

# ON QUESTIONS

[Now] it follows concerning questions:  
and first concerning questions of the  
Ascendant, that is, the 1<sup>st</sup> domicile

## §1.1

If you were asked about some question, you will begin to look just as I have told you before. For I have already established for you the manner from which it is taken in every matter: therefore you should not seek to deviate to something else, nor should you insert a purpose concerning which you were not asked, lest, in the purpose about which you are asked, you would insert something commingled [with it] concerning yourself—as for instance he who asks about a marriage, and when you were looking at this, he asks you about another matter which then came to him. If however you have reflected<sup>1</sup> before the consideration of diverse matters, it is just and right that you should accept each matter from its own heading. Nor is it right that someone might ask in one question about two matters which are of one kind.<sup>2</sup> And you should not look except for him who comes to you hoping, or under necessity, or sad, and who comes to you concerned or with labor. For he who came to you knowingly (as though one crafty or a tester), you should not look for him. Because the matter goes out<sup>3</sup> according to the quantity of the concern of the questioner in the matter about which he asks. Therefore, beware in these chapters: for then the question will be more useful if a man asked about himself, or were to send such a one who would ask for him who is concerned about his matter.

Therefore, know the intentions of men, because the consideration<sup>4</sup> and work comes to be according to the concern and intention of the questioner.

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<sup>1</sup> Or, “planned” (*meditatus fueris*).

<sup>2</sup> If for example one asked multiple questions concerning money, the planetary combinations would likely give the same answer for each question.

<sup>3</sup> *Exit*. The sense here is of the question arising, appearing, and coming out of the querent’s mouth in a certain way.

<sup>4</sup> Below he clarifies that the “consideration” is the astrologer’s actual examination of the chart after receiving the question.

For were someone to ask, and his intention in that question were concerning his whole time [of his life], the places of the planets at the hour of the question signify his being for the whole time [of his life]. Likewise, if his intention was to ask about some matter in his year or in a month or in a day (or in whatever such), it will be so. Therefore, understand their intentions before the consideration: because every questioner does not ask except about that which is prevailing in him from the nature of the circle, with his being, about which he asks: namely, from the complexion of the circle, with its being concerning fortune or evil.<sup>5</sup> For they are the branches and parts.<sup>6</sup> Therefore he for whom a benefic comes up to or meets with the Lord<sup>7</sup> of his Ascendant and the Moon, he will be made fortunate; and to whom their impediment corresponds, he will be impeded. Wherefore [no] man asks about the presence of a significator's impediment (that is, of the Moon and the Lord of the Ascendant in the hour of the question or the nativity), unless [he is] impeded and bad (that is, made unfortunate and troubled), or a man who ought to find evils. Likewise fortune: no one asks about it except for every one made fortunate and a man who ought to have fortune. Nor should you be afraid if you were asked about diverse questions under one Ascendant, because the matters come to be diverse: which if more of them agreed in one being (that is, in good or evil), this will be benefic or malefic for them. For we see certain people made fortunate, and others like them made fortunate.

### §1.2: A question about the durability and improvement of a matter

If however you were asked about some matter which ought to be profitable and be improved and be stable, look at the conjunction of the Lord of the Ascendant with the Lord of the matter, and the reception of the receiving planet (namely, of the planet who receives the disposition), whether it were the Lord of the matter or the Lord of the Ascendant (namely of the

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<sup>5</sup> This almost sounds like the "consultation chart" tradition (see Introduction). Note that he is speaking about understanding the querent's *intentions*, not answering his *question*.

<sup>6</sup> Note the similarity between this material and Bonatti's statement that horary practice is like a tree in which questions are the trunk and the considerations of the chart's configuration are the branches (*BOA* p. 371). Bonatti's whole discussion (pp. 371-372) seems to be a reinterpretation of this passage.

<sup>7</sup> Reading *domino* for *domini*.

one who was heavier);<sup>8</sup> and look at his freedom from those things which I have told you regarding the impediments of the planets.

### §1.3: A question about the instability of a matter and its changeability

If however it were a question about the instability of a matter or about movement (like foreign travel or change or the going-out of someone imprisoned, or someone's escape from tribulation and sorrow), look in these matters from the place of instability and receding (that is, from the cadents from the angles).

