



# THE BOOK OF SIGNS

## RUDOLF KOCH



493 SYMBOLS USED FROM EARLIEST TIMES TO THE MIDDLE AGES BY  
PRIMITIVE PEOPLES AND EARLY CHRISTIANS

## 6. Stonemasons' signs.

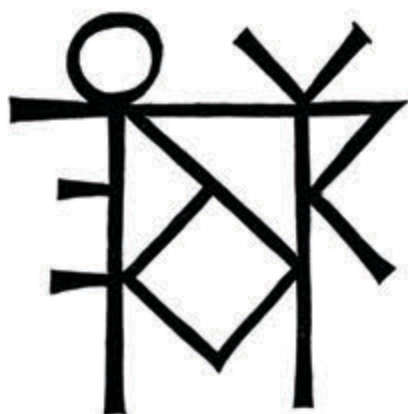
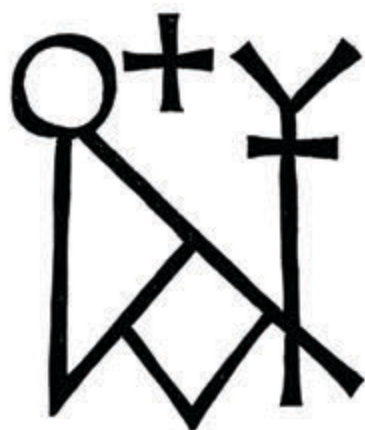
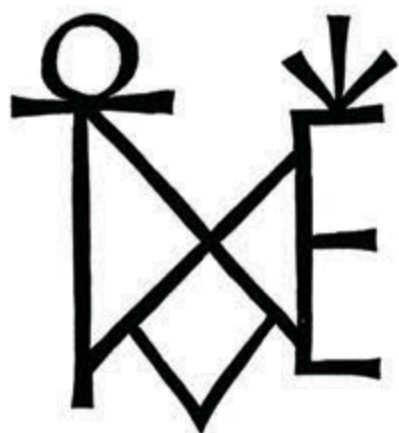
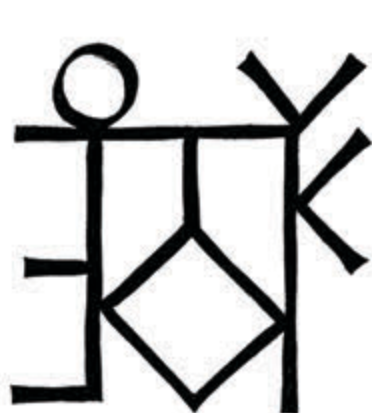
These were signs by which journeyman stonemasons in the Middle Ages distinguished their finished work. They are to be found carved on many German cathedrals and other mediaeval buildings.

The Masonic lodges were powerful guilds of stonemasons, the chief one being the Masonic lodge of Strassburg, which had authority over all the other lodges of all the German-speaking countries. The members of these guilds were strongly bound together in their work. Originally these Masonic lodges were entirely controlled by the Church, but they soon shook themselves free from the influence of religion. For a long time, however, they still remained powerful societies of men remarkable for their principles and adherence to the Church. On the completion of his apprenticeship the journeyman received a sign,

conferred upon him by his master. This sign was taken from a so-called Mother-figure, which differed in each Masonic lodge. These different Mother-figures were based upon triangulation and squaring, the trefoil and the quatrefoil. From these signs we can tell exactly whence the wandering journeymen came who worked on any particular building.

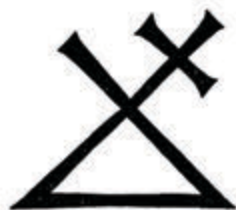
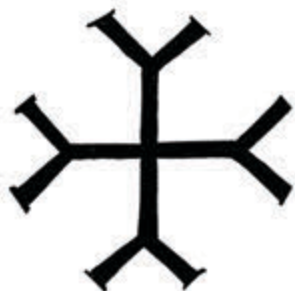
Disgraceful conduct might lead to a mason being deprived of his sign, and excluded from his lodge. The first duty of a journeyman when he came under a new master, in the course of his travels, was to construct the sign of his own Mother lodge, before his assembled colleagues in the lodge room, and then to explain it symbolically. Master masons were allowed to enclose their own signs within a shield.

Here follow a few stonemasons' signs of different periods:



The above are four Byzantine masonic signs, actually purely alphabetical monograms, closely related to the designs in the last chapter.

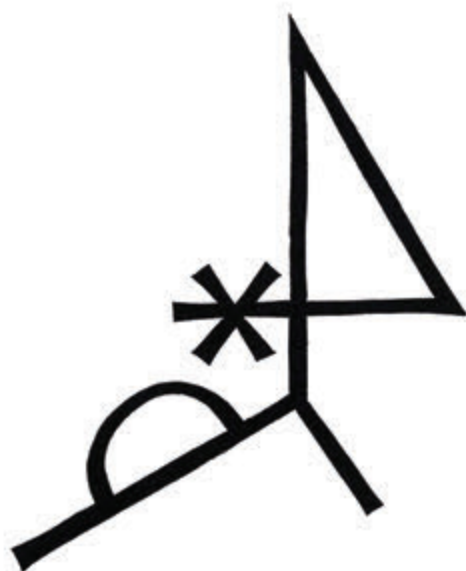
Six Roman signs, remarkable for their beautiful clearness and simplicity of form. To the modern mind these signs are typical of the vigorous age which produced them.



By far the commonest masonic signs are those on the Gothic



buildings that still survive. They are often to be found in great profusion, and show considerable ingenuity. The two following pages show examples of these:



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