

minor importance compared with the fact and the age of the observation itself. That an astronomical observation was taken by the Brahmans as early as the 12th century before Christ is proved beyond any doubt by the date to be elicited from the observation itself. If astronomical calculations of past events are of any worth, we must accept as settled the date of the position of the solstitial

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*station of the moon.* But the very formation of the word by means of the suffix *atra* indicates, that something particular must be attached to its meaning; compare *patatra* a wing, literally a means for flying, *vadhatra* a weapon, literally a means for striking, *yajatram* the keeping of a sacrificial fire, literally the means or place for sacrificing; *amatra* a drinking vessel, literally a place to which a thing goes which holds it. According to all analogy we can derive the word only from *naksh*, which is a purely Vedic root, and means to "arrive at." Thus *nakshatra* etymologically means, either the means by which one arrives, or the place where one arrives, a station. This expresses most adequately the idea attached by the Indians to the Nakshatras as mansions for the travelling moon. But even if we waive this derivation, and make it a compound of *nak* (instead of *nakṭá*, see Rigveda 7, 71, 1) and *satra*=*sattra* a session for the night, night quarters, we arrive at the same meaning. The latter derivation is, I think, even preferable to the former. The meanings of the word are to be classed as follows: 1) *station*, quarters where to pass the night. In this sense it is out of use; 2) especially the *stations on the heavens* where the travelling moon is supposed to put up, the twenty-eight constellations; 3) metonymically *stars* in general, *the starry sphere* (Rigveda 7, 86, 1: *nakshatram papra-thachcha bhûma*, he spread the starry sphere, and the earth). The latter use is pre-eminently poetical, as poets always can use *pars pro toto*. The *nakshatras* as stations of the moon were perfectly known to the Rishis, as every one can convince himself from the many passages in the Taittiriya Brâhmaṇam, and the Atharvaveda. That these books are throughout much later than the songs of the Rigveda is just what I have strong reasons to doubt. The arrangement of the meanings of *nakshatra* as given here entirely coincides with all we know of the history of either the word *siu* in Chinese, or *manzil*, *mazzuloth* in the Semitic languages. The Chinese, especially poets, used the word *siu* in the sense of *star*, or *stars* in general, and so did the Rabbis in the Mishnah and the Talmud according to the testimony of Juda ben Karish (see Gesenii Thesaurus Linguae Hebrææ, et Chaldææ ii. page 869).