

**OKAWA'S CONCEPT OF HAPPINESS:  
AN ANALYSIS FROM THE ISLAMIC PERSPECTIVE**

**BY**

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**A dissertation submitted in fulfilment of the requirement for  
the degree of Master of Islamic Revealed Knowledge and  
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## ABSTRACT

Among the active and widely spread New Religious Movement (NRM) that are receiving attention all around the globe is Happy Science Religious Organization. Having its origin in Japan, Ryuho Okawa, the founder of Happy Science, plays an influential role in order to spread the teaching of happiness to the people all over the world. Malaysia, without exception also have been exposed by the teaching of this new religious movement. Thus, this research seeks to explore the background of this religious organization and its founder. In the meantime, it explores the concept of happiness that has been the main teaching in this organization and the concept of happiness in Islam based on the two Islamic philosophers which is Al-Ghazali and Ibn Miskawayh. Hence, the main gist discussed in this research is the analysis about Okawa's concept of happiness from Islamic perspectives. This research is theoretical and descriptive in nature; therefore, it is qualitative and depends much on the textual analysis. The resources of this research include printed and online materials. To analyze the data, the researcher has used analytical and comparative methods. The findings show that there are a few syncretic elements that existed in Okawa's teaching and there is a difference between Okawa's concept of happiness and the concept of happiness discussed by Al-Ghazali and Ibn Miskawayh. The concept of happiness by Okawa is simple yet organized in structure whereas, the concept of happiness by Al-Ghazali and Ibn Miskawayh are more systematic and comprehensive. In addition, the way of understanding about the definition of happiness also different among Okawa and these two Islamic philosophers. Apart from this, much has been written on the background of this organization but there is little research done on the fundamental teaching of this organization. This research, therefore, fill this gap.

## خلاصة البحث

من الحركات الدينية الجديدة التي تحظى بالاهتمام في جميع أنحاء العالم منظمة علم السعادة، ولمؤسسها Ryuho Okawa في اليابان دور مؤثر في نشر تعليم السعادة في دول العالم، ومنها ماليزيا، ومن ثمّ؛ يسعى هذا البحث إلى تحريي بدايات هذه المنظمة الدينية ومؤسسها، وبيان مفهوم السعادة لدى المنظمة ومفهومها في الإسلام كما ذكره الغزالي وابن مسكويه؛ أي تحليل مفهوم أوكاوا للسعادة من منظور إسلامي، ويتوسّل البحث نهجًا نوعيًا باستخدام المنهجين الوصفي والمقارن والاعتماد على التحليل النصي للمصادر والمراجع، وتبين النتائج أن هناك بعض العناصر التوفيقية في تعاليم أوكاوا، مع فرق في مفهوم السعادة بينه وبين الغزالي وابن مسكويه، فالمفهوم لدى أوكاوا بسيط ومنظم في هيكل في آن معًا، في حين أن المفهوم لدى الغزالي وابن مسكويه أكثر منهجية وشمولية، بالإضافة إلى اختلاف طريقة تعريف السعادة بين أوكاوا وبين الفلاسفة الإسلاميين، ورغم كثرة الدراسات التي تناولت بدايات منظمة علم السعادة؛ فقلة منها تناولت تعاليمها الأساس بالتفصيل، وعليه؛ يسعى هذا البحث إلى سدّ هذه الفجوة.

## APPROVAL PAGE

I certify that I have supervised and read this study and that in my opinion, it conforms to acceptable standards of scholarly presentation and is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a thesis for the degree of Master of Islamic Revealed Knowledge and Human Science (Usul al-Din and Comparative Religion).

