

Swastika

W en.wikipedia.org /

For other uses, see [Swastika \(disambiguation\)](#).

The **swastika** (also known as the **gammadion cross**, **cross cramponnée**, or **manji**) (as a Chinese character: 卐 or 卐) is a **symbol** that generally takes the form of an equilateral **cross**, with its four legs bent at 90 degrees.^{[1][2]} It is considered to be a sacred and auspicious symbol in **Hinduism**, **Buddhism** and **Jainism**.^[3]

It has been used as a decorative element in various cultures since at least the **Neolithic**, and is found on a man's tunic depicted in a Roman mosaic at the **Villa Romana del Casale** in Sicily. It is known most widely as an important symbol long used in **Indian religions**, denoting "auspiciousness." It was adopted as such **in pre-World War I-Europe** and later, and most notably, by the **Nazi Party** and **Nazi Germany** prior to World War II . In many Western countries the swastika has been **stigmatized** because of its use in Nazism.^[4] It continues to be commonly used as a religious symbol in **Hinduism** and **Buddhism**.^[3]

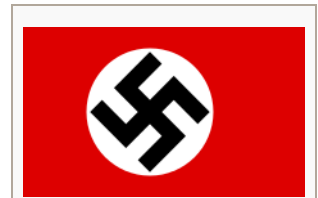
The word *swastika* derives from the **Sanskrit** *svastika* (**Devanagari**: स्वस्तिक) "lucky or auspicious object".^[5] The older term *gammadion cross* in Western literature derives mainly from its appearance, which is identical to four Greek **gamma** letters affixed to each other.^[5]

Contents

- 1 Names
- 2 Symbol in various scripts
- 3 Geometry
- 4 Origin hypotheses
- 5 Archeological record
- 6 Worldwide use
 - 6.1 Asia
 - 6.1.1 Hinduism
 - 6.1.2 Buddhism
 - 6.1.3 Jainism
 - 6.1.4 Other East Asian traditions
 - 6.1.5 Armenia
 - 6.2 Europe
 - 6.2.1 Greco-Roman antiquity
 - 6.2.2 Celts
 - 6.2.3 Germanic Iron Age
 - 6.2.4 Illyrians
 - 6.2.5 Slavic
 - 6.2.6 Sami
 - 6.2.7 Medieval and early modern Europe
 - 6.2.8 Early 20th-century Europe
 - 6.3 North America
- 7 As the symbol of Nazism
- 8 Post-WWII stigmatization
 - 8.1 Origins
 - 8.2 Germany
 - 8.3 Legislation in other European countries
 - 8.4 Attempt to ban in the European Union
 - 8.5 Latin America
 - 8.6 Media
 - 8.7 Satirical use
 - 8.8 Misinterpretation over imported Asian products in Western countries
- 9 Contemporary use in Asia
 - 9.1 South Asia
 - 9.2 East Asia
 - 9.3 Central Asia
- 10 New religious movements
- 11 See also
- 12 References



Called *svastika* in **Sanskrit** and *manji* in **Japanese**, it is a **symbol** of auspiciousness in **Hinduism**, **Buddhism**, and **Jainism**.



In the **Western world**, the swastika since the 1930s has mostly been associated with the flag of **Nazi Germany** and the **Nazi Party**.

- [13 Bibliography](#)
- [14 External links](#)

Names

The word *swastika* has been in use in English since the 1870s, replacing *gammadion* (from [Greek](#) γαμμῶδιον).^[6] It was loaned from the [Sanskrit](#) term *svastika* ([Devanagari](#): स्वस्तिक), meaning any lucky or auspicious object, and in particular a mark made on persons and things to denote auspiciousness, or any piece of luck or well-being. It is composed of *su-* meaning "good, well" and *asti* "being"; the suffix *-ka* either forms a diminutive or intensifies the verbal meaning, and *swastika* might thus be translated literally as "that which is associated with well-being," corresponding to "lucky charm" or "thing that is auspicious."^[7] The word finds its origin in [Vedic Sanskrit](#). As noted by [Monier-Williams](#) in his Sanskrit-English dictionary, according to [Alexander Cunningham](#), its shape represents a monogram formed by interlacing of the letters of the auspicious words *su-asti* (*svasti*) written in [Ashokan characters](#).^[8]

Other names for the symbol include:

- *hook cross* (German: **Hakenkreuz**), *angled cross* (German: *Winkelkreuz*) or *crooked cross* (German: *Krummkreuz*).
- *cross cramponned*, *cramponnée*, or *cramponny*, in [heraldry](#), as each arm resembles a [Crampon](#) or angle-iron (German: *Winkelmaßkreuz*).
- *fylfot*, chiefly in heraldry and architecture. The term was coined in the 19th century based on a misunderstanding of a Renaissance manuscript.
- *gammadion*, *tetragammadion* (Greek: τετραγαμμῶδιον), or *cross gammadion* (Latin: *crux gammata*; French: *croix gammée*), as each arm resembles the [Greek letter Γ](#) (*gamma*).^[1]
- *tetraskelion* (Greek: τετρασκελίον), literally meaning "four legged", especially when composed of four conjoined legs (compare [triskelion](#) (Greek: τρισκέλιον)).

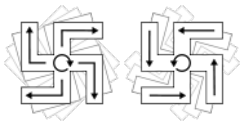
Symbol in various scripts

The swastika has been a standardized [Chinese character](#) "卐" (pinyin: *wàn*) and as such entered various other [East Asian languages](#) such as Japanese where the symbol is called "卍" (Hepburn: *manji*) or "卐字" (*manji*). The swastika is included as part of the [Chinese script](#) and has [Unicode](#) encodings U+534D 卐 (left-facing) and U+5350 卍 (right-facing);^[9] the latter has a mapping in the original [Big5](#) character set,^[10] but the former does not (although it is in Big5+^[11]). In Unicode 5.2, four swastika symbols were added to the [Tibetan block](#): U+0FD5 卍 right-facing svasti sign, U+0FD6 卐 left-facing svasti sign, U+0FD7 卍 right-facing svasti sign with dots and U+0FD8 卐 left-facing svasti sign with dots

Geometry

[Geometrically](#), the swastika can be regarded as an irregular [icosagon](#) or 20-sided [polygon](#). The proportions of the Nazi swastika were fixed based on a 5 × 5 diagonal grid.^[12]

Characteristic is the 90° [rotational symmetry](#) and [chirality](#), hence the absence of reflectional [symmetry](#), and the existence of two versions of swastikas that are each other's [mirror image](#).



A right-facing swastika might be described as "clockwise" or "counterclockwise".

The mirror-image forms are often described as:

- counterclockwise (卍) and clockwise (卐);
- left-facing (卐) and right-facing (卍);
- left-hand (卐) and right-hand (卍).

Origin hypotheses

The earliest known object with swastika-motifs is a bird from the [tusk](#) of a [mammoth](#) from the paleolithic settlement of [Mezine, Ukraine](#) dated to 10,000 [BCE](#).^[13]

Among the earliest cultures utilizing swastika is the neolithic [Vinča culture](#) of South-East Europe (see [Vinča symbols](#)). More extensive use of the Swastika can be traced to [Ancient India](#), during the [Indus Valley Civilization](#).

The swastika is a repeating design, created by the edges of the reeds in a square basket-weave. Other theories attempt to establish a connection via [cultural diffusion](#) or an explanation along the lines of [Carl Jung's collective unconscious](#).

The genesis of the swastika symbol is often treated in conjunction with [cross symbols](#) in general, such as the [sun cross](#) of pagan [Bronze Age religion](#). Beyond its certain presence in the "proto-writing" symbol systems emerging in the [Neolithic](#),^[14] nothing certain is known about the symbol's origin. There are nevertheless a number of speculative hypotheses. One hypothesis is that the cross symbols and the swastika share a common origin in simply symbolizing the [sun](#). Another hypothesis is that the 4 arms of the cross represent 4 aspects of nature - the sun, wind, water, soil. Some have said the 4 arms of cross are four seasons, where the division for 90-degree sections correspond to the [solstices](#) and [equinoxes](#). The Hindus represent it as the Universe in our own spiral galaxy in the fore finger of Lord Vishnu. This carries most significance in establishing the creation of the Universe and the arms as 'kal' or time, a calendar that is seen to be more advanced than the lunar calendar where the seasons drift from calendar year to calendar year. The [luni-solar](#) solution for correcting season drift was to [intercalate](#) an extra month in certain years to restore the lunar cycle to the solar-season cycle. The [Star of David](#) is thought to originate as a symbol of that calendar system, where the two overlapping triangles are seen to form a partition of 12 sections around the perimeter with a 13th section in the middle, representing the 12 and sometimes 13 months to a year. As such, the Christian cross, Jewish hexagram star and the Muslim crescent moon are seen to have their origins in different views regarding which calendar system is preferred for marking holy days. Groups in higher latitudes experience the seasons more strongly, offering more advantage to the calendar represented by the swastika/cross. (Note relation to the [sun cross](#).)



