Charts of Conflict and Battles
Bernadette Brady


One of the most important duties of an astrologer of the middle ages was as an advisor on battles. Armies entering into conflict would need information on timing and the answer to such questions as when to go into battle, when to flee or when to tarry and be slow to respond. If the astrologer was incorrect in his (almost never “her”) judgement, then his continual employment would be in jeopardy.

As this was an important part of the professional astrologer’s skills, there is a substantial body of writing in these questions of conflict. There are two main sources for the material in this paper: firstly, my own empirical research work, and, secondly, Robert Zoller’s translation of Tractatus Sextus of Guido Bonatti’s Liber Astronomiae which focuses on this subject of Battles, Conflicts and Besiegement of Castles. This work was published in the Astronomical Quarterly in four parts in Volume 62. No 3, Volume 63. No 1, Volume 63. No 2 and Volume 63. No 3, published in 1992/93.

Guido Bonatti was a 13th century Italian astrologer. His occupation was varied but one area of his work was that of a military adviser. He talks of two types of conflict, the first where two armies or opposing sides encountered each other on a field of battle and fought it out. The second type of conflict was that of the besiegement of a castle where one army attacked and tried to take a fortified castle. These are two very different types of conflict and we will look at both of these by putting them into a modern frame work.

The Two Types of Battles

The first type of conflict we define as a field battle and is applicable to any battle where two teams or individuals meet and engage in conflict, with neither party having the advantage of ownership or holding the object that is being fought over. If you are in conflict with another individual, then this is the style of conflict chart with which you would work. This type of conflict is the most common, covering everything from domestic arguments to the majority of sporting events where there are two sides or teams striving to win a game.

The second type of conflict defined by Bonatti is castle besiegement. You may feel that this has little use in our modern life, for the majority of us no longer want to besiege our neighbour’s castle. Nevertheless this is applicable to any conflict where one person or team has some property and an opposing force wants to take that property. The hallmark of this type of conflict is that a stalemate (or draw) allows the holder of the property to maintain possession and the opposition therefore loses. Custody battles over children may well fit into this style of conflict. Fighting a bank through the courts in order not to
lose property would also be a modern castle besiegement. In this conflict there is one person or team which holds the “trophy” or the property and another who must win it. If the holder forces a stalemate, they still hold the property.

Field Battles – The Technique

At its simplest form this is a battle between two planets. The astrologer needs to recognise the two planets and decide which of the two is the strongest. If it is a short battle, this is sufficient. However, a longer battle also requires taking into account allies, supplies and the like. The first step is to erect a chart for the battle. This chart will be for the commencement of the conflict.

The ruler of the 1st house is the challenger; the ruler of the 7th receives the challenge. We are, of course, using old rulerships.

Having decided on the two planets that are in conflict, the next step is to decide which of these planets is the strongest. This is done according to a set of rules.

1) The Two Planets – the ruler of the 1st house versus ruler of the 7th house

The superior planets of Mars, Jupiter and Saturn are always considered stronger than the inferior planets of Mercury or Venus or the luminaries.

You ought to know that the superior planets, that is Saturn, Jupiter and Mars, are stronger in wars and conflicts than the inferiors, that is Sol, Luna and Mercury. (Part 2 Page 16)

In this style of conflict we are dealing with the 1st and 7th house rulers. Therefore we are always going to be dealing with precise planetary battles. For Saturn (ruler of Capricorn and Aquarius) will always be in conflict with the Moon (ruler of Cancer) or the Sun (ruler of Leo); Mars (ruler of Aries and Scorpio) will only ever be in conflict with Venus (ruler of Libra and Taurus); and Jupiter (ruler of Sagittarius and Pisces) will only ever be in conflict with Mercury (ruler of Gemini and Virgo). Hence Saturn will only challenge the luminaries, Mars will only fight with Venus, and Mercury is only ever in battle with Jupiter.3

2) Zodiacal condition of the rulers

One of the major ways that a planet receives strength or is depleted in a chart is the zodiac sign it occupies. Rulerships and exaltation are considered to improve the planet and allow it to fulfil its promise, whereas detriment or fall depletes the planet’s ability to perform.

