

ESF 6824

# Animals in Estonian Folk Astronomy

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## ★ There is a lot of Animals in Classic Constellation names

The Classic System of Constellations was finished by Claudius Ptolemaeus (Ptolemy), who listed 48 constellations in his *Almagest* (2d cent. a.d.).

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The Mainz Globe is one of only three surviving celestial globes that have survived from the Classical world. It shows 48 Classical constellations and the first known representation of the entire Milky Way. The piece was produced as the crown of a gnomon on a sundial.

It is currently on display in the Römisch-Germanischen Museum, Mainz, Germany. We see Crab, Lion, Hydra, and there is no *Libra*, the Balance between *Virgo* the Maiden and *Scorpio*. There was 21 animals in *Almagest's* constellation names

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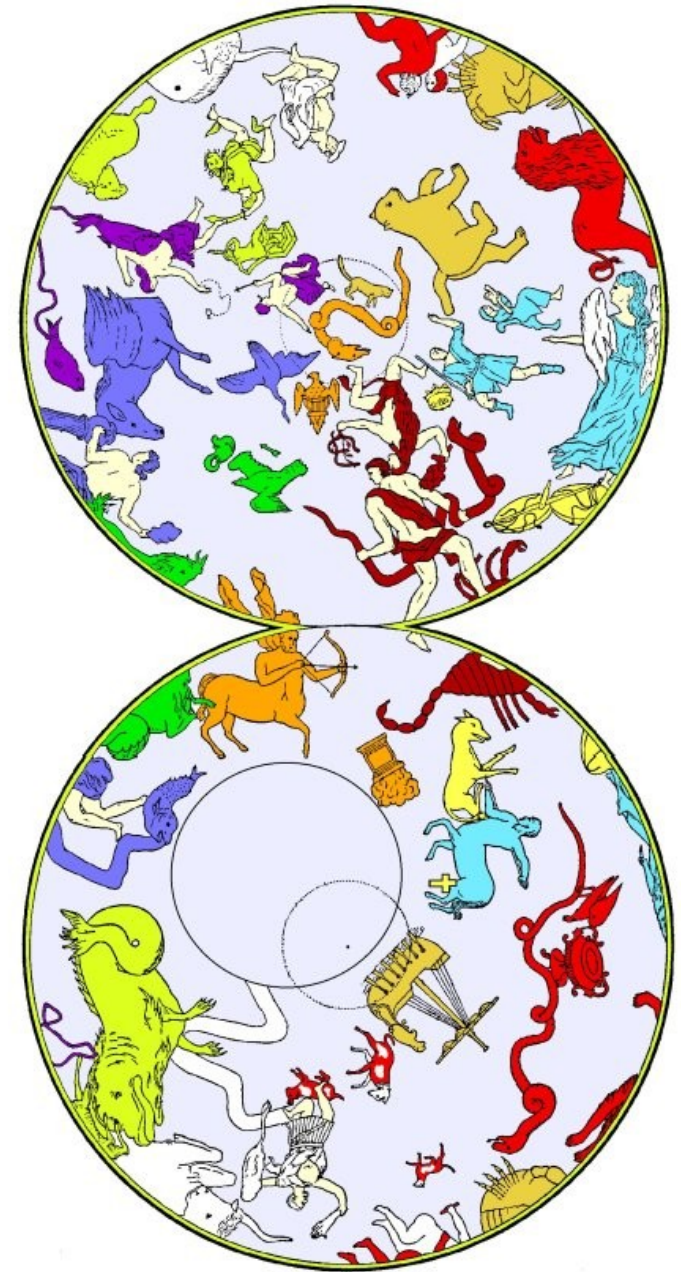
**The Mainz Globe c 150 - 220 AD**





## Classic Animals

By the Karl Otfried Müller (1797-1840), who studied hellenic myths and process creating constellations via the texts of ancient Greek epic poets, the zodiacal constellations are not connected with there creations, and are earlier. Some animals are part of created myths, like Whale, Orion's dogs (Sirius as the dog itself was probably earlier), Hydra. The Big and Lesser Bear with there big tails were borrowed from Phoenicians.







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## 1. The Wolf Beside the Ox



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**1. The Wolf Beside the Ox**

**2. The Northern Snake**





## The Big Dipper

This wellknown constellation has old name **Odamus**, similar to Finnish name Otava.

