

॥ तैत्तिरीय ब्राह्मणे नक्षत्र-सूक्तम् ॥

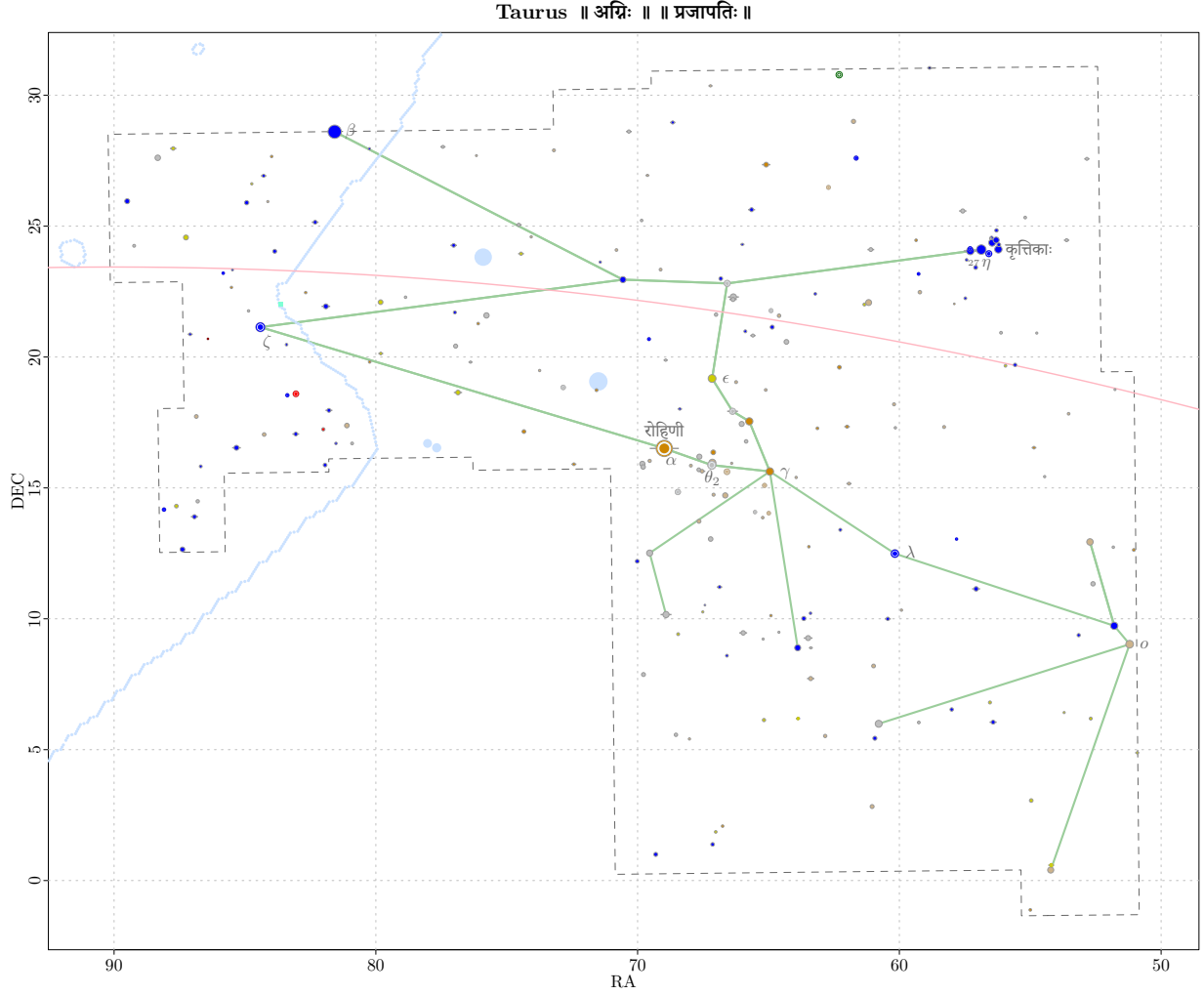
॥ ॐ ॥

अ॒ग्निर्नः पातु कृ॒त्तिकाः । नक्ष॑त्रं दे॒वमिन्द्रि॑यम् ।

इ॒दमा॑सां विचक्ष॑णम् । ह॒विरा॑सं जु॒होत॑न ।

यस्य॑ भा॒न्ति र॒श्मयो॑ यस्य॑ के॒तवः॑ । यस्ये॒मा वि॒श्वा भु॑वं॒नानि॑ सर्वा॑ ।

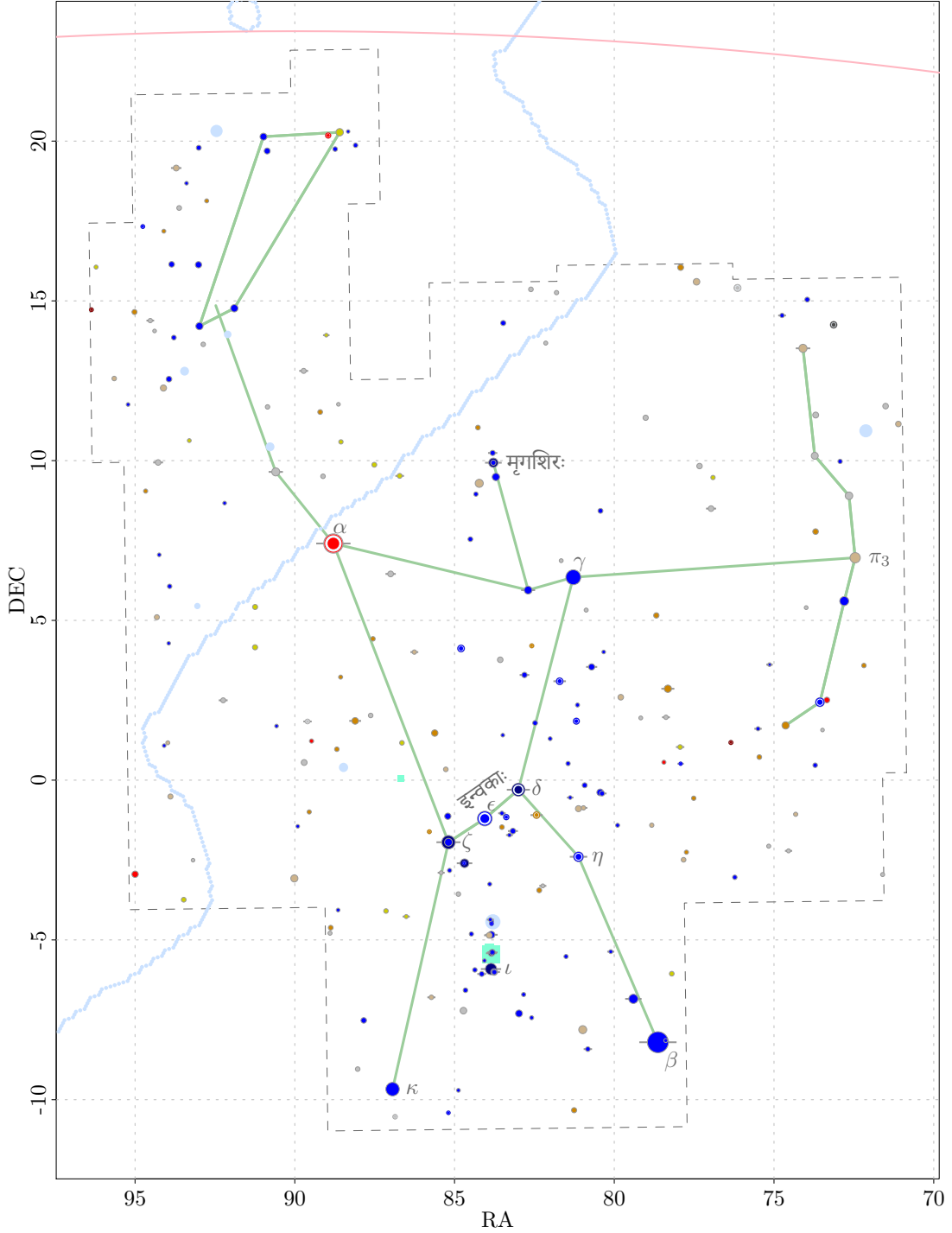
स कृ॒त्तिकाभि॑र॒भिसं॑वसा॒नः । अ॒ग्निर्नो दे॒वः सु॑वि॒ते द॑धातु ॥ १॥



प्र॒जाप॑ते रोहि॒णी वे॑तु॒ पत्नी॑ । वि॒श्वरू॑पा बृ॒हती चि॒त्रभा॑नुः ।
सा नो॑ य॒ज्ञस्य॑ सु॒वि॒ते द॑धातु । यथा॑ जी॒वेम॑ श॒रदः॑सर्वी॒राः ।
रोहि॒णी दे॒व्युद॑गात्पु॒रस्ता॑त् । वि॒श्वा रू॒पणि॑ प्रति॒मोद॑माना ।
प्र॒जाप॑तिः ह॒विषा॑ व॒र्धय॑न्ती । प्रि॒या दे॒वाना॑मु॒पया॑तु य॒ज्ञम् ॥ २॥

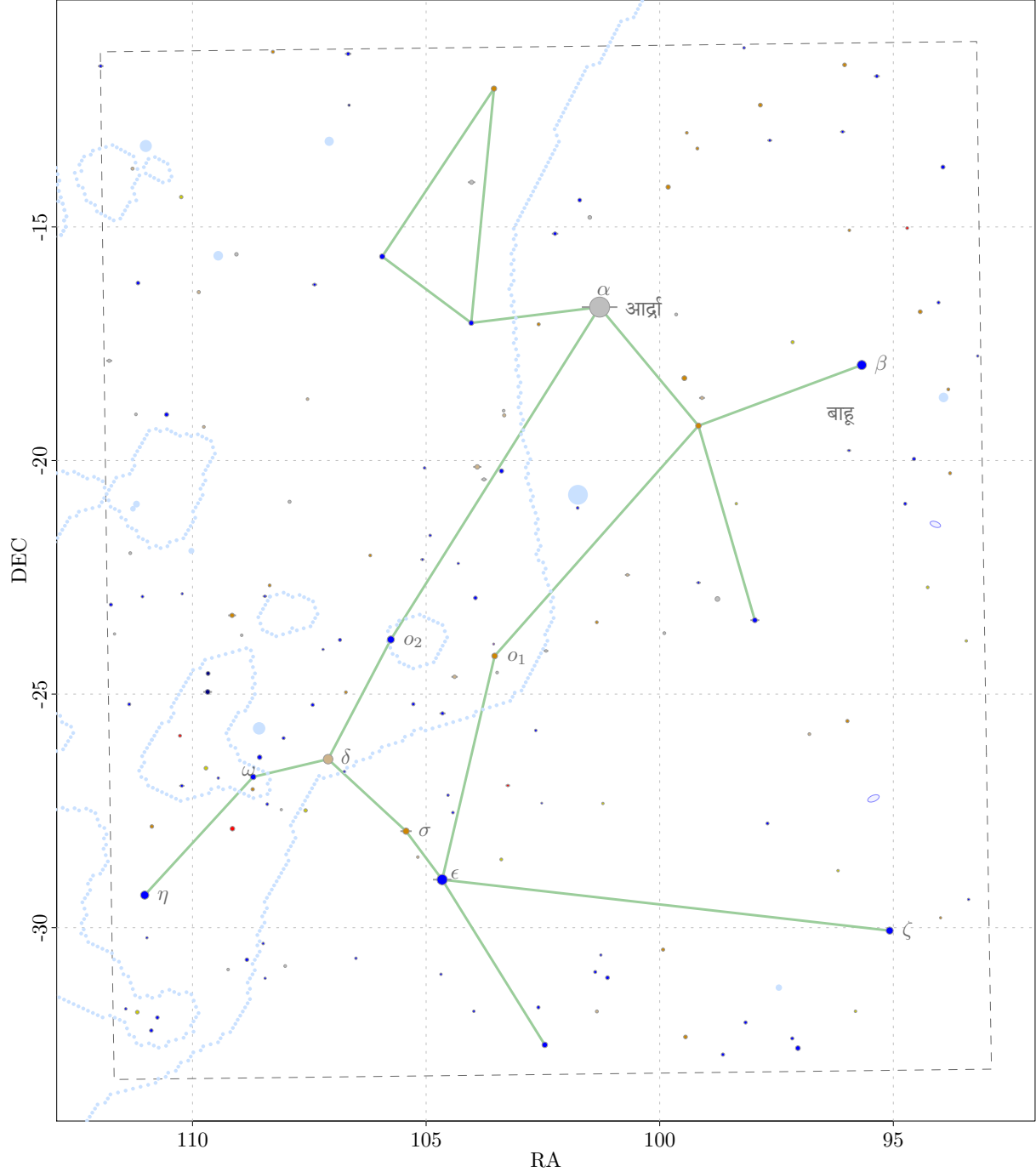
सोमो राजा मृगशीर्षेण आगन् । शिवं नक्षत्रं प्रियमस्य धाम ।
 आप्यायमानो बहुधा जनैषु । रेतः प्रजां यजमाने दधातु ।
 यत्ते नक्षत्रं मृगशीर्षमस्ति । प्रियः राजन् प्रियतमं प्रियाणाम् ।
 तस्मै ते सोम हविषा विधेम । शं न एधि द्विपदे शं चतुष्पदे ॥३॥

Orion ॥ सोमः ॥

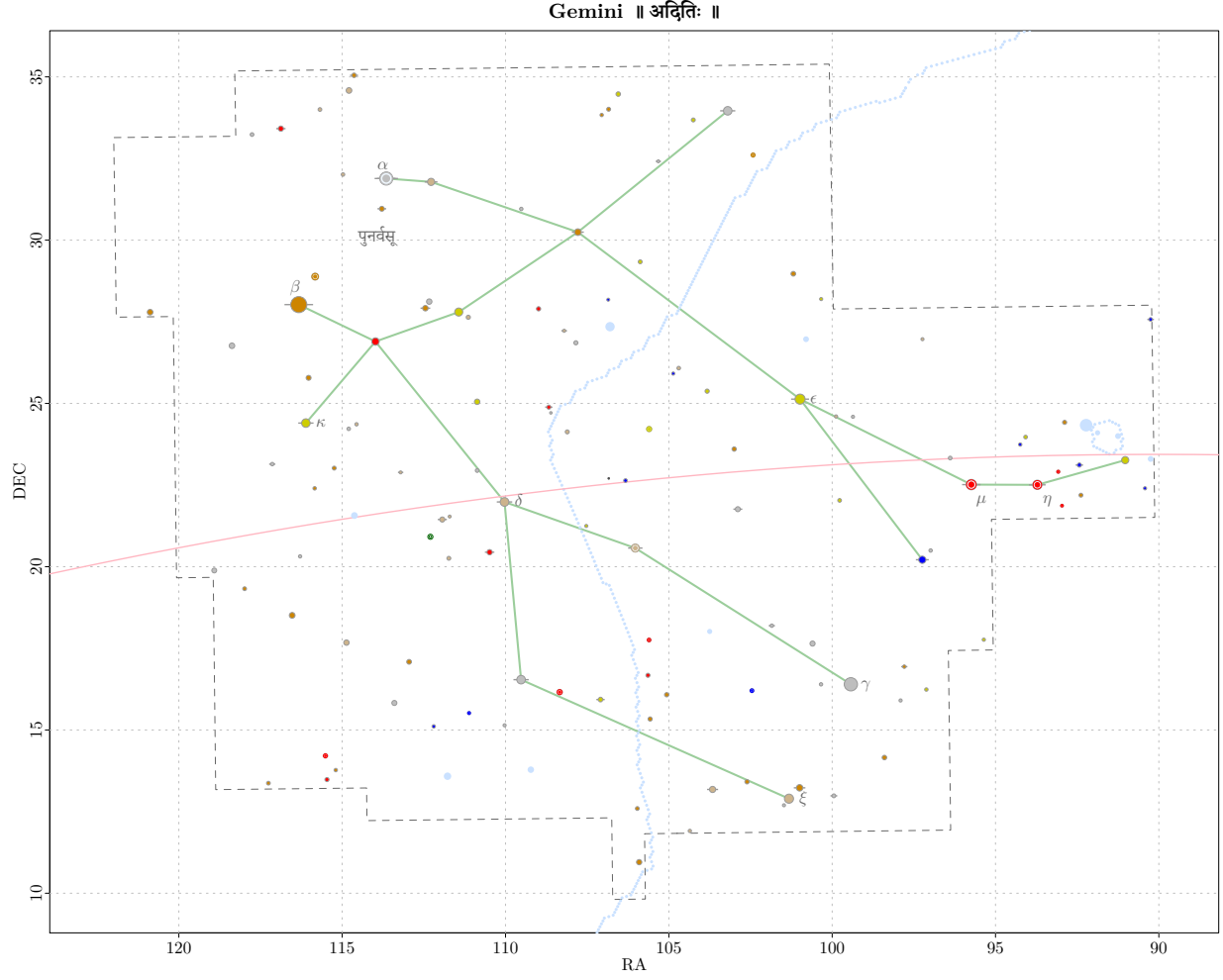


आर्द्रयां रुद्रः प्रथमान एति । श्रेष्ठो देवानां पतिरघ्नियानाम् ।
 नक्षत्रमस्य हविषा विधेम । मा नः प्रजाः रीरिषन्मोत वीरान् ।
 हेती रुद्रस्य परिणो वृणक्तु । आर्द्रा नक्षत्रं जुषताः हविर्नः ।
 प्रमुञ्चमानौ दुरितानि विश्वा । अपाघशः सन्नुदतामरातिम् ॥४॥