Bonatti says “It is better to have an auspicious inferior than an unfortunate or impeded or afflicted superior.” (Part 2 page 16) This tends to imply that
planets in rulership or exaltation work as a service to the team or individual they signify and that any planets that are in detriment and fall will hinder the party they signify. However, one should remember Ptolemy’s discussion on diurnal and nocturnal planets which considers that the malefic Saturn, thought to be “anti-life” because of its extreme cold, was thought to be of less malice if it was in the same hemisphere as the Sun because it would be warmed. And Mars, considered to be malefic and anti-life because of its dryness and heat, was thought to be of less malice as a nocturnal planet (in the hemisphere opposite the Sun) as the night would cool and moisten it. And from this principle Ptolemy concludes that benefics are aided when helped by the sign they are in, whereas the malefics have their potential to give affliction greatly reduced if they are in a sign which does not help them.

Thus, the above point can be modified to: a benefic in rulership or exaltation greatly aids the party it signifies but a malefic in rulership or exaltation greatly hinders the party it signifies. In contrast to this, a benefic in detriment or fall hinders the party it signifies but a malefic in detriment or fall greatly benefits the party it signifies.

3) The Natal House Position

Angular houses are action houses and the most effective. Succedent houses are considered to be half as effective as angular houses. A ruler in a cadent house is considered greatly weakened, for even though it may be strong via its zodiacal condition, it is unable to effectively use its strength in the impending battle. In addition, it is considered negative to have the ruler of the 1st in the 7th, as it implies that the 1st House army or team has been captured, and visa versa.

4) Applying Aspect.

Ptolemaic aspects are used to look at what planet the ruler is applying to or what planets are applying to the ruler. If the ruler is applying to a benefic in good condition, then it is being helped. However, if it is applying to a malefic by hard aspect, then it is being hindered in some way.

Aspecting

It is important to note that the method and techniques of aspecting between planets or points for Bonatti was quite different to our modern methods. Only the five Ptolemaic aspects of the conjunction, sextile, square, trine and opposition were used and in electional charts, once a planet separated from an exact aspect, it released that planet and was no longer involved in that aspect. Thus a planet can only form one aspect at a time.

Reception

A planet could also gain or lose from an aspect and the major way it could do this was through the concept of reception. A planet is said to receive another planet if it is in a sign in which the other planet has some dignity (rulership,
Guido Bonatti’s methods of analysing horoscopes of conflict and battles
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exaltation or any two of term, triplicity ruler or face). If this is the case, then the second planet is said to receive the first. The first planet receives the virtue or nature of the second planet. However, if the first planet is retrograde or cadent, then it cannot carry the gift and it will return it to the second planet. This is to the benefit of the second planet unless it is retrograde or cadent because it cannot handle the return of its burden and thus is greatly weakened by the exchange.

For example, if Mercury is at 2°20 Aries and is applying to a trine of Mars at 2°30 Leo, then the Mars receives Mercury because Mercury is in a place where Mars has dignity. Mars then gives a gift or strength to Mercury. If, however, the Mercury was natally in the 6th house, then it cannot receive the gift Mars offers. In addition, if the Mars was also cadent or retrograde then the return of the gift will weaken the Mars. This is like a heavy bundle being passed to another, only to find, to one’s dismay, it being returned.

5) Retrogradation

If the ruler is retrograde, this greatly weakens the ruler.

A Field Battle Example – WWII

We can look at the chart for The commencement of WWII: 1st September 1939. 4.17 am CET Danzig Poland, 54N23 18E40. (Ref: Nicholas Campion, World Horoscopes).

The lord of the 1st house is the aggressor and, in this case, indicates Germany. The lord of the 7th house is Poland and the Allies.

The lord of the 1st is Mercury in Leo in the 12th and cadent. Inferior planets are always weaker than superior planets in matters of conflict. Being cadent, this Mercury is weak. It is also inferior and holds no real dignity in Leo. It is in its own Egyptian term – but that is all.

The Allies are represented by a retrograde succedent Jupiter in Aries. Jupiter is weakened by being retrograde. In Aries it is in
one of its triplicity rulerships – but that is all. However, Jupiter is stronger than the cadent Mercury. So why did the war take so long to resolve in Jupiter’s favour?

6) The Moon’s Last and Next Aspects

Each warring planet also receives the help or hindrance of another planet. Using Ptolemaic aspects, the planet to which the Moon made its last aspect is given to the lord of the 1st house. The planet which is receiving the next aspect from the moon is given to the lord of the 7th. Bonatti also tells us that Zael does not mind if the Moon has to change signs to do this.

So for the chart for the commencement of WWII:

**The Moon’s last aspect was a sextile to Mars.** Mars is exalted in the 5th house, so Germany gains an exalted Mars. The 5th house for Germany represents the valour and ability of its troops (Refer Table 1). The German soldier was well equipped and eager to go into battle, well trained and willing to die for his country.

