

Sukyo Mahikari/ Belgium

Introduction

The Mahikari movement was founded in 1959 by Yoshikazu Okada (1901-1974), from then on named Kotoma Okada. He was the first president from 1959 to 1974. When he passed away in 1974, there was much confusion as to whom should be his successor. There was a court case to clarify the matter, which was eventually settled in 1982.

His adopted daughter Koko Okada (1926-), later named Keishu Okada, was his principal disciple and assistant. In 1978 she announced that she had formally registered Sukyo Mahikari in Japan as a religious organisation, with herself as its spiritual leader.

Sukyo Mahikari now is a world wide spiritual organisation dedicated to the worship of Creator God and the promotion of peace and happiness throughout the world. Our main practice is the giving and receiving of God's True Light (the spiritual energy of God or his vibrations of wisdom, love and will) to purify our spirit, mind and body and to elevate our soul and attitude. We also give True Light (Mahikari) to our food, homes and the environment.

In the present day society, many people live as if the only thing that matters is the physical world. As a result, little attention is paid to the existence and influence of the unseen world. One aim of Sukyo Mahikari is to guide people to accept that there is an unseen world of spirit, and to encourage them to follow a God centred, spiritual way of life. This means to live according to the basic principles that govern the universe. We call these principles Sukyo.

In accordance with God's plan for humanity, Sukyo Mahikari wishes to work with people from all backgrounds to establish a God-centred civilisation on Earth, a civilisation where the use of the material blessings of nature and the earth is inspired by spiritual wisdom based on a deep understanding of the principles that govern the universe. This vision is based on the sublime tenet: the origin of the world is one; the origin of all human beings is one; and the origin of all religions is one. Through our Mahikari practice we aim to create an ethos where love and harmony within the family provide the foundation for a society that is compassionate and responsible for everyone, and that cares about the environment and the well being of present and future generations.

Let us now return to Mr Okada. His grandfather was a member of a noble samurai family, a scholar and a tutor to a feudal lord. His father was also a tutor, but later he enlisted in the army and rose to the rank of major general. As a young man, Okada entered the military academy in 1920 and after graduating in 1922 he became an officer in the Imperial Guards. In 1931, he was given the mission to accompany the Emperor or crown prince on their travels. In 1937, the year that the war between China and Japan began, he became a section commander at the Imperial headquarters. During the war, Okada was a member of the military team responsible for organising transport strategy in China. He was in charge of railway operations at the rear. Unexpectedly, Okada became ill with a high fever. Later, when he had recovered, Okada was sent back to Japan. In 1938, whilst taking part in a steeplechase held in the presence of the Emperor, Okada's horse stumbled and Okada fractured his spine. When his condition stabilised, Okada left hospital and returned to his army post.

In 1941, Okada was sent on duty to Vietnam in French Indochina as a Lieutenant Colonel. However, the caries of the thoracic vertebrae re-appeared and he had to return to Japan. Okada was told by one of Japan's top medical specialists that he had only three years to live.

Okada thought deeply about his experience and came to the conclusion that medical science was making a mistake by treating only the physical aspect of the human being, a fine and intricate work of art which was created through an ultra-high dimensional science which transcended the physical plane, human power, and human knowledge. Surely, he reasoned, it must be God who created human beings. With this realisation, Okada accepted that medicines were not going to cure his illness. He decided to pray for God's guidance and to leave his fate to God.

In 1941, aged forty, Okada retired from the army and transferred to the reserves. He then proceeded to invest his entire family inheritance in different business ventures including an army aircraft manufacturing company. In a relatively short period of time, the various companies became very successful. In addition, contrary to expectations, his physical condition improved considerably and all signs of his serious illness gradually disappeared.

Several months before the end of the war in August 1945, all of Okada's companies were destroyed by bombs dropped during air raids. In a short time span, Okada found himself not only physically exhausted but also penniless and with a mountain of debts.

With no home to return to, there were many nights when Okada had to sleep under a bridge. With time, he accepted that the sudden loss of all his material possessions was partly because he had forgotten God in the midst of his success, and partly because he had to compensate for the negative karma, that he and his ancestors had accumulated in past lifetimes.

