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A Comparative Survey of the Indradhvaja Ceremony (*Gārgīyajyotiṣa* 45)

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A Comparative Survey of the Indradhvaja Ceremony (*Gārgīyajyotiṣa* 45)

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INTRODUCTION

PRESCRIBED FOR THE BRIGHT FORTNIGHT OF BHĀDRAPADA (AUGUST–SEPTEMBER), the festival of Indra’s banner (*indradhvaja*) marks the beginning of the autumnal, pre-war cycle in the annual ritual calendar of the medieval Indian monarch. The ritual centers on a large wooden post that is retrieved from the forest and ceremonially welcomed into the city, where it is adorned and worshipped.¹ While versions of the ritual appear in the late-Vedic *Kauśikasūtra* (14.4) as well as in the *Mahābhārata* (1.57), its form was only fully standardized by the early-medieval period (ca. 700–1200 CE), in a number of purāṇic accounts.² The earliest datable model for these accounts is in Varāhamihira’s sixth-century *Bṛhatsaṃhitā* (BS 42). In a longer study of this ritual, I hope to show how Varāhamihira’s ritual prescription establishes the Indradhvaja as a royal divinatory event, meant to indicate the chances for the king’s success in the impending military campaign.³ Both in its placement within the ritual sequence of the *Bṛhatsaṃhitā*, and in its thematic and conventional links with rituals of warfare (*yātrā*) and consecration (*abhiṣeka*), Varāhamihira presents the Indradhvaja as an exemplar of a larger system of ritual techniques in the service of the royal office.

This article presents a comparative survey of the Indradhvaja instruction preserved in the *Gārgīyajyotiṣa* (GJ), a primary resource for Varāhamihira’s *Bṛhatsaṃhitā* (BS).⁴ As in many other cases, the testimony of Garga on the Indradhvaja confirms the relative antiquity of Varāhamihira’s source material, while illuminating the famed astrologer’s labours to systematize and incorporate *jyotiṣa* within

1 For a contemporary account, see Baltutis 2014.

2 The Atharvan evidence was studied by Gonda (1967). On the *Mahābhārata*’s account, see Baltutis 2011.

3 Geslani (submitted). See this publication for a fuller bibliography on Indradhvaja.

4 On the *Gārgīyajyotiṣa*, see Geslani et al. 2017.



a mainstream Brahmanical purview. In the present case, a comparison of both sources highlights the ways in which Varāhamihira integrated the Indradhvaja ceremony into the royal ritual calendar. As I will argue below, at the level of the texts, this integration appears in [1] relating the timing of the ritual to the king's departure (*prasthāna*) to war; [2] implementing the overnight ritual structure (*adhivāsana*) and the observation of fire omens; and [3] an emphasis on a ritual logic of theological exchange. Each of these features recalls the organization of Varāhamihira's other ritual instructions (the *yātrā*, *nīrājana*, *puṣyasnāna*, and *pratiṣṭhā*), but they are absent in the earlier *Gārgīyajyotiṣa*, which otherwise bears a high degree of similarity with his account.⁵

1 TEXT AND MANUSCRIPTS

I HAVE CONSULTED NINE MANUSCRIPTS OF GĀRGĪYAJYOTIṢA 45:⁶

Siglum Location, institution, shelf-mark, folios

B	Varanasi, Sampurnanand Sanskrit Vishwavidyalaya, 36370. 122 ff.
Bh	Pune, BORI 542 of 1895/1902. 225 ff.
D	Kolkata, National Library of India, Th319. 295 ff.
E	Pune, BORI 345 of 1879/80. 232/239 ff.
H	Varanasi. BHU, 2B/1288. No. 34. 227 ff.
M	Mumbai, University of Mumbai, 1433. Itchhārām Sūryarām Desāi Collection. 192 ff.
Q	Alwar, RORI, 2603. 186 ff.
R	Alwar, RORI, 2602. 245 ff.
S	Varanasi. BHU, 35311. 201 ff.

To these we may add the 12.5 verses attributed to Garga by Bhaṭṭotpala (siglum U, the BS edition by Dvivedī (1895–7)) in his commentary to *Bṛhatsaṃhitā* 42.

⁵ On the role of the *yātrā* and the logic of ritual exchange in Varāhamihira's program, see Geslani 2016; 2018: ch. 3.

⁶ The evidence thus far follows Mitchiner's grouping: Group 1: Bh, R (very close);

Group 2: D; Group 3: B, M (very close); E, H (close); S; Group 4: Q. On this grouping see more recently Zysk 2016. I have omitted the especially corrupt testimony of Q from my apparatus below.

GJ 45	BS 42
5-7b	7
12	14
22ab	24*
34	38
	39*
19-20	40
45	57
49, 57	61
25-26	66

Bhaṭṭotpala includes three lines (1.5 verses) not attested in the manuscripts. One of these half-verses seems logically integrated at GJ 45.22cd. The other, given at BS 42.39, seems to refer to a lost portion of the text related to the erection of Indra's daughters, a series of subsidiary posts arranged around the primary banner. In all then, the surviving text comprises 79.5 *ślokas*. The manuscripts divide the text into three parts. Although the colophons to these subsections are uninformative, I would summarize them as follows:⁷

Part 1 etioloical myth (verses 1-11)

Part 2 production and erection of the banner (12-55)

Part 3 omens while the banner is standing, atonement (*prāyaścitta*), and disposal (56-80b)

After a first collation, a significant portion of the text, perhaps a fifth, remains unclear, especially in the sections dealing with omens. One further problem is that verses 12-51b are missing from Bh and R, two of the more reliable manuscripts. For this reason, the passages that I present below, which derive from the second part of the text, represent the testimony of only six manuscripts (BDEHMS), with readings from Bhaṭṭotpala, where applicable. I am hopeful that the additions of manuscripts A and C might help to reconstitute the text further. In the meantime I here present selected passages for a preliminary comparison. Despite some remaining uncertainties, I feel that the available evidence in the aggregate supports my tentative conclusions, further substantiating the emergent view of the relation between the GJ and BS.

⁷ For instance, D: (Part 1) इन्द्रध्वजमुत्थानं;
(Part 2) श्री गा[र्]गीये ज्योतिषे इन्द्रध्वजोत्थाने च;
(Part 3) D: इन्द्रध्वजोत्थानं समाप्तं. I have ignored

the section divisions in my numbering of the text here.

2 RITUAL STRUCTURE

AS MENTIONED ABOVE, it can be said that Varāhamihira's version of this ritual set a major baseline for the Puranic versions. I would summarize the structure of this version as follows:

1. The astrologer and the architect go to the forest at the appointed time (BS 42.12).
2. They choose a tree (13–16).
3. The priest addresses the tree-spirits [*bali/pūjā* offering] (17–18).
4. The next morning the architect fells the tree with an axe, while the astrologer observes the sound of the axe and the direction of the falling tree (19–20).
5. [The architect] removes the top (four *āṅgulas*) and bottom (eight *āṅgulas*) portions of the tree and immerses it in water (21ab).
6. Removing it from water, he brings it to the eastern gate of the city on a cart or palanquin, observing the omens on the journey (21c–22).
7. On the eighth day of *śukla bhādrapada*, the king with his retinue welcomes the pole into the eastern gate of the city (which has been cleaned and decorated) in the presence of the citizenry, observing omens as it enters (23–28).
8. The carpenter arranges it on a *yantra* (29ab).
9. The king stays awake with the pole on the night of the eleventh day (29cd).
10. The *purohita* makes an offering with mantras dedicated to Viṣṇu and Śakra, while [the astrologer] observes the signs of the fire (30–37).
11. After *brāhmaṇas* are honored with food and *dakṣiṇās*, the banner is raised on the twelfth day in conjunction with *śravaṇa* (38).
12. The “Daughters of Indra” are made (39–40).
13. The banner is offered baskets and ornaments (41–51), while the king recites a non-Vedic mantra dedicated to Indra (52–56).
14. The erected and ornamented banner is inspected for omens that might require *śānti* rites (57–66).
15. After worshipping the banner for four days, the banner is disposed of on the fifth day (67).

The following chart, Table 1, presents the relative consistency of this ritual form across the available Puranic accounts. In the final column, I have added the testimony of GJ 45 for comparison.

step	<i>Br̥hat -saṃhitā</i> 42	<i>Devī- purāṇa</i> 12	<i>Kālikā- purāṇa</i> 87	<i>Viṣṇudharmottara- purāṇa</i> 2.155	<i>Gārgīya- jyotiṣa</i> 45
1	12	3-4b	4c-5 (?)	5(?)	12
2	13-16	4c-10	6-11	6-8	13-14b
3	17-18	11-13	12-14b	-	14c-15
4	19-20	20-21	14c	-	16?-18
5	21ab	22ab	14d-15b	9c?-10	19-20
6	21c-22	22c-25	15c	8c-9b/11ab	21
7	23-28	26	15d-16c	11c-14b	22-27
8	29ab	27	16d	14cd?	Cf. 28-33
9	29cd	50	20	15	-
10	30-37	40-41	22-23	21	-
11	38	44	24ab/34cd	18, 22	34
12	39-40	29-31b	18-19	-	Cf. 38
13	41-56	31c-37	30b-34b	23-24	39-43
14	57-66	38-49?	50	VDhP 2.156	56-75
15	67		43-49, 51-54	26	76-78

Table 1: The relative consistency of the ritual form across the available Puranic accounts.

This overview shows that Garga's account of the Indradhvaja follows the same basic schedule as Varāhamihira and the later *purāṇas*. GJ 45 includes the selection of the tree and its preparation in the forest (steps 1-6); its entrance to the city on the eighth day of Bhādrapada (step 7); its erection on the twelfth day (11); its adornment and worship (13); observation of omens and rectification (14); and finally, its disposal on the fifteenth day (15). Within this basic schedule, there are nonetheless some crucial structural differences. Most obviously, Garga's account is lacking steps 9-10, corresponding to the "overnight" portion of Varāhamihira's version, wherein Indra's banner, having been welcomed into the city, is subject to an overnight vigil and fire sacrifice. In what follows I will examine this structural difference along with further discrepancies of ritual performance.

3 VARĀHAMIHIRA'S RITUAL CONVENTIONS

RITUAL TIMING

WE MIGHT BEGIN BY COMPARING each text's description of the timing of the departure to the forest at the outset of the ritual (step 1):

Garga:

प्रौष्ठपदेप्रौष्ठपदे^a प्रतिपदि^b ध्वजार्थ^c पूर्वतो वनं ।
गत्वा वृक्षं परीक्षेत वयः^dसारगुणान्वितं ॥ GJ 45.12 ॥

^aप्रौष्ठपदे] एमेन्द, प्रौष्ठपाद Σ, प्रौष्ठपदा D, प्रौष्ठपादे U

^bप्रतिपदि] D, प्रति++ Σ

^cध्वजार्थ] U, ध्वजं तं Σ, ध्वज तं D, ध्वजं+ S

^dवयः^o] D, वय^o Σ

Having gone to the forest for the purpose of obtaining the post on the first day of Prauṣṭhapada, he should look for a tree that is possessed of longevity, heft, and other good qualities.

Varāhamihira:

तस्य विधानं शुभकरणादिवसनक्षत्रमङ्गलमुहूर्तैः ।
प्रास्थानिकैर्वनमियाद्देवज्ञः सूत्रधरश्च ॥ GJ 42.12 ॥

Here is the instruction for Indra's Banner. The astrologer and the carpenter should go the forest in conjunction with the same auspicious *karaṇas*, weekdays, lunar asterisms, and lucky *muhūrtas* prescribed for the king's departure [to war].

Whereas Garga merely prescribes the first day of Prauṣṭhapada, Varāhamihira requires a much more complicated timing "in reference to the departure" (*prāsthānika*), understood elsewhere in Varāhamihira's corpus as meaning the departure (*prasthānika*) to war (*yātrā*), as in the chapter of the same name, *Bṛhadyātrā* 22. Bhaṭṭotpala refers us to specific details in BS 99.1–2 (on *karaṇa*); BS 98.2cd (on *tithi/divasa*); and *Bṛhadyātrā* 6.2–4 (on *muhūrta*). Such intra-textual references are common in Varāhamihira's ritual instructions, which, as I have shown elsewhere, often take the *yātrā* cycle as a basis.⁸ Note that while a precursor to Varāhamihira's *yātrā* texts survive in GJ 32, the military march not referenced in GJ 45. In Garga's corpus, the two sources appear as relatively independent texts. As a result, Varāhamihira's account of the Indradhvaja begins with a clearer thematic link to the *yātrā*, highlighting the oscillation between the forest and the city. While this oscillation is certainly implicit in both versions of the ritual, it is nonetheless made explicit in Varāhamihira.

⁸ Geslani 2016.

MANTRAS OF EXCHANGE

Garga:

तं सायं^a स्नातमाच्छाद्य^b बलिं^c कृत्वानुमन्त्रयेत् ॥ १४ ॥
यानीह भूतभव्यानि तेभ्यः स्वस्ति नमोऽस्तु वः ।
इन्द्रध्वजं^d वासयतां क्रियताम् वासपर्ययः ॥ १५ ॥ GJ 45 ॥

^aतं सायं] D, स्यं BMS, ह्यं EH

^bआच्छाद्य] emend., आच्छाय Σ; आसाद्य D; आस्पाय M

^cबलिं] Σ, वलिं BM

^dनमो] D, मनो Σ

^eइन्द्रध्वजं] DS, इन्द्रध्वज Σ

^fक्रियताम्] Σ, क्रियताम् D

That evening, after bathing the tree, covering it in a cloth, and presenting a *bali* offering, he should address the tree as follows: "Blessings and obeisance to those past and future (?) beings residing here! Please let Indra's banner dwell here! Please find another dwelling!

Varāhamihira:

यानीह वृक्षे भूतानि तेभ्यः स्वस्ति नमोऽस्तु वः
उपहारं गृहीत्वमं क्रियतां वासपर्ययः ॥ १७ ॥
पार्थिवस्त्वां वरयते स्वस्ति तेऽस्तु नगोत्तम ।
ध्वजार्थं देवराजस्य पूजेयं प्रतिगृह्यताम् ॥ १८ ॥

Blessings and obeisance to those beings living in this tree! Having accepted this offering please find another dwelling. The king chooses you for the banner of Indra! Blessings to you, most excellent tree! Please accept this worship.

Note again the similarity of each text. Both request the tree spirits to relocate for Indra's banner. Varāhamihira's expanded text, however, lays a more explicit emphasis on the logic of exchange; the beings should accept the *bali* and *pūjā* in exchange for giving up their dwelling. Again, this logic, which is implicit in the first case, is made explicit in the second.

The logic of ritual exchange is also salient later in Varāhamihira's account, at the height of the ritual worship (step 13). There, after prescribing the decoration of the banner with baskets (*piṭakāni*), Varāhamihira prescribes a mantra to be recited by the king. The mantra requests that Indra empower the king's army in exchange for the adorning baskets (see below). But no such mantra is supplied in GJ 45, which reflects a different ritual logic at this juncture. I will detail the case in the following section. In all, the logic of exchange appears more forcefully in the mantras of Varāhamihira.

RITUAL STRUCTURE

Another major difference concerns the sequence of rituals after the post arrives in the city (steps 8–12):

Garga:

प्रोष्टपद्य अष्टमी^a पक्षे ज्येष्ठायोगे स्वलंकृतां ।
यष्टिं पौरन्दरीं राजा नगरं सम्प्रवेशयेत्^b ॥ 22 ॥

^aअष्टमी] D, अषुमी Σ

^bनगरं...येत्] om Σ (taken from U)

हुत्वाग्निं^a ब्राह्मणान्वाच्य^b प्रहृष्टजनसंकुले^c ।
पुरोहितो^d जपेद्^e बीजं^f मन्त्रांश्चै^g वानुवाचयेत्^h ॥ 23 ॥

^aआग्निं] Σ, आग्नि D

^bवाच्य] DEHS, वाय BM

^cकुले] Σ, °कुलो H

^dपुरोहितो] D, पुराहीतो Σ

^eजपेद्] emend., वपेद् Σ

^fबीजं] Σ, बीजं BM, दीजं S

^gमन्त्रांश्च] Σ, मन्त्राश्च BM

^hवाचयेत्] °वासयेत् Σ, °चासयेत् BD

पवित्रपाणिरन्वस्यादाद्रवस्त्रसमन्वितः^a ।
तामन्वगच्छेच्च नृपः^b सामात्य^c समूहजनः^d ॥ २४ ॥ GJ 45 ॥

^aसमन्वितः] D, °समन्विताः Σ

^bनृपः] D, नृप Σ

^cसामात्य^o] emend., समात्य^o Σ, सामात्यः D

^dसमूहजनः] emend., समूहजना Σ, समूहजन D

On the eighth day in the bright fortnight of Prauṣṭhapada, in conjunction with Jyēṣṭhā, the king bids Indra's well adorned pole enter the city. Having made a fire offering, and causing Brāhmaṇas to pronounce benedictions amidst a crowd of glad citizens, the purohita, softly reciting the seed syllable,⁹ should have the invitational mantras recited. Holding a blade of *pavitra* grass, wearing damp clothes, the king should stay nearby, and should follow it along with his ministers and a mass of citizens.

Here the banner arrives triumphantly in the city. The *purohita* performs a fire offering while reciting mantras that are either unspecified or corrupted. The king follows the banner accompanied by ministers and townspeople.

After the celebratory arrival, the following ritual occurs:

9 The reading of *bījaṇi* as a "bīja mantra" strikes me as somewhat anacronistic, if GJ

is indeed to be dated to near the turn of the common era (Mitchiner 2002: 81).

ततः पुरस्य पूर्वेण निर्गत्योत्तरतोऽपि वा ।
इन्द्रस्थानं परीक्षेत ईशान्यामथवा दिशि^a ॥ 28 ॥

^aअथवा दिशि] Σ, अथवा दि+ D

समं प्राक्प्रवणं स्निग्धं निर्विक्षुपके^aऽकण्टके^b ।
मृदुभूमि समं वार्ध^c श्वभ्रवल्मीकवर्जितं ॥ 29 ॥

^aनिर्विक्षुपके] emend., विर्विक्षुपके B E, निर्विक्षुप+ D, निर्विक्षुं क्षुपके H; विर्विक्षुपके M; विर्विक्षुपके S
^bऽकण्टके] Σ, कण्टकं D
^cवार्ध] B, वार्धं D, वार्ध Σ

परिकर्मणादि कृष्यादि^a कृत्वा तत्राग्निवार्जितम्^b ।
हुत्वाग्निमिन्द्रशीर्षार्थं तक्षसांवत्सरद्विजः^c ॥ 30 ॥ GJ 45 ॥

^aकृष्यादि] E H, कृष्यादि B M, कृस्योदि D
^b°आग्निवर्जितं] emend., °आग्निवर्जितः D, °वर्जितः Σ
^cतक्षसांवत्सरद्विजः] emend., रक्षसांवत्सरद्विजः Σ, रक्षसांवत्सरं द्विजः D; रक्षसांवत्सरद्विजः S

Then having gone out of the city eastward, northward, or in the north-east direction, he should look for a place for Indra's that is level, sloping to the east, smooth, on a spot that is free of shrubs and thorns, level...and free of holes or ant-hills. Having performed a preparatory cleansing and ploughing, etc., and having cleared the area of fire, he (the purohita) should make an offering for the purpose of Indra's head, together with the architect, astrologer, and priest.

Here an appropriate site outside the city is selected, designated as the *indrasthāna*. There a fire offering is performed for the purpose of Indra's head (*indraśīrṣārthaṃ*). The mantric content for this fire offering is not specified.

In Varāhamihira's version, most of the ritual action after the arrival in the city is specified on the evening of the eleventh day:

सन्तक्ष्य पुनस्तक्षा विधिवद्यष्टिं प्ररोपयेद्यन्त्रे ।
जागरमेकादश्यां नरेश्वरः कारयेच्चास्याम् ॥ 29 ॥
सितवस्त्रोष्णीषधरः पुरोहितः शाक्रवैष्णवैर्मन्त्रैः ।
जुहुयादग्निं साम्बत्सरो निमित्तानि गृहीयात् ॥ 30 ॥ BS 42

Having fitted it again appropriately, the architect should mount the pole on a crane. The king should host a vigil on the eleventh night near the pole. The purohita, wearing a white turban and clothes, should make an fire offering with mantras dedicated to Indra and Viṣṇu. The astrologer should observe the omens in the fire.

This night vigil on the eleventh day—not mentioned in Garga’s account—corresponds with the “overnight” (*adhivāsana*) motif, deployed in other rituals in Varāhamihira’s text corpus (*yātrā*, *puṣyasnāna*, *pratiṣṭhā*). In the paradigmatic war march (*yātrā*), the king, prior to his departure, spends the night in the wilderness in order to observe his dreams (*svapnanimitta*). In the present case, the pole takes the place of the king. Here the mantras are related to Indra and Viṣṇu, though Varāhamihira does not confirm their source, Vedic or non-Vedic. This correlates with a similar ritual eclecticism elsewhere in his ritual system.

Closely related to this overnight structure, Varāhamihira pays extra attention to the fire omens, which he describes at length in BS 42.31–36. Here again, he makes reference to the *yātrā*:

इष्टद्रव्याकारः सुरभिः स्निग्धो घनोऽनलोऽर्चिष्मान्।
शुभकृतोऽन्योऽनिष्टो यात्रायां विस्तरोऽभिहितः ॥ 31 ॥ BS 42 ॥

A fire that has the shape of an auspicious object, that is pleasing, smooth, thick, and full of flames, is auspicious. Otherwise it is inauspicious. This has been explained extensively in the *Yātrā*.

The passage concludes as follows:

उक्तं यदुत्तिष्ठति शक्रकेतौ शुभाशुभं सप्तमरीचिरूपैः।
तजन्मयज्ञग्रहशान्तियात्राविवाहकालेष्वपि चिन्तनीयम् ॥ 37 ॥ BS 42 ॥

Those auspicious and inauspicious omens which have been mentioned regarding the raising of Indra’s banner, through the forms of the fire, should be considered also on the occasions of a birth, sacrifice, planetary appeasement, war march, and wedding.

Here Varāhamihira describes the motif of fire omens as a structural element that can be repeated in other rituals. The model for this passage is found at *Bṛhadya-trā* 21 and *Yogayātrā* 8. By contrast, no reference to fire omens appears in GJ 45, despite the fact that the same text features a chapter on fire omens elsewhere in the *yātrā* section (GJ 32).

As for the erection and worship of the banner (steps 11–13), both texts agree that the banner should be raised on the twelfth day of Bhādrapada, under the Śravaṇa nakṣatra. Both texts also then describe the adornment of the banner with “baskets” (*piṭakāni*): GJ 45.39–45 and BS 42.41–50.¹⁰ But they differ in their interpretation of these baskets, and in the mode of worship of the banner:

¹⁰ The manuscripts do not mention the construction of “Indra’s daughters” (cf. BS 42.39–40), a topic that is common in purāṇic accounts. However, Bhaṭṭotpala attributes a verse to Garga on this topic: षडकाष्ठकृताः पञ्च स-

प्त वा लक्षणान्विताः। इन्द्रध्वयस्य शोभार्थं कुमारीः कारये-
द्विजः ॥ “In order to beautify the Indradhvaja, the priest should have five or seven daughters constructed, fashioned from firm wood and possessed of all appropriate marks.”

Garga:

ततः सद्यो^a ध्वजं कृत्वा जलकुम्भैः सचन्दनैः^b ।
गन्धौषधारत्नगर्भैर्^c यथावदभिषेचयेत् ॥ 46 ॥

^aततः सद्यो] emend., ततो सद्यं D, ++सज्यं Σ

^bजलकुम्भैः सचन्दनैः] Σ, जलकुम्भौ संचदनैः S

^cगर्भैर्] Σ, गर्भे D

अभिषिक्तमलंकृत्य^a मन्त्रैश्^b चाहूय वापरैः ।
आसनं पाद्यमर्घ्यं^c च दत्त्वा दद्याद्वलीनपि ॥ 47 ॥

^aअलंकृत्य] Σ, अलंक्रत्यं B M

^bमन्त्रैश्] मन्त्रैश् E H

^cआसनं...अर्घ्यं] Σ, असनं पद्यमर्घं D

आशीर्^aमङ्गलशब्दैश्च^b च वादित्राणां च निःसृतैः^c ॥
समं पुण्याहघोषैश्च वासवोच्छ्रयणं भवेत् ॥ 48 ॥ GJ 45 ॥

^aआशीर्] emend., आशीन्^o Dआसी^o Σ

^bमङ्गलशब्दैश्] D S, ^oमङ्गलशब्दैश् Σ

^cच निःसृतैः] D, निजस्वनैः Σ

On the same day, having made the banner, he should consecrate it accordingly with pots of water with sandal paste, perfumes, herbs, and jewels. Adorning the consecrated pole with ornaments and invoking with other mantras, having given a seat, foot water, and reception water, he should give bali offerings. The raising of Vāsava should be accompanied by benedictions and auspicious sounds spoken by bards, and with the sounds of *punṣyāha*.

Here the banner is treated to a set of services that approximates a classical *pūjā* or guest reception offering paired with an *abhiṣeka* (though the passage does not use the word *pūjā*).¹¹ Again the passage mentions invocatory mantras without any further identifying information. Note that while the adornment of the banner with the baskets is described in the preceding passage (GJ 45:39–43)—the text reads “he should tie the baskets” (बन्धीयात्पिटकानि)—it is not explicitly mentioned as part of this worship.

This scenario somewhat contrasts the ritual action presented by Varāhamihira:

¹¹ Geslani 2018: ch. 5.

कुर्यादहनि चतुर्थे पूरणमिन्द्रध्वजस्य शास्त्रज्ञः ।
 मनुना चागमगीतान्मन्त्रानेतान्पठेन्नियतः ॥ 51 ॥
 हरार्कवैवस्वतशक्रसोमैर्धनेशवैश्वानरपाशभृद्भिः ।
 महर्षिसंघैः सदिगप्सरोभिः शुक्राङ्गिरःस्कन्दमरुद्गणैश्च ॥ 52 ॥
 यथा त्वमूर्जस्करणैकरूपैः समर्चितस्त्वाभरणैरुदारैः ।
 तथेह तान्याभरणानि यागे शुभानि सम्प्रीतमना गृहाण ॥ 53 ॥
 अजोऽव्ययः शाश्वत एकरूपो विष्णुर्वराहः पुरुषः पुराणः ।
 त्वमन्तकः सर्वहरः कृशानुः सहस्रशीर्षः शतमन्युरीड्यः ॥ 54 ॥
 कविं सप्तजिह्वं त्रातारमिन्द्रं स्ववितारं सुरेशम् ।
 ह्यामि शक्रं वृत्रहणं सुषेणमस्माकं वीरा उत्तरा भवन्तु ॥ 55 ॥ BS 42

On the fourth day the priest knowing the Śāstras should fill the Indra-dhvaja, and he should carefully read these mantras, which were sung authoritatively by Manu:

“Just as you were praised by Hara, Arka, Vaivasvata, Śakra, Soma, Dhaneśa, Vaiśvānara, Pāśabhṛt, the mass of Maharṣis, the directions and Apsaras, Śukra, Aṅgiras, Skanda, and the Marudgaṇas, with excellent, uniform, strengthening, ornaments, so on this occasion, accept these auspicious ornaments, with a happy mind. You are Aja, Avyaya, Śāśvata, Ekarūpa, Viṣṇu, Varāha, Puruṣa, Purāṇa, Antaka, Sarvaharaḥ, Kṛṣānu, Sahasraśīrṣa, Śatamanyu, Īḍya. I invoke Śakra, Vṛtrahan, Suṣeṇa, Kavi, Saptajihva, Trātāra, Indra, Svavitr, Sureśa. May our heroes be superior.”

In this version, the “filling” (*pūraṇam*) of the banner (with the baskets) should be done on the fourth day (i.e. on the fifteenth day of the month), and this is accompanied by a mantra (attributed to Manu) recited by the king.¹² The details of this mantra suggest a clearer ritual structure. Whereas in Garga’s text, the tying of the baskets was not explicitly integrated into the worship of the pole, here the baskets are seen as gifts exchanged for Indra’s favour: just as Indra was honoured in the past, he is to accept these pleasing and auspicious ornaments. In exchange, he should make the king’s heroes “superior”.¹³ The reference to

¹² Varāhamihira in some cases attributes to Manu passages that can partly be traced to the *Manusmṛiti* (see BS 77.10 = *Manusmṛiti* 3.58). However, as one reviewer has pointed out, the term Manu, here as elsewhere in reference to the source of unorthodox man-

tras, could also refer to a generic sage.

¹³ Varāhamihira’s mantra also addresses Indra with the epithets of Viṣṇu, which is in keeping with the Vaiṣṇava element added to the text’s mythological introduction and to the mantras in the fire sacrifice at step 10.

the king's heroes may suggest a link to the impending autumnal season of war, to be further ritualized in the *nīrājana* and *yātrā*.¹⁴ As in the case of the offering to the tree spirits at the outset of the ritual, Varāhamihira has not fundamentally transformed the substance of the ritual, both texts include both the tying of baskets and some variation of a simple *bali* offering. Instead, he has sharpened the ritual logic with mantric content. It appears that Varāhamihira has thought more deliberately about the relation between the gesture of tying the baskets and the logic of ritual exchange, leading to what is on the whole a more coherent ritual scenario.

4 CONCLUSION

CONFIRMING THE EMERGING CONSENSUS regarding the priority of the *Gārgīya-jyotiṣa* to Varāhamihira's corpus, the testimony of Garga leaves no doubt that the Indradhvaja festival was largely established prior to Varāhamihira, in a form that would for the most part carry on into purāṇic sources. As in other cases, Varāhamihira's contribution to this ritual history, then, should not be seen in terms of invention, but rather integration. Indeed, one could argue that Varāhamihira added nothing essential to the Indradhvaja festival. Rather, he sharpened a nascent ritual logic of exchange, added relative specificity to the ritual's mantric liturgy, and implemented a structural overlay that harmonized the Indradhvaja with the *yātrā* cycle.

However minor, these additions may nonetheless prove decisive. From a broader perspective, these changes seem in line with the emphasis on *bali* and *yātrā* throughout Varāhamihira's ritual oeuvre. In other words, in Varāhamihira's hands, the Indradhvaja transforms from an isolated festival into one node in an integrated and uniform ritual calendar, comprising the *nīrājana*, *yātrā*, *puṣyasnāna*, and *pratiṣṭhā*.¹⁵ Further comparative and text-critical work on the *Gārgīyajyotiṣa* may shed further light on the formation of medieval state ritual as it appears in Varāhamihira's corpus.

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¹⁴ For further on the militarization of the Indradhvaja, see Geslani (submitted).

¹⁵ On Varāhamihira's account of the *yātrā*, *puṣyasnāna*, and *pratiṣṭhā*, see Geslani 2018.

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