

Global Astronomy and Astrology

This week we focus on global astronomy and astrology. The key book is Campion, *Astrology and Cosmology in the World's Traditions*. This book was a response to, and rejection of, a common assumption that astrology, defined as the search for meaning or significance in the stars and planets, is a feature of western culture. Instead, astrology, so defined, exists in all human cultures. All chapters are online via the University Library.

Category Problems

1. Culture and Geography

The academic world divides cultures, geographical areas and time periods into discrete components, for convenience. However, the results may cause confusion as much as clarity. The distinction between global traditions and western ones is problematic, but such distinctions serve a purpose. I would therefore define western as the culture transmitted to the modern world via Christian Europe. Again, the definition is easily contestable on the grounds that Christianity has multiple forms, it engages with other religions, and European culture is diverse. Nevertheless a form of astrology came down to modern Europe in a lineage transmitted from Babylon/Mesopotamia to the Hellenistic world, where it absorbed Egyptian influences and was transformed by its encounter with Greek philosophy, through the Roman world, Persia, the Islamic world, and then into twelfth century Europe.

We can then distinguish other traditions outside this current which may be connected to it, as is the Indian practice – which extends into Southeast Asia – have had some contact – as in China – or be entirely separate as in the Americas, Australia. But we shouldn't define any tradition against the western, which is then imagined as 'normal'. Other, it's just the tradition within which British (and Welsh) culture is based. That's why we encourage the study of all and any traditions and practices.

2. Astronomy and Astrology

Within the discipline of cultural astronomy there is a further, and serious, category problem. This is the use of the word 'astronomy' to describe the traditions and practices found in many parts of the non-western world. This is why studies of so many traditions and practices are published under the heading 'cultural astronomy'. In some people's view this is clearly what historians call 'anachronistic', i.e., mistaken. This is why *Astrology and Cosmology in the World's Traditions* uses the term astrology

Most (if not all) non-western cultures do not employ different words to distinguish traditional astronomy from astrology. In India both are *jyotish*, the 'science of light'. In Japan they are *onmyōdō*, the 'yin-yang way'. In China, the observation and measurement of celestial phenomena were inseparable from their application to human knowledge, which, in turn, was divided into two *li*, or *li fa*, calendar systems, and *tian wen*, or sky patterns. In Arabic astrology itself was known as *Ahkam al-Nudium*, literally, 'the decrees of the stars'.

3. Indigenous Astronomy and Astrology

The term 'indigenous' raises further problems. Simply it refers to people who are born in a place (from Latin genesis (generation, nativity) and the Greek γένεσις (genesis, origin, source, beginning, nativity, generation, production, creation)). More generally it refers to people who live in the place they were born in. Most of us, in that sense, are indigenous. However, in what is probably the most common current usage it refers to people who are common usage it refers to people who (a) were colonised by European powers and/or (b) had (or have) and oral, non-

literate, tradition. Against such specific uses we can talk about, for example, indigenous New Yorkers or Berliners. Bernadette and I have argued (not yet in print) that western astrology is the indigenous astronomy of the western world, partly on the grounds that one of its central concerns is to locate the origin of each person in a specific place (and time). However, we can still adopt the common usage of indigenous as cultures which are (a) colonised and/or (b) use oral transmission, as long as we know that the use is specific to these circumstances but has wider applications.

Reading and Resources

The reading this week is mainly optional.

Two key general sources containing a huge range of articles, are on line through the University library. You should take some time to scan through these, looking for papers which interest you.

Ruggles, Clive (ed.), *Archaeoastronomy and Ethnoastronomy: Building Bridges Between Cultures*, Proceedings of International Astronomy Union Symposium 278, (the 9th "Oxford" International Symposium on Archaeoastronomy), Lima, Peru, 4-14 January 2011 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

Ruggles, Clive (ed.), *Handbook of Archaeoastronomy and Ethnoastronomy* (Berlin: Springer-Verlag, 2013).

Below are some reading suggestions, arranged by culture/geography

Ancient Egypt

The astronomy/astrology of ancient Egypt could be both very exact (witness the exact orientation of the Great Pyramid of Giza to the cardinal axis – east-west, north-south), but also what we would now call religious (the concept of religion as a separate category of life and experience was unknown) in the sense that it emphasised a connection between the soul and the stars. Obviously, in the roughly 3000 years of Egyptian history from the Old Kingdom to the country's conquest by the Roman Empire, practices and concepts changed and evolved.

Various resources have been posted on the Moodle page.

