

# Life Matters: the Cross of Matter

The Cross of Matter is a fundamental principle of Astrology and as such is the backbone of any chart. Its components are the four angles: the Ascendant, the MC, the Descendant and the IC. The concept is based on divisions of the circle described by the path of the sun and planets across the sky as seen from the earth.

Indeed, the Greek word *'horoskopos'* means the 'watcher of the hour' describing the fact that originally, the celestial observers would record what stars or planets were rising at different hours of the day. These were used as markers in the construction of calendars for religious observances.



**Babylonian omen stone showing the crescent moon and other celestial phenomena**

The earliest records of natal astrology go back to the Babylonians whose astrology we would describe as 'omen' astrology, in the sense that they used not only the planets and the stars, but the winds, the flight of birds, comets and other phenomena. These were recorded on stones and were used to describe the nature of the time in which they appeared. There was no Ascendant and therefore no other division of the celestial circle.

The Babylonians had a strongly developed system of heaven-earth correspondences. Orientation and division of space was very important. They used the four cardinal points and the notion of associating right and left with east and west are the same qualities which underpin most of the ancient world philosophies where east and right are associated with the masculine, diurnal principle while west and left are associated with the feminine nocturnal principle.

The marking of the eastern horizon has always been important and the ancient Egyptians marked it with the rising of particular stars, most important was the helical rising (rising with the Sun) of the star Sirius which signified the beginning of the Egyptian year and heralded the annual flooding of the Nile.

The East point was seen as the birth place of the Sun, the giver of life and the west was seen as the 'dying place' where the Sun slipped below the horizon to the place 'of rest' in the underworld. The underworld was the place where east and west came together and when the Sun reached the nadir, the centre of the underworld it would transform itself from the ageing deity into the newborn babe ready to be reborn at dawn.

The centre point of this underworld is what in astrology we refer to as **The IC or midnight point** and it is where the Sun god was transformed from an old to a new god ready for rebirth the following day. The Egyptian underworld was not a place of suffering and damnation like the hell of Christianity. It was the afterlife where the soul went for rest and renewal and prepared for reincarnation into the next life. The underworld was known as the Source from which all things emerged and that is how the IC derives its connections to beginnings and endings of all things, to the source of our lives, to parents, and to home.

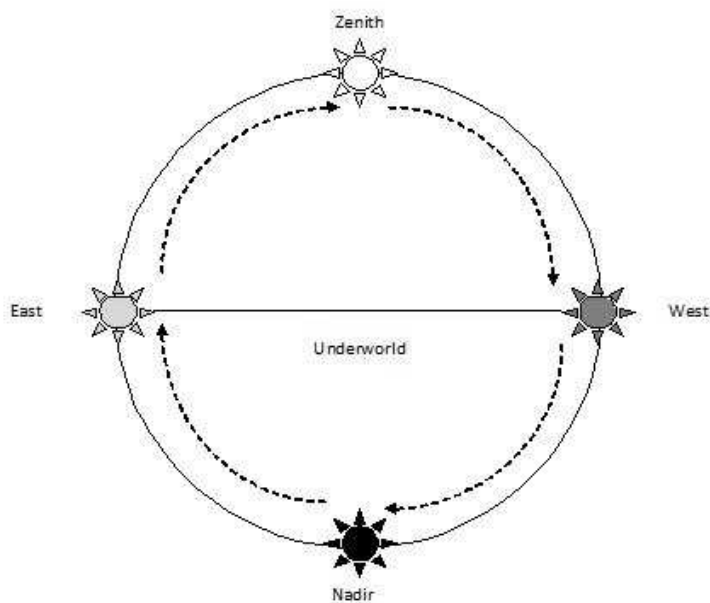
Marcus Manilius the 1<sup>st</sup> century writer tells us:

*It controls the foundations of things and governs wealth; it examines to what extent desires are accomplished by the mining of metal and what gain can issue from a hidden source.*<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Manilius *Astronomica* page 147

The IC was also seen as the repository of resources of the earth e.g. metals, mining, hidden treasure and wealth. Other classical writers added reputation and lineage, family wealth (that



*The Sun god's journey as it rises in the East, culminates and then sets in the West descending into the underworld and at the Nadir is reborn to rise again*

which we inherit from family and parents), land (as most wealth would have been linked with land ownership), old age, ancestry, beginning and end of life. Father is also represented here because father is the 'hidden' parent – paternity was not something which could be established as obviously as maternity, hence its hidden nature but also the foundation of genetic structure.

