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How is a Vehicular Homicide like the Sacrifice?

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This essay examines an ancient whodunit, reconsidering a cold case of vehicular homicide from the *Jaiminīya Brāhmaṇa* of the *Sāmaveda*. I will argue that this tale, about a chariot, an accident, and a death, does not concern a historical chariot but a metaphorical one. The narrative is a metaphysical account of the sacrifice conceived of in terms of a chariot collision. In what follows, I hope to demonstrate that the text is using narrative to make an argument, tacitly presenting the patron of the sacrifice, and not the priests, as ultimately responsible for the death of the sacrificial animal.

The story opens with the origin of the *vārśa sāman*, which is a melody named after Vṛ̊śa Jāna, the *purohita* (personal priest) of King Triyaruṇa.

> *atha vārśam | vṛ̊śo vai jānas triyaruṇasya traivṛ̊ṣṇasyaikṣvākasya rājñaḥ purohita āsa | atha ha sma tataḥ purā rājabhyaḥ purohitā eva rathān saṃgṛhṇanty aupadraṣṭryāya – ned ayaṃ pāpaṃ karavad iti | tau hādhāvayantau brāhmaṇakumāraṃ pathi krīḍantaṃ rathacakreṇa vicicchidatuḥ | itaro hādhāvayann abhiprayuyāvāpetara āyayāma | sa hādhigatya na śaśākāpāyantum | taṃ ha tad eva vicicchidatuḥ | tasmin hodāte tvaṃ hantāsi tvaṃ hantāsīti | sa ha vṛ̊śo 'bhīśūn prakīryāvatiṣṭhann uvāca tvaṃ hantāsīti | neti hovāca | yo vai rathaṃ saṃgṛhṇāti sa rathasyeśe | tvaṃ hantāsīti | neti hetara uvācāpa vā aham āyāṃsaṃ, sa tvam abhiprāyauṣīs, tvam eva hantāsīti* | (*JB* 3.94)

> So, the *vārśa* (melody): Vṛ̊śa Jāna was the *purohita* of the Ikṣvāku King, Triyaruṇa, the son of Trivṛ̊ṣṇa. Now, in those days, only the *purohitas*

> drive chariots for kings (so that) to an on-looker (it seems) 'this one will do no evil'. These two driving towards the son of a priest playing on the road, cut him apart with the chariot's wheel. The one driving, pushes (the chariot) forward; the other holds (it) back. Having gone up to that (boy), he evidently could not hold back—right then those two killed him. Then, they said to one another, 'You are the killer, you are the killer.' Evidently, Vṛśa, having tossed the reins and stepping down, said, 'You are the killer.' 'No', said Triyaruṇa, 'He who reins the chariot, he is the chariot's master; you are the killer.' 'No', said the other, 'I held (it) back, you pushed (it) forward (over him). You alone are the killer.'

Regarding this exchange, the *Pañcaviṃśa Brāhmaṇa* summarizes (*PB* 13.3.12) *sa purohitam abravīt tava mā purodhāyām idam īdṛg upāgād* 'He said to his *purohita*: "Because of your (being) placed in front, has something like this befallen me."' For the *Pañcaviṃśa Brāhmaṇa*, there is no conflict because the king has accepted that this has happened to him. His objection is simply that his *purohita* should have better protected him from all negative consequences. As a dutiful *purohita*, Vṛśa sings the *vārśa* melody and restores the boy to life. The story appears in *Pañcaviṃśa Brāhmaṇa* as an anecdote that attests to the melody's power in fulfilling wishes and nothing more. The longer narrative of the *Jaiminīya Brāhmaṇa*, however, has a more elaborate rhetorical objective.

Regarding this episode, Laurie Patton notes, 'Vṛśa Jāna is upset because a faulty judgment has been pronounced against him, either by King Trayaruṇa himself or by the Ikṣvaku court to which the two go for appeal.'[1] Indeed, the Ikṣvāku elders find their *rājan* innocent and the *purohita* guilty.[2] Like most legal systems today would, they find the rider not guilty and declare the driver to be responsible for the collision. The Ikṣvākus repeat Triyaruṇa's own phrasing:

> *tau vai pṛcchāvahā iti | tau hekṣvākūn eva praśnam eyatuḥ |*
> *te hekṣvākava ūcur yo vāva rathaṃ saṃgṛhṇāti sa rathasyeśe |*
> *tvam eva hantāsīti vṛśam eva parābruvan |* (*JB* 3.95.1–4)
>
> Those two (said,) 'Let's ask!' The two came to the Ikṣvākus to ask.
> The Ikṣvākus said, 'Whoever reins the chariot is the chariot's master.'

[1] Laurie L. Patton, 'Speech Acts and Kings' Edicts: Vedic Words and Rulership in Taxonomical Perspective', *History of Religions*, vol. 34, no. 4, 1995, p. 349.

[2] I will use the noun 'guilt' and the adjective 'guilty' in this article in a restricted way to refer specifically to the ontological state of culpability as opposed to the emotional state.

They then declared to Vṛśa alone, 'You alone are the killer.'

