15.3.5 Strong laser pointer

One piece of equipment that makes data collection much easier is a laser pointer, a high-powered one with a green beam that is visible for long distances. It makes pointing and identifying stars and asterism with informants very easy because both researcher and informant can see the target as opposed to trying to point with a finger or hand. The laser beam is visible from a great distance, and will attract a crowd that may contain future informants.

15.4 Collecting Simple Terms

Three ways to collect celestial terms are (1) working with informants with a list of terms to be translated, (2) going out at night with informants, and (3) analysing and interpreting terms found in recorded conversations. The problem with working with a list is that it can be like an examination and the answers may be 'school' terms, i.e. standard western terms, rather than local terms. The researcher has to be careful to assess the common usage of each term, and whether informants have heard other people in their community use these terms. The third approach is similar to participant observation in that conversations could be about anything and contain celestial terms about the calendar, time, and duration among other concepts. These three approaches are meant to be suggestive but not exhaustive in relation to the ways of collecting terms.

15.4.1 Daytime

Terms that are associated with the daytime sky should be collected along with associated myths and legends such as for the Sun, Moon, clouds, and rainbows. With weather and climate there is often a predictive aspect associated with terms, such as a ring around the Moon meaning rain is coming, rainbows associated with the end of rain, and cloud colour indicating rain. Cardinal directions (North, ↳ South, East, West), island directions (East, West, towards the ocean, towards the mountains or away from the ocean), and wind directions usually emerge from discussing weather patterns. All these contribute to gaining a broader understanding of people's relationship to both the daytime and nighttime sky.

15.4.2 Bright stars and asterisms

Bright stars are the easiest to identify, and can be collected first. Asterisms are groups of stars that are not official western constellations. For example, the Big Dipper is an asterism of seven bright stars within the constellation Ursa Major. Asterisms tend to represent animals, fish, plants in the local environment, and important historical figures. Asking which stars belong together can begin the dialogue on local asterisms.