

around the world. For example, the Chagga of Tanzania have an elaborate system of predicting personality traits based on both the day of the month and the hour of the day in which one is born (Dundas 1926). In the Chagga case, they have a lunar calendar, thus the day of the month is tied to observing the phase of the Moon. Then the hour of the day is marked by the progression of the Sun across the sky as well as routine activities that take place around the same time everyday. In contrast, astrology includes these and adds the position of the planets and the position of the sun and their astrological relationships to each other. In some cases, numerology or the magical properties of numbers may also be evoked. Here the numbers that make up the birth date are combined in some manner to come up with a representative number that can then be used to predict personality, life choices, romance, health, etc.

In Islamic countries, there appears to be a link between astrology and diagnosing illnesses and prescribing medicine that is not common in other present-day astrological traditions, though during the Middle Ages there was such a link among European astrologers with the Zodiac constellations ruling various parts of the body (see Curth 2005 and references therein).

Because of the complexity of observations, the mathematical calculations, and the extensive ways these are said to influence humans, studying divination systems takes a huge time commitment and careful study. Sometimes becoming an apprentice requiring a commitment of several years may be the only way to have access to the divination information and to get permission to publish it.

European astrology in the form of horoscopes has become a standard feature in most daily newspapers, and may now be influencing local divination systems. How people negotiate these two sources of divine influence is of interest to cultural astronomy researchers as part of their study of the globalization of astronomy knowledge.

15.8 Religions

p. 367 The connection between the sky, celestial events, and religions has many levels of complexity. Religious calendars are a way to identify important days that correspond with full Moons, solstices, equinoxes, etc. Once these are identified, a researcher can try to make the connection explicit through interviews and archival ↵ research. Celestial themes that are found woven into religions include 'twelve' reflecting the classical twelve signs of the Zodiac, 'seven' reflecting the seven visible celestial bodies that move (Sun, Moon, Mercury, Venus, Mars, Jupiter, and Saturn), 'three' days of death with rebirth reflecting the time it takes the Sun to 'turn around' from reaching the solstice to obviously moving again on the horizon. Temples and houses of worship may be aligned such that the Sun's rays enter on religiously significant days. However, the significance may not obviously correspond to solstices and equinoxes; instead it can be when the Sun passes directly overhead (if it is in the tropics), or if dedicated to a particular saint it might be aligned to the Sun's position on the horizon on that saint's day. How to find alignments is beyond the scope of this chapter; instead I recommend that on the day of a proposed alignment the researcher simply take a picture recording the event and thus proving the alignment.