. FPMT centers were welcome refuges after long journeys by Indian train and local bus. I cannot tell my FPMT informants how much I valued their candor, time and companionship. I would also like to extend special thanks to my informants in Kushinagar, especially those who saw fit to place their confidence in me in a time of deep local crisis. I wish for my Kushinagari informants the calm they crave. It is my fervent hope that someday, somehow, the desires articulated by most of my FPMT on the one hand, and those hopes expressed by my Kushinagari informants on the other, will no longer come into direct conflict with one another. Perhaps, in the future, these two communities can endeavor to find ways to move forward in collaboration with each other instead of working at cross-purposes.

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Association was a generous supporter of my graduate education and research, as they awarded me Full Preferment (a Room and Board Scholarship) at the Cornell Branch of the Telluride Association for a full five semesters.

My academic Field at Cornell University deserves special mention, as I feel that the Department of Anthropology supported my intellectual development with every possible resource at their disposal. My committee members, Dr. Dominic Boyer, Dr. Andrew Willford, Dr. Anne Blackburn and Dr. Hiro Miyazaki, have been tireless advocates for my advancement in graduate school and beyond. Dominic Boyer, in particular, was extremely kind to continue on as my primary Chair, even though he had moved to another university many semesters before. Dr. Boyer's wise and thoughtful commentaries as regards my drafts, papers and intellectual trajectory have helped me to craft a dissertation that, although still imperfect, is one that I can file with pride. Andrew Willford was a fascinating and enthusiastic interlocutor whose comments have always led me to transcend my theoretical comfort zones. I am grateful to Hiro Miyazaki for stoking and guiding my interest in the literatures of gift exchange, hope, and material culture studies, which have provided important guideposts along my doctoral path. Dr. Anne Blackburn of the Department of Asian Studies deserves special praise for consistently going far above and beyond the call of duty on behalf of my work, my candidacy and my nascent career. She has been an invaluable and careful reader, selflessly giving time and energy towards challenging me to create a more rigorous product. Of course, while all of my mentors deserve a great deal of praise for the strengths of this dissertation, it would be unfair to hold them responsible for its shortcomings, since the weaknesses and mistakes that invariably dot this dissertation are my fault alone.

My colleagues and friends in the Department of Anthropology at Cornell were incredible supporters throughout my graduate training. From post-Capstone beer-mates to astute advisors on the job search eight years later, my peers have been stalwart co-
travelers on a long and onerous road. And Telluriders, my dear housemates, what can I say to you? We pushed, pulled, loved and raged at one another like siblings, my friends, but from the bottom of my heart – and in memory of the 36-hour preferment meetings, the dance-like kitchen shifts, and so much laughter – I am grateful for every single moment of our time together. I must also acknowledge my deep appreciation for close friends harvested from a myriad of communities – from Philadelphia, New College, Camp Galil, SIT-India ’97, Cornell Raas, Asheville – whose good company throughout my PhD process helped me to face my task with optimism and a healthy sense of humor.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ASHA - ASHA for Education
ASI - Archaeological Survey of India
BBSS - Bhoomi Bachao Sangharsh Samiti (Save the Land Movement)
BJP - Bhartiya Janta Party
BSP - Bahujan Samaj Party
BUPC - Bhumi Ucched Pratirodh Committee (Committee to Resist Eviction from the Land)
CM - Chief Minister
CPI-M - Communist Party of India-Marxist
DM - District Magistrate
FPMT - Foundation for the Preservation of the Mahayana Tradition
KSDA - Kushinagar Special Development Area
LAA - Land Acquisition Act
MOU - Memorandum of Understanding
MLA - Member of Legislative Assembly
MP - Member of Parliament
MPI - Maitreya Project International
MPT - Maitreya Project Trust
SEZ - Special Economic Zone
SP - Samajwadi Party
UP - Uttar Pradesh
CHAPTER 1

"DHYANA"/MEDITATION: THINKING THROUGH BUDDHISM

The Maitreya Project: a Social Biography

Lama Zopa Rinpoche, the spiritual director of the Foundation for the Preservation of the Mahayana Tradition (FPMT), has dozens of ambitious construction projects underway at any given time, but the Maitreya Project statue is known to be Rinpoche's ultimate dream. The statue as it is currently imagined will be 500 feet high, which is approximately three times the size of the statue of liberty sans pedestal. FPMT leaders want to build the statue in Kushinagar, India, where the historical Buddha is thought to have passed away just over 2500 years ago.

FPMT was founded in the sixties by a Tibetan refugee, Lama Yeshe, and his disciple, Lama Zopa Rinpoche, at the height of uncertainty amongst Tibetan refugees about their future prospects; they began teaching non-Tibetan devotees from America and Europe in part to "preserve" Gelukpa Tibetan Buddhist religious conventions, in part by passing them on to mostly "Western" students,1 and in part because Westerners began flocking to them with a desire to learn.2 Today, the devotees, monastics and administrators worshipping at FPMT's global network of over 150 centers are as likely to hail from Canada or Switzerland as Malaysia or Taiwan. In general, these FPMT students have supported their gurus' desire to repay India, ostensibly for sheltering Tibetan refugees, with the "gift" of a grand statue (Figure 1).

1 While I utilize the conventional delineation of "Western" and "Eastern" with respect to the terminology used by so many of my informants, I must note here that the binary is, of course, exceedingly oversimplistic, erasing some of the historical contingencies of these imaginaries.
2 There are four primary Tibetan Buddhist sects recognized today: Nyingma, Sakya, Kagyu, and Gelukpa. Jonang practitioners sometimes argue that it should be considered the fifth important Tibetan Buddhist sect. From internal perspectives there are sectarian differences in lineage, Tantric rituals practices, and other aspects, however arguably all the schools follow Nagarjuna's Mahayana Buddhism and emphasize the significance of Vajrayana (Tantric) ritual and practice (Powers 1995).
Figure 1. A framed poster of MPI's giant planned statue hanging in the Maitreya Project's Universal Education School in Bodh Gaya in the fall of 2006. (Photograph by Jessica Falcone.)

Staff from the Maitreya Project International (MPI), which is the FPMT affiliate now responsible for seeing the statue project through to fruition, claim that the statue will establish a direct karmic connection between Maitreya himself, the long-awaited Buddha of Loving-Kindness, and the donors (and viewers) of the statue. Buddhist devotees from all traditions believe that the Maitreya Buddha will manifest on earth in the very distant future, long after Buddhist philosophies have been forgotten, long after the inevitable decline of humanity and long after the gradual resurgence of human physique and psyche that will follow the great decline. When humanity is ready, Maitreya will be reborn on earth, and help those lucky enough to be alive at the time to achieve quick liberation from samsara. The Tibetan Buddhist ritual and practice surrounding Maitreya emphasizes the significance of making karmic connections to Maitreya in this life, by building and worshiping a Maitreya statue for example, in order to be in a good karmic position to be reborn during his lifetime. Besides the primarily religious goal of constructing a statue in order to establish a connection to the Maitreya Buddha, the MPI also boasts a secondary
motivation for their plans in Kushinagar: humanitarianism. MPI literature focuses on the fact that statue will be flanked by a host of charitable, "engaged Buddhist" projects, such as a school and a hospital, so as to provide immediate socioeconomic benefits to complement long-term karmic advantages.

My project is a history of the Maitreya Project's future. Like so many other histories of the future (Rosenberg and Harding 2005), though the actual object of research itself is not-yet extant, the researcher must focus on the past and present. Not unlike Benjamin's angel of history who rushes forward facing backwards into the past (1968), the angel of futurity rushes forward into ever new present moments, but never gets where s/he sought to go; the angel of futurity is, and has always been stuck in the here and now. When I envision the angel of futurity, I think about the Sri Lankan men charged with painting on the eyes of the Buddha statue without looking straight at it, for just like these men the angel faces in the opposite direction of its object and can only intuit where it is going through dull reflections and images of images. Just as no human eye can look directly in the face of the creation of Buddha/god without mediation, reflection, and artifice, none of us, not even the angel of futurity, can look straight into the face of the future. So although my work focuses on the future, I cannot pretend or hope to look forward. Mostly, I just observe the acts of mediation through which my informants are creating their futures. By looking backwards at the way that FPMT and the Maitreya Project have framed their future, I trace the Maitreya Project's origins, its progress and setbacks, and its forward momentum past and present.

This dissertation traces a plan, a project, an innovation, which has not happened yet, not wholly unlike Bruno Latour's exploration of the rise and fall of the idea of Aramis

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3 For more on the Natra Mangala, or eye ceremony, see Coomaraswamy 1956. In his novel, Ondaatje explains the ceremony like this: "The other man, facing him, holds up the mirror, and the artificer puts the brush over his shoulder, and paints the eyes without looking directly at the face. He uses just the reflection to guide him — so only the mirror receives the direct image of the glance being created. No human eye can meet the Buddha's during the process of creation. Around him the mantras continue..." (2000: 99)
(1996). Like Aramis when it was in process, the Maitreya statue is a "fiction seeking to come true" (1996: 18). Also, like Aramis, the Maitreya statue has hit stumbling block after obstacle after rough patch, and it is incumbent upon us to understand the context and complexity behind both the project in and of itself, and the social environments that have resisted and welcomed it (sometimes doing both simultaneously). Since Kushinagar is my primary site inquiry for this history of the future, allow me envision and frame a future visit there through your eyes.

**Kushinagar: A Guided Tour**

It will take about an hour and a half to reach Kushinagar by bus via highway from the largest city nearby, Gorakhpur. After you peel yourself out of the train car at the Gorakhpur railway station you will need to get your wits about you quickly – the fifteen-minute walk to the bus station is a gauntlet of touts and scams. Definitely do not listen to the men trying to lure you into an over-stuffed jeep, even though they promise that they will get you there quicker. Many of them do not have their papers in order, and if the police pull them over, they will arrest the driver, leaving you stranded in the middle-of-nowhere-Uttar-Pradesh. Just take the bus – trust me. Ask the driver to stop at Kushinagar. It is not a stop really – it is a pause just long enough for them to throw your bags down from the roof, which should be enough time for you to push forward through the throngs of co-passengers and pop out the door.

You will see a Buddha statue in the center of a *chowk* (traffic circle) just off the crossroad. This center *chowk* is the only really bustling part of Kushinagar. From there you will walk down the road that extends underneath a brightly colored Buddhist Gateway. You will overtake students hurrying towards their high school, and pass several roadside chai stands, STD/ISD booths for making phone calls, snack shops. From here you can see the spires of the stupa at the Burmese temple. As you walk further up the
road, you see a few dank and squat dwellings and painted signs advertising rooms for rent. There is a primary school to your left – just lean-tos with palm-leaf roofs really, but the children are all in uniforms and they are learning something. Junior College students hang their laundry out to dry on the same railing that advertises their nascent Internet services. (They are the best internet in Kushinagar, since they hook their computers up to their Nokia cell-phones instead of attempting the farce of land-line dial-up.) I predict that you will find yourself back here later in the day. Just as your backpack starts getting heavy, you will pass the "China" temple (run by Vietnamese Buddhists these days), and the short lane running off to the left down towards the Burmese monastery. There is a government information office to the right, which is occasionally staffed with a man who gives out dusty brochures. There are convenience shops for snacks and soda, and pukka (authentic) dhabas (inexpensive food stalls particularly popular with Indian truckers and bus-drivers) with spicy vegetarian thalis (platters).

Figure 2. Mahaparinirvana Stupa in Bodh Gaya. (Photograph by Jessica Falcone.)
The outdoor stalls give way to trees and the Mahaparinirvana park or the left (Figure 2). At the entrance to the park a tourist bus has just pulled up. The Sri Lankan pilgrims, mostly women, look out at the vendors busily trying to interest them in souvenirs and snacks. Gaudily painted "reclining" or dying Buddha statues are pushed into the faces of the tourists as they disembark. Teens and children hawk their bosses' wares, snacks, and photos of the temple. Unless you want to be forever bombarded, you will have to wave off all of these touts, at least the first several times you pass by.

Across the road from the stupa complex is an Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) office, which is usually as dead as the people whose crafts and buildings they excavate. Beside the ASI office, there is an Uttar Pradesh state-run hotel; they have electric generators, so that's a plus. The road dead-ends into another small monument. Here the road hooks left, although streams of locals pour down the dirt road towards the right, which leads to a set of nearby villages. You will continue past a lone dhobi-wallah ironing shirts, and another block of dhabas, chai, and phones. A few short minutes walk to the left is the Tibetan monastery, a Gelukpa Namgyal monastery (the Dalai Lama's private monastery – the one that has a branch in Ithaca, NY). This is where I usually put down my bags, but you probably will not be comfortable there: the rooms are cement cells without power points; the two rickety outhouses are, well, rickety outhouses; the cold bucket bath water is drawn from the pump in the courtyard. I guess it depends on what you will be able afford; the extremely swanky hotels are just ahead.

The post office is across the street from Namgyal, and so is a prominent Hindu temple. Right next door to Namgyal is a Yoga center that has never been opened or operational once in the four plus years that I have been coming and going. A local Indian family lives there now. The road continues straight down to the Ramabhar stupa. The Ramabhar stupa is another 20-minute walk from here – past the Korean temple, the Japanese temple, the three luxury Japanese-owned hotels, the central Thai monastery and
the new, smaller Thai compound, and the handful of additional chai stalls and dhabas. Halfway to Ramabhar now, there are stretches of the road that are flanked by sugarcane or rice paddy on both sides. If you are a woman walking alone, do not be surprised if one of the local teens riding by on a motorbike shouts profanities or circle you with suggestive intent. They do that sometimes; eve-teasing is an issue here. Walking onwards, you see that the Mahabodhi Society's grounds are abandoned, crumbling, which may strike you as odd, since they were one of the first groups working towards the resurrection of Bodh Gaya and other places as Buddhist pilgrimage sites, but so it is. A bike rickshaw might be carrying a sole tourist from here straight back to the Lotus Nikko hotel. I wonder... will you make eye contact with this other lone foreigner? A group of children driving goats might try to chat with you as you walk. They may ask you for "ek pen," since that is what many guidebooks will tell you to have on hand and they know it. The cultivated fields on one side of the road give way to a small electric power station – the same one that powers Kushinagar for a fraction of the day. Be forewarned, most of the time in Kushinagar, you will have to make do without power.

The Ramabhar stupa rises ahead on your left. You can go inside for free and circumambulate to your heart's content. You may want to offer some incense or a candle. The gardener(s) will sell it to you for a good price – don't worry. This is where your journey ends. This is where Kushinagar ends for almost everyone who visits. It is the great upside down "L" running from the highway past the site where the Buddha died down here to the site where he was cremated. You can enjoy a chai across the road while you wait for a bike rickshaw to swing by. You may have to wait a while, but one will come along eventually. It will be long walk back in this heat…

But for me, it's a whole different story. This is just the beginning of my Kushinagar. This is where the Maitreya Project's land grab really begins in earnest, although technically some of that farmland you passed on the way will also be acquired
for their statue project. From here I can bike for twenty or thirty more minutes and still be surrounded by the land that the Maitreya Project intends to have acquired on its behalf. That school, and that one... they will be shuttered, and their students left to fend for themselves, even though that one was started, ironically by a Japanese nonprofit called the Maitri foundation. That whole dhola (Hindi: neighborhood) of Anirudhwa village, that shrine, that sugarcane processing station, that house, and all of those, and all of those fields back, back, back into the distance further than I can see with my naked eye. It is all slated for acquisition.

The government has been working tirelessly for several years to acquire swathes of seven villages for the Maitreya Project. It is mostly farmland, but also whole neighborhoods, some crucial cogs of the economic infrastructure, and even a few Hindu holy sites (sacred trees, shrines and temples). The land is mostly arable, and already under cultivation. The small portion that is marshland, and hence less useful for agricultural purposes, has mostly been sold off to the government already. The rest of the acreage is full – full of people walking in tight groups from one domestic island to the next, full of men on tractors pulling in the sugarcane harvest, full of children in uniforms going to school, and full women harvesting crops by hand in their family fields. In the Maitreya Project's few photos of the Kushinagar land on their website, it is always empty of people and houses. As if a wild expanse of empty, barren land – the land is pictured as a tangle of green. With one of their email updates (Kedge 2006), they included a photo – the pictured area is the area by the bridge where there is periodic flooding.4 I show my own photo of this exact piece of the land in Figure 3, although at the time that my photo was taken there is clearly some agricultural production and housing in evidence in the background – not so in MPI's

4 To see MPI's photo of the "Maitreya Project Land Site," go to www.maitreyaproject.org, and under "Latest Information," there is an Updates Archive, which holds the April 2006 Update.
photo. MPI's Kushinagar photo crops out the movement, the dwellings, and the faces nearby. The photos are especially still – especially quiet.

Figure 3. A small swathe of the 750 acres of Kushinagari land claimed by the Maitreya Project. (Photo by Jessica Falcone.)

The fields of Kushinagar are MPI's hinterland. Crapanzano's discussion of the hinterland marks a frontier that cannot be transgressed literally or figuratively. "Frontiers mark a change in the ontological register" (2004). The hinterland is an ambiguous beyond that forms as plans, dreams, images, desires, but even as it is approached, it recedes further into the distance. Just as when one approaches the horizon, there's another horizon beyond it ad infinitum. The "imaginative horizon," in Crapanzano's view, can never be reached, even though it pulls us forward.
For the Maitreya Project International, Kushinagar is the empty wilderness, the frontier, and the hinderland upon which their dream can be made manifest. Like Joseph Masco's full/empty Nevada desert (2005) and Anna Tsing's constructed Indonesian resource "frontier" (2005), the empty, barren lands of Kushinagar are a myth and a dream. Crapanzano writes about the pull of the beyond, and how it is at once enticing and anxiety provoking. He writes, "It is a land, of pure possibility, of desire, and fear" (2004). Kushinagar is at a distance, and the Kushinagar of the Maitreya Project is at a further distance from that distance. It is a completely unknown space to the Buddhist devotees and staffers of FPMT and MPI – it is a new frontier, one they have created in their minds, and one that cannot be transgressed. Is this why they have no office or center in Kushinagar? It is so much a hinterland that it can only be visited in secret. One of my very last on-the-record personal communications with an MPI staffer confirmed that in the fall of 2008, Lama Zopa Rinpoche and some monks traveled to the Kushinagar land without alerting the local people to their identities or presence. In secret, they conducted a puja (Sanskrit: prayer) to rid the land of evil spirits, and overcome the obstacles to the project.

*Circumambulating the Maitreya Project*

I was never allowed inside the project – that is, I never managed full access to the bureaucracy of the MPI institution itself – therefore, I embraced another tack: a veritable circumambulation of the Maitreya Project. Circumambulations of holy objects hold the connotation of both giving respect to the object, and taking merit from one's proximity. Proper circumambulations are done clock-wise, and are called *nang khor* in Tibetan. Anti-clockwise circumambulations, also called *chi khor* in Tibetan, are considered improper in
normative Tibetan Buddhist practice. My friends and I sometimes joked that contrary to plan, I sometimes seemed to be circumambulating the Maitreya Project counterclockwise. Like the women excluded from the full men's path around Pure Crystal Mountain in Tibet who had to proceed by going nang khor halfway and chi khor halfway, perhaps one could say that I did both. According to the emic sensibilities of my FPMT devotee informants, I probably circulated properly at times and improperly at other times. I would argue that I circulated maitri (Sanskrit: loving-kindness) with utter respect throughout the entire process. If my own central holy object was the Maitreya statue-to-be, then arguably I have proceeded with some impropriety. However, if the actual holy object were the maitri itself, then I would argue that I worked to act with great respect to this notion throughout my research.

I did kora (Tibetan for circled; circumambulated) around countless stupas and holy spaces during my research tenure, but my focus was on kora around a statue that does not yet exist. I saw my research trajectory as a sustained circumambulation of the Maitreya Project. I circled the project in small tight rings, and wandered further out on longer, lengthier cycles around the heart of the matter. The Maitreya Project was always at the center, the heart, of my ethnographic investigations.

Since I was barred from the inner sanctum, I was denied the internal memos, the Maitreya Project staff meeting minutes, etcetera, that was the primary data that I had hoped to collect, I was compelled to circle the project in other ways. I spent my two years of fulltime research in very disparate fieldsites: 1) in Indian FPMT centers in

5 There are apparently proper times and places for chi khor however, in certain Tantric practices (Snellgrove 1987). Chi khor is also often associated with Bonpos, the indigenous religious practitioners in Tibet, although there are times and places that Bonpos circulate clockwise, and other times and places when Buddhists circumambulate counter-clockwise (Huber 1999). Huber also notes that on certain popular mountain cult circumambulations, women are forbidden from making the full clockwise circumambulations, and must proceed counter-clockwise on specific paths (121). Huber wonders along with a colleague if the left-circling of women is a relic of the left-handed practices associated with the feminine path of the highest yoga Tantra (253).

6 See previous footnote.
Dharamsala, Bodh Gaya and Delhi, as well as in American FPMT centers in California and elsewhere; 2) with Maitreya Project side projects, i.e., the Relic Tour in various American towns, and the Maitreya Project school in India; 3) in Kushinagar with both the potential winners and losers of the land acquisition plan; 4) in Lucknow acquiring the Maitreya Project paperwork, legislation, and plans from UP state government partners.

As a consequence, my project reflects a transnational pull that led me in smaller concentric circles around America and India, and then the hemispherical travel around the globe that led me back and forth several times. My path and movement mirrors an extremely transnational project that remains in planning and in flux. If I had spent two years shuttling the 55 kilometers between Gorakhpur and Kushinagar as initially planned, my dissertation would have been a story of local Indian politics, rather than a "history of the future" (Rosenburg and Harding 2005) of the nascent Maitreya Project. Despite the fact that multi-sited ethnography is increasingly ubiquitous (Marcus 1995), I felt rather envious of my counterparts in the field whose research was based in a single locale, as it seems more classically anthropological, and eminently more practical. Instead, during the two years of concentrated fieldwork, I traveled often, usually never staying in one place for more than two or three months at any one stretch. Like many of the MPI administrators, staff and devotees that I met along the way, I was in constant motion.

From December 2005 to April 2007, I primarily divided my time in India between the statue's prospective home in Kushinagar, the statue's current bureaucratic home on the drawing boards in Lucknow and elsewhere, and the statue's spiritual home in the thoughts and prayers of devotees from the three FPMT centers in Bodh Gaya, Dharamsala, and Delhi. Book-ending my fourteen months in India, during the fall of 2005 and the summer of 2007, I followed the Relic Tour to several different sites, and

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5 In India, I completed two stints in Dharamsala, two in Bodh Gaya, several in Kushinagar, one in Lucknow, and several in Delhi. In the United States, I attended several relic tour weekend throughout the nation, and part of a summer doing research with three different centers in California.
also conducted research at three FPMT centers in California. My object of study was a statue in planning, but I found that its future presence permeated these fieldsites. In fact, the Maitreya Project statue had a past, present and future in each of my fieldsites.

I used standard participant observation techniques – I was a hunter and gatherer of interviews, written information, experiences, interactions, and diverse perspectives and viewpoints. I collected newspaper articles, pamphlets, blog postings, maps, plans, advertisements, etcetera, about everything directly, and even very peripherally, related to the Maitreya Project, transnational Buddhism, Uttar Pradesh politics, the Land Acquisition Act, and dispossession in rural India. I collected many government documents about the Maitreya Project, including maps, the Memorandum of Understanding, the Kushinagar Master Plan 2021, etcetera. Some documents were in Hindi and some were in English; most Hindi materials I collected were translated by myself, and hired translators. I also gathered books, puja booklets, schedules, listserv emails, and other documents from the FPMT centers where I did research.

I solicited interviews from all levels of FPMT: staff, students, monastics, volunteers, and etcetera. I attended several dozen FPMT courses, lectures, meditation sessions and discussions – some required payment and others requested donations. I rented a bed at FPMT's Root Institute for the entire time that I was in Bodh Gaya (in 2000, 2006 and 2007); I also paid to stay at the Land of the Medicine Buddha in California. Conversely, when I did research with FPMT elsewhere, I commuted; for example, I traveled back and forth to Delhi's Tushita Center, as well as the Tushita Center in Dharamsala.

In Kushinagar, I interviewed businesspeople, monastics, students, teachers, factory workers, day laborers, and farmers. I spend my days collecting interviews, both formal and informal with nearly everyone who crossed my path. I was as interested in the perspectives and histories of the sweeper at the Tibetan monastery as I was in the
Thai abbot's viewpoints and narratives. I visited and took notes at the Buddhist
pilgrimage sites on a daily basis. I also spent a good deal of time in the Maitreya Project
plan-affected villages, especially Siswa Mahant, Anirudhwa and Dumari. I conducted an
unscientific survey of these villages, going house-to-house, and interviewing people using
a set of questions about their families, economic situation, the Maitreya Project, and their
futures, which I expanded or reduced according to the circumstances and initial answers.
I also organized dozens of group interviews at people's homes and in public village
spaces. I became particularly attached to a specific elementary school in Siswa Mahant,
and visited regularly, both to support their educational work, and to do interviews with
the staff and parents connected to the school. Finally, I attended dozens of anti-Maitreya
Project protests, and later, towards the end of my research, I acceded to requests to
occasionally speak out during protests and sit-ins.

In terms of anonymity for my informants, I have protected the identity of
everyone whom I have ever formally or informally interviewed by giving them
appropriate pseudonyms, usually even those who indicated that they would not mind if I
shared their names in my work. Except for the proper names, I have not changed
significant details about my FPMT informants. However, given the sensitivity of the
situation in Kushinagar proper, I have not only given pseudonyms, but I have also altered
some of the details about several of the informants from the Kushinagar locale in order
to try to more effectively protect their privacy.

Public figures, such as the Dalai Lama, the founding lamas of FPMT, and the
public faces of the Maitreya Project who have not granted interviews for this dissertation
(e.g., Peter Kedge, Linda Gatter and Tony Simmons), will only be quoted by their public
remarks and publications, so I have not changed their names. In addition, I have not
changed the names of people who are already widely publicized in mass media (as both
writers and the subject of articles) in either the Indian world of social justice work, such as Sandeep Pandey, or religion, the late Kirti Rinpoche, e.g.

A generous Junior Research Fellowship from the American Institute for Indian Studies provided me with financial sponsorship and logistical support for my Indian research. I was allocated twelve months of research funding, but stretched it to over fourteen months of fieldwork in India proper between December 2005 and April 2007. The Graduate School at Cornell University also extended their financial assistance with a grant to cover my work with FPMT centers (and the Relic Tour) in California in the summer of 2007. Other research on the Relic Tour was covered by small department grants from the Anthropology Department at Cornell.

*Insider/Outsider*

Several years ago, at the outset of this research project, I would have described my religious persuasion as simply "Buddhist," although as a relatively new convert, I had always had the curse and privilege of being able to choose exactly what Buddhist meant for me in my own terms. This dissertation project has shaken certain tentative beliefs and inclinations, although my personal Buddhism was always on the more skeptical end of things. I have always harbored certain doubts about particular tenets of the tradition, such as rebirth, karmic cosmologies, heaven and hell realms, guru devotion, skilful means, etcetera, but as a self-identified Buddhist, I had a good deal of certainty about many other of the central views of the religion/philosophy, especially from the Madhyamika Tibetan Buddhist perspective. Even now I remain steadfastly committed to certain Buddhist tenets, such as impermanence, emptiness, dependent arising, the efficacy of meditative many practices, aspects of the four noble truths and so on. In sum, while I still have Buddhist-leanings, the research work I have done for this dissertation has made me even more of an uneasy Buddhist than ever before.
I am also an FPMTer. I was once an FPMTer, at any rate. I took refuge with FPMT’s Lama Zopa Rinpoche in the late nineties, and soon afterwards, in 2000, my Buddhist trajectory was firmly shaped by several months as a student/volunteer at FPMT’s Root Institute in Bodh Gaya, India. I volunteered in the center’s library, helping devotees and students find books and resources, all the while devouring books and attending meditation sessions myself. Holed up at the Root Institute, I wrote my MA thesis for George Washington University on engaged Buddhism; I prominently featured Root’s Health Clinic and the Maitreya Project as two of my three case studies. Initially, I was very optimistic about the Maitreya Project.\(^8\) In 2000, I would sit on the roof of the Root Institute kitchen eating their particularly thick and warm breakfast *chapatis*, and look out over the fields below imaging the giant statue that would someday rise up over that very horizon. When I sat on that same roof eating those very *chapatis* under their new covered roof in 2007, the cancelled image was more of a haunting than a memory of a hope could have been. So many of my Bodh Gaya informants still reported the presence of that giant absence on the horizon.

My stays at the Root Institute in 2006 and 2007 were more measured, stretched thin and ambivalent than my volunteer period in 2000. I still attended pujas and meditation sessions in good faith, but it was a more complex faith and a heavier doubt that sat on my meditation pillow with me. I still considered myself a part of FPMT during my fieldwork period, just as I still considered myself a part of my own nuclear family, which was fraying to the point of collapse at the same time. In my nuclear and spiritual families, there was mutual affection, both open and secret recriminations, and attempts to work things out. My relationship with FPMT is complex, and familial –

\(^8\) My MA thesis expressed optimism about the grassroots development potential of the Maitreya Project, but the thesis was also critical of its early failures to work more directly with the affected locals in Bodh Gaya (Falcone 2001).
absolutely warm and loving at times, and very painful and rocky at times. I have very
sincere affection for many of the students and devotees that I met along the way. When I
close my eyes, I can remember certain favorite tastes, sounds, and sights at Tushita
Dharamsala. Tushita Delhi was a peaceful haven. I can remember feeling absolutely at
home with FPMT at times, especially at the Root Institute.

I have seen Lama Zopa Rinpoche in person several times – each time like
everyone around me, I have bowed at the hips and lowered my head while straining to
catch a glimpse of the famous lama through the crowd. However, we have only had a
personal interaction one single time over ten years ago.

I had studied Buddhism academically at New College of Florida, and my Asian
Religions professor, John Newman, was a practitioner himself – a student of Geshe Sopa,
who was himself one of Lama Zopa Rinpoche's teachers. Sometime during the 1998-9
academic year, when John Newman recognized that some of his students were interested
in Buddhism beyond mere academic minutiae, he arranged for some of us to accompany
him to West Palm Beach for an FPMT retreat. I was definitely intrigued – many
Buddhist ideas gelled with my own, and other notions just seemed so nail-on-the-head
true. While I was still very skeptical about karma, reincarnation, guru devotion, etcetera, I
was open-minded; I had that famous "beginner's mind." I was keen to be convinced. I
decided to take the plunge and attend my first Buddhist event with Dr. Newman and
other students. Besides, my boyfriend at the time was going, and so was the woman
upon whom he had had a very obvious and prolonged crush. I went.

I was less than impressed during my first retreat with Lama Zopa Rinpoche. I
remember that he talked a lot, and for a long, long time. He seemed knowledgeable, but
very hard to understand. His English was fine, but his speaking voice was garbled,
muffled by endless strings of coughs, throat-clearing ahems, uhms and other verbal ticks.
I was softened by his laugh, and impressed with the teaching, which I felt went over my
head for the most part. Still, I could tell that I was taking in something very fine, and I took copious notes. I was really trying to focus, although I noticed my boyfriend glancing over at the object of his affections overly often. I wondered if Lama Zopa Rinpoche could see the little black cloud of steam accumulating over my head – after all, this was terribly important! I had one mental foot in the retreat, and one mental foot firmly outside it. I would tune in and out. When I tuned in, it was all very clear: attachment causes suffering. Boy, does it ever, I thought as I watched my own mini-soap opera unfolding to my chagrin. I still clung desperately to my boyfriend, even though he was causing me so much suffering. Why is that?, I wondered. I was not sure about Lama Zopa Rinpoche, but the truth of impermanence and all its sordid consequences were extremely compelling under the circumstances.

One night, Lama Zopa Rinpoche's discourse was supposed to end at 9pm, but it droned on and on and on until it was already hours past midnight. This is not uncommon for him, by the way, but I did not know that at the time. I continued taking notes, staring up at Rinpoche as several people stood up and left one by one. I was determined to hold out. I remember shifting on my cushion, a heartbeat away from getting up, and then feeling that it would be unbelievably rude to do so. Furthermore, I refused to retreat before my boyfriend and his crush did – no way, no how.

I decided to take my refuge vows, when it was offered en masse at the end of the retreat. I recited something I did not understand, and wondered if finally, and officially, calling myself a Buddhist would make it easier to dispel my doubts. Then, I stood in a line of other brand spanking new Buddhists, and waited for my turn to meet Lama Zopa Rinpoche one-on-one. It was swift, but memorable – for me, anyway. I offered him a kathak, we regarded one another for a moment, and both gave thin smiles. This was very different than my handshake with the Dalai Lama years later; with Lama Zopa Rinpoche, there was no wide smile from me that earned a full-on beaming smile in return. Instead,
Lama Zopa Rinpoche looked me over, signed his name as "refuge master," and then jotted down my "refuge name" – Thubten Choying – in a red refuge booklet with a shiny Shakyamuni outline on the cover. I walked on.

I was elated when a Western devotee translated my refugee name for me as "one who straddles different worlds." Fabulous, I thought. Lama Zopa Rinpoche knew! How did he know? Did he know? I was both here and there. A Buddhist and a non-Buddhist. An insider and outsider. I was a non-Buddhistic Buddhist. I had been converting and not converting. I was at home and in the world. I saw the emic and the etic. I was a bridge-builder. He was observant, I thought. I wondered if he was my guru. I wondered if I wanted one.

I have seen Lama Zopa Rinpoche a handful of times since then, either at talks or in crowds. Since I have begun this research I have requested several audiences with him through his handlers (or attendants), and have been deferred, rejected or ignored each time. I asked first for an interview. Later, once I was an established advocate for the Kushinagari protestors, I asked several times to meet with Lama Zopa Rinpoche in order that he could interview me about my experiences, research and opinions (as I did with so many other Maitreya Project supporters and leaders). I have never been allowed the opportunity to talk with Lama Zopa Rinpoche. I have been ignored, misdirected, and denied flat-out. So, Lama Zopa Rinpoche has never been my "guru," nor was he an informant, but he has been one Buddhist teacher of many. The current Dalai Lama has my utmost respect, but quite problematically from my more devoted informants' point of view, I have no actual root guru. Once on the "dharma-net" website, in the midst of a conversation about my Wild River Review articles on the Kushinagar controversy, I read

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9 Much later, a Tibetan Buddhologist, who speaks Tibetan as a first language, translated the name "Thubten Choying" as "'the emptiness' or 'dharma reality' that is explained in the Buddha Dharma." He was quite unsure how the Western Buddhologist I mention in the story above interpreted the name to mean "one who straddles different worlds." He said, "Maybe that guy was just messing with you."
that the deepest of Buddhist hells is reserved for this Jessica Falcone – a person who would stand up against the heart project of the teacher from whom she took refuge. While I was unnerved by the personal attack, but lucky for me, the Buddhist hells are one of those things that Lama Zopa Rinpoche never managed to convince me actually exists.

In trying to position myself, I cannot really determine where my original cynicism ends and my newfound dissertation research process cynicism begins. I have never managed to give myself wholly to any specific community, tradition or teacher. Moreover, like Capper, an ethnographer working with a different Tibetan Buddhist convert community (2002), although I failed to connect with the gurus of my informants, I trudge onwards in (Tibetan) Buddhism(s) anyway. To date I remain a Buddhist of sorts, Buddhist-esque, but I endeavor to find another door in further that does not require that I shed my doubts before I am ready. From 2008-2010, I have served as a faculty co-convener of the Buddhist Interest group, -be-, at Warren Wilson College. Since I do have a great respect for many Buddhist ideas, some of which I see as logical truths, I have embraced them in this dissertation. I do so with respect for a proposition that has framed this research project from the beginning: a dissertation on Buddhists, by a Buddhist, can also be a particular kind of Buddhist dissertation.

Here I would like to "set the motivation," as one might do at the beginning of a Tibetan Buddhist rite or meditation: given my use of Buddhist sociologies, meditations on knowledge production, and the ethical mores that guided this project, I would argue that this dissertation can be seen as a Buddhist endeavor that reflects that of my FPMT informants. This Buddhist ethnography is an experiment, an effort, in researching and writing with Buddhism. It is not just a dissertation written about Buddhists. Nor is it simply a dissertation written by a Buddhist. Bracketing out the question of what "Buddhist" actually signifies for the moment, I would argue that the theoretical merit of the dissertation lies in the goal to create Buddhist moments throughout my work. My
motivation then lies in trying to capture some of the motivations and sociologics of Buddhism not simply as the subject of the study, but as the guideposts for my methodology and epistemology as well.

*Advocacy*

In no small part due to my commitment to the Buddhist idea of maitri or loving-kindness, I eventually felt compelled to cast any pretense of neutrality by the wayside. It took only a few months in the field in India for me to determine that there was a terrible injustice about to be perpetrated on some small farmers by the Uttar Pradesh state government on behalf of the Maitreya Project: in the name of a Maitreya statue project, thousands were about to lose their lands and livelihoods without proper compensation. Silence was too similar to collusion to remain appropriate for long.

I had initially asked to volunteer for the Maitreya Project, but institutional authorities quickly rejected that request (probably to our mutual benefit given what later transpired). I focused instead on the Kushinagar locale, as well as the Maitreya Project fundraising and support activities conducted in FPMT centers. Upon realizing that the forcible land acquisition could be disastrous for the local farming villages, I began approaching insiders with connections to the project: I talked to an FPMT group leader whose center had recently hosted the Relic Tour, as well as a Maitreya Project board member.

Another ethnographer of a Tibetan Buddhist community, Daniel Capper, admitted that when he began his research he certainly expected "a worldly utopia" (Capper 2002: 35), but felt forced to reset his expectations upon observing the sometimes "unenlightened" actions of his informants. He notes that his expectations were naïve and

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10 The relevant Center directors gave me permission to conduct my research in those specific FPMT Centers. Throughout my research period I secured permissions from institutional heads, as well as from the individuals with whom I conducted interviews.
I can do no less. While my MA research had disabused me of the notion that FPMT centers were utopian spaces occupied by the perfection of wisdom incarnate, I did still hope, with a great deal of naïveté perhaps, that the Maitreya Project would be a Buddhist project done with the mindfulness and excessive attention to the details necessary to mitigate the kind of collateral damage that so often accompany development projects.

The two main Maitreya Project administrators, Tony Simmons and Peter Kedge, have both been in contact with me over the years, either by letter, email or phone, but neither has ever endorsed this research project or granted an interview. In the summer of 2006, several months after I had requested their permission to volunteer in the Maitreya Project "office" in Gorakhpur, but shortly after I began an information campaign targeted at Maitreya Project associates, I was told by one MPI official to cease and desist. An MPI official, who hoped to stymie my research, then proceeded to go over my head by contacting my dissertation chair and complaining that I did not have MPI's official consent to pursue my project. Tony Simmons, Peter Kedge, and Lama Zopa Rinpoche's attendant Roger Kunsang, have never acceded to my requests to let me interview them or vice versa. However, in the summer of 2006, I began writing emails and letters to the Maitreya Project. I was resolved to try to work within the organization, because I believed for a long time that MPI official simply did not know about the resistance of the farmers in Kushinagar. Their repeated insistence that I was wrong to believe the farmers led me to redouble my efforts to verify and check my data.

Later, when I met with lower level MPI and FPMT staff, I was completely open with them about my agenda and my advocacy. I allowed several Maitreya Project affiliates (a few Relic Tour custodians, Maitreya Project administrators, FPMT sangha and Maitreya Project Board members) to first interview me at length about my experiences in Kushinagar before I interviewed them. I have lost many research opportunities with this advocacy. My somewhat under-whelming activist aim: whistle-blowing. If MPI was
ignorant to the situation in Kushinagar, then they should know the facts, but if the Maitreya Project was feigning ignorance, they should not be allowed to continue that charade. If indeed the plan had gone ahead as they anticipated, and if violence had unfortunately ensued, MPI's extraordinarily top-down and hands-off approach (not one FPMT devotee within several hundred miles of the project) made it plausible for them to deny previous knowledge of the controversy. If nothing else, I have denied them the option of claiming ignorance, and insisted upon their culpability.

Figure 4. Anti-Maitreya Protest in March 2006. (Photograph by Jessica Falcone.)

I was sometimes treated as a pariah, and sometimes treated as an advocate with an important message. Readers of this dissertation should know that my personal religious ties to FPMT made my struggles with the Maitreya Project a particularly painful fieldwork
experience. In 2007, I talked to a few affiliates who told me that I was being maligned in
internal emails, which portrayed me as a young, naïve, dissident without cause, who had
"become increasingly shrill." Various FPMTers have told me that Babbar Singh, an MPI
associate in India, has spread unsavory rumors about my character.

After realizing that the Maitreya Project leadership had taken a firm position of
antagonism to the Kushinagari resistance and me, I decided to alter my course of action.
After a year and half of working through FPMT channels to get the Maitreya Project to
work with the Kushinagari farmers instead of against them, I finally went public with my
dissent. I exposed my concern with their plans in the Wild River Review (Falcone
2007a), essentially showing the gap between their predicted outcomes and futures that
seemed more probable given their negligence. When the Maitreya Project issued a
rebuttal (Gatter 2007b), I wrote a detailed response (Falcone 2007b). I also actively
alerted dozens of journalists and press outlets about the story several times (some told me
to contact them again if violence actually ensued). However, in the fall of 2007, a
freelance journalist picked up the story tip, went to Kushinagar to cover the story himself,
and wrote an article that was circulated widely from the Christian Science Monitor
(Pepper 2007a) to the Washington Times (Pepper 2007b).

By late 2007, FPMTers had heard from multiple voices that cast doubt on the
integrity of the process in Kushinagar, as well as many counter-reassurances from
Maitreya Project staffers that the criticism is malice or sensationalist. At this point, many
FPMTers are talking about the controversy, and they are working through these opposing
narratives as they will, some taking recourse in their faith in their guru's decisions, and
others wondering (both in whispers and in emails to the Maitreya Project staffers)
whether indeed everything in the process is as it should be.

Despite my efforts to refocus on my dissertation post-2007, my more recent acts
of advocacy involved the following: 1) continuing to speak with Maitreya Project affiliates
(such as the custodians of the Relic Tour in 2008), as well as FPMTers who crossed my path, about my critique of the process; 2) with supporters connected to ASHA for Education (and also the National Alliance of People's Movements), I also started an e-petition and circulated it lightly. I sent the petition with 215 signatures from all over the world to the Maitreya Project in 2009.

After my Wild River Review articles were published, I met with icy silence from MPI leadership, and I have received no written missives since then. In North Carolina in 2008, I tiptoed into the Relic Tour terrified that the Custodians would ask me to leave; I was not expelled from the premises, but my continuing discussion with the head Custodian at the time, who I had met with several times before, was especially tense.

A very prominent MPI and FPMT leader did call me in early October 2009 in response to a note that I written to him which stated that despite a recent statement by the Maitreya Project arguing that all was finally worked out with the farmers, the farmers' advocacy group had issued a statement in July 2009 to refute MPI's rosy public relations picture. In our October 2009 phone call, this MPI leader was entirely unwilling to admit that the Project had moved forward in an inappropriate way, and reticent to concede that they would shift gears in their dealings with Indian locals. His only admission of Maitreya Project misstep was to agree with me that they had underestimated the obstacles and difficulties of their plan. He said that they had lost their major donors, and were now starting over. Because of the economic downturn?, I suggested. No, he said, because of our obstacles. I was disappointed. He indicated that he was ready to stop talking, so we agreed to disagree, and hung up. I wondered if the call was as profoundly discomfiting to him as it was to me. I have burnt my MPI bridges to a crisp.

While I have worked to be as objective as possible while collecting narratives from all of the stakeholders involved with the Maitreya Project as proponents or protestors, I primarily honor the fact that the politics of ethnography refuse any real
objectivity. As an advocate, I continue to feel deeply frustrated with the Maitreya Project, and my dissertation must be read in this light. As an FPMT student, a former donor to the statue project, and a friend of several affiliates, I have been disappointed by the gaps that I perceive between their rhetoric and their (in)actions. I also would argue that despite my frustrations with the Maitreya Project, I have a great deal of empathy for some of their goals and motivations. By dismissing me as an enemy of the project almost immediately, they were able to shake off my critiques without ever examining the weaknesses of their project. However, if they manage to shift gears so that the statue can be built without massive collateral damage in Kushinagar, then I would be the first to celebrate their success.

Despite the ethical tightrope I walked, or maybe because of it, my dissertation research was itself an ethical, even Buddhist, practice. I have written at length elsewhere about my views on ethical research, and how the AAA Code of Ethics has been a disappointing document during consultations along the way (Falcone 2010a). Every single day in the field, I wrestled with my conscience and while I found no easy answers, but I allowed my desire for ethical action guide my decisions in the field and afterwards. As I will detail at length later in this Introduction, I have used many Buddhist findings for this dissertation, many of which I discuss in terms of ethics, such as four immeasurables of loving-kindness, compassion, joy and equanimity. I have also used the notion of "mindfulness" as both a methodological and ethical compulsion.

**Mindfulness: Reflections on Reflexivity**

"I call ethnography a meditative vehicle because we come to it neither as a map of knowledge nor as a guide to action, nor even for entertainment. We come to it as the start of a different kind of journey" (Tyler 1986: 140).
The preceding sections discuss my methods, biases, limitations, and tactical decisions towards collecting the most thorough data possible for this ethnography. This discussion is itself a result of the reflexive turn in anthropology that led us to work towards a middle path between the objective and the subjective. The *Writing Culture* (Clifford and Marcus 1986) revolution has led to a sea change in our disciplinary *habitus* regarding representation, authorship and collaboration.

Crpanzano teaches us that both informant and ethnographer are recreated through the process of fieldwork (1980), and Rabinow tells his readers that understanding of the self comes through the detour of understanding the other (1977). I changed the discourse of the Maitreya Project to some extent, and they changed mine; we changed each other. I would sit with FPMTers doing prayers to defeat the obstacles to the Maitreya Project, and I would wonder if one of those obstacles was actually me; I have reason to believe that my work thus far has caused defections, problems, doubt and dissent. Less obviously, there are layers of change in me, my spiritual practice, my academic trajectories and my personal and family life. I also wonder if there were moments in which the effects of my presence and advocacy work actually caused the Maitreya Project to stand fast against the protestors even more stubbornly than if I had been far, far away, busily researching the religious practices of fishing communities on the beaches of Goa. Perhaps my well-meaning meddling provided a cause for others to redouble their donations and efforts towards a Maitreya Project that seemed under attack. I cannot know if the effects that I produced were on the whole positive or negative, but I hope it is the former. I was often twisted myself about the best ways to effect change, and what the unintended consequences of my actions might be. I know that I have touched countless informants in subtle and intangible ways that are too numerous to count, and vice versa. We have all of us effected change in one another, both
intentionally and unintentionally. Unlike the laws of karma, I believe that our unintended causes and effects count as much as our intentional ones.

I have argued elsewhere (Falcone 2010b) that the reflexive turn ushered in by Jay Ruby (1982), Clifford and Marcus (1986) and others, was merely a step in the direction towards which social scientists could continue further and longer. Drawing on two bodies of scholars, Tibetan Gelukpa monastics and American anthropologists, I argued that for all of their analytical tools for the analysis of illusions and ideologies, both communities seem to have trouble using their theoretical tools upon their own institutions. Here I draw on Boyer's Spirit and System, as he wrestles with the same phenomenon in terms of the theory and practice enacted by his German media informants (2005b). I posit a meditative thinking that would allow an anthropologist to go beyond traditional reflexivity, that is, concern about representation, bias, co-constitutionality, and begin to publicly and unabashedly explore academic culture and knowledge production practices in a more personal, probing, and mindful manner. In her work, The Vulnerable Observer, Ruth Behar notes that counter to much of normative past and present anthropological thinking, the personal does have an important place in the public documents of anthropology, but that returning the self to the text does not mean "exposure for its own sake," or vulnerability for it's own sake, since it ought to add to the integrity of the argument along the way (1996: 14). Deep meditative work through and in ethnography by virtue of the relentless questioning of my own authority, authorship, ethos, sociality, and subjectivity will achieve the end of punctuating my work on "them" with vulnerable gestures to the "I" that is no more or less fluid, under construction, and in process.

I have structured my dissertation to itself serve as a meditation. I have wondered if our vaunted anthropological reflexivity could go deeper, further, and more sincerely past our relations with "them," our informants (Falcone 2010b). Using our own
theoretical tools as mirrors could be transformative; I would reflect upon "us" and our academic culture, and even more specifically, the processes, the spaces and the desires that enabled this particular dissertation to come to fruition. Each chapter of this dissertation is followed by a meditative interlude. I hope to rise to my own challenge in this dissertation by using meditative interludes as a space of exploration of the usually unseen frames of anthropology and the anthropologist. Since I am also using the theoretical framework of my informants, I choose to consider these interludes as meditations proper. This is an exercise in meditative ethnography.

In meditating throughout the dissertation process, and by writing and sharing some of these exercises, I follow Taussig, who is another anthropologist who has moved increasingly towards the more meditative, deeper levels of the reflexive. Taussig might call my meditative interludes "aftereffects" (2006), as he termed his own reflection on "us" after an ethnographic exposition of "them." He closes an article on giving with an "Aftereffect" in which he turns the lens of the article back onto the disciplinary and epistemological frameworks themselves (Taussig 2006: 94). Essentially, I will be using my meditations as Taussigian "aftereffects," in order to find space in which to integrate the framework from my fieldwork observations with deeper levels of reflection. Taussig's "nervous system" makes a move in this direction, as it works to "make manifest the hand of the writer so as to perturb the fiction masquerading as what we call truth…" (2006: x). Throughout his work he draws on this theme to show the puppet-master behind the curtain, and to argue that the he is, and we are, always a part of the story too. These meditative interludes serve as moments of mirroring back the epistemology and technologies of scholarship to my readers, so that they can understand the conditions under which this particular document has been produced. Michael Wesch captured this move nicely in his lecture to the Library of Congress, "An Anthropological Introduction to Youtube," when he showed a clip of one of his students/co-researchers/informants
wrestling with an early "vlogs": she is talking to her audience – to us, to me – and then suddenly jars us by putting a mirror in front of her webcam, so that we can see what she is actually looking at, what she is really talking to, and the conditions under which vlogs are truly created (2008). While writing my interludes, I hoped to use the mirror effect to create similarly enlightening, albeit discomfiting, disjunctures.

The ethnobmeditations riddled throughout this dissertation are narrative thought pieces, extracted bits from my fieldnotes, as well as outside quotes that extend this material. As I began outlining my dissertation, my feeling was that the meditations would be the easy part, the fun, breezy face of an otherwise dry scholarly enterprise, but instead the ethnographic chapters began coming together paragraph by paragraph, while the ethno-meditative interludes became somewhat burdensome and uncomfortable. I have written pages upon pages for these interludes, some in journals during fieldwork and many during the post-field writing phase. Entries were sometimes extremely personal, very painful to write, and excruciating to imagine sharing with readers. In the end, I have included only excerpts of these meditations, both for my piece of mind and also with due respect for the patience of my readers. In effect, the interludes were a challenge and an exercise that worked out certain muscles of reflection that rarely get used in the process of academic writing. I have shared only a fraction of the total; I have framed them just as I have framed the compatible concepts in relation to my informants.

Here I must admit that Henrietta Moore's insightful observation that the author in the text, and the author of the text are disparate, despite our best efforts to gloss this fact in normative ethnographic writing (1994), has given me pause: on top of the distinction between the author of the text and the authorial imaginaries in the text, is the author in the content chapters also different than the author of the meditative interludes? To what extent does the writing down and framing of my meditations undo the very work that they hope to accomplish? Moore goes on to give me my answer – the various
authorial voices in this text, like others, reflect a "self in process" (1994: 118). So while
my own meditations on emptiness confirm (and sometimes embrace) this fluidity, I also
construct conventional selves for public and personal gratification. The writing has
therefore made the constructions of conventional realities starkly obvious to me. For all
the flaws and discomfort of the meditations, I do believe that they have been extremely
useful for me as an anthropologist, a writer, and a Buddhist-leaning individual. The
exercises have spoken to me, but whether the interludes will actually speak to my readers
is another challenge entirely, and one that I may or may not have fully risen to.

I would argue that these meditations are Buddhist exercises, especially in the
context of the thinking through Buddhism that I also employ as a method in this
dissertation, as described in detail in the forthcoming section. One must sometimes go
beyond "Buddhism," that is to color outside the lines a bit, in order to do the work of
Buddhism in various cultural contexts. Here I echo Robert Thurman's approach to the
burgeoning Buddhist America: "…I came to the idea that Buddhism will not actually be
able to succeed in its mission here in America, unless it is able to perform that mission
without being Buddhism…In other words, Buddhism has to go beyond being Buddhism
in order to do the work that Buddhism wants to do, wherever it is. Okay, so it's
Buddhism without Buddhism" (Thurman 1998: 451). As an elite Buddhist myself, this
exercise arguably helps to elucidate the content about elite Buddhists, in the process
giving the scholarly endeavor an additional dimension.

**Appropriations/Borrowing: Thinking Through Buddhism**

"In this archipelago, our thought may perhaps be accustomed to doing the rounds (in both senses), as in
the Polynesian kula rite, in which precious cowrie shells are exchanged between one shore and another.
Let us pass from one island to another, feeling no nostalgia for any idealized Ithaca, for the true Ithaca is,
precisely, an archipelago – neither island, nor continent, or possibly both at once, or something else
altogether" (Faure 2004: 174).
One of the central issues of this dissertation revolves around the notion of appropriation. What belongs to Western Buddhists? How do FPMTers wrestle with issues of authenticity, ownership and lineage, and why are these subjects so anxiety provoking? In mirroring these notions back at myself as a scholar, I find myself asking: what belongs to Western academics and what does not? As anthropologists, what is authentic in our own terms? While some things appear to be a natural inheritance, I would argue that the notions of ownership and lineage are fluid socio-legal historical ideas. Those to whom we owe our allegiance, our academic ancestors, are not as natural as we sometimes seem to take for granted. Often we can trace these histories back, back, back, but genealogies (not in the Foucaultian sense, but in a kinship sense) themselves are always changing. Are they not also socio-historical constructions themselves, precisely in the Foucaultian sense?\textsuperscript{12}

My FPMT informants are primarily converts, and they are converts to a relatively new oeuvre of neo-Tibetan Buddhism that, within limits, allows them to take certain aspects and discard others. For example, while some FPMTers feel that women are not fully equal to men (e.g., there is still respect given to discourse about the difficulties of achieving liberation in a woman's body), there is no doubt that FPMTers have completely reshaped and transformed more traditional Tibetan gender dynamics to appeal to contemporary Western notions of equality. Their power to choose, rather than inherit, tradition in some senses comes to mean that FPMTers have a different relationship to the religion than either most Tibetan lay people or most Tibetan sangha. Therefore, there is a liminal, betwixt and between, quality to the experience that both allows for creativity and also becomes the source for a great deal of anxiety. My informants ask themselves,

\textsuperscript{11} For examples, see Randall Collins' intellectual genealogies of Eastern and Western philosophies (1998) or Webb Keane's genealogy of anthropological debates on particularizing versus theorizing (2003).
\textsuperscript{12} I am not distinguishing between history, lineage or genealogy as Foucault tends to do in his work (see Foucault 1972[1969]). However, I am agreeing with his sense that academic discourses are themselves objects which are sociohistorical constructions that hide the effects of power.
each other and their teachers: what makes us Tibetan Buddhist practitioners? Which Tibetan masters have crafted and upheld our brand of Tibetan Buddhism? Who are our spiritual masters and what is their lineage? On the flip side, which lineages and perspectives are definitively other? As my informants advance from student to devotee within the FPMT organization, the lessons regarding what "we" believe as opposed to what "they" believe become increasingly significant.

Lineage is significant in many Buddhisms, Tibetan and otherwise; "kinship" in Buddhist monasticism is focused most specifically upon the transmissions of monastic lineages (see Blackburn 2003, for example). In Tibetan Buddhism, the lineage transmissions are one thing, but specific direct person-to-person empowerments (Tibetan: wang) provide a different way of establishing links to the past. In Western Tibetan Buddhism, questions of appropriation of theological and/or cultural ideas are often solved with the answer that the teacher, the guru, our lineage lama, has allowed it, so the appropriation has been vetted, mediated and facilitated. For my elite informants, they are considered Tibetan Buddhists, even though their practices diverge from those of many ethnic Tibetans, by virtue of ideological genealogy. They are students of Ani Rachel, who is the disciple of Lama Zopa Rinpoche, who is himself the disciple of Lama Yeshe, who was in turn the disciple of X, Y and Z at Sera Je monastery in Lhasa.

What strikes me the most in studying the discomfort of appropriation and borrowing in Western Tibetan Buddhism is just how very familiar it is – not just as a convert myself, but as an academic. As scholars, we face similar tensions regarding our lineages and our authenticity. The genealogies of the academy, of social theory, of anthropology, of my professors, also hold the keys to answering certain questions; e.g., what makes me an anthropologist? I have certain lineages of thinking, genealogies of discourse at my disposal, which give me my inheritance as an anthropologist, and bestow a certain authenticity. There are specific sets of human thinkers that I can reasonably
acknowledge as my forebears, and their arguments and theories are thus "naturally" available to me.

What we call 'philosophizing' frequently does no more than retrace the history of philosophy. It is true that, except in a few rare cases, such as that of Wittgenstein, one can hardly consider oneself a philosopher if one has no paid tribute to one's ancestral lineage. Perhaps there is an element of magic in that invocation of the great ancestors. Even Wittgenstein, who so proudly paid no attention to that history of philosophy, was quickly recuperated by it (just as Socrates, the false ignoramus, had been long before). Whatever you say, philosophy is first and foremost a tradition. Every tabula rasa presupposes that of Descartes. You cannot proceed as though he never existed, or as though a number of others never did. To ignore them is still to claim descent from them (Faure 2004: 22).  

I can cite Descartes; I must cite Foucault. I cannot cite the Shakyamuni Buddha, because apparently he does not belong to us, he belongs to them. I fully intend to defy this last prohibition. I will argue that Buddhist theory is a scholastic resource at my disposal. After all, the family tree is always changing, even dying and being reborn (like the Bodhi tree that is worshipped in Bodh Gaya, which is a mature growth thought to be born of a cutting of a cutting of the original), but we squint and pretend that it is, and has always been the very same tree. If we squint, and crinkle up our noses long enough, then we American academics are in the same great lineage as Plato. A few steps back, with more perspective, and suddenly new connections and new limbs become available. I am only making the observation that our academic family tree is as much as socio-historical construction as anything else, and therefore my kinship with the French modern philosopher Descartes is as much an illusion as my alienation from the Indian Buddhist philosopher Nagarjuna.

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13 I lean heavily on Faure here and elsewhere, especially daring on Double Exposure, so I should divulge that his modus operandi in this project is to highlight and play with instances of doubling and coupling – the difference between what is written and what is done; the innate tensions that emerge as from the binaries of a supposedly non-dual tradition; the push-pull between the pragmatic and the mystical. I have found his inter-tradition philosophical conversation a useful text, and model, for my project.

14 See Boyer for a discussion of the ubiquity of Foucault at a particular moment in American anthropological culture (2003).
What if we step back, and back and back once more? What if all human thinkers are our philosophical ancestors? What could we gain by citing, borrowing, appropriating anyone and everyone with the understanding that they are all (none of them) our ancestors? With the understanding that all lineages are constructions, I would like to propose taking Buddhist philosophy seriously as a social theory can be deployed as a useful analytic in this dissertation, if not elsewhere.

I am intentionally replicating appropriation throughout my dissertation in various ways, both as a meditator as I explained above, and as a borrower of Buddhist thought, as I will explain at length directly. In his book, Hiro Miyazaki (2005) replicates the moments of hope he witnesses from his informants through the construction of a moment of hope. He uses hope as a method, as Bloch does, and as his informants do. My extension of this hope lies with the notion that replication can also work when we can use of own informants' content and form to try to represent and reproduce their content and form. In his ethnography of the reunification of German media, Dominic Boyer also arguably engages in this kind of replication, since he appropriates and deploys the notion of "the dialectic" that is as much a part and parcel of his informants' own debates, thinking and terminology, as it is useful as an analytic for him as an ethnographer (2005b). In this dissertation, I follow Boyer's example in using their analytics as my own, especially insofar as he goes on to meditatively reflect upon the conditions of his own knowledge production practices.

At a panel in Philadelphia at an American Anthropological Association Meeting in 2009, Dominic Boyer and Cymene Howe co-presented a paper on "portable analytics" that serves to extend even further Boyer's notion from his earlier work that a scholar can frame one's analysis through the analytics of one's informants (Boyer and Howe n.a.). For Boyer's part he observed that anthropological theory is wrestling with an identity crisis – a crisis of significance. The paper challenges anthropologists to endeavor to
harness their ways of knowing in our work with their cultures: "Portable analytics are in essence the epistemic work of one set of minds made to travel to encounter others through the brokerage of anthropology" (2). While recognizing that theory has always been in motion and borrowed to some extent, Boyer and Howe argue that there is still a great deal to be gained by investigating through the analytics of our informants in a more sustained manner.

By way of example, Boyer discusses the Russian term, "stiob," as a portable analytic that refers to hypernormalizing parody in the late Soviet project; he and a colleague were working to draft the portable analytic of "stiob" and transfer it into work on contemporary, late liberal Western cultural medias (n.a.). While Russian and American "stiob" are not equivalent, the use of the former in this context serves to better illuminate the other; raiding the analytical toolkits of others can be productive. Cymene Howe's example of portable analytics emerged from her work with queer activists in Nicaragua who promoted the idea of "una sexualidad libre de prejuicios" – "A Sexuality Free From Prejudice." How argues that the analytic at hand, "A Sexuality Free From Prejudice," can be productive dislodged and translocated to help frame and understand sexual rights activisms in other national settings.

Boyer and Howe end their paper with this righteous challenge to ethnographers to go forth and borrow for mutual epistemological benefit: "As portable analytics, 'stiob' and 'A Sexuality Free From Prejudice' – and no doubt there are infinite others – offer the opportunity to empower comparative critical analysis, as well as to suggest new political projects by mobilizing the epistemic work of actors who exist on the margins of dominant northern and western knowledges" (n.a.: 9). Boyer and Howe's compelling argument for cross-fertilization of disparate analytical gene pools is refreshing and represents promising new movement towards analytical miscegenation.
I argue that by using certain notions from Buddhist thinking as "portable analytics," along with more traditionally acceptable anthropological theory, it serves to draw our attention to the details of our praxis and assumptions therein. "The ancient paths along which it was once possible to roam freely have become obligatory routes leading to the mausoleums of Plato, Kant, Hegel and Heidegger and now constitute superhighways of thought, complete with toll booths and fast food stops along the way. We find our way in thought by making for these reassuring landmarks, forgetting that the primary requirement for all true thought should be to call our mental habits into question and thereby disorient us" (Faure 2004: ix). The landmarks of anthropology today are no less familiar and comforting, Malinowski, Mauss, Geertz, Bourdieu, and Hegel and Heidegger. There is something always already performative and ritualistic about our pilgrimages along the routes of our disciplinary ancestors, and while I am all for pilgrimage, I think we need to be more cognizant and self-reflexive about the journey. My hope is that by (re)engaging with some landmarks off the beaten path, we will at least be discomfited and disoriented enough to spend more time with the map, and more time adventuring out of safe epistemological territory. Some of the caution signs along the way suggest that good, safe social scientific knowledge is secular knowledge, but I have hurled past these warnings noting the small print on my side-view mirrors that "religious ideas in mirror are closer than they appear."

Secularism as a general political and academic category indicates the desirability of separating religious and non-religious institutions, especially in government institutions. "...'the secular' is conceptually prior to the political doctrine of 'secularism,' that over time a variety of concepts, practices and sensibilities have come together to form 'the secular'" (Asad 2003: 16). The recent work on secularism (Asad 1993; Asad 2003; Brahm Levey and Modood 2008; Taylor 2008), and an "anthropology of secularism" (Asad 2003)
more specifically, provides a unique opportunity to turn the topic back on ourselves and examine the question of the secularism of anthropology itself.

On the one hand secularism is the notion that religion can be simply separated out from the rest (law, politics, history, etc.), but on the other there is a simultaneous recognition that secularism is itself a notion coming directly out of "the historical language of Latin Christendom" (Taylor 2008: xvii), and thus must be understood in that particular context. Taylor explains how the difference between the notions of immanent and transcendent was first crystallized in Western languages and discourses, and then transformed to reflect secular as "true" to religion's "false" – a problematic dualism which can, and has, led to egregious ethnocentrism. Therefore, recent scholarship on the notion of secularism shows that it is not the pure, rational truth it has come to represent in much mainstream discourse, but rather that it is a socio-historically constructed notion that has had unintended political effects.

Asad begins his foray into the debate by arguing that anthropologists must recognize the knowledge production practices and academic genealogies that give us our contemporary notions of the "religious." He writes, "More particularly, I would hold that anthropologists who would study, say, Muslim beliefs and practices will need some understanding of how 'religion' has come to be formed as a concept and practice in the modern West. For while religion is integral to modern Western history, there are dangers in employing it as a normalizing concept when translating Islamic traditions" (Asad 1993: 1). Anthropologists and scholars must understand the causes and conditions that have come together to create our understanding of the notion of the "religious," which by and large delimits academic notions of authenticity, history and power.

One could also argue that secularism actually has something of the religious embedded within. Anthropologist have showed that the religious/secular divide is itself a cultural construction that undervalues the intertwining and interconnections involved,
e.g., "the State" is imbued with sacred, ritual and mystic significances (Asad 2003; Taussig 1992). Asad argues compellingly that the secular and the religious are not fixed categories. He writes that the religious and the political have always been interdependent: "In a sense what many would anachronistically call "religion" was always involved in the world of power… The concept of the secular cannot do without the idea of religion" (Asad 2003: 200).

My interest in this debate hinges on the notion that social scientific knowledge is so often, and quite wrongly, considered secular knowledge in such a way as to ignore the interdependence of "religious" and "secular" ways of knowing. My dissertation, then, seeks to highlight this interdependence by leaning into it, instead of just busily refusing it. By using Buddhist sociologies as analytical frameworks, for example, I hope to call attention to the fact that religious discourses have always already been part and parcel of so-called secular anthropological epistemologies. Secularism has been a conceit, one that sought to devalue alternative ways of knowing, and simultaneously exalt a particular type of knowledge for its own sake.

Are the venues of philosophy, social and critical thinking reason free from passion, logic sans religion? Faure reminds that this is a perilous double standard: "…in that case, we would also have to recognize that no more were Socrates and Plato really philosophers, or Augustine, Spinoza, Pascal, Nietzsche, Kierkegaard, and Bergson" (Faure 2004: 64). Faure asks that the twofold truth be incorporated into philosophical discourse instead of relegated lesser than status. "The notion of a twofold truth should allow us to bypass the old dilemma of faith and reason and to rediscover the "external thought" of Buddhism, that is to say, ritual thought" (Faure 2004: 64). I would also like to blur the distinction between philosophy and religion, and claim both as invented traditions that we as academics can and should feel free to draw upon. Buddhism is a religion; Buddhism is a philosophy. Buddhism as a form of knowledge has long been
dragged headlong into the debate about whether it is "religious" or "rational." In Buddhism as Philosophy, Siderits argues that it is a fallacy to see Buddhism as simply a faith-based religion as opposed to philosophies that reason-based, because it is an oversimplification that erases the internal logics, reason, facts and debate inherent in Buddhist ways of knowing (2007). Buddhist history is rife with philosophizing and an emphasis on epistemologies of logic: "...Buddhist philosophers thought that their most important claims should be subjected to rational scrutiny. This is what made them philosophers. They certainly criticized the views of other Buddhist philosophers. And there was a great deal of rational criticism exchanged between the Buddhists and other Indian philosophers" (2007: 10b11). Siderits is right to claim philosophical ground for Buddhism, but I would argue that he is still too eager to pull apart the logical and the cultural, as if they are separable and immutable.

In addition, Buddhist ways of knowing are already embedded in our so-called Western philosophies and knowledges. Bernard Faure reminds us that it is too late to be coy about Buddhist influence upon Western thought, since it has already influenced non-Buddhist scholars and thinkers for some time. "It means realizing that we are, in some respects, already Buddhist, or rather that Buddhism is one of the cultural manifestations of virtualities that we possess, but have too long repressed in the name of certain Greek and/or Christian concepts of our identity" (Faure 2004: x).

Each in their own way, Faure, Garfield, and Obeyesekere have undertaken projects which work to put Buddhism and Western philosophy into productive conversation: Faure has worked to bring down the walls between the two (2004); Garfield has written essays that precisely and carefully juxtapose certain Buddhist texts and certain Western philosophical texts (2002); and Obeyesekere has argued that Plato and Buddha can, and should, be read together (2002).
While exploring the terrain of Western interpretations of Buddhism, Faure reveals how often Buddhist thought permeated the Western philosophical imagination. He tells us that Saint-Hilaire railed against Buddhism, as he really took aim at Schopenhauer and his ilk (as "Buddhist" nihilists): "At this point a polemic erupted about the "cult of nothingness," a polemic for which Hegel, as early as 1827, had given the signal, attacking Buddhism for making nirvana "the principle of everything, the ultimate, final goal and ultimate end of everything" (Faure 2004: 4). In the late 19th century, positive Orientalism, that is, glorifications and romanticizations of Buddhism, largely supplanted negative Orientalism. He writes, "Since the end of the nineteenth century, two major types of discourse on Buddhism developed: Western discourse, frequently characterized either by a primary Orientalism (that is to say, a reductionist view of Eastern "otherness") or a secondary Orientalism (an exotic idealization of that otherness), and national variants of Asian discourse, either Tibetan or Japanese, themselves often impregnated by second-degree Orientalism (reacting against Western discourse, but still influenced by it)" (Faure 2004: 5).

In the introduction to *Imagining Karma*, Obeyesekere does not argue that Plato and Buddha were necessarily communing with one another across the miles, nor does he argue that contact between these civilizations had definitely been made, but he does say that such contact was more than likely (2002). Obeyesekere writes that Plato's notion of rebirth and his development of a soteriology has been dismissed or overlooked by scholars who see Greece as the beginning of their academic lineage, the root of their family tree, and therefore would prefer a more secular (or least less mystical) standard-bearer. Obeyesekere on the other hand prefers to recognize both Buddha and Plato as philosophers and spiritualists, as both social theorists and religious charismatics.

Branching off branches, borrowing from borrowings… Buddhism is already a result of the marriage between innovation and borrowing. For example, Obeyesekere
argues that karma, as it was developed in early Buddhist thought, was likely a notion that Buddha (or Buddhists) borrowed and altered from an entirely separate, original notion of karma that appears in ancient Vedic texts (2002). Obeyesekere notes that Buddhism, like all traditions, harks back to its antecedents even as it works to transcend them, and he further goes on to say that this way of thinking is common and happens in the academy as well: "This referral back to tradition, even as one moves from it, is common to argumentative discourse, and the human sciences exemplify it all the time." Obeyesekere proceeds to note that Weber borrowed terms like *charisma* and *theodicy* from Christian theology, and then redefined each term in order to frame it in a new way. Borrowing in this way can lead to haphazard and confusing misinterpretations; many theoretical words have been reworked so often that there are multiple valences and echoes that become increasingly hard to discern from one another.

In anthropology itself Radcliffe-Brown's notion of *structure* is quite different from Levi-Strauss's, and my usage differs from both. But insofar as we all use the same word, it is possible to find some similarities and then make the unwonted inference that, let us say, Levi-Strauss's structuralism represents a straight line of development from Radcliffe-Brown's. So it is with *karma*: the fact that the word appears in a variety of texts might indicate continuity of an idea. On the other hand it might not, and ethical thinkers in the Buddhist tradition have poured into the term a new set of ideas that break with previous traditions (Obeyesekere 2002: 3).

By putting Western philosophy and Buddhism side-by-side as two invented traditions, perhaps each can be strengthened, even as the exercise questions the solidity and integrity of each body in turn.

I prefer not to envision various epistemological traditions as distant and utterly separate family trees, independent and self-sustaining, with different roots and trunks and canopies. Our lineages perhaps could be thought of as a banyan tree with multiple intertwined and interconnected trunks all sprouting and connected, and yet all distinct
from the same source. Thus I have argued that Buddhism is always already appropriations and borrowing, and so is anthropology, and this perspective sets up my own specific theoretical borrowings for this dissertation.

**Buddhist Findings**

The pick-and-choose method is one rather common approach to Buddhism, which is particularly obvious in Western Buddhisms, though such activities are also clearly evident in many historical transmissions and traditions of Buddhism past. The history of Buddhism, arguably from the days of the Buddha himself, demonstrate a willingness pick through what is extant, and take some, leave some, synthesize some, and invent some. Hybridity is a poor way to explain this momentum, simply because the pieces being synthesized were themselves always already hybrid. (And does not the history of anthropology demonstrate many of the same hybrid initiatives?)

Like found objects, picked up along a path or beach, many Western Buddhists have collected various ideas and images from various traditions, countries and teachers, and then constructed something rather different out of the images, ideas and scraps of others. Many FPMTers begin that way, with pieces and scraps that may or not make sense out of context, but once inside FPMT, although the community has roots in a particular Gelukpa Tibetan Buddhist approach, the picking and choosing certainly continues. FPMT offers many ways for devotees and students to engage, so that there is a great deal of individual choice about how to be an FPMTer. FPMT has itself chosen certain ideas and practices from their lamas' traditions to keep, and others to jettison. FPMT education and practice is not the same as the education and practice at Sera Je monastery where Lama Yeshe was trained. FPMT's contemporary Buddhism is not a carbon copy of contemporary Gelukpa Tibetan Buddhism. Amidst all of the work of both preservation and innovation, FPMT has quilted itself a body out of disparate
patches. This is not the work of bricoleurs, nor engineers (Levi-Strauss 1966), since these cultural transformations and fluid traditions seem to be the work of both creative minds piecing together found discourses, and thoughtful innovators trying to invent something with new with some sense of larger structural integrity.

Not only have I done the very same thing as a Buddhist myself, I intend to mirror that act as a scholar by picking and choosing which theories to appropriate from various scholarly traditions, including aspects of Buddhist thought, as well as Western philosophy, critical theory, neo-Freudianism, neo-Marxism, etcetera. Just as one use might use "findings" to construct and finish off a work of art or a piece of handmade jewelry, I intend to self-consciously pluck certain aspects of Buddhist thinking from their moorings, and use them as social theory in and of itself. My interest in using Buddhist theory transcends just respecting "their" ideas, or even being comfortable in my own skin as a Buddhist myself; other anthropologists have written un-self-consciously as Buddhists (Klima 2002, for example), but I have never seen an ethnography take Buddhist theory as a central theoretical framework. Given that is not common practice in anthropology, this section will discuss further exactly which Buddhist ideas I plan to use throughout the dissertation.

One of the key ideas that I seek to deploy as social theory is that of emptiness (Sanskrit: sunyata), which is found in various forms in across the spectrum of Buddhist traditions. By extension, I hope to rely heavily on the idea of the "two truths," since the "ultimate" truth is no less that the realization of the emptiness of all things. To begin

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15 I have seen more casual gestures in this direction, such as Willford's observations regarding some of what Buddhist and Heideggerian logic have in common (2005: 278).
16 We have seen emptiness in the social sciences before, such as when Levi-Strauss uses the term "empty signifier" to explicate the disconnect between signified and signifier (1987). This is an admirable gesture in the right direction, but it seems to stop short of recognizing that everything is essentially empty, and always has been. There have been many pieces of writing that deconstruct the illusory reality of things and strip them of essential substance much as a meditation on the emptiness of the idea or object would do. However, despite some significant resonances, the empty signifier of semiotics does not equal the emptiness of the Buddhist Madhyamika, especially insofar as emptiness is seen as one (albeit superior) perspective among two true ways of seeing.
with emptiness then, it is important to explain that emptiness is not nihilism. Emptiness means that there is nothing essential or core about anything; everything is in process and in flux. I draw primarily on Mahayana Prajnaparamita texts which argue that everything and everyone is empty, which goes a few steps further than earlier Abhidharma texts (Williams and Tribe 2000: 135). The notion of dependent arising or dependent origination (Sanskrit: pratityasamutpada) is helpful in teasing out the whys and wherefores of emptiness. The logic of dependent arising is that everything is caused and contingent, and therefore should not be understood as anything other than fluid and impermanent. Williams and Tribe explain dependent arising this way: "All elements of saṃsāra exist in some sense or another relative to their causes and conditions. This is why they are impermanent, because if the cause is impermanent then so too will be the effect" (2000: 64). This is true of the self as well, and therefore it is commonly understood that the self is no-self (Sanskrit: anatman), since the self is just as wont to change according to its causes and conditions. The emptiness of the self is a profound philosophy of the person, in which there is nothing at bottom, only contingency. The notion of impermanence is key to emptiness, since everything changes fluidly from moment to moment.

Emptiness in the Mahayana tradition does not just refer to the true state of everything except the dharma, it refers to absolutely everything. Everything, even the dharma, is a product of its ever-changing causes and conditions. Enlightenment comes only when one has completely recognized the inherent existence of all things, and ceased grasping at things or selves.

As an analytic, emptiness is the intellectual frame through which many of my Buddhist informants, and myself, see the world. Of course, an intellectual understanding of emptiness is not the same thing as the vaunted "direct realization" of emptiness, which

17 Lopez narrates Schopenhauer's misreading of Buddhism, that is, his insistence that Buddhism was unethical, that is, indifferent to good and evil (a symptom of the wrong interpretation that Buddhism is nihilistic) (1998).
can reputedly be achieved only with serious dedication to contemplation and meditation of emptiness (and for Mahayanists especially, it must be mixed in with true compassion, as well). For Buddhists, the intellectual understanding of emptiness is only the map, and is therefore wholly different that the actual experience of the place.

As a scholar, I find emptiness to be an extremely useful theory for understanding the true nature of all phenomena. With the understanding that I find the concept of emptiness useful as a social theory, and that I have no claim upon the direct realization of emptiness that precedes enlightenment, I would like to use compare the act of explaining emptiness to the act of deconstruction. The Buddhist teacher explaining the emptiness of a chair sounds very much like a postmodernist deconstructing a text, discourse, or practice. However, emptiness is similar to, but not equal to, some postmodern discourses that deconstruct ad infinitum (Derrida 1992), or semiotics (Levi-Strauss 1987), since these analytics operate within their own larger discourses, and with their own socio-historical boundaries. But emptiness is only useful for me as a social scientist (and an individual) up to a point. It is one thing to take emptiness as a truism, but it would be a dismal and flat social science that relied only on this frame of reference. For this reason I find the "two truths" analytic to be an eminently useful analytical framework as well.

The key to understanding the two truths – "ultimate" and "conventional" – lies with the fact that things can be seen at both levels at once, and that both can be taken as truthful perspectives. The conventional truth of a situation is that which can be perceived and observed. In a conventional sense, Jessica is a name labeling a person with a specific history and a whole host of qualities and weaknesses, but in the ultimate sense, Jessica is just a product of her fluid causes and conditions, and is therefore, essentially empty.

Faure points out that Greek philosophers made a crucial distinction between myth and logic, false thought and true thought, that paved the way for the Renaissance,
Enlightenment, and science, and yet this extreme binary has also brought problems and further questions as well, so Faure argues that the "philosophical absolutism" of the Aristotelian principle of the excluded middle should be tempered with engagements with the rationality and cultural logics of other traditions.¹⁸ He tells us, "The principle claim to fame of Western reason is to have managed to formulate logic. We know that, for Hegel, logic was 'the absolute form of truth.' But to believe that is to forget that, in the magnetic field of culture, concepts, like iron filings, are oriented by the forces that pass through them; they do not possess the autonomy attributed to them. The notion of a single truth makes it impossible to grasp the permanent fluctuation of reality" (Faure 2004: 32).

Faure delves into some of the oversimplifications that lie at the bottom of an important vein of Western discourse. He shows that the logic behind Aristotle's law of contradiction and law of the excluded middle¹⁹ diverge sharply from the logics of "the Buddhist tetralemma."²⁰ Here we see that Buddhist cultural logics that may offer a more complex way of thinking than the vaunted "either true or false" rationality of the Greeks that still underlies so much, but of course not all, Western thinking.

Jay Garfield explains how in the Mulamadhyamakakarika, when Nagarjuna uses the tetralemma,²¹ he established the centrality of emptiness: "…Here, Nagarjuna notes that each of the four branches of the tetralemma with regard to reality can be asserted, subject to appropriate ontological qualification: (1) Everything is conventionally real. (2) Everything is ultimately not real. (3) Everything is both conventionally real and ultimately

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¹⁸ While I agree with Faure that other intellectual traditions can be useful, perhaps it is only fair to note that his characterization of Western philosophies as hopelessly dualist is also something of an overstatement. It would be disingenuous to argue that the dualistic dilemma is the only Western philosophical form.

¹⁹ The law of the excluded middle states that in the case of contradictory statements, if either X or Y is true, then the other must be false, and there can be no intermediate truth between them.

²⁰ The tetralemma as defined by Faure offers the following logic: X; Y; both X and Y; neither X nor Y (Faure 2004: 36).

²¹ 'Everything is real and is not real, Both real and not real, Neither real nor not real. 'This is the Lord Buddha's teaching' (Nagarjuna cited in Garfield 2002:57).
not real. (4) Everything is neither ultimately real nor completely unreal" (2002: 57).

Faure argues that Nagarjuna eventually goes beyond the tetralemma, "… Aristotle rejected the tetralemma in favor of the dilemma: for him, without the dilemma, there is no salvation. Nagarjuna, in contrast, passes not only the dilemma, but even the tetralemma, which he also reckons to be too dichotomous… We should note that Nagarjuna himself does not speak of double truth, even if his successors (in particular, Chandrakirti) do. He sticks to the notion of 'two truths' so as to avoid any hint of synthesis" (Faure 2004: 95).

I find the two truths an apt analytical framework when reading some anthropological debates in which one side castigates the other as if there is only one valid perspective; the two truths perspective may be a way beyond some of the either/or scholastic debates that ignore each others strengths. For example, as I shall argue at length in Chapter 10, Derrida's claim that the gift is impossible would undermine Mauss' claims about the gift, only if we follow the either/or logic of the dilemma. Instead, why not acknowledge that on one analytical level (closer to the ultimate view, though not identical with it) there is indeed no possible gift, while on another analytical level (closer to the conventional view, though not identical with it), there are gifts in abundance.

The tetralemma can also be used to contribute to debates about agency vs. sociality: my informants are self-aware actors; my informants are simply empty products of their causes and conditions; my informants are both self-aware actors and simply empty products of their causes and conditions; my informants are neither just self-aware actors, nor simply empty products of their causes and conditions. I read the two truths as valid perspectives upon the same thing from different vantage points, although most Madhyamika Buddhists, myself included, would in the final analysis laud emptiness as the superior perspective. However, despite the extremely true truth of emptiness, other
truths ought to be reckoned with. An anthropological endeavor, whether actually about Buddhists or not, can gain from multiple vantage points here.

By attempting to dismiss dualities with the Buddhist notion of the "two truths" am I solving problems or hiding them? I hope that my approach is not unintentionally sustaining certain dualities, even as I seek to work past them. I am framing my dissertation in terms of Buddhist sociologies, mostly as a way to escape the either/or of certain theoretical dichotomies. In this effort, I would argue that I am attempting to rise above the extremes of the dialectic between the "epistemologies of estrangement and of intimacy" (Keane 2003: 223) by showing that more than one truth is possible at the same time. This is not simply an ethnography of the particular, nor is it an ethnography that objectifies and categorizes with abandon. One productive use of the framework involves acknowledging that one can tack back and forth between certain theoretical binaries by adopting the Buddhist sociologic of the two truths; there are conventional and ultimate truths, and since both levels represent important means of analysis, both perspectives can be articulated in a single ethnography.

**Trajectory**

My dissertation will trace the trajectory of the Maitreya statue by following the pre-life of the giant holy object from the beginning of FPMT in Nepal to the current anti-statue anxiety expressed by farmers in Kushinagar. As such it represents a portion of the cultural biography of a possible statue, one that may, or may not, ever be built.

I begin the dissertation with Chapter 2, "'Sangha'/Community: Appropriations, conversion and translation in FPMT's "New" Transnational Buddhism," which is about the FPMT community writ large. In Chapter 2, I ask, "What is the Foundation for the Preservation of the Mahayana Tradition?" and "What is the Maitreya Project?" I work through the history of Buddhism in the West to explain the positionality of FPMT vis-à-
vis other Western and/or Tibetan Buddhisms. I also explore the diversity of actors within both FPMT and MPI, and the very different ways of being a part of the community. In the following interlude, Chapter 3, I discuss my own perspective on community identity and self-awareness with respect to academic culture, knowledge and reproduction.

"'Guru'/Authority: The Locus of Faith in the Teacher," the fourth chapter of this dissertation, works through the work of establishing, and ritually enacting one's faith in one's dharma teachers in the FPMT community. I focus on one of the central tenets of Gelukpa Tibetan Buddhism – guru devotion (Tibetan: the nyan tentshul) – and how the concept is used and sometimes abused as a central sociologic of authority, faith and power. The following interlude works through some of my own desires and anxieties regarding faith and recognition.

In Chapter 6, "'Kaya'/ the Buddha Embodied: The social life of FPMT's Holy Objects," I will explore the Buddhist landscape of holy objects by reading relics, statues, images and dharma text through both material studies literature, and the Buddhist notions of emptiness and impermanence. I show the diversity of opinions about holy objects in FPMT, from devout to skeptic, and how these perspectives translate to aspects of the Maitreya Project's rituals and events, such as Relic Tour ceremonies. In the interlude, Chapter 7, I meditate on bodies and impermanence, and engage with some of my own holy objects.

Chapter 8, entitled, "'Asha'/Aspiration: Hope, prophecy, the future tense and making (up) progress on the Maitreya Project," serves to explore futurity both through the forward-thinking aspirations of merit-making and desires for rebirth in the era of the Maitreya, as well as through the specific futures constructed by and for the statue project, and Kushinagar itself. In this chapter, I argue that futurity is also tied to the notion of impermanence and Buddhist temporality, but for all that, the anxiety about the future
remains. I posit the future tense, as a way of distinguishing this forward-orientation from others that are less immediately concerned with the denial of death (Becker 1973), or the pregnant uncertainty of the gap (Crapanzano 2004). I follow Chapter 6 with an interlude tracing a history of the future of my own: the construction of momentum through proposals and drafts for this very dissertation. The interlude also forced me to confront some of my own prophecies.

Chapter 10, "Dana / Generosity: Merit-making, donations and the (im)possibilities of the Buddhist gift," focuses on gift giving in FPMT and the Maitreya Project. I contextualize my ethnographic work on offerings, volunteering and donations with a discussion of anthropological and religious theories of generosity and merit making. In Chapter 10, I make the argument that both conventional and ultimate perspectives on gifting are crucial for understanding the full spectrum of cultural meaning. My meditative interlude on the subject of dana, Chapter 11, is a brief reflection on gifting in the academy with particular attention on the gift of citationality.

The following chapter, "Maitri / Loving-Kindness: Ethics, protest, and ideology in the shadow of Maitreya," primarily deals with the unexpected controversies experienced by the Maitreya Project and its partners in their dealings with affected farmers in Kushinagar. The chapter traces the histories of past conflict, and the contours of the disputes that rage on in Kushinagar and Uttar Pradesh still today. I discuss the perspectives of various stakeholders: bureaucrats in Lucknow working towards increasing international tourism, Kushinagari business-people who are hoping to expand their customer base, and various farmers and landowners who are fighting for better compensation or the cancellation of MPI's plans in their vicinity. Chapter 12 looks at the effects of global Buddhism, free market liberalization, as well as national, regional and local politics upon the futures of seven villages that stand to lose some of all of their farmland to the land acquisition. I write in detail about the burgeoning grassroots
resistance movement that has thus far staved off the threat of acquisition by the state
government on behalf of MPI, and also how networks of people's movements have
affected the activism and discourse in Kushinagar. Chapter 13, my final meditative
interlude compiles fieldnotes about loving-kindness in fieldwork, research and debate.

My conclusion wraps up my argument by tying my chapters together with a
sustained discourse on the concept of "waiting," which I have drawn from "Waiting for
Godot." In the conclusion, I allow analysis, ethnography and meditation to interact more
freely, instead of keeping them to their own separate spheres. My conclusion ends with a
dedication of the merit to counterbalance the "setting the motivation" that marks this
introduction; by doing so, I draw from the normative ritual beginning and end of any
Tibetan Buddhist practice.
CHAPTER 2

"SANGHA"/COMMUNITY: APPROPRIATIONS, CONVERSION AND TRANSLATION IN FPMT'S "NEW" TRANSNATIONAL BUDDHISM

The Foundation for the Preservation of the Mahayana Tradition began as a chance meeting – it was a historic accident. The story goes something like this: Lama Yeshe and his young ward Lama Zopa Rinpoche were temporarily living in Darjeeling when a Russian "princess" from America came to the camp looking for a specific teacher that she had heard about. She was misdirected to Lama Zopa Rinpoche, but even after realizing her mistake, she began asking the two monks questions anyway. She pleaded with Lama Yeshe to teach her, and despite his initial misgivings, he eventually relented. Lama Yeshe and his disciple soon began taking on Western students; the former worked to improve their English, and the latter, their understanding of the Buddha dharma.

From these humble origins, FPMT has grown into a veritable transnational Buddhist empire. With over 150 centers and projects worldwide, FPMT has students, devotees and donors from all over the world. FPMT is currently running centers for Westerners, monasteries and nunneries for non-Western sangha, voluntary charitable projects, giant construction projects, educational initiatives, language training efforts, a college in the United States, as well as a magazine, and other projects.

This chapter will discuss FPMT as institution in the process of constructing itself. I will elaborate upon the context and history of the organization, and discuss the

22 Just as Hugh Gusterson did fieldwork on the Livermore National Laboratory without ever getting full clearance to work inside of it (1996), learning instead by encircling it and working at its periphery, I have worked on the institution of FPMT by circumambulating it. I take Gusterson’s work as a model for handling an large institution sociologically, since he works to establish a sense of the whole through individual interviews, public documents, as well as by soliciting views from those outside the organization. I also take Foucault as a significant theoretical marker in the study of the institution, since I do read power as working on and through the bodies of those who encompass FPMT (1979); power does not eradicate charisma as Weber has argued (1968), but rather in this case power works through the bodies of FPMT to
various communities who comprise the body of FPMT. This chapter is about the FPMT "sangha" in the most general sense of "Buddhist spiritual community." The chapter will provide a brief overview of Global Buddhist trajectories and movements, and discuss where FPMT fits into this religious trend. In this chapter, I seek to understand new appropriations of traditional mores, and how FPMT's borrowings and transformations from Tibetan Buddhism have simultaneously created something new out of the old, and also simply followed in an ancient tradition of doing just that.

Transnational Buddhism

FPMT is a Buddhist organization, to be sure, but what kind of Buddhism? Which Buddhism? Whose Buddhism? FPMT purports to follow a Gelukpa Tibetan Buddhist lineage and tradition, but in fact the practices of lay FPMTers are quite different than that of most ethnically Tibetan lay Gelukpa Tibetan Buddhists of both today and yesterday. FPMT's Buddhisms are different than their forbearers' Buddhisms, yet the similarities are significant as well; to contextualize these gaps and bridges, I will now give a more comprehensive accounting of Buddhism today.

To various practitioners, at various times, and in various places, Buddhism can be equal parts philosophy, worldview, cultural inheritance, commodity, religious practice, etc. The historical Buddha probably lived some 2500 years ago, and may have taught some of the lessons that are popularly attributed to him, but scholastic work in Buddhism has...
taught us nothing if not the fact that Buddhism has been changing, and continually becoming over the course of millennia (Williams and Tribe 2000).

Buddhism itself is a slippery appellation. Is Buddhism an amorphous philosophy, or is this a caricature? Is Buddhism the whole unifying religious umbrella, or should it be taken on a case-by-case basis, iteration by iteration? If Buddhism is a multi-headed hydra, then is it the heads one should be concerned with, or the body they emerge from, or the whole creature taken as a whole? Buddhism is Buddhisms. Faure writes: "Buddhism is itself double, hybrid, bastardized. On the one hand, it is a powerful intellectual system with tendencies both rationalist and abstract, almost structuralist and universalist. On the other, it is a form of local, pagan, quasi-shamanistic thought. By the same token, it is irreducibly plural. As the eminent Indianist Paul Mus has remarked, there are not just two, but at least half a dozen Buddhisms" (Faure 2004: x). As an anthropologist, I would, instead posit hundreds, if not many thousands of Buddhisms, therefore its subsequent construction as a single tradition must be regarded as an accident of history, rather than as an essential appellation; that is to say, Buddhism is ultimately empty too. Buddhism can thus be seen as ultimately "empty," although clearly from a "conventional" perspective, it is very much a meaningful religious category.25 Going back to my reliance on the two truths as a theoretical strategy, I will first conclude that FPMT's Buddhism, like all Buddhism, is empty; now, I will proceed to define FPMT's Buddhism in more conventional terms.

