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Mahikari in Context

Kamigakari, *Chinkon kishin*, and Psychical Investigation in Ōmoto-lineage Religions

Adherents are taught that Mahikari originated from divine revelations that Okada Yoshikazu received during a spontaneous episode of *kamigakari* in 1959, and academic studies generally present the view that it is a derivative of Sekai Kyūseikyō and Ōmoto. From the perspective of adherents, if not scholars, these two views are mutually exclusive. In practice, the origins of many religions in the Ōmoto lineage are not easy to clarify. Adherents tend to identify a founder's initial revelation or other mystical occurrence as the starting point of a religion, and consider this occurrence to be so momentous that the previous religious affiliations of the founder, if known, become largely irrelevant. The doctrines of these religions are typically based on divine revelations received by the founder through means such as *kamigakari*, *chinkon kishin*, and psychical investigation techniques.

KEYWORDS: Mahikari — revelations — *tekazashi* — Okada Yoshikazu — *chinkon kishin* — psychical investigation

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OKADA YOSHIKAZU 岡田良一 (1901–1974) established the Mahikari 真光 (True Light) religious movement in 1959, reportedly in response to a revelation he received earlier that year during a spontaneous episode of *kamigakari* 神懸かり (possession by the spirit of a deity).¹ This and subsequent revelations are credited as being the source of Mahikari doctrine. For many years, adherents also reported that the first episode of *kamigakari* was the occasion and means of Okada acquiring the ability to perform *tekazashi* 手かざし (literally, holding up the hand; a spiritual purification and healing method in which spiritual energy is radiated from the palm of the hand) and, soon after, to enable his followers to do the same.

Academic writers, most notably Winston DAVIS (1980), have broadened what is known concerning the origins of Mahikari by reporting that Okada had previously been a member of Sekai Kyūseikyō 世界救世教 (Church of World Messianity), and by showing that Mahikari doctrine and practice have much in common with that of Ōmoto² 大本 (“great origin”) and Sekai Kyūseikyō (DAVIS 1980, 77–78). This observation potentially raises the question of whether Okada’s teachings and his form of *tekazashi* were sourced entirely from his *kamigakari* experiences, or at least partly from Sekai Kyūseikyō, but Davis does not explore this question. He simply reports the spontaneous possession and divine revelation story that was current within Mahikari in the 1980s (DAVIS 1980, 5), alongside his own appraisal of Mahikari’s religious lineage.

In practice, it is difficult to establish to what extent a new religion is shaped by its founder’s mystical experiences, prior religious affiliations, and other influences, since such considerations are anathema to true believers. Adherents tend to regard the founder’s initial mystical experience as a major turning point in his or her life, during which newly revealed spiritual truths dominate above all prior beliefs and influences. Thus, members and even leaders of a particular religion

1. According to the online *Encyclopedia of Shinto*, “*Kamigakari* refers to the possession of a person by a *kami* [deity] or other spirit. It is often followed by *takusen*, whereby the possessed person serves as a “medium” (*yorimashi*) to communicate the divine will or message of that *kami* or spirit. Also included in the category of *takusen* are “dream revelations” (*mukoku*), in which a *kami* appears in a dream to communicate its will. *Kamigakari*, or spirit possession, is generally accompanied by a physical and mental transformation.” <http://eos.kokugakuin.ac.jp/modules/xwords/entry.php?entryID=1308> (accessed May 2008)

2. The founder of Sekai Kyūseikyō, Okada Mokichi (no relation to Okada Yoshikazu), was originally a staff member and missionary within the Ōmoto organization.

often appear ill-informed about its origins and unable to provide researchers with reliable information.

This article attempts to identify the actual origins of Mahikari, or more specifically, the source of its doctrine and its form of *tekazashi*. Were these sourced from Okada's *kamigakari* experiences, from Sekai Kyūseikyō, or from other influences? Existing academic writing identifies Ōmoto and Sekai Kyūseikyō as influences, making it relevant to also examine the sources of the doctrine and practice of those religions and of other religions in that lineage.

I identify three types of paranormal experiences that have contributed to the emergence of new religions in the Ōmoto lineage, namely *kamigakari*, *chinkon kishin* 鎮魂帰神 (a form of mediated spirit possession), and psychical investigation of the divine spiritual realm, and discuss their respective roles in the origins of Mahikari in detail. This dual focus—the origins of Mahikari, and the context in which it arose—may be helpful since there are no immediately obvious references to *chinkon kishin* and psychical investigation within Mahikari publications, and the evidence that shows their importance only becomes meaningful when the historical context is understood. As far as the author is aware, existing academic writing contains little or no discussion of these aspects of Mahikari.

The first section of this article discusses the tradition of *kamigakari*, as exemplified by Tenrikyō 天理教, and the part it played in the origins of Ōmoto. It then discusses details of the *kamigakari* origin story reported by Mahikari adherents. The next section briefly discusses the founders and origins of some of the religions in the Ōmoto lineage, with particular focus on the means by which revelations were received. This is not intended to be a comprehensive overview, but rather a sketch of the way *chinkon kishin* and psychical investigation contributed to the religious climate of the time, and the information and religions included in this section have been selected on that basis. The third section returns to the topic of Mahikari and discusses the evidence that shows Okada's connections with and influence from the psychical investigation movement discussed in the preceding section. The final section focuses on the relationship between *chinkon kishin* and the Mahikari form of *tekazashi*.

Okada Yoshikazu established a religious association known as Yōkōshi Tomo no Kai 陽光子友乃会 (Sunlight Children Friends Association) in August 1959. In 1963, he registered this group as a religion under the name Sekai Mahikari Bunmei Kyōdan 世界真光文明教団 (Church of the World True-Light Civilization). This group then split into two main factions after Okada's death, leading to the establishment of Sūkyō Mahikari 崇教真光 (Sūkyō True Light) in 1978.³ Scholars and adherents alike tend to refer generically

3. Sūkyō is a word coined by Okada Yoshikazu, and is a modification of the kanji used to write "shūkyō" (religion). He used "Sūkyō" to refer to what he claimed are universal spiritual laws that

both major factions and the entire duration of Okada's religious movement, from 1959 onwards, as "Mahikari." This article likewise uses the generic term "Mahikari" in reference to both factions, but maintains chronological accuracy by using the name Yōkōshi Tomo no Kai when discussing events and influences prior to 1963.

Kamigakari Precedents and the Yōkōshi Tomo no Kai Origin Story

Kamigakari is a prominent feature of Japan's long and varied tradition of shamanism, and may occur spontaneously or be induced by various ascetic practices. In spontaneous cases, an ordinary person is suddenly possessed by a deity who chooses to reside in the physical body or "ride on" (*kamigakari*) the person and use her or him as its spokesperson. The onset of possession is often marked by a serious illness, perhaps involving prolonged unconsciousness, and by the sudden acquisition of healing and other paranormal powers. Since the possessed person is subsequently thought to transmit the will of the possessing deity, and particularly since the deity is believed to have specifically chosen that particular person and been solely responsible for initiating the possession, the affected person may become highly, though often not widely, respected as an authority on spiritual matters.

The origin of Tenrikyō provides one illustration of the way in which episodes of *kamigakari* can lead to the emergence of a new religion, and is informative concerning the type of interaction between deities and humans that is traditionally considered possible in Japanese religious thought, and indeed highly desirable provided that the possessing entity can be shown to be a high-level deity. The Tenrikyō founder, Nakayama Miki 中山みき (1798–1887), was an ordinary woman who suddenly experienced divine possession in 1838 while participating in an esoteric Buddhist exorcism ceremony. She was unconscious for three days before becoming the "living shrine" of Tenri-Ō-no-Mikoto 天理王命. Speaking through her, the deity said "I am the true and original God. I have descended from Heaven to save all human beings, and I want Miki to be the shrine of God."⁴

The Tenrikyō website states: "This settling [possession] meant that God the Parent now resided within the body of Oyasama [Nakayama Miki], and that Her words, therefore, emanated from the mind of God the Parent. That is, Her mind

transcend the doctrines of differing religions and sects and which were the original basis of the world's major religions (SEIŌ 1984, 49). Sūkyō Mahikari continues to use the book of revelations and other teachings published by Okada Yoshikazu. Since this split resulted from a simple leadership succession dispute, the doctrine and practice of this group remained identical to those of the parent group, at least initially. There are also several other offshoots, but these resulted from doctrinal differences.

4. Quoted at http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nakayama_Miki (accessed March 2008).

was now that of God the Parent.”⁵ She began giving away all her possessions as instructed by the deity. From about 1854 she began exhibiting prophetic ability and the power to heal and guarantee safe childbirth. In 1869 she began writing the *Ofudesaki* お筆先 (tip of the writing brush) in which she recorded the core teachings of Tenrikyō as revealed to her by Tenri-Ō-no-Mikoto.

It is perhaps significant that Nakayama Miki reportedly attracted followers only after she commenced her healing and other paranormal activities, sixteen years after becoming possessed. McFarland notes that in many of Japan’s new religions, “some kind of mystical manifestation of power is offered as primary evidence of the validity of the religious mission. This has long been a widely respected credential among the Japanese masses” (McFarland 1967, 74). Tenrikyō claims almost two million adherents,⁶ mostly in Japan, but Tenrikyō has also spread to Brazil, parts of Asia, and various Western countries, suggesting a significant degree of acceptance that the doctrine taught by Nakayama Miki came from a divine source.

