# Sources for the Study of Guru Gobind Singh's Life and Times

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This essay surveys the sites, artifacts, and literary texts associated with Guru Gobind Singh's period (1675-1708). In the process, it introduces a set of sources of information as well as attempts at reorientation of the context that produced them. In a brief conclusion, the essay highlights the need for expanding and revising the current understanding of the Guru's life.

The present day understanding of Guru Gobind Singh's life is constructed around three landmarks: his birth in Patna in eastern India, in 1666; his creation of the Khalsa ("Community of the Pure") at Anandpur, in the Punjab hills, in 1699; and his replacement of the office of the personal Guru with the Granth, the Sikh scripture, thereby elevating it to the position of the Guru Granth ("Book manifested as the Guru") at the time of his death, in Nanderh in south India, in 1708.[1] The details that fill in the forty-two years of the Guru's life are culled from a variety of texts, which begin with the *Dasam Granth* ("the tenth book" or "book of the tenth [Guru]"), an anthology of poetry created largely between 1685 to 1698, and *Sri Gur Sobha* ("Praise of the Guru"), a poetic history of the period presently dated in 1711, and include eighteenth and nineteenth century writings culminating in Giani Gian Singh's synthetic narrative, *Tvarikh Guru Khalsa* ("History of the Guru Community"), completed in 1891.[2] (For a brief review of this chronology of events see Appendix).

The three tri-centennial celebrations associated with the above-mentioned events in Guru Gobind Singh's life, which fell on 1966, 1999, and 2008, respectively, have helped to open up this area of study. These events brought together educational institutions, media outlets, museum curators, scholars, state governments (Bihar, Haryana, Maharashtra, and Punjab), religious organizations, and the Sikh community to commemorate the most important figure in Sikh history after Guru Nanak (1469-1539), the founder of the Sikh tradition.[3] The elaborate deliberations between people with a wide variety of interests that ranged from writing books about the Guru's life and legacy to holding exhibitions of art and artifacts of his times and paving roads to commemorate his travels in the subcontinent helped to expand the corpus of information pertaining to his life and times in important ways.

As part of this larger activity, educational institutions in the Punjab launched a concerted effort to make the primary sources related to the period of Guru Gobind Singh available in print form. This initiative involved the preparation of critical editions of texts such as the Guru's *hukamname* ("letters of command"), the writings pertaining to Sikh *rahit* ("code of practice") that claim to have the Guru's imprimatur, and the historical texts that reflect the literary and cultural ethos of his period.[4] Simultaneously, the relevant Farsi writings created around 1700 with bearing on the Sikhs were translated into Punjabi and English, and some key Punjabi texts of this time are now available in English.[5] Beside these, a host of scholarly studies narrating Guru Gobind Singh's life and assessing the nature of his legacy came forth in the past decades.[6]As a result, a sizable literature on this subject is now available for those interested in studying it.

The celebratory activity around the three centennial events was instrumental in projects such as the building of Guru Gobind Singh Marg ("path"), a road covering the Guru's journey from Anandpur, the town he founded in the hills, to Damdama, a place of brief stay in the Malwa region at the southern tip of the Punjab (400 miles), in the early 1970s, and plans for its extension to reach Nanderh (1600 miles) in south India, in 2008.[7] In addition, there have been efforts to renovate the sites and towns associated with the Guru, which included the construction of new museums at Anandpur and Kapal Mochan, and arranging of major exhibitions of art to celebrate Sikh history that Guru Gobind Singh is understood to have shaped in fundamental ways.[8] In the process, significant information has come to light that synchronized well with the increasing scholarly awareness of the use of material heritage in writing history and groundbreaking research in this area is in the making.[9]

Recent studies in the history of the Guru Granth have yielded important implications for scholarly understanding of Guru Gobind Singh's period. Based upon manuscript evidence, it is now possible to locate the making of the canonical text of the Granth at Anandpur in the late 1670s and then trace the steady rise of its status to become the Guru Granth in 1708.[10] As a result, Guru Gobind Singh's role in the canonization, proliferation, and elevation of Sikh scripture at the time of his passing away is firmly established. The details of this narrative are different from the ones available in popular understanding that dated the canonization of the text in 1705 at Damdama and then its rise to the Guru Granth in 1708 at Nanderh.[11]

Building on the wide variety of information that has become available in the past decades, this essay aims to survey the sources presently available for the study of Guru Gobind Singh and his times. It opens with a discussion of the sites and artifacts that shed light on the physical and social environment in which the activity of the Guru's life unfolded, and then goes on to review the literary sources that were created under his

guidance and patronage. In a brief conclusion, I propose the possibility of creating a new biography of Guru Gobind Singh, which duly takes into account the comprehensive data available on his period. While presenting this detailed discussion, I introduce new sources of information that have surfaced during my past years' fieldwork, suggest revised dating of some well known texts and the time of enactment of some important events of the period, and argue for a concerted effort toward creating a ground-up understanding of Guru Gobind Singh's life, his achievements, and his vision for the future of the Khalsa Panth.[12]

**Material sources: Sites**

Early Sikh towns like Kartarpur (1520s) and Goindval (1550s) were built around the gurdwara ("house of the Guru"), which served as a place for Sikhs to gather and sing their sacred compositions, listen to the Guru's words of wisdom, meet fellow community members, and partake in the *langar* (Farsi, "anchor," a term that now refers both to a place of eating and the meal itself in Punjabi). As the community grew, Ramdaspur (1570s), known as Amritsar beginning with the second half of the eighteenth century, was centered on an impressive structure (Darbar Sahib, the honorable court) that was surrounded by other "majestic buildings" (*Mandar mere sabh te uche*, GG, M5, 1141). The Sikhs sang of the appointment of "the guards to protect the town" (*Guru sache baddha theh, rakhwale Guru dite*, GG, M4, 653), and the presence of the army there (*Gharu lashkar sabh tera*, GG, M5, 622).[13] The Sikhs who lived in other places away from the center congregated at their *dharamsal* ("place of worship"), where they prayed, listened to stories about the founder and his successors, and shared *langar*.[14]

Guru Nanak's idea that there was no pilgrimage center like the Guru himself (*Gur samani tirathu nahi koi*, M1*,* GG, 1328) developed into the belief that the Guru "sanctifies" the spot where he sits and the Sikhs should aspire "to rub their forehead with its dust" (*Jithai jai bahai mera satiguru so thanu sohava ram raje*/*Gursikhi so thanu bhalia lai dhuri mukhi lava*/ M4, GG, 450). This belief paved way for the performance of pilgrimage to the Guru's seat as well as making of the efforts to have the Guru visit other congregations to sanctify Sikh houses and *dharamsals*, if that was possible. The spread of the Sikh community across the river Satluj created the opportunity for Guru Hargobind (Guru 1606-1644) to visit there and extend the Sikh sacred geography to the Malwa region; and Guru Tegh Bahadur (Guru 1664-1675) with his extensive travels expanded it further to the eastern edge of the subcontinent in Assam.[15]

Using this as a backdrop, we can focus on the sites associated with Guru Gobind Singh.[16] They fall into two sets: Paunta and Anandpur, the towns that the Guru built and others like Patna, Damdama, and Nanderh, where he briefly stayed. The first set deserves closer attention and a look

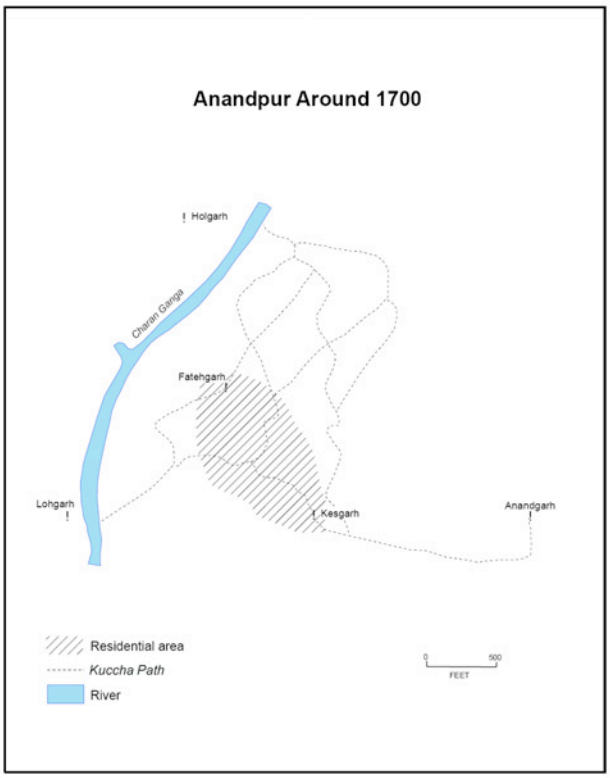
at their layout helps us understand the concerns that went into their planning. Both these towns were on the banks of major rivers. Paunta was situated at the confluence of the rivers Giri and Yamuna as they enter the plains of the then eastern Punjab, and Anandpur was on the banks of the Charan Ganga, a tributary of the river Satluj, which flowed nearby.[17] At this location, the Satluj passes through a smallish valley (*dun*), which served as habitat for wild animals and migratory birds, and had some potential for agriculture.[18] The beauty of these two natural settings is evoked in the literature of the period.

Although away from the hustle and bustle of the Punjab plains, both Paunta and Anandpur were situated on important trade and pilgrimage routes.[19] The Hindus crossed the Yamuna at Paunta to immerse the remains of their dead in the sacred river Ganga at Haridwar, and Hindu as well as Jain devotees passed through Anandpur while undertaking pilgrimages to Devi temples in Naina Devi and Jawalamukhi and the Adi Nath temple in Kangra. These routes also served to funnel trade between Kashmir and the Punjab, and through it to Delhi, and the area between the rivers Yamuna and Ganga.[20] We have an early seventeenth century account of a European travelling from Haridwar to Jawalamukhi, and other references to the bulk of the trade flowing through this route.[21] The locations of Paunta and Anandpur thus provided the Sikhs easy access to the travelers, the goods they carried, and other resources at their disposal.

The layout of Paunta and Anandpur reflects Sikh concerns of the times in important ways.[22] At Paunta, the Sikh establishment was on the top of a hillock that surveyed the people crossing the river Yamuna. From this vantage point, they could control the passage on the river while it was not easy for anyone to attack their base perched at a higher elevation. We have early references to Sikh surveillance of the traffic on the ford, deciding on issues of entry and access, and the challenges that resulted from this position of power.[23] These issues come into focus further as we look at Anandpur.

After his victory against the chief of Garhwal, a powerful figure in the area whose ancestors had ruled Banaras for centuries, the Guru returned to his parental seat of authority in the Punjab hills. Whether Anandpur was founded in 1684 or 1688 is not entirely clear, but we know for sure that it was a thriving town in the 1690s.[24] It was built on the hillocks on the eastern edge of the valley. The Guru's residential quarters were at its center. These were surrounded by the houses of his battle-tested warriors of the Paunta days.[25] We have contemporary references to a spot called the *Ucha Asthan* ("High Place"), where the Guru held his court.[26] In all likelihood, the declaration of renaming the community as the Khalsa Panth was issued from here, and since the Sikhs from that point on were to keep their hair (*kes*) uncut, the fort built at that spot came to be known as the *Kesgarh* ("Fort of [the gift of] Hair").

Although concerns for security can be traced back to the development of Amritsar, this dimension of Sikh thinking underwent considerable growth at Anandpur. In its original plan, the town demonstrates the preparations its builders made to defend its territory from any external attacks, and they used both natural and other resources at their disposal toward this goal. The Charan Ganga and the Satluj rivers protected the town from the northern and western side, respectively. The *Fatehgarh* ("fort of victory") was the first fort to be built commemorating the victory at Bhanganhi, and it was followed by *Holgarh* ("fort of *holi* celebration," and a spot of army exercises) in the northeast, *Lohgarh* ("fort of steel") in the west, *Anandgarh* ("fort of bliss") in the south, and *Kesgarh* in the center.[27]




While *Holgarh* and *Lohgarh* were across the Charan Ganga, and would have stopped any interference from the north, *Anandgarh* was located on the top of a hillock commanding a view in the direction of the Mughal territories. Among these five forts, *Anandgarh* was the largest, having a well with stairs (*bauli*) within its precincts, and thick walls with provisions for guns to be fitted in. A recently surfaced letter mentions the

transportation of cannons (*topan*) from Kabul to Anandpur.[28] The *Fatehgarh* and *Kesgarh*, being closer to the residential quarters, would have provided the second line of defense in case of need.

In addition to the Sikhs that lived at Anandpur permanently and those who came for short visits, the population of the town included an army comprising both cavalry and infantry. The tradition was not new: Guru Arjan refers to the presence of his army at Amritsar, and we know that Guru Hargobind had a standing army at Kiratpur with "three hundred battle-tested horsemen and sixty musketeers."[29] The institution had grown under Guru Gobind Singh and we have contemporary references to non-Sikh soldiers, both Hindu and Muslim, fighting for the Guru and details of some of them defecting to join the enemy in the heat of a pitched battle at Bhanganhi.[30]

Sikh aspirations at Anandpur also helped crystallize their thinking about sacred space in interesting ways. An entry in the Goindval Pothis, a scriptural manuscript created in the 1570s, calls Guru Nanak "Vedi Patishah, the anchor of Sikh spiritual and temporal life" (*Baba Nanak Vedi Patishah din dunia ki tek*).[31] This belief strengthened during the time of his successors, who were assigned the title of *Sacha Patishah* ("True Lord"), and the center at Amritsar was seen as their seat of spiritual and temporal authority.[32] For late seventeenth-century writers, Anandpur substituted for Amritsar as the center of their Guru's spiritual and temporal power.[33] No matter from which side pilgrims/visitors would have entered Anandpur, the first building that would have come to their notice was a fort, and, having entered the town there was no way to miss the presence of professional soldiers working in the Sikh army.

The belief in the sanctity of sacrificing one's life, which had started with the deaths of Guru Arjan and Guru Tegh Bahadur, was further strengthened by warfare at Paunta and Anandpur. The sacrifice of life for the protection of the community translated into the emergence of spots soaked in Sikh blood as part of sacred geography.[34] The first call after the death of Guru Gobind Singh was to revive Anandpur to its erstwhile glory. The town marked the epitome of sanctity—it was the tenth Guru's town as well as the site that had absorbed a huge quantity of Sikh blood in 1704.[35]

Other spots where Sikh blood was spilt turned into centers of Sikh pilgrimage with the passage of time. For instance, the first action that the Khalsa Panth took after the fall of Sirhind in 1710 was to locate the place of martyrdom of Fateh Singh and Zoravar Singh, the youngest sons of Guru Gobind Singh, and build a gurdwara on the site.[36] In the 1790s, when the Sikhs gathered sufficient strength to have their sway in Delhi, they erected a gurdwara at the spot where Guru Tegh Bahadur was martyred in 1675.[37] The touch of the Guru (*than suhava*) and the shedding of Sikh blood (*shahid ganj*) came to mark the sanctity of a spot, and this sense has been preserved.

Contemporary writers thought Guru Gobind Singh to be the chief (*sirmaur*) among the Gurus, and this sentiment reflects in the evolution of Sikh sacred geography during the eighteenth century.[38]Anandpur and Nanderh emerged on the Sikh pilgrimage map soon after the Guru's death, and Patna and Damdama joined them in subsequent decades.[39] Although historical circumstances led to the return to Amritsar as the center of Sikh activity, the four sites that followed it in sacred authority commemorated the life and activity of Guru Gobind Singh.

**Material Sources: Artifacts**

As to specific artifacts, we can begin with an examination of those that are available at the early sites mentioned in the previous section. Keeping in mind the treatment of manuscripts of the Granth as objects of reverence, it may be helpful to consider them as artifacts for the purpose of this discussion.[40]Manuscripts were a part of the treasury at the seats (*gaddi*) of the Gurus since the very inception of the community and it seems reasonable to assume that they had also reached Sikh *dharamsals* in distant places by the end of the seventeenth century. In their physical makeup, the extant manuscripts of this period are bound in leather, and some of them have illuminated opening folios.[41]As for their treatment, they received profound reverence within the community. Some sites earned prominence because of the presence of an early manuscript there such as Kartarpur near Jalandhar, and others such as Patna developed as major repositories of these manuscripts.

