

Primary Directions Notation: Towards a Uniform Presentation Standard

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- Changed ‘promittor’ to ‘promissor’ (following Gansten).
- Changed ‘participator’ (Project Hindsight) to ‘partner’ (following Dykes).
- Clarified definition of converse directions.

Introduction

This article is adapted from the User’s Guide to my second book: *American is Born: Introducing the Regulus USA National Horoscope*. Since publication of that book, Janus software has introduced a complete overhaul of their primary directions module with versions 4.0 – 4.3. This has helped straighten out some confusion in terminology and presentation for former students of Robert Zoller who used Janus 3.0 in their coursework.

Note: References to Chapter 5 are to *America is Born* which includes further background on the mechanics of primary directions.

Note: ‘Bounds’ are the five-fold sign division also referred to as ‘terms.’ As of 2009, Robert Schmidt of Project Hindsight has taken to calling them ‘confines.’ I am sticking with ‘bounds’ and use the Egyptian system.

Presentation

How we choose to label and speak about primary directions plays an important role in how well primary directions as a methodology is communicated. In *A Rectification Manual, 1st edition*, I chose to present primary directions results based on report output directly from Janus 3.0 software. As readers will soon learn, recovery of the centrality of bounds to primary directions theory has caused me to revisit the notation question. In making changes to the presentation format of primary directions for *American is Born* and *A Rectification Manual, 3rd edition*, I have considered the work of primary directions specialist Rumen Kolev as a starting point (for further information see Kolev’s website www.babylonianastrology.com).

Historically there has been confusion among authors on definition of the terms ‘significator’ and ‘promissor.’ The *significator* is the planet or point which is held fixed on the celestial sphere. The *promissor* is the planet, aspect, or point which moves with the celestial sphere as the sphere rotates on its axis. In presenting notation, the promissor always appears first; the significator, second. This is the convention adopted by Rumen Kolev and the one I have chosen to follow.

Definitions and Suggested Presentation Format for an Article or Book

PT	D	Mars/Sagittarius	P	dex. sextile Moon (l=0) d. → ASC	22-Jul-1777
PT	D	Mars/Sagittarius	P	dex. sextile Moon (l=MO) d. → ASC	1-Aug-1779

Promissor. This is the planet, aspect, or point which moves with the celestial sphere as the sphere rotates on its axis. For the first example, the promissor is the dexter sextile aspect of the Moon, labeled as ‘dex. sextile Moon (l=0).’

Significator. This is the point held fixed on the celestial sphere. Originally, only the Ascendant, Midheaven, Sun, Moon, lot of fortune, and prenatal syzygy were allowable significators. Examples in the main portion of *America is Born* adhere to this convention using the Ascendant as significator. For this example “ASC” is the symbol for the Ascendant. Note the significator *always* appears to the *right* of the arrow. Later authors allowed planets to take on the role of the significator. Examples of this variation are found in *America is Born*, Appendix C. But no matter what is listed as the promissor or significator, the same principal holds that any planet or point listed to the *right* of the arrow is held fixed on the celestial sphere.

Distributors and Partners. Abū Ma’shar introduces two new words to primary directions vocabulary. The **distributor** is the Egyptian bound placement of the promissor. Central to Abū Ma’shar’s system of distributors and partners, the distributor contributes roughly half the effect of the actual direction by effectively setting the stage for actors to play out roles as partners. The **partner** is nothing more than the grouping of a single promissor and significator. In the example presented above, I abbreviate distributor with ‘D’ and partner with ‘P.’

D = distributor = bound = ‘Mars/Sagittarius’
P = partner = ‘dex. sextile Moon (l=0) d. → ASC’

Because bounds function differently across signs, bounds need to be identified beyond the planet itself. Stating ‘the bound of Mars’ tells us little because ‘the bound of Mars in Sagittarius’ behaves much differently than ‘the bound of Mars in Capricorn.’ Bounds need identification by both planet and sign.

Aspect. The type of aspect between the promissor and significator. Either conjunction, sextile, square, trine, or opposition. For this example ‘sextile’ denotes the aspect.

