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**Recognition through Traditional Values  
A Literary Representation of *dāna*\* as an Essential Way of Boosting  
Royal Worthiness\*\***

SUMMARY: The present article is focused on the notion of *dāna* and its use in *Śivrajbhūṣaṇ*, a late 17<sup>th</sup>-century *rīti*granth composed by Bhūṣaṇ in the court of Śivājī Bhoṃsle, shortly before the coronation. The ruler had it composed in Braj, a vernacular that had already risen to the status of a transregional language. The poem, which used to be reduced by literary historians to a simple panegyric, belongs to South Asian early modern court literature, the authors of which were explicitly manifesting their fixture in Sanskrit literary tradition and simultaneously fulfilled complex political agendas. The royal patronage infused the poetry with political essence, but the literary conventions dictated the ways in which the political substance should be weaved into the poems. Basing on the textual analysis of Bhūṣaṇ's work, I draw attention to the high frequency and various ways of use of the notion of *dāna* by the poet. This aims to prove that poetical representation of royal generosity embodied in various

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\* The transliteration for both Modern Hindi and Braj terms, names and titles follows the rules by McGregor as in *The Oxford Hindi-English Dictionary*, though *anusvāras* are transliterated as appropriate nasals whenever possible or as *m̐* with a subscript dot in the other cases. However, in the citations of Braj poetry final *a* (and the middle *a* in long words) never drops because of its metrical value. Anglicized versions of proper names are used in my own translations of Braj passages. Please note that several terms and names, quoted in the article, are taken from Sanskrit, thus middle and final *a* is always spelt out for such words.

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practices of *dāna*—liberally put to display—was one of the major tools of validating, vitalizing and bolstering royal authority.

KEYWORDS: *dāna*, generosity, *rājadharmā*, Śivāji, Bhūṣaṇ, *Śivrajbhūṣaṇ*, *rīti*, *rīti*granth.

“Generosity is not only good morals,  
but it is often good politics and good expediency.”

(J. Nehru, 29<sup>th</sup> Dec. 1929)

It has been acknowledged that literature is entangled in politics: the former shapes the latter, but the literary texts also exert influence on political authorities, social actions and relations. Literary historians pay a lot of attention to the hidden traits of such entanglements, providing multiple analyses of the texts which are grounded in politics no less than their authors are. In a similar tune, much has been said about the historiographical texts plunged into current ideologies, or historians who vainly do their best to be objective. A more conscious entanglement belongs to the literary works that aim at educating, or to *littérature engagée*.

In the present article I deal with the specific area of early modern court literature in South Asia, composed in Braj. The authors explicitly manifesting their fixture in the Sanskrit literary tradition were bound to deal with complex political agendas. The poets of the early modern *rītikāvya*,<sup>1</sup> i.e. elaborate court poetry in the vernacular, used the Sanskrit *kāvya* tradition and its principles, but did not find it necessary to justify the subservience of aesthetics to political authorities. Literature in service

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<sup>1</sup> *Rītikāvya* is a term existing in the history of Hindi literature, denoting both the literary period and the elaborate style of court poetry written in the classical Hindi from the 17<sup>th</sup> to 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. Poets chose to “express themselves in Brajbhasha, a literary dialect of Hindi. And thus was born a style of poetry today known as *rīti*, so called because of the tradition’s signature genre, the *ritigranth* or poetry manual that drew significant inspiration from classical *alankarashastra* (rhetoric)” (Busch 2015: 249).

of power was not an early modern or specifically South Asian novelty, but these times and this area saw the emergence of distinct patterns of such entanglement. The royal or aristocratic patronage of poets is an incontestable factor that infused this poetry with political essence. However, more than patrons themselves, the literary conventions dictated the ways in which political substance should be weaved into poems. I draw attention to the notion of *dāna*,<sup>2</sup> a time-honoured subject, which has been extensively re-used by the early modern court poets in their politically oriented compositions. The textual analysis that forms the crucial part of this article is based on the work *Śivrajbhūṣaṇ*, a late 17<sup>th</sup> century *rīti*granth, or the handbook of poetry,<sup>3</sup> the content of which used to be perceived by historians of Hindi as primarily a panegyric.<sup>4</sup> The ruler praised in this poem had it composed in Braj, a literary idiom that had already risen to the status of a transregional language recognized by the political and cultural centre of the subcontinent. By drawing attention to the high frequency and various ways of use of the notion under consideration I attempt

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<sup>2</sup> *Dāna* is a Sanskrit word that occurs unchanged in the literary Braj in both *bhakti* and *rīti* texts. Among various meanings of Sanskrit *dāna*, ‘the act of giving’ or ‘donation, gift’ comes down to the dictionaries of classical and modern forms of Hindi (see e.g. DB 930–931, KK 337, HS 2251–2252), in the latter case as *dān*.

<sup>3</sup> *Rīti*granth is a literary genre dominant in the Braj court poetry of the 17<sup>th</sup> to 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, earlier applied to the vernacular by Keśavdās, the late 16<sup>th</sup>-century harbinger of *rīti* poetry. It consists of the illustrations of literary figures preceded by their definitions.

<sup>4</sup> For instance, Nagendra mentions the only aim of Bhūṣaṇ’s poem—glorifying Śivāji’s character: *Śivrajbhūṣaṇ kā uddeśya alankārvarṇan nahim, pratyut paraṃparā ke ānusār śivraj ke caritr kā sankīrtan hai* [...] (Nagendra 1973: 343). Even when he points out to the originality of the poet, he ardently declares—departing from a general nationalist assumption of *rīti* literature as obscene—that the aim of Bhūṣaṇ’s poetry was to “drag the speech out of feminine aura of Kaliyuga and sanctify it in the blazing river of heroism”: *Bhūṣaṇ ke kāvya kā uddeśya vāṇī ko kaliyugīn straiṅ vātāvaran se nikālkar vīratva kī dīpt saritā maiṃ pavitr karnā thā* (Nagendra 1973: 342).

to show that poetical representation of the royal generosity embodied in various practices of *dāna*—liberally put to display—was one of the major tools of validating, vitalizing and bolstering royal authority. The precise function of this tool depended on the actual geopolitical situation of the generous patron.

## On traditions of *dāna*<sup>5</sup>

### A. Ancient traditions

The practice of liberal and generous giving reaches most ancient times. Mauss, in his theorization of gift, states that ancient India “after the Aryan colonization was in fact a land of potlatch<sup>6</sup> twice over. First, the potlatch is still found among two very large groups [...] forming the substratum of the Indian population: the tribes of Assam (Tibeto-Burman) and the tribes of *munda* origin (Austro-Asiatic).” Aryans must have brought similar tradition from the Indo-European world and “these two traditions also reinforced one another” (Mauss 2002: 71). In the ancient literary traditions acts of giving used to be pictured next to several other attributes of a good individual. Their importance and dimensions changed as much as the set of other virtues acknowledged to the central character.

