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## **THE NOMENCLATURE OF TRADITIONAL ORNAMENTS IN LATVIAN AND LITHUANIAN**

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**Annotation.** The traditional ornaments, characteristic for the Latvian and Lithuanian ethnographic regions, are an essential part of traditional Baltic culture. Since the 19th century researchers have studied their technical aspects and semiotics (Brastiņš, 1923; Dzērvīts, 1925; Celms 2007) but little attention has been paid to empirical terminology. The name is an integral part of the sign, it often carries semantic information helping to reveal its usage and significance. In Latvia, the names of traditional signs have been influenced by the work of Brastiņš and *dievturi* (“Keepers of Dievs”) who attributed the names of Baltic mythological deities to ornaments linking them to the manifestations of the deity mentioned in the denominations. While these denominations are very popular in Latvia, in Lithuania very similar ornaments are called and interpreted differently. This research focuses on collecting and analysing Baltic ornament nomenclature published in Latvia and Lithuania in the first half of the 20th century. It compares the ornament naming traditions in both countries and highlights the main parallels and differences. It also reviews previous research of ornament in Latvia and Lithuania where significant differences can be seen – while semiotic research dominates in Latvia, in Lithuania more attention has been paid to the nomenclature, although in both countries the nomenclature has often been viewed separately from the visual form, making the research of ornament evolution and typology difficult. It has been found that the spectrum of ornament nomenclature at the beginning of the 20th century in Latvia was more diverse than it is now; that it is common for Latvians and Lithuanians to view ornament as a pattern rather than separate graphic elements and that geometric, plant, animal, artefact and celestial body denominations dominate the nomenclature of both languages. Symbols appearing in Baltic culture are also present in ornament nomenclature.

**Keywords:** comparative research; ethnographic Baltic ornament; Latvian signs; ornament typology; phenomenology; semiotics.

### **Introduction**

The traditional ornaments, characteristic of the Latvian and Lithuanian ethnographic regions, are an essential part of traditional Baltic culture. These ornaments have been a focal point for researchers since the end of the 19th century and have also retained their importance in present day studies but very few of them take a closer look at the comparison of Latvian and Lithuanian ornaments and even less – at their nomenclature. In addition to the visual form, the name is also an integral part of the ornament as it often carries

semantic information and helps to reveal its usage and significance. In Latvia, in the 1920s, a new ornament naming tradition was introduced by *dievturi* (literally “keepers of *Dievs*” – a modern revival of the local pre-Christian religion) and their leader Ernests Brastiņš. As a result – in Latvia nowadays ornaments are named after Baltic deities such as *Dieva zīme* (“Sign of *Dievs*”), *Laimas slotiņa* (“*Laima*’s Broom”), *Pērkona krusts* (“Cross of *Pērkons*”), etc. Since the denominations name what deity, animal, or object the ornament supposedly represents, it can be considered a crucial part of the ornament’s semiotic message. Modern Latvian ornament researchers tend to use these names of ornaments in explaining their semiotics (Celms, 2007). It is significant to note that the ornament studies at the beginning of the 20th century display a more diverse nomenclature and rarely name any specific deities. This can also be noted in Lithuanian ornament nomenclature, which also seems to differ from Latvian nomenclature considerably.

While the Latvian and Lithuanian ornaments have much in common aesthetically and technically, the methodological approaches in their research differ; while Latvians focus on the tradition set by *dievturi* linking specific ornaments and graphic elements to Baltic deities, Lithuanians have taken a different path focusing more on the folk tradition of ornament nomenclature and its typology. As a result – Latvian and Lithuanian ornaments that look similar are named quite differently. Unfortunately, there are very few studies that focus specifically on the comparison of Latvian and Lithuanian ornament nomenclature. The most notable researcher to compare Latvian and Lithuanian ornaments is Vytautas Tumėnas (Tumėnas, 2002, 2014). In Latvian research, the topic of ornament nomenclature has only been outlined in some articles published in magazine “*Latvijas Saule*” (Paegle, 1930; Dzērvītis, 1925). Recent Latvian researchers tend to focus on the semiotic aspects using the established terminology of *dievturi*. Graphic designer and one of the leaders of *dievturi* Valdis Celms has extensively described the semiotics of Latvian ornament and its nomenclature and his ideas have also been published in Lithuanian (Celms, 2014, 2016).

**The goal of this research** is to summarize the nomenclature of Latvian and Lithuanian ornament represented in Latvian and Lithuanian publications of the first half of the 20th century, to compare the main

tendencies, and to review how the differences have affected the traditional ornament reception and nomenclature usage in both cultures.

**The main tasks** include gathering samples of Latvian and Lithuanian ornament according to the defined criteria, comparing and analysing samples based on their defining visual and nomenclature features, and performing a case study of a selected ornament in both Latvian and Lithuanian sources in more detail.

To accomplish the set goals, the following **scientific methods** were used: the descriptive method for recording information on each ornament sample, the comparative method for organizing the samples in categories according to their visual forms and nomenclature, marking out the common and the different; besides, the semiotic aspect of the ornament samples was examined with the use of structural analysis viewing the ornament samples as a sign system.