The second item found at early Sikh sites comprises the Gurus' *hukamname*. The actual letters become extant from Guru Hargobind's time on, but this genre of writing seemingly existed before his time.[42] Sikh congregations and families to whom these letters were addressed preserved them as tokens of the Guru's affection and treated them with utmost reverence. Their texts follow a standard pattern. They begin with an invocation to Akal Purakh/Vahiguru, the frequently used epithet for God in the Sikh tradition, go on to recognize the names of community leaders and family heads, sometimes including females, and close with specific instructions to the recipients regarding their conduct.

Although authoritative voices in the field of Sikh art are open to the possibility that there were contemporary portraits of the Gurus, the research required to support this position is yet to be done.[43] However, my limited work confirms that some of these portraits have survived. For instance, the early seventeenth century seat of Bidhi Chand at Sur Singh, in the Majha area, holds two portraits of Guru Hargobind.[44] The corroborating evidence appears in *Gurbilas Patishahi Chhevin* ("Praise of the Sixth Guru"), which narrates the arrival of a painter (*mussavar*) and the making of a portrait of the Guru at Amritsar.[45] Once started, this tradition continued in subsequent times, and we have references as well

to actual portraits of Guru Tegh Bahadur prepared during his visit to Assam.[46]

In addition, we have houses that the Gurus built, the trees under which they rested, the pools, wells and *baulis* that they dug and drank water from, the utensils they used for eating, the clothes and shoes they wore, the cots on which they sat, the musical instruments that were played upon in their presence, and the weapons and the drums that were part of their entourage.[47]

During Guru Gobind Singh's time, we see the expansion of this part of the Sikh heritage. For instance the number of the manuscripts of the Granth that belong to his time is much larger than the ones created earlier. I have records of thirty-three dated manuscripts. Eleven of these were compiled between 1604 and 1675, and the remaining twenty-two belong to Guru Gobind Singh's period.[48] It is reasonable to argue that the rise in the number of these manuscripts was related to their increased use in Sikh congregational worship. We will return to this issue later.

During Guru Gobind Singh's period, the writing of *hukamname* advanced to such a level that they functioned as royal decrees issued from Anandpur. The scribes took dictation from the Guru, committed these utterances to writing, inscribed them on illuminated sheets of paper in some cases, and assigned them some sort of serial number before sending them off. The thirty-four letters of Guru Gobind Singh are available in published form. They carry information ranging from norms of Sikh ethical conduct to the nature of Sikh religious and social organization, and materials ranging from gold to horses that the congregations in distant places were asked to bring or send to Anandpur.[49]

I am gratified to bring two new *hukamname* to the notice of scholars in the field.[50] The first is dated 1698 (*Samat* 1755) and its contents are extremely important. It begins with an invocation, states that the Guru's congregations are presently spread in all four corners of the earth, asks the listeners to give their offerings (*kar bheta*) to the bearer of the letter, who is a special assistant of the Guru (*hazuri taihilia*), or bring them along when they come to Anandpur.

It further says that the Khalsa Panth constitutes the Guru's own form (*rup*), and that it is created to protect the *dharma*. An audience with the Guru (*darshan*) and taking of the *pahul* ("nectar") will ensure liberation (*Jo amrit chhakega so amar hovega*). While the Sikhs are asked to develop close relations among themselves, they are not to have any interaction with the "five groups." Other sources explain these five to include the followers of Pirthi Chand, Dhirmal, Ramrai, the erstwhile *masands* (all of the foregoing represented divisions within the seventeenth-century Sikh community), and the *kurhimars,* those who "killed their daughters," a term that referred to the Rajputs in the Punjab hills."[51] It concludes with the information that the Guru had

communicated this message to Sainha Singh, who duly recorded it in sixteen lines, and that it is being sent under the signature of the Guru.

*Hukamnama* (1698), Private Collection, U.S.A.

*Hukamnama* (1699), Private Collection, U.S.A.

The above *hukamnama* (*Samat* 1756*, Magh Pravaste* 9) brings the Guru's blessings to the congregation, declares its members to be the Khalsa of the Guru, asks them to meditate on the Guru's name, and then commands them to send their contribution through the bearer of the letter. Although its carries routine contents, it represents an interesting specimen of illuminated documents of this period.

Both these letters evoke language and issues that appear in writings of the period, but the first of the two has some unique features. First, this is one of the most elaborately illuminated *hukamnama* that I have come across in my fieldwork. Secondly, it is not addressed to any specific congregation but broadly refers to the presence of Sikhs in "all four corners of the world." Thirdly, it includes the name of its scribe, Sainha Singh, as well as that of its bearer, Partap Singh. The effort put in its preparation, the nature of its details, and the absence of any particular address may imply that Partap Singh was supposed to travel with it to more than one place, announce its contents to different congregations, and answer any questions that they may have had.

Finally, this letter refers to the availability of the *pahul*, links the ceremony with the attainment of liberation, and echoes the Guru's expectation that the Sikhs will undergo the ceremony. These details confirm the existence of the ceremony of *pahul* in 1698, which points to the need to reexamine the tradition that associates the introduction of the *pahul* ceremony and the declaration of the Khalsa Panth with the Visakhi celebration of 1699.

In the 1960s, Ganda Singh and Shamsher Singh Ashok made important contribution to the field by publishing their editions of the *hukamname*. Their work needs to be expanded with the details available in these documents carefully incorporated into existing narratives of the 1690s. For instance, we have a set of five letters issued to different congregations on a single day (*Phago* 10*, Samat* 1758), and they all ask that their recipients come to Anandpur along with their weaponry.[52] While the existence of several letters written on a single day reflects the process of issuing these letters, the command for the Sikhs to come to Anandpur in early 1701 points to the circumstances that required the presence of additional community members. In another instance, one of the letters present at Takhat Harimandar, Patna, asks that *hukkas* and *chilams* (smoking equipment) be sent to Anandpur. Scholars have dismissed this document as spurious, but it may be worth considering that these items may have been required for the non-Sikh soldiers in the army at Anandpur.[53]

There is also potential to expand this corpus and bring into the discussion the *hukamname* that are not yet available in print. In addition to the two presented above, I have photographs of five others that surfaced during my fieldwork. Their addresses and dates are as follows:

| | |
|---|---|
| Ram Nath | (1688) *Samat* 1745* |
| Sangat Goindval | (1699) *Samat* 1756*, Katak* 4 |
| Sangat Nurmaihil | (1699) *Samat* 1756*, Katak* 24 |
| Mohkam Singh | (1701) *Samat* 1758*, Fago* 10 |
| Dip Chand [Kabul?] | Lower edge with date is lost.[54] |

The one marked with asterisk is beautifully illuminated. I am certain that these are not the only ones in the field that remain unpublished.

I was also fortunate to come across an altogether new category of artifacts created during the period under discussion. In the summer of 2000, I found myself in a fascinating situation when a copper plate (*tamar patar*) attributed to Guru Gobind Singh was unveiled in my presence at Naina Devi.[55] The inscription on the plate is in what is now called the Anandpur Lipi, a version of Gurmukhi script that began to appear in the 1670s and reached a considerable level of advancement in the following three decades.[56]

The text on the plate reads: "Salutations to Naina (*Namo Naine*). Bhadia is our priest (*purohit*). Those who follow us should acknowledge him." The plate is undated, and contemporary Sikh writings that mention the Guru's visit to Naina Devi temple are silent about the issuing of a copper plate there.[57]The *Sudharam Marag Granth* ("Book of the Good Religious Path"), a little known Sikh text, however, mentions the story of the Guru's visit to the temple at Naina Devi and his bestowing of the copper plate.[58] Its narrator reports that the Guru offered gifts of cash and kind to various priests during his visit there. Bhadia, the principal priest of the site, however, refused the Guru's offering of 100,000 rupees. His argument was that he would like to have a gift that "will stay with the family for long time to come." In response, the Guru had his instructions "inscribed on a copper plate" and bestowed it upon him. Bhadia appears in the *kursinama* ("genealogy") of the custodians of the plate and on the basis of the count of generations one could place him around 1700.

Naina Devi Temple, Naina Devi

Shiva Temple, Kapal Mochan

In order to make sense of this interesting find, I visited other Hindu sites associated with the Guru's travels in subsequent years, and my explorations in these places bore interesting results. I found one copper plate at the Shiva temple in Kapal Mochan, near Paunta, and was given information about another one in Kurukshetar.[59] The plate at Kapal Mochan is dated 1679 (*Samat* 1736, *katak badi panchami din mangalvar*), and its inscription uses regular Gurmukhi. Its text reads: "One God, with the grace of the Guru. The Khalsa belongs to the Immortal one. Guru Gobind Singh bestowed the *hukamnama* on Jawala Das Brahman on Tuesday, October 14, 1679. My Sikh, who will follow this *hukamnama,* will be blessed." The following text records the opening passage of Sikh *ardas* ("supplication"), which supports the belief that the success of the Khalsa is imminent and that Guru Gobind Singh along with his nine predecessors, all recipients of divine blessings, will help those who will work for this victory.[60] According to its custodians, the Guru made two visits to their place, and bestowed upon the family a plate in 1679 and a *hukamnama* inscribed on an illuminated paper in 1688. A Sikh account also narrates the Guru's visit to Kapal Mochan in 1688 but makes no reference to any of these artifacts.[61]

How does one interpret the significance of these copper plates? Historically, they have served as symbols of political patronage in Hindu society and it was a common practice for the Punjab hill chiefs to bestow them on local shrines as a mark of their benevolence as well as authority. The surfacing of these two plates is not an anomaly in any way. Twenty-six extant plates from this period dating between the years 1650 to 1725 were granted by the local hill chiefs in the region to the Hindu temples in the vicinity of Naina Devi.[62]

As for the authenticity of these plates, their custodians report that the Guru bestowed them on the temples and they have preserved them as markers of his blessings on the site they serve. If one takes into account the *Sudharam Marg Granth*'s testimony, the tradition of the plate at Naina Devi is at least two centuries old. In all likelihood, the blacksmiths associated with the Sikh court had the capability to create these plates and then print the inscription on them. The specificity of the details of its "bestowal in the morning" creates the possibility that the Guru ordered the issuing of the copper plate, and the blacksmith paraphrased the Guru's command on the plate later. When ready, the plate was passed on to the priests.[63] The *hukamnama* presented above claims to have been prepared in the same manner.

Whatever the precise circumstances of the making of these plates, their symbolic content is not hard to grasp. They point to the hierarchy of authority and the direction of the flow of power in the area around Anandpur. It should cause no surprise that the Guru visited Naina Devi, Kapal Mochan, and Kurukshetar; he was obviously not the first Guru to travel to Hindu sacred sites.[64] While the custodians of these sites

welcomed him, and received these plates as a marker of his blessings, the Sikhs saw the acceptance of the plates by the influential priestly families as a token of their formal submission to Sikh authority. The description of the Guru's visit to Kapal Mochan in contemporary Sikh sources is centered on the fun and frolic that they had at the annual fare associated with the shrine.[65] But there is no reference to local priests, the solemnity of the occasion, and the bestowing of the *hukamname.*

The inscription on the Kapal Mochan plate records 1679 as the time of the Guru's visit and names him as "Gobind Singh." Working within the accepted scholarly and traditional narrative, one would assume that the Guru appended the title "Singh" to his name in 1699 and the appearance of the "Singh" and the "Khalsa" in 1679 would seem anachronistic. Given the information available in the plate along with the terms used for the Guru's succession to his father's authority in other contemporary reports, however, it seems worth considering the possibility that he assumed the title "Singh" in 1675.[66] The existing sequence of developments during the life of Guru Gobind Singh is largely constructed from information that surfaces in late-eighteenth, or early-nineteenth century texts, and the data presented in the above document point to the need of a revised chronology (see Appendix).[67]

The illumination and calligraphy manifested in the above documents was also employed in manuscripts of the Granth prepared in both Gurmukhi and Anandpur Lipi. The *Anandpur Birh*, the earliest extant manuscript of what later came to be known as the *Dasam Granth*, is a beautifully inscribed text, which records in the margins the names of the scribes.[68] (For the facsimiles, see the last essay in this volume). In addition, the manuscript has two portraits of Guru Gobind Singh pasted on the opening folios.[69] The first presents him sitting on the throne with his attendant waving the ceremonial whisk, and the second shows him participating in the royal sport of hunting. These portraits leave little doubt that some of the accomplished artists of the time had moved to Anandpur and were working under Sikh patronage. These two portraits easily compare with the finest paintings of the period and they are not the only such pictures to have come to light.

A portrait presently available in the National Museum, New Delhi, records "Guru Gobind Singh" at its lower edge and was seemingly made by an artist at Mandi in the late 1690s. A portrait at Patna is also believed to have been "prepared during the Guru's lifetime (*hayati*)."[70] Some of his childhood portraits are also available there. The one below was acquired by Trilochan Singh, an important scholar of Sikh history, from the Patna area and is currently with his son Anurag Singh in Ludhiana. These paintings have interesting correspondence with the verbal portraits drawn by the poets singing at his court at Anandpur.[71]

5.75" by 7.5", *Anandpur Birh*, Private Collection

10.75" by 7.5", *Anandpur Birh*, Private Collection

9.00" by 7.5", Anurag Singh, Punjab

The Sikh community has also preserved Guru Gobind Singh's personal memorabilia. These include beds, turbans, clothes, combs, shoes, utensils, prayer beads, pens, and musical instruments that were played in his presence.[72] The largest single type of artifacts related to his period is weaponry. These arms range from small swords and bows that he is believed to have played with as a youngster at Patna to large matchlocks and heavy cannons employed by his troops based in various forts at Anandpur.[73] Some of these have handles with gold and silver inlay that traces their history to the markets in Kabul, while others carry inscriptions recorded both in Gurmukhi and in Arabic, which indicates that the suppliers of these arms were both Sikh and Muslim blacksmiths. There are arrowheads that have a small clump of gold welded to their tip or carry a gold ring around at the base of their stem. According to popular Sikh traditions, the gold was intended to pay for the cremation of the person killed with the Guru's arrow.[74]

Although the presence of Sikh weapons can be traced back to Guru Hargobind, their significance expanded considerably during the period of Guru Gobind Singh. The evolution of Sikh thinking at Anandpur, the center of their *din* and *dunia,* can be seen to be taking place in two stages: it began with the rise of the Sikh ideology of providing food and justice to all (*deg tegh fateh*), and then developed into the conception of Khalsa Raj (Divine rule), a religio-political state constructed around the obligation of providing food and justice to all. Within this context, Vahiguru was described as *Sarab Loh* ("All Steel") and the weapons were interpreted as divine instruments to be used toward the establishment of the Khalsa Raj. While the Sikhs at Anandpur trained to use these weapons, the local blacksmiths showed their artistic skills in creating different types of inlays for them and imprinting Sikh sacred verses on them.[75] The poets of the period declared them to be the objects of worship and took onomatopoeic delight in capturing the sounds they made in battle as they narrated the Guru's confrontations with the Rajputs of the hill states in the vicinity.[76]

We also have contemporary reports of the presence of a *mohar* (official seal), a *nishan* (flag), and an early nineteenth century claim as to the minting of *sikke* (coins) at Anandpur.[77] Although none of these items is available for examination, references to them deserve closer attention. For instance, the first Mughal coin that carries the counter strike of the *deg tegh fateh* symbol is dated 1698. It is easier to make a case for the rise of these symbols of sovereignty at Anandpur and their resurfacing in Sirhind and Mukhlispur in the 1710s than to attribute them exclusively to Banda Singh (d. 1716), as is often done in current scholarship.[78]