For Patton, two kinds of speech acts are represented here. Vṛśa Jāna's priestly mantras and the Ikṣvākus' royal edicts recapitulate a distinction between two elite spheres: that of the brahmins and that of the *kṣatriyas*. The *Jaiminīya Brāhmaṇa* presents the speech of brahmins like Vṛśa Jāna to be superior. The power of Vṛśa Jāna's speech is evident because he can bring the decapitated boy back to life:

> *so 'kāmayatod ita iyāṃ, gātuṃ nāthaṃ vindeya | sam ayaṃ kumāro jīved iti | sa etat sāmāpaśyat | tenainaṃ samairayad |* (*JB* 3.95.5–8)
>
> He wished to himself, 'May I get out of this; may I find a way, a rescue, (by which) this boy may live (again).' He saw this melody. By that (melody) he reassembled him.

Not only does Vṛśa Jāna's *sāman* have power, but Patton argues that only his brahmin speech can correct the damage caused by the ignorant speech of the *kṣatriya* Ikṣvākus in *JB* 3.96. According to Patton: 'It is the Kṣatriya judgment that, because of its faulty nature, destroys the crucial element of a royal household—the domestic fire. Vṛśa Jāna's Vedic verses come to the rescue. Thus, the king cannot put his own house to rights; it is only the mantras, or speech of a Brahmin, that can reverse the effect of the faulty royal judgment.'[3] Consider Vṛśa Jāna's assertion immediately following his reanimation of the decapitated boy (*JB* 3.96.1–2) *sa kruddho janam agacchat | anṛtaṃ mā vyavocann iti* 'Angered, he went to the people (and said,) "They sentenced me falsely!"'

The fact that he has gone to the *jana-* (people) marks this a public speech act denouncing Ikṣvāku decision-making. Vṛśa Jāna has subverted their authority by undoing the very crime of which he was ruled guilty. While I do think Patton's analysis of *JB* 3.96 is correct, and that the text presents the speech of priests as higher on a hierarchy of truth than the speech of rulers, it is an insufficient explanation of the scene of the vehicular homicide in *JB* 3.94. For the supremacy of brahmin speech over *kṣatriya* speech is not resolved in *JB* 3.94 itself. *JB* 3.94 ends before they even go to the Ikṣvākus, let alone see the consequences of their erroneous decision.

[3] Patton, 'Speech Acts and Kings' Edicts', p. 349.

Hieratic Commitments Permeate the Brāhmaṇas

To approach these texts in a probative manner, one must first be familiar with the genre of text to which the *Jaiminīya Brāhmaṇa* belongs. The Vedic texts are conventionally divided into four levels: Saṃhitās, Brāhmaṇas, Āraṇyakas, and Upaniṣads. The Saṃhitās are the mantras recited during the performance of ritual. The Brāhmaṇas are sacred commentary on the Saṃhitās; sometimes all three remaining classes are grouped together as 'Brāhmaṇa'.[4] While the Brāhmaṇas are not texts that are ritually performed, they are deeply concerned with the performance of the Saṃhitās. This concern pervades the text, to the extent that these texts locate themselves on the ritual grounds. Consider an example from another Brāhmaṇa, the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*.

> *bahir veder iyáṃ vai védiḥ āpto vấ asya sá vāyúr yo 'syām átha yá imām páreṇa vāyus tám asminn etád dadhāti* | (*ŚB* 9.4.2.3)
>
> From outside of the altar, for this is the altar.
> Obtained is the wind of this which is in it.
> So, which wind is beyond it, he puts that in this.

Without context, this comment is very hard to understand. To properly interpret the passage requires the awareness that the text conceives of itself as being spoken on the ritual ground. One might imagine an elder and a youth watching the performance of the sacrifice, and the elder relating to his protégé the significance of the ritual actions going on before him. In other words, the text tacitly expects a certain amount of information to be at the disposal of its intended audience.

[4] *ŚāṅkhGS* 1.2.3–5: *śrutaṃ tu sarvān atyeti* | *na śrutam atīyād* | *adhidaivam athādhyātmam adhiyajñam iti trayam* | *mantreṣu brāhmaṇe caiva śrutam ity abhidhīyate* '(Sacred) knowledge surpasses everything, (sacred) knowledge should not be passed over. What is threefold, pertaining to heaven, to the self, to the sacrifice, only what is in *mantras* and the Brāhmaṇa (commentary), is defined as "(sacred) knowledge".' This passage from *Śāṅkhāyana Gṛhyasūtra* seems to conceive of the Vedas as consisting of *mantra* and Brāhmaṇa. I interpret *mantra* to refer to the Saṃhitā and Brāhmaṇa to refer to remainder of the canon, which means the Brāhmaṇa, Āraṇyaka, and Upaniṣad belonging to a particular *caraṇa* (a subgrouping of *śākhā* 'branch (of the Veda)'). A *caraṇa* may have its own distinct sacred commentary (Brāhmaṇa, Āraṇyaka, and Upaniṣad), but all *caraṇas* which share a Saṃhitā belong to the same *śākhā*.

Here the pronouns need no explicit referent because of the speaker's ability to indicate with gesture and spatial proximity. Consider the same verse with the presupposed sacrificial context in parentheses.

> (He takes wind) from outside of the altar, for this (earth) is the altar.
> Obtained is this (hearth)'s wind, which is (already) in this (earth).
> So, which wind is beyond (this earth), (the priest) puts that (wind) in this (hearth).