One of the famous and most striking stories of a generous individual belongs originally to Buddhist literature. The Sanskrit text of *Śūra*’s

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<sup>5</sup> The main purpose of this section is to draw a background for the analysis of uses of generosity in Bhūṣaṅ’s oeuvre. I do not claim that the examples I choose are representative of the respective traditions, where one may find a plethora of various pictures of generous acts.

<sup>6</sup> Potlatch—a system of gift exchange. We read in the editorial note to the English edition of Mauss’s classical work on the gift that “it consists of a festival where goods and services of all kinds are exchanged. Gifts are made and reciprocated with interest. There is a dominant idea of rivalry and competition between the tribe or tribes assembled for the festival, coupled occasionally with conspicuous consumption” (Mauss 2002: vii).

*Jātakamālā* gives an example of King Śivi (another variant of the name: Śibi), intoxicated with generosity. The hero first distributes his wealth to beggars and ascetics, but ultimately cuts out his own eyes in order to give them away. Elsewhere, the same text presents the ideal figure of Bodhisattva, who understands that the wealth is of use only when it can be given away (cf. Warder 1974: 248–251). The story of King Śivi acquired over time enormous attention in various traditions and regions. “There are different variants of the tale to be found in *jātakas*, *avadānas*, in the *Mahābhārata*, etc. and it has quite frequently been depicted in paintings or reliefs” (Sudyka 2013: 88). South Indian tradition also proves its supra-regional success.<sup>7</sup> Similarly, Prince Vessantara, a hero of the famous Pali *Vessantara Jātaka*, also widely known to various Asian textual traditions, causes distress to his own country and subsequently suffers punishment for giving away the magic White Elephant to the people of Kalinga (cf. Cone and Gombrich 1977). Not only in this case, charity is one of the perfections on the way to enlightenment. By conformity with Buddhist moral ethics, it seems natural that in those stories the practice of *dāna* stands as a primary virtue, next to compassion, self-control, and often replaces or precedes asceticism of the main character.

But ethical presuppositions—central for Buddhist ethics—would come as much less significant for the Hindu kings. For the latter, generosity was something different. The anthropological theorization of the sacrifice by Hubert and Mauss indicates that generous offerings had the function of making a man a king only when they were pushed to the extreme, playing the risk of ruin (cf. Hubert and Mauss 1899). Though the extremity of King Śivi’s or Vessantara’s acts is clear, it has the traces of a good, unselfish virtue. For a Hindu king, giving was out of such concern. The first textual examples of the hymns in praise of the chiefs bestowing gifts on the composers are as early as the Vedic literature to which they belong. They have been

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<sup>7</sup> For a detailed study of the King Śivi’s legend in Andhra Pradesh, also with reference to the notion of generosity, see Sudyka 2013: 89–108.

classified as *dāna-stutis*. After victorious raids against the neighboring tribes the chiefs used to reward their bards for the eulogies the latter had composed. According to Thapar, the Vedic bard received lavish gifts as his due reward, since his invocation to the deities was the cause of the chief's success. Though the transfer of wealth looked like a simple economic relation, the issue was more complex. "Those chiefs who were magnanimous in their gifts were held by the bards as models and it was suggested that other chiefs should follow their examples." Moreover, the *stutis* fulfilled "the rāja's claim to fame and re-iterated his right to be a rāja" (Thapar 1987: 18–19).

The *Mahābhārata* abounds with images of generosity of various types. The character of Karna provides one of the best-known examples. As the one who inherited natural generosity he gave away his golden armor and earrings that were protecting his own life (cf. Miller 1985: 48). A significant number of generous acts refers to sacrificial gifts presented to the priests. E.g., in the 7<sup>th</sup> book, *Droṇaparvan*, we find an extensive and fantastic description of a sacrificial offering performed by the king Sasavindu, who: "[...] had one hundred thousand wives. From each of those wives were born a thousand sons. All those princes were endued with great prowess. [...] Their father, O best of monarchs, in the Horse-sacrifices he had performed, gave away, (as sacrificial presents), all those sons unto the Brahmanas. Behind each of those princes were hundreds upon hundreds of cars and elephants and fair maidens decked in ornaments of gold. With each maiden were a hundred elephants; with each elephant, a hundred cars; with each car a hundred steeds, adorned with garlands of gold. With each of those steeds were a thousand kine; and with each cow were fifty goats" (*The Mahābhārata*, Book 7, Section LXV: 127).<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Mauss gives another examples to prove his statement that *Mahābhārata* itself is the story of a gigantic potlatch: "The Mahabharata is the story of a gigantic potlatch: the game of dice of the Kauravas against the Pandavas; jousting tournaments and the choice of bridegrooms by Draupadi, the sister and polyandrous wife of the Pandavas. Other repetitions

Several types of rulers' acts of generosity have been praised in *kāvya* literature: as moral virtues, magnanimous rewards for poets' services, generous givings to the Brahmins as offerings that accompanied rituals and spectacular charity acts. The Vedic-times generosity toward bards rises into a fully-fledged component of patron-to-poet relationship in *kāvya* literature. For instance, Dhoyīka, who served as a court poet to Lakṣmaṇasena, (12<sup>th</sup>/13<sup>th</sup> century) at the end of his *Pavanadūta*, testifies to having received from the king a troop of elephants, an ornament of gold, a fan and a golden sceptre (cf. Lienhard 1984: 18). The high status of the poet is certainly not the only reason that lies beyond the lavish gifts presented by the rulers. Its function must have been to display the mightiness of the patron and—in the nomadic world of poets—to attract the best composers to the court. One may doubt whether the descriptions were factual, but it does not really matter at this point. If indeed they were purely imaginative, it may only strengthen the argument about the persuasive role of the texts commissioned in the courts.<sup>9</sup>

## B. Royal generosity in the early modern vernacular poetry

Before focusing on *Śivrājbhūṣaṇ*, the work composed by Bhūṣaṇ, it is indispensable to turn for a while toward the Rājapūts and their literary practices of praising patrons in poetry, for at least three reasons. First of all, most of the texts belonging to *ādikāl*, or the earliest phase

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of the same legendary cycle are to be met with in the finest episodes of the epic—for example, the romance of Nala and Damayanti, as does the whole Mahabharata, tells of the construction and assembling of a house, a game of dice, etc.” (Mauss 2002: 71).