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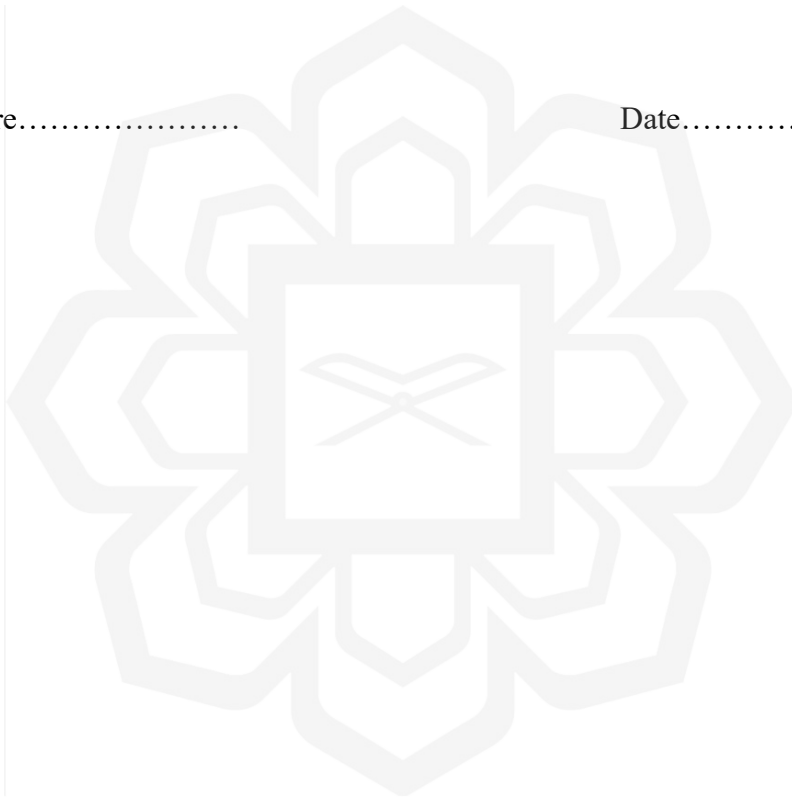
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*This dissertation is dedicated to my beloved parents,*

*Mohamed Indera Alim Shah B. Jamaludin*

*&*

*Norma Bt. Ismail.*

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# CHAPTER ONE

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

The Happy Science<sup>1</sup> organization or movement is referred to as a spiritual movement which appeared in Japan in 1985 under the name “The Institute for Research in Human Happiness”. In its early days, it is known as *Kofuku no Kagaku* (the science of happiness). But now, as it gains wider acceptance it is known with its English name, Happy Science.<sup>2</sup> In the beginning, this movement is one of the controversial movements in Japan as it claimed to be a new religion. Beckford connotes that “New Religious Movement (NRM) refers principally to the groups which have attracted the most publicity or notoriety”.<sup>3</sup> It started as a religious organization and is currently one of the most important religious organizations in Japan and in the world in general. This religious organization as claimed by some people, has a big influence in many parts of the world and has followers in over 100 countries around the world.<sup>4</sup>

The founder of this organization is a Japanese man named Ryuho Okawa. He was born on 7<sup>th</sup> July 1956, in Tokushima Prefecture, Japan. He started his academic journey at one of the eminent universities in Japan, The University of Tokyo. On 6<sup>th</sup> October 1986, Happy Science was founded and later, on 7<sup>th</sup> March 1991, it was

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<sup>1</sup> The term Happy Science is sometimes been referred to as a religious organization; or religious movement;

or spiritual movement and was even claimed by its founder Mr. Ryuho Okawa (b. 1956) as a new religion.

<sup>2</sup> E. Baffelli and I. Reader, “Competing for the Apocalypse: Religious Rivalry and Millennial Transformations in a Japanese Religion,” *International Journal for The Study of New Religions*, vol. 2, no. 1, (2011), pp. 6.

<sup>3</sup> J. A. Beckford, *Cult Controversies: The Societal Response To New Religious Movements* (New York: Tavistock Publications, 1985), p. 23.

<sup>4</sup> Happy Science Group. *Group Profile 2014*. (Tokyo: IRH Press Ltd, 2014), p. 14.

officially certified as a religious organization in Japan.<sup>5</sup> The main purpose of this religious organization is to bring happiness to the world through the teaching of happiness, which is based on Okawa's concept of happiness as illuminated by God El-Cantare through his personality.

## 1.2 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Depression, which finally led to many people committing suicide in Japanese society, has perhaps inspired Okawa to initiate an organization to teach and bring happiness to the world at large and the Japanese society in particular.<sup>6</sup> In Japan, the index on suicides shows a high percentage of occurrence and it is a major national issue.<sup>7</sup> Until very recently, Japan is the sixth highest nation in terms of suicide rates in the world and the second amongst eight major industrialized nations according to a government report.<sup>8</sup> The main reason for suicides is due to the unhappiness felt by individuals. Among the factors that cause unhappiness in an individual are unemployment, stress, financial problems and depression.<sup>9</sup> Today, Okawa's message of happiness has reached many places around the world including Malaysia and it has gained a significant number of followers. Therefore, it is assumed that this kind of issue has motivated Okawa to bring happiness in the society. According to Okawa, this kind of unhappiness can be curbed

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<sup>5</sup> T. Astley, "The Transformation of a Recent Japanese New Religion: Okawa Ryuho and Kofuku no Kagaku," *Japanese Journal of Religious Studied*, vol. 22, no. 3/4, (1995), pp. 347.

