

Astrological Keystones – New aspect formations for the new millennium?

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Note: This article is a summary of work done by the author in collaboration with Linda Shelnut, (parapsychologist and research astrologer) of Florence, Colorado, USA from 1998 to date.

In April 1998 I received an email from Linda Shelnut, an astrologer friend of mine in Colorado, USA. She had just noticed a new aspect formation in a chart she was working on which consisted of a trine, 2 squares and a sextile, arranged to form a symmetrical grouping – i.e. trine: square: sextile: square. She called this grouping a “Rosetta” – after the Rosetta stone – as she felt it had the possibility to open up a new understanding of the way astrology works. Like most astrologers, I went back to the chart I know backwards – my own natal – to see if I could find this formation there, and yes, I could. But I also saw something else which I found equally interesting and illuminating – another symmetrical collection of planets formed of 2 trines, a square and a semi-sextile – grouped as square: trine: semi-sextile: trine. I gave this grouping the name “Hele” - after the old spelling for the Heel Stone at Stonehenge, which supposedly meant “Sun Stone”. Little did either of us realise how much intense work these two groupings of planets would lead us into!

Over a period of three years or more we exchanged email thoughts on these and other formations that we began to see in charts we were doing for clients and events. After some discussion we named our first two “discoveries” “Keystones” – partly because of their shape when drawn on a chart, which resembles that of the keystone of an arch, and partly because we felt they offered the key to a new way to approach charts.

As Linda put it, in May 1998

“Now I see the Keystone, too. (And a Capstone.) That has clarified for me why I could only see a “solidity” in the pattern and is why, as I said before... <<At first I was attempting to “see” the pattern as a pail or container part of a bucket with the bottom narrower than the top. That just didn’t “work” for me. Which is when I saw the building stone shape.>>.....

It’s a stone rather than a container; it causes or provides SOLIDIFICATION; it does not have the CAPACITY, or purpose, to CONTAIN, as in a liquid container!”

We soon found two other keystones, which also combined pairs of long-standing and accepted strong aspects which we called, rather less imaginatively, the Double Yod Key and the Square Key. Set out below are our thoughts on how these figures can be used to give deeper insight into the workings of the planets.

I do not for one moment imagine that we are the first to see these patterns in charts. They are so common that I guarantee that every working astrologer will find several of them in charts they have already analysed; once you begin to look you will find them everywhere. But I do think we are the first people to group them together and see them as rather more than the simple “sum of their parts”. Not only do they give us new information in natal charts, they also help to explain why some (particularly quincunx) transits can produce unexpectedly strong effects.

When working with the keystones, Linda and I use a form of shorthand, defining the formation by the number of signs between the points of the form, beginning with the wide single arc which we call the “top” of the keystone, and numbering the points forming it from the top left “corner”. Also, in these definitions it is worth remembering that what makes a square a frictional aspect is the fact that the two planets which form it are always in signs in the same quadruplicity (fixed, cardinal or mutable), which are opposed in one or more of their elemental qualities (i.e. hot opposing cold or wet opposing dry – or both as in the case of fire/water and earth/air)

The four basic keystones are:

Rosetta
Double Yod Key

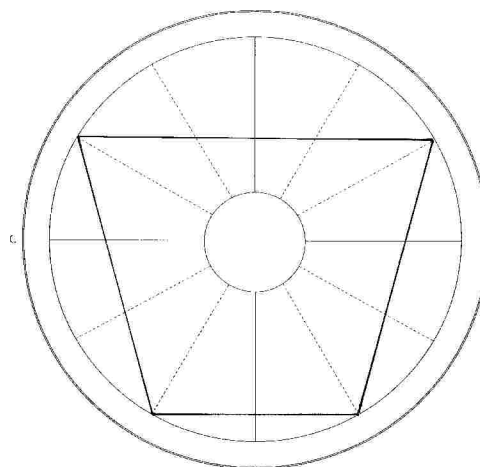
4:3:2:3
5:2:3:2

Hele
Square Key

3:4:1:4
5:3:1:3

1. Rosetta 4:3:2:3

This formation is one of a trine and sextile “holding together” two squares, with the aspect between points 1&3 and 2&4 being quincunx. The tension in the formation is between the “top” and “bottom” aspects, because point 1 is in an opposing sign to point 4, with point 2 opposing point 3. The trine will thus be in one element, which will define the type of Rosetta, with the base sextile being in the two temperature-opposed elements – i.e. a fire trine for the top with earth and water signs (the two cold elements) forming the base.

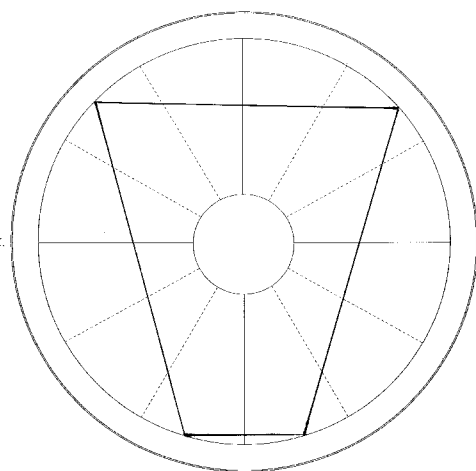


Rosetta 4:3:2:3

Our basic definition of the action of a Rosetta in a chart is thus that of stabilising, solidifying and crystallising, bringing together differing forces into a firm, solid, central core.

The importance of the quincunx “across the corners” of the Rosetta is probably more noticeable in transits than in the natal chart. This formation explains why some quincunx transits have a stronger effect in unexpected areas of the chart. A transit to any of the points will always be square to at least one of the other points, and this effect will be obvious. But the quincunx and the related trine (if the transit is to one of the base points) would not be. We have seen this effect in charts we have worked with, and would be interested in feedback from other astrologers on this matter.

