

TRANSFORMING THE SYMBOL OF THE “SWASTIKA”:
A BRIGHT LOTUS FLOWER GROWS
OUT OF THE DARK MUDDY SWAMP OF HISTORY

By

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Abstract

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Serving in temples in the United States for more than 25 years as a Japanese Buddhist priest, and working with the Interfaith Center of New York for over 10 years, I am aware of the painful memories that the swastika symbol represents in the West where it is seen by many as a symbol of the hate and genocide perpetuated by the Nazis. However, the swastika has also been an important ancient holy symbol of happiness, well-being, and good luck for Buddhists, Hindus, Jain and others for more than 2000 years.

The object of this demonstration project is to provide accurate facts on the swastika symbol from different religious and cultural views. Chapter 1 deals with the present and historical usage of the swastika in the Eastern religions and cultures such as Buddhism, Jainism and Hinduism, as well as the swastika in other world traditions including Christianity, Judaism, Islam, and Native American Indians. The meaning and usage of the swastika symbol was completely changed from good to evil in Europe because of Nazi Germany’s anti-Semitic genocide during the Holocaust. Therefore, chapter 2 deals with the question of how Hitler adopted the swastika for his propaganda. The usage of the swastika in *Mein Kampf* is discussed in detail, to clarify Hitler’s intentions for the symbol, and to show that Hitler did not use the word swastika, a common word in German, but intentionally used the word “Hakenkreuz”(Hook-Cross). My discussion then focuses on the

two basic intended meanings of the Hook-Cross symbol by Hitler. His first intention, the 'Aryan' Hook-Cross is discussed in terms of Max Muller's contribution to the idea of "Aryan." His second intention, the 'Anti-Semitic' Hook-Cross, is discussed in the context of the influences of Martin Luther and Richard Wagner. These discussions lead to the conclusion that Hitler's Hook-Cross was a new German Christian 'cross' of Nazi Germany, and should not be confused with the Eastern svastika.

Chapter 3 is a summary of reports from swastika workshops conducted in New York. The first is a report from a lecture-style presentation. The second is a report from a workshop with Buddhists in New York. The third is a half-day workshop in an interfaith setting. Chapter 4, the conclusion of my project offers future possibilities for mutual understanding of the symbol in the East and West. The epilogue is a proposed statement—including an explanation of the different uses of the swastika—that I will send to various museums in the West and Eastern religious organizations after the completion of this thesis. It is my understanding that mutual understanding and mutual recognition are essential for our future inter-religious and inter-cultural dialogue.

To those who lost their precious lives by wars and violence in the world
with palms together

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Introduction:
Why the Swastika Symbol?

I have served various temples of the Buddhist Churches of America for more than 25 years. I served the Seattle Buddhist Church in Washington (1985- 1989), the Parlier Buddhist Church in California (1989-1994), and the New York Buddhist Church (1994-2010) as a resident Buddhist priest, following the Pure Land Tradition of Buddhism (Jodoshinshu Buddhism). Establishment in 1045, my family temple in Osaka, Japan, is nearly 1,000 years old.

As a Buddhist, I see the “swastika” or “Manji”, as it is called in Japanese, as one of the sacred symbols of the 2,000 year-old Buddhist tradition. The swastika has always been around for many generations in many uses. It appears on the cover of sacred texts, statues, and on other ritual and decorative objects. The word swastika comes from the Sanskrit “Svastika” which means auspiciousness, good fortune and well-being. In Buddhism, it is meant to express Buddha’s mind and all the good virtues of the universe. However, in the United States and European countries, it is sad to see that the svastika symbol appears to have been permanently desecrated because of its misappropriation in the past by Nazi Germany and in the present by racist groups and individuals. The First Amendment of the U. S. Constitution is supposed to protect the rights of religious freedom of expression, yet Buddhists—as well as other religions from the East, including Hindus and Jains—and Native Americans, cannot use this sacred symbol freely in the U. S. because of cultural and social perceptions. If we use it, we are criticized even when we explain our reasons and

history. The swastika one of the oldest sacred symbols used by human beings and is commonly and widely used in Japan and many Asian countries without any offense. In other countries, such as Germany, however, it is completely outlawed, and one may even be sent to prison for using it.

My first personal encounter with the Western swastika happened in April 1986. It was the second year after I came to the United States from Japan as an ordained Buddhist priest. I was assigned to a Buddhist temple in Seattle, and I made a flower shrine for the Buddha's Birthday "Hanamatsuri" Ceremony. The flower shrine is the main shrine for the Buddha's Birthday Ceremony. I arranged chrysanthemum blossoms in the shape of a swastika on the front roof of the shrine,¹ as this was the tradition I had been taught and practiced in Japan. Suddenly, seeing what I was doing, a Japanese-American member of the temple rushed towards me, exclaiming, "You cannot do that!" I did not understand what he was talking about. "What is wrong with the *manji*? It looks pretty," I said, not thinking about the Western swastika at all. He gave me a short lesson that the swastika here represents Nazi Germany's killing of six million Jews in the Holocaust and anti-Semitism. He also explained to me that racial issues are very sensitive in this country, unlike Japan which has a more homogenous society. As I listened to the temple member, I came to understand the different meaning of the swastika in this country, and how sensitive and serious it is. Since this incident, I have not used the svastika symbol for 25 years. I did not want to cause more pain to Jewish people.

Although I traveled to Washington D. C. many times for business, after I came to New York in 1994, I did not have time to visit the Holocaust Museum. Finally in 2003, I

¹ A photo of a similar flower shrine is found in Fig. 79 (Fresno Hanamatsuri).

was able to visit the museum. I spent two full days viewing and reading the exhibitions, and watching various videotapes that were showing. The tension and racism in our society that followed the 9-11 attack had made me curious to learn what happened to Jews in Europe during World War II. I could not help but compare the holocaust to the experience of the Hiroshima and Nagasaki Atomic bombings in 1945. I was chilled by the capacity and potential for human beings to kill millions of people, whether through genocide or through nuclear weaponry.

Since 1994, I had been organizing an annual peace ceremony at the New York Buddhist Church to commemorate the Hiroshima/Nagasaki atomic bombings. I had met many survivors from Hiroshima and Nagasaki through the ceremony as well as at other events to which I was invited. I was very impressed by their courage and sense of mission to share their tragic stories to create a nuclear free and peaceful world.

Mr. Koji Kobayashi, a Hiroshima survivor who has participated in our commemoration, once told me: “Although it is a painful experience, if I don’t talk about it, people may forget and might use nuclear weapons again. Then others will have to suffer like me in future generations. It could be my grandchildren. Nobody should experience the same suffering as I experienced. As long as I live, I will continue to share my experience.”

I see that his view is common among Hiroshima and Nagasaki survivors. Though they are getting old, their spirit is young and moves many people. This is one of the most important reasons that I want to continue to have peace events. As a Japanese from the only country that has experienced atomic bombings, I feel it is my responsibility to further the effort towards a peaceful and nuclear-free world.

I have worked with the Interfaith Center of New York since its establishment in 1997 and am currently serving as vice chair of the organization. When I attended the Rabbi Marshall Meyer Retreat on “Hate Crime” held by the Interfaith Center of New York in January 2009, one of the speakers made the following statement: “The swastika is the universal symbol of Nazism and evil.” This shocked me as well as other Buddhists, Hindu and Jain participants. I asked the question, “What do you mean by ‘universal’? The svastika has been the sacred symbol of good fortune for over 2,000 years before Nazism.” When the expert admitted that he did not know anything about the svastika in the Eastern countries, I felt disappointment and uneasy. It is very problematic that an expert on hate crimes did not know the original meaning of the swastika. This type of ignorance should not be perpetuated. This is not acceptable for those of us who valued and grew up with the svastika, who consider it a sacred symbol with very positive meanings. Though I have been silent about the swastika issue for almost 25 years, it is time to speak out about it. This is not right, I felt. This incident eventually led me to my current project on symbolism.

In May 2010, many Hiroshima and Nagasaki survivors, known as “Hibakusha” in Japanese, gathered in New York for the occasion of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty renewal at the United Nations. They shared their stories at various events in New York City and its vicinity. I myself organized several Hibakusha talks at schools, churches and at The Jewish Heritage Museum. I also organized a discussion between Hibakusha survivors and Holocaust survivors at the Church of St. Paul and St. Andrew.² It was an extraordinary meeting that made a deep impact. Just seeing the survivors together was a moving experience. As soon as the survivors met and before I introduced them, they were

² Tracy Bradshaw, “Dialogue of Hope,” Battery Place (blog), <http://mjhstaff.blogspot.com/2010/05/dialogue-of-hope.html> (accessed on January 10, 2012).

instantly connected. They greeted each other, and acknowledged their suffering and celebrated their lives. It was a beautiful scene that I did not expect at all.

Sharing stories is a way to heal people's wounds. It is hard to speak about and also hard to hear about what happened. I always had a dark image of the Holocaust as a real taboo subject in this country about which no one should even speak. Hearing the survivors' stories changed this perception. They were open and willing to share their experiences. Like the Hibakusha, they explained that the very reason we should talk about it more is so that nobody else will need to go through such a painful experience. Both of these subjects were once taboo and still are to some degree, but it is now understood that it is necessary to talk about them. This started me thinking that likewise, we also need to talk about the swastika symbol, which is taboo in the West. Perhaps by doing so, the swastika can open a dialogue between people. Through that dialogue it may become a symbol of peace, which embraces the tragedy—not forgetting its victims but rather remembering them as the way not to repeat—while also providing paths to tolerance, respect and deeper mutual understanding. Then, the swastika may again become the original positive symbol, while embracing and not forgetting the history of the desecrated “evil” swastika. It is truly like a lotus flower which represents enlightenment in Buddhism. The lotus grows out of mud (which in Buddhism represents defilement, evil, difficulties) and yet blossoms with pure white flowers without defilement of the mud.

Although it may take a long time for the positive meanings of the svastika symbol to be accepted by the public in the West, I feel that we need to begin at some point. Before the survivors' talks, I assumed that Jews would never accept the swastika as anything other than a symbol of hate. But after the survivors' talks, I changed my mind and started

thinking that perhaps it can be reclaimed and accepted as a symbol for healing with a positive association. This meeting of survivors inspired me to do my project on symbolism. I call it the “*Manji* Peace Project.”

One of the comments from a Holocaust survivor that struck me most during the talks was the following: “When I tried to share the story with my grandchildren, my son discouraged me and stopped from doing so. ...It is common for the 2nd and 3rd generation of Jews to oppose opening up discussion.” Why does the survivor want to share the story? It is because of the message of “Never Again.” No one wants to repeat the horrors of this history again. Therefore, it is crucial to talk about it, listen to it and remind ourselves about what happened, so that the tragedy won’t happen to any other people

As the wounded symbol heals, the wounds of the people may heal as well. As Hiroshima now represents “peace” instead of anger, hatred, and destruction, I sincerely hope that the swastika will eventually be seen as a symbol of healing and good fortune for all human beings, instead of as a negative symbol.

Human beings are capable of doing many cruel things, such as the Holocaust which killed millions of people. We need to remind ourselves that this is not only a tragedy for Jews but for all of humanity. It is not the recognition of who is good and who is evil, but rather that we all are both good and evil. We human beings, more precisely, you and I, have the potential to do evil as well as good. Hitler is not outside of us, but rather, you and I can be Hitler. Mother Teresa, when being asked when she had begun her work of relief and care for abandoned children replied, “on the day I discovered I had a Hitler inside me.” We need to deal with our own hatred, discrimination, and ability to bring suffering and pain throughout human history, and find inner peace within ourselves. Instead of

identifying who is evil, it may be more important to realize the monsters within each of us. When we identify someone as evil, it is still not humanity's problems but THEIR problem. But it is OUR issue as human beings. Genocide is possible and will continue as long as human don't recognize their own monsters. As a result of the unique history of the swastika in the West, the swastika can represent both the sages and monsters within us.

The swastika's strong association with Nazism and hate crimes in the West makes it very difficult to bring up this topic. But it is because of this very fact that it is important to educate the public about its original meaning, which became hijacked by Nazi Germany and hate groups with their misappropriated usage.

In this thesis, various terms are used to refer to the symbol. I have purposefully used different words to describe the symbol to both highlight differences in its historical usage and to also encourage readers who are not familiar with its larger history and usage beyond Hitler, to challenge their own preconceptions of a "swastika" as nothing more than a sign of hate and evil.

When referring to the Eastern symbol and its usage in ancient cultures, the word "svastika" is used. When referring to the Japanese symbol, the word "manji" is used. When referring to Hitler's symbol, the words "Hakenkreuz" or "Hook-Cross" are used. When referring to the post-WWII use of the symbol, the word "swastika" is used.

Chapter I. The “Svastika” Symbol in My Tradition

Sometimes something is so close that we may fail to recognize it. What was the shape of the moon last night? How many teeth do you have? One may say “Who cares?” but it usually means that one does not pay attention to them. It is like a blind spot. It is there but not there. It is here but not here. This is the case of the svastika symbol in the East. In Japan, the svastika is called “manji” and is considered to be a Buddhist symbol.

The *manji* symbol has been used for more than 1,500 years in Japan, ever since Buddhism was introduced to Japan. Average Japanese people equate the *manji* symbol with a Buddhist temple because *Manji* is the symbol used on maps to represent a Buddhist temple. It was standardized as a temple marker in the Meiji Era in the 1880’s,³ and has been used since then for more than a century in Japan. All cities, towns, train stations, and tourist attractions have maps and one often finds svastika symbols on them, as there are about 85,000 Buddhist temples in Japan. The ancient capitals, Kyoto and Nara, both of which are famous for their many Buddhist temples, are filled with svastika symbols (Fig. 1, 2). Japanese people do not see it as Nazi symbol nor a hate symbol in Japan.

Manji symbols are also found on the Buddha’s footprint and Buddha’s chest on scrolls and sculptures. When NHK Television reconstructed the *Daibutsu* “Huge Buddha” (A fifty feet high Sitting Buddha statue, first built in 752) at Todaiji Buddhist Temple in

³ Topographic map of Japan was unified in 1884 by Meiji government.



Figure 1 : *Manji* symbols on the map in Awaji Island 卍: 寺院 a Buddhist temple on map.

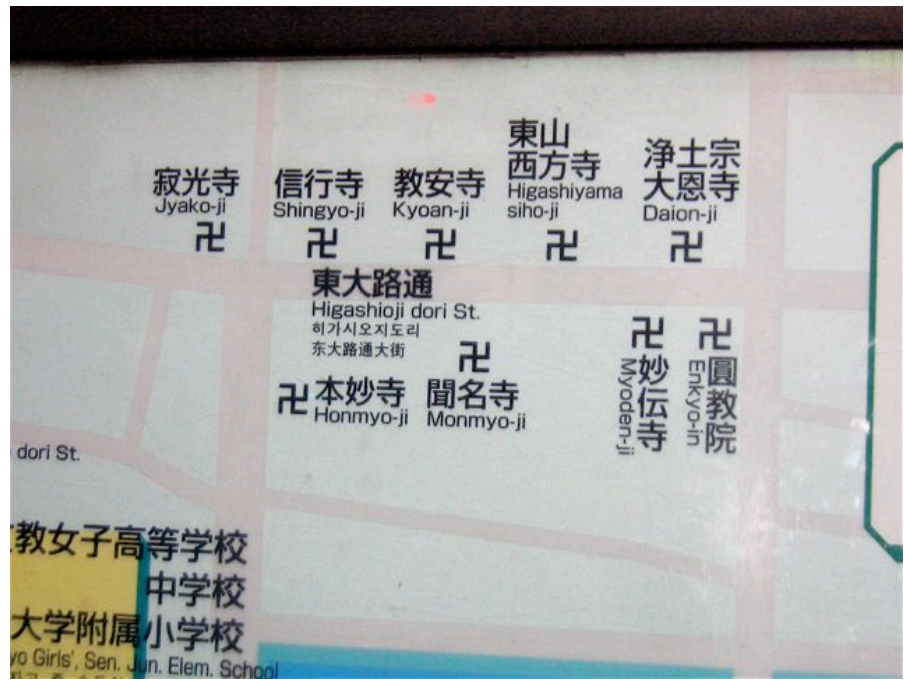


Figure 2 : *Manji* symbols on the map in Kyoto 卍: 寺院 a Buddhist temple on map.⁴

⁴ Photos (Fig. 1, 2) were taken by author.

Nara, using 3D computer technology, it clearly showed the *manji* on the Buddha's chest.⁵

Although there are many Buddhist institutions such as Buddhist universities in Japan, and many Buddhist scholars who have researched and written on the, history, and teaching of Buddhism, it is rare to find a book or research report specifically about the *manji* or svastika symbol itself. The study of the *manji* symbol is a blind spot in Buddhist studies and few resources are available, in spite of its ancient and broad usage in Japan. A two volume set of books about the *manji*, titled *Manji no Hakubutsushi* (Record of the Swastika) written by Manji Uemura, a professor of philosophy at Kobe Gakuin University, may be the only work which encompasses various aspects of the *manji* symbol. The first volume discusses the *manji* symbol in Japan, and the second volume talks about the svastika in other countries. Much information in this work comes from *Swastika the Earliest Known Symbol and its Migrations*, written by Thomas Wilson in 1894.

Research in Japan

The author visited Japan from October 30 to December 10, 2010 in order to collect data, such as various photos of *manji*, and to study Japanese language materials that were only available in Japan. Meeting and interviewing Prof. Manji Uemura at Kobe Gakuin University, a professor of philosophy, with a focus on Judaic studies, helped provide direction for the author's research in Japan.⁶ Prof. Uemura agreed that little research has been done about the *manji* symbol. Prof. Uemura shared his view on his project, and told how he became interested in the *manji* symbol, as well as his vision for

⁵ NHK program "Todai-ji: yomigaeru btsuno daiuchu (Todai-ji Temple: reviving the great universe of the Buddha) aired on May 4, 2007.

⁶ The author met Professor Uemura at his office of Kobe Gakuin University near Akashi, Japan, on November 3, 2010.

his future research. Prof. Uemura was inspired to start his research because of the name his parents gave him when he was born in 1942, “Manji (svastika)” written with the Chinese character “卍.”⁷ For Uemura, his research has been the way to find the roots of his own name.

Zenko-ji Buddhist temple, in Nagano, is historically the most important and influential Buddhist temple in Japan. In 1998, its priests became famous for their refusal to allow the Olympic Torch relay to begin at the temple as a protest against the Chinese invasion of Tibet, whose people are mostly Buddhists.⁸ *Zenko-ji* Buddhist temple is the oldest Buddhist temple in Japan, built in 644 A.D. The statue of Amida Buddha of *Zenko-ji* is considered the oldest Buddha statue in Japan. It came from Korea in 552, and was brought to *Zenko-ji* in 642. It has been seen as the most sacred temple in Japan for more than 1,300 years. The ancient Buddhist symbols of the Dharma-wheel and *manji* are used extensively, as well as the temple’s crest of “tachi-aoi” (standing hollyhock) at *Zenko-ji* temple. *Manji* symbols are on the banner, paper lanterns, roof, shrine room, iron lanterns and pillar. The frequent usage of the *manji* indicates the sacred value of the symbol in Buddhism (Fig. 3 –9).

Senso-ji Buddhist temple, also known as Asakusa Kannon Temple, is the most popular and oldest Buddhist temple in Tokyo. *Senso-ji*, dedicated to Kannon Bodhisattva, dates back to 645 A.D. For 1,300 years, it has been a center of the local community. *Nakamise* shopping street, located on part of the temple grounds, attracts locals as well as tourists from all over the world. Many *manji* symbols are seen on *Senso-ji*’s center roof,

⁷ His full name ‘Uemura, Manji’ is written as 植村 卍.

⁸ The 1998 Winter Olympics (XVIII Olympic Winter Games) was held in Nagano, Japan.



Figure 3 Zenko-ji (善光寺) Buddhist Temple in Nagano. The banner has *manji* symbols and *tachi-aoi* symbols.



Figure 4: *Manji* symbols on the banner and paper lanterns, the entrance of the Hondo (Main Buddha Hall building) of Zenko-ji Buddhist Temple.⁹

⁹ Photos (Fig 3, 4) by the author.



Figure 5: *Manji* symbol on the top of the temple roof at Zenko-ji.



Figure 6: *Manji* symbols with *manji* design ji background on the pillars of the Zenko-ji.



Figure 7: A lantern with a *manji* symbol at Zenko-Temple garden.¹⁰

¹⁰ Photos (Fig. 5-7) by the author.



Figure 8: Golden *manji* with red background, inside of Zenko-ji main worship hall.¹¹

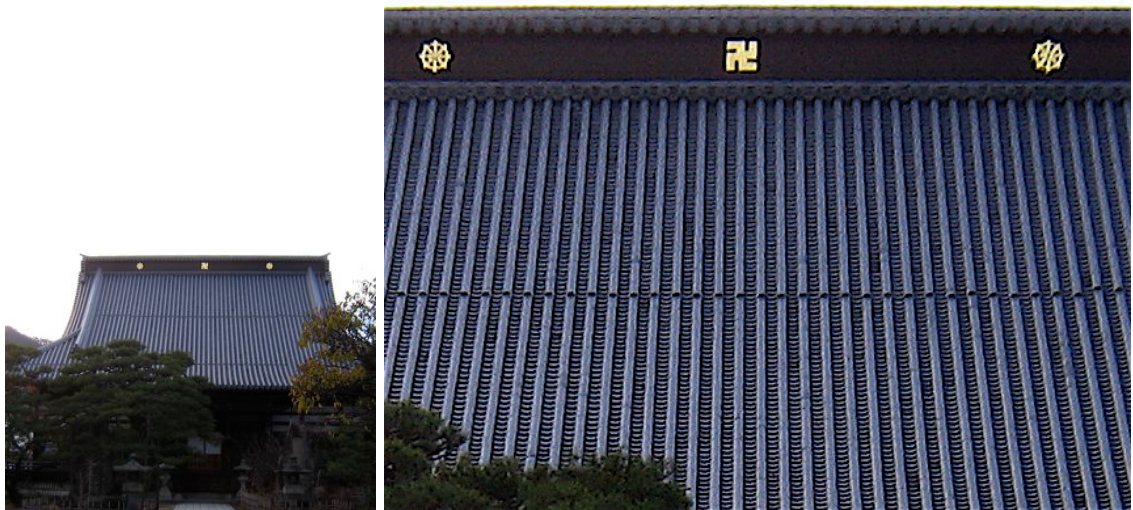


Figure 9: *Manji* and dharma-wheel symbols on the roof top at Saiho-ji Buddhist Temple, built in 1199. It was used as a temporary Zenko-ji worship hall from 1700-1709.¹²

¹¹ Takeshi Gunji, *Bukkyo shin hakken (Buddhism New Discovery): Zenko-ji* (Asahishinbun-sha in 2007), 9.

¹² Photo (Fig. 9) by the author.



Figure 10: Roof with three *manji* at Senso-ji (浅草寺) Buddhist Temple in Asakusa, Tokyo.

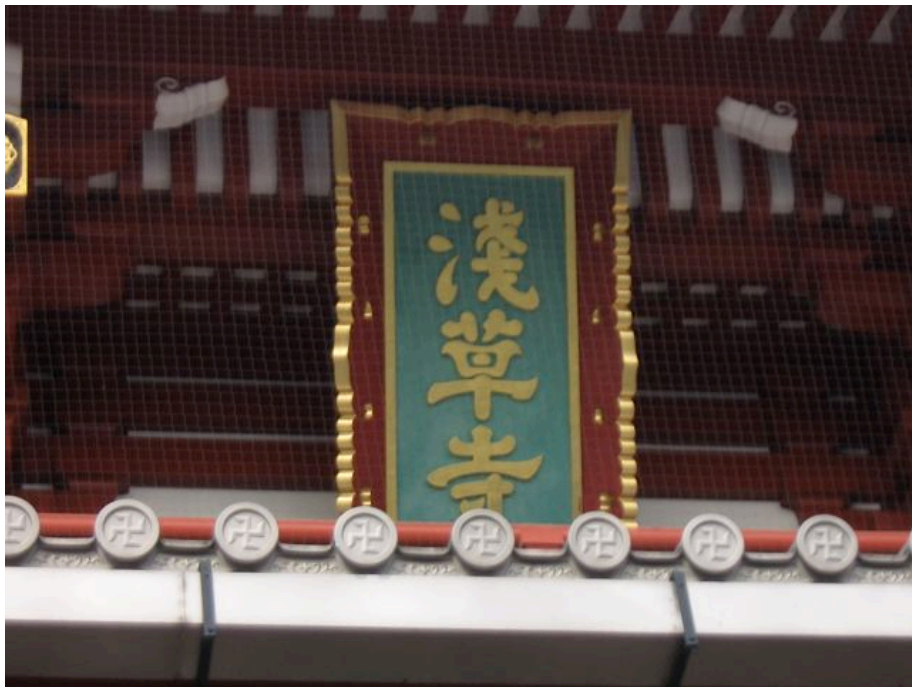


Figure 11: Roof tiles with *manji* at Senso-ji Temple.¹³

¹³ Photos (Fig. 10, 11) by author.



Figure 12: A container with *manji* symbol and *manji* decorative border at Senso-ji Temple.



Figure 13: A huge incense burner with *manji* symbol at Senso-ji Temple.¹⁴

¹⁴ Photos (Fig. 12, 13) by author.

roof tiles, containers, incense burners, and candle altar. The symbol can also be found on amulets sold at the temple and on souvenirs sold on Nakamise street (Fig. 10–13).

Kyoto and Nara, the ancient capitals of Japan, still have thousands of Buddhist temples. There, *manji* symbols are often found at temples, such as the *Manpuku-ji* Zen Temple (Fig.14 -16). As tourists walk on the side streets in Kyoto, they see *manji* with Jizo Bodhisattva shrines in front of people's homes and businesses. Jizo Bodhisattva is considered the protector of travelers, women, children, and unborn babies. Jizo is the most beloved, friendly and respected Bodhisattva in Japan. There are many folk stories about Jizo Bodhisattva helping villagers and children. Statues of Jizo are found at the intersections of country roads and paths, and Jizo often is accompanied by a *manji* symbol. The image of the *manji* is warm, kind and revered in Japan. Figure 17 shows various types of Jizo Bodhisattva shrines found just by walking around near the J.R. Kyoto station.

Although the author took many photos of Jizo in Kyoto, , most people, when asked, could not identify a specific place where one can find a *manji* symbol. Most people, including even Buddhist professors, responded that they never paid close attention to the *manji* symbol. They probably pass in front of a Jizo shrine every day. It has always been there but is so integrated into the common sights of everyday life in Japan that, until someone points it out, it is not even noticed.

The *Manji* and *manji* decorative designs and patterns are used for many everyday non-religious items in Japan including paper lanterns, socks, wallets, *happi* festival coats, kimonos, and ceramics. The *manji symbol* is very integrated into Japanese Buddhist religion, culture, and everyday life. The *manji symbol* was introduced to Japan with



Figure 14: *Manji* Railing at Manpuku-ji (万福寺) Zen Temple, Kyoto (built in 1661).



Figure 15: *Manji* on incense burner at Manpuku-ji Buddhist Temple.



Figure 16: *Manji* Lanterns for “Higiri” Jizo at Ansho-ji Buddhist Temple, Kyoto (built in 942).¹⁵

¹⁵ Photos by author (Fig. 14-16).



Figure 17: Various Jizo shrines near Kyoto Station.¹⁶

¹⁶ Photos by author.



Figure 18: Kimono with *manji* pattern.



Figure 19: Amulet with *manji* and *manji*-pattern.



Figure 20: Happi festival coat with *manji* border.¹⁷

¹⁷ Photos (Fig. 18 – 20) by author.



Figure 21: Ceramics with *manji* design.



Figure 22: Tabi socks with *manji* design.



Figure 23: Ceramics with *manji* design.



Figure 24: Change purse with *manji*.

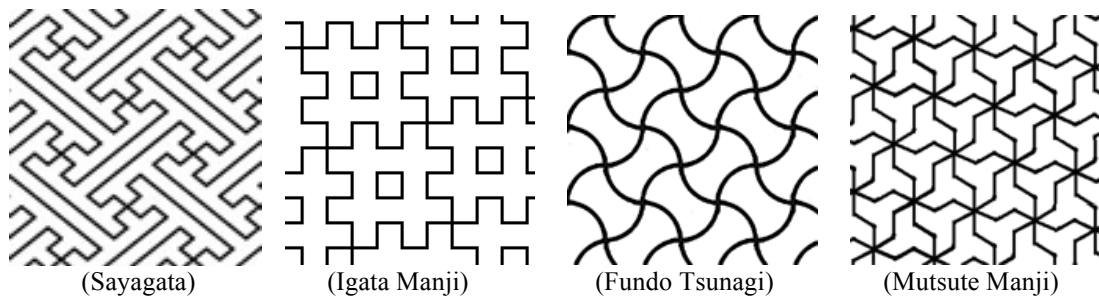


Figure 25: 'Chochin' lanterns with *Manji* symbol.¹⁸

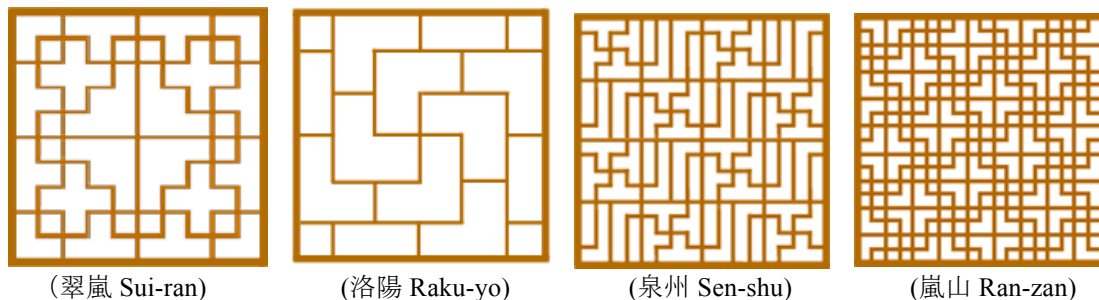
¹⁸ Photos (Fig. 21 – 25) by author.

Buddhism more than 1,300 years ago. *Manji* is a vital part of Japanese life today as a symbol of beauty, peace, luck and happiness. Figures 18-25 show its variety of usages.

In Japanese arts and culture, *manji* geometric patterns are called ‘Sayagata’, ‘Manji-kuzushi’, or ‘Manji-tsunagi’. These patterns are used for kimono, ceramics and architecture. There are also other varieties of *manji* such as ‘Igeta Manji’, ‘Fundo tsunagi’, and ‘Mutsute Manji’.¹⁹



Many types of *manji* patterns came to Japan from China. These are some *manji* patterns found on wood lattice work.²⁰



The *Manji* is used for family crests, called “kamon” in Japanese. “Ka” literally means house, family, lineage, and “mon” means crest or emblem, and expresses the genealogical connection to a family. Kamon designs are chosen from several categories such as flowers, trees, birds, tools, characters, buildings, and patterns (Fig. 26).

¹⁹ <http://dearbooks.cafe.coocan.jp/wagara/kotoba09a.html> (accessed on January 12, 2012).

²⁰ <http://www.rakuten.ne.jp/gold/ranma/> (accessed on January 12, 2012).

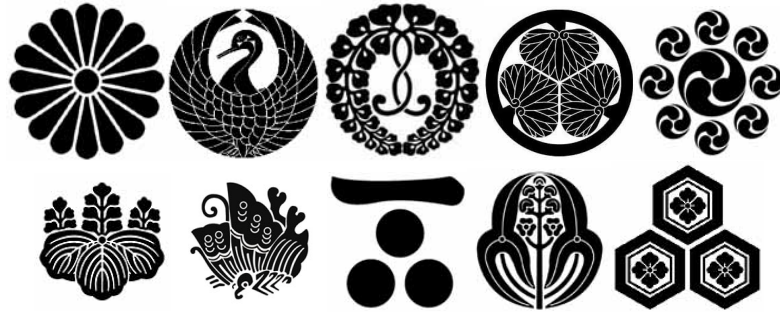


Figure 26: Various Kamon design.²¹

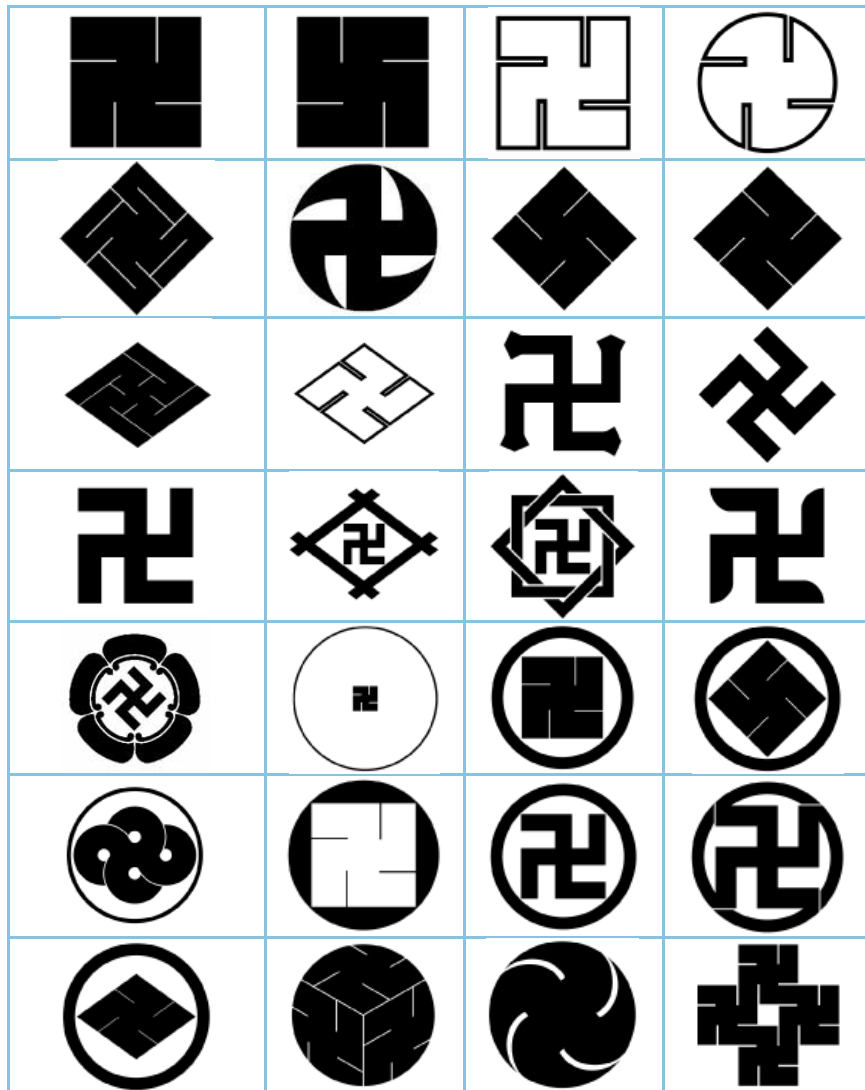


Figure 27: Examples of various *manji* family crests found in Japan.²²

²¹ <http://www2.harimaya.com/sengoku/bukemon.html> (accessed on January 12, 2012).

²² <http://www.asgy.co.jp/cgi-bin/kmnlst.pl?manji> (accessed on January 12, 2012).

The *Manji* was used as a design to express good luck, prosperity, and Buddhism. It was also sometimes used by families who secretly practiced Christianity during the 17th century Edo period, when Christianity was banned in Japan. The *Manji* has a cross in the middle, or is “a single cross with four ends at right and left angles” and was therefore seen as a kind of cross.²³ Therefore, the svastika has been used as both a symbol of Buddhism and Christianity in Japan. There are various *manji*-design family crests including that of the Hachisuka, Itami, Odagiri, Tada, Tsugaru, Torii, Ono, Okabe, and Hattori families, to name just a few (Fig. 27). Hirosaki city in Aomori Prefecture uses the Tsugaru family crest *manji* design as its city crest. The Asia Society in New York had an exhibition, called “Nobody’s Fool” by Yoshitomo Nara on September 9, 2010 – January 2, 2011.²⁴ Many *manji* were used by Nara in his art, because he originally came from Hirosaki city, Japan.²⁵ Shorinji Kempo (Shaolin Kung-fu) is a well-known martial art in Japan, and its emblem is the *manji*. Their martial arts uniform had a *manji* symbol until it was changed to a *so-en* (double circle) in 2005.

There is a Jewish synagogue in Kobe (Fig. 28), Japan, established in 1912.²⁶ An interview with current Rabbi David Gingold of the Jewish Community of Kansai was conducted by the author on November 11, 2010. Rabbi Gingold has been assigned there since September 2010. He is originally from Brooklyn, NY. Rabbi Gingold was interviewed by the author about how he sees and reacts to the *manji* svastika in Japan.

²³ Ernest Clement, “Cross in Japanese Heraldry,” *The Open Court* 1899, issue 12 (Winter, 1899), 745-746.

²⁴ <http://asiasociety.org/arts/asia-society-museum/past-exhibitions/yoshitomo-nara-nobodys-fool> (accessed on January 12, 2012).

²⁵ <http://www.city.hirosaki.aomori.jp/> (accessed on January 12, 2012).

²⁶ [http://www.jcckobe.org/Jewish Community of Kansai 関西ユダヤ教団](http://www.jcckobe.org/Jewish%20Community%20of%20Kansai%20関西ユダヤ教団) (accessed on January 12, 2012).

Rabbi Gingold said that he was able to accept the symbol because in Japan it does not have any association with hate crimes or anti-Semitism. Also, he said, when he previously studied Zen Buddhism, he learned that the svastika is a symbol of Buddhism. Therefore, he was not bothered by the svastika symbol in Japan as a ordinary American might be. Rabbi Gingold observed that most Jewish people think that Hitler created the swastika symbol, and do not know or think of it as a symbol of Buddhism. He pointed out that the average American person does not know that Hitler appropriated the swastika from other cultures. He said that if Americans knew this fact, they would recognize the ‘good’ svastika symbol. He added that even Jewish Rabbis don’t know about it. This interview is a reminder that it is important to educate people with real facts, not hiding the subject. Instead opening it up for discussion.

Interviews conducted with visitors from foreign countries at Senso-ji Buddhist Temple in Tokyo were quite revealing. This temple has many *manji* symbols and is one of Tokyo’s major tourist attractions. The interview questions consisted of their first name, where they came from, what their impression of the *manji* symbol was and what the *manji* means to them. The 15 interviewees were from Poland, the United States (California), Germany, England, Korea, Australia, the Philippines, and India.

Three said that they did not notice the symbol at the temple until these questions were asked. Ten people said that they did not have any bad feeling and they felt the svastika is okay in Japan. One said that it is “natural” to have svastika in Japan. The other one said it is “peaceful.” The Australian couple commented that it is okay to see here but not in their country. If they saw it in their county, they would be offended. Two people were confused to see it here. The Indian and Philippine females and an American male

knew the symbol came from India with Buddhism. A female Indian, noting that visitors were not required to remove their shoes upon entering the temple, said she was offended that people were not removing their shoes. The *Manji* for her, she said, marked a holy place and to see people wearing shoes at such a place was offensive to her. A Polish woman said that the swastika means Hitler in Poland, but here it means peace. A male from California knew the history of the symbol, and explained that it is “more than three thousand years old” and mentioned other names it is known as in other cultures, such as “fylfot” in Scandinavian, and “gammadion” in French. A woman from Germany thought it would take time to see the symbol as meaning good fortune in the West, although she knew what it meant in the East. A Korean man knew the meaning, but also expressed the opinion that it would take time in the West to accept the Eastern meaning. A couple from England said they previously knew the svastika was used in Japan, but did not know what it meant exactly in Japan. Another couple from England knew that in Japan it was not related to Nazi Germany and that it had something to do with Japanese culture. Not all who were interviewed were receptive to seeing it. Two men in their twenties from England were confused and asked the author why this symbol was here at the temple. They obviously did not expect to see a svastika here.

From these interviews, it was clear that temples and other places should have some explanation of the *manji* in English, so that visitors would realize that the *manji* have nothing to do with the Nazi Hook-Cross.

Japan has become known as a leader in the animation industry or “anime” at it is popularly known. Anime conventions are very popular these days both inside and outside Japan. The *Manji* have appeared in some anime, but in many cases are erased when they

are shown or exported outside of Japan. In December 1999, a big controversy was created after a *manji* was discovered on a Pokemon card, although the card was only sold in Japan. Pokemon is a popular animation figure in Japan and around the world (Fig. 29). “Bleach” is a popular Japanese animation series. The characters’ special transformation is called “Ban-Kai” which is written in Japanese as “卍解.” Ban is the same as *manji*, fulfillment, and Kai means to release. One of the recent manga in English has a scene with a *manji*. Below is the main hero character Ichigo Kurosaki carrying a *manji* to recover his power (Fig. 30).

“Blade of Immortal 無限の住人”(1994), an award winning anime, has a main character “Manji 万次” who is a Samurai warrior and wears a black and white kimono with a big *manji*. There are English-language anime comic books of “Blade of Immortal” available, published by Dark Horse Comics. The English version includes a section called “About the Translation” with an explanation of the svastika. It says:

It is important that readers understand that the swastika has ancient and honorable origins and it is those origins that apply to this story which takes place in the 18th century (ca. 1782-3). There is no anti-Semitic or pro-Nazi meaning behind the use of the symbol in this story. Those meanings did not exist until after 1910.²⁷

Katsushika Kokusai (葛飾北斎 1760-1849) is a Japanese Ukiyo-e painter and printmaker of the Edo period. After 75 years of age (1834), he used the pen name, ‘Gakyo Rojin Manji’(画狂老人卍), meaning “old man Manji mad with painting.”²⁸ On

²⁷ Dave Chipps, edit, “About the translation” from *Blade of Immortal* (Dark Horse Comics, Inc.2010).

²⁸ Seiji Nagata, translated by John Bester. *Hokusai: Genius of the Japanese Ukiyo-e* (Tokyo, New York: Kodansha, 1995), 52.



Figure 28: a Jewish Synagogue in Kobe “Jewish Community of Kansai.”²⁹



Figure 29: Pokémon Card with red *manji*.³⁰



Figure 30: Manga character from Bleach anime series, with *manji*.³¹

²⁹ Photo by author.

³⁰ http://dogasu.bulbagarden.net/bashing/zubat_card.jpg (accessed on January 14, 2012).

³¹ Animation from “Bleach #436,” *Weekly Shonen Jump magazine*, <http://www.mangareader.net/bleach/436/23> (accessed on January 14, 2012).

his gravestone in Asakusa, Tokyo, this name is carved into stone. Hokusai was interested in fine patterns and created many *manji* patterns along with various other patterns in his book ‘Shingaka Komoncho’³². Manjiro Hokuga 卍楼北鷺, a disciple of Hokusai, used the *manji* as a part of his name.

Junichiro Tanizaki (1886-1985) is one of the major writers of modern Japanese literature and a well-known novelist. One of his novels, called “卍 (Manji)”, was published in 1928 and explored lesbianism. The English title of this book is called “Quicksand.” Several films with the title “卍 (Manji)” that were based upon this novel were made in 1964, 1983, 1998 and 2006 in Japan.

There are names of historical people such as Buddhist monks, Mangai 卍凱, Manzan Dohaku 卍山道白, Mangen Shihan 卍元師蛮, Mankai Sosan 卍海宗珊, Manan Shigan 卍庵士顔, Jido Kakuman 字堂覚卍 ; Ninjas, Manji-Gama no Kurodo 卍鎌の蔵人, Manji Kamaitachi 卍かまいたち, Manji Maru 卍丸; and poet, Nishigaki Manzenshi 西垣卍禅子.

Various things are named after the *manji* in Japan, including restaurant names (e.g. Chuka Ramen Manji 中華ラーメン卍 in Sendai), a wrestling technique (Manji Gatame 卍固め), a Samurai technique to kill (Yagyū-ryū Manji-Sappo 柳生流卍殺法, Nemuri Kyoshiro Manji-Giri 眠狂四郎卍斬り), and a computer game (“Tengai Makyo II: Manji-maru” only sold in Japan, and Manji-maru 卍丸 its main character). Japanese little boys pretend they are ninjas and throw “Manji Shuriken”, Ninja throwing stars in the shape of *manji*.

³² 『新形小紋帳』 (*Notes of New Shapes and Small Patterns*) published in 1824.

The *Manji* has a history of more than 1,500 years in Japan and is still used in many parts of daily life. In this section, the use of the *manji* in Japanese culture is discussed. The Japanese *manji* has a much richer and longer history than the Nazi swastika, or I should say “Dwastika.”³³

Meaning of the *Manji* in Japan

What is the general understanding of the *manji* symbol in Japan? The meaning of the *manji* in the Japanese language should first be analyzed based upon various dictionaries.