<sup>9</sup> The importance of the phenomenon of *dāna* in Indian tradition is also well testified in multiple Sanskrit normative texts, from *Dharmaśāstras* through treatises devoted primarily to *dāna*, e.g. Ballāla Sena's *Dānasāgara*, through extensive digests like Lakṣmīdhāra's *Kṛtyakalpataru* containing *Dānakāṇḍa*, a large section providing detailed classifications of *dānas*.

of Hindi literature,<sup>10</sup> have been produced on Rājṣūṭ courts or at least are devoted to the deeds of Rājṣūṭ rulers. Secondly, when one looks at the Rājṣūṭ courts of the Mughal period, they were, “in terms of sheer volume of patronage, the most important centers for *rīti* writers” (Busch 2011: 167).<sup>11</sup> Moreover, Śivāṃī in whose praise *Śivrājḃhūṣaṇ* has been composed was close to the Rājṣūṭs as a co-player on the political arena of the Mughal world. Bhūṣaṇ’s text reveals that Śivāṃī was aspiring to the Rājṣūṭ royal culture or at least competing with them. Moreover, fabricating his Rājṣūṭ lineage was crucial for the legitimization of Śivāṃī’s accession to the throne.

Though generosity did not belong to the primary values of the Rājṣūṭs’ ethos built by their bards, Cāraṇs and Bhāṭs, its practice under various forms is present in the texts. Bhāṭs “used their praise and insult poetry to inculcate in their patrons values such as unrestrained generosity” (Snodgrass 2002: 619). This practice would well remind us of the Vedic *stutis*, where most generous chiefs used to be displayed as models for the prospective patrons. It is possible that their efforts were fruitful since both sacrificial and patron-to-poet transfer of wealth have been channeled at some point towards the Rājṣūṭs’ bards, i.e. the bards, and not the Brahmins, used to be granted places of honour in the court and royal gifts on the occasions of wedding ceremonies (cf. Szyszko 2011: 149). As Basu observes with reference to the medieval poetry of the Cāraṇs:

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<sup>10</sup> As classified by Śukla (Śukla 1929).

<sup>11</sup> According to Busch, the term Rājṣūṭ, in the context of *rīti* literary tradition, does not only signify “the rulers from today’s Rajasthan but also the subimperial kings, from across *rīti* literary tradition was an important part of Rajput literature, alongside with Rajasthani literature” (Cf. *ibidem*: 168). “Charans, Bhats, and Bhils were the traditional social base of local Rajasthani styles, whereas *rīti* poets, who were mostly Brahman (and occasionally Kayasth), transmitted the more classical literary modes into a language, Brajḃhasha, that was far more accessible than Sanskrit for most communities in this period” (*ibidem*: 169).

Panegyrics praise acts of bravery by kings on the battlefield, speak in hyperbolic terms of royal victories over enemies, commend royal generosity and, above all, glorify the sacrifice of life on the battlefield. Heroic praise poetry is, moreover, expressive of the desire for fame. (Basu 2005: 82)

Ultimately, some of the chronicles were built around the generosity of the politically powerful. Charity and financing various projects for the well being of local people (*prajā*) are being attributed a political function:

The rulers' role as a magnanimous donor, bestowing alms upon religious mendicants, supporting eleemosynary for religious establishments, feeding the subjects when crop failures occurred, extending **taccavi advances to finance** cultivation and construction of wells, sponsoring the construction of water reservoirs, and rescuing dependents through relief and rehabilitation, finds mention in numerous early modern textual narratives.

At least in rhetoric if not in reality, this ethico-political terrain of state building was acknowledged in Marwar too, evident in a proverb popular in the Jodhpur region that runs: *Raja rau daan are paraja rau samman*<sup>12</sup> i.e. 'it is befitting for a King to be generous with charity and the subjects to be deferential towards him.'<sup>13</sup> (Sahai 2007: 690)<sup>13</sup>

As early as in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, North Indian kingdoms, and many in Deccan as well, hosted *rīti* poets. Though generosity was one among a multitude of attributes securing royal authority,<sup>14</sup> it became a frequent motive, again not only as an outcome of the patron-to-poet relationship, but as charity and impressive offerings to Brahmins

<sup>12</sup> Original transcription by Sahai.

<sup>13</sup> It might be misleading though to acknowledge that the understanding of generous acts was purely political: "As a ruler—at whatever level—the Rājapūt is necessarily a man of many 'friends' whose connections to others are established and maintained by generous giving" (Babb 1999: 16).

<sup>14</sup> "Elegance, eminence, sovereignty, respect, gentility, apart from divine attributes that secured authority for the kings, and certain behavioural traits as generalised qualities of the king were frequently incorporated in verses dedicated to rulers. Generosity, humanity, courage and wisdom were other attributes" (Sandhya 2011: 186).

as well. Such understanding of *dāna* (generosity; gift) is most easily traceable in the texts classified as heroic poetry (*vīrakāvya*). According to Tivari, all medieval Hindi authors of such texts depicted their patrons as generous, especially in giving elephants and gold.<sup>15</sup> He illustrates this statement only with one Bhūṣaṅ's *kavitt*,<sup>16</sup> but he lists seven other names of authors as referable examples.<sup>17</sup> Apart from elephants and gold, poets used to be granted villages, horses, camels, ornaments, clothes, food and so on. The magnitude of generosity could be expressed with a special term of *lākhapasāv*, which means a gift of hundreds of thousands (cf. Tivari 1987: 9).<sup>18</sup> Overall, Tivari indicates four hallmarks of heroism (*vīrtā*)<sup>19</sup> of the patrons who are the subjects of praise, i.e. heroism in generosity (*dānvīrtā*), in mercy (*dayāvīrtā*), in protection of religion (*dharmvīrtā*) and in war (*yuddhvīrtā*) (Tivari 1987: 36–38).

That generosity can be as important as *dharma* and virtue, we learn from the *Māncarī*, composed by Amṛt Rāy, probably a Bhāt, as early as in 1585. Here, not the patron, i.e. Man Singh, who was a Mughal *manṣabdār*, but the emperor Akbar is the one who helped to rescue all three of them from drowning (cf. Busch 2012: 299). Whereas the patron himself has the regal grandeur, he is learned, generous and true to his word.<sup>20</sup>

<sup>15</sup> *Sabhi kaviyoṃ ne apne āsraydātā ko barā dānī kahā hai. Viśeṣkar gajdān aur kañcandān ke prasaṅg meṃ atyukti kā khub sahārā liyā gayā hai* (Tivari 1987: 37).

<sup>16</sup> *Kavitt* is a Braj term that means “poetry”. In the *rīti* literature it is also one of the frequently used metres, a quatrain.