With due respect for Buddhism's many journeys over as many centuries, this is not the place to rehearse the movement of ideas, objects and people, which has been traced admirably elsewhere by others (Batchelor 1994; R. Collins 1998); it will suffice to

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25 My Gelukpa Tibetan Buddhist informants would agree to this formulation: Buddhism and the Buddha dharma are empty of inherent existence.
say that Buddhism has never been the under the purview of one kingdom or state; since the time of the Buddha, his ideas have traversed innumerable boundaries. The movement of ideas from the Gangetic plains of what is now India and Nepal has long been "global," as they snake outward across seas, over mountains, up steep plateaus, and across trade routes to distant corners of the world.

Buddhism cannot even be taken as simply an Asian phenomenon, since Buddhist notions have influenced Western thinkers for many centuries as well (Batchelor 1994; Faure 2004; Inada and Jacobson 1984). So when did Buddhism go "global?" One thousand years ago, even as Buddhism dominated many parts of Asia – was not the notion of the "world" different than it is now? Although one can argue that Buddhism has always already been globalized, there is a new valence to the contemporary movements that have leapt new oceans and been invited into new homes, all the while taking on different forms and meanings than before. I refer to this new movement as the globalization of Buddhism with full understanding that it is simply the newest stanza of a very old song. Taking my cue from David Harvey (1989), I would argue that it is precisely the character and speed of change that is actually changing; it is the frequency of time-space compressions given new technologies that have made the current movement especially unique in its own right. Global Buddhism cannot simply refer to Western Buddhism, since there are new, globalizing shifts occurring in the East, the West, and everywhere in between. I would consider Global Buddhism today to be inextricably linked to the phenomena of globalization, in all of its cultural, economic and media forms, as it has been discussed by social scientists such as Appadurai (1996), Harvey (1989), and others.

Western Buddhism, as opposed to regional, national, or cultural Buddhasm throughout Asia, has two interrelated components: 1) the movement of Asian Buddhists into the West; 2) the development of transnational Buddhist communities, many of which
are primarily convert communities. James William Coleman delineates two different Western Buddhism: the "ethnic Buddhism" of immigrants to the West and the "new Buddhism" of Western converts (2001: 7). Coleman’s formulation reverberates with the "two Buddhisms" approach to American Buddhism as established by Charles Prebish (1993), which notes the distinction between "ethnic Asian-American Buddhist groups" and those of mostly "European derived ancestry." The two Buddhisms approach was an effort to avoid defining American Buddhism exclusively through the vantage point of converts; the two Buddhisms notion explicitly, although still over-simplistically, recognizes two very different ideal types of practice. For example, even as Tanaka notes the differentiation between "Buddhists in America," that is, Asian-Americans practicing an inherited tradition, and an "American Buddhism" that is conversely associated with the white or European American converts (1998), he goes on to write that this delineation is useful only insofar as it identifies different patterns of practice (e.g., that Asian-American Buddhist immigrant temples often merge Buddhist spirituality with community and other cultural affairs and festivals) that are sometimes overemphasized to the point that they mask the substantial overlap and cooperation between actor categories. For the time being, one could argue that there is a fuzzy division between Buddhism in the West, as primarily practiced by Asian immigrants, and Western Buddhism, as a newer form of these Buddhism that are being vigorously developed in the West (and sometimes even returned Eastwards). These distinctions must be understood as simplistic placeholders in deference to the quickly changing landscape of Global Buddhism today. Peter Gregory was on the right track as he protested the provisional use of the two types of American Buddhism (2001); however, I am less than convinced by his argument that the boundaries would inevitably blurred to the point that there is no distinction at all.

In her discussion of American Buddhism, Jan Nattier identified three ideal types, which I believe capture the major categories of practice with slightly more nuance than
the usual two types discussed above: 1) "Elite Buddhism" – the "demand-driven" Buddhism of the privileged, which must be largely upper-middle class dominated because it often requires huge outlays of money for meditation and philosophy opportunities at centers here and abroad; 2) "Evangelical Buddhism," on the other hand, is an exported, proselytizing Buddhism (Soka Gakkai, for example), which is more inclusive given that it is often accessible to all without fees, and advertises material as well as spiritual benefits through Buddhist prayer (as opposed to meditation); 3) "Ethnic Buddhism" is the religious practice of Buddhist immigrants from Asia who congregate in temples that primarily function on behalf of one ethnic group (Nattier 1998). In this dissertation, I will use the term "convert" Buddhism interchangeably with "elite" Buddhism, and "heritage" Buddhism as a synonym for "ethnic" Buddhism.

Nattier's typology works well enough, as long as one recognizes the nuances within each category, and also that a particular institution or person may move between categories freely. The Namgyal Institute in Ithaca, New York, for example, supports both elite and ethnic Buddhism simultaneously with a schedule that includes both pujas that are frequented primarily by the area Tibetan in exile community, as well as lectures and meditation sessions that are almost exclusively attended by their elite Buddhist congregants. In this case, the two sets of congregations, ethnic and elite, are usually fairly

26 Frankly, I am uneasy with all of these appellations, and hence I use them with deep ambivalence; I look forward to better terminology. I use the term convert with care, since there are certainly elite Buddhists with children who have been brought up as Buddhists and as second-generation Buddhists they cannot be seen as converts proper. In a more refined typology, second-generation children of "convert Buddhists" would have to constitute their own sub-category, since they have grown up with Buddhism, yet cannot be lumped with ethnic Buddhists. Also, I know some informants who embrace the term convert, while others find it galling, since they associate with Buddhism, but may continue to hold some of the former religious-cultural beliefs from their heritage. It is a useful descriptor, however, especially since it adequately, albeit imperfectly, emphasizes the fact that the roots of this category of practitioners emerged out of a new, chosen affiliation, and not an inherited one. On the other hand, use of the word "elite" carries its own class baggage that glosses the class diversity of the devotees who worship in Western Buddhist communities. If one were to try to differentiate ethnic Buddhists by contrasting them with "nonethnic" Buddhists, then one would be rightly de-linking the latter's practices from their diverse ethnic identities, but using a rather clunky and ungraceful terminology that could be read as glossing practitioners' personal and/or spiritual identities.
separate, but they do intermix for particular events; though they may coexist and occasionally practice side by side, the two fuzzy sets of congregant make different spiritual, cultural, linguistic and educational demands of the resident monastics.

I would add another category of elite Buddhists to our typology thus far: "Buddhist sympathizers," or bookstore Buddhists, that is, those who have a general affinity for Buddhist ideas as they have seen them represented in popular culture or a few books they have read. Thomas Tweed has coined the term "Buddhist sympathizer" to refer to those who self-identify as Buddhist or Buddhist leaning without committing to a set of practices or community (1999). This category refers to people who have a few books by the Dalai Lama and Pema Choedron their shelves, or buy a smiling Buddha statue for their garden and a wheel-of-life tapestry for their kitchen. Either because a book or statue is aesthetically pleasing, spiritually engaging, or because they are commodities that help them to publicly self-identify as something (philosophical, deep, Tibet-supporting, etc.), essentially these objects alone represent forays, and not commitments, into Buddhism.

All told, Buddhist America is still primarily made up of Asian American Buddhists who brought their beliefs with them. The movement of Buddhism from Asia to America started in earnest with the immigration of Chinese workers to California in the mid-nineteenth century (Prebish 1998). However, since the twentieth century there has been an influx of Buddhist teachers who have sought to lead American convert communities instead of, or in addition to, their natal communities.27
Most Tibetans who fled from Tibet proper were forced to resettle in South Asian countries like Bhutan, Nepal and India, but a few high level monastics soon found their way to America and Europe, and began teaching Tibetan Buddhism to Westerners. Early on Geshe Wangyal, Geshe Sopa, Deshung Rinpoche and others laid the foundations for Tibetan Buddhist studies in the academy, and others such as Tarthang Tulku and Chogyam Trungpa Rinpoche worked to start American sanghas (Lavine 1998). Eventually, with the advent of the Tibetan Resettlement Project in the early nineties, over a thousand Tibetans (and their families) were officially resettled in the United States. Now there are Tibetan religious institutions representing most of the major Tibetan lineages on the ground in America, including the New Kadampa Tradition, a movement that is squaring off against the Dalai Lama on the Shukden issue (Dreyfus 1999). Amy Lavine notes that Tibetan Buddhism in America, or "American Vajrayana," is still connected to Tibetan lineages fairly explicitly by geshes and lamas either trained in the Tibetan system or recognized by it (1998).

As mentioned previously, many Tibetan Buddhist centers are diverse and serve more than one community. While one the one hand there are some ethnic Tibetan Buddhist temples that primarily serve large communities of Tibetan Buddhist immigrants, and on the other hand "elite" Tibetan Buddhist communities, such as Shambala International and FPMT, that cater almost exclusively to nonethnically-Tibetan Tibetan Buddhists, it is important to recognize that many Tibetan Buddhist religious communities, such as the Drepung Loseling Monastery in Atlanta, Georgia, work to some degree with both elite and ethnic Tibetan Buddhists. These distinctions and overlaps in the clientele of monasteries are as relevant in Indian Buddhist pilgrimage places as they

28 The Shukden issue rests on the controversial character of the Shukden deity, who is portrayed as violent and pro-Gelukpa to the exclusion of other Tibetan sects. The current fourteenth Dalai Lama has banned propitiation of this deity on the grounds that Tibetan Buddhism should be less sect-oriented and more inclusive. As a result some Shukden devotees stopped propitiating the deity altogether, while others turned against the Dalai Lama, accusing him of religious intolerance. See Dreyfus 1999, for more on the Shukden controversy.
are in the West. Global Tibetan Buddhism in India means that in Bodh Gaya India, for example, there are several Tibetan Buddhist temples of different denominations and sects, which serve the varying religious needs of ethnic Tibetan Buddhists. While Tibetan Buddhist converts feel free to visit these sites, and many do, their religious practice is generally relegated to courses at the Root Institute. Furthermore, ethnic Tibetan Buddhists do not generally visit the Root Institute on their pilgrimages, or to serve their religious needs while living in Bodh Gaya during the high season. 29

The rash of typologies regarding various Buddhists demonstrates that there is a substantial commitment by many Buddhists, Buddhist scholars, and/or social scientists in contrasting the Buddhists who have been brought up to believe in certain notions like karma, reincarnation, etcetera, with those who came to the ideas later in life. Not wholly unlike the distinction between a missionized subject's decision to believe or not (Asad 1993), in contrast to a person's unconsciously perpetuated *habitus* (Bourdieu 1977), elite Buddhists generally have a different relationship to Buddhism than ethnic Buddhists.

FPMT's centers in Europe and the United States (and even in Asian countries like Singapore and Taiwan) generally tend towards the elite Buddhist consumer, but they are careful to celebrate the Tibetan cultural aspects of their practices. I consider FPMT

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29 Not all ethnic Buddhist communities really know what to make of elite converts to Buddhism. Coleman notes that while some Buddhists of Asian descent are proud of the expansion of Buddhism to their new homelands, many Asian Buddhists are puzzled by some new Buddhisms in the West. He writes, "To some, Western Buddhism just seems too different to really be Buddhism" (2001: 219). It is certainly the case that no matter how aesthetically attuned they may be to Tibetan Buddhist art and architecture, few FPMT centers, if any, are a draw for ethnic Tibetans. While the Root Institute is almost never on the pilgrimage route of ethnic Tibetans in Bodh Gaya, the relics of the Maitreya Project headquarters nearby do serve as a more frequent draw. In Bodh Gaya, thousands upon thousands of Tibetans come each year for pilgrimage – they flock to the Tibetan monasteries (in addition to the Mahabodhi Stupa, of course), but not to the Root Institute. Dharamsala has a large Tibetan exile community, but they generally attend talks and pujas at other communities, and never the Tushita center. Once I took a Tibetan exile friend with me to the Tushita center in Delhi, and she seemed disinterested in the meditation, and discomfited by the community (mostly Indians, with a smattering of European expatriates) and by the fact that there was a single Norwegian nun (and not any Tibetan monastics). Although a Delhi resident, and a dedicated Buddhist, my Tibetan friend never went back to Tushita. My Tibetan exile friends seem somewhat nonplussed by FPMTers, but also grateful for the Western love affair with Buddhism that has been so good for their community in particular.
primarily an elite transnational Tibetan Buddhist organization, which also financially supports a handful of ethnic Tibetan Buddhist monasteries in Nepal and Mongolia. That is to say, the organization generally serves an elite Buddhist clientele, but also works to support some ethnic Tibetan Buddhist groups for good measure. FPMT centers in most places in the Western world are populated by converts; in East Asia – in Singapore, Taiwan and elsewhere – the laity may or may not have grown up with Buddhism, but few, if any, grew up as Tibetan Buddhists. FPMT has taken its form of elite Buddhism and returned it to the East, both by building centers in East Asia, and also by continuing to work through its South Asian pilgrimage bases in Nepal and India. However, it is important to note that the elite FPMT institutions, as a general rule, are very much open to the traditional or cultural elements of Tibetan Buddhism.

Nattier's aforementioned typology is also oversimplified insofar as it fails to differentiate between the elite Buddhists that embrace the cultural aspects of their new traditions, or conversely, the elite Buddhists who work to erase the cultural aspects of their chosen Buddhism. The latter have also been called "neobuddhists" (Faure 2004), "Protestant" Buddhists (Gombrich and Obeyesekere 1988; Zablocki n.a.), and "modernist" Buddhists (Bechert 1984). This distinction has provisionally been made by Martin Baumann (2001) and supported by Numrich (2006); Baumann gestures towards the notion that in both of the two types of American Buddhism, there are "traditionalist" elements and "modernist" elements (though he reports that generally Asian Buddhists rely more heavily on the former, while non-Asian Buddhists are keener on the latter) (2001). With due respect to the oversimplifications of the terminologies at hand, one must recognize that in both of the two American Buddhisms at hand, whatever you chose to call them, there are adherents to a more traditional/cultural Buddhism, and advocates for a more modern/rational Buddhism. Following Zablocki (n.a.), I do not suggest that the binary of modern and traditional Buddhisms be abandoned altogether, but rather that
the categories themselves are only useful as long as they can be understood in the proper socio-historical context.

Neobuddhism is a particular kind of elite Buddhism that works to erase some or all of the ethnic or traditional elements by working to separate out the desirable philosophical elements from the cultural elements that some Neobuddhists find objectionable. For example, in Abraham Zablocki's exposition of so-called Protestant Buddhism, he cites a white European informant who claims a transnational Tibetan Buddhist teaching lineage, yet simultaneously works to instruct his students in a Buddhism that he has cleansed of ritual and culture; Zablocki's informant, "Sven," feels that his modern Tibetan Buddhism is superior to traditional forms, and yet he also claims that he can discern truth through his meditative experiences, including the fact that he knows he was a Khampa warrior in a previous life, and that holy objects have important magical properties (Zablocki n.a.). Zablocki's "Sven" has constructed a type of Protestant Buddhism that Zablocki compares to the Orientalists, since both find merit in a version of Buddhism that tries to extract a philosophy and practice from their cultural moorings.

Because of their Orientalist attitudes, Faure writes of neobuddhists with slight derision: "Neobuddhism, for its part, sometimes doubly utopian, in the current sense of the term – as a rejection of reality, in particular the reality of contemporary society, but also the reality of traditional Buddhism, which is reckoned to be insufficiently "spiritual." Neobuddhist enthusiasts avert their eyes from prayer wheels and other embarrassing signs of "popular superstition," raising them up toward spiritual realities of a more sublime nature" (Faure 2004: 15-16). FPMT may represent a new form of Buddhism, but it is not neobuddhist in Faure's terms, since the institutional literature, practices and discourse are demonstrably supportive of much (though certainly not all) of the aesthetics, ritual and cultural artifacts of Tibetan Buddhism.
A neobuddhist, in Faure's terms, evokes the type of Buddhist who would strip away the Tibetan from Tibetan Buddhism, the Japanese culture from Zen, or the Thai from Thai Theravada. For him or her, new age "...does not simply constitute a new way of adapting religion to local cultures. On the contrary, it involves submitting traditional ways of thinking to one sole form of thought, that of modern, capitalist logic. So in truth, it negates local cultures. Western Neobuddhism, which flirts with this tendency without fully identifying with it, is inclined to become simply one of many forms of spirituality, a Buddhism "à la carte, digitized, flavorless and odorless (rather as money is)" (Faure 2004: 17).

Neobuddhism has at its root the Orientalist romanticization of Buddhism by Westerners that has emphasized the philosophical and textual aspects of Buddhism, while simultaneously ignoring the way that Buddhism was actually practiced (Faure 2004; Lopez 1995 and 1998). But this romantic notion is a grave oversimplification: "What Buddhism, as a middle way between two extremes, manages to rise above is precisely the traditional opposition between philosophy and religion. It is neither solely a philosophy nor solely a religion, but both at once, or perhaps neither. It is perfectly possible to be religiously philosophical and philosophically religious" (Faure 2004: 66).

The oversimplification, revisionism and romanticization of Buddhism by some scholars was addressed in Edward Said's seminal work, Orientalism (1978). Although Said focuses most explicitly on the Middle East, his critique of Western scholars for having misread the tradition by foregrounding the texts at the expense of vernacular practice is still relevant today. In his book, Curators of the Buddha (1995), Lopez reports that Buddhist studies as an academic discipline has worked hard to transcend the extreme romanticism of the Orientalist perspective that still haunts their disciplinary history. Neobuddhists, on the other hand, remain vulnerable to criticism that their judgments about what is "true" or "real" Buddhism smack of Orientalism. On the other extreme,
some have represented Tibetan Buddhism by emphasizing only its supposed mysticism, and/or positing that Tibetans are innately spiritual and peace-loving. These distortions, especially as regards the trope of the Dalai Lama as the embodiment of Tibet, are myths forwarded by elite practitioners and media, but at the same time these fallacies have also been usefully deployed for the benefit of Tibetans working to get the support of the international community as the wait in exile (Dodin and Rather 2001). The myth is itself a double-edged sword; it has served to both forward the socio-political causes of Tibetan refugees, and simultaneously boxed Tibetan exiles into certain overly prescribed notions of Tibetan identity (Falcone and Wangchuk 2008).

Faure discusses this second extreme by observing that, "Others, in reaction, abandoning all philosophical rationality, have been bent on drawing attention to the irrational, mystical character of certain forms of Buddhism and have been mystified by it. This tendency explains the attraction exerted by Zen and Tibetan Buddhism in the alternative culture of the 1960s and among its New Age Buddhist enthusiasts. In both cases, the Buddhism thus recreated in Western circles has frequently had very little to do with reality." (Faure 2004: 67). Faure argues here that transnational Tibetan Buddhism is not authentic or real. As FPMT and other mostly elite Tibetan Buddhist groups clearly fall under this rubric, I would argue that spectrum is not so clear as to relegate all transnational Tibetan Buddhism under this extreme category. FPMTers fall on various places along the line from overly neobuddhist to overly New Age, with many feeling that both extremes are problematic.

As to where FPMT's institutional Buddhism might fall along that spectrum – it does seem to align itself more closely with the romantic notion of Tibetan Buddhism as an essentially perfect and mystical tradition. However I would argue, contra Faure, that while FPMT's version of Tibetan Buddhism is a new tradition, it is one that is no more or less real than what is practiced in Sera Je monastery today (either the one near
Lhasa, or the one in south India). To be sure, what is now the reality in Kopan monastery or either Sera Je would look quite alien to someone who had practiced at Sera Je fifty years ago, and perhaps even that pre-invasion reality would have been just unfamiliar to someone who had practiced there one hundred years previously and so on and so forth.\(^{30}\) The monks at Sera Je in Bylakuppe, India, are learning in the traditional mode, according to the three acumens, in which one needs to perfect one's understanding long before engaging in meditation practice.\(^{31}\) On the other hand, FPMT's Kopan is full of laity (and women and men together at that!) learning basic philosophy and doing meditation immediately without first doing any of the prerequisite teachings, memorization or scholastic debate. FPMT is a new, new Buddhism.

A young American Buddhist monk, Jon, who had converted in the Tibetan Buddhist tradition, but outside of the FPMT fold proper, expressed his own ambivalence about elite Buddhism that is creating something new and distinctive instead of staying closer to Tibetan monastic norms. He has spent the past decade in and out of more traditional Tibetan Buddhist monasteries that are populated almost entirely by ethnic Tibetans. He found that new Buddhism was problematic to those of a more traditional perspective:

> Westerners are still pretty stupid. They don't know how to treat geshes, lamas, and monks. The highly realized monks understand that these are degenerate humans and so these geshes run back to India...These [Westerners] are insane. The first 200 or 300 years of Buddhism in Tibet was a debacle. Mahasiddhas were invited to dissipate the evil, and eventually lineages started. There were several degenerations, and then Je Tsongkhapa started... all that. But there are no lineages in America. It's all hippie cool. Buddhism in America is all second-hand. You can't just make up Buddhism. How can you do it without a base? You

\(^{30}\) For more on the variability of monastic traditions over time, please see Dreyfus 1999, and Sopa 1983.

\(^{31}\) The three acumens (prajnas) – "acumen arising from listening," "acumen arising from thinking," and "acumen arising from meditation" – that structure traditional Tibetan Buddhist pedagogy in the Gelukpa tradition (and elsewhere) explain that meditation is just one level of reflection, which must be preceded by other important steps in learning and comprehension (Dreyfus 1999). The third acumen, actually practicing meditation, is generally deferred indefinitely, or at least until the monk has reached a very senior status.
have to light the butter lamp from the currently existing butter lamps, or it won't light.\textsuperscript{32}

\textit{Appropriation}

As mentioned previously, the New Age aesthetic requires borrowing from the old age – often refashioning and repackaging it within a discourse cleansed of certain less palatable meanings, if necessary. From Native American music to Tibetan artifacts, many objects, rituals, and texts are taken out of their normative contexts and reinserted into cozy shops playing Celtic music or Gregorian monastic chanting. Certain veins of Buddhism, Taoism, Native religions, Wicca, and the Occult (to name but a few) all bundled together as commodities to be bought and sold. Crystals and fairy statues often adorn the shelves next to where Buddhist texts, academic and/or popular, are sold, and this is very often where FPMTers begin their journey. There is no easy way to separate New Age Buddhism from ethnic Buddhism from academic Buddhism; often books from all of these categories sit on the same shelves in a bookstore.

Almost every single FPMTer I interviewed about their religious trajectory mentioned that their first contact with Buddhism had been through books, and many of those (who did not receive them as gifts from friends or family, or come across them in academic courses in college) found their first Buddhist books by the Dalai Lama, Choygam Trungpa Rinpoche and others in New Age bookstores or magazines. Carl, a British FPMT student, told me that Sogyal Rinpoche's \textit{The Tibetan Book of Living and Dying} had made a huge impact on him, and propelled his visit to FPMT's Tushita center in Dharamsala. Others began in the New Age or Spirituality sections of mainstream bookstores. Some admit that readings about Hinduism paved the way for their subsequent interest in Buddhism, for example Wilt, an African-American who has

\textsuperscript{32} Mahasiddhas are great accomplished masters. Je Tsongkhapa (1357-1419) was an important monastic, who is usually credited with the founding of the Gelukpa sect of Tibetan Buddhism.
converted to Tibetan Buddhism (while maintaining connections to other religious traditions), first heard about Buddhism while reading a Hindu text, Autobiography of a Yogi. Another FPMTer, a Dutch woman volunteering at the Root Institute, had initially come to India looking for a spiritual path and eventually fell into FPMT, because she had read Osho's books. (Other reputed gateways to Buddhism, like martial arts and drugs, were occasionally mentioned by FPMTers, but not often.)

The literary genre of popular Buddhism is primarily a phenomenon of convert Buddhism. Elites from the Americas, Europe, and certain pockets of East Asia have embraced the books of respected Buddhist masters, and even many solidly non-Buddhist Christian or Jewish families have a book or two by the Dalai Lama sitting on their bookshelves. For some these books serve as a gateway medium towards the further exploration of Buddhist doctrine and practice, and so it was for all of my FPMT informants, who each mentioned that their Buddhist books indirectly inspired their first visit to a meditation session at an FPMT center (or some other Buddhist center), and/or their first trip to Asia to travel pilgrimage places. FPMT appeals to many elites traveling in South Asia, since they have centers in some of the major Buddhist affiliated pilgrimage stops in India and Nepal, maintain a very good reputation among travelers for their food and sanitation standards, and teach a Westerner-targeted curriculum in English.

FPMT's lineage is Tibetan Buddhist, specifically Gelukpa Tibetan Buddhist. However, FPMT has developed a teaching method, program, and institutional culture than would be altogether unfamiliar to their Gelukpa Tibetan Buddhist forebears. FPMT's Kopan monastery is nothing like Sera Je monastery (either the one in Tibet or its reproduction in exile in India). Faure notes that adaptation is required, but it cannot pass without certain turmoil about authenticity: "If Buddhism is to root itself in Western societies it must clearly adapt – and purists are likely to regard any adaptation as a bastardization. It is not possible to doubt the sincerity of those who, like the Vietnamese
monk Thich Nhat Hanh and the Dalai Lama, are trying to meet the challenge of modernity in order to preserve the achievements of tradition" (Faure 2004: 17). Although the gurus at the top tend to remain irreproachable, the mid and lower level teachers and staff who work to transform the original teachings into programs that work for various levels of Western and Asian elite students do sometimes field criticism for changing and adapting traditions too much or too little. Of course, there is a constant underlying tension and anxiety amongst FPMTers that they have strayed too far from the original. There is a general crisis of authenticity in FPMT that sometimes manifests as a strong undercurrent, but occasionally seems a much more explosive and dominant concern.

Inclusiveness and multi-denominationalism are sensitive issues within the FPMT institution. Although the Dalai Lama often diplomatically counsels followers to retain whatever religion identity they were born into, and simply add certain Buddhist meditation and mindfulness practices as a philosophical and practical complement, if so desired, there is also an underlying understanding in his work that one can only go so far along the Buddhist path without adopting the full program outlined in Gelukpa Tibetan Buddhism. FPMT has taken his approach as their own, since they are fairly amiable about students maintaining connections to other traditions – up to a point. FPMT is unswervingly Gelukpa, and generally will not allow people from other Buddhist denominations to teach courses or give talks at their centers. For example, Robbie, a long time volunteer at the Root Institute, complained to me that his primary guru, Thich Nhat Hanh, would never be allowed to teach or lead a meditation session at the FPMT center where he worked, nor would many other revered and respected Tibetan lamas from other sects: "Here at Root, it is the Gelukpa tradition, and there is a resistance to letting anyone outside of the Gelukpa school teach. It seems attached… We can't get too
attached or we'll experience spiritual slavery… Thich Nhat Hanh is my root teacher, but I read others. Thich Nhat Hanh doesn't have a monopoly on the dharma.

Many students and devotees shop around for a while and maintain connections to multiple communities, Buddhist and otherwise. As one advances in the organization, especially in becoming ordained, one is supposed to shed one's alternative religious connections (if not ethnic and cultural identities). Laura, a long-time European devotee at Tushita Dharamsala, told me that tried to balance both Tibetan and Goenka communities, but that there are substantial "dharma politics" and tensions that muddle her interest in being involved in both of the traditions:

There hasn't been that thunderbolt from the sky saying this is my lama. Right now I'd say that His Holiness the Dalai Lama is my root lama. I still do some other practices. I spent 6 weeks in Lumbini doing a Vipassana retreat – it's a Burmese style tradition. The simplicity of it appeals to me. I have done Goenka but that was just... (I have to stay clear of dharma politics. It's all more mischief by our minds.) There is a fantastic lack of understanding between Mahayana-ists and Theravadins. The Mahayana says that Theravadins are selfish. The Theravadins say that the Mahayana has corrupted the dharma – they're referring to the sex and ritual in the Vajrayana. His Holiness says that the difference between Mahayana and Theravada has nothing to do with the color of your robes or your particular practice; it has to do with your motivation to practice. Some Tibetan lay people don't even have a Hinayana motivation to achieve enlightenment. It's about your personal motivation. Doing retreat at a Theravadin center – I want to maintain my connection to that. It's a lonely endeavor trying to do it by yourself. At the Goenkan Vipassana centers they say, no other practices while you're there. They say that no other commitments can be fulfilled or practices done, even if you've promised. One Vipassana monk was a German, he was disapproving about Mahayana and the Tibetan tradition, but he let people maintain their commitments. In Tibetan meditation you have to do a lot of work manipulating the energies in your body. In Vipassana it's just the absence of everything.

33 Abby, a popular and well-regarded FPMT nun from Pennsylvania, took Buddhist ordination, yet acknowledges that she is also still ethnically and culturally Jewish. Similarly, Natalie, who grew up Catholic in a small town in Brazil, became an FPMT nun only after being able to put her Catholicism behind her.
During the last conversation I had with this FPMT volunteer, she remained committed to trying to continue in both Goenka and FPMT communities, although both institutions would have preferred her to settle on their style of practice and abandon the other.

A Norwegian FPMT nun who I interviewed in Delhi in 2006 also began her meditation practices with Goenka, but finally decided that her fellow practitioners were too competitive and sometimes even mean. Many FPMT teachers say that they see Goenka's Vipassana meditations as a viable path, but not the best possible one, and that FPMT helps one move onto the most potent practices for the benefit of oneself and others.

The Insight Meditation community headed by Christopher Titmuss also forwards a competing claim on better Buddhism. He noted in his lectures in Sarnath in February 2006 and in Bodh Gaya in January 2007 that statues and centers were unnecessary for dharma practice; often his teaching spaces reflected this tenet – the one Buddha statue in any given space was rarely the center of attention. Those who gravitate towards Insight Meditation Buddhism(s) tend to say that they were turned off by the guru devotion and holy object worship in Tibetan Buddhist communities. Serious FPMTers have often shopped around, and necessarily by-passed these, and other, alternative Buddhist sanghas.

FPMTers, like many Goenka and Insight Meditation practitioners, are very likely to have begun their Buddhist practices in earnest while traveling in South Asia. Especially in the beginning of FPMT's history, almost all of their devotees started at FPMT's Kopan monastery in Kathmandu, or at other FPMT pilgrimage site centers. Nowadays, there is more of a balance between FPMTers who establish their affiliation with FPMT in Asian pilgrimage centers, and those who start in their homeland centers. FPMT teachers and devotees have said many times in our interviews that being near pilgrimage sites in India or Nepal, and specifically being at an intense meditation session near these sacred Buddhist sites, presents its own opportunities for life-altering experiences sui generis.
For example, being out of the daily grind of work life and away from family and friends makes South Asian pilgrimage spots exceptionally liminal spaces. It is an easy space for replication and reproduction of movement, aesthetics and ideas that may have seemed less palatable or integrable elsewhere in time and space.

Appropriation and recontextualization of ideas is not unlike the movement of objects from one social context to another. One could discuss the "social life" (Appadurai 1986) or "cultural biography" of Buddhist ideas, rather than objects. For example, Nicholas Thomas (1991) has extensively written about how objects are "promiscuous." By demonstrating that the identity of things is never fixed, but rather that objects pass through social transformations through different phases of their history, Thomas specifically works to undermine the former essentialist notion that a particular object was, essentially, either a "commodity" or a "gift." While Thomas specifically discussed the promiscuity of objects vis-à-vis their fluid identities, I would use his insights to refer to the promiscuity of notions/ideas: Buddhist traditions, mantras, rituals, etc. The notion of karma, for example, is arguably as promiscuous and mobile as the now ubiquitous Tibetan prayer flags.

Appropriation as borrowing can be seen as positive adaptations when a less powerful group subverts a dominant or dominating discourse by transforming it themselves (Comaroff 1985, Wolf 2002). However, appropriation of cultural elements from the less powerful by a dominant regime can also be considered exploitation, even stealing (Deloria 1968; Goonatilake 1999; Sardar 1999; Stephen 1980). I find Nicholas Thomas' discussion of "appropriation/appreciation" in terms of indigenous and settler art in Australia and New Zealand to be the most useful frame for the current discussion, since he argues that besides the obvious problems of post-colonial appropriation, there is an ambivalent, multi-layered space in which there can be something created that is both an extension of the old as well as the creation of the new (2001).
Sally McAra's recent work on materiality of the Friends of the Western Buddhist Order in New Zealand has several valences that resonate strongly with this dissertation, such as her interest in the Western Buddhist convert community, and the way that a particular community has navigated the issue of holy objects and faith as it refers to a particular dharma project (the construction of a stupa, in her case). However, her discussion of "appropriation" takes an interesting tack as she argues that FWBO devotees as Buddhist converts were "halfies" in Abu-Lughod's sense (Abu-Lughod 1991: 137), that is, while they were born into mainstream western society, they had stepped out of it in order to practice alternative religious identities in a smaller Buddhist subculture (McAra 2007: 149). I would argue that the term "halfies" as Abu-Lughod does not apply neatly here, since this hides the power imbalance at issue here, especially as her informants increasingly appropriate the discourse of the local indigenous people along the way. McAra considers Buddhist converts in New Zealand to be equal parts insiders and outsiders at the same time: "The FWBO provides an instance of appropriation in a very different group: while members belong to a relatively affluent and politically empowered social milieu, as a subgroup of Western society the challenge many of the assumptions, values, practices of that materialistic and destructive society" (2007: 149). But this explanation would erase the discourse of exploitation in cases of white practitioners appropriating aspects of native cultures like religious practices of American Indians with the caveat that doing so is in resistance to dominant industrial, globalizing, and anti-environmental discourses; I would guess that most "new age" practitioners feel that they are appropriating with the best intentions, especially as they work to challenge "many of the assumptions, values, practices of that materialistic and destructive society." While Buddhist discourse is not owned by a particular indigenous community (nor are Buddhists particularly protective of their tenets and practices), there are sociopolitical power issues to be accounted for, especially as McAra's informants wrestle with the
history of indigenous peoples on their land in a way that exposes some deep and old inequities. Therefore, I am concerned that McAra lets us new Buddhists (her informants, herself, my informants, and myself) off the hook far too easily. In essence, ultimately these categories of traditions are utterly empty (whether Buddhist or Maori), and therefore appropriation represents not rupture, but steady and constant change; on the other hand, the complex conventional realities of history and politics cannot be glossed over in the process.

**Preservation**

Appropriation and borrowing must be put into conversation with another key notion with the Foundation for the Preservation of the Mahayana Tradition: preservation. The other side of the coin so to speak, preservation, and not appropriation, is the term of choice for internal and external FPMT discourse. FPMT presents itself as an extension of the old, as part of an ancient lineage, and a force for the conservation of, rather than the reinvention of, Gelukpa Mahayana practices. I would argue that both the appropriation and preservation at work in FPMT are two forces constantly at work together, and constantly in tension with one another, and that this entanglement is at the heart of the dynamics of the FPMT community.

Why preservation? Was Mahayana endangered? One could argue that at the outset of the organization, in the seventies, a few decades post-flight into exile in India, Lama Yeshe and his peers may have feared for the future of the Tibetan Buddhist dharma. The relocation (or duplication) of once mighty Tibetan monastic institutions in India was just beginning to make progress, and perhaps the lamas recognized that support from Westerners would be crucial to the success or failure of these nascent experiments. FPMT lore has not preserved the story of who exactly – hippie, princess or lama – came up with the name for FPMT.
Are all of FPMT's activities "preservation" in the strictest sense of the term? Preservation suggests a tradition frozen in time, as well as the absence of change. But FPMT is not markedly conservative or even normative by today's ethnic Tibetan Buddhist standards. Many aspects of FPMT culture and practice would be considered markedly different in contrast to both Lama Yeshe's educational experiences inside Sera Je in pre-occupation Tibet, and the dynamic between Tibetan lay people and monastics at that time. Perhaps Tibetan Buddhism is being preserved, but that preservation has taken the form of adaptation and transformation. Just to identify a few of the many changes: a pedagogy that allows lay people to fast forward past the decades of philosophical training that is supposed to precede meditation practice;\textsuperscript{34} students who have different notions of decorum and authority (e.g., Westerners wearing short shorts or revealing clothing during courses); completely new gender dynamics (co-ed courses, the high status of particular women teachers, etcetera); new monastic accommodations to skepticism amongst the base lay community; differentiations between ethnic Tibetan pedagogies and elite convert pedagogies;\textsuperscript{35} super-sized ambitions and projects (such as the Maitreya Project); a lineage holding tulku "temporarily" leaving the fold; global empire-building, and jet-set lamas.

While certain practices diverged and there were tensions about teaching meditation and giving empowerments, etc., to those who have not been prepared in the "traditional" monastic program, FPMT has been adamant that it is "preserving" the

\textsuperscript{34} Dreyfus describes the three acumens or "prajnas" as the "acumen arising from listening," the "acumen arising from thinking," and the "acumen arising from meditation" (1993). In "The Sound of Two Hands Clapping," he demonstrates that meditation is just one level of reflection, which must be preceded by other important steps in learning and comprehension. For more on more traditional pedagogies and the acumens, see Dreyfus (2003) and Sopa (1983).

\textsuperscript{35} Tibetan monastic pedagogy hinges on memorization and traditional debate (Cozort 2003; Dreyfus 2003), while FPMT has abandoned attempts to include debate methods in its pedagogical practices (Cozort 2003). Daniel Cozort notes that in the FPMT centers students found the traditional debate style too "academic," while they were themselves more interested in "practice." The jettisoning of debate, as well as intensive memorization, has been supplanted by more Western academic pedagogies like discussion-oriented classes, review sessions, and take quizzes and exams (Cozort 2003). There are also innovations in some of the FPMT educational programs that were not necessarily common in either Western universities or Tibetan monasteries, such as weekly meditation sessions, retreats, journals for self-evaluation of behaviors, and community service.
Mahayana tradition as it has been since the time of Lama Tsongkhapa. According to informants who were long-time devotees in FPMT, the organizational leadership, and the clientele base, expressed occasional anxieties about trying to maintain the "pure" teachings in the face of translation and cultural differences. There were voices and choices that were accommodations to "new age" spirituality, as well as those that were resistant to anything that would dilute the authenticity of the teachings. These devotees can remember times when FPMTers were asked by the International Office to distance themselves explicitly from the fuzzy "new age" spirituality that tends towards pastiche, and instead work to maintain the authenticity and Tibetanness of the institution. The centralization of the centers under the auspices of the International office in the late seventies and early eighties was done in some part to ensure that FPMTers and their teachers stayed on message. Not all of the Tibetan geshes recruited from the monastic centers to teach at FPMT centers were amicable about taking strong direction from the International office; the Manjushri Institute was an FPMT center whose core members and FPMT-recruited geshe resisted the spiritual direction of Lama Yeshe and Lama Zopa Rinpoche, and eventually split from the parent organization. 

Not only has FPMT translated certain older forms and practices into new ones, they have literally translated countless prayers and ritual texts from Tibetan into English.

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36 The problems at Manjushri Institute involved, among other things, charges of embezzling and fraud by certain FPMTers including Peter Kedge, who has subsequently been the president and CEO of the Maitreya Project since its inception. The charges were never substantiated or proven in a court of law, but they became a wedge issue in a power play between Lama Yeshe (and his supporters) and the resident Lama, Geshe Kelsang (and his supporters). At some point Lama Yeshe asked Geshe Kelsang to resign so that a Geshe "more devoted to FPMT objectives" could take over, but the since many local students petitioned for him to stay, he decided to remain, effectively going against the express wishes of the centralized authorities of FPMT (Kay 2004: 61-4). The Manjushri Institute informally broke off relations with FPMT in 1984, and became the founding "mother centre" of the new institution, the New Kadampa Tradition. The legal separation between the two entities came later, in 1990. In 2003, the group became the New Kadampa Tradition - International Kadampa Buddhist Union (NKT-IKBU). The New Kadampas are a group aligned against the Dalai Lama's restriction on the propitiation of the Shukden deity, and therefore extremely controversial in the realm of Western Tibetan Buddhism. For more on the Shugden controversy, see Dreyfus 1999, and for more on the role of the FPMT and the Manjushri Institute, see Kay 2004 and Cozort in Heine and Prebish 2003.
Some of this work has been done in house by FPMT staff and volunteers, and these books are published by FPMT, Inc., and distributed to centers only. Other work has been published by FPMT's Wisdom Publications by independent scholars or writers who may or may not be FPMT-affiliated. Many of the prayer books produced by FPMT, Inc. have the transliterated Tibetan on one side and the English translation on the other. Few of these books have the Tibetan script anywhere on its pages. Tibetan language learning is not discouraged, but it is also not specifically encouraged or required for lay or monastic persons. Daniel Cozort writes that for FPMT dharma learners, the emphasis is on philosophy and meditation, so Tibetan is not taught in centers nor does it need to be (2003).

There seems to be little agreement upon when to chant in Tibetan or English, or at least no centralized training surrounding the leading of many FPMT pujas, especially since non-monastic staff or volunteers often lead them. On any given day, at any given center, even if one is doing a familiar puja (such as a guru puja, or a Medicine Buddha puja), there are many ways to do it. Almost every guru puja that I did over my years in FPMT centers was greatly or slightly different than the time before. For example, there is skipping around in the prayer books, new addendums that are sometimes ignored, various levels of training in how to pronounce words or in which cadences one should chant them, or whether one should do the short or long version. Should one do multiplying mantras after the Long Life Prayer for the Dalai Lama or just before it? I have seen it both ways and multiple times at that. Which set of dedications should be read, and from which book? At the outset of many pujas, the leader will have had to handout several pamphlets and books, as different parts of the puja are spread out in various publications. Students and devotees tend to try to go with the flow, and this is far easier for those at centers catering to fixed devotee communities as opposed to transient ones.
What, if anything, is being lost in translation? Benjamin argues that translation should not be literal; rather the translation should transcend the literal to capture the essence of the original (1968). Is FPMT effecting good translations that capture the aura of the original, or are they being too careful too true to word for word translations? I ask this question in terms of micro-translations, literally Tibetan text to English text, but also macro-translations such as the practices, beliefs, and forms that are considered essential to transmit from Tibetan norms to FPMT norms. Latour writes that translation is always ambiguous (1996). If nothing else, the use of the word "preservation" as a key appellation and motivation of the Foundation for the Preservation of the Mahayana Tradition denotes a conceit of the precise, exact translation. Whether for better or worse, the translations seem to indicate flexibility and transformation, not a frozen, inert-informaldehyde type of preservation.

The Princess and her Lamas: A Brief History of FPMT

Lama Thubten Yeshe was born in 1935 in the U-Tsang area of Tibet (Landaw 1982[1975]). He was soon recognized as the reincarnation of the abbess of a small Gelukpa nunnery in his natal region. With the financial assistance of the nuns, young Lama Yeshe was permitted to join the Sera Je monastery at the age of 6. Lama Yeshe stayed at Sera Je until he was 25 years old, and the fled to India with many of his peers and teachers. In Buxa, India, at a Tibetan resettlement camp, he continued his studies for a few years, and finally took his full ordination at the age of 28.

Lama Thubten Zopa Rinpoche was born to a Sherpa family in the Khumbu area of Nepal in 1945 as Dawa Chotar (Wangmo 2005). He was recognized as the

37 While devotees know that Lama Zopa Rinpoche's roots are entrenched in Nepal (and the full biography is available on-line and in some books), many informal biographies that dot the landscape of FPMT centers actually gloss his background. In a post-exile twist, while Tibetans traditionally felt that if it was not from India it was not authentic (Huber 2008: 63), nowadays Westerners seem to give great currency to all things Tibetan. Several of the stories I found in handouts, publications, signs and reading materials at the Tushita Center in Dharamsala emphasized only that Lama Zopa Rinpoche had escaped from Tibet; they did not
reincarnation of the Lawudo Lama Kunzang Yeshe although the boy was born two months before the old Lawudo Lama passed away.\footnote{In Tibetan, the case of a reincarnation born previous to the death of the reincarnated is called madeb tulku, and is still considered a rare occurrence.} As a reincarnated lama, Dawa Chotar had many opportunities to study in his childhood – he studied at Thangme Gompa and in Rolwaling as a Nyingmapa Tibetan Buddhist. On a pilgrimage to Tibet in 1957 with his uncles, Dawa Chotar became a student at a Gelukpa monastery, and eventually refused to return home to Khumbu with his uncles. Here he took novice vows and was given the name Thubten Zopa. In 1959, as the Chinese invasion of Tibet grew increasingly violent and repressive, Lama Thubten Zopa Rinpoche and his peers at his monastery fled together to India.

Since monastic exiles were being sent to Buxa by Indian authorities, Thubten Zopa joined his comrades there and began study with a series of different Gelukpa teachers, including Geshe Rabten (Wangmo 2005). For a time he traveled to Delhi and Dalhousie to study at a special educational institution founded to educate Tibetan tulkus (reincarnate lamas), but eventually he returned to Buxa.\footnote{Tulkus are identified, usually at a very young age, as the reincarnation of a significant Buddhist personality (usually male lamas and/or learned monastic teachers, but also sometimes very accomplished women or laity). Through a ritualized series of tests, elders generally search for, formally recognize and eventually enthrone the tulku. There is occasionally institutional disagreement, for example, there are currently two Karmapa throne-holders, as the sect has divided over a tulku recognition controversy. Moreover, the People's Republic of China has taken an increasingly controlling hand in the recognition of tulkus who now stand in direct competition with the status of those recognized by the Dalai Lama and his Tibetan government in exile.} Back in Buxa, he studied with a few teachers, but was eventually directed to Lama Thubten Yeshe. Lama Yeshe took full responsibility for the education of the young teenaged Lama Thubten Zopa, and soon Lama Zopa moved into the same house as his teacher. The two traveled to Darjeeling to visit a colleague at Ghoom Gompa, and while staying there in 1965 they met Zina Rachevsky, who would plant the seeds for FPMT (Landaw 1982[1975]).
Zina Rachevsky was from a Russian royal family that had settled in France to escape the Communist revolution; Zina eventually immigrated to the United States, married a film financier, and had children, but eventually began a process of spiritual exploration that led her to India (Wangmo 2005). In Wangmo's book, Lama Zopa describes Zina's entrance into his life like this: "Her life had been very interesting. I think she did everything one can possibly do in the West (Hollywood star, fashion model, can-can dancer in Paris, and so forth), except being a president or prime minister. Zina believed herself to be an incarnation of H.P. Blavatsky and came to the Himalayas looking for a Tibetan lama" (Wangmo 2005:203). Zina Rachevsky proceeded to seek out lamas and teachers in the Darjeeling area, sitting with them and asking questions. Zina wanted to meet a particular learned Geshe whose name was almost identical to Lama Thubten Zopa's nickname, "Dromo Rinpoche"; she thought she would be meeting the former, but instead she was taken to meet the latter and his tutor, Lama Yeshe (Landaw 1982[1975]). After getting over her initial surprise at the mix-up, she was quite taken with Lama Yeshe, and returned often to meet with them.

According to the oral tradition surrounding their first meeting, she burst out quickly with the question – "How can I receive peace and liberation?" (Mackenzie 1995:117). Eventually Lama Yeshe and Lama Zopa Rinpoche were invited to stay with her in Darjeeling, where Lama Yeshe would give her informal teachings and Lama Zopa Rinpoche would translate as best he could from Tibetan to English (Wangmo 2005).

Lama Zopa Rinpoche describes how inappropriate and informal she was with them at the outset, but he notes that their patience with her was worth it, since she provided the connections and means to make FPMT a reality. He said in an interview: "We had to use the same toilet, and on the way we had to pass her, sitting in her underpants in front of the mirror. She would spend about two hours every morning putting creams and make-up on her face…After Zina's toilette was finished, we would
join her for breakfast. Then she would come to receive teachings from Lama Yeshe and I would translate. She usually brought a book with her to leaf through, sat with her legs up or stretched out because she did not know that this is considered disrespectful, and would nibble on biscuits, chocolate, or pakoras (an Indian snack). Most of the time it was not a formal teaching, and we would just talk about cause and effect and the things she had done in her life" (Wangmo 2005: 204-5). The two lamas were sometimes frustrated with Zina, but they clearly also had an effect on her, since after just a few years she took novice vows in the Gelukpa sect and began wearing Tibetan Buddhist nun's robes, reputedly becoming the first known Westerner to do so (Mackenzie 1995).

Zina Rachevsky became their benefactor and in return they traveled with her to Kathmandu when her Indian visa expired in 1968. In Kathmandu, Lama Yeshe began taking English lessons and slowly expanding his flock of Western devotees. Zina and her friends rented a house on a hill-- the nascent Kopan monastery-- where "her Tibetan lamas" (Wangmo 2003: 209) could begin teaching other Westerners about meditation and Buddhist thought. Lama Zopa Rinpoche also began planning to build a monastery, the Mount Everest Center, in his home region of Khumbu, so he started working on raising money towards that end.

Kopan was a difficult and piecemeal undertaking at first; according to Lama Zopa Rinpoche it was an exercise in patience: "The house was full of Zina's friends – hippies taking drugs and playing music with guitars and so forth. We were given the smallest room with space for only two beds and a very small table in between. Lozang Nyima had to sleep on the floor. Actually during the years we were with Zina we really had to practice thought training. One evening she got very upset about something and threw the bamboo tray with bowls of thugpa all over us. We just laughed and cleaned it up, and the next day she apologized" (Wangmo 2005: 233). Lama Zopa Rinpoche also reminisces about the way in which Zina underfed the lamas, or fed them insubstantial meals such as
peanut butter and bread, so that occasionally they would go hungry. Despite her notorious behavior, Zina was a celebrated figure within FPMT, and many years after her death her reincarnation was identified as the newborn son of one of her relatives in Paris (Mackenzie 1995: 119).

When Zina first asked Lama Yeshe to begin teaching meditation courses at Kopan for Western students he refused, so Lama Zopa Rinpoche volunteered in his stead. According to Lama Zopa Rinpoche, Lama Yeshe's hesitation stemmed from the fact that at Sera Je and other monasteries there is no "meditation" in the classic sense until after many years of study and Tantric initiations (Wangmo 2003: 241). Despite his guru's reticence, and perhaps because he had never studied at a huge scholastic monastery like Sera Je, Lama Zopa Rinpoche began teaching meditation courses at Kopan in 1971. By the time of the seventh month-long course in 1974, attendance had grown to 200 persons, which stretched the capacity of the newly built gompa (temple) facilities (Landaw 1982[1975]). In 1975, Lama Yeshe officially founded the Foundation for the Preservation of the Mahayana Tradition.

Lama Zopa Rinpoche and Lama Yeshe cultivated both their Western devotee community as well as their work on the Mt. Everest center. After a handful of years, the monastery at Lawudo was transformed back into a retreat hermitage, and the young monks of the center were transferred to a new monastery for them at Kopan. The seventies saw the growth of the Kopan meditation courses that are now famous in the transnational Tibetan Buddhist community, Zina's sudden death (possibly from food poisoning or cholera), and the steady growth of Western devotees.

The lamas were given the opportunity to establish and teach at centers all over the world. Monastic travel is not a completely new, modern, post-exile phenomenon

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40 For a longer exposition on the limitations and timing of Gelukpa meditation practices in and outside of monastic institutions, please see my article in Michigan Developments in Anthropology.
amongst Tibetan Buddhist lamas, but the extent of FPMT's religious empire is fairly unique in scope and size, especially since the devotees are almost exclusively converts. There are a handful of other Tibetan Buddhist convert groups whose institutional reach and scope are fairly expansive, Shambala International, for example. However, while FPMT and Shambala's Tibetan Buddhist teachings were attracting converts, there were other Tibetan teachers who approached their elite students from East and West, in quite different ways.

Another teacher attaining prominence at this time was the Dalai Lama himself, who began attracting devotees to public lectures and private audiences, but unlike FPMT's lamas, the Dalai Lama did not encourage the building of centers far and wide, or develop an education program for Western converts. Yet another important Tibetan Buddhist monastic, Geshe Sopa, was appointed to the faculty of University of Wisconsin in the late sixties and taught a generation of Tibetan Buddhist studies faculty and practitioners (many were studying both experientially and academically). Geshe Sopa also had less of a craving for a monastic and educational empire than the FPMT lamas, and instead established a single center, the Deer Park Buddhist Center, where he still lives and teaches today. At the time of writing in 2008, Geshe Sopa still holds summer-long teachings, many of which are even now still patronized and attended by Lama Zopa Rinpoche. Lama Zopa Rinpoche has raised his status by virtue of his slew of students worldwide, but amongst respected Tibetan Buddhist monastics and lamas like the Dalai Lama and Geshe Sopa, he is reverential. FPMT is somewhat unique in that it has grown so quickly and expansively, as compared to the organizations of many other lamas who

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41 Monastic travel for purposes of pilgrimage, teaching, institutionalized meditation retreats, inter-monastery debate was not uncommon in pre-exile Tibet (Sopa 1983; Huber 2008), nor was it uncommon for a main monastic center to have several branch monastic centers in the same tradition scattered elsewhere. Huber's work on inter-"national" religious pilgrimage also demonstrates that there was concerted effort at various historical points to establish connections with sites and communities in India especially (2008). While "global" travel is therefore not new to Tibetan Buddhism, the jet-set nature of FPMT's monastic travel certainly adds a unique dynamic to globalized teachings today.
boast a much smaller handful of centers, and instead cultivate more intensive relationships with a much small number of, usually very rich, elite devotees.

While FPMT's influence and centers spread quickly into the Americas, Europe, Australia, and South and Southeast Asia from the seventies onward, FPMT does not consider itself a proselytizing tradition; FPMT argues that it provides a religious service for those who seek it, as opposed to aggressively working to recruit and convert members. My informants tell me that Lama Yeshe's smile and laugh alone won converts by the hundreds. According to most reports from long-time FPMT devotees whom I interviewed, Lama Yeshe was charming, friendly and prone to exploration and curiosity. A devotee wrote about his adventures, saying, "... on a trip to America, he astonished not a few by playing the tables at Las Vegas! He then dragged a reluctant Lama Zopa (who by inclination would much prefer meditating in his room), not only to Disneyland, where he tried most of the rides and wore a Mickey Mouse hat—but also to a strip joint, where they both sat eating ice-cream, not at all shocked by the antics of the lady on the stage. Lama was certainly never a prude" (Mackenzie 1988: 26). According to Mackenzie, one devotee wondered whether he was really a party animal or not, since he would tell everyone to have a great time, yet also criticize those who wasted time partying.

Throughout the seventies and early eighties, the two Lamas continued to teach within a Gelukpa Tibetan Buddhist framework that draws heavily on the traditions of Sera Je and other major Gelukpa monastic venues.

Lama Yeshe passed away on March 3, 1984. Lama Zopa Rinpoche has blamed the "problems regarding our center in England, Manjushri Institute" for the rapid decline of Lama Yeshe's health (Wangmo 2005: 281).42 Once Lama Zopa Rinpoche caused commotion and upset amongst FPMT devotees when he told them that Lama Yeshe

42 See earlier footnote, in this chapter's "Preservation" section, for more on the Manjushri Institute controversies.
could have lived another ten years, but that his lifespan had been dependent on the integrity of the prayers and karma of his followers, who had essentially failed to muster the conviction to keep him healthy (Mackenzie 1988).43

After Lama Yeshe's death, Lama Zopa Rinpoche took on the work of running and expanding the FPMT empire. By the late eighties, there were fifty FPMT centers worldwide (Mackenzie 1988). Several devotees who had first taken refuge with Lama Yeshe told me that they had trouble taking Lama Zopa Rinpoche as seriously as a guru, and some of these individuals receded quietly out of the organization, while others stayed and transitioned to accept Lama Zopa Rinpoche as the head of the organization. Still others feel that Lama Zopa Rinpoche is their primary guru, whether they were first Lama Yeshe's students or not.

After a few years, Lama Zopa Rinpoche found and recognized Lama Osel Hita Torres (born to Spanish parents in February 1985) as the reincarnation of Lama Yeshe; the Dalai Lama confirmed this identification in 1986 (Wangmo 2005).44 Shortly thereafter, Lama Zopa Rinpoche began plans to educate him at a Tibetan monastery as befits a reincarnate lama.

Mackenzie, a Buddhist journalist, and a devotee of Lama Yeshe's followed Lama Osel's movements from the time she met him as a 20-month old toddler (1988) to his pre-teen years (1995). She wrote of her own shock at seeing aspects of her former teacher's personality reflected back to her through a child, and of how devotees both looked for clues to whether he was an authentic reincarnation with hope and doubt. Her

43 In FPMT, the notion that it is the defilements of the followers that cause the death of a lama is still in wide circulation amongst devotees — I heard the statement stated as fact in many contexts, including during a guru puja being done for the health of a senior Tibetan lama, during lunch conversations, and during discussions about the Maitreya Project controversy.

44 Foreign tulku (reincarnations) are not unheard of, but they are still quite rare. There are several Western tulku who have been identified by Tibetan lineage holders from all the major Tibetan sects. Most were the boy children of "elite" Tibetan Buddhist devotees, but there have also been a few adult Western men (Steven Segal, e.g.) and women (such as Catherine Burroughs, a.k.a. Jetsunma Akhon Lhama) who were recognized as tulku over the past twenty or so years as well.
two books on Lama Osel read as hagiographies designed to convince the reader from her initial skepticism towards her openness to Lama Yeshe's reincarnation.

Since Osel's parents were dedicated FPMT converts from Spain, they were willing to let Lama Zopa Rinpoche take charge of his education from an early age. At the age of three he was being taught by his parents, by an FPMT Geshe in Spain, and at Kopan monastery by Lama Zopa Rinpoche. Like Lama Zopa Rinpoche's own educational journeys, Osel traveled often from Nepal to India to Spain and also to many centers all over the world. In 1991, he was sent to the most reputable collegiate monastery in India, the Sera monastery in exile, located in the southern state of Karnataka. According to Mackenzie, Osel struggled somewhat against the traditional Tibetan Buddhist pedagogy of intense memorization, strict discipline, and tightly controlled schedules (1995). After two years, he left the monastery. Mackenzie described the "crisis," and how it put various layers of the FPMT community into a great deal of uncertainty about Osel's future with the organization. Eventually, a resolution was reached, and Osel returned to Sera on the condition that his father and a beloved brother could accompany him. He reintegrated into the system at Sera with some special accommodations, and stayed for several more years. He eventually left Sera, took off his monastic robes, and went to a private school in Europe.

During my dissertation fieldwork period, Lama Osel was largely out of sight, and out of the public eye. Lama Osel had asked FPMTers to leave him alone for the time being, as he pursues a Western education, without FPMT responsibilities. My informants, especially those who are long-term devotees, whisper to one another that they have heard that Lama Osel is now just Osel, and that he now dresses in "Goth" or "punk rocker" fashions, and he is drawn to the dregs of society – sitting with them and

45 Also, he had specific desires for a replacement tutor, and he asked be given concessions about his food arrangements there (Mackenzie 1995).
listening to their stories at dirty bars in California. One informant sounded concerned as she told me that she had heard that he had a Mohawk hairstyle now.

My informants noted that he was studying film at a university in North America – some said in Canada and others said in America. While Osel's departure was a source of some consternation around the dining hall tables of FPMT centers in India, the news of his educational pursuits also excited many devotees who said that he is learning the film medium in order to benefit the greatest possible number of people. This echoes an idea voiced by Vicki Mackenzie as she considered the similarities between her former guru and the young Osel, in particular his effortless and grace in front of crowds and press. She wrote, "I pondered on the fact that Lama Yeshe had, without doubt, been one of the biggest and earliest transmitters of Tibetan Buddhism to the West. His unusual and remarkable skill at putting across the ancient wisdom of his religion in Western terms, together with his charismatic personality, had inspired a huge number of followers and eventually a worldwide organization. It followed, therefore, that his reincarnation would also be high-profile, gregarious, at ease with the public, and ready to make his message known on a wide scale" (Mackenzie 1995: 161).

There are many devotees who always hoped that he would stay active in the organization and take over from Lama Zopa Rinpoche at the age of thirteen, but there are others who always felt that as a Westerner he would go his own way, and contribute to the dharma in his own unique manner, becoming a "talk show host," for example (Mackenzie 1995: 207-8). One of my informants, a long-time staff member at FPMT's Root Institute, told me in 2006 that Osel was expected to go his own way for a time, and then return to the FPMT fold:

Lama Osel is pursuing his Western education now. He hasn't disrobed, since he was never ordained, he was never really robed! He is doing film studies. He is keeping a low profile. He wants to understand what life is like for his students. He had been at a boarding school in Europe for a while and no one there even
knew that he was a tulku. One of his friends from there went to Kopan and saw his friend's photo all over the place. He hadn't known that Osel was a lama. [Osel] doesn't want Mandala to do any sort of article, since he's trying to stay out of the spotlight. He's doing it all his own way. This doesn't surprise anyone. Lama Yeshe was quite an unconventional lama. He used to drag Lama Zopa Rinpoche to strip clubs and Disneyland. He wanted to understand the world of his students. We expect great things from [Osel] still, and he will come back to us when he is ready.

Yet, FPMT leadership has realized that Osel may not be ever be willing and able to take up a position as a teacher, as the Spiritual Director of FPMT, as he was destined to do. The preservation of the Foundation for the Preservation of the Mahayana Tradition is now at issue. At a major FPMT retreat in North Carolina in 2009, the Education Director of FPMT gave a talk to the assembly noting that state of the art equipment was being used to record all of Lama Zopa Rinpoche’s talks at the event and to translate these teachings into several other languages: French, Spanish, and Chinese. (The Italians had canceled at the last minute.) The Director said that the preservation of the FPMT lineage is now an important directive, and that Lama Zopa Rinpoche would give several lengthy multi-year talks on certain topics that would provide a foundation for the preservation of the unique teachings of FPMT. The Lam Rim retreat itself that October was the first in a series of "Light of the Path" retreats to follow, each of which would follow and build upon the last, and each of which would be recorded, transcribed and preserved for posterity. By focusing the preservation of the lineage upon the educational material, FPMT’s Education Director was demonstrably not placing the responsibility for the future of FPMT onto the shoulders of Osel.

In the summer of 2009, a controversy ensued regarding Osel Hita Torres’ recent interview with Babylon Magazine (Pontones 2009). The article quotes Osel as saying that he does not consider himself a Buddhist, that he had a very difficult childhood as a tulku, and that he sometimes felt that he was living a lie; the article quotes Osel insisting that he
will not teach in FPMT in the future as they had hoped, since he had left his robes and monastic education behind. He would be a filmmaker instead. A few media outlets, such as the Guardian, sensationalized the interview by only emphasizing quotes about the suffering Osel described in terms of his childhood in seclusion, and by making it appear that a major, angry rift existed between FPMT and Osel (Fuchs 2009). On their website, FPMT quickly posted a letter from Osel to FPMTers that decried this sensationalism without ever actually refuting the main points or quotes from the Babylon article ("Osel" 2009). He did, however, try to ease possible hurt feelings by writing that he was grateful for the opportunity to have lived and studied in India, for although it had been difficult, it had been a formative experience. He worked to assuage the controversy by saying, "FPMT is doing a great job and Lama Zopa Rinpoche is an immensely special person…" He signed it: "Big Love, Osel."

**What is FPMT?: the Institution**

FPMT is an enormous transnational federation of local organizations that spans the globe, has a changing cast of characters and spaces, and many more informally affiliated students than registered members. It would be a mistake to believe that FPMT is an unchanging, fixed and steady bureaucracy/sangha combination that speaks with one timeless voice. On the contrary, FPMT is a cacophony of ever-changing voices, persons and projects that have been modulated over time. This section will provide a wide lens snapshot of FPMT today, and also provide some context for its trajectory over time.

According to the documentary attached to its website, FPMT's message is crystal clear: "World peace through inner peace. Inner peace through helping others" (FPMT: A Documentary). As of 2007, FPMT's international headquarters, or "International
Office," is now located in Portland, Oregon. The International Office is Lama Zopa Rinpoche's central administrative operation, and FPMT's Board of Directors guide their work. Lama Zopa Rinpoche is an "ex-officio" member of the Board, as the Spiritual Director of the organization. Rinpoche's attendant, Roger Kunsang, a white convert and monk, was the president/CEO of FPMT, Inc., during my research period and remains so as of March 2010.

FPMT is essentially a somewhat legally decentralized global institution; diffuse legal and economic responsibilities fall to individual centers, yet it has a fairly centralized mission and platform that requires center directors and spiritual directors (the Council for the Preservation of the Mahayana Tradition) to follow specific FPMT rules and guidelines, and to meet together (with certain administrators) every 12-18 months. The CPMT can make recommendations to the Board of Directors, who have absolute authority. While each center has its own Board of Directors, the local centers must have permission from the International Board of Directors to appoint center directors, etc. In effect, while the centers are legally and economically independent from FPMT, Inc., FPMT is a very centralized bureaucracy that has the essential control over high level personnel and teachers (center directors, high-level staff, teachers, etc.), and educational policies and programs. Kay puts it this way: "Lama Yeshe's project of defining and implementing an efficient organizational and administrative structure within the FPMT created the potential for friction at a local level. The organization's affiliate centers had initially been largely autonomous and self-regulating, but towards the late-1970's were increasingly subject to central management and control" (Kay 2004: 61-2). The Board of Directors guides the International Office and CPMT, and International Office and CPMT then have authority over the staff and volunteers at FPMT's various centers,

46 Previously, the International headquarters of FPMT were located in Taos, New Mexico, Soquel, California, and Kathmandu, Nepal [listed from most to least recent].
projects and services. There are certainly power and authority struggles within certain local centers and at various levels along the chain of command, as one would likely find in most organizations, but the skeletal power structure I have traced above is generally respected in practice.

Lama Zopa Rinpoche and his designees appoint all resident Geshes to centers who can support them. In the past, FPMT has lost more than a few centers, as various invited Geshes have subsequently struck out on their own and founded their own institutions. More recently, FPMT has asked lamas to sign a "Geshe agreement" which makes FPMT’s expectations of them explicit, and functions to ensure that FPMT centers remain under their institutional purview and control. Centers can only invite specifically Gelukpa teachers and instructors; the International Office must give permissions to centers in advance of them extending invitations to speakers and teachers. The centralization of power is a testament to the fact that the tradition of privileged decision-making continues unabated in FPMT. To some extent, this runs contrary to the claims that new Western Buddhism tends to be highly democratic (Tanaka 1998).

In March 2010, FPMT’s website, www.fpmt.org, advertised that FPMT currently had "156 centers, projects and services." While the documentary on the site acknowledged that 136 of these are meditation centers (FPMT: A Documentary), it is difficult to tell whether this count encompasses the Study Groups. Study Groups are ostensibly the seedlings of future centers. The website also notes that there are meditation centers in 33 countries. Each center is required to be financially self-sufficient, although there are occasionally monies available to the centers from the International Office of FPMT. FPMT affiliates are centers that are governed by FPMT, over and above the local Board. FPMT’s Center Services Director wrote: "If a center, project or service is affiliated with FPMT, it means that it follows the spiritual direction of Lama Zopa Rinpoche. It means that the centers and study groups use FPMT’s
educational programs and material, created in the unique lineage of Lama Yeshe and Lama Zopa Rinpoche" (FPMT "Center Frequently Asked Questions").

Centers come and go. There are once and future centers all over the map. Cumbria, England had one. Asheville, NC had one. These centers and many others either switched religious affiliations within the Buddhist community, or simply fizzled out and became defunct. On the other hand, centers in the making are currently called "Study Groups." Study Groups must have permission from FPMT, Inc. to start, and to this end they must submit plans to become a more permanent center after about 24 months of starting up, although this timeline seem eminently flexible in practice. The Buddha Maitreya Study Group in Boston, for example, has been operating as an approved Study Group for several years, and yet has not yet become an official center. In their monthly email updates, FPMT Inc. includes a section called "Impermanence at Work," which details the fluidity of the center directors, as well as openings and closings of various centers and study groups.

Various centers have their own local emphases and specialties, which often depend on the locale, needs of the local community, and the teachers at hand. For example, certain centers were geared primarily towards housing and teaching travelers and pilgrims, including the centers in Santa Cruz, California and Dharamsala and Bodh Gaya, India, while other centers were geared towards serving the needs of local practitioners, such as the centers in Delhi, India, San Francisco, California, and Raleigh-Durham, North Carolina. Some centers have specialties such as long-term retreat, hospice care, or "socially and ecologically engaged Buddhism," while others generally maintain a schedule of teachings and meditation sessions based on FPMT texts and by relying on FPMT approved teachers.

Up until 2008, there was no official membership for FPMT students and devotees at the general FPMT level, but there were some centers that offered local membership to
their particular FPMT center. The new membership that is being offered by FPMT comes at various levels of support, each of the membership levels are designated with a name and symbol that corresponds to the "eight auspicious signs" (lotus flower, right-turning conch, precious umbrella, etcetera) of Tibetan Buddhism that each symbolize a facet of Buddhist thought, and taken as a whole also symbolically correspond to the eight-fold path of Buddhist practice. FPMT's website notes that "As a Foundation Member, you are part of a worldwide movement, a family of practitioners and friends, dedicated to the preservation of the Mahayana tradition and its values" (FPMT "Foundation Membership FAQ"). Put another way: "As a Foundation Member, you will belong to an international community of students, supporting a vibrant network of over 150 Dharma centers, monasteries, nunneries, social service projects, hospices, health care clinics, publishing houses, and initiatives to create holy objects, translate rare texts, and preserve the pure teachings of the Buddha in the Lama Tsongkhapa tradition" (FPMT "Foundation Membership").

Given that centers run with financial independence, the operating budget of FPMT, Inc. mostly goes to additional dharma and charity projects. FPMT has approximately nine affiliated hospices (in developed nations), and a handful of heath-care projects (in developing nations) (see Figure 5 below). FPMT financially supports "animal liberation" events, which entail devotees rescuing doomed animals and/or insects, and then circumambulating the rescued beings around holy objects in order that the nonhumans receive good merit for a better rebirth. FPMT has developed several educational programs and services. They have an intensive Tibetan language program, in which students get subsidized education for two years in return for eventually working for FPMT centers as a translator for Tibetan teachers without English fluency.

47 As I will discuss at length in later chapters, the issue of karmic merit and benefits is a complex one – merit is often given and kept at one time. In the case of circumambulating with nonhuman sentient beings, the latter are slated to receive merit, but the human circumambulator is also due to receive good merit.
The headquarters also supports a Western teacher training program, a fund for supporting FPMT sangha, as well as fund for supporting abbots and main teachers at several revered teaching (non-FPMT) monasteries. FPMT has also sponsored some of the monks from Sera Je to attend the revived tradition of Jang winter debate sessions for the monks of the three most celebrated monastic colleges.\textsuperscript{48} The support of these monastic teachers and programs at some of the more populated non-FPMT affiliated ethnic Tibetan monasteries in exile is notable given its extension outside the FPMT community to more traditional Tibetan institutions.

\textsuperscript{48} The Jang winter debate sessions were a long-time tradition pre-exile between the three most celebrated monastic colleges – Sera Je, Ganden, and Drepung. Although, the FPMT website claims to have single-handedly revived the Jang tradition in exile ("Lama Tsongkhapa Teachers Fund"), according to another history, the exile branches of these monasteries kept the practice individually until 1980, and then revived the tradition of a joint meeting together themselves in 1981 (Zopa 2003). This narrative notes that the debate sessions are seven plus hours per day. Since only 200 monks from Sera Je could travel to these debates initially, one of Lama Zopa Rinpoche's FPMT funds subsequently sponsored many more to attend these debates.
Another direct charitable offering to Sera Je has been an ongoing commitment since Lama Osel first took residence there, and it has continued past his departure: FPMT pays for the daily meals at Sera Je. In 1991, there were about 1300 monks at Sera Je in India, and this offering was made in perpetuity as part of the ritual acceptance of Lama Osel into the monastic community (though he was to live in a separate dwelling at Sera Je). As of 2007, the approximate doubling of the size of Sera Je has made the Sera Food Fund a tidy expense at about $270,000 per annum ("Sera Je Food Fund").

Lama Zopa Rinpoche has also been donating money as offerings to his gurus and various Tibetan sanghas on auspicious days. The website notes "On these days, virtuous karma is increased by as much as 100 million times, so Rinpoche has put in place permanent arrangements to have pujas and other activities performed by various Gelug monasteries in Nepal and India by tens of thousands of monks" (FPMT "The FPMT Puja Fund"). Merit from these offerings is dedicated to the long life of His Holiness the Dalai Lama as well as to removing obstacles from all of FPMT's projects; merit is also dedicated to all FPMT students and benefactors. The FPMT Puja Fund also goes to whitewashing, cleaning, and decorating the famous Boudhanath Stupa in Kathmandu once a month.

Maintaining the connections that FPMT has to Sera Je as the monastic college that trained Lama Yeshe (in Tibet) and Lama Osel (in India) is considered very meritorious by FPMTers. It is also one way that FPMT is presumably trying to enhance its reputation in the ethnically Tibetan communities in Tibet and in exile. Lama Yeshe was not a significant teacher in Tibetan circles (never having earned a Geshe degree at Sera Je) nor having been the reincarnation of a important lama, and Lama Zopa Rinpoche was only revered in local circles in his home region of Nepal; therefore, FPMT has little standing or status in Tibetan exile circles as a dharma group per se, except insofar as it
has helped to spread Buddha dharma to the West and spread Western dollars back to Tibetan groups.

FPMT supports a publishing effort in the forms of Wisdom Publications and also the Lama Yeshe Wisdom Archives. FPMT also raises money to sponsor the translation of dharma texts into various languages, including English, French, Spanish, German, Chinese, Mongolian, Vietnamese, and etcetera. Educational materials are also produced through several different lay practitioner programs that can be practiced at FPMT centers carrying the program, or independently as home-study or correspondence courses: 1) "Discovering Buddhism" – a two year introductory course that covers fourteen modules of Tibetan Buddhist Mahayana theory and practice; 2) "Foundations of Buddhist Thought" – a two year intermediate course that covers six modules, and includes papers, and exams; 3) "the Basic Program" – a more advanced intermediate course that is meant to span five years and challenge students to keep the precept, ritual practices, meditation and retreats during the courses of the progression. The FPMT empire has recently added a university in Portland, which grants an MA in Buddhist Studies. Daniel Cozort also wrote about a "Master's Program" at an Italian FPMT center that was meant to take seven years of intense study, and graduate more advanced teachers (2003).

There is uncertainty about whether Western teachers will be able to continue to hold the same degree of respect absent a central Tibetan figure such as Lama Yeshe or Lama Zopa Rinpoche. According to Cozort, FPMT was also planning to grant the title of "Lopon" on their most learned Western teachers, who would then be able to administer certain vows and give select transmissions (not including Tantric transmissions) (2003). Cozort astutely notes that it is unclear whether students will develop the same guru devotion for Western teachers that they have for ethnically Tibetan teachers.
FPMT also supports several massive holy objects development projects: 1) the "Padmasambhava Project for Peace" that aims to build 100,000 large Padmasambhava statues around the globe; 2) the "Prayer Wheel Fund" that aims to build 100,000 large prayer wheels around the world; the "Stupa Fund" that aims to build 100,000 stupas worldwide. It seems that most of these funds are just at the beginning of their campaigns, as the numbers of achieved goals still just in the single or double digits. Many of these holy objects will be located at the site of a currently extant center. Centers are expected to raise the money for the projects, but can apply to these FPMT funds for assistance. For example, in 2007, when I was in residence at the Root Institute, the preparations were being made to build a giant prayer wheel as per Lama Zopa Rinpoche's explicit request; the expenses were substantial, so in addition to raising money through the Festival of Lights and Merit (FLAM), direct donation, etc., the Root Institute was granted some $6000 by an FPMT Fund for the construction of their wheel.

The Maitreya Project, which I will discuss in more depth directly, has a place of special prominence in FPMT as the "heart project" of Lama Zopa Rinpoche. By all accounts, it is the most ambitious holy object project that the group has conceived to date.

Who is FPMT?: the Community

FPMT is borderless – not just a transnational corporation, but also one that is extremely amorphous with loosely affiliated community members across the globe. Throughout my fieldwork period, there was a membership concept, but it was more of a fundraising device than anything else. FPMTers writ large include those who read the

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49 In brief, the construction of holy objects, such as statues, stupas, and prayer wheels, in Tibetan Buddhism, as in other Buddhisms, generates karmic merit. I will explore the significance of holy objects in FPMT in greater length in Chapter 6.

50 The appellation of "heart" indicates a special devotion in Tibetan Buddhism, e.g. one's primary disciple is one's "heart disciple." This term is probably derived from the Tibetan "thuk," which bestows the sense of something close to one's heart.
lamas' books and feel some connection to the teachings therein, those who work or volunteer for the organization, those who have attended courses or events at centers, those who serve as teachers or sangha, etcetera.

I cannot claim to have a deep and abiding knowledge of every nook and cranny of any one specific center, as I might have if I had lived only at one center for the duration of my research, so my general discussion of membership and FPMTers, then, must be understood in that context. I did research and lived at a handful of different centers for many weeks or months at a time, so I have a good feel for the daily operations, the seasonal changes, the environs, and the community of several Indian and American centers.

As of late 2008, a membership level could buy certain privileges – the extent of those privileges depend upon which level ($30-$5000/year) one had subscribed. Membership at the $30/year (or "Golden Fish") level bought a subscription to Mandala magazine (FPMT's quarterly periodical), its e-zine, and a discount at the FPMT e-store. Membership at the "Victory Banner" level ($5000/year) included the above, plus free videos, access to Online Learning, special mention as in Mandala magazine, the merit of being honored at the "yearly Patron Puja," as well the additional "great merit" of helping FPMT with its publishing efforts (FPMT "FPMT Membership"). In 2009, the FPMT membership concept delineated above was scrapped in favor of encouraging donations through a "Friends of FPMT" formulation. The Friends of FPMT has four ranks, which correspond to the Buddhist story of the Four Harmonious Friends: FPMT Membership is available for free, and entails listserv access and limited access to the Online Learning center; FPMT Basic Friendship is available for a $5-25/month donation, and includes the above, plus a subscription to Mandala magazine; FPMT Dharma Supporters give between

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51 Mandala magazine has gone through many iterations – glossy paper vs. newsprint, monthly vs. bi-monthly vs. quarterly. At present, it is a glossy magazine produced quarterly.
$30-99 per month, and have access to all of the above, plus unlimited access to the Online Learning Center; FPMT Patron status is given to all those donors who give more than $100 per month to FPMT, in exchange they receive all of the above, as well as getting the benefit of a yearly puja for patrons (FPMT "Friends of FPMT").

Since membership is an oft-shifting concept in FPMT, I do not differentiate or identity "members" or "friends" of FPMT. Instead, I have tracked patterns in order to establish some broad distinctions, 'a la Weberian ideal types,\textsuperscript{52} between FPMTers. The first differentiation lies between the monastics and the laity.\textsuperscript{53} There are several types of FPMT monastic sangha: 1) primary lamas (Lama Yeshe, Lama Zopa Rinpoche, and Lama Osel); 2) Western or elite sangha who are non-ethnically Tibetan monks and nuns (see Figure 6), either teachers or practitioners; 3) ethnically Tibetan sangha, who are either older teachers (many of whom were first trained at Sera Je and other formal teaching monasteries within the Gelukpa tradition, and then hired by FPMT), or the monks and nuns who are enrolled as the rank and file in FPMT's handful of ethnically Tibetan monasteries.

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=0.8\textwidth]{image6.jpg}
\caption{FPMT sangha – elite monks and nuns – in a relic processional in Bodh Gaya in the spring of 2007. (Photograph by Jessica Falcone.)}
\end{figure}

\textsuperscript{52} These ideal types leave much to be desired, but are necessary to avoid lengthy explanations throughout the body of the dissertation.

\textsuperscript{53} Monastics are ordained at various levels. The ethnic Tibetan and Mongolian youth and children who have entered into FPMT monasteries and nunneries take a more formal ordination when they grow older.
In terms of elite, non-sangha FPMTers, I would differentiate between three main types: 1) "devotees," who are those who consider a high-ranking FPMT lama as a root guru (or amongst their primary vow-administering gurus), and who see themselves as firmly embedded in the FPMT world either as long-time lay practitioners in FPMT; 2) "students" who are taking courses or doing meditation sessions at FPMT centers, but have yet to commit to FPMT, their ideology or their lamas in a serious way (some of whom are "neophytes" or "newcomers" to the organization); 3) "bookstore" FPMTers or FPMT "sympathizers" who have read some of the literature, but have never been to a center or teaching. Aside from being the strictly learners, many devotees and students also participate in the organization different ways: FPMT, Inc. staff; center staff; CPMT membership; teachers; and, volunteers. These differentiations are made to some extent within FPMT discourses, that is monastic sangha do recognize the differences between ethnically Tibetan and Western monastics, and various levels of commitment from lay persons, etcetera, but there is no set of categories within FPMT institutionally, at least not one was overt and public.

Diversity, according to nationality, is quite prominent at South Asian centers. At a short course on Death and Dying at Tushita in Dharamsala in April 2006, the approximately fifty students hailed from Sweden, Hungary, the Czech Republic, Venezuela, Peru, Israel, France, the United States, Switzerland, Canada, Australia, Mexico, England, Germany, Ireland, etcetera. There was one man from India (an upper middle-class, well-educated Keralan), but he dropped the course after the first hour session. The course was diverse according to other measures as well: the course attendance was roughly half below the age of thirty and half above, and it seemed about even gender-wise. The students were almost all of European descent, except for the Latinos from Latin America, though many of these individuals would be considered "white," or of
Spanish descent, according to the ethnic delineations of their native countries. This rough sketch is not inconsistent with the normative composition of FPMT courses in pilgrimage centers in India, although Introduction to Buddhism courses tend to have slightly more young pilgrims (and slightly more participants, especially at high seasonal points) than the particular course that I have just described. Fresh off an "Introduction to Buddhism" course at Tushita Dharamsala (see Figure 7), a 35-year old German student, Julius, described the community at the course this way:

It's such a good group dynamic. I mean you do this meditation on compassion with 60 people. It was like a big family. It was so peaceful. Only sometimes the mind would throw a tantrum because it was too peaceful and it got bored. It's amazing to see people from all over; from Southern India, Japan, a nun for Korea (from a Theravadin school), all kinds of people, businessmen, former drug addicts. People from 17 to 60 years old. The age spectrum was also diverse. From complete newbies to people who studied with Lama Yeshe 30 years ago. People from New Zealand, Australia, Argentina, Germany, Poland, Holland, Switzerland, Scotland, Ireland, Vietnam, all over the place...Spain, France, Canada... and Germany!

Figure 7. FPMT students enjoy a final meal together at the end of an Introduction to Buddhism course at Tushita Dharamsala in the spring of 2006. (Photograph by Jessica Falcone.)
There are many ways that students find FPMT. Like Zina before them, many find FPMT while on pilgrimage and/or vacation in South Asia, since many are attracted to India in the first place by its spiritual traditions. Leslie, a volunteer at Tushita Dharamsala, shared her story of about the long, circuitous route she followed which ultimately led to her embrace of FPMT:

My first contact with Buddhism was as college student. It was a meditation group that met once a week. It was affiliated with the FWBO, which is very big in the UK, but not so much elsewhere. I don't know if you've ever heard of it. [I nodded "yes." ] The group was called the Buddhist Meditation Society. It was a very superficial interest at the time, and I was bad at meditation at first.

I went to China during school. I went back later to finish a degree in modern Chinese studies, but altogether I've spent the last nine years in Asia. Mostly in China, Taiwan, and India. In China and Taiwan I was exposed to the environment of Buddhism, but I never considered Buddhism there and I didn't meditate much. I found the philosophy of life useful, but for a long time I didn't want to be an -ist. Like the way that I was a Christian in my youth – I rebelled. I thought that religions are in conflict and they all claim a monopoly on the truth. I was agnostic.

I really discovered Buddhism in India. I came by accident. I was here for a year the first time. I was studying yoga for four months in Rishikesh. I was in an eclectic group that drew from Sufism, Buddhism, Hinduism, and other things. It showed me that all paths could be on the path to the same goal. It was the stereotypical spiritual quest in India. I hadn't intended it, it was quite unexpected.

It was in Spiti and Ladakh that I started gravitating towards Tibetan Buddhism. Then I went back to China for a few years. I started working for a nonprofit in Kham called Kham Aid. It worked on non-religious projects – there were just so many problems there to work on. In between our work we would go and visit monasteries, and I met a lot of Rinpoches. I worked with some of them to set up schools and clinics. I couldn't quite find my way in at that point. I met a lot of Chinese Buddhists studying Tibetan Buddhism. I wrote a piece about the Chinese Buddhists in a Chinese paper. I began to start to consider myself Buddhist. I wanted to take refuge, but I wanted to find a teacher I was committed to. I thought that's what you have to do.

In India, I had done Vipassana. I was and I am attracted to different traditions. After two years I went back to India. That was two and a half years ago. I spent some time in Nepal, in Boudha; there were mostly Tibetans there. It was again
hard. It was like a secret society. Westerners were getting initiations. I ended up at Kopan, I walked up one day. I got the schedules, and I just liked the FPMT style, the helpfulness, everything is right out there. So I did one of the 10-day courses. I was familiar with the material by then, quite [missing word], but it was great to be there. Lama Lhundrup was teaching. I took refuge with him – he was the abbot of Kopan. Taking refuge was a powerful step for me. Finally I'd committed myself to this path. It was a great relief to me. From there I came straight here [to Tushita Dharamsala]. I knew I wanted to stay here and do work, so I asked to be a volunteer.

Leslie's story is not atypical. Many devotees find that they have an initial interest that slowly grows over time, and FPMT happens to be at the right place at the right time. There are many elements to her story that ring parallel with most of my other informants' "finding FPMT" stories: she rebelled against her ancestral religion; she learned about Buddhism first in college; she traveled and lived in Asia; she did yoga and meditation; she shopped around with various spiritual communities; she eventually felt a connection with Tibetan Buddhism; she was looking for a guru; she found FPMT to be a convenient way to engage with the world of Tibetan Buddhism that seemed somewhat enigmatic and exclusive at the outset.

As FPMT has gradually spread its empire throughout the world, the trend has been for devotees who started their journeys with FPMT in Asia to be the driving force behind opening and maintaining these centers. At first, most people found FPMT in South Asia (or in FPMT books that brought them to South Asia), and almost all of the very long time devotees started their practices with Lama Zopa Rinpoche and/or Lama Yeshe at pilgrimage centers in Nepal or India. Over time, the proliferation of centers has provided alternative FPMT entry points. Nowadays, you meet many people whose first contact with FPMT came when they attended a talk, puja or meditation session at the FPMT center closest to their home.

Several of my main FPMT informants argue that there are vast differences between devotees from various regions. Certainly, there are also various differences
between FPMTers from different places – Asian devotees vs. European devotees vs. North American devotees, etcetera. Then perhaps there are general cultural and linguistic variations between British devotees as compared with Swiss devotees. One could contrast Californian devotees with their counterparts in Massachusetts. There are absolutely cultural differences between devotees, but this is a difficult and overwhelming issue; I have not had extensive time to visit most centers or study these differences in earnest – that remains a project for another time and someone else's dissertation.

However, the advantage of studying FPMT primarily in India is that as pilgrimage places they are eminently international, and very multi-ethnic. At any given time Bodh Gaya's Root Institute may be hosting devotees and students from centers all over the world, as well as new students from various countries and ethnic backgrounds. In general, my informants tell me, European and North Americans are thought to be keener on meditation, and less inclined towards merit-making donations for holy objects, etc., than Asian devotees, and even Latin American devotees. One American devotee who had spent time in European and American centers observed that "Europeans are a bit more cynical. Americans are a little more wide-eyed and willing to go along with things." I have observed this pattern to a certain degree, but I have met too many wholly faithful Europeans, and too many cynical, detached Americans, to feel this is necessarily a straightforward cultural difference. European centers are reputedly somewhat more formal and reserved than American centers, according to informants who have visited a handful in both regions. Latin American centers are thought to be even more ritualistic than North American centers. Devotees from Mexico and Brazil, for example, are more easily accepting of holy objects than Americans, Canadians, and the French, but they are less tolerant than East Asian FPMTers.

East Asian devotees are reputedly the major donors who keep things afloat in FPMT, and make most of FPMT's dharma projects possible; according to all of my
FPMT interviews on the subject, East Asian FPMTers are thought to be less focused on meditation, and keener on merit making activities, than other community members. Indian students, mostly elderly educated Hindus, are often engaged in spiritual development activities at FPMT centers that, to some extent, run parallel to their continuing Hindu beliefs and practices. Many of Asian devotees grew up with the notion of merit-making, and therefore make larger donations for the karmic benefit of themselves and their ancestors.

Of American and European devotees on pilgrimage to Indian centers (and students in American centers) and on pilgrimage to Indian centers, they were elite educated, upper or middle class whites by a very large majority. In FPMT circles, there are generally more women than men, although there is over-representation of men in authority positions.

The gender issue deserves its own chapter perhaps, but it is a project for someone else and/or another time. One of the truisms about Western/elite Buddhisms is that they tend to be far more egalitarian and gender inclusive than the practicing communities from which their traditions have been adapted. This is certainly true in FPMT, as women form the majority of practitioners, and the volunteers in any given center are far more likely to be women than men. The FPMT monastic sangha has welcomed many men and women, and many of these monastics from both genders are important teachers, especially those who teach "Introduction to Buddhism" courses in centers in South Asia. One famed FPMT female teacher even had a long-life prayer composed (by and for her students) – the first time I had ever seen this honor accorded to a non-ethnicity Tibetan monastic (or a woman at that). There is absolutely more upward mobility and respect accorded to women in FPMT than one would find in most ethnic Tibetan religious enclaves, as one might find pre-exile (Sopa 1983), or post-exile (Dreyfus 2003).
However, there is not as much respect and equality as many FPMT women would like, since power brokers and leadership, in general, is more likely to be male than female. I have heard outright stories of sexual harassment within the ranks of one of the FPMT projects, but never experienced it myself. I have heard many FPMT women call the organization an "old boys club," and say that this was a result of the Tibetan patriarchy as well as Western ones.\(^{54}\) I have also observed that aside from a few standout exceptions, female teachers are often relegated to beginner courses, while more often than not more advanced teachings are done by male teachers.\(^{55}\) The gender issue for FPMT is a story of a work in progress, and one can either emphasize the "work" needed or the "progress" made in turns.

In terms of age, centers tend to be dominated by middle-aged devotees and students, although there are often a handful of young people also.\(^{56}\) Centers in pilgrimage areas tend to attract younger communities than those in the centers back home, since the pilgrims themselves are more likely to be young people traveling Asia or the world in college, after the Bar exam, or after Israeli military service, e.g., though these communities almost always include more senior members in their ranks as well.

While FPMT practitioners at South Asian, European, and American centers are overwhelming white, obviously, in Latin American centers the racial dynamics are not so clear, since "whiteness" itself is such a complex category.\(^{57}\) However, even in Mexico, the

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\(^{54}\) I find myself wondering if my appeals to FPMT leadership would have been taken more seriously had I not been a young woman. I have been told as much by friends within the organization… At least, one would surmise that a male researcher would not have been called a "bitch" in a meeting, or accused of "becoming increasing shrill" as I was portrayed in a lightly-circulated internal MPI email.

\(^{55}\) This mirrors, to some extent, the gender inequalities that have plagued many generations in Western educational systems, i.e. the more advanced the material, the higher the male to female ratio.

\(^{56}\) Alexander Berzin constructed a model of how different generations – the Baby Boomers, the "Me" generations, and Generation X – met Tibetan Buddhism in different ways (2000), but I have found the model to be so oversimplified as to be less than useful for my purposes. Suffice it say that I have met FPMT staff, volunteers, sangha, devotees, students, and dropouts from each of these generations.

\(^{57}\) Whiteness as a category is always socio-historically constructed, of course, and is defined and delimited variably in all communities with notable changes over time. Latin American categories of whiteness are difficult for FPMT as an institution or myself as a researcher to distinguish, which is why I have noted the
class, gender and education dynamics are reputedly very similar to those that I have detailed with respect to American centers. The Indian center in Delhi has a small local FPMT community of primarily highly educated older Indians, mostly of Hindu and Sikh backgrounds, with a smattering of white expatriates. Notably, the Tibetan exile community in Delhi does not attend teachings or rituals at this center, but prefer the Tibetan Buddhist practices in the Tibetan settlement, which are entirely conducted in the Tibetan language, for and by ethnic Tibetans.

Some students, and even some devotees and sangha, maintain significant links and affiliations to their natal religion. Many new Buddhists do give up old religious affiliations, but some do not.\textsuperscript{58} To the latter, it is perfectly acceptable to be both Buddhist and Jewish, or Buddhist and Christian, etcetera. Natalie, a Brazilian nun, who was living at Tushita Dharamsala, told me that she felt that although her Buddhism had helped her to nurture her simultaneous belief in Catholicism, her parents still worried that she would go to Hell. During an interview, Natalie said the following:

In Brazil, it is rare to believe in nothing. It is easier there since Brazilians are so spiritual. I'm much more open to Catholicism than before. I see Jesus as a bodhisattva. But it is the practice in daily life in Buddhism that is so attractive to me. I talked to a Buddhist friend that is very into Mary. He lived in a Franciscan monastery. If I see the 10 commandments in the same way as the virtues and non-virtues in Buddhism, but in Buddhism it is practiced better. In church it is not said often that one should not just focus on Jesus and God, but one should act like Jesus. I say to my mom, if you try to act like Jesus then it will be better than praying. There's a book by a Buddhist monk and a Benedictine monk – I read it, my mom (who is a psychologist) read it. It said that death for Catholics means heaven, hell and purgatory. I asked my mom about it and she said that most of us go to purgatory until we're ready to meet god. But how do you get ready? Do you purify there? She didn't know, though she had studied some. I think that purgatory is like samsara. The book was saying that you go to heaven

\textsuperscript{58} In a survey of American converts to Buddhism, Coleman found that over twenty percent of his respondents also identified as followers of another religion (2001).
when you are ready meet God, but it didn't say that you have to be active now, to purify... I think that different minds need different religions.

