

The Oldest Extant Source on the Indian Lore of Nakṣatras According to Vṛddhagarga

Bill M. Mak
Kyoto University

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1.0 *Gārgīyajyotiṣa* and the Origin of the Indian Nakṣatras

- Gap of intervening period: c. 500 BCE to c. 500 CE.
- *Gārgīyajyotiṣa* in 64 “*aṅgas*,” 1st century CE?
- Geslani, Marko, Bill M. Mak, Michio Yano, Kenneth Zysk. “Garga and early astral science in India”. *History of Science in South Asia*, 5.1 (2017): 151-191.
- Mak, Bill. 2018. “Tithikarmaguṇa in *Gārgīyajyotiṣa* – Tithi worship according to a number of early sources.” *Journal of Indian and Buddhist Studies* 66 (3): 958-911.

1.1 Nakṣatras in the Vedic Literature

- Full set of 27 *nakṣatras* (from Kṛttikā): *Taittirīyasaṃhitā* 4.4.10, *Taittirīyabrāhmaṇa* 1.5.1. Early first millennium BCE.
- 28 *nakṣatras* (with Abhijit): *Maitrāyāṇīsaṃhitā* 2.13.20, *Taittirīyabrāhmaṇa* 3.1.1, *Atharvaveda* 19.7.2-5. Late first millennium BCE.

2.0 The Lore of the Nakṣatras according to Vṛddhagarga in the *Gārgīyajyotiṣa*

| | | |
|-------------|--|-----------------------|
| Aṅga | 1 | 2-11 (except 3) |
| Structure | With subsections | Without subsections |
| Format | Prose and verses (in śloka and other meters) | Verse only (in śloka) |
| Content | Lunar-Nakṣatra astral lore | Planetary astral lore |
| Attribution | Garga and Vṛddhagarga | Garga |

Preamble:

[I] *tathā laukikavaidikādhyātmikānām arthānām karmaguṇānām prayogakālasiddhyartham tithinakṣatramuhūrtakaraṇānām ca prayoktā*

[The astrologer/astronomer (*sāṃvatsara*)] thus determines (lit. “the fixer” [of]) the *tithi*, *nakṣatra*, *muhūrta*, and *karaṇa* for success at applicable time of the characteristic ritual acts (*karmaguṇa*) whose purposes are mundane, Vedic or supramundane.]

[II] *caturvyūham karmaguṇam gargeṇoktam yathāvidhi| tithinakṣatrankaraṇair muhūrtānām ca saṃpadah||*

The quality of actions was proclaimed by Garga to be of four varieties, accordingly, and to be furnished by *tithis*, *nakṣatras*, *karaṇas*, and *muhūrtas*.

[III] Incongruous closing remark: *vṛddhagarge jyotiṣaśāstre nakṣatrakarma nāma caturtho 'dhyāyah* (“Chapter Four titled "Actions of Nakṣatra" of the Jyotiṣaśāstra of Vṛddhagarga”)

2.1 Number of Nakṣatras: Twenty-seven or twenty-eight?

[IV] *ekatāre śatabhiṣaj puṣyārdrā tvāṣṭram ānilam |
rādhā bhadre saphālgunyaw dvitāram aurvam āśvinam ||
tritāram ilvikā yāmyam jyeṣṭhā brāhmaṇam savaiṣṇavam |
catustārāṇy āśāḍhe dve maitram pauṣṇam savāsavam ||
pañcatāram bhaved dhastam prājāpatyam tathaiva ca |
ṣaṭtāram kṛttikā mūlam āśleṣā paitryam eva ca ||*

“One star have Śatabhiṣaj, Puṣya, Ārdrā, Citrā, and Svātī. Two stars have Rādhā (i.e. Viśākhā), the two Bhadrpadās, the two Phālgunī, Punarvasu (Aurva = Aditi) and Āśvinī. Three stars have the Ilvikās, Bharanī, Jyeṣṭhā, Abhijit, Śravaṇa. Four stars have the two Āśāḍhās, Anurādhā, Revatī and Śraviṣṭhā. Five stars have Hasta and Rohiṇi. Six stars have Kṛttikā, Mūla, Āśleṣā and Maghā.” (Thibaut trans.)