Australia

The most prolific of current scholars is Duane Hamacher. Duane works with a team of indigenous and non-indigenous scholars and practitioners, all represented on the Aboriginal Astronomy web site:

<http://www.aboriginalastronomy.com.au/people/>

You will find many of Duane's papers posted on his academia.edu web page:

<https://unimelb.academia.edu/DuaneHamacher>

Many of his papers concern very specific topics, but a useful general paper is his chapter on the planets:

Hamacher, Duane, 'The Planets in Indigenous Australian Traditions' in Peter Read (ed.), *Oxford Research Encyclopaedia of Planetary Science* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018).
https://www.academia.edu/36789888/The_Planets_in_Indigenous_Australian_Traditions

China

The three scholars who have contributed the most to our knowledge of Chinese astronomy and astrology in English-language publications are David Pankenier and Jeffrey Kotyk. Both have many of their papers accessible on academia.edu

Koty, Jeffrey, 'Can Monks Practice Astrology? Astrology and the Vinaya in China' in Susan Andrews, Jinhua Chen and Cuilan Liu (eds), *Rules of Engagement: Medieval Traditions of Buddhist Monastic Regulation*, (Hamburg: Hamburg University Press, 2017), pp. 503-17.

[https://www.academia.edu/34408763/ Can Monks Practice Astrology Astrology and the Vinaya in China](https://www.academia.edu/34408763/Can_Monks_Practice_Astrology_Astrology_and_the_Vinaya_in_China)

David Pankenier's work is also on academia.edu, but read this from a past Sophia conference:

Pankenier, David W., 'On Chinese Astrology's Imperviousness to External Influences', in Nicholas Campion and Dorian Gieseler Greenbaum (eds), *Astrology in Time and Place* (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Press), pp. 3-26.

Online through the University library

Also check Bil Mak on academia.edu: he specializes in south and east Asia

Japan

The single most important source is Dolce, Lucia, *The Worship of Stars in Japanese Religious Practice*, Proceedings of the Conference on 'The Worship of Stars in Japanese Religious Practice', School of Oriental and African Studies, September 2004, *Culture and Cosmos*, vol. 10, no. 1 and 2, (Spring and Summer, Autumn and Winter 2006).

On line at <http://www.cultureandcosmos.org/issues/vol10.php>

India

Beinorius, Audrius, 'Transformations of the Social and Religious Status of Indian Astrologer at the Royal Court', in Nicholas Campion and Dorian Gieseler Greenbaum (eds), *Astrology in Time and Place: Cross-Cultural Currents in the History of Astrology* (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2016), pp. 53-66.

Online through the University library

Campion, Nicholas and Gale Dreyer, Ronnie, 'Indian Astrology', in David Kim (ed.), *Modern History of Asian Religions*, Leiden: Brill, 2015, pp 163-191.

Frischia, Mario, 'Astrology and its Ritual Applications: Propitiations of the Planet Saturn within the Sun Temple at Suryanaar Koyil (Tamil Nadu, India). A Case Study from Contemporary Tamil Shaivism', Nicholas Campion and Dorian Gieseler Greenbaum (eds), *Astrology in Time and Place: Cross-Cultural Currents in the History of Astrology* (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2016), pp. 67-91.

Online through the University library

Kemper, Steven, 'Time, Person, and Gender in Sinhalese Astrology', *American Ethnologist*, vol. 7, no. 4, (Nov. 1980), pp. 744-58.

Guenzi, Catarina. 'The Allotted Share. Managing Fortune in Astrological Counselling in Banaras', in G. Da Col et C. Humphrey (eds.), *Cosmologies of Fortune: Luck, Vitality and the Contingency of Daily Life*, Special Issue of *Social Analysis*, vol. 56, Issues no. 1&2, 2012. pp. 39-55.

<https://independent.academia.edu/CaterinaGuenzi>

Guenzi, Catarina, 'The Smell of Soil. Geomantic Practices among Banaras Astrologers', with S. Singh, in D. Berti and G. Tarabout (eds.), *Territory, Soil and Society in South Asia*, Delhi, Manohar, pp. 175-202, 2009.

This paper, unfortunately is not on line.

Kemper, Steven, 'Sinhalese Astrology, South Asian Caste Systems, and the Notion of Individuality', *Journal of South Asian Studies*, vol. 38, no. 3, (May 1979), pp. 477-97.

JSTOR

Kemper, Steven, 'Time, Person, and Gender in Sinhalese Astrology', *American Ethnologist*, vol. 7, no. 4, (Nov. 1980), pp. 744-58.

JSTOR

Yongjia, Liang. "Between Science and Religion: An Astrological Interpretation of the Asian Tsunami in India." *Asian Journal of Social Science*, vol. 36, no. 2, 2008, pp. 234–249.

JSTOR

The Arabic World

Arabic-speaking was home to both complex, urban cultures which inherited astronomical/astrological practices from Mesopotamia, India, Persia, Egypt, Greece and Rome. Certain traditions have survived to the modern world, and are dying only with the end of nomadic culture. Western scholars tend to use the term 'folk-astronomy in relation to such practices. Two papers are suggested.

