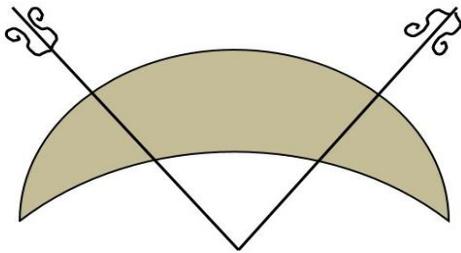


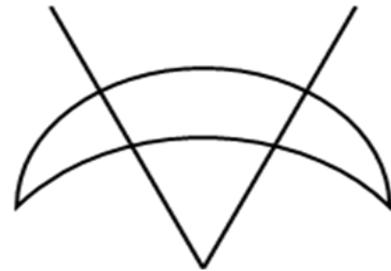
## V-Rod & Crescent Construction



General pattern ↑

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.

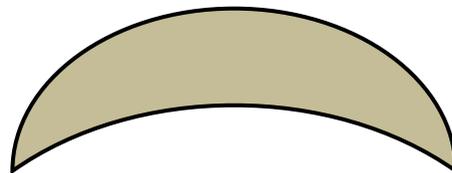


Basic components ↑

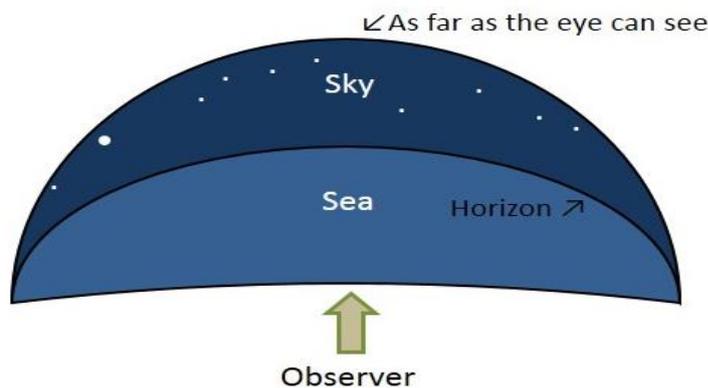
Although drawn here with solid "infill" between the lines it is highly unlikely that was part of the carving design. More elaborate examples have drawn infill designs rather than some form of shading; most have "finial" terminations similar to the Z-Rod & Double Disc.

[Click here for the full set of drawn 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.

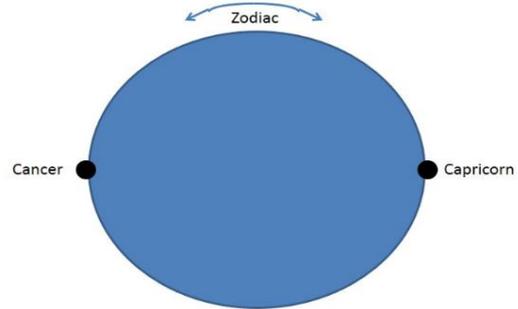


An observer standing by the shore, or cliff top, overlooking a wide expanse of sea looks straight out and side-to-side to the horizon as the "edge of the sea". Extremities to the left and right hand views are marked by the land. Looking up from the sea horizon and scanning all around above the sea and 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 artistic technique for this Symbol.

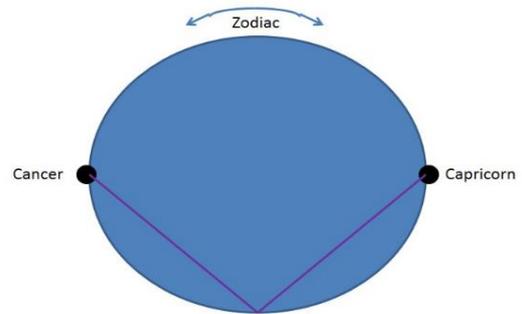


Placement of the V shape across the Crescent reflects the context and meaning of the Symbol - Mithraic belief involving the travel of the soul. What are often referred to as decorative "finials" on the rods are an artistic design alluding to arrow feathers giving the rods direction. In Mithraism, taking 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.

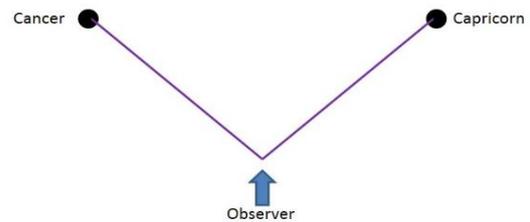
Astrologically the Celestial Sphere contains the Zodiac with Cancer and Capricorn having a specific relevance in Mithraism as the points of exit and entry of the soul from and to Heaven beyond on birth and death. As Constellations seen in the sky they are basically 180° apart.



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.

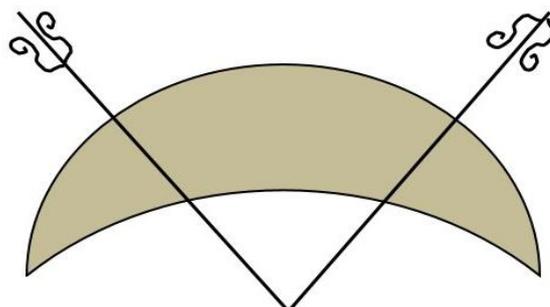


Adding in the observer enables a tie in between the focal point view for a person looking skyward and the arrival and return points for the soul on birth and death.



Combining the above there is an explanation for the general pattern for the V-Rod & Crescent shown above.

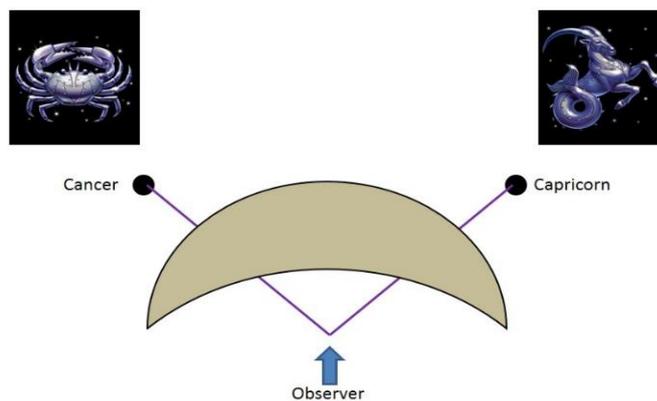
Soul coming from Heaven via the Celestial Sphere.



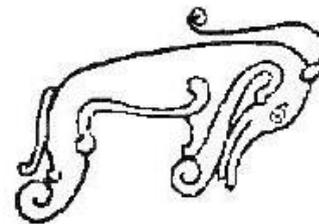
Soul returning to Heaven via the Celestial Sphere.

Observer

When considering the Pictish Symbol Stones, artistic 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 the philosopher 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.



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.pictishsymbolstones.com](http://www.pictishsymbolstones.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 V-Rod & Crescent selection was drawn by the author. Lack of adherence to other than an overall pattern with the basic V-Rod, Crescent and Arrow direction components is clear.

[Click here for the full set of drawn designs.](#)