**The next aspect that the Moon makes** is a conjunction to Jupiter, so the Allies do not gain any additional help.

We can now run the chart forward through time to see how the conflict will unfold, looking firstly at how the two rulers will transit through the battle chart:

Mars is Void of Course as it is not going to make another Ptolemaic aspect by transit before it leaves the sign. However, Jupiter representing both the Allies and their help is at 7°0 Aries and will make many aspects before it leaves the sign of Aries. Jupiter therefore has places to go. According to Bonatti, the invading army is seen to be strong (Mars in Capricorn) but does not get support in the long run. The longer the battle continues the better the Allies become and the Germans grow weaker.

Jupiter is retrograde, so the first action it takes is to return to the sign of its rulership (Pisces) and then move through Aries. It has to move through 20°0 of Aries before it forms its first aspect which is to Mercury. However, this planet is weak, cadent and ineffective, as well as in the 6th house from the 7th. Jupiter then goes on to form a square to the exalted Mars. This Mars is in the 11th house from the 7th which represents a very strong and powerful friend – the USA.

Mars is also the planet which helps the cadent Mercury (Ruling planet for the Germans) and it cannot form alliances as it is void. Thus, although he starts strong, he will find himself without friends or support.

The longer the conflict, the more important it is to be aware of the movement of the key planets against the chart.
Length and Carnage of the War

The ruler of the 7th being in the 8th from the 1st also tells how the aggressor kills great numbers of its enemy. In addition, Bonatti tells us that the weaker the Moon is in a war chart, the longer and more difficult is the battle. The 8th house Moon in the degree of the Nodes speaks of a long and bloody war.6

Another Mercury-Jupiter conflict is not a war but a sporting contest that has raged for over 120 years. Although the carnage is pride rather than bodies, the same rules apply. The sporting event is the battle for the Ashes, the cricket trophy between England and Australia, and the following chart is the first time the two countries played a test match.

1st Test England vs Australia (source: papers of the day)
15th March 1877
1.00pm
Melbourne

**England** is the 1st house, represented by Mercury in Pisces and cadent. Australia is represented by Jupiter in the 7th and in fall. The last aspect of the Moon is to the Sun, also in Pisces and cadent. The English have pride but are weaker than they think. The Sun has nowhere to go but Mercury is in early degrees and seeks the sextile to Mars which is exalted in the 7th. This strengthens the Mercury which sits next to the North Node. Bonatti talks of the possibility of many returns of the battle and numerous encounters when the Moon or one of the rulers is involved with the Node.

**Australia** – Jupiter in the 7th is in fall, strong by house but weak by sign. The next aspect the Moon makes is a square to Jupiter, so Australia gains no real additional help. However, there is a separating sextile between Mercury and Jupiter and Jupiter receives Mercury. Bonatti says if the two opposing planets are in some form of reception to each other or in good aspect to each other, they may talk it out before they go to conflict. So Bonatti would question that a battle took place at all. Indeed with the angular Mars, he would note that it
was a noble thing but be horrified by the cadency of the Moon. For although the battle is noble and seems friendly, it will go on for a long time.

So we have a war where the sides like each other and are willing to work together but will meet often in this conflict. In this particular battle the superior planet, Jupiter, angular and in its own house even though it is in fall, proved to be stronger than the Mercury with its ally of the cadent Sun. Australia won the match. However, the outcome of the “War” has not yet been decided, as the conflict has been waging for over 120 years.

**Table 1: 1st House vs 7th House conflicts**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>House</th>
<th>War</th>
<th>Team sport</th>
<th>Individual sport</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1st</td>
<td>The aggressor</td>
<td>The challenging team</td>
<td>The challenger</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd</td>
<td>The resources and supplies</td>
<td>The teams reserves</td>
<td>Their past record</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd</td>
<td>The condition of the army</td>
<td>The condition of the team</td>
<td>Their current condition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4th</td>
<td>The place of Battle</td>
<td>The field and weather</td>
<td>The conditions of the place of challenge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5th</td>
<td>The morale and condition of the soldiers</td>
<td>The morale of the team</td>
<td>Their attitude</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6th</td>
<td>Vehicles of transport</td>
<td>Their plans for moving players and their ability to move the ball</td>
<td>Their methods of play</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7th</td>
<td>The enemy</td>
<td>The opposition</td>
<td>Their opponent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8th</td>
<td>Wounds, capture, illness and death</td>
<td>Accidents, injuries, reportings</td>
<td>Injuries or physical problems</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9th</td>
<td>The information, messages and spies</td>
<td>How well they understand the coaches messages</td>
<td>How they will use the information that they gain during the contest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10th</td>
<td>The Generals</td>
<td>The Coach</td>
<td>Their reputation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11th</td>
<td>The organisation of the army</td>
<td>The training and prepared plays</td>
<td>Their preparation before the contest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12th</td>
<td>The home city or town</td>
<td>The fans</td>
<td>Their backers</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Castle Besiegement**