### §1.4: A question about some matter pertaining to the twelve signs: if it will come to be or not

And if you were asked about some matter (of the matters which are in the twelve signs),<sup>9</sup> give the Ascendant and its Lord and the Moon as significators of that man who asks you; the sign of the quaesited matter and its Lord<sup>10</sup> to the quaesited matter.

After this,<sup>11</sup> look at the Lord of the Ascendant and the Moon, and the stronger of them (namely the one who was in an angle, and who aspected the Ascendant),<sup>12</sup> and begin from that one. Which if one of them were joined to the Lord of the matter, the matter will be perfected by means of the striving<sup>13</sup> of the one asking. And if you found the Lord of the matter joined with the Lord of the Ascendant, the matter will be perfected with the ease and eagerness<sup>14</sup> of the one asking, without striving, and without any

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<sup>8</sup> Note that this is not a matter of reception proper, but of receiving disposition; and it needs an applying aspect from the lighter planet to the heavier one.

<sup>9</sup> See §13 for some questions not directly related to houses.

<sup>10</sup> Reading *eius* for *unius* ("the Lord of one").

<sup>11</sup> I have divided up this passage into three paragraphs, since Sahl says that there are three ways in which matters are perfected. But the reader will see that the first paragraph (which ought only to concern perfection "by joining") there is at least one other method: what I call perfection "by location." This method is found throughout Sahl and Māshā'allāh's *OR*.

<sup>12</sup> Note the similarity to Māshā'allāh's method for picking significators in *OR*.

<sup>13</sup> *Petitione*, from *peto*, "to strive, search, attach, sue for." But there is no intrinsic suggestion of legal action in the paragraph, so I have opted for the more generic "striving."

<sup>14</sup> *Studium*. This is meant in the sense of actively applying oneself to accomplishing the goal.

unreasonableness. And<sup>15</sup> if you found the Lord of the Ascendant or the Moon in the place of the matter, or you found the Lord of the matter in the Ascendant, the matter will be perfected unless the Ascendant is impeded and its Lord in his own descension or combust in it:<sup>16</sup> then it will not be. And<sup>17</sup> if you found the Lord of the Ascendant or the Moon to be joined to some planet in the place of the purpose,<sup>18</sup> or you found the Lord of the purpose joined to some planet in the Ascendant, and the planet had testimony in it (of domicile or exaltation or triplicity, and the rest), it will be perfected.

And if there were not any of all those things which we have said, then look to see (in the transfer of light) to the Moon or to some one of the light planets: which if you found it separated from the Lord of the Ascendant, and joined to the Lord of the matter, or separated from the Lord of the matter and joined to the Lord of the Ascendant, the matter is perfected by means of the hands of legates of those who run back and forth between each of them.

And if you did not find a planet between them who brings away the light of one of them to its partner, then look in the collection of light: which if you found the Lord of the matter and the Lord of the Ascendant (each of them, namely) joined to one planet heavier than they, and that planet aspected the place of the matter (or were in the Ascendant or in the Midheaven),<sup>19</sup> the matter will be perfected by means of the hands of a judge or man to whom they are sent.

Therefore, from these three methods the effecting of all matters comes to be: first, from the conjunction of the Lord of the Ascendant and the Moon and the Lord of the matter. Second, that some planet brings away the light between them (that is, it is being separated from one of them and would be conjoined to the other): then the matter comes to be through the hands of legates. Third, from the collection of light: that is, that they are both joined to some planet heavier than they, who conjoins their light, taking up the strength of each; and its judgment will be able to be taken up between them,

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<sup>15</sup> This is perfection “by location.”

<sup>16</sup> This probably means “combust, in the Ascendant.”

<sup>17</sup> The sort of perfection described in this last paragraph seems to be a combination of perfection “by location” and “by joining,” whereby some other planet in the Ascendant or the place of the matter is joined to the key significator.

<sup>18</sup> *Causae*, used here as a synonym for “the quesited matter.”

<sup>19</sup> Cf. *Introduct.* §5.6, which does not specifically mention a whole-sign aspect to the Ascendant or location in the Ascendant or Midheaven.

or through a man who will aid in that same matter. Therefore from these three first headings, the effecting of matters comes to be.<sup>20</sup>

After this, look to see (just as I have told you) at the receiver of the disposition from the one of them who is the heavier planet, whether it was the Lord of the Ascendant or the Lord of the matter, and the planet who collects the light, to see if it were free from the malefics, in the angles or in the followers of the angles (and it were not retrograde nor combust, nor cadent from the angles): the matter will be perfected after its attainment. And if the receiver [of the disposition] were retrograde, it will be dissolved after he thought he had attained it.

