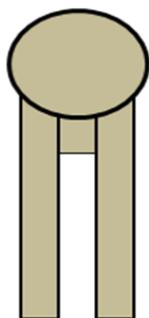


Mithraic Symbols Decoded - Tuning Fork

Although there are similarities, these “Tuning Forks” are categorised as a separate design to Decorated and 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. The adherence to a general pattern is much less in this Symbol set than in several others. This suggests a framework design either with the sculptors’ interpretation in adding decoration or, indeed, misinterpretation. Overall, however, the concept of a rounded shape at the top connected to two, broad parallel lines has been achieved. Group 1 has either a completed oval or round shape at the top of the Symbol. Group 2 has a variety of semi-circular type shapes on top of the parallel lines.

The decode for the Notched Rectangle is that its shape represents the shape and layout of a Roman Mithraeum. The tuning fork is generally not dis-similar but has neither indentations nor is it ever crossed with a Z-Rod. The broad, parallel lines are like the lower part of the Notched Rectangle design so they could equate to the benches of a Mithraeum.

The Pictish Symbol Stone Symbols are carved in a two dimensional fashion without any clear attempts to suggest a three dimensional projection (except for the “waist” effect used with the Z-Rod & Double Disc) or a suggestion that part of the carving may be “coming out” of the slab. The Tuning Fork may be the exception. If the parallel lines are indeed representative of the “side benches” of a Roman Mithraeum then the shape at the top of them could be at right angles to the benches. The view into an Indoor Mithraeum would have been of two benches and the Tauroctony scene at the opposite end. The curved shape of the top of the Tuning Fork would be like the curved shape of the roof of the Mithraeum.

The decode for the Tuning Fork is that it symbolises a view into a Roman Mithraeum with parallel side benches leading towards the Tauroctony scene whilst alluding to the curved roof of an Indoor Mithraeum. This Symbol would have enabled a teacher to describe the inside of a Mithraeum and is a simplified version of the Notched Rectangle in that it does not contain any iconography of the Mysteries of Mithras as such.