

# Latvian medieval symbols

Katrīna Kārkle and Dāce Asme

Latvia

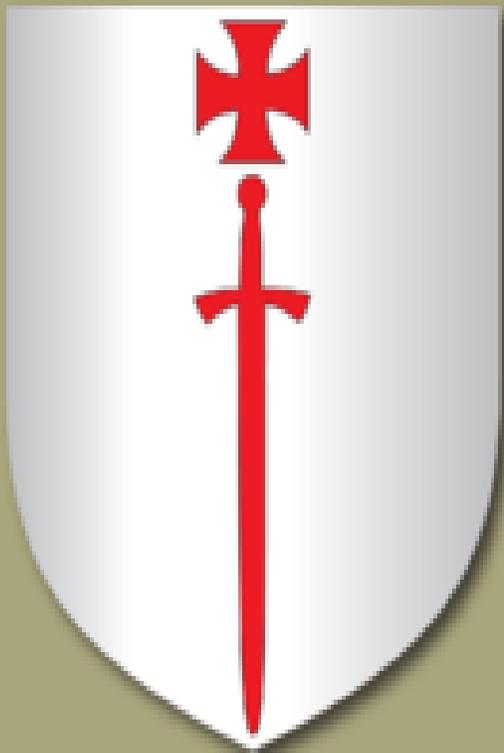


**"GREAT ROUTES IN  
THE MIDDLE AGE AND  
THEIR SYMBOLY"**

Nr. 2016-1-ES01-  
KA219-025035\_3



# Christianity symbols in Latvia middle age time



# The Livonian Brothers of the Sword

(Latin: *Fratres militiae Christi Livoniae*, German: *Schwertbrüderorden*, French: *Ordre des Chevaliers Porte-Glaive*) was a catholic military order established by the third bishop of Riga, Bishop Albert of Riga (or possibly Theoderich von Treyden), in 1202. Religious organization of German knights in the territory of Latvia and Estonia. The suit is a white cape with a red cross on it.

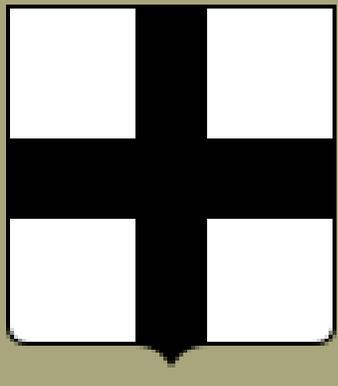
- Sword- power
- Cross- Christianity
- White – holy,innocence

# Map of the Livonian order

The Livonian Order, or the Holy House of the Holy Family of Jerusalem of Saint Mary, the brotherhood of Livonia (Latin: Fratres de Domo Sanctae Mariae Theutonicorum, Jerusalemitana per Livonia) was the branch of the German Order in Livonia, which was formed after the destruction of the Order of the Swordsmen in the Sun Battle of 1236.

Terra Mariana – land of St. Mary – Holy Jesus Christ mother



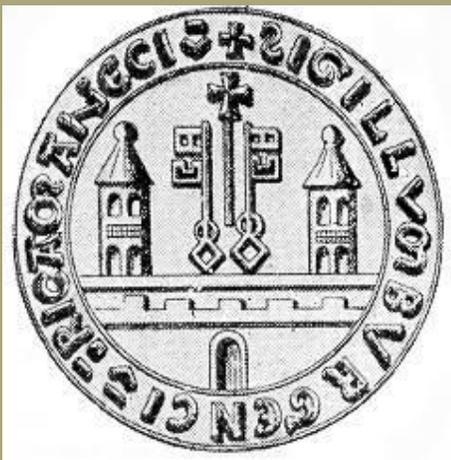


Seal of the Livonian Order's master  
and the Coat of Arms of Teutonic  
Knights in the Livonian Order



## Knight of the Livonian Order on a horse

The **Livonian Order** was an autonomous branch of the **Teutonic Order**, formed in 1237. It was later a member of the **Livonian Confederation**, from 1435 to 1561.



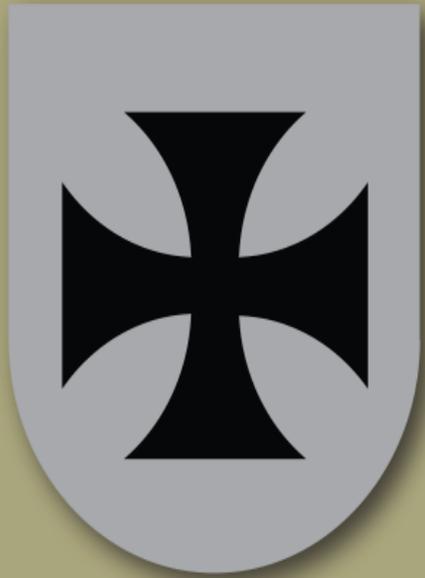
The key is the symbol of success

Tower – symbolizing power, as well as taking off above a daily life.

Riga town oldest stamp. 1226.



Since the first half of the 16th century, at the back of the Riga bench at Lübeck Shipyard, **the first emblem of Riga** has been preserved in heraldic colors: two towers with open gates on the silver field, a red cross on the top, two black crossed keys below it (bench copy RVMM)



Claw cross



Open-Air  
Museum.  
Crucifix - the  
death of Jesus  
Christ and the  
suffering at the  
cross





## Riga's Dome church golden cock

Wooden and metal cabins the roofs of the Riga Houses have been crowned since the end of the 13<sup>th</sup> century. The vows say that the devil is very afraid of cock songs and meets their homes. Most of the oldest cocks of Riga died in fires, which was the biggest misfortune of medieval cities.

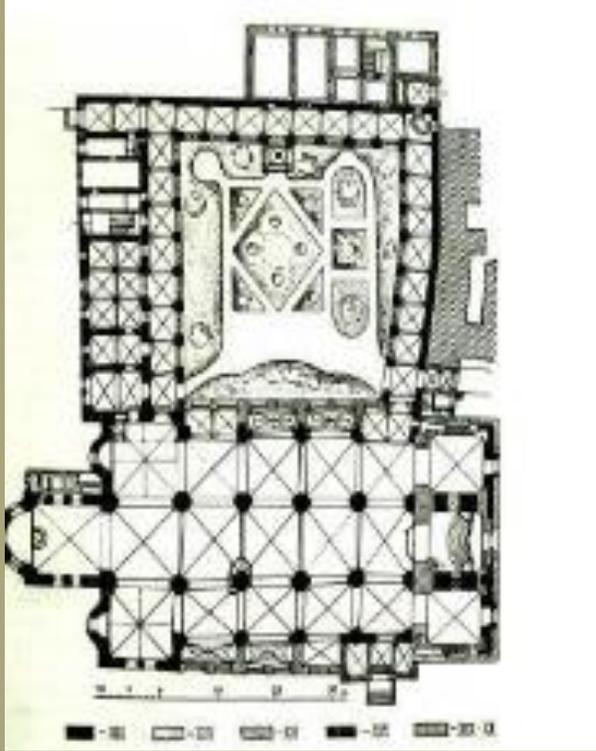
# The symbolism of parts of the medieval church

Symbolic meaning is attached to all parts of a church. In a Catholic church the roof symbolises charity; the floor symbolises the foundation of faith and the humility of the poor; the columns represent the Apostles, Bishops, and Doctors; the vaulting represents the preachers who bear up the dead weight of man's infirmity heavenwards; and the beams represent the champions of ecclesiastical right who defend it with the sword. The Nave symbolises Noah's Ark and the Barque of St. Peter. The direction of the East represents the Heavenly Jerusalem, and the direction whence the Messiah will return in glory; West represents death. (Catholic Encyclopaedia)

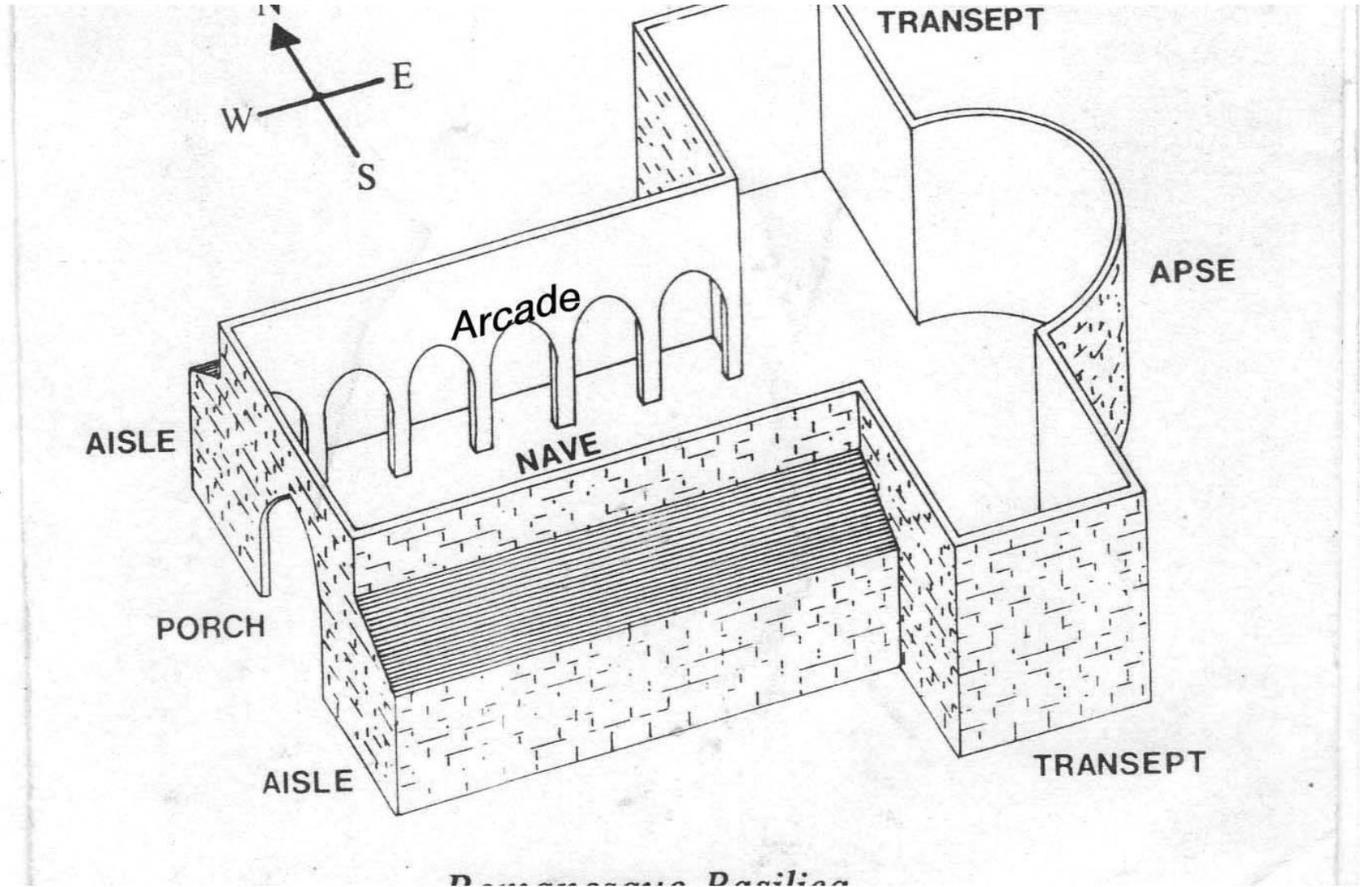
(If you think of the church as a human form the narthex is the feet, the nave is the body, the transepts are the arms and the apse is the head – the most important part!)

## THE DIRECTION OF A CHURCH

Traditionally all Christian churches were built from East to West. For Christians, of all the points of the compass, the most sacred is East, pointing in the direction of the holy city of Jerusalem.



Riga's Dome cathedral plane.





## The Riga's Dome cathedral Northern portal

- Such sites are called prospective portals, and they were just as compulsory details in medieval cult buildings.
- The portal's tympanum was shaped like a three-leaf clover (shamrock). Trinity is the idea that is really three-in-one: The Father, The Son and The Holy Spirit.



## Column crown sculptural capitals

On the left side of the portal, flowers, fruits, and similar symbols of happiness are depicted on the portal, while on the right are wolves and other motifs of different monsters. It was typical of the period of the Romanesque style tradition, when church sites often portrayed in the last theme of the law with Jesus Christ, who pointed out to the right-handed enthusiasts: "in the joy and peace without fear, living clever, peaceful, friends of good deity," with the left – "It is being visited not by law-abiding people". So the left side conditionally portrays the paradise, the right side – the hell.



## Rose window

Riga's Dome cathedral.

Rose - following the Christianization of Rome under the emperor Constantine, the rose became identified with the Virgin Mary. The rose symbol eventually led to the creation of the rosary and other devotional prayers in Christianity.



**Stellar vaults** on the southern side of Riga's St. Peter Evangelic Lutheran Church.

**The star** symbolic in christianity – the Bethelhem star in the Christian tradition revealed to the Eastern wises that Christ was born and later took them to Bethlehem.



flat vaults and  
pillars.



# Riga's Black Head hose

The building was an international mark of Riga from the time of Mannerism, when the facade of the Blackhead House was formed. "





Riga's Black Head hose details.

## Coat of arms of Riga

### Black head man figure with crusaders flags.

Since the house was built, marketers gathered at that time, in the big hall, various guilds participants had their own bench, with which the most important discussions and decision-making took place. The main tenants of the house for many years were unmarried merchants of German origin, sailors and linden blackheads, as well as citizens representing the Great Guild.

# The statue of the knight Roland

The northern German medieval town markets and Town Hall Square traditionally placed statues of the knight Roland. Their original origins and meanings are not very clear. Part of the researchers are associated with the French franchise of King Charles the Great Proud knight Roland. The installation of the statue symbolized the privilege, independence and freedom of the city court, as well as market security. According to the sources of history, Roland's wooden statue was already in Riga before 1413.



Latvian mythology symbolic



The key against evil. The crossed window guarded from the devils, witches, thieves, ill-advists and looked good.



**Yumis** is cereal field deity and saint patron of horses in the Latvian mythology, which is symbolized by two fruits grown together. You are responsible for productivity. The Yumis has its own graphic mark, which is a double-W image. The Yumis sign was often used at the end of the barn, roof or roof of the house, so it decorated the house and blessed its inhabitants.

Typical room in  
farmer house



Bread hod  
and carpet with  
Latvian  
ethnographic  
signs



# Latvian archeological folk costume



<https://www.pinterest.com/putzfrau/tautas-t%C4%93rpi/?lp=true>

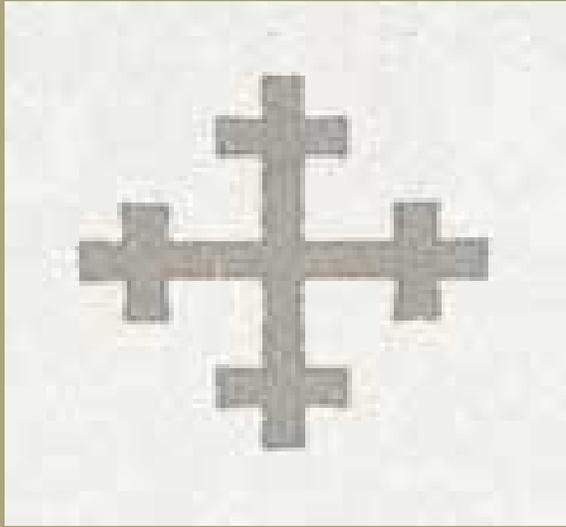
# Latvian archeological folk costume

<http://www.katramsavutautasterpu.lv/tautasterpi/14-gadsimta-latgalu-sievietes-terpa-rekonstrukcija/>

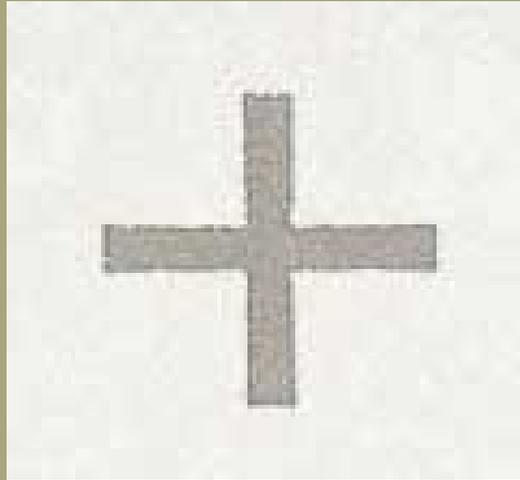


Latvian folk  
costumes belts –  
Latvian  
ethnographic  
signs  
encyclopedia





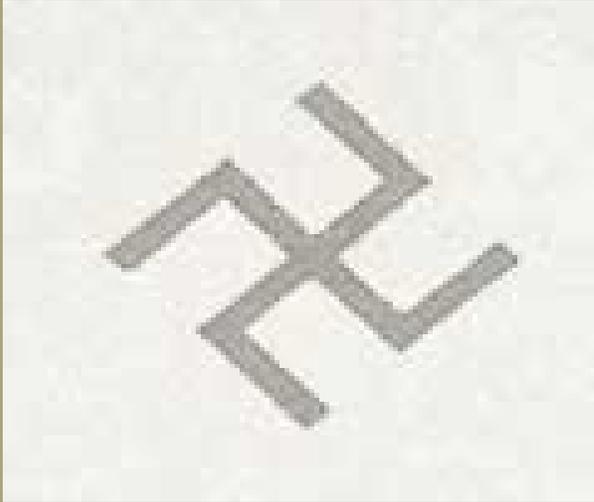
**Cross of Crosses** - A combination of four crosses, this symbol has been carved on ancient sacrificial stones for bestowal of divine favours. Cross of Crosses have been found decorating women's wraps during the Iron and Bronze Ages.

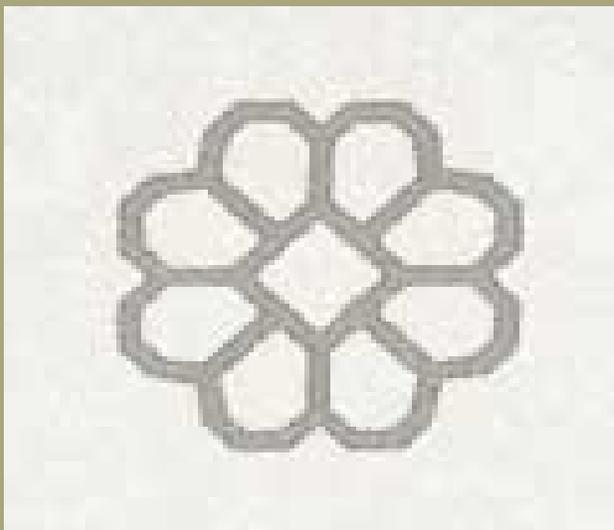


**Cross** – Perhaps due to its simplicity the cross sign has been widely used since antiquity. Found on Early Iron Age jewellery, it has no relationship to Christianity.

# The Sign of Thunder Cross

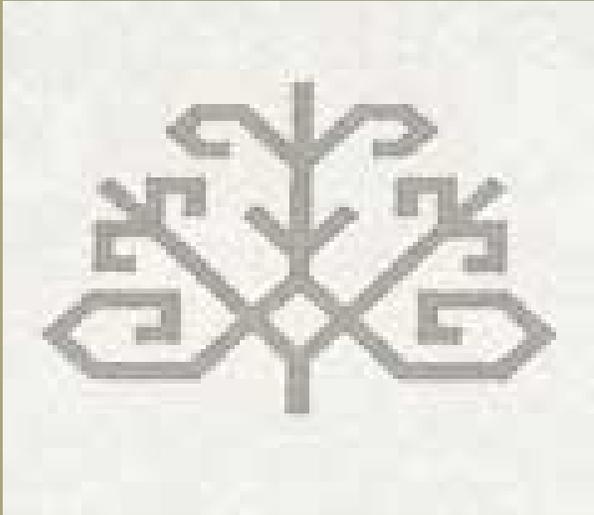
Also known as Fire Cross, Cross of Fortune or Swastica this sign is common to all Indo-European cultures. It is the symbol of fire, thunder, light, fortune, health and prosperity. Often used to adorn women's wraps and sashes, the variations of Thunder Cross include clockwise and counter-clockwise directions.





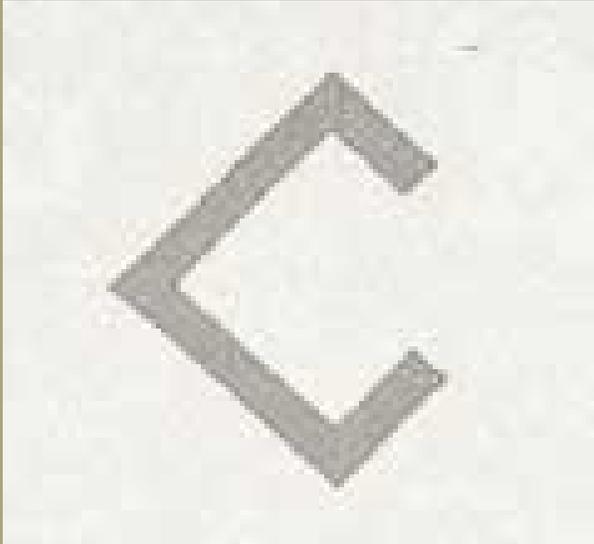
## The Sign of Sun

Sun is the dominant feature of God's heaven. Likewise, the sign of Sun is the most frequently used element in Latvian design. In ornaments of the Early Iron Age it is a plain circle. Later it evolved into various eight-segmented units.



## Tree of Sun

A combination of the basic design elements creates diversified symbol extensions. Such is the Tree of Sun, which represents reaching upward and growth.



## The Sign of Moon

Moon is the symbol of warriors. This sign is most often found on swords, bracelets and other objects carried by warriors. Moon shapes are also used in forming pendants for fibulae.

## The Sign of God or Heaven

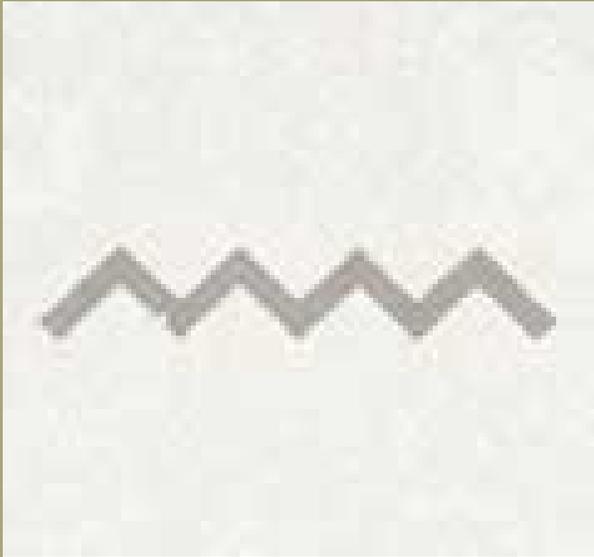
The presence of God, his love, caring and goodness is widely proclaimed in *dainas*. It is represented by a slender triangular shape above a horizontal base line (Earth-mother) and with a circle at its apex – God above the expanse of the heavens. This element is extremely old and is found on metal jewelry dating to the Early Iron Age.



## The Sign of Laima

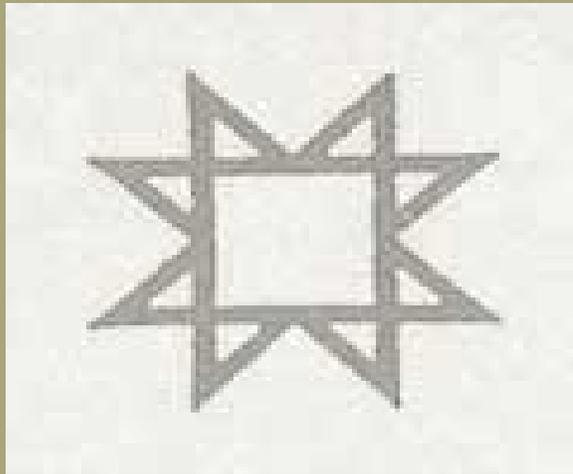
Laima determined the destiny of people. It was believed that she lived under the threshold and was not to be disturbed by handing anything over it. The graphic fir-twig sign of Laima is attributed to the very beginnings of Latvian symbology. Besides the popular variant called „Laimas Broom“, it has relatively few other variations.





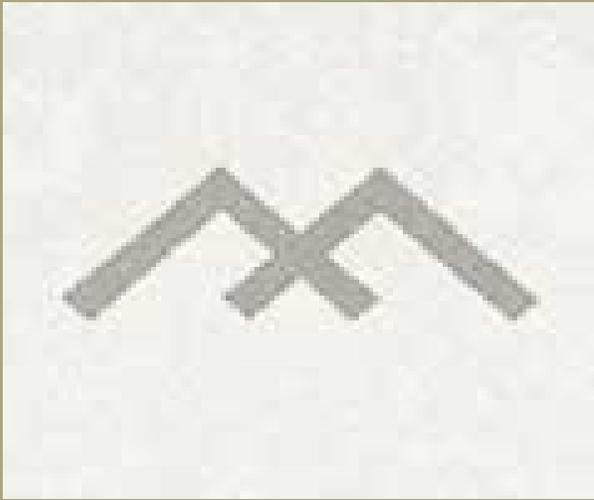
## The Sign of Mara

Māra is the deity of earth and water and all the creatures within. An insight into her position within the ancient beliefs abound in dainas, and are just as often visually reflected in Latvian ornamental design. The symbol of Māra – a zigzag line – dates back to the Iron Age.



## The Sign of Auseklis (Morning Star)

Of the many star design variations, Auseklis is the most prominent. In *dainas* it is often mentioned as a protector and contains numerous references to „star blankets“ and „star coats.“



## The Sign of Jumis

Depicting a double spiked stalk of grain, Jumis symbolizes fertility and prosperity. Found on Iron Age wraps and jewelry, it is a popular element used in subsequent textile adornments.



Thank you for your attention!