

Ugo DESSÌ

Social Behavior and Religious Consciousness among Shin Buddhist Practitioners

The doctrinal intricacies related to the teaching of other-power and the absence of precepts in Shin Buddhism have not traditionally prevented the development of a distinctive ethic and forms of social interaction. The data from a survey conducted by the author among a sample of Shin Buddhist practitioners show that high expectations of good social behavior are still present within the religious community, and that there is a meaningful correspondence between morals and religious consciousness. Practitioners seem to be oriented toward core Shin Buddhist values such as compassion, responding in gratitude to the Buddha's benevolence, and peace of mind; traditional Japanese values which are generally related to human relationships, and, in the case of lay followers, also ancestor veneration; and other core Shin Buddhist values such as equality and nonviolence, which may be also characterized as modern values. There are indications that the inclination toward a rich interior religious life does not preclude interesting levels of social engagement, an anti-discriminatory attitude, and support for peace and nonviolence, which also appear to be positively correlated to high standards of religious consciousness. However, the latter is also shown to affect the inclination to religious exclusivism, and to be intertwined with patriotism and ethno-cultural defense.

KEYWORDS: Shin Buddhism—social ethics—religious consciousness—Shin Buddhist values—traditional Japanese values—modern values

Ugo Dessì teaches at the Institute of Religious Studies, University of Leipzig.

ONE OF the major characteristics of Shin Buddhism (Jōdo Shinshū 浄土真宗, literally “True Pure Land school”), the tradition of Japanese Buddhism which traces back to the work and activities of Shinran 親鸞 (1173–1262), lies in its guarded attitude toward normative ethics. This is a direct consequence of the emphasis placed on the “other-power” of Amida Nyorai as the source of religious liberation, that is, birth in the Pure Land. This does not mean, however, that in Shin Buddhism no room is left for moral action guided by religious principles. This approach to an internalized version of Mahayana ethics, namely, morality without precepts, may be already seen at work in Shinran’s thought, and continues to characterize much of the doctrinal debate on social ethics, as well as forms of social activism within Shin Buddhism. At the individual level there are signs that the moral expectations of the practitioners might be quite high, but so far there has been scant attention in the field of religious studies to the character of Shin Buddhist ethics and its interplay with the level of religious consciousness. The analysis of these two issues will be pursued in this article through the data of a survey carried out by the author in Japan among a sample of Shin Buddhist practitioners.

Shin Buddhist Social Ethics

The core of the Shin Buddhist approach to ethics lies in Shinran’s claim that all sorts of “calculations” (*hakarai* はからい), including the good acts aimed at accumulating merit, are nothing but an obstacle to the fundamental religious experience of *shinjin* 信心 and the achievement of Buddhist liberation.¹ Following the

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1. *Shinjin* conveys a meaning close to “entrusting faith” or “entrusting heart,” but is often left unchanged in English translations. This religious experience is described by Shinran as “one thought-moment” (*ichinen* 一念), through which the nenbutsu practitioner, though still an “ordinary person” (*bonbu* 凡夫) possessed by blind passions, is grasped by Amida’s grace, and

path opened by his master Hōnen 法然 (1133–1212), Shinran believed that the meritorious acts of “self-power” (*jiriki* 自力) should be superseded by the exclusive practice of the nenbutsu (*senju nenbutsu* 専修念仏), which, on the basis of the universality of Amida’s Vow, can also direct the less fortunate and capable to birth in the Pure Land (*ōjō* 往生). In this connection, Shinran was also eager to clarify that the nenbutsu in itself was not a means but rather an act of gratitude to Amida’s compassion and “other-power” (*tariki* 他力). This attitude also provided the pattern to the main traditional Shin Buddhist approach to morality, characterized as a “response in gratitude to the Buddha’s benevolence” (*button* 佛恩) (CWS I, 564; and SSZ II, 702). In this way, the newly established tradition was at the same time drawing from, and contributing to, the traditional idea of *hō-on* 報恩 (return of benefits), a Japanese core value influenced by both Buddhism and Chinese thought (see BELLAH 1957, 70–1; and DAVIS 1992, 157, 300). Also strictly linked to the exclusive practice of the nenbutsu was Shinran’s idea of “fellow companions” (*dōbō* 同朋), which acknowledges the equality of all practitioners, a point which was later emphasized by Rennyo 蓮如 (1415–1499), the eighth head priest and “restorer” of the tradition. On the other hand, the emphasis on the nenbutsu also led Shinran practically to deny the possibility of liberation in other religious traditions, as well as in other forms of Buddhism classified as “Path of Sages,” which was “no longer in accord with beings” (CWS I, 240, 286; and SSZ II, 166, 199). The above-mentioned elements, together with Shinran’s critical attitude toward kami worship and his emphasis on the autonomy of the religious community, can still be found in modern expressions of Shin Buddhist social ethics. Needless to say, the tradition also underwent important changes in the following centuries, among which were the adoption of a more substantialized conception of the Pure Land, a relatively more relaxed approach toward the worship of kami and buddhas, and the elaboration of the *ōbō-buppō* 王法佛法 (Imperial and Buddhist Law) dialectic, which acknowledged the primacy of the secular over the religious sphere in the *shinzoku-nitai-ron* 真俗二諦論 (Two truths theory). Different aspects of the Shin Buddhist heritage have been elaborated in the modern period by sectarian doctrinal studies, contributing to the demythologization of the concept of Pure Land, but also, with their stress on *shinjin* and peace of mind, to a model of Shin Buddhist ethics focused more on the interiority of the practitioner than on interaction with the social sphere.²

Therefore, it is quite natural that most of the discussions on ethics within the Shin Buddhist context still implicitly refer to the idea of the Pure Land as

immediately enters the stage of “non-retrogression” (*futaiten* 不退転), which means that one will attain awakening without fail. See, for example, CWS I, 4, 110, 341.

2. For a detailed account of Shinran’s ethics, further developments within the Shin Buddhist tradition, and the contemporary debate, see Dessì 2007.

immanent in the present world, or to the experience of *shinjin* as the ideal of compassionate behavior in response to Amida's working. On the other hand, a traditional religious concept such as that of "fellow companions" (*dōbō*) continues to exercise a strong influence on characterizations and self-interpretations of Shin Buddhist ethics. This may be seen particularly since the end of World War II and the formation of the analogous *Dōbō* reform movement and, in the latest developments, in close connection with the emphasis on nonviolence and peace, which is also echoed in the Shin Buddhist scriptures, and is accompanied by an acknowledgment of Shin Buddhist war responsibilities. This last theme is also related to the traditional contempt for kami worship, a distinctive theme in Shinran's religious thought (CWS I, 255; SSZ II, 175), which is seen by an important sector of Shin Buddhist intellectuals and leaders as implying a critical attitude toward political power and nationalism—as in the case of the Yasukuni Shrine issue.³ On the other hand, the aforementioned elements of religious exclusivism embedded in the tradition are still to be found in the contemporary context, notably in the critique of "humanism" (*hyūmanizumu* ヒューマニズム) as a manifestation of self-power, which also emerges at the institutional level (DESSi 2007, 131–40, 144–63).

Moreover, the pattern of equality in Shin Buddhist social ethics can also be seen at work in Shin Buddhist social activism, where the concept and practice of *dōbō* plays a major role in defining institutional action on behalf of discriminated minorities, such as the *hisabetsu burakumin* 被差別部落民, and former Hansen's disease (*hansenbyō* ハンセン病) patients. In both cases, the support for these minorities is accompanied by acknowledgment of the role that Shin Buddhism played in past episodes of discrimination (DESSi 2007, 141–90).

