W.H. McLeod

Early Sikh Tradition

A Study of the Janam-sākhīs

Clarendon Press
*Early Sikh Tradition* is a study of the Panjabi narratives of the life of Guru Nanak known as janam-sakhis. The janam-sakhis are important as examples of hagiographic growth-processes, as sources of Panjab history for the post-Nanak period within which they developed, as a cohesive factor in subsequent Sikh history, and as the earliest works of Panjabi prose. *Early Sikh Tradition* examines these four aspects of the janam-sakhi literature, concentrating in particular on the first. It seeks to trace the origins of the janam-sakhi style, it describes the anecdotal and discourse forms used by the janam-sakhi narrators, and it reconstructs a pattern whereby janam-sakhi traditions were assembled and transmitted. The book owes a significant debt to techniques of analysis developed over many decades of biblical studies. As such it offers a contribution to comparative religious literature as well as to the history and religion of the Sikhs.
EARLY SIKH TRADITION
A Study of the Janam-sākhis

BY
W. H. McLEOD

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To
Margaret
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*The University of Otago*

*Dunedin.*

HEW McLEOD
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ABBREVIATIONS

AG The Adi Granth.


ASI Alexander Cunningham, Archaeological Survey of India annual reports.

Aṣṭa ḍapādi.

B40 The India Office Library manuscript Panj. B40. The folio numbers given in B40 citations are the manuscript’s original Gurmukhi numerals. The Gurmukhi pagination is given in the margin of both Piār Singh (ed.), Janam Sākhī Śri Gūrū Nānak Dev Ji (Amritsar, 1974), and W. H. McLeod, The B40 Janam-sākhī (Amritsar, 1979).


B41 The India Office Library manuscript Panj. B41 (a Bālā janam-sākhī).

Bālā JS The Bālā janam-sākhī lithographed by Hāfaz Qutub Din of Lahore in A.D. 1871.

BG The vārs of Bhāi Gurdās.

BL British Library.

Cole JS The Colebrooke Janam-sākhī.

CPL Central Public Library, Patiālā.

CUL Cambridge University Library.


GR The edition of the Gyān-ratanāvali lithographed by Charāg Din and Sarāj Din, Lahore, A.D. 1891.


Haf JS The Ḥāfizābād Janam-sākhī.
ABBREVIATIONS

IA Indian Antiquary.
IG Imperial Gazetteer of India.
IOL India Office Library.
LDP The Languages Department of the Pañjáb Government, Paṭialā.
LDP 194 Manuscript no. 194 of the LDP.
NPr Santokh Singh, Gur Nānāk Prakāś (the Nānāk Prakāś.)
PNQ Panjāb Notes and Queries.
PPP Panjāb Past and Present.
S Samvat, dating according to the Vikramī era.
SLTGN(Pbi) Ibid. (Paṇḍjābī Section).
SRL Sikh Reference Library, Amritsar.

In the case of multiple-volume works footnote citations normally give two figures, separated by a full stop. The first figure specifies the volume number(s). The same form is also used for citations from Santokh Singh’s Gur Nānāk Prakāś (abbrev. NPr). In these NPr citations the first number indicates the section of work. (I designates the pūrabāradh section, and II the utarāradh section.)

In Ādi Granth references a single figure designates the number of a shabād or (in the case of a citation from a vār) the number of a paurī. A figure added in parentheses indicates a particular stanza (añk) within the designated shabād. (1R) indicates a reference from the rahāu, or refrain, of a shabād. Most vār references incorporate two figures, separated by a colon. This form is used for citations which refer to shaloks (slok). The second figure designates the number of the shalok; and the first that of the paurī to which it is attached. For example, Vār Malār 3:2 designates the second of the shaloks attached to the third paurī of the vār in Malār rāga.
SECTION I
THE HISTORICAL SETTING
The Pañjāb 1500–1800

*Historical* periods always present problems of definition and Indian history is no exception. Sharp divisions must inevitably be blurred by persistent continuities. Most historians would agree, however, that the Mughal invasions together constitute an event of unusual importance, and for many this importance has been sufficient to warrant a clear period division at the year 1526, the occasion of Bābur’s victory over Ibrāhīm Lodi on the field of Pānīpat.

In the case of the Pañjāb there is an additional reason for regarding the early decades of the sixteenth century as the prelude to a new period. During the last four-and-a-half centuries the most important development in Pañjāb history has unquestionably been the evolution of the Sikh community and its rise to a position of enduring prominence within the Land of the Five Rivers. This community had its beginnings in a group of disciples who gathered around their chosen teacher during the first half of the sixteenth century. While Bābur was securing his hold upon Northern India, Gūrū Nānak was instructing his followers in a village of Central Pañjāb. Under his guidance there developed in the village of Kartārpur the religious community which we know today as the Sikh Panth. It was a community which during the period extending from the death of Nānak to the late eighteenth century was to ascend from the obscurity of Kartārpur to a position of predominance within the Pañjāb. As Mughal power in the north disintegrated, Sikh strength increased until eventually during the early decades of the nineteenth century the province became an avowedly Sikh kingdom, ruled in the name of the Khālsā by the celebrated Mahārājā Raṇjīt Siṅgh.

Today the prominence of the Sikh Panth remains undiminished. Although the political and military glories of Raṇjīt Siṅgh did not survive his death, the Panth, after a brief period of decline, soon recovered its vigour. Today its representatives are to be found scattered throughout the world. The wave of Indian immigration which in recent years has reached the United Kingdom consists largely of Pañjābīs, most of them Sikhs. An earlier wave of Pañjābī migration travelled to the east coast of North America, and during the same period ripples reached as far as the flax swamps and scrub-covered hills of New Zealand. During the past hundred years they have shown themselves to be a remarkably mobile people. In addition to the substantial communities in England, California, and British Columbia there are many thousands of Sikhs to be found in...
HISTORICAL SETTING: THE PAŃJĀB 1500–1800

South-East Asia, Hong Kong, Fiji, East Africa, and the Middle East.

Needless to say, the community as it exists today is no mere replica of the religious following which gathered around Nānak during the first half of the sixteenth century. Other influences have shaped the Panth during its subsequent history and the result is certainly not to be defined in exclusively religious terms. This should not, however, suggest an absence of direct links connecting the earliest disciples with their modern descendants. The Sikh Panth which confronts us today is the product of a process of transformation incipient within the earliest group of disciples and essentially complete by the end of the eighteenth century.

Nānak, the first of the Sikh Gurus, was followed by a series of nine successors, all of them Pañjabis. There was thus established a line of ten masters, corresponding in terms of time to the period of the Great Mughals. Gobind Siṅgh, the tenth and last of the succession, died in 1708, the year following the death of Aurāngzeb.¹ Inevitably Sikh tradition concentrates almost exclusively upon the activities of the Gurus and deals only indirectly with less obvious influences affecting the development of the community during the first two centuries of its existence. Of the more important of these influences one commands a particular significance in terms of its impact upon the evolving Panth. This was the caste constituency of the community.

The first six Gurus all belonged to the mercantile Khatri caste and all resided in villages of Central Pañjāb.² Their caste origins and their rural domicile were of crucial significance in the development of their following. The villages of Central Pañjāb contained a dominant concentration of Jāts, and in accordance with established tradition Khatris were accorded a role as the teachers of Jāts. This traditional status, together with the inherent appeal of the Gurus’ teachings, attracted a substantial following from amongst the Jāts, and during the course of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries the Jāt segment of the Sikh community acquired a preponderance which it has never lost. The Sikhs entered the eighteenth century as a community still lead by a Khatri succession, but strongly Jāt in membership. It was inevitable that the community should have been influenced by its numerically dominant element. Without relinquishing its loyalty to the teachings of Nānak it had assumed features which derived from its Jāt antecedents.

This pattern of development received a considerable impetus during the eighteenth century. In 1708 Guru Gobind Siṅgh died without an heir. Once again the fourth Guru a hereditary principle of succession

¹ The nine successors of Nānak were Aṅgad (1539–52), Amar Dās (1552–74), Rām Dās (1574–81), Arjan (1581–1606), Hargobind (1606–44), Har Rāi (1644–61), Har Kriṣṇa (1661–4), Tegh Bahādur (1664–75), and Gobind Siṅgh (1675–1708).
² The remaining four Gurus were also Khatris. Nānak and Aṅgad both passed over the members of their own families in choosing successors. Guru Amar Dās bestowed the succession upon Jeṭhā, husband of his daughter and a Khatri of the Soṇhī sub-caste. Jeṭhā assumed the name Rām Dās and in turn chose his youngest son Arjan as successor. Thereafter the succession remained within the male line of Soṇhīs descended from Rām Dās. The last four Gurus were compelled to spend most of their time beyond the borders of the Pañjāb.
had been accepted and Guru Gobind Singh's death without surviving heirs brought a crisis. At first the answer appeared to be a transfer of the legitimacy to a different line and for this distinction the obvious candidate was a Sikh named Banda Bahadur, or Bandā the Brave.

During the time of Guru Arjan the Panth had begun to attract the unfavourable notice of the Mughal emperors and in 1606 Arjan had died in a Mughal prison. Skirmishes between Sikhs and the Lahore administration broke out during the period of Arjan's son, Hargobind, but these petered out when Hargobind withdrew to the Sivalik Hills in 1634. The period of peace which followed was abruptly terminated when in 1675 the ninth Guru, Tegh Bahadur, was executed at Aurangzeb's command. Although Guru Gobind Singh remained in the Sivalik Hills for most of his life, his principal enemy was to be a Mughal force from Sirhind which entered a hills war against him. Immediately after his death and that of Aurangzeb Mughal authority in the Pañjāb declined rapidly. Persistent rural unrest now developed into a widespread rebellion and threw up a new Sikh leader. This was Bandā Bahādur.

Bandā's early successes against the Mughal administration in the Pañjāb qualified him in the eyes of many as a suitable successor to Guru Gobind Singh. It was, however, a disputed status, and his execution in 1716 finally settled the issue. A more dispersed variety of leadership now developed, together with other features which increasingly distinguish the later Sikh community from the earlier following of the Gurūs.

The eighteenth century was a period of considerable confusion. Earlier patterns of belief and behaviour were either extinct or largely unsuited to new needs and it is scarcely surprising that fresh patterns should have emerged during this turbulent period. As one might expect, the customs and ideals which now ascended to prominence within the Sikh Panth related closely to the cultural inheritance of the Panth's dominant element and to the distinctive circumstances which forced the change. The patterns which emerged under these pressures derived in large measure from Jāt antecedents and from the nature of the warfare which occupied the middle years of the century. For the Panth this crucial century began in 1699 and may be said to have concluded in 1799. In 1699 Guru Gobind Singh promulgated the Order of the Khalsa, the Sikh brotherhood which in its developed form has dominated subsequent Sikh history; and in 1799 Raṇjit Singh secured control of Lahore, the key to the Pañjāb. The Khālsā brotherhood served as a focus of Sikh ideals throughout the century, faithfully reflecting in its evolving discipline the development and consolidation of these ideals.

Bandā's unsuccessful rebellion was followed by a period of restored Mughal authority and persecution of the Sikhs. This campaign was rarely pursued with any vigour, for the restoration was never strong and Nādir Shāh's invasion in 1739 brought another collapse. The restoration which followed Nādir Shāh's withdrawal was the last. The next invader, Ahmad Shāh Abdālī of Afghānistān, finally destroyed all hope of a Mughal revival in the Pañjāb.
Ahmad Shāh Abdāli's nine invasions covered the years from 1747 to 1769. The Afghān failed to establish himself in Northern India, but having destroyed the Mughals and seriously weakened the Marāṭhās, Ahmad Shāh did serve to prepare the way for the establishment of Sikh authority. This authority first passed into the hands of twelve warrior bands or associations known as misls. These were independent groups of Sikhs bound in a loose confederation by their rural origins, by the ties of a common religious affiliation, and in the earlier days by opposition to a common enemy. The third of these was the more important, for the final withdrawal of Ahmad Shāh brought a period of internecine warfare amongst the misls. Eventually one of the chieftains, Raṇjīt Sīṅgh of the Shukerchakīa misl, secured an ascendancy over the remainder. This brought him to sovereignty over the entire area of the Panjāb, and with the establishment of that sovereignty the most significant period in Sikh history came to an end. Although the teachings of Nānak had never been abandoned, the community which, in the form of the evolved Khālsā, emerged at the end of the eighteenth century was something radically different from the group of disciples who first gathered at Kartārpur.

This account covers in outline the period from the time of Nānak to the emergence of the fully-fledged Khālsā. It should be added that whereas an outline can be sketched with a certain distinctness much of the detail remains very obscure. Sources for the period are few and generally unsatisfactory, and conclusions concerning this earlier period must be in part dependent upon social patterns described in sources which relate to later periods. An obvious source for the early period is the Ādi Granth, the scripture compiled by Gūrū Arjan during the years 1603 and 1604. The Ādi Granth provides an abundance of information concerning the religious beliefs of Nānak and his immediate successors, but the historian who pursues a wider social, economic, or political interest must labour hard in order to extract from it the material which he requires. Material of this sort, although certainly present, is not provided in a readily accessible form.

The help offered by Persian sources is also limited. Several Persian chronicles deal with this period, but almost all of them direct their courtly interest away from the Panjāb. Only two significant exceptions exist. One is the Ā'īn-i-Akbarī, which several times refers to features of the Lahore Sūba; and the other the Khulāsāt-ut-Tavārīkh of Sūjān Rāi Bhaṇḍārī. Sūjān Rāi was a native of Baṭālā and his narrative, which was completed in 1696, largely concerns his native province. The section on the Nānak-panthis in the Dabistān-i-Mazāhīb and Nūr Muhammad's

2 Ā'īn ii. 310–47.
4 David Shea and Anthony Troyer, The Dabistan or School of Manners, vol. ii (Paris, 1843), pp. 246–88. Most of the section dealing with the Nānak-panthis has also been translated by Gaṇḍā Singh in PPP 1. i (April 1967), pp. 47–71. The portion of the latter translation dealing specifically with Guru Nanak also appears in SLTGN(Eng), pp. 45–53.
Jaṅg-nāma might also be added, but beyond these four works there is little except the brief comments included in such works as the Bābur-nāma and the Tuzuk-i-Jahāngīrī. Although European visitors subsequently had much to say about the Paṅjāb, and although some of their material is of great value, the principal contributors all arrived too late to observe the critical period of Sikh development or to secure access to reliable sources.

In view of this paucity of source material it is perhaps surprising that the devotional literature of the Sikhs has not received more attention. In such circumstances problems associated with the reading and analysis of the Aḍī Granth do not constitute a sufficient reason for continuing to neglect it, nor do they provide adequate justification for our undisturbed ignorance of other early products of the Sikh community. Three varieties of devotional literature deserve particular attention. First there are the poetic works of Bhai Gurdās, a nephew of the third Gurū and a contemporary of the three Gurūs who followed him. The vārs of Bhai Gurdās constitute a source of considerable importance, one which has yet to receive the close scrutiny and analysis which it deserves. Secondly, there is the substantial Dasam Granth, a heterogeneous collection of writings attributed to the tenth Gurū. Although the attribution seems plainly erroneous for the bulk of its contents this in no way impairs their value, for all are products of the period of Gurū Gobind Siṅgh or of the years immediately following his death. With this collection should be bracketed the Persian compositions of Nand Lāl Goya, another Sikh of the same period. Thirdly there are the janam-sākhīs, hagiographic accounts of the life of Nānak. These had their first beginnings in the late sixteenth century, flourished during the seventeenth century, and then decreased as other concerns increasingly dominated the Panth’s interest. The decline has, however, never been total. Janam-sākhīs are still extensively read today.

This study concerns the third of these categories. In the case of the janam-sākhīs the problem has been one of misunderstanding rather than total neglect. The various janam-sākhīs purport to narrate the events of the life of Nānak and it is as generally trustworthy biographies that they have hitherto been used. This accords them a reliability which they do not possess, while ignoring the considerable interest and value which they do in fact offer. The janam-sākhīs are important as examples of hagiographic growth-processes, as sources of Paṅjāb history for the post-Nānak period within which they developed, as a cohesive factor in subsequent Sikh history, and as the earliest works of Paṅjābī prose. The purpose of this study will be to examine these four aspects of the janam-sākhī literature.

1 An English translation by Gaṇḍā Singh was published by Khalsa College, Amritsar, in 1939.
3 For surveys of all three varieties see W. H. McLeod, op. cit., chaps. 2 and 4.
THE JANAM-SĀKHĪS
A Definition and Summary Description

The janam-sākhīs are commonly defined as 'biographies of Gurū Nānak'. This standard description is mentioned here only in order to reject it. Whatever else the janam-sākhīs may be they are certainly not biographies. It is true that they do concern the person of Gurū Nānak, and it can also be claimed that certain elements within the janam-sākhīs must assuredly derive from authentic incidents associated with the actual life of Nānak. This does not, however, mean that they can be regarded as biographies, nor that they can be uncritically used as sources for the life of the Gurū. Much misunderstanding has resulted from the application of this mistaken interpretation of the janam-sākhīs.

The janam-sākhīs are properly defined not as biographies of Gurū Nānak, but as hagiographic accounts of his life. They are tradition in precisely the same sense as the Hadith, and although they lack some of the features associated with their Muslim counterpart they have nevertheless developed in response to the same impulses, and in a less formalized manner they have fulfilled much the same role within their parent community. Although the distinction between biography and hagiography may seem obvious, it has in practice been largely ignored and much misunderstanding has consequently persisted. Until the distinction is clearly understood there can be no appreciation of the true nature of the janam-sākhīs, nor of their manifold contents. It is not sufficient to interpret them as nuclei of authentic tradition overlaid and in some measure obscured by the legendary accretions of later periods. There are indeed a few isolated anecdotes which appear to fit this description, but it is not an accurate representation of the janam-sākhīs as a whole. Even when stripped of all their wonder stories the janam-sākhīs do not offer an account of the actual events of the Gurū's life. What they do provide is an interpretation of that life, an interpretation springing from the piety and commitment of later generations.

This fundamental distinction may be expressed in a slightly different way. The janam-sākhīs find their origin not in the actual life of Nānak but rather in a myth which derives from that life. The word 'myth' will recur during the course of this analysis and it is of vital importance to the analysis that its meaning in this context should be clearly understood. This clarification is all the more important because the term is a newcomer to Sikh studies. Although 'myth' has for long been used in a technical sense by scholars working in biblical and Near Eastern studies, and
although the concept has proved so valuable to social anthropologists, there are still extensive areas largely untouched by it. Sikh tradition provides one such area, one which offers considerable scope for fruitful application of a particular understanding of the concept.

In this context it is most important that the term 'myth' should not be interpreted as a synonym for 'legend'. Although legendary material has been extensively used in the janam-sakhis to give expression to the myth which constitutes their origin the two terms must be kept rigidly distinct. As far as the purpose and the function of the janam-sakhis are concerned this distinction between legend and myth is of much greater importance than the difference between legend and the authenticated historical event. Whenever the janam-sakhis are used as a source for the actual life of Gurú Nának the latter distinction becomes primary, and the historian who seeks to reconstruct the events of the Gurú's life must endeavour to separate the authentic elements embedded in the janam-sakhis from the vast quantity of strictly spurious material within which they are set. This, however, is not the principal role or value of the janam-sakhis. Their principal role has concerned their function within the later community; and as historical sources their value lies chiefly in their testimony to the period and the society within which they evolved. For an analysis of either the role of the janam-sakhis or of their primary historical value the distinction between legend and history is of little practical importance. It is the myth which matters, and the myth can be served with equal advantage by both legend and history, provided only that the legendary element does not do serious violence to accepted conventions. In this sense myth is a fundamental aspect of the janam-sakhis. It therefore follows that a firm grasp of this particular usage is a pre-requisite for any sufficient understanding of their true nature.

According to this usage a myth is a construct of the human imagination, developing out of an actual situation and seeking to give meaning to that situation. It is, in other words, an interpretation based upon a particular understanding of a given array of circumstances. This interpretation must be expressed in concrete form. It evolves in response to particular needs and if it is to survive it must continue to fulfil its distinctive function for the society within which it took shape. As long as it retains the capacity to do so it will survive. If it is to retain an acceptable relevance it must evolve in accordance with the changing needs and understanding of the society which it serves, for when it loses its capacity to fulfil a relevant function it will wither. Eventually it will either die or, if it lingers on, will survive as a cultural curiosity. Although every myth should accord with accepted norms of truth and reality, neither its rise nor its survival will relate primarily to such issues. It is the function which must sustain it and when a myth ceases to fulfil its function it must either change or make way for a more effective substitute.

Myths may be expressed in a wide variety of forms. They may exist in oral or in written tradition, and in either case they may be poetry or narrative prose. They may be drama, sagas, anecdotes, or series of
discourses. Their conscious emphasis may be religious, historical, philosophical, or a mixture of all and much more besides. Though commonly expressed in oral or recorded tradition myth is not necessarily limited to the spoken or written word. It may be expressed in the ritual of a sacrifice, in the structure of a liturgy, in the design of a building, or in the multitude of customs observed by a particular society. The range of possibilities is enormous. Every society must find means of expressing its myths and any form which will provide a concrete and immediately comprehensible expression qualifies thereby as an appropriate vehicle.

It is in precisely this sense that the janam-sakhis have served as the vehicle of a powerful myth, one which still commands a wide acceptance within the society which developed it. The myth which they express may be briefly stated as follows. Bābā Nānak was the divinely commissioned giver of salvation. To all who would seek salvation the way lies open. The means of salvation consists in loyalty to the person of Bābā Nānak and acceptance of his teachings. This is the myth. The form which was developed to give it expression was the narrative anecdote which, in relating some incident concerning the life of Nānak, sought to authenticate the claims made on his behalf. These anecdotes, collected into anthologies or structured 'biographies', constitute the janam-sakhis.

Let it be stressed once again that the issue does not involve questions of historical truth, at least not in a primary sense. The fundamental question to ask of a myth should concern not its historical truth but its functional utility. Inevitably the janam-sākhī narrators have employed both historical and legendary material in order to give concrete expression to the myth of Bābā Nānak. It is, for example, safe to accept as historically accurate their claim that Nānak was born in Talvandi village, in the year S.1526 (A.D. 1469), and that he was the son of Kālū Bedi.1 This is a statement of actual fact and it is also a part of the myth. Having made this statement concerning place, date, and parentage, the narrators add that a mighty concourse of celestial beings hailed his birth—three hundred and thirty million gods, eighty-four Siddhs, nine Nāths, sixty-four Yoginis, fifty-two Virs, and six Jatis.2 Legend has been joined to historical fact but the myth remains the same.

This example will at once suggest the Lucan account of the Nativity. Jesus, the son of Mary and Joseph, born in Palestine, is greeted at his birth by the heavenly host of angels.3 The authentic statement is coupled with a legendary element in order to express one aspect of the myth of Jesus. For an analysis of this kind the question is not whether the myth of Nānak or the myth of Jesus is true. In either case the issue can be affirmed only by an act of faith.

The nature of the janam-sākhī myth is clearly indicated by the declarations of purpose which some of the narrators attach to their collections of

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1 Bṣg, f. 1.
2 Ibid. For Siddhs and Nāths see below, pp. 68–9, 296. Yoginis, Virs, and Jatis are legendary figures possessing superhuman powers.
anecdotes. In one of the more important janam-sākhīs it is expressed in
the following terms:

He who reads or hears this sākhī shall attain to the supreme rapture. He who hears,
sings or reads this sākhī shall find his highest desire fulfilled, for through it he
shall meet Gurū Bābā Nānak. He who with love sings of the glory of Bābā Nānak
or gives ear to it shall obtain joy ineffable in all that he does in this life, and in the
life to come salvation.¹

The word sākhī which is here used by the writer to designate his work
means, literally, ‘testimony’. This is precisely what the janam-sākhīs are
intended to be. They are testimonies to the belief which, in its concrete
form, becomes the myth of Nānak. In a more specific sense they are, or
claim to be, witnesses to actual episodes from the life of Nānak. These
episodes are believed to authenticate the soteriological status of Nānak
which constitutes the fundamental myth. For this reason the earliest
collections were styled simply sākhiān, or ‘Testimonies’.

It was not long, however, before the title was expanded and the word
sākhī underwent a slight shift in meaning. One of the earlier collections
assumed the title janam-patri (‘horoscope’ or, more precisely, the piece of
paper on which a person’s horoscope is recorded).² Although in a strict
sense the expression janam-patri related only to the opening anecdote
describing the birth of Nānak it came to be applied to the collection as a
whole. It was consistently used as a title for the collection which had first
appropriated it, and eventually coalesced with the earlier term. The word
patri was dropped and sākhī substituted to form the new compound
janam-sākhī.

This compound has been used ever since and continues to be used today.
Although in a literal sense it can be translated as ‘testimonies to the birth
(of Nānak)’ it no longer projects this meaning. The coalescence has
produced a different sense. The translation which best accords with the
popular understanding of the meaning of janam-sākhī today is ‘biography’
and, as we have already observed, this is the term which is most commonly
used in English translation. The word sākhī has, meanwhile, assumed a
somewhat different connotation when used in this context. Occasionally
one encounters a usage which implies the earlier meaning of ‘witness’ or
‘testimony’. The usual meaning in modern usage is, however, an ‘episode’
or ‘chapter’ from the ‘biography’ of Nānak. Individual incidents are
recorded separately or in integrated series, and each incident or series is
called a sākhī. The individual sākhis have been gathered into collections,
some random and some ordered. These collections constitute the janam-
sākhīs.

Although janam-sākhīs of other religious figures have since been

¹ AS, p. 101. See also Mih JS I. 1.
² This was the title used by the janam-sākhīs of the Bālā tradition. Bālā JS, p. 2. The same term
is also affixed to the collection known as the Ādi Sākhis, but in this latter case may perhaps be a
written, the term is generally restricted to collections of tales concerning Guru Nānak, and if used without any specific indication of its subject it will invariably refer to him. As a result janam-sākhī is commonly translated not simply as 'biography' but as 'biography of Guru Nānak'. Whereas this is certainly an accurate representation of the meaning popularly attached to the term today, it must again be emphasized that it is in fact a mis-representation. The emphasis is necessary because of the extensive misunderstanding which still results from a persistent use of the janam-sākhīs as historical accounts of the life of Nānak. This was the method followed at the turn of the century by M. A. Macauliffe and in this sense his ghost is still very much with us. The janam-sākhīs do indeed have a considerable importance as historical sources, but only a limited measure of that importance relates to their usefulness as sources for the life of Nānak. Their primary significance as historical source-material lies elsewhere. It consists, first, in the role which the janam-sākhīs have played in the subsequent history of the Sikh community. Secondly, it is to be found in those elements incorporated within the janam-sākhī which relate to the period of their actual emergence rather than to the earlier period of Guru Nānak. In both respects the importance chiefly concerns the period stretching from the sixteenth century to the early eighteenth century. The first of these will be more fully explained when dealing with the function of the janam-sākhīs. The second will be treated in the section which discusses the contribution of the janam-sākhīs as historical sources.

The customary interpretation of the janam-sākhīs must accordingly be rejected and an effort made to redefine them. A janam-sākhī is a collection of hagiographic anecdotes concerning the person of Guru Nānak (A.D. 1469–1539). These anecdotes, both individually and in their collective form, all serve to express a single myth relating to the life and teachings of Nānak, namely that he was sent into the world by God to demonstrate the way of salvation to an erring and confused mankind. In order to express this myth the anonymous narrators responsible for the various anecdotes have drawn in some small measure from authentic memories concerning the actual life of Nānak, and in considerable measure from current legend.

Some of the individual anecdotes are the product of simple borrowing from earlier traditions, whereas others derive from complicated growth processes. Most of the borrowings and much of the growth process must be related to the period of oral transmission. This not only preceded the first recording of anecdotes, but continues to the present day. As a result the expansion of the janam-sākhī traditions, though particularly active during the seventeenth century, is still continuing. It was during the late sixteenth or early seventeenth century that material drawn from oral sources was first recorded in written form. The earlier written collections (and some of their later descendants) recorded individual anecdotes in a random manner, the only deference to chronology being a simple sequence of birth, childhood, manhood, and death. Later collections devised more

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1 There exist janam-sākhīs of Kabir and Nāmdev.
2 See below, pp. 244–7.
detailed chronological structures and reordered the individual anecdotes to accord with these predetermined patterns. In some instances a later manuscript will represent a generally faithful copying of an earlier version, but in most cases there will be some significant departures. Earlier versions are commonly augmented by the addition of minor details, extra anecdotes, or clusters of anecdotes, and are sometimes distinguished by alterations in the chronological pattern. In some instances supplementary manuscripts have served as sources for such additions, and in others the later copyist has drawn from current oral tradition.

The language of most janam-sākhīs is Pāñjābī and until the nineteenth century the script was almost invariably Gurmukhī. Versions copied in the Arabic script do eventually appear, but they are exceedingly rare. Although distinct variations of language are to be found within the janam-sākhīs only occasionally are they sufficient to justify any claim that a writer has actually abandoned Pāñjābī. Three principal varieties of linguistic difference are to be found. There is, first, a range of dialects extending from the Mājhi of the central tract (the Bāri Doab) to the Pothohārī of Rāwalpīndī District. Secondly, there is within the narrative traditions a gradual change from the primitive Pāñjābī prose of the earliest manuscripts to the more refined language of the latest letterpress editions. Thirdly, there is a pronounced difference between the same crude Pāñjābī of the earliest manuscripts and the sophisticated language of that variety of later janam-sākhī which stresses exegesis rather than narrative.

Several of the copyists have recorded the date on which they completed their work, and if to their manuscripts we add the modern printed editions the period which they span runs from the middle of the seventeenth century to the present day. It must be stressed that these dates refer to the actual copying of extant manuscripts. They do not necessarily refer to the original compiling of particular collections and in most cases it is abundantly evident that the extant work has been directly copied from an earlier manuscript or manuscripts. In a few important instances manuscripts bearing eighteenth-century dates must be related to the seventeenth century rather than to the time when they were actually copied, for it is clear that their material derives mainly from the earlier period. The seventeenth century was the formative period in the development of the janam-sākhīs, and it is with this century, running over into the opening decades of its successor, that any discussion of the janam-sākhīs must be primarily concerned.

The outcome of this continuing process is an indeterminate but obviously substantial number of manuscript janam-sākhīs. Most of these are concentrated within the Pāñjāb.1 Others are to be found scattered throughout India and the libraries of the western world, two of the most important being held by the India Office Library in London.2 In 1870 the first printed edition appeared and the trade has flourished ever since. Most of the manuscript copies can be distributed amongst four, or perhaps five,

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1 See Appendix 6.
2 IOL MSS. Panj. B6 and B40.
recognizable traditions. The printed versions, although they have continued the process of growth and diversification, are later extensions of these same groups or traditions. In our attempt to analyse the janam-sakhis frequent reference will have to be made to these various traditions and to their principal manuscript collections. For this reason a description of the more important extant janam-sakhis will precede the attempt to analyse their actual development.
THE PRINCIPAL JANAM-SĀKHĪS

Most of the janam-sakhis fall into one of a small number of recognizable groups or traditions, the only significant exception being the unique Bāo Janam-sākhī held by the India Office Library. Each of these traditions possesses distinctive characteristics and there is rarely any difficulty in allocating a manuscript to its appropriate category. For this reason the various manuscripts will be described under the headings of their various traditions.

One feature common to all the traditions which should be made clear at the outset is that they are all, in their extant forms, composite products. All have drawn upon a diversity of earlier sources. Their identity as distinctive groups or traditions has arisen only because particular selections were subsequently copied, completely or in substantial part, by later hands. For this reason it is important to distinguish three varieties of participant in the development process. These are the original narrators of oral tradition; the compilers who made selections from oral tradition and recorded their individual selections in manuscripts; and the copyists who with varying degrees of faithfulness reproduced these earliest compilations in later manuscript or, even later, printed form. During the later stages of the development process participants occasionally combined the roles of both compiler and copyist. They were copyists in that they reproduced earlier manuscripts but compilers in that they combined extracts from more than one source to produce new selections.

Such details are, however, aspects of the discussion which must follow the account of extant janam-sakhis. This account will be largely descriptive, its purpose being to provide a frame of reference for the analysis which will follow.

THE BĀLĀ JANAM-SĀKHĪS

When during his visit to the Pañjāb in 1805 Colonel Malcolm made inquiries concerning Sikh history and religion he was informed that Bābā Nānak had been accompanied on his travels by ‘a person named Bālā Sandhū’.¹ He adds that it is on this person’s authority that ‘most of the miracles and wonders of his journeys are related’.² Although Malcolm does make passing reference to two other sources,³ it is evident from his

² Ibid.
³ The first is the Bhācta Māla, an unidentifiable work evidently confused with the Bhakta Māla of Nābhā Dās and perhaps with the Bhagat-rotanīvali of Mani Singh. The second is Bhāī Gurdās
account that the Bālā version of the life and travels of Bābā Nānak had been accepted as standard by the beginning of the nineteenth century.

It is this status which constitutes the principal importance of the Bālā janam-sākhi. In spite of their claims to be the ‘original janam-sākhi’ there can be no doubt that they represent an intermediate stage in the evolution of the form, and that others are accordingly more significant in terms of age and simplicity of structure. Having first emerged during the middle decades of the seventeenth century the Bālā tradition flourished increasingly during the eighteenth century and eventually secured its position as the standard version of the life of Nānak. This position it retained unchallenged until the rediscovery of the Purātan tradition late in the nineteenth century. The publication of Macauliffe’s The Sikh Religion in 1909 eventually transferred the primary reputation to the Purātan version, but the Bālā janam-sākhis yielded nothing in popularity and to this day they dominate the Pārijābi market.

Although the reasons for this Bālā ascendancy are not altogether clear, one which certainly played a major role was its confident claim to represent an eye-witness account of the life and travels of Bābā Nānak. All Bālā janam-sākhis begin with a prologue which purports to describe the manner in which Bālā Sandhū (commonly known as Bhai Bālā) was summoned before Nānak’s successor Aṅgad and how he then proceeded to narrate all that he had witnessed as the first Guru’s constant companion. The earliest of the extant Bālā versions begins as follows:

The janam-patri of Bābā Nānakjī

In the year Sammat fifteen hundred and eighty two, S. 1582, on the fifth day of the bright half of the month of Vaisākh, Paiṛā Mokhā, a Khatrī of Sultānpur, wrote this book. Guru Aṅgad commanded it to be written. Paiṛā recorded the dictation of Bālā, a Sandhū Jat who had come from Talvala, the village of Rāi Bhoi. He had come in search of Guru Aṅgad. The recording of his account took two months and seventeen days to complete. All the facts and all the places visited by Guru Nānakjī were faithfully and fluently described by Bhai Bālā, with the result that Guru Aṅgad was greatly pleased with him. Bhai Bālā and Mardānā the Bard accompanied Bābā Nānak on his travels and Bhai Bālā was with him during the period he spent at the commissariat [of Daulat Khān in Sultānpur].

The narrative then proceeds to describe how Guru Aṅgad was one day sitting in his village of Khaḍūr disconsolately reflecting upon the fact that he did not know Bābā Nānak’s date of birth. It so happened that Bālā Sandhū, the first Guru’s companion, had only recently learnt the identity of his Master’s successor, and having discovered the location of Guru Aṅgad’s residence he arrived at this convenient moment to pay his respects. In response to a request from Guru Aṅgad he agreed to go back to Talvala and search for the horoscope (janam-patri) which had been recorded on Nānak’s birth. When he returned triumphantly bearing the

(see below, pp. 43–45), whom Malcolm mistakenly declares to have been the author of the Gyān-ratandvālī. Ibid., pp. 203, 204.

1 Bālā JS, p. 1. For janam-patri as the title of a janam-sākhi see above, p. 11.
document it was discovered that the horoscope had been written in Śastri (Nāgari) characters. Fortunately there lived in Sultānpur a Sikh named Paiā Mokhā who knew ‘both characters’ and who could accordingly write Gurmukhi as well as read Nāgari. Paiā was duly summoned and having received the horoscope he sat down to transcribe it.¹

This process mysteriously turns out to be a recording of Bālā’s lengthy dictation instead of a transcription of the horoscope. The horoscope incident is clearly a contrived episode designed to create an impression of authenticity, and the clumsiness of the transition from horoscope to narrative has evidently done nothing to frustrate this intention. It has, on the contrary, been abundantly fulfilled, and to this day there still survives a conviction that the Bālā tradition must be at least based upon an eyewitness account delivered in the presence of Gurū Aṅgad. This reputation it has retained in spite of numerous inconsistencies, a high incidence of fantasy, and a generally incoherent travel narrative.

Two theories have been advanced to account for the origin of the Bālā tradition. The first assumes the authenticity of the tradition’s own claims as outlined above. There are, however, inescapable problems involved in the acceptance of these claims, problems which must in some manner be answered before there can be any prospect of sustaining them. The early Bālā manuscripts all include denigratory references which could hardly have proceeded from a loyal disciple and would never have been tolerated by the Gurū’s successor. These references are plainly the work of the Hindālis, a schismatic group which evidently regarded itself as Sikh but which accepted the leadership of a rival claimant in opposition to the claims of Gurū Hargobind (1595–1644). This rival was Bidhi Chand, son of Bābā Hindāl of Jaṇḍīlā, and because his claim was advanced in the name of his father the group bore the name Hindāli.²

Within the earliest extant janam-sākhis of the Bālā tradition there are several episodes which seek to exalt Bābā Hindāl at the expense of Nānak. These references vary in emphasis. At one point there is propounded a threefold apostolic succession which begins with Kabīr, continues through Nānak, and reaches its climax in Hindāl.³ Elsewhere Nānak and Hindāl are both accorded earlier incarnations in the court of King Janak, with Nānak cast in the humble role of oil-bearer (teli).⁴ Finally, there occurs in some of the manuscripts a story which seems to suggest that Nānak once requested Aṅgad to grant him seigniorial rights over his daughter.⁵

¹ Bālā Ḭī, pp. 1–7.
² GNSR, p. 23. The group is also known as the Nīraṇjanī panth. Jaṇḍīlā in Amritsar District was the group’s centre. Hindāl was himself a Jat from the pargana of Baḷālī. B4r, f. 142b.
³ This is expressed in the form of a brief verse.

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{āge bālā ab bhi hoi} & \quad \text{ṣk kambīrā nānak doi} \\
\text{tījā hor handāl jāteī} & \quad \text{jāṅko āp nīraṇjan bhēta} \\
\text{āsiī hiropī hari kambīr} & \quad \text{tō dujāī nānak bandhī dhīr}
\end{align*}
\]

B4r, f. 166b.

⁴ B4r, f. 189a.
⁵ B4r, f. 251a–b. This third element, although certainly a part of the same polemic, may be a later addition to the Bālā narrative.
The first theory concerning the origins of the Bālā tradition interprets these references as interpolations introduced into an earlier ‘original’ janam-sākhī narrated before Guri Sāngat. This theory was popularized by the early nineteenth-century Sikh hagiographer Santokh Singh, who thereby managed to reconcile the tradition’s occasional Hindī declara-
tions with its confident claims to originality. It was a relatively simple
matter to excise the offending material, and having done this Santokh
Singh used the Bālā version as the basis for his Nānak Prakās. Numerous
successors have followed the same method, some confidently and some
with evident misgivings.

A second theory claims that the entire janam-sākhī is the work of the
Hindīs and that it was first composed to serve as a vehicle for their
polemic against the supporters of the orthodox line. This interpretation
was vigorously if erratically propagated by Karam Singh in his Kattak ki
Visākh, a book which in spite of its manifold inconsistencies did serve to
strengthen doubts which had been raised by Macauliffe.

The first of these two theories must certainly be rejected. The reasons
for this rejection will be treated in greater detail when discussing the
sources used by janam-sākhī compilers. At this point they need be only
briefly summarized. There are, first, the numerous and irreconcilable
inconsistencies involved in the tradition’s own account of its origins.
Secondly, there is the unusually strong element of fantasy which character-
izes the Bālā version of the Nānak narratives. Thirdly, there is a significant
absence of any reference to Bhāī Bālā in the other janam-sākhīs predating
the eighteenth century. Even in the eighteenth century he receives only
passing mention in other traditions. This would have been inconceivable
if in fact Bālā had been a regular companion of the Guri. Their omission
of his name further strengthens a conclusion which is already apparent
from the first two objections. In terms of content, structure, and language
the earliest Bālā version bears all the marks of a middle period in the
pattern of janam-sākhī evolution and theories based upon its claim to
originality must assuredly be repudiated.

Whilst this disposes of the first theory it does not necessarily mean that
the second thereby stands affirmed. It does not follow that Karam Singh’s
alternative theory is automatically established by a repudiation of the
claims which he so vigorously contested. Karam Singh insisted that the
earliest extant versions represent an original Hindī composition, not an
earlier janam-sākhī corrupted by them. The incidence of the Hindī
references does, however, offer some support for the suggestion that they
must be interpolations and it is accordingly necessary to postulate a third
theory. The earliest extant versions of the Bālā traditions may represent a

1 NPr 1. 37.
2 See below, pp. 45-6.
3 See below, pp. 174-6.
4 The Mahinā Prakās Vāratah makes a single mention of Bhāī Bālā in its account of the life of
Nānak, one which accords him no special importance. SLTGN(Eng), p. 79. SLTGN(Pbi), p. 42.
At one point the B4o and Adī Sākhīs versions, following a common source, refer to ‘another man’
who was with Nānak in addition to Mardīnā, a reference which might perhaps be intended to
indicate Bālā. B4o, f. 83b. AS, p. 27. The failure of Bhāī Gurdās to mention him in his Vār x1
catalogue of principal disciples is of particular significance.
THE PRINCIPAL JANAM-SĀKHĪS

mid-seventeenth-century janam-sākhī interpolated by the Hindālis. This remains no more than a possibility, for there is no manuscript evidence to support it, and if it is in fact correct the Hindālis must have made use of it very soon after its first emergence. Either this or the second theory could be correct and if the Hindālis were not actually responsible for the first Bālā compilation they must certainly have appropriated it almost immediately after it appeared.¹

It will be observed that in describing the products of the Bālā tradition reference is made to the Bālā janam-sākhīs, not to a single Bālā Janam-sākhī. Although there is an obvious relationship linking all versions of the tradition, with much common material, there are also marked differences. These are almost certainly linear in the sense that the various versions can be regarded as successive amplifications of an original Bālā janam-sākhī, first recorded in the middle decades of the seventeenth century. There are two principal manuscript recensions extant, followed by four main printed versions. Although the latest of the printed editions differs greatly from the first manuscript recension the lineal connection can be easily traced. The one link which may still be missing from the chain is the first. Whereas one of the extant manuscript recensions may represent the first Bālā version there is no conclusive means of establishing this status.

Manuscripts

1. Bālā MS Recension A  Recension A can be easily distinguished from Recension B by its omission of sākhīs describing the death of Nānak. There seems to be little doubt that A must be earlier than B. The earliest of all extant Bālā manuscripts bearing a date follows the A text, and the inclusion of death sākhīs adds one further inconsistency to the narrative. The introduction attached to all versions relates that Bhai Bālā was unaware of the identity of Bābā Nānak’s successor, an ignorance which would have been altogether inexplicable had he been present at the time of Nānak’s death. The editor responsible for Recension B, taking cognisance of this fact, has Gurū Angad narrate the death sākhīs for Bhai Bālā’s benefit. In order to do so, however, he borrows a significant portion of his account from a janam-sākhī of the Mīhārbān tradition. This brands the passage as a later addition, and implies that the briefer Recension A version must be earlier.

The earliest of all dated Bālā janam-sākhīs is a manuscript in the possession of a Delhi family, an illustrated copy bearing the date S.1715 (A.D. 1658).² Two of the three Bālā manuscripts in London also follow the

¹ The case in favour of an original Hindāli composition has recently been restated in a more developed form by Gurbachan Kaur, ‘Janam Sākhī of Bhai Bālā: authentic text and its critical editing’ (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, Gurū Nānak Dev University, 1978). Dr. Gurbachan Kaur identifies Bālī with the elder son of Bābā Hindāl.

² The actual manuscript is in the possession of Shri P. N. Kapoor of Hauz Qazi, Delhi. A photocopy is held by the Department of Punjab Historical Studies, Punjabi University, Paṭialā. An abbreviated text is given in Kirpāl Singh, Janam Sākhī Parampara (Paṭialā, 1969), Appendix, pp. 221–239. See also Rattan Singh Jaggi, Dasam Granth dū pauḍāghīk adhīain (Jalandhar, 1965), p. 59.
Recension A text. The better of the two is the India Office Library manuscript Panj. B41. This consists of two parts, the first being the janam-sākhī proper (folios 1–253a) and the second a version of the two discourses entitled *Mahke di goṣṭi* and *Madine di goṣṭi* (folios 254a–348a, 348b–95). Between the two sections a shabad in Gauri rāgā has been inserted. The copyist is named Thākür Dās Faqīr and both portions of the work are said to have been completed in S.1831–2 (A.D. 1775).1 The second London representative of the tradition is the British Library's manuscript Or. 2754.1. This is undated and omits the story of how Gurū Nānak asked Gurū Angād to send his daughter to him.2 Although it has been copied by various hands on inferior paper it is generally clear.