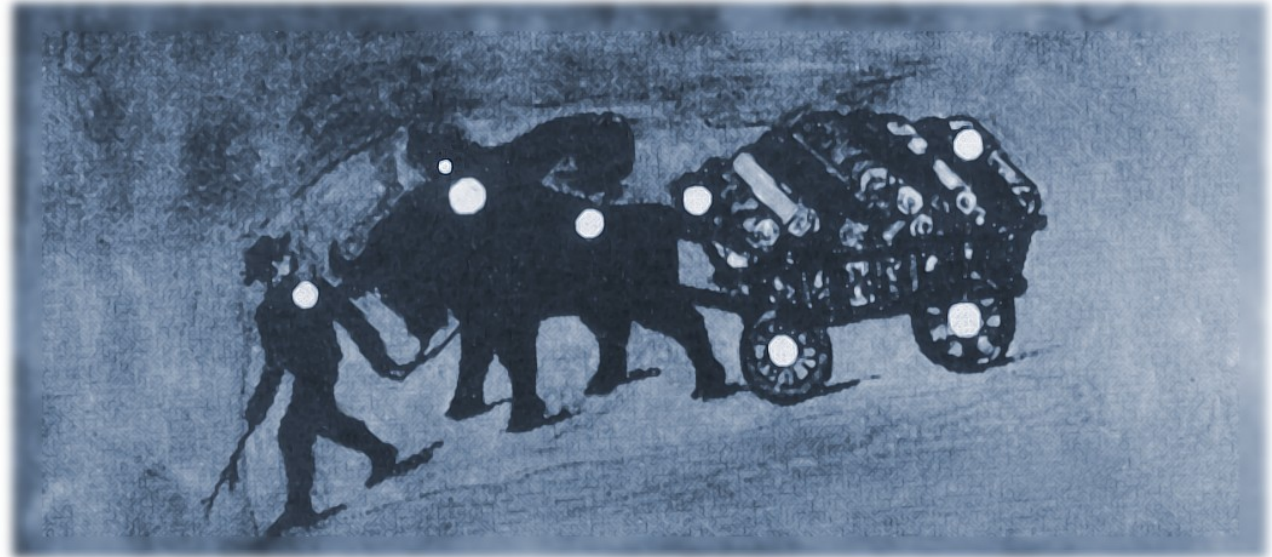
Meaning of this name is yet uncertain. Big Dipper is well-known as Great Wain nowadays.

It was important constellation to measure the time and to find the north direction.