2.2 Divinities of the Nakṣatras

[V] *nakṣatradevatā hy etā etābhir yajñakarmani / yajamānasya sāstrajñaiḥ nāma nakṣatrajaṇam smṛtam // R-VJ 28; Y-VJ 35.*

“The people learned in the religious lores say that these deity-names are to be substituted for their own names in the (saṅkalpa of) the yāga (of the person on whose behalf the sacrifice is performed, viz.) the yajamāna.” (Kuppanna Sastry trans.).

| | Nakṣatra | Garga (G1 nakṣatrakarma) | VJ R25-26, Y36-40 | TS 4.4.10 | AVP | ŚKA skt |
|----|----------------|-----------------------------|-------------------|------------|------------|------------------|
| 1 | Kṛttikā | vahni (=agni) | agni | agni | agni | agni |
| 2 | Rohiṇī | prājāpatya (=prajāpati) | prajāpati | prajāpati | prajāpati | brahmā/prajāpati |
| 3 | Mṛgaśiras | saumya (soma) | soma | soma | maruta | soma |
| 4 | Ārdrā | rudra- | rudra | rudra | rudra | śūlabhṛt |
| 5 | Punarvasu | āditya (=aditi) | aditi | aditi | aditi | aditi/āditya |
| 6 | Puṣya | bārhaspatya (=br̥haspati) | br̥haspati | br̥haspati | br̥haspati | br̥haspati |
| 7 | Āśleṣā | sarpa- | sarpāḥ | sarpāḥ | sarpāḥ | sarpāḥ |
| 8 | Maghā | pitṛ- | pitarah | pitarah | pitarah | pitṛ/pitarah |
| 9 | Pūrvaphalgunī | bhaga- | bhaga | aryaman | bhaga | pitarah/aryaman |
| 10 | Uttaraphalgunī | āryamaṇa (emend. = aryaman) | aryaman | bhaga | aryaman | aryaman/bhaga |
| 11 | Hasta | sāvitra (=savitr) | savitr | savitr | savitr | sūrya |
| 12 | Citrā | tvāṣṭra (=tvaṣṭr) | tvaṣṭr | indra | tvaṣṭr | tvaṣṭr |
| 13 | Svātī | vāyavya (=vāyu) | vāyu | vāyu | vāyu | vāyu |
| 14 | Viśākhā | aindrāgnya (=indrāgnī) | indrāgnī | indrāgnī | indrāgnī | indrāgnī |
| 15 | Anurādhā | mitra | mitra | mitra | mitra | mitra |

| | | | | | | |
|----|--------------------------|---------------------|-------------|-------------|------------------------|-----------------|
| 16 | Jyeṣṭhā | aindra (=inda) | indra | indra | indramahādeva | indra |
| 17 | Mūla | nairṛta (=nirṛti) | nirṛti | pitarah | ahirbudhnya/ nirṛti | nairṛti |
| 18 | Pūrvāṣādhā | āpya (=āpah) | āpah | ap | ap | toya/āpah |
| 19 | Uttarāṣādhā | vaiśvadeva (=viśva) | viśvadevāḥ | viśva | viśvadeva | viśva |
| 20 | Abhijit | - | - | - | brahma | brahma/viṣṇu |
| 21 | Śravaṇā | vaiṣṇava (=viṣṇu) | viṣṇu | viṣṇu | viṣṇu | viṣṇu |
| 22 | Dhaniṣṭhā (Śraviṣṭha) | vāsava (=vasu) | vasavaḥ | vasavaḥ | vasu | vasu/vasavaḥ |
| 23 | Śatabhiṣā | vāruṇa (=varuṇa) | varuṇa | indra | varuṇa/indra | varuṇa |
| 24 | Pūrvabhādrapadā | āja (=aja) | aja ekapād | ajaikapād | ajaikapād/diś | ahirbudhnya |
| 25 | Uttarabhādrapadā | ahirbudhnya | ahirbudhnya | ahirbudhnya | āditya | ahirbudhnya |
| 26 | Revatī | pauṣṇa (=puṣan) | puṣan | puṣan | puṣan | puṣan |
| 27 | Aśvinī | aśvayugala | aśvayugala | aśvinau | aśvinau | aśvin/gandharva |
| 28 | Bharanī | yāmya (=yama) | yama | yama | yama | yama |

Table 1 Comparison of *Nakṣatra* deities

2.3 Number of stars

Group one (characterized by Śatabhiṣaj 100 stars, Revatī 32, and Aśvinī 3):

- i. Vṛddhagarga's *Nakṣatrakarma* in *Gārgyājyotiṣa* (G1-i)
- ii. Varāhamihia's *Brhatsaṃhitā* 97.1-2 (Var)
- iii. Brahmagupta's *Khandhakhādyaka* 1.9.1-2 (Bra)
- iv. Lalla's *Ratnaḥṣa* (Lal)
- v. *Vaṭeśvarasiddhānta* 8.2.12-13 (Vaṭ)
- vi. Śrīpati's *Jyotiṣaratnamālā* (Śrīp)
- vii. Rāma's *Muhūrtacintāmaṇi* (MC)
- viii. First fascicle of Amoghavajra's *Xiuyao jing* 宿曜經, Japanese (XYJ1j) and Chinese (XYJ1c) editions

Group two (characterized by Śatabhiṣaj 1 star and Aśvinī 2):

- ix. Garga's *Nakṣatrakendrabha* in *Gārgyājyotiṣa* (G1-ii)
- x. *Atharvaparīṣiṣṭa* (AVP)
- xi. *Śārdūlakarṇāvadāna* (Śārd)

- Amoghavajra's *Xiuyao jing*. Yang Jingfeng's recension in 759 CE.