This passage belongs to a portion of the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* in which the priest constructs a sacred hearth endowed with the wind of the three worlds. The *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* reasons that, since the *vedi-* (altar) is dug out of earth, the hearth is already endowed with the wind of the earth. The challenge, then, is to furnish it with the winds proper to the other two worlds, the atmosphere and the heavens, which are beyond this earth. The following sentence confirms that, assuming a ritual context was prudent, for it describes the ritual gesture by which the priest can seize the wind beyond this earth: (*ŚB* 9.4.2.4) *añjalínā na hy ètasyétīvābhípattir ásti* '(He does so) by a cupping (hand gesture), for there is no seizing of this (wind) superior (to this gesture)'.

Perhaps claiming that a hieratic canon is concerned with ritual is a bit overdetermined. I bring it up, however, because the *Jaiminīya Brāhmaṇa* is as committed to the ritual as the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*.[5] The assumption of a hieratic context must be explicit in order to build upon Patton's analysis. If brahmin speech is indeed superior, why is it superior? I am not convinced that the text would be satisfied in presenting Vṛśa Jāna's speech as superior merely by a de facto manifestation of its power. Rather, I would expect it to be a superior manifestation of truth which reflects Vṛśa Jāna's superior knowledge. That superior knowledge is shared by the text, which asserts that in a two-man chariot (*JB* 3.94) *itaro hādhāvayann abhiprayuyāvāpetara āyayāma* 'the driving one pushes (it) forward, the other one holds (it) back'. As holding back the forward motion of a chariot can only be done by means of the reins, the text seems to suggest that that it is the other party, the passenger, who is to blame. How can this be? To understand culpability in a chariot crash, it is

[5] The commitments of the *Jaiminīya Brāhmaṇa* are shaped by a Sāmavedic point of view rather than the White Yajurvedic point of view assumed by the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*.

necessary to understand what a chariot really is in the sacrificial context presupposed by the Brāhmaṇas.

Already at the very beginning of the Vedic tradition, the chariot appears as a metaphor for the sacrifice. For the sacrifice, like a chariot, transports verbal art, mental intentions, and material oblations across the vast distance of the atmosphere to the heavens. Consider this example from the *Ṛgveda*:[6]

> *prātáṁ rátho návo yoji sásniś | cáturyugas trikaśáḥ saptáraśmiḥ |*
> *dáśāritro manuṣíyaḥ suvarṣáḥ | sá iṣṭíbhir matíbhī ráṃhiyo bhūt ||*
> (*ṚV* 2.18.1)
>
> At daybreak, a new winning chariot is yoked, having four yokes, three whips, seven reins, and ten oars. Belonging to Manu, sun-winning, it becomes quick by our wishes and thoughts.

Here the chariot in question is distinctly unlike a historical chariot as it is furnished with oars. Karl Friedrich Geldner follows Sāyaṇa in assuming that the parts of the chariot represent components of the sacrifice, although he suggests that they may not represent specific implements of the sacrifice, but rather its multifarious nature in general.[7] One way to conceive of this phenomenon is as a poetic and stylized use of numerals. The ten oars may not have a fixed referent, but instead suggest to the audience any element of the sacrifice that is conceived of in sets of ten.[8] Another example of an impossible chariot is found in the enigmatic riddle hymn.

[6] The text of the *Ṛgveda* is taken from B.A. van Nooten and G.B. Holland, eds., *Rig Veda: A Metrically Restored Text with an Introduction and Notes*, Harvard Oriental Series, vol. 50, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1994.

[7] Karl Friedrich Geldner, *Der Rig-Veda aus dem Sanskrit ins Deutsche übersetzt und mit einem laufenden Kommentar versehen*, Harvard Oriental Series, vols. 33–36, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1951; repr., Harvard Oriental Series, vol. 63, 2003, p. 214: 'Ob das Bild des Webens festgehalten wird? Sāy[aṇa] bezieht die drei Savanas, 7 auf die Metren. Man könnte auch an die 7 Grundformen des Opfers denken, falls überkaupt die Zahlenhäufung einen bestimmten Sinn hat und nicht nur allgemein die große Mannigfaltigkeit zum Ausdruck bringen soll.'

[8] On the other hand, the strategy of homology is seen throughout Vedic poetics. In it, two specific compounded items are equated, and their respective components are also equated. This 'compositional metaphor' intensifies the assertion that the two compounded items are identical. Consider (*ṚV* 10.90.6) *yát púruṣeṇa havíṣā | devá́ yajñám átanvata | vasantó*

saptá yuñjanti rátham ékacakram | éko áśvo vahati saptánāmā |
trināḿbhi cakrám ajáram anarváṇ | yátremā́ víśvā bhúvanāḿdhi tasthúḥ ||
(*Ṛ̊V* 1.164.2)
imáṃ rátham ádhi yé saptá tasthúḥ | saptácakraṃ saptá vahanti áśvāḥ |
saptá svásāro abhí sáṃ navante | yátra gávāṃ níhitā saptá nā́ma ||
(*Ṛ̊V* 1.164.3)

The seven yoke the one-wheel chariot, one horse with seven names draws (it). Having three naves, un-aging, and unstoppable (is the) wheel on which all these beings here stand.
On this seven-wheel chariot, the seven stand; seven horses draw (it). Seven sisters cry out together towards (that), in which are deposited the seven names of the cows.

