

# LIETUVOS AIDAS

LIETUVOS TARYBA  
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Lietuvos nepriklausomybę

On 16 February 1918, Lithuania proclaimed the Act of Independence. The Lithuanian coat of arms once again had the symbol of statehood — the historical GDL knight (vytis). With the issuing of Lithuanian money, the key symbols of state were depicted on them as well. On 2 October 1922, the first temporary Lithuanian litas and cent banknotes appeared in circulation, printed in Berlin and marked with the date 10 September 1922. They were made using not only graphic projects designed by artists, but also drawings and ornaments had by the printing house, adding Lithuanian text and the knight on the reverse. Soon, these banknotes were replaced by a series of higher-quality, permanent issue of banknotes, printed in Prague and marked with the date 16 November 1922. Their graphic designs were created by the artist Adomas Varnas.

The later issue banknotes were printed in England using hand-engraved steel plates and had reliable security features. They were created by artists Adomas Galdikas, Vilius Jomantas and Antanas Žmuidzinavičius.

According to the 1924 and 1936 Laws on Coins, the State Budget was provided with the exclusive right to mint and issue into circulation metal coins. The Lithuanian 1925-issue coins were minted in England, while the 1936 and 1938-issue coins were minted in Kaunas, at the Spindulys Mint. The plaster models of coins of all issues were created by artist Juozas Zikaras; he also created the knight on the coin obverse, used on all of the coins and having become very popular. On 15 June 1940, the USSR occupation of Lithuania halted the monetary developments.



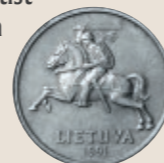
After the restoration of Lithuania's independence on 11 March 1990, the historical coat of arms Lithuania — the Vytis — was legalised. Its compositional basis was the depiction of the knight on horseback with a sword and shield, created by sculptor Juozas Zikaras for the coins, and well-known due to the horse's lowered tail. On 4 August 1991, the Supreme Council of Lithuania confirmed the second version of the coat of arms, created by Arvydas Každailis and approved by the Heraldry Commission of Lithuania. This version is still used today. It restores the historical colours of the coat of arms and the old idea — to depict a knight in horseback, ready to protect, sword in hand, his land and state. The horse's tail is already raised in this version.



On 1 October 1992 the Republic of Lithuania adopted the temporary currency, talonas, and roubles were withdrawn from circulation. Thus the national currency system was established. On 25 June 1993, litas and centas were issued into circulation. The first litas were created by the artists Giedrius Jonaitis, Justas Tolvaišis, Rimvydas Bartkus, Rytis Valantinas, Raimundas Miknevičius. In total, 25 different denominations and issues of banknotes were issued; banknotes of three denominations did not enter into circulation. In creating the first banknote projects, the first version of the Lithuanian coat of arms, Vytis, were used — the aforementioned depiction of the knight, by Juozas Zikaras, therefore it was used in the first and later banknote issues.



The first 1991-issue 1, 2, 5 litas and 10, 20, 50 cent coins were minted in England, while the Lithuanian Mint began minting 1, 2 and 5 cent coins on 30 September 1992. For their obverse, the artist Petras Garška also used the version of the knight created by Juozas Zikaras. In 1997, the Lithuanian Mint minted the new issue circulation 10, 20, 50 cent coins, while in 1998 — the 1, 2, 5 litas coins. Their plaster models were created by the artist Antanas Žukauskas. The obverse of the coin utilised the version of the knight proposed by Arvydas Každailis and specially adapted for the coins. The earlier issue larger denomination coins were withdrawn from circulation and the earlier version of the knight remained only on the 1991-issue 1, 2 and 5 cent coins still in use.



Since 1993, the Bank of Lithuania has been issuing also collector (commemorative) coins. The coins perpetuate landmark events in our state's and world history, cultural, sporting events, prominent people and architectural and natural monuments. To date, the Bank of Lithuania has already issued nearly 100 collector and collector circulation coins. The approved state coat of arms, or the figure specially adapted for the coin, has been used for the obverse increasingly rarer since 2003. The artists began to propose versions of the knight that were more varied, interesting and stylistically accurate to the period or theme portrayed. Both sides of the coins became continuous.