In 1948, filled with regret for his shortcomings and negative karma, and overwhelmed by his responsibility to repay the enormous debts he had, Okada contemplated suicide. Before deciding whether to take such a drastic step, Okada felt he should first visit the shrine of the family deity that his ancestors worshipped. When Okada left the shrine, a mysterious thing happened. Okada saw a dog in obvious pain lying in the street. As he approached the dog, he suddenly heard a voice, seemingly from nowhere, saying "Raise your hand". After hesitating a moment, he raised his hand over the dog. Okada felt a warm energy pouring forth from his hand and after some minutes the dog got up and walked away, in apparently good health.

This incident marked a transition point in Okada's life. He soon discovered that there were many opportunities when he was able to help people simply by raising his hand. He began to study many subjects including history, religion, political science and natural science (including nuclear physics), in an attempt to understand the source and character of the vital energy that he was able to transmit. He eventually decided that it came from a dimension not yet explained by science.

Starting from scratch after the end of the war, Okada slowly began to repay his debts. He sold boots and other footwear, and in 1949 thanks to an introduction provided by an acquaintance, he was offered a job as an advisor to a construction company. He rapidly rose through the ranks of this company and in 1953 joined the company board. Okada remained with this company as a board member until he resigned in order to devote himself full-time to the Mahikari organisation that he founded in August 1959.

In order to further his spiritual development and deepen his spiritual practice of humility, Okada undertook a period of ascetic training at a Zen Buddhist temple. He also joined several religious organisations (one of them was Sekai Kyusei Kyo) and studied the Bible extensively. It is evident that the Mahikari movement is originated in the socio-cultural context of a Japan after the Second World War. Shinto, the state religion, has been cancelled by American pressure, as a

manifestation of the separation between state and religion, and as an expression of liberty of religion. As a result, there was room for a multitude of new religious movements originating or expanding as so much variants or re-arrangements of the religious heritage of Shrine Shinto, Buddhism, folk religion and shamanism, esoterism and christianism too. Some new elements were added or new interpretations were given according to the revelations or the mystical experiences of the founders.

Therefore, many new religious movements are characterised by syncretism. They have something new within a more known reference and antecedents. They make their own reference using elements from different systems or religions, to unite all those into a new mosaic. According to an official report in 1963, these new religions constituted about half of the total of the 379 religious juridical persons at national level, and the number of their adherants was estimated at well over ten million.

As a result of his research and personal experience, Okada arrived at the conclusion that the spiritual energy or Light that he transmitted from his hand must have come from an extremely high dimension. Okada observed that after he gave Light to someone, the receiver would sometimes have a cleansing followed by an improvement in his or her condition. He also observed that when he gave Light to some people, attaching spirits would manifest. As a result, he felt that the Light he transmitted not only purified the soul of the receiver but also the souls of the spirits attached to that person. Okada gradually arrived at the conclusion that the Light he transmitted when he held up his hand was the Light of purification and salvation.

These were Okada's opinions, based on his experience and research. However, it was not until 27 February 1959, when Okada woke up from five days of an unconscious state due to high fever, and he received his first divine revelation concerning his God-given missions, that Okada felt confident that the answers he sought regarding the many questions he had concerning the Light he transmitted – its properties, function and purpose – were finally being answered. Okada understood, through the revelations that he received, that the Light that he gave with his hand was the same Light of purification and salvation that God allowed many holy messengers in the past to give when they raised their hands. He decided that he had no choice but to embark on his "mission of Yo" – the mission "to bring about the reconstruction of the world", that is, the mission to establish a world of true harmony that accords with the will of God. Other missions given

to Okada included the mission of sumeigodo and the mission of yosuka judo. The mission of sumeigodo means "to help all religions re-discover their common origin", which is Creator God, and to reveal to all humankind divine teachings in a more direct manner than was possible in the past. The mission of yosuka judo means "to give people the power of God" and "to give people the power to worship God in the correct way".

As a result of the divine missions that were given to Okada, people now have the opportunity to know the laws that God put in place at the beginning of Creation so that everything in the universe can prosper eternally (Sukyo) and to practice the art of True Light (Mahikari no waza).