This research focuses on materials published in the first half of the 20th century specifically. As indicated before, most recent studies favour the terminology introduced by *dievturi* and tend to overlook the nomenclature that has been recorded in ethnographic field work. Because of this, it is most productive to review publications from the first half of the 20th century when *dievturi* terminology had not yet rooted in common use. "Materials" in this study include scientific publications and articles in press about the results of ethnographic expeditions and descriptions of artefacts in museums. The studies published by Brastiņš are not viewed as "materials" in this research, as they focus on establishing a new nomenclature system rather than describing the existing customs of naming ornament.

### **"Ornament", "Pattern", "Sign" and "Symbol" – the Differences and Usage of These Terms**

These terms are widely used across many research fields as well as in everyday communication, but their usage is inconsistent and sometimes – incorrectly synonymic. That is why it would be best to start by defining their usage within this study.

**Ornament** is the main term used in this study to describe samples because its definition is solid and does not declare the presence of any semiotic value. In English, ornament is defined as “anything that enhances the appearance of a person or thing” (Collins English Dictionary, 2012) while the same term in Latvian and Lithuanian is more restricted and indicates that the ornament usually consists of symmetrically and rhythmically aligned elements (Spektors et al., 2022; Liutkevičienė et al., 2022). This is important to note, as traditional Latvian and Lithuanian ornaments are usually patterns consisting of such elements. Local researchers (Brastiņš, 1923; Galaunė, 1930) also commonly use the term *raksts* (LV)/*raštas* (LT) to describe ornaments and this term is also encountered in ornament nomenclature (*saulīšu raksts*, *tulpinis raštas*, etc.). *Raksts/raštas* can be translated as a “pattern” and its primary meaning of refers to writing (*rakstīt* (LV)/*rašyti* (LT) – “to write”) but its original meaning was “to decorate, leave markings”, the meaning of “text-creation” was only adopted later (Karulis, 2001, p. 736). Within this study both patterns and isolated elements are viewed as “ornaments”.

**Sign** and **symbol** are both terms used in semiotics but the definitions change depending on the approach by individual authors. According to Peirce, a symbol is a type of sign with no apparent resemblance between the form of the sign and the concept it represents (e.g., alphabetical letters, punctuation marks etc.) and “sign” is a broader term (in Chandler, 2002, p. 36). These terms are also widely used outside of scientific disciplines. In Latvian, *zīme* (“sign”) is the most common term used in reference to ornaments but *simbols* (“symbol”) can also be encountered. In Lithuanian *ženklas* (“sign”) and *simbolis* (“symbol”) are used more sparingly – mostly in semiotic research. The primary definition of *zīme* is given as “something (an object, its reproduction, image) that signifies or indicates something else” (Spektors et al., 2022). Also, *simbols* is defined similarly – “a sign, or a set of signs (e.g., image, ornament, object, combination of colours, artistic image, composition) that reflects an idea or a phenomenon in society, nature etc.” Respectively, referring to Latvian ornament as *zīmes* or *simboli* means assigning semiotic value to it by default.

## **Previous Studies of Ornament Nomenclature in Latvia and Lithuania**

Even though traditional ornament has been the focal point of many studies, they have been fragmentary – not all ethnographic regions have been studied to the same extent in different time periods. This makes it difficult to come to objective and precise conclusions.

The most fruitful period in ornament studies was the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Finally facing no more restrictions and eager to expand the cultural foundation of their newly founded states, Latvian and Lithuanian researchers conducted extensive studies on many folklore subjects, including ornaments. Notable Latvian ornament researchers of this period are Ernests Brastiņš, Eduards Paegle, Arvīds Dzērvītis, Edīte Elksnīte, Jēkabs Bīne and Rihards Zariņš. Most of them were members of *dievturi* community.

As Tumėnas notes, Lithuanians have not been as active in the field of ornament research (Tumėnas, 2002, p. 30) but still many important studies have been conducted by researchers including Jonas Basanavičius, Paulius Galaunė, Antanas Tamošaitis and Balys Buračas.

Latvian and Lithuanian ornament can and should be studied comparatively because of the visual resemblances and affinity of languages. Another common trait of Latvian and Lithuanian folk art is that it developed as “peasant art” under the rule of another nation. But comparative ornament studies are hindered by the very different approaches Latvian and Lithuanian researchers have taken in studying ornament and its nomenclature.

As shown by the inclination to name traditional ornaments “signs” and “symbols”, Latvian researchers tend to view ornament through the prism of mythology. By the 20<sup>th</sup> century Latvia had lost much of its traditional cultural heritage, and it also did not have the historical experience of a once large and influential state like Lithuania did, so it needed other symbols and means to build a new identity; what was lost – had to be built anew. Several artists and researchers including Ansis Cīrulis, Jūlijs Madernieks and Jēkabs Bīne set out to define the “Latvian style” in art and design, others, such as Brastiņš and Paegle, focused on defining the Latvian way of living and religion, which

included the complex question of Baltic mythology and religion. In his work *Latviešu ornamentika* ("Latvian ornamentation") Brastiņš proposed that the Latvian ornament, as all prehistoric ornament, originally depicted stylized natural phenomena (lightning, waves of water, etc.) and, as the primitive religion developed, these forces of nature evolved into manifestations of various deities; therefore, a link between ornament and a specific deity can be established (Brastiņš, 1923, pp. 35–36). He also justified this statement with various symbols found in Latvian folklore, folk songs specifically.

Even though Brastiņš had many followers, he also had many critics. His work faced further criticism in later times because his interpretations made it more difficult for next generations of researchers to separate traditional folk nomenclature from *dievturi* terminology (Karlson, 1994, p. 78). The criticism was mostly directed at Brastiņš' unsystematic approach in selecting individual folk songs, a dubious source in itself, to prove his hypotheses. While providing criticism where it is due, it is also important to note Brastiņš' motivation. He pointed out that the national traditional ornament had been almost entirely forgotten, and Latvians needed to establish a new style and philosophy which would not only draw from the remaining heritage but also continue it (Brastiņš, 1923, pp. 8–9). Instead of focusing on the past, Brastiņš constructed new beliefs and perspectives for Latvian art, religion and way of living. Many researchers have followed in his footsteps, most notably Celms whose work has also been published in Lithuanian (Celms, 2014, 2016).

It must also be pointed out that there was a second approach to ornament research in Latvia which focused on the technical and material aspects of ornaments and their creation, it was used by Arvīds Dzērvītis, Jānis Niedre and Rihards Zariņš. Unfortunately, they often overlooked the nomenclature of the ornaments they recorded. Evidence gathered in later ethnographic expeditions shows that the women who created ornamented textiles often had no notion of how those ornaments were named (Kraukle, 2020), but it remains unclear if there were no names at all or if these names had been lost over time because they were not recorded.

Even though at the beginning of the 20th century Lithuanians were just as concerned about preserving the national identity as Latvians (Lietuvių meno kūrėjų draugija, 1920, p. 2), it is important to note that there did not exist any

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analogue of *dievturi* in Lithuania – a group that would focus on ornament specifically and invent new terminology. Lithuanian researchers were less concerned with semiotics and turned to ornament nomenclature instead. In an article written for the newspaper *Viltis*, Basanavičius describes the folk art displays at the 4<sup>th</sup> Lithuanian Art Exhibition and quotes the display descriptions mentioning about 50 various denominations of Lithuanian ornament. Unfortunately, there are no visual samples of these ornaments which characterizes the problem in Lithuanian research in general – there are many mentions of ornament denominations, but usually they are analysed separately from their visual form (Tumėnas, 2014, p. 385). Such approach might help in developing typology but hinders analysis of ornament evolution and semiotics as well as comparative analysis of ornaments of other nations.

It must also be pointed out that the analysed objects in both countries differ. In Latvia, ornament research mostly focuses on knitwear (mittens and socks) and woven textiles. A lot of attention has also been paid to archaeological materials of the 13th century and before. Lithuanian ornament studies review ornamented textiles as well, but with focus on woven textiles specifically – sashes, aprons, blankets, and etc.; knitwear is not mentioned as often. Another field of interest is woodcarving, mostly household items and crosses; Latvian sources mention this type of folk art very rarely. One more very interesting subject is the ornamentation of decorated Lithuanian Easter eggs – *margučiai* – but since none of the reviewed mentions of *margučiai* ornament denominations included any visual examples, none have been included in the corpus of samples of this study. Also, archaeological materials are not referenced as often as in Latvian research.

### **Conclusions of the Previous Studies**

With Latvian researchers focusing on the technical and mythological aspects of ornament, the first one to provide an early typology of ornament nomenclature was Basanavičius. He classified ornament denominations into **geometric**, **plant**, and **animal** categories and concluded that the ornament nomenclature used in folk art is remarkably diverse (Basanavičius, 1910). Later Galaunė expanded this classification by adding **twisted** and **celestial body**

ornaments, but Balčikonis differentiated geometric ornaments into **abstract** and **symbolic** (Savoniakaitė, 1998, p. 46). Already in 1930 Galaunė pointed out that the ornaments are often copied from imported pattern books; therefore, it must be evaluated whether certain ornaments can be considered as a part of the local custom (Galaunė, 1930, p. 271). He also pondered about the origin of denominations of ornaments having significant discrepancy with their visual form (Galaunė, 1930, p. 271) – a similar question could be asked about Latvian denominations as well. Tumėnas has tried to look for answers in semiotics of Lithuanian ornament in sashes and comparing Lithuanian, Latvian, Russian and Belarusian ornaments, and their nomenclature. Taking into account the visual form of the ornament, he organized all the nomenclature into groups according to visual similarities; there were plant, animal, artefact/celestial bodies, and geometric denominations. He concluded that various denominations in the same group also belonged to the same semiotic category, which points toward their oldness and similar worldview of the Baltic and Slavic tribes (Tumėnas, 2014, p. 390–398). Since Latvian studies mostly focus on mythology or technicality of the ornament, there are no notable conclusions about its nomenclature outside the mythological approach.

### **General Characteristics of the Samples**

Such a criterion as having both a name and a visual representation was crucial for ornament samples to be included in this study. Unless both parts are present, it is impossible to determine cases where the same name is used to denominate different visual forms. General and common geometrical terms such as triangles, circles, squares etc. are not considered ornament nomenclature within this study. The authenticity of nomenclature cannot be treated as a criterion as it is impossible to determine when authors use the local common nomenclature and when their own individual terminology.