### §1.5: A question if a matter will come to be with ease or with duress

And if you were asked whether he would attain it with ease or with duress, look to see if there were a conjunction from the Lord of the Ascendant and the Lord of the matter from a trine or from a sextile aspect: the attainment will be with ease; and if it were a conjunction from the square aspect or from their opposition, the attainment will be after duress and inconvenience and prolonging.

### §1.6: A question if he will attain the matter through striving,<sup>21</sup> or he will have it without striving

And if you were asked whether he will attain it by means of striving or it would come to him by means of the other<sup>22</sup> without any striving, look at the Lord of the Ascendant and the Moon: if they are joined to the Lord of the

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<sup>20</sup> Note that the type of perfection describes *how* the perfection will take place: by joining, through the querent's agency or somehow directly; by a transfer of light, through some third party or legate; through collection, by some judge or arbitrator who takes up the matter.

<sup>21</sup> *Petitione*. See above.

<sup>22</sup> Here and below, *utro*. The contrast being drawn is between the querent's significator being the lighter planet, or that of the quaesited. If the querent's significator is the lighter, than the perfection comes from him; if not, then it comes from "the other" direction: some person or thing represented by the quaesited.

matter, this will be with striving.<sup>23</sup> And if the Lord of the matter is joined to the Lord of the Ascendant, it will come by means of the other.<sup>24</sup>

Moreover,<sup>25</sup> if the Lord of the Ascendant or the Moon were in the place of the matter, it will be with the striving and applying<sup>26</sup> of the questioner (that is, with his distress, and so on). Indeed if the Lord of the purpose were in the Ascendant, they will be diligent<sup>27</sup> concerning him in the matter, and it will be given to him voluntarily. Which if the question were about the arrangement of some honor, it will come by means of the other, and he will not come to the gates of kings on account of this.<sup>28</sup>

And if the effecting of the matter were from the transfer of light, it will be through legates and those who run back and forth between them. If however the Moon were separated from the Lord of the Ascendant and were joined to the Lord of the matter, the legation will begin from the one asking.<sup>29</sup> Indeed if the Moon were separated from the Lord of the matter and joined to the Lord of the Ascendant, a legate will come to him, and there will be diligence upon him in this.<sup>30</sup>

And if the attainment of the matter were from the collection of light, the attaining of the matter will be through some judge who enters in between them, or through one who enters in the matter until the attaining of the matter comes to be.

And know that if the Lord of the Ascendant or the Moon is joined to a planet from the descension of that planet,<sup>31</sup> it signifies the detriment of the matter; as for example if she was joined to Mars out of Cancer, or to Jupiter out of Capricorn: for these destroy matters. Likewise, if planets were joined which were in the descension of those who do not receive them: it signifies

<sup>23</sup> That is, the querent (as the lighter planet) must go to the quesited.

<sup>24</sup> So if the Lord of the matter is applying to the querent's significator, the matter will come to the querent.

<sup>25</sup> I have set this passage apart so it is obvious we are speaking about perfection by location.

<sup>26</sup> *Studium*, "eagerness, applying oneself to something, diligence," etc.

<sup>27</sup> *Studium*.

<sup>28</sup> That is, since someone else is arranging the matter, he will not have to go begging to the authority who grants the honor.

<sup>29</sup> Since the Moon is standardly a significator of the querent—or of the situation itself in which the querent is engaged.

<sup>30</sup> That is, a legate will come from the other side, and will be diligent in bringing matters about.

<sup>31</sup> See *Introduct.* §5.9.

the bad disposition<sup>32</sup> of the master of the question in those things which he wants to do, and that the matter would not be perfected: of which an example is if the Moon would be joined to some planet which was in the third degree of Scorpio (which is the descension of the same Moon), or the Lord of the Ascendant is Mars, and he would be joined to a planet who is in the end of Cancer (which is his descension).

And know that if a malefic were the Lord of the matter, and the Lord of the Ascendant (or the Moon) were joined to him from the square aspect or opposition, and he did not receive them, the questioner will desire that the matter would not come to be on account of the evils or tribulations, and labors which enter in upon him in that matter.<sup>33</sup> If however there were a conjunction from the trine or sextile aspect, it will be decreased from this.