<sup>17</sup> *Sadānanda* [1], *durasā āṛhā* [2], *haṃsarāma* [3], *maṅgala kavi* [4], *padmākara* [5], *gaṇapati bhāratī* [6], *madaneśa mahāpātra* [7], *ādi kaviyoṃ dvārā nirūpit dān varṇan, isī prakār atyukti pūrṇ hai* (Tivari 1987: 37).

<sup>18</sup> However, this term should not be understood *verbatim*. Its use must have been aimed at impressing the listener/reader of the poem. According to Tivari, the actual value of *lākhapasāva* was between three and sixty thousands.

<sup>19</sup> This term might be translated here alternatively as ‘manliness’.

<sup>20</sup> “Many of the themes are straight out of a Sanskrit textbook on expressing kingly authority: Man Singh has the regal grandeur of Indra,

*Vīrsimhdevcarit* may give another perspective on how important generosity is for the well-being of the kingdom. Its author, Keśavdās, the harbinger of *rīti* poetry, composed this poem as a dialogue between personified Generosity (*dāna*) and Greed (*lobhā*).<sup>21</sup>

*Rītigranth*s had become the leading genre of court poetry by the 17<sup>th</sup> century. They contain rich descriptions of various types of *dāna*, mostly towards poets, frequently towards the poor, but also to the Brahmins—through lavish sacrificial gifts. For instance, in *Lalitlalām* by Matirām we find several stanzas praising openly the generous nature of the Bundelā king Bhavsinh.<sup>22</sup> Early in the text appears a statement on him growing the wealth of poor people. However, one can observe that not only beggars, but also the other kings are pictured as the beneficiaries of unparalleled royal munificence:

*dina-dina dīne dūnī sampati barhata jāti aiso yāko kachū kamalā ko bara bara hai  
hema haya hāthī hūra bakasi anūpa jimi bhūpani ko karata bhikhārīna ko ghara hai  
kahai 'matirāma' aura jācaka jahāna saba eka dāni satrusālanandana ko kara hai  
rāva bhāvasimhājū ke dāna kī barāī dekhi kahā kāmadhenu hai kachū na surataru hai  
(Lalitlalām, v. 66)*

The wealth of the poor doubles day after day, as if it were Lakshmi's best blessing. The unparalleled one is the abode for beggars the same way as he makes kings by gifting gold, horses, elephants and diamonds. Matiram, the mendicant, says [that] the hand of the son of Chhatrasal is the most generous in the world. In front of the immense gifts [given] by king Bhavsinh<sup>23</sup>, where is the wish-fulfilling cow? The wishing tree is nothing.<sup>24</sup>

Though the presence of the wish-fulfilling cow and the divine or wishing tree (*kāmadhenu* and *kalpavṛkṣa*) are conventional elements drawn

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the king of the gods; he is learned, like Bhoja, a famous king of old; generous, like Karna; true to his word, like the Puranic hero Harischandra, etc.” (Busch 2012: 303).

<sup>21</sup> For an interesting reading of this poem see Busch 2005.

<sup>22</sup> Eg. vv. 66 (quoted in this article), 76, 78, 79, 129, 378 of *Lalitlalām*.

<sup>23</sup> *Verbatim*: “Seeing the greatness of Bhavsinh's gifts [...]”.

<sup>24</sup> All translations from Braj are mine.

by court poets<sup>25</sup> through Sanskrit poetics, here it must have helped to greatly inspire the imagination and build the picture of a powerful king and the kingdom. One of the reasons lying behind the creations of such pictures may have been a need to attract the artisans and entrepreneurs who certainly seek to increase their private wealth.

The complex pictures of royal multi-layered generosity are to be found earlier within the traditions relatively fresh on Indian soil. For instance, Persian art and literature of the Mughal court strongly underlined its value. Lefèvre, writing about ordering and collecting of images meant for the illustration of the *Jahāngīr Nāma*, observes that “A number of images depict the monarch’s generosity” (Lefèvre, 2007: 483). Also “The court poets and writers tell us that Shah Jahan was the ‘spring of the flower garden of justice and generosity’” (Koch 1997: 159). In the first part of *Mau’izah-i Jahāngārī*, ‘Admonition of Jahangir’ composed in 1612, its author Bāqir discusses several qualities rulers needed to govern successfully. “Generosity, bravery, forbearance, personal discipline in governing passions and the senses; the right balance between kingly dignity and the kind of personal affability needed to draw friends; a sense of timing in dealing with enemies, of when to be lenient and when to punish” (O’Hanlon 1999: 57–58). Moreover, “[...] Bāqir emphasised the set of universal virtues that was appropriate to rulers: of generosity, bravery (*shujā’at*) and high-mindedness (*himmat-i buland*)” (*ibidem*). Although the ideas, sayings and maxims collected in this book have also been drawn from Indian sources, the latter have not been the only ones displaying the admiration for royal generosity. Persian poetry outside India had built its own tradition of praising patrons’ munificence. Especially the texts belonging to *qaṣīdah*, a major genre of Persian court poetry, both predispose the patrons to be generous and praise their extravagant acts of gifting.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Not only in *rīṭigranths*. E.g.: v. 10 in the already mentioned *Māncarīt* (Rai 1990: 2).

<sup>26</sup> For a further reading on this subject see e.g. Meisami 1987.

### Generosity in *Śivrājbhūṣaṇ*<sup>27</sup>

Bhūṣaṇ completed the composition of his poetic work in May 1673.<sup>28</sup> To identify possible functions of his *rīti* *granth* it is necessary to observe that the composition had been completed shortly before Śivājī's first coronation. His accession to the throne was equal to the proclamation of a new kingdom, not the result of a succession, thus we deal with an event critical for legitimizing a new political entity. Śivājī became Bhūṣaṇ's patron in the sense common for the courts where *rīti* poets were hosted; therefore, he was the one who commissioned the composition of *Śivrājbhūṣaṇ*. The characterization of the leader runs across numerous stanzas deifying him, praising his strength, bravery and martial prowess, as well as praising his fame, wealth and generosity. Out of the long list of qualities<sup>29</sup> that secure royal authority—frequently depicted in the early modern vernacular literature—Bhūṣaṇ deals with only few. Such a set of values definitely brings Bhūṣaṇ's poem close to the Caras' peans of the kings.<sup>30</sup> For some reason Bhūṣaṇ did not find it appropriate to praise Śivājī's elegance, refinement, nor even much his wisdom. Apparently some of the themes were much more important than the others. Even if both convention and practices of the court poets allowed to choose from so many attributes, in an emerging kingdom under the process of its self-constitution there might have been less space for elegance than for talks about war, care for its interregional recognition or attracting those who might help to fortify its power. Mauss's analysis of the functions of gifts in the archaic societies allows for a hypothesis that also in the case of Śivājī displaying generosity was a declaration of having become rich enough to distribute wealth and, consequently, of being ready to align with

<sup>27</sup> For a list of editions and manuscripts that I have consulted and for general information on this text and its author see Borek 2015.

