ARTISTIC TECHNIQUES USED IN CREATING PICTISH "SYMBOLS"
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Perspective in art, for example, is nowadays recognised as having been developed during the Italian Renaissance period but similar techniques appear to have been applied on Pictish Stones over a thousand years before - further adding to their unique nature. This Booklet explores and aims to explain several very specific "artistic techniques" used in creating some of the objects carved on Pictish Symbol Stones.

Often listed under the broad title of "art technique" (which is different from "artistic technique") are the permutations of mediums, types of materials, tools and methods used in producing visual art. Examples include oil paint on canvas using a brush; gouache for water colours on paper using a brush perhaps with air-brushed overlay; oil paint on board applied with a spatula; pointillism effect with acrylic paint; wood gouged with a chisel etc. For Pictish Symbols the medium, or substrate, is stone and the method used for modifying the surface is carving - there is no colour addition.

By using an "artistic technique" the surface of a foundation medium can be creatively transformed to convey a message - straightforward, obscure, requiring interpretation or explanation, real, fantastic, socially acceptable, abhorrent, thought provoking, worrying, reassuring.....anything. Elements using similar, different or not very specific artistic techniques can be built up perhaps to remain unrelated or with a thread to reflect a narrative. In the case of Pictish Symbol Stones particular objects such as the upward arrow in the V-Rod & Crescent representing the travel of the soul towards heaven and the Pictish Beast as Capricornus as the marker to the Capricorn constellation are complementary and part of a narrative - the journey of the soul from and to heaven. By reviewing the message or meaning put over by the Symbols in Pictish-Mithraic terms it has been possible to identify the artistic techniques deployed in structuring them.

Time wise earlier Stones (often referred to as Class 1) are incise carved with the objects cut into the surface, later Stones (Class 2) are relief carved with the objects raised against the plain background.

Srathmartine - incise carved
Brodie - relief carved

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There are 12 Pictish Symbols with Pictish-Mithraic decodes; identifiable "artistic techniques" have been used in creating the 10 individual objects highlighted in blue :-

V-Rod & Crescent | Mirror | Z-Rod & Double Disc
Pictish Beast | Comb | Mirror Case
Double Disc Alone | Horseshoe / Arch | Triple Disc
Tuning Fork | Serpent / Snake | Notched Rectangle

No specific "artistic technique" seems to have been used in portraying the Serpent/Snake and the Pictish Beast as individual objects - there is straightforward two dimensional representation - but an "artistic technique" is apparent when they are grouped together with other Symbols with associated meanings (explored in Section 2).
This Booklet explores three types of artistic techniques that are pertinent to Pictish Symbol Stones:

Construction of objects where techniques such as illusion, perspective and panorama are apparent plus clear 2D “plan” recording rather than rendering.

Associated Meanings involving two or more objects prospectively leading towards a narrative.

Relative Positioning of objects on a surface to reinforce a message.

1) Construction of Objects
For the 10 Symbol objects highlighted above in blue some can be considered together where there is commonality of artistic techniques. With the Double Disc Alone having the same derivation and meaning as the item in the Z-Rod and Double Disc these two items are grouped together. Having similar decodes in Pictish-Mithraic terms and with artistically analogous construction the Notched Rectangle, Horseshoe / Arch and Tuning Fork are grouped together. The symbols are considered in number of instances order.

V-Rod & Crescent - having a general pattern but no two examples exactly the same, this is the most numerous Pictish Symbol. Described in detail in the V-Rod & Crescent Construction PDF, basically the object can be de-constructed into a downward line and an upward line joined at an angle and laid over a crescent shape. Placed in a Pictish-Mithraic context these are allusions to the travel of the soul from and to heaven on birth and death.

What are often referred to as decorative “finials” on the so-called rods are an artistic design alluding to arrow feathers giving the rods direction making them arrows. As built up in the PDF, by imagining a panoramic view from the land, across the sea and upwards to the sky a crescent shape results - its ends are the extremities of the panorama to the left and right.