The main aspect in comparing ornaments is their visual form. Colour, although traditionally meaningful in folklore, was not treated as a dividing aspect. In ethnographic materials colour may be a defining feature of the region and social group but does not affect the nomenclature of ornaments. This is confirmed by the samples of this study where ornaments of various colours



carry the same denomination, and by the fact that many researchers tend to ignore the colour altogether using black and white images of the ornaments. The names of ornaments are given in their original form. Some have been recorded in dialects and some may display errors as many of the Lithuanian names used in this study have been recorded by Latvian researchers.

The main sources of this study were two periodicals that included articles on ethnography, archaeology, and culture. *Latvijas Saule* ("Latvian Sun"; published from 1923–1931 by Eduards Paegle) consists of 55 issues which yielded the most samples – 91 – including both Latvian and Lithuanian nomenclature. Its analogue in Lithuania was *Gimtasai kraštas* ("Native land", published from 1934–1943 by *Šiaulių kraštotyros draugija* ("Local lore society of Šiauliai") and Šiauliai *Aušros* museum) which seems to further illustrate the Latvians' obsession with ornament studies – none of the 17 published issues yielded any samples for this research. Additional sources include *Lietuvių liaudies menas* ("Lithuanian folk art", Galaunė, 1930), *Rucavas krekliai* ("Shirts of Rucava", Elksnīte, 1933) and *Latvju raksti* (Latvian ornament, Zariņš, 1924–1931).

Even though embroidery, knitting, weaving and other handicraft books of traditional folk ornaments were popular at this time, none of them seemed to include any nomenclature of the ornaments depicted, so they were not useful for the purpose of this research.

## **An Overview of the Samples**

Within the study, a total of 172 ornament samples were collected: 130 – Latvian and 42 – Lithuanian. The most common references are those of various flowers, especially roses (7 samples), suns (9 samples), and stars (7 samples). The samples include less swastikas than expected, although swastikas were often mentioned in articles that lacked visual references. There were also no mentions of *lietuvėna krusts*, ("cross of lietuvėns" – a pentagram that was commonly used to deflect *lietuvėns* (*slogutis* in Lithuanian) – a harmful spirit that torments people and cattle at night. The reason can be found within the usage of this ornament – it was drawn on doors, walls, even bodies (Šmits, 1940, No. 17499) for temporary protection and never used in

folk art. Another popular Latvian denomination missing in the samples is *auseklis*. First mentioned at the end of the 19th century (Ūdre, 2023), it is attributed to an eight-pointed star shape. Shapes like this carried other names such as *saules* (“suns”), *zvaigznes* (“stars”) even *kļavas lapas* (“maple leaves”) and *ragainās spurdzes* (“the horned flowers”).

It was also found that 33 Latvian ornament samples were attributed to mittens, but it is possible that there were more among them. This is important to note because mitten patterns tended to carry specific nomenclature – “blanket patterns did not have any specific names, but mitten patterns had” (Onzule, cited in Kraukle, 2020, p. 37). Most mitten pattern nomenclature found in this study was constructed using the ending *-aiņi* (*puķaiņi*, *rakstaiņi*, *spieķaiņi*, and etc.).

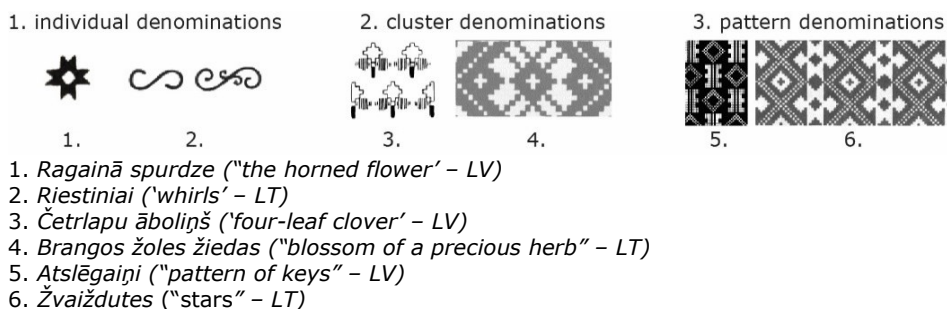
## Typology of Samples

### **Format of Denomination**

To understand the main tendencies of ornament descriptions, the recorded nomenclature was first organized by the format of denomination dividing it into 3 groups: **individual denominations** – referring to a single separate graphic element; **cluster denominations** – referring to a cluster of elements forming a complex single shape; **pattern denominations** – referring to a complex combination of overlapping and blending elements (Fig. 1).

### **Figure 1**

#### *Examples of Nomenclature Types by the Format of Denomination*



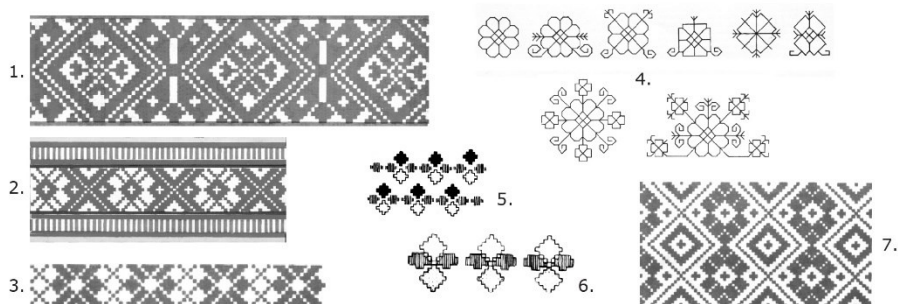
The last group turned out to be largest – there were 95 pattern nomenclature samples (55.2% of total), leaving 40 individual denominations (23.3%) and 37 cluster denominations (21.5%). Even though the borders between the groups are blurred, there are far more denominations that refer to a group of elements (76.7%) rather than a single element – this could signify a tendency to focus on ornament as a composition and not as collection of individual signs.