At this point, it may also be helpful to briefly look at the nature and the evolution of sites and artifacts related to the female members of the families of the Gurus. The *Janam Sakhi* ("life story"/"eye witness account of life") literature presenting Guru Nanak's life and mission

preserved the names and created portraits of Tripta, Nanaki, Sulakhanhi, and Chando Ranhi, his mother, sister, wife, and mother-in-law, respectively.[79] It is with Bibi Bhani, the daughter of Guru Amardas (Guru 1552-1574), and wife of Guru Ramdas (Guru 1574-1581), however, that the Sikh tradition began to retain a material heritage associated with the early Sikh women. The quarters where she gave birth to her son Arjan (born 1563, Guru 1581-1606) and her actual cooking place (*chulah*) are preserved at Goindval.[80] A chariot, which is associated with Mata Ganga, Guru Arjan's wife, is presently available at Bhai Rupa, Bhatinda.[81] Kaulsar, a pool in Amritsar, was named after Mata Kaulan, the wife of Guru Hargobind.[82] The tradition has also preserved a prayer book (*pothi*), an embroidered handkerchief (*rumal*) and a fan (*pakhi*) that belonged to Bibi Rup Kaur, the daughter of Guru Harirai (born 1630, Guru 1644-1661).[83]

As we move toward the closing decades of the seventeenth century, interesting developments took place. Guru Tegh Bahadur named his town, Chak Nanaki, after his mother, Mata Nanaki. Following his death in 1675, his wife, Mata Gujari, ensured a smooth succession of their son to the Guru's position, and we also have a *hukamnama* that is formally issued under her name.[84] Guru Gobind Singh's first wife, Mata Jito (died 1700), seemingly carried the title of *Jagat Mata* ("Mother of the World"), and she became the first Sikh female to be assigned a spot in sacred geography at Anandpur: her place of cremation was marked with a gurdwara.[85] Mata Gujari followed Mata Jito and obtained this honor a decade or so later.[86] After Guru Gobind Singh's death in 1708, his wives Mata Sundari and Mata Sahib Devi continued to issue *hukamname*; eighteen of these documents are available in printed form. These edicts asked help for the *langar* at Delhi and underscored the belief that the Khalsa Panth belonged to Vahiguru, and that there was no provision for personal authority within the community.[87]

To sum up this section, the complex array of sources mentioned above needs to be examined and a concerted effort made to collect the information relevant to the period around 1700. The layers of security around Anandpur, the presence of the standing army, the weaponry, the elephants, the horses, the flags, the seal, the official stationery, the issuing of the *hukamname*, the copper plates, and the emergence of Mata Jito's place of cremation on the map of Sikh sacred geography—all these need to be incorporated in our understanding of Guru Gobind Singh's life, the nature of his leadership, and the contours of his vision for the future of the Khalsa Panth. Such artifacts also serve as the markers of the context in which the poets and writers of the time created their compositions and as a result should be taken into consideration while interpreting the textual sources created at Anandpur.

**Textual Sources**

Unlike the previous section, where we tried to discuss relatively underutilized sources of information, here we deal with texts that are familiar to scholars in Sikh Studies. The dating and contextualization of many of these texts, however, are not as firm as one would like to believe and additional manuscript work is required to attain the requisite degree of clarity about their time of compilation. Let us begin with a quick look at the nature of literary activity during Guru Gobind Singh's period and then focus on its various segments—the Granth that later becomes the Guru Granth, its commentaries, the *rahit* documents, the historical texts presenting the life story of the Guru, and the *Dasam Granth*.We will examine their relationships with each other as well as with the larger context that produced them.

Right at the outset, two basic observations need to be made. First, the Sikh poets and writers of the time (Nand Lal, Prihlad Singh, Chaupa Singh, Sainapati, and Seva Das) were the recipients of a literary inheritance that had spanned over a century and a half. It is important to understand how these people built on existing Sikh writings and expanded or modified the ideas available therein. Secondly, we have an altogether new group of writers who joined the Sikh court in search of patronage during Guru Gobind Singh's period. It seems that this process started with the Sikh move to Paunta in the mid-1680s and developed further at Anandpur in the 1690s. Unlike the aforementioned group of writers, who came from within the tradition, these people belonged to a non-Sikh religious and literary background and had to adjust their activity to the parameters of the Sikh court. Barring one major exception, *Prem Sumarag Granth* ("Book of Good Path of Love"), which we will discuss later, the names of all the writers in the first group are known, while the identity of the authors belonging to the latter category has been lost, if ever it was known.[88]

Early in its history, Sikh literature developed along five lines: (1) the scriptural text, (2) commentaries on this text, (3) statements about practice, (4) life stories of the founder and his successors, (5) and other historically inflected texts such as court poetry. These strands are not always demarcated but it may be helpful to look briefly at the evolution of each of them up to and through Guru Gobind Singh's times.

Guru Nanak's compositions provided the core of Sikh scripture. The *Puratan Janam Sakhi* ("Old Life Story" [of Guru Nanak]), a late sixteenth-century document on Guru Nanak's life, reports that his companions wrote down his compositions as he sang them, and we have references to these compositions being compiled in the form of a Pothi (volume) in the opening decades of the sixteenth century.[89]

The volume created during Guru Nanak's times expanded as his successors created compositions and appended them to its text. This

enlarged volume refers to itself as the Pothi (1604), the Granth (1653), the Granth Ji (1688), while other writings address it as Granth Sahib (beginning the 1690s), and even the Guru Granth (1697 and 1709).[90] The titles and honorifics that were assigned to the holy book reflect the rise of its status within the community. The Pothi of 1604 becomes the Guru Granth ("The book manifested as the Guru") by the time of Guru Gobind Singh's death in 1708.

The Pothi was already established as the foundation of Sikh spiritual and literary heritage by the turn of the seventeenth century and this position firmed up with the passage of time. During Guru Gobind Singh's period, its history can be traced in three phases: the creation of the canonical version in the late 1670s, the multiplication of its manuscripts in following decades, and a steady rise of its status until it became the "Guru Granth," the custodian of the authority of the line of personal Gurus. Guru Gobind Singh thus oversaw the closing of the community's Granth, a visible increase in the number of its manuscripts, and its elevation toward an iconic status.

Unlike the Granth, the remaining four categories of textual production were seen to comprise an open-ended corpus, which was expected to grow as time passed. The first segment of this "open canon" was comprised by the commentaries on the Granth. Beliefs enshrined in the compositions of the Gurus were not only to be recited and revered, but were to be understood and translated into real life (*Dithai mukati na hovai jicharu sabadi na kare vichar*, M3, GG, 594; M3, 560). Guru Nanak's successors attempted to elaborate on his themes, and the exegesis of Sikh sacred compositions thus began with the very inception of the community.[91]

The narrator of the *Puratan Janam Sakhi* makes a conscious effort to contextualize Guru Nanak's writings in real-life settings and then attempts to convey their message. During the seventeenth century, the ballads (*vars*) of Bhai Gurdas (d. 1638) take up themes such as the ideal Sikh (*gursikh*), the nature of relationship between the Guru and his followers (*guru-chela*/*pir-murid*), the nature of Sikh congregation (*sangat*), and values such as service (*seva*), explaining them on the basis of the Gurus' writings.[92] This period also saw the rise of commentaries that focused on the benefit (*paramarth*) of the reciting and reflecting upon the scriptural verses.[93]

During the period of Guru Gobind Singh, Bhai Mani Singh (d. 1734) emerges as the key contributor within this category of literature. The Guru sent him to Amritsar in the late 1690s with the responsibility of overseeing activity at the Darbar Sahib, which included helping the local congregation understand the message of the Gurus. A scholar, a scribe, and a martyr, Bhai Mani Singh enjoys the unique distinction of being the only Sikh of the early period whose life and death became the subject of a biography (*Shahid Bilas*) at the turn of nineteenth century.[94] Bhai Mani

Singh and Bhai Gurdas, both commentators on the scriptural text, are the only Sikhs to have made it into Sikh iconography in the mid-nineteenth century.[95]

Given the Sikh emphasis on *shubh amal* ("good deeds"), it is logical that statements about practice (*rahit*) developed alongside the interpretation of Sikh beliefs. By 1600, we have a list of ten prescriptions, which included five things that a Sikh should do and five that he or she should not do. These originally appeared on the blank folios of scriptural manuscripts. Later they developed in such a way that took the form of narratives of question-answer sessions between the Gurus and the Sikhs in the middle decades of the seventeenth century.[96]

The first statement of *rahit* created during Guru Gobind Singh's period is attributed to Nand Lal and is dated December 4, 1694 (*Samat satra sahis su bavan* [1752], *Magahar Sudi naumi sukh davan*).[97] A document entitled *Tankhahnama* ("Letter of Conduct") also refers to Nand Lal as its author and seems to have been created in the following years.[98] Another *Rahitnama* authored by Prihlad Singh refers to its date of composition as *Samat satar sai bhai barakh bavanja nihar* [1752], *Magh sudi thit panchami Ravivar subh var*.[99] In addition, we have a set of documents such as *Sakhi Bhai Dan Singh nal hoi*, which though undated falls in the same time period.[100]

The next *Rahitnama* text that appears within this corpus claims to have been compiled by Chaupa Singh and carries the date of its completion as 1700.[101] The manuscript evidence points to a text comprising of four parts: the preface, a set of prescriptions of conduct, a narrative of Guru Gobind Singh's life, and a string of transgressions that need to be punished. The core of the text is constituted of the preface and the part that follows it, while the remaining two sections were appended later. The counting of the sentences in the section that follows the preface was eventually extended to the appended parts, creating the impression that they were always part of a single whole.

The opening two segments that claim to have been completed in 1700 need a careful look.[102] The preface reports that this document resulted from a discussion between the *muktas* ("enlightened ones") and the *mussadis* ("officials") at Anandpur. The issue at stake was the Sikh norms for marriage. We are told that the *muktas,* who seemingly had the responsibility of providing advice to Sikhs visiting Anandpur, wanted the Sikhs to marry their children within the Sikh community without any consideration, to the social backgrounds of their families. The *mussadis*, however, had some doubts about its being the appropriate position and wanted to seek the Guru's confirmation on this.

In response to their request, the Guru ordered Chaupa Singh to seek the help of other *gurmukhs* ("pious ones") and draft a code of practice that would follow the "testimony of the Granth Sahib." The text reports that Chaupa Singh prepared this collaborative statement and presented it

to the Guru on May 14, 1700 (*Samat* 1757*, Jeth din satven*). The Guru listened to "some part of the prepared document," found it to follow the spirit of Sikh teachings as enshrined in the Granth, gave it his formal approval, and asked for its copies to be made and distributed among Sikhs.[103]

The next section of the opening segment lists a set of prescriptions pertaining to Sikh practice, which are counted in two extant manuscripts as 156 and 500, respectively. This section opens with an invocation (*Ek onkar satiguru prasadi*) and concludes with the following: "These words represent the consensus of the Sikhs and have the approval of the Guru. They are intended only for Sikhs and are not meant for everyone (*jagat*). Besides these [codes], the Sikh of the Guru should follow any other [code] that is in accordance with the teachings of Guru and the ideas of [enlightened] Sikhs. Never let a good deed remain undone."[104] The preface and this statement manifest clear literary integrity, standing as independent units of text, and the sections that follow have distinct characteristics of their own.

The importance of the *Chaupa Singh Rahitnama* cannot be overstated. First, it offers a detailed statement on personal and communal obligations that the Sikhs were expected to follow. Secondly, by evoking the authority of the "Granth Ji" or "Granth Sahib" consistently, it establishes the source that one needs to tap to find answers to questions about practice. For the authors, "the word of the Granth Sahib Ji should be considered the Guru." Thirdly, the drafting of the document emphasizes the centrality of communal consensus in this process. Finally, the document defines *rahit* as an open-ended concept within the Sikh community, which has full authorization to resolve any practice-related issue based on the teachings enshrined in the text of the Granth. It is crucial to register that the document, though formally approved by the Guru, leaves open the possibility of further additions.

These statements regarding the domain of *rahit* reach their highest elaboration in a text entitled the *Prem Sumarag* or *Param Marag* ("Good Path of Love," "Great Path").[105] The invocation to Guru Gobind Singh (*Giranth likhiate Patishahi* 10) at the beginning of the text points to its being compiled during his period, and in terms of its language and primary concerns it clearly expands the scope of the documents mentioned above. The *Prem Sumarag Granth* does not carry the name of its author, and the explanation may well be that it resulted from a collective effort of many *gurmukhs/muktas*; it was not found necessary to retain their names. The text reflects deep understanding of Sikh beliefs, a sense of Guru Gobind Singh's vision for the future of the Sikhs, and a good knowledge of the beliefs of Hindu and Muslim communities. Furthermore, it shows an amazing sensitivity to gender-related issues, and a considerable care is taken to include the details of rituals related to the birth, marriage, and death of female members of the Sikh community,

including widows.[106] In my view, the *Prem Sumarag Granth* is a comprehensive document that marked the peak among *rahit* documents produced at Anandpur, and it synchronizes well with Sikh religious, social, and political aspirations of the rule of the *deg* and *tegh*.[107]

From commentaries on Sikh scripture and lists of what Sikhs should or should not do, let us move on to the texts that attempted to record Sikh history. As I have said, this category of Sikh literature began with the *Puratan Janam Sakhi*, which evolved in such a way as to take three broad forms during the seventeenth century.[108] First, Bhai Gurdas poeticized the life of Guru Nanak in forty-five stanzas. Secondly, the followers of Prithi Chand (d. 1618) and Handal (d. 1648) turned their compilation of stories about Guru Nanak into the markers of their sectarian outfits within the Sikh community. Finally, authors coming in the second half of the seventeenth century expanded the existing writings to include the life stories of Guru Nanak's successors, individually as well as collectively.[109] Despite all this, the literary integrity of the *Puratan Janam Sakhi* remained largely intact and its eighteenth-century manuscripts were scattered throughout far-flung places in India.[110]

During Guru Gobind Singh's period, the *Janam Sakhi* genre evolved in two distinct ways. First, the political concerns at Anandpur impinged upon the manner in which the existing stories were told. For instance, the *Puratan Janam Sakhi*'s original episode regarding the Mughal invasion is expanded by means of a brief detour that describes a face-to-face meeting between Babur and the Guru. The Guru bestows sovereignty upon the Mughal chief. Another episode in the *Puratan Janam Sakhi*, a conversation between Guru Nanak and Qazi Rukandin, a Muslim leader based in Mecca, served as the occasion for the insertion of an altogether independent text trumpeting the idea that the period of Hindu and Muslim political power was gone and it was now the time for Guru Nanak and by implication his followers to rule.[111] Guru Nanak is the source of Sikh power, the text proclaims and the Sikhs are destined to establish their kingdom of *deg* and *tegh.*

Second, unlike the early *Janam Sakhis* that were created after the deaths of the Gurus whose life stories they narrated, Guru Gobind Singh's life and mission began to be sung in the 1690s while he was very much alive. The first surge of this narrative took the form of 471 couplets, and was entitled *Sarab Kal Ki Benati,* completed around 1698.[112] The narrative traces the mythical past of the social groups to which the Gurus belonged, the achievements of the first nine Gurus, the divine intervention resulting in the birth of Guru Gobind Singh, and an account of his efforts to establish the community of Vahiguru. The composition is firmly situated within the context of *vansavali* ("genealogy") literature popular in the Punjab hills. The poet, whose name has not come down to us, presents it as a first-person account, creating the impression of its being autobiographical in nature.

With a poetic composition entitled *Sri Gur Sobha* ("Praise of the Guru"), texts singing about the Guru's life come closer to the *Janam Sakhi* mode.[113] There is no reference to the name of the poet in the text itself but later sources remember him as Sainapati, a court poet at Anandpur.[114] The narrator begins with the Guru's activity at Paunta around the time of his victory over the chief of Garhwal, and goes on to trace the details of the happenings at Anandpur, the Guru's journey to south India, and his demise in Nanderh. It concludes with a call to return to Anandpur and revive the dream of Guru Gobind Singh.