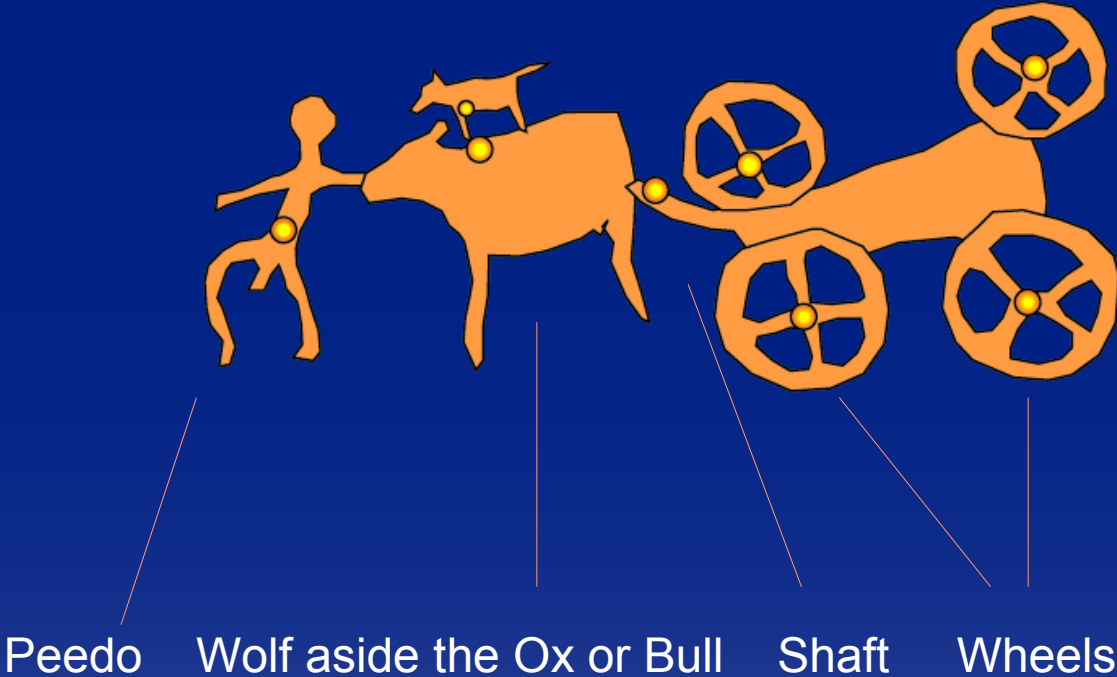
## The Wolf beside the Ox

One of the oldest Estonian Star name, written down by Salomo Heinrich Westring from the beginning of 18-th Century is the Wolf beside the Ox. It is a dimmer star Alcor near the bright Star Mizar.



Jakob Hurt published his book about Estonian Astronomy 1898 on the basis of his collected materials. And in this book is a little story about a man, who carried wood with his wain, a wolf attacked an ox. Grandfather (synonym of God in that national-romantic mood) harnessed wolf beside the ox, and so they are going, at first the man, then the ox and the wolf, who tries to pull the wain toward the forest. This story was published as the fairy-tale and considered to be the only Estonian star myth.

The Wolf beside th Ox

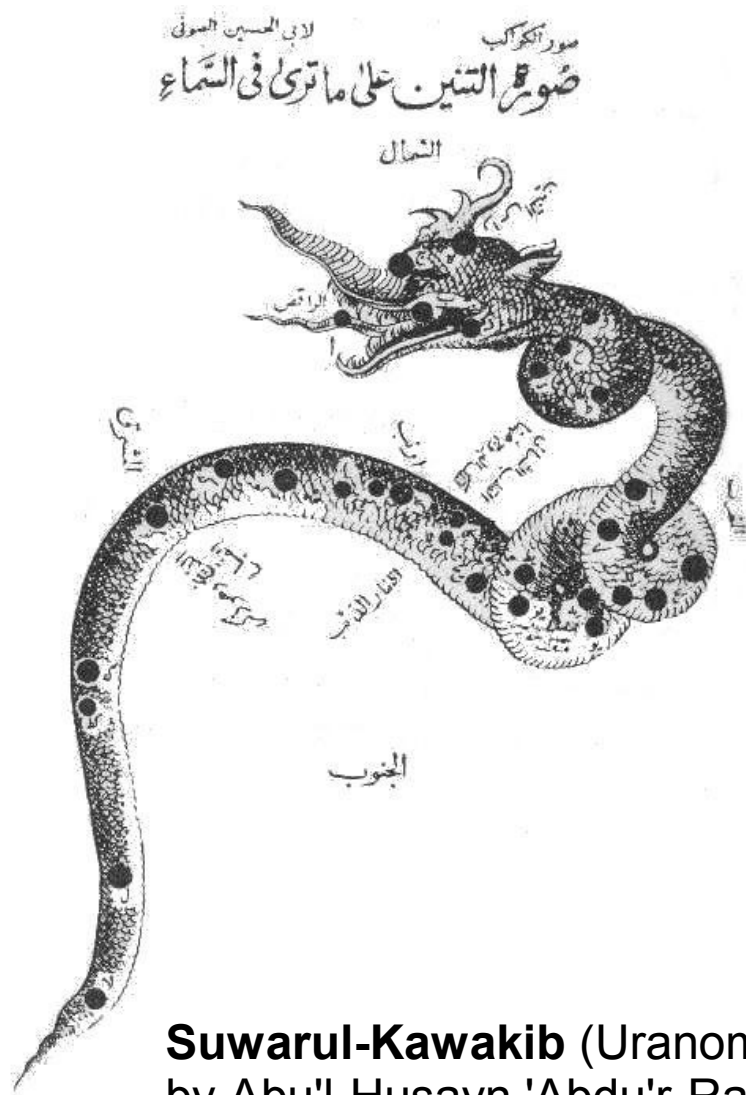


In Slovenia, from an article about slovenian star names by Milko Matičetov, was almost exactly the same story about the Big Dipper (Zemona, pri Ilirski Bistrici), only the man was St Martin.