Swastika seals from the [Indus Valley Civilization](#) preserved at the [British Museum](#)

According to Reza Assasi, Swastika is a geometric pattern in the sky representing the north [ecliptic pole](#) centred to [Zeta Draconis](#). He argues that this primitive astrological symbol was later called the four-horse chariot of [Mithra](#) in ancient [Iran](#) and represented the centre of Ecliptic in the star map and also demonstrates that in [Iranian mythology](#), the cosmos was believed to be pulled by four heavenly horses revolving around a fixed centre on clockwise direction possibly because of a geocentric understanding of an astronomical phenomenon called [axial precession](#). He suggests that this notion was transmitted to the west and flourished in Roman [mithraism](#) in which this symbol appears in Mithraic iconography and astrological representations.^[15]

[Carl Sagan](#) in his book *Comet* (1985) reproduces [Han period](#) Chinese manuscript (the *Book of Silk*, 2nd century BC) that shows comet tail varieties: most are variations on simple comet tails, but the last shows the comet nucleus with four bent arms extending from it, recalling a swastika. Sagan suggests that in antiquity a [comet](#) could have approached so close to Earth that the jets of gas streaming from it, bent by the comet's rotation, became visible, leading to the adoption of the swastika as a symbol across the world.^[16] [Bob Kobres](#) in *Comets and the Bronze Age Collapse* (1992) contends that the swastika like comet on the Han Dynasty silk comet atlas was labeled a "long tailed pheasant star" (Di-Xing) because of its resemblance to a [bird's foot](#) or [track](#). Kobres goes on to suggest an association of mythological birds and comets also outside China.

In *Life's Other Secret* (1999), [Ian Stewart](#) suggests the ubiquitous swastika pattern arises when parallel waves of neural activity sweep across the [visual cortex](#) during states of altered consciousness, producing a swirling swastika-like image, due to the way quadrants in the field of vision are mapped to opposite areas in the brain.^[17]

[Alexander Cunningham](#) suggested that the Buddhist use of the shape arose from a combination of [Brahmi](#) characters abbreviating the words *su asti*.^[8]

In his book *The Apocalypse Unsealed* (1981), Robert F. Riggs lists the swastika as one of several variations of the quadratura circuli, other examples being oriental [mandalas](#) and the [Latin cross](#) with the circle of eternity (i.e. the [Celtic cross](#)). He notes that the [Tetrad 4](#) (square, cross, or cube) symbolizes the world of man, and a circle (or sphere) symbolizes heaven, the realm of the spirit, and heavenly virtues. As such, the combination of circles, crosses, spheres, and cubes, as found in various forms of the quadratura circuli, symbolize the union of heaven and earth.^[18]

Archeological record

The earliest swastika known has been found in [Mezine, Ukraine](#). It is carved on late paleolithic figurine of mammoth ivory, being dated as early as about 10,000 BC. It has been suggested this swastika may be a stylized picture of a [stork](#) in flight and not the true swastika that is in use today.^[20]

In [England](#), neolithic or Bronze Age stone carvings of the symbol have been found on [Ilkley Moor](#).

Mirror-image swastikas (clockwise and anti-clockwise) have been found on ceramic pottery in the [Devetashka cave, Bulgaria](#), dated 6,000 B.C.^[21]

Some of the earliest archaeological evidences of Swastika in the [Indian subcontinent](#) can be dated to 3,000 BCE.^[22] Swastikas have also been found on pottery in archaeological digs in Africa, in the area of [Kush](#) and on pottery at the [Jebel Barkal temples](#),^[23] in [Iron Age](#) designs of the northern [Caucasus](#) ([Koban culture](#)), and in [Neolithic China](#) in the [Majiabang](#),^[24] [Dawenkou](#) and [Xiaoheyan](#) cultures.^[25] Other Iron Age attestations of the swastika can be associated with [Indo-European](#) cultures such as the [Indo-Iranians](#), [Celts](#), [Greeks](#), [Germanic peoples](#) and [Slavs](#).

The swastika is also seen in Egypt during the Coptic period. Textile number T.231-1923 held at the V&A Museum in London includes small swastikas in its design. This piece was found at Qau-el-Kebir, near Asyut, and is dated between AD300-600.

The *Tierwirbel* (the German for "animal whorl" or "whirl of animals"^[26]) is a characteristic motif in Bronze Age Central Asia, the [Eurasian Steppe](#), and later also in Iron Age [Scythian](#) and [European](#) ([Baltic](#)^[27] and [Germanic](#)) culture, showing rotational symmetric arrangement of an [animal motif](#), often four birds' heads. Even wider diffusion of this "Asiatic" theme has been proposed, to the Pacific and even North America (especially [Moundville](#)).^[28]

Worldwide use

Asia

In [Asia](#), the swastika symbol first appears in the archaeological record around ^[22] 3000 BC in the [Indus Valley Civilization](#).^{[29][30]} It also appears in the Bronze and Iron Age cultures around the Black Sea and the Caspian Sea. In all these cultures the swastika symbol does not appear to occupy any marked position or significance, but appears as just one form of a series of similar symbols of varying complexity. In the Zoroastrian religion of Persia, the swastika was a symbol of the revolving sun, infinity, or continuing creation.^{[31][32]} It rose to importance in [Buddhism](#) during the [Mauryan Empire](#) and in [Hinduism](#) with the [decline of Buddhism in India](#) during the [Gupta Empire](#). With the [spread of Buddhism](#), the Buddhist swastika reached Tibet and China. The symbol was also introduced to [Balinese Hinduism](#) by [Hindu](#) kings. The use of the swastika by the [Bön](#) faith of [Tibet](#), as well as Chinese [Taoism](#), can also be traced to Buddhist influence. In [Thailand](#), the word "Sawaddi" is normally used as a greeting which simply means "hello"; Sawaddi-ka (feminine) and Sawaddi-krup (masculine). "Sawaddi" derives from the Sanskrit word "swasti" and its meaning is a combination of the words: prosperity, luck, security, glory, and good.

Hinduism

The swastika is an important Hindu symbol. It is traced with the finger with [sindoor](#) on the head or body during Hindu religious rites, and on doors on festival days - notably on diwali, or deepavalli. It is painted on many, if not most, three-wheel auto-rikshas and trucks. In all these uses it is a lucky charm protecting from evil and attracting good.

It is also said to represent [God](#) (the [Brahman](#)) in his universal manifestation, and energy (*Shakti*). It represents the four directions of the world (the four faces of [Brahma](#)). It also represents the [Purushartha](#): Dharma (natural order), Artha (wealth), Kama (desire), and Moksha (liberation).

Among the Hindus of [Bengal](#), it is common to see the name "swastika" ([Bengali](#): স্বস্তিক *shostik*) applied to a slightly different symbol, which has the same significance as the common swastika, that looks like a stick figure of a human being.^[33] Right-facing swastika in the decorative Hindu form is used to evoke the Shakti.

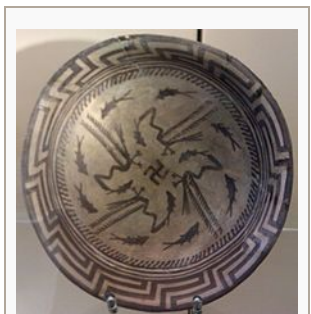
Buddhism



Ancient Roman mosaics of [La Olmeda](#), Spain.



Mosaic swastika in excavated Byzantine (?) church in [Shavei Tzion](#) (Israel)



The [Samarra bowl](#), at the [Pergamonmuseum](#), Berlin. The swastika in the center of the design is a reconstruction.^[19]



A photograph of the swastika stone on [Ilkley Moor](#), alongside its replica carving and the view it overlooks from [Woodhouse Crag](#).



Swastika symbol carved on the window of [Lalibela Rock hewn churches](#), Ethiopia

Buddhism originated in the 5th century BC and spread throughout the **Indian subcontinent**. In the 3rd century BC (**Maurya Empire**). Known as a "yungdrung"^[34] in ancient Tibet, it was a graphical representation of eternity.^[35]

Jainism

Jainism gives even more prominence to the swastika as a tantra than Hinduism does. It is a symbol of the seventh **tirthankara**, **Suparśvanātha**. In the **Śvētāmbara** tradition, it is also one of the **aṣṭamaṅgala**. All **Jain temples** and holy books must contain the swastika and ceremonies typically begin and end with creating a swastika mark several times with rice around the altar. Jains use rice to make a swastika in front of statues and then put an offering on it, usually a ripe or dried fruit, a sweet (**Hindi**: मिठाई *mīṭhāī*), or a coin or currency note. The four arms of the swastika symbolize the four places where a soul could be reborn in the cycle of birth and death - **svarga** "heaven", **naraka** "hell", **manushya** "humanity" or **tiryancha** "as flora or fauna" - before the soul attains **moksha** "salvation" as a **siddha**, having ended the cycle of birth and death and become free and **omniscient**.

Other East Asian traditions

The paired swastika symbols are included, at least since the **Liao Dynasty** (AD 907–1125), as part of the **Chinese writing system** (卍 and 卐) and are **variant characters** for 萬 or 万 (*wàn* in Mandarin, *man* in Korean, Cantonese and Japanese, *vạn* in Vietnamese) meaning "all" or "eternity" (lit. **myriad**). The swastika marks the beginning of many Buddhist scriptures. In East Asian countries, the left-facing character is often used as symbol for Buddhism and marks the site of a Buddhist temple on maps.

In Chinese, Japanese, and Korean the swastika is also a homonym of the number 10,000, and is commonly used to represent the whole of Creation, e.g. 'the myriad things' in the **Dao De Jing**. During the Chinese **Tang Dynasty**, Empress **Wu Zetian** (684-704) decreed that the swastika would also be used as an alternative symbol of the Sun.

When the **Chinese writing system** was introduced to Japan in the 8th century, the swastika was adopted into the Japanese language and culture, with the meaning remained unchanged but slight change on its pronunciation. It is commonly referred as the *manji* (lit. Man-character). Since the Middle Ages, it has been used as a *mon* by various Japanese families such as **Tsugaru clan**, **Hachisuka clan** or around 60 clans that belong to **Tokugawa clan**.^[36] On **Japanese maps**, a swastika (left-facing and horizontal) is used to mark the location of a Buddhist temple. The right-facing *manji* is often referred to as the *gyaku manji* (逆卍, lit. "reverse *manji*") or *migi manji* (右卍, lit. "right *manji*"), and can also be called *kagi jūji* (鉤十字, literally "hook cross").