I have had the chance to examine four manuscripts of *Sri Gur Sobha*. The two of these four carry the date of 1701 (*Samat satra sai bhai baras athavan bit* [1758] *Bhado sudi pandars bhai rachi katha kar prit*), the third records it as 1741 *(Samat satra sai bhai baras athanav bit* [1798] *Bhado sudi* 15 *bhai rachi katha kar prit*), and the last one does not contain the section that refers to the date.[115] Both 1701 and 1741 have been considered and discarded by scholars who seem to be developing a consensus around 1711.[116]Although 1711 may seem reasonable to many, it is important to register that there is no supporting evidence for this date in the extant manuscripts, and the logic that went into its formulation is not very convincing.[117]

The appearance of the date of 1701 within the invocation of *Sri Gur Sobha* needs to be taken into serious consideration. Its presence at the opening of the text could imply that the poet began writing it in 1701 and continued to work on the text until late in 1708. This dating, mode, and lengthy period of composition explain the detailed nature of its narrative, and bring into focus its importance as a first-hand account of the events that may have even been recited before and corrected by the Guru himself, if one accepts references to this effect in another source.[118]

This period also saw the continuation of the *Janam Sakhi* genre in the form of the *Parchian Patishahi Dasvin Ki* ("Introductions to the Tenth Master"), which was completed at Nanderh soon after the death of the Guru.[119] An early manuscript whose date of completion was 1709 (*Samat 1766, aitvar thit panchami*) does not provide the name of the author, but later manuscripts close with a couplet, which attributes the text to Seva Das Udasi. Although titled so as the give the impression that it contains only the stories about Guru Gobind Singh, the text actually begins with a set of twelve episodes that relate to the first nine Gurus. It then goes on to record thirty-eight episodes about the life and activities of Guru Gobind Singh. These stories about Guru Gobind Singh's activity do not appear in any chronological order and seem to have emerged from a context in which the narrator shared them on various occasions with people interested in knowing about his life.

Important details appear in this text. For instance, the author records the title "Guru Granth" in referring to Sikh scripture (episodes 9 and 10), reports the use of an official seal by Guru Gobind Singh (episode 16),

and in a different context quotes the epigraph that appeared in the seal of Banda Singh and later was put on Sikh coins.[120] His description of the death scene of the Guru includes the community's request for a personal successor, and the Guru's declaration that the Khalsa Panth will stay in the lap of the God (*Akal Purakh di god*, episode 50). This comes close to what appears in the account available in *Sri Gur Sobha*. Other texts could be added to the three I have just described. Given the varied background of their authors, they seem to present different facets of the Guru's day-to-day activities.[121]

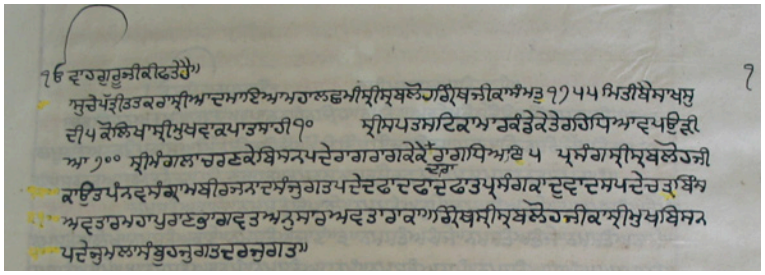
This takes us to the last type of literature that emerged during this period. The presence of bards at the center of Sikh activities started with Mardana, a contemporary of Guru Nanak, and developed to include Balvand and Satta (1540s), the Bhatts (1581-1606), and Abdulla and Natha (post-1606). They were all poets who composed songs in praise of the Gurus in an idiom that they had acquired prior to accepting Sikh patronage. While some of them had ties with Islam, the Bhatts were Brahmins, who liked to compare the Gurus with Janak, the royal ascetic (*raj yogi*) who appears in the Ramayan.

With the move to the Punjab hills, there was a disruption in the activity of the Sikh court, but its revival started with Guru Tegh Bahadur and reached its peak during the period of Guru Gobind Singh. Poets entered the Sikh court in two phases. With the Sikh movement to Paunta (1685-1688), poets from the nearby Mathura region arrived there. They sang about Krishna using Brajbhasha as their linguistic medium. The first products of this poetic activity were compiled under the title of *Krishan Avatar* in 1688.[122] Some of these poets followed Guru Gobind Singh to Anandpur and continued to compose songs about the Hindu deities. These compositions were added to the previous corpus and compiled in the form of the *Bachitar Natak Granth* ("Book of Unusual Dramas") in 1698.[123]

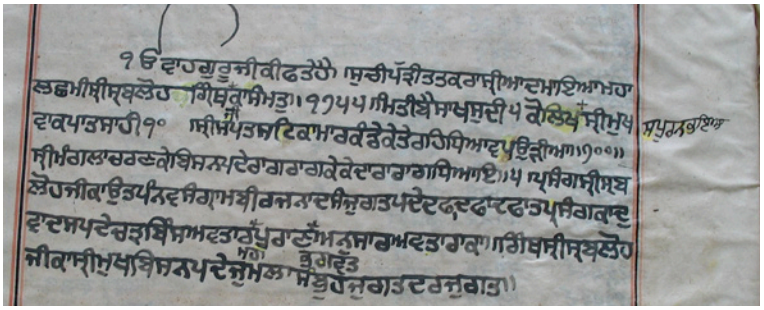
There seemed also to have been other poets too who joined the court at Anandpur and were interested in tales about kings, warriors, uncouth men, and women of easy virtue. An assortment of four hundred such stories was compiled in the form of a text entitled the *Charitaro Pakhian Granth* ("Book of Stories and Tales") in 1696.[124] Some of them carry historical details such as the Guru's visit to Kapal Mochan and the fun that the Sikhs had there, while others focus on themes that would have had special appeal to people such as professional soldiers who also inhabited Anandpur. Debates about the place of this text within Sikh literature has resulted in efforts that range from allegorizing its contents to underscoring their "moral content" to making public appeals to eliminate it from the *Dasam Granth*.[125] The debate has completely missed the importance of this text as a representative of the literature created to entertain ordinary people in their free time.

The *Bachitar Natak Granth* and the *Charitaro Pakhian Granth* were not the only anthologies of this type to have been produced during this period. Another large text entitled *Sri Sarab Loh Granth* ("Book of Sri Sarab Loh [All Steel]") sings about the annihilation of the demons by an incarnation of a deity named Mahakal/Shiva and closely echoes the spirit that pervades compositions collected in the *Bachitar Natak Granth*.[126] Harnam Das Udasi, a serious scholar of early Sikh manuscripts, prepared an excellent annotated edition of *Sri Sarab Loh Granth* in the late 1980s but its circulation has remained restricted. Consequently little is known about the nature of this text's contents and the circumstances of its compilation.[127] Alhough Udasi dates *Sri Sarab Loh Granth* to Guru Gobind Singh's period, others feel more comfortable in placing it in the late eighteenth century.[128]

I was fortunate to come across two dated manuscripts of *Sri Sarab Loh Granth* that are presently available in private collections in the Punjab. Both the manuscripts mention the date of 1698 (*Samat* 1755*, miti Bisakh sudi* 5, folio 1, and 2b, respectively) as the time they were written. Reference to another manuscript with the same date appears in Udasi's detailed discussion of twenty-four manuscripts of the text that he examined during the preparation of his annotated edition.[129]



*Sri Sarab Loh Granth* (1698), Private Collection, Punjab



*Sri Sarab Loh Granth* (1698), Private Collection, Punjab

The first manuscript above begins with the text of *Bachitar Natak Granth* (folios 1 to 350), and then goes on to include *Sri Sarab Loh Granth* (folios 351 to 702). The second manuscript contains only the text of *Sri Sarab Loh Granth*, though its pagination begins with folio number 351 and closes with 747.[130]

Besides the details of the activity of Sri Sarab Loh, the text contains short compositions regarding the history of the ten Gurus, the nature of the Khalsa, the importance of the Granth and the Khalsa Panth, and the inscription that appears on the seal of Banda Singh (1710) and Sikh coins. These are the same themes that appear in other texts of the period and Anandpur seems to provide the most appropriate context for the creation of a text such as this. Whether the two manuscripts below were recorded in 1698 or their scribes simply copied the information from the original they used may be open to discussion, but the appearance of this date in three extant manuscripts is in itself significant.

The early manuscripts of *Bachitar Natak Granth*, *Charitaro Pakhian Granth* and *Sri Sarab Loh Granth* thus appear independently as well as joined together in different combinations. The joining of *Bachitar Natak Granth* and *Charitaro Pakhian Granth* seemingly became the more popular of these two alternatives and this expanded text came to be seen as representative of the period. In the two early manuscripts in which *Bachitar Natak Granth* and *Charitaro Pakhian Granth* appear together, the tables of contents are recorded along with their respective texts. In the later manuscripts, however, a master table of contents is placed at the head of the combined text, named *Dasvin Patishahi ka Granth* ("Book of the Tenth Master"). During the twentieth century, this title turned into what is now the more popular name, "*Dasam Granth,"* though the previous title, *Dasvin Patishahi ka Granth,* remained in use.[131] Finally, we should mention that there are several other texts that claim to have been produced at the Sikh court at Anandpur.[132]

A review of the textual sources of the period of Guru Gobind Singh thus brings into view a vibrant and multi-layered literary scene at Anandpur. The text now considered the Guru Granth provided the foundational stratum for this artifice and came to be seen as consisting a class of its own. By my count, manuscripts of the Granth are almost double that of all other texts of the period put together. The Guru himself and Sikhs like Nand Lal, Prihlad Singh, Mani Singh, Chaupa Singh, and others commented upon these writings to clarify the nature of Sikh beliefs to those who needed this information.

In summary, the *rahit* documents formulated norms of conduct in accordance with "the testimony of the Granth." They laid out an array of activities ranging from the daily prayers to the ceremonies associated with birth, naming, marriage, and death, the ethical thrust of the Sikh way of life, and the obligations of the Khalsa Panth to society at large. Sikh family values appearing in the Granth turned into specific

prescriptions in the *rahitname*.[133] And as we have seen, the *Prem Sumarag Granth* tried its best to attend to the needs of both male and female members of the Sikh community.[134] Given the time of its composition, the very conversation about ceremonies to be performed at the birth of a daughter, and prescriptions for ceremonies at the time of marriage or at the death of a widow is significant.

The *Janam Sakhi* genre as it developed during Guru Gobind Singh's period presented the activities of the Gurus so that their followers could adopt them in their own lives. The Khalsa Panth, after all, was supposed to represent the Guru's own form (*rup*), a theme which reverberates throughout this literature. So it was important that the community know what the Gurus did in the course of their own lives.[135]

Then, in addition, we have a hoard of court poetry created by nameless poets at Anandpur. The texts now called the *Dasam Granth* and *Sri Sarab Loh Granth* fall in this category. While the text of *Sri Sarab Loh Granth* is yet to be incorporated into scholarly discussions of the period, the tendency heretofore to attribute the contents of the *Dasam Granth* to Guru Gobind Singh and then use them to understand Sikh beliefs of the time has obviously not been successful. In recent times, however, two scholars interested in gender-related studies have made use of these texts in interesting ways.[136] But unless properly contextualized, this literature cannot help in making sense of either Sikh beliefs or practices or the overall history of the community at that point in time.

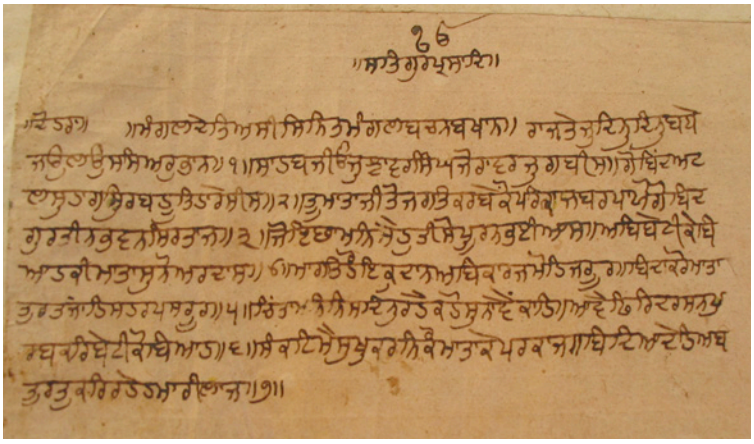
In my view, the *Dasam Granth* and *Sri Sarab Loh Granth* are markers of the aura of royalty that the Sikhs attempted to create at Anandpur. The poets gathered there drew upon a shared reservoir of themes, literary forms, metaphors and images to create their songs. With the emergence of Sikh power, some poets who were resident in the broader region moved to Anandpur. A cursory look at their compositions shows the structural changes that had to be made to adjust these works to the needs of the new situation. The statements at the closing of the two longest compositions, the *Krishan Avatar* and *Ram Avatar,* carry thundering assertions of the futility of, worshipping Krishan and Ram. I can only explain them as addenda having been required to make these texts presentable at Anandpur.

Ami P. Shah's ground-breaking translation of the *Ugardanti* in this issue makes it clear that in a somewhat similar fashion the goddess at the center of that poem "worships and recites the name of the formless and transcendent being referred to as *Niranjan Purakh*, *Satguru, Hari*, and *Akal,*" and is expected to aid in "the destruction of the Hindu and Turk *panths*" and the elevation "of the *tisar panth*," the third community. Instead of explaining this literature as a marker of the Puranic sway over Sikh thinking at Anandpur, a view popular within current scholarship, I submit that it may be more useful to give attention to the way in which these texts reflect the local poets' adjustments to the needs of the Sikh

court.[137] To me, the acceptance of the Sikh *tamar patar* by the three influential priestly seats in the region, Naina Devi, Kapal Mochan, and Kurukshetar seems to harmonize well with the erstwhile temple bards envisioning the fulfillment of the Puranic prophecies at Anandpur.

This description of things seems to be applicable to the *Charitaro Pakhian Granth* too. The text is the creation of more than one poet and falls in the genre of entertainment, which would have found a sympathetic audience in a town such as Anandpur. There were clearly no sanctions against the singing of this literature and it eventually found a place in records and anthologies of the Sikh courtly heritage. Its contents fit in well within the context of Anandpur as a thriving town and a rising center of a new power. This involved the arrival of seamy characters such as petty thieves and women of easy virtue. Both the *Charitro Pakhayan Granth* (episodes 21-22) and the *rahitname* take notice of them and alert the Sikhs to their tricks.[138]

Since I referred to the recent use of the compositions in the *Dasam Granth* by scholars interested in gender studies, the introduction of a short poem (*dohra*) recorded on the opening folio of the *Anandpur Birh* may be of interest. It is addressed to Mata Jito and the poet records his name as Mangal.



*Anandpur Birh*, Private Collection

The poem begins with a prayer that the Mata's glory may be like that of the sun and the moon, that her sons Jujhar and Zoravar live long, and that eternal life be granted to her husband Guru Gobind Singh, "the ruler of the three worlds. "She herself is announced as the Jagat Mata who grants wishes of all who come to her. Having said that, Mangal then requests financial support that will enable him to go to his native village, Pasrur, perform the wedding of his daughter, and return to Anandpur to take up a role in her service free of any anxiety.