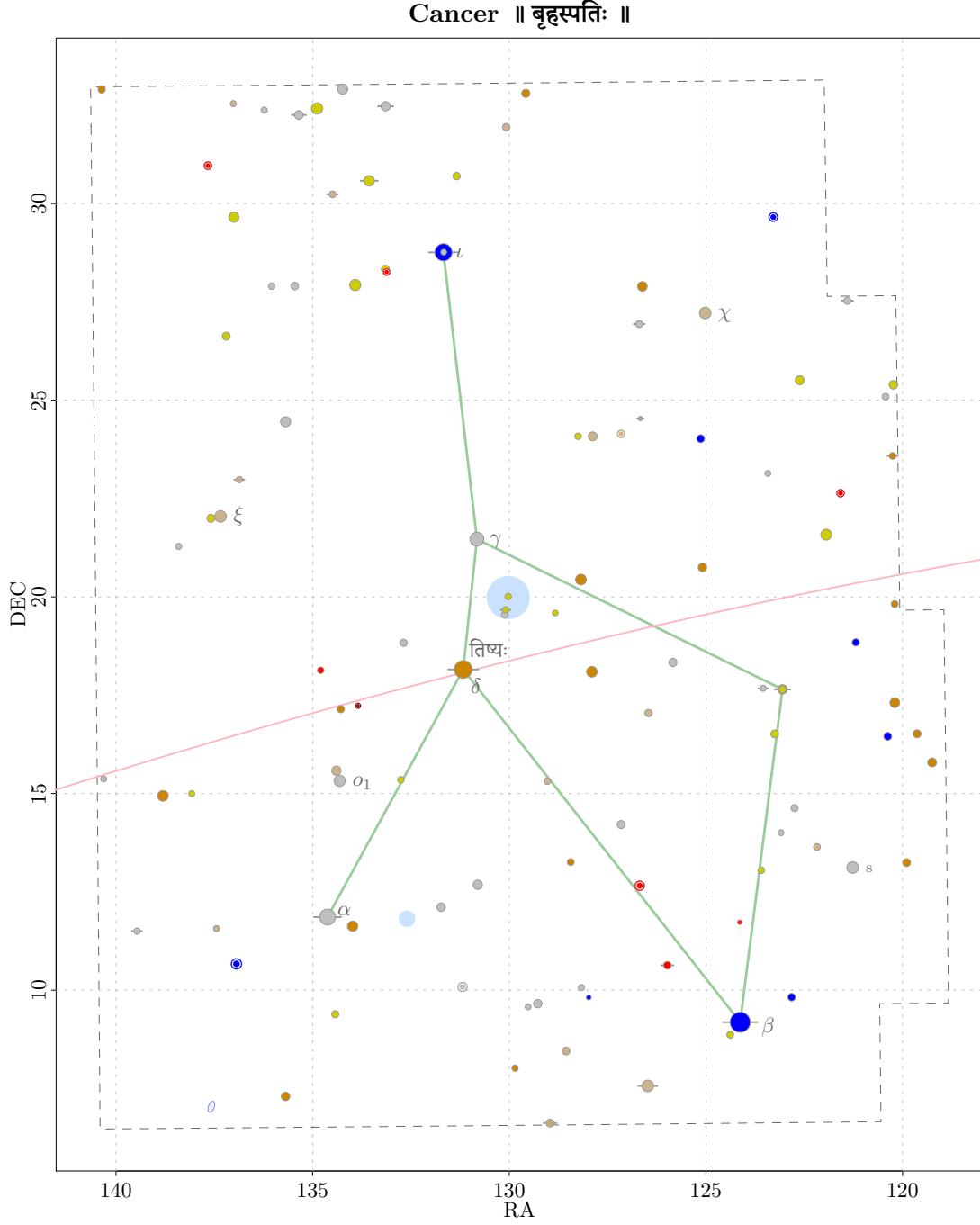
Canis Major ॥ रुद्रः ॥



पुन॑र्नो दे॒व्यदि॑तिस्पृ॒णोतु । पुन॑र्वसू नः पुन॑रेतां य॒ज्ञम् ।
 पुन॑र्नो दे॒वा अ॒भिय॑न्तु स॒र्वे । पुनः पुन॑र्वो ह॒विषा॑ य॒जामः ।
 ए॒वा न दे॒व्यदि॑तिर॒नुर्वा । वि॒श्वस्य॑ भ॒र्त्री जग॑तः प्र॒तिष्ठा ।
 पुन॑र्वसू ह॒विषा॑ व॒र्धय॑न्ती । प्रि॒यं दे॒वाना॑म॒प्येतु॑ पा॒थः ॥५॥

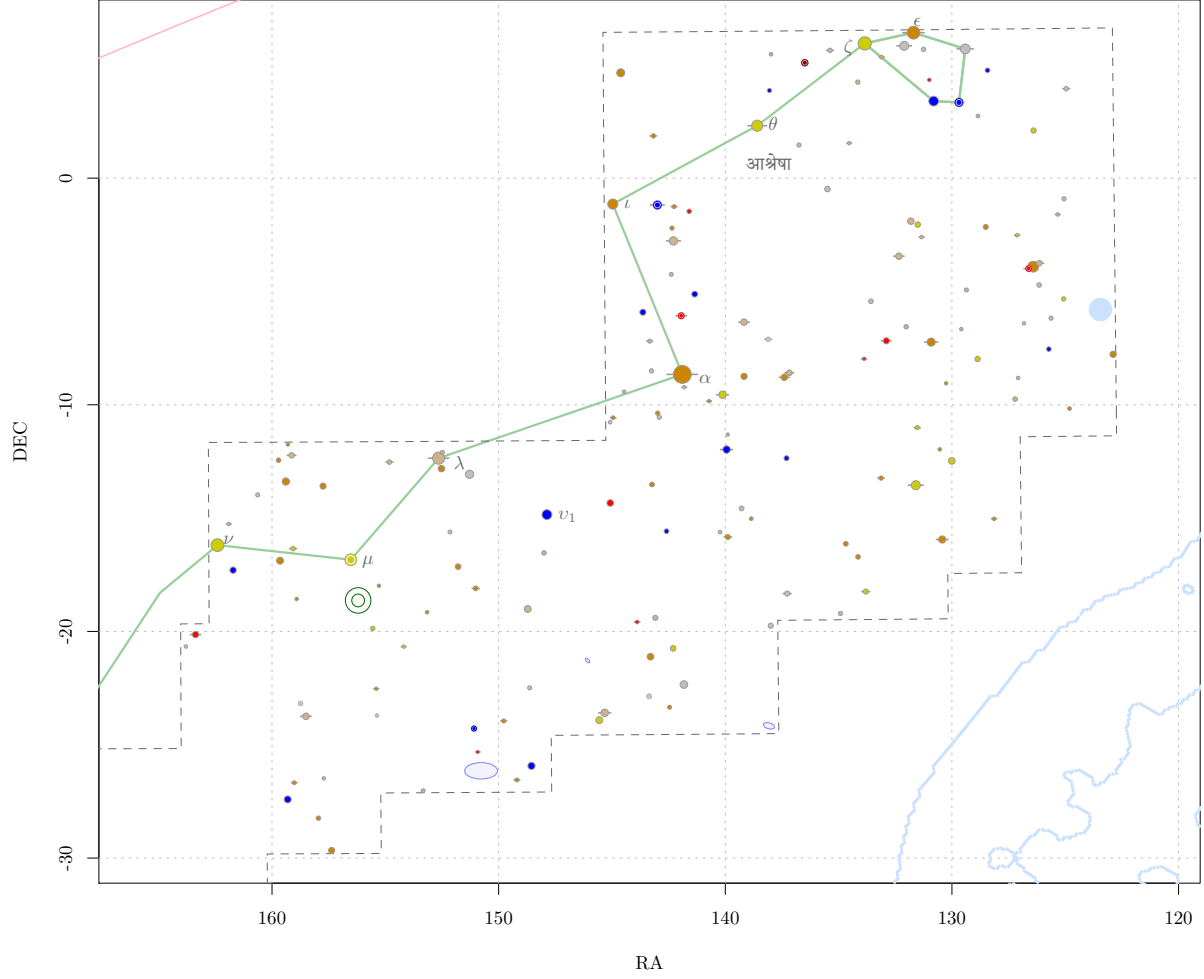


बृहस्पतिः प्रथमं जायमानः । तिष्यं नक्षत्रमभि संबभूव ।
 श्रेष्ठो देवानां पृतनासु जिष्णुः । दिशोऽनु सर्वा अभयन्नो अस्तु ।
 तिष्यः पुरस्तादुत मध्यतो नः । बृहस्पतिर्नः परिपातु पश्चात् ।
 बार्धेतां द्वेषो अभयं कृणुताम् । सुवीर्यस्य पतयस्याम ॥६॥



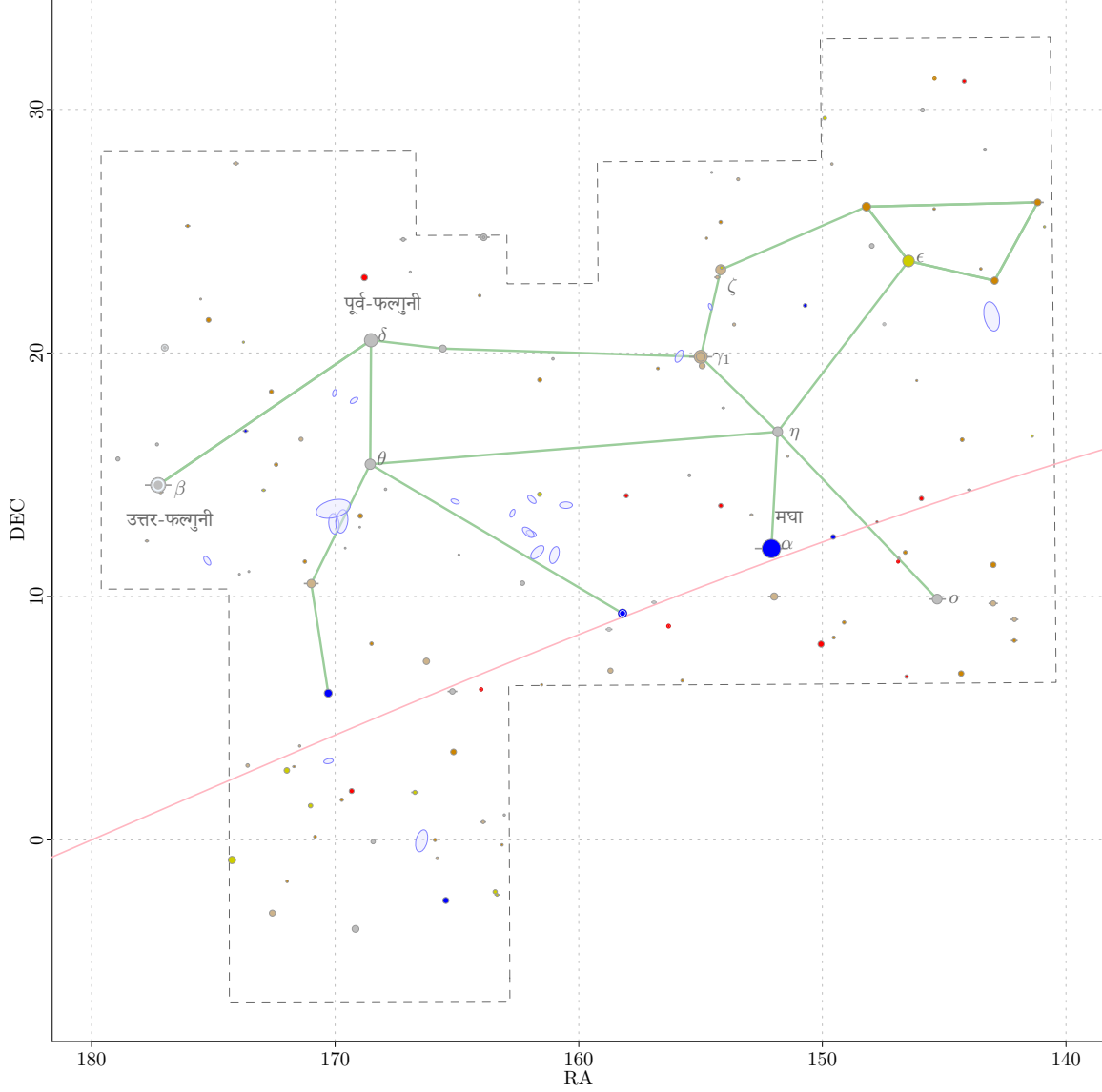
इ॒दं स॒र्पेभ्यो॑ ह॒विर॑स्तु जुष्टम् । आ॒श्रेषा॑ येषा॑मनु॒यन्ति॑ चे॒तः ।
ये अ॒न्तरि॑क्षं पृथि॒वीं क्षि॑यन्ति । ते नः॑ स॒र्पासो॑ ह॒वमा॑गमि॒ष्टाः ।
ये रो॑च॒ने सूर्य॑स्यापि॒ सर्पाः॑ । ये दि॒वं दे॒वीमनु॑संचर॒न्ति ।
येषा॑मा॒श्रेषा॑ अ॒नुयन्ति॑ का॒मम् । तेभ्यः॑ स॒र्पेभ्यो॑ मधु॒मञ्जु॑होमि ॥७॥

Hydra ॥ सर्पः ॥



उपहूताः पि॒तरो॒ ये म॒घासु॑ । मनोजवसः सुकृतः सुकृत्याः ।
ते नो नक्षत्रे हव॒माग॑मिष्ठाः । स्वधाभि॒र्यज्ञं॑ प्रयतं जुषन्ताम् ।
ये अ॒ग्निद॑ग्धा येऽन॒ग्निद॑ग्धाः । येऽमुं लो॒कं पि॒तरः॑ क्षियन्ति ।
याँश्च॑ वि॒द्ययाँ॑ उ॒ च न प्र॑ वि॒द्य । म॒घासु॑ य॒ज्ञँ सु॒कृतं॑ जुषन्ताम् ॥८॥