In **Chinese** and **Japanese** art, the swastika is often found as part of a repeating pattern. One common pattern, called *sayagata* in Japanese, comprises left- and right-facing swastikas joined by lines.^[37] As the negative space between the lines has a distinctive shape, the sayagata pattern is sometimes called the "*key fret*" motif in English.

As a pottery graph of unknown provision and meaning the swastika-like sign is known in Chinese Neolithic culture (2400–2000 BCE, Liu wan 柳湾, **Qinghai** province).

Armenia

In **Armenia** swastika is called "**arevakhach**" and "kerkhach" (**Armenian**: կրեռխաչ)^[38] and is the ancient symbol of eternity and eternal light (i.e. God). Swastikas in **Armenia** were founded on petroglyphs. During the bronze age it was depicted on **cauldrons**, belts, **medallions** and other items.^[39] Among the oldest petroglyphs is the seventh letter of the Armenian alphabet - "E" (which means "is" or "to be") - depicted as half-swastika.

Swastikas can also be seen on early Medieval churches and fortresses, including the principal tower in Armenia's historical capital city of **Ani**.^[38] The same symbol can be found on **Armenian carpets**, cross-stones (**khachkar**) and in medieval manuscripts, as well as on modern monuments (symbol of eternity).^[40]

Europe

In **Bronze Age Europe**, the "**Sun cross**" (a three- or four-armed hooked cross in a circle) appears frequently, often interpreted as a solar symbol. Swastika shapes have been found on numerous artifacts from **Iron Age Europe** - **Armenian Arevakhach** (**Armenian**: Արևախաչ, առև arev "sun" + խաչ *xač* "cross", "sun cross"),^{[38][41][42]} **Greco-Roman**, **Illyrian**, **Etruscan**, **Baltic**, **Celtic**, **Germanic**, **Slavic**.^[1]

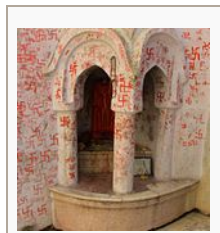
Greco-Roman antiquity

Ancient Greek architectural, clothing and coin designs are replete with single or interlinking swastika motifs. There are also gold plate **fibulae** from the 8th century BC decorated with an engraved swastika.^[43] Related symbols in classical Western architecture include the **cross**, the three-legged **triskele** or **triskelion** and the rounded **lauburu**. The swastika symbol is also known in these contexts by a number of names, especially *gammadion*,^[44] or rather the tetra-gammadion. The name gammadion comes from the fact that it can be seen as being made up of four Greek gamma (Γ) letters. Ancient Greek priestesses would tattoo the symbol, along with the tetraskelion, on their bodies. Ancient Greek architectural designs are replete with the interlinking symbol.

In **Greco-Roman** art and architecture, and in **Romanesque** and **Gothic art** in the West, isolated swastikas are relatively rare, and the swastika is more commonly found as a repeated element in a border or tessellation. The swastika often represented perpetual motion, reflecting the design of a rotating windmill or watermill. A meander of connected swastikas makes up the large band that surrounds the **Augustan Ara Pacis**. A design of interlocking swastikas is one of several **tessellations** on the floor of the cathedral of **Amiens**, France.^[45] A border of linked swastikas was a common Roman architectural motif,^[46] and can be seen in more recent buildings as a neoclassical element. A swastika border is one form of **meander**, and the individual swastikas in such a border are sometimes called **Greek keys**. There have also been swastikas found on the floors of **Pompeii**.^[47]

Celts

The bronze frontispiece of a ritual pre-Christian (c. 350-50 BC) shield found in the **River Thames** near **Battersea Bridge** (hence "**Battersea Shield**") is embossed with 27 swastikas in bronze and red enamel.^[48] An **Ogham** stone found in **Anglish**, **Co Kerry**, **Ireland** (**CIIC** 141) was modified into an early Christian gravestone, and was decorated with a **cross patée** and two swastikas.^[49] The **Book of Kells** (ca. 800) contains swastika-shaped ornamentation. At the Northern edge of **Ilkley Moor** in **West Yorkshire**, there is a swastika-shaped pattern engraved in a stone known as the **Swastika Stone**.^[50] The figure in the foreground of the picture is a 20th-century replica; the original carving can be seen a little farther away, at left of center.



Swastikas inscribed at a Kshetrapala shrine at Hanumantal Bada Jain Mandir at Jabalpur



Hindu child with head shaven and red Swastika painted on it as part of his Upanayana ceremony.



Nepalese Buddhist gumpa, Swayambhunath, Kathmandu, showing swastika designs on curtains. 1973



Swastika on the doorstep of an apartment in Maharashtra, India.



Manji sign on Saisen box in Buddhist temple Senso-ji, Asakusa, Taito, Tokyo, Japan.

Germanic Iron Age

Main article: [Swastika \(Germanic Iron Age\)](#)

The swastika shape (also called a *fylfot*) appears on various Germanic [Migration Period](#) and [Viking Age](#) artifacts, such as the 3rd century [Værlose Fibula](#) from Zealand, Denmark, the [Gothic spearhead](#) from [Brest-Litovsk](#), today in [Belarus](#), the 9th century [Snoldelev Stone](#) from [Ramsø](#), Denmark, and numerous Migration Period [bracteates](#) drawn left-facing or right-facing.^[51]

The [pagan Anglo-Saxon ship burial](#) at [Sutton Hoo](#), England, contained numerous items bearing the swastika, now housed in the collection of the [Cambridge Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology](#).^[52] The Swastika is clearly marked on a hilt and sword belt found at [Bifrons](#) in [Kent](#), in a grave of about the 6th century.

[Hilda Ellis Davidson](#) theorized that the swastika symbol was associated with [Thor](#), possibly representing his hammer [Mjolnir](#) - symbolic of thunder - and possibly being connected to the Bronze Age [sun cross](#).^[52] Davidson cites "many examples" of the swastika symbol from Anglo-Saxon graves of the pagan period, with particular prominence on cremation urns from the cemeteries of East Anglia.^[52] Some of the swastikas on the items, on display at the Cambridge Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, are depicted with such care and art that, according to Davidson, it must have possessed special significance as a [funerary symbol](#).^[52] The [runic inscription](#) on the 8th-century [Sæbø sword](#) has been taken as evidence of the swastika as a symbol of Thor in [Norse paganism](#).

Illyrians

Swastika was widespread among the [Illyrians](#), symbolizing the Sun. The Sun cult was the main Illyrian cult, and the Sun was represented by a swastika in clockwise motion, and it stood for the movement of the Sun.^[53]

Slavic

The *Stoneczko* (lit. "little sun") is an [Early Slavic](#) pagan symbol of the sun. It was engraved on wooden monuments built near the final resting places of fallen Slavs to represent eternal life.^[54] The symbol was first seen in a collection of Early Slavic symbols and architectural features drawn and compiled by [Polish](#) painter [Stanisław Jakubowski](#), which he named *Prasłowiańskie motywy architektoniczne* ([Polish](#): *Early Slavic Architectural Motifs*).^[54] His work of art was published in 1923, by a publishing house that was then based in the Dębniki district of [Kraków](#).^[54] Symbol can also be found on embroidery and pottery in most Slavic countries.

In contemporary times, *Stoneczko* has become known in [Russia](#) as [Коловрат](#) (Kolovrat - lit. "spinning wheel"). [Russian neopagans](#) have adopted it as a traditional symbol of the pre-Christian Slavic faith. The neopagans say that [Коловрат](#) is a native Russian name for the swastika as a solar symbol. However, according to the historian and theologian [Роман Багдасаров](#) (Roman Bagdasarov), no known historical sources referring to the swastika as "Kolovrat" have been discovered in Russia.

[Коловрат](#) has also been appropriated by nationalist organizations and [Neo-Nazis](#) in Russia, who claim it is an ancient symbol that is exclusive to the [East Slavs](#).

Similar words to [Коловрат](#) in other Slavic languages include the [Polish](#) *Kołowrót* and the [Slovak](#) *Kolovrátok*, both of which are used solely to describe the [wheel and axle](#) and usually have no connotations with the symbol originally known in Polish as *Stoneczko*.

Sami

An object very much like a hammer or a double axe is depicted among the magical symbols on the drums of [Sami](#) shamans, used in their religious ceremonies before Christianity was established. The name of the Sami thunder god was [Horagalles](#), thought to be derived from "Old Man Thor" (*Pórr karl*). Sometimes on the drums, a male figure with a hammer-like object in either hand is shown, and sometimes it is more like a cross with crooked ends, or a swastika.^[52]

Medieval and early modern Europe

In Christianity, the swastika is used as a hooked version of the [Christian Cross](#), the symbol of Christ's victory over death. Some Christian churches built in the [Romanesque](#) and [Gothic](#) eras are decorated with swastikas, carrying over earlier Roman designs. Swastikas are prominently displayed in a [mosaic](#) in the St. Sophia church of [Kiev](#), Ukraine dating from the 12th century. They also appear as a repeating ornamental motif on a tomb in the Basilica of St. Ambrose in [Milan](#).

