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How Does the Internet Work for Religions Based in Japan?

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1. Introduction

Since the launching of Windows 95 by Microsoft cooperation and the subsequent popularization of the Internet in Japan, we have had little experience to observe common peoples' activities on the Japanese Internet. For example, I started research on the Internet and religions in 1996 and found small numbers of web-sites related to religions based in Japan. At that time, there were less than 100. Then I studied web sites in English in a former paper (Tamura 1997). Now as of May 15, 1998, Yahoo-Japan, a famous search engine, has a list for 1,057 web sites related to religions based in Japan. That includes sites of Christianity (504), Buddhism (365), Shinto (79), Islam (5), and other many religions. These include new religions[1] in Japan, new age movements, and even *Shugendo's*[2]. Since Yahoo-Japan does not cover all religious web sites then we can expect more numbers of them to exist.

However, instead of an explosive expansion of the Computer Mediated Communication [CMC hereinafter] represented by the Internet, not many empirical discussions have been conducted from a sociological point of view so far and fewer papers argue about the influence of the Internet for religions[3]. This paper tries to figure out two things related to the Internet and religions. The first one is the influence of using the Internet on religions. Does the Internet change the relationship of people in Churches, Temples, or any religious organizations? Does the use of the Internet change ways of

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management in religious organizations? The second one explores the possibilities of actual religious activities on the Internet. Can they have essential religious experiences, like rituals, meditations, or worship on the Internet? We would like to argue and try to establish hypotheses for the research on these issues mainly based on empirical research of religion web sites in Japan. The influence on organizations is described in the second chapter and the religious activities are discussed in the third chapter. The research started on June 29, 1997 and ended on October 14, 1997. One hundred and ninety four e-mails were sent and 76 replies were received. The answers consist of e-mails from Buddhist sites (36), Christianity sites (22), and others (18). Table 1 – 4 shows statistics of the answers.

2.THE INTERNET AS A DOUBLE-EDGED SWORD

A. Equalization of voice

The religious organizations in Japan have not started a full-scale commitment to CMC yet. Generally, individuals administrate almost all of the sites in Japan [Table1 Q1]. They maintain sites voluntarily and get no financial help from their organizations. However, there are no claims of financial problems. Though they spent some money to get a CMC environment, it is cheaper to make paper brochures with colorful photos. The Cost of web-sites is low but personal ownership has several problems. It is rather hard to maintain sites. It is time consuming, effort is required and sometimes, a foreign language needed. Many web-sites have English version files. They translate them and respond to e-mail in a foreign language, mainly in English. It is not easy to keep contents fresh. If they have two versions of the web site, it is doubly hard. Twenty answers claim those kinds of hardships and one respondent complains that the religious organization should help him [Table4-1, 3].

An important issue is that web-sites equalize the influence of voices inside the media. Both a personal web-site and an official web-site of an organization are reduced equally to simple Uniform Resource Locators (URLs). So many of the individual web-sites mentioned above could be critical for totality of the organization. In this situation, making sites freely

means existence of the freedom of speech in the organization. Otherwise, there is a resistance to any restriction of the freedom of speech in the organization. A Catholic bishop, Jacques Gaillot, had opposed the Vatican on issues like women's status and homosexuality. Eventually he was appointed to be in charge of Partenia, a desert, in the middle of nowhere. But he did not surrender and he made a web site[4] and has kept sending his messages to the whole world (Zaleski 1997, p.3).

Though they have the right of speech, they have to be concerned about a balance between personal web-sites and an official one. They know that they have equal influence of voice inside CMC, and they do not want to have problems with the organization. Not all of them want to be Jacques Gaillot. We found that a personal site named "*Katorikku no kyokai* (Church of Catholic)" had to change its name because of a complaint from the Catholic Church because the name was too representative[5]. One answer from Konkokyo shows that he tries to keep his site simpler than the Konkokyo official web-site. In case of Tenrikyo, they put consecutive organized numbers in uniformed logotype to personal sites to modify the balance of personal opinions and totality of the organization.