The *Kojien Japanese Dictionary* says:³⁴

Manji 【卍・卍】 (Meaning of 万字) 1. (Sanskrit word svastika, hair on the chest of Vishnu) meaning fulfillment of virtues. It is drawn on the chest of the Buddha as a feature of auspiciousness and all virtues. There are both right-turning and left-turning *manji*. Buddhism in our country uses mainly left-turning, and it is also used as an icon of Buddhist temples. 2. Shape like 卍 3. Name of family crests. Things formed of 卍. Left *manji* · Right *manji* · Sharp Corner *manji* · Circular *manji* etc.³⁵

The *Nippon Kokugo Daijiten* (Dictionary of Japanese Language) explains:

MANJI 【卍、卍字、万字】 [n.] 1. Sign of auspiciousness from hair on the chest of Vishnu-god in India originally. It is a feature of auspiciousness and all virtues which appears on the Buddha and Bodhisattva's chest, hands and legs. In Japan, it is used for Buddhist temple's sign and mark. 2. Shape like 卍 3. One of family crests. Things formed of 卍. Various kinds of Left 卍, right 卍, and circular 卍.³⁶

³³ *Du* is opposite of *Su*. *Dukha* is suffering, difficulties, unpleasant. vs *Sukha* is happiness, peace and tranquility. The current usage of Western swastika has opposite meaning of original svastika, therefore it should be called “dwastika.”

³⁴ Translation from original Japanese by the author.

³⁵ まんじ 【卍・卍】 (万字の意) 1、(梵語 svastika ヴィシュヌなどの胸部にある旋毛) 功德 (くどく) 円満の意。仏像の胸に描き、吉祥万徳の相とするもの。右旋・左旋の両種があり、わが国の仏教ではおもに左旋を用い、寺院の記号などにも用いる。二、卍 1 のような形。3、紋所の名。卍 1 にかたどったもの。左まんじ・右まんじ・角立まんじ・丸まんじなど。*Kojien* (Tokyo: Iwanami Books, 1998), s.v. “Manji.”

³⁶ まんじ 【卍、卍字、万字】 (名) 1、もとインドでビシュヌ神の胸毛より起こった吉

The *Daikanwa-jiten* (Great Chinese-Japanese Dictionary) by Tetsuji Morohashi

says:

【卍】 read as ‘ban’ ‘man’ :

(In Buddhism) Feature of auspiciousness in India. *Manji*. In Sanskrit, it is called ‘Srivatsa’, ‘Svastika,’ meaning auspicious ocean-cloud, existing joy, happiness. It is an auspicious sign on the Buddha’s chest. Chinese sutra-translators used 萬[man] based upon a meaning of gathering all the good virtues and fortunes.

(In Japan) Situation that various things are all there.

(Reference) Many of *manji* is right turning 卍, but now we follow the Kosho’s dictionary. Right turning 卍 is called [migi *manji*]; when showing respect to the Buddha, people go around three times with right turns. Buddha’s “Byakugo” (white hair on the central forehead) is circling right. Therefore it is 卍, and 卐 *hidari manji* (left turn) is wrong in ancient times.³⁷

The *Daijiten* (Dictionary of Characters) says:

【卍】 *Manji* Character of man which is seen in Buddhist texts.

Buddhism uses this sign from ancient times. It is called Svastika, which means the place where all good auspicious virtues gather. It is taught as a seal of Buddha’s Heart. Because this character means all virtues, it created a character “wan” in China.³⁸

The *Bonwa Daijiten* (Sanskrit-Japanese Dictionary) defines the svastika as:

祥のしるし。仏菩薩の胸・手・足などに現れた吉祥・万徳の相を示すもの。日本では寺院の標識、記号などに用いる。2、卍のような形。3、紋所の一つ。卍にかたどったもの。左卍、右卍、丸卍など種類が多い。 *Nippon Kokugo Daijiten* (Tokyo:Shogakkan, 2001), s.v. “Manji.”

³⁷ 【卍】 バン マン [佛] 印度に於ける吉祥の標相。まんじ。梵語で *Srivatsa* 室哩鞞蹉・*Svastika* 塞縛悉底迦といふ。吉祥海雲・有楽・幸福の意。佛の胸上に在る吉祥の標識であるのを、吉祥萬徳の集まる意から、中國の諸経家は萬の字にあてて用いた。[邦] 物の入りみだれるさま。[参考] 多くは右旋の形で卍に作るが、今姑く康熙字典に従ふ。右旋の卍は「みぎまんじ」と称し、佛を禮敬するに右旋三匝し、佛の眉間の白毫も右旋婉轉す。故に卍に作り、古来、卍 (ひだりまんじ) に作るは誤なりとす。 *Daikanwa Jiten* (Tokyo: Daishukan Shoten, 1955), s.v. “Manji.”

³⁸ 【卍】 マンジ 佛書に見ゆる萬の字。佛教にて古より有する標にて之を塞縛悉底迦 *Svastika* といひ吉祥萬徳の集る処。又佛心の印として説かれたり。此字に萬徳の義あるより、支那に渡り變形して万の字を作る。 *Daijiten* (Tokyo:Kodansha, 1965), s.v. “Manji.”

Svastika a poet who sings (rare) ; seal of good fortune; *Manji* symbol (卍); crossing arms before one's chest; a kind of cross shaped sweet snack; sitting with crossed legs.³⁹

How does the Buddhist dictionary define the symbol? The world-renowned Buddhist scholar, Hajime Nakamura, explains in his *Bukkyogo Daijiten*:

【卍字】 *Manji* It originally symbolizes a rare wondrous sign of circulating hair on the chest of ancient Indian god known as Vishnu (Krishna). Later in Buddhism (and Jainism), it indicated good luck and auspiciousness, appearing on the chest, hands, feet, and head-hair of the Buddha (or Jain). It also symbolizes the mind of the Buddha. In Japan, it has been used as a sign, emblem, symbol of Buddhism and Buddhist temples.⁴⁰

The definitions and explanations of the *manji* are all positive meanings deeply related to Buddhism, which has been a major religion in Japan since the end of the 7th century.⁴¹ The symbol comes from the Sanskrit term “svastika,” which expresses good fortune and auspiciousness. It arrived in Japan with the sacred symbols of Buddhism, and eventually spread into Japanese culture and daily life. It has a very positive and sacred meaning in Japan. The Japanese dictionary has a different word, ‘ha-ken kuroitsu’⁴² or ‘kagi juji (hook cross)’⁴³ for the *Hakenkreuz* (Hook-Cross) swastika of Nazi Germany.

³⁹ Svastika [男] 吟唱詩人 (の一種) (まれ) ; 吉兆のしるし、(まんじ) 十字標 (卍) ; 両手を胸に組み合わせる事 ; 十字型菓子 (の一種) . [中] 両足を組んですわる事。 *Bonwa Daijiten* (Tokyo: Kodansha 1978), s.v. “Manji.”

⁴⁰ 【卍字】 まんじ もとインドで、ヴィシュヌ (クリシュナ) 神の胸の旋毛に起源を發し瑞兆の相を表したが、仏教 (およびジャイナ教) では、仏 (またはジナ) の胸・手足・頭髪に現れた吉祥の印の表象となった。仏心の印としても用い、日本では広く仏教、寺院の記号・紋章・標識としても用いる。 *Bukkyogo Daijiten* (Tokyo: Tokoyo Shoten 1981), s.v. “Manji.”

⁴¹ According to *Bukkyo Daijiten* (Toyama-bo. 1987), the *manji* was first officially used in 639 (長寿2年) during the time of Empress Wu Zetian (則天武后) in China.

⁴² According to *Kojien* (Tokyo: Iwanami Books, 1998), [hakenkreuz German] it is translated as hook-cross. It comes from the same origin of *the manji*, and is a right turn hook, that is 卩.- This sign is used by the Nazi party's flag from 1919, and became the German national flag from 1935 to 1945.

⁴³ According to the *Kojien* (Tokyo: Iwanami Books, 1998), [kagi juji] the translation of *Hakenkreuz*.

The Japanese *manji* is almost always a left-turn svastika, and the Hook-Cross is always a right turn. The Buddhist svastika in general, not only in Japanese Buddhism, but also in Buddhism in other countries such as Korea, China and Tibet, is standardized as a left-turn svastika.

The *Manji* in Japanese is a translation of the Sanskrit term “svastika” meaning all virtues and auspiciousness deeply related to Buddhism. It is also used as a map icon of Buddhist temples and as a design of family crests. 卍 was pronounced as [wan] in Chinese, and [man] in Korean. In Tibet, it is called (g)yung-drung and means changelessness and eternity for Buddhists as well as the native Bon religion.

Meaning of the Svastika in Buddhism

What does the Buddha say about the svastika? Where can we find the Buddha’s discourse talking about the svastika? There are numerous numbers of sutras (Buddha’s discourses), and here it will be discussed what sutras and commentaries use the word svastika. The Sutras are the most important scriptures in Buddhism. They are considered to be the words of the Buddha, and therefore, they are primal sources. There are seven ways that the svastika appear in all the sutras.

(1) The svastika was used as one of the thirty-two special features of the enlightened beings:

“The chest (of the Buddha) has the svastika symbol.”⁴⁴

⁴⁴ 「胸有萬字」 『長阿含經』 *Agama Sutra* (Taisho Daizokyo volume 1, 1935), 5; 「胸有卍字」 『佛說普曜經』 *Sutra on Universal Day* (TD vol. 3), 496; 「胸有万字」 『佛說太子瑞應本起經』 *Sutra on the Prince’s Magnificent Life* (TD vol. 3), 474; 「胸有萬字」 『大薩遮尼乾子所說經』 *Sutra on the Discourse by Mahāsatyanirgrantha* (TD vol. 9), 345; 「胸表卍字」 『無量義經』 *Sutra of Immeasurable Meanings* (TD vol. 9), 385; 「胸標卍字」 『大方廣佛華嚴經』 *Garland Sutra* (TD vol. 10), 349; 「胸萬字相」 『佛說十地經』 *Sutra on the Ten Stages* (TD vol. 10), 535; 「胸有卍字」 『優婆夷淨行法門經』 *Sutra on the Dharma-gate of Pure Practice* (TD vol. 14), 955; 「胸德字萬字」 『禪祕要法經』 *Sutra on the Essential Dharma of Zen* (TD vol. 15), 255; 「示胸卍字」 『佛說觀佛三昧海經』 *Ocean-like Sutra on Samadhi through Meditation on the Buddha* (TD vol. 15), 685; 「佛胸上卍字」 『陀

There are many examples from the Buddhist sutras talking about the thirty-two superior features of the Buddha, who is different from ordinary beings as the awakened one. Among the usage of the svastika in the various sutras, the svastika on the Buddha's chest appears the most frequently. This is one of the very reasons that the Buddha statue frequently has a svastika on the Buddha's chest (Fig. 31, 32).

(2) The svastika was used as one of eighty additional features of enlightened beings.

“The child's hair is a circle with right turning like the svastika.”⁴⁵

“Hair has five svastika characters.”⁴⁶

“Svastika characters appear on the tips of the ten fingers (of the Buddha).”⁴⁷

“Bodhisattva lifted up his hand with the svastika, the fortunate sign of hundred thousand virtues, and gave fearlessness.”⁴⁸

The svastika appeared not only on the Buddha's chest, but also on Buddha's head, hands and feet. Many times on his hands and feet, the svastika often appears together with the Dharma-wheel and lotus flower. Among Buddhist symbols, the lotus, Dharma-wheel and svastika are three important symbols. These symbols appear on the footprint of the Buddha (Fig. 33, 34).

羅尼集經』 *Sutra on the Collection of Dhāraṇī* (TD vol. 15), 870; 「胸前作於卍字」 『不空羼索陀羅尼經』 *Dhāraṇī Sutra of Amogha Paaza* (TD vol. 20), 415.

⁴⁵ 「童子髮圓而右旋狀如卍字」 『佛本行集經』 *Sutra of the Collection of the Original Acts of the Buddha* (TD vol. 3), 696.

⁴⁶ 「髮有五卍字」 『方廣大莊嚴經』 *Sutra of the Great Adornments* (TD vol. 3), 557.

⁴⁷ 「指萬字千輻輪相」 『佛本行集經』 *Sutra of the Collection of the Original Acts of the Buddha* (TD vol. 3), 736; 「指端各生卍字」 『佛說觀佛三昧海經』 *Ocean-like Sutra on Samadhi through Meditation on the Buddha* (TD vol. 15), 649.

⁴⁸ 「萬字輪文。福德之手」 『佛本行集經』 *Sutra of the Collection of the Original Acts of the Buddha* (TD vol. 3, 705); 「菩薩舉萬字福相百千威德之手。作無畏印」 『佛說衆許摩訶帝經』 卷第五 *Sutra of Sanghabhedavastu* (TD vol. 3), 946.

(3) The svastika as the Buddha's virtue and auspicious symbol:

“The svastika shows the Buddha's virtues in the world.”⁴⁹

“The svastika on the Buddha's chest shows the figure of benefit and virtues.”⁵⁰

“Both the front and back of the svastika have auspicious and lucky figures.”⁵¹

“Within the svastika sign, revealing the practices with the Buddha's 84,000 virtues...”⁵²

“The svastika is named as the sign of the fulfillment status ... Once one gains this sign, he or she is not afraid of birth and death, and is free from five kinds of greed.”⁵³

This is the most common interpretation and meaning of the svastika in various dictionaries and encyclopedias. The svastika symbol contains all the virtue, goodness, good luck and auspiciousness of the Buddha. The svastika belongs to sacred or holy ones who realize the truth and share it with supreme wisdom and compassion. As will be discussed later in more detail, the svastika belongs to an “Aryan” who is a noble being who practices the Four “Aryan” truths, known as the Four Noble Truths.⁵⁴ In this sense,

⁴⁹ 「萬字現佛德現天下」『修行本起經』 *Sutra of the Practice and Original Raising* (TD vol. 3), 464.

⁵⁰ 「胸有萬字示功德相」『大薩遮尼乾子所說經』 *Sutra on the Discourse by Mahāsatyanirgrantha* (TD vol. 9), 345

⁵¹ 「表裏皆有吉祥之相卍」『大寶積經』 *Great Jewel-Heap Sutra* (TD vol. 11), 109.

⁵² 「於萬字印中。說佛八萬四千諸功德行」『佛說觀佛三昧海經』 *Ocean-like Sutra on Samadhi through Meditation on the Buddha* (TD vol. 15), 661.

⁵³ 「万字名實相印。諸佛如來無量無邊阿僧祇劫學得此印。得此印故不畏生死。不染五欲」『佛說觀佛三昧海經』 *Ocean-like Sutra on Samadhi through Meditation on the Buddha* (TD vol. 15), 665.

⁵⁴ Four noble truths is the English translation of “ārya-satya” in Sanskrit, “ariya-sacca” in Pali. The noble truths of 1) life is suffering 2) cause of suffering 3) Ceasing the cause of suffering 4) paths to cease the suffering.



Figure 31: A svastika on the Buddha's chest.⁵⁵



Figure 32: A svastika on the Buddha's chest.⁵⁶



Figure 33: Footprint of the Buddha from Asia Society Exhibition of "The Buddhist Heritage in Pakistan: Art of Gandhara" (August 9 –October 30, 2011). You see svastika (in both right direction and left direction) on the toes; Dharmachakra in the center; and the lotus flower on the heel. These symbols are sacred and seen as the quality of the Buddha and Buddha's teachings (Sikri, in Pakistan: 2nd – 3rd Century, CE).⁵⁷

⁵⁵ Invitation Card that I received for the Vesak (Buddha's Birthday) Celebration in 2010.

⁵⁶ Photo by author.

⁵⁷ *The Buddhist heritage of Pakistan: art of Gandhara* by Christian Luczantis (New York: Asian Society, 2011).



Figure 34: Anuradhapura, Sri Lanka (3rd Century).⁵⁸



Figure 35: Bodhisattva Avalokiteshvara carries the svastika seal (Koryu-ji 広隆寺 Buddhist temple in Kyoto).⁵⁹

⁵⁸ Motoji Niwa, *Sekai no Bussokuseki* (Tokyo: Meicho Shuppan, 1992). Photos 32, 33.

⁵⁹ Koryu-ji Temple souvenir booklet.

Aryans are Buddhists. In this original meaning, Aryan has nothing to do with race, but is simply a noble practitioner of the noble (Aryan) path to the Truth Enlightenment.

Anyone who lives such noble life is called an Aryan. You cannot be born as Aryan but anyone can choose to be Aryan who practices the Aryan Dharma. This is why the svastika represents a great person who overcomes the suffering and sorrow of birth-and-death and reaches the stage of enlightenment like the Buddha and Bodhisattvas.

(4) The svastika is the symbol of a great person.

“The svastika on the Buddha’s chest is the feature of a great person.”⁶⁰

“... gains the feature of a great person whose chest has the svastika.”⁶¹

(5) The svastika is the source of light:

“From the svastika diamond-like adornment in his heart and spreading a great bright light.”⁶²

“At that time, the Tathagata (Buddha) exposed the treasure-like light from the svastika on his chest, that light has a hundred thousand colors, and illuminated all the Buddha’s worlds spread like particles throughout ten quarters.”⁶³

“Those who see the light feature (svastika) of Buddha’s chest will remove their one hundred twenty trillions sins of birth-and-death.”⁶⁴

The svastika is related to light in the Buddhist sutras. The origin of the svastika was not known, but many scholars agree that the svastika comes from something related

⁶⁰ 「胸前自然卍字大人相」 『寶女所問經』 *Sutra of the Precious Woman’s Questions* (TD vol. 13), 469.

⁶¹ 「得大人相胸有卍字」 『優婆夷淨行法門經』 *Sutra on the Dharma-Gate of Pure Practice*. (TD vol. 14), 958.

⁶² 「於卍字金剛莊嚴心藏中放大光明」 『大方廣佛華嚴經』 *Garland Sutra* (TD vol. 10), 310.

⁶³ 「即時如來從胸卍字涌出寶光。其光晃昱有百千色。十方微塵普佛世界一時周遍」 『大佛頂如來密因修證了義諸菩薩萬行首楞嚴經』 *Sutra of Śūraṅgama*. (TD vol. 15), 109.

⁶⁴ 「見佛胸相光者。除却十二萬億劫生死之罪」 『佛說觀佛三昧海經』 *Ocean-like Sutra on Samadhi through Meditation on the Buddha* (TD vol. 15), 665.

to the sun, maybe early sun worshippers. Needless to say, the sun is related to light. When the svastika is used as the meaning of light, we see the connection between the original meaning of the sun and the svastika light of the Buddha. In Buddhism, light is often another word for wisdom, as the light of wisdom breaks the darkness of ignorance. Therefore, the words of the Buddha or the teachings of the Buddha are symbolized by light.

(6) The svastika is compared to the Buddha's mind or Buddha's heart.

“The World Honored One (Buddha), it is rare and great that the chest symbol (svastika) discourse immeasurable teachings. So as the Buddha's mind possesses the various virtues.”⁶⁵

The svastika appears in correspondence to the Buddha's Heart-Mind. The Buddha's Heart-Mind is the mind of great compassion, which embraces all beings without discrimination.

(7) The svastika on the emblems which adorn the Bodhi tree of the Amitabha Tathagata:

“That Bodhi-tree is ... adorned with the emblems of the dolphin, the svastika, the Nandyavarta and the moon, adorned with nets of jewels and of bells...”⁶⁶

“...For in case that the Buddhas of ten quarters immediately come to give to his/her hand, placing beads in a hand; for in case achievement of all the great voices and sounds, placing the treasure-bell in a hand; for in case verbal expressions are skillful and clear, placing the treasure-seal (svastika) in a hand; for in case, good gods and a dragon king always come and protect, placing treasurer-weapon in a hand...”⁶⁷

⁶⁵ 「世尊甚奇特。但於胸字說無量義。何況佛心所有功德」 『佛說觀佛三昧海經』 *Ocean-like Sutra on Samadhi through Meditation on the Buddha* (TD vol. 15), 661.

⁶⁶ Only exists Sanskrit version of *Sukhavativyuha Sutra* (*Sutra of the Buddha of Immeasurable Life*), translated by Max Muller, *Buddhist Mahāyāna Texts* (New York: Cosimo, Inc., 2007), 50.

⁶⁷ 「若爲十方諸佛速來授手者。當於數珠手。若爲成就一切上妙梵音聲者。當於寶鐸手。若爲口業辭辯巧妙者。當於寶印手。若爲善神龍王常來擁護者。當於俱尸鐵鉤手」 『千手千眼觀世音菩薩廣大圓滿無礙大悲心陀羅尼經』 *Dhāraṇī Sutra of the Great Compassionate Avalokitesvara* (TD vol. 20), 111.

These passages are related to various symbols that some Pure Land Buddhist sutras talk about, and symbolic items of the Bodhisattva Avalokitesvara with eleven faces and a thousand arms, seen in the photo below. In Buddhism, esoteric types of Buddhism in particular use many different symbols. The Bodhisattva carries a square shaped ‘treasure-seal’ with the svastika symbol. The true enlightenment is beyond form, therefore, one symbol is not enough to grasp the world of enlightenment. Many symbols are used to reach enlightenment. Through the symbols we go beyond words, forms, and dualistic thoughts (Fig. 35).

The treatises and commentaries of the Sutras tend to be longer and have more detailed explanations about the svastika. In short, various commentaries explain that the svastika is a very important symbol to break the darkness of evil and bring peace, happiness and goodness to all. The svastika brings good luck and great benefits with its positive meanings.

“The *svastika* means virtuous nature without blind passion, and is called Svastika (阿悉底迦) in Sanskrit. It is the existence of happiness and joy. Therefore, it is the feature of excellent virtue of auspicious happiness. Having this feature always receives peace and joy, and lives twice longer life. Controlling this word creates peace in the center of the heaven, just like the shape of the character.”⁶⁸

“A passage of 卍: In Sanskrit, it says ‘Srivatsa’; In Chinese, it is a feature of auspiciousness, and the svastika is the general expression, and so forth. This is not a character, it is several places on the Buddha (Tathagata)’s body, there is a passage of good fortune, and is the feature of great happiness and virtues.”⁶⁹

⁶⁸ 「萬字者。表無漏性德。梵云阿悉底迦。此云有樂。即是吉祥勝德之相。有此相者。必受安樂。則天長壽二年。權制此字。安於天樞。其形如此。」『首楞嚴義疏注經』 *Commentary on the Śūraṅgama Samādhi Sutra* (TD vol. 39), 841.

⁶⁹ 「卍字之文 梵云室哩二合末蹉倉何反 唐云吉祥相也有 云萬字者謬說也 非是字也 乃是如來身上數處 有此吉祥之文 大福德之相」『一切經音義』 *Meanings on the Sound of all the sutras* (TD vol. 54), 378.

“Showing 卍 feature means thousands of virtues and good fortune on the surface, and diamond-like wisdom and determination within.”⁷⁰

“The character 卍 should be interpreted for the auspicious ocean-cloud.”⁷¹

“The svastika character on the chest, countless hundred thousand million fighting kings appear with inconceivable miracle powers that make hundreds of thousands of worlds all greatly move. The brave and strong svastika means pure and calm. In the middle of fighting beings, they bravely make efforts to shake and destroy the evil army of blind passions (greed, anger and self-centered ignorance).”⁷²

“The Bodhisattva spread the one Great Light out from the Diamond-like (Vajra) svastika chest adorned with great virtue, called destroyer of demon hatred. There are ten Asamkhyeya hundred thousand lights for family and relatives, and they already spread and shine upon immeasurable worlds of the entire universe. Showing the infinite divine power, again they come into the Diamond-like svastika chest adorned with great virtue.”⁷³

“(Buddha’s) chest has a svastika which is named as the sign of true form, and spreads Great Light.”⁷⁴

Looking at various ways to explain it in the Buddhist texts, “卍” is the Sanskrit term “Svastika,” meaning happiness, joy, good fortune and auspiciousness. Because the Buddha has attained the true diamond-like wisdom, the sign of true happiness of all virtues appears on his/her chest. The svastika is the symbol of enlightenment to fulfill the

⁷⁰ 「標卍相。表萬德吉祥。內智契如名金剛界」 『大方廣佛華嚴經疏』 *Commentary on the Avatamsaka Sutra* (TD vol. 35), 715.

⁷¹ 「卍字正翻爲吉祥海」 『大方廣佛華嚴經疏』 *Commentary on the Avatamsaka Sutra* (TD vol. 35), 866.

⁷² 「胸前卍字中出無數百千億阿脩羅王。皆悉示現不可思議自在幻力。令百千世界皆大震動者。胸是勇猛義卍者清涼義故。」 『新華嚴經論』 *Treatise on the New Translation of the Flower Ornament Scripture* (TD vol. 36), 961.

⁷³ 「菩薩。於功德莊嚴金剛萬字胸出一大光明名壞魔怨。有十阿僧祇百千光明以爲眷屬。出已悉照十方無量世界。示無量神力亦來入是大菩薩功德莊嚴金剛萬字胸」 『十地經論』 *Treatise on the Ten Stages Sutra* (TD vol. 26), 195.

⁷⁴ 「胸有卍字名實相印。放大光明」 『往生要集』 *Collections of the Essentials for the Rebirth* (TD vol. 84), 54.

wisdom and compassion to illuminate all beings and bring true happiness and peace to them.

The Buddhist svastika is depicted as a left-turning svastika although many sutras refer to the right-turning svastika of the Buddha, after the left-turning svastika became the standard Chinese character. In ancient times, China was the most influential Buddhist region from which Buddhism spread to Korea, Japan, Vietnam and Tibet. Therefore, the Buddhist svastika is normally a left-turning one, which is the opposite of the Nazi Hook-Cross, although most people don't notice such differences. Nazi Germany adopted the right-turning or clockwise svastika for its emblem.

According to *the Encyclopedia of Tibetan Symbols and Motifs* (1999) by Robert Beer, in the Tibetan Bon tradition the svastika (Tib. *g.yung drung*) means eternal and unchanging, essentially corresponding to the Buddhist vajra, and likewise gives its name to the Bon tradition. The Bon svastika rotates in a counter clockwise direction, unlike the Hindu, Jain, and early Buddhist svastika, whose sacred motion is clockwise. For this reason practitioners of the Bon tradition circumambulate sacred buildings or pilgrimage sites in a counter clockwise direction.

According to J.C. Cooper's *An Illustrated Encyclopedia of Traditional Symbols* (1978), in Chinese the 卐 means,

‘The accumulation of lucky signs of Ten Thousand Efficacies.’ It is an early form of the character *fang* which denoted the four quarters of space and of the earth. Used as a border it depicts the *Wan tzu*, the Ten Thousand Things or Continuities, i.e. infinite duration without beginning or end, infinite renewal of life, perpetuity. It also symbolizes perfection; movement according to the law; longevity; blessing; good augury; good wishes. The blue swastika denotes infinite celestial virtues; the red, infinite sacred virtues of the heart of Buddha; yellow, infinite prosperity; green, infinite

virtues in agriculture. The clockwise swastika is *yang*, counter clockwise *yin*.⁷⁵

The two swastikas (clockwise and counter clockwise) are used to depict the *yin* and *yang* forces. Whether in Tibet related to Bon, or in China related to Taoism, the swastika was an ancient and widespread auspicious symbol of good fortune in Asia, influenced by Buddhism.

It is interesting to note that American Buddhism and European Buddhism have developed with the absence of the svastika symbol, though many students there have learned about the symbol as they learn the Buddhist teachings and culture. The spread of Buddhism in the West occurred mostly after World War II, so it was natural to avoid using the svastika there where it was feared and might create the wrong image. Instead of the svastika, the Dharma-wheel and lotus are often used as Buddhist emblems in the West. It can be said that this approach by Buddhists in the West has helped perpetuate ignorance in the America and Europe about the svastika symbol. From this sense, this is a Buddhist responsibility to educate the misinformed public about the sacred symbol of the svastika, which is nothing to do with racism and hatred, or Nazism and racist supremacy groups.

The “Svastika” Symbol in the World

Various svastika symbols dating back to ancient times are found all over the world in the East as well as the West with all positive meanings. Knowledge of the svastika in the world makes us realize that the svastika symbol is a much broader and greater symbol than its current usage in the Western world, limited by association with Nazi Germany and supremacy groups.

⁷⁵ J.C. Cooper, *An Illustrated Encyclopedia of traditional Symbols* (New York: Thames and Hudson, 1978), 166.

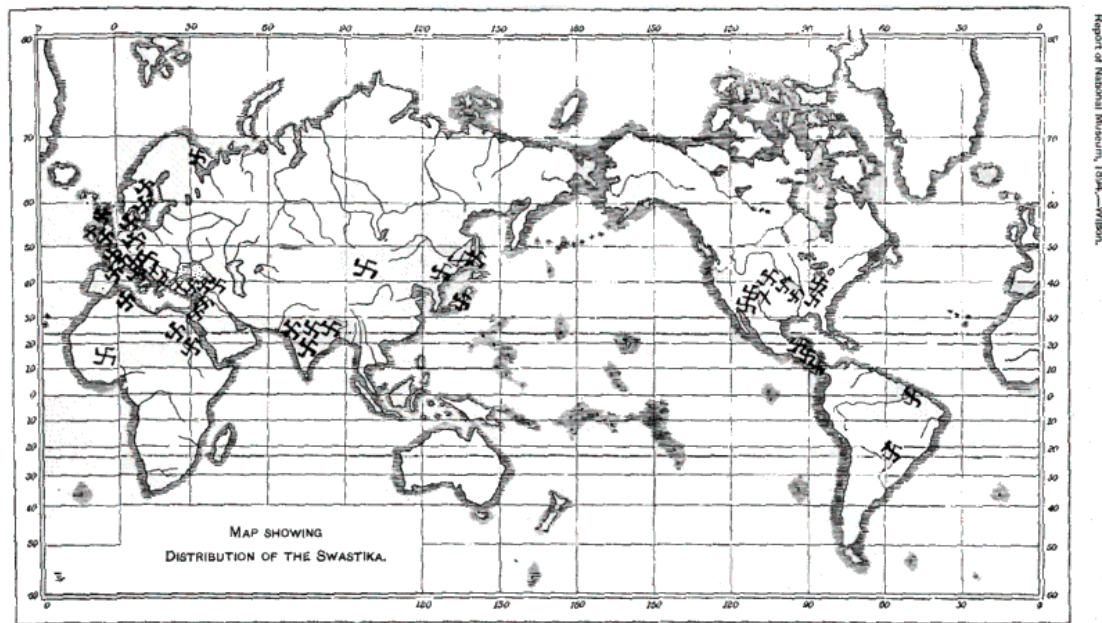
Swastika the Earliest Known Symbol and its Migrations by Thomas Wilson, 1894 is a thorough and authoritative text on the history and use of the svastika in various cultures around the world. Wilson's research extensively documents variations of the svastika symbol before the svastika was hijacked by Hitler and racist groups in the West. Wilson discusses the definitions and origins of the svastika and examples of svastikas with illustrations. Most recent books on the svastika update the information found in Wilson's text with additional photographs and add recent data from their perspectives, often dealing with the Nazi and Neo-Nazi use of the svastika. This section summarizes various findings by Wilson and other recent studies that categorize various svastika symbols based upon religion and cultural aspects except for the swastika of Hitler and racist groups, which will be discussed later.

In recent years, the word "swastika" has been used as a general term in English to identify the forms 卐卍. The swastika symbol has been called by different names in different countries at different times: Svastika or Sauvastika in India, Wan in China, *Manji* in Japan, Man in Korea, Tetraskelion "four armed" (Ogee Swastika), Fylfot "four foot" (Anglo-Saxon swastika - Isle of Manx), Croix gammee (French swastika) or Gammadion (known as 'Greek Cross' in ancient Greek), Thor's hammer (Scandinavian), Mjolner, or Mjolner "crusher / mallet" (Greek, Latin).

The svastika is one of the world's oldest and most universal symbols, possibly dating to prehistoric times. It is found in ancient ruins all over the globe. It has been used for thousands of years in Eastern religions including Buddhism, Jainism, and Hinduism. Prior to WWII, it was used by Native Americans on both the North and South American continents. It was used by the ancient Mu, Mayan, Aztecs and Inca civilizations. In

Europe it has been discovered in Roman and Greek ruins, including Troy. The symbol has also been used in parts of Africa.

Gentle Swastika by ManWoman presents a well-organized collection of many pictures from various parts of the world and shows readers the richness and variety of the swastika symbol. Below is a swastika map by Wilson.⁷⁶ The map shows that the swastika can be found all over the world. It is one of the most circulated symbols in human society.



(swastika world map)

What is the meaning of the word “swastika?” According to *Webster’s New Collegiate Dictionary* (1973), the etymology of the swastika explains that it is derived from the Sanskrit term “*svastika*, fr. *swasti* welfare, *su-* well + *asti* he is.”

The swastika entry in *A New English Dictionary on Historical Principles*, by Sir James Murray in 1884 says the swastika is derived from “*svastika*, well-being, fortune, luck, *su* good + *asti* being (f. as to be).”

⁷⁶ Thomas Wilson, *Swastika the Earliest Known Symbol and its Migrations* (United States National Museum. Report, 1894), 904, 905.

According to Thomas Wilson, *Littre's French Dictionary*⁷⁷, the etymology of the *svastika*, or *swastika* says, "A Sanskrit word signifying happiness, pleasure, good luck. It is composed of *Su*, 'good' and *asti*, 'being,' 'good beings,' with the suffix *ka*."

According to *Ilios*, by Dr. Henry Schliemann, Max Muller says:

Etymologically, *svastika* is derived from *svasti*, and *svasti* from *su*, 'well,' and *as*, 'to be.' *Svasti* occurs frequently in the Veda, both as a noun in the sense of happiness, and as an adverb in the sentence of 'well', or 'hail!' The derivation *svasti-ka* is of later date, and it always means an auspicious sign, such as are found most frequently among Buddhists and Jains. It occurs often at the beginning of Buddhist inscriptions, on Buddhist coins, and in Buddhist manuscripts.⁷⁸

The etymology of the *svastika* has a positive meaning of good with *su* + *asti* (+*ka*). This is why the *svastika* symbol has been used as the meaning of good luck; good augury; good wishes; auspiciousness; pleasure; well-being; peace; blessings; longevity; fecundity; health and life. From this original meaning, one can see the current usage of the *svastika* in the West is completely the opposite and wrong.

The next question is why the sign 卐 or 卐 is called *svastika* with an auspicious meaning? In other words, what is the origin of the *svastika* and its auspicious meaning?

Max Muller says:

Why the sign 卐 should have had an auspicious meaning, and why in Sanskrit it should have been called *Svastika*. ... Here, then, I think, we have very clear indications that the *Svastika*, with the hands pointing in the right direction was originally a symbol of the sun, perhaps of the vernal sun and therefore a natural symbol of light, life health and wealth. That in ancient mythology the sun was frequently represented as a wheel is well known.⁷⁹

⁷⁷ Emile Littre, *Dictionnaire de la Langue Francaise* (Hachette, Paris, 1873).

⁷⁸ Dr. Henry Schliemann. *Ilios: the city and country of the Trojans: the results of researchers and discoveries on the site of Troy and throughout the road in the years 1871-72-73-78-79* (London: John Murray, Albemarle Street, 1880), 347

⁷⁹ Dr. Henry Schliemann. *Ilios: the city and country of the Trojans* (London: John Murray, Albemarle Street, 1880), 348.

The origin of the svastika as a symbol of the sun is commonly agreed among scholars, though there are many different theories about how and why it came to be so. J.C. Cooper says, “It has been thought to be an aniconic representation of their supreme divinity, the Sun, and Dyaus, the sky god, and it is most generally accepted as a sun symbol since it frequently accompanies the solar disk.⁸⁰” He also explains other interesting theories of its origin.

Its exact symbolism, however, is unknown and it has variously been suggested as the revolving sun; the radiate wheel of the noon sun; the sun chariot; the Pole and revolution of the stars round it; the four cardinal points; the four quarters of the moon, the four winds and the four seasons; a whirlwind movement; the motion of revolving round the world; the Centre; creative force in motion; the generation of the cycles; the revolution of the wheel of life; ...⁸¹

Therefore, the svastika was not created by Hitler as many Western people think.

Hitler’s political interpretation of the Hakenkreuz-swastika damaged this ancient and broad symbol of human spirituality in the West, and still not much effort has been made

⁸⁰ J.C. Cooper, *An Illustrated Encyclopedia of traditional Symbols* (New York: Thames and Hudson, 1978), 165.

⁸¹ “...; the cross as the four quarters over which the solar power revolves converting it into a circle, i.e. circling the square and squaring the circle; the cross as the vertical and horizontal lines depicting the spirit and matter and the four grades of existence. It is also suggested that the swastika is a conventionalized human form of two arms and legs, or the union of the male and female principles; the dynamic and static; mobility and immobility; harmony and balance; the two complementary phases of movement, centrifugal and centripetal, inbreathing and out-breathing, going out from and returning to the centre, beginning and end. Again, it is suggested as a version of the labyrinth; of water in movement; or a possible representation of forked lightning, being a combination of the two Z forms of lightning; or the two fire-sticks and the whirling movement of the fire-wheel; or the two bent sticks carried by the Vedic Queen Arani to produce fire; or the Qabalistic Aleph, symbolic of the primaeval motion of the Great Breath whirling chaos into the creative centre; or the Scandinavian sun-snake in double form. Others think that the swastika was formed by the crossing of the meander, or as a variation of the Tau Cross. It has been suggested as a symbol of submission and resignation as arms crossed on the breast in an attitude of submission. The swastika appears with both gods and goddesses. Its being depicted with the feminine principle has led to suggestions that it represents the four lunar phases, but is associated mainly with solar and generative symbols such as the lion, ram, deer, horse, birds, the lotus. It is found on altars, figures, vestments, urns, vases, utensils, pottery, weapons, shields, dresses, coins and spindle-whorls, where it is thought to depict the whirling movement of the spindle-drill.” J.C. Cooper, *An Illustrated Encyclopedia of traditional Symbols* (New York: Thames and Hudson, 1978), 165-166.

to repair its desecration. As the svastika is the creation of our human ancestors and has been respected by billions people on the earth, it is our responsibility to protect it and not allow it to be permanently desecrated by the relatively brief period of misuse by Hitler and current racist groups and individuals. To allow that desecration to continue unchallenged is to acknowledge and confirm their viewpoint that the svastika represents something opposite from its original and true good meaning.

How has the svastika been understood by various religions and cultures?

Hinduism, Jainism, Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Zoroastrianism and other religions use or have used the svastika.

Hinduism:

As is mentioned in the Buddhist dictionary, the svastika is described as a symbol of the Indian god Vishnu, and comes from Hindu religions and cultures. Jainism and Buddhism have been using the svastika symbol for more than 2,000 years (Fig. 36). Hinduism which is possibly the oldest religion in the East, has been using the svastika for more than 3,000 years or possibly 5,000 years. The history of Jainism started around the same time as Buddhism in India, about 500 BC. The svastika is a common symbol of the major three Eastern religions, Hinduism, Jainism and Buddhism, and all three originally came from India. The svastika, in a way, is the ancient interfaith symbol or common symbol in the East.

Excavation sites in Harappa and Mohenjo-Daro in the Indus valley reported the seals with svastika symbols (Fig. 37). In contrast to Buddhism, generally the right-handed svastika is used in the Hindu tradition. However, the meaning of the svastika is auspiciousness, good-luck and blessing. The svastika was identified with Vishnu, as the

sun or fire symbol or as auspiciousness. The shrivatsa is a name to identify the svastika symbol on Vishnu's chest. In Hinduism, the Buddha is considered the ninth of Vishnu's ten incarnations, and his chest has a sacred svastika sign. The svastika was also "identified with Shiva and the snake cults of the Naga civilization, originating possibly from the markings on a cobra's hood or the entwined knotting of serpents."⁸² J.C. Cooper explains that the svastika is "a symbol of the Vedic fire god and divine carpenter, Agni; the fire-sticks, the 'mystic double Arani'; Dyaus, the ancient Aryan sky god, later Indra; also associated with Brahma, Surya, Vishnu, Siva and with Ganesha (Fig. 38) as pathfinder and god of the crossroads."⁸³

In Hinduism, Om (or Aum), the svastika and Sri Chakra Yantra are considered the three most revered symbols (Fig. 39). The svastika symbol is used not only for deities but also for worship services and ritual items. There are "Svasti Mantras" in the Vedas that are chanted during religious events and worship services. The svastikas are placed on the right and left sides of the entrance door. On special days, rituals are begun by writing the svastika symbol. In yoga, a sitting position with crossed legs is called "Svastikasana," because the leg position resembles the svastika. *Asana* means 'sitting down'. Because the svastika represents happiness, it is often displayed at celebrations, ceremonies, and festivals such as weddings.⁸⁴

MG Prasad explained at the workshop held on June 9, 2011, "The four arms (of the svastika) represent the four directions" -East, South, West and North. The central

⁸² Robert Beer, *The Encyclopedia of Tibetan Symbols and Motifs* (Boston: Shambhala 1999), 344.

⁸³ J.C. Cooper, *An Illustrated Encyclopedia of Traditional Symbols* (New York: Thames and Hudson, 1978), 166.

⁸⁴ Dr. M.G. Prasad provided me with some practical information of his own practice and experience as a Hindu.



Figure 36: Hindu svastika symbol.



Figure 37: Harappa seal with svastika, Mohenjo-Daro in the Indus valley (circa 2500 BC).⁸⁵

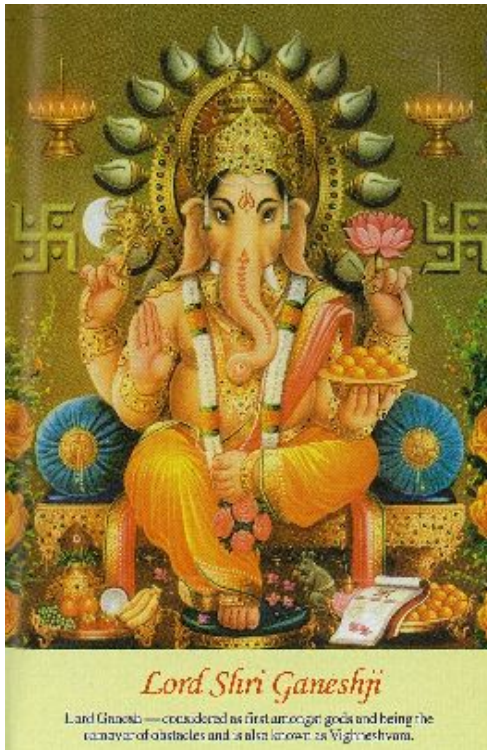


Figure 38: Card of 'Lord Shri Ganeshji' with Hindu svastikas.⁸⁶



Figure 39: Om (or Aum) and svastika on the Hindu Temple in India.⁸⁷

⁸⁵ <http://www.archaeologyonline.net/artifacts/scientific-verif-vedas.html> (accessed on January 15, 2012).

⁸⁶ The card belongs to M.G. Prasad.

⁸⁷ <http://www.fullstopindia.com/10-important-symbols-of-hinduism> (accessed on January 15, 2012).

point of the svastika also represents the navel of Lord Vishnu or Om. It also “represents four-objectives - righteousness, right wealth, right desires and bliss; the four stage of life- Student, Married, Contemplative and Detached; the four Vedas - Rig-Veda, Yajur-Veda, Sama-Veda and Atharva-Veda; four Yugas- Satya, Treta, Dwapara and Kali; and many other four-fold divisions.”

Jainism

According to *JAINISM –Religions of Compassion and Ecology*, the comprehensive Jain symbol (Fig. 40, 41) “consists of a crescent of the moon, three dots, the svastika or Om, the palm of a hand with the wheel (Chakra) inset, and an outline figure encompassing all symbols. Each individual symbol is also used in Jainism.”⁸⁸ The svastika is a sacred symbol in Jainism. It means “auspiciousness” as it does Hinduism and Buddhism. For Jains, the four states of the existence of souls in the world – heaven, human, animal and hell - are symbolized by the four sides of the svastika. Souls undergo a continuous cycle of birth, suffering, and death in these four states. If one follows religious teachings, one can be liberated from suffering. An open hand symbol below the svastika means non-violence or ahimsa. The three circles above it represent the Three Jewels of right belief, right knowledge, right conduct; with the crescent moon above it represents the state of liberation. A single circle inside of the crescent means the state of full consciousness, omniscience, or complete liberation. The svastika in Jainism represents the divine force, Creator of Heaven and Earth.⁸⁹

The Tirthankaras, “those human beings who have crossed the ocean of birth and

⁸⁸ Pravin Shah, *JAINISM –Religions of Compassion and Ecology* (Federation of Jain Association in North America, 2004), 30.

⁸⁹ J.C. Cooper, *An Illustrated Encyclopedia of Traditional Symbols* (New York: Thames and Hudson, 1978), 166.