<sup>28</sup> See e.g. Sarkar 2010. For a textual testimony of this date in *Śivrājbhūṣaṇ* see Borek 2015: 44–45.

<sup>29</sup> As provided by Sandhya; see citation in a footnote above.

<sup>30</sup> As summarized by Basu; see citation above.

the other rulers. As Mauss writes “[t]he unreciprocated gift still makes the person who has accepted it inferior, particularly when it has been accepted with no thought of returning it. [...] Charity is still wounding for him who has accepted it, and the whole tendency of our morality is to strive to do away with the unconscious and injurious patronage of the rich almsgiver” (Mauss 2002: 83). For Śivājī, who was seeking to demonstrate his sovereignty in the world of the Mughal supremacy, it must have been of utmost importance to show that he is not an inferior who would accept an unreciprocated gift.

After cutting out the definitions of the literary figures of speech, the reader is left with less than two third out of 347 stanzas of the short recension. At least twenty refer explicitly to Śivājī’s generosity. Those stanzas, therefore, which refer to the subject under discussion, occupy roughly ten percent of the illustrations, i.e. examples of the figures of speech. Though I do not want to put too much emphasis on the quantitative aspects, the one above is impressive enough to provide a strong argument about the priorities of the contracting parties: the author and the king.

Wealth, strength and fame of the king should be seen as the conditions of his successful rule. That munificence is another such condition, one may infer—leaving aside the quantitative aspect—from the fact that it is being often linked to them.

At first glance, another stanza looks like a praise of Śivājī’s fame, but as an illustration of *prahaṛṣaṇa*, or the figure poetic of enrapturing,<sup>31</sup> it relates on beggars and the impressive gifts. In fact, two out of four verses of this *manaharaṇa*<sup>32</sup> make clear what exactly lays the foundations of the royal fame.

*sāhitanaī sarajā kī kīratī soṃ cāro ora caṃdanī bitāna chīti-choī chāīyatu hai  
bhūṣaṇa bhanata aiso bhūmīpati bhvaisilā hai jāke dvāra bhicchuka sadā hī bhāīyatu*

<sup>31</sup> The figure consists in presenting the situation when an object longed for is obtained without effort or by chance.

<sup>32</sup> *Manaharaṇa* and *savaiya* are another metres, next to *kavitt*, frequently used by Bhūṣaṇ and popular among *rīti* poets.

*mahādāni sīvājū khumāna yā jahāna para dāna ke bakhāna jāke yaum ganāīyatu hai  
rajata kī haum̄sa kiye hema pāiyatu jāsom hayana kī haum̄sa kiyaīm hāthī pāiyatu hai*  
(VPM 1994, v. 195)

The fame of the son of Shah[ji] the Lion<sup>33</sup> extends toward all directions, to the corners of the earth, as the range of moonlight.

Bhushan says: Bhonsle is the king, whose gates are always desired by beggars, The great donor Shivaji the Long-lived, whose immense gifts are sung about in this world.

When one desires silver from him, he receives gold, when one asks for horses, receives an elephant.

It is utterly astonishing that Śivājī gives gold and elephants to the mendicants. Should the mendicants be really considered here as the actual beneficiaries of Śivājī's magnanimity? Their appearance in the text is not only conventional. It helps to build, in a merely hyperbolic way, an image of ruler's excessive richness. Another description of royal extravagance comes as an illustration of *adhika*, or the figure of exceeding:<sup>34</sup>

*sahaja salīla sīla jalada-se nīla pabbaya-se pīla deta nāhi akulāta hai  
bhūšana bhanata mahārāja sivarāja deta kañcana ko dheru jo sumeru-so  
dikhāta hai  
sarajā savāī kāsom kari kabitāī tere hātha kī barāī ko bakhāna kari jāta hai  
jāko jasa-ṭaṇḍa sāto dvīpa nauhū khaṇḍa mahīmaṇḍala kī kahā brahmaṇḍa  
na samāta hai*  
(VPM 1994, v. 200)

He does not tire of giving in a way natural for him [and] with affection sapphires [blue] like clouds, elephants as [big as] mountains, Bhushan says: maharaja Shiva[ji] gives pile of gold that looks like Meru [mountain].

O Sawai, the Lion! How one can tell the magnificence of your hand with the help of poetry?

The amount of its fame does not fit in the seven islands, nine parts of the universe, [so] how [can it fit in] the world?

<sup>33</sup> The noun *sarajā* can be translated here as both 'lion' and 'headman'.

<sup>34</sup> The figure consists in presenting the situation when an object contained is vaster than the container itself.

In this stanza, the praise of excessive generosity reveals another conventional image of the glory that cannot fit in the universe and beyond. Giving is so important that it becomes equal to fame. Literally, the glory is not an attribute of the king himself, but of his hand, the symbol of giving. Thus the hand becomes the main component identifying Śivājī's munificence with the fame. This identification makes it clear for the listener or reader that generosity is the cause of fame. Quite promptly the reader or listener gets the point about the conventional use of hand in the poem. A few stanzas later, Bhūṣaṇ makes use of the potential of *anyonya*, the figure that is based on the reciprocal characterization of a pair of artifacts. In a single stanza the author fits distributing gifts, royal magnitude, excellence of the kingdom, talented men, strength and the well being of subjects.

*to kara soṃ chiti chājata dānahi dānahu soṃ ati to kara chajai  
tūm hī gunī kī baṛāī sajai aru teri baṛāī gunī saba sajai  
bhūṣana tohi soṃ rāja birājita rāja soṃ tūm sivarāja birājai  
to bala soṃ gaṛha-koṭa hai rājata tūm gaṛha-koṭani ke bala gājai*  
(VPM 1994, v. 208)

Due to your hand the earth is beautiful with gifts, may your hand be extraordinarily beautiful with gifts.

Only you create the greatness of the talented and may all talented create your greatness.

Bhushan [says]: the kingdom shines thanks to your very self [and] you, o king Shiva[jī], may shine thanks to the kingdom.

Forts-fortresses are resplendent because of your strength [and] you boast of the strength of [your] forts.