The original founder of Ōmoto, Deguchi Nao 出口なお (1836–1918), likewise experienced spontaneous *kamigakari*, beginning in 1892. According to a biography published by Ōmoto, Nao experienced mysterious spiritual dreams in which she met various divine figures, followed by spontaneous (and initially unwelcome) possession by a deity who identified itself as Ushitora no Konjin, “the god who will reconstruct the world.... This presence seemed to push up with great power from the pit of her stomach, and Nao would begin roaring in a great voice not her own. In her own quiet voice she would reply or ask questions and the spirit would roar in response.” Her family thought she had gone mad, so she asked the deity to find some other way of communicating, and he told her to take up a brush. Not having one, she picked up a nail and “To her amazement, her hand began to move of its own accord and scratched some words on a pillar—words which the illiterate Nao could not read.”⁷

Thereafter, during episodes of possession, Nao recorded the words of Ushitora no Konjin through automatic writing, which eventually amounted to approximately two hundred thousand pages. These writings are used as the Ōmoto scripture and are known as her *Ofudesaki* (tip of the writing brush). Even though this material was written entirely in hiragana syllables (rather than the more complex kanji), the fact that Nao was reportedly illiterate is presented as

5. From the Tenrikyō website, <http://www.tenrikyo.or.jp/en/teaching/teachings/lifeofoya.html> (accessed March 2008).

6. Unless otherwise noted, membership figures in this article are drawn from the online *Encyclopedia of Shinto*.

7. From the Ōmoto website, *Nao Deguchi: A Biography of the Foundress of Oomoto*, 1982, published by The Ōmoto Foundation, Kameoka, Japan, at <http://www.oomoto.or.jp/English/enKyos/kaisoden/index.html> (accessed March 2008).

evidence that her episodes of possession were genuine. In addition, Nao became known as a faith-healer and seer.

Nao's biography states that, "For thirteen days after her initial possession, Nao went without food, and for seventy-five days she was not allowed to sleep." She bathed herself with buckets of icy water every night, despite the "freezing weather," and "an invisible spiritual presence entered and left her at intervals." It is perhaps worth noting that extended fasting, lack of sleep, and repeated cold-water ablutions are three common elements of ascetic practices performed in order to invite possession by spirit entities. In Nao's initial episodes of *kamigakari* these actions may not have been entirely voluntary (the biography implies that the deity possessing her made her do these things), but her physiological state at the time must have been similar to that of one who induces spirit possession through ascetic means. In later years also, Nao would fast and rise numerous times each night to douse herself with icy water during periods when she was using automatic writing to write the *Ofudesaki*.

Most Mahikari publications report that Yōkōshi Tomo no Kai began as a result of a spontaneous revelation that Okada Yoshikazu received from Mioya Motosu Mahikari Ōmikami 御親元主真光大御神 (literally Great Parent, Original Lord, God of True Light)—commonly abbreviated as Sushin 主神, or Su God (Creator God)—on 27 February 1959 when he awoke after being unconscious for five days with a high fever. According to most published texts of this revelation, Su God told Okada:

You will be made to speak the depth of the teachings, which was not revealed before. The Spirit of Truth has entered your _____. You shall speak what you hear. The time of heaven has come. Rise. Your name shall be Kōtama. Raise your hand [perform *tekazashi*]. The world shall enter severe times.

(SŪKYŌ MAHIKARI 2002, 4–5)

This first revelation, and fifty-one subsequent ones received between 1959 and 1967, are published in *Goseigen* 御聖言 (holy words), which contains over four hundred pages of text and forms the basis of Okada's doctrine.

The above quote suggests a slight deviation from the examples of *kamigakari* discussed above in that the deity providing the revelations did not reside directly in Okada's body. Instead, the "Spirit of Truth" had entered Okada (the underscore in the above quote indicates that Okada deliberately refrained from reporting which part of his body was involved), and he was told that he would be "made to speak." Mahikari publications provide few details of the possession experience itself, focusing instead on the revelation Okada received on this occasion. One Mahikari text states:

Since Sukuinushisama [Okada] had been engaged in fields entirely different to religion, such as science, the management of an airplane company and other

fields based on material gain, he was dumbfounded and felt as though he had been “bewitched by a fox” when he received the first revelation. . . . [H]e did not take these revelations seriously at first. However, when he held up his hand [performed *tekazashi*] as directed by God, a blind person’s eyes opened and a crippled person was able to stand up. . . . Thus he was unable to deny the validity of the Revelations granted him by God.

(SŪKYŌ MAHIKARI 1983 [March], 2)

This origin story conforms closely to the spontaneous *kamigakari* pattern: Okada was possessed by the Spirit of Truth immediately after being unconscious for five days with a serious illness and was thus made to transmit the words of Su God. This sudden and uninvited possession interrupted and transformed an otherwise ordinary secular life, Okada subsequently received and transmitted numerous other revelations from Su God, and he was given a new spiritual name and the ability to heal people by raising his hand. As discussed below, a *saniwa* (a person who interprets the words of a possessed person and judges whether or not the spirit is authentic) is sometimes used to detect trickery by low-level spirits which, according to Japanese folk tradition, may include mischievous fox or badger spirits. However, in the cases of *kamigakari* discussed above, mystical manifestations of power function as proof. The miraculous healing Okada observed when he performed *tekazashi* is presented explicitly as such a manifestation of power, convincing not only him but also his followers that his possession experience was genuine and that the revelations he received were divine in origin.

Current membership figures for Mahikari are smaller than those of Tenrikyō—ninety-eight thousand for Sekai Mahikari Bunmei Kyōdan and four hundred and ninety thousand for Sūkyō Mahikari—but Mahikari appears to have gained a greater degree of cross-cultural acceptance. Unlike Tenrikyō, the overseas membership is not generally restricted to communities of Japanese descent. Mahikari publications state that there are members in around one hundred countries, but the membership figures for most countries other than Japan range from a mere handful to a few thousand.

Since the late 1970s (possibly a little earlier), Mahikari leaders have taught that Okada Yoshikazu established Yōkōshi Tomo no Kai in 1959 as a result of the above revelation, received under the circumstances described above, and validated by the successful testing of *tekazashi*. These leaders are (or were) apparently unaware of the considerable evidence that suggests that Yōkōshi Tomo no Kai did not originate in quite this way.

As scholars of Japan’s new religions are well aware, Okada was not just an ordinary businessman with no particular religious interests prior to 1959. On the contrary, he was employed as the head of a Sekai Kyūseikyō center. According to Sekai Kyūseikyō sources, Okada Yoshikazu joined that religion around 1947 and

was a staff member from 1949 to 1953.⁸ He therefore must have had considerable experience of *tekazashi* prior to his 1959 revelation, and presumably considered it effective. Davis reports essentially the same origin story as outlined above, except that in the version he was told, Okada first tested *tekazashi* on a sick dog (DAVIS 1980, 5). Davis comments as follows:

I can only conclude that the puzzlement Okada is said to have felt when, in 1959, the heavenly voice first told him to “raise his hand” was a pious liberty taken with the truth. Any believer in the Church of World Messianity [Sekai Kyūseikyō] would have known what it meant to “raise one’s hand.” It meant *jōrei* [Sekai Kyūseikyō’s *tekazashi*]. (DAVIS 1980, 314, note 5)

Difficult as it may be to believe that Okada would have been surprised or puzzled by Su God’s instruction to “Raise your hand,” an examination of the editions of *Goseigen* published prior to Okada’s death makes this difficulty irrelevant. According to the first (1970) edition of *Goseigen*, the words “Raise your hand” (*te o kazase*) were *not* part of the 1959 revelation (or any other revelation published in *Goseigen*).⁹ Likewise, these words are not present in the published text of the 1959 revelation in the third (1973) and fourth (1974)¹⁰ editions (presumably, the second edition likewise lacks these words, but that is yet to be confirmed). Okada died in June 1974, so it is possible he did not personally authorize the eventual insertion of these words into the published text. According to the current editions of *Goseigen* used by both major Mahikari factions, the 1959 revelation *did* include the words “Raise your hand.”¹¹ Therefore, these words must have been inserted before the split into two separate factions, that is, not more than a few months after Okada’s death.

Thus, there is no logical connection between *tekazashi* and the first 1959 revelation. Okada could not have reassured himself of the validity of his 1959 possession experience by testing the effectiveness of *tekazashi*. (This suggests that Mahikari spokespersons do not have accurate information concerning the

8. From interviews conducted by former Mahikari members, reported at: <http://members.ozemail.com.au/~skyaxe/earlyyears.htm> (accessed May 2008).

9. Scanned copies of this text in the 1970 edition and an undated edition published after Okada’s death are published at http://www.geocities.com/anne_9_8/goseigen.html (accessed September 2007).

10. Knecht explains that the words rendered in the 1982 English translation of the revelations (*Goseigen: The Holy Words*) as “Exercise the Art of Purification” (a rather loose translation of *te o kazase*, which is translated as “Raise your hand” in most translations) are missing in the 1974 Japanese edition. However, he does not give the month of publication (KNECHT 1995, 4, note 4).

11. The Sekai Mahikari Bunmei Kyōdan version of this passage can be seen at their website, <http://www.mahikari.or.jp/info.html> (accessed March 2008).

origins of Yōkōshi Tomo no Kai, and that other details in the origin story may also be misconceptions.) Nor could his earliest followers, indeed any of his followers prior to his death, have presented the apparent effectiveness of *tekazashi* as validation of the 1959 revelation. Since there is no mention of a *saniwa* being used to identify the spirit possessing Okada, this raises the question of what *did* originally function as validation. One possibility is that the *Tenjō* (divine stick) divinations conducted in 1960 in order to confirm Okada's mission, discussed later in this article, validated Okada's claims in the eyes of his followers, but Okada himself must have believed his revelations were genuine prior to establishing Yōkōshi Tomo no Kai in August 1959.

The words "Raise your hand" are perhaps the most important words in Okada's doctrine. *Tekazashi* is also practiced in a number of other new religions, in addition to Sekai Kyūseikyō, but "raising the hand" is *the* defining activity of Mahikari, with dedicated members devoting many hours each day to it. Perhaps more importantly, the insertion of these words indicates a degree of tampering with a text that is presented as being an accurate record of the words of Su God.