And if the Lord of the Ascendant or the Lord of the matter were one planet (that is, if the Lord of the Ascendant and the Lord of the matter were the same),<sup>34</sup> and it were received (that is, joined to the Lord of its own domicile or exaltation) and it were free from malefics,<sup>35</sup> the matter will be perfected; and if it were otherwise, the matter will be destroyed. Likewise if the Moon were joined to him and she were safe from defects, it will be perfected.

### §1.7: The testimonies of the signs in the effecting of the matter

And know, because the testimonies of the signs in the effecting of matters are: that the Ascendant is a fixed sign or a common one, and the angles stable (that is, that the Midheaven is the tenth sign, and the angle of the earth the fourth sign—and the Midheaven is not the ninth sign, nor does the angle of the earth fall on the third sign).<sup>36</sup> This exposition of the angles is of the stable ones.

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<sup>32</sup> “Disposition” here does not mean “mental state,” as later horary astrologers often want to assume. It means that the querent is in an *objectively* bad situation, badly prepared, not well-suited, *etc.*, *one component* of which might be having a bad mental state.

<sup>33</sup> Following BN. That is, the matter will have so many problems attached to it, that the querent will regret having asked about or having pursued the matter.

<sup>34</sup> *Cf.* §10.2.

<sup>35</sup> Reading *et fuerit liber a malis* with BN, for *vel situ erit liber a malis*. Remember that *malum* can also simply mean an “evil,” so it could be read “and it were free from evils.”

<sup>36</sup> Here Sahl is clearly speaking about the fact that the MC-IC axis can fall on signs not corresponding to the tenth and fourth, he is *not* necessarily advocating quadrant houses

### §1.8: The testimonies of the planets in the effecting of matters

And<sup>37</sup> the testimonies of the stars in the effecting [of matters] are three, from which the Lord of the Ascendant and the Moon and the Lord of the matter are sought. If two of them (that is, the Lord of the Ascendant and the Lord of the matter) were free from the aforesaid malefics, two-thirds of the matter will be perfected; and if one of them were safe, one-third of the matter which he demanded<sup>38</sup> will be perfected—this is, if it had one testimony, he will have one-third. And if there were two testimonies, he will attain two-thirds of those things which he sought; and if the three testimonies were joined (that is, if the Lord of the Ascendant and the Lord of the matter and the Moon were safe from retrogradation and combustion—also from the malefics and from descension or fall), he will attain everything which he sought. And if they were received with their own two testimonies, and even he who received them were received, his good will be increased above that which he sought. Know therefore these questions, because they are conjoined to, and are consistent with, all matters.

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for topics: he is only interested in whether the angles are *stable*. However, he seems to be contradicting his (or the Latin translator's) earlier statements (*Introduct.* §§3, 4, 9) that define the “angle of the earth” as the fourth sign or domicile. Perhaps in the earlier passages he is simply *assuming* an idealized chart—which seems to be confirmed in the next sentence, since he seems to say he will not overcomplicate matters by assuming unstable angles. Still, this does not help us much, because we still want to know in a given case whether, say, we should look at the tenth sign or the sign with the degree of the Mid-heaven to look for matters pertaining to honors, kings, *etc.*

<sup>37</sup> This passage bears a strong resemblance to *BOA* pp. 367-68.

<sup>38</sup> *Postulaverit*. “Demanded” is perhaps a bit too strong. The sense is that the querent is pursuing a matter and is trying hard to bring it about: so the astrological consultation is part of his overall prosecution of the matter.