*It's thought that the Ox represents the Catholics, while the wolf (or fox) represents the Protestants. In Christian iconography, the Ox is a metaphor for patience, strength, docility, and humility. In this context, the use of the ox could reflect the willingness of the Catholics to submit, to labor diligently for the good of others. On the other hand, the wolf (or fox), as seen by Catholics of the times, symbolizes Protestant cunning and guile or any number of other Protestant evils including lust and greed. [www.virtualvienna.net](http://www.virtualvienna.net)*

The combination of Wolf and Ox is probably known also in Bulgarian region (Zvezdoto nebe nad nas by Darina Mladenova).





**Suwarul-Kawakib** (Uranometry)  
by Abu'l-Husayn 'Abdu'r-Rahman  
as-Sufi, 10<sup>th</sup> century

## The Snake

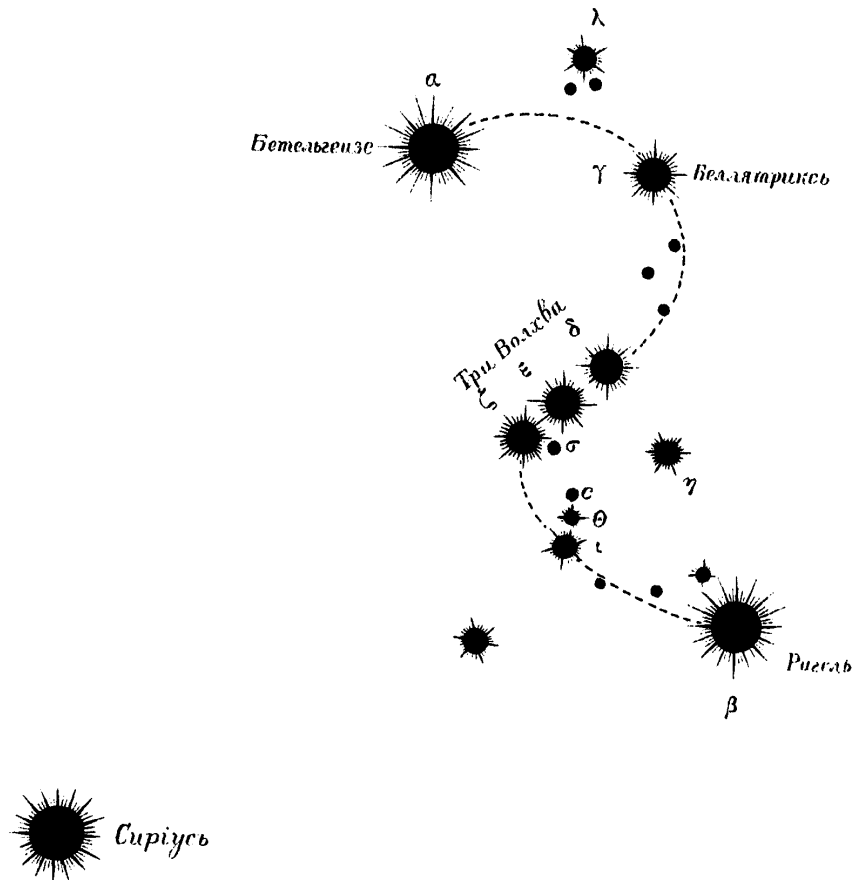
- ★ **The Sky** is a place to live for **Celestial people** (Sun, Moon, Star are ones of them) and **all their staff** is visible as constellations. So are there Shaftbow, Sieves, Flail and Rake.
- ★ *All the animals are visible in Sky, when God created the Earth, all animals he created on the Earth, he put them in Sky. All is visible in the Sky, horses and bulls, even the snakeworm is there.* ERAII 205

Constellation name **Northern Snake** is recorded from Kadrina parish and used for constellation *Draco*. Constellations from Kadrina parish are different and they are probably influences/modifications from the classic starshapes.

Constellations from Almagest are actually very robust, there is only few differences in shapes from 2<sup>nd</sup> to 19<sup>th</sup> century.



## Non Classic animals



One known name from Northern Estonia is *Siulik*, which means Snakelike. It must be seven stars in winter Sky. And it is not Pleiades. (Some dialect versions of Pleiades name sounds very similarly). P. E. Prüller found and published that this constellation may be Orion. In St Peterburg was published Herman Klein's book from 1898 with additional illustrations, one of them depicts Orion as serpent.

## Non Classic animals

**Wolf Hunt** – This wolf is not beside the ox, but two stars in South-West

**Bear Karu** – Sometimes it may be Great or Lesser Wain like in classic, but sometimes it may be in Sky together with Wains. (Informant? Collector? or independent constellation?)