### **Visual Form Types**

Samples were also organized in 28 different groups each consisting of visually similar ornaments. During the organizing process the denominations of ornaments were not visible so that they would not influence the perception of the shapes. After revealing the denominations of each group, they turned out to be very diverse – e.g., ornaments resembling rose or flower-like shapes would be named after various plants and even celestial bodies (Figure 2).

**Figure 2**

*Group No. 26 – 4-Parted Roses with Diagonal Division*



1. *Saulītes* ("suns" – LV)
2. *Brangios vaistažolēs žiedas* ("blossom of a precious herb" – LT)
3. *Žibuoklēs* ("anemones" – LT)
4. *Astoņlapainās rozītes, saulītes* ("eight-leaf roses, suns" – LV)
5. *Āboliņš ar mītim* ("clover with a cross" – LV)
6. *Četrlapu āboliņš* ("four-leaf clover" – LV)
7. *Rozēs žiedas* ("rose blossom" – LT)

Summarizing the denomination principles, it can be said that nomenclature mostly consists of either geometric or technical descriptions,

such as crosses (*krustiņi*), zigzag (*līklocis, kriptutē*), whirls (*riestīnīai*), etc. or figurative descriptions as *saulītes* ("suns") or *rožes žiedas* ("rose blossoms") (Fig. 2). It is impossible to determine whether a deliberate stylization of a symbolic object has taken place or whether the denomination simply follows the form of the ornament. Some denominations mention more recent realia, such as carnations (*gvazdikai*), tulips (*tulpēs*), mirrors (*spoguļu raksts*) or ducats (*dukatu raksts*); therefore, they could be more recent.

Figurative denominations can be assembled in the same categories stated by Tumėnas (2014) – plant motifs, animal motifs, artefacts, and celestial bodies. But further categorization is hindered by the fact that very often the same shape is denominated by nomenclature belonging in various categories. Some categories in both languages are more uniform than others, e.g., most denominations in plant motif groups mostly named realia that are associated with plants and flowers. Very uniform groups are also "roosters and horses" and "snakes".

Maria Gimbutas has described plant ornaments as the manifestation of the beauty and force of life (Gimbutas, 1958, p. 48) and this type of ornament is very popular in Latvian and Lithuanian folk-art as can also be seen in the many plant motif variations in this study.

There is also nomenclature that includes the names of various animals or their parts. A very common part used is "eyes" which is present in two samples *rubeņactiņas* ("grouse-eyes") and *cūkactiņas* ("pig-eyes"), other kinds of eyes were also mentioned in later Lithuanian literature (Tumėnas, 2014, p. 393). Animals are also indicated in the denominations as *kaķa pēdiņa* ("cat's foot") and *ožinkoja* ("goat's foot"), but neither of these are stable as these visual forms are also denominated by names of other categories. Tumėnas notes that parts of animals – feet, nails, horns, etc. – are often named in ornament nomenclature and could possibly be linked to the sacrificial traditions where these parts of animals were commonly devoted to gods (2014, pp. 393–398), but a viable explanation is that these specific parts are mentioned just because of visual resemblance. *Kaķa pēdiņa* is a complex denomination. It is encountered in many variations in Latvia and also Lithuania (*katpédélè*). The same ornament is often called *dimka* in Latvia and Lithuania (Kraukle, 2020; Savoniakaite, 1998) which also refers to the technique of weaving this

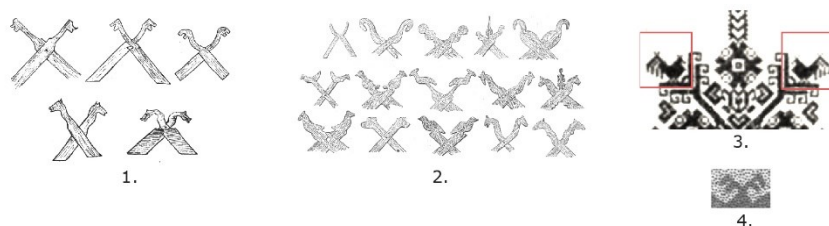
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ornament. Other versions include stars and roses which seem to be based on visual resemblance. Although Tumėnas places *katpédélė* in the animal motif group, it could also be considered a plant motif as *kaķpēdiņa/katpédélė* is a common plant in Latvia and Lithuania (Kļaviņš, 2023).

Frequent and semantically stable animals in nomenclature are roosters, horses and snakes, the grass-snake (*Natrix natrix*) specifically. It is also worth noting that a rooftop ornament which is used in both Latvia and Lithuania to ensure the prosperity of the house is called *gaiļi* or *zirdziņi* in Latvian and *gaidukai* or *arkliukai* in Lithuanian ("roosters", "horses") (Fig. 3).