This seems contradictory but the Internet occasionally helps the centralization of power. Information control inside the organization for unity is also a function of CMC [Table2-3]. That could be a benefit for world wide expanded religions that want to be united, for example Roman Catholicism. In an answer to the questionnaire, a Catholic monk said as follows:

> We are prohibited to go out, and so e-mail is the fastest and the most exact way to contact other monasteries. Especially important is that information from the Procurator General can be obtained easily from his page in Rome. That web site is in several languages. If we decide that page is the ultimate reference, we can avoid misunderstanding caused by translation. (Translation: Tamura)

But that may have unexpected influence on the structure of Catholic. James Mulholland, a founder and editor of Catholic Information Center (CICI http://www.catholic.net/) said in an interview with Zaleski that:

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Well it will strengthen the central organization and weaken perhaps, the power of the national organizations. It will not weaken the power of the bishop.... (Because the Pope can not deal with all problems.)

The media enhance direct connection between a layman and the founder or the leader of the religion. That might weaken intermediate organization. That could have a big influence on organization management.

B. Expanding relationship

Web-sites are a rather one-sided means of communication. In this case bulletin boards, IRC and other means are used with web-sites for interactive communication but the e-mail is the most popular. We must think of e-mail first regarding the expansion of relationships in the Internet.

Web-sites are divided into two groups, one got few e-mails and the other got a lot. Most answers said that they got less than 10 to 30 messages since the start of the site [39 of 76]. On the other hand, 22 web-sites got over 70 e-mails. Numbers of e-mails may depend on how old the site is. Thirty six percent of sites that claimed "receiving many messages" started in 1995, the earliest year. In the group of "few e-males," 22% of these sites were from 1995. Difference in policies also can affect the number of e-mails. An owner of Tenrikyo web-site answered that he visited more than three thousands sites and sent a greeting mail at every site in order to invite them to visit his web-site. On the other hand, a Konkokyo church said that they originally did not do outgoing recruiting activities but waited for visitors to come to churches. So they also waited for people to visit their web-sites. He former got more than 70 messages and the latter got little e-mail.

Some web-sites do not have e-mail addresses, but this does not mean they simply refuse e-mail communication. The author sent a snail mail to a counseling institute that has a web-site with no e-mail address. The institute belongs to a religious organization. It may have seemed they had no e-mail address because of a policy of counseling face to face. But the answer was the opposite. They said they do not have an e-mail address because they do not have enough staff members and intend to do e-mail counseling as soon as the situation allows. They showed intentions towards e-mail counseling.

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E-mail is easy to send and reduces the tension that accompanies telephone conversations or face to face meetings. That encourages web-site visitors to send e-mail to unknown religious organizations. This easiness changes images of the organization from "closed" to "open" [Table2-7]. And then it invites new comers to the society [Table1-Q8].

E-mail is sent for various purposes. Some visitors send e-mail and ask about doctrines and activities [Table2-2]. They were also asked for consultation on religions and problems in life [Table2-6]. Current believers also use e-mail for communication among themselves and ex-members. E-mail can go beyond time and space easily. One of answers indicates their happiness because they could contact ex-members who had moved far away.

Forty answers (53%) said relationships through CMC brought them to facial encounters. Sometimes they got new visitors and even believers. There is general research about encounters through CMC communication. In the research based in the USA (Parks 1996), 33.3% of people who got to know each other in newsgroups had experience of meeting in the real world. A research for a bulletin board meeting room in Japanese domestic network shows ratio of 46%(Kawakami 1993, p.115). Fifty five percent is higher than the average ratio. Newsgroups and bulletin board meetings are originally set for frequent exchange of information and aim group communication in CMC. On the other hand, the site is rather characterized as a one way communication tool and does not always expect interaction. If we include those differences of media, it should be higher than 53%. Then we can say that the web-site could be a good way to encounter people for believers as long as they want that. Though one of them answers that s/he might attach greater importance to communication on CMC than to face to face meetings. He does not think we must gather but should make a place where we can communicate that goes beyond distance. That matches contemporary privatized styles of life and thought of religions. That suggests a prospective style of invisible gathering of believers. That is also a possibility of an expansion of relationships on the Internet.