2. Bālā MS Recension B This version, with its Mīharbān death addendum, is represented by MS 104975 of the School of Oriental and African Studies in London, and also by MS Add. 921 of the Cambridge University Library. Both are recent works. The London manuscript is dated S.1912 (A.D. 1855) and the Cambridge manuscript S.1922 (A.D. 1865). An example noted in the Pañjāb by Professor Piār Singh is manuscript no. 342 of the Pañjāb Archives in Paṭīālā.3

These are the two principal recensions available in manuscript form. Needless to say, a comparison of any two manuscripts will reveal many variants, some of them substantial.4 These variants do not, however, upset the pattern of a relatively mature janam-sākhī emerging with strong Hindī associations in the middle of the seventeenth century and subsequently augmented by the addition of sākhīs narrating a version of Nānak's death. Of all janam-sākhīs this is the most common. In his catalogue of Pañjābī manuscripts Ashok has listed twenty-two Bālā manuscripts.5 This catalogue relates exclusively to the Pañjāb. It does not include the Delhi and United Kingdom manuscripts noted above, nor a Bālā manuscript in the possession of Mr Jan Nielsen of Denmark.6

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1 The first is dated Māgh sudi 13, S. 1831; and the second portion Vaisīkh sudi 4, S. 1832. Loc. cit., ff. 253b, 395b
2 See above, p. 17.
4 Other sākhīs added to the original Recension A collection by later copyists are noted by Gurbachan Kaur, op. cit, Appendix.
6 A microfilm copy of this manuscript is held by Punjabi University, Paṭīālā. The original, which was copied in Multān in S. 1884 (A.D. 1827), bears the following note signed by Mr. Rich Ash. Hannaford: 'The Ghrunt of the Seikhs. Taken from the altar in one of their temples by Lieut: G: Moxon. Given to me by Mrs. Moxon Dec: 22, 1831.'
Printed editions

The printing of janam-sakhis appears to have begun in 1870. In October of that year the owners of the Ganesh Prakash Press in Lahore issued a composite volume comprising three Sikh works lithographed in the Arabic script. The second of these was a version of the Bālā narrative, a popular retelling which plainly derived from a Gurmukhi original.1

The Gurmukhi version was not far behind and within months the dominant Bālā text had followed the 1870 forerunner into print. In 1871 a generally faithful replica of the Recension A Gurmukhi text was issued by another Lahore publisher, establishing thereby a firm link between the earlier manuscripts and the progressively expanding versions delivered by printing presses. During this same year the process of expansion was given a substantial impetus by the appearance of an extensively augmented version. The process continued into the twentieth century, each successive product claiming to represent the authentic text delivered by Bālā Sandhū to Guru Arjan. The four Gurmukhi versions which constitute this developing sequence are as follows:

1. Bālā Lithographed Edition A (A.D. 1871) This edition, published in Lahore by Hāfiz Qutub Din, establishes the firm link with earlier Bālā manuscripts. Most of its text follows that of Bālā MS Recension A closely and thus effects only a slight advance in the expansion process. For this reason, and because it is more accessible than manuscript copies, this Hāfiz Qutub Din edition (Bālā Lithographed Edition A) will be used for most Bālā citations in this study.2 It should, however, be noted that some significant variants do occur. These are set out in Appendix 1, together with a list of all Recension A and Lithographed Edition A sakhis.3

2. Bālā Lithographed Edition B (A.D. 1871) The second of the 1871 editions is a much larger product, both in actual dimensions and in content. As indicated above, this second 1871 edition marks the first significant stage in the rapid and substantial expansion which transformed the Bālā tradition during the last three decades of the nineteenth century and created the twentieth-century Bālā janam-sakhī still so popular in Pañjāb villages. From this point of view it commands a considerable interest, although it is of no help as a source for the primary period of

1 The three works which comprise the volume are Jāpiṇī paramārath (50 pp.), Pothī janam-sākhi (114 pp.), and Gurbīlās (44 pp.). Each appears to have been lithographed as a separate booklet and the three subsequently bound as a single volume. The October 1870 date is recorded on the cover and evidently refers to the issue of the complete volume. A copy is held by the IOL (call number: VT 1552).
2 It is to this edition that the abbreviation Bālā 7S applies. The copy in the India Office Library is catalogued as Panj. 1522. The India Office Library also holds two later editions of the same version, one published in A.D. 1874 (Panj. 30.E.3) and the other in A.D. 1886 (Panj. 1523). The book is relatively small, measuring 25 × 15 cm.
3 See below, pp. 271–5.
janam-sākhī development during the seventeenth century. The edition was published by Mālik Divān Būṭā Singh of Lahore.¹

3. Bālā Lithographed Edition C (A.D. 1890) The Bālā tradition was further expanded by an even weightier volume published in 1890 by Maulvī Maibūb Ahmad of Lahore.²

4. Bālā Letterpress Edition The climax was finally reached with the twentieth-century letterpress edition which still sells well in the bazaar bookshops of the Pañjāb.³ The first of the lithographed editions described above contains 90 sākhīs, the second jumps to 311, and the third leaps still further to 495. In the standard modern letterpress version the number is reduced to 183 by amalgamating earlier sākhīs. Some portions have been omitted, extra material has been added, and there has been some rearrangement, but the pattern of linear descent is still clear.

THE PURĀTAN JANAM-SĀKHĪS

Having established its supremacy during the course of the eighteenth century the Bālā tradition remained the standard account of the life of Nānak for more than a hundred years. It was only in 1872 that a serious rival reappeared, and it was not until the early twentieth century that this rival tradition began to make any serious impression upon the Bālā reputation. Because it was alleged by some of its promoters to be the oldest of all versions this variant account of the life of Nānak was dubbed the Purātan or 'Ancient' tradition.

The term Purātan Janam-sākhī, which has ever since been used with reference to this second major tradition, is misleading in two respects. It is misleading because it implies (and the claim has sometimes been expressed in explicit terms) that this must be the original janam-sākhī. The claim that the Purātan version represents the oldest of all extant accounts may perhaps be accurate. It is certainly disputable, but the possibility must be acknowledged. What is not acceptable is the suggestion that the Purātan tradition represents an 'original' janam-sākhī. The Purātan tradition is, like all extant janam-sākhī collections, a composite version based upon more than one antecedent source.

The term is also misleading in that its use of the singular implies the existence of a single Purātan janam-sākhī. This too is incorrect. As in the case of the Bālā tradition there is more than one Purātan janam-sākhī, and it is because more than one exists that the heading given above for this section uses a plural form. The intimate relationship which connects the various Purātan janam-sākhīs cannot be doubted and for this reason they

³ IOL Panj. H.18 is an example. The best available copies are those published by Munshi Gulāb Singh and Sons of Lahore.
are here grouped within a single definable tradition. This grouping should not, however, suggest identity. The terms 'Purātan janam-sākhīs' and 'Purātan tradition' serve as convenient collective labels, whereas the singular form, the *Purātan Janam-sākhī*, must be restricted to the published text which bears this misleading title.\(^\text{1}\) In addition to this and an earlier published text three of the more important *Purātan* manuscripts will be noted. Two of these manuscripts (the *Colebrooke* and the *Hāfizābād*) have enjoyed a particular fame. This they owe not to their dates (which are unknown) nor to any uniqueness of text, but rather to the manner of their discovery and to the fact that the names bestowed upon them have also been used to designate the two principal recensions of the *Purātan* tradition. The third manuscript, likewise undated but obviously later than its more celebrated analogues, deserves notice because it illustrates so well the persistent tendency of copyists to expand earlier collections.

**Manuscripts**

1. *The Colebrooke Janam-sākhī*  
   In 1869 the Pañjāb Government commissioned Ernst Trumpp to translate the sacred scripture of the Sikhs.\(^\text{2}\) Although Trumpp’s responsibility was limited to the Ādi Granth he was naturally interested in surviving traditions concerning the lives of the Gurūs, and specifically those relating to Nānak. Knowledge of the Nānak traditions was largely confined to the *Bālā* version and because this version seemed to him to be so unsatisfactory Trumpp endeavoured to procure older and more trustworthy traditions regarding the life of Nānak. In India his search was unsuccessful, but after his return to Europe he chanced upon a manuscript which seemed to answer his need.

After my return to Europe in 1872, some manuscripts of the Granth were forwarded to me from the India Office Library, for the prosecution of my labours, and to these some other Gurmukhi manuscripts were added in the expectation that the one or the other might prove useful in my researches. In looking them over, I found an old manuscript, partly destroyed by white ants, the early characters of which, resembling those of the old copy of the Granth, preserved at Kartarpur, and signed by Guru Arjun himself, at once caught my eye. On the first leaf it contained in Sanskrit letters the short title, *Nanak ka Granth Janam-sakhi ka, A book of Nanak, referring to his birth (or life)*. The copy had been presented to the Library of the East India House, according to the entry on the first leaf, by the famous H. T. Colebrooke, without his being aware, as it appears, of the contents of the book. As soon as I commenced to read the book, I observed with great pleasure, that this was a description of the life of Nanak quite different from all the others I had hitherto seen. As the characters, so also was the idiom, in which it was composed, old and in many words and expressions agreeing with the diction of Guru Arjun.

After a lengthened examination and comparison of this manuscript with the later Janam-sakhis, I am satisfied that this is the fountain, from which all the others have been drawn largely: for the stories, as far as they are common to both

\(^{1}\) See below, pp. 28–9.  
relations, very frequently agree verbally, with the only difference, that the later Janam-sakhis have substituted more modern forms for old words, which with the progress of time had become unintelligible. This old Janam-sakhi, as hinted already, belongs, according to all external and internal marks, to the latter end of the time of Guru Arjun or to that of his immediate successor. The Granth, which Guru Arjun compiled of the writings of his four predecessors and the old famous Bhagats, as well as of his own numerous poetical effusions, is cited throughout, without any paraphrase, whereas the later Janam-sakhis have deemed it already necessary to add to every quotation from the Granth a paraphrase in the modern idiom.

We are enabled now, by the discovery of this old Janam-sakhi, which is now-a-days, as it appears, quite unknown to the Sikhs themselves, to distinguish the older tradition regarding Nanak from the later one, and to fix, with some degree of verisimility, the real facts of his life.¹

Although Trumpp was astray in his estimate of the age and reliability of the manuscript there can be no doubt that he had discovered one of the most important of the janam-sakhis. H. T. Colebrooke had presumably presented the manuscript to the Library of East India House in 1815 or 1816. In English works it is commonly referred to as the Colebrooke Janam-sakhi, and in Panjabi references as the Valāīwāli Janam-sakhi, or 'the janam-sākhi from overseas'.² The manuscript is almost complete, the only missing folios being 2–6, 12–13, and 18–19.

Trumpp had, in the manner of late nineteenth-century religious polemic, made some exceedingly discourteous remarks about the Sikh sacred scriptures and for this reason his book was ill received by the community when it was published in 1877.³ His description and translation of the rediscovered janam-sākhi did, however, arouse considerable interest and in 1883 a group of Amritsar Sikhs petitioned the Lieutenant-Governor of the Pāñjāb to have the manuscript brought to India for inspection. Sir Charles Aitcheson accepted the request and in the autumn of the same year the manuscript was sent to the Pañjāb. There it was made available for scrutiny in Lahore and Amritsar, where interest was sufficiently marked to persuade Sir Charles to have it reproduced. This was done by means of a zincographic process in 1885 and copies bearing the title Janam Sakhi or the Biography of Guru Nanak, Founder of the Sikh Religion were presented to selected institutions as gifts.⁴ In the meantime a transcribed copy had been prepared and lithographed by the Singh Sabhā of Lahore.⁵

Although the manuscript bears no date for either an original compilation or the actual copying, a cryptic reference in the sākhi 'Jhanḍā the Carpenter and the Jugāvalī' points to the year A.D. 1635.⁶ It is possible

¹ Ibid., p. ii.
² The manuscript is IOL MS Panj. B6.
³ For examples of his opinion see E. Trumpp, op. cit., pp. VI–VIII, i–ii; and N. Gerald Barrier, The Sikhs and their Literature, (Delhi, 1970), pp. xix–xx.
⁴ Loc. cit., prefatory note, p. ii. Because the reproduction was carried out at the Survey of India offices in Dehra Dūn the Colebrooke version is sometimes referred to as the Dehra Dūn Valī Janam-sākhī. The India Office Library copy is catalogued as Panj. 30.E.4.
⁵ IOL Panj. 30.E.2.
⁶ Pur JS, p. 116n.
that this reference is intended to indicate the year in which the *Purātan* version was first compiled, and there can be no doubt that a janam-sākhī of the *Purātan* variety might well have been recorded at that time. A reference of this kind is, however, slender evidence. It occurs in the apocryphal *Jugāvalī* (a work borrowed by the Colebrooke compiler from one of his sources), and it does not appear in all other *Purātan* manuscripts. The reference may relate to an original compilation, or to a later recension, or to a particular part of the composite *Purātan* tradition. Another possibility is that it may be entirely spurious. It occurs as an obscure reference within an esoteric work, circumstances which are scarcely favourable to positive conclusions. The text bears all the marks of an early seventeenth-century janam-sākhī, but beyond this supposition it is impossible to proceed. The actual manuscript is evidently later than this period. This conclusion is suggested by the salutation with which the manuscript concludes: *bolahu vāhi guru ji ki fatai hoi.*\(^1\) There is no evidence to suggest that this formula was used prior to the time of Guru Gobind Singh, from which it follows that the manuscript was probably copied during the early eighteenth century.

2. *The Hāfizābād Janam-sākhī* In 1884 Gurmukh Singh of Oriental College, Lahore, acquired a second *Purātan* manuscript from the town of Hāfizābād in Gujranwāla District. This manuscript he loaned to M. A. Macauliffe, who, having separated the individual words of the unbroken text, had it published at his own expense in 1885.\(^2\) This version is variously known as the *Hāfizābād Janam-sākhī* or as the *Macauliffe-vāli Janam-sākhī.*

The *Hāfizābād* text differs from the Colebrooke version in three significant respects. First, it includes in addition to all the Colebrooke material (which it reproduces with minor variants) a small cluster of two consecutive sakhis, neither of which appears in the Colebrooke analogue. These are the anecdotes entitled ‘The Proud Karorī Humbled’ and ‘The Merchant and Rājā Śivanābh’.*\(^3\) Second, it contains a discourse with Bābur which the Colebrooke text lacks.*\(^4\) Thirdly, it omits the three lengthy compositions entitled *Āsā Paṭṭī,* the *Jugāvalī,* and the *Prān Saṅgālī.*\(^5\) One other difference reported by Gurmukh Singh in his introduction to the lithographed edition is that there were some folios missing from the end of the manuscript. In order to complete the text Macauliffe used the Colebrooke manuscript.*\(^6\)

Macauliffe’s decision to publish a lithographed edition of the *Hāfizābād Janam-sākhī* was particularly fortunate in that the original manuscript is now no longer extant. When Gurmukh Singh died in 1896 his collection of

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\(^1\) Ibid., p. 115.
\(^2\) *Janam Sākhī Bābā Nānak Ji ki: the Most Ancient Biography of Baba Nanak, the Founder of the Sikh Religion,* edited by M. A. Macauliffe, lithographed by the Gulashan Press, Rawalpindi, 15 November 1885, with introduction by Gurmukh Singh.
\(^3\) Ibid., pp. 184-97. *Pur JS,* pp. 73-8.
\(^5\) M. A. Macauliffe, op. cit., introduction, p. 9.
\(^6\) Ibid.
manuscripts passed to his widow Parameshari Devi; and when she died in 1923 they came into the possession of his adoptive nephew. The nephew’s possession was disputed (presumably by other relatives of Gurmukh Singh) and although a court decision was delivered in his favour he evidently decided to dispose of the property which threatened to involve him in further litigation. This he did by casting the manuscripts into the Ravi river. No inventory of the manuscripts exists, but it is presumed that the Hafizabad Janam-sakhī must have been amongst them.1

In addition to the Macauliffe text at least two other extant manuscripts follow the Hafizabad Janam-sakhī version of the Purātan narrative. These are manuscript number 2913 of the Central Public Library, Patiala, and manuscript number 2310A in the Sikh History Research Department of Khalsa College, Amritsar.2 The Patiala manuscript is dated S.1747 (A.D. 1690)3 and the Khalsa College manuscript S.1829 (A.D. 1772).4

Other manuscripts are distinguished by their use of both Colebrooke and Hafizabad. An example of this pattern is provided by a Purātan manuscript dated S.1814 (A.D. 1757), copied in Burdwan and now in the possession of Sardār Kulāp Singh Bedi of Batālā. This manuscript is much closer to Colebrooke than to Hafizabad and is best classified as an example of the former. It does, however, include occasional readings which have evidently been adapted from a Hafizabad source.5

3. The Prachin Janam-sakhī The title Prachin Janam-sakhī designates a manuscript in the possession of a private collector, Sevā Singh Sevak of Tarn Taran. This manuscript represents a relatively late and substantially expanded Purātan collection. Although no date is given it is evident from the language and structure of the collection that the seventeenth-century estimate suggested by its owner must be too early.6

The bulk of the manuscript consists of Purātan material, rearranged in places but plainly attesting its basic source. To this foundation have been added sakhīs drawn from several other sources. Only a few of these have been introduced into the Purātan sequence. Most have been added at its

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1 Information supplied by Sardār Shamsher Singh Ashok of Amritsar, who reports having learnt it while scrutinizing the Lahore Sikh Sakhī records in 1943.
3 Loc. cit., f. 276b. The manuscript is said to have been copied at Galgalā. The copyist adds: ‘Galgalā is twelve kosa from Būjpur on the Kistna river. . . . It was written in the south, in the camp of naarāg Pāthār [Aurangzeb].’ Ibid.
4 Ashok reports two additional Purātan manuscripts located after the compilation of P HLS, one in Ferozepore District and the other in Hoshiapūr District. Shamsher Singh Ashok, Purātan Janam-sakhī Śri Guru Nanak Dev Ji ki (Amritsar, 1969), introduction, p. 46. He also reports having seen ‘several Purātan janam-sakhīs’ in Lahore prior to Partition in 1947. Ibid., p. 45. Karam Singh, writing in 1913, claimed to have seen five Purātan manuscripts in addition to Colebrooke and Hafizabad, and to have received a report concerning a sixth. Karam Singh, Kattak ki Vuiikh (Amritsar, 1913), p. 218. It seems certain that one of these must have been the Biso Janam-sakhī (see below, p. 43), and in view of the looseness with which the term Purātan is used it is likely that other manuscripts to which this title has been applied may have been misnamed.
The Principal Janam-Sakhis

conclusion. A variety of sources lie behind these supplementary sakhis. Several obviously derive from two major traditions unknown to the Puratan compilers but extensively used in some other janam-sakhis. The Miharban tradition (discussed below) is well represented by several lengthy discourses, grouped within four sakhis. A cluster which plainly derives from a Balda source manages to avoid all reference to the person of Bhai Balla. Another cluster appears to be unique to the Prachin Janam-sakhis. The manuscript also includes a version of the apocryphal 'Mecca Discourse'.

Authorship and dating of the Puratan version

In The Sikh Religion Macauliffe states that the Puratan version 'was written by a Sikh called Sewa Das'. He claims to have obtained 'several copies', and adds: 'One of them in our possession bears the date Sambat 1645 = A.D. 1588.' The first of these claims can be safely dismissed. Macauliffe himself acknowledges the information to be hearsay, no manuscript bearing this name exists, and it seems clear that Macauliffe's informant (Sir Attar Singh of Bhadaur) must have mistaken the identity of a writer of Guru Gobind Singh's period named Seva Das Udasi. The second is also open to considerable doubt. Apart from the Haifizabd manuscript in its printed edition none of Macauliffe's 'several copies' seems to have survived, and it is highly unlikely that a janam-sakh as maturely structured as the extant Puratan version could have evolved by 1588. It is possible that Macauliffe may have seen a manuscript bearing this date, but if so it will almost certainly have been a much more primitive collection than the extant version.

Other attempts to devise a date for the compiling of the Puratan tradition must be treated with the same scepticism, for no specifically dated

1 Sakhis 19, 33-6, and 51 have been interpolated; also portions of sakhis 10, 41, and 53. The Puratan material concludes immediately prior to the Puratan account of Nahak's death, and the remaining sakhis (58-81) are almost all taken from other sources. The sole exception is sakh 80, a brief return to Puratan material immediately prior to the death sakh.

2 These are the so-called Narrative II and Narrative III traditions. (See below, pp. 197-226) The former had, on earlier occasions, been extensively used by the compilers of the Adi Sakhis and the Bjo Janam-sakh, both following a common source-manuscript. In its recorded form the latter can be traced to the Bjo Janam-sakh, and it is possible that the compiler of the Prachin Janam-sakh actually copied his Narrative III sakhis directly from the Bjo manuscript. His source was at least very close to the original Bjo. It is also possible that he may have had access to a late recension of the Adi Sakhis, for sources which are blended in the later Adi Sakhis appear in the same form in the Prachin Janam-sakh. Narrative II sakhis in the Prachin Janam-sakh are 58, parts of 59, and 62-5. Narrative III sakhis are 71 and 75-9. Other sakhis which may have been derived from the Bjo Janam-sakh are parts of 10 and 41, 51, 66-70, and 81.

3 Sakhis 19, parts of 59, 60-1.

4 Sakhis 72-4.

5 Sakhis 33-6.


7 Loc. cit. i.lxxxvi.

8 Ibid.

9 Sevi Dاس Udasi was the author of a collection of anecdotes entitled Parchiin, completed in A.D. 1708. Only one of these anecdotes (a version of the discourse on Mount Sumeru) refers to Bibb Nanaak. Jagjit Singh, 'A Critical and Comparative Study of the Janam Sakhis of Guru Nanak up to the Middle of the Eighteenth Century' (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, Panjab University. 1967), pp. 33-\. For the Pañjäbi text of this anecdote see SLTON(P86), pp. 30-1.
THE PRINCIPAL JANAM-SĀKHĪS

reference survives. Calculations based on indirect references are of little help, except perhaps for the sākhi or poetic composition within which they occur. The extant Purātan version is, like all extant janam-sākhīs, a composite product and different portions have been incorporated at different times. A date within the middle decades of the seventeenth century may be assumed as highly probable but further than this it is not yet possible to go.

Printed editions

1. M. A. Macauliffe (ed.), Janam Sākhi Bābē Nānak Ji ki. Rawalpindi, 1885. This printed edition has already been briefly described in the section dealing with the Ḥāfizābād manuscript. According to Gurmukh Singh's introduction the lithographed text represents a faithful reproduction of the Ḥāfizābād manuscript, the only significant difference being the editor's separation of individual words, the addition of punctuation, and the terminal section drawn from the Colebrooke manuscript. Copies of this printed edition are now rare. The British Library possesses one, but not the India Office Library. A few copies are still held privately and in libraries in the Pañjāb.

2. Vir Singh (ed.), Purātan Janam-sākhi. In 1926 the distinguished Sikh novelist and theologian Bhāi Vir Singh of Amritsar published a conflation of the Colebrooke and Ḥāfizābād versions under the title Purātan Janam-sākhi. For this printed edition Vir Singh took as his primary text the Colebrooke manuscript (using the zincographic reproduction) and added to it material included in the Ḥāfizābād manuscript which the Colebrooke manuscript lacked. For the portions covered by both manuscripts the more important of the Ḥāfizābād variant readings were listed in footnotes. This still left some gaps in the text, notably at the conclusion of the death sākhi. These Vir Singh filled in his second edition (1931), by adding readings drawn from the Purātan manuscript in the possession of the Khalsa College Sikh History Research Department. The three manuscripts were, like all Pañjābī manuscripts of this kind, written without gaps be ween individual words and with only rudimentary punctuation.

1 BL 14162.c.14.
2 Amritsar: Khālsā Samāchār. The complete title is Huṇ tak mīlāṇ vichon sab ton Purātan Janam-sākhi Śrī Gūrū Nānak Dev Ji (“The Earliest Extant Janam-sākhi of Śrī Guru Nānak Dev Ji”). Several subsequent editions have been issued by the same publisher and the book is still in print. The abbreviation Pur JS used in this study refers to the fifth edition of this work (February 1959). An abridged version appears in Kirpal Singh, Janam Sākhi Paramparā (Pañjālī, 1969), Appendix, pp. 1-57.
3 One gap which still remained, and which can only be filled by speculation, is the prologue which evidently preceded the birth narrative in the Colebrooke manuscript. Although the extant manuscript begins with the birth of Nānak, the folio numbering indicates that five folios have been detached from the beginning of the manuscript. Janam Sākhi or the Biography of Gūrū Nānak (Photozincograph Facsimile, Dehrā Dūn, 1885), Introduction, p. iii. These presumably recorded a pre-natal commissioning of Nānak by God in the manner of the introductory portions of the Ṝaṭī Sākhīs and the Mīhārbān Janam-sākhi.
In the printed edition the individual words have been separated and additional punctuation provided.¹

Three other features of this printed version should be noted. First, Vir Singh has added headings to the individual sākhīs and also section headings to mark the commencement of each of the five journeys which according to the Purātan version Bābā Nānak is said to have made. Secondly, he has amended the narrator’s numerous quotations from Nānak’s own compositions in order to bring them into conformity with the Ādi Granth text. This frequently involves substantial changes in the Purātan text. Vir Singh defends these amendments on the grounds that “because the authentic text of the Gurū’s utterances is that of the Gurū Granth Sāhib it would be offensive to print a corrupt text”.² Thirdly, he has omitted from his main text compositions attributed by the janam-sākhī to the Gurū which he regards as apocryphal. These he has relegated to a series of appendices.³ The shorter compositions are there printed in full, but for the remainder (including the important Prāṇ Saṅgali) only the opening stanzas are given.


4. Shamsher Singh Ashok, Purātan Janam-sākhī Sri Gurū Nānak Dev Ji ki. Amritsar, 1969. In spite of its title this recent publication is not strictly a Purātan text and it is included here only because claims to this status have been made on its behalf. It is, like Vir Singh’s Purātan Janam-sākhī, a conflation. Unlike Vir Singh’s version, however, the component texts are not all Purātan. Although the primary text has been provided by a Purātan manuscript the finished product contains much material derived from two non-Purātan manuscripts. It differs from the Prāchina Janam-sākhī in that its non-Purātan sākhīs have been dispersed through the complete collection, extensively supplementing the Purātan content without disrupting its distinctive pattern. In the Prāchina Janam-sākhī most of the non-Purātan sākhīs have been appended at the conclusion of the Purātan material.

Ashok has constructed his text in two stages. The first step was to conflate two Ādi Sākhīs texts (representatives of a separate tradition which is described below). These texts were taken from a manuscript in his own possession and from another in the library of the Maharaja of Patiala. The second step was to conflate this conflated Ādi Sākhīs text with the text of the Purātan manuscript in the possession of Sardār Kuldip Singh Bedi of Baṭalā.⁴ This Purātan text is basic in the sense that it supplies not only a

¹ Pur JS, Introduction, pp. r–h.
² Ibid., p. h.
⁴ Shamsher Singh Ashok (ed.), Purātan Janam Sākhī Sri Gurū Nānak Dev Ji ki, Introduction, pp. 13, 47. The two Ādi Sākhīs manuscripts are dated respectively S. 1791 (A.D. 1734) and S. 1758 (A.D. 1701). See below, p. 32. The Purātan manuscript is dated S. 1814 (A.D. 1757).
majority of the sakhis but also the structure of the conflated product. In all Purātan manuscripts the narrative is distinguished by an ordering of the travel sakhis into four major journeys, one to each of the four cardinal points of the compass, together with a minor journey to a place called Gorakh-haṭarā. This chronology has been retained by the editor and the extra sakhis provided by the Ādi Sākhīs version have been introduced into this Purātan narrative individually or in clusters, at points which seemed appropriate.

Because the Ādi Sākhīs chronology disagrees with the Purātan pattern these supplementary sakhis could not be interpolated in the same order as they appear in their Ādi Sākhīs form. In the case of common sakhis, however, the editor has preferred their readings to that of his Purātan text. Wherever the Purātan and Ādi Sākhīs versions have sakhis in common the conflated Ādi Sākhīs text has normally been used.1 No indication of this is given in the printed text, the only manuscript identifications being occasional footnote references to variant readings. In a few places a passage included in one or more of the manuscripts has been omitted from the published text. An example is the Ādi Sākhīs explanation for Nānak’s decision to visit the pilgrimage-centres.2 The Ādi Sākhīs compiler, following a source used by other janam-sākhī compilers, records a tradition that Nānak’s visit was in quest of a gurū.3 This passage, which should have been attached to the end of sākhī 17 or the beginning of sākhī 24,5 was evidently omitted because the suggestion that Bābā Nānak should ever have sought a gurū is now held to be offensive.

English translations

An English translation of the Colebrooke text is given by Trumpp in his introduction to his The Ādi Granth.6 This rendering is exceedingly stilted and contains numerous inaccuracies. Much of the first volume of Macauliffe’s The Sikh Religion is a paraphrase of the Purātan narrative, but no indication is given of the points at which the author briefly moves away from his principal source.

A list of the sakhīs included in the Purātan janam-sākhīs is given in Appendix 2.7

THE ĀDI SĀKHĪS

At some unspecified date prior to the partition of India in 1947 Dr Mohan Singh Dewana of Punjab University, Lahore, discovered in the Uni-
versity's library a janam-sākhī manuscript which recorded a version different from any of the extant traditions. This collection he named the Ādi Sākhīs, or 'First Collection of Sākhīs'. Mohan Singh did not make a complete copy of the manuscript and efforts to trace it made in early 1969 proved unsuccessful. In the meantime, however, four manuscript copies of the same collection had been located on the Indian side of the border by Professor Piār Singh of Punjabi University, Patiala, and in October 1969 Piār Singh published a printed edition of the text.

The name chosen by Mohan Singh for this collection is misleading, for it implies a precedence which in fact the janam-sākhī does not possess. This is made clear by an analysis of its contents. At least three distinct sources can be recognized, and from the material provided by these sources the compiler of the collection has fashioned a coherent travel itinerary. These are features of a relatively mature janam-sākhī and any theory that the Ādi Sākhīs represent a 'first' collection must be rejected.

The composite nature of the Ādi Sākhīs collection must also prompt a measure of caution in attempting to place the janam-sākhī within any reconstructed sequence of janam-sākhīs. It has, for example, been argued that a reference to Akbar which is repeated in the Miharbān Janam-sākhī indicates that the Ādi Sākhīs is earlier than the Miharbān collection. The portion of the Miharbān Janam-sākhī in which this reference appears claims to be a product of the year S.1707 (A.D. 1650), and because the Akbar reference in the extant Miharbān Janam-sākhī appears to be later than the Ādi Sākhīs version it would seem to follow that the Ādi Sākhīs must antedate the middle of the seventeenth century. In fact, however, both the Ādi Sākhīs and the Miharbān Janam-sākhī in their earliest extant forms are the products of a continuing process of expansion. Whereas on the one hand there can be no doubt that the extant Miharbān Janam-sākhī embodies borrowings from the Ādi Sākhīs, on the other there seems to be little question that the extant Ādi Sākhīs includes reciprocal borrowings from the Miharbān tradition. The Akbar reference appears to be one of the latter, taken not from the extant Miharbān Janam-sākhī but from an earlier recension.

Mohan Singh's information is dispersed over several publications, summarized by Piār Singh in AS, pp. ix-xi. The copyist's name is given as Sibhū (or Śambi) Nāth Brahma and the manuscript's number as PUL 4141.

Failure to locate the manuscript does not necessarily mean that it has been lost. The Gurmukhi manuscripts held by Punjab University, Lahore, are said to be in a condition of total confusion at present. Piār Singh, 'A Critical Survey of Panjabi Prose in the Seventeenth Century' (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, Panjab University, Chandīgarh, 1968), pp. 94-5. AS, Introduction, p. xliii. The AS reference reads: 'ihu sākhī akbar pātisāhu sunī thi.' 'The Emperor Akbar heard this sākhī.' AS, p. 90. The longer Miharbān version reads: 'eh sākhī akbar pātisāh kari sunāi thi. jab gurā arjun lahauri āi miliā tha pātisāh kau.' 'The Emperor Akbar heard this sākhī related. [This happened] when Guru Arjan visited Lahore to meet the Emperor Akbar.' Mih JS II.137.

See below, p. 32. 4 See below, pp. 219-20.

Piār Singh actually carries the date of the Ādi Sākhīs compilation as far back as a period preceding the compilation of the Ādi Granth (A.D. 1603-4), adding to the argument set out above the claim that anything later than this period would have utilized Bhāī Gurdāsa's
This cannot be affirmed in categorical terms, but it does at least demonstrate the perils of seeking to date janam-sākhīs on the basis of isolated references. The only positive assertions which may be regarded as permissible are, first, that the original Ādi Sākhīs collection must have been compiled during the seventeenth century; and secondly, that it incorporates material from earlier sources. The first is a safe assumption because two of the extant manuscripts bear dates corresponding to A.D. 1701 and both are evidently copies of an earlier manuscript.

**Manuscript copies**

The four manuscripts known to exist in Indian Pañjāb are located in the following places:

2. The library of the Mahārājā of Paṭiālā in Motī Bāgh Palace, Paṭiālā.
3. The personal library of Sārdār Shamsher Singh Ashok of Amritsar.
4. Central Public Library, Paṭiālā. MS no. 495.¹

Of these only the first two correspond in arrangement and content to the Lahore collection reported by Mohan Singh. Sārdār Ashok’s manuscript is limited to twenty-five of the thirty sākhis included in the older manuscripts,² and the remaining manuscript records the Ādi Sākhīs anecdotes as part of a much larger collection.³ The undated manuscript held by the Sikh Reference Library lacks its first five folios, but is otherwise complete.⁴ Only one folio is missing from the Motī Bāgh copy. This manuscript is dated S.1758 (A.D. 1701), six months earlier than the Lahore manuscript.⁵ Both manuscripts number their sākhis up to thirty, but both have at different places overlooked a sākhi in the process.⁶ Several of the sākhis are composite and contain two or more separate anecdotes.


³ *AS*, Introduction, pp. xi-xii.

⁴ The pagination begins with the figure 6. This, however, is not the original numbering. The fourth folio of the extant text also bears, in an earlier hand, the number 167. From this it is evident that the manuscript must originally have been part of a larger manuscript and it can be assumed that the Ādi Sākhīs portion must have commenced on folio 159. The extant manuscript concludes with folio 155 of the later numbering.

⁵ *sammat* 1758 māh asūr bādi 13. Mohan Singh reported the date of the Lahore manuscript as *sammat* 1758 poh suṭi 1. *AS*, Introduction, p. xi. Ashok’s manuscript is dated S. 1701 (A.D. 1734) and the Central Public Library manuscript S. 1813 (A.D. 1756). Ibid., pp. xi-xii.

⁶ Sikh Reference Library manuscript no. 5462, f. 35b. *AS*, p. 81.
Printed edition

Piār Singh’s printed edition of the Ādi Sākhīs was issued in 1969 under the title Šambhū Nāth Vālī Janam Patri Bābe Nānak Ji ki prasidh nān Ādi Sākhiān.1 In preparing this edition the editor followed the Motī Bāgh text supplementing it where necessary with the Sikh Reference Library manuscript. Footnotes have been added to indicate variant readings in the texts of the Sikh Reference Library and Ashok manuscripts. A list of the janam-sākhi’s contents as printed in this edition is given in Appendix 3.

THE MIHARBĀN TRADITION

Soqhi Miharban, putative author of the discourses recorded in the Miharban Janam-sākhī, occupies an unenviable position in Sikh annals. His father Prithi Chand, although the eldest son of Gurū Rām Dās, had been passed over as successor to the office of Gurū in favour of his younger brother Arjan. The succession of Arjan did not, however, go unchallenged. Prithi Chand, claiming to be the only legitimate heir, evidently managed to retain the allegiance of a portion of the Sikh community and when he died in 1619 he was succeeded by his son Miharban. The followers of Prithi Chand and his successors were stigmatized MiQas, or unscrupulous rogues, by the adherents of Gurū Arjan’s line and enmity between the two groups persisted until the Miṇā strength eventually dwindled to insignificance during the latter part of the eighteenth century. Miharban himself led the Miṇā sect until his death in 1640, when he was succeeded by his son Hariji. 5

Although there persisted in Sikh tradition a belief that Miharban had written a janam-sākhī it was not until well into the twentieth century that a copy was actually known to exist. In the absence of any text, and on the basis of the prologue to the Gyan-ratanāvali,4 it was assumed that the work of one so notoriously inimical to the established line of Gurūs would certainly be dangerously heretical, and in this assurance the absence of a copy went unmourned. It was only in 1940 that a copy was discovered in the village of Damdama Sāhib. 6

Unfortunately the manuscript found in Damdamā Sāhib covers only the first three sections (pothī, ‘volume’) of the six which constituted the complete janam-sākhī. To this day the three remaining sections are still untraced, except for the portion of the Miharban account of Nānak’s death

1 Published by the editor, Paṭiallā, and printed at the Phulkān Press, Phulkān Mārg, Paṭiallā. Paṭiallā introduction, pp. ix–lii, and text, pp. 1–101. The abbreviation AS used in this study refers to this edition.
2 BG xxvi: 33, xxxvi: 1 ff.
3 GNSR, pp. 18–19. See also the Dabistān reference in PPP 1.1 (April 1967), p. 61.
4 See below, p. 37.
5 GNSR, p. 19. Damdamā Sāhib, also known as Sābo ki Talvānda, is located eighteen miles south of Bhatiāmpā. It acquired the name Damdamā, or ‘resting-place’, in memory of the occasion when in 1705 Gurū Gobind Siṅgh rested there following the Battle of Muktsar.
which appears in the later Bālā tradition. The three sections included in the manuscript are entitled respectively Pothi Sach-khaṇḍ, Pothi Hariji, and Pothi Chatarbhuj. According to the colophon of the first of these the three remaining sections were entitled Kēto Rāi Pothi, Abhai Pad Pothi, and Prem Pad Pothi.

An examination of the extant portion indicates three important conclusions. The first is that if the works of Guru Nanak are to be accepted as the standard of orthodoxy the sect responsible for the Miharbān tradition cannot possibly be branded as heretical. Differences between the teachings Nanak and the theology of the Miharbān sect can certainly be detected, but they represent no more than the shifting of interpretation and emphasis one might expect after a period of one hundred years. The followers of Miharbān must be regarded as loyal perpetuators of the Divine Name theology propounded by Nānak rather than as heretics. Their sin plainly was schism, not heresy.

The second point to be noted is that if the collection of Miharbān discourses is to be classified as a janam-sākhī the definition of that term will require some extension. The so-called Miharbān Janam-sākhī is not simply a collection of hagiographic anecdotes. It does indeed incorporate many such anecdotes, and Pothi Sach-khaṇḍ uses a janam-sākhī variety of travel sequence as a framework for its discourses. The interest of the Miharbān commentators, however, is not primarily in this narrative material. Their chief interest is in exegesis of the works of Nānak and it is for precisely this reason that they must be called commentators rather than narrators. For the same reason the word used to designate its subdivisions is goṣṭ ('discourse'), not sākhī. Anecdotes rarely provide more than settings for the scriptural quotations and exposition which the Miharbān commentators were so concerned to propagate. In Pothi Sach-khaṇḍ this exegetical interest is dominant and in the two succeeding sections it is overwhelming.

The third point to emerge from an examination of the manuscript is that the extant Miharbān text is a late and highly evolved product. According to the Miharbān group's own claim the janam-sākhī represents discourses delivered orally by Miharbān and recorded shortly after his death in 1640. There may well be truth in this claim, but if it is to be allowed it must follow that the extant text does not correspond to the original version. The colophon at the conclusion of the manuscript declares that the actual copying was concluded in S.1885 (A.D. 1828). It is to this early nineteenth-century period rather than to the early seventeenth century that the extant text should be related, for it clearly represents a process of growth requiring much more than a hundred years. This is indicated by the number of discourses it contains, by the enormous length and variety of its scriptural commentary, by interpolations which can only have come

1 MS Recension B of the Bālā tradition. See above, pp. 19, 20.  
2 Mih JS 1.519.  
3 GNSR, p. 21.  
4 Mih JS II.624.  
5 Pothi Sach-khaṇḍ contains 153 discourses, Pothi Hariji has 61, and Pothi Chatarbhuj has 74. The total recorded in all six pothīs is said to have been 575. Mih JS 1.519.
from late eighteenth-century sources, by evidences of earlier Miharbān recensions in other extant janam-sākhīs, and by comparisons of highly developed Miharbān narratives with the more primitive analogues recorded in these other janam-sākhīs. The basic structure of the Miharbān Janam-sākhī and an indeterminate quantity of its material may derive from the first half of the seventeenth century, but the text as it now stands is the composite product of several generations of later commentators. This expansion applies particularly to the scriptural quotations and exegesis which set the Miharbān tradition apart from all other janam-sākhīs.

The distinctive religious concerns expressed throughout the extant Miharbān material suggest that the tradition must have been sustained throughout the eighteenth century by groups (saṅgat) of Sikhs who did not subscribe to the evolving beliefs and discipline of the Khālsā brotherhood. These non-Khālsā saṅgats stand in a direct line leading from the teachings of Nānak through to the so-called saha-dhārī section of the modern Sikh community.1 The followers of Miharbān may be regarded as seventeenth-century representatives of this Nānak-panthī stream and it would be entirely natural for the Miharbān writings, with their strongly religious emphasis, to survive within the eighteenth-century and nineteenth-century continuation of the same stream. The Miharbān following did not, of course, constitute the entire membership of this portion of the wider Sikh community, merely that of its most articulate section. It was also representative of this continuing Nānak-panthī tradition in that it perpetuated Khātri influence, as opposed to the rapidly increasing Jaṭ dominance in the Khālsā.

Within the Khālsā the influence of the Miharbān tradition was negligible except in a purely negative sense and it was ironic that the principal Miharbān manuscript should have been discovered at Damdama Sāhib, a village redolent with Khālsā associations. It is, however, possible that the Miharbān works may have commanded a continuing interest amongst sādhūs of the Udāsī sect and that versions of the Miharbān tradition may have been preserved in their akhārīs.2

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1 The term saha-dhārī is normally translated 'slow-adopter', i.e. one who is moving towards a full acceptance of the Khālsā discipline but who has not yet proceeded further than an acceptance of Nānak's teachings concerning salvation. It is much more likely that the compound should be traced to Nānak's own distinctive usage of the word saha. In the works of Nānak saha is the most popular of several expressions used to designate the condition of ineffable bliss induced by the disciplined practice of nām simaran. GNSR, pp. 224–5. The term saha-dhārī probably assumed this usage and should accordingly be understood to mean 'one who accepts the nām simaran teachings of Nānak', without any reference to the adoption of the Khālsā discipline.

2 The Udāsīs constitute an order of ascetics within the Sikh community. Although they claim as their founder Sīrī Chand, one of Gūrū Nānak's two sons, they are more accurately understood as a continuation within the new community of an earlier ascetic tradition. Nāth influence is plainly evident in some of their customs and beliefs. Their connection with the wider Sikh community is sustained by the reverence which they show towards the Ādi Granth and by close family ties. In theory, and generally in practice, the Udāsīs have been celibate and have relied largely upon the Jaṭ community for recruits. The word akhāra, 'arena', is used to designate their temples and monasteries. See H. A. Rose (ed.). GTC, vol. iii, pp. 479–81; and J. C. Oman, The Mystics, Ascetics, and Saints of India (London, 1903), pp. 194–6.
THE PRINCIPAL JANAM-SĀKHĪS

Manuscript copies

The manuscript discovered at Damdama Sāhib in 1940 was acquired early in the following year by Khalsa College, Amritsar, and lodged in the College's Sikh History Research Department where it bears the number SHR 427.1 This manuscript, as already noted, is dated S.1885 (A.D. 1828) and covers only the first three of the janam-sākhi’s six sections. It is also incomplete in that two small clusters of folios are missing.2 In 1961, however, the College obtained a second Miharban manuscript (SHR 2190). This was no more than a large fragment covering seventy-two discourses of Pothi Sach khaṇḍ, but it did at least supply the two portions missing from the first manuscript. Its text corresponds closely to that of SHR 427. No date is given, but the copyist identifies himself as a Brāhmaṇ Sikh of Gujar Mal Mandi in Lahore City.3

Apart from these two Khalsa College manuscripts no copies of any substantial portion of the Miharban tradition are known to exist. There are, however, other works which were produced by the Miṇās and of these one deserves a brief mention. This is the Miṇā account of Miharban’s own life, a work attributed to his son Hariji and entitled Gosṭān Miharban jī diān (‘Discourses of Miharban’). The work deserves attention because of the light which it casts upon the nature of the Miharban following and their distinctive beliefs. Two manuscript copies are extant, one dated S.1836 (A.D. 1779) held by the Sikh Reference Library in Amritsar, and the other an undated copy in the Central Public Library, Paṭialā.4 The text has not been published.

Printed edition

The text of Pothi Sach-khaṇḍ was published by the Sikh History Research Department of Khalsa College, Amritsar, in 1962 under the title Janam Sākhi Sri Guru Nānak Dev Ji (edited by Kirpal Singh and Shamsher Singh Ashok). This edition follows the text of SHR 427, supplemented where necessary by SHR 2190. The remainder of SHR 427 (Pothi Hariji and Pothi Chatarbhuj) was edited by Parkash Singh and published in 1969 as a second volume under the same title. Both volumes include a series of introductory essays by various contributors.5
THE GYAN-RATANĀVALĪ

Tradition attributes the authorship of the Gyan-ratanavali to Mani Singh, a famous Sikh of the early eighteenth century, executed by Zakaryā Khan of Lahore in 1738.1 A prologue attached to extant copies of the janam-sākhī relates the circumstances of its composition as follows:

The Sikhs once made a request to Bhāi Mani Singh, saying, "The Chhote Mel Vāle2 have in several places introduced errors into the record of the first Master's discourses and life, and as a result of hearing these the Sikhs' faith in the Gurū is declining. Just as milk is adulterated with water and the swan separates the two, so you be our Great Swan and separate the Gurū's swords from those of the Mīnās.' Bhāi Mani Singh replied, 'At the time when the fifth Master established the canon of Sri Granth Śāhī the Sikhs besought him, saying, "There is no authenticated version of the discourses. The PAIṆJ Mel VĀlé3 have all interpolated objectionable things in the janam-sākhī and are leading the Sikhs astray.'" Bhāi Gurdās was instructed to write a janam-sākhī in the form of a vār so that by means of the vār the Gurū's Sikhs might hear and read the record [of the Gurū's life]. Bhāi Gurdās's vār, that treasury of wisdom,4 is a janam-sākhī. The Sikhs then said, 'He has written [simply] the record. Please give us an expanded commentary on it so that faith may grow in the Sikhs who hear it.' Bhāi Mani Singh replied, 'Just as an ant cannot lift an elephant's burden and a turtle cannot raise Mount Mandar, so I am unable to prepare a commentary on the discourses of Bābā [Nānak]. But just as swimmers fix reeds in the river so that those who do not know the way may also cross, so I shall take Bhāi Gurdās's vār as my basis and in accordance with it, and with the accounts which I have heard at the court of the tenth Master, I shall relate to you whatever commentary issues from my humble mind.’5

This passage is certainly important in so far as it testifies to the early eighteenth-century influence of the Mīnās (the Chhote Mel Vāle) and to Khālsā hostility towards them. It may even be essentially accurate as an explanation for an original eighteenth-century Gyan-ratanāvalī.6 The professed connection with Mani Singh is, however, open to serious doubt and so too is the alleged period of composition. No eighteenth-century text


2 Lit. 'the lower congregation', a term which could be applied to any heretics or dissenters but which came to be attached specifically to the Mīnās. MK, p. 603. See above, p. 33.
3 The five execrated groups whom Khālsā Sikhs, in accordance with their baptismal oath, must spurn. These include the Mīnās. MK, pp. 593–4. The usage in this context is anachronistic as the term dates from the seventeenth or early eighteenth century.
4 GYAN (jīhān): knowledge, wisdom. Ratanāvalī: a string of pearls or necklace of gems.
5 GR, pp. 3–4. For Bhāi Gurdās see below, pp. 43–5.
6 Although the prologue refers to Bhāi Gurdās's vār as the Gyan-ratanāvalī the title is more commonly applied to the janam-sākhī attributed to Mani Singh. The vār in question is Bhāi Gurdās's first. The Bhagat-ratanāvalī, or Sikkhān di Bhagat-māl, a work based on Bhāi Gurdās's eleventh vār, is also attributed to Mani Singh.
appears to have survived. All we have are lengthy nineteenth-century products which incorporate substantial quantities of extraneous material, much of it plainly derived from Bālā sources. In addition to numerous anecdotes this supplementary material also includes commentaries on Āśā di Vār, Gurū Nānak's jāpi, and his Siddha Goṣṭ.

The evidence provided by extant texts suggests the following pattern. At some indeterminate date an amplified version of Bhāi Gurdās's first vār was produced. This, in its original form, probably comprised no more than the actual stanzas of the vār, with a comparatively brief paraphrase in each instance. Most stanzas were quoted individually, each with its corresponding paraphrase. Whenever a particular anecdote extended over more than one stanza, however, the relevant stanzas would be cited together and followed by a single paraphrase. The result would have been a brief janam-sākhī incorporating Bhāi Gurdās's limited selection of anecdotes together with his preliminary description of the darkness preceding the light of Nānak and also his summary treatment of Gurū Nānak's immediate successors.

This nucleus must have been a brief work, its contents apparently limited to quotation of the successive stanzas of Vār 1 and simple paraphrases of these stanzas. To it have been added materials drawn from all available sources. The original stanzas and paraphrases are still easily identifiable in most instances, but inserted between them one now finds a vast fund of supplementary anecdotes and commentary. This interpolated material is so substantial that the late nineteenth-century version of the Gyān-ratanāvali rivals its Bālā contemporary in length.

