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The Reliable Poem. A 17th-century Hindi Poet in his Words*

SUMMARY: The article is devoted to the 17th-century poet Bhushan, author of *Śivarājabhūṣaṇa*, a *rītigranth* most probably commissioned by the emerging Maratha ruler Shivaji Bhonsle. The existing histories of Hindi literature provide multiple accounts on the life of the poet, often calling them the hearsay tradition. Although many of them are drawn from a Maratha chronicle (*bakhar*), a proper study on the source of such accounts is still lacking. One more source that gives a chance to retrieve the curricula of Bhushan is *Śivarājabhūṣaṇa*, the only homogenic text that is attributed to the poet. The manuscripts and the editions of this text, especially the stanzas referring to the poet himself, do not show significant changes or interpolations. It allows us to treat it as a relatively reliable source, and therefore the treatise can serve as a basis for the reconstruction of the poet's life and the circumstances of its composition. All portions of the text which refer to his biography are presented in order to provide complete data that can be drawn out of the internal evidence.

KEYWORDS: Bhushan, Bhūṣaṇa, *Śivarājabhūṣaṇa, rīti*, *rītigranth*, *bakhar*, manuscript.

The aim of this article is to draw attention to the self-presentation of a prominent Hindi poet Bhushan (*Bhūṣaṇa*, sometimes referred to as Bhushan Tripathi), who, according to Ramchandra Shukla's periodisation, belongs to the so called *rīti* literature. Bhushan is the author of a relatively innovative text among the poetic treatises composed

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in the 17th-century North Indian courts.[1] The account on this author's curricula significantly contributes to the geography of the literary culture to which he belongs. Although his literary background links him to the realms of North India, he is a truly cosmopolitan poet. The path of his career helps to realize the large geographical span and the importance of an early modern literary vernacular language. It testifies that even in the remote Deccan, an emerging leader had to include Brajbhasha into his political agenda.

The picture presented in this article is based on the data drawn from Bhushan's *rītigranth*,[2] *Śivarājabhūṣaṇa*, most probably the only uniform text attributed to this poet. A major part of the accounts on his life is based on the descriptions available in modern scholarship, especially in the Hindi language academic tradition. Although those descriptions are associated with at least one Marathas' chronicle the historicity of which is being restored in contemporary scholarship, it is necessary to treat them as important but still uncertain sources of information about the poet's life. The study on four editions and two manuscripts of the text which have been taken into consideration for the purpose of the present article allows us to perceive it as a modest but relatively reliable source on the subject of poet's life.

Apart from sketching a picture of the silhouette of Bhushan and his oeuvre, this article may also offer arguments for the discussion on the nature of Hindi scholarship. Due to several possible factors, such as an urgent need to create a complex history of one-language literature, the need motivated by the nationalist zeal, this scholarship often astounds its readers with a multitude of accounts built in a way

[1] *Śivarājabhūṣaṇa* is an interesting case of Braj *rītigranth* that was composed in Deccan but still belongs to the literary tradition of the early modern North Indian courts.

[2] *Rītigranth* is a literary genre dominant in the Braj court literature. It had a characteristic shape of the handbook of poetics with *lakṣaṇa*s (definitions) and *udāharaṇa*s (illustrations) of the concepts drawn from Sanskrit poetics. Among those concepts we find *rasa* (literary sentiments), *nāyikābheda* (categories of female characters) and *alaṅkāra* (figures of speech) but Bhushan's oeuvre refers only to the figures of speech.

that makes it difficult to reach or even imagine their possible sources. Such observation may reveal a nationalistic teleology and at the same time may suggest that the histories have been prepared somehow hastily. On the other hand, we may also deal with the opposite situation: several reliable sources exist, but many Hindi literary historians do not always feel a need or conviction to disclose them.

The early modern court literature composed in various idioms which (mostly for a necessary academic simplification) have been put under the term of classical Hindi has long been criticized, if not condemned, as a symptom of cultural deterioration. This situation, well known to the few Western scholars working on that period of North Indian literature, is perceived as the main reason for the scarcity of academic knowledge on this literary tradition. Various projects held nowadays by several scholars in the West, such as Imre Bangha, Allison Busch or Francesca Orsini, dynamically redraw its image. However, the character of Bhushan's texts, especially its subject-matter, differs from the dominant trend present in the so called *rīti* works. This might be the reason why it received relatively frail negative evaluations. The works in question still lack the proper study which would enable one to describe Bhushan's oeuvre not as unique, even idiosyncratic, but as being part of existing practices pursued in the courts of 17th- and 18th-century North Indian realms. Apart from the only comprehensive work on the classical Hindi court literature (i.e. Busch 2011),[3] Bhushan is rarely noticeable outside specific Hindi editorial or academic works. And most of the latter tend to present him in a certain separation from the 17th- and 18th-century literary trends.