Schmidl P.G. (2015) Islamic Folk Astronomy. In: Ruggles C. (eds) Handbook of Archaeoastronomy and Ethnoastronomy. Springer, New York, NY. https://doi-org.ezproxy.uwtsd.ac.uk/10.1007/978-1-4614-6141-8_199

Varisco D.M. (2015) Folk Astronomy and Calendars in Yemen. In: Ruggles C. (eds) Handbook of Archaeoastronomy and Ethnoastronomy. Springer, New York, NY. https://doi-org.ezproxy.uwtsd.ac.uk/10.1007/978-1-4614-6141-8_200

North America

There is little scholarship on the native/indigenous astronomies and astrologies of North America. One scholar who is taking this area forward is Annette Lee and her website is a good starting point: <https://www.nativeskywatchers.com/>

Most of the published work is by non-native scholars and focuses on archaeoastronomy, rather than wider practices. These two papers are a way into thinking about the area.

Cannon, Chris, and Gary Holton. "A Newly Documented Whole-Sky Circumpolar Constellation in Alaskan Gwich'in." *Arctic Anthropology*, vol. 51, no. 2, 2014, pp. 1–8.

JSTOR

MacDonald J. (2015) Inuit Astronomy. In: Ruggles C. (eds) *Handbook of Archaeoastronomy and Ethnoastronomy*. Springer, New York, NY. https://doi-org.ezproxy.uwtsd.ac.uk/10.1007/978-1-4614-6141-8_40

Online through the University library

Williamson R. (2015) Pueblo Ethnoastronomy. In: Ruggles C. (eds) *Handbook of Archaeoastronomy and Ethnoastronomy*. Springer, New York, NY. https://doi-org.ezproxy.uwtsd.ac.uk/10.1007/978-1-4614-6141-8_248

Central and South America

There is a huge amount of published material on central and south American astronomy/astrology, the vast majority on archaeoastronomy. The following three papers, all from Clive Ruggles *Handbook*, are thought-provoking.

Lima F.P. (2015) Astronomy in Brazilian Ethnohistory. In: Ruggles C. (eds) *Handbook of Archaeoastronomy and Ethnoastronomy*. Springer, New York, NY. https://doi-org.ezproxy.uwtsd.ac.uk/10.1007/978-1-4614-6141-8_87

Faulhaber P. (2015) Ticuna Astronomy, Mythology and Cosmovision. In: Ruggles C. (eds) *Handbook of Archaeoastronomy and Ethnoastronomy*. Springer, New York, NY. https://doi-org.ezproxy.uwtsd.ac.uk/10.1007/978-1-4614-6141-8_88

Mudrik A. (2015) Ethnoastronomy in the Multicultural Context of the Agricultural Colonies in Northern Santa Fe Province, Argentina. In: Ruggles C. (eds) *Handbook of Archaeoastronomy and Ethnoastronomy*. Springer, New York, NY. https://doi-org.ezproxy.uwtsd.ac.uk/10.1007/978-1-4614-6141-8_86

Sub Saharan Africa

There is one book on sub-Saharan astronomy/astrology, but is difficult to obtain:

Holbrook, Jarita, Rodney Medupe and Johnson Urama (eds.), *African Cultural Astronomy: Current Archaeoastronomy and Ethnoastronomy Research in Africa*, Amsterdam: Springer Verlag, Astrophysics and Space Science Proceedings, 2008

However, much of the material in this books is duplicated in Ruggles' *Handbook*. The following is a selection:

Holbrook J. (2015) Cultural Astronomy in Africa South of the Sahara. In: Ruggles C. (eds) *Handbook of Archaeoastronomy and Ethnoastronomy*. Springer, New York, NY. https://doi-org.ezproxy.uwtsd.ac.uk/10.1007/978-1-4614-6141-8_99

Medupe T.R. (2015) Indigenous Astronomy in Southern Africa. In: Ruggles C. (eds) *Handbook of Archaeoastronomy and Ethnoastronomy*. Springer, New York, NY. https://doi-org.ezproxy.uwtsd.ac.uk/10.1007/978-1-4614-6141-8_94

Roberts A.F. (2015) "Reading" Central African Skies - A Case Study from Southeastern DRC. In: Ruggles C. (eds) Handbook of Archaeoastronomy and Ethnoastronomy. Springer, New York, NY. https://doi-org.ezproxy.uwtsd.ac.uk/10.1007/978-1-4614-6141-8_95

Oxby C. (2015) Calendar Pluralism and the Cultural Heritage of Domination and Resistance (Tuareg and Other Saharans). In: Ruggles C. (eds) Handbook of Archaeoastronomy and Ethnoastronomy. Springer, New York, NY. https://doi-org.ezproxy.uwtsd.ac.uk/10.1007/978-1-4614-6141-8_103