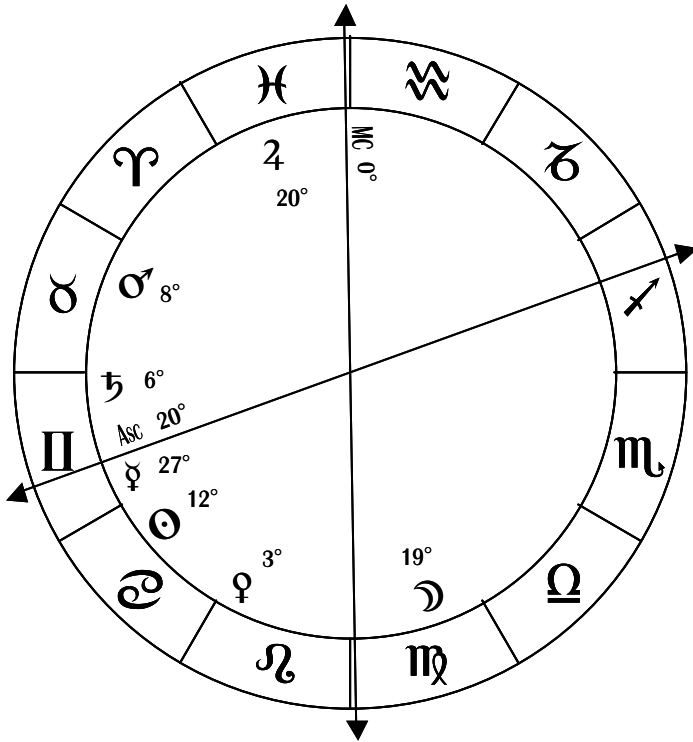


Figure 10: Acquiring a Kingdom

An example<sup>39</sup> of which matter is a certain question which was made for a kingdom—whether he would acquire it or not. And the Ascendant was the sign of Gemini, 20°; and the Midheaven, the first degree of the sign of Pisces; and the Sun in Cancer, 12°; and the Moon in Virgo, 19°; and Mercury in Gemini, 27°; and Mars in Taurus, 8°; and Venus in Leo, 3°; and Jupiter in Pisces, 20°, in the first station, wanting to go retrograde; and Saturn in Gemini, 6°.

Therefore I looked, in this question, to the ascending sign and its Lord, and the Moon (which are the signifiers of the one asking), and at the sign of the Midheaven and its Lord (which are the signifiers of the kingdom concerning which the question was). And the Ascendant was the sign of

<sup>39</sup> This chart was cast for a latitude of about 34°N. The date is approximately July 5, 824 AD GC, so it is likely a chart of Sahl's own. Bonatti's version of this chart (*BOA* p. 375) puts the Head and Tail of the Dragon at 22° of Pisces and Virgo respectively, though my dating puts them at 29°.

Gemini, and Mercury in it (namely the Ascendant), in the end of the sign. And Jupiter, who was the Lord of the matter, in the Midheaven in the twentieth degree.<sup>40</sup> And I found the Lord of the Ascendant separated from the Lord of the matter. Therefore I looked at the Moon, whom I found in the angle of the earth, joined to Jupiter from the opposition. And it signifies the attainment of the matter through winning and unreasonableness because they were joined from the opposition.<sup>41</sup> And if they had been joined from the sextile or trine aspect, the attaining would come to be with ease. And the Moon (who was joined to the Lord of the matter) was signifying that this would come to be through the striving and diligence of the one asking. And if the Lord of the matter had been the one who was being joined,<sup>42</sup> the attaining of the matter would be through the undertaking of him who would organize it, without the striving or inconvenience of the one asking.

Therefore, I looked even at Jupiter, who was the receiver of the disposition: and I found him in the Midheaven, in his first station, wanting to go retrograde, signifying the dissolution of the matter which I said;<sup>43</sup> and its detriment would be more quickly; and this will be from the direction of the king, on account of Jupiter (who was the Lord of the 10<sup>th</sup> domicile, which is the royal house, and who was signifying the king). And if the Lord of the Ascendant had been the receiver of the disposition, and he had been impeded, I would have said that the detriment would come to be from the one asking, and because of his own doing, because the Lord of the Ascendant was being changed from his own domicile into the domicile of substance, which signifies the quickness of the change of the one asking, and his journey for the sake of seeking substance to the place in which he was making a delay;<sup>44</sup> and he would not have received this, because when he went out from

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<sup>40</sup> Perhaps there was some mix-up over the Arabic in the Latin translator's mind: above, Sahl said "20" (20. *gradus*).

<sup>41</sup> That is, the aspect showed perfection by joining, and the opposition showed it would be with unreasonableness (or inconvenience), and a contention he would win.

<sup>42</sup> That is, if the Lord of the matter (Jupiter) had been the lighter, applying planet.

<sup>43</sup> See the rule for this above, §1.4.

<sup>44</sup> *Moram*, a delay, period of time, pause. BN reads: "which signifies the quickness of the change (of the one asking, and of his matters, through the seeking of substance), to the place in which he would make a delay." Meaning somewhat unclear. Bonatti's version (*BOA* p. 377) reads: "it signified that the querent changed his own purpose quickly [from one] to another, and because he was changed to the 2<sup>nd</sup> house, it seemed that the change would be the reason that he would acquire for himself substance which he did not have."