The Four Arms of Destiny: Swastikas in the Hopi World & Beyond

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Most of us shudder when we see photos of swastikas on Nazi flags or on the uniforms of the Third Reich. It reminds us of that terrible historical period in the mid-20th century when hatred threatened to rule the world. Most of us would be surprised to learn, however, that this emblem was once an ancient symbol known the world over to represent just the opposite: peace, prosperity, and fortuity.

A prime example of the positive meaning comes from the Hopi of northern Arizona. When masked kachinas (spirit messengers) dance in the village plaza during annual ceremonies to pray for rainfall and fertility, they carry a flat gourd rattle in their right hand. These rattles frequently bear the image of the swastika.

Far older than Germany’s Nazi regime, this icon of the Anasazi (or ancestral Hopi) had been considered sacred rather than malevolent. Specifically, it represented the center of Hopi land. Frank Waters in his classic Book of the Hopi explains the swastika in terms of the tribe’s prehistoric migrations. “We can now see that the complete pattern formed by the migrations was a great cross whose center, Túwanasavi [Center of the Universe], lay in what is now the Hopi country in the southwestern part of the United States, and whose arms extended to the four directional pásos.”

In early times at the start of the Fourth World (the current epoch), one Hopi clan after another began great migrations to the four directions represented by the venerable symbol of the swastika. Waters believes that the Hopi migrated from the Atlantic coast to the Pacific coast and from the Arctic Circle to Tierra del Fuego, though the range may actually be narrower.

Certainly the Anasazi traveled from the Colorado River to the Rio Grande, and from the San Juan River south to the lands of the Toltecs in Mexico and the Maya in Central America. Macaw and parrot feathers or even whole birds have been found in burial sites around the Colorado
Plateau. This indicates that the Anasazi had well established trade routes to the south.

Regardless of what the farthest limits of actual migration were, the point where the four arms of the geographical swastika meet is known as the Center of the World, the *Tuuwanasavi*. This is supposedly a few miles from the Arizona village of Oraibi on the Hopi Third Mesa.

Founded about 1120 AD, Oraibi has been continuously inhabited longer than any community on the North American continent. Oraibi literally means “Round Rock,” but the full name of this village is Sip Oraibi, “the place where the earth was made solid” or “the place where the roots solidify.” The first syllable of the name is similar to the Hopi word for navel: *sipna’at*. Hence, this tribe considers the spot to be the navel of the world.

Waters also suggests that a counterclockwise-turning swastika represents the earth, whereas a clockwise-turning one represents the sun in its movement across the sky. This indicates the dynamically potent nature of the symbol.

In addition to its importance in the beginning times, the swastika also plays a key role in Hopi prophecy of the end times. In a period preordained by the Creator, the enigmatic figure of Pahana will return wearing a red cap or a red cape. Also known as the Elder Brother, Pahana will verify his authenticity by bearing a stone piece that will match up with the rest of the sacred tablet the Creator had given the Hopi before they began their migrations.

Two helpers will accompany Pahana, one of which carries a masculine swastika representing purity and the four directions. The first helper also brings a Maltese cross with lines between the arms signifying menstrual blood, while the second helper holds merely a sun symbol. The combined forces of these three icons will “shake the world” and bring about global purification.

Some commentators have noted that these hoary emblems of Hopi prophecy represent the Central Powers of World War I (the Iron Cross) and the Axis Powers of World War II (the Swastika and the Rising Sun), whereas the final purification of the planet will present itself as World War III.

Pahana is probably not a single figure but an anthropomorphized composite, since it is said that his population will be great. In addition, Pahana supposedly has no religion but his own. If Pahana and his two helpers fail to stop human inequities, an unnamed figure from the west will come “like a big storm.” He will unmercifully purge evildoers, though he too is said to be a large number of people.

The late Hopi sun chief Dan Katchongva describes the End of Days: “The Purifier, commanded by the Red symbol [Maltese cross], with the help of the Sun and the Meha [swastika], will weed out the wicked who have disturbed the way of life of the Hopi, the true way of life on Earth. The wicked will be beheaded and will speak no more. This will be the purification for all the righteous people, the Earth, and all living things on the Earth. The ills of the Earth will be cured. Mother Earth will bloom again and all the people will unite into peace and harmony for a long time to come.”
However, if the Hopi nation disappears totally, the motion of the planet will become eccentric, and a great flood will again engulf the land as it did at the end of the Third World. Eventually, hordes of ants will inherit the Earth.