2. Hele 3:4:1:4



Hele 3:4:1:4

This is a much less static formation than the Rosetta, but in some ways more interesting. Because the square in this pattern forms the “top “ of the key there is much more tension “across “ the key, between the two trines forming the “sides”. The elemental opposition here can only be either of temperature (hot/cold), or total, since signs with the same temperature but different quality (wet/dry) are not adjacent in the zodiac.

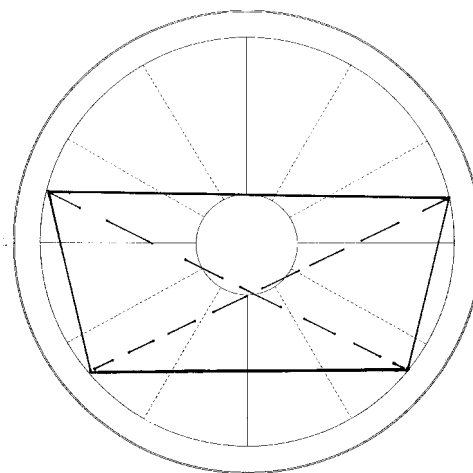
Consequently, we feel that the Hele is very much a delicate balance of opposites - a focus for where tension should be sought in the chart, holding the potentially unstable and destructive forces in a stable but dynamic equilibrium.

Again, as with the Rosetta, the quincunxes across the Hele bring the formation into play in assessing the potential effect of transits to the points of the form.

3. Double Yod Key 5:2:3:2

An interesting and very dynamic form, this actually comprises two Yods, in which the focus of each Yod is one of the base points for the other, and the “non-focus” base points of each Yod are square. Again, a dynamic rather than static form. The two Yods point to areas of equal force in the chart, where it may be difficult or impossible to make a choice between priorities, although generally one or other area will dominate at different times.

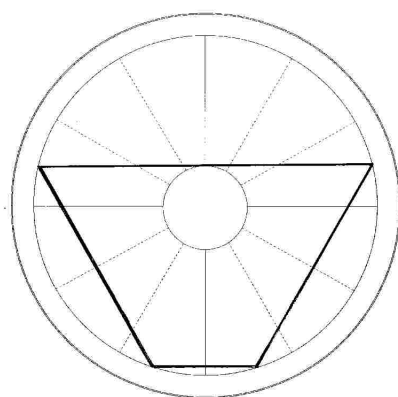
The nett result of this is a “flickering focus” between the two Yods – which can produce either an inability to decide on anything related to these Yods or apparently sudden decisions to “change tack” on the part of the native.



DYK 5:2:3:2

The result of linking the two Yods also carries over into transits, so that a transit to one Yod also affects the area of interest of the other.

This formation is almost surprisingly frequent, once you look for it.



Square Key 5:3:1:3

4. The Square Key 5:3:1:3

At first glance, this is the weakest of the four Keys, but the interest here lies in the “crossed trines” which brace it across points 1&3 and 2&4. Like the Rosetta, this has squares between the “top” and “base”, and the trines, in this case across the form, are in opposed elements in the same way as the Hele (see above). This is the only one of these four Keystone formations where the aspect across the formation is NOT a quincunx.

Our original thought was that this formation tends to imply an internal “damping” mechanism, preventing wild mood swings or erratic behaviour which might otherwise occur with the mix of aspects from which this form is comprised. Alternatively, it could also imply a “Mexican Stand-off”. Which of these effects is stronger may well depend on the actual planets making up the formation.

In transit terms, each of the points is linked to two of the other three by aspects which are already recognised – i.e. squares or trines. However, once again the quincunx/semi-sextile aspects to the remaining point “bring in” not only the fourth point, but also the aspects to that point, for consideration.

In notes to Linda in July and November 1998, by which time we had identified all four of these forms in charts, I summarised our thoughts on their qualities as follows:

“Generally speaking, I think we are agreed that the Keystones are formations that hold the energies together, and pull them towards the centre and stability, although this is manifested in different ways in each variety.” (July '98)

“I think of the four “Major Keys” the Rosetta is definitely the most stable, with the Hele having a strongly dynamic quality, the Square Key a frictional/damping quality and the DYK having the “shifting focus” quality that I mentioned when we first discussed this pattern all those aeons ago (all right, all right, four months if you want to be pedantic!).” (November '98)

Five years on, I don't think I can improve on that summary.

However, before you begin looking for these new astrological keys in your charts, a word of warning. Based on these keys and an extended family of Yods (more about these later, perhaps) Linda and I have so far identified 130 individual formations. You think that's crazy? So do we. In July 1998 we had these keystones, plus 3 more yods, and a few derivatives making a total of 13 – at which point we decided that was probably enough. But it doesn't work that way. Once you get into the habit of looking at charts differently – looking for the overall pattern rather than at the specific aspects – you see them everywhere. Very occasionally Linda or I have thought we saw something new when it was in fact one we'd already “tagged” for reference. More often it genuinely was a different grouping of planets/aspects. Say, for example, you notice you have a Rosetta with the “top” trine intercepted – so that you have a pattern of 2:2:3:2:3 instead of the Rosetta 4:3:2:3 – look again. What you also have is a group of 3 Yods, where the foci of two Yods form the base of the third. And so on, ad infinitum!

Of course we haven't analysed all of these formations yet, but some of them are very interesting – and all of them we have actually found when looking at real charts for real clients or events.

[Feedback or enquiries about the formations described in this articles, or others you may see in your own charts will be welcomed. Please email to: sally.v.fisher@btinternet.com or LGShelnutt@aol.com]