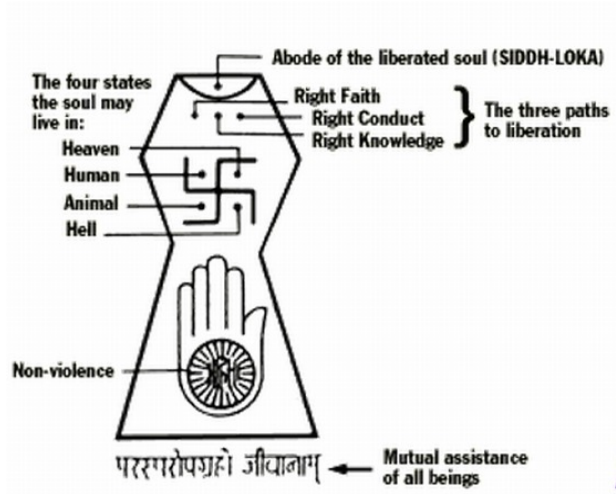


Figure 40: Jain svastika symbol.



Figure 41: India five rupees, India.⁹⁰



Figure 42: Jain svastika made with rice.



Figure 43: Jain Shrine with svastika (right) and *Nandyavarta* (left).⁹¹

⁹⁰ India 5 Rupees commemorative coin Bhagwan Mahavir, issued by the Government of India in 2001, which was given to the author by Naresh Jain.

⁹¹ Photos (Fig. 42, 43) by the author.

rebirth and have been released from the bonds of karma, are the central objects of devotion for Jain.”⁹² The svastika symbol is the emblem of Suparsvanatha, who is the seventh Tirthankara. “The father of the next Tirthankara was the Rajput king of Benares; but his wife suffered from leprosy in both her sides. This dreadful disease was cured before the child’s birth, so he was given the name *Su* (good) *parsva* (side). His emblem is the Svastika symbol...”⁹³

The svastika is one of the eight symbols, called “astamangala” which appears frequently in Jain art. The *Nandyavarta*, one of astamangala, means auspicious turning and is an extended svastika. In actual practice, “Laity who are skilled at drawing will draw the eight mangals with rice grains as part of their temple worship; others merely draw a svastika in rice on a small table.”⁹⁴ The svastika symbol appears on sacred books and in Jain temples as well as in the rice offering ritual mentioned above (Fig. 42, 43). Among the Indian religious traditions, Jainism is most closely associated with Ahimsa or non-violence, and its central symbol is the svastika. It is the complete opposite of the Holocaust mass killings.

Currently, each religion from India uses a separate symbol for respective religions. Buddhism uses the Dharma-chakra, Hinduism uses the Om, and Jainism uses the open hand of non-violence. Yet, we see the svastika is a common symbol for all three Eastern religions. Generally speaking, the svastika has a more significant meaning in the East, but that does not mean that the svastika / gammadion / fylfot is not used in Western countries.

⁹² *Encyclopedia of Hinduism*. New York: Infobase Publishing, 2007), 448.

⁹³ Sinclair Stevenson, *The Heart of Jainism* (Forgotten Books, 1915), 53.

⁹⁴ John E. Cort, *Jains in the World: Religious Values and Ideology in India* (Oxford University Press, 2001), 194.

The svastika can be seen in European cultures as well, especially in early civilizations. It appeared in Byzantine arts and early Christianity.

Judaism

Svastika symbols have been discovered at many ancient synagogue excavations. *The Universal Jewish Encyclopedia* says, “The Swastika appears on various articles excavated in Palestine, on ancient synagogues in Galilee and Syria, and on the Jewish catacombs at the Villa Torlonia in Rome.”⁹⁵ The svastika was found in ancient synagogues including Capernaum, discovered 1838; Ein Gedi, discovered in 1965; and Maoz Haim, discovered in 1974.

These three excavations indicate that the svastika was an ancient forgotten Jewish symbol, or at least a favorite design motif. The svastika was found in an ancient synagogue in Capernaum, Israel in 1838 by Eduard Robinson. Joseph Gutmann says,

In the synagogue at Capernaum, Galilee, a synagogue which may date from the fourth century C.E., the Magen David is found alongside the pentagram and the swastika, but there is no reason to assume that the Magen David or the other signs on the synagogue stone frieze served any but decorative purposes.⁹⁶

Gershom Scholem says,

The hexagram next appears – with a clearly indicated point at its center – only much later among the various ornamental motifs on a frieze that decorates the well-known synagogue of Capernaum (second or third century). But the same frieze displays a swastika right next to it, and no one will on that account claim that the swastika might be a Jewish symbol.⁹⁷

⁹⁵ Isaak Landman, *The Universal Jewish Encyclopedia: Volume 10* (New York: The Universal Jewish encyclopedia, inc., 1939 -1943), 111.

⁹⁶ Joseph Gutmann, *Iconography of religions: Judaism. The Jewish Sanctuary* (BRILL, 1983), 21.

⁹⁷ Gershom Scholem. *The Star of David: History of a Symbol. The Messianic Idea in Judaism: And Other Essays on Jewish Spirituality* (New York: Schocken Books, 1971), 260.

It is interesting to read comments that both Gutmann and Scholem appear to make deliberate efforts to refuse to acknowledge the svastika as a Jewish symbol though its presence at ancient synagogues clearly indicate it has been a part of Jewish history prior to the Nazis.

The Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs' article on "Capernaum, City of Jesus and its Jewish Synagogue (November 26, 2003)" states:

The remains of Capernaum of the New Testament are located on the northern shore of the Sea of Galilee. The town was a center of Jesus' activities in the Jewish Galilee (Matthew 4:13, 8:5) and became known as 'His own city' (Matthew 9:1), where he performed several miracles (Luke 4:31-35; Matthew 8:14-17; Mark 5:21-42), and visited the synagogue (Mark 1:21-28).

Capernaum is also mentioned by Josephus Flavius (Life 72), who was brought there after being wounded in battle. Christian sources of the Byzantine period describe Capernaum as a village inhabited by Jews and Christians. In the Early Muslim period (7th-8th centuries), Capernaum continued to prosper, then declined and was abandoned in the 11th century (Fig. 44).⁹⁸

This shows the uniqueness of the Synagogue of Capernaum where three faiths (Judaism, Christianity and Islam) were present and a portion of its svastika symbols survived. The presence of the svastika at the site indicates it must have been considered a favorite, good or sacred symbol because a design or symbol representing something bad or evil wouldn't have been used in a sacred space.

In more recent excavation sites, the svastika was found at the synagogue of Ein Gedi in 1965 (Fig. 45).

The indigenous Jewish town of Ein Gedi was an important source of balsam for the Greco-Roman world until its destruction by Byzantine emperor Justinian as part of his persecution of the Jews in his realm. The Synagogue, a street, a Miqwe (Mikveh) and a number of buildings are

⁹⁸ <http://www.mfa.gov.il/MFA/History/Early%20History%20-%20Archaeology/Capernaum%20-%20City%20of%20Jesus%20and%20its%20Jewish%20Synagogue> (accessed on January 12, 2012).



Figure 44: Svastika pattern at ancient Synagogue of Capernaum.⁹⁹



Figure 45: Svastika design mosaic floor of ancient Ein Gedi Synagogue.¹⁰⁰



Figure 46: Svastika design mosaic floor of ancient Maoz Haim Synagogue.¹⁰¹

⁹⁹ <https://picasaweb.google.com/114074044225481390441/Day17July18th> (accessed on January 16, 2012).

¹⁰⁰ <http://lumq.com/02/swasika/> (accessed on January 16, 2012).

¹⁰¹ <http://en.epochtimes.com/news/7-2-16/51803.html> (accessed on January 16, 2012).



Figure 47: Svastika design mosaic floor of ancient Maoz Haim Synagogue.¹⁰²



Figure 48: Menorah and svastikas are curved, ancient Umm el Kanatir Synagogue.¹⁰³

¹⁰² <http://en.epochtimes.com/news/7-2-16/51803.html> (accessed on January 16, 2012).

¹⁰³ <https://picasaweb.google.com/114074044225481390441/Day17July18th> (accessed on January 16, 2012).

visible on the site...In 1965, 300 meters northeast of Tel Goren, remains of a mosaic floor were discovered accidentally..... In its northern wall, facing Jerusalem, were two openings. The floor was of simple white mosaic with a swastika pattern in black tesserae in the center. This pattern has been interpreted as a decorative motif or as a good luck symbol.¹⁰⁴

Another recent excavation is on a kibbutz (a communal farm) in Israel named Maoz Haim on the border of Jordan found in 1974 (Fig. 46, 47). Archeologists have unearthed three synagogues there.

Originally, it was just a simple structure, but later some Roman basilica-style structures with windows that were traditionally pointed towards Jerusalem were added. The floors were paved with small stones of about 70 different hues depicting Itzhak's sacrifice, the Ark of the Covenant, inscriptions in Hebrew and Aramaic, traditional Jewish symbols, such as the menorah, customary national ornaments, and many different swastikas. Avshalom,¹⁰⁵ who is 91, has an excellent memory and possesses a detailed historical knowledge of this place, which dates back to 400-600 A.D. ... In the next layer of the excavation, they found the 3rd century Jewish settlement named Baala, where Jews had lived for more than 300 years (the settlement of Baala is mentioned in 1 of the 3 parts of the Old Testament).

This report continued.

When asked about how swastikas found their way into a synagogue, Avshalom answered, "All Jewish archeologists that had been working here did not pay any attention to swastikas. People all over the world have been using this ancient symbol of happiness for millennia. This swastika is hundreds of years old. At that time, Hitler was not born yet, how could this fiend be more powerful than the world's history, world's art, and world's culture? I think now it is a right time for all of mankind to put in order some acquired erroneous concepts regarding the swastika symbol."¹⁰⁶

It is interesting to see this statement that we need to provide correct

¹⁰⁴ <http://historyhuntersinternational.org/2010/05/19/archaeology-of-ein-gedi/> (accessed on January 12, 2012).

¹⁰⁵ In 1974, the kibbutz founder Avshalom Yakobi lied to the soldiers who were about to commence construction of a military project on this land. They had accidentally come across some archeological treasures of antiquity and he told them that it was a synagogue. Then, they really found an ancient synagogue, truly "the underground miracle."

¹⁰⁶ <http://en.epochtimes.com/news/7-2-16/51803.html> (accessed on January 12, 2012).

information about the svastika instead of the current biased view that the svastika is a symbol of evil and hate.

There are other ancient examples found in Israel. These include a svastika curved together with a menorah at the Umm el Kanatir synagogue which was built in the 6th century AD in Israel (Fig. 48).

Christianity

Many see the cross or crucifixion as the religious symbol of Christianity, but it was not formally adopted by the Church until the 6th Century. The svastika is the most ancient of many forms of the cross symbol, though its origin is unknown. It is a prehistoric symbol. The svastika appears frequently as a symbol in catacombs signifying Christ as the power of the world as early as the first and second century.

According to the *Dent Dictionary of Symbols in Christian Art*, the svastika is “in the art of the catacombs, a cryptic symbol of Christ’s power. It comprises four gammas (the third letter of the Greek alphabet) joined together at the foot and so was later interpreted as the Four Evangelists with Christ as their centre.”¹⁰⁷ Here, Christ is the “Sun of Righteousness.” In medieval times it was the gammadion, used to symbolize Christ as the cornerstone, also four Evangelists, with Christ as the center. The four Evangelists are Matthew, Mark, Luke and John who represent each gamma. There are various versions of the cross which have been used in Christianity, including the Greek Cross, Tau Cross, Latin Cross, Peter Cross, Saltier (X-shaped cross), and Gammadion or hooked Cross Swastika.

The svastika “together with the Egyptian key of life was used by the early

¹⁰⁷ Jennifer Speake, *The Dent Dictionary of Symbols in Christian Art* (London: J. M. Dent Ltd. 1994), 134.

Christians long before they adopted the cross as the symbol of their religion, and the later cross is absolutely absent in the oldest Christian catacombs of Rome. ... A Roman Catholic archeologist suggests that the svastika was the monogram of Jesus, in which Christ's name was spelled Zesus and thus abbreviated into two crossed Z's."¹⁰⁸ "It is certain that the swastika was not invented by Christians, but was adopted by them, and was gradually superseded by the Christogram and the definite acceptance of the cross as the emblem of Christianity."¹⁰⁹

The photos (Fig. 49) from the catacomb di San Callisto show the symbols found on early Roman Catholic tombs: fish; the svastika; a shepherd with a sacrificed lamb; the symbol XP (Chi and Rho, the Greek letters symbolizing Christos); and an anchor. And, the cross was absent.

The svastika is seen on 'Svastika symbols on an Abbot's Mitre of 8th Century' (Fig. 50, 51). William Park said,

"the mitre of Blessed Thomas A. Becket, an embroidered symbol of swastika. There is also one to be found on a memorial brass in Lewknor Church, Oxfordshire. The swastika, the most ancient prophetic symbol of our Blessed Lord's coming, was also found of value in concealing the sign of the cross from those ready to betray or destroy any Christian whose profession became known."¹¹⁰

There are fylfot-svastika crosses at some churches in England as well (Fig 52, 53). A svastika floor similar to the one of Christ Church Cathedral in Oxford can also be found at Cathédrale Notre-Dame d'Amiens in France, and Hereford Cathedral in England.

¹⁰⁸ Paul Carus, "Fylfot and Swastika" from *The Open Court* (London: Open Court Publishing Co, 1902), 359.

¹⁰⁹ William Parker. *The Swastika: A prophetic symbol*. From *The Open Court*, Volume 21 (London: Open Court Publishing Co, 1907), 545.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 541.

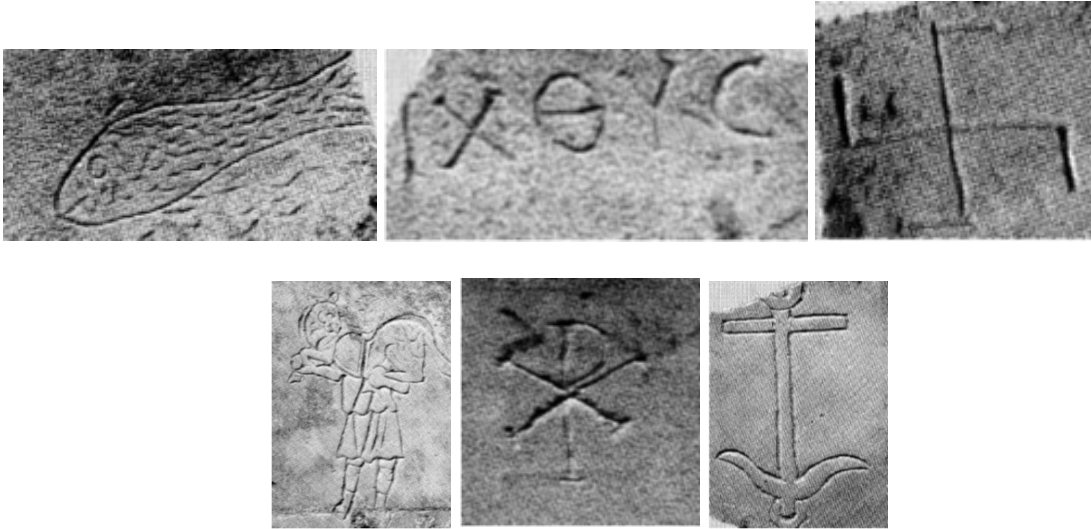


Figure 49: Catacomb di San Callisto, Roma, Italy.¹¹¹

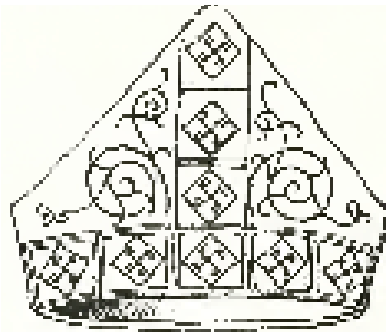


Figure 50: Svastika symbols on an Abbot's Mitre of 8th Century, Cahier, *Melanges d' Archelologie*.¹¹²



Figure 51: Svastika symbols on An Abbot's Mitre; The memorial of Huyshe

¹¹¹ <http://cura.free.fr/xx/17sepp1.html> (accessed on January 16, 2012).

¹¹² Paul Carus, "Fylfot and Swastik," *The Open Court* (London: Open Court Publishing Co, 1902), 360.

Wolcott Yeatman the first Bishop of Coventry the Cathedral, England.¹¹³

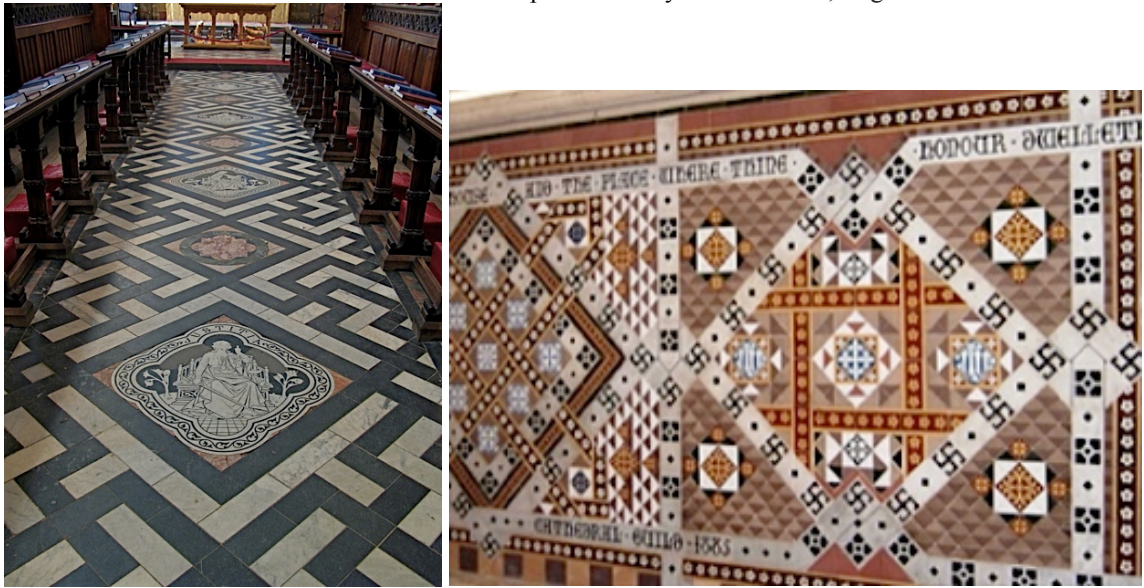


Figure 52: Svastika Patterns on the tiles in the choir section and svastika tiling of the wall at Christ Church Cathedral, Oxford, Oxfordshire, England.¹¹⁴



Figure 53: Odin with Fylfot 'svastika' crosses and other symbols at The Church of the Virgin and Child, Canfield in England.¹¹⁵

¹¹³ <http://arthobo.blogspot.com/> (accessed on January 16, 2012).

¹¹⁴ <http://www.flickr.com/photos/thorskegga/4263845016/> (accessed on January 16, 2012) and <http://www.flickr.com/photos/jnhwhitaker/4507634200/> (accessed on January 16, 2012).

¹¹⁵ <http://northstoke.blogspot.com/2009/05/great-canfield-church.html> (accessed on January 15, 2012).



Figure 54: Svastika design on the floor at Byzantine Church in Nahariya, in Israel. Built between 4th to 7th century AD.¹¹⁶



Figure 55: Svastika friezes running along the east wall of the Church of Christ Pantocrator in Bulgaria.¹¹⁷

¹¹⁶ <http://www.maxhead.org/pol/showthread.php?&tid=426772&t=&start=740> (accessed on January 15, 2012).

¹¹⁷ http://www.galenfrysinger.com/bulgaria_nesebar_christ_pantocrator.htm (accessed on January 15, 2012).



Figure 56: Svastika patterns in Mausoleum of Galla Placidia in Ravenna, Italy.¹¹⁸



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Figure 57: The Cross with svastikas carried by a priest, and various cross design windows on the wall of Monolithic Beta Medhane Alem Church, Lalibela (Ethiopia, Africa).

¹¹⁸ <http://mosaicartsource.wordpress.com/2007/02/05/galla-placidia-mausoleum-in-ravenna/> (accessed on January 16, 2012).

¹¹⁹ <http://henrysuter.ch/photos/Tourisme/2009/Ethiopie/Lalibela/slides/DSC035040.html> (accessed on January 15, 2012).

¹²⁰ https://picasaweb.google.com/lh/photo/x0bq6sEIkdrQYkB_4qM6kA (accessed on January 15, 2012).

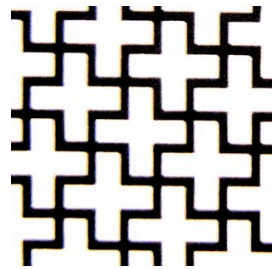
Byzantine svastikas, also known as the ‘gammadion cross’ or ‘crux gammata’ are found in medieval churches (Fig. 54). This presence indicates that the svastika was considered a sacred symbol by the Byzantines and was regarded in high esteem. It was used in ancient Greece and continued to be used in medieval times in the Byzantine Empire. Such svastika symbols can even be found inside the Hagia Sophia Cathedral in Constantinople.¹²¹ The Church of Christ Pantocrator (Fig. 55), a medieval Eastern Orthodox church in the eastern Bulgarian town of Nesebar, is designed in the cross-in-square style of the late Byzantine. It is a part of the Ancient Nesebar UNESCO World Heritage site. The church, which was constructed in the 13th–14th century, is known for its ornate brick svastika decorative friezes running along its exterior east wall. The svastika patterns can also be found at the Byzantine Mausoleum of Galla Placidia (Fig. 56), in Ravenna, Italy. It is one of eight structures in Ravenna added to the World Heritage List in 1996.

A very interesting cross with svastikas can be found at an Orthodox Church in Ethiopia (Fig. 57). It is clear from this picture that the swastika is considered one form of the sacred cross. The svastika can also be seen in “Arches, windows, niches, colossal crosses and svastikas in bas-relief and haut-relief, decorative rock moldings and friezes of geometrical shapes, apses and domes - all these and other features have truly rendered the Lalibela churches enduring monuments of Christian architecture in the heart of the African continent.”¹²²

¹²¹ “Byzantine Swastika”: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V442lxwRvYA> (accessed on January 12, 2012).

¹²² Getnet Tamene, *Features of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church and Clergy* (Asian and African Studies, 1998), 93.

While we are on the subject of combining the cross and svastika, during the 17th century Edo period in Japan, it was prohibited to practice Christianity. During this time those who practiced it in secret used the svastika-cross. Therefore, those using it were not seen as Christians. It is interesting to see that the svastika can hide the cross. How many Western people see the cross when they see the svastika? Below (Fig. 60) is a photo of a svastika pattern from Islam. One person may see a cross in the pattern, another may see a svastika, and another may see both the cross and svastika in the design. It shows how the svastika and cross are related.



Islam

Although the svastika is not as prevalent in Islam compared to the Indian religions, the svastika patterns are found in mosques around the world (Figs. 58 - 66). Among Muslims in Asia, the svastika “expresses the four cardinal directions and control of the four seasons by angels, one at each point: West, the Recorder; South, Death; North, Life; East, the Announcer.”¹²³

India is a country where many religions have existed together. The Ottoman Empire (13th century – 20th Century) used the svastika in their mosques. The svastika is used on walls and pillars. The Mughal architecture is a distinctive development by the Mughals during the Mughal Empire (16th Century – 18th Century). The Emperor Akbar

¹²³ J.C. Cooper, *An Illustrated Encyclopedia of traditional Symbols* (New York: Thames and Hudson, 1978), 166.



Figure 58: Ali's name in tilework Kufic Calligraphy Next to svastikas (Shiite Muslim), Friday Mosque, Yazd, in Iran.¹²⁵



Figure 59: Entrance of the Kalyan Mosque, Bukhara, Uzbekistan, arguably completed in 1514.¹²⁴



Figure 60: Ulu Mosque Column, Iran.¹²⁶



Figure 61: Pillar with svastika pattern, Imam Mosque, Isfahan, in Iran.¹²⁷

¹²⁴ https://picasaweb.google.com/bgmolov/200502_#5159892354513665602 (accessed on 16, 2012).

¹²⁵ <http://www.paulstravelblog.com/2008/05/shia-islam.html> (accessed on January 16, 2012).

¹²⁶ http://blog.travelpod.com/travel-photo/lraleigh/youarehere./1203699600/mosque_column_swast.jpg/tpod.html (accessed on January 16, 2012).

¹²⁷ <http://www.pbase.com/bmcmorrow/image/57988499> (accessed on January 16, 2012).



Figure 62: Jameh Mosque decorations with swastika, Isfahan, Iran.¹²⁸



Figure 63: Iranian Mosque¹²⁹



Figure 64: Exterior wall tile, ancient mosque in Xinjiang, China.¹³⁰

¹²⁸ <http://www.islamic-architecture.info/WA-IR/WA-IR-001.htm>, and <http://www.pbase.com/bmcmorrow/image/58012995> (accessed on January 16, 2012).

¹²⁹ <http://www.stormfront.org/forum/t730136/> (accessed on January 16, 2012).

¹³⁰ <http://www.flickr.com/photos/29179162@N03/6021813087/> (accessed on January 16, 2012).



Figure 65: Mihrab uses the svastika motif, Friday Mosque of Pandua, India.¹³¹



Figure 66: Classic Islamic design at the renovated part of the Wazir Khan mosque in Lahore, Pakistan.¹³²



Figure 67: Main gateway of the Tomb of Akbar.¹³³



Figure 68: Svastika along with Moslem seal, Agra Fort, captial city of Akbar in India.¹³⁴

¹³¹ <http://www.paulstravelblog.com/2010/03/reuse-of-religious-sites-iii.html> (accessed on January 16, 2012).

¹³² <http://www.flickr.com/photos/camdiary/483703113/> (accessed on January 16, 2012).

¹³³ <http://www.anistor.gr/english/enback/swastika4a.jpg> (accessed on January 16, 2012).

¹³⁴ <http://thisbigblueball.blogspot.com/2008/08/agra-fort.html> (accessed on January 16, 2012).

(1556-1605) introduced ideas about tolerance towards the Hindu religion and respect for the culture of the indigenous people of India. The architecture of his reign evolved into an amalgam of both Hindu and Islamic art.

In Hindu architecture the svastika was not used as a decorative motif but as an auspicious symbol. The svastika was used as one of many ornamental geometrical designs on the buildings of Akbar and in other Mughal art by Muslim builders. Some, however, believe that usage of the design at certain locations, such as at the entrance of a tomb, could have been used also as a symbolic meaning or as protection from evil spirits (Fig. 67, 68).¹³⁵

Zoroastrianism and other religions

The svastika is found in the Zoroastrian religion of ancient Persia, where it represented the revolving sun, the source of life-giving fire and infinite creativity. Some scholars believe that Zoroastrianism, a pre-Christian monotheistic religion, heavily influenced the development of Judaism, which in turn influenced Christianity and Islam. The Tash-Khovli Palace column has a svastika at the base (Fig. 69). Many scholars believe that ancient Khorezm in Central Asia is the birthplace of Zoroastrianism and its prophet Zaratushra. Archaeological research has linked the Zoroastrian doctrine and its cult of fire and natural elements with religious conceptions of primitive Khorezmians. Zoroastrianism spanned three great empires across the near East - the Akheminid, the Persian, and the Sasakhid - over more than a millennia from the fourth century B.C. to the seventh century A.D. Therefore, the Zoroastrian doctrine can be considered to be the first world religion. Elements of Zoroastrianism were later absorbed into Christianity,

¹³⁵ Article "Application of the Swastika in Mughal Architecture of India, from website: <http://www.anistor.gr/english/enback/e053.htm> (accessed on January 16, 2012).

Buddhism and Islam in the region. It is interesting to note that the Jews incorporated some ideas from Zoroastrianism at the time of Babylonian captivity, which included sacred symbols such as the Star of David, the Pentagram and the svastika.¹³⁶

There are many more local religions existing in the world that use the svastika with their own meanings (Fig. 70). For example, in African religions: the Akan people of Ghana, Africa, explain “Nkotimsefo Mpua” (Fig. 71) which is a svastika shape in their hair style:

Symbol of loyalty and a readiness to serve: This symbol signifies the ceremonial hair style of court attendants. Oral accounts say nkotimsefo mpua was shaved on the heads of certain attendants of the Queen mother.¹³⁷

It is impossible to list here all the svastika symbols that appear in many local religions, cultures and countries around the world. This chapter has focused on the richness and widespread use of the svastika symbol in many parts of the world. The svastika is not just any symbol but one of the most common and valued symbols used by human beings. Throughout time, it has been used historically, culturally, religiously and spiritually. Because of this broad usage of the svastika, it is a very inter-religious and international symbol in human culture spanning the four continents of the East (Asia / Oceania), the West (America), the South (Africa) and the North (Europe). The svastika has been the universal symbol of good luck on Earth with the exception of its twisted usage from the 20th Century in the West. The svastika is also shaped like the galaxy (Fig. 72). The svastika *is* the shape of our universe.

¹³⁶ Chris Travers, *The Serpent and the Eagle: An Introduction to the Elder Runic Tradition* (Chris Travers, 2009), 12.

¹³⁷ Bruce Willis, *The Adinkra Dictionary* (Washington DC: The Pyramid Complex, 1998), 142.



Figure 69: Tash-Khovli Palace column with a swastika at the base.¹³⁸



Figure 70: Ashanti goldweight with swastika, 13th Century, Ghana.¹³⁹



Figure 71: Nkotimsefo Mpua



Figure 72: Galaxy.¹⁴⁰

¹³⁸ <http://www.flickr.com/photos/briansearwar/3184317959/> (accessed on January 16, 2012).

¹³⁹ <http://www.flickr.com/photos/imknowmadic2/1152582254/> (accessed on January 16, 2012).

¹⁴⁰ http://jtgnew.sjrdesign.net/cosmos_galaxies.html (accessed on January 16, 2012).

The Svastika Symbol in North America

The svastika was commonly used in the United States and Canada until World War II. Japanese-American Buddhist communities used the *manji*-svastika frequently in the same way that it was and is still used in Japan. Native American Indians used their whirl-log svastika long before Columbus arrived. The svastika gained popularity in popular culture in the United States and Canada following archeological discoveries made in the 19th and early 20th centuries.

Manji for Japanese-American Buddhists before the war

The author conducted an informal interview with several elderly Japanese American Nisei (2nd generation Japanese-Americans) temple members at the Buddhist Churches of America (BCA) National Council meeting, in Visalia, California, in February 2011. According to these members, BCA temples used the svastika symbol commonly before World War II. Although the author served this organization for 25 years, he never knew about this aspect of BCA history. The BCA stopped using the svastika symbol after World War II completely. The Nisei members explained that many temple decorations, service books, Buddhist books and banners previously used the *svastika* symbol. Some said that they even suspected that the svastika symbols on their belongings, such as service books, may have caused them to be sent to the internment camps because Americans thought the symbol meant they had been Nazi sympathies¹⁴¹. Their suspicions are supported by several articles which shows that the *manji*-svastika became a target of blame and violence.

¹⁴¹ President Franklin Roosevelt signed Executive Order 9066, which called for the removal of Japanese and Japanese-Americans from the west coast and relocation into internment camps.

John Howard described the racism toward Japanese-Americans in the Western states before the war as comparable to the discrimination towards African-Americans in the South. “White racist assaults in California were often dismissed in court, and many murders went unsolved,” 26-year old J. Kino and 43-year old Frank Yoshioka were killed in Stockton California in early 1941, but the case was unsolved. “As in the South with African American churches, whites in the West attacked Buddhist temples.” Howard writes that the “Fresno temple attended by Tokio Yamane, Shigeru Matsuda, and, less frequently, his wife, Violet, was the target of shotgun blasts in the war.” Howard added that “potshots were particularly aimed at the ancient Buddhist symbol called the *manji*,” quoting from scholar Duncan Ryuken Williams, which “coincidentally – and unfortunately – resembles a German Nazi swastika (though reserved and predating the swastika by thousands of years).”¹⁴²

D. R. Williams comments on an incident at the Fresno Buddhist Temple in *Issei Buddhism in the Americas*, saying:

What would today be called a “hate crime” were directed against Buddhists, such as an incident in which local white boys took their shotguns to the Fresno Buddhist Temple and used the front entrance of the building for target practice. Their potshots were particularly aimed at the ancient Buddhist symbol called *manji*, which represented an aerial view of a stupa and which adorns many Buddhist temples around the world. ...¹⁴³

Nikkei in the Pacific Northwest described the situation of the svastika symbol after Pearl Harbor, and explains how Japanese and Japanese-American Buddhists had to

¹⁴² John Howard, *Concentration Camps on the Home Front: Japanese Americans in the House of Jim Crow* (The University of Chicago Press, 2008), 162.

¹⁴³ Duncan Ryuken Williams and Tomoye Moriya, *Issei Buddhism in the Americas* (University Illinois Press, 2010), 137.

change the usage of this Buddhist symbol because of the war.¹⁴⁴

The racist hysteria that followed the Japanese bombing of Pearl Harbor and pending internment persuaded even the most tradition-conscious Buddhists that they no longer could afford to retain the reverse swastika as a religious emblem in their architecture, despite its long tradition as an Indian symbol for Buddhism and its extensive use in American Buddhist temples. Public perceptions of its meaning immediately were transformed with the advent of war. The reverse swastika was misinterpreted as a sign of loyalty to the Axis powers, providing tangible “evidence” to confirm existing prejudices about the suspect status of people of Japanese descent in America. So, Buddhists reluctantly removed these signs from their architecture and related material culture in the closing days before internment. In the post-war period they substituted more benign symbols, such as lotuses and eight-spoked wheels, in architectural ornamentation.¹⁴⁵

Josephine Nock-Hee Park explains the difficult situation of Buddhists in that era.

After Pearl Harbor, Buddhist priests were in the first group rounded up and incarcerated, and the Nazi resignification of the Buddhist symbol of the swastika dramatically symbolizes the grave liability of being a Buddhist in this era.”¹⁴⁶

Lawson Inaba shared a story from after World War II. After the war, the svastika became not only anti-Japanese but also an anti-Semitic symbol.

We moved to Sonoma County in 1946 to try our hands at chicken farming. Tommy was in the second grade. The effects of internment lasted for a long time. For example, he felt pain and confusion when he saw a swastika in a classmate’s home and was taunted with anti-Japanese and anti-Semitic insults. He knew this was wrong, yet he questioned whether he should confront his friend or “keep his mouth shut.”¹⁴⁷

Japanese people and Asian people are still keeping their mouths shut about this subject more than 60 years later. Although using the svastika is often identified in the news only

¹⁴⁴ Louis Fiset and Gail M. Nomura *Nikkei in the Pacific Northwest: Japanese American and Japanese Canadian in the Twentieth Century* (University of Washington Press, 2005), 141, 142.

¹⁴⁵ Tetsuden Kashima, *Buddhism in America* (Westport, Conn; Greenwood Press, 1977), 115.

¹⁴⁶ Josephine Nock-Hee Park, *Apparition of Asia: Modernist form and Asian American Poetics* (Oxford University Press, 2008), 101.

¹⁴⁷ Lawson Fusao Inaba, *Only What We Could Carry: The Japanese American Internment Experience* (Heyday Books, CA. 2000], 171.

as a hate crime, most of them still have kept their silence even though they know the symbol represents something much more than that.

In America before WW II,卐 was used as a sacred Buddhist symbol at many Buddhist churches/temples of the Buddhist Missions of North America (known as the Buddhist Churches of America or, BCA after WW II), the oldest recognized Buddhist organization in the United States. The archives of the Japanese American National Museum in Los Angeles, located in a building that formerly housed a BCA temple, hold many historic photos and materials from the BCA churches and temples. It is an important resource for Japanese-American history in the United States, including the history of the BCA. The first BCA temple was established in San Francisco in 1898. In the years following, temples were built in Fresno, Los Angeles, San Jose, Sacramento, and Seattle. Since 1898 for a period of about 40 years, the svastika was used extensively as a sacred Buddhist symbol at BCA temples. At the museum, several pews with *manji* are displayed, and visitors can see the railings with *manji* that remain in the building from its days as the former Nishi Hongwanji Los Angeles Betsuin Buddhist Temple (Fig. 73-75).¹⁴⁸ The Japanese American National Museum website has various photos with the *manji* before WW II. Young Japanese Buddhists organized various religious gatherings and the *manji* is prominent on their banners. Each district has their own banners designed with Buddhist symbols including the *manji*. The *Manji* symbols were used on the roof fronts and roof tiles of temple buildings, and in temple Japanese gardens. The *manji* was also used on service books, incense burners, burner tables and other temple objects (Fig. 76 – 81).

¹⁴⁸ The Japanese American Museum now occupies the space of the former Nishi Hongwanji Los Angeles Betsuin Buddhist Temple (Fig. 74).



Figure 73: an original pew with *Manji* Used at L.A. Betsuin before WW II.



Figure 74: Former Nishi Hongwanji L.A. Betsuin Buddhist Temple (now The Japanese American Museum).



Figure 75: Original stair railings with *manji* at L.A. Betsuin.¹⁴⁹

¹⁴⁹ Photos (Fig. 73-75) by the author.



Figure 76: Northern California District Banner with *manji*, California Young Buddhist League Conference in Fresno (April 1938).¹⁵¹



Figure 77: Bay District Young Women's Buddhist Association Banner with *manji* (1934).¹⁵⁰



Figure 78: *Manji* on the center top of Marysville Buddhist Church Building, CA (1935).¹⁵²

¹⁵⁰ <http://www.janm.org/collections/item/99.201.25/> (accessed on January 18, 2012).

¹⁵¹ <http://www.janm.org/collections/item/99.201.12/> (accessed on January 18, 2012).

¹⁵² <http://www.janm.org/collections/item/99.201.27/> (accessed on January 18, 2012).



Figure 79: Buddha's Birthday (Hanamatsuri) Flower Shrine with flower-manji on front roof in Fresno (1937).¹⁵³



Figure 80: Japanese garden surrounded by *manji* border stones at Fresno Buddhist Temple.



Figure 81: Incense Burner Table with a *manji* symbol at Fresno Buddhist temple.¹⁵⁴

¹⁵³ <http://www.janm.org/collections/item/99.201.10/> (accessed on January 18, 2012).

¹⁵⁴ The photos (Fig. 80 and 81) by the author.

The svastika frequently appears within the traditions of different Asian American cultures.¹⁵⁵ It was primarily transmitted through its associations with multiple religious traditions from Asia, such as Buddhism, Hinduism and Jainism. When Asians immigrated to this country, they brought various cultural traditions from Asia, including the svastika symbol. Many Asian Americans and Asian expatriates who live in America are often surprised by how the svastika is seen in the United States, because the svastika has no evil, hate or racist connotations in Asia. When immigrants learn the meaning of the svastika in the West, they avoid using it. This quiet avoidance of the subject, rather than attempting to educate others, has also contributed to the ignorance of the American public about the svastika. Therefore, this research is intended to inform accurate knowledge about the svastika to academia and the public. As it was during WW II, even today the svastika continues to suffer from negative associations in the West. Every time a swastika is drawn in a hate crime incident, it is a double insult for Buddhists, as well as Hindu, Jain and others for whom it is sacred. To use a sacred symbol to do evil is the first insult, and to hear the media and others then describe it as a symbol of hate is the second insult. Yet, Asians do not speak up and instead patiently keep their silence. Voiceless voices need to be listened to by those who have not heard them. In a Buddhist sense, people should not accumulate bad karma by using the svastika with ill intentions and by slandering the sacred symbol. Perhaps the symbol might stop being used by individuals as an expression of hate and intolerance if the public were more educated about its other positive associations and if it were understood that the symbol is not truly a pure symbol of hate, as it is often mistakenly described in the West.

¹⁵⁵ Jonathan Lee and Kathleen Nadeau, *Encyclopedia of Asian American Folklore and Folklife* (Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, 2011), 86,87.

Native American Indians' Svastika Symbol

The svastika has existed as a symbol for Native American Indians before the post-Columbus period. Thomas Wilson's research in the 1890s showed that the earliest evidence of the svastika in pre-historic America was found in excavations at Fains Island and Toco Mounds in Tennessee, at Hopewell Mound, Chillicothe and Ross County in Ohio, and in Poinsett County in Arkansas. Wilson researched the svastika usage by North American Indians from the Kansas, Sac, Pueblo, Navajo, and Pima tribes.¹⁵⁶ More studies and research were done later including *Archaeological Survey in the Lower Mississippi Alluvial Valley, 1940-1947*¹⁵⁷, which reported finding svastikas on various native items including jars, bottles, vessels, bowls, and pots.

The svastika seems to have had different meanings depending upon the tribe. The Navajo American Indians in Arizona, Utah and New Mexico saw it as sacred symbol for healing. It is reported that the Navajos used the svastika solely in their religious ceremonies in the form of sand paintings. The svastika is known as a “Whirling Log” (literally meaning “that which revolves”) among the Navajos.

The Hopis in northeastern Arizona see the svastika as the center of ancestral Hopi land, and the wandering Hopi clan with four directions, according to Frank Water who researched the Hopi Indian extensively. The svastika for the Hopi people depicts the migration routes of the Hopi clans.¹⁵⁸

¹⁵⁶ Thomas Wilson, *Swastika: the Early Known Symbol and its Migrations* ((United States National Museum. Report, 1894), 879 – 925.

¹⁵⁷ Philip Phillips, and James A Ford, *Archaeological Survey in the Lower Mississippi Alluvial Valley, 1940-1947* (The University of Alabama Press, 2003), 132,160,496, 522. It described that the most common design elements are the spiral meander and swastika spiral.

¹⁵⁸ Frank Water, *Book of the Hopi* (New York: Penguin Books, 1963), 35, 114.

An article, “The Most Misunderstood Mark”¹⁵⁹ by William Manns describes how “In the pre-war West, the swastika had nothing to do with the Nazis and everything to do with good luck.” From 1880 to 1940, the svastika was a popular pattern used in Navajo rugs. The Navajo silver spoons became coveted souvenirs, and one of the most popular motifs was svastikas. The Navajo referred to the svastika as “nohokos” meaning “wishes of well being or blessing on you.” The design was widely recognized as “Indian good luck.” It was adopted by the white settlers in the Southwest and spread across the Old West, according to Manns. He lists various examples, such as the Miller Brothers of 101 Ranch fame who used the sign for their letterhead and as an element on many of their Wild West Show posters. It was used as a good fortune design for cowboys’ gear together with the four-leaf clover and horseshoes on holsters and saddles. The svastika was also the sign of the Santa Fe Station until WW II. In Santa Fe, American Indian svastikas can be found in many museums and galleries. Figures 82 – 88 are examples of the Native American svastika.

In 1940, in response to Hitler's regime, the Navajo, Papago, Apache and Hopi formally banned the svastika symbol from native designs on baskets and blanket, and set them afire. It read, "The above ornament, which has been a symbol of friendship among our forefathers for many centuries, has been desecrated recently by another nation of peoples. Therefore it is resolved that henceforth from this date on and forever more our tribes renounce the use of the emblem commonly known today as the swastika or fylfot

¹⁵⁹ William Manns, “Most Most Misunderstood Mark,” *American Cowboy* (Active Interest Media, Inc. Nov-Dec 2000), 84-86.



Figure 82: Native American Basket.¹⁶⁰



Figure 83: Native American Quilt with whirling log.¹⁶¹



Figure 84: Native American Spoon.¹⁶²



Figure 85: Poker chips with swastikas (1930's).¹⁶³



Figure 86: Native American Pawn Bracelet.¹⁶⁴

¹⁶⁰ <http://nativeamericanjewelrytips.wordpress.com/page/23/?pages-list> (accessed on January 18, 2012).

¹⁶¹ Photo (Fig. 83) by author. The quilt belongs to Jerry Pevahouse.

¹⁶² <http://reclaimtheswastika.tumblr.com/post/3052174905/navajo-spoon> (accessed on January 18, 2012).

¹⁶³ <http://reclaimtheswastika.tumblr.com/page/3> (accessed on January 18, 2012).



Figure 87: Cowboy spurs with svastika.¹⁶⁵

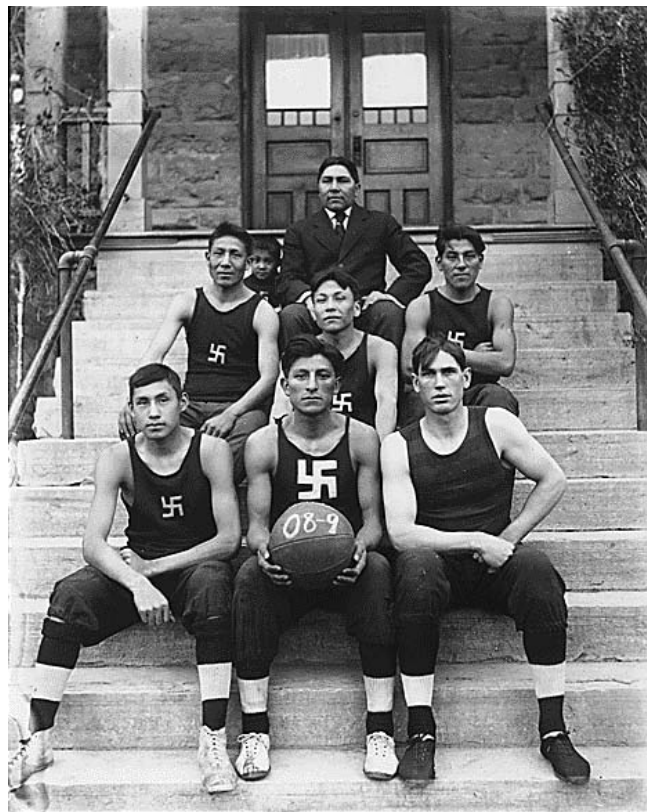


Figure 88: Svastika uniform of Native American basketball team from 1909.¹⁶⁶

¹⁶⁴ <http://nativeamericanjewelrytips.wordpress.com/2010/06/10/native-american-symbol-whirling-log-swastika/> (accessed on January 18, 2012).