Here is another impossible chariot. Instead of ten oars, it has either one wheel or seven wheels. My suggestion for *Ṛ̊V* 2.18.1 can be applied here too: it might be better to treat the use of each numeral as a poetic repetition of a single referent rather than discrete sets of different sacrificial implements. There is a chariot with one of something [wheel, horse] and with seven of something [sisters, names, wheels, horses]. Joanna Jurewicz finds a complex blend of sacrificial metaphors and solar imagery in these verses.[9] It is clear

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asyāsīd ā́jyaṃ | grīṣmá idhmáḥ śarád dhavíḥ 'When the gods extended the sacrifice with man as the oblation, the spring was its butter, the summer (its) kindling, (and) the autumn (its) oblation.' The season of winter would be equated with the execution of the *puruṣa,* and, most likely on the basis of that equation, is omitted. This omission is probably a strategy to avoid culpability for the execution. I think these compositional metaphors are a form of poetic index. For more on this phenomenon, see Calvert Watkins, *How to Kill a Dragon: Aspects of Indo-European Poetics*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1995; Velizar Sadovski, 'Structure and Contents of Lists and Catalogues in Indo-Iranian Traditions of Oral Poetry (Speech and Performance in Veda and Avesta, II)', in *Indic across the Millennia: From the Rigveda to Modern Indo-Aryan,* 14th World Sanskrit Conference, Kyoto, Japan, Bremen: Hempen, 2012, pp. 153–92.

[9] The term 'blend' used by Jurewicz refers to the entanglement of two or more concepts. Jurewicz explains, 'Metaphor is a cognitive mapping operating between two conceptual domains. It allows for conceptualization of one domain in terms of another.' See Joanna Jurewicz, *Fire and Cognition in the Ṛ̊gveda*, Warsaw: Dom Wydawniczy Elipsa, 2010, p. 28. If I interpret Jurewicz correctly, one might think of one metaphor as conceiving of X in terms of Y, of another metaphor as conceiving of Y in terms of Z, then of their conceptual blend as conceiving of X in terms

from another verse in this very hymn, that the single wheel is a metaphor for the solar year:

> *duvā́daśa pradhā́yaś cakrám ékaṃ | trī́ṇi nábhyāni ká u tác ciketa |*
> *tásmin sākáṃ triśatā́ ná śaṅkávo | arpitā́ḥ ṣaṣṭír ná calācalā́saḥ ||*
> (*Ṛ́V* 1.164.48)
>
> Twelve fellies, one wheel, three hub-parts: who recognizes that?
> Fitted in that (wheel), like three hundred and sixty pegs, they go and come.

The answer to the riddle is that solar days come and go like pegs in the wheel, which is the solar year.[10] It seems likely, then, that the one horse refers to the Sun, for the horse is often connected to the Sun in Vedic texts from the *Ṛ́gveda* to the Upaniṣads.[11] Jurewicz suggests that the seven may represent the seven seers or Aṅgirases, and, I would add, it likely refers to the team of seven priests who undertake the sacrifice.[12] I think it is worth emphasizing the relationship between a chariot and the list of its parts. For whatever the enigmatic referent (the Sun, the year, or the seven seers), the parts are conceived of as wheels belonging to the chariot. Thus, one aspect of the chariot that makes it an attractive metaphor for the sacrifice is precisely its compositional nature.

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of Z. In this case, a few more variables are involved: (1) The sacrifice is metaphorically conceived of as a chariot that travels the path to heaven and back; (2) The Sun is metaphorically conceived of as a chariot which travels as its path its trajectory in the sky during the Solar day; and (3) The Sun is metonymically conceived of as a chariot which travels the solar year. The Sun, the sacrifice, and the year are blended by association with the chariot. The blending of a metaphor of the sacrifice and that of the chariot of the Sun is not accidental, argues Jurewicz: 'In this stanza the composer presents the morning ritual activity of the primeval seers during which they mentally reach the sun in zenith.' See Jurewicz, *Fire, Death and Philosophy: A History of Ancient Indian Thinking*, Warsaw: Dom Wydawniczy Elipsa, 2016, p. 103.

[10] Again, the wheel has three naves, which may represent the four seasons with inauspicious winter excluded. Alternately, it may represent the three worlds.

[11] *Ṛ́V* 1.163.2d: *sū́rād áśvaṃ vasavo nír ataṣṭa* 'Vasus, you carved the horse out of the Sun.' *BĀU* 1.1.1: *uṣā́ vā́ áśvasya médhyasya śíraḥ sū́ryaś cákṣur* 'Dawn is the head of the sacrificial horse, the Sun (its) eye.'

[12] Jurewicz, *Fire, Death and Philosophy*, p. 100.