However this expansion is not always possible. Many negative e-mails are sent. They contain religious discussions. The site-owners have negative experiences like unreasonable discussions, undesirable linking, unauthorized use of e-mail ID, and slanderous postings in bulletin boards

[Table4-2]. Expansion of social inter-courses pushes us to meet many unexpected people. They are sometimes troublesome to owners. This is inevitable in CMC, but appropriate strategies against trouble have not been established yet. That sometimes causes lawsuits in Western countries (Post 1996).

Links are also a problem. Off course link is the biggest advantage of web-sites in terms of collecting information. If we do not have links, including results of research engines, the World Wide Web (WWW) is just chaos. In the process of making links, we collect information known as URLs, choose some of them, edit them, classify and name them, give some comments and evaluate them. Making links establishes order from inside the Internet. However order means power in the Internet. If a web-site is quoted as a link in a twisted way and against the owner's will, that sometimes works as violence against the site (Fukamizu 1997).

According to the replies to our questionnaire, almost all web-sites were established in 1996 [46 sites] and no sites were made before 1994. Japanese religion related web-sites have just started and they do not have serious problems like the ones in the USA and Europe so far. But the problems that may arise in the future are to be considered.

3. POSSIBILITIES OF ESSENTIAL RELIGIOUS ACTIVITIES

Even many religion related web-site owners think that the use of the Internet does not essentially matter for religions because they are similar to their brochures and magazines. To them the Internet is just a convenient way to expand (Kawashima 1997; Zaleski 1997, p.118). Zaleski asked Brother Richard whether the Internet is a major step toward global consciousness, web-master of the Order of Saint Benedict (OSB) web-site (Zaleski 1997, p.118). He answered "Where is the evidence?" Also in answering Zaleski's question that a synagogue could be duplicated online, Rabbi Kazen answered "It can be duplicated ... but only to certain extent" because an actual physical act is needed (Zaleski 1997, p.18). We would like to propose some evidence regarding that exists in the Internet.

Before talking about religious possibilities on the Internet, we would

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like to refer to the preceding Media studies that gives us plenty of insights as to the influence of media in society. They will show us why the Internet may have essential influences on religions. They show three topics to be addressed. First, media came immanent to people's thinking. Second, new media makes for a new style of relating to people. Third, the media stimulates people to be aware of their multiplicity of self.

We are too accustomed to think using the media and through the media to be aware of the unexpected influence of the media. If we are asked "Have you ever seen the pyramids in Egypt? ", we are apt to answer "yes" even we have not been in Egypt because we have seen the pyramids in movies and TV shows many times. It is hard to believe that we have never actually seen a pyramid. An experience through media is part of our real experience. In baseball fields in Japan, they have big screens to show the game being played. We are so accustomed to watching baseball on TV that we feel some frustration in watching a *real* baseball game sitting in a seat far from the players. We are very used to seeing sweat of a pitcher and the shouting mouth of a coach as part of our viewing pleasure. The screen is needed so that the real game is *real*. More basic media such as writing is harder for us to recognize its immanence in us without learning from outstanding works of scholars. Walter Ong, communication historian, said that there was a difference in the concept of category of how they divide things into groups, between people who were literate and those who were not literate, introduced in research by A. R. Luria in Russia in 1931(Ong 1982, pp.49-59). Writing itself generated a new interior awareness of the self and a subsequent alienation of this self from the external world. The printing press accelerated this alienation(Ong 1982). MacLuhan and other people pointed out that typological appearance of words in printing books had people to hold the view of homogeneous space like Isaac Newton's physics. The media came to be immanent and change our styles of thinking. So the media is not a closed world outside the real whole world where we think we live but embedded there and media is a component that consists our social life.