The early modern courts in North India abound with literary works in which *śṛṅgāra rasa* is a dominating emotion.[4] Regardless of the genre

[3] An inceptive study about Bhushan's literature by Tatiana Rutkowska is one more rare example of interest in this poet outside the Hindi academia (Rutkowska 1983).

[4] Both *śṛṅgāra* (erotic) and *vīra* (heroic) *rasa*s belong to the earliest (i.e. described in Bharatamuni's *Nāṭyaśāstra*) classification of the eight sentiments or aesthetic principles. They go back as far as the early Sanskrit drama

and style chosen by the poets, the amount of texts treating *bārah-māsā*[5] or *nāyikābheda*,[6] the latter with the common use of the *nakha-śikha* technique of descritpion,[7] makes such subjects representative of the period called by Ramchandra Shukla *rītikāl*. The material of this stream or period of literature provides a sharp contrast to the devotional themes associated with Braj (or *Bhāṣā* as some authors used to call their own idiom), which belongs to the working category of classical Hindi. It is surprisingly rare that poets serving their patrons use *vīra rasa*. It may seem against common sense that a Kshatriya patronises more eagerly the works of entertainment than those devoted to bravery,

tradition (cf. Gerow 1977: 245, Winternitz 1963: 5–11). The dominance of *śr̥ṅgāra* as the main *rasa* in the *rīti* literature reflects the opinion of the earliest Sanskrit theoreticians and thus can be perceived as the main symptom of the classicization. "A literary work may contain a number of *rasa*s but only *śr̥ṅgāra-rasa* is called *rasa-rāja*—the king of all *rasa*s, as it excels all other aesthetic emotions existing in poetry" (Sudyka 2007: 131).

[5] *Bārah-māsā* (description of the twelve months) does not necessarily come straight from the Sanskrit classical literature. This concept reminds of the traditional *ṣad-r̥tu-varṇana* (characterization of the six seasons), but as Charlotte Vaudeville noted: "There are no known examples of *bārahmāsā*s in Sanskrit, only *ṣad-r̥tu-varṇana*s, although certain types of *dūta-kāvya* suggest that songs of the kind were known" (Vaudeville 1986: 5).

[6] The *nāyikābheda* representations are also drawn from the Sanskrit poetics and were widely practiced in the early modern Hindi court literature. As Allison Busch explains, "a subdiscipline of *alaṅkāraśāstra* known as *nāyikābheda*, a typology of different female characters, was particularly well developed in Brajbhasha". Furthermore, "(…) the *nāyikā* is the foundation of *śr̥ṅgāra rasa*, considered its *ālambana vibhāva* or underlying cause. Traditional Sanskrit theoreticians generally subsumed *nāyikābheda* within the larger discipline of *rasa* theory, but in the early modern period this subject became a new discipline in its own right" (Busch 2011: 79). For *nāyikābheda* in Sanskrit tradition see Sudyka 2007.

[7] *Nakha-śikha* is a "detailed depiction from toe to top (in. Skr. *nakha-śikhāvarṇana*, i.e. from a toe-nail—*nakha*—to *śikhā*—a lock of hair on the crown of the head)" (Sudyka 2013: 41).

war, physical strength, political domination and so on. However that is the situation we observe when trying to get acquainted with the fragments of knowledge about Braj (or *Bhaṣa*) court literature.

The *vīra rasa* or the heroic poetry at large is not new to the vernacular traditions. It goes back to the earliest works classified as Hindi in the first comprehensive history of Hindi literature. The works such as Jāyasī's *Padmāvat* or much earlier poems such as *Pṛthvīrāj rāsau* and *Ālhākhaṇḍ*[8] surely constitute an early Hindi net, although quite loose, of heroic poetry. But the literary production of the 17th-century courts does not offer too many elaborate examples falling into such category. Here we find Bhushan, who travelled from the Braj area to the North-West of the remote Deccan to compose a *vīra rasa* handbook of poetry, i.e. using a rare style within a typical genre.