The additions which have so impressively enlarged the Gyān-ratanāvali cannot have been the work of a single interpolator. This is made clear by a division within the nineteenth-century collection. While covering the Gurū's early life and a period of travels which takes him to eastern and southern India the modern Gyān-ratanāvali is relatively coherent. Parts of it are, moreover, distinctively different from the analogues provided by the other major janam-sākhī traditions. Instances occur of borrowings from the Bālā tradition, but most nineteenth-century texts omit the person of Bhāi Bālā from this first section. It is the introduction of Bhāi Bālā which marks the line of division between the two sections. Some clusters of anecdotes continue to ignore him and these retain the essential consistency of the first section. On the whole, however, this latter portion of the modern Gyān-ratanāvali resembles the disordered Bālā pattern and lengthy passages represent direct borrowings from the Bālā tradition.

One other element remains to be noted. At some stage in this growth process an explanatory prologue (quoted above) and epilogue were added. Like the supplementary anecdotes these two passages refer to Mani Singh in the third person and thus cannot be attributed to him personally. It seems likely that they were appended at a comparatively early date, before the introduction of significant interpolation, and that they provide a correspondingly early stage in the evolution of the bulky product which

1 GR, p. 264. For further details see GNSR, pp. 26–7.
we now possess.¹ The final stage was reached when the heterogeneous result was lithographed at the end of the nineteenth century.

**Manuscript copies**

The only important collection of *Gyān-ratanāvali* manuscripts consists of three copies in the possession of Professor Pritam Singh of Amritsar, all of them complete and all dated. One bears the date S.1778 (A.D. 1721) which, if correct, would firmly place the *Gyān-ratanāvali* in the first two decades of the eighteenth century. It is, however, evident both from the modernity of the manuscript’s language and from its actual contents that the date must be incorrect.² The two remaining manuscripts are dated S.1883 (A.D. 1826) and S.1927 (A.D. 1870). In addition to these three copies Shamsher Singh Ashok lists four undated manuscripts, two of them substantially complete and two incomplete.³ Two more are held by the Sikh History Research Department of Khalsa College, Amritsar, both of them complete and both dated.⁴

**Printed editions**

At least three editions of the amplified *Gyān-ratanāvali* text have been lithographed. One was published in 1891 by Charag Din and Saraj Din of Lahore; a second was published by the Sanskrit Book Depot of Lahore in 1892;⁵ and a third was issued by Gulab Singh and Sons, also of Lahore, in 1908.⁶

**THE MAHĪMĀ PRAKĀŚ TRADITION**

Internal evidence suggests that most of the important janam-sākhī traditions evolved in areas to the north and north-west of Lahore. The Bālā tradition may perhaps be an exception to this rule, but this has not yet been established. The only proven exception is the Mahīmā Prakāś. This version of the life of Nānak represents a tradition which developed in Khādūr, a village south-east of Amritsar on the right bank of the Beās river. It was here that Guru Angad lived during his years as leader of the Sikh community (1539–52). Two centuries later the same village produced

² For examples see *PHLS* ii. 243.
³ *PHLS* ii. 240–5.
⁶ The abbreviation *GR* used in this study refers to the first of these. The book is now very difficult to procure. The British Library and the India Office Library each possess a copy.
its own distinctive janam-sākhi tradition, the Mahimā Prakāś or ‘Light of Glory’.

Although two janam-sākhis bearing the title Mahimā Prakāś now exist only one of these strictly qualifies as a separate and distinct janam-sākhi tradition. This is the collection of sākhis known as the Mahimā Prakāś Vāratak, or ‘Mahimā Prakāś in Prose’. Unlike its predecessors this tradition does not deal exclusively with Nānak anecdotes, traversing instead the lives of all ten Gurus and treating each of them relatively briefly. The first Gurū naturally receives special attention and the portion covering his life can be detached to form a complete janam-sākhi. It is, however, an unusually brief one, omitting many of the well-established anecdotes one might otherwise expect in an eighteenth-century collection. In the actual selection of anecdotes a primary criterion has obviously been the reputation of Khaḍūr. No reference to the village from earlier tradition appears to have been overlooked and some extra anecdotes relating to it have been added.

The second of the janam-sākhis bearing the Mahimā Prakāś title is the so-called Mahimā Prakāś Kavitā, or ‘Mahimā Prakāś in Verse’. Apart from the actual title and the fact that both were evidently compiled in Khaḍūr there is little to suggest any close connection between the two janam-sākhis. The third of the Kavitā sākhis corresponds to one which first appears in the Mahimā Prakāś Vāratak, but thereafter the Kavitā version follows a pattern which indicates a variety of sources. Sākhis found only in the Vāratak collection are ignored and at two critical points (the dates of Nānak’s birth and death) the two versions directly contradict each other.

The Mahimā Prakāś Kavitā in its extant form evidently represents the product of two distinct phases. The first was the composition of a metrical janam-sākhi, based upon earlier narrative janam-sākhis and probably the oral tradition of Khaḍūr. This first stage, representing the authentic Mahimā Prakāś Kavitā, has subsequently been augmented by later borrowings from other janam-sākhis and from apocryphal works attributed to Gurū Nānak. In some instances these prose borrowings have been interspersed within particular sākhis between sections of the original verse. Elsewhere they have been incorporated as complete prose sākhis. Particularly obvious are extensive borrowings from a Miharbān source, complete with the exegetical supplements so characteristic of the Miharbān tradition.

The metrical portion of the Mahimā Prakāś Kavitā presents no apparent problems of authorship or dating. The author gives his name as Sarāp Dās and specifies S.1833 (A.D. 1776) as the year in which he composed his poetic account in Khaḍūr. In the case of the Mahimā Prakāś Vāratak, however, the extant text provides no information. The author is variously known in modern works as Kirpal Singh Bhalla and Kirpal Dās Bhalla; and the date of composition as either S.1798 (A.D. 1741) or S.1830

1 GNM, pp. 7–8. SLTGN(Pb), p. 32.
2 GNM, pp. 5; 347. SLTGN(Pb), pp. 32, 46.
THE PRINCIPAL JANAM-SÄKHIS

(A.D. 1773). Either date is possible. An earlier date is unlikely and any date more than two years later would appear to be impossible.¹

Manuscript copies

Manuscript copies of both Mahimä Prakâś versions are surprisingly scarce. Only four Mahimä Prakâś Vâratak manuscripts are said to exist, and it is possible that the actual number is even smaller. One manuscript is (or was) in the library of the Languages Department of the Pañjâb in Pañiâl.² A second is in the personal library of the late Bhâi Vir Singh, now housed in Dehra Dûn; and a third is held by the Sikh History Research Department of Khalsa College, Amritsar.³ The fourth is reported to have been in the Punjab Public Library, Lahore. The third of these manuscripts is a copy of the second, made in 1932. The second is itself a recent product, having been copied only four years earlier.⁴

Manuscript copies of the Mahimä Prakâś Kavita are more numerous. Eight such copies are known to be extant.⁵ Those which are dated range in age from S.1857 (A.D. 1800) to S.1897 (A.D. 1840).

Printed editions

A text of the portion of the Mahimä Prakâś Vâratak which deals with Gurû Nânak has been printed in Sources on the Life and Teachings of Guru Nânak, together with an annotated English translation.⁶ This text follows the Khalsa College manuscript SHR 2308 noted above. An earlier edition of the same text which was privately printed in Dehra Dûn in 1959 is now out of print.⁷ A list of the Nanak anecdotes included in the Mahimä Prakâś Vâratak is given in Appendix 5.

A complete text of the Mahimä Prakâś Kavita was published in two volumes by the Languages Department of the Pañjâb in 1970–1.⁸ The first of the volumes, issued under the title Gurû Nânak Mahimä, covers

¹ For a more detailed discussion of the authorship and dating of the two versions, together with citations, see W. H. McLeod, introduction to an English translation of the Mahimä Prakâś Vâratak, in SLTGN(Eng), pp. 55–7.
² Efforts made to trace it in 1969 were unsuccessful.
⁴ MS no. SHR 2308, f. 129a. The copyist, Akâlî Kaur Singh, evidently left no information concerning the location of the manuscript which he used.
⁵ MS no. SHR 2308, f. 129a. The copyist, Akâlî Kaur Singh, evidently left no information concerning the location of the manuscript which he used.
⁶ SLTGN(PBi), pp. 32–46. SLTGN(Eng), pp. 59–87.
⁸ Sarotp Dâs Bhallâl (ed. Shamasher Singh Ashok and Gobind Singh Lâmbâ), Gurû Nânak Mahimä (Pañiâl, 1970), and Mahimä Prakâś (Pañiâl, 1971). The abbreviation GNM refers to the first of these.
the portion which concerns the life of Nanak. The second volume, misleadingly entitled simply Mahimā Prakāṣ, contains a brief introduction by one of the editors and the portion dealing with the nine remaining Gurūs. The manuscript held by the Languages Department has been followed in the preparation of this text, with supplements and amendments drawn from three other manuscripts.¹

**INDIVIDUAL JANAM-SĀKHĪS**

Two important janam-sākhis which have not produced distinctive traditions are the manuscripts which for convenience will be referred to as LDP 194 and B40. (In both cases the titles are library catalogue numbers.) Both are closely related to other traditions, notably to the Purātan and Ādi Sākhīs collections, but not to the point of justifying inclusion within either of them.

**LDP 194** The abbreviation LDP 194 designates manuscript no. 194 in the library of the Languages Department of the Punjab, Patiala. At first sight it may appear that the manuscript is an early recension of the Colebrooke and Ĥāfizābād janam-sākhīs, and that it should accordingly be in the Purātan group. This would be misleading. Although the manuscript certainly stands within a line of descent leading to the Ĥāfizābād janam-sākhī, it is the line which accounts only for the extra material added by the Ĥāfizābād compiler to the Colebrooke nucleus. Later it will be shown how an early tradition (designated Narrative I) divided into two streams (Narrative Ia and Narrative Ib). The first of these leads directly to the Colebrooke version and accounts both for the distinctive structure of the Purātan narrative and also for almost all of its material. To this Colebrooke version the Ĥāfizābād compiler added two anecdotes and a discourse drawn from a Narrative Ib source.²

It is to this second stream that LDP 194 belongs, and as this was no more than a supplementary source for the Purātan tradition it would be misleading to bracket the manuscript with the Colebrooke and Ĥāfizābād janam-sākhīs in a common tradition. The link connecting it with the Purātan tradition is plain, but so too is its distinction from the main line of Purātan development. This same Narrative Ib tradition also contributes directly to the Ādi Sākhīs and B40 compilations, and less directly to the Mīhārbān collection.³

The LDP 194 manuscript is in poor condition. Several leaves are missing, some of the folios have been bound out of order, and having reached the figure 100 the pagination reverts to 43 in the middle of a sākhī. It is, however, easily read. The script, although very immature, is unusually clear. The manuscript bears no date.

The actual text of the manuscript consists of two principal elements. The first portion is narrative, and although it is not regularly divided into

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¹ LDP MS no. 176, supplemented by the SRL, Panjab Archives, and Khalsa College MSS.
² See above, p. 25.
³ See below, p. 195.
The Principal Janam-sakhīs

sakhīs a total of twenty can be distinguished. These are listed in Appendix 4. The second portion comprises extended quotations from the works of Nānak, notably the Siddh Gosī and Vār Āsā. The Siddh Gosī begins on folio 56a of the second set of folios. The text briefly reverts to narrative with the Achal discourse on folio 77b and then continues its scriptural quotation through to folio 117b. A few folios of scriptural quotation in a different hand conclude the manuscript.

The B40 Janam-sakhī The B40 manuscript (so called because of the number which it bears in the India Office Library catalogue) is perhaps the most important of all extant janam-sakhīs. This reputation it deserves partly because of the quality of its illustrations; partly because of the unusually specific information which is provided concerning its origins; but chiefly because it is of all janam-sakhīs the most representative in terms of content. It is, like all janam-sakhīs, a composite product. The range of sources and styles, however, is superior to that of any other collection. Oral and written sources have both been used by its compiler and from these sources he has drawn examples of all the major forms to be found in the janam-sakhī literature.

Two notes appended to the text describe the genesis of the B40 Janam-sakhī.1 It was commissioned, the scribe informs us, by a certain Bhāi Sangū Mal, ‘servant of the congregation’. The copyist identifies himself as Dayā Rām Abrol and his artist colleague as Ālam Chand Rāj. The work was completed in S.1790 on a date corresponding to 31 August 1733. In 1907 the manuscript was acquired from Lahore for the India Office Library.

An edition of the Gurmukhī text of the B40 Janam-sakhī was published in 1974 by Professor Piār Singh under the title Janam Sakhī Sri Gurū Nānak Dev Ji. To this has since been added an English translation by W. H. McLeod entitled The B40 Janam-sakhī. Its contents are listed below on pp. 230–2.

Miscellaneous Works Closely Related to the Janam-Sakhīs

In view of their enormous and sustained popularity it is scarcely surprising that the janam-sakhīs should have stimulated an affiliated literature, most of it appearing in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Four representatives of this literature will be briefly noted. Reference must also be made to a related work composed during the early seventeenth century. This latter is the first of a collection of thirty-nine vārs by the distinguished Sikh poet Bhāi Gurdās, a collection which possesses a considerable importance for any understanding of the early Sikh community.

Vār 1 of Bhāi Gurdās Bhāi Gurdās Bhallā has three major claims to fame in the history of the Sikh community. The first of these is that he

1 B40, ff. 84b, 230a–231a.
was a nephew of the third Gurū, Amar Dās. Secondly, he was the amanuensis employed by Gurū Arjan to record the contents of the Ādi Granth during its compilation in 1603-4. Thirdly he was himself the author of thirty-nine poetic works written in the vār form, and of 556 others composed in the kābīt form. Although none of these works was included in the Ādi Granth the vārs came to be regarded as ‘the key to the Gurū Granth Sāhib’ and the compositions of Bhāi Gurdās are specifically approved for recitation in Sikh gurdwaras. His date of birth is unknown, but his death is said to have occurred in 1637.1

Although Bhāi Gurdās’s first vār is not strictly speaking a janam-sākhī no survey of the janam-sākhīs would be complete without reference to it. The vār differs from the standard janam-sākhī form in two respects. First, it uses a poetic form instead of the narrative of the janam-sākhīs; and secondly its primary intention is to eulogize the unique status and power of the Gurū. These are, however, only marginal differences. In order to fulfil his intention, Bhāi Gurdās has used anecdotes of precisely the same kind as those of the janam-sākhīs, all of them to be found at various points in different janam-sākhīs. A loose definition of the janam-sākhī would certainly embrace the relevant portion of Bhāi Gurdās’s first vār (stanzas 23-45). To this portion should be added stanzas 13–14 of the eleventh vār, a passage in which Bhāi Gurdās lists the more prominent of Bābā Nānak’s followers. The standard printed edition is that of Hazārā Singh.2 An English translation is given in Sources on the Life and Teachings of Guru Nanak.3

Because of its relatively early date Bhāi Gurdās’s contribution is of notable importance, and its value is enhanced by the personal links which connected the author to the line of Gurūs descended from Amar Dās. Its importance must not, however, be exaggerated. Bhāi Gurdās’s Vār I has commonly been read as a historical account of the Gurū’s life and a strong insistence has been laid upon an obligation to accept all that he writes as literally true. This scarcely does justice to Bhāi Gurdās’s method and understanding. His purpose was to magnify the Gurū’s greatness, a task which he performs with notable success. In early seventeenth-century Pañjāb there was no reason why his panegyric should have been written with scrupulous concern for the canons of later historical scholarship. It was the myth that mattered and, as already indicated in the discussion of the purpose of the janam-sākhīs,4 legend and history were alike legitimate ingredients.

The point deserves to be stressed in this context because the defence of the historical reliability of the janam-sākhīs generally takes its stand upon an assumed inerrancy of the works of Bhāi Gurdās. To deny this inerrancy as far as strictly historical information is concerned is not to suggest that

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3 SLTGN(Eng), pp. 32–44.
4 See above, pp. 8–10.
Bhai Gurdas was dishonest or even credulous. Bhai Gurdas relates various miraculous occurrences,\(^1\) sets a discourse with the long-deceased Gorakhnath on the legendary mountain of Sumeru,\(^2\) and attaches to Baba Nānak an anecdote which had already been extensively used in earlier Sufi hagiography.\(^3\) None of these elements destroys the value of what Bhai Gurdas has written, provided only that the nature of that value is understood. His approach and his understanding were not those of a twentieth-century historian, nor were they inferior. It is merely that he pursued a different understanding of the nature of truth, the truth which myth seeks to express and for which it may utilize legend as well as history. For those who believe in the divine inspiration of Guru Nānak Bhai Gurdas’s words are eternally true, regardless of what use he may make of legendary material. To read him as a chronicler of literal historical facts is to misunderstand him.

None of the vārs of Bhai Gurdas are dated and the only statement which may be made with any assurance is that they must have been written before 1637. The fact that he obviously had before him a janam-sākhī model\(^4\) suggests a date close to 1637 rather than earlier in the seventeenth century, but falls far short of proof. A list of the anecdotes utilized in the composition of his Nānak stanzas is given in Appendix 5.

The Nānak Prakāś of Santokh Singh Santokh Singh’s Nānak Prakāś was completed in 1823 and since that date has exercised a considerable influence upon the popular understanding of the life of Gurū Nānak.\(^5\) It is of interest for two reasons. First, it did much to strengthen a Bālā dominance which by the beginning of the nineteenth century was already well established. Confronted by the Hindāli content of the extant Bālā manuscripts Santokh Singh decided that these manuscripts must represent a corrupted version of an original janam-sākhī delivered before Gurū Aṅgad. The original version had, he believed, been corrupted simply by means of interpolation and he accordingly concluded that an authentic text could be restored by excising the recognizably Hindāli portions of the janam-sākhī. This he did and the first section of his Nānak Prakāś (the pūrabāradh section) was based upon the remainder.

The Nānak Prakāś is also of interest for the extensive additions which it makes to the Bālā tradition as Santokh Singh had received it. Three supplementary sources are of particular importance. First, there is the Purātan tradition. This appears in such distinctively Colebrooke anecdotes as ‘Dūnī Chand and the Wolf’ and ‘The Kashmirī Paṇḍit’.\(^6\) Secondly, there was the B40 Janam-sākhī or a source very close to it. The B40 janam-sākhī is itself an amalgam drawn from several sources, one of them an oral tradition (designated Narrative III) which is peculiar to B40.\(^7\)

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1. BG I:31, 32, 36, 41.
2. BG I:44. See below, pp. 118–20.
3. See below, p. 204.
4. The correct title of the work is Gur Nānak Prakāś. The shortened form is, however, almost invariably used. For a brief account of Santokh Singh’s life see Macauliffe, i. lxvi–vii.
5. NPr II.4, 14. See also II.15, 20, 21, 25.
Most of the *Narrative III* anecdotes recorded in the *Bāṇaṃ Janam-sākhī* reappear in the *Nānak Prakhāi*. Thirdly, there are numerous details together with a few complete anecdotes which have no antecedents in extant janam-sākhīs. Much of this material was presumably derived by Santokh Singh from current oral tradition. These three supplementary sources together contribute the bulk of the anecdotes recorded in the second of the two sections in the *Nānak Prakhāi* (the *uttarāradha* section).

Like the *vaṃs* of Bhai Gurdās the *Nānak Prakhāi* is in verse, but in both form and intention it comes much closer to the standard narrative janam-sākhī. Although the form is clearly intended to be poetic the product offers constant reminders of its prose origins. A charitable judgement might describe it as narrative poetry, with the qualification that its merits are essentially narrative rather than poetic. Today even its narrative qualities are difficult to appreciate, for Santokh Singh’s crabbed mixture of Pāṣjābī and Sanskritized Hindi is far removed from the simple language of the janam-sākhīs.

Even more important in terms of its subsequent influence was the lengthy sequel to the *Nānak Prakhāi*, a work entitled *Gur Pratāp Sūray* and popularly referred to as the *Sūraj Prakhāi*. This substantial composition, completed in 1844, covers the lives of Nānak’s nine successors. Whereas the *Nānak Prakhāi* stands as one of several janam-sākhīs the *Sūraj Prakhāi* commonly stands alone, and references by modern authors to incidents in the lives of the Gurūs can often be traced no further than statements by Santokh Singh. This is particularly true of the eight Gurūs between Nānak and Gobind Singh. An edited text of both the *Nānak Prakhāi* and *Sūraj Prakhāi* was published in fourteen volumes by Vir Singh between 1927 and 1935, and is still in print.

The *Nānak Prakhāi* is divided into two parts, the *purabāradha* and the *uttarāradha*. In footnote citations these will be designated by the roman figures I and II respectively. Sections of each part (*adhyāya*) will be indicated by arabic numerals without parentheses, and for individual stanzas within an *adhyāya* arabic numerals within parentheses will be used. The actual title of the work will be represented by the abbreviation *NPr*.

The *Nānak Vijay* of Sant Ren Sant Ren’s *Nānak Vijay*, or *Śrī Gurū Nānak Dig Vijay* is another nineteenth-century contribution to the hagiographic literature concerning Gurū Nānak. Its importance has been slight and it warrants mention here only because the author has sometimes been represented as a contemporary of Nānak. This misunderstanding has evidently arisen because the leader of a group of sādhūs figuring in the *Bāla* anecdote entitled ‘The Good Bargain’ is also named Sant Ren. The

1 *NPr* II.12, 13, 14, 40, 44. Also II.11, 38.
account of Bābā Nānak which it offers is, as one would expect, another amplified version of the Bālā tradition.1

The Sūchak Prasāṅg Gūrū ḳā attributed to Bhai Bahlo Bahlo is said to have been an early Sikh who died in the month of Chet, S. 1660 (A.D. 1603).2 If the composition entitled Sūchak Prasāṅg Gūrū ḳā were in fact the work of such a person it would rank as the earliest of all extant accounts of the life of Nānak. It is, however, another Bālā-based nineteenth-century product. This is evident both from the modernity of its language and from its contents.

The Sūchak Prasāṅg Gūrū ḳā differs from its nineteenth-century contemporaries in that it offers an epitome of the Bālā tradition instead of an expanded version, compressing a remarkable amount into a very brief space. Although the section dealing with Gūrū Nānak consists of only thirty-eight couplets the author manages to mention more than fifty janam-sākhī anecdotes. Occasionally an anecdote receives more than one couplet, but normally each is limited to a single line or half a line. The terseness of the style is well illustrated by couplet 24:

\[\text{ali yār nūn bālī bahnāyā bimal jot nūn sūdhū karāyā}\\ \text{māṇak chand kābal bich tārā bāl gudāī ūlle bārā}\]

Ali Yār he made a saint; Bimal Jot he cleansed.
Māṇak Chand he redeemed in Kabūl; and Bāl gündāī in Tīllā.

This may be compared with a Bālā version similar to the source which the author has obviously used. In the India Office Library manuscript Panj. B41 the portion so summarily expressed in this couplet covers eleven folios.4

The only extant copy of the work is a manuscript in the possession of Dr. Gaṇḍā Singh of Paṭialā. This bears the date S. 1907 (A.D. 1850).5 The text of the portion which concerns Gūrū Nānak has been published in Sources on the Life and Teachings of Guru Nanak.6

Vir Singh’s Sri Gūrū Nānak Chamatkār. Bhai Vir Singh’s two-volume work Sri Gūrū Nānak Chamatkār is of interest as a singularly attractive twentieth-century representative of the continuing janam-sākhī form.7

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2 PHLŚ i. 361. *SLTGN(Pbi)*, p. 27.
3 PHLŚ i. 361. The text is inscribed upon account books (vahi) of the kind used by shopkeepers.
4 B41, ff. 187a–198a.
Just as Santokh Singh and others rewrote the received Bālā tradition so in like manner Vir Singh produced in contemporary language an augmented version of the Purātan tradition. Vir Singh was an unusually gifted Panjabi writer and his Sri Gūrū Nānak Chamatkār can be regarded, in terms of language and style, as the climax of janam-sākhī development.
THE LANGUAGE OF THE JANAM-SĀKHĪS

Grierson, when dealing with the language of the janam-sākhīs, is both brief and confusing. In the primary definition given in The Linguistic Survey of India he declares: 'The celebrated Janam-Sakhi (a life of Nanak) is in Lahnda, not in Panjabi.' Elsewhere he contradicts this statement. In an earlier volume, having claimed that 'Lahnda ... contains no prose literature', he adds the footnote: 'The Janam Sakhi, a well known Sikh book, is written in a dialect which is half Panjabi and half Lahnda.'

The contradiction is of less importance than might appear. It would be of importance only if Grierson's rigorous distinction between Pañjābī and Lahndā as two separate languages could be sustained. The line which, with due caution, he drew at 74° E. to distinguish the 'Indo-Aryan' Pañjābī from the 'Dardic' Lahndā is meaningful only as a convenient division between two groups of Pañjābī dialects. Although the language group which he labelled Lahndā provides a viable linguistic unit, it must be regarded as a segment of the larger Pañjābī group, not as a separate language. The line which he drew amounts to no more than a convenience. There is, as Grierson well understood, a substantial area within which the Lahndā dialects merge into Mājhī and others of the eastern group.

Once the essential vagueness of this distinction is recognized it becomes possible to accept an adapted form of Grierson's second definition. Most of the janam-sākhīs are written in varying blends of Pañjābī dialects, to which some exotic elements have also been added. In most instances Lahndā is dominant. Two notable exceptions are the Mahimī Prakījb Viiratak, in which Mājhī strongly predominates, and the Miharbān Janam-sākhi which generally uses Sādhukkaṛī. Partial exceptions also occur in the case of the B40 and Ādi Sākhīs collections. A variety of sources have been used in the preparation of both, and because at least one of these sources happened to be in Sādhukkaṛī a small number of sakhīs in that language appear in both janam-sākhīs. This feature is more prominent in the Ādi Sākhīs than in the B40 Janam-sākhi.

The Lahndā group of Pañjābī dialects has been variously subdivided. Grierson's classification was based upon a primary distinction between a large southern segment and a smaller northern group, the line being drawn

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3 Ibid., vol. i, part i (Calcutta, 1927), p. 136.
4 Ibid. ix.i.608.
a little to the south of Jhelum. The northern group was further divided into north-eastern and north-western groups, and all three sections were then subdivided according to Grierson's understanding of their dialects. Most of the area covered by the districts of Gujrat, Gujranwala, and Lahore he classified as 'Panjabi merging into Lahnda'.¹

Provided that the extreme vagueness of such definitions is given due stress this classification can be generally accepted. It is, however, convenient to ignore Grierson's subdivision of Northern Lahnda and to lay greater stress upon his principal subdivision of Southern Lahnda. In the case of the latter he drew an east–west line a little to the north of 30°N. This line deserves rather more prominence, and if with the usual insistence upon a necessary vagueness of definition it is given this prominence a threefold division emerges. In the north there is Northern Lahnda, with the Poṭhohāri dialect occupying a position of particular prominence; and in the south the dialects of Multān, Muzzafargarh, Bahāwalpur, and Derā Ghāzī Khān. This leaves Central Lahnda covering the area of Mīānwālī, Shāhpur, Lyallpur, Montgomery, Jhaṅg and Maṅkerā.

The eastern portion of this central area must be closely linked with the immediately adjacent areas of Gujrat, Gujranwālā, and Lahore. This link enables us to circumscribe the geographical area and the distinctive dialect which dominates the janam-sākhī literature. To this linguistic area belong the Purātana, LDP 194, and Bālā janam-sākhīs, and the greater part of the B40 and Ādi Sākhīs collections.² LDP 194 and the Bālā janam-sākhīs are generally more homogeneous in terms of language forms, and in the case of the latter the language is more modern. The other three collections, all of them using a variety of sources, display a greater diversity of dialect forms. Of the exotic elements the more prominent are Persian and Braj.

The principal exception to this general rule is the Miharbān Janam-sākhī which for most of its material uses the language variously called Sādhukkārī or Sant Bhāṣā, 'the language of the Sants'. This language consists of a Khāṛi Boli base, supplemented by elements drawn from Braj and other North Indian vernaculars. It served as a lingua franca for devotional works of the Sant tradition, a religious movement which spread over much of Northern India during the late medieval and early modern period.³ Representatives of this tradition commonly took the Khāṛi Boli of the Delhi area as their foundation and added to it vocabulary and supplementary grammatical forms derived from their own geographical areas. In the case of its Ādi Granth and janam-sākhī examples the supplement is, predictably, provided by Paṅjābī dialects. This supplement is frequently insignificant to the point that the resultant language might well be described simply as Khāṛi Boli.

Passages written in Sādhukkārī occur in both the Ādi Sākhīs and the

¹ Ibid. viii.i.233 ff., and ix.i.607 ff.
² All five display the terminal forms which constitute the most distinctive feature of Lahnda. The most prominent are the verb-endings usu (Perfective) and si (Future). Gurcharan Singh et al., Paṅjābī sāhit dā titḥās (madh kāl), section 5 (Paṅjābī gadd), pp. 20–8.
³ GNSR, pp. 151–8.
The Language of the Janam-Sākhīs

B40 Janam-sākhī. Such passages are normally confined to particular sākhīs and are of considerable help in identifying changes of source within both janam-sākhīs. This may be illustrated by three consecutive sākhīs from the Ādi Sākhīs collection. The brief narrative portion of sākhī 25 runs as follows:

tā phiri gurū horu sāgu kitā. bākī diā sikhā de vāsate. sūrīa age lītā. dui kute nālī lite. lahi chhurā badhā. je koī sā so sabh bhaji gae. koī ḥhahārāi na sakīu. tā sabh lage ākhāni nānak bhalā fakhir sā par devānā hūā. bhalā fakhir kāmal daraves sā. paru devānā hūā. dhānakau raliā. tā bābe sīrī rāg vichi sabadu kitā . . . 1

This is unmistakably Paṇjābī, and so too is the even briefer narrative portion of sākhī 26. There is, however, a hint of difference. The passage is in fact an editorial link connecting sākhīs 25 and 27:

jab ehu goṣṭi kari chuke tab gorakh nāth bābe no kahīā nānak tā pūrā purakh hai paru jug de āhu. tab bābā nānak bolāa . . . 2

In sākhī 27 the compiler, having changed his source, abandons the Paṇjābī of the earlier source.

bābe nānak kau udāsi jo upaji chak te chaliā jātā thā. dekhāi tā eku bāgu hai udiān ke bikhai . . . 3

This is not unadulterated Khaṛī Boli but certainly it is much closer to Khaṛī Boli than to the Paṇjābī of the preceding sākhīs. It is Śaḍhukkaṛī of the kind so commonly found in the Ādi Granth and in the non-Paṇjābī portions of the janam-sākhīs. Even within a passage as brief as this one both the Khaṛī Boli base and Paṇjābī supplement are evident.4

In the Ādi Sākhīs Śaḍhukkaṛī is subordinate to Paṇjābī, and in the B40 Janam-sākhī this same relationship is even more pronounced. Within the extant Mīharbān Janam-sākhī, however, the balance moves strongly in the opposite direction. Although Paṇjābī passages do occur, and although the Mīharbān Śaḍhukkaṛī betrays ample evidence of Paṇjābī influence, the language of the Mīharbān Janam-sākhī must nevertheless be distinguished from the Paṇjābī which, with varying blends of dialect, dominates all other janam-sākhīs. It is a distinction which corresponds to the fundamental difference separating the Mīharbān tradition from the remainder of the janam-sākhī literature. Whereas the other janam-sākhīs are primarily concerned with popular narrative the Mīharbān tradition is much more interested in religious discourse. Paṇjābī was the natural language for the former and Śaḍhukkaṛī the appropriate language for the latter. In addition to its Paṇjābī contribution the Mīharbān language also includes elements derived from Braj.

The linguistic difference which distinguishes the Mīharbān tradition

1 AS, p. 84. The remainder of the sākhī consists of a recitation of the shabad Sīrī Rāg 29.
2 AS, pp. 84–5. The remainder of the sākhī consists of a recitation of five stanzas of the Japī Sāhib.
3 AS, p. 86.
4 For a more detailed examination of the B40 language see the introduction to B40(Eng).
from all other janam-sākhīs has been considerably obscured by a consistent use of the Gurmukhi script. Although the distinction between Pañjābī language and the Gurmukhi script is now clearly understood there still persists a tendency to assume that Gurmukhi is used only for Pañjābī. The Miharbān Janam-sākhī provides an important example of the fallacy of this assumption. The same regular use of the Gurmukhi script is shared by all janam-sākhī traditions, regardless of their linguistic content.
SECTION II
THE ORIGINS AND GROWTH OF THE JANAM-SĀKHĪ TRADITIONS

The ultimate origin of all the janam-sākhī traditions is the person of Nānak or, to be more precise, an interpretation of that person. Nānak had recast a particular range of popular religious doctrine in a uniquely coherent form, expressing it in poetry of a compelling directness and beauty. It was natural that such qualities should attract disciples, and those who in this manner gathered around their chosen teacher during the early decades of the sixteenth century constituted the nucleus of the Nānak-panth, 'the community of those owing allegiance to Nānak'. These were the first Sikhs, a word which in its literal sense means simply 'learner' or 'disciple'. It was in this sense that it was first used to describe the early followers of Gūrū Nānak and only gradually did it acquire the distinctive and more restricted meaning which it now possesses. Although the Gurmukhi script makes no provision for capitalization the conventions of written English permit us to express the process in terms of a gradual change from 'sikh' to 'Sikh', from 'disciples' to 'Disciples'.

Inevitably there developed within this community an interpretation of the life and teachings of its first Master. A religious community can have neither purpose nor coherence without a distinctive pattern of belief, and when such a community owes a conscious allegiance to a particular person it must assuredly incorporate within that pattern a particular understanding of the Master's mission and message. In the case of the emergent nānak-panthī or sikh community this understanding constitutes what we have already called the myth of Nānak. It is this myth which provided, and continues to provide, the source and origin of the ever-evolving janam-sākhī traditions.

At this point a clarification of terms is needed. Although the myth of

1 A Mīhārbān commentator claims that in the earlier period the word sikh was reserved for the Hindu disciples of Nānak. Muslim disciples were called murid. Mīh JS II. 414. The other term commonly used in the janam-sākhīs to designate a follower of Nānak is, predictably, nānak-panthī. Although the term nānak-panthī is rarely used nowadays, the word panth from which it derives provides another example of the process which can be represented in terms of a change from the lower case to the upper case. The word panth, in its normal usage, designates a 'sect' or definable area of Indian religious tradition distinguished by loyalty to a particular teacher or adherence to particular doctrines. In this sense it clearly implies distinctiveness within Hindu tradition and society, and in this sense the early community of Nānak's followers may be properly designated a panth. As the community began to develop a consciousness of sharp differentiation panth tended increasingly to become Panth. In other words, it came to represent a religious community distinct from Hindu society. This distinction, however, has never become absolute. Whereas some Sikhs will draw the line with all possible clarity, others seem to be unaware of its existence.
Nānak has just been described as the source of the janam-sākhīs the word 'source' will not hereafter be used in this sense. Instead it will be reserved for the section which discusses the compilation of extant manuscript collections. In all instances it is evident that the copyists responsible for the manuscripts now extant must have had access to one or more earlier manuscripts. These earlier manuscripts served as sources for the composite products we now possess and it is in this sense that the word will normally be used. The only extension beyond this usage will be to cover borrowings made by these copyists from developed oral traditions. It will be shown, for example, that the B40 compiler has copied material from at least two recognizable manuscripts, and that he has drawn another substantial cluster of anecdotes from the oral tradition of his own area. Both the oral tradition and the manuscripts will be referred to as sources, and the term will normally be limited to this usage.

This means that another term will be required to designate the materials utilized by those responsible for the earliest traditions. A few anecdotes can presumably be traced to actual incidents in the life of Nānak; others were obviously borrowed direct from even earlier pre-Nānak sources; and many developed organically in accordance with processes of varying complexity. In all three cases 'sources' were required in order to provide either the complete anecdote or the elements which were drawn together to form one. Wherever possible these 'sources' will be covered by the term 'constituents'. The word will have a particular relevance to the earliest traditions, but because the janam-sākhīs have persisted in growing there has always been a continuing if irregular inflow of constituents. For this reason the term will also be applied to the materials which, to the present day, continue to supply extra details or additional anecdotes. Occasionally it will be convenient to use the word 'sources' when indicating the origin of these elements, but its usage will be restricted and will be accompanied by a reference to the constituents which derive from any such origin.

It seems safe to assume that the earliest of all constituents must have been authentic memories concerning actual incidents from the life of Nānak. Anecdotes concerning the Master will have begun to circulate during the Master's own lifetime, and although his actual presence will not have prevented the addition of legendary details it will certainly have served to inhibit their entry into the earliest tradition. They will have been added more as embroidery. The fabric will have been the narrative of authentic incidents.

This period was, however, brief, and an examination of the janam-sākhī literature plainly demonstrates that the vast bulk of their material entered the tradition after the death of Nānak. For this subsequent period of expansion three constituents proved to be of particular importance. One was the body of received tradition current in the Pañjab during the seventeenth century. Some of the material which entered the janam-sākhīs in this manner has obviously been taken from the Epics and the

1 See below, pp. 174ff.
ORIGINS AND GROWTH OF JANAM-SĀKHĪ TRADITIONS

Purānas. Other features evidently derive from the distinctive legends of the Nāṭh yogis, and yet others betray a Sūfī origin. All three varieties represent a natural process. The Pañjāb of this period was impregnated with Puranic lore, and both the Nāths and the Sūfis combined a considerable reputation with a well-stocked treasury of legend. Living within such a context the janam-sākhī narrators were inevitably directed by its more powerful influences.

The second of the major constituents was provided by the poetic works composed by Nānak for the benefit of his followers. There are many examples to be found in the janam-sākhīs of anecdotes which have been developed out of particular hymns by the Gūrū, or out of isolated references from various compositions. Whenever this occurs in a sākhī the hymn which prompts the anecdote will be quoted during the course of the narrative, normally as the answer given by Nānak to an interlocutor or as his comment on the episode which provides the substance of the sākhī.

Although this is an important constituent it should be noted that all such quotations from the works of Nānak are not to be explained as the seeds from which their associated anecdotes grew. Many of the hymns which appear in the janam-sākhīs represent later additions to evolved sākhīs. A hymn introduced in this manner was normally added because its theme seemed to accord well with the subject of a particular anecdote. In other cases a hymn has evidently been quoted because the narrator wished to add to the hymn his own commentary on it. When this occurs in one of the narrative janam-sākhīs it commonly reflects a doctrinal issue current within the later community, the hymn with its commentary serving to express a particular view concerning the issue. Yet other hymns have been added to sākhīs for reasons which now elude us. In some cases the reason may have been nothing more than a narrator’s partiality.

Most of the hymns quoted in the janam-sākhīs are by Nānak and are to be found in the Ādi Granth. In such instances the janam-sākhīs invariably depart from the standard Ādi Granth text and in some quotations their variant readings diverge extensively. A few hymns which are attributed by the janam-sākhīs to Nānak are listed in the Ādi Granth as the works of later Gūrūs, and a number do not appear in the Ādi Granth at all. In the analysis which follows compositions of the latter kind are described as apocryphal. This they probably are, and in some cases there can be no doubt whatsoever. There remains, however, the possibility that genuine works may have escaped the Ādi Granth and yet been retained in an oral tradition later used by a janam-sākhī compiler.

The third of the important constituents was more restricted in scope than either the influence of received tradition or the impulses derived from Nānak’s own words. This third element was provided by the continuing influence within the Sikh community of an ascetic tradition. Although Nānak himself had spurned extreme asceticism the conviction was too deeply rooted in Indian tradition to be easily eradicated and its influence emerges at several points in the janam-sākhīs.

Four principal constituents may accordingly be discerned in the
janam-sakhis. The first of these is fundamental in that it provided the original impulse and a significant portion of the earliest traditions. This is the authentic material derived from actual episodes in the life of Nānak. Subsequently this element comes to be vastly overshadowed by materials derived from received tradition, the works of Nānak, and resurgent ascetic ideals. These constituents are discussed at greater length in chapter 6.

This is followed in chapter 7 by a description of the various literary forms which have been used in order to give expression to these traditions. A preliminary survey of the janam-sakhī forms indicates an obvious division into two categories. First there are the narrative anecdotes; and secondly the numerous discourses which Nānak is said to have conducted. There is, however, a more meaningful distinction which becomes evident when the various discourses are analysed. This would link with the anecdotes the type of discourse which contains a strong narrative element, separating these two forms from the remainder of the discourses.

The first two forms we shall designate the narrative anecdote and the narrative discourse. The narrative anecdote is the janam-sakhī form par excellence. Sakhis which employ it are normally brief and succinct, although a more complicated pattern sometimes emerges. During the later stages of janam-sakhī evolution composite sakhis are commonly formed by grouping anecdotes which concern a single person, place, or theme. Some of these clusters enjoy a particular popularity and continue to grow as extra sub-sakhis are added. The various traditions concerning Bābā Nānak's visit to Mecca provide a good example of this combination and growth process.

Narrative discourses are closely allied to the anecdotal form in terms of purpose, but can be easily distinguished in terms of structure. The term narrative discourse has been reserved for conversation pieces which have been developed out of quotations from the works of Gurū Nānak. A shabad or a shalok by the Gurū is sometimes incorporated within a sakhī in a manner which plainly marks it as the actual origin of the story in which it is set. In such instances the Gurū's actual composition serves as his answer, or series of answers, to questions or comments which are fashioned to suit the given reply. Several simple stories, communicating the same message as the narrative anecdotes, have been constructed in this manner.

These two narrative forms provide the bulk of the material recorded by the Purātan and Bālā janam-sakhīs, Bāo, the Ādi Sakhīs, and the Gyān-ratānivalī. There are, however, two other distinctive forms which make occasional appearances in all of them. Both are discourses and both can be distinguished in terms of structure, content, and intention. One of them dominates the Miharbān tradition, thereby providing a clear line of demarcation between the Miharbān Janam-sakhī and all other important janam-sakhīs. This line can be drawn with a sharpness which might suggest that the Miharbān Janam-sakhī is not really a janam-sakhī at all. Any such conclusion would, however, mean carrying the distinction too
far, for although the demarcation is certainly clear it cannot be regarded as an absolute one. The Miharbān Janam-sākhī differs not because it has abandoned the characteristic features of the janam-sākhī but because it has incorporated them within something larger.

The primary difference between the distinctively Miharbān variety of discourse and those of the narrative janam-sākhīs is the consciously preceptive nature of the former. For this reason it will be referred to as didactic discourse. Once again there are individual instances which are not easy to classify, but these are very rare. The shift of interest from narrative to doctrine is usually obvious, and is plainly reflected in the discourse structure which has been developed to give expression to doctrinal concerns.

The didactic discourse is, in a sense, an extension of the narrative discourse, for it commonly uses the narrative variety as a basis. The narrative form is however little more than a point of departure, a convenient framework within which to set the distinctively doctrinal portion of the discourse. Narrative settings and the introduction of interlocutors provide a context for the basic pedagogical purpose. This purpose was to provide an explanation or interpretation of Gurū Nānak’s own works, an intention which seems to have been directed primarily to members of the community (or particular groups within it) but which might also extend to others outside.

The hermeneutic purpose was served by first quoting a passage from the works of Nānak and then attaching to it an exegetical supplement. Discourses which had already developed within the narrative traditions were appropriated for this purpose and transformed by means of adding passages of exegesis to every individual quotation of a stanza, shabad, or shalok by Gurū Nānak. These were, however, soon exhausted, and a substantial majority of the didactic discourses have been constructed with the obvious intention of expounding particular passages from the works of Nānak.

This blend of discourse and commentary constitutes the distinctive Miharbān approach. Examples which are to be found in other janam-sākhīs normally represent borrowings from the Miharbān tradition. Each division of the Miharbān Janam-sākhī is called a goś, not a sākhī, and because these divisions embody something characteristically different the term goś has been retained as a convenient means of reference when dealing with the Miharbān Janam-sākhī. Although its literal meaning is ‘discourse’ this translation will not be used for the goś form of the Miharbān tradition, this particular form being distinctively different from all other varieties of discourse. For the same reason the persons responsible for the development and transmission of the Miharbān Janam-sākhī will normally be designated commentators rather than narrators.

The exegetical portion of the goś is sometimes referred to as the paramārath. This is because the commentary which follows each quotation almost always begins with the formula tis kā paramārath, literally ‘its sublime meaning’. The words ‘is as follows’ are understood, and the
formula thus serves to distinguish the exegesis from the quotation. Modern usage does this by means of indentation, together with a separate line in the text to correspond to each line of a hymn or poem. Lacking these conventions the Miharban commentators had to devise a method of their own to mark off exegesis from quotation.  

The last major form to be noted makes only rare appearances in the janam-sakhis. This is the heterodox discourse, an independent form which has occasionally provided janam-sakhí compilers with acceptable material. The origins of these discourses are to be found in heretical doctrines and gnostic interpretation of earlier esoteric traditions (principally Nàth and Sûfí) which have found expression in a small group of apocryphal works attributed to Gurú Nànak. Most of these compositions were of sufficient length to warrant independent circulation, and for this reason they were commonly recorded as separate works, distinct from the janam-sakhís. Their claim to authenticity was evidently viewed with suspicion by some of the compilers, but others were sufficiently impressed to include selections in their janam-sakhís. All are, without doubt, spurious. Neither their curious doctrines nor their banal expression could possibly be imputed to Gurú Nànak.

The principal forms employed by the janam-sakhí narrators and commentators may thus be divided into two groups:

Narrative
   1. Narrative anecdotes
   2. Narrative discourses

Non-narrative
   1. Didactic discourses, comprising both
      (a) Narrative discourses, and
      (b) Exegetical supplements
   2. Heterodox discourses

These four forms together account for practically all that the janam-sakhís contain. Other forms are exceedingly rare.

The chapter describing the various janam-sakhí forms is followed by a brief examination of oral transmission procedures and of the manner in which selections drawn from oral tradition were gathered into the written collections to which the term janam-sakhí is properly applied. Four stages can be observed in the development of recorded janam-sakhís. The first is the random collection, a phase which continued long after the emergence of the more intricate second and third stages. For some compilers it was, however, an inadequate method. Random collections of anecdotes were regarded as an unsatisfactory way of narrating the Gurú's life-story and there soon emerged an impulse to order disjointed traditions into a coherent chronological sequence. This constituted the second stage. The

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1 In the English translation of the B4o Janam-sakhí the formula tis ká paramáraíath has been rendered: 'The exegesis [of this stanza etc. is as follows].' See for example B4o, ff. 118b, 119b. B4o(Eng), pp. 134, 136. In sákhi 2 of this janam-sakhí the formula is reduced to tis ká arath (perhaps an earlier form) and is translated: 'Its meaning [is as follows].' B4o, ff. 42-5b. B4o(Eng), pp. 8-9.
third followed when to the narrative anecdotes there were added exegetical
passages; and the fourth when the introduction of the printing-press
enabled particular recorded versions to be widely disseminated.

In chapter 9 the discussion proceeds to a more detailed examination of
the manner in which the different kinds of sakhis evolved. This examina-
tion consists largely of an analysis of representative types. In some
instances an anecdotal sākhī turns out to be little more than a repetition
of pre-Nānak tradition. Others are simple anecdotes which have been
suggested by a particular reference in one of Nānak's compositions, or
discourses of the kind already noted which have been constructed on the
basis of a complete hymn or a series of quotations. In such cases the
pattern is relatively uncomplicated and requires little elucidation. Else-
where the origins and structure of particular sakhis are found to be more
complex. Most of the samples chosen for analysis have been taken from
these more complicated sakhis. This is partly because the need for
explanation is obviously greater, but also because the complex sakhis
usually embody sub-sakhis which serve to illustrate the simpler forms.