The poem sheds interesting light on Mata Jito's position within the Sikh community at Anandpur, and seems to serve as a mirror image of the Guru's letters. The sovereign of Anandpur issues commands to his Sikhs to supply the town's requirements and also visit it personally and bring their offerings (*kar bheta*). It is understood to be an honor for Sikhs to follow the Guru's orders and avail themselves the opportunity to have audience with him. Those who live at Anandpur, however, appeal to his wife for support, and she, as the overseer of the community's normal routines, ensures every family's welfare.[139] Although no one has so far examined the image of the Guru's wife as a protector of the Sikhs and the mother of the Khalsa Panth, it is a powerful point of reference in discourses popular among the Nihang groups.[140]

Finally, the issue of the presence of Guru Gobind Singh's compositions in *Dasam Granth* as well as in *Sri Sarab Loh Granth* needs special attention.[141]At this point in our research, the only thing that can be said with any degree of confidence is that we know relatively little about the precise corpus of the Guru's writings, the circumstances of their entry into these texts, and the history as well as the position of the *Dasam Granth* within the Sikh community. On the basis of my limited work, it is clear that the narrative currently in circulation in English writings does not have much supporting evidence in early texts.[142]

For those interested in addressing these issues, important sources of information are available. We know that Guru Gobind Singh did not use the signature of "Nanak," his official entitlement, in his compositions; the implications of this decision need to be examined in detail. We also have evidence that some of his compositions, such as the *Jap,* were already recited as part of the morning prayers in the mid-1690s, and that the *Chaupai* and the *Saviyyae* were part of the ceremonial preparation of *khande di pahul*.These texts appear along with other compositions from the Guru Granth in anthologies of daily prayers (*gutkas*).[143] Furthermore, we have access to early manuscripts such as the *Anandpur Birh* (undated but compiled in the 1690s), *Patna Birh* (1698), and *New Delhi Birh* (1713), along with twenty plus undated manuscripts that were compiled in later times.[144] In addition, we have seven editions of the *Dasam Granth* that were printed during the last two decades of the nineteenth century. The circumstances that resulted in the rise of so many editions at just this point in time raise questions of their own and need to be looked at closely. While seemingly there were less than forty manuscripts produced between 1700-1885, what was the need of so many printed editions towards the close of the nineteenth century? The increasingly easy availability of print itself provides only a partial answer. Answers to these questions are significant, as they will help us make sense of the nature of scholarly debates that ensued, dominating the twentieth century.

With all this information at our disposal, one hopes that it may not be impossible to handle the discussion of Guru Gobind Singh's compositions as it relates to its larger literary context with both rigor and precision.

**Conclusion**

In this essay, I have pursued the goal of reviewing the sources that are available to reconstruct the life and period of Guru Gobind Singh. In the process, I referred to the sites that provide us information about the layout of his towns and the primary concerns that went into their planning. We saw his residential quarters constituting the center of Anandpur, being surrounded by the houses of his followers. They in turn were protected by a ring of forts and a set of natural barriers. We referred to contemporary evidence of the Guru's court (*ucha asthan*). The texts offer descriptions of how he sat on the throne (*takhat*), accompanied by his personal attendant (*hazuri taihilia*) waving the ceremonial flywhisk (*chaur*), and by the chamberlains (*ardasias*) who announced the visitors, as well as by scholars (*muktas*), poets (*kavi*), scribes (*likharis*), musicians (*dhadhis/rababis*), drummers (*nagarachis*), and flag-bearers (*jhanda bardar*). All these were expected to be in attendance (*hazir*).

The sources we have mentioned also offer details about his administration (*karkhana*), with the officials (*mussadis*), who kept in contact with Sikhs being scattered along the trade routes from Dhaka in the east to Kabul in the west and from Kashmir in the north to Burhanpur in the south. Court chroniclers also kept records (*vahis*) of happenings in Anandpur and asked Sikhs living in distant places to supply the requirements of the center so as to ensure the running of the *langar/deg* there. Their texts also inform us that the Guru maintained an army and that his troops marched with elephants and horses led by the drums and by the pennants with the emblem of sword imprinted on them (*asdhuj/asiket*).[145] The Guru is said to have patronized Hindu and Muslim sacred sites, made treaties as well as fought battles with local chiefs when necessary.[146]

We are given a picture of a majestic figure who during a phase of extreme stress, could walk into the Mughal court, exchange gifts and courtesies with Emperor Bahadur Shah with an élan that not only was taken note of by his own scribe (*Charhi kaman shashtar sabh sare, kalagi chhab hai apar apare)* but was registered by the royal chroniclers of the time.[147] Behind this dignified exterior and the regalia of a temporal authority was a person with deep spiritual leanings. As the *Satiguru* ("True Guru") of the Sikhs, he participated in daily prayers, was immersed in wisdom enshrined in the Granth (*Param Bibeki*), and could quickly correct the singing of the Guru Granth if the need arose.[148] He is believed to have been able to recite the complete text of the Granth from memory, if we take mid-eighteenth century traditions at face value.[149]

He must have learnt this early in his life, for the internalization of these verses and beliefs was reflected in his poetry.

It is interesting that Emperor Bahadur Shah remembered the Guru as a *dervish* ("saintly figure"), an epithet that harmonizes well with the descriptions used by his own poets.[150] They report to us how their *dervish* was focused on the ideas of the divine court (*Khiale Guru suie dargahe Rabb*) and was dedicated to the service of the Sovereign of the universe (*Ba-pishash sare bandaghi dashtam*). They reveal how this service translated into his life's mission of turning his followers into a community directly answerable to Vahiguru. They would work toward the establishment of the divine rule on the earth (Khalsa Raj), a regime in which the meek would be protected and the evil punished (*Santan ki rachha kari dutan mario dhai/Khalsa soi nirdhan ko palai, Khalsa soi dushat ko galai*).[151]

Guru Gobind Singh is clearly a complex and considerable figure, someone who has left a trail of sources that range from his towns, his forts, and his weapons to the writings of his court scribes as well as those of the royal chroniclers working for the Mughal emperor. A comprehensive understanding of his life is significant for Sikhs and their historians alike. With access to new sources and a somewhat modified approach to the ones already part of scholarly discussion, we may be at the threshold of being able to achieve this goal. What could be a better commemoration of the Guru's death centennial, than for someone to work toward an authoritative biography of this *Badshah-Dervish* ("Royal Mystic"), a work that would capture the nuances of the noble exterior, the deep spiritual life that inspired it, and the prophetic vision that provided the ideological base and the institutional structures for the community of his followers? Here is a momentous opportunity and a challenge!

From the Guru Granth (1775), Punjab

**Appendix: Guru Gobind Singh's Life and Early Sikh Sources**

It is intriguing to synchronize the details of the Guru's life—his birth in 1666, his "creation" of the Khalsa in 1699, and his elevation of the Granth to be the Guru Granth in 1708—with the information available in early Sikh sources. Four eighteenth-century sources, Chaupa Singh (1700), Kesar Singh Chhibbar (1769), Sarup Das Bhalla (1776), and Sarup Singh Kaushish (1790) mention the year of his birth as 1661, and Sukha Singh (1797) records it as 1666.[152] How 1666 came to be recognized as the authoritative year of the Guru's birth is an important issue that needs to be addressed, but for our purpose it may suffice to point out that the first reference to this appears in 1797.[153]

Secondly, the description of the central event of the Guru's life as being the "creation of the Khalsa" implies the emergence of something new within the Sikh community. We know that the term Khalsa was in use within the seventeenth-century community and the early reports of this event are built around the Guru's declaration of the "total Sikh community" to be renamed as the Khalsa Panth.[154] Furthermore, the declaration's association with the Visakhi of 1699 appears for the first time in late-nineteenth-century sources.[155] References to the *pahul* in the *hukamnama* discussed in this essay and information in other eighteenth-century sources point to the need for a reexamination of these issues.

Finally, we know that the *Gurgaddi Divas* of the Granth served as the center of Sikh celebrations of 2008. The early reports of the Guru's passing away, however, tell us that he bequeathed his mantle of authority to the Khalsa Panth (*Bakash kio Khalas ko jama*), which was to locate its destiny according to the teachings of the Guru Granth.[156] This belief in the dual authority of the Granth and the Panth seems to have been in use during the Guru's own lifetime. Explaining the absence of any mention to the authority of the Guru Panth during the year long commemoration offers an interesting challenge to the historians of the Sikhs.[157]

It may be a little disconcerting to realize that if there are such variations between the information available in early texts and the current understanding of a subject of such importance as that of the life of Guru Gobind Singh, then the situation in other areas that are not so central to the field and did not attract much scholarly attention cannot be better. In my view, this discussion points to the simple fact that the field of Sikh Studies is at a nascent stage of development and more work is required before a critical mass of serious scholarship is reached.

Yet this observation should not be seen to diminish the importance of scholarly advances of the past decades. Major achievements have been made: many of the early textual sources are now available in print. These texts need to be further examined and the information in them correlated with findings about the Sikh material heritage that have become available in the past decades. These data need to be collected, sifted, assessed, and

used toward the creation of authoritative narratives of Sikh history, which will draw their vital sap from indigenous sources, so to speak, and not from the easily accessible but inaccurate renderings of these events that were produced in later times!

**Notes**

*The custodians of the documents and artifacts referred to as housed in "private collections" in the Punjab and the U.S. prefer to remain anonymous. I am deeply indebted to them for providing me access to their precious possessions. My personal gratitude goes to J.S. Grewal for his encouraging comments on the outline of this paper in Summer 2008, and to John Stratton Hawley for giving its final version the benefit of his magical touch that helped me crack through various points of opaqueness in its text. Thanks to Mohan Singh of Panjab University, Chandigarh, for the map of Anandpur.

1. J.S. Grewal and S.S. Bal, *Guru Gobind Singh: A Biographical Study* (Chandigarh: Panjab University, 1967) is generally considered to be an authoritative work on this subject. For the discussion around the happenings in 1699, see Shiv Kumar Gupta, ed., *Creation of the Khalsa: Fulfillment of Guru Nanak's Mission* (Patiala: Punjabi University, 1999), and Madanjit Kaur, ed., *Guru Gobind Singh and the Creation of the Khalsa* (Amritsar: Guru Nanak Dev University, 2000). On the elevation of the Granth to the office of the Guru, see Rattan Singh Jaggi, *Itihas Sri Guru Granth Sahib* (Patiala: Punjabi University, 2008), and his *Guru Manio Granth* (Nanderh: Takhat Sach Khand, 2008).

2. For single volume text, see *Dasam Sri Guru Granth Sahib Ji* (Mehro: Kalagidhar Printing Press, 1995), 1-1428, and *Sri Dasam Granth Sahib Ji* (Nanderh: Takhat Sach Khand Sri Hazur Sahib, 2002), 1-1428. For annotated editions, see Rattan Singh Jaggi and Gursharan Kaur Jaggi, eds., *Sri Dasam Granth Sahib* 5 vols. (New Delhi: Gobind Sadan, 1997-2008), and Bhai Randhir Singh, ed., *Shabadarth Dasam Granth Sahib* 3 vols. (Patiala: Punjabi University, 1972-1987). Bhai Randhir Singh's edited text does not include the longest composition in the *Dasam Granth* entitled *Charitro Pakhian*. Other primary sources include Sainapati, *Sri Gur Sobha,* ed. Ganda Singh (Patiala: Punjabi University, 1967 [1711?]); Koer Singh Kalal, *Gurbilas Patishahi* 10*,* ed. Shamasher Singh Ashok (Patiala: Punjabi University, 1968 [1751?]); Kesar Singh Chhibbar, *Bansavalinama*, ed. Rattan Singh Jaggi (Chandigarh: Panjab University, 1972 [1769]) and ed. Piara Singh Padam (Amritsar: Singh Brothers, 1997); Sukha Singh, *Gurbilas Patishahi* 10*,* ed. Gursharan Kaur Jaggi (Patiala: Bhasha Vibhag, 1989 [1797]); Rattan Singh Bhangu,

*Sri Gur Panth Parkash*, ed. Balwant Singh Dhillon (Amritsar: Singh Brothers, 2004 [1842?]); Bhai Santokh Singh, *Sri Gur Partap Suraj Granth,* ed. Bhai Vir Singh (Amritsar: Khalsa Samachar, 1963[1842]); and Giani Gian Singh, *Tvarikh Guru Khalsa*, ed. K.S. Raju (Patiala: Bhasha Vibhag, 1970 [1891]). In addition, see Ganda Singh's "The Major Sources of Early Sikh History," in J.S. Grewal and Indu Banga, eds., *The Khalsa over 300 Years* (New Delhi: Tulika, 1999), 8-18. This essay was written in 1938, and Ganda Singh deserves recognition for pioneering a discussion on the relevant sources for Sikh history.

3. The 1966 celebrations included a procession of the Guru's weapons that were loaned from descendents of Marquis of Dalhousie, Governor General India (1848-1856). See Shamsher Singh Ashok, ed., *Shiromani Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee da Punjah Sala Itihas* (Amritsar: Sikh Itihas Research Board, 1982), 370, and Mohinder Singh, "The Relics of the Tenth Master," *The Khalsa: A Saga of Excellence* (Anandpur Sahib Foundation, 1999). For a detailed discussion of the activities of this period, see Anne Murphy, "The Material of Sikh History" (Ph D Dissertation, Columbia University, 2005), chapter 6. For the 1999 celebrations, see the online edition of *The Tribune,* at http://www.tribuneindia.com/khalsa/index.htm. For the 2008 celebrations, see *The Tribune,* October 28 to November 4, 2008.

4. In addition to note 2, see *Hukamname,* ed. Ganda Singh (Patiala: Punjabi University, 1967), *Guru Khalse de Nishan te Hukamname,* ed. Shamsher Singh Ashok (Amritsar: Sikh Itihas Research Board, 1967); *Hukamname: Sri Guru Tegh Bahadur,* ed. Fauja Singh (Patiala: Punjabi University, 1976); *Rahitname*, ed. Piara Singh Padam (Amritsar: Singh Brothers, 1995 [1974]); *Prem Sumarag Granth*, ed. Randhir Singh (Jalandhar: New Book Company, 2000 [1953]). For the other discussions, see Rattan Singh Jaggi, *Dasam Granth da Kritativ* (New Delhi: Punjabi Sahitt Sabha*,* 1966); and Piara Singh Padam, *Sri Guru Gobind Singh de Darbari Ratan* (Patiala: Kalam Mandir, 1976).

5. For translations of Farsi sources, see *Makhaz-i Tvarikhe-i- Sikhan,* ed. Ganda Singh (Amritsar: Sikh History Society, 1949); *Sri Guru Tegh Bahadur: Farsi Srot,* tr. Piar Singh (Amritsar: Guru Nanak Dev University, 1976); and *Sikh History from Persian Sources,* ed. J.S. Grewal and Irfan Habib (New Delhi: Tulika, 2001). W. H. McLeod has made an important contribution by making Punjabi sources available in English, as in his *Textual Sources for the Study of Sikhism* (Totowa: Barnes and Noble, 1984), *Chaupa Singh Rahit-nama* (Dunedin: University of Otago Press, 1987), *Sikhs of the Khalsa* (New Delhi:

Oxford University Press, 2003), and *Prem Sumarag* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2006). For my differences with his dating of the documents translated here, see note 97 below.

6. For recent ones, see Surjit Singh Gandhi, *A Historian's Approach to Guru Gobind Singh* (Amritsar: Singh Brothers, 2004); Nikky-Guninder Kaur Singh, *The Birth of the Khalsa* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2005); and Louis E. Fenech, *The Darbar of the Sikh Gurus* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2008).

7. Fauja Singh Bajwa and Kapur Singh Ghuman, eds., *Guru Gobind Singh Marag* (Patiala: Bhasha Vibhag, 1973). For information about its extension, I am grateful to Dr. Balwant Singh Dhillon of Guru Nanak Dev University, who was a member of the team of scholars who surveyed this route in 2007.

8. For major exhibitions around 1999, see Susan Stronge, ed., *The Arts of the Sikh Kingdom* (London: V&A Publications, 1999); B.N. Goswamy, ed., *Piety and Splendour* (New Delhi: National Museum, 2000); and Kavita Singh, ed., *New Insights into Sikh Art* (Mumbai: Marg, 2003).

