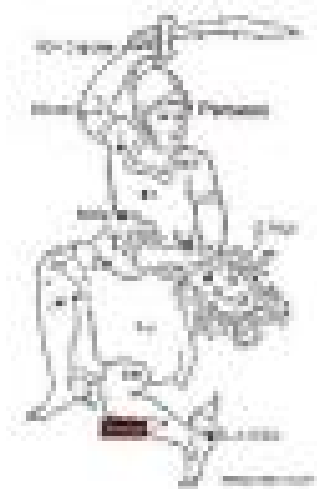


February's star of the month: Menkib

Rich Heffern | Feb. 2, 2011 | Eco Catholic



Fourth-magnitude star Menkib (Arabic for "shoulder") in the constellation Perseus is

one of the hottest stars visible to the unaided eye and one of the most massive. Located about 1,600 light years away, this blue-white giant's visible light is believed to be over 13,000 times as bright as our Sun. The star is also six times hotter with a temperature of 37,000 Kelvin. It is thought that this luminous giant is about 40 solar masses in size. Interstellar dust may dim its brightness, but Menkib itself illuminates the large California Nebula, a star forming region located in Perseus. The young star is only a few million years old, is unstable and may someday explode. It is also one of the rare "runaway" stars of our galaxy, rapidly accelerating with its dim companion away from its birthplace in Perseus.

Menkib and the constellation Perseus are visible overhead on February nights in North America.

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