![Diagram of Prophecy Rock, petroglyphs (rock carvings) near Oraibi, Arizona. The upper horizontal line followed by a zigzag represents the rootless, materialistic culture of modern society. The two circles on the lower horizontal line signify the two world wars, while the corn plants and human figure at the right represent harmony with nature. The Maltese cross is ruler of this latter realm. As stated, both the swastika and the cross that one of the helpers of Pahana carries are key elements in the Hopi prophecy of End Times.](image1)

An Anasazi rock art example of a swastika is found at El Morro National Monument in northwestern New Mexico. (See photo below.) Rising two hundred feet above the desert, a massive sandstone mesa shelters a watering hole at its base. Over the course of thousands of years, diverse travelers found respite. These include the ancestral Zuni (a tribe culturally though not linguistically related to the Hopi), conquistadors, emigrants, surveyors, settlers, and cowboys. On the top are the ruins of an 875-room pueblo built by the native people in the late 13th century AD. Along the vertical faces of this bluff are more than 2,000 ancient petroglyphs as well as more recent signatures carved into the rock.

![Swastika petroglyph at El Morro National Monument, New Mexico.](image2)
The swastika itself (at center right) is adjacent to a number of vertical grooves technically called incised abstract petroglyphs. This indicates that they may have been scratched into the stone in the Archaic period as early as 1000 BC. Near the counterclockwise-turning swastika is a curving snake or water petroglyph along with a sun shield or mask traditionally worn during the winter solstice ceremony.

![A pair of Aya (Runner) kachinas with a swastika on each side of their masks.](image)

Whatever the Hopi connotations of the swastika are, this icon transcends any specific culture by virtue of its global occurrence. J.E. Cirlot in *A Dictionary of Symbols* comments on its universality: “The graphic symbol is to be found in almost every ancient and primitive cult all over the world—in Christian catacombs, in Britain, Ireland, Mycenae and Gascony; among the Etruscans, the Hindus, the Celts and the Germanic peoples; in central Asia as well as in pre-Columbian America.”

![Swastikas from various cultures](image)

The word swastika comes from the Sanskrit and literally means “being fortunate.” (*Su-* = “good, or well” and *asti* = “to be.”) It is an auspicious symbol bringing good luck. This sacred icon also signifies highest perfection, happiness, or pleasure. It originated in the Indus River Valley and spread during the Neolithic to Persia, Asia Minor, Troy, and eventually around the world. Artifacts with swastikas dated as early as 4500 – 3500 BC have recently been found. Despite the negative associations of Fascism in the modern consciousness, swastikas still hold
inestimable power and beauty resonating deep within the human soul. It remains to be seen whether or not these four-armed emblems will usher in the termination of our current age of chaos (the Hopi Fourth World) and the advent of an age of peace.

Minoan pottery fragment.

Iranian necklace, first millennium BC, National Museum of Iran.
Greek helmet with swastika, 350–325 BC, found in Italy.

Swastika-shaped pool or well constructed 801 AD at the ancient city of Thiruvallarai, Tamil Nadu, India. Photo courtesy of T.L. Subash Chandira Bose.

Interior of swastika-shaped well (above).
Mr. T.L. Subash Chandira Bose of Tamil Nadu, India, makes the following observations: “As a tradition from the ancient culture of South India, the swastika symbol is marked on the doorposts of dwelling houses. We also find the ancient practice of writing the swastika symbol on the first page of the yearly account book of a business. In addition, we have a special ceremony of laying a newborn baby on a cloth marked with a swastika symbol.”

Buddhist statue with swastika on chest.

Hohokam pottery fragments, about 1000 AD, Phoenix Basin, Arizona.
Navajo rug with swastikas.

1907 U.S. postcard.
Native American Basketball Team, Chilocco Indian School, Oklahoma, 1909.

Old sign for State Rt. 64 from Williams along the south rim of Grand Canyon to Cameron, Arizona.
U.S. Navy barracks, Coronado, California.
The architect claims the design was unintentional.
About the Author


His articles or interviews have appeared in Ancient American, Atlantis Rising, Fate, UFO, and World Explorer magazines, as well as in Lost Knowledge of the Ancients: A Graham Hancock Reader and Underground: The Disinformation Guide to Ancient Civilizations, Astonishing Archaeology and Hidden History. He continues to give lectures and international radio interviews.

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