

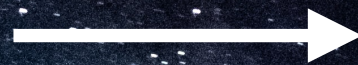
ASTRONIC

RELIGIOUS TRADITION & INDIAN CULTURE

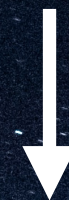


WHAT IS THE ASTRONIC TRADITION?

A religious tradition that stands alongside the Abrahamic, Dharmic and Taoic world religions but that instead follows an astronomical and space theme. Its members are astrolatry, astromancy and more recently Astronism.



The Astronic tradition has origins during the Stone Age of Europe but also gradually emerged in the Indian subcontinent where astronomical observations have always been central to cultural knowledge:

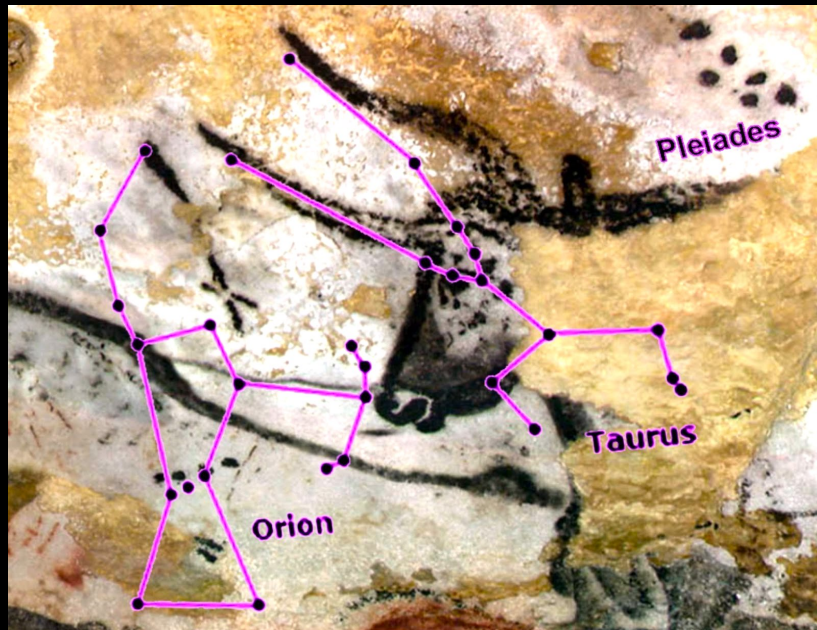


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I developed my theory for an Astronic tradition emerging in Europe, Siberia and the Indian subcontinent as part of my Master's Dissertation titled *Astronomy in the Origins of Religion*.

ORIGINS OF THE ASTRONOMIC TRADITION



Great Star Bull, France
c. 15,000 BCE



Orion Star Chart, Germany
c. 30,500 BCE



Palaeolithic Milky Way, Spain
c. 38,000 BCE

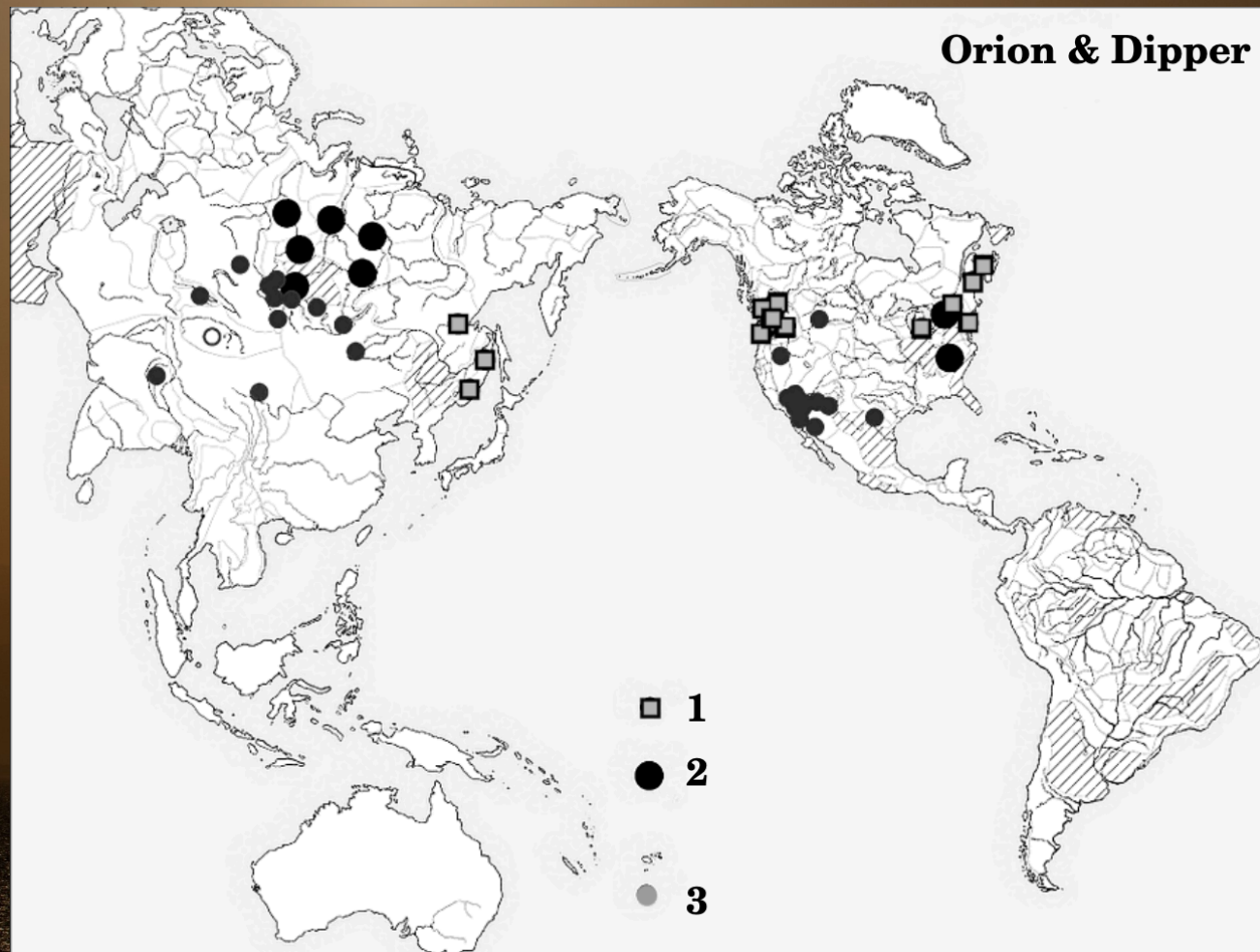
- Cave and rock art featuring astronomical phenomena.
- Crafting amulets and other talismans that feature astronomical phenomena.
- Lunar calendars and star charts.
- Engravings and cup marks edged into rock faces and stones depicting constellations.
- Constructed monuments that align with the movements of the stars and the Moon.