9. It is important to register that the conversation about Sikh sites and artifacts is not new. The narrator of the *Puratan Janam Sakhi*, a late-sixteenth-century source, attempts to record the places sanctified by Guru Nanak's visits, the eighteenth-century texts sing of the importance of Anandpur and Amritsar, and late-nineteenth-century authors such as Tara Singh Narotam and Giani Gian Singh prepared lists of the places of possible Sikh pilgrimage and the historic artifacts present there. See their *Sri Guru Tirath Sangraih* (Kankhal: Sri Nirmal Panchayati Akhara, 1975, [1884]), and *Tvarikh Gurduarian* (Amritsar: Bhai Buta Singh Partap Singh, n.d. [1900?]), respectively. The use of the material heritage to reconstruct Sikh history is, however, new, and Anne Murphy deserves credit for this pioneering effort. See her "The Material of Sikh History."

10. See Piar Singh, *Gatha Sri Adi Granth* (Amritsar: Guru Nanak Dev University, 1992); Balwant Singh, *Early Sikh Scriptural Tradition* (Amritsar: Singh Brothers, 1999); and Pashaura Singh, *The Guru Granth Sahib* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2000); and my *Making of Sikh Scripture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001).

11. For developments during the 1670s, see Piara Singh Padam, *Sri Guru Panth Parkash* (Patiala: Kalam Mandir, 1990 [1977]), 58; and my *Making of Sikh Scripture*, 82-85, and 121-125. For the generally accepted

version, see Taran Singh, "Sri Guru Granth Sahib," in *The Encyclopedia of Sikhism,* ed. Harbans Singh (Patiala: Punjabi University, 1996), 4: 239-252.

12. A brief detour to explain the evolution of my own thinking may be in order. In the late 1980s, I began my research with Sikh scriptural manuscripts. Locating them, working out ways to access them, and then studying their contents expanded my horizons in three basic ways. First, the reverence assigned to these manuscripts by their custodians, as manifested in the process of putting them up for display, unwrapping them, and returning them to their places of rest, made me aware of the importance of the material dimension of these texts. Secondly, important historical texts kept on surfacing around the manuscripts in which I was initially interested in and it was hard to resist taking note of their dates and contents and familiarizing myself with them. Finally, the conversations I had with the custodians brought forth much information about early artifacts, the details of their history, and the nature of the reverence assigned to them. Over time, the photographs of these texts, artifacts, and sites have resulted in a small personal archive, which is always a source of joy when I return to it.

13. "*Dabistan Mazahib*," *Sikh History from Persian Sources*, 68.

14. "*Chaupa Singh Rahitnama*," *Rahitname*, 90.

15. *Gurbilas Patishahi Chhevin*, ed. Joginder Singh Vedanti et al. (Amritsar: SGPC, 1998), 635; Tara Singh Narotam, *Sri Guru Tirath Sangraih*, 116-121.

16. For details of these sites, see Gurbachan Singh Nayar and Sukhdial Singh, *Guru Gobind Singh* (Patiala: Punjabi University, 1989).

17. The Charan Ganga is now reduced to a small rivulet that drains the rainwater from the hills to the river Satluj.

18. *Prem Sumarag Granth*, 41, an important document of the period, prescribes Sikhs to eat the meat of seven types of fish and fourteen types of fowl. Ropar, which is fifteen some miles downriver from Anandpur, is one of three largest migratory birds resorts in the region.

19. Pilgrimage and trade seem to be closely related in Punjabi imagination—a local proverb goes *Nale devi de darshan nale vanjha da*

*vapar*, "Have a glimpse of the goddess and bring back bamboos to make profit."

20. The towns that appeared on this route included Bhadarwah, Chamba, Kangra, and Nadaunh, from which point one path came to Anandpur and Ropar and the other went to Nahan and Haridwar.

21. Chetan Singh, *Region and Empire* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1991), 237, note 31. Also see Michael Strachan, *The Life and Adventures of Thomas Coryate* (London: Oxford University Press, 1962), 257-258. I am grateful to Jim Lochtefeld of Carthage College for introducing me to this interesting work.

22. I am fully aware that the buildings presently standing on these sites were constructed later, but I work on the assumption that the newly erected structures maintained the architectural integrity of the ones they replicated.

23. *Guru Ratanmal,* ed. Gurbachan Singh Nayar (Patiala: Punjabi University, 1985), 156.

24. *Kahlur main bandhio ani Anandpur ganv*, "*Sarab Kal Ki Benati*," *Dasam Granth*, 79. *Ani Kahilur main ap tahi samai Anandpur bandhi bisram kino*, Sainapati, *Sri Gur Sobha*, 73. This claim would place the founding of Anandpur in 1688, that is, after the Guru's return from Paunta. For the date of 1684, see Sarup Singh Kaushish, *Guru Kian Sakhian,* ed. Giani Garja Singh and Piara Singh Padam (Patiala: Kalam Mandir, 1986), 85. For an English translation of this text, see *Guru Kian Sakhian,* tr. Pritpal Singh Bindra (Amritsar: Singh Brothers, 2005). I am grateful to Mr. Bindra for the kind gift of his book.

25. *Je je nar taih na bhirhe dine nagar nikar*, *je tih thhaur bhale bhirhe tine kari pritpar*. "*Sarab Kal Ki Benati*," *Dasam Granth*, 79.

26. Seva Das Udasi, *Parchi Patishahi Dasvin Ki,* ed. Piara Singh Padam (Patiala: Kalam Mandir, 1988). Episodes 20 to 24. There are also other references to this spot in this text, as well as in others of the period.

27. For the history of Anandpur, see Reeta Grewal's essay in this issue; Shalini Dharmani, "Morphology of a Religious Town: Anandpur Sahib" (M. Phil Dissertation, Panjab University, 2004); Sukhdial Singh, *Siri Anandpur Sahib* (Patiala: Punjabi University, 1998); and Harjinder Singh Dilgir, *Anandpur Sahib* (Amritsar: Shiromani Gurdwara Prabandhak

Committee, 1998). For a pictorial version, see Mohinder Singh, *Anandpur: The City of Bliss* (New Delhi: UBS Publishers, 2002). I find *Holgarh* an intriguing name. My impression is that this was the site of Holi/Hola celebrations, which later developed as the occasion for Sikh troops to stage mock battles amongst themselves. This fort's being built on the flat area served as a good ground for these army exercises. See Sarup Singh Kaushish, *Guru Kian Sakhian*, 134.

28. Guru Gobind Singh's *hukamnama* asks Dip Chand to ensure the safe passage of cannons from Kabul. This important document is presently in a private collection in New York. The poet of the *Ugradanti* sings: *Tuhi top banduk gola chalanti, tuhi kot garh kau pasak sau urhanti* /71/, for more on it, see Ami P. Shah's essay on the *Ugradanti* in this volume. For later references to the *topkhana* at Anandpur, see Koer Singh Kalal, *Gurbilas Patishahi* 10, chapter 10, 140-159.

29. "*Dabistan-i-Mazahib*," *Sikh History from Persian Sources*, 69.

30. *Dasam Granth*, 77. There are references to Maimu Khan, a Jamadar commanding 100 soldiers in the Sikh army, in *Guru Ratanmal*, 41, and Hayat Khan, who left the Sikhs and joined the Garhwali army at Paunta, is mentioned in Koer Singh Kalal, *Gurbilas Patishahi* 10, 93.

31. See my *Goindval Pothis* (Cambridge, Harvard Oriental Series, 51, 1996), 97. For the title, "Baba Patishah," see 81, and 83.

32. See the writings of the Bhatts, in Guru Granth, 1385-1409.

33. *Darsan karai nit Khalsa khusi hot nit nit…*
*Satigur raj chahu dis bhayo*, Sainapati, *Sri Gur Sobha*, 116.

34. "*Chaupa Singh Rahitnama*," *Rahitname*, 103.

35. Sainapati, *Sri Gur Sobha*, 173-174.

36. Rattan Singh Bhangu, *Sri Gur Panth Parkash*, 381-382.

37. Bakhat Mal, "*The Khalsa Nama*," in *Sri Tegh Bahadur: Farasi Srot*, 73.

38. Kankan writes: *…Tin ka sut Gobind Singh sabh guruan sirmaur. Jesai avitar mai Krishan saman na aur*, *Das Guru Katha*, folio 26.

39. *Damdama Guru Ji ki kashi hai (74)*, *Visakhi dipmala Amritsar kare, Hola Aanndpur kare, Abchal Nagar jai kul sambuh tare (75)*, in "*Rahitnama Bhai Daya Singh*;" and *Anandpur param suhavan, Amritsar shubh sabh man bhavan. Harimandar Patne me joi, Dakhani Abchali Nagar so hoi* (129), in "*Rahitnama Bhai Daya Singh*," *Rahitname*.

40. For old manuscripts present in distant gurdwaras, see G.B. Singh, *Prachin Birhan Bare* (Lahore: Modern Publication, 1944).

41. For the binding of the early texts, see my *Goindval Pothis,* 29-31.

42. See *Hukamnama Mahala 3*, MS 913 Airha, Guru Nanak Dev University, Amritsar, ff. 319-322.

43. B.N. Goswamy, *Piety and Splendour*, 43.

44. For the seat at Sur Singh, see "*Dabistan-i-Mazahib*," *Sikh History from Persian Sources*, 74.

45. See *Gurbilas Patishahi Chhevin*, 729-730. The date of its original composition is yet to be established. The text claims to have been written in early eighteenth century, but there are references in it, which in the eyes of many, date it in the early nineteenth century. More manuscript work is required to confirm the status of these references in the original text. Interestingly, the portraits available at Sur Singh closely resemble the Guru's portrait presently available at Bhai Rupa, Bhatinda, and Dehra Ramrai, Dehradun.

46. For a portrait of Guru Tegh Bahadur, see Kerry Brown, ed., *Sikh Art and Literature* (London: Routledge, 1999), plate 5.

47. For details, see Tara Singh Narotam, *Sri Guru Tirath Sangraih.*

48. See my *Making of Sikh Scripture*, 72. This list includes 9 manuscripts produced between 1676-1692. In addition seven others dated 1675 (Pindi Lala), 1682 (Mirzapur), 1685 (Dehradun), 1685 (Nanak Mata), 1685 (Banaras), 1687 (Pateta), and 1695 (Banaras) are referred to in G.B. Singh, *Sri Guru Granth Sahib dian Prachin Birhan*, 302, 150, 177, 281, 304, 310. I have seen ones prepared in 1695 (Sikh Reference Library, Amritsar), 1698 (Takhat Harimandar, Patna), 1701 (City Museum, Chandigarh), 1703 (MS 73, Guru Nanak Dev University), and 1705 (Anurag Singh, Ludhiana). In addition, we have on record an undated

manuscript prepared by Haridas, who was a scribe at Anandpur. This precious manuscript was destroyed in Operation Blue Star in 1984.

49. Published in 1967, Ganda Singh's *Hukamname* includes thirty-four letters of Guru Gobind Singh.

50. Both these documents are presently in the custody of families in the U.S. I am grateful to them for their permission to reproduce these photographs here. I am particularly indebted to the custodians of the first document for sending their rare possession to me so that a high-resolution photograph could be prepared. It was a unique experience for our Punjabi class at UCSB to attempt to decipher its inscription.

51. Kankan, *Das Guru Katha*, folio 29b, is perhaps the first writing that offers details of these five groups.

52. *Hukamname*, 168-176, include five letters and the sixth one with the same date is pasted in the *Anandpur Birh*.

53. Rattan Singh Jaggi, *Dasam Granth da Kritativ,* 133-135.

54. All these documents are in private custody in the Punjab and the U.S. The second in the sequence appears in the *Anandpur Birh*.

55. I am profoundly grateful to my friend there who informed me about the existence of the plate and then introduced me to its custodians.

56. For its early appearance, see *Hukamname*, 75.

57. The early sources present the Guru's visit as part of his preparation for elevating the Sikh community to be the Khalsa Panth. See Kankan, *Das Guru Katha*, folios 28-29, Kesar Singh Chhibbar, *Bansavalinama,* 130.

58. This episode appears in MS 90280 (1791?), Punjabi University, Patiala, ff. 14-15, and MS 504 (1858), Panjab University, Chandigarh, f. 11. Randhir Singh attributes this text to Sant Bhup Singh and dates it in the early nineteenth century (*Prem Sumarag Granth*, 16-17), but more work is needed to confirm its time of composition.

59. It took me some time to locate the Kurukshetar plate. The family in question lives at 727/1, Mohalla Guru Nanak Pura, Jhansa Road. Ravi Dar Sharma, the family patriarch, died in the summer of 2007. Usha

Rani, his wife, and Chandar Parkash, his son, told me that the family had a *tamar patar* and a *hukamnama*. The officials of the Shiromani Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee, Amritsar, they said, took the *hukamnama* from them in the 1970s. As for the copper plate, it was in the possession of Ram Devi, an aunt of Chandar Parkash, who decided to put it up for display in the gurdwara in the neighborhood. As per their report, the plate disappeared from there in early 1980, and no one has heard of it since. Unfortunately, there is no picture of the plate, so nothing can be said about the contents of its inscription.

60. See *Sikh Rahit Maryada* (Amritsar: Shiromani Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee, 1978 [1951]).

61. See episode 71, *Charitro Pakhian Granth*.

62. Mahesh Sharma of Panjab University, Chandigarh, kindly provided me this information. The break down of the 26 copper plates created between 1650-1725 is as follows: 1650-1675: 9 plates; 1675-1700: 7 plates; 1700-1725: 10 plates. Their spread is as follows: Chamba: 14; Kangra: 4 ; Kullu and Mandi: 3; and Bilaspur: 2. For the details of this discussion, see his *Western Himalayan Temple Records: State, Pilgrimage, Ritual and Legality in Chamba* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, forthcoming), chapters 1 and 4.

63. The possibility that these families created their plates to seek favors from the Sikh chiefs in the late eighteenth century did surface in my conversations with some scholars, but I do not find this line of thinking convincing. In my view, making the public claim of possessing an artifact whose origins were falsified could not have been an option for three priestly families of this stature. Moreover, these people were too sophisticated not to appreciate the risk involved in such a plan.

64. For Guru Amardas' visit to Kurukshetar, see Guru Granth, M4, 1116-1117.

65. Episode 71, *Charitro Pakhian Granth*. The report begins with the description of a situation in which the Sikhs in the Guru's retinue fall short of turbans and are unable to acquire new ones. It is decided that pilgrims are the only source of supply and that the Sikhs should remove the turbans of whoever is caught urinating in the vicinity of the temple. The effort yields good results and a large number of turbans are collected by the end of the day. These are washed, dried, and then gifted to the needy by the Guru.

66. Contemporary Sikh descriptions present the Guru's succession as *Raj kaj ham par jab aio*, "*Sarab Kal Ki Benati*," *Dasam Granth*, 77; *Karkhana toria chahie*, "*Chaupa Singh Rahitnama*," *Rahitname*, 92; the Mughal sources follow in the same vein, see "*Ibratnama*," *Sikh History from Persian Sources*, 113-115.

67. "*Chaupa Singh Rahitnama*," *Rahitname*, 82, Sarup Singh Kaushish, *Guru Kian Sakhian*, 82-84.

68. The *Anandpur Birh* first surfaced in Amritsar in the 1890s. For information on this, see the Sodhak Committee Report (Amritsar: The New Anglo Gurmukhi Press, 1897); Mahan Singh, "*Dasam Granth di khas hauzari te daskhati birh*;" a hand written report presently available at Balbir Singh Sahitya Kendar, Dehradun; and Piara Singh Padam, *Dasam Granth Darshan.* I am grateful to Piara Singh Padam and Joginder Singh Ahulwalia of Richmond, California, for their encouragement to work on this manuscript.

69. Piara Singh Padam was the first scholar to publish these pictures. See his *Dasam Granth Darshan*. For a brief discussion of the first portrait, see Louis E. Fenech, *The Darbar of the Sikh Gurus*, 6-8.

