



ETF 6824



# Celestial Pantheons

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## ★ **The Sky is holy**

- ★ Objects in the Sky are holy. You can't to point them with finger. It will be punished
- ★ God is living in the Sky

These are most common opinions about Sky and celestial bodies. But how this holyness reflects in ethnoastronomy, especially in constellation names and where are the roots of these names. The classic star map has only some constellations with hidden Olympic roots (*Orion* – as god of war, *Cygnus* – as Zeus like Swan) and planets of course.

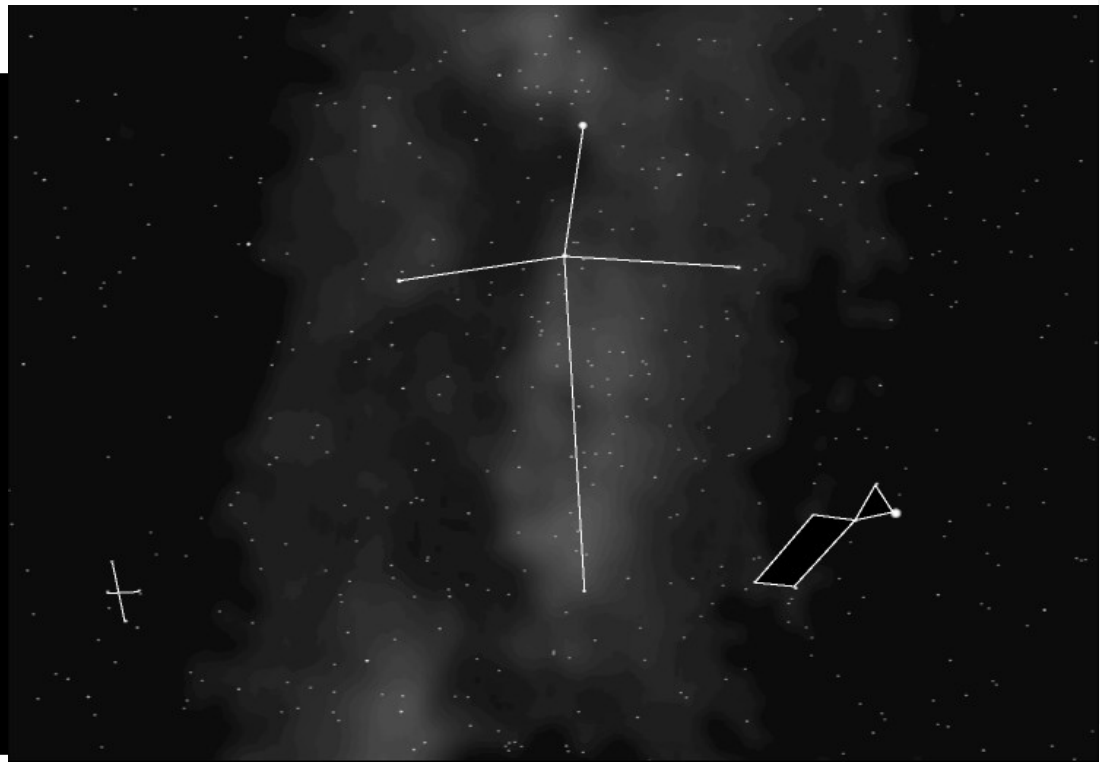
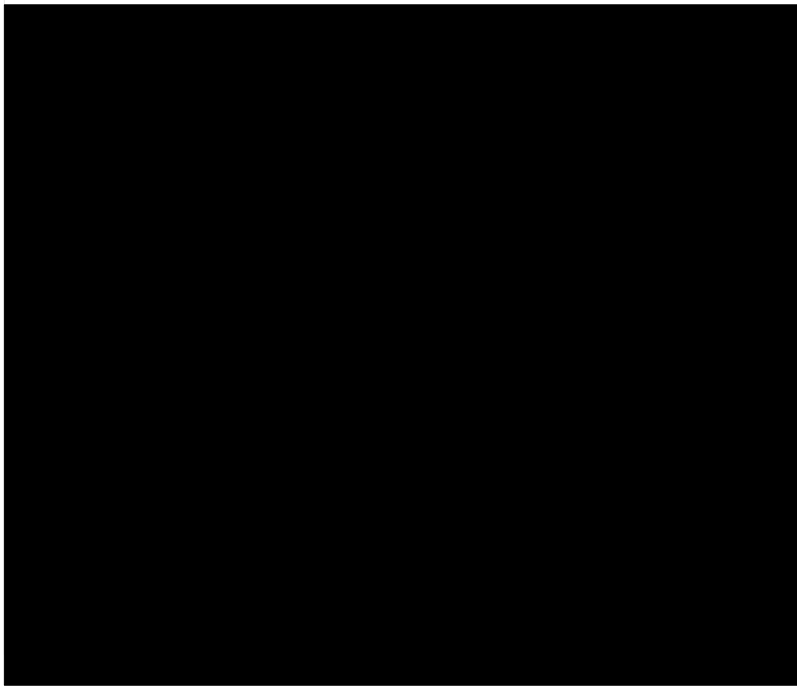
There is no god names in Estonian Sky. This is a livingplace for Celestial people (Sun, Moon, Star are ones of them) and all their staff is visible as constellations. So are there Shaftbow, Sieves, Flail and Rake.