As the Sun then began its ascent towards the horizon, the Sun god was seen to emerge into the upper world at dawn, bringing life and vitality, shedding light and warmth on the world. With the appearance of the Sun, the Egyptians saw this as the birth of the god and in astrology

this 'marker of the hour' of birth of the individual is **the Ascendant** - the moment in which the child makes its entry into the world.

Manilius says:

*Within its domain lies the arbitrament of life and the formation of character; it will grant success to enterprises, open up the professions, and decide the early years that await men from their birth, the education they receive, and the station to which they are born....<sup>2</sup>*

Hence we have the Ascendant's association with the life force, the source of character and physical appearance. It describes the person emerging into the world hence it also describes impressions, image, will, strength and vitality. The Ascendant as the beginning of life also represents beginnings generally i.e. how a person starts things, the impressions they make on others as well as their impact on the external world.

The Sun then continues to climb high into the sky and reaches the zenith of its path and gains maximum strength and heat. It is this point which in astrology we know as the **MC**. It is associated with power, glory, honour and distinction. It is the pinnacle of the chart hence its association with status, rank, profession, success, public life and social acknowledgement. It was seen to show where the individual succeeded as a result of their own efforts as opposed to position or status which was inherited, as symbolised by the IC. The MC was also the Mother, the public parent as opposed to the IC, the Father.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid page 149

Manilius says it:

*...holds sway at the summit of the sky and divides heaven in two with imperceptible meridian; enthroned on high this post is occupied by Glory (truly a fit warden for heaven's supreme station), so that she may claim all that is pre-eminent, arrogate all distinction, and reign by awarding honours of every kind. Here comes applause, splendour, and every form of popular favour; hence the power to dispense justice in the courts, to bring the world under the rule of law, to make alliances with foreign nations on one's own terms, and to win fame relative to one's station.<sup>3</sup>*

After reaching the zenith, the Sun then starts its downward journey to the west and this was where the Sun died and descended into the underworld. Egyptian philosophy saw this as the diminution of strength, of vitality and of life. The point at which the Sun disappeared past the horizon is what we define as the **Descendant**. Manilius saw it as:

*... concerned with the consummation of affairs and the conclusion of toil<sup>4</sup>, marriages and banquets and the closing years of life, leisure and social intercourse and worship of the gods.<sup>5</sup>*

Here we see how we have derived the meanings of the Descendant where we place marriage and partnerships as well as enemies, foes and opponents. If this is puzzling consider that the Descendant is opposite the Ascendant but also the symbolism of light (Ascendant where the light is born) vs dark (Descendant where the light disappears). The hero is always white (Ascendant) strong, vigorous with right and might on their side—it is masculine and diurnal while those that oppose him are black (Descendant) indirect and obscure – it is feminine and nocturnal.

As discussed earlier, the east was associated with the right and has the qualities of might and light. It is direct, strong and benefits the individual self. Its opposite, the west was associated with the qualities of strength and benefit given over to others. Any union or partnership demands cooperation but also compromise and therefore the individual has to hand over some of their power and influence. Therefore there is the association with marriage, partners and associations but it also indicates a weakness to the individual self and factors which may be harmful or which 'oppose' it.

These four angles make up the Cross of Matter and they define the life cycle: conception occurs at the IC, birth at the Ascendant, middle age and maturity at the MC and the descent from the MC to the Descendant is old age and eventually death at the IC. This is the representation of the diurnal motion of the earth, the primary motion that brings life.

If we look at a chart and see it as a fourfold unfoldment of an individual's life, or a moment of time, it makes a powerful statement especially if we remember that what we are looking at is the literal representation of the earth's movement.