<sup>6</sup> Refer to the suicides records in Japan and North Korea between 1985 to 2010 in *A Demographic Evaluation of Increasing Rates of Suicide Mortality in Japan and South Korea*, by Sun Young Jeon, Utah State University. Utah State University, DigitalCommons@USU. Year 2012; and suicides record between 1950 to 1985 in World Health Organization (WHO) record [http://www.who.int/mental\\_health/media/japa.pdf](http://www.who.int/mental_health/media/japa.pdf) (accessed March 27, 2018).

<sup>7</sup> S. Strom, "In Japan, Mired in Recession, Suicides Soar", *The New York Times*, (Published on July 15, 1999), accessed on 2018, March 26.

<https://www.nytimes.com/1999/07/15/world/in-japan-mired-in-recession-suicides-soar.html>

<sup>8</sup> Tomoko Otake, May 30, 2017, *The Japan Times News*, "suicide down, but Japan still second highest amongst industrialized nations." <https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2017/05/30/national/social-issues/preventiveefforts-seen-helping-2016-saw-another-decline-suicides-japan-21897/#.WrqU2h3wZdg>

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

by following the right teaching to achieve happiness. This teaching is embedded in the Happy Science organization which has more than 12 million members in over 100 different countries.<sup>10</sup>

Sutherland and Clarke state that most of the new religious movements aim to enable people to cope with a normal lifestyle and to bring a solution to every problem in society, especially those religious organizations of Japanese origin.<sup>11</sup> Sutherland and Clarke also add that, the objective of the religious organizations is to make people live easier and provide solutions which are compatible with the contemporary times which suits the teaching of happiness by Okawa. Okawa's teaching of happiness has attracted a significant number of followers in many places around the world. It is, therefore, very important for students of Usuluddian and Comparative Religion to study and analyze his teachings so as to be well-versed on the beliefs and nature of certain societies and communities as well as the reality on the ground.

### **1.3 RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

1. Who is Okawa and what is his organization about?
2. What is happiness in Okawa's teaching?
3. What are the syncretic elements in Okawa's concept of happiness?
4. What are the Islamic views on Okawa's concept of happiness?

### **1.4 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES**

1. To explore Okawa's background and his organization.

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<sup>10</sup> Happy Science Group. *Group Profile 2014*. (Tokyo: IRH Press Ltd, 2014), p. 14.

<sup>11</sup> J. A. Beckford, *Cult Controversies: The Societal Response To New Religious Movements* (New York: Tavistock Publications, 1985), p. 23.

2. To explore Okawa's concept of happiness.
3. To identify syncretic ideas in Okawa's teaching of happiness.
4. To analyze Okawa's concept of happiness from the Islamic perspective.

## **1.5 JUSTIFICATION OF THE STUDY**

Happy Science needs to be studied based on a few reasons. Firstly, Happy Science is not a common religious organization. It claims to be the medium and channel in which the teachings of Jesus, Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) and Buddha are to be spread and taught to the society. Due to this, it gains a significant number of members throughout the world. A study and analysis should be done to look into its teachings and methods.

Secondly, Happy Science is an active religious organization and it is expanding all over the world. It is not only expanding to Non-Muslim countries but also to Muslim countries. The most important point is that it exists in Malaysia, which is an influential Muslim country. As for now, in Malaysia, the followers of Happy Science are from the Chinese, Indian and Darwinian communities<sup>12</sup> while, in Singapore, there are Muslims who are already followers of Happy Science.<sup>13</sup> Therefore, there is a probability that Muslims in Malaysia will join Happy Science in the future. So, it is a must for Muslims to study and be alert about this kind of movement as it might affect the environment in Muslim countries in the future either in a subtle way or directly. Muslims should know and be alert about the current new religious movement and it is very important for

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<sup>12</sup> The researcher assumes that this term refers to persons who adhere to the evolution theory of Charles Darwin.