The period of evolution was, of course, an extended one and is in fact
still continuing. New sakhis, though now a mere trickle, are still appearing,
and older sakhis are commonly modified in accordance with contemporary
needs and understanding. Perhaps the most striking example of the latter
feature is provided by the story of the moving miharāb.1 Most janam-sakhī
versions set this anecdote in Mecca and relate how Bābā Nānak, when he
reached the city, lay down to sleep in a mosque with his feet in the direc-
tion of the mosque's miharāb.2 An outraged qāzi commanded him to point
his feet away from the house of God. Nānak, in reply, invited him to lay
his feet 'in whatever direction the house of God is not'.3 Accepting the
invitation the qāzi dragged Nānak's feet away from the direction of the
miharāb, whereupon the miharāb itself moved. Wherever the qāzi laid
Nānak's feet, there the miharāb also swung round. Confounded by this
miracle the qāzi fell at his feet.

For modern readers a wonder story of this kind raises obvious problems.
Some have suggested that the miharāb only seemed to move, but a much
more popular solution has been to terminate the sakhī at the point where
Nānak invites the qāzi to point the offending feet 'in whatever direction
the house of God is not', omitting all that follows except for the qāzi’s
submission.4 This produces a neat anecdote, one which is entirely accept-
able to the modern reader. The dwelling-place of God is everywhere!
It is not, however, what the earlier janam-sakhīs say. What it illustrates is
the continuing process of change and development. Another example of
the same process has recently been provided by a new tradition concerning
a visit to Sikkim (an aetiological legend explaining the appearance of rice

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1 See below, pp. 137-44.
2 The niche which is aligned with the Ka' bah, thereby indicating the qibla.
3 B40, f. 51b.
4 Tejī Singh and Gaṇḍā Singh, A Short History of the Sikhs, vol. i (Bombay, 1950), p. 11. This
rationalized interpretation appears in John Malcolm’s Sketch of the Sikhs (Calcutta, 1810), p. 274.
and banana cropping in North Sikkim). In this instance the new development represents an expansion of the received tradition, not a rationalizing contraction.

The last chapter of this section deals with the various sources used by janam-sākhī compilers. All the extant janam-sākhīs, regardless of the stage or stages to which they belong, include anecdotes drawn from a multiplicity of sources. Oral tradition continued to provide much supplementary material, but in no instance does the compiler of an extant janam-sākhī appear to have relied solely upon oral sources. All had access to at least one earlier manuscript and sometimes more than one. Needless to say the compilers do not acknowledge their various sources and the task of distinguishing them can be highly complex. The analysis included in chapter 10 covers no more than a sample. Whereas the B40 Janam-sākhī and the Ādi Sākhīs are treated in some detail, references to other janam-sākhī traditions are generally limited to points of close contact with the two primary examples. Although this limitation is necessary within the scope of a single volume it is regrettable, for it must involve many omissions. Two janam-sākhīs which should produce interesting responses to the same variety of analysis are the Colebrooke and early Bālā versions.

1 SLTGN(Eng), pp. 329–33.
CONSTITUENTS OF THE JANAM-SĀKHĪS

1. EPISODES FROM THE LIFE OF NĀNAK

Although the mass of extant janam-sākhi material must be classified as legend there can be little doubt that the earliest constituent will have been actual observation and authentic memory. There can be no doubt whatsoever concerning the broad outline of Nānak’s life, nor of the fact that a community of disciples gathered around him in the village of Kartārpur during the early decades of the sixteenth century. It is also clear that many of these disciples continued to live in their own villages and expressed their devotion to the Master through regular visits to Kartārpur rather than through permanent attendance upon his person. Under such circumstances it was inevitable that anecdotes concerning the Master should have begun to circulate amongst his dispersed followers. These early tales will have been subjected to processes of expansion and embellishment even during the lifetime of the Gurū, but the basis of many of them will have been episodes from his actual experience, or authentic utterances which he had in fact made.

The problem presented by the authentic elements in the extant janam-sākhis is that of recognition. Although their presence may be undoubted so too is the extreme difficulty involved in separating them from the quantity of supplementary material which now envelops them. The historian who is concerned to identify these elements can hope to achieve a certain limited success, but the analysis is arduous and the product scant.

Fortunately the solution of this particular problem is not vital for an understanding of the janam-sākhis, nor for an appreciation of their chief importance. The importance of the janam-sākhis concerns the myth which they express, and for this expression authentic history and legend can be equally serviceable. It is the quest of the historical Nānak which imposes a rigorous obligation to separate the two. For an understanding of the myth of Nānak the separation is always of interest and can occasionally be helpful, but it is not absolutely essential. At this point it is sufficient to note that authentic incidents from the life of Nānak form one of the several constituents which have contributed to the growth of the janam-sākhis. In terms of temporal priority these authentic elements are primary and must form the basis of some of the earliest sākhis. In terms of quantity they are of relatively minor significance. For the major constituents in terms of quantity we must turn to three other elements. The first is
CONSTITUENTS OF THE JANAM-SĀKHĪS

received tradition; the second is the corpus of Nānak's own compositions; and the third is a miscellany of ascetic ideals current during the period of janam-sākhī growth.

2. RECEIVED TRADITION

Received tradition in the Pañjāb of the janam-sākhī period consisted chiefly of an amalgam of Puranic lore, tales from the Rāmāyaṇa, the Mahābhārata, and the Yoga-vasiṣṭha, Nāth legend, and Sūfī hagiography. Occasionally it is possible to trace a connection with the Buddhist Jātaka, as in the popular story of how a tree's shadow stood still in order to shelter the sleeping child Nānak from the rays of the sun.1 This is one among several prominent Wundersagen elements appearing in the janam-sākhīs, mediated by a variety of received tradition. Others include triumph over carnal temptations, the miraculous opening of springs, homilies on the curse of wealth, flight on magic prayer-mats, and shelter afforded by a cobra's distended hood.

Although the various sources can often be distinguished, it is important to remember that for the rural Pañjāb of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries they commonly constituted a single tangled tradition. This coalescence is particularly advanced in the relationship to Puranic and Nāth elements. Sūfī traditions, by reason of their connection with Muslim belief, maintain a somewhat clearer definition. The difference is, however, one of degree and it is not a marked one. It would be altogether misleading to suggest that the traditions associated with celebrated Sūfīs were immune from the influence of native Indian traditions, or that those native traditions were screened from Sūfī influence. There was, in fact, no real clarity of definition. Boundaries were always blurred and commonly crossed. Details, structures, and complete anecdotes might be associated with a Sūfī pir, a Nāth Master, or a prominent bhakta. Villagers who worshipped with equal reverence at a Śaivite temple or a Muslim tomb would not always distinguish between elements drawn from the Bhāgavata Purāṇa and those which derived from the Hadīth.2

This amalgam is faithfully reflected in much of the janam-sākhī material, particularly in the anecdotes which narrate encounters with Nāths. Needless to say, the point should not be laboured to the extent of suggesting that all janam-sākhī traditions necessarily manifest this composite character. In most cases of material derived from a received tradition it is possible to identify a dominant element and to label it Puranic, Epic, Nāth, or Sūfī. The point which does deserve to be laboured is the possibility of incorporating these diverse elements within a single tradition. To this possibility the extant janam-sākhīs bear ample witness.

One other misunderstanding which can easily arise from the composite

2 The extent to which the exchange of ideas could be carried is well illustrated in the case of Nāths and Sūfīs by the Rushd-nāma of Sheikh 'Abd al-Quddūs (1456–1537). S. A. A. Rizvi and S. Zaidi, Alakh Bānī (Aligārh, 1971).
nature of the janam-sākhīs is the assumption that the teachings of Gurū Nānak (as opposed to the traditions concerning his life) must necessarily reflect the same variety of synthesis. This misunderstanding is expressed in terms of a claim that the works of Nānak represent a blend of 'Hindu­ism' and 'Islam'. Although a diversity of influences can certainly be detected in Nānak's thought the synthesis to which he gave expression is not to be identified with that of the janam-sākhīs. Sūfī influence is much more pronounced in the janam-sākhīs than in the works of Nānak himself. The antecedents of Nānak's own thought are to be found primarily in the earlier Sant synthesis, and beyond this in the distinctive belief of Vaiṣṇava bhakti and in the hātha-yoga of the Nath tradition and other related cults. Muslim influence, Sūfī and otherwise, is of marginal importance as far as the basic components of his thought are concerned. The janam-sākhīs, in contrast, show abundant evidence of the influence of Sūfī traditions. Whereas Nānak had found little of importance in contemporary Sūfī belief which was not already present in his Sant inheritance, his disciples found much in contemporary Sūfī hagiography to enrich their own narratives. It is partly to the Sūfī borrowings in the janam-sākhīs that the persistent misunderstanding of Nānak's own antecedents can be traced.

(a) The Epics and the Purāṇas

Purānic and Epic elements appear in the janam-sākhīs both as illustrative material and as the substance of particular sākhīs. The former application, which corresponds to Gurū Nānak's own usage of details from the Epics and the Purāṇas, is well illustrated by a passage which the B40 compiler appends to an earlier narrative. The anecdote relates how Rājā Śivanabh tested Bābā Nānak by sending beautiful women to tempt him. To emphasize their comeliness the B40 compiler adds:

Their alluring appearance was like that of the Kāmīndalās, the seductive sirens of Raja Indra; or like the four temptresses of Vaikunṭh. Whoever looked upon them—[even such] supermen and sages [as] the sons of Brahmā, [the generations of saintly heroes from] Janak onwards [or] ascetics and master ascetics such as Rṣya Śṛṅga—would have lost their heads.

In this instance the passage appears to be an interpolation introduced because the anecdote following it so strongly suggested the popular Epic theme of the holy man tempted. Elsewhere complete stories from the Epics or the Purāṇas are given a distinctively janam-sākhī expression. One example is provided by the sākhī entitled 'The Robbers and the Funeral-pyre', 3 an anecdote which can be traced to the story of Ajāmila in the Bhāgavata Purāṇa. 4 Another which can be connected with a narrative in

1 GNSR, p. 160.
2 B40, ff. 146b-147a. Particular points occurring in the quotation are explained in the footnotes to the B40 translation. See B40 (Eng) p. 163. The Adi Sākhīs compiler, following the same source, refers only to the supermen. AS, p. 65.
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the Bhāgavata Purāṇa is 'The Encounter with Kaliyug'.1 This evidently derives its basic feature (notably the personification of the Kaliyuga or 'Age of Strife') from the episode concerning the chastisement of Kali by King Parīkṣit.2 Both of these traditions entered the janam-sākhīs at an early date and acquired a considerable popularity. A later example appears in the Mahimā Prakāś story of how Gūrū Aṅgad, having misunderstood a command of Bābā Nānak, remained rooted to the same spot for several years while ants gradually covered him with earth.3 This tale can be traced to the Mahābhārata story of Rṣi Chyavana.4

The most prominent of all Puranic features to appear in the janam-sākhīs is Mount Sumeru (Mount Meru), legendary centre and axis of the earth and the setting for one of the most popular of all janam-sākhī discourses.5 In this connection the 'Discourse on Mount Sumeru' is of particular interest for two reasons. First, it illustrates not merely the influence of Puranic legend, but also the manner in which Nāth and Puranic tradition are inextricably linked in the janam-sākhīs. The interlocutors in the discourse are Siddhs, which in this context plainly means Nāth Masters.

The second point of interest concerns the Bālā version of the discourse. Puranic influence is much more pronounced in the Bālā janam-sākhīs than in any of the others and at no point does this distinctive Bālā characteristic appear with greater prominence than in the mountain-climbing episodes which reach a climax in Bābā Nānak’s ascent of Mount Sumeru.6 The later Bālā janam-sākhīs also introduce sākhīs set in Govardhan, Mathurā, and Vrindābān, and from the details which they incorporate it is at once clear that they have derived their extra material from the Bhāgavata Purāṇa.7

(b) Nāth tradition

The Nāth sampradaya, or sect of Nāth yogīs, is a feature of medieval Indian society which has received only a fragment of the attention which it deserves. This neglect derives partly from the condition of the sect when first it became an object of interest to European observers. Monserrate, who accompanied Akbar on a visit to the Nāth centre at Tīlā, indicates the kind of impression which the sect made upon an observer during the late fifteenth century.

When they heard of the King’s approaching visit, a huge number of the members of that sect gathered at this place, many of whom, in order to show off their sanctity, betook themselves stark naked to certain caves which either nature or

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2 Bhāgavata Purāṇa, 1.17.28-41. Cf. also ibid. 1.18.5-16. Kaliyug is also personified in the Mahābhārata, III.58-62, 72. For another example of a janam-sākhī borrowing from the Mahābhārata see below, p. 162.
3 SLTGN(Eng), p. 83. SLTGN(Pbi), p. 44.
4 Mahābhārata, III.122.
5 Bhāgo, ff. 86a-93a. AS, pp. 36-42. Pur JS, pp. 94-7. Mih JS 1.384-416.
6 Bālā JS, pp. 200 ff.
7 Expanded 1871 edition, sākhīs 251-3
the art of man has made there. Many people did reverence to these naked ascetics and proclaimed their sanctity abroad. They are however extremely greedy of money. All their trickery and pretended sanctity is aimed at the acquisition of gain.¹

Monserrate does, however, indicate more than mere knavery. The description which he gives of the Tilla establishment is, by his standards, a lengthy one² and implies that during this period Tilla must have commanded a considerable interest. Indeed, his report that Akbar stayed four days and while there paid homage suggests that the sect commanded not just interest but positive respect. This need occasion no surprise. The ignorant and arrogant charlatans described by Monserrate and later European observers have never constituted the entire sect, and their reputation obscures the importance of their antecedents. The antecedents and the later reputation are both necessary aspects of any attempt to understand either the thought of Nānak or the content of the janam-sākhīs.

The word 'sect' is, as always, a misleading term to use as a translation of panth or sampradaya. There were in fact several sects of Nath yogis. They are regarded as a single panth because they share a common allegiance to Gorakhnāth, a common adherence to the hatha-yoga technique, and the common observance of a particular custom. This is the practice of wearing large ear-rings (mudrā), a custom which has earned them the name of Kānphat (or 'split-ear') yogīs.³

The antecedents of the Kānphat yogīs can be traced to the ancient tradition of esoteric Tantrism. This much is clear, but it does not in fact tell us much about the actual origins of the cult for it merely leads us into one of the most obscure areas of early Indian tradition. Little is known of Tantrism apart from its later expressions and it is only by inference from these later expressions that its origins and its earlier development can be described. Many of these influences relate to the geographical location of the earliest developments. It was along the northern perimeter of Aryan culture, from the Afghan highlands along the Himalayas to Assām, that tantric beliefs evolved and flourished. This indicates alien antecedents, and the incorporation of these exotic elements within a Hindu tradition has suggested that Tantrism must represent an assimilation of the kind which enabled Hindu culture to extend into regions on its periphery. A secondary centre of Tantrism in the Dravidian country supports this theory.⁴

Tantrism emerges in two streams, one Buddhist and the other Hindu. The former represents an obscure blend of tantric traditions and Mahāyāna Buddhism; and the latter an equally obscure blend of tantric and Śaivite

² Ibid., pp. 113–16.
beliefs. Neither stream can be easily distinguished from the other, and later developments flowing from these earlier antecedents share their lack of clear definition. One important line seems to descend from Vajrayāna Buddhism (the classic Buddhist form of Tantrism) through Sahajiyā Buddhism to a Vaiṣṇava version of the Sahajiyā cult and thence through the Sant tradition of Northern India to Nānak himself.1 Although the lines are by no means plain there can be no doubt concerning the Sant debt to a refined Tantrism. This is clear from the common denunciation of external forms of religion, from a common insistence upon an interior discipline, and from certain key terms which the Sants can only have derived from Sahajiyā usage.

The Nāths of Nānak’s day and of the period following belonged to a different lineage. Once again it is impossible to trace the line of development with any clarity, but both the tantric origins and the radical distinction from the Sants are clear. The Nāth Masters are commonly called Siddhs, a feature which indicates a connection with the legendary Siddhāchāryas of the Buddhist Sahajiyā cult2. From this source the yogic beliefs and practices of the Nāths have evidently descended without being affected by the devotional concepts of the Vaiṣṇavas. It was bhakti belief which transformed the Sahajiyā cult in its Vaiṣṇava expression. Unaffected by this deviant development the Nāths continued the distinctively haṭha-yoga version of the Sahajiyā kāya-sādhana (‘culture of the body’). A particular prominence was accorded to belief in the nine Nāths, the legendary Masters who had achieved immortality through perfection in haṭha-yoga and who dwelt eternally in the further recesses of the Himalayas. Various lists of names are given for the nine Nāth Masters, all of them including the celebrated Gorakhnāth. Some lists name Mahādeva (Śiva) as one of the nine distinct from Gorakhnāth, whereas others merge the two.3

By the sixteenth century the various Nāth sects had achieved a considerable diffusion over Northern India, with two major centres in the Pañjab and Nepāl. They were by this time in decline, but still commanded awe and a certain grudging respect for their extreme asceticism and their reputation as wonder-workers. The extent of their influence in the Pañjab is plainly indicated by the number of compositions which Nānak addresses to Nāth yogīs. The same compositions also demonstrate the vigorous nature of Nānak’s opposition to their teachings and their practices.

The reputation of the Nāths continued into the janam-sākhī period and its influence upon the evolving janam-sākhī traditions is patently clear. The attitude of the janam-sākhī narrators is ambivalent. On the one hand they naturally accept the case made by Nānak, and in both discourse and magical contest the Nāths are always worsted. On the other hand they give expression to a genuine respect for the person of Gorakhnāth. Although long since dead at the time when the janam-sākhīs were developing Gorakhnāth is a prominent choice as interlocutor for Nānak’s discourses, and the pattern

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which these discourses follow is generally one of accord between the two participants rather than the customary defeat. It is Goraknāth who indicates a choice of succession to Bābā Nānak and in the Mahimā Prakāś tradition it is he who first recognizes Nānak’s greatness.

One of the most prominent of the Nāth discourses, ‘The Discourse on Mount Sumeru’, has already been noted as an example of the manner in which the janam-sākhīs combine Nāth and Puranic legend in a single tradition. In this respect they merely reflect the Nāths’ own understanding and that of sixteenth-century Pañjāb. The actual origin of this particular discourse is a series of shaloks by Guru Nānak which refer to several of the Nāth Masters by name. To the names given by Nānak and the questions implied by his verses the janam-sākhīs have added the Puranic setting and many of the details needed in order to sustain the narrative. The chosen setting indicates that the legend concerning the immortal Masters was implicitly accepted by the janam-sākhī narrators and their audiences. It also illustrates the common confusion of the nine immortal Nāths with the eighty-four immortal Siddhs. Whereas the names of the interlocutors are those of Nāth Masters, Bhai Gurdās and all his successors refer to them as representatives of the eighty-four Siddhs.

A sākhī which owes rather more to the current reputation of the Nāths is the Achal discourse. Like the Mount Sumeru discourse this sākhī derives in part from Nāth-oriented compositions by Nānak, but it deals with yogīs rather than immortal Masters and accords a particular prominence to their reputed power as wonder-workers. In the Purātan janam-sākhīs the wonder-working material is incorporated in a sākhī set in Gor-khātṛī, a Nāth centre in Peshāwar. Other discourse settings are Tillā, Gorak-matā, Setu-bandha, and ‘in the midst of the ocean’.

Most of the discourses are, like the Mount Sumeru sākhī, only partially derived from Nāth legend. The basis is generally provided by a shabad or series of shaloks from the works of Gurū Nānak, almost always a composition which by terminology or actual name indicates a Nāth audience. Nāth legend serves to supplement this basis with appropriate settings, details, and occasionally a sub-sākhī. It is an important supplement, one which bears eloquent testimony to the continuing influence of Nāth yogīs upon rural Pañjāb. The same influence emerges even more prominently in the apocryphal Prāṇ Sāngalī, a work attributed to Nānak but expressing Nāth concepts of precisely the kind rebutted by the Gurū in his authentic compositions. The Prāṇ Sāngalī, having penetrated the Sikh community or evolved within it, was soon appropriated by janam-sākhī

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2 B40, f. 93a.
3 SLTON(Eng), pp. 59–60. GNM, pp. 7–8.
10 Bālā JS, pp. 282–7. 11 Pur JS, p. 84.
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compilers. Other apocryphal works used as sources for the janam-sākhīs provide further evidence of Nath influence in certain sections of the post-Nānak community. An example is the B40 sākhī 'Discourse with Kabir'.

One anecdote which can be traced directly to a Nath source appears in the sākhī entitled ‘The Country ruled by Women’. This anecdote has enjoyed a notable popularity amongst the compilers of janam-sākhīs and varying versions are to be found in all collections except the Miharbān Jānām-sākhī. The source of the anecdote is plainly the Nath legend which relates the seduction of Machhendranāth (Matsyendranāth, or Minanāth). According to this legend Machhendranāth, while in the womb of a fish, overheard Śiva expounding the secret of the universe to his consort Gaurī. Machhendranāth subsequently made slighting remarks concerning Gaurī and as a result of her curse was transformed into a sheep by the women of Kadali. From this sorry fate he was rescued by Gorakhnāth. In spite of its more grotesque elements the janam-sākhīs’ version of the anecdote has enjoyed a continuing popularity because two of them set it in an area variously called Kaurū or Kārū. This obviously indicates Kāmrūp, long regarded as the home of Tantrism and the darker magical crafts. Modern biographers have assumed that the Kāmrūp setting indicates a visit by Guru Nānak to Āssām.

(c) Sūfi tradition

In the use which they make of Nath contacts the janam-sākhī compilers were, in large measure, following a pattern which had earlier been developed in Sūfi hagiography. A recent study of this aspect of Sūfi tradition enumerates three varieties of anecdote concerning encounters between yogīs and Sūfī pīrs.

Three classes of anecdotes regarding Jogīs in the Sūfī literature of the Dehli Sultanate can be arranged in a series of progressive elaboracy viz:—

(1) Plain anecdotes of the voluntary conversion of Jogīs followed by their attainment of a high ‘station’ on the Sūfī ‘path’.

(2) Anecdotes of magic contests leading to the subjugation and conversion of the Jogī, again usually followed by his attainment of a high Sūfī station.

(3) Anecdotes of magic contest and conversion which have a regional significance, in that the Jogī is displaced as the locum tenens of a sacred or otherwise desirable site by the Sūfī Shaykh. Professing Islam and attaining a Sūfī ‘station’, the Jogī is accommodated in a subordinate capacity on the same holy site, or as an esteemed member of the Shaykh’s entourage.

This list indicates a striking but altogether natural similarity of Sūfī and janam-sākhī styles. The only significant difference is the extensive use

1 See below, pp. 103–4.
3 Shashibhusan Dasgupta, op. cit., pp. 201–2, 244, 368n.
4 GNSR, pp. 110–12.
made by the janam-sākhī narrators of passages from the works of Nānak.

The close resemblance at this particular point indicates one of the janam-sākhī affinities with Sufi hagiography. Other debts of an even more obvious nature can be observed throughout the janam-sākhī collections. Just as the Nāth discourses bear witness to a continuing Nāth influence in the Pañjāb of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, so in like manner do the numerous encounters with Sufi pirs testify to the extent of Sufi influence. It must, however, be stressed that the influence derived from the hagiography of the Sūfis and the personal fame of some of the more prominent pirs. It did not derive from any extensive understanding of Muslim doctrine. Knowledge of the doctrines of Islam and the contents of the Qur'ān is conspicuously absent from the janam-sākhīs. The insistent interest of the janam-sākhī narrators in folklore traditions and their general ignorance of Muslim doctrines are both well illustrated by the following extract from the Bālā account of Bābā Nānak's visit to Mecca.

It is written in the qibla that one day a dervish named Nānak will come and that water will spring in the well of Mecca.\(^1\)

Once again there emerges a contrast between the understanding of the janam-sākhīs and that of Nānak himself. Gūrū Nānak, though relatively little influenced by Muslim doctrine, certainly possessed an extensive knowledge of it and commonly made use of its terminology.

In some instances janam-sākhī narrators have incorporated distinctively Sufi features in anecdotes concerning Bābā Nānak. Many of these are easily recognized, particularly those which use a demonstrably Muslim context for stories involving miraculous locomotion, levitation, or tai-i-safar (instantaneous transportation achieved by the mere closing of the eyes). The Bālā story of the moving mosque of Kābul illustrates this variety of miraculous locomotion,\(^2\) and Bhāi Gurdās provides an example of levitation in his account of how Bābā Nānak ascended into the air during his visit to Bāghdād.\(^3\) The tai-i-safar tradition has been of occasional use to janam-sākhī compilers who have not followed chronological patterns in their order of sakhis. When confronted by an evident need to explain how Bābā Nānak could traverse hundreds of miles in an instant they commonly found their solution in recourse to the example of Sufi hagiographers.\(^4\)

One specific application by the Sūfis of their belief in miraculous movement of objects as a proof of spiritual power is the tradition that the Ka'bah may revolve around a pir of the most exalted status. Ordinarily the Muslim circumambulates the Ka'bah, but in cases of supreme spiritual achievement the roles are reversed. It seems clear that one of the key elements in the janam-sākhī story of the moving miharāb should be traced

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\(^2\) Bālā, f. 154b.

\(^3\) BG 1:36. GNSR, p. 35.

\(^4\) This is a common feature in the chronologically disorganized Bālā janam-sākhīs. Cf. also Bālā, ff. 123b, 133b, 157a, 178a.
to this tradition.\(^1\) Although the earliest version of the sākhī appears to have been given a setting away from Mecca\(^2\) the movement of a mihārāb amounts to the same thing as movement of the Ka'bah. The mihārāb marks the qibla (the direction of the Ka'bah), and a mobile mihārāb can only mean a corresponding movement of the Ka'bah.

In all of these Sūfī instances the janam-sākhī anecdote has been constituted by a combining of recognizably Sūfī elements with other material. This is the characteristic form of janam-sākhī borrowing. Occasionally, however, two other forms of direct borrowing may be noted. The first is the narration of a Sūfī anecdote in a manner which retains its earlier connection with a Sūfī pīr, but which sets the entire episode in the context of an encounter with Bābā Nānak. An example of this form is the Purātan story of a meeting with Sheikh Farīd in the legendary land of Āsā. One of the three anecdotes included in this sākhī describes Farīd's attempt to maintain a rigorous ascetic discipline by carrying a wooden loaf (chapātī). This he did in order to provide an excuse for refusing proffered food. The anecdote, which properly belongs to the traditions concerning Farīd, retains this connection in the Purātan janam-sākhīs. The difference is that the meeting with Bābā Nānak convinces Farīd of the dangerous hypocrisy involved in the stratagem, as a result of which he abandons the wooden chapātī.\(^3\)

Elsewhere a complete, or substantially complete, anecdote borrowed from Sūfī hagiography has been deprived of its Sūfī context and attached directly to the person of Bābā Nānak. The most striking example is Bhāi Gurdās's story of Nānak's encounter with the pīrs of Multān.\(^4\) This anecdote, which is discussed below as an example of a Wandersage,\(^5\) has obviously been taken directly from Sūfī traditions centring on Multān. Another example, also derived from a Multān source, is the Sūfī tradition concerning the manner in which Sheikh Bahā' al-Dīn Zakariyyā died.\(^6\)

In addition to the direct borrowings, Sūfī influence is also evident in the choice of interlocutors for several of the janam-sākhī discsourses. Sūfī pīrs commanded a considerable respect in the Paṅjāb of the janam-sākhī period and it was of vital importance to the purpose of the janam-sākhīs that their reputations should be eclipsed by that of Bābā Nānak. The fact that the more impressive of Sūfī reputations were attached to pīrs long since dead did not affect the need to involve such men in discourses with Nānak and to demonstrate the superiority of the latter. There is no suggestion of conscious deceit at this point. Neither the janam-sākhī narrators nor their audiences were historians. History and legend could both serve their purpose and, as we have already observed, a consciousness of sharp distinctions between the two should never be expected in the janam-sākhīs. The discourses held with Sūfī pīrs of earlier centuries must be regarded as illustrations of the Nānak myth of the janam-sākhīs rather than as examples of their narrators' credulity.

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\(^1\) Bg 40, f. 51b.  
\(^2\) See below, p. 140.  
\(^3\) Pur JS, p. 45. GNSR, pp. 42, 80.  
\(^4\) BG 1:44. GNSR, pp. 35, 142.  
\(^5\) See below, pp. 118–20.  
\(^6\) See below, p. 119n.
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As a result of this need to contest the hold of Sūfī tradition the janam-sākhi compilers have sprinkled a series of appropriate discourses through their collections. In the B4o Janam-sākhi Bābā Nānak is said to have encountered, at various times, Rukan al-Dīn, Rattān Ḥāji, Ibrāhīm Farīd Sānī, and Sharaf al-Dīn.1 Of these only Sheikh Ibrāhīm could have been a contemporary of Guru Nānak. With the exception of Rattān Ḥāji all appear in the Purāṭān janam-sākhis, where they are joined by Farīd al-Dīn Mas'ūd Ganj-i-Shakar and Bahā' al-Dīn Zakariyyā,2 both of whom had long predeceased the birth of Nānak. Other janam-sākhis add more names. Bhāi Gurdās and the Mihrābān Janam-sākhi both describe encounters with 'Abd al-Qādir Jilānī;3 the Mahimā Prakāś Vāratak introduces Sākhi Sarvār Sultān;4 and eventually Santokh Singh finds a place for the celebrated Shams al-Dīn Tabrīzī, Pir of Multān and preceptor of Rūmī.5 The same figure does not always appear in the same setting. Sheikh Sharaf is variously located in Pānīpat, Bāghdād, Bidar, and Mecca; Rukan al-Dīn is to be found in Mecca and Multān; and Jilānī in Bāghdād and Kartārpūr. Inconsistencies of this kind are, however, of no more importance than the fact that all three pirs were long since dead. It is the pirs’ function which is important.

3. THE WORKS OF GURŪ NĀNAK

A second major constituent in the formation of the janam-sākhi traditions was provided by references in Nānak’s own works. One important example of this feature has already been noted. In Vār Rāmkālī, shaloks 2–7 of paurī 12, Guru Nānak refers by name to Īsār, Gerakh, Gopichand, Charapaṭ, and Bharathari, all of whom figure prominently in lists of the seven legendary Nāth Masters.6 Whereas Guru Nānak’s own intention was clearly the expression of an imaginary dialogue, the janam-sākhi narrators quickly assumed an actual encounter. Elements from Puranic and Nāth legend were added and the result was the ever-popular ‘Discourse on Mount Sumeru’. Other compositions employing Nāth names and terminology prompted similar discourses, and in like manner works which made prominent use of Muslim tradition or imagery soon found their way into sākhīs describing encounters with Sūfī pirs. Works of this kind rarely indicate a specifically Sūfī audience, but Sūfis were, like Nāth yogīs, prominent in seventeenth-century Pañjab and it is natural that the janam-sākhs should reflect this prominence.

1 B4o, ff. 53a, 56a, 57b, 2009.
2 Pur JŚ, pp. 22, 40, 52, 82, 100, 104, 108.
3 BG 1:35–6. Mīḥ JŚ 11.179. Bhāi Gurdās refers to him as Daastgīr, one of the many names applied to Jilānī. GNSR, p. 126.
In such cases a complete shabad would normally be responsible for the discourse or anecdote. Elsewhere a brief reference or even a single word might be sufficient to spark the imagination. The words lālo in Tilaṅg 5, sajjā in Sūhi 3, and mūlā in Surplus Shaloks 21 have all been interpreted as proper names and as such have served as starting-points for prominent anecdotes.¹

Sakhis which have been developed out of compositions by Guru Nanak are a common feature of all janam-sākhis. When, as in most instances, the resultant sākhi takes the form of a discourse the process is generally as follows. Guru Nanak’s own words, as expressed in a suggestive shabad or shalok, provide, as a nucleus for the discourse, answers to an interlocutor’s questions. A suitable person is chosen to serve as interlocutor (one to whom Nanak’s words might appropriately have been directed), and the questions or comments to be uttered by him are framed in accordance with the known answer. This provides the basic pattern. The interlocutor’s question or comment is followed by a shalok or by the first stanza of a shabad. Another question or comment is followed by the second stanza or another shalok, and so the discourse proceeds until the shabad has been completed or the supply of suitable shaloks is exhausted. A setting is provided in order to introduce the discourse and in a brief conclusion the interlocutor submits to the Guru.

This is the standard procedure. It is, however, by no means invariable. A narrator’s imagination was not limited to the images suggested by the text of Guru Nanak’s actual compositions and commonly it would range much more widely. This was particularly the case when the starting-point for a sākhi was provided by a single word or reference. It was, for example, inevitable that Nanak’s references to Bābur and, in a less explicit way, to the Mughal invasions should attract attention. The resultant sakhis do not, however, follow the pattern indicated by any of the shabads which include these references, for in no case are they well suited to discourse purposes. Instead the narrators utilize traditions concerning Bābur (notably the belief that he was a clandestine qalandar) and authentic memories relating to the Mughal conquest of the Pañjāb. The shabads evidently prompt the anecdotes and in this sense constitute their origin, but make only a small contribution to the substance of the narrative.²

The imagination of the narrator finds further expression during the period of subsequent circulation. Simple discourses become progressively longer and more complex, with extra details and complete episodes being drawn in from other sources. Some sakhis which have evolved out of shabads or shaloks retain their individuality throughout this period of expansion, whereas others are combined to form a complex of sub-sakhis. The Bābur narratives provide examples of both. The earlier traditions retain their central position, but extra material is added. This supplementary material includes a discourse developed in accordance with the standard process out of the shabad Tilaṅg 2. The shabad begins:

¹ See below, pp. 86–7, 121, 122.
² B40, ff. 66b, 73a(2). GNSR, pp. 132–8.
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Fear of Thee, O Lord, is my bhang, and my mind the pouch in which I carry it. Intoxicated with this bhang I have abandoned all interest in worldly concerns.¹

Here the suggestive prompt is provided by the word bhang (cannabis). The narrator's task is relatively simple. Bābur, having heard Bābā Nānak sing an earlier shabad, has him brought to his presence. The earlier shabad is repeated and Bābur is converted. At this point the bhang sub-sākhi is introduced.

[Bābur] then opened his bhang-pouch and offered it to Bābā Nānak, saying, 'Have some bhang, faqir.'² To this Bābā Nānak replies:

Mīrī, I have already eaten bhang. I have taken a kind of bhang which induces a condition of permanent intoxication.³

He then recites Tilang 2 and the sākhi moves on to another episode. A discourse developed out of a shabad and complete in itself has thus been introduced as a sub-sākhi into an earlier cluster of sakhis concerning Bābur.

The part played by the imagination of the narrator becomes even clearer when this Bābur anecdote is compared with the Purātan version of Bābā Nānak's visit to Mecca.⁴ In this composite sākhi the same shabad appears within a different discourse, this time with a Mecca pilgrim serving as interlocutor. Evidently the bhang-consuming interlocutor had to be a Muslim. The Colebrooke narrator (to whom the Mecca version can be traced) chose a hāji whereas the unknown narrator followed by the B40 and Ādi Sākhīs compilers decided that Bābur would be an appropriate choice.⁵ The Hāfsīzābad compiler, with access to both sources, includes both discourses.⁶

These procedures will be further analysed when discussing the evolution of individual sakhis. Two further points should, however, be noted before proceeding to the fourth important constituent of the janam-sākhis. The first is that the processes indicated above should not be interpreted as explicitly conscious procedures and certainly not as examples of deliberate fabrication. Such an assumption would imply a variety of understanding which the janam-sākhi narrators did not possess and criteria which they could never have used. The point has already been made with the works of Bhai Gurdās, but it is of sufficient importance to warrant repetition. The approach of the janam-sākhi narrators was not that of historians. Their primary concern was with a single belief, namely belief in the divine mission of Bābā Nānak. This was for them the essential truth. The variety and nature of the material which they employed was of secondary importance. No question of deceit would normally be involved in the use

of ‘unhistorical’ material. It was the basic myth which demanded their faithful allegiance and with rare exceptions their allegiance was unswerving.

The second point to be noted at this stage is that although there are many sākhis and sub-sākhis which have been developed out of the Gurū’s compositions their number is not nearly as substantial as first appearances might suggest. A cursory reading of almost any janam-sākhī will reveal numerous quotations from the works of Nānak, most of them presented as integral parts of the sākhīs in which they occur. Only a small minority of the large total have actually participated in the development of their contextual sākhīs. The large majority are subsequent additions to evolved sākhīs. Although they may still be regarded as constituents of the janam-sākhīs they are constituents in a much more superficial sense than works which have actually served to generate sākhīs.

Most extracts from the works of Nānak have been added because their terminology, content, or some particular reference seems to accord with the theme of an available sākhī. A transparent example is provided at the conclusion of the B40 version of the sākhī ‘Bābā Nānak’s Visit to the Pilgrimage-centres’. The Adi Sākhīs analogue terminates the sākhī at the point where Bābā Nānak’s ‘first disciples’ give away all their possessions in order to live as bairāgis.

Having given them his blessing he went on his way.¹

The B40 compiler has at this point responded to the ever-insistent impulse to expand.

Having given them his blessing he went on his way singing an asṭapadi in the measure Tilang rāga.

Wondrous is the Kingdom of Poverty,
The domain wherein there are no pretensions to greatness.²

Whereas in this example it is the theme of the shabad which has prompted the addition, elsewhere a single brief reference has been sufficient to suggest a scriptural supplement. An example is provided by the anecdote entitled ‘The Monster’s Cauldron’. Once again it is the Adi Sākhīs analogue which provides the earlier text and it is a text which completely lacks scriptural quotation.³ In the B40 and other versions, however, a shabad by Gurū Arjan has been added in the mistaken belief that it is by Gurū Nānak.⁴ The sākhī describes how when the monster sought to boil Bābā Nānak in a cauldron the oil refused to heat.⁵ The shabad by Gurū Arjan includes the line:

The seething cauldron has lost its heat, for the Gurū has applied to it the cooling Name.

Although it is clear that Gurū Arjan was using the cauldron as an image for the troubled human heart, the similarity in terminology was evidently

too strong to be resisted and the shabad was accordingly added to the sākhī. ¹

The introduction of compositions by later Gurūs is a common inconsist­
ency. Another is the manner in which different narrators interpolate the
same shabad or shalok at different places. Many of the suggestive themes
and references which have prompted interpolation can find congenial
locations in more than one sākhī. An example is Mārū ⁶ in which Gurū
Nānak describes himself as a slave (lālā).² His meaning can only be 'a slave
of God', but this is not explicitly stated and two narrators have independ­
ently interpreted it in a literal sense. In the B4o janam-sākhī it has been
appended without further comment to a sākhī concerning a child who was
to be sold into slavery by his parents.⁴ The Purātan janam-sākhīs, in
contrast, have introduced it into the sākhī describing the sack of Saidpur
at the point where Bābā Nānak is said to have been committed to the
Saidpur jail. In this latter instance a brief sub-sākhī has been developed
from the shabad.⁴

Another example is provided by the shabad Basant Hindol ¹, where the
prompting issues from the fifth and sixth stanzas.

And now the Primal One is called Allāh and it is the writ of the sheikhs which
runs in Hindustān.⁵

One narrator, whose version was subsequently followed by the Ādī
Sākhīs, B4o, and Miharbān janam-sākhīs, somewhat inappropriately chose
the Mecca visit as a suitable point to insert the shabad.⁶ For him the
reference to Muslims was sufficient. It was a more alert Bālā narrator who
appreciated the distinctively Indian context of Nānak's comments and
who was thus able to select a more suitable setting. The sākhī which he
chose was a discourse between Bābā Nānak and a Muslim named Sheikh
Mālo Takhān.⁷ In this latter instance it is possible that the shabad may
have been responsible for the development of the discourse. The same
question arises in the case of a shalok from Vār Āsā which is said to have
been addressed to a wealthy misanthrope named Bhāgo. In one tradition
this Bhāgo appears as a resident of Saidpur in the celebrated story of Lālo
the Carpenter;⁸ and in the other as a chaudhari of Lahore.⁹ Whereas the
latter appears to be a direct development from the shalok the former is
more doubtful.

It is thus evident that a majority of the scriptural quotations included
in the janam-sākhīs are interpolations. Amongst those which appear as
later supplements rather than original components some have been

¹ The interpretation suggested in GNSR, p. 79, is incorrect. The sākhī cannot have evolved out
of the shabad.
² AG, p. 991.
³ B4o, f. 508a.
⁴ Pur JS, p. 60. For an example of two complete sākhīs developed in this manner see below,
pp. 128–9.
⁵ AG, pp. 1190–1.
⁷ Bālā JS, p. 339.
⁸ SLTGN(Eng), pp. 75–6. In this tradition Bhāgo is said to be a Khatri and a karori.
⁹ Mih JS 11.385–6. The Bhāgo of the Miharbān tradition is said to be a Khahirā Jaṭa and to have
been accompanied by a Dīlavāri Khatri named Gaṅgō. The shalok is Vār Āsā 17:1, AG, p. 472.
introduced for pedagogical reasons, and a few for motives which are no longer evident. Pedagogical intentions are a prominent feature of the Miharbān tradition, particularly in the second and third sections of the extant Miharbān janam-sākhī. In a sense, of course, all additions drawn from the works of Guru Nanak are intended to serve this function. All have been introduced to strengthen the soteriological thrust of the janam-sākhīs. Because they represent subsequent additions to earlier traditions they are also of interest as a means of distinguishing later versions from their earlier sources.

An anecdote which illustrates most of the features associated with the use of scriptural quotations in the janam-sākhīs is ‘Bābā Nānak’s Discourse with the Physician’. The anecdote represents, in the first place, a sākhī which has been developed out of a composition by Guru Nanak, aided by a shalok of Guru Angad and two apocryphal shaloks. The composition by Guru Nānak is also a shalok:

They called a physician to practise his art, to seize my wrist and feel my pulse.

The ignorant physician was unaware that the pain is in my heart!

The other three couplets all express a similar message and there can be no doubt that the genesis of the sākhī is to be found in one or more of the four. In its original form the sākhī must have consisted of a brief introduction, at least one of the four shaloks, and the physician’s concluding declaration.

The second feature illustrated by this sākhī is the subsequent addition of scriptural quotations which seem to accord with its theme. Having emerged as a brief, coherent anecdote the sākhī was taken up by two separate traditions. During transmission within one of these traditions it was expanded by the addition of Guru Nānak’s Malār 7, a shabad which seemed eminently suited to its theme. Malār 7 begins:

Bring no medicine, O ignorant physician.
It is this heart of mine which suffers, not my body.
Such medicine is worthless, foolish physician.

Meanwhile a narrator within the other tradition had made a different choice. Instead of Malār 7 he had selected Malār 8 as a suitable addition. This he did for precisely the same reason. Malār 8 begins:

Bring no medicine, O ignorant physician,
For it is my heart which suffers torment.

1 B4o, between ff. 14b and 19a. The B4o text of this sākhī is missing, but has been reconstructed with the help of the manuscript LDP 194. See B4o(Eng), introduction, pp. 28–31.
3 Photozincograph Facsimile (Dehra Dīn, 1885), p. 35. In the Adi Granth version this refrain follows the first stanza, and its second line reads:
Pain lingers, agony still racks my body.

AG, p. 1256.

The janam-sākhī tradition into which this addition was introduced has been designated Narrative 1a. See below, pp. 185–7.

4 B4o, between ff. 14b and 19a. AG, pp. 1256–7. The janam-sākhī tradition which incorporates this supplement is Narrative 1b. One compiler utilizing Narrative 1b sources quotes Malār 7, not Malār 8. AS, p. 13. Malār 8 is, however, confined to Narrative 1b janam-sākhīs and clearly represents an addition made within that tradition.
Both of these shabads were added because of their evident affinities with the subject of the anecdote.

A third feature appears only in the first of the two traditions. A narrator within this tradition later appended the shabad *Gaurī* 17. This he did for reasons which are difficult to understand. The theme of the hymn bears no obvious resemblance to that of the sākhī. Moreover the addition has been made at the conclusion of the sākhī, following the physician's final pronouncement. Unlike *Malār* 7 it has not been integrated into the narrative.

A fourth feature, already implied by the second and third, emerges clearly from a comparison of the various versions of the Physician sākhī. This is the manner in which the sākhī has progressively expanded with successive versions. Although no text of the original form exists, its presence in the earliest oral tradition may be deduced from the differences distinguishing the two recorded traditions. The earliest of the recorded texts is represented by *LDP* 194 and the reconstructed *B40* sākhī. This corresponds to the second of the traditions noted above. The first tradition emerges, in a much later form, in the *Colebrooke Janam-sākhī*. Both traditions united in the composite *Hāfizābād Janam-sākhī*.

The Physician sākhī provides a preliminary illustration of the manner in which the scriptural constituent has been utilized by janam-sākhī narrators. Other examples of greater complexity will be discussed in the section dealing with the evolution of selected individual sākhīs.

4. **ASCETIC IDEALS**

The last of the major constituents is of a markedly different nature from the remainder. It derives not from earlier compositions, whether current anecdotes or works of the Gurū, but from a prevailing attitude or ideology. This is the ancient and tenacious belief in the supreme merit of asceticism. In one sense this constituent can be regarded as an aspect of received tradition, for it was as a part of tradition in the wider sense that the ascetic ideal exerted its powerful pressure upon the janam-sākhī narrators. It could not, however, be classified as an aspect of the other major constituent noted above. The ascetic ideals which find expression in the janam-sākhīs are diametrically opposed to Gurū Nānak's own emphatically stated beliefs. Nānak himself maintained a moderate position, a disciplined worldliness which was opposed to laxity on the one hand and total renunciation on the other.

It is a measure of the power exercised by the ascetic tradition that it could so effectively reassert itself against Nānak's explicit opposition. This

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5 *GNSR*, p. 211.
is not to suggest that its resurgence affected all sections of the new community, nor that Nānak's own teachings were buried in an avalanche of restored traditions. On the contrary, the emphasis upon the old ideals seems to have been the work of a particular group within the community.¹ It was, however, an influential group and it could appeal to deeply rooted sympathies. Its strength is abundantly evident from the extent to which the ascetic ideal has affected many of the janam-sañhī narratives.

As with all janam-sañhī constituents the ascetic tradition mingles with other elements. Sometimes it is the dominant element, sometimes it plays a subordinate though integrated role, and sometimes it emerges in the form of an interpolation. An example of the third of these appears in the Purātātan version of the sañhī variously entitled 'Bābā Nānak's Visit to Gujrat' and 'Dūnī Chand's Flags'. This relates an anecdote concerning a wealthy man who flaunted his riches by means of a display of symbolic pennants.² According to the B40 version (a narrative which seems to have been taken directly from oral sources) Bābā Nānak's response to the rich man's conversion is simply one of joy.³ The Purātātan janam-sañhīs add to this a statement which can only be interpreted as a commendation of the renunciant life.

'Give in God's name,' answered the Gurū. 'Feed ascetics (attit) and wandering holy men (abhiāgat) for it is in this manner that your wealth will be carried into the hereafter.'⁴

Whereas the first instruction accords with Gurū Nānak's own ideals the second does so only in a strictly qualified sense which would not be the meaning intended by the narrator. Normally the distinction would be completely overlooked by a janam-sañhī audience. In this manner traditional beliefs which had been modified or rejected by the Gurū were soon restored to the community of his followers.