Jurewicz astutely notes another attractive aspect relating to the conceptual blend. In her words:

> The conceptual network created by the composer consists of the following input spaces. The first is a chariot pulled by a horse, the second is the rising sun and the third is the world. In the blend, the world is placed in the revolving wheel of the chariot. The generic space is the concept of motion.[13]

The chariot is an icon of motion; it moves both rapidly and loudly. This velocity is a necessary element in sacrificial performance as the offerings to the gods must quickly traverse the atmosphere to reach heaven. Further, poetic speech must not be limited by the auditory range of normal speech; it must be audible to the gods. A final reason for the success of the chariot as a metaphor for the sacrifice is that the chariot is a luxury good created for elites. The chariot persisted as a symbol of royal power long after its obsolescence as a tool of war. The use of the chariot as a metaphor for the sacrifice confers the chariot's value as a prestigious commodity onto the sacrifice, justifying the fee owed to the priests.

In that capacity, the chariot combines features of several other metaphors for the sacrifice found in the *Ṛgveda*. The sacrifice is conceived of as a woven textile, which is an elite good but lacks mobility, unless one considers the motion of the shuttle.[14] The sacrifice is sometimes conceived of as an arrow,[15] but while an arrow

[13] Ibid.

[14] *ṚV* 10.130.1: *yó yajñó viśvátas tántubhis tatá | ékaśataṃ devakarmébhir āyataḥ | imé vayanti pitáro yá āyayúḥ | prá vayāpa vayéti āsate taté* 'The sacrifice which is stretched in all directions by threads (which) is extended to one hundred and one by the acts of god. These ones weave it: the fathers who have come here. They sit at the stretched (sacrifice) saying, "weave to, weave fro".'

[15] *ṚV* 10.42.1: *ásteva sú prataráṃ lāyam ásyan | bhūṣann iva prá bharā stómam asmai | vācā́ viprās tarata vā́cam aryó | ní rāmaya jaritaḥ sóma índram* 'Like an archer shooting farther while crouching, like one decorating (a body) bear forth praise to him! By poetic speech, inspired (poets), cross over the poetic speech of the stranger. Singer, bring Indra to rest at our Soma (pressing)!' Here an archer shooting an arrow is directly compared to the praise singer. A crouching position may be indicated by adverb *lā́yam* (see Manfred Mayrhofer, *Etymologisches Wörterbuch des Altindoarischen*, vol. 2. Heidelberg: Carl Winter, 1996, p. 475) may be capturing the physical position of the poet in performance. It is implied

is a powerful symbol of masculinity and military might, it is not a particularly expensive commodity. Finally, its use in competitive racing made it a fitting metaphor for an industry based on agonistic poetics; Indra must be drawn to the Soma pressing by outcompeting rival sacrifices.

The Chariot in the *Kaṭha Upaniṣad*

While the *Ṛgveda* gives ample evidence that the chariot is one of the primary metaphors for the sacrifice, it is not immediately obvious how that provides any insight into *JB* 3.94. Even if the chariot driven by Vṛśa Jāna is a sacrifice, the argument about the sacrifice coded into the narrative is quite opaque. To examine how metaphorical chariots are used in Vedic argumentation, I shall now investigate a genre closer to that of the *Jaiminīya Brāhmaṇa*. The *Kaṭha Upaniṣad* is a late Vedic text which equates the chariot with the body in its third chapter. The equation of the chariot with the body and the passenger of that chariot with the *ātman* has been understood to be an allegory which anticipates features of the early Sāṅkhya philosophical tradition by making the *ātman* (self) an entity distinct from the body, the mind, and the senses.

> *ātmānaṃ rathinaṃ viddhi* | *śarīraṃ ratham eva tu* |
> *buddhiṃ tu sārathiṃ viddhi* | *manaḥ pragraham eva ca* ‖ (*KaṭhU* 3.3)
> *indriyāṇi hayān āhur* | *viṣayāṁs teṣu gocarān* |
> *ātmendriyamanoyuktaṃ* | *bhoktety āhur manīṣiṇaḥ* ‖ (*KaṭhU* 3.4)
>
> Know the self to be the chariot-passenger, but the body is only the chariot.
> Know the understanding to be the chariot-driver, and the mind only the reins.
> They say that the senses are the horses; among them the (sensory) ranges are pastures
> Whose mind, senses, and self are yoked, the wise say he is the enjoyer.

Notice, however, that this metaphor takes advantage of the same compositional aspect of the chariot as *ṚV* 2.18.1 and *ṚV* 1.164.2–3. I think the metaphor of the chariot in the *Kaṭha Upaniṣad* is more

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by comparative *prataráṃ* that the singer must be like an archer who shoots farther than his rival. Just as an arrow can move through space faster and farther than the arrow of a rival archer, the inspired poets' *vāc* must cross the *vāc* of the rival to reach Indra.

than a simple equation of the body with a chariot and the self with its passenger. In a previous article, I argued that the dialogue between Naciketas and Death in the first chapter has an argument structure that mimics the ritual sequence of constructing a fire altar, but in reverse.[16] I argued that rhetorically deconstructing the fire altar is a way of theorizing the metaphysical essence of why the sacrifice works. The *nāciketa* fire altar is conceived of in triplicate because one fire altar is the ritual fire, one is a heavenly fire-altar, and one is internal to the *yajamāna* (the patron of the sacrifice). In order to transport the *yajamāna* to the heavenly world, the sacrifice links his *ātman* to *brahman*, the Sun, which is the *ātman* of Prajāpati. What is the evidence that the ritual dimensions, which seem so important in the first chapter, are still present in the third chapter? Consider the first two verses of the third chapter which immediately precede the chariot allegory.