The immanence of media compels us to relate to others mainly via media, especially electronic media (Meyrowitz 1985; Gumpert 1987; Yoshimi 1992). They have even to started call them communities. The existence of the community via media was pointed out before the

popularization of CMC, but CMC expanded the size and variation of the community on media (Rheingold 1993; Tamura,1996; Parks 1996). So the interaction and community in the Internet do not mean that the Internet is a new strange world but that it is the way we make relationships beyond face to face relationships in the modern society. Anthony Giddens suggested that modernity changed human relationships as follows:

> The advent of modernity increasingly tears space away from place by fostering relations between "absent" others, locationally distant from any given situation of face to face interaction. In conditions of modernity, place becomes increasingly *phantasmagoric*: that is to say, locals are thoroughly penetrated by and shaped in terms of social influences quite distant from them (Giddens 1990, pp.18-19).

Then thinking about interaction via the Internet and religious activity has essential meaning to religious sociology.

The reality and the self are originally pluralistic as phenomenological sociologists claimed. But that is especially realized in CMC communication (Poster 1990; Osawa 1995; Turkle 1995; Narita 1997).

> The Internet is another element of the computer culture that has contributed to thinking about identity as multiplicity. On it, people were able to build a self by cycling through many selves (Turkle 1995, p.178).

In an interview with Turkle, a woman who had a cyber-boyfriend in chat sessions on American Online and who was about to meet him face to face for the first time, confessed her anxiety because:

> I didn't exactly lie to him about anything specific, but I feel very different online. I am a lot more outgoing less inhibited. I would say I feel more like myself. But that's the contradiction. I feel more like who I wish I was. I'm just hoping that face-to-face I can find a way to spend some time being the online me (Turkle 1995, p.179).

The other woman, a thirty-year-old teacher, described her relationship with Internet Relay Chat, or IRC. On IRC one makes up a name, or handle, and joins any one of thousands of channels discussing different issues, like real-time conferences in cyberspace. She has concerns about her involvement with IRC,

that do not stem from how much time she spends but from how many roles she plays.

> It is a complete escape.... On IRC, I'm very popular. I have three handles I use
> a lot.... So one [handle] is serious about the war in Yugoslavia, [another is] a
> bit of a nut about *Melrose Place*, and [a third is] very active on sexual
> channels, always looking for a good time.... Maybe I can only relax if I see life
> as one more IRC channel (Turkle 1995, p.179).

That does not mean that the Internet is crazy world but that shows us the situation of "self" in postmodern world. The phenomena we see in the Internet is one of consequences of the modernity.

Those features make religious activities in the Internet possible. Stephan O'Leary, a scholar of religious studies, wrote about religious rituals held by new age movement groups on the CompuServe for four years.They hold rituals through Chat, and participants join the ritual according to the text that appears on the screen. Practitioners do enact the ritual at home in front of their computers, manipulating ritual objects of bread. This ritual strays from traditional rituals but matches demands of contemporary people seeking spiritual things (O'Leary 1997, p.803). In future this phenomenon may occur frequently in Japan, too. In the answers to the questionnaire, we could find signs of that. They use the Internet as a supplement in absence of gathering [Table2-11]. A Zen teacher gives Zen instruction through e-mail [Table2-12]. They ask Mizuko-Kuyo[6] through the net. This indicates that CMC is going to contain essentially religious activities. Observing those answers and other examples in the Internet, we would propose three hypotheses with three key words for essential religious activities on the Internet. They are spirituality around words, places and symbols, and counseling.

A. Religion of words: Transmittable mysteries

In cases of religions that attach great importance to words and text, mysteries may transmit through web-sites and email that mainly consist of exchanging words.

In essentially philosophical or word-centered religion like Koan-Zen, exchanging words can be a religious activity. One leader of Zen taught his

student through 'only email' and led him to as high a level as "Kensho," one step before Satori. In a web-site of another temple, they offer an experience of *Ajikan*[7] (Meditation through watching a Sanskrit letter sounds "a.")

In the other case, O'Leary pointed out the changing of properties of the text made ritual in cyberspace possible. Depending on Ongian media theory, he claimed that Protestantism and Publishing separate "signifier" from "signified" and robbed symbolic power from words of rituals.