Taking a position of observer, an angle can be formed at the bottom of a circle representing the Zodiac with the touch points being Cancer and Capricorn. Placed in a Pictish-Mithraic context these allude to the travel of the soul from heaven on birth and back to heaven on death.

Mirror - this is one of the best objects for stylistically analysing and grouping but is one of the more difficult to interpret. Two broad patterns – “ring” (in fact an open circle on a type of base) and “solid” - both giving the same message.

In both patterns the significant objects are a large circle typically with two interconnected circles at the base. In Pictish-Mithraism decoding these represent the Double Disc part of the Z-Rod & Double Disc design with the larger circle above being the Zodiac (more obvious in the “ring” pattern as that is how the Zodiac is shown in Mithras group statuary).

Mirror construction maps across to the Z-Rod & Double Disc where the lines between the two smaller circles are generally "waisted" to give a 3D effect - less clear in the Mirror designs but maybe there is an assumption that the viewer will relate to the Z-Rod & Double Disc explanation. It seems that, artistically, the designer of the Mirror has taken a brief to retain the principle of a contained universe (earth, planets and celestial sphere) and to add scale to the Zodiac (celestial sphere) by expanding it into the large circle.
**Z-Rod & Double Disc and Double Disc Alone** - with the Z-Rod and the Double Disc elements appearing in and with other Symbols some key principles of the Mithraic beliefs are given widespread coverage. Deconstruction identifies three elements - a floriated arrow pointing upwards, another downwards, two sets of concentric circles and horizontal lines joining them. Detail on how the object was created is in the Z-Rod & Double Disc Construction PDF.

The key turning point in trying to decode the Symbols on the Pictish Stones came from the author seeing a piece of Mithraic statuary in the Museum of London - a roundel discovered in 1954 that would have been the centre piece of a 3rd century Mithraeum.

Mithras is accompanied by his supporters (to his right and left) – the torchbearers, Cautes and Cautopates. Together a reversed Z is formed by the interconnected torches.

Taking the Mithraic context of the Museum of London roundel Cautes holds his torch up representing sunrise and the spring equinox, Cautopates holds his torch down representing sunset and the autumn equinox. These are artistically translated into the horizontally opposing floriated arrows of the Pictish-Mithraic Z-Rod but a viewer would need to know about the context - so the meaning is obscured in the carving and known only to the leaders and initiates of the religious belief.

Several proposals have been made for the Double Disc ranging from the depiction of a constellation to a Druidic association but generally, as with the other Symbols, it is often considered to be enigmatic and undecoded. Taking more of an artistic technique approach (as detailed in the associated PDF) the two sets of symmetrical concentric circles can be achieved by cutting through a dough-ring giving a 2D representation. By horizontally connecting the outermost of these circles with lines then making the lines convex to their centre the look of a ring that has been cut can be created - in other words an illusion in 3D. As mentioned above, specific artistic techniques are recognised as having been developed during the Italian Renaissance period - perhaps the technique used for the Double Disc over a thousand years before is a “first”?

**Comb** - of the 40 so-called Comb objects identified in "The Pictish Symbol Stones of Scotland" edited by Iain Fraser (RCAHMS 2008 publication) 6 are indistinct, 34 have been drawn by the author with 22 distinct designs emerging. Although listed as "combs" only 16 of the carvings are truly recognisable as combs with teeth - they have varying numbers of "teeth" and layouts. If the context of these objects is Pictish-Mithraic then a purpose for them is needed. This can be seen with the number “7” as the Mithraic Grades and planets so amongst the steps the soul would take on death back to heaven. End-to-end that would be ten points - first the start on earth, 7 across the planets, 1 for going through the Capricorn constellation and the final point being heaven.