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

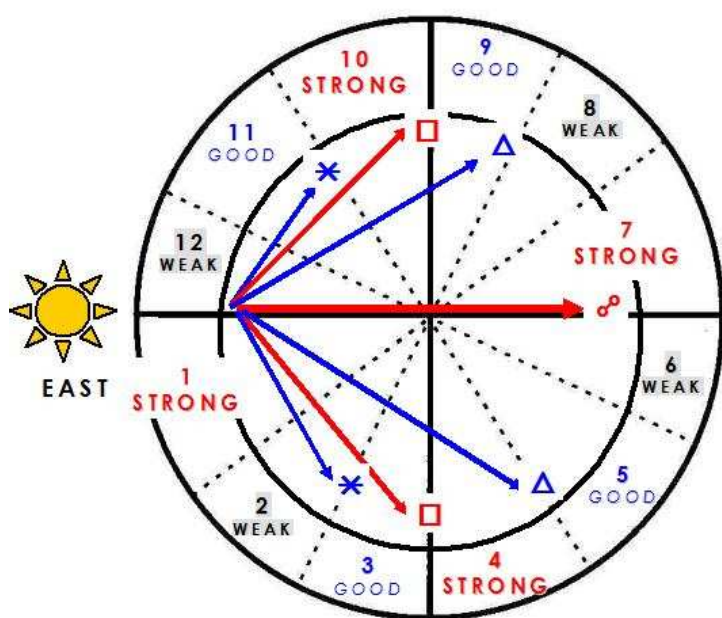
<sup>4</sup> In his day, work would have ceased at sunset for all labourers, merchants and freemen.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid page 149.

How then can we use this? If we apply to any chart we can consider the following:

- IC – what is the root, cause or origin of the person or the matter in question. It describes that which lies hidden beneath the surface and the foundation on which it rests.
- Ascendant – the person's view of life and how others see them. They way they start endeavors and the drive that impels them to meet life.
- MC –the person's aspirations and goals and the nature of their success.
- Descendant – the partners and associates as well as the nature of relationships and their opponents or foes.

### *House Strength & Aspects to the Ascendant*



The strength of the individual houses was also directly related to this model which attributes to the Ascendant the source of light. The houses associated with the Cross of Matter, the 1<sup>st</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup>, and 4<sup>th</sup> are considered to be the strongest of houses as they had a direct and strong relationship by aspect to the Ascendant. Therefore, a planet in these angular houses was considered to be strong, potent and effective in realising the matters of the houses it ruled.

The 9<sup>th</sup>, 11<sup>th</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> houses were considered to be good because they were in either sextile or trine relationship to the Ascendant and therefore partook of the light. Planets in these houses could manifest the matters of the houses they ruled but depending on whether the house was above or

below the horizon described whether the expression was public or private. Hence, the 9<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> suggested public expression while the 5<sup>th</sup> and the 3<sup>rd</sup>, because they are below the horizon, were expressed privately or away from public scrutiny.

However, the 2<sup>nd</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> were considered weak because they were 'blind' to the Ascendant that is they did not have a strong aspectual relationship to it. They literally cannot 'see' the Ascendant as they are either right beside it (12<sup>th</sup> and the 2<sup>nd</sup>) or away from direct sight (8<sup>th</sup> and the 6<sup>th</sup>). Planets in these houses are considered weak and ineffectual, often having to rely on other factors to get them over the line. Another difficulty with these houses was that apart from the 2<sup>nd</sup>, they were associated with difficulties, sorrow and labour suggesting that planets placed here would have to work hard to produce what they promised but might also be the source of hardship for the person or may even destroy what had been produced.

We then consider the sign on each of the angles and they will describe the nature of each area of life and the condition of its ruler will signify how easy or difficult it is to realise the matters of each.

A quick guide to the signs:

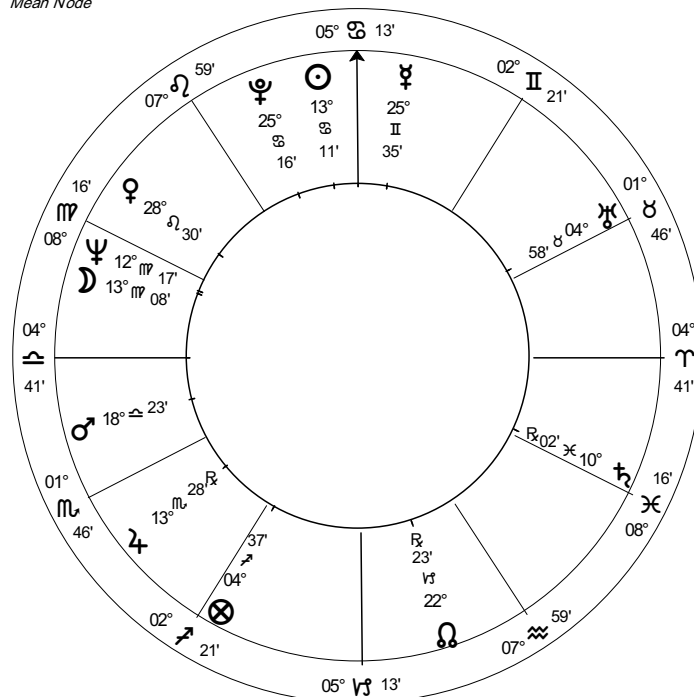
Sign	Qualities	Element	Ruler
♈	Hot-Dry	Fire	Mars
♉	Cold-Dry	Earth	Venus
♊	Hot-Wet	Air	Mercury
♋	Cold-Wet	Water	Moon
♌	Hot-Dry	Fire	Sun
♍	Cold-Dry	Earth	Mercury
♎	Hot-Wet	Air	Venus
♏	Cold-Wet	Water	Mars
♐	Hot-Dry	Fire	Jupiter
♑	Cold-Dry	Earth	Saturn
♒	Hot-Wet	Air	Saturn
♓	Cold-Wet	Water	Jupiter