An example of combination with other constituents is the 'Sack of Saidpur' sañhī. Two primary elements can be recognized in this instance. The first is an authentic incident, namely the Mughal invasions of the Pañjāb and specifically Bābūr's attack on the town of Saidpur;⁵ and the second is a group of four shabads by Gurū Nānak which refer in general terms to Bābūr's invasions.⁶ The ascetic ideal provides a third constituent, subordinate to the other two but nevertheless important and richly embroidered by later narrators. Bābūr attacked Saidpur (so it is claimed) because the churlish inhabitants of the town had refused hospitality to Bābā Nānak and the group of faqirs who were with him.⁷ In the proto-anecdote the explanation was probably limited to disrespect for the Gurū. The later narrators, however, magnify the explanation into something much larger. It is not merely the Gurū who was insulted but faqirs in

¹ Probably the Udāsī sādhūs. The ascetic ideal obviously commanded a considerable following within the group responsible for the Mīharbān tradition. It continues to find expression today in the surviving Udāsī panth and amongst the sañhīs of the Nirmālī panth. Both groups maintain their links with the wider Sikh community. For the Udāsīs see above, p. 35 and B40(Eng), p. 96.
² B40, ff. 189a–190a.
³ B40, f. 189b.
⁴ Pur JS, p. 71.
⁵ GNSR, p. 138.
⁶ Ibid., p. 135.
⁷ B40, ff. 66b–68b.
CONSTITUENTS OF THE JANAM-SĀKHĪS

general, and faqīrs are explicitly distinguished from householders.1 Once again the departure from Nānak's own teachings becomes apparent.

In this instance the ascetic element is secondary. A sākhī in which it plays a primary role is the Bālā anecdote entitled Kharā Saudā or 'The Good Bargain'.2 Bābā Nānak, having received twenty rupees from his father for a small commercial enterprise, gives the entire amount to a band of wandering sādhūs. Once again the pressure of the ascetic ideal, with its marked deference to total renunciation, is abundantly evident.

From a number of sākhīs included in the Ādi Sākhīs and the B4ō Janam-sākhī (and descending from the former to the Miharbān Janam-sākhī) it appears that a section of the Sikh community which subscribed to the ascetic ideal may once have produced its own distinctive janam-sākhī. In the B4ō Janam-sākhī these sākhīs occur in two clusters (numbers 20–1 and 25–7).3 There can be no doubt that these anecdotes have been taken from a single common source by the B4ō and Ādi Sākhīs compilers.4 In view of the consistent emphasis laid upon asceticism and renunciation in these clusters it seems reasonable to conclude that they must have originated (at least in their extant form) within an ascetically inclined segment of the community. These sākhīs represent Bābā Nānak as a performer of austerities5 and as one who sought total withdrawal from the world.6 It is no accident that Gorakhnāth, with his immense reputation for ascetic accomplishments, should be accorded a particular respect within this group of sākhīs.

Received tradition and the works of Gurū Nānak provide the two most important constituents of the janam-sākhīs. A continuing ascetic ideal accounts for a third, and a fourth is occasionally supplied by memories of authentic incidents. A single constituent is rarely found in complete isolation. Most sākhīs are products of a blending of constituents, and in many instances the mingling process has reached a considerable degree of complexity. Whereas in all cases the choice of elements has been largely determined by the primary purpose of the janam-sākhī narrators, the form and content of their actual expression has been moulded by the cultural context within which the janam-sākhīs evolved. The impact of Gurū Nānak upon certain areas of sixteenth-century Pañjāb society produced a conviction concerning the meaning of his life and teachings. To give this belief concrete and convincing expression there soon accumulated a body of tradition, most of it consisting of anecdote and discourse. Although this tradition inevitably drew much of its material from earlier traditions it nevertheless possessed a freshness and a novelty of its own. This it acquired by reason of the new focus for the tradition and also as a result of the function it served in giving expression to the distinctive needs of the new community.

1 B4ō, f. 68b. 2 Bālā JS, pp. 16–22. GNSR, p. 83. See also SLTGN(Eng), p. 65. 3 B4ō, ff. 76a–82a, 100a–110a. See below, p. 203. 4 The source is the Q2 manuscript. It appears that the Q2 compiler may have used a particular source for these sākhīs. See below, p. 206. 5 B4ō, ff. 76a, 102b–103a, 103b. 6 B4ō, f. 106b.
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JANAM-SĀKHĪ FORMS

The intention of the janam-sākhī narrators was to give expression to their interpretations of the life and teachings of Guru Nānak. For this purpose they required appropriate forms. If the purpose was to be fulfilled it was essential that the chosen forms should provide coherent statements of their interpretations in a manner agreeable to their intended audiences, and it was inevitable that this requirement should be answered by means of extensive borrowing from contemporary models. The janam-sākhī narrators were not conscious artists, much less deliberate innovators. It was the message which concerned them and it was entirely natural that they should unconsciously adapt existing forms in order to give it expression. Narrative patterns which well suited their purpose were already abundantly familiar to their audiences. These provided the narrators with their models.

The principal exemplar followed by the janam-sākhī narrators was the tāzkira of Sūfī hagiography. The Sūfī tāzkiras were collections of biographical anecdotes which related the wondrous deeds of celebrated pirs. This was precisely the pattern which the janam-sākhī narrators required and they slipped into it with complete ease. In some cases their debt to Sūfī tradition extended to exact borrowings of complete anecdotes. Even the distinctively Indian elements in the janam-sākhī style can, in some measure, be associated with the Sūfī example, for Sūfī hagiography within India had itself engaged in extensive borrowing of native forms.

It is, of course, possible to carry this self-evident theory of correspondence too far and to assume that all varieties of janam-sākhī forms should be attributed to Sūfī models. This is certainly not the case. The beginnings of the janam-sākhī traditions must be closely linked with Sūfī forms and the continuing anecdotal method retains that connection. There are, however, other forms to be found within the janam-sākhīs and here the relationship is that of similarity rather than correspondence. Janam-sākhī discourse and commentary are not the same as the Sūfī forms.

The impression which emerges from a comparison of janam-sākhī and Sūfī traditions is that of an early assumption of the standard narrative forms used by the Sūfis, followed by an increasing divergence as the janam-sākhīs grow in age and quantity. The needs of the Sikh community were not identical with the interests of Sūfī hagiographers, and just as the initial correspondence was inevitable so too was the later divergence. Although this applied to actual content rather than form the latter was by

1 The anecdote concerning Bābā Nānak's visit to Multān provides an example. See below, pp. 118–20
no means uninfluenced by the distinctive needs of the evolving community.

The principal forms used by janam-sakhī narrators and commentators have already been briefly summarized. They will now be analysed in greater detail.

1. **NARRATIVE ANECDOTES**

The narrative anecdote was the earliest of all janam-sakhī forms and has ever since remained dominant in all janam-sakhīs except that of the Miharbān tradition. This at once indicates a plain debt to the Sūfī models. It should, however, be added that even without the example of the tazkira the janam-sakhī narrators would still have employed an anecdotal style. The anecdote is unusually well suited to the needs of hagiography. It provides ample scope for an unending series of decisive actions, pointed epigrams, and evidences of divine approval. These are the obvious concerns of the janam-sakhī hagiographers and their extensive use of the anecdotal form is a predictable consequence.

Although most of the individual anecdotes are marked by a pithy brevity this feature has been somewhat obscured by the general tendency of narrators to group them into clusters. A particular person, place, or theme has commonly attracted more than one anecdote and clusters of this kind have frequently been recast as a single composite sakhī or as a brief series of consecutive sakhīs. The process is clearly illustrated by the later janam-sakhī treatments of several Mecca anecdotes, and by some of the sakhīs which describe encounters with Nāths.¹ Most of the longer narrative sakhīs are fashioned in this manner from a number of separate anecdotes, often with a considerable degree of skill. It is only occasionally that the specifically narrative portion of a single anecdote will run to several folios of a manuscript, and whenever this does occur it usually succeeds only in weakening the force of the anecdote's message. An unusually clumsy example is the B40 sakhī entitled 'Bābā Nānak Enslaved in the Land of the Paṭhāns'.²

Cumbersome narrative structures are, however, rare. Single anecdotes which run to excessive length normally do so because scriptural quotations have been inserted. These interpolations also tend to weaken the impact of an anecdote, and although they have obviously been introduced to serve the primary purpose of the janam-sakhīs it may well be suspected that they frequently produced the opposite effect. Whereas a single shabad would be tolerable a series which interrupted an interesting narrative could defeat the narrator's purpose.

A clarification which is required at this point concerns the distinction which must be drawn between anecdote and sakhī. In its normal usage 'sakhī' designates no more than a chapter or section of a janam-sakhī. A sakhī may, and often does, contain only one anecdote, but this should not imply an identity of meaning. The limitation of each sakhī to a single

¹ See below, examples 7 and 8, pp. 135–57.
² B40, ff. 163b–170b.
anecdote must have been a general feature of the earliest traditions, becoming progressively less common as the narratives diversify and the grouping of anecdotes advances. Whereas single-anecdote sākhis dominate material drawn direct from oral tradition, composite sākhis containing more than one anecdote (or sub-sākhī) rapidly evolved within the recorded traditions. Moreover, these composite sākhis frequently embodied distinctly different forms of anecdote and discourse. The term sākhī, in its strict sense, thus designates a convenient division. It is not itself a janam-sākhī prose form.

The narrative anecdotes of the janam-sākhīs may be subdivided into four categories. There are moralistic anecdotes, chimeric fairy-tales, devotional legends, and aetiological legends. All serve to express the same myth, but do so in distinctively different ways.

(a) Moralistic anecdotes

The moralistic anecdote serves, as its name so plainly indicates, to point a particular moral. This it may do either in a brief concluding statement by Bābā Nānak or, less commonly, by means of a parabolic action attributed to him. Brevity is vital if success is to be achieved and for this reason the moralistic anecdote is normally distinguished by succinct expression. The form is particularly prominent in the Purātan janam-sākhīs, a feature which indicates a special interest on the part of the principal Colebrooke compiler. It is to this anonymous person that we owe the following five examples of highly effective moralistic anecdote.

**The Inhospitable Village Umneusted and the Hospitable Village Dispersed**

They departed from there and proceeding on their way they came to a village. They stopped there, but no one would give them shelter. Instead the inhabitants jeered at them. They moved on to the next town where they were warmly welcomed. Spending the night there they departed the next day. As they were leaving the Gurū declared, ‘May this town be uprooted and its inhabitants scattered.’

‘This is strange justice,’ observed Mardānā. ‘The place where we received no hospitality you left alone, and the town which welcomed us so warmly you have uprooted.’

‘Mardānā,’ replied the Gurū, ‘the inhabitants of the first town would go to another and corrupt it. When the inhabitants of this town go to another they will bring it truth and salvation.’

**Sheikh Bajid**

On the road Bābā Nānak and Mardānā met Sheikh Bajid Sayyid riding in a litter

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1 An example of this variety of material is supplied by the B40 sākhīs 35–49 and 51. Loc. cit., ff. 154b–199a, 2048–205a. Even here there are instances of dual-anecdote sākhīs (e.g. 35, 43, 44, 49), although the two portions are rarely blended in the manner of the later composite sākhīs.

2 The compiler of the Hiifi::ablad Janam-sākhī (the other major Purātan janam-sākhī) has evidently copied all his moralistic anecdotes from his Colebrooke source.

3 Pur JS, p. 40. GNSR, pp. 41–2.
carried by six bearers. The Sheikh alighted beneath a tree and his bearers began to massage and fan him.

'Is there not one God?' asked Mardānā.

'God is indeed one, Mardānā,' replied Bābā Nānak.

'Then who created him, my Lord?' asked Mardānā. 'Who created the one who rides in a palanquin whilst these others are barefoot and their bodies naked? They bear him on their backs, whereas he reclines and is massaged.'

Bābā Nānak answered him, 'All who enter the world come naked from the womb. Joy and pain come in accordance with the deeds of one's previous existence.'

Mardānā prostrated himself.¹

Sheikh Farīd and the Gold Coins

Bābā Nānak and Sheikh Farīd spent the night together in the jungle. A devout person happened to pass that way and seeing them he returned to his home. There he filled a bowl with milk and having dropped four gold coins into it he brought it back during the early hours of the morning. Sheikh Farīd took his share and left the Gurū his portion.

'Sheikh Farīd, stir this milk with your hand and see what is in it,' said Bābā Nānak. When Sheikh Farīd did so he discovered the four gold coins. The devout donor put down the bowl and departed. . . Bābā Nānak and Sheikh Farīd also departed and when the donor returned he found the bowl sitting there. Picking it up he discovered that it was now made of gold and filled with gold coins. Then he began to lament, saying, 'They were true faqirs. He who comes with an open heart finds true faith, whereas he who brings worldly things receives a worldly reward.' He picked up the bowl and returned home.²

Bābā Nānak explains the Destruction of Saidpur

One day Mardānā asked, 'Why have so many been slain when only one did wrong?'

'Go and sleep under that tree, Mardānā,' answered the Gurū. 'When you get up I shall give you an answer.'

And so Mardānā went and slept there. Now a drop of grease had fallen on his chest while he was eating and while he was sleeping it attracted ants. One ant happened to disturb the sleeping Mardānā who responded by wiping them all away with his hand.

'What have you done, Mardānā?' asked Bābā Nānak.

'All have died because one disturbed me,' exclaimed Mardānā.

Bābā Nānak laughed and said, 'Mardānā, thus does death come to many because of one.'³

A Pious Boy

One day the Gurū decreed that there should be communal singing (kirtan) during the last watch of the night. A boy seven years of age used to leave his house and come and stand behind the Gurū during the kirtan. After the ārati had been sung he would depart. One day Bābā Nānak said, 'Detain the boy today.' After the boy had prostrated himself and was on his way out the other members of the congregation stopped him and brought him to the Gurū.

² Pur JS, pp. 43-4. GNSR, p. 42.
³ Pur JS, p. 65. GNSR, p. 44.
Bābā Nānak addressed him, 'Boy, you who arise and come at such an hour, why do you come? This is the time of life for eating, playing and sleeping.'

'Sir,' replied the boy, 'one day my mother said to me, “Light the fire, son.” I lit the fire and as I placed the wood on it the little sticks kindled first then later the bigger ones. I became afraid, thinking that like the firewood we who are small may have to depart first. We may perhaps reach adulthood—but then perhaps we may not. And so I decided that I should repeat the Guru’s name.'

Hearing this the congregation was struck with wonder. The Gurū was delighted and the boy fell at his feet.¹

Of these five anecdotes only the last constitutes a separate and complete sākhī. The first has unaccountably been divided into two sākhīs, and the remainder have all been incorporated in composite sākhīs. Scriptural quotations have been added to all except the fourth. In the case of ‘Sheikh Bajīd’ the quotation (an apocryphal shalok) may have provided the actual genesis of the brief narrative.

Two anecdotes of the moralistic variety which have enjoyed a notable popularity within the Sikh community are the Bālā stories entitled respectively ‘The Good Bargain’ and ‘Lālo and Bhāgo’.² The second of these, a relatively late development, provides perhaps the most striking of all parables within the range of the janam-sākhīs. Abbreviated versions of both anecdotes have been included in the Mahimā Prakāś Vāratak, and it is from the text of this latter collection that the following translations have been made.

The Good Bargain

Even after his marriage, however, Bābāji’s spirit was still restless and Kālū, when he perceived this, was greatly disheartened. ‘Whatever can we do to calm Nānak’s restless spirit?’ he asked himself. He tried another idea. ‘Do some trading, son,’ he said, and gave him a capital of twenty rupees, together with a servant, in order to procure some fine yarn. Bābāji set out to purchase the yarn. On the way he observed a large number of sādhūs sitting in a jungle, and tarrying in their company he conversed with them about God. Following this discourse Bābāji laid the twenty rupees before the sādhūs and returned home.

When he arrived Kālū said to him, ‘Show us the merchandise which you have brought, son.’

‘Father,’ replied Bābāji, ‘I have returned after striking a most profitable bargain!’

‘He has returned after giving the money to faqirs!’ said the servant.

When he heard this Kālū was greatly disheartened and lost his temper. Rāi Bulār, the landlord, hearing what had happened summoned Kālū and said, ‘Do not trouble Nānak. He is the image of God.’ And so Kālū pardoned him.³

Lālo and Bhāgo

Next he visited the house of Lālo where he remained for some days. Meanwhile news of his arrival spread throughout that area. It so happened that at that time a certain Khātri was holding a yagya. To secure blessings for his deceased forbears

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¹ Pur JS, pp. 72-3. GNSR, pp. 45-6.
² Bālā JS, pp. 16-22, 80-90.
³ SLTGN(Eng), pp. 65-6. GNSR, p. 83.
he had ordered one hundred thousand cows for presentation to Bráhmaṇs and had invited one hundred thousand Bráhmaṇs to the feast. Formerly the name of the village in which Lálo lived had been Saidpur Sarohá. Because of a sin committed by some Paṭháns Bábájí had invoked a curse upon it and the Emperor Bábur had massacred its inhabitants. Subsequently the name was changed to Eminábád in accordance with Bábájí’s command, and having bestowed this new name upon it he had caused the devastated village to be reoccupied.

This foolish Khatri károṭí was at that time holding a yágya and when he heard of Bábájí’s arrival he sent a man to the house of Lálo the carpenter to say that Nának should dine at his house. Bábájí, however, refused the invitation and so when the Bráhmaṇs had taken their seats for the feast the károṭí came to Bábájí and with insistent requests managed to persuade him to come to his own house. Setting a tray of food before him he said, ‘How can an exiled sādhu such as you dine at the house of a mere carpenter? Tell me please why you decline to eat with Bráhmaṇs and Khatriś?’

‘In Lálo’s house,’ replied Bábájí, ‘there lies my vegetable cake. Bring it here.’ The vegetable cake was brought and Bábájí took it in one hand. In the other hand he took one of the károṭí’s fried pastries (púri) and with both hands he squeezed the two articles. From the károṭí’s rich food there oozed blood and from Lálo’s humble vegetable cake there flowed milk. Bábájí then recited a shalok.

\textit{slok mahalá 1}

\begin{quote}
If a thief burgles a house, and having robbed it offers the proceeds as an oblation for his departed forbears,
The stolen property will be recognised in the other world and your forefathers will be accused of theft.
The broker’s hand will be cut off, for thus is divine retribution administered.
Nának, only that which is given from honest earnings can be received in the other world.

Then Bábájí said, ‘Close your eyes, brother károṭí, and witness a spectacle.’ And what should he see but his own forefathers being beaten with shoes by the forefathers of those whose cows he had taken. Awestruck he fell at Bábájí’s feet, saying ‘O Master, let me become your disciple. You are the saviour of the fallen. Let the purpose of my yágya be fulfilled.’ Bábájí took mercy upon him and said, ‘Pay everyone whose cows you have taken and when you have satisfied them make your offering to the Bráhmaṇs.’ The károṭí did as he was instructed and Bábájí, having brought the károṭí’s yágya to fulfiment, went on his way.\textsuperscript{1}
\end{quote}

Another anecdote of this kind which appears in both collections attributes its moral to Gurú Àṅgad:

\begin{quote}
1 \textit{SLTGN(Eng)}, p. 75. In the \textit{Mahimí Praháṭ Kavití} version of the anecdote the Khatri’s name is given as Gursá. \textit{GNM}, pp. 293-4. This anecdote is also of interest as an example of a sákhí which owes a primary element to a reference in one of Nának’s shabads. The name ‘Lálo’ evidently derives from \textit{Tilángh} 5 (\textit{AG}, p. 722). See \textit{GNSR}, pp. 86-7. Popular piety still identifies a house in Eminábád with the actual residence of Lálo. This must be a later building. The town which existed during the lifetime of Gurú Nának (it was at that time called Saidpur) was razed either by Sher Sháh Súrí or earlier by Bábur. The Eminábád which eventually replaced it was not constructed until the reign of Akbar and was built at a distance of one-and-a-half miles from the former site. \textit{Gazetter of the Gujranwala District} 1893-94 (Lahore, 1895), p. 173. For the question of who actually destroyed Saidpur see below, pp. 93-4. See also \textit{B40(Eng)}, pp. 69-70.
\end{quote}
**JANAM-SĀKHĪ FORMS**

**Absolute Loyalty**

One night Bābā Ji asked Bābā Buḍhā, ‘How much of the night remains, Buḍhā?’

‘A watch and a quarter, my Lord,’ replied Buḍhā.

‘How do you know?’ asked Bābā Ji.

‘We who are rural folk can tell by observing the stars,’ answered Buḍhā.

Bābā Ji then asked Gūrū Aṅgad, ‘How much of the night remains, my man?’

‘My Lord,’ he replied, ‘You know full well that whether it is night or whether it is day I am yours. Night or day, it makes no difference.’

Hearing this response Bābā Ji was greatly pleased.

To these examples many more could be added, particularly from the *Purātan* janam-sākhīs. Others included by the Colebrooke compiler are ‘The Death of the Trader’s Infant Son’, ‘A Watchman receives Royal Authority’, and ‘The Coal and the Thorn’. The *Bāro* compiler was evidently less attracted by the moralistic approach, but does find space for two classic anecdotes of this kind, ‘The Watering of the Fields’ and ‘The Rich Man’s Pennants’.

The stories narrated in these anecdotes and the morals which they point are in every case related directly to the purpose of the janam-sākhīs. Moralistic anecdotes serve to express the wisdom of their principal participant, and the credit implied in the janam-sākhī specimens of this form is, of course, attached specifically to Bābā Nānak. In this manner the form provides its own distinctive and attractive contribution to the message of the janam-sākhīs.

(b) **Chimeric fairy-tales**

The chimeric fairy-tale is distinguished from other fairy-stories and legends by the presence of such figures of fantasy as magicians, ogres, and beasts endowed with human faculties. Characters of this kind are to be found in all the janam-sākhīs, with a particular fondness for them evident in those of the Bālā tradition. Although the earlier Mihārbān commentators were evidently reluctant to include the more grotesque variety a late redactor of the Mihārbān *Janam-sākhī* has interpolated a series of unusually bizarre figures. Chimeric fairy-tales are accordingly a significant feature of all extant janam-sākhīs.

Amongst the more popular instances of this form two which have enjoyed a particular prominence are ‘The Monster’s Cauldron’ and ‘The Country Ruled by Women’. The first of these relates how Bābā Nānak, having lost his way in a wilderness, was seized by a rākāś (demon or

1 SLTGN(Eng), pp. 80–1. The anecdote appears in Bālā manuscripts, but not in the printed Bālā *JS*.

2 *Pur JS*, pp. 28–32. *GNSR*, p. 19. All three now include shabads. The first appears to have developed out of the shabad which it incorporates.

3 *Bāro*, ff. 76b–79a.


monster). The monster’s intention was to boil Nānak in a cauldron of oil, a plan which was frustrated when the Guru dipped his finger in the oil. It immediately became cool and the monster, confounded by this miracle, became a disciple. This is the substance of the narrative as it appears in the B4o version.¹ The Ādi Sākhī account omits the reference to the wilderness, but actually places Bābā Nānak in the cauldron and describes in rather more detail the unsuccessful attempt to heat it.² In the interpolated Mihrābān version it is Mardānā who is put in the cauldron.³ The Purātan narrator makes Bābā Nānak a voluntary candidate for stewing and adds that the incident took place ‘on an island in the ocean, in foreign parts’.⁴ In a considerably expanded version the standard Bālā account adds that the monster’s name was Kauṭā.⁵

The figure variously described in this manner is plainly of the chimeric variety. Although in modern usage this word can be rendered ‘cannibal’ or ‘savage’, and although the rākaš encountered by Bābā Nānak certainly numbered cannibalism amongst his qualifications, it is evident that the janam-sākhī narrators envisaged a creature of more than mere human proportions. This is clearly brought out in the illustration which accompanies the B4o version⁶ and to this day Kauṭā the Rākaš provides bazaar lithographers with their choicest opportunity for the exercise of ingenius fancy. The figure was not, of course, an invention of the janam-sākhī narrators. Earlier tradition offered an abundance of incidents involving rākaš (rākṣasa). Rāvaṇ of Lāṅka is the obvious example.

The anecdote entitled ‘The Country Ruled by Women’ has already been noted as an example of a direct borrowing from received tradition.⁷ In this episode interest is focused upon a group of female magicians who turn Mardānā into a sheep by means of an enchanted thread.⁸ These are the famous women of stri déś, a popular theme in earlier legend.⁹

Other examples of the chimeric fairy-tale may be found in all janam-sākhīs. Another popular one, included in all major versions, is the encounter with Kaliyug.¹⁰ Elsewhere in the B4o janam-sākhī Bābā Nānak is confronted by a demon arsonist ‘as high as the heavens’ who made a monthly habit of setting fire to the houses in a particular area.¹¹ The Purātan janam-sākhīs relate anecdotes concerning a city of ants, a talking wolf, and the legendary Khwājā Khizar.¹² Although most of these are missing from the Bālā narrative other representatives of the same form more than compensate for their absence. The Bālā contribution includes a talking fish, seventy miles long and ten miles wide, which carries Bābā

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Nānak across the sea;¹ an encounter with Kāl (Death); a visit to the city of Demon Devalūt, ruler over 1,700,000 gods, who like Kauḍā the Rākaś is fond of boiling people in oil; and a meeting with some ape-men.²

As in the case of the moralistic anecdotes all of these chimeric fairy-tales are used to supplement the janam-sākhi myth. It is true that figures such as Kauḍā the Rākaś and Demon Devalūt appeal enormously to the popular imagination and that this feature alone might justify their inclusion. This, however, is not their primary significance. They have been introduced into the janam-sākhi narratives not merely to entertain but more particularly to provide further illustrations of the authority of Bābā Nānak. Although the women of stri deś wield magical powers of terrifying potency these powers are ineffective against Bābā Nānak. Only one who has received a divine commission could possibly withstand such assaults. Kauḍā, Devalūt, Kaliyug, and all the rest recognize the presence of divinity and fall at his feet. If they who hear these stories make the same submission they too shall find salvation. Thus does the chimeric fairy-tale, like all other forms, serve the basic purpose of the janam-sākhi narrators.

(c) Devotional legends

The basic purpose of the janam-sākhīs is expressed with even greater directness in the third variety of anecdote. The devotional legend seeks to convince or confirm by means of explicit reference to the power possessed by the Gurū, to the quality of his devotion, or to intervention by God on his behalf. This category may be further subdivided as follows:

(i) Wonder-stories  The primary feature of the wonder-story is, in this context, the signification of divine status by means of miraculous deeds or supernatural phenomena. The essential feature of the story is not the miracle itself but rather the conclusion towards which the miracle points. Miracles can be performed only by the person chosen and endowed by God. Bābā Nānak worked miracles and God worked them on his behalf. Here surely is the seal of his divinity. The fact that Gurū Nānak himself laid no such claims in his works is of no importance. For the later believer miraculous events were both a staple tradition and a necessary proof. Their introduction into the janam-sākhis was inevitable.

As one might expect, wonder-stories associated with the Gurū's childhood enjoy a considerable popularity. No janam-sākhi which deals with this period lacks 'The Ruined Crop Restored' or 'The Tree's Stationary Shadow',³ both of them tales of how divine approval was signified by the suspension of natural laws. The child Nānak's discourses with the paṇḍīt and the mullah⁴ provide an interesting parallel to the child Jesus in the Temple; and the later Bālā introduction of a protective cobra illustrates a direct borrowing from earlier tradition.⁵ Tales of dangers

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¹ Cf. the Mahabhārata, Mārkandeya-samāsīyā parva (vana parva CLXXXVI).
³ B40, ff. 7a-9b.
⁵ Bālā JS, p. 14.
survived are curiously absent, but not the predictable emphasis upon the
degeneracy of the period into which Bābā Nānak was born.1 The deeper
the darkness the brighter the rising sun will appear to shine. This feature
still survives in modern accounts of the life of the Gurū.

(ii) Apologetic anecdotes Some janam-sākhī anecdotes have a patently
apologetic purpose, one which at times assumes a distinctly polemical
character. In its positive form the apologetic anecdote seeks to uphold the
claims made on the Gurū’s behalf by means of explicit declarations,
usually issuing direct from the mouth of God. Most janam-sākhī com-
pilers regarded at least one such declaration as essential and an interview
with God is accordingly a standard feature of almost all collections.2

In its negative form the apologetic anecdote involves encounters with
Muslims and Hindus, particularly with the variety who commanded
influence during the janam-sākhī period. Those whose distinctive beliefs
or customs were understood to be in radical conflict with the teachings of
Gurū Nānak also received attention. Bigoted qāzīs3 and punctilious
Brāhmans4 provided obvious targets. They were not, however, the most
suitable interlocutors. Because they were so very obvious the anecdotes
which relate encounters with such figures are usually less effective than
those which concern a more sympathetic kind of Hindu or Muslim.
A pir convinced served the janam-sākhī purpose better than a qāzī
humiliated.

(iii) Sectarian narratives In some instances the apologetic expressed by a
particular anecdote concerns not the wider Sikh community but rather the
distinctive beliefs of some segment of it. The result is the sectarian
anecdote. Sakhīs which in the B4o, Ādi Sakhīs, and Miharbān
collections give expression to an ascetic ideal may be classified in this manner,5 and
likewise the Hindālī material which is to be found in manuscript versions
of the Bālā tradition.6

(d) Aetiological legends

Although the aetiological legend is rare in the janam-sākhīs the few
examples which do appear are of sufficient interest to warrant separate
notice. They include popular etymologies, local legends, and at least one
explanation of a natural phenomenon.

The earliest example of an aetiological legend appears to be the explana-
tion offered by the janam-sākhīs for the second Gurū’s change of name
from Lahaṇā to Aṅgad. This, it is claimed, took place in accordance with a
declaration attributed to Gorakhnāth: ‘Nānak, he who is born from your
body (aṅg) will be your Gurū.’7 The classification of this anecdote as an

1 BG 1:17, 22.  2 B4o sakhī 30, ff. 123b–126b, is an example.
6 See above, p. 17.
7 Pur JS, p. 108. B4o accepts the same etymology. B4o, ff. 93a, 95a.
aetiological legend does not, of course, mean that the janam-sākhīs are necessarily mistaken in claiming that Gurū Arāgad was originally called LahaJā. It is the etymological connection with Gorakhnāth which constitutes the legend.

Another popular etymology attributes the name of the Chinese city of Nanking to a supposed visit by Nānak. This legend, which emerged only very recently and which is still in the process of gaining currency, demonstrates that even today the travel narratives can still be expanded. Whereas the extant janam-sākhīs take Nānak only as far as the Himālayas (and Mount Sumeru), some modern hagiographers are evidently prepared, on the basis of this fanciful etymology, to extend his northern itinerary as far as eastern China.1

Two local legends of the aetiological variety are to be found in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century traditions. The earlier of the two is an obscure story recorded in the Mahimā Prakhās Vāratak which attributes a well in Khādūr village to the divination of the Gurū.2 The second example is both unusually late and tremendously popular. This is the story of Pañjāh Sāhib, an anecdote set in the village of Hasan Abdāl (Attock District). The anecdote relates how Bābā Nānak once came to the village and feeling thirsty he dispatched his companion Mardān to bring water. The only available spring happened to be situated on the crest of a nearby hill, in the keeping of a Muslim dervish named Bāwā Vali Qandhāri. Jealous of the Gurū’s fame Vali Qandhāri refused to permit access to the water, suggesting that if the Gurū were equal to his reputation he would provide his own spring. Bābā Nānak accepted the challenge and opened a fresh spring at the foot of the hill, whereupon the spring on the crest dried up. The enraged Vali Qandhāri then sent an avenging boulder hurtling down towards the Gurū who stopped it merely by raising his hand. The imprint of his hand upon the rock can (so it is claimed) be seen to this day, and for this reason the place is known as Pañjāh Sāhib, or the Holy Palm.

This ‘hand-mark’ has added a second feature to a site which had already inspired a series of aetiological legends. The earlier legends, developed within Buddhist, Hindu, and Muslim tradition, all concerned the springs, which, as Jahāṅgīr was later to note, were unusually limpid.3 Although in the Sikh tradition the springs still play an important role, primary attention has been transferred to the ‘hand-mark’.

The legend of Pañjāh Sāhib is of particular interest not merely for its aetiological characteristics, but for its relative lateness. None of the seventeenth- or eighteenth-century janam-sākhīs refers to it, nor does

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1 Surindar Singh Kohli, Travels of Guru Nanak (Chandigarh, 1969), pp. 57, 127. The same writer suggests that Nānak must have travelled by sea. He claims that the Gurū visited the Malay Peninsula and Singapore, and surmises that he must also have extended his travels to include the archipelago, perhaps also the Philippines and Japan. Ibid., pp. 55–7.

2 SLTGN(Eng), pp. 83–4.

Jahāṅgīr indicate any awareness of its existence.1 Moorcroft and Trebeck, who passed through Hasan Abdāl in 1823, describe the story as 'the probable invention of a very recent date' and imply that it can be traced to the occasion of Ranjit Singh's occupation of the town in 1818.2 In 1866 J. G. Delmerick, while visiting the town, was given an explanation which supported their opinion. Having related the standard tradition concerning the boulder and the 'hand-mark', he continues:

But there are many people still living in the town who openly deny the truth of this story. They remember to have grazed their buffaloes on the site of the tank and temple. They state that one Kaman, a mason, for his own amusement cut out on a stone the impression of a hand, and that on one occasion during the reign of Ranjit Singh, the Sikhs having resolved to punish the inhabitants of the place for some marauding act, they all ran away, except one Naju, a faqir, to the Gandgarh Mountain. Naju was caught, but he declared that he was one of Baba Nanak's faqirs. He was asked how he came to know Baba Nanak, whereupon he showed the handiwork of Kaman, and invented the tale. The Sikhs believed him and set up the stone. Nanda, a very old man, and a Hindu, who is, moreover, a highly respectable resident of the town, admits that before Ranjit Singh's time there was no shrine or place for Hindu worship at Hasan Abdal.3

The 'hand-mark' witnessed by these early travellers was not an incision cut into the rock, but a representation projecting in relief. Hugel described it as a bas-relief4 and the 1893-4 edition of the Gazetteer of the Rawalpindi District as 'a rude representation of a hand in relief'.5 The same feature was again noted by G. B. Scott in 1930.6 It was evidently during the course of 1940 that the original representation in relief was eventually replaced by a crude intaglio cut into the rock. The edges which were at first sharp have now been worn smooth.7

Two more aetiological legends offer points of particular interest. The janam-sākhis explain the destruction of Saidpur by Bābur as divine punishment wreaked upon the town for its callous disregard of the Gurū and his company of faqirs. The point of interest raised by this aspect of the Saidpur story is that it may well supply a historical fact which would otherwise be unknown. What was already known was that Saidpur was

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1 Vādi Qandhāri does appear in the early Bālā tradition, but not in the context of the Paṭjā Sāhib anecdote. Bālā JS, pp. 300–3.
3 J. G. Delmerick quoting an extract from his diary dated 11 February 1866, in PNQ, vol. ii, no. 23 (August 1885), p. 185.
4 Baron Charles von Hugel, Travels in Kashmir and the Panjab (London, 1845), p. 225. Von Hugel, who visited Hasan Abdāl in December 1835, adds that the stone was moved to its present site following the Sikh occupation. Ibid.
5 Loc. cit., p. 35.
7 This information was supplied to the author by three informants who visited the shrine at Paṭjā Sāhib. According to the first informant the carving in relief was still there in early 1940. The second, who visited the site later in the same year, stated that the 'hand-mark' had been incised but that the edges were sharp. The third, whose visit took place in 1964, reported that the edges were smooth.
indeed destroyed and then later rebuilt as Eminābād. *The Gazetteer of the Gujranwala District* attributes the destruction to Sher Shāh Sūri, but does not name a source. The *janam-sākhīs* were sufficiently close to the event to be in contact with authentic memories, and there is every likelihood that their attributing of the event to Bābur is correct. Upon this episode the ascetic ideal has erected an aetiological legend.

The same ascetic ideal was also responsible for a later explanation of how Bābā Nānak happened to have sons. To those of this ascetic persuasion it was unthinkable that the Gurū could be other than completely celibate. It was, however, equally unthinkable that the existence of Siri Chand and Lakhmī Dās could be doubted. The dilemma was eventually solved by resort to a method of conception which would not involve a renunciation of celibacy. Bābā Nānak, after first resisting his mother’s pleas for grandchildren, finally consented for her sake. To fulfil her wish he gave his wife two cloves, thereby inducing parthenogenetic conception of the two boys.

2. **NARRATIVE DISCOURSES**

The closeness of the narrative discourse form to that of the narrative anecdote has already been noted and for this reason it has been allied to the latter rather than to the more developed discourse form which appears in the *Miharbān janam-sākhī*. This should not, however, imply a complete identity. Whereas there is certainly an identity of purpose, the actual form of the narrative discourse is distinctively different from that of the anecdote.

The term *narrative discourse* designates *sakhīs* or sub-*sakhīs* which have taken their origin from compositions by Gurū Nānak and which incorporate these compositions within a contrived conversation or discourse as the response given by Nānak to the questions or comments of an interlocutor. This form should be distinguished on the one hand from the kind of conversation which has not been developed out of a shabad or a shalok; and, on the other, from discourses which have been consciously turned to a didactic purpose by the addition of exegetical supplements. An example of the former is provided by the central portion of the B40 version of the *sākhī* ‘Bābā Nānak’s discourse with Daulat Khān’s Qāzi’. Although this portion of the *sākhī* records a conversation and also includes a series of scriptural quotations the conversation element is in no way dependent upon the quotations. These are mere appendages. The actual conversation relates an independent anecdote and for this reason it has been classified as a narrative anecdote rather than as a narrative discourse. The earlier


2 This particular explanation is to be found in the *Mahimā Prabhā Varatah*, SLTGN(Eng), pp. 78–9. The *Gyān-ratanāvati*, which also relates this story (*GR, sākhī 50*), adds that Nānak also caused his sister Nānakī to conceive in the same manner. To her he gave a clove and a cardamom, as a result of which she gave birth to a son and a daughter.

3 *See below, pp. 98–101.*

4 *B40, ff. 21b–24a.*
portion of the same sākhi can also be regarded primarily as a narrative anecdote relating a conversation, but it should be noted that one of the quotations added to this portion has generated a brief sub-sākhi of the narrative discourse variety.¹

Narrative discourse should also be distinguished from anecdotes which have developed out of individual works of Gurū Nānak but which have not been cast in the form of discourses. Although the celebrated stories of Sajjan the Robber and Mūlā the Khatri plainly derive from compositions of the Gurū neither can be described as a narrative discourse. Both are narrative anecdotes.

The nature of the narrative discourse and its manner of development have already been indicated in the preceding chapter. At this point it will be sufficient to recapitulate the standard pattern appearing in all discourses of this kind. The basis is provided by a quotation from the works of Gurū Nānak. This hymn (or series of couplets) provides the answers which Nānak is said to have given during the course of the discussion. A convenient interlocutor is then introduced and appropriate questions or leading comments are devised to match the answers which Nānak will give. These questions and their answers constitute the substance of the discourse. A brief introductory narrative furnishes a setting, and following the terminal quotation the interlocutor either falls at the Gurū’s feet or (less commonly) withdraws defeated but unrepentant. Most of the compositions which are used in this manner can be safely regarded as the works of Gurū Nānak. The balance consists of a number of apocryphal works, a few by other Gurūs which have been erroneously attached to Nānak, and in one notable instance a series of shaloks attributed to Sheikh Farid. All follow the same structural pattern.

One of the least complicated of the narrative discourses is the brief tale entitled ‘Lamenting Women Commended’ which the B4o compiler attaches to his version of ‘The Encounter with Kaliyug’.

Bābā Nānak and Mardānā then proceeded on their way and came to a village where a death had occurred. Women were lamenting, crying out, ‘Alas! Alas for our Lord! O God! O God!’ Bābā Nānak heard their cries and was greatly saddened. ‘Blessed be this town,’ he said, ‘and blessed be these women who repeat the Name of God.’ He then recited a shalok.

‘Alas! Alas!’ they cry, ‘Woe! Woe!’
They scream and tear their hair.
Let them instead take the divine Name and repeat it.
To such Nānak offers himself a sacrifice.
Bābā Nānak and Mardānā then left that place.²

The basis of this narrative is the cryptic shalok, quoted above in the course of the anecdote, which appears in the Ādi Granth as Surplus Shaloks 6.³
This provides both the setting for the discourse and the words which the lamenting women utter in order to provide an appropriate point of entry for the shalok.

¹ B4o, f. 21a-b. ² B4o, f. 47a-b ³ AG, p. 1410.
Brief discourses of this kind are not as rare as a cursory reading of the janam-sakhis might suggest. They are easily missed, for most of them have been incorporated within composite sakhis in a manner which largely conceals their independent origins. Another example has been given above in the chapter dealing with the constituents of the janam-sakhis. These single-comment discourses are, however, less common than the longer variety embodying a series of questions. 'The Encounter with Kaliyug' offers a more typical illustration of the standard pattern. In this instance the basis of the discourse is furnished by the shabad *Siri Rāg 1*, a highly suggestive work which begins with the words:

If for me there were to be built a palace of pearl encrusted with jewels, Anointed with musk, with saffron, with the fragrance of aloes and sandal, Forbid it, O Lord, that beholding it I should forget Thee and fail to call to mind Thy Name.

Such a stanza indicates an obvious lead for the interlocutor.

Gracious one, if you command I shall erect a palace studded with pearls and anointed with musk.

The second stanza is equally helpful to the narrator.

If the world were to be encrusted with diamonds and rubies, my bed studded with rubies; And if there were to be an alluring damsel, her face glistening with jewels, tempting me with seductive gesture; Forbid it, O Lord, that beholding such temptation I should forget Thee and fail to call to mind Thy Name.

For this reply the following lead-in has been devised:

If you so command I shall encrust the whole world with diamonds, and stud a bed with pearls and rubies.

In this manner the discourse continues until the shabad reaches its conclusion.

The words of the shabad also indicated a narrow range of possible interlocutors. Plainly it would have to be someone who possessed the capacity to make such stupendous promises. An earthly king, however powerful, would be unsuitable. The interlocutor had to be one who could offer to 'encrust the whole world with diamonds' and this promise no human could ever fulfil. This indicated a superhuman interlocutor. In cases of this kind God can sometimes be introduced, but hardly in a discourse which involves an evidently sincere proffering of carnal temptations. The solution adopted by the first narrator was evidently suggested by a Puranic precedent. Kaliyug, a personification of the present evil age, had already appeared in earlier tradition and none could be more appro-

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1 Bibur offers bhang to Bābī Nānak. See above, pp. 74-5.
2 B40, ff. 44a-47a.
4 B40, ff. 44b-45a.
5 B40, f. 45a.
priate for the present need. A suitably fearsome context was accordingly devised with details drawn from traditions of the chimeric variety.

Gradually the darkness and the rain lifted. When they had cleared there appeared the figure of a demon with huge fangs, the top of its head touching the heavens and its feet the ground. Enormous was its belly and terrifying its evil eyes! Fearsomely it advanced towards them . . .

Kaliyug, have failed to intimidate Bābā Nānak in this manner, then advances his series of offers. The Guru utters each of the Siri Rāg 1 stanzas in succession, Kaliyug makes his submission, and the proto-sākhī is complete.

This analysis concerns the first stage in the development of the discourse. The B40 version indicates a second stage. To the simple structure provided by the proto-sākhī a number of extra details have been added, notably an apologetic addendum which gives expression to the evolving self-consciousness of the Sikh community.

The proto-sākhī already provided an unusually clear example of the myth of Nānak, and this addition drives the point home with even greater force. It is, however, no more than an addition. A more advanced stage still is reached when simple discourses are incorporated within composite sākhīs, normally in combination with narrative anecdotes. In some instances the discourse provides the nucleus around which other elements cluster, and in others it is added to an existing nucleus. The composite sākhī concerning Bābā Nānak's meeting with Rāja Śivanābh is an example of the former.

An obvious parallel to the narrative discourse of the janam-sākhīs would appear to be the Persian munāzāra form. The resemblance is, however, strictly superficial and concerns little more than the evident fact that both embody dialogue. The munāzāra is properly understood as a battle of wits, a genuine disputation in which both parties genuinely participate. This distinguishes it from the one-sided question-and-answer, or contrived comment-and-answer, pattern of the janam-sākhīs. Similarly the regular occurrence of questions in the janam-sākhī form should not suggest that the janam-sākhī discourse bears any significant resemblance to the Muslim mas'ala. The mas'ala is a question arising from a dispute which is put to a mujtahid and which he answers with a fatwā. The nearest approach which the janam-sākhīs make to this form is the manner in which the Miharbān commentators provide suitable contexts for their exegesis by bringing a Sikh or group of Sikhs to Bābā Nānak with questions suited to the passages which they wish to expound. This is, however, far removed from the mas'ala. Moreover, it is distinct from the narrative discourse form. Exegetical intentions are a feature of the third of the janam-sākhī forms.

1 See above, pp. 65–6. Buddhist traditions concerning the temptations of the Buddha may also have aided the structuring of the discourse.
2 B40, f. 44a.
3 B40, ff. 46a-47a.
5 B40, f. 71a-b. See above, pp. 74–5.
3. DIDACTIC DISCOURSES

It is a fundamental difference of intention which distinguishes the narrative discourse from the didactic discourse. Most didactic discourses actually use the narrative discourse as a basis, but transform it by the addition of a lengthy exegetical supplement. The conscious intention of the Miharbān commentators responsible for the development of the didactic variety of discourse was exposition of the works of Nānak. The narrative discourse provided them with a convenient vehicle, and in accordance with their primary purpose they attached to the scriptural quotations which recur in many of the narrative discourses passages which purported to explain the meaning of those quotations. In most cases there was no need to depart from the established pattern of the narrative discourse form. It was sufficient to add the words tīs kā paramārath after each quotation, and then insert the exegesis. The formula tīs kā paramārath means ‘its sublime meaning’, and because these words appear with such unfailing regularity the exegetical supplement which they introduce is sometimes designated the paramārath form.¹

The difference between the narrative discourse and the didactic discourse is conveniently illustrated by the B40 version of the sākhī entitled ‘Bābā Nānak’s Discourse with Sheikh Braham’.² The sākhī is primarily based upon the series of shaloks attributed to Sheikh Farīd, together with some similar works of Gūrū Nānak. These compositions were developed into a narrative discourse of the standard question-and-answer pattern, and this must have been the full extent of the proto-sākhī. The B40 compiler has, however, interpolated a section borrowed from a Miharbān version of the same sākhī.³ In this particular instance he does not use the customary tīs kā paramārath formula, but much of the extra material which he introduces is of precisely this paramārath kind. Another example is provided by a similar interpolation in the sākhī ‘A Discourse with Siddhs at Achal’, where the borrowing includes the introductory formula.⁴

These two examples are, however, strictly interpolations, with neither making any substantial difference to the structure of the discourse in which it occurs. Didactic discourses are untypical of the B40 collection and of all other janam-sākhīs except those of the Miharbān tradition. Whereas discourses of this kind are the standard form for the Miharbān Janam-sākhīs they appear in other janam-sākhīs only as borrowings taken from various recensions of the Miharbān Janam-sākhīs.⁵ Exegetical supplements grafted on to narrative discourses are the stock form used by the commentators responsible for the Miharbān Janam-sākhī, and the term which they have applied to the form (gōṭ) can conveniently be

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² B40, ff. 57b–65b. For a more detailed analysis of the sākhī see below, pp. 131–5.
³ B40, ff. 60a–64b.
⁴ B40, ff. 118b–120a. The Adi Sākhīs also include a similar interpolation at this point. AS, pp. 73–5. See below, p. 206. Both compilers have used the same source.
⁵ In addition to the two examples noted above the principal Miharbān borrowings included in the B40 Janam-sākhī are to be found on folios 2b–5b, 112a–b, and 210a–218a.
retained as an alternative label for their variety of discourse. Although the word goft means simply ‘discourse’ its usage in this study is limited to didactic discourses bearing the hallmarks of the Miharbān tradition.