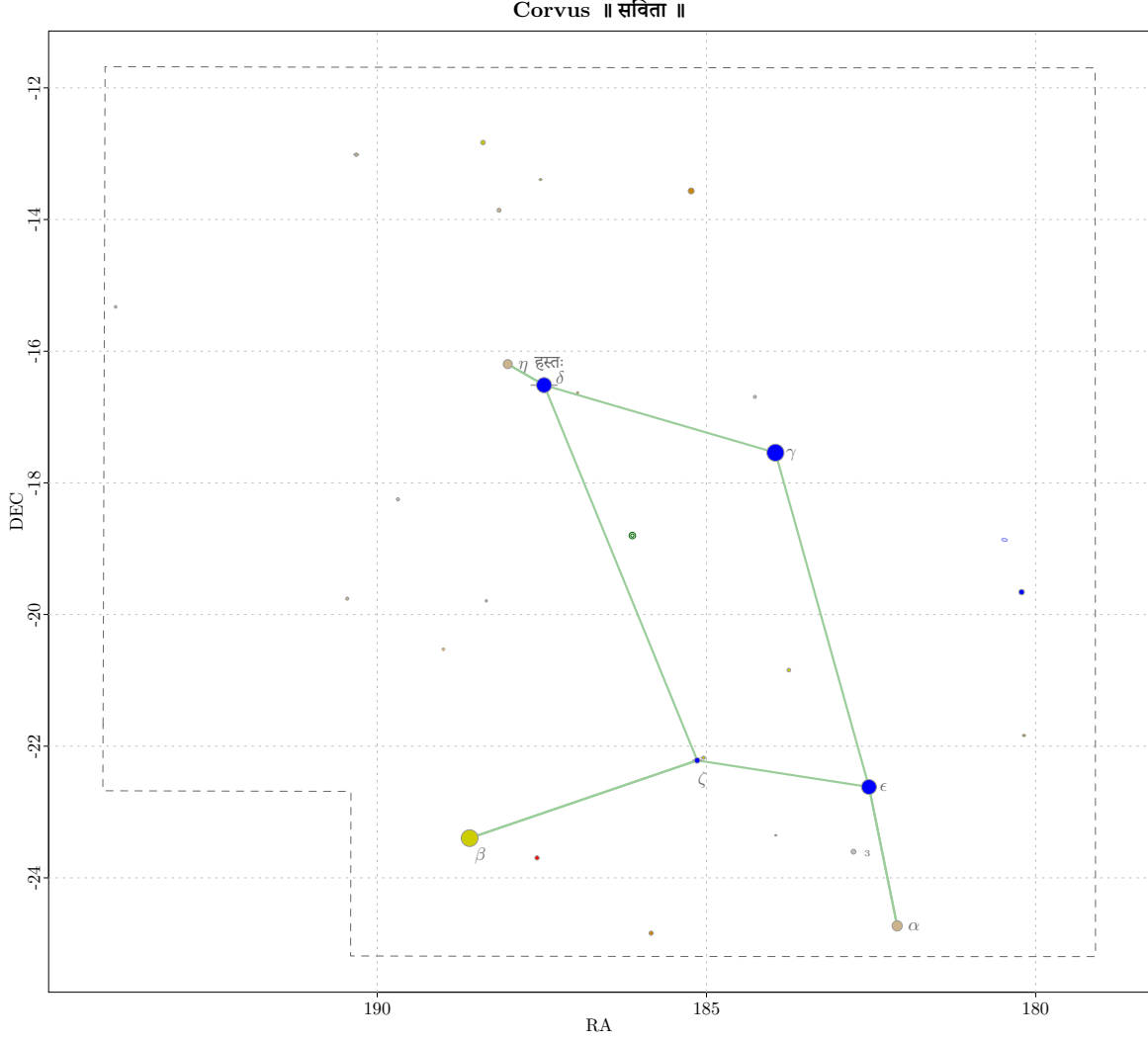
Leo ॥ पितरः ॥ ॥ अर्यमा ॥ ॥ भगः ॥



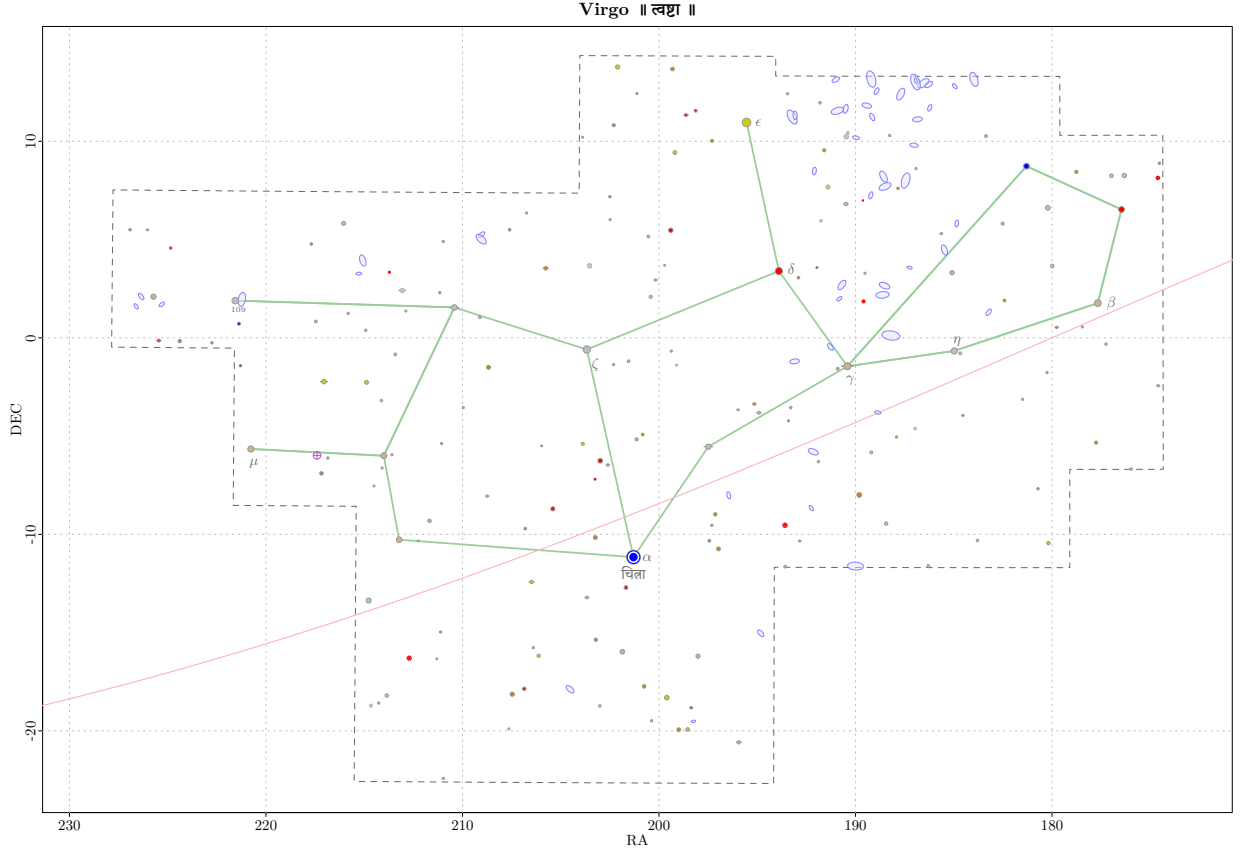
गवां पतिः फल्गुनीनामसि त्वम् । तदर्यमन् वरुणमित्र चारु ।
तं त्वा वयँ स॒नितारँ॑ सनीनाम् । जीवा जीवन्तमुप संविशेम ।
येने॒मा वि॒श्वा भुव॑नानि सञ्जिता । यस्य दे॒वा अ॒नुसं॑यन्ति चेतः ।
अ॒र्य॒मा रा॒जाऽज॑रस्तुविष्मान् । फल्गुनीनामृषभो रौरवीति ॥९॥

श्रेष्ठो देवानां॑ भगवो॑ भगासि । तत्त्वा॑विदुः फल्गु॑नीस्तस्य॒ वित्तात् ।
अ॒स्मभ्यं॑ क्ष॒त्रम॒जरं॑ सु॒वीर्यम् । गोम॒दश्व॑व॒दुप॒संनु॑देह ।
भगो॑ ह दा॒ता भग॑ इत्प्रदा॒ता । भगो॑ दे॒वीः फल्गु॑नीरावि॒वेश ।
भग॒स्येत्तं॑ प्र॒स॒वं ग॑मेम । यत्र॑ दे॒वैः स॑ध॒माद॑ मदेम ॥१०॥

आया॒तु दे॒वः सं॒वि॒तोप॑यातु । हि॒र॒ण्य॒येन॑ सुवृ॒ता रथे॑न ।
 वह॑न् ह॒स्तः सु॒भगं॑ वि॒घ्नना॑प॒सम् । प्र॒यच्छ॑न्तं प॒पु॒रिं पु॒ण्य॒मच्छ॑ ।
 ह॒स्तः प्र॒यच्छ॑त्व॒मृतं॑ व॒सी॒यः । दक्षि॑णेन॒ प्रति॑गृ॒णीम॑ ए॒नत् ।
 दा॒तार॑म॒द्य सं॒वि॒ता वि॑दे॒य । यो नो॑ ह॒स्ताय॑ प्र॒सु॒वाति॑ य॒ज्ञम् ॥११॥

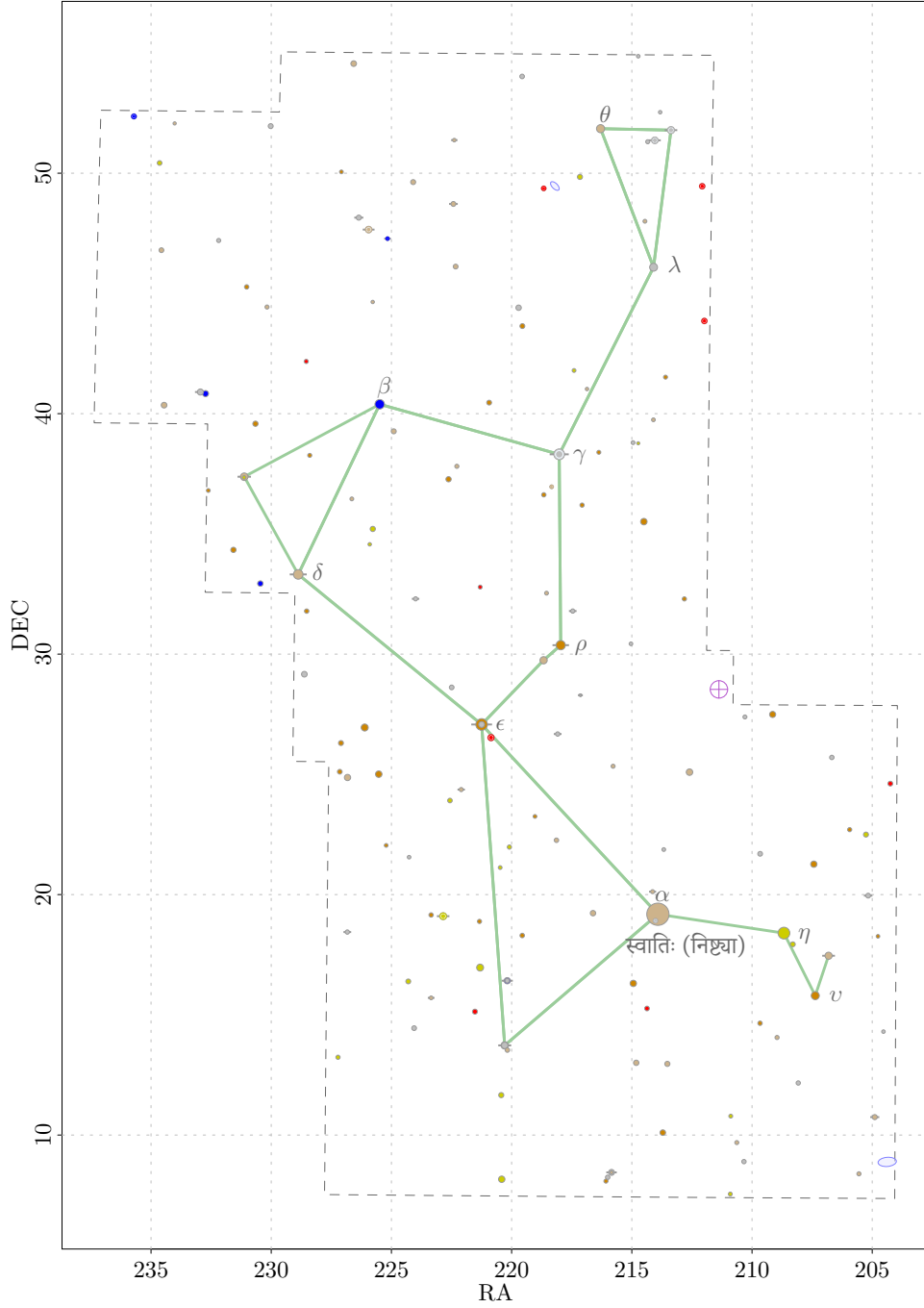


त्वष्टा नक्षत्रमभ्यैति चित्राम् । सुभङ्गं संसं युवतिङ्गं रोचमानाम् ।
 निवेशयन्नमृतान्मर्त्याङ्गंश्च । रूपाणि पिङ्गान् भुवनानि विश्वा ।
 तन्नस्त्वष्टा तदु चित्रा विचष्टाम् । तन्नक्षत्रं भूरिदा अस्तु मह्यम् ।
 तन्नः प्रजां वीरवतीङ्गं सनोतु । गोभिर्नो अश्वैः समनक्तु यज्ञम् ॥१२॥

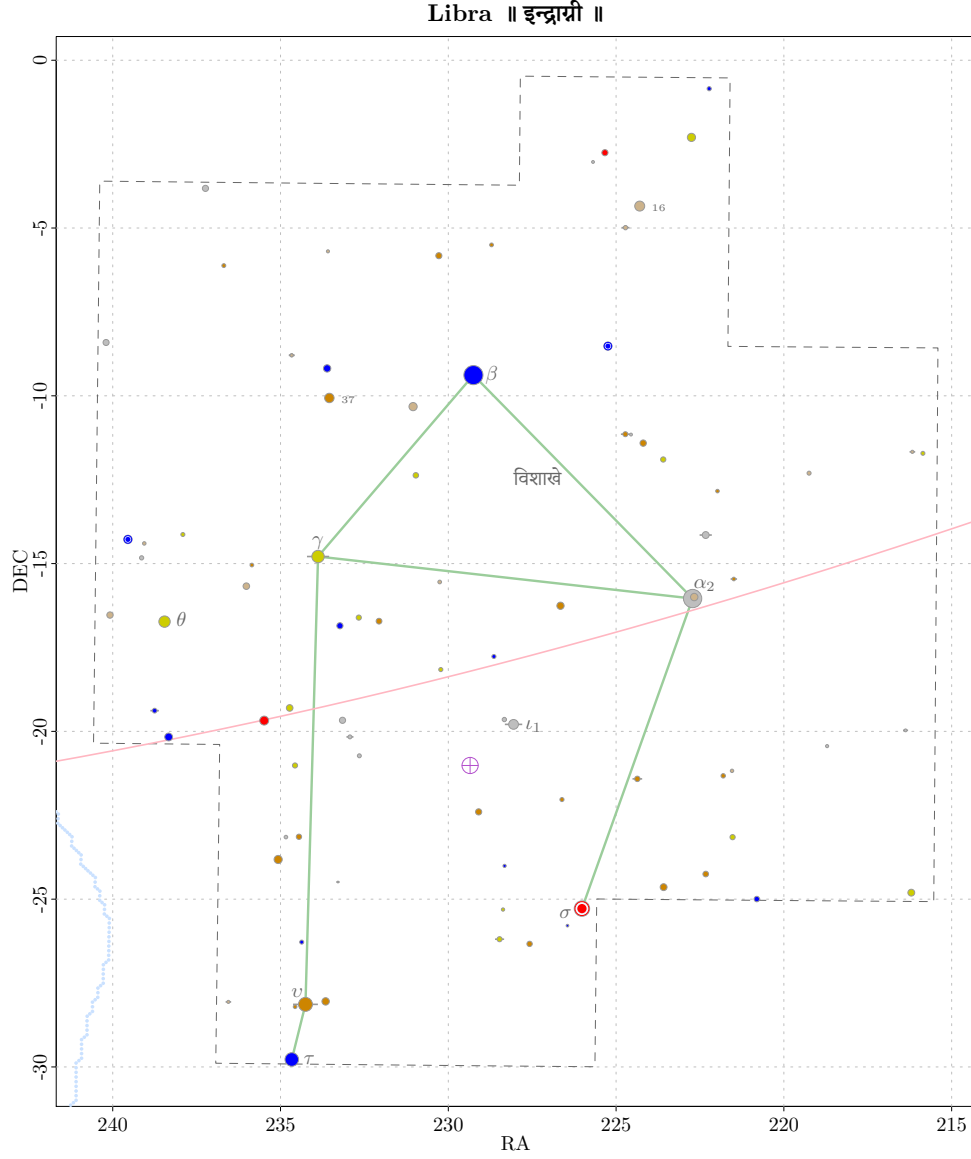


वा॒युर्नक्ष॑त्रम॒भ्येति॑ नि॒ष्ट्या॑म् । ति॒ग्मशृ॑ङ्गो वृष॒भो रो॑रु॒वाणः ।
स॒मीर॑य॒न् भुव॑ना मा॒तरि॑श्व॒म् । अप॒ द्वे॒षाँ॑सि नुद॒ताम॑रा॒तीः ।
तन्नो॑ वा॒यस्तदु॑ नि॒ष्ट्यां शृ॑णोतु । तन्नक्ष॑त्रं भू॒रिदा॑ अ॒स्तु म॒ह्यम् ।
तन्नो॑ दे॒वासो॒ अनु॑जानन्तु कामम् । यथा॒ तरे॑म दु॒रितानि॑ वि॒श्वम् ॥१३॥

