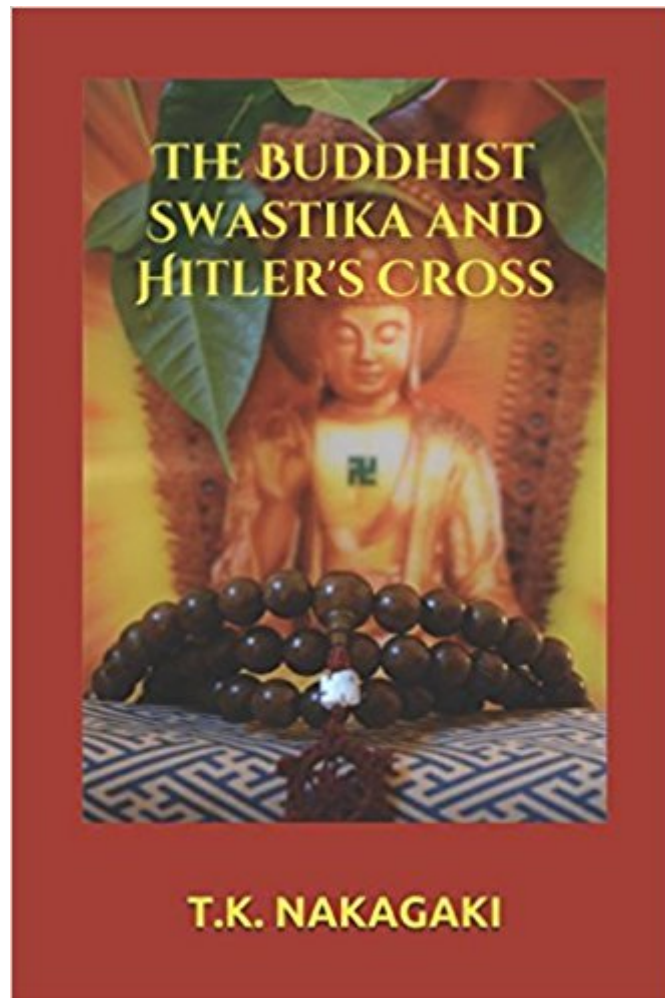




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The Buddhist Swastika And Hitler's Cross



Synopsis

The swastika has a long history over a span of several thousand years as one of the world's most important auspicious symbols. However, beginning with its hijacking and misappropriation by Nazi Germany, it has also been used, and continues to be used, as a symbol of hate in the Western World. I hope this book will encourage more conversation and dialogue about the complex history of this symbol as a way to peace, mutual understanding and reconciliation. Quotes from the book: ... It is clear that the swastika has had a rich and widespread use throughout most of the globe for thousands of years. The swastika is not just any symbol but one of the most common and valued symbols used by human beings throughout human history, culturally, religiously and spiritually. ... Many in the West believe that Hitler invented the swastika symbol. He didn't. Many also believe he invented the word "swastika" to describe it. He didn't do that either. ... The swastika did not choose Hitler. The swastika 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 including those who follow Buddhism, Jainism and Hinduism. The swastika is not responsible for Hitler's actions. The swastika is a symbol, whose meaning lies in what others pour into it. ... The swastika also appears in the sutras as a symbol of the Buddha's Heart-Mind, the mind of great compassion, which embraces all beings without discrimination beyond likes and dislikes. ... Among the Indian religious traditions, Jainism is most closely associated with Ahimsa or non-violence, and its central symbol is the swastika. ... In this sense, it is a Buddhist responsibility to educate the misinformed public about the sacred symbol of the swastika, so the larger public can understand that in Asian religious contexts, it has nothing to do with the racism and hatred of Nazism or racist supremacy groups. ... Hitler always used the term "Hakenkreuz" which literally translates to "Hook-Cross" to refer to his symbol. ... Though racial discrimination and anti-Semitism were done under Hitler's Cross, English speakers do not see the cross in the swastika. These evil actions were instead done under Hitler's Swastika. If we call it a Hook-Cross, people may be more likely to recognize the cross in the center of the swastika-cross. Whether intentional or not, these translators protected the Christian cross and damaged the Eastern religious swastika. ... Talking about the swastika can open dialogue. Such a dialogue can embrace the tragedy of the Holocaust - 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 of our religions, cultures and historical experiences. ...

Book Information

Paperback: 183 pages

Publisher: Independently published (April 20, 2017)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 1521101361

ISBN-13: 978-1521101360

Product Dimensions: 6 x 0.5 x 9 inches

Shipping Weight: 11.8 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.5 out of 5 stars 5 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #517,198 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #151 in [Books > Textbooks >](#)

[Humanities > Design](#) #12501 in [Books > Textbooks > Humanities > History](#) #20319

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Customer Reviews

Rev. Dr. T. K. NAKAGAKI is a Buddhist priest, ordained in the 750-year-old Jodoshinshu tradition of Japanese Buddhism. He was ordained at the Nishi Hongwanji Temple in Kyoto, Japan, in 1980. He graduated from Ryukoku University in Kyoto, majoring in Buddhist History in 1983, and later conducted advanced study in Jodoshinshu Buddhist doctrine at Gyoshin Buddhist Seminary in Osaka, Japan, from 1983-1985. He received an M.A. in Linguistics from California State University at Fresno in 1994, and earned a Doctorate of Ministry in Multifaith studies from the New York Theological Seminary in 2012. Rev. Dr. Nakagaki is currently President of the Buddhist Council of New York, Hiroshima Peace Ambassador, Peace Correspondent of Nagasaki City, Community Clergy Liaison for the NYC Police Department, and former Vice President of the Interfaith Center of New York. He served as a resident priest for Jodoshinshu Buddhist communities in Seattle from 1985-1989, in Parlier, CA from 1989 -1994, and at the New York Buddhist Church from 1994-2010.

--This text refers to an alternate Paperback edition.

This book has been greatly needed in the world. As a person who travels often between eastern & western countries, I've seen how polarization over this symbol has created a lot of unnecessary misunderstanding & negativity. The swastika is often maligned in the West as a "universal symbol of hatred," which is not only untrue, but denies the perspective of millions of people who regard it as wholly positive. As the author asserts, it's only through the sharing of perspectives we can hope to ever bridge the cultural divide. This book was well written (and edited) with a lot of great photos.

This is a big *“little”* book. Packed into its 150 pages is a veritable treasure of philosophy, religion, history, sociology and expedited cultural literacy. Because it is written so deeply and beautifully, it can be considered an authentically enlightening read by those who engage it as Abraham Joshua Heschel abjured by keeping in mind *“the principle to know what we see rather than to see what we know”*. P.140 of the book, a quote from *The Prophet*. One can profitably encounter this work by suspending not one’s disbelief, as in a work of fiction, but one’s knee-jerk, deep-seated prejudices, and this in order to transcend the hideous nature of Hitler’s cultural misappropriation of symbols and concepts that have a vital history in Asia and elsewhere of thousands of years of holiness and beauty in the exact antithesis of meaning to Hitler’s perversions and hate-fueled genocidal ends. This work makes a scholarly and decisive foray into holocaust and comparative religious studies in more than one important way, but of particular note is the differentiation completely of Hitler’s hakenkreuz or *“hook cross”* from the ancient svastika, more commonly in English referred to as the swastika. When I visited Germany and saw the prominence of Christian cathedrals and churches in every single town, I wondered how it had been possible that each was not a central sanctuary for the Jews. The description of how the hooked cross or hakenkreuz supplanted the crucifixes is also a history of how the Nazis were corrupted from Christian values to Nazi hatred and it is chilling. Sadly, it is also the story of a good Christian gone amok, for in all my classes in religious studies over the years (and my Fordham degree) I had never read the doctrines of Martin Luther in his 60s, when he became a confirmed anti-Semite, and his last years’ writing fed the Nazi Beast in Germany. It is certainly beyond time to redirect the blame from a powerful ancient symbol of achieved virtue that was hijacked by a demagogue who murdered millions to he himself and the virulent fascist mob he intentionally misled and incited. As the holocaust survivors and hibakusha, or nuclear bomb survivors encourage us from *The Buddhist Swastika and Hitler’s Cross*, it becomes incumbent upon us to proactively wrest Hitler’s last victory from him, and restore to our hearts, minds and the knowledge of our lives and souls, the respectful and profoundly positive and sacred meaning of the svastika symbol, by , as so many other cultures have done all along, differentiating it from Hitler’s horribly disfigured hooked cross. I personally found the spiritual maturity, generosity and insightful scholarship of this book to be in complete harmony with the nature of its author, T.K. Nakagaki , whom I have known for many years from interfaith work in greater New York.

Many Western readers will be surprised to learn that the swastika has long been a revered symbol of peace and harmony in the Eastern world. In a brave gesture of cross-cultural significance, Rev. Dr. Nakagaki offers us a detailed explanation of the positive history and meaning that this symbol has had for millions of people over the millennia.

Excellent. Fascinating explanation.

While much (I don't know all) of what the author says is true I seriously doubt you will get people to see beyond WW II and the Nazis. Just too evil. I know it isn't fair but...If i remember right the swastika also appears in ancient Native American petroglyph which have nothing to do with Bhuddism. And please be clear, you can call it a hooked cross but Hitler and the Nazis were no kind of Christians and didn't pretend to be once they'd hoodwinked the Lutherans and others in the early '30's. They were into some kind of weird pan-German paganism that, if i remember right, didn't even include the pantheon of pagan gods that were there pre-Christian era, "Gott be mit uns" belt buckles or not.

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