

15.9 Conclusions

Collecting names of celestial bodies requires preparation and uncommon knowledge of the sky, and moving on to collect information on functional relationships and more complex ideas is just as difficult. However, the night sky has enchanted humans throughout time and has served as a source of inspiration as well as being the root of a major branch of science: astronomy. It has been definitively stated again and again that all human cultures have sky knowledge and a relationship to the sky, but as of this millennium, information has not been collected from all human cultures in order to prove or disprove this point.

Linguists can help gather astronomy information and bring new insight that cultural astronomers do not have access to: the linguistic roots of the names of celestial bodies and celestially related objects. Linguists can also show connections between ethnic groups through analysis of astronomy terms that would be missed by cultural astronomers. Finally, cultural astronomers are amenable to collaborations with linguists to mutually benefit both disciplines.

For further reading on cultural astronomy, see Holbrook and Baleisis (2008). On data collection see Fabian (2001), and for more case studies see Chamberlain, Carlson, and Young (2005).

Notes

- 1 <http://www.fourmilab.ch/cgi-bin/Yourhorizon>
- 2 The names of stars and constellations used here are those adopted by the International Astronomical Union (cf. Delporte 1930), recognizing that, of course, they are entrenched in the western scientific view of the sky.
- 3 <http://stellarium.sourceforge.net>
- 4 <http://eclipse.gsfc.nasa.gov>
- 5 <http://www.mreclipse.com>