It is difficult to say to what extent Bhushan's literary choices for *Śivarājabhūṣaṇa* were motivated by his own inclinations or were the result of his new patron's imposition. At first sight, the list of works attributed to Bhushan is decent enough to say something about the craft or nature of this poet, but a closer look leaves no doubt: out of six titles that we can list basing on the existing histories of Hindi literature, and the seventh one which is being consequently omitted by them, the researcher is left with one firm pillar only. *Śivsiṃh-saroj* lists four oeuvres: apart from *Śivarājabhūṣaṇa* one finds there *Bhūṣana-hajara*, *Bhūṣana-ullasa* and *Dūṣana-ullasa.* But those names are virtually everything we know about the works. None of the later literary historians, including Ramchandra Shukla, even try to indicate the source of those titles and there is no evidence that anyone has ever seen a single

[8] Both the authorship and the original body of those texts remain uncertain. Regarding the multitude of the recensions it is hard to admit that these are works by a single author. *Pṛthvīrāj rāsau* is ascribed to a bard named Cand, possibly a confidant of Pṛthvīrāj Chauhān of Delhi (cf. McGregor 1984: 16–17), whereas the nucleus of *Ālhākhaṇḍ* (or *Parmāl rāsau*) might have been composed by Jag'nāyak (Grierson 1989: 2) or again by Candbardāī (McGregor 1984: 20).

scrap of folio of any of those works. Two other collections of stanzas, *Śivā bāvanī* and *Chatrasāla daśaka*, which are included in all editions of *Bhūṣaṇa granthāvalī*, probably were structured as the compilations of the *sphuṭ kāvya* collected from various manuscripts.[9] There is one more work, a hardly available printed edition of *Alaṃkāra-prakāśa*,[10] but it seems that no one apart from its editor, and recently Rajmal Bora, bothered to discuss the authorship or authenticity of this work.[11] Taking into account all the uncertainties it may appear that drawing an account of Bhushan is a slippery task. It is sometimes more a work of an archaeologist than of a literary historian, but such a reconstruction is actually quite a reasonable method one can apply to the literary world which had been ideologically neglected for almost a century of nationalist-oriented scholarship.

The available Hindi scholarship on Bhushan

The nucleus of the biographical information about Bhushan was presented in the earliest comprehensive work on the history of Hindi literature, which is a catalogue of poets and their works, the famous

[9] *Sphuṭ kāvya* or *phuṭkar* is a technical term used to denote loose (miscellaneous) verses which have not been attributed to a larger poem. Besides the fact that *Śivā bāvanī* and *Chatrasāla daśaka* may be late collections of such verses, in each of the existing *Bhūṣaṇa granthāvalī* editions a few dozens of *phuṭkar*s form a final section which follows the three poems. As Vedavrat Śāstrī simply explained in the introduction to the Prayāg edition: "*phuṭkar meṃ bhūṣaṇjī ke un chandoṃ kā saṅgrah hai jo śivarāja-bhūṣaṇa, śivābāvanī aur chatrasāla-daśaka se bhinn haiṃ aur abtak upalabdh ho sake haiṃ. inmeṃ kuch śivājī viṣayak bhi haiṃ, kuch bhinn bhinn rājāoṃ kī praśaṃsā meṃ kahe gaye haiṃ aur kuch aise bhī haiṃ jo kisī kī praśaṃsā meṃ nahiṃ balki svatantr viṣay par likhe gae haiṃ*" (Śāstrī 1929: 13).

[10] According to its editor Kaiptan Shurvirsinh, this text might be the *Bhūṣana-ullāsa* mentioned in the *Śivsiṃh-saroj*.

[11] However, as Rajmal Bora acknowledges, it is dubious that *Alaṁkāra-prakāśa* is a work by Bhushan. It might be rather attributed to Murlidhar, who was given a pen name Bhushan by raja Devisiṁha of Chanderi (Borā 2004: 16–17).

Śivsiṃh-saroj by Shivsinh Sengar (Seṅgar 1878/1970). We find a further extension of those data in the earliest history of Hindi literature, i.e. the pioneering and to a large extent critical work by Ramachandra Shukla (Śukla 1929). Several other literary histories, such as Nagendra's sixth volume of *Hindī sāhitya ka bṛhat itihās* (Nagendra 1973) devoted to the *rītibaddh* style and other works of this author devoted to the *rīti* period invented by Shukla, *Hindī rīti sāhitya* written by Bhagirath Mishra (Miśra 1973) and e.g. encyclopaedias such as *Hindī sāhitya koś* by Dhirendra Varma (Varmā 1985 & 1986), do not profusely extend our knowledge about the case of Bhushan. They do not seem to be influenced by *Mahākāvi Bhūṣaṇa*, a relatively early monograph by Bhagirath Prasad Dikshit (Dīkṣit 1953) or by more informative introductions to several editions of *Bhūṣaṇa granthāvalī*, among which Mishrabandhu brothers' work occupies an important place (MB 1989). The popularity of *Śivarājabhūṣaṇa* at the end of the 19th century, i.e. after the first edition of *Śivsiṃh-saroj* had been published, probably had its roots in the 30th volume of *Mahārāṣtra kāvyetihāsa saṃgraha* (1889). At least this is one of the main reasons for its popularity that was given in the introduction to the earliest, hardly available today, edition of *Bhūṣaṇa granthāvalī* by Gangavishnu Shrikrishnadas (Śrīkr̥ṣṇadās c. 1895).[12]