As a result of such reading the first verse reveals what lies behind the acts of generosity. The king should appear as powerful and attractive. Now, when reading it along with the second verse, one realizes whom exactly the ruler needed to attract. It forms another instance of textual support for the interpretation of Matirām's stanza quoted earlier: *gunīs*, or the talented men are wanted. Bhūṣaṇ does not even try to hide the backstage of this political enterprise. He clearly states that the *gunīs*, and this is also how poets used to be called, create the magnitude of the king. As cynical as it looks, the high moral virtue is being

downgraded to an extremely useful and necessary tool. Only in the long recension one finds a *dohā*, thus a short metre, theorizing such dependences in an extremely explicit way. Though there are many examples of *dohās* used by Bhūṣaṅ as illustrations of the poetic figures, this one is so compendious that it looks more like a definition—not of a figure, but of the successful rule:

*sujasa dāna aru dāna dhana dhana upajai kirvāna*  
*so jaga maim jāhira karī sarajā sivā khumāna*  
 (ŚB 1989, v. 232)

Good fame [out of] generosity and generosity [out of] wealth, wealth  
 is born [out of] sword.

This is what long-lived Shivaji the Lion evinced in the world.

The excerpt, absent in the shorter recension, repeats or rather summarizes the content already expressed. Either the author, if it is an original verse, or a scribe—possibly an editor—if one takes it as an interpolation, underlines the political value of the text in a straightforward way. It is already visible that Śivājī's generosity as depicted by Bhūṣaṅ could be a useful medium more than a morally laudable value. To get a broader perspective on its functions, however, let us now turn to a few more detailed pictures of various forms of royal munificence.

### A. Poetic patronage

Guha's analysis of the politics of *Rādhāmādhavavilāsacampū* provides an argument supporting an assumption that accounts of lavish gifts might have worked indeed as job announcements. *Rādhāmādhavavilāsacampū* is a multilingual text from the court of Śivājī's father, Śāhji. Guha gives an account of "[t]he poet Jayarama, surnamed Pindye, who was skilled in twelve languages, heard of his [Shahji's] generosity and was eager to see him. [...] this learned Sanskrit scholar heard of Shahaji from traveling bhāṭs who were returning to their northern homes" (Guha 2011: 58–9).

Elephants, the animals that were always associated with kingship, belonged among the most valuable goods. According to Tivari, as has

been quoted, most of the patrons used to offer elephants to their poets. To describe those animals properly with a good knowledge of their qualities—as they used to be pictured in *kāvya* literature—could surely increase their value in the ears or eyes of the potential addressees. This is exactly what Bhūṣaṅ did. According to his account, the animals distributed by Śivājī were of highest breed:

*sāhitanai sivarāja aise deta gajarāja jinhairi pāya hota kabirāja bephikiri hairi  
jhumata jhulamulāta jhulairi jarabāphana kī jakare jamjirairi jora karata jikiri hairi  
bhūṣana bhāmvara bhananāta ghananāta ghaṅṅa pagana saghana  
ghanāghana rahe ghiri hairi  
jibakī garāja suni diggaja beāba hota mada hī ke āba garakāba hota giri hairi*  
(VPM 1994, v. 317)

King Shiva[jī], the son of Shah[jī] gives such elephants that poets become carefree on receiving them.

Glittering gold-embroidered caparisons flutter, it is mentioned that [elephants] shackled by chains create noise,

Bhushan [says]: humming bees like dense and heavy clouds surround [elephants with] ringing bells,

Hearing their roar the World-Elephants<sup>35</sup> lose their own splendor; mountains drown in the rut fluid.

The picture of bees over the elephants is drawn by *rīti* poets from *kāvya* literature like many other conventional descriptions. The presence of the bees indicates that the elephants are in rut. As Edgerton states “Hindu poetry is full of allusions to bees coming and gathering sweetness from the temples of *must*-elephants” (Edgerton 1985: 34). According to *Mātaṅgalilā* of Nīlakaṅṭha the state of rut, for which Edgerton uses the word ‘must’, and consequently the discharge of ‘must-fluid’ arise out of good health, vigor and happy life (cf. Edgerton 1985: 32, 80). *Mada* may be translated—due to elephants’ violent and unpredictable behavior—as intoxication, however the same word is used in both Sanskrit and Braj for must (or rut) and the fluid coming prevalently from

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<sup>35</sup> *Diggaja*—World-Elephants, i.e. the mythical elephants which protect the four directions of the world and support the earth.

the animal's temples.<sup>36</sup> Thus, Śivājī offers the top or best elephants (*gajarāja*) to the top or best poets (*kavirāja*).

In an earlier stanza containing a description of the young vigorous elephants in the state of must, encircled by black bees, Bhūṣaṇ addresses again the poets:

[...] *kīrati ke kāja mahārāja sivarāja saba aise gajarāja kabirājana kauṃ  
bakasai*  
(VPM 1994, v. 307)

[...] For the purpose of [promoting his own] glory, maharaja Shiva[ji] hands all those top elephants over to the top poets.

If to believe historians who depreciated the *rītikāl* literature, entertainment used to be the main motive of literary creation. Here, we see that for Śivājī distributing lavish gifts was the matter of fame or glory. In fact, it is hard to find in the text of *Śivrājbhūṣaṇ* even a suggestion that Śivājī expected entertainment from his litterateurs. Paying for substantive works evidently raises his fame.

The type of royal advertisement that we meet in Bhūṣaṇ's account is pretty impressive not only for the types of gifts a good poet may receive, but also for how easy it is to get them:

*deta turīgana gīta sune bina karīgana gīta sunāem  
bhūṣana bhāvata bhūpa na āna jahāna khumāna kī kīrati gāem  
deta ghane ṅṛpa maṅgana kauṃ pai nihāla karaīm sivarāja rijhāem  
āna ritaiṃ sarasaiṃ barasaiṃ pai carhaiṃ nadiyaṃ nada pāvasa āem*  
(VPM 1994, v. 126)

[He] gives herds of horses without listening to the songs [and] the elephants [only if] we perform.

Bhushan [says]: no other king in the world seems attractive, [so] we should praise the fame of the long-lived;

Numerous kings give to the beggars [only], so we should satisfy and please the king Shiva[ji].

[There may be] rainy water in the other seasons, but big and small rivers would flood upon coming of the rainy season.

<sup>36</sup> For the meaning of *mada* in Braj see e.g. DB 1634, KK 608.

