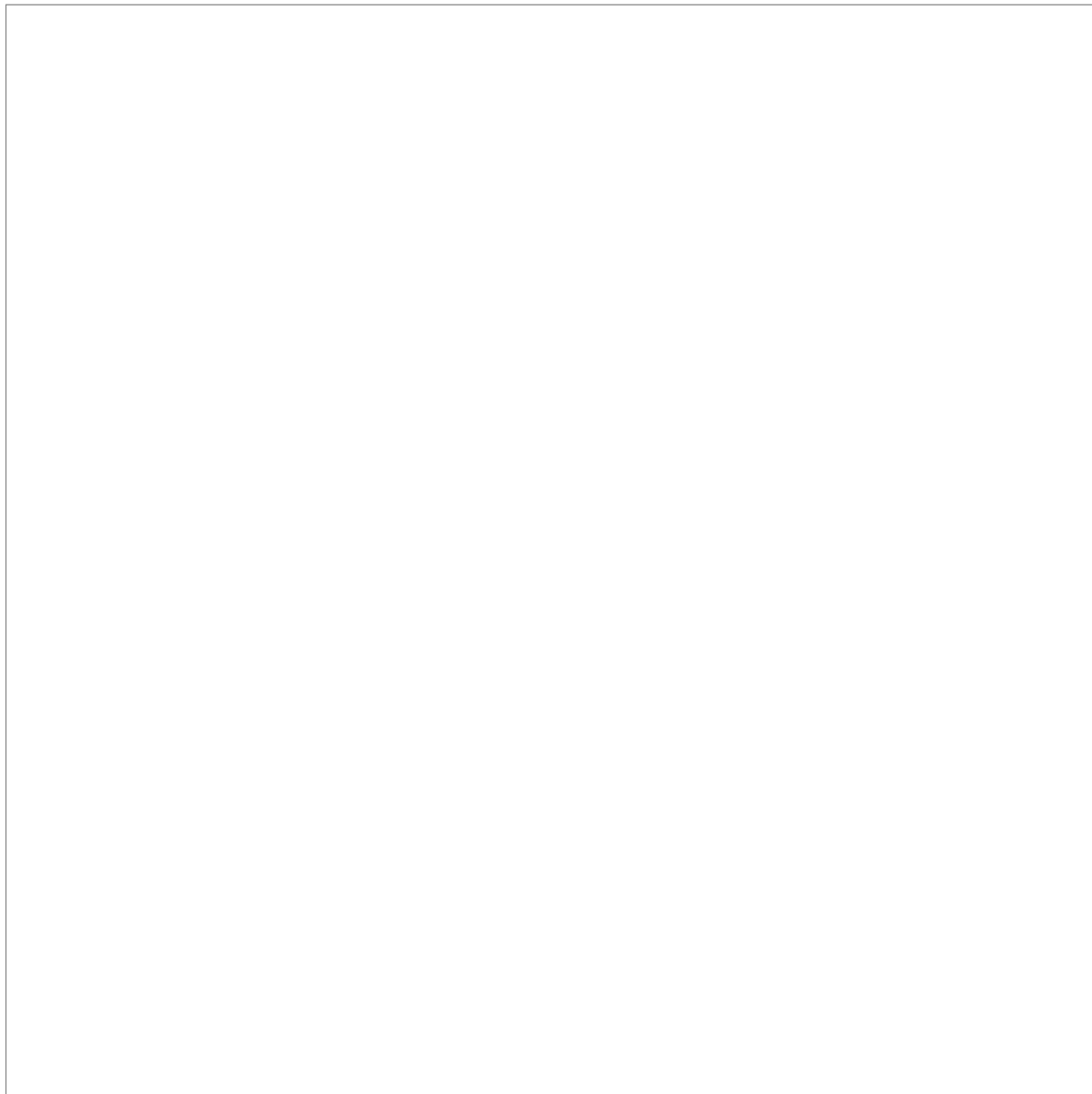


# Cross of tailors' guild in Kęty



- Date of production 1912
- Place of creation Kęty, Poland
- Dimensions height: 36.5 cm, length: 26 cm, width: 2.2 cm
- ID no. MK/H/19
- Museum [Aleksander Kłosiński Museum in Kęty](#)
- Subjects [city](#), [daily life](#), [religion](#), [sculpted](#)
- Technique [sculpture](#)
- Material [wood](#)
- Object copyright Aleksander Kłosiński Museum in Kęty
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- Digitalisation RDW MIC, Małopolska's Virtual Museums project
- Tags [Kęty](#), [cechy rzemieślnicze](#), [rzemiosło](#), [3D](#), [3D plus](#), [domena publiczna](#)

This guild sign, in the shape of a cross, from the guild of tailors in Kęty, was made in 1912. Such signs were called, among others: *obesłania*, *bieguny*, *cechy*. They served as messages, calling tradesmen belonging to the guild for deliberations. Obviously, the guild brothers were also informed about the

funerals and ecclesiastical and secular holidays in which they were obliged to participate. Being absent from a meeting or celebration communicated by this sign, without giving a valid reason, incurred a high penalty. According to the statute of the guild of the tailors, to whom this sanction belonged, the penalty for absence was to deliver one pound of wax to the guild, from which candles for the guild's altar were smelted. Most often, the youngest foreman — who was also supposed to give an oral message — was sent with the summons, and the validity of his words authenticated the deposition. The transfer of the guild sign without a messenger was also practised, by sending it from workshop to workshop. Sometimes, however, one of the masters forgot to pass it on to the next workshop, which put him at risk of punishment.

Guilds of craftsmen were mostly of Christian character; therefore, the signs and symbols often referred to religion. The tailors in Kęty acted in a similar fashion, giving their mark the shape of the cross. The arms of the cross have tri-lobate endings. Additional decoration is also provided in the form of small flowers. On the shoulders, there were also — something commonly practiced when decorating examination certificates — the images of tools used by the craftsmen. For tailors, it was: a needle, scissors and an iron. In the upper part of the cross, there is a bas-relief depicting a coat as an example of craftsmanship. The image was made in such detail that even the buttons are visible. The frequently used Christogram — “IHS” — was also applied to the guild signs. The guild sign of the tailors' guild is made of wood. It has a comfortable grip at the bottom, thanks to which the messenger could safely carry the sign so that everyone could see it. Right next to the handle is the date “1912” and the initials “AT”, probably belonging to the artist who made the sign, but his identity cannot be determined

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## Guilds

The main aim of the existence of guilds was to ensure that the associated craftsmen would have exclusive rights to practice their craft in town (craftsmen who did not belong to guilds were called botchers). But the role of guilds was not limited to administrative functions (representation before the town authorities, acquiring new qualifications, ensuring standards of workmanship, caring for equal chances of sale by limiting the production and sale), the organisations also fulfilled religious and culture-forming functions. Did you know that guilds were the courts for the first instance, resolving all disputes among craftsmen. In case of brawls, gambling, disputes connected with debts, or work outside of guilds (botchers), guilds imposed fines, which were usually paid with candles or wax.

Guild organisations still function, for example, the Polish Association of Stage Actors, although, under somewhat different names today.

In the past, a craftsman membership was obligatory; today guild associations only encourage voluntary association because thanks to this “the plant gains prestige and a craftsman does not feel lonely in the trade“. This is particularly significant when certain professions are dying out.

The mechanisation of many professions that used to be made by hand in workshops has resulted in a marginalised role of guilds and also in the disappearance of many guild rituals and celebrations.

Guilds which work to this day (there are 479 registered guilds in the structures of the Polish Craft Association) fulfil a communicative function – they settle disputes that may arise between a client and a craftsman; its members sit on examination boards before which young apprentices of the craft take a master's exam to receive the title of master or journeyman).

The activity of guilds was not limited only to administrative and professional matters. Guild meetings and also rituals interfered in the zone of guild brothers' spirit. Every member of the association was obliged to participate in religious rituals and ceremonies (masses, Corpus Christi processions).

Participation in ceremonies was often an occasion to show other people the affluence and wealth of a given association (banners embroidered with a gold thread were exhibited).

After the death of a guild brother, a funeral service was celebrated in a particular solemn way.

Members of guilds also founded altars, in which they placed valuable jewellery, treating them as a kind of

treasury protecting them from being robbed.

Did you know that guilds were equipped with instruments of punishment, also called good advice?

Elaborated by Editorial team of Małopolska's Virtual Museums,



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See also:

[Chest of the tailors' guild and related guilds in Kęty](#)

[Cross of tailors' guild in Kęty](#)

[Stamp of the drapers' guild](#)

[“Obesłanie” – metal plate bearing the emblem of the grand guild of Tarnów](#)

[Welcoming cup of Sword Bearers' Guild](#)

[Manuscript “Charter of shoemakers' guild“](#)

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