

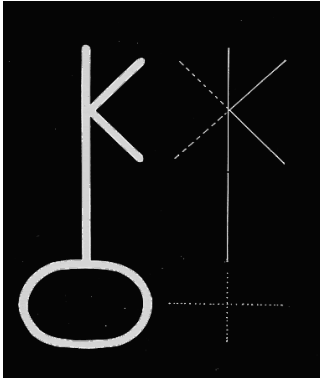
## Comment on U+26B7 CHIRON

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The origin of the 'key' symbol for Chiron, U+26B7, is somewhat obscure, and some fonts render it as a simple circle surmounted by a K. The intended shape is somewhat different: a half-X on a staff rising from an oval. This summary of the design will hopefully be of some use to typographers.



*This is a facsimile of the original Chiron glyph, reduced in size.*

*Note the half-hidden perfect X cross pierced by the vertical staff. The sections of the staff are in subtle proportional sequences with the arms of the cross, and with each other. The width and length of the horizontal loop [variant of orb] are in Golden Section relation, and in sequential proportions with the other elements of the glyph.*

Figure 1. Description of the design, by Al Morrison. As drawn, the upper part of the staff, on which the arms are centered, is 1.6 times the arm length and 1.4 times the remainder of the staff, so that the entire staff is  $2\frac{3}{4}$  times the arm length. The arms form a right angle. The width to height of the oval is intended to be the Golden Ratio. (Chiron Ephemeris, CAO *Times*.)

U+26B7 is the universal astrological symbol for Chiron. This dominance is largely due to its early adoption by the now-defunct Congress of Astrological Organizations (CAO), spearheaded by Al H. Morrison, and to its publication in the magazine *CAO Times*. One of us (Stein) was a member of the CAO and a regular attendee of its occasional meetings.

When 2060 Chiron was discovered by Charles Kowal in 1977, it was reported by some in the press as the tenth planet. Its discovery prompted the recognition of a new class of object, now called the *centaurs*, and astronomers expected it would be a key to our understanding of the Solar system. Stein took an immediate interest for its application to astrology.

Soon after its discovery, a CAO meeting was called to decide on a symbol for Chiron – or, as it was informally known at the time, ‘Object Kowal’ after its discoverer. (It would be formally named ‘Chiron’ in April 1978.) Several suggestions were reviewed, and U+26B7 was chosen. The symbol is a blend of two metaphors: a key, reflecting Chiron’s importance to our understanding of the planets, which in turn is composed of the initials O-K for ‘Object Kowal’.

Centaur symbols discovered in subsequent decades are more variable in their symbols. However, a widely used pattern, proposed by Robert von Heeren in the 1990s, is based on the Chiron key glyph, with initial letters substituted for the K: P for Pholus (U+2BDB), N for Nessus (U+2BDC), C for Chariklo (♁), CY for Cyllarus (♁), Greek Y for Hylonome (♁), etc., with the same oval at their base.