This layer is probably most interesting and original part of Estonian folk astronomy collected into the Estonian Folklore Archives. But some of common folk constellation names have probably different roots and they may be (or they are) connected with catholic description of the Sky.

## Christian Constellations

The first Christian description of the sky important in ethnoastronomical content, originates in the 6th century and was provided by **Saint Gregory of Tours**.

His *De cursu stellarum* from 573, the objective of which was mainly to explain the chronology for monks, also described the Greater Cross (the Swan - *Cygnus*) and the Smaller Cross (the Dolphin - *Delphinus*) that are also widely known in current European folk astronomy.





## 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.



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Dum raptum super astra vides, Elifæ, Magistrum,  
 Aufers deciduam, præmia magna, togam.  
 Veste sub hac, plenus sub qua fuit igne propheta,  
 Non frigere Dei cor in amore potest.

*Der Mantel fällt dir zu, da Gott Euch beyde trennet  
 (dich, Jünger, und Prophet) durch feurige Gestalt.  
 O Mantel (theure Gab!) drinn der Prophet gebrennet  
 in dir wird wol kein Mensch an Gottes Liebe kalt.*

Estonia has been Lutheran country for the centuries. So we have very few stories connected with different saints.

But Big Dipper has two names, connectable with holy men.

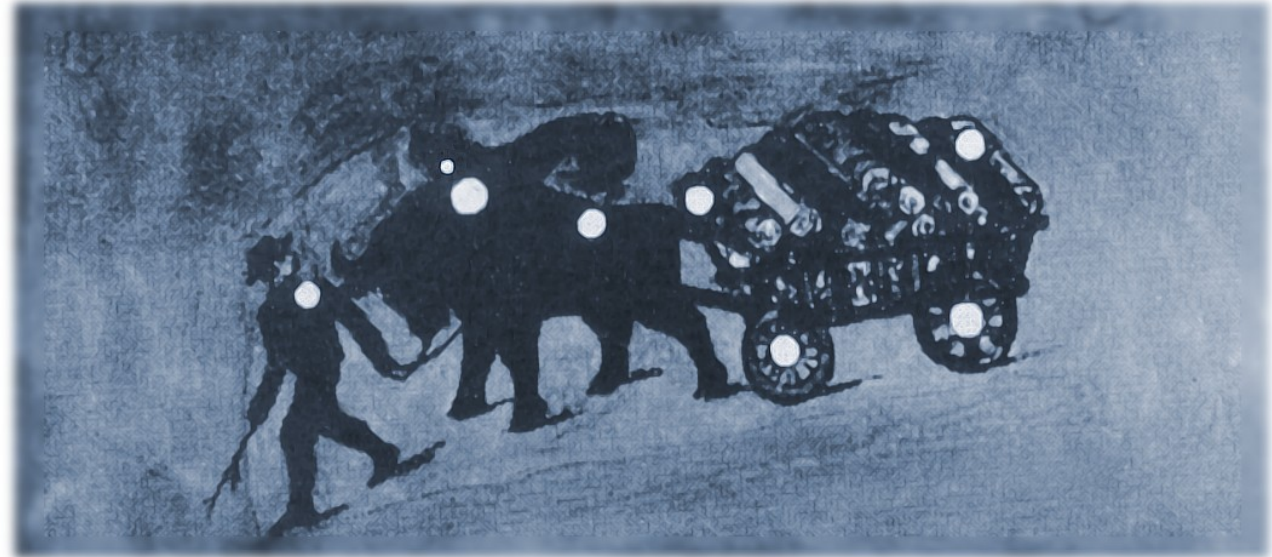
**Sandivanker** (The wain of sant). In modern Estonian language the word Sant means a poor, ill and probably physically or mentally defective man or women.