On 19 June 1959, Mr Okada held the first Mahikari primary course at the Tenso Shrine in Omori, a district of Tokyo. This was the first time that he had brought his followers together to give them teachings. It was the beginning of the expansion of Mahikari in Japan.

On 28 August 1959, he founded and became president of Yokoshi Tomo no Kai (Children of the Dawn Association). He held the first intermediate course in May 1962 and the first advanced course in November 1962. In July 1962, Okada began to publish a newsletter and in January 1963 this newsletter became a monthly magazine. He edited the monthly magazine (Mahikari Journal) until he passed away in 1974. On 5 November 1963, he established the religious organisation Sekai Mahikari Bunmei Kyodan (World True Light Civilisation Religious Organisation).

Okada continued to receive more revelations, and travelled extensively throughout Japan spreading the divine teachings. By raising his hand to radiate God's Light, he demonstrated in a practical way that 'God is Light' and that an invisible realm of spirit exists. Miracles often occurred whenever and wherever the founder raised his hand and as a result many people came to see him. It was for this reason and also because of his great love for people, that members of the organisation he founded began to call him "Sukuinushisama" (Master of Salvation), a title that is still used today.

Mahikari expanded from Tokyo, first east to west and then, north and south, across Japan. It was introduced to Europe in 1971 via Paris and from Paris, it spread to Africa and the Caribbean. It was primarily

through Japanese people that Mahikari was introduced to North, Central and South America. In addition, many overseas students, scholars, businessmen, etc., met Mahikari in Japan and, on returning home, they introduced the practice to others.

In September 1973, Mr Okada made his first visit outside Japan and spent three weeks in Europe, visiting France, Italy, Belgium and Switzerland.. On 19 September he met with Pope Paul VI in Rome.

When Sukuinushisama passed away on 23 June 1974, there was much confusion as to who should be his successor. His adopted daughter Koko Okada (1926-), later named Keishu and now generally known as Oshienushisama (master of teachings), who was Sukuinushisama's principal disciple and assistant, explained that her father had bestowed the role of Yo on her, in accordance with a revelation he had received on 13 June 1974. However, some members felt that another of Sukuinushisama's assistants, Mr Sakae Sekiguchi, should be the successor. As a result of the confusion, there was a court case to clarify the matter. The matter was eventually settled in 1982.

In order that she might fulfil, as quickly as possible, the covenant that Sukuinushisama had made with God to build Suza, "God's Throne" or the world shrine dedicated to Creator God, in June 1978 Oshienushisama announced that she had formally registered Sukyo Mahikari in Japan as a religious organisation, with herself as its spiritual leader.

In July 1982, after a series of court hearings the Supreme Court recommended that there should be an amicable settlement between what were then already two independent Mahikari organisations, one led by Oshienushisama, and the other by Mr Sekiguchi. The two organisations agreed to respect each other, not to interfere with each other's activities, and to share the Goseigen (Book of Holy Words) and the Norigotoshu (prayer book). By 1982, Sukyo Mahikari was already an established organisation and the construction of Suza was well underway. Following the Supreme Court ruling, most of the members followed Oshienushisama. Others followed Mr Sekiguchi, whose organisation retained the original title of Sekai Mahikari Bunmei Kyodan. On 3 November 1984, Suza has been inaugurated.

Sukyo Mahikari now has centres in over seventy-five countries. In terms of membership, our numbers are modest (800,000 persons worldwide, of whom about 500,000 in Japan). We have observed that those of our members who seem to benefit the most from their

Mahikari practice are those who are prepared to make a commitment to the practice, who have a strong desire to be of service to God and who wish to help others.

Source: (An unpublished manuscript by S. Chang, ch. 12, 1-3)

For more information, see <http://sukyomahikari-europe.org>

Profile

1. Hierarchical structure

The spiritual leader or Oshienushisama is at the same time the president of the Japanese religious organisation Sukyo Mahikari. The president and four administrators constitute the Board of Directors.

Main office: Takayama, Gifu prefecture, Japan.

Regional offices: G.D. Luxembourg for Europe, Africa and the Caribbean Islands - São Paulo (Brazil) for Latin America - Rancho Santa Margarita (California/USA) for North America - Canberra (Australia) for Australia and Oceania - Singapore for Asia.