This is a different type of battle based on property and ownership. Instead of looking at the rulers of the 1st and 7th houses, as in a field battle, we examine the rulers of the 1st and 4th. The 1st house is the army attacking the castle; the 4th house is the castle itself. The army in the castle is the 7th house. The castle is property. This may be children in a custody battle, a trophy or any other form of property or physical thing which you hold, own and to which you have the stronger claim. It also means that if you are to lose it, then someone has to take it from you.

The question is not “Does the army inside the castle get beaten?” But rather “Does the castle fall?” Thus the battle is between the ruler of the 1st and the ruler of the 4th and these two planets are judged in the same way as for field battles, by considering the zodiacal condition and house position. However,
there are some interesting variations with house placement. For example, if
the ruler of the 1st is in the 4th, then the castle has been taken.

One also takes into account whether the aspects are applying or separating,
retrogradation and the point that a superior planet is always stronger than the
inferior planets.

In addition, Bonatti talks of the following:

- If there are any benefics in the 4th house – Jupiter, Moon, North Node and
  Venus – this aids the castle.
- If there are malefics in the 4th – Saturn, Mars and the South Node – this
  weakens the castle.
- If the lord of the 1st house is in aspect to either the Ascendant or the IC,
  the challenger is greatly aided.
- If the lord of the 4th is in an aspect to either the Ascendant or the MC, the
  holder of the castle is greatly aided.
- If the lord of the 1st has any form of dignity in the degree of the castle (4th
  house cusp), then this greatly aids the challenger.
- If the lord of the 1st rules the 4th, then the conflict is decided beforehand.
- If the Moon and the Nodes are emphasised in some way, it can indicate a
draw or a long-fought battle resulting in a stalemate.
- The ruler which is the stronger of all of the above points succeeds.

**Examples of Castle Besiegement**

Martin Navratilova’s last Wimbledon Final, played 2nd July 1994. 2.05 pm BST
London. The time of the chart is for the first ball.

Martina is clearly the 4th house as she has held this title longer than anyone else. She is also emotionally the holder of “the castle” although technically last year’s winner has no advantage the following year. However, once she made it to the finals, the media and fans saw the match as “Will Martina lose her crown?”

Thus Martina is the IC at 24°0 Capricorn and the 1st house is 18°0 Libra.

Venus is in the 10th in Leo. Venus has no dignity at 20°0
Leo but is in the 10th house which helps it, yet it is an inferior planet. The old champion is a retrograde Saturn in Pisces.

Are there any applying aspects? Venus is applying a square to Mars. Mars is in detriment in Taurus but Mars helps the Venus. Saturn does not apply to any planets. Other planets apply to it. Thus the challenger gains Mars as well.

Are any planets in the 4th? No.

- Venus at 20°0 Leo sextiles the Ascendant.
- Saturn is at 12°0 Pisces and does not aspect the angles
- Venus has dignity at 20°0 Capricorn, the place of the IC, as it is one of the triplicity rulers of the IC.9
- The Node is not strongly emphasised with the Moon, so we do not have to worry about a continual challenge between these two players.

Thus the challenger (Venus) is far stronger than the holder (Saturn) and Martina lost her crown.

The America’s Cup – A Yachting Race

Australia versus USA
First race: 31st January 1987 1.30pm AWST (+8) Fremantle, Western Australia.10

The America’s Cup is a yachting race and the winner is the best out of seven races. The holder of the cup means that all the other countries have to race for the right to challenge the holder. Those earlier races would be considered field battle charts (1st and 7th house challengers). However, once the contest starts for the actual America’s Cup, it becomes a castle besiegement conflict where one country holds the cup and the other is trying to win it.
The First Race:

For this series of races Australia held the cup and is represented by the 4th house cusp at 26°0 Leo. The Sun is cadent and in detriment in Aquarius. However, the Americans are represented by the 1st house and Venus in Sagittarius. There is no superior planet involved and the Venus in Sagittarius is stronger than the cadent Sun in detriment. No planets are in the 4th house, so there is no aid for Australia. However, Venus makes a tight trine to the IC.