Dexter/Sinister. For sextile, square, and trine aspects, there are two aspect types to consider. To specify which aspect, the terms dexter (abbreviated ‘dex.’) and sinister (abbreviated ‘sin.’) are used. Dexter aspects are found by beginning at the planet and moving against the order of the signs; sinister aspects, vice versa. (For visual examples of these aspect types, see *America is Born*, Chapter 5). For this example, ‘dex.’ is the abbreviation for the dexter aspect of the Moon. With the Moon’s position at 27AQ51, the dexter sextile aspect of the Moon is 27SA51. With the bound of Mars defined to be the four degree range from 26SA00’00” to 29SA59’59”, this dexter sextile aspect of the

Moon falls within the bound of Mars/Sagittarius. This is why Mars/Sagittarius is designated the Distributor.

Latitude. Janus offers latitude assignments for both significator and promissor. There are three latitude conditions: zero latitude, the planet's full latitude, or an interpolated latitude based on the method of Bianchini. Latitude is abbreviated as 'l.' For zero latitude directions, the number '0' is listed or omitted for the Sun and Nodes where latitude is always zero. For full planet latitude directions, the planet's name is abbreviated. ('SA' = Saturn, 'JU' = Jupiter, 'MA' = Mars, 'SU' = Sun, 'VE' = Venus, 'ME' = Mercury, 'MO' = Moon). For directions which employ the latitude adjustment of Bianchini, 'B' is listed.

For the first row in this example, '(l=0)' denotes the direction is computed with a zero latitude assumption for the Moon. For the second row in this example, '(l=MO)' indicates the Moon's full latitude is used to compute the direction.

Direct or Converse. Whether the celestial sphere is moved by direct motion (abbreviated as 'd.')

 or by converse motion (abbreviated as 'c.') requires identification. For this example, 'd.' indicates direct motion.

The projected event date is listed last. Ptolemy's Key is used to convert the arc of direction to the projected date when the direction is due.

Ptolemy's Key: 1 degree = 1 year = 365.2424 days.

Method - *Mundo* versus *In Zodiaco*. Medieval astrologers relied on zodiacal directions which are based on the zodiacal projections of planets and their aspects. All directions presented in *America is Born* are computed *in zodiaco*. 'Mundo primary directions', sometimes referred to as 'mundane primary directions', use the earth as a point of reference and were developed later by Placidus. Klev uses the abbreviations 'M' for mundane and 'ZOD' for zodiacal directions, a choice I support for those who choose to present results for both systems.

Method - Interplanetary directions. Ptolemy, Regiomontanus, or Placidus were the most commonly used systems for interplanetary directions in the medieval era. Whatever computation method used for interplanetary directions requires disclosure. I recommend 'PT' for Ptolemy, 'REG' for Regiomontanus, and 'PL' for Placidus.

Distributor Changeovers. When the directed significator changes from one bound to another, the following format is recommended. Added are the words 'Changeover' and 'bound'. Absent is listing of any partner direction designated by the bold letter '**P**'.

D	Changeover	bound Saturn/Aries d. → ASC	9-Jul-1863
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Note on Definition of ‘Converse’ Directions

In the period prior to 1600 when traditional astrology was practiced, converse directions were defined as directions where the typical role of significator and promissor was reversed. Instead of the ASC, MC, Sun, Moon, lot of fortune and prenatal syzygy *held fixed* on the celestial sphere as significators, these planets or points *were moved* while the promissor was *fixed*. This is the original meaning of the term ‘converse’.

As described here and used consistently through all my work, ‘converse’ is defined as arcs of direction which assume time is moved backwards from the time at birth. In the field of primary directions, this use of converse directions was introduced in the late 19th century by Alan Leo. In his 2009 book on primary directions, Martin Gansten names these types of directions as ‘neo converse directions’ and limits the term ‘converse directions’ to describe their original usage prior to 1600. Were I to be true to Gansten’s terminology, I would introduce ‘nc’ for ‘neo converse’ directions which move the celestial sphere backwards through time.

My choice to maintain ‘c’ or ‘converse’ terminology for directions which move the celestial sphere backwards through time is motivated by two reasons. First, I accept converse motion, e.g., moving backwards in time, as a valid astrological technique not only in primary directions, but also solar arc directions, progressions, and transits.¹ Second, most modern astrological software programs (and some traditional ones including Janus) define converse motion in this way. Sometimes it is easier to fall in line with contemporary conventions rather than spend time mounting a campaign to change naming conventions. The important point is to understand what methods were practiced traditionally, which methods are modern innovations, and how to distinguish between different methods with clarity of language and presentation.

¹ Readers should be aware that most traditional astrologers consider this statement heretical.