ṛtaṃ pibantau sukṛtasya loke | guhāṃ praviṣṭau parame parārdhe |
chāyātapau brahmavido vadanti | pañcāgnayo ye ca triṇāciketāḥ ‖
(*KaṭhU* 3.1)

yaḥ setur ījānānām | akṣaraṃ brahma yat param |
bhayaṃ titīrṣatāṃ pāraṃ | nāciketaṃ śakemahi ‖ (*KaṭhU* 3.2)

Truly, (two are) drinking in the world of proper ritual actions
(Each) entered a cave: the farthest place (and its) other half.
The ones finding *brahman*, who maintain the five fires and the triple *nāciketa* (fire-altar), call (the two) shadow and heat.

For those desiring to cross over fear[17] to yonder (side),
may we master the *nāciketa* (fire-altar),
which is the bridge of those having sacrificed,
the far (place) which is inexhaustible *brahman*.

[16] See Caley Charles Smith, 'The Kaṭhopaniṣad and the Deconstruction of the Fire-Altar', in *Tavet Tat Satyam: Studies in Honor of Jared S. Klein on the Occasion of His Seventieth Birthday*, ed. Mark Wenthe, Andrew Byrd, and Jessica DeLisi, Ann Arbor, MI: Beech Stave Press, 2016.

[17] I have emended *abhayaṃ* to *bhayaṃ* on metrical grounds as suggested by Patrick Olivelle, *The Earliest Upaniṣads: Annotated Text and Translation*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1998, p. 606. 'Crossing over fear' probably means to overcome fear and the result, therefore, is the absence of fear. So the point is semantically somewhat moot.

There are numerous elements in these two verses that refer to ritual, warranting the assumption that the ritual context is nontrivial in the portrayal of the chariot that follows in the verses immediately after. First, consider that this truth about *chāyā-* (shadow) and *ātapa-* (heat) is being related by *pañcāgni-* (maintainers of the five ritual fires) who are *triṇāciketa-* (pilers of the triple *nāciketa* fire altar), which links this chapter to the first one.[18] The other indication of ritual activity is that the subjects of first person plural middle optative *śakemahi* 'may we be able' are not the genitive plural *īj̄āna-* (those having sacrificed), for whom the *nāciketa* fire altar is a *setu* (bridge).[19] The speakers of *śakemahi* are expressing a wish that they may be able to master this fire-altar as a *setu* for the benefit of these *īj̄āna-* who are *titīrṣant-* (desiring to cross) to *brahman*. This point is crucial, for the bridge to *brahman* is depicted as something which one can obtain for another. Who are these *īj̄āna-*? If the perfect middle participle is re-inflected for the present stem, the form becomes much more recognizable—*yajamāna*. There is good reason, then, to apply this sacrificial context to the chariot in the next verse. This nuance does not invalidate traditional analyses of the chariot as an allegory for the self, far from it, but the relationship between *ātman* and *brahman* is explicitly connected by a *setu*, the *nāciketa* fire altar, which should not be dismissed in any analysis of the *Kaṭha Upaniṣad*. In other words, the chariot in the *Kaṭha Upaniṣad* seems to redeploy the metaphor of the sacrificial chariot to theorize the body of the *yajamāna* as a compositional whole. Of the components that make up the *yajamāna*, only one, the *ātman*, is the passenger on this sacrificial journey to *brahman*.[20]

[18] They are also *brahmavid 'brahman*-finding'. In Smith, 'The Kaṭhopaniṣad and the Deconstruction of the Fire-Altar', p. 291, I argued that *brahman* refers to the Sun. If that analysis is correct, then *brahmavid* could be a conceptual equivalent of the Ṛgvedic form *svarvid*.

[19] This *setu* serves as a connection to *brahman*. The terms *setu* more often refers to a dam, but the construction of a dam is such that it also serves as a bridge. The noun is built from √*sā* (to tie) which gives insight into the construction of bridges and dams in this period. It also falls into the conceptual vocabulary of tying, which Vedic texts use to refer to ritual linkages like *nidāna-* (tether) from √*dā* (to tie) or *bandhu-* (link) from √*bandh* (to bind).

[20] This is consistent with the notion of a 'compositional self' seen elsewhere in the Vedas. See Stephanie A. Majcher, *Becoming Sanskrit: A*