Further examination reveals that there is at least one other inconsistency. A text provided at Mahikari initiation courses states that the following passage is part of the 1959 revelation: "Thou shalt distribute Mahikari (Divine True Light), Thou shalt declare the Dawn of the Spiritual Civilization, and Thou shalt have the mission to be a Jewel of Light. For the time being, Thy name shall be Kōtama" (SŪKYŌ MAHIKARI 1983 [January], 2).¹² In fact, "Your name shall be Kōtama" is the only part of this passage that is present in the version of the 1959 revelation published in *Goseigen*. However, these particular words have an air of redundancy. It has been reported that long before 1959 Okada Yoshikazu encouraged Sekai Kyūseikyō members to address him as "Kōtama sensei"¹³ (Kōtama 光玉 means sphere/jewel/ball of light).

As mentioned above, scholars such as DAVIS, Richard Fox YOUNG (1990) and Brian McVEIGH (1997, 15–16, 81) do not question the occurrence of the 1959 *kamigakari* experience and revelation, but they do note the similarities between Okada Yoshikazu's doctrine and that of Sekai Kyūseikyō. Davis concluded that "the religious thought and activities" of the founders of Ōmoto, Sekai Kyūseikyō, and Mahikari "fall into one continuous historical tradition" (DAVIS 1980, 77–78). He systematically lists the significant similarities between the three religions, perhaps implying that Okada Mokichi 岡田茂吉 (founder of Sekai Kyūseikyō)

12. This translation presented in the English *kenshū* text accurately reflects the text in the equivalent location in the Japanese version of the *kenshū* text. A slightly different translation bearing the same meaning is given by McVEIGH (1997, 15) in his account of the origin story.

13. Mahikari Exposed website, under *Okada Plagiarised Others*, <http://members.ozemail.com.au/~skyaxe/mahikari.htm> (accessed September 2007).

may have copied some doctrine from Ōmoto, and Okada Yoshikazu in turn may have copied some doctrine from Okada Mokichi, and that these parts of their doctrines were therefore not sourced from revelations. (One could also argue that if their respective doctrines were entirely sourced from revelations, and these revelations were all from divine sources, then *all* their teachings should be identical.)

The influence of Sekai Kyūseikyō seems indisputable, but it would be simplistic to view Yōkōshi Tomo no Kai as merely a derivative of that religion. What was Okada doing during the five or six years after his employment with Sekai Kyūseikyō ceased? Not all of his doctrine is identical to theirs, and his practice of *tekazashi* has a slightly different emphasis (discussed below). Something must have happened in 1959 to prompt the establishment of Yōkōshi Tomo no Kai. Despite the above indications of the general unreliability of the origin story taught by Mahikari, Okada may indeed have received some sort of revelation in 1959. An examination of the religious environment in which Yōkōshi Tomo no Kai arose suggests possible alternate sources of Okada's revelations.

Chinkon kishin and Psychological Investigation in Ōmoto-lineage Religions

Chinkon kishin is generally thought to be an ancient Shinto technique. It was revived by Honda Chikaatsu 本田親徳 toward the end of the nineteenth century and popularized by the Ōmoto religion. According to the online *Encyclopedia of Shinto*, “*chinkon* refers to the procedures for healing and directing spirits; by extension, it also refers to joining a deity's spirit [with a human subject]. *Kishin* means possession by the spirit of a *kami* [deity]. One type of *kishin* is abrupt and spontaneous, while another is humanly induced through the process of *chinkon*.”¹⁴ In short, *kishin* refers to possession by a deity or other spirit (spontaneous or otherwise), and *chinkon* refers to purification of a person's spirit for various purposes, such as enabling possession by a deity in order to receive revelations, or for healing or other purposes. Whereas spontaneous *kamigakari* relies on being selected by a deity, *chinkon kishin* appears to be a methodical human-initiated means of contact with the divine that many people, with sufficient diligence, can achieve.

It is not clear whether Ōmoto's co-founder, Deguchi Onisaburō 出口王仁三郎 (1871–1948), initially sought divine revelations deliberately or experienced them spontaneously. Many sources report that he practiced Honda's form of mediated spirit possession, *chinkon kishin*, suggesting that Onisaburō purposefully sought possession and revelations. However, Onisaburō's initial practice of *chinkon kishin* appears to fit the spontaneous mode. In 1898 he was reportedly

14. *Encyclopedia of Shinto*, Chinkon kishin entry, <http://eos.kokugakuin.ac.jp/modules/xwords/entry.php?entryID=1454> (accessed March 2008).

attacked and severely beaten, leaving him drifting in and out of consciousness. Following a vision he experienced during that time, he spent a week meditating and fasting in a cave on Mt. Takakuma. When he returned home he behaved strangely, slept for several days, and again sank into an unconscious state. He decided to leave his business in order to pursue spiritual matters. He later wrote, “After completing one week of discipline on the holy mountain of Takakuma near Anao in Tamba, I gained an understanding of the basics of clairvoyance, telepathy, communication with the divine, and an understanding of karma.”¹⁵

According to Onisaburō’s grandson (Deguchi Yasuaki), Onisaburō received his knowledge of *chinkon kishin* from a revelation he had while at Mount Takakuma. He later visited a priest called Nagasawa Katsutate, a disciple of Honda Chikaatsu, and they “engaged in *yusai* exercises (two-person esoteric “spirit channeling” exercises).” Nagasawa acted as the *saniwa* and “judged Onisaburō’s divine inspirations to be of a very high level.”¹⁶ Thus, even though some accounts suggest that Onisaburō’s *chinkon kishin* technique came directly or indirectly from Honda, the above account suggests that his initial mystical experiences arose spontaneously as a direct result of his physical condition after being severely beaten.

Onisaburō met Deguchi Nao in 1898 and soon became an influential force within Ōmoto. He introduced the *chinkon kishin* technique, and as Ōmoto members began practicing it and experiencing “divine inspirations, the Ōmoto order was thrown into somewhat of a pandemonium. You see, during such divine inspirations most spirits will appropriate the name of some other more ‘correct’ spirit, which the inspired person will believe to be its true name and identity. The little country town of Ayabe was beset by a sort of divine rush-hour, and Onisaburō had great difficulty controlling this situation.”¹⁷ At that stage, Onisaburō banned the practice, though it was later revived.

When *chinkon kishin* is practiced for the purpose of receiving divine revelations, it is often practiced in pairs, as in the above example of Deguchi and Nagasawa, with one party acting as the spirit medium and the other acting as the *saniwa*. The *chinkon* procedure apparently produces some sort of trance state which facilitates possession by the spirit of a deity (or indeed any spirit). Onisaburō taught *chinkon kishin* to Ueshiba Morihei 植芝盛平 (1883–1969), the founder of aikido, and an online aikido article shows a photograph of Ueshiba and an Ōmoto

15. From the Ōmoto website, “*The Great Onisaburō Deguchi*,” by Ruth Reiner, <http://www.oomoto.or.jp/English/enVisitor/enRkyo/Rkyo005.html> (accessed March 2008).

16. Quotes from an interview with Deguchi Yasuaki published in the online *Aikido Journal*, <http://www.aikidojournal.com/article?articleID=256> (accessed March 2008).

17. See online *Aikido Journal*, <http://www.aikidojournal.com/article?articleID=256> (accessed March 2008).

devotee practicing this technique.¹⁸ The pair are sitting in the *seiza* position (erect formal kneeling posture) with closed eyes and hands in prayer position.

Chinkon is sometimes practiced without the *kishin* part (without inviting spirit possession) for healing or other purposes. A form of *chinkon* that includes specific breathing patterns and physical movements is still practiced among some branches of aikido as a means of concentrating *ki* (spiritual energy). To many modern practitioners, aikido may primarily be a martial art, without any particular religious or spiritual component, but Ueshiba seems to have regarded aikido as being primarily a spiritual path. He was closely involved with Ōmoto, to the extent of accompanying Onisaburō as his bodyguard in 1924 when he traveled to Mongolia in an attempt to establish a utopian colony there.¹⁹ Ueshiba distanced himself from Ōmoto after the second Ōmoto incident in 1935, but in postwar years he also had a close association with Goi Masahisa 五井昌久, founder of Byakkō Shinkōkai 白光真宏会 (White Light Association). At least one modern group combines aikido with religious practices derived from Ōmoto. Members practice *misogi* (purification by means of standing under a cold waterfall or similar), which was part of Ueshiba's regular routine and is a feature of some Ōmoto-lineage religions, and they begin their *chinkon* ritual by chanting a purification prayer that very closely matches the Ōmoto purification prayer, *Amatsu Norito* (prayer of heaven).²⁰

Deguchi Onisaburō exhibited healing powers, and his extensive writings include the eighty-one volume *Reikai Monogatari* [Tales of the Spirit World]. It appears that he, rather than Deguchi Nao, and Asano Wasaburō 浅野和三郎 (1874–1937) were largely responsible for the growth of Ōmoto and its extensive influence on subsequent new religions. Its current membership is 170,000, but in the early 1930s, before suppression by the government, it “had upward of two million members.”²¹

Asano joined Ōmoto in 1916 due to his interest in *chinkon kishin*, and persuaded Onisaburō to teach it to him. Asano was an instructor at Japan's Naval Academy, and he and his brother, an Admiral, were responsible for large numbers of Navy personnel joining Ōmoto, drawn largely by *chinkon kishin*. Asano became extremely influential within Ōmoto and appears to have been largely responsible for its revival of this technique.