**Eelija vanker** (The chariot of Elijah). Elijah rode into Sky with a chariot which has burning wheels.

St Catherines Day mummers are singing, that they are coming by the Milky Way (Birds Way), there is opinion, that St Martins Day mummers are somehow connected with Great Wain.

## The Wolf beside th 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.

Two years ago we visited Slovenia first time and the finding for me was an article about slovenian star names by Milko Matičetov. And there was exactly same story about the Big Dipper (Zemona, pri Ilirski Bistrici), only the man was St Martin.

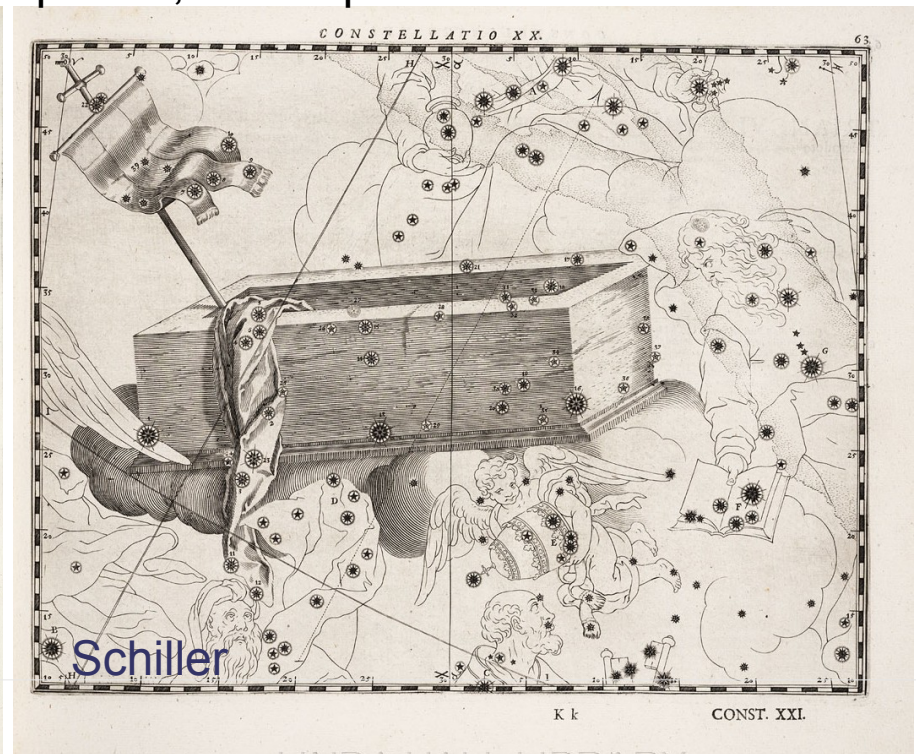
*It's thought that the Ox represents the Catholics, while the wolf (or fox) represents the Protestants. In Christian iconography, the Ox is a metaphor for patience, strength, docility, and humility. In this context, the use of the ox could reflect the willingness of the Catholics to submit, to labor 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)*

(Harnessing of wild animal, wolf or bear, is common for saints – St Herve, St Fillan, St Naum, St. James of Tarentaise).





The Christian approach to the sky has been continuously and constantly developed. Twelve tribes are mentioned, supposedly traceable to the twelve apostles of the Old Testament; this is followed by an attempt to replace the names of Zodiac constellations with the names of these apostles. There are also attempts to project other things originating in the Scriptures into the sky. The highlight of such attempts arrived in 1627 when Jesuit Julius Schiller published his *Coelum Stellarium Christianum* (Schiller 1627) in Augsburg. It was an attempt to replace all the current names derived from ancient mythology on the official star map and replace these with Christian names. The Zodiac was again composed of the twelve apostles, the Swan is depicted as the Cross of St. Helena and Orion has become Joseph the Carpenter, the stepfather of Jesus.



The continuity of all such attempts was usually broken and similarly, Julius Schiller did not draw from the works of his predecessors. The constellation of Big Dipper (Ursa Major) is a fine example of Schiller's map's distance from reality - it is no longer St. Martin known from hagiographic texts, who performed miracles with his peasant's cart, and neither is it prophet Elijah ascending to heaven in his chariot of fire; now it is the boat of St. Peter.

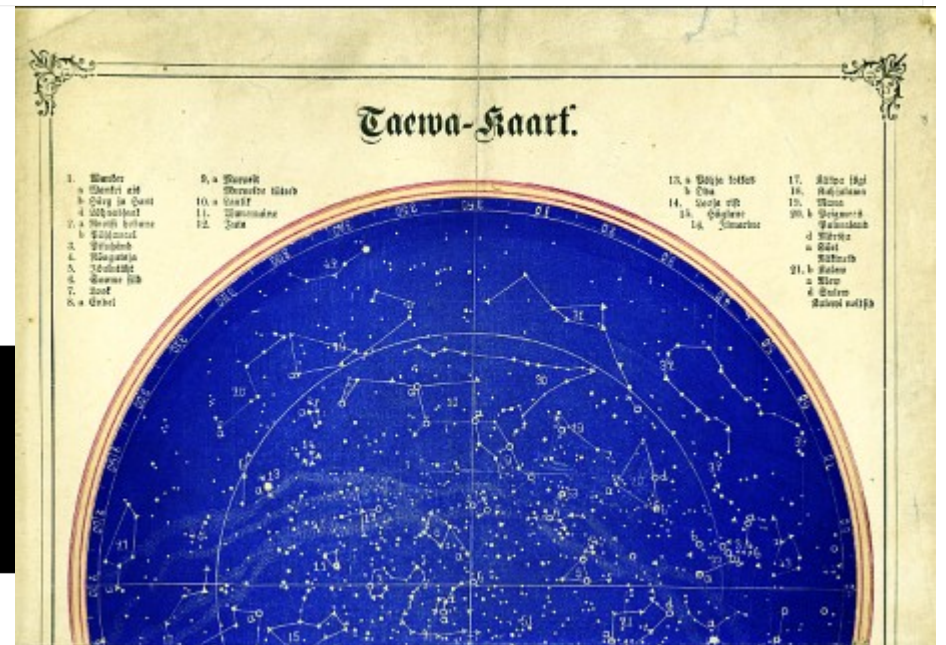
Even though Andreas Cellarius published Schiller's map in his star atlas *Atlas coelestis seu armonia macrocosmica* as late as in 1661, this attempt failed to take off regardless of being published in print several times and the relatively favourable ideological situation. Julius Schiller's map became an antique rarity. But regardless of this, similar attempts are still being undertaken by many religious movements and New Age followers, even though there is, of course, no common ground between their and Schiller's work.



## 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.





## **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

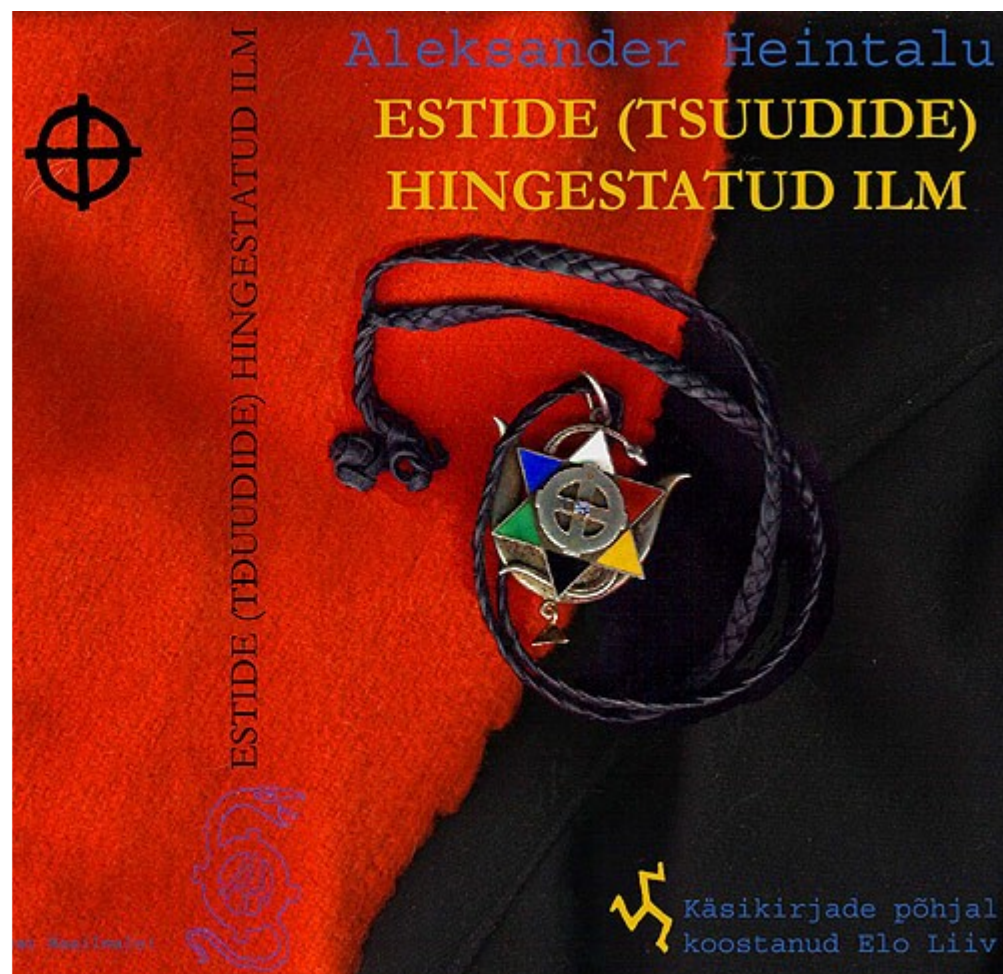
Ahti, Endel, Juta (from literature), Jutas hair and Jutas veil.

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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. Paul-Egon Prüller later published several articles on the basis of the materials collected by Hurt and others and the first national astronomical star map was created. However, it has to be noted that the sky map instilled in the collective mind as the Estonian map is actually fiction, in which images belonging in different regions and at various stages of constellation evolution have been placed onto one sheet. But since this map has been distributed in this form for decades, by now it can be said that this is the perception Estonian people have of the sky, or a truly national astronomical phenomenon.

## 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.





The first Christian description of the sky worth mentioning originates in the 6th century and was provided by Saint Gregory of Tours. His *De cursu stellarum* written in 573, the objective of which was mainly to explain the chronology for monks, also described the Northern Cross (the Swan - Cygnus) and the Southern Cross or the Crux (the Dolphin - Delphinus) that are also widely known in current European folk astronomy.



## Conclusions

There are some constellation names from prelutherian periode that were known Estonian area – Great and Smaller Gross, Big Dippers names.

Ado Grenzsteins try to create Estonian Celestial Pantheon failed. But his starnames were republished in Estonian Sky Atlas (2000).