¹⁶⁵ <http://reclaimthesvastika.tumblr.com/post/3149108647/early-1900s-cowboy-spurs-probably-from-the> (accessed on January 18, 2012).

on our blankets, baskets, art objects, sand paintings and clothing."¹⁶⁷

The Native American communities here, just like the Japanese-American community had done, decided not to challenge its desecration, and instead simply opted not to continue using it. World War II erased the svastika as a positive symbol from American culture. World War II ended more than half a century ago. Perhaps it is time that the svastika symbol can be officially returned to its original use in Native American Indian, Japanese, and Asian communities.

For Native American Indians, there is a way to bring back the svastika symbol for use among indigenous peoples. According to the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (2007)¹⁶⁸, the Native American usage of the svastika should be respected as part of the culture of indigenous peoples. Article #11 says,

1. Indigenous peoples have the right to practise and revitalize their cultural traditions and customs. This includes the right to maintain, protect and develop the past, present and future manifestations of their cultures, such as archaeological and historical sites, art crafts, designs, ceremonies, technologies and visual and performing arts and literature.

2. States shall provide redress through effective mechanisms, which may include restitution, developed in conjunction with indigenous peoples, with respect to their cultural, intellectual, religious and spiritual property taken without their free, prior and informed consent or in violation of their laws, traditions and customs.

Article #12 says,

1. Indigenous peoples have the right to manifest, practise, develop and teach their spiritual and religious traditions, customs and ceremonies; the right to maintain, protect, and have access in privacy to their religious and cultural sites; the right to the use and control of their ceremonial objects; and the right to the repatriation of their human remains.

¹⁶⁶ <http://www.wipwapweb.com/search/?q=swastika> (accessed on January 18, 2012).

¹⁶⁷ Alison R. Bernstein, *American Indians and World War II: Toward a New Era in Indian Affairs* (University of Oklahoma Press, 1999), 20 (read from the photo).

¹⁶⁸ <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=23794> (accessed on January 20, 2012).

2. States shall seek to enable the access and/or repatriation of ceremonial objects and human remains in their possession through fair, transparent and effective mechanisms developed in conjunction with indigenous peoples concerned.¹⁶⁹

Other Svastikas in the US and Canada before World War II

The svastika was treated as a fashionable lucky charm symbol in the United States, as well as Canada and Europe, for a brief period before WWII. After major archeological findings in the 19th century, including the discovery of ancient Troy and its association with Proto-Indo-Europe, the svastika gained attention in the West as a significant religious symbol of distant ancestors. It became a symbol linking European and Indo-Iranian cultures. This popularity peaked in the late 19th and early 20th Century, and the svastika became known worldwide as a symbol of good luck during this period. As Mann describes, the “lucky” svastika spread throughout American popular culture of the time. The Smithsonian in the U.S. funded research of the svastika by Thomas Wilson, which in 1894 resulted in his book, *Swastika the Earliest Known Symbol and its Migrations*. The book is often referred to as a resource for other books and articles since then about the svastika. This popularity lasted in the United States until 1930, when it was first appropriated by Hitler as a Nazi symbol and later associated with his Third Reich. Before 1930, the svastika appears as good luck charm designs on Coca Cola in the 1920’s, Boy Scout merit badges with a message “Good Luck”, post cards, tiles, poker chips, as a brand name and logo, souvenirs, sports teams insignia, rugs, clothes and jewelry. The legs of the svastika were said to represent the “Four Ls”: Love, Life, Light and Luck. The svastika also appeared in Hollywood movies about the American West (Fig. 89-95). A newspaper ad from 1917 shows a wide variety of svastika designed jewelry, wallets,

¹⁶⁹ http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unpfii/documents/DRIPS_en.pdf (accessed on January 20, 2012).

spoons and a leather case. The ad explains, “To the wearer of the swastika will come from the four winds of Heaven, good luck, long life and prosperity (Fig. 96).” The ad further explained the historical usage of the svastika symbol of the world: “The Swastika is the oldest cross, and the oldest symbol in the world...” The symbol was also a common motif on post cards and greeting cards from the period. A card from the cowcard.com website, which lists more than 60 antique cards with the svastika motif, shows one with a design of a svastika with the Stars and Stripes flag and a message saying, “May our glorious flag and this lucky star guide you and keep you wherever you are.”

There are a number of towns in Canada and the United States in which the svastika appears as a part of a name either for the town itself, or for a building. Swastika, Ontario (Fig. 97) in Canada is a small residential community in north of Ontario that was known for its gold mining. The town people resisted government efforts to change the name during World War II. The name remains today.¹⁷⁰ In Black Brook, New York, for example, there is a village called “Swastika” and in the village there was a post office that until it closed in 1958 was named “swastika.” One of the main roads is called “Swastika Road.”¹⁷¹ “Swastika Park” is the name of a housing development in Miami, Florida, that dates from the early 1900s. “Swastika Beach” is open to the public on Fish Lake, Minnesota. “Swastika Trail” is a road that runs through the state of Iowa from Nebraska City, Nebraska to Keokuk, Iowa. According to the website of the Iowa State Department of Transportation,

¹⁷⁰ ManWoman, *Gentle Swastika* (Cranbrook, BC: Flyfoot Press: 2001), 31- 34.

¹⁷¹ “Swastika”, Black Brook, NY 12985 (Clinton County, NY) ‘swastika’ post office opened in 1913 and closed in 1958.



Figure 89: 1925 Coca Cola.¹⁷²



Figure 90: 1910 Rhododendron Washington State flower, Mt. Rainer, and svastika.¹⁷³



Figure 91: Boy Scout Merit Badge.¹⁷⁴



Figure 92: "The Swastika 9" Girls Softball Team, Washington, 1925.¹⁷⁵

¹⁷² <http://lumq.com/02/swasika/> on January 18, 2012.

¹⁷³ The card's message says, "I can't send a bit of turquoise sky, Or the glow of the setting sun. Here's the good luck sign of a hundred lands, And the flower of Washington." <http://www.cardcow.com/171008/rhododendron-state-flowers-seals/> (accessed on January 18, 2012).

¹⁷⁴ <http://www.gothicnews.com/boy-scout-swastika/> (accessed on January 18, 2012).

¹⁷⁵ <http://lumq.com/02/swasika/> (accessed on January 18, 2012).



Figure 93: Postmarked 1918 U.S. Flag and swastika, U.S.A.¹⁷⁷



Figure 94: Cinema: On Desert Sands 1915.¹⁷⁶



Figure 95: U.S. postcard, copyright 1907 by E. Phillips.¹⁷⁸

¹⁷⁶ <http://www.vnnforum.com/showthread.php?p=1352840> (accessed on January 18, 2012).

¹⁷⁷ <http://www.staging.casgliadywerincymru.co.uk/Flickr/3109221915> (accessed on January 18, 2012).

¹⁷⁸ <http://lumq.com/02/swasika/> (accessed on January 18, 2012).

SWASTIKA JEWELRY. "To the wearer of Swastika will come from the four winds of Heaven good luck, long life and prosperity."

The Swastika is the oldest cross, and the oldest symbol in the world. Of unknown origin, in frequent use in prehistoric times, it historically first appeared on coins as early as the year 315 B. C. The Swastika has been discovered on this continent among the ruins of Mexico and Central America, and is at present frequently used by the Indians of the Southwest as an ornament and amulet. The following specimens are shown actual size. They are all sterling silver. The enamel is dark blue.

430 Charm, gold finish, turquoise	1.65	4210 Brooch, gold finish, inst. diamonds	1.75
434 Charm, enameled	.50	4211 Brooch, gold finish, turquoise	1.65
435 Charm, enameled	.65	4213 Brooch, etched	.50
2851 Scarf Pin, enameled	.50	4214 Brooch, hand eng.	.75
2855 Scarf Pin, enameled	.35	4733 Hat Pin, enameled	.65
3093 Link Buttons, enam.	1.00	4734 Hat Pin, enameled	.50
3094 Link Buttons, hand engraved	1.25	4735 Hat Pin, gold finish, inst. diamonds	1.75
3095 Link Buttons, enam.	1.25	90720 Belt Brooch, etched	1.35
4205 Brooch, enameled	.65	90730 Belt Brooch, hand em.	2.50
4209 Brooch, enameled	.50	95085 Lady's Fob, enam.	1.50
4212 Brooch, gold fin., pt's	1.65		

STERLING SILVER SWASTIKA FOBs AND SPOON. Shown one half scale.

1126 Tea Spoon, enameled handle, gold bowl	1.50	95079 Fob, enameled, black leather strap	1.00	95078 Fob, enam. in colors	2.75
95073 Fob, heavy, enameled	2.00	95083 Fob, hand engraved, black leather strap	1.25	95086 Fob, grey finish	1.50
95077 Fob, enameled	1.00			95087 Fob, polished	1.00

2811 Leather Case with Playing Cards, enameled swastika - 1.50

Swastika with ancient symbols:
 4051 brooch, very heavy .75
 4736 Hat Pin, very heavy .75
 445 Charm, very heavy .75

Figure 96: Swastika Jewelry Ad in 1917, from New York Public Library Digital Gallery.¹⁷⁹

¹⁷⁹ <http://digitalgallery.nypl.org/nypldigital/dgkeysearchdetail.cfm?trg=1&strucID=715099&imageID=831845> (accessed on January 12, 2012).



Figure 97: “Swastika” name of town in Ontario.¹⁸⁰



Figure 98: Library ceiling with svastika-pattern, Columbia University, New York.



Figure 99: Subway station wall with svastika, NY.

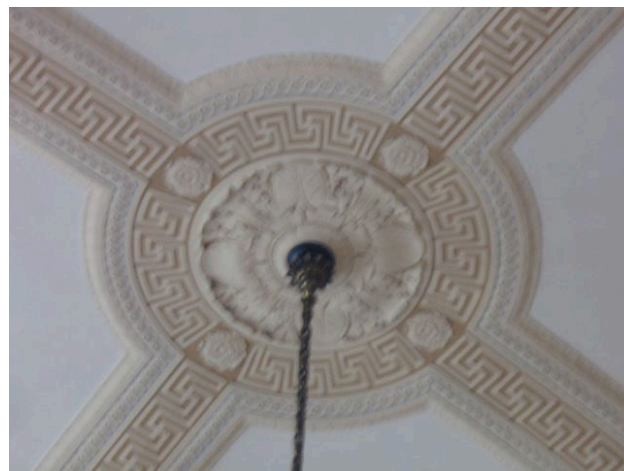


Figure 100: Library Entrance with svastika patterns, Wesleyan University, CT.¹⁸¹

¹⁸⁰ <http://lumq.com/02/swasika/> (accessed on January 18, 2012).

¹⁸¹ Photos (Fig 98-100) by author.

When this route was designated, the Swastika symbol was recognized for its attributes as a charm or amulet, as a sign of benediction, blessing, long life, good fortune, and good luck. The swastika symbol was popular in the United States prior to 1920, when it was appropriated as a Nazi symbol and later associated with the Third Reich during World War II. The symbol remains visible on numerous historic buildings, including sites that are listed on the National Register of Historic Places. It also appeared on tiles, lampposts, metal valves, tools, surfboards, stock certificates, brand names, place names, medals, commercial tokens, postcards, souvenirs, rugs and clothing.¹⁸²

There are many more examples of how the svastika was used with a positive meaning in Canada and the United States. Many photos can be found in books by Steven Heller, Malcolm Quinn and ManWoman, as well as various svastika-related websites. The svastika patterns are found in New York City on prominent pre-war buildings, such as the New York Public Library, the Columbia University Library, and at some subway stations (Fig. 98-100).

¹⁸² <http://www.iowadot.gov/autotrails/autoroutes.htm> (accessed on January 12, 2012).

Chapter II. ***The “Swastika” Symbol in the West***

Visiting various Holocaust sites in Europe is essential for svatika/swastika research. The first thing that the author needed to do was to pay respect to those who had lost their lives because of the Holocaust in Europe, at places such as at the Auschwitz death camp.

The swastika is a “taboo” topic in the United States. But as a Buddhist practitioner in the West the author felt a need to discuss it. Surprisingly only a handful of scholars have written about the svastika symbol’s larger history. Most recent books and articles have concluded that it is difficult or impossible to redeem the symbol in the West. Most were either scholars or graphic designers, and as such, the svastika was not necessarily important to their lives and cultures as it is for a Buddhist priest from the East. But to try to understand from that perspective, imagine for a moment if Hitler had instead used a Christian cross as a symbol for his political propaganda, even though the cross was used long before him, and with this symbol killed millions of Jews and others. If the cross were prohibited in the West instead of the swastika, would Christians simply say that it is difficult to redeem the cross? What if it were said: “As you know, the cross is the universal symbol of hatred and racism, we cannot use it here. All Christians should respect that. Those who use the cross should be treated as criminals.” How would Christians react?

The author is well aware that this *Manji* project is dealing with a very sensitive issue especially for Jewish people and Holocaust survivors, and Western people in general. Most Holocaust survivors may not be ready or able to deal with the original

meaning of the symbol. Yet, future generations will benefit from this *Manji* project as it will bring some light to the suffering of all humanity.

How do we approach a taboo issue? It is first necessary to break the silence on the topic. Ignoring the taboo creates more problems and even hysteria. In Buddhism, there is a parable called “snake-rope-string”. It is about a rope consisting of strings that looks like a snake in dim light. Those who have a fear of snakes may see the rope as snake. The parable teaches us not to fear the rope. If you look at it, it actually consists of many strings. But those who see the rope as a snake will feel fear and act accordingly, because that is a reality for them. This parable teaches that when dealing with any fear, first of all, one must look at it carefully without preconceptions. That is the beginning. With that teaching in mind, the intent of this *Manji* project is to bring the swastika/svastika to the public eye. A taboo carries a stigma which is often created with false information or partial information, and may be manipulated by political, social, cultural and religious biases. It may contain layers of misinformation, and hide something under the label of a “taboo.” Considering the characteristics of a taboo, it cannot be spoken of, and the taboo is avoided as much as possible with a sense of fear. Therefore, the simplest way to break the taboo is to talk about it, to face it without avoiding it, and then it can be realized that there is not much to be fearful of.

It is important to see the Holocaust with one’s own eyes too. Though it is impossible to fully imagine how terrible the Holocaust was for one who did not go through the experience, one needed to stand where Jews, Gypsies, homosexuals, and prisoners of war were murdered to see as much as possible. Reading about the Holocaust is one thing, but actually being there and feeling it with one’s body is another thing.

The Holocaust

The “Holocaust” is the term used to describe the mass slaughter of European civilians, especially Jews, by the Nazis during World War II. It was a systematic state-sponsored persecution. More than eleven million men, women and children were murdered in the Holocaust between 1933 and 1945.¹⁸³ Approximately six millions Jews, which is 2/3 of the Jews in Europe at the time, and five million other groups of people, including Gypsies¹⁸⁴, Russian prisoners of war, the handicapped people, political and religious opponents, Jehovah’s Witnesses, blacks, and homosexuals were also killed. Persecution of the Jews began a month after Adolf Hitler became Chancellor on January 30, 1933, and ended on May 8, 1945, known as Victory in Europe (V-E) Day, when Nazi Germany was defeated by the Allied Forces.

The phrase, “The Final Solution”, was used by the Nazis to describe their plan to murder the Jewish people. The word “Holocaust” comes from the Greek *holo* ‘whole’ + *kaustos* ‘burnt’, which refers to a sacrifice consumed by fire or burnt offerings. It is also known as the *Shoah* ‘destruction’ in Hebrew language. The word Holocaust was first used by Elie Wiesel, and became widely accepted in the 1970’s especially after the NBC television miniseries “Holocaust” was aired. Elie Wiesel’s *Night* in many ways contributed to establishing the Holocaust as a formative event in the twentieth century. He initiated the establishment of the Holocaust Museum in Washington DC. In 1986 Wiesel was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for bringing to the world’s attention to the

¹⁸³ There are still various arguments among scholars about the exact numbers of victims killed during the Holocaust, and any number is to some degree an estimate, but evidence exists to support the conclusion that millions of people were killed.

¹⁸⁴ 220,000 – 500,000 Sinti and Roma (Gypsies) were killed during Holocaust.

importance of the Holocaust and for speaking out against violence, repression, and discrimination.¹⁸⁵

After Hitler came to power, he quickly initiated a boycott of Jews and a campaign against Jews. They were fired from and no longer allowed to work in local governments, law courts, and universities. Windows of Jewish shops were broken, and synagogues were ransacked. Jews were barred from certain trades and industry. Police made no effort to protect the Jews from attacks on the streets. In September 1935, Hitler announced the Nuremberg Laws on citizenship and race at a Nazi party rally. The new laws deprived German Jews of their citizenship and most of their civil rights, and also prohibited marriages between Jews and Germans. The Nuremberg laws defined and limited the status of Jews politically and socially, while also setting a legal precedent for further anti-Jewish legislation.

At the beginning of the Third Reich, many Jews were permitted to leave Germany and Austria, though emigration to Palestine was limited after 1936. Other countries increasingly did not want to accept them. In July 1938, President Franklin Roosevelt invited delegates from 32 countries to Evian, France, for a humanitarian conference to discuss how to deal with Jewish refugees from Germany and Austria. Although it was hoped that the conference could resolve the dilemma, only one country, the Dominican Republic, agreed to change their immigration policies to allow the refugees in. Not even the United States would do any more than fulfill a pre-existing quota. “Multiple resolutions were presented, but there was an absence of solutions. The Evian Conference

¹⁸⁵ Marc H. Ellis. *Encountering the Jewish Future: With Elie Wiesel, Martin Buber, Abraham Joshua Heschel, Hannah Arendt, Emmanuel Levinas*. (Fortress Press, 2011), 13-18.

failed.”¹⁸⁶ Following the Evian Conference, on July 14, 1938, a German newspaper *Reichswart*, ran the headline, “Jews for sale at a bargain price. Who wants them? No one.” A month later, the Nazi party’s newspaper wrote, “We want only one thing, that the world loves the Jews enough to rid us of them all.”¹⁸⁷

During the night of November 9th to 10th, 1938, the Nazis incited a pogrom against Jews in Germany and Austria that came to be known as Kristallnacht (Night of Broken Glass). More than 7,000 Jewish-owned businesses were destroyed and more than 1,000 synagogues were damaged and looted. Jews were physically attacked, resulting in 96 deaths. Approximately 30,000 Jews were rounded up and sent to concentration camps. Kristallnacht marked a new and more violent phase in the persecution of Jews under the Third Reich.

At the beginning of World War II in 1939, The Nazis ordered Jews to wear a yellow Star of David attached to their clothes, and ordered them to live within designated “ghettos” in big cities. In the ghettos, Jews were forced to move into smaller apartments, that were often shared with other families. Piotrków Trybunalski in Central Poland was the first ghetto, created in October 1939, and the largest Ghetto was in Warsaw with a peak population of 445,000 in March 1941.¹⁸⁸ From the ghettos, Jews were deported to labor camps, transit camps, concentration camps or death/extermination camps. In January 1942, the “Final Solution” was created during the Wannsee Conference, in which

¹⁸⁶ Walter Laqueur, *The Holocaust Encyclopedia* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2001), 172-174.

¹⁸⁷ Robert Michael, *A Concise History of American Anti-Semitism* (Rowman & Littlefield, 2005), 182.

¹⁸⁸ When the Nazis attempted to liquidate the Warsaw Ghetto on April 13, 1943, the remaining Jews fought back in what has become known as the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising. The Jewish resistance fighters held out against the entire Nazi regime for 28 days -- longer than many European countries had been able to withstand Nazi conquest.

fourteen high-ranking Nazis met in a suburb of Berlin and constructed a plan to deport all Jews to Poland for extermination by the SS.

The first three main concentration camps were set up in the early days of the Nazi regime at Dachau (1933, near Munich), Sachsenhausen (1936, near Berlin), and Buchenwald (1937, near Weimar). Although their first inmates were Communists and Jews, any opponents of the Nazis, including Socialists, Democrats, Catholics, Protestants, union leaders, clergy, pacifists, and even dissident Nazis were also sent to the camps - all without trial or the right to appeal. Other camps were added later in Germany and Austria. The largest single Holocaust killing took place in September 1941 at the Babi Yar Ravine just outside of Kiev, Ukraine, where more than 33,000 Jews were killed in just two days. After the conquest of Poland, camps at Chelmno, Belzec, Sobibor, Treblinka, Auschwitz-Birkenau and Majdanek were turned into extermination camps. Auschwitz was the largest concentration and extermination camp built, and 1.1 million Jews were killed there in addition to 140,000 - 150, 000 Poles, 23,000 Sinti and Roma (Gypsies), 15,000 Russians prisoners of war, and 25,000 others.¹⁸⁹ Three to 15 minutes were all it took to kill everyone in a gas chamber. The chambers at Auschwitz-Birkenau could kill 6,000 people a day. The categories of prisoners consisted primarily of four groups: political opponents, members of inferior races (non-Aryan), criminals, and those considered physically or mentally abnormal, such as the handicapped and homosexuals. All the inmates wore prescribed markings on their clothing including colored triangles to designate their category and were forced to have a serial number tattooed on their left forearm. Inmates

¹⁸⁹ This number is from the Auschwitz museum website (<http://en.auschwitz.org>). Their source was : Franciszek Piper, *Ilu ludzi zginęło w KL Auschwitz. Liczba ofiar w świetle źródeł i badań*, Oświęcim 1992, tables 14-27. Georges Wellers, *Essai de détermination du nombre de morts au camp d'Auschwitz*, Le Monde Juif, (October-December, 1983).

were forced to do hard physical labor and slept three or more people per wooden bunk without a mattress or pillow. Torture and death happened frequently. Nazi doctors conducted medical experiments on prisoners against their will. Prisoners transported to the extermination camps were told to undress to take a shower, but many were instead herded into gas chambers and killed. Pregnant women, small children, the sick or handicapped, and the elderly were immediately condemned to death in a cruel selection process conducted upon arrival at the entrance to the camps.

According to *The Holocaust Camps* by Ann Byers, the main concentration camps and associated deaths are: Auschwitz-Birkenau, 2,000,000; Belzec, 600,000; Bergen-Belsen, 70,000; Buchenwald, 56,000; Chelmno, 340,000; Dachau, 30,000; Flossenburg 30,000; Majdanek, 1,380,000; Mauthausen, 95,000; Ravensbruck, 90,000; Sachsenhausen, 100,000; Sobibor, 250,000; and Treblinka, 800,000 (Fig. 101).



Figure 101: Holocaust Map of Eastern Europe.¹⁹⁰

¹⁹⁰ http://www.theshekel.org/images/concentration_camp_map.jpg (accessed on January 19, 2012).

Because the Hakenkreuz-swastika was used for the emblem of Nazi Germany, the symbol carried the misfortune and tragedy of the Holocaust. It is important to understand how the Hakenkreuz-swastika symbol is seen in present-day Europe. It is also important to see what the Holocaust means not just as a past horrific incident in history, but also its importance for prevention of another Holocaust again for any other human beings, and the awareness it has created of universal human rights. Even if the positive meanings of the svastika symbol are reclaimed in the West, the symbol will and should always bear the Holocaust tragedy as part of its larger and longer history throughout centuries of the worldwide human experience. That can never and should never be erased.

Visiting the Holocaust Related Sites in Europe

The author's research trip to Europe was made from May 23 – June 3, 2011. Three different concentration camps were visited. The cremation of dead bodies took place after gas chamber killings everyday and the ground was continually covered with the gray ash of the remains when the camps were operated. Auschwitz-Birkenau and Treblinka in Poland, and Sachsenhausen in Germany each had their own characteristics of horror. This trip was made because the author strongly felt that the most important thing to do before starting this *Manji* project was to stand on the very ground where millions of people – men, woman, children, adults and elderly – lost their lives. Before gathering facts and information, the author needed to first pray, meditate and offer incense to show his sincere respect to those who lost their lives in these three places.

Auschwitz-Birkenau was the largest of the Nazi death camps, and was operated from May 1940 to January 1945. In less than five years, 1.1 million or close to 2million people were murdered there. Auschwitz has become a symbol of the Holocaust, and is

visited by millions of people from all over the world today. Their website <http://en.auschwitz.org> gives detailed information about the Auschwitz museum. On May 28 and 29, 2011, the author visited Auschwitz–Birkenau Concentration Camp, and joined an English-language tour there on the first day. The first site, Auschwitz I, is where the actual barracks were transformed into a museum in 1947. Many items such as shoes, bags, hair, and clothes, as well as various photos and drawings with explanations, were exhibited in the buildings. Birkenau, also called Auschwitz II, is where the Russian POW's, Gypsies, and homosexuals were imprisoned. It seemed almost unbelievable to see that humans could do such insane and cruel acts to other humans. Auschwitz is an extremely powerful place filled with sadness and darkness. It is important to know what happened so that we won't repeat the same tragedy in humanity's future.

The swastika symbol was only present in the museum in a few photos. The Deputy Director of the museum, Krystyna Oleksy, explained to the author that the museum intentionally avoided showing the swastika because of concerns that the symbol might cause emotional distress and suffering for some people. As we discussed the 'swastika' symbol, she also mentioned that the svastika was an ancient symbol used in Poland before the Nazi invasion. Polish people can no longer use their ancient svastika symbol because of Nazi Germany's misuse of it in history. In Poland, the svastika, or *swarzyca*, as it is called in the Polish language, is known as a Slavic Pagan symbol. It has been found on pre-Christian artifacts, and in the ruins of medieval Christian churches in Poland (Fig. 102, 103).

The author's visit to the Treblinka Concentration Camp Memorial took place on May 26, 2011. This camp was operated only from July 1942 to October 1943, yet with

4,000 – 7,000 sent to its gas chambers every day, an estimated 850,000-1 million people were killed there. Warsaw was the most populated Jewish area before World War II. Most of Warsaw's Jews were sent to and killed at Treblinka. The phrase "Never Again" of its stone monument (Fig. 104) is so powerful. This is what the Holocaust represents now, a recognition of one of humanity's darkest chapters, one that should never again be repeated.

The Sachsenhausen Concentration Camp Memorial is the last concentration camp site the author visited on June 2, 2011. It was located in Oranienburg, Germany, north of Berlin, and created in 1936. This is the one of the earliest camps. The triangle shape of this camp is unique and was designed to control the inmates. This concentration camp was used primarily for political prisoners from 1936 - 1945, and after World War II, this area was part of the Soviet occupation zone. The facility was used during that time by Soviet occupiers until 1950. The entrance has the same sign as Auschwitz, "Arbeit Macht Frei" (Work makes you free). Sachsenhausen was built as a concentration camp to hold political prisoners and opponents of the regime. An estimated 200,000 people passed through here, mostly Soviet POW's and Poles. Approximately 30,000 of them were killed. This also served as an administrative center for the whole camp system and was also used as a training facility for SS officers, including Rudolf Hess who became the commandant of Auschwitz. This camp became the principle internment center for high-profile opponents of the Nazis, and more than 5,000 Jews were sent here after Kristallnacht (Night of Broken Glass) in 1938. Most of the Jewish inmates in Sachsenhausen were deported to Auschwitz in 1942.



Figure 102: Swarzyca in a wall stone of a collegiate church at Kruszwica in Poland. (12th Century).¹⁹¹



Figure 103: “Hands of God”, pre-Christian old Polish symbol of the sun god.¹⁹²



Figure 104: Treblinka – Monument “Never Again.”¹⁹³



Figure 105: Nozyk Synagogue in Warsaw Ghetto (left) , Rabbi M. Schudrich, Chief Rabbi of Poland and the author.¹⁹⁴

¹⁹¹ <http://slavicmythology.tumblr.com/> (accessed on January 20, 2012).

¹⁹² <http://www.rbi.webd.pl/swarga/receboga.php> (accessed on January 20, 2012).

¹⁹³ Photo by author.

¹⁹⁴ The photo was taken with the author’s camera.

The memorial monument at Sachsenhausen says, “And I know one thing more – that the Europe of the future cannot exist without commemorating all those, regardless of their nationality, who were killed at that time with complete contempt and hate, who were tortured to death, starved, gassed, incinerated, and hanged...” This message echoed the author’s intention of his research trip. In other words, the future *Manji* project cannot exist without showing respect to those who lost their lives.

All three concentration camps were built in isolated areas outside of large cities. They are located over one hour away by car from the respective closest cities, namely Krakow, Warsaw and Berlin. At present, all three camps offer a tremendous amount of educational materials about the Holocaust, though there was no information about the Hakenkreuz–swastika or the svastika. One of the keys to actualize the message of “Never Again” is to educate people about how this horrible period of history was carried out so that no one else will need to suffer by it ever again being repeated. Hitler’s misuse of the svastika as a propaganda tool and logo was a vital part of his success in rallying people to support his campaigns and that should be explained.

The author also visited the Warsaw Ghetto, and interviewed Rabbi Michael Schudrich, Chief Rabbi of Poland, residing at the Nozyk Synagogue in the Warsaw Ghetto (Fig. 105). Before the Nazi invasion, Warsaw was a major center of Jewish culture and life in Poland. Warsaw's prewar Jewish population - more than 350,000 – made up about 30 percent of the city's total population. The Jewish community of Warsaw was the largest in both Poland and all of Europe. Around 300 Synagogues and prayer houses existed in Warsaw at that time. Warsaw was the largest of all of Europe’s Jewish ghettos during the war. The Warsaw Ghetto Uprising occurred in Warsaw when

the Nazis attempted to liquidate the Ghetto on April 13, 1943. The remaining Jews fought back and held out for 28 days - longer than the period that many European countries had been able to in the face of Nazi invasion. The huge Ghetto contains wall ruins, Jewish cemeteries, an old train station where Jews were sent to the Treblinka Camp, and the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising monument. The Nozyk Synagogue is the only pre-war synagogue still active in Warsaw today.

Interviewing Rabbi M. Schudrich, the Chief Rabbi of Poland, at Nozyk Synagogue was one of the highlights of the research trip. The author was honored that Rabbi Schudrich took the time to meet with him, especially considering that on the exact same day of the author's appointment, US President Barack Obama also had a scheduled visit with the Rabbi later in the day. President Obama was on a visit to Warsaw that week as well. Rabbi Schudrich received his rabbinical degrees from the Jewish Theological Seminary (conservative) as well as Yeshiva University (orthodox). He is originally from New York, and also speaks Japanese. He served at the Jewish Synagogue in Kobe for six years from 1983 to 1989. This interview was conducted at his office on May 27, 2011, at 1pm.

After an informal introduction, the author explained the *Manji* project. When the author mentioned about the swastika being considered as "universal symbol of evil" in the U. S., Schudrich immediately said, "It's not." It wasn't surprising because Schudrich would know about its origins because he was in Japan for six years and must have seen the *manji*-svastika there. He added, "However, 99% of the time when somebody draws a swastika on walls in Europe, it is something negative. People who write the symbol have no idea that the symbol comes from Buddhism or Hinduism." Schudrich pointed out that

the swastika is “such a powerful symbol of evil.” It is not logical, intellectual or political, but rather it is “emotional” coming from the historical fact that millions of Jews were killed under the swastika symbol. He added, “Personally I believe Buddhists and Hindus should be able to use the svastika symbol for their religious practices. Or maybe use another symbol.” We also discussed some differences between the Hiroshima/Nagasaki bombings and the Holocaust. The Holocaust lasted for 6 years, while Hiroshima/Nagasaki was one moment. Because of that, the level of trauma is different. Jews and Japanese have a different ways of reacting to tragedy because of their different ways of thinking and different cultures.

Regarding possible educational programs about the svastika symbol, Rabbi suggested the possibility of having a small section explaining its use at various museums such as Auschwitz, where millions of visitors come from all over the world. It was a brilliant idea, and the author promised to incorporate his suggestion into the *Manji* project. He advised the author to meet Pieta Cywnski (director) or Krystyna Oleksy (deputy director) of the Auschwitz Museum. In sum, it was a very meaningful meeting with Rabbi Schudrich.

The author’s travel diary says,

In the evening, Rabbi Schudrich kindly invited me to join the Shabbat dinner, and I did join him. It was a wonderful experience and my honor to attend the Shabbat service and dinner. In fact, it is the first time I have attended a Shabbat dinner, though I have attended a Shabbat service in New York before. Rabbi Schudrich welcomed me and seated me at the head of the table next to him. I felt very honored to sit next to him and to hear his story about his meeting with President Obama that occurred that afternoon between my meeting and the Shabbat service. It was a wonderful evening with a new experience participating in this wonderful Jewish tradition.¹⁹⁵

¹⁹⁵ During my trip, I wrote a summary of each day on my computer.

In Holland the author visited the Anne Frank House in Amsterdam, the place where a young Jewish girl, Anne Frank, hid and wrote her well-known diary during World War II. The house itself is now a museum that exhibits items related to Anne Frank, including her 56 diaries and also photos and videos of the Holocaust in the Netherlands. Amsterdam was home to the majority of Dutch Jews since the late 16th century. There are historic Jewish quarters around Waterloopein, including the 17th Century Portuguese Synagogue, a Sephardic temple, and the Jewish Historical Museum which occupies a complex of former Ashkenazi synagogues. Other historical sites relating to the Holocaust that the author visited included the Wannsee Konferenz in Germany where the Nazis held the conference which decided the official start of the Holocaust in January 1942. The so-called “Final Solution of the Jewish Questions” was discussed there. It is now a memorial and educational site. It offers a private educational tour and displays various historical photos with explanations for the public. The most important method for historians is to simply visit the sites with their own feet, and then various materials and information will become more real, and helpful to reconstruct history.

It was valuable to communicate with the local people. The author gave a short lecture related to the *Manji* project at each place and feedback was all positive and encouraging. The author met a group of teachers who were involved with interfaith dialogues in Amsterdam, on May 24th, and joined a Buddhist evening gathering at the Poland Shin Buddhist Sangha led by Rev. Myo Shu Sensei, in Warsaw on May 27th. He also attended a Dharma meeting with the Berlin Jodoshinshu Buddhist Sangha in Berlin, on June 2. The gathering in Berlin was good to have access to a couple of persons there

who only understood German, and others who understood both English and German. It was a good opportunity to ask about the usage of the words “Hakenkreuz” and “swastika” in Germany to average German people. German speakers make a clear distinction between the two. “Hakenkreuz” means “Hitler’s cross” and “swastika” in German means something from the East. Also, they knew that in English the word “Hakenkreuz” was translated as “swastika.”

Visiting various museums in each city (Amsterdam, Warsaw, Krakow and Berlin) was very helpful for a deeper understanding of the Holocaust. Among them, two museums were very important for the *Manji* project research and future program. One is the branch of the Krakow City Historical Museum where Schindler’s Factory formerly was. Schindler’s List¹⁹⁶ is one of the Holocaust movies that has been viewed by many. During World War II, German industrialist Oskar Schindler saved approximately 1,200 of his Jewish workers from extermination.¹⁹⁷ This museum has many Hakenkreuz-swastikas displayed including many big flags with Nazi emblems. It seemed that the museum encourages people to view the swastika as a horrifying symbol. In spite of the many examples of the Hakenkreuz-swastika on display in the museum, there was no explanation of the swastika symbol. The other museum visited was the Topography of Terror in Berlin, which exhibited how Hitler became the leader of Germany, resulting in the Holocaust. “Never Again” means that the public needs to learn about how Hitler

¹⁹⁶ Schindler's List (1993) is Steven Spielberg's award-winning masterpiece, based on the Holocaust in Krakow. Oskar Schindler (died in 1974) was a German Industrialist and war profiteer who first exploited the cheap labor of Jewish workers in his factory, and eventually rescued more than one thousand of them from extinction in labor/death camps.

¹⁹⁷ Schindler reminds me of Ambassador Chiune Sugihara who gave visas to 6,000 -10,000 Jews in spite of the Japanese Government refusal at that time. Sugihara, the elusive Japanese diplomat rescued many Jews from the Holocaust in Lithuania. Among the horror of the Holocaust, we see some lights of humanity as well.

came to power and maintained that power, how and why Hitler did what he did and how he could succeed in organizing the empire of Nazi Germany. How did he promote and sell his fanatical ideas to an entire nation? Many factors, such as existing political conditions, a poor economy, and unemployment after World War I helped Hitler gain supporters. A simple crazy person ranting, as Hitler is often described (not to say he wasn't crazy), was not enough to organize Nazi Germany. It was more complicated than that. The Hakenkreuz-svastika served a very important role in his propaganda for promoting his twisted, racist, ideology. It served as a unifying logo, a brand emblem, which helped forge a new sense of superior national identity among an insecure populace whose national pride had been gravely wounded by losing World War I. However, there is no explanation about this or Hitler's interest in the Eastern svastika, or the other positive meanings and history of the Eastern svastika at the museum.

Everyone and everything could recover from injury and damage like the city of Berlin. It was the same as Hiroshima and Nagasaki recovering from the devastation of the atomic bombings. Against all odds, Jewish Holocaust survivors began to reconstruct their community with faith and determination. Israel was born in 1948 and many also settled in the U.S. Although a symbol is, of course, not a person and its suffering cannot truly be compared to that of a person, the author would like to see that the wounded original svastika (not Hook-Cross) also heal some day. The original svastika can also in a sense be considered a victim of Nazism and current racist groups. After visiting various museums, the author observed that the symbol was always presented as negative and nowhere was the different meaning of the Eastern svastika noted. The svastika instead was blamed, damaged and looked down on with misunderstanding as a scapegoat. It

became clear that education about the svastika symbol will bring about a fair understanding and realization of the value of the original sacred symbol of Buddhism, Hindu and other religions and cultures.

Hitler's Swastika is called "Hakenkreuz"

Everything in this world is subject to change, as the Buddha said, and so is this thesis. As the research progressed, the author's focal points started to shift. Originally using the workshops as ways to appeal to people about the true and original meaning of the svastika symbol that was misused by Hitler's Nazi Germany. Through workshops, traveling in Europe and Japan, and meeting various people, the author realized that it is very important to reach out to museums and later, to educational institutions that exhibit and teach about Nazis in Germany and the Holocaust. It is important to clarify not only the meaning of the svastika symbol, but also the relationship between Hitler and the Eastern svastika symbol. In Chapter I, the meaning of the svastika symbol from the Buddhist perspective was discussed as well as the perspective from other religions and cultures; and in this chapter the relationship between Hitler and the svastika symbol is discussed.

The main question of this chapter then, is, why did Hitler adopt the svastika as a symbol to represent Nazi Germany? This question leads to other questions such as: Did Hitler know about the long history of the Eastern svastika spanning thousands of years? Or was it an accident that Hitler used the swastika? Did Hitler adopt the svastika symbol for a particular reason? When we think about this question, we need to look at what Adolf Hitler himself said about this symbol. The following two statements from Hitler's

*Mein Kampf*¹⁹⁸ are the key passages for this chapter's discussion. The first quotation describes how the swastika design was selected. The second quotation describes what the swastika meant to Hitler. Quotations are provided in both German and English, to show what Hitler said in the original language and how it was translated into English.¹⁹⁹ Note: Bold-face emphasis is added by the author.

(1) *Ich selbst trat immer für die Beibehaltung der alten Farben ein, nicht nur weil sie mir als Soldat das Heiligste sind, das ich kenne, sondern weil sie auch in ihrer ästhetischen Wirkung meinem Gefühl weitaus am meisten entsprechen. Dennoch mußte ich die zahllosen Entwürfe, die damals aus den Kreisen der jungen Bewegung einliefen, und die meistens das **Hakenkreuz** in die alte Fahne hineingezeichnet hatten, ausnahmslos ablehnen. Ich selbst - als Führer - wollte nicht sofort mit meinem eigenen Entwurf an die Öffentlichkeit treten, da es ja möglich war, daß ein anderer einen ebenso guten oder vielleicht auch besseren bringen würde. Tatsächlich hat ein Zahnarzt aus Starnberg auch einen gar nicht schlechten Entwurf geliefert, der übrigens dem meinem ziemlich nahekam, nur den einen Fehler hatte, daß das **Hakenkreuz** mit gebogenen Haken in eine weiße Scheibe hineinkomponiert war.*

I myself always came out for the retention of the old colors, not only because as a soldier they are to me the holiest thing I know, but because also in their esthetic effect they are by far the most compatible with my feeling. Nevertheless, I was obliged to reject without exception the numerous designs which poured in from the circles of the young movement, and which for the most part had drawn the **swastika** into the old flag I myself - as Leader - did not want to come out publicly at once with my own design, since after all it was possible that another should produce one just as good or perhaps even better. Actually, a dentist from Starnberg did deliver a design that was not bad at all, and, incidentally, was quite close to my own, having only the one fault that a **swastika** with curved legs was composed into a white disk.

(2) *Als nationale Sozialisten sehen wir in unserer Flagge unser Programm. Im Rot sehen wir den sozialen Gedanken der Bewegung, im Weiß den nationalsozialistischen, im **Hakenkreuz** die Mission des Kampfes für den Sieg des arischen Menschen und zugleich mit ihm auch den Sieg des Gedankens der schaffenden Arbeit, die selbst ewig antisemitisch war und antisemitisch sein wird.*

¹⁹⁸ German version was taken from *Mein Kampf*, München : Zentralverlag der NSDAP, Frz. Eher Nachf, 1940.

¹⁹⁹ *Mein Kampf* translated by Ralph Manheim in 1943 is most read and used.

As National Socialists, we see our program in our flag. In red we see the social idea of the movement, in white the nationalistic idea, in the **swastika** the mission of the struggle for the victory of the Aryan man, and, by the same token, the victory of the idea of creative work, which as such always has been and always will be anti-Semitic.

Definition of “Hakenkreuz”

First of all, we need to define some key words. Although most English speaking people believe that “swastika” is the word that Hitler used for the Nazi emblem, that is not true. As seen in the comparison of the passages of *Mein Kampf* in German and English, Hitler did not use the word “swastika” in German. Hitler never used the word “swastika” anywhere. The word “swastika” was not even in Hitler’s vocabulary. He always used the word “Hakenkreuz” (literally “hook-cross” in English) to describe卐.

Where did the word “Hakenkreuz” come from? What does Hakenkreuz mean? According to *Webster’s New Collegiate Dictionary* (1973), the Hakenkreuz is defined as:

ha·ken·kreuz *n.* often cap [G, fr. *haken* hook + *kreuz* cross]

Hitler called the卐 symbol “Hakenkreuz” in German, instead of using the Sanskrit term “svastika”. Hitler’s term consists of two words combined: “haken” means ‘hook, bent, curve’ and; “kreuz” means “cross.” So, it literally means ‘hook-cross’ or ‘bent-cross’ or ‘curve-cross’.

*Online Etymology Dictionary*²⁰⁰ describes that Hakenkreuz is a proper German name which was used by the Nazis in 1931. The year 1931 probably came from the Oxford English Dictionary, but Hitler used the Hakenkreuz flag for the first time in the

²⁰⁰ **Hakenkreuz** 1931, proper German name for the Nazi swastika (q.v.), lit. "hook-cross," from O.H.G. *hako* "hook," from P.Gmc. **hoka-*, from PIE **keg-* "hook, tooth" (<http://www.etymonline.com>).

summer of 1920 according to his *Mein Kampf*.²⁰¹ In the *Oxford English Dictionary second edition* (published 1989 from Clarendon Press), the entry for ‘Hakenkreuz’ says:

Hakenkreuz, hakenkreuz [Ger.] The Nazi swastika. Also *attrib.*
1931 *Times* 23 Dec. 7/4 A large Nazi Hakenkreuz flag, ‘which can be seen for miles’, flies from the tallest chimney. **1935** C. ISHERWOOD Mr. *Norris changes Trains* xi. 165 Hitler’s negotiations with the Right had broken down; the Hakenkreuz was even flirting mildly with the Hammer and Sickle...

According to this entry, the Hakenkreuz as an English term first appeared in the *Times* in 1931 as the name of the Nazi flag. The term Hakenkreuz was created by Nazi Germany to describe their emblem, the Hakenkreuz. It was used as a proper noun, not a common noun. Hitler saw the swastika symbol as a kind of Christian Cross, and adopted it for his emblem with a different name, Hakenkreuz. With this symbol, the German people were united under a Cross (Hook-Cross) and the leadership of Adolf Hitler.

There is an earlier reference also from the *Times*, which casts doubt on the O.E.D.s’ reference to 1931 as the first printed appearance. A *New York Times* article dated Dec. 2nd 1923 found in the NYT’s archives uses the word Hakenkreuz to describe the Nazi emblem. This is the earliest reference to the “Hakenkreuz” in the *New York Times*. “We see a couple, of uniforms, a Hakenkreuz sash and Hitler!” The *New York Times* also mentions the “Hakenkreuz Banner” as the name of the Nazi Party Newspaper in articles from 1933 and 1934. Although the Nazi paper was published in German, the Times kept the term Hakenkreuz and did not translate it into the word “swastika,” in these articles.