> The words of the minister were no longer a performative utterance; they simply directed the attention of the congregation. With the aesthetic and formal elements in the liturgy kept to an absolute minimum, this attention was less likely to rest upon external reality as apprehended through the sense and would presumably turn to an interior meditation on salvation characterized by a high degree of abstraction (O'Leary 1997, p.790).

However, if we look at rituals of new age group in real time communication, we find signifier and signified fused in the network.

> .... The old conception of the ritualistic power of symbolic action.... is not dead; it survives within the now limited domain of the Church and has a new home in the global communication network (O'Leary 1997, p.791).

That discussion would be appropriate in Christian and alphabet culture situations, but there are reservations whether it would apply to a Japanese situation. We have the tradition of Buddhism chant, Shinto *Norito*, prayer words for Shinto gods well known in Japan. A head temple of Shin-Buddhism has a page for *Shakyo*, holy script writing as practicing asceticism and believers take it seriously. As in the Ajikan Meditation web-site mentioned before, script, letter and words have been sacred from the ancient time to the present in this context. They have never been divided between signifier and signified. Japanese culture could match up easier to symbolic action in the Internet.

For another aspect of religion and word, there is a forum owned by a channeler and Space Spirit *ARION*. According to explanation in the forum, ARION is energy in the Universe. ARION has been talking with people in the computer forum since 1991. Before ARION started talking in the forum, ARION's channeler spread its message through a magazine. ARION claimed

that communicating through the forum is more direct than using other media. ARION chose the forum, CMC, as a medium. Media came to be the medium as the origin of the word has been.

ARION's messages are written by the medium, Ms Kitagawa. She has her own ID and express her opinion as a human being, too. She uses a different ID when she writes ARION's words. In CMC, ARION and Kitagawa look more different than when she speaks ARION's words from her mouth. From one perspective, she has double characters, but multiple characters are ordinary in CMC. In that situation, Kitagawa can be an ordinary person who laughs, gets angry and makes mistakes. According to the studies of mediums, they suffer when they find that they have two selves, spiritual self as higher being and social self as people. So far, they have denied their social selves and became higher beings as founders of new religions in Japan did (Takezawa 1992, pp.117-119). Kitagawa does not want to kill her social self. By using CMC, Kitagawa keeps freedom to be an ordinary person and stay as a medium at the same time. This could be a new phenomenon that is brought by CMC.

B. Religions of places and symbols

Tenrikyo set a stationary camera that broadcasts the image of their *Odiba*, Main Sanctuary, every three minutes. The file of broadcasts of the Main Sanctuary gets the highest access among files in their web-site[8]. Also, one believer testified that "That could be called virtual *Odiba Gaeri* (Return to Main Sanctuary, the most important event)[9]. Those images made me feel at home and I involuntary access the image often though I know there is very few differences from the last access. " We found people visited sites because they could not attend worship [Table2-11]. The case of the *Tenrikyo* is the most typical case. But also in other temple's web-site, the site-owners often make "Virtual visiting tour." because visiting the place is essential for their believers. That kind of accessibility is an important aspect of religious activities in the Internet. The WWW as multimedia is more suitable for Japanese religions than text based communication to express their symbols. Popularization of use of the Internet started after Windows 95 released that made dealing with the WWW easy.

We found the other kind of symbolic action in the Internet. There are many web-sites based in Japan that shows images of holy statue, and pictures. They show pictures of *Goshintai* (symbol of a god) in Shinto Shrines, and statues of Buddha in Buddhist temples. A visitor wrote in a bulletin board of a Buddhist web-site:

> I love touring temples around (for my peace in mind). They say that it is meaningless if you do not actually go there but it is not possible to go to all temples in Japan. The important thing is the mental distance to Buddha. We can be tied up to Buddha by praying with the joining of our palms together in front of statutes on display. Buddha is in our mind.

