

In China α , β , and γ were **Ho Koo**, a River Drum.

In astrology Altair was a mischief-maker, and portended danger from reptiles.

Ptolemy, who designated the degrees of star brilliancy by Greek letters, applied β to this as being of the 2d magnitude, whence some think that it has increased in light since his day. It is now the standard 1st magnitude according to the Pogson, or "absolute," photometric scale generally adopted by workers in stellar photometry, and is largely used in determining lunar distances at sea; while Flamsteed made it the fundamental reference star in his observations on the sun and in the construction of his catalogue.

Its parallax,¹ $0''.214$, considered by Elkin as nearly or quite exact, indicates a distance of about $15\frac{1}{2}$ light years.

Its spectrum is of Pickering's class Xb of Secchi's first type, but peculiar, with very hazy solar lines between the broad hydrogen lines.

Altair has the large proper motion of $0''.65$ annually; and Gould thought it slightly variable.

It marks the junction of the right wing with the body, and rises at sunset about the 15th of June, culminating on the 1st of September.

Near it appeared, in A. D. 389, an object, whether a temporary star or a comet is not now known, said by Cuspinianus to have equaled Venus in brilliancy, which vanished after three weeks' visibility; and there is record of another, of sixty years previous, in this constellation.

5° to the eastward of Altair, according to Denning, lies the radiant point of the **Aquilids**, the meteor stream visible from the 7th of June to the 12th of August.

β , 3.9, pale orange.

Alshain is from Shahin, a portion of the Persian name for the constellation; but Al Achsasi termed it **Al Unuk al Ghurāb**, the Raven's Neck.

It is the southern of the two stars flanking Altair; yet, although it bears the second letter, is not as bright as γ or δ .

γ , 3, pale orange.

Tarazed, or **Tarazad**, from the same Persian title, lies north of Altair.

These three stars constitute the **Family of Aquila**, the line joining them being 5° in length.

¹ A parallax of $1''$ represents a distance from the earth of 3.26 light years; a light year, the astronomers' unit in measuring stellar distances,—light traveling 186,327 miles in a second of time,—being about 63,000 times the distance of the earth from the sun. But no star thus far investigated has so large a parallax; that of the nearest, α Centauri, being only $0''.75$.

Just north of γ is π , the only pretty and fairly easy double in the constellation. The components, of 6 and 6.8 magnitudes, 1".5 apart, are at a position angle of 120°.7.

δ , η , and θ , of 3d to 4th magnitudes, in Antinoüs, were **Al Mizān**, the Scale-beam, of early Arabia, from their similar direction and nearly equal distances apart.

ϵ , 4.3, and ζ , 3.3, green.

Each of these is known as **Deneb**, from **Al Dhanab al 'Oḡāb**, the Eagle's Tail, which they mark.

In China they were **Woo** and **Yuē**, names of old feudal states.

η , in Antinoüs, is a noteworthy short-period variable of the 2d type, discovered by Pigott in 1784, yellow in tint, and fluctuating in brilliancy from 3.5 to 4.7 in a period of about seven days and four hours, and thus a convenient and interesting object of observation for midsummer evenings.

Its spectrum is similar to that of our sun, and Lockyer and Belopolsky think it a spectroscopic binary.

θ was the Chinese **Tseen Foo**, the Heavenly Raft.

ι , 4.3, and λ , 3.6,

were **Al Thalimain**, the Two Ostriches, by some confusion with the not far distant stars of like designation in Sagittarius; but the Grynæus *Syntaxis* of 1538 gave λ , with some others unlettered, as belonging to the Dolphin.

ι , with δ , η , and κ , was **Yew Ke** in China, the Right Flag; ρ being **Tso Ke**, the Left Flag.

λ , with h , g , and some stars in Scutum, was **Tseen Peen**, the Heavenly Casque.

★

And this you note but little time aloft;
For opposite Bear-watcher doth it rise.
And whilst his course is high in air,
It quickly speeds beneath the western sea.

Robert Brown, Junior's, translation of the *Phainomena* of Aratos.

Ara, the Altar,

Altar in Germany, **Altare** in Italy, **Autel** and **Encensoir** in France.

It is located as Aratos described it —

'neath the glowing sting of that huge sign
The *Scorpion*, near the south, the *Altar* hangs;