Recall that in *KaṭhU* 3.3 the *śarīra-* (body) comprises three components: the *ātman-* (self), the *buddhi-* (understanding), and the *manas-* (thought). The chariot has three components: the *rathin-* (passenger), the *sārathi-* (driver), and the *pragraha-* (the reins). What are the differences between a passenger and a driver? The passenger is typically the social superior being taken to a destination of his choosing, while the driver obediently taxis him to that destination. The passenger is a passive participant during the journey, while the driver takes the active role of operating the craft. It is precisely the inactive behavior of the passenger which absolves him of guilt according to the Ikṣvākus. The difference between passenger and driver is emphasized in the *Kaṭha Upaniṣad*, as the *buddhi* is not the beneficiary of the chariot's journey; only the *ātman* is. In emphasizing this difference, the *Kaṭha Upaniṣad* casts light on another important aspect of the chariot, which makes it an attractive metaphor for the sacrifice. The beneficiary of the sacrifice, the socially elite *yajamāna*, does relatively little, while the priests toil in ritual labor. Sacrifice creates a metaphysical quandary. The patron, who has memorized nothing and is inactive during performance, receives all the benefit of the sacrifice while the wise and busy priests receive only their *dakṣiṇā* (ritual fee). How can this be? Because the sacrifice is like a chariot. The priests are chauffeurs who drive the sacrifice like a chariot, transporting the *yajamāna* to the heavenly world like a passenger. Further, the *yajamāna* needs no knowledge of the ritual to benefit from it, which is why the *ātman* is distinct from the *buddhi*.

Guilt in the *Ṛgveda*

So far, I have argued that the *Jaiminīya Brāhmaṇa* is a hieratic text that comments on aspects of ritual; that the chariot is a pervasive metaphor for the sacrifice; and that the distinction between driver and passenger is a distinction between priest and patron as active and inactive sacrificial participants. Vṛśa Jāna is both a *sārathi-* (driver) and a *purohita-* (priest). Triyaruṇa is both a *rathin-* (passenger) and a *rājan-* (king), who would have been a *yajamāna* (patron of the sacrifice) at the very least at his royal consecration. There is a third ritual participant: the *kumāra* (boy), who is decapitated by the chariot's tread. Who is this boy's ritual homologue? I suggest that

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Study of Language and Person in the Ṛgvedic Āraṇyakas, PhD dissertation, The University of Sydney, 2016.

the boy represents the *paśu* ([sacrificial] animal). A great anxiety surrounds ritual execution in the *Ṛgveda*. The sacrificial horse is told:

ná vā́ u etán mriyase ná riṣyasi | devā́ṁ íd eṣi pathíbhiḥ sugébhiḥ |
hárī te yúñjā pṛ́ṣatī abhūtām | úpāsthād vā́jī́ dhurí rā́sabhasya ‖
(*Ṛ̊V* 1.162.21)

sugáviyaṃ no vā́jī́ suáśviyam | puṃsáḥ putrā́ṁ utá viśvāpúṣaṃ rayím |
anāgāstváṃ no áditiḥ kṛṇotu | kṣatráṃ no áśvo vanatāṃ havíṣmān ‖
(*Ṛ̊V* 1.162.22)

You neither die nor are you harmed. You are just going to the gods by easy paths.
(Indra's) two gold steeds became your teammates (and the Marut's) piebald mares.
The prize-winning horse stands at the chariot pole of the (Aśvins') donkey.
Let our prize-winning horse, bearing the oblation, win for us rule, good bovine (livestock), good equine (livestock), men, sons, and all-thriving wealth! Let Aditi make for us guiltlessness!

That the horse did not truly die is somewhat undercut by the directive that Aditi make the ritual participants free of guilt. In the hymn that follows this one, the sacrifice of the horse is imagined as a happy family reunion.

úpa prā́gāc chásanaṃ vā́jī́ árvā | devadrī́cā mánasā dī́dhiyānaḥ |
ajáḥ puró nīyate nā́bhir asya | ánu paścā́t kaváyo yanti rebhā́ḥ ‖
(*Ṛ̊V* 1.163.12)

úpa prā́gāt paramā́ṃ yát sadhástham | árvāṁ áchā pitáram mātáraṃ ca |
adyā́ devā́ñ júṣṭatamo hí gamyā́ | áthā́ śāste dāśúṣe vā́riyāṇi ‖
(*Ṛ̊V* 1.163.13)

Forth went he, the prize-winning horse, up to slaughter, seeing through a thought (which is) intent upon serving the gods. The goat, his umbilical cord, is led in front; the poets and singers follow from behind.
Forth went he, up to the highest assembly. The racehorse (went up) to his mother and father. So that he may go to the gods, the choicest, today and then proclaim the devotee's desires.

One wonders if *manas-* (thought) that is *devadrī́c-* (towards honoring the gods) reflects an attempt to depict the animal as desiring to serve the gods in order to present it as consenting to its own sacrifice. In the ritual as described by the later Śrautasūtras, the term for the ritual execution of an animal is *saṃjñapana-* (causing to give consent).

The killing is done away from the sacrificial pole and the sacred hearths by the *śamitar-* (tranquilizer) who prevents the animal from crying out and then suffocates, butchers, and roasts it in the privacy of the *śāmitra-* shed.