A [ceiling](#) painted in 1910 in the church of St Laurent in [Grenoble](#) has many swastikas. It can be visited today because the church became the archaeological museum of the city. A proposed direct link between it and a swastika floor mosaic in the [Cathedral of Our Lady of Amiens](#), which was built on top of a pagan site at [Amiens](#), France in the 13th century, is considered unlikely. The [stole](#) worn by a priest in the 1445 [painting of the Seven Sacraments](#) by [Rogier van der Weyden](#) presents the swastika form simply as one way of depicting the cross. Swastikas also appear on the vestments on the effigy of Bishop [William Edington](#) (d. 1366) in [Winchester Cathedral](#), as can be seen at [File:Winchestercathedralheadonwilliamedingtonomb.jpg](#).

In the Polish First Republic the symbol of the swastika was also popular with the nobility. According to chronicles, the [Rus'](#) prince [Oleg](#), who in the 9th century [attacked Constantinople](#), nailed his shield (which had a large red swastika painted on it) to the city's gates.^[55] Several noble houses, e.g. [Boreyko](#), [Borzym](#), and [Radziechowski](#) from Ruthenia, also had Swastikas as their [coat of arms](#). The family reached its greatness in the 14th and 15th centuries and its crest can be seen in many heraldry books produced at that time. The Swastika was also a heraldic symbol, for example on the [Boreyko coat of arms](#), used by noblemen in Poland and Ukraine. In the 19th century the swastika was one of the Russian empire's symbols; it was even placed in coins as a background to the [Russian eagle](#).^[56]^[57]

[Freemasons](#) also gave the swastika symbol importance. In medieval Northern European Runic Script, a counter-clockwise swastika denotes the letter 'G,' and could stand for the important Freemason terms God, [Great Architect of the Universe](#), or [Geometry](#).^[58]

A swastika can be seen on stonework at [Valle Crucis Abbey](#), near [Llangollen](#).

Early 20th-century Europe

Main article: [Western use of the swastika in the early 20th century](#)



The Hachisuka manji, a family crest used by the Japanese Hachisuka clan. Hachisuka Manji (蜂須賀氏).



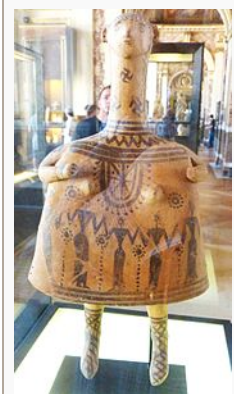
Khachkar with swastikas Sanahin, Armenia



Arevakhach on 10th century Makaravank monastery, Armenia



Swastika on a Greek silver stater coin from Corinth, 6th century BC.



Bronze Age Mycenaean "doll" with human, solar and tetragammadion (swastika) symbols. Louvre Museum



Greek helmet with swastika marks on the top part (circled), 350-325 BC from Taranto, found at Herculaneum. Cabinet des Médailles, Paris.



Swastikas on the wedding dress as symbols of luck, British colony, 1910

In the Western world, the symbol experienced a resurgence following the archaeological work in the late 19th century of [Heinrich Schliemann](#), who discovered the symbol in the site of ancient [Troy](#) and associated it with the ancient migrations of [Proto-Indo-Europeans](#), whose proto-language was not incidentally termed "Proto-Indo-Germanisch" by German language historians. He connected it with similar shapes found on ancient pots in Germany, and theorized that the swastika was a "significant religious symbol of our remote ancestors", linking Germanic, Greek and Indo-Iranian cultures.^{[59][60]} By the early 20th century, it was used worldwide and was regarded as a symbol of good luck and success.

The work of Schliemann soon became intertwined with the *völkisch* movements, for which the swastika was a symbol of the "[Aryan race](#)", a concept that came to be equated by theorists such as [Alfred Rosenberg](#) with a [Nordic master race](#) originating in northern Europe. Since its adoption by the [Nazi Party](#) of [Adolf Hitler](#), the swastika has been associated with Nazism, fascism, racism in its ([white supremacy](#)) form, the [Axis powers](#) in World War II, and [the Holocaust](#) in much of the West. The swastika remains a core symbol of [Neo-Nazi](#) groups, and is used regularly by [activist](#) groups.

The Benedictine choir school at [Lambach Abbey](#), Upper Austria, which Hitler attended for several months as a boy, had a swastika chiseled into the monastery portal and also the wall above the spring grotto in the courtyard by 1868. Their origin was the personal [coat of arms](#) of Abbot [Theoderich Hagn](#) of the monastery in Lambach, which bore a golden swastika with slanted points on a blue field.^[61] The Lambach swastika is probably of Medieval origin.

Denmark

The Danish brewery company [Carlsberg Group](#) used the swastika as a logo^[62] from the 19th Century until the middle of the 1930s when it was discontinued because of association with the Nazi Party in neighbouring Germany. The swastika carved on elephants at the entrance gates of the company's headquarters in [Copenhagen](#) in 1901 can still be seen today.^[63]

Ireland

The [Swastika Laundry](#) was a laundry founded in 1912, located on Shelbourne Road, [Ballsbridge](#), a district of [Dublin](#), Ireland. In the fifties [Heinrich Böll](#) came across a van belonging to the company while he was staying in Ireland, leading to some awkward moments before he realized the company was older than Nazism and totally unrelated to it. The chimney of the boiler-house of the laundry still stands, but the laundry has been redeveloped.^{[64][65]}

Finnish folklore

In Finland the swastika was often used in traditional folk art products, as a decoration or magical symbol on textiles and wood. The swastika was also used by the [Finnish Air Force](#) until 1945, and is still used in air force flags.

The [tursaansydän](#) is used by [scouts](#) in some instances^[66] and a student organization.^[67] The village of Tursa uses the tursaansydän as a kind of a certificate of authenticity on products made there.^[68] Traditional textiles are still being made with swastikas as parts of traditional ornaments.

Swastika in Finnish military

The [Finnish Air Force](#) uses the swastika as an emblem, introduced in 1918. The type of swastika adopted by the air-force was the symbol of luck for the Swedish count [Eric von Rosen](#), who donated one of its earliest aircraft; he later became a prominent figure in the Swedish nazi-movement.

The swastika was also used by the women's paramilitary organization [Lotta Svärd](#), which was banned in 1944 in accordance with the [Moscow Armistice](#) between Finland and the [allied Soviet Union](#) and [Britain](#).

The [President of Finland](#) is the grand master of the [Order of the White Rose](#). According to the protocol, the president shall wear the Grand Cross of the White Rose with collar on formal occasions. The original design of the collar, decorated with 9 swastikas, dates from 1918, and was designed by the artist [Akseli Gallen-Kallela](#). The Grand Cross with the swastika collar has been awarded 41 times to foreign heads of state. To avoid misunderstandings, the swastika decorations were replaced by fir crosses at the decision of president [Urho Kekkonen](#) in 1963 after it became known that the [President of France](#) [Charles De Gaulle](#) was uncomfortable with the swastika collar.

Also a design by Gallen-Kallela from 1918, the [Cross of Liberty](#) has a swastika pattern in its arms. The Cross of Liberty is depicted in the upper left corner of the standard of the President of Finland.^[69]

In December 2007, a silver replica of the [WWII](#) period Finnish air defence's relief ring decorated with a swastika became available as a part of a charity campaign.^[70]

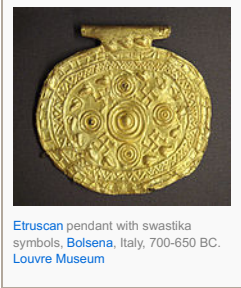
The original war time idea was that the public swap their precious metal rings for the State air defence's relief ring, made of iron.

Latvia

Latvia adopted the swastika, called the [Ugunskrusts](#) ("fire cross"), for its air force in 1918/1919 and continued its use until 1940. The cross itself was maroon on a white background, mirroring the colors of the [Latvian flag](#). Earlier versions pointed counter-clockwise, while later versions pointed clock-wise and eliminated the white background.^{[71][72]}



Two [sauwastikas](#) (opposite-facing swastikas) on an ancient Greek [Kantharos](#), Attica, ca. 780 BC.



Etruscan pendant with swastika symbols, [Bolsena](#), Italy, 700-650 BC. [Louvre Museum](#)



A comb with a swastika found in [Nydam Mose](#), Denmark.



Swastika symbols on the [Church of Christ Pantocrator](#) (13th-14th century) in [Nesebar](#), Bulgaria.



[Słoneczko](#) or [Kolovrat](#) ([Kolvrat](#)) is an [Early Slavic](#) pagan symbol of the sun.



Old Russian embroidery

North America

The swastika motif is found in some traditional [Native American](#) art and iconography. Historically, the design has been found in excavations of [Mississippian](#)-era sites in the [Ohio](#) and [Mississippi River](#) valleys, and on objects associated with the [Southeastern Ceremonial Complex](#) (S.E.C.C.). It is also widely used by a number of [southwestern](#) tribes, most notably the [Navajo](#), and [plains nations](#) such as the [Dakota](#). Among various tribes, the swastika carries different meanings. To the [Hopi](#) it represents the wandering Hopi clan; to the Navajo it is one symbol for the whirling log (*tsil no'oli*), a sacred image representing a legend that is used in healing rituals.^[73] A brightly colored [First Nations](#) saddle featuring swastika designs is on display at the [Royal Saskatchewan Museum](#) in Canada.^[74]

A swastika shape is a symbol in the culture of the [Kuna people](#) of [Kuna Yala](#), Panama. In Kuna tradition it symbolizes the octopus that created the world, its tentacles pointing to the four cardinal points.^[75]

In February 1925 the Kuna revolted vigorously against Panamanian suppression of their culture, and in 1930 they assumed autonomy. The flag they adopted at that time is based on the swastika shape, and remains the official flag of Kuna Yala. A number of variations on the flag have been used over the years: red top and bottom bands instead of orange were previously used, and in 1942 a ring (representing the traditional Kuna nose-ring) was added to the center of the flag to distance it from the symbol of the Nazi party.^[76]

The symbol for the [45th Infantry Division of the United States Army](#), before the 1930s, was a red square with a yellow swastika, a tribute to the large Native American population in the southwestern United States.