What happens in the second half of this *savaiya*? Was Bhūṣaṇ trying to depreciate the other kings in front of his actual patron? Not necessarily. It rather looks like a description, again purposely exaggerated, which aims at underlining Śivājī's independence.<sup>37</sup> The emerging ruler known for his strong opposition against the supremacy of the Mughal court certainly needed to mark it more than anyone else. The earlier Sanskrit tradition of the medieval courts in India allowed the formulation of such declarations of self-subsistence through recurrence to generosity. As we learn from Ali's work on courtship in medieval India:

[g]enerosity was a sign of independence as it presupposed not only self-subsistence, but the ability to make others dependent upon one-self. Through generosity one became a refuge for others. (Ali 2002: 119)

## B. Generosity towards the poor

Tempting good poets and possibly other talented men who had means to spread or increase royal fame was both a primary point of the political agenda and the practice sanctioned by the earliest Indian traditions reaching back to the Vedic times. However, a wise ruler cannot forget about the local *prajā*, his subjects. Given the fact that the inhabitants of the dominium could neither understand the highly elaborate poetry, nor probably even the language in which it had been composed, one cannot perceive them as possible addressees of Bhūṣaṇ's work. But still, the mere existence of surely exaggerated depictions must have had some propaganda functions. In the early modern world, where performative arts including recitation served as the strongest mass medium, commissioning a text and making it spread was a good way to reach the remote regions of the subcontinent. One can assume that if only some part of the nobility formed the circle of poem's recipients, their number still could be impressive. Numerous descriptions of almsgiving suggest that an important reason must have drove the poet to use the theme. The hero of

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<sup>37</sup> In an even more explicit comparison of Śivājī to the rest of the rulers Bhūṣaṇ stands openly that there is no sense to go the other courts and beg, because Śivājī is the only generous on the earth (cf. VPM 1994: 258).

*Śivrajbhūṣaṇ* is continuously presented as the king of the Hindus<sup>38</sup> or the one who protected the Hindus from non-Hindus (*mlecchāna*), or precisely from Muslims (usu. *turakāna*). Hence, it is natural to expect that such king would fulfill the traditional requirements of *rājadharmā*, or “the way a king should comport himself in order to be righteous” (Duncan Derrett 1976: 606). According to Duncan Derrett the presuppositions of *rājadharmā* “were that the king should rule his subjects [...] in such a manner as to give general satisfaction [...]” (Duncan Derrett 1976: 606). *Artha* which—next to *danḍa*—was one of the main components of *rājadharmā* “though it boils down to money, can, and indeed must be used in part to maintain those whom charity directs as the objects of the king’s bounty, e.g., widows, orphans, poor brahmins. By sustaining those who have no patron, he acquires merit” (Duncan Derrett 1976: 605).<sup>39</sup> *Puṇya*, or the karmic merit, is one more clue to understand better the reason why in several stanzas of *Bhūṣaṇ*’s poem mere mendicants became the beneficiaries of *Śivājī*’s *dāna*.

The tale of *Śivājī*’s superiority among the rulers, already mentioned in the previous section, is discussed again in a *savaiya* devoted to his munificence towards poor:

*sāhitanaī sarajā tua dvāra pratīdina dāna kauṃ dundubhi bājai  
bhūṣana bhicchuka bhīrana kauṃ ati bhojahu teṃ baṛhi maujani sājai  
rāyani kau ganu rājani ko ganu sāhana mauṃ nahim yaum chabi chajai  
āja garībanivāja mahi para to so tuhīm sivarāja birājai*  
(VPM 1994, v. 55)

O, son of Shah[ji], the Lion (or Headman), drums [announcing distribution of] gifts play at your gates every day.

Bhushan [says]: [you] create (i.e. cause) greater waves of crowds of beggars than [king] Bhoja.

There is no one [like you] among crowds of noblemen, crowds of kings and shahs, thus [your] splendor spreads around.

Today on the earth you are the [only] gracious one to the poor, only you shine.<sup>40</sup>

<sup>38</sup> E.g. *hinduāna kau ādhāra, hinduāna-khambha, hinduna ke pati*.

<sup>39</sup> The textual support of Duncan Derrett’s such characterization of *rājadharmā* is one of the *Dharmaśāstras*.

<sup>40</sup> *Birājai* can be alternatively translated here as ‘you rule’.

Śivājī outshines all other rulers, including the emperors, but it might be quite meaningful that in the competition “who is better” he wins also with Bhoja, an 11<sup>th</sup> century Rājput king of Malwa famous for unparalleled acts of *dāna*, mostly for construction of multiple temples. It is possible that such reference was purely conventional. However, it is noteworthy that Bhūṣaṇ mentions Bhoja three times in his oeuvre,<sup>41</sup> always in a similar context, i.e. to showcase his own patron’s superiority. Choosing the legend of a neighboring country for a virtual rival may not be accidental and far from Śivājī’s ambitions. Another stanza comparing Śivājī to the legendary models of generosity informs about a fantastic condition of king’s dependents.

*sāhitanai sarajā samaraththa karī karanī dharatī para nīkī  
bhūli ge bhoja-se bikrama-se au bhāī bali-benu kī kīrati phīkī  
bhūṣana bhicchuka bhūpa bhae bhali bhīkha lai kevala bhvaisilā hī kī  
neka kī rījhi dhanesa karai lakhi esiyai rīti sadā sivajī kī*  
(VPM 1994, v. 243)

The powerful son of Shah[ji], the Lion performed good deeds on the earth  
Kings such as Bhoja and Vikramaditya were forgotten and the fame of Bali  
and Venu faded away.

Bhushan [says]: beggars became kings only by taking the alms of Bhonsle.  
The joy<sup>42</sup> of the good man makes [one] the lord of wealth (lit. Kubera); this  
is the way Shivaji always acts.

The most attractive attribute of Śivājī described in this excerpt is that he has the means to “make the kings”. We have already seen in Matirām’s *Lalitlālām* that “[Bhavsinh] makes the kings, he is the abode for beggars”. He identifies his patron with two mythical entities: cow and tree, *kāmadhenu* and *kalpavṛkṣa*. In a way, Bhūṣaṇ uses this old conventional image for a similar purpose. He explains what lies behind Śivājī’s power to “make the kings”.

<sup>41</sup> VPM 1994, vv. 55, 172, 243. In the long recension one more stanza (ŚB 1948, v. 193) contains the name of Bhoja.

<sup>42</sup> The feminine substantive *rījhi* is a derivative of the verb *rījhna* that “specifically connotes a connoisseur’s delight upon hearing a poem or song performed” (cf. Busch 2015: 256).

*magana manoratha ko dānau prathamahiṃ tohi kāmadhenu kāmataru teṃ  
ganāiyatu hai  
yāteṃ tere saba guna gāi ko sakata kabi buddhi-anusāra kachu kachu gāiyatu hai  
bhūšana kahai yaum sāhitanaī sivarāja nija bakhata baṛhāi kari tohi dhyāiyatu hai  
dīnatākaum dāri au adhīnatā biḍāri dīha-dāridakoṃ māri tere dvāra āiyatu hai*  
(VPM 1994: 208)

You are the first to [give] a desired gift [and thus] you are considered [bet-  
ter] than wish-fulfilling cow and wishing tree.

Thus who can sing all your qualities? A poet, according to his understand-  
ing [tries to] sing [at least] a little.