Thus for this Castle Besiegement there is:

Holder (Australia)

- Sun in detriment and cadent.
- No planets in the 4th house.
- Sun forms a wide square to the Ascendant/Descendant axis.

Challenger (USA)

- Venus in Sagittarius in the 8th
- Venus forms a tight trine to the IC.
- Has no dignity in the place of the Cup.

So Australia loses the first race.

The second race is scheduled for the next day (31st January) at the same time: the same chart with the same results.
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Australia loses the second race.

The Third Race is scheduled for the next day (2\textsuperscript{nd} February) at the same time: the same chart with the same results.
Australia loses the third race.

If Australia loses the fourth race, they lose the cup. The race is scheduled for the next day (3rd February): the same chart with Venus moving at the same speed as the IC from one day to the next and the trine of Venus to the IC still tight. Once again it is the same result.

USA wins the fourth race and takes the castle.

Test Cricket – The Ashes as a Castle Besiegement

The Ashes (Test cricket between England and Australia) is a true castle besiegement:

- The team that holds the Ashes must be beaten.
- If the series is a draw, the holder still holds the Ashes.
- To take the Ashes, a team must win the majority of tests.

There are usually five or six tests in a series played over a summer. Each test lasts for five days with play beginning either at 10am or 11am and lasting until 6pm every day. There is one break for lunch and one break for tea. This is not a fast game and in sport it is a true castle besiegement, both in length as well as design.

The Ashes is considered the ultimate sporting event in both English as well as Australian culture and is outright war by cricket fans in both countries.
The Ashes started in 1888 and any matches before then were 1st or 7th house conflicts, for those matches were not for a trophy. However, once the countries fought for the actual trophy of the “Ashes”, the conflict became a castle besiegement. This idea is also present in the test matches between Australia and the West Indies. In 1966 the Frank Worrell Trophy was given to the winner of the series as a perpetual trophy and is the prize for which the teams play whenever the two teams meet. Previous to this, any test match between Australia and the West Indies would have been a 1st house – 7th house conflict. After the presentation of the Frank Worrell Trophy, these tests become castle besiegement conflicts.

Castle besiegement is not simply a “win” or “lose” situation. There can be three outcomes: win, lose or draw, depending on how the contest is arranged. In working with Bonatti’s castle besiegement technique with the last 203 Ashes test matches, the technique correctly selected 137 results. More importantly this method was applied to the 1997 Ashes matches. The results were not only correctly forecast but the work selected the actual test in which the Ashes were won by Australia. This work was published, well prior to the commencement of play, in the AA Journal of April, 1997, entitled 12th Century Castle Besiegement in Sport by Brady and Lehman.

Conclusion

So is Bonatti’s military astrology applicable to us in modern life?

The elegant possibilities of this work is that one can mark and weigh the different ways a planet can be strengthened or weakened and reduce the pros and cons to a score-line to see which of the two rulers is the stronger. Once such a system has been developed and standardised (so the astrologer is not making any “shades of grey” decisions), then it can be tested.

The specialty sport with which I have been working is Australia Football League matches with its league originating in 1990. AFL football matches, like most other sports played in many different countries, have a concept of home or away teams, the “away” team being the one which travels to the “home” team’s ground and challenges them to battle. The chart can be constructed and the ruler of either the 1st or 7th house, which scores the most points is deemed the winner. At the time of writing, in the work I have done so far, working with over 1000 AFL home and away games and Bonatti’s techniques yield a 75% accuracy rate. Throughout the 1997 AFL season these astrological tips were announced every week on TV and over the entire season, Bonatti proved to be the most successful tipster, beating the football experts.

So yes, Guido Bonatti’s thinking about the astrology of conflict does seem to still have meaning for our modern lives.
Notes and References

1 This may be the time when the two parties engage, for example, in sport it will be the beginning of the game, but this can vary depending on the characteristics of the particular style of conflict you are examining.

2 Bonatti leaves Venus off this list but it should be considered an inferior planet.

3 These can be considered three sub-sets of field battles and can be researched individually in their own right. However, this is beyond the parameters of this paper.


5 This is not an “arm-chair” statement. All of my research on conflict charts indicates that this is the correct way to judge the planets in their zodiac signs.

6 In Test Cricket this talks of a possible draw or rather, no-one really being the victor.

7 Op cit. Part 4, page 17

8 This data was collected from a live telecast.

9 Bonatti used Dorotheus’ system of Triplicities.

10 All the America’s Cup data was collected from live telecasts.