<sup>13</sup> Kota Noguchi, "The Details of Happy Science". Interviewed by Nor Athirah. February 28, 2018.

Muslims to create the element of awareness in the society, particularly about things related to religion and beliefs.

Thirdly, information and research on Happy Science are still very limited despite the big number of followers it has. For this reason, a study related to this religious organization should be carried out in order to identify the root, doctrine and methodology they use to gain the support of people from different religions and cultures.

## **1.6 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

There are many ways of collecting data and it depends on the types of research and areas of study itself. Different types of research utilize different styles and methods of collecting data. Data can be collected from a variety of sources and channels. Therefore, this kind of study will solely focus on qualitative primary data collection, which falls under the qualitative method. As a result, this study is a library research study. To put it simply, this study will use academic journals, articles, books, newspapers and official websites to collect and gather all the information related to the study. In sum, this study utilizes these following methods:

### **i. Descriptive Method**

The Descriptive Method will be applied in order to identify and peruse about the life and academic background of the founder of Happy Science, Ryuho Okawa. It is very important to point out all the essential information and clarify the elements that led to the emergence of Happy Science. In addition, this method will be the main root and channel to ensure the effectiveness of the next following method which is the analytical method.

ii. **Analytical Method**

The Analytical Method will be applied in order to thoroughly analyze the fundamental teaching and the concept of happiness in Happy Science. In a specific way, this method will focus on the teaching and principles of happiness in Happy Science and scrutinize the syncretic elements that exist in the organization. This is very important in order to identify the gist of this dissertation.

### **1.7 LITERATURE REVIEW**

There is a variety of literature that have been reviewed on the emergence of new religious movements today and one of it is Happy Science. Happy Science began its journey as an Institute of Research for Human Happiness before it became one of the most influential religious organizations today. It began its step from an ordinary religious movement and slowly grew to become one of the most significant religious movement globally. Thus, this is in line with Beckford, who states that, “NRM (New Religious Movement) refers principally to the groups which have attracted the most publicity or notoriety”.<sup>14</sup>

The founders of new religious movements are mostly the ones who have good personality and attitude, such as Ryuhō Okawa. Sutherland and Clarke state that the existence of new religions is the result of the creation of a charismatic leader who dominates by using his or her personality. It also involves their logical thoughts, views, and intellects.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> S. Sutherland & P. Clarke, *The World's Religion: The Study of Religion, Traditional, New Religions* (London: New Fetter Lane, 1991), p. 151.

New religious movements act as instruments for the creation of a perfect order in society and regain territory lost by religion that existed before.<sup>16</sup> The objective of the establishment of Happy Science is to achieve happiness in society. Its subtlety symbolized that there are flaws in the religions that existed before and for this reason, the founder is determined to create a new religion that can make people feel real happiness in life.

There are a few definitions regarding the term “Happy Science”. In 2009, Okawa wrote that, “a nondenominational universal religion, to share God’s Truths and to help humankind overcome religious and cultural conflicts and usher in an era of peace on Earth”.<sup>17</sup> Other than that, Okawa mentioned that Happy Science is “a spiritual movement dedicated to bringing greater happiness to humankind by overcoming barriers of race, religion and culture and by working toward the idea of a world united in peace and harmony”.<sup>18</sup> Additionally, Okawa said that Happy Science is “an organization of people who aim to cultivate their souls and deepen their love and wisdom through learning and practicing the teachings (The Truth) of Ryuhō Okawa, it spreads the light of Truth with the aim to create an ideal world on Earth”.<sup>19</sup> In summary, Happy Science is a form of religious movement that has its own clear objective, which is to guide people to overcome the hardships in life in order to achieve happiness. It also acts as the channel and medium for people to reach ultimate happiness.

Happy Science is expanding rapidly all over the world.<sup>20</sup> It has gained more followers from time to time and penetrates both Muslim and Non-Muslim countries. At

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid, 152.

<sup>17</sup> R. Okawa, *The Science of Happiness: 10 Principles for Manifesting Your Divine Nature* (Tokyo: IRH Press Ltd, 2009), p. 117.

