

STELE N. 3 OF CAVEN The Calendric Aspect

KERBER Tom, Münster, Germany

This quasi-anthropomorphous stele ("magna mater") seems to be in fact a luni-solar calender (that doesn't mean of course any encroachment on its sacredness). The upper part shows the full moon between twice the new moon. The number of lines in the rays runs up to 28 (2x4 vertical, 20 horizontal: this may have an "astrological" meaning), i.e. the average number of days, on which the moon is visible. Together with the new moons, the length of a synodic moon-month seems to be indicated, without them the length of a sideric month. Five circles in the full moon mark five main phases of increasing resp. decreasing. - The two double spirals at the right side seem to reproduce the yearly movements of the sun around the northern part of the earth, beginning and ending with midwinter solstice (= tropical year). Why two double spirals? This indicates the returning of a special year: they enclose the "holy" period of 56 sun-years - later called the Great Metonic Year - after which cosmic order is restored ("apokatastasis"). Sun and moon with their very different movements in the sky for a short while come to full synchronization, which must have been highly feasted. The inferior part of the stele represents a Chalcolithic calculation-"machine" (at the same time surely the influence of the heaven on the earth in a more "astrological" sense). As both indicators on the left (+ thin lines) resp. right side make clear, astronomic lunar numbers must be brought to correspondence with solar numbers. So if this stele has to do with the Great Metonic Year, 56 solar tropical years ($365,2422d \times 56$) are to be equalized by a certain amount of lunar years. Now we can count 39 "hooks", i.e. 3 lunar years of 13 months each; the number of days may be 28 or 27,32 (sideric month). On the right side underneath we notice two thin curves: a multiplier. It indicates, that we have to count the 39 "hooks" twice (= 6 lunar years), and as they are multipliers themselves we must put them in some way or another into connection with those 9 full curves ($6 \times 9 = 54$ years with 13×28 or 27,32 days) and distribute the lacking days in respect to those of the 56 solar years onto the partial curves. (The Chalcolithic "priests" may have kept up this calender by using ochre.)

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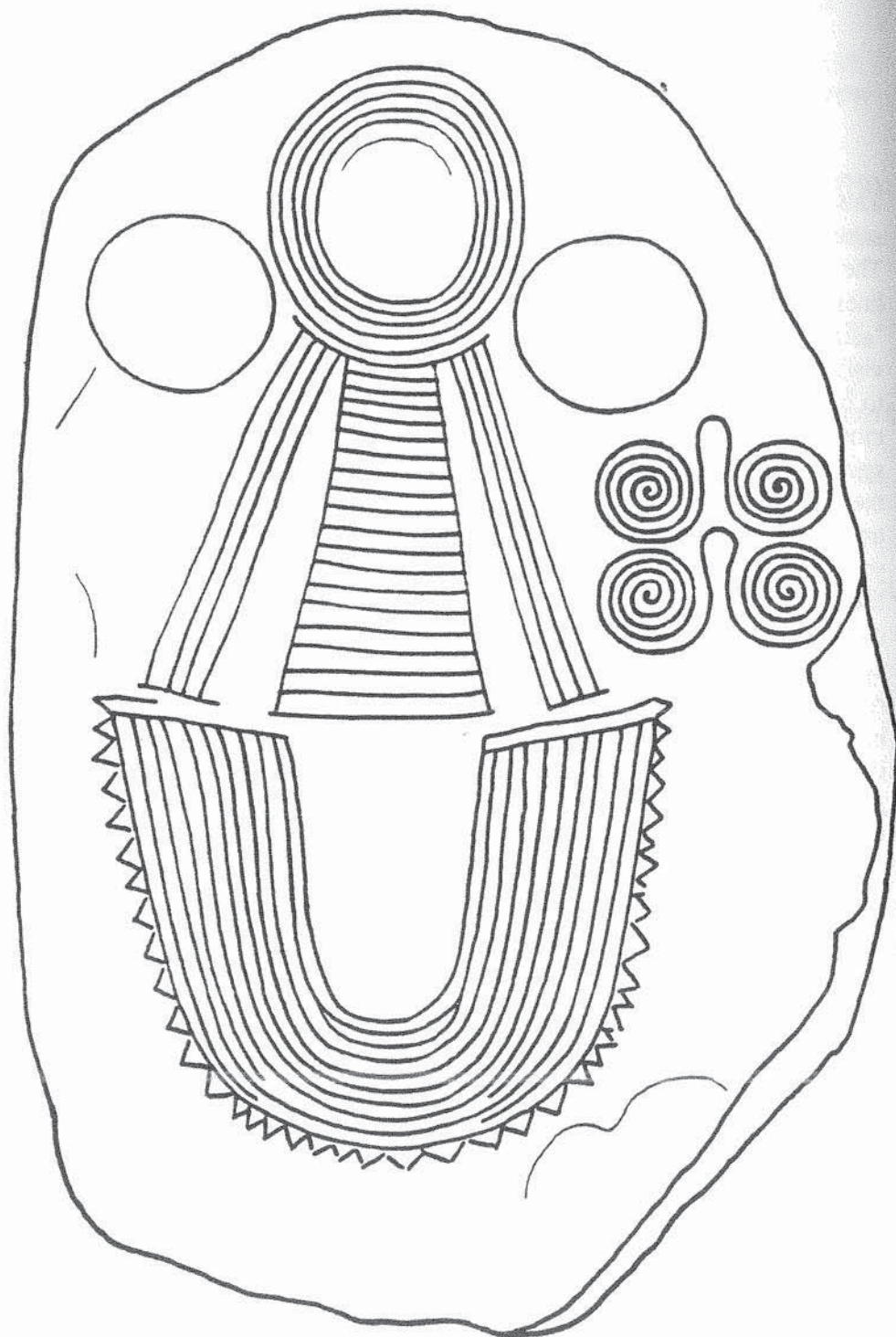
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- Rilievo della stele n° 3 di Caven; altezza massima, circa cm. 50.