

SEALED BEFORE SEARCHING

The Durability Test

Pre-registration, predictions and scoring rules

APPARATUS

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Pre-Registration

The Durability Test

What Happens When the Sky Moves Out From Under a Tradition

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22 November 2026

Status of this document

Written 22 November 2026, **before any searching**. Nothing below may be edited after the first search. Corrections go in a dated block at the end.

This is the third sealed registration in the sequence. The first governed *The Leadered and the Scattered*; the second is this one.

Why this study

The two completed volumes argue that the Pleiades sisters do not look like an inherited narrative, and that what is widely shared is a **name** rather than a story, because a name is transmitted by ordinary language acquisition while a narrative needs a teller, an occasion and an authority.

That argument was made from the content of traditions. It has never been tested against the one physical process that attacks sky-traditions directly.

Precession of the equinoxes moves the sky out from under any calendar anchored to a stellar event. The pole shifts, and the date of a heliacal rising drifts against the solar year at roughly one day per seventy-one years, which is about fourteen days per millennium. A calendar anchored to the dawn rising of a star will be noticeably wrong within a few generations and catastrophically wrong within a few thousand years.

This gives us something no amount of comparative mythology can: **a clock that runs underneath every sky-tradition on Earth, at a known rate, destroying anchors whether anybody notices or not.**

So the question is not whether ancient peoples *knew* about precession. That is the question the popular literature asks and it is the less interesting one. The question is what happened to their traditions when precession **happened to them**.

And that is a direct test of the transmission claim this whole project began with. If a sky-narrative were genuinely carried for tens of thousands of years, precession would have broken its anchors many times over. So either the tradition was repeatedly repaired, or it was never anchored to the sky in the first place.

If it was never anchored, then what survived was never observational, and the first book's finding is confirmed from a completely independent direction.

The proposed typology

From the completed volumes, five outcomes have already been observed for Pleiades calendars. This study tests whether they are general, and what predicts which one occurs.

1. **Corrected.** The anchor is updated to match the current sky.
2. **Re-explained.** The anchor is kept and a new reason is supplied for it.
3. **Fossilised.** The anchor is kept, the reason is lost, the statement persists.
4. **Abandoned.** The tradition stops.
5. **Recovered.** The tradition is reconstructed from a record after interruption.

The predictions

Scored only on cases found after this document was written.

P1. Literacy fossilises; orality corrects

Predict: that **fossilisation is the commonest outcome in literate traditions and correction is the commonest in oral ones.**

Reasoning, stated before testing: a written list acquires authority independent of observation, and can be copied accurately by someone who has never looked at the sky. An oral calendar must be re-derived each year by a person actually watching the horizon, and that person will adjust without necessarily noticing they have.

This inverts the usual assumption, which is that writing preserves knowledge better. The prediction is that **writing preserves the statement and destroys the function.**

Falsified if: literate traditions show correction at comparable or higher rates than oral ones, or if oral traditions are found preserving stellar dates that are demonstrably millennia out of true.

This is the study's principal prediction.

P2. Seasonal anchors survive; stellar anchors fossilise

Predict: that traditions anchoring a date to a **terrestrial seasonal event** (first rain, river flood, a plant flowering, a bird arriving) survive precession intact, while traditions anchoring to a **stellar event** drift and then fossilise or break.

Reasoning: a seasonal anchor re-synchronises itself annually against the actual climate. A stellar anchor does not.

Falsified if: stellar-anchored traditions prove as durable as seasonally anchored ones, or if seasonal anchors show comparable drift.

P3. Drift magnitude predicts the response

Predict: that the response depends on whether the drift is perceptible within a human lifetime.

- Drift of less than roughly three days, which accumulates in under about two centuries: **silent correction**, with no record of a change having occurred.
- Drift of weeks, accumulating across many generations: **fossilisation or re-explanation**, because nobody alive remembers a correct version to correct toward.

Reasoning: you can only repair what somebody noticed.

Falsified if: responses do not sort by drift magnitude, or if large drifts are routinely corrected.

P4. No tradition tracked precession itself

Predict: that **no tradition in the sample will show evidence of having measured or modelled precession before Hipparchus**, as distinct from having been affected by it.

This prediction deliberately tests against the position that prompted this study. The proposal that generated it holds that precessional knowledge is encoded across many ancient civilisations, in the numbers 72, 432, 2160 and 25920. This study predicts that is not supported and that those numbers have other origins, most likely sexagesimal arithmetic.

Falsified if: a pre-Hipparchan tradition is found with a demonstrable precessional model, or with those numbers in a context that requires a precessional reading rather than permitting one.

If this prediction fails, it is a significant result in favour of the proposal, and it will be reported as such. The registration is written this way on purpose: a sealed file that can only confirm the author is worthless.

P5. The transmission test

Predict: that any tradition for which an age of more than ten thousand years is claimed will show **either** at least one documented precessional anchor-break in its history, **or** no stellar anchor at all.