<sup>18</sup> The Official website of Happy Science United Kingdom, *About Happy Science*, accessed on 2017, Nov 5 <http://www.happyscience-uk.org/about-happy-science/>

<sup>19</sup> R. Okawa, *The Laws of Happiness: The Four Principles for a Successful Life*. (Tokyo: IRH Press Ltd, 2011), p. 153.

<sup>20</sup> The official website of Happy Science, *Happy Science Activities*, accessed on 2017, Nov 9.

the beginning of its establishment in 1986, there were only four members. In 1987, the members increased to 1700 and by December 1988, the number of members increased to 4000.<sup>21</sup> Due to the rapid increase of members in Happy Science, it was certified as a religious movement in 1991.<sup>22</sup> Now, it has 12 million followers in 100 countries.<sup>23</sup> In Japan, Happy Science has already become the biggest growing religion while in Malaysia, for now, it still maintains as a religious organization due to the strict procedures in application process in order to be certified as a religion in Malaysia.<sup>24</sup> It keeps expanding from a small-scale groups to big scale groups until today. It contradicts what has been stated by Beckford, who states that “New Religious Movements have been a recurrent feature of the major religious traditions but their salience has not been constant.”<sup>25</sup> This is because Happy Science is an active religious movement. It has 700 local temples and 27 main temples all over the world.<sup>26</sup> There are two local temples in Malaysia which are in Petaling Jaya and Penang, and one main temple located in Bukit Jalil.<sup>27</sup> There are two ritual tools in the temple. First, is the bell. It is used to call all good spirits and blessings to come into an individual. Second, is the sword which is used to expel all evil spirits.<sup>28</sup>

Happy Science believers have faith in the god of the Earth, which is known as El Cantare which means the light of the land. El Cantare is similar to the existence of the Father in Christianity and Allah in Islam.<sup>29</sup> According to Happy Science, all

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<http://happy-science.org/activities/>

<sup>21</sup> Trevor Astley, “The Transformation of a Recent Japanese New Religion: Okawa Ryuho and Kofuku no Kagaku,” *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies*, vol. 22, no. ¾, (1995), pp. 352.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> Happy Science Group. *Group Profile 2014*. (Tokyo: IRH Press Ltd, 2014), p. 14.

<sup>24</sup> K. Noguchi, “The Details of Happy Science”. Interview by Athirah, N. February 28, 2018.

<sup>25</sup> J. A. Beckford, *Cult Controversies: The Societal Response To New Religious Movements* (New York: Tavistock Publications, 1985), p. 24.

<sup>26</sup> Happy Science Group. *Group Profile 2014*. (Tokyo: IRH Press Ltd, 2014), p. 16.

<sup>27</sup> K. Noguchi, “The Details of Happy Science”. Interview by Athirah, N. February 28, 2018.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> Happy Science Group. *Group Profile 2014*. (Tokyo: IRH Press Ltd, 2014), p. 9.

religions originally come from one source which is El Cantare.<sup>30</sup> A part of El Cantare resides within Master Okawa and it is his responsibility to guide humans to create a world filled with harmony and prosperity.

In Happy Science, there are a lot of prayer books. Each book consists of specific prayers for wealth, health, joy, sport and many more.<sup>31</sup> The main prayer book is *The Dharma of The Right Mind* and it is recited during the initiation ceremonies of new members of Happy Science.<sup>32</sup> The ritual prayer is conducted every Sunday. Each prayer is different, depending on the individual's needs, but the compulsory prayer is the prayer of *The Dharma of the Right Mind*.<sup>33</sup> After the prayer session, the monthly spiritual message will be delivered to the members.

Other than that, it conducts a lot of activities such as social contributions and charities in many places all over the world. Among the charity work that Happy Science is involved in is providing funds to support people who cannot receive education due to poverty, race or gender. The fund is known as the HS Nelson Mandela Fund.<sup>34</sup> Besides that, Happy Science also provides funds, food and medical supplies to countries affected by natural disasters.<sup>35</sup> Additionally, Happy Science is also actively involved in social contributions such as the Prevention against Suicide Campaign in 2013, the Foundation Network to Protect Children from Bullying, the Social Recovery Aid, Happy Marriage Consultancy and many more.<sup>36</sup> On 17 April 2013, a Japanese missionary, Dr. Ijo Imai came to Malaysia to spread the message of happiness at Bukit

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<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

<sup>32</sup> Trevor Astley, "The Transformation of a Recent Japanese New Religion: Okawa Ryuho and Kofuku no Kagaku," *Japanese Journal of Religious Studied*, vol. 22, no. 34, (1995), pp. 356.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

<sup>34</sup> Happy Science Group. *Group Profile 2014*. (Tokyo: IRH Press Ltd, 2014), p. 28.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

Jalil, which is the location of the main temple of Happy Science in Malaysia.<sup>37</sup> In that talk, he shared his experience about the importance of happiness for human beings. Therefore, their effort and salience in spreading their teachings are constant and persistent.