Asano, however, is better known for his interest in and promotion of spiri-

18. See photo at <http://www.budodojo.com/chinkon-kishin.htm> (accessed March 2008).

19. From *Morihei Ueshiba & Onisaburo Deguchi*, by Stanley A. Pranin. <http://omlc.ogi.edu/aikido/talk/osensei/bio/moriz.html> (accessed May 2008)

20. See post by Rev. K. Barrish of the Tsubaki Grand Shrine of America on 02–07–2008, 01:34 PM at <http://www.aikiweb.com/forums/showthread.php?t=13854> (accessed March 2008).

21. Quoted at http://www.adherents.com/Na/Na_487.html (accessed May 2008).

tualism and theosophy. In 1923, after leaving Ōmoto, he established the Shinrei Kagaku Kenkyūkai 心霊科学研究会 (Research Association for Psychic Science). By 1928 this group claimed to have over 3,000 members, and it conducted lectures, séances, and discussions on psychic matters.²² According to the *Encyclopedia of Shinto*, Asano promoted “psychical research” whereby “investigations of the spirit realm were carried out through the actions of spiritual mediums and clairvoyants.”²³ It is not clear to what extent séances and other psychical techniques contributed to religious doctrine in the 1920s and 1930s, but by the postwar years, a number of religious leaders (discussed below) apparently regarded such techniques as a reliable means of ascertaining spiritual truths. Thus, even though Asano did not form a new religion himself, he was perhaps the main person responsible for promoting *chinkon kishin* and also psychical investigation of the spiritual realm, thus significantly broadening the means by which potential religious leaders received divine revelations.

An additional psychical technique was introduced to the Ōmoto lineage when Deguchi Onisaburō began interfaith activities with the Bahá’í faith,²⁴ a Chinese group called Dao Yuan, and other new religious movements outside Japan around 1925. From Dao Yuan, Ōmoto adopted a psychical divination technique known as *fu ji*, or *tenjō* 天杖 (heavenly stick) as it became known in postwar psychical investigation circles in Japan. This is an automatic writing technique in which a psychic medium holds one end of the horizontal piece of a T-shaped stick and the person to whom the divination relates holds the other end. A deity or spirit is asked questions, and the vertical piece of the stick (or it can be a brush) moves, apparently of its own volition, and writes words in response to the questions. It is not clear how extensively *fu ji* was used within Ōmoto but, like other psychical techniques, it became a trusted source of spiritual information in some religious circles in postwar years.

Seichō-no-Ie 生長の家 originated with a revelation that Taniguchi Masaharu 谷口雅春 (1893–1985) received while meditating in 1930. Taniguchi had joined Ōmoto in 1918, but left it and joined Asano’s psychical investigation group in 1925.²⁵ According to a Seichō-no-Ie website, “in 1930, after extensive

22. From a 1928 article concerning Asano’s visit to London, published at <http://www.woodlandway.org/PDF/PP3.3March07.pdf> (accessed March 2008).

23. <http://eos.kokugakuin.ac.jp/modules/xwords/entry.php?entryID=1264> (accessed May 2008).

24. The three core assertions of the Bahá’í Faith are the Oneness of God, the Oneness of Religion and the Oneness of Humanity. These are echoed in the Sūkyō Mahikari tenet that appears on virtually all of their English websites: “The origin of the world [meaning God] is one; the origin of all human beings is one; and the origin of all religions is one.”

25. *Encyclopedia of Shinto*, Seichō no Ie entry, <http://eos.kokugakuin.ac.jp/modules/xwords/entry.php?entryID=632> (accessed May 2007).

study, contemplation and while in deep meditation, the new light—the Truth, was directly revealed to him. This realization came to him as if it were a commanding voice....Many were healed of their disease merely by listening to his [Taniguchi's] lecture or by receiving his visit....[Taniguchi] heard intuitively a Heavenly Voice saying, "Rise now! Begin your mission now!"²⁶ He therefore began publication of his *Seichō-no-Ie* magazine, in which he published numerous subsequent revelations. *Seichō-no-Ie* has been quite successful, with a membership of eight hundred and seventy thousand, including overseas groups in countries such as Brazil and North America.

The above revelations Taniguchi received while in "deep meditation" are presented as being the pivotal experience prompting the start of his religious movement, but no details of his meditation technique are given. Should "deep meditation" perhaps be added to the list of possible means of receiving divine revelations? Or might this be a reference to *chinkon kishin*? Taniguchi's association with Ōmoto and Asano was during the period in which this technique was promoted, so it is certainly possible that he learnt *chinkon kishin*. McFarland comments that the daily meditation practiced by *Seichō-no-Ie* members, *shinsōkan* 神想観 (divine concept contemplation), was adapted by Taniguchi from "an Ōmoto practice," and there are enough similarities between *shinsōkan* and *chinkon* to think that McFarland was probably referring to the latter. He comments that practitioners eventually "achieve a kind of hypnotic state of spiritual empowerment" (McFARLAND 1967, 161). Goi Masahisa practiced *shinsōkan* regularly at one stage and commented that he saw various spirits coming and going in front of his closed eyes and experienced "spirit movement" (*reidō* 靈動) in his hands (involuntary movements caused by possessing spirits), but received little divine inspiration.²⁷

Seichō-no-Ie websites make no mention of *chinkon kishin* or of Taniguchi's prior involvement with Asano's psychical investigation group, and Taniguchi himself appears to have downplayed or denied his connection with Asano. Based on interviews conducted in the early 1960s, McFarland said of Taniguchi: "He attended a séance of a spiritualist medium, and while he knew that the whole show was faked, he was much surprised and impressed by the eloquence of the medium" (McFARLAND 1967, 151).

Okada Mokichi (1882–1955) began experiencing episodes of divine possession in 1926 and, even though he did not form the first of his religious groups until 1934, these episodes are generally regarded as the starting point of his reli-

26. From the *Seicho-No-Ie Truth of Life Movement (US)* website, <http://www.snitruth.org/dr.htm> (accessed March 2008).

27. From excerpts from Goi's writings quoted at <http://f35.aaa.livedoor.jp/~shinri/shinji.html#label9> (accessed March 2008).

gious movement (which eventually was renamed as Sekai Kyūseikyō in 1955). Okada joined Ōmoto in 1920 and was an Ōmoto missionary from 1928 until 1934. He received a divination via *fu ji* at Ōmoto headquarters in 1930, which was interpreted as an indication of his future mission of purifying the world. The current number of members of Sekai Kyūseikyō is eight hundred and forty thousand, which includes members in a number of overseas countries. However, if we include the members of offshoot groups who continue to revere Okada Mokichi as their founder, that figure would be considerably higher, making him one of the more influential founders.

Okada Mokichi describes the *chinkon kishin* he learnt at Ōmoto thus:

With the hands clasped and eyes closed in meditation, one exercised one's own divine nature in order to achieve union with the divine. By repeating this practice, it was supposed that one might receive strength from divine entities, which enabled one to practice *chinkon*, that is, to heal illness and even to perform miracles.²⁸

This suggests that healing powers are something that anyone can develop through specific mental or spiritual exercises, rather than only ever being a “gift” that is selectively bestowed by the gods on the people they choose to possess.

According to information taken from Okada Mokichi's biography, in 1926 he began receiving revelations via spontaneous and automatic talking, in which words that were not his own flowed from his mouth and were written down by his wife. He later wrote, “Some enormous power was moving me freely at its will”; “In my abdomen there is a sphere of light”; and “This is the spirit of one of the highest of the divine beings.”²⁹ Thus, Okada seems to be claiming that a divine spirit was in his abdomen and controlling his actions, suggesting that these revelations resulted spontaneously as the result of *kamigakari*.

After these initial revelations, Okada Mokichi reportedly devoted himself to the practice of *chinkon kishin* and soon discovered he had developed healing powers. The above biographical material does not explicitly say what led to the initial revelations, but Okada Mokichi was almost certainly familiar with *chinkon kishin* before he received those revelations. If, as suggested, he was possessed by “the spirit of one of the highest of the divine beings,” it seems curious that he would have felt a need to *begin* practicing *chinkon kishin* after that possession.

However, *chinkon* is acknowledged as being the source of Sekai Kyūseikyō's *tekazashi* technique, *jōrei*. Shortly before Okada Mokichi resigned from Ōmoto

28. Quote from Okada Mokichi's *The Light from the East*, cited at <http://johrei.johreiki.net/> (accessed March 2008).

29. From Okada Mokichi's *The Light from the East*, quoted at <http://johrei.johreiki.net/> (accessed March 2008).

and started his own religious movement in 1934, “he refined his *chinkon* method of healing and began calling it Okada-Style Spiritual Finger-Pressure Therapy.... The term “*jōrei*” was not used until much later, 1947.”³⁰ To summarize, the above information suggests that Okada Mokichi originally practiced the Ōmoto form of *chinkon kishin*, and that he subsequently “refined” the *chinkon* part (without the *kishin* spirit possession part) as a healing technique, which eventually became known as *jōrei* (the Sekai Kyūseikyō form of *tekazashi*).

What might refining his *chinkon* method have involved? Present-day *jōrei* involves *tekazashi*, in which one person radiates spiritually purifying (healing) divine energy from the palm of the hand towards the recipient. The *jōrei* session begins with both parties bowing, clapping, and offering a prayer. The recipient then kneels in *seiza* posture with eyes closed and hands in a prayer position while the giver chants the Sekai Kyūseikyō version of *amatsu norito* (which is very similar to the Ōmoto version) and performs *tekazashi*. Even though the recipient focuses on receiving purification, the giver is seen as being the active party; more precisely, the amulet worn by the giver is considered the source of the purification. Thus, Okada Mokichi’s refinement of *chinkon* appears to have changed it from being a technique one can practice in order to purify oneself, into a partially passive process that relies on *tekazashi* being performed by another party who possesses a special amulet.