I have found that many devotees and monastics (and even many students) in FPMT, unlike Natalie, do consider themselves Buddhists to the exclusion of other spiritual traditions, but many say that they do still engage in religio-cultural practices with their families: choosing Christian rituals in marriage ceremonies; occasionally singing or chanting prayers from one's natal religion; celebrating Christmas, Hanukkah, Eid, etcetera. For example, Abby, an American FPMT nun, told me that when she first took refuge in 1988 she tried juggling two spiritual paths, but found the experience very difficult. Eventually, Abby chose Buddhism as a religious path and Judaism as a cultural path: "In the beginning, I was doing both, and then Lama Zopa Rinpoche said that the path would become clear. For me I still feel Jewish. I'm still culturally Jewish, but not an observant Jew."

FPMT is a community composed of countless small communities that are networked together by literature, community and common gurus. At any given center, there is a fluid network of people who work with, study with, and meditate with one another. FPMT is very much about community-building. Even a ten-day course conducted in silence for the majority of the participants can be an enormously social experience, as people relate to one another and communicate in more subtle ways. After a ten-day course conducted mostly in silence, Carl, a British neophyte said, "At Tushita my favorite thing was offering lights at the stupa. It was very moving. There was a real feeling of a collective. I lost myself in it. I lost my comparative isolation." After a similar course, a woman approached a "stranger" from the course, and said, "Thank you. You smiled at me a few times, at really important moments."

Essentially, many people choose FPMT over other Buddhist groups or other religious groups, because they like the "feel of the community." One woman at a
California center talked about her fellow volunteers, saying that she felt that FPMT provides a very caring community – ”a very supportive and loving sangha that keeps us all connected to what's really important.” I cannot overstate the importance of the social comfort factor at FPMT centers in India and Nepal; aesthetically, functionally, and especially socially, the centers excel at making themselves feel comfortable and inclusive to educated, middle-class devotees and students from around the world. For example, after a long journey by train to Gaya, and a sometimes harrowing auto rickshaw ride to Bodh Gaya, the clean rooms, comfort food, hot showers, and gated peace and security inside FPMT's Root Institute complex serve as a balm for the anxious traveler. Many devotees at the Root Institute talk about the "clean," "sanitized," and "safe" food at the Root Institute, which they trust, since the head kitchen volunteer is almost always a Western convert to Buddhism. The high walls, the police presence at the gates, and the late night Sherpa patrol evince safety. The manicured gardens in full bloom give the Root Institute a calm, quiet oasis-like quality in a crowded, dusty, loud, sensory overstimulating place like Bodh Gaya. I was not the only person who felt that the Root Institute's breakfast staple – warm breads served with fruit jam and orange marmalade – was almost as comforting as a phone call home.

Most centers do arguably work to create a particular aesthetic and environment that stands in contrast to the world outside its doors, and they do this by establishing rules, tones, and physical ways of being. FPMT centers, like other institutions, make "docile bodies" (Foucault 1979). Whether in California or Bihar, centers ask people to behave in certain prescribed manners – taking off shoes before entering a gompa, bowing to high lamas as they enter a room, and refraining from inappropriate dress, etcetera. Essentially, many centers require some version of the Buddhist lay precepts to be respected: guests and staff at a center must refrain from sexual misdemeanors (like adultery), killing (even mosquitoes… especially mosquitoes, really!), and lying, for
example. The discipline of FPMT is enforced through signs, through social repetition, and informal and formal policing. I learned informally at the Root Institute in 2001 how to behave, sit and act inside a gompa – when to stand, sit, bow, pray, and how to do these things like everyone else. I learned that one way to tell the neophytes from the older devotees was the speed and confidence with which they could make a mandala offering by knotting together their ten fingers in the proper way. FPMT as an institution does regulate the bodies of those inside its centers, sometimes by expelling those who brazenly defy precepts, or by using peer pressure and soft power to motivate behavioral changes.

Just as a point of contrast, the physical ways in which FPMTers occupy and use Tibetan Buddhist ritual space, is not identical to the ways in which ethnic Tibetan Buddhists generally occupy equivalent spaces, for example. This may be one reason that on their pilgrimage tours of Indian Buddhist places, FPMT centers are not to my knowledge ever a stop along the way. Tibetan Buddhist pilgrims, regardless of sect, visit the ethnic Gelukpa, Nyingmapa and Kagyu monasteries in Bodh Gaya, but never the FPMT gompa. I would hypothesize that transnational Tibetan Buddhist spaces, the way that they are set up, and the way that they are moved through, are uncomfortable and foreign to ethnic Tibetans. I would like to complicate the narrative I told above about how my Tibetan friend in Delhi felt uncomfortable at FPMT's Tushita center there, and argue that it was both because of the rituals and practices done there, and also because of the proxemics of space and the ways that we had been disciplined to move through that space. This cultural disconnect may hold some clues to why the Maitreya Project has thus far operated almost entirely outside of the sphere of ethnic Tibetan communities.

**FPMT's "Heart Project": What is the Maitreya Project?**

By all accounts, the Maitreya Project was originally conceived by Lama Yeshe, who desired that a Maitreya statue be built in India as a way to give back to the nation
that had accepted the Tibetan refugee community. From the first, the statue itself was conceived of as a gift to India, a return gift. Lama Yeshe did not detail the specific height or breadth of the statue project; he only expressed his desire that it be build in Bodh Gaya, the place of the Shakyamuni Buddha’s enlightenment. The statue was originally supposed to be built in Bodh Gaya, but was eventually shifted to Kushinagar.\(^{59}\) Lama Zopa Rinpoche has described the MPI statue as his "heart project"; he has made it clear that the statue is a central and profound personal dream.

Why a statue of Maitreya in particular? There is a history of building Maitreya statues in Tibetan Buddhist institutions, especially in the Gelukpa tradition, but usually they are housed inside temples and monastery lha-khangs. The largest known Maitreya Buddha statue in Tibet, in the Tashilhunpo Monastery in Shigatse, is an 86-foot sitting Maitreya housed in a specially-designed chapel. The Maitreya Project has taken the tradition to a previously unknown extreme degree; this will be the first Maitreya statue that will itself house chapels. The question of the statue itself, the tradition of holy objects, as well as the symbolic significance of Maitreya himself, will be taken up in greater detail in the following chapters. This section will focus on the institutional culture of the Maitreya Project International (MPI or the Maitreya Project, for short).

The Maitreya Project is one of the many projects of FPMT, yet the former lists on its website that its affiliation with FPMT is still pending; this is one of the irregularities that have attracted the attention of those suspicious of the status and legal operations of the project. It has been suggested by critics that the financial tribulations and debt of Maitreya Project International has made FPMT loathe to endorse any explicit legal links to the project. In fact, the affiliation is undeniable. The Maitreya Project is listed unambiguously as an FPMT project in FPMT literature and web pages. FPMT is also

\(^{59}\) The history and events surrounding this shift from Bodh Gaya to Kushinagar will be recounted at length in Chapter 12.
clearly listed as the community sponsoring the Maitreya Project in MPI and FPMT literature and web materials.

Maitreya Project International is legally decentralized: it has numerous legal components that operate independently of one another. The main Maitreya Project International corporate entity was based in Great Britain, but was reincorporated in the Isle of Man. There is a corporate branch in India that will eventually by the main "owner" of the statue and Maitreya Project assets on the ground. According to an MPI document written in 2007, the other MPI entities that exist primarily for fundraising and promotion are located in Singapore, Hong King, the United States, France, and Australia.

The organization looks to be a large operation on paper, but there are only a few administrators managing the project. The "MPI Coordination Team" as reported in late 2007 on the Maitreya Project's website: 1) the "director and CEO," Peter Kedge (a former businessman, and long-time FPMT devotee who lives in Vancouver); 2) "executive director" of the Maitreya Project Trust and the Maitreya Project Society, as well as "Art Programme director," Tony Simmons (who is based in Australia, but commutes periodically to India); 3) the "Education director" (who was previously David Thomas, a devotee based out of both Australia and India); 4) the "liaison officer," the regional associate based in India, Babbar Singh; 5) the public relations head, "media manager," Linda Gatter (based in Britain); 6) the Relic Tour Manager (at the time it was Stephanie Evans, a British national who worked primarily out of the United States).60

Other involved personalities include the spiritual director, Lama Zopa Rinpoche, and his attendant Roger Kunsang.61 Certainly the FPMT Board of Trustees also consider

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60 I have substituted pseudonyms for most of the people listed above, since during my interviews with them I offered to do so. Despite the fact that some declined this protection, I have extended it to everyone whom I interviewed. I have decided not to change the names of the three prominent members of the team who publish publicly for the Maitreya Project, and whom I have never interviewed: 1) Peter Kedge; 2) Tony Simmons; 3) Linda Gatter.

61 I have not changed the names of the lamas of FPMT, since they are public personalities whom I have never interviewed. I have also declined to change Roger Kunsang's name, since he is a famous personality.
and reflect upon Maitreya Project policy in their own way. Also, there are two local boards in India that are also charged with responsibility for the project: 1) The Maitreya Project Trust (a "socio-spiritual trust"), which will eventually be entrusted with the Kushinagar site; 2) The Maitreya Project Society (registered as a "spiritual society") that is currently responsible for the Bodh Gaya site. Professional staff includes the following: 1) the Relic Tour custodians; 2) the staff (kitchen, grounds, security) of the Maitreya Project headquarters in India, in Bodh Gaya; 3) the Maitreya Project schoolteachers and staff. The Maitreya Project has also periodically contracted engineers, architects, etcetera.

During my fieldwork period, the Maitreya Project ran two side projects: the Relic Tour, and the Maitreya Project School. Since the Maitreya Project statue was in limbo, these two side projects represent the only work that the Maitreya Project was doing that was concrete and visible to the public eye. The Maitreya Project school was started as a part of the local FPMT center, the Root Institute, but was subsequently handed over to the Maitreya Project at Lama Zopa Rinpoche's request, since the original Maitreya Project plans were expanded to include health and education components. The Relic Tour was initiated to publicly display the relics (from Buddhas, bodhisattvas, historical gurus and teachers of India and Tibet) that Lama Zopa Rinpoche had collected to place inside a "heart shrine" of the giant Maitreya statue. Forthcoming chapters will delve into these side projects in more detail.

The Maitreya Project website and literature have always listed several offices worldwide that one might imagine are staffed with Maitreya Project employees. In practice, many of these Maitreya Project offices are not offices at all, but mailing addresses of associates.

Within the organization, whom I never formally interviewed. Everything cited in regards to these personages are, therefore, public proclamations and publications.
The North American Maitreya Project office has long been located inside other FPMT offices, either with the FPMT Inc. in Taos, or at the Land of the Medicine Buddha in Soquel. When I tried to visit the former in 2000, I was told not to come, because there was no one affiliated with the Maitreya Project based there; literature and materials were housed there, and donations were processed by FPMT staffers. When I visited the North American Maitreya Project headquarters in Soquel in the summer of 2007, I was told that the Relic Tour and regional MPI were on technically based there; in practice, the FPMT center simply kept a shed with extra MPI publications and materials. I was shown the shed – it was full of Relic Tour souvenir booklets and also the foot-high Maitreya statues that were given to important sponsors. I was also shown the single desk that the Relic Tour coordinator used to use when she had temporarily been in residence there.

The Maitreya Project office in Uttar Pradesh, India is in Gorakhpur, which is about an hour and a half drive from Kushinagar. It is a private house on the upper floors, and a private office on the lower floor; the building is owned by Babbar Singh, who is the primary broker managing the local politics and bureaucrats for the Maitreya Project. He has been appointed to a government committee overseeing the land transfer. The house/office is legitimately used for Maitreya Project work, but it is owned and operated by Singh, who is involved in many projects of his own. That is to say, it is not an office or center owned or operated by FPMT or MPI proper.

Singh is the mover and shaker for the Maitreya Project on the Indian side, although he has a local reputation as a villain of the worst character. Singh is neither an FPMT student nor devotee; he is a Hindu, but he noted that he believes in the Buddha, as do most Hindus. In general, Kushinagari farmers revile him, and enumerate his many sins against the community. Not one single farmer in the Kushinagari area that I interviewed had a kind word to say about him. Singh's name was frequently, and vociferously, vilified by Save the Land Movement speakers at rallies. I never attended a
rally or protest in which Babbar Singh was not named first and foremost amongst the
dastardly local politicians, bureaucrats and businessmen who were trying to seize the
farmer's land for his own profit (a former DM was also high on their list of enemies of
the people, but he was transferred). At the first protest I witnessed in January 2006, a
speaker railed against Singh for being in cahoots with the government, and taking and
giving bribes. When I asked an organizer of the Save the Land movement he said,
"[Babbar Singh] is the main person with the project. He is taking lots of commission. He
is a dishonest man. He used to be with the Indo-Japan association. He's been taking too
much commission." At a protest held in February 2007, over a year later, Babbar Singh
was still the central focal point for farmers' grievances: "The man behind all of this,
[Babbar Singh], is a land broker. He became very rich. He heads Kanta agencies. He
brought the Maitreya Project here. He met Brahmashankar Tripathy and he said if you
do work with us then you will get money. For the Indo-Japan society, he made 35
schools, and he would take commissions of billions of rupees. He made two
organizations called Maitri in Kanpur and Gorakhpur. Very corrupt person."

Kushinagar businesspeople also discussed their impressions of Babbar Singh's
long history of graft and corruption in his business dealings in the region, an impression
shared even by those who had cordial personal relationships with him. A Japanese
woman running an NGO in Kushinagar (and her staff) sadly confirmed that the widely
circulated claim that Singh had defrauded her Indo-Japanese nonprofit several years
before was all too true. Several bureaucrats in Lucknow also expressed their mistrust of
Singh, who seems to strike many people, myself included, as extremely self-interested.62
He is so much maligned that during the entirety of my fieldwork period, he had no

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62 In early 2006, I spent one night in the guest room at the Gorakhpur office, but my request to stay and
volunteer at the office was politely but firmly rejected by Singh, who asked me to contact Kedge and
Simmons (again) for permission. My brief stay at the office in Gorakhpur was as close as I ever got to an
inner sanctum of the Maitreya Project, which is why this study is limited to circumambulations around the
statue-to-be, as opposed to an account of its inner workings.
contact with the Kushinagari farmers whose land he was working to acquire. Although his home/office is an armed fortress, and he travels with armed guards, the Kushinagari farmers who are threatened by the Maitreya Project's land acquisition plans often say with bluster that if he were to drive up to their farmlands, they would kill him.

The Maitreya Project office in Bodh Gaya, India is the former home of the statue project. It is currently being used as a bureaucratic staging point for two ventures: 1) the Maitreya Project school, which is located just a short distance away; 2) outreach and fundraising for the Maitreya Project, generally targeted at Buddhist pilgrims. The fundraising has been relatively successful given the draw of a large prototype of the MPI statue, which is housed in large hangar in the middle of a large empty field; during the pilgrimage season the Maitreya Project staff set up a fundraising video, put relics in display cases, and hang giant *thangkas*. The site is not a popular attraction, especially compared to the frenetic crowds of pilgrims at the Mahabodhi temple, but it does periodically receive a busload of pilgrims eager to pay their respects to the relics.

The Maitreya Project has long been in a state of dire financial straights. During my research period in India, when I asked for any public financial records, I was not obliged. In India, long-time devotees told me that the "problem" with the Maitreya Project was financial – donations were down; this is to say that the controversy in Kushinagar was off the radar at the time. The revelation about MPI's financial woes was brought to public light when a dissident against the project, a Buddhist computer programmer in Britain with no particular ties to FPMT (who told me that he began researching about the project out of concern for the good name of Buddhism everywhere), threatened to take his suspicions of financial impropriety public. In response to the threats, as well as substantial questions from donors that followed hard on the heels of some unflattering press, the Maitreya Project leadership finally made the finances of the organization public for the first time in 2007.
Fundraising for the statue has been ongoing since about 1990. The records for the project that were released in 2007 show earnings and expenditures up to the end of the 2006 fiscal year. From 1990-2006, the Maitreya Project (in total from all its offices) brought in $12,667,000, and spent $19,033,000; during this period the Maitreya Project has allowed a deficit "financed by loans and creditors" of $6,366,000. According to the same document, the top expenditures during this period were the following: 1) for "Contractors, Consultants, Architects, and Engineers," a total of $8,289,000 was paid out; 2) for "Salaries & Allowances," a total of $3,112,000 was paid out; 3) for "Financial, interest, insurances, bank charges," there was $2,023,000 spent; 4) for "Marketing, Advertising, Fundraising," there was $1,468,000 paid out; 5) for "Travel, Accommodation, F & B," the total expenditure was $878,000. In the 2006 financial year alone, the Maitreya Project brought in $1,126,981, and paid out $1,590,893, leaving them with an annual deficit of $463,912 (MPI "Summary of Receipts & Payments 1990-2006" 2007; MPI "Summary of Receipts & Payments, 2006" 2007). In 2001, Peter Kedge noted that while the United States provided the larger number of contributions, Taiwan was the source of over one-third of the funding (Bartholomew 2001).

While some of the fundraising is done at centers worldwide, through Merit Boxes or private donations, a good deal of the Maitreya Project operating budget is financed through the Relic Tour events. In addition, the Maitreya Project website is one of the major vehicles for soliciting donations.

The Memorandum of Understanding signed by the Maitreya Project Trust and the Uttar Pradesh state government stipulates a "zero tolerance" for corruption ("Memorandum of Understanding" 2003: 21). The Maitreya Project makes much of this declaration, although they have not a single employee or volunteer in Kushinagar, Deoria or Padrauna to oversee the bureaucrats who are doing the actually handling of state monies towards the land transfer. Therefore, it is unlikely that the MPI can reasonably
claim that corruption is not taking place, since they have not made any effort to supervise those who are currently working on the preliminaries. Amongst both Kushinagari farmers and business-people, there are very outspoken critics of the process in Kushinagar who have accused both the Maitreya Project representative Babbar Singh, and government bureaucrats with significant corruption already.

There was apparently a socio-environmental impact study done for Bodh Gaya, but I was never given access to it. It seems that one has not yet been done for the Kushinagar locale, since FPMTers close to the project griped that it was odd that it had not been done. One source told me that the administrators were waiting for the land acquisition to go forward before taking such measures.

**Conclusion**

This chapter is essentially an introduction to the various Tibetan Buddhist actors involved in the Maitreya Project, those of Tibetan ethnicity and otherwise. I have discussed the complexity of transnational Buddhism, and FPMT’s specific place along the vast spectrum of global Buddhisms. I have laid the groundwork for understanding the institutional and theological character of FPMT and its Maitreya Project by discussing the persons, places and ideas associated with the two deeply interrelated organizations. In this chapter I used the conceit of the "two truths" to show that ultimately there is no essential Buddhism, no essential Tibetan Buddhism, no proper way of doing things, and therefore FPMT new transnational Buddhism is no more or less essentially empty than any other form of Buddhism. From this perspective FPMTers are constructing their Buddhism more or less like everyone else, whether their sect is thirty years old or three thousand years old. However, from a more conventional perspective, I argued that claims of appropriation, preservation and authenticity must be seen in terms of their socio-historical context: the work of creation as opposed to preservation is being glossed
over as a means to construct the veneer of ancient wisdom. In the next content-based chapter, I will expand upon the performativity of authenticity by specifically examining the centrality of guru devotion in the context of faith-building.
"Deep Play" in Three Acts

Why do we pack away our concentration and mindfulness along our notebooks, pens and tape-recorders when we return home from the field? I see potential benefits in engaging more frequently and more deeply with the analytical tools of one's trade, but to be honest, I also think that the technologies of one culture could possibly be productive for other cultures, and we could experiment and play with the idea that we all still have something to learn from one another.

In the quest for the truest truths possible, Tibetan Gelukpa monastics may stand to gain from some of the methods and insights of ethnographic inquiry (I have a hunch that Hegel would have been a star debater at the Institute of Buddhist Dialectics in Dharamsala), and we anthropologists could learn something from our Tibetan comrades in reflective thinking. My prescription for a more hopeful anthropological future does not hinge on this sort of appropriation, but it never hurts to explore our alternatives to Weber, Levi-Strauss, Bourdieu, Foucault and the next big thing.

Just for fun, for kicks, perhaps we could try meditating on ourselves 'Tibetan style,' using a little of our substance and some version of their form, that is, a few of popular styles of meditation found in their textual traditions: stabilization, analytical and visualization. Playing with theories and technologies, ours, theirs, or both in tandem, may be another kind of 'deep play' (Geertz 1973) that is still quite a bit more serious than the 'gratuitous games' Bourdieu charges scholars with playing (1990: 381); here the stakes themselves are far less significant than the meaning created by risking them.
Act 1

A Tibetan text on meditation might advocate 'watching the breath' in order to both develop concentration, and to expose the wily underbelly of the mind, an organ that we mistakenly believe we have under control.

Now, try watching the university's breath. You are at the university; in the office, or in the library, or in the hallway of your department. Take a moment; stop; sit; concentrate. Close your eyes, and breathe deeply—just for a few seconds. Once your mind is calm, you can begin. Stabilization meditations in Buddhism are meant to steady the mind with hard and fast concentration on the breath, on the moment, the ever fleeting 'now.'

Open your eyes and observe single-pointedly. Watch the university swirl around you, and watch your mind swirl around the university. Do not judge, just observe quietly. Take it all in, but do not get swept away. If your mind wanders, don't be alarmed, but gently bring it back to focused concentration on the university's breath.

Did you notice anything new about the university? Your mind? What if we did this often, daily—how might it change our relationship to our academic habitus?

Act 2

The second type of Tibetan Buddhist meditation requires analytical concentration, so we anthropologists should be naturals at this. We do this all day every day, of course, but generally, as I have already argued, we analyze them, not us.

Choose a theory, any theory. Your favorite, perhaps. Hmmm… just for the sake of illustration, I will demonstrate what I mean. "All that is solid melts into air." Consider this statement for a moment. What did Marx mean? Think through the analytic at length, and perhaps what role it played in Marx's theoretical contributions writ large.

Now think about the university—the students, the faculty, the staff, the grounds.
Fix that theory upon us; analyze what we are doing, what we do, and what we say we do. Meditate on this for a while—fixate, concentrate, analyze. Can you do it for twenty minutes, ten minutes? Try it. Come on, even five minutes. I dare you.

Does the theory you meditated on speak to your experience of the university in any way? If not, isn't that just as significant as if it did? What if we were committed to doing this sort of analysis on ourselves with any and all of our chosen theories?

Act 3

Gelukpas swear by guru or deity visualizations, so why not give it a whirl? Close your eyes, and visualize your favorite theorist, ________, sitting in front of you. Try to focus on the qualities of this person that you respect, and establish a motivation to develop these qualities in yourself. S/he responds by sending out these qualities in a stream of light from his/her forehead to yours. S/he turns into light and moves towards you, until your 'guru' is hovering above you, and facing the same way that you are. At this point, s/he dissolves in light at your crown; the light flows into you, and your own body glows with that light. Now you are ________. You have all of that person's qualities, strengths and ideas, and you can channel their theoretical gifts in your own writing.

Visualizing yourself as an academostar may not rocket you towards the academo-stratosphere, but who knows, it may not be all that different from the standard motivational invocations to 'see the ball go in the goal' before taking the shot. I am curious whether meditative visualizations of our favorite theorists would further encourage a culture of guru devotion that already seems too prevalent in our institutions of higher learning. I'm returning back up to Act 2 to meditate on Weber's notion of 'charisma' as it might elucidate power dynamics in the university, but you can continue down to Act Up.

Act Up

Please do not misunderstand me – I am not suggesting that Tibetan Buddhist
meditation techniques, Marx, or your (once and future) dissertation chair actually hold
some sort of elusive key to life, the universe and everything. This interlude was not meant
to be prescriptive, except in the sense that I would like us to shake things up a bit. Act up,
play.

This interlude was meant to show that meditative thinking can be fluid, fun even,
and that there are dusty corners that we have left unexamined. Mirrors only serve as
mirrors if we look into them. Looking into a mirror can be a deeply troubling, but
powerfully formulative experience, and it can also give us a new, fresh perspective on
what we never knew we never knew.
CHAPTER 4

"GURU"/ AUTHORITY: THE LOCUS OF FAITH IN THE TEACHER

To succeed in practice, one must have excellent teachers – this is a universally acknowledged truth in all schools of Tibetan Buddhism. Tilopia writes, "...the ignorant may know that sesame oil – the essence – exists in the sesame seed, but because they do not know how, they cannot extract the oil. So also does the innate fundamental wisdom abide in the heart of all migrators; but unless it is pointed out by the guru, it cannot be realized. By pounding the seeds and clearing away the husks, one can extract the essence – the sesame oil. Similarly, when it is shown by the lama, the meaning of suchness is so illuminated that one can enter into it" (cf. Powers 1995: 270). Gurus both establish lineage connections between current students and revered teachers of the past, and guide students with lectures, advice, and teachings that help one work towards finding the essence. On the FPMT path, a serious practitioner must have faith in the gurus, and through the gurus.

In this chapter, I will explore the notion of faith in FPMT, and how has become intertwined with the significance of guru devotion, and practices of guru yoga, in which devotees visualize their gurus as Buddhas. FPMT's educational discourses do require faith and guru devotion as an end point (even a mid-point), but it leads beginning students there through an obstacle course riddled with skepticism and rationality. Faith via skepticism, as well as unquestioning devotion via logic, are staple epistemological moves in FPMT teachings as given by both lower monastic teachers and higher order geshes and lamas.
**Guru Devotion**

"It is said that the cowl never made the monk; nor, for sure, did it ever make a Buddhist master. The first Buddhist virtue is to reject all authority; the second is to obey one's superiors (or the other way round)" (Faure, 2004: 9).

According to tradition, if all goes well, skepticism is a temporary state of mind, just a phase between ignorance and enlightenment. In FPMT's Tibetan Buddhism, the key to letting go of doubt often relies heavily upon building trust in one's guru to guide one's leaps of faith.\(^63\) The attainment of real guru devotion obviates the pain of uncertainty, because ostensibly if the guru is certain, so should you be.

Buddhism begins with a guru – the Buddha himself. Buddhism can be understood through Gold's grammars\(^64\) – "holy man," "singular personality," and "eternal heritage" (1988) – if one tracks the trajectory of the religious conceptualization of the guru: Shakyamuni the living "holy man" becomes Shakyamuni Buddha the "singular personality" who has sacrificed his former bodies countless times to make merit enough to bring humanity the Dharma and found an eternal heritage of the Buddha dharma. The traditional hagiography involves progression – from meditator to guru to founder to institution – and cycles, as the current holy objects, relics, and even gurus of today maintain their links with the ultimate guru himself.

In Daniel Capper's ethnography of a Choygam Trungpa Rinpoche center (2002), he hypothesizes that the Tibetan Buddhist converts in the United States are attracted to their communities first and foremost because of the gurus leading the group. He foregrounds the relationships of his informants with their main gurus, and argues that it is the guru-disciple connection that keeps devotees committed to the center, involved in

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\(^{63}\) *Guru* is the Sanskrit term for spiritual teacher, and *Lama* is the Tibetan translation of the word *guru* (literally meaning "sublime mother" (Berzin 2000). Another interpretation of the derivation of the word *"lama"* would be "sublime one" with the emphasis on being the sublime above all others. Both guru and lama have migrated to English, and are used commonly as such in FPMT discourse and literature.

\(^{64}\) The progression in Gold's terms, as I read him, is not necessarily linear, but shifts, and could tack back and forth (1988).
their practice, and transforming in a positive direction. Like Capper, I found the guru-disciple relationship to be an absolutely key concept in understanding the cultural logics of my elite Tibetan Buddhist informants, but unlike Capper I have found that many of my informants found their way to FPMT before they developed a connection to the FPMT lamas. FPMT devotees who have been part of the community for many decades did initially have immediate access to the gurus, Lama Yeshe and Lama Zopa Rinpoche, but this has lessened over time as the institution has grown.

Nowadays, most students seem to take a course or several courses with lower-ranked monks and nuns first, and it is their time in the community that helps to keep them on track to embrace the gurus (or not, as the case may be). These students and devotees say that either they eventually meet and feel connected to Lama Zopa Rinpoche or their faith in the institution of FPMT leads to burgeoning faith in the lama who stands behind it all. One informant, who had become a Buddhist at an FPMT center in Raleigh-Durham (and later gone on to volunteer full-time at another), told me in an interview that she once confessed to a Tibetan lama-in-residence at her home center that she did not know who her root guru was; he looked shocked and appalled at her uncertainty, and said, 'Lama Zopa Rinpoche is your guru!' She told me that from then on, she knew that Lama Zopa Rinpoche was indeed her main guru; she had such high regard for the lama-in-residence at the Raleigh-Durham center that his insistence and conviction were ultimately compelling. While the large majority of my FPMT informants seemed to become attached to FPMT before its lamas, a minority of respondents did say that they felt a deep connection with Lama Zopa Rinpoche immediately, and it was that connection above all that kept them firmly connected to the organization.

Guru devotion has a long history in many Buddhisms – a tradition that has developed from the seminal relationships in its Indian origin – and yet, it has been elevated to a special place of prominence in Tibetan Buddhism. The Buddha himself was
a guru with disciples, and this model has been long replicated and recreated even before his time (Podgorski 1986). Podgorski draws on the Meghiya-sutta to show that the Buddha taught that a "beautiful friend" (kalyānamitta) must "pass on" the dharma through instruction (31); this relationship had the quality then that the guru-disciple relationship does now, and served as its precursor in Buddhist discourse (Podgorski 1986). The Theravadin and Mahayana paths both taught the need for a teacher to guide one's experience through the dharma, since their experience of could light the way ahead. The spiritual friend, or guru, was considered elemental on both paths; although Capper argues that the Theravadin literature tends to emphasize a more strictly hierarchical relationship between guru and disciple than does Mahayana literature (2002: 78).

In practice, monastic lineages in Tibet are routinely traced back to India with much of the precision and care of ancestry or kinship mapping (although some of these links were arguably manufactured in retrospect). Tibetan monastics today trace their lineage back to the Shakyamuni Buddha through Shantarakshita, who is reputed to have brought about the first dissemination of Buddhism in the 8th century CE. Much of the sacredness of the guru is due to the notion of transmission; the presence of the Buddha is explicit, almost as with a holy object. This is ultimately the reason that textual study will never be enough – the guru is a necessary part of the enlightenment process; a guru is a guide, yes, but s/he is also a physical being that can give empowerments and blessings that derive their power from tracing a lineage back to the beginning of Buddhism itself.

In this vein, one can also read the cult of guru devotion as an effect of the routinization of charisma in Weberian terms. If Buddha is the "charismatic leader" that unsettled everyone out of old patterns and into their initiations to the sangha, then the leaders, teachers and monastics that have come since has necessarily routinized the charisma of the Buddha into bureaucracy. At more micro levels, one can see the same

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65 See Weber (1968) for more.
process repeated, with similar effects. For example, later charismatics, such as Tsongkhapa, in 15th century Tibet, managed other coups, such as the reconfiguration of disparate strands of Tibetan Buddhist thought into a new movement, the Gelukpa sect, which still dominates Tibetan Buddhism today. The routinization of charismatic power, Weber tells us, leads to "permanence" (1968: 18).

Guru devotion in the classical Tibetan Buddhist sense manifests in a number of ways. For one, the guru has attained such a special level of prominence that in Tibetan Buddhist refuge prayers, Buddhists take refuge in the Buddha, the Dharma, the Sangha, and the Guru. The Guru has been elevated to a new high that is simply uncommon in both theory and practice elsewhere, and this has been further codified into hierarchical social practices. The Tibetan Buddhist monastic institutions were extremely hierarchical as a rule, and generally continue in that vein in Tibet and in exile (Dreyfus 2003).

Even the guru's death is considered a gift to the student – it is an enactment or performance of immortality done for the good of the student (Mullin 1998). The guru is considered generous and all-knowing, and any appearances of mistakes, missteps, or hypocrisy are often considered manifestations or performances for the benefit of the disciple's education. For example, one of the most famous and enduring folk tales in Tibetan culture, the story of Milarepa, details how the guru is infallible. After a series of violent acts, a repentant Milarepa seeks the guidance of the great guru, Marpa. Before he will agree to teach Milarepa, Marpa demands that Milarepa perform a series of inane and contradictory tasks. Milarepa almost quits, but in the end he perseveres, accomplishes the Herculean tasks, and finally wins the tutelage of the great guru Marpa who had been sagely helping his student to purify his negative karma the whole time. The message of the Milarepa tale is clearly that the guru knows best; even if a guru's orders do not make sense to the disciple, the disciple should unquestioningly and unfailingly obey.
In addition, since Vajrayana (or Tantric) Buddhism has been so ubiquitously embraced in Tibet, Tibetan Buddhists have been greatly affected by the Tantric notion that the guru is not just like the Buddha, but is the Buddha. If one is practicing the highest yoga Tantras, then one must visualize one’s root guru as a Buddha (Berzin 2000). Berzin elaborates on the logic behind this inseparability: "In short, the deepest basis for mentally labeling a tantric master as Buddha is the master’s clear light mind. The basis for labeling is not the fleeting stains that may or may not be obscuring that mind. Nor is the basis the strength of the manifest qualities of that mind" (2000: 162). Under the Vajrayana model, the guru is still a guide, but in addition the guru is the object of worship in and of him-(or her)self (Wayman 1987).

Alex Wayman describes three forms of the Tibetan Vajrayana – 1) the "outer guru," the physical manifestation of guru; 2) the text as guru; 3) the "inner guru," one's personal deity (Tibetan: yidam) – and notes that it is the ritual practices for the "inner guru" are the most significant (1987). However, both Capper (2002) and Snellgrove (1987) argue that it is actually the "outer guru" who is the supreme guru of the triad. Whether the inner or outer guru is actually more significant is a matter for monastics to confront in their debate courtyards; what is crystal clear is that all aspects of the guru are essential elements in the Tantric doctrine. All forms of the guru are "the same enlightened nature as all the Buddhas, differing only in the physical aspect they manifest" (Asvaghosa 1975:11). The "outer guru" has represents and embodies the nature of the Buddha himself in Tantric Buddhism, and this lesson is of paramount importance in FPMT’s theology and ritual practice.

In FPMT courses and educational materials, the lessons clearly state that one's guru devotion must be absolute and total in order to attain success on the path towards enlightenment. Since the guru has been anointed in a long lineage of teachers, the guru is
the only one who can anoint devotees with the empowerments and transmissions that allow them to seek achievement on the Vajrayana stage.

Empowerments (Tibetan: *wang*) allow for devotees to actually practice effectively. One must be empowered or initiated to do certain practices, and thus it is not enough to simply do the practices that one reads about in FPMT books. First, one must receive the direct transmission of an empowerment from a lama with the ability and desire to do so. In FPMT circles, it is only once one has taken the empowerment from a lama that one can truly reap the benefits of the proper *sadhana* (scheme of ritual practice). An FPMT devotee explained it this way: "The empowerment allows you to get the benefits of that deity. If you practice without the empowerment you might not be able to get merit. Empowerment gives the connection and allows for quick results. Otherwise you're swimming against the current." A teacher in an FPMT course explained that ritual acts without empowerments are not useless, but they are inefficient.

Gurus are guides. According to my FPMT informants, the teachers have been there, and hence they can show you the way. Lama Sherab Dorje, a Tibetan Buddhist convert from Canada who references FPMT gurus occasionally in his writing (as the founder of his own centers, he is not strictly an FPMTer) has noted that in Tibetan Buddhism especially one must have a guru.

The biggest drawback of Tibetan Buddhism? There's too much of it. It's like being handed the key to the Library of Congress and being told, "Go for it." That's why perhaps more than with other traditions, you need to have the librarian, you need to have the map on the wall to show you how to get there. You need more guidance because so much is at your disposal. That's why the teacher becomes important and the community becomes important. These are the people who've walked the aisles before and know the way (Dorje 1998: 50-1).

The argument articulated by Dorje above is a very popular one with the FPMT sangha writ large.
In Vajrayana Buddhism, one must become the guru through intense visualization meditations. The visualizations on the Tantric path involve visualizing the deity (and/or guru, and/or Buddha), and then absorbing the visualized entities into oneself. Moreover, the goal is to use the guru as a conduit to one's inner capacities, one's Buddha-nature, one's perfect clarity (that is currently obscured by negativities and karmic obscurations). In the context of discussing guru devotional practices, Lama Yeshe wrote that it is useful and proper to envision one's root guru as the central guru: "Seeing the essence of Vajradhara as your own root guru brings a feeling of closeness, of personal kindness; and visualizing the guru in the aspect of Vajradhara brings inspiration and realizations quickly" (Lama Yeshe 1998: 60). One is not supposed to inflate the ego by overlaying the guru's accomplishments onto oneself, on the contrary, the exercise is supposed to ease the ego through the actualization of anatman (no-self) and egolessness (Dorje 1998: 41). Therefore, guru devotion is a means to an end, but not the end itself (Berzin 2000; Butterfield 1994; Capper 2002; Dorje 1998; Rabten 1974).

The first step, then, is finding a guru. Berzin offers a useful discussion of the many sutras that direct seekers to proceed with caution while selecting a guru, and vice versa (2000), so there is a sense of prudence about the search process built into the classical literature itself. Much of the advice from the sutras describes procedures of due diligence, but gives no firm, infallible standard for establishing the validity of any particular guru – in the end, one can only make a subjective evaluation. FPMT's own lamas seem to agree wholeheartedly with Faure's wry observation that "There are, unfortunately, no objective criteria for distinguishing a true guru from a charlatan" (Faure, 2004: 72). In the early days of FPMT, there were many questions posed to the lamas themselves about this, but nowadays questions of this type are usually handled by other FPMT monastics. However, the answers offered by these FPMT monastics often echo the gist of Lama Yeshe's past replies: students must be careful when selecting a guru.
A student asks, "What is your definition of a guru?" and Lama Yeshe replies: A guru is a person who can really show you the true nature of your mind and who knows the perfect remedies for your psychological problems. Someone who doesn't know his own mind can never know others' mind and therefore cannot be a guru. Such a person can never solve other people's problems. You have to be extremely careful before taking someone as a guru; there are many impostors around. Westerners are sometimes too trusting. Someone comes along, 'I'm a lama, I'm a yogi; I can knowledge,' are earnest young Westerners think, 'I'm sure he can teach me something. I'm going to follow him.' This can really get you into trouble. I've heard of many cases of people being taken in by charlatans. Westerners tend to believe too easily. Eastern people are much more skeptical. Take your time; relax; check up (Lama Yeshe 2003: 77).

Taussig's notion that skepticism is a crucial part of faith production is useful in this context, in which the guru himself warns about importance of vetting one's guru; in the act of warning newcomers about charlatans, he is establishing himself as trustworthy, caring, and wise, i.e., the genuine article.

Within the educational lectures and books of the FPMT community, there have been countless reprisals of Lama Yeshe's warning about charlatans. Lama Yeshe and Lama Zopa Rinpoche have argued that the guru is like a guide over unfamiliar terrain or a language teacher whose help we require; FPMT's root lamas have said that although teachers are always needed, this is particularly important for dharma studies (Yeshe and Rinpoche 1982). One of the lamas said that "As it is vitally important for us to follow a correct spiritual path, the person we accept as our guide must be a perfect teacher. He or she must be a living exemplar of the dharma...If we rely on a teacher who does not have all the proper qualifications, however, there is always the danger that our practices will be mistaken and unsuccessful" (Yeshe and Rinpoche 1982: 70-71).

At another talk Lama Yeshe's discussion of the importance of a teacher is followed by the question "Who taught the first teacher?" (2003: 119); Lama Yeshe replied that wisdom itself was the first teacher. The follow-up question —"Well, if the first
teacher didn't have a human teacher, why do any of us need one?” – is answered with a reprise of the previous answer: "Because there's no beginning, and there's no end. Wisdom is universal wisdom, wisdom is universal consciousness" (119).

The FPMT sangha writ large is dominated by guru devotion as an ideal practice that is made manifest in power hierarchies, meditative visualization and prayers, but also in the proxemics and rituals of group worship. For example, guru devotion is being reinforced as devotees and students rise whenever the teacher walks into the room, and immediately bow at the waist, head declined towards the floor, palms conjoined in respect and/or prayer. The teacher approaches his/her raised throne, and then turns their back to the assembly. S/he prostrates to the ground three times to whatever statues and images of the Buddhas and lineage lama sit on the altar. Then, once s/he has settled into their raised seat, the assembly will follow with their own set of three full prostrations to the guru and the altar in front of them. Devotees will never sit when the guru is standing, so when the lama rises to leave, the devotees stand and bow at the waist again until the teacher has departed. There are variations on this theme according to the rank of the teacher, formality of the occasional, etcetera, but what I have described is a normative occurrence for a respected lama or teacher giving a discourse at an FPMT center.

Another significant aspect of guru devotion in FPMT is the circulation of hagiographies and narratives of perfection about the lamas. The lamas expound this practice themselves, such as when Lama Zopa Rinpoche discusses or writes at length about the flawlessness of Lama Yeshe. Many FPMT texts attributed to Lama Zopa Rinpoche and Lama Yeshe, both published those internally and those published by Wisdom Publications, are preceded by hagiographies of the founding lamas. In a Foreword to a book cobbled together from some of Lama Yeshe's discourses, Lama Zopa Rinpoche takes the opportunity to expound at great length on the qualities of Lama Yeshe's "holy mind," "holy speech," and "holy body" (Lama Zopa Rinpoche 1998).
Lama Zopa Rinpoche observes that the more highly developed one's mind the more one will be able to recognize the perfections of true lamas like Lama Yeshe: "The unimaginable secret qualities and actions of a Buddha are the objects of knowledge only of the omniscient minds of other Buddhas. Therefore, there is no way that ordinary beings could understand Lama Yeshe's secret qualities; they could only see his qualities in accordance with the level of their mind" (1998: vii).

FPMT devotees also save and trade stories of the moments of miracles, humor and compassion that they have witnessed of their gurus. The effect of the stories is that the lamas are portrayed as endearing, loving and lovable, and extraordinary. Compilations of news, anecdotes and stories are available on-line, and many centers print them out and hang them in prominent public spaces. One such compilation included a story about how Lama Zopa Rinpoche was so concerned about the insects dying on the windshield of the car that he was in that he started chanted and praying, and suddenly the insects seemed to make way for the car instead of hitting the car. Another compilation included a narrative of how Lama Zopa Rinpoche likes to personally do extra circumambulations and prayers after animal liberation pujas, so he put two buckets containing 400 worms on a broom and did circumambulations, reportedly saying, "In India, when ones parents are too old to walk then their children carry them on their back this way. So here I am carrying 400 of my fathers and mothers on my back" (FPMT 2006c).

Jon, an American monk, talked about his lamas, and how Tibetan lineage lamas are the only authentic ones, in contrast to American faux lamas:

The Dalai Lama is fully enlightened. He doesn't practice anything – he just says something and you know it's true. And an enlightened being is Dzongsar Kyentse Rinpoche. He tears apart the fake teachers. 'I'm a gay teacher. I'm a female teacher.' These people aren't in a lineage; they are just giving people companionship. Lama Zopa Rinpoche is fully developed with vast qualities. His disciples have never seen him sleep. They have only seen him rest a few times. None of us saw him sleep in 2 weeks. They're only going to be reborn a few more times. They are once-returners. Rinpoche loves to help people. The best
thing they can do is have a real connection to a highly realized monk. If he dies, or if you die it doesn't matter, you still have a rope. The only [Tibetan] teachers in the West are swamped. The genuine masters will try to tell you they're not. They are really noble; if you're just looking for a joyride then you won't see that they're realized. I've seen directly photos and documentation of high lamas passing. There are incredible relics, like little round pearls. This is a sign of high levels of Tantric absorption. And the pyre definitely wasn't touched.

Many FPMTers feel that the key to their faith in their guru is the fact that they come from a long lineage. Even though Lama Yeshe was not of a significant lineage from the perspective of internal ethnic Tibetan hierarchical logics, the fact that he was trained at Sera Je monastery is lineage enough for most non-Tibetan elites. Since Lama Zopa Rinpoche is a reincarnation of a regional lama who was unknown to anyone except locals from the Lawudo area, he benefits from lineage connections to Lama Yeshe – as Lama Yeshe's disciple he too gets respect from their connection to the teaching lineages of Sera Je. This works for elite converts, but the lineage of FPMT lamas is not overly compelling to many ethnic Tibetans.

Many of my FPMT informants talked about the emotional connection that they felt with their guru; some even felt that the guru had initiated contact. There is a saying popular in FPMT student discourse: "When you are ready, the guru will find you." Some FPMTers were still waiting, but others believe that Lama Zopa Rinpoche is the one. Tomas, a devotee from Belgium, had taken a few FPMT courses and then worked in a center for a few years before meeting the FPMT guru. Here he tells the story of how he finally met Lama Zopa Rinpoche: "I was supposed to go to Ladakh. I thought that maybe it wasn't enough time. I unpacked everything and went to Tushita Dharamsala instead. He was there. He must have called me. He was so busy. When he came out and blessed everyone, it was like the feeling I got from the Dalai Lama. It was so powerful. The behavior of a holy being." Klaudia, a Belgian woman studying and volunteering at the Root Institute, told me that her gurus were everything to her. In an
interview, she said, "My gurus are alive. They are real to me. When I read the book of
his life I could cry. When I listen to his teachings I could cry. This photo of my gurus is
more important than the relics."

Ani Abby, an American nun, noted in our interview that although she took refuge
with Lama Zopa Rinpoche, she actually has thirty gurus. She did not have a home
monastery or center when I interviewed her, so she showed me that she had made a
laminated sheet with the images of all of her gurus which she could pack easily. Like Ani
Abby, many FPMTers have multiple gurus and teachers, but what makes an FPMTer a
devotee, in my terms, is commitment to Lama Zopa Rinpoche and/or Lama Yeshe as a
root guru, or at least that these FPMT lamas are ranked very highly among their set of
primary vow-administering gurus.

Tomas, Abby, and almost all of the devotees that I interviewed, were utterly taken
with their gurus, and Lama Zopa Rinpoche was very beloved. Much like Abby, devotees
kept photographs of their main teachers on their alters and made offerings to them.
Many attended regular guru pujas at centers, or chanted long-life prayers for their gurus at
home alone. What Capper calls "enchantment," the love of guru that his elite informants
felt for their Tibetan teachers at an American Buddhist center (2002: 10), was clearly in
evidence in an FPMT context as well. Capper defines enchantment as "a state whose
hallmark is numinosity, or experienced spiritual potency" (10), and also a relationship
which echoes (but transcends) the standard "transference" (Freud 1949 [1940]) that a

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66 Alexander Berzin has identified a typology of spiritual teachers in the Tibetan Buddhist world, which I
have found useful: 1) "Buddhism professors" at universities and colleges; 2) "Dharma instructors" at
centers who teach based on their experience, study, and insight (Tibetan: nyamyi; 3) "meditation or ritual
trainers"; 4) "spiritual mentors" who embody the teachings and have a stable realization (Tibetan: togpa),
thus can guide disciples; 5) "refuge or vow preceptors" who are Mahayana elders qualified to administer
vows based on their monastic lineage going all the way back to the Buddha's disciples; 6) "Mahayana
masters" who are those gurus who inspire the desire for, and administer, the bodhisattva vows; 7) "Tantric
masters" who are the gurus who inspire desire for, and administer, Tantric empowerments; 8) "root gurus"
are the gurus who serve as a central guide for a practitioner, and whose designation usually emerges within
the context of highest yoga Tantra practices (2000). Berzin's hierarchy is consistent with FPMT's practice
and literature on the subject, especially since he acknowledges that often the same teacher(s) can fulfill
multiple rungs upon the ladder, and that there may be many teachers on each rung.
patient feels for a psychoanalyst. I am loathe to conclude that my informants engaged in classic acts of transference in their guru-disciple relationships; however, it did seem that many of my FPMT informants explicitly elevated Lama Zopa Rinpoche, the Dalai Lama and others to the status of love-objects, as parental figures, doctors, and yes, even therapists.

The level of enchantment that my FPMT informants expressed about Lama Zopa Rinpoche varied, but in general, the phenomenon of guru love is an undeniable aspect of the institutional culture. Lama Zopa Rinpoche is considered "omniscient," "full-realized," "enlightened," and "the real thing," by most devotees. In interviews, devotees mention how they have been shown certain insights indirectly by their lamas, even in the guise of mistakes or incomprehensibility; still, they often identify for themselves, sometimes in conversation with one another, that they have figured out the actual lesson that "by virtue of his kindness, Rinpoche wanted me to learn." I would argue that FPMT devotees generally feel something akin to deep adoration and love for their gurus, and that this may come as surprise to some, like Daniel Gold, who in observing the early years of Eastern gurus in the West wrote that respect, as opposed to the adoration typical in the Indian guru-devotee relations, was all that Westerners would be able to muster (1988: 122).

Even moments of seeming cruelty or harshness from a teacher, such as those dished out by one particularly famous FPMT nun (or even Lama Osel when he was a young boy) are often interpreted by devotees as generous lessons, at least publicly. For example, one devotee explained how she initially chafed under one particularly irritable American guru, but she had learned to be open to her: "She was projecting anger out of kindness. She knew that that was the only way that I would hear her. It was kindness, but I saw cruelty. I'm learning... I'm learning to be grateful." During my research, most FPMT devotees and students regularly explained away any FPMT action or policy that felt morally wrong or uncomfortable to them. While FPMT has never seen the same
kind of controversy dogging other Tibetan Buddhist groups in the West, such as the
group of the infamous Choygam Trungpa who apparently bullied and slept with certain
students in turn, imbibed drugs and alcohol, and died of his addictions (Feuerstein 1991:
71), the fact that all of these students love their disparate teachers unconditionally and
unquestioningly hinges upon equivalent cultural logics of guru devotion.

FPMT devotees met with gurus to receive advice on practice, but also to guide
career and life decisions. While living at the Root Institute, and doing interviews at the
Tushita Institute in Dharamsala, I have met many staff who noted that they were asked to
serve in a particular place or country by Lama Zopa Rinpoche, and agreed to do so only
out of a sense of obligation and respect for the guru's wishes. I have also met two
devotees who have refused Lama Zopa Rinpoche's requests, or simply begged off for the
time being, but these stories are kept more private, and are often considered somewhat
shameful; one of the devotees who refused an FPMT placement request recognizes
another living teacher in the Gelukpa tradition as her primary guru, while the other felt
that Lama Yeshe was the guru she felt more attached to, so one might posit that these
devotees were less inclined to serve Lama Zopa Rinpoche's request at any cost because
they both had other more predominant root gurus. If my informants are to be believed,
the guru's advice about life, jobs, relationships, and religious practices is usually taken.
Berzin writes that not all advice and directions from gurus must be obeyed in a healthy
guru-disciple relationship, since one is supposed to take advice with both "discriminating
awareness" and "belief" (2000: 134), but I have not heard this particular interpretation
explicitly affirmed FPMT circles.

There is a great deal of tolerance for non-declaration of root affiliations for a long
while, but simultaneously there is peer pressure applied at FPMT centers to encourage
long-term hold-outs and doubters to embrace Lama Zopa Rinpoche once and for all.
The longer one remains in the organization, the less tolerance there seems to be about
undeclared guru affiliations. Robbie was a long-time staffer at the Root Institute, but although he was open to many teachers, he was uncomfortable with the social pressure to claim Lama Zopa Rinpoche as a primary teacher. He said, "I'm in another tradition. My root teacher is Thich Nhat Hanh. I did take an initiation from Lama Zopa Rinpoche. I didn't understand the teaching. I thought I should take the initiation. It's helped me to take a time every day to think of other sentient beings to promote their healing. [Donna] said to me, "Oh wonderful, now you're Rinpoche's student," and that really caught me off-guard. I didn't think of it that way." There are divergent views about "guru" within FPMT centers, but there is also pressure (especially for those who have been around for a while) to converge around the FPMT guru and notions of guru forwarded by him.

For some, skepticism is alleviated by faith in the guru, but for others skepticism wins out, and the guru is tainted by association. FPMT devotees and teachers often say that they are sure that their lessons are planting positive seeds, but that some of these seeds may only ripen later – in later years, or later lifetimes. There is a high attrition rate from many introductory FPMT courses, especially those at South Asian pilgrimage centers; there are a high number of participants, but many move on and never look back. A student may love aspects of the dharma as taught by FPMT, but may find that certain aspects of the community they have less faith in (the necessity of doing lengthy purification practices, for example) cause them to doubt the guru from the beginning.

For example, while I discussed holy objects with Maureen, the spiritual director at a pilgrimage FPMT center, she remarked with chagrin that many people are turned off by their skepticism.

The Goenka retreat people – he is very anti-ritual, for him you have to give up everything – the Theravada and even Zen, they are very simple. People have some very strong reactions against these things... Like bowing to statues, not pointing feet at statues or saying mantras... They say that these are cultural things, distractions, and a waste of time. There is sometimes strong cynicism, strong criticism. We see a lot of defensiveness. We see that from all sides. I think it may
be because of science. We only believe in what we see. If it's unexplained then it seems like superstition. Because they see superstition then they think the rest is false. They say, he's not as smart as I thought he was. You've got to be dumb to believe in this, so how can I believe in the rest.

Maureen believed that many of these doubters simply do not have the right karma to accept the truth, but that their lessons from FPMT will bear fruit eventually, even if it is in the future lives of their current students.

One proper way to deal with skepticism about the guru is to fake it, and work to trick oneself into believing that the guru is the Buddha, until that lie is made true over the passage of time and one's personal experience of the guru's gifts. Capper, whose Tibetan Buddhist convert informants had man of the very same lessons about guru devotion that mine did, writes the following about the forcible subjugation of skepticism on this score:

As one's guru is by definition already enlightened, the guru represents the ideal mirror. In guru devotion practice one therefore must see the lama as the Buddha. If such a perception must at first be forced or fabricated, then so be it, because without projecting Buddhahood onto the guru, practice of necessity falters. Ideally, with time even a forced projection will become "unfabricated," as what one first pretended becomes revealed as actually true.

Skepticism is here seen as a part of the process, but one that must be transcended and defeated in order to stay on track. Therefore, belief is not a matter of course, but it is one that must be manufactured if it does not come easily. Faith is a critical component of the FPMT ideology and practice.

In accepting a guru, what is one giving up? This is rarely discussed in the corridors of FPMT centers; I never heard a conversation about it amongst devotees. It is something that students and neophytes do sometimes discuss, however, and it came up in several interviews in Dharamsala. Faure considered the question briefly, "…Kant considered submission to a book or to a master to be typical forms of immaturity…"
Buddhism, each individual is in principle responsible for his/her own salvation. However, in practice the virtue of humility fostered among disciples is apt to lend itself to personality cults that seem a far cry from Kantian maturity. Through what kind of strange reversal could such radical heteronomy lead to autonomy?" (Faure 2004: 72).

Faure's cynicism regarding autonomy in the guru-disciple relationship is well taken, and although it was not one of my initial points of focus, it quickly became clear in the field that anxiety about giving oneself to a guru was a crucial issue for some Buddhist neophytes. Georg Feuerstein also writes that guru-yoga in the Tibetan tradition lead to fetishistic and immature guru-disciple relationships, but argues that the hagiographies of adepts show many successful triumphs of enlightenment. Bracketing out histories, myths and hagiographies, I found conflicting ethnographic interpretations about the autonomy of Tibetan Buddhist converts.

In Capper's investigation of a Tibetan Buddhist center in the United States, he argues that while his informants are generally fully enchanted by their gurus, they remain independent and empowered agents, as opposed to submissive toadies. He writes, "There seems to be a deep, subtle and often therapeutic process at work in the guru-disciple relationship, and the common belief that submission to a guru inhibits autonomous growth overlooks this important dimension" (2002: 13). Capper supports his informants' claims of greater self-reliance, confidence and autonomy as a result of guru devotion (204). My informants also seemed to reflect positively on their own personal changes and transformations under the guidance of their gurus, but I question Capper's willingness to take all of these reports at face value.

Capper's ethnographic analysis relies heavily on Kohutian psychoanalytic discourse in which transference and counter-transference ultimately serve as healing

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67 Feuerstein writes, "Incapable of authentic response, the seeker sentimentalizes or romanticizes the guru and transmogrifies him or her into a mini-deity who grants temporary relief from the stresses of existence. The relationship to the actual guru is thereby rendered impotent" (1990: 163).
phenomenon. While I find that many Tibetan Buddhist practitioners do important "work on themselves" at FPMT centers, I would argue that the therapeutic aspects of the community are as much (or more) in relation to the community writ large, and the individual practice, as opposed any specific gain due to the guru-disciple relationship, or the idealizing transference. Berzin, too, notes that transference (of parents or loved ones) onto the guru by the disciple was not uncommon amongst Western Tibetan Buddhists, but that this is far from healthy and can lead to degenerative behaviors if not handled maturely by both parties (2000). Berzin argues that in a case of transference a realized guru would be compassionate and gentle, but s/he would not allow counter-transference to occur, and certainly would not confront the devotee to sort out his/her transference issues. I did observe (and experience) moments of transference during my extended period with FPMT. I found that the guru devotion at FPMT quite frequently lent itself to a submissive and extremely hierarchical sub-culture, which is not as purely beneficial and unproblematic as Capper would lead us to believe. In sum, I did not experience FPMT as a utopian healing community, since the submissiveness seemed to also lead to an unquestioning ethic that the guru is always right, no matter evidence to the contrary. I will return to this assertion, and its consequences (to both FPMTers, and Kushinagari farmers) in cases of controversy, in later chapters.

Capper notes that the enchantment of his informants led many of them to embrace their lamas emotionally as guides, but that this does not obviate the ability of most of his informants to occasionally critique their lamas (2002: 181). However, he notes a few particular cases in which his informants were so uncritical of their lamas that it appeared unhealthy or emotionally immature. For example, Capper writes about two marginal cases: "Shannon offered sometimes trenchant critiques of some lamas, although she never seemed open to subjugating her lama to similar criticism and became very angry when I once intimated that some of his actions may have been problematic. Lucy
seemed to lack critical understandings of any lamas, instead feeling that anyone who has finished a three-year retreat is by definition enlightened and at least largely infallible" (181). While Capper rushes to highlight the agency of the majority of informants by showing the problems of the two discussed above, I would note that he himself remains uncritical of the practices of guru devotion itself for reasons that remain unexplored.

In contrast to Capper, I found that the large majority of devotees and monastics at FPMT centers were unable to muster (in interviews or in informal conversations, albeit with an anthropologist present) any single word of disappointment, criticism or ambivalence about any of Lama Zopa Rinpoche's decisions. While devotees were sometimes disappointed or surprised by FPMT policies or projects, they invariably asserted that problems were never Rinpoche's fault. In case of something unsavory, it was either actually a bitter pill than Rinpoche knew would help us in the end, or a bitter pill that had been prescribed by FPMTer in the bureaucracy without Rinpoche's explicit knowledge. "Rinpoche must not know. You should tell him," was a common refrain from devotees about the Maitreya Project controversy – an approach that I will elaborate upon in later chapters.

In the same way that skepticism is a result of negative karmas, the inability of a student to see the inherent qualities of Lama Zopa Rinpoche, is similarly couched in the cultural logics of karma. Lama Zopa Rinpoche's discourses famously hard to understand. Center staff often talk about which of his discourses on tape or video are most intelligible in contrast to lesser ones. However, despite a certain amount of openness about how difficult he can be to understand, the feeling amongst devotees is that if you do not understand him, then it means you have karmic impediments that must be purified.

I, for one, have been told many times that if I have not been able to give myself over to Lama Zopa Rinpoche as a root guru, then my karma is to blame. A British woman, Allie, who was staying at the Root Institute for much of the winter 2006-7 season
while taking courses told me that although she was fond of Lama Zopa Rinpoche for his obvious kindness, she did not feel particularly connected to him. She hated the idea that her lack of connection was somehow the fault of her karma, and said that she felt it was a loophole in logic at FPMT that made her feel less inclined to follow their teachings. This is how she described her recent experience with Lama Zopa Rinpoche at a course at the Root Institute:

He started teaching at 8pm, and it went on until 3am. (Many people left early. You could see people getting restless, and some people would leave, and then more and more.) You could leave holy objects out for him to bless. He put rice on the objects and said some mantras. Then when we said goodbye we lined up to give him khatakṣ, and everyone was really happy. He did have a lovely presence… There was a lovely feeling in the gompa. They chalked the auspicious signs in the floor. It was very warm. There was lots of affection. I offered my mala to be blessed by Lama Zopa Rinpoche. It surprised me that it was blessed, and that it mattered. It's not my teacher. I feel the Dalai Lama is my teacher. I didn't understand Lama Zopa Rinpoche enough. They said that if you can't understand him then your negative karma needs to be purified. People told me, well, then it's not your karma to understand. I think that's ridiculous though. In Sarnath, when the Dalai Lama taught, Lama Zopa Rinpoche gave a speech at some point and the Dalai Lama said, 'I didn't understand any of that, but alright.' So, this isn't where I am with my dharma practice. I don't really want to follow those teachings.

Allie was one of several students that I met who had decided that FPMT devotees were overly extreme in their guru devotion by religiously fabricating reasons to explain his faults. She noted often that even the Dalai Lama had trouble understanding Lama Zopa Rinpoche, so surely it was not a matter of karma.

I observed many back-stage conversations amongst newcomers about whether Lama Zopa Rinpoche is as perfect and enlightened as his committed devotees have made him out to be. Many of the students most skeptical about guru devotion (or FPMT's particular lamas) take certain lessons from FPMT, but either hover at the edge of the organization, or leave it for alternative Buddhist groups. However, the very expression of
fresh dissent provides rich opportunity for devotees to try to convince newcomers of their convictions, to renarrate their coming to faith stories, and to bolster their own faith (whether flagging or resolute) through the performance of certainty. The guru-disciple relationship then does provide a hinge by which any ersatz FPMTer swings further towards, or further away from, the dharma materials of the organization.

**Guru Pujas and Long-life Prayers**

By requesting that centers organize Guru Puja (or Lama Chopa) ritual prayers on auspicious days, FPMTers participate in an ancient Tibetan tradition. Once or twice a month, in general, FPMT centers hold Guru Pujas that are open to any and all monastics, teachers, devotees and students. I attended several of these at various FPMT centers from California to Delhi.

The Lama Chopa is a ritual dedicated to the visualization of guru devotion. It includes purification practices, merit-making practices and guru devotion practices. Lama Zopa Rinpoche has emphasized its importance in being one of the paths towards nirvana. He said, "If you are able to do the Lama Chöpa practice well, you can achieve enlightenment in this very brief lifetime. If you are unable to practice Lama Chöpa well, you cannot achieve the unification of no-more-learning nor actualize the yoga of guru-deity in this very brief lifetime… Even though having this perfect human rebirth offers you the opportunity, the whole question of whether it will happen or not depends on your own practice, on whether you put the meaning of the Lama Chöpa into practice" (FPMT 2004b).

The exact progression of a Lama Chopa at FPMT is certainly different depending on who is leading them, but they draw upon the same sets of FPMT literature. There are many versions in the various Tibetan sects, but generally FPMT circulates a modified version of the Lama Chopa that was composed by Losang Chokyi Gyaltsen, the first
Panchen Lama. FPMT’s expanded *Lama Chöpa* text has a transliteration of Tibetan on the even numbered pages (with sub-heading and practice directions inserted in English), and then English translations (excepting mantras) on the odd-numbered pages (2004). At one Guru Puja, a leader may choose to chant the whole puja in Tibetan, while another may do most of it in

In my experience, the volunteer or monastic charged with preparing for the Lama Chopā will set out cushions, and then place the relevant books, booklets and addendum at each place setting (the texts are usually similar, but there are countless minor variations and each center has different editions and versions). Also, the preparer must ensure that there is a food offering for the guru available on the altar.

At a Guru Puja at the FPMT center in California in July of 2007, there were about seventeen people in attendance (including a Tibetan geshe and a few Western nuns). At the Guru Puja in early November 2006 at the Root Institute, there were just two people (me and the spiritual director of Root). The attendance at both places rises and falls depending on course obligations, season, residency, etcetera.

Without going into minute detail, I would like to describe some of the main features of a Lama Chopā ritual that took place in mid-November 2006 at the Root Institute, because the ritual evoke guru devotion rather explicitly, and the puja itself reveals much about the character of ideal guru devotion in FPMT circles. This particular Lama Chopā was an unremarkable puja – led by a Singaporean FPMT nun with just over fifteen people in attendance (counting the nun and the two other monastics in attendance, but not counting the two people that were curious newcomers who left soon after the puja began) – which makes it normative, in its way.

Participants sit in rows, with books and addendums on small wooden tables in front of our cushions. The nun and two monks sat in the very front of the company, and

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68 There is no Tibetan script in FPMT’s *Lama Chöpa*. 
everyone faced the main altar; lit by Christmas lights, the altar was crowded with statues and images of deities, gurus, Buddhas and bodhisattvas, including the monastics leading the puja.

We flipped open to the first page of the ritual in the Lama Chöpa book, and as directed, we read the refuge prayer. The nun stop to talk for a moment, discussing in her own words, the importance of generating bodhicitta. Then we continued in the Tibetan – chanting to generate special bodhicitta. In Tibetan, we generated the Field of Merit, which is the specific image of countless gurus and lineage ancestors upon whom one's spiritual path is dependent. The translation, which we did not read aloud (or have time to read silently), described the image of the Field of Merit, in which one's guru sits at the heart of countless "...direct and lineage gurus, yidams, hosts of mandala deities, Buddhas, bodhisattvas, heroes, and dakinis encircled by an ocean of dharma protectors" (FPMT 2004b: 19). At the end of this section, and certain sections afterwards, the page guide indicates symbols calling for bells, drums, etcetera, and right on cue the monastics wielded their instruments; simultaneously, when needed, a volunteer hits the play button on a tape recorder to blast full Tibetan instrumental sounds, including Tibetan horns. The invocation was conducted in English.

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At the heart of the Field of Merit image provided in the FPMT literature, the center image is the personification of "one's own root guru appearing in the outer form of Je Tsongkhapa, the inner form of Shakyamuni Buddha, and the secret form of Vajradhara" (FPMT 2004b: 131). Right below this amalgamated image, which is called "Lama Losang Thubwang Dorje Chang," sits one's own root guru who is flanked by one's other Buddhist teachers. The sets of lineage lamas are grouped this way: method lineage, with Maitreya at the center; wisdom lineage, with Manjughosha at the center; Kadam Lamrim lineage; Kadam Treatise Lineage; Kadam Instruction Lineage; Gelug Lineage Lamas, with Je Tsongkhapa at the center; various practice lineages; one's own root guru and direct Dharma teachers; and, lines of tantric deities, Buddhas, bodhisattvas, arhats, dakas and dakinis, Dharma protectors and the guardians of the four directions. This information is provided clearly in the FPMT literature, but not explicated as such during the guru pujas. Devotees and students learn about the make up of the Field of Merit and work on the mental visualizations in other ways, through personal study or advanced courses. I have never had a thorough explication of the Field of Merit in one of FPMT’s public courses or pujas. Therefore, it is safe to say that many people doing the guru pujas in FPMT environs have no training in Field of Merit visualization or the centrality of one’s own guru in the image, and vice versa.
In English, we read the mental prostrations, and made mental offerings. The cloud mantra offering was done by reading the Tibetan. We read the extensive version of the Power of Truth, which is meant to help actualize the offerings that have been made. We made Outer Offerings, and then offered flowers, incense, light, perfume, food and music, and finally offer "the mandala of the twenty-three heaps." We then read the "offering of practice."

The nun leading the puja paused to tell say that if one has taken bodhisattva vows, then one should recite them in English, as written in the book, otherwise we should remain silent. Following that step, those having taken the bodhisattva vow recite their Tantric vows in Tibetan.

Then, everyone recited the Seven-Limb Practice together. At a certain point, as indicated in the text, the nun ad-libbed on the importance of rejoicing in one's merits of yourself and all others. We then went back to the "Mandala of the 37 heaps" in Tibetan. We did another offering cloud mantra three times, and another power of truth. Then, three times, we made the "special request for the three great purposes." We made special requests of the gurus, such as "You are my gurus, you are my yidams; You are the dakinis and the dharma protectors. From now until enlightenment I shall seek no other refuge than you. In this life, the bardo, and all future lives; Hold me with your hook of compassion; Free me from samsara and nirvana's fears; grant all attainments; be my constant friend and guard me from interferences" (FPMT 2004b: 57). In this section, we read certain sections in English, and some in Tibetan.

Finally, the preliminaries were done, and so we began to perform the actual Lama Chopas Tsog Offering almost exclusively in Tibetan. Occasionally, where three repetitions are called for, we were directed to do the first one at regular speed, and the second two very fast (so that we barely enunciate the words). After we "offer tsog to the master" (68), we read the master's ritual reply – he will take the offering and satisfy the
deities within his body. At this point in the ritual, the actual physical tsog was distributed to the gathered devotees as we sang the "Song of the Spring Queen." Each person is given candies and cookies, and other little snacks, as well as chai.

We were then directed to another book for an offering prayer. Everyone put some "leftover" back to the offering plate; as a volunteer passed with the plate, I unwrapped a candy and put it on the plate, the woman next to me took a bite of a biscuit and then put the half-eaten item onto the plate, etcetera. We return to the Lama Chöpa text and read the offering prayer for leftover tsog, which was then taken outside and left there symbolically for those who were not in attendance (including "hungry ghosts").

We did the lam rim prayer, and then read the "practicing guru devotion with the nine attitudes" (78-79). We continued with the prayers for training the mind in various levels of capacity for practice, the eight verses of "thought transformation," the prayers for the Buddha's previous lives, and then tong-len practices. Then, "meditating on the special universal intention and generating bodhicitta" (91-93), and training the mind towards the Tantric path of the Vajrayana.

With a chant in Tibetan, we dissolved the Field of Merit into ourselves (imagining that the whole host of gurus offer blessings by entering through the crown of the head and settling into our hearts). We then chanted the "Mantra of Maitreya' Buddha's Promise" (98) seven times. The nun leading the puja dedicated this recitation to the success of the Maitreya Project and for a connection to meet him in the future. We dedicated the merit formally, and then recited dedication prayers. At this point the spiritual director of the Root Institute read the special dedications to Root Institute projects, people and donors. We returned to another book for multiplication mantras that multiply the merit of our guru puja, as well as an "end of the day" dedication. Finally, from the Lama Chöpa text, we recited, in Tibetan, a long life prayer for Lama Zopa Rinpoche, a long life prayer for His Holiness the Dalai Lama, and then (three
times) a requesting prayer to Lama Je Tsongkhapa.

Guru Pujas are a central part of guru devotion in Tibetan Buddhism in general, and FPMT has carried on the tradition faithfully by translating it into a new context. It is interesting and important to note that many students participate in the Guru Pujas before they actually choose a root guru. The Guru Pujas are then a central forum for devotees to proclaim their faith, and for students to both witness and mime the motions of faith.

**Skepticism and Faith**

As an institution, FPMT is so diffuse, decentralized and transnational that there is an incredible diversity of opinion, belief and practice within the organization. Skepticism is not only common, it is considered a prudent and necessary step along the path towards faith. There are FPMT students who are cynical about everything and others who are only doubtful or ambivalent about certain notions, such as guru devotion, reincarnation, or karma. Others have worked through doubt and skepticism and now consider themselves full believers with total faith in the FPMT program and gurus.

Lama Yeshe's writings and recorded teachings acknowledge skepticism in both positive and negative ways. On the more positive side, skepticism is used as a way to encourage students to "test" the validity of what's being taught. Conversely, Lama Yeshe has complained that skepticism is something of a fetish in the West that has become a mental block against an open mind.

Lama Yeshe has argued that our minds generally have the upper hand, and we humans go through the motions of life unconsciously; he writes that his audience should check this conclusion for themselves: "Check up for yourselves; experiment. I'm not being judgmental or putting you down. This is how Buddhism works. It gives you idea that you can check out in your own experience to see if they're true or not. It's very down-to-earth" (Yeshe 2003: 8-9).
Similarly, in "Wisdom Energy," a compilation of lectures from 1974, after a discourse about mindfulness and dharma in practice, Lama Yeshe notes that the students should test his words for themselves: "You must investigate the truth of all these statements for yourself. Do not rely on my words because they come from a lama. Experiment and see what the effect is of gaining control over your mind, both during the day and night. If your practice is sincere, you should experience noticeable results in a very short time, so begin right now" (Yeshe and Rinpoche 1982: 140-141).

Lama Yeshe also suggests that whether one is Buddhist or not, one should be committed to questioning and checking up on one's religious beliefs and practices. He writes, "…blind faith in any religion can never solve your problems. Many people are lackadaisical about their spiritual practice. 'It's easy. I go to church every week. That's enough for me.' That's not the answer. What's the purpose of your religion? Are you getting the answers you need or is your practice simply a joke? You have to check." (Yeshe 2003: 42). He goes on to suggest that it is because Buddhism is something other than a religion that faith is not enough, especially at the beginning. "We consider Lord Buddha's teaching to be more akin to psychology and philosophy than to what you might usually imagine religion to be. Many people seem to think that religion is mostly a question of belief, but if your religious practice relies mainly on faith, sometimes one skeptical question from a friend – 'What on earth are you doing?' – can shatter it completely: 'Oh my god! Everything I've been doing is wrong.' Therefore, before you commit yourself to any spiritual path, make sure you know exactly what you're doing" (43). The final sentence quoted above is instructive in demonstrating that in FPMT there is a time and place for skepticism, and once committed to the path the skepticism is ideally supposed to recede. This is generally how FPMTers are supposed to proceed in practice: skepticism is encouraged and actively vocalized and solicited by teachers in the
Introduction courses, but after someone commits and spends years in the organization, there is an expectation that faith will gradually outstrip skepticism.

Lama Yeshe also acknowledges skepticism as an acute problem for Western students. He writes that whether people believe him or not is irrelevant to the facts that he presents to them. "It doesn't matter if you try to refute what I'm saying by telling me that you don't believe me. It's not a question of belief. No matter how much you say, 'I don't believe I have a nose,' your nose is still there… I've met many people who proudly proclaim, 'I'm not a believer.' They're so proud of their professed lack of belief in anything" (2003: 6).

Directly after many lectures and discourses in transnational Buddhist settings, there are Question and Answer sessions. In Tibetan monastic institutions, such as the Namgyal monastery or the Institute for Buddhist Dialectics, until recently there was never any chance to ask questions to lamas during a teaching. Two different types of teaching can be differentiated: a teaching/discourse (Tibetan: sung chu) vs. class lecture (Tibetan: pe ti). A teaching is a more formal affair in which respected lama, geshe, or monastic gives a discourse from an elevated throne to monastic and/or lay devotees below. A class lecture at a monastery is an entirely less formal affair, and throughout a pe ti a lecturer can expect questions from the monastic (and/or lay) students.

A Tibetan refugee friend of mine, who was born in India and trained at the Institute for Buddhist Dialectics for nearly 15 years, explained that as far as he can tell the "Question and Answer session" is a relatively new addition to the Tibetan Buddhist pedagogy. He described the way that a new program in Dharamsala has begun, which works to teach Buddhism to lay students using "modern" discourses about the rationality of Buddhism, as well as "modern" forms like the Question and Answer session. He continued by saying, "At TCV [the Tibetan Children's Village], when the Dalai Lama gives a talk, he also gives them an opportunity to submit questions in advance, similar to
how he gives a lecture here and gives people a chance to ask a question in writing and someone selects them ahead of time. My general sense is that this is a new and quite recent phenomenon. It's a modern form of teaching."

The Question and Answer session seems to be a form of pedagogy that has been increasingly adopted by Tibetan Buddhist teachers in various contexts, but arguably the trail was blazed by Western students and their early instructors. Though questions from the Q&As at FPMT centers run the gamut between issues about emotions, meditation, and philosophy etcetera, some teachers and lamas at a sung chu are hit with extremely skeptical, borderline-impertinent inquiries.

At the FPMT center in Bodh Gaya, e.g., there is a distinction made between lower level monastic instructors and upper-level lamas, and most students and devotees seem to recognize that there are appropriate times and places for certain types of questions depending on the level of the particular instructor. For example, during introductory courses, there are dozens of opportunities for students to question their monastic instructors. This questioning is encouraged and solicited, especially in this context. These introductory courses are a constant give and take, in which faith is slowly solicited through the performance of skepticism. Students ask challenging personal, philosophical, and theological questions, such as, "What is emptiness and is it the same as nirvana?" and "Can I still consider myself a Buddhist if I don't believe in reincarnation?" Instructors answer the questions as best they can, sometimes referring students to Buddhist narratives from sutras, lessons learned from the co-founding lamas, or to their own brand of rational explanation. Often Buddhist monks and nuns will respond to these persistent questions by retelling their own stories of skepticism, and how and why it eventually gave way to faith. In Tibetan Buddhism, faith is a part of advanced practice. As Lama Sherab Dorje put it, "Faith and devotion, like analysis, help you cut through your old way of seeing things" (1998: 50). However, faith for Tibetan Buddhist converts, like cold water,
is often something that is more palatable if one eases in gradually. And just as with cold water, some people do prefer jumping in all at once.

Another very common response involves recalling and paraphrasing a statement attributed to the historical Buddha – "Do not accept my Dharma merely out of respect for me, but analyze and check it the way a goldsmith analyzes gold, by rubbing, cutting and melting it" (Berzin 2000) – that essentially serves to demonstrate that the Buddha himself prescribes skepticism and questioning as part of the path. This notion – that the Buddha, and Buddhist teachers in FPMT, defer from asking for faith, and instead encourage students to see for themselves – is opt repeated amongst FPMTers describing their path in the organization. Faith is often derided by newcomers who say that it is the blind faith required by their childhood religions that made it less than attractive in the first place; to these FPMTers, Buddhism was initially appealing because it is a "practice," "meditation," "philosophy," and "way of being," all of which could be empirically tested and tried out. For example, at Tushita in Dharamsala, I took an FPMT course with Jose and Andres, who had some rather typical insights about their blossoming interest in Buddhism. Jose and Andrew are two friends that traveled to India together from Mexico. Jose had read some books about Buddhism about a year previously, and then shared his enthusiasm for those books with Andres, who read them as well. There was no Buddhist group in their hometown, but they did a Vipassana meditation course together at some point. Eventually they ended up on pilgrimage in India together and just happened to come across FPMT while they were visiting Dharamsala. As new, but "hooked," FPMTers, they argued that blind faith was not a part of their new tradition:

Andres: It's funny for us – sometimes we say, 'how did we end up here? Why did we end up here?' We are always looking for the logical reasons.
Jose: Yes, we are always asking why, why? I always ask why.
Andres: So Buddhism gave us a practical explanation. We are coming from Christianity where it is based on blind faith.
Jose: We converted to Buddhism because it doesn't depend on faith.
Andres: But I still think that God, Jesus, is a special being.
Jessica: Did you both convert to Buddhism?
Jose: Yes, I converted, but I don't like the label. If you have a faith-based religion then you need it, but in Buddhism we question everything, so I even prefer no label. If you have the label then you can't see the other side, as if this is the only way. Buddhists even think this way!
Andres: There are a few precepts in Buddhism that I don't agree with, but still I am Buddhist.

Andres and Jose were new FPMTers – students who felt a connection to Tibetan Buddhism, but did not yet subscribe to everything that they were being taught in FPMT courses. In the same interview, Jose told me that he resented that their FPMT teachers had taught them that Buddhists could not follow other spiritual paths at the same time, and noted that he was sure that the Dalai Lama would not agree. Despite their reservations, they were both planning to go to the Kopan monastery in Nepal for another FPMT course a few months hence.

Maureen, a young American devotee, who had been a part of FPMT for more than eight years, said the following regarding her process of testing the truth of Buddhism: "Some people dismiss Buddhism because there are details that can't be fully explained. In the end I see a statue and I am inspired. I see a benefit, I don't need to understand everything. I am a little more kind, I am more patient, and my mind is more clear. That's how I know it works. They say, don't believe in anything, try it out and see if it works."

Julius, a German student, having just finished his first course at an FPMT center in Dharamsala, discussed the skepticism he felt about certain things (relics, reincarnation, etcetera), and how the community at FPMT (both students and teachers) had helped him to open his mind to things that he not taken seriously before.

Relics, and all that about rainbow bodies that just disappear, it all sounds so unbelievable. It's a fascinating topic. I want to learn more about this. When you think about human politics at a global level, you question how the world is run. You think that many things, many phenomena have been discredited by powerful
people or ideologies. There is always a danger that things that are genuine, are real, are discredited because people in power find that it would disrupt the status quo. So I will have to learn more. As soon as I get home I will dive into studying all this. Yesterday I talked to a woman, she was saying that she remembered an old castle – it was a memory from a past life. She had no reason to lie to me. She is genuine, open-minded. I have no reason to doubt her. It was her first hand experience and I have to celebrate it and also examine it. It is very different than reading on the subject. Ani [Rachel] told us that she did hypnosis and went back to a funeral in a previous life. She has no reason to lie to us. She would not make it up. Our science mind disrupts our ability to believe, but she wouldn't lie. She's not a missionary. You need to give it time to sink in.

Students often discussed how the teachers were trustworthy and honest – telling their own stories – and how they allowed themselves to try to believe, since the teachers were only being forthcoming out of compassion for their students.

Laura, a 32-year old white woman from England, who was volunteering at a center in India, told me although she sometimes had doubts, she was not consumed by them. She also noted that her frequent contact with neophytes often had the effect of reinforcing her belief. She explained her experience of wrestling with doubt this way:

I try not to fight with the things I don't understand too much. The extremes would be to reject everything and get angry, or to force oneself to believe (and then feel guilt and doubt). These two ways of struggling are very common with Western Buddhists. I don't have much faith in statues and relics, but I'm just letting it be. Talking to the newbies helps me to clarify my views. I can't remember when I didn't believe in rebirth and karma. I don't question them anymore. It's very helpful to see others' doubts and have to back up my views. Sometimes it's quite powerful to see the intellectual side, but people tie themselves in by searching and not committing. So many people want the whole picture, the complete theory of the Buddhist universe before they will watch their breath. They direct it outward instead of just working on themselves. Some say, "Why do Tibetans eat meat?" They are critical and applying their morals to others without watching their own hearts.

Laura found that the doubts of others forced her to defend her views in a way that reinforced, rather than threatened, her set of beliefs. She also watched people deal with
their skepticism in ways that she felt was less than healthy, so she endeavored to accept certain doubts without worrying too much about them.

Another common explanation of skepticism hinged on the notion of karma: in FPMT, if one is lucky and has good karma, then one will have faith. Doubts and skepticism are a sign of the negative karma and obstacles that are blocking one's way along the path toward enlightenment. Karma, which will be discussed in more detail in a later chapter, is essentially the law of cosmic cause and effect. One's current situation is a result of one's past actions, and one's future actions will be determined by the quality of one's present actions. Georgianna, a Scottish woman volunteering at the Tushita Dharamsala center, noted that karma plays a very central role in the fact that she does not feel connected to statues: "I have one small Buddha image. The manager of the Pokhara center gave it to me. I've never bought one. It's not consecrated. This is a kind of evidence about karma. I just don't feel a connection [to statues]. It's quite interesting."

This is a very crucial point to understand about the cultural logics of skepticism in FPMT: if you do not believe, then it is your own fault, since your past actions must have caused the impasse. One must then work to burn off negative karmas in order to improve one's situation (and capacity for faith) in the present and future.

An FPMT nun, a Norwegian woman, who ran the Tushita Delhi center, told me that skepticism is a part of the process of knowing, and that while she used to fear doubt, she no longer does. During an interview, she said:

There's an open period, the 'beginners mind,' then everything just streams in, and then suddenly – crash – questioning comes, and you have to work through that. That's the experience for many, many people. You can't be in the Eastern dream, you have to face the fact that I'm a Westerner. My conditioning, my upbringing, is very different. And I have to look into it. I can't pretend that I'm a Tibetan. It can be quite hard. Suddenly some people have to question everything. I've done that. I'm not afraid of any questions anymore. I don't think I'm afraid of any questions. And then, I've come full circle. I see, yeah. It's right, it's true. It's correct. And I don't have to pretend anything.
In fact, one of the specialties of FPMT is working through these questions with Westerners, and helping as many as possible come full circle back to faith, when they have lost it.

The lamas and geshes of FPMT get difficult questions as well, although I have been told several times that generally higher lamas tend to get more serious upper level philosophical questions, since they usually teach more upper level discourses. This was not always that case, as books that document Lama Yeshe’s teachings from the 1970s demonstrate that at the beginning of the organization questions from the audience could be more skeptical, more elementary and more conversational (2003). In one exchange, Lama Yeshe is grilled for seven questions about how he "treats" people's problems, whether it is always successful, and how long it takes. Lama Yeshe here is put on the defensive about why his prescriptions for meditation do not always work. He explains "Sometimes there's a problem in communication; people misunderstand what I'm saying. Perhaps people don't have the patience to put the methods I recommend into action. It takes time to treat the dissatisfied mind. Changing the mind isn't like painting a house. You can change the color of a house in an hour. It takes a lot longer than that to transform an attitude of mind" (2003: 90). It is difficult for many of my informants to imagine any kind of confrontational exchange taking place in a Question and Answer session with Lama Zopa Rinpoche today, although a few of my student informants suggested that it could easily still happen sometimes.

Thus, the Question and Answer session seems to serve in some ways as drawing skepticism out into the open. The willingness of FPMT teachers to take questions, acknowledge the doubts of new students, recount tales of emerging from skepticism towards faith, and model that path as an ideal one, all serve shore up the faith of others.
Conclusion

In his chapter, "Viscerality, Faith and Skepticism," Michael Taussig revisits Boas' collaboration with George Hunt (a.k.a. Giving-Potlates-in-the-World), a Kwakiutl informant, about magicians and skepticism (2006). Hunt describes his efforts to trick the tricksters, and how in his work towards uncovering the magic, he becomes a famous shaman himself. Hunt writes that he desires to become a shaman in order to learn if shamans are real or just tricksters. His skepticism compels and feeds his investigation into the tricks of the trade, as it were. Taussig delights in playing with Hunt's stories of his own triumphs over other shamans, their desire for his secrets, and how they simultaneously reveal and confess their tricks to him, for the whole process reveals "the skilled revelation of skilled concealment" that forms the crux of his new theory of magic; Taussig writes, "This we might in truth call a 'nervous system,' in which shamanism thrives on a corrosive skepticism and in which skepticism and belief actively cannibalize one another so that continuous injections of recruits, such as Giving-Potlates-in-the-World, who are full of questioning are required" (138).

The teaching of shamanism in this context requires questioners in order to provide opportunities for the continued skilled revelation of skilled concealments. With this insight, Taussig gives me a framework for understanding the compelling and constant presence of doubt and skepticism in the prayer halls of FPMT. Skepticism and belief actively (de)construct each other, so that the fresh faces of FPMT serve to reinvigorate the faith of believers. The rituals of the Guru Puja, the back and forth of the Question and Answer session, and even the mandate to bow at the waist as lamas approach – the multiple forums in FPMT that enact and enable guru devotion all allow for the active participation of skeptics. This is not only designed to convert skeptics in the long term,

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70 Taussig takes the game one step further by noting that the real shaman in the picture is Boas himself, and his faith in the magic of his own rituals of anthropological theory and practice.
but also to strengthen the faith of those who already profess their faith in gurus.

In this chapter, I have explicated a central tenet of FPMT belief and practice, guru devotion, by demonstrating the rites, practices and belief surrounding the centrality of lamas and teachers. The guru is empty, even most gurus would agree to this, but along the path devotees are instructed to elevate the teacher to the status of holy being, the contemporaneous face of the Buddha. Ultimately, the practice is empty. From a conventional standpoint, faith is constructed, disciplined through one's body with Guru Pujas, bowing, and the willingness to obey the advice of one's spiritual master. In our analysis of the conventionalities of faith, we see the way that the institution has gone about securing faith, dispelling skepticism, and enabling the sangha. Guru devotion permeates the Tibetan Buddhist tradition, but in translating the practices of guru worship to Western "elite" devotees it is notable that the path to total faith is constructed through actively engaging with, through and beyond skepticism. After the interlude, in Chapter 6, I will explore faith in holy objects in FPMT, and in doing extend many of the same precepts regarding the work of skepticism in creating its own inverse effects.
CHAPTER 5

"GURU": INTERLUDE

Reflections on academic guru-ing

Lee Edelman hit the nail on the head: the future is kid stuff (2004). It's all about "the Child," and it is all wrapped up in the fantasy that somehow through the next generation our future will magically fill all voids, and transcend all gaps. But students and devotees are children too.

As I write about Buddhist gurus, I must acknowledge that this dissertation is itself a product of the teacher-student relationship. I have worked through, with, and against my committee members and teachers. In the end, it has always been a collaboration, despite the fact that I will try to take credit for the best bits. My committee members should recognize their gifts, as they are scattered throughout my articles, my dissertation and my ways of thinking about the world. They should see themselves in me. Theoretically, I have his knows, and her I's; his birth Marx, and his Lac(an)tose (in)tolerance. But I wonder if sometimes – if not already – we grad students fail to live up to the hopes that inspired our mentors to tutor us. Have I disappointed my Buddhist teachers, my academic teachers, and my parents by not resembling them even more?

I am in a liminal space. Simultaneously a student about to graduate, an adjunct teaching eight credits per semester, and a paper sailboat on the job market during a storm, I stand at an impasse. As ambivalent as I am about my actual genes, I am rather fond of my some of my ideas, and I wonder if they will ever be carried forward by students. My students produce papers that I have delimited and shaped with my queries and suggestions; their final drafts carry my heavy mark on the content and form, and I ask them to submit the first draft too with my comments, so that I can see the fruits of my labors with them. Woe to the student who chooses to ignore all my notes in the
margins. And, woe to me if I ignore the needs of my committee… My faculty, my students – my parents, my children.

What is the difference between faculty devotion and guru devotion? There are profound differences, of course, but it is discomfiting that there are so many similarities too. Fundamentally, I believe, guru-ing, and thus this meditation too, is about impermanence and death. It is about what is left behind, and the comfort of leaving something of substance that will last longer than we do. Guru devotion establishes lineage, connections, and a teacher-student devotion that leads to memories and stories that we are compelled to pass down through generations. Gurus are cultural manifestations of heroes, and they often court eulogizers. Becker tells us that we walk a heroic path to feel significant and to be recognized as such, and we do so in constant denial of death (1973). Does the omnipresence of death awareness in Tibetan Buddhist discourse erase the anxiety of impending death? Does the deep and abiding awareness of impermanence in Tibetan Buddhism lead to a willingness to let go of one's lineage building? Does it…?

My students stop talking about parties when I arrive to class – they take out their books, pens. His students get up from their cushions and bow three times. Our students listen, and they take notes; they read us, cite us, hang onto our every word, and look to us for guidance. I hope they learn from us. Perhaps some of our students will even transcend us eventually, but under no circumstances are they permitted to forget us...!
Despite training and practice in aspects of both Hindu and Buddhist traditions over the course of several years, Wallace remained altogether ambivalent about statues. He told me that during FPMT courses he would bow to them, because that was what everyone else was doing, but he continues to feel that the real guru, the real Buddha is inside of himself, and not inside the objects. Wallace was a Canadian yoga teacher, who was traveling India with his girlfriend when I met him at an FPMT center in Dharamsala at the end of a course in 2006. Previously, he had taken courses with a Hindu teacher in Canada who introduced him to meditation, and then he had found a second guru there, a Buddhist; still, Wallace felt that much of his learning about Buddhism had been from books, and that is why he began taking FPMT courses during this trip to India.

He told me that he did not feel the need to have an altar himself, but he did not particularly mind them either. The internal images, the visualization images, were more constructive in Wallace's opinion, than the outer shells, the visible things, the material statues. Yet he admitted to me that he had jettisoned the standard images of bodhisattvas, and begun meditating on his own unique image visualizations. He told me that while leading a visualization on Chenrezig at an FPMT retreat, a Buddhist nun first told the students to look at the Chenrezig statue on the altar in front of them and fix that image in their minds, but then said that they could chose another image of compassion if they had trouble holding Chenrezig's image in their mind. Wallace said that he could have visualized the Tibetan version of Chenrezig, but that he preferred the latter option:
I created a creature for visualization. The statues are all cartoon pictures anyway, so I tried to take the human Jesus, Buddha, Krishna, Zoroaster, Sita, Mahavir, Rumi, Ram, Guru Nanak, Kabir, Superman, Moses and Laotzu. It was during a Chenrezig visualization. She said you could visualize anyone who inspires you, so I thought of them all together. It was all heads, a lot of arms. I made Jesus Iranian looking. It was hard to visualize!

For Wallace, the statues themselves did not provide a viable material map or a representative template for his visualizations. Wallace was a new FPMT student, a newcomer with just a few courses in the organization who admitted to being "hooked," but not yet a "devotee." He felt that the FPMT courses had helped him by breaking down complex ideas and putting them into comprehensible registers. Wallace indicated that FPMT's ideology is a "clean teaching," and that he would be able to take what he had learned about Buddhist tenets to heart; however, he did not feel particularly wedded or committed to the organization itself, or the personage of Lama Zopa Rinpoche. He said that he will keep traveling, keep learning and keep searching at FPMT centers, at other Buddhist centers, and with other teachers from various traditions.