²⁰¹ Adolf Hitler, translated by Ralph Manheim. *Mein Kampf* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1943), 496.

An article published March 19th, 1933 in the *New York Times*, appears under the title “Hooked Cross an Old Symbol from India the Swastika Made its Way to Germany”.

The article uses the terms interchangeably. The article says:

Under a decree signed by President von Hindenburg all German public buildings fly side by side, the black-and-white-and-red flag of Imperial Germany and the Nazi banner with the swastika or hooked cross. By another decree the black and gold-and-red republican colors were banished from the German war flag.²⁰²

The *New York Times* would have been more accurate if it had been written instead “Swastika an old Symbol from India Made Its Way to the Germany Hooked Cross.”

Perhaps it is this article that initiated the switch towards using the word swastika instead of Hakenkreuz in English to describe Hitler’s symbol.

A New English Dictionary on Historical Principles published in 1884, has an entry for “swastika” (also svastika, swastica), but no entry for “Hakenkreuz.” The swastika entry says, it “is known as fylfot or gammadion” but does not mention Hakenkreuz. This is because the Hakenkreuz as a term did not yet exist as it was created by Hitler for the propaganda of Nazi Germany, and swastika was not the correct translation of Hakenkreuz. Hakenkreuz became an English word that appeared in dictionaries to mean the Nazi emblem and was also used in newspapers, but it later disappeared from many dictionaries and newspapers. The term swastika took the place of Hakenkreuz. The original meaning of swastika then also disappeared from some dictionaries including web dictionaries, which many people use nowadays.

Thomas Wilson’s *Swastika the Earliest Known Symbol and its Migrations* in 1894 does not mention the word “Hakenkreuz,” either, though it talks about fylfot,

²⁰² <http://select.nytimes.com/gst/abstract.html?res=F30917FE3F5C16738DDDA00994DB405B838FF1D3> (accessed on January 15, 2012).

gammadions, thor’s hammer, Croix gammée, svastika and *manji* as different ways to call the swastika symbol in the world. This confirms that Hakenkreuz was not used before as a word to refer to the swastika symbol, and did not exist before the time of Hitler.

How do English dictionaries define the Hakenkreuz? It is important to make clear that “swastika” is a general term of the 卐 symbol, and “Hakenkreuz” is a specific term referring to the Nazi Germany emblem. Therefore, most English dictionaries use a common word “swastika” to explain the Hakenkreuz. For example, The Hakenkreuz is defined as “The Nazi swastika²⁰³” “the swastika used as a symbol of German anti-Semitism or of Nazi Germany²⁰⁴” or “proper German name for the Nazi swastika²⁰⁵.”

Swastika (svastika) as a general term includes:



Hakenkreuz (Hook-Cross) specifically means:



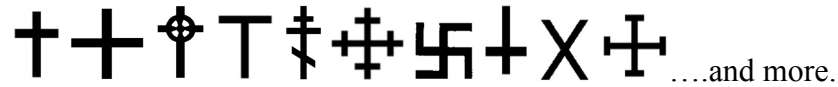
Hakenkreuz is one of the swastikas from its shape. The word “swastika” refers to various kinds of svastikas, not only just to Hitler’s Hakenkreuz. However, the present English does not want to recognize “swastika” as a general term, but only the Hakenkreuz swastika.

In Hitler’s sense, Hakenkreuz is one of the varieties of crosses:

²⁰³ Oxford English Dictionary second edition (1989), s.v. “Hakenkreuz.”

²⁰⁴ Webster’s Seventh New Collegiate Dictionary (1977), s.v. “Hakenkreuz.”

²⁰⁵ <http://www.etymonline.com>, ‘Hakenkreuz’ (accessed on January 12, 2012).



Hitler's Hakenkreuz should be explained as a kind of cross, based upon Hitler's naming it a Hook-Cross. From that perspective, the examples of definitions of Hakenkreuz above could change to "The Nazi *cross*," "the *cross* used as a symbol of German anti-Semitism or of Nazi Germany," or "proper German name for the Nazi *cross*." A clear example is "German Cross" (Deutsches Kreuz) which was established by Hitler in 1941. It was designed to be an intermediate award between the Iron Cross, First Class, and the Knight's Cross. The Gold laurel wreath was "for outstanding bravery," and the silver laurel wreath was "for special achievements in troop leadership."²⁰⁶ The German Cross can be seen in Fig. 106 and 107. Hitler's swastika or Hook-Cross was in the middle and he called it "German Cross." Therefore, Hitler's swastika was definitely a cross.



Figure 106: German Cross in gold.²⁰⁷



Figure 107: German Cross in silver.²⁰⁸

²⁰⁶ Christian Zentner and Friedemann Bedürftig, *The Encyclopedia of the Third Reich* (New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1991), 329.

²⁰⁷ <http://www.gpsjr.com/?p=1719> (accessed on January 21, 2012).

²⁰⁸ <http://www.hessenantique.com/PhotoGallery.asp?Product Code=HAGAM011> (accessed on January 21, 2012).

This research challenges the translation of Hakenkreuz in the English language as fundamentally misleading. As a Buddhist, the author feels uncomfortable that the Hakenkreuz has invaded and poisoned the svastika. It has denied any other definition and signification of all other svastikas and other uses other than the meaning of what should be properly termed a Hakenkreuz or hook-cross in English. The word swastika needs to be protected from wrong accusation or the incorrect association with it that resulted from the misleading mistranslation of the Hakenkreuz.

Below are usage examples of ‘swastika’ before the WWII according to the *Oxford English Dictionary second edition* in 1989.

1871 ALABASRTER *Wheel of Law* 249 On the great toe is the Trisul. On each side of the others a Swastika. **1882** E.C. ROBERTSON in *Proc. Berw. Nat. Club* IX. No. 3. 516 In Japan, the cross-like symbol of the sun, the Swastica, is put on coffins. **1895** *Reliquary* Oct. 252 The use of the Swastica cross in medieval times. **1904** *Times* 27 Aug. 10/3 [In Tibet] a few white, straitened hovels in tiers... On the door of each is a kicking swastika in white, and over it a rude daub of ball and crescent.

It reveals that the word ‘swastika’ was used as a positive sacred svastika, and had nothing to do with hate, evil and racism. As discussed previously, the meaning of the svastika in the Eastern countries and the words that described it existed for a long time as positive, good and sacred words, long before Hitler ever appeared. While the Hakenkreuz was created by Hitler, the swastika was not.

Hitler could have called the symbol a “swastika” or “swastica” which many people called the symbol at that time, but he deliberately called it “Hakenkreuz” instead. When German people hear the word “Hakenkreuz,” they understand it as a kind of cross immediately. The word itself can make people see that there is a cross in the center and the legs are bent clockwise. In the German language, it is obvious that the swastika is a

type of cross, as “cross” (kreuz) is built into the term. Most English speaking people, when they hear the word swastika, do not associate the symbol with a cross at all.

I did an experiment myself by taking recent articles which include the word “swastika” to see what it would sound like if it were changed to “Hook-Cross.” The readers can also try this and see how they feel. The following are examples from some recent news.²⁰⁹

“**Hook-Cross** Is Deemed a ‘Universal’ Hate Symbol”²¹⁰
New York Times (July 28, 2010):

The **Hook-Cross** now shows up so often as a generic symbol of hatred that the Anti-Defamation League, in its annual tally of hate crimes against Jews, will no longer automatically count its appearance as an act of anti-Semitism.

“The **Hook-Cross** has morphed into a universal symbol of hate,” said Abraham Foxman, the national director of the Anti-Defamation League, a Jewish advocacy organization. “Today it’s used as an epithet against African-Americans, Hispanics and gays, as well as Jews, because it is a symbol which frightens.”

Observing the trend, he said that his group had decided it would examine reports of scrawled **Hook-Cross** for contextual clues. If it appears Jews were not the target, the incident will not be included in the league’s annual audit of anti-Semitic hate crimes.

“A year ago, there was a **Hook-Cross** put on Plymouth Rock,” Mr. Foxman said in an interview. “We saw it as a symbol of hatred against America, maybe against immigrants, I don’t know. But to count that **Hook-Cross** as an anti-Semitic incident would not be accurate.”

Using the new measure, the Anti-Defamation League logged 1,211 anti-Semitic incidents in the United States in 2009. It included 422 cases of anti-Semitic vandalism like **Hook-Cross** graffiti, as well as violent episodes like the murder of a security guard at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington.

The tally was down from 2008, which found 1,352 incidents — in part because of the new approach to **Hook-Cross**. (The group is considering

²⁰⁹ All emphasis is author’s.

²¹⁰ Original title is “Swastika Is Deemed a ‘Universal’ Hate Symbol,” written by Laurie Goodstein, <http://www.nytimes.com/2010/07/29/us/29hate.html> (accessed on January 21, 2012).

whether to issue a separate report on **Hook-Cross** incidents that were excluded from its audit).....

Here it is substituted in several headlines and summaries of news articles:

“UC Davis: **Hook-Cross** carved into Jewish student's door probed as hate crime”²¹¹
News 10 / KXTV (February 27, 2010):

DAVIS, CA - Authorities at UC Davis were investigating an act of vandalism as a hate crime after a **Hook-Cross** was found carved into the door of a Jewish student's room, the university confirmed Friday.

Originally written as: DAVIS, CA - Authorities at UC Davis were investigating an act of vandalism as a hate crime after a swastika was found carved into the door of a Jewish student's room, the university confirmed Friday.

“**Hook-Cross** on Danville Synagogue May Be Considered Hate Crime”²¹²
ABC 13 (July 6, 2011):

Danville, VA - Danville police need information after a synagogue had a **Hook-Cross** spray painted on and around the building.

Originally written as: Danville, VA - Danville police need information after a synagogue had a swastika spray painted on and around the building.

“Police Investigate Northridge Hate Crime”²¹³
NBC Los Angeles (July 25, 2011):

Los Angeles police are looking for the vandals who spray-painted a **Hook-Cross** and racist messages on sidewalks and walls in a Northridge residential area over the weekend.

Originally written as: Los Angeles police are looking for the vandals who spray-painted a swastika and racist messages on sidewalks and walls in a Northridge residential area over the weekend.

If the word “swastika”, which to the author is a Buddhist symbol, is not used, interestingly, he does not feel very offended by the article. The image is still the same, but it is taken differently. The readers may sense how German people understand the

²¹¹ Original title is “UC Davis: Swastika carved into Jewish student's door probed as hate crime,” <http://www.news.10.net/news/local/story.aspx?storyid=76212> (accessed on January 21, 2012).

²¹² Original title: “Swastika on Danville Synagogue May Be Considered Hate Crime,” reported by Sarah Bloom, <http://www.wset.com/story/15036942/synagogue-vandalized-in-danville> (accessed on January 21, 2012).

²¹³ Yvonne Beltzer, “Police Investigate Northridge Hate Crime,” <http://www.nbclosangeles.com/news/local/Police-Investigate-Northridge-Hate-Crime-126126613.html> (accessed on January 21, 2012).

word “Hakenkreuz” as a kind of cross.

English Translation of Hakenkreuz

The usage of Hakenkreuz in Hitler’s own words is essential to examine. Volume 1 of *Mein Kampf* was written in 1925 and Volume 2 of *Mein Kampf* was published in 1926, while Hitler was in prison. By the end of the war, about 10 million copies of the book were sold and distributed in Germany, and also translated into various languages including English, Arabic, French, and Japanese. There are several English translations of *Mein Kampf*. In *Mein Kampf* in the original German texts by Adolf Hitler, the word “Hakenkreuz” appeared eight times in Chapter 7 (“The Struggle with the Red Front”) of Volume 2. There is no word “swastika” or the variations “svastika” or “swastica” used in the original German *Mein Kampf* or in any other materials written by Hitler in German. Most of the English translations except for one from 1933, use the term “swastika” for Hakenkreuz.

I selected four different translations of *Mein Kampf* for comparison reasons.

- i. Ralph Manheim Translation, published by Houghton Mifflin Company, Boston, MA in 1943. This is the most popular translation in English. This translation of *Mein Kampf* is the one used for all quotes in this thesis except for the section where different translations are compared.
- ii. Translation committee (including John Chamberlain, Sidney B. Fay and other eight translators), published by Reynal & Hitchcock, New York, NY in 1940.
- iii. James Murphy Translation, which was the only version officially approved by the Third Reich, published by Hutchison & Co., London in 1939.
- iv. Edgar T.S. Dugdale Translation, published by Houghton Mifflin Company, Boston, MA, in 1933. Title is “My Battle” in America, and “My Struggle” in U. K. This is the first translation of *Mein Kampf* into English. It is an abridged version.

It would be interesting to closely look at how they translate the entire original German text, however the author's interest here is only how the word *Hakenkreuz* was translated.²¹⁴

*Dennoch mußte ich die zahllosen Entwürfe, die damals aus den Kreisen der jungen Bewegung einliefen, und die meistens das **Hakenkreuz** in die alte Fahne hineingezeichnet hatten, ausnahmslos ablehnen. ... Tatsächlich hat ein Zahnarzt aus Starnberg auch einen gar nicht schlechten Entwurf geliefert, der übrigens dem meinem ziemlich nahekam, nur den einen Fehler hatte, daß das **Hakenkreuz** mit gebogenen Haken in eine weiße Scheibe hineinkomponiert war.*

[Manheim's Translation]

Nevertheless, I was obliged to reject without exception the numerous designs which poured in from the circles of the young movement, and which for the most part had drawn the **swastika** into the old flag ... Actually, a dentist from Starnberg did deliver a design that was not bad at all, and, incidentally, was quite close to my own, having only the one fault that a **swastika** with curved legs was composed into a white disk.

[Chamberlain and Fay's Translation]

Yet, I had to reject, without exception, the numerous designs that in those days were handed in by the circles of the young movement and that mostly had placed the **swastika** on the old flag. ... In fact, a dentist from Starnberg produced a design that was not bad at all, and besides that approached my own design very closely, except that it had the one mistake that the **swastika** was composed on a white circle with curved hooks.

[Murphy's Translation]

Accordingly I had to discard all the innumerable suggestions and designs which had been proposed for the new movement among which were many that had incorporated the **swastika** into the old colours. ... As a matter of fact, a dental surgeon from Starnberg submitted a good design very similar to mine, with only one mistake, in that his **swastika** with curved corners was set upon a white background.

[Dugdale's Translation - This section was not translated.]

*Ich selbst hatte unterdes nach unzähligen Versuchen eine endgültige Form niedergelegt; eine Fahne aus roten Grundtuch mit einer weißen Scheibe und in deren Mitte ein schwarzes **Hakenkreuz**. Nach langen Versuchen fand ich auch ein bestimmtes Verhältnis zwischen der Größe der Fahne und der Größe der weißen scheinbe sowie der Form und Stärke des **Hakenkreuzes**.*

[Manheim's Translation]

²¹⁴ All emphasis is author's.

I myself, meanwhile, after innumerable attempts, had laid down a final form; a flag with a red background, a white disk, and a black **swastika** in the middle. After long trials I also found a definite proportion between the size of the flag and the size of the white disk, as well as the shape and thickness of the **swastika**. And this remained final.

[Chamberlain and Fay's Translation]

Meanwhile, I myself, after innumerable attempts, had put down a final form: a flag with a background of red with a white circle, and in its center, a black **swastika**. And this then was kept.

[Murphy's Translation]

After innumerable trials I decided upon a final form – a flag of red material with a white disc bearing in its centre a black **swastika**. After many trials I obtained the correct proportions between the dimensions of the flag and of the white central disc, as well as that of the **swastika**. And this is how it has remained ever since.

[Dugdale's Translation]

I myself was always for keeping the old colours. After innumerable trials I settled upon a final form: a flag having a red ground with a white disc in it bearing on its centre a black **hooked cross**. After much searching I decided on the proper portions between the size of the flag and that of the white disc and the form and thickness of the **cross**; and it has remained so ever since.

*Und dabei ist es dann geblieben. In gleichem Sinne wurden nun sofort Armbinden für die Ordnungsmannschaften in Auftrag gegeben, und zwar eine rote Binde, auf der sich ebenfalls die weiße Scheibe mit schwarzem **Hakenkreuz** befindet. Auch das Parteiabzeichen wurde nach gleichen Richtlinien entworfen: eine weiße Scheibe auf rotem Felde und in der Mitte das **Hakenkreuz**. Ein Münchner Goldschmied, Füß, lieferte den ersten verwendbaren und dann auch beibehaltenen Entwurf.*

[Manheim's Translation]

Along the same lines arm-bands were immediately ordered for the monitor detachments, a red band, likewise with the white disk and black **swastika**. The party insignia was also designed along the same lines: a white disk on a red field, with the **swastika** in the middle. A Munich goldsmith by the name of Fuss furnished the first usable design, which was kept.

[Chamberlain and Fay's Translation]

In the same sense, arm bands were immediately ordered for the supervising detachments, that is a red band which also shows a white circle with a black **swastika**. The party emblem, too, was designed along the same lines: a white circle in a red field and in its center the **swastika**. A Munich goldsmith, Fuss, produced the first design that could be used and that then was kept.

[Murphy's Translation]

At the same time we immediately ordered the corresponding armlets for our

squad of men who kept order at meetings, armlets of red material, a central white disc with the black **swastika** upon it. Herr Fuss, a Munich goldsmith, supplied the first practical and permanent design.

[Dugdale's Translation]

Armlets, also, of the same were at once ordered for the men of the bodies for keeping order – red with a white disc and **hooked cross** in it.

*Als nationale Sozialisten sehen wir in unserer Flagge unser Programm. Im Rot sehen wir den sozialen Gedanken der Bewegung, im Weiß den nationalsozialistischen, im **Hakenkreuz** die Mission des Kampfes für den Sieg des arischen Menschen und zugleich mit ihm auch den Sieg des Gedankens der schaffenden Arbeit, die selbst ewig antisemitisch war und antisemitisch sein wird.*

[Manheim's Translation]

As National Socialists, we see our program in our flag. In red we see the social idea of the movement, in white the nationalistic idea, in the **swastika** the mission of the struggle for the victory of the Aryan man, and, by the same token, the victory of the idea of creative work, which as such always has been and always will be anti-Semitic.

[Chamberlain and Fay's Translation]

As National Socialists we see our program in our flag. In the red we see the social idea of the movement, in the white the national idea, in the **swastika** the mission of the fight for the victory of Aryan man, and at the same time also the victory of the idea of creative work which in itself is and will always be anti-Semitic.

[Murphy's Translation]

We National Socialists regarded our flag as being the embodiment of our party programme. The red expressed the social thought underlying the movement. White the national thought. And the **swastika** signified the mission allotted to us – the struggle for the victory of Aryan mankind and at the same time the triumph of the idea of creative work which is in itself and always will be anti-Semitic.

[Dugdale's Translation - This section was not translated.]

When we compare the original text and various translations, the following is revealed:

1) First, the English word “swastika” is not the word that Hitler used in the original German when he explained the Nazi German emblem. Hitler's word is “Hakenkreuz” as explained previously. The swastika is selected as an English word to

refer to the Hakenkreuz in the translations #i, #ii and #iii.

2) Secondly, though three translations used “swastika” for the Hakenkreuz, the oldest translation by E. Dugdale used “hooked cross” instead. Also, Dugdale used “the cross” to refer to the Hakenkreuz. It shows Hakenkreuz was considered a type of cross.

3) Thirdly, issues of censorship have long surrounded *Mein Kampf* so that entire texts were not available because of its racist and anti-Semitic content. The Dugdale version does is missing two important parts which explain how the swastika design was made and what it signified. Normally we may think that there must be a different German version of *Mein Kampf* because some of the translations do not match to the German one, but not in this case.

Translation Issues:

The Hakenkreuz was no doubt one of the key terms for Hitler’s Nazi Germany, and it was necessary for each translator to choose the best word or phrase among all possibilities. Sometimes one word or one phrase may be the most difficult and controversial. Even in the author’s tradition of Buddhism, the simple question “How should the word “Tariki²¹⁵” be translated?” has been continually discussed ever since the author began his study of Jodoshinshu Buddhism in English more than 30 years ago. Tariki is a very important concept in Jodoshinshu Buddhist tradition and is notoriously difficult to translate. The author has been also involved in a translation project for Jodoshinshu Buddhism. Translation is not an easy task, especially when a particular word or phrase carries an important and special meaning.

²¹⁵ Literally “Other-Power,” which is considered the key notion of Jodoshinshu Buddhism, and yet easily misunderstood. Some says that we use ‘Tariki’ without translation, others use ‘Other-Power’, ‘Amida’s Power’, ‘Benefiting-others Power’ etc.

The aim of translation is to provide semantic equivalence between the source and target language. In this case, the source language is German and target language is English. There is no such a thing as the ‘best’ translation, because the success of a translation depends on the purpose of the translation, and on reader’s needs. What might be ‘best’ for one set of circumstances may be entirely unsuitable for another. Therefore, a choice for a word may be different depending upon each translator.

My attempt here is to analyze how translators might use a certain word or phrase, and not another word(s) or phrase(s). How do translators choose their word for ‘Hakenkreuz’? There are several possibilities to translate the word ‘Hakenkreuz.’

The first choice is not to translate and to just use the exact word ‘Hakenkreuz’ that Hitler used. This is called “borrowing”. Borrowing happens often when the equivalent words do not exist in the target language. For example, the Japanese word “sushi” is not translated into English but borrowed from the Japanese word. Another example is when translating the title *Mein Kampf* the translations in 1943, 1940 and 1939, borrowed directly from the German title *Mein Kampf* without translation. On the other hand, the 1933 Dugdale version translated the title literally as “My Struggle” in UK and “My Battle” in America.

The word Hakenkreuz is recognized as an English term for a borrowed German word. The *Oxford English Dictionary*, published in 1989, gave examples below.

Hakenkreuz, hakenkreuz [Ger.] The Nazi swastika. Also *attrib.*
1931 *Times* 23 Dec. 7/4 A large Nazi Hakenkreuz flag, ‘which can be seen for miles’, flies from the tallest chimney. **1935** C. ISHERWOOD Mr. *Norris changes Trains* xi. 165 Hitler’s negotiations with the Right had broken down; the Hakenkreuz was even flirting mildly with the Hammer and Sickle. **1966** ‘M. ALBRAND’ *Door fell Shut* xvi. 115 His eyes fell on a large hakenkreuz. To come upon the Nazi insignia so unexpectedly made Bronsky feel slightly sick. **1972** *Oxford Times* 28 July 9 Perhaps he [sc.

Hitler] hoped the Hakenkreuz would bring bad luck to his enemies.

As discussed in the previous section of definition, *Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary*, published in 1973 makes a clear distinction between Hakenkreuz and swastika. The swastika entry does not include the meaning of Hitler's swastika, though most of the dictionaries have two meanings of swastika.

ha·ken·kreuz *n.* *often cap* [G, fr. *haken* hook + *kreuz* cross]: the swastika used as a symbol of German anti-Semitism or of Nazi Germany

swas·ti·ka *n* [Skt *svastika*, fr. *svasti* welfare, fr. *su-* well + *asti* he is; akin to OE *is*; fr. Its being regarded as a good luck symbol]: a symbol or ornament in the form of a Greek cross with the end of the arms extended at right angles all in the same rotary direction

The intention of *Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary* at one point might have been to try to make a distinction between the two. The Hakenkreuz and swastika are treated as two separate words. However, when recent English dictionaries are consulted, most of them do not list the word "Hakenkreuz." The swastika entry lists two meanings. Some small dictionaries list only one meaning of the swastika of Hitler's emblem, and as an anti-Semitism symbol, instead of the positive meaning of the swastika.

None of the translators of *Mein Kampf* used "Hakenkreuz", although it is definitely one possible choice of the word for Hakenkreuz.

The second choice is to translate the meaning of "Hakenkreuz" as Hook-Cross, or hooked cross, because the Hakenkreuz consists of "Haken" which means 'hook, curve, bend' in German, and "kreuz" which means 'cross' in German. This is the case in Edgar T.S. Dugdale's translation in 1933. He semantically and literally translated Hakenkreuz as 'hooked cross.'

Dugdale treated the Hakenkreuz as a regular phrase/noun, but Hitler created the Hakenkreuz as having a particular meaning and shape for his party and emblem. It is not

an accident that he did not use the word ‘swastika’ which was an already known word at that time, but named it Hakenkreuz, which is a new compound word. It was a proper noun, so the author would prefer ‘Hook-Cross’ to express what is unique to Hitler’s Nazi Germany, and it should not apply to the regular hooked cross, which includes the Eastern-svastika.

When German people hear the word “Hakenkreuz,” they understand it as a kind of cross immediately. The word itself can make people see that there is a cross in the center and legs that are bent clockwise. From this sense, by translating either hooked cross or Hook-Cross, it conveys the fact that Hitler’s symbol is not a swastika as English speaking people understand it without the association of cross.

The third choice is to use the existing word, which is used among people referring to the form or shape. It could be translated as swastika, gammadion, Croix gammee, fylfot and whirling log. This is the case of the translations in 1943, 1940 and 1939. The name “swastika” gained popularity in the West at the end of 19th century.²¹⁶ Therefore, translators might have chosen the term swastika, instead of other words available. The term *swastika* is first found in English in 1871²¹⁷, and first refers to the Nazi emblem in 1932.²¹⁸

²¹⁶ Thomas Wilson, *Swastika the Earliest Known Symbol and its Migrations* (United States National Museum. Report, 1894), 768. “The swastika has been called by different names in different countries, though nearly all countries have in later year accepted the ancient Sanskrit name of Swastika; and this name is recommended as the most definite and certain, being now the most general and, indeed, almost universal.”

²¹⁷ According to Oxford English Dictionary, the first swastika appeared in English as the original positive meaning: 1871 ALABASRTER *Wheel of Law* 249 On the great toe is the Trisul. On each side of the others a Swastika.

²¹⁸ According to Oxford English Dictionary, the term swastika referring the Nazi emblem first appeared : 1932 ‘*NORDICUS*’ *Hitlerism* ii. 17 Thousands flocked to his standard—the ‘Hakenkreuz’ — (swastika), the ancient anti-Semitic cross in a color scheme of red-white-black in memory of the colors of the old army.

This is not really a translation because it did not translate its meaning of the word Hakenkreuz, but rather the image of the Hakenkreuz is translated as ‘swastika.’ Three translations chose to use the word swastika, which is a borrowed Sanskrit word ‘svastika.’ It means that the word swastika is borrowed from Sanskrit to express the Hakenkreuz shape. The word swastika was considered a form of a cross in the West, according to the *Oxford English Dictionary*. It defines it as, “A primitive symbol or ornament of the form of a cross with equal arms with a limb of the same length projecting at right angles from the end of each arm, all in the same direction and (usually) clockwise; also called GAMMADION and FYLFOT.” If so, the swastika contains the cross of the Hakenkreuz (hook-cross). In addition, the svastika symbol was considered an Aryan symbol from Buddhism and Hinduism at that time, and it suited the statement of meaning of the Hakenkreuz as “the mission of the struggle for the victory of the Aryan man.”

The swastika was known as a word to express the shape of Hakenkreuz, as well as convey the message about the cross as a part of its image. It could convey the newly popularized notion of the Aryan race of Hakenkreuz, which related to anti-Semitism based upon the imagined pure blood of Aryanism. Therefore, the word swastika was able to convey many elements of the meaning of the Hakenkreuz as well as its shape. Having said that, the word ‘swastika’ became problematic later, as the word Hakenkreuz was replaced by the swastika in English, and the swastika became strongly associated with Hitler. In a way, the translators were so clever that people started to believe that even the word swastika was created by Hitler, and the swastika represents Hitler and Nazi Germany in English instead of the real name of the symbol, ‘Hakenkreuz.’

The translation has created the illusion that the swastika is Hitler’s, and it has

changed the meaning to evil, racism and all negativity. The English translators changed the meaning of the swastika from positive, goodness and a sign of peace to a negative, bad and bloody sign. There is no doubt that the word “swastika” was damaged by some translators, which might not have been anticipated that at that time. Hitler did not use the word “swastika,” so it was not his responsibility that the word “swastika” was damaged.

Just as a coin has a front side and back side, the translations have two sides. From the Eastern religious point of view, the translators helped mistreat, desecrate, and disrespect the word swastika which is a very sacred, important symbol used over thousands of years. Eastern religions were desecrated in many ways from this. On the other hand, the Christian cross was saved from Hitler’s actions and the accusation that it is an anti-Semitic symbol. Though racial discrimination and anti-Semitism were carried out under Hitler’s Cross, English speakers do not see the cross in the swastika, and evil actions were instead done under Hitler’s Swastika. If we call it a Hook-Cross, people may recognize the cross in the center of the swastika-cross. Whether intentional or not, the translators protected the Christian cross and damaged the Eastern religious svastika. If this was done intentionally, these translators were really clever and succeeded in protecting the cross. Although they may not have intended to, the translators succeeded in oppressing growing Eastern religions in the West at that time. There is no doubt that the swastika word hid the cross well.

Most English speakers do not associate the swastika with the word or idea “cross” and many think that “swastika” is the word that Nazi Germany used. Under the name of hook-cross (Hakenkreuz), Hitler murdered millions of people. The cross is hidden by the word “swastika” in English. The svastika has saved the cross from association with

Hitler in the English-speaking world. In a sense the swastika became a scapegoat for Hitler's actions.

In comparison to other languages, using the word swastika to replace the Hakenkreuz was a bit of a jump. When *Mein Kampf* was translated into other languages, the translators tended to use a similar meaning as Hakenkreuz. In this way, they respected the Eastern svastika word for good luck. Many languages have two entries to make the distinction between the swastika and Hakenkreuz. From this perspective, speculations of intentional usage of 'swastika' instead of 'Hakenkreuz' to protect the cross are not completely out of order. Except for the first translation by Dugdale, the English translations were done during World War II (1939-1945). These translations might encompass an invisible agenda rather than a simple translation. The Dugdale translation of Hakenkreuz as 'hooked cross' makes sense then, when compared to the other three translations during the war. We know that many things done during war time, tended to have a different hidden agenda beyond the apparent one. It is therefore very reasonable to doubt the use of the word swastika was simply a random translation choice.

When German people use the word Hakenkreuz, it is used to mean Hitler's Nazi emblem, not the Eastern symbols of Hinduism, Buddhism and Jainism. The Eastern svastika symbol is called "swastika" in German. It is the same way in Japan, as explained in Chapter I. 'Hakenkreuz' in Japanese is called "hakkenkuroitsu" or "kagi-juji", and 'svastika' is called "manji."

In German, Hakenkreuz vs Swastika;
in French, croix gammée vs Svastika, swastika;
in Italian, croce uncinata vs svastica;
in Spanish, cruz gamada vs esvástica;
in Dutch, Hakenkruis vs swastika;
in Swedish, Hakkros vs svastika;

and in Japanese, Hākenkuroitsu, kagi-juji vs *manji*.

In French and Spanish, Hakenkreuz is translated as “cross with gamma.” Gamma (Γ) is the third letter of Greek alphabet. The French word ‘croix’ means “cross,” and ‘gammée’ means “gamma.” The Spanish word ‘cruz’ means “cross,” and ‘gamada’ means “gamma.” In Italian, ‘croce’ means “cross,” and ‘uncinata’ means “hook sedge” which is a genus of flowering plants of the family Cyperaceae. Therefore, Hakenkreuz is translated as “a cross like hook-sedge.” In Dutch, ‘haken’ means “hook,” and ‘kruis’ means “cross.” In Swedish, ‘Hak’ means “hook,” and ‘kros’ means “cross.” Hakenkreuz is translated as “hook-cross.” In Japanese, ‘Hākenkuroitsu’ is a transliteration of Hakenkreuz. It is also translated into Japanese as ‘Kagi-juji.’ The Japanese term ‘kagi’ means “hook,” and ‘juji’ means “cross.” The svastika was called ‘manji’, which means “word of ten thousand (all virtues).”

Because English translators used the ‘swastika’ for Hakenkreuz, there is only one word to express the two meanings of Hitler’s swastika and the Eastern svastika. Were those translators not aware that their translation would confuse English speaking people? Even later, there isn’t much effort to correct the confusion. Nowadays, the word ‘swastika’ is considered a taboo word. Again, it is not because of Hitler, but because of the translation of Hakenkreuz. It is possible to speculate that this was the intention of the usage of the swastika for the Hakenkreuz to protect the Christian faith, and at the same time prevent Eastern religions from coming to the West. Otherwise, the choice of the word ‘swastika’ for Hakenkreuz is not easy to explain. The word swastika would not have become a taboo term unjustifiably, if the English language had two separate words.

Fourth, there were also other possibilities to translate it as a combined new word.

Since the Hakenkreuz is a compound word from ‘Haken (hook)’ and ‘Kreuz (cross)’, one can be translated as its meaning and the other can be translated as its form, as you see it in other languages. Making compounds is a common method to create a new word. For example, the Japanese word which is now an English term, “Karaoke” is a compound of the Japanese word ‘kara (empty)’ and the transliterated English word ‘oke (orchestra)’. Therefore, Karaoke literally means “empty orchestra.” So, you can sing (filling your voices) with the orchestra background music. Linguistically speaking, “compounding” or “word-compounding” refers to a device in language to form new words by combining or putting together existing words. ‘Hook-Cross’ is a compound word. New words like ‘L-Cross’, ‘Bent-Cross’, ‘Boomerang-Cross’, and ‘Sickle-Cross’ could have been a possibility as well. In any case, it would have made sense to keep the word “Cross” for Hakenkreuz as many other languages did.

If the author were the one translating Hakenkreuz, he would have chosen “Hook-Cross” in following the first English translation of “hooked cross” used in 1933, and would change it a little bit to emphasize that the Hakenkreuz is a proper noun created by Hitler for his political propaganda. The word “Hook-Cross” captures the image of the German people when they hear the word Hakenkreuz. The word is much closer to the original new word that Hitler used. This way, people would not confuse it with the auspicious symbol for the svastika which had been previously used over thousands of years.

A great effort would need to be made in innovative ways to correct the misperception of the word “swastika” from its incorrect English translation. Once we know and identify the problem, it is possible to overcome the problem and to promote the

right knowledge about the wholesome svastika to the English-speaking world. The svastika is such an important word for human history, as reflected in many cultures and religions, especially in the East. The English language has abused the word 'swastika'. This denies, insults and degrades other values and cultures. It is important for the English language to recognize this and find a way to heal the word 'swastika'.

Why did Hitler choose the Hakenkreuz?

As mentioned previously, Hitler did not use the word "swastika" at all, and we know that Hitler instead used the word Hakenkreuz with a clear intent. Because Hitler called it a Hook-Cross (Hakenkreuz) in German, the author changed the word "swastika" below to Hook-Cross in the English translation of *Mein Kampf* by Ralph Manheim in 1943 to demonstrate the difference in effect when the Hook-Cross is used instead.

Adolf Hitler explained how he decided to use a flag with a Hook-Cross in *Mein Kampf*. There are two sections that we need to pay attention to in order to understand how Hitler came to use the particular design of the flag:

I myself always came out for the retention of the old colors, not only because as a soldier they are to me the holiest thing I know, but because also in their esthetic effect they are by far the most compatible with my feeling. Nevertheless, I was obliged to reject without exception the numerous designs which poured in from the circles of the young movement, and which for the most part had drawn the **Hook-Cross** into the old flag I myself - as Leader - did not want to come out publicly at once with my own design, since after all it was possible that another should produce one just as good or perhaps even better. Actually, a dentist from Starnberg did deliver a design that was not bad at all, and, incidentally, was quite close to my own, having only the one fault that a **Hook-Cross** with curved legs was composed into a white disk.

As National Socialists, we see our program in our flag. In red we see the social idea of the movement, in white the nationalistic idea, in the **Hook-Cross** the mission of the struggle for the victory of the Aryan man, and, by

the same token, the victory of the idea of creative work, which as such always has been and always will be anti-Semitic.²¹⁹

From the above two quotations, we see how the design of the Hook-Cross was selected and what the Hook-Cross meant. The design of the Hook-Cross, which was presented by a dentist from Starnberg (Dr. Friedrich Krohn), was selected with one correction of curved legs as the official emblem of Nazi Germany. The Hook-Cross represents two things: the first “the mission of the struggle for the victory of the Aryan man”, and the second, “the victory of the idea of creative work, which as such always has been and always will be anti-Semitic.”

Design of the Hook-Cross

How was the design selected for Nazi Germany? Many Western people think that Hitler created the swastika symbol for Nazi Germany, but it is not true. As Hitler had an artistic background, he must have spent time making the correct and appropriated design. Hitler’s Hook-Cross symbol, as well as the choice of three colors (black, red and white²²⁰), was not an accident but rather carefully selected. He felt that it was crucial to develop the most appropriate flag for his movement. His new movement needed a new flag which represented his party’s philosophy, character and struggle for the future of Germany. It should also be appealing to many people. Hitler said in *Mein Kampf*,

... Up till then the movement possessed no party insignia and no party flag. The absence of such symbols not only had momentary disadvantages, but was intolerable for the future. ... For the new flag had to be equally a symbol of our own struggle, since in the other hand it was expected also to be highly effective as a poster. Anyone who has to concern himself much with the masses will recognize these apparent trifles to be very important

²¹⁹ Adolf Hitler, translated by Ralph Manheim, *Mein Kampf*, 496-497. I changed the word swastika to Hook-Cross.

²²⁰ Black, red and white were the symbols of Nationalism vs Weimar Republic national flag with tricolor of black, red and gold.

matters. An effective insignia can in hundreds of thousands of cases give the first impetus toward interest in a movement.²²¹

Hitler explained in detail the final process of selection for the new flag. The flag is the center of his propaganda, therefore, it is very important matter. It is not just simply a random design, but rather the flag needs to reflect the essence of the movement. Hitler was very proud of the final new flag of Nazi Germany.

In midsummer of 1920 the new flag came before the public for the first time. It was excellently suited to our new movement. It was young and new, like the movement itself. No one had seen it before; it had the effect of a burning torch.²²²

Why was the Hook-Cross selected? Among many designs suggested, Hitler found the design closest to the one he had in mind, which was designed by Dr. Friedrich Krohn in Starnberg. Hitler changed one part of the design, the curved legs. Dr. Krohn's design was probably similar to the symbol of the Thule Society, of which Dr. Krohn was a member. The Thule society was a German occult group whose goal was to recreate a race of Aryan supermen with psychic powers. They allegedly inhabited the lost city of Atlantis, and lost their powers due to generations of racial mixing. Below is the Thule Society log (Fig. 108) and Dr. Krohn's design (Fig. 109). Figure 109 is based upon Hitler's statement that the design "having only the one fault that a Hook-Cross with curved legs was composed into a white disk." Instead of curving legs, Hitler decided to use the Hook-Cross with straight legs (Fig. 110).

Hitler did not explain why he chose the right-turning swastika instead of the left-turning one. He did not explain why the swastika is tilted at 45 degrees, either. There are

²²¹ *Mein Kampf*, 492, 495.

²²² *Ibid.*, 496.



Figure 108: Thule Society Logo.²²³



Figure 109: Possible Dr. Krohn's design based upon *Mein Kampf*.²²⁴








Figure 110: Official Hakenkreuz Emblem (*Hakenkreuzflagg* 1923).²²⁵

²²³ <http://www.crystalinks.com/thule.html> (accessed on January 21, 2012).

²²⁴ The image is created by the author with his computer.

²²⁵ <http://austria-lexikon.at/af/Wissenssammlungen/Symbole/Hakenkreuz> (accessed on January 21, 2012).

some explanations available but they are based upon speculations and guesses, though some are very interesting and convincing.

The Internet book by Rex Curry²²⁶, talks about the 45 degree angle of the swastika representing the SS (Schutzstaffel) or “S” from the Socialists, but the author didn’t find any evidence that Hitler used such reasoning. The SS troops used  whose prototype was the rune, known in German as Sig-rune, the victory rune, . The Nordic symbol runes appear as the sign for an s-sound and an e-sound.²²⁷ If so,  may be seen as “S” of Sieg (victory) which was used on many occasions, such as when Hitler finished his speeches, saying, “Heil Sieg!” For the German people,  is the encouragement sign of victory for Germany. The Hook-Cross can be seen as two s.

Instead of the idea of the SS from Socialism, it can be observed that the German word “Sieg” (victory) is also used twice when Hitler explains what the Hook-Cross meant. Hitler says,²²⁸

*im **Hakenkreuz** die Mission des Kampfes für den **Sieg** des arischen Menschen und zugleich mit ihm auch den **Sieg** des Gedankens der schaffenden Arbeit, die selbst ewig antisemitisch war und antisemitisch sein wird.*

in the **Hook-Cross** the mission of the struggle for the **victory** of the Aryan man, and, by the same token, the **victory** of the idea of creative work, which as such always has been and always will be anti-Semitic.

The Hook-Cross represents the Sieg (Victory) of Aryan people and Sieg (Victory) of anti-Semitism. These double SS may be closer to the idea of a 45-degree “S” related to the Hakenkreuz. Hitler did not explain this himself so this is still speculation.

²²⁶ <http://rexcurry.blogspot.com/> and <http://rexcurry.net/.html> (accessed on January 12, 2012).

²²⁷ Carl Liungman, *Dictionary of Symbols* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1991), 67.

²²⁸ All emphasis is author’s.

The 45-degree angle version is the standard form of the Hakenkreuz. Svastika symbols normally are not tilted, though there exist both left turning and right turning svastikas. The 45-degree tilt is a distinguished feature of the Hakenkreuz, differing from svastikas in general. This difference alone is a good reason to call it a Hakenkreuz instead of a svastika.

卐,卍: svastika 卐: Hakenkreuz

In the “Mein Kampf as Source Material” chapter of Werner Maser’s Hitler’s *Mein Kampf -An Analysis*, Maser explains “As early as the Vienna period (in other words before 1913) or even while still at school (before 1905) Hitler had designed a book cover showing the swastika in precisely the form in which it was generally used by the National-Socialist Party after 1920.” Hitler was really waiting for the same or similar design that he had in his mind to use as the flag.

So, did Hitler create the swastika symbol? Although he created the word “Hakenkreuz”(Hook-Cross) as discussed in the previous section, Hitler did not create the symbol of the swastika itself. The swastika symbol had been widely known to European people after the mid 19th Century. Therefore, the swastika was not the creation of Hitler. He might have been attracted to the swastika symbol as he drew it on his book cover. What Hitler did was basically adopt the ancient and already popular svastika symbol from India for the Nazi Germany emblem. Hitler adopted many popular culture symbols and ideologies at that time. He spent 5 years in Vienna, Austria, which was then the center of excitement and modernization in Europe. He was influenced by art, architecture, music, philosophy and politics.²²⁹

²²⁹ He developed his anti-Semitic views in Vienna as well. Vienna was the capital of the Austrian

Chapter I provides information that the svastika symbol was a good symbol in the present as well as ancient times in the East, and existed long before Hitler. Here the question is how much Hitler knew about the svastika symbol. In order to answer this question, one needs to look at the svastika usage in the 19th Century to early 20th Century in Europe.

Heinrich Schliemann (1822- 1890), a German businessman and amateur archeologist, found many svastika motifs when excavating the ruins of Troy. Schliemann concluded after consultations with two leading Sanskrit scholars, Emile Burnouf (1821–1907) and Max Muller (1823 –1900), that the svastika was a specifically Indo-European symbol and associated with migrations of the Proto-Indo Europeans in ancient times. These exciting archeological findings gained much international attention and put the svastika in the spotlight as a significant religious symbol of the ancient ancestors of Europeans. This led to the popularization in the early 20th century of the svastika as the worldwide symbol of good luck.

According to *Dictionary of Symbols*,²³⁰ the svastika was earlier used as a sign for power, energy and migration. In Sweden, the hokkors (hook cross, the Swedish word for swastika) was often used on maps to indicate where you could find a power plant. The Swedish company ASEA, used a svastika in its logo until the beginning of the 1930's, when it was discontinued because of its Nazi associations. In Denmark, in the first part of the 20th century, the Danish brewery Carlsberg had a svastika as its logo, and on one of the elephants by the brewery's gate in 1901 (Fig. 109). The Swastika laundry in Dublin,

Empire and then Austro-Hungarian Empire. Vienna had played a major role in European and world politics and was known as a center of classical music. From the late 19th century to WW II, Vienna remained a center of high culture and modernism.

²³⁰ Carl G. Liungman, *Dictionary of Symbols* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1991), 48.

Ireland, used a svastika logo for its establishment in 1912 (Fig. 110). Svastikas were used in the insignia of Finland's Air Force in 1918 and in Latvia after their independence following World War I, until the 1940s (Fig. 111).