The framework of Happy Science also covers all aspects that should be included in a new religious movement such as politics, medical science, art and culture, education and the media.<sup>38</sup> To put it simply, it has all the characteristics of a new religious movement. Beckford wrote that, “New Religious Movement concerns about teachings, beliefs, values, feelings, experiences, symbols, forms, pattern of social organizations, or pattern of social relationships.”<sup>39</sup> This indicates that Happy Science hits all the characteristics of a new religious movement.

Other than that, like other religions and religious movements, Happy Science also has its own principle of ethics to achieve happiness. Runzo and Martin wrote that ethics is an attempt to determine what is right and wrong, good and bad.<sup>40</sup> Basically, it is a way on how to differentiate what is right or wrong for an individual to do and it is closely related to morality.

On the contrary, ethics in religion is different. It has its own meaning and it is called “religious ethics”. Different religions have different religious ethics. For instance, Buddhism has its own religious ethics which are apart from Hinduism, Christianity,

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<sup>37</sup> G. Chen, “Dr Jiro Imai Spreads The Message Of Happiness”, The Star Online. (Published on April 17,2013), accessed on 2018, March 26. <https://www.thestar.com.my/lifestyle/archive/2013/04/17/dr-jiro-imai-spreads-the-messageofhappiness/>

<sup>38</sup> The Official website of Happy Science United Kingdom, *About Happy Science*, accessed on 2017, Nov 5. <http://www.happyscience-uk.org/about-happy-science/>

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

<sup>40</sup> N. Martin & J. Runzo, *Ethics in The World Religions* (New York: One World Publications, 2001), p. 20.

Islam, Judaism and Sikhism. Each religion is different in term of religious ethics. What is good in Buddhism might not be good in other religions.

In 1987, Chidester wrote that, “Religious ethics is that aspect of religion concerned with normative patterns of action in the ordinary situations and circumstances of the human life cycle and social relations.”<sup>41</sup> To put it simply, religious ethics is a set of rules which guides people to do right actions and good deeds. It acts as a framework and guideline to lead people in a religion to differentiate between good and bad, right and wrong in daily life and become a good human being in a religion. In Happy Science, the only way to achieve happiness is by following Okawa’s concept of happiness.

This is different from Islam. Islam has its own definition of happiness. Happiness in Islam is conceived as transcendence beyond the physical or the sensual to achieve long-lasting eternal happiness which is with the mercy of God and His heavens.<sup>42</sup> To achieve eternal happiness, which is life in the Hereafter, an individual must go through a path and journey in the earthly life. So, real and eternal happiness is closely related to an individual’s life on this earth. If the individual performs all of God’s commandments and carry out his or her duty as the *khalifa* in the world, then he or she will achieve eternal happiness in the Hereafter with the mercy of God.

There are many ways and channels to achieve happiness in Islam. Several Islamic philosophers have their own views on how to achieve eternal happiness. One of these philosophers is Al Farabi (d. 950). According to him, there are four paths to achieve happiness which are through theoretical virtues, deliberated virtues, moral

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<sup>41</sup> D. Chidester, *Patterns of Actions: Religion and Ethics in a Comparative Perspectives* (California: Wadsworth Publishing Company, 1987), p. 12.

<sup>42</sup> Tiliouine, Habib, *Encyclopedia of Quality of Life Research*, “Happiness in Islam”, (Netherland: Springer Netherlands, 2014), 2662-2667.

virtues, and practical arts.<sup>43</sup> Ibn Miskawayh (d. 1050), however, has his own views and opinion on how to achieve happiness. According to him, who is deeply influenced by Aristotle and Neo-Platonism, happiness is the main aim and common vision of all human beings.<sup>44</sup> Nevertheless, true happiness could not be achieved easily. A human being should face all the challenges and triumphs to succeed the test in their earthly life and seek God's blessing for happiness in the worldly life and the Hereafter.