Bhushan says: o, son of Shah[ji], king Shiva[ji], you are remembered  
as the one who outran his own times.

In order to fling the wretchedness away, cast the subjection away and kill  
the misery [people who?] come to your gates.

Describing Śivājī as the one who “outran his own times” may have various meanings. But if read along with the last verse, this statement provokes a question. Who can attract all those individuals seeking to reject subjugation and getting rid of the misery? It must be someone equally rebellious, the one who knows how to rebel and climb up. Śivājī gained enormous popularity thanks to his rebellious nature and opposition against the Mughal court. As a historical figure, he has been elevated to the status of the model protector of Hindu *dharma* endangered by Muslim domination. This stanza evidently suggests that advances, in terms of social status, are possible. Of course, it is highly dubious that anything concerning social advance of Śivājī could have been revealed in a text commissioned by the ruler himself. Taking into consideration the aspirations and position of Śivājī in the Mughal network, it may be rather seen as an invitation to join the forces with the emerging ruler. Thus, showcasing Śivājī’s magnanimity towards the poor could have been aimed at attracting the more ambitious among his present or prospective subjects.<sup>43</sup> Its main purpose, however, must have been to set the new king and thus legitimize his power in the context of *rājadharmā*.

<sup>43</sup> A separate stanza is devoted to soldiers. It must have also been thought either to attract the new forces or to secure the existing ones:[...] *koṭīna dāna siva sarajā ke sipāhana koṃ bicalāyau* [...] (VPM 1994, v. 177). [...] The gifts of millions have astounded the soldiers of Shivaji [...].

### C. Religious patronage

If rewarding a poet served to attract other *gunīs*, being generous to all served to boast the image of royal attributes and possibly gain or secure the support of other nobles, sponsoring religious enterprises must have been also politically important for a ruler aware of his duties. Ultimately, protecting the *dharma* belonged to the competences of every Hindu ruler. As I have already mentioned in the context of Caran̄s and Bhāṭs, elevating the bards' role in the courts and giving them a certain priority in comparison with Brahmins occurred at some point among Rāj̄pūt rulers. Nevertheless, a similar situation was hardly possible at Śivājī's court, or at a court in the process of laying its legal foundations. Both existing histories (e.g. Sarkar 2010: 157–168) and textual sources (e.g. *Śivarājābhīṣeka* by Gāgā Bhaṭṭa, popularly known as Gaga Bhatt) prove that Brahmins occupied a strategic place in the whole enterprise. The genealogy fabricated by Gāgā Bhaṭṭa finds its place in *Śivrāj̄bhūṣaṇ* and the text does not lack other descriptions revealing royal attitude toward priests. Also the elephants come back once again in this context. Not only the fluid produced in the period of rut may flow down from animals' temples, the gifts themselves are so numerous that they flow like water.

*śiva saraja tuva dāna ko kari ko sakata bakhāna*  
*baṛhata nadīgana dāna-jala umaṛata nada gaja-dāna*  
 (VPM 1994, v. 121)

Shiva[ji] the Lion, who can compose the tale of your generosity?  
 The number of rivers increases [due to] the gifts [flowing like] water.  
 The river of elephants [offered] in gifts overflows.

The hands, which have already appeared as a conventional symbol of generosity, come again in an illustration of a variant of the figure *vibhāvna*. According to the definition provided by Bhūṣaṇ, one type of *vibhāvna* occurs when the cause arises from the result and not the other way round. Though it is natural that a lotus grows on the river, Śivājī's hands are lotuses giving birth to the rivers:

*sahitanai siva tero sunata punīta nāma dhāma-dhāma saba hī ke pātaka kaṭatu haiṃ  
tero jasa-kāja sarajā nihāri āja kabi-mana-bikrama-katha teṃ ucaṭatu haiṃ  
bhūšana bhanata tero dāna-saṅkalapa-jala aciraja sakala mahīna lapaṭatu haiṃ  
aura nadī-nadana teṃ kokanada hota tere kara-kokanada nadī-nada pragaṭatu haiṃ*  
(VPM 1994, v. 172)

Shiva[ji], the son of Shah[ji], in every house the sins of those who hear your sacred name are erased.

Having seen your glorious deeds, now the minds of poets turn away from the tale of Vikramaditya<sup>44</sup>.

Bhushan says: the flow (lit. water) of your deliberate gifts floods all sites.

Elsewhere (red) lotuses grow on small and big rivers [but] due to your hands [like] lotuses small and big rivers appear.

The quantity of gifts offered is so immense that their flow turns into rivers. Reading the stanza as a whole, not as an aggregate of separate images, makes the imagery understood as an amplification of king's name: the latter became powerful enough to erase sins from the homesteads. Such reading makes one realize that picturing generosity was again meant to raise Śivājī's profile.

## Conclusions

If royal authority is well grounded and relatively secure, the king may be free to enjoy the luxury of pure aesthetics or talks about moral virtues. The other players in the geopolitical arena are fully aware of his status and power, thus he does not need to inform his surroundings that he fulfills the basic requirements expected from a ruler. He finds enough space for entertainment and displaying his refinement. But the one who fights for recognition and strives to lay the legal foundations of his dominium has different priorities. The interesting points are that it is possible to express those priorities through a type

<sup>44</sup> In the long recension the generous king Bhoja reappears here again next to Vikramāditya:[...] *tero jasa kāja āja sarajā nihāri kabimana bhoja vikrama kathā te ucaṭata hai* [...] (ŚB 1948, v. 193) [...] Having seen your glorious deeds, the poet's mind turns away from the tale of Bhoja and Vikramāditya [...]

of literature strongly bound by convention and that nobles can advance their specific political points through talks on time-honored values. For a poet presumably employed by the ambitious Śivājī, using *vīra rasa*, or heroic mood, talking about martial prowess and bravery was apparently not enough to gain proper esteem or express the political agenda of his patron. Out of the set of themes dictated by the poet-ics, Bhūṣaṇ needed to explore and underline—as far as possible—the ones that served Śivājī’s actual aims. In *Śivrājībhūṣaṇ* the use of *dāna* has been channeled to suit several components of the current political agenda. The latter, given the position of the Marāṭhā ruler in the Mughal political network in 1673, consisted predominantly in legitimizing the new authority and attracting both the alliances and the necessary resources. It has been attained by means of exposing and boosting his royal worthiness in the eyes of powerful classes of *gunīs* and rulers, or the other co-players on the shared political arena, including the Mughal emperor Aurangzeb. The case of Śivājī’s entanglement in literature reveals a regional ruler who seeks transregional recognition and there is a meaningful analogy in the fact that one of his tools of political expression is a regional language advanced in taking over the cosmopolitan role of Sanskrit.

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