### Figure 3

Group No. 27 – Roosters and Horses



1. *Gaiļi, zirdziņi* ("roosters, horses" – LV)
2. *Arkliukai, gaidukai* "horses, roosters" – LT)
3. *Gaiļi* ("roosters" – LV)
4. *Gaiļi* ("roosters" – LV)

In Latvian and Lithuanian folklore, rooster is an ancient symbol of the sun and a bringer of light, it can also chase away the devil and evil spirits with its crow. (Šmits, 1918, p. 132; Puzinas, 1955, p. 458). Gimbutas remarks that birds represent the sphere of sky and in folk art are often depicted among celestial bodies (Gimbutas, 1958, p. 37).

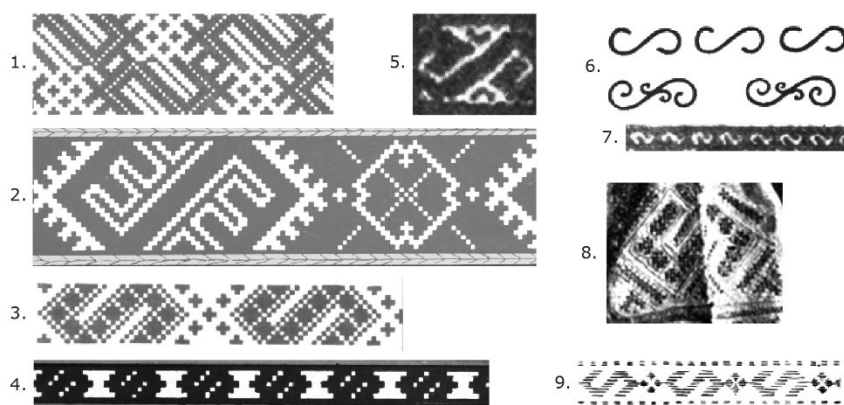
In folk art horses are also often accompanied by circular solar symbols. Horse as a carrier of the sun has been present in European art since the bronze age (Zemītis, 2004, p. 49). Another ornament – *atslēgaiņi* (Figure 1) – is also linked to horses and the sun. In the mythological approach this ornament is interpreted as two horses pulling the cart of sun; it is also referred to as the sign of *Ūsiņš* – a deity of light and horses (Celms, 2007, p. 162).

Within this study this motif was not found among Lithuanian samples.

Even though celestial bodies do not form a semiotically stable group as often *saulītes/saulutēs* ("suns"), *zvaigznītes/žvaigždutēs* ("stars"), and *rozītes/roželēs* ("roses") are used interchangeably, it is worth pointing out how popular these motifs are in both Latvian and Lithuanian ornaments and their nomenclature. These motifs have been popular ever since their appearance in the Baltic region during the Neolithic period (Zemītis, 2004, p. 35, p. 48).

#### Figure 4

Group No. 28 – Snakes



1. Ožinkoja ("Goat's foot" – LT)
2. Ķirmāles raksts ("Pattern of snake" – LV)
3. Litaka (lydeka) ("Pike (fish)" – LT)
4. Ķirmāles, zalkši ("snakes" – LV)
5. Ķirmāle ("snake" – LV)
6. Riestiniai ("whirls" – LV)
7. Ķirmāļši ("snakes" – LV)
8. Ķirmāle ("snake" – LV)
9. Līkumiņi ("curves" – LV)

*Zalktis* ("grass-snake" in Latvian) is a very popular ornament denomination in Latvia but within the study more samples were found of its dialect forms – *ķirmāle*, *ķirmāle*, *ķirmālītis* (Fig. 4). This denomination has been used near Rucava which is also where most of this type of ornaments were recorded. The Lithuanian *žaltys* ("grass-snake") does not appear among the samples, but Basanavičius recorded *kirminėliai* in Lithuania, although without visual representation (Basanavičius, 1910). In Aukshtaitian dialect, *kirmialė* means "snake" and *kirminas* in Žemaitian refers to "snake, grass-snake".

The symbolic status of the grass-snake and its connection to traditional ornament can be confirmed in archaeological findings. Across her expeditions in Europe Gimbutas found multiple snake-goddess figurines ornamented with zigzag and meander ornaments. While in Latvia the grass-snake ornament is always S-shaped as shown in the samples (Fig. 4); in Lithuania it is often associated with zigzags and waves (Galaunė, 1930, p. 24, Gimbutas, 1958) and the author, while conversing with Lithuanians, has also found that the denomination *žaltys* mostly evokes associations with wavy lines and zigzags instead of S-shaped forms.

Brastiņš considered the S-shaped grass-snake ornament to be a type of swastika – an abbreviated swastika (*aplauzts ugunskrusts*), because it appears as two branches of the swastika with the rest of the ornament cut off; this idea was later upheld by other Latvian researchers as well. But this sort of interpretation is not very productive because following this logic we could also argue that all rhombi are triangles, etc. (Karlsonē, 1994, p. 78). Even though swastikas are not used in Lithuania to describe S-shaped forms, Tumėnas notes that Belarusians use a similar ornament in woven belts and call it *огнивик* (“flame”), and Russians have a similar ornament called *огнилицы* (“sparks”) (Tumėnasm 2002, pp. 208–209). It could be possible that Brastiņš was influenced by the work of Russian and Belarusian researchers, but none were listed among his sources.

This link between snakes and swastikas can also be confirmed by many iron-age findings of swastika-shaped brooches with crawling snake shapes at all four ends. These brooches have been found in both Latvia and Lithuania, in the territory previously inhabited by Curonians (Zemītis, 2004, p. 59). It is important to note that the town Rucava, which has been dubbed the birthplace of *ķirmāle* (Tumėnas, 2002, p. 208), is also located in this region near the border of Lithuania.

### **The Comparison of Latvian and Lithuanian Nomenclature**

The count of Latvian samples by far exceeds the count of Lithuanian samples in this study; therefore, it is difficult to make general conclusions, but there are tendencies which appear in both Latvian and Lithuanian denominating

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traditions – use of diminutives *lapainīši*, *cūkactiņa*, *līkumiņi*, *eglutē*, *kriputē*, *grebliukai*; tiny elements are compared to eyes, and *raksts/raštas* is commonly used to denominate patterns such as *tulpinis raštas*, *saulīšu raksts*.

The Lithuanian plant motif nomenclature is more detailed and diverse – it mentions daisies (*brolelių žiedai*), fir tree (*eglutė*), carnations (*gvazdikai*), dahlias (*jurginai*), cat's-foot (*katpėdėlė*), hollyhocks (*radastos*), rose (*rožė*), lily (*lelija*), and tulip (*tulpė*). There are relatively few samples that mention general parts of plants such as *brangios vaistažolės žiedas* (“blossom of a precious herb”).

Latvian plant motif nomenclature is more general and does not mention specific plants – *lapaiņi*, *lapainīši*, *lapainītes*, *puķaiņi*, *rožaiņi*, *zaraiņi*; these samples also display that it is common to construct the denominations with the suffix and ending *-aiņi*, which refers to belonging to a specific group, possessing specific traits, e.g., *lapaiņi* (*lapas* – “leaves”) describe a pattern that looks like leaves. These names are also used in plural, because they tend to be attributed to knitted mittens; so this is how you would describe a pair. A very popular denomination in both Latvian and Lithuanian is *eglīte/eglutė* (“fir tree”) for fir-like ornaments which can be found in the Baltic region since the Mesolithic period (Zemītis, 2004, p. 34).

Roosters, horses, and grass-snakes are also used across both languages as previously stated. It is interesting to note that the general term for grass-snake – *zalktis/žaltys* – did not appear as often as its dialect variations – *ķirmāle* in Latvian and *kirminėlis* in Lithuanian. While these names denominate the same type of ornaments, the same cannot be said about the pattern of *cirvaiņi* (Ex 16) and *kirvukai* (Ex 48) which both mean “axes”, but the design of both patterns differs considerably. It is also important to note that *ugunskrusts* (“firecross”) which is a very popular denomination in Latvia for swastika-type ornaments was not encountered in any of the sources in Lithuanian, but for a more definitive conclusion further research should be conducted.



## Conclusions

Most of ornament nomenclature used in Latvia nowadays was established in 1920s and 1930s, whereas the materials of the first half of the 20th century show a much wider array of nomenclature that is no longer commonly used.

Ornament nomenclature used in Latvia is not common in Lithuania; denominations mentioning deities such as *Marios vandenys* ("Waters of Māra"), *Laimos šluota* ("Broom of Laima"), and *Dievas* ("Dievs") only appeared in Lithuania recently and have been borrowed from the ornament interpretations of *dievturi*.

There appears to be a connection between the denomination and the technique in which the ornament was executed. In Latvia, denominations for mitten ornaments tend to have a specific form (-aiņi), and denominations for woven ornaments also tend to be used for describing the weaving method itself.

The ornament of the grass-snake is often encountered in nomenclature in its dialect form *ķirmāle*, which is similar to the Lithuanian dialect forms – *kirmėlė* in Aukštaitija and *kirminas* in Žemaitija, so it is possible that it shares a common origin.

The "firecross", which is one of the most popular ornament denominations in Latvia, was not discovered in any Lithuanian samples.

Even though geometric and plant denominations dominate in both Latvian and Lithuanian nomenclature, they are often not stable – denominations of various categories can be attributed to the same shape. Latvian plant denominations tend to be more general, while Lithuanian ones mention specific plants.

Many ornament denominations containing animal names are present in both languages and are assigned to the same type of ornaments. These animals are horses, roosters, and snakes, and they have similar semiotics in both cultures that reaches into the Neolithic solar cult and the cult of fertility, which could be even more ancient.

The selection of Lithuanian ornament samples proved to be more difficult than expected, as their presentation in publications differs from that in

Latvian ornament studies. While Latvians focus on dividing the patterns into single elements and assigning nomenclature and meaning to them, Lithuanians seem to be viewing ornament as a whole set, a composition that blends single elements together in a unified image embodying the aesthetics and worldview of the folk customs – this is best illustrated by the traditional ornamentation of wooden crosses. Lithuanian ornament nomenclature is often viewed separately and examined from a linguistic perspective.

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## **TRADICIONĀLO ORNAMENTU NOMENKLATŪRA LATVIEŠU UN LIETUVIEŠU VALODĀ**

**Kopsavilkums.** Tradicionālais un dažādus Latvijas un Lietuvas etnogrāfiskos reģionus raksturojošais ornaments ir nozīmīga baltu kultūras sastāvdaļa. Jau kopš 19. gs. tas atradies pētnieku intereses lokā, kas īpašu uzmanību pievērsuši ornamenta tehniskajiem aspektiem un simbolikai (Brastiņš 1923, Galaunē 1930, Celms 2007), bet līdz šim maz apskatīta ornamentu empīriskā terminoloģija. Nosaukums ir ornamenta neatņemama sastāvdaļa, tas nereti satur semantisku informāciju, kas ļauj atklāt ornamenta pielietojumu un nozīmi. Latvijā tradicionālā ornamenta mūsdienu nosaukšanas tradīcijas veidojušās E. Brastiņa un dievturu ietekmē, viņš individualizētiem grafiskajiem elementiem piešķīra baltu mitoloģisko tēlu nosaukumus, arī pašus ornamentus saistot ar minēto dievību izpaušmēm. Lai gan Latvijā šie nosaukumi ir ļoti plaši izplatīti, Lietuvā, kur sastopami ļoti līdzīgi ornamentu, tie tiek apzīmēti ar citiem nosaukumiem un arī skaidroti citādi. Pētījumā apkopoti un analizēti 20. gs. pirmajā pusē publicētie etnogrāfisko ornamentu nosaukumi Latvijā un Lietuvā. Tiek salīdzinātas ornamentu nosaukšanas tradīcijas, kā arī izceltas galvenās nosaukumu kopīgās iezīmes un atšķirības. Tiek arī apskatīta ornamentu un to nosaukumu pētīšanas tradīcija Latvijā un Lietuvā, kurā konstatētas nozīmīgas atšķirības – kamēr Latvijā dominē ornamentu semiotikas pētniecība, Lietuvā vairāk uzmanības pievērsts to nosaukumiem, tomēr abās zemēs ornamentu nosaukums un tā vizuālā forma visbiežāk skatīta šķirti, kas apgrūtina ornamentu attīstības pētniecību un tipoloģiju. Rakstā secināts, ka 20. gs. sākumā pirms dievturu ietekmes paplašināšanās sastopamais ornamentu nosaukumu klāsts Latvijā ir bijis daudz bagātīgāks. Analizējot nosaukumu formas un veidus, secināts, ka gan latviešiem, gan lietuviešiem ir raksturīgi ornamentu uztvert kā grafisku elementu kompozīciju, nevis kā atsevišķus elementus. Latviešu un lietuviešu empīriskajā terminoloģijā dominē ģeometriskie, augu, dzīvnieku un debess spīdekļu nosaukumi, sastopami arī nosaukumi, kas saistīti ar baltu folklorā atrodamiem simboliem.

**Atslēgas vārdi:** etnogrāfiskais baltu ornaments; fenomenoloģija; latvju zīmes; ornamentu tipoloģija; salīdzinošā pētniecība; semiotika.

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## **TRADICINIŲ ORNAMENTŲ NOMENKLATŪRA LATVIŲ IR LIETUVIŲ KALBOMIS**

**Anotacija.** Latvijos ir Lietuvos etnografiniams regionams būdingi tradiciniai ornamentai yra esminė tradicinės baltų kultūros dalis. Nuo XIX a. mokslininkai tyrinėjo jų techninius aspektus ir semiotiką (Brastiņš, 1923; Dzērvīts, 1925; Celms, 2007), tačiau empirinei terminologijai skirta mažai dėmesio. Pavadinimas – neatsiejama ženklo dalis, dažnai sukaupęs semantinę informaciją, padedančią atskleisti jo vartojimą ir reikšmę. Latvijoje tradicinių ženklų pavadinimams įtakos turėjo E. Brastiņš ir jo įkurto „Dievturių“ judėjimo nariai („Dievs saugotojai“), kurie baltų mitologinių dievybių vardus priskyre ornamentams, susieję juos su vardynuose minimomis dievybės apraiškomis. Šie įvardijimai labai populiarūs Latvijoje, o Lietuvoje labai panašūs ornamentai vadinami ir interpretuojami skirtingai. Šio tyrimo tikslas – surinkti ir išanalizuoti XX a. pirmojoje pusėje Latvijoje ir Lietuvoje publikuotas baltiškų ornamentų nomenklaturas. Lyginamos abiejų šalių ornamentų įvardijimo tradicijos, išryškinamos pagrindinės paralelės ir skirtumai. Taip pat apžvelgiami ankstesni ornamentų tyrimai Latvijoje ir Lietuvoje; beje, juose pastebima reikšmingų skirtumų: Latvijoje dominuoja semiotiniai tyrimai, Lietuvoje daugiau dėmesio skiriama nomenklaturai, nors abiejose šalyse nomenklatura dažnai buvo vertinama atskirai nuo vizualinės formos, o tai apsunkina ornamento raidos ir tipologijos tyrimus. Nustatyta, kad XX a. pradžioje ornamentų nomenklaturų spektras Latvijoje buvo įvairesnis nei dabar, kad latviams ir lietuviams įprasta ornamentą vertinti kaip raštą, o ne atskirus grafinius elementus, kad abiejų kalbų nomenklatūroje dominuoja geometriniai, augalų, gyvūnų, artefaktų ir dangaus kūnų pavadinimai. Baltų kultūroje pasitaikančių simbolių yra ir ornamentų nomenklatūroje.

**Pagrindinės sąvokos:** lyginamieji tyrimai; etnografinis baltų ornamentas; latvių ženklai; ornamentų tipologija; fenomenologija; semiotika.