

Fortunetelling

by Solemn Judgement, Ashbury Sage's Guild

Since its appearance in Amora Fortannis, Ashbury finds itself in a world strangely like and unlike their former one. Just as the local flora and fauna are functionally similar but with signal exceptions, those looking to the sky for prophecy see many of the ruling principles still at work, though in several cases operating upon different objects than before. The earth still rotates and revolves as it did previously, and the simplest calendric system is one similar to that of the previous solar calendar. That suffices to match the days with the seasons: like before, the moon of this earth also appears to obey a solar month as it follows its parent around the heavens. Due to this very fortunate coincidence, the land marches through one sign of the zodiac in every solar month, accompanied in regular fashion by the moon: how it manages to vary its progress by just one day in either direction for most months, and then a shortened one in the second month (but an extra day in that month every four years!) is truly a puzzle.

A very few sages theorize that this extraordinary set of factors argues in favor of some overall design or plan established in the cosmic mechanism, by a being unknown: they are of course shouted down and ostracized by the majority of right-thinking folk.

The zodiac, then, consists of twelve signs, each represented by a constellation which rotates through earth's ecliptic in synchronous movement with the solar months. The moon, during each month, both waxes and wanes in keeping with this march of the zodiacal constellations, and the various planets also at times touch upon or move through them, producing a nearly endless variety of influences and meanings which can take a lifetime to master.

As one simple example, the moon comes to rest in the center of each zodiac sign in the middle of each month: this time, called by some the Ides, is usually considered the strongest moment for each sign's particular strength and influence. In certain months, the moon at the Ides is full, and this has the effect of multiplying that sign's influence: the seas appear to recede at this time, but in fact the earth is being drawn somewhat closer to the heavens as a symbol and effect of this influence. By the same token, a new moon will, all things being equal, signify a weakened effect for a particular zodiac; a new moon at Ides can practically cancel a sign's effect, and the earth sinks deeper into the waters as a result.

Calendar of Years and Cycles

In every year the months are named for the zodiacal creature listed; but in addition each year is named for one of the astronomical signs deemed to be especially important at that time.

This creates a Cycle of twelve years: Sword in Crown is the first year of any cycle, followed by Spirit Circle, and so forth. Each Cycle, in turn, is thought to be influenced by each of the elements, and the Cycles bear those names in succession.

<u>Sign</u>	<u>Astronomic Influence</u>	<u>Elemental Symbology</u>
Turtle	Sword in Crown	Ascendance
Dolphin	Spirit Circle	Water
Swan	Scales	Death
Dragon	The Arbalest	Alliance
Hawk	The Shadow-Twin	Air
Serpent	Moon	Chaos
Ferret	Mercury	Balance
Salamander	Venus	Fire
Gryphon	Sun	Life
Fire Ant	Mars	Convergence
Lion	Jupiter	Earth
Raccoon	Saturn	Order

First the Relational elements go in order, then the Physical and finally the Causal, for a total of 12 cycles of 12 years each.

The final year of an Ascendance cycle is called a Saturn year, and is followed by the Sword in Crown year of the Alliance cycle: the last year of the Convergence cycle is followed by the first year of the Water cycle, and so forth. These twelve 12-year cycles in succession are grouped into a Generation of 144 years in duration.

Each Generation is named for one of the Avatars of the zodiac, which is to say, the four animals that govern the heart of each season: therefore, a Generation of the Dolphin is followed by one of the Hawk, Salamander and Lion.

These four Generations define an Epoch, and each Epoch is 576 years in length. Ashbury, at the time of its removal from its previous plane of existence, had a recorded history of 597 years, just a little more than one Epoch, and is presently registered in the year 599, **Scales** of the Cycle **Alliance** of the Generation of the **Lion** in the **First** Epoch; the Cycle Balance begins in the numbered year 609.

The Second Epoch will begin (with a Dolphin Generation, Ascendance Cycle, and Sword in Crown year) in calendar year 728.

Zodiac Signs

The twelve constellations that pass through the world's ecliptic can be seen to hold the shape of animals (though other races and beings see different figures there). Each month brings the ascent of a different zodiacal constellation, and thus each month draws its name. The arrangement of the months bears a strong relation to that of the physical elements, with three animals for each one. Further, one animal of each allied physical element accompanies an avatar of the ruling element in each season.

Winter, ruled by *Water*, is bounded by the signs of the Turtle (an Earth creature at home in Water), the Dolphin (an avatar of Water), and the Swan (a creature of Air that rests often on Water's surface). Turtle begins the season, as the time of Earth has just passed, and Swan presides over its ending, presaging Spring's influence of Air: only Fire, Water's enemy, is not represented in Winter.

Spring, ruled by *Air*, is begun by the sign of the Dragon (a creature of Fire which plays in the sky), centers on the Hawk (Air's avatar), and concludes under the Serpent (a magical snake native to Water's surface, and which molts into a winged form in its old age). Note the influence of Chaos in Spring, which has the effect of reversing the adjacencies seen in other seasons: Serpent and Dragon seem inverted in their proper order. Also notice that Earth has no place in Spring, when its enemy Air is ascendant.

Summer, ruled by *Fire*, is initiated by the sign of the Ferret (an Earth creature unafraid of Fire), ruled by the Salamander (the avatar of Fire), and completed by the Gryphon (a creature of Air that flies closest to the Sun). The inversion instigated by the Serpent (and the Moon) continues: and Water is not represented.

Autumn, ruled by *Earth*, begins with the sign of the Fire Ant (native of Fire with close ties to Earth), is ruled by the Lion (the avatar of Earth) and finishes with the Raccoon (a Water creature despite its dry home). The advent of Order in this season restores the proper adjacency among the months: the season is heralded by a Fire creature near to Summer, and is ended by a Water creature announcing the Winter ahead. Air is not represented.

To repeat the signs and their elemental influences (bold = the Avatar):

Water = **Dolphin**, Serpent, Raccoon
Air = Swan, **Hawk**, Gryphon
Fire = Dragon, **Salamander**, Fire Ant
Earth = Turtle, Ferret, **Lion**