The town of [Swastika, Ontario, Canada](#) is named after the symbol.

As the symbol of Nazism

Further information: [Nazi symbolism](#)

In the wake of [widespread popular usage](#), the [Nazi Party](#) (*Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei* or *NSDAP*) formally adopted the swastika (in German: *Hakenkreuz* [hook-cross]) in 1920. This was used on the party's flag, badge, and armband.

In his 1925 work *Mein Kampf*, [Adolf Hitler](#) writes that: "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."

When Hitler created a flag for the Nazi Party, he sought to incorporate both the swastika and "those revered colors expressive of our homage to the glorious past and which once brought so much honor to the German nation." (Red, white, and black were the colors of the flag of the old [German Empire](#).) He also stated: "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."^[77]

The swastika was also understood as "the symbol of the creating, effecting life" (*das Symbol des schaffenden, wirkenden Lebens*) and as "race emblem of Germanism" (*Rasseabzeichen des Germanentums*).^[78]

The use of the swastika was incorporated by Nazi theorists with their conjecture of Aryan cultural descent of the German people. Following the [Nordicist](#) version of the [Aryan invasion theory](#), the Nazis claimed that the early Aryans of India, from whose Vedic tradition the swastika sprang, were the prototypical white invaders. The concept of [racial hygiene](#) was an ideology central to Nazism, though it is now considered [unscientific](#).^{[79][80]} For [Alfred Rosenberg](#), the Aryans of India were both a model to be imitated and a warning of the dangers of the spiritual and racial "confusion" that, he believed, arose from the close proximity of races. Thus, they saw fit to co-opt the sign as a symbol of the Aryan [master race](#). The use of the swastika as a symbol of the [Aryan race](#) dates back to writings of [Emile Burnouf](#). Following many other writers, the German nationalist poet [Guido von List](#) believed it to be a uniquely Aryan symbol.

Before the Nazis, the swastika was already in use as a symbol of German *völkisch* nationalist movements (*Völkische Bewegung*). In *Deutschland Erwache* (ISBN 0-912138-69-6), Ulric of England [sic] says:

[...] what inspired Hitler to use the swastika as a symbol for the NSDAP was its use by the [Thule Society](#) (German: *Thule-Gesellschaft*) since there were many connections between them and the [DAP](#) ... from 1919 until the summer of 1921 Hitler used the special Nationalsozialistische library of Dr. Friedrich Krohn, a very active member of the Thule-Gesellschaft ... Dr. Krohn was also the dentist from Sternberg who was named by Hitler in *Mein Kampf* as the designer of a flag very similar to one that Hitler designed in 1920 ... during the summer of 1920, the first party flag was shown at Lake Tegernsee ... these home-made ... early flags were not preserved, the *Ortsgruppe München* (Munich Local Group) flag was generally regarded as the first flag of the Party.

José Manuel Erbez says:

The first time the swastika was used with an Aryan meaning was on December 25, 1907, when the self-named [Order of the New Templars](#), a secret society founded by [Adolf Joseph] [Jörg Lanz von Liebenfels](#), hoisted at Werfenstein Castle (Austria) a yellow flag with a swastika and four *fleurs-de-lys*.^[81]

However, Liebenfels was drawing on an already established use of the symbol. On March 14, 1933, shortly after Hitler's appointment as Chancellor of Germany, the NSDAP flag was hoisted alongside Germany's national colors. It was adopted as the sole national flag on September 15, 1935 (see [Nazi Germany](#)).

The swastika was used for badges and flags throughout [Nazi Germany](#), particularly for government and military organizations, but also for "popular" organizations such as the *Reichsbund Deutsche Jägerschaft* (German Hunting Society).^[82]

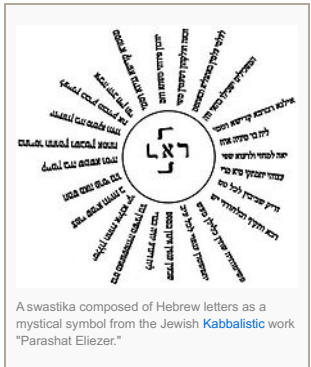
While the DAP and the NSDAP had used both right-facing and left-facing swastikas, the right-facing swastika was used consistently from 1920 onwards. Ralf Stelter notes that the swastika flag used on land had a right-facing swastika on both sides, while the ensign (naval flag) had it printed through so that a left-facing swastika would be seen when looking at the ensign with the flagpole to the right.^[83] Nazi ensigns had a [through and through](#) image, so both versions were present, one on each side, but the [Nazi flag](#) on land was right-facing on both sides and at a 45° rotation.^[84]



Swastika pattern on Russian orthodox präst robe



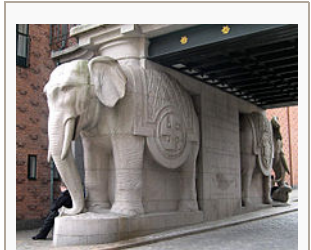
Swastika pattern in a Venetian palace that likely follows a Roman pattern, at Palazzo Roncale, Rovigo



A swastika composed of Hebrew letters as a mystical symbol from the Jewish Kabbalistic work "Parashat Eliezer."



The aviator [Matilde Moisant](#) (1878-1964) wearing a swastika medallion in 1912; the symbol was popular as a [good luck charm](#) with early aviators.



Carlsberg's [Elephant Tower](#).

Several variants are found:

- a 45° black swastika on a white disc as in the NSDAP and national flags;
- a 45° black swastika on a white lozenge (e.g., [Hitler Youth](#)^[85]);
- a 45° black swastika with a white outline was painted [on the tail of aircraft](#) of the [Luftwaffe](#), and usually using a design based on a 25-small-square subdivided square template (width of "strokes" in each of its arms, equalling the width of the space between the strokes);
- a 45° black swastika outlined by thin white and black lines on a white disc (e.g., the German War Ensign ^[86]);
- an upright black swastika outlined by thin white and black lines on a white disc (e.g., [Personal standard of Adolf Hitler](#) in which a gold wreath encircles the swastika; the *Schutzstaffel*; and the *Reichsdienstflagge*, in which a black circle encircles the swastika);
- small gold, silver, black, or white 45° swastikas, often lying on or being held by an eagle, on many badges and flags. ^[87]
- a swastika with curved outer arms forming a broken circle, as worn by the [SS Nordland Division](#).^[88]

There were attempts to amalgamate Nazi and Hindu use of the swastika, notably by the French writer [Savitri Devi](#) who declared Hitler an *Avatar* of [Vishnu](#) (see [Nazi mysticism](#)).

Post-WWII stigmatization

Origins

Because of its use by [Nazi Germany](#), the swastika since the 1930s has been largely associated with Nazism and [white supremacy](#) in most Western countries. As a result, all of its use, or its use as a Nazi or hate symbol is prohibited in some countries, including Germany. Because of the stigma attached to the symbol, many buildings that have contained the symbol as decoration have had the symbol removed.

Germany

Further information: [Strafgesetzbuch § 86a](#)

The German and Austrian postwar [criminal code](#) makes the public showing of the *Hakenkreuz* (the swastika), the *sigrune*, the [Celtic cross](#) (specifically the variations used by the White-Power-Activists), the *wolfsangel*, the *odal rune* and the *SS skull* illegal, except for scholarly reasons (and - in the case of the odal rune - as the insignia of the rank of sergeant major, *Hauptfeldwebel*,^[89] in the modern German Bundeswehr). It is also censored from the reprints of 1930s railway timetables published by the Reichsbahn. The eagle remains, but appears to be holding a solid black circle between its talons. The swastikas on Hindu, Buddhist, and Jain temples are exempt, as religious symbols cannot be banned in Germany.

A German fashion company was investigated for using traditional British-made folded leather buttons after complaints that they resembled swastikas. In response, [Esprit](#) destroyed two hundred thousand catalogues.^{[90][91]}

A controversy was stirred by the decision of several police departments to begin inquiries against anti-fascists.^[92] In late 2005 police raided the offices of the [punk rock](#) label and mail order store "Nix Gut Records" and confiscated merchandise depicting crossed-out swastikas and fists smashing swastikas. In 2006 the [Stade](#) police department started an inquiry against anti-fascist youths using a placard depicting a person dumping a swastika into a trashcan. The placard was displayed in opposition to the campaign of right-wing nationalist parties for local elections.^[93]

On Friday, March 17, 2006, a member of the [Bundestag](#), [Claudia Roth](#) reported herself to the German police for displaying a crossed-out swastika in multiple demonstrations against [Neo-Nazis](#), and subsequently got the Bundestag to suspend her immunity from prosecution. She intended to show the absurdity of charging anti-fascists with using fascist symbols: "We don't need prosecution of non-violent young people engaging against right-wing extremism." On March 15, 2007, the [Federal Court of Justice of Germany](#) (Bundesgerichtshof) held that the crossed-out symbols were "clearly directed against a revival of national-socialist endeavors", thereby settling the dispute for the future.^{[94][95][96]}