What is striking in those works is that the sources of relatively rich accounts on the life of Bhushan are not being given. Apart from certain data that can be read out of *Śivarājabhūṣaṇa* most of the stories are either built on the unconnected shreds of *sphūṭ kāvya* or on accounts devoid of any textual roots. Although one may already accept that the early *Śivsiṃh-saroj* catalogue provides many data *ex cathedra* (*Śivsiṃh-saroj* 1970: 759–761), the renown project by

[12] Hereby I would like to express my gratitude to Uday Shankar Dube, who not only provided me with the copy of the otherwise unavailable text of the 1st edition of *Bhūṣaṇa granthāvalī* (Śrīkr̥ṣṇadās c. 1895) but who also directed part of my field research devoted to Bhushan and generously shared with me his knowledge on the manuscripts.

the Mishra brothers[13] astounds with the extensive use of unscientific markers such as *kahte haiṁ*, *sunā jātā hai*, *yah bāt prasiddh hai* or *jān paṛtā hai.*[14] This is how they introduce a significant bulk of information about the poet (e.g. Miśra 1989).

Regarding the above mentioned problems with scholarship on Bhushan, it is necessary to acknowledge that Rajmal Bora in his latest work *Bhūṣaṇa,* which was published in a series by Sāhitya Akādemī, divides the sources informing about the poet's life into three categories: inner evidence, outer evidence and hearsay tradition (*janśruti*). What is important here is that Rajmal Bora identifies the hearsay tradition with the famous Marathi chronicle or *bakhar* by Malhar Ramrao Citnis (Borā 2004: 15–16). The work is referred to by the earlier researchers such as the Mishra brothers as one of the main sources not only about Shivaji, but also about Bhushan. The apparatus of Mishrabandhu's works does not allow one to state how exactly the hearsay tradition was understood by the scholars. We may only assume that the previous researchers' associations of *janśruti* with the *bakhar* do not differ much from the one made by Rajmal Bora. This situation of doubt, however, is not necessarily a simple image of the nature of Hindi scholarship. The reason for such dubious association probably lies in the fact that the *bakhar*s only lately have started to be considered as legitimate histories. The allegations of their inadequacy to the Western historiographical methods and practices are surely responsible for the fact that such a prominent historian of Marathas as Jadunath Sarkar characterized *bakhar*s as "collections of gossips and tradition, sometimes no better than opium-eaters' tales" (Sarkar 1966: 265). The other opinions were not more favourable. As we learn from Prachi Deshpande's study on Maratha historiographies, although the *bakhar* "narratives were often *improved* by copyists in the course of transmission

[13] Introduction to their *Bhūṣaṇa granthāvalī* (Miśra 1907/1989) edition as well as their *Hindī navaratna* (Miśra 1955).

[14] Lit.: "they say", "it is heard", "this matter is well-known", "there is an opinion".

with changes in idiom, words and explanatory interpolations" (Deshpande 2007: 32) they cannot be refused as histories. The negative evaluations of this type of text seem unjust especially when we look at Citnis's own description of the professional workshop where "he indicates the specific sources he consulted" (Deshpande 2007: 31). Deshpande's work is devoted to four *bakhar*s. Two of them are especially important for the history of Shivaji's court. One is the *Sabhasad bakhar* (c. 1694) by Krishnaji Anant Sabhasad, an older official in the court's administration. She calls this chronicle one of the earliest biographical narratives on Shivaji. The other is a much later *Citnis bakhar* (c. 1811), an early 19th-century chronicle by Malhar Ramrao Citnis, a senior writer at the Satara court of Shahu II (Deshpande 2007: 20–21). The above mentioned Hindi scholars refer only to the second one, though according to Deshpande "(…) the bulk of the narrative is almost certainly based on Sabhasad's text (…)" (Deshpande 2007: 27).

