

3-D Elemental Matrix of Houses: “In the Court of the Crimson King”

	Order ♄	Logic ♃ ♄	Compassion ♋ ♀	Desire ♋ ♂	
Earth Tier: Inception (Pages)	Card # 16 Earth of Earth (F)	Card # 15 Earth of Air (U)	Card # 14 Earth of Water (F)	Card # 13 Earth of Fire (N)	Instinct ♁ ♀ ♁
Air Tier: Development (Knights)	Card # 12 Air of Earth (U)	Card # 11 Air of Air (F)	Card # 10 Air of Water (N)	Card # 9 Air of Fire (F)	Thought ♊ ≐ ≈
Water Tier: Fulfillment (Queens)	Card # 8 Water of Earth (F)	Card # 7 Water of Air (N)	Card # 6 Water of Water (F)	Card # 5 Water of Fire (U)	Feeling ♋ ♀ ♋
Fire Tier: Culmination (Kings)	Card # 4 Fire of Earth (N)	Card # 3 Fire of Air (F)	Card # 2 Fire of Water (U)	Card # 1 Fire of Fire (F)	Action ♋ ♀ ♋
	Earth Column (♅) (Pentacles)	Air Column (♃) (Swords)	Water Column (♋) (Cups)	Fire Column (♋) (Wands)	
	Physical (Works) “I Am/I Become”	Mental (Ideas) “I Think”	Emotional (Needs) “I Feel”	Aspirational (Goals) “I Want”	

Elemental Dignity Key: (F) = Friendly/Strengthening; (N) = Neutral/Supporting; (U) = Unfriendly/Weakening

The categories of “Goals,” “Needs,” “Ideas” and “Works” are general rather than all-inclusive; other situational interpretations are encouraged.

“Tell the Querent what he has come for . . .” (Aleister Crowley, *The Book of Thoth*)

In the Golden Dawn system of divination known as the Opening of the Key (later adopted by Aleister Crowley), the initial step of the First Operation involved cutting the deck into four piles, right-to-left according to the Hebrew Tetragrammaton: Yod (Fire), Heh (Water), Vau (Air) and Heh Final (Earth). Having previously selected a card to describe the Querent (the “Significator”), the diviner’s goal was to identify the pile containing that card in order to gain a preliminary glimpse of the circumstances into which the subsequent reading would most likely delve. Fire/Wands was understood to show “work, business, etc;” Water/Cups suggested “love, marriage, or pleasure;” Air/Swords indicated “trouble, loss, scandal, quarreling;” and Earth/Pentacles favored “money, goods, and such purely material matters.” Rather than simply asking the Querent point-blank why he or she came for the reading, the reader was instructed to abandon the divination if the first “educated guess” was wrong. However, modern thinking offers a more flexible and nuanced view of these divisions, recognizing that – while the original categories are valid as far as they go – tarot often answers the unasked (and sometimes unforeseen) question.

The included matrix is a spin-off of that process, using a straight deal from the deck rather than a series of cuts and rolling in court-card “motifs” as well as astrological factors to produce a more thorough practical and psychological focus on the Querent’s situation. For example, in Card #1 (Fire of Fire) the King of Wands is at the height of his power, drawing on the potent energies of the Sun and Mars in the creative Fire signs of Aries, Leo and Sagittarius to fuel his aspirations. The elemental signature of two Fire components is entirely favorable, although any card dealt into that position will add its own inflection to the mix. One question for the Querent might well be “Why haven’t you done it yet?”

In Card #2 (Fire of Water), the King finds the elusiveness of the Moon and Venus in the elastic Water signs of Cancer, Scorpio and Pisces to be a bit too slippery for his authoritarian style. He senses that something must be done but can’t quite put his finger on what it is since his emotions can cloud his vision. The elemental signature of one Fire and one Water component is entirely unfavorable unless modulated by the card dealt there, creating an uncomfortable duality of purpose.

In Card #3 (Fire of Air), the King’s mental acuity is exquisite, lending breadth and depth of vision and an administrative acumen that is second to none. The practical and philosophical intelligence symbolized by Mercury and Jupiter is completely at home in the expansive Air signs of Gemini, Libra and Aquarius. The elemental signature of one Fire and one Air component is a highly volatile and inspiring combination, utterly favorable if kept in proper proportion and not allowed to run wild.

In Card #4 (Fire of Earth), the motif is one of benign neglect; this King is more apt to “let the chips fall where they may” than take an active role in arranging practical matters more to his liking. Saturn, the unimaginative planet of “business as usual” is totally submerged in the mundane concerns of the pragmatic Earth signs Taurus, Virgo and Capricorn, offering few flashes of inspiration. The elemental signature of one Fire and one Earth component, while potentially constructive, is neutral and therefore mainly unambitious.

To use this layout, first select a Significator from among the court cards in the usual manner: gender, age, observable characteristics or, if more is known about the Querent, other telling personal features. Set this card aside, then shuffle and cut the remaining 77 cards and deal out 15 cards face-down into a stack. Insert the Significator to make sixteen, then shuffle and cut this sub-pack once again. Deal these 16 cards face-up into a 4X4 array as shown, then slide each column together to create four “tiers” with Earth at the bottom and Fire at the top. Find the Significator and read the four-card series in that column as reflecting the nature of the Querent’s circumstances in that particular area of life or psychological state of mind. Factor in both the court-card “motif” and the astrological overlay for the Significator’s location to flesh out the picture. Note these observations, then proceed to the main reading, using the original Significator or not according to your customary practice.