EXPLAINING THE WORLD

- The ancients used astronomical phenomena to explain the world around them and their lives. An example of this can be seen in the Indian subcontinent where many astronomical stories emerged.
- Some of the most common subjects were explanations of eclipses, Ursa Major and the Pleiades, the Pole Star, Orion as well as whole cosmogonies (stories pertaining to the creation of the universe).
- Mayank Vahia provides an excellent overview of the many astronomical myths of India in their work:

Vahia, M. *Astronomical Myths in India*. [Online]. Tata Institute of Fundamental Research. Available at: <https://www.tifr.res.in/~archaeo/papers/Astronomy%20and%20Sanskrit%20literature/Astronomical%20Myths%20in%20India.pdf> [Accessed 18 October 2022].

THE COSMIC HUNT



A map produced to signify the distribution of the Cosmic Hunt myth featuring Orion & The Big Dipper.

- The Cosmic Hunt is one of the oldest myths and is a family of myths. The story was told that hunters killed an animal and at death, the spirit of the animal raised to the sky and transformed into a constellation.
- The Cosmic Hunt myth had a version in Northern India which proves that tribespeople were retelling this story across Siberia and Central Asia and that a version of the story made its way south to the Indian subcontinent.

INDIAN ASTRONOMICISM

- Naksatras – a series of 27 stars that mark the passage of the Moon through the sky in a month; each is associated with a deity.
- Purana cosmology — a conception of the Earth as a flat circular disc with a mountain named Meru at its centre, surrounded by alternating rings of sea and land, forming seven continents and seven seas; wheels were conceived that carried celestial bodies, turning at the North Pole star by Brahma through the use of cords made by wind.
- Rāhu and Ketu — the personification of the Moon.
- Savitr — the solar deity of ancient Vedic religion, the precursor to Hinduism.
- Surya — the solar deity of modern Hinduism.

THE IMPACT OF ASTRONOMY

- Indian uses of astronomy for agriculture, navigation, timekeeping and storytelling connected communities together and gave them a common.
- Astronomy is therefore an explainer, a connector, a pastime, a useful tool, and a dispenser of valuable knowledge.
- Astronomical observations continue to fulfil these functions today albeit in new and more technologically advanced ways (i.e. with the James Webb Telescope).

BRANCHES OF THE ASTRONIC TRADITION

- Simple, unorganised systems of astromancy (astral divination) gradually developed into the vast, organised system of Hindu astrology.
- A kinds of astrolatry including star worship, moon worship and sun worship would have been widespread in prehistoric and ancient India just as they were in others parts of the world at the time including the Middle East, East Asia and Europe.

INDIA IN SPACE!

- The Indian Space Research Organisation is the modern manifestation of India's cultural astronomy in new and innovative scientific and technological ventures.
- Alongside China, Russia, the United States, European Union and the U.K., India is becoming an important leading in space exploration — and eventually colonisation!



CONCLUSION

- Since prehistoric times, astronomy has played a central role in shaping cultural and religious knowledge which has come to inform our individual and collective worldviews.
- The influence of astronomy on Indian culture and world culture cannot be understated.
- I will end by saying that no matter where we are or who we are on this planet Earth, we all look up to the same, mighty astronomical world which simply demonstrates how astronomy is the greatest unifier of all.

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