Bootes ॥ वायुः ॥

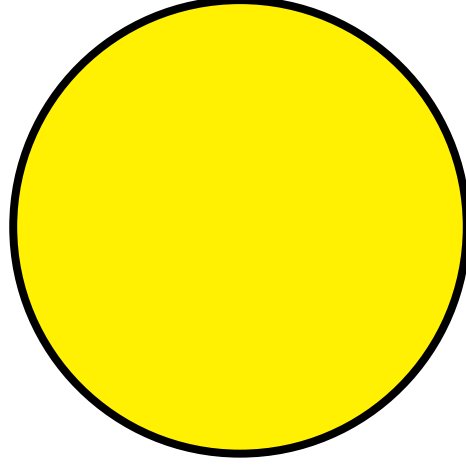


दूरम्स्मच्छत्रवो यन्तु भीताः । तदिन्द्राग्नी कृणुतां तद्विशाखे ।
 तन्नो देवा अनुमदन्तु यज्ञम् । पश्चात् पुरस्तादभयं नो अस्तु ।
 नक्षत्राणामधिपती विशाखे । श्रेष्ठाविन्द्राग्नी भुवनस्य गोपौ ।
 विषूचः शत्रूनपबाधमानौ । अपक्षुधं नुदतामरातिम् ॥१४॥



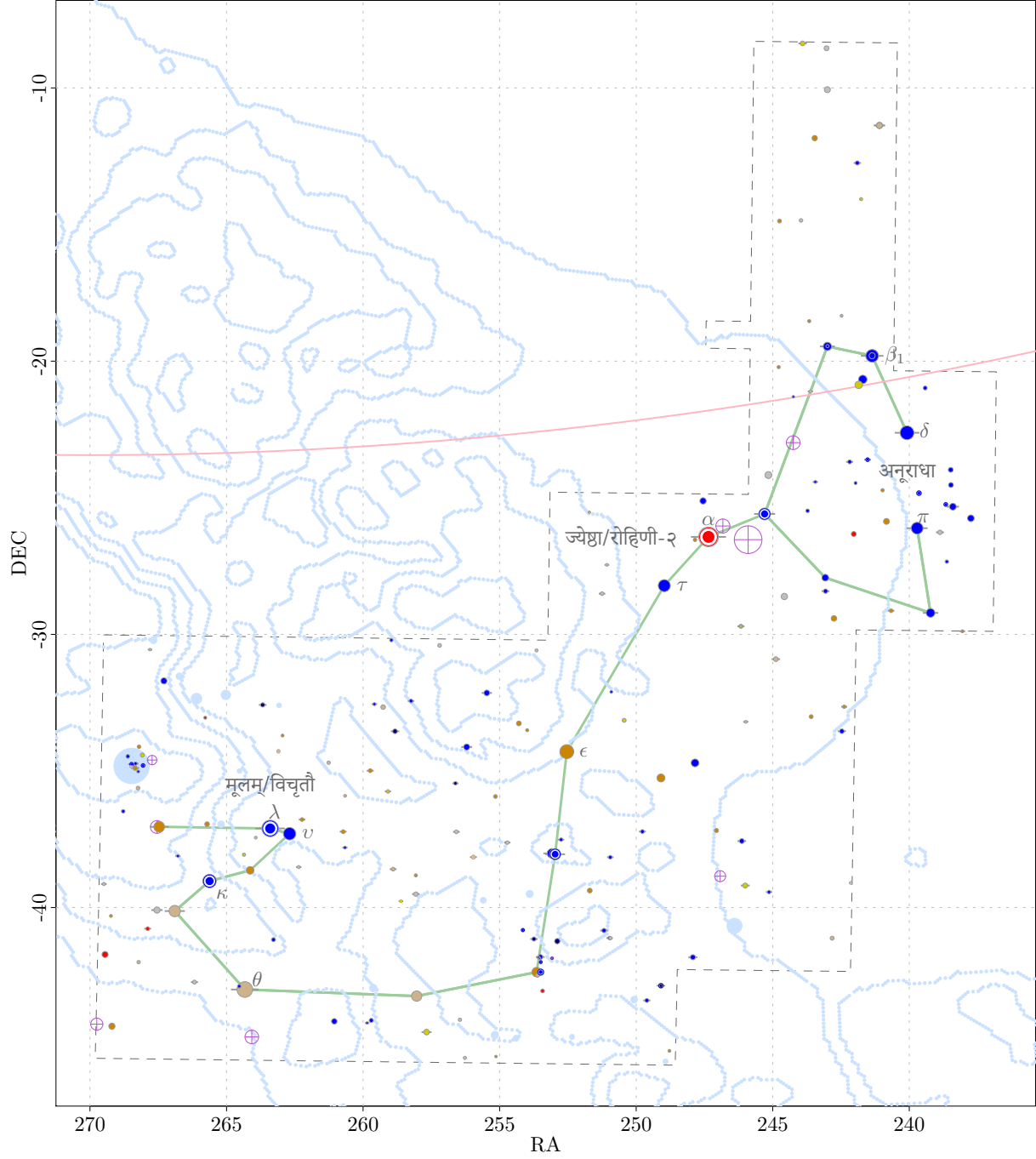
पू॒र्णा प॒श्चादु॒त पू॒र्णा पु॒रस्ता॑त् । उ॒न्म॑ध्य॒तः पौ॑र्ण॒मा॒सी जि॑गाय ।
तस्या॑ दे॒वा अधि॑स॒ंवस॑न्तः । उ॒त्त॒मे नाकं॑ इ॒ह मा॑दयन्ताम् ।
पृ॒थ्वी सु॒वर्चा॑ यु॒वतिः॑ स॒जोषा॑ः । पौ॒र्ण॒मा॒स्युद॑गा॒च्छोभ॑माना ।
आ॒प्याय॑यन्ती दुरि॒तानि॑ वि॒श्वौ । उ॒रुं दु॒हां यज॑मानाय य॒ज्ञम् ॥१५॥

Full Moon ॥ राका ॥



ऋद्ध्यास्मि हव्यैर्नमसोपसद्य । मित्रं देवं मित्रधेयं नो अस्तु ।
 अनूराधान् हविषा वर्धयन्तः । शतं जीवेम शरदः सर्वाः ।
 चित्रं नक्षत्रमुदगात्पुरस्तात् । अनूराधा स इति यद्वदन्ति ।
 तन्मित्र एति पृथिभिर्देवयानैः । हिरण्ययैर्विततैरन्तरिक्षे ॥१६॥

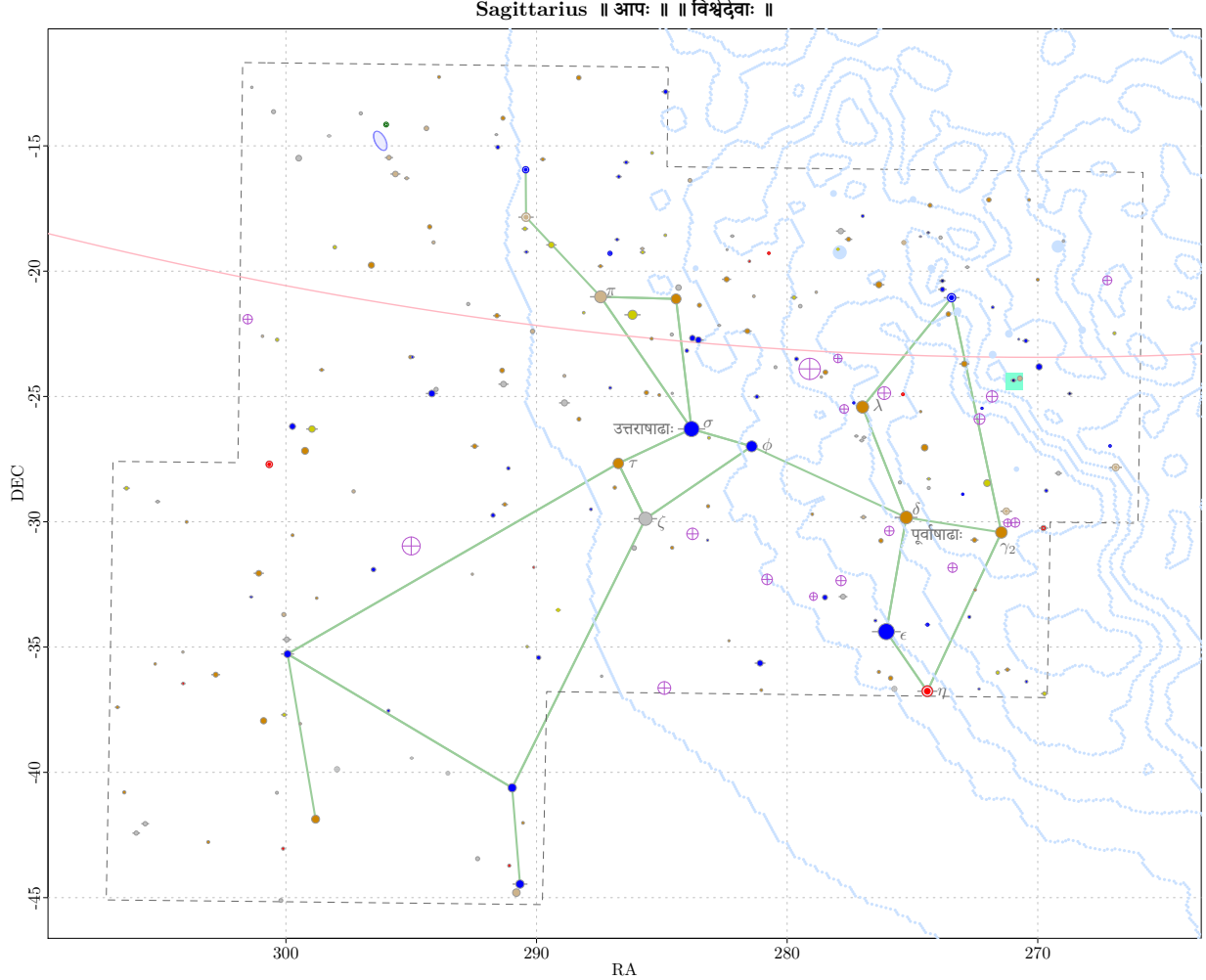
Scorpius ॥ मित्रः ॥ ॥ इन्द्रः ॥ ॥ निर्रक्तिः/पितरः ॥



इन्द्रो॑ ज्ये॒ष्ठामनु॑ नक्ष॑त्रमेति । यस्मिन् वृ॒त्रं वृ॒त्रतूर्ये॑ त॒तारं ।
तस्मिन्व॒यम॒मृतं॑ दुहा॑नाः । क्षु॒धन्तरे॑म॒ दुरि॑तिं॒ दुरि॑ष्टिम् ।
पु॒रन्द॒राय॑ वृष॒भाय॑ धृ॒ष्णवे॑ । अषा॑ढाय॒ सह॑मानाय मी॒दुषे॑ ।
इन्द्रा॑य ज्ये॒ष्ठा मधु॑म॒द्दुहा॑ना । उ॒रुं कृ॑णोतु॒ यज॑मानाय लो॒कम् ॥१७॥

मूलं॑ प्र॒जां वी॒रव॑तीं विदेय । परा॑च्येतु॒ निर्र॑तिः परा॒चा ।
गोभि॑र्नक्ष॒त्रं प॒शुभि॑स्सम॒क्तम् । अह॑र्भूयाद्यज॑मानाय॒ मह्य॑म् ।
अह॑र्नो अ॒द्य सु॒विते॑ द॒धातु॑ । मूलं॑ नक्ष॒त्रमि॑ति॒ यद्वद॑न्ति ।
परा॑चीं वा॒चा निर्र॑तिं नुदामि । शि॒वं प्र॒जयै॑ शि॒वम॑स्तु॒ मह्य॑म् ॥१८॥

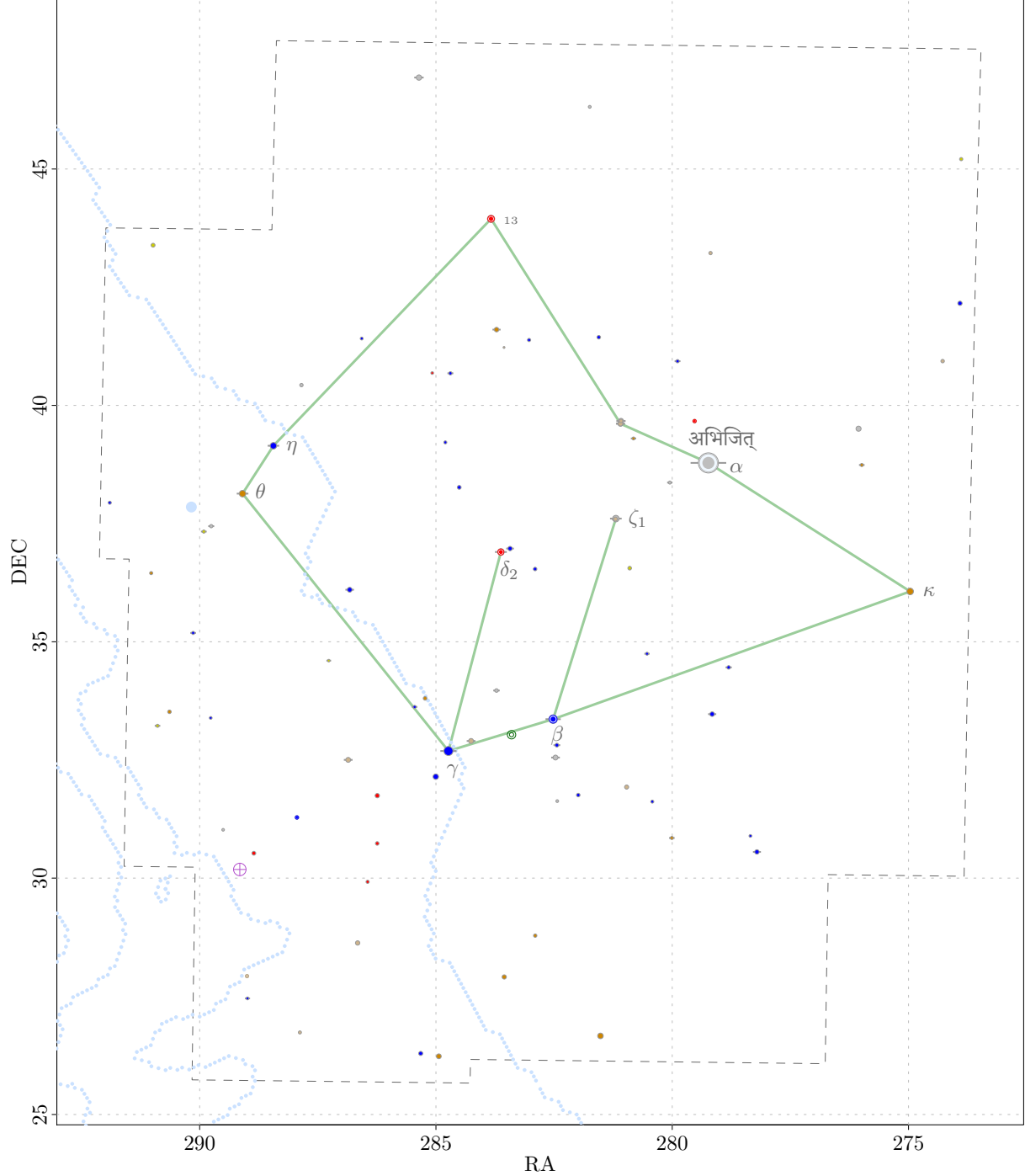
या दिव्या आपः पर्यसा सम्बभूवुः । या अन्तरिक्ष उत पार्थिवीर्याः ।
यासामषाढा अनुयन्ति कामम् । ता न आपः शः स्योना भवन्तु ।
याश्च कूप्या याश्च नाद्याः समुद्रियाः । याश्च वैशन्तीरुत प्रासचीर्याः ।
यासामषाढा मधु भक्षयन्ति । ता न आपः शः स्योना भवन्तु ॥१९॥