In its more advanced stages the didactic discourse is distinguished by more than the mere addition of exegesis. A developed goft expresses a particular theme and it is to the enunciation of this theme that the commentator’s efforts are directed. In most cases the theme is suggested by the shabad or shalok which provides the nucleus of the discourse. A few have, however, been constructed in defence of a preconceived view concerning particular doctrinal issues.

This latter variety is well illustrated by the only Miharbān borrowing to have been recorded as a complete and separate unit by the B40 compiler. The borrowing appears in the B40 Janam-sākhī as two consecutive discourses with closely related themes. The first (B40 sākhī 54) insists upon an obligation to meditate upon the divine Name (nām simaran) during the early hours of the morning; and the second (B40 sākhī 55) extends the same insistence to include an early-morning bathe. Both have been constructed point by point and may be represented in the following summary form:

**The Way of Salvation**

**Goft 1** (B40 sākhī no. 54, ff.210a–214a)

**Theme:** The necessity of nām simaran.

**Interlocutor:** Gurū Aṅgad.

**Setting:** Bābā Nānak goes to bathe in the Rāvī river during the last watch of the night. He then meditates and sings praises to God.

**Treatment:**

- Niim simaran must be performed early in the morning every day.
- An exhortation to resist the temptation to abandon the discipline.
- The reward of following the discipline.
- The importance of associating with the few perfected devotees who have already discovered the way.

**Goft 2** (B40 sākhī no. 55, ff.214b–218a)

**Theme:** The daily discipline.

**Interlocutor:** Gurū Aṅgad.

**Setting:** Bābā Nānak sits in Kartārpur during the third watch of the night.

**Treatment:**

- The merit of early rising and bathing.
- An exhortation to follow truth and goodness throughout the remainder of the day.
- The fate of those who practise falsehood and deceit.
- The necessity of nām simaran reaffirmed; oral repetition specified as the proper method.
- The human body as the dwelling-place of God.
Each point of the argument is supported by an appropriate quotation, with intervening dialogue constructed out of the material provided by the passages quoted and from the distinctive doctrines which the commentator wishes to communicate. In some instances this is skilfully done; in others it is patently naive.

Gurū Angadī then asked, 'Respected Bābāji, He who is called God—where does He live? In what village does He dwell? ...'

This enables the commentator to introduce a quotation referring to the dwelling-place of the divine Name, but his method is on this occasion scarcely felicitous. Such crudities are, however, very rare.

It seems clear that the B40 compiler introduced these two Miharbān discourses because of a personal interest in the practice of nām simaran. This same concern is expressed with even greater emphasis in the Miharbān interpolation which appears in the Achal discourse. The didactic portion is of particular interest in this latter case because it illustrates the manner in which a commentator would carry his exegesis beyond the meaning intended by Nānak to a position which is actually contrary to the Guru’s teachings. The particular point which the Miharbān commentator was anxious to communicate is that salvation is to be secured through constant repetition of the name of God (rām). The second stanza of Gurū Nānak’s Sūhi 1 seemed to afford a suitable text to quote in support of the theory and in his exegetical supplement the commentator emphasizes the point by including a twelvefold repetition of the word ‘Rām’. 3

Although the second stanza of Sūhi 1 could, in isolation, be interpreted in this manner it does not actually make the point, and the burden of Gurū Nānak’s teachings in their totality is clearly opposed to the commentator’s exclusive insistence upon mechanical repetition. The commentator has reverted to an earlier interpretation which Nānak had deliberately opposed. The Guru’s own insistence was upon the interiorization of the process termed nām simaran or nām japai, and although this could include mechanical repetition it was by no means limited to it. When, as in this particular instance, Nānak uses the words nām japai they must be interpreted in the wider context of his teachings, not in isolation.

The commentator was, however, one who retained a firm belief in the efficacy of the old method and his conviction was shared by the author of a narrative source used by the B40 and Ādi Sākhīs compilers. The B40 compiler’s unquestioning acceptance of the theory presumably explains an interesting slip which occurs when he quotes the stanza a second time. In the first instance he correctly reproduces the term nām japai, but in re-quoting it he substitutes rām for nām. 4 There can be no doubt that the Miharbān, B40, and Ādi Sākhīs compilers were all expressing the dominant interpretation of their period. The Ādi Sākhīs compiler adds to the repetition of rām an instruction to use the ascription vāh gurū (‘praise to the Guru’) in the same mechanical manner. 5

Having dealt with this subject the commentary then proceeds to discuss another critical issue. How could an idol-worshipper such as Nāmdev have attained to salvation? His attainment could not be doubted, for he had been included in the sacred scripture compiled by Gurū Arjan. But nor could his idol-worshipping propensities be denied. Once again the commentary departs radically from the actual quotation which it purports to expound. The issue must have been a genuine problem within the community during the late seventeenth or early eighteenth century.

In yet another instance the B40 compiler, in common with other compilers of narrative janam-sākhis, has introduced an exegetical supplement which reverses a meaning intended by Gurū Nānak. In most versions the sākhi ‘The Child Nānak’s Discourse with his Teacher’ largely consists of a didactic discourse based on the shabad *Siri Rāg* 6. The message which the third stanza communicates is that all men, whether high or low, pass their lives in vain if they neglect the paramount duty of meditation on the divine Name. Some are compelled to beg whereas others are exalted to kingship, but upon all there lies the same responsibility and the same penalty for neglecting it. In this stanza Gurū Nānak is not commending begging, and elsewhere he deprecates it. The commentator, however, interprets the passage as an expression of approval for the practice of begging. Having described the nature of divine retribution he concludes:

Such will be the condition of those who enjoy the comforts and pleasures of sovereignty but neglect to repeat the Name of God, whereas they who remember God and live by begging shall receive high honour in the court of God.

Exegesis of this kind represents the continuing pressure of the ascetic ideal. Didactic discourses offered a particularly convenient vehicle for such ideals, a feature which does much to explain the strong Miḥārbān preference for this particular form.

### 4. HETERODOX DISCOURSES

It has already been observed how later traditions, within the Sikh community or closely allied to it, are sometimes distinguished by a marked divergence from the teachings and evident intention of Gurū Nānak. Some of these deviant traditions can be traced to the influence of contemporary Islam in the Paṇjāb, others derive from Nāth sources, and yet others are curious amalgams drawn from a variety of sources. Many give expression to gnostic interpretations whereas others are more concerned with trite epigrams. In tone and content they range from mild heresy to virulent polemic.

There is thus a considerable variety covered by the works of deviant

traditions. Three features provide a common bond. The first is their generally heretical nature; the second is the uniformly poor quality of the verse in which they are expressed; and the third their strong preference for a discourse form. These reasons justify a convenient grouping under the common heading heterodox discourse. Occasionally a basis is provided for a discourse of this kind by an authentic composition of Guru Nānak, but apocryphal verse is the general rule. As with other varieties of discourse settings are contrived and then largely ignored. It is the actual discourse which commands attention.

Most of the works incorporating heterodox beliefs developed apart from the janam-sakhīs and circulated independently. The purpose of their authors and promoters differed in some measure from that of the janam-sakhī compilers, and in most cases their products were too lengthy to encourage borrowing by the janam-sakhī compilers. The differences were, however, by no means absolute, and works which could not be included in toto might well provide extracts of manageable length. Heretical doctrine was not automatically excluded. The prerequisite was that it should purport to represent the authentic teachings of Bābā Nānak. This claim the heterodox discourses made explicitly and as a result a few extracts found their way into the various janam-sakhīs.

Independent works of this nature which circulated within the Sikh community during the janam-sakhī period may be divided into three categories. First there were two lengthy discourses set in the context of Bābā Nānak's alleged visit to Arabia. These are 'The Mecca Discourse' (makke di goṣṭi) and 'The Medīnā Discourse' (madine di goṣṭi). The first of these purports to record a debate which Nānak conducted during his visit to Mecca, and the second an encounter with the quranic King Qārūn. During the course of the latter the Gurū recites a homily entitled the Nasihat-nāmā. Neither discourse has been actually incorporated within any of the principal janam-sakhīs, but they have occasionally been recorded in conjunction with a janam-sakhī or included within a single manuscript binding. An abbreviated version of both is to be found at the conclusion of the B4o manuscript, obviously the work of a later copyist. Both are plainly spurious in so far as they are attributed to Gurū Nānak. It is to the 'Triumph over Islam' theme of the janam-sakhī period that the two discourses properly belong.

A second group, closely allied to the Mecca and Medīnā discourses, consists of compositions attributed to Gurū Nānak which embody beliefs derived from the popular Sūfīsm of the period. These works are invariably set in the context of a debate held with a famous Sūfī, normally one who had lived prior to the time of Nānak. They are important in that they provide statements of the variety of Sūfī doctrine which evidently com-

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1 An example is IOL MS Panj. B41. The janam-sakhī terminates on f. 253. Thereafter the manuscript records the Mecca and Medīnā discourses (ff. 254–295). Sardar Kuldip Singh Bedi's manuscript also includes both discourses in addition to its Purātan text.

2 B4o, ff. 229–38 (Arabic pagination). The Gurmukhi pagination does not extend to this point. For an English summary of the B4o version see B4o(Eng), Introduction, pp. 10–11.
manded a widespread following in the rural Pānījāb of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries; and also for the testimony which in common with some of the narrative discourses they bear to the enduring reputation of certain Sūfī pirs. 'Abd al-Qādir Jilānī, Shams al-Dīn Tabrizī, Farīd al-Dīn Mas'ūd Ganj-i-Shakar, Bahā' al-Dīn Zakariyyā, Rukn al-Dīn of Multān, and Sharaf al-Dīn of Pāņīpat all figure in heterodox discourses. Two of the more important compositions included in discourses of this kind are the Tīh Sīpārē and the Hāzār-nāmā.¹

In one instance a discourse is said to have been held not with a figure who had predeceased Nānak but with one who came after him. This was Bābā Lāl of Dhiānpūr, near Baṭālā.² Although Bābā Lāl was a Hindu, his celebrated association with Dārā Shikoh indicates that the Sikh ‘Discourse with Bābā Lāl’ should be included in the second category of heterodox discourses. The Sikh tradition derives directly from the record of Dārā Shikoh’s own discourses.³

A third category of heterodox discourses is provided by works which owe their origin to the ḥaṭha-yoga doctrines of the Nāṭh tradition. The distinctively Nāṭh element incorporated within narrative sākhīs bears ample witness to the widespread influence of the Nāṭh tradition in seventeenth-century Pānījāb, and from this third category of heterodox discourses it is evident that in spite of Gūrū Nānak’s strictures upon Nāṭh beliefs, these beliefs had in fact penetrated the later Sikh community. Within the community the doctrines and practices of ḥaṭha-yoga were accorded a particular loyalty by the so-called Udāsī sādhūs, but it is clear that respect for these doctrines extended beyond the limited Udāsī circle. This is apparent from the willingness of the B40 compiler to include such material in his janam-sākhī. An even clearer instance is provided by the Colebrooke Janam-sākhī. Like the B40 janam-sākhī it is not to be identified as an Udāsī document, but it nevertheless includes an early version of the lengthy Prāṇ Saṅgāli.⁴

The Prāṇ Saṅgāli is the most important of the heterodox discourses with a Nāṭh orientation. Although it is not quoted in extenso by the B40 compiler it does receive a passing reference at the conclusion of the Śivanābh sākhī.⁵ In its extant form the entire work extends to eighty cantos and is plainly a collection of several compositions in verse connected by brief narrative passages.⁶ The collection takes the form of a discourse which, as the B40 reference indicates, is set in the context of a visit to Rājā Śivanābh’s domain in Śīṅghalādīp. Śīṅghalābh begins the discourse with Bābā Nānak and is later joined by Gorakhnāth and other Siddhs. The discourse proceeds in the usual manner, an appropriate question by one of the interlocutors being followed by Bābā Nānak’s reply. Pīār Singh attributes the composition of the various parts, and also

¹ B40, ff. 52b–55b, 56b–57a.
⁴ Pur JS, pp. 89, 118.
⁵ B40, f. 153b.
⁶ Pīār Singh, op. cit., p. 129.
their collection into a single work, to the latter half of the seventeenth century. Portions of it may perhaps pre-date this period, but there seems to be little doubt that his opinion is substantially correct.

Although the Prāṇ Sangali must have enjoyed a considerable popularity during the eighteenth century it subsequently came to be regarded as apocryphal. A tradition related by Santokh Singh towards the middle of the nineteenth century implies this conviction. Santokh Singh relates that Guru Arjan, while preparing the compilation of the Ādi Granth at the beginning of the seventeenth century, received news of a work which (so it was claimed) had been composed by Bābā Nānak during his visit to Sri Lanka and left there. A Sikh named Fāirā Mokhā was forthwith dispatched to Sri Lanka, from where he returned bearing a copy of the Prāṇ Sangali. Guru Arjan examined the work, but being unconvinced of its authenticity declined to include it in the Ādi Granth. This opinion was evidently not shared by the eighteenth-century community, for manuscript copies of portions of the work were circulating freely in the Pañjāb during this period. Amongst the more important works which came to be included in the Prāṇ Sangali were the Dhiao Bihangam kā ('The Bird Canto'), also referred to as the Goṣṭ Nirānkār Nāl ('Discourse with God'); the Goṣṭ Ātme Paramātme kī; the Sākhi Ved Sadaē; the Gyān Surodaya; and thejugāvāli. The last of these is to be found in the Colebrooke manuscript.

Another popular work belonging to this same cycle of Nath-oriented traditions is ‘A Discourse with Ajitta Randhava’ (goṣṭi ajitte randhāve nāl). Bhai Gurdās relates that Jittā (or Ajittā), a Randhāvā Jāt, was one of the more prominent disciples of Guru Nānak. Apart from a reference to his upright behaviour Bhai Gurdās tells us nothing about him, but later narrators have enlisted him in a number of narrative anecdotes. The discourse in which he is said to have participated is of particular interest as an example of later polemic concerning disputed authority within the Sikh community. A version has been included in the B40 Janam-sākhī.

1 Ibid., p. 130.
3 Fāīr Singh, op. cit.
5 BG X1:14. SLTGN(Eng), p. 44.
6 B40, ff. 1118–16. The reference to disputed authority occurs on f. 1153: ‘Son, they will set
5. CODES OF DISCIPLINE

One last form which deserves to be noted is the *rahit-nāmā* or 'code of discipline'. This warrants a brief notice, not because it is accorded any prominence in the janam-sakhis but rather because the rudimentary examples which do make occasional appearances in the janam-sakhis were later to develop into a literary form of fundamental importance for the eighteenth-century Sikh community. It was during the course of the eighteenth century that the Khālsā discipline crystallized into a coherent code of conduct (*rahit*), and it was to give formal expression to this evolving code that the *rahit-nāmā* was developed. As links in the chain which connects the seventeenth- and the nineteenth-century communities the succession of *rahit-nāmās* is of some importance, and to this day modern versions continue to serve as a means of maintaining the coherence of the community on the basis of an agreed code of Khālsā conduct.

Although the janam-sakhis incorporate no evolved *rahit-nāmās* they do include statements which can safely be regarded as the seeds from which the later codes were to grow. These range from the brief and oft-repeated slogan *nām dān istsān* to more detailed lists of instructions issued by God to Nānak as patterns of conduct for his followers. The *Bān* and *Ādi Sākhīs*, following a common source, include one such rudimentary *rahit-nāmā* in the sākhī 'An Interview with God', and another appears at the conclusion of a *Miharbān* interview of the same kind. In both instances the setting is important. It was evidently believed to be necessary that the words of the *rahit* should proceed directly from God. The later *rahit-nāmās* of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries consist largely of instructions ascribed to Gurdī Gobind Singh.

up *maṇīs* [seats of spiritual authority] in their houses and sit on them, but these people will be punished.' The nature of the dispute appears to be indicated in a question concerning the shaving of heads on f. 113a. This suggests a conflict between an ascetic tradition and the Khālsā. The cryptic reference to 'the ninth garb' (? the ninth Gūr) on f. 111b probably relates to the same issue.


3 *Mih JS* II.156. This *rahit-nāmā* is particularly specific in its reference to intoxicants.
THE ASSEMBLING AND TRANSMISSION OF THE JANAM-SĀKHĪ TRADITIONS

In their earliest stages the growth processes and the transmission of the evolving janam-sākhīs were evidently confined to oral tradition, and for fully three centuries oral tradition remained the area of major expansion. Although the first written collections must have been recorded within a hundred years of the Gurū's death (and probably earlier) their contribution has inevitably been more in terms of recording various phases of development than of actually stimulating it. The written word, though by no means static, tends to stabilize a tradition and to inhibit further expansion or radical diversification. By contrast, oral tradition can be vigorously dynamic, particularly when it lacks the conventional restraints commonly applied to the repetition of sacred texts. The oral tradition of the janam-sākhīs has, on the whole, lacked these.

The study of oral tradition has interested philologists for many decades and has long since demonstrated its critical contribution to the understanding of Old Testament development and transmission. More recently its methodology, refined and extended, has been widely applied in such areas as African and Pacific pre-history. As a result of this research much has been discovered concerning techniques of oral transmission and methods of analysing its products. Amongst the conclusions which must now be regarded as firmly established is the insistence that oral tradition does not necessarily lack safeguards. Oral traditions can in fact be transmitted with relatively little change provided that certain conventions are observed. These include specific memory training, mnemonic devices, control over the recital by certain groups or members of the audience, and a normal preference for poetry rather than prose.

Oral traditions of this controlled variety are, however, much different from those which lie behind the janam-sākhīs. None of the conventional safeguards have been applied to the transmission of the anecdotes which eventually came to be collected into janam-sākhīs. These were anecdotes which did not need to be learnt by heart. The one essential feature was that


3 Ibid., pp. 31-43.
they should be seen to fulfil the requirements of the myth which they were intended to express. This imposed a certain limited restraint in that it required a general faithfulness to the current understanding of the person and mission of Nānak, but it was a restraint which could have little effect on wide areas of the evolving tradition. It was only the bāṇī (the actual works of Nānak himself) which had to be memorized. The traditions which were built around and beyond the bāṇī needed no such limitation.

The freedom to expand which was thus provided for the oral tradition concerning Gurū Nānak was greatly encouraged by other features. If in fact there were any members of the early Sikh community specifically appointed to narrate the tradition there is no evidence that any of these narrators ever received any training in memory or transmission skills. In practice the procedure was almost certainly that within a local community (saṅgat) the role of narrator would by general consent be accorded to a particular person. Age, social status, piety, or eloquence could presumably have determined the choice. This person, without either the benefit of training or the compulsion to adhere strictly to a received version, would relate anecdotes concerning the Gurū in words meaningful to himself and to his audience. The reactions of his audience would inevitably operate not as a control but rather as an encouragement to mutate and expand. The resultant pattern of development manifests, as one might expect, a pronounced affection for the simple wonder-story and a predictable reliance upon other traditions current during the period of growth.

Finally, it must be remembered that the anecdotes which together constitute the janam-sākhis are prose narratives, not verse. Prose is not an impossible medium for a generally static oral tradition (the Icelandic sagas demonstrate this), but certainly it is vastly inferior to verse as a means of consistent preservation. Given this and the other features mentioned above it is scarcely surprising that the janam-sākhi traditions should expand with such speed and in such diverse forms. For the same reasons it is understandable that traditions relating to the authentic life of Nānak should be few and, in most instances, difficult to recognize. Although such elements certainly exist within the janam-sākhi traditions, they are deeply embedded and when extracted provide little more than glimpses of the historical Nānak.¹

It seems clear that the main focus of the transmission process was the cult centre. For the early Sikh community this centre was the dharamsālā, a building or portion of a building which is nowhere described with any precision but which could evidently be anything capable of holding a small group of people. In some villages a separate structure may have been provided, in others the purpose may have been served by using a room attached to a private house, and in yet others a room in everyday use may have been appropriated for the regular meetings of the group. This much is reasonable conjecture. What seems certain is that a single room normally served as a dharamsālā, and what is certain beyond all doubt is that this dharamsālā was the cult centre.

¹ For an attempt to identify those elements see GNSR, pp. 68–147.
Within its dharamsālā a saṅgat, or congregation, would meet for kirtan (the singing of devotional songs). Kirtan would be the principal corporate activity of any local group of Sikhs, and an important supplement would be the recitation of narrative traditions concerning the first Gurū (kathā). There were many local saṅgats scattered throughout rural Pañjāb, and within each there will have been this regular pattern of kirtan and kathā. In a few favoured instances a manuscript collection of sākhīs was obtained and thereafter the stories of the Gurū could be read. (The B4o patron specifically states that he commissioned the writing of his janam-sākhī for the benefit of the saṅgat to which he belonged.) For most saṅgats, however, there will have been a continuing dependence on oral tradition until at least the late nineteenth and perhaps into the twentieth century.

The home was presumably a second focus of the transmission process. There are no positive indications within the recorded janam-sākhīs to indicate that the written collections were used domestically during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, but this testimony relates only to the recorded tradition. Within Sikh homes the transmission process will almost invariably have been concerned with the continuing oral tradition. In this respect the home will normally have reflected the dharamsālā. The tradition current within any particular village or district will have found its primary expression in the dharamsālā, and a repetition in the Sikh homes of that district.

Because of the scattered nature of the Sikh community different areas inevitably developed their own local traditions. This produced variant versions of sākhīs which had gained a wide currency, and local sākhīs confined to particular areas. Some of the variants together with instances of unique local traditions find expression in the recorded collections and help to determine the geographical areas in which the different collections were compiled. It should not, however, be supposed that saṅgats lived in complete isolation from each other or from the community's principal centres of activity. Pilgrimage has been a regular feature of Sikh custom since at least the time of Gurū Amar Dās (1552–74), and right from the time of Nānak himself visits to the Gurū will have been a joy for many and an obligation for all who could reasonably make them. The cross-fertilization which was continually provided by such pilgrimages ensured that the pattern of janam-sākhī development constituted a close-knit web rather than a splay of lines connected only at their point of origin.

It has already been suggested that the agent of transmission within the local saṅgat could have been any person who possessed acceptable qualifications as a narrator. In practice the role will commonly have been performed by Khatris. The Gurūs were all Khatris, Bhai Gurdās and Mihārbān were both Khatris, and Dayā Rām Abrol, compiler and copyist of the B4o janam-sākhī, was also a Khatri. Leadership by Khatris would

1 B4o, f. 84b.

Mani Singh's caste connections are, like his janam-sākhī role, disputed. According to the late nineteenth-century writer Gyiṅ Singh he was a Jaṭ. The traditional consensus claims, however, that he was a Kamboh. MK, p. 712n.
be no more than a continuation of a well-established pattern of leadership in rural Pāñjāb. Social status, education, and a traditional role as teachers of the Jāts would serve as strong qualifications. It was not, however, an invariable pattern. The author of the *Dabistān-i-Masāḥib* reports that in the early seventeenth century Jāts were already moving into positions of authority,1 and during the succeeding century they assumed a dominant status within the community. The recorded janam-sākhī collections seem to reflect this change. Whereas the *Miharbān janam-sākhī, B40*, and the *Gyān-ratanāvalī* accord a greater prominence to Khatris, the Bālā tradition shifts attention to the Jāts. The latter tradition may, in fact, represent an aspect of the Jāts’ ascent to dominance, and the later popularity of the Bālā janam-sākhīs may in some measure derive from the establishment of their dominant status.

Oral circulation from the time of Nānak’s own lifetime constitutes the first major phase in the evolution of the janam-sākhīs. The second begins with the initial recording of a selection of sākhīs. This second phase will have been initiated for a number of reasons. One which can be safely assumed is the measure of sanctity which India traditionally attaches to holy books. Everyone else had their sacred scriptures, and although the fifth Guru Arjan had provided his followers with their own Sikh scripture in 1604 there was no reason why they should not have more if there existed material suitable for recording. The Sākhī Pothi, or ‘Volume of Sākhīs’ was soon accorded a respect second only to the Granth Sāhib compiled by Guru Arjan.

A second reason was presumably a growing awareness on the part of some literate Sikhs of the unreliability of oral tradition as a means of accurate transmission. All would have claimed a concern for accuracy, and a few will have perceived that uncontrolled oral transmission must seriously endanger the objective. The answer for such men will have been an attempt to fix the tradition by setting it down in writing.

These appear to have been the two main reasons for the earliest decisions to record the tradition. Others may be added as conjectures. In some instances a particular Sikh, having heard a recitation of the tradition at a location away from his home (perhaps from someone of renowned piety, or at one of the pilgrimage centres) may have desired to have it repeated to his own family or sāṅgat. Rather than trust to his own memory he may have arranged to have the tradition recorded in order that he might return home with the manuscript.

Four principal stages may be observed in the recording of janam-sākhīs. The first is the random collection. A small number of sākhīs were selected from the current oral tradition and recorded in an essentially haphazard order. This phase appears to have been initiated during the late sixteenth century, or perhaps at the beginning of the seventeenth century. The earliest available examples suggest that the only deference paid to the notion of chronology was a rough grouping according to birth, childhood, manhood, and death. Chronology was of only secondary importance. The

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janam-sākhis were more concerned with the myth of Nānak than with the actual pattern of his life, and a coherent sequence of anecdotes was not essential to their primary purpose.

Amongst the extant manuscripts the earliest example of this first phase is provided by LPD 194. It is not, however, a particularly good example, for the impulse to order and arrange is already at work. A better example would have been the collection which evidently lay behind LDP 194, and an even better example is provided by the janam-sākhis of the Bālā tradition. Although the Bālā janam-sākhis emerge later than the tradition which leads through LDP 194 into the Purātan janam-sākhis, these later manuscripts are actually more primitive in terms of structure. A generally consistent pattern is sustained up to the point where Nānak ventures out on his travels, but thereafter the selection and recording of anecdotes is essentially random.

The same feature is also evident in much of the B40 Janam-sākhi, particularly in the portion which was drawn directly from oral tradition. Although it was compiled towards the middle of the eighteenth century this portion is perhaps the best of all available examples of the first primitive phase of janam-sākhi recording. Other portions of the B40 Janam-sākhi manifest the same disarray, but none are as primitive in structure as the group of sākhis derived from the compiler’s oral source. No other group of sākhis has quite the same simplicity of narrative pattern nor its complete absence of quotations from the works of Nānak. The B40 Janam-sākhi is plainly an anthology drawn from a variety of sources, and as such it manages to combine highly evolved sākhis with the most primitive we possess.

The second stage in the recording of janam-sākhis closely followed the first. This new development was marked by a concern for chronology and a consequent effort to order the assortment of sākhis into a coherent sequence. The process which is already evident in LDP 194 reaches its climax in the detailed structures of the later Purātan manuscripts (the Colebrooke and the Hāfizābād janam-sākhis). In the case of the childhood and early manhood sākhis this task presented few problems. For this period of Nānak’s life the chief issues concerned the timing of his betrothal and marriage, and the order in which his two sons were born. It was the period of Nānak’s travels which provided the Purātan tradition with its greatest challenge and it was with considerable ingenuity that the challenge was answered. The result is a pattern of four major journeys corresponding to the four cardinal points of the compass, a schema which was presumably suggested by the ancient digvijaya tradition. Into this pattern numerous travel anecdotes have been fitted. There are, it is true, several flaws. The order is not always consistent, there are some obvious gaps, the compiler was obviously much more interested in outward rather than homeward journeys, and one anecdote which was evidently overlooked has been appended in the form of a fifth journey. It is, nevertheless, something of a

1 See below, p. 188.  
ASSEMBLING AND TRANSMISSION OF TRADITIONS

Tour de force and it marks the high point of janam-sākhī restructuring. Macauliffe followed this Purātan pattern closely in his account of the life of Nānak, and few biographers have since departed from it.

The manner in which different compilers used the same material to construct differing chronologies is illustrated by the varying placement of the sākhī ‘An Interview with God’. The anecdote related in this sākhī describes how Nānak was summoned to the Divine Court and there ordained by God to go forth into the world to preach the divine Name. The B40 compiler has taken this anecdote from an earlier collection, and following his predecessor’s evident indifference to chronological concerns he has recorded it at a point more than half-way through his own collection.1 If the B40 collection were to be regarded as a coherent sequence it could only mean that Nānak had been preaching his message long before God had actually commissioned him to do so. The B40 compiler is not, however, committed to any rigorous preservation of chronological sequences and follows them only when using a source which has already devised one. Most of his material represents the first stage of janam-sākhī compilation where sequence means little or nothing.

The compiler responsible for the Purātan chronology could not share this indifference. A logical place had to be found for the anecdote. In the Purātan janam-sākhīs it is recorded immediately before Nānak’s departure from Sultanpur.2 Nānak’s travels (interpreted by the Purātan tradition as missionary journeys) begin with his departure from Sultanpur and this suggested a Sultanpur context for the anecdote. In accordance with this conviction the compiler has introduced it into the narrative relating Nānak’s disappearance in the stream near Sultanpur. Other versions of this same narrative make it clear that the introduction of the commissioning sākhī at this point is an interpolation.3

The Purātan and B40 compilers, following different sources, have recorded variant versions of the same anecdote. The source used for the B40 version was also available to the Ādi Sākhīs compiler, a person who shared in some measure the Purātan concern for chronological consistency. For the Ādi Sākhīs compiler the logical place for a commissioning sākhī was the very beginning of the janam-sākhī and accordingly the narrative which appears at such an advanced stage in the B40 collection is recorded as the first of all anecdotes in the Ādi Sākhīs.4 Nānak is first commissioned by God and only then is he given birth in order to carry out his commission. In addition to this version, however, the Ādi Sākhīs compiler also had access to the Purātan version in a manuscript which recorded it in its distinctively Purātan place. Illogically he repeats it in this later setting5 with the result that Nānak is twice commissioned in the Ādi Sākhīs. The two versions of the anecdote had diverged radically in earlier transmission and the Ādi Sākhīs compiler evidently failed to recognize them as separate recensions derived from a common origin.

In the case of the commissioning sākhī the feature which has attracted the attention and the varying interpretations of the different compilers is

1 B40, ff. 123b-126b.  
3 See below, p. 199.  
4 AS, pp. 1-3.  
5 AS, p. 16.
the theme. Elsewhere their decisions concerning placement within a sequence are evidently determined by minor references within the narrative. For the Purātan compiler the determinative reference in the Achal sākhī appears to have been the presence of Siddhs. Because the Achal encounter involves Siddhs the Purātan compiler bracketed this discourse with the other prominent confrontation with Siddhs, the discourse on Mount Sumeru.\footnote{Pur JS, p. 97.} For another compiler, however, an appropriate context was evidently suggested by the presence of Guru Angad in the Achal narrative. As a result the B40 and Ādi Sākhis compilers, following their common source, include the discourse in the cluster of Angad anecdotes.\footnote{B40, ff. 117a-122b. AS, pp. 73-6. The common source was the manuscript Qz. See below, p. 198.}

The contrast between random and ordered recording can be further illustrated by sākhīs 32-4 of the B40 collection.\footnote{B40, ff. 133a-154a.} This cluster covers a visit to Mecca, a discourse with Kabir, and Bābā Nānak's encounter with Rāja Śivanābh. For the B40 compiler there is no problem in the consecutive recording of sākhīs which jump from Western Arabia to Northern India, from Northern India to an unspecified location over the sea, and from there (in sākhī 35) to Kābul. He has, moreover, already recorded a different sākhī set in Mecca.\footnote{GNSR, pp. 115-16.} Sequence did not matter. The message could be communicated without coherent chronological patterns.

For the Purātan compiler, however, such inconsistencies were intolerable. If Nānak was to visit Mecca then it would have to be during the course of the westwards journey, and if both Mecca sākhīs were to be included they would have to come together. The result is a conflation of the two anecdotes, recorded as a single sākhī in its appropriate place.\footnote{B40, ff. 51b-52b.} The story of Rāja Śivanābh has, in like manner, been assigned a suitable place within the total structure. Having decided that the unspecified location over the sea can only mean Sri Lanka,\footnote{B40, ff. 117a-122b.} the compiler has included the Śivanābh sākhī in his southwards journey.\footnote{GNSR, pp. 115-16.} Kabir does not appear in the Purātan collection, but the Miḥarbān tradition duly puts him in his proper place.\footnote{Mih JS 1.154-6. The Miḥarbān discourse is not the same as the B40 version.}

There remains the question of why some compilers should have developed an impulse to order their material into a coherent sequence. The answer is probably the simple one that whereas certain minds will readily sustain a single theme through a disarray of circumstances, others prefer to systematize. Any desire to impart a stronger impression of authenticity probably had little to do with the earlier expressions of the systematizing impulse. For seventeenth- and eighteenth-century readers and listeners the essential questions of authenticity related to the myth expounded by the janam-sākhīs rather than to the incidents which served as a means of exposition. It is only in more recent times, following the
spread of western historicism, that the truth of the myth has been so intimately linked to the authenticity of the incidents expressing it. This misunderstanding of the janam-sākhī method does much to explain the vehemence with which the Purātan chronology is defended today.

The third of the four stages in the growth of the janam-sākhī collections is distinguished by the addition of expository material to the narrative anecdotes and discourses. In a sense it is misleading to define this feature as a third stage, for it is not dependent upon a prior ordering of earlier random selections. Exegetical passages can be added to disordered collections as well as to ordered janam-sākhīs of the second stage. Indeed, it can be argued that this third stage should properly be classified as the initial stage of a distinctively exegetical form, parallel to the first stage of the narrative janam-sākhīs. It is in fact claimed that the Miharbān Janam-sākhī is the direct product of an early oral tradition. Another work from the group which produced the earliest versions of the Miharbān tradition claims that the Miharbān Janam-sākhī records homilies which Miharbān delivered to his followers during the early years of the sixteenth century. These homilies (so it is claimed) were taken down by a disciple named Keśo Dās and later recorded as the Miharbān Janam-sākhī towards the middle of the century.1

This claim, even if true, does not gainsay the mature character of the extant Miharbān collection. Pothī Sach-khaṇḍ, the first portion of the Miharbān Janam-sākhī, is constructed on the basis of a substantial collection of narrative sakhīs, ordered into a coherent sequence. The narrative element is generally subordinate to the exegetical purpose of the collection but it plainly precedes it in terms of development. If Keśo Dās was in fact responsible for the structure of the extant Pothī Sach-khaṇḍ it follows that the introduction of exegetical material must represent a third stage in the development of the janam-sākhīs. The exponents of the Miharbān tradition have appropriated the coherent narrative form of the second-stage janam-sākhī and used it to develop a new form. In the remaining sections of the complete Miharbān Janam-sākhī this chronological interest largely disappears, but only because the travel itinerary has been almost completely covered in Pothī Sach-khaṇḍ. In a sense it is still assumed, for the remaining discourses are all set within the context of the later Kartārpur period of the Guru’s life.

The first three phases in the formation of recorded janam-sākhīs developed rapidly. If the Miharbān Janam-sākhī’s own account of its origins is to be believed (and there is no evident reason for doubting it), random, structured, and exegetical collections were all in existence by the middle of the seventeenth century. More than two hundred years passed before the next significant phase began. They were not, of course, sterile years. During the two intervening centuries the earlier janam-sākhīs were considerably supplemented, other distinctive traditions emerged, and individual compilers occasionally gathered all three phases into a single janam-sākhī. The two major developments during this period were a

1 Gośṭān Sri Miharvān ji dīān, quoted in Mih JS 1, Introductory Essays, pp. 36–8.
considerable expansion of the *Miharbān* tradition and the increasing popularity of the *Bālā* *janam-sākhīs*.

The expansion of the *Miharbān* tradition can be safely assumed from the evident fact that the portion of the *Miharbān Janam-sākhī* now extant is obviously the product of sustained development over a lengthy period. The extreme rarity of *Miharbān* manuscripts indicates, however, that this development must have taken place within strictly limited confines. The ascetic emphases which find obvious favour with the *Miharbān* commentators suggest that these limited confines probably corresponded to a few *maṭhs* (‘monasteries’, ascetic communities). These *maṭhs* may have consisted of Udāsi sādhūs or perhaps sādhūs of the Nirmālā order.¹

Restricted circulation also seems to have been the fate of the *Purātaṅ* tradition and likewise of the later *Gyān-ratanāvalī* collection. Increasingly it was the *Bālā* tradition which found favour in the eighteenth-century Sikh community, and by the nineteenth century its dominance was almost complete.

A number of reasons may be held to account for this widespread popularity of the *Bālā* *janam-sākhīs*. One will presumably have been its explicit claim to represent the actual words of a disciple who had accompanied Bābā Nānak on his travels.² No other *janam-sākhī* makes this same claim, and as there was no apparent reason for questioning it the *janam-sākhī* which advanced the claim was the one which won acceptance.

Secondly, the *Bālā* *janam-sākhīs* contain much that would attract the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century believer. The strong Puranic atmosphere of much of the *Bālā* narrative will have been thoroughly congenial to the rural Pañjāb of this period, and in no other *janam-sākhī* is the power of Bābā Nānak the wonder-worker more magnificently displayed. The *Bālā* tradition is, in fact, a faithful reflection of many aspects of contemporary Pañjāb rural culture, with its marked fascination for Puranic legends and Sūfī hagiography. Given such qualifications it is scarcely surprising that the *Bālā* *janam-sākhīs* should acquire such extensive popularity.

Thirdly there is the theory, to which passing reference has already been made, that the rise of the *Bālā* tradition may reflect the rise of the Jaṭs within the Sikh community. Although this is much less certain, it must be regarded as at least a possibility. The other important *janam-sākhīs* reflect a stronger Khatri influence, both in terms of authorship and of references to particular disciples of the Gurū. In contrast, the *Bālā* *janam-sākhīs* mark a shift towards Jaṭ participation (Bālā himself is a Sandhū Jaṭ), and it can be argued that the tradition’s dominant emphases accord better with Jaṭ cultural patterns than with those of the Khatris.

Whatever the reasons there can be no doubt concerning the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century success of the *Bālā* tradition. This success placed it in a position of considerable advantage when the fourth phase became

² *Bālā JS*, p. 3.
Assembling and Transmission of Traditions

possible. The fourth phase began with the introduction of the printing-press to the Pañjāb. In 1871 the first lithographed Gurmukhi text appeared in Lahore, closely followed in the same year by a second. Both were Bālā janam-sākhis, the second much longer than the first,¹ and since that year progressively larger Bālā versions have completely dominated the market. Although Vir Singh’s Purātan Janam-sākhi has run through several editions its sales have been greatly assisted by its regular inclusion in university syllabuses. An earlier challenge advanced by two editions of the Gyān-ratanāvali was soon overwhelmed, with the result that lithographed copies of the Gyān-ratanāvali are now very difficult to obtain. To this day the popular market is still controlled by modern versions of the Bālā tradition. The spread of education must eventually destroy the Bālā reputation, but its disappearance from Pañjāb bookshops is still many years distant.

One last point may be briefly noted before terminating this survey of the janam-sākhis’ linear development. This is the appearance of works which are not strictly janam-sākhis, but which relate in a generally uncritical manner the accounts given in the janam-sākhis. In some instances these accounts depend almost exclusively upon a single tradition; in others they blend a variety of traditions, normally without any acknowledgement of source.

Two works of this derived nature have been of particular importance, one of them based upon the Bālā tradition and the other upon Purātan. The first of these has already been briefly noticed. This is Santokh Singh’s Nānak Prakhāi, a work which today is little read but which for earlier generations served as a valued confirmation of the Bālā tradition and as a supplement to it.² As far as scholars and writers were concerned its decline in popularity reflected in large measure a corresponding decline in the reputation of its principal source. The Bālā tradition retained its popularity amongst writers until after the turn of the century and as late as 1914 could still find an ardent supporter in Khazān Singh, author of History and Philosophy of Sikhism. Its reputation as a primary source had, however, declined sharply during the closing years of the nineteenth century and it suffered a particularly serious blow with the publication in 1909 of the second major work deriving largely from a single janam-sākhi source. This was the first volume of Macauliffe’s The Sikh Religion, an account of the life of Nānak which diverted the attention of scholars and writers away from the increasingly discredited Bālā tradition to the newly discovered Purātan janam-sākhis. It needed only the publication of Karam Singh’s Kattak ki Visākh in 1913 to seal the Bālā fate.

Macauliffe, aided by Bhāī Kahn Singh, established a pattern which has been generally followed ever since. The Purātan tradition provides the framework and much of the actual content for most subsequent biographies. This means that the Gurū performs his four major journeys to the east, south, north, and west, concluding with the brief journey to Gorakh-haṭarī (Gor-khatri). To this Purātan itinerary are added the

¹ See above, p. 21.
² See above, p. 45.
three extra incidents mentioned by Bhāī Gurdās (the visits to Medīnā, Bāghdād, and Multān) together with others which command a particular popularity. (The water-splashing anecdote set in Hardwār is a prominent example.) Bhāī Bālā, the putative narrator of the tradition bearing his name, has presented a major problem. Macauliffe, firmly loyal to his Purātan source, rigorously excluded him¹ but others have been unwilling to go as far.

The situation established at the turn of the century by writers such as Macauliffe and Kāhn Singh continues to this day. Those who attempt biographies of Gurū Nānak almost invariably take their stand upon Purātan, and sometimes produce accounts which amount to little more than simple paraphrases. It must, however, be emphasized that this fashion is still largely limited to the authors of the more sophisticated variety of biographical study. Bālā still lives on. His continuing authority is everywhere considerable and in the villages of the Pañjāb it remains unchallenged.

¹ Macauliffe, i. lxxix.
THE EVOLUTION OF SĀKHĪS

INCLUDED in the Purātan janam-sākhīs is the sad story of a merchant who lost his infant son because he failed to pay proper respect to Bābā Nānak. The child had only recently been born and the proud father was busy celebrating the event when Bābā Nānak and Mardānā arrived on the scene. Mardānā sought the usual contribution due to itinerant faqirs, but was ignored. When he returned and reported this disrespectful negligence to his master Bābā Nānak recited the shabad Siri Rāg Pahare 1.

In the first watch of the night, O my merchant friend,
the divine order sets you within the womb...
In the second watch of the night, O my merchant friend,
you wander heedlessly astray...
In the third watch of the night, O my merchant friend,
you are seduced by wealth and carnal beauty...
And in the fourth watch of the night, O my merchant friend,
the Reaper comes to gather your harvest...1

Next morning the child died and the two travellers moved on, leaving the merchant to bewail his fate.2

Although the narrator’s choice of subject is not the happiest, the sākhī does at least provide a simple example of the manner in which anecdotes have been appropriated or developed in order to give expression to the basic janam-sākhī message. Gurū Nānak’s own concern when composing Siri Rāg Pahare 1 was to stress the futility of life without the divine Name. This message he repeats in a wide variety of ways, and in this particular instance he has chosen to use mercantile imagery. The basic theme of the janam-sākhī narrators is distinctively different. The message which they repeat with the same insistence is that salvation is to be found in submission to Bābā Nānak, and the corollary which this necessarily involves is that failure to make this submission can be an invitation to disaster. To give expression to this conviction the Colebrooke narrator or one of his predecessors has here taken a particular constituent (a shabad by Gurū Nānak) and from it has fashioned a brief anecdote demonstrating the fate of those who spurn the Gurū.

This illustrates in the simplest possible terms the manner in which one of the major constituents described in chapter 6 can be incorporated in one of the forms outlined in chapter 7. The purpose of this chapter will be to analyse other examples of the same process, particularly those which have developed more complex patterns.

1 AG, pp. 74–5.  
The present chapter will be concerned with sakhis or clusters of sakhis rather than with individual anecdotes or discourses, and for this reason a distinction which has already been mentioned must be repeated at this point. The term 'sakhi' should not be confused with the term 'anecdote'. A sākhi in its later normative usage is simply a division of a janam-sākhi (a 'chapter'). As such it may contain only one anecdote, or it may contain several. Where a multiplicity of anecdotes or discourses occurs within a single sākhi they may be expressed in a recognizable sequence, or they may be blended to form a composite 'episode'. Occasionally a sākhi will be found to contain no anecdotes at all. This variety is well illustrated by the agglomeration of miscellaneous statements which together constitute sākhi z6a of the Bājī Janam-sākhi.¹ This consists of the following elements:

1. A statement that Bābā Nānak commenced a course of austerities (f. 102b).
2. A description of Bābā Nānak's cell (f. 102b).
3. A reference to Bābā Nānak's custom of retaining a rabābī (minstrel) for regular kirtan (f. 102b).
4. Bābā Nānak's custom of taking an early-morning bathe, followed by devout prostrations (f. 103a).
5. A brief, incomplete reference to an unspecified meritorious deed performed by Gurū Aṅgad (f. 103b).
6. A reference to the custom of communal dining by Bābā Nānak's disciples in his presence (f. 103b).
7. The tradition that Bābā Nānak once sustained himself during a lengthy period with nothing more than a daily handful of sand and a poisonous ak pod (f. 103b).
8. A declaration concerning the world-wide fame of Bābā Nānak (f. 104a).

Miscellanies of this kind are unusual, but the list does at least serve to emphasize that a sākhi is essentially a division of a janam-sākhi and not necessarily a single anecdote. This should not suggest, however, that sakhis are mere conveniences, devoid of any meaning other than the whim of a compiler. Most sakhis, whether the single-anecdote variety or composite amalgams, deserve to be regarded as distinct units, and it is to the emergence of these units that the present chapter will be devoted. The method to be followed will consist of individual analyses of a series of representative examples.

Example 1: Bābā Nānak's visit to Multān
Narrative anecdote: simple form, direct borrowing from current tradition

The story of Bābā Nānak's encounter with the pirs of Multān provides a simple example of an anecdote appropriated from earlier hagiography. In this instance the source is Sufi tradition. The Sikh version retains all of the

¹ Bājī, ff. 102b–104a.
details intact, altering only the identity of the central participant. Bhāi Gurdās briefly relates the story as follows:

\[
\text{melio bābā uthīā mulatāē di jārati jāī}
\text{agon pīr mulatāē de dudhī kātōrā bharī laī āī}
\text{bābē kadhi kari bagal te chambeli dudhī vīchī milāī}
\text{jiū sāgar vīchī gāng samāī}
\]

Bābā [Nānak] arose and journeyed from the [Achal] fair to Multān. As he approached [the city] the pirs of Multān came bringing a cup filled with milk. Bābā [Nānak] plucked a nearby jasmine flower and laid it on the milk; Just as the Gāngā flows into the ocean.\n
As the water of the Gāngā makes no evident difference to the volume of water already in the ocean, so did the jasmine make no difference to the volume of milk in the cup. Although Multān was already brim-full of pirs there was still room for the crown and glory of them all.\n
This particular anecdote had earlier been related in connection with 'Abd al-Qādir Jilānī (A.D. 1077-1166), the founder of the Qādirī order of Sūfis. In this early version the city was Bāḥgād, the cup contained water, and the flower which Jilānī laid on the water was a rose. The Jilānī anecdote, however, was not the actual source from which Bhāi Gurdās derived his version. Prior to its appearance in Sikh tradition the legend had travelled to India where it had come to be associated with the city of Multān. In this context it had been attached to two different people, both of them celebrated Sūfis of the city. The earlier was Bahāʾ al-Dīn Zakariyyāʾ, the great Suhrawardi pir who, according to Abu al-Fazl, died in A.D. 1266. This version related the anecdote to Bahāʾ al-Dīn's arrival in Multān from Bāḥgād. The second appropriation was in the name of the equally famous Sufī pir Shams al-Dīn Tabrīzī of the same period, who, according to legend, must bear the responsibility for having rendered the climate of Multān so unpleasantly hot. This second version relates that when Shams al-Dīn first approached the city the symbolic cup was sent out by the incumbent Bahāʾ al-Dīn. In both instances the cup contained milk, not water as in the case of the Jilānī version.