Legislation in other European countries

- In [Hungary](#), it is a criminal misdemeanour to publicly display "totalitarian symbols", including the swastika, the [SS insignia](#) and the [Arrow Cross](#), punishable by fine.^[97] Display for academic, educational, artistic or journalistic reasons is allowed. The communist symbols of [hammer and sickle](#) and the [red star](#) are also regarded as a totalitarian symbols and have the same restriction by Hungarian criminal law.
- In [Lithuania](#) public display of Nazi and Soviet symbols, including swastika, is an administrative offence, punishable by fine from 150 to 300 [euros](#).
- In [Poland](#), public display of Nazi symbols, including the [Nazi swastika](#), is a criminal offence punishable by up to eight years of imprisonment. The use of the swastika as a religious symbol is legal.^[98]

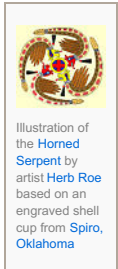
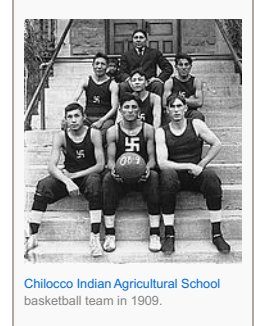
Attempt to ban in the European Union

The [European Union's Executive Commission](#) proposed a European Union-wide anti-racism law in 2001, but European Union states failed to agree on the balance between prohibiting racism and freedom of expression.^[99] An attempt to ban the swastika across the EU in early 2005 failed after objections from the British Government and others. In early 2007, while Germany held the European Union presidency, Berlin proposed that the European Union should follow [German Criminal Law](#) and criminalize the [denial of the Holocaust](#) and the display of Nazi symbols including the swastika, which is based on the Ban on the Symbols of Unconstitutional Organisations Act. This led to an opposition campaign by Hindu groups across Europe against a ban on the swastika. They pointed out that the swastika has been around for 5,000 years as a symbol of peace.^{[100][101]} The proposal to ban the swastika was dropped by Berlin from the proposed [European Union wide anti-racism laws](#) on January 29, 2007.^[99]

Latin America

- The manufacture, distribution or broadcasting of the swastika, with the intent to propagate Nazism, is a crime in [Brazil](#) as dictated by article 20, paragraph 1, of federal statute 7.716, passed in 1989. The penalty is a two to five years prison term and a fine.^[102]
- The flag of the [Guna Yala](#) autonomous territory of [Panama](#) is based on a swastika design. In 1942 a ring was added to the centre of the flag to differentiate it from the symbol of the [Nazi Party](#) (this version subsequently fell into disuse).^[76]

Media



In 2010, [Microsoft](#) officially spoke out against the use of the swastika in the [first-person shooter](#) *Call of Duty: Black Ops*. In *Black Ops*, players are allowed to customize their name tags to represent, essentially, whatever they want. The swastika can be created and used, but [Stephen Toulouse](#), director of [Xbox Live](#) policy and enforcement, stated that players with the symbol on their name tag will be banned (if someone reports as inappropriate) from Xbox Live.^[103]

In the [Indiana Jones Stunt Spectacular](#) in [Disney Hollywood Studios](#) in Orlando, Florida, the swastikas on German trucks, aircraft and actor uniforms in the reenactment of a scene from *Raiders of the Lost Ark* were removed in 2004. The swastika has been replaced by a stylized [Greek Cross](#).^[104] *Sin City* character [Miho](#) occasionally uses [shurikens](#) shaped like a swastika as assassination tools.

Satirical use

A book featuring "120 Funny Swastika Cartoons" was published in 2008 by New York Cartoonist [Sam Gross](#). The author said he created the cartoons in response to excessive news coverage given to Swastika vandals, that his intent "...is to reduce the Swastika to something humorous."^[105]

The powerful symbolism acquired by the swastika has often been used in graphic design and propaganda as a means of [drawing Nazi comparisons](#); examples include the cover of [Stuart Eizenstat](#)'s 2003 book *Imperfect Justice*,^[106] publicity materials for [Constantin Costa-Gavras](#)'s 2002 film *Amen*,^[107] and a billboard that was erected opposite the [United States Interests Section in Havana](#) in [Havana](#), Cuba, in 2004, which juxtaposed images of the [Abu Ghraib torture and prisoner abuse](#) pictures with a swastika.

Misinterpretation over imported Asian products in Western countries

At the end of 20th century, and early 21st century, confusion and controversy has occurred when consumer goods bearing the Buddhist symbol have been exported to North America, and mistakenly interpreted by Western consumers as a Nazi symbol.

When a ten-year-old boy in [Lynbrook, New York](#), bought a set of [Pokémon cards](#) imported from Japan in 1999, two of the cards contained the left-facing Buddhist *Manji* symbol. The boy's parents misinterpreted the symbol as a Nazi swastika, which is right-facing with 45 degree rotation, and filed a complaint to the manufacturer. It also caused a lot of concern amongst fans from Jewish communities. [Nintendo](#) of America announced that the cards would be discontinued, explaining that what was acceptable in one culture was not necessarily so in another; their action was welcomed by the [Anti-Defamation League](#) who recognised that there was no intention to be offensive but said that international commerce meant that "isolating [the Swastika] in Asia would just create more problems."^[108]

In 2002, [Christmas crackers](#) containing plastic toy red pandas sporting swastikas were pulled from shelves after complaints from consumers in Canada. The manufacturer, based in China, explained the symbol was presented in a traditional sense and not as a reference to the Nazis, and apologized to the customers for the cross-cultural mixup.^[109] In 2007, Spanish fashion chain [Zara](#) withdrew a handbag from its stores after a customer in Britain complained swastikas were embroidered on it. The bags were made by a supplier in India and inspired by commonly used Hindu symbols, which include the swastika.^[110]

Contemporary use in Asia

South Asia

In [South Asia](#), the swastika is omnipresent as a symbol of wealth and good fortune. In India and Nepal, electoral ballot papers are stamped with a round swastika-like pattern (to ensure that the accidental ink imprint on the other side of a folded ballot paper can be correctly identified as such).^[111] Many businesses and other organisations, such as the [Ahmedabad Stock Exchange](#) and the [Nepal Chamber of Commerce](#),^[112] use the swastika in their logos. The red swastika was suggested as an emblem of [International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement](#) in India and Sri Lanka, but the idea was not implemented.^[113] Swastikas are fairly ubiquitous in Indian and Nepalese cities, located on buses, buildings, auto-rickshaws, and clothing. The swastika continues to be prominently used in Hindu religious ceremonies and temples, and is recognised as a Hindu religious symbol, sometimes used to evoke the [Shakti](#) in tantric rituals.

In India, Swastik and Swastika, with their spelling variants, are common first names for males and females respectively, e.g. [Swastika Mukherjee](#). Also, the [Seal of Bihar](#) contains two swastikas.

East Asia

In the [Sinosphere](#), countries and regions that were historically influenced by the culture of China, such as Taiwan, Japan, Hong Kong, Korea, Vietnam, Singapore and China itself, the symbol is most commonly associated with Buddhism. They are commonly found in Buddhist temples, religious artifacts, texts related to Buddhism and schools founded by Buddhist religious groups.

The [Red Swastika Society](#), a syncretic religious group that aspires to unify [Taoism](#), [Confucianism](#), and Buddhism, runs two schools in Hong Kong ([Hong Kong Red Swastika Society Tai Po Secondary School](#) and [Hong Kong Red Swastika Society Tuen Mun Primary School](#)) and one in Singapore ([Red Swastika School](#)). All of them incorporated the Swastika in their school logo to signify the society's aspiration with philanthropy and moral education.

The swastika is also used in maps to denote a temple. For example, the symbol is designated by the Survey Act and related Japanese governmental rules to denote a [Buddhist temple](#) on [Japanese maps](#).^[114]

[Hirosaki City](#) in [Aomori Prefecture](#) designates this symbol as its official flag, which stemmed from its use in the emblem of [Tsugaru clan](#), the lord of [Hirosaki Domain](#) in [Edo era](#). See also the section [East Asian traditions](#) in this article.

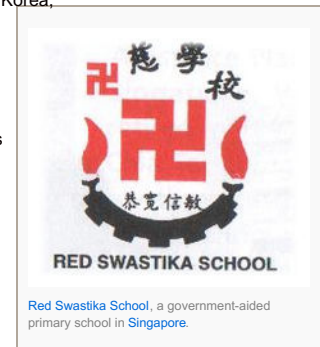
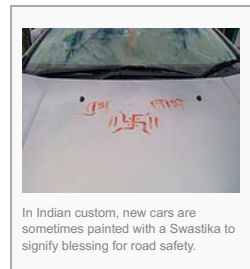
Central Asia

In 2005, authorities in [Tajikistan](#) called for the widespread adoption of the swastika as a national [symbol](#). President [Emomali Rahmonov](#) declared the swastika an [Aryan](#) symbol and 2006 to be "the year of Aryan culture," which would be a time to "study and popularize Aryan contributions to the history of the world civilization, raise a new generation (of Tajiks) with the spirit of national self-determination, and develop deeper ties with other ethnicities and cultures."^[115]

New religious movements

Besides the use as a religious symbol in Buddhism, Hinduism and Jainism, which can be traced to pre-modern traditions, the swastika is also used by a number of [new religious movements](#) established in the modern period.

- The [Theosophical Society](#) uses a swastika as part of its seal, along with an [Om](#), a hexagram or [star of David](#), an [Ankh](#) and an [Ouroboros](#). Unlike the much more recent



Raëlian movement (see below), the Theosophical Society symbol has been free from controversy, and the seal is still used. The current seal also includes the text "There is no religion higher than truth."^[116]



Swastika on a temple in Korea.

- The **Raëlian Movement**, who believe that Extra-Terrestrials originally created all life on earth, use a symbol that is often the source of considerable controversy: an interlaced **star of David** and a swastika. The Raelians state that the Star of David represents infinity in space whereas the swastika represents infinity in time i.e. there being no beginning and no end in time, and everything being cyclic.^[117] In 1991, the symbol was changed to remove the swastika, out of respect to the victims of the **Holocaust**, but as of 2007 has been restored to its original form.^[118]
- The **Tantra**-based **new religious movement Ananda Marga** (Devanagari: आनन्द मार्ग, meaning *Path of Bliss*) uses a motif similar to the Raëlians, but in their case the apparent star of David is defined as intersecting triangles with no specific reference to Jewish culture.
- The **Falun Gong qigong** movement uses a symbol that features a large swastika surrounded by four smaller (and rounded) ones, interspersed with **yin-and-yang** symbols. The usage is taken from traditional Chinese symbolism, and here alludes to a **chakra**-like portion of the esoteric human anatomy, located in the stomach.
- The **Odinic Rite** claims the **fyfot** as a holy symbol of **Odinism**, citing the pre-Christian **Germanic use of the symbol**.



Theosophical Seal

See also

- [Armenian eternity sign](#)
- [Borjgali](#)
- [Brigid's cross](#)
- [Camunian rose](#)
- [Confederate flag controversy](#)
- [Fascist symbolism](#)
- [The Red Swastika Society \(China\)](#)
- [Nazi symbolism](#)
- [Solar symbols](#)
- [Swastika curve](#)
- [Swastika Stone](#)
- [Western use of the swastika in the early 20th century](#)
- [Tursaansydän](#)

References

- ¹ ^a ^b ^c [The Migration of Symbols](#), by Goblet d'Alviella, [Chapter II](#), hosted at the [Internet Sacred Text Archive](#) 88.
- ² [Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary](#), Cambridge University Press, 2008, [p.1472](#) 89.
- ³ ^a ^b [The Handbook of Tibetan Buddhist Symbols](#), Robert Beer, Serindia Publications, Inc., 2003, [p.97](#) [The Illustrated Encyclopedia of Hinduism: N-Z](#), by James G. Lochtefeld, The Rosen Publishing Group, 2002, [p. 678](#) 90.
- ⁴ [Rosenberg, Jennifer. "History of Swastika". *about.com*. Retrieved 26 April 2013.](#) 91.
- ⁵ ^a ^b ^c ["Swastika" Etymology](#). [dictionary.com](#). Retrieved 8 June 2015. 92.
- ⁶ [first recorded 1871 \(OED\); alternative historical English spellings include *suastika*, *swastica*, and *svastica*.](#) 93.
- ⁷ ["svasti meaning". *http://www.sanskritdictionary.com*. Retrieved 6 June 2014.](#) 94.
- ⁸ ^a ^b [Monier Monier-Williams \(1899\). *A Sanskrit-English Dictionary*, s.v. *svastika* \(p. 1283\).](#) 95.
- ⁹ ["CJK Unified Ideographs" PDF \(4.83 MB\), *The Unicode Standard, Version 4.1*. Unicode, Inc. 2005.](#) 96.
- ¹⁰ [Big5: C9_C3, according to \[Wenlin\]\(#\)](#) 97.
- ¹¹ [Big5+: 85_80, according to \[Wenlin\]\(#\)](#) 98.
- ¹² ["Swastika Flag Specifications and Construction Sheet \(Germany\)". *Flags of the World*.](#) 99.
- ¹³ [Mukti Jain Champion: *How the world loved the swastika - until Hitler stole it* BBC 23 October 2014](#) 00.
- ¹⁴ [Freed, S. A. and R. S., "Origin of the Swastika", *Natural History*, January 1980, 68-75.](#) 01.
- ¹⁵ [Assasi, Reza. 2013. Swastika:The Forgotten Constellation Representing the Chariot of Mithras. In: Ivan Šprajc and Peter Pehani Ed. ANCIENT COSMOLOGIES AND MODERN PROPHETS: Proceedings of the 20th Conference of the European Society for Astronomy in Culture \(Special volume of Anthropological Notebooks\) Ljubljana: Slovene Anthropological Society. p418. ISSN: 1408 – 032X](#) 02.
- ¹⁶ [Sagan, Carl; Ann Druyon \(1985\). *Comet*. Ballantine Books. p. 496. ISBN 0-345-41222-2.](#) 03.
- ¹⁷ [Stewart, Ian \(1999\), *Life's Other Secret: The new mathematics of the living world* \(Penguin\) Missing or empty |title= \(help\)](#) 04.
- ¹⁸ [Riggs, Robert F. \(1981\), *The Apocalypse Unsealed* \(Philosophical Library\) Missing or empty |title= \(help\)](#) 05.
- ¹⁹ [Stanley A. Freed, *Research Pitfalls as a Result of the Restoration of Museum Specimens*, Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences, Volume 376, The Research Potential of Anthropological Museum Collections pages 229–245, December 1981.](#) 06.
- ²⁰ [Campbell, Joseph \(2002\). *The Flight of the Wild Gander*. p. 117.](#) 07.
- ²¹ [Dimitrova, Stefania "8 000 Year Ago Proto-Thracians Depicted the Evolution of the Divine" – Courier of UNESCO, No 1, 1996](#) 08.
- ²² ^a ^b [Kathleen M. Nadeau \(2010\). Lee, Jonathan H. X., ed. *Encyclopedia of Asian American Folklore and Folklife*. ABL-CLIO. p. 87. ISBN 978-0-313-35066-5. Retrieved 21 March 2011.](#) 09.
- ²³ [Dunham, Dows "A Collection of 'Pot-Marks' from Kush and Nubia," *Kush*, 13, 131-147, 1965](#) 10.
- ²⁴ [\(Chinese\) Bao Jing " "祀"与"𠄎"漫议 \("祀" and "𠄎" Man Yee\)". 2004-01-06, news.xinhuanet.com](#) 11.
- ²⁵ [\(Chinese\) "祀字符號 \(Swastika Symbol\). *Epoch Times*, 2009-04-22 Reprint from *New Era* #115 "Art and Culture" section \(2009.04.02—04.08\)](#) 12.
- ²⁶ [a term coined by Anna Roes, "Tierwirbel," *IPEK*, 1936-37](#) 13.

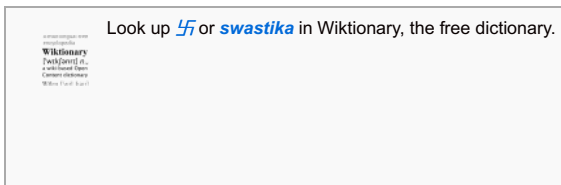
27. [^] [Marija Gimbutas](#) *The Balts before the Dawn of History*
28. [^] [Claude Lévi-Strauss](#), *Structural Anthropology* (1959), p. 267.
29. [^] Steven Heller. *The Swastika: Symbol Beyond Redemption?*. Skyhorse Publishing, Inc. p. 31.
30. [^] Mohan Pant, Shūji Funo. *Stupa and Swastika: Historical Urban Planning Principles in Nepal's Kathmandu Valley*. NUS Press. p. 16.
31. [^] [Dictionary - Definition of swastika](#)
32. [^] [A symbol is a thought, a drawing, an action, an archetype, etcetera of the conceptualization of a thing that exists either in reality or in the imagination](#)
33. [^] Subhayu Banerjee."Shubho Nabobarsho". *Bengal on the Net*. April 16, 2001
34. [^] ["what-is-yungdrung"](#). Retrieved 7 June 2009.
35. [^] ["About the Bon"](#). Retrieved 7 June 2009.
36. [^] (Japanese) Hitoshi Takazawa, *Encyclopedia of Kamon*, Tōkyōdō Shuppan, 2008. ISBN 978-4-490-10738-8.
37. [^] ["Sayagata 紗綾形"](#). *Japanese Architecture and Art Net Users System*.
38. [^] [a b c](#) Concise Armenian Encyclopedia, Yerevan, v. II, p. 663
39. [^] T. Wilson *The swastika, the earlist known symbol and its migrations*, p. 807, 951
40. [^] [Armenia](#).
41. [^] Jacob G. Ghazarian (2006), *The Mediterranean legacy in early Celtic Christianity: a journey from Armenia to Ireland*, Bennett & Bloom, pp. 263, p. 171 "... Quite a different version of the Celtic triskelion, and perhaps the most common pre-Christian symbolism found throughout Armenian cultural tradition, is the round clockwise (occasionally counter-clockwise) whirling sun-like spiral fixed at a centre — the Armenian symbol of eternity."
42. [^] K. B. Mehr, M. Markow, *Mormon Missionaries enter Eastern Europe*, Brigham Young University Press, 2002, pp. 399, p. 252 "... She viewed a tall building with spires and circular windows along the top of the walls. It was engraved with sun stones, a typical symbol of eternity in ancient Armenian architecture."
43. [^] Biers, W.R. 1996. *The Archaeology of Greece*, p. 130. Cornell University Press, Ithaca/London.
44. [^] ["Perseus:image:1990.26.0822"](#). Perseus.tufts.edu. 1990-02-26. Retrieved 2 March 2010.
45. [^] Robert Ferré. "Amiens Cathedral". *Labyrinth Enterprises*. Constructed from 1220 to 1402, Amiens Cathedral is the largest Gothic cathedral in France, a popular tourist attraction and since 1981 a UNESCO World Heritage Site. During World War I, Amiens was targeted by German forces but remained in Allied territory following the Battle of Amiens.
46. [^] Gary Malkin. "Tockington Park Roman Villa". *The Area of Bristol in Roman Times*. December 9, 2002.
47. [^] Lara Nagy, Jane Vadhá, "Glossary Medieval Art and Architecture," "Greek key or meander", University of Pittsburgh 1997-98.
48. [^] [The Battersea Shield British Museum](#)
49. [^] ["CISP entry"](#). Ucl.ac.uk. Retrieved 2 March 2010.
50. [^] Martin J Powell. "Megalithic Sites in England - Photo Archive".
51. [^] Margrethe, Queen, Poul Kjørum, Rikke Agnete Olsen (1990). *Oldtidens Ansigt: Faces of the Past*, page 148. ISBN 978-87-7468-274-5
52. [^] [a b c d e](#) H.R. Ellis Davidson (1965). *Gods and Myths of Northern Europe*, page 83. ISBN 978-0-14-013627-2, p. 83
53. [^] Stipčević, Aleksandar (1977). *The Illyrians: history and culture*. Noyes Press. pp. 182, 186. ISBN 9780815550525.
54. [^] [a b c](#) "Prasłowiańskie motywy architektoniczne". 1923. Retrieved 19 May 2014.
55. [^] ["Swastika \(Kolovrat\) - Historical Roots"](#) (in Russian). Distedu.ru. Retrieved 2 March 2010.
56. [^] Vladimir Nikolaevich. "The Swastika, the historical roots" (in Russian). Klk.pp.ru. Retrieved 2 March 2010.
57. [^] Vladimir Plakhotnyuk. "Kolovrat-Historical Roots-Collection of articles" (in Russian). Ruskolan.xpomo.com. Retrieved 2 March 2010.
58. [^] Berzin, Alexander (2003). "The Nazi Connection with Shambhala and Tibet".
59. [^] Schliemann, H. *Troy and its remains*, London: Murray, 1875, pp. 102, 119-20.
60. [^] Boxer, Sarah (2000-06-29). "One of the World's Great Symbols Strives for a Comeback". *Think Tank (The New York Times)*. Retrieved 7 May 2012.
61. [^] [Dutch article in Wikipedia "Swastika"; Holocaust Chronology](#)
62. [^] ["Flickr Album; "Probably the Best Photo's of Swastikas in the World"](#)". Fiveprime.org. Retrieved 1 May 2011.
63. [^] [Carlsberg Group Website](#)
64. [^] ["Swastika chimney"](#). The Irish Times. 2007-03-03. Retrieved 3 October 2010.
65. [^] ["Swastika Laundry \(1912–1987\)"](#). *Come here to me!*. Comeheretome.wordpress.com. 2010-04-26. Retrieved 3 October 2010.
66. [^] ["Partiolippunkunta Pitkäjärven Vaeltajat ry"](#). Pitva.partio.net. Retrieved 2 March 2010.
67. [^] Kainuun Kerho (2009-09-18). "Kainuun Kerho". Ppo.osakunta.fi. Retrieved 2 March 2010.
68. [^] ["Tursan Sydän"](#). Tursa.fi. Retrieved 2 March 2010.
69. [^] [Flag](#) The President of the Republic Of Finland
70. [^] ["Campaign site rautasormus.fi \(campaign now closed\)"](#). Rautasormus.fi. Retrieved 2 March 2010.
71. [^] [Latvian Air Force 1918-40](#). Retrieved 30 September 2008.
72. [^] [Spārnota Latvija](#). Retrieved 30 September 2008.
73. [^] Dottie Indyke. "The History of an Ancient Human Symbol." April 4, 2005. originally from *The Wingspread Collector's Guide to Santa Fe, Taos and Albuquerque*, Volume 15.
74. [^] Photo and text,"Why is there a Swastika on the saddle in the First Nations Gallery?", Royal Saskatchewan Museum
75. [^] [Chants and Myths about Creation](#), from Rainforest Art. Retrieved 25 February 2006.
76. [^] [a b](#) [Panama - Native Peoples](#), from Flags of the World. Retrieved 20 February 2006.
77. [^] ["text of Mein Kampf at Project Gutenberg of Australia"](#). Gutenberg.net.au. Retrieved 2 March 2010.
78. [^] Walther Blachetta: *Das Buch der deutschen Sinnzeichen* (The book of German sense characters); reprint of 1941; page 47
79. [^] Robert Proctor. *Racial Hygiene: Medicine Under the Nazis*. Harvard University Press. p. 220.
80. [^] Mark B. Adams (1990). *The Wellborn Science : Eugenics in Germany, France, Brazil, and Russia: Eugenics in Germany, France, Brazil, and Russia*. Oxford University Press. p. 43

81. [^] José Manuel Erbez. "Order of the New Templars 1907". *Flags of the World*. January 21, 2001.
82. [^] Santiago Dotor and Norman Martin. "German Hunting Society 1934-1945 (Third Reich, Germany)" *Flags of the World*. March 15, 2003. *The flag of the Reichsbund Deutsche Jägerschaft*
83. [^] Mark Sensen, António Martins, Norman Martin, and Ralf Stelter. "Centred vs. Offset Disc and Swastika 1933-1945 (Germany)". *Flags of the World*. December 29, 2004.
84. [^] "Centred vs. Offset Disc and Swastika 1933-1945 (Germany)". *Flagspot.net*. Retrieved 2 March 2010.
85. [^] Marcus Wendel et al. "Hitler Youth (NSDAP, Germany)". *Flags of the World*. January 17, 2004.
86. [^] Norman Martin et al. "War Ensign 1938-1945 (Germany)". *Flags of the World*. The "Reichskriegsflagge"
87. [^] Flags at *Flags of the World*:

Bibliography

- Aigner, Dennis J. (2000). *The Swastika Symbol in Navajo Textiles*. Laguna Beach, California: DAI Press. ISBN 0-9701898-0-X.
- Clarence House issues apology for Prince Harry's Nazi costume. *BBC News*. January 13, 2005.
- Clube, V. and Napier, B. *The Cosmic Serpent*. Universe Books, 1982.
- Enthoven, R.E. *The Folklore of Bombay*. London: Oxford University Press, 1924 (pp. 40–45).
- Gardner, N. (2006) *Multiple Meanings: The Swastika Symbol*. In *Hidden Europe*, 11, pp. 35–37. Berlin. ISSN 1860-6318.
- Jaume Ollé, Željko Heimer, and Norman Martin. "State Flag and Ensign 1935-1945" December 29, 2004. The *Reichsdienstflagge*.
- e, Steven. *Animals and the Origin of Dance*, Thames and Hudson Inc., NY, 1982 (pp. 169–181).
- Leidig, Ludwig. *Bombshell*. sbpra, 2013, ISBN 978-1-62516-346-2
- MacCulloch, C.J.A. Canon, John A. (Ed.) *Mythology of all Races*. vol. 8 ("Chinese Mythology" Ferguson, John C.) Marshall Jones Co. Boston, MA 1928 (p. 31).
- ManWoman. *Gentle Swastika: Reclaiming the Innocence*, Cranbrook, B.C., Canada: Flyfoot Press, 2001. ISBN 0-9688716-0-7.
- Marcus Wendel, Jaume Ollé, et al. "Schutzstaffel/SS" December 14, 2001.
- Morphy, Howard (Ed.). *Animals into Art (ONE WORLD ARCHAEOLOGY; vol. 7)* Unwin Gyman Ltd., London, 1989 (chapt. 11 Schaaafsma, Polly).
- Norman Martin et al. "Standard of the Leader and National Chancellor 1935-1945". April 9, 2004. Hitler's personal flag.
- Roy, Pratap Chandra. The *Mahabharata*, Munshiram Manoharlal, New Delhi, 1973 (vol. 1 section 13-58, vol. 5 section 2-3).
- Schliemann, Henry. *Ilios* Harper & Brothers, Franklin Square, NY, 1881 (pp. 334–353).
- Tan Huay Peng. (1980–1983). *Fun with Chinese Characters*. Singapore: Federal Publications. ISBN 981-01-3005-8.
- *The Swastika: The Earliest Known Symbol, and Its Migrations; with Observations on the Migration of Certain Industries in Prehistoric Times*. In *Annual report of the Board of Regents of the Smithsonian Institution*. Washington DC: Smithsonian Institution
- Whipple, Fred L. *The Mystery of Comets* Smithsonian Inst. Press, Washington, DC 1985, (pp. 163–167).
- Wilson, Thomas (Curator, Department of Prehistoric Anthropology, U.S. National Museum) *The Swastika*. Government Printing Office, Washington, USA, 1896.

External links



General

- *History of the Swastika* (*US Holocaust Memorial Museum*)
- *The Origins of the Swastika* *BBC News*
- *A Swastika Pictorial Atlas*
- *Swastika in Norway*

Dharmic religions

- *Swastikam - Symbol of Auspiciousness* (chapter 7 of *Vishayasuchi* by Satguru Sivaya Subramuniyaswami)
- *Om, Swastika and Shivalinga* (Book by Narsibhai Patel)

Nazi use

- *The variants of the NS-swastika flag*
- *Documentary about the use of the swastika in the Third Reich*
- From *Flags of the World*:
 - *Origins of the Swastika Flag (Third Reich, Germany)* (collection of links and comments)
 - *Neo-Nazi flags* (links to other *FOTW* pages)
- This page was last modified on 22 June 2015, at 08:58.
- Text is available under the [Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike License](#); additional terms may apply. By using this site, you agree to the [Terms of Use](#) and [Privacy Policy](#). Wikipedia® is a registered trademark of the [Wikimedia Foundation, Inc.](#), a non-profit organization.