A philological legitimization of the source

As stated in the beginning, the only available text by *kavi* Bhushan that might have been planned as a single oeuvre is the poetic treatise *Śivarājabhūṣaṇa*. Although the hearsay tradition provides us with an argument that is against this statement,[15] I will refer to this treatise as a uniform source. My motivation comes from a general comparison of the existing editions and available manuscripts. As already

[15] This argument concerns mainly a famous *kavitta* "indra jimi jambha…" (SBh 2046vi: 56). According to *Śivsiṃh-saroj*, during the first encounter of Shivaji with Bhushan, the poet after reciting this verse got rewarded with five elephants and twenty-five thousand rupees. Some other versions of this story, among which is the account provided by Rajmal Bora, tell about a reward of fifty-two elephants and fifty-two lakh rupees of reward given after Bhushan had either repeated this kavitta fifty-two times or recited fifty-two different verses (Bora 2004: 21). Such an account coming from the hearsay tradition would attest to the fact that Bhushan's treatise might have been, at least partially, a compilation of previously composed verses.

mentioned, the oeuvre is a *rītigranth*, which means that it has a form of a handbook of poetics.[16] Several editions of *Śivarājabhūṣaṇa*, most of which are included in *Bhūṣaṇa granthāvalī*s published since at least 1895, are rather a proof of its popularity than the result of significant differences between the available versions of the text.

The stanzas from the following sources have been consulted for the purpose of the present paper:

1) manuscript no. 54 of 1898-99, 52 folios, located in the Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute (BORI) in Pune, here referred to as the earlier one;

2) manuscript no. 1525 of 1891-95, 56 folios, located in the BORI in Pune as well;

Both manuscripts are complete and in a very good state.

3) *Bhūṣaṇa granthāvalī* by the Mishra brothers (Miśra 1907/1989), referred to as MB 1989 or the Varanasi edition;

4) *Bhūṣaṇa granthāvalī* by Vedavrat Shastri (Śāstrī 1929), referred to as the Prayag edition;

5) *Bhūṣaṇa granthāvalī* by Rajnarayan Sharma (Śarma 1937), referred to as the Lahaur edition;

6) *Bhūṣaṇa granthāvalī* by Vishvanath Prasad Mishra (Miśra 1953/2004), referred to as VM 1994 or the Delhi edition. The text of *Śivarājabhūṣaṇa* in this *granthāvalī* was equipped with valuable footnotes with the modern Hindi translation of the chosen words and a simple critical apparatus showing major lexical differences with several sources, mostly with the Varanasi edition. It also has an appendix (pp. 195-205) with sixty stanzas from the other sources which are different or have not been included into the main text by V. P. Mishra.

My preliminary comparison of the two manuscripts and four editions allows us to reject a suspicion of significant interpolations and changes that might have been driven by the political character of its content. Despite the problems with an objective dating of the earlier manuscript, the later one being written between 1887 and 1895, I refer to the expertise of Uday Shankar Dube, according to whom it was

[16] However, I am reluctant to use the English term as it may suggest its didactic purpose which is highly dubious.

produced no later than in the 18th century.[17] Moreover, I can indicate the existence of two recensions of *Śivarājabhūṣaṇa*: a shorter one, which corresponds to the Delhi edition, to which both manuscripts I have examined belong, and the longer one constituted by the Varanasi edition, the Lahaur edition or the Prayag edition. The two latter editions show almost no noticeable differences between them. The shorter and the longer recensions differ in the number of verses (between 347 in V.P. Mishra's Delhi edition and 382 in Mishrabandhu's Varanasi one). With the structure typical for a *rītigranth*, the text is composed of definitions of poetic figures and their illustrations. The main difference between the two recensions is that the longer one sometimes provides more illustrations under one definition. Besides, we observe the differences in the text itself, but they hardly ever result in a different meaning. Indeed, the higher number of illustrations in the longer recension could be perceived as a sign of interpolations, but it will require a further analysis. The autobiographical information I refer to in the subsequent section of this paper is based on the few verses common to the four printed editions and both manuscripts with a single reference to one *dohā* that appears only in the longer recension. I also draw attention to the differences between the stanzas of the two recensions whenever they appear.

Bhushan in *Śivarājabhūṣaṇa*

Most of the autobiographical data about the poet is cumulated in one of the sections of the text, which precedes the stream of definitions and illustrations. The section called by the 20th-century editors *kavivaṁśavarṇana* (none of the two manuscripts names this section) consists of six or seven *dohā*s, although the last one does not provide any information about the poet, informing only that he will now start

[17] Uday Shankar Dube has stated that the manuscript may have been written around the middle of the 18th century and is certainly earlier than the one used during the preparation of the Delhi edition of *Bhūṣaṇa granthāvalī* (expertise on the 20th of March, 2014, Vrindavan).

with the description of the figure of speech called *upamā*. The rest of the *dohā*s included in this section of the shorter recension refer to the poet's family background, his place of origin and the story about the origins of his pen name, which may sound as presenting the recommendation from the previous patron. In agreement with a usual practice of the court poet, as an extension of the recommendations, Bhushan refers to his professional association by confirming that he has learnt from good poets and does follow their path.[18] He also explains why he came to Shivaji's court.