Local and national centres are to be found throughout the world in over seventy-five countries. A centre is sometimes referred to as a "dojo", a Japanese word that means "training place". Members visit their local, national and regional centres to pray, to give and receive True Light, to learn more about the spiritual and practical aspects of the art of True Light, and to participate in ceremonies and seminars.

Each national association chooses the juridical and administrative structures which are appropriate in its country or state. In Belgium, the legal status is this of a "non-profit association".

Parallel to these structures, there are also several specialised agencies in Japan:

- the *Doshi School* for training the missionaries (doshi) during a three year period;
- the *Yoko Civilisation Research Institute*, founded in 1973 but operational since 1985, for the research on the development of a well-balanced and harmonious civilisation;

- the *Yoko Health Clinic*, opened in Takayama in 1989, for the research on the integration of a spiritual outlook with medical science;
- the *Yoko Farms* for a spirit-centred approach to organic gardening;
- the *Yoko Youth Centre*, inaugurated in Kuguno near Takayama in July 2002, for the education and spiritual development of young people, as well as for parents and teachers;
- the *Hikaru Memorial Museum*, located on the outskirts of Takayama City and opened on 27 February 1999, commemorates the life and missions of Sukuinushisama, and has exhibitions on the history and culture of ancient civilisations of the world and the geology of the Hida Takayama region.

Sukyo Mahikari Belgium

A. Spiritual structure

In Belgium Sukyo Mahikari has 6 official centres:

The main centre (called "Dojo") is located in Schepdaal (Dilbeek), smaller centres (called "Okiyomesho") are located in Berchem (Antwerp), Houthalen, Bree, Verviers and Zwevegem (the last one is called "Renrakusho", which is the smallest in hierarchy).

In each centre one person is in charge of the spiritual guidance of its members and visitors. In general he/she has one or more assistants. Besides these, others concentrate more on the practical/material aspects of the functioning of the centre. For the time being, Sukyo Mahikari also has 3 (part-time) "missionaries" in Belgium. They followed a specific 3-year training in Japan and they visit all the centres.

B. Legal structure

Throughout the world Sukyo Mahikari adopts in each country the best available juridical structure to realise its spiritual/religious mission. In Belgium, it is a non-profit association (VZW – ASBL).

The "general assembly" counts 22 members, a 5 member-board of directors and an external commissioner-revisor to certify each year its administration and accounts.

2. Recruitment of new members

The main approach is through personal contacts. The aim is to offer the opportunity for people to know about the existence of True Light and the teachings on divine principles. The message is not to save the others at any price or to be saved: proselytism is not practised. When a person is interested in the teaching of Sukyo Mahikari, he can receive True Light and make his own experiences.

Occasionally, public information sessions are held to promote the image of the movement.

3. Entrance in the movement

Any person who has been receiving True Light over a long period of time, and who is sufficiently acquainted with the aim and the functioning of Sukyo Mahikari, can ask to participate actively in the divine service of transmitting True Light to others by applying for the primary initiation course. At the end of this three-day primary course, the new member receives "Omitama", a sacred locket prepared by Oshienushisama, by which the spiritual link between the person and the Creator God is being strengthened, and he is empowered to transmit True Light. When a person receives Omitama, he automatically becomes a member of Sukyo Mahikari (also named 'kamikumite' and 'yokoshi'). This spiritual practice is open to people of other faiths.

A once-only donation of about 160 euros is demanded for this initiation course. Thereafter, the member can freely attend the course as many times as he wants without any obligatory donation. The primary course is open to everyone over the age of ten. Those aged ten to 18, however, must have their parents' permission to attend. Candidates who live in a partner relationship are advised to consult their partner before applying for the initiation.

4. Adherence to the movement and to another religion

The vision of Sukyo Mahikari is based on the tenet "the origin of the world is one, the origin of all human beings is one, the origin of all

religions is one". Mr Kotoma Okada said that at its heart, each religion is one with all others.