70. Dr. Daljit, *Sikh Heritage* (New Delhi: Parkash Book Depot, 2004), 127, and and K.C. Aryan, *100 Years Survey of Punjabi Painting (1841-1941)* (Patiala: Punjabi University, 1975), 22. Kishan Singh's note as presented by Aryan reads: *Sri Kalagidhar Sahib Guru Gobind Singh Ji Dasvin Patishahi chhabi jo vacate hayat vich tiyar hoi hai mutabik Patna Sahib vali banai.*

71. See Sainapati, *Sri Gur Sobha*, 142, Kankan, *Das Guru Katha*, folios 26-27, verse 179.

72. Tara Singh Narotam, *Sri Guru Tirath Sangraih*, 127-207, Dr. Daljeet, *Sikh Heritage*, 115.

73. See note 28. Tara Singh Narotam refers to the shifting of cannons to Lahore in the nineteenth century. See his *Sri Guru Tirath Sangraih*, 155.

74. A set of arrows with gold rings around them is available at a gurdwara in Kapurgarh, Sirhind. Two arrows with gold welded to them are presently in the archives at Bhaini Sahib. I am grateful to Bhai Harpal Singh for arranging to show me these artifacts.

75. Donald J. LoRocca, *The Gods of War* (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1997), 37.

76. For a long composition on this theme, see "*The Shashtar Nammala*," *Dasam Granth*, 1021-1165.

77. For reference to the seal during Guru Gobind Singh's period, see Seva Das Udasi, *Parchian Patishahi Dasvin Ki,* 63, and 84. It seems that the history of the seal goes farther back to the period of Guru Tegh Bahadur. A document dated 1675 (*Samat 1732, Harh sudi puranmashi*) carries the ninth Guru's seal and is presently at a gurdwara in Mukaronpur near Chandigarh. Although no *nishan* of the period has survived, there is firm evidence to support its presence at Anandpur. In the literature of the period, Vahiguru is referred to as one with "a sword on his banner" (*asiket*, *asidhuj*). The first depiction of this banner with sword (*asi*) and shield appears in a manuscript of the Guru Granth dated 1775 (folio, 814), presently at Lehra Mohabat, in the Malwa area (see Conclusion). For paintings of the *nishan* in subsequent period, see Dr. Daljeet, *Sikh Heritage*, 142, and B.N. Goswamy, *Piety and Splendour,* 209. In recent years, there has been an increased interest in Sikh numismatics: see John S. Deyell, "Banda Bahadur and the First Sikh Coinage," *Numismatic Digest* (June 1980), 59-67; Hans Herrli, *The Coins of the Sikhs* (New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal, 2004 [1993]); and Surinder Singh, *Sikh Coinage* (New Delhi: Manohar, 2004). Surinder Singh refers to Khushwakat Rai's claim that Guru Gobind Singh had struck coins at Anandpur, but dismisses this as untenable (see his *Sikh Coinage*, 30-31). I believe that the minting of coins at Anandpur fits well with other developments and deserves serious scholarly consideration. References to these items appear in both Sikh and Mughal accounts, see Sainapati, *Sri Gur Sobha*, 116, *Sri Sarab Loh Granth Sahib Ji* ed. [not mentioned but Harnam Das Udasi] (Anandpur: Shiromani Panth Akali Buddha Dal, Undated [1980s]), 2: 837; and "*Ibratnama*," *Sikh History from Persian Sources*, 113-115.

78. See Surinder Singh, *Sikh Coinage*, 83. If true, the minting of Sikh coins as a marker of sovereignty at Anandpur explains the Mughal attack in late 1704. The Mughals were not only supporting the hill chiefs against the Guru, but saw the Sikhs as a threat to their own authority. A coin attributed to Banda Singh dated 1712 is available at the American Numismatic Society, New York (http://data.numismatics.org/cgi-bin/objsearch?kw=sikh&header=simple&dep=any&fld=any&image=yes &orderby=objs.ce1%2Cobjs.ce2%2Cobjs.m&format=fullims). Another

dating to 1713 is in the possession of Saran Singh, a Malaysia-based collector. For a detailed discussion, see John S. Deyell, "Banda Bahadur and the First Sikh Coinage," 59-67.

79. For a comprehensive discussion of the *Puratan Janam Sakhi*, see Rattan Singh Jaggi, *Punjabi Sahitt da Srot-Mulak Itihas* (Patiala: Punjabi University, 2001), 4: 11-55.

80. Tara Singh Narotam, *Sri Guru Tirath Sangraih,* 35.

81. For a picture of the chariot at Bhai Rupa, Bhatinda, visit http://www.sikhcyber.com/gallary_new/destinationfolder/pages/chariotmatagangaji_jpg.htm

82. *Gurbilas Patishahi Chhevin*, 379-380.

83. All three artifacts were present at Kiratpur until 2001, when the prayer book disappeared. Part of this text was published under the title "*Sri Satigur Ji de Muhai dian Sakhian*" in *Prachin Punjabi Gadd*, ed. Piara Singh Padam (Patiala: Kalam Mandir, 1978).

84. *Hukamname*, 120-123, *Rahitname*, 93.

85. Tara Singh Narotam, *Sri Guru Tirath Sangraih,* 159.

86. Rattan Singh Bhangu, *Sri Gur Panth Parkash*, 381-382. He refers to the place of Mata Gujari's death as "*Mata da Buraj*."

87. *Hukamname*, 196-231.

88. It is important to note that even the name of the poet who created the narrative of Guru Gobind Singh's life entitled "*Sarab Kal Ki Benati*" is not retained in the tradition.

89. Rattan Singh Jaggi, *Punjabi Sahitt da Srot-Mulak Itihas*, 4: 11-55. For the manuscript of Guru Nanak's times, see my *Making of Sikh Scripture*, 33-40.

90. The idea of the Granth as the Guru developed steadily during the seventeenth century. We have a note in a manuscript dated 1654 that claims: *Jo koi is Granth Sahib Ji de darshan karega us nun Guru Nanak Dev Ji ki deh ka darshan hoiga* ("whoever will see the manuscript will see the body of Guru Nanak Dev"). This association reappears in 1697

with "*Guru Khalsa maniahi…Guru manihai Granth*, "*Rahitnama Bhai Prihlad Singh*," *Rahitname*, 67, and the title in its full clarity appears in a manuscript of Seva Das Udasi's *Parchian Patishahai Dasvin Ki*, folio 50, dated 1709. The use of the titles is based on the following:

| *Location* | *Date* | *Scribe* | *Title* |
|---|---|---|---|
| Kartarpur | 1604 | Not mentioned | Pothi |
| Patiala | 1653 | Gurdita Jateta | Granth |
| Destroyed (1984) | 1688 | Pakhar Mal Dhillon | Granth Ji |
| Takhat Kesgarh | 1714 | Not mentioned | Granth Ji |

91. In one of his compositions, Guru Nanak asks "how could I reflect on the divine with my mind out of control?" (*Kiau simari siviria nahi jai*, M1, GG, 661). Guru Amardas answers the question in terms of divine grace being instrumental in peaceful reflection (*Nadari kare ta simaria jai*, M3, GG, 661). In the early manuscripts this composition is under Guru Amardas' name, but later scribes and the creators of the printed editions changed the attribution to that of Guru Nanak.

92. Bhai Gurdas, *Varan*, ed. Gursharan Kaur Jaggi, (Patiala: Punjabi University, 1987) is considered the standard edition of this text.

93. For more on this issue, see Taran Singh, *Gurbanhi dian Viakhia Parnhalian* (Patiala: Punjabi University, 1980), 51-89. For the earliest manuscript of these writings, see MS 2306, Khalsa College. Its scribe claims that Hariji, son of Miharban, narrated this text in 1650 (*Samat 1707)*, folio 165.

94. Seva Singh, *Shahid Bilas*, ed. Garja Singh Giani (Ludhiana: Punjabi Sahitt Academy, 1961). *Gian Ratanavali*, ed. Jasbir Singh Sabar (Amritsar: Guru Nanak Dev University, 1993), and *Sikhan di Bhagatmal*, ed. Tarlochan Singh Bedi (Patiala: Punjabi University, 1994) are attributed to him. For a brief introduction, see Taran Singh, *Gurbanhi dian Viakhia Parnhalian*, 191-204.

95. Beautiful portraits of both Bhai Gurdas and Bhai Mani Singh are available in Moti Bagh Museum at Patiala, for another portrait of Bhai Mani Singh, see Gurbachan Singh Nayar and Sukhdial Singh, *Guru Gobind Singh*, 108 and 109.

96. The list is entitled *Panj kam kare panj na kare*, and is recorded in manuscripts such as the *Bahoval Pothi* and the one associated with Bhai Painda. For the mid-seventeenth century literature see "*Sri Satigur Ji de*

*Muhai dian Sakhian*," in *Prachin Punjabi Gadd*, 66-85. The Sikhs were exhorted to do the following:

1. Participation in congregational worship.
2. Generosity to the needy, suffering, and poor.
3. Arranging for the marriage of an unmarried Sikh.
4. Assisting a non-Sikh join the Sikh fold.
5. Praying for the welfare of all with no ill will for anyone.

And the five prohibitions included no stealing, no adultery, no slander, no gambling, no consumption of liquor and meat.

97. My dating of the *rahit* documents is based on the information that is available in the early manuscripts of these texts. Unlike others who are skeptical about the dates recorded in the printed editions they work with, I do not find any reason to be so. For instance, in his *Sikhs of the Khalsa,* McLeod does not take the colophons of these texts into serious consideration. Instead, his dating emerges from his overarching understanding that these texts represent the Khalsa *rahit* and thus by definition have to be post-1699 and preferably after the death of Guru Gobind Singh. I do not find any evidence in support of these assumptions. In my view, the rise of these documents at Anandpur makes lot more sense than would any other time during the eighteenth century. For the conversion of dates mentioned in these documents, I used Pal Singh Purewal, *Jantari* (Mohali: Punjab School Education Board, 1994), and I am also grateful to him for his help in sorting out some complicated details. Jasbir Singh Mann of Fullerton, California, kindly sent me a copy of the *Jantari*.

98. The ideas present in Nand Lal echo in "*Sri Satiguru de Muhai dian Sakhian*," *Prachin Punjabi Gadd*, 79. The concept of the Khalsa Raj appears in texts such as the *Sri Sarab Loh Granth* and others produced in the 1690s.

99. For the text, see "*Rahitnama Bhai Prihlad Singh*," *Rahitname*, 65-67. The day and the date coordinate perfectly if we register the claim that 1752 years have gone by and 1753 is presently transpiring. With this the *Magh Sudi thit panchami* falls on *Ravivar* (Sunday, January 17, 1697). The reference to its being an auspicious day indicates that it was Basant Panchami. I have copies of eight manuscripts of this text and only one of them, MS 1442F, Khalsa College, records the date as *Samat satrai sai bhai basath baras nihar, magh vadi thit panchavi virbar subh var*. It is worth looking into how this happened.

100. The earliest dated appearance of this unpublished text is in MS 770, Guru Nanak Dev University, prepared in 1718 (*Samat* 1775).

101. Two published editions are Piara Singh Padam, "*Chaupa Singh Rahitnama*," in *Rahitname*, and W.H. McLeod, *Chaupa Singh Rahit-nama*.

102. I base this discussion on three manuscripts: MS 227 and MS 228 at Balbir Singh Sahitya Kendar, Dehradun, and MS 1018 at Guru Nanak Dev University, Amritsar. MS 1018 does not have a running pagination. It begins with folio 1 and goes up to folio 20. The handwriting changes at this point and the pagination begins again with folio 1, running up to folio 177. The structure of this text is not entirely clear to me at this point in my research. The first two manuscripts open with the preface, which is missing in MS 1018. This preface is part of Padam's edition but not of McLeod's Gurmukhi text. McLeod, however, takes "the preface" from Padam's edition, translates it, and appends to his translation without registering its importance. See his *Chaupa Singh Rahit-nama*, 31.

103. This summary version of the context of its compilation comes from MS 227 and MS 228 at Balbir Singh Sahitya Kendar, Dehradun. It does not correspond entirely with the one available in Padam's *Rahitname*, 78, who either had a different source at his disposal or decided to simplify the original text.

104. Unfortunately, this concluding statement does not appear in McLeod's translation of the text. It is recorded in the Punjabi text (p. 78), but the numbering of the last two sentences and their translations seem to have gotten shuffled with other statements in the English version (*Chaupa Singh Rahit-nama*, 166).

105. The variation of the title between *Prem Sumarag*, *Param Marag*, and *Parmasur Marag* is enigmatic. The *Prem Sumarag* appears as the title of the text in most of the extant manuscripts, but the *Param Marag* is mentioned as the name at the closings of the chapters. The opening and the concluding sections of the text also emphasize the theme of the *Param Marag,* saying that it leads to *Param Purakh*, and *Param Rup*, and is superior to the Hindu and the Muslim paths. The *Prem Marag* appears once in the text along with a few references to the love of Vahiguru. For its published edition, see Randhir Singh, *Prem Sumarag Granth*. For its English translation, see W.H. McLeod, *Prem Sumarag*.

106. *Prem Sumarag Granth*, 13-27, and 53-54.

107. I have had access to several manuscripts of this text. Randhir Singh refers to a manuscript dated 1701 (see his *Prem Sumarag Granth*, 58) and I have a copy of a manuscript that claims to have been prepared in 1707. With the appearance of an early-nineteenth-century translation of the *Prem Sumarag Granth* in London, McLeod had to revise the dating of this text from "the first half of the nineteenth century" (his *Prem Sumarag*, 3), to the late eighteenth century ("Reflections on *Prem Sumarag*," *Journal of Punjab Studies*, 14:1, 123-124). His dating of the text is based on the belief that it is product of "a settled period of Sikh history." I tend to agree with him except that I see this stability represented in the years around 1700 at Anandpur. Interesting details ranging from references to the compositions of Guru Gobind Singh in the *Bachitar Natak Granth* to the types of fish and fowl that the Sikh are encouraged to eat point to Anandpur as the context in which this text was produced.

108. See note 79.

109. The sectarian divisions within the growing Sikh community seemed to have resulted in the creation of their own versions of the *Janam Sakhi* of Guru Nanak. For the earliest manuscript of the version associated with the followers of Prithi Chand, see MS 2306, Khalsa College. Another version known as the *Bala Janam Sakhi* is associated with Baba Handal (d. 1648), a Sikh leader who left the community and created his own group. An illustrated manuscript of this text was prepared in 1658 and was extant in Faridabad until recently. The *Janam Sakhi* genre also expanded to include stories about Guru Nanak's successors. For the text of the stories in Pothi Bibi Rup Kaur, see Piara Singh Padam, *Prachin Punjabi Gadd*, 66-86. An independent tradition evolved around Guru Amardas, with the earliest manuscript being dated 1683 (MS 676, Central Public Library, Patiala). For its published edition, see Raijasbir Singh, *Guru Amardas Srot Pustak* (Amritsar: Guru Nanak Dev University, 1986), 43-207. We also see the emergence of a narrative around Guru Arjan (undated, *Prichha Mahala Panjve Ka*. MS 2219A, Khalsa College, ff. 1-25).

110. I have studied four manuscripts, which are dated 1690, 1757, 1758, and 1772.

111. *Makke Madine di Goshati,* ed. Kulwant Singh (Patiala: Punjabi University, 1988), 190-191.

112. In scholarly studies the text is called the *Bachitar Natak*. In the early manuscripts, however, *Bachitar Natak Granth* is the name assigned to a large section that includes a string of compositions including this one, and comprised the opening part of the present-day *Dasam Granth*. Since this particular text appeared at the head of the *Bachitar Natak Granth*, it began to be called by this name.

113. Ganda Singh's edition of Sainapati's *Sri Gur Sobha* is considered the standard edition. For an important interpretation of this text, see Anne Murphy, "History in the Sikh Past," *History and Theory* 46 (October 2007), 345-365.