Bhushan thus calls himself a twice-born of the Kanauja lineage, i.e. a Kanyakubja Brahmin, son of Ratinath. In the same *dohā* he indicates his place of origin, which is Trivikramapura at the bank of the Yamuna river:

dvija kanoja kula kasyapī ratinātha kau kumara
basata tribikramapura sadā jamunā-kaṇṭha suṭhāra (VM 1994, v. 26)[19]

In the three editions which according to my evaluation account for the longer recension the name of Bhuṣan's father is "ratanākara", not "ratinātha".

dvija kanauja kula kasyapī ratanākara suta dhīra
basata tivikramapura sadā taranitanūja tīra (MB 1989, v. 26)[20]

This difference might be meaningful for a further study on Bhushan's relation to two other court poets—Chintamani and Matiram.[21]

[18] Bhushan attests in such a way that he belongs to the *kavikul* or "family of poets" which was a *conditio sine qua non* of professional success (cf. Busch 2011: 189).

[19] "Twice-born, [belonging to] the Kanauja clan, the son of Ratinath / Living in Trivikramapura, on the beautiful bank of the Yamuna". All literal translations given in the footnotes are mine.

[20] "Twice-born, [belonging to] the Kanauja clan, the patient son of Ratnakar / Living in Trivikramapura, on the bank of the Yamuna (lit. daughter of Surya)".

[21] There are three major *rīti* poets "(…) Matiram Tripathi, Bhushan Tripathi, and Chintamani Tripathi, whom Hindi tradition remembers

He then probably associates his place of origin with the famous poet Birbal, or just indicates that this is the place where both poets and kings were born.[22] But more interesting in this section are Bhushan's professional curricula. The very first *dohā* of the analyzed section starts with revealing the poet's motivation to come to the court. In tune with the concept of a poet-traveller, characteristic of early modern vernacular literature, one finds here a clear statement that the talented come from different countries in order to ask the ruler (for money or goods?):

desani desani teṃ gunī āvata jacana tāhi
tinameṃ āyau eka kabi bhūṣana kahiyai jāh[*i*] (VM 1994, v. 25)[23]

Bhushan is one of them, i.e. he situates himself among those who are attracted by the personality of the ruler or his fame. The above-mentioned professional references confirm that Bhushan previously had a patron, a piece of information which is heavily supported in the Hindi scholarship by many stories drawn from the *janśruti*. The poet himself confirms that Rudrashah Solamki from Chitrakut, Hridairam's son, whom he calls an ocean of courage and good conduct, has given him the pen name *bhūṣāṇa* which means the jewel among poets:

kula sulaṅki citakūṭapati sāhasa-sīla-samudra
kabi bhūṣana padavī daī hṛdairāma suta-rudra (VM 1994, v. 28)[24]

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as brothers. Striking correspondences such as their birthplace (Tikvanpur, near modern Kanpur), connections between patrons, probable instances of textual borrowing, and the frequent juxtapositions of their names in premodern works confirm the reliability of the consensus on this point" (Busch 2011: 189).

[22] *bīra bīrabara se jahaṃ upaje kabi aru bhūpa* (…) (VM 1994, v. 27): "where poets and kings like brave Birbal were born".

[23] "The talented [men] come from various countries in order to request him [for goods?] / One poet who is called Bhushan came among them".

[24] "The lord of Chitrakut from the Solanki clan, the ocean of courage and good conduct / Rudra, the son of Hridairam, gave him the pen name Bhushan".

Despite this recommendation he still finds it necessary to attest that he has learnt from the good poets and that he follows their path. And this is what permits him to compose the *Śivabhūṣana* full of ornaments:

sukabina sauṃ suni suni kachuka samujhi kabina kau pantha
bhūṣana bhūṣanamaya karata sivabhūṣana subha grantha (VM 1994: v. 29)[25]

The longer recension offers a slightly different reading of the first verse of this stanza:

sukabina huṃ kī kachu kṛpa, samujhi kavina ko pantha
bhūṣana bhūṣanamaya karata "śivabhūṣana" subha grantha (MB 1989: v. 30)[26]

The variant of this *dohā* in the longer recension does not considerably change our perception of the poets' relations in the early modern courts, but it certainly draws a more precise picture of the professional hierarchy in that literary world.