In the context of exploring the significance of statues in practice, I repeated the gist of Wallace's visualization story to a few FPMT monks and nuns at centers. One monk, a Western convert from Europe, roared with appreciation, "Jesus, Buddha and Superman?! I love it," and then proceeded to discuss his own self-proclaimed "ambivalence" towards holy objects. On a separate occasion when I told Wallace's story, an FPMT monk from Australia seemed less than enthusiastic. "He doesn't get it," he said, and then after a moment, "I don't think you get it either." But what makes a Western convert to Tibetan Buddhism believe, or decline to believe, in the ritual efficacy of holy objects? I believe that faith in holy objects is often tied to the centrality of guru devotion in FPMT's transnational Tibetan Buddhism; faith in one's guru is often extended out to encompass faith in the holy objects that s/he touts, constructs and
celebrates. In Michael Taussig's work on shamans and magicians (2006), he writes that faith and skepticism about magic is dialogically constructive; the "exposure of the trick is no less necessary to the magic of magic than is its concealment" (129). Again, I affirm Taussig's sense that faith is, in effect, constituted by intense engagements with and through skepticism.

Each type of religious objects in their own right – statues, relics, thangka paintings, malas, prayer wheels, stupas, texts, etc. – as well as each individual thing within its set has its own story and significance upon the altars of Buddhist objects. Holy objects are very important in Buddhasms the world over, but they have a place of special prominence in the Gelukpa Tibetan tradition. Given the connections between holy objects and the bodies of enlightened beings, I have framed this section in terms of kayas, or bodies.71 If it seems problematic to discuss material things and bodies in the same breath, I would note that in the Madhyamika perspective they are both equally empty; also, in Nigel Thrift's view the dualism of object/person is problematically "…predicated on the stable conceptions of what it means to be human and material…" (2005: 232).

Theravadin Buddhists traditions do expound upon the various forms or bodies of the Buddhas though Robert Gethin notes that this discourse is often, and mistakenly, associated most directly with later Mahayana thinkers, who elaborated upon it further in the fourth century CE (1998).72 Mahayana Buddhism has identified various kayas of a Buddha, but the basis of the kaya discussion lies in the significant differentiation first made between the dharmakāya, the ultimate empty body, and the rūpakāya, or physical body, also called the form-body (Williams 1989). Williams and Tribe draw upon Griffiths to articulate a classical Mahayana doctrine kaya typology: "...dharmakāya (or svabhāvakāya)

71 The Sanskrit term for kayas means bodies in terms of physical, but also projected or astral bodies, as well as "collections" as in a body of texts (Williams 2000: 172).
72 For an elaboration upon the ways that Theravadins distinguish between the dharma-kaya (dharma body) and rupa-kaya (physical body), please refer to Gethin 1998 and Robinson and Johnson 1977.
From the Mahayana perspective, the Shakyamuni's physical body, which expired in India just over 2500 years ago, is considered his nirmanakaya emanation (and sometimes this is seen as the kind of emanation that teaches the lower lessons of Theravada, as if introductory lessons), or Transformation Body. The sambhogakaya, or Enjoyment Body, on the other hand, is the perfect or astral emanation that appears in Pure Lands, and other planes of existence, expounding the true teachings of the Mahayana doctrine. The true or "real" body of the Buddha is not just an emanation through the dharmakaya (the body of the texts/doctrine), since some Mahayana texts, such as the Yogacara, also emphasize the perfect emptiness of this body: "It is a gnosis completely empty of subject-object duality, beyond all conceivability or speculation, free of all cognitive and moral obscurations. It is the wisdom-body (jñānakāya) of the Buddha possessed of all the superior qualities intrinsic to the nature of a Buddha, eternal and itself unchanging. It is said to serve as the support for the other bodies of the Buddha, which manifest out of infinite compassion in a form suited to help others. The dharmakāya is in fact what a Buddha is in himself, as it were from his (or her) own side" (Williams and Tribe 2000: 174).

Williams tells his readers that in the Gelukpa tradition the dharmakāya is divided into the Wisdom Body (jñānakāya) and the Essence Body (svabhāvakāya) (1989). The Essence Body refers to both the fact of the inherent emptiness of Buddha's consciousness, and the absence of obscurations in his consciousness. The Wisdom Body, then, is the Buddha's actual omniscient mind-stream. In the Gelukpa tradition, according

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73 There is a long history of disagreement about the actual number of Mahayana kayas that hinges primarily on interpretative between dharmakaya and the svabhavakaya that have been worked through at length elsewhere (e.g., Makransky 1997, Williams 1989), so suffice it to say that these debates may be prevalent in debate courtyards and in Buddhist studies treatises, but were not significant matters for concern at FPMT centers during my research period.
to Williams (1989), only the Wisdom Body represents the ultimate perspective, while in descending order, the conventional perspectives recognize the Essence Body, the Enjoyment Body and the Transformation Body.

One of my informants, a Gelukpa Tibetan lama from outside the FPMT fold, who taught periodically in Europe, told me that the kayas were important for understanding the various emanations of enlightened beings – how Shakyamuni Buddha could be dead, but also present through teachings, and present through holy objects. He felt that the relics were aspects of the nirmanakaya, or tulku body. Another informant, a former monk from the Institute for Buddhist Dialectics, felt that the proper way of understanding relics would be as "representations" of the Buddha's kayas, since the nirmanakaya was a whole body of a Buddha. Williams and Tribe assert that the relics can be thought of a manifestation of the Buddha's dharmakaya (2000: 258). Despite the fact of various interpretations about the kayas, as a category the kayas help to explicate how holy objects can house Buddhas and bodhisattvas – it helps to explain their simultaneous presence and absence.

FPMT leadership, under the tutelage of Lama Zopa Rinpoche, have worked hard to make Tibetan Buddhist holy objects (with the Maitreya Project statue projected to be their crowning jewel) an essential part of the FPMT aesthetics, teachings, and practice. However, this chapter will detail the wide diversity and range of attachments and ambivalences towards holy objects in general within the FPMT community. The cultural biography of the Maitreya Statue begins here, with these simple questions: why a giant statue? Why build a massive holy object and fill it to the brim with more holy objects? What is the significance of statues within the tradition historically, and to what extent does this project represent a departure from those traditions? Why put relics in its heart shrine? Do FPMT devotees process the value of the statue in terms of its aesthetics or its
power, or both? Are holy objects a home for one of the kayas of Buddhas and bodhisattvas: are they present in statues, relics, etcetera?

While holy objects have a long history in Buddhist practice, there is considerable debate about exactly how long certain forms have been acceptable with the tradition. Grouping them into three categories – relics, images, the dharma – the tripartite presences of the Buddha, each of which has its own story, I will endeavor to discuss them, in that order. It is considered general knowledge in FPMT that a good altar will contain actual or symbolic representations for these three presences: a stupa, a statue, and a text. The stupa (associated with reliquaries) symbolizes the Buddha's mind, the statue represents the Buddha's body and the text stands in for Buddha's voice. This chapter is about the things themselves, about various moments and rearticulations of value in their social lives as holy objects.

**Anthropological Things**

Objects were once thought to be peripheral props within anthropological theory, especially since early social theory focused on the sociality of the person to the exclusion of the sociality of the material (see Durkheim 1965 [1915] and Malinowski 1984 [1922], for example). While there have been gestures towards the de-sacralization of the person as sole social agent vis-à-vis objects in Bourdieu's work, such as his writings on the Berber house (1970) or his observations about the form of the student evaluations (1988), there were few other steps taken in anthropology towards an understanding of materiality in and of itself. Increasingly, thanks to new work being done in material culture studies (Appadurai 1986; Kopytoff 1986; Miller 2005; Myers 2001), objects have become the main characters in their own cultural biographies.

As Appadurai notes, "...commodities, like persons, have social lives" (1986: 3). Even though holy objects are not the kind of things that one usually associates with the
word "commodity," Appadurai and others observe that many sacred objects or priceless art works were first produced (or found/identified), then bought/sold (or saved), but were socially transformed into a thing of value either at the beginning of its existence, or somewhere down the road (Appadurai 1986; Kopytoff 1986, Geary 1986), and hence the "gift"/"commodity" and "art"/"artifact" distinctions must be muted if not done away with altogether (Appadurai 1986; Miller 2005; Myers 2001; Thomas 1991; Weiner 1992).

The crux of the problem with the use of these categories is the assumption that the values and contexts and meaning of these objects are fixed. I am in full agreement with the trajectory of material culture studies that instead protests the fluidity and significance of their meanings. I would argue that this underscores the emptiness of the objects, as they and/or their human interlocutors move through time and space. Some sacred objects were culturally transformed into inalienable possessions for the time being, but even these may yet again become objects for exchange/sale/consumption in the future. Many sacred objects are still sold, gifted, exchanged, and otherwise circulated. Ritual objects in Buddhism, like many ritual objects (Davenport 1986; Appadurai 1986), are not permitted to exist long in a commodity state, but there is no doubt that statues are often bought and sold, and sometimes resold (as with antiques).

One cannot ignore the social and political sheen attributed to objects, even religious objects. As Appadurai notes, politics are paramount: "Politics (in the broad sense of relations, assumptions, and contests pertaining to power) is what links value and exchange in the social life of commodities" (1986: 57). For example, the current Burmese military junta has busily constructed monasteries and gilded statues, in order to try to appease some of their unsatisfied citizens. The tooth relic in Kandy, Sri Lanka, is often used in demonstrations of patriotism and power by Sinhalese government officials. In Thailand, the emerald Buddha jewel is housed in the royal palace complex and the king is turned officiant to administer ceremonies in its honor at regular interval; furthermore the
emerald Buddha jewel was a spoil of civil war that served to sacralized various competing kingdoms and rulers through history (Tambiah 1984). This is just not a Buddhist phenomenon, of course, as can be attested to by cultural significance the British crown jewels, or as demonstrated by the debates about the true owners of the Elgin marbles and other antiquities that have long histories and ever-changing political significance (Fiskejo 2007; Hamilakis 1999).

Holy objects essentially hinge upon the notion of value(s), both shifting moral values, and economic values. Appadurai usefully observes that the social mediation of objects is accomplished through "regimes of value" that are themselves often fluid over time and in space (1986: 4). Myers is correct when he asserts that values and equivalences are constantly transforming, not breaking down, and that the changes must be understood in terms of shifting dynamics of people, boundaries and power (2001).

Objects are no longer just tools, but like people, they are simultaneously shaped by, and shaping, the societies around them. The real and imputed effects of holy objects give them a special place in the discussion of the agency of objects. Alfred Gell has written of the "secondary" agency of objects in which the objects that humans create have the ability to affect human lives (1998: 20). He writes that it is possible to proceed with a theory in which "persons or 'social agents' are, in certain contexts, substituted for by art objects" (1998: 5). Acknowledging the Maussian roots of a theory in which the object extends and retains the person, Gell forwards a theory of agency for objects that also applies normative anthropological theory, such as "the study of relationships over the life course (the relationships through which culture is acquired and reproduced) and the life-projects which agents seek to realize through their relations with others" to the study of objects (11). While the "primary" agency lies with a person, but the "secondary" agency of objects is significant in and of itself: "The little girl's doll is not a self-sufficient agent like an (idealized) human being, even the girl herself does not think so. But the doll is an
emanation or manifestation of agency (actually, primarily the child's own), a mirror, vehicle, or channel of agency, and hence, a source of such potent experiences of the copresence of an agent as to make no difference" (20).

Gell extends his theory of art objects to other objects and back again. He pays particular attention to "idols" or religious objects, and attributes to them the same "secondary" agency, no more or less, than he allows for other objects. While Gell's cursory glance at Buddhist images (148) is unsatisfying, to say the least, some of his more astute observations about other religious objects can be handily extended to Buddhist objects. His discussion of idols, such as statues or paintings of a Goddess in Hinduism, shows that the eye contact between image and devotee creates an interdependent pathway of agency, a mirroring effect as the devotee implicitly sees the statue seeing her (120). This is not entirely different from the way that a Tibetan Buddhist might experience taking a blessing from a statue, such as the Jowo statue enshrined in the Jokhang temple in Lhasa. Some faithful FPMT informants reported experiences with certain stupas, relics and statues that constituted feelings of mutual recognition.

Actor-Network Theory enterprise proponents, such as Bruno Latour, have moved past Gell to argue that objects have at least as much social agency as anything or anyone else. The have also worked to insist that non-human objects have agency as well as humans (Latour 1996), in the process defining "actants" as both non-human and human actors, since both work upon each other in relation to the sociocultural networks in which they are embedded (Latour 2005). In Aramis or the Love of Technology, Bruno Latour's exploration of Aramis is a useful example of how social scientists can effectively

74 For the record, Gell, in his treatise on art and anthropology (1998), argues that relics do not animate a statue, but rather, they make it "dead" through the insertion of a "death-substance." Gell writes that as monks handle these relics, they are themselves "semi-dead," and that Buddhahood implies a "death-in-life" (1998:149). As Gell's work seems to argue that monks are strictly aniconic in practice (drawing strongly on text to make his argument), it evinces something of an Orientalist hangover.
represent objects as co-constituting agents (1996). Aramis, a technological innovation in public transportation that was supposed to be built in Paris, was cancelled in 1987. Latour's whodunnit asks: who, exactly, is responsible for the murder of Aramis? He follows the personal history of the object as it weaves its way from idea(s), to prototype, to models, and then back to idea/text. Latour argues that the line between human and machine (object) is more blurry than immediately obvious, since objects such as Aramis have their own "life" and "death," just like their creators. Although Aramis is no more, for some twenty years Aramis was in the process of becoming, so much so that Latour gives the machine a voice with which to express a will to live, frustration at the reticence of his ersatz makers, and despair at having been loved too little. In demonstrating that objects must be taken more seriously by social scientists, and that technicians must take people and culture more seriously, Latour brings the agency of the object to a new level.

Daniel Miller, a proponent of material culture studies, also seeks to take the human subject off its pedestal to recognize both the objectivity and materiality of the subject, as well as the agency and sociality of the object (2005). He lauds Bourdieu's attention to the construction of human sociality through everyday things, and goes one to say that anthropologists must show the object as a primary agent. He writes, "In short, we need to show how the things that people make, make people" (38).

I frame this discussion of holy objects with the material culture studies literature in order to foreground the agency, the biographies, and the cultures of objects. For holy objects that are thought to embody Buddhas and bodhisattvas, the agency imputed to the objects by FPMT believers is thought to be "primary" not "secondary." Holy objects seen in this light are extensions of the holy persons, and are often thought to be able to bless or grant favors to devotees. It is in this light that relics, statues and altars must be seen, as objects that blur the boundaries between "primary" and "secondary" agency, if indeed the boundary exists at all.
Holy objects are currently very significant to the internal culture of FPMT; indeed, they are a favorite passion of Lama Zopa Rinpoche. Lama Yeshe was never adverse to holy objects, but he did not ask his devotees to make them in the same quantity, quality or size as his disciple, Lama Zopa Rinpoche, has tended to do. Most early FPMT writings both from Lama Yeshe and Lama Zopa Rinpoche focused on Buddhist philosophy and meditation practice, and although these topics remain central to the teachings, holy objects have now entered the equation in much more prevalent manner. Holy objects have a long history within Buddhism in general, including Tibetan Buddhism, as I shall explore later in this chapter, so Lama Zopa Rinpoche's pronounced emphasis on holy objects does not rest outside of the tradition he practices; rather, what is notable about Lama Zopa Rinpoche, according to many ethnic and elite Tibetan Buddhists both inside and outside of FPMT, is a more pronounced enthusiasm for holy objects, which stands in marked contrast to his Tibetan Buddhist peers and even his teachers, such as Lama Yeshe, Geshe Sopa and the Dalai Lama.

In the philosophical work of Madhyamika Tibetan Buddhism, the emphasis is on the emptiness of all things, and thus holy objects too are counted as inherently empty from their own side. In "Different Ways of Looking at Things," a chapter of a book taken from talks given in 1990, Lama Zopa Rinpoche discusses the fundamentally emptiness of all things: objects, people, etcetera (2008). He writes "Everything – what is called 'I,' 'action,' and 'object,' the names that we say and hear – is labeled. When we talk, we talk by labeling on a base. From morning to night, everything we think, talk or hear about is labeled. We think things that we have labeled. We talk about things that we have labeled. We hear things that we have labeled. Everything, every word, shows that it is empty of existing from its own side. Everything, every word, shows that it is a
dependent arising, merely imputed by the mind in dependence upon its base" (Rinpoche 2008: 85-86). The emptiness of all things is a cornerstone of Buddhist belief, and Tibetan Buddhists do not consider emptiness of objects to be at odds with the sacralization and worship of holy objects.

In a discussion on the lam-rim, Lama Zopa Rinpoche discussed the nature of the "clock" at length (Rinpoche 2008). "When we hear 'clock,' it means a dependent arising. A clock exists in dependence upon two things—the appropriate base and the mind that labels it 'clock'… It's the same with all the sense objects: forms, sounds, smells, tastes, and tangible objects. Again, they are nothing other than that which is merely imputed in dependence upon their base. That which is called "form" is what is labeled in dependence upon a base that has color and shape and is an object of the eye-sense" (Rinpoche 2008: 63). In the same talk, Lama Zopa Rinpoche discusses the classic Buddhist example of a perceiver seeing a "snake," although in actuality it is a coiled rope; he notes that both the misperception of the snake and the perception of rope are both imputed by the observer as if truly existing. In FPMT discourse, the emptiness of these objects is absolute, and the method for recognizing the true nature of things is to acknowledge the misperception: "When you see a table, it appears to be something completely real from its own side, but this is a hallucination, the object to be refuted. In reality it is not there. When you look at a flower, think, 'This real flower appearing from its own side is a projection, a hallucination. In reality, there's no such thing there'" (83). While no object is real in the ultimate sense, holy objects are considered efficacious. Holy objects are statues, relics, thangka paintings, precious malas, etcetera. Lama Zopa Rinpoche has also written that as part of guru devotional practices one should see the guru as a holy object (FPMT 2004b: 6).

Lama Zopa Rinpoche has written and talked extensively about the notion that making and worshipping stupas and statues has extensive benefits towards purification.
and merit-making. Lama Zopa Rinpoche observes that despite the fact that the teachings emphasize the importance of intentionality in Buddhist karma-production and merit-making, there is an exception when it comes to holy objects. "...it is said that due to the power of holy objects, even if one makes offerings, prostrations and circumambulations to them with an impure motivation such as angers, it all becomes the cause of omniscience" (Courtin and Zopa 2003: 27).

When making mandala offerings during a guru puja one is supposed to make offerings to the guru, because a/he is the object with whom one has the closest dharma connection. Lama Zopa Rinpoche writes, "The guru is the most powerful object for creating merit, whether that person is actually enlightened or not" (FPMT 2004b: 6).

Enlightenment is just one of many desired "felicit ies" in FPMT's brand of Buddhism. Steven Collins' (1998) keen observation that nirvana is just one of the many rewards and "felicit ies" desired and sought by practicing Buddhists is illustrated precisely by the FPMT literature that outlines in detail the many benefits of making various holy objects. Lama Zopa Rinpoche enumerates the benefits of making holy objects in these terms: 1) "Birth as a Wheel Turning King"; 2) "Attaining Perfect Concentration"; 3) "Achieving the Arya Path"; 4) "Attaining Enlightenment" (FPMT 2006a).

Lama Zopa Rinpoche has also emphasized the perspective that size matters, since the number of atoms making up a holy objects determines the size of the karmic benefit. In explaining the first category of benefits outlined above he writes, "When King Sogyal asked Lord Buddha about the benefits of making holy objects, he explained that equal to the number of atoms that the statue or stupa contains, for that many lifetimes the person who sponsored or made that holy object will be born as a king in the "deva human" realm, where the enjoyments are millions of times greater than the most developed human wealth" (FPMT 2006a: 11). The fact that size matters to Lama Zopa Rinpoche may shed some light on FPMT's decision to build the biggest statue in the world.
In terms of creating perfect concentration, Lama Zopa Rinpoche writes that, "the next Benefit is that as many atoms the stupa or statue has, that many causes to achieve perfect concentration, shamatha, are created" (FPMT 2006a: 11). Similarly, "The next benefit is that, as many atoms as a statue or stupa has, that many causes to achieve the arya path are created by the person who makes or sponsors that holy object" (FPMT 2006a: 13). Finally, enlightenment is also a benefit of holy object, as it "directs your life towards enlightenment": "As many atoms as a statue or stupa has, that many causes of enlightenment are created by the person who sponsors or makes that holy object. The benefit of attaining enlightenment is that after you attain it, you liberate and enlighten numberless other sentient beings from all their oceans of samsaric suffering and its cause and bring them to enlightenment" (FPMT 2006a: 13).

Lama Zopa Rinpoche also quotes the Buddha as he lists the eighteen benefits for building a stupa:

1. One will be reborn into a royal family.
2. One will have a beautiful body.
3. One's speech will be entrancing.
4. One's mere sight will be a great joy for others to behold.
5. One will have a charming and attractive personality.
6. One will be erudite in the five sciences
7. One will become a support (example to all).
8. One will be praised from all directions.
9. One will be inclined to sounds and words of the dharma.
10. One will live only with happiness.
11. One will be venerated by both men and gods.
12. One will obtain great riches.
13. One will be granted a long life.
14. All one's wishes will be fulfilled.
15. One's beneficial activity and wisdom will only grow.
16. One body will become as indestructible as a dorje (diamond).
17. One will be reborn in the higher realms of existence.
18. One will quickly reach perfect awakening.

Apart from these, countless other benefits are announced in many sutras and tantras (FPMT 2006a: 17-18).
There is no discussion of how these benefits relate to one another in the texts or in Lama Zopa Rinpoche's discourses. That is, how one might simultaneously be reborn in as wheel-turning king for the number of lifetimes equivalent to the number of atoms in the sponsored holy object, and also quickly attain enlightenment. Given the enthusiasm for holy objects evinced by Lama Zopa Rinpoche in both his discourses, writing and directions to his sangha to build more and more holy objects, there is little doubt that even though some of FPMT's students struggle to digest his lists of benefits, Lama Zopa Rinpoche himself appears to have unmitigated faith in these directives.

According to FPMT teachings, the merit of building a statue or stupa can be shared, as one can dedicate the merit of sponsoring a holy object to the deceased, and to other sentient beings. As with other holy objects, another way to make merit for oneself and others is to make offerings to the holy objects that have been constructed. Mourners of the deceased can also make offering to the holy objects and also dedicate the merit of these offerings to the deceased (FPMT 2006a: 17). Since a forthcoming chapter will focus solely upon gifts and offering in FPMT, so I will not go into greater depth here.

In FPMT, merit-making is not only accomplished through the production of holy objects or by making offering to them, merit is also made through the direct physical worship of these agents. Lama Zopa Rinpoche has also written and talked a great deal about the importance of making prostrations to holy objects, and again noted that the more objects, and the greater in size, the better. He writes that if one were to enter a room full of holy objects (such as one's own altar room if grand enough), one can prostrate or even just make a symbolic gesture (mudra) of prostration in order to receive eight benefits as listed in the sutra "Offering the Butter Lamp":

1. One receives a good body of high caste, which people respect and obey and which includes having perfect organs and a beautiful or handsome form.
2. One will have perfect surroundings and helpers.
3. One will be able to live morally.
4. One will have devotion, or faith, which is the main factor for completing the accumulation of merit. (Being without faith is like a vehicle without fuel – unable to function – or like everything in a city not functioning and collapsing when there is no electricity.)
5. One will have a very brave mind for practicing Dharma and working for other sentient beings, a mind brave in facing up to the delusions.
6. One will be reborn as a deva or a human being.
7. One will achieve the Arya path.
8. One will become enlightened.
(Rinpoche 2006a: 6)

Lama Zopa Rinpoche's writings and teachings emphasize the many felicities of mere prostrations to holy objects.

Lama Yeshe's relationship to holy objects was of a different nature than that of Lama Zopa Rinpoche. I have heard several long-term FPMT devotees describe the ways that Lama Yeshe was very flexible, creative and tolerant regarding different ways of treating holy objects and altars. For example, long time devotees that I interviewed without exception noted that Lama Yeshe kept a non-traditional altar with items that he found or had been given, while Lama Zopa Rinpoche was keen towards more traditional altars (and the more altars the better). Several FPMTers who were Lama Yeshe's devotees before Lama Zopa Rinpoche took over the leadership wondered if he would have been unhappy with the size and scope of the Maitreya Project statue, but others disagreed with this criticism, saying that Lama Yeshe would definitely have been supportive of the enormity of the project. While it is impossible to know what he would have thought about the project or its scope, what is certain is that Lama Yeshe was not as focused on holy objects in his talks, writing and conversations as Lama Zopa Rinpoche has been.

When the young Lama Osel began experimenting with the daily offerings to his altar – "He'd invent different ways to make these offerings. He'd put the little crystal bowls in various different patterns and add colouring to the water. It took much longer,
but he showed me what creativity could do to transform a fairly mechanistic daily rite” (Mackenzie 1995: 189-190) – a long-time devotee noted that this creativity reflected Lama Yeshe's unconventional relationship to holy objects: "This is so like Lama Yeshe, who would transgress the conventional monastic rules by creating his own altars—full of diverse, imaginative objects like shells and clay animals that represented things that were precious to him. Once he put a toy airplane on the altar, as that was the hallowed means by which he could reach sentient beings around the globe" (190).

According to long-time devotees, under Lama Zopa Rinpoche's leadership, FPMT culture has become increasingly preoccupied with the construction, sponsorship and worship of holy objects, and this has precipitated a whole host of books, DVDs and talks on the efficacy and importance of holy objects. Lama Zopa's discourses are consistent with the teachings of the Tibetan Buddhist tradition, but his emphasis on holy objects is more pronounced and more often articulated than one would find in his contemporaries, and in the teachings of his very own teachers: Lama Yeshe, Geshe Sopa and the current Dalai Lama. I have no evidence to suggest that Lama Zopa Rinpoche's enthusiasm for holy objects is simply a socially viable conduit for his engagement with contemporary globalized cultures of commodification, but this line of questioning might be productively explored in the future. Perhaps the holy objects are the most obvious culturally permissible place for a rich guru to accumulate wealth. His devotees often point out that Lama Zopa Rinpoche uses holy objects as a way to inspire and motivate practice; one long-time FPMTer noted something to the effect that Lama Zopa Rinpoche sees the world differently than ordinary people do, and to him the whole world is gold plated, dripping with holy objects and topped with clouds of offerings. Devotees rarely criticize his emphasis on holy objects, but rather note that Lama Zopa Rinpoche is compassionately trying to improve the world we live in by bringing more and more objects of beauty and spiritual efficacy into the world. While all objects are thought to be
empty from their own side, including holy objects, in contemporary FPMT discourse holy objects are extremely sacred things with immanent power.

Memory

In essence, holy objects are about remembrance; they are the embodiment of figures and ideas that Buddhists are compelled to mindfully recollect and reaffirm. However, the passage of time itself poses a unique conundrum to the Buddhist community. The "I" has ceased to exist, based on the premise that the self is ever-changing and has no essential core being, so one is forced to ask, who or what moves through time? If there is no self (anatman), where do memories reside? How are they carried forward if the self is reinvented moment by moment? Who remembers? Who anticipates? Gyatso's edited volume expertly tackles the question of Buddhists in time, demonstrating that the place of memory in Buddhism is complex, and textually often either ignored or left opaque (1992). "Smrti," the Sanskrit term often associated with memory, has another meaning: "mindfulness," which evokes the state of meditation (4).

Memory and meditation are often linked. Kapstein argues that the adherents of the Great Perfection tradition believe that enlightenment is our pure state of mind, which has been forgotten or polluted (2000). Therefore, in this context memory serves as a meditative means to recovering, or remembering, our natural state of mental bliss. Additionally, meditation involves recollection of teachings, mnemonic devices, etc in the service of remembering the Dharma. Gyatso points out that memory in meditation is also "habit memory," which theoretically affects the subject in the present without their realization of it (1992). Cox focuses on the fact that in order to meditate on an object or idea the attentiveness required to hold onto the thought in one's mind is a specific type of necessary memory (1992). This fixity is reiterated by Nyanaponika's discussion of how the object of meditation must be held over time in the mind in order to be marked and
remembered, in order to facilitate the future recollection of that object (1992). Harrison writes that the visualization of the Buddha's body in meditation is commemorative memory, and lends itself to transference in which the meditator imagines taking on the qualities of the Buddha (1992).

If the memory of the past only happens when some "enduring subjective substratum" (Gyatso 1992:11) exists to retain recollections, is the doctrine of no-self effectively negated? Despite the fact that some Buddhist schools have tackled this issue, Gyatso reports the paucity of analysis on the subject (1992). The Yogacara texts posit "a store consciousness," a theoretical notion which some contemporary and ancient scholars have deemed in tension with the no-self doctrine. Sarvastivadans wrote about memories as part of "mental bundles" which recur depending on internal and external conditions and factors. The Abhidharma text also provides an important engagement with the question of memory: "Vasubandhu's Abhidharmakosa account describes a memory in which both the remembered content and the rememberer are causally connected and part of the same stream as their past identities, yet are not identical with those past identities" (Gyatso 1992:11). In response to Vasubandhu's claims, Griffiths wonders where the traces exist before they are remembered, if indeed they are separate from the original subject (1992). The notion of memory in Buddhism retains its contentious nature, as the controversy has by no means been resolved.

Lopez has written about the central importance of the Buddha's own epic feat of memory as he approached enlightenment under the Bodhi tree 2500 years ago (1992). The hagiography of the Buddha reports that he recalled in detail all of his past lives in succession. Lopez hypothesizes that the Buddha "needed to remember in order to forget" (Gyatso 1992: 10). Lopez also argues that in the case of the Buddha memory was efficacious in an almost psychoanalytic way: "...Freud wrote, 'a thing which has not been understood inevitably reappears; like an unlaid ghost, it cannot rest until the mystery has
been solved and the spell broken'; samsara as the return of the repressed, if you will" (1992:31). Yet Lopez proceeds to observe that the Buddha's memory is usefully revised and utilized to meet his goals in the present, that is, to provide illustrations for his teaching on the four noble truths. The Buddha was not only remembering or forgetting – he was constructing a memory for the present.

Gyatso notes that beyond the hagiography and Jataka tales of the Buddha(s) there are many examples of (auto)biographies of lamas and scholars of ancient Buddhism, especially in Tibet that institutionalize memories of individuals (1992). Her own work on the esoteric autobiography of Jigme Lingpa demonstrates that shared memories serve to narrate and situate the present (Gyatso 1998). The proliferation of such commemorations especially provoked Gyatso to remark that, "...even if the Buddha needed to remember in order to forget, many Buddhists want to remember in order to remember" (1992:16).

Attachment to the past, although discouraged from one perspective, has still been institutionalized in the annals of Buddhist text, ritual and practice. Relics, images and statues, and even the dharma (the body of Buddhist text) serve as routine commemorations of the Buddha(s) and as "technolog(ies) of remembrance and representation." The slippages between past, present and future are largely accomplished through the vehicles of relics, statues, images, and other holy objects.

**Dharma/Text**

One of the tripartite "presences" of the Buddha(s) is the dharma, that is, the Buddha's teachings, which was eventually materialized into text, but since the materiality

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75 Trainor (1997) specifically called relics a "technology of remembrance and representation," yet I argue that the description is an apt fit for statues and images of the Buddha as well.
76 The dharma constitute the totality of the Buddha's teachings, yet I use the term loosely, with the understanding that there is no certainty in scholarship as to what if anything that is attributed to the Buddha was ever actually taught by the historical figure.
of text is somewhat less significant for FPMT, this will be a very short section indeed. The dharma is the third material tradition that is thought to embody the Buddha, and hence provide a temporal mediation of his distance. In the Theravadin text, the Samyutta Nikaya, the Buddha proclaims that, "Whoever sees me (the Buddha) sees the Dhamma; whoever sees the Dhamma sees me (the Buddha)" (Swearer 2004:17). In certain scriptures, the texts themselves are also considered to be the "guru" or master (Wayman 1987: 197). Finally, Reiko Ohnuma makes an argument about how the body of the Buddha and the body of the dharma are portrayed in certain Jatakas as one and the same (1998).

Buddhist books (Tibetan: *pechas*), as religious texts, are considered to be sacred objects in Tibetan Buddhism. In Tibet, there are many texts that are circumambulated for devotees to create merit. Portions of texts were carved onto stones or into rocks by the side of the road, and passersby would make merit by passing or circumambulating them. Sacred texts often form a part of the altar, as the books are supposed to sit above the images, but often are arranged around them. Within FPMT, even contemporary dharma books are considered holy objects insofar as they can be carried around, but never allowed to touch the floor. Students are also directed not to set small statues and stupa on top of holy texts (FPMT 2006a: 29). One can also make merit by making offerings to the texts, such as giving "robes" (cloth book covers), water, incense, light, perfume, etc. In the FPMT text, Lama Zopa Rinpoche writes, "So make prayers and offerings to as many texts as you can think of and you will create unbelievable merit" (29).

There are certain texts that are felt to have special efficacy when read or recited. The Arya Sanghata Sutra, which was only recently translated into English, and circulated for free by Ani Damcho (Diana Finnegan), is one such text. At some FPMT centers, including the Delhi Tushita center there was an effort to bring devotees together to read and recite it together. The benefits of reciting even portions of the sutra are thought to
be innumerable. At relic tour events, as noted, there are certain sutras that lay open for perusal on the altar, since they are thought to be especially efficacious. There are other sutras that are set up with tracing paper so that devotees or attendees can trace portions of the sutra in gold marker. This is an echo of Lama Zopa Rinpoche's own efforts to make very beautiful copies of specific sutras in his own hand, on special paper and in gold ink. "Offering gold" to the Prajñaparamita Sutra or the Arya Sanghata Sutra is thought to bring "unbelievable merit." Often, Lama Zopa Rinpoche's sutra copying efforts are especially dedicated to the speedy realization of the dream to make the Maitreya Project a reality.

Another sign of the significance of text in FPMT is that it brings many Westerners to Buddhism and FPMT in the first place. Almost every single FPMTer that I interviewed, who had joined the organization during the Lama Zopa Rinpoche era, noted during their life histories that they first discovered Buddhist thought through books. Whether spiritual guides by Lama Yeshe, the Dalai Lama and others, read for pleasure, or academic Buddhist books read for college classes, many of FPMT's students, devotees and sangha trace their relationship with Buddhism from the books they read long before they came to India, tried a meditation, sought a teacher or took a course. In these terms, both texts by Buddhists and texts about Buddhism have played an important role in spreading messages that have led people to seek out FPMT.

**Relics**

Relics are the material remnants of famous Buddhist personages, which serve to embody, emanate and echo the presence of the deceased (Schopen 1991 and 1997; Strong 2004; Trainor 1997). Buddhists from a wide vary of Asian Buddhist traditions believe relics to be the bones, ash or even small pearl-like spherical deposits that remain after the cremation of a holy teacher or Buddha. Even the hair or nail clippings that came from a
revered living teacher in the Tibetan tradition are considered relics. However popular relics are with many ethnic Buddhists, they are somewhat more challenging for many elite Buddhists, especially Europeans and Americans. The ambivalence of converts about the sacredness of relics has been normative since the early days of Western Buddhism, perhaps because converts romanticized Eastern traditions as less materialistic in contrast to the mores of Western consumerism; even the Buddhists Theosophy Society's Colonel Olcott disagreed on this point with his Sri Lankan protégé Angarika Dharmapala, and their parting of ways is thought to have been occasioned by Dharmapala's sense that Olcott had failed to pay proper respect to a relic (Strong 2008).

While relics of the Buddha and his disciples are most important, there are valuable relics from great lamas and Buddhist teachers throughout the ages. A video shown at every relic tour stop, the Maitreya Project DVD, shows a monk gathering small relics from a smoky cremation ground with a spoon, as a voice-over reports that relics are still being generated by important Buddhist lamas (MPI 2004). Kopan monastery, the central monastery of FPMT, located in Nepal, houses many relics, including those of Lama Konchok, a recently deceased teacher whose relics are on prominent display there (Courtin and Zopa 2003). FPMT literature is unambiguously assertive about the power of lamas, and considers the remains of lamas after death a gift to living from the deceased. Lama Zopa Rinpoche writes that "Relics are very precious. Relics are manifested and remains are left behind due to the kindness of holy beings for the sake of us sentient beings to collect merit and purify obscurations" (Courtin and Zopa 2003: 25).

Trainor reports that relics are highly valued in Buddhist practice, especially "relics of the Buddha," since they are thought to be efficacious in terms of removing

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77 Trainor is immediately concerned with the prevalence of an ambivalent attitude towards scholarly work on relics and their place in Buddhist ritual (1997). Trainor critiques the notion that the earliest texts represent the "truest" and most authentic Buddhism possible, and that ritual was simply a degeneration of the tradition. Rhys Davids and other Orientalist scholars as well as missionaries began the "textual reification" of Buddhism as if it the tradition were buried in the pages of text, unintentionally affecting change in Buddhist practice in Sri Lanka and elsewhere.
obstacles from the path of Buddhist practice (1997). Trainor (1997) and Strong (2004) both classify relics on the standard Theravadin three-fold scale, "corporeal relics," "relics of use," and "commemorative relics," but both foreground the first (and to some extent, the second) while disregarding the third type altogether.\(^{78}\) "Corporeal relics" are physical remnants of the deceased, and usually represented by the dagaba, the stupa, i.e., "relic chamber" in Sinhalese (Trainor 1997). "Relics of use" are objects/belongings of the deceased – robes, bowls, etc. – often represented in Theravadin traditions by the famous Bodhi Tree under which the Buddha attained enlightenment. "Commemorative relics" are images of the Buddha, that is, statues, paintings, etc. "Commemorative relics" are of a slightly different pedigree,\(^{79}\) which is the reason that these images are usually not considered relics in the strict sense, and why I will be addressing these "relics" under the heading of "images."

The Mahaparinirvana Sutra (hereafter, the MPNS) is the Buddhist record of the death of the Shakyamuni Buddha; the MPNS reports the Buddha’s advice regarding what ought to be done with his body after death,\(^{80}\) how a stupa is to be built, etc., and as such it provides the textual origin for relic veneration and pilgrimage in general (Trainor 1997). Returning to the MPNS, Trainor shows that the veneration of the Buddha's body by Mahakassapa was so important that the deities delayed the lighting of the funeral pyre to

\(^{78}\) Otherwise unqualified reference to "relics" will refer to the first of these categories as per standard contemporary meaning.

\(^{79}\) Frazer's notions of "sympathetic magic" can be useful in making this distinction (1978). "Homeopathic magic" works according to the notion that similar things are connected; "commemorative relics" are like "homeopathic magic" as like images are associated with the presence/power of the original. "Contagious magic" which associates items which have been in contact with one another fits the logic behind the power associated with "corporeal relics" and "relics of use," since they are presumed to have gained their efficacy and power through physical contact with the Buddha.

\(^{80}\) Within Buddhist scholarship there is some controversy about Buddha's direction to allow the Brahmins and householders to care for the body ("sarira"). Schopen's work sent shockwaves through the Buddhist studies community, which had long advocated for a reading of the MPNS in which the Buddha told monks not to waste their time with devotion to relics, when he re-translated and re-interpreted the text to argue that relic worship was not precluded by the Buddha before his death (1991). Trainor favors Schopen’s argument that Buddha's textual command is not meant to devalue relic worship, but that the word sarira (as in sarira-puja) is used to mean body before death as opposed to the relics after death (1997).
ensure his ability to do so. This reading is confirmed in a later work by Swearer, who notes that the MPNS encourages Buddhists to not only follow the dhamma, but also to worship his remains (2004). Trainor also examines the Milindapandha text in order to demonstrate that there is no prohibition against the worship of relics (1997). Furthermore, he points to archaeological evidence that indicates the widespread worship of relics in the past in India, a practice which had taken hold by the Ashokan era at the latest.

Schopen argued that the relics themselves had historically served to make the Buddha "actually present and alive" to devotees (1997: 126). Calling the phenomenon, "the localization of presence" (1997: 97), Trainor argues that the relics serve to impart an air of sacredness to the sites they occupy. In effect, the sacralization of the relics is a means of affecting the "presence" of the Buddha. According to Trainor, while only Mahayana is known for its countless accessible Buddhas and bodhisattvas, even Theravadin Buddhist rituals evoke the "presence" of the historical Buddha through these sacred objects. Tambiah also notes that while an orthodox textual position would have Theravadins reject icons as anything other than mere reminders of the Buddha's great achievements, the tradition more or less came around to recognize "fiery energy" or "radiance" from Buddha images that are created in the true likeness of the Buddha (Tambiah 1984: 231).

Steven Collins rejects the idea that Buddha could be "present" in the present by virtue of statues and relics mostly due to the Judeo-Christian theological associations with the terminology (1998). Collins takes the whole debate on "presence" to task: "... in general one might say, adapting Bergson's remark about societies (that they are 'machines for generating gods'), that transcendental visions are machines for generating presence-absence discourse... for traditional Buddhism there had to be some way for nirvana and Buddhahood to be immanent in the here-and-now, both through objects
such as statues, relics, and books (stage-props in the Buddhist socio-religious theater) and imaginatively, as something 'good to think''' (1998:25). While Collins balks at the notion that the Buddha is "present" in the present, he does note that the slipperiness of the final nirvana leaves the Buddha somehow not explicitly dead: "Famously, perhaps notoriously, four alternatives are all said to be inapplicable to the state of an enlightened person after death: it is wrong to say that he or she exists, does not exist, both exists and does not exist, or neither exists nor does not exist" (244). Collins is then forced to concede that material aspects of religious culture mediate the Nirvanic non-death of the Shakyamuni Buddha as a kind of presence. Collins' sensitivity to the terminology of "presence" is duly noted, but the evidence at hand which indicates that an affective presence is created through ritual is ultimately more compelling.

Strong (2004), like Trainor and Schopen, affirms the presence of the Buddha in Buddhist relic practices; Strong forwards an interpretation of the relics as an extension of the life of the Buddha. Strong argues that it is not enough to observe that the relics embody the Buddha, since the relics represent the extension of his biography into the present: "...the relics continue to do things the Buddha did, to fill the roles the Buddha filled; but they also do new things the Buddha never did. They write new chapters in the Buddha's life story" (2004: 8).

Strong's view of the Buddha's hagiography would not end at Mahaparinirvana, since the relics are pieces of the Buddha which propel his being indefinitely through time (2004). In fact, there is a narrative that prophesizes that in the future when the decline of the dharma leads to a lapse in devotion to the relics, all the relics of the Buddha will magically reassemble, form an image of the Buddha, and then by bursting into flame, attain a final nirvana, or "final extinction" of their own. Only after the relics are thus consumed, Strong argues, will the Buddha's biography be brought to its ultimate closure (224). However, compelling this view of the future Mahaparinirvana may be, there are
also narratives in the Buddhist tradition which would preserve certain of Buddha's relics into Maitreya's era, making relics a material bridge between Buddhas (Strong 2004). In this tale, Maitreya will honor the relics of his predecessor, but not take them for himself. Schopen's narration of a text in which the Buddha stood over a site of the previous Buddha, Kashyapa's, relics, indicate that in some texts, Buddha relics are not thought to undergo their own ultimate Mahaparinirvana (1997). In fact, my own FPMT informants, like many Tibetan Buddhists, believe that Kashyapa's relics are still in active circulation, and the Maitreya Project Relic Tour has relics reputed to come from both the Shakyamuni Buddha and the Kashyapa Buddha (see Figure 8).

Figure 8. Kashyapa Buddha Relic at the MPI Headquarters in Bodh Gaya in the spring of 2007. (Photograph by Jessica Falcone.)

While Strong is perceptive to identify a new nuance regarding relics in some aspects of literature and practice, he perhaps overemphasizes the notion that relics can "best be understood as expressions and extensions of his biography" (229), by insinuating that it is
always so. The ability of Buddha's relics to coexist with the Maitreya Buddha in certain texts, and the fact that the past and present Buddha's relics co-exist today, means that to some Buddhists the relics are not always indicative of an extended "second life" of the Buddha, since Buddhist cosmology firmly and universally states that two Buddhas cannot influence the same place (Buddha Field) at the same time.

Trainor asserts that the relics themselves have been the objects of desire and attachment, as according to the MPNS, several clans were on the verge of war in order to lay claim to the Buddha's relics (1997); the relics were eventually distributed in ten parts, but according to some narratives there were attempts at "relic theft" even in the midst of the distribution. The famous "Kandyan tooth" relic which is notably on display in Sri Lanka is thought to be the focal point of the authority of Sinhalese rulers, and was even moved to each new capital, demonstrating its absolute importance to the regime.

Recently, when relics were unearthed in the archaeological dig in the ruins of ancient city of Kapilavastu, there was a tug-of-war between the Indian and Sri Lankan governments regarding the relics, since the Sinhalese were dismayed that the relics were not being worshipped (Srivastava 1986). Eventually the relics were sent to tour Sri Lanka for a period of 95 days, and received the attentions and devotions of politicians as well as the general public. Relics are often in great demand, and Buddhists have desired them so much that religious sites without "genuine" relics are considered to have lesser efficacy.

Several lists of the fast proliferating relics of the Buddha offer evidence to scholars that by the 5th century CE almost every monastery had enshrined "authentic" relics (Trainor 1997: 122). The explosion of relics can in part be understood by the reports that Ashoka redistributed at least one cache of relics to install 84,000 relics in

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81 Many instances of "relic theft" have been recorded in Buddhist history (Trainor 1997), and there are also some instances in which Theravadins have argued that "a relic theft is not theft" (135). This is not unlike the double edge of medieval relic theft as described by Geary (1986), as the relic theft serves to certify the value
various stupas around his kingdom (Subramanyam 1998). In addition, some Buddhists, particularly devotees of Tibetan Buddhism, believe that relics can reproduce themselves, or just magically appear — "self-arising."

The desire for the authentic presence of the Buddha that is evoked by his relics exercises a strong pull on many Buddhists, which is arguably contrary to the admonition to non-attachment that is mandated by Buddhist ontology. Yet if sometimes a "relic theft is not a theft" (Trainor 1997), then we can glean why desire for relics is not necessarily considered unmeritorious desire.

The presence of the Buddha accomplished by relics represents a slippage in both space and time. Strong's observation regarding the continuing life of the Buddha through his relics is proof positive that in some realms of the Buddhist tradition, at least, the presence of the Buddha in the present is not just affective, but quite literal indeed. The presence of the Buddha and others available through their relics makes these objects unique, for as Geary notes in reference to medieval relics, "Like slaves, relics belong to that category, unusual in Western society, of objects that are both persons and things" (Geary 1986: 169). Perhaps not as unusual in the Asian societies where Buddhism has flourished for millennia, the relics are now posing something of a challenge to many new Buddhists in FPMT.

Relics arguably fall into Appadurai's category of "enclaved" Commodities (1986: 24), or "objects whose commodity life is ideally brief, whose movement is restricted, and which are apparently not "priced" the way other things might be" (24), since the social rules for their movement highlight their scarcity, authenticity and sacredness.

The question of the authentication of relics is less an issue regarding those objects encased in ancient stupas, but for those which have been on the move, there are reputedly methodologies in various Buddhist traditions for establishing the authenticity of a relic. The question of what is real and true, often serves to underline the fluidity, and
ephemerality of realness and trueness along the way, for as Spooner writes, "Authenticity is a conceptualization of elusive, inadequately defined, other cultural, socially ordered genuineness" (1986: 225). Like Geary's medieval relics (1986), Buddhist relics also undergo specific (e)valuations, and are certified (and recertified over time as the object changes hands by gift, theft or sale) according to certain socially constructed categories of value. A special expertise is necessary for this kind of evaluation, and so it falls to the guru to decide which relics are real and which are not. In FPMT, it is Lama Zopa Rinpoche's certification that is needed to establish a relic as unquestionably authentic. Spooner's essay on the question of authenticity in the realm of Oriental carpet consumption demonstrates that signs of "real" and "authentic" not only change over time, but are manufactured just as surely as the objects themselves (1986).

In terms of Buddhist relics in FPMT, the question of authenticity is also paramount, but the heart of the negotiation of authenticity has less to do with taste (as it did with Spooner's informants), and more to do with faith. If a venerated monastic proclaims a relic to be authentic, then it is for devotees to negotiate that realm of faith and guru devotion to determine whether to question or accept that proclamation. Most ethnically Tibetan Buddhists would never think to question the validity of such a proclamation of authenticity, but this is demonstrably a much more difficult situation for some Western converts, especially those less committed to guru devotion. In FPMT, as I discuss at length later in this dissertation chapter, there are those who wholly accept the authenticity of relics and holy objects, others who struggle to do so, and still others who remain (comfortably or uncomfortably) skeptical.

Relics are considered as important in Tibetan Buddhism as they are in other Buddhisms, and this emphasis has found its way into teachings and practice in FPMT. When relics were interred in the Mahabodhi Stupa in Bodh Gaya in February 2007, Tibetans thronged the processional, the Dalai Lama was on hand to participate in the
ceremonies, and both elite and ethnic Tibetan Buddhists sought to gain admission to as many of the proceedings as possible (see Figure 9).

Figure 9. The Mahabodhi Society's relics on display amidst floral display in Bodh Gaya in the spring of 2007. (Photograph by Jessica Falcone.)

FPMT literature is unequivocal in its assertion of the significance of relics as powerful holy objects. Strong FPMT devotees regard relics as an unequivocal sign, or proof positive, that the Buddhist teacher was a realized master. My FPMT informants know that Lama Zopa Rinpoche firmly believes in the efficacy, power and significance of systematically authenticated relics, but they fell upon a wide spectrum of belief themselves. While relics are present in various FPMT sites, perhaps the most important relics to FPMT (certainly in terms of this dissertation) are those circulating on behalf of the Maitreya Project.

**The Relic Tour**

Arguably, the Maitreya Project's paramount ambassadors to the world at the moment are a Buddha of the past, Kashyapa, and the Buddha of the present, the Shakyamuni Buddha. Lama Zopa Rinpoche's collection of *rigstel* (relics), which includes
relics of the Shakyamuni Buddha, his son Rahula, and even Kashyapa, as well as many, many other relics from Indian and Tibetan saints and teachers, was put on tour to advertise the mission and plans of the Maitreya Project. The tour began in 2001, and has been so successful that the original collection was expanded, and the Relic Tour itself was split in two in order to facilitate more exposure and more fundraising; sometimes there are even three of these Maitreya Project relic collections traveling simultaneously in the Americas, Europe and Asia. There is also a small relic collection in the Maitreya Project headquarters in Bodh Gaya that does not travel. Cristin, the primary guardian or "Custodian and Coordinator of the Relic Tour," who cared for and traveled with the tour throughout the time of my fieldwork and beyond, noted in an interview in 2005 that the fact that Catholics put their relics on display inspired His Holiness the Dalai Lama to suggest the need to put Buddhist relics in public places; according to the Cristin, it was this mandate that compelled Lama Zopa Rinpoche to circulate the collection of relics that were intended to eventually reside in the heart shrine of the Maitreya Project statue.

The relics are thought to embody the qualities of the masters from whom they came. A Relic Tour handout from 2008 reads: "These ringtsel are special because they hold the essence of the qualities of the spiritual masters. Their inner purity appears in the form of relics. The relics are physical evidence that the teacher attained qualities of compassion and wisdom before death." The relics then are thought to provide attendees

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82 There are relics from thirty plus Indian and Tibetan masters on display at the Relic Tour, but not all of them are popular with everyone, and this had led to certain communities boycotting the Relic Tour at times. For example, Nyingmapas are not entirely fond of Pabongkha, a historical personage whose relics are found in the Relic Tour collection, since he was so vehemently pro-Gelukpa that he arguably worked to undermine the interests of other sects, such as the Nyingma tradition. The current, fourteenth Dalai Lama, has donated relics to the tour, but he is vastly unpopular with a very small sect called the New Kadampas, given that he has called for the cessation of the propitiation of one of their central deities, Shukden. Lama Zopa Rinpoche is himself not very popular with the New Kadampas, so as far as I can discern they tend to steer clear of the Tour. For more on the Shukden controversy in general, see Dreyfus 1999. The tour is fairly Gelukpa leaning, although monks and nuns of various communities are not only invited to see the relics, but help the tour by sitting in chairs and giving blessings to attendees. However, when a non-FPMT, non-Buddhist Native American was traveling with the tour, the decision came down that his presence was less than appropriate, so he was not allowed to continue on.
with an opportunity to establish a direct connection with departed enlightened beings. The Relic Tour handout reports that "Again and again, people have connected directly with the powerful loving energy emanating from the relics. Buddhists and non-Buddhists alike tell us that they feel inspired, healed and at peace simply by being in the presence of the relics. Each visitor touches the divine within them." The relic tour custodians report miracles; one custodian reported to me that on a particularly rainy day at a stop in upstate NY in 2005 just as the opening ceremony began, the weather began to clear up and the sun came out. She dismissed this as a minor miracle, but she said that there were innumerable cases of these miracles that she had experienced and heard about.\(^{83}\)

The relics shift to a new region each weekend, as they are invited by host institutions to display the relics for free to the public.\(^{84}\) Relic tours are unique events in that they draw various types of devotees and on-lookers depending on the locale; they are FPMT events that more often than not are attended by few, if any, FPMT devotees, but highly popular with many people who are not primarily FPMT devotees. At an event in rural Pennsylvania in 2005, the Relic Tour was hosted by a Vietnamese temple cum community center, so most of the visitors that day were local Vietnamese Buddhists (with a few handfuls of others, such as some local Korean Buddhists and white converts). At the event hosted by the Namgyal Institute in Ithaca in 2006 there were a handful of Asian Buddhists (e.g., several refugee Tibetan families), but the large majority of visitors were American converts, or just curious locals.\(^{85}\) The different venues also advertise to and attract very disparate constituencies. An event at the Sorya Ransey Buddhist Temple in

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\(^{83}\) A temporary Custodian, a man who toured with the relics for a summer in Mexico seemed less convinced. As he told a group of Buddhist students about the relics he mentioned that he had heard about relics, but had never experienced any, so he was a little doubtful. He even noted that he was not sure if the relics were even authentic, though he said he supposed at least few probably were. He was not the only FPMTer to wonder, as I will discuss later.

\(^{84}\) I have attended four of these American relic tour weekends myself, and volunteered twice. Due to hefty traveling expenses, I have also sent research assistants in my stead to take notes, photos, or do interviews a few additional times. Also, I have seen the MPI's non-traveling relics in Bodh Gaya several times.

\(^{85}\) This was also, roughly, the make-up of the crowd in attendance when the Namaste Yoga Center hosted the Relic Tour in Asheville, NC in mid-October 2008.
Philadelphia in November 2007 attracted an almost exclusively immigrant crowd, while the event at the FPMT center in San Francisco attracted an extremely diverse following of both converts and ethnic Asian Buddhists.

Although Relic Tour Custodians told me in interviews that the relics sacralize every space, and therefore the space itself is relatively unimportant, it seemed that the various venues also sometimes determine the sanctity or tone of the event; at a major Chinese monastery the grand altar room was hushed and reverent, while at the Vietnamese community center there was a sense of familial ease, louder talking and children running helter-skelter in and out of the altar room. At the Namaste Yoga Center in Asheville, NC the relics shared space with a small altar of Hindu deities and gurus. At the same site, the walls of the room were arranged with Tibetan thangkas, but sitting at the end of a long row of them was a large batik of the Hindu god, Shiva. Despite Cristin's admonition that the relics completely transform the setting so that the space is the same everywhere, the environment actually did have quite a profound effect on the tone, ambiance, and aesthetic of a particular Relic Tour weekend. Therefore, I will describe one particular Relic Tour event in detail with the caveat that the Tour is both somewhat similar and somewhat distinct every single weekend.

On August 2, 2007, the altar was set up inside a day center for severely disabled students located in Walnut Creek, a small town due east of Berkeley, CA. Outside the venue the souvenir table was set up with various Buddhist baubles, statues and books each of which could be acquired by a "suggested donation." Some of the souvenirs were directly produced by the Maitreya Project, such as posters of the statue-to-be, a Maitreya Project DVD, a brochure of the Relic Tour, Maitreya Project tsatsas, etc., while other souvenirs had been acquired specifically for resale. Next to the souvenir table, volunteers set up a TV playing the Maitreya Project DVD on a continuous loop.
Volunteers helped set up the display, the Maitreya Project information panels, and the altars, but all this was accomplished before the relics were put in their cases. Once the Relic Tour opening ceremony began in earnest, the volunteers and devotees all sat while visiting monks from a nearby sangha performed an invocation. Then two long-term Relic Tour Custodians, Cristin and Vicki, both non-ordained Western women dressed in Tibetan chubas, tied kathak scarves around their mouths, as masks to avoid any pollution or impropriety while handling the relics. One Custodian then hit play on a tape-deck – playing what a few informants have called "new age-y" Buddhist music. In tandem, as if a choreographed dance, they did prostrations, and then proceeded to reverently shuttle back and forth between the relic storage cases and the relic display cases with the relics held high upon their crowns.

Each relic (or set of relics) is encased in a container of its own, and is labeled with the identifying tag of the name of the Buddhist master from whom it came; in each relic display case there are several of these smaller containers (see Figure 10). Custodians maintain a high level of care and diligence regarding the relics in their care. When the relic display cases are still unlocked, the guardians are on high alert, and on guard to protect the relics; here in California, I observed Cristin anxiously tense and square herself to defend the relics as a visitor approached the inner circle (on his way to the restroom, it turned out) during a set-up sequence. Once the cases were carefully locked from the back, the music turned down, and the kathak scarves removed, the Custodians and the monastics present lead the entire audience in prayers and recitations. Custodians and volunteers handed out photocopied sheets of prayers in English to the congregation (that

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86 During this opening ceremony it was a piece called "Just Tara" that had been given to one of the custodians, but there are several musical mantra albums that have been used.
87 In a later relic tour stop, nearly every relic was flanked by a card that added illustrations to the former labels. There was a thangka-like picture illustration of each ancient master, and actual photo representations of more recent Buddhist teachers and masters.
are re-collected at the end). The Custodians then gave a talk about the authenticity and power of the relics, and about the goals and significance of the Maitreya Project. The two women then took up their stations to keep the crowd moving, and to educate the public about the relics; they suggested rituals, helped volunteers direct traffic, and protectively monitored the relics at all times.

![Figure 20. Relic Tour event in San Francisco during the summer of 2007. (Photo by Julie Allen on behalf of Jessica Falcone).](image)

The relics were displayed in small glass cases that surround a centrally-placed Maitreya Buddha statue (designed by the project as a model of the MPI statue slated for Kushinagar), and the display was dotted with several other statues/images: 15 small/medium-sized Maitreya statues, one small Manjushri statue, one Vajrassatva statue, and one Manjushri image on a postcard. At the front of the altar were saffron-infused water-bowl offerings, flowers, electric lights, and candles.

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88 The "Suggested Prayers While in the Presence of the Relics" handout included a "Prayer of Refuge and Developing Bodhicitta" (repeated three times), "The Four Immeasurables," the "Seven Limb Prayer" and several mantras, such as the "Wisdom Mantra," the "Buddha Shakyamuni Mantra," the "Chenrezig mantra" (often repeated seven times), the "Tara Mantra" (sometimes repeated seven times), the "Maitreya Mantra" (sometimes repeated seven times). Followed by the dedication: "By the merit I have gathered from all these acts of virtue done in this way, may all the sufferings of every being disappear."

89 Manjushri is a Wisdom deity.

90 Vajrassatva is a Power deity.
The first thing seasoned devotees do as they approach the altar is generally prostrate three times, but since there are curiosity-seekers as well, sometimes people just approach the objects and begin a clockwise circle around the table. At the very front of the display, there was a large water-bowl with a baby Buddha (pointing up at the sky) affixed to its center; devotees are invited to bathe the image by dipping a ladle into the bowl, while saying a blessing (which is helpfully written out on a piece of paper beside the bowl) to purify and be purified. The relic caskets were dotted around the altar table, so that devotees circumambulate the table as they go from one case to the other. In front of each case lay pieces of cloth upon which some devotees placed their foreheads as they prayed. The "golden light sutra" laid open at one place upon the altar table, and devotees were invited to read about the benefits of the sutra.

Devotees generally prostrate, circumambulate, and then get in a queue to get direct blessings from one of the relics of the Shakyamuni Buddha, which is placed on their forehead by a local Buddhist monk or nun. Some devotees sit and meditate, others do continuous rounds of circumambulations, some over-write the Sanghatasutra in gold marker at one of three stations set up for that activity, while others read the large display about the benefits of the Maitreya Project that is set up adjacent to the altar. Devotees who spend a several hours at a time at the Relic Tour often do all of the above more than once, but these activities are undertaken independently and there is little formal instruction or direction, just a few volunteers and Custodians offering suggestions, and directing visitors to take off their shoes upon entering.

91 The exact make-up of the altar varies from year to year, and sometimes site to site, but in general it is fairly similar over time and space. The kind of flowers sitting in the vases on either side of central Maitreya Project statue, and how the arrangements are done, likewise varies. In Asheville, NC in 2008 it was roses; in Walnut Creek, CA in 2007 it was a varied arrangement. Also in Asheville there were several large crystals arrayed around the whole altar.
The end of the day was marked with prayers and chanting. As Buddhist mantra music is played in the background, the two female Custodians performed ritual prostrations, and as they began to carefully place each relic casket back into their protective traveling cases, they were joined in the closing ceremony by a Tibetan monk who had come to assist them with the weekend. The dance-like process continues until all of the relics were safely stowed. The now-blessed saffron water offerings were distributed to the interested public, or placed in small containers for the next day. At the very end of the weekend, event volunteers and some devotees, help the Custodians to break down all of the display items.

This tour stop, like so many others, drew hundreds of visitors over the course of the three evenings and two days (of course, sometimes a stop would draw thousands of visitors, and have long lines out the doors, so this was a medium-sized event). The crowd was mostly of European ancestry, but there were many Asian families as well, and a few African-American and Latino visitors to boot. During opening chanting there were about 80 people in attendance and then throughout the day there was a steady flow of people, so that there were at least about 30-40 inside at a time. There were several big Vietnamese and Chinese contingents that arrived in groups to visit the relics, and some Korean families. At any given time approximately one third of the attendees were of obvious Asian descent. The public at a Relic Tour event can be differentiated into very general categories such as devotees (those who believe in either Buddhism or the efficacy of the relics, or both), and attendees (curious people who have come to see what all the fuss is about), but this categorization is necessarily extremely over-simplified. Over the course of the weekend's events at Walnut Creek, just as I had at many of the other events, I met many attendees from many different communities. However, since many visitors

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92 At the end of the weekend, at this point in the day, gifts, such as small Maitreya Project replica statues, gold Bodhi leaves, and Maitreya Project thank-you cards were distributed to the main organizers and volunteers.
come and go after a short while, it is difficult to get to know many of the attendees or learn their stories. Naturally, I grew to know the other volunteers best, but they represent a specific type of devotee at these events, and not a normative one.

The venue organizers, Tom and Marty (with their pre-teenaged son), had already hosted four Relic Tour stops, and attended some eight Relic Tour events. Tom explained to me that they were so deeply affected by the holy presence of the relics the first time that they got right onto a plane to attend the next weekend's event in Phoenix. Marty and Tom worked at the center for the disabled where the event was taking place (although Marty was also training to become a paralegal), and it had long been a shared dream to bring the relics here to their workplace. Tom was vocally enthusiastic about the fact that some of his disabled students had now been exposed to the power of the relics, both because some of them came to the event with their family members, and also because the space itself would bear a spiritual imprint from the relics that would have a good impact on the center in the future.

Tom told me that he was often asked to defend the authenticity of the relics, and he has had to explain that the relics have gone through a process of validation by Lama Zopa Rinpoche. He says that they have not been carbon dated, and that he thinks such a process might have a problematic effect on the relics themselves, which is why it should not be done. He prefers to tell narratives to these non-believers about how people leave the room glowing, about the miracles that have happened in the presence of the relics, and about how so many people feel moved by the relics. He told a person who had emailed him asking whether the relics had been scientifically tested that if the person would just come to the event then they would get their answer, "I said, you can just tell when you walk in that it's real. You can feel it." He articulated a very strong belief that certain objects have essential power, and he had recently become intrigued by crystals and
other strong minerals that have powerful effects: "I can read the energies in crystals. I'm very sensitive to the energies in objects."

Tom called himself a "serious" Buddhist practitioner, while Marty seemed less invested in the whole of Buddhism as a practice, though dedicated to the Relic Tour. During the event Marty and Tom spent most of the time sitting outside with the souvenir/donations table, and also telling passersby to come inside to view the relics, but they also took turns doing circumambulations and "enjoying" the relics. Marty and Tom helped to arrange for a relic to be brought out each time someone came with their dogs, so that both the devotee and their pets could be blessed. At some point, a few dogs, including a cancer-stricken canine, were allowed into the relic room to circumambulate the relic display one at a time. Marty and Tom had brought their dog with them to the event, and kept him tied under the souvenir table for most of the weekend; Marty told me that she felt that relic blessings could have a very good impact on all creatures that came into contact with them.

Another set of devotees was a Korean Buddhist family, the Yi family, who came in as group representing several generations: a young woman helped her elderly grandmother circle the relics, as her own mother held one of her daughter's children in her arms. The men and women of this large family circled the relics, prayed and took pictures in front of each case, made a donation, and then took a blessing from the Buddha relic given by the Tibetan Buddhist monk. They then sat in the chairs facing the relics for a few moments before leaving the venue. There were many couples and families like this, Korean, Chinese, Asian and non-Asian, who came to pay their respects, receive a blessing from the relics, make a donation, and pick out a souvenir or two before leaving.

Angela, a volunteer devotee at the 2007 Walnut Creek Relic Tour, was an African-American woman from North Carolina who had self-identified as a serious FPMTer for
years; she had already seen the Relic Tour, and volunteered before. Angela was an artist, and said that she had a special connection with holy objects, including the relics. Indeed, her room at the FPMT center in San Francisco, which I had seen during an interview a few weeks before, was a veritable museum display of holy objects. She had several altars, each one immaculately kept, and each one arrayed with offerings of some kind. Angela was confident in the "power of Buddhist objects" in and of themselves. She noted that holy objects must be treated with respect, and she knew that when she made Buddhist art it would have to be handled with care by her, by the gallery or museum owners, and by the buyer (she was chagrined to remember once seeing someone use a Buddha head as a doorstop). She observed that the difference between "sacred art" and "holy objects" was the consecration of the latter with relics or mantras. At the Relic Tour, Angela divided her time between doing practices and mantras inside the Relic Tour venue, and helping out as a volunteer at the souvenir table.

As far as I could tell, the Relic Tour-going public at this event was mostly comprised of "devotees," like Tom and Marty, Angela, and the Yis, to the extent that they consider the relics to be immanently efficacious and powerful; however, there was another set of Buddhist attendees who seemed interested in the relics, but still agnostic or openly doubtful about their efficacy and/or authenticity. These devotees were fewer and further between, but I met several Buddhists at the Walnut Creek event who felt strongly that real Buddhism was about meditation and that while the relics were fascinating cultural artifacts, they were not particularly sacred objects. Bess was a white senior citizen

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93 She had a small altar for Lama Zopa Rinpoche and Lama Yeshe (with a few deity representations), and one set of water bowls. Another larger altar for photos of teachers and gurus, also included stupas, a vase collected with blessed strings that had come off, and other collected blessed things from teachers, such as a tissue from Lama Zopa Rinpoche, and a piece of Ani Robina Courtin's robe. This larger guru altar had two sets of water bowl offerings. She had one altar for dharma books with one water bowl offering. The final altar, the central one, was arrayed with dozens of statues and images of Tibetan deities, stupas and beautiful stones with a set of water bowls at the fore. There was an individual water bowl offering for Tara. Angela was quite enamored with the mandala set and mala that Lama Zopa Rinpoche had given her. She also had received another mala as a gift, and made one herself. She would get many of her malas and other holy objects, such as "wealth vases" blessed by gurus.
who was affiliated with a Buddhist community in San Jose, but not connected FPMT per se (though she had gone to meditations and teachings at their San Francisco center a number of times). I talked to her at a coffee shop after she had left the Relic Tour venue. Bess told me that she had come to view the relics out of curiosity. She said that she had watched others pray to learn how to do it; she then went through the motions of prostrations and walked around the relic display a few times, but did not feel any special connection with them:

I don't believe in it. It's culture. Mythology, or like that. I came here the way I would go to a museum. I respect that fact that Tibetans have preserved some of the Buddhist dharma, but they mixed it all up with their superstitions and traditions and stories. The relics are just that – objects mixed with stories. They don't have any special power in and of themselves. The Buddha wasn't present the way [my friend] told me that she felt him when she came to [another relic tour event elsewhere]. Even if one of these old Buddha relics was real, which I highly doubt, then I don't think it would have power… Except what people give it. When I prostrated I thought about what if one of those ancient relics was actually real. I prostrated out of respect to that guru from long ago, but not with the thought that it was anything more than a single little old bone. I don't feel blissed out or blessed or anything. I am glad I came anyway, but just to see it, not the other stuff. Like a museum. Like going to the Met in New York City to see the old Buddha statues.

Bess was not alone in feeling that the narratives of miracles and bliss were constructed by the community.

Another Buddhist devotee, Alex, a young white man who did consider himself loosely FPMT affiliated because of some courses he had taken in India years before, but generally "just Buddhist, if anything," came to the California event, but felt that the whole Relic Tour was just a nicely staged way to capture donations and interest for the statue project. He said that "The Relic Tour is a performance by Buddhists instead of a Buddhist performance." He went on to say that he knew other Buddhists who would never speak openly about their ambiguous feelings about the relics and holy objects, as he
had done, but that they would sometimes talk to him in private. "You see all those people in there, well I'll bet half of them at least don't believe the relics are real, they are just going along with it. Like the emperor has no clothes. I'll tell you that straight up. The emperor has none. He's naked! They put on a good show though. It just makes me mad as a Buddhist a little. It's attachment! It's crazy." He told a story about how he felt that the devotees inside were watching each other, and each trying to outdo the other: "It's a holier than thou atmosphere. It's judgmental."

Alex and I had started talking because he had been watching the Maitreya Project video outside, and said, "500 feet? Is this a joke?" I had been minding the donations table diligently, but sensing his cynicism, I laughed, and said "Yes, a big one. But the joke's on us." I told him in a few sentences that I had just finished research in Kushinagar, and I briefly filled him in about the controversy there amongst the landowners, telling him how the statue project would be taking land owned by small subsistence farmers. He was aghast, and began a long tirade about how expensive statues were un-Buddhist, especially giant statues or gilded statues. He was reminded that he had heard about the Maitreya Project before, but when it was slated to be built in Bodh Gaya, but he had since thought that the whole thing had been cancelled, and he had been glad to think so. Perhaps in earnest, or perhaps sensing my frustration with the statue effort, he said that he was sorry to have commuted in for the event, saying that he felt like he had been tricked into supporting the statue, when all he had wanted to do was check out the relics to satiate his curiosity.

When I pressed Alex about why he came to the event since he felt considered himself "skeptical about all things holy," he said that he came expecting to see some dharma friends who had told him about the event. He also took this opportunity to confess that he had felt that he should give relics one more try; he was so unimpressed the first time he had seen relics (at a stupa consecration), but he wanted to come to this
viewing to see if maybe the "lightning would strike" this time. We were talking after he had viewed the relics again, so he added, "No lightning. Maybe next time..." He told me that he sometimes wanted to believe in the efficacy of relics and statues, but that his "natural skepticism" would not let him do so. "I will say this," he said as he was about to walk away, "The statues – the small ones! – can be nice to look at. And I will come to the next relic tour gig, because there's a nice, soothing ambiance here. I did a good meditation despite the competitiveness of some of those quote unquote Buddhists." A volunteer who had come out halfway through this exchange had caught the gist of his ambivalence, and after he was gone she said that "even the non-believers come around eventually. He'll realize that it was the relics themselves, the Buddhas and the gurus present in the room that make the room feel that way. If it's his karma [he'll realize it]..."

Some attendees were just that – they came, saw and went. Some were curiosity-seekers who had heard about the event, and just wanted to come see relics for the pure novelty or spectacle of it. Marty actively solicited passersby, which made the number of these attendees higher than usual. A passerby and his sister were lured inside by Marty, who, at times, would talk it up to everyone who passed through the open air corridor, like a hawker outside a carnival tent. The white teenager went inside and looked around, while the sister of the young man peeked inside and then came right back out. She paced back and forth and then yelled vocally at her brother when he finally reappeared: "We're Christians! Mom is going to kill you. I'm going to tell. That is not Christian in there!" A passing African-American family went inside even though they said they were Christian, and seemed unsure whether it would be suitable. "It was very pretty," the woman said to the volunteers as she exited, "I'll tell my friends about it." Another passing family went in and the child started screaming. Marty leaned over to tell me, "Sometimes the kids get scared." A group of neighborhood toughs was coaxed inside, and while some of them
hung back looking at the display from a distance, one of them walked around the table respectfully gazing down into the cases.

Many more of the attendees/devotees defied easy classification between devotee and attendee. A lesbian couple arrived and immediately went inside. When they came back out to the souvenir desk, they excitedly told the volunteers that they had been at a café drinking coffee that morning and one of them had picked up an old edition of a local newspaper that happened to advertise the Relic Tour event. There was no address, so they called the reporter and left a message. The reporter called back with the address, and now here they were. "It was karma!," one of the women said. The other noted that she wasn't a Buddhist, and didn't think it would affect her, she said, "But I felt it. I got goose-bumps. I didn't expect that." The volunteer sitting with me, Angela, seemed un-phased by their excitement and just nodded and smiled as if it happened all the time. Soon afterwards, another volunteer pointed out an interracial couple, and told us that they are Relic Tour regulars. She says that they had actually first met at a Relic Tour event, and were now married, despite resistance by his family from India: "I don't think either of them were Buddhist… but who cares? They were drawn to the relics and then to each other. It's a Relic Tour love story!"

Andres was a Latino man who lived in an apartment close by – in the building right above the center. He was not a Buddhist, but he felt that he was "spiritually open," and had loved the "vibe" of the relics. He decided to help out, and spent half of the weekend opening the door for people going in and out of the relic venue. On the last morning of the event he came down and took up his station opening the door again. He addressed the volunteers sitting outside, saying that the relics had been calling out to him in his sleep. He told us that he had had an anxiety dream in which he had been missing his clothes – they were lost or stolen – but he needed to come down to the event to help. In his dream, he had walk around naked, back and forth and back and forth, until finally
he was clothed and could come downstairs and help out with the relic event. "What does that mean?" he asked. After a moment he answered his own query, "It was some kind of karma. They were calling out to me."

**Images**

In contemporary Buddhist life, images of the Buddha often take center-stage, either as paintings or statues of the Buddha (S. Collins 1998; Gombrich 1971b; Swearer 2004; Tambiah 1984; Trainor 1997), but in Tibetan Buddhism, in particular, Buddha images jostle for prominence with the images of many other revered teachers, bodhisattvas, and deities. Images are usually thought to be most efficacious when they themselves hold relics,94 although only the image itself is visible, while the relics are usually hidden. While not all statues or stupas contain cherished relics of powerful Buddhists from the past, almost all holy objects undergo a rite of recognition, consecration,95 or "sacralization" (Kopytoff 1986). Even many smaller statues in the Tibetan Buddhist tradition are filled and consecrated with mantras.96 A Tibetan Buddhist

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94 I.e. "corporeal relics" (Trainor 1997).
95 Consecration (rapne) in Tibetan Buddhism does involve ritual recognition of the Buddha or Bodhisattva's presence in the vessel, but Kirti Rinpoche, a prominent Tibetan Buddhist lama teaching in Dharamsala during my fieldwork period, told me that consecration is just a formality when the donor is sincere: "When someone makes a statue or stupa the Buddha or Bodhisattva of the site will come if the person who has done this does so with great motivation. They [the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas] have clairvoyance, so they know when to come and they will be in the statue. This is because of the sincere motivation of the maker. They are inside the statue even before the consecration. We consecrate for the ordinary beings, for the ordinary people who have doubts. So the ceremony of consecration is done so it helps the people to feel assured that the Buddhas are now blessing the statues. Before the ceremony there is no doubt that the Buddha is there, but also afterwards. These days we have a computer; when you want information it has to be shown on the screen, but the information is already there. But even as the statue is being built the Buddha is there, and after the consecration then the blessing in the statue is like the information appearing on the screen." This may be a significant and considered interpretation of the presence of a Buddha pre-consecration, but another lama was very keen to express the significance of rapne: "The filling of the statue is too important. Without filling the statue it is just an empty form. Without filling the statue, it is just decoration.
96 I conducted several interviews with monks at a Tantric college in Dharamsala in 2006, and helped them fill some statues. The monks worked in a large room and watched Chinese television as they filled the Buddha statues of Dharamsala tourists who had sought them out for that purpose. These monks also felt strongly that if the statues were not filled, the Buddha was not inside – at least this is what they told me. Several different mantras were Xeroxed and pre-rolled in various sizes, so that the monks could gather the needed mantras easily and stuff the statue with disparate mantras for the head and body. The consecrations
convert in Bodh Gaya observed that "For Buddhists the rapne is the consecration ceremony or ritual. …First they make statue and then they put holy objects inside them and the lama invites the deity. The lama says, 'please be seated inside,' and then the statue becomes the deity. This makes the object sacred. Before that it is just a material object. To repair a statue we have to first take the life away, repair it, and then put it back."

Donald Swearer's work on the ritual of consecration, or "opening the eyes," of a new Buddha statue in Thailand stresses that Buddha images of the past, present and future become a corporeal presence as the object is anthropomorphized (2004). Gombrich reports that Sinhalese statue makers cannot even look directly into the eyes of the statue as they paint them (1966). The statue makers paint the eyes by looking at a reflection of the statue in a mirror held by an assistant. Afterwards, the statue makers are thought to be in such danger from the power of the transformative act they have wrought that they are led away blindfolded, and must perform ceremonial acts of purification. In many places in Asia, though not in Tibet, consecration ceremonies begin with the Buddha image blindfolded as well, since the ceremony of awakening the Buddha, "dhammaticizing" it, and making the Buddha present, is an "eye-opening" ceremony (Swearer 2004).

From a phenomenological perspective, once consecrated, the Buddha images literally embody the Buddha. The Buddha is thought to be present in the present moment. As with the proliferation of Buddhas in the Buddhist cosmology (Nattier 1991), and of Buddhist "presence" in the form of relics, the propagation of statues and images

were done on a "donation" basis, but many tourists were caught unawares when the monks told them that their offered "donations" were not enough and charged a higher fee.

97 Swearer, not unlike Trainor (1997) and Collins (1998), critiques the anti-ritual bias in the history of the academic study of religion, and his book is a means to close the gap between textual and ritual Buddhism.

98 Concluding a recapitulation of the controversies and debates in the field about how early Buddha images emerged in the tradition, Swearer differentiates between Buddha images: 1) "Indian figurative representations" which occurred early, and 2) "...other material representations of the Buddha, especially relics..." (2004:25).
serves to replicate and copy the power and efficacy of the Buddha(s) to achieve a temporal slippage.

In Thailand, Swearer observes that the Buddha images even serve as markers which regulate time itself: "The Buddha also lives through his images and ceremonies that empower/consecrate him as the redeemer of macroscopic time – those Buddhas of past eons, Dipankara, Kassapa; of the present age, Gotama Buddha; and the future, Metteya – and of personal and microscopic time, the birthday Buddha images of the days of the week. In these ways the Buddha image contextualizes and contemporizes the person of the Buddha" (2004: 5).

The Theravadin Kosala-Bimba-Vannara account (hereafter, the KBV) recalls King Pasendi's excruciating disappointment when the Buddha was absent when the king came for a visit; the king then resolves to make a statue of the Buddha to mitigate any future disappointments (Strong 2008). With the Buddha's approval, the king commissions a statue made out of sandalwood. When the Buddha first meets his image, the statue genuflects before the Shakyamuni Buddha. The Buddha then addresses the statue and wishes it longevity and duration, saying, "Soon, O statue, I will be entering parinirvāna; therefore you should remain behind so that my religion will last into the future for five thousand years…Today I commit my Order to you; for the sake of the wellbeig of the whole world, stay with my religion" (cf. Strong 2008: 52). The survival of the tradition hinges on the image of the Buddha in this text. The text, Strong notes, makes the Buddha statue a permanent present in the Buddha's "absence" in parinirvana.

A Mahayana variant of the KBV has two kings, Udayana and Pasendi, each building images of the Buddha to satisfy their distress at his absence (Swearer 2004). Another version of the tale, from "the Sutra of the Sea of Mystic Ecstasy," narrates only the story of the creation of King Udayana's golden statue of the Buddha. The image rises to meet the Buddha, and it seems imbued with sacred power itself. The Buddha greets
the image and foretells its importance in maintaining the Buddhist order: "The tathagatha
pays respect to the image and prophesies that it will ensure the well-being of the sangha"
(21). A Chinese text, "the Scripture on the Production of Buddha images," is based on
the KBV, and also foregrounds King Udayana’s statue making. The image is produced
after King Udayana proclaims that he is unable to bear the absence of the Buddha, "I
never weary for a moment of gazing on the Buddha...I dread no longer being able to look
upon the Buddha after the Buddha is gone" (Swearer 2004: 22). The figures of the
Buddha represent the living presence of the Buddha, and make him available to be seen,
communicated with, and prevailed upon. The importance of memory and recognition of
the Buddha vis-à-vis his image is the aspect of statue building that is said to lead to great
benefits. In both Theravadin and Mahayana versions of the KBV, in Jatakas, and other
narratives, the Buddha discusses the merits and benefits accrued by making images and
venerating them (Swearer 2004). The merits include rebirth as a Buddha, rebirth in
Maitreya’s era, rebirth as a fragrant and aesthetically pleasing human, rebirth as a wealthy
human, rebirth as a deity in Heaven, etc.

In the variants of the KPV story, the Buddha meets an animated statue, his
doppelganger, in an eerie moment which evokes "the uncanny" (Freud 1953). For Freud,
the uncanny is produced by a repressed belief in magic that haunts the civilized. The
recognition of the self as estranged from being-for-itself produces anxiety, and the
familiarity of repressed "primitive beliefs" produces the sense of uncanniness. One of the
primary manifestations of the uncanny is the appearance of "the double." In the case of
Buddha’s uncanny "double" in the KBV, it is arguably a repressed desire for a permanent,
immortal Buddha that haunts a civilized tradition bent on excavating any illusions of
permanence. In one sense, the Buddha is literally split into two, yet the original celebrates
the fact that the image, the double, will be more permanent than he himself. Buddhist
notions of anitya (impermanence) and anatman (no-self) do not preclude the Buddha
welcoming a version of permanence for himself and his doctrine, and yet this internal logic of the doctrine may hide some anxiety about philosophical tensions.

In the KBV, the visual connection between the image and the Buddha is powerful: the self-reflexive reflection leads the Buddha and the statue to recognize themselves in one another; "...the power through or by which the image represents the Buddha is the power born through this act of mutual recognition: the Buddha recognizes the image as the Buddha" (Swearer 2004:18). Lacan's theory of the mirror stage demonstrates that it is at the precise moment that one sees one's reflection and one recognizes one's own contingency vis-à-vis viewers that the differentiated self is born (Lacan 1977), and provides grist for the eventual split self. The split self establishes a lack of unity and autonomy that can be painful, but part and parcel of being in the world. Willford has explained it this way, "In order to apprehend one's self as a knowing subject, one must symbolize oneself to oneself" (2006: 2). In the KBV, as the Buddha regards his double, and the original is figuratively split apart into two Buddhas (one that will die, and one that will go on), and the result, perhaps, is something of a split self in the tradition that manifests in iconic vs. aniconic dualisms, for example. In a more general sense, there are unsettling dualities of being and subjectivity in Buddhism, tensions that generally co-exist with one another in the same text, sermon and/or ritual: the Buddha is no-self, yet through a feat of replication he is embodied in countless images and statues; the Buddha has achieved mahaparinirvana, yet is present; the Buddha is a historical personage sui generis, yet he is also all the Buddhas before and after. Although Buddhist image worship is ubiquitous throughout Asia, the tensions caused by the "presence" of the Buddha has no gone wholly un-remarked in Buddhist communities themselves; Swearer notes that the Zen koan, "if you meet the Buddha, kill him!," represents a lingering aniconic view that is held by some Buddhists, including some notable contemporary Thai Buddhist figures
However, while the aniconic view persists, it has been largely subsumed in many Buddhist traditions by fierce dedication to images.

The tension of the Buddhist split self is arguably still extant in contemporary Buddhist micro-cultures of image worship. In the Thai tradition, the Buddhist "cult of amulets," in which amulets from revered forest-dwelling saints are thought to retain efficacy and power, has compelled Tambiah to note that religious charisma itself is being objectified and transmitted through these coveted amulets (Tambiah 1984). Tambiah astutely notes that "replication" ensures continuity and connection between the past and the present (240). In Tibetan Buddhist guru devotional contexts, the proximity of the contemporary gurus photographs to the statues and relics of ancient teachers serve to remind students of replication of authority through lineage association (see Figure 11).

Figure 11. The replication of authority through image association. A devotee circumambulates a side altar in Tushita Delhi in April 2007 – Maitreya statues flank photos of FPMT gurus, and a stupa-raised Dalai Lama image. (Photograph by Jessica Falcone.)
Anthropological accounts of Buddhist engagements with holy objects tend to demonstrate their centrality in practice. Sally McAra's ethnography of the significance of building and consecrating a stupa to an Australian sangha of FWBO (the Friends of the Western Buddhist Order) demonstrated the centrality of holy objects even as it has been translated from Asian Buddhism to this form of Western Buddhism (2007). McAra follows Gell (1998) in asserting the agency of the stupa in the eyes of her informants, not only as it represented enlightenment, and the mind and body of the Buddha, but as having a profoundly transformative effect upon them and even upon the valley it was built in. McAra's informants themselves were not convinced by McAra's argument that the stupa served to form a collective and that the local FWBO community was drawn into a collective through their creation and worship of it. Her informants argued that the creation of their microculture, their community, was incidental to their religious intentions and the power of the stupa in and of itself.

I agree with Gell (1998) and McAra (2007) insofar as they both point to the source of the agency of an object in the need to feign the presence of an absence; I see this as an extension of my argument that holy objects embody the dead, in an effort to cheat or at least stave off cessation, death and impermanence. McAra zeroes in on the fact that once the relics of Dhardo Rinpoche, one of the FWBO guru's of the organization's founder, were enshrined in the stupa during the consecration, and her informants began to see the stupa as an embodiment of the deceased teacher. In the following quote, McAra cites an article written by a devotee about the presence of the deceased in the stupa: "The highlight of my solitary [retreat], and perhaps its very foundation, was my daily pilgrimage to Dhardo's stupa: climbing the hill...and to see this magnificent white form towering into the cold blue sky surrounded by puffy clouds, I immediately saw Dhardo's eyes, then figured I was imagining it and was just seeing the eyes of the Nepalese stupas. Then I realized again, no, these eyes were slanted liked
Dhardo’s, they were his eyes. I felt the care and compassion pouring out of them, as I had felt from his human form” (cf. McAra 2007: 120).

All Buddhist images are not equal and equivalent; different regions, sects, schools, etc., have particular micro-cultures and micro-aesthetics of image worship. Images in Tibetan Buddhism have a particular aesthetic that immediately set them apart from those of Thailand, Japan, or elsewhere. A typical Tibetan monastery of the Gelukpa tradition in both Tibet proper and in exile in India will have altar(s), as grand as possible, adorned with many heavy statues and thangka paintings of the Buddha(s), bodhisattvas, benevolent deities and fierce protector deities, offerings (water bowls, butter lamps, incense, food, perfume, kathak scarves, etcetera), and many pechas (texts). Some altars have special "self-arising" objects, such as a statue of Tara that "just appeared fully formed out of nowhere," or "talking statues" that are reputed to occasional converse with highly realized devotees.

Some monasteries have built or commissioned grand statues, such as the giant Maitreya at Shigatse, but none are on the scale of the destroyed Bamiyan Buddhas of Afghanistan, or the Maitreya Project for that matter. The Gelukpas have emphasized Maitreya, and one finds a Maitreya in almost every Gelukpa monastery whether a richly endowed national monastic seat or a small local monastery (see Figure 12). Still, even in Tibet in 2005, in a Nyingmapa or Karma Kagyu sect monastic compound one rarely finds images of the Maitreya Buddha, whereas Gelukpa institutions are replete with Maitreyas. The Maitreya is very central figure in FPMT’s transnational Tibetan Buddhism, so it is not surprising that their crown jewel will be a giant Maitreya statue.

99 The biggest copper image of the Maitreya in the world sits in Tashilhunpo in Shigatse. The sitting Maitreya towers several stories high inside a huge temple (lhakhang). The chapel was built by the 9th Panchen Lama in 1914. The other main lhakhangs of the monastery are all devoted to former Panchen Lamas.
"Build, baby, build!" said Mark, an FPMT devotee, joking with me at a relic tour event in the fall of 2008 about Lama Zopa Rinpoche's pervasive interest in building more and more holy objects; while riffing off a contemporaneous Republican political slogan at the time which promoted off-shore drilling ("Drill, baby, drill!), Mark suggested that there is something very intense, and perhaps even off-key, about the intensity of the holy objects directive in FPMT. Mark, like many FPMT devotees, constantly struggled with some aspects of the holy objects directive, despite understanding from sutras like the KBV that statues have their traditional place in classical Buddhisms. Not sure if relics were real, and not sure why statues were so important to his guru, he simply was not sure whether the mandate was or should be meaningful to him in the context of his own practice. Many devotees have passed through Mark's ambivalence and found certainty on the other side, so the second half of the chapter will explore the spectrum of opinions amongst FPMT sangha and devotees regarding whether holy objects are as efficacious and powerful as Lama Zopa Rinpoche teaches.
"Build, baby, build": Statues are Holy

In all of my time doing research with FPMTers about holy objects, I met less than a half dozen FPMT community members who claimed that the worship of holy objects came easily and naturally to them. This handful of devotees, sangha and students reported that the worship of holy objects as power objects was "never a problem" or "a snap," though it is impossible to verify whether these claims, like others, were true or not, and I harbored a few doubts during some of these interviews. One of these heated confessions of ease with holy objects seemed designed to impress a fellow FPMT interviewee. Two of these devotees were artists, and noted that it was the aesthetics and form of Tibetan Buddhist objects and architecture that had called to them in the first place, and that their ties to FPMT depended first and foremost on materiality and meditation rather than philosophy and meditation.

On the other hand, the large majority of devotees were skeptical about holy objects at first, but some, usually through faith in their guru, and a leap of faith, gradually became more accepting of the emphasis on holy objects in practice. For these devotees, their initial uncertainty about either the efficacy or nature of holy objects, gave way to full agreement with their lamas and FPMT instructors about the presence of holy beings within statues. For example, Maureen, an American, and a long-time devotee and staffer at the Root Institute, tells of her awakening to holy objects:

… holy objects are very debatable. I had initial skepticism, assuming it was an old wives tale. Kind of this particular form of old cultural story that just got integrated in. I felt a strong connection with the Buddha statue at Tushita, but Baptists are anti-idol worship. I saw statues as cultural objects. [Missing sentence.] I brushed holy objects off. I was more interested in how to work on the mind. I thought of holy objects as cultural. It was like my interest in Catholicism as a Protestant. But as a student of Lama Zopa Rinpoche... I had no

100 More than one of these devotees were fairly new Buddhists, young people with a "new age" aesthetic who had just come out of an FPMT course brimming with enthusiasm, and seemed perhaps overly effusive and overly keen to proclaim their faith in all parts of Buddhism.
teachings from him for a few years. Rinpoche totally believes with his whole heart. He feels that our relationship to holy objects is just as important as retreat or meditation. What he says is very contagious to me. If Rinpoche is going on and on and on about it, he wouldn't if there wasn't some benefit. I believe that he is clairvoyant, if not omniscient. My heart got hooked, and my mind is open. Now there is a great deal of faith [in holy objects].

In the same interview, Maureen continued on to discuss how her faith in statues has made her open to the significance of the Maitreya Project. She talked about what she and others were doing to bring the plans to fruition, and the value of the project despite the obstacles they face.

Maureen: With the Maitreya statue project there is such inspiration with what they want to do in this world. This is a gift they are giving. They have helped the dharma to spread. That he wants to do this crazy thing, and I would call it crazy to spend so much money on something so beautiful. He always wants to do something bigger and better. The Maitreya Project is like the centerpiece of the FPMT family. This is what Lama Zopa Rinpoche sends out requests about most often – to do special pujas for its benefit. Lama Zopa Rinpoche says that FPMT hasn't even started yet, like a baby that hasn't even stood up yet. Through the obstacles we are clearing through the Maitreya Project we will be able to really blossom. We haven't even started yet. We are trying to do something beneficial for the world. The energy of Kushinagar – it's incredible energy. It will be so amazing. I'm pleased that it's happening in Kushinagar. People will think about death more often. There have been so many disappointments, so many starts and stops. A meeting was coming up, and they thought that everything would go ahead. It was just so close. But Rinpoche has undying enthusiasm. Whatever disappointments there are, they don't last very long. He is so unfazed. Because this was Lama Yeshe's wish, he will not stop. That was what Lama wanted and he will do whatever it takes. There were some disappointments just to get the land. They worked so hard. They tried to get the land. They will do good things with it still. They needed far more land, this was just the initial plot, but then there were big government problems. The government is so supportive in UP. The land situation is okay in Kushinagar, but now the lack of money is holding us back. The main obstacle now is finances.

Jessica: Uhm, well, actually I have been to Kushinagar, and there's a lot more going on. Protests...a lot of anger.

Maureen: This is life. You keep doing more pujas and more practices. Rinpoche has said that when we are trying to do something, sometimes there are maras.

Jessica: What are maras?

Maureen: Maras are negative karmas. The wish to do something this big for other beings is highly beneficial. Karma that would have ripened as going to hell realms
can become smaller obstacles. Of course there will be problems. This is a good sign. This is lo jong — so rejoice! If there were no problems, if it was easy, what would we learn? With bodhicitta we must bear hardships for others. Sometimes a strong sense of fear comes in my heart that when [the Maitreya Project statue] is finished maybe it would be a target for terrorism. When I have this fear I try to think of impermanence; it would just be part of the process. The process is just as important as the statue itself. From the emptiness of the project now... Where is it now, when will it start, where will it end? I find it a constant source of lessons, so I am grateful to Rinpoche.

Maureen had had initial doubts about the importance and value of holy objects, but had come to see them through the eyes of her guru, and hence had become a staunch supporter of the Maitreya Project along with his other projects. Maureen's skepticism played a starring role in her narration of her faith, and this is one way in which the two extremes exist in dialectical symbiosis. At the time of the interview, Maureen was working hard to raise offerings from devotees to fund a Giant Prayer Wheel that Rinpoche had recommended for installation on the Root Institute grounds.

Thus, Maureen is on the far end of a continuum of belief and disbelief in the efficacy and power of holy objects. Like many of my FPMT informants with her on the belief and faith end of the spectrum, she had had to work through her doubts about holy objects over time. My informants on this end of things seemed to indicate that holy objects grew on them, and fed largely upon their faith in their guru, and their guru's faith in holy objects.

**Objects Holy? Yes and no. Neither yes, nor no.**

On the other hand, some of my FPMT informants explained to me that the statues *do* have power, but only because they are a placeholder for the "buddhanature," "buddha energy" or "bodhi" that is everywhere and in all things. This perspective argues that objects fundamentally have power because they embody and give materiality and substance to what is actually everywhere. Still, these voices emphasize that the holy
objects are efficacious, even though the power does not come from its own side. I consider this view a bit more nuanced than the view related above, in which holy objects are power objects in and of themselves, and substantively and qualitatively different from other objects.

One of the first people to narrate this perspective was Ani Rachel, a Western FPMT nun from Europe, who was of the opinion that statues and holy objects are important to practice, and the more the better. However, as a teacher of beginning Buddhism courses for FPMT she would often have to couch these things in "terms that people at different levels can understand." She would start by acknowledging that thinking of statues as symbols was useful, but she would push students to recognize that statues also have real power.

Jessica: Are Buddha statues efficacious?  
Ani Rachel: Inside is the cause, in your own potential. You take refuge in the outer Buddha. The statue shows us our own Buddha potential. I went around with the Relic Tour in Europe. There was small statue there, and even the little statue was strong. People sat all day and meditated on compassion and they said that they had never felt so peaceful, so you can just imagine what a big statue will do. Lama Zopa Rinpoche says that it should be so big to attract the most amount of people. It will cause strong imprints on their minds.

Jessica: Is the Buddha present inside a Buddha statue? Or Maitreya in a Maitreya statue?  
Ani Rachel: The Buddhas don't exist from their own side. The Buddhas are asked, they are invited to stay in the statue... It is sacred. The consecrated statues are powerful... Maybe the difference is our own mind. Buddha energy is everywhere. Even in the trash bin. When Buddha statues are filled they create definite imprints. Even if we are not aware of it. Bowing in front of the statue is not enough. But bowing in front of the Maitreya Project statue will give us a huge benefit, but maybe not in this life. The seeds are in midstream. The practicing in the past is what leads us to now, and now our merit is developing for the future. With no faith there is no interest. Merit has come from making prostrations and offerings to holy objects in the past. But a strong mind can get the same merit from a visualization.

Jessica: Does a person have to have faith in the efficacy of statues to reap the benefits?  
Ani Rachel: It is difficult. Not solid. It's not just in the mind and not just physical. If there is less faith then it has less effect. It's like medicine won't help
as much without faith. If full faith in the medicine then it will help a little even without real medicine in it. It's like that. People making offerings to the giant statue, or even just seeing it – it will help those people.

Tomas, another proponent of this view, was a long time Belgian FPMT student who was living in Delhi and leading meditations at the FPMT center there. Tomas was from a Catholic family though he had rebelled against his family’s religion at the age of twelve or thirteen. During his second trip to South Asia he did a ten-day course at an FPMT center, and he had never looked back. He is a strong proponent of holy objects, and believes that statues are powerful, and embody the Buddha. However he also argued that statues are important as representations of the Buddha, and do not in and of themselves have the power to heal.

Jessica: What do you have on your altar?
Tomas: On my altar there is a picture of His Holiness the Dalai Lama, Lama Zopa Rinpoche, a picture of my family and a picture of the living Jesus, not the one on the cross (this is where I came from – he is the guru of my parents). Lama Yeshe said put things that make sense to you on your altar. Lama Yeshe put a little plane on his altar, since it took him abroad to meet his students). I also have a scripture, and a stupa (a picture of a stupa) and some water bowls. The Shakyamuni Buddha statues have been filled and blessed by HH the DL. People who do Vajrasattva at Tushita, they get a private audience at the end. So I put my stuff on the table with theirs, and he blessed everything. I have one un-filled Buddha statue. I have a stupa and a big medicine Buddha thangka I got blessed by HH the DL and HH the Karmapa. I might have another statue to give away. A medicine Buddha. [A friend] is sick. It will sit on my altar for a little while and then I will send it. It's not the statue which helps, but it might be a trigger to find out more about the dharma. It is a representation of the actual Buddha. While I'm here other people have my statues. During the Vajrasattva retreat I asked Rinpoche, in my mind, how to have enough money to keep giving away statues. The best gift is statues. I had a dream after that, a monk was going around with a Merit Box. Almost every FPMT office has a merit box (but not us).

Jessica: Is the Buddha inside a consecrated Buddha statue?
Tomas: It's difficult to say that the Buddha is in the statue. I believe it. It's a bodhi mind, but you can't say it's inside the statue. You cannot touch someone with nothing. As bodhimind is everywhere, then statues are crucial. You can't circumambulate air. You need material artifacts. My feeling is that we live in bodhi, [but] we aren't aware of it. We have to connect with what will help. [Statues] do have the power.
Tomas had a complex view of statues, but he was not ambivalent about them in the least. He wanted to buy more, give more, and even help build more on FPMT’s behalf.

Other students struggled to find the meaning and certainty that was evinced by either Ani Rachel or Tomas, but had failed to find faith about the significance of holy objects. In the following section, I will address the perspectives of those FPMTers still consumed with doubt about the efficacy and meaning of holy objects.

**Holy Objects, Batman!: Ambivalence about Images**

Even those who have given their time and commitment to FPMT as sangha, volunteers or long-term devotees were not all entirely resolved to believe Lama Zopa Rinpoche’s ideology of holy objects. Some of FPMT’s oldest students came to FPMT under Lama Yeshe, and some of these students have noted with dismay that Lama Zopa Rinpoche is far more interested in holy objects than Lama Yeshe had ever been. Other students simply cannot resolve their doubts about holy objects, and instead understand them as something other than embodiments of Buddhas and bodhisattvas. Ambivalence, even skepticism, about the power of statues was not uncommon, though many of these informants found that statues held symbolic or social meaning.

Leslie is a 32-year-old woman from England who followed a long meandering path to Buddhism, but in the end took refuge with FPMT. She told me that she did not have a particularly strong relationship to relics or statues, but valued statues that had been given to her:

Leslie: I appreciate a beautiful statue, but I'm not at the stage where I see the Buddha in the statue. I know I'm not supposed to criticize the art... Still I find it inspiring to see a beautiful statue. I bow to them. I love bowing. I bow to everything. I notice that some people have trouble bowing to images. It's bowing to a higher principle. It's bowing down to your own Buddha nature.

Jessica: Do you have any statues?
Leslie: I have a few statues. I haven't bought a statue – they have all been inherited.
Jessica: Are they consecrated?
Leslie: No, I haven't taken them to be consecrated. One is wood, and the other is tiny – I don't think either of them were blessed. One is a miniature Buddha; I got it at the Vipassana retreat in Lumbini. The Vipassana center is super austere. There's no talking, contact only with teachers, and then only for ten minutes each time. It was around Christmas time. We're not allowed to sleep more than six hours. Ideally you sleep less than four hours. On Christmas day, at breakfast the cup was upside down in the saucer. There was a tiny little Buddha statue in the cup. It was the best Christmas present ever. You are totally alone, so a little thing like that can seem totally significant.

Leslie's observations here, in tandem with Angela's (in the Relic Tour section above), and those of many of my informants, go to the heart of social exchange in statues, as a normative means for dharma students, teachers and administrators to make and keep social relationships. Even FPMTers who may not believe that statues embody holy beings still often value statues as either aesthetically-pleasing or symbolically significant. Even informants who were ambivalent about statues in general, often still deemed the gift of a statue from a dharma teacher or friend as very important memorial keepsakes. Some FPMTers have noted that statues that were given as gifts by their dharma teachers were more precious, as if imbued with some of the efficacy of the giver. This is not unlike Tambiah's recognition that the charisma of the forest saints in Thailand has been objectified and transferred into amulets (1984). One could posit a "hau" for these gifted holy objects (see Mauss 1966 [1925]), as the giver remained connected to the gift; despite the fact that the receiver reciprocates through offerings and devotion rather than similar return gifts, Mauss notion of return is relevant in this context.

Wilt, an African-American who had found his connection to Sakya, rather than Gelukpa Tibetan Buddhism, was nevertheless applying to an FPMT translation program when we talked in May of 2006. Wilt felt a connection to FPMT teachings and said that there was nothing about the organization that he objects to, except that he had
reservations about the Maitreya Statue. He was a self-identified Buddhist, but revealed that he planned to keep studying and borrowing aspects from other religions too. Wilt expressed doubts to me about certain aspects of Buddhism (like the emphasis on better rebirths, merit-making and karma), including the emphasis on holy objects as power objects in and of themselves. While he harbored doubts about their status as actual power objects, he did see value in them as memory objects that were helpful in his practice:

I want a Manjushri statue. I'd also like a White Tara. The empowerment allows you to get the benefits of that deity. If you practice without the empowerment you might not be able to get merit. Empowerment gives the connection and allows for quick results. Otherwise you're swimming against the current. Statues help me with visualization for my practice. They serve as a reminder. There are attributes in the statues that serve as a reminder. Manjushri has a teaching mudra and text, but also a sword to cut through ignorance. You want to connect with him. He is the essence of wisdom. You want to connect with that. It is very sensual. Pictures, statues, thangkas help me. If I don't know what he looks like, then how can I visualize him? At first I felt some separation between myself and the statue. At the beginning. Then you gain the attributes yourself. It's separate then. The next step is that you lose the separation and become Manjushri is in your mind. I see his attributions shining on me, shining on everyone. I am working towards his enlightened mind. I need to work until there is no separation. I make prostrations to gompa statues. The statues are there to help people. People might think, 'in the future I might get that empowerment.' Seeing and prostrating – it's planting good seeds in my mind. The attributes that the statue represents are higher than me. It is essentially perfect. All statues have the attributes that I would like to accrue.

Wilt found that photos of his primary teachers were of enormous value to him, more valuable than other holy objects. He found relics to be less than useful, but would feel differently if he had a personal connection to the relics. He told me,

The relics might have come from an enlightened teacher. It is there to show an idealized representation. Some people think that if I touch it I'll get a benefit. Like, I might get something, but the object is there to represent something – what I don't have. Not a thing, but what I'm shooting for. I want Sakya Trinzin to be
my root teacher, but I haven't asked him yet. In the States, so many people have no connection to their teachers. I have the opportunity for a personal teacher relationship with Sakya Trinzin and family. I have that connection, but I still have to ask. If he has relics, then it would mean more to me than the Buddha's tooth. I never met the Buddha whereas my living teacher – his relics will have significance.

Moreover, he found that although relics were not important to him, certain holy places had a special quality, not matter what religion. "Stupas feel special. There's something special soaked into it. Doing kora – I enjoy it."

However, Wilt was not willing to believe in holy objects in the way that he felt Tibetan monastics and laity generally did.

At the Kalachakra, people rubbed their body against a pillar of the original stupa. They were rubbing themselves on it. It looked like they were getting frisky with that rock. My Tibetan family said it would remove impurities, sickness, bad luck from the body. This is really a Tibetan thing. I wouldn't rub myself on a rock! At a holy spot I might do meditation, but not get up close and personal with it! They really believe that statues and relics are living things. I'm from Brooklyn. My object is not to become Tibetan. I wouldn't prostrate all the way to Lhasa. It's not beneficial to me. I walk kora, but I do my sadhana. It's my practice. When I do kora, I do my mantra and my visualization.

Wilt was one of many students of FPMT and other Tibetan Buddhist groups who articulated clear delineations between ethnic Tibetan beliefs and practices, and his own. He seemed comfortable with the idea that he was adopting the parts of Buddhism that were the most beneficial spiritually, while trying to leave certain Tibetan "folk" beliefs aside. Despite Wilt's fondness for statues, his view of modernizing Buddhism has a strong resonance to the discourses of neobuddhism that were explored in Chapter Two.

Wallace, the informant I discussed at the very beginning of this chapter, was not my only informant who admitted to visualizing the Buddhist deities as superheroes, or

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101 In Amaravati in 2006.
vice versa. During an interview, I told Michel, a long-time FPMT devotee from Switzerland who was about to embark on a course at the Root Institute, about Wallace's deity visualization, and he thought that Wallace had clearly understood the point of the meditation. For Michel holy objects are only useful for forming good models in our minds. He told me that he himself sometimes used superheroes as stand-ins for bodhisattvas and Buddhas during his meditations, but that he did not like to talk openly about this with other Buddhists. However, just after the interview, as we sat on the roof of the kitchen, we were joined by a neophyte, Justin (who had just begun investigating Buddhism in the past year) and Michel elaborated upon this particular notion of images once again. Justin had asked what we had been talking about, and once we started talking about statues again, Justin asked us about why some statues look serene and loving, while others look fierce or wrathful. Justin said that he sometimes felt ill at ease whenever he went into, or was left inside of, the meditation hall by himself, because the "scary statues are really creepy!" Michel responded with an explanation of "protector deities," and then illustrated his point by saying that the forces of good need both Supermans and Batmans. He proceeded to use the form of Batman to explain that protector deities were used to scare away demons, evil, and ignorance by themselves invoking it, "just like the Dark Knight… right?"

They then had a discussion about whether it would be appropriate for Justin to put his childhood "action figures" on his altar. Michel said, "yes, it would," but observed that if some other Buddhists saw it, they might not understand, so he should only use them in a private home altar. Justin concluded by saying that he would not add them to his home altar anyway, since he was planning on buying some statues in India, which were "way cooler anyway," but he had just wondered if there were rules about things like that. They then talked about which statues Justin would buy, and Michel gave him some advice about where to buy them in Dharamsala (the town where Justin was eventually
headed). The whole discussion made me wonder to what extent altars are grown-up stand-ins for the "pretty dolls" or "action figures" that had held up rapt as children. Gell has a similar thought about the work of Egyptian priests who animated statues (134), and in relation to the notion that objects are all social beings: "What is David if not a big doll for grown-ups? This is not a matter of devaluing David so much as revaluing little girls' dolls, which are truly remarkable objects, all things considered. They are certainly social beings 'members of the family', for a short time at any rate. From dolls to idols is but a short step, and from idols to sculptures by Michaelangelo another, hardly longer" (18).

Even Lama Osel's mother, a long-time FPMT devotee, described her ambivalence about holy objects. A reporter who knew her wrote: "At home, in Bubion, Maria was not one for having altars and statues of Buddha around. 'I have never liked that kind of thing. The respect is there, but I prefer it to be on the inside. And for me, guru devotion has always meant trying to put the teachings into practice, she said, honestly" (MacKenzie 1988: 113). This admission came in the context of descriptions of how during Osel's childhood, he had been perceived as being so comfortable with holy objects that it provided more evidence to devotees that he was the genuine article, the real reincarnation of Lama Yeshe.

In 2006, while I was living at the Root Institute in Bodh Gaya, I began taking afternoon meals with Venerable Lars, a monk from the Netherlands who had ordained in the Thai tradition, but who liked FPMT and felt connected to their sangha. Given that he himself was not directly ordained in FPMT, it was not surprising that he was one of the few sangha I met in an FPMT context who freely dismissed the efficacy of statues and holy objects. He said that statues can bind people together and cause good vibrations, and good feelings about a place, but they were not important for practice:

No, I don't have a need for statues. I just have the forest in front of me. Images of the Buddha weren't around from the beginning. The Greeks came and
conquered here, and they said, oh you have this holy person, you must make statues. You go to some of these places, a stupa in Thailand, where there is a line of a thousand Buddhas. Yes, of course it can even touch me, but I don't need it. There are some people who need these things to focus their minds. It is better that they focus on an image of the Buddha than a beer in their hand. This is a catalyst for less developed minds. Wise minds don't need this. There are even some monks who carry around bags of holy objects, they are like collectors. This is weight, and it is attached, so I don't like this. I did have one nice medium sized Buddha-statue that I was carrying around but I didn't use it and I eventually left it in the house of a friend in Thailand. I feel the same way about relics. They are not important. They shouldn't be important. The Buddha said that his body wasn't the most important thing – the dharma is. He knew that people would do this so he gave instructions on how his relics were supposed to be divided, but this is not the main thing. I have some of Buddha relics, but they are not important to me, and I don't use them for my practice. My practice is about focusing on the mind. The mind is a process.

Venerable Lars represents the far end of ambivalence on the spectrum of belief in the efficacy of holy objects. He actively deplores the focus upon statues in Gelukpa Tibetan Buddhism, and in this respect was very like the Insight Meditation group leaders who were actively campaigning against the Maitreya Project (as will be discussed in later chapters). For Lars, his skepticism about holy objects frames his faith in other aspects of Buddhist practices; his skepticism feeds his faith.

McAra mentions the ambivalence of some of her Western Buddhist informants almost as an afterthought to her discussion of the centrality of the stupa to the Sudarshanaloka center in New Zealand (2007). Her engagement with FWBO has a light touch, and very rarely questions the diversity of thought, doubt and ambivalences found within the community. In an entire book dedicated to the construction and consecration of the stupa she mentions only three people less than thrilled with the stupa, including herself. She writes, "Not all FWBO members relate readily to a concept that remains 'foreign' to their own cultural preconceptions. This is particularly noticeable

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102 This approach left her field relationships intact, but given my own experience with a similar community, I wonder if she held back from asking impudent questions that would have raised hackles, hence underrepresenting extant currents of ambivalence and discord.
among people who are not involved with Sudarshanaloka's projects. One Auckland *mitra*, for example, told me 'the stupa leaves me cold and that it 'doesn't resonate'' (123).

Most of my informants in this bracket of skepticism were closer to Leslie's ambivalence than Lars' derision, as they simply did not feel connected or interested in statues per se, and believed that they were only useful insofar as they were symbolic representations of a particular powerful notion. However, many FPMT informants who evinced ambivalence about the significance or efficacy of statue struggled vocally with the Maitreya Project's 500-foot statue plan. Countless informants met the plan with "lukewarm" or "worried" feelings, or even "frustration," because so much money would be spent on the statue project. These informants, who had never heard me or anyone else discuss the specific land problems in Kushinagar, volunteered their concern that such a massive statue would only be a foolhardy waste of money in the face of an impoverished region and other institutional priorities.

As demonstrated by the centrality of skepticism in their narrations of faith, Maureen and many others with stories very similar to hers, show that skepticism is a part and parcel of the FPMT community, so much so that I would argue that skepticism plays an important part in dialoguing with and constructing faith. Even people within the FPMT community who remain actively skeptical about the magic of holy objects, such new students or associates such as Lars, seem to highlight their faith in aspects of Buddhism by discussing their rationality in their ambivalence or distaste for holy objects. At FPMT, skepticism is assumed at the outset, and teachers work through skepticism, using it to frame their own choices and to set apart the inner and outer circles. One of the most popular sayings attributed to the Buddha during Introductory talks and retreats is the aforementioned quote about how one must examine Buddhist philosophy with discerning rationality before accepting it. The quote was paraphrased countless times in formal and informal settings at FPMT centers in India and abroad. Often the
corresponding effect of the Buddha's (or the guru's) own permission to be skeptical is an increase in faith in his wisdom. Skepticism is a part of faith, and to some extent, vice versa. I follow Taussig here in working to show that faith and skepticism are a part and parcel of one another; they create each other even as the stand in opposition and contradiction. Taussig also sagely suggests that rather than feints and concealments or "fraud," on the part of believers, teachers, sangha and gurus, the importance of the magic and ritual lies in the "simulation" or "mimesis" that serves to create identity and social order through performance, dialogue, and repetition.

Conclusion

The FPMT culture embraces, even revels in the production and consumption of holy objects, yet the community is not of one mind about holy objects. There are some devotees who, along with their guru, Lama Zopa Rinpoche, believe, or at least claim to fully believe, in the power of the holy objects in and of themselves, especially as consecrated retainers of the very presence of the Buddha and bodhisattvas. Others give more nuanced explanations of the embodiment of omnipresent Buddha energy or purity housed and represented especially well by the vessel of the holy object, though still finding that it has power, albeit not from its own side. Still others find holy objects practical as symbols and representations of the Buddha or the gurus' achievements, and/or their own potential to realize the very same achievements with purification, merit-making and other forms of Buddhist practice. Another common view is that statues are not useful, powerful, or efficacious, but that they do no harm and serve as a visible cultural links to their gurus' Tibetan culture. Still yet another set of FPMTers resist statues, relics and stupas, etcetera, as being almost contra Buddhist, since they are objects to which one develops attachment. The range of interpretations within FPMT are extraordinary, especially since the guru, Lama Zopa Rinpoche, and institutional literature,
are quite clear on the matter. Rather than being in full contradiction with one another, faith and skepticism surrounding the relics, images and texts are co-producing, dialectical, and symbiotic.

The Gellian "secondary" agency of these holy objects is made more than apparent by the centrality of their production and consumption in FPMT society. Like the Thai Buddhists with their statues and amulets (Tambiah 1984), the power of statues is recognized (and created) by FPMT sangha, yet the statues also serve to bestow power and recognition to the sangha as representatives of the deities and Buddhas. They exist in symbiosis: the objects are produced by Buddhists, and producing Buddhists all at once.

Moreover, holy objects can be understood as simulations, or even Baudrillard-ian "simulacra" (1994), but importantly, so can the rituals of creating them, worshiping them and making offerings to them. But how much can Baudrillard help here? Are the first order statue constructions of the pre-modern era, the second order statue replications of modernity, and the third order simulacra of simulations of the post-modern era really as separate and clear-cut as Baudrillard would argue? Perhaps there have always already been three orders. But that said, it is difficult not to read the Maitreya Statue as a third order simulacra, especially because the map is all we have, and the territory is literally forthcoming. Just as Willford has read the urban landscape of Kuala Lumpur, which is increasingly developing a modern Islamic aesthetic that feigns historical continuity, as hyperreal (2006), there is something hauntingly, achingly hyperreal about the Maitreya statue model sitting in the center of the Relic Tour's touted ancient artifacts.

Faure writes that to dismiss the worship of Buddhist objects as pure commodity fetishism misses some of the work being done by and through these objects:

In the wake of Marxist analysis of fetishism of merchandise, there have been many descriptions of the way in which man projects himself into objects, and is thereby alienated. In Buddhism, too, we find a theory of projection, which shows man how to 're-collect' himself and disinvest himself in the world of objects.
Meanwhile, it is mistaken to regard the Buddhist cult of icons simply as a form of fetishism or idolatry, for this cult brings to bear what borrowing from Michel Foucault's expression, we might call 'pensee du dehors.' Buddhism has invested ritual with a collection of thoughts on the 'objective' dissemination of being. We are in objects, but no longer know it. This is a reflection on mediation: Man attains to certain energies, either within himself or in the cosmos, through the mediation of objects. That is an illusion, both literally and in the Freudian sense, you may say. But it is an illusion that is sometimes just as effective as psychoanalysis, if not more so" (Faure, 2004: 114).

Arguably, Faure's explanation here also oversimplifies Marx's notion of commodity fetishism. If we take fetishization in this context to mean that there is a gap or estrangement between subjective and objective values, especially in terms of the economic operations of the institutions of capitalism and private property (Boyer 2007), then one can certainly trace the social mediations that have obscured the origins, production, investment and values of the statue project. Going back to Gell, one could argue that the Faure is here gesturing towards the social agency of these objects, and their significance in Buddhist philosophical work and religious practice. That said, if one pans back, at a conventional level, one could make a reasonable argument that the cultural emphasis on making holy objects, especially as exemplified by the desire for a giant 500-foot Maitreya statue in the middle of one of the poorest states in India, does suggest some degree of commodity fetishization.

Daniel Miller's proposition that neither the subject nor the object (nor the emperor) has clothes, goes a step further than Gell to show that it is not enough to show that objects have human-like qualities, but moreover that people have object-like qualities. I would argue if this emphasis on how subjects and objects are no more or less real or substantive than the other seems familiar, it is – Madhyamika Buddhist thought in

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103 One can honor Marxist contributions vis-à-vis commodification while also noting that he may have undervalued the significance of religious (and other non-explicitly economic) activities. In his sympathetic, but careful criticism of Marxism, he writes, "Marx's relative inattention to the stubborn plurality of human immediacies and non-market mediations under capitalism is perhaps the strength of his political rhetoric, but it is also the weak link in his critical theory" (Boyer 2007).
general and FPMT institutional thought reinforces this belief: everything is equally empty – the table, the action and the self.

So which is it? – are objects secondary or primary agents? I would argue that the Buddhist notion of "two truths" can serve us well here. Instead of looking for a single theoretical object-ive truth, either Marx, Gell or Miller, etcetera, one may be better served working at simultaneous levels. The two truths itself as a form is just as immutable as anything else, so I will define it here as a two-tiered truth – the conventional and the ultimate.

By arguing that subjects and objects mutually construct one another, Latour and Miller take the reader closer and closer towards emptiness and hence one can respect his work as being closer to the level of the ultimate truth – the object is constructed and constructing, but at bottom it is fundamentally empty. Although Latour and Miller do not empty the subject and object completely (in Madhyamika terms), it seems that the momentum of their arguments is precisely towards this end. Miller draws upon the Hegelian dialectic in which, "Everything that we create has, by virtue of that act, the potential to both appear, and to become alien to us. We may not recognize our creations as those of history or ourselves. They may take on their own trajectory" (2005:8), by which he shows that philosophically the distinction between object and person is illusory. Miller goes on to show that: "…our humanity is not prior to that which it creates. What is prior is the process of objectification that gives form and that produces in its wake what appear to us as both autonomous subjects and autonomous objects, which leads us to think in terms of a person using an object or an institution" (10). While Miller goes some part of the distance here is recognizing the contingency and interdependence at the heart of emptiness, he argues that the anthropologist cannot dwell too long at the apex of this understanding: "…we will have at some point to descend from this place of ultimate revelation at the mountain's peak." This descent back down to the "people using objects"
take us back down to the level of convention truth. As anthropologists, both levels should be understood, as I have argued throughout this dissertation.

The conventional truth is also significant and just as important as a node of anthropological study. Here one can speak in terms of a spectrum of conventional truths – what the object is, what it does how it functions, what it means and when and to whom and why. The old idea that a gift was always just a gift, and a commodity always a commodity, was a lesser conventional truth along that spectrum, since it ignores the fluidity, the "promiscuity," of all social objects. Here I would argue that the material studies literature such as Appadurai, Thomas and Gell's that has attributed secondary agency and even a social biography to objects is getting closer and closer to moving towards important conventional truths regarding the objects themselves.

Hence this chapter challenges notions of singular truths, just as it challenges notions of easy delineations between objectivity and subjectivity. My essential point here is that both levels of understanding are crucial towards really getting at the core issues of the object as subject and vice versa. A statue is empty, and it is agentive, and it is powerful, and it is inert all at once. It is for us to understand that these truths can operate all at once as layers or spectrums, or layers of spectrums, without being barriers to one another. The object, one might say, has never been so subjective.
CHAPTER 7

"KAYAŚ": INTERLUDE

Paper

The significance of the collected papers was immeasurable at the time: the maps, the Memo of Understanding, booklets, texts, plans, pages and papers of bureaucratic Hindi. Artifacts, treasures. I was chasing a shadow – doing kora around a non-existent statue. Each page was precious – it was only thing I had to hold on to. Proof of something. But what? The evidence that pages were being expended at least. The substance of it was reassuring. I was collecting and gathering. I fixated on these pieces of paper during my fieldwork. I made countless copies, and mailed and carried them in many directions. So much anxiety – what if one set got lost in the mail, and the other was stolen from my luggage? What if the papers – the proof, the puzzle pieces – did not make it safely to the other shore, to the post-field afterlife? I had nightmares: the pages in pieces, in tatters caught by the wind, like a ticker tape parade in a lower hell. But now, most of this paper sits barely touched – stacks and stacks of paper at my elbow, and yet I create more as this dissertation creeps upwards and onwards – steadily growing. The hard evidence sits in boxes, molding.

The new pages grow of their own accord: they are my translation and my transformation of "their" dreams. The new pages – "over 400 now!," I tell my partner – the stacks in my computer, printed drafts-to-be that will be boxed or recycled later, they are the commodity fetish of my dreams. And this copy that you may be holding – how will that end? What will its life look like? How many recycled papers before and after have become intertwined with it? So many stories these papers could have told... I am
closer, and yet further away from the end than I was before I collected a single scrap of paper in the field. Filed. All that I have accomplished is paper.

**The Royal Afterlife**

"'Nothing lasts,' Palipana told them. 'It is an old dream. Art burns, dissolves. And to be loved with the irony of history – that isn't much.' He said this in his first class to his archaeology students. He had been talking about the 'ascendency of the idea' being often the only survivor.

This was the place of a complete crime. Heads separated from bodies. Hands broken off. None of the bodies remained – all the statuary had been removed in the few years following its discovery by Japanese archaeologists in 1918, the Bodhisattvas quickly bought up by museums in the West. Three torsos in a museum in California. A head lost in a river south of the Sind desert, adjacent to the pilgrim routes.


**Embodiment**

"The most that any one of us can seem to do is to fashion something – an object or ourselves – and drop it into the confusion, make an offering of it, so to speak, to the life force" (Becker 1973: 285).

Ernest Becker's *The Denial of Death* was published in 1973. He died in 1974. I read his book while in the field in 2006, and through his offering to the world, I was able to converse with a dead man. The most extraordinary thing about this is precisely how very ordinary it is, to commune with the dearly departed.

I too write in defiance of death, and in respect for its inevitability. If the past is any indication, a paper, an article, a dissertation, a book – they will all last longer than I will. Even if no one ever reads it after it is filed, my dissertation will sit in a library. It will have material substance; it will speak for me, and it will be there, even when I am long gone. It will wear my name. This is the sacralizing effect of the rituals of publication. The localization of presence is indeed not perhaps as strong for the authors of yesteryear as the Buddha(s) of the past, but it is true that when we read the texts of the
deceased we are listening to and communicating with those ghosts. Of course, we as readers add something to the text, but that is just as true as when someone is present; if I were sitting and talking to Bourdieu or Weber, I would project and contribute to my understanding of those conversations as well.

It is the materiality of the printed page that appeals to me, and also frightens me. Someday surely I will regret some part of my dissertation. Perhaps these interludes? Or missed opportunities…? Mistakes even? But there will be no taking it back. It will always be there, like a photograph of my own thinking at a certain moment in time. I write this sentence in March 2008, but will it ever see 2009? Will this sentence make the cut into the dissertation, and will it outlast its maker – will this lazy, navel-gazing sentence last longer than I will?

Art and immortality have always seemed interconnected to me. Buddha statues call the bluff of Buddhists who are supposed to be un-attached to this mortal coil, and the Buddha's first and foremost. Holy objects work as reminders and opportunities to make merit, but they also function to cheat death: we can be absent the Buddha but have him too. This is attachment is precisely the tendency that the Buddha worked tirelessly to dislodge from our grasp. It is all impermanent. Still, we hold on. I remember when I first bowed to a statue – I felt like it was laughing at me.

Anthropology is art(ifice) too. My dissertation writing group met through the '07-'08 academic year, and we called it the "holy objects group." The name came from the notion that my dissertation itself was a holy object for me, but my peers seized upon this and named the group thusly, because it felt so (uncomfortably, perhaps) true to them as well. Write on.

Dissertations are holy objects with their own social biographies as well. How will it end? – not the actual final word, but the final moment of the official bound copy – will it be fire, water, decay? A devastating plumbing problem in Olin Library that floods the
stacks in 2028? Will the Coming of Christ raze my dissertation? Whose hands will it pass through between its creation and its demise, and how will it be treated? Will a devout FPMTer steal the copy to keep it out of circulation? Will an undergraduate lay it out on the floor along with others to soften a tryst in the stacks? Will anyone cite from it? Will the dissertation seem less sacred to me if a book comes out? Will I love it less later? – not unlike the little girl in Kushinagar that was ignored once her little brother was born.

Sacred objects – we have so many in the academy: an article in a top peer-reviewed journal, the book contract, the framed diploma. I remember when a professor got a book deal with University of Chicago press.

"This is it. The holy grail," he said.

"Can I touch it?" I said, only half-joking.

Another professor reverently took her field notes – typed index cards, which she kept in a box on a shelf – down to show graduate students. A captive audience of pre-field graduate students, we OOOO-ed and AAh-ah at the yellowing pieces of paper. Her fieldnotes were the most memorable moment of that entire course.

Artifacts from the field – a headdress of feathers, a filled buddha statue, crafts. Taken out of their environments they hold a different meaning, they are trophies, and proof that "I survived my fieldwork period." They serve as relics of ritual. So I write for immortality. Though it is an affective permanence, and though it is icy cold, it is still some comfort. I meditate on my desires, so at least I know that I am led by them.

I had a few near death experiences in India. A near auto accident, a bus skidding in the Himalayas. Was I really under surveillance in Kushinagar? Followed in Gorakhpur? Was I a target, or was I paranoid? Each time I considered death I faced an immature and overwhelming feeling of sadness that I would be lost so soon – before I had ever published anything…! It felt intolerable that I would be extinguished before I made a slightly more permanent offering to the universe. During the Death and Dying
course I took at an FPMT center, I once again made my peace with the inevitability of my own passing, and I try to do regular death visualizations as prescribed in Tibetan Buddhist practice. Still, I remain committed to the mental bait and switch that will allow me to feel that some part of me remain behind. Paper, sentences, words – they are both as solid and empty as everything else. In lieu of anything else, I'll take it.
FPMT has many projects in the pipeline, but the Maitreya Project dwarves all others, both in the breadth of its ambitions and in the sizable frustration it has heaped upon FPMT devotees as it has been deferred over and over again. If the Maitreya Project’s 500-foot statue is ever built in Kushinagar, then it will be the largest statue of a Buddha in the world, and the first ever "Buddhist skyscraper." Why would FPMT adherents desire to build such a gigantic statue? At least as many FPMTers seem to react in bemused surprise as with unmitigated enthusiasm when first hearing of the plans to build a gargantuan Maitreya statue, and certainly there are also those who react with vocal cynicism about the project’s motivations and means. I have heard many dozens of people, both inside and outside of FPMT, wonder why in the world Buddhists would seek to build a statue of Maitreya, as opposed to other popular Buddhas or bodhisattvas. Who is Maitreya, and why should we care about him? The answers to these questions provoke a flurry of more questions: Are statue donors propitiating Maitreya now in Tushita heaven,\textsuperscript{104} or hoping for some other more far-flung karmic rewards? Why pray to be born in the very distant, post-apocalyptic era of Maitreya? Why would anyone desire this, as opposed to just desiring enlightenment right away?

This chapter will address the spectrum of aspirations, desires and hopes that Buddhism, especially FPMT’s brand of Tibetan Buddhism, itself stoke in its adherents. What do Buddhists want? Nirvana, of course, but how is it that the path to nirvana is sometimes paved with gold, wishing-trees, dancing girls or paradise on earth? I will

\textsuperscript{104} Tushita heaven is a pure land, in which Maitreya waits.
investigate the specific prophecies surrounding the coming of the future Buddha, and how they tie into FPMT's aspirations to build a statue for the future benefit of "all sentient beings."

Buddhist notions of hope for the future will be elucidated by paying close attention to the ethnographic data collected about the developing iterations of FPMT's future statue of the future Buddha. Through the lens of Buddhist aspirations for the future, I will explore the changing temporal orientations of the Maitreya Project, and how the future statue of the Maitreya was planned, was planned again and then again, and how it is being reconceptualized in the present. I will trace the history of future-thinking in FPMT's public discourses surrounding project "progress" and prophecies.

I will argue that the Maitreya Buddha offers more than an opportunity to achieve nirvana in the distant future, but also a temporal conduit to work on the "problem" of the present through a focus on the near future. Here I offer my contribution to Jane Guyer's invitation to anthropologists to attune ourselves to the near futures of our informants instead of just the present and distant future (2007). If the problem of the present is in some way related to the gap, the unbearable distance and impossibility of ever achieving the horizon (for if we do, it is no longer the horizon), then one of our choices for engagement is that of imagination (Crapanzano 2004). Since the future is clouded by both hope and anxiety, imagination does its own magic on fact and fiction, in order to make the gap between now and then more bearable. I will trace the imaginative flights of the Maitreya Project with particular attention to their near futures, their shorter term goals and their construction of meditated hope. This chapter concerns what I call the future tense, that is, the anxious momentum provoked in the present by orientation towards future possibilities in opposition to one another.
FPMT's Hope: Planning for Maitreya

It is a truism in FPMT that Lama Zopa Rinpoche dreams big. Devotees and sangha laugh (or cringe) as they describe how Rinpoche narrates his grand visions to them, and then places the responsibility fully in their hands just before boarding his plane to visit the next center. A nun at an FPMT center in California reminisced: "He looked at the land and thought for a little while, and said, "A big stupa will go there, there will be a giant statue here, and a big nunnery over there. Just like that." One informant told me that instead of praising her for realizing his past ambitions, Rinpoche instead narrated the next project to undertake: a giant prayer wheel, even bigger than the last one. Every FPMT devotee knows that Rinpoche is the visionary.

Rinpoche has dozens of very big projects underway at any given time, but the Maitreya Project statue is known to be Rinpoche's ultimate dream. At the FPMT center in Dharamsala, in the main gompa, there is an altar off to the left side with a three-foot
high prototype of the Maitreya statue and also a small version of the same image. The statues are adorned with flowers, and flanked by Maitreya Project documents explaining the project goals and inviting people to make donations in the Tushita center office. The gompa itself is full of statues, thangkas, and photos of lama, but the only prominent sign in the room is taped up next to the Maitreya altar, underneath a early color postcard-sized drawing of the Maitreya Project site; on a single sheet of paper in large lettering it reads, "Actualizing the Maitreya statue is the goal of my life," and then underneath, "Quote by Lama Zopa Rinpoche 2001" (see Figure 13 above).

The MPI statue is widely publicized by FPMT, and generally looked upon favorably by devotees. According to Peter Kedge, "In the religious sense, like other great monuments, the Maitreya statue will surely be a source of spiritual inspiration to countless people during the 1000 years it is being built to endure" ("Peter Kedge International Director of Maitreya Project" 1997: 12).

Another devotee, a volunteer at the FPMT center in Bodh Gaya, narrated how he gradually came to support the project despite initial ambivalence, because it would do so much good karmically and socio-economically. He went on to say that according to Lama Zopa Rinpoche even people who oppose and criticize the statue should be blessed by thinking about the image of Maitreya.

A serious devotee from the center in Delhi, Tomas, told me about his plans to build a Maitreya statue in his own country:

You know about the Maitreya Project? I would like to build a statue half the size in Belgium. In each continent Rinpoche wants giant statues. I will build a Maitreya statue. I will benefit so many people. Just by seeing these statues, it would purify. If you have a little bit of belief and circumambulate, it creates merit. The power of big statues, they draw people in and it can bring people to the dharma. You have to bring people to the dharma. What they do is up to them… I dedicate to this regularly. Maybe it's too big to realize it on my own. I would have to start with a center. It would be so great. A 75-meter statue would tower above so many other things.
Thus far, Tibetans in exile religious leaders have appeared to overwhelmingly supported the project. The Dalai Lama spoke about the potential benefits of the statue in 1998 when he blessed the land in Bodh Gaya that the Maitreya Statue was supposed to be built upon:

You should realize that this is a very holy and sacred project and I will therefore pray and wish that it will benefit the flourishing Buddhadharma and the well-being of sentient beings. From your own side it is very important to cultivate a correct motivation and try to pray and dedicate the success of the project to the well-being of sentient beings... After the completion of this huge statue of Maitreya Buddha I'm sure many people out of devotion, and some visitors, will definitely visit this place. Even in the case of those who might visit this statue just as a casual visitor though they do not have any special faith I'm sure that merely seeing this holy statue and taking its picture will leave a positive imprint in their minds (Rose 1998:36-7).

Tibetan monastics are not of one mind about the statue, but many are enthusiastic, especially those in the Gelukpa tradition with the closest ties to FPMT institutions. A Namgyal Monastery senior, Tenzin Lhundrup, told me in 2004 that he was inordinately excited about the prospects of the project, and had even made a small donation to it himself. His feeling was that if it was not so enormous, then people would not come to see it, and that lay people need these sort of things to make good karma.

FPMT tries to build the Maitreya statue, and we try to achieve the bodhimind, the seed of loving-kindness now that will be nourished by Maitreya Buddha. FPMT tries to build the statue to encourage people to go there and learn about Maitreya. If it's the biggest then people will want to learn about Champa... Lay practitioners could only learn from scholars. They do mantras, they say the name of Maitreya.

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105 Champa is the name of the Maitreya Buddha in Tibet and its environs.
When I saw him again around Losar in 2008, Tenzin-la was disappointed that the plan had run into obstacles, but still enthusiastic about its potential.

If the Maitreya statue can itself be perceived as a form of inalienable wealth (Weiner 1985) that offers the FPMT community the affective boon of hope for better karmic futures (and ironically, a kind of affective permanence), it bolsters the notion that Buddhist gifting in this context is much more "strategic" (Bourdieu 1977), forward-thinking and abstract than more conventional notions of Maussian reciprocity would suggest. This is especially apparent when the involved Tibetan teachers talk about how it will go far towards solving the Tibetan political crisis; one lama from the Tibetan government in exile who has been a vocal supporter of the project, said in an interview in 2004: "Maitreya [Project] has a huge contribution to benefit for the political situation. The future Buddha – by making a connection with the Maitreya. By building this project, it is cultivating love within the Tibetan people, and even in the Chinese people who destroy our culture. Through the power of love it will reach and change the minds of people who harm us." Tibetan high lamas seemed to be of one public mind about this project, since even those ambivalent about it within their communities would never speak against it. Gelukpas appear united behind the statue, but even within FPMT there are frequently whispered stories about how the Dalai Lama did not initially see the value of this project, and that is why the school and health care project were added to the planned complex. Most ethnically-Tibetan Buddhists seem generally ambivalent about the project – confused about its status, very distant from the planning and fundraising, but still generally supportive of the idea behind it, and keen to visit should it ever be actualized.

The Maitreya Project is not an ends in itself, it is a means to an ends. Many ends are visualized, and many hopes are being expressed through its construction. The statue is desired because it will bring the future into the present, but isn't desire itself a Buddhist sin? How do Buddhists hope?
Supporters desire the statue; they hope for the statue. Which is it? – and does it even matter? Although desire and hope are often inextricably linked, perhaps they should not be conceived of as synonyms. Crapanzano delicately separates the notions by drawing on Minkowski (although the former challenges the latter's humanist pretensions to capture the distinction for all peoples) to argue that desire is more active than hope (2004). Crapanzano cites Minkowski, who says, "Desire contains activity within itself, while hope liberates us from anxious expectation. And yet, it holds us breathless. Unlike desire, which is continuous, hope assumes a moment of arrest" (104). Crapanzano himself writes that hope is somewhat transcendent, and without imposing an absolute delineation between hope and desire, he shows that hope is a version of longing that often necessitates inactive waiting and dependence upon some third party. Where does Buddhist doctrine fall along the spectrum, and how might this affect the way in which FPMTers express their thoughts about the possibilities of a future statue of the future Buddha?

In A Manual of Key Buddhist Terms: Categorization of Buddhist Terminology with Commentary, the English rendering of an 8th century Tibetan translation of ancient Indian Buddhist texts, the words "hope" and "despair" are entirely absent (Paltseg 1992). The list of virtuous attributes – faith (in Buddhist doctrine), shame (of inappropriate thought and actions), embarrassment (of inappropriate thoughts and actions), non-attachment, non-hatred, non-ignorance, effort, pliancy, conscientiousness, equanimity, and non-harmfulness – delineates certain virtues that are necessary for the attainment of spiritual mastery. While hope, anticipation and expectation as explicit concepts are absent, faith is present in abundance. Faith can contain and mobilize latent hope.
On the one hand, hope can be implicitly discerned in Buddhist discourses on faith, such as those Buddhist narratives that promise certain, absolute futures should you engage in specific meritorious acts, but on the other hand, certain contingent futures remain based on one's virtues and decisions. By the same token, neither the list of "six root afflictions," nor the list of twenty "secondary afflictions," in Tibetan Buddhism, mentions hopelessness, but only take note of the "sins" of "doubt" and "non-faith."

Despite the seeming paucity of explicit hope in Buddhist grammars, there is a great deal of emphasis on aspiration and motivation in Tibetan Buddhism. Following Crpanzano, I recognize both active desire and passive hope in Tibetan Buddhism. One desires enlightenment for oneself and others, though always amongst other felicities (1998). One hopes that ripening karma will be kind to oneself and one's family in this lifetime. One also hopes that one will be reborn in the time of the Maitreya Buddha. One hopes that one will have the opportunities to make good merit over the course of a long, healthy, happy, prosperous lifetime.

At the outset of a meditation of puja, one must set the motivation, which is in and of itself forward-looking. The aspiration that one usually sets here orients the merit towards positive ends: merit-making to benefit oneself and others, and/or the attainment of enlightenment in order to benefit oneself and others. One of the most common prayers after refuge involves taking refuge with bodhicitta:

I go for refuge until I am enlightened
To the Buddha, the Dharma, and the Supreme Assembly
By my merits from giving and other perfections
May I become a Buddha to benefit all sentient beings (FPMT 2004b: 11).

The generation of bodhicitta is forward-looking, as it encourages the imagining of buddhahood in the distant future.
The bodhisattva vows also require that one dedicate oneself to the future attainment of becoming a true bodhisattva. (This vow can be seen as mimetic – the vow does not make one a bodhisattva – it plants seeds that will ripen karmically in the future so that one will someday become a bodhisattva). An FPMTer who takes the vow is making a promise to act towards bodhisattvahood, but one must also hope to meet with favorable conditions, gurus and teachings along the way.

The Four Noble Truths that form the basis of Buddhist thought are likewise imbued with an implicitly hope-generating promise of a future without suffering.\(^{106}\) Hope is implicit in the formula, since one would have to hope to attain a cure if one was to undertake the course of treatment: "Without some initial trust in the fact that there is a way out of suffering, without some seed of understanding of the nature of suffering and its cessation, we would never begin to look for the path and we would have no hope of finding it" (Gethin 1998: 166) However, hope is marked in its absence from the formula itself. Most of the written texts stress active desires and deeds, as opposed to the more passive notion of hope. Hope for the future is not explicitly extant in most Tibetan Buddhist theological texts, but in fact implicit hope is a key part of the work towards enlightenment.

The absence of explicit hope may lay in the ambiguity about attachment for the goal of enlightenment itself. Buddhist doctrine wrestles with the fact that one must internalize the dharma, have faith in its truth, and hope for the realization of a better (non)existence, yet at the same time the doctrine of non-attachment means that Buddhists are counseled not have a fierce attachment to the goal. Even an extreme attachment to Buddhist doctrine is considered counter-productive: "...the Buddha

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\(^{106}\) The Four Noble Truths are: 1) everything is suffering; 2) the origin of suffering is craving; 3) the means to cure oneself of constant suffering is to eliminate craving by seeing things as they really are; 4) the way to attain enlightenment is through the eight-fold path – right view, right intention, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, and right concentration.
counsels the Kalamas not to reject or accept things because tradition, scripture, reasoning, logic, or argument tells them to do so, nor out of respect for some ascetic, but rather because of their own direct knowledge" (Gethin 1998: 167). Gethin is careful to point out that in Buddhism faith is "affective" rather than "cognitive," so that Buddhists feel a positive emotional trust in the religion as opposed to its specific intellectual mores. The uneasy balance between simultaneously stoking and deconstructing hope for the goal and the path means that the relationship of Buddhism to hope is necessarily ambivalent. One must rely on hope and faith, yet one must never become attached to them. In the strictest sense of the doctrine, hope, like desire, would seem to be a necessary initial motivation, which must be transcended later at an appropriate point on the spiritual path.

While many Judeo-Christian adherents clamor towards heaven with a good deal of hope, arguably Buddhists have a somewhat more ambivalent relationship with nirvana, the Buddhist state of enlightenment. Nirvana is always heralded as the ultimate goal, yet enlightenment is an oft-deferred goal sometimes mitigated by other salvations or "felicities" (S. Collins 1998). Instead of privileging nirvana as the single substantive desire of Buddhists, Steven Collins identifies a whole host of anticipatory possibilities besides nirvana in the Theravada tradition: "heavens, earthly paradises, Metteyya's millennium, the Perfect Moral Commonwealth of the Good Kind," (110) and other "objects of religious ambition, conditions of natural abundance, unlimited food, physical beauty, forest paradises, earthly and heavenly palaces sparkling with jewels and precious metals, conditions of peace on earth and goodwill to all" (94).

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107 Many Buddhist cosmologies include heavens and hells as various spaces that beings cycle in and out of; thus, rebirths into both heavens and hells are transcended by attaining a state of nirvana.
108 Steven Collins begins his re-evaluation of Buddhist desires by narrating his discomfort with the answer he provided to an intractable question posed by Clifford Geertz during his D.Phil exam about whether Buddhists are working to escape the suffering of life or death. While the academic answer, that nirvana is the antidote to the endless cycle of rebirth (and re-death) was sufficient, it seemed overly simplistic and lacking in a full accounting of the complexity of Buddhist goals in theory and practice.
Steven Collins explodes the notion popular among textually fixated Orientalist scholars that all Buddhists simply seek nirvana; he argues that, in point of fact, nirvana was an immediate goal for only a very small minority of Buddhist practitioners throughout the centuries (1998). Like other contemporary scholars (Swearer 2004; Trainor 1997), Collins critiques Orientalist scholars for overlooking actual ritual and religious practices in favor of a focus on the supposed "authenticity" and purity of textual Buddhism. Yet neither does Collins advocate for the converse extreme, which is posited by Keyes (1977), that in fact, virtually no Buddhists seek nirvana. Egge, on the other hand, argues that Theravadin Buddhists pursue only one of two goals – nirvana or a better rebirth (2002) – and while things can be thus simplified, Collins' "felicities" offer a more elegant framework precisely because this appellation is more inclusive and fluid.

Nirvana remains a touchstone at the end of the path of every alternative Buddhist hope. Tibetan Buddhist ritual, text and practice is also chock-full of non-enlightenment desires, goals, and felicities, from mundane prayers for deities to give one wealth to the aspiration for rebirth in higher realms. In Tibetan Buddhism, it takes innumerable cons to attain enlightenment for most practitioners, although Tantric paths provide some expeditious alternatives. What felicities are desired by FPMT Buddhists and why? The spiritual aspirations of FPMTers are as variable and diverse as FPMTers themselves, and survey of FPMT's felicities would include nirvana, enlightenment towards helping others to achieve enlightenment, rebirth near Buddhist teachers (especially their own lamas), rebirth in Maitreya's era, etcetera. Nirvana is back-grounded by FPMT's Maitreya Project, which focuses instead a slightly less temporally distant goal: Maitreya's millennium. The FPMT-motivated Maitreya Project is designed to combine several felicities into one: affected persons in the present will have better rebirths, and to varying degrees, establish a connection to Maitreya that will guarantee they are reborn during his era, because in the presence of a Buddha enlightenment can be achieved quickly.
Both hope and desire exist in Buddhist thought and ritual; Buddhists aspire to many felicities to try to fill the emptiness of samsara, the "lack" of nirvana, despite the fact that these desires themselves must be transcended in order to achieve enlightenment, the unattainable object of desire (objet petit a) (Lacan 1977). In a Lacanian sense, felicities could be interpreted to be "symptoms" (Zizek 1989), that is, subversions of the underlying Buddhist mandate to reject attachment and desire outright. The Maitreya Statue itself arguably represents the "symptom" for my FPMT informants, as it could be interpreted, outside of Buddhist phenomenology, as a jarring exception to the rule of no-desire. As we will see, supporters of the statue desired its manifestation intensely – some had already given themselves over to this attachment – while other FPMTers continued to struggle with it. Perhaps given the decades of obstacles, some of my devoted informants tend to view the statue as a kind of stand in for enlightenment itself, and thus another form of the unattainable object of desire (objet petit a). Although often rejected in theory and practice when focused on certain ends (such as certain sexual desires and other specific attachments), desire and hope are found in Buddhism in multiple formulations. From the perspective of internal social logics, attachments and desires seem to be acceptable, as long as they take socially and/or textually appropriate forms, which are arguably a step along the road towards enlightenment, but for elite practitioners struggling with the (im)possibilities of non-attachment there are ample signs of Lacanian frustration.

Karma: A Mechanism for Aspiration

Karma is the mechanism most central to the notion of aspiration and hope in Buddhism. Karma is the cosmic machinery which connects past, present and future, and eventually propels humanity towards its future destinations, whether it the path includes a
sojourn to the era of Maitreya Buddha or not. Karma is the key to understanding Buddhist notions of cosmology and futurity.¹⁰⁹

Dependent arising refers to the causality of the Buddhist universe. Everything is interlinked, and nothing is outside of the rule of cause and effect. However, one cannot know the exact causes of the present condition, nor the exact timing or qualities of the future fruits of one's present actions; therefore it serves as a general cosmology taken on faith rather than an observable system.¹¹⁰ In Buddhism, karma is the concept that mental intention causes future effects. Seeds are planted, which are later reaped. Therefore one's current state, and that of everyone and everything else, has been caused by past actions and past karmas. Karma is also sometimes explicitly taken to refer to the "merit" or demerit" that one earns from one's actions, or the fruits of one's past actions. In general, I will use the word to refer to the soteriological system as a whole, but in practice in FPMT it is used in all of these ways: the system of karma ("Now I believe in karma, but I didn't at first"); the (de)merit itself ("I do prostrations to make good karma"); and the result of causes past ("My sickness is a result of my karma").

It is important to differentiate between various types of karmas. Karma in Buddhism is arguably of a different quality than the ideas of the same name in Hinduism, Jainism, etcetera, but all these are ideas are historically linked (Keyes 1983; Obeyesekere 2002). According to Gananath Obeyesekere, a cosmology of rebirth was most likely an indigenous way of thinking in certain parts of the subcontinent, that is, it was a "rebirth eschatology," that eventually made its way into early Upanishadic texts, and was simply

¹⁰⁹ As Babb has explained in reference to popular Hindu notions of karma, karmic theory serve to trace, however obliquely, the source of one's ultimate destiny, and is therefore much more closely linked with the notion of futurity than most scholars give it credit for (1983: 179).

¹¹⁰ This unseen aspect of most past causes (many having been in previous lives) and the unknowable nature of eventual future fruits of past and present actions leads Babb to note that a sort of "amnesia" is necessary for the logic of popular Hindu karmas to play itself out: "…human control is absolute, but the present self can never take into account all of the controlling actions of the past" (1983: 176). The observation is relevant for Buddhist karmas also, since one must take on faith the idea that causality is working without being able to remember most of the causes conditioning the present moment.
adopted wholesale by the Buddha as someone who had learned that rebirth was the cosmic order.

Gombrich explains at length that the historical Buddha transformed a concept that referred to ritual action in Hinduism/Brahmanical/other traditions, and referred to something akin to polluted material weighing one down in Jainism, and instead linked it explicitly to intentionality (1996). Gombrich, and Williams and Tribe after him (2000), gesture towards the fact that morality is injected into the soteriology not just by ritual or deeds, but by "inner purification" and mental training practices. Like Gombrich, Obeyesekere argues that the word "karma" meant something else entirely in the Vedas and Brahmanas, the oldest texts of the tradition(s) we now call Hinduism, than it means in Indic traditions today (2002).

Though karma literally means "action," it does not refer simply to physical action, but also mental action. In Obeyesekere's chronology the word "karma" was used sporadically in early Hinduism to mean "ritual action," and it wasn't until the early Upanishads composed around 6th century BCE that the word "karma" seemed to take on a valence of "ethical action" (2002: 2). He goes on to say that the historical Buddha, drawing on and transforming past terminology to reconfigure "karma," then engaged in a process of "ethicization" in which morals are laid out in a manner such that the consequences of one's actions directly affect the circumstances and quality of their rebirth(s) (75). Buddhism's specific ethicization was a new formulation, that is, impermanence took on a central role, and as karma takes on a new meaning and a new ethical emphasis, the tradition then becomes one of Obeyesekere's ideal types: "a karmic eschatology." Obeyesekere argues that karma, the theory that every action has a future consequence, was the key component that allowed for the "radical theory of impermanence" (127). According to Obeyesekere, following the appropriation of "karma" from the Upanishads karma was developed into a full blown ethical code in
which the intentionality of one's actions is cosmically revisited upon oneself either in present or future lives; later iterations of Hindu traditions accomplished their own appropriations of this kind of "ethical karma," which is why Hindu karma has come to share many of the same valences as Buddhist karma (2).\footnote{Obeyesekere himself acknowledges that this type of piecemeal textual interpretation without social and cultural context is problematic and inconclusive (2002), but he seems content that given the evidence at hand the above chronology of rebirth and karma is most probable.}

As karma developed within the tradition(s) now subsumed under the rubric of "Hinduism," the caste system eventually became implicated in the karmic cosmology, so that caste (Sanskrit: \textit{varna}) and sub-caste (Sanskrit: \textit{jati}) were supposedly the direct result of karma. This justification for the caste hierarchy is not ubiquitously honored in practice, however, since one can point to Sanskritization (Srinivas 1962),\footnote{Sanskritization refers to the process, as outlined by M.N. Srinivas, of caste mobility as achieved when lower castes begin to mimic some of the behaviors and ideologies of higher castes. Sanskritization demonstrates remarkable fluidity in a system that was once considered fixed and absolute.} or the Ambedkarite revolution,\footnote{Ambedkar led tens of thousands of fellow untouchable to convert to a form of Buddhism as a way to undermine their lower status on the Hindu caste ladder. This mass conversion establishes that untouchables felt that the social system, not karma was to blame for their disenfranchisement.} for example, to demonstrate that many South Asian actors work to change their caste status. For example, Babb notes quite rightly that many low caste Hindus were ambivalent or resistant to the notion that their low caste status was the direct karmic fruit of misdeeds in previous lifetimes (Babb 1983: 165). Perhaps it is safest to say that especially amongst high caste Hindus, there is a sense that their high status is a result of previous karmic merit. The lack of a classical caste system in many Buddhist societies (albeit excepting India, Sri Lanka, etc.) demonstrates one way in which the subtleties of karma have played out differently in Hindu and Buddhist traditions, but even so, within many Buddhist communities there are manifest forms of untouchability and impurity recognized by social actors.\footnote{For example, see Kim Gutschow's work on outcasts ineligible for admission in the nunnery of Zanskar in the Kashmiri Buddhist community (2002).} Another difference is arguably that the wide diffusion of Hindu tradition without a specific founding figure has led to more variations...
in the interpretation of karmic theory in popular Hinduism than is extant in popular Buddhism (Keyes 1983).

One significant similarity between Hindu and Buddhist popular karmas is that neither posits actual "justice" in the sense of solving the puzzles of theodicy, the question of why bad things happen to good people and vice versa (Keyes 1983). In many Hindu traditions there is an idea that one's karma is written by the gods, and in Buddhisms one's karmic present is at least partially a result of unknowable past lives. Keyes writes that Weber was wrong to posit karma as the answer to theodicy in Buddhism and Hinduism, since there is no actual "justice" in the system. For Buddhists, the cosmic system itself is manifestly unjust – it is samsara, the endless cycle of suffering ad infinitum – therefore, one must try to escape it through enlightenment. Within the context of samsara – full of suffering though it may be – the concept of karma for Buddhists does manage to establish a meaningful, moral order.

Karma must also be understood somewhat variably according to the character of regional Buddhisms, so it safe to say that karma has a particular quality in Tibetan culture, despite some subtle differences within various Tibetan regions and schools at various times. Since I am loathe even to attempt to work out all of its unique aspects vis-à-vis other traditions, I will say that in general Tibetan Buddhism is thought to be "...remarkably consistent through time and space in their interpretation of fundamental dogmas" (Keyes 1983: 12) and therefore the analyses of karma are relatively consistent. According to Lichter and Epstein, Tibetans are more focused on creating positive karmic causes, than they are on the reasons for their present misfortunes: "Tibetans seem to speculate more on karmic prospects than they do about retrospects" (1983: 234). Like other traditions, Tibetans have their own specific gradations of sins, and to some extent the intentionality of the action will make it weigh heavier or lighter (Lichter and Epstein 1983). Lichter and Epstein also acknowledge that there is a difference between the
karmic theories of most learned monastics as opposed to those of uneducated monastics and laity, as the former is wont to find that everything is karmically determined, while the latter may be more likely to ascribe various attributions, including but not limited to karma. From my experience, and according to many of my Tibetan informants, the distinction between these two sets of views is overstated, as there are many lay people who would attribute everything to karma (Tibetan: le). Lichter and Epstein identify several other terms, such as kyen (Tibetan for "cooperating cause"), gyu (Tibetan for "substantive cause"), sonam ("Tibetan for "stored karmic merit"), sode (Tibetan for "luck"), and layo (Tibetan notion that is translated as akin to either "karma" or "the result of the suffering of change"), which are sometimes attributed to le, while sometimes thought to work independently or outside of it (1983).

Karma in FPMT is simply le, as the other notions in Tibetan Buddhism and culture that relate to causation are not lost in translation, but just not translated. Karma is taken for granted by FPMT lamas and most monastics, but it is something that many students wrestle with, especially at the outset of their practice. Whereas karma is assumed by ethnic Tibetan Buddhists, a great deal of skepticism is raised in practice regarding the notion of karma by the elite Buddhists of FPMT. I cannot count the number of times that an FPMTer has said to me (or to a group of which I was a part): "I don't believe in karma," or "I don't know about karma." FPMT teachers often tell beginners to test the idea for themselves by seeing whether their bad behavior or bad mood leads others to respond in kind (or vice versa with kind actions and a pleasant demeanor). Teachers note that this is one way of testing the immediacy of karma, although it is impossible to know if the fruits of a particular action will ripen in the near or very distant future (including in one's future lives). FPMT teachers sometimes start with a simplified version of karma, and say that it is okay (at least in the beginning) for students to simply watch to see if cause and effect seems at work in their daily lives.
Since the idea of rebirth is crucial to the notion of karmic return, much of the difficulty that converts have with karma stems from its reliance on the system of reincarnation. In FPMT's Tibetan Buddhism, even a human rebirth with good faculties is evidence of positive karma, since there are many layers of hells and lower realms of rebirth, and it is from our world that we are most likely to earn escape from the samsara. Rebirth is one of the fundamental ideological obstacles for many converts. Some FPMTers come around as their faith is nurtured, but very many FPMTers remain skeptical about rebirth. Without rebirth karma does not follow seamlessly, however, since in this life it is an observable fact that terrible things do happen to good people; if one believe that they are reaping what they sowed from previous lives, then karmic law retains its sheen of justice, but without belief in rebirth there is no conclusive moral order in evidence.

Rupert Gethin calls Buddhist ideas about this an "equivalence of cosmology and psychology" (1998: 119), meaning that the psyche's range of mental states mirror the cosmology's range of heavens, hells, and other worlds. Discussions of heavens and hells are quite unpopular in Introduction to Buddhism courses in FPMT, and usually left to more intermediate students to attempt to digest. I heard one teacher at FPMT try to help students ease into the idea by comparing Tibetan heavens and hells with more contemporaneous versions – the "heaven" of the conspicuous consumption of billionaires in Southern California, or the "hell" of the suffering of internally-displaced refugees in Sudan – and how both highs and lows disallow any serious work on the mind; therefore, students are told to hope for a middle path, in other words, conditions that will allow for meditation and learning without obstacles or distractions.
Buddhist Temporality

Hope and desire both represent ways of thinking towards the future and through time. Futurity and temporality, like everything else, are not experienced everywhere in the same way. Temporality is certainly culturally specific (Fabian 1983; Leach 2000), and while there is no single Buddhist temporality, there are patterns of thinking which can be gleaned regarding the notions of time and the cosmos in Buddhist texts and practices. Nattier describes two systems of Buddhist time: cosmological and Buddhological (1991:9). Cosmological time refers to narratives of the cyclical origins, duration and ends of the universe without substantial reference to Buddhas, as told in sutras and commentaries.

The Agganna-suttanta ("Primeval sutra") tells the story of the rebirth of the universe and the evolution of sentient beings. The Cakkavatti-sihanada-suttanta ("Sutra on the Lion's Roar of the Wheel-Turning King) narrates the severe decline of man (from 80,000 lifespans to 10 years) based on the failure of the line of kings to reproduce moral rule, its gradual resurgence back (from 10 year lifespans to 80,000 years), the return of the Wheel-Turning king, who reigns during the advent of Maitreya Buddha's era. In general, Buddhist time can be divided into four kalpas: 1) the kalpa of destruction; 2) the kalpa of duration of destruction; 3) the kalpa of renovation; the kalpa of duration of renovation (Nattier 1991: 16). Unlike Hindu cosmology, within each kalpa are twenty intermediate sub-kalpas which represent microcasmic cycles of degeneration and regeneration. In Buddhist terms, according to Nattier, we are on the declining end of a sub-kalpa in the kalpa of the duration of renovation, and it is only at the apex of the next sub-kalpa that Maitreya Buddha will manifest on earth. Furthermore, Mahayana Buddhists believe that we are descending the very first sub-kalpa, while Niyaka Buddhist texts reports that we are further along in the kalpa.

Kalpas are extensive eons that measure long durations of time in Hindu and Buddhist cosmologies.
Nattier's Buddhological time refers to the sense of time as directly relates to the lineages of Buddhas (1991). Nattier hypothesizes that during the time-span of the Shakyamuni Buddha there was little actual discussion of past or future Buddhas, yet the proliferation of a multiplicity of Buddhas has inspired its own notion of temporality. Over the course of time, and in various schools, writes Nattier, the chronologies of the Buddhas started with seven Buddhas of the past, expanded to twenty-five Buddhas of the past, shifted to the seven Buddhas of the past, present and future in this bhadrakalpa (the present "good" sub-kalpa), and was altered in some Mahayana contexts to include one thousand Buddhas of the past, present and future in this bhadrakalpa (with extensive lists of anticipated future Buddhas). The sea change in Buddhological temporality occurred as Buddhas of the past were decentered by the introduction of Maitreya (and in some cases, by other Buddhas of the future).

Steven Collins' explication of the complexity of Buddhist time hinges first and foremost on his antagonism for any over-simplistic academic dualities posited between Western linear time and non-Western cyclical time (1998: 236). Collins argues that while cyclic time is imperative in understanding concepts of nirvana, etc., it would be unconscionable to suggest that linear time, beginnings and endings were not a part of the non-Western temporal schemas. Similarly, in so-called Western societies, there are cyclical aspects of time as well, including lunar cycles, seasons, etc. Thus, Steven Collins argues that Buddhist time is inclusive of both cyclical and linear aspects. I would suggest that this formulation is exemplified by the fact that, in Mahayana Buddhism especially, the tension between the Buddha's enlightenment as historically achieved through a sequence events, and the Buddha as always already enlightened, is tolerated.

116 Similarly, Maurice Bloch critiqued Geertz for his over-simplification of time in "Person, Time and Conduct in Bali," as if there was only a single notion of time as opposed to "religio-political"/cyclical and "practical"/linear notions of time (Bloch 1977). Furthermore, Howe has critiqued Bloch's dual formulation of temporality for failing to note that the two notions are time are often mutually inclusive and overlapping (Howe 1981). Therefore, in essence, Howe concludes that there is one Balinese notion of time, and it includes both cyclical and linear elements.
Jan Nattier had upheld the essential cyclical nature of Buddhist time, but she had qualified it with an assertion that Buddhism had a solid sense of history, which implies a simultaneous recognition of the linear aspect of Buddhist time (1991). Collins fiercely upholds the necessity for exploding the myth of Buddhist cyclical time: "the truth – indeed the truism – that repetitive and non-repetitive modes of time exist simultaneously, always and everywhere, seems to me so monumentally obvious that it becomes difficult to see how the mystifications of theologians like Augustine and Eliade could ever have succeeded in obscuring it" (1998: 239).

The linear aspect of Buddhist time is most obvious in its close attention, indeed, fixation, on endings. Buddhist scholarship is replete with narratives of its own decline. According to one textual tradition, which began between 340-200 BCE in Nattier's estimation, the Buddha resists the ordination of women into the Buddhist sangha, saying that without nuns the Buddhist tradition would last 1000 years, but with their inclusion it would expire after only 500 years (1991). While the 500-year mark was long considered canon, the Mahayana tradition has texts which date the expiration (or decline) of the tradition at 700 years, which almost certainly demonstrates an ex-post facto revision after the 500 year mark had come and gone. Nattier demonstrates that by reading the aforementioned marks as the beginning of Buddhist decline, that is, the end of the "true dharma," it was possible for Mahayanists to defer the date in various texts to 1000 years, 1500 years, 2000 years, 5000 years, 5104 years, and to 10,000+ years.

The Buddhas of the past, present and future are historically particular, but their almost identical hagiographies conspire to evoke a sense of unity between them: the

117 Decline is usually blamed on either the laxity of the sangha regarding the maintenance of order (including the inclusion of women), the weakness of the sangha in the face of over-bearing patrons or government, or foreign invaders (Nattier 1991). The Kausambi prophecy of the decline is a unique synthesis: a king overcome with guilt after violently repelling foreign invaders decides to bring together all the Buddhist monks in the world together for a great feast, but the well-intentioned gesture goes dreadfully awry as monks of various lineages quarrel vehemently and kill each other until there are none left alive.
Buddha(s). Symbolically, the rise of the Maitreya Buddha stops just short of being the resurrection of Shakyamuni Buddha. I will argue that the replicability of the Buddhas offer certainty to Buddhist practitioners. The anxiety about the impermanence of time and space is tempered by the cyclical routinization of successive Buddhas. A particular impermanence is thus endlessly deferred. Moreover, for some Mahayana Buddhists, the Buddhas have always already been enlightened. From this perspective, the Maitreya Buddha, waiting in Tushita heaven to descend to earth teaches us that in some ways at least the future is now. Harkening back to my earlier discussion of Freud's notion of the "uncanny" (1953), I would suggest that there is something quite discomfiting about the doubling, the tripling, the multiplication of the Buddha. Essentially, the endless replication of Buddhas, as if they are duplicable and replaceable, suggests that the ego, the self, the character of the Shakyamuni Buddha is spread thin across the vastness of past pasts and future futures – a fact which could serve to collapse the integrity of his personal hagiography. To many Buddhists there is no tension here, the cycles of Buddhas, their identical stories and experiences – this is as natural as the cyclic seasons. However, there may be moments in which the replication of Buddhas does manifest as the uncanny in some sutras, texts and traditions, for example, there are various sutras that depict a tension between Shakyamuni and Maitreya. Shakyamuni essentially lapped Maitreya, who was all set to be a Buddha first. Now Maitreya has to patiently wait for cons. The Maitreya and Buddha are so closely linked that most traditional Tibetan images of the Maitreya Buddha include the image of the Shakyamuni Buddha at the Maitreya Buddha's crown.\[^{118}\] There is textual ambiguity about whether the Buddha's relics will recombine at some future time and flame out finally (a second mahaparinirvana, of sorts), and whether the Maitreya will do obeisance to the Shakyamuni Buddha's relics or vice versa. Some of

\[^{118}\] The Maitreya Project, notably, does not use this image for their Maitreya Buddha.
the tensions between the Shakyamuni Buddha and the Maitreya tend towards the uncanny of the doubling, rather than rivalry.

Collins' work addresses the Buddhist felicities, which foreground paradise or ideals that will occur in the future (1998). Recounting the prophecies of Metteyya, Collins also notes the present aspiration for future rebirth in the era of the Buddha-to-come. The temporal complexities of Metteyya in ritual and text is profound since he is considered both near and far, and often his future Buddhahood is represented as having always already been accomplished. The prophecy of the future Buddha leaves nothing to chance – the Maitreya Buddha, like the Buddhas before him, was prophesized, and all will come to pass for Maitreya just as it did for them. The Buddhas then sometimes blend together, as if carbon copies of each other, the past giving the future an air of certainty.

There have been many accountings of the Buddhas, various texts report 7, 5, 25 or 1000 Buddhas of the past (including Shakyamuni), but all agree that Maitreya will be the next to come (Nattier 1991). Sometimes the temporal structure of past, present and future is represented by the triad of Dipankara, Gotama (Shakyamuni) and Metteyya (Collins 1998). The "cult of the five Buddhas of the present" in Thailand spans past, present and future Buddhas, and becomes a testament to the temporal slippages at work in the practice of image veneration (Swearer 2004). Time itself becomes inextricably blurred as the registers shift; for example, in the Jataka tales a present Shakyamuni (from our past), narrates his past lives (when he was a future Buddha), and despite his death 2500 years ago his "presence" is arguably manifest in ritual representations; the Maitreya Buddha is foretold by a past Buddha in a narration by a present Shakyamuni (in our historical past), yet despite the long duration before his "presence" on earth, he is currently in a pure land waiting, which makes him most present in our present. Felicities past, present and future are bundled into a cosmology and temporality that demands more detailed attention.
In discussing the proliferation of Buddha images, Swearer notes that the Shakyamuni Buddha is "omnipresent in time, particularized in history," but I would argue that this truism is also applicable for the whole range of Buddhas, including Maitreya who is particularized in a futurity. The ritual consecration of statues in Thailand is accomplished through the lighting of two candles, one of which, the Vipassi candle is named for a past Buddha, who comes to represent all of the Buddhas (Swearer 2004:175). The paradox in Theravada Buddhism, according to Swearer, is that the pantheon of Buddhas are all distinctive and yet all the same. Nattier envisages the same conundrum while explaining that no matter how many Buddhas are being remembered or anticipated, the Buddhas evoke each other, they are "replications (even clones)" (24) of the historical Buddha.

The Buddhas move through time – they are born, reborn, enlightened, and then attain final nirvana – yet they also manage to cheat time through the machinations of our present desires for their return. In Buddhist thought and practice most generally, practitioners can be thought of as being simultaneously focused on the Shakyamuni and the Maitreya: indeed, Buddhists today can perhaps best be thought of as living devotionally between two Buddhas, trying to recollect, on the one hand, the glories of Shakyamuni, and looking forward, on the other hand, to the coming of Maitreya" (Strong 2008: 53). Western FPMTers often wrestle with Buddhist temporalities, and with the succession of Buddhas. FPMTers, like most Gelukpas, seem to have less in Buddhas preceding Shakyamuni, but there is a good deal of sustained attention devoted to the next Buddha, Maitreya.

**The Future Buddha**

The Maitreya Buddha, the Buddha of loving-kindness (Sanskrit: maitri), will be reborn sometime in the future, in order to rediscover and resurrect the body of the
Buddhist dharma long after it has been utterly lost to humanity. Practitioners in most, if not all, major Buddhist traditions, focus on the Maitreya in order to motivate the practice of merit-making now that will allow one to be reborn at the time of the Maitreya Buddha; in the predictions about the coming of Maitreya attributed to the Shakyamuni Buddha, he tells his followers that only the meritorious will have the opportunity to benefit from taking teachings in person from the Maitreya Buddha (Strong 2008). In the Mahayana tradition, there are many texts that are attributed to Maitreya, who is said to have dictated them to Asanga, so therefore many practitioners do technically have the words of the Maitreya bodhisattva to draw upon in the here and now. The eschatology of the Maitreya Buddha represents a contemporary distant millennialism that provides a receptacle of hope for the future post-apocalypse, not completely unlike the millennial hope of Tamils in Malaysia described by Andrew Willford (2006). The Maitreya Buddha figure is pregnant with hope for Tibetan Buddhists and others.

The coming of Maitreya Buddha is narrated in the Anagatavamsa Desana text in a Pali sutra that is attributed to the historical Buddha (Meddegama 1993). Though it is impossible to determine its origins in fact, scholars generally find such a claim unlikely, as the cult of the Maitreya Buddha cannot be dated earlier than two centuries BCE, that is, some scholars believe that the origins of the Maitreya Buddha in the tradition can probably be attributed to the contact between Buddhism and other world religions such as Zoroastrianism, Jainism and Hinduism (Kitagawa 1988; Holt 1993). Kitagawa has argued that ancient Persian Zoroastrianism’s myth of Saosyant, the future messiah, pre-ordained to save humanity from evil by defeating the devil and establishing a paradise on earth, deeply influenced both Judeo-Christian and Buddhist traditions (9). However, Kitagawa does not conclude that Maitreya is simply a Buddhist version of Zoroastrianism’s Saosyant, because he notes that Indic traditions may have had compelling influence as well; Kitagawa points to the possibly pre-Vedic Indic ideal of the divinely empowered super monarch, the cakravartin, who, "has a special place in the cosmic scheme as the final unifier of the earthly realm" (9). On the other hand, Holt notes that while Zoroastrianism may have had significant influence in the advent of the Maitreya narratives, the Indic religion of Jainism may have actually been the tradition to inspire tales of a future Buddha: "...it may be that the emergent belief in a future buddha owes its origins to antecedent Jain traditions regarding the continuing lineage of tirthankaras (‘ford-makers’: spiritual ‘victors’ exemplifying the way leading the ultimate spiritual realization)” (Holt 1993: 2). Conversely, Steven Collins (1998) remains unconvinced that Metteyya is a development from a Persian savior deity, but admits that the name might have been borrowed, since he feels that the idea of future and past Buddhas is intrinsic to the fact of Buddhism’s plurality of Buddhas. While Kitagawa (1988) and Holt (1993) are convinced that the Maitreya is a product of contact with other

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nearly three centuries after the passing of Shakyamuni Buddha (Holt 1993:3). Not only is Maitreya a ubiquitous figure found in every classical Buddhist tradition, he also has a place in most contemporary ones, including Tibetan traditions (and especially the Gelukpa school from which FPMT derives its lineage).

In the *Anagatavamsa Desana*, the Shakyamuni Buddha tells an assembly of devotees the story of a previous Buddha, named Muhurta, who had long since foreordained that one of his particular devotees, the Cakravartin Prabhavanta, would eventually be reborn as the future Buddha, Maitreya (Meddegama 1993). The prophesy itself is important, since many of the previous life, pre-life and life stories of the Maitreya Buddha precisely mirror those of the Shakyamuni Buddha's hagiography; since the Buddhist sacred texts tell that the Shakyamuni's coming had been prophesied, it is not surprising that Maitreya's coming would also be foreordained. In some Buddhist texts there are other future Buddhas who are expected after the Maitreya Buddha, but these texts are often marginalized, and the popular lay and monastic perspective is that the Maitreya Buddha represents a final determination: "Accordingly, this figure's consummation of Buddhist heritage sometimes casts him in the role of an eschatological cosmic savior who, at the end of the empirical world order, will establish a utopian state of justice, peace and truth" (Kitagawa 1988: 7).

As mentioned previously, according to Steven Collins, all "felicities" lead forward towards nirvana if not directly there (1998); the Maitreya "felicity" also represents a spatiotemporal transit point between now and nirvana. Chris Arthur impresses upon his readers that according to the letter of the text, even Maitreya's era will be impermanent: "...he is a messiah who is not unique and who will not bring time to an end, but will act as a punctuation mark in the great cycles of time in which all beings are caught up and from religious traditions, both Nattier (1988) and Jaini (1988) note that the controversy is far from resolved and that the origins of the Maitreya Buddha remain ambiguous.
which, according to Buddhist soteriology, they ought to seek release in the form of nirvana” (1997).

In Buddhist theology, Maitreya is expected to be born on earth only when Buddhism has been lost from the world, but unlike some other messianic figures, he will not come at the pinnacle of darkness (Meddegama 1993). The old world must first be destroyed and then regenerate of its own accord, for he will come only once the minds of humanity have undergone enough of a resurgence to be able to receive the dharma. The Anagatavamsa Desana sutra prophecies that the state of the world will decline to the point that the maximum age of human life is 10 years, children will marry but only love themselves, and humans will behave like animals (Meddegama 1993: 26). Then, deities will travel through all universes and warn of seven days of rain in which any person who gets wet will perceive other humans as game; yet, only the "wise" will hide in caves while the others slaughter each other until the universes will all run red with blood (27). The wise who had survived the homicidal rain will naturally give up all killing, and with each preceding generation humans will become wiser until their minds have ripen to the point that they are prepared to receive the Buddhist dharma; only then, many eons later, when humanity is again ready, will the Maitreya Buddha be reborn on earth. This act of deferred salvation makes Maitreya an unusual character in stories of the messianic traditions.

When FPMT's Lama Yeshe gave a discourse about Maitreya in 1981, the classic version of the story narrated above is given something of a regional Tibetan twist: Maitreya manifests on earth as a learned spiritual teacher when human life expectancy declines to just ten years, that is, precisely at the pinnacle of darkness (Yeshe 2008: 46). Guru Maitreya's teachings, especially those on loving-kindness, serve to turn the tide, and his message inspires spiritual changes that lead to an increase in human longevity. Much later, after many eons, when the time is right, Maitreya will finally manifest as a "universal
teacher or founding buddha, like Shakyamuni" (46). Therefore, in an FPMT narrative such as this one, Maitreya does serve to play the role of a messiah, in addition to his more traditional role of deferred savior. While Lama Yeshe's narrative is not ubiquitous amongst Tibetans or Nepalis, it is a familiar tale within ethnic Tibetan Buddhist communities. In an interview with a senior monk at the Namgyal Monastery in Ithaca, NY in 2004, I asked about the tale of the future Buddha. Tenzin Lhundrup explained to me that the Maitreya Buddha had been overtaken by the efforts of Shakyamuni, so had to wait in the wings, just like countless Buddhas to come. Tenzin la also told a narrative that represents Maitreya as a more direct savior figure:

There will be 1000 Buddhas. Maitreya will be the fifth Buddha. They reside in Tushita heaven. Maitreya has three names: as a king, Gyelwar Champa; as a bodhisattva, Jetsun Champa; as a Buddha, Sanghye Champa... He generates the bodhi mind, and altruism... Forty-two eons before Shakyamuni he generated bodhi mind. Maitreya was skipped because of Shakyamuni Buddha's diligence. There is a prediction that Maitreya will come. Many Buddhas are there and they will choose their time to come...When people's lifespan is only ten years, then that is when Maitreya comes. Lifespan will have degenerated. Gyelwar Champa as a king to help encourage people to improve. That body has radiance, and his words cool the angry little people. Humans will be the size of a thumb. Maitreya as a king will be the size of a forearm.

Tenzin la's observation that the Maitreya would be very, very small compared to people today is an oft-repeated legend, but not a ubiquitous one. Here Tenzin la's discussion of the Maitreya emphasizes that the Maitreya will come when life spans have decreased, a narrative that seems popular in Tibetan folk versions. More than a few critics of the Maitreya Project statue have seized on the idea of this wee Maitreya to argue that building a 500-foot statue is wildly disproportionate and inappropriate in more ways than one. In all extant versions, the coming Maitreya Buddha will be born into the imperfect world of samsara as a human, a royal heir – precisely mirroring the narrative of the historical Buddha. Before attaining enlightenment, he will be a prince who renounces
his material wealth and comfort in favor of the pursuit of enlightenment. He is said to attain enlightenment in much the same way as narrated in Shakyamuni Buddha's hagiography: besting Mara, Lord of the Dead, while sitting under a Bodhi tree in deep contemplation (Meddegama 1993). He will then deliver sermons that "...save the world...," by delivering the listeners to nirvana and ending their cyclical rebirths: "...eighty thousand billions of men and gods will be saved from the ocean of samsara. That ocean of samsara, filled with the water of suffering with its waves of birth, old age and sickness, its whirlpools of desirous forms and sounds, its fish being like various passions, residence of the female water-demons, is fed by the river waters of desire. Its length, width and depth can never be fully measured. Maitreya saves all beings sunk into the ocean of samsara who are about to fall into the furnace of hell under the sea which is shaped like the head of a mare" (45).

For Mahayanists, Maitreya is waiting in a "pure land" to come to earth, and so he is "alive," unlike the Buddhas past who have achieved final nirvana and ceased to be definitively "alive" in the same way. The notion that Maitreya is pre-nirvana and thus more accessible means that he is thought to be able to respond to the prayers of his devotees; this aspect of practice fosters yet another kind of hope: "Being compassionate...he willingly grants help; and being a high god in his present birth, he has the power to do so. His cult thus offers its devotees the advantages of theism and Buddhism combined" (Robinson and Johnson 1977: 103).

John Holt considers the Maitreya story to be analogous to Judeo-Christian Messianism (1993: 1), but Nattier offers a cautionary note that only one type of the four spatio-temporal types of Maitreya stories could be properly regarded as apocalyptic. Nattier notes that the cults of Maitreya have stoked various and sundry aspirations regarding Maitreya; there are outstanding questions of time and space, ascent and descent, near future or distant future (1988: 25). The "here/now" possibility evokes the devotees'
hopes that Maitreya will descend to earth now, during the present lifetime to grant spiritual or material boons; this apocalyptic form of the myth manifests as figures in history, especially in China, who claim to be Maitreya while engaging in revolution against empires (31), but even today there are would-be gurus who claim to be Maitreya incarnate. The devotee adhering to the "there/now" perspective hopes to ascend to Tushita heaven now to be taught by the Bodhisattva Maitreya. On the other hand, if the cultist hopes to ascend to Tushita heaven in the distant future to be taught by the Maitreya, then they are demonstrating a "there/later" perspective. However, if a cultist believes in the "here/later" option, then (s)he anticipates that Maitreya will descend to earth to teach in the far distant future.

The "here/later" version, which is the oldest and most popular of the four spatiotemporal interpretations, refers to promise of messianic intervention and a "deferred golden age," but Nattier is quick to point out that the messiah in Buddhism is quite different from Judeo-Christian messiahs: Maitreya does not bring about the world-ending and the world rebirth – the reborn world is only reinvigorated, spiritually enlightened and completed by the appearance of the Maitreya Buddha (34). However, Nattier did not refer to the existence of the Tibetan myth of Gyelwar Champa or King Maitreya in which he does in fact bring about the world-ending and rebirth. When Maitreya is invoked in Lama Zopa Rinpoche’s Maitreya Project and in all of FPMT’s theological literature and practices for that matter, it is in the form of a "here/later" anticipation: either later at the pinnacle of darkness, or much later at the rebirth of Buddhism.

In the *Anagatavamsa Desana* Sutra, the Shakyamuni Buddha tells his disciples who will see the Maitreya and who will not; the historical Buddha is said to have noted that those "who engage in meritorious acts according to their individual capabilities will definitely see Maitreya" (Meddegama 1993:52). Meritorious acts include such things as giving alms to temples, building temples and making offerings. Hope is generated in the
devotee that if they perform merit-making activities they will be reborn in the time of a living Buddha and thus have a great chance of reaching nirvana.

Hope as a concept is generally implicit in Buddhist traditions, but hope becomes increasingly more explicit in the ontology regarding Maitreya (Kitagawa 1988; Sponberg 1988; Holt 1993). Sponberg argues that Maitreya is a manifestation of hope in Buddhism: "Though perhaps initially a minor figure in early Buddhist tradition, Maitreya thus came to represent a hope for the future, a time when all human beings could once again enjoy the spiritual and physical environment most favorable to enlightenment and the release from worldly suffering" (Sponberg 1988: 1). Sponberg also writes of the universality of this interpretation of the Maitreya, "In every Buddhist culture Maitreya is a symbol of hope, of the human aspiration for a better life in the future when the glories of the golden past will be regained" (Sponberg 1988: 2), a view that is contiguous with Holt's view that in all Buddhist cosmologies Maitreya is a symbol of hope:

Throughout the historical development of Buddhist traditions in Asian cultures and societies, veneration of the bodhisattva Maitreya (Pali: Metteya; Sinhala: Maitri; Tibetan: Byama-pa; Chinese: Mi-lo; and Japanese: Miroku) has consistently reflected eschatological visions of an ultimate spiritual salvation and, to a lesser extent, recurrent millennial dreams of collective redemption from the problematic conditions of this-worldly existence. Abiding in the splendid heavenly abode of Tusita in the upper strata of the Buddhist hierarchical cosmos, Maitreya is believed to be the future Buddha whose appearance in the human abode later in this world-cycle (kalpa) will re-establish dharmic norms of righteousness and provide the virtuous with an auspicious time and place to gain final fruition of the spiritual path: nirvana... The figure of Maitreya, therefore, embodies the spiritual hope that righteous human beings may some day live in universal concord (Holt 1993: 1).

Kitagawa recognizes that the Maitreya narrative holds an implicit promise that connects hope and faith in Buddhist theology: "Clearly, the notion that the future promises to be better than the present, leading to the triumph of the good at the end of the world, is based not on empirical observation, but on speculation and affirmation" (Kitagawa 1988: 2).
8). Kitagawa's claim is consistent with Crapanzano's idea that in contrast to the psychologically motivated notion of 'desire,' "...hope presupposes a metaphysics" (Crapanzano 2004:100); as a metaphysics, Buddhist ontology plants hopes in fertile ground. The eschatological quality of the Maitreya story does not preclude hope, for as we know, many eschatologies are utopian, apocalyptic or both at once (Robbins and Palmer 1997); in fact, for many Buddhists adherents, Maitreya is precisely the promise of something beyond world-ending that invariably stokes hope. Maitreya is the light at the end of a forthcoming tunnel along the human spiritual journey.

Kitagawa (1981) and Holt (1993) have found that the future orientation of the Maitreya figure in the Buddhist tradition has allowed Buddhists to approach the figure with an open-ended quality that has lent itself to creative practice: "...one of the most fascinating features of the Maitreya is wherever Buddhism was transplanted his figure evoked 'potential modes of creativeness'...in the peoples' religious apprehension and expression" (Kitagawa 1981: 110). The Maitreya Buddha narrative opens a new "imaginative horizon" in Crapanzano's terms (2004).

Lama Yeshe and Lama Zopa Rinpoche's teachings on Maitreya emphasize the need to connect with Maitreya in the present in order to align our futures with his future. For example, Lama Yeshe once said:

In the absolute sense, Maitreya is subject to neither death nor rebirth; he is forever benefiting all mother sentient beings. Furthermore, he once declared, 'Anybody keeping just one vow of moral disciple purely during the time of Shakyamuni Buddha's teachings will become my personal disciple when I appear and I shall liberate all such disciples,' and he faithfully keeps this promise, his sworn oath and pledge. Therefore, those of us fortunate enough to have met the teachings of Shakyamuni Buddha and maintained some level of pure discipline are guaranteed to make direct contact with Maitreya, become his disciple and quickly achieve enlightenment (2008: 49).
FPMT discourses on Maitreya note that by helping to build the statue (through prayers and donations, especially) one explicitly connects one's karma stream to the era of the Maitreya Buddha; thus, by making an offering to MPI, one can aspire to be reborn when Maitreya once again returns to earth, and makes the achievement of enlightenment a much easier matter for all contemporaneous humans.

Within FPMT there is wide variety of opinions about the Maitreya figure; within a single FPMT retreat, he might worshipped as a presence in Tushita heaven by some, hailed as a promise by others, respected as a mere symbol for maitri by a handful of students, or even doubted as a cultural fiction by the more skeptical minds in the room. Despite the range of reception Maitreya receives by various FPMTers, Maitreya images and prayers are very prominent in FPMT circles, as they are in Tibetan Buddhism in general (especially in Gelukpa contexts).

**Imag(in)ing Maitreya**

Lama Yeshe first discussed his desire to build a Maitreya statue in Bodh Gaya, the place of the historical Buddha's enlightenment, in 1982 (Colony 1998: 38), but the size and contours of the project evolved for many years after that. In this section, I will trace the development of the form of the Maitreya statue itself, from artistic and technological perspectives, since this provides a "text" for understanding the hopes and anticipations of the Project. For, as Crapanzano writes, "As with the dream, so do our constructions – and our evocations – of that which lies beyond the imaginative frontier translate experience into text" (2004). Latour also posits that Aramis, in the making, is a text, a fiction to be realized or not, made manifest or not (1996).

Latour's work on Aramis provides a useful frame for the innovations of the Maitreya Project, since he focuses on the how the innovation and the innovators co-constitute one another, and how they shape and change one another over time and space.
One of the innovations of Latour's theory of invention was his understanding that there was not just one Aramis, there were many, and that projects drift: Latour's fictionalized social scientists trace the ideas over time. There are also many Maitreya statues. The statue, although it does not yet exist, has taken many forms already. Aramis did not come into being because its makers never negotiated and coaxed it into being; according to Latour, they did not love it enough to compromise with either the technology or the environment. It remains to be seen whether the Maitreya Project makers – Buddhist devotees, engineers, financiers, artists, bureaucrats, etcetera – will "love" the Maitreya Project enough to merge its "body and soul" (Latour 1996: 288).

After Lama Yeshe's death, the statue project grew exponentially – not only in terms of momentum, but in terms of the absolute size of the statue. Lama Yeshe never specified that the Maitreya statue of his dreams need have a certain height or dimension. For many years the statue was just an idea floating around the corridors of FPMT centers called Maitreya for World Peace, and initially it was conceived of by many devotees as an "ambitious plan to build a sixty-foot statue of Maitreya, the Buddha to come, in Bodhgaya, the place where Buddha attained enlightenment" (Mackenzie 1995: 207).

Lama Zopa Rinpoche had even more ambitious plans for the statue, and the size and scope of the project increased gradually until in 1996, the height of the statue jumped from 421 feet to the currently expected 500 feet (Mandala 1996b: 26). "The very idea to make the image so big came from an architect in Taiwan," Kedge said, adding that they settled on the round number of 500 feet (152.4m) during a visit by Lama Thubten Zopa Rinpoche to Taiwan five years ago" (Bartholomew 2001).

According to oft-repeated FPMT lore, as a young boy, Lama Yeshe's young Spanish-born reincarnation, Lama Osel, described his preference that the statue would be a giant, transparent statue with lights blinking inside at the chakra points. Needless to say, the project proceeded forward with a less fanciful version of the statue. Over the
past fifteen plus years, MPI has published various images and representations of the statue as they have developed and altered over time, although none quite as fanciful as the one envisaged by Lama Yeshe's reincarnation. In each version of the statue, Maitreya is seated aloft on a pedestal in the Bhadrasana pose, but the qualities and details of some of the faces are quite distinct, and according to public reports from the project, it is the face that has received the most attention. Early images were two-dimensional pictures painted or drawn as artists' renderings of the project, while later renderings were three-dimensional prototype statues (or 3-D representations of the prototype) (see Figure 13 and Figure 14 for two early representations).

Figure 14. Early images of the MPI statue plan as shown in a poster hanging in the MPI Headquarters in Bodh Gaya in 2007. (Photograph by Jessica Falcone.)

In an article meant for internal FPMTer consumption, an MPI administrator detailed the commissioning of an early prototype of the statue from a factory owner (to whom Lama Zopa Rinpoche had given a portfolio of both Maitreya and Shakyamuni Buddhas to draw inspiration from) (Bertels 1996). In the piece, Bertels described how for six hours Lama Zopa Rinpoche worked tirelessly on the five-foot prototype: "Using little wooden tools and occasionally his finger, Rinpoche caringly again and again would return
to the area of Maitreya's mouth to get just the right loving smile. As the day wore on, our initial disappointment started to disappear and a sense of wonder and joy replaced it as Rinpoche put his magic to work. At the end of the day, there was a very happy and smiling Maitreya Buddha. Rinpoche declared that "if the face of the Maitreya Statue in Bodhgaya would look like this, I would be very happy" (Bertels 1996:11).

The first architects chosen were "TCC Architects and Associates" from Taiwan, and during this period "The Maitreya Project Taiwan National Office" was opened at the FPMT Taipei center, which served as both a technical and fundraising base ("Maitreya Project moves ahead" 1996: 11). However, the years following the subsequent appointment of Peter Kedge to the CEO position showed a marked shift towards Western project experts instead of Taiwanese ones, and the onus of the technical operations were moved to the UK. A team from Whinney Mackey Lewis, the Maitreya Project's architects in 2000, formed AROS in 2001, and has continued to provide architectural advice for the project.

In 1997, Denise Griffin, a British sculptor, and a devotee of Lama Zopa Rinpoche, accepted a commission to create the next prototype of the statue ("Peter Kedge International Director of Maitreya Project" 1997: 12). Denise was eventually joined in the artistic undertaking by her husband Peter; once they had finished a first prototype in 1998, they dissembled it, packed it up, and send it to Kathmandu, where they received hands-on assistance from a Tibetan sculptor, and guidance from Rinpoche. The Griffin prototype produced in 1998, accounting for some minor adjustments to the right hand and forearm in 2001, is essentially the image of the Maitreya that has been reproduced and globally circulated since then.

In 2001, there was a great deal of excitement in FPMT periodicals and MPI ads over the computer generation of the schematics created by scanning the original prototype. The life-size, 5-6 foot prototype, finished by the Griffins in Kathmandu with
help from a master Tibetan sculptor, was shipped to Salt Lake City, Utah for scanning. The scanned images were then to be used to control for artist error. Also, this "rapid prototyping" process was supposed to aid in the computer generation of statues; computer-guided lasers were reputed to work an epoxy into an exact replica of the image within just a few hours. The computer-generated images were also billed as fundamental in eventually creating the giant bronze pieces that would eventually be assembled into the giant statue on site. The Maitreya Project's literature on planning in 2001 emphasized the significance of the new technologies being used and developed for the statue process. The technology in Salt Lake City was used to make two 24 foot fiberglass-coated Styrofoam models, one which was installed at an FPMT center in California in 1999, and the other which was delivered to a hangar on the Maitreya Project land in Bodh Gaya soon after.

The new technologies being reported by the Maitreya Project in 2007 emphasized that the Delcam group, a UK-based company, would be engaging in a process of "reverse engineering." The "non-contact" scanning of the prototype statue with software designed to capture "millions of points describing the shape of the statue," would guide the creation of a "triangle model" ("Project Partners: Delcam" 2007). Delcam software would then create a smooth model from the triangle model to ensure that no anomalies exist in the final computerized "CAD model." The computer model would be used to crop out 4000+ individual panels, which could then be modified with engineering features, such as joints, etc. Another partner, the Casting Development Center, was slated to make more than 4000 molds from Delcam's computer panels, probably out of "solid blocks of 'green sand,'" which would be shipped to India, so that each 2-meter-square bronze panel could be cast on-site in Kushinagar. Thus, the process by which the statue may finally be created requires several steps between the visionary, the artist(s), and the finished product.
Even the original Maitreya statue built in Kushinagar will be a mechanical reproduction of the original statue handcrafted by Tibetan-trained British artisans (with help from their teachers). In "The work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," Benjamin tackles the ineffability of a reproduction by showing that it ultimately destabilizes the notion of traditional art: "...that which withers in the age of mechanical reproduction is the aura of the work of art" (1968: 221). Benjamin seemed to indicate that within the destabilization of aura there was an opportunity for liberation, and so too is the replication of statues an opportunity rather than a lack. However, there is something about the creation of the Maitreya statue by new technologies that makes it more prone to doubt regarding its authenticity. Molds are not an uncommon technique in traditional Tibetan art, but it is this distance between traditional craft and modern technology that has some devotees whispering that the authenticity (or "aura") of the statue is in doubt: "The statue won't even be Tibetan"; "It won't be authentic, but maybe that's okay"; "They should program the computers to run mantras at the same time as they are running the graphics software! That would be better." The casting of statues in Tibet is often done mindfully, as part of a meditation practice, and so the idea that a giant statue would be made by machines and non-Buddhist workers, has led some FPMTers to wonder if spiritual ends justify un-spiritual means.

Even if the completed statue of Maitreya retains its "aura" in the eyes of the beholders, there is another level of reproduction in the offing, which evokes tension between art and commodity. Images of the proposed statue, in the forms of posters, postcards, tsatsas, etc., are already being widely circulated amongst FPMT supporters, and these images are even found amongst peripheral Buddhist communities whose members often frequent the Relic Tour events. Even if the statue is never built, the image of it has already had quite a celebrated pre-life. It is a recognizable image, a commodified image, at times bordering on fetish in the Marxist sense of the word.
At the FPMT e-store, one can buy a set of postcards with images of the relics and the statue for $20. On the Maitreya Project International website, one can purchase a six-inch replica of the statue made in white resin for $150. Outside of every relic tour event there is a table where one can buy souvenirs like Maitreya Project posters, DVDs, CDs, etc. Sometimes these purchases are called "donations," sometimes "suggested donations," but they are "prices" in the sense that one can only get the item in exchange for its set value. Even as a representation of a plan, it is a real image with substantial cultural currency in the present moment – the image is a plan of action, an advertisement, a call to donate, a charming ambassador for their ambitions in Kushinagar, and as Benjamin prophesized, "instead of being based on ritual, it begins to be based on another practice – politics" (1968: 224). If Benjamin felt that political liberation could ensue from replication, there certainly a sense here that the replication of images would help to create a momentum for the future. This echoes Junker's approach to the image of a pre-object, in which the graphic becomes an activating and motivating prescription for the future (1999: 23).

Lama Zopa Rinpoche's accommodations to some more East Asian aesthetics with regard to the Maitreya statue has not met with approval from everyone. They are often whispered, back-stage remarks to be sure, but I have heard variations on the exact same comment too many times and from too many disparate sources to ignore: "The Maitreya Project's statue looks too Chinese." The aesthetic and pedigree of the statue is certainly unique, but the comment may point to concerns about the hefty amount that Chinese/Taiwanese devotees have contributed or pledged to the project. These complaints come from both elite FPMTers and ethnic Tibetan Buddhists from outside the FPMT family, and reflect a general mistrust of the Chinese given simmering resentment at the long-term Chinese occupation of Tibet. The Maitreya Project would acknowledge that the statue was not made in a normative Tibetan aesthetic style. Peter
Kedge mentioned in an interview that while the traditional proportionality would be maintained, the statue would not be representative of any specific national or regional aesthetic style (Bartholomew 2001). My Tibetan exile informants looked at the image and said that it is not Tibetan, but rather East Asian, in style and appearance. Certainly there are notable differences between classical Tibetan representations of Maitreya and the artistic rendering of the MPI statue. For example, during a summer-long survey of Maitreya statues in 2005, I was surprised to note that every single Maitreya in Tibet proper I came across had a crown with a Shakyamuni Buddha inside, while the representation of the MPI statue is without a crown (and without a Shakyamuni Buddha image) (see Figure 12 and Figure 15).

![Maitreya statue in Ganden Monastery in Tibet in the summer 2005.](Photograph by Jessica Falcone.)

This, and other stylistic differences between the standard Maitreya image in contemporary Tibetan monasteries and the image that has been produced for the Maitreya Project, has
some tongues wagging in disapproval. Ethnic Tibetans who do not recognize the image as their own worry that the aesthetic represents too much accommodation to ethnic Chinese devotees whose political ideas about Tibet so often run counter to their own. The face of the Buddha, the MPI statue image itself, has evolved over time and space and been influenced by many people along the way, and as such, it is arguably a very transnational representation of the Maitreya Buddha. The face of transnationalism, it would seem, is not always welcome.

**Divining Maitreya: Designs of the Future, Signs of the Future**

At a meeting of experts on the Maitreya Project land in Bodh Gaya in 1997, which included three Taiwanese architects, two Malaysian feng-shui (geomancy) experts, and two Taiwanese specialists from a corporation peddling their assistance with the "Computer Aided Manufacturing" of statues, the geomancers were busily "propitiating the guardian deities of the land to co-operate requesting that there be no mishaps and that all work be accomplished without obstacle."\(^{120}\) (Colony 1997: 12). This example clearly demonstrates that the technologies of planning and envisioning the future in FPMT contexts privilege various types of expertise. The Maitreya Project work has enabled various kinds of technologies of planning from the beginning, as evident in the description of the above of the Griffins using both traditional and modern techniques to make a prototype. Architects' skill sets are as valuable as the advice of geomancers, and the science-wallah must come to an accommodation with the divinations of lama. In this section, I will focus on the technologies of forecasting used by MPI and its affiliates.

Predictions are a common form of expression for enlightened beings and teachers in Tibetan literature. American Buddhists, especially those in the Tibetan tradition, sometimes attribute a prophecy to the Shakyamuni Buddha that in effect would show that

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\(^{120}\) The geomancers reported that the "three resident deities had all agreed." (Colony 1997: 12).
Buddhism was always supposed to end up in America: "2,500 years after I have passed away into Nirvana, the Highest doctrine will become spread in the country of the red-faced people" (cf. Fields 1998). Padmasambhava, an Indian sage thought to have lived in the eighth or ninth century, was reputed to have said, "When the iron bird flies, and the horse runs on wheels, the Tibetan people will be scattered like ants across the World, and the dharma will come to the land of the red man" (cf. Prebish 1998: 6). These prophecies are oft-repeated (paraphrased, really) in the halls of FPMT, sometimes in courses, and sometimes just amongst fellows students at the dinner table during a course. As one might expect, prophecy talk is met with wonder and skepticism both.

Oracles (Tibetan: kuten, or lapa) are prevalent figures in Tibetan Buddhist history, and some are even state sponsored. Oracles serve as the heads of particular monasteries like Nechung, and Gadong. At state rituals, the Dalai Lama is given advice and predictions in order to assist in his decision-making for the Tibetan state, though the current Dalai Lama has acknowledged that the oracles are just one set of advisors and he himself is responsible for decision-making (Ellington 2008; "Mediums of Nechung" 1992; 'To become Nechung's Medium is not an ordinary duty' 1992). Most of these high state oracles are men, but there are significant exceptions to this rule, as some women in Tibetan history have attained the title of State Oracle (Havnevik 2002). Aside from high state oracles and oracular monastic heads, in Tibet and in exile, there are multitudes of locally and regionally recognized minor oracles.

Divinations (mos) are a common facet of contemporary ethnic Tibetan religious practice; likely a part of the indigenous tradition of Tibet that was adapted during the influx of Buddhism, divinations are considered one of the provinces of the Tibetan Buddhist tulkus. Lamas often use dice, malas or dough-balls to tell the future for themselves or their devotees. The diviner has established a ritual connection with a particular deity who invests the divinations with supernatural insight.
According to Rosenberg and Harding, modern futures were predicated on a rejection of the prophet, but this became intractable when prophets failed to get the message: "as it turns out, what most characterizes the modern problem of the future is not its historical distance from the mode of prophecy but rather its hybrid and contradictory relationship to it" (2005: 6). Within FPMT there is simultaneously acceptance and mistrust of prophecy and divination. "I'm not surprised [the Maitreya Project's] a mess," offered one Western Tibetan Buddhist devotee, whose teacher is actually one of Lama Zopa Rinpoche's teachers, "It's always just a roll of the dice with FPMT. Rinpoche makes all of his decisions based on mos." There are others who feel that Lama Zopa Rinpoche's divinations are the best possible way to feel out the future, and make choices accordingly. "I believe in mos if they are being handled by a divine being….Lama Zopa Rinpoche is a divine being." Guru devotion and faith play a significant part in whether divinations are accepted or rejected, but occasionally even the most devoted FPMTers may have cultural dissonance with certain prophetic elements, and have to either work through them, or simply allow them to mentally flicker as temporary spaces of doubt.

There are also hushed discussions around common tables at FPMT centers in India that Lama Zopa Rinpoche can look into the future, and has made predictions about some of his devotees. As I will discuss at length in a later chapter, one of the most common responses of devoted FPMTers wrestling with the discomfort of local protests about the Maitreya Project is to reason aloud that since Lama Zopa Rinpoche is omniscient and enlightened, he knows the future better than anyone else – therefore, whatever the MPI is up to, it must be for the best. I have also been told by devotees that Lama Osel is able to divine the future. His former attendant noted that when Osel was a child he showed psychic qualities and the ability to tell the future, while another monk reports the following prophecy: "Again you are going to be a lama, and I will hold you in
my arms" (Mackenzie 1995: 191). In her hagiography of Lama Osel, Mackenzie notes that other monks confirmed to her that he was able to see their past and future lives. Also, "at other times he would scare them witless by declaring they were going to the hell realms--whether these were true prophesies or false no one was in a position to judge" (Mackenzie 191).

The interpretation of incidental signs or omens is also a common phenomenon in Tibetan religious culture. Although Tibetan refugees often wonder about the bad omens encountered by the Maitreya Project, it is not everyday practice for FPMT devotees to consider the "obstacles" encountered by the project "bad omens." The flexibility inherent in signs is that they can be interpreted to support a foregone conclusion.

In January 1998, when the Dalai Lama came to the Maitreya Project owned land in Bodh Gaya he gave a speech in support of the project, but soon afterwards a series of events took place that are often considered bad omens (fire, strange weather, postponement) according to Tibetan cultural norms, yet these were all interpreted publicly as auspicious happenings.121

"In a dramatic turn later, a fire broke out, destroying the large Shakyamuni tangka and part of the temporary tent structure on the Maitreya land… Towards the end of His Holiness' teachings' that day, following the Chenrezig initiation, there was an unexpected downpour of rain. His Holiness looked up in surprise, but continued teaching. While people were fully protected by the teaching tent, heavy rain meant that the Maitreya puja scheduled for the same evening to bless the Maitreya land had to be canceled. Mini-pujas were held on buses and by a few monks at the land. It was felt by most that all these conditions were auspicious signs" (Rose 1998:37).

121 It is not uncommon for Tibetans to have very fuzzy ways of interpreting signs. For example, I was told of situations in which there were competitors, either individuals or monasteries, and the same event would be interpreted as auspicious or inauspicious depending on whose side they were on.
Peter Kedge narrated the event by noting that although the tent, Buddha thangka, offerings, and ritual implements had all burned, the throne that His Holiness had just occupied, plus the Maitreya thangka had escaped damage in the fire. Still, he admitted that he found himself "wishing that auspiciousness could display itself in a slightly more friendly manner" (Kedge 1998: 41). Publicly, in FPMT, it seems that ostensibly bad news is spun as good news, and what would seem bad omens in one light are interpreted as auspicious instead. There are no bad omens – events are interpreted as either good omens or "obstacles." FPMTers usually talk about obstacles as if they were inevitable, and therefore nothing to be concerned about. In 2000, Lama Osel gave an interview in which he repeated a common refrain of FPMT devotees that obstacles are inevitable in a dharma project of this magnitude: "If you make something big, then always some obstacles come. Some people feel jealous, so many things" (Mandala, March/April 2000: 64). A Maitreya Project staffer in India, Babbar Singh, showed me that one of the small 6-inch Maitreya Buddha in his glass case kept slipping out of its box and falling forward, so that its head hit the glass. He interpreted it as a good omen that the project would soon move ahead: "...see that one keeps coming out of its case on its own. It's ready!"

122 This example of the fire at the Maitreya Project site was reprised when an Italian FPMT center burned to the ground in December of 2008. The FPMT International headquarters sent the CPMT e-list a copy of a letter Lama Zopa Rinpoche wrote to the gutted center about how something burning can be interpreted as an auspicious sign. After re-telling the story of the fire at the Maitreya Project site, and specifically mentioning that both Ribur Rinpoche and one of the Dalai Lama's ritual attendants' said that it was an auspicious sign, Lama Zopa Rinpoche wrote about how the fire at the center was similarly auspicious: "I think that what has happened at Lama Tsong Khapa Institute with the blazing fire destroying the Gompa is an auspicious sign – that you have overcome all the problems by this blazing fire...Even though there was much work and effort done for this Gompa, its burning gives us the opportunity to build an Enlightened Gompa, and for the encouraging Gompa not [to be used as] a place to eat pizza and mozzarella" (CPMT 2008).

123 At the time, I noted his explanation. I, in turn, later interpreted the same phenomenon as a sign that the Maitreya himself was trying to escape the project, and I should have taken it as a "divine foreshadowing" of the trouble I was to have with the project. Like the Christian charismatic healer and patient described at length by Crapanzano, both my interlocutor and I could easily read into the signs exactly what we wanted and reinterpret them as needed: "It is clear that these "premonitions" are retrospective reevaluations of experiences that seem to have little on the surface to do with the revelation they purportedly foreshadow" (2004: 48).
When the Maitreya Project hit "obstacles" in Bihar and was considering a move to Uttar Pradesh, the Dalai Lama performed a dough-ball divination to decide if the project would relocate. The story circulating in FPMT is that the names of all possible options were all placed inside dough-balls and then put inside a bowl; at the appropriate moment in the ritual at the Mahabodhi temple in Bodh Gaya, the Dalai Lama picked out a dough-ball with a single word inside: Kushinagar.

Once the project moved to Kushinagar, supporters often argued that it had been a foregone conclusion, and that the reason that the project had so many problems in Bodh Gaya was precisely because the project was always supposed to be done in Kushinagar. Babbar Singh, a Maitreya Project official (an Indian from Gorakhpur who identifies as a Buddhist via Hinduism), said that he had done a careful study of the literature, which all pointed to his conclusion that the historical Buddha had foreseen the coming of the Maitreya Project to Kushinagar. He narrated how he had found a passage in a dusty text somewhere that described how the Buddha had berated his disciple for bemoaning that an outlying place like the Malla kingdom would host the mahaparinirvana, and said that in ancient times Kushinagar had been a very famous and large kingdom. Babbar Singh said, "[The Buddha] said that 'what was past will be again in the future. In time this city will rise again.' He visualized this and his prophecy is coming true. Kushinagar will again be a beautiful city… I cannot prove this, but I believe that the Maitreya statue was meant to come to Kushinagar. The site of dying will be the site of rising. Kushinagar will rise up – the Buddha made this prophecy."

Tibetan refugees have not played a major part in the Maitreya Project effort, mostly given that few are FPMT students or serious devotees of Lama Zopa Rinpoche. The few members of the Tibetan refugee community in Dharamsala that I interviewed about the statue project are quick to point out that many of the delays, controversies, and problems experienced by the Maitreya Project are incontrovertibly bad omens. Still, a
lama who once served in the Tibetan in exile government (the Central Tibetan Administration) seemed to highlight the Dalai Lama’s support of the project and connect it to the contemporary Tibetan nationalism of the exile community:

There is some important connection between Maitreya, the 5th Buddha and our situation in exile. The Tibetan political situation...Maitreya has a huge contribution to benefit for the political situation. The future Buddha – by making a connection with the Maitreya. By building this project it is cultivating love within the Tibetan people, and even in the Chinese people who destroy our culture. Through the power of love it will reach and change the minds of people who harm us. Their minds may change.

This lama was not alone in feeling that the statue would have positive effects for the Tibetan cause, but he was the only Tibetan I interviewed who emphasized its connections with Tibetans. Tibetan refugees often seem isolated from the Maitreya Project. Dozens of ethnic Tibetan Buddhist informants indicated that the MPI statue is a "Western" project, both lamenting that the Maitreya Project was run and funded by non-Tibetans, and wondering if perhaps the inauspicious signs of delay and rumors of corruption were not connected in some way to its distance from them.

**Making (Up) Progress: Constructing a "Prospective Momentum"**

Rosenberg and Harding argue that the futures visualized in the past continue to live on in the present: "More and more, our sense of the future is conditioned by a knowledge of, and even a nostalgia for, futures that we have already lost" (2005:3). Futures past haunt our present, but do they also affect our ability to have faith in futures future? As the Maitreya Project writes its progress reports it is consistently dogged by past broken promises, and past failed progress.

The Maitreya Project has been in process for decades, but the organization has struggled to accomplish their major goals. However, the organization sets, resets, and
redefines goals in order to forward a narrative of progress. The production of momentum by MPI is accomplished in the organization's literature, periodic email updates to the organization's listserv, and also through articles in FPMT's Mandala magazine. Going back, one is struck by the plethora of envisioned futures that have failed to come to fruition, as well as the repetition of promise after broken promise to both themselves and their donors. In 2000, the expected completion date for the Maitreya Project was 2005. In 2007, though ground had not yet been broken, those connected to the project still hoped that it would be complete by 2013. Three years later, in the spring of 2010, the land in Kushinagar still was under cultivation with no Maitreya Project entity within a 30 kilometer radius. There is clearly a wide gap between what is and what may be, but it is important to see the gap as it has been constructed over time.

The gap between reality and the ideal that is central to Paul Ricoeur's notion of utopian thought (1986) is cogently extended by Hiro Miyazaki who observes that the gap give the present its future directionality (2003: 261). By explicating the way that Japanese arbitragers handled and extended the temporal incongruities of a volatile market, Miyazaki argues that only by exposing the gap between "reality" and the "ideal" can one hope develop the necessary "prospective momentum" (2003: 261). I draw upon Miyazaki's formulation here to show that each of these detailed narratives of progress from the Maitreya Project illuminated precisely that distance between what was and what will be in order to excite a feeling of optimism.

Email updates have been sent out one to four times a year between 2001 and 2007 to those registered as donors and/or interested parties on the Maitreya Project website. Almost every emailed Latest Update focused on what had been accomplished, as well as setting short term goals for the next phase of work: for example, in the first half of the update from 2000, a small "success" was registered – "the Concept Design team's work was complete" – with language such as, "milestone," "dynamic," "inspiring,"
"energizing," while the second half of the email described the "ideal" (Miyazaki 2003) in detail – the statue as it will be – "a quiet hallowed setting," surrounded by a "natural native woodland landscape," which is partially encircled by a "Living Wall" where most of the accommodations, management and services will be located.

While a mid-2001 update proclaimed "Construction phase begins," in fact the November 2001 update acknowledge a full stop on progress as new sites were being scouted for suitability (MPI 2001a; MPI 2001b). The next set of updates over the course of a year builds momentum towards a swift resolution, which then takes much longer than expected. The project announced that an agreement with the Uttar Pradesh state government has been reached as of May 2003, and that it would be "several months before Maitreya Project will take possession of a site..." in Kushinagar (MPI 2003).

Over a year later, in August 2004, the Maitreya Project wrote that they hoped to take possession of the land later in that year itself, to open offices in Lucknow and Delhi, and to begin social programs in Kushinagar (MPI 2004b). The MPI update from December 2004 documents their hope that it will be "several months" before they can possess the land that would be acquired on their behalf (MPI 2004c).

In early 2005, the project staff wrote that they "expected" that the land would be under their control later in that calendar year, and that the statue would be done five years from that time (Kedge 2005b). In a December 2005 update, Peter Kedge wrote that "...there is intense and ongoing activity, particularly in India, where we make daily progress towards the taking over of our site of 750 acres of land in Kushinagar, Uttar Pradesh. ...we are making good steady progress with our partners in shared vision, the Uttar Pradesh State Government" (Kedge 2005a). 124

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124 Given this update, I found myself quite shocked when I visited the land in January 2006 at the beginning of my fieldwork, and discovered that several thousand people still occupied the land in question, and that they had no intention of ever moving. The residents of the project area had been protesting against the plans at a local level, and in August 2006 met with the Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh, who agreed to cancel the project. Just a few weeks later, when I returned to Kushinagar, the farmers told me of their
The August 2006 update reported that the government land acquisition was well underway: "Currently, 40% of the land is ready for handover and the government has completed most of the process for the remaining 60% of the land. Although we know all too well that timing cannot be guaranteed, we expect the land site process will be completed by the end of 2006 or early 2007" (Kedge 2006). This apparent progress was not evident in person, nor did locals agree with this rosy assessment.

The next of these "progress updates" was sent in June 2007, and simultaneously proclaimed that all the legal requirements to the land acquisition had been made, and that "...it will still take further time before it is operationally under the control of the project; nonetheless, this is a major milestone in the development of the project and we are pleased to be able to share with you this news which has been eagerly awaited for so long" (MPI 2007c). The build-up during these updates generated a continuous effect of being on the cusp of a breakthrough, although during the summer of 2007 the Kushinagari farmers still occupied the coveted project land, steadfastly refused to budge, and moreover, reported to me over the phone that the government seems less and less inclined to force them off their land.

In the fall of 2007, the Maitreya Project suffered some bad press,\(^{125}\) and they felt compelled to issue some progress updates that were more defensive. The update issued in September 2007 was a sweeping repudiation of the charges leveled against the MPI regarding the challenges faced by the land acquisition – it said that no one would be forced off the land for the project (Kedge 2007c). The report picks a few difficult cases, such as the case of a leasee who also reputedly wanted compensation for eviction, and argues that the Maitreya Project has no legal standing in the Land Acquisition. This

\(^{125}\)To be fully transparent, I was deeply implicated in the media coverage, both as an occasional author and a quoted source in Pepper's articles. For more, see Falcone (2007 a & b), Gatter (2007 a & b), Pepper (2007 a & b).
report was the first that eschewed the sing-song-y sway between "real" and "ideal," in favor of a perfunctory question and answer style. It seemed that the momentum was dealt a blow here, as the progress reports have changed in substance since summer 2007, and have only just reverted back to the former style in April 2010.

The progress report issued in November 2007 was more specifically designed to refute some building accusations of lack of transparency about decision-making and finances. Peter Kedge wrote that all due diligence was being done to ensure a fair process of land acquisition, and noted that cases of eminent domain are "always highly emotive, whether they take place in the US, the UK, India or elsewhere" (Kedge 2007b). Also, for the first time, with the update, Kedge released the financial records of the organization. In addition, they also showed the bureaucratic structure of the Maitreya Project as a transnational institution. In this report, progress is not discussed in terms of short-term goals, and specifics on what happens next, it is simply stated that the land acquisition will eventually go ahead: "…keeping in mind the long-term, sustainable benefits Maitreya Project will bring to the local community, the Project remains dedicated in its attempt to locate at Kushinagar, and at present we have every faith that the land purchase will be achieved to the satisfaction of all parties" (Kedge 2007b).

A more recent report, issued in October 2008, was a nostalgia-laden look at the Maitreya Project's school in Bodh Gaya. The update is no progress report, but rather a celebration of the accomplishments of the school; it is a posting of the school's newsletter, the Good Heart, rather than a discussion of the progress or lack thereof in Kushinagar (MPI 2008a). The effect of nostalgia – the good old days when Bodh Gaya, and not Kushinagar, was the future site of the statue – was evident. The momentum of the updates seems to reverse and travel backwards in time, as there is no mention of Kushinagar at all. The accomplishments of the Bodh Gaya school, while substantial, were absolutely out of place as a "progress update" from the Maitreya Project in contrast
to their archived updates. The new hope in October 2008 is fueled by the children of Bodh Gaya and their brighter futures, as one student's poem included in the update shows: "We little children will make a new world" (MPI 2008a). This update was nostalgic, and evinced a layover in the work forward.

Robin Weigman's piece, "Feminism's Apocalyptic Futures," approaches the problem of the present without a tenable solution. As per Weigman's explication, the future of feminism is fraught because the present has failed to bring the future's promises to fruition in the now. It is the short-term nature of the promises of the past that make the present seem uninhabitable to feminists lamenting "the failure of feminism's present tense" (807). In the same way, the future imagery evoked in each of the updates forwarded by Maitreya Project International is haunted by the short-term broken promises of the past. This haunting by futures past is especially apparent in the revising and re-revising of projected dates for goals to be accomplished.

After the break that occurred to the "prospective momentum" being generated through the updates, the Maitreya Project could not seem to get forward momentum rolling again via the same medium. Instead the Maitreya Project revamped their website page to focus on the Maitreya Healthcare Project and the education aspects of the project. The education reset is accomplished by mapping out the need for funds so that the Bodh Gaya school "can do so much more – with a little help from our sponsors" (MPI 2008a). The Kushinagar Healthcare proposal, posted to the Maitreya Project website in early 2008, outlines a new "real" and a new "ideal" in detail. The new "real" glosses Kushinagar under an avalanche of facts and statistics about poverty, illiteracy and the lack of basic health care options for Indians in general, and Uttar Pradeshis more specifically. Only after eighteen pages of the national/regional is there a single paragraph about the Kushinagar locale. The single paragraph constructs a convenient real, noting the dearth of healthcare options (which is undeniable), but failing to mention that the
Thai temple has a hospital under construction. Rather than focusing on the land acquisition (the old "ideal"), it provides a new target goal: the Maitreya Project healthcare project became the new "ideal." The Healthcare plan is rolled out in phases, with detailed costs attached (such as "Physiotherapy" capital expenses being 60,000 rupees, and liability insurance being 5,000 rupees) (MPI 2008b). The healthcare project had long been envisioned as a part of the project writ large, but the effect of rolling out the funding proposal seemed to work to reset the momentum clock. The report detailed the hopes and expectations of the project without mentioning the people of Kushinagar, their resistance to the project or the land acquisition. There was no sense of contingency; nothing to the effect of, "if the land is acquired, then we will proceed with phase one," etcetera. The Maitreya Project hospital became the fantasy du jour. In 2008, the controversy was erased, silenced. A digital clock, a countdown, was unplugged…until the fall of 2009.

In September 2009, the update was another "factual" report addressing the controversy and claiming a fact-check that emphasizing MPI's ersatz concern for the local people in Kushinagar (MPI 2009). The 2009 update was jolt to the heart of FPMT's heart project – a plodding return back from nostalgia-land back towards the business of making up progress and eliciting hope. The most recent update, issued in April 2010, was extraordinary in its breadth, style and content: it reported on the successes and miracles of the Relic Tour, and then explained that it would be closing the Maitreya Project school in Bodhgaya indefinitely due to financial issues, and asked for funding help in order to help transfer the students and staff of the school to another local program (MPI 2010). Yet, it was the final section that gave life to hope again: it showed a photo of Richard Gere posed with Indian bureaucrats in Lucknow with an explanation that the Hollywood actor had successfully gone to advocate on behalf of the project. The report resets the
gap, and returns the progress updates to the genre of hope creation and optimism that is designed to solicit funding. The report reads:

In January 2010, members of Maitreya Project met with the Culture Secretary of Uttar Pradesh, Shri Awanish K. Awasthi. The meeting included the executive director of Maitreya Project Trust Tony Simmons, Maitreya Project advocate Atul Chopra, trustees from Maitreya Project Trust, and friend of Maitreya Project Richard Gere. Mr Awasthi presented a plan and timetable for the state government to identify final land site boundaries that are agreeable to all stakeholders.

In a series of meetings since then, which have been held daily in Lucknow, further progress has been made. Our understanding directly from state government is that the timetable for handover is now approximately June 2010. The fact that such an announcement has been made directly to representatives of Maitreya Project and also published widely in state government press releases indicates that Maitreya Project should soon be in a position to take possession of the landsite in Kushinagar.

There have been many reasons why this process has been long and drawn out. Some of these reasons have been presented already and they include the difficult circumstances involved in dealing with the state government responsible for over 150 million people in an essentially rural and poor part of India. A system of 'office rotation' that occurs within the Indian Administrative Service is frequently implemented and hinders continuity. Politics also plays a part. Nevertheless, this year, 2010, has seen strong determination from the side of the State Government of Uttar Pradesh as well as, of course, Maitreya Project to bringing this issue to full resolution (MPI 2010).

The spring 2010 update, like all discourse coming out of MPI thus far, blames any and all obstacles and delays on solely external causes. The update also goes on to note that once the land is seized, the education and healthcare projects conceived for the area will begin. The fact that the healthcare project was proposed to start long ago is glossed and forgotten. Now the land is once more at issue – and this time will be different, it promises. It resets the clock again, post-pause, and unveils a new real and a new ideal. The prospective momentum rolls upward and upwards once more...

The construction of "prospective momentum" in their literature has had the effect of both sustaining much hope within FPMT, and also perhaps frustrating hope for
others, who point to the revisions upon revisions as evidence that the Maitreya Project's plans and promises cannot be trusted. Faith and hope, as compatriots, are intertwined in this process. I have showed how hope is manufactured when it is frustrated or slowed; the Maitreya Project managed to reboot their momentum countless times by identifying a new ideal and a new real. Thus a new gap is made manifest, and the Maitreya Project busies itself with the work of trying to transgress it.

**Conclusion: The Future Tense**

What is the significance of these imaginary futures on the present? This concluding section will revisit the work that both distant future thinking and near future thinking does in the present. Essentially, the work of projecting and imagining into the future is creative, comforting, but also profoundly anxiety provoking. Future horizons, frontiers, projects, progress, hopes – these are all ultimately unbridgeable. As soon as one reaches one's destination on the horizon, the future is later, the horizon is elsewhere. Of course, ultimately, the future is empty, and it always has been and always will be. Conventionally though, there are good reasons to examine the work that hope and aspiration for the future do in the present.

The Maitreya Project also portends its own excesses, and places its horizon at a dizzying distance in the far-flung future of Maitreya, but at the same time, like a time machine the statue would forge a connection between now and then. The statue, and the planning, imaging, designing, fundraising and bureaucratic work needed to be done to achieve it, these are the near futures that arise in one gap and create their own smaller gaps along the way. The problem with Guyer's formulation (2007) as I see it is that it seems to posit that our informants too highlight only one gap, that between the present and the distant future; while anthropologists and social scientists may have indeed tended to gloss intermediate futures, we should not assume that our informants have done the
same. Among other responses to Guyer's article, Crapanzano replies to the prompt with further attention to the role of missionizing within the evangelical gap (2007), but this just one more temporal landmark. The gap is still gaps, and we simply have to look for them. In that spirit, this chapter focuses on many gaps, but with the understanding that within each gap there are countless more: between now and Maitreya's era; between now and the Maitreya Buddha statue's completion; between now and the statue's construction phase; between now and the seizure of the land in Kushinagar; between now and the construction of a new school in Kushinagar; between now and the next update.

The anticipation about the Maitreya's era is also somewhat deferred. The same creative energy and imaginations construct the statue, frame and delimit it. Planning, designing, and fundraising – they stoke enthusiasm and anxiety in turns. It is precisely engagement with hopeful futures in the now that enables one to discuss the affective tensions of such openness. The future tense indicates that future thinking evokes crucial anxieties and oppositions in the present with regards to what is to come.

Crapanzano wrote that narratives of world-endings, hope, desire, waiting, prophecy, etcetera, are confrontations with the "imaginative horizons" (2004) that play at the distant edges of the known. He observes,

What makes the inaccessibility of the hinterland terrifying is less its inaccessibility than its determining role in our perception of that which we take naively to be accessible: that which we actually perceive, experience, touch and feel. Imagined – or better still, imaginable – it remains elusive… It is this elusiveness, this determining absence of the accessible, which is terrifying; for that which we perceive is always determined – up to a point, I'm compelled to say – by that absence, that imagined presence. It is more than contingency that frightens us. It is the artifice of factuality, of our empiricism, our realism, to which we blind ourselves – often through absurdist methodologies of truth and naively positivist philosophies (17).
Here Crapanzano notes the terror of the intangible that ought to be graspable, and anxiety of an absence where a presence should be. The tension that creeps up on someone who is certain of the fact of progress, and yet haunted by the memories of broken promises.... MPI has worked hard to erase contingency, and to put the future in those all too certain terms through projections, prophecies and progress reports. The hinterland, the unknown, the betwixt and between, become all the more threatening if we are faced with pretence of a somehow known happy ending.

Crapanzano's montage of eschatological narratives demonstrates that death and world-ending are inextricably linked: "According to Frank Kermode, Saint Augustine says that terror of world-ending is a substitute for the terror of dying. Kermode himself argues that the End, whether in life or story, is a figure for death. It is certainly true that death lurks in all apocalyptic thought. But might we not reverse Augustine's formula and say that the terror of death is a substitute for the terror of world-ending?" (2004: 201-2).

The proposed Maitreya statue is rife with narrative strands of both world-ending and death, and of course world-regeneration and life. Arguably, there is a deep-seated anxiety evoked by the figure of Maitreya that is very essentially connected to the fear of death. On the one hand, the fact that death is a topic of interest and opportunity in the religious discourse might make one pause at Ernest Becker's assertion that "...the idea of death, the fear of it, haunts the human animal like nothing else; it is the mainspring of human activity – activity designed largely to avoid the fatality of death, to overcome it by denying in some way that it is the final destiny of man" (Becker 1973: ix). Certainly I would argue contra Becker that fear of death may not be a universal as he insists – I would rather recognize it as a general pattern of humanity. Tibetan Buddhism's preoccupation with death in text and practice does not mean that Tibetan Buddhists the world over have
somehow risen above anxiety about death. In a previous chapter, I gestured towards some of the compressions within the tradition that have served to make the Buddha present despite mahaparinirvana, both in terms of the discourse of kayas, as well as the duplication of Buddhas present, present and future. There are many ways in which death, endings, and absence are avoided or postponed in the tradition, and just as many ways in which affective permanence is established and maintained; I find that these philosophical and psychological moments expose the future tense as inseparable from a certain anxiety about death. Becker may have overstated the case when he wrote that "Religions like Hinduism and Buddhism performed the ingenious trick of pretending not to want to be reborn, which is a sort of negative magic: claiming not to want what you really want" (Becker 1973: 12), but I come back to his work, and these words again and again, since there is something almost excruciating true embedded in this observation. Tibetan Buddhist discourse and practice often perform philosophical contortions to allow devotees to avoid what they fear the most: dissolution and real endings.

For Tibetan exiles, such as Lama Yeshe, anxiety about the End of Tibet (either its destruction, or its transformation into something unrecognizable), the End of the Dalai Lama (either death of the persona, or the abolition of the institution), the End of the world (either as one meditates on one's own impermanence, or the impermanence of the world around you), can fold in on each other and the edges may blur, until they all signify the same fear. Maitreya could represent the inversion of fear, the hope for life, the

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126 The Tibetan Buddhist stance on human life is that it is a precious opportunity to work towards enlightenment in order to defeat the samsaric cycle of rebirth. The Tibetan Buddhist thinking about death in large part revolves around the fact that one should try to transcend it; one popular death meditation on death in the tradition emphasize three points: the inescapable fact of death, the uncertainty of the time and place of death, and the notion that only one's meditative acumen can help one at the time of death (the 13th Dalai Lama cf. Mullin 1998; McDonald 1984). There are many different kinds of death meditations from both sutric and tantric traditions, some of which help the meditator to visualize his/her path through the bardos, the stages of the afterlife, in order to be prepared to face death with the best state of mind to accomplish a good rebirth or enlightenment, but it is widely acknowledged that most Tibetan Buddhists whether lay or monastic, do not do regular death meditations (Geshe Ngawang Dargye cf. Mullin 1998).
sunrise that can only happen on the other side of a sunset, but it also attempts to suppress and delay the inevitability of ending.

One cannot underscore the importance of reproducing the past in the future through replication. If the Buddha and the Buddhas meld together, then the future felicity of desiring to be born during the era of Maitreya is akin to a temporally-sanctioned traveling backwards in time, for given that there is little practical difference between being in the presence of the historical Buddha and the anticipated Buddha, the love, respect and grandeur a Buddhist develops for the Buddha past can be transferred easily to the Buddha future. The religious power of the historical Buddha provides a touchstone or gold standard that the cult of Maitreya can draw from. The future Buddha is an affective, though not karmic, resurrection of the historical Buddha.

The same temporal work is achieved and replicated through the reproduction of gurus in Tibetan Buddhism. The reincarnations of gurus have led to a suspension of impermanence, as the life of the lama simply continues in a child for our benefit. The reincarnation of regular laity is anonymous, but the practice of lama rebirth through tulkus, is a form of affective immortality. This system has been put into play by FPMT, since their lamas have thus far all been reincarnated into identified tulkus. When he was three, he reputedly said, "...I am Tenzin Osel, a monk...Before, I was Lama Yeshe. Now I am Tenzin Osel" (Mackenzie 1995: 174). A few years later Osel put his reincarnation in a slightly different way: "Before,' he said, 'many, many Buddhas came into my body, then I became tiny and entered into my mother's womb. Then I came out.' He paused, then added, 'Before, I was Lama Yeshe. Now I am Lama Osel'" (Mackenzie 1995: 174). Osel was either self-aware about his reincarnation, or he had heard the story enough times to internalize it; now that he has strayed away from FPMT, it will be interesting to see if he fulfills his responsibility to someday find Lama Zopa Rinpoche's tulkus. In any case, as the creator/initiator/director of the world's largest Buddha statue
in the world – that is, the Maitreya Project statue – Lama Zopa Rinpoche would have attained another form of immortality.

Ultimately, the efficacy of the FPMT community’s effort to seize upon the anxiety of the present by gesturing to the future relies on faith in narratives of the past. Hope in the future is fed by the faith that Tibetan Buddhists evince in the stories of the future attributed to the historical Buddha. The Tibetan Buddhist flavor of hope that drives the Maitreya Project is dependent on prevailing faith in order to be grounded and internalized on a wide scale. Walter Benjamin's exploration of hope, as framed by Szondi, attempts to recapture the present by looking for the future in the past (Szondi 1986). Szondi argues that Benjamin reflects on his childhood by concentrating heartily on the moments of the past which portend the future: "...he is sent back into the past, a past, however, which is open, not completed, and which promises the future Benjamin's tense is not the perfect, but the future perfect in the fullness of the paradox: being future and past at the same time" (153). Benjamin works to gain a sense of mastery over temporality by casting historians in the role of archaeologists of historical artifacts of future. Benjamin's solution to the problem of the present is to take ownership of the past in order to reinfuse the present moment with hope. Benjamin's strategy of embracing the past's futures reverberates with the ways that Moltmann's Christian hope mines the past in order to create the faith which is propelled forward by Christian hope. The messiah-like historian of Walter Benjamin's imagination has the power to fulfill the promises of the past, mimicking the effects of the coming of Christ or the appearance of Moltmann's God, who has ever been "only before us" (1993: 16). The Maitreya myth is similar in that it relies heavily on mirroring the narrative of the historical Buddha's hagiography in order to create future hope out of faith in the past. The past is mined in order to create the

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127 Moltmann posits that the essence of Christianity lies in the promises of the past in regards to the future. The past – the crucifixion and subsequent resurrection – only offer precedence for the promise of the future, that is, the next coming of Christ and the resurrection and judgment of the dead (1993).
forward momentum of hope for a utopian future in which the devotee will be able to meet an actual Buddha.

By extending Miyazaki's formulation of prospective momentum (2003), I illuminate how the MPI's deployment of the real (lack of real progress) and the ideal (movement towards the completion of the statue) has served to foment widespread hope for the statue amongst most FPMTers. By building a statue today to commemorate an event they both hope to avoid (the end of Buddhism, the end of the world, the end of FPMT) and an event they hope will be achieved (the regeneration of world and the rebirth of Buddhism), FPMT evokes the wide, anxiety-provoking gap between another cosmic real and ideal. The end of Lama Yeshe's reign at FPMT, the end of a lineage, the end of the Dalai Lama, the end of Tibet, the end of the world as it once was – each ending recedes in favor of the forward motion towards hope for future utopias.

Each of these hopeful moments – hope for enlightenment; hope for the Maitreya's era; hope for reincarnation of lama; hope for continuation of the nation, lineage, organization and self; hope for the statue; hope for progress – contains a seed of fear as well. The future tense goes beyond the anxiety, the stress, of longing for something against the ultimately unknowable result, because it reflects deeper human ambivalence(s) about the future; the future tense represents the tension in the very articulation of a future possibility – between wanting something better and between wanting things to stay as they are; between wanting to know the future and wanting the future to remain unknowable; between desire for endings and fear of them. Crapanzano acknowledged the difficulty of this predicament in this way:

Of course, just as we desire fixity, we desire openness. We fear closure; we delight in possibility. Obviously each community has its own tolerance for openness and closure, fixity and looseness. But whether cultural – or individual – emphasis is given to one or the other, the fact remains that once the hinterland, once possibility is articulated, it is somehow fixed and constraining, determining further possibilities: the newly displaced hinterland (2004: 23).
Thus, the future tense is located at the intersection between the simultaneous inevitability and unbearability of impermanence: the impermanence of Buddhism within Buddhist cosmology, the impermanence of FPMT, and the impermanence of every single FPMTer from Lama Zopa Rinpoche to the newest student. The future tense is manifestly apparent in FPMT's struggle to articulate its future possibilities, and in the anxiety produced by the (mis)recognition that the gap between real and ideal is so fraught that they may well tumble into the precipice between the two.
"Yes, the hope and desire of the cultists cannot easily be distinguished from the anthropologists. They are both caught. Though we place them insistently in the individual, neither desire nor hope can be removed from social engagement and implication. We are all, I suppose, caught" (Crpanzano 1993:123).

**Dissertations**

There were not interludes at the beginning. This was not supposed to be here. It was not part of the plan. "Projects drift; that's why they're called research projects. To follow them, it's impossible to trace a target, a starting point, a trajectory" (Latour 1996:91). There were many Aramises, and most of them are dead, but not all of them. It exists as ideas, memories, texts, and even now as Latour's own transformations of it into a new textual form with a voice of its own. Occasionally, Latour's analyst plays with the idea of the essence of the object preceding its existence, but this, I cannot accept. To suggest that there is an essence supposes that there is only one real Aramis. We learn that it is inflexibility and the illusion of an essence that kills Aramis in the womb. Just as there were many possible Aramises, so too were there many Maitreyas, and many Maitreya Project statues. Perhaps there will be an embodied Maitreya Project statue somewhere, someday – if body and soul manage to come together as one.

The body and soul of this dissertation too still flit around, unsure of what is solid ground and what may be deleted tomorrow. As I write, my dissertation is literally in process. This dissertation is my Aramis, my Maitreya Project, and my Frankenstein; terrifying, despised, and beloved all at once. I make it, and it makes me. There were many "Waiting for Maitreya" dissertations – so many different possible dissertations that could have been, most of which are no longer probable versions.
My Statement of Purpose as an applicant to the Cornell Anthropology department asserts that I "will" do my research on the Maitreya Project in Bodh Gaya. I remember thinking how nice it would be to live in Bodh Gaya for a few years. I remember thinking that the project would be finished at around the same time as my dissertation. I imagined them as two gestating beings in the same womb: twins! I remember that I told a peer how perfect it would be, since the Buddhist reading public would be keen to read the resulting book just as the statue was becoming a hot pilgrimage destination. That would have been a completely different text, however, the one with a triumph of engaged Buddhism, the one detailing the promise of religious social capital in the effort to stamp out poverty, the one with a happy ending. Their statue ate that book. Or did my dissertation eat their statue? Did you know that some of the most egregious deformities were actually cases of parasitic twins in which one is simply engulfed by the other? But which is the parasite – the one that emerged, or the one that got stuck inside?

My funding proposals construct new gaps between my stated real (I have no money to do my fascinating research) and my ideal (you will give me money, and I will do what I propose here in detail). I have constructed my prospective momentum, and I perform it for another. Uniquely, neither I, nor my reader, has much faith in the promises of the proposal. We both have no doubt that what I actually do will be different than what I have proposed, but the performance of certainty is significant. Our proposals read like prophecies, since they fill a ritual purpose and propel us into the future clutching something seemingly solid.

Many of my initial proposals assumed that I would be given access to the inner world of MPI. I was supposed to be working within the institution, as a volunteer/anthropologist, as an insider, as an FPMTer, as an MPIer. I imagined being present during meetings with the planners, the innovators, the artists, the MPI staffers. I would sit in the corner and listen and learn, and collect minutes, drafts and schematics.
Perhaps I would be there for the ground-breaking, smiling, celebrating. I would trace the trajectory of the statue project from the inside out. I was supposed to be meditating inside the statue project, not doing circumambulations around it. My proposals are wonderful artifacts of past hopes. I will live there, and I will do that, and that, and that.

I should have known better. I did actually... My MA thesis from 2001 foreordained a hot mess.

2001

I conducted my MA research for George Washington University in the fall of 2000 in both Dharamsala and Bodh Gaya. I included the Maitreya Project as one of several case studies of Engaged Buddhism in India by focusing on the Maitreya Project school in Bodh Gaya. I have several field notes that predicted disaster in Bodh Gaya if the MPI did not begin to improve their relationships with the local community in Bodh Gaya.

The engaged Buddhism of FPMT in Bodh Gaya were largely "hands-off," so that elite Buddhists had simply funded Indians to do the actual social justice work in their stead. Moreover, it was clear in 2000 that the relationship between the local community and the FPMT community was strained and getting worse. As it was a "development anthropology" MA thesis, my advisor asked me to make policy recommendations for the projects that I had studied. For MPI, I recommended the following:

- Regular community meetings are needed to keep constantly abreast of the needs and worries of the beneficiary community, as demonstrated by the resistance generated by the Maitreya Project's silence leading up to their one and only community meeting. The Project should also work towards improving degree of community participation and community communication in general, by working with community to decide on a plan of action to resolve this problem.
One of my fieldnotes from 2000 actively casts doubt on whether the statue can become manifest without substantial grassroots support; I wrote that "...without support from, and collaboration with, local Indians, the statue will never happen, and nor should it."

"When You Need To – Put Your Hand Here"

A gift to calm me.

"Kushinagar is a powder keg. There will be blood running along the lanes with cobblestones taken from the ruins of the ancient Malla kingdom. The farmers will fight to the death! They told me so, and I believe them. The looks in their eyes…"

At the tail end of a meeting with me upon my return from the field, a senior anthropologist and mentor traced her own hand, and then gave the paper to me. Inside the hand, she had written, "You are not Cassandra."
"DANA"/GENEROSITY: MERIT-MAKING, DONATIONS AND THE (IM)POSSIBILITIES OF THE BUDDHIST GIFT

At first glance Buddhist giving in FPMT is simple: generosity makes "good merit." But as one investigates further, it seems that the notion of generosity involves complex cultural notions of selflessness and disinterestedness, but simultaneously relies heavily upon motivating the gift through self-interestedness and karmic reward. Does the return of merit for a selfless act obviate the selflessness of said act? If so, then generosity as a purely selfless act may not exist in Buddhist discourse and practice. Generosity may be ultimately impossible, and as empty as everything else, but conventionally the correct performance of "generosity" does lead to good karma; it is my contention that FPMT's Buddhist gifts ought to be understood through both registers. This chapter will focus on the complexity of generosity (dana) in Buddhism with emphasis on how gifting and merit-making are interpreted by my FPMT devotees. What is the nature of the gift in FPMT Buddhism?

Generosity is a central tenet of Tibetan Buddhism in general, and FPMT's brand of Buddhism is no exception. Generosity and altruism are important elements in meditative practices towards developing bodhicitta (desire to attain Buddhahood for the benefit of all sentient beings), and as such "giving" is one of the "six perfections" of the bodhisattva practice.\(^{128}\) According to the Dalai Lama, while altruism is necessary towards developing the motivation to attain Buddhahood, it must be cultivated in steps, beginning with charitable acts (Gyatso 2000). In order to attain Buddhahood, wisdom is not

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\(^{128}\) The six perfections are "giving, ethics, patience, effort, concentration, and wisdom" (Tenzin Gyatso and Jeffrey Hopkins 2000: 101). Patrul Rinpoche calls them the "six transcendent perfections" and his translator uses the word "generosity" instead of "giving" (1994).
enough, a direct experience of emptiness is not enough; a bodhisattva must attain extreme levels of altruism and generosity in order to purify negative karma and create positive karma. Generosity takes many forms in Tibetan Buddhism. Patrul Rinpoche notes three ways of giving: "material giving, giving Dharma, and giving protection from fear" (1994:234).

Herein lies the complexity and tension – one must create positive karma for oneself, but in order to make it, one must not explicitly desire that positive karma for oneself: "Giving means to train from the depths of the heart in an attitude of generosity such that one seeks no reward or result for oneself; the act of charity and all its beneficial results are dedicated to other sentient beings" (Gyatso 2000: 101). The cosmology of the gift in Buddhism revolves around the constant regifting of the gift of merit, in order to maximize one's own return gifts (ultimately for the benefit of all). The return gifts of positive karma hold the dual promise of benefits for oneself and others. Devotees are promised that offerings reap untold future benefits; good karma leads to happiness, bliss, and riches. Devotees are told not to desire the happiness, bliss and riches for themselves, even as they are told that that is precisely what will happen as a result of their generosity. While "paradox" is perhaps a strong word to use here, it seems that to deny it would be to gloss over the many aporias that Buddhism has wrestled with in text and practice; Obeyesekere himself identifies several paradoxes in Buddhist philosophy with regards to karma, and while tempted to frame them in terms of contradictions and their meditation, he notes that this approach denies what Ricouer calls the 'aporias of existence' (cf. Obeyesekere 2002). It is especially incumbent upon me to puzzle through the aporias of Obeyesekere's list of karmic aporias: 1) karma and punishment; 2) the psychological indeterminacy of karma; 3) gods and the subversion of karma; 4) theodicy and the problem of suffering; 5) doctrinal responses to popular religiosity; 6) karma and merit-making. It is the sixth aporia, the existential puzzles that emerge from the karmic calculi of merit-making, that play out in this chapter, although my focus is quite different than Obeyesekere's: his focus in was on how the notion of "merit transfer" that is ubiquitous in practice and in some text is actually quite a radical rupture from intentionality. On the other hand, I focus on how the gift-giver in Tibetan Buddhism must remain selfless, all the while knowing that making gifts simultaneously results in merit for the giver.
paradoxes, since many of my elite FPMT informants are not easily convinced of the sociologies of Buddhist merit-making, and in working through apparent tensions they either come to terms with the logics of karma, or they do not.

In FPMT courses and teachings, the tension between the obligation to make merit and the challenge to not desire merit are discussed in terms of progress. One has to make progress in order to improve one's ability to practice better altruism later, so therefore it is proper to desire merit and benefits for oneself now, although the goal is to do so less and less in the future. The continuum of progress is what allows a charitable act done for selfish reasons to be counted as good, although a charitable act done for altruistic reasons is better.

The Tibetan exiles in Dharamsala practice charity often, but especially on auspicious days on which the merit of an offering is multiplied, and this practice has been adopted by FPMTers at the Tushita Center in Dharamsala. A long-time FPMT devotee and volunteer at Tushita told me about how she had learned to line up on auspicious days to give small rupee notes to beggars. She said, "The merit is multiplied by 10,000 times on Saka Dawa, so I make sure to give on that day." The devotee was hard pressed to explain exactly who accrues the merit – her or others, or both: "I make the merit, but it is for others. I dedicate it to others at the end of the offerings. And then I get more that way also, but the more is for others too…I think." She laughed and said that since humanity is interdependent, it does not really matter who accrues the merit.

Saka Dawa is a boon for the Indian beggars and Buddhist practitioners alike; a fact which makes some people feel that the display of generosity is performative, and the apparent disinterestedness of gifting is entirely obviated by the merits achieved by the

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130 Merit multiplication is common in Hindu (and sometimes Muslim) thinking – as particular times (Kal yug) and places can achieve more merit by doing the same ritual action (Copeman 2005/6: 44).

131 Saka Dawa, the fourth month of the Tibetan calendar is riddled with auspicious days (given significant dates in the Buddha's life), but on the 15th day of Saka Dawa, the merit earned is cosmically multiplied by 10,000.
A long-time resident of Dharamsala felt that these Buddhist gifts were not selfless at all, but rather "counterfeit" (Derrida 1992):

I'm not a Buddhist, but I've been involved with Tibetans for a long time. Also, my husband is Tibetan. But I still think that Buddhists can be rather selfish. Like Saka Dawa, I think it's coming up. Do you know about it? All the beggars come from all over HP [Himachal Pradesh] and they line the streets from the monastery to the bus stand. Tibetans believe that their merit will be increased by 10,000 on that day, so they take out one rupee notes and give them to the beggars outside. They go down the line giving one-one rupee to each one. But they are not doing it for the beggars! They are doing it for their own benefit!

In general, beggars flock to pilgrimage places on Saka Dawa, but there are countless beggars at pilgrimage places throughout the high tourist seasons and beyond, since they know that Buddhists are keen to give. This truism aside, in practice devotees can be overwhelmed by excessive demands; giving some money or food to beggars is common practice, but it is just as typical to see persistent demands for alms meet with frustration, so that beggars are often ignored altogether (see Figure 16).

![Outstretched begging bowls protrude from the Mahabodhi stupa complex fence in Bodh Gaya in January 2007. For pilgrims, the Buddhist mandate to give is often tempered by the constant demands for alms.](Photograph by Jessica Falcone.)
Most FPMT students have little trouble with the concept of generosity, but karma is another matter altogether and in Buddhist gifting karma is a central aspect of the system. According to several teachers, Western FPMT students often have to begin with the recognition that generosity is useful in the here and now, and that it feels good. A German man who had just recently completed both the 10-day Introduction to Buddhism course and an Emptiness course at Tushita noted that he felt the effects of highlighting generosity immediately, although he was not sure about Buddhist notions of rebirth and karma:

When the course ends they have envelopes to make donations for the teachers. Tushita gives the teachers a little, but they need more. I gave more that I usually give. There are ways to be generous that are even more important than giving money. In everyday life, when you get on a bus, you look for the best seat, but then it becomes unavailable to others. At the library I was buying a book. I think that I should look for the best book, but we should think, and maybe be sure that others get the good things. I thought of taking the lowest book on the pile, but I took the one on top because it was the most handled. If I didn't buy it, then they might not have sold it. Also I gave a book to the library about How to Learn Hindi. In the past I wouldn't have done that, I would have tried to sell it…. The concept of generosity makes sense from the beginning.

FPMT teachers across the board said that small acts of charity are a good start, but just as one can only go so far on the bodhisattva path with wisdom, one can only go so far without it; belief in karma is a necessary step towards the full altruism and motivation necessary to progress along the bodhisattva path. One FPMT teacher, a white British-born monk who had trained extensively at an otherwise ethnically-Tibetan monastery in Dharamsala told me that, "Performing deeds of generosity is a wise kind of selfishness."

The Buddhist gift, like so many others, is in the grips of a kind of complex social ambiguity. Generosity is selfless on the one hand, but perhaps that selflessness masks something quite the opposite, that is, something definitively self-interested. Economist
Robert Frank calls this the "altruism paradox" and demonstrates that the question has been of great interest to those outside anthropology, such as economists, mathematicians, biologists, psychologists and philosophers, and that even Adam Smith to Darwin made contributions on the question of human self-interest (1988). Edward O. Wilson (1978), for example, distinguishes between the "hard-core altruism" of sacrifice for a family member or loved one and the "soft-core altruism" of giving in order to eventually receive something in return. I would join others in noting that Wilson glosses over the complexity of "return" when positing this duality. In this chapter, I will explore the nuances of offerings in FPMT's transnational Buddhism through the legacy of gift theories that have been offered up each in their own way. The next section then will focus on reciprocity as the key to the question of generosity and the gift in anthropological literature.

**Reciprocity**

Reciprocity from Malinowski through Sahlins and others is an unwieldy notion at times, since it can be deployed in various registers (MacCormack 1976). MacCormack has noted that as an analytic "reciprocity" in anthropology can be variously used to denote empirical claims, the phenomenological interpretation of the informants, and/or the interpretation of the anthropologist. The question of reciprocity has become crucial to the understanding of Buddhist, Jain and Hindu gifting in South Asian religious studies literature. The essential question here is: why do people give?

To understand the significance and complexity of reciprocity as an analytic, one has to go back to the beginning of the gift theory conversation. Malinowski wrote against the notion that the human is an entirely economic creature (whether this notion was a popular one or one he had invented as a "straw man" is debatable), and described the Trobriand kula practice as an indication that gifts function to make and strengthen social
ties and a "network of relationships" (1984[1922]). Malinowski famously writes that some gifts are "free," a notion which Mauss later challenged, and Malinowski finally abandoned in his later work. Mauss' central thesis in his seminal work, The Gift (1966[1925]), is that gifts are social obligations; he draws upon the ethnographic and historical work done by others to examine the obligation to give, receive, and reciprocate.

Mauss argues that people give as a matter of course in interdependent social systems in order to create the ties that bind us together. We are obligated to give, receive, and reciprocate (1966[1925]). Mauss sets out to prove this Durkheim-inspired theory of social solidarity by drawing on fieldwork reports from others, especially focusing on work completed with the Maori people. Mauss writes a phenomenological account of Maori reciprocity, in which the return of the gift is compelled by the *hau* (or spirit) of the original gift. Since the *hau* demands return, within the social logics of the community, reciprocity is not a choice, but rather it is an obligation that one breaks at one's own peril. With all due respect to the debates about whether Mauss misinterpreted the *hau* (e.g., Levi-Strauss 1987, Sahlins 1972), it seems that after these years, the hau of Mauss' theoretical contribution still demands a return to it. One cannot help but acknowledge that Mauss stumbled across a significant observation about a general pattern of human sociality, if not the universal rule he thought he had discovered: the gift as a social obligation that binds a community together.

In Outline of a Theory of Practice, Bourdieu seems to finesse Mauss' notion of the gift, that is, he extends and complicates the latter's work without explicitly negating it (1977). Bourdieu wants to find a middle way between objectivism and subjectivism, and hence forwards his notion of "practice theory." The gift is still an invariably social act and there are still obligations, but the actor has more choice in how and when the gift is returned; thus Bourdieu advocates a close watch on how social actors strategize their gifts and return gifts, and here temporality becomes a key analytic. Crucially, Bourdieu
demonstrates that the key to the gift lies in the fact the time-lag between gift and return gives gift-givers the opportunity to misrecognize the continuity of the gift exchange system; they gloss gift, reciprocal gift and return gift as discrete acts. This misrecognition masks the social obligation, making the act seem generous as opposed to self-interested, individually motivated rather than socially motivated. Still, according to Bourdieu, the time-lag does allow for the individual to exercise agency and strategy in the social process of meeting his or her obligations.

Derrida's later contribution is a classic deconstruction of The Gift; essentially, he writes that a gift by definition requires selflessness and lack of return, therefore the only possibility of an actual gift would be if both the person giving and the person receiving immediately forgot the gift act (1992). Derrida tells us that "One could go so far as to say that a work as monumental as Marcel Mauss' The Gift speaks of everything but the gift: It deals with economy, exchange, contract (do ut des), it speaks of raising the stakes, sacrifice, gift and counter-gift – in short, everything that in the thing itself impels the gift and the annulment of the gift" (1992: 24). Derrida's deconstruction of the gift is quite persuasive. Technically, literally, the gift itself is impossible. However, one can agree that the gift is literally impossible without submitting to the misguided and somewhat self-righteous critique Derrida levels at Mauss for apparently having given us a counterfeit gift in the form of The Gift itself. Mauss' gift was no more or less authentic than Derrida's, the former simply looked at the question with more compassion for the phenomenological perspective of "gift" givers. Derrida has inspired me to use mental scare quotes around the gift forevermore, but his intervention changes little else for us as social scientists. People believe that they are giving gifts and being generous, so if we erase every "gift" and replace it with "exchange," then we also erase a part of the story.

Is reciprocity even important anymore? The trend in anthropology has been to assert that reciprocity always was an over-analyzed notion that blocked certain other ways
of seeing the gifts/objects as social beings in and of themselves with their own social lives (Appadurai 1986; Myers 2001; Weiner 1980; Myers and Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 2001). If reciprocity was over-simplified, I think it is up to anthropology to complicate it, and rescue it from the dustbin of anthropological theory (where we are so eager to toss out slightly-used theories in our rush for the new). As Annette Weiner has argued, the apparent equivalences of reciprocity are manufactured, and more often then not create hierarchies instead of smoothing them away, but I would argue that this is as much a place to begin to complicate and understand reciprocity as a moment to abandon it.

Using the Buddhist notion of ultimate and conventional truths,132 we can find ways to integrate works that have thus far stood at odds with one another. At the ultimate level, one could argue that Derrida is correct to assert that the gift itself is impossible. Derrida could be read as gesturing towards the emptiness of the gift, although he does not use Buddhist terminology. However, Mauss, Bourdieu and others who describe the sociomaterial workings of the gift are doing so at a more conventional level. Both of these perspectives teach us a great deal about the "gift." I would argue that as far as these "truths" go they fall along a spectrum of "conventional" explanations. Bourdieu sees more complexity in the gift than Mauss, and Mauss sees more than Malinowski, so they would fall along the "conventional" end of the spectrum as such. To rather roughly translate all this into Buddhist allegorical terms: Malinowski saw a snake; Mauss recognizes the snake as it really is conventionally – it is a rope; Bourdieu has intuited even more of the details about the rope and its strengths and limitations – how it works; only Derrida sees that the rope is actual empty of inherent existence (and yet rather unfortunately mocks others for having a care about the quality of the rope in the

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132 In his commentary on Shantideva's Guide to the Bodhisattva's Way of Life, Thrangu Rinpoche distinguishes between "relative" and "ultimate" truths, saying that the first is what we perceive, while the second is the essential emptiness that we rarely perceive, but which is the nature of all things; "Neither the relative truth nor the ultimate truth are unreal; they are both real. The relative truth is true on the relative level, and the ultimate truth is real on the absolute or ultimate level" (Thrangu Rinpoche 2001:132).
first place). Not one of them recognize that the rope (or gift) can, and should, be seen as simultaneously both conventionally extant and ultimately empty.

The motivation behind the Buddhist gift, or any gift in which karma alone is considered a return upon one's initial donation, has been well-examined by South Asian religious scholars and anthropologists from Mauss onwards, but often karma itself is glossed over. Perhaps in order to differentiate a karmic return from a material return, one needs to emphasize, not erase or marginalize (as so many South Asianists have done thus far), the workings of what I call *karmic reciprocity*. Since Sizemore and Swearer have emphasized the tension in the tradition between mundane (*lokiya*) and the transmundane (*lokuttara*) (1990), one also could speak of transmundane reciprocity.

In reference to the karmic gifts in Vedic literature, Trautmann calls this "transcendental" reciprocity (1981: 281), as opposed to "mundane reciprocity." Trautmann's nod to an alternative form of reciprocity comes in the context of his exposition on the karmic, "unseen," "invisible," return of the gift (281), and his elucidation on the self-interestedness of the gift. However, I take issue with Trautmann's determination that the gift then obviates Mauss' thinking, and fails to elucidate social mechanisms; he writes, "The Dharmasastra theory of the gift, then, is a soteriology. not a sociology of reciprocity as is Marcel Mauss's masterwork on the gift." I would argue that this moment takes the South Asian gift theorists down a problematic road, since soteriology and sociology are not so neatly distinguishable. Does not the belief in karmic merit actually motivate a whole socioeconomic movement of goods and gifts from one sector of society towards another?

133 For more on the character of Buddhist karma and the way that the fruits of actions are understood phenomenologically in Tibetan Buddhism, please return to the chapter section entitled, "Karma: A Mechanism for Aspiration," in Chapter 8.
My argument is essentially that a gift or offering, which is believed to be "returned" through the forces of karma does indeed constitute a significant form of reciprocity. The gift is believed to be returned – the motivation for gifting is that return – a social system is constructed and maintained based on those beliefs, and the gift is once again shown to be self-interested (or at least, not completely disinterested).

In FPMT discourse and practice, one finds sociomaterial reciprocity, affective reciprocity, and karmic reciprocity. Sociomaterial reciprocity might encompass the Mauss/Bourdieu-ian types of reciprocity: I give you something now, and you will reciprocate with a similar something in the future. Things change hands, social agents may strategize or compete to give back correctly, lovingly, effusively or devastatingly, and social networks are thus established, maintained and transformed. Karmic reciprocity, on the other hand, involves an understanding of the cosmology of merit that is being accrued when one endeavors to make offerings, give gifts, be generous, etc. Affective reciprocity is the good feeling, the emotional return that one might feel as motivation to giving. Sometimes one finds all happening three types of reciprocity happening in one instance of gifting, sometimes only one. By looking at reciprocities plural instead of reciprocity singular, I believe we come closer to understand the true "ultimate" paradox of the gift that Derrida points towards: there is always a return in some form. Also, by examining three types of reciprocities, a scholar can do more justice to the complex "conventional" motivations of generosity in Buddhist giving.

In the next section, I will discuss this work to demonstrate that much of it tends to discount the significance of a karmic reward in their discussion of the system of gifting, an oversight that sorely distorts the meaning and value of the gift in practice.
The Karmic Gift

By virtue of shared ontological genealogy Hinduism, Jainism and Buddhist traditions share certain common elements, such as karma, yet the classics of Indian gift-giving (Dumont 1980; Laidlaw 2000; Parry 1986; Parry 1994; Raheja 1988) explicate Hindu and Jain practices with little or no attention given even to classical or modern Buddhist ideas or practices. At the risk of glossing very different social norms (e.g., the vagaries of caste, class, regional difference) that attend to these various karmic traditions, they are often theorized as a whole, or at least in conversation with one another. Maria Heim's recent religious studies treatise focuses on Hindu, Jain and Buddhist texts from the medieval period in India (2004), and argues that these traditions were historic interlocutors and thus can be discussed as a meta-tradition with the understanding that one must allow for micro differences amongst the macro similarities.

Scholars of South Asian religions have highlighted the unidirectional aspect of the religious gift, and thus concluded that it is unreciprocated. While in these karmic traditions there is a general, and overarching emphasis on giving up, both in the sense of renunciation, and in the sense of giving to the properly superior recipients (Brahmans, priests, monks, etc.), there is on the other hand a general sense that the donor receives merit, or good karma, in exchange for their gifts. Yet, academics have tended to give short shrift to the fact that devotees count on the karmic return of the gift, and I will argue that this inattention to and undervaluation of karma undermines the ability of scholars to understand the full story behind gifts given in these societies.

In the South Asian gift literature, Parry (1986; 1994) and Raheja (1988) have focused their attention on the intricacies of practices of giving dan to Brahmans in Hindu

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134 One might argue that "Indic gifts" is more appropriate terminology than "karmic gifts," but since Islamic and Christian religions are prominent Indian traditions whose Indian-ness is now being contested by Hindutva nationalists, I have opted for the latter appellation.
communities in India. Parry's work with Brahman priests in Banaras demonstrated that a gift from devotee to priest is dangerous for both the donor and the recipient (1986: 460). The sin (pap) of the donor is thought to pass from the donor to the recipient through the gift. The Brahman priest then accumulates sin with the understanding that he should theoretically be able to burn it off with the proper ritual and the proper regifting to other Brahmans. Parry's work indicates that Brahmans often feel unequal to the task of fully burning off the pap they have inherited from the donor, so often illness and death in Brahman households is attributed to what Raheja (1988) has called, "the poison in the gift." Parry writes that Brahmans acknowledge certain ambivalence about the gift of dan, since they desire material gifts (it is their livelihood) and yet see it as a task they do out of kindness for donors (1994), and furthermore it is seen as a necessary evil, as this is their lot and their way of supporting their families.

Dan clearly involves a connection, a nexus, a transfer of some part of the self through the transfer of the money or gift from the donor to the Brahman priest. One could even evoke the ban and say that the "spirit" of the donor remains attached to the gift. Parry has also demonstrated that donors of dan are also at risk, since they remain karmically connected to the recipient (1986; 1994). The donor must give to a "worthy recipient," since a donor will share in the sin accumulated by a Brahman recipient who is immoral, especially if evil is done with the donation. The worthy recipient is thought to be one who, among other things, does not covet the gift. Parry (1986) and Laidlaw (2000) have also both noted that in both Hinduism and Jainism the best recipient is the kind who explicitly does not want the gift. Still, it is important to note that this danger is well-known to priests, but not the donors, since "only the more doctrinally sophisticated

135 Not all gifts in a Hindu community, nor even all gifts in a ritual context, are dan. Most types of Hindu gifts involve a social expectation of reciprocity. On the other hand, dan specifically precludes direct reciprocity, and involves the transfer of sin from one party to another.

136 This transfer of sin does not seem to occur in the case of Buddhist gifts, however.
of the pilgrims and mourners would be aware of the risks they incur" (1994:122). Parry argues that the fallen state of the current crop of Brahmans willing to accept dan is so low that "far from releasing the donor from sin, he is more probably dragged down into hell by the bonds which the gift creates between them. In short the profligate priesthood cannot deliver on its side of the bargain and the gift is therefore unreciprocated" (135). This is an unconvincing argument against reciprocity precisely because he has already told us that donors do not generally know that the poor character of their recipients would obviate their merit. Hindu devotees believe that they will burn off sin, and receive merit for their dan.

Pilgrims and devotees are generally aware of the central tension in Hindu, Jain and Buddhist giving: the gift will be rewarded with good karma, but it should ideally be given without a thought of the karmic reward. The calculus of karmic recompense is explicit in the both text and ritual practice: one will reap what one sows, and giving gifts properly creates merit. The desire to give is motivated by the karmic merit that is both explicitly and implicitly promised to the donor, despite the fact that they are urged to curb their enthusiasm for any sort of karmic or material reward. Karmic giving requires a feint, and the ability to fib to oneself a bit in order to accomplish something meritorious (perhaps not entirely unlike setting one's clock five minutes ahead so as not to be late). The knowledge of merit-making drives the gift-giving practice: "Householders seek to maximize their gift out of devotion, and the desire to perform a good karma, and so gain merit" (Laidlaw 2000: 626). Thus, along with the truism that attaining merit is always positive, the system entails mixed messages: one should give to attain merit, but one ought not desire merit; one should receive to attain merit (by giving others an opportunity to do so), but not desire the inevitable merit accumulated. The ambivalence regarding the gift is made manifest through the two-step which must be performed in order to attain the merit which is so unambiguously valued.
Parry and Laidlaw demonstrate a simple material notion of reciprocity, that is, that things (gifts, offerings, money, watches, etc.) must exchange hands, and then some kind of thing(s) must given back to those who gave in the first place. Since Jain renunciants and Brahman priests never give things back to the devotees who first gave to them, then reciprocity as an analytic is obviated and South Asian gifts made to stand apart.

In arguing for the "free gift," Parry writes that, "The gift does indeed return to the donor, but it does so as the fruits of karma... The return is deferred (in all likelihood to another existence); its mechanism has become entirely impersonal and its recipient is merely a vessel (patra) or conduit for the flow of merit and is himself in no way constrained by the gift or bound by the donor" (462). Why is any recognition of karmic reciprocity thus discounted?

Can Parry dismiss reciprocity by virtue of the time that passes between the gift and its return? Bourdieu notes that time lag is often a crucial aspect of understanding reciprocity, so that fact that the return gift will come in another lifetime should not negate its power in effecting the present (1977). If not time, then is equivalence the sticking point? Is reciprocity negated because the gift is not always returned in exactly the same form – not always a scratch on the back for a scratch given? The accounting of karma is enormously complex, but believers trust in its inherent justice: the return is cosmologically equivalent, if not exactly the same thing. Furthermore, in standard anthropological descriptions of reciprocity (Malinowski 1984 [1922]; Mauss 1966 [1925]; Sahlins 1972,) return gifts are rarely exactly the same, as the return could try to trump the initial gift, or be a different but equivalent object (a fine sowali in return for a fine mwali). In sum, neither the issues of time deferral nor equivalence cast reasonable doubt on the use of reciprocity as a analytic for karmic return. Parry is correct to note that the physical exchange of gifts within Hindu communities is different than in Maori communities. The
cultural mechanisms of exchange are unique, of course. Still, Parry takes the cultural
details too literally and elides similar patterns of thinking. Having dismissed reciprocity
Parry and Laidlaw both claim that their informants give the elusive "free gift." Yet, the
donor and recipient remain dangerously connected with one another through the gift.
Laidlaw notes the implicit paradox in this formulation: "[The gift of dan] is said to carry
the donor's sin (pap, dosh), inauspiciousness (ashubh, amangal), misfortune (kasht), and
impurity (asbuddh). What kind of free gift is that?" (2000: 617-8). Laidlaw and Parry argue
that because no material return gift or social obligation between donor and recipient is
expected the gift of dan is explicitly "free." The karmic return to the donor is utterly
overlooked, and the cost (the accrual of sin and misfortune which affects this life and in
future lives) of the gift to the recipient is elided.

Heim ratifies the notion that South Asian gifts are not reciprocated: "The elite
South Asian ideal for dana does not theorize the gift as a site for self-interested individuals
to make (and mask) exchanges. In all of the traditions under consideration, dana has
allowed the theorists the opportunity to consider the value of a one-way, unreciprocated
gift, not because the act is entirely selfless and pure, but because it makes possible valued
human relationships based on esteem and admiration" (2004:144). Her notion of Hindu,
Jain and Buddhist gifts as operating within an "ethic of esteem," in which gifts are
unreciprocated signs of respect offered from a devotee to a religious superior. Heim
recognizes that this ethic of esteem may be glossing over the problems of power, but this
recognition only shows that she has anticipated her critics, and not that she has silenced
them. It remains tempting to read her "ethics of esteem" as an apology for the
superiority of clergy and Brahmins, because it erases the obligations and hierarchies, and
replaces them with "respect" for those who happen to be setting the rules.

Moving on to explicitly Indian Buddhist writings on the gift, it seems that in
general, the ideal gift is not predicated on grandeur, since Buddhism demands only that
the mind of the donor is free from desire, and that the recipient should be worthy.

Intention is paramount according to Gombrich (1971a), but the quality of the recipient matters too.

While there are two motivations for *dana*, according to Strong, they are mutually dependent: giving out of devotion and giving out of desire for enlightenment (1990).137 The hagiography of the historical figure of Emperor Ashoka represents a balance of these two motivations in his reputedly extreme *dana* practices, which included the following "potlatch" type agonistic giving: Ashoka made a grand gift to the sangha, which his son doubled, so Ashoka doubled that, and so on and so forth until Ashoka had given everything he owned, including himself and his son (but not the state treasury, which his ministers used to purchase Ashoka and his family back!). The three forms of *dana* in the Theravada Buddhist tradition, as reported by Simpson (2004), are exemplified in the Jatakas: the gift of material goods (*dana paramita*); the gift of parts of one's body (*dana upa paramita*); the gift of one's life (*dana paramattha paramita*). Most gifts come in the form of material forms (see Figure 17).

![Figure 17. In Kushinagar, pilgrims make pecuniary offerings at the head and feet of the Buddha statue, as well as in the donation box [pictured in the background] to make merit for themselves and others. (Photograph by Jessica Falcone.)](image)

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137 Arguably, as per Collins, enlightenment or "other Buddhist felicities" (Collins 1998).
Reiko Ohnuma once argued that the Buddhist notion of a "true" gift is only predicated on a lack of exchange and the presence of a certain earth-shaking intentionality (2000), and therefore the tradition was rife with such "pure" gifts, but her more recent work suggests that she has a more subtle argument regarding the notion of the "pure gift" in Buddhism (2005). In her article, "Gift," she first tells us that there are indeed "unreciprocated gifts": alms to a monk, e.g., since a monk is not obligated to maintain a relationship with the donor, nor to return a gift in any form; also, alms made to the Buddha, for if the Buddha is no longer present as a receiver, material reciprocity is impossible. Ohnuma does concede that these are self-interested gifts in which the donors earn merit for their offerings, but she then goes on to suggest that there are "pure gifts" in Buddhism: 1) when an enlightened being gifts to another enlightened being; 2) when a bodhisattva tries to refuse the karmic merit he or she has made through a "gift of merit"; 3) when a donor gives to an unworthy recipient. I would argue that only the first hypothetical gift even comes close to qualifying as a pure gift. In the second case, according to the cosmology of karmic calculus, the refusal of merit through making a gift of it, only leads to the creation of more merit. Ohnuma writes: "Paradoxically, then, it is only the relentless and willful avoidance of accumulation that results in the huge collection of merit needed for buddhahood." In this case, the bodhisattva tries to explicitly distance himself from the karmic fruits of generosity by attempting to "out-gift

138 I would argue that the only potential "pure gift" in Buddhism is never actually discussed in the Jatakas, that is, a gift between two enlightened beings. Ohnuma gestured towards the "pure gifts" of the already enlightened in Buddhism by mentioning a hypothetical gift between an enlightened disinterested giver (such as an arhat) and an enlightened disinterested receiver (2005), but this exchange never actually takes place in Buddhist texts. I would concede that as an enlightened being has technically ceased to accumulate karma the gift between two such beings may hypothetically be karma-less, and therefore, "pure." Certainly, as Ohnuma notes, the impossibility of the gift (Derrida 1993) is a relevant dynamic here, as the aporia usually made manifest through the karmic cycle — the act of giving creates merit for the self, so the gift becomes its own reward — is untangled when both giver and receiver make no merit. The impossibility of the gift rendered by Derrida details the "impossible" conditions needed to in order to make a gift pure, including if the gift is forgotten by both giver and receiver.
the gift itself” (Ohnuma 2005: 113), while remaining implicitly aware of the forthcoming fruits of the act of self-denial. This is not a pure gift then, as return is duly expected, and indeed forthcoming.

Regarding her third, and also problematic notion of a "pure gift," Ohnuma argues that examples of giving to undeserving recipients constitutes a "pure gift" because of the hypothetically low karmic yield: "...gifts which flow in the opposite direction – that is, downward toward unworthy recipients – are productive of very little merit, since they are planted in a poor quality 'field'... Furthermore, since unworthy recipients (such as animals and beggars) are equally incapable of reciprocating in a worldly sense, gifts directed at them produce neither worldly nor transcendent rewards. Unproductive in any manner, such gifts become the site of pure, unmitigated generosity" (2005: 114). Extraordinary giving to an unworthy giver is an implicit rejection of the karmic fruits of the gift, but since all the more good karma will accrue to one who thus seeks to avoid amassing good karma, the end result is that karma cannot be tricked, and the trickster knows this: the extraordinary gift to the unworthy is extra-productive given the appearance of disinterest. The tension lies in the explicit desire of the bodhisattva to become a Buddha, which remains the motivation for such extreme gifts. Contra Ohnuma, I would argue that since the relentless "indifference" evinced by the bodhisattva towards reaping the karmic merit of the gift leads to even greater karmic merit, the gift remains essentially impure.

Even if the bodhisattva were less vocal about his desires, it is only the fact that there is an extra temporal deferral (Bourdieu 1977) of the gift's return that may make the gift seem "pure" to Ohnuma. The strategy evinced by the bodhisattva by making extreme gifts of body parts to the undeserving is akin to the "slam dunk" of gift giving, and can be interpreted as the Buddhist answer to the indigenous American potlatch explored by Mauss (1966[1925]). Bourdieu's observations about temporality indicate that strategic temporal feints are helpful in maintaining the illusion of the gift itself. However, as
Derrida notes, the illusion of a gift, does not a pure gift make, and therefore Derrida's aporia of the gift remains, despite Ohnuma's assertions to the contrary.

Finally, Ohnuma tells her readers that any common Buddhist gift in practice, such as a robe offering, is also a kind of pure gift, since the return is so temporally far into the future that it is practically disconnected and disinterested. She writes, "The gift given for the sake of merit clearly involves time lag between the gift and its recompense – in this case, one that frequently extends into a future lifetime (and, in fact, to a "different" person altogether) – again allowing the subjective experience of pure generosity to coexist with the objective truth of exchange" (119). I strongly take issue with this final sweeping rhetorical gesture. First of all, Ohnuma makes her claim without reference or evidence from any text or fieldwork. She would need to show first that Buddhist practitioners believe that the merit they are making today is meant for the benefit of another, separate person in the future. She does not, and indeed could not. Buddhism cosmology teaches a karmic connection between the empty "I" of now and the empty "I" of the near or distant future, so unless someone becomes enlightened and stops developing karma, the connection is not severed in any meaningful way. Buddhist theology also teaches the ultimate emptiness of the self, anatman, but very few practitioners are thought to have directly realized this; hence, if we are stuck in samsara, we are self-interestedly making merit for ourselves – whether the merit is earned for the continuing consciousness of three minutes, three month, three years or three lifetimes from now.

Alan Klima also argues that ontologically the Buddhist gift can thought of as always already pure if the self was always already an illusion (2002).\textsuperscript{139} For him, the key to

\textsuperscript{139} Klima juxtaposes three separate terrains of Buddhist exchange, loosely in terms of the gift of death: political martyrdom and the subsequent marketplace of gory images of the dead; the monastic exchange of images of the dead in meditations on the corpse; the funeral casinos that offer the gift of company to the dead and the gift of a gambling venue to the living. In the strictest Buddhist sense of ultimate reality, the self is impossible and the gift is possible. However, a social phenomenon is rarely as simple as ontology, as evinced by the dichotomy between anatman in theory and the Buddhist ambivalence about the self in practice. The deep ambivalence about anatman, nirvana and impermanence in the Buddhist tradition, complicates and derails Klima's simple notion of the pure Buddhist gift.
the possibility of the pure Buddhist gift is anatman (no-self). In discussing the gifting at Thai funeral casinos, Klima notes that generosity is only pure because the object and the self are transitory and impermanent: "What if there is no "thing" given, no "one" and no "other one" in the first and last place?" (2002: 269). Therefore, if generosity makes merit for the self, it makes merit for a future self, it is a gift to a not-I, to the other. If there is no self for the gift to return to, then the return gift, either material or karmic, is a gift to someone else. This is compelling as a sociologic, but as I have already noted, the rules of karma make the pure gift possible, if and only if the self has directly realized its own emptiness. Therefore, I would argue that the experience of the pure gift exists in direct proportion to the experience of emptiness of self. This corresponds to my assertion that a pure Buddhist gift would only be possible between two beings who had already unambiguously internalized and directly realized anatman.

My sense that the pure gift is only possible by someone who is enlightened does not mean that while gifting Buddhists do not strive towards it, but essentially it means that in the act of gifting is still impure if one has not internalized the truth of emptiness and achieved parinirvana. Lama Yeshe, a founder of FPMT, does exhort his students to try to remember emptiness while giving, and seems to indicate that giving without thought of return is important. Here he obscures the karmic return, and focuses on motivation. In a lecture in 1975, he said, "True charity depends on motivation – giving without attachment or the expectation of anything in return. Such giving automatically frees the mind. Giving with the hope of getting something back is in the nature of conflict...In order to make sure that our actions become positive, while doing them we meditate on the ultimate nature of reality, what is sometimes called the 'circle of three': subject, object, and action" (Yeshe 2008). In one sense Lama Yeshe seems to be inviting his students to work towards true charity through awareness of emptiness, but I would
also note that his very first sentence posits a distinction between true and un-true charity, and the key to that distinction lies with the understanding of emptiness.

While gifts embedded in Hindu and Buddhist soteriologies may or may not produce a social obligation between a specific giver and a specific receiver, this does not make karmic reciprocity irrelevant to social scientists, since it remains the phenomenological motivation and explanation for much of social action in the world regarding Indic gifting, and Tibetan Buddhist gifting by extension.

If a true "gift" is ultimately impossible because it yields a return according to Derrida (1992), then since so many of FPMT's devotees give offerings (both real and imagined) because they are thought to yield positive karma, both institutional and individual, then these are not true gifts in Derrida's sense, and arguably not "true charity" in Lama Yeshe's view. Buddhist offerings can be thought of as cultural performances of karmic exchange as opposed to "pure" or "free" gifting. The pure gift remains forever out of reach for my informants, since karmic intervention dogs each gift with some manner of equivalence or return.

This discussion shows that in some ways karma acts as the "spirit," the "bau" of an act of Buddhist generosity. As the laws of the Buddhist cosmos crystallize, it is apparent that karma is the magical-religious notion that serves to explain the ultimate reciprocity of the gift at FPMT. The question of the gift is bound in terms of reciprocity: the gift once given demands cosmic, spiritual, social or material reciprocity. The bau of the gift, the "spirit of the gift," is a useful notion that embodies the obligation entailed by the gift. As a concept, the question of karma evinces a similar logic: an action once materialized demands cosmic, spiritual, social or material reciprocity. Karma is bau writ large. Karma can be framed as the "spirit" of the action, which demands to return to the origin.
Buddhist karma is a system of cosmic reciprocity, but it is also social since it motivates social actions and material gifts in the here and now. If one gives a positive action to the universe, one eventually receives a positive result in return, and conversely, if one gives a negative action to the universe, one will suffer a negative result in return. Karma is neither the action, the actor, nor the receiver of the action; karma is the spirit of the action. Both ban and karma are the cosmological mechanisms that defer reciprocity, so like cosmic chits, they make distinct promises about the future that motivate social action in the present. Even when one focuses on specific cases of Buddhist giving, such as dedicated offerings meant for the Maitreya statue, the material and social relationships between actual corporeal givers and receivers are completely enmeshed within the laws of karmic reciprocity.

Most of this discussion has been focused squarely upon the conventional nature of the Buddhist gift, but the ultimate nature of the gift should not be disregarded. On a conventional level, for devotees who believe in karma, every gift, offering, and dedication led to the creation of merit either for the self, even and especially when it was couched in terms of merit-making for "myself and others." However, from the ultimate perspective, arguably Derrida's own discourse can serve to usefully point us towards the perspective of emptiness; the truth of dependent arising suggests the impossibility of any real gift, including even the karmic gift. Serious deconstruction along these lines leads us to conclude that while karmic reciprocity moves us towards the sharpest possible conventional truth regarding the Buddhist gift, nothing exists from its own side, and therefore karmic reciprocity and the Buddhist gift are also inherently empty. I argue that both conventional and ultimate truths are important to understand as we puzzle through the nature of the Buddhist gift.

I will draw on the discussion above to show that sociomaterial reciprocity, karmic reciprocity and affective reciprocity are all significant nodes of analysis for understanding
the character of the gift in FPMT’s transnational Buddhist community, especially since it is a unique Buddhist community in which karma itself, while taken as a cosmological fact is still being constantly being questioned and reinterpreted.

**Of Gifting Statues**

In order to explore karmic reciprocity in practice in FPMT, I would like to explore some of their gifting practices in detail. The Foundation for the Preservation of the Mahayana Tradition, like other Gelukpa groups, places a special emphasis on generosity. Lama Yeshe and Lama Zopa Rinpoche, as well as their instructors in the FPMT sangha, often discuss the importance of generosity as a means to cleanse negative karmas. In set of lectures by the two lamas, one of them made the observation after developing compassion and love for others, one should work to benefit and repay others with generosity, both material and karmic giving to others is required (Yeshe and Rinpoche 1982). The emphasis on thinking of others instead of oneself is extended to the practice of "...exchanging our self-cherishing attitude for one of cherishing others..." (110); one of the lamas quotes the Guru Puja, saying,

Please bless me to be able to change myself into others,  
And to equalize myself with them,  
By thinking about the benefits and shortcomings,  
Of the following actions:  
A buddha works only for others,  
While the small-minded child works only for himself.

To cherish oneself brings only downfall,  
And to hold dear our mothers  
Is the basis of all that is good.  
Therefore by the practice of exchanging self for others,  
Please bless me to be able to do all this  
(Yeshe and Rinpoche 1982: 110).

Exchanging self for others is a way to generate bodhicitta, and to generate positive karma.
FPMT teachers are not coy about discussing the benefits to oneself as one engages in the practice of helping others.

'Puja' is a Sanskrit word meaning 'offering.' Why do people give offerings to someone else? Usually it is to please the other person and make him happy. This is the lower, relative interpretation. But in terms of the dharma, 'puja' has a more profound connotation. When you transform everything into beautiful sights, sounds, smells and so forth and offer them in a puja to representations of the fully enlightened omniscient mind, it is you yourself who benefits. By directing your energy through such a ceremony towards the thought of enlightenment, you bring yourself closer to achieving everlasting pleasure and peace (Yeshe and Rinpoche 1982: 136-137).

The FPMT community runs largely on donations and offerings, but these offerings to the institution are seen in the institutional literature as a means towards the self-betterment of the donor. As I sat with two volunteers at the Tushita Center in Dharamsala in 2006, they gave course participants their cell-phones back, and gestured them towards the envelopes for donations to the center and the teachers. "Didn't the students pay for the class ahead of time?," I asked. One of them told me that they were "giving the students a chance to give offerings." The other volunteer contributed, "Tushita gets good karma also from giving them the chance to make good merit by giving offerings." Students and devotees are hyper-aware of the community focus on generosity, and often work to meet expectations for social, secular moral, and/or karma-inspired reasons.

The guru's gifts are especially significant in terms of cementing and reaffirming the guru-disciple relationship. A gift of a statues, mala, or mandala set to a devotee from Lama Zopa Rinpoche is considered very special, a prized possession. These gifts do create social solidarity, but they do something else, something spirit-like. From the perspective of the devotee, it is as if the teacher is giving some part of him/herself to the devotee. In effect, the statue affectively carries a part of the teacher.
Maitreya Project press encourages devotees to give generously so that they will be rewarded by a future rebirth in the era of the Maitreya Buddha: "May the beings who contribute to the creation of images of Maitreya, Buddha of Love, experience the dharma of the great way in the presence of Maitreya himself" (MPI 2005). The Maitreya Buddha statue is meant to give devotees an opportunity to create a karmic connection to Maitreya that will ripen in the Maitreya's future lifetime on earth. The benefits of the statue will accrue to all sentient beings, but especially to those whose proximity will enable them to be inspired by the Maitreya, thus creating karmic links with him. At the heart of the project lies the sense that the statue is a gift to Indian people – those who will see the statue and receive blessings and inspiration from it.

Maitreya Project director, Peter Kedge, has written that the "merit" created in assisting with the project is "indescribable," and quoted Lama Zopa Rinpoche as having said, "Those who work, sponsor, or help build this statue in any way will be the first disciples of Maitreya Buddha when he comes to this world" (Kedge 1998: 40). As far as I am concerned the penchant to link one's future self to the Maitreya shows the deep flaw in both Klima's and Ohnuma's arguments that Buddhist practitioners give disinterestedly because the benefits accrue to "future selves." My informants are deeply self-interested about the future, and much of their present practice hinges upon their self-interest in the well-being of their karmic futures.

Lama Zopa Rinpoche had given many talks about the benefits that accrue to the donors of offerings. He is known for being acutely interested in the creation and worship of holy objects – much more so than his guru Lama Yeshe. Lama Zopa Rinpoche has said, "We are not aware of the limitless skies of benefits we achieve from the practice of offering; what we achieve and can enjoy from life to life. Even while we are in samsara, we will enjoy good rebirths, wealth, and every happiness." (FPMT "E.O.P" 2006: 6)
A European FPMT devotee living in Delhi noted that Rinpoche dreams of making holy objects "for our benefit. That is how compassionate he is. The statue isn't for him, it's for us, so that we can make merit." Of course, the karmic calculus of this gift (to some extent, whether the statue happens or not) will definitely shower Lama Zopa Rinpoche with merit, and he certainly knows this. However, this remains implicit, and devotees are even appalled at questions along the line of the merits to be earned by the guru for his gift of a statue. To make this karmic calculus explicit as regards a specific gift would diminish its power, although the implicit promises of merit remain an open secret.

An FPMT nun from Germany, who has taught converts the basics of Buddhism for the past 15 plus years, told me that "Bowing in front of the Maitreya Project statue will give us a huge benefit, but maybe not in this life. The seeds are in midstream. The practicing of the past is what leads us to now, and now our merit is developing for the future. With no faith there is no interest. Merit has come from making prostrations and offerings to holy objects in the past… People making offerings to the giant statue, or even just seeing it – it will help those people." She went on to say, "It is not just the sangha who think about the project and dedicate merit, all the students of Rinpoche do so. And there are representatives in every country to help collect money – if not in every country, then every region."

While many FPMT students and devotees believed strongly in the value(s) of the project, many did not. Dozens of students articulated dissatisfaction that so much money would be spent on the construction – money that could be used for helping the poor, for example. What is notable is that most, although not all, of those who criticized the idea of the statue were those who had less faith in the karmic cosmology of Buddhism that Lama Zopa Rinpoche espouses, or evinced no faith in karma or rebirth. In order to discuss the gifting rituals and donations made towards the Maitreya Statue project, I conducted research on activities at both FPMT centers and MPI's circulating Relic Tour.
The Maitreya Project statue comes up often in casual conversations at the Root Institute, as devotees wholly ignorant of the land controversy talked about how the only thing needed to make the statue a reality were additional donations. The statue project remains the primary recipient of transferred merit, if not dollars, from the ritual offerings at the center. Most of the dollars donated to Root Institute programs go straight back into the running of the center and the attached health clinic. On the other hand, during ritual offerings at the Bodh Gaya center, the Maitreya Project gets more specific and sustained attention during merit dedications than any other FPMT project in the world. I attended dozens of these ritual offerings, and here will describe a robe offering puja in detail, and discuss a variation in the form of a light offering puja.

Ritual Offerings

On February 2, 2007, I joined nearly 20 FPMT affiliates, including a few Root Institute center volunteers and two Western nuns, at a full moon day ritual – a robe offering to the Buddha statue at the heart of the Mahabodhi temple in Bodh Gaya. We could not fit inside the temple for the duration of the approximately twenty-five minute Puja, so the dharma program director of the Root Institute spread out mats brought from the center in the walkway around the temple; the devotees faced the Mahabodhi temple's front right corner, and the two nuns leading the Puja sat to our right, facing us. One of the nuns began the Puja by noting that the temple was almost unfortunately bedecked in exotic, expensive flowers, such as orchids that had been flown in by a Sri Lankan community for a relic enshrinement procession earlier that day; she noted that we should not be dismayed by the fact that so much money had been spent on the floral arrangements, even though they stood in such direct contrast to the beggars who sat just outside the Mahabodhi Stupa gates. The German nun told us not to allow our feelings of consternation at this waste of money, nor her crankiness about it, to disrupt the solemnity
and heart of the robe offerings we were about to undertake. Xerox copies from prayer books were passed around to the assembly. Devotees from other Buddhist communities continued to circumambulate the stupa, but a few occasionally stopped to listen to the FPMT devotees, especially when they chanted in Tibetan.

The ani led us in chanting from a few FPMT pamphlets, which we switched between for the entire session, one called "The Extensive Offering Practice" (FPMT 2006b) and another called "Dedication Prayers for Special Occasions (FPMT 2004a). We first chanted "The Extensive Offering Practice" itself, which was composed of the following sections: Motivation, Blessing the Offerings, Making Charity to the Beings of the Six Realms, Offering to the Merit Field, Offering Cloud Mantra, Extensive Power of Truth, the Actual (Light) Offering Practice, and Dedications.

In the first part, devotees were instructed to set our motivation towards achieving enlightenment to help others, and this offering would allow us to generate merit towards that goal. We performed the "Blessing the Offerings" section, and read in the margins that this keeps the offerings from being possessed by spirits. As the FPMT assembly did the "Making Charity to the Beings of the Six Realms," we were told to think that the offerings are not ours, and rather that we were giving them to others to offer. "Think that you are making these offerings on their behalf – you and all other beings are going to make offerings to the Buddhas together. Generate great happiness at having accumulated infinite merit by thinking this way," the ani said. Devotees chanted the next section, "Offering to the Merit Field," in order to make the actual modest offerings into imaginary offerings that pervade the whole sky, and the Offering Cloud mantra was then undertaken to make it so. During the chanting of the "Extensive Power of Truth," we were instructed to visualize ourselves prostrating, giving a whole sky full of offerings, and generating great bliss by the thought that these offerings have been received; offerings are made step by step to holy objects, places, and Buddhas, which according to the pamphlet
we read from are all "manifestations of your own root Guru, who is one with all other virtuous friends." The text goes on to say that, "Since the virtuous friend is the most powerful object in the merit field, by offering like this, you accumulate the most extensive merit." We chanted the lines in order to know who to offer to, and then we all paused as the offering was mentally made and ostensibly received. The FPMTers then chanted a page from the "Selection of verses for offering robes" in which there were several offering verses from Tibetan sources such as the Tibetan Lama Chopa, and even one unsourced passage from a Theravadin text.

Afterwards, we returned to the original FPMT book on "extensive offerings" to chant the selection on the "Actual (Light) Offering Prayers" three times. The offerings were now officially made, and the devotees accumulated merit: "I have accumulated infinite merit by having generated bodhicitta, having made charity to the sentient beings, and having made actual (light) offerings to the gurus, Triple Gem, and to all holy objects of the ten directions" (FPMT 2006b:14). The devotees then chant a reading which had us ask that this merit be used to purity the bad karma of all sentient beings.

Finally the ritual offering ceremony ended with a series of dedications, each of which multiplied the merit already created by the offering. The Dedication, chanted in Tibetan, reads thusly: "Due to the merits of these virtuous actions; May I quickly attain the state of a Guru-buddha, and lead all living beings, without exception; Into that enlightened state. May the supreme jewel bodhichitta; That has not arisen, arise and grow; and may that which has arisen not diminish; But increase more and more." (2006: 15). In English, the chant continued, "Due to these infinite merits, may whatever sufferings sentient beings have ripen on me right now. May whatever happiness and virtue I have accumulated, including all the realizations of the path and the highest goal enlightenment, be received by each hell being, preta, animal, human, asura, and sura right now. Having dedicated in this way, you have accumulated infinite merit, so rejoice."
Here the devotees were told again that we had increased the size of our return gift by trying to give away the merit over and over, and thus in the process our merit had increased all the more. This karmic reciprocity in evidence in this explanation is not necessarily ungenerous, but such cultural logics clearly negate the possibility of a "pure" or "free" Buddhist gift, as I discussed above.

FPMTers then chanted the "Abbreviated Dedication Prayers for Special Occasions" from another pamphlet created and distributed by FPMT, Inc. These dedication prayers were explicitly geared towards promoting the success of all FPMT centers and projects. It began with a dedication towards the swift achievement of the Maitreya Project statue:

We dedicate all these merits for immediate success in getting all the funding needed for the Maitreya Project, for the statue to be completed quickly, and for it to be most beneficial for sentient beings to purify their minds, collect extensive merit, and generate faith in Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha. May the statue generate compassion, loving kindness, and bodhicitta in the hearts of all living beings, particularly, in this world – particularly in the hearts of all the leaders of the world and all the terrorists, those who cause so much violence to others in this world. May it be the cause for perfect enjoyments and peace, as well as inner prosperity, generating the complete path to enlightenment in their hearts as quickly as possible.

The dedication then proceeded to wish success for other FPMT causes and projects, but with far greater brevity; in this dedication, there is as much written about the Maitreya statue as all other FPMT projects put together. The center's individual list of dedications had already been silently read by the spiritual program director of the Root Institute; these were short prayers for the well-being of specific donors, and also

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140 In the un-abbreviated "Dedication Prayers for Special Occasions" (FPMT 2004a), the Maitreya Project is given one third of the total space for dedications. In the abbreviated version, about one half the space is dedicated to the success of the Maitreya Project.
dedications for the success of specific Root Institute projects, such as the health care center and the giant stupa wheel project.

The group then chanted "Multiplying Mantras" in Tibetan that are supposed to increase the merit already made by 100,000 times, which we followed with a mantra that guarantees that the prayers made will come to pass. Finally, as is customary in Gelukpa traditions the final dedication prayers were made to Lama Tsongkhapa, and to the long life of his holiness the Dalai Lama.

Figure 18. FPMTers make a robe offering in front of the Mahabodhi Stupa in Bodh Gaya in February 2007. (Photograph by Jessica Falcone.)

Participants in the robe offering ceremony were mostly volunteers at the Root Institute, or students enrolled in courses there (see Figure 18). In interviews I did in the following days, I learned the participants were motivated to do the offerings because of both the positive karma created for themselves and others, as well as the promise that negative karma is burned away from oneself and others. In my discussions the benefits were couched in these terms "for myself and others"; further probing for the motivations
behind the gift were often met with resistance. "Yes, of course, by taking Bodhisattva vows or giving our merit away we are also making merit for ourselves, but you shouldn't think about it that way – it defeats the purpose," one Root institute student told me.

Offering rituals are often prescribed by Lama Zopa Rinpoche for both centers writ large, and individuals who meet him to ask for personal guidance with a spiritual program. So in this example, the offerings were done towards the creation of merit for the Maitreya Projects statue and other FPMT projects, but the actual participants, despite the discomfort it seem to provoke, spoke more often of creating good karma and burning off bad karma themselves. The two are not mutually exclusive, of course, but we see here that devotees seem explicitly buy into the implicit karmic calculus that sees the return of the gift in the creation of karmic merit for oneself even as one also gives the "gift of merit" to others.

After the event, I talked to several of the participants about the robe offerings, and there were several views on the matter. Two representative informants held quite divergent views: one of whom absolutely believed that by giving merit one would make more merit, while another felt that this system was somehow "cheating." The former, Gertie, a long-time FPMTer from Germany, felt strongly that ritual offerings were "win-win," and that the karmic calculus was just "inherently good," and would benefit all people primarily because of the dedications. The latter, Tom, an American who had just gotten out of his first FPMT course, said that he just went to see what the fuss was about; "I am a Buddhist, but I don't believe in all the merit-making mumbo jumbo. It's just a way to make us feel good about giving stuff away to monks!" This conversation grew quite heated, and each of the two devotees seemed to feel that the other was quite wrong, and were both a bit curt with each other as they said their "goodnights." Still, they drank their tea, and sat together at meals for the next few days, until finally Gertie left Bodh Gaya a bit later. In recalling this heated debate later, Tom said that he had conversations
like that all the time at the Root Institute. "I like that in FPMT there is room for debate like that. Of course, only up to a point! I have been told that I am not a real Buddhist even by FPMT standards unless I believe in karma, merit, guru devotion – all that stuff. Whatever. I have two words for you. Write this down. Two words: merit multiplication." He went on to say that the whole concept of mathematically multiplying merit through mantras was simply too much for him to believe. "If I could believe stuff like that then I'd still be a Catholic. I came to Buddhism to transcend all that faith crap."

During an interview with Frank, one of the few volunteers at FPMT who did not consider himself primarily a devotee of Lama Zopa Rinpoche or another Tibetan teacher, I met with more skepticism about merit-making:

I'm not sure I believe in it. I don't know what I think about it. I don't want to do anything with the intention of creating merit. If merit comes, fine. I don't feel inclined to do things for the purpose of something like that. The idea of giving away merit is nice, but is it really also self-serving? And those merit multiplications! They say, the merit will be multiplied twelve times if it's done here [in Bodh Gaya]...!

The practice of merit multiplications was seen as an illogical deal-breaker for some of my more cynical informants in FPMT. Merit multiplications are not a singularly Buddhist phenomenon. Copeman argues in his article "Blood, Blessings and Technology" that merit multiplication is foregrounded in religious blood bank advertising very consciously, so that donors will feel that through the technological process of "centrifuge technology" their one donation becomes several donations: the result is that the generosity of blood banking becomes more generous and the productivity of the bank increases (2005/6). The appeal of this ritual arithmetic was universally appealing to Copeman's informants, but it was a complex, and sometimes divisive, issue for mine.

141 This volunteer was primarily a student of Thich Nhat Hanh, a Vietnamese Buddhist teacher. He was at the Root Institute to help run their health clinic.
But for every Frank there were at least a few Gerties. In fact there are many people who believe so strongly in the concept of merit-making that they will give substantive donations to FPMT to sponsor merit-making activities. Offering 100,000 lights during the Festival of Lights and Merit (FLAM) was a bi-annual endeavor of the Root Institute, and it hinged entirely on the practice of merit multiplications.

In the months preceding an eight-night FLAM, donors were solicited, many from far away centers, with the most coming from East Asian devotees. The Root Institute's Indian staff would hang 100,000 Christmas lights around the Mahabodhi temple. I participated in three FLAM recitations in February of 2007. Several volunteers and staff at Root Institute gathered on a platform close to the Mahabodhi stupa after dark each evening, and read and chanted from the Extensive Offering Prayers booklet and supplementary materials. We would read the actual offering prayers several times, and then multiply our offerings with special multiplying mantras. One night there were seven of us present making the offerings, so the religious program coordinator calculated the multiplications and told us that together we had made seven million light offerings. On evenings that the electricity failed, we would have to wait for it the lights to be restored before certain parts of the ritual could be finished.

The offerings are made on behalf of the donors, so after the actual offerings and extra prayers (such as the King of Prayers), we made FPMT dedications, including specific dedications for the success of the Maitreya Project. Then the participants were each given several printouts from which we would individually whisper aloud the actual names and dedications of the puja sponsors. Under one donor entry it was common to find a list of names per whole nuclear or extended family. Specific dedications to the donor's ancestors were not rare. For example, a dedication might read something like this fictionalized donor entry: "Yun Li - for the benefit of all sentient beings, and for the benefit of all the living and deceased members of the Fong and Li families, especially
Hun, Carrie, Tao and Deng." After reading off the names, we would read the multiplication mantras. Then, we finished with long life prayers for the Dalai Lama and Lama Zopa Rinpoche, and the Lama Tsongkhapa Prayer.

"Suggested Donations"

Donations are made to the Maitreya Project in a number of ways. Donations are being collected as small, individual donations at centers, but these account for only a percentage of the total. Merit boxes are placed at centers for people to deposit their small change towards many international FPMT projects, the MPI included. Many large donors were tapped at the outset, most from Taiwan and other Asian countries where merit-making by donating to the construction of a Buddhist statue or temple is a more traditional activity. Donations are made on-line at the Maitreya Project's website, www.maitreyaproject.org, which functions in several languages. As of spring 2010, on the Maitreya Project International website, one could make a donation in order to receive a six-inch replica of the statue made in white resin for $150. The website is careful to teach donors that the exchange is not capitalist in nature, but rather a merit-making one:

Buddhism teaches that one should not sell sacred objects for personal profit. For that reason, we are not providing these statues simply as 'for sale', thinking of them as goods to be bought and sold. Rather, we are making them available with the wish to benefit others by generating funds to enable us to carry out the charitable work of Maitreya Project.

All of the proceeds from your donation will be used to build the Maitreya Project statue and support Maitreya Project's charitable activities in Kushinagar, in the state of Uttar Pradesh, and Bodhgaya, in the state of Bihar, both in northern India.

From your side, please do not think that you are purchasing this statue. Rather, think that you are making a donation with the thought of creating benefit. By thinking in this way, you, and the millions of other beings who will receive the blessings of Maitreya Project, will receive only benefit.
In April 2010, one could secure a poster with image of the relics and the statue for a "suggested offering" of $15 at the FPMT e-store.

According to a Custodian of the Relic Tour, suggested donations are one of the primary means towards soliciting donations for the project, as well as the best way to spread awareness about the project. At the Relic Tour sites, donations are not explicitly solicited as entry fees, but there are offering boxes in various places inside the room and outside as well. The motivations expressed by individuals who had donated at Relic Tour events were diverse. Of the people who made donations inside the Relic Tour shrine room, many gave donations to make merit, and indicated that the offering were an important and mandatory part of taking blessings. The offerings boxes were usually stuffed with cash and checks, and at the risk of generalizing, it was most often Asian devotees from Buddhist countries, and long-time Western practitioners, who gave in tandem with their viewing of the relics. Of the people I interviewed who did not mention merit-making, most gave donations because they saw others do it, or said that they had had a positive experience with the relics – also, a few people noted their intention to donate specifically towards the Maitreya Project statue.

At the Relic Tour events, I found donors expressing desire for merit, desire to be blessed by the relics, desire to make offerings to the Relic Tour or statue, but very often it was the desire for a specific souvenir that led a visitor to pay a pre-set "suggested donation." Outside of every relic tour event there is a table where attendees can acquire souvenirs like Maitreya Project posters, postcards, DVDs, statues and other Buddhist music CDs, charms, images, etc. Sometimes these exchanges were called "donations," sometimes "suggested donations," but they were guided by set prices in the strict sense of the word, since one could only receive an item in exchange for a set value, which was clearly listed next to items as "suggested donations." As a volunteer manning the table, I talked to other volunteers about this when a woman wanted to take a statue at half the
price of the suggested donation. We were not allowed to let the woman proceed with the
transaction unless she paid the full amount on the printed "suggestion donation" list.
The items are paid for by placing the money in a large "offerings" box (although
volunteers sometimes kept money in an envelope to help make change, when necessary).
The donations/gifts table was always set-up next to a television that played the Maitreya
Project DVD about the touted benefits of the statue plan on a continuous loop.

According to the Custodian, there was little difference in the merit accomplished
by these various forms of donations at Relic Tour events: "Visitors have burned off 1000
years of negative karma in their visit to the relics, and by making donations they have
created good karma that will lead to a connection between themselves and Maitreya.
This is an enormously positive opportunity to make good merit."

The donations pay for the traveling Relic Tour, but they also go far further
towards making substantive donations to the running of MPI proper. In discussion with
a Custodian it was clear that if the Relic Tour stopped running, then MPI would be in
dire financial straights. Recently, under pressure from critics and donors to be more
transparent, the Maitreya Project released its financial documents, and for the first time
publicly showed that it was in substantial debt. As I mentioned in a previous chapter,
between 1990 and 2006 it had taken in about 12.5 million dollars in donations, but had
spent approximately 19 million, leaving them a 6.5 million dollar deficit. The Relic Tour
monies, thus, are one of the only sources of guaranteed regular income.

Also, as I have discussed before, "suggested donations" are also often mandatory
payments for dharma courses, as one must pay the donation in order to take the course.
There are often collection envelopes placed out at the end of the course to make
additional "suggested donations" to the teachers who taught the course. This is
considered an important way to supplement teacher/monastic salaries, as well as a way to
give students an opportunity to practice generosity and guru devotion.
There is little doubt that the practice of suggested donations and suggested offerings reflects mandatory pricing structures in practice. However, by calling it a donation, an illusion of gifting is nourished. Also, although one cannot give less than the minimum, some donors decide to donate more than the set suggested fee, so there is incentive for FPMT institutions to use this nomenclature.

**Giving Time**

The ritual offerings, such as FLAM, discussed above are usually conducted by staff, volunteers, sangha and devotees, few of whom are paid for their efforts in this regard. The voluntary work given to support FPMT centers, such as the Root Institute, is substantial. FPMT thrives because of its volunteer base. Each center runs with a combination of paid staff, and gratis sangha and volunteers. At the centers in India, volunteers generally received free room and board in exchange for working an approximately forty-hour work week. Volunteers could take courses only very occasionally, since they were primarily needed to help make sure the courses and centers themselves ran smoothly, but they could attend pujas and films and the occasional meditations that were scheduled early or late enough in the day.

Many of these volunteers indicated that they felt that they were giving time to their guru, both to benefit themselves (by giving them a dharma community) and to benefit the FPMT community as a whole. Derrida's book, called *Given Time: 1. Counterfeit Money,* actually refers very little to the concept of giving time. In his short introduction, Derrida tussles a little with the notion of whether time can be given or taken by deconstructing a letter from a king's mistresses about her unsettling desire to give more time to a charitable organization. From here, he leads his readers down the

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142 I myself served as a volunteer for the Root Institute in 2000 – I ran the library and wrote my MA thesis over the course of a portion of the fall/winter season.
path of the impossible gift, a concept that I have already discussed at length earlier in this very chapter. Significantly, Derrida indicates that the giving of objects and the giving of time are both impossible tasks. Although giving time may be an inherently empty notion, it is also bursting with meaning for the volunteers themselves.

One volunteer at Tushita Dharamsala began volunteering shortly after she had first taken refuge after a ten-day course at FPMT's flagship center, the Kopan monastery.

Taking refuge was a powerful step for me. Finally I'd committed myself to this path. It was a great relief to me. From there I came straight here [to Dharamsala, and Tushita]. I knew I wanted to stay here and do work, so I asked to be a volunteer. I did the Nyung Nay course... When a volunteer you can take courses sometimes. You do eight sets of two day Nyung Nays. So I did one, and we took turns. When I first came I said it would be a few months at least. When I started I did digital archiving. I was turning tapes into digital. It was way boring! Then the librarian left and I did that for a year. I got to know the dharma books really well. Last year I was a discussion group leader for the 10 day courses. Now we don't have leaders, since they used to just ask us questions. Tushita is amazing. So many people meet the dharma there. There is a three month Vajrasattva retreat in the summer, and I did that. [Thutop] had been moved into the library. He's staff, he used to work in the kitchen, but he wanted the library job. I didn't want to make a fuss and take the library back, so now I work in administration, in the office and with the accounts. It's also a good challenge to move into the organizational side. There are office conflicts, personality differences and trouble-shooting. But you can get caught up in the organizational side, office conflicts, personality differences and troubleshooting so sometimes you lose sight of the courses. I wish I had been able to take a ten-day course here ten days ago! I keep up a minimum daily practice to have continuity. I would have a certain meditation or yoga practice and then I might drop it.

There have been long discussions over tea at the Root Institute about the fact that volunteers often have to forgo the courses and meditation sessions they wish to go given the demands of the work they are expected to complete. Robbie, the health project staffer at the Root Institute also noted that he was not able to sustain his Buddhist regime while he was working, a feeling shared by many full-time volunteers at FPMT centers. Therefore, the volunteers often felt tension between the fact of supporting the religious
progress of others and being less able to engage in their own spiritual development than they had hoped. Volunteers talked of giving to the community, giving of themselves, and of giving up some of their own opportunities.

**Conclusion**

I have not exhausted the topic of generosity in FPMT. There could be an entire book simply on *dana* in FPMT. What I have worked to do in this chapter is to put gift theory into discussion with Buddhist sociologies and content. Gifts are empty in the ultimate sense, and yet at the conventional level, absolutely pregnant with social meaning and karmic promise.

The gift is often a complex subject, and this is no less true for *dana* in FPMT, where giving is not only socially and karmically obligated, but also chosen by certain actors and not by others. While I am not at all comfortable with the notion that gifts in this context are disinterested, pure or free, neither would I argue that they are completely self-interested, obligated, or calculated. My fascination with gifting lies in the play between these extremes, and in the layers of truths that show the full range of meaning for givers and receivers in this community.

I find the two truths to be a very useful way of approaching the question of the gift in this context. Analysis at the level of Mauss’ work moves the conventionality of the obligations inherent in the system of *dana* forward, while Bourdieu's work complicates and hones this conventional perspective on the gift. Simultaneously, Derrida's tack is more valid as one approaches the ultimate truth. Derrida's deconstruction flirts with emptiness, even if he does not necessarily go the distance. Confronted, then, with the question of karmic reciprocity, I would argue that the debate at the conventional level should be finessed to recognize that that the Buddhist gift is not free, as karmic
reciprocity is doing significant social work. However, at the ultimate level, like everything else, the Buddhist gift is entirely empty, and thus impossible.

In a sense, the discussion of engaged Buddhism and humanitarianism that continues in the next content-based chapter is an important result of the centrality of *dana* in Buddhism. The next chapter will address Buddhist ethics more generally however, especially referring to the challenges raised in MPI's attempts to actualize the Maitreya Project statue in the face of local resistance in Kushinagar.
CHAPTER 11
"DANA": INTERLUDE

Cite Me!

I have an obligation to them and I feel it strongly. The bau of the gift demands it. The bau of "the" Gift (Mauss 1966[1925]) is stronger than I am, and it compels the return of academic gifts past. I believe in the spirit of a gift – it moves me.

The old adage that one must publish or perish ought to be reframed; what is at stake in publication transcends tenure and promotion, because if we publish, then we do not wholly perish, ever. Some names are carried forward and live on as part of future conversations of our discipline. I am talking immortality. The wealth of anthropological theories on exchange should be applied to the temporal present of our greatest material presents: the gifts of our theories.

I was only half done with this dissertation when I first began this ethnomeditation; I had endless lists of names that I have to visit or revisit or revisit over again. Stacks of precursors whose work I was bound to honor with a citation. Even now, years later, revisiting and revising this interlude, just weeks away from filing, I am still burdened by the riches of the past. Whether I want to or not, I must make more offerings. I prostrate to you, and you, and you'n'you'n'you. The names are still piling up: honor X; cite Y earlier; you're obliged to Z; read A; boo hiss on B – take him out of the game; why didn't you mention C?; handle D with more care, please. By the time you read this, I will have already cited them. I have an obligation to regift their ideas. We must keep it all in motion. Pass it on. Hot potatoes (and cold ones too). If I don't, well, I'm out of the game. I lose. Not cited, circulated, sacralized, or entombed even. Cite while you write, and then they will cite you as they write. Disclaimer: we have our own hierarchy, and I know very well how low my place is in the scheme of things. I draw heat
from the touchstones of the big (wo)men; I watch them, and I emulate them, but I'm still trading my theoretical armbands and necklaces with the third string. Another cycle, another circle, another kind of kula.

Is there any difference between the giving out of obligation by the Maori, my Tibetan Buddhist informants, and myself even now, even as I write? I am making merit too. Not karmic merit – goodness no! – academic merit. I am accruing academic karma by returning the gifts that I've been given. As I sit here, on my couch on a Thursday night, typing on this loaner computer from Warren Wilson College instead of going to the contra dance in the old wooden gymnasium across the street, I am preparing my gift – making it, wrapping it, finessing the ribbon, and strategizing the right ways and means to the work the academic kula. As I type now, I am performing the (only slightly less mystified) hope that my own theories will cause an effect or two; perhaps, someday the *hau* of my gift of theory will eventually be empowered through circulation. Is it cheating to openly anticipate the hoped for reciprocations of gifts of theory? Does it dash the magic? Will this missive be integrated into the conventional discussions of conventions, and if so, how? Will it be returned in good working order or will it be smashed to pieces? Regardless, I do expect it back. In making an implicit desire explicit I am not trying to end the story – to expose it as false in some essential way. If we are somewhat alienated from our products, then we should reclaim them as our own. If we burden our gifts with the expectation that they will carry our selves forward, then let us embrace our fictions as such, and know them (and love them) for what they are.
"MAITRI"/LOVING-KINDNESS: ETHICS, PROTEST, AND IDEOLOGY IN THE SHADOW OF MAITREYA

In Tibetan Buddhism, as in other traditions, loving-kindness, or "maitri" in Sanskrit, is considered a significant idea in theory and practice. Developing loving-kindness for all beings, is one way of developing bodhicitta, and hence a way towards enlightenment for the benefit of all. Loving-kindness is one of four immeasurables, along with compassion (Sanskrit: karuna), joy (Sanskrit: mudita) and equanimity (Sanskrit:upeksa). Most often loving-kindness is considered the corollary of compassion. Loving-kindness is known to be the desire for others to be happy; compassion, on the other hand, refers to the desire for others to be free of suffering. Compassion and loving-kindness in the Tibetan Buddhist traditions, then, are often thought to be two sides of the same coin (Lief 1998: 12). Lief tells her audience that her root teacher, Chogyam Trungpa Rinpoche, used to say that maitri involved both friendliness to others, but also friendliness and love towards oneself.

The Maitreya Buddha is the deity of loving-kindness – the Buddha of desiring happiness for all sentient beings. Is FPMT's 500-foot statue of the Maitreya Buddha being made with loving-kindness? This chapter is about loving-kindness in action, both theologically and in practice. The loving-kindness of MPI has manifested in myriad ways that are recognizable to FPMTers, but I have argued that there is little maitri in their dealings with the Kushinagari farmers who are about to lose their land (see Figure 19).
I will frame the Maitreya Project land controversies in Bodh Gaya and Kushinagar by framing it in terms of Buddhist morality and engaged Buddhism. The heart of this chapter is the story of the turmoil that the pre-event of the statue is causing in Kushinagar now, as well as the rifts it has caused between the statue's supporters and detractors in the region. The forcible land acquisition of the parcel for the statue project must be understood in terms of its place in a globalizing world, in which India's relatively new neoliberal agenda has allowed the British colonial legislation, the Land Acquisition Act, to be leveraged by states to acquire tracts of land for international corporate interests. Economic liberalization in India, which arguably began under the watch of Rajiv Gandhi in the 1990s, has continued apace under various political parties since then. This shift has met with resistance, as people's movement have grown organically against
various projects, such as the Narmada Dam, the Nandigram SEZ (Special Economic Zone) and other SEZs (Banerjee 2007). The anti-Maitreya Project agitation in Kushinagar must be framed within the larger discourses of globalization and development in India today, especially in relation to discontent about the trajectory of neoliberal policies, and their untoward consequences.

The fear of forcible acquisition has paralyzed the Kushinagar area farmers in some ways; some have deferred repairs, new houses and weddings given the uncertainty they now face. However, their protests have paralyzed the efforts to co-opt land for the statue in certain ways as well: the plan lies in waiting, in limbo. However, despite the apparent lack of progress – the seeming stasis that led one Maitreya Project Trust trustee tell me in 2006 that "Nothing has happened in Kushinagar" – there is in fact a deep and frenetic current of mobilization and activism in Kushinagar. For their part, the Maitreya Project and the Uttar Pradesh state government act in their disparate ways towards their own desired ends, whether it is for the purposes of fundraising or bureaucratic work. This chapter will examine the Kushinagar controversy in detail, from the perspectives of various stakeholders.

In this chapter, I ask: How could the Maitreya Project allow so much suffering, uncertainty, and fear to prevail in Kushinagar – just in the planning, pre-acquisition stage alone? How could the Maitreya Project simultaneously rescue goats from slaughter, pray for world peace and happiness, and dedicate clouds of offerings towards the hope that all sentient beings will be spared suffering, and all the while proceed with plans that have alarmed and outraged a whole region of hard-working small farming families? How is the Maitreya Project staff justifying their actions to its donors? How have FPMTers in general dealt with the controversy post-2007, once it became more public knowledge? How have donors reacted?
This chapter is as much about suffering as it is about happiness – it is as much about failures as it is about motivations. Of course, it is also about rights and wrongs. And so I wonder: is it wrong to frame the chapter about the land acquisition controversy with a discussion of maitri? Or, on the other hand, what could possibly be more right?

**Buddhist Morality**

The first few introductory sections of this chapter will address how Buddhist ethics work in theory and practice in the context of the Maitreya Project controversy in Kushinagar. This particular section will examine concepts of Buddhist ethics, especially those that are taught in FPMT's Tibetan Buddhism. Perhaps Buddhist morality is more useful terminology than Buddhist ethics, but I use them interchangeably in this dissertation. Damien Keown makes a useful argument that Buddhism as a general tradition writ large has no "ethics," by way of noting that while rife with morality, the tradition simply has no branch of philosophical inquiry devoted to the study of morality (2006). In contrasting ethical debates in Plato with that of Buddhist discourse, he writes, "A Buddhist version of this problem might ask whether certain acts are bad because they are punished by karma, or whether they are punished by karma because they are bad. Although this is clearly an important question, I have never seen the problem posed in these terms by Buddhist authors" (49). Keown goes so far as to suggest that the absence of ethics as a genre of thinking may have been due to the authoritarian, non-democratic nature of Buddhist kingdoms, and the assumption within the monastic communities that the vinaya (monastic disciplinary order) is absolute. Keown also relates the development of Buddhist ethics, since Buddhist thought came Westward, with the advent of engaged Buddhism. Here he explicitly connects the philosophical questions relating to Buddhist morality with the social justice questions of engaged Buddhism.
One could also argue that emptiness means ultimately that even good and evil are empty signifiers; and that anatman indicates that there is no moral agent in the first place. However, this is not how my informants see morality. There is good and evil aplenty in Tibetan Buddhism; the hierarchy of heavens over hells demonstrate clearly that good motivations begets better rebirths, and bad motivations lead to lesser rebirths. To some extent one's actions and their consequences matter, but one's motivations are of paramount concern in terms of karmic accumulation.

Buddhist ethics, in part, hinge upon adherence to the eight-fold path, which is thought to direct the way towards enlightenment and out of samsara. The eightfold path is: 1) right view; 2) right intention; 3) right speech; 4) right action; 5) right livelihood; 6) right effort; 7) right mindfulness; 8) right concentration (Williams and Tribe 2000). The three jewels – wisdom, morality, and meditation/mindfulness – classify the "right speech," "right action," and "right livelihood" as the three elements of the eightfold path that fall under the jewel of morality. Another popular categorization of the above concepts is known as the "six perfections": giving, ethics, patience, effort, concentration, and wisdom.

"Right speech" is communication that is does not promote divisions, gossip, or lies. "Right action" hinges upon avoiding acts that harm any living being, take what is not given, or engaging in sexual misconduct (the details of which depend on one's particular commitments or vows) (Williams and Tribe 2000). Finally, acceding to the mandate to "right livelihood" involves ensuring that one's career path never betraying "right speech" or "right action." The monastic sangha have strict disciplinary rules codified into the vinaya, and many local institutions have their own specific cultures of discipline and order. The laity in every tradition have been allowed certain action, speech and livelihoods denied to monastics, but the specifics are more regionally and locally determined. Suffice it to say that FPMT monastics wear robes, shave their heads,
maintain celibacy, and uphold many other strictures and practices. The laity has far more
leeway than sangha, but at FPMT centers there are regulations against violating the
precepts, and distracting others from their spiritual pursuits.

The realization of anatman is also an important value that elucidates ethical
thought and action. The devaluation of the ego, to whatever extent, allows for more
compassion, giving and kindness, in general. The Dalai Lama writes, "Concerning ethics,
the root practice of a bodhisattva is to restrain self-centeredness. Since the practice of
charity cannot involve any harm to others if it is to succeed, it is necessary to overcome
the very root of any tendency to harm others. This must be done through eliminating
self-centeredness, since a solely altruistic attitude leaves no room for harming others.
Thus, the ethic of restraining self-centeredness is crucial" (Gyatso 2000: 101).

Christopher Queen identifies four types of Buddhist ethics that are overlapping
and sometimes fluid: 1) discipline; 2) virtue; 3) altruism; 4) engagement (2000). Discipline
refers to right action, while virtue refers to right mental intentions (such as compassion
and loving-kindness). Queen goes on to explain that generosity is the aspect of ethics,
especially in Mahayana literature, that focuses on benefiting all other beings; on the path
to bodhisattvahood generosity is a means to an end. The ethics of engagement is a
paradigm shift in Queen's view simply because the level of vocal activism and policy
change work that has been characteristic of engaged Buddhism is not characteristic of
normative Theravada or Mahayana traditions.

Labour

Engaged Buddhism

Thich Nhat Hanh coined the term "engaged Buddhism" in the 1960s in the
context of Buddhist monastics protesting against the Vietnam War on moral terms
(Queen 2000). Though primarily a holy object construction project, the Maitreya Project
staff consider it to be a fundamentally "engaged Buddhist" endeavor, but what does that really mean?

While engaged Buddhism is considered a contemporary movement encompassing a wide variety of practices, there are those who might argue that all Buddhism is inherently engaged, and always has been so (Kraft 2000: 493; Queen 2000: 24). Engaged Buddhism for some means general mindfulness and kindness in everyday life. For others it means ethical living in general, while for still others it means collective political action or volunteering for social justice projects. While this range of perspectives show that engagement is a fluid and flexible notion used by various people in various ways, it most generally refers to social action, such as work in prisons, anti-war activism, volunteering, and charitable work. The notion that this sort of work is the same as Buddhist collective actions past is not accepted by most Engaged Buddhists. Thich Nhat Hanh's students point to Buddhist collective action in Vietnam in the 1960s, such as strikes, boycotts, non-cooperation with the government, etcetera, all against the war, as a break with even past efforts at Buddhist politicking in the region (Hunt-Perry and Fine 2000). Although it is acknowledged that there have always been Buddhists who act with the Buddha's moral lessons in mind, engaged Buddhist proponents seek to amplify the general lessons of right action, and then direct them full tilt towards helping others in a hands on manner.

Engaged Buddhism is now a movement with literature, advocates, activists, practitioners and even whole communities that sing its praises and discuss its significance as religious ethics in action. The engaged Buddhist literature, however, is almost completely written from the perspective of engaged Buddhists and its proponents, whether academics or practitioners, and in these narratives engaged Buddhism can do no wrong (Chappell 2003; Eppsteiner 1985; King 2005; Kotler 1996; Kraft 1999; Queen 1996 & 2000; Puri 2006). In my own MA thesis I argued that engaged Buddhism was a promising movement towards responsible Buddhist development; I wrote that by tapping
into Buddhist values it had activated the social capital of Buddhist morality for the benefit of social justice projects in India (Falcone 2001). David Loy has argued that as consumerism and free market capitalism have increasingly become our new religion, so therefore it is up to traditional religions to reassert the values of generosity and renunciation for the betterment of the general (1997). But while Loy carefully critiques the market, his gloss of Buddhism (and all religions for that matter) is simplistic, for he ignores the fact that Buddhist society, law and politics have often been just as prone to inequality, hierarchy, and yes, even greed. While it is clear that engaged Buddhism has inspired some very beneficial projects and practices,\textsuperscript{143} it has also become increasingly apparent to me in the intervening years since completing my MA thesis that engaged Buddhism is no panacea, not even in the Buddhist world. For example, scholars have hypothesized that putting the civic engagement back into Sinhalese Buddhism may have made it more palatable for Sri Lankan monastics to undertake the active political careers that have contributed to monastic militancy and nationalism in the Sri Lankan civil war that ended in 2009 (Tambiah 1992; Trawick 2007). Nor is everything that done in the name of engaged Buddhism actually beneficial for everyone affected. In Bodh Gaya, for example, there are vocal complaints in the press and on the streets that many Buddhist charitable works nonprofits are corrupt, and the money often is diverted away from the projects that Buddhists have donated money to support. In Kushinagar, there is a growing sense that charitable engaged Buddhist projects support a sense of entitlement and dependence amongst regular beneficiaries. Not unlike the appropriation of grassroots terminology like "participatory development" and "action research" by the

\textsuperscript{143} For example, the Maitreya Project’s school in Bodh Gaya, and FPMT’s Health Project are good examples of how Buddhist groups can sponsor sustainable, well-planned programs that are beneficial in general, despite perhaps being less than perfect. Also, dozens of Buddhist groups have begun offering meditation courses, anger management training and educational materials to inmates in prisons (Parkum and Stulz 2000).
World Bank in the nineties, the term "engaged Buddhism" can be co-opted by Buddhist groups to make their routine work seem more en vogue and appealing to donors.

Anthropologies of development and humanitarianism teach us nothing if not that it is wise to look a gift horse in the mouth. The whole field of anthropology of development is predicated on the need to understand the internal sociologies within development agencies and projects. Projects with goals that seem charitable on their face may be more complex, more self-gratifying and self-serving.

FPMT has many humanitarian projects in the works, some of which I already discussed in Chapter 2 on the Sangha. I have also discussed the concept of generosity in more general terms, especially as it related to the Maitreya Project. There is no doubt that FPMT has made charitable giving an important platform of their Buddhist practice. There is definitely a sense in centers in India that the ethnic devotees are generally more enthused about offering holy objects rather than enabling hospital care for the poor, therefore charitable social projects are not an easy sell to everyone.

Robbie: The health program is a gift to the Indian people from the Tibetans, who they have been kind to.
Jessica: You mentioned some tension. Is there any tension between Root [religious] resources and the health program resources?
Robbie: From my perspective there have not been tensions between resources. We are experiencing extreme generosity directed towards the health program at present. We need to generate more money and we are meeting with success. Some recent donations were unparalleled in our history here. Well, maybe not since the group of Singaporeans gave the money to build this place… Some years ago the health program had to be curtailed because of lack of funds. Some programs and staff were curtailed, so there was an attempt to raise more money and it was sufficient to keep the program functioning. We've tried to turn it from a clinic to a health program. That's when I was invited to come. I communicate a lot with donors…We've made proposals to donors for child health programs. It takes immense energy to generate more funds…There was a Theravadin monk who came with a group. When they left they gave a lot of money to our program. The teacher said, I wish I could convince Chinese people to give to health clinics instead of to gilding statues. They think nothing of spending enormous amounts for such things. But there are enough of both kinds of people to go around…
The charitable project, the health program at the Root Institute, is financed independently – the two projects co-exist in the same compound, but the health project is essentially self-sufficient. Robbie diplomatically noted that there is enough money for both projects, but some of the health project volunteers felt strongly that the health projects were underfunded in contrast to money for things like new statues and prayer wheels. Donors must specifically give to charitable works versus more explicitly religious works, showing that in FPMT centers the distinction that remains between the two types of projects in most cases.

Is MPI's statue an engaged Buddhist project? Certainly the Maitreya Project advocates consider it an engaged Buddhist project. The proposed development and economic stimulus entailed in the project literature make it clear that the number one benefit that will accrue to Kushinagar is the enhanced opportunities afforded by regional prosperity. A hospital project will also be included on the Maitreya Project grounds. In addition, the project promises to build a school, perhaps one even going up to the university level. The health and education projects are now seamlessly integrated into the MPI plan, and a glance at the project website shows that these elements are now highlighted almost above and beyond the more strictly religious aspects of the project.

The Maitreya Project: a History of Contention

According to a Maitreya Project administrator in Bodh Gaya, the Maitreya Project Society of Bodh Gaya was established in 1994: "The formal presence here started then. The land was purchased, around 40 acres, but small strips of land within that area were owned by the government and also a small family. The issues related to the land made it impossible to proceed." In addition to these bureaucratic issues, the plan met with controversy from the outset from several quarters at once.
First of all, there were vocal opponents among the local Buddhist expatriate community. According to many of my informants, regardless of their feelings about the giant Maitreya statue itself, there were those amongst both elite and ethnic Buddhists who felt that Bodh Gaya itself and/or the spot they had chosen there was not the most appropriate place for various reasons. For example, a prominent Burmese monk who had been in Bodh Gaya for years felt that the idea of a giant statue was fine, but that the Maitreya Project had picked the wrong place, since it was on desirable land in the middle of farms. A devotee of this monk described his guru's feelings this way:

He thought it should be over by the Mahakala caves. The area by the caves, the land is not good, so no one would mind the statue over there. This is one of the more intelligent critiques of the statue plans. … he knows the complexity of land issues. He thinks they should have picked a site that no one wanted. He didn't say whether the statue was important or good. The Burmese have large statues in Burma too. They picked the wrong spot. He's the son of a farmer, so he thinks it's wasteful to take arable land. It wasn't going to work because people weren't going to give them the land they wanted.

In the end, the landowners surrounding the Maitreya Project headquarters did indicate resistance to selling off more land to MPI. The land problems with the government and its neighbors seemed to doom the prospects for the statue in Bodh Gaya. In tandem, there was also an unverifiable rumor amongst local Indians that the nearby Air Force base, and the proposed reopening of the Gaya International airport taken together would mean too many planes in the sky uncomfortably close to a 500-foot statue with its head in the monsoon clouds.

There is some evidence that even certain high-status Tibetans were against the idea of the MPI statue. The Dalai Lama reportedly was antagonistic to the idea initially, but only agreed to support it once the social service and education aspects were added to the plan. An informant from FPMT told me that an initial envoy from the project cried
when the Dalai Lama failed to support the project after a first hearing. Also, there were rumbles, quiet ones, that certain Tibetan teachers, especially those outside the Gelukpa tradition were less than enthusiastic. One Western student said the following:

I have a Tibetan teacher, he said, it's a good project, but maybe in the wrong place. His concern was that it would destabilize everything here. There is too much corruption and greed for a project of that size to be done well here. It was the late 90's. He said, it's a good idea, but maybe in the wrong place. But it got the Dalai Lama's backing, so there was probably difficulty in speaking against it.

The Tibetan community is not of one mind about the project – not now, and not then.

Ralph, a Buddhist devotee and educator who had been coming to, and living periodically in, Bodh Gaya for decades, also noted that many people were upset that the Maitreya statue would be higher than the Mahabodhi Temple. Ralph felt that they concerns were quite right, and that there would be something disrespectful about trumping the spot where Buddha became enlightened.

From an esoteric point of view it may really hurt the spiritual energy of the town. It used to bother me that the Maitreya Project statue would have been bigger than the temple. I thought that to dwarf the Mahabodhi temple was wrong; as if the Maitreya would be looking down on a little model Mahabodhi. It wouldn't be far enough away. People would see the statue first and it would over-shadow the temple. The Mahabodhi temple shouldn't be over-shadowed by any modern construction, even a statue. I think that a lot of people felt that.

Regarding this final observation, Ralph was quite right – like him, I heard concern about the dwarfing of the stupa reiterated several times by Western Buddhists (non-FPMTers), by Buddhists of Asian descent, and even a few Indian working in foreign monasteries in Bodh Gaya. All indicated anxiety that the spiritual geography of Bodh Gaya would be shifted in a problematic way, or that the sacred energy of the place would be weakened.
Locally, there were many community members who worried about the socioeconomic effects of the giant statue project. Ralph, and many others with a special and lengthy connection to Bodh Gaya, mentioned their concern about how the addition of a huge new project might change Bodh Gaya overly quickly, and that given all public precedence, the corruption and graft might be excessive. He said, "Bracketing appropriateness questions, I was afraid that it would be terribly executed – that it would be a slow rolling disaster that would transform Bodh Gaya. For the average Bodh Gaya resident the past 30 years, the changes have been good. They have more income than before. I was afraid it would destabilize the local economy. Those people out at the Maitreya Project don't know India well enough." If the recollections of local Indians and expatriates are to be believed, then the leadership of several dozen nonprofits, social service hubs, and schools in town felt that the Maitreya Project would be hurting, rather than helping local Indians.

MPI has been accused of cultural insensitivity, and even outright racism, in some of their dealing with local people in India. One Bodh Gaya native, a social worker, said that he protested against plan because he thought that FPMT was anti-Indian, and therefore could not be trusted to carry out such an ambitious project in a responsible way. Though there is the appearance of intercommunal harmony, there are long simmering histories of racial, ethnic and class/caste tensions between the various communities of Bodh Gaya: whites and Indians going back to the colonial period, and Tibetans and Indians going back to the period of mass resettlement of refugees into India. The postcolonial legacy has affected certain white/Indian power dynamics, which have been upheld by globalization. Indo-Tibetan relations are as interdependent as they are fraught (Falcone and Wangchuk 2008); Tibetans hold many unsavory stereotypes about Indians, as Indians do about Tibetans.
FPMT has given its interlocutors reason to suggest that the organization is not always enlightened about their relationships with local Indians. I, myself, have seen the gamut of relations: from devotees who make an extra effort to build respectful relationships with Indian staff to racist staffers who rage about how all Indians are liars and cheats. In her article, "The Maitreya Project – Buddhists Behaving Badly," a Western convert to Tibetan Buddhism indicates that Westerners and Western racism are to blame for any condescending values towards local Hindus, "The project is being imposed by outsiders, and not ethnic Tibetans, but new Western Buddhists or newly converted Indian Buddhists, who appear to see the local Hindu culture as deficient" (Cousens 2007).

Ralph, on the other hand, seemed to place the blame for any antibIndian bias by FPMT solely at the feet of both ethnic Tibetans. Ralph phrased his concerns this way:

Lama Yeshe founded Root with the idea of giving back to local Indians. But amongst non-Tibetan Tibetan-practitioners there is a certain distain for the locals. They don't value Indian culture. Lama Yeshe wasn't like that, but many Tibetans feel that. Westerners acculturate to Tibetan values in an exaggerated way. If Tibetans have tension with Indians, then it will be more so from the Westerners in the organization. The cultural bias, and the acculturation from Tibetans and then followers is an important part of this. Some people come here in spite of India, but others, like [Helloise], love India. Tibetans and Western Tibetan Buddhists have this issue.

Thus, there is a great deal of ambivalence about India and Indians within FPMT centers. There is a general sense that FPMT's pilgrimage place centers serves as refuges from India, not refuges in India, and almost never refuges for Indians.

The concern about an anti-Indian bias in FPMT has fed certain critiques of the Maitreya Project, including Sister Theresa's antagonism to the plan. Sister Theresa is a white, European woman who runs a Christian nonprofit in Bodh Gaya. She works very closely with underprivileged youth and women in some of the villages surrounding the tourist sector of Bodh Gaya. Although she sometimes collaborates with Buddhist
nonprofits, she was immediately critical of the Maitreya Project's top-down activities in Bodh Gaya. She said:

It's a corporation. The Maitreya corporation is working with the government. I remember when it was supposed to be here. There were all sorts of petitions against it, and Christopher [Titmuss] wrote against it. There were women who went there and protested… Such a huge waste of money. [The Maitreya Project] were saying that it was the Christians who were against it, but that wasn't true, it was so many people.

She noted that there were several groups actively protesting the statue project in Bodh Gaya, there were some rallies against it that were organized by locals afraid of rapid change, corruption, and an egregious waste of money in the face of enormous local poverty. Sister Theresa explained that some of the local women she knew through her organization were so angry about the plan that they walked a picket line near the Maitreya Project land. She also noted that the Maitreya Project had an open house lunch in which dissenters were invited, but that the forum was not a discussion format – it was a one-sided, lectured advertisement for the statue. She and her social worker friends were frustrated that the Maitreya Project was dictating terms, rather than engaging in real dialogue with the local people about their needs and concerns. One community group wrote an open letter to the Maitreya Project that voiced its concern and fear that the project would have unintentional and negative consequences for Bodh Gaya (Gaya-Forum-of-Village-Republics 1999a and 1999b).

Finally, there was the controversy sparked during the early years of the project about whether or not the statue would amount to Buddhist practice or whether building a mammoth holy object was actually counter to true Buddha dharma. This controversy raged among Buddhists in Bodh Gaya, and quickly spread into debate and discourse in the larger Western Buddhist communities. Ralph noted that Christopher Titmuss was the
first Westerner to raise a hue and cry about the statue, and that he and his Buddhist community questioned its spiritual value:

He was asking, is it good to spend all of that money? In such a poor area why not spend it on something better? It's a waste of money. So do other things with that money – that was his view. In the late nineties, it was discussed a lot; from 1995-2000, it was discussed a lot over here over tea.

It also became fodder for debate amongst those who were completely unconnected to the Bodh Gaya Buddhist community. The Turning Wheel magazine featured the debate – Insight Meditation's Christopher Titmuss wrote a piece, which was offset by a counter-point from a Maitreya Project official (Gatter 2001; Titmuss 2001).

In addition to meeting resistance from some local Indians and expatriates, the Maitreya Project in Bodh Gaya had encountered problems with the Bihar state government. Bihar, especially at the time, was considered one of the most corrupt state governments in all of India. The state government was run by Lalu Yadav Prashad and his family, though the man himself was in and out of prison for graft. Bihari politics being notoriously corrupt, one cannot help but feel that the Maitreya Project must have seemed like a prime target for exploitation by the regime.

After a very long, thorough and candid discussion regarding my 2006 research with Kushinagari farmers with David Thomas, the administrator of the Maitreya Project headquarters (and the MPI school) in Bodh Gaya in 2007, he told me that indeed that state government had try to extract outrageous rent on land that ran through the organization's property. He told me that the reason the government has some of the land is that there are some old government-owned waterways (canals) that are on some strips of land that protrude into their property area. "They had wanted an astronomical sum of money for the land. The land prices have gone up all over Bodh Gaya quite a bit, but even while some of the land could be used, most of that contested land is pretty useless
commercially." Other informants suggested quite strongly that the state government had tried to draw *baksheesh* ("tips" – here meaning extorted payments) from the Maitreya Project that they were unwilling to pay.

The 30 plus acres owned by the Maitreya Project in Bodh Gaya was initially supposed to be enough land for the statue and its constituent infrastructure. When I noted that there was a huge gap between the 30-40 acres needed at the original site, and the 750 acres that is slated to be acquired at the Kushinagar site, he said, "Now we can see that 40 acres wouldn't have been quite enough land. Now whether 750 acres is needed… that's another story." A report by Peter Kedge observed that the Bihar state government's Land Ceiling prohibited MPI from purchasing more than 50 acres of land in Bihar, a fact which limited their possibilities there from the outset (Kedge 2007c).

According to FPMT informants, when the Bodh Gaya site became manifestly intractable due to the land and corruption issues of a difficult state government, the Maitreya Project put out feelers for alternative locations; the Uttar Pradesh state government responded with alacrity. According to an informant in the Department of Culture in Uttar Pradesh, a high state official from the Sarnath area of Uttar Pradesh began courting the Maitreya Project to settle near Sarnath. The state government of Uttar Pradesh's Department of Culture, recognizing a potential boon to their tourism offerings, forwarded some proposals that gained traction quickly. Eventually, it became clear that the land in the Sarnath area was too expensive and there was not as much available as the project wanted. The Maitreya Project eventually (and reportedly with the help of a divination by the Dalai Lama) settled on the Kushinagar area, and the Uttar Pradesh state government began its work to secure land there.

Whether the Maitreya Project was given a deal too good to pass up, or whether their representatives twisted the arm of the state government into offering far, far more land than they initially wanted to do, is the subject of intense controversy amongst
informants from Lucknow to Delhi to California. Lucknowi bureaucrats interviewed for my project indicated that they felt Maitreya Project representatives were "greedy" and "not good," but that their superiors had felt pressured to close the deal anyway. An informant from the state Department of Culture told the story this way:

Informant: They are encroaching on 700 acres of land.
Jessica: Why so much land?
Informant: They say that it is a big condition. We think that it is land-grabbing. But they say that they will build a big auditorium where 5000 people can pray, and there will be a big environmental campus, and one big school free of cost from primary to an engineering college, and they will build a big hospital. Have you been the Bodh Gaya? There is a small Maitreya Project school there. Have you seen it? What is your impression?
Jessica: Yes, I've spent a lot of time there in the past. Actually, I think that the school is quite well run, but, well, it has consumed many of the resources of the Bodh Gaya Maitreya Project people, and that makes me nervous about the ability to carry out the Kushinagar plan responsibly. I mean they are doing one school well, but their resources to expand are limited, I think. The school is good though.
Informant: Have you met [Babbar Singh]?
Jessica: Yes.
Informant: Honestly what do you think of him?
Jessica: Well, I don't know… I didn't really spend much time there, it's hard to say… [I grimaced – my face likely revealing my opinion about his character.]
Informant: Well, our feeling here at the department is that he is a poor choice to run this project. He is land-grabbing, and trying to gain from this project. He is a bad man. We feel that he is really the problem…Why have they contracted with that man? It is a shame because the project is now nowhere.

The informant went on about how the project was nothing but a glorified land grab, and thus only really a project on paper: "The whole project is air. It is just on paper. The Maitreya Project has so much paper: red paper, green paper, blue paper!" The bureaucrat noted that he understood why farmers were unhappy with the project, and said that thought that they were very angry for good reason.

On another occasion, with disgust and sadness in her voice, an FPMT nun told me that an FPMT monk (disrobed and no longer a part of FPMT at the time of her
narration) gleefully told her and others the story of how he (and his peers) had kept demanding more and more land from the Uttar Pradesh state government, and how the latter had acquiesced, toppling under their demands, not unlike a house of cards. The Maitreya Project literature, on the other hand, would emphasize that the Uttar Pradesh government was enthusiastic about the project, and simply wooed them away from Bihar with a sweeter deal.

The Maitreya Project signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Uttar Pradesh state government on May 9, 2003. With some difficulty, I collected excerpts from an internally circulated draft of the MOU, as well as the final, official copy. While the main statue shifted to Uttar Pradesh, there may yet be a statue in Bihar. After the Lalu Yadav Prashad faction lost elections and there was a transfer of power in Bihar, the subsequent administration has been more obliging to the Maitreya Project staff. There have been media reports and discussions in FPMT circles about reinvesting in the Bodh Gaya land and building another Maitreya statue there—though perhaps at a lesser scale than the giant one planned in Kushinagar. The new plans for the Maitreya statue in Bodh Gaya are only about 170 feet, as opposed to the 500 feet of the primary statue. During my fieldwork period, the Bodh Gaya office was quietly pursuing the "development of the land," including a statue project, school and clinic. Given the political issues in Bodh Gaya, some interlocutors feel that the Maitreya Project's lesson number one from the Bodh Gaya era was to get the state government on board. Another handful of project opponents feel that the number one lesson learned was to remove the project from the prying eyes of foreigners; in sharp contrast to Bodh Gaya, Kushinagar is not an area

144 The MOU was not easy to acquire. I had to solicit the MOU from various government departments in Lucknow. It is not available from the Maitreya Project. The question of whether the MOU was technically public or not was a matter of dispute in various departments, though the MOU does include explicit language of "confidentiality" saying that it will not be shared with a third party outside of the MPT and the government. While much of the two documents, draft and final language, remained similar in spirit and in detail, there are some interesting divergences, which I will explore later in the chapter. The draft, I believe, should not be overlooked, as I follow Ann Stoler's assertion that drafts too have a special place in the unraveling of cultural logics (2002).
where there is a substantial community of expats who reside locally for extended periods of time – aside from the Thai sangha, and one or two monks stationed at each of the pilgrimage sites various monasteries, all of whom mostly keeps to themselves, Kushinagar is practically devoid of meddling Western Buddhists.

**Kushinagar**

Kushinagar is the famous pilgrimage town where the Buddha passed away roughly 2500 years ago. Kushinagar, which is located in the Kushinagar district of Uttar Pradesh, was reclaimed from the jungle in archaeological digs during the British colonial administration of India. The Archaeological Survey of India is responsible for the preservation and administration of several Buddhist holy sites in the Kushinagar, and a museum of local antiquities.

The Mahaparinirvana Stupa, where the Buddha uttered his final words, thought to be, "Vayadhamma sankhara appamadena sampadetha," which can be translated, "Everything is impermanent. Work out your own liberation with diligence," lies at the heart of Kushinagar. The actual stupa is dwarfed by a shrine set just in front of it, which houses a red sandstone statue of the Shakyamuni Buddha reclining on his deathbed. This shrine is the center of the swirl of pilgrims who descend on the small Indian town every day, pray briefly, make offerings to the statue (some of which go to the ASI for upkeep, and some of which go straight into the pockets of the groundskeepers), make offerings to the local Indian Buddhist monks who sit at the statue daily (most of whom have admitted freely that they have robed for the economic largesse). Most pilgrims then file back onto their air-conditioned tourist buses before either moving to the next

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145 The 2500th anniversary of his death was celebrated during my time in the field, although it was much more conspicuously and grandly commemorated in more popular Buddhist pilgrimage sites than Kushinagar itself.

146 According to the ASI, the statue was carved in the 5th century CE.
pilgrimage site, or spending a single evening in a foreign-owned and operated four-star hotel in town before departing town at the crack of dawn.

Buddhist tourists rarely stay in Kushinagar for long, and thus appropriately enough perhaps, Kushinagar is considered a "dead" pilgrimage site by some international Buddhists, especially in contrast to the bustling site of Buddha's enlightenment at Bodh Gaya, or the similarly active Buddhist community in Sarnath where the Buddha gave his first teaching. The government Buddha museum in Kushinagar is almost always dark and empty. One new luxury hotel stands completely and consistently empty, waiting for someone to come and breathe some life into the premises.

Ramabhar Stupa is also usually quiet and desolate, despite its claim to fame as the site of origin for all of the Buddha's relics (see Figure 20 below). The site is surrounded by the ruins of ancient monasteries; a reminder that the spot was enthusiastically venerated once upon a time, before Buddhism receded in central India, and the jungle reclaimed all of Kushinagar's former monuments. One can only imagine what it was like during ancient times, over a thousand years ago, when monks diligently made offerings and prayed daily in shadows of the great stupa.

![Figure 20. The Ramabhar Stupa. (Photograph by Jessica Falcone.)](image-url)
Now there are just a few ASI gardeners on the premises, who trim the hedges and offer candles and incense for profit to the handful of tour buses whose occupants step out quickly for often hurried devotional rituals and photographs.

In the midst of this graveyard of sacred death sites, there is a row of monasteries and temples built by devotees from around the world – Sri Lanka, Japan, Burma, Thailand, China, Korea, and Tibet. Not unlike an embassy row in the capital city of some irrelevant state, many of the monasteries are shabby and half-empty: mere symbolic gestures of devotion that remain largely ignored by most pilgrims. Most of these house only a token monk or two, sometimes one who has lost a lottery, and been sent against his will. FPMT has no center in Kushinagar, neither do they (nor the Maitreya Project proper) have an office, volunteers, or any other presence in the locale. Few of my FPMT informants spend any time in Kushinagar, and the few that do never stay more than a day of pilgrimage.

The Tibetan monastery, where I stayed for several of my research visits, had employed a local Indian caretaker during my preliminary visit in 2003, who was supervised by two monks during the high tourist season. Three years later, the Tibetan monastery had hired one elderly Tibetan widower as a caretaker, who was assisted by a local Indian worker, and a Tibetan cook. These employees were all technically supervised by the elder of the two monks who had been sent by their monastery in Dharamsala to look after the place during the high season, when bus loads of Tibetan pilgrims might show up at our gate at any time of the night or day to sleep in the twenty or so rooms of the guest house. I was generally the only person to stay on for more than a day at a time, so I was always given the "best" room, which was the one most convenient to the hand-pump operated cold bathing facilities, and the nearby outhouse. Still, the two seasonal monks, a crumbling monastery and decrepit guest facilities, stand in stark contrast to the
well-kept and well-staffed facilities of the very same Tibetan monastery in Bodh Gaya.

Kushinagar is a significant Buddhist pilgrimage site for Tibetans coming from Tibet, as well as those Tibetans on pilgrimage from inside the exile community.¹⁴⁷ Tibet's Kushinagar has not always been where it stands now. The terrain of Buddhist India shifts, as Toni Huber has argued compellingly in The Holy Land Reborn (2008), so that the holy places of yesterday may go unrecognized, forgotten and sometimes re-recognized in new ways. The Kushinagar of today was identified at the site marking the Buddha's death by archaeologists of the British Raj. Before that it was in ruins, forgotten, buried, but that did not stop Tibetan Buddhists from finding it in other ways. Huber has traced a long period, from at least the late 16th c./early 17th c. to the late 19th c./mid-20th c., in which Tibetan conventional wisdom indicated that Kushinagar was in present day, and very distant town of Hajo, in the state of Assam (2008:129). I have found no Tibetan lay people who remember that it was the case that Tibetans once identified Kushinagar as being anywhere other than Uttar Pradesh, but Huber's well-documented evidence shows plainly that the Tibetan community, in collusion and cooperation with locals, had replicated a whole host of holy sites around the Assamese "Kushinagar," including another famous Bodhi tree. Huber demonstrates that only in the twentieth century did compelling archaeological evidence and Buddhist modernism motivate pilgrims to shift their Kushinagar from Assam to Uttar Pradesh; at that time, Amdo Gendun Chopel published his ubiquitous Guide to India (Huber 2000), which not only dismisses the Assamese Kushinagar and recommends the Uttar Pradeshi Kushinagar, but for the first time, according to Huber (2008), instructs Tibetans in how to authenticate their

¹⁴⁷ Huber writes that pilgrimage as a religious phenomenon (both internally in Tibet and externally to India) really only took shape during the period called the later propagation of Buddhist teaching to Tibet, known to be from late 10th c. to 13th c. Tibet (2008: 59). Tibetan pilgrimage has long imbued the sacred sites as being the abodes or repositories of sacred beings, such as Buddhas and deities. Huber writes, "Another vital aspect of Tibetan understanding of né that seems to closely parallel what can be discerned about early Indian Buddhist beliefs and practices is the idea that pilgrimage sites, as both sacred objects and their immediate physical surroundings, somehow physically embody both salvational power and superior morality."
pilgrimage sites in accordance with modern methodologies. Kushinagar is significant to Tibetan pilgrims, but certainly not as trafficked as other pilgrimage places like Bodh Gaya, as evinced by the dilapidated Tibetan monastery and comparative dearth of pilgrims.

There are exceptions to the rule of under-staffed monasteries, such as the Wat Thai monastery, which enjoys the patronage of the Thai royal family. It is an enormous monastery with well-manicured gardens, a full sangha, and a host of volunteers, all of whom are separated from the fields of sugarcane surrounding it by high walls topped with barbed wire, which are patrolled by armed guards. The Thai monastics do most of their prayers within their own compound, but accompany any Thai pilgrims to the Mahaparinirvana stupa. A Thai abbot expressed his feeling that only the Thais really respected the place of Buddha's death as a most important pilgrimage site, and this is why so many of the other monasteries were in a state of disrepair. He specifically said that Tibetan Buddhism undervalues the importance of Kushinagar, and death meditations. He said,

Tibetans don't like to come to Kushinagar. They have big monasteries in Sarnath, and Bodh Gaya. And Lumbini, but not here. Maybe because the Buddha died here. They think, he died here and that's the end, but we think he died here and so this is where we must continue the dharma. It is our work to carry it forward.

Tibetans would likely dismiss his concerns, saying that Kushinagar is an important pilgrimage site for them, and argue that if they were as flush they would have built a grander monastery. However, despite the grandeur of the Thai temple, it is not the most prominent monastery in Kushinagar. The Burmese Temple is the oldest in the region, and it also houses an active sangha, which is quite a bit more friendly with the local Indian community than other temples.

The Thai monastery is not the only well-funded institution in Kushinagar. The "China Temple" has been remained the Linh-Son Temple, and taken over by Vietnamese
devotees; their compound is expanding, and they plan to keep hosting a few big events for monastics each year, but by and large while the grounds are impressively kept, there is only a devotee or two at a time living there with Indian staff.

Significantly, there is very little socializing between monasteries. The Thai and Tibetan monastics do not know each other, the Burmese do not socialize with the Vietnamese laity running the Lînh Son temple, and the local Indian monks keep to themselves. Except for a very occasional function, on the Buddha's birthday, for example, when a devotee might sponsor a meal for all the monastics of the area, the monastics keep to their own compounds and their own communities. While the language barrier is no small matter, one Tibetan monk reminded me that "broken English" is a common language amongst most of Kushinagar’s monastics, and that in fact, "We just don't want to talk to them."

Kushinagar itself is not the home of many local Indians; it is tourist and business dominated. Over the past few centuries, the nearby towns and villages of that time have expanded to surround the refurbished ruins. (A few archaeologists in the area actually believed that many of the old brick lanes found in area villages were stolen from the ruins themselves, and even that villagers find new archaeological spots and promptly cover them up to avoid seizure by ASI). The Kushinagar district is poor and underdeveloped, even in contrast to other districts in Uttar Pradesh, which itself is one of the poorer states in the nation. The 2001 Census reports 2,891,933 persons in Kushinagar district, with less than 50% literacy rate overall (Census of India 2001).

The Human Development Index is by no means a perfect development measure, but it does more accurately reflect the complexity of progress made than just Gross Domestic Product alone, since it looks at three variables: life expectancy, educational attainment, and GDP per capita. By almost any measure, Uttar Pradesh is one of the lowest performing states in India; Uttar Pradesh was ranked 15 out of 17 states in 2001 in
terms of the HDI, but dropped to 16th of 17 states in terms of the HDI of 2005 (Human Development Report 2006).

The Kushinagar district, where the Maitreya Project is slated to be built, was one of the lowest performers in terms of improving its HDI between 2001 and 2005; its score indicated just a slight 0.0304% improvement. It ranked 60th out of 70 districts in terms of absolute Human Development Indicators. Most significantly, according to the deprivation index in 2001, Kushinagar district evinced an extreme case of poverty as the 63rd worst district out of 70.

The Gender Development Index or GDI takes HDI data and adjusts for gender discrepancies (Human Development Report 2006). In 2005, the Kushinagar District was ranked 55 out of 70 districts, with an underwhelming 0.4742 GDI. One reason for this is low GDI is that Kushinagar has a very low female literacy rate – ranking in the bottom handful of districts with just 30% female literacy.

Much of the economy of Kushinagar proper is dependent on pilgrimage tourism, while most of the surrounding villages subsist on agriculture, both subsistence and cash crop farming. The large majority of the district lives in rural areas, relying on either on the cultivation of their own plots or agricultural labor wages (or a mix of the two) to feed mostly large extended families. There are certainly overlapping interests, as many farming families have one or more members who have found some formal or informal work in the tourism industry.

Despite the fact that the largely Hindu local population is quite amiable towards the worship of the Buddha (who is considered an avatar of Vishnu, an extremely popular classical Hindu deity), there are very definite walls between the international Buddhists and the local people of Kushinagar. Even where the physical walls are less imposing and concrete than those which hug the Thai monastery, there is a very palpable ambivalence between locals and foreigners. One might expect to find a strong symbiotic relationship
between guests and hosts, but while there is certainly some flow from the pockets of Buddhist pilgrims into the local economy, the socioeconomic dynamic is fraught with inequality.

While some monasteries sponsor small health clinics or schools, many locals say that the charitable projects are mere gestures of compassion, but not real work towards upending the systematic structures of poverty. One observation that I heard over and over was that the Buddhist charities were unintentionally creating a culture of beggars and entitlement. One Kushinagari businessman noted cynically that India's poverty was good for Buddhist business.

A Kushinagari couple removed their young daughter from a Buddhist school which was getting regular visits from wealthy pilgrimage groups who would shower the children with pencils, sweaters and other goodies. The couple, businesspeople with a decent income from their business, claimed that their daughter was being trained to think like a beggar. One day their young daughter heard that another school was getting freebies, so she lied to her parents and snuck out to beg for her share of the bounty. Since my informants felt that the freebies were costing their daughter her integrity – a price was too heavy for them to pay – they took her out of the Buddhist school that was being over-frequented by Buddhist foreigners giving away pens, sweaters, and such. They have found that at her new school their daughter is far enough away from the well-intentioned, but problematic, Buddhist charities to have slowly weaned herself off of her over-developed sense of entitlement for Western loot and gifts.

The local people, both businessmen and farmers, also complain that most of the donations (and tourist dollars for that matter) simply end up in the hands of the monasteries, which all too eagerly, and sometimes forcibly, buy large swathes of land, in the process driving up land prices and slowly displacing some of the poorest farmers. Many locals also recognize that some of the money is sent directly back to the home
countries of the monasteries, and money is not trickling down into their local economy effectively. (I have heard the same complaints from locals in Sarnath, Bodh Gaya, and Dharamsala, who are just as dependent and also somewhat resentful of foreign Buddhists).

On the other hand, monasteries argue that they are religious organizations with a religious mission, not social activists with the goal of revitalizing the local economy. That said, several locally-based Buddhist monastics and lay people did argue compellingly that the economic situation and educational opportunities of the nearby villages had been revolutionized by the influx of pilgrims' rupees, especially since the roads had been improved with the investment of Japanese interest in the early nineties. This progress has not gone unappreciated by the local businesspeople, who admit as much, even while they note that the effects are not as profound as they could, or should, have been. The Indian employees of foreign monasteries are especially likely to express their gratitude to the foreign Buddhists.

Hence, the Maitreya Project is entering a dynamic that was already quite complex and somewhat strained. The Maitreya Project has, just with their plans, exacerbated those pre-existing tensions by opting to work with the state government on a massive land acquisition scheme, instead of trying to build on un-arable, uninhabited wasteland, or conversely, trying to acquire land for the project one-on-one from potential Indian sellers. As mentioned earlier, opponents of the project argue that the greed of those negotiating the land acquisition led MPI to demand far more land than needed, and that from the outset MPI seemed unconcerned about the arability of the land or its current occupants.

Of course, Kushinagaris are of many minds about the project. The majority of the land acquisition is happening outside of Kushinagar proper. The greater Kushinagar area includes all the surrounding villages; the Maitreya Project's slated land is far from the madding crowds hopping on and off buses at the Mahaparinirvana temple.
Kisan Ekta Zindabad!: The Farmers' Resistance

In 2001, Kushinagari farmers from seven villages found out that according to preliminary plans, the Maitreya Project land acquisition may divest them of their lands and livelihood. After the Dalai Lama officially chose Kushinagar over and above other Uttar Pradesh options, the CM gave approval for the go ahead in Kushinagar in January 2002 (Department of Culture 2004). The government then went ahead with the plans and procedures leading up to the signing of the MOU by representatives of the Maitreya Project Trust and the state government's Department of Culture in May 2003. The affected farmers in Kushinagar are slated to lose some or all of their family plots to the Uttar Pradesh state government, which plans to seize it on behalf of the Maitreya Project. The Maitreya Project statue plan is considered a future boon for Uttar Pradesh tourism by the state government, so it plans to lease the land to the Maitreya Project for just 1 Rupee in perpetuity ("Memorandum Of Understanding" 2003). The Memorandum of Understanding also details the fact that the Maitreya Project will be exempt from taxes, charges, duties and fees ("Memorandum Of Understanding" 2003: 13).

In 2002, the farmers established an anti-Maitreya Project group, called the Bhoomi Bachao Sangharsh Samiti (BBSS), which can be translated as the "Council for the Struggle to Save the Land," or more simply, the "Save the Land Association." The BBSS has been extraordinarily active in organizing angry individuals into a cohesive grassroots effort. Since the MOU was signed in May of 2003, the BBSS has redoubled their efforts to halt the project, or at least to change the terms of the agreement. BBSS, which claims to represent and be inclusive of all the farmers of the affected villages, seems to indeed have the explicit support of almost all the affected farmers. BBSS has organized countless hunger strikes, fasting relays, protests, highway blockades, and strikes, including the protests pictured in Figures 4, 21, 22, 23, and 24.
The BBSS and its supporters immediately undertook several courses of action at once, prevailing upon the local District Magistrate for help, and consulting with social workers and lawyers in the community to see what their rights and options were on the matter. BBSS and its associates have filed lawsuits against the project, but none has thus far succeeded in stopping the goliath project from moving forward legally. One lawsuit explained that the District Magistrate who had signed off on the previous survey of the land had been corrupt, and been bribed by an MPI official to say that the quality of the land was poor, un-arable and cheap. According to the BBSS, the suit was still underway when I last visited Kushinagar in the spring of 2007.

Once the provisional rates were publicized many of the farmers in the affected villages were utterly distraught. When the land acquisition process technically began in 2005, only a few dozen households out of over a thousand affected would approve of

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148 A "Section 6" notification was published in June 2005, which technically made the land acquisition a point of fact, however, most farmers resisted any attempts to force checks or compensation upon them,
the initial rates of compensation, since the rates for their portions of the land, which were un-arable (waterlogged and flood-prone) were actually quite decent. According to the BBSS, these few dozen households sold their land to the government quickly, despite the fact that most of their comrades in agriculture tried to convince them to stand with the majority against the land acquisition. As of 2009, according to my sources in Kushinagar, the large majority have yet to accept forced LAA payments for the purchase of their land and homes. The actual physical transfer of land to the government has not happened, and therefore life goes on in the region much as it has for the past many decades. The only visible sign of the coming project are the anti-Maitreya Project slogans written in graffiti on building walls, and also the protests themselves. Otherwise, the farmers continue to farm, the children trudge back and forth to school in their uniforms, and both Hindus and Muslims pray at their respective institutions for the Maitreya Project to shift elsewhere.

The number of affected farmers from the seven affected villages is itself the source of controversy (see Appendix #2 for more details): the Maitreya Project says 1100 families; the local newspapers say 1400 families; the BBSS usually estimates 2000 families; a bureaucrat directly in charge of the land acquisition said 3000 families. Daniel Pepper's articles quoted the Land Acquisition Officer in Deoria saying that "between 15,000 and 20,000 people will be displaced in the process" (Pepper 2007a &b).149 The land would be seized under the Land Acquisition Act (LAA) that had been instituted by the British.

and refused to sign anything giving up their land. Therefore, while these steps were taken legally, in actuality the process had ground to a halt for years after this.

149 Frankly, this figure seems inconsistent with the general information available to me about the project, as I report above. I would hazard a guess that either some signals got crossed on the questioner's side or from the answerer's side: 1) the bureaucrat misspoke; 2) Pepper's translator misheard/mistranslated; 3) Pepper asked how many people would ultimately be "affected" and these figures include multiple phases of the process not just the first acquisition; 4) Pepper asked how many people would ultimately be "displaced" and these figures include multiple phases of the process not just the first acquisition. Although I interviewed the same bureaucrat before Pepper, I failed to ask him about the effect of all combined phases future, so I cannot rule out any of the above possibilities. I would rule out MPI's hypothesis on the matter, which pointed to slander pure and simple.
colonial government to forcibly acquire land for the purpose of railway construction. According to my informants in Kushinagar, the affected farmers were worried and aggrieved about the plan from the very outset.

The essential issue for the farmers railing against the project is loss of land, livelihood, homes and/or community. To most of my informants these losses were absolutely unacceptable. Many farmers talked about how "land is mother," saying further that many of them have a deep connection to their particular stretch of earth. They know their land, its temperament, its history, tricks for irrigation, its potential with various crops and its shortcomings with others. The land has been handed down for several generations in most cases. In these terms, the land owned by a particular family is not necessary an easily alienable object, even if it were easily replaced, which it is not. Even the relatively successful families that have stopped farming themselves because their primary income comes from the profits of a shop in town, often keep their farmland and hire laborers to farm it; to these businessmen-landowners the land is considered an important investment, and a supplemental source of income, and to the laborers it is the source of income.

In 2006, my BBSS informants noted that even if they were being offered reasonable compensation, land is not a renewable resource – land is finite in a particular locality. If farmers lost their land, it would be nearly impossible to stay in their homes and buy replacement land. Since they would have to move to buy new land somewhere, they would effectively lose the investment of their homes, since who would want to buy a home in such a place? – a place devoid of land prospects, and under threat of future forcible acquisition. Finally, my BBSS informants all impressed upon me over and over

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150 If the archaeological documents are to be believed then some 150 years ago much of the immediate Kushinagar surroundings were natural forest or jungle, and so not under cultivation. According to an interview with a source in the ASI, the discovery of the site led to new infrastructure, new communities and expansion of farmlands throughout the region. Hence, while much of the land to be acquired is ancestral land, it may not have been in the family from time immemorial.
the fact that such a move would mean the deprivation of their tightly knit communities, neighborhoods, and extended family networks. The plan to acquire land does not take into account the innumerable social costs of resettlement and starting over again in a distant locale amidst strangers. These social considerations are among the strongest reasons that many of my informants say that they will defend their property and livelihoods to the death.

Despite the fact that my farming informants feared moving, some said that they feared the police and army more. If the compensation were generous, some informants say that they would still be frustrated and angry, but would take the money anyway, and try to do the best they could to resettle amicably. Most farmers will not admit to this in public, but in private some BBSSers acknowledge that many of their stalwart comrades would probably assent to the acquisition if the price was right. One farmer, echoing many other interviews, said "What can I do? If the compensation was right, then I would be a fool to fight the police." This is a moot point at the moment, since the BBSS as a body, and farmers individually have testified at length about the extreme and intolerable under-valuation of their land under the current plan. Within the affected villages 100% of those I have interviewed said that the compensation is abominably low, and this view has been confirmed independently by those shopping for land and even non-land-holding townspeople who want the Maitreya Project statue to come to the area.

The farmers are fighting what they perceive as abysmally insufficient provisional compensation packages. The rates of compensation vary according to several factors, including the distance from the town of Kasia, its arability, and its accessibility to the main roads. No matter these factors, the provisional values are generally 10%-50% of what the farmers believe their land is currently worth on the open market (see Appendix #1 for more details), if they were selling, which the large majority still resist for the reasons outlined above. For example, one woman, a teacher whose family would lose
land to the MPI plan said, "The value of the land is not correct. It is more than one lakh [rupees] per kotta, but they are giving less than 40,000 [rupees] per kotta. Or even 6,000 [rupees] per kutta sometimes! It is too low. We are not going to give the land. The government is giving unreasonable rates, but even if they give two lakhs per kotta, then it would be a big problem and we wouldn't sell it." Her friend, another female teacher at a small private nonprofit school, told me, "I am ready to give you five acres of land, but first you give me five acres of land in the USA. Just give me five kotta of land in your country. Foreigners don't understand. They think we are crazy, but if we take their land to build a statue of Hanuman in their country, then they will think we are crazy."

Farmers also note that it is safe to assume that the market value of land will go up over time, so retaining their land would be a stable and safe investment – one that they may be forced to relinquish. Furthermore, they have no trust that the government is capable of figuring out the proper market values, since the rates are being determined in part by the registered values reported by buyers and sellers to the local government in the past decade or so. Farmers acknowledge the open secret that everyone claims to pay far less than they actually do, in order to avoid high taxes (stamp duty) on their property transfers. This common practice, and its problematic effects on land compensation pricing, is not acknowledged publicly by the government, but the bureaucrats of the Land Acquisition Office in Deoria conceded that it was normative practice amongst farmers to register at low rates and then pay the rest under the table. They emphasized that the practice was illegal, so the unintended consequences being felt by the Kushinagar farmers now, was not the problem of the state government. The decision of the government to base compensation on property transfer registrations, plus their concerns that a former District Magistrate twisted the facts in order to make the land seem barren, add up to a

\[151\] Land is measured in kotta, but throughout South Asia the size of a kotta is not fixed. In the Kushinagar area, farmers report that there are 25 kotta in one acre. One lakh rupees is equal to one hundred thousand rupees.
feeling that the government has no idea what the real market value of land actually is in the area. The provisional values were to be followed by provisional pay-outs, and then, after the transfer was complete, the matter would be looked into once more by bureaucrats in Lucknow to see if there was a final extra payment needed in order to reach the appropriate government-determined final value. The general national agitation against using the LAA to disenfranchise farmers by eminent domain noted similar issues in states everywhere. An economics professor in Delhi noted of land acquisitions in general: "The record of state governments is dismal when it comes to fixing and updating the circle rates for land… Since the demand for land is growing while the supply remains fixed, and average of the past prices will be less than the current market price. Also, in order to save on stamp duty, prices quoted in sale deeds are much lower than actual payments. This means that the very basis of determining compensation is faulty. What is just compensation has been debated for long. A just compensation should not leave the owners poorer than they would be in the absence of acquisition" (Singh 2007). The scholarship on the dismal effects of displacing and disenfranchising the poor in order to pursue development options has been well-argued elsewhere, especially in regards to the antagonism of scholars and activists regarding the paltry resettlement and rehabilitation (R&R) packages offered to those affected by the Narmada river dam projects (D’Souza 2002; as well as the dozens of contributors to the two volumes edited by Dreze, Samson and Singh 1997 and Mohan Mathur and Marsden 1998, respectively). Farmers in Kushinagar, not unlike those fighting land acquisitions elsewhere, have zero confidence that they will be any more satisfied with future settlements than they are were with the provisional settlements. Acknowledging the difficulties faced by the farmers protesting the Narmada project and corporate projects in Bengal, BBSS farmers told me that they too would not concede without a fight, and indeed they have been aggressively resisting the plan.
Value, of course, is notoriously controversial. Social scientists have long discussed the intractable nature of value, how it is a promiscuous notion, one that shifts according to cultural, economic, temporal and other factors (e.g., Appadurai 1986; Maurer 2003; Myers 2001). I gesture back towards the discussion of holy objects earlier in this dissertation as constructed, temporal, fluid objects whose changing meanings over time and space reveal their essential emptiness. For my informants, land is a holy object of sorts: land is not just commodity, but also "Mother." Land for some informants transcends livelihood as both kin and goddess. Market value is just one way of relating to their parcels of land, which is why many farmers insist that even if the compensation was fair, they would never consider selling. The slippery notion of value makes it easy for proponents of the Maitreya Project in FPMT to argue that Indian farmers are being greedy and hoping to get rich quick. Furthermore, they argue that the value is being set by the government, so the Maitreya Project has no reason to involve itself in the messy material matters of remuneration, since it is all a matter of Uttar Pradesh policy and law.

If the compensation had been higher, would more of farmers have agreed that the Maitreya Project would help the region's economic situation down the line? Perhaps, some would be more agreeable in that case, but even these farmers were not at all convinced that the Maitreya Project would ever help their situations, even if they could somehow subsist and manage from the moments their land was seized to the grand opening of the statue complex. Many farmers expressed anxiety about the pollution restrictions – a wide circumference around the statue within which industry would be banned – that would actually deter the kind of local development that they relied upon. For example, the BBSS noted that brick-making factories, which spew smoke, would be pushed many kilometers away in order to keep the statue pristine; as potential workers and consumers of these factories, farmers were opposed to the strict pollution regulations that would accompany the Maitreya Project. They felt that Indians would be pushed
further and further away from their ancestral lands, so that any benefits would accrue to others, to the wealthy, to the foreigners. Although a few farmers and social workers in the BBSS acknowledged the fact that some environmental regulations could benefit the air quality, hey worried that it would come at the expense of the welfare of the poor who would invariably fall between the cracks.

Farmers were not romantic about their livelihoods, in general. In their speeches and interviews in 2007, farmers indicated their interest in better lives for themselves and their families. Almost every farmer noted that they wanted their children to have other options in government or business sectors – they did not necessarily want their children to be farmers. Still, they felt that for the time being agriculture was the one stable, known entity, and without it, they and their families would be ruined. Several farmers told me that they knew that they would not be given any jobs in relation to the statue. This was a point that the BBSS had insisted upon – they had asked the government officials to make a provision that each family losing land would be given a job in the government or at the Maitreya statue park; however, according to two successive District Magistrates and Lucknowi bureaucrats, the notion that affected farmers would be guaranteed new jobs was never seriously entertained by the government. Instead, the BBSS insisted, any new jobs would be given to...Tibetans. This was a prevalent rumor in the trenches of the anti-Maitreya Project resistance:

Rakesh: We heard that 5,000 Tibetans will get Indian citizenship from this Maitreya Project.
Jessica: But what does that have to do with the statue?
Rakesh: In 2001, the Maitreya Project came, and 6 years has been spent on discussion. The hidden aspect is that the Maitreya Project is asking for 5,000 Tibetan citizenships. It is a secret discussion, a top secret matter. They will come to take care of the Maitreya Project.
I had not heard a word about this from FPMTers, planners or bureaucrats, so I highly doubt there is any veracity to the rumor. Whatever the truth of the matter, and despite my overt skepticism on the matter, the idea that Kushinagar would soon be overrun with Tibetans was a widespread belief amongst local Indians.

There was a general sense of injustice, which some people attributed to globalization, but not many. More often during my research my informants would compare the land acquisition to colonization; a foreign power moving in to colonize their land and their livelihoods. One very memorable Kushinagari man, one of many who were not really sure where I stood, especially at the beginning of my research stint, even compared me to the forerunners of the colonial presence:

Sanjay: I am a teacher in primary school. 8km away – at a government junior high school. My school is safe. There are eleven schools which will be taken by the Maitreya Project. Primary, intermediate and up to 12th class.

Jessica: How big is your family?
Sanjay: I have three children; 1 girl and 2 boys. My eldest is in the 9th class, and one girl in 4th class. I want them to be doctors and engineers.

Jessica: Will the Maitreya Project land acquisition hurt you? If it happens…
Sanjay: I will lose 2 bigha and 40 kutta. I live in a joint family of 22 people. Four brothers and two sisters... My house will also be taken. The cost of the house was 8 lakhs, but the government rate is 20,000.

Jessica: Do you think your protests will halt the project?
Sanjay: We will win against the Maitreya Project. I am 100% sure that we will be successful. In 1700 AD the East Indian Company came from London. The East Indian Company was also project. The Maitreya Project is like the East India Company. And you are like Thomas Rowe. Thomas Rowe met Jehangir, and he made a promise. He said the British are simply salesmen.

I admit that I smiled at this in surprise. I quickly reiterated that I supported their protest: "But I'm not trying to convince you that the Maitreya Project will be good for you. I'm not paving the way. I hope you all win in your struggle," I said. But Sanjay just smiled thinly and lifted his eyebrows, as if to say, "We'll see." Sanjay, like many others, was not working his land himself, but rather was contributing to the joint family income while
some of his brothers worked the family land. Later that afternoon, after I interviewed others from his village, he said to me, "We are stronger now. You tell them that we can't be colonized again."

At other times, an elderly family member or two recounted that they could remember the British leaving when they were children and that if Gandhi was still alive, he would be fighting against the Maitreya Project. "We will not be colonized again," said an old woman, after spending fifteen minutes tugging at her clothes ("How will we afford clothes?") and rubbing her belly ("What will we eat? Where will we get our chapatis?") to show her anger at MPI's plans. This particular old woman told me that she remembered seeing Gandhi when she was a child – her father took her to see him during the salt tax protests. Irate, and yelling to whomever was in earshot, she said that even as an old woman she would fight to the death for her family's land.

There is some evidence that some of the BBSS leadership, at least, has begun to attribute their plight to globalization and the policies of an increasingly neoliberal India. From the beginning, Marxist groups in the area (e.g., student groups and local political affiliates) took an eager interest in the anti-Maitreya Project protests and their representatives often took the microphone to give speeches at protests. There is little doubt in my mind that the controversy is a textbook case of the unintended local and regional consequences of global capital.

There was little religious communalism in Kushinagar, however – that is, the lines between support and antagonism for the project did not fall neatly along religious lines. Notably, even the self-avowed Marxists declined to demonize the religious aspects of the project, one Marxist gentleman noted the following at a rally:

We have been fighting. These leaders [politicians] are not good... We will cancel this project. Until then we will fight, until we win... This is non-violent. We accept Buddha, but we will protest the Maitreya Project. They are robbing us. This is wrong.
This speaker, railing against the Maitreya Project in 2006 in front of some 200 farmers, compellingly argued that neither the Buddha nor Buddhists are the real problem; rather it was the economic robbery under the guise of development that they must fight against. In fact, since the large majority of the Kushinagaris were Hindus, the widespread feeling there is that the "Buddha Bhagwan" is an avatar of Vishnu, and therefore not a foreign deity, but a locally recognized one. The small Muslim community in the area was working tirelessly with their Hindu neighbors against the Maitreya Project, which they also saw as a socioeconomic fight rather than a religious battle.\(^{152}\) While "Buddha Bhagwan" was not anyone's avowed enemy, my informants did say that they saw no need for another statue to be built when there were already so many holy site in the area. The only religiously motivated opposition by a Hindu priest against the project came because a large Hindu temple in the area would lose some of the land that it owned to the Maitreya Project plan:

> The Radha-Krishna Temple will be adversely affected by the Maitreya Project. This is the opinion of the BBSS, who is on the 16th day of their hunger strike. The Mahant Shiv Sharan, of the Radha-Krishna Temple was speaking at the strike. He said that the Radha-Krishna Temple was losing a lot of arable land. God would not be looked after properly, and a lot of people would be left shelterless. With this plan, the agricultural land would be halted and many families will be displaced. For this reason the plan should be moved somewhere else ("Better Tourist Facilities…" 2007).

\(^{152}\) Although there were periodic Hindu-Muslim disputes in the district (and even some communal riots with the region during my fieldwork period), the Kushinagaris in the area of land to be acquired said that communalism had never been a problem there. I confirmed this with some of the Muslim households – they said that the anti-Maitreya Project struggle was not about religion, it was about justice for them and for their neighbors. It seemed to me that the Muslim and Hindus in the locality got along well, and even while communal riots raged just an hour’s drive away, the camaraderie in the Kushinagari area seemed undiminished. I admit that there may be more to this part of the story, and perhaps underneath the façade of brotherly love, there may have been tensions that I was unaware of. I can only report that despite my repeated inquiries into the question of communal friction, the Hindu and Muslims of the area seemed to have neighborly concern for one another, and were certainly fighting against the Maitreya Project as a unified front.
It was not uncommon for a farmer to quip that the Buddha himself would certainly stand against the Maitreya Project for all of the suffering that it has already caused, and may yet cause. Many local Hindi medium newspapers also carried the story of how a Burmese abbot and several of his monks came to sit in support of the protestors in February 2007, but only one local article noted that the Buddhist monks of the area were split about the costs and benefits of the project ("Maitreya Project: Chasm in the Buddhist Monk Ranks" 2007).

In 2006, a local connection to an ASHA for Education social worker, led the BBSS to invite two famous activists, Sandeep Pandey and his wife Arundhati Dharu, to a rally. Sandeep and his wife are also very prominent members of the National Alliance for People's Movements (the NAPM), which boasts other famous Indian activists, such as Medha Patekar, who has battled tirelessly against the Narmada Dam project's propensity to displace countless villagers. The entrance of the NAPM into the anti-Maitreya Project battle raised the profile of the struggle from a local one to a more national one. Some BBSS members were invited to NAPM activist trainings, and subsequently began talking more about how their struggle was people's resistance to global capitalism. Sandeep Pandey was somewhat frustrated in 2007, because he felt that

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153 None of the local media coverage mentioned that the Buddhist monks sitting in solidarity had been compelled to participate in the demonstration by threats of violence. While the primary monk, Bhante Gyaneshwar, was fundamentally opposed to the Project given what he perceived as an excessive land-grab (one that took some 40 acres of his temple's lands as well), he only began showing up at the strikes because of threats that I will detail later.

154 At their insistence, I have not changed their names, especially since their names have been reported at length in the local and regional press. Sandeep Pandey is one of the founders of ASHA for Education, an international nonprofit with branches in colleges and universities throughout the United States. In the interest of full disclosure, I was a member and occasional fund-raiser with the ASHA for Education chapter at Cornell University from 2003-2008. Upon his return to India, Sandeep Pandey settled in Lucknow, and has been a celebrated social worker and activist ever since (even winning the prestigious Magasaysay Award). He and his wife helped to ensure the smooth running of ASHA schools and projects, and also work tirelessly on behalf of the poorest of the poor. During my tenure there, they were training social workers to help them survey villages in Uttar Pradesh to see if the government's schemes to help the poor were actually working or not.
too few Kushinagaris realized the extent to which their problem was a symptom of globalization. He told me,

> The problem with the anti-Maitreya Project struggle is that they are not putting up a holistic struggle. They are only fighting for better compensation, so it is not giving the people strength. It is not an ideological struggle there. They are dealing with the same-same politicians, but only fighting against the Maitreya Project, not for their rights holistically.

By this measure, Sandeep Pandey was correct, farmers by and large had no interest in revolution, and they just wanted the Maitreya Project to relocate. This dynamic may have changed somewhat when the NAPM had their annual conference in Kushinagar in the summer of 2008, but I have not been back myself so it would be premature to speculate.

"Who is Maitreya Project? It is difficult to find him!"

The NAPM may have also helped the villagers to realize that the Maitreya Project was not just a conspiracy between Babbar Singh and a few investors overseas to create an empty shell corporation that would allow them to take valuable land at a pittance. The worldwide network and the disperse base of the Maitreya Project nonprofit was such an unfamiliar social form to the Kushinagari protestors that in the beginning of my research I heard many narratives about how the Maitreya Project was not a real organization, it was just a scam concocted so that the state government and people like Babbar Singh could profit at their expense. The Maitreya Project then was a ghost, a haunting – not a real antagonist with form and substance.

The fact that the project largely operated though email and overseas phone calls was an untenable, alien notion from the farmers' perspective. There was very little internet savvy in the affected villages; even now, very few of my Kushinagari informants have email accounts. The son of a farmer managed to print out sections from the
Maitreya Project website, but in 2006 many of the farmers, and even many of the BBSS leadership, believed that the website was all design, a vacant shell with no real organization and devotees behind it. Since the Kushinagari locals had no contact with FPMT, they puzzled over about how an organization like the Maitreya Project could operate without real headquarters. One informant called MPI "a head without a body."

The BBSS initially said that the MPI "headquarters" was actual Babbar Singh's own house in Gorakhpur, so that fact made them doubly suspicious that the whole project was nothing more than a well-orchestrated swindle. The global, transnational nature of FPMT and the Maitreya Project was completely unfamiliar and confusing to the protestors, who were skeptical that the statue was ever really a true plan. This doubt eased somewhat as the NAPM's more seasoned activist veterans assured them that such global corporations behave as such, and that the plan may well be real. This did not change anyone's assessment of their plight, but simply shifted their sense of who was responsible for their suffering. Candidly, a few BBSS leaders said that they were afraid that the Maitreya Project statue plan was indeed real, since they then would be fighting an organization that was perhaps out of their league. One person said that something to the effect of, "If we are fighting the Buddhist Coca-Cola, then how can we hope to win?"

During one conversation my informants argued about where they should go to protest if the decision-makers were really all so far away. When I told them that the leader of the Maitreya Project, Peter Kedge, lived in Canada, and that he was Babbar Singh's boss, they were crestfallen; "How can we fight an enemy who is so far away? Our stones cannot hit them there. Our microphones are not loud enough…" Aneesh said. Amongst this circle of friends, there was some sense that if the fight could not be won locally, then they had no chance of success.

Others felt more hope, since they recognized that perhaps if the Maitreya Project was a real Buddhist organization, then they could potentially be reasoned with. A few of
these farmers traveled to Bodh Gaya to find the Maitreya Project office there, and to make appeals to this office. The first visit only made them more convinced that the organization was a sham, since the offices were on undeveloped land and they did not see any school there.\textsuperscript{155} However, I have since heard that on their second visit, they finally visited the Maitreya Project School, which at least gave them the sense that their antagonists were really a Buddhist organization with some good projects underway. As far as I can tell, this recognition has not changed BBSS' strategy in practice, but it has helped some of the Kushinagari leaders to get a better sense of the whole picture.

The farmers have generally focused on rallying against those who were most accessible – their local politicians and bureaucrats. They began leading protests against the bureaucrats responsible for developing the area with the Maitreya Project, especially the district magistrates overseeing these efforts. Roughly 4.6 miles around the project site would be turned into the Kushinagar Special Development Area, a special economic zone that would have harsh restrictions on polluting industry, but lesser restrictions on tourist and business development. While the Maitreya Project's Linda Gatter painted the KSDA as a special regulatory area with municipal bylaws and centralized management that would curtail any opportunism, the Kushinagari farmers felt that it would just allow the bureaucrats to extend favors to their friends while ignoring those with lesser means and connections (2007b). In the same article, Gatter writes, "The Special Development Area status was enacted specifically because it would be irresponsible to build the Project without a carefully considered planning context to complement it." While the KSDA is envisioned as a religious SEZ (Special Economic Zone), and therefore somewhat different than the industrial SEZs being set up and protested against around the country throughout the 2000s, it must to be understood through the lens of national discourses about SEZs. SEZs were often set up with use of

\textsuperscript{155} This makes sense, since the school was located off the MPI grounds, and near the Root Institute.
the Land Acquisition Act, and the viability of this strategy was being called into question, especially by advocates for the poor. In one legal petition filed with the Supreme Court against the use of the LAA to seize land for industry and corporate interests, the petitioners wrote that the system was rigged against the poor: "A strategy under which the State allies with corporations who dispossess people of their livelihood is nothing but developmental terrorism…" (cf. Prakash 2007). The Supreme Court replied to the petition by ordering the national and state governments to issue a justification for their overly expansive use of the term "public purpose," in seizing farmland for corporate and development projects (Prakash 2007). The Kushinagari farmers' position may have been strengthened by the national level legal challenges to the use of the LAA by state governments. There was agitation against SEZs all over India during my fieldwork period. One journalist even noted that nationwide, in areas where there is plans for SEZs, the region is plagued by a dearth of marriages; the fear of possible future land acquisition has led to a grinding halt in marriage proposals and weddings (Pattnaik 2007).

Anti-SEZ protests were given even more attention by the national press after the West Bengal violence over SEZs culminated in 2007. The state government of Bengal had arranged for several SEZs, including a few in areas that saw widespread dissent about land acquisition plans, most notably Nandigram and Singhur. The SEZs were proposed and pursued under the administration of Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee, of the Communist Part of India-Marxist, also known as the CPI-M. The state government had seized hundreds of acres of agricultural land for a Tata car manufacturing scheme in the town of Singhur. Even after the land acquisition the farmers tangled with police to regain their land ("Singhur Flares Up…" 2007), and eventually the corporation pulled out of the state completely ("Tata Pulls Out of Singhur" 2008).

Approximately 10,000-14,000 acres of mostly agricultural land in Nandigram were set to be acquired by the state of West Bengal via the LAA on behalf of an Indonesian-
owned chemical corporation. The affected farmers set up the Committee to Resist Eviction from the Land (Bhumi Ucched Pratirodh Committee, hereafter BUPC). In 2007, fearing the land acquisition was imminent, the BUPC endeavored to defend their land by setting up blockades along the roads, cutting off communication with outsiders, and refusing to let any police or military into the area. On March 14, 2007, the CPI-M determined that the state government must restore the rule of law to Nandigram, and sent 3,000-4,000 armed policemen and CPI-M party cadre members to break the BUPC's resistance movement. When government stormed the area, the BUPC members, including men, women and children stood in opposition to the police, and in the intervening chaos between 14 and 50 Nandigram locals were shot and killed by the invading forces ("Red-hand Buddha…" 2007; "Nandigram Turns Blood Red" 2007). Human Rights Watch asserted that there had been at least thirty deaths in the violence, hundreds of injuries and thousands displaced in a political vendetta that had largely gone unpunished in the intervening year ("India: Urgent Inquiry Needed…" 2008). The BUPC, which maintained control of Nandigram immediately following the attempted recapture, responded by driving CPI-M supporters in Nandigram out of their homes. The immediate effect of the violence was that technically the SEZ plan was put on hold, although not cancelled. Opposition parties in West Bengal condemned the CPI-M's actions in Nandigram, as did many of CPI-M's national allies. In both November 2007 and May 2008, fresh tensions between the BUPC and the CPI-M cadres led to renewed violence and aggression against BUPC members ("Red Terror Continues…" 2007; "Fresh Violence in Nandigram…" 2008).

While the state government has been ordered by their High Court to pay restitution to some BUPC victims, there have been no criminal charges levied successfully against perpetrators of the violence in Nandigram. The CPI-M has paid a political price, as they experienced some backlash in the May 2008 elections. Amnesty International's
India Office produced a report that asserted that CPI-M especially had been guilty of perpetrating human rights violations including murder, rape, and kidnapping of Nandigram dissidents ("Urgent Need to Address Large Scale Human Rights Abuses..." 2008). The aforementioned reports by Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International both highlight the need for politically independent tribunals to prosecute the perpetrators of the violence in Nandigram. I find the CPI-M party's assault on a people's movement in Nandigram on behalf of corporate interests to be an interesting parallel with Kushinagar's predicament at the hands of Tibetan Buddhists. I am not the only person to draw this parallel, as my informants and the NAPM were also cognizant that the lessons of Nandigram may serve as a cautionary tale for the current UP state government. In the aftermath of the violence in West Bengal, the national government of India, the Centre, generally took the stance that SEZs would be pursued only in cases where there was no forcible land acquisition (Ahmad 2007). However, where states were restricted from seizing land for SEZs, the land could be acquired if the project was not technically called an SEZ (Singh 2007).

Another media topic that received constant coverage during my fieldwork period was the rise in starvation deaths and farmer suicides in many agricultural centers. A BBC article about the starvation deaths, noted that NGOs in the area estimated that between 2003 and 2006 there were 52 deaths in the Kushinagar district (Pandey 2008). The related issue of farmer suicides was similarly grisly. Drought and/or poor crop yields in various states had led to financial ruin for thousands of farmers. Some farmers committed suicide when crops failed and bankruptcy ensued, since they felt that only the subsequent government payouts to their widows would sustain their families. I did not hear about any starvation deaths in the areas slated to be acquired by the MPI, but there were some rumblings about starvation deaths in the Kushinagar district. My informants knew about the national trend of farmers' starvation and suicide; the literate
farmers read about the rise of cases in various states in their Hindi newspapers, and talked about it with their non-literate friends. In interviews it was not uncommon for a farmer to bring up these deaths and say that starvation will happen to them also if their arable lands are forcibly acquired for the MPI statue. One man indicated that he would commit suicide if the land was taken, since that would be his only option. (Far more common than any talk of suicide was the mantra of fighting to the death, such as "I will fight to the death to save this land" or "Kill or be killed, I will not surrender my land.") Some farmers talked about how ingenuous it was that on the one hand the state government was talking about helping farmers in dire straights, but on the other hand they were all set to doom the Kushinagar farmers to the ranks of those already in financial ruin.

The politics behind the Maitreya statue plan could be the subject of a dissertation in and of itself. In brief, the state, regional and local government officials have certainly brought political considerations to bear regarding both the statue and the farmers' resistance to it. At the state level, the elected chief ministers and party heads in Lucknow have weighed in on the statue project, albeit obliquely and very infrequently. Mayawati, who was a former chief minister of the BSP (Bahujan Samaj Party) during my fieldwork period, but was re-elected in spring 2007, had said to her core dalit community during her first tenure in office something to the effect of, "I'm building this statue for you – it is a gift." This quote was paraphrased by my Indian informants in Lucknow and Kushinagar several times, so even if it was never uttered as such, it is widely attributed to her. However, another former chief minister, from the BJP (Bhartiya Janta Party), Rajnath Singh, had heralded the Maitreya Project as his initiative and a credit to his own party. When he was in office he emphasized that it would be bigger than the Bamiyan statues that the Taliban had destroyed. Since the BJP is at heart a pro-Hindu party with an implicit (and sometimes explicit) anti-Muslim agenda, the emphasis on building a statue grander than the one that Afghans had torn down, can be read as a political maneuver
tapping into anti-Muslim sentiments. The SP (Samajwadi Party), under Mulayam Singh Yadav, was opposed to the statue project while out of office, but supported the project while in office, even going so far as to tell the farmers that the plan would be postponed all the while allowing the plan to move forward unopposed.

The state level politics above trickled down to intense political debates at the regional level. Membership of the BBSS and other farmers' advocacy groups have little respect for the integrity of political promises made about the Maitreya Statue. A veritable parade of regional ministers dependent on farming constituencies in the Kushinagar district would pass through the area declaring their opposition to the Maitreya Project in public. More specifics forthcoming in later section on this topic, but the shared sentiment amongst most farmers in the area was that regional and local politicians were all pro-Maitreya (in action, if not in speech) while they were in positions of power, but whenever they were out of power they would promise vehemently to oppose the plan if returned to power. Since it had become politically dangerous to crow too loudly about pro-Maitreya activities, the MLAs had long since stopped vocally supporting the project in public, but the farmers had amassed evidence that their elected representatives were indeed helping to advance the Maitreya Project's interests in secret. In general, the sense from the anti-Maitreya contingent can be summed up in the feelings of a local Kushinagari schoolteacher: "One thing is clear: there is no political party for the poor."

Brahma Shankar Tripathy, the MLA (state minister) of the area at the time of my research had been "caught" by the locals having meeting with Babbar Singh in Kushinagar in 2006, and one thousand of farmers reputedly surrounded the hotel to protest. I missed this protest, but when I came back to Kushinagar a few weeks later, I got a detailed eyewitness report from Raj and Aneesh that I corroborated with other farmers and businessmen later.
Raj: The hunger strike was from 10th August to 26th August. It was kept by some men, and also women and children. They were senseless because they would lose everything. One day the MLA of this area was here in Kushinagar with the Maitreya Project broker, [Babbar Singh]. They were staying in Pathak Niwas and we came to know. The farmers all came, the women came, and they really showed that they were angry. The MLA had said to us that "I have no idea about this person, I have no relation to [Babbar Singh]," but now he was caught. Women were the most angry and they showed it with so much yelling and commotion.

Aneesh: The women were holding their shoes and shouting. They wanted to beat those men with their shoes. They were so angry. It was something.

Raj: People were saying, "We respect the Lord Buddha, but if he will take our land, our lives, then we will kill him." So the MLA assured the farmers that he would help them. On 14th August evening this happened. There were 500 women and over 500 men. So the MLA said, "I will take you to CM Mulayam Yadav Singh." On the 15th of August India got freedom, and on that day we were freed also!

Raj and Aneesh continued their story: they told me that a bus was chartered by the MLA that took the farmers to Lucknow. In Lucknow, they were feted at a breakfast by the chief minister, who told them that their struggle had been successful, and that he would immediately fax the District Magistrate to put a hold on the project until a commission looked into the whole project again, and reanalyzed the statistics and data that were under contention. His assurances were apparently unambiguous, and everyone who attended felt that he had clearly said that the whole project would not happen without a great deal of further research, work, and the farmers consent. The fact that the land would be resurveyed as part of the commission was key to my informants, since they felt that the DM who had done it was corrupt, and had been paid to misrepresent the vitality and quality of the land; a resurvey, Raj and Aneesh assured me, meant that the land would be appraised as fully arable, and the whole Maitreya Project would be cancelled as a result. "They can't take such arable land," Raj said. And Aneesh noted that even if they did, they would have to pay generous compensation for it. So, the farmers returned home triumphant from Lucknow. When I asked others about the story, BBSS members
reported to me that the MPI plan had been officially cancelled by the chief minister, and everything had gone back to normal.

But just the day before I spoke to Raj and Aneesh, MPI had issued an Update report to their listserv (and posted it on their website), saying that the news from Kushinagar was good, and that they were many steps closer to acquiring the land. I was concerned – both the farmers and the Maitreya Project were simultaneously trumpeting their success, and touting incommensurable facts.

With some members of the BBSS, I then traveled to Padrauna, the seat of the district government, to interview the new District Magistrate about the planned pause in the project. To the dismay of the farmers, the District Magistrate said that the plan was absolutely going forward and that there had been no order from the Chief Minister to change or alter course in any way. The conversation with this DM was very different than my interaction with his predecessor. He supported the project, but had a great deal of compassion for the farmers. When pressed, he acknowledged that plans had not been worked out yet to mitigate the trials of displaced persons and those who would be unable to make a living after the acquisition, but he promised that he would look into the progress being made on this score. About this, he said, "We will try to strike a balance between the needs of the project and the farmers. Perhaps though, this goes to show that whatever level of civilization the rule of the jungle still prevails. Might is right." We had a provocative and candid talk about power, diplomacy, and politics, even American politics of supremacy. Although the conversation was amiable enough, the discussion was difficult. I was drained – wholly spent by a day of travel, waiting, and emotional, challenging interviews, and terrible news. I was emotionally and physically fried, but the BBSS representatives were distraught.

Shashi: It's very bad news, but I think he is telling us the truth.
Raj: We had a very unlucky day. We waited and waited, and in the end it was
very bad news.
Jessica: So the CM was dishonest.
Shashi: The CM is very liar.
Raj: This DM is very sincere and honest, but what he said is very bad for us to hear.
Shashi: The numbers he gave are very wrong. Definitely. There are 1400 families affected.
Raj: He didn't know very much about the project. I think he was a little embarrassed that he couldn't answer your questions. He will learn more about it now, so that he can talk about it.
Shashi: What kind of DM knows so little about such a big thing? If I were DM I would know everything. The CM is a liar. He lied to my face. He had sent for his personal assistant, and they sent a fax to the DM of Kushinagar ordering a resurvey of the land. He said, I am a son of a farmer too, and your land is safe. He is a liar. The DM seems honest, so I think he told the truth.
Jessica: Well, he definitely seemed honest to me. I think he felt bad to give us tell us the bad news. He looked like he felt guilty.
Shashi: The leaders in India...This is our problem in India. Our leaders are liars. They say that the farmers are the backbone of the nation. That farmers are everything, but they are treated like nothing and told lies. This is truly an unlucky day.

We traveled the thirty minutes back to Kushinagar in near silence. I had rarely felt so tired, even on longer days canvassing the affected villages in the heat of the sun. Shashi said that the BBSS would be meeting soon to strategize their next steps.

The farmers, having been alerted to the fact that they had been misled deliberately by the chief minister, began their protests again. They also began a rotating fast or "hunger strike" that was supported by the entire community. Certain volunteers took turns fasting at a central location. While they were not on individual hunger strikes to the death, these men all lost a lot of weight in a short span of time, and seemed weakened. Fasters were inevitably joined by whoever from the community was free to sit in solidarity with them, as well as parade of politicians and others offering support. The local Hindi medium newspapers were covering the protests and fasts regularly.
Tripathy reported to them that the chief minister was going to appoint a commission to look into the matter, but that it had come too late, since there was a pre-election freeze on their legislative power. The farmers were livid and continued their protest.

On 17th of February, a Cabinet Minister from this locality, Brahma Shankar Tripathy, he said, I have talked with the CM, and now everything should be stopped. They will make a committee and survey and then give to the governor and he will say. The local villagers do not trust these assurances. Let them promise, but we will continue. They all say the same thing. They make the same promises. They all promise to cancel the project, and then they forget. The politicians are all talking with the farmers and saying support me. The farmers know very well. Farmers aren't making any promises to politicians. They are having no confidence. They will not stop their protest. The media is highlighting this. In the Rashtriya Sahara newspaper they said the farmers are angry. They said that if our request is not accepted then we will abduct the foreigners, and we will just give them Indian food to eat.
I started laughing when he said this, but he said that they were quite serious. Discomfited, I shifted in my seat, collected myself, and then kept asking questions.

Violence is not a laughing matter, since I have heard it threatened time and time again both from the leadership and the rank and file of the anti-Maitreya Project movement. Babbar Singh even admits that he would be attacked by villagers if he came without his armed guards, so in general he stays out of the vicinity. Bureaucrats on business, and even the occasional tourists who stray out of the Buddhist zone and onto the contested lands, have been threatened as well.

One day Tripathy and some other gazetted officers, the farmers surrounded them for 3 hours. There were 5000 people and they said, if you go anywhere we'll kill you. The district magistrate [one of the officers who was surrounded] wrote a letter to the governor and the dept. of tourism and culture that concerned the matter. Ultimately, the district magistrate sent the letter and then the farmers released them. That district magistrate was then transferred — it was [Manav Khan] — he was the one who wrote the letter that supported the farmers, so then he was transferred. This place, Siswa Chowk, they kidnapped them here. The farmers were going to set fire to the car. They had already snatched the mobile phone from the officers. I controlled the people and told them to calm down. Otherwise, the ladies they had put the wood under the car to burn the car. They were so angry they would have done violence. There were 5000 people there. They would have killed people. I said to the district magistrate that the farmers don't know who you are; they think you are with the Maitreya Project, so they want to kill you.

"Were they bluffing?" various FPMTers have asked me, in various ways, when I tell them this story. I still do not know — they certainly seem deadly serious to me.

Another altercation was covered in the local Hindi media under the heading, "Agitated villagers keep District Officer captive for two hours":

Due to the negligence of an administrative officer of the district, agitated farmers kept the District Officer captive for almost two hours. It was only coincidental that nothing untoward happened. Later the District Officer and other officials were able to leave after appropriate assurance was given by them at the behest of some knowledgeable people (Rashtriya Sahara 2002: R3).
Far more usual than actual threats of violence against ministers and officials was the burning of effigies. At their protests it was not uncommon to see effigies burnt of the politicians who supported the project. In 2006 and 2007 farmers did full funeral processions, rites and burning of the effigy of Chief Minister Mulayam Singh Yadav.

The farmers have also threatened Buddhists in the area in a direct and targeted way. For example, one of the local Buddhist abbots was threatened by a group of farmers, so in order to calm the situation he promised to join them in their hunger strike. He said, "It's a bad feeling. Some villagers came here to beat me." The abbot noted later in an interview that this was no ideological hardship, since a few dozen acres that belonged to his own monastery were being forcibly acquired at a very low price for the Maitreya Project. He did oppose the low rate of compensation, but he wished that he had not felt compelled to protest against the statue by threat of violence, since he noted that he was not explicitly antagonistic to the project itself. This abbot privately hoped the statue would be built, but in a downsized version that would not require forcible land acquisitions. He also predicted actual violence if the land was forcibly acquired: "If the project is passed then something terrible will happen. Something very bad." "You mean, something violent," I probed. "Yes, violence. The word maitri means friendship and love. If you work with love then you can achieve good things, but without it, what can you expect?" The local newspapers reported that some Buddhists were standing in solidarity with the hunger strike.

The draft MOU, especially, makes it clear that there was great concern about the possibility of local retaliation, as it asks specifically for government assistance in securing the lands, and protection for Maitreya Project staff against any local violence in the wake of the acquisition ("Memorandum of Understanding Draft" 2002). The draft language states "During the acquisition process when some disturbances may arise, the
Government agrees to provide armed police personnel to accompany MPT Staff and Consultants during this sensitive phase." A bureaucrat in the Culture Department explained that the phrase was pulled from the final language, because the preceding phrase, which was retained, implicitly promised such protection for the site and the personnel at all phases from acquisition onwards. "It did not look nice," he said about the deleted language. The draft also retained language obligating the Government to set up a police outpost at the site during pre-construction and construction phases. This aspect of the MOU exposes the fact that both the government and the Maitreya Project anticipated the possibility of resistance, decided to meet it with a police presence, and proceeded apace anyway.

Finally, even as vocal supporter of the farmers’ rights against the acquisition, I was threatened many times by farmers who still did not trust me, despite my assurances and those of BBSS leaders. Especially at the beginning of my research in Kushinagar, it was not uncommon for some of the children in Anirudhwa village to throw stones or other things at me when I bicycled past them; usually, they would scream things in Hindi, that essentially meant "No Maitreya," or "Go away." It was not unreasonable of them to think that a young American woman interviewing people about the Maitreya Project could actually be doing so on behalf of the latter. Since there were many thousands of people affected, most of whom had to work all day, there were many people who did not see me at protests, and did not know that I had been welcomed by BBSS leadership. Some just did not believe my story or my assertions of support. Why would an American come across the world to research their plight?

Most farmers had never heard of anthropology, and did not understand that I was writing a dissertation. I was asked hundreds of times, "who are you writing a report for?" The report is for myself, and my teachers, I replied. I am certain that the fact that I could only afford to stay in monasteries hurt my initial credibility. As I went through the
villages doing surveys and interviews, I met many, many people who did not believe that I was on their side. In one hamlet, my translator and I sat down to do interviews, but we were chased away by an angry group of women who believed that I was a Maitreya Project staffer. Usually people who doubted my motivations would just refuse to cooperate, but sometimes I got looks that could kill, and actual threats saying that I would be attacked or killed if I returned. I believe that by the end of my trips to Kushinagar most of the villagers felt that I was harmless at least, or an advocate at best, but there were still some people who tried to beg their spouses not to speak with me. Even during my last trip to Kushinagar, I met a woman who grabbed at my clothes, sank to the ground, and pleaded with me not to take her family's land.

During that last trip to Kushinagar in March 2007, a hunger strike was in full swing. The hunger strike is really a fasting relay, not an indefinite one-person hunger strike, but those who fast regularly had already lost weight upon my spring 2007 visit. While some farmers were hopeful that after the elections there would be a more favorable climate for the CM to finally cancel the project once and for all, most were worried that after the elections any promises would be quickly forgotten. I also collected copies of all of the Hindi newspaper clippings about the project, which had been saved from the beginning by an elderly gentleman who was one of the hunger strikers. Rakesh was on hunger strike last time I saw him in March of 2007. When I asked him about the political situation and upcoming election, he spread the blame equally to all the parties, reiterating the mantra that the farmers could trust no one but themselves. Rakesh said, "All the political parties are responsible. The BJP, the BSP, the SP. They are all dishonest. We don't trust any of these political parties." And so, the hunger strike

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156 I translated some of these articles, but there were many hundreds and it was slow going, so I had a translator do the rest. Therefore, I had access to all of the clipping in the local media about the project from the first announcements to spring 2006.
continued. According to a missive sent out by ASHA for Education social workers working in the district, the fasting relay has continued unabated as of April 2010.

Welcome, Maitreya!

While there is widespread local resistance to the MPI, I must be permitted to observe that there are also many locals who see the project as a potential boon to the region; it may bring tourist and infrastructure dollars that expand and develop the local economy. At first glance, the business people seemed keen on the project and the farmers felt otherwise, but this is a bit of an oversimplification. There are many business people who desire the project, but not all of them. Most farmers are antagonistic to the Maitreya Project, but not all of them. I interviewed many dozens of business-people in Kushinagar proper, and in the nearby town of Kasia.

Business people who had land that was slated to be acquired, or who had family members who would lose land to the project, were all very much against the land acquisition; some of these people talked wistfully about alternative sites for the project, some railed against the project as a whole, and still others felt that the government and Maitreya Project brokers were perpetrating fraud. However, business people who had no land being acquired were almost all enthusiastic about the forthcoming Maitreya Project, although some felt that the controversy had put the plans in danger, so their critiques of MPI were not with the statue plan, but rather with the mismanagement of the project. Some pro-Maitreya Project vendors felt strongly that the Maitreya Project would bring much needed benefits to their region and to their own business opportunities; therefore, they said, the farmers should stop their fight for the benefit or the region as whole. Other pro-Maitreya Project elements noted that the despite their own optimism at the prospect of the Maitreya Project in Kushinagar, the farmers were getting a very raw deal, and it is a shame that their future boom would come at the expense of villagers.
A.R. Thakur was a Buddhist businessman in Kushinagar who had been patiently waiting for the Maitreya Project for years, since he felt strongly that it would help revitalize the economy as a whole, as well as his own business interests. He was quick to note that he was not only hoping for the Maitreya Project because of the prospects for his wallet – he really desired the statue because he feels it will be good for Buddhism. Mr. Thakur told me that he and his wife have actually foreseen the Maitreya Project:

I know that even if the Maitreya statue doesn't come here now, it will in the future. I have seen it, it will be over there on that side. [Here he gestures towards Anirudhwa]. And it will be facing north. Once my wife and I were out sleeping on the roof... We used to do that. Suddenly the sky was white, and then against the southern horizon it turned a fierce red color. And then it was like a fire burning, and we thought that maybe the Thai temple was on fire, we both saw it and were talking about it like that. This was on the 1st of August in 1998. But it wasn't a fire, and then we saw two columns of light that were coming out of the Mahaparinirvana stupa. We were amazed. We put our hands together and did like this. [He closes his eyes in prayer]. We questioned people carefully the next day, like the chowkidar who stayed there, but no one had seen anything. Only we saw it. We still don't know what it was. We told our guru and he wrote it all down. He writes books sometimes. He thinks that it may have had something to do with one of the ancient relics. We're not sure.

Mr. Thakur was one of my favorite informants in Kushinagar, since he was amiable and talkative, and especially since he seemed to have a somewhat complex relationship with the Maitreya Project. I supported his email business by coming by at least a few times a week.

Mr. Thakur and his wife were Buddhists businesspeople who owned land on the other side of Kushinagar, that is, far from the MPI's future land. Therefore, they had everything to gain by the coming of the Maitreya statue, and nothing to lose. However, in the course of most conversations Mr. Thakur would tie himself in knots by both supporting the statue plan and railing against it. He would talk about how much economic and spiritual good benefit the statue could bring to Kushinagar, and then he...
would angrily vent about how the Maitreya Project was stupidly relying on thugs (government and otherwise) to do their dirty work for them. He and his wife would discuss at length how the farmers were getting a raw deal from the government, and how sad it was that a dharma project was hurting so many people. Then he might say how he still hoped that, despite all the obstacles, the plan might be brought to fruition soon.

For example, one of our conversations began on the topic of how the whole region would benefit from the statue project. He talked about his own plans to try to build an eco-friendly yoga center for tourists – something that would not stand a chance of success under the current economic situation in Kushinagar. Then when I start talking about the farmers’ problems with the plan, then Mr. Thakur frenetically discussed how they are being done a terrible injustice:

Mr. Thakur: The checks have been cut and sent out. Some people have already deposited those checks. I have seen one of them myself at the bank. Many people have not withdrawn the money however. The people who have sold are from this side – they are not as strong as the people on the other side who have formed an organization against the acquisition. There are rumors that the documents are being given to poor people where everything is in pen, but the amount to be received is in pencil. They would change the numbers afterwards. I have not seen this, but this is being said. I think that the authorities should investigate this claim. The farmers are not educated so they just put down their thumbprint...

Jessica: You said last time that the government rates were very low…

Mr. Thakur: There is one man who had a parcel of land he was going to sell several years back – before the Maitreya Project. Someone was going to put a plant there. He was offered 64 lakhs. He demanded 1 crore, but the buyer wouldn’t go up so high. The government acquisition rate for that land: 55,000 rupees only! Of course, he is really regretting that decision! This shows the difference between government rates and market prices. Of course, every farmer is getting different, different rates per kutta…

Jessica: Yeah – depending on where it is in relation to the road, right…?

Mr. Thakur: We have lost interest in it. We used to be interested in helping bring it to Kushinagar, but now it is such a mess. We thought it could be done with consideration to the dharma, but that isn't what's happening. Anyway, we’ll see.
Mr. Thakur told me a few days after this that he still was very hopeful that the Maitreya Project would come. He reiterated both his sadness for the farmers, and his desire to see economic boons that will trickle down to help the whole community. He looked almost guilty as he ended the conversation by saying that he was praying for it.

Mr. Thakur was not the only person whose feelings about the statue were fraught and complex. I conducted several interviews with local farmers slated to lose land to MPI who actually supported the statue in theory, but were simply antagonistic to the way that the plan had been carried out. These interviews were few and far between, but the sentiment was reiterated enough times to catch my attention. These were most often farmers who talk about the prospects for their children, specifically hoping that the statue could bring an economic boon that would mean better jobs for their progeny in the future. Each of these farmers said the same thing: the statue is most welcome, provided that it does not destroy my family's economic well-being in the short term. A few of these men even spoke with regret at the lost opportunity to the region, saying that it is a shame that the Maitreya Project must be opposed tooth and nail, since it could have been a good thing. These farmers usually blamed Babbar Singh and corrupt government officials for the problems that beset the project planning and development.

I interviewed some businessmen and white-collar workers who had good jobs in the nearby town of Kasia, but whose family land was staked for land acquisition, and their opinions about the statue were generally ambivalent: they liked the idea of the statue, but agreed with the landowners that the rates of compensation were intractably low. I interviewed a Kasia lawyer with a good job, whose finances were not at all dependent on his father's plot of land in the area to be acquired. Still, while he was outraged that the family land was being acquired at a low rate of compensation (and by force), he acknowledged that the region as a whole would be better off should the MPI build its statue. He said,
We want the Maitreya Project to come. We know it will be good for us. But the government is giving us too little money for our land. The broker, [Babbar Singh], he doesn't have a good reputation here. They are only giving us 13,000 or 14,000 per kutta, but the land is worth 100,000 per kutta. We won't sell at this low price. We have land that they want to acquire. Still, the Maitreya Project would be good for the people here. We want the development that it will bring.

He said that his father would survive economically due to his support, but that he had other extended family members who would be in dire financial straits if the land acquisition went through. His opinion was that sometimes painful economic situations must be borne in the short term in order that a community profit in the long term. This lawyer was not involved in the protests, but said that he could understand why so many farmers were protesting. He said that he supported the fight for higher compensation, but not the fight against the project.

Young adults, college students, living in the affected villages were also more likely to support the MPI statue as a potential economic windfall. I met Kapil Guha only once, during a canvassing of Anirudhwa village. He reported to me that his extended family of 14 people was being supported tolerably on 5 acres of land, since the family income was being supplemented by a few wage earners doing small business. He told me, "Both the farm and the businesses are important to feed the whole family. We grow wheat, paddy, sugarcane, pulses (i.e., daal), vegetables, and maize. Most of the harvest we eat and only some, a little bit, we sell. The sugarcane we sell." He reported that he was in his third year of college nearby, studying economics and history. "It is my hope to be a teacher or a civil servant with a government job. I don't want to do business," he said.

Kapil's family had been spared the threat of losing land to the Maitreya Project plan, but many of his friends and neighbors were in dire straights, so he felt very ambivalent about the plan, but hopeful about the development of his area. Kapil said:
Kushinagar should develop as a tourist place. There have been a lot of changes. The fertility of the land is increasing and infrastructure is better. This is improving. Electricity has come. Before, in previous time, all the homes were mud. At present time, all burnt bricks and cement. Education is better now, there is more. The facilities have also increased. I want more development in every field. The [Maitreya Project] would be good for Kushinagar, but there are problems. The Maitreya Project would bring big problems too. I don't want the village to be removed. It would destroy some villagers, and it wants to take fertile land.

He went on to say that if the plan could happen without displacing people or wasting good farmland, then he would support it wholeheartedly.

**Develop-mentality**

The intractable, uncompromising, top-down nature of the MPI plan has met with extreme anger from those it seeks to displace and disenfranchise. I am keen to add this narrative to the many stories of local resistance to globalizing forces of development (e.g., Ong 1987; Scott 1985; Taussig 1980; Turner 1993). Like Terence Turner's reports of the Kayapo in Brazil who succeeded in getting a World Bank dam project cancelled (1993), the resistance in Kushinagar has not been futile in the least. BBSS and the Kushinagari farmers have put up a show of force that has thwarted the speedy acquisition of land that the Maitreya Project had once anticipated. However, as of the final revision of this dissertation in April 2010, the farmers were still desperately fighting to get the project cancelled. Informants still indicate that villagers feel insecure and anxious – the police could come at any day to force them off their land against their will.

This complex mix of local, regional, national and international motivations, politics and resistances has made concepts like "modern," "postcolonial," "globalization," and "development" all so complex that I could spend hundreds of pages these concepts and their putative effects upon Kushinagar. However, I will limit myself to briefly putting the farmers' agitations in more explicit conversation with these literatures.
The Kushinagar land acquisition plan seems to be yet another development plan with good intentions and poor follow through. There have been so many projects studied in the anthropology of development literature that teach us that development projects often go awry (Escobar 1995; Ferguson 1994; Sachs 1992). Ferguson goes so far as to remind his readers that in the world of development, failures are the rule, rather than the exception. Ferguson observes that the most successful work of development industries is its self-maintenance, as well as its role as a purveyor of excessive governmentality. The Maitreya Project, and its partner, the Uttar Pradesh state government, have proceeded by laboring under the assumption that the economic development of Kushinagar is obviously beneficial; surprisingly, most Kushinagaris, even those opposed to the project, also view development as a universally positive outcome. As Escobar notes, in the 1970s development discourse became widely naturalized: "Development had achieved the status of a certainty in the social imaginary" (1995: 5). Vandana Shiva has called the naturalization of development discourse a form of violence against the poor, and considers development to be "maldevelopment" (1988). My informants saw MPI as maldevelopment, but they would not have viewed development itself in those terms.

While economic development as a global system and an uncritical ideology is anathema to me as a scholar, it is easy for me to judge it as such, having already personally benefited from the fruits of a globalized economy that feeds off the poor. While I am personally a severe critic of the develop-mentality that projects linear progress, Kushinagaris, in general, seem less interested in the problems with development and globalization, and more interested in what it will take for all of their villages to have more and more access to the gadgets and luxuries that the Indian middle class already enjoys. Kushinagaris have bought into the idea posed by Latouche that "...economic development as the trickle-down effect of industrial growth" (1997: 137). For
Kushinagaris, development and progress were indeed good futures to work towards; the farmers' resistance was never in opposition to development itself, their resistance was in opposition to the fact as far as they could tell the plan would preclude progress and development for them. The Kushinagari farmers who protested against the statue plan almost all noted that if they themselves were confident that their families would benefit along the way, then they would indeed be converts to the statue plan. They did not dispute the specific development idea that progress would eventually trickle-down to them, instead they railed against the notion that they would be able to survive the loss of so many pounds of flesh in the interim. Many hoped that it would be moved nearby, close enough that the region would benefit, but far enough away that they would not be the victims of eminent domain. In effect, the development strategy of the Maitreya Project and its partners advocates a top-down strategy that is, according to many development studies scholars (Chambers 1997; Chaudhari 1985; Holland and Blackburn 1998; Nelson and Wright 1997; Setty 1991), demonstrably less effective than grassroots development or participatory development.

While "the revolution" may not yet have come to Kushinagar with the totality that would please the ASHA and NAPM leadership, the speeches at protests, and the discussions with farmers in interviews in their homes demonstrated that some farmers have gradually recognized that their enemies were no longer just local and regional despots, but instead transnational outsiders: the global economy, the free market fetish, and the threat of outsiders coming back in to take more land, seize more control and make more money. Some of the farmers in the Kushinagar area who are protesting against the Maitreya Project do recognize themselves that their plight is a result of the global forces adversely affecting their local community. While many farmers do want progress, higher standards of living and more opportunity for their children, some also recognize globalization as a symptom of neoliberal free market economics, in which the
rich get richer and the poor bear the brunt of progress. Marxism is not a dirty word in the villages of Kushinagar, and it is not surprising therefore that many villagers seem to take seriously the notion that the government ought to work for the benefit of the poor, and spread the wealth of the rich around to allow all to improve their lots in life. A neo-Marxist critique of the project is not only implicit found in my work, but my informants, especially NAPM and BBSS leadership, spoke Marxist theory with remarkable fluency and passion. While the anti-colonization rhetoric still far outstrips the Marxist discourse, in many speeches these two strands of thoughts are becoming intertwined with post-colonial awareness of "never again." Never again, they say, will we be enslaved and abused by white people from far away. The postcolonial experience has affected my informants – they have thrived, or failed to thrive, under certain conditions that cannot be unhitched from the history of the nation and its economies. Not entirely unlike Gupta's explication of the post-colonial condition according to his informants (who were also peasant farmers in Uttar Pradesh) (1998), I feel that the "postcolonial condition" is an absolute given, yet as an ethnographic tool, it is only useful insofar as it helps to illuminate the experiences of our informants. Many of my informants see that their current situation is linked to past domination, as evidenced by the fact that their colonized past did often come up in our interviews. However, most see globalization as an independent threat that must be resisted at all levels, since even their own state and local governments seemed to be taking the side of outsiders against their own interests. On the other hand, development is usually viewed as a boon.

Although not unique by any means, the local community is skillfully weighing the good, bad, and ugly of their postcolonial condition; those with the most to lose are putting up an extraordinary show of resistance to the threat of dispossession by global forces outside of their control. The current situation has spurred significant endeavors in social solidarity, as well as more awareness of the larger economic forces affecting the
local today; therefore, bracketing out the hardship of living in constant fear and uncertainty about the future, the MPI resistance has arguably left the villagers in a communally stronger place today than they were several years ago.

If development is even to be considered a viable possibility, then this story, like so many others before it (e.g., Barnett 1977; Chambers 1983; Gardner and Lewis 1996), demonstrates the need for less top-down development strategies. More participation, cooperation, communication and mutual respect could have led to compromises that would have had the statue plan well underway years ago. The stalemate in Kushinagar is largely a result of the structural violence of the situation: a global organization with access to the rich and famous has arm-twisted a state government to get more arable land than it needed from thousands of people who depend on it for subsistence. As such, the Maitreya Project controversy is another narrative detailing the unintended, high local costs of neo-liberal globalization, and as such joins a whole literature with a similar lesson (Gupta 1998).

There is certainly no clear-cut delineation between the "modern" and the "traditional" in Kushinagar. Farmers would oppose the idea that they are anti-progress or development. In fact, they want the trappings of modernity so much that they are unwilling to slip backwards, which is what they fear they will face should their land be acquired. The villagers insist that, despite the work yet to be done, they are now more modern, more educated, more progressive, more successful and stable than their parents' generation had been. They would oppose any suggestion that they are the "tradition" side of an imaginary binary upon which the Maitreya Project was a putative "modern." The Maitreya Project, of course, in building a 500-ft statue of a future Buddha, can be accused of being more on the traditional, i.e., religious, end of things than farmers eager to modernize. I would argue that the idea of "hybrid cultures" deployed by Arturo Escobar (1995) or even Gupta's notion of "hybridity" (1998: 6) do both capture the complexity
and tangle of the modern and traditional, however the terms are problematic because they suggest the poles are themselves concrete and solid. The notion of hybridity erases the fluidity always already present in terms like "modern" and "traditional." In an ultimate sense, these terms are completely empty, but of course in a conventional sense there is some utility to the notion of hybridity, so long as even the poles are recognized as having been always already fluid. My conclusion that top-down developmentality is to blame for the current crisis in Kushinagar was well-established in my Wild River Review articles (2007a and b). The Maitreya Project has not conceded this point; their discourse assumes a model of classic economic development and trickle-down growth.

**Controlling the Message**

The Maitreya Project administrators continue to work to acquire the land, but much of their work is wrapped up in public relations and fundraising. The public image of the Maitreya Project is a matter of grave concern to administrators. For example, when the unsavory media attention came to light in 2007 almost every time the story was posted to a Buddhist website or blog, the Media Manager Linda Gatter would post the same crafted rebuttal, or variations thereupon (much of which had been taken verbatim from Kedge's contemporaneous Maitreya Project Update (Kedge 2007c). When "Vassa: A blog for SCUBA" posted links to the Pepper article and discussed the story, the first "comment" was a form letter repudiating the report posted by Linda Gatter. When someone replied to Pepper's article with an editorial piece entitled, "Proponents of the Maitreya Project heartless, arrogant" (McLeod 2007), Linda Gatter posted a version of the same reply (Gatter 2007a). MPI was in fervent damage control mode. The Maitreya Project, not unlike the American president in office at the time, George W. Bush, refused to acknowledge one single misstep or mistake along the way. Controlling the message means not having to say you're sorry.
When the Wikipedia page about the Maitreya Project was retooled by Tony Simmons to mirror the organization's website, Wikipedia editors contested the objectivity of the edits and started a prolonged web-battle or "edit war" over the right to control the content of the "Maitreya Project" Wikipedia web-page. For a period of time, every single time someone would contest the veracity of the claims and take down his edits, he would challenge them, and vice versa. Several times editors tagged the page with a dispute of the neutrality of the point of view, and Simmons would delete the neutrality addendum.

The dispute raged on, as more senior editors were called upon to resolve the dispute. Within mediation, Simmons accused one of the editors of religious bias after she called his version of the page an "advertisement" and noted that his account was "a single-purpose account" working only on the Maitreya Project page; he deleted the point of view tags again, and wrote the following: "Your inability to state a case clearly makes one wonder if there is a hidden religious agenda afoot. As I consider myself a neutral editor, thus I feel that I am entitled to remove this tag again as the article has been further edited." He was tagged for "conflict of interest," and asked to identify his affiliations.

When Tony Simmons was finally outed as a Maitreya Project administrator, he conceded and allowed many of the changes to stand, including reports of the controversy and links to opposing views that he had tried to erase from the page. Before this concession, he wrote that the Pepper article contained "deliberately fabricated" material, and was a "witch hunt"; he suggested that it should be removed, but was talked out of the change by the editors on the page who suggested that Simmons' opinion (and a letter he brandished from a bureaucrat in India) were not enough to explicitly refute an article published in the Christian Science Monitor and other reputed international news outlets.

The debate continued for weeks, and then Tony Simmons bowed out, acknowledging that the conflict of interest concerns had made it difficult for him to function as an editor. He also noted that he would periodically revisit the page, since he
said that there were enemies of the project who would like to skew the public record. The page was altered further as the Maitreya Project's newly released records showed the organizational structure and finances more clearly. Another FPMTer popped up to try to insert a sentence about how thousands of FPMTers had made offering of candles in support of the project, but editors asked him to back up the assertion with a citation, which he failed to produce. He tried to say that he had himself witnessed the offerings, but this was unconvincing to the editors involved, so the sentence was removed.

I observed the Wikipedia morass from the e-sidelines, since the Wikipedia edits were archived and the internal dialogues about the edits were completely public. The Wikipedia debates were significant to me, because they were a public stage upon which the Maitreya Project and FPMT leadership tried to take control of the way that the statue project was being represented, but the Wikipedia structure and guidelines frustrated the ability of the Project to represent itself as it wished to be represented. Wikipedia's editors, mostly volunteers who had risen in the ranks of editorial leadership, worked to make a page that referenced both the Maitreya Project's assertions about the project and its future, and the assertions of its critics.

**He Said, She Said: Guru Devotion Revisited**

While I waited nearly eighteen months to publicly question the policies of the Maitreya Project, I began discussing my concerns with certain FPMTers and Maitreya Project staff just a few months after my arrival. It only took few months for me to realize the communication gap between the farmers and the Buddhists was increasingly perilous, and growing more so as the days before the land acquisition ticked away. My first inquiries were gentle: Why wasn't there an FPMT presence in the area? Why was Babbar Singh the only regional staffer, since he was wildly unpopular in Kushinagar? Shouldn't someone, anyone, go talk to the farmers and discuss their future with them? As time
passed my questions became, not "increasingly shrill" as they were characterized internally by MPIers, but both increasingly despondent and impassioned. Don't you think that the compensation is too low? Why isn't it your problem? – isn't the land being taken for your statue? How can you build a statue of loving-kindness in a manner that is causing so much collateral suffering? As I mentioned in the introduction, I began granting interviews with Maitreya Project staff and supporters, so that I spread the word regarding my findings. During the second half of my research period, having checked and rechecked my facts in Kushinagar, I began talking more openly about the controversy in Kushinagar with FPMTers of various stripes in Bodh Gaya, Delhi and California. I met with a whole range of responses: surprise, doubt, anger, fear, anxiety. Mostly there was a great deal of doubt, and I believe that despite everything that has transpired in the media, there is still widespread skepticism about the validity of the farmer's protests in Kushinagar. I am considered naïve by many who find it easy to believe so – what could a young white woman know about land prices and local politics in Kushinagar? Moreover, it is far easier to doubt me, whether my conclusions or my motivations, than to doubt their guru's heart project, or their guru himself. While I have implicitly and explicitly argued that the thoughtless, top-down imposition of the statue project onto the small farmers of Kushinagar is ideologically hypocritical, I know as well as anyone that the cultural logics of Buddhist guru devotion do not allow for such a straightforward dismissal of MPI's motivations and actions.

Fear of disobeying or questioning the guru is prevalent in FPMT theory and practice. In certain Tibetan sutras and commentaries, there are specific narrations about the fact that those who are guilty of a "breach of guru devotion" that could come from "antagonistic" or "distorted" thinking about one's gurus will have to submit to the suffering of hell in response. While Alexander Berzin notes that the texts only impugn certain actions as deserving of rebirth in hell realms, many Western devotees have deep
fears about "breach of guru devotion" that lead to deep guilt about doubts in the teacher's qualifications, enlightenment status, teachings or actions (2000). Berzin defends the Tibetan tradition, saying that there is little to fear if one engages in close readings of the sutras themselves. My primary interest is not in what the actual texts say, but how they are understood by FPMTers. I would argue that within FPMT is a great deal of flexibility for newcomers and uncommitted students, but amongst devotees the culture of guru devotion in FPMT lends itself to deep anxieties about pleasing the guru, and avoiding anything, whether internal or external, that could be interpreted as wavering or waning devotion and faith in the guru.

Ethical questions within FPMT are often sent straight to the top, but when they are dealt with in a more localized way, it is the guru's blessing of the bureaucratic chain of command that is referred to in order to diffuse disagreement. For example, I watched with great interest an intense battle of wills over the use of "mosquito plug-ins": the director of the Root Institute allowed them, and bought them for rooms with the center's funds, but a nun in residence at the center felt that the plug-ins were killing mosquitoes and therefore should be disallowed. The plug-ins were thought to paralyze or neutralize the mosquitoes, but not actually kill them, which is why the center director permitted them. The nun saw dead mosquitoes everywhere and felt that whatever the chemical explanation offered – the mosquitoes were being killed. Even if they were just immobilized, she told me, they cannot fly away and we step on them by accident. The nun went so far as to remove the plug-ins from the gompas and throw them away. I was present in the library one day when the director confronted the nun and told her that she was stealing from Lama Zopa Rinpoche by throwing away his things, and that since she was the center director, Lama Zopa Rinpoche's will was being done through her. The nun protested, but she was told again that if she waged a guerilla war against the plug-ins, then she would be asked to leave. The nun told me later that she would write a letter to
Lama Zopa Rinpoche to resolve the issue. She felt that while he had appointed the center director, he still needed to be alerted to such ethical and moral issues. I do not know what happened in the end, but when I left just a month or so later the plug-ins were still in widespread use at Root.

Some of the Buddhists who are outside the FPMT fold recognize that any skepticism about the Maitreya Project is often solved by deference to the guru. A Buddhist from America who has spent a great deal of time with various communities in Bodh Gaya felt that guru devotion has impeded internal dispute: "You know, even most Tibetans and Western Tibetan Buddhists looked at the Maitreya Project with skepticism, and asked, 'Why?' Of course at the Root Institute they tow the party line. They are devoted to Lama Zopa Rinpoche. What he says goes. Other Tibetan groups are a little more skeptical. Everyone respects the Dalai Lama but some people are willing to diverge from his view more than others. Some Tibetan Buddhists might say, if people are hungry, then maybe don't build a big statue now; if you have a surplus okay, but if not, then you are extracting it from people." Guru devotion in the extreme has truly impeded the social and religious viability of dissent amongst committed FPMT devotees. Contra Capper, who argues that although his informants at Shambala International were intensely devoted to their gurus, they were overall able to maintain their ability to think independently (2002: 181), I would argue that the culture of guru devotion at FPMT does sometimes limit the ability of devotees to vocally question their lamas' decisions. For serious students, doubts must be worked through, and can be interpreted as tests of one's devotion. However, a few of my informants, both students and devotees, had some very deep doubts about the project's effects on Kushinagar after discovering the controversy; some have turned their backs on the project and/or FPMT in response, either cancelling Relic Tours stops, refusing to make more donations, or finding another sangha to practice with. FPMTers can find it difficult and uncomfortable to stay within
the organization if they harbor intense doubts, since they are not respected after one has reached a certain stage in the teachings.

In general, the institutional narrative is that doubts and dissention are a sign of one’s own weaknesses and obstacles, and never weaknesses or mistakes of FPMT as an institution, nor Lama Zopa Rinpoche as spiritual leader. Natalie, a Brazilian woman who had taken monastic robes said, "Guru devotion is the most important thing. I can train my mind – everything is the manifestation of the guru." She noted in the interview that she felt very strongly about her love for her primary guru, Lama Zopa Rinpoche, but that she was not above doubts about certain things that he believed in. For example, she struggled with relics ("I have respect for relics... I try to get it. In Bodh Gaya, I saw some of the relics on display. Sometimes they just put them out. A piece of robe of Lama Tsongkhapa, and other things. I don't know the profundity, I mean I see that it's holy. I know I may be purified…."), and also the ability to see holy objects as more than just objects ("Now I see just frames and pictures, I have to train my mind to see that they are not what they appear to be, and with that there are blessings. If you see that thing – they say there is power in the object. That's difficult. The power of statues and mantras and prayer wheels. It is very difficult to see the power of the blessing. I have to try to see the emptiness – it is not as it is."). However, her initial doubts about the Maitreya Project were subjugated to her faith in the guru; she observed that since he was so kind, the project could only have the best possible effects.

Natalie was also one of many who directly linked her faith in the goodness of the Maitreya Project with her faith in the goodness of Lama Zopa Rinpoche. She said:

At first I thought the Maitreya Project was a bit strange. Why should the project be so big? It's not just a statue, it's such a big project. Everything is about my faith in my guru. I know that will benefit people. I saw that everything Rinpoche does is so beneficial. For me that's true, so then when I think of how beneficial it will be for the world... I think about the statue, not the other stuff. When I pray I think about how the statue itself can benefit others. The power of the object can
purify and give blessings. [Missing sentence]. Whoever sees it will get blessed. It's harder for the public, who are more beginners, it's harder for them to get it. We sangha do puja every night – we dedicate for everything, but there are special pujas we do especially for the Maitreya statue. Now we are reading the sangata sutra. The renovation of the gompa here and also the Maitreya Project are the two main things we dedicate merit to here. Sometimes Lama Zopa Rinpoche says, 'Please all centers should do such a prayers or mantras for the statue.' Lama Zopa Rinpoche was here in March. We were five monastics in Delhi, and we went to say goodbye. We called Roger. He said that Rinpoche is asking us to read seven sugata sutras to remove obstacles to Maitreya. In fact, most of the sangha is involved in prayers for the project. Even centers read the sutras and mantras for it.

Natalie observed here that most of her colleagues also participated in offering dedications to the Maitreya Project, and that they were a high priority for Lama Zopa Rinpoche and his entourage.

Another explanation given about the methods and choices of Lama Zopa Rinpoche, and his hand-picked staffers, with regards to the Maitreya Project, was that they were using skilful means to accomplish the highest possible goals. An informant deeply enmeshed in FPMT, and a regular donor to the Maitreya Project said of the controversy, "Well, it may look bad to you, but Lama is using skilful means. Even the people protesting, even you, you are all planting seeds that will bring you closer to Maitreya."

Skilful means (Sanskrit: upaya) indicates the need to use the spectrum of truths in various ways and means depending on the context; so gurus and Buddhas might need to oversimplify the truest truths in order to produce the best possible effects in a particular person, audience or setting. One author claimed that upaya was a sort of "social and cultural relativism" that reverberated positively with postmodern values (Hubbard 2006). The concept of skilful means is often used to essentially indicate that wisdom involves following the Buddhist precepts in spirit, if not in letter. Sometimes complex discourses
must be truncated or simplified in order to achieve the best possible benefit for a particular audience. Sometimes violence must be done in the spirit of non-violence.

Tibetan Buddhist lama Chogyam Trungpa Rinpoche was reported have advocated skilful means in the form of "ruthless compassion" in situations in which advanced practitioners queried about whether it was ethical to use violence in order to do a greater good (Feuerstein 1988: 249). Feuerstein reports that Chogyam Trungpa's recommendation assumes the maturity and goodness of the practitioners, but he reports being ill at ease with what is purportedly a slippery ethic slope: "Trungpa's unqualified answer that violence is a valid means in the spiritual process is alarming. However, this belief reflects an attitude that is common in spiritual circles and is closely associated with the paternalism so prevalent in the spiritual traditions, which treats the seeker or disciple as a child. This has repeatedly led to situations of abuse" (249).

Skilful means also refers to knowing when to give and when not to give. As I discussed in Chapter 8, Lama Yeshe himself gave a lecture in 1975, in which he noted that not all giving is created equal. There are right and wrong ways to give. Lama Yeshe stated, "Westerners over emphasize physical action. For example, many people believe that they're being religious when they give money to the poor or to worthy causes but often what they're doing is just an ego trip. Instead of their giving becoming an antidote to dissatisfaction and attachment it simply causes increased dissatisfaction and egocentricity and therefore has nothing to do with religion. Such people are taking the religious idea that it's good to give and believe that they're giving, but from the Buddhist point of view charity is not what you give but why and how… Therefore we have to carefully check our supposedly religious actions to make sure that they do in act bring benefit and don't cause more confusion for themselves and others" (Yeshe 2008: 18). From my perspective, this is one of the few internal critiques of uncritical charitable giving that I have read from inside the world of Tibetan Buddhism. Ironically, also from
my perspective, the Maitreya Project itself is being accused by Kushinagari farmers of
giving in a way that will not benefit the donors, and causing "confusion for themselves
and others." Even more ironic, again from my perspective, is that the 1975 lectures were
printed in a volume called "Universal Love," which was commissioned and sponsored by
the Maitreya Project itself.

During a Question and Answer session which followed the lecture quoted above,
Lama Yeshe was asked about how to know when it is better, more moral, to withhold
generosity.

Q: Do you also have to check to see whether what you're giving is appropriate?
Lama: Yes, that's a good point too. For example, if you give money to somebody
who then goes and gets drunk, instead of helping that person, you've given harm.
That's just a simple example; there are many more.
Q: Would it then be charitable not to give that person money?
Lama: Yes, that's right. (Yeshe 2008:24).

Skilful means is often used to show nuance to arguments and action about ethics and
morality. What is good and what is bad, what is true and what is false, what is right and
what is wrong – none of these are black and white. The logic of skilful means is
commonly deployed within FPMT to explain how an enlightened being like Lama Zopa
Rinpoche might do something that appears unjust, when really he know that the benefits
will trickle down to everyone, even the villagers so angry at him now. Faithful devotees
found comfort in the fact that if their Lama was using skilful means, then it was not for
them to judge one way or the other, since he knew better than they did. Since their Lama
is believed to be omniscient, and he is able to act with skilful means, it absolves devotees
of the ability to question inconsistencies, injustices, etcetera. The significant power of
skilful means is that it can also be used to justify anything, and as mentioned above it can
be a slippery slope towards giving guru's a free hand to do absolutely anything – whether
for good or ill.
Another tack offered by devotees was not that real good was masquerading as injustice, but rather that in order to do real good, sometimes a little injustice was just acceptable collateral damage. These interviewees felt that even if there was a land acquisition issue, only a fraction of people would be hurt in contrast to the immense benefits that would be accrued to all sentient beings. The logic that perhaps a few eggs must be broken to make an omelet was not uncommon in discussion about the controversy. Gertie, a German devotee, said "Maybe it's just the only way that it can happen. Maybe there's no way that it can happen without someone getting hurt. Maybe it's impossible for everyone to benefit." An FPMT monk shrugged and said that realistically there was a cost-benefit analysis at play; "I would definitely sacrifice a few farm families' happiness for the religious good of the rest of the world," he said.

Another perspective that made the rounds primarily amongst students, but also a few devotees, is that the Tibetan Buddhist notions of karma allows for karmic intermediaries that block one from acquiring negative karmas oneself. For example, one student brought up the fact of how Tibetan monks, even the Dalai Lama, can eat meat, provided that meat was no specifically killed on their behalf. In Lhasa, for example, one cannot help but notice that all of the butchers are Muslims who settled in Tibet centuries ago to do the karmically impure work of slaughtering animals. In Lhasa today, this is still the arrangement. Moreover, Tibetan Buddhists in Lhasa who make ritual panoramas/boxes in order to draw the ill-fortune out of their households, will still often set those boxes near the Muslim neighborhood of the Barkhor, so that they can be destroyed by those who disbelief in the consequences. These karmic intermediaries run defense for Buddhists who are not keen to take the impurity upon themselves. This relates to the Maitreya Project only insofar as FPMT students confronted with the controversy have occasionally connected the tendency to allow others to kill animals for Buddhist consumption with the sense that the Maitreya Project seems comfortable
allowing the Uttar Pradesh state government to cause suffering in order that the land be acquired. I heard variations of this argument many times, but usually from students not wedded to FPMT or the Maitreya Project. In a conversation with Jennifer, an American in Bodh Gaya, who was volunteering elsewhere, although she had loose ties to FPMT, she seemed saddened about the controversy in Kushinagar that I had just narrated to her. As it became clear to her that FPMT had no presence in Kushinagar proper, and seemed to be saying that they would not communicate with farmers until after the acquisition, she seemed angry. "I hate that Tibetans will eat meat just because someone else killed the cow. I think that's what's happening here. They [the Maitreya Project staffers] don't care that the Uttar Pradesh police will beat people out of their houses. They don't care that the farmers will fight back against the police. They don't care that people are cursing the Buddha." At this point I explained that the Buddha himself was not being blamed by farmers, since they respect Buddha as an avatar of Vishnu. I then told her that since none of the farmers knew who Lama Zopa Rinpoche was, they tended to blame the Dalai Lama and Babbar Singh. She then continued, "Oh, then they are making so much bad karma! But the Maitreya Project doesn't care about the collateral bad karma that is being created. They just care that they will get the good karma from building the damn statue."

Jennifer, as a non-devotee had taken refuge in FPMT, and been to several courses over as many years, but had not really committed to FPMT or its teachers. She was volunteering at a local educational charity and going to the Mahabodhi Stupa on a regular basis. She told me that she did not feel that Lama Zopa Rinpoche was necessarily to blame, but that she would not be surprised if he had consented to all of the poor decisions made in the Maitreya Project planning: "He's smart, I think. But he's no Dalai Lama. I think that Lama Zopa Rinpoche may be the problem. He may be too Tibetan, and just isn't getting the point of engaged Buddhism. I am not sure though – don't quote me on that." I asked if I could quote her provided that I used a pseudonym, and she
consented. Her perspective was not singularly unique, but neither was it normative or institutionally sanctioned FPMT thinking.

Aside from the argument that the guru knows best, or that the guru is to blame, there was another common response to the Maitreya Project controversy by FPMTers: the guru must not know anything about it. After a candid discussion with Gertie, a German devotee in residence at the Root Institute, about my opinions of the injustices being perpetrated in Kushinagar, she seemed genuinely upset, but unwilling to believe that her guru could have any knowledge of the situation.

Gertie: There are many of us who don't know anything about that. I thought the land was secure, but that there were money troubles – an inability to fundraise enough money. Many of us really want the statue. It will be good for those poor people.
Jessica: But the people who are suffering the most probably won't get the benefits of the statue.
Gertie: You should email Lama Zopa Rinpoche. He must not know about it. You should tell him.

Gertie's reaction was not at all unusual amongst students and devotees; I was often told that Lama Zopa Rinpoche's advisors and the Maitreya Project staff could be hiding information from him out of ignorance, as they were just seekers on the path and not omniscient. I was advised over and over again to try to tell him. The FPMT devotees and monastics that I met who believed that the Maitreya Project was indeed acting in bad faith were willing to believe that the Lama was uninformed or testing them as a community, but none of them, not one, ever said that they thought Lama Zopa Rinpoche himself bore any responsibility for the controversy, or had made any mistakes along the way. Although Berzin argues that guru devotion should not be taken as absolute acceptance of everything the guru says or does, he also explains that many Westerners are so anxious about transgressing their commitments of devotion that they are far too
judgmental of themselves when they feel doubt (2000). It is this excess of guru devotion, or misunderstanding of it, perhaps, that helps explicate how the Maitreya Project could be understood by some FPMTers as a failure of everything and everyone, except Lama Zopa Rinpoche himself.

**Conclusion**

In this chapter I have detailed the development of grassroots resistance to the Maitreya Plans in both Bodh Gaya and Kushinagar. I have worked to describe the context of the current standoff in Kushinagar, and the diversity of strong opinions about the project in Kushinagar. Despite the success of the Kushinagari resistance in delaying the forcible land acquisition, I cannot end this dissertation, or this chapter, with a happy reflection upon the fact that David has defeated Goliath once again. The farmers have not won. The waiting game continues – the threat still looms, the farmers still rally and fast, fear is still growing as quickly as the sugarcane, and uncertainty about the future is still the order of the day.

Figure 23. Anti-Maitreya project protest – women's wing. (Photograph by Jessica Falcone.)
I have worked to contextualize the resistance of the farming community in Kushinagar (see Figure 23) to the Maitreya Project, their partners, and the FPMT community. Although I do not myself condone the manner in which the Maitreya Project staff has conducted their affairs, I have tried to understand the whys and wherefores of their decision-making by looking at some of the sociologies that have guided their approach. In doing so, I have once again determined that the conventional perspective is an important one, since the politics of the controversy is just as important as its poetics. Taking too sharp a postmodern turn might emphasize the truism that morality is always already just a construction; loving-kindness is essentially empty. The land was supposedly "empty," yet from another perspective, it is doubly occupied. So who is to say what is right and what is wrong? In facing these intractable questions, I have juxtaposed the details of the land controversy with the conventional moral constructions of FMPT and MPI themselves to lay bare the fraught dynamics at play.
"MAITRI": INTERLUDE

"This world very much needs love. We have to help the next Buddha, Maitreya, the Buddha of love, come to be. I am more and more convinced that the next Buddha may not be just one person, but he may be a community of love. We need to support each other to build a community where love is tangible" (Nhat Hanh 1998: 141).

FIELDNOTES: May 24, 2006

Jessica: Can you tell me about maitri?

Ernest: Loving-kindness is a wish for them to be happy, and then you develop the wish to reduce their suffering. Attachment is when you expect something from others... Real love is trying to make others happy. It is altruistic.

Jessica: I have often wondered about maitri in terms of my own academic culture... In Tibetan monastic culture, how can one debate with maitri?

Ernest: Well, in Tibetan debate the motivation of fame or pride is discouraged. It is competitive. You've got to prove that someone else is wrong. Their delusion is fogging their mind. By everyone getting worked up and competitive your mind gets charged up. In a Tibetan context, teachers are reluctant to praise [debaters]. Tibetan teachers very rarely give signs that students have done well. Therefore, there is little performative competition for the benefit of the teachers. Also, a class is very supportive of each other. The dynamics in a cohort are supportive. Tibetans, and especially monks, are taught to avoid anger - it is bred out of children. So debating without anger is important.

Jessica: You've done a lot of Tibetan debate yourself, right?

Ernest: Yes. A good deal. At IBD (the Institute of Buddhist Dialectics), there is philosophy and debate, but not the emphasis on ritual that you usually see at other monasteries.

Jessica: Is there a sense of ethics in the academic culture there?

Ernest: Yes, teachers often talk about ethical behavior. They do prayers and chanting, and there are so many lessons to be taken from these practices, as well as the texts we study...
Jessica: Please tell me about maitri and karuna; what's the difference between them.

Kirti Rinpoche: Loving-kindness and compassion - both have the attribute of feeling dear. The distinction... Champa is loving-kindness. You think of others, you want something good to them. How nice if they could be happy - it would be good. Can I give them happiness? Then you resolve to give them happiness. There are different degrees of Champa...

Jessica: In Tibetan debate, there is often a great deal of enthusiasm and also disagreement. Can there be loving-kindness in the midst of scholastic competition?

Kirti Rinpoche: When you criticize or debate with them you should think of helping others. When you bring up questions it will inspire them to think more. You are helping the knowledge and intelligence to grow. Your motivation must be sincere to help them and it will help them to increase their wisdom. It is good to have altruistic motivation before you criticize people. So the sincere and positive motivation is always the thing. In the monasteries there is the study of philosophy. Monks gather in groups for debate. The rest will challenge the person – the person who is sitting is being challenged by many people. This means that he learns so many more ways to answer questions. When you criticize and debate it helps to receive this intelligence. It raises doubts and helps them to raise more questions. In the West, there are conferences and seminars; scholars gather and everyone has ideas. More questions raised, and more doubts raised. It is very good to have this environment to debate – it helps everyone.

Jessica: I am just wondering about the antagonistic side of debate...often we feel that we have to take a side – and if I say that I am right, and he is wrong... it feels inconsistent with maitri somehow.

Kirti Rinpoche: Sometimes when there is a conference, a person who is being attacked, that person may feel embarrassed. They may take it negatively, but this is unfortunate for him. There's nothing that can be done. But you should be trying to help them. They may take it negatively, but you should still see that debate is generally a good thing.
A Backwards Glance

In January 2006, during my very first full month in India of my doctoral fieldwork stint proper, I met Christopher Titmuss, told him about my research project, and subsequently asked him for an interview. "The Maitreya Project," he said slowly, "That bloody Maitreya Project." For many years up to that moment, he had argued about the unbearable excesses of the Project, while I was at the outset of my investigations. What struck me most at the time was how unbelievably tired he sounded. I did not understand it then, but now I feel it in my bones – Maitreya Project fatigue.

Allow me to conclude with a backwards glance. I began the dissertation with an Introduction that advocated for the thoughtful deployment of Buddhist sociologies, in addition to more conventional anthropological ones, to best mediate my ethnographic data. I have argued that the use of concepts like "emptiness," "impermanence," and the "two truths" have resonance with anthropological and philosophical social theories. In the preceding chapters, I have worked to occasionally use these Buddhist social theories when appropriate, especially to demonstrate the simultaneous commensurability of the conventional perspective with the absolute truth of emptiness; for example, I utilized Buddhist logics to transcend either/or approaches to materiality, gifting, and morality. Thus, not only have my chapters been framed according to the Buddhist terminology of my informants, I have written my dissertation to try to reflect upon and through some of the critical concepts of the Tibetan Buddhist tradition. It can be useful, I believe, to work with, and literally think through, one's informants own frameworks instead of just imposing our own academic categories, theories and judgments. Like my FPMT
informants, I am picking and choosing, but also like them, I do not necessarily intend disrespect for what has not been chosen. As such, I would posit that by representing FPMT in both content and form I have achieved a fleshed out and multidimensional ethnography that is as true as possible to its subject.

In circumambulating around the Maitreya Project's statue as a research focus, and maitri as an ethical focus, I first established with the whos, whats and wherefores of both FPMT and the Maitreya Project. In Chapter 2, I examined the religious roots of the organization, as well as the places where FPMT converges with, and diverges from, other Western Buddhism, other Tibetan Buddhism, and other new Tibetan Buddhism. I focused on guru devotion as a particularly important religious idea that has ordered much of the bureaucracy, power and hierarchy within FPMT. In order to discuss the significance of the figure of the guru in the FPMT community and its religious and social practices, I addressed key questions of the co-constitution of skepticism and faith in Chapter 4.

In Chapter 6, my object of inquiry was the holy object itself. I worked to understand, "Why a 500-foot statue?" I traced the various theological reasons that holy objects are constructed and worshipped in Tibetan Buddhism in detail, in order to provide a historical context for the dedication that so many Buddhists have for Buddhist images, texts, relics and statues. I discussed specific sacred objects and object-focused events within FPMT, to show that there are various ways to apprehend these objects even within the same organization. I demonstrated that there is a wide spectrum between the poles of faith and doubt regarding holy objects in FPMT. I used the anthropological stylings of material culture studies, as well as Buddhist sociologies of emptiness, in order to frame my argument that the MPI statue has a conventional social life of its own.

My discussion of futurity as related to the Maitreya Project in Chapter 8 first explored macro notions that serve to guide a sense of Buddhist hope and anticipation,
such as temporality, karmic cosmology, and eschatology. I traced various aspects of future construction such as planning, image creation, prophesizing and progressions of "progress," in order to explicate the sociocultural uses of the future creation work extant within the Maitreya Project's modus operandi. I have argued here that the discomfort about endings and death that permeates so much of the human experience also underlies the project of giant statue construction planned for Kushinagar, and that this anxiety, or future tense, is present throughout the process of hope for creation. As I have defined it, the future tense must be recognized as an aspect of the project that shows the (im)possibility of surrendering to impermanence, even though my informants technically desire to do so.

Chapter 10 focused on the gift in FPMT, and the complexity of generosity as mandate, obligation, and choice within Buddhist ritual and practice. By arguing that the Buddhist gift is neither impossible, nor free, my perspective flies in the face of much writing South Asian gifting, as well as more general anthropological gift literature. I used the two truths to suggest that Mauss' trajectory and Derrida's are not mutually exclusive, but rather that both their voices and those like them represent important and valuable perspectives on reciprocity. I examined volunteering, offerings and gifts in FPMT to show obligation at the conventional level, and emptiness at the ultimate level.

My final content-driven chapter focused on the concept of loving-kindness, and how that idea is being realized and/or betrayed by FPMTers and Maitreya Project staffers who have attempted to put the plan in motion in Bodh Gaya and then Kushinagar. As long as the project remains on the drawing board there is widespread accord about the values of maitri and the prospects for the statue, but every time the statue planners endeavor for emplacement, they find that there is no ground beneath their feet. The chapter detailed the conflicts and cooperation between the local Indian communities and the Maitreya Project representatives, and how the current controversies have led to a
questionable land acquisition and a stalemate. In this context, I elaborated upon the local and regional grassroots resistance movement that has emerged to oppose the statue project in the first place, and neocolonial globalization in the second place. I have discussed the ways that FPMTers have dealt with various setbacks, failure to progress forward, and the resulting finger-pointing and internal debate; finally, I showed how the futures of maitri, faith and the statue's very existence remain at stake.

And so, we all wait to see what will happen next.

(Still) Waiting for Maitreya

"VLADIMIR: (musingly). The last moment… (He meditates). Hope deferred maketh something sick, who said that?" (Beckett 1954: 8).

While some MPI staff remain active in fundraising and cheerleading for the statue project, they are simply waiting for the land to be acquired before they can move ahead in earnest. Despite the setbacks and dwindling funds, the Maitreya Project hopes to seize the land soon, and "start over" with fundraising. "Until we get Kushinagar, I'm twiddling my thumbs," said one staffer in 2006. FPMTers and others who support the project wait impatiently. Lama Zopa Rinpoche, by all accounts, is also waiting.

As mentioned in a previous chapter, waiting is one of the faces of hope. The FPMT community is playing the waiting game. In Crapanzano's ethnography of South African whites before apartheid fell, he finds his informants waiting for something, anything, to happen (1985). Depressed, anxious, and wondering what would happen in the future, the South African whites did nothing to work towards preparation; the point is that hope can be paralyzing. Crapanzano writes that hope "is the field of desire in waiting" (45). The South African whites were afraid of the coming political changes, and took refuge in leaving their futures to their faith. There is something passive and paralyzed about FPMT's relationship to the Maitreya Project. Devotees are hopeful and
anxious, but they generally do nothing, say nothing, and just trust in their leaders to sort out whatever issues the project faces. The response to conflict or controversy is icy silence, defensiveness or rationalizations. These devotees are also waiting.

Figure 24. Farmers, social workers, and an anthropologist at the anti-MPI protests and fasts in Kushinagar early one spring morning in 2007. (Photograph taken by a bystander on behalf of Jessica Falcone.)

The farmers of Kushinagar, on the other hand, are waiting to slough off their panic mode. They are waiting for notification that the end of their world is not nigh, but until then they will sit in a show of determined resistance (see Figure 24). The BBSS waits for the cessation of hostilities, fasts, protests, and strikes. They wait day by day for the official, and true, word that the project will be cancelled or moved far away, so that their lives can return to normal after almost a decade of struggle.

The waiting of my informants represents one of those all important gaps (Boellstorff 2008; Crapanzano 2004): this is a gap between what is anticipated and what
may yet happen. While Baudrillard may argue that in our postmodern era the gap has collapsed or imploded in on itself (1994), I doubt that it is so. There is a difference, a palpable distance, between our presents and our futures, and the gaps are as manifestly (g)aping as they ever were. The gap is no strategic delay (Bourdieu 1977) – waiting is something else entirely.

There are no more interludes, so this can't wait. A cobbled together pastiche of my fieldnotes on the subject of waiting:

2006: Is Kushinagar waiting or is it living? Is there a difference between the two? Aren't we always waiting and anticipating in the present?...And is Kushinagar as dead as people say? As of yet unborn? Everyone talks of rebirth and rejuvenation of the town, so does that mean that it is dead now, or in a holding pattern? They talk about it as being dead, slow, devoid of spirituality and social energy. This version is popular amongst Buddhists, business-people and even myself at times, but the farmers have a different view. They see their crops growing, the fertility of the land, and the village world which is as lively as it has ever been. For the people of Anirudwa, nothing is dead, not yet. The town is not waiting to live life, they are waiting for other things.

2006: On waiting. My Buddhists are waiting for the rebirth of Maitreya, waiting for a better rebirth, waiting for the rebirth of Kushinagar, waiting for the statue. My farmers are waiting for the statue project to fizzle out and go away, but they wait for other things too. They are all of them waiting for something: a baby, a good job for their eldest son, a letter from Kolkata, enough money to build an extension, recovery from illness, a change in luck, a rise in the price of sugar-cane. They wait for the cost of a tractor to come down. We wait for the next bus, for the warmth of March, but not the heat of April.

2006: All of Kushinagar is waiting for Holi. Waiting for the other shoe to drop, waiting for a decision about the Maitreya Project. Waiting to celebrate or riot. Waiting to pack. Or waiting to sigh with relief – waiting to resume an interrupted sense of security. Waiting for the pilgrimage season to end, and the long hot summer to begin. And then they will patiently wait for the tourists to return. And others wait for the harvest. Waiting for exam results. Waiting for her husband to come home after drinking with his friends...

2006: Today I'm waiting for Holi to be over, waiting for the [Sharmas] to have time to take me out for interviews. Waiting for loved ones to call.

2007: I am waiting too. I am waiting for my informants, waiting for information,
waiting to tell the MP, waiting for money, waiting for the end, the book...

2009: The waiting is unbearable. What next? A grant, postdoc, job, thumb-twiddling? I applied for two handfuls of possible futures, but the waiting is so agonizing that I celebrate rejection letters. Rejections are not pleasurable, but they do scratch an itch, even if momentarily. One future less to wait for.

2010: A job! A miracle in this depressed, oversaturated market. My future begins to pick up steam and crystallize. I can't wait – full health benefits! And yet, my own students, my own job, and my own career come with a heavy burden. For now, I have to wait to see when, if ever, my partner and I will find academic jobs in the same vicinity. There will be countless miles between Tsering and I. I dread the dissolution of our shared household. He gets that bookshelf and I get the desk? A happy ending deferred yet again...

2010: Will the Maitreya Project have the land by June 2010 as they now promise? Not if the Kushinagari farmers currently living on, and determinedly farming, that particular land have anything to say about it, of course – but now that Mayawati is in power as CM, they may not be able to defer eviction any longer. Far from the field now, I am more helpless than ever – and I've never been further away. I cannot speak for the other readers of these MPI updates, but as I read my heart is pounding, and my palms are moist. I feel their momentum re-constructing itself, and I despair for MPI's staid rigidity. I desperately await news from Kushinagar.

Can you believe it? As far as we have come together, it is far from over. I am still waiting, and so are they.

_Dedicating the Merit_

_This_ was a Buddhist dissertation? This explicit condemnation of the malpractices of the Maitreya Project in Kushinagar? Yes, indeed – I believe that by framing this dissertation through the Buddhist sociologies of FPMT and its Maitreya Project with Buddhist social theory as well as Western social theory, I can claim to have worked with some of the practices of Buddhism instead of just writing about them. Moreover, I would argue that the process of research, advocacy and even writing represented, for me, a form of sustained, mindful, engaged Buddhist practice.
In all seriousness, and with due respect to the compassion and loving-kindness that sits at the center of so much of the ritual and practice of certain Buddhisms, activisms and anthropologies respectively, whatever little bit of merit may have been earned in the process of researching and writing this dissertation, I hope it will benefit all sentient beings everywhere. Whatever demerit may have unfortunately been garnered in the process, unintended though it was, may that rest with me alone.
APPENDIX 1

LAND COMPENSATION RATES SPREADSHEET

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ACTOR</th>
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<th>MARKET $</th>
<th>AMOUNT</th>
<th>NOTE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>* Teacher</td>
<td>4 lakh</td>
<td>1 kutta</td>
<td>(near road)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>8000</td>
<td>20,000</td>
<td>1 kutta (away from road)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
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<td>60 crore</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* Farmer</td>
<td>6000</td>
<td>75,000</td>
<td>1 kutta</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
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<td>1 kutta</td>
<td>town rate</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>15,000-16,000</td>
<td>1 kutta</td>
<td>farm rate</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* Bureaucrat</td>
<td>65.96 crore</td>
<td>660 acres</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* Businessman</td>
<td>8000</td>
<td>1 lakh</td>
<td>1 kutta</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This spreadsheet is a chronological record of some my initial inquiries about land compensation rates (the numbers provided during recorded, official interviews) in Kushinagar and Deoria in 2006 and 2007. The "Govt $" column refers to the amount offered by the Uttar Pradesh state government, while the "Market $" column refers to the amount as valued on the market. "Amount" refers to the amount of land being referred to by the actor. While there is certainly variability, there is also clearly a pattern in the valuation. According to Kushinagari informants, there are 25 kutta per acre. Valuation is in Indian rupees. One lakh is 100,000 and one crore is 10,000,000 (or in Indian numeration: 1,00,00,000). I note when farmers specifically say that they would not sell at any rate. Farmers were interviewed at or before protests, but most often at their homes. Each new entry, as denoted with an asterisk, represents a separate individual (only two people above were interviewed twice).
* Potential Buyer 30-40 lakhs 1 acre

* Businessman 55,000 64 lakh-1 crore a parcel of unspecified size
(anecdote about pre-MPI land prices)

* Farmer 10,000 1 lakh 1 kutta

* Farmer 8 lakh 1 acre 1996 rate

* Farmer 50,000 1 kutta

12.5 lakh 1 acre (but wouldn't sell)

* Farmer 1 lakh 1 kutta (but wouldn't sell)

* Farmer 4 lakh 1 kutta (but wouldn't sell)

* Farmer 1 lakh 1 kutta (but wouldn't sell)

* Farmer 4000 30,000 1 kutta

* Farmer 1 lakh 1 kutta (but wouldn't sell)

* Potential Buyer 20,000 1 kutta far from MPI area

2 lakh 1 kutta near MPI area
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Price Range</th>
<th>Land Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Farmer</td>
<td>3.5 lakh</td>
<td>1 acre by main roads</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>14,000</td>
<td>1 kutta by main roads</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1.5 lakhs</td>
<td>1 acre away from roads</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6,000</td>
<td>1 kutta away from roads</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1 crore</td>
<td>1 acre roadside land rate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>10.5 lakh</td>
<td>1 acre agricultural land rate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>8000</td>
<td>1 kutta</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>8000</td>
<td>1 kutta</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bureaucrat</td>
<td>26,074,818</td>
<td>608 acres</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Landowner</td>
<td>130,000</td>
<td>per kutta on the market</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2 lakh</td>
<td>per acre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farmer</td>
<td>5-6 lakh</td>
<td>1 acre on highway (Kasia)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1.24 lakh</td>
<td>1 acre by river</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Farmer          | 8,000 to 12,000 | 1 lakh 25,000 | per kutta
|                 |             | ("But the value is in the billions, not the millions.") |
|                 |             | 3 lakh | per kutta near hotel area    |
| Farmer          | 6,000       | 2 lakh | per kutta near hotel area    |
30,000 per kutta for "worst land"

* Farmer 8-12,000 per kutta "ridiculous"
1 lakh 25,000 per kutta "is about right"
1 lakh 50,000 per kutta "what we want"
1 lakh 30,000 per kutta is "okay"

("The actual rate is more than 10 times what the government thinks.")

* Farmer 6-40,000
1 lakh per kutta
2 lakh per kutta is "good"

(But still wouldn't sell.)
APPENDIX 2

NUMBER OF PEOPLE AFFECTED \(^{158}\)

* Bureaucrat - 7 villages - 2000 people affected - 660 acres
[Farmer (in response to the Bureaucrat) - 2000 families, \textit{not} 2000 people affected]

* Farmer - 1400 households - 20,000 people affected

* Bureaucrat - 7 villages - 2977 people affected

* Farmer - 1400 families affected

* Bureaucrat - 3000 families (3000 households) affected. 48 households displaced.

* Bureaucrat - 400-500 people (50 families) will be displaced, "scattered."

* Farmer - 2000 households affected ("in first stage")

* Farmer: In a family, maybe 10-12 people. 14,000 people affected. 1400 families here, and about 10 people per family means 14,000 people affected.
Jessica: But the govt. said 3000 families would be affected…?
Farmer: The government is right. But some people don't live here, some families live in Kasia or elsewhere. So, in total, maybe 30,000 people affected.

\(^{158}\) Representative, not comprehensive, selection of my data on numbers of people and/or houses that would be affected by the land acquisition. This table is listed in chronological order, all interviews conducted between 2006-7. Each note denotes a separate actor.
* Farmer: So, 500 houses will be destroyed. 1400 heads of household will be affected by land loss. One father has 3-4 sons, and 2 or 3 brothers could be living in the same house, so it's a question of different definitions of a family unit.

* Jessica: How many houses would be destroyed?

Farmer: The actual number is about 500. About 250 concrete buildings, and 250 small huts, not concrete. of the 500 about 100 are in Anirudhwa purva; 48 of these are the concrete houses they were talking about, about 50 others that are not concrete. The other houses have not been counted. The amount being given for the houses is minimum. You need 7-8 lakhs to make a house, but the government rate is around 20,000 rupees in compensation.
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anatman - (Sanskrit) no-self
anitva - (Sanskrit) impermanence
asha - (Sanskrit) hope
bardo - (Tibetan) intermediate state
bbadrasana - (Sanskrit) particular seated pose
bigha - (Hindi) land measurement – disparate acreage according to regional differences
bodhi - (Sanskrit) mind of enlightenment, perfect knowledge
bodhicitta - (Sanskrit) desire to achieve enlightenment for all sentient beings
chapati - (Hindi) unleavened bread
chi khor - (Tibetan) counter-clockwise circumambulation
chowk - (Hindi) traffic circle
crore - (Hindi) ten million
dana - (Sanskrit) generosity
ek - (Hindi) one
gaali - (Hindi) abusive language; profanity
geshe - (Tibetan) high Tibetan monastic degree
gompa - (Tibetan) monastery
gyu - (Tibetan) substantive cause
jati - (Sanskrit) sub-caste
kalpa - (Sanskrit) era
karma - (Sanskrit) causal system in Buddhism, Hinduism, Jainism, etc.
kbatak - (Tibetan) offering scarf
kuten - (Tibetan) oracle
kutta - (Hindi) land measurement – disparate acreage according to regional differences.
(In Kushinagar, a kutta is considered 1/25th of an acre.)

kyen - (Tibetan) cooperating causes and conditions

kora - (Tibetan) circling, clock-wise circumambulation

lakb - (Hindi) one hundred thousand

Lama Choîpa - (Tibetan) guru devotional practice

lapa - (Tibetan) oracle

layo - (Tibetan) notion that can be translated as akin to either "karma," "sin," or "the result of the suffering of change"

le - (Tibetan) karma

lha-khang - (Tibetan) chapel or altar room

lo jong - (Tibetan) mental training

mala - (Sanskrit) necklace, rosary

maîtrî - (Sanskrit) loving-kindness

mara - (Sanskrit) negative karma

mos - (Tibetan) divinations

muboli – (Hindi) adopted

mudra - (Sanskrit) gesture

pecha - (Tibetan) unbound Tibetan text

pratityasamutpada - (Sanskrit) dependent origination

puja - (Sanskrit) prayer

rapne - (Tibetan) consecration

rigstel - (Tibetan) relics

sadhana - (Sanskrit) practice

sangha - (Sanskrit) community

she nyen tentshul - (Tibetan) guru devotion

sode - (Tibetan) luck
sonam - (Tibetan) "stored karmic merit"

stupa - (Sanskrit) particular holy object or relic receptacle, usually a dome-like structure

snyata - (Sanskrit) emptiness

thangka - (Tibetan) particular style of Tibetan Buddhist painting

tsatsa - (Tibetan) Buddhist statues made as part of a particular ritual/meditation practice

tsong - (Tibetan) particular kind of offering, feast offering

tulku - (Tibetan) reincarnate lama

varna - (Sanskrit) caste

vinaya - (Sanskrit) monastic discipline

wang - (Tibetan) empowerment

wallah - (Hindi) doer/maker, as in chaiwallah

yidam - (Tibetan) personal or tutelary deity form