3. Conclusion: Development of the *Nakṣatras*

- 27 *nakṣatras* as day-indicator associated with Vedic rituals and natal astrology, enumerated from Kṛttikā (Vṛddhagarga)
- 27 *nakṣatras* associated with sidereal movement of the Moon (27.3 days) (*Vedāṅgajyotiṣa*)
- 28 *nakṣatras* with the inclusion of Abhijit, motivated by the attempt to gain greater accuracy in the uneven *nakṣatra* coordinate system (*Atharvavedaparīṣiṣṭa*, *Śārdūlakarṇāvadāna*)
- Abhijit associated with the post-Vedic deity Brahmā.
- 28 *nakṣatra* system died out but is preserved in early Vedic and Buddhist texts
- 27 *nakṣatras* enumerated from Aśvinī (= Meṣa or Aries)

| | Nakṣatra | G1-i | G1-ii | AVP | Śārd | Var | Bra | Lal | Vaṭ | Śrīp | MC | XYJ1j | XYJ1c | 隋書 |
|----|-----------------------|------|-------|-----|------|-----|-----|-----|-----|------|-----|--------|-------|----|
| 1 | Kṛttikā | 6 | 6 | 6 | 6 | 6 | 6 | 6 | 6 | 6 | 6 | 6 | 6 | 7 |
| 2 | Rohiṇī | 5 | 5 | 1 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 8 |
| 3 | Mrgāśiras | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 |
| 4 | Ādrā | - | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1/2/10 | 1 | 10 |
| 5 | Punarvasu | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 5 | 2 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 2 | 2 | 8 |
| 6 | Puṣya | - | 1 | 1 | 3 | 3 | 1 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3/5 | 3/5 | 5 |
| 7 | Aśleṣā | 6 | 6 | 6 | 1 | 6 | 6 | 5 | 6 | 5 | 5 | 6 | 6 | 8 |
| 8 | Maghā | 6 | 6 | 6 | 5 | 5 | 6 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 6/8/5 | 6 | 7 |
| 9 | Pūrvaphalgunī | 2 | 2 | 4 | 2 | 8 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 6 | 2 | 6 |
| 10 | Uttaraphalgunī | 2 | 2 | 4 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 22 |
| 11 | Hasta | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 4 |
| 12 | Citrā | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 2 |
| 13 | Svātī | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 4 |
| 14 | Viśākhā | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 5 | 2 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 1 | 1 | 4 |
| 15 | Anurādhā | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 |
| 16 | Jyeṣṭhā | 3 | 3 | 1 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 |
| 17 | Mūla | 6 | 6 | 7 | 7 | 11 | 2 | 11 | 11 | 11 | 11 | 9 | 2 | 9 |
| 18 | Pūrvāṣāḍhā | 4 | 4 | 8 | 4 | 2 | 4 | 2 | 2 | 4 | 2 | 4 | 4 | 4 |
| 19 | Uttarāṣāḍhā | 4 | 4 | 8 | 4 | 8 | 4 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 2 | 4 | 4 | 6 |
| 20 | Abhijit | - | 3 | 1 | 3 | - | 3 | - | 3 | - | 3 | 3 | 3 | 6 |
| 21 | Śravaṇā | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 4 |
| 22 | Dhaniṣṭhā (Śraviṣṭha) | 4 | 4 | 5 | 4 | 5 | 5 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 2 |
| 23 | Śatabhiṣā | 100 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 100 | 1 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 1 | 3 |
| 24 | Pūrvabhādrapadā | 2 | 2 | 4 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 |
| 25 | Uttarabhādrapadā | 2 | 2 | 4 | 2 | 8 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 |
| 26 | Revatī | 32 | 4 | 1 | 1 | 32 | 1 | 32 | 32 | 32 | 32 | 32 | 32 | 16 |
| 27 | Aśviṇī | 3 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 3 | 2 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 |
| 28 | Bharaṇī | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 |

Table 2 Comparison of the Number of Stars in a *Nakṣatra*