1 BG 1:44.
2 The Mahimā Prahāl Vāratak offers another version of the same anecdote. See SLTGN(Eng), p. 72.
4 A’in III. 363. The tradition concerning Bahāʾ al-Dīn’s actual death also appears to have been appropriated by one of the janam-sikhī traditions. Immediately prior to his death Bahāʾ al-Dīn is said to have received a sealed letter from ‘an aged person of grave aspect’. Ibid. One janam-sikhī tradition links the deaths of both Bahāʾ al-Dīn and Nānak with an anachronistic exchange of letters immediately prior to their deaths. Pur JS, pp. 108-10. The Mahimā Prahāl Vāratak repeats this story, adding that Bābā Nānak subsequently received a mysterious letter which proved to be a harbinger of his death. SLTGN(Eng), pp. 84-6.
7 Lepel H. Griffin, The Panjab Chiefs, vol. iii (Lahore, 1890), p. 84.
The legend is particularly well suited to the concerns of hagiography and its entry into the janam-sākhī tradition need occasion no surprise. If there is any reason for surprise it is that the legend achieved only a limited circulation within the early Sikh community. The Purāṇa, Miharbān, Bālā, Ādi Sākhīs, and B4o compilers all ignore it. In the eighteenth century, however, it was retrieved first by the Gyān-ratanāvalī and then by the Mahimā Prakāś. Thereafter its popularity was assured.

The Multān anecdote is an excellent example of a Wandersage, in this case a story which has travelled eastwards in a Sufi form. Another such example is the ever-popular story of how Bābā Nānak claimed to be watering his Lahore fields by splashing water from Hardwār.¹ In this instance the earlier version is to be found in Buddhist tradition.²

Example 2: Mūlā the Khatri

Narrative anecdote: simple form, evolved from quotation

The story of Mūlā the parsimonious Khatri offers an uncomplicated example of a narrative anecdote which has developed out of a quotation from the works of Nānak. One day Bābā Nānak summoned Angād to accompany him on a visit to ‘a worldly fellow’ named Mūlā the Khatri.

‘When I myself followed a worldly way of life this person, Mūlā the Khatri, was my friend. If possible I should like to see him again.’ And so Bābā Nānak, wearing the dress of a faqir and accompanied by celibate langāl-bands, went and stood at the threshold of Mūlā the Khatri’s house.³

Mūlā’s wife happened to observe the Gurū standing outside and suspecting that he had come to beg she urged her husband to conceal himself. This he did while she went out to inform Bābā Nānak that he was not at home. The Gurū was not deceived. He recited an imprecatory shalok and departed. Mūlā then emerged from his hiding-place, collapsed, and shortly afterwards died. Fortunately his companions managed to bring him to Bābā Nānak before he actually expired, and having thus beheld the Gurū (dārsan) he died in the assurance of salvation.⁴

This brief cautionary tale has a dual origin. Its ultimate origin lies in the ascetic ideal which characterized a section of the later Sikh community and which produced several sākhīs with a distinctively austere message. Celibacy, renunciation, ascetic discipline, and respect for faqirs are all affirmed; worldliness is proscribed. Bābā Nānak is made to fit this ideal and in a number of appropriate sākhīs is cast in the role of a celibate renunciant. The story of Mūlā the Khatri belongs to this tradition and its earliest version is recorded within a cluster of ascetically inclined sākhīs.⁵

The story of Mūlā the Khatri evidently developed within this tradition

¹ B4o, ff. 76b-79a. ² GNSR, p. 90. ³ B4o, f. 100b. ⁴ B4o, ff. 100b-101b. AS, pp. 77–8. Mih JS ii. 163–4. In all three janam-sākhīs the Mūlā anecdote is the second part of a composite sākhī. The first part is a brief description of Bābā Nānak’s apparel, with specific reference to his adoption of both Hindū and Muslim customs; and a brief statement of his preaching methods. B4o, f. 100a. ⁵ See above, pp. 79–81 and below, pp. 203–4.
in the following manner. The ideal provided the impulse, and a pungent
epigram by Gurū Nānak served as a nucleus. Out of this nucleus ingenuity
fashioned a moralistic tale concerning the fate awaiting those who spurn
faqirs in general and the Supreme Faqir in particular. The epigram
providing the second element of the anecdote’s dual origin is a couplet by
Gurū Nānak which in the Ādi Granth appears as Surplus Shaloks 21.

nālī kirārā dosī eve kare guāu
marāṇu na jāpi mūlā āvae kitai ōhāi

They who fraternize with merchants squander their affection.
Foolish one! None knows whence Death shall come.¹

The key features of the couplet are the vocative form mūlā, the noun
kirārā, and the mention made in the second line of the unpredictable
nature of death. Although the word mūlā can be used as a proper name²
the context provided by the shalok as a whole indicates that in this instance
the literal meaning, ‘O sad one’ or ‘O foolish one’, is intended. The
reference to kirārā(n) has been similarly misconstrued. In its literal sense
the word means ‘shopkeepers’ or ‘traders’ and has been specifically
applied in a somewhat pejorative sense to Khatris and Aroṅās. Within the
context of the shalok it refers to those who ‘trade’ in worldly ambitions
rather than in the things of God, providing thereby another example of
Nānak’s fondness for mercantile imagery. It has, however, been construed
in a literal sense, the somewhat strained interpretation being that all
traders are condemned because of one particular kirār named Mūlā.

An anecdote has then been evolved to explain the condemnation and the
result is the story of Mūlā the deceitful trader who out of niggardliness
concealed himself when warned of the Guru’s approach. The second line
of the couplet suggests his punishment. Bābā Nānāṅk departs and Mūlā,
overcome with shame, collapses and dies.³ In the course of the narrative
Mūlā is sometimes referred to as a kirār and sometimes as a Khatri. The
latter designation presumably derives from the assumption that a trader
or shopkeeper disciple would have been a Khatri by caste.⁴

In the case of the Mūlā anecdote there has been a general acceptance of
the janam-sākhī narrator’s misinterpretation of Gurū Nānak’s shalok.
This is not invariably the case with all anecdotes which relate to specific
references in the works of Nānak. An example of divergence is provided

¹ B40, f. 101a. The Ādi Granth version reads:

nālī kirārā dosī kērāi kērāi pāi
marāṇu nā jēpāi mūlā āvai kihā tāi

² AG, p. 1412.

³ Bhāi Gurdās refers to a disciple of Gurū Nānak named Mūlā the Kir. (BG XI:13.) Although Kir
is the name of a Khatri sub-caste Bhāi Gurdās is not referring to Mūlā the Khatri of janam-
sākhī fame. Unlike Mūlā the Khatri, the Mūlā of whom Bhāi Gurdās makes mention is said to have
been a loyal disciple, and in the Nānak Prakhāl the two Mūlās are treated separately. NPr II. 38, 42.
Another Mūlā, also a Khatri, was Mūlā Chūṇī, the father-in-law of Gurū Nānak.

⁴ A later version of the tradition attributes his death to snake-bite. NPr II. 38 (69).

⁵ In the area around Pakho and Karṭāpūr (the locality in which the story probably evolved)
kirār was normally identified with Khatri rather than with Aroṅā. Census of India 1891, vol. xix
(Calcutta, 1892), p. 290.
by the vocative form ve lālo, ‘O beloved’, which recurs in the shabad Tilang 5. The earliest janam-sākhī treatment of this shabad ignores these words and instead directs all attention to its Mughal references. For the janam-sākhī narrators the major event of the Mughal invasions was the sack of Saidpur and so the shabad takes its place within the sākhī describing this event. In the Bālā tradition, however, the two words have been picked up and attached to another anecdote, thereby transforming it into a tale concerning a poor carpenter of Saidpur called Lālo. The Miharbān tradition also notes the reference, but claims that the word lālo is an affirmative particle used by Pathāns.

Example 3: Sajjañ/Bhola the Robber

The anecdotes which have been developed out of Gurū Nānak's shabad Sūhi 3 are of interest for two reasons. First, they illustrate, like the preceding example, how the theme of a shabad, aided by a striking reference in its text, can prompt a narrative anecdote. Secondly, they demonstrate the manner in which a single extract from the works of Nānak can generate more than one distinct story. Sūhi 3 begins:

Bronze shines brightly, but if I rub bronze it sheds an inky black.
Though I scour it a hundred times polishing will never remove its stain.

The theme of this hymn is the fate which must ineluctably overtake hypocrites and dissemblers, those who are outwardly pious but inwardly evil. This message evidently proved irresistible to the early community, for there emerged from its treatment of the shabad three distinct anecdotes with several variant forms, all describing pious rogues and all employing a recitation of Sūhi 3 as the means of exposing their pretences. In the Ādi Sākhīs the story concerns a man called Sajjañ, the name being derived from the word sajan or 'friend' which Gurū Nānak uses to introduce the refrain of the shabad. The pious Sajjañ sits dressed in white, rosary in hand, devoutly repeating ‘Rām, Rām’ and dispensing water to all who pass. Bābā Nānak's recitation of Sūhi 3 converts him and he confesses to having murdered unsuspecting guests. The Purātan manuscripts offer one variant of this story, the Miharbān Janam-sākhī a second, and the Gyān-ratanāvalī a third. In the Purātan and Gyān-ratanāvalī versions Sajjañ is said to be a thag and is located in North India. The Miharbān Janam-sākhī adheres more closely to the Ādi Sākhīs version and though much expanded is evidently derived directly from it.

The Bāla version also concerns a hypocrite called Sajjañ, but portrays him as a rascally Vaiñava who steals clothes.\(^1\) This provides a second distinct tradition, and the B40 Janam-sākhī supplies a third. In the B40 story yet another kind of thief appears. This time it is a highwayman named Bholā, and in the quotation of the shabad Gurū Nānak is said to have used the word bholā, or 'heedless one', instead of sajan.\(^2\)

The first two of these versions must have evolved out of the shabad, for there can be no other explanation to account for the key part which its recitation plays in the two stories. Only in the case of the B40 version can we doubt the validity of this explanation. In this third case the story related by the janam-sākhī possesses a unity which is in no way dependent upon the shabad. A more likely explanation of the shabad's appearance in the B40 version is that it was subsequently appended to an existing anecdote because its theme seemed to consort well with the theme of the anecdote.

The shabad Sūhi 3 has thus stimulated two separate stories and in addition has found a third place in the janam-sākhī traditions through incorporation within yet another tale. These anecdotes in their various versions may be diagrammatically represented as in figure 1.

One collection incorporates both the dominant Sajjañ version and also the Bholā anecdote. This is the so-called Prāchin Janam-sākhī. The Sajjañ story is a part of the collection's Puratan foundation; and the Bholā

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1 Bāla JS, pp. 290-4. Although the Vaiñava identity links the Bāla figure directly with the white-garmented rogue of the Adi Sākhīs tradition, the two narratives diverge considerably.

2 B40, p. 438.
anecdote appears as one of the supplementary sakhis added to this nucleus.¹

Example 4: The Rich Man’s Pennants

Narrative anecdotes: simple, composite sākhī

Once an anecdote had begun to circulate within a janam-sākhī tradition several developments could follow. Occasionally a tale might retain its primitive structure, economy of detail, and isolation from other stories. Such immunity from expansive impulses was however rare. The general trend was towards a greater measure of complexity in structure, together with various supplements of additional detail. This development was normal in recorded versions as well as for oral tradition and commonly the process operated with considerable speed.

The more important of the features which characterize the process of anecdote expansion are as follows:

1. Anecdotes become longer and more diversified in structure. This results from:
   (a) Extra detail
   (b) Combination with other anecdotes or portions of anecdotes.

2. Quotations from the works of Gurū Nānak are added.

3. Personal details are added
   (names of participants, their occupations, details of dress and appearance, etc.).

4. Specific locations are added.

5. Sakhīs are arranged in chronological order according to locations.
   (4 and 5 are commonly simultaneous processes.)

6. The more striking details (including miracles) tend to become exaggerated.

7. Anachronisms become more numerous.

8. Passages serving an apologetic or pedagogical purpose are added.

Although these eight features are rarely to be found within a single sakhī they are all common and the later janam-sakhīs provide an abundance of examples. All eight can be illustrated by comparing two extant versions of the anecdote ‘The Rich Man’s Pennants’. This tale has been recorded in a relatively primitive form by the B40 compiler from a source which appears to have been the oral tradition of his area.² A much more developed version is to be found in the Purūtan janam-sakhīs (both Colebrooke and Háftzābād), and from a comparison of the B40 and Purūtan narratives it can at once be seen how the proto-anecdote has developed within a particular tradition.

The B40 version is as follows:

The Rich Man’s Pennants

Bābā Nānak left that place and appeared in another country. In the city to which he had come four pennants were fluttering aloft. Bābā Nānak asked what kind of

² See B40(Eng), Introduction, pp. 12–13, 22.
pennants they were and the people replied, ‘There is a wealthy money-lender here. He has four coffers containing a large hoard of treasure and to signify this he flies four pennants over them.’

Bābā Nānak went to the money-lender and asked him, ‘Shāh, what kind of pennants are these which have been hoisted up there?’

‘Those pennants will accompany me after my death,’ replied the money-lender. Bābā Nānak then gave the money-lender a needle and said, ‘Brother Shāh, keep this needle safe. I shall ask you to return it in heaven.’ Having said this he arose and departed.

Later the money-lender began to worry. ‘How can I take this needle with me when I die?’ he asked himself. ‘And how can I deliver it to that faqīr in heaven? I shall be put to shame.’

He arose and ran after Bābā Nānak, and after running more than two kos he caught up with him. Prostrating himself he said, ‘Take back your needle. There is no point in my keeping it.’

‘Shāh,’ replied Bābā Nānak, ‘if there is no point in keeping this needle of mine, then how can these four treasure-chests accompany you when you die?’

Then the portals of the money-lender’s understanding opened. Error was swept away! Joining his hands in supplication he stood before Bābā Nānak and begged for forgiveness. Bābā Nānak was overjoyed.

The money-lender then returned, gave away all his possessions, and applied himself to the threefold discipline of repeating the divine Name, giving charity, and regular bathing. He became a Sikh and found happiness. The transmigratory round of death and rebirth was broken, for the grace of the supreme Sidhu had come upon him. He had found happiness!  

This simple version should be compared with the Purātan narrative, which here follows the Ḥāfizābād version. The Colebrooke version differs only slightly.

A. The Gurū then proceeded to Lahore on the River Rāvi. The kārōrī of the par-gana of Lahore was Dūnī Chand, a Dhuppar Khatri. His father’s srāddh was being held when he heard that Nānak the Ascetic had arrived. He went and reverently brought Bābā Nānak to his house. Bābā Nānak went in and sat down, and Dūnī Chand ordered milk, curd, and wood to be brought in from outside. When everything was ready he fed the Brāhmaṇs who had been invited for the srāddh ceremony.

Bābā Nānak was also invited and when he arrived he asked, ‘What are you celebrating?’.

‘It is my father’s srāddh,’ he replied. ‘I have fed Brāhmaṇs in his name.’

‘It is now the third day since your father had food,’ said Bābā Nānak, ‘and you say “I have fed a hundred Brāhmaṇs”.’

‘Where is he?’ asked Dūnī Chand.

‘He is lying under a mal tree, five kos away,’ replied Bābā Nānak. ‘He has been reborn as a wolf. But take food and go without fear. When he recognizes you his human intelligence will return. He will eat the food and speak with you.’

Dūnī Chand took food and went to the wolf. He prostrated himself, set down the food, and asked, ‘Father, why have you been incarnated thus?’

The wolf replied, ‘I was the disciple of a man who was scrupulous in the observance of his duties. It so happened that he had left a fish near me. When the
hour of my death arrived I was suffering and the fish was stewing beside me. Its smell assailed me and I desired it. As a result I received this incarnation.'

The wolf arose and fled. Duni Chand returned and prostrated himself before the Gurū.

B. Duni Chand then took the Gurū to his home. Over his door were seven pennants, each representing a lakh of rupees. 'Whose are these pennants?' the Gurū inquired, to which Duni Chand replied, 'These pennants are mine.' Bābā Nānak then gave him a needle and said, 'Keep it safe for me. I shall ask for it in the hereafter.'

Duni Chand took the needle to his wife and said, 'Keep this needle. The Gurū gave it to me saying, "I shall ask for it in the hereafter."'

'Good God!' exclaimed his wife. 'Will this needle accompany you to the hereafter?'

'What can I do?' asked Duni Chand.

'Go and give it back,' answered his wife.

Duni Chand took the needle back to Bābā Nānak and said, 'This needle will not go with me into the hereafter. Please take it back.'

'If a needle cannot get there,' replied the Gurū, 'how will these pennants get there?'

Duni Chand bowed before him and said, 'Give me that which will go into the hereafter.'

'Give in God's Name,' answered the Gurū. 'Feed ascetics (atit) and wandering holy men (abhiṅgat), for it is in this manner that your wealth will be carried into the hereafter.'

Duni Chand distributed the seven lakhs of rupees symbolized by the pennants. He obeyed the command. The Gurū's command is such that whoever obeys it finds salvation. Duni Chand became a Name-believing disciple (naudhariku sikh) and began repeating 'Gurū, Gurū'. Bābā Nānak then said, 'Mardānā, play the rabāb.' Mardānā played the rabāb.

[There follows a quotation from Vār Asā]
The vār is to be completed later. Utter: 'Praise to the Gurū'!

The eight features noted above are illustrated by the Purātan narrative in the following manner:

1. (a) The rich man's wife is introduced.
   (b) The anecdote B which in the B4o Janam-sākhī stands alone has been linked to an entirely separate anecdote A concerning a man who wasted money on futile ceremonies.

2. A quotation from Vār Asā has been added.

3. The rich man has been named Duni Chand, his sub-caste is given as Dhuppar Khatri, and he is said to have been a government official of high rank (karori).

4. The composite sākhī is set in 'Lahore on the river Rāvi'. (The B4o compiler has also specified a location, namely the town of Gujrat. This he does only in his table of contents. The actual sākhī includes no such reference.)

2 B4o, f. 228b (Arabic pagination).
5. The sākhī is set within the context of a tour of the Pañjāb which, according to the distinctive Purātan chronology, followed Bābā Nānak’s return from his first major journey. The previous sākhī is set in a place near Pasrūr, approximately fifty miles from Lahore. The narrator responsible for the Purātan sequence then brings the Gurū down to Lahore and the Rāvī river. Two unlocated sākhis follow and the Ḥāfizābād compiler then introduces another incident on the banks of the Rāvī.

6. The rich man has graduated from the status of a mere money-lender to that of a high government official; and the four pennants of the B40 version have become seven. Each of these Purātan pennants represents a lakh of rupees instead of a coffer of treasure.

7. The rich man is anachronistically described as a karorī. The title was instituted by Akbar after the death of Nānak.

8. Two distinctive beliefs are given direct and emphatic expression in the Purātan version.
   (a) The authority of the Gurū: ‘The Gurū’s command is such that whoever obeys it finds salvation.’ The Colebrooke version also adds as an explanation for the fate of Dūnī Chand’s reincarnated father: ‘I received this incarnation because I was without the perfected Gurū.’
   (b) The ascetic ideal, and, specifically, deference to ascetics: ‘Give in God’s Name. Feed ascetics and wandering holy men, for it is in this manner that your wealth will be carried into the hereafter.’

At the beginning of the sākhī the Gurū is referred to as ‘Nānak Tāpā’, Nanak the Ascetic.

Three concluding points may be noted. The first is that the relatively sophisticated commentators and redactors of the Miharbiin tradition sometimes reverse the normal process in the case of miracles, excising rather than multiplying. In other respects, however, they follow the general pattern, commonly to a degree which far outstrips all other traditions. Secondly, the Purātan version of the anecdote discussed above, although appreciably more developed than that of the B40 Janam-sākhī, is nevertheless still essentially primitive. It has not attained the measure of complexity which distinguishes a highly evolved version. Thirdly, it should be stressed that evolved products are not necessarily later in terms of time than more primitive analogues. The B40 version of ‘The Rich Man’s Pennants’ was drawn from an oral tradition and recorded approximately one hundred years after the Purātan version emerged in its present form.

1 Sākhī 36. Pur JS, p. 66.
2 Sākhī 40. Ibid., p. 73.
3 Ibid., p. 71.
4 Macauliffe’s rendering of this sentence illustrates the arbitrary manner in which he altered his Janam-sākhī material in order to bring it into accord with the known beliefs and teachings of Gurū Nānak. ‘Give some of thy wealth in God’s name, feed the poor, and thy wealth shall accompany thee.’ Macauliffe, i. 130.
5 The Miharbiin Janam-sākhī does not include the anecdote discussed in this example.
Example 5: Bābā Nānak returns to Talvandī

Narrative discourse: simple, combined with narrative anecdote

Most janam-sākhīs include in their accounts of how Bābā Nānak returned home after his travels a discourse based upon the shabad Siri Rāg 7.1 Having greeted him, his mother and later his father seek to divert him from his chosen path of itinerant sanctity. Siri Rāg 7 is unusually well suited to the construction of a discourse, and the result as it appears in the B40, Ādi Sākhīs, Purātan, and Miharbān collections is one of the most consistent examples of this form that the janam-sākhīs can offer.2

The theme of the shabad is self-denial and the choice is accordingly an appropriate one for the narrator's purpose. Gurū Nānak opens it with the following stanza and refrain:

To believe in the divine Name is to taste all sweet flavours;
to hear it all the salty.
To utter the divine Name is to taste all tart flavours;
to sing it all the spicy.
In single-minded love of the Name lie the thirty-six delectable flavours, but only he can love like this upon whom falls the gracious glance of the Lord. 1
Bābā, to eat any other food would be to turn joy into suffering.
He who eats it brings agony to his body and liberates evil within his man. Refrain

The narrator's task is an easy one. The vocative bābā is changed to mātā ('Mother, to eat . . . ') and from the amended quotation has been fashioned the following introductory narrative:

His mother laid the sweets and clothing before him and said, 'Eat, my son.'
'I am already filled,' replied Bābā Nānak.
'How can you have eaten your fill in this wasteland, my son?' asked his mother.
'Mardānā, play the measure Siri Rāg on the rabāb,' commanded Bābā Nānak. Mardānā played Siri Rāg and Bābā Nānak sang a shabad . . . 3

This narrative is then followed by stanza 1 and the amended refrain.

The second stanza continues the same kind of imagery, so characteristic of Gurū Nānak's style.

Let the crimson which you wear be a steeping of your man in God, and let your white be the giving of charity.
Let your blue be the removal of the stain of falsehood and meditation the garment which you put on.
I have bound around myself the sash of spiritual contentment. Thy Name, O Lord, is all my wealth and all my joy. 2
Bābā, to wear other garments would be to turn joy into suffering.
He who arrays himself in any other brings agony to his body and liberates evil within his man. Refrain

Given this answer the narrator frames another suitable comment to precede it.

1 AG, pp. 16–17.
After he had concluded the first stanza his mother said, 'Remove that faqir's robe and put on these new clothes.' Bābā Nānak then sang the second stanza...

The Guru’s mother then withdraws and his father offers him a mare. An offer of this kind might, under the circumstances, have seemed incongruous, but not when one observes that the third stanza refers to horses and riding equipment. In this manner a narrative discourse of the standard comment-and-answer variety is constructed. The quotations from Siri Rāg 7 provide ready-made answers for Bābā Nānak to utter, and on the basis of this given material the narrator devises suitable comments or questions for the interlocutors. Bābā Nānak's fourth stanza clinches the issue, and the discourse is brought to a rapid close.

The discourse which has thus been developed represents the dominant janam-sākhī usage of Siri Rāg 7. It is not however the only one. Siri Rāg 7 is of interest not merely because it has prompted a narrative discourse of unusual consistency, but also because within a different tradition it has been applied to an entirely different set of imaginary circumstances. The pattern outlined above belongs to the tradition which will later be designated Narrative I. In contrast to this Narrative I product the Bālā tradition has developed from the same shabad a discourse set in the village of Pakho, with Mūlā Choṇā and Ajītā Randhāvā cast in the role of interlocutors. The actual questions inevitably correspond to a considerable degree, for both sets have been derived from the same given text. It is the setting devised for the discourse which differs and the difference is at once striking. In the Bālā version it is Mūlā Choṇā who offers the food and clothing, and Ajītā Randhāvā who offers the mare.

The gap between the two traditions widens still further when later compilers link their Siri Rāg 7 discourse with other anecdotes. In the dominant Narrative I tradition a partnership is formed with Bābā Nānak’s homecoming sākhī, an anecdote which in the Bālā tradition is completely divorced from the Siri Rāg 7 discourse. At an early stage the shabad Vadaḥamsa 1 has been added to the composite sākhī, and somewhat later a Purātān compiler has appended two more shabads, Sūhi Chhant 4 and Māṟū 1. Later still Miharbān commentators have added a shalok from Vār Sāraṅ, the shabads Siri Rāg 4 and Māṟū 5, extra details, and the usual quantity of Miharbān exegesis. The Bālā compiler, on the other hand, has preserved the isolation of his Siri Rāg 7 discourse. To the homecoming anecdote he has added an apocryphal shabad in the Rāmkali measure and linked to it an episode concerning Rāi Bulār, the landlord of Talvaṇḍī.

The various traditions have thus used a common shabad and a common anecdote in differing ways. The patterns of expansion and their relationship may be represented as in figure 2.

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1 B40, f. 35a.
2 Because the interlocutor is now Nānak's father the vocative bābā can be retained.
3 See below, pp. 181–5.
4 Bālā JS, sākhī 70, pp. 312–14.
5 Later still Miharbān commentators have added a shalok from Vār Sāraṅ, the shabads Siri Rāg 4 and Māṟū 5, extra details, and the usual quantity of Miharbān exegesis. The Bālā compiler, on the other hand, has preserved the isolation of his Siri Rāg 7 discourse. To the homecoming anecdote he has added an apocryphal shabad in the Rāmkali measure and linked to it an episode concerning Rāi Bulār, the landlord of Talvaṇḍī.
6 Mih JS 1.475, 479–81, 482–4. AG, pp. 1243, 15, 999.
7 Bālā JS, sākhī 22, pp. 93–9.
The five sākhīs so far discussed are all examples of relatively uncomplicated processes. Each includes either one or two anecdotes, and where two occur they are linked by means of simple juxtaposition. For various reasons they have proved resistant to incorporation within sākhīs of a more complex character. Although many anecdotes have preserved this measure of isolation, such simplicity of form and structure is by no means an invariable rule. Many other anecdotes obviously lost their independence very quickly. Instead of remaining isolated and subject in terms of sequence to the discretion of later compilers they were soon associated with other anecdotes and transmitted in an assimilated form. This process is particularly common in the case of anecdotes relating to the same person, place, incident, or theme.

In some instances various anecdotes associated in this manner have been blended to form a single composite sākhī. The earlier versions of these composite sākhīs normally betray clear indications of their diverse origins, but in the course of transmission the sharp divisions are blurred and a
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greater measure of unity is achieved. One or perhaps two anecdotes normally provide a focus for the composite sākhī, and these central anecdotes almost always survive any excising tendencies to which later narrators may occasionally be prone. Others of marginal significance to the central theme may drop away, although the general tendency favours expansion of a received tradition rather than contraction.

Three useful examples of this blending process are provided by the sakhīs set in Pāk Paṭṭan, Mecca, and Achal. In the first of these (example 6) the focus is a particular person, namely Sheikh Braham (Sheikh Ibrāhīm). This is a first step, and no more than a first step, in the movement away from simplicity. Although this sakhī in its various versions is more complex than any of the examples already discussed it was not a complexity which imposed serious demands upon the ingenuity of any janam­sakhī narrator. The measure of coherence sustained by the narrators in this lengthy sakhī was already implicit in the selection of quotations which provide a basis for the discourse.

A more subtle blend is demonstrated by the evolved Mecca sakhī (example 7). In this instance the factor primarily responsible for drawing together a number of separate anecdotes was their common setting, with a common theme aiding the process. In the case of the composite Achal sakhī (example 8 inter alia) the common theme provided the dominant impulse, with a common location serving a subsidiary role.

An even more impressive example of narrative skill and the blending of several anecdotes is to be found in the Raja Sivanabh sakhī (example 9). This is the more impressive because it lacks the obvious focus provided by a common person, place, incident, or theme. The sakhī in its evolved form possesses a measure of unity which does much to obscure the multiplicity of its antecedents.

In all of these instances the end product in the more evolved janam­sakhīs has been a single sakhī. This is the general rule, but not an invariable one. In a few cases anecdotes with a common focus have retained their essential distinctions and instead of merging in a single, integrated sakhī have been transmitted as a cluster. This process is illustrated by the various anecdotes concerning Gurū Aṅgad which appear in the narrative janam­sakhīs (example 10). In even fewer cases the result is neither a composite sakhī nor a cluster, but a recurrent reappearance within well-defined circumstances of a person who serves a distinctive function. This feature is illustrated in the last of the examples by the person of Mardānā the Bard (example 11).

Example 6: Bābā Nānak’s discourse with Sheikh Braham

Narrative discourse and exegetical supplements: complex composite sakhī

A series of shaloks attributed to Sheikh Farīd have prompted a narrative discourse of unusual length and consistency. Although in this instance the germinal passages are not actually by Gurū Nānak the process which has
operated upon them is the same. Quotations from the works of Guru Nānak have subsequently been added in order to extend the discourse. Later versions contain more of these extra quotations, together with appropriate questions to introduce them, and the Miharbān treatment is distinguished by its customary fund of exegetical material.

The sākhī begins in all versions with an account of how Bābā Nānak once visited Pāk Paṭṭan, the town in which was situated the Sufi khānqāh established in the thirteenth century by the celebrated Sheikh Farīd-al-Dīn Mas’ūd Ganj-i-Shakar. There he held discourse with Sheikh Braham, a successor of Farīd. Sheikh Braham may be safely identified with Sheikh Ibrāhīm (born A.D. 1450), the twelfth successor of Farīd. Because Nānak and Sheikh Ibrāhīm were contemporaries and because Pāk Paṭṭan lay within easy reach of the Pañjāb a meeting between the two must be regarded as at least a possibility. It should not, however, be inferred that any such meeting was directly responsible for the genesis of the sākhī entitled ‘Bābā Nānak’s Discourse with Sheikh Braham’. Its genesis is to be found not in this incident, if in fact it took place, but rather in a small group of shaloks bearing the name of Farīd.

Shaloks attributed to Sheikh Farīd had long been current in the Pañjāb and a selection had been included by Gurū Arjan in the Ādi Granth. Several of these shaloks were cast in an interlocutory form and were for this reason admirably suited to inclusion within the pattern of a dialogue. The original Farīd had died in 1265, and although the janam-sākhīs of the Purātan tradition do include a sākhī relating an encounter with the first Farīd the more sophisticated narrators would have recognized this as an impossibility. It so happened, however, that Sheikh Ibrāhīm, the contemporary of Gurū Nānak, was commonly known as Farīd Sānī, or ‘Farīd the Second’. This may mean that the shaloks bearing the name of Farīd were in fact the work of Farīd Sānī, or it may merely have suggested to the janam-sākhī narrators that this was the case. For reasons sound or mistaken the identification with Farīd Sānī, or Sheikh Ibrāhīm, was certainly assumed. The interlocutory tone of the shaloks implied discourse and from this there evidently followed the belief that the discourse which provided their original context was a conversation between Bābā Nānak and his contemporary Sheikh Ibrāhīm, erroneously called Sheikh Braham.

This process may have been encouraged by a tradition that Gurū Nānak had once visited Pāk Paṭṭan, and it is possible that such a tradition could

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1 Multān District, now in Pakistan.
3 AG, pp. 1377–84.
4 Pur JS, pp. 40–5. This sākhī illustrates the same process. It owes its origin partly to shaloks attributed to Farīd (only one of which is in the Ādi Granth), to two shabads attributed to Farīd in the Ādi Granth, and to shabads of Gurū Nānak. In this case, however, other processes have also operated. Some of the shabads have been added later, and earlier legends associated with Farīd have been worked into the discourse.
have derived from an actual incident. Even if no such tradition existed prior to the development of the discourse Pāk Paṭṭān would have been the obvious choice of location for the evolving discourse. In either case it is of secondary importance. For the actual origin and the substance of the discourse attention must be directed to the verses which were currently in circulation and which are now embedded in the sākhi. Both origin and substance are to be found in the Farid shaloks, together with a few compositions by Gūrū Nānak which seemed to accord with the occasion and with the tenor of the discourse. Four of the Farid shaloks are included in the Ādi Granth collection. Two are extra-canonical.

With the solitary exception of Bhai Gurdās all the important janam-sākhi traditions relate versions of this narrative discourse.1 There are many minor variants in style and, as usual, the material progressively expands as the line of transmission grows longer. There can, however, be no doubt that all are based upon a common proto-discourse. This proto-discourse was formed by the addition of connecting passages of dialogue to the core provided by the verses. A visit to Pāk Paṭṭān provided an appropriate setting and the proto-discourse was then complete. Extra verses with related dialogue were later added, and later still we have the inevitable introduction of lengthy expository passages in the Mihārbān version of the tradition.

If the analysis is confined to the Colebrooke, Ḥāфизābād, and B40 janam-sākhis the process may be diagrammatically illustrated as in figure 3. Qr represents a hypothetical manuscript which, for reasons to be discussed later, must have been used by the compilers of the Ḥāфизābād and B40 janam-sākhis.2 Although in general the anecdotes recorded by this manuscript must have been briefer than their Colebrooke analogues, the Sheikh Braham discourse provides an instance of a Qr sākhi which is slightly more expanded than the corresponding Colebrooke version. An extra shalok (Vār Mālār 23:1) which must have been added by the compiler of Qr appears in both Ḥāфизābād and B40, thereby distinguishing them from Colebrooke.

The pattern becomes a little more complicated when the Ādi Sākhīs version is introduced into the comparison. This version lacks the extra shalok and in consequence resembles the Colebrooke analogue rather than those of Ḥāфизābād or B40. The resemblance does not, however, amount to complete identity, and when other anecdotes common to all four collections are added to the comparison it becomes clear that the Ādi Sākhīs connection with Ḥāфизābād and B40 is actually closer than its connection with Colebrooke. The introduction of the additional anecdotes also shows that the Ḥāфизābād compiler used not only Qr but also Colebrooke, or a manuscript very close to it. The pattern which now emerges is as shown in figure 4.

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2 See below, p. 191.
Further complications are introduced when the Miharbān version of the discourse is compared with the four represented above. Although the Miharbān version includes all the quotations given by Ḥāfizābād and B40 it cannot be assumed that any of the Miharbān redactors had access to Qr. The earliest Miharbān collection appears to predate Qr. To this original collection extra quotations were added, one of them the shalok which distinguishes Ḥāfizābād and B40. In addition to the extra quotations lengthy passages of exegesis were also introduced, thereby converting the original anecdote into three consecutive didactic discourses of the typical Miharbān variety.

This much is predictable for it merely illustrates the standard pattern of Miharbān growth. Less typical is the fact that some of the expanded Miharbān material has found its way into the B40 version of the discourse. The B40 version adds to the Qr text an extra quotation and five exegetical passages which can only have come from a Miharbān source. A comparison with the extant Miharbān Jānam-sākhī confirms this, and also indicates that the Miharbān version utilized by the B40 compiler was a recension earlier than the extant text.

1 Mih JS 1.488–508.
2 The extra quotation is Siri Rāg 33 (first stanza and refrain, part of second stanza and second refrain). B40, ff. 64a, 64b. The exegetical passages follow the quotations given on folios 60a–63a.
The addition of the Miharbān version of the discourse produces the extended pattern shown in figure 5.

Even this is not the full measure of the complexity, for the diagram omits the Bālā, Gyān-ratanāvali, and LDP 194 versions. It does, however, represent the principal components of the complete pattern, together with a sufficient indication of the growth process which has operated in all versions of the discourse.

**Example 7: Bābā Nānak’s visit to Mecca**

Narrative anecdotes with subsidiary discourses and exegetical supplements: complex composite sākhī

Few janam-sākhī anecdotes can equal in popularity the tales concerning Bābā Nānak’s visit to Mecca and Medinā. The latter city is not mentioned in all versions, but in every janam-sākhī which is more than a mere fragment there is to be found an account of a journey to Mecca. The story is a particularly popular one, both because of its dramatic interest and for the function which it performs. There are, in fact, several distinct anecdotes
which the janam-sakhis set in Mecca and which later compilers combine within single sakhis. All have a common theme, through which they fulfil a common function. The common theme, the triumph of Bābā Nānak over Islam, is represented in three different ways corresponding to three original anecdotes.

There is, first, the entry of a Hindu into the forbidden city. The janam-sakhis stress Nānak's identity as a Hindu, contrasting this with the insistence of various Muslims that no Hindu can ever enter the city. With divine assistance the impossible is achieved, thereby proclaiming the sanction of God upon the work of Nānak and the unique power which he possessed as a result of his divine commission.¹

¹ Concerning the proscription of unbelievers from entering Mecca see the Qurʾān 9:28–9 and Reuben Levy, The Social Structure of Islam (Cambridge, 1962), p. 3. It has been suggested that
The same claim is expressed through the other two episodes which have descended from individual anecdotes to the composite Mecca sakhī of the later versions. The miharāb which moves as Nānak's feet are dragged round by an irate qāzī obviously moves in response to divine intervention, thereby confounding the representative of Islam and proclaiming once again the seal of divine authority upon Nānak. Even the qibla moves in response to the position occupied by Bābā Nānak. This claim, which evidently follows Sūfī precedents, is here applied to one who patently stood outside the bounds of Islam. Less spectacular but equally emphatic in making the same point is the religious discussion which, in its many different versions, Nānak is said to have held with qāzīs, mullahs, pīrs, and pilgrims in Mecca. The principal interlocutor in this discourse, and occasionally the only one, is said to have been the Sūfī Sheikh Rukn al-Dīn.

In these three anecdotes it may be seen how closely allied are the purpose and the function of the janam-sakhīs. All three attribute to Nānak an authority which is divine, unique, and invincible, an authority which is set in successful conflict with another claimant to the same titles in the same period and within the same geographical area. Such a claim demands a common loyalty from all who own Nānak as Master. At the same time it offers the assurance of divine approval upon the chosen Master and a corresponding assurance of salvation to those who follow him. In this manner it assists the efforts of the emergent Nānak-panthī community towards a distinctive identity, and at all subsequent stages of the community's development serves to strengthen its cohesion.

The common theme of these three episodes soon led to amalgamation in a single Mecca sakhī. The fact that the three anecdotes originally existed as separate expressions of the common theme is made clear by the testimony of the B40 janam-sakhī and by an analysis of the single composite sakhīs which we find in the later versions. Amalgamation did not, however, follow a common pattern in all traditions, and in order to understand its various permutations the different traditions must be treated separately. In figure 6 an attempt is made to represent the distinctive Purātan pattern.

As the diagram indicates, the three episodes which are combined in the

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Narrative

Pre-Nānak tradition

The Moving Miḥarāb
(proto-anecdote)

Mecca location

Voice of God

Discourse with Rukn al-Dīn
(proto-discourse)

? Sūfī tradition

Discourse

I

Bābā Nānak’s miraculous arrival
(proto-anecdote)

Shabad added

II

Mecca

III

Q2

B40

AS

14

15

The following cloud

Shabads added

IV

Nānak’s apparel

Water in the wells of Mecca

Pir Patliā

V

Pur JS

51

Figure 6
single *Purātan* sākhi are still separate in the *B40 Janam-sākhi*. This at once suggests that although the *B40* collection was actually compiled after the formation of the *Purātan* tradition its versions of the three anecdotes represent in each case an early stage in the evolution of the later sākhi. Such an assumption would indeed be correct, but it should not be carried to the point of concluding that any of the three represents an original version. An analysis of the *B40* analogues will show that they are themselves the product of a period of development and that none of them can be regarded as an accurate representation of a proto-anecdote. They are of interest merely as identifiable stages in the process which eventually produced the composite *Purātan* sākhi. In one instance it is evident that the *B40* compiler has used a source to which the *Ādi Sākhūs* compiler also had access (a hypothetical manuscript designated *Q2*).

Although the *B40* analogues are thus to be regarded as more primitive than the *Purātan* sākhi it would be a mistake to assume that the three anecdotes as they appear in the *B40 Janam-sākhi* should all be placed at the same stage of development. The *B40* versions of ‘The Miraculous Arrival’ and ‘The Moving Miharāb’ are earlier products than the same manuscript’s version of the Rukn al-Din discourse. The Rukn al-Din encounter, as it appears in the *B40* collection, embodies the kind of heterodox discourse (in this case the so-called *Tih Sipārē*) which marks a later stage than the two wonder-stories. For this reason the *B40* sākhis have been set at differing points in the diagram. The moving miharāb anecdote, lacking any scriptural supplements, has been represented as a second-stage product; the miraculous arrival anecdote, with its supplementary shabad, has been set at stage III; and the discourse has been aligned with stage IV. It should be emphasized that in this diagrammatic form these stages are intended to represent no more than highly simplified steps in what can commonly be a complex pattern of development.

From these three stages it is possible to work back to stage I archetypes. The story of ‘The Journey to Mecca’ is, in its *B40* form, very brief and simple, but to it has been added a shabad which will not have been a part of the earliest version of the tradition. There appears to be no reason to doubt that the proto-anecdote must have closely resembled the *B40* version without its attached shabad.

The *B40* account of ‘The Moving Miharāb’ is similarly primitive, and although it too has been supplemented the extra material is not a scriptural quotation. The voice from the cupola pronouncing a blessing upon Nānak is evidently a version of the highly popular ‘Divine Voice’ which in hagiographical traditions is a stock method of expressing divine sanction or approval. Because this element appears in no other version it can be assumed that it was not a part of the proto-anecdote.

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1 *B40* sākhūs 14, 15, and 32, ff. 51b–52b, 133b–135a. Although the *B40* compiler has recorded two of the anecdotes consecutively, he has taken all three from different sources. See below, p. 230–1.

2 See below, p. 198.

3 A common variant is the ‘Voice from the Tomb’ communicating guidance from a deceased saint or from the Prophet Muhammad himself. Rukn al-Din is said to have indicated his final resting-place in this manner. *ASI* v. 133.
The Evolution of Sakhis

It seems likely that the location in Mecca represents another such addition. Had the proto-anecdote been set in Mecca it is most unlikely that the moving object would have been a miharāb. It is only outside Mecca that miharābs acquire their special significance as indicators of the qibla or direction of the Ka'bah. If the original anecdote had been set in Mecca the focus of the incident would almost certainly have been the Ka'bah itself, a conclusion which is strongly supported by the fact that the Miharban version locates the incident in a village on the way to Mecca and by the Bālā retelling of the same story in a Medinē context. A Purātan statement to the effect that Bābā Nānak's feet were pointing 'towards Mecca' appears to be a remnant of the earlier location which the later narrator has failed to eliminate. The common theme linking 'The Moving Miharāb' and the 'Journey to Mecca' anecdotes, together with the heightened effect achieved by setting the incident at the geographical centre of Islam, presumably account for the change of setting. From this stage it is only a short step to a combining of the two tales within a single narrative.

The encounter with Rukn al-Din which constitutes the third of the contributory sub-sakhīs is of a different nature. The anecdote is not a simple wonder-story. It is a heterodox discourse of the kind which appears later in the janam-sakhī traditions. This particular example does not compare in length or complexity with most discourses of this kind, nor with the variety of didactic discourse which figures so prominently in the Miharban tradition. Although it represents a form later than that of the two narrative anecdotes with which it has been linked it is less developed than most Miharban discourses and for this reason has been treated as an example of fourth-stage development.

The remaining elements in the Purātan version of the Mecca sakhī have been added to one of these three primary elements, or perhaps to the single sakhī which has resulted from the blending of the three. It seems clear that some of the extra shabads must have been attached to the 'Journey to Mecca' anecdote in its earlier separated version and that others were added to the independent tale of the 'The Moving Miharāb'. There can be no doubt that the cloud magically following the pilgrims belongs to the former, and Pir Patliā is evidently a later contribution to the Rukn al-Din discourse. The point at which the two remaining elements were introduced is not altogether clear, although it seems likely that they represent the latest of all contributions to the final Purātan synthesis. One of them, the description of Bābā Nānak's apparel, is evidently a fragment which having developed in isolation came to be attached to the Mecca sakhī, perhaps as a result of a brief reference to dress which Bhāī Gurdās uses to introduce his version of the episode.

1 Mih JS 1.449.
2 Bālā JS, p. 188. The Bālā narrator evidently appreciated the incongruence of a miharāb in the Mecca setting. In its place he substitutes variously 'the gate of Mecca' or simply 'Mecca'. Ibid., pp. 184-5.
3 Pr JS, p. 100.
4 BG 1:32.
Figure 7

The mention of water springing in the wells of Mecca may possibly be a borrowing from the Bālā tradition.

The Bālā tradition provides a somewhat different pattern. It embodies the same three constituents as the Purātan version, but the content of each betrays evident differences, particularly in the case of the 'Journey to Mecca' portion and the 'Discourse with Rukandin' as the first of these.

1 Bālā JS, pp. 182–94.

2 The Purātan texts refer to Rukn al-Din as Rukandin.
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is so distinctively different from both the B40 and the Purātan versions that we must assume only a remote connection with the proto-anecdote. The B40 and Purātan encounter with pilgrims is dropped, leaving only the account of Nānak’s miraculous transportation common to all three accounts. To this has been added a story of how mosque attendants who refused entry to the city were struck blind. Another distinctive addition is the description of a Hindu idol which, to his astonishment, Mardanā discovered in Mecca. This seems to be an appreciably later introduction, one which consorts ill with the remainder of the material and which serves only to disrupt the plot.

An interesting feature of the Bālā use of its sources is a second appearance of ‘The Moving Miharāb’ anecdote. In its second telling it does not feature a miharāb but instead the tomb of Muhammad in Medina. There can, however, be no doubt concerning its identity and origin, for in all other significant details the two stories correspond. To this tradition other elements are added and the result is the Bālā ‘Visit to Medina’ sākhi.

In spite of their numerous variants the Purātan and Bālā versions of the Mecca sākhi bear a general resemblance to each other. The Miharban version, however, is distinctively different. It has already been noted how almost the entire range of the Miharban material diverges from that of the Purātan, Bālā, and other janam-sākhī traditions. The Miharban treatment of its Mecca sources serves to illustrate the features which typically account for this difference. There is, first, the greater sophistication of the Miharbān narrators, a quality which prompts them to eliminate elements which strain their credulity. Secondly, there is a strong tendency to clarify points by introducing extra details. Thirdly, there is the customary Miharban practice of providing lengthy exegetical supplements.