An article on the Shirahige Jinja website³¹ describes their approach to *chinkon kishin*: a new practitioner at first practices only the *chinkon* part in order to raise her or his spiritual level, since it is believed that a low spiritual level will result in possession (and trickery) by only low-level spirits, as would practicing *chinkon kishin* merely in pursuit of personal gain. At this time, spirit movement often occurs and a person who takes a *saniwa* role gives *tekazashi* or *te-ate* (a similar technique) to purify the spiritual aspect of the practitioner. Once the person’s spiritual level is raised, the *kishin* part (possession by deities) occurs, but the *saniwa* is still required in order to judge whether the possessing deity (or spirit) is righteous or unrighteous. For inexperienced practitioners in particular, practicing alone without a *saniwa* is considered dangerous. Thus in Sekai Kyūseikyō, by extrapolation, the person giving *jōrei* (*tekazashi*) is taking a *saniwa* role in an adapted form of *chinkon*.

The above article states the view that many of Japan’s Shinto-derived new religions practiced *chinkon kishin* during their formative stages but, once established, restricted their practice to just the *chinkon* (purification) part due to problems

30. Information from article concerning Okada Mokichi, <http://johrei.johreiki.net/> (accessed March 2008).

31. From *Honda Reigaku to Chinkon Kishinhō* 本田霊学と鎮魂帰神法. <http://www.michihiraki.org/michihiraki/honda.html> (accessed March 2008).

that arose from *kishin* (spirit possession). This view appears to apply to the evolution of Taniguchi's *shinsōkan* meditation technique and Okada Mokichi's *jōrei*. The purpose of *jōrei* is spiritual purification and healing, rather than achieving a state in which possession by a deity (*kishin*) occurs, but possession by spirits does at times occur. "Okada Mokichi recognized the existence of evil spirits and stressed the value of his amulets in expelling them" (DAVIS 1980, 76), but he discouraged practitioners from taking an interest in spirit manifestations.

Shinsei Ryūjinkai 神政龍神会 (Theocratic Dragon Deity Association) was founded in 1934 by Yano Yūtarō 矢野祐太郎 (1881–1938), partially on the basis of revelations received by his wife and others during spirit possession. Yano visited Ōmoto headquarters in 1917 and received the *chinkon kishin* ritual from Asano. He also studied Deguchi Nao's revelations and those of other new religions. Yano's wife began to experience divine possessions in 1929, perhaps as a result of practicing *chinkon kishin*; one writer mentions that, around 1934, Yano was planning to hold a collective *chinkon kishin* ritual (spirit pacification) for all deities and spirits (TSUSHIMA 1997), suggesting that he had maintained his interest in the technique and may have practiced it with his wife.

Yano developed a doctrine based partly on his studies of these revelations, but also significantly influenced by Amatsukyō—a new religion established by Takeuchi Kiyomaro (1874–1965)—and the "ancient text" in the possession of the Takeuchi family. Most scholars regard the Takeuchi document as a fake, but it attracted a good deal of attention during the 1930s among supporters of military expansionism since it stated that "the Japanese emperor was ruler not merely of the nation and people of Japan, but of all the peoples of the entire world."³² According to Yano, the world was progressing in accordance with God's "divine plan," and a time of "world renewal" in which wars and cataclysmic natural disasters would occur was imminent. This would be followed by a theocratic age in which the Emperor would assume his rightful place as ruler of the entire world, as in ancient times (TSUSHIMA 1997). Although Shinsei Ryūjinkai was small and existed for only eighteen months before it suffered government suppression, its membership included important members of society and high-ranking military officers.

Makoto no Michi 真の道 (Way of Truth) was registered as a religion in 1953, but began its existence in 1947 as a psychical investigation group under the name Chidorikai 千鳥会 (Plover Association). This association was founded by Shioya Nobuo (1902–), a medical doctor who practiced *tekazashi*, and Ogiwara Makoto 萩原 真, a spirit medium. It used psychical means, such as séances and *tenjō* (*fu ji*)

32. The Takeuchi (or Takenouchi) document was supposedly written in divine age characters (*kamiyo moji*), and recorded the lineage of Japanese emperors back to the beginnings of time. It attracted "the attention of certain nationalists and military figures who were sensitive to the issue of a 'crisis of legitimation'" during the 1930s (TSUSHIMA 1997).

to receive information from spirits, including one particularly influential spirit known as Ōmine Rōsen 大峰老仙, the spirit of an old hermit who manifested frequently at Chidorikai séances. Shioya received frequent revelations from Ōmine Rōsen, with Ogiwara acting as the spirit medium, over their eight-year period of close collaboration between 1947 and 1955.

Chidorikai split off from the Japan Psychic Science Association 日本心霊科学協会 (Shioya's brother was an advisor to this group), which was established in 1946 as a postwar revival of Asano's group. Thus, Shioya may have been associated with Asano's original group, which had folded after Asano's death in 1937. Many of the participants at Chidorikai meetings were members of Sekai Kyūseikyō and Seichō-no-Ie. Given the prewar connections of the founders of these religions with Ōmoto and Asano, these participants constitute an additional link with prewar *chinkon kishin* and psychical investigation trends.

Goi Masahisa (founder of Byakkō Shinkōkai) described Chidorikai as an organization for cooperation between the divine, astral, and physical worlds, with a religious and political awareness, and with prayers for Japan's restoration and world salvation.³³ The nature of the religious and political awareness within Chidorikai can be deduced from a further statement by Goi. According to him, Ōmine Rōsen is one of a group of divine spirits working with Shotoku Taishi in the spirit world, conducting activities for the administration of the physical world, and working toward salvation of humankind under imperialism.

According to a revelation given by Ōmine Rōsen to Shioya and his wife around 1950, various cataclysms of nature would occur to purify the world, then "a world of true peace, a united world with no national borders, would appear. However, a world of true peace can have only one center, and there is no true peace in a world without a center. It can be assumed that this center will be the Crown Prince [the current emperor]."³⁴ These revelations echo Yano's world renewal concept discussed above (one writer states that Shioya was a member of Yano's group). They also echo Japan's war-era expansionist slogan of *hakkō ichiu* 八紘一宇 (all the world under one roof), which referred to the concept that Japan had a divine mandate to unite all people of the world under its emperor in order to achieve world peace. It is not surprising, therefore, that Chidorikai and Makoto no Michi reportedly attracted many ex-military personnel.

Tenjō (to use the Chidorikai name for *fu ji* divination) was a regular activity at Chidorikai meetings, being used to seek divine information, but also often to seek answers to mundane questions. At times the spirit controlling the stick (or

33. From *Goi Masahisa to Chidorikai* 五井昌久と千鳥会, <http://f35.aaa.livedoor.jp/~shinri/shinji.html#label9> (accessed March 2008).

34. From *Yogen* 予言, <http://f35.aaa.livedoor.jp/~shinri/shioya.html#label3> (accessed March 2008).

brush) that wrote the *tenjō* responses was Ōmine Rōsen. This spirit was highly regarded as a source of information about the divine spiritual world, and the affairs of Chidorikai itself, including the registration of the group as a religion under the name Makoto no Michi (in 1953), were conducted in accordance with its guidance.

According to its website,³⁵ much of Makoto no Michi's doctrine is derived from revelations received from the Ōmine Rōsen spirit during the early years of the group. The group continues to receive new revelations from other divine spirits and guiding spirits, and to use the *tenjō* divination technique. *Tenjō* is used to assign to each member a specific katakana syllable that symbolizes his or her role in life (each syllable is regarded as having a specific meaning and power). Members practice a form of *tekazashi*, but without the requirement for a special amulet.

The *Encyclopedia of Shinto* states that Makoto no Michi “actively undertakes séances and rites of spirit possession, as well as performing other religious practice.” Details of the “rites of spirit possession” are not given, but the group's website indicates that some of its leaders undergo training in order to receive revelations. The Makoto no Michi website is atypical in that it explicitly states that the revelations they receive are sourced from “divine spirits” and “guiding spirits” via psychical means. Even though the success of a religion in terms of attracting members would be affected by many factors, not just the means by which revelations are received, it is perhaps significant that the membership figure for Makoto no Michi (only ten thousand members) is tiny compared with the religions discussed here that claim a *kamigakari* origin.

Shioya apparently left Makoto no Michi in 1955 and formed an associated group called Makoto no Michi Kyōkai 真の道協会 (Way of Truth Association), but very little is known about this group. The relationship between Makoto no Michi and this later group apparently remained amicable, since news about Makoto no Michi appeared in the *Seiwa* magazine published by Makoto no Michi Kyōkai.

Ananaikyō 三五教 was founded by Nakano Yonosuke (1887–1974) in 1949. *Chinkon kishin* appears overshadowed by psychical investigation activities in postwar groups influenced by Chidorikai, but its role is quite explicit in the formation of Nakano's group. Originally a member of Ōmoto, Nakano studied *chinkon kishin* and experienced a divine vision. From 1932 to 1940 he studied Honda Chikaatsu's *reigaku* (spirit studies) under Nagasawa Katsutate (Honda's disciple). In 1899, when Nagasawa had been acting as *saniwa* and mediating in a case of *chinkon kishin* spirit possession, he received a divine message to the effect that: “[F]ifty years from now, in the village of Tamai in Shimizu City, a world religion,

35. From the Makoto no Michi website, <http://www.makoto.or.jp/> (accessed June 2007).

called by a name written with the ideograms ‘3’ and ‘5’ but read as ‘Ananai’ will arise, and from that point on, it will reveal the way of the gods to the entire world.”

On that basis, Nakano founded Ananaikyō. “Since this revelation made it clear that the religion would act in harmony with the religions of the world, the movement has associated itself with the Baha’i faith...and sponsored a variety of meetings among the religions of the world.”³⁶ This group has also built a number of observatories in response to a divine revelation stating that religion and astronomy are one and the same. Though larger than Makoto no Michi, with a membership of thirty-four thousand, Ananaikyō is also small compared with the religions that claim a *kamigakari* origin.

The group now known as Byakkō Shinkōkai began to form around Goi Masahisa (1916–1980) in 1951, but prior to that Goi was urged to develop his spiritual abilities by the Ōmine Rōsen spirit. Goi was briefly a member of the postwar Japan Psychic Science Association, where he witnessed a wide variety of paranormal phenomena. Finding that the scientific study of the spirit world conducted by this group did not satisfy his desire for knowledge about the divine realm, he joined Chidorikai in 1948 and received revelations which Ogiwara transmitted from Ōmine Rōsen.³⁷

According to the *Encyclopedia of Shinto*, Goi was still a religious instructor within Seichō-no-Ie during the period when he was attending Chidorikai meetings “and he experienced paranormal phenomena so frequently that leading an ordinary life became impossible”. (Other sources state that he had to resign from his job due to almost continuous spirit movement in the form of uncontrollable automatic writing.) He left Chidorikai in 1949 and “immediately felt compelled by the deities to undertake severe austerities involving week-long fasts...Goi had an experience in which his own body began to radiate a shining light, and he became one with the divine. The next day he experienced union with Shakyamuni and Jesus.”³⁸ He therefore left Seichō-no-Ie, and Byakkō Shinkōkai began to form.

Thus, Goi’s religious movement appears to have arisen at least partly as a result of his Chidorikai experiences and the revelations he received from Ōmine Rōsen. However, the biographical details on the public website of his group make no mention of psychical investigation techniques, merely stating that he became involved in “various esoteric studies in spiritual healing, yoga, the martial arts and the pursuit of various spiritual practices which included long hours of med-

36. *Encyclopedia of Shinto*, Ananaikyō entry, <http://eos.kokugakuin.ac.jp/modules/xwords/entry.php?entryID=374> (accessed March 2008).

37. From *Goi Masahisa to Chidorikai* 五井昌久と千鳥会, <http://f35.aaa.livedoor.jp/~shinri/shinji.html#label9> (accessed March 2008).

38. *Encyclopedia of Shinto*, Byakkō Shinkōkai entry, <http://eos.kokugakuin.ac.jp/modules/xwords/entry.php?entryID=657> (accessed August 2007).

itation,” that “he received a series of rigorous spiritual training through the guidance of his Guardian Deities,” and that as a result he “reached enlightenment and experienced oneness with his divine self.”³⁹ The current membership of Byakkō Shinkōkai is five hundred thousand, making it roughly as successful as Mahikari.

Goi dedicated himself to working toward world peace, which he taught could be achieved through prayer. Byakkō Shinkōkai is known as the group that erects peace prayer poles throughout Japan, and it also conducts peace prayer activities in Japan and elsewhere. The English language website of the group⁴⁰ gives no indication of the form of world peace envisaged by Goi, but it may not be the same form imagined by non-Japanese visitors to the website. Goi’s apparent approval of the imperialistic political stance of Chidorikai, and indications of great reverence for the Emperor in other sources,⁴¹ suggest that Goi’s vision of world peace, like that of Shioya, may have involved a world united under Japan’s emperor. Seichō-no-Ie likewise promotes itself as a “world peace” religion, but Taniguchi’s wartime activities and postwar political activities suggest that his notion of peace may have been similarly ethnocentric (McFARLAND 1967, 61–62).⁴²

Okada Yoshikazu and the Psychological Investigation Movement

Mahikari publications give the impression that its teachings and practice have remained essentially the same since the earliest days of Yōkōshi Tomo no Kai, but there is evidence of a degree of evolution during its formative years. The earliest followers were almost certainly aware of Okada’s prior religious involvements and the events that led to the establishment of Yōkōshi Tomo no Kai in August 1959, but Okada’s movement remained quite small until around 1970 (the year the revelations first appeared in print). It is conceivable that by 1970, most of the members and core staff had joined the organization sufficiently late to have no knowledge of such facts.⁴³ The inconsistencies in material published by the organization, and between this material and information from outside sources, suggest that this is so.

39. Byakko Shinko Kai International website, http://www.byakko.org/1_about/goi/index.html (accessed May 2008).

40. Byakko Shinko Kai International website, <http://www.byakko.org/index.html> (accessed March 2008).

41. Comments in an address by Ueshiba (founder of Aikido and a friend of Goi) to Byakkō Shinkōkai members, <http://www.aikidojournal.com/article?articleID=639>) (accessed March 2008).

42. Similarly, one could argue that the peace concepts held by many of the world’s religious and political leaders tend to be ethnocentric.

43. One notable exception is the current leader of Sūkyō Mahikari, Okada Keishu, who joined Sekai Kyūseikyō along with Okada Yoshikazu. She was adopted by him as an adult and was his constant companion throughout all the relevant years.

A seemingly incidental detail from a Mahikari publication indicates that Okada was at least influenced by (and possibly participated in) Chidorikai. This publication provides a lengthy explanation of one of Okada's main roles, the "Role of Yo." In brief, this means that Su God gave Okada the "mission of representing and acting for the god of Yo ... the great god of heaven with the strongest influence at this stage of the great divine work ... and the great mission to bring about the reconstruction of the world." A footnote states that these explanations are "based on divine revelations which Dr. Shioya received from Ōmine Rōsen on Dec. 24, 1948" (SŪKYŌ MAHIKARI 2004, 7).⁴⁴

Chidorikai participants included members of Sekai Kyūseikyō, and Okada joined that religion around 1947, so he may have been present when Shioya received the above revelations. This possibility is consistent with an account in a 1997 book published by a Mahikari member: "Immediately after the end of the war, Okada heard a disembodied voice say 'Raise your hand!,' and when he raised his hand, miracles occurred one after the other. Okada was very surprised, and in desperation to solve the riddle, he delved into studying everything from *psychic science* to religions and *parapsychology*."⁴⁵ (Immediately after the war and prior to joining Sekai Kyūseikyō is the only time when it would not have been redundant for Su God to tell Okada to raise his hand.) A similar account written by another Mahikari member states that Okada was told to "Raise your hand" and subsequently tested *tekazashi* on a dog in 1948.⁴⁶ If these accounts are correct, a divine instruction to raise his hand sometime in the late 1940s may have ultimately contributed to Okada's decision to establish Yōkōshi Tomo no Kai in 1959, but only after a long delay.

44. The presence of this footnote is a key reason for suggesting that current Mahikari leaders are not aware of the way Mahikari originated. Leaders of the Sūkyō Mahikari faction appear to be not averse to omitting information that might be considered problematic. Their chronology of the history of Mahikari, for example, makes no mention of Sekai Mahikari Bunmei Kyōdan, and accordingly also omits mention of the registration of Sūkyō Mahikari itself in 1978. See the Sūkyō Mahikari website at <http://www.sukyomahikari.or.jp/13/13.html> (accessed May 2008). The home page of this site shows a photo of Okada Yoshikazu that has been edited to remove the Sekai Mahikari Bunmei Kyōdan badge that he wears on his left lapel in the original of this photo, thus suggesting deliberate hiding of facts that were well known to senior leaders of Sūkyō Mahikari. Since any information showing Okada's link with psychical investigation potentially undermines the spontaneous *kamigakari* origin story taught by Mahikari, it seems likely that the above footnote would have been omitted from the Sūkyō Mahikari text if the significance of the Shioya and Ōmine Rōsen names had been known to senior Mahikari staff.

45. Quoted in a bulletin board post, <http://jbbs.livedoor.jp/bbs/read.cgi/study/3760/1137721826/979>. Accessed March 2008; emphasis added.

46. S. Chang, report concerning Sūkyō Mahikari in Belgium, at http://www.hrwf.net/religiousfreedom/profiles/ext/Sūkyō_mahikari_observatory_on_.pdf (accessed November 2007).

In recent years, some members of Mahikari have become aware through scholarly works that Okada Yoshikazu was a member of Sekai Kyūseikyō, and the claim that Okada was focused entirely on secular matters before the 1959 revelation is beginning to disappear. A Mahikari promotional book published in 2004 states: “It is clear from his [Okada’s] words and writings that he received communication from God (including revelations) during the war and postwar years before 1959” but that the 1959 revelation marked “a new phase” (TEBECIS 2004, 67). The author of a website devoted to psychical investigation goes so far as to assert that Okada, along with Ogiwara, Goi, and Fukuda Kura 福田くら (“a Shintoist”), received revelations from Ōmine Rōsen.⁴⁷ However, I have not managed to find any clear evidence supporting this latter claim.

Some of the content of Okada’s teachings suggest at least close familiarity with Chidorikai. Okada’s teachings that the world is progressing according to Su God’s divine plan through the eras denoted by the katakana syllables, and that the “storms of ra-ru-ro” (involving millennial-style cataclysms of nature) would peak around the year 2000, for example, are almost exact matches for revelations that the Ōmine Rōsen spirit gave to Shioya and others associated with Chidorikai. The details and even the expressions in the following revelation, which Shioya received from Ōmine Rōsen around 1947, would not look out of place in Mahikari publications:

Humans have been continuing to behave incorrectly for a long time and have made their souls and bodies impure. However, the time has come when their sins and impurities must be scrubbed away. The earth has also become impure, and must also be cleansed, purified, and repaired. Accordingly, various cataclysms of nature (*tenpenchii*) will occur. Many people will die, but those who have purified their souls and bodies will survive these great purifications (*Ōmisogi*). Then, a heavenly country with true peace will be created in this purified world.⁴⁸

Despite the above information, it remains uncertain whether Okada participated in Chidorikai or not, but Okada’s citing of the revelation from Ōmine Rōsen concerning his Role of Yo indicates significant respect for Shioya and this spirit. In addition, use of the words “divine revelations” in reference to these revelations seems to place them on a par with the revelations Okada received from Su God.

It is clear, however, that Okada participated in Makoto no Michi Kyōkai (the group established by Shioya in 1955). Okada’s biography states that news about Yōkōshi Tomo no Kai “was reported in *Seiwa*, a newspaper on spiritual topics” from 1959 until July 1962 (SHIBATA 1993, 58). This is the magazine mentioned

47. From introductory paragraph at <http://f35.aaa.livedoor.jp/~shinri/shikumi.html> (accessed March 2008).

48. Quoted at <http://f35.aaa.livedoor.jp/~shinri/shioya.html#label5> (accessed March 2008).

earlier, published by Makoto no Michi Kyōkai. The March 1962 edition of *Seiwa* indicates that Okada was a leader of a subgroup, known as the “Mahikari” subgroup, within Makoto no Michi Kyōkai at that time. Thus, Okada was concurrently the leader of Yōkōshi Tomo no Kai and a core member of Makoto no Michi Kyōkai.⁴⁹ The name of this Makoto no Michi Kyōkai subgroup appears to have been the source of the word “Mahikari” which Okada used in the name of his religion when he registered it as Sekai Mahikari Bunmei Kyōdan the following year. He also used “The Mahikari” as the name of a new magazine which he started in July 1962, when publishing news about Yōkōshi Tomo no Kai in the Makoto no Michi Kyōkai magazine became “problematic in many ways” (SHIBATA 1993, 58).

The above information suggests that Okada’s core concept of “Mahikari,” or True Light—the “light” (energy) radiated from the hand during *tekazashi*—was originally a Makoto no Michi Kyōkai concept. Could it be that Mahikari evolved from Makoto no Michi Kyōkai, rather than being a direct derivative of Sekai Kyūseikyō? According to Mahikari-related bulletin board posts, some members of the “Mahikari” subgroup of Makoto no Michi Kyōkai, along with some of its other members, formed the bulk of the original membership of Yōkōshi Tomo no Kai. Whatever the above “problems” were, they appear to have propelled Okada, the “Mahikari” concept and name, and a portion of Makoto no Michi Kyōkai members away from the psychical investigation world of Shioya and toward Okada’s “new” religion, Sekai Mahikari Bunmei Kyōdan. It is not known what happened to Shioya and Makoto no Michi Kyōkai after that. However, in recent years Shioya has been promoting a healing method involving a breathing technique and positive affirmations.⁵⁰

Armed with the above information, other information in Mahikari texts takes on new meaning. One text states that some “Shinto priests” were suspicious of Okada’s revelation claims and used an “ancient Shinto” divination technique known as *tenjō* to ask God about the identity of Okada’s soul and his missions. They were said to have been astonished when God revealed that Okada had been given the Role of Yo and other momentous divine roles (SŪKYŌ MAHIKARI 1983 [March], 3–5).

However, this author is unaware of any Shinto sects that practice *tenjō* (or *fu ji*) divination other than the new religions discussed in this article. In addition, the use of *Tenjō* to confirm the role of Yo (“Yo” being one of the katakana syllables) seems reminiscent of the Makoto no Michi practice of using *Tenjō* to assign roles to its members. According to Mahikari-related bulletin board

49. Sūkyō Mahikari 崇教真光 entry in Japanese Wikipedia, under *Gaiyō* 概要, <http://ja.wikipedia.org/wiki/%E5%B4%87%E6%95%99%E7%9C%9F%E5%85%89> (accessed October 2007).

50. Shioya’s website, <http://www.infoibis.ne.jp/~shioya/index.html> (accessed October 2007).

posts,⁵¹ the *Tenjō* investigation which confirmed Okada's Role of Yo was conducted by Makoto no Michi Kyōkai people in 1960, and *Tenjō* was also practiced within Yōkōshi Tomo no Kai itself during its early years.

Mahikari texts also state that, in 1961, *tenjō* divination conducted by "Shinto priests" gave Okada yet another divine name, *Seigyoku* (holy jewel), and both *Kōtama* (which was part of Okada's 1959 revelation, according to current editions of *Goseigen*) and *Seigyoku* are referred to as being "God-given names." One text refers to revelations received through *tenjō* as "Divine Revelations using the objective method of 'Tenjō' (the heavenly stick)" (SŪKYŌ MAHIKARI March 1983, 3). This, in combination with the above reference to communications from Ōmine Rōsen as "divine revelations," implies that Okada regarded revelations received through psychical investigation techniques and the revelations he received from Su God "through a messenger deity" as equally divine in origin. This should not be surprising, since other religious leaders of his time regarded these as valid methods of learning divine truths. Nevertheless, this is a surprising implication in Okada's case, for in *Sunkyō* (mini-teachings), he specifically warned that having faith in psychic mediums was dangerous (SEIŌ 1984, 15).

Thus, even though it is not known when or how Okada first became associated with the psychical investigation sphere of Chidorikai and its derivatives, this was clearly an important influence. It may even be appropriate to view Okada's "new" Mahikari religion as an off-shoot of Makoto no Michi Kyōkai. Since Okada was part of that group until at least 1962, it seems reasonable to think that the 1959 revelation discussed above and the other revelations received up until 1962 may have been received through séances or other psychical means, rather than through spontaneous *kamigakari*, but we have no way of knowing with certainty.

Mahikari texts state that subsequent revelations occurred frequently after the 1959 revelation, but there is conflicting information about how these were received. In the Preface of *Goseigen*, Okada states that the revelations were "given to me by Su God, the Creator of heaven and earth, through a messenger deity under circumstances similar to those experienced by the aforementioned great leaders," namely John the Baptist, Jesus, and Muhammad (SŪKYŌ MAHIKARI 2002, x–xi). However, other texts state that he received subsequent revelations through "a form of automatic writing." An entry in Okada's diary gives the impression that a disembodied voice gave him dictation:

I have to get out of bed very quickly and go to my desk. Then I have to write furiously until the end. I have to be very quick; getting everything down is a

51. Similar claims appear in a number of postings. For examples, see post 22 at <http://jbbs.livedoor.jp/bbs/read.cgi/sports/28726/1190274213/> and post 804 at <http://mimizun.com/2chlog/psy/etc.2ch.net/psy/oyster/1077/1077411299.html> (both accessed March 2008).

feat which requires lightning speed. I am not permitted to ask for something to be repeated. Some words are easy to understand, but others not at all. Also I have to translate very old words into modern terms with great care so as not to depart from the divine will. It is rather hard work. (SHIBATA 1993, 43–44)

The need to translate between old and modern terms sounds reminiscent of some Chidorikai séances: at times an ancient spirit would manifest, and the spirit of a more recently deceased person would need to “translate” unfamiliar expressions into modern idiom.

We have no information concerning Okada Yoshikazu’s religious influences prior to joining Sekai Kyūseikyō at the age of 46. He was a career officer in the Imperial Army until 1941, having graduated (along with two other top Mahikari leaders) from the Rikugun Shikan Gakkō (army officer training school) in 1922. It is possible he was aware of Ōmoto, perhaps via the aikido founder, Ueshiba Morihei, who had numerous military contacts. He may also have been aware of Asano and *chinkon kishin*, since this technique apparently attracted a degree of military interest. Seichō-no-Ie was particularly active in supporting Japan’s war effort, and the wording of some of its doctrine sounds oddly similar to Mahikari teachings, suggesting that Okada may have been familiar with this group.

As noted above, the Takeuchi document attracted much attention during the 1930s due to the theological basis it seemed to provide for imperialism and military expansion, so Okada could have been aware of this document from military sources. However, Yano’s concept of a divine plan, involving world renewal and culminating in world peace under a theocracy headed by the Emperor, is echoed not only by Shioya but also by Okada. Okada drew heavily on the Takeuchi document for his teachings concerning ancient history and the Emperor’s divinity. It may merely be coincidence, but during his military years Okada used the name Ryūdō 竜道 (Dragon Way) as a nickname. Perhaps Okada knew Shioya through Yano’s group, or perhaps he was attracted to Chidorikai simply due to its political leanings.

Okada does not discuss the Emperor’s role quite as explicitly as Yano and Shioya. However, he taught that the peaceful and heavenly world after the convulsions of nature will be a theocracy (not a democracy); that Japan is the “head” and other nations are “branch” countries; and that Japan’s emperor is God’s representative. Trainees at the Sūkyō Mahikari staff training school are required to recite from memory the text of the Imperial Rescript on Education. One senior Sekai Mahikari Bunmei Kyōdan staff member stated: “Our great savior said that during the time of our third spiritual leader [the current leader is the third] someone would appear who was to become the leader of the world—the implication was that this is the Emperor, but it’s not an appropriate thing to go

around saying today.”⁵² Despite attempts by non-Japanese Mahikari leaders to explain away Okada’s ethnocentric imperialism (TEBECIS 2004, 58–59), it is clear from Mahikari advanced initiation course lectures that Okada’s vision of world peace was indeed a worldwide theocracy headed by Japan’s emperor.

Since Mahikari spokespersons seem to be unaware of Okada’s involvement in groups associated with psychical investigation, the above discussion of the origins of Yōkōshi Tomo no Kai is forced to resort to speculation on important points. Hopefully the details presented above will suggest avenues for further research.

Relationship between Chinkon Kishin and Okada’s Form of Tekazashi

As Davis and others have noted, Okada’s doctrine and practice show signs of significant influence from Sekai Kyūseikyō. Shioya, Fukuda Kura, and Makoto no Michi members all practiced *tekazashi*, but Mahikari’s *tekazashi* has greater similarity with Sekai Kyūseikyō’s *tekazashi* (*jōrei*) than that of Makoto no Michi. Sekai Kyūseikyō and Mahikari practitioners wear a similar amulet to enable them to perform *tekazashi*, adopt the same posture, and radiate *tekazashi* from the hand in the same way, directing it first to the forehead then to other parts of the body. The purification prayer (*Amatsu Norigoto*) which Mahikari members chant when beginning a session of *tekazashi* appears to be modeled on Sekai Kyūseikyō’s purification prayer (*Amatsu Norito*), which is very similar to Ōmoto’s *Amatsu Norito*.⁵³

The term *chinkon kishin* appears nowhere in Mahikari publications, but if Sekai Kyūseikyō’s *tekazashi* technique evolved from *chinkon kishin*, as discussed above, then the Mahikari form of *tekazashi* could likewise be considered an adaptation of *chinkon*. (One Mahikari source states that Okada also studied Ōmoto.⁵⁴) The main difference between the *tekazashi* of Sekai Kyūseikyō and of Mahikari might be that Okada Mokichi discouraged practitioners from taking an interest in spirits, whereas Okada Yoshikazu explicitly aimed to “resolve spirit disturbance,”⁵⁵ suggesting a partial reversion to *chinkon kishin*. According to Sekai Kyūseikyō sources, one reason contributing to Okada Yoshikazu’s dismissal as one of their staff members was that he persisted in taking an interest in spirits despite being warned to not do so.⁵⁶

52. From *All the Emperor’s Men*, Garry Greenwood, revised 2005 edition, Ch.9. <http://emperormen.bravehost.com/freecopy.htm> (accessed September 2007).

53. The texts of these prayers can be seen in the blog “After Mahikari,” at <http://anne987.blog.spot.com/2007/05/amatsu-norigoto-and-amatsu-norito.html> (accessed January 2008).

54. From a scanned copy of a 1994 letter from Tomita Kazumi (a Sūkyō Mahikari spokesperson) shown at <http://members.ozemail.com.au/~skyaxe/letter.htm> (accessed March 2008).

55. See <http://members.ozemail.com.au/~skyaxe/letter.htm> (accessed March 2008).

56. From interviews conducted by former Mahikari members, reported at: <http://members.ozemail.com.au/~skyaxe/earlyyears.htm> (accessed May 2008).

Spirit manifestations are relatively common during Mahikari's *tekazashi*, although a significant proportion of members experience this rarely or not at all. While receiving *tekazashi* to the forehead, recipients may exhibit "spirit movement," which refers to involuntary movements, including involuntary speech or automatic writing (sometimes using a finger to "write" on the floor). Such spirit manifestations may be quite subtle but occasionally are very dramatic, even alarming, with the affected person reportedly feeling taken over by a powerful and unfamiliar force and speaking and acting quite out of character. Okada taught that spirit movement is caused by "attaching spirits," the Mahikari term for low-level possessing spirits which are believed to be more or less permanently attached to the person (unless they become sufficiently purified to return to the astral world). He taught that the spiritual purification such spirits receive during *tekazashi* is painful to them, and this is the reason attaching spirits generally only manifest during *tekazashi* even though they are always present in the person's body and affecting her or his health, thoughts, and emotions.

Ordinary members of Mahikari are discouraged from taking an interest in spirit manifestations, but members of staff are trained to question the spirit (called a "spirit investigation") in order to find out who or what it is and its reason for attaching to the affected person. They then give advice to the spirit and ask it to return to the astral world. One member who had received spirit investigations on a number of occasions ultimately refused to allow them after one investigation in which a manifesting spirit responded by saying that it had *not* previously been attached to the person but was just "passing by" (personal communication).

On the surface at least, there appear to be parallels between possession by a deity and possession by an attaching spirit. Both are capable of causing involuntary actions, automatic speech, and automatic writing, and both are capable of giving information concerning unseen realms. However, according to Davis, Mahikari teaches that attaching spirits are, by definition, evil or low-level spirits, since "gods never possess people." If an attaching spirit claims to be a deity, it is lying (DAVIS 1980, 120). Perhaps Okada was aware of the chaos that ensued when Ōmoto members believed they were possessed by deities during their practice of *chinkon kishin*, and he wished to avoid such problems.

Since Okada taught that the spirits who manifest during *tekazashi* are already attached to a person's body, rather than external spirits who are temporarily able to possess the person during this procedure, the giver of *tekazashi* and the Mahikari amulet are seen as being the active components causing spirit manifestations, rather than the mental state of the receiver. Given this set of concepts, it is highly unlikely that Mahikari members would see any similarity at all between *chinkon kishin* and *tekazashi*, yet similar spirit manifestations occur during both. Since practitioners are only aware of spirits while they are manifesting, surely it

is beyond the capabilities of human perception to know whether a spirit is inside one's body or elsewhere at other times.⁵⁷

A number of religious groups regard it as more or less essential to use a *saniwa* to differentiate between possession by a deity and possession by a lower-level spirit who merely pretends to be a deity. This implies that possession by any type of spirit feels roughly the same to the person being possessed. Similarly, it suggests that the mental state that gives rise to involuntary spirit movements (including automatic writing and speech) caused by low-level or attaching spirits must be roughly the same state that enables possession by a high-level spirit or deity. Thus, those Mahikari members who have experienced strong spirit manifestations may already have an approximate familiarity with the experience of *kishin* (possession by a deity or other spirit). After experiencing spirit movement, if a Mahikari member has difficulty returning to a normal state, simply eating some food often proves to be an effective aid towards "feeling oneself" again, suggesting that the physiological state resulting from insufficient food facilitates spirit manifestations.

If, contrary to Mahikari beliefs, the spirits that manifest during *tekazashi* are spirits from outside the person rather than attaching spirits, then the similarity to *chinkon kishin* becomes clear, in terms of results if not intentions. In practice, Mahikari staff at times find it expedient to believe that a manifesting spirit is not an attaching spirit. A case in point would be, for example, the spirit of a recently deceased Mahikari member who died in an accident and who manifests in order to reassure family members that all is well (TEBECIS 2004, 56–57). Remembering that Okada was reprimanded for taking too much interest in spirits during his time as a Sekai Kyūseikyō staff member, might Mahikari be one of the religions that practiced *chinkon kishin* in its formative years, but subsequently restricted itself to the practice of *chinkon*? This line of thinking raises the possibility that some of the revelations Okada received may have resulted from the practice of *chinkon kishin*, instead of or in addition to psychical investigation means and/or *kamigakari*.

Conclusion

This article shows that a number of elements of the *kamigakari* origin story taught by Mahikari are inconsistent with known facts, thus placing doubt on the reliability of the claim that Okada received his revelations through spontaneous possession by a deity. It also shows that Okada's *tekazashi* technique did not originate from his 1959 revelation. The present author does not have access to sufficient information to establish the actual source of his revelations and *teka-*

57. Similarly, it is perhaps beyond the capabilities of human perception to distinguish between involuntary actions caused by spirits and those caused by the equally invisible subconscious.

zashi technique with certainty—Okada may be the only person who could do that. However, the available evidence suggests that Okada's *tekazashi* could be seen as being a direct or indirect derivative of *chinkon kishin*, and that it is not improbable that at least some of his revelations were received through psychical means. Examination of the context in which Mahikari arose shows that other religious founders of his time regarded revelations received through *chinkon kishin* and psychical investigation as just as valid as those resulting from *kamigakari*. Okada apparently concurred, at least in relation to psychical investigation. This seems logical, since all three methods involve receiving information from spirits, and the validity of all three rests entirely on correct identification of the spirit source.

This article also shows that existing academic writing, in identifying Mahikari as a derivative of Sekai Kyūseikyō, presents an incomplete picture of the origins of Mahikari, thus failing to explain why Okada chose to establish a new religion. Simply having left Sekai Kyūseikyō would seem insufficient reason, particularly considering the time lag involved. This incomplete picture has led some potential, current, and former members of Mahikari, who have turned to academic writers for objective information, to assume that Okada deliberately deceived his followers by copying much of his doctrine and practice from Sekai Kyūseikyō, and by concocting a false *kamigakari* origin story. This assumption has led to further speculation.⁵⁸ If Su God did not tell Okada to raise his hand and start a new religion, as claimed, what *was* Okada's motivation for doing so? Was Okada delusional? Was he a part of a conspiracy to use religion to promote world unity under the leadership of Japan's emperor? Was he a con man in pursuit of money or power?

In light of the incomplete information available from Mahikari and scholarly sources, such speculation is understandable. However, the information presented in this article suggests that Okada was probably acting in good faith, and that the political aspect of his doctrine was not unusual amongst new religions in the Ōmoto lineage. Regardless of whether the claimed spontaneous *kamigakari* experience occurred, he was not alone in regarding information sourced from séances and *tenjō* as being divine revelations. *Tenjō* divination confirmed that Okada had a divine mission (the Role of Yo), and revelations from Ōmine Rōsen explained the magnitude of that mission. Other information from that spirit indicated that world unity under Japan's emperor was the only way to achieve world peace. If Okada believed all this—and it appears that he did—speculation on his motives becomes unnecessary. Certainly, many of Mahikari's claims con-

58. Speculation of this nature can be seen in any number of Mahikari-related blog discussions, and is common in conversations between former members who are trying to come to terms with a perceived betrayal of trust.

cerning its origins seem ill-founded, but it is possible to imagine that he (or his followers) considered his mission to be sufficiently grave to justify boosting his credibility with an origin story that facilitated belief.

The origin stories of the religions discussed in this article exhibit a chronological trend: spontaneous *kamigakari*, followed by possession induced by *chinkon kishin*, followed by receiving divine information through psychical means, with a degree of overlap between the three. *Chinkon kishin* and psychical investigation techniques seem to have largely replaced spontaneous *kamigakari* as the formative forces in this sample of Ōmoto-lineage new religions. However, the more successful religions in terms of membership numbers are generally those that originated with some form of spontaneous revelation, or claimed to do so.

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