One *dohā* that we find only in the longer recension may seem a little bit out of place among the other verses of *kavivaṁśavarṇana*. On the other hand, it confirms the information about the composition of *Śivabhūṣana* already expressed in the verse discussed above. But what is especially worth noting is that it tries to convince us that Bhushan was a witness to Shivaji's deeds. It states that after observing the acts of Shivaji, it came to Bhushan's mind that he would compose a poetry (or maybe a *kavitta* only?) loaded with various ornaments:

siva caritra lakhi yoṃ bhayo kavi ke citta
bhaṃti bhaṃti bhūṣani soṃ bhūṣita karauṃ kavitta (MB 1989, v. 29)[27]

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[25] "Having learnt [lit. heard] from the good poets and having understood a bit the path of poets / Bhushan composes with the poetic figures an amazing book *Shivabhushana*".

[26] In the three editions of the longer recension the first verse of this stanza is identical and it differs from the variants which are present in both manuscripts and the Delhi edition. We may read the whole stanza as: "Having understood the path of poets, [thanks to] the grace of the good poets only / Bhushan composes with the poetic figures an amazing book *Shivabhushana*".

[27] "Having seen the deeds of Shiva[ji] it came to his (i.e. poet's) mind: / I may compose the poetry adorned with various figures [or: jewels]".

The fact that Bhushan was the witness of Shivaji's deeds seems unlikely. It lacks support both in the content of the treatise and in the stories from the hearsay traditions quoted by the editors. Would this *dohā* be a short interpolation aiming to legitimize Bhushan as a chronicler or to boast the poem's authority according to the Western criteria of historical authenticity?

With the verse about the talented coming from different countries we gain a possible feature of the sponsorship of the poets by the rulers or mighty courtiers. Unlike some of the accounts retold by the Mishra brothers or by several other Hindi literary historians, the poet did not necessarily have to be invited to the court by the ruler who sought a good specialist in the craft. This *dohā* does not state clearly the standards of the recruitment, but much further in the text, among various illustrations glorifying the power of the ruler, we find a verse which sheds a stronger light on this matter. The example of the use of *smṛti alaṁkāra* is another stanza filled with poet's fear of rejection. Bhushan first asks whose appreciation would he sing if he left Shivaji, but at the same time he notices that his lord is bored with the poet singing his qualities. In a long stanza (which is a *kavitta*) he complains that the lord rejects him with no reason and looks favourably at the other Brahmins. Simultaneously, the poet reveals his motivation to work for the great leader:

> *tuma sivarāja bṛjarāja avatāra āja tuma hī jagata-kāja pokhata bharata hau*
> *tumhaiṃ choṛi kāhi yāteṃ binatī sunāūṃ maiṃ tihāre guna gāūṃ tuma ḍhīlakauṃ dharata hau*
> *bhūṣana bhanata vahi kula meṃ na bhayau na gunāha kachu ṭhayau kyauṃ na cinta hī harata hau*
> *aura bāṃbhanani deta karata sudāmā sudhi mohi dekhi kāhe sudhi bhṛgukī karat ahau* (VM 1994, v. 70)[28]

[28] "King Shiva[ji], you are the avatar of the lord of Braj (i.e. Krishna), you are the one who fulfills the task of watching and warding the world / Thus, whom shall I praise if I abandon you? I am singing your qualities, [thus] why do you keep boredom [in yourself]? / Neither do I come from this family, nor did I do anything wrong, so why do you reject me? / The other Brahmins

Is this stanza a reference to a specific situation that might have happened in the course of Bhushan's stay as a court poet in Raigarh? Or does it describe the competition among the poets who were used to searching for an employer?

One more verse contributes to the reconstruction of poet's biographical data: the last but one stanza in the whole treatise, i.e. a *dohā* about the time of its composition. It is especially important as Hindi scholars used to argue about this issue. It is interesting that the whole problem had been probably conceived by a note in *Śivsiṃh-saroj*. It's author Shivsinh Sengar stated that the poet was born in 1738 Vi., which is c. 1681 AD. Accepting this date, which was of much temptation to several scholars, would make our poet a historian born around seven years after Shivaji's coronation. At the same time Sengar quotes uncritically the accounts about Bhushan's encounters with Shivaji or Chatrasal, which are a clear contradiction to the date of his birth. We read in *Śivarājabhūṣaṇa*:

> *samata satraha sentīsa para suci badi terasi bhānu*
> *bhūṣana sivabhūṣana kiyau paṛhau sakala sugyāna* (VM 1994, v. 356)[29]

The division of words in V. P. Mishra's edition may suggest a modern Hindi number seventeen and thirty seven. The morpheme *seṁ/sen* between the numbers seventeen (*satraha*) and thirty (*tīsa*), which indeed appears in the manuscripts, seemed very problematic for the editors. Some of them even decided to get rid of it.[30] However, where the year is given, it is usually a common feature that we observe a precise formulation of the number. This *dohā* should be read as the *saṃvat* seventeen hundred thirty (cf. Callewaert 2009: 2137),

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remind you of Sudama, but when you look at me, why does Bhrigu comes to your mind?"