Sukyo Mahikari is not the only path to the Creator God, nor the only way to come closer to God. It is one of many paths leading to the same Truth that is given many different names, "God" being one of them

Sukyo Mahikari wants to help people awaken to the universal principles that are common to all religions and faiths and to encourage people of all religions to practice giving the Light of the Creator God, in this way helping to restore the original essence of religious practice.

Quite a number of people practice another religion before becoming a Sukyo Mahikari member. They are free to continue their original religious practise at any time.

Sukyo Mahikari welcomes inter-religious dialogue, especially on topics related to the creation of a more peaceful and harmonious society. In August 2000, Sukyo Mahikari was one of the co-sponsors of the Millennium World Peace Summit of Religious and Spiritual Leaders which was held at the United Nations Headquarters in New York.

5. Financial obligations of members

For all its activities, the organisation relies on a recommended monthly membership fee (currently 5 euros but 3 euros for students) and voluntary donations by members and non-members. It is entirely at the discretion of each person, however, to decide whether or not to make a donation and to decide on the amount. Members are advised to be realistic in this matter and not to put their family in difficulty. There is no rule of '10% of one's income' whatsoever.

These donations are accounted for in accordance with the laws and financial regulations of the country where the donations are offered.

6. Voluntary leave of the movement

Members are free to leave Sukyo Mahikari at any time. There is no formal procedure.

When a member has not paid any of the recommended monthly membership fee (see above: 3 to 5 Euro) during five consecutive years, he will be considered as having left the organisation voluntarily.

If at a later date this person wants to resume his activities as a member, he is able to do so as a new candidate.

7. Procedure of exclusion of an adherent, a member of the hierarchy or the supreme leader

Exclusion of an adherent is very rare. No such case is known in Belgium.

Concerning the spiritual aspect of membership, there is no exclusion procedure. (See also point 6 above).

Concerning the civil aspects of membership, each national association can solve the posed problem according to civil law, its "statutes" and its "internal rules". To our knowledge there has been no need so far in Belgium to exclude a member for civil reasons.

In Belgium, there have not been any exclusions of members of the hierarchy either. There have been a few cases in which a member of the hierarchy was dismissed from his function (but not excluded) by the board of directors or the general assembly.

8. Social and domestic relations

Members of the movement fully live in civil society. The other members of the family are not pressed to adhere to the movement; in many cases they are not all members.

Sukyo Mahikari promotes a lifestyle where service to God, to society and to the family must be compatible and balanced. In this sense, members are encouraged to be committed to their families, to other people and to their occupation.

Most of the Mahikari members spend some of their free time on volunteer work, mainly by practicing the Art of True Light. (An individual Light-session lasts a maximum of 50 minutes, see Point 11 below.)

Besides this main practice, there are some practical tasks, just like in every non-profit organisation, in which members can assist the professional personnel: secretary work, preparation of activities, cleaning and daily maintenance of the centres, reception of members

and visitors, translation and interpretation work, etc... Members are sometimes encouraged to participate in these activities but remain free from direct obligation.

Due to limited financial resources, professional personnel is limited. Today there are about four full-time equivalents: 2,5 have a spiritual function and 1,5 take care of the administrative work.

9. The movement and medicine

The position of Sukyo Mahikari Belgium is as follows: Some people receive True Light (See point 11) with the hope that they will be healed or that their condition will improve. The aim of the art of Mahikari, however, is not to heal illnesses but to revive the original divine power of men, children of God, through purification of their spiritual, astral and physical body, to allow them to participate in the accomplishment of the divine work and to make progress on the path of divinisation.

There is no charge for receiving or giving Light. It is entirely left to the discretion of each person to decide whether or not to make a donation to the organisation in accordance with his heart and possibilities.

Sukyo Mahikari teachings explain that during physical life on earth the spiritual, astral and physical body are intimately interwoven and that they are linked by the universal principle of 'spirit first, mind next, body follows". Therefore, after any action on the spiritual level, for instance by receiving True Light, people may feel that there is an improvement in their condition. This kind of experience can help people to understand that it is important to cultivate a more holistic and positive attitude for the sake of their well-being.

The art of True Light is no substitute for medical or psychological therapy. Sukyo Mahikari recommends, therefore, that if a person has a physical problem, he should see a qualified medical doctor or physician. Similarly, if a person has an emotional or mental problem, he should seek the help of a professional therapist or counsellor.