Guilt in the *Jaiminīya Brāhmaṇa*

We need turn to neither the *Ṛgveda* nor the Śrautasūtras to establish that that guilt over the execution of animals is present in the *Jaiminīya Brāhmaṇa*. The following passage is part of a larger section that comments on the Āprī offerings.[21]

> *rohiṇīṃ chaviṃ paridhatte | eṣā ha vā agre paśūnāṃ tvag āsa yā puruṣasya yā paśūnāṃ sā puruṣasya | te paśava ātapaṃ varṣaṃ daśān maśakān na dhārayanti | te puruṣam etyābruvan puruṣeyaṃ tava tvag astv eṣāsmākam iti | kiṃ tata syād iti | ādyā te syāma ity abruvan | idaṃ te vāsa iti vāsaḥ prāyacchan | tad yad rohiṇīṃ chaviṃ paridhatte svenaiva tadrūpeṇa samṛdhyate | tathā hainam amuṣmin loke paśavo nādanti | adanti ha vā amuṣmin loke paśavaḥ puruṣam | tasmād u ha gor ante nagno na syāt | īśvaro hāsmād apakramitos tvacam asya bibharmīti |* (*JB* 2.182)
>
> He drapes the red cowhide around himself. In the beginning, this hide of (sacrificial) animals was that of man, (and the skin of) man (was) that of (sacrificial) animals. Those (first) animals do not endure heat, rain, bites, (or) bugs. Having come to man, they said, 'Man! (Let) this skin (of ours be) yours, let that skin (of yours) be ours!' (He responded,) 'Why should it?' They answered, 'So that we may be first(class) for you! This (will be) your garb.' They presented (him) the garb. That is the red cowhide which he drapes around himself. He is successful by its color which is (really) just his own. In that way, the (sacrificial) animals do not eat him in yonder world. In yonder world, the (sacrificial) animals eat man. Therefore, he should not be naked in the presence of a cow, (for the cow might) run away from him, (thinking,) 'I carry his hide.'

[21] Beginning in *JB* 2.181 (*athaitāny āprīr . . .*). The Āprī offerings accompany animal sacrifice in the *śrauta* ritual. Indeed, their name (*ā* + √*prī* = 'to mollify') may indicate a ritual process like the later *saṃjñapana*, in which the animal's consent is obtained and the guilt of executing it avoided. The Āprī hymns praise ritual implements and sequences, but omit any mention of killing the animal. See Stephanie W. Jamison and Joel P. Brereton, trs., *The Rigveda: The Earliest Religious Poetry of India*, vol. 1, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014, p. 33: 'at best the victim is delicately referred to as an oblation.'

This passage makes a pair of assertions guided by the theme of reciprocal exchange. First, one wears the hide of a red cow not arbitrarily, but because it was the original human hide which man exchanged with that of the animals. The conditions of this exchange suggest that for the use of this originally human hide during the lifespan of an animal, an animal returns that hide in death in the form of clothing. As first noticed by Marcel Mauss, the phenomenon of reciprocal gift-exchange, while arguably obligatory, is often portrayed as voluntary.[22] This exchange, first, casts the use of animal products not as theft or violence but as a consensual agreement made in advance. Second, the text asserts that, in the heavenly world, sacrificial animals eat humans. The state of affairs in the heavenly world is thereby the opposite of the terrestrial one. Therefore, when both worlds are taken into consideration, animals are not treated inequitably. Both these assertions, one about the primordial past and one about the future after death, seem to be strategies to remove the guilt of animal slaughter by making it consensual and equitable.

Conclusion

I am now able to draw some plausible inferences from this discussion regarding the argument made by *JB* 3.94. The first inference is that this narrative about vehicular homicide, due to the hieratic commitments of the text, is coding an intelligible argument about the nature of the sacrifice. The second inference, based on the emphasis that *KaṭhU* 3.3 places on the fundamental difference between *rathin/ātman* and *sārathi/buddhi*, is that in the context of the chariot as metaphor for the sacrifice, the patron of the sacrifice is conceived of as a *rathin* who receives the merit of the sacrifice, despite being an inactive and ignorant participant. The priest is the *sārathi* who performs the sacrifice on behalf of his patron, but does not receive its fruits. The theme of sacrificial guilt brings me to a third inference, that this chariot metaphor is redeployed in the narrative of *JB* 3.94 in order to imagine the sacrificial animal as a decapitated child. If the patron of

[22] According to Mauss, 'these total services and counter-services are committed to in a somewhat voluntary form by presents and gifts, although in the final analysis they are strictly compulsory, on pain of private or public warfare. We propose to call all this the system of total services.' See Marcel Mauss, *The Gift: The Form and Reason for Exchange in Archaic Societies*, London: Cohen and West, 1954; repr. New York: Routledge, 2002, p. 7.

the sacrifice receives the auspicious results of the sacrifice, despite being a mere passenger, then he too receives the inauspicious results. Even if the priest slaughters the animal, he is not the recipient of the negative consequences for its death because he is not the recipient of the positive consequences of the sacrifice either. The chariot of sacrifice is ultimately set in motion by the *yajamāna*. The text admits that the priest, as the driver, can stop the chariot, but to fail to stop the execution does not remove ultimate agency from the *yajamāna*.

If the priest were guilty of killing the sacrificial animal, he would be a recipient of the benefits of the sacrifice as well. This metaphysics coded into narrative is yet another instance of Vedic texts attempting to mitigate the pervasive anxiety regarding animal sacrifice. At the same time, it makes a stronger argument about the superiority of sacred knowledge. By making causality and agency in the physical world an extension of ritual causality and agency, the text articulates a vision of the cosmos as subordinate to sacrificial principles. In so doing, the *Jaiminīya Brāhmaṇa* makes knowledge of the physical world subordinate to knowledge of the sacrifice.