

Kluwer Copyright Blog

The missionary church of kopimism

Johan Axhamn (Department of Business Law, Lund University) · Wednesday, January 18th, 2012



It has been brought to attention, by [traditional media](#) and by [bloggers](#), that the [Missionary Church of Kopimism](#) (pronounced “copy me-ism”) has recently been recognized as a religious organization by Sweden’s Legal, Financial and Administrative Services Agency ([Kammarkollegiet](#)). The registration has made Sweden the first country to recognize Kopimism as a religion. According to its [website](#) the Church of Kopimism is a religious group centered in Sweden, which believe that copying and the sharing of information are the best and the most beautiful that is. The number of members of the Church is [about 3000](#).

The Church does not directly promote illegal file sharing, focusing instead on the open distribution of knowledge to all. It believes that to have your information copied is a sign of appreciation, that someone think you have done something good. For this reason CTRL+C and CTRL+V, the computer shortcut keys for “copy” and “paste”, are considered sacred symbols and the “Religion of Copyright” is held to be Kopimism’s “absolute opposite”. Furthermore, the fundamental notion of “originality” in copyright law is held to not exist as the world is believed to be “built on copies”. No belief in Gods or other supernatural phenomena are mentioned on the site.

The registration shall be seen in the context that in recent years Sweden has become known to be a base for [online piracy](#) and [anti-copyright activism](#). As regards religion in general, Sweden is quite secular; only [17 per cent](#) of Swedes hold faith to be an important aspect of their lives.

The registration is purely formal and contains the Church’s name, address and name and address of contact person. The agency does not assess the contents of the belief as such, hence the main effects of the registration are that the name of the Church is protected and that it makes the organization eligible to apply for government aid. Thus the registration neither constitutes any substantial formal rights or freedoms – maybe most importantly it does not exempt Church members from copyright law. In this sense, the main result of the registration is that it strengthens the identity of the Church and its followers.

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