However, Sukyo Mahikari recommends a well-considered use of medication and treatments, restricted to those cases judged necessary through careful diagnosis by a medical doctor.

In 1989, Sukyo Mahikari opened the Yoko Health Clinic to the general public in Takayama. The medical philosophy of that clinic is to conduct

research on the integration of the spiritual and medical-scientific outlook on health care.

10. Information of members about the financial management of the movement

In Belgium, a non-member external accountant is being consulted for the accounting and each year a "full audit" is being performed by a (non-member) legal reviser. This accountability largely meets the criteria required by the Belgian law. The annual accounts of the closed year and budget for the new year are approved by the General Assembly of the juridical association. Every year, generally in March, on the occasion of the monthly thanksgiving ceremony, the attending members are informed about the highlights. Further information is available for those interested.

As regards the "accusations" that Sukyo Mahikari Belgium would send every year about 125,000 Euros to the main office in Japan and 17,000 Euros to the regional office in the G.D. of Luxembourg, the reality is that this was true only for certain years. Moreover, the transfer of the money is both a legal transaction and morally beyond reproach.

In the beginning, from 1974, an important part of the donations were indeed sent to Japan, mainly for the construction of the World Shrine in Takayama which was inaugurated in 1984. A few years later, the decision was taken to buy or build a new dojo or training centre for Belgium. From 1988, then, the donations were accumulated in Belgium for this project, culminating in 1992. From 1993, donations have been reserved for the expenses of additional personnel in Belgium. Donations with the specific goal of the maintenance of the World Shrine (located in Japan), however, have always been transferred to Japan without exception. In these last years, the amount is about 13.000 euros annually.

Concerning the regional office, located in the G.D. of Luxembourg since 1996, Sukyo Mahikari/Belgium has made a financial contribution according to the incoming donations from 1997. Today it is limited to ten euros per active member in Belgium which makes a total of approximately 6.500 to 7.000 euros annually.

As regards the real estate of Sukyo Mahikari/Belgium, as previously mentioned, a new dojo was installed in Schepdaal in 1992. To this end, a medium-sized administrative building (not a castle as certain

sources have claimed) was converted into a place of worship and spiritual training and into some offices for the general and legal administration of the association. In the same year a new local centre was built in Theux, near Verviers. This year, Sukyo Mahikari/ Belgium purchased a house in Bree and converted it into a centre. For the time being, the other centres are located in a hired place or in private houses.

Finally, it bears note that there is a severe audit of the main office in Japan every second year by the Ministry of Finance.

11. Worshipping and religious activities

The main practice is the giving and receiving of God's True Light (the spiritual energy of God or his vibrations of wisdom, love and will) to purify the spirit, mind and body and to elevate the soul.

This practice is often referred to as "okiyome" (a Japanese word meaning "purification"). After chanting the prayer, a Mahikari member radiates God's Light from the palm of his hand to another person in an individual okiyome session lasting a maximum of 50 minutes. The hand of the giver is held at a distance of 30 cm or so from the body of the receiver. In a typical session, True Light is radiated first to the centre of the forehead, then to the back of the head and the neck, followed by kidney area and other parts of the body.

True Light (Mahikari) can also be transmitted to food, homes and the environment.

Thanksgiving ceremonies are held at all Sukyo Mahikari centres every month, every year and on special occasions to coincide with the major ceremonies at Suza, the world shrine.

The basic teachings of Sukyo Mahikari are to be found in two holy books: "The Holy Words" (*Goseigen*) and a prayer book (*Norigotoshu*).

There are three levels of initiation courses which a member is free to take over a period of several years. The first or primary initiation course lasts three days and can be attended in a local centre. A once-only donation of about 160 euros is demanded in order to attend. The second level or secondary course is organised on a regional level (i.e. Europe), it also lasts three days and requires a financial contribution of 463 euros. For the third level initiation, which is a four-day course, members must travel to the World Shrine in Japan. The donation for

this third level initiation is approximately 630 euros. Each one of these courses can be re-attended by members whenever they desire; any further financial contribution is made at their own discretion.

Sukyo Mahikari teachings are guidelines rather than constraints. Members decide for themselves whether or not to accept the teachings and put them into practice and to what extent. Some members regard the teachings as high ideals or goals to which they can aspire and work towards in a step by step process.

Occasional seminars take place to study on a more practical level the applications of the individual teachings in daily life.

12. Life in community

There is no community-life. Members of the movement fully live in civil society.

13. List of allegations concerning the dangerous nature of the movement

- A. Rejection of scientific medicine to the benefit of religious healing techniques such as the laying on of hands, the purification of the spirit, the mind and the body.
- B. Outrageous payments for the purification of the spirit, the mind and the body as a guarantee against illnesses.
- C. Financial extortion justified by various spiritual reasons (i.e. donation of 10% of one's income to receive True Light, courses, etc.)
- D. Use of the donations for financial operations and investments abroad.
- E. Exploitation of cheap labour and voluntary work as a form of purification of the soul and of redemption.
- F. Proselytism targeting vulnerable people.
- G. Severing the links with the family and friends.

- H. Sukyo Mahikari is a totalitarian sect (use of the swastika, the symbol of nazi and extreme-right movements).
- I. Sukyo Mahikari is an apocalyptic sect (only its members will be saved).

14. Official position of the movement to these allegations

- A. See Point 9 above.
- B. See Point 9 above.
- C. See Points 5 and 11 above.
- D. See Point 10 above.
- E. See point 8 above.
- F. See Points 2 & 3 above.
- G. See Point 8 above.
- H. As regards the allegation of Sukyo Mahikari being a totalitarian sect and a harmful sectarian organisation (See parliamentary report on cults pp...), Sukyo Mahikari/Belgium asked the Minister of Justice for evidence of this claim in December 1998. After four letters and two years and a half of waiting, the movement was answered on 8 June 2001 that the "Information and Advice Centre on Harmful Sectarian Organisations" is the legal appropriate authority in this matter. Sukyo Mahikari/Belgium contacted the Centre which replied on 13 December 2001
 - "a. Concerning the Parliamentary Report it is clear that only the small section 'Conclusions and Recommendations' (only 18 pages) has been accepted by the Parliament; all the other texts have only an informative value and have not all been verified by the Commission.
 - b. Concerning claims about illegal practices, harming the individual, the family or the society and disturbing the public order, the Centre stated that in their documentation there is no proof of any facts which would have been discussed before a judge."

The swastika symbol is a very ancient esoteric symbol which expresses the four fundamental forces of the universe in their dynamic functioning (left turning). Insofar that Sukyo Mahikari uses this symbol, it does so in its reference to the ancient spiritual meaning, not as a reference to nazism.

- I. Some media and reports have referred to Sukyo Mahikari as being a 'doomsday' or apocalyptic organisation. Sukyo Mahikari denies such a teaching.

15. Lawsuits against the movement or against members of the clergy in Belgium on the basis of one of the allegations from point 13.

In Belgium, a lawsuit was initiated on 29 May 1997 by the "Procureur du Roi" (Public Prosecutor), urging the dissolution of the Sukyo Mahikari association in Belgium on the allegation that the Belgian administrators would have been nominated "pro forma" and did in no way fulfil their function.

On 7 September 1999, the judge considered the claim to be unfounded. The "Procureur du Roi" failed to make any argumentation for his accusation.

16. Lawsuits against the movement or against members of the clergy in Japan on the basis of one of the allegations from point 13.

In Japan: No lawsuits.

In other countries: None to our present knowledge.

17. Complaints from members of the movement concerning intolerance, discrimination on the basis of their convictions and hindrances to the exercise of their liberties *before* the publication of parliamentary reports on cults in Belgium?

No specific complaints.

18. Complaints from members of the movement concerning intolerance, discrimination on the basis of their convictions and hindrances to the exercise of their liberties *after* the publication of parliamentary reports on cults in Belgium?

Two cases concerning the visitation right in divorce cases.

The first case was initiated in September 1996. After a social expertise in October 1997, a Flemish court granted the father in question a visitation right without surveillance (he did not participate in activities of the movement with his children). The mother in question (and an ex-member), however, appealed the decision before a French-speaking court in December 1997. This second court stated that the children must be put under the guidance of a social service chosen jointly by the parents because "Sukyo Mahikari can undoubtedly be considered a cult and, as such, poses an obvious danger for the children". There has been a long discussion because the mother wanted an anti-cult guidance but the father insisted for a neutral one. The case was closed at the end of 2002 with a judgement that granted again a visitation right without surveillance.

The second case was initiated by a mother in 1998 to restrict the father's visitation right on the grounds of his active membership to the movement and of accusations listed in the parliamentary report on sects (the supposed refusal of any medical treatment taught by Sukyo Mahikari). In the final judgment in 2001, it is stated that both parents will exercise their authority jointly over the child and that the child may not be put in contact with the movement.

Some members (i.e. a police officer) have resigned their responsibilities in the movement to preserve their occupation in public services.

19. Lawsuits initiated by the movement

There was an official refusal for granting property tax exemption on Sukyo Mahikari places of worship on the grounds of several allegations from point 13. The only procedure of appeal against this negative decision is to seize the Court of Appeal against the Belgian State. This procedure was initiated in 1998. At this stage of the procedure, both parties have filed their conclusions.

Since 1995, Sukyo Mahikari Belgium has been waiting for the official authorisation to receive a legacy (normally this procedure is considered a formality and takes a few months). The demand was re-activated in 2002. The movement hopes this matter can be resolved without any lawsuit.

20. The movement and human rights

In conformity with the teaching "we believe that every person is a child of God by nature, and that people should treat each other with respect, compassion and kindness", Sukyo Mahikari/Belgium considers the Universal Declaration of Human Rights as a practical expression of what it considers a fundamental spiritual law. Sukyo Mahikari claims that human rights are, therefore, embedded in the basic attitude and practices that it promotes with its members. Sukyo Mahikari has not carried out any specific actions promoting human rights.

May 2003

Note: This profile of Sukyo Mahikari is based on material collected during interviews taken in 2002 and 2003.

Some books on Sukyo Mahikari

CLARKE, P.B. (2000) Japanese New Religions in Global Perspective. Edited by P.B. Clarke. Curzon Press: Richmond, Surrey. ISBN 0-7007-1185-6.

Especially the following chapters:

CORNILLE, C. New Japanese religions in the West: Between nationalism and universalism. Chapter 1, pp. 10 – 34.

BOUMA, G.D., SMITH, W. & VASI, S. Japanese religion in Australia: Mahikari and Zen in a multicultural society. Chapter 3, pp. 74 – 91 & 107 – 112.

MATSUNAGA, L. Spirit first, mind follows, body belongs. Notions of health, illness and disease in Sukyo Mahikari UK. Chapter 7, pp. 198 – 239.

CLARKE, P.B. & SOMERS, J. (1994) Japanese New Religions in the West. Edited by P.B. Clarke & J. Somers. Japan Library/Curzon Press: Kent. ISBN: 1-873410-24-7

Especially the following chapters:

SOMERS, J. Japanese new religious movements in Britain. Chapter 5, pp. 54 – 77.

CORNILLE, C. Jesus in Japan: Christian syncretism in Mahikari. Chapter 7, pp. 89 – 103.

DAVIS, W. (1980) *Magic and Exorcism in Modern Japan*. Stanford University Press, Stanford. ISBN: 0-8047-1131-3.

INTROVIGNE, M. (1999) *Sukyo Mahikari*. Elledici, Torino. pp. 112. (Only available in the Italian language, French translation probably in course of 2003).

KITAGAWA, J.M. (1966, 1990) *Religion in Japanese History*. Columbia University

Press, New York. ISBN: 0-231-02834-2.

McVEIGH, B.J. (1997) *Spirits, Selves, and Subjectivity in a Japanese New Religion. The Cultural Psychology of Belief in Sukyo Mahikari*. The Edwin Mellen Press, New York. ISBN: 0-7734-8430-2.

MORLION, A.E. (1987) *The calling of Mahikari for the coming spiritual civilization*. In: *Creating the Future of Mankind*. (Proceedings of the First Yoko Civilization International Conference), pp. 25-30. Yoko Civilization Research Institute, Tokyo.

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