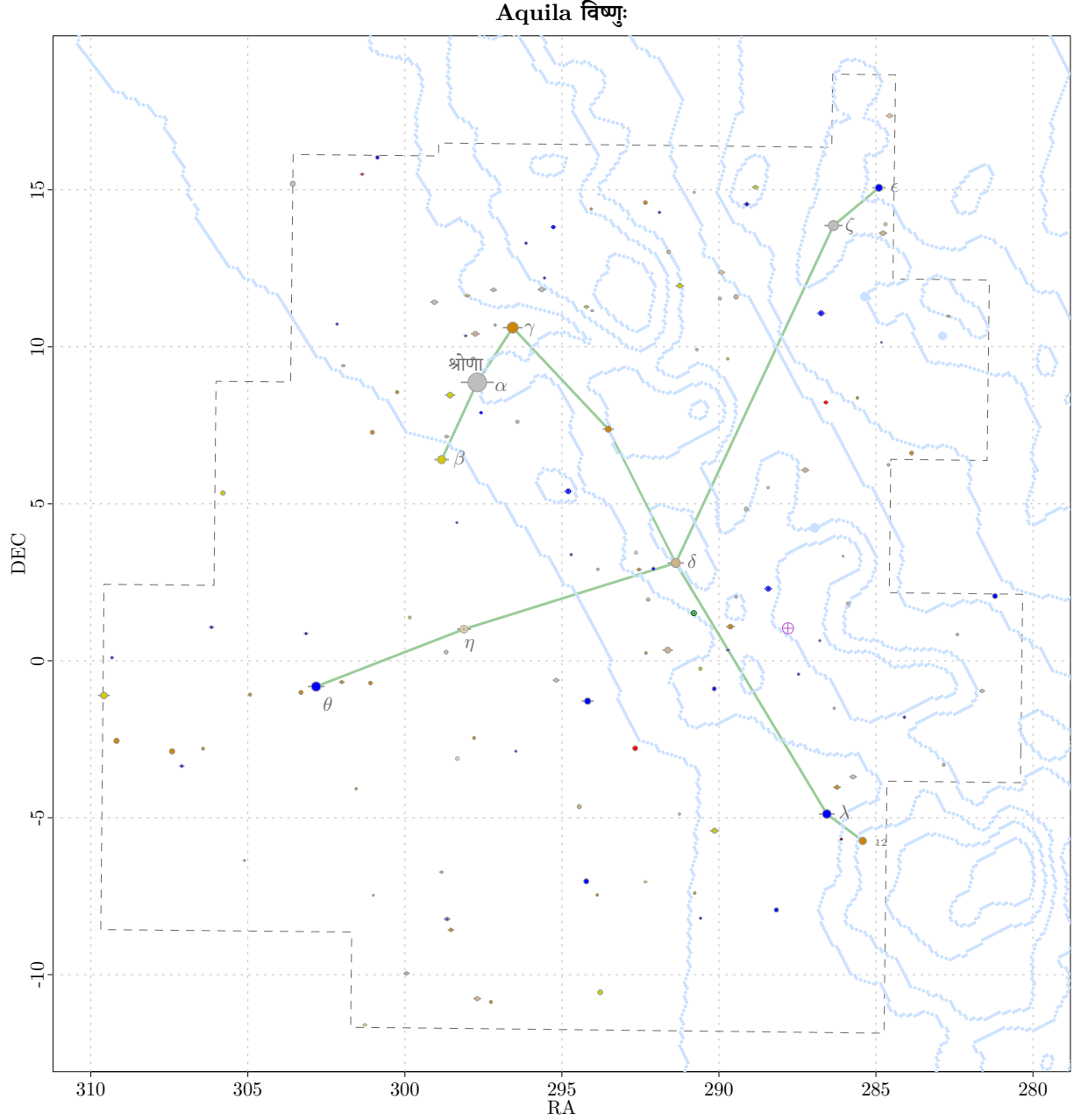
तन्नो विश्वे उप शृण्वन्तु देवाः । तदषाढा अभिसंयन्तु यज्ञम् ।
तन्नक्षत्रं प्रथतां पशुभ्यः । कृषिर्वृष्टिर्यजमानाय कल्पताम् ।
शुभ्राः कन्या युवतयः सुपेशसः । कर्मकृतः सुकृतो वीर्यावतीः ।
विश्वान् देवान् हविषा वर्धयन्तीः । अषाढाः काममुपायन्तु यज्ञम् ॥२०॥

यस्मिन् ब्रह्माभ्यजयत्सर्वमेतत् । अमुं च लोकमिदमूच सर्वम् ।
 तन्नो नक्षत्रमभिजिद्विजित्य । श्रियं दधात्वह्णीयमानम् ।
 उभौ लोकौ ब्रह्मणा संजितेभौ । तन्नो नक्षत्रमभिजिद्विचष्टाम् ।
 तस्मिन्वयं पृतनाः संजयेम । तन्नो देवासो अनु जानन्तु कामम् ॥२१॥

Lyra ॥ ब्रह्मा ॥

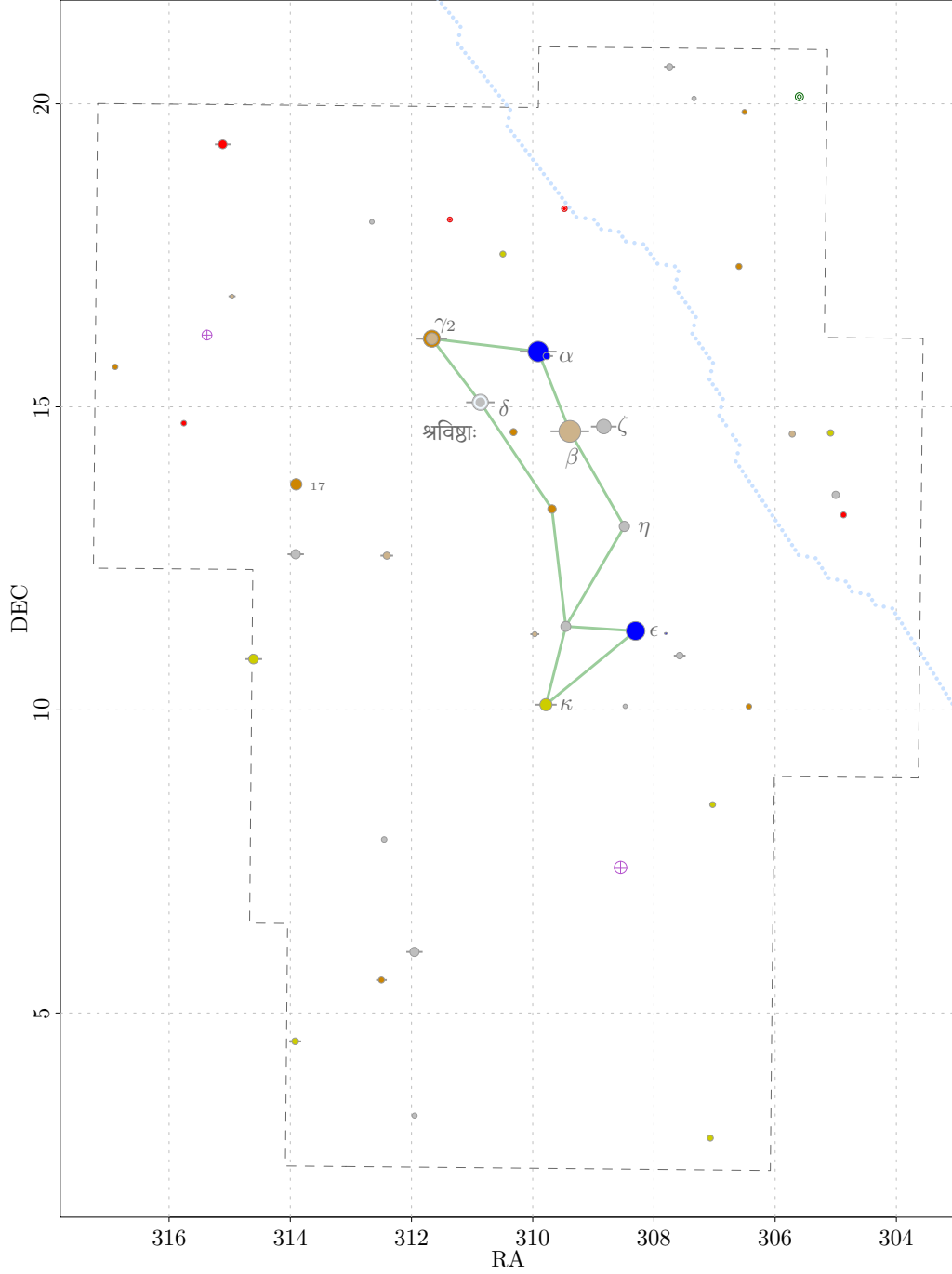


शृण्वन्ति श्रोणाममृतस्य गोपाम् । पुण्यामस्या उपं शृणोमि वाचम् ।
 महीं देवीं विष्णुपत्नीमजूर्याम् । प्रतीचीं मेनां हविषा यजामः ।
 त्रेधा विष्णुरुरुगायो वि चक्रमे । महीं दिवं पृथिवीमन्तरिक्षम् ।
 तच्छ्रोणैति श्रवं इच्छमाना । पुण्यं श्लोकं यजमानाय कृण्वती ॥२२॥

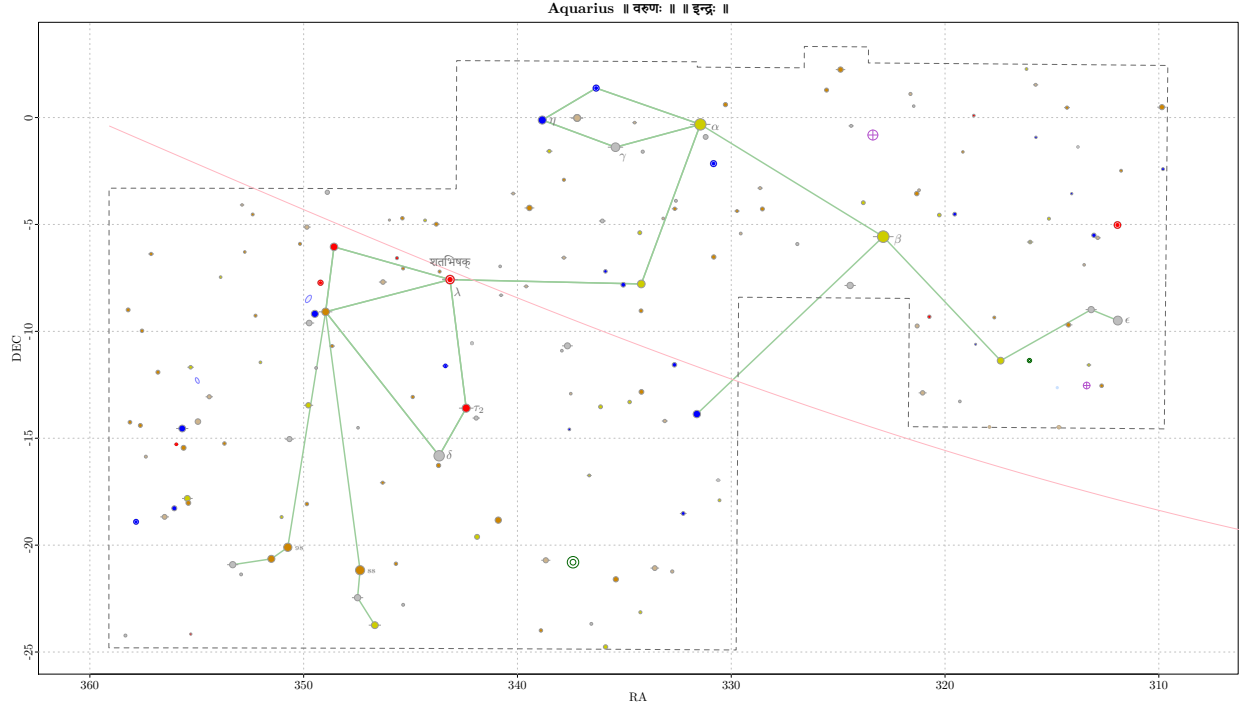


अष्टौ देवा वसंवः सोम्यासः । चतस्रो देवीरजराः श्रविष्ठाः ।
ते यज्ञं पान्तु रजसः पुरस्तात् । संवत्सरीणममृतं स्वस्ति ।
यज्ञं नः पान्तु वसंवः पुरस्तात् । दक्षिणतोऽभियन्तु श्रविष्ठाः ।
पुण्यं नक्षत्रमभि संविशाम । मा नो अरातिरघशः साऽगन् ॥ २३ ॥

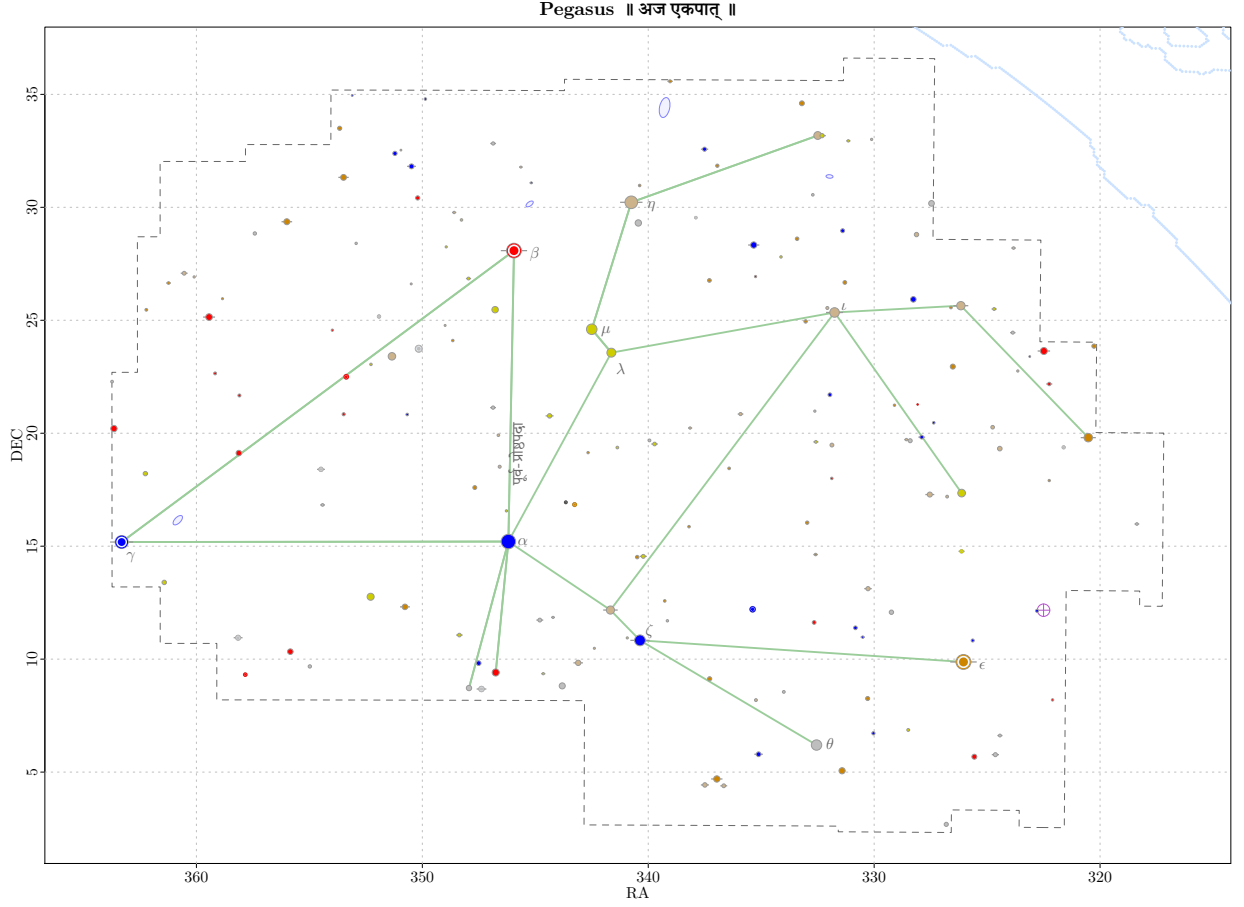
Delphinus ॥ ८ वसवः ॥



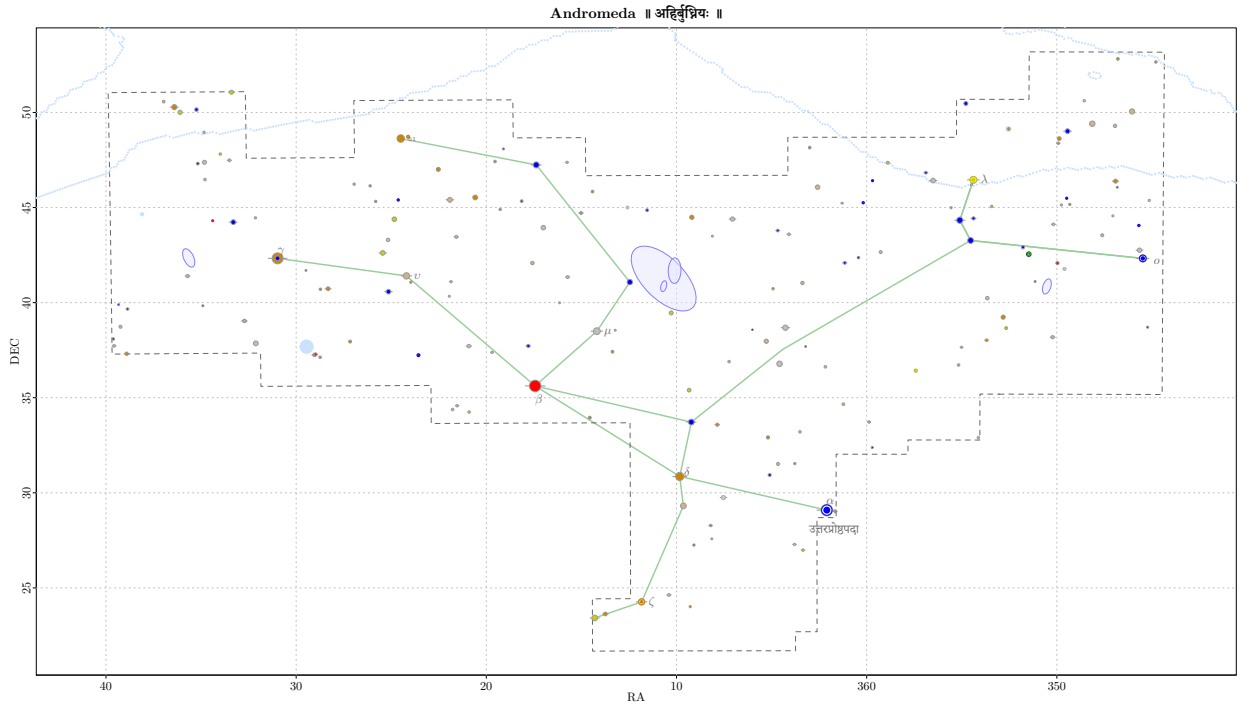
क्षत्रस्य राजा वरुणोऽधिराजः । नक्षत्राणां शतभिषग्वसिष्ठः ।
तौ देवेभ्यः कृणुतो दीर्घमायुः । शतं सहस्रां भेषजानि धत्तः ।
यज्ञं नो राजा वरुण उपयातु । तन्नो विश्वे अभि संयन्तु देवाः ।
तन्नो नक्षत्रं शतभिषग्जुषाणम् । दीर्घमायुः प्रतिरद्वेषजानि ॥२४॥



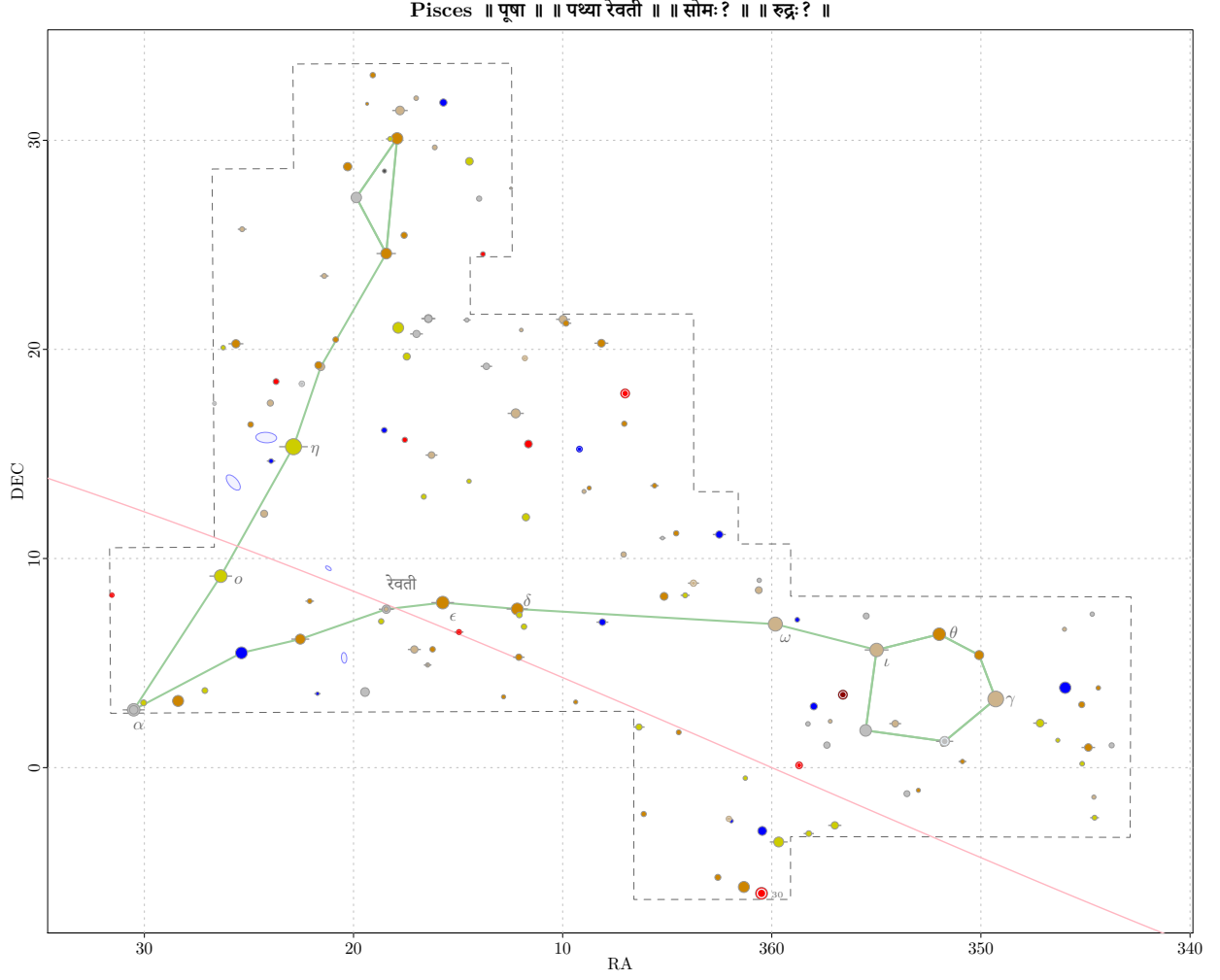
अज एकपादुदगात्पुरस्तात् । विश्वा भूतानि प्रति मोदमानः ।
तस्य देवाः प्रसवं यन्ति सर्वे । प्रोष्ठपदासो अमृतस्य गोपाः ।
विभ्राजमानः समिधा न उग्रः । आऽन्तरिक्षमरुहदगन्धाम् ।
तस्मै सूर्य देवमजमेकपादम् । प्रोष्ठपदासो अनुयन्ति सर्वे ॥२५॥



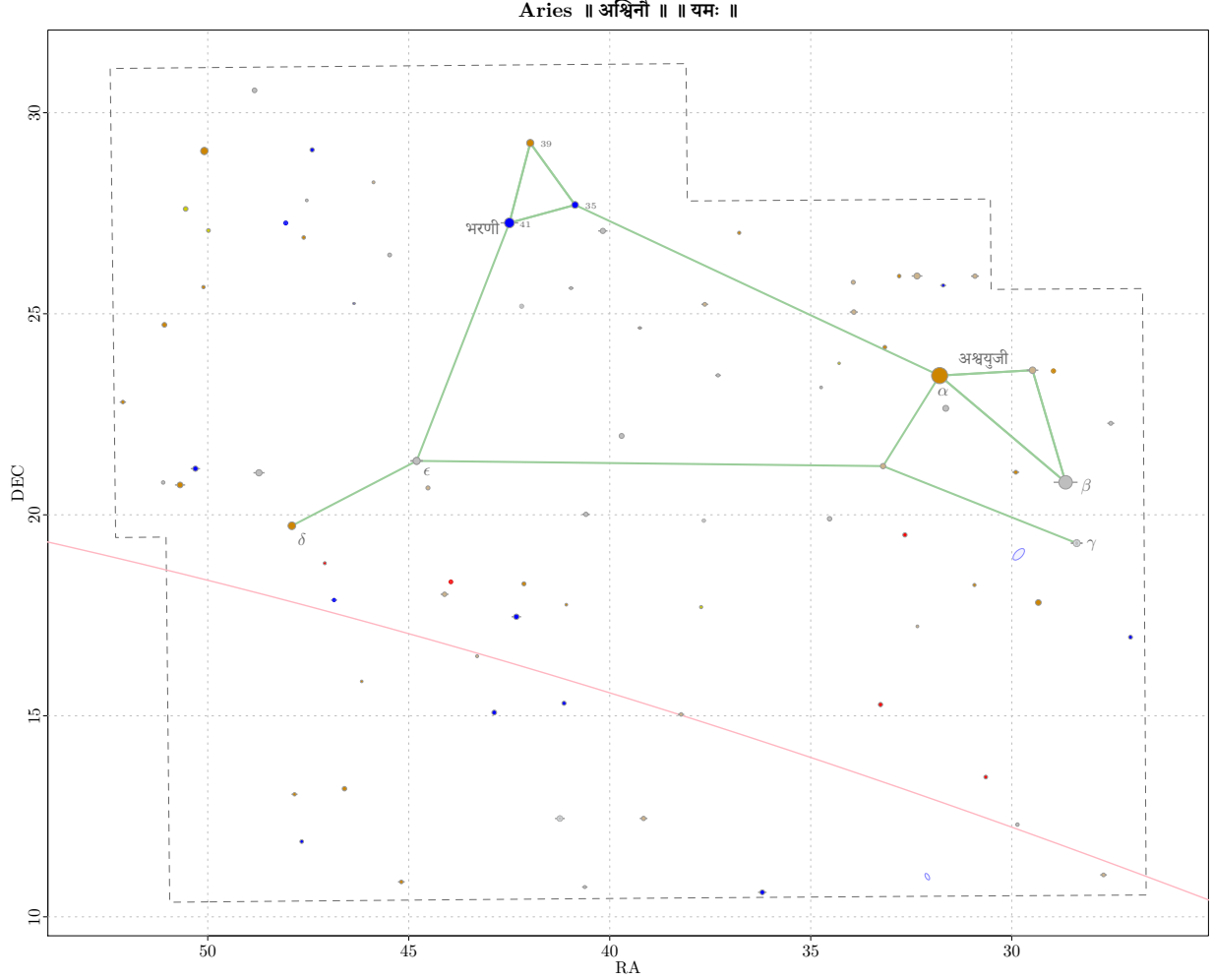
अहिर्बुध्नियः प्रथमान एति । श्रेष्ठो देवानामुत मानुषाणाम् ।
तं ब्राह्मणाः सोमपाः सोम्यासः । प्रोष्ठपदासो अभिरक्षन्ति सर्वे ।
चत्वार एकमभि कर्म देवाः । प्रोष्ठपदास इति यान् वदन्ति ।
ते बुध्नियं परिषद्यं स्तुवन्तः । अहिं रक्षन्ति नमसोपसद्यं ॥ २६ ॥



पूषा रेवत्यन्वेति पन्थाम् । पुष्टिपती पशुपा वाजबस्त्यौ ।
 इमानि हव्या प्रयता जुषाणा । सुगैर्नो यानैरुपयातां यज्ञम् ।
 क्षुद्रान् पशून् रक्षतु रेवती नः । गावो नो अश्वाः अन्वेतु पूषा ।
 अन्नः रक्षन्तौ बहुधा विरूपम् । वाजः सनुतां यजमानाय यज्ञम् ॥२७॥



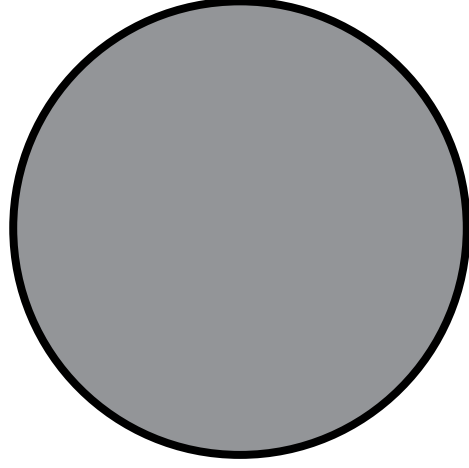
तदश्विनां वश्वयुजोपयाताम् । शुभं गमिष्ठौ सुयमैभिरश्वैः ।
 स्वं नक्षत्रं हविषा यजन्तौ । मध्वा सम्पृक्तौ यजुषा समन्तौ ।
 यौ देवानां भिषजौ हव्यवाहौ । विश्वस्य दूतवमृतस्य गोपौ ।
 तौ नक्षत्रं जुजुषाणोपयाताम् । नमोऽश्विभ्यां कृणुमोऽश्वयुग्भ्याम् ॥२८॥



अपं पाप्मानं भरणीर्भरन्तु । तद्यमो राजा भगवान् विचष्टाम् ।
 लोकस्य राजा महतो महान् हि । सुगं नः पन्थामभयं कृणोतु ।
 यस्मिन्नक्षत्रे यम एति राजा । यस्मिन्नेनमभ्यर्षिचन्त देवाः ।
 तदस्य चित्रं हविषा यजाम । अपं पाप्मानं भरणीर्भरन्तु ॥२९॥

नि॒वेश॑नी॒ स॒ङ्ग॑म॒नी॒ वसू॑नां॒ वि॒श्वा॑ रू॒पाणि॑ वसू॑न्यावे॒शय॑न्ती ।
स॒ह॒स्र॒पो॒षः॑ सु॒भगा॑ ररा॒णा सा न॒ आ॒ग॒न्व॒र्च॑सा संवि॒दा॒ना ॥
यत्ते॑ दे॒वा अ॒द॒धु॒र्भा॒ग॒धे॒य॒म॒मा॒वा॒स्ये॑ सं॒व॒स॒न्तो॑ म॒हि॒त्वा ।
सा नो॑ य॒ज्ञं पि॑पृ॒हि वि॒श्व॒वा॒रे॒ र॒यिं नो॑ धे॒हि सु॒भगे॑ सु॒वी॒रम् ॥

New Moon ॥ कुट्ट ॥



A note on the asterisms forming the nakṣatra-s

In Hindu tradition the ecliptic is divided into 27 parts of $13\frac{1}{3}^\circ$ that correspond to 27 asterisms known as the nakṣatra-s. Each nakṣatra approximately corresponds to the part of the ecliptic covered by the moon in a day in course of the sidereal month of 27.322 days. In multiple earliest extant lists of our tradition the number of nakṣatra-s is specified as 28. This either implies a division into sectors of $12\frac{6}{7}^\circ$ or insertion of a nakṣatra with adjacent compressed sectors. The latter seems more plausible given that the number 28 was made up with the special nakṣatra Abhijit (α Lyrae), which might have been used for determining a specific (eponymous) ritual day in the annual sattra. In support of this, coeval with the 28 nakṣatra lists, we see the standard 27 nakṣatra list in Taittirīya Saṃhitā 4.4.10 that drops Abhijit (However, the nakṣatra list of the equivalent incantation from the Maitrāyaṇī Saṃhitā 2.13.20 gives 29(!) nakṣatra-s including Abhijit).

The earliest complete nakṣatra lists are found in the Taittirīya-śruti and the Atharvaveda, where they are recited as part of the nakṣatreṣṭi/nakṣatra-homa ritual, which places the deities of pantheon in these celestial compartments. Indeed, ever since it has been common practice in Hindu astronomy to use the names of the deities corresponding to a given compartment alternatively for the nakṣatra itself. The old nakṣatra-lists in the TS, Laugākṣi's sūtra-s and the Atharvaveda begin with Kṛttikā i.e., the Pleiades, suggesting that the system as described in these texts was put in place sometime in the interval of 4500-4000 years before present. However, we hold that the nakṣatra system did not begin with these texts. These texts are mostly predated by the Ṛgveda, where we find stray references to specific nakṣatra-s and also the term itself in its generic sense. Thus, we believe a form of the system was already in place even in the days of the Ṛgveda. Further, there are some homologies between nakṣatra-s and Iranian asterisms suggesting that some form of the system might have existed even in the Indo-Iranian past on the Eurasian steppes.

An often-asked question is whether there is a way of knowing precisely how nakṣatra-s were defined in the Vedic period? In classical Indian astronomy each nakṣatra is defined by giving the latitude and longitude of a star called the yogatārā. The yogatārā was defined by the scientist Brahmagupta in 665 CE as the brightest star in the asterism. This makes the nakṣatra quite unambiguous but then there are nakṣatra-s, which are far away from the ecliptic in the Vedic reckoning raising the question if the later definitions differ from the Vedic ones. The best way to start answering this is by using the earliest surviving list in tradition that gives the number of stars in each nakṣatra from the Nakṣatra-kalpa (NK) of the Atharvan tradition:

षट् कृत्तिका एका रोहिणी तिस्रो मृगशिर एकाद्रा द्वे पुनर्वसू एकः पुष्यः षड्
आश्लेषाः षण् मघाः चतस्रः फल्गुन्यः पञ्च हस्त एका चित्रा एका स्वातिर् द्वे
विशाखे चतस्रो ऽनुराधा एका ज्येष्ठा सप्त मूलम् अष्टाव् अषाढा एको ऽभिजित्
तिस्रः श्रवणः पञ्च श्रविष्ठा एका शतभिषा चतस्रः प्रोष्ठपदौ एका रेवती द्वे अश्वयुजौ
तिस्रो भरणीः । इति संख्या परिमितं ब्रह्म ॥ (NK2)

Kṛttikā-s: 6. This clearly coincides with the traditional understanding of the 6 Pleiades being this asterism. However, an older text the Taittirīya saṃhitā names seven of them explicitly:

अम्बा दुला नितलिर् अभ्रयन्ती मेघयन्ती वर्षयन्ती चुपुणिका नामासि ॥

Likewise, in Greek tradition there was an older record of 7, with Aratus claiming that one of them had faded away. This is generally believed to be Ambā (Greek Pleione). This has led to the debate that originally the 7 were of comparable brightness with 28 Tauri fading away later. The parallel between the ārya and yavana records suggests that indeed such a fading might have happened within collective human memory.

Rohiṇī: 1. Hindu tradition has always identified Rohiṇī with α Tauri (Aldebaran); hence, the single star assigned to Rohiṇī should be taken as this one. The name is also indicative of the redness of the star. Whereas the Taittirīya Nakṣatra-sūkta assigns Rohiṇī to Prajāpati, it appears that originally Rohiṇī was the nakṣatra of Soma (see below for shift) prior to the rise of the Prājāpatya stream of the Vedic religion. This tradition is remembered in the Maitrāyaṇīya tradition (in MS 1.6.9):

रोहिण्यां पशुकामस्यादध्यात् सोमस्य वा एतन् नक्षत्रम् ।

The [fires] may be set in when the [full/new moon] is in Rohiṇī; this is verily the asterism of Soma.

The Maitrāyaṇīya tradition also provides a famous myth, which is often repeated in the Purāṇa-s, that gives the special connection of Soma to Rohiṇī. Prajāpati gave his daughters, the nakṣatra-s. as wives to Soma. He tended to favor Rohiṇī over the others. Hence, Prajāpati afflicted him with tuberculosis and he started waning. He then ran to Prajāpati, who instructed him that the natural law was to reside equally with each of the wives (MS 2.2.7 in the brāhmaṇa on the new moon expiatory ritual and the ritual for relief from tuberculosis). This connection of Soma to Rohiṇī is perhaps a reflection of the early Indo-Aryan recognition of the frequent occultation of the stars called Rohiṇī (α Tauri and α Scorpii by the moon). Since the moon's path is tilted with respect to the ecliptic, it occults various bright stars such as α Tauri (Rohiṇī), α Leonis (in the Magha-s), α Virginis (Citrā), α Scorpii (Jyeṣṭhā also known as Rohiṇī). Modern calculations suggest that the lunar occultations of the two Rohiṇī-s by the moon are on the whole more frequent than those of the other bright stars.

Mṛgaśīras: 3. Some take this to be the 3 stars on the head of Orion (ϕ_1, ϕ_2, λ Orionis), which is how they are denoted in classical astronomy. This remains a possibility even in the Vedic reckoning. In Vaidika reckoning the core of Mṛga was Orion with the arrow of Rudra shot through it (See below). The arrow is identified with the three stars of the belt of Orion (ζ, ϵ, δ Orionis), known in the Veda as the Invaka-s. Hence, we should entertain the possibility that originally the 3 could have meant the Invaka-s. In support of this proposal we note that the Taittirīya Brāhmaṇa 1.5.1.1 states:

सोमस्येन्वका विततानि ॥

Soma's are the Invaka-s [which are] drawn [from the bow to be fired].

This explicitly identifies Mṛgaśīras with the Invaka-s. In the Kaṭha (also followed by Maitrāyaṇīya-s) tradition the nakṣatra is identified with the Marut-s. The Marut-s are the one major class of deity not associated with a nakṣatra in the Taittirīya-śruti. This makes sense given that they are the sons of Rudra and flank him in the sky (see below). However, it should also be noted that Somarudrā is ancient coupling found throughout the śruti. One possibility is that the rise of the Prājāpatya tradition (and the concomitant takeover of Rohiṇī) resulted in the displacement of Soma to Mṛgaśīras with the resultant loss of its assignment to the Marut-s. This uncertainty with respect to Soma is also seen in the Maitrāyaṇī Samhitā (where Mṛgaśīras is retained for the Marut-s), where even though Rohiṇī is termed his nakṣatra in MS 1.6.9 in the nakṣatra-brick incantation (MS 2.13.20) Soma is assigned a mysterious 29th Brāhmaṇa nakṣatra placed after Bharāṇī.

Ādrā: 1. The Taittirīya, Kāṭha and Atharvaṇa-śruti-s are all consistent in identifying Ādrā with the god Rudra. Going by classical astronomy, the coordinates of the yogatārā of Ādrā would indicate γ Geminorum. There is another commonly held view that α Orionis is Ādrā. The Vedic text says there is a single star associated with it and the evidence within the Veda suggests that it was not γ Gem. The Taittirīyaśruti states:

आर्द्रया रुद्रः प्रथमान एति ।

With Ādrā, Rudra goes forth luminescent.

This means that the original Ādrā was likely seen as a bright star. Now, while both α Ori and α Canis Majoris are bright stars, α Ori is too close to Mṛgaśīras making α CMa more likely. It is also closer to the position of the later yogatārā when projected on to the ecliptic. In the brāhmaṇa on the nakṣatra ritual in TB 1.5.1.1 the name Ādrā is replaced by Mṛgayu which is always understood as stars of CMa:

रुद्रस्य बाहू मृगयवः ।

The two arms of Rudra are the Mṛgayu-s (The “hunters”- i.e. stars in CMa).

Similarly, Maitrāyaṇī Saṃhitā nakṣatra-brick incantation (MS 2.13.20) terms the nakṣatra of Rudra as Bāhū. This probably implies a connection to the open ṛk of the Śatarudrīya, wherein the arms of Rudra are praised.

Further, this is supported by the evidence of the Aitareya Brāhmaṇa on the famed Āgnimāruta-śāstra recitation, which we provide in full:

प्रजापतिर् वै स्वां दुहितरम् अभ्यध्यायद् ।

Prajāpati desired his own daughter.

दिवम् इत्य् अन्य आहुर् उषसम् इत्य् अन्ये ।

The sky some say and others the Uṣas.

ताम् ऋश्यो भूत्वा रोहितम् भूताम् अबुयैत् ।

Having become a stag he approached her as a red deer.

तं देवा अपश्यन्ः आकृतं वै प्रजापतिः करोतीति ।

The gods saw him: “Prajāpati is doing something that is not done”.

ते तम् ऐच्छन् य एनम् आरिष्यत्य् एतम् अन्योन्यस्मिन् नाविन्दस्

They wished to punish him. They did not find him among one another.

तेषां या एव घोरतमास् तन्व आसंस्, ता एकधा समभरंस्

Whatever most terrible forms exist they brought together in one place.

ताः सम्भृता एष देवो ऽभवत्, तद् अस्यैतद् भूतवन् नाम ।

Brought together they became this god; hence, his name has the word “bhūta” (Bhūtapati)

भवति वै स यो ऽस्यैतद् एवं नाम वेद ॥

He who knows his name thus prospers.

तं देवा अब्रूवन्ः अयं वै प्रजापतिर् आकृतम् अकर्, इमं विध्येति ।

The gods told him: “this Prajāpati has verily done a deed that is not done; pierce him.”

स तथेत्य् अब्रवीत्, स वै वो वरं वृणा इति । वृणीष्वेति ।

He said: “So be it” He also said: “let me choose a boon from you.” They said: “Choose”.

स एतम् एव वरम् अवृणीतः पशूनाम् आधिपत्यं ।

He chose this boon: “The overlordship of animals”.

तद् अस्यैतत् पशुमन् नाम पशुमान् भवति यो ऽस्यैतद् एवं नाम वेद ।

Hence, his name contains the word animal (Paśupati). He who knows this name thus becomes rich in cattle.

तम् अभ्यायत्याविध्यत्, स विद्ध ऊर्ध्व उदप्रवत् ।

He took aim and pierced him [Prajāpati]. Pierce thus he flew upwards.

तम् एतम् मृग इत्य् आचक्षते ।

They know him as the [constellation of the] deer.

य उ एव मृगव्याधः स उ एव स, या रोहिन् सा रोहिणी,

He who is the piercer of the deer [is the asterism] known as that, she who is red is [is the star] Rohiṇī.

यो एवेषुस् त्रिकाण्डा सो एवेषुस् त्रिकाण्डा ।

That which is the 3-pointed arrow is the [asterism] of the three-pointed arrow.

तद् वा इदम् प्रजापते रेतः सिक्तम् अधावत्, तत् सरो ऽभवत् ।

The semen of Prajāpati spilled out and ran; it became the lake [the Milky Way].

ते देवा अब्रुवन्ः मेदम् प्रजापते रेतो दुषद् इति ।

The gods said let this semen of Prajāpati not get ruined.

यद् अब्रुवन्ः मेदम् प्रजापते रेतो दुषद् इति, तन् मादुषम् अभवत् ।

As they said: “let the semen of Prajāpati not be spoiled” it became “not spoiled”

तन् मादुषस्य मादुषत्वम् ।

The state of not being spoiled is of not spoiled.

मादुषं ह वै नामैतद् यन् मानुषं ।

From “not spoiled” is the name which is “man”.

तन् मादुषं सन् मानुषम् इत्य् आचक्षते परोक्षेण,

That which is “not spoiled” they know by metaphorical meaning to be linked to man.

परोक्ष-प्रिया इव हि देवाः

For it is as if the gods like the mysterious.

This narrative clearly identifies Rudra with the killer of Prajāpati. Prajāpati is unambiguously identified with the constellation of Orion and positioned with respect to Rohiṇī. Moreover, he himself becoming a red deer to pursue Rohiṇī could be related to the red star, α Ori, being in the constellation of the Mṛiga. Further, he is described as “flying above” his hunter when pierced. Together these identify the constellation of Rudra his hunter with CMa. Hence, we may conclude that originally α CMa was Ārdrā. Further, the name Ārdrā means moist indicating a link with the wet season. The Iranian equivalent of Sirius, Tishtrya is also associated with rain suggesting that Ārdrā inherits this ancestral association. This identification is retained in medieval Indian astrolabes and celestial globes, where α CMa is labeled as Ārdrā-Lubdhaka (meaning Ārdrā the hunter). We may also note the appearance of the Marut-s later in this brāhmaṇa explaining the Āgnimāruta-śāstra might provide the link between the Marut-s and Mṛgaśiras seen in the Kaṭha-śruti.

Punarvasū: 2. There is a fairly uniform agreement that the two stars of Punarvasū are α, β Geminorum (Castor and Pollux). The simile of these two stars is frequently encountered. In the Rāmāyaṇa (1.29.25; Gita Press edition):

प्रविशन् नाश्रम-पदम् व्यरोचत महामुहिः ।

शशीव गत-नीहारः पुनर्वसु-समन्वितः ॥

The refulgent great sage (Viśvāmitra) entered the path of the āśrama, even as the moon free from fog accompanied by the two stars of Punarvasū (i.e. Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa).

Vedic tradition associates Punarvasū with the goddess Aditi. Under this association the simile of the moon in Punarvasū is again seen in the Rāmāyaṇa (6.67.161):

कुम्भकर्ण-शिरो भाति कुण्डलालङ्कृतं महत् ।

आदित्येऽभ्युदिते रात्रौ मध्यस्थ इव चन्द्रमाः ॥

The giant head of Kumbhakarna adorned with earrings shone forth even as the moon having arisen at night in the midst of the constellation of Aditi (i.e. between Castor and Pollux).

The Taittirīya Saṃhitā has an incantation in the Soma procurement ritual (in 1.2.4):

अदितिर् अस्य उभयतः शीर्ष्णी सा नः सुप्राची सुप्रतीची सं भव ।

You are Aditi, she is two-headed, be good to us together eastward and westward.

The Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa (3.2.4.16) states:

अदितिर् अस्य उभयतः शीर्ष्णीति स यदेनया समानं सद्विपर्यासं वदति यदपरं तत्पूर्वं करोति यत्पूर्वं तदपरं तेनोभयतः शीर्ष्णी तस्माद् आहादितिर् अस्य उभयतः शीर्ष्णीति ॥

You are Aditi, the two-headed. Because he speaks the right in an inverted manner and makes what comes first come last, and what comes last first by her, therefore she is double-headed. That is why he says: “You are Aditi, the double-headed”.

These allusions indicate that the two-headed nature of the constellation of Gemini was transposed on to the presiding deity Aditi and the inversion associated with the two heads along with the eastward and westward paths might indicate an old memory of the start of the ecliptic at Aditi in prehistoric times (>7000 years BP). It is also clear from the incantation “sahasra-vṛd iyaṃ bhumih...” used in the Aruṇaketuka ritual that originally this constellation also represented the Aśvin-s, just as it represented the Dioscuri in the Greek tradition.

Puṣya/Tiṣya: 1. This single star is generally taken to be δ Cancri, which was close to the ecliptic. However, we have evidence from the R̥gveda that originally it meant the Praesepe open cluster (M44). The great ṛṣi Śyāvāśva Ātreya:

युष्मादन्तस्य मरुतो विचेतसो रायः

स्याम रथ्योऽ वयस्वतः ।

न यो युच्छति तिष्योऽ यथा

दिवोऽस्मे रान्त मरुतः सहस्रिणम् ॥ RV 5.54.13c

May we bear as charioteers of the great wealth
given by you, discriminating Maruts.

That which does not depart, even as Tiṣya does not from the sky,

to us in thousands, Marut-s rejoice.

The comparison of great riches, in thousands, is indicative of the great mass of stars in the open cluster supporting the identification of the old *Tiṣya* with M44. The name *Tiṣya* seems homologous to the Iranian *Tishtrya*. In later Iranian tradition, the asterism is equated with *Sirius*. The Iranian tradition associates *Tishtrya* with an archer deity comparable to *Rudra*, the archon of *Ādrā*, which as noted above is also associated with moisture. Thus, the later Iranian *Tishtrya* conceals a *Rudra*-class deity under the patina of the Zoroastrian counter-religion. It is possible that this shift of the name *Tishtrya* to *Sirius* was a secondary development under Mesopotamian influence, which went along with the Zoroastrian demonization of overt *Rudra*-class deities.

Āśleṣā: 6. This constellation is associated with the snakes in Vedic tradition. It corresponds to the head of the Greek constellation of *Hydra*, suggesting that the link to a snake goes back to early Indo-European times or earlier (given Mesopotamian serpentine associations of the constellation). *Āśleṣā* is specifically associated with the head of the snake. Hence, the 6 stars should correspond to $\theta, \zeta, \epsilon, \delta, \sigma, \eta$ *Hydrae*. The *Vedāṅga Jyotiṣa* states that the summer solstice began in the middle of this constellation suggesting that it was composed around ≈ 3350 YBP. The *Maitrāyaṇī Brāhmaṇa Upaniṣad* (a text with explicit knowledge of the precession of the Pole Star) again mentions a similar configuration, with the solstitial colure passing in between *Āśleṣā* and the *Magha*-s on one side and bisecting *Śraviṣṭha* on the other (≈ 3500 YBP)

Maghāḥ: 6. While today *Magha* is associated with α *Leonis*, the Vedic tradition indicates 6 stars for this asterism. This would mean it included the entire sickle of *Leo*: $\epsilon, \mu, \zeta, \gamma 1, \eta, \alpha$ *Leonis*. The *Atharvaveda Nakṣatra sūkta* states that the summer solstice happened in this asterism pointing to an earlier period than above (≈ 4350 YBP).

Phalgunyaḥ: 4. There are 2 *Phalguni*-s *Pūrva* and *Uttara* together with 4 stars. These can be identified with θ, δ *Leonis* (*pūrva*) and $\beta, 93$ *Leonis* (*uttara*). There is a persistent tradition seen across the TS and various *Brāhmaṇa* texts such as, *Taittirīya*, *Śatapatha*, *Kauṣītaki* and *Pañchaviṃśa* that the year-beginning corresponded with the *Phālguna* full moon. The TB, KB and ŚB even state that the last night of the year is in *Pūrva*-*Phalguni* and the first night of the next year is in *Uttara*-*Phalguni*. The KB further states that the *yajamāna* should take *dīkṣa* for the *Somayāga* on the *prathamī* after the *Taiṣa* or *Māgha* new moon. It adds that while *Taiṣa* new moon is more current, it or the *Māgha* new moon mark the time just before when the sun embarks on its northern journey. This would correspond to the memory of an even earlier period than above of ≈ 5000 YBP. This is also consonant the statement in the *Vivāha-sūkta* (RV 10.85.13) which states that for the marriage of the solar goddess *Sūryā*, the oxen are whipped up in the *Agha* (= *Magha*) [month] and the procession sets forth in the *Phālguna* (= *Arjuni*) [month].

Hasta: 5. Tradition unequivocally identifies *Hasta* with *Corvus*. Hence the 5 principal stars of *Corvus* are the 5 listed for *Hasta*: $\alpha, \beta, \gamma, \delta, \epsilon$ *Corvi*.

Citrā: 1. *Spica* (α *Virginis*) in *Virgo*. According to us the *nakṣatra*-s is mentioned in the RV (contra white indological opinion). In the TB 1.5.1.3 *Citrā* is described as an additional star of the god *Indra*. The fifth layer of the altar for the *Somayāga* has a set of 27 bricks known as the *Nakṣatra* bricks. These are laid down with the incantations provided in TS 4.4.10. Here again *Indra* is specified as the deity of 3 different *nakṣatra*-s, the first of these being *Citra*.

Svāti: 1. *Arcturus* in *Bootes*. Also known as *Niṣṭyā* in the *Yajurveda*.

Viśākha: 2. α, β *Librae*. The asterism of the *Ikṣvāku*-s according to the *Rāmāyaṇa*. They are specified with a dual ending as *Viśākhe*, suggesting that, as with *Purnarvasu*, the two stars forming the *nakṣatra* were

an important aspect of it. The name implies a branching fork. We will see below that the early Indo-Aryans probably conceived this asterism as part of a large constellation of a tree with branching forks.

Anurādhā: 4. $\beta, \delta, \eta, \rho$ Scorpii.

Jyeṣṭhā: 1. Antares. The TB/TS 4.4.10 describes this star as a second Rohiṇī keeping with the red color of the star. It is the second of the Indra-nakṣatra-s in the reckoning used in the TS incantation of the piling of the nakṣatra bricks.

Mūla/Vicṛtau: 7. These seven stars are in the tail of Scorpio. Which stars exactly were identified with the asterism is hard to say but most likely were: $\zeta, \eta, \theta, \iota, \kappa, \nu, \lambda$. TS 4.4.10 specifies these a dyad of stars termed the Vicṛtau (the releasers) and assigns them as the second nakṣatra of the Pitarah. The more common assignment of the asterism is to the goddess of the nether regions, Nirṛti. In the Rāmāyaṇa, it is associated with Rākṣasa-s who are supposed to have emanated from Nirṛti. The late NK Nakṣatra-sūkta of the AV tradition also identifies it as the constellation of Mother Pṛthivī along with (or as) Nirṛti.

It should be noted that if Mūla is the root and twin Viśākha-s the dual branches, Jyeṣṭhā could mean the great one/the foremost and signify the trunk. Thus it is possible that in old Aryan uranography, the whole Scorpius-Libra complex was seen as a tree rooted at the nether end of the ancient equinoctial colure. This probably gave rise to the Vaiṣṇava concept of the viśākha-yupa mentioned in the Pañcharātra texts and illustrated in some of the early Vaiṣṇava iconography in the form of images and coinage from the Kuṣāṇa age.

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Aṣādhā-s: 8. These eight stars are in the two Aṣādhā-s: The pūrva group may be identified with the 4 stars associated with the spout of the teapot of Sagittarius: $\delta, \gamma, \epsilon, \eta$ Sagittarii. The uttara group may be identified with the handle of the teapot: $\phi, \sigma, \tau, \zeta$ Sagittarii. The Taittirīya Brāhmaṇa's nakṣatra-sūkta identifies the Pūrva group with divine waters (*yā divyā āpaḥ payasā sambabhūvuḥ*) and see all other waters as emerging from it. We take this identification as an allusion to the bright center of the Milky Way just next to the Pūrva group. The late NK Nakṣatra-sūkta of the AV tradition identifies these waters as being generated by the god Parjanya and belonging to Varuṇa (Vāruṇī).

Abhijit: 1, Vega. This star is way off the ecliptic and is omitted in latter lists. However, its name meaning the all conquering is equivalent to the Iranian name for the same star Vanant. This suggests that it might have been an ancient asterism associated with victory. The Aitareya brāhmaṇa indicates that it was used to mark the day just before the svarasāman days during the annual sattra. We believe Tilak rightly realized that this was the reason why Abhijit was important in the early period to mark this ritual day. This was in turn critical for marking the days leading up to the Viśuvān day. However, due to precession this role of Abhijit became superfluous in later times resulting in it no longer being useful in the nakṣatra list.

The Mahābharata preserves a curious tale regarding Abhijit's fall and also involves other asterisms pointing to a precessional legend. The great god Indra tells the god Skanda:

अभिजित् स्पर्धमाना तु रोहिण्या कनीयसी स्वसा ।
इच्छन्ती ज्येष्ठतां देवी तपस् तप्तुं वनं गता ॥

Abhijit, the younger sister, contested with Rohiṇī

The goddess desiring seniority, she went woods to perform austerities.

तत्र मूढो ऽस्मि भद्रं ते नक्षत्रं गगनाच्च्युतम् ।
कालं त्व इमं परं स्कन्द ब्रह्मणा सह चिन्तय ॥

I am dumbstruck by the fall of that auspicious star from the sky.

O Skanda, you with Brahmā should think about this important [issue] regarding time [i.e. the calendar].

धनिष्ठादिस् तदा कालो ब्रह्मणा परिनिर्मितः ।

रोहिण्याद्यो ऽभवत् पूर्वम् एवं संख्या समाभवत् ॥

Time was specified by Brahmā starting with Dhaniṣṭhā around [the ecliptic].

Formerly, they started from Rohiṇi and thus their number was complete around [the ecliptic].

एवम् उक्ते तु शक्रेण त्रिदिवं कृत्तिका गताः ।

नक्षत्रं शकटाकारं भाति तद् वह्नि-दैवतम् ॥ Mbh 3.219.8-12 (“Critical edition”)

Thus told by Indra, Kṛttikā-s went to the third heavenly realm.

There they shone forth in the shape of a cart presided by the god Agni.

While several authors have attempted to decode this legend, it remains rather obscure. The only clear parts are the memory of a transition from the Rohiṇi period to the Kṛttikā period and an allusion to the loss of Abhijit from the nakṣatra reckoning. This might relate to Abhijit having lost its utility as a marker of important rituals close to the solstices due to precession.

Śravaṇa/Śroṇa: 3. These are quite unambiguously identified as α, β, γ Aquilae. It is possible that it was associated with the celestial footprint of Viṣṇu in his three strides.

Śraviṣṭhā/Dhaniṣṭhā: 5. While the Nakṣatra-kalpa gives 5 stars for this asterism the older Taittirīya-śruti seems to indicate that there were 4. In any case this group is unambiguously identified with Delphinus. The older reckoning likely took 4 of the brightest stars, $\alpha, \beta, \gamma, \delta$. The NK included one further the star. Corresponding to what was noted above for Āśreṣa, the Vedāṅga Jyotiṣa notes that the sun starts its northern movement in the first part of Śraviṣṭhā (i.e. the solstitial colure passes through it). This would imply a period of ≈ 3300 YBP. The NK sūkta of the AV tradition associates this constellations with the 108 comets (Śvetaketu-s), whose significance remains entirely unclear.

Śatabhiṣā: 1 This is today taken to be λ Aquarii. Given the predilection for bright stars, even is farther away from the ecliptic, in the early nakṣatra system, it remains unclear if this was the star meant in the Vedic texts. Hence, Fomalhaut (α Pisces Austrinis) originally being this star is not implausible. There is an asterism of Iranians known as Satavaṣa, which we hold to be the equivalent of the Vedic one. The Iranian asterism was associated with the sea while the Vedic one with Varuṇa.

Proṣṭhapada-s: 4. The two Proṣṭhapada-s are given 2 each. Identifying each pair with the two vertically adjacent stars of the 4 stars comprising the square of Pegasus seems the most likely for these. The NK sūkta of the AV tradition identifies the first two stars with the twin Śunāsira-s. Evidence from other texts suggests that Śunāsira-s were more likely to have originally meant the Sirius and Procyon. The same sūkta sees the first of these asterism as feeding the ancestors as a pair of breasts. However, the name Proṣṭhapada means a stool. This indicates that the square of Pegasus was conceived as a four-legged stool. From the references in the RV we may infer that Dadhikra, the flying horse, probably stood for a constellation whose rising before dawn was significant to the ārya-s. Hence, the possibility of a mapping of Dadhikra onto Pegasus needs deeper exploration.

Revatī: 1. Classical astronomy identifies it with ζ Piscium. While close to the ecliptic, at mag 5.2 it is a really undistinguished star. Given the preference for bright stars, it looks unlikely that the Vedic system intended ζ Piscium to be Revatī. It is quite possible that originally a brighter star like β Andromedae was used. Narahari Achar holds that the goddess Pathyā Revatī mentioned in the Svastisūkta (RV 5.51.11) of the Atri-s implied this asterism. While the asterism and the goddess seem to have a real connection, it is

not entirely clearly if this was intended in the said sūкта. While NK2 indicates a single star for Revatī, the Nakṣatrasūkta of the TB assigns of dual deities to it – Puṣṭipati Paśupā. One of those is transparently named as Pūṣan but who is the other one? Most likely it is the goddess Pathyā Revatī, whom the Gopatha Brāhmaṇa of the AV holds to be the wife of the goat-riding Pūṣan. Together they are the guardians of paths, and also of horses, cows, other domesticates and food. Pūṣan is also coupled with Soma and Rudra, who is also the protector of cattle. Hence, they could also be the second deity coupled with Pūṣan. However, Pathyā Revatī seems more likely given other evidence: The Aitareya Brāhmaṇa mentions the sun following the path laid out by Pathyā (Revatī). Given the solar connections of Pūṣan, it is quite possible that this was the intended coupling.

Aśvayujau: 2. α, β Arietis. Concerning this asterism there is a problematic issue concerning the the Yajurvedika incantation known as the Uttaranārāyaṇa (Found in both KYV and SYV traditions). This text describing the cosmic Viṣṇu bearing a special name Nārāyaṇa states:

अहोरात्रे पार्श्वे । नक्षत्राणि रूपम् । अश्विनौ व्यात्तम् ॥

His sides are the day and the night. His form [is comprised of] the asterisms. The two Aśvin-s his jaws.

Here Nārāyaṇa is identified with the constellations, even as Prajāpati was earlier identified with them in the ritual of the Nakṣatra-rūpin Prajāpati specified in the Yajurveda (Taittiriya Brāhmaṇa 1.5.2.2). This identification continues through later Vaiṣṇava tradition. The ritual itself has further continuity going down to the Gupta age where it is described by the naturalist Varāhamihira. He states that by performing it a man becomes attractive to women and women attain beauty. Now the question is whether the account of the Aśvayujau at the mouth of Nārāyaṇa have some significance for the date of this text. The text is clearly a late one clinging to the edge of the Vaidika productions but when exactly was it composed. If one takes Aśvayujau *sensu strictu* to imply the start of the nakṣatra cycle having shifted to this asterism it would yield a date of around 2300 YBP. This date resonates with the ideas of the white indologists who ascribe late dates to all Vedic texts. However, we do not think the mouth should be taken as the beginning of the nakṣatra cycle. Rather, that position is usually reserved for the top of the head. Hence, the mouth likely implies the nakṣatra after it which might imply the equinoctial colure passing before Aśvayujau suggesting a date of around 3300-3000 YBP. Alternatively, a shift in the reckoning of the first nakṣatra to Aśvayujī might have been registered around 800 BCE in line with the very late composition of the text.

One also wonders if the tale of Prajāpati being fitted with a goat's head after his beheading by Rudra's agent Vīrabhadra alludes to the transition of the equinoctial colure to somewhere in Aries, with the Prajāpati's new goat/ram's head representing Aries. One could object that the constellation of Aries as a ram came from the Mesopotamian tradition and was not known to the Indians until the Yavana invasion. However, in earlier Mesopotamian tradition the constellation stood for a farmer or a servant and the ram assignment came much later. Hence, it cannot be ruled out that the ram identification was prevalent elsewhere and secondarily came to Mesopotamian. If the original source was not India, then it could have been acquired by Hindus from the same source as the Mesopotamians.

Bharaṇī: 3. This triad is understood to be the compact triangle formed by 41, 39, 35 Arietis.

By the early medieval period, Hindu asterism-reckoning had changed to a degree from the Vedic period with the choice of stars closer to the ecliptic. Brahmagupta says in his Khaṇḍakhādhyaka (1.9.1-2):

मूल+अज+अहिर्बुध्न्य+अश्वयुग्+अदिति+इन्द्राग्नी+फल्गुनी द्वितयम् ।
त्वाष्ट्र-गुरु-वारुण+आर्द्र+अनिल-पौष्णान्य एक ताराणि ॥

ब्रह्म+इन्द्र-यम-हरि+इन्दु-त्रितयम् षड्-वह्नि-भुजग-पित्र्याणि ।
मैत्राषाड-चतुष्कम् वसु-रवि-रोहिण्य इति पञ्च ॥

Brahmagupta gives the number of stars in each asterism as (rather economically):

Kṛttikā: 6; Rohiṇī: 5 (likely whole Hyades+Aldebaran); Mṛgaśīras: 3; Ādrā: 1; Punarvasū: 2; Puṣya: 1; Āśleṣā: 6; Maghā: 5; Phalguni-s: 2 each; Hasta: 5; Citrā: 1; Svāti: 1; Viśākhā: 2; Anurādhā: 4; Jyeṣṭhā: 3; Mūla: 1; Aṣāḍhā-s: 4 each; Abhijit: 3; Śravaṇa: 3; Śraviṣṭhā: 5; Śatabhiṣā: 1; Proṣṭhapada-s: 2 each; Revatī: 1; Aśvayujau: 2; Bharāṇi: 3.