In the mid-19th century when it was discovered that Buddhists were using the svastika as a symbol of the Buddha, many Christians welcomed the svastika with a prophetic meaning, as a symbol of Christ. William T. Parker says in his article *The Swastika: A Prophetic Symbol*,

Significance of the svastika is to be accounted for as a great fact or truth divinely communicated in the earliest times as prophetic of the coming of the Agnus Dei, the Light of the World and the Saviour of Mankind ... Every svastika conceals the sign of the cross, and as the books of the Bible are prophetic of the coming of our Lord so this symbol is prophetic of the coming of the Founder of Christianity. It is one of the great religious symbols of the world. It has been revered all over Europe and Asia. It is one of the oldest things in history, and there is scarcely a land in whose ruined temples it is not found.²³¹

The svastika gained popularity in America in the early 20th century as well, as discussed in Chapter I. Svastika symbols were all over the Europe when Adolf Hitler was growing up. Hitler himself was an artist who was interested in various designs, and he would have seen and probably paid attention to the svastika on many occasions. Hitler's association of "Aryan" with the svastika symbol indicates he already knew about the svastika and probably learned details about its meanings in Eastern cultures. Why if he was knowledgeable about the svastika symbol did he call it a 'Hakenkreuz' instead? Swastika is a Sanskrit word from India, and Hakenkreuz is a German term that emphasizes that the symbol was not foreign but German's own. The Hakenkreuz is a cross which is an ancient sacred symbol of Christianity as well. It can be argued that for

²³¹ William Thornton Parker, *The Swastika: A Prophetic Symbol* (Open Court, 1907), 541.



Figure 111: Elephant by the brewery's gate.²³²



Figure 112: Swastika Laundry, Ireland.²³³



Figure 113: Finnish Air Force and its Flag²³⁴

²³²<http://swastika-info.com/en/printpreview.php?article=1069534845> (accessed on January 21, 2012).

²³³ <http://www.freewebs.com/manwomans/apps/photos/photo?photoid=25308572> (accessed on January 21, 2012).



Figure 114: Poster of Nazi Organization Bund Deutscher Osten with swastika on Teutonic Knights shield (1935).²³⁶



Figure 115: Iron Cross (1939).²³⁵



Figure 116: German Mother's Cross (1938).²³⁷



Figure 117: German Battle Flag.²³⁸

²³⁴ <http://www.acesofww2.com/finland/>, <http://flagspot.net/flags/fi%5Eafsq.html> (accessed on January 21, 2012).

²³⁵ <http://www.warrellic.com/med.htm> (accessed on January 21, 2012).

²³⁶ <http://www.answers.com/topic/teutonic-knights> (accessed on January 21, 2012).

²³⁷ <http://www.warrellics.eu/forum/orders-decorations-3-reich/mothers-cross-bronze-knights-cross-war-merit-cross-swords-authentic-pieces-17651/> (accessed on January 21, 2012).

²³⁸ <http://www.frontline-models.com/116flagspennants.htm> (accessed on January 21, 2012).

Hitler, his movement was a crusade under the cross.²³⁹ The Hook-Cross included elements from the Eastern swastika and Christian cross. Figures 114 -117 are examples of the combination of Hook-Cross (swastika) and cross. In Hitler's speech (Munich, 26 February 1925), he said,²⁴⁰

In this mire of lies, stupidity and cowardice it must raise again the old flag, the victory sign of our Hook-Cross, so that it becomes, as the sign of the cross of our Lord once became the symbol of our belief, the victory banner of our greatest hope, which we all harbour: the freedom of our people and of the Fatherland.²⁴¹

The meaning of the Hakenkreuz or Hook-Cross that Hitler used in relation to the Eastern svastika, needs to be examined in terms of how it is defined in *Mein Kampf*. It must be emphasized that Hitler never mentioned anything about the word or meaning of 'swastika' and always used the term Hakenkreuz, as if the swastika was non-existent in his vocabulary.

Reason #1: Aryan Race

Considering the importance of the flag for Hitler, the flag was carefully created. It is certainly not an accidental design. The symbol carries the essence of Hitler's movement. The first reason for the choice of this particular symbol is, according to *Mein Kampf*, "In the Hook-Cross (Hakenkreuz), the mission of the struggle (Kampf) is for the victory (Sieg) of the Aryan (Arischen) man." This statement indicates that the Hook-Cross is associated with the concept of Aryan in Hitler's mind.

²³⁹ 'Crusade' is explained as "The wars known as the Crusades were so called because the Christians who took part in them wore the cross as a badge," according to Maurice Arthur Canney, *An Encyclopaedia of Religions*.

²⁴⁰ The author changed "Swastika" to "Hook-Cross" for "Hakenkreuz" in original German.

²⁴¹ Detlef Mühlberger, *Hitler's voice: the Völkischer Beobachter, 1920-1933* (New York: Peter Lang, 2004), 120.

This statement itself indicates that Hitler definitely knew the svastika symbol came from India, because the word Aryan also came from a Sanskrit term and is associated with the svastika symbol. The *Svastika* is considered a sacred symbol for Aryan (meaning “noble”) in the Hindu, Buddhist and Jain traditions.

What is ‘Aryan’?

The word Aryan comes from the Sanskrit word “arya,” meaning “noble.” In Buddhism and other Eastern traditions, a noble man is a man of happiness, peace and well-being. According to *Webster’s New World Dictionary of American Language* (Second Edition, 1984), Aryan is defined as:

Ar·y·an *adj.* [Sans *ārya*, noble, lord (used as tribal name to distinguish from indigenous races), whence Avestan *airya-nam*, IRAN; akin to Gr. *aristos* best]

According to *A New English Dictionary on Historical Principles*, by Sir James Murray in 1884, the etymology of Aryan is explained as:

Ar·y·an, Arian *a. and sb.* [f. Sanskrit *ārya*, in the later language ‘noble, of good family,’ but apparently in earlier use a national name ‘comprising the worshippers of the gods of the Brahmans’ (Max Muller); cf. Zend *ariya* ‘venerable,’ ...]

Aryan in the original Sanskrit, is not the name of a kind of race or blood, and does not refer to race or ethnicity at all, but instead reflects the quality of an individual and how he or she acts and lives. The notion and definition of Aryan, defined incorrectly in the above entries through its mistaken association with “good family” and “race,” was misinterpreted and adopted by Western scholars, and misused by Hitler as a name of a race.

The word *ārya* is used frequently in Buddhism, probably more than in Hinduism and Jainism. *Ārya* is a key term in Buddhism. When studying Buddhism, one first learns

the teachings of the “Four Noble Truths,” which is the translation of *ārya-satya*, as well as the “Eightfold Noble Paths,” which is the translation of *āryastṅgika-marga*. Buddhists are called *ārya-saṃgha* or *ārya-gaṇa*, meaning “a gathering of noble people.” *Ārya-pudgala* is “a noble person,” which is an enlightened individual. Aryan is not the name of a race or ethnic group, but instead means one who practices the noble paths of Enlightenment. The person is noble because of their practice. In Chinese or Japanese, *ārya* is translated as “聖”(noble, sacred).

Ārya in Buddhism:

There is a Buddhist scripture called the “Mahācattārīsaka sutta” or “the Great Forty Sutra,²⁴²” which appears in the Pali Canon. There, the Buddha explains that cultivation of the Eightfold Noble Paths: right view, right thought, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort and right mindfulness. Many Buddhist sutras were written in the Pali language, which is a relative of Sanskrit. The Sanskrit word *ārya* is *ariya* in Pali. The Sanskrit *ārya-satya* is *ariya-sacca* in Pali; *Ārya-pudgala* is *ariya-puggala*.

*Katamo ca bhikkhave, ariyo sammāsamādhi saupaniso saparikkhāro, seyyathīdaṃ: sammādiṭṭhi sammāsaṅkappo sammāvācā sammākammanto sammāājīvo sammāvāyāmo sammāsati. Yā kho bhikkhave, imehi sattaha'ṅgehi l cittaṃ ekaggatā parikkhatā ayaṃ vuccati bhikkhave, ariyo sammāsamādhi saupaniso itipi, saparikkhāro itipi.*²⁴³

Now what, monks, is **noble** right concentration with its supports and requisite conditions? Any singleness of mind equipped with these seven factors — right view, right thoughts, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, and right mindfulness — is called **noble** right concentration with its supports and requisite conditions. ...²⁴⁴

²⁴² 大四十經 (in Chinese/Japanese).

²⁴³ All emphasis is the author's.

²⁴⁴ Translation from the Pali texts by Thanissaro Bhikkhu.

*Katamā ca bhikkhave, sammādiṭṭhi ariyā anāsavā lokuttarā maggaṅgā: yā
kho bhikkhave, ariyacittassa anāsavacittassa ariyamaggasamaṅgino
ariyamaggaṃ bhāvayato paññā paññindriyaṃ paññābalaṃ
dhammavicayasambojjhaṅgo sammādiṭṭhi maggaṅgaṃ ayaṃ vuccati
bhikkhave, sammādiṭṭhi ariyā anāsavā lokuttarā maggaṅgā.*

And, monks, what is the right view, that is **noble**, without passions, transcendent, a partial path? Monks, those with the **noble** mind and the mind without passions, investigators of the **noble** path, and practitioners of the **noble** path gain the roots of Wisdom, the power of Wisdom, and the analytical ability to understand the truth. They are fully possessed of the path. Monks, this is the right view that is **noble**, without passions, transcendent, a partial path. ...²⁴⁵

The “Dhammapada” is a well-known sutra in terms of its usage of the word “Arya” (ariya).²⁴⁶ The Dhammapada is a collection of the teachings of the Buddha expressed in simple verses. Part of the Four Noble Truths in the Dhammapada reads: Those who take refuge in the three treasures (Buddha, Dharma and Sangha) are called Buddhists. All Buddhists are the ones who see the Aryan teachings.

*Yo ca buddhanca dhammanca samghanca saranam gato cattari ariyasaccani
sammappannaya passati.
Dukkham dukkhasamuppadam dukkhassa ca atikkamam ariyam catthagikam
maggam dukkhupasamagaminam.*

One, who takes refuge in the Buddha, the Dhamma and the Samgha, sees with Magga Insight the Four **Noble** Truths, viz., Dukkha, the Cause of Dukkha, the Cessation of Dukkha, and the **Noble** Path of Eight Constituents which leads to the Cessation of Dukkha.²⁴⁷

The “Aryan” in the following three parts of Dhammapada expresses that it is another name of the Buddha, because he became a noble one who realized the noble truth (Dharma) beyond birth-and-death through his mindfulness.

*Appamado amatapadam pamado maccuno padam appamatta na miyanti
ye pamatta yatha mata.*

²⁴⁵ Translated by the author.

²⁴⁶ All the *Dhammapada* quotations are translated by Daw Mya Tin, M.A.

²⁴⁷ Dhammapada Chapter XIV “The Buddha (The Awakened),” Verse 190, 191.

*Evam visesato natva appamadamhi pandita appamade pamodanti
ariyanam gocare rata.*

Mindfulness is the way to the Deathless (Nibbana); unmindfulness is the way to Death. Those who are mindful do not die; those who are not mindful are as if already dead.

Fully comprehending this, the wise, who are mindful, rejoice in being mindful and find delight in the domain of the **Noble Ones** (Ariyas).²⁴⁸

*Dhammapiti sukham seti vipasannena cetasa ariyappavedite dhamme sada
ramati pandito.*

He who drinks in the Dharma lives happily with a serene mind; the wise man always takes delight in the Dharma expounded by the **Noble Ones** (Ariyas).²⁴⁹

*Yo sasanam arahatam ariyanam dhammajivinam patikkosati dummedho
ditthim nissaya papikam phalani katthakasseva attaghataya phallati.*

The foolish man who, on account of his wrong views, scorns the teaching of homage-worthy **Noble Ones** (Ariyas) who live according to the Dhamma is like the bamboo which bears fruit for its own destruction.²⁵⁰

*So karohi dipamattano khippam vayama pandito bhava niddhantamalo
anangano dibbam ariyabhummim upehisi.*

Make a firm support for yourself; hasten to strive hard, and be wise. Having removed impurities and being free from moral defilements you shall enter the abodes of the **Ariyas** (i.e., **Suddhavasa brahma realm**).²⁵¹

In the following section, the Buddha clearly explained who is “not Aryan” vs. “Aryan.” Understanding this original definition, Hitler and the Nazis, who murdered millions of human beings, were clearly “not Aryan” in the Buddhist sense. Their actions were the complete opposite of the true definition of “Aryan”.

*Na tena ariyo hoti yena panani himsati ahimsa sabbapapnam “ariyo” ti
pavuccati.*

He who harms living beings is, for that reason, not an **ariya** (a **Noble One**);

²⁴⁸ Dhammapada Chapter II “On Earnestness,” Verse 21, 22.

²⁴⁹ Dhammapada Chapter VI “The Wise Man (Pandita),” Verse 79.

²⁵⁰ Dhammapada Chapter XII “Self,” Verse 164.

²⁵¹ Dhammapada Chapter XVIII “Impurity,” Verse 236.

he who does not harm any living being is called an **ariya**.²⁵²

Aryan is not a word to refer to race but instead to the way the people live. People called “Aryan” are the ones who understand and practice the noble paths of Enlightenment, and live a noble life of wisdom and compassion. Together with the svastika, the Sanskrit word, Aryan, also needs to be corrected in its usage. The auspicious sign of the svastika appears on the heart of the Buddha who fulfilled the aryan (noble) paths with aryan (noble) mind of wisdom and compassion and ahimsa (no harming). Therefore, the svastika of auspiciousness, good luck and peace belongs to the aryan person (noble person). Those who are noble, spiritual, sacred, and venerable are called aryan in the original usage of the Eastern religions.

Birth, blood or race do not make people noble in this sense of the word, but the actions of the people make them noble. The word “Arya” in Sanskrit means noble in this sense without ever referring to race. It is clear that the understanding, or rather, misunderstanding of the concept of “Aryan” in Europe was totally non-Buddhist and as Hitler used it, was antithetical to the Eastern religious definition of the word and concept.

Aryan in the West:

The concept of “Aryan” in Europe was very much related to the development of language theory, after the discovery of the Sanskrit language in India during the British occupation of India. What we now call the “Proto Indo-European Language,” was also then known as the “Aryan Language.” The European scholarship of Sanskrit done in the late 18th Century is regarded as responsible for the discovery of the Indo-European language family. When the English philologist Sir William Jones encountered the Sanskrit language during the British occupation of India, he said,

²⁵² Dhammapada Chapter XIX “The Just.” Verse. 270.

The Sanscrit language, whatever be its antiquity, is of a wonderful structure; more perfect than the *Greek*, more copious than the *Latin*, and more exquisitely refined than either, yet bearing to both of them a stronger affinity, both in the roots of verbs and the forms of grammar, than could possibly have been produced by accident; so strong indeed, that no philologer could examine them all three, without believing them to have sprung from some common source, which, perhaps, no longer exists; there is a similar reason, though not quite so forcible, for supposing that both the *Gothic* and the *Celtic*, though blended with a very different idiom, had the same origin with the *Sanscrit*; and the old *Persian* might be added to the same family.²⁵³

The question of European scholars was why the great language of Sanskrit “more perfect than Greek and more copious than the Latin” existed in India, not in Europe, and it was then that the idea of an Aryan language family came alive. It was introduced by Max Muller, an Anglo-German philologist and Orientalist. His *A History of Ancient Sanskrit Literature* was written in 1859, seventy years after Sir William Jones initiated the study of Sanskrit philology. Max Muller has been credited with having first introduced the theory of an Aryan language family, Aryan nations and an Aryan race. He wrote,

Although the Brahmans’ of India belong to the same family, the Aryan or Indo-European family, which civilised the whole world of Europe, the two great branches of that primitive race were kept asunder for centuries after their first separation. The main stream of the Aryan nations has always flowed towards the northwest...²⁵⁴

Muller explained his ideas about the history of the Aryan family, Aryan man and Aryan nations in detail, based upon comparative philology. This concept of Aryan,

²⁵³ Sir William Jones in Calutta on February, 1786.

²⁵⁴ Max Muller, *A History of Ancient Sanskrit Literature* (London: Williams and Norgate 1859) .11 -12.

though Muller claimed that he only meant those who speak the Aryan language²⁵⁵, according to the above quotation, refers to a race that civilized the whole world. It presents the image that those who speak the Aryan language are a superior race. Muller was responsible for popularizing this notion of Aryan race from mid 19th century. He used the term “Aryan” to replace the cumbersome term of “Indo-European.”²⁵⁶

Sir Charles Lyell (1797-1875) in his *The Geological Evidences of the Antiquity of Man*, Chapter 23 “Origin of Development of Language and Species Compared” says,

The supposed existence, at a remote and unknown period, of a language conventionally called the Aryan, has of late years been a favourite subject of speculation among German philologists, and Professor Max Muller has given us lately the most improved version of this theory, and has set forth the various facts and arguments by which it may be defended, with his usual perspicuity and eloquence.²⁵⁷

John Crawfurd, in his *Notes on the Antiquity of Man*, says,

“Sir Charles Lyell has adopted what has been called the Aryan theory of language, and fancies that he finds in it an illustration of the hypothesis of the transmutation of species by natural selection. The Aryan or Indo-European theory, which has its origin and its chief supporters in Germany, is briefly as follows ... A language which theorists have been pleased to call Aryan is the presumed source of the many languages referred to. But the Aryan is but a language of the imagination, of the existence of which no proof ever has been or can ever be adduced ... The Aryan theory proceeds on the principle that all languages are to be traced to a certain residuum called “roots.”²⁵⁸

Here, we see that the “Aryan language” and “Aryan people” were imagination and speculation based upon language hypothesis, and comparison of languages.

²⁵⁵ In 1888, Max Muller warned scholars interested in race that they were wrong: “I have declared again and again that if I say Aryans, I mean neither blood nor bones, nor hairs nor skull; I mean simply those who speak an Aryan language.”

²⁵⁶ Current linguists agree to call it “(Proto) Indo-European language.”

²⁵⁷ Charles Lyell, *Geological Evidences of the Antiquity of Man*. (London: Murray, 1863), 354.

²⁵⁸ John Crawfurd, “Notes on Sir Charles Antiquity of Man” from *Anthropological Review* (Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland, 1864-1870), 173, 174.

This language hypothesis of the Aryan theory also contributed to another “historical” story of an invasion by the nomadic light skinned Indo-European Aryan race from Central Asia around 1500-1000 BC. This allegedly destroyed the Harappa Civilization and established the Aryan or Vedic culture in India. Recent scholars challenge the Aryan invasion theory, which had been largely accepted in the West, as a baseless story.²⁵⁹ No literary or archaeological records from India support the myth of the Aryan invasion. Many contemporary scholars believe that the theory of the Aryan invasion of India was invented to explain the existence of the Sanskrit language in India. The theory presupposed that there was an Aryan tribe or Aryan race that existed before. This is a Eurocentric story that white skinned Aryans, possibly Nordic peoples, brought the Sanskrit language to India, and created the basis of Vedic culture.

In Germany, the Aryan theory became popular in the 19th Century. Why is it then that the swastika symbol had a strong association with the Indian Aryan culture? To understand this we must begin with Heinrich Schliemann, a wealthy German businessman and archeologist who began excavating ancient Troy in 1868. When Schliemann found many svastika motifs in Troy, he wrote a letter asking Max Muller about the symbol. Muller identified the svastika as “Aryan”. Thomas Wilson’s *Swastika, the earliest known symbol and its migrations* published in 1894, discusses the svastika

²⁵⁹ J. Randall Groves of Ferris State University. (The Aryan Hypothesis and Indian Identity: A Case Study in the Postmodern Pathology of National Identity) He lists five different arguments on Aryan invasion: 1. The linguistic thesis that Sanskrit shares a common origin with several Mediterranean, Near Eastern and European languages. 2. The Aryan invasion thesis argues that Vedic culture in India is the result of an invasion of outsiders. 3. Aryan migration thesis that says there was no invasion, merely a migration. 4. Aryans never invaded nor migrated into India, they were already there. 5. Aryans are originally from India and spread out from there to the rest of the world.

symbol in relation to Aryan²⁶⁰. Wilson quoted various scholars. Mr. R. P. Greg expressed the opinion that the svastika is a “far older and wider spread as a symbol than the triskelion, as well as being a more purely Aryan symbol.” Max Muller says; “But while from these indications we are justified in supposing that among the Aryan nations the Svastika may have been an old emblem of the sun,”²⁶¹ Muller’s words sound as if they are affirming that the svastika is the emblem of the European definition of Aryan. All these scholars agreed that the svastika was an Aryan symbol. Schliemann concluded that the svastika was a specifically Indo-European symbol, and associated the symbol with the ancient migrations of Aryans.

“Aryan” did not yet have a meaning of a superior race or racial discrimination at this point. “Aryan” was seen as the name of a proto Indo-European language and people who spoke the language. The svastika was the Aryan symbol for the sun god, good luck and auspiciousness. There is no reference from this period that links “Aryan” and “Swastika” with an idea of a master race or anti-Semitism.

The roots of the association began when Max Muller used the word “Aryan” to describe the Proto Indo-European language and speakers of the language. His arguments were crafted with a bias for European superiority which viewed that which was not European to be primitive and less advanced. By simply saying anything “good” must come from Europe or Germany, the Aryan theory provided a convenient tool to steal goodness from the Indian cultures. Though he contributed greatly to the field of Indian studies in Europe, Muller was also responsible for creating misunderstandings and great

²⁶⁰ Thomas Wilson, *Swastika: the Earliest Known Symbol and its Migrations* (United States National Museum. Report, 1894), 770 – 780.

²⁶¹ Dr. Henry Schliemann, *Ilios: the City and Country of the Trojans* (London: John Murray, Albemarle Street, 1880), 348.

problems later for both India and Europe because of his use of the word “Aryan.” That is to say, Muller created an Aryan invasion myth in India, and planted the seed of a superior Aryan race myth in Europe. Max Muller knew the word “Aryan” was used frequently in Buddhist and Hindu texts. He was also aware of the frequent usage of the svastika symbol in India to mean sacred auspicious virtue. His misappropriation of the word “Aryan” dramatically changed the meaning of this sacred term and the svastika symbol from the Indian religions and culture, so that these terms are now associated with evil in the current Western world. If Muller had not first named the Proto Indo-European language, “Aryan,” Aryan racial theory would have not have developed and there would have been no basis for the German concept of an “Aryan” superior race, and thus no Holocaust.

Both the Aryan notion and svastika symbol are very important for the Buddhist, Hindu, and Jain religions and have been for thousands of years. To be an Aryan ‘noble’ has been the goal of all Indian religions. In this regard, Muller’s work was careless and irresponsible towards the sacred religions and cultures of the East that he studied. It was also racist. By having Europeans take credit for the Aryan language, all the great religions of India, such as Buddhism, Jain and Hinduism, became a product of the white “Aryan” people under his theories.

How did the “Aryan language” morph into an “Aryan” race? According to Muller, Aryan is the hypothetical parent language (Proto language) of the Indo-European family, spoken by prehistoric peoples. However, “Aryan” is not a valid ethnological term. Yet it was accepted by many in the West that the Aryan hypothesis and the Aryan invasion myth was a historical reality.

Arthur de Gobineau (1816 – 1882), a mid-19th century French diplomat, writer, ethnologist and racial theorist, in his *Essay on the Inequality of Human Races*, talked about the Aryan superiority as a scientific theory and described Aryans as the superior race among white races. He tried to create a science of history by explaining the rise and fall of civilizations in terms of race. He believed that the civilization arose as the result of a conquest by the superior Aryan race over inferior races. He listed ten civilizations including Indian, Egyptian, Assyrian and Chinese, and described that all of them were as basically created or influenced by the Aryan race. Gobineau divided races into three great races -white, yellow and black. He described a more negative view toward blacks, but not much toward Jews. Though he was neither anti-Semitic nor nationalistic, and believed some race mixing to be beneficial, his work influenced the subsequent development of racialist theories and practices in Western Europe.

Hitler was not the first to associate the svastika symbol with the so-called Aryan race. From the mid-1870s, new archaeological discoveries and modern occultism both spurred the development of the Aryan myth by identifying the svastika as a racial symbol. Emile Burnouf of the French archaeological school in Athens, assimilated the svastika into the Aryan myth. Burnouf claimed that the old Aryan symbol depicted the laying of sacred fires in Vedic India and was later adapted into the cross by Christianity. H. Schliemann concluded that the svastika was a uniquely Aryan religious symbol whose spatial distribution mapped the racial continuities of the ancient West and the mysterious East. The svastika was henceforth launched as the Aryan symbol in the European mind. Ernst Ludwig Krause (1839-1903), a popular German writer on science, myth, and archaeology, first introduced the Aryan svastika into the current of German volkisch

nationalism.²⁶²

Racialism became identified with German nationalism. In the 19th century, the Germans believed that each person has his/her own particular genius which was expressed in the national spirit, or *Volksgeist*.²⁶³ This spirit was incontestably superior and had its own moral universe whose outward form was a distinctive national culture. For example, Richard Wagner, the German composer, insisted that the German hero spirit was inborn in those with Nordic blood. German racialists held that the Nordic characteristics represent the best of the Aryan race.²⁶⁴

Houston Stewart Chamberlain (1855-1927) developed anti-Semitism based upon the concept of Aryan or Nordic (Teutonic) superiority. His work *Foundation of the Nineteenth Century* published in 1899 developed the theory of race and the dominant role of Germany that influenced Hitler.

Be that as it may, wherever the Aryans went they became masters. The Greek, the Latin, the Kelt, the Teuton, the Slav – all these were Aryans; of the aborigines of the countries which they overran, scarcely a trace remains. So, too, in India it was “Varna,” colour, which distinguished the white conquering Arya from the defeated black man, the Dasyu, and so laid the foundation of caste. It is to the Teuton branch of the Aryan family that the first place in the world belongs, and the story of the Nineteenth Century is the story of the Teuton’s triumph.²⁶⁵

Like Hitler, Chamberlain also idolized Wagner, and was married to Wagner’s daughter Eva. Hitler and Chamberlain met in 1923, and a letter written from Chamberlain to Hitler in 1924 expressed Hitler’s destiny to rule Germany.

²⁶² Nicholas Goodrick-Clarke, *Hitler's Priestess: Savitri Devi, the Hindu-Aryan Myth, and Neo-Nazism* (New York: New York University Press, 1998), 33 - 34.

²⁶³ “Volk”: people, nation. “Geist”: spirit.

²⁶⁴ Louis L. Snyder, *Encyclopedia of the Third Reich* (London: Robert Hale, 1976), 277.

²⁶⁵ Houston Stewart Chamberlain, *Foundation of the Nineteenth Century* (Munich: F. Bruckmann, 1911), xx.

The Aryan connection to the swastika was also popularized in Occultist movements including Theosophy, led by Helena P. Blavatsky (1831- 1891), and later by Savitri Devi (1905- 1982). It was especially popularized by The Thule Society, a German occultist and volkisch group, begun in Munich in 1911. The design of the Nazi flag was made by a member of the Thule society, Dr. Friedrich Krohn. The Thule society focused on the origins of the Aryan race. Thule is the legendary kingdom of Nordic mythology whose members believed was the homeland of the ancient German race.

In the West, Aryan language thus came to be understood as ethnicity. From language theory, the “Aryan” noble race became a superior race and Aryan came to mean nobility of blood, incomparable beauty of form and mind, and superior breed.²⁶⁶ Every great achievement in history was made by this Aryan race, and all civilizations were seen as the result of a struggle between creative Aryans and the non-creative non-Aryans. The Aryan idea itself was not a new idea created by Hitler and Nazi Germany.

The meaning of “Aryan” for Hitler:

How did Hitler understand the term “Aryan”? Judging from the usages of “Aryan” in *Mein Kampf*, Hitler used the term to mean a Germanic white race, which he saw as a higher and superior race that created great cultures and civilizations in the world. The intention in using the term Aryan was threefold –to affirm and praise their Germanic blood and race with positive superior qualities; to affirm in comparison with lower races and Jews; and as a neutral reference to describe the German people, excluding Jews.

Gobineau’s work influenced the idea of Aryans as a superior race in Europe, though he himself was not anti-Semitic. The idea of Aryan supremacy was not always

²⁶⁶ The myth of Aryan superiority became the source of secondary myths such as Teutonism in Germany, Anglo-Saxonism in England and US and Celticism in France as well.

connected to anti-Semitism. Aryan superiority definitely provided a feeling of confidence, affirmation and pride to those who are considered themselves Aryan. “Aryan” took on the meaning of a ‘chosen’ race. Hitler gave confidence and a sense of a superior identity to the German people through their shared “Aryan” identity. This was expressed by and united under a lucky “Aryan” symbol, the Hakenkreuz-swastika. Many German people supported him as the leader who would revitalize the fallen Germany, which lost World War I, and restore it to its imagined rightful place at the top of the world. Hitler became a leader with the mind set to help Germany recover and create a new society, the “Third Reich” for Aryan people.

In *Mein Kampf*, Hitler used the word “Aryan” often. It appears many times in Volume 1, Chapter 11 “Nation and Race” and throughout the work as well. How did Hitler use the word “Aryan” in *Mein Kampf*?

First, Aryan was used as an affirmation of the German people. All human culture, art, science, and technology were created by Aryans.

All the human culture, all the results of art, science, and technology that we see before us today, are almost exclusively the creative product of the **Aryan**. This very fact admits of the not unfounded inference that **he** alone was the founder of all higher humanity...²⁶⁷

If we were to divide mankind into three groups, the founders of culture, the bearers of culture, the destroyers of culture, only the **Aryan** could be considered as the representative of the first group.²⁶⁸

This mere sketch of the development of ‘culture-bearing’ nations gives a picture of the growth, of the activity, and – the decline – of the true culture-founders of this earth, the **Aryans** themselves.²⁶⁹

²⁶⁷ *Mein Kampf*, 290.

²⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 293.

Even Japanese culture was a product of Aryan influence.

The foundation of actual life is no longer the special Japanese culture, although it determined the color of life – because outwardly, in consequence of its inner differences, it is more conspicuous to the European – but gigantic scientific-technological achievements of Europe and America; that is, **Aryan** people.²⁷⁰

Therefore, just as the present Japanese development owes its life to **Aryan** origin, long ago in the gray past foreign influence and foreign spirit awakened the Japanese culture of that time.²⁷¹

The Aryan for Hitler had a great personal quality of self-sacrificing for others, and creating all the great works for mankind, at the same time without expecting rewards.

Aryans are hard working people to bring benefits to all. This sentence suggests that Hitler was aware of the original meaning of Aryan as ‘noble.’

This self-sacrificing will to give one's personal labor and if necessary one's own life for others is most strongly developed in the **Aryan**. The **Aryan** is not greatest in his mental qualities as such, but in the extent of his willingness to put all his abilities in the service of the community. In him the instinct of self-preservation has reached the noblest form... This state of mind, which subordinates the interests of the ego to the conservation of the community, is really the first premise for every truly human culture. From it alone can arise all the great works of mankind, which bring the founder little reward, but the richest blessings to posterity...²⁷²

It is to this inner attitude that the **Aryan** owes his position in this world, and to it the world owes man; for it alone formed from pure spirit the creative force...²⁷³

Secondly, the Aryan's relationship to other races is defined by Hitler as one of dominance as a leader or master of lower races. An Aryan needs to be assisted by others

²⁷⁰ Ibid., 290.

²⁷¹ Ibid., 291.

²⁷² Ibid., 297.

²⁷³ Ibid., 299.

to complete his/her work for new cultural development. Aryans alone cannot accomplish building a culture. An Aryan is a conqueror of humanity.

Aryan races – often absurdly small numerically – subject foreign peoples, and then stimulated by the special living conditions of the new territory (Fertility, Climatic conditions, etc.) and assisted by the multitude of lower-type beings standing at their disposal as helpers, develop the intellectual and organizational capacities dormant within them.²⁷⁴

As soon as Fate leads [of the **Aryans**] toward special conditions, their latent abilities begin to develop in a more and more rapid sequence ... Without possibility of using the lower human beings, the **Aryan** would never have been able to take his first steps toward his future culture ... Hence it is no accident that the first cultures arose in places where the **Aryan**, in his encounters with lower peoples, subjugated them and bent them to his will. They then became the first technical instrument in the service of a developing culture. As long as he ruthlessly upheld the master attitude, not only did he really remain master, but also the preserver and increaser of culture.²⁷⁵

Thus, the road which the **Aryan** had to take was clearly marked out. As a conqueror he subjected the lower beings and regulated their practical activity under his command, according to his will and for his aims.²⁷⁶

Not in his intellectual gifts lies the source of the **Aryan**'s capacity for creating and building culture. If he had just this alone, he could only act destructively, in no case could be organize.²⁷⁷

Hitler considered purity of blood important. Mixing of Aryan blood with a lower race will lead to the destruction of cultures.

“No more than Nature desires the mating of weaker with stronger individuals, even less does she desire the blending of a higher with a lower race, since, if she did, her whole work of higher breeding, over perhaps hundreds of thousands of years, might be ruined with one blow. Historical experience offers countless proofs of this. It shows with terrifying clarity that in every mingling of **Aryan** blood with that of lower peoples the result was the end of the cultured people.²⁷⁸

²⁷⁴ Ibid., 291.

²⁷⁵ Ibid., 294.

²⁷⁶ Ibid., 295.

²⁷⁷ Ibid., 297.

²⁷⁸ Ibid., 286.

The **Aryan** gave up the purity of his blood and, therefore, lost his sojourn in the paradise within he had made for himself. He became submerged in the racial mixture, and gradually, more and more, lost his cultural capacity...²⁷⁹

Thirdly, an Aryan in association with Jews: German people must have wondered if Aryans are superior, then why have Germans suffered. Hitler provides a convenient answer by faulting non-Aryans, especially the Jews. This is where anti-Semitism appeared strongly. In some descriptions, Aryans are the victim of Jews. Hitler considered Jews as counterparts to the Aryans. Hitler continued to discuss the Jewish problem for the rest of the Chapter (30 pages) in comparison to the Aryan.

The mightiest counterpart to the **Aryan** is represented by the Jew. In hardly any people in the world is the instinct of self-preservation developed more strongly than in the so-called 'chosen.' The mental qualities of the Jew have been schooled in the course of many centuries. Today he passes as 'smart,' and this in a certain sense he has been at all times. But his intelligence is not the result of his own development, but of visual instruction through foreigners.²⁸⁰

Lastly, in Hitler's usages of "Aryan" from other chapters of *Mein Kampf*, the Aryan-Nordic is for Hitler the highest Aryan race. Hitler, encouraged by Heinrich Himmler, also endorsed research about Aryans, and sent an expedition team to Lhasa in Tibet in 1938-1939 to prove that Aryans were the mother race of the Tibetans, which would make it possible to claim Nordic racial hegemony for the entire Indo-European world.²⁸¹

Only through individual men, in the bosom of foreign nations, could the

²⁷⁹ Ibid., 296.

²⁸⁰ Ibid., 300.

²⁸¹ The expedition to Tibet accumulated benign geographic, climate, and weather data and gathered many crates of animal specimens. Krause took 40,000 photos, and the film "Secret Tibet" was released in 1942. *Hitler's Master of the Dark Arts: Himmler's Black Knights and the Occult origin of the SS* by Bill Yenne, 143 -146. See details in *Himmler's Crusade: The Expedition to Find the Origins of the Aryan Race*, by Christopher Hale.

German spirit make its contribution to culture, and its origin would not even be recognized. Cultural fertilizer, until the last remnant of **Aryan**-Nordic blood in us would be corrupted or extinguished.²⁸²

For Hitler, the Aryan represents God, the creator, and goodness; the Jew represents Demons, the destroyer or evil, both in an eternal fight. Hitler's struggle is a struggle between himself with Aryans vs. Jews.

And assuredly this world is moving toward a great revolution. The question can only be whether it will redound to the benefit of **Aryan** humanity or to the profit of the eternal Jew.²⁸³

Organizing principle of **Aryan** humanity is replaced by the destructive principle of the Jew. He becomes a ferment of decomposition among peoples and races, and in the broader sense a dissolver of human culture.²⁸⁴

In any case the Jew reached his desired goal: Catholics and Protestants wage a merry war with one another, and the mortal enemy of **Aryan** humanity and all Christendom laughs up his sleeve.²⁸⁵

For Hitler, Aryan is an affirmation of good, noble, and a hero figure. In this sense the Aryan appropriated the meaning of noble and venerable, by talking about positive inner qualities. However, describing the Aryan as master race over the Jews was not a noble approach at all, and in creating this description, created a meaning antithetical to the original one. Aryan blood is not an acceptable meaning for the original meaning of Aryan, either. In the original meaning, anybody can become an Aryan when he/she lives a wholesome "noble" life.

When Hitler used the Hook-Cross as the emblem for the Aryan-man, it was understood to mean the Christian Aryan race. "In the *swastika* [Hakenkreuz] the mission

²⁸² *Mein Kampf*, 648.

²⁸³ *Ibid.*, 427.

²⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 447.

²⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 561.

of the struggle for the victory of the **Aryan** man.”²⁸⁶ The association of Hitler’s Aryans with the Christian cross might come from Houston Chamberlain’s influence. In

Foundation of the Nineteenth Century, Houston wrote:

“ For – however unworthy we may show ourselves of this – our whole culture, than God, still stands under the sign of the Cross upon Golgotha. We do see this Cross; but who sees the Crucified One? Yet He, and He alone is the living well of all Christianity, ... Christ was still greater. And like the everlasting “hearth-fire” of the Aryans, so the torch of the truth which He kindled for us can never be extinguished.²⁸⁷

Therefore, by using the word “Hook-Cross” instead of the swastika, the Cross emblem may take on the added meaning of victory for “Aryan Christians” or “Christian Aryan race.” It was the affirmation for Germans as a proud Christian Aryan people.

Here Hitler took the meaning of the good luck svastika to represent the good, virtuous Aryans. In relation to the next sentence of anti-Semitism, this sentence affirms the Aryan people as a superior race who possessed great qualities. This vision could inspire Germany to rise up again from the difficulties from World War I, and create a new idealized Aryan nation. This was an important quality for the Hook-Cross to become a national flag. While *Mein Kampf* is often portrayed as nothing more than an anti-Semitic rant, actually less than one tenth of it talks about Jews. The rest contains Hitler's ideas and beliefs for a greater nation and his plan on how to accomplish that goal. The majority of *Mein Kampf* talks about Hitler's own struggle, as well as the German people's troubles after World War I, the organization of the Nazi Party, political positions, and theory. Anti-Semitism was definitely a part of Nazi Germany, but there were other

²⁸⁶ Ibid., 497.

²⁸⁷ Houston Stewart Chamberlain, *Foundation of the Nineteenth Century* (Munich: F. Bruckmann, 1911), 249.



Figure 118: Nazi Post card: Hook-Cross superimposed on real photo of Dessau (1939).²⁸⁸



Figure 119: Nazi Post card: Hook-Cross and Neues Rathaus in Vienna, Austria (1938).²⁸⁹



Figure 120: Poster stamp. 6th Country Rally 1939. DNSAP. Danish Nazi Party.²⁹⁰



Figure 121: Nazi Xmas Stamp (1938) Danish Nazi Party.²⁹¹

²⁸⁸ <http://www.germanpostalhistory.com/php/viewitem.php?itemid=27170&germany%20cover=search> (accessed on January 21, 2012).

²⁸⁹ <http://www.germanpostalhistory.com/php/viewitem.php?itemid=27230&germany%20cover=search> (accessed on January 21, 2012).

²⁹⁰ http://www.moonwheel-historical.com/product_info.php?products_id=1289 (accessed on January 21, 2012).

²⁹¹ <http://yardyyardyyardy.blogspot.com/2009/12/hitler-grinch-who-tried-to-steal.html> (accessed on January 21, 2012). DNSAP: Danmarks Nationalsocialistiske Arbejderparti (National Socialist Workers' Party of Denmark) is the largest Nazi party in Denmark.

political issues that the Nazis implemented, such as their 25-point programme.

Hitler used the swastika as propaganda to create a positive image of this superior Aryan race. Post cards and stamps from Nazi Germany portrayed the Hook-Cross as the sun, bringing hope and light to the German people. (Fig. 118-121) Judging from the various factors discussed before, Hitler knew the meaning of Eastern svastika, yet, chose not to use the word svastika at all, but intentionally used the term Hakenkreuz, Hook-Cross.

Here is a passage from a Christmas Sermon quoted by John Conway:

Germany, after the Great War, was threatened with collapse. But then he came who, despite the great darkness in so many German hearts, spoke of light and showed them the way to the light. His appeal found an echo in thousands and hundreds of thousands of German souls, who carried the appeal further. It swelled out like a sweeping cloud and then happened that greatest miracle: Germany awoke and followed the sign of light, the Swastika.

The darkness is now conquered, now suffering is over, which so long gripped our people. The Sun is rising ever higher, with our ancient German symbol, the Swastika, and its warmth surrounds the whole German people, melts our hearts together into one great German community. No one is left out, no one needs to hunger or freeze, despite the deep night and snow and ice because the warmth from the hearts of the whole people pours out, in the emblems of the National Socialist Welfare programme and the Winter Help work and carries the German Xmas in the most forsaken German heart.

In this hour, Adolf Hitler is our benefactor, who has overcome the winter night with its terrors for the whole people and has led us under the Swastika to a new light and a new day.”²⁹²

This quote gives us a very different image of the swastika in Germany, but surprisingly it is a closer image to the svastika of good fortune in the East. The Aryan construct functioned to affirm and empower the Christian Germans, and on the other hand to create the basis of the creation of Jewish Anti-Aryans and anti-Semitism.

²⁹² John Conway, *The Nazi Persecution of the Churches, 1933-1945* (New York: Basic Books, 1968), 364-365. Appendix 9: A Christmas Sermon 1936 preached in Solingen (Source: file of the Old Prussian Union Church, Berlin).

Reason #2: Anti-Semitism

The second intention of the Hook-Cross is the victory of anti-Semitism. Hitler's *Mein Kampf* says,

und zugleich mit ihm auch den Sieg [victory] des Gedankens der schaffenden Arbeit [work], die selbst ewig antisemitisch [anti-Semitic] war und antisemitisch [anti-Semitic] sein wird.

... and by the same token, the victory of the idea of creative work, which as such always has been and always will be anti-Semitic.²⁹³

This passage, in which Hitler explains the meaning of Hook-Cross as anti-Semitic shows Hitler's view that the Hook-Cross was a natural evolution of the Christian cross' use for anti-Semitism in other previous periods of Western history. This suggests Hitler's swastika was more of a cross to Hitler than an Eastern svastika. The Hook-Cross represents Hitler's sense of self as a dedicated Christian. Hitler said: "Hence today I believe that I am acting in accordance with the will of the Almighty Creator: by defending myself against the Jew, I am fighting for the work of the Lord."²⁹⁴

The Eastern svastika has never had anything to do with anti-Semitism. Most importantly, Hitler himself chose to describe the symbol as a type of cross, rather than using the already well-known term, swastika. On the other hand, anti-Semitism had been practiced under the cross for a long time in Europe and Hitler's Germany intended to continue this mission. The Hook-Cross represents the history of anti-Semitism in Germany under the Cross. Hitler admired Martin Luther and Richard Wagner. Hitler said in *Mein Kampf*, "To them belong, not only the truly great statesmen, but all other great reformers as well. Beside Frederick the Great stands Martin Luther as well as Richard

²⁹³ *Mein Kampf*, 497.

²⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 65.

Wagner.”²⁹⁵ Both were anti-Semitic activists and what they said about anti-Semitism is important in understanding Hitler’s anti-Semitism.

Anti-Semitism and Hitler’s life:

Hitler’s anti-Semitism began when he was in Vienna, Austria. He said, “There were few Jews in Linz. In the course of the centuries their outward appearance had become Europeanized and had taken on a human look; in fact, I even took them for Germans.”²⁹⁶ In 1907 when he came to Vienna, a new world for the then 18-year old Hitler, he “encountered the Jewish questions.”

When Hitler saw Jews with ‘a black caftan and black hair locks’ for the first time, he asked himself, “Is this a Jew?” and then “Is this a German?”²⁹⁷ This question led him to explore anti-Semitic viewpoints. Hitler said that he occasionally picked up the *Deutsches Volksblatt*, a German-American newspaper, when he was in Vienna. “I was not in agreement with the sharp anti-Semitic tone, but from time to time I read arguments which gave me some food for thought.”²⁹⁸ Through the readings he became acquainted with Dr. Karl Lueger, and the Christian Social Party movement.

When Hitler initially arrived in Vienna, he was in opposition to Dr. Lueger and the Party, both of which he felt were reactionary. As Hitler became more familiar with Dr. Lueger and the movement, he grew to admire them. Hitler said,

Today, more than ever, I regard this man [Dr. Lueger] as the greatest German mayor of all times. How many of my basic principles were upset by this change in my attitude toward the Christian Social movement! My

²⁹⁵ Ibid., 213.

²⁹⁶ Ibid., 52.

²⁹⁷ Ibid., 56.