**Rooster's Star Kikkatäht** – Brightest star in morning Sky before sunrise.

**Swedish Horse Rootsi Hobu** – word swedish remembers the old good swedish times, probably it is Lesser Wain. Name Swedish Bear for the Greater Wain is known also.

**Celestial Rooster & Celestial Goat Taeva Kukk ja Taeva Sikk** - fictions.

## The Sieve

Pleiades are anywhere known as Sieve, names have only dialect related variability. There are thoughts that word Söel has germanic (swedish) originality, also like astronoms Great and Lesser Wain. As these names are widespread, almost only names, they must be quite old.

Mentioned, that the shape of 7 (actually 6) stars is like the shape of Big Dipper:

*.. like a wain, one is the horse and a line, which it pulls .. And one eye is forehead, is it the wolf or what. ERA II 62, 615*



Differently, a lot of Finnish names known and some of them are connected with dogs like Puppies, Dogs nose... Another animal connected finnish name for Pleiades is Pigs nose.

## The Bird Way

In Estonia the common name for the Milky Way is the 'Bird Way' (Linnutee), but the name 'Milkpath' (Piimatee) has also been recorded in some places, versions are also 'Stork Path', 'Heavenly Way or Row', 'Winter Plant-Bed'. The Milky Way as a way of birds is a very widespread belief, and in Estonian archived material is most commonly noted as the road that migrant birds follow on their way to winter habitats and back.

*Heavenly Way – Bird Way that migrant birds travel in spring and autumn. The birds are led by a white bird, similar to a swan, with the head of a pretty maiden that all birds of prey fear...ERA II 273,*









Modern approaches

**PseudoMythology**

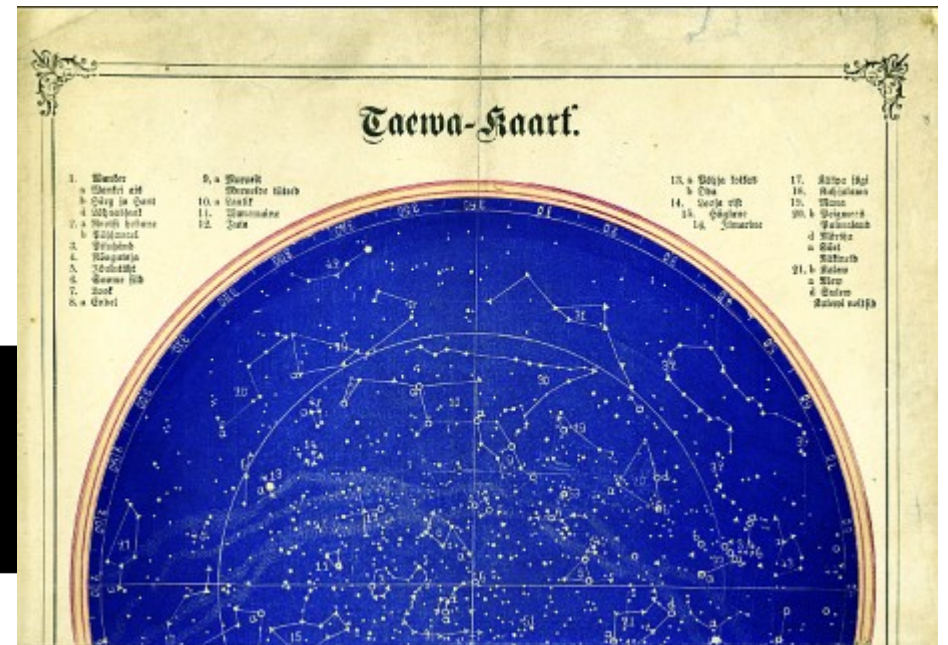




## Ado Grenzstein's celestial map from 1886

There have been attempts to create a sky map in Estonian language. In 1886, Ado Grenzstein published the first star map in the Estonian language, published as an extra to the Olevik newspaper and printed using the wood engraving technique.

This map (Grenzstein 1886) can be considered a true pseudo-mythological sky map. The names of 55 objects in the sky have been included on the map following the National-Romantic spirit of the 19th century. Some of these names have been in actual use (stars of the Big Dipper, Bow, Haystack, etc.), some partially overlapped popular names (Spear, Swedish Horse), or are translations of the traditional map (Herder). Most of it, however, is the creation of the author's fantasy, through which shines the attempt to try and create a fully Estonian-language sky map (without using direct translation of the names of traditional constellations) and a national sky pantheon that would be based on the literature containing artificial National-Romantic mythology.





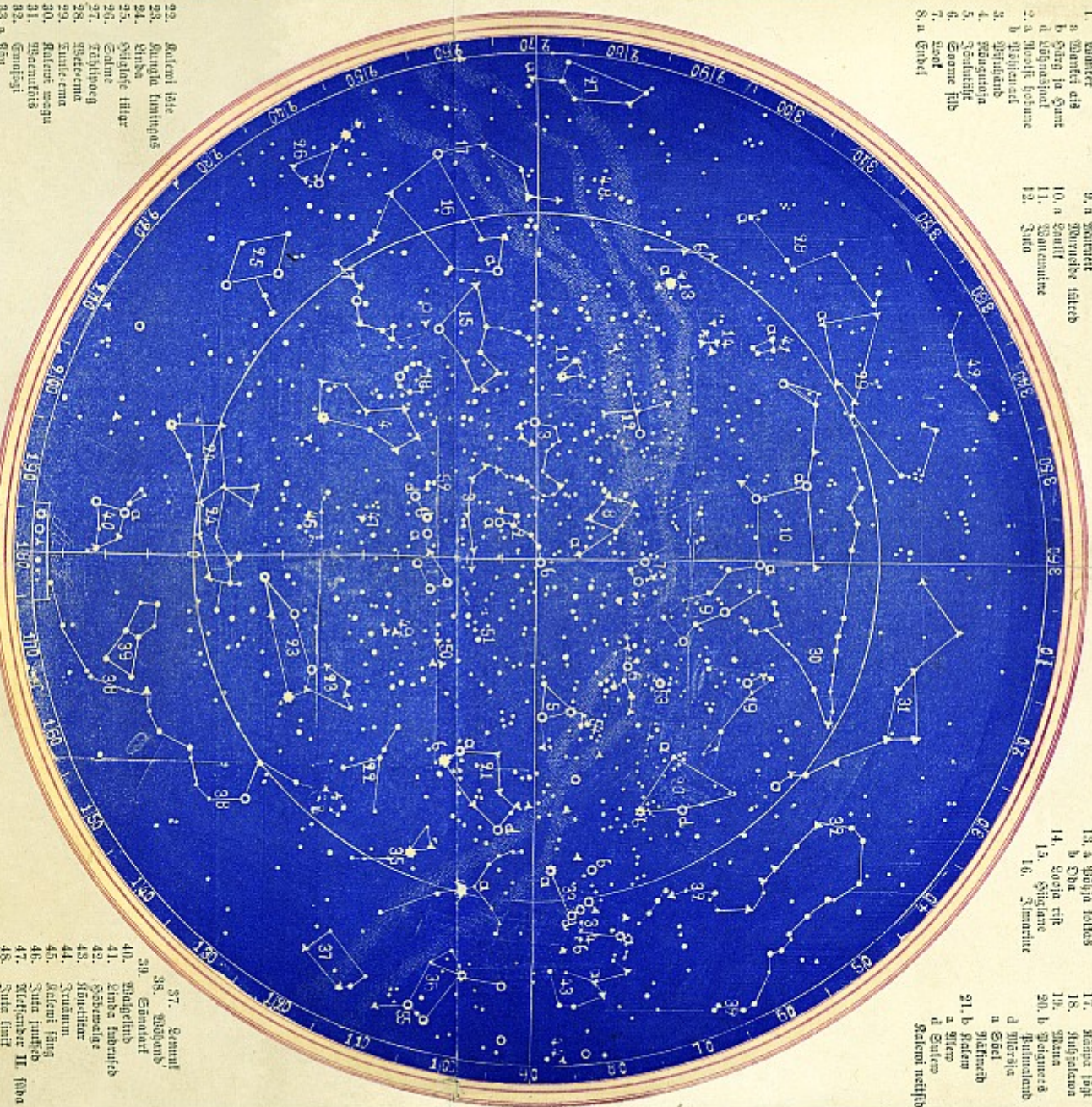
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Описание II. Звезда-Маарт 1886.  
Звезда-Маарт



## **Some names created by Ado Grenzstein**

Old lady living in the grass and her daughters

Kalev, Alev, Sulev (heroes, more known their sons) and their maidens

Mother of Wind, Mother of Water, Daughter of Giant

Vanemuine (Väinämöinen), Ilmarine – heroes from Finnish Kalevala

Ahti, Endel, Juta (from literature), Jutas hair and Jutas veil.

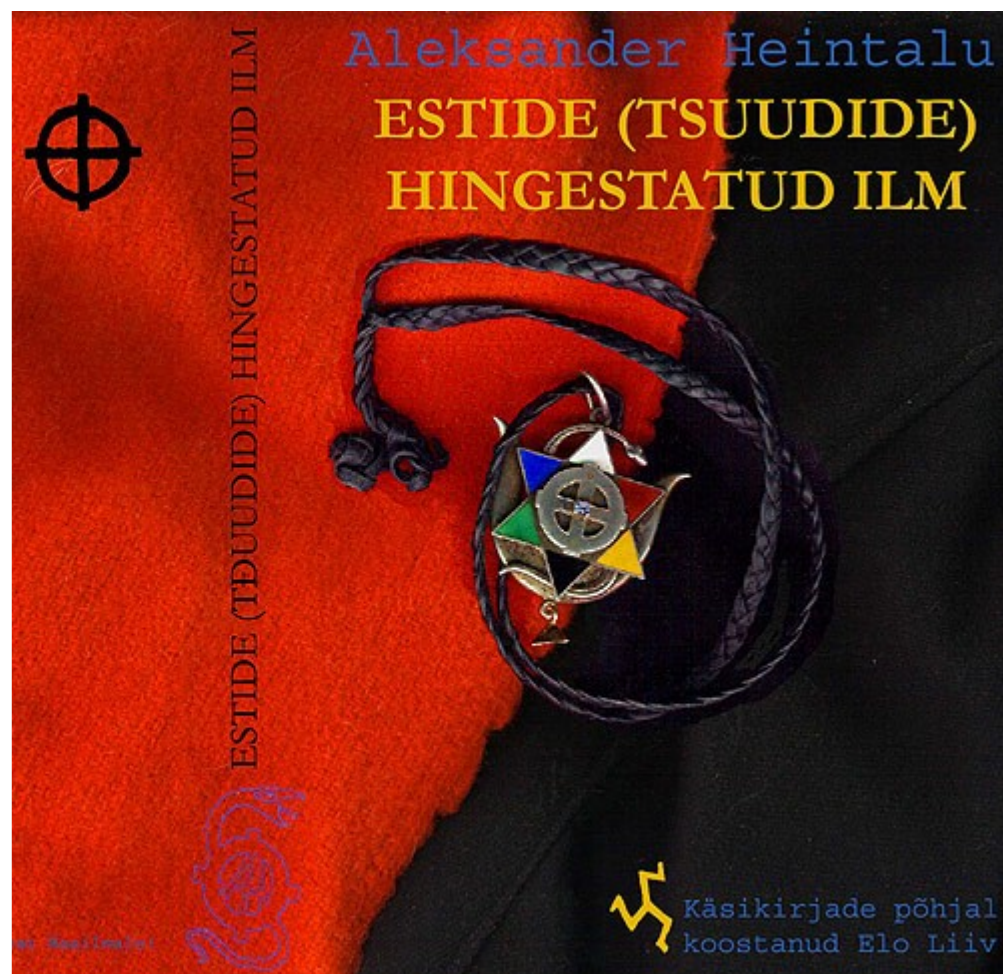
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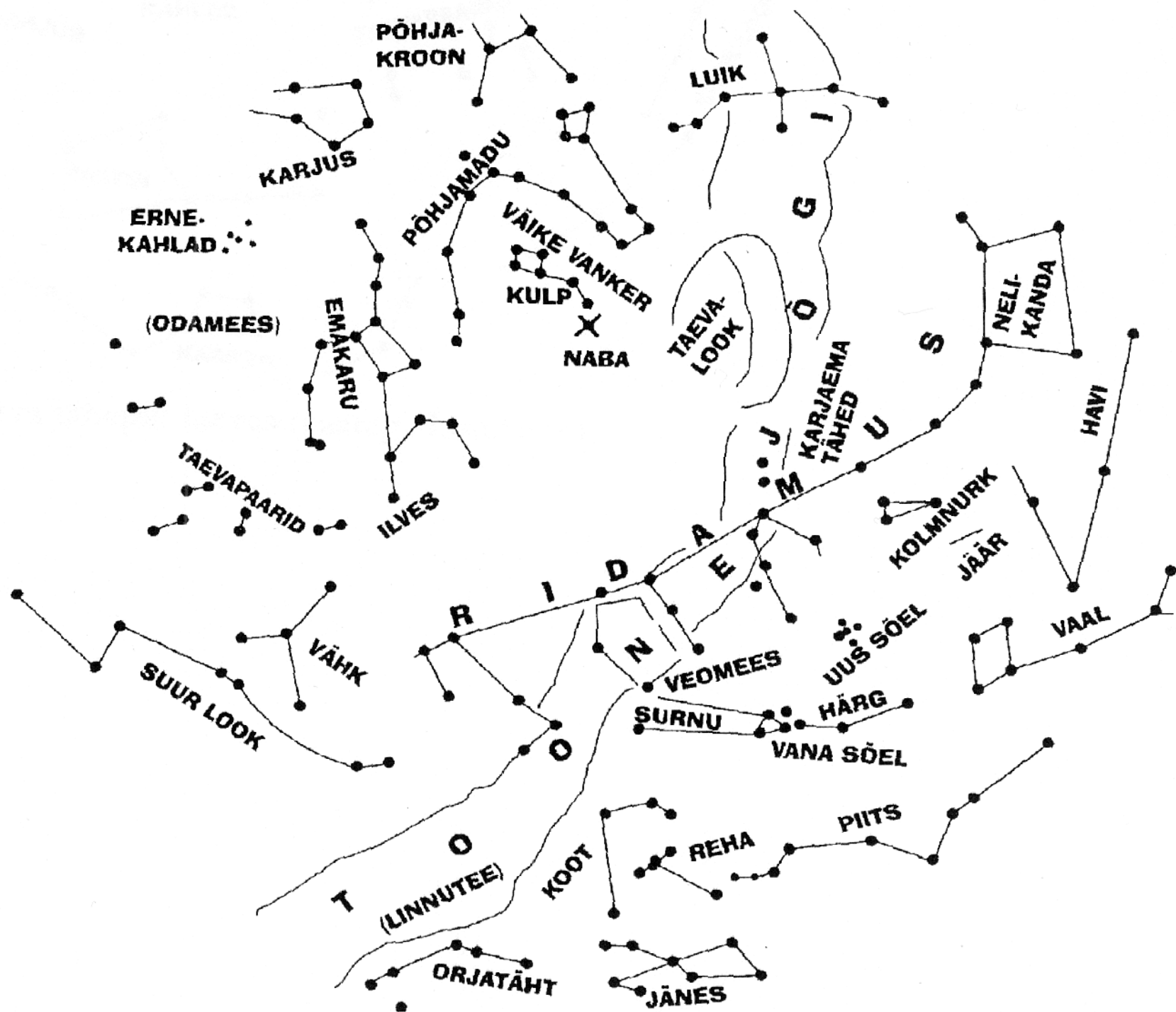
Names on this map are pure fantasy, far from original and folk astronomy, but two names connected with animals used – Swedish Horse (uncommon folk astronomy name, Lesser Wain) and White Bird (classical constellation the Crow, translation using nickname *Corvus*).

Unfortunately, this sky map did not become popular among the people either. At the beginning of the 20th century, however, the names of many folk-astronomical constellations defined by Jakob Hurt were printed on the sky maps published in books.

## The Sky of Ests (Chudes)

The representation of the sky of the Ests (Chudes) described by Aleksander Heintalu (Sass of Vigala) is a somewhat more complicated case as it has used a tumble of names from the Estonian sky map by Paul-Egon Prüller (using a selection of constellation names recorded in different regions) and constellations of official astronomy, some of which are presented with their own names and some have been renamed (Heintalu 2001). I have no doubt that this solution also finds followers in certain groups, but in the context of folk astronomy this is nothing more than another expression of contemporary folklore and artificial mythology.





As Grenshtein's map, Aleksander Heintalu's constellations map is a classical starmap, system of names is compilation of translated classic names, names from P.E. Prüller's common starmap of Estonian Folk Astronomy and his own fantasy.

Animal names are nearly identical to originals, only differs are:

1. Big Dipper, Ursa Major – Bears Mother or Female Bear
2. The Dragon, Draco – Northern Serpent
3. The Fishes, Pisces – Pike

Other animal names are unchanged.