114. Reference to Sainapti does appear in *Guru Ratanmal,* 80. Although the name of *Sri Gur Sobha* is not mentioned, the description below may point to it:

*Sainapati kavita kahe gurdarsan te par,*
*Kare bhali va buri nit Satiguru lai savar* (*Guru Ratanmal,* 80).

115. A manuscript of the complete text of *Sri Gur Sobha* is available in a private collection in the Punjab, and some chapters of the text appear in large anthologies presently available at Balbir Singh Sahitya Kendar, Dehradun, Bhasha Vibhag, Patiala, and Sahitt Academy, Ludhiana.

116. Sainapati, *Sri Gur Sobha*, 5-6.

117. To support this date Ganda Singh invokes Sumer Singh's *Sri Guru-Pad Prem Prakash* [1882]. See *Sri Gur Sobha*, 5, 64. The explanation is that since the dates indicated by the words *athavan (*1701), and *athanav* (1741) do not fit, this must be a scribal error with the correct word being *athasath* (1711). For the text of *Guru-Pad Prem Prakash*, see Achhar Singh Kahlon's edition (Patiala: Punjabi University, 2000).

118. See note 114. My reading of the closing sections of *Sri Gur Sobha* points to their being composed soon after the Guru's death in Nanderh. It is hard to imagine a poet of Sainapati's sensitivity to history singing about reviving Anandpur after Sirhind had fallen and Banda Singh had created the semblance of a center at Mukhlispur. I see Sainapati calling the Sikhs to gather at Mukhlispur and help Banda Singh establish the Khalsa Raj, if he was writing in 1711.

119. My observations here are based on two manuscripts: the first is dated 1709 (*Samat* 1766*, aitvar, thit panchami*) and is presently available in a private collection in the Punjab, and the second, MS 1737, ff. 169-

284, is archived at Khalsa College, and dated 1783. For its printed edition, see *Parchi Patishahi Dasvin Ki,* ed. Piara Singh Padam. For its English translation, see *Parchian Sewadas,* ed. Kharak Singh and Gurtej Singh (Chandigarh: Institute of Sikh Studies, 1995).

120. Ganda Singh, *Hukamname*, 192 and 194.

121. *Amarnama,* tr. Ganda Singh (Amritsar: Sikh History Society, 1953) Kankan's *Das Guru Katha,* previously mentioned, come to mind.

122. The *Krishan Avatar* closes as follows:
*Satrah sai paintali se savan sudi thiti dip.*
*Nagar Pavanta subh karan Jamuna bahe samip*. (1688).

123. The *Ram Avatar*'s date of completion is *Samat satra sahis pachavan harh vadi pritham such davan*. (1698).

124. The *Charitaro Pakhian Granth* ends as follows:
*Samat satra sahans bhanijai ardh sahas phuni tin kahijai.*
*Bhadav sudi ashatami ravivara tir satdrav granth sudhara*. (1696).

125. It might be useful to point out that though Randhir Singh annotated the *Charitaro Pakhian Granth*, the Punjabi University authorities decided against including this section in their edition (see note 2).

126. The Nihangs (literally, "carefree"), a small but colorful group within the Sikh community, attribute both the *Dasam Granth* and *Sri Sarab Loh Granth* to Guru Gobind Singh. They place the *Dasam Granth* on the right and *Sri Sarab Loh Granth* on the left side of the Guru Granth in their public worship. The ceremonial texts of the *Dasam Granth* and *Sri Sarab Loh Granth* have 1428 and 1216 pages, respectively. Chatar Singh Jiwan Singh, a commercial publishing house based in Amritsar, prepares these texts for use in the gurdwaras associated with the Nihangs.

127. See note 77. One has to go to the main centers associated with the Nihangs at Anandpur or Patiala to get this text.
128. Kahn Singh Nabha places it in the post-Guru Gobind Singh period: see his *Mahan Kosh* (Patiala: Bhasha Vibhag, 1981 [1930]), 167. W.H. McLeod seemingly pushes this further into the late eighteenth century, see his *Historical Dictionary of Sikhism* (Lanham, Md.: The Scarecrow Press, 1995), 188-189, and *Sikhs of the Khalsa*, 138-139. McLeod offers no manuscript evidence in support of this dating.

129. *Sri Sarab Loh Granth*, introduction, chh. It may be useful to mention that some of the manuscripts of this text contain a compositions attributed to Gurdas Singh that concludes with *Sambat satra sai bhae barakh satvanja jan. Gurdas Singh puran kio sri mukh granth parmanh*. The dating of this important composition is yet to receive the attention it deserves. For its text, see *Varan Bhai Gurdas* (Amritsar: Shiromani Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee, 1952), *airha*, and 436-451.

130. After the *Sri Sarab Loh Granth*, the text has a set of 39 folios recording twelve *hikayats* and two other compositions not known to me at this point.

131. To my knowledge, the title *Dasam Granth* begins to appear in the late nineteenth century—see Budh Singh, *Khalsa Shatak* (1876), in *Rahitname*, 162; also the Sodhak Committee Report (1897)—and then is taken up by Giani Bishan Singh in his "*Dasam Granth Kis Ne Banhia*" (1902), and Ranh Singh Akali in his *Dasam Granth Niranhaya* (Bhasorh: Panch Khalsa Diwan, 1918). Alhough the title *Dasam Granth* has become popular in scholarly literature, the most commonly used edition of the *Dasam Granth* in the Nihang gurdwaras is in fact entitled, *Dasam Sri Guru Granth Sahib Ji* (Mehro: Kalagidhar Printing Press, 2005[1995], 1-1428).

132. They range from the *Prem Ambodh*, which sings of both mythological and historical figures, to the translation of the *Chanakaya Rajniti* into Punjabi. The late-eighteenth-century texts also refer to the presence of other "large texts" such as the *Vidia Sagar* and the *Samund Sagar*, which were supposed to have been created at Anandpur but are no longer accessible. See Kesar Singh Chhibbar, *Bansavalinama*, 135.

133. "*Chaupa Singh Rahitnama*," *Rahitname,* 107-108.

134. *Prem Sumarag Granth*, 13-27, and 53-54.

135. *Sri Sarab Loh Granth Sahib Ji*, 2: 496-497, and 529-533; "*Rahitnama Bhai Nand Lal*," and "*Rahitnama Bhai Prihlad Singh*," *Rahitname*, 55, and 66.

136. Doris R. Jakobsh in her *Relocating Gender in Sikh History: Transformation, Meaning and Identity* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2003), 44-45, writes: Given the 'Pakhian Charitar's stark condemnation of what was understood to be implicit in womanhood, the wiles-of-women narratives must be viewed as essential in configuring the

construction of gender during the time of the tenth guru, particularly in the light of the specific male construct initiated by the guru through the Khalsa order. Nikky-Guninder Kaur Singh in her *Birth of the Khalsa,* 119-120, presents the goddess compositions in the *Bachitar Natak Granth* as a marker of Guru Gobind Singh's "acknowledgement of the female power in society." Although both scholars claim to be dealing with the *Dasam Granth*, they are highly selective in what they cull from it. Jakobsh closes in on a string of compositions in the *Charitaro Pakhian Granth*, and Singh's discussion remains restricted to a set of compositions in the *Bachitar Natak Granth*. It is important not to miss the point that their arguments would have faced difficulties if other parts of these texts had been brought into their respective discussions.

137. See W.H. McLeod, *The Evolution of the Sikh Community* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1976), 13-14, and Jeevan Deol, "Eighteenth Century: Khalsa Identity: Discourse, Praxis, and Narrative," in Christopher Shackle, Gurharpal Singh and Arvindpal Singh Mandair, eds., *Sikh Religion, Culture and Ethnicity* (Richmond: Curzon Press, 2001), 30-35.

138. Seva Das Udasi, *Parchian Patishahi Dasvin Ki*, 74, "*Chaupa Singh Rahit Nama*," *Rahitname*, 94.

139. For more on Mangal, see Piara Singh Padam, *Sri Guru Gobind Singh de Darbari Ratan,* 129-134.

140. I am grateful to Baba Santa Singh's discourse on "*Mat Bhagavati pita [A]Kal Purakh god lio hai Khal[sa] pali*," from *Sri Sarab Loh Granth*, 2:496, which he shared with me during one of my meetings with him in Talvandi Sabo in the mid-1990s.

141. The details of Guru Gobind Singh's compositions were obviously clear to the compilers of the early manuscripts but following the upheaval of the evacuation of Anandpur, the community's understanding of this issue seemingly got somewhat confused. During the twentieth century, efforts have been made to resolve this. In a meeting held on May 11, 1938, the Dharamik Salahakar Committee of the Shiromani Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee, Amritsar, recommended that the compositions in the *Dasam Granth* that carry the title of "*Sri Mukhvak Patishahi* 10" be regarded as belonging to Guru Gobind Singh, but simultaneously suggested that "more work needs to be done to assess the attribution of those writings that carry the same title but appear in other texts of the period." See Kirpal Singh, ed., *Panthank Mate* (Chandigarh: Man Singh Nirankari, 2002), 17. The past seven decades have seen no advance on

this front. In my view, notice should be taken of the fact that the usage of the title "*Sri Mukhvak Patishahi* 10" in the *Anandpur Birh, Patna Birh*, and other early manuscripts do not correspond with the printed edition of the *Dasam Granth*. Based on my study of these variations, I submit that the title *Sri Mukhvak Patishahi* 10 is part of the language at the Sikh court and it may have developed as the Punjabi counterpart of the Farsi court term "*mukhatib*," meaning "addressed to." The appearance of this title at the head of a composition thus indicates that it was presented at the court and thus had the honor of having been addressed/dedicated to Guru Gobind Singh. This meaning will explain the context of a large number of compositions in the *Dasam Granth* as well as other texts of the period. I believe that the Sikhs have forgotten the original meaning of *mukhvak*, and this has proved to be extremely problematic for their understanding of the literature of the period of Guru Gobind Singh. I hope to address this issue in detail in my forthcoming writings.

142. For a summary of this understanding, see "*Dasam Granth*," in W.H. McLeod, *Essays in Sikh History* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2007), 54-65.

143. *"Tankhahnama Bhai Nand Lal*," *Rahitname*, 55, "*Rahitnama Bhai Prihlad Singh*," *Rahitname*, 66, "*Rahitnama Bhai Daya Singh," Rahitname*, 68, "*Chaupa Singh Rahitnama*," *Rahitname*, 80, 94. *Prem Sumarag Granth*, 3, 4, 15.

144. I am grateful to Joginder Singh Ahluwalia of Richmond, California, for providing me the films of the early manuscripts. In addition to the two dated eighteenth-century manuscripts that surfaced in my fieldwork, Randhir Singh mentions two others of 1765 and 1783: see his *Shabad-Murati* (Amritsar: Shiromani Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee, 1962), 52.

145. See Ami P. Shah's discussion on the *Benati Chaupai* in her "Liturgical Compositions in the *Dasam Granth*" in this volume.

146. The Sikh center's relationship with Sufi seats at Ghurham and Sadhaura seems to have close parallels to that of Naina Devi and Kapal Mochan. This area of study is yet to be explored.

147. Sainapati, *Sri Gur Sobha*, 156. The fact that the Guru was armed when he met Emperor Bahadur Shah was not lost on the court chronicler who mentions it in his report. See "Reports from Bahadur Shah's court, 1707-1710," *Sikh History from Persian Sources*, 106.

148. Seva Das Udasi, *Parchian Patishahi Dasvin Ki*, 62, 103.

149. Kesar Singh Chhibbar reports that when denied access to the Kartarpur Pothi, Guru Gobind Singh dictated the Granth from his own memory (*Apni rasana thi uchar hor banaia*). See his *Bansavalinama*, 126.

150. When approached with the question of what to do with the Guru's considerable property after his death, the emperor categorically ordered that the authorities should not interfere "with the property of *dervishes*." "Reports from Bahadur Shah's court, 1707-1710," *Sikh History from Persian Sources*, 107.

151. *Amarnama*, 21 and 24; Sainapati, *Sri Gur Sobha*, 73; and *Rahitname*, 59.

152. *Samat* 1718*, Magh de mahine, krishan pakh thit satvin, ravivar*, "*Chaupa Singh Rahitnama*," *Rahitname*, 92.
*Samat* 1718*, Dhneshta nichhatar tijhe charan, ravivar mahina magh thit Ashatami*, Kesar Singh Chhibbar, *Bansavalinama*, 125;
*Bahut kal satigur rahe Patane dhar avatar, baras duadas so adhik karat bilas bihar*, Sarup Das Bhalla, *Mahima Parkash*, f. 398 MS 176 , Khalsa College, Amritsar;
*Samat* 1718*, Pokh mas sudi saptami, budhvar*, Sarup Singh Kaushish, *Guru Kian Sakhian*, 53;
*Samat* 1723*, Samat satarah sahas bhanije, bis tine sang barakh ganhijai*, Sukha Singh, *Gurbilas Patishahi* 10, 34. Other eighteenth century sources such as Kankan, *Das Guru Katha*; *Mahima Parkash (Vartak),* ed. Kulwinder Singh Bajwa (Amritsar: Singh Brothers, 2004), do not mention the year of the Guru's birth. The date of *Samat* 1723*, Samat again bisanto muni sasi janmat bhal* is also available in Koer Singh Kalal, *Gurbilas Patishahi* 10, 34.

153. Leading scholars such as Piara Singh Padam have supported the Guru's birth in 1661: see his *Dasam Granth Darshan* (Patiala: Kalam Mandir, 1990 [1968]), 14, and his *Sri Guru Gobind Singh de Darbari Ratan*, 268. In addition, see G.B. Singh and Des Raj Narang, *1661 or 1666: Correct Date Of Birth of Guru Gobind Singh* (New Delhi: Himala Publishers 2001 [1993]), and Pal Singh Purewal's response to their position, *Guru Kian Sakhain*, tr. Pritpal Singh Bindra, 22-24. I am grateful to Mohinder Singh of National Institute of Punjab Studies, New Delhi, for sending me the pamphlet by Singh and Narang.

154. *Sarab sangat adi anti mera Khalsa; Sagal Sikh bhai Khalsa sunie sach bichar; Sarab Khalsa laini sidhio;* Sainapati, *Sri Gur Sobha*, 81, 100, and 153.

155. The dates appear as follows in the early sources:

1697. *Samat* 1754 *savan din sat*, *"Rahitnama Chaupa Singh," Rahitname*, 94;
1698. *Samat* 1755, *Prem Sumarag Granth*, 2;
1697. *Samat* 1754, Kesar Singh Chhibbar, *Bansavalinama*, 127;
1698. *Samat* 1755 *Visakhi*, Sarup Singh Kaushish, *Guru Kian Sakhian*, 111;
1689. *Samat* 1746, Koer Singh Kalal, *Gurbilas Patishahi* 10, 134;
1695. *Samat* 1752 *Visakhi*, Seva Singh, *Shahid Bilas*, 67;
1695. *Samat* 1752 *Visakhi*, Ratan Singh Bhangu, *Sri Gur Panth Parkash*, 33;
1699. *Samat* 1756 *Visakhi*, Giani Gian Singh, *Tvarikh Guru Khalsa*, 879.

For Ganda Singh's discussion of this issue, see *Sri Gur Sobha*, 19.

156. Sainapati, *Sri Gur Sobha*, 170. The interweaving of authority between the Granth as the repository of the divine word (*shabad*) and the Khalsa Panth, representing the Guru's form (*rup*), appears in several writings of the 1690s. See *Rahitname*, 55-60, 65-67, 112, and 147, and *Sri Sarab Loh Granth Sahib Ji*, 2: 496-497, and 529-533.

157. As part of the 2008 celebrations, Punjabi University, Patiala, and Takhat Sach Khand, Nanderh, invited Rattan Singh Jaggi, the leading scholar of early Sikh literature to write on the Guru Granth (see his *Itihas Sri Guru Granth Sahib*, and *Guru Manio Granth*). J.S. Grewal has recently completed his book on the Guru Granth, which he hopes to publish soon.

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