Particularly relevant Combs are those with teeth on one side - Clach Ard, Tillytarmont 5, Inveravon 2 and Collace - and teeth on both sides (representing soul travel from and to heaven) - Cullaird, Inveravon 1, Meigle 1, Maiden Stone, Kingoldrum, Kinnedar, Kirriemuir 1, Monifeith, St Vigeans 1 & 2, Wester Denoon and Birse.

An artistic technique is specifically apparent in the Combs with 7 teeth as a metaphor for the 7 steps via the Planets from and to the Celestial Sphere disguised as a form of comb - such as Inveravon 1 alongside.
**Mirror Case** - perhaps partly due to a similarity with the Mirror, the name was been given over a hundred years ago to an object that has been decoded with a strong linkage back to the origins of Mithraism. In the Great North Museum in Newcastle there is a sculpture (from Housesteads on Hadrian's Wall – picture below courtesy of GNM) of Mithras being born from the cosmic egg from the rock and holding the Zodiac in his hands. The rock birth would have been a fundamental point to make to an initiate – the start of Mithras' life on Earth. The grip on the Zodiac would have enabled his connection with the cosmos.

Although geographically well separated the carving to the right is the same design for Tillytarmont 1 and North Ronaldsay. Similarity with the sculpture from a Mithraeum on Hadrian's Wall seems quite clear. The carving of these objects onto the Symbol Stones shows a straightforward translation into Pictish-Mithraism.

**Triple Disc** - referred to as a “cauldron” in some texts due to its shape and therefore its prospective use. Although there is a general pattern there are Groups with distinct combinations of smaller circles (4 arranged vertically, 9 horizontally) adjacent to a larger, central one. Design variants include concentric circles, solid and ring smaller circles and in 5 of the instances of horizontally arranged circles there is a horizontal line.

Whilst cauldron, libation bowl, water, plus rings and rods as means of carrying could be contenders in this decode, the greater likelihood is perhaps something more esoteric than obvious. Complementing other key Mithraic Symbols on the Pictish Stones, the Triple Disc arguably represents the Zodiac with Cancer and Capricorn Constellations (the gates from and to Heaven) 180° apart.

**Horseshoe / Arch, Notched Rectangle and Tuning Fork** - these are considered together as they have similar structure and meaning. Of the 3 the Notched Rectangle has the most readily explicable use of an artistic technique.

With its Triple Disc name a basically flat object is described. However, the alternative of “cauldron" suggests not only a three-dimensional depth but a practical function but artistically this is not readily seen as having been executed. As a stand alone object a prospective Pictish-Mithraic meaning is not obvious but the possibility of it representing the Zodiac, Cancer and Capricorn become more tenable when considered with other Symbols (as in Sections 2 and 3 below).

The examples above reflect the general structure of each of these Symbols.
Of the 18 Horseshoe / Arch carvings 6 are indistinct, of the 12 that have been drawn all except Rothiebrisbane (a distorted shape) have similar arch patterns. There is a wide range of detail within the general pattern from the simplicity of Sandness to the highly decorated style of Crosskirk and the inclusion of concentric circles (as in the Z-Rod & Double Disc) at Strathpeffer. By taking the shape as an arc this object could represent a Planet’s orbit, the entrance to a cave, the general shape of the inside of a Roman Mithraeum or the Celestial Sphere. In the context of the Mithraic theme for the Pictish Symbols, the horseshoe and arch shape may be a portrayal "of" the Mithraeum in the sense of its arched shape and "from" in the sense that within the Mithraeum there are representations of the Celestial Sphere etc.

There are 16 objects with the Notched Rectangle label of which 9 are superimposed with Z-Rods. They appear to represent the layout of an indoor Mithraeum typically having circle shaped cut outs into the longitudinal sides. On the Raven Stone (Tyrrie, Aberdeenshire) and Birnie Stone (near Elgin) the overall rectangular footprint has what could be construed as the “side benches” of a Mithraeum with statue niches (one on each side of the Mithraeum and near the Tauroctony end – most likely for Cautopates). The interpretation of the Z-Rod shapes on Notched Rectangles is arguably the same as that for Z-Rods & Double Discs. This Object is the only one on Pictish Stones that requires minimal decoding as it basically records the layout of the Roman Mithraeum. Although artistically it is not constructed to enable a 3D view into the Mithraeum it is an excellent example of a plan view.