As one can see from this brief summary of Shin Buddhist attitudes to social ethics, there are a variety of themes at play which may overlap traditional Japanese and Shin Buddhist values, modern values, and the defense of religious identity against pluralism. In the following pages I will illustrate how these points are related to the morality of Shin Buddhist practitioners, to what degree they may be affected by the level of involvement in Shin Buddhist religious practice, and to what extent they contribute to a definite Shin Buddhist identity and social ethics at the individual level.

3. The Shin Buddhist opposition to state support and state officials' visits to Yasukuni Shrine is based on passages of Shinran's writings aimed at discouraging the worship of kami and the enshrinement of spirits, commitment to the principle of the separation of religion and state, and concern that the state officials' homage to the "glorious [war] spirits" (*eirei* 英霊) honored in the Yasukuni Shrine may encourage an uncritical approach to the issue of Japanese war responsibilities. See DESSi 2007, 144.

The Morality of Shin Buddhist Practitioners

There is enough historical evidence to suggest a considerable concern for good social behavior within the Shin Buddhist community, not only in the early stages of its development but also in the premodern and modern period (see DOBBINS 2002, 66–8; BELLAH 1957, 117–22; ARIMOTO 1997; and AMSTUTZ 1997a and 2002). That this concern may still be important for Shin Buddhist practitioners emerges quite clearly from two items of the Seventh Basic Survey (*Dai 7 kai shūsei kihon chōsa* 第7回宗勢基本調査) of the Honganji-ha carried out in 1996.⁴ The first of these is “A religious person should also be moral in all aspects of daily life.” The number of lay followers interviewed who agree with this statement is about 68%, while 3.4% disagree. The response of chief priests of local temples and their spouses, the “temple keepers,” is different: only about 48% of them agree, while 10% disagree. The second item from the survey which is relevant for this discussion is related to social activism. The data show that more than 20% of the practitioners declared that they are or have been active in helping disabled or terminally ill patients. Moreover, this kind of social engagement is shown to be correlated with a high level of religious consciousness among lay followers.⁵ The responses to the first item quoted above shows how good social behavior is important for most lay followers; the fact that ordained priests are less inclined to agree is related by the authors of the survey to a different understanding of the relationship of religion and morality for the two groups. On the other hand, the responses to the second item indicate a significant level of awareness of the religious community in relation to social welfare, a pattern which, though in different modalities, can also be detected in the past history of Shin Buddhism (and Japanese Buddhism at large) throughout the Meiji period until the end of World War II.⁶

4. These surveys have been carried out by the Honganji-ha since 1959. Starting with the Fifth Basic Survey in 1983, the focus has been on subjects such as local communities, their membership, their financial foundation, religious and social activities at local temples, and the socio-religious consciousness of priests and lay followers. In 1996, the Seventh Basic Survey was conducted on a total of 20,451 practitioners through three kinds of questionnaires: one for *jūshoku* 住職, the chief priests of local temples (5,173 respondents); one for *bōmori* 坊守, or “temple keepers” (5,173 respondents); and one for *montō* 門徒, or lay followers (10,105 respondents, 5,061 male and 5,044 female). The lay followers interviewed were mostly *sōdai* 総代 (representatives of the laity), *sewa-gata* 世話方 (caretakers of local temples), and Bukkyō Fujinkai 仏教婦人会 (Buddhist Women Association) members. See KUCHIBA and FUNAHASHI 2000, 86–88.

5. See KUCHIBA and FUNAHASHI 2000, 97–98, 102–3, 118. Here, the rate of lay followers who “join voluntary welfare groups” is 17.6%, more than the 13.5% found among the representatives of the laity in the fifth survey carried out in 1983.

6. See DESSÌ 2007, 182–83. On this point, and in the past, the Shin Buddhist uncritical attitude to the state; see KETELAAR 1990 and 1997, and ROGERS and ROGERS 1991, 316–39.

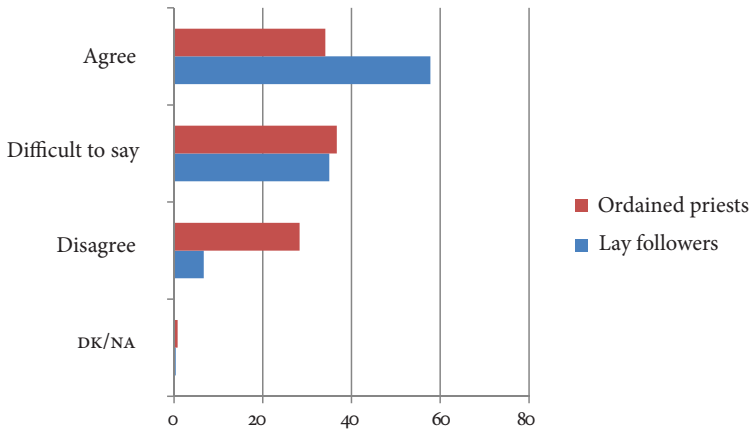


CHART 1. A religious person should also be moral in all aspects of daily life (%).

In order to analyze specifically the character of Shin Buddhist morality at the individual level, I conducted a survey in June-September 2008 through a close-ended self-administered questionnaire that included ninety-four items. The 400 responses were from a sample of practitioners (231 male and 169 female) from twenty-six Japanese prefectures mainly belonging to the two main branches of Shin Buddhism, the Honganji-ha 本願寺派 (213) and the Ōtani-ha 大谷派 (174), and included 280 lay followers and 120 ordained priests. In order to get a balanced view of the opinions of lay followers, the representatives of the laity and the temple caretakers are limited in the present survey to 12% of the respondents. The above-mentioned question, “A religious person should also be moral in all aspects of daily life” was also added to the questionnaire. The data in CHART 1 substantially confirms the high moral expectations of lay followers and the difference between their attitudes and that of ordained priests found in the Seventh Basic Survey of the Honganji-ha. Here the overall rate of lay followers who agree is 57.8%, while 6.7% of them disagree. As for the group of ordained priests (*sōryo* 僧侶), the rates are 34.1% and 28.3% respectively. From analysis of the data of the present survey no positive correspondence emerges between support for the statement in CHART 1 and a more superficial understanding of the Shin Buddhist fundamental idea that meritorious acts of self-power represent an obstacle to birth in the Pure Land. It would seem that the explanation of the different attitudes of lay followers and ordained priests on this point requires further research specifically focused on the complexity of the Shin Buddhist psychology.

	ALL	LAY FOLLOWERS	ORDAINED PRIESTS
Compassion	93.0	92.1	95.0
Cooperation	91.8	90.7	94.2
Manners	90.2	91.1	88.4
Honesty	90.0	89.3	91.7
Helpfulness	86.6	86.4	86.6
Filial piety	85.6	88.2	79.1
Responding in gratitude to the Buddha's benevolence	85.2	83.3	90.0
Nonviolence	84.0	81.4	90.0
Equality	84.0	82.5	87.5
Peace of mind	84.0	85.3	80.9
Lawfulness	81.3	82.5	78.3
Uttering the nenbutsu	80.2	76.5	89.2
Repaying of obligations	78.7	80.7	74.1
Diligence	77.0	78.2	74.2
Ancestor veneration	73.7	80.0	59.1
Social engagement	73.2	74.2	70.9
Groupism	58.2	60.7	52.5
Customs	54.0	57.5	45.8
Patriotism	52.3	58.6	37.5
Loyalty	50.7	57.9	34.1
Success at work	45.3	48.6	37.5
Obedience	38.5	40.3	34.1
Authority	37.7	42.2	27.5

TABLE 1. Shin Buddhist practitioners' fundamental values (% "very important" and "important").

	ALL	LAY FOLLOWERS	ORDAINED PRIESTS
Achieving peace of mind	62.8	61.1	66.7
Supporting UN activities	19.5	20.4	17.5
Engaging in social activism	13.2	13.2	13.3
Building up one's defense capabilities	1.5	1.8	0.8
DK/NA	3.0	3.6	1.7

TABLE 2. Ways to bring about world peace (%).

The question with multiple items in TABLE 1 was intended to shed some light on the specific character of the practitioners' morality. The list of items includes traditional Japanese values such as cooperation, honesty, filial piety, ancestor veneration, loyalty, patriotism, and repaying of obligations; other values more representative of the Shin Buddhist tradition, such as compassion, responding in gratitude to the Buddha's benevolence, uttering the nenbutsu, and peace of mind; modern/early modern values such as success at work and diligence; and others, such as equality, and nonviolence, which can be taken both as modern values and expressions of contemporary Shin Buddhist social ethics. In level of importance, compassion is ranked first (93%), immediately followed by cooperation (91.8%), manners (90.2%), honesty (90%), helpfulness (86.6%), filial piety (85.6%), responding in gratitude to the Buddha's benevolence (85.2%), nonviolence (84%), equality (84%), and peace of mind (84%). At the bottom of the scale we find patriotism (52.3%), loyalty (50.7%), success at work (45.3%), obedience (38.5%), and authority (37.7%). Thus, it would seem that the practitioners are mostly oriented toward values such as compassion, which has a strong Buddhist connotation; cooperation, manners, honesty, helpfulness, and filial piety, which are traditional Japanese and Asian values; and others, such as responding in gratitude to the Buddha's benevolence, equality, nonviolence, and peace of mind, which are particularly emphasized in the Shin Buddhist context.

Traditional Shin Buddhist Values

The idea of compassion, which is found at the top of the scale of values (93%), is strongly related to Japanese Buddhism as a whole, and its pervasiveness in the Japanese context is exemplified by the fact that it recurred as a distinctive theme in all the editions of the ethics textbooks issued by the Ministry of Education between 1904 and 1945 (YAMASHITA 1996, 137). As a fundamental concept in Mahayana Buddhism, compassion may be also considered representative of Shin Buddhist ethics at the most basic level.

Another of the values most favored by the practitioners, namely, responding in gratitude to the Buddha's benevolence (85.2%), indicates the specific dynamic between faith and morality within the Shin Buddhist tradition since its inception. That is, moral behavior is not the cause but the effect of Amida's grace, and should be understood as a response in gratitude to its compassionate working. As such, besides being a modulation of the aforementioned traditional idea of *hō-on*, this value should be understood as a characteristic feature of the Shin Buddhist tradition, and it is not surprising that it attracts the support of many practitioners. In this regard, it is quite significant that responding in gratitude to

	LAY FOLLOWERS		ORDAINED PRIESTS	
	Doing now	Have done so in the past	Doing now	Have done so in the past
For the disabled	5.0	43.9	10.8	41.7
For terminally ill patients	1.4	7.5	2.5	20.8
Against discrimination	2.5	20.7	7.5	32.5
Against the revision of Article 9	3.2	7.9	13.3	20.0

TABLE 3. Engagement in social activities (%).

the Buddha's benevolence is preferred by ordained priests over traditional values as manners, helpfulness, and filial piety.

The emphasis on a rich interior life as expressed by the idea of peace of mind, and favored by 84% of the respondents, holds an inter-sectarian status in Japanese Buddhism. However, it has acquired a distinctive connotation in Shin Buddhism at least since the appearance of the *ōbō-buppō* dialectic, emphasized in the exegeses of Rennyo's formulations of *anjin* 安心 (literally, "serene/settled mind") and in the piety of the *myōkōnin* 妙好人 (the "saintly persons" in the Shin Buddhist tradition), as well as in the emphasis placed on "spiritual awareness" by modern doctrinal studies (see ROGERS and ROGERS 1991, 291–315; AMSTUTZ 1997b, 74–84; and HISHIKI 1998, 196–201). This orientation toward a rich interior life rather than to social engagement may be also seen in TABLE 2, which shows that the rate of those who support "achieving peace of mind" as the best way to bring about world peace is 61.1% among lay followers, and 66.7% among ordained priests. On the other hand, those who support "engaging in social activism" are about 13% in both groups.

In order to test the practitioners' level of engagement in social work, the above-mentioned items from the Seventh Basic Survey of the Honganji-ha related to voluntary activities on behalf of disabled or terminally ill people were added to the questionnaire. Both disabled and terminally ill persons are generally encouraged by Shin Buddhist institutions (DESSÌ 2007, 182–90). The data in TABLE 3 show that about half of those interviewed have volunteered for the disabled. About 10% of lay followers and more than 20% of ordained priests have been engaged in terminal care. The rates of those presently volunteering for the disabled tend to be higher for both lay followers (5%) and ordained priests (10.8%). The other two items in the same question were meant to test the practitioners' involvement in social activism against discrimination, and for peace. The

	FOR THE DISABLED	TERMINAL CARE	AGAINST DISCRIMINATION	FOR ARTICLE 9
All	48.9	8.9	23.2	11.1
Have under- taken the <i>kikyōshiki</i>	52.6	11.0	33.0	14.4
Often par- ticipate in the <i>Hō-onkō</i>	59.3	12.2	30.9	13.8
Often perform the <i>gongyō</i>	58.9	12.2	30.0	15.5
Often listen to sermons	56.8	11.8	32.2	13.5
Often read religious books	57.9	12.7	34.7	14.7
Never worship the <i>kamidana</i>	46.1	8.7	23.0	10.3
Never keep <i>o-mamori</i>	50.0	12.0	26.7	14.6
Never take part to shrine activities	46.9	9.6	19.1	11.7
Never perform <i>hatsumōde</i>	44.4	15.3	22.2	13.9

TABLE 4. Social engagement by religious consciousness (lay followers, % “Doing now” and “Have done so in the past”).

data show that more than 20% of lay followers and about 40% of ordained priests have been engaged in activities against discrimination, and 11.1% and 33.3% respectively oppose the revision of Article 9 of the Japanese Constitution, a typical expression of Japanese pacifism.⁷ The rate of those who are presently engaged among lay followers tends to be very low (about 3%), while it is noticeable that about 13% of ordained priests describe themselves as being currently engaged in peace activities, and 7.5% against discrimination.

7. Article 9 of the Japanese Constitution contains the well known “renunciation of war” statement: 1. Aspiring sincerely to an international peace based on justice and order, the Japanese people forever renounce war as a sovereign right of the nation and the threat or use of force as means of settling international disputes. 2. In order to accomplish the aim of the preceding paragraph, land, sea, and air forces, as well as other war potential, will never be maintained. The right of belligerency of the state will not be recognized.

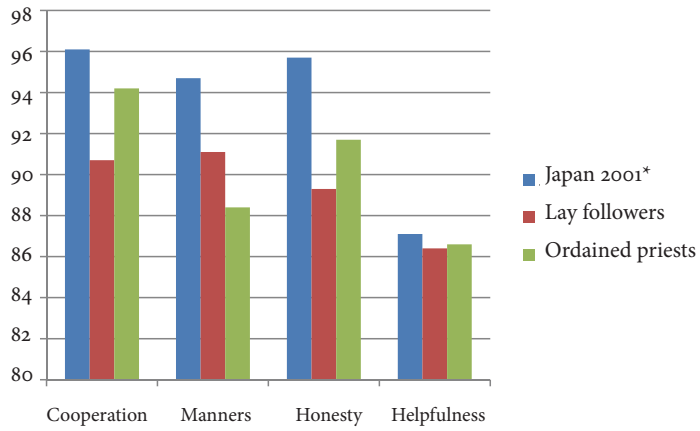


CHART 2. Support for cooperation, manners, honesty, and helpfulness (%). (*Source: KISALA et al., 2007)



CHART 3. Traditional values vs. modern values (%). (*Source: KISALA et al., 2007)

These rates tend to increase in correspondence with a deeper involvement in Shin Buddhist religious practice expressed by the first group of religious consciousness indicators in TABLE 4: for those lay followers who have undertaken the *kikyōshiki* 帰敬式 (the “confirmation” rite at the head temple, which is strongly recommended by the institutions); those who often visit the temple for the Hō-onkō 報恩講 (the memorial service for Shinran); those who regularly perform the daily religious service in front of the home altar (*gongyō* 勤行); and those who often listen to sermons (*hōwa* 法話) and read the scriptures or religious books.⁸ The case of the second group of religious consciousness indicators in TABLE 4 is different, and related to Shin Buddhist orthodox praxis based on Shinran’s contempt for kami worship. These are the negative approaches to Shinto home altar (*kamidana* 神棚) worship, to the use of amulets (*o-mamori* お守り), to participation in religious activities and festivals at local Shinto shrines, and to the initial visit to a shrine at the beginning of the year (*hatsumōde* 初詣).⁹ As for the neglect of *kamidana* worship, no positive correlation may be noticed with higher levels of social engagement, while in the case of *o-mamori*, religious activities at local shrines, and *hatsumōde*, there are considerable variations.

Generally speaking, it would seem that the two areas of social work most popular among the two groups are those for the disabled and discriminated minorities, while the highest rate of practitioners presently involved in social activism is that of ordained priests in relation to pacifism (13.3%). These data suggest that, despite the emphasis placed on peace of mind within the Shin Buddhist community, the number of those who are inclined to a more active participation in society is not marginal, especially in areas which are also addressed at the institutional level, and tend to be politically neutral.

Traditional Japanese Values

From the data in TABLE 1 it emerges that the traditional Japanese values which find most support are cooperation for ordained priests (94.2%), and manners for lay followers (91.1%). At the top of the scale we find other items which are

8. The Hō-onkō is the major annual ceremony in Shin Buddhism. The doctrine of other-power and the limitations posed on the effectiveness of other practices have invested the act of “listening” to the teachings (*hōwa*) of a particular significance.

9. The disregard of lay followers for such requirements is a widely debated issue in Shin Buddhism. See SASAKI 1988, and KUCHIBA and FUNAHASHI 2000, 93–94. The data of the present survey confirm the low rates of lay followers who never worship or make offerings to the Shinto home altar (*kamidana*) (45%); never take part to religious activities and festivals at local Shinto shrines (33.6%); never keep amulets (*o-mamori*) (41.4%); never perform the initial visit to a shrine at the first of the year (*hatsumōde*) (25.7%); and do not approve visits to Yasukuni Shrine by state officials to worship the *eirei* (“glorious [war] spirits”) (28.9%), all of which indicate a higher standard of Shin Buddhist religious consciousness in relation to kami worship.

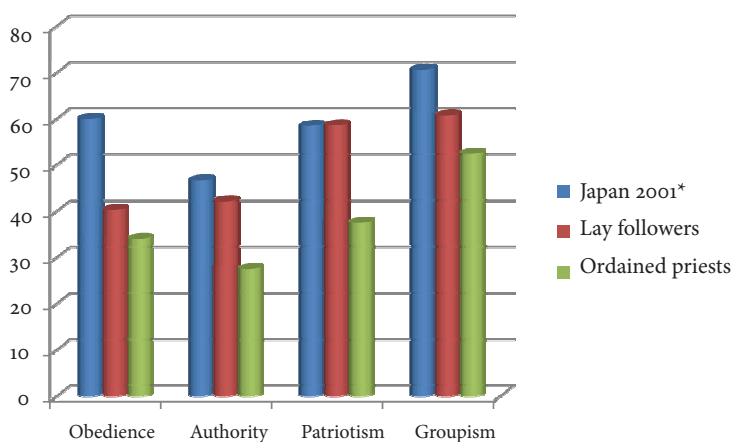


CHART 4. Support for obedience, authority, patriotism, and groupism (%). (*Source: KISALA et al., 2007; source for “obedience,” KISALA 2003)

	OBEDIENCE	AUTHORITY	PATRIOTISM	GROUPISM
All	40.3	42.2	58.6	60.7
Have undertaken the <i>kikyōshiki</i>	42.3	50.0	63.5	66.1
Often participate in the <i>Hō-onkō</i>	47.1	56.9	71.6	73.1
Often perform the <i>gongyō</i>	47.8	53.3	70.0	71.1
Often listen to sermons	48.3	55.0	72.1	71.2
Often read religious books	43.1	48.4	62.1	69.5
Never worship the <i>kamidana</i>	34.2	39.6	46.0	52.4
Never keep <i>o-mamori</i>	35.3	41.4	50.8	52.6
Never take part in shrine activities	34.0	31.9	45.7	51.1
Never perform <i>hatsumōde</i>	29.2	34.7	34.7	52.8

TABLE 5. Support for obedience, authority, patriotism, and groupism by religious consciousness) lay followers, “very important” and “important” (%).

generally most valued in the Japanese context: manners (90.2%), honesty (90%), helpfulness (86.6%), and filial piety (85.6%). The latter precedes helpfulness in the scale for lay followers. Other traditional values, such as repaying of obligations (80.7%) and ancestor veneration (80%) are also respected, especially by lay followers. The commitment to cooperation, manners, honesty, and helpfulness is close to the Japanese average, as is shown in CHART 2, through a comparison with the data from a survey organized by the Nanzan Institute for Religion and Culture (hereafter, NIRC; KISALA 2007, 148).

The support for filial piety is lower for ordained priests (79.1%), as is another traditional value, ancestor veneration (59.1%). This may be explained by the centrality of Amida Nyorai and the nenbutsu practice in Shin Buddhism, which is also reflected in the prescription to lay followers not to place a memorial tablet with a deceased person's name (*ihai* 位牌) in the home altar (*butsudan* 仏壇 or *naibutsu* 内仏) (SHINSHŪ ŌTANI-HA SHŪMUSHO 2003, 75; and JŌDO SHINSHŪ HONGANJI-HA 2004, 229).

The results in CHART 3 suggest that support for filial piety among Shin Buddhist practitioners may be lower than the Japanese average. The data from the survey organized by NIRC show that filial piety is given precedence by those interviewed (64.6%) over other modern values (respect for individual rights and respect for freedom) and another traditional value (repaying of obligations) (KISALA 2007, 151). The responses to the same question in my survey show that lay followers prefer filial piety to the modern values in the list. Indeed, filial piety is ranked by them as first in order of importance (56.4%), followed by the repaying of obligations (50.4%). This emphasis on the latter value is probably due to the fact that it overlaps with "responding in gratitude to the Buddha's benevolence," perhaps the most traditional formulation of Shin Buddhist morality. In fact, the repaying of obligations is the most important item for ordained priests (50.8%). As the four values in CHART 3 make clear, lay followers appear to be more traditionally-oriented than the general public, even though they support filial piety (56.4%) less than the Japanese average. This may be also partially true for ordained priests, although they place more value on respect for freedom (45.1%) than lay followers (41.4%) and the Japanese average (42.6%). This is also suggested where the support for traditional customs among lay followers (57.5%) in TABLE 1 is stronger than among the general public (48.9%) (see KISALA 2007, 148).

Traditional values such as filial piety and the repaying of obligations, which are highly valued by Shin Buddhist practitioners, are not necessarily authoritarian (see KISALA 1999, 62). It is interesting to note that among Shin Buddhist practitioners there is an inclination to give far less importance to other traditional values in TABLE 1 linked to vertical relationships such as authority (37.7%), obedience (38.5%), loyalty (50.7%), patriotism (52.3%), and groupism

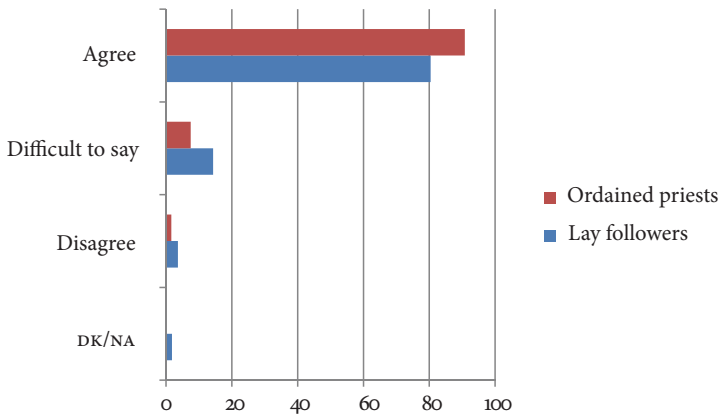


CHART 5. Discrimination toward the Burakumin is not acceptable (%).

	LAY FOLLOWERS	ORDAINED PRIESTS	JAPAN 2001*
Never justifiable	23.6	20.0	26.2
2	4.3	2.5	8.9
3	6.8	2.5	10.0
4	1.8	3.3	6.5
5	10.7	15.8	17.4
6	8.2	11.7	10.4
7	4.3	7.5	3.5
8	3.2	8.3	4.6
9	1.8	5.8	1.6
Always justifiable	10.0	9.2	4.6
DK/NA	25.4	13.3	6.3

TABLE 6. Attitude toward homosexuality (% measured on a 10-point scale). (*Source: KISALA et al., 2007)

	NOT JUSTIFIABLE	JUSTIFIABLE
All	47.2	27.5
Have undertaken the <i>kikyōshiki</i>	50.0	23.7
Often participate in the <i>Hō-onkō</i>	59.3	21.2
Often perform the <i>gongyō</i>	61.1	11.0
Often listen to sermons	55.1	23.6
Often read religious books	51.6	28.5
Never worship the <i>kami-dana</i>	35.7	44.5
Never keep <i>o-mamori</i>	37.0	38.8
Never take part in shrine activities	37.1	38.3
Never perform <i>hatsumōde</i>	30.6	48.6

TABLE 7. Attitude toward homosexuality by religious consciousness (lay followers, %).

	LAY FOLLOWERS	ORDAINED PRIESTS	JAPAN 2001*
Incomes should be made more equal	5.4	6.7	1.9
2	0.7	3.3	1.8
3	5.0	6.7	4.2
4	2.5	6.7	4.4
5	18.9	14.2	14.8
6	12.9	16.7	20.8
7	11.1	10.8	22.8
8	13.6	13.3	15.7
9	2.1	0.8	3.5
We need larger income differences	7.9	1.7	4.2
DK/NA	20.0	19.2	5.9

TABLE 8. Attitude toward income equality (% measured on a 10-point scale). (*Source: KISALA et al., 2007)

	INCOMES SHOULD BE MADE MORE EQUAL	WE NEED LARGER INCOME DIFFERENCES
All	32.5	47.6
Have undertaken the <i>kikyōshiki</i>	37.2	47.4
Often participate in the <i>Hō-onkō</i>	35.7	46.2
Often perform the <i>gongyō</i>	31.1	43.3
Often listen to sermons	35.6	42.4
Often read religious books	32.6	48.4
Never worship the <i>kami- dana</i>	29.5	51.6
Never keep <i>o-mamori</i>	31.9	49.1
Never take part in shrine activities	29.8	52.1
Never perform <i>hatsumōde</i>	30.6	54.2

TABLE 9. Attitude toward income equality by religious consciousness (lay followers, %).

(58.2%).¹⁰ In this connection, there are also indications that the support for such values within the Shin Buddhist community may be lower than the Japanese average (CHART 4). In the survey organized by NIRC, the rates of Japanese who value obedience (60%) (KISALA 2003, 220), authority (46.7%), patriotism (58.5%), and groupism (70.7%) (KISALA 2007, 148) are generally higher than those of Shin Buddhist practitioners. This is especially true of ordained priests, whose appreciation of obedience (34.1%), authority (27.5%), patriotism (37.5%), groupism (52.5%), and loyalty (34.1%) is quite low. If we consider a group of lay followers, however, while the rates of those who chose obedience (40.3%), authority (42.2%), and groupism (60.7%) are lower than the Japanese average, that for patriotism (58.6%) conforms to the average. It is also interesting to note that for the groups over sixty years old, the rates of lay followers supporting authority (43.3%), groupism (67.4%), and obedience (47.7%) tend to increase much less than that of those supporting patriotism (73.6%).

Generally speaking, the inclination not to emphasize vertical relationships may also be noticed in the distinctive features of Shin Buddhism at the institutional level, such as the critical approach to past Japanese imperialism, the

10. On the distinction between two clusters within traditional values, related to personal morality and vertical relationships respectively, see KISALA 1999, 60–2.

adoption of democratic principles in the denominational administration, and the opposition to the visits by prime ministers and cabinet members to Yasukuni Shrine (DESSÌ 2007, 141–72; 2009a; 2009b; 2010). This orientation within Shin Buddhism is also reflected by the fact that ordained priests tend to support the aforementioned authoritarian values far less than lay followers.

The connection between religious consciousness and support for obedience, authority, patriotism, and groupism is noticeable. Those who are closer to the required standards of religious practice related to (the rejection of) kami worship tend to emphasize these values less, while a stronger appreciation may be seen among those who have undertaken the *kikyōshiki*, perform the daily religious services, often listen to sermons, and so on (TABLE 5). This indicates that the rejection of kami worship at the individual level tends to be related, as in the institutional context and in important part of the doctrinal debate, to the critical dimension of Shin Buddhism, which may imply the rejection of authority, and the concern for freedom of religion and social justice (DESSÌ 2007, 111–31).

Another interesting point that emerges from the aforementioned data is that affiliation to Shin Buddhism might not affect the importance of specific Japanese traditional values positively, as has been observed by others for different religious contexts (see KISALA 2001, 220–21). This may be observed not only in the case of the authoritarian values shown in TABLE 5, but also for lawfulness, which appears to be less valued within the Shin Buddhist community (81.3%) than by the general public (92.3%). Moreover, it should be noted that for Shin Buddhist practitioners as a whole, the commitment to manners, helpfulness, and diligence remains similar, or slightly inferior, to the Japanese average (see KISALA 2007, 148).

Equality and Exclusivism

Equality and nonviolence are among the values to which Shin Buddhist practitioners are most committed. Unlike modern/early modern values such as diligence (77%) and success at work (45.3%), which appear in the middle and at the bottom of the scale respectively, both equality and nonviolence are themes widely discussed in contemporary Shin Buddhism, and may also be considered as fundamental concepts in the tradition.

As for equality, I have already mentioned above Shinran's idea of *dōbō*, acknowledging the equality of all practitioners as "fellow companions" in religious terms. It should be added here that despite belonging to the scriptural tradition, this idea has come to be emphasized in the postwar period, especially in connection with the development of the *Dōbō* movement (HEIDEGGER 2006, 292–305). As shown by the data in TABLE 1, equality (84%) is highly valued by Shin Buddhist practitioners. Within the context of the *Dōbō* movement, the

	ALL	LAY FOLLOWERS	ORDAINED PRIESTS	TEMPLE CHIEF PRIESTS	TEMPLE KEEPERS
Agree strongly	11.8	11.1	13.3	12.5	18.2
Agree	9.2	5.7	17.5	31.2	27.3
Difficult to say	41.5	45.7	31.7	31.2	22.7
Disagree	14.8	14.6	15.0	12.5	9.1
Strongly disagree	20.0	19.3	21.7	12.5	22.7
DK/NA	2.8	3.6	0.8	0.0	0.0

TABLE 10. Religious liberation outside Shin Buddhism is not achievable (%).

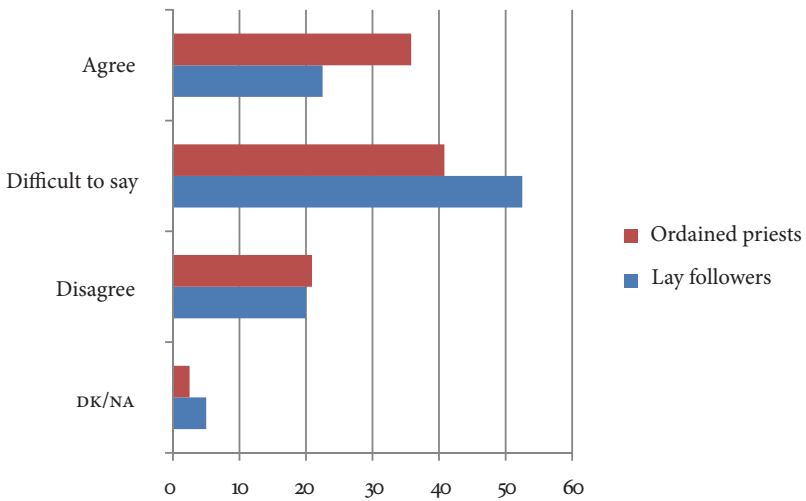


CHART 6. Anthropocentrism and humanism are the cause of many social problems, which can be solved only by Buddhist spirituality (%).

	LIBERATION OUTSIDE SHIN BUDDHISM IS NOT ACHIEVABLE	SOCIAL PROBLEMS CAN BE SOLVED ONLY BY BUDDHIST SPIRITUALITY
All	16.8	22.5
Have undertaken the <i>kikyōshiki</i>	27.1	32.2
Often participate in the <i>Hō-onkō</i>	28.5	33.3
Often perform the <i>gongyō</i>	32.3	36.7
Often listen to sermons	28.8	37.3
Often read religious books	25.3	29.4
Never worship the <i>kamidana</i>	17.4	16.9
Never keep <i>o-mamori</i>	18.1	25.8
Never take part in shrine activities	22.3	15.9
Never perform <i>hatsumōde</i>	22.2	25.0

TABLE 11. Religious exclusivism by religious consciousness (lay followers, % “Agree strongly” and “Agree”).

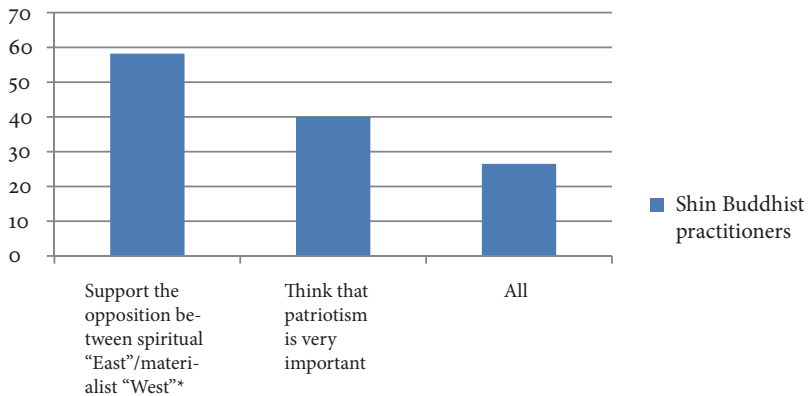


CHART 7. Religious exclusivism by ethno-cultural defense: “Social problems can only be solved by Buddhist spirituality” (%). (*The percentage is a total of those responding “Agree strongly” and “Agree”)

ideal of fellow companions has been especially related to the *hisabetsu buraku* issue—thus significantly overlapping with the theme of human rights and equality understood as a modern value. The latter issue can therefore be taken as an indicator of the general Shin Buddhist attitude toward equality. According to the data in CHART 5, the large majority of ordained priests (90.8%) and lay followers (80.4%) are against the discrimination to which this cultural minority has been subjected.

In order to see whether in Shin Buddhism the idea of religious equality can have wider implications for social behavior, the practitioners' attitude toward equality has been further tested through two questions related to homosexuality and income equality.

As regards homosexuality (TABLE 6), both lay followers (47.2%) and ordained priests (44.1%) seem less inclined to discriminate than the Japanese average (69.1%) (KISALA 2007, 166). If we consider the group of ordained priests, the rates of those who find it unjustifiable (44.1%) and justifiable (42.5%) are very close.

As is shown in TABLE 7, the refusal to justify homosexuality seems to be positively correlated for lay followers to certain aspects of religious practice, especially for those who often participate in the Hō-onkō (59.3%), perform the *gongyō* (61.1%), or listen to sermons (55.1%). It may also be noted, however, that a stricter adherence to the religious requirements concerning the rejection of kami worship appears to affect the justification of homosexuality positively. This might be interpreted as another indication that the rejection of kami worship on an individual level tends to be related—as in the case of the authoritarian values in TABLE 5—to the critical dimension of Shin Buddhism.

The responses to the question shown in TABLE 8 indicate that lay followers (32.5%) and ordained priests (37.6%) are more oriented to income equality than the Japanese average as found in the Nanzan survey (27.1%; see KISALA 2007, 164). On the other hand, those who support large income differences as incentives for individual effort—47.6% of lay followers, and 43.3% of ordained priests—are far less than the 67% of the Japanese average. Indeed, this suggests that the idea of equality in Shin Buddhism may have implications for economic ethics. The inclination to economic equality seems to be loosely correlated with religious consciousness, especially among those who often listen to sermons, and have undertaken the *kikyōshiki* (TABLE 9).

It may also be interesting to see whether the concept of fellow companions, besides indicating the equality of all practitioners in religious terms, can also be applied in the Shin Buddhist context to believers of other religious traditions. The data in TABLE 10 indicate that a substantial percentage of ordained priests (30.8%) agree with the statement “Religious liberation outside Shin Buddhism is not achievable,” although the rate of those who disagree is still higher (36.7%). These data, and the high rate of those undecided, suggest that the full acknowledgment

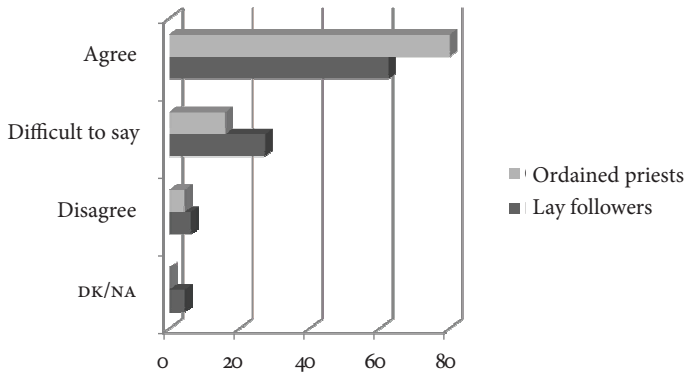


CHART 8. Article 9 of the Japanese Constitution should not be changed (%).

All	62.5
Have undertaken the <i>kikyōshiki</i>	66.1
Often participate in the <i>Hō-onkō</i>	62.6
Often perform the <i>gongyō</i>	65.6
Often listen to sermons	63.5
Often read religious books	70.6
Never worship the <i>kamidana</i>	70.6
Never keep <i>o-mamori</i>	72.4
Never take part in shrine activities	65.9
Never perform <i>hatsumōde</i>	70.9

TABLE 12. “Article 9 of the Japanese Constitution should not be changed” by religious consciousness (lay followers, % “Agree strongly” and “Agree”).

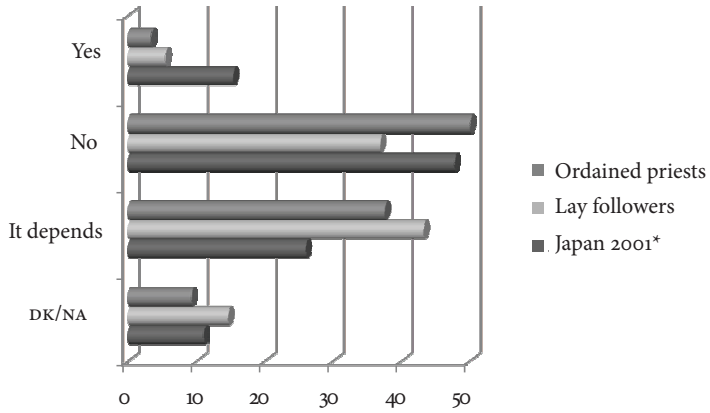


CHART 9. Willingness to fight for the country (%). (*Source: Kisala et al., 2007)

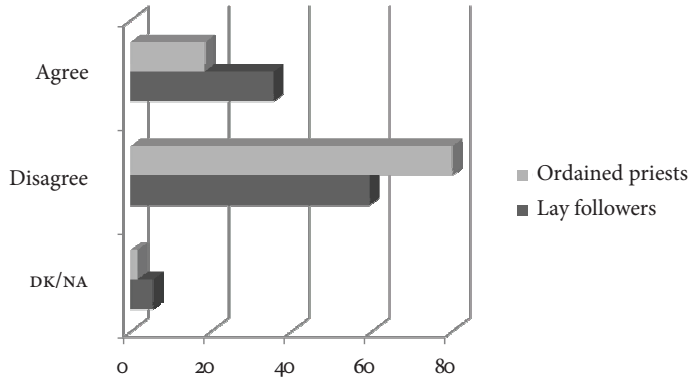


CHART 10. Overseas deployment of the SDF (%).

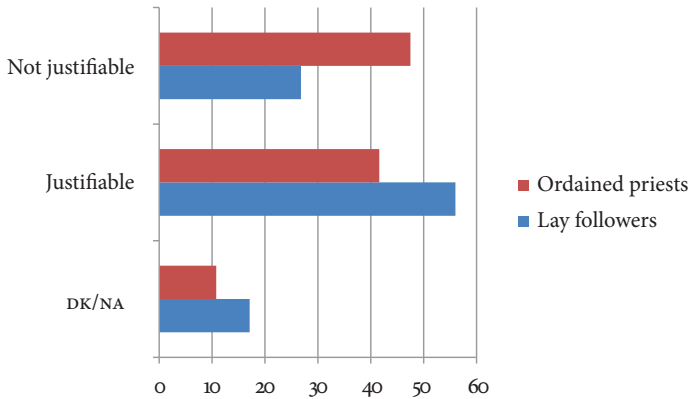


CHART 11. Attitude toward the death penalty (%).

of religious pluralism is not taken for granted within this group, and that this issue is quite problematic. It is also noticeable that this tendency to religious exclusivism appears to be stronger for chief priests of local temples (43.7%) and temple keepers (45.5%). Lay followers seem to be far less inclined to it, however, because only 16.8% of the respondents agree, while 33.9% disagree.

Another indicator of the Shin Buddhist practitioners' attitude toward pluralism is their position regarding the aforementioned critique of humanism found at the institutional level. In this context it is claimed that in order to overcome anthropocentrism and humanism—two forms of self-power that are the cause of contemporary problems such as the destruction of the natural environment, competition, and the collapse of the family—“there is no other way than that offered by Buddhism” (SHINSHŪ KYŌDAN RENGŌ 2000).¹¹ The rate of ordained priests who agree with this statement of religious exclusivism in CHART 6 is 35.8%, while those who disagree are just 20.9%. It is interesting to note that the rate of those who agree among lay followers, despite the many undecided, is much lower (22.5%), while the rate of those who disagree (20%) is similar. The data in TABLE 10 and CHART 6 indicate that lay followers might be less permeable than the institutions and their local representatives to the claims of religious exclusivism.

Interestingly enough, it may be observed here that there is, at the general level, a positive correlation between a deeper involvement in Shin Buddhist practice and religious exclusivism. In fact, the rates of lay followers who agree with the

11. For a detailed analysis of this topic, see Dessi 2006 and 2007, 131–40.

	NOT JUSTIFIABLE	JUSTIFIABLE
All	26.8	56.0
Have undertaken the <i>kikyōshiki</i>	30.5	53.4
Often participate in the <i>Hō-onkō</i>	31.7	53.7
Often perform the <i>gongyō</i>	28.8	48.9
Often listen to sermons	30.5	50.8
Often read religious books	37.9	47.4
Never worship the <i>kami-dana</i>	31.0	53.2
Never keep <i>o-mamori</i>	30.1	53.4
Never take part in shrine activities	29.8	54.2
Never perform <i>hatsumōde</i>	38.9	50.1

TABLE 13. Attitude toward the death penalty by religious consciousness (lay followers, %).

statements in TABLE 10 and CHART 6 tend to increase among those who show a higher level of Shin Buddhist religious consciousness (TABLE 11).

It may be argued that the occidentalist overtones embedded in the critique of humanism, with its opposition between the “other” (humanism, “Western” culture), and the uniqueness and superiority of Buddhist (and implicitly Japanese) culture, also speak of the significant presence in the Shin Buddhist context of elements of cultural exclusivism, which was already suggested by a certain stress on patriotism on the part of lay followers and its positive correlation with distinctive traits of Shin Buddhist practice illustrated in TABLE 5. A similar indication is also given by the fact that the religious community of lay followers is still polarized about the long standing rhetorical opposition between the spiritual “East” and the material “West,” a basic statement of past ultranationalism found in documents such as the 1937 *Kokutai no hongī* 国体の本義 (Fundamentals of National Polity). It is significant that those among lay followers who agree with the statement that “The ‘East’ is a spiritual culture, the ‘West’ is a materialist culture” make up 18.5%, those who disagree 17.9%, while the rest are undecided. In the case of ordained priests, the rates are 22.5% and 27.5% respectively. A significant correlation between religious identity and instances of ethno-cultural defense is shown in CHART 7, where the inclination to religious exclusivism dramatically increases among those practitioners who find patriotism very important (40%),

and agree with the above-mentioned opposition between the spiritual “East” and the material “West” (58.2%).¹²

Nonviolence

Nonviolence is also a theme widely discussed in contemporary Shin Buddhism, and can be traced back directly to the work of Shinran. Needless to say, this idea is fundamental in the overall Buddhist tradition (despite significant exceptions), and it is especially expressed in Shin Buddhist terms as *hyōga muyō* 兵戈無用 (“no need for soldiers or weapons,” a passage from the *Muryōju-kyō*), and *yo no naka an'on nare* 世の中安穩なれ (“may there be peace in the world,” a passage from Shinran’s *Letters*) (DESSÌ 2007, 145, 148).

It is worth mentioning here that the idea of nonviolence, despite being found in scriptural tradition, has been strongly emphasized (like that of *dōbō*) in the postwar period, especially in connection with the process of rethinking past war responsibilities by the religious community, which culminated in the issuance of anti-war declarations by the Ōtani-ha in 1987 and the Honganji-ha in 1995. In doing so, the institutions were claiming to go back to the teaching of Shinran, and to conform strictly to the pacifist ideal expressed by Article 9 of the Japanese Constitution (DESSÌ 2007, 147). In this regard, it is significant that *yo no naka an'on nare*, which is now widely used to express pacifism within the two major branches of Shin Buddhism, was used in the past as a slogan to support Japanese militarism (PORCU 2009, 58–61). At the same time, nonviolence, linked, like equality, to pluralism, may be also characterized as a modern value.

The commitment to nonviolence at the institutional level is reflected in the rates mentioned (TABLE 3) of lay followers (11.1%) and ordained priests (33.3%) who have been or are engaged in opposing revision of Article 9 of the Japanese Constitution. A similar attitude among practitioners is shown in CHART 8, where a strong majority of ordained priests (80%) and lay followers (62.5%) appears to be against any change in Article 9 of the Constitution. It may be also noted that the rate of those interviewed who support the revision of Article 9 is generally lower than that registered by various opinion polls nationwide.¹³

Lay followers with higher standards of religious behavior and consciousness tend to be more inclined to defend the pacifist values expressed by Article 9 of

12. On religious exclusivism in the Shin Buddhist context, see DESSÌ 2009a, 2009b, and 2010.

13. See, for example, the opinion polls conducted by the *Asahi Shinbun* [<http://www.asahi.com/national/update/0502/TKY200805020272.html>] (accessed 10 January 2009); *Kyōdo News* [<http://www.shikoku-np.co.jp/national/political/article.aspx?id=20070416000268>] (accessed 12 January 2009); and *Chūnichi Shinbun* [<http://www.chunichi.co.jp/hold/2007/saninsen07/main/CK2007070802030628.html>] (accessed 10 January 2009).

the Constitution (TABLE 12). This is especially true for those who place emphasis on the rejection of kami worship. As in the case of authoritarian traditional values, this indication matches the general guidelines of Shin Buddhist pacifism promoted at the institutional level, which tend to focus on the relationship between past Japanese militarism, violence, and State Shinto ideology.

The same inclination to pacifism can also be seen in the response to the questions in CHART 9, which tested the practitioners' willingness to fight for the country, and CHART 10, concerning the overseas deployment of the Japanese Self Defense Forces (SDF). In CHART 9, 5.4% of lay followers would fight as opposed to 3.3% of ordained priests. The rate of the latter who would not fight is 50%, slightly higher than the Japanese average (47.7%) (see KISALA 2007, 165). CHART 10 shows how the rate of lay followers who support the overseas deployment of the Self Defense Forces (35.4%) is much lower than those who oppose it (59.3%), the latter rising to 80% for ordained priests. Also in this case the number of those who agree is less than in various opinion polls nationwide.¹⁴

Shin Buddhist practitioners' attitude toward nonviolence has been further tested through another question concerning the support for the death penalty. It should be mentioned here that this is an issue which has been strongly emphasized at the institutional level, especially by the Ōtani-ha, which has protested against executions on various occasions on the basis of the Buddhist teaching of not killing (see SHINSHŪ ŌTANI-HA 2008). According to the data in CHART 11, 41.6% of ordained priests think that the death penalty is justifiable. This rate is considerably lower, for example, than the 81.4% who, in a public opinion poll taken in 2004 by the Cabinet Office of the Government of Japan, agreed that the death penalty is justifiable.¹⁵ A lower rate has also been found among lay followers (56%). If we consider the group of ordained priests, the rate of those who found the death penalty not justifiable is 47.5% (for 20% of them it is never justifiable), the relative majority. These data suggest that opposition to the death penalty among the practitioners, and especially among ordained priests, might be substantially stronger than in Japanese society at large, thus confirming the inclination to nonviolence within the Shin Buddhist community.

In the case of the death penalty, there are indications that a deeper involvement in Shin Buddhist practice and belief may correspond to a stronger commitment to nonviolence. The rate of those who oppose the death penalty is much

14. See, for example, the opinion polls conducted by the Cabinet Office of the Government of Japan [<http://www8.cao.go.jp/survey/tokubetu/h18/h18-jieitai.pdf>] (accessed 9 January 2009); and by the *Asahi Shinbun* [<http://www.asahi.com/special/shijiritsu/TKY200403150268.html>] (accessed 10 January 2009).

15. See the official web site [<http://www8.cao.go.jp/survey/h16/h16-houseido/2-2.html>] (accessed 6 January 2009).

higher, for example, among those who often read the scriptures and religious books (37.9%), and never perform the *hatsumōde* (38.9%) (TABLE 13). These data confirm the importance of the idea of nonviolence for the overall Shin Buddhist community, even when a delicate issue such as the death penalty, which generally encounters little criticism among the general public, is at stake.

Conclusion

On the basis of the results of the survey which have been illustrated and analyzed above, it is possible to delineate the general characteristics of the Shin Buddhist approach to social ethics at the individual level. Despite the doctrinal intricacies relating to the teaching of other-power and the absence of precepts in Shin Buddhism, there are signs that the practitioners highly value good social behavior. The value that lay followers emphasize most is compassion, a fundamental concept in Mahayana and Japanese Buddhism. It is followed by traditional Asian and Japanese core values such as cooperation, manners, honesty, and helpfulness, the commitment to which is similar to the Japanese average. Another important value appearing at the top of the scale, filial piety, is privileged over traditional values such as authority, obedience, loyalty, patriotism, and groupism found at the bottom of the scale, which emphasize vertical relationships. There are indications, however, that lay followers may value filial piety less than the Japanese average. On the other hand, there are also signs that they may value the repaying of obligations much more than the Japanese average, perhaps also because of its substantial overlapping with a key Shin Buddhist value, namely, responding in gratitude to the Buddha's benevolence—which implies the understanding of moral behavior as the effect of Amida's grace. The high evaluation of peace of mind, and the orientation to a rich interior life rather than to social engagement is also apparent.

However, this does not prevent a significant involvement in activities on behalf of the disabled or discriminated minorities, which is also promoted at the institutional level. Two other key values for lay followers are equality and nonviolence, which are both core Shin Buddhist values and modern values. In this connection, as is shown by lay followers' attitude toward income equality and homosexuality, there are some suggestions that the idea of "fellow companions" or *dōbō* in Shin Buddhism may have implications for social behavior which go beyond the acknowledgment of the religious equality of all practitioners. On the other hand, it is possible to notice a tendency to religious and cultural exclusivism which is positively correlated to higher standards of religious practice. Finally, the orientation toward nonviolence, which is strongly encouraged at the institutional level, is reflected by the strong support for Article 9 of the Japanese Constitution, and by the interesting number, if not the

majority, of lay followers who oppose the death penalty. Moreover, in this case the inclination to nonviolence is shown to be affected by the level of religious consciousness.

The general attitude toward morality among ordained priests presents similar traits, and some significant variations. Also, in this case the most valued quality is compassion, and there is a strong support for cooperation and manners. However, this group tends to emphasize traditional Shin Buddhist values such as responding in gratitude to the Buddha's benevolence, and uttering the *nenbutsu*, together with other values such as equality and nonviolence, over filial piety and especially ancestor veneration. This may be explained by the centrality of Amida Nyorai and the *nenbutsu* in Shin Buddhist doctrine and practice. The evaluation of authority, patriotism, loyalty, and obedience among ordained priests is much lower than for lay followers. Similarly, nonviolence and equality are among the most important values, but even more emphasis is placed on them. Indeed, this is also reflected in ordained priests' strong support for Article 9 of the Japanese Constitution and pacifism, and in their opposition to the death penalty. As for equality, there are indications in this group that the idea of *dōbō* may have wider applications for social behavior. At the same time, there is a marked tendency to religious exclusivism, namely, to place great stress on the Shin Buddhist religious tradition and identity.

At the general level, there are reasons to believe that the morality of the practitioners is oriented to key Shin Buddhist values such as compassion, responding in gratitude to the Buddha's benevolence, and peace of mind; to traditional Japanese values which are generally related to human relationships, such as cooperation, manners, honesty, helpfulness, filial piety, repaying of debts, and, for lay followers, also ancestor veneration; and to other core Shin Buddhist values, such as equality and nonviolence, which may be well characterized as modern values as well. The orientation toward the interiority of religious experience does not seem to preclude interesting levels of social engagement, a distinctive anti-discriminatory attitude, and support for peace and nonviolence. Indeed, it would seem that this approach is positively correlated to high standards of religious consciousness. This, on the other hand, is linked to higher levels of religious exclusivism, implying the difficulty of applying the concept of *dōbō* to believers of other religious traditions, and appears to be intertwined, especially among lay followers, with the issues of patriotism and ethno-cultural defense.

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