When acceding to the European Union on 1 May 2004, Lithuania assumed the obligation to adopt the euro in the future. Euro banknotes of seven denominations and coins of eight denominations are circulating in the euro area. Euro banknotes are the same in all euro area states. One side of the euro circulation coins is common while the other is national, and the latter is different in each state. The decision was made to depict the coat of arms of Lithuania — the knight (vytis) — on the national side of the Lithuanian euro coins. The plaster models were created by the artist A. Žukauskas. The Lithuanian Mint has already minted the Lithuanian euro standard coins with the 2015 date. On the coins, the knight on horseback is surrounded by 12 stars: On the 1, 2 and 5 euro cent coins — a plain surface; the 10, 20 and 50 euro cent coins — horizontal lines; 1 and 2 euro coins — a background of vertical lines. The edge of the Lithuanian 2 euro coin bears the inscription: LAISVĖ, VIENYBĖ, GEROVĖ (Freedom, Unity, Well-Being). Lithuania expects to successfully meet the established requirements for euro adoption and on 1 January 2015 adopt the single currency of the EU.

Vidmantas Laurinavičius



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# VYTIS: FROM THE LITHUANIAN DENAR TO THE EURO



PINIGŲ MUZIEJUS



The first coins of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania (GDL) were called denar, which began to be minted at the end of the 14<sup>th</sup> c. They were made using primitive technology — from silver wire blanks; therefore they were of poor quality and irregular in shape.

The first Lithuanian coins were minted with the symbols of the grand dukes or the heraldic signs of their dynasties: the lion, double cross, Columns of Gediminas, a knight on horseback with a sword (*vytis*). Later, a few of them became the state's national symbols or a component of the coat of arms. It is believed that the first Lithuanian coins were minted by Jogaila and Vytautas.

The depiction of an armoured knight with a sword comes from the portrait seals of the rulers (dukes) and first depicted the rulers themselves, determined to defend the land that they ruled. During the period of the rule of Grand Duke Vytautas (1392–1430), the knight on horseback became the coat of arms of Lithuania. At that time it was not yet called *vytis*. The Lithuanian term “*vytis*” was first used in our language in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> c. by Simonas Daukantas, as a synonym for expressing a warrior, a knight on horseback. *Vytis* as the name of the coat of arms was first used in 1884 by Mikalojus Akelaitis. Today the word *vytis* is used for the coat of arms of the Lithuanian state, *Vytis* (a knight on horseback in an escutcheon) and the separate figure from the coat of arms — the knight (*vytis*); they are incorrectly associated with one another and are not differentiated.

In the first Lithuanian coins the knight on horseback appeared at the end of the 14<sup>th</sup> c.; however, this figure had not yet formed. In some coins the knight is depicted as riding to the left, in others — to the right; in some he holds a spear while others show a sword; the horse can either be standing in place or galloping.



The coat of arms of Lithuania is the *Vytis* — an armoured knight on horseback holding a sword and shield, placed on an escutcheon. It is one of the oldest in Europe and fully formed in the 15<sup>th</sup> c. At that time the heraldic colours used in the coat of arms also settled down. The red field of the escutcheon depicts a silver armoured knight on a silver horse, holding above his head a raised silver sword. On his left shoulder the knight has a blue shield with a golden double cross. The horse's saddle, saddlecloth, bridle and harness are all blue. The sword's hilt, the bridle bits, stirrup and spurs, metal reinforcements on the sheath and horse's coverings, as well as the horseshoes, are all gold.

The knight's shield is composed of the double cross — the heraldic symbol of Jogaila (later — the coat of arms of the Jagiellonian dynasty) — related to the ruler's baptism at the end of the 14<sup>th</sup> c.

The heraldic sign of the Columns of Gediminas dates back to the late 14<sup>th</sup> century, and it could have originated from marks of ownership. It is believed that this was the coat of arms of Kęstutis, the ruler of Lithuania, and his sons Vytautas and Sigismund.