Praying to digital Buddha statues seem to be a little odd to some modern Japanese people, but why? Praying to a wooden Buddha should be also odd because it is just pieces of wood. But the Japanese does not think so. That should be related to the concept of "romantic reaction," in Turkle's work. Sherry Turkle describes their feeling in western countries to machine in a phrase "romantic reaction". For example, computation is an ability that belongs to computers. However computation originally belonged to human beings. Once ability belongs to machines, people start to identify themselves as beings that have other abilities from the machines. Once computation belongs to machines, human beings must be something emotional, spiritual and organic. Turkle calls that as "romantic reaction" and wrote that was a process of modern people's identification. If they feel a sense of incongruity for a digital Buddha, it is because the computer is object of "romantic reaction" that belongs to modernity but the wooden statue is not. People who have the other senses may have the other reactions.

There is some difference between religions in Japan and in the West. Especially religions like Protestant Christianity, which depends extremely on text, words or logos. In Japan, symbols are more important.

C. Online Counseling

In our research, web-site owners said they received e-mail for consultation on religion and life problems [Table2-6], and offered consultation services in their web-sites[10]. One owner said that he got more e-

mail than he expected for his consultation service. Some group activities can be held through chat meetings or discussion groups (Tamura 1996)[11].

Then it came to be recognized that features of the Internet have some alliance to psychological counseling by psychologists in Japan. Some websites offer psychological counseling via e-mail[12] by professional psychiatrists and there are mailing lists for people who have mental problems to encourage each other. Its anonymity and being free from time and space helps people to be talkative via the Internet. A visitor to a psychiatrists' website used the word "virtual relax."

Seishin Iryo Yuza no Page (Mental Health Service consumer's Page) is a page for counseling and is supported by the Social Welfare and Medical Service Corporation. In its official report to the Corporation, they describe the appropriateness of CMC as a way of counseling and for self-help activities. CMC is basically different from self-help groups that meet face to face but actually can offer effective opportunities for healing. The advantages of CMC for mental care in the paper are as follows:

1. Freedom from time and space: good for people who can not go out because of mental reasons.
2. Anonymity: Avoid pressure in communication.
3. Use of letters: Recorded letters and writing itself encourage objective thinking that works positively for their conditions.
4. An unspecified number of the general public: Avoid isolation.
5. Equality: Conditions mentioned above enable people to feel free to speak in loose relationship.

In short, the Internet offers an opportunity to people to speak about themselves free from social concern. Other people seek such opportunity in the other situation; for example face to face counseling or a self-help groups. They look different but they are just two different expressions of a desire.

Recently there have occurred some religious movements that are related to psychotherapy, called Religio-Psycho Complex Movement (Kumada 1997). The possibility of psychological counseling on the Internet could be at least part of this kind of religion. ARION mentioned in the former section has also started this kind of activities called *Jikan*, self-observation.

4. CONCLUSION

The features of the Internet would give peculiar influence to religious organizations. Email and web site research are the most popular features of the Internet. The characteristics of e-mail are being free from time and space, two-way communication and anonymity. The characteristics of the web-sites are one side communication, low cost, uniformity, safe access, and multimedia. Those features make it possible for each person to state their opinions to the world and communicate strangers in far away places. Through the Internet an organization can expand by getting new members or enable efficient communication within the organization. The Internet is quite advantageous but also brings new problems. Use of the Internet causes a strain between a layman and the organization because of the equalization of voice. Some groups bash others they disagree with. That negative aspect occurs because of freedom and equality of speech on the Internet, too. The Internet should be useful for expanding the chances of new people meeting, but it should also have a negative aspect. That is our first hypothesis. We should keep observing the influence of the Internet on religious organizations from this perspective. The influence will be stronger in future.

We found some religious activities that will expand in the future on the Internet. That is not a temporary boom but crucial to the society that should be called Internet-embedded society. Religions in the Internet should be considered in a wide perspective as religious phenomena in modern society. Therefore it is meaningful to examine our second hypothesis, regarding religious activities on words, places and symbols, and counseling. That will be verified in the forthcoming consecutive monographs.