These are predictable differences, features which are generally characteristic of the Miharban method. In this particular instance additional differences may be observed. The Miharban account of the Mecca visit is also distinguished by the omission of one of the three sakhis used by both Purātan and Bālā, and by a shift of emphasis in its treatment of the two which it retains. The ‘Discourse with Rukandin’ is dropped altogether and ‘The Moving Miharāb’ is deprived of the primary importance accorded it by the Purātan and Bālā versions. In its place the ‘Miraculous Arrival’ anecdote is moved to the centre, with much greater attention paid to the encounter with the Mecca pilgrims. The Miharban narrators could resist wonder-stories with a firmness wholly uncongenial to Purātan and Bālā, and at least one of them evidently appreciated that the ‘Triumph over Islam’ theme would be best served by the story of Bābā Nānak’s encounter with the pilgrims.

In its Miharban context ‘The Moving Miharāb’ anecdote contributes no more than a minor episode expressed in a much mutilated form. The

1 Bālā JS, sākhi 40, pp. 188–94.
2 A minor difference is that Bhāi Bālā joins Bābā Nānak in sleeping with his feet towards the tomb.
miharāb is replaced by a reference to the Ka'bah, and its miraculous movement is, in characteristic Mihrbān fashion, eliminated.\(^1\) In one respect, however, this version seems to be nearer to the proto-anecdote. As we have already noted, the Mihrbān narrator does not set the incident in Mecca.

An even more significant shift of emphasis is produced by the introduction of expository material. It is this feature which particularly distinguishes the Mihrbān treatment in this as in almost all Mihrbān material. The radical nature of the shift is illustrated in figure 8 by the

\(^{1}\) It is, however, clear that the extant Mihrbān version is based on a source which does relate the miraculous moving of the mihbarāb. This is made clear by the words, attributed to Bābā Nānak: 'Turn my shoes in that direction where the House of the Lord will not go. Place my shoes in that direction where the Ka'bah is not.' Mih JS 1.449.
central line which begins in *Narrative* and moves sharply through *Discourse* into *Exposition*. To this central line, representing the 'Triumph Over Islam' theme, are subsequently added two discourses with God, neither of which possesses any intrinsic connection with the theme. Both have been added simply because the shabads which they expound suggest Muslim associations.\(^1\) This leads well beyond the stage reached by the *Purātan* and *Bālā* versions, and to this advanced stage the number VII has been arbitrarily attached.

Yet another diagram could be constructed on the basis of the extant *Gyān-ratanāvali* treatment of the Mecca sākhī.\(^2\) This would indicate an affinity with the *Purātan* and *Bālā* patterns, as opposed to that of the *Miharbān Janam-sākhī*, but would involve extra detail and a further extension of the central line, an extension which would be both horizontal and vertical. The horizontal extension would not travel as far into the area of *Exposition* as the corresponding line for the *Miharbān Janam-sākhī*, but it would nevertheless enter it. Although these discourses with their attendant expository passages are assimilated to the narrative line with rather more concern for the plot than is to be found in the *Miharbān Janam-sākhī*, they do nevertheless disrupt it wherever they occur. One such conversation, although avowedly related to Bhāi Gurdās's statement concerning Bābā Nānak's apparel, evokes echoes of the *B40* 'Discourse concerning True Renunciation'.\(^3\) Additional interlocutors are introduced (notably Sheikh Bahāuddin); the 'Water in the Wells' episode is both rationalized and enlarged; and the *Bālā* idol becomes a śiva-liṅga.\(^4\)

Finally we may note an example of relatively advanced development which yet retains a primary emphasis upon the narrative element. This is provided by an addendum recorded in a later hand on spare folios at the end of the *B40* manuscript.\(^5\) The version is of particular interest in that it includes the story of the qāzi's filly, an anecdote which most other janam-sākhīs incorporate in a composite sākhī describing Bābā Nānak's experiences in Sultanpur.\(^6\) It is also distinguished by the introduction of an associated Medīnā episode, one which differs from that of the *Bālā* janam-sākhīs.

**Example 8: Discourses with Nāths**

Narrative discourses with narrative anecdotes added: complex composite sākhīs with common theme

In the section dealing with the constituents of the janam-sākhīs particular stress was laid upon the influence of Puranic and Nāth traditions.\(^7\) The cosmology of the Purāṇas, everywhere assumed, commonly appears in an explicit form. Echoes of Puranic legends can be distinguished in many

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1 A *Miharbān* commentator has also transferred the shabad *Basant Hindol att.* 8 from its earlier Mecca setting (*B40*, ff. 1348-1350) to the context of the discourse with God (*Mih JS* l.453). This was evidently done because the shabad is so plainly addressed to God.

2 *GR*, pp. 405-19.


4 *GR*, pp. 405, 417.

5 See *B40 (Eng)*, Introduction, pp. 8-11

6 *B40*, ff. 21b-22b.

7 See above, pp. 65-70.
janam-sākhī anecdotes and a few of the more important Puranic figures make occasional appearances (particularly in the Bālā janam-sākhīs). References to Nāth Masters are even more common. Gorakhnāth figures in numerous discourses and in some of these anecdotes lesser Nāths also play key roles. The degree of prominence given to these legends plainly indicates that the Purāṇas and Nāth tradition must have exercised a considerable influence upon the rural Pañjāb of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

In the case of the Purāṇas, as with the Epics, this was to be expected and to this day the folklore and beliefs of the Pañjāb are shot through with Puranic influence. The measure of the Nāths’ hold on the imagination of rural Pañjāb is perhaps a little more surprising, for it no longer applies to nearly the same extent today. It is evident that the influence which still lingers must be a remnant of something much more powerful. The part played by Gorakhnāth in the janam-sākhī traditions reflects a substantial reputation, one which is surpassed only by a few distinguished disciples of Bābā Nānak. Anecdotes in which he or other Nāths appear also imply a considerable awe, and although Bābā Nānak invariably overcomes them he sometimes has to contend with an impressively fearsome display of magical powers. The Nāth yogīs who wandered through sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Pañjāb must have been held in some dread by the people for their alleged possession of such powers. They must have commanded both fear and a grudging respect, for asceticism of the Nāth order cannot go entirely unrecognized.

Strictly speaking Puranic and Nāth influences are two separate elements. In practice, however, the two were extensively confused by the common people who received and transmitted the legends. The Nāth yogīs themselves confused the two, grafting many of their distinctive traditions on to selected portions of the luxuriant Puranic growth. This confusion was further aggravated by a merging of the terms ‘Nāth’ and ‘Siddh’. The latter properly relates to tantric Buddhism, and although the tradition of the nine immortal Nāths must have owed much to the earlier legends concerning the eighty-four immortal Siddhīs the two should, in theory, be distinguished. The actual fact was, however, much more significant than the theory, and the fact was that the Nāth Masters and the Siddh Āchāryas were inextricably confused in the popular imagination.

This confusion is entirely characteristic of the janam-sākhī usage of legendary materials. It is on Mount Sumeru, the centre of the Puranic cosmological system, that Bābā Nānak is said to have held his longest discourse with Gorakhnāth and other Siddhīs. In this, as in so many other respects, the janam-sākhīs plainly mirror the understanding of their own place and time. The amalgam of Puranic, Nāth, and earlier tantric legends must have exercised an enormous influence upon the rural understandings of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Pañjāb.

This is not, however, the full extent of the janam-sākhī pattern. In the janam-sākhī treatment of these legendary materials a third element enters the amalgam. The influence of the Nāth yogīs is evident not only in the
THE EVOLUTION OF SĀKHĪS

Janam-sākhīs, but also in the works of Guru Nanak himself. In his compositions he makes extensive use of Nāth concepts and terminology, and many of them are obviously addressed directly to a Nāth audience. This could not fail to impress the janam-sakhī narrators and inevitably these Nāth-directed compositions came to be linked with the traditions received from earlier sources. The characteristic janam-sakhī pattern is accordingly an amalgam of Puranic legend, Nāth legend, and evocative references from the works of Guru Nanak.

Two locations command a particular popularity as settings for the janam-sakhī narratives which incorporate these influences, and others of lesser appeal are also used. Mount Sumeru and Achal are the two primary sites. Of these Mount Sumeru is certainly derived from the Purāṇas, and although Achal has been identified with a Nāth centre near the town of Baṭālā it is at least possible that its real origins are, like those of Sumeru, to be found in legend rather than in a factual location. The identification with a particular place in the Paṇḍjab may have come later, perhaps as a result of a tradition concerning an actual confrontation between Bābā Nānak and some Nāth yogis at the site near Baṭālā."1

Other settings for discourses with Siddhs (or Nāths) are Tīllā,3 Gor-khattrī (which invariably appears in the janam-sakhīs as Gorakh-kaṭarī),3 Gorakh-matā,4 Setu-bandha Rāmesvaram,5 and a remote spot set 'in the midst of the sea'.6 Occasionally Gorakhnāth comes to Kartāpur for a meeting with Nānak.7 The first two of these locations deserve to be added to the list of primary janam-sakhī sites. Tīllā in Jhelum District, has for centuries ranked as the leading Nāth centre in the Paṇḍjab and one of the most important of all Nāth strongholds. In this sense there can be no doubt concerning its primacy. Gor-khattrī, near Peshāwar, did not possess the same status for the Nāths, but it was a place of some importance for Hindu pilgrimage and in the janam-sakhīs it receives as much attention as Tīllā.8

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1 For a discussion of the identification of Achal with the site near Baṭālā see B40(Eng), p. 132n
4 GR, p. 407. The place is later referred to as Nānakmatā. Pur JS, p. 27. GNSR, p. 85.
5 Bāḷā JS, p. 282.
6 Pur JS, p. 84.
8 Gor-khattrī ('the tomb of the Khatrī', sometimes Kor-khattrī) is situated in the old city of Peshāwar. Būbur, having failed to locate the spot in 1505, returned to the area in 1519 and was able to pay the visit he had cherished for so long. He was, however, disappointed.

'Marching on next day, we reached Bigrām and went to see Gur-khattrī. This is a smallish abode, after the fashion of a hermitage (gauna'at), rather confined and dark. After entering at the door and going down a few steps, one must lie full length to get beyond. There is no getting in without a lamp. All round near the building there is let lie an enormous quantity of hair of the head and beard which men have shaved off there. There are a great many retreats (jufra) near Gur-khattrī like those of a rest-house or a college. In the year we came into Kābul (910 A.H.) and over-ran Kohāt, Bānnī and the plain we made an excursion to Bigrām, saw its great tree and were consumed with regret at not seeing Gur-khattrī, but it does not seem a place to regret not-seeing.' (A. S. Beveridge (trans.), The Būbur-nāma in English, vol. 1 (London, 1921), p. 394).
Each of these four locations has been used as a setting for at least one important discourse. There is general agreement amongst the various janam-sakhis as far as the Mount Sumeru discourse is concerned, but marked divergences appear in the anecdotes set in Achal, Tilla, and Gor-khatri. Although much of the material is common to the principal janam-sakhis (including both narrative details and quotations from the works of Nānak) they disagree in the settings used for the different incidents and compositions. In general there is correspondence as far as Bhai Gurdās, the Miharbān janam-sākhī, the Ādi Sākhī, and the B40 janam-sākhī are concerned. This cluster must, however, be clearly distinguished from the Purātan janam-sakhīs and, with even greater sharpness, from the Bālā janam-sakhīs. The primary distinctions will later be seen to relate to recognizable traditions and, in some instances, to identifiable sources used by more than one janam-sākhī compiler.

An effort will now be made to disentangle some of the strands which constitute this particular portion of the janam-sākhī web, and having done so to reintegrate them in a composite diagram representing all the major traditions. The principal emphasis will be upon the various versions of the Achal discourse, with only brief analyses provided for the Sumeru, Tilla, and Gor-khatri traditions.

The Achal discourse has been selected for detailed analysis because it is one of the most illuminating episodes in the entire range of janam-sākhī traditions. Almost all the important issues arising from the evolution of the janam-sākhīs can be illustrated by reference to this particular sākhī. It combines narrative with discourse, and in some versions adds exegesis. Portions can be traced to earlier narrative traditions and others have obviously been developed out of references in the works of Nānak. Some quotations have been incorporated for this reason and others because they seemed to accord with the theme of the sākhī. The exegesis relates in part to the manifest intention of Nānak and in part to the doctrinal predilections of a narrator. Legendary details abound, but the actual location may perhaps be traceable to an authentic incident in the life of the Gurū. Earlier versions have been used by later compilers and the mode of expansion can be clearly traced in the latter. This is a substantial catalogue

See also ibid., p. 230. Abu al-Fazl reports a visit to Gor-khatri by Akbar (H. Beveridge, trans., The Akbarnāma, III.528) and in the Aʿīn-i-Akbarī refers to it as 'a shrine greatly venerated . . . visited by people especially jogis from distant parts'. Aʿīn 11.404. Jahāngīr also visited the spot, and like his great-grandfather was greatly disappointed by what he found. A. Rogers and H. Beveridge, Tīlizuk-i-Jahangīrī, 1.102. A. H. Dani traces the history of Gor-khatri back to a Buddhist foundation of the early Kushan period. Idem, Peshawar the Historic City of the Frontier (Peshawar, 1969), pp. 26–7, 171–3. See also A. Cunningham, The Ancient Geography of India (Calcutta, 1924), p. 93; S. M. Jaffar, Peshawar Past and Present (Peshawar, 1946), p. 74; and GTC i. 679. Gor-khatri has been transformed into Gorakh-hatari by means of an interesting process of transmutation. The initial consonant of khatri has been assimilated to gor, leaving a residual h; and the dental t and alveolar r have both been changed to retroflexes (ʈ and r). 'The tomb of the Khatri' has thus become 'the shop of Gorakhnāth'.

1 This issue is discussed in chapter 10.
of qualifications for a single sākhī, one which attaches to it an unusual interest and importance.¹

The analysis of this material concerns three principal elements, one of them basic and two of considerable subsidiary importance. The basic element is provided by the reputation of the Nath yogis and the influence of their legends. The two subsidiary elements are the influence of Puranic legend and the works of Nānak. Elsewhere either of these elements may be of primary importance. Within this particular area however both are subordinate to the dominant Nath influence.

The simplest of the traditions to analyse and also the latest to evolve is that of the Bālā janam-sākhis. This can be briefly outlined and then disregarded, for it had no evident influence upon the later evolution of the other traditions. The primary analysis must concern the other important janam-sākhis. In the case of the Bālā version of the Sumeru discourse the most distinctive feature is the substantial quantity of Puranic material which has been added to the episode. No other janam-sākhī can match the range of Puranic borrowings utilized by the Bālā tradition to construct a mountaineering itinerary for Bābā Nānak. In order to reach Mount Sumeru Bābā Nānak climbs four legendary mountains many hundreds of miles high and having performed this feat he proceeds to ascend nine more (including Mount Kailās, which in this context is strictly legendary as it provides a setting for a discourse with Dhrū Bhagat).² Indeed, it would be legitimate to regard the Puranic material as basic in this particular tradition, were it not for the fact that the core around which it all clusters remains the Sumeru discourse with Gorakhnāth and his colleagues. This discourse, as in all other traditions, blends a Puranic location (Mount Sumeru) with a Nath audience (Gorakhnāth and others) and a content drawn from the works of Gurū Nānak (Vār Rāmkali, shaloks 2–7 of stanza 12).³

The Ṭillā and Achal sākhis offered by the Bālā tradition are both brief narratives, curiously remote from the other older traditions. The former relates a discourse with Bālgundāi, mahant of the Ṭillā math;⁴ and the latter another of the many discourses with Gorakhnāth, accompanied on this occasion by Bharathari.⁵ It is possible that the setting may derive from an actual visit to the Baṭalā area by Bābā Nānak, but the content of the Bālā sākhī, which includes an apocryphal composition, must be traced to other antecedents.

The Bālā pattern for these three sākhis may now be represented as in figure 9. This is a relatively simple pattern. Simplicity of structure should not, of course, be confused with brevity. Apart from the Miḥarbān Janam-sākhī, with all its exegetical supplements, the Bālā versions are, in sum total, much the longest.

¹ The episode also provides another example of the manner in which Macauliffe conflated his material without indicating either his sources for various details or his reasons for setting the discourse at a particular point in his chronology. Macauliffe, i. 157–63.
² Bālā JS, sākhīs 43–59, pp. 200–70.
⁴ Bālā JS, sākhī 60, pp. 308–11.
⁵ Ibid., sākhī 62, pp. 287–8.
A greater intricacy is encountered in the Purātan tradition. The Purātan version of the Sumeru sākhī is, in itself, simpler than the amplified Bālā version, but with it has been linked the Purātan Achal sākhī.¹

![Figure 9](image-url)

The two have been bracketed in a single sākhī for the apparent reason that they concern similar themes, the gap being bridged by one of Nānak’s instantaneous journeys from one locality to another. In this Purātan version Achal produces only a minor anecdote. Bābā Nānak is offered an intoxicating drink by the assembled Nathṣ and in response recites his Āsā 38.² This shabad employs the intoxication produced by liquor as an image representing divine intoxication, and specifies raw sugar (gur) and the dhāvā or mahūā blossom as two of the constituents. In the Purātan narrative these are the constituents said to have been used by the Nathṣ and it is at once plain that the brief anecdote derives from the references in the shabad.

The Gorakh-hatāri (Gor-khatri) episode of the Purātan tradition is a more substantial anecdote.³ Inevitably the composition by Gurū Nānak entitled Siddh Gosāṭ⁴ found its way into the janam-sākhīs, and inevitably it was set in the context of a discourse with Siddhs (or Nathṣ). The actual context selected by the Purātan tradition is this Gorakh-hatāri discourse. Following a recitation of Nānak’s lengthy composition the Siddhs demonstrate their powers by making deerskins fly, stones move, and walls walk. Bābā Nānak replies by reciting Vār Mājiḥ, shalok 1 of stanza 19, a brief work which proclaims the futility of both magic and extreme asceticism.⁵ The Siddhs acknowledge defeat and the sākhī concludes with a recitation by Bābā Nānak of Gurū Arjan’s Gaurī aṣṭapadi 4.⁶

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¹ *Pur JS*, sākhī 50, pp. 94–7.  
² *AG*, p. 360. See B40, f. 91b–b.  
⁴ *AG*, pp. 938–46. See B40(Eng), p. 139n.  
⁵ *AG*, p. 147. See B40, f. 122a.  
⁶ *AG*, p. 237.
This *Purātan* pattern may be represented as in figure 10. The pattern, though more complex than that of the *Bālā* version, is still relatively simple. Another stage in the growing complexity results from an analysis of the material which, in various stages of growth, is found in Bhāi Gurdās’s *Vīr 1*, the *Ādi Sākhi*, the *B4o Janam-sākhi*, and the *Miharbān Janam-sākhi*. This complexity does not derive from their several treatments of a single Sumeru tradition,¹ but rather from their versions of a single Achal tradition.²

Only two points relating to the former will be noted here. The first is the inclusion in the Sumeru discourse of the shabad *Āsā 38*.³ This is the shabad which the *Purātan* tradition sets within its Achal discourse. The imagery of the hymn points unmistakably to a Nāth audience and with equal clarity suggests a liquor-drinking context. This leaves only the question of location for the compiler to decide. The *Purātan* tradition chooses Achal and the *Ādi Sākhi/B4o/Miharbān* tradition selects Mount Sumeru.

The second point to be noted is that the extant *Miharbān Janam-sākhi* appends to its version of the Sumeru discourse an account, both brief and vague, of a visit to Gorakh-hataṛī.⁴ This *Miharbān* anecdote bears no

⁴ *Mih JS* 1.416–19. *GNSR*, p. 60
The Sumeru discourse pattern which emerges from a comparison of these four versions is shown in figure 11. Once again the B40 and Adi Sakhis compilers have the Q2 manuscript as a common source. This is still a relatively simple pattern and one which stands in marked contrast to the four corresponding versions of the Achal sākhī. The Achal sākhī as it appears in the B40 Janam-sākhī may be summarized as follows. Bābā Nānak proceeds to Achal on the occasion of the annual Śivrātri fair, taking with him his trusted disciple Lahaṇā (Gurū Aṅgad). There he observes pious folk performing various devout ceremonies. Meanwhile the sly ‘Siddhs’ (i.e. Nāth yogīs), evidently annoyed by the

1 AG, pp. 155–6. The shabad clearly assumes a Nāth audience.
manner in which the people have ignored them, have hidden a brass pot (loṭā) belonging to these pious folk. Bābā Nānak confounds them by ordering Lahaṇā to reveal the place where the loṭā was concealed.

A debate then takes place between Bābā Nānak and a yogi named Bhagarnāth (or Bhāgarnāth). The discourse turns on a recitation of Gurū Nānak’s Suḥī 1,1 and an exegesis of a portion of this shabad is given. Bhagarnāth refuses to accept defeat, and declaring Nānak to be ‘a worthless Bedi’ he summons the eighty-four Siddh Masters, the nine Nāths, and sundry other figures of Puranic legend. The Siddhs (Bhagarnāth and his fellow yogīs) begin by performing a series of miracles, including the magical propulsion of a wall and flight on a deerskin. In response Bābā Nānak challenges them to a game of hide-and-seek. The Siddhs hide first and are easily found by Nānak. Bābā Nānak then ‘merges in the four elements’ (i.e. becomes invisible) and the Siddhs, when they are finally compelled to acknowledge their inability to locate him, make their submission. As soon as they admit defeat Bābā Nānak reappears and utter Vār Mājh, shalok 1 of stanza 19. When the humbled Siddhs ask him to instruct them in true yoga Bābā Nānak replies with a recitation of the Siddh Got. He then returns home triumphant.

This version should be compared with the briefer version recorded by Bhai Gurdās, the closely corresponding iṇdi Siṅhī text, and the much longer Miharbān account. All four clearly represent versions of the same tradition. Bhai Gurdās omits several of the details (for example, the presence of Lahaṇā) and quotes no shabads, but it should not thereby be assumed that his version was appreciably earlier than that of the source used by the B40 compiler. The differences can obviously be traced to the constraints imposed by Bhai Gurdās’s poetic medium, for it is clear that he was working from a source which includes both the shabad Suḥī 1 and the Vār Mājh shalok. He has merely converted both into his own briefer words. Moreover, although he omits some B40 details he adds others. The Siddhs perform a much more impressive display of magic in Bhai Gurdās’s account.3

The Ādi Siṅhī version differs only slightly from B40. It omits the hide-and-seek story, and adds some extra exegesis which the B40 sākhī lacks. The two are plainly from the same common Q2 source and it appears that the Q2 manuscript contained neither the hide-and-seek story nor the extra exegetical material. This is certainly a safe conclusion in the case of the former. The additional anecdote disturbs the unity of the story concerning the encounter with the Siddhs and can only be explained as an interpolation. The B40 compiler presumably derived it from current oral tradition.

The extra exegesis included in the Ādi Siṅhī version raises issues which are a little more complex.8 Although the absence of the extra material from the B40 version seems to indicate another instance of inter-

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1 AG, p. 728.  
2 For an English translation see SLTGN(Eng), pp. 40–3.  
3 The additional material consists of the exegetical passage which follows the fourth stanza of Suḥī 1, AS, p. 75.
potation it can hardly have been a simple addition of the kind made by the $B_40$ compiler when he introduced the hide-and-seek episode. This conclusion follows from a more extended comparison of the two versions. The $B_40$ text also includes two exegetical passages in precisely the same style as the additional $\textit{Adi Sākhī}$ material\(^1\) and there appears to be little doubt that these $B_40$ passages (which the $\textit{Adi Sākhī}$ compiler uses in only a slightly different form) must have derived from the same source as the extra $\textit{Adi Sākhī}$ exegesis. The difference is merely one of quantity. The $B_40$ compiler has taken only a small amount from this supplementary source, whereas the $\textit{Adi Sākhī}$ compiler has incorporated rather more in his version of the discourse.\(^2\)

It is clear that in both instances the exegetical material represents an interpolation within an earlier narrative tradition concerning the Achal discourse. Moreover, there can be no doubt concerning the source of the interpolation. The style is unmistakably that of the $\textit{Miharbān}$ tradition. A comparison with the extant $\textit{Miharbān}$ version confirms this and also indicates that the actual source must have been an earlier recension of this tradition.

This much is clear. The issue which remains obscure concerns the precise manner in which the $\textit{Miharbān}$ borrowings entered the two janam-śākhs. Behind the $\textit{Adi Sākhī}$ and the $B_40$ janam-śākhi there lies the common $Q_2$ source for the Achal narrative. Did $Q_2$ include the $\textit{Miharbān}$ borrowing? If so did it include only the portion which appears in the $B_40$ text, or did it also incorporate the extra material recorded in the $\textit{Adi Sākhī}$? If this manuscript did not include the $\textit{Miharbān}$ borrowing, from where did the $\textit{Adi Sākhī}$ and $B_40$ compilers obtain it? Did they have access to another common manuscript (a $\textit{Miharbān}$ manuscript)? If so, does it mean that the $\textit{Adi Sākhī}$ and the $B_40$ janam-śākhi originated within the same geographical area? This is but the beginning of a series of related questions arising from this situation. There is, however, little value to be derived from posing them, for the available texts do not provide the means of reaching answers. We can merely affirm that the two janam-śākhs incorporate borrowings of differing length, derived from an early recension of the $\textit{Miharbān}$ tradition and introduced into an even earlier Achal narrative.

The extant $\textit{Miharbān}$ janam-śākhi carries the process of expansion much further. This it achieves partly by expanding the narrative element, partly by quoting the $\textit{Siddh Gosī}$ in full, partly by introducing extra quotations from the works of Nānak, and above all by adding substantial quantities of exegesis in the characteristic $\textit{Miharbān}$ style. This, when compared with the $\textit{Adi Sākhī}$ and $B_40$ analogues, demonstrates the relative lateness of the extant $\textit{Miharbān}$ text. Although the origins of the $\textit{Miharbān}$ tradition may date from the early or mid-seventeenth century, the $\textit{Miharbān}$

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\(^1\) Exegesis of the second and third stanzas of $\textit{Sāhī}$ I, $B_40$, ff. 118b–119a, 119b–120a.

\(^2\) The $\textit{Adi Sākhī}$ compiler is rather more consistent, recording each stanza in turn with its appropriate exegesis attached. The $B_40$ compiler first records the second stanza with its exegesis and then the entire shabad followed by the exegesis of stanza 3 only.
THE EVOLUTION OF SĀKHĪS

Janam-sākhī as we know it today is obviously a product of the late eighteenth or early nineteenth century.

The evolved discourse may be represented in tabular form as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event/Activity</th>
<th>BG</th>
<th>AS</th>
<th>B40</th>
<th>Mih</th>
<th>JS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sivrātri fair at Achal</td>
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<tr>
<td>Achal identified with Baṭālā site</td>
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<tr>
<td>Angad as companion</td>
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<td>The hidden lotā</td>
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<td>Discourse with Bhagarnāth based on Sāhi 1</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Recitation of the Siddh Gosti</td>
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<td>Recitation of Jāpī concluding stanzas</td>
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This evolved pattern combines three basic components and an extensive supplement. The basic components can be identified as three separate stories. One of these is a simple narrative anecdote. The remaining two are narrative discourses which derive from a blending of popular attitudes towards Nāth yogis with evocative references in the works of Nānāk.

The first identifiable component is the story of the hidden lotā. It was presumably to this anecdote that the Achal allocation and Sivrātri occasion were first attached, and it is possible that an actual visit to the Nāth centre near Baṭālā may underlie it.

The second component is the discourse with Bhagarnāth (or Bhāgar-nāth, or Bhāṅgar-nāth) which has been developled out of Gurū Nānāk’s shabad Sūhi 1. In this instance the shabad is primary, and the Nāth references incidental. The brief narrative relates exclusively to the content of the shabad and although Bhāi Gurdās does not actually quote the shabad it is clear that he was working from a version which already incorporated it.

In the third story the Nānāk composition is again primary but the Nāth reference is much more prominent. The nucleus of the discourse is provided by the shalok from Vār Mājh in which Gurū Nānāk emphatically spurns the power to work wonders or the capacity to endure rigorous
asceticism. The message which Nānak seeks to communicate through the shalok concerns the grace of God, and magical powers are mentioned merely in order to dismiss them as irrelevant. It was, however, the reference to magical and ascetic powers which attracted his later audience. The reference at once suggested the powers popularly attributed to Nath yogis and so the discourse began to evolve. The process ended with an anecdote which relates a contest of magical powers. These are demonstrated only by the Nāths, for Nānak’s shalok provides a sufficient answer to their antics. For at least one disciple, however, this was unsatisfactory. If Nānak was greater than the Nāths, then plainly he could beat them at their own game. A story concerning Nānak’s power to render himself invisible was developed and this erratic feature enters the B40 version as the hide-and-seek test.

Before this B40 interpolation had been introduced (and probably at the time when the discourse first evolved) another supplementary feature had been added. It was inevitable that Nānak’s Rāmkali composition entitled Siddh Gosī should find its way into a janam-sākhi anecdote, and the ‘Contest of Magical Powers’ sākhi was chosen as an appropriate point to introduce it. At first it is merely mentioned. Later (in the Miharbān version) it is quoted in full.

This third discourse, ‘The Contest of Magical Powers’, is the anecdote which the Purātan tradition places in a Gorakh-haṭārī setting. In its Purātan context it remains an individual sākhi. In the Bhāi Gurdās/Ādi Sākhis/B40/Miharbān tradition, however, it becomes a part of a composite Achal sākhi.¹

The major supplement which is later added to this composite sākhi is the exegetical material introduced by the Miharbān compilers. Given the specific interests and purposes of the Miharbān compilers and redactors this was an inevitable development. In the late recension represented by the extant Miharbān manuscripts this feature has attained considerable dimensions and now provides a much greater proportion of the discourse’s material than the three original anecdotes. The process of expansion has been achieved in this later recension not only by adding exegetical passages to Sūhi 1 and Vār Majh 19:1, but also by quoting the Siddh Gosī in full and by introducing additional extracts from the works of Nānak.²

To these extra quotations exegesis had to be added, and the end product is a discourse of considerable length.

This proliferation of material must have been a continuing process within the Miharbān tradition, a process which eventually issued during the early nineteenth century in the extant Miharbān text. It was obviously an earlier and briefer recension which provided the exegetical interpolations appearing in the Ādi Sākhis and B40 accounts. These interpolations

¹ The introductory portion of the B40 Tīllā sākhi also relates a contest of miraculous powers with a Nāth yogi. B40, f. 182a. This is a much later tradition which may perhaps derive in part from the earlier tradition.

² The shabad Sūhi 6 (AG, pp. 729–30) has obviously been added because its key word, bhūdā (pot, vessel), is also a key word of Sūhi 1 and of the discourse built around it. Mih JS 11.70–4.
THE EVOLUTION OF SĀKHĪS

Figure 12
were introduced into the second of the three original components (the discourse based on Sūhi I).

The result of this process of blending and expansion is a single sakhī illustrating an unusual variety of janam-sakhī features. The pattern which accounts for its growth is illustrated in figure 12. A simplified version of this diagram and of the Sumeru diagram for the same group of janam-sakhīs can be compared with the corresponding discourses of the Purātana janam-sakhīs. This produces an interesting web of connecting strands, illustrated in figure 13.

This, it must be stressed, is a simplified pattern. Some of the minor strands have been omitted, the Bālā development is completely unrepresented, and the janam-sakhīs included in the diagram offer other instances of Nath influence operating upon the janam-sakhī evolutionary processes. The diagram will, however, serve to illustrate a measure of that influence. At the same time it should provide a glimpse of the complex mechanics of sakhī and janam-sakhī development.

Example 9: Rājā Śivanābh

Narrative discourse with narrative anecdotes added: complex composite sakhī

The story of Bābā Nānak’s meeting with Rājā Śivanābh consists, in its evolved form, of three distinct episodes. The first relates the story of how a merchant of Lahore visited Kartārupur and was there converted by Bābā Nānak. This is followed by the merchant’s visit to the domain of Rājā Śivanābh and the conversion of the latter. Finally Bābā Nānak himself visits Śivanābh.¹ The Purātana janam-sakhīs add that the rājā’s domain was in Singhāładīp (Sri Lanka).²

Although the reference to Sri Lanka must be dismissed as a later interpolation³ it is possible that a Rājā Śivanābh did in fact exist and that Gurū Nānak actually met him. This possibility arises from the universal agreement amongst the janam-sakhī narrators concerning his existence and the apparent absence in pre-Sikh tradition of any figure to whom the janam-sakhī Śivanābh might be traced. It is, however, no more than a possibility. The well-known anecdote which the Purātana janam-sakhīs set in Singhāładīp is the product of a single tradition, not of all the janam-sakhīs. In the Miharbān tradition there appears an entirely different encounter with Śivanābh.⁴ The area of agreement is thus confined to his mere existence and if in fact an authentic encounter did take place its details have been buried beyond recall.

The origin of the Śivanābh portion of the composite sakhī (the third of the three episodes noted above) lies not in any such encounter, real or imagined, but in Gurū Nānak’s shabad Mārū 11.⁵ The discourse which has been built around this composition follows the standard pattern of

episodes developed out of works by Guru Nanak. Each stanza serves as Baba Nanak's reply, and Sivanabh's questions are framed in accordance with the given answers. Because of the manner in which it has been contrived the resultant discourse provides an unusually clear example of the standard pattern. Although the key words in Sivanabh's questions have obviously been taken from the stanzas which provide the replies the
questions do not really correspond to the replies. This element of discord derives not from ineptness, but rather from the anecdotal concern of the narrator who first framed the questions. Whereas a close correspondence would not have produced a coherent discourse, a measure of freedom enables him to construct a neat little tale of how persistent cross-questioning finally enabled the rājā to identity his mysterious visitor.

The misinterpretations which are needed in order to make the shabad fit the narrative intention occur in a series corresponding to the stanzas of the shabad. The first quotation is the refrain, in which Gurū Nānak apostrophizes God in the following terms:

\[
gusāi terā kahā nāmu kaise jātī \\
jā kau bhūtāri mahālī bulāvahu pūchhau bātī miranti\]

Master, where is Thy Name [to be discerned]? How art Thou to be known? When Thou dost summon me within Thy palace let me inquire [of Thee the way of mystical] union.

The janam-sākhī narrator misconstrues this in three respects. First, he overlooks the word kaha(n), 'where', which indicates that the question relates to locality; secondly, he takes jiiti, 'known', to be jātī, 'caste'; and thirdly, he understands mahal to refer to an earthly palace. Were these three assumptions to be accepted a translation of the following kind would be required:

Master, what is your name and what your caste?
Let me invite you within [my] palace that I may inquire [of you the way of mystical] union [with God].

This is patently a mistranslation, but if the couplet is construed in this sense it can provide a narrator with a suitable query to put into his interlocutor's mouth. This initial query serves to introduce the discourse, and the actual stanzas can then be utilized as a series of responses by Bābā Nānak to a series of appropriate questions posed by the chosen interlocutor.

The same variety of misconstruction persists throughout the remainder of the discourse. The first stanza offers a brief description of the 'true yogi', a variety of reinterpretation which occurs commonly in the works of Gurū Nānak. It does indeed include the word jogī, but it does not (if properly construed) read like an answer to the interlocutor's question, 'Master, are you a yogi?' In all five instances the quotations from Gurū Nānak's shabad have been pressed into a use which they cannot really serve.

At two points the interpolations imposed by different narrators diverge. Stanza 4 begins with the words dovai sire, which may be variously translated as 'in both respects', 'both kinds', 'in both directions', etc. The B40 narrator (or his source) evidently recognized the ambiguity, for in framing his introductory question he merely says, 'Master, tell me about

1 B40, f. 150b. The Ādi Granth version corresponds almost exactly.
one Sirā that I may understand', thereby avoiding the awkward necessity of indicating what Sirā means. The Colebrooke narrator evidently perceived the same difficulty and solved it by bracketing stanzas 3 and 4, without inserting a question to introduce stanza 4. The Hāfizābād narrator is, however, prepared to offer an interpretation. The word Sirā, he believes, must refer to the two dominant religious communities, and in accordance with this assumption he interposes the question: 'Are you a Hindu or a Muslim?'

The second variant distinguishing the B40 and Purātana discourses occurs in their treatment of the fifth stanza. For the B40 narrator the suggestive word is Vāti, 'dweller' or 'resident', which occurs at the end of the first line. From this he has devised the question: 'Master, in what place is your home?' The Colebrooke narrator (followed by Hāfizābād) has taken the key word to be gorakh, with the result that in the Purātana version we find the question: 'Are you Gorakhnāth?'

The discourse which, in its variant versions, has been constructed in this manner constitutes the nucleus of the complete anecdote. Next an appropriate interlocutor and setting were required. The former had of necessity to be someone possessing a palace and for this role a rāja named Sivanābh was well fitted. A suitable setting is provided by the age-old story of the holy man tempted by women. Sivanābh, having previously determined to find a perfected sādhā, enlists a cadre of alluring damsels and charges them with the responsibility of tempting all visiting faqirs. Only the most sublime will be able to resist their proffered charms and the rāja will in this manner find the teacher whom he seeks. This portion of the Śivanābh story bears a marked resemblance to the legend of Ṣrṣya Śṛṅga, a resemblance which was noted by the B40 compiler. The theme is one which recurs in the Epic literature and there can be no doubt that the janam-sākhī tradition must derive either from one particular legend or from the cumulative effect of their recurrence in the Mahābhārata and the Rāmāyaṇa.

A second introductory element is the brief episode which relates how Bābā Nānak's arrival caused a withered garden to blossom. The withered garden episode opens the narrative. Next comes the dispatch of the temptresses to test the mysterious wonder-working faqir, followed by their failure and submission. The stage is then set and the discourse based on Mārū Ṣīrū Ṣahib Dārāpurīs duly follows.

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1 B40, f. 151a. In the English translation of the B40 text this has been rendered: 'Master, tell me about one world ...' See B40(Eng), p. 169. This follows the interpretation of Tejā Singh in Sahodārath, p. 992, n. 28. Tejā Singh construes douai sirai as a reference to this world and the next, to the present life and the hereafter. For yet another interpretation see Sahib Singh, Śri Guru Granth Sāhib Darāpurīs, where the term is understood to be a reference to janam maran (birth and death, the round of transmigration). Loc. cit., vol. vii, pp. 376, 377.
2 Pur JS, p. 87. 3 Pur JS, p. 87, n. 8. 4 B40, f. 151b. 5 Pur JS, p. 87
6 B40, ff. 146b-147a. See above, p. 65. The legend of Śrṣya Śṛṅga, the one-horned ascetic, is a much-travelled tale. See 'The youth who had never seen a woman' in Joseph Jacobs, Barlaam and Josaphat (London, 1896), pp. cxxx-cxxxii.
In its later recensions the narrative followed two different lines of development. One of these eventually produced the composite sākhī with its three distinct episodes, whereas the other presented the Śivanābẖ discourse as an isolated anecdote, considerably expanded but still separate. The first line leads to a common source utilized by both the Ādi Sākhīs and the B40 compilers; and the second to the Colebrooke Janam-sākhī of the Purātan tradition. Both lines are eventually drawn together by the Ḥāfizābād Ḥanam-sākhī.

The composite sākhī was formed by combining the Śivanābẖ discourse with the anecdote concerning the Lahore merchant. The simple tale of the merchant who was converted during a visit to Kartārpur is, in style and substance, completely independent of the Śivanābẖ discourse and presumably developed in isolation from it. The two anecdotes were subsequently linked by a third. The merchant, following his conversion, sails away to Śivanābẖ's domain, and having enrolled the rājā as a believer assures him that he will one day meet the Gurū himself. But, he adds, the Gurū may come in disguise. The rājā must watch alertly for his coming. This provides the link connecting the two sakhis although it is unlikely that it was originally developed with this conscious intention. Had that been the case the beliefs and ceremonies attributed to Śivanābẖ and his subjects would probably have been Śaivite. The distinctively Vaiṣṇava character of the accusations brought against the merchant by Śivanābẖ’s outraged subjects suggests that an anecdote developed in association with a different person has been appropriated to provide the needed link.

The composite sākhī is now substantially complete and subsequent additions do not affect its structure. Of the later supplements the most obvious are two shabads which appear in the B40 version of the tempting of the Guru episode. Both illustrate the common practice of inserting quotations from the works of Nānak because their themes and terminology appear to accord well with the subjects of particular anecdotes. A simile commonly used by Gurū Nānak and his Sant predecessors is that of a woman representing the devotee. The imagery is often mildly erotic, the intention being to express in terms comprehensible to human understanding the nature of the devotee’s mystical union with God. In several instances it is the faithless devotee who is portrayed, and in such cases the woman appears as one given to fleeting worldly pleasures.

A woman desires elegance and carnal delights,
Betel-leaf, flowers, the transient sweetness which turns to anguish.
She revels and makes merry, but all must turn to lamentation.
Let her cast herself upon the Lord’s mercy and all her deeds will find fulfilment.

Once again Gurū Nānak’s meaning has been misunderstood by a janam-sākhī narrator. A real woman has been envisaged and the Śivanābẖ introduction has provided a convenient place to introduce Nānak’s Basant Aṣṭapadi 1. This particular shabad was included in the version used

1 B40, ff. 141b–142a.  
by the Ādi Sākhīs and B40 compilers. The second shabd (Gurū Nānak’s Āsā 35) has been interpolated by the B40 compiler for the same reason as the Basant shabd and on the basis of the same misunderstanding.

Meanwhile the original Śivanabh discourse had been receiving different treatment within the tradition which eventually issued in the Colebrooke Janam-sākhī. This version lacks the two anecdotes concerning the Lahore merchant. It also relates the story of the temptresses in the briefest of terms and omits the extra shabads noted above. Instead two other episodes are introduced, both of them derived from pre-Sikh tradition. The first relates how Bābā Nānak insisted upon entering Śivanabh’s city mounted on the rājā’s back. The second is a grotesque tale of how Bābā Nānak commanded Śivanabh to cut his son’s throat and then eat the boy’s flesh. It is within this tradition that the reference to Śinghaladīp appears. Other earlier versions lack it, indicating instead that the abode of Rājā Śivanabh was believed to be somewhere in North India and probably within the Pañjāb itself. A reference to Gorakh-haṭārī (Gor-khatri) which has survived in the Colebrooke text suggests an original location within or near the Pañjāb.

Pre-Sikh tradition has provided the extra Colebrooke material, and the manner in which it came to be added to the Śivanabh story is at once evident. In the Mārkandeya-samāśyā parva of the Mahābhārata there is to be found the tale of how a Brāhmaṇ once visited King Śivi, son of Uśīnara. He requested food and when Śivi asked him to be more specific he commanded that the king’s son should be killed and cooked. In obedience to this command King Śivi duly slaughtered his son and took the cooked flesh to the visitor. The Brāhmaṇ then ordered the king to eat the flesh himself and only when Śivi began to do so did he stop him. King Śivi had passed the test. The Brāhmaṇ, who revealed himself to be Vidhāṭrī (Viśvakarman) in disguise, commended the king’s virtue, restored his son, and proceeded on his way. The name Śivi was evidently confused by the Colebrooke narrator with Śivanabh and in this manner the Mahābhārata tradition came to be grafted on to the janam-sākhī anecdote.

One further stage in the evolution of the Śivanabh story is marked by the Hāfizābād Janam-sākhī. The person responsible for the Hāfizābād Janam-sākhī had access to a manuscript followed by the B40 compiler (the hypothetical manuscript designated Qr) and also to either the Colebrooke Janam-sākhī or another manuscript very close to it. This meant that he was in a position to use either or both traditions. The rule invariably

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1 For the Ādi Sākhīs version see AS, pp. 60–9.
2 See B40, f. 148a-b.
4 Pur JS, p. 87.
6 In 1969 it was claimed that the authenticity of the Sri Lanka visit had been established by a newly discovered interlinear inscription incised on a slab now located in the Anurādhapura Museum. This claim must be rejected. For a discussion of the alleged inscription see W. H. McLeod, ‘Inter-linear inscriptions in Sri Lanka’, South Asia, no. 3 (August 1973), pp. 105–6.
7 Mah. III.197. In the Buddhist version of this legend (the Śivi-jātaka) the Brāhmaṇ demands the king’s eyes. E. B. Cowell (ed.), The Jātaka, or Stories of the Buddha’s Former Births, vol. iv (Cambridge, 1901), pp. 250–6.
observed by the Hāfizābād copyist was to use his Colebrooke manuscript as his principal source and to resort to the Qr source only where it contained important material which Colebrooke lacked. Both manuscripts included versions of the Śivanābh discourse, and so the Hāfizābād copyist followed the Colebrooke alternative, in sequence as well as in its actual text. The Colebrooke manuscript did not, however, include the merchant anecdotes. For these the Hāfizābād compiler turned to his second manuscript, once again following its sequence as well as its text. The result is that the two portions of the composite sākhī have been separated in the Hāfizābād Janam-sākhī. The merchant anecdotes are recorded at the conclusion of Bābā Nānak’s first journey, and the Śivanābh discourse towards the end of his second journey.

The pattern which emerges from this analysis may be diagrammatically represented as in figure 14. This diagram illustrates only the basic structure of the composite sākhī. Within the sākhī a number of supplementary elements have been accommodated, most of them relatively late and all of them interesting. First, there is clear evidence of a distinctive Nānak theology. This is expressed in the doctrine, communicated by the merchant to Rājā Śivanābh, that Bābā Nānak is present wherever he is worshipped. Secondly, the sākhī incorporates some apologetic passages, notably a clear definition of the nature of salvation. These passages also include a polemic directed against Vaiśṇava ceremonies and, in approving contrast, a description of the Nānak-panthī pattern of worship. Thirdly, there is an interpolation which goes to unusual lengths in stressing the importance of ritual bathing. This evidently reflects a controversy which must have troubled the Sikh community for many years. Other indications of the same controversy appear elsewhere in the janam-sākhīs.

A final complication which deserves to be noted appears in the late Purātan manuscript owned by Sevā Singh Sevak of Tarn Tārān. This manuscript, although clearly within the Purātan tradition, follows the Qr version in its entirety. To this Qr version it adds two brief extracts drawn from the Colebrooke lineage. The first is the introduction appended to Bābā Nānak’s discourse with Śivanābh, in which Nānak’s crossing to Śivanābh’s domain is incoherently described. This sets the discourse explicitly in Śrīghalādip. The second extract comprises the introductory portion of the anecdote in which Śivanābh is commanded to kill and consume his son. Obviously the unknown copyist of this manuscript had access to a relatively late recension of the Qr version. Unlike his Hāfizābād

1 See below, pp. 188–91.
9 In common with the B4o text it adds the shabad Āśā 35.
10 Sevā Singh Sevak, op. cit., p. 89.
11 Ibid., p. 94.
Conversion of the Lahore merchant

Shabad Mārū 11

Meeting with Śivanābh

Received tradition

Discourse with Rāja Śivanābh (proto-sākhī)

Miharbān tradition

The Merchant's Visit to Śivanābh

Basant Aṣṭ 1

Q1

Āṣā 35

Abandoned

Sri Lanka setting

Cole JS

Haif JS

Purāṭan

Figure 14
predecessor he preferred to follow the more consistent and attractive Q1 narrative throughout the entire sākhī, adding to it only the Purātan location and the inconsequential introduction to one of the Purātan anecdotes.

**Example 10: Gurū Aṅgad**

Narrative anecdotes: clusters

The ultimate origin of the Gurū Aṅgad cluster of anecdotes is to be found in a demonstrably authentic fact. Bhāi Gurdās briefly states it in the following words:

He shattered the old traditions and [before his death] appointed Aṅgad as Gurū, For his sons did not obey him, becoming instead perfidious rebels and deserters.¹

Before he died he installed Lahāṇā as his successor, setting the Gurū’s canopy over his head. Merