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## Free Inquiry and Japanese Buddhist Studies: The Case of Katō Totsudō (1870-1949)\*\*



This paper argues that an influential but hitherto largely unexamined strain of Japanese Buddhist studies emerged from the ideal of “free inquiry” (*jiyū tōkyū* 自由討究) advocated by the Fraternity of New Buddhists (*Shin Bukkyōto Dōshikai* 新佛教徒同志會), a group of lay intellectuals and disaffected priests primarily active in Tokyo from 1900 to 1915. Although this group disbanded in the late 1910s, the New Buddhist project of “free inquiry” reached its zenith in the 1920s, when former members such as Katō Totsudō 加藤咄堂 (1870-1949) prodigiously published evidentiary scholarship on Buddhism while also advocating normative policy aims such as the eradication of superstition and the inculcation of “a sound Buddhist faith” in the populace. Katō’s “free inquiry” upheld the ideal of academic freedom as a way of countering sectarianism and superseding clerical authority, but as an example of activist Buddhist studies scholarship that clearly influenced contemporary religious policy, it was hardly politically neutral.

*Keywords:* Free inquiry – New Buddhism – Katō Totsudō – social edification – politics of religious freedom

Buddhist studies in the Taishō 大正 (1912-1926) and early Shōwa 昭和 (1926-1989) periods should not be characterized solely by the rise of evidentiary scholarship, philological and historiographic methodologies, and major editorial

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\*\* This article is based on Chapter 3 of my 2014 Princeton University doctoral dissertation. In addition to my advisor Jacqueline Stone and the other members of my examination committee, I am indebted to Michel Mohr and Kerry San Chirico for their comments on a presentation of an early draft of the paper in November 2013. Thanks as well to James Dobbins, Hayashi Makoto, Jason Josephson, Orion Klautau, and Bryan Lowe and members of the audience for their comments and questions at the AAR panel session (also November 2013) on which this special issue is based.

efforts like the compilation of the Taishō Buddhist canon (the *Taishō shinshū daizōkyō* 大正新脩大藏經). These efforts were obviously extremely influential on Buddhist studies both in Japan and worldwide, and have been well-documented in previous scholarship.<sup>1</sup> As part of a larger research project on the politics of religious freedom in twentieth-century Japan, this article shows that an equally important, politically influential, and hitherto largely overlooked aspect of Buddhist studies emerged in the late 1910s and early 1920s. At that time, Buddhist intellectuals began to popularize Buddhist studies for a lay audience while simultaneously using their familiarity with Buddhist doctrine and history to support political initiatives, particularly social edification (*kyōka* 教化), spiritual mobilization of the citizenry, and the eradication of superstition.

In this article I focus in particular on the afterlife of the Shin Bukkyōto Dōshikai 新佛教徒同志會 (Fraternity of New Buddhists), a group of relatively young Buddhist intellectuals and disaffected priests that was active in the first fifteen years of the twentieth century. At the height of its activity, the Fraternity's chief activities involved publishing the journal *Shin Bukkyō* 新佛教 and hosting monthly lecture meetings (*enzetsukai* 演說会) on topics related to Buddhist reform.<sup>2</sup> The Fraternity paired a progressive approach to doctrine with a commitment to liberal political principles (especially a policy of rejecting governmental interference in religions' affairs), but at the same time they championed relatively conservative stances regarding public morals and advocated the eradication of "superstition" (*meishin* 迷信).

While a considerable body of scholarship exists on the Fraternity during the time *Shin Bukkyō* was in publication (July 1900 to August 1915), less is known about the roles that the New Buddhists played in the late Taishō and early Shōwa eras, when they entered middle age and began to enjoy a greater degree of prestige and political clout. Below I use the lay Buddhist Katō Tōtsudō 加藤咄堂 (b. Yūichirō 熊一郎, 1870-1949) as an example of how the former New Buddhists successfully married their reformist vision to the policy aims of influential policymakers in the late Taishō era.<sup>3</sup> In particular, I focus on how the ideal of "free inquiry" (*jiyū tōkyū* 自由討究) privileged lay academic approaches to Buddhist history and doctrine, thereby rendering Buddhism useful for political projects such as social edification and nation-building.

1. Stone 1990; Hayashi and Ōtani, eds. 2009; Klautau 2012.

2. There are several foregoing works on the New Buddhists, including Ikeda 1976, Josephson 2006, Ōtani 2012, Hoshino 2012, and Yoshinaga, ed. 2012.

3. In my 2014 Princeton University dissertation I rendered Katō's given name as "Kumaichirō" following conventions on the Modern Digital Library maintained by the National Diet Library of Japan. My deep thanks to an anonymous reviewer for pointing out that Katō's given name was "Yūichirō," not "Kumaichirō."

During the years *Shin Bukkyō* was actually in publication, Fraternity activities centered primarily on the intertwined aims of fostering “sound faith” through “free inquiry.”<sup>4</sup> As a nonsectarian, rational investigation of religious doctrines conducted with the aim of refining coarse religious practices, free inquiry provided a way for this group of lay intellectuals and disaffected priests to assert a degree of control over the Buddhist tradition. By adopting an authoritative academic tone, Fraternity members were able to bypass or undermine clerical claims; they were also able to highlight the power of a rational, desacralized Buddhism to combat deleterious “superstitions.”<sup>5</sup>

After the discontinuation of *Shin Bukkyō* in August 1915, many of the former members of the Fraternity continued to publish prolifically in special interest journals and in introductory texts on Buddhist history and doctrine aimed at a popular audience. They also continued to engage in social edification projects, advancing a political vision that paired the ideal of self-governance (*jichi* 自治) with sanguine visions of a benevolent state that would use the ideological power of Buddhism to cultivate the citizenry. This “pop” Buddhist studies scholarship had a political effect in that it contributed to contemporary understandings of religious freedom and ideal religion-state relations by discriminating between “true” and “false” religions. While their influence on popular opinion can only be measured indirectly, the historical evidence suggests that the erstwhile New Buddhists not only had a devoted audience of readers and listeners, but also that they enjoyed the trust of prominent politicians and policymakers.<sup>6</sup> Skillful use of academic language (and selective use of academic method) allowed these inveterate critics of the Buddhist clerical establishment to position themselves, rather than clerical leaders, as spokespeople for the Buddhist world.

In the specific case described below, free inquiry positioned the lay Buddhist Katō Totsudō – not an ordained representative of any of the Buddhist sects – to receive the imprimatur of Home Minister Tokonami Takejirō 床次竹二郎 (1866–1935) as Japan’s leading authority on Buddhism. It was Katō Totsudō, not any sectarian leader, who Tokonami felt could best articulate how to “cultivate the power of the people” through Buddhist teaching and outreach. In turn, Totsudō provided Tokonami with a Buddhist political philosophy that emphasized personal responsibility and morality and that criticized Buddhist clerics for failing to sufficiently address social ills.

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4. Yoshinaga, ed. 2012

5. See Josephson 2006 and 2012 for discussions of the category of “superstition” in early twentieth century Japan.

6. On the New Buddhists’ audience, see Ōtani 2012: 42–70; also see, in English, Ōtani 2014. I discuss the New Buddhists’ connections with policymakers below.

Viewed in light of his evident popularity as a scholar and orator and in light of his political connections, Totsudō's biography helps to clarify how attempts to harness the power of religion for nation-building and eradicate "superstition" became bureaucratic projects carried out at both national and local scales during the Taishō era. Totsudō's scholarship and speeches show that important articulations of ideal religion-state relations did not always make explicit mention of legal principles such as religious freedom, but did make clear distinctions between what ideas and groups counted as "religion" and which practices were deserving of "freedom." If the Meiji Constitution had granted freedom of religious belief to Japanese citizens to the extent that exercising that freedom did not interfere with their duties as subjects or disturb peace and order, then research and speeches by former New Buddhists like Katō provided academic articulations of what constituted "genuine" religious belief and which beliefs and practices may have been detrimental to "peace and order." Similarly, if the Peace Preservation Law (*Chian iji hō* 治安維持法) of 1925 could be used repeatedly to suppress marginal movements for disturbing the peace, it was only because a distinction could be made between "true" and "false" religion – a theoretical distinction that was readily advanced by Totsudō and his fellow New Buddhists in a way that was useful to policymakers and police alike.<sup>7</sup>

### 1. *The New Buddhism Movement*

The New Buddhism movement has been thoroughly examined in foregoing scholarship, so I will only provide a brief overview here.<sup>8</sup> The Bukkyō Seito Dōshikai 佛教聖徒同志會 (Fraternity of Buddhist Puritans, renamed the Shin Bukkyōto Dōshikai 新佛教徒同志會, or Fraternity of New Buddhists, in 1903) emerged out of the Keikai 経緯會 (Warp and Woof Society) and its publication *Bukkyō* 佛教 (*Buddhism*). The Fraternity continued and expanded the Keikai project of criticizing the sectarian establishment but added to it a concern with social reform, pairing a progressive political project with a conservative social one. The group had been forged in the crucible of the debates over the controversial Yamagata Religions Bill (*Shūkyō hōan* 宗教法案) of 1899, and the founders and early members

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7. Sheldon Garon briefly acknowledged this connection in his important 1997 chapter on the suppression of marginal religious movements such as Ōmotokyō and Hito no michi.
  8. The most exhaustive and recent collection of studies is Yoshinaga, ed. 2012. A very early treatment is available as the last chapter of Ikeda 1976, while a collection of *Shin Bukkyō* editorials was compiled in four volumes with critical commentary under the editorial supervision of Futaba Kenkō in 1979. Other examinations of the movement are found in Thelle 1987, Davis 1992, Moriya 2005, Josephson 2006, Ōtani 2012, and Thomas 2014.

had been galvanized by what they saw as an inappropriate attempt by the Yamagata Aritomo 山県有朋 cabinet to unnecessarily interfere in religions' affairs. They were equally concerned with what they perceived to have been an inappropriate reaction to the legislation on the part of many Buddhists, who aimed to turn debates over the bill into an opportunity to secure a position for Buddhism as Japan's sole "officially recognized religion" (*kōninkyō* 公認教).<sup>9</sup> Over time, however, the Fraternity commitment to rejecting political protection of religion and governmental interference in religions' affairs retreated into the background in favor of other goals: the promotion of "sound faith" (*kenzen naru shinkō* 健全なる信仰) and the conduct of "free inquiry" (*jiyū tōkyū* 自由討究).<sup>10</sup>

Although the Fraternity members' political attitudes were outliers among their Buddhist contemporaries, in its transectarian outlook and its positioning of Buddhism vis-à-vis politics, society, and other religions, the Fraternity magazine *Shin Bukkyō* (*New Buddhism*) reflected broader trends in Buddhist print culture of the day.<sup>11</sup> During its sixteen years of publication (July 1900 - August 1915), *Shin Bukkyō* addressed a small, sympathetic audience of young lay intellectuals and clerics who harbored sincere interest in religious reform.<sup>12</sup> Because of its marginal position, *Shin Bukkyō* could play several roles: gadfly to the sectarian establishment; publication outlet for young and politically progressive Buddhist intellectuals; and a safe place for respected luminaries such as Sanskritist Takakusu Junjirō 高楠順次郎 (1866-1945) to air opinions that they might not have expressed in other venues. Indeed, many of the leading intellectual figures of the Buddhist world – particularly those who either lacked strong ties to clerical elites or were otherwise critical of

9. Thomas 2014: 119–167.

10. Yoshinaga 2012

11. Specifically, a new mode of apologetic (and inherently reflexive) Buddhist discourse had emerged in the aftermath of the *haibutsu kishaku* ("destroy the buddhas; expel Śākyamuni") pogroms of the late 1860s and early 1870s. This apologetic mode was solidified in the 1880s and 1890s as Buddhists attempted to stake out particular territory for Buddhism in the rapidly changing Meiji state. Buddhist apologia were disseminated through novel social media such as public oratory, the special interest magazine, and academic monographs written in colloquial style. On the "new social media" of "Buddhist youth culture," see Ōtani 2012: 42–70. On enzetsu oratory, see Hoshino 2012: 71–92.

12. Ōtani Ei'ichi places the maximum distribution of the journal at only about 400 copies in 1906, although he indicates that despite such a limited distribution the journal apparently had considerable notoriety in the contemporary Buddhist world. Ōtani 2012: 60. The journal was banned from publication three times (September 1910, October 1913, and May 1914).

the sectarian establishment – published in *Shin Bukkyō* at one time or another.<sup>13</sup> Tables of contents from the journal issues read, with the benefit of historical hindsight, as a veritable “Who’s Who” of Buddhist academia, although because of its transsectarian, anti-sacerdotalist orientation the journal never seems to have served as an outlet for sectarian scholarship (*shūgaku* 宗学).<sup>14</sup>

As lay intellectuals who enjoyed relatively high degrees of education, many of the Fraternity members preferred to discuss religion in an academic mode rather than a confessional one.<sup>15</sup> The academic stance allowed Fraternity members to speak authoritatively about Buddhism without relying on clerical status or any particular sectarian affiliation for their credentials. Academic training at institutions such as Tokyo Imperial University 東京帝国大学 and Tetsugakukan 哲学館 (later, Tōyō University 東洋大学) also gave them a toolkit of sophisticated conceptual tools to use in their discussions of Buddhist and social reform.<sup>16</sup> In this regard, they represented a burgeoning class of educated middle class intellectuals who stood outside of the corridors of political and sectarian power but nevertheless exerted influence on contemporary understandings of religion through their facility with abstract concepts.<sup>17</sup> This was also a natural reaction to – and extension of – an earlier generation of apologetic scholarship conducted by reformist Buddhist scholars such as Nakanishi Ushirō 中西牛郎 (1859-1930) and Inoue Enryō 井上円了 (1858-1919).<sup>18</sup>

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13. The New Buddhist culture of semi-secrecy aided this, and many contributions were attributed to “Anonymous” (*Soregashi*) or to obvious pseudonyms. The 1903 publication *The New Buddhism Bookmark* (*Shin Bukkyō no shiori*) promised, for example, to preserve the anonymity of people who wanted to join the group or contribute articles to the magazine. See SB 4, no. 13 (December 1903): 14.
  14. Hayashi Makoto has published several articles on the division of labor in Buddhist studies, religious studies, Oriental studies, and Shintō studies in modern Japan. See Hayashi 2008, 2009, 2013, 2014, and this volume.
  15. Ōtani 2012: 54–64. Fraternity guidelines suggested that members have at least a moderate level of education; potential members with prestigious academic credentials or professional experience were particularly welcomed (see, for example, the guide to membership published in *Shin Bukkyō no shiori*, 14).
  16. Tetsugakukan was founded by Buddhist reformer Inoue Enryō (1858–1919) in 1887. Many issues of *Shin Bukkyō* included advertisements seeking students for Tetsugakukan courses; Enryō contributed a congratulatory message to the journal in its second issue. See SB 1, no. 2: v (my pagination). Takashima also operated a bookstore specializing in Tetsugakukan textbooks, and later opened a publishing company that featured topics in Buddhism and philosophy. I discuss the press, Heigo Shuppan, in more detail below.
  17. See Hoshino 2012.
  18. See Hoshino 2009; Hoshino 2012; and Josephson 2006: 147–198.

*The Ideal of Free Inquiry*

This academic orientation was exemplified by the Fraternity celebration of “free inquiry” as a method for both describing and refining religion. As two early statements on free inquiry penned by Katō Genchi 加藤玄智 (1873-1965) and Katō Totsudō indicate, the New Buddhist ideal of free inquiry drew heavily from the emerging field of comparative religion, but it had a more explicitly normative component in that its practitioners exhibited a willingness to reject religious institutions and practices that seemed illogical or outmoded.<sup>19</sup> In Katō Totsudō’s rendition, a strong repudiation of clerical authority and a similar rejection of any special treatment for priests was also evident.

Befitting his training with Inoue Tetsujirō 井上哲次郎 (1855-1944) at Tokyo Imperial University, Katō Genchi wrote an early explication of free inquiry in a May 1901 issue of *Shin Bukkyō* that focused primarily on academic methods associated with the cutting edge of the field of comparative religion (the “surefire scientific methods” of critique, comparison, and historical analysis).<sup>20</sup> Due to personality conflicts and differences of vision, Genchi left the Fraternity about a year and a half after he had joined the group as its first non-founding member, meaning that it was ultimately Totsudō’s vision of free inquiry that would characterize the group’s efforts in later years.<sup>21</sup> Genchi’s 1901 statement on free inquiry as the practice of comparative religion appeared in a May 1901 issue of *Shin Bukkyō* that included short articles on each of the six points of the Fraternity platform, but after his departure Genchi’s contribution was replaced by Totsudō’s statement on free inquiry as a cure for sacerdotalism (*kyōkenshugi* 教權主義) in a 1903 special issue called *The New Buddhism Bookmark* (*Shin Bukkyō no shiori* 新佛教の葉).<sup>22</sup> Like Genchi, Totsudō emphasized the importance of academic inquiry for the general edification of the masses, but his vision of free inquiry exhibited less concern with the mechanics of scholarly method. Instead, he staked out a new position for the enlightened intellectual that was distinct from both clerical authority and the sort of dispassionate scholarship Genchi apparently favored.<sup>23</sup>

19. I refer to the two men by their given names below in order to distinguish between them. They were not related.

20. Katō Genchi, “Jiyū tōkyū,” SB 2, no. 5 (May 1901): 3.

21. Thomas 2014: 168–170.

22. Katō Totsudō, “Jiyū tōkyū,” *Shin Bukkyō no shiori* (SB 4, no 13; December 1903): 10. The short articles on the other five points of the Fraternity platform were merely reproduced from the May 1901 issue.

23. This is not to suggest that Genchi’s scholarship was actually politically neutral. See Thomas 2014, esp. 98–102.

The “free inquiry” model that matured in the pages of *Shin Bukkyō* in the following decade allowed lay intellectuals and disaffected priests to make authoritative statements about religion without needing to derive that authority from any sort of sectarian institution. With Totsudō’s vision as a guide, it also allowed them to conduct academic “research” in the service of foregone conclusions. That is, “free inquiry” used the methods and language of academia to question and critique the presuppositions of clerics, politicians, and ordinary citizens, but it was “research” that assumed that the New Buddhists ultimately knew what was best for Japan in terms of national policy and for Japanese citizens in terms of personal practice. “Free inquiry” had a normative component in that it was explicitly designed to improve society through spreading familiarity with a desacralized, lay-centric Buddhism while identifying certain practices and ideas as deserving of eradication.

*The New Buddhists after the Discontinuation of Shin Bukkyō*

Yoshinaga Shin’ichi has argued that the New Buddhist commitment to fostering “sound faith” in society at large became a presupposition shared by government policymakers and religious leaders alike by the time *Shin Bukkyō* ceased publication in 1915.<sup>24</sup> In this way, the discontinuation of the journal can be seen as a victory for the New Buddhist message rather than a failure. Indeed, both Takashima Beihō 高島米峰 (1875-1949) and Tanaka Jiroku 田中治六 (writing under the pseudonym Gaken Shō 我觀生, 1869-?) argued that the discontinuation of *Shin Bukkyō* marked the ultimate success of the New Buddhist project: Takashima claimed that the journal had served its stated purpose, while Tanaka suggested that most young religionists had already adopted “New Buddhist-ism.”<sup>25</sup>

These claims on the part of the New Buddhists themselves can be regarded with a degree of suspicion, for the New Buddhists had changed to match society just as much as clerics and politicians had come to embrace the Fraternity critique. As they entered middle age and gained increasing clout as respected intellectuals with ties to government leaders, the former commitment to “rejecting all sorts of political protection and interference” yielded to the impulse to negotiate protection for certain types of religiosity and interference in the development of other, unsavory, types. It was here that their project wielded the greatest influence on contemporaneous conceptions of religious freedom and ideal religion-state relations. While they initially resisted collaboration with government bureaucrats who they

24. Yoshinaga 2012: 41.

25. Takashima Beihō, “*Shin Bukkyō* o hōmuru,” SB 16, no. 8 (August 1915): 722; Gaken Shō, “*Shin Bukkyō* yuku,” SB 16, no. 8 (August 1915): 727.

suspected of aiming to control religion, by the middle of the Taishō era they were instead offering their professional opinions on how to cultivate religion for nation-building and how to police marginal “superstitions.”

The publication records of many of the prominent Fraternity members in the post-*Shin Bukkyō* period are impressive by any standard. By the early Taishō era when *Shin Bukkyō* was nearing its end, several members were publishing not only in that magazine but were also publishing in other periodicals as well as stand-alone monographs. Katō Totsudō edited the journal *Shin shūyō* 新修養 (*New Self-Cultivation*), kept up a busy lecture schedule in which he delivered upwards of two hundred speeches a year, and published multiple monographs on sundry aspects of Buddhist doctrine and history.<sup>26</sup> Suzuki Daisetsu 鈴木大拙 (1870-1966), a longtime contributor to *Shin Bukkyō* who had returned from the United States in 1909, thrust himself into his famed research and publication career.<sup>27</sup> Takashima Beihō managed the publishing house Heigo Shuppan 丙午出版, which published a series of introductory texts on Buddhism, including monographs by Suzuki, studies of Chinese and Japanese Buddhism by Sakaino Kōyō 境野黄洋 (1871-1933), and a general overview of Buddhism by Totsudō.<sup>28</sup> Takakusu Junjirō and Watanabe Kaikyoku 渡辺海旭 (1872-1933) compiled and edited the *Taishō shinshū daizōkyō*, still regarded as the definitive East Asian Buddhist canon today.

Any of these figures deserves sustained attention in light of the deeply intertwined New Buddhist ideals of “free inquiry” and “sound faith,” but the remainder of this article will use the figure of Katō Totsudō – and his personal relationships with owner of Heigo Press Takashima Beihō and Home Minister Tokonami Takejirō – to show how the New Buddhist ideal of “free inquiry” wielded its greatest political effects in the Taishō era after the discontinuation of *Shin Bukkyō* in 1915 and the subsequent dissolution of the Fraternity.

## 2. The Case of Katō Totsudō

Katō Totsudō was born Katō Yūichirō 加藤熊一郎 in Kansai to a samurai family.<sup>29</sup> He displayed academic aptitude from an early age, studying in the prestigious schools of the Kyoto region, but his father’s early demise meant that

26. *Shin shūyō* began publication in February 1913; many of the New Buddhists published in its pages as *Shin Bukkyō* neared the end of its life.

27. See Moriya 2005.

28. For a very brief overview of the history of the press and the types of books it published, see Ōtani 2012b. Takashima ran Heigo Press until 1934.

29. The following account of Katō’s life derives in part from his 1928 memoir *Fude to shita sanjū nen* and in part from Okada Masahiko’s very helpful, if short, biography in the collection of materials on the New Buddhism movement edited by Yoshinaga Shin’ichi (Yoshinaga, ed. 2012).

Totsudō grew up relatively poor. Inspired by the Freedom and People's Rights Movement of the 1880s, Katō moved to Tokyo in 1889 with the intention of studying law. He studied at the English Law School (Igirisu Hōritsu Gakkō, the predecessor to Chūō University 中央大学), but struggled to make ends meet. For a period Katō lived hand to mouth in Tokyo, cobbling together a living by writing for various journals, taking up translation work, and teaching. By his own account, while he made his living primarily by writing at his desk, at a certain point the debt collectors had marked even this crucial bit of property as subject to seizure.<sup>30</sup> Just when he seemed to be at a complete loss for gainful employment, through the kind intervention of an acquaintance Totsudō took up a position teaching at the clerical academy affiliated with Tsukiji Honganji 築地本願寺, the Settoku Kyōkō 積徳教校 (Accumulation of Merit Academy).

This serendipitous turn of events was the catalyst for Totsudō to apply his formidable talents as an orator and writer to the issues facing the contemporary Buddhist world. Although his academic training was technically in law, once he made the turn to Buddhism Totsudō published regularly and prolifically on his new subject. His first outline of Japanese Buddhist history was published in 1892; it was followed by his first overview of Buddhist doctrine, *Bukkyō kyōri yōron* 佛教教理用論, in 1893.<sup>31</sup> A steady stream of monographs on Buddhist subjects followed throughout the 1890s and well into the twentieth century.

While it is difficult to assess from considerable historical distance how these early publications were received, Totsudō's works were almost certainly read avidly by his peers in the "Buddhist youth culture" of the day.<sup>32</sup> No doubt his thoughts on preparing for "mixed residence" (*Bukkyō kokumin zakkyo go no kokoro* 佛教国民雜居後の心得, 1899) resonated with Buddhists who were concerned about the influx of Christians and the latitude granted to non-Japanese missionaries. Totsudō's authority on Buddhist matters was bolstered due to his editorial work for the main Buddhist journals of the time: *Meikyō shinshi* 明教新誌 (Totsudō served as *henshūnin* 編集人 from 1 May 1893-?) and *Chūgai nippō* 中外日報 (dates unclear). This authority derived entirely from Totsudō's intellectual acumen, not from his clerical training (he had none of which I am aware) nor from formal affiliation with

30. This account appears in the essay "Waga tsukue," reproduced in *Fude to shita sanjū nen* but originally published under Katō's pseudonym Kuroyama Kikutsu in SB 6, no. 8 (1905): 599–602.

31. The book included marginal notes for readers unfamiliar with the subject matter, a feature that positions Totsudō's work among the reformist apologia that proliferated in the 1890s. See Hoshino 2012, esp. 112–130.

32. See Ōtani 2012.

any particular sect (although he was nominally affiliated with the Sōtō Zen sect, Totsudō's publications were almost always written from a transsectarian point of view).<sup>33</sup>

Totsudō's editorial duties reflected his reputation as a skilled rhetorician and writer; he was also famed for his eloquence in speaking. Accordingly, when the Fraternity of Buddhist Puritans began planning their first public lecture meeting, they hoped specifically to bring him on board.<sup>34</sup> While it is unclear when Totsudō formally joined the group, he published his first article in *Shin Bukkyō* in April 1902.<sup>35</sup> He would go on to serve as one of the most prolific authors for the journal. While founding members Sakaino Kōyō and Takashima Beihō undoubtedly served as the official "face" of the Fraternity as the chief editors of the journal and the most prolific contributors to it, Totsudō's eminent stature within the group is evidenced by the esteem with which the members greeted his skills as an orator, their shared trust of Totsudō's magisterial knowledge of Buddhism despite (and perhaps because of) his non-clerical status, and the fact that he eventually shared editorial duties with the founding members and served as a member of the board (*hyōgiin* 評議員).<sup>36</sup>

While the list of Totsudō's contributions to *Shin Bukkyō* does not immediately reveal a consistent thematic pattern, his other publications can be broadly divided into three categories: 1) works on rhetoric and oratory; 2) primers on Buddhism for a non-specialist lay audience (e.g., *Bukkyō kōen shū* 佛教講演集 [Collected Lectures on Buddhism], 1910); and 3) works on self-cultivation that were targeted to social edification organizations.<sup>37</sup> Here I focus on his "pop" scholarship and works on self-cultivation in particular because they seem to best encapsulate the Fraternity

33. Totsudō taught for some time at Sōtō-shū Daigaku (the predecessor to Komazawa University in Tokyo) and penned a pamphlet for laypeople entitled *Sōtō-shū shinja no shiori*, published in February 1902 by Morie Press.

34. Takashima 1946b: 30. Some of Totsudō's publications reflect the esteem with which his oratory was greeted. His first extant publication, dated 1891, was on the subject of composition. In 1902 he published a monograph on eloquence, *Yūbengaku no taii* (*Outline of The Study of Eloquence*). The following year Totsudō was featured in several compilations on oratory. In 1906 he published a primer on rhetoric entitled *Enzetsu bunshō ōyō shūji gaku* (*The Study of Applied Rhetoric in Oratory and Writing*); in 1908 he published a book on oratory entitled *Yūben hō* (*Eloquence as Method*).

35. "Engeki ni awaretaru meishin," SB 3, no. 4 (1902): 177–179.

36. See the announcement in SB 4, no. 12 (December 1903): ii (my pagination).

37. See Okada 2012 for an incomplete list of Katō Totsudō's publications. For a more complete bibliography, see the listing of Katō Totsudō's publications in the Modern Digital Library maintained by the National Diet Library of Japan: <http://kindai.ndl.go.jp/>. Last accessed 6 December 2012. The NDL list includes 292 separate entries under Katō Totsudō's name, which gives a sense of the scope of his scholarly output. However, it does not include his editorials for journals such as *Shin shūyō*.

understanding that “free inquiry” would facilitate the inculcation of “sound faith” in the populace. These works also show how Totsudō’s Buddhist political philosophy could be easily turned to bureaucratic projects (spiritual mobilization for nation-building; the eradication of superstition) and how that political philosophy could inform conceptions of ideal religion-state relations.

While his dedication to his work seems unquestionable, Totsudō’s prodigious output was not merely due to the verve he brought to his subject matter. Although he probably received some income from his work as a lecturer at Buddhist-leaning universities like the Sōtō-shū University 曹洞宗大学 and Tōyō University, there was an economic imperative for him to keep producing new material because he primarily lived on honorariums from speeches and essays.<sup>38</sup> Both in their form and content, Totsudō’s publications in the interwar period generally reflected a “Protestant” commitment to minimizing clerical authority and a populist commitment to sharing cutting-edge scholarship with a general audience.<sup>39</sup> For example, most of Totsudō’s books and every issue of his journal *Shin shūyō* featured *furigana* ふりがな glosses for all words (not just unusual or difficult ones), thereby allowing people of minimal education to read and understand potentially difficult vocabulary. Some of his books also included marginal notes to guide readers through unfamiliar concepts.<sup>40</sup> When writing for a lay audience, Totsudō’s presentation of Buddhist doctrine was almost invariably brief, and references to abstruse Buddhist technical terms were almost always used in support of a political or social objective.

While he tailored his messages depending on his audience, in general Totsudō drew upon contemporary European theory, Japanese and Buddhist history, and Buddhist doctrine. Totsudō’s references to foregoing scholarship served a dual purpose. On the one hand, he cited such scholarship as a way of increasing lay audiences’ familiarity with the vanguard of academia. On the other hand, Totsudō’s references to scholarship – particularly scholarship in European languages – served the purpose of bolstering his own credentials by demonstrating his erudition. By dropping the names of European philosophers with whom his lay audiences were almost certainly not familiar, Totsudō underscored his own intellectual prowess. When discussing Buddhism, the language of academe gave him an edge over clerics in that he could dismiss their claims or practices as outmoded or shortsighted.

38. See Katō T. 1928. Also see Takashima Beihō, “Afterword (*Batsu*),” Katō T., *Fude to shita sanjūnen*.

39. See his editorial foreword to the inaugural issue of *Shin Shūyō* in 1913. Katō Totsudō, “Gakusha to jōjin,” *Shin shūyō* 4, no. 2 (March 1913): 7. Although this issue was listed as volume 4, number 2, it was actually the first volume published under the title “*Shin shūyō*” and Katō Totsudō’s editorship.

40. See, e.g., Katō T. 1910.

When discussing how to best address social problems, Buddhist language and skillful use of examples from Japan's religious history gave Totsudō an air of moral authority.

Totsudō's intellectual interests were eclectic, but he consistently mobilized others' scholarship on law, philosophy, and history to make some fairly simple points. In a time of rapid modernization and urbanization, he argued, Japan needed some sort of counter to the twin pressures of cosmopolitanism and individualism.<sup>41</sup> Moreover, in an age in which science was rapidly displacing older forms of knowledge, spurious superstitions needed to be eradicated in favor of proper religious faith and a commitment to self-cultivation.<sup>42</sup> If individual Japanese citizens could resist anti-scientific practices and embrace a rational religious faith centered on the quest for the ultimate, Japan as a whole would flourish.

When he turned from individual responsibility to broader systemic issues, Totsudō argued that because Buddhist temples could already be found in communities large and small throughout Japan, these Buddhist institutions could be mobilized to support social welfare initiatives that could reduce the economic disparity and associated social factors that fostered indolence and apathy, strengthening Japan as a whole in the process.<sup>43</sup> In Totsudō's vision, Buddhism was the medicine for alleviating social ills like superstition and class stratification, but Buddhist clerics were also part of the problem in that they often merely observed social problems rather than actively addressing them.<sup>44</sup> The implication, of course, was that lay intellectuals like Totsudō himself – and the social edification groups and sympathetic politicians who served as his target audience – were best positioned to convert the power of religion into political power. This was not the mundane politics of supporting specific electoral candidates or pursuing similarly parochial aims, but rather the broader political objective of mobilizing the citizenry in support of noble national agendas.

Here it is crucial to note that Totsudō envisioned people as autonomous citizens engaged in self-governance, not as passive imperial subjects. His message combined an emphasis on personal responsibility and "sound faith" with an equal and related emphasis on the power of religion to support nation-building projects. It is no surprise that some policymakers found this message attractive. Totsudō provided the intellectual gravitas, historical acumen, theoretical sophistication, and prodigious publishing output to present the New Buddhist project of "free inquiry" to broader audiences including social edification organizations, policymakers,

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41. Katō T. 1919: 1–18; Katō T. 1923: 124–129.

42. Katō T. 1926.

43. Katō T. 1923: 132ff.

44. Katō T. 1923.

politicians, and fellow intellectuals. While his repertoire of examples was somewhat repetitive, judging from the sheer number of his publications it seems to have been consistently attractive and perhaps moderately lucrative.

### 3. A Common Project

Although the Fraternity of New Buddhists had famously rejected political protection of religion or interference in religious affairs, in the Taishō era Fraternity members grudgingly came to respect and collaborate with bureaucrats and politicians. In 1912, for example, several of the New Buddhists banded together with other religious leaders such as Chikazumi Jōkan 近角常観 (1870-1941) and Andō Masazumi 安藤正純 (1876-1955) to resist the Three Religions Conference (Sankyō Kaidō 三教会同) that had been organized by Tokyo Imperial University scholar of religion Anesaki Masaharu 姉崎正治 (1873-1949) at the behest of Vice Minister Tokonami Takejirō 床次竹二郎 (1866-1935).<sup>45</sup> The Three Religions Conference took place on 25 February 1912 and ended with little fanfare, but one result was that a new, mutually beneficial relationship was forged between the New Buddhists and government leaders.<sup>46</sup>

Ironically, the New Buddhists found themselves benefiting from bureaucratic favor in much the same way that they had previously critiqued sectarian leaders for doing. Although they had initially resisted Tokonami's "Three Religions Conference" of 1912 because they viewed it as a crude attempt to subordinate religion to the needs of the state, in the course of their unsuccessful lobbying attempts the New Buddhists – especially Takashima – found common ground with Tokonami. Within just a few years their project and Tokonami's had become aligned, and Takashima described himself as a "Tokonami fan."<sup>47</sup>

Although the New Buddhists were theoretically against political protection and interference in religious affairs, pragmatically they still needed to align their social reform projects with contemporary political authority if they wanted any of their desired reforms to see the light of day. Policymakers like Tokonami also needed to have allies in the Buddhist world who could provide theoretical support for their initiatives while circumventing the messy world of sectarian politics. As a result, a mutually beneficial relationship developed in which Tokonami's efforts to conscript Buddhism for nation-building projects led him to turn to people like Takashima and Totsudō, who could speak authoritatively about Buddhism in transsectarian

45. See Garon 1986, esp. 281. Also see Hayashi 2014: 185.

46. Yoshinaga 2012: 40–41.

47. See Takashima Beihō's retrospective, "Tokonami fan to natta wake" ("Why I Became a Fan of Tokonami"), in Takashima 1951.

terms and who enjoyed a degree of clout as recognizable lay intellectuals who produced “pop” Buddhist scholarship. In turn, Takashima and Totsudō were able to benefit from a position closer to the corridors of power to enact their social reforms.

This mutually beneficial relationship worked in part by giving even greater legitimacy to non-clerics in the political sphere. In 1919, for example, Tokonami (now Home Minister) asked Totsudō to write a book on the subject of “cultivating the power of the people as seen from the perspective of Buddhism.” In his Foreword to that book (published, of course, through Takashima’s press), Tokonami praised the author as one of the few individuals who had the erudition, moral fortitude, and familiarity with Buddhism to conduct such a project.<sup>48</sup> The effect of Tokonami’s endorsement was that Totsudō – a layperson with no formal clerical training who was unstinting in his critiques of sacerdotalism – was treated by one of the most eminent and influential policymakers of the day as *the* authority on Buddhism. This was a stunning victory for the New Buddhist principle of free inquiry, even if it came at the expense of the principle of “rejecting all sorts of political protection and interference.”

The relationship also worked in that Totsudō readily tied Buddhist principles to political philosophy and prescriptive claims about Japanese democracy. In his 1923 book *Jichi minsei to Bukkyō* 自治民政と佛教 (*Self-Governance and Buddhism*, also a Heigo Press publication), for example, Totsudō offered a lengthy historical exposition of various political systems that had existed throughout Japanese history, only to conclude that the best sort of political system was a democratic one that combined benevolent social management and moral self-cultivation. Obviously, he concluded, the best cultural resource for meeting these twin objectives was Buddhism. While the imprimatur of a foreword from the sitting Home Minister was lacking in the later (1923) book, Totsudō’s stature as an authority on Buddhism had already been thoroughly established by that point. The 1923 book advocated the cultivation of individual citizens according to Buddhist principles (*kyōka*) and the alignment of local Buddhist organizations with national initiatives.<sup>49</sup> Putting his own theory into practice, in 1924 Totsudō served as the unifying figure who helped to meliorate programmatic differences between several competing social edification organizations. Wielding his clout as an authority on Buddhism and respected orator and author – not to mention his political connections with policymakers in Tokyo – Totsudō helped create a new national social edification federation called the Greater Japan Social Edification Organization Federation (*Dai Nippon Kyōka Dantai Rengō Kai* 大日本教化団体連合會).<sup>50</sup>

48. See Katō T. 1919: i–ii.

49. See Katō T. 1923.

50. Totsudō served in a leadership capacity of this organization for some time, although my preliminary efforts to find detailed records regarding the organization itself have been fruitless.

In general, Totsudō's political philosophy was premised on a romantic vision of interconnectedness in which ubiquitous Buddhist temples served as mediating institutions between individuals and the state. Buddhists could provide moral guidance to the citizenry and help to alleviate the social ills that arose from individuals' misguided behavior, but they could also directly tackle systemic injustice in a way that individuals alone could not. While Totsudō was clearly not a communist, he advanced a utopian vision of a socialist democracy in which the benevolent state cared for Buddhist institutions, which in turn cared for and protected the people from capitalist injustices such as income inequality and predatory lending. Social edification movements could and should advance anti-superstition campaigns, guarding against the problems wrought by the atomization that attended modernization and urbanization. This meant, of course, that certain ritual practices and groups would eventually need to be eradicated, but the happy result would be a healthier, democratic, robust Japanese society.

#### 4. Conclusion

In a 1990 essay, Jacqueline Stone suggested that the Taishō and early Shōwa eras saw three developments that greatly changed Japanese Buddhist studies and propelled Japanese scholarship to global prominence. Buddhist studies emerged as an academic discipline separate from confessional approaches characteristic of traditional sectarian Buddhist studies, and scholars adopted philological, positivist historiographical, and textual exegetical methods while applying methods characteristic of psychology, sociology, archaeology, and comparative religion to the study of Buddhism. These methods informed a monumental attempt to systematize the various Buddhist doctrines through translation and compilation projects.<sup>51</sup> Major contemporary developments in the field included the establishment of chairs in Sanskrit (Takakusu Junjirō, 1901) and Indian philosophy (Murakami Senshō, 1917) at Tokyo Imperial University, the compilation of the *Taishō shinshū daizōkyō* (edited by Takakusu and erstwhile New Buddhist Watanabe Kaikyoku) between 1922 and 1934, and the increasing global academic clout of the standard-bearers of Japanese Buddhist studies.<sup>52</sup>

51. Stone 1990: 217–218. More recent accounts of the development of Japanese Buddhist studies (which are inextricable from the social and intellectual history of Japanese Buddhism *per se*) include Klautau 2012, Ōtani 2012, and Hayashi and Ōtani 2009.
52. The Taishō canon was published in one hundred volumes between 1924 and 1934. Takakusu and Watanabe were both affiliated to some degree with the Fraternity of New Buddhists. Watanabe was a founding member, although he contributed only intermittently during his time studying abroad (1900–1910). Takakusu's relationship with the Fraternity is more difficult to assess. He contributed several articles to *Shin Bukkyō* but was peripheral enough that members seem to have not counted him among them. See, for example, Takakusu Junjirō, "Dai jū shūnen no Shin Bukkyō," *Shin Bukkyō* 11, no. 7, SBRS 2: 1020–1021.

While the gravitational center of this interwar scholarship was undoubtedly Tokyo Imperial University, equally important trends in Buddhist studies occurred elsewhere in Japanese society.<sup>53</sup> One strain of this scholarship germinated within the Fraternity of New Buddhists and then flowered after the discontinuation of the New Buddhist journal *Shin Bukkyō*. This had the notable side effect of giving a stronger political voice to lay or laicized Buddhists than they had historically enjoyed, continuing a process already in motion in which Buddhist sectarian authorities saw some of their political influence erode as young reformers who were fluent in the theoretical language of modern academe captured the attention of policymakers and the reading public.

Although *Shin Bukkyō* was relatively short-lived, it fostered a generation of activist scholars who freely traversed the boundaries between the hallowed halls of academia and more plebeian venues such as public lectures, popular hortatory magazines, and – by the 1920s – radio.<sup>54</sup> Skilled in the use of the social media of their day, these intellectuals published accessible primers on Buddhism, engaged in social edification through public oratory, and vigorously attempted to eradicate superstition through awareness campaigns. After the dissolution of the Fraternity, New Buddhists such as Katō Totsudō and Takashima Beihō not only served as prominent public intellectuals, but they also occasionally bent the ears of politicians and bureaucrats such as Tokonami Takejirō who were formulating religions policy. In turn, Tokonami skillfully used the erstwhile New Buddhists as mouthpieces for his plan of better integrating religion with nation-building projects.

The New Buddhist project of free inquiry therefore had profound political ramifications that impinged directly on understandings of religious freedom and ideal religion-state relations in the Taishō and early Shōwa eras (1912-1945). Free inquiry was essentially apologetic in that it served as a way for self-identified Buddhists to make their tradition fit with the modern critical spirit. This apologetic impulse resulted in an academic stance that used evidentiary scholarship and cutting-edge political and social theory to criticize clerical institutions and social trends alike: society needed Buddhism to thrive, but Buddhism needed to change to survive. For policymakers, this was an attractive combination of insider claims and outsider critique that could be used to mobilize religion when convenient (“cultivating the power of the people through Buddhism”) and keep religion in its proper place by countering “superstitions” through social edification and by denying ecclesiastical claims to customary rights or privileges when policymakers found them inconvenient.

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53. See Hayashi 2013 and 2014.

54. Yoshinaga 2012: 41. *Shin Bukkyō* ceased publication in August 1915. The last Fraternity *enzetsukai* was held in 1917.

By drawing distinctions between “good religion,” “outmoded sacerdotalism,” and “deleterious superstition,” the New Buddhists provided the parameters in which discussions of religious freedom and “peace and order” could take place. The New Buddhist critique of sacerdotalism gave policymakers a tool for countering the political claims of clerical institutions; the critique of “superstition” gave law enforcement officers a tool for surveilling and suppressing marginal movements (because “superstitions” were not “real religions,” they were by definition not deserving of “religious freedom”).<sup>55</sup>

The influence of this project on the average citizen is difficult to measure in quantitative terms, and to date I have not found a “smoking gun” that definitively proves the connection, but I suspect that the New Buddhist project of free inquiry served as one factor that contributed to the early Shōwa era push to clarify religions legislation. That push, which began as a Ministry of Education initiative in 1925 and which saw repeated bureaucratic and parliamentary defeats until the 1939 passage of the Religious Corporations Law (*Shūkyō hōjin hō* 宗教法人法), would have major ramifications for conceptions of religion-state relations and religious freedom even before the Religious Corporations Law was formally enacted in 1940.<sup>56</sup> The mature version of the New Buddhist critique – exemplified and embodied by Katō Totsudō but evident in the activities of other former New Buddhists as well – almost certainly affected the parameters of Taishō and early Shōwa debates about religion-state relations, religious freedom, and how distinguish between deleterious “superstition” and the benign “religion” of the sort that could be mobilized for social edification and nation-building.

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55. See Garon 1997: 60–87.

56. The defeat of the Yamagata Bill in 1900 was followed by a quarter-century in which no major attempts were made to introduce specific legislation regarding religion. That changed in 1925, when bureaucrats in the Ministry of Education began preliminary attempts at passing a new religions bill. The attempts repeatedly failed. However, in 1939 a version of the legislation was finally passed; it went into effect in 1940 and stayed effective until its repeal by the Occupation Civil Liberties Directive of 4 October 1945.

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