[29] "In the year 1730, on the 13th [day] of the dark half of [the month of] Jyeshtha, on Sunday / Bhushan completed *Shivabhushana*. Let all the learned men read it!"

[30] *sama satraha tīsa* (…) (Śāstrī 1929, v. 382).

which with the thirteenth day of the month *jyeṣṭha* situates the completion of the work in May 1673.

The poet's self-presentation framing the treatise is not a common procedure, or at least it is absent in what came down to us in the case of many authors, but still we find it in several works by court poets. The pattern similar to the one applied in *Śivarājabhūṣaṇa*, i.e. the genealogy of the poet following the genealogy of the patron,[31] is to be found in Keshavdas's (*Keśavdāsa*) *Kavi-priyā* (cf. Stasik 2005: 277). The names of the poet's clan, father, place of birth, and of the previous patrons are often mentioned in their poems. Bhushan may have followed (see above: VM 1994, v. 29) the example of this forerunner of Hindi elaborate poetry. Keshavdas informs us in *Kavi-priyā* that he was born to Kaśīnath, a man highly respected by the king Madhurśāh, in the Brahmin *Sanaḍhya* family (Nagendra 1973: 229). What is striking in *Śivarājabhūṣaṇa* is that unlike Keshavdas Bhushan remains silent about his brothers. In a similar tune, a late 17th-century poet Dev (whose full name is Devadatta) attests in *Bhāvavilāsa* that he is a *Dyausariyā* Brahman from *Iṭāya* (*Iṭāva*). It is also from his writing that we learn about his father and patrons (Nagendra 1973: 250-1). The section of self-presentation may also appear at the end of the poem. For instance let us take an example of *Kavitārasavinoda* by a less known late 18th-century Janraj (*Janrāja*). In the last section (24th) of the work he procures quite an extensive autobiographical account. The poet reveals there his real name, his father's and grand-father's names, his caste, the places important in the course of his life and work. He also indicates his guru and patrons. Janraj dates his oeuvre as well (Nagendra 1973: 276).

To conclude, it is hardly debatable that the popularity of Bhushan comes prevalently from the hearsay tradition, at least partially drawn from the *Citnis bakhar*, historical or legendary. It is being retold *in extenso* by the 19th- and 20th-century Hindi literary historians.

[31] Bhushan's treatise contains also *rāyagaṛhavarṇana*, the description of Shivaji's capital. This section is located between the two genealogies.

Nevertheless, the so-called inner evidence—or Bhushan's available poetic treatise in the case in question—permits us to draw a couple of valuable pieces of information about his life. The work is extremely important for this purpose, especially since we do not possess any other Hindi literary source that would bring a better idea about the poet's life and commitments.[32] We rest assured—by what has come down to us in written form—that he is a Kanyakubja Brahmin, born in Trivikramapura at the bank of the Yamuna river. Despite the absence of major interpolations or differences between them. The manuscripts and editions of the text, unfortunately, those which appear may cast a shadow on the authenticity of some information. Unlike many other *rīti* poets, Bhushan does not help the readers to retrieve his real name. One can only learn that the poet's previous patron, Rudrashah Solamki of Chitrakut, gave him the pen name which means a jewel or ornament. The poet leaves us also with a doubt about the way he was commissioned to write the treatise. However, the philological scrutiny helps to attest that he had completed the composition just before the coronation of Shivaji that took place in June 1673. It certainly suggests that this oeuvre belonged to the political agenda of the emerging ruler.

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[32] A piece of information which might be helpful for the reconstruction of Bhushan's curricula can be drawn from Bhikharidas's (*Bhikhārīdās*) *Kāvyaprayojana*. This 18th-century court poet lists his greatest predecessors putting them into three categories: those who work for spiritual reasons, for money or for fame. According to Bhikharidas's opinion Bhushan falls into the second category (for the original text see Nagendra 1973: 273, for the English translation and commentary see Busch 2011: 118).

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