

Keywords 10/14/10

Totem: “Among the American Indians: The hereditary mark, emblem, or badge of a tribe, clan, or group of Indians, consisting of a figure or representation of some animal, less commonly a plant or other natural object, after which the group is named; thus sometimes used to denote the tribe, clan, or division of a ‘nation’, having such a mark; also applied to the animal or natural object itself, sometimes considered to be ancestrally or fraternally related to the clan, being spoken of as a brother or sister, and treated as an object of friendly regard, or sometimes even as incarnating a guardian spirit who may be appealed to or worshipped.” (OED) We can consider the Sampo a totem, inasmuch as it is a marker of Kaleva and the Finnish people. In this sense it is a special symbol of ethnic identity.

Symbol: An object which stands for something else. Some typical symbols include the flag for the nation, moon and star for Islam, gray hair for wisdom, the lion for strength, water for life. Actions can also be symbolic. For example, the journey into the underworld is a symbol of spiritual quest and confrontation with the limits of human knowledge. The *Kalevala* is a symbol for Finland, just as the epic itself is built around a symbol, the Sampo.