In the reign of Grand Duke Alexander Jagiellon (1492–1506), the Mint of Vilnius began to strike coins according to the European technology — from silver tin. In 1495, money reform was implemented and a decimal counting system was introduced. 1 groat (lit. *grašis*) was made up of 10 denarii. However, groat weren't minted — only denarii and half-groat were. Alexander's coins, besides the knight, also depict an eagle as the symbol of the grand duke of Lithuania's dynastic claim to the Polish throne. In his coins the knight on horseback is placed in a circle, the fine details of both the horse and knight, depicted already with armour, are visible. It is pointing to the left (heraldic — to the right) and is depicted as galloping; the horse's tail for the first time is raised, but the knight does not yet have on his shoulder a shield with the double cross.

During the reign of Grand Duke Sigismund the Old of Lithuania (1506–1544), for the first time the year of issue began to be marked on the Lithuanian coins, the half-groat of 1508 being the first such coin. However, the image of the knight was not entirely formed — he did not have a shield with the double cross. The latter appeared only in 1535 with the minting of larger denomination coins — groat — which ended the monetary reform in the GDL, begun by Alexander. On the coin, along with gothic script, renaissance script was used as well.

During the period of the rule of Sigismund II Augustus, Grand Duke of Lithuania (1544–1572) a wide variety of coin denominations were issued: from the smallest — the bilon half-denarii, to the greatest — golden portugal. A renaissance style dominates in the coins. They are unique in ornateness, artistic quality, high minting quality; some depicted a portrait of the ruler. The coins started bearing the heraldic insignia of mint governors and land treasurers.

Until the Union of Lublin, the knight on the Lithuanian coins varied, his clothing details, helmets, shields were different and the horse was depicted sometimes with a raised tail, other times — lowered. The knight was depicted both separately and together with the Columns of Gediminas on distinct shields, as well as with the Polish eagle, but on different sides of the coin. In 1547 the coat of arms of the GDL was used for the first time on a coin (the knight was placed on an emblematic shield), with the duke's hat above it. Until then, the knight had been represented separately, only as a figure of the coat of arms. After the Union of Lublin in 1569, the united coat of arms of the Commonwealth of Two Nations was legitimised.



In 1572, with the death of Sigismund II Augustus, the Gediminid dynasty ended, therefore the coins no longer had their commonly-used heraldic symbol — the Columns of Gediminas. During the reign of Grand Duke Stephen Báthory (1576–1586), a coin of a new denomination was issued — the shilling, which was one third of a groat. The obverse depicts the crowned S monogram of Stephen Báthory and the dynastic coat of arms — a wolf fang; on the reverse — the Duke's crown, the coat of arms of Poland and the GDL, the sign of the treasurer of the GDL lands. The knight on horseback once again began to be used without the shield, with a double cross.

During the reign of Sigismund III Vasa (1587–1632), Grand Duke of Lithuania, coins of 8 denominations were minted: double-denarii, shillings, groat, three-half-groat, three-groat, 1, 5, and 10 ducat coins. In 1619 the first coins in a new denomination — three-half-groat — were minted. The coins of Sigismund III Vasa have in the centre of a four-part coat of arms shield the dynastic coat of arms of the Vasa — a sheaf of grain. The knight on horseback was varied throughout the coins: he could be depicted with or without a shield and the double cross, with or without a saddlecloth; the rider's clothing details changed as well. In the groat from 1625–1627, instead of the double cross on the shield, a sheaf of grain was depicted instead.

With Władysław IV Vasa coming to the throne (1632–1648), Lithuanian coins were not minted. They were only minted when his brother, John II Casimir Vasa (1648–1668), was crowned Grand Duke of Lithuania. For the first time, copper shillings and silver orts appeared. The depiction of the knight in the coins of this period varied, but there weren't any major modifications. In 1666, all of the Lithuanian mints were closed down. The six-groat specimen minting attempts in Kraków during the reign of John III Sobieski (1674–1696) and the six-groat (marked with the dates 1706 and 1707) minted during the reign of Augustus II (1697–1706, 1709–1733), were the last Lithuanian coins. After them, the same money was in circulation throughout the Commonwealth of Two Nations.

After the third partition of the Polish and Lithuanian Commonwealth in 1795, a large part of our land was annexed by the Russian Empire. Russian coins began to be used in Lithuania.