If we apply these to the chart of the Dalai Lama we see Capricorn on the IC. Capricorn is cold-dry suggesting that there is slowness and separation in home life, foundations and family and that they are traditional and conservative. The ruler is Saturn in Pisces in the 6<sup>th</sup> with neutral dignity but cadent. Family and foundations are precarious and are dependent on others. The Dalai Lama's life started in a small farming family but he was taken at the age of four to

succeed his predecessor and honour the traditions of Tibetan Buddhism. The ruler Saturn is also in a tight opposition to Neptune and the Moon echoing the sense of loss, as well as the contradiction and paradox of spiritual and physical reality. Saturn as the ruler of the IC is hampered and must bow to the will of others. The Dalai Lama is the embodiment of Buddhist spiritualism but is also the temporal leader of the Tibetan nation. This is not however a position of glory but one which is dependent on the goodwill of governments as he lives in exile away from his personal and collective Tibetan 'family'.

His Ascendant is Libra which is hot-wet suggesting he moves quickly to connect with the world and this describes an engaging and communicative personality especially with the ruler Venus in

**14th Dalai Lama**  
**Natal Chart**  
 6 Jul 1935, Sat  
 4:45 am GMT +0:00  
 Takster, Tibet  
 36°N 32' 101°E 12'  
 Geocentric  
 Tropical  
 Placidus  
 Mean Node



Leo, in neutral dignity in the 11<sup>th</sup>.

The fact that the ruler is in the 11<sup>th</sup> and therefore can 'see' the Ascendant suggests that on a personal level, he is successful in realising the drive of the Ascendant which is to engage with others. Venus forms a sextile to Mercury, which is in rulership in Gemini suggesting that he has the gift of communication and the mental acuity to express his ideas and desires.

The MC is Cancer which describes his ambitions and goals. Cancer is cold-wet suggesting he moves slowly to make strong connections with others. The Dalai Lama is known for his ability to embrace not only his subjects but all those he meets. One of his titles is *Ocean of Compassion*. The ruler of Cancer is the Moon in Virgo in the 12<sup>th</sup> conjunct Neptune and also opposing Saturn. The Moon is in the cadent 12<sup>th</sup> house suggesting that his own personal goals and ambitions cannot be realised without difficulty and may also be marked with sorrow.

The Descendant is Aries describing his relationships and associations as well as his enemies. Aries is hot-dry suggesting quick action to identify and separate both associates and enemies that these change quickly and may also be fiery and unpredictable. The ruler Mars is in Libra in the sign of its detriment but in the angular 1<sup>st</sup> house. His enemies are strong and a planet in detriment can bring about hurts. As it is placed in the 1<sup>st</sup>, these enemies are always present in his life. Conversely, those he has associations with may not always be the most powerful or influential but are strong and reliable in their own way.

If we look at the Cross of Matter it is Cardinal suggesting that the person is pro-active and sees life as a challenge. The planets which dominate are the Sun, Moon, Venus and Mars as the ruler of the angles.

In summary, the nature of the Cross of Matter describes that which supports the fabric of the natal chart, it describes the four main areas of life and also provides an understanding of which planets will be the main players and how their condition and placement will determine the experience.

**Mari Garcia**  
19 May 2011

*Copyright Mari Garcia 2011. Mari Garcia is a consulting astrologer who has been involved with astrology since 1990. She has lectured widely both in Australia and the USA and has published articles in Australia and overseas and writes for several local and national publications. She runs a consulting practice in Adelaide and is co-principal of **ASTRO MUNDI**, which offers a four year course in astrology as well as special interest workshops. Mari can be contacted on 08 8563 9182 or check out the website at [www.astromundi.com](http://www.astromundi.com)*