Questionnaire for Religion related web-sites RESULTS

Table1

TOTAL			194		
RETURNS			76	39%	
Buddhism			36	47%	
Christianity			22	29%	
New Religions					
Others			1	1%	76
Established	95		8	11%	
	96		46	61%	
	97		22	29%	76

Q1.Who is the owner of the site?

Individual Person	59	78%
Voluntary Group	4	5%
Organization	11	14%
Others	2	3%
N.A.	0	0% 76

Q2.Who is a proposer?

Individual Person	61	80%
Voluntary Group	9	12%
Organization	4	5%
Others	2	3%
N.A.	0	0% 76

Q3.How much e-mail did the site receive?

less than 10	17	22%
10–30	22	29%
30–50	12	16%
50–70	3	4%
more than 70	22	29%
N.A.	0	0% 76

Q4.Did you get positive e-mails?

Yes.	70	92%
No.	5	7%
N.A.	1	1% 76

Q5.Did you get negative e-mails?

Yes.	14	18%
No.	58	76%
N.A.	4	5% 76

Q6.Did you have positive experiences due to the site?

Yes.	70	92%
No.	5	7%
N.A.	1	1%	76

Q7.Did you have negative experiences due to having the site?

Yes.	37	49%
No.	34	45%
N.A.	5	7%	76

Q8.Did the site make an opportunity for face to face meeting?

Yes.	40	53%
No.	35	46%
N.A.	1	1%	76

Table2　Contents of Positive e-mails

1. Encouragement (from outsiders)	16
2. Inquiry for doctrines and activities	16
3. Communication among believers (Current, Ex)	7
4. Visiting by non-believers	6
5. Asking for link	5
6. Consultation about religions, life	4
7. Image Renewal	4
8. Sympathy with the contents of the site	3
9. Asking for link	2
10. Asking for surveys	2
11. Visiting the sites as substitution for attendance	2
12. Religious activities (Zen, Mizuko kuyo)	2
13. Evaluation for being individual free speech	1
14. just out of curiosity	1
15. appreciation	1

Table3　Positive experiences

1.Tele and wide communication	46%	31
2.Q&A, Explanation of doctrines	12%	8
3.Image renewal	10%	7
4. Publicity	6%	4
5. Keeping up with Information age	4%	3
6. Internal communication	4%	3
7. Being encouraged	6%	4
8. Getting chance for face to face meeting	4%	3
9.Pleasure, joy	4%	3
10. As my own study	1%	1
11. Instructing Zen	1%	1
	100%	68

Table4 Negative experiences

1. Efforts for maintenance	44%	17
2. Troubles peculiar to CMC	28%	11
3. Organizational problem like lacking of understanding	13%	5
4. Misleading	5%	2
5. Unanswerable questions	5%	2
6. Correction of wrong information	3%	1
7. Few e-mails	3%	1
	100%	39

NOTES

1 New religions in Japan are newly established religions since the end of Edo era.
2 Shugendo is based on traditional worship on sacred mountains. Practitioners run
around in deep a mountain, sleep in a cave, are stroked by falls, and avoid civilized
equipment for life to get power of spirituals.
3 O'Leary,1997. Brook,1997. Robinson,1997. Zaleski,1997.
4 http://www.partenia.org/ [Received Wednesday, June 24, 1998]
5 http://ux01.so-net.or.jp/~albert/angelus/about.html
6 Mizuko-Kuyo is a Buddhism mass for aborted children.
7 http://www.peace1.co.jp/~f10002/agikan.htm
8 Shimizu Kuniharu, Tenrikyo executive, private e-mail
9 Yamada Masanobu, Doctoral Course student Tsukuba University, private
conversation.
10 Also despite the fact that it looks as if there is much information about religions, it is
not easy to get fair information about religions and to seek some appropriate agency to
ask their questions.
11 Refer reports of psychologist in http://www.mitsunobu.com/
12 *Iyashino Hiroba (Plaza for Healing)* http://www.asahi-net.or.jp/~wn6k-
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