On the contrary, Ibn Arabi (d. 1270) has his own views on how to achieve happiness. Based on Ibn Arabi, the only way to achieve happiness is through the soul. Happiness can solely be found in the process of aspiring for truth, reality, rightness, and the *haqq*.<sup>45</sup> In short, in order to achieve ultimate happiness, an individual must know about the truth and reality of the cosmos, the soul, and human affairs based on Islamic teachings.

The definitions and ways to achieve happiness in Islam are different among the Islamic philosophers but their aim is the same which is solely to get the ultimate blessings from God.

There are various literatures that focus on new religious movements, ethics, religious ethics and the concept of happiness in Islam, but very little research has been conducted on the difference in the concept of happiness between new religious movements and the Islamic concept of happiness, as for instance, Happy Science and its concept of happiness. Through reviewing related researches and studies on this topic, it is clear that no studies have been carried out, and thus the focus of the present study will be "Okawa's Concept of Happiness: An Analysis from the Islamic Perspective".

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<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **HISTORICAL BACKGROUND AND FUNDAMENTAL TEACHINGS OF HAPPY SCIENCE**

#### **2.1 INTRODUCTION**

This chapter, discusses about the historical background of Happy Science and the way it is developed from the early stage of its establishment until present day. Basically, this chapter will discuss on four subtopics.

Firstly, it will explain in detail about the history of the emergence of Happy Science and the way it is claimed to be a new religion by its founder, Ryuho Okawa. Secondly, the focus will be on the main teachings of Happy Science. Thirdly, it discusses about the concept of happiness which is the main focus of this chapter. Lastly, the focus will be more on Happy Science's activities that cover four main areas which are rituals, education, charity and social contribution.

#### **2.2 HISTORY OF HAPPY SCIENCE**

“Happy Science”<sup>1</sup> (Kofuku no Kagaku) is one of the religious movements in Japan. It is referred to as a type of religious movement, which appeared in Japan in 1985 under the name “The Institute for Research in Human Happiness”. Due to the fact that it appeared in 1985, Happy Science is thus considered as one of the Neo New Japanese

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<sup>1</sup> The term Happy Science is sometimes been referred to as a religious organization; or religious movement; or spiritual movement and was even claimed by its founder Mr. Ryuho Okawa (b. 1956) as a new religion.

Religions or the Japanese term which is “Shin Shin Shukyo”, which refers to all the movements that came to eminence and dominance in the 1970s after Japan’s period of postwar economic growth.<sup>2</sup>

Ryuho Okawa (a self-proclaimed reincarnation of the Buddha) is the founder of Happy Science.<sup>3</sup> He became the most important and influential religious figure behind the emergence of Happy Science due to his self-proclamation as a reincarnation of the Buddha. Happy Science became one of the widely known religious organizations starting from the year 1991. In its early beginning in 1986, Happy Science was considered as a moderate religious organization.<sup>4</sup> It consisted of only four members in the first year of its establishment and towards the end of the year the members increased to 100.<sup>5</sup> From the first year to the next, the number of members gradually increased and finally on 7<sup>th</sup> March 1991, “Happy Science” was recognized as a mass movement.<sup>6</sup>

Among the factors that lead to the phenomenal increase in the number of members in Happy Science was the tremendous sales of its publications and the broad media coverage of its activities.<sup>7</sup>

### **2.2.1 Background of The Founder**

The founder of Happy Science is Ryuho Okawa. He is a Japanese man who was born in Tokushima Prefecture, on the island of Shikoku on 7 July 1956.<sup>8</sup> He is the second

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<sup>2</sup> Tsukada Hotaka, “Cultural Nationalism in Japanese Neo-New Religions: A Comparative Study of Mahikari and Kofuku no Kagaku,” *Monumenta Nipponica*, Vol. 67, No. 1, (2012), pp. 133.

<sup>3</sup> Trevor Astley, “The Transformation of a Recent Japanese New Religion: Okawa Ryuho and Kofuku no Kagaku,” *Japanese Journal of Religious Studied*, vol. 22, no. ¾, (1995), pp. 341.

<sup>4</sup> Astley, *The Transformation of a Recent Japanese New Religion...*, 352.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 343.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 344.