Reasoning: these are the only two possibilities. A genuinely ancient anchored tradition must have broken and been repaired; a genuinely ancient unanchored tradition was never observational to begin with.

Predict further that the second case will be the common one, and specifically that the long-lived components will be **names and collective terms** rather than dates, counts or observational claims.

Falsified if: a tradition is found with a stellar anchor that has demonstrably held across more than ten thousand years without repair, which would be evidence of transmission fidelity far beyond anything this project has assumed.

The sample

Selected before searching. Each case is chosen because it offers a known or probable anchor-break, and several are chosen as controls against each other.

1. Krittika and the nakshatra list. The earliest Vedic lists begin with Krittika, reportedly on the grounds that it rose due east at the equinox. That ceased to be true in the second millennium BCE. The list order appears to have persisted. **Expected outcome: fossilisation.** This is the study's reference case and the one it already half-knows.

2. The tropical and sidereal zodiacs. The single best control in the sample, because it is **one problem with two documented solutions.** Western practice kept the sign names and re-anchored them to the equinox, fossilising the names while correcting the function. Indian practice kept the stars and let the calendar dates move, correcting the referent while fossilising the sky. Two civilisations, the same drift, opposite repairs, both fully documented.

3. Egyptian Sirius and the wandering year. A civil year of 365 days with no intercalation, against a heliacal rising that drifts through it. A known, long-recorded, long-tolerated mismatch.

4. The Greek parapegmata. The completed volumes already flagged an unresolved discrepancy: Euctemon gives 6 May and Ovid 13 May for the dawn rising of the Pleiades, while modern computation for Athens with a standard arc of visibility gives 21 May. Two weeks. That gap is exactly the quantity this study is about, and it was left open in the first volume.

5. Babylonian star-dates. MUL.APIN and related texts give dated stellar events. The question is whether later copies were corrected, re-dated, or transmitted unchanged.

6. The Chinese lunar lodges. Spica heads the earliest arrangement; the system was later reorganised. The question is whether the reorganisation tracks precession and whether it was understood as such.

7. Pleiades new years, as a set. Andean, Māori, Hawaiian, Bantu, Amazigh and Torres Strait. These share an object and differ in literacy, climate and anchor type, which makes them the natural test bed for P1 and P2 together.

8. Polynesian star paths. Navigation by rising and setting points, which precession moves. A high-stakes, orally transmitted, continuously used system: the strongest single test of P1.

9. Horizon calendars of the American Southwest. Sunrise positions against fixed landmarks. These should be **immune**, because they are solar and terrestrial, and they are included as a negative control: if these show drift, something is wrong with the method.

Scoring rules, fixed in advance

An anchor-break is counted only where (a) the tradition states a stellar event and a date or season, (b) that pairing can be shown to have been true at some epoch and false at a later one, and (c) the drift exceeds three days.

Correction is counted only where a changed statement is attested, not where a modern scholar infers that a correction must have occurred.

Fossilisation is counted only where the original statement persists in a tradition for which it is demonstrably no longer true, and where the tradition continues to use it.

A precessional model (P4) is counted only where a source gives a rate, a period, or an explicit statement that the stellar framework moves against the seasonal one. **Possession of the numbers 72, 432, 2160 or 25920 does not count**, because those numbers have ordinary sexagesimal origins and their appearance permits but does not require a precessional reading.

Oral and literate are scored by whether the tradition's authoritative form at the time of the break was a text or a practice. Traditions with both are scored separately for each.

Hazards, written down in advance

1. **The secondary literature on this topic is heavily contaminated** by the *Hamlet's Mill* tradition and its descendants, which read precessional knowledge into sources that do not require it. Any claim of ancient precessional knowledge will be traced to a primary source or graded contested.
2. **Retrocalculation is easy to do badly.** Heliacal rising dates depend on latitude, horizon altitude, atmospheric extinction and the assumed arc of visibility, and small changes in assumption move the answer by days. Where this study gives a date it will state the assumptions or decline to give one.
3. **Dating oral traditions is largely impossible**, which structurally limits P1. The honest version of P1 may only be testable where an oral tradition was recorded at two separated dates.
4. **I will be tempted to score ambiguous cases as fossilisation**, because fossilisation is the interesting outcome and the one that supports the project's existing findings. Ambiguous cases are graded open.
5. **Survivorship.** Traditions that were abandoned leave less evidence than traditions that fossilised, so outcome 4 will be systematically under-counted. This is stated now so it cannot be forgotten later.

What would make this study worth doing

If P1 holds, it says something uncomfortable and useful about the whole category of inherited knowledge: **that the traditions which wrote things down are the ones most likely to be preserving something that stopped being true**, and that the ones which kept looking are the ones that quietly stayed correct and left no record of ever having changed.

If P5 holds, the first book's central finding is confirmed from an entirely independent direction, by physics rather than by philology.

And if P4 fails, the position this study was written to doubt turns out to have had something in it, which would be the third time in this project that a proposal with wrong reasons pointed at a right object.

In Harmony, Small Things Grow Towards Unity.