²⁹⁸ Ibid., 55.

views with regard to anti-Semitism thus succumbed to the passage of time, and this was my great transformation of all.²⁹⁹

According to *Mein Kampf*, Hitler evaluated two anti-Semitic movements in Vienna at that time: The Christian Socialists under Karl Lueger, and the Pan-Germans under Georg von Schonerer. Hitler described his feeling about Schonerer:

Nevertheless my personal sympathy lay at first on the side of the Pan-German Schonerer ... Compared as to abilities, Schonerer seemed to me even then the better and more profound thinker in questions of principle. He foresaw the inevitable end of the Austrian state more clearly and correctly than anyone else. ... But if Schonerer recognized the problems in their innermost essence, he erred when it came to men.³⁰⁰

Hitler was drawn to Schonerer ideology and Dr. Lueger's political attitude, which he would later combine. Hitler discussed both parties in detail in *Mein Kampf*. It was clear that Hitler learned about these two party leaders and from there formed the anti-Semitism of Nazi Germany.

There were several individuals who greatly influenced Hitler's ideas about the Aryan race and anti-Semitism. Guido von List (1848 – 1919), born in Vienna, was an Austrian/German poet, businessman, and well-known occultist and volkisch author of Germanic revivalism, Germanic mysticism, and Runology in the late 19th Century. Von List wrote a book called *the Secret of the Rune*. He claimed that the ancient runes offered revelations about a total cosmology and esoteric understanding of early the Teutonic/Aryan peoples. List influenced Jorg Lanz von Liebefels and Dr. Karl Lueger, the anti-Semitic mayor of Vienna.

Jorg Lanz von Liebenfels (1874 –1954) directed the formation of an Aryan league

²⁹⁹ Ibid.

³⁰⁰ Ibid., 98.

and used a swastika flag. In 1907, he pledged to violently counter the socialistic class struggle by a race struggle “to the hilt of the castration knife.”³⁰¹ Lanz was the first to use the swastika symbol for Aryans to represent anti-Semitism. Hitler was the one who spread it all over the West. Lanz was a former monk, ordained in 1893, and the founder of the magazine *Ostara* in 1905, based upon anti-Semitic and volkisch theories. Lanz’s *Ostara* was a gateway for Hitler to learn about anti-Semitism and Aryan race theories.

It might not be directly connected, but Hitler also learned and formed his anti-Marxist views in Vienna, and maintained both anti-Semitism and anti-Marxism throughout his life. He believed that Marxism supported the Jews. He said,

The Jewish doctrine of Marxism rejects the aristocratic principle of Nature and replaces the eternal privilege of power and strength by the mass of numbers and their dead weight. Thus it denies the value of personality in man, contests the significance of nationality and race, and thereby withdraws from humanity the premise of its existence and its culture. As a foundation of the universe, this doctrine would bring about the end of any order intellectually conceivable to man. And as, in this greatest of all recognizable organisms, the result of an application of such a law could only be chaos, on earth it could only be destruction for the inhabitants of this planet.³⁰²

Hitler’s anti-Semitism did not arise all of the sudden but was a gradual process through his surroundings. Individuals and society influenced Hitler to form the ideas of a master race and anti-Semitism. There were two individuals in particular, Martin Luther (1483 -1546) and Richard Wagner (1813 -1883) who were especially important influences on Hitler, and whom he greatly respected.

Martin Luther and Anti-Semitism:

In 1933, the Hook-Cross was officially adopted as the new German Christian

³⁰¹ Joachim C. Fest, *Hitler* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1974), 36.

³⁰² *Mein Kampf*, 65.

cross at a conference held at Castle Church in Wittenberg, the cathedral where Martin Luther had begun his movement four hundred years earlier. The Hook-Cross was considered a symbol of “German Christians” which meant that all Christians in Germany were required to use the Hook-Cross, replacing the regular Christian cross. Many churches displayed the Hook-Cross on their altars. The German church was not neutral but supported the anti-Jewish movement openly or quietly.

We stand enthusiastically behind your struggle against the Jewish death watch beetles which are undermining our Jewish nation... So too against those friends of Jewry which are found even in the ranks of the Protestant pastorate. We will fight along side of you and we will not give up until the struggle against all Jewry and against the murderers of Our Savior has been brought to a victorious end, in the Spirit of Christ and of Martin Luther. In true fellowship, I greet you with Heil Hitler!³⁰³

Bishop Martin Sasse, a leading German Protestant, published a compilation of Martin Luther's anti-Semitic writings shortly after *Kristallnacht*. In the Foreword, Sasse praised the burning of the synagogues and the coincidence of the day the violence occurred. “On November 10, 1938, on Luther's birthday, the synagogues are burning in Germany.” The German people, he urged, ought to heed these words “of the greatest anti-Semite of his time, the warner of his people against the Jews.”³⁰⁴

Such statements reveal that Martin Luther was seen as a figure of anti-Semitism even in Hitler's time. Martin Luther represents the birth of Protestant Christianity as well as the seeds of Jewish hatred that flourished in Germany. Martin Luther was an influential Christian leader in German Christian history, and as such, his words and

³⁰³ A letter written by Pastor Riechelmann to German newspaper which stood on the Jewish Question (from the *Oldenburgischen Rundschreiben*, 7 October 1935). Appendix of J.S. Conway, *the Nazi Persecution of the Churches 1933 – 1945* (New York: Basic Books, 1968), 377.

³⁰⁴ Daniel Jonah Goldhagen, *Hitler's Willing Executioners* (Vintage, 1997), 111.

actions were admired and respected by Adolf Hitler. Luther's work *On The Jews and their Lies* (1543) contains very strong views against Jews.³⁰⁵ It should be noted that the bishops of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America gathered in Chicago and officially renounced Martin Luther's anti-Semitic writings in November 1994.

Here it is necessary to examine *On The Jews and Their Lies* as this book had a big impact on Germany and Hitler's hatred towards Jewish people. Luther explained his view on Jews was based upon the New Testament. He felt that Jews were a brood of vipers, children of Satan rather than Abraham's children.

No one can take away from them their pride concerning their blood and their descent from Israel. In the Old Testament they lost many a battle in wars over this matter, though no Jew understands this. All the prophets censured them for it, for it betrays an arrogant, carnal presumption devoid of spirit and of faith. They were also slain and persecuted for this reason. St. John the Baptist took them to task severely because of it, saying, "Do not presume to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham for our father'; for I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise up children to Abraham" [Matt. 3:9]. He did not call them Abraham's children but a "brood of vipers" [Matt. 3:7]. Oh, that was too insulting for the noble blood and race of Israel, and they declared, "He has a demon" [Matt. 11:18] Our Lord also calls them a "brood of vipers"; furthermore, in John' 3:39³⁰⁶ he states: "If you were Abraham's children would do what Abraham did.... You are of your father the devil." It was intolerable to them to hear that they were not Abraham's but the devil's children, nor can they bear to hear this today. If they should surrender this boast and argument, their whole system which is built on it would topple and change.³⁰⁷

Luther blamed the Jews for the Crucifixion of the Messiah Jesus. He preached that Jews are guilty of the death of Christ, and John's gospel considered the Jews as enemies of Jesus.

³⁰⁵ Two translations are available *The Jews and Their Lies* from Liberty Bell Publications and *On the Jews and Their Lies* from lulu.com. Here I use the latter *On the Jews and Their Lies* which is a less censured version. It is translated by Martin H. Bertram.

³⁰⁶ The correct section is John's 8:39.

³⁰⁷ Martin Luther, *On the Jews and Their Lies* (USA: Lulu.com, 2011), 4.

Now as I began to ask earlier: What harm has the poor Jesus done to the most holy children of Israel that they cannot stop cursing him after his death, with which he paid his debt? Is it perhaps that he aspires to be the Messiah, which they cannot tolerate? Oh no, for he is dead. They themselves crucified him, and a dead person cannot be the Messiah. Perhaps he is an obstacle to their return into their homeland? No, that is not the reason either; for how can a dead man prevent that? What, then, is the reason? I will tell you. As I said before, it is the lightning and thunder of Moses to which I referred before: "The Lord will smite you with madness and blindness and confusion of mind." It is the eternal fire of which the prophets speak: "My wrath will go forth like fire, and burn with none to quench it" [Jer. 4:4]. John the Baptist proclaimed the same message to them after Herod had removed their scepter, saying [Luke 3:17]: "His winnowing fork is in his hand, and he will clear his threshing-floor and gather his wheat into his granary, but his chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire." Indeed, such fire of divine wrath we behold descending on the Jews. We see it burning, ablaze and aflame, a fire more horrible than that of Sodom and Gomorrah.³⁰⁸

Luther warned the Christians not to allow themselves to be confused by the Jews.

Learn from this dear Christian, what you are doing if you permit the blind Jews to mislead you. Then the saying will truly apply, "When a blind man leads a blind man, both will fall into the pit" [cf. Luke 6:39]. You cannot learn anything from them except how to misunderstand the divine commandments, and, despite this, boast haughtily over against the Gentiles who really are much better before God than they, since they do not have such pride of holiness and yet keep far more of the law than these arrogant saints and damned blasphemers and liars.³⁰⁹

At the part XI of *On the Jews and Their Lies*, Luther gave concrete advice to fellow Christians about what should be done with the Jews:

What shall we Christians do with this rejected and condemned people, the Jews? Since they live among us, we dare not tolerate their conduct, now that we are aware of their lying and reviling and blaspheming. If we do, we become sharers in their lies, cursing and blasphemy. Thus we cannot extinguish the unquenchable fire of divine wrath, of which the prophets speak, nor can we convert the Jews. With prayer and the fear of God we must practice a sharp mercy to see whether we might save at least a few from the glowing flames. We dare not avenge ourselves. Vengeance a thousand times worse than we could wish them already has them by the

³⁰⁸ Ibid., 107.

³⁰⁹ Ibid., 31.

throat. I shall give you my sincere advice.³¹⁰

Luther gave seven pieces of advice.³¹¹

First, to set fire to their synagogues or schools and to bury and cover with dirt whatever will not burn, so that no man will ever again see a stone or cinder of them. This is to be done in honor of our Lord and of Christendom, so that God might see that we are Christians, and do not condone or knowingly tolerate such public lying, cursing, and blaspheming of his Son and of his Christians. For whatever we tolerated in the past unknowingly and I myself was unaware of it will be pardoned by God. But if we, now that we are informed, were to protect and shield such a house for the Jews, existing right before our very nose, in which they lie about, blaspheme, curse, vilify, and defame Christ and us (as was heard above), it would be the same as if we were doing all this and even worse ourselves, as we very well know.³¹²

He quoted passages from the Bible to support his position: In [Deuteronomy 13:12] Moses says that any city that is given to idolatry shall be totally destroyed by fire, and nothing of it shall be preserved; [Deuteronomy 4:2 and 12:32] He commanded very explicitly that nothing is to be added to or subtracted from his law. [Samuel 15:23] Samuel says that disobedience to God is idolatry.

Second, I advise that their houses also be razed and destroyed. For they pursue in them the same aims as in their synagogues. Instead they might be lodged under a roof or in a barn, like the gypsies. This will bring home to them that they are not masters in our country, as they boast, but that they are living in exile and in captivity, as they incessantly wail and lament about us before God.

Third, I advise that all their prayer books and Talmudic writings, in which such idolatry, lies, cursing, and blasphemy are taught, be taken from them.

Fourth, I advise that their rabbis be forbidden to teach henceforth on pain of loss of life and limb....

Continuing, Luther quotes [Deuteronomy 17:10] and [Matthew 16:18] to describe

³¹⁰ Ibid., 111.

³¹¹ The first physical violence against the Jews came on November 9-10 on *Kristallnacht* (Crystal Night) when the Nazis killed Jews, shattered glass windows, and destroyed hundreds of synagogues, just as Luther had proposed.

³¹² *On the Jews and Their Lies*, 111.

the deception of Jews.

Fifth, I advise that safe-conduct on the highways be abolished completely for the Jews. For they have no business in the countryside, since they are not lords, officials, tradesmen, or the like. Let them stay at home. I have heard it said that a rich Jew is now traveling across the country with twelve horses *his ambition is to become a Kokhba* devouring princes, lords, lands, and people with his usury, so that the great lords view it with jealous eyes...

Sixth, I advise that usury be prohibited to them, and that all cash and treasure of silver and gold be taken from them and put aside for safekeeping. The reason for such a measure is that, as said above, they have no other means of earning a livelihood than usury, and by it they have stolen and robbed from us and they possess....

Here, Luther cited [Deuteronomy 23:20], [Matthew 27:22] and [John 19:15]

concerning usury.

Seventh, I recommend putting a flail, an ax, a hoe, a spade, a distaff, or a spindle into the hands of young, strong Jews and Jewesses and letting them earn their bread in the sweat of their brow, as was imposed on the children of Adam....

After Luther explained his seven suggestions in Part XI, he continued to offer advice to Christian pastors and preachers as well as government authorities.

And you, my dear gentlemen and friends who are pastors and preachers, I wish to remind very faithfully of your official duty, so that you too may warn your parishioners concerning their eternal harm, as you know how to do, namely, that they be on their guard against the Jews and avoid them so far as possible...

But if the authorities are reluctant to use force and restrain the Jews' devilish wantonness, the latter should, as we said, be expelled from the country and be told to return to their land and their possessions in Jerusalem, where they may lie, curse, blaspheme, defame, murder, steal, rob, practice usury, mock, and indulge in all those infamous abominations which they practice among us, and leave us our government, our country, our life, and our property, much more leave our Lord the Messiah, our faith, and our church undefiled and uncontaminated with their devilish tyranny and malice....

If you pastors and preachers have followed my example and have faithfully issued such warnings, but neither prince nor subject will do anything about it, let us follow the advice of Christ (Matthew 10:14) and shake the dust from our shoes, and say, "We are innocent of your blood." For I observe

and have often experienced how indulgent the perverted world is when it should be strict, and, conversely, how harsh it is when it should be merciful. Such was the case with King Ahab, as we find recorded in I Kings 20. That is the way the prince of this world reigns. I suppose that the princes will now wish to show mercy to the Jews, the bloodthirsty foes of our Christian and human name, in order to earn heaven thereby. But that the Jews enmesh us, harass us, torment and distress us poor Christians in every way with the above mentioned devilish and detestable deeds, this they want us to tolerate, and this is a good Christian deed, especially if there is any money involved (which they have filched and stolen from us).

There are many more anti-Semitic passages in Luther's text, but the last quotation from the very last paragraph of *The Jews and Their Lies* provides a chilling endnote in that it sets the stage for, justifies and encourages conflict between Jews and Christians through its identification of Christians as the rightful "foe" of devilish Jews.

So long an essay, dear sir and good friend, you have elicited from me with your booklet in which a Jew demonstrates his skill in a debate with an absent Christian. He would not, thank God, do this in my presence! My essay, I hope, will furnish a Christian (who in any case has no desire to become a Jew) with enough material not only to defend himself against the blind, venomous Jews, but also to become the foe of the Jews' malice, lying, and cursing, and to understand not only that their belief is false but that they are surely possessed by all devils. May Christ, our dear Lord, convert them mercifully and preserve us steadfastly and immovably in the knowledge of him, which is eternal life. Amen.³¹³

Martin Luther's views toward Jews were identical to that of Hitler as observed in the following section from *Mein Kampf*:

In this, too, unfortunately, nothing changed as time went on; all they obtained from the Jew was the thousandfold reward for the sins they had once committed against their peoples. They made a pact with the devil and landed in hell.³¹⁴

His unfailing instinct in such things scents the original soul in everyone, and his hostility is assured to anyone who is not spirit of his spirit. Since the Jew is not the attacked but the attacker, not only anyone who attacks passes as his enemy, but also anyone who resists him. But the means with

³¹³ Ibid., 143.

³¹⁴ *Mein Kampf*, 311.

which he seeks to break such reckless but upright souls is not honest warfare, but lies and slander. Here he stops at nothing, and in his vileness he becomes so gigantic that no one need be surprised if among our people the personification of the devil as the symbol of all evil assumes the living shape of the Jew. The ignorance of the broad masses about the inner nature of the Jew, the lack of instinct and narrow-mindedness of our upper classes, make the people an easy victim for this Jewish campaign of lies.³¹⁵

Luther, writing in *An Open Letter on the Harsh Book* justifies the action of killing for stopping evil and maintaining “peace and safety.” Luther wrote:

Therefore, as I wrote then so I write now; Let no one have mercy on the obstinate, hardened, blinded peasants who refuse to listen to reason; but let everyone, as he is able, strike, hew, stab, and slay, as though among mad dogs, put to flight, and led astray by these peasants, so that peace and safety may be maintained.

The merciless punishment of the wicked is not being carried out just to punish the wicked and make them atone for the evil desires that are in their blood, but to protect the righteous and to maintain peace and safety. And beyond all doubt, these are precious works of mercy, love, and kindness...

From this point of view, the Holocaust is considered an act of love and kindness instead of an evil act. History teaches us that human beings are capable of killing enemies or committing great evil in the name of justice and righteousness. Sometimes we hear, “how could any human being do such evil like Hitler?” yet all human beings are capable of doing so when certain conditions are fulfilled. For Luther or Hitler, they did not see their action as evil, rather as an act of righteousness to stop evil, based upon their interpretation of Christianity. Hitler’s own speeches showed how Luther’s anti-Semitic Christian teachings influenced to him, and how he understood Christianity for his movement.

My feeling as a Christian points me to my Lord and Savior as a fighter. It points me to the man who once in loneliness, surrounded by a few followers, recognized these Jews for what they were and summoned men to fight against them and who, God's truth! was greatest not as a sufferer but as a

³¹⁵ Ibid., 324.

fighter. In boundless love as a Christian and as a man I read through the passage which tells us how the Lord at last rose in His might and seized the scourge to drive out of the Temple the brood of vipers and adders. How terrific was His fight for the world against the Jewish poison. To-day, after two thousand years, with deepest emotion I recognize more profoundly than ever before the fact that it was for this that He had to shed His blood upon the Cross. As a Christian I have no duty to allow myself to be cheated, but I have the duty to be a fighter for truth and justice... And if there is anything which could demonstrate that we are acting rightly it is the distress that daily grows. For as a Christian I have also a duty to my own people.³¹⁶

Martin Luther represented one of the strongest views of anti-Semitism found in history but he was also the product of the history of Christianity dating back to the New Testament. This author intentionally quotes many Luther's rather long words, so that the readers really understand the intensiveness of Luther's anti-Semitism with Luther's own words, though some readers may be exhausted to read them all. It is a masculine type of Christianity, described as a "fighter." Luther doesn't just completely invent his arguments against Jews, but quotes the biblical passages to support them. From the Buddhist point of view, everything has its causes and conditions. Hitler's anti-Semitic views were nothing new, and came from the long history of the often conflicting relationship between Christianity and Judaism. Anti-Semitism was not necessarily seen as something negative in German and Christian history.

When English authors called Hitler's symbol a "swastika", they failed to see the importance of the cross, though the center of the swastika symbol is the cross. The Hook-Cross or Hakenkreuz has a clear connection to anti-Semitism in European history, but originally the Eastern svastika had no meaning of anti-Semitism.

Richard Wagner and Anti-Semitism:

Hitler once said, "Whoever wants to understand National Socialist Germany must

³¹⁶ Adolf Hitler, edited by Norman H. Baynes, *The Speeches of Adolf Hitler, April 1922-August 1939, Vol. 1* (Oxford University Press, 1942), 19-20.

know Wagner.”³¹⁷ But he did not specifically say what people needed to know about Wagner. From his youth, Hitler worshipped and idolized Wagner. Even after he became a German Chancellor, he continued to be a great fan of Wagner. Each year, Hitler attended the Bayreuth Festival³¹⁸ and declared it a National Socialist annual event. He never tired of Wagner’s operas. He also visited Wagner’s home many times. When Hitler was born in 1889, Wagner had already died. Hitler never met Wagner in person, only knew him through his music and writing. Wagner’s works had a great influence on Hitler. Hitler writes of his first experience with the Wagnerian opera, when he saw *Lohengrin*.

... and a few months later my first opera *Lohengrin*. I was captivated at once. My youthful enthusiasm for the master of Bayreuth knew no bounds. Again and again I was drawn to his works, and it still seems to me especially fortunate that the modest provincial performance left me open to an intensified experience later on.³¹⁹

Siegfried, the hero of Wagner’s opera *Nibelungen*, is referred to in Hitler’s *Mein*

Kampf, Hitler wrote:

The International Jewish world finance needed these lures to enable it to carry out its long-desired plan for destroying the Germany which thus far did not submit to its widespread superstate control of finance and economics. Only in this way could they forge a coalition made strong and courageous by the sheer numbers of the gigantic armies now on the march and prepared to attack the horny Siegfried at last.”³²⁰

August Kubizek met Adolf Hitler in 1904 (or 1905) at the opera. Because of their mutual interest in the opera, a friendship developed. They went to the opera together

³¹⁷ William Shirer, *The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich* (New York: Simon & Schuster Paperbacks, 1990), 101.

³¹⁸ Bayreuth Festival is a season of musical entertainment held annually in Bayreuth, Bavaria to present the operas of Wagner since 1876.

³¹⁹ *Mein Kampf*, 16.

³²⁰ *Ibid.*, 148.

many times over four years. Kubizek explained Hitler's enthusiasm for Wagner in the book, *The Young Hitler I Knew*.

Listening to Wagner meant to him [Hitler], not a simple visit to the theatre but the opportunity of being transported into that extraordinary state which Wagner's music produced in him, that trance, that escape into the mystical dream world which he needed in order to sustain the enormous tension of his turbulent nature. ... Of course, we knew by heart *Lohengrin*, Adolf's favorite opera – I believe he saw it ten times during our time together in Vienna – and the same is true of *Meistersinger*. ... For him nothing counted but German ways, German feeling and German thought. He accepted none but the German masters. How often did he tell me that he was proud to belong to a people who had produced such masters. ... His devotion to, and veneration of Wagner took almost the form of a religion. When he listened to Wagner's music he was a changed man: his violence left him, he became quiet, yielding and tractable. His gaze lost its restlessness; his own destiny, however heavily it may have weighted upon him, became unimportant. He no longer felt lonely and outlawed, misjudged by society. As if intoxicated by some hypnotic agent, he slipped into a state of ecstasy, and willingly let himself be carried away into that mystical universe which was more real to him than the actual workaday world. From the stale, musty prison of his back room, he was transported into the blissful regions of Germanic antiquity, that ideal world which was the lofty goal for all his endeavours.³²¹

Judging from Kubizek's book, Wagner for Hitler was not just an impetus for political ideology, but also his private place of refuge, the source of his energy and spiritual comfort. Kubizek expressed how Hitler changed when discussing Wagner. They also went to other operas, but Hitler did not care much for them.

Henderson asked "What was this man Wagner trying to do?" at the very beginning chapter I of Part II of *Richard Wagner: His Life and His Dramas*,

Broadly stated, the purpose of his life was to reform the lyric drama, to restore to it the artistic nature with which it was born, and to bring it into direct relation to the life of the German people. His ideal was the highest form of the drama, with music as the chief expository medium; and his most earnest desire, to make that drama national, both in its expression of the loftiest artistic impulses of the Teutonic people and in their recognition of

³²¹ August Kubizek, *The Young Hitler I Knew* (London: Greenhill Books, 2006), 185-188.

that fact.³²²

Wagner was considered one of the great German composers, and was especially known for his operas. His opera was often explained as a music drama with a spectacular setting. Wagner strove to create a “total work of Art³²³” with his opera. Productions were filled with music, storylines, poems, and visual excitement. Wagner considered his music to be essentially German. His dramatic operas were filled with German-centered elements such as Teutonic, Nordic, and German mythology, and heroic tales. This sense of German-ness was Wagner’s essence. His most well-known master piece was *Der Ring des Nibelungen*, which moved German audiences with a sense of a German-centered universe. Other works included *Lohengrin*, *Die Meistersinger*, *Die fliegende Holländer*, *Tannhäuser*, *Tristan und Isolde*, and *Parsifal*. Hitler’s theatrical presentations at political events were influenced by Wagner’s concept of “Total Work of Art”. As the propaganda film of *Triumph of the Will* (1935) by Leni Riefenstahl showed, Hitler brought excitement to various political events. Not only was Hitler able to deliver a good speech but by setting fireworks, holding parades, torchlight processions, performances and music he created great enthusiasm. Hook-Cross flags were at the center of all the events and served as an essential element in the setting. Hitler treated politics as operatic theater.

Wagner was influential on Hitler not only through music but also through his philosophy and ideas, which included an anti-Semitic view. In spite of Wagner’s great achievements, he suffered in many ways. He lived a free lifestyle, which was not traditional, and expressed his controversial views toward German society, religions and

³²² W.J. Henderson, *Richard Wagner: His Life and His Dramas* (New York: G.P. Putnam’s sons, 1923), 167.

³²³ Gesamtkunstwerke is translated differently like ‘works of all arts in - gesamt (whole, all, entire), kunst (art), werke (works).

politics. A libretto of *Der Ring des Nibelungen* was written when Wagner was exiled to Switzerland. Wagner's difficult life was somewhat similar to Hitler's life. Hitler wrote *Mein Kampf*, while he was in prison for five years at Landsberg Castle, Munich.

Richard Wagner: His Life and His Dramas (1901) by W. J. Henderson explains the principal works written by Wagner as a struggle for artistic expression.

The principal works written by him in this state of mind were 'Art and Revolution' in 1849, 'The Artwork of the Future', 'Art and Climate' 'Judaism in Music' in 1850, 'Recollections of Spontini' in 1851 and 'Opera and Drama' in 1852. Of these the last is the most important to the student of Wagner's theories, but at the time of publication it was the article on 'Judaism in Music' which raised the largest disturbance. The criticisms of Meyerbeer contained in it have been used by Wagner's enemies down to the present day as evidence that he was an ungrateful man.³²⁴

Based upon Henderson's summary, it is reasonable to focus on the anti-Semitism of *Judaism in Music*, though Wagner made other racist and anti-Semitic comments such as, "I felt a long-repressed hatred for this Jewry, and this hatred is as necessary to my nature as gall is to the blood."³²⁵ In 1850, Wagner published the *Das Judentum in de Musik* translated in English as *Judaism in Music*.³²⁶ Wagner's argument was unusual and new, and only he could make such an argument. Wagner began his argument against Jews from the standpoint of art, especially music, saying,

It will not be a question, however, of saying something new, but of explaining that unconscious feeling which proclaims itself among the people as a rooted dislike of the Jewish nature; thus, of speaking out a something really existent, and by no means of attempting to artfully breathe life into an unreality through the force of any sort of fancy. Criticism goes

³²⁴ W.J. Henderson, *Richard Wagner: His Life and His Dramas* (New York: G. P. Putnam's sons, 1923), 86.

³²⁵ Richard Wagner, *Correspondence of Wagner and Liszt* (New York: Haskell House Publishers, 1897), 145. Edited by William Ashton Ellis, Originally translated by Francis Hueffer.

³²⁶ *Judaism in Music* by Richard Wagner, Translated by William Ashton Ellis. All the passages of Judaism in Music are taken from *The Theatre, Richard Wagner's Prose Works, Volume 3* (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co. 1894), 79-100.

against its very essence, if, in attack or defence, it tries for anything else.

Since it here is merely in respect of Art, and specially of Music, that we want to explain to ourselves the popular dislike of the Jewish nature, even at the present day, we may completely pass over any dealing with this same phenomenon in the field of Religion and Politics.³²⁷

Wagner explained his view of Jewish status in German society. Jews had financial power, and they influenced the art-business.

According to the present constitution of this world, the Jew in truth is already more than emancipate: he rules, and will rule, so long as Money remains the power before which all our doings and our dealings lose their force. That the historical adversity of the Jews and the rapacious rawness of Christian-German potentates have brought this power within the hands of Israel's sons — this needs no argument of ours to prove. ... that this has also brought the public Art-taste of our time between the busy fingers of the Jew ... What their thralls had toiled and moiled to pay the liege-lords of the Roman and the Medieval world, to-day is turned to money by the Jew ... What the heroes of the arts, with untold strain consuming lief and life, have wrested from the art-fiend of two millennia of misery, to-day the Jew converts into an art-bazaar.³²⁸

Wagner thought of Jewish people as controlling the business-world. His attitude toward art was that it was never created for money-making or business. A money society was killing the real arts, including Wagner's art, he believed, and he criticized Jews who were in the money business. Wagner said in another work, "... whilst if the Jew comes tinkling with his bell of paper, it throws its savings at his feet, and makes him in one night a millionaire."³²⁹ In his view, Jews were taking money from Germans. Wagner said in *Know Thyself*,

Clever though be the many thoughts expressed by mouth or pen about the invention of money and its enormous value as a civiliser, against such praises should be set the curse to which it has always been doomed in song

³²⁷ *Judaism in Music*, 79.

³²⁸ Ibid.

³²⁹ *Richard Wagner's Prose Works Volume 6* (London: K. Paul, Trench, Trübner, 1897), 271.

and legend. If gold here figures as the demon strangling manhood's innocence, our greatest poet shows at last the goblin's game of paper money. The Nibelung's fateful ring become a pocket-book, might well complete the eerie picture of the spectral world-controller. By the advocates of our Progressive Civilisation this rulership is indeed regarded as a spiritual, nay, a moral power; for vanished Faith is now replaced by "Credit", that fiction of our mutual honesty kept upright by the most elaborate safeguards against loss and trickery. What comes to pass beneath the benediction of this Credit we now are witnessing, and seem inclined to lay all blame upon the Jews. They certainly are virtuosi in an art which we but bungle.³³⁰

Judaism in Music continued to describe different traits of Jewish people, such as their appearance, speech, language, and culture.

The Jew — who, as everyone knows, has a God all to himself — in ordinary life strikes us primarily by his outward appearance, which, no matter to what European nationality we belong, has something disagreeably foreign to that nationality: instinctively we wish to have nothing in common with a man who looks like that. ...

We can conceive no representation of an antique or modern stage-character by a Jew, be it as hero or lover, without feeling instinctively the incongruity of such a notion. ...By far more weighty, nay, of quite decisive weight for our inquiry, is the effect the Jew produces on us through his *speech*; and this is the essential point at which to sound the Jewish influence upon Music. — The Jew speaks the language of the nation in whose midst he dwells from generation to generation, but he speaks it always as an alien...³³¹

Wagner argued that Jews are not good for music, because their language is not German, and therefore cannot speak German from their hearts. Jewish artists are superficial and deceptive.

The first thing that strikes our ear as quite outlandish and unpleasant, in the Jew's production of the voice-sounds, is a creaking, squeaking, buzzing snuffle. ... Now, if the aforesaid qualities of his dialect make the Jew almost incapable of giving artistic enunciation to his feelings and beholdings through *talk*, for such an enunciation through *song* his aptitude must needs be infinitely smaller. Song is just Talk aroused to highest passion: Music is the speech of Passion.

³³⁰ Ibid., 268.

³³¹ *Judaism in Music*, 82-83.

When this had once been spoken out, there was nothing left but to babble after; and indeed with quite distressing accuracy and deceptive likeness, just as parrots reel off human words and phrases, but also with just as little real feeling and expression as these foolish birds. Only, in the case of our Jewish music-makers this mimicked speech presents one marked peculiarity — that of the Jewish style of talk in general, which we have more minutely characterised above.³³²

He discussed the well-known Jewish composer Mendelssohn as an unfortunate example in detail, comparing him to German composers such as Beethoven and Mozart.

He [Mendelssohn] has shown us that a Jew may have the amplest store of specific talents, may own the finest and most varied culture, the highest and the tenderest sense of honour — yet without all these pre-eminences helping him, were it but one single time, to call forth in us that deep, that heart-searching effect which we await from Art. ... Whereas Beethoven, the last in the chain of our true music-heroes, strove with highest longing, and wonder-working faculty, for the clearest, certainest Expression of an unsayable Content through a sharp-cut, plastic shaping of his tone-pictures: Mendelssohn, on the contrary, reduces these achievements to vague, fantastic shadow-forms, midst whose indefinite shimmer our freakish fancy is indeed aroused, but our inner, purely-human yearning for distinct artistic sight is hardly touched with even the merest hope of a fulfillment.³³³

Wagner explained what makes true art, and shared his philosophy of art and music, which he thought that a Jew could not possessively be capable of expressing:

The Jews could never take possession of this art, until *that* was to be exposed in it which they now demonstrably have brought to light — its inner incapacity for life. So long as the separate art of Music had a real organic life-need in it, down to the epochs of Mozart and Beethoven, there was nowhere to be found a Jew composer: it was impossible for an element entirely foreign to that living organism to take part in the formative stages of that life. Only when a body's inner death is manifest, do outside elements win the power of lodgment in it — yet merely to destroy it. Then indeed that body's flesh dissolves into a swarming colony of insect-life: but who, in looking on that body's self would hold it still for living? The spirit, that is: the *life*, has fled from out that body, has sped to kindred other bodies; and this is all that makes out Life. In genuine Life alone can we, too, find again

³³² Ibid., 85.

³³³ Ibid., 95-96.

the ghost of Art, and not within its worm-befretted carcass.³³⁴

Wagner mentions a Jewish poet, Heinrich Heine whose poems he insists were lies, saying “he duped himself into a poet, and was rewarded by his versified lies being set to music by our own composers. — He was the conscience of Judaism, just as Judaism is the evil conscience of our modern Civilisation.”³³⁵ At the last phrase, Wagner concluded “But bethink ye, that one only thing can redeem you from the burden of your curse: the redemption of Ahasuerus³³⁶ — *Going under!*”³³⁷

Though Judaism in Music did not discuss the racial superiority of a German white Aryan race, Wagner expressed such views in other writings. *Hero-dom and Christendom* by Wagner claimed the superior value of the white race, an Aryan noble quality and German nationalism.

We cannot withhold our acknowledgment that the human family consists of irredeemably disparate races, whereof the noble could rule the ignoble, yet never raise them to their level by commixture, but simply sink to theirs. Indeed this one relation might suffice to explain our fall. ...

Whilst yellow races have viewed themselves as sprung from monkeys, the white traced back their origin to gods, and deemed themselves marked out for rulership. It has been made quite clear that we should have no History of Man at all, had there been no movements, creations, and achievements of the white man. ...

Like Herakles and Siegfried, they were conscious of divine descent: a lie to them was inconceivable, and a free man meant a truthful man. Nowhere in history do the root qualities of the Aryan race show forth more plainly than in the contact of the last pure-bred Germanic branches with the falling Roman world.³³⁸

It certainly may be right to charge this purblind dullness of our public spirit to the vitiation of our blood -- not only by departure from the natural food

³³⁴ Ibid., 99.

³³⁵ Ibid.

³³⁶ *Ahasuerus*: name of one Median and two Persian kings mentioned in the Torah.

³³⁷ *Judaism in Music*, 100.

³³⁸ *Richard Wagner's Prose Works Volume 6*, (London: K. Paul, Trench, Trübner, 1897), 275 -278.

of man, but above all by the tainting of the hero-blood of the noblest races with that of former cannibals now trained to be the business agents of Society.³³⁹

The main passage of *Mein Kampf* mentioning the Hook-Cross says that it symbolized “the victory of the idea of creative work, which as such always has been and always will be anti-Semitic.” The phrase “creative work” brings the image of Wagner’s creativity. Wagner created great works of art centering on the German spirit. Operas are also open to be interpreted by the viewers /listeners, and Hitler might have interpreted that Wagner’s operas were great creative works with the message of anti-Semitism. What could be then, the creative work of Hitler? It was the Hook-Cross emblem for Nazi Germany by a designer artist, named Hitler, and his design became the symbol of Nazi Germany. Just as Wagner created sensational operas, and Hitler’s creation was the sensational Hakenkreuz, which was created by adopting the lucky charm symbol of the swastika from the East in connection to Aryans and anti-Semitism.

Based upon Wagner’s writings, it becomes clear that Wagner had both elements of Hitler’s Hook-Cross - “victory of Aryan man” and “victory of creative work of anti-Semitism.” When Hitler said “whoever wants to understand National Socialist Germany must know Wagner,” it was not an exaggeration. If one knows Wagner, one will know the creative works of his music, the heritage of the German Aryan race, and anti-Semitism. Wagner’s operas planted the seeds for Hitler’s own creative theatrical propaganda, of which the swastika was a central element.

The only difference between Wagner and Hitler was that Wagner did not use the Hakenkreuz-swastika for the reasons of Aryan-man and anti-Semitism, nor is that in any

³³⁹ Ibid., 284.

of Wagner's writings or operas, as it did not yet exist. Wagner did sometimes use the Christian cross to represent Aryan German Christians as well as anti-Semitism, following the tradition of Martin Luther. 'Siegfried' in Wagner's opera *Nibelungen* is the German hero, identified with German 'Volk' and also with Christ. Siegfried-Christ is killed, and Jews are the killers of the Siegfried-Christ. They are guilty and need to be punished. A mission of revenge takes place. Such an interpretation of the opera invokes the image of the Crusades symbolized by the cross. This spirit of the constructed revenge cross was succeeded by the Hook-Cross, a kind of cross created by Hitler.

Luther and Wagner:

The strength of Hitler's anti-Semitism came from both religious and historical anti-Semitism and more recent racial anti-Semitism. Generally speaking, religious anti-Semitism did not associate to race, and the Aryan race idea did not associate to anti-Semitism. Martin Luther's anti-Semitism had a religious root, and Richard Wagner's anti-Semitism had a racial (Germanic) root. In addition, Luther and Wagner were well-known and well-respected as great Germans in German history. They were Germany's top figures in religion and in music. All Germans knew who they were.

Adolf Hitler added the dimension of power and politics to Luther and Wagner's ideas about Jews. In *Judaism in Music*, Wagner says:

Since it here is merely in respect of Art, and specially of Music, that we want to explain to ourselves the popular dislike of the Jewish nature, even at the present day, we may completely pass over any dealing with this same phenomenon in the field of Religion and Politics. In Religion the Jews have long ceased to be our hated foes, — thanks to all those who within the Christian religion itself have drawn upon themselves the people's hatred. In pure Politics we have never come to actual conflict with the Jews.³⁴⁰

³⁴⁰ *Judaism in Music*, 79.

Hitler might have thought that this was Wagner's suggestion that Germany needed a good anti-Semitic politician, and perhaps Hitler decided to become the one. Hitler was a skillful politician and gained popularity from the German people.

The systematic anti-Semitism of Nazi Germany was a combination of Luther, Wagner and Hitler. Nazi Germany was a fusion of the power of religion, art, and politics.

Concluding Notes

The svastikas had existed long before Hitler and it happened to be his favorite symbol because of his interest in the East and its association with Aryans. He chose to use the symbol with his new interpretation and did it for his own political purpose. The svastika did not choose Hitler. The svastika has been chosen by many cultures and religions as the symbol of the sun, good fortune and auspiciousness, and billions of people have received the benefit over three thousand years like in Buddhism, Jainism and Hinduism. The svastika was not responsible for Hitler's action. Hitler's action was his own responsibility. Hitler should be blamed, and the Hitler's Hook-Cross could be blamed, but not sacred svastika symbol. The Hook-Cross or Hakenkreuz may be a symbol of hate but the svastika has nothing to do with hate, violence, racism and killing.

As chapter II began with the Holocaust story, it would be appropriate to end with the words from a Holocaust survivor. Greta Elbogen is a Holocaust survivor and a psychotherapist who is one of the author's site team members for this *Manji* project. She was born in 1937 in Vienna, Austria, and survived Nazi persecution as a young child in Budapest, Hungary. Her family fled to Hungary in 1939. In 1942 her father was taken to a forced slave labor camp. His final station was the Dachau concentration camp in Germany where he perished. Her mother and older sister survived in a protected house

from Swedish diplomat Raoul Wallenberg in Budapest. Elbogen and her two older brothers were hidden in a Red Cross shelter in Budakeszi on the outskirts of Budapest during the winter of 1944-45. After the war her mother and the four children reunited, but her mother was so traumatized that they were taken to a children's home and later her two brothers were sent to an orthodox Jewish Rabbinical seminary in England. Elbogen at a very young age had to take care of her mother. She eventually came to the United States in 1956.

Elbogen gave the author various suggestions from a survivor's view, as well as a therapist's view. Her input was very valuable because the *Manji* project deals with a sensitive issue for Jewish people, especially survivors of the Holocaust. This formal interview took place in New York, on December 20, 2011. She gave the author a card with her short poem, titled "I only have time to Love" and it captures who she is.

You may toss unkind words
Towards me,
I do not care,
I only have time to Love.
You may offer discouragement
Or guilt
It matters not.
I only have time to Love.
Have you attempted
To put me down?
That is alright with me,
Love cancels them all.

by Greta Elbogen

Elbogen's attitude has been positive, curious and enthusiastic. Her attitude towards the *Manji* project was a great source of comfort and encouragement, and made it possible for the author to continue the *Manji* project without hesitation. All survivors of the Holocaust may not think the same way as Elbogen does, but at least one person is

willing to hear and learn from the *Manji* project, which is worthwhile and reasonable enough to do this project.

“When I was asked to corroborate on a project of researching a meaning and history of the swastika, I saw it as an excellent opportunity to join a well-known Buddhist faith, interfaith and peace activist, to use this topic for dialogue among Jewish and non-Jewish and Holocaust survivors to ease the reactions to swastikas by widening the meaning of it. Bringing information and talking about it could help release the negative reactions,” said Elbogen. “I am committed to healing myself and others to create inner and outer peace. The best way to bring about change is when each individual is working on self development.” She thought that the *Manji* project would encourage more dialogue and saw it as a healing process. In her view, change has to come from higher consciousness. If so, then, everything finds its place. She said she thought that the *Manji* project comes from the higher consciousness, so she decided to join the author’s site team. Elbogen said that the svastika is alien to her, and she did not know much about it. She explained, “If a spiritual teachers wants to work with a particular issue, it can only bring good to people, because information and knowledge that two teachers³⁴¹ will provide can only help people.”

Elbogen commented, “Many people make a big deal about the swastika because they don’t know what the swastika means. Many Jewish people don’t know that the swastika also has been a good luck symbol for other religions. When a swastika is drawn in Brooklyn or California, if they knew that, they would not be frightened, and possibly smile at it in some point. As a spiritual person and a Holocaust survivor, I am intent to

³⁴¹ Two teachers mean Greta Elbogen and the author.

learn many positive meanings of the swastika and respect it. This way, I won't have such a negative reaction to it.”

From her childhood on when she lived in the orphanage, Elbogen wondered why the Jewish people suffered so much. Through the history of anti-Semitism in relation to Christianity in many cases, she says, Jews have developed a “persecution complex” – a sense of what's next? The community she grew up in, consisting mostly of Holocaust survivors, the understanding is that the Jewish people are often picked on, disliked and, of course, knowing from the recent past, hated. It is no surprise therefore that some of the people of the Jewish faith are cautious even today in a peaceful time in America to mingle with non-Jewish people.

However, she thinks that Judaism teaching is not so. Abraham, the forefather of the Jewish faith, represents a deep spiritual trust in the Higher Power – the Creator of the Universe. She quoted the Golden Rule by Hillel the Elder (110 BCE – 10 CE), “That which is hateful to you, do not do to your fellow. That is whole Torah; the rest is the explanation; go and learn.” Therefore, for her, the healing process happens by “opening-up” to ourselves and to others, and “letting go of fears” with the light of love and peace. How can we do that? She said, “Recognize one's fears and send light and love to it.”

After we had worked together for over half a year, Elbogen expressed that she enjoyed working together. “We have a similar goal to open up people's mind and hearts, look at things in different ways, and try to bring love and compassion to people,” she said. “In my thinking, everything has to do with love and healing.”

Her suggestions and her professional input as a psychotherapist truly helped the *Manji* project. Elbogen attended The Jewish Gymnasium (high school) in Budapest,

received her B.A. from Brooklyn College, and her M.S.W. at Hunter College. She continues to study spiritual subjects and holistic modes of healing. She practices now as a spiritual counselor. The author hopes that the *Manji* peace project will help to heal people and the world through awareness, discussion and dialogue on the swastika symbol. Her most favorite poem among those she has written is “Dialogue with a Waterbug,” and it is suitable to share her poem as a conclusion of the interview as well as Chapter II.

Dialogue With a Waterbug³⁴²

And said the waterbug to me pleading:

“Please just look at me once without
such hate of passion.

Who is bigger after all?

When you humans go astray
You expect to get direction
To your destination.”

And he continued pleading:

“Please would you just lead me
back to my home.
It is simple courtesy ...

After all we both,
Humans and insects,
Are guests in God’s House.”

I responded:

“Yes tiny shiny black creature
you may rest in my space
For as long as you need to.”

And the pleading waterbug and I
became unlikely roommates after all.

by Greta Elbogen

³⁴² Greta Elbogen, *Remember Me! A Collection of Poems by Greta Elbogen* (self published 2008).

Chapter III

Awareness Workshops

Any theory and idea should be tested. My topic about the swastika symbol will be the same way, but it may change form after being tested.

I held a couple of small workshops. As the *Manji* project is a sensitive topic dealing with a taboo issue, and is still in the experimental stage, I wanted to hold small workshops. After I finish my research and some workshops, I would like to have larger scale workshops in the future for my awareness campaign.

Public Talk at Ethical Society of Northern Westchester

I was a guest speaker at the Ethical Society of Northern Westchester on February 20, 2011 for their Sunday gathering. Approximately fifty people attended. It was my first time to talk about the svastika symbol to the public, and I did not have any idea how the audience would respond.

I began to talk generally about symbolism in Buddhism, and then spoke about one Buddhist symbol which was controversial here in the United States. I shared how I encountered the svastika symbol and why I decided to make the issue a subject for my doctoral thesis.

What amazed me was the reaction by the group. As soon as I said, “Do you have any questions or comments?” half of the group raised their hands. All the comments and questions were about the svastika. One person strongly, and with great emotion, expressed reluctance to acknowledge the svastika having any possible positive associations. I really appreciated her honest feeling and I will do my best to respect such

emotions as I continue my research. However, the others were simply interested in the Buddhist meaning of the svastika, and most of them did not know anything about the Eastern svastika. Some people who knew about the svastika as an Eastern symbol, showed interest and encouraged me to finish this “important” project. The comments and questions went on for an enthusiastic hour-long exchange. The discussion continued until a time keeper told us that we needed to stop. During a coffee hour after the formal session, people further asked me about the symbol and offered comments on my presentation. My research was at that point geared more towards the meaning of the svastika symbol, but I realized then I needed to do more research about the relationship between the Eastern svastika and Hitler’s swastika.

I sensed that the svastika must be the key to have an open conversation and dialogue. My feeling was that once the door would be opened by the svastika key, oppressed feelings and thoughts would be released and rushed out. Therefore, I would need to be careful in using this key, and I also needed to be serious and sincere about this symbol. Interfaith dialogue is focused on finding a common ground, which is important to develop friendships and a safe space to meet, discuss and exchange views. I perceive that the svastika discussion will bring a new level to interfaith dialogues, or dialogues among people on how we can understand and respect other’s religions which might have opposite points of views. I see the *Manji* project as a challenge to the current interfaith dialogue. I have been involved in interfaith dialogues for more than fifteen years, and I believe that interfaith communities are ready for this issue. Although it may be difficult for some to accept, the svastika is the most interfaith symbol in the world as demonstrated in Chapter I. It embraces all of Asia, the Middle East, the Americas, ancient

Europe and some parts of Africa, because of its nature as a symbol as the sun. The sun is the source of energy for all living beings on earth, and even primitive religions started from sun worship. The svastika is not just one of many symbols, but has been the predominant symbol of human beings on the Earth over thousands of years.

This is why the svastika brings on such a heated dialogue. If this is just one of many symbols, many people would not care, and I would not be very interested in doing this *Manji* project. I myself was amazed to realize the historical importance of the symbol. Learning about the svastika is learning world human history. Our many generations of ancestors were blessed by the svastika symbol for a long time in various places on the earth. I even feel that killing the svastika symbol is like killing our own roots as human beings.

The workshop jumpstarted my project on awareness of the swastika symbol. My feeling was positive and I was grateful for the opportunity that I was given by the Ethical Society of Northern Westchester.





Workshop at Buddhist Forum

I presented a workshop forum at the Buddhist Forum on April 16, 2011, held at Still Mind Zendo, New York, NY. I was one of the three speakers on the Buddhist Forum, which was sponsored by the Buddhist Council of New York. The Participants were all Buddhists. Most of them were American Buddhists, but there were some Asian Buddhists as well.

For this workshop, I prepared two materials. One was a simple question sheet about the svastika symbol handed out before my presentation. The other was photo

collection of the *manji*-svastika in Japan, which I passed around during my presentation. Later, we had a small group discussion.

In my mind, I assumed that all Buddhists knew this symbol. For the Buddhists from Asia, the svastika was a familiar symbol, but when I talked to American Buddhists at the forum, they held the same perceptions as most ordinary Americans. This is because American Buddhism became popular after the 60's, which was, of course, after WWII, and Buddhist centers in the United States did not use the svastika symbol anywhere. This was an interesting difference to notice. The Asian Buddhists, who were from Sri Lanka, Taiwan, Korea and Japan, grew up with the svastika signs, and their association with the svastika was consistently positive. But the American Buddhists, who all grew up in the United States, had learned that the swastika symbol was a symbol of Nazism and evil. Therefore, even for American Buddhists, the sacred svastika, so important in Buddhism, was seen negatively. It is sad to realize that American Buddhists were not able to appreciate their own sacred Buddhist symbol anymore, and I believe that this is a result of education and a society that only recognized the evil swastika. Though some people may know what it originally means, they are still not comfortable using the swastika. In any case, many Buddhist temples and centers in the United States have avoided using the svastika symbol. From my standpoint, if Buddhists or other Eastern religions can not raise this issue, who else who can?

At the session I asked the following simple questions: (1) What does it mean to you? (2) What is your impression / feeling about it? I showed four shapes – (a)  (b) 
(c)  (d) 

For most American respondents, the symbols were all the same. The differences were not recognized. In terms of the first question, the correct answer would be (a) the standard svastika symbol of Hindus and Jains, sometimes used by Buddhists, the Hook-Cross used often by Nazi Germany and (b) standard svastika symbol of Buddhists as well as Bon; (c) the incorrect way of writing Nazi swastika, sometimes used for hate-crimes; (d) the standard Hakenkreuz Nazi symbol used by Hitler and current Neo-Nazi and other racist hate groups. As a note, all four versions have been used during hate crimes.

I was able to collect responses from fifteen individuals. Two respondents gave correct responses for all four symbols. Six identified (d) as the Nazi symbol. Ten identified (a) as a Nazi and hate symbol. Three identified both (a) and (d) as Nazi/hate symbols. Only four identified (b) as a Buddhist symbol. Five seemed to not have any idea that the svastika is a Buddhist symbol, since they did not mark any of them as Buddhist. Two were not sure about which direction of the svastika is considered the Buddhist version and which one was used by the Nazis.

The second question asked about their feeling and impression of the symbol. “How sad such a simple joy could be used for evil,” “Reminding me of Tibetan and India culture,” “no feeling,” “neutral,” were among the responses. There were no negative comments about the Buddhist svastika when they recognized it as such. One respondent identified the Buddhist symbol but said he still had the same “negative feeling” for the Nazi one. Five who recognized the Buddhist symbol had a different impression for the Nazi symbol. Nazi vs. Buddhist svastika is “negative, WW II vs. neutral”; “discomfort vs. no feelings”; “uneasy vs. ?” “fear vs. construction power”; and “Tibetan and Indian

culture vs. black magic.” People who recognized only the Nazi/evil swastika wrote: “evil – sad”, “Repulsion, disgust, pain”, and “death, persecution, hatred.”

I also asked how many years they have been Buddhists. Some were for a short time and others for more than 30 years, but knowledge about the svastika did not necessarily correlate with their years of involvement. Because the svastika symbol has been avoided in American Buddhist practice, their practice and teachings were not associated with the svastika symbol.

There are many Jewish Buddhists in the West, especially in the New York area. That has probably contributed as well to the avoidance of the svastika in American Buddhism. It reminds me of visiting the Rubin Museum in Manhattan, NY, for my project to find out whether or not they have any items with the svastika symbol. Even the Rubin Museum, which displays Himalayan arts, avoids items with the svastika. I guess that public face is important to run a museum, but hopefully in the future, they will have some kind of exhibition about Buddhist svastika symbols since Tibetans and the Bon of the Himalayas frequently use the symbol for good fortune.

I gave the questionnaire to participants and asked them to fill it out before my talk. After they were done, I began my talk on the topic of “Symbolism and Buddhist Practice.” During my talk, I passed around a handout with photos of svastikas at Buddhist temples, Buddha statues, and svastikas on maps in Japan. I talked about Buddhist symbols, and the meaning of the svastika in Buddhist traditions. This time, we did not have a Q & A session, but we had a small group discussion in the afternoon.

At the small group discussion, the participants exchanged their thoughts and ideas. I realized how much we Buddhists have avoided this conversation, though it has been a

sacred symbol of Buddhism. This gathering made me realize that it is a Buddhist responsibility to bring this education to the public as well. For Western people, the Nazi swastika is much more familiar than the Eastern svastika, therefore, when I present the swastika from the East, this question of the Nazi swastika in relation to the Eastern swastika is an important issue that the *Manji* project needs to deal with. This workshop further helped me realize I needed to adjust the focus of the *Manji* project more towards the relationship of Hitler's swastika and the Eastern svastika with an awareness that American Buddhists also need to be educated about the svastika.

Workshop with Interfaith participants

I organized a workshop on "Interfaith Dialogue on Symbolism" on June 9, 2011 from 9 a.m. to 12noon with interfaith leaders. The workshop was held at the New York Theological Seminary Conference Room. This was a more organized workshop focused on the svastika. The purpose of the workshop was to bring awareness through presentations by various religious traditions, including Buddhism, Hinduism and Jainism. Here is schedule of the day after we began with an informal conversation over a light breakfast.

- I. Introduction
 - a. Silent prayer for those who lost their lives by the Holocaust – Jews, gypsies, homosexuals, handicapped, and all others, as well as all genocide victims of the world
 - b. Survey Questions
 - c. Introduction/Orientation

- II. Presentation on the Swastika Symbol - Overview & QA
by TK Nakagaki

- (Short Break)

- III. Panel Presentation from various religions & QA / Discussion
Moderator: Dr. Karim Abdul-Matin

Panelists: Naresh Jain (Jainism)
Dr. M.G. Prasad (Hinduism)
Rabbi Jo David (Judaism)

IV. Closing

- a. Peace Meditation by Rabbi Jo David
- b. Survey Questions

The workshop itself went very nicely and the quality was great, but the number of participants was low because of the choice of the date, I believe. I should have been more aware of the Jewish holiday of Shavuot, which commemorates the giving of the Ten Commandments to the Jewish People at Mt. Sinai. Shavuot starts at sundown on June 7, and June 9 when I had the workshop was the second day of Shavuot. Fortunately, most of my site team members were available and their presentations were very effective.

After a light breakfast, we began with a silent prayer for those who lost their lives by the Holocaust – Jews, gypsies, homosexuals, handicapped, and all others, as well as genocide victims in the world. I felt that this *Manji* project, as well as my workshop, needed to begin with a showing of respect for all victims of the Holocaust. I had just returned from my Holocaust research trip to Europe on June 3, a week before this workshop day.

After the opening prayer, all the participants answered the survey questions. I had another set of questions for after the workshop, so that we could measure the change of their understanding and perception. This questionnaire was longer than the one used at the Buddhist Forum. First, I wanted to ask for their contact number and e-mail so that I could ask them if I had a question later, as well as informing them of new workshops in the future.

The questions were: (1) Personal background. (2) “Do you think symbols are more powerful than words in inspiring actions?” This was intended to make the

participants think about the power of symbols in general, since we were going to talk about symbolism. (3) “What do these symbols mean to you?” This time, I decided to have two swastikas with 卐 and 卐, since many people did not see much difference of the swastika direction at the Buddhist forum. (4) “What do the above symbols make you feel?” I still wanted to know more about peoples’ understanding and feelings /emotions. (5) “Who created the swastika symbol and what for?” With this question, I wanted to find out if people really thought the swastika was created by Hitler. (6) “What is your understanding of the meaning of the “swastika”? I listed words – “peace,” “evil,” “prosperity,” “Nazis,” “Good Luck,” “anti-Semitism,” “sun,” “auspiciousness,” and “Buddhist temple.” And people could choose which word or words describe the swastika well. Then lastly (7) “When you hear the word swastika, what is your reaction?” This time, I wanted to focus on the word, not the shape. These questions arose from e-mail conversations and face-to-face meetings among the site team members, and were finalized by consensus. The survey would be helpful for the participants to prepare themselves for the workshop.

Then, we introduced ourselves briefly and explained the reason for participating in the workshop. In terms of religion, including site teams, we had Hindu (2), Jain (1), Catholic (2), Jewish (1), Muslim (4), Protestant (1), and Jewish Buddhist (1) participants. Seven females and five males were present. Twelve individuals of various ethnicities and myself, who is a male Japanese Buddhist, were present. The age range was from 25 years to 66 years. It was a balanced group. On the table, we displayed svastika items from different traditions which my site teams and myself brought. They included lanterns, coins, clothes, a card, pictures, ornaments and a flag.

I gave an hour-long presentation with a 135 page Power Point on a large TV screen. I gave an overview of the swastika symbol. Many photos were shown from my research trip to Japan but I did not have time to include my Holocaust trip to Europe. After the presentation, we had a Q&A period. The participants were very engaged in the presentation, and showed their appreciation for the preparation. As in the other workshops, participants again were interested in why and how Hitler decided to use the swastika as a symbol of Nazi Germany.

After a short break, we had a panel presentation from various religions, moderated by Dr. Karim Abdul-Matin. The panelists were: Naresh Jain from Jainism, Dr. MG Prasad from Hinduism, Rabbi Jo David from Judaism, and myself. N. Jain gave a presentation of the meaning of the Jain symbol, and brought svastika items such as a Jain coin and Jain flag. Dr. Prasad brought his own Power Point presentation, and explained the meaning of the Hindu svastika, and how it is used now. Rabbi David shared her concerns from the Jewish tradition in relation to the swastika symbol.

Rabbi David made the following comments after the workshop on her website “Healing and Hope 2011” on June 9, 2011.

The heart of TK’s project has to do with relieving the swastika from its negative associations with the Nazis as a way of promoting healing and peace. The central issue for Jews, I feel, is that the negative association with the swastika didn’t end with the conclusion of World War II. The swastika is still being used by Neo Nazis, White Supremacists and other hate groups to strike at Jewish communities, almost always with accompanying verbiage that is intended to create an atmosphere of fear. For these hate groups, the swastika is a potent vehicle for anti-Semitic rage. Until there is a way to disconnect the symbol of the swastika from continuing anti-Semitic violence, it will be difficult to convince the Jewish community that there is any possibility at all of making space for the understanding of the swastika as a non-violent symbol of goodness and prosperity. This being said, I believe that bringing together people of Eastern religious backgrounds and Western religious backgrounds to

discuss the ways in which we understand and respond to major religious symbols is an extremely productive activity. We live in a shrinking world in which we rub shoulders with more and more people who have widely-diverse religious, cultural and societal views. The challenge of multi-faith work is to help all people learn to navigate this world in a way that permits each of us to maintain our values while acknowledging without judgment ideas, rituals and traditions that may be quite different from our own. The activity of getting together and sharing our ideas can be a powerful tool in helping to add peace to the world.³⁴³

I deeply appreciate Rabbi David's comments and I would like to at some point in the future address her concerns about Neo-Nazi racial groups but I decided not to at this time. I felt that I needed to focus on the relation between Hitler's swastika and the Eastern svastika this time, following the workshops and Holocaust trip. When we talk about hate crimes, white supremacy, and Neo-Nazis, we always need to understand Hitler and Nazi Germany as the essential root. The first step is to provide correct information about the svastika of the East as well as Hitler's Hook-Cross. After this session I decided to attempt to interview a member of a Neo-Nazi group, and did so in December.

We concluded the workshop session with a peace meditation by Rabbi Jo David. I wished that my *Manji*-svastika project would bring peace and healing to many people in the near future. Lastly I asked the participants to use 5 – 10 minutes to answer the post-workshop survey.

This survey had two pages. On the first page were very similar questions from the survey before the workshop. "Now, how do you see the swastika/svastika after the workshop?" (1) "Personal background." It is good to ask them to write again so that I can check their information twice, especially e-mail addresses. Some handwriting is difficult to read. (2) "Do you think symbols are more powerful than words in inspiring

³⁴³ <http://healingandhope2011.com/2011/06/june-9-2011/> (accessed on January 21, 2011).

actions?” (3) “What do these symbols mean to you now?” (4) “What do the above symbols make you feel now?” (5) “When you hear the word swastika now, what do you think?”: I attempted to see the differences after the session. The second page was an evaluation of the workshop.

(6) “Questions on Presentation”: This is important to improve our presentation in the future. Five levels were provided: “1- Excellent; 2- Good; 3- OK; 4- Not good; and 5- Bad.” The participants can check the level. The main categories are “Svastika in Asia” and “Hitler’s Swastika.” Then, I had another five areas that they could choose: “a- Printed materials; b- Audio-visual materials; c- Speakers; d- Organization; and e- Discussion.” (7) “Please share any suggestions or comments to improve our presentation.” If they had specific ideas and comments, this was the chance to share them. (8) “Did you learn something new today? What did you learn? Which portion of the workshop was helpful to you in better understanding the symbol of the swastika?” These questions will be helpful to organize next conference. (9) “Are you interested in future involvement in the *Manji* (swastika) Awareness Campaign committee?” I intend to expand the *Manji* project in a future, so it would be great to have people, especially interfaith communities to be a part of the *Manji* project. (10) “General Comments”: Any comments and ideas are welcome.

After the workshop was over, I collected the survey sheets. Here is the summary from the surveys. One third of the respondents knew what my project was all about, so I could not expect to see any difference between pre-workshop and pro-workshop. However, even among the site team members, they found the workshop very educational, and quite good. From a religious perspective, Hindus, Jains, and Buddhists were familiar

with the friendly swastika (svastika). Jewish respondents were familiar with the evil swastika (Hakenkreuz). Christians and Muslims were not much concerned about the symbol for their faith practice.

Question #2 was intended to make participants think about symbolism to get them in the right mindset, so I will skip their answers. Pre-Workshop Questions #3 - #7 were about recognition of the swastika symbols and in relation to their feelings. Seven people recognized both meanings of negative (Nazi) and positive (Hindu, Buddhism etc.), but among them, four expressed that they were not sure which orientation of the symbol is which. Three people recognized the swastikas as negative only, and one recognized it only as positive. Even among those who answered both, the people from Asia saw it basically as positive, and the people who grew up in this country saw it basically as negative. Pre-Workshop question #5 was to see how many people understand that the swastika was created by Hitler, but none of them thought so. Among the images of the swastika of Pre-Workshop question #6, “Nazi” was chosen five times; “Anti-Semitism” and “good-luck” were chosen three times; “evil,” “peace” and “auspicious” were chosen twice; “prosperity” and “Buddhist temple” were chosen once; and the “sun” was not selected at all. I omitted this question for the Post-Workshop survey, because I mentioned that all of them can mean swastika in the present usage in the world at the presentation time. As for Pre-Workshop questions #4 and #6, some did not see the differences of the survey questions. What I wanted to find out was whether there were any differences between a swastika word as a sound one hears with his/her ears and a swastika symbol as a visual one sees with his/her eyes. Though some people did not get

my intention, the feelings that they wrote were an important measurement, when compared to Post-Workshop survey questions #4 and #5.

As my workshop was intended to introduce the positive Eastern svastika symbol, people who already knew the Eastern svastika did not find it as exciting as the others who only knew the Nazi related symbol or did not know much about Eastern religions. However, those who knew the Eastern svastika also found that they liked learning more and deepened their thoughts about it. One wrote, “The workshop was powerful and deepened my experience of the swastika. Because I knew the discussion it did not radically change my answers here.” In general, this comment summarized the feelings of the Hindu, Jain and Buddhist participants. The topic of how Hitler used the swastika would be more interesting for the Eastern religious affiliated people. Basically, this workshop was based upon Chapter I of my thesis. I would like to organize a workshop based upon Chapter II in the near future. One Hindu person who did not have much knowledge about the Nazi swastika learned about the Nazis misappropriation of the swastika symbol during the workshop, and he changed his reaction to the symbol from “Nothing significant” to “symbol of peace abused by Nazis.” Among Western religious affiliated people, I could see changes. For some, it was a small change, but for others it was a big jump. People who were vaguely familiar with the Eastern svastika symbol became more positive about the symbol. One began with the feeling of “a little uncomfortable”, and ended up with the feeling “peaceful” after the workshop. This same person changed her order of explanations for each, which means that she explained the Nazi swastika first and then the Eastern swastika, but wrote the Eastern positive meaning first and then the Nazi swastika. I noticed two people shifted their order of explanation to

one that is similar to one explained by the Eastern religious affiliated people. Four people changed their understanding and feeling from negative to neutral or positive: from “anger” to “motivated to do more education”; from “aversion” to “There’s a lot of work to be done”; from “Holocaust/anger” symbol to “more than Holocaust symbol”; from “confused, fearful” to “not fear, luck, happiness”; from “connotation to Hitler, anti-Semitism” to “its positive connotations”; from “curiosity” to “symbol representing good will”; from “disputed symbol” to “Eastern faiths”; from “confused” to “sacred symbol which has been with humanity for thousands of years”; from “mixed emotions” to “sacred reminder” and “tool education”. One person came late and so didn’t have a chance to fill out the Pre-Workshop survey, but her comments from the post-workshop survey were all positive: “happy, inspired” and “life giving”.

Post-Workshop question #6 provided a way for me to know the effectiveness of the presentation, speakers, organization, materials and discussion. All participants checked “excellent” or “good” for all categories. Responding to Post-Workshop Question #7, two respondents suggested a possible video presentation. One wrote that it would be good to have more time for each presenter as well as with the audience. In terms of content: “It would be interesting to hear more about how Hitler came to use this symbol.” This is definitely the emphasis of the next workshop, and I am interested in this area as well. All their suggestions were reasonable, and I would consider them all. After the workshop, one Muslim participant found interesting that the swastika-phobia could be connected to anti-Islam sentiment or Islam-phobia which has recurred after the 9-11 W. T. C. terrorist attack. I was not thinking about this aspect, so it was interesting to hear this comment.

People shared what they learned from the workshop in Post-Workshop Question

#8. Here are some comments:

-I learned many things -1) the variety of uses of swastika 2) the many cultures in which it is used.

-Positive meaning of *manji* (svastika) - all presentation and interaction with participants

-Discussion was very helpful in understanding because of variety of speakers, speaking from different backgrounds.

-I had not known how very widespread the swastika is in the world's religions traditions.

-How much swastika is a part of everyday culture in parts of Asia, Africa.

-I thought the panel presentations were very informative and TK's research on the use of the symbol around the world and throughout history was very enlightening.

For post-Workshop question #9, I asked about their interest in being a part of the *Manji* (svastika) awareness campaign committee. Except for one person who kept the space blank, everyone expressed interested in remaining involved in the campaign. Their willingness encouraged me to continue and complete the *Manji* project. Post-Workshop question #10, was a chance for participants to offer general comments and any other thoughts. One suggested a possible educational dialogue with Neo-Nazi/hate groups in the future. Another suggested having a reference list for the presentation. Others thanked me for the workshop, and encouraged me to have another one.

Based upon the survey question responses, as well as the discussion and conversations at the workshop, I would say that the workshop was very successful for the purpose of an awareness campaign. The workshop gave me the encouragement that my *Manji* project could influence and change the people's conceptions and understanding as

long as people are open-minded. This is what education is all about, and I believe that it is our responsibility to provide correct information. The workshop simply shared facts about the swastika from various aspects. From my eyes, it is not healthy to push one's view of the swastika in Western society, and simply providing facts to the public is the first step to stop perpetuating ignorance.

I also realized that I need to think of at least three audiences of Interfaith groups, when we organize workshops. – 1) Eastern religious affiliated people who are familiar with the positive svastika; 2) Western religious affiliated people who know only the negative swastika symbol; and 3) those who are in between, knowing both the negative and positive swastika, and yet do not have enough knowledge about either. This swastika issue may be difficult for Jewish people to deal with, yet it is also important for the Jewish community to be correctly informed.

Important Meetings for Future Possible Paths

Because this is a sensitive yet important issue for Jewish communities, I would like to have workshops and projects together with these communities in the future. I see the *Manji* project as more or less a follow-up of the statement from the Second Hindu-Jewish Leadership Summit that was held in Jerusalem in 2008. Hindu leaders and Jewish leaders held major summits in 2007, 2008 and 2010³⁴⁴, organized by Mr. Bawa Jain. I had an informal meeting with Mr. Bawa Jain on February 14, 2011, and he kindly gave me copies of the Hindu-Jewish Summit papers from 2007 and 2008. The following is a part of the joint declaration made in 2008, which talked about the swastika.

³⁴⁴ The Summits were held in New Delhi in 2007, Jerusalem in 2008, and New York/Washington in 2010.

... The *swastika* is an ancient and greatly auspicious symbol of the Hindu tradition. It is inscribed on Hindu temples, ritual altars, entrances, and even account books. A distorted version of this sacred symbol was misappropriated by the Third Reich in Germany, and abused as an emblem under which heinous crimes were perpetrated against humanity, particularly the Jewish people. The participants recognize that this symbol is, and has been sacred to Hindus for millennia, long before its misappropriation. ...³⁴⁵

As leaders have already recognized the swastika, we need to now implement the declaration by developing educational materials and workshops. This is my research and project, though from my view as a Buddhist. It is time as the first step to recognize and spread knowledge of this ancient sacred symbol to the public.

I had a meeting with Mark Weitzman, Director of Government Affairs of the Museum of Tolerance, in New York City on August 30, 2011. Judging from the name, it would be a good place to have a discussion, lecture, workshop and develop educational materials on the swastika. Mr. Weitzman showed me various displays and said he would consider those suggestions. He said, "It is still a difficult subject and has some risk for the public." Well, at least it was not a "no."

I met with David Warren, Director, Education Division of Anti-Defamation League, in New York City on October 18, 2011. He was open to the idea of having educational sessions with workers there. Mr. Etzion Neuer, ADL's Director of Community Service and Policy, said that on his desk is a photo of the Canadian women's hockey team wearing svastika uniforms. Both of them were open-minded and educated people, so I hope to actually be able to do some sessions at the ADL in the near future.

I met with Barbara Wind, Director of Holocaust Council of MetroWest in New

³⁴⁵ Booklet of *Report of the Hindu-Jewish Leadership Summit* (February 17-20, 2008), 9. An initiative of the World Council of Religious Leaders Of The Millennium World Peace Summit, hosted by The Chief of Rabbinate of Israel with the support of the American Jewish Community.

Jersey on November 9, 2011. My site team member Greta Elbogen and I together went to see her, and we attended their Kristallnacht commemoration and survivor's talk. We had an hour-long talk with Ms. Wind, who showed her understanding and her curiosity of the *Manji* project. It would be wonderful to do a project in the future with Holocaust survivors.

I met with other Jewish leaders in New York. Rabbi Simkha Y. Weintraub, Rabbinic Director of N. C. J. H. (The National Center for Jewish Healing) and N. Y. J. H. C. (New York Jewish Healing Center) introduced me to several rabbis who may possibly be important for my *Manji* project. He himself showed an interest in participating in future workshops. Coincidentally, he happened to be a classmate of Rabbi Michael Schudrich, Chief Rabbi of Poland, whom I met with shortly afterward in Warsaw. I also met Rabbi Joseph Potasnik, Executive Vice President, New York Board of Rabbis.

Following up the suggestion made at the interfaith workshop that I should further consider the importance of the use of the symbol by Neo-Nazi and Hate groups and individuals, I set up an interview with Mr. R. P. who is a former member of the White Aryan Resistance, as well as the Hammerskins. Mr. R.P. is also a former member of The New York Buddhist Church, my former temple, and a convert to Buddhism. He is currently continuing his Buddhist studies with me. I met him for the interview in Chinatown/Little Italy in New York on December 28, 2011. He joined white supremacy groups when he was a high school student in Oklahoma, more than twenty years ago. I asked about how they used the swastika symbol, and what it meant to them. He said swastika flags, pins, and decorations were placed on tables, walls and doors, and they drew the swastika on their own houses. They revered the swastika symbol together with

various other symbols such as the cross. But he did not know that Hitler did not call it a swastika and was not familiar with the term Hakenkreuz. He said it was his impression that members of those groups did not know anything about the history of the symbol beyond its association with Hitler and he also didn't know about it before his studies of Buddhism. There was more interesting information that he shared with me. I saw a possibility to have some educational dialogue with hate groups in the future, after my interview with Mr. R. P.

Meeting various people and organizing workshops to discuss the swastika/svastika symbol reaped rewards. Individuals have shared concerns and interests. To continue the awareness project will be beneficial for a greater public that has little idea about the Eastern svastika, and at the same time this can bring more dialogue, more discussion and increased multifaith mutual-understanding.

Chapter IV ***Conclusion: Now and Future***

The swastika issue is all around us today. It is important to update what is happening. On July 27, 2010, the Anti-Defamation League (ADL) made a historical announcement about the swastika symbol. The Jewish Week reported,

The painting of a swastika—the dark, ubiquitous signature of hateful vandals everywhere—will no longer be automatically considered an act of anti-Semitism under new guidelines for recording attacks against Jews announced by the Anti-Defamation League. The most prominent Jewish defense agency in the country, perhaps the world, announced July 27 that it has revamped its guidelines for recording anti-Semitic incidents in its annual survey for the first time in 30 years, taking a more conservative approach.³⁴⁶

In a recent article dated November 11, 2011, The Jewish Week's reported, "The ADL recently announced that it no longer considers the swastika as outright anti-Semitic symbol for purposes of recording hate crimes statistics if the target is not related to Jews."³⁴⁷

The swastika has in recent years has become more of a general hate symbol, rather than one which is particularly anti-Semitic. This can be seen in a number of incidents in New York in recent months. On January 11, 2012, the DNAINfo News reported (by Wil Cruz) the following:³⁴⁸

MIDTOWN — Vandals accused of scrawling swastikas on storefronts near

³⁴⁶ Adam Dickter, "ADL downgrades swastika as Jewish hate symbol," *The Jewish Week* (August 2, 2010).

³⁴⁷ Adam Dickter, "Growing-Up Hate in Jackson Heights: Swastikas at shul, public libraries in Queens neighborhood seen as malicious attack rather than kids' prank," *The Jewish Week* (November 11, 2011).

³⁴⁸ <http://www.dnainfo.com/20120111/midtown/nypd-releases-video-of-midtown-swastika-suspects> (accessed on January 22, 2012).

Bryant Park were captured on security video footage. The NYPD released film of four people wanted for the attacks on the Penguin Clothing Store, the Kinokuniya Bookstore and an office building, all on one block of Sixth Avenue. It shows two females and two males leaving the bookstore on Sunday. It shows one of them stopping to draw a swastika. One of the male suspects was shown pulling a black wheelbag and carrying a red backpack, police said.

Kinokuniya is a Japanese bookstore, and has nothing to do with Jewish people or Judaism. Why did they paint a swastika at a Japanese store? What exactly were they trying to communicate? It was not clear. There was no hate message that accompanied the symbol, and the suspects were not apprehended so there has been no chance to ask them.

An especially dramatic incident of apparent anti-Semitism happened on the 73rd Anniversary of Kristallnacht on November 11, 2011. The New York Times reported the story under the headline, “Cars Burned and Swastikas Scrawled in Brooklyn Jewish Area”:

One or more vandals on Friday set fire to several parked cars and scrawled anti-Semitic graffiti on nearby benches in Brooklyn, in what the police said was a hate crime in a heavily Jewish neighborhood. The arson took place along Ocean Parkway in Midwood, between Avenue I and Avenue J, where three cars, a BMW, a Lexus and a Jaguar, were set on fire. Also, “KKK” was written on the side of a red van, the police said, and swastikas and anti-Semitic slurs were scrawled on benches.³⁴⁹

“This kind of hateful act has no place in the freest city in the freest country in the world,” said Mayor Bloomberg and his remarks were echoed by other local leaders. Two days later residents, elected officials and others marched against hatred and intolerance.

But, the story did not end. Two months later after an investigation, police announced they suspected that the incident was an insurance scam, and not a hate crime,

³⁴⁹ <http://cityroom.blogs.nytimes.com/2011/11/11/cars-burned-and-swastikas-scrawled-in-brooklyn-jewish-area/> (accessed on January 22, 2012).

with the hateful graffiti done to throw off investigators. NBC reporter Shimon Prokupez, in a report written on January 11, 2012, “Authorities are investigating a spree of burned cars and swastikas in a predominantly Jewish area of Brooklyn as a possible insurance scam, not a hate crime, sources tell NBC New York.” The same report explained,

Officials have a person of interest that they're investigating for being behind the November destruction, which included spray-painted "KKK" graffiti and stunned the city with its hateful messages. The person may have been trying to destroy a car for insurance money, authorities believe, and was concealing that with the other crimes.³⁵⁰

It is reasonable say those who committed ill actions with ill intention, used the swastika for a hateful and destructive purpose, no matter what their own backgrounds are. But what about a store selling an item that has a swastika symbol and identifies it when asked as a Tibetan symbol, not a hate symbol? Should this symbol be removed and the person selling it described as evil? The Daily News reported such a case involving swastika design earrings on January 11, 2012 (by Simone Weichselbaum).

A Brooklyn jewelry store came under fire from politicians Tuesday for hawking earrings that look like swastikas. The Bejeweled shop in Greenpoint has sold out of all but one pair of the controversial accessory — studs that closely resemble the Nazi symbol. “It’s totally outrageous,” said City Councilman Steve Levin (D-Greenpoint), who called on Bejeweled to stop selling the earrings. ... State Assemblyman Dov Hikind (D-Brooklyn) called the manager’s defense “nauseating.” “It’s sick. It’s insulting. It’s degrading,” Hikind said. “The average person, when they see a swastika, they see it as a symbol of hate. End of story.”³⁵¹

The passion with which the earrings were criticized was the same as that used for hate crimes incidents. The very appearance of the symbol was enough to

³⁵⁰ <http://www.nbcnewyork.com/news/local/Swastikas-Burned-Cars-Insurance-Scam-Midwood-Brooklyn-137090188.html> (accessed on January 22, 2012).

³⁵¹ http://articles.nydailynews.com/2012-01-10/news/30613446_1_swastikas-earrings-symbol (accessed on January 22, 2012).

draw ire, even well outside of the context of a hate crime. The news report further explained, “A Bejeweled manager defended the Manhattan Ave. store’s decision to sell the jewelry, saying that the earrings mirror the Tibetan symbol, not swastikas.” Another news report mentioned that the manager was Asian.

Selling an ancient Eastern religious symbol represented as such is not a hate crime. The reaction to this incident shows that it is time to talk about the swastika symbol more openly. These types of incidents will happen more often when the East and West meet. Does Western society have to keep denying the Eastern and Native American meanings of the swastika? Note the response of Assemblyman Hikind (whose constituents that he is elected to represent include many Asian Americans by the way) after being informed of the Asian manager’s explanation of it as an ancient Tibetan symbol: “The average person, when they see a swastika, they see it as a symbol of hate. End of story.” This comment reflects an attitude of swastika-phobia, and Eurocentricism. Who is Hikind’s “average person”? Obviously not Asian-Americans. In the news story, the manager was correct in describing the symbol as meaning good fortune in Tibetan Buddhism. On the other hand, Hikind’s statement also was correct by saying that the swastika is equated with evil in the West. Now, when this conflict happens, what should we do? This is where dialogue becomes important. When one side is happy, then other side is unhappy, and vice versa. In the news, there was no dialogue, just opposing voices isolated from one another, and in that case, simply the bigger and stronger voice wins. If this is a truly democratic country, then don’t we need to respect others’ views as well?

The most important aspect of dialogue is to be able to listen to others, and understand the other's position as well as presenting one's own view. Dialogue cannot be achieved if one is not ready to listen to others. Religious dialogue, interfaith dialogue, and intercultural dialogue are the way to work together to find a common ground with mutual-respect and mutual-understanding. As for the svastika symbol, we need to begin to provide information and knowledge first.

In a concluding note, we all need to have knowledge, and to educate ourselves from broader perspectives, based upon facts and truth. We may not like some facts and truth, but yet we need to learn from them. Our life is full of learning. It is always good to be humble and open-minded. The issue of the swastika symbol has been eye-opening for me as I described in various chapters. For me, it was just a simple Buddhist symbol that I grew up with in Japan. I was shocked to hear from a hate crime expert that "Swastika is now the universal symbol of hate or Nazism." From this incident, my dissertation has developed. Now, I am grateful to the hate crime expert who made such a statement. I have learned a lot from my research. It was surely an eye-opening experience for me. I never would have learned that the svastika is the most interfaith symbol existing on Earth if I did not choose this topic. I hope that my research will provide a new awareness about the swastika symbol, and offer a broader scope to deal with the international, historical, religiously diverse swastika symbol, as well as understand how Hitler adopted the Hook-Cross from the Eastern svastika.

"Transforming the symbol of the 'swastika': A bright lotus flower grows out of the dark muddy swamp of history" is the title that I chose for my demonstration project. It has two aspects. One is to recognize the svastika of the East and other world cultures,

and the other is promoting discussion and dialogue in relation to the svastika and Hook-Cross in the West.

“Transforming the symbol of the swastika” focuses on the first aspect of bringing awareness about the svastika symbol in the world, which is discussed in Chapter I and Chapter II. Information about the svastika/swastika needs to be presented.

‘Transformation’ means “change” or “turning” specifically through providing knowledge and understanding about the swastika symbol. Transformation does NOT mean to forget or to replace it or any part of its historical usage, but rather to remember and to face it directly. False/wrong information makes people confused and causes chaos, but true/right knowledge makes people understand and therefore creates balance.

The lotus flower, a Buddhist symbol of enlightenment, is achieved through transformation. The lotus flower blossoms only from the mud, not from ordinary beautiful soil. This means that suffering is a source of enlightenment, and without suffering, there will be no enlightenment. In the midst of suffering and pain, the lotus grows and blossoms. Through right knowledge and wisdom with compassion one will be healed and nurtured to grow one’s pure flower.

Once we gain true knowledge, no one needs to fear the symbol, one can accept its dark history and bring the light to the darkness. Because anti-Semitism has deeply traumatized Western society, it is not so easy to change overnight to view the svastika symbol as distinct from the Hook-Cross. It is also important for Eastern people to understand the pain and difficulties of the Holocaust.

Discussion, debate and dialogue about the swastika will help transformation not just of the swastika. Talking about the swastika provides opportunities to talk about larger

and related issues of hate crimes, religious symbols, freedom of religious expression, the meaning and power of symbols, genocide, and Holocaust education. I believe that my research provides provocative information for further discussion and educational action in these areas.

Dedication:

2011 was a special year for me in many ways. The Japan Earthquake and Tsunami took away at least 19,000 people's lives and crippled the Fukushima nuclear reactor which has created enormous radiation pollution in Japan. The year 2011 was also the 10th year anniversary of the 9-11 W. T. C. terrorist attack, which affected me in many ways. It was sad to see, but I was grateful for the opportunity for the first time to visit the Auschwitz and Treblinka death camps in Poland and pay my respects to the victims.

The year 2011 marked the 2600 Vesak Buddha's Birthday. The year 2011 was also the 750th memorial year for Shinran Shonin, the founder of Jodoshinshu (True Pure Land) Buddhism, and the 800th Memorial year for Honen Shonin, the teacher of Shinran who founded Jodo-shu (Pure Land) Buddhism, my tradition.

I would like to dedicate my svastika dissertation to honor all the above happenings in 2011 and all the lives which were lost by the tragic events connected to this year. With my sincere appreciation to my wife, parents, children, family, friends and site team members, I would like to extend my best wishes for a peaceful world.

Very lastly, I would like to share the poetry and words which helped me to do the *Manji* peace project: The following is a quote from a Holocaust survivor, Greta Elbogen's poem, *Remember Me!*

“Not in my dictionary”³⁵²

In my dictionary the word
Disgusting
Is replaced with
The unique nature of things.

The word
Hate
Is replaced with
Inquiry into the unfamiliar.

Instead of
Revenge
Is stated
Dialogue with the one who hurt me.

In place of the word
War
Is written,
Building bridges of understanding
Between myself and the other.

Also, I was encouraged by some words from the Hasidic Jewish master, Rebbe

Nachman of Breslow (1772 – 1810):³⁵³

Know! A person walks in life on a very narrow bridge. The most important thing is not to be afraid.

The highest peace is the peace between opposites. If you remember this the next time you meet someone who makes you uncomfortable, instead of heading for the nearest exit, you’ll find ways for the two of you to get along.

To be a person of truth, be swayed neither by approval nor disapproval. Work at not needing approval from anyone and you will be free to be who you really are.

Develop a good eye. Always looking for good will bring you to truth.

Truth is the “light” by which to find your way out of darkness. Turn it on.

If you believe that you can damage, then believe that you can fix.

If you believe that you can harm, then believe that you can heal.

³⁵² Greta Elbogen, *Remember Me! A Collection of Poems by Greta Elbogen 2nd Edition* (Self-published, 2012).

³⁵³ Rebbe Nachman of Breslow. *The Empty Chair: Finding Hope and Joy* (Woodstock: Jewish Light Publishing, 1994), 15, 29, 77, 78, 79 and 112.

Thank you, and may all living beings be happy, well and peaceful. May we all be free from the attachment to greed, anger and ignorance. May we all attain enlightenment. With palms together.

Epilogue *Statement for the Museums*

One of the actions I would like to take is to send out a statement about the Eastern meanings of the svastika symbol to various Holocaust related museums, as well as temples which use the svastika symbol in Asia. I hope to see this statement posted at the museums and temples to educate people about the larger history of the svastika and its ongoing usage in other cultures. This is a part of the svastika awareness campaign discussed in the previous chapter. This idea was suggested by the Chief Rabbi of Poland during our meeting. As millions of people from all over the world visit museums, such as the Auschwitz Holocaust Memorial Museum, as well as major temples in Asia such as Senso-ji in Tokyo, it is a practical and efficient approach to educate people about this subject. Other museums may also be interested in posting a statement.

As mentioned in Chapter 2, the author's research visits to many museums related to the Holocaust and Nazi Germany in the U. S., as well as in European countries, revealed that there are no explanations displayed about Hitler's Hook-Cross (Hakenkreuz), or swastika in relation to the Eastern svastika. As a Buddhist priest, when I made a trip to the Holocaust related sites, such as concentration camps, historical ghetto sites and museums, I felt heavy, dark and sad about what happened to the Jews, Gypsies, prisoners of war, handicapped, homosexual, and all victims there. At the same time, I felt the sacred Eastern religious symbol of the svastika was looked down on, hated, and persecuted. The sacred svastika continues to be defiled without any proper explanation. Many people see the svastika as something created by Hitler's Nazi Germany. As

mentioned in Chapter 1, research visits to Zenko-ji temple in Nagano and Senso-ji temple in Tokyo, Japan, where the *manji*-svastika symbols are displayed prominently also lack any written explanations about their meanings and usage. It would be helpful for them to have a similar statement which explains the usage of svastika in Japan or other Asian countries, so that the Western visitors do not feel confused and see it as hate symbol related to Nazism.

Talking about the swastika symbol is a way to create more dialogue about both issues of genocide and an understanding of human cultures. Mutual understanding and respect is at the heart of all Interfaith work. As we educate the West about the swastika, we also have a chance to educate the East about the horrors of the Holocaust, which often isn't discussed in depth in Eastern countries, such as Japan. In this sense, the svastika, through discussions about its use and meanings, can create a two way path in the 21st Century, reminding us "Never Again" and helping prevent genocides in the world. In this way, this original sun symbol, a symbol possibly as old as human history itself, can shine a light of education and mutual understanding. When seen in this way, the swastika's cross shape itself inspires. It consists of two lines together symbolizing a meeting of East and West, in unity and harmony.

Suggested Statement about the Swastika for Western Museums

The swastika symbol, or "svastika" as it is called in Sanskrit, is said by scholars to be one of the oldest sacred symbols in the world. Its use has been documented in ancient Christianity, Judaism, and many Eastern religions as well as Native American Indian cultures. Scholars believe its original meaning may have been to represent the sun.

The svastika has been used for more than 2,000 years in Buddhism, Jainism, and Hinduism as a sacred religious symbol of auspiciousness, luck and virtue. It is seen in temples, scrolls, statues and other ritual items used in these religions.

In many Asian cultures, the svastika is also commonly used as a decorative element in ceramics, textiles, woodwork and other items as a lucky motif.

Hitler, who had an interest in Eastern religions and the occult, misappropriated and misinterpreted the svastika symbol, which he called a “Hook-cross” or “Hakenkreuz” in German, for use in political propaganda. Likewise Hitler also misappropriated the Sanskrit word “Aryan” whose original meaning simply meant “noble” and “virtuous” in Buddhism and other Indian religions without any connotation of race or ethnicity. Twisted out of their original meanings and contexts, the swastika and concept of “Aryan” served the Nazi propaganda helping to create the tragedy of World War Two and the Holocaust.

Hitler’s use of the svastika was a desecration of the symbol. Since then, it has been commonly associated in the West with anti-Semitism, Hitler, Neo-Nazi supremacy groups, racism, and hate crimes, in contrast to its continued positive associations in the East.

Statement about the Swastika for Eastern Tradition Temples

Visitors may notice many swastika symbols at this temple. It is not here as a symbol of Nazi Germany or hate groups, as it is commonly associated with in the West.

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Nazi supremacy groups, racism, and hate crimes, in contrast to its continued positive associations in the East.

After I finish my dissertation, I would like to send the above statements to various museums and to religious organizations in Europe, the United States and Asia. I will include the declaration of the 2nd Hindu-Jewish Summit about the svastika and possibly my final dissertation paper. I also hope to translate my dissertation into Japanese and have it published there.

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