Although there are similarities, Tuning Forks are categorised as a separate design to Notched Rectangles. There are 11 of these objects, 1 is indistinct and 9 designs emerged which have been arranged into 3 Groups, the third of which has partially intact examples with only the parallel line parts of the object visible. The other two Groups follow a broad, general pattern with elements which can be interpreted as the curved roof of a Mithraeum and its side benches.

Perhaps these three shapes, as decoded, were used instructionally to tell initiates about indoor Mithraea in which cult members would have met elsewhere and in the past but are not doing so in North East Scotland because the indoor Roman Mithraea have transitioned into Outdoor Mithraea, or temples, with the Stone being the terrestrial part and the real sky being the part that otherwise would have been depicted indoors. Collectively these carvings are central to a narrative - the worship and place of worship of Mithras in the Roman-Mithraic version of that belief. Such a narrative gives a form of historical link back to the past.

2) Associated Meanings of Symbols
In the context of the Pictish Symbol Stones, it has become apparent that construction of individual objects is not the only art technique that has been employed. In some instances objects with a common meaning or thread are located in proximity to one another on the surface of a Stone. Taking the V-Rod & Crescent and Pictish Beast objects which have a common thread in the travel of the soul and its entry at the Capricorn point on the Zodiac, perhaps the physical positioning is deliberate. This relative positioning is explored in Section 3. First of all the reason for such positioning needed to be identified.
As described and illustrated in Section 1 above, these Symbols refer to the construction and layout of the Mithraeum used in the era of Roman-Mithraism and would have enabled a narrative about the use of that place of worship as a link back to the source of Pictish-Mithraism.

In summary, on birth the soul travels from heaven via the Celestial Sphere and the Planets to the mortal person on the Earth with the reverse journey on death and into immortality as alluded to by the downward and upward arrows (V-Rod elements) using the Planets as steps (Comb object). Still retaining the principle of a contained universe (earth, planets and celestial sphere) the top part of the Mirror object seems to have the Celestial Sphere expanded as large circle. Shown by the Triple Disc object, Cancer and Capricorn constellations are respectively the Celestial Sphere's exit and entry points for the soul on its journey between heaven and the planets with the Pictish Beast as Capricornus marking the entry gateway.

In identifying associated meanings across the 12 Symbols, 3 groupings are apparent:-

a) V-Rod & Crescent, Comb, Mirror, Pictish Beast, Triple Disc and Serpent/Snake

A common thread joining these Symbols is the travel of the soul based on the structure of the contained universe i.e. what is visible to the Zodiac or Celestial Sphere. Being the most numerous Symbol on the Stones the V-Rod & Crescent is perhaps the "lead object" in explaining and following this Pictish-Mithraic belief as the anchor point for the narrative.

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In the time of the origins of the Mithraic Mysteries the equinoxes were in Taurus and Scorpio with the Hydra constellation (the Serpent / Snake) also including Sextans, Crater and Corvus; also the serpent has been associated with the brightness in the Milky Way – a connection perhaps with the soul's exit and entry points of Cancer and Capricorn. Taken together the six Symbol objects in this group are the material for this example of the artistic technique of several components being the basis of telling a story. Symbols for this narrative also input to the narrative surrounding the Z-Rod & Double Disc.

b) Horseshoe / Arch, Notched Rectangle and Tuning Fork

As described and illustrated in Section 1 above, these Symbols refer to the construction and layout of the Mithraeum used in the era of Roman-Mithraism and would have enabled a narrative about the use of that place of worship as a link back to the source of Pictish-Mithraism.
c) Z-Rod & Double Disc, Double Disc Alone and Mirror Case

In effect the Double Disc Alone (Inchyra alongside) is a subset of the Z-Rod & Double Disc symbol so for that element there is a common meaning.

A set of concentric circles is in the design of 8 Mirror Cases most notably Inverurie (1) shown alongside. Half of these have additional geometric carvings but all reflect the Disc construction of the Z-Rod & Double Disc. An associated meaning would be Mithras supporting the universe by holding the Zodiac as exemplified in the Mirror Case and the outer concentric circle being the Celestial Sphere as the boundary of the tangible universe.

3) Relative Positioning of Symbols

Physical positioning on a surface is a technique, in artistic terms, known as “juxtapositioning”. As explored in Section 2, placing objects side-by-side on a Pictish Stone can suggest or support a narrative - such as the upward arrow of the V-Rod & Crescent going through a hole in the Zodiac with the Pictish Beast marking that Zodiac location as Capricorn. In addition the particular physical location on the surface or medium can reinforce or enhance that narrative.

In the Pictish-Mithraism website www.pictish-mithraism.com and in the book The Religious Purpose of the Pictish Symbol Stones (published by Austin Macauley) there is a chapter on the Open Air Mithraeum which adds an additional aspect to relative positioning. Whilst artistic juxtapositioning refers to achieving a compare / contrast effect on a surface, the broader concept of "relative positioning" can be taken a step further when the Pictish Stone is the terrestrial element of the Open Air Mithraeum and the view to the sky would have been to the Planets and the stars. To those “in the know” it would have been possible to identify specific Planets, Constellations and the Milky Way.

With the V-Rod & Crescent prompting a thought about the travel of the soul and the Pictish Beast as Capricorn one can imagine standing in front of these Stones (particularly Aberlemno Roadside) and looking skyward. Arguably deliberately carved with these two Symbols and the Stone placed in this position to enable a basic religious belief to be explained.

A Hypothetical Symbol Stone

Overall the Pictish Symbols tend to complement one another and collectively conceal but also reveal a religious belief. In keeping with the context of the religious meaning of the Symbols being known only to leaders and followers of the belief whilst obscured from others, here is a hypothetical Stone that has sufficient objects to encompass the tenets of Pictish-Mithraic belief. In effect, it brings together the techniques of object construction, associated meanings and positioning as explained in this Booklet.
Structurally the V-Rod & Crescent elegantly records a fundamental aspect of the Mithraic belief of the travel of the soul from and to heaven using directional arrows; the view to heaven across the horizon to the fixed stars is artistically achieved with the crescent.

Having decoded the individual Symbols placing each of them in the context of religious belief a further step, consistent with identifying the use of artistic techniques, is looking for and prospectively fitting together associated meanings. Narratives have been found - overall Mithraic belief, soul travel and the use of Roman Mithraea.

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The carved connection between the Double Discs is convex lines giving a 3D "waisted" effect transforming the object to represent the contained universe. Could this be the earliest example of this artistic technique?

A Hypothetical Pictish Symbol Stone

Highlights of Artistic Techniques apparent on Pictish Symbol Stones

With the Pictish Symbols there is a unique test of "the eye sees but the brain interprets - the artist needs to create or cause that interpretation". There is evidence of a range of artistic techniques having been employed by the original carvers to obscure from those who were not privy to the belief but to make clear to those who were followers. For the author there are three highlights:-

- Pictish Beast – Capricornus - at the gateway through the Zodiac on the soul's travel to heaven on death.
- V-Rod & Crescent – view across the horizon to the sky (appropriately placed at the top of this Stone); travel of the soul from and to heaven.
- Mirror – expanded circle for the Zodiac (Celestial Sphere) linking to the Double Disc.
- Comb – the steps (ladder) from and to heaven via the Celestial Sphere.
- Z-Rod & Double Disc – the contained universe of earth, planets and Celestial Sphere with Cautes connected to Cautopates via Mithras all beyond the tangible universe.
- Mirror – expanded circle for the Zodiac (Celestial Sphere) linking to the Double Disc.
Appendix 1 - V-Rod & Crescent Construction

This is the popular, descriptive name for what historically has been determined as two Symbols that look like a bent rod and a crescent (particularly influenced, seemingly, by the shape of the crescent Moon). This is the most prolifically used Symbol on Class 1 and Class 2 Stones and is not restricted to any specific geographic area.

There is no consistency in any detail where a number of Stones are to the same design or, indeed, sufficiently similar to produce any groups of designs. This tends to suggest the carver only needed to comply with the basic components and had a rather broad artistic licence. Maybe the commissioner of the slab or individual object on it expressed a wish for a particular style of adornment. 90 objects follow the general pattern of which 27 are indistinct; 63 separate designs have emerged.

Although drawn here with solid "infill" between the lines it is highly unlikely that was part of the carving design. More elaborate examples have drawn infill designs rather than some form of shading; most have "finial" terminations similar to the Z-Rod & Double Disc. Appendix A of www.pictish-mithraism.com shows the full set of designs.

If a crescent moon was intended then it is in the wrong orientation. An alternative would be to find a meaning for the two curved lines - touching at their extremities.

An observer standing by the shore, or cliff top, overlooking a wide expanse of sea looks straight out and side-to-side to the horizon as the "edge of the sea". Extremities to the left and right hand views are marked by the land. Looking up from the sea horizon and scanning all around above the sea and land is the sky - collectively "as far as the eye can see". Two lines - the horizon and "as far as the eye can see" - equate to the "crescent" and translate into the art technique for this Symbol.
Placement of the V shape across the Crescent reflects the context and meaning of the Symbol - Mithraic belief involving the travel of the soul. What are often referred to as decorative "finials" on the rods are an artistic design alluding to arrow feathers giving the rods direction. In Mithraism, taking a skyward view, these arrows would have suggested the soul travelling from the direction of the fixed Celestial Sphere at birth and returning via the Celestial Sphere on death; in effect into mortality and later into immortality.

Astrologically the Celestial Sphere contains the Zodiac with Cancer and Capricorn having a specific relevance in Mithraism as the points of exit and entry of the soul from and to heaven beyond on birth and death. As Constellations seen in the sky they are basically 180° apart.

By drawing in two lines - the "rods" of the V-Rod & Crescent symbol an angle can be formed at the bottom of the circle representing the Zodiac.

Adding in the observer enables a tie in between the focal point view for a person looking skyward and the arrival and return points for the soul on birth and death.

Combining the above there is an explanation for the general pattern for the V-Rod & Crescent at the beginning of this section.

Soul coming from heaven via the Celestial Sphere.  
Soul returning to heaven via the Celestial Sphere.
When considering the Pictish Symbol Stones, art technique does not refer just to individual Symbols but their physical positioning on different Stones and relationships with other Symbols. Astrologically the Gate of Capricorn is described by Porphyry as the hole in the sphere of fixed stars through which the soul gains access to heaven on death. Drawings of Capricorn and the Pictish Beast are remarkably similar leading to the decode of the Pictish Beast as representing Capricorn therefore acting as a marker for the soul's journey back to heaven and immortality on death.

![Diagram of Cancer, Capricorn, and Observer](image)

Similarity between the Pictish Beast and a typical depiction of Capricorn or Capricornus is clear.

On Class 1 Stones the Pictish Beast is often next to the V-Rod, usually beneath it. From the above comments about the Gate of Capricorn this closeness is reinforcing the purpose of the upward pointing arrow of the V-Rod i.e. the return of the soul. Theologically they are complementary objects - such closeness is being artistically depicted.

There are 20 instances of the V-Rod & Crescent being at the top of a Stone. Within the concept of the Pictish Symbol Stones being the terrestrial part of an open air temple (or Mithraeum as described in [www.pictish-mithraism.com](http://www.pictish-mithraism.com), having specific Symbols at the top of a Stone has a practical value. Standing in front of the Stone and looking skywards to and above it, on seeing the V-Rod and understanding the meaning of the arrows and their direction the observer would be staring towards the Celestial Sphere and thinking what is beyond - heaven. For these 20 specific instances, positioning as an artistic technique is providing not only practical value but spiritual as well.

This following selection was drawn by the author - the full set is in Appendix A of [www.pictish-mithraism.com](http://www.pictish-mithraism.com). Lack of adherence to other than an overall pattern with the basic V-Rod, Crescent and Arrow direction components is clear.
Appendix 2  - Z-Rod & Double Disc Construction

As with other Pictish Symbols the meaning of this object is far from immediately obvious so a
• three concentric circles.
• a “Z” shape (in fact the reverse of a Z) comprising two parallel horizontal lines
  connected at opposite ends by a straight line (basically at 45°). In most instances
  objects generally referred to as finials terminate the outer ends of the horizontal
  lines.
• two inwardly curving parallel lines touching the left and right hand
  outer circles.

These components can be decoded in a Pictish-Mithraic context:-

With the earth considered, at the time, as the centre of the universe with the
planets (including the moon) rotating around it and the constellations counter-
rotating further out, the **concentric circles** comprise the earth (sometimes a dot,
more often a circle) in the middle, then planets and constellations (the celestial
sphere). Collectively these become the tangible universe.

In this example of Mithraic statuary in the Museum of London, Mithras is accompanied by his
supporters (to his right and left) – the torchbearers, Cautes and Cautopates. Cautes holds his torch up
representing sunrise and the spring equinox. Cautopates holds his torch down representing
sunset and the autumn equinox. Wondering whether the carvings on the Pictish Symbol Stones
could be rooted in a Mithraic belief practiced by
Roman military members I could see the reversed Z
formed by interconnected torches.

Seeing this prompted the question "had the artistic representation in the Tauroctony
transferred in a geometric format to the Symbol Stones"?
Although seemingly a reversed "Z" there are three lines each with a different, but complementary, meaning.

Representing the beginning of the day and the summer equinox, the top line is Cautes.
The end of the day and winter equinox is represented by the lower line as Cautopates.
Mithras is, in effect, the line joining the horizontal ones; but not just a line - Mithras is the God of time and has the power to rotate the universe.

Regarding the portrayal of Cautes and Cautopates and what they represent, the term "finials" is too generic. They are holding torches so the ends of the horizontal lines are "flame" patterns. Over the range of Z-Rod & Double Disc carvings there are several variants of these flames in the adjacent illustration →

This is the General Pattern of a Z-Rod & Double Disc with components ↓
Two dimensional representations e.g. concentric circles and lines terminating in finials are, arguably, unremarkable artistically. However, thinking about the concept of a physical universe with heaven beyond I realised that the two sets of concentric circles are drawn in such a way that they are not just a mirror image of one another but are derived from the shape of a dough-ring or torus. This has been achieved artistically by connecting the outer circle in each set (the constellations) with curved lines. This gives a three-dimensional illusion of an object that is little different in design than a finger ring but also assists the allusion to our physically being in a tangible, physically contained, universe with aspects of the soul travelling from and to an intangible heaven beyond.

The following three diagrams show the artistic technique behind the construction of the Double Disc part of the object.

The tangible universe is contained in a dough-nut shape or torus ↓

![Diagram of a doughnut shape](image)

This is the cross-section through a torus - two circles, or discs →

![Diagram of torus cross-section](image)

By joining with curved lines the two-dimensional shape of the discs from the cross-section can be given three-dimensional depth ↓

![Diagram of disc joining](image)
This selection was drawn by the author - the full set is in Appendix A of www.pictish-mithraism.com. With the same Double Disc shape and Z-Rod variants include Aberlemno (2) and Glenfarness Stones with 7 individual instead of concentric circles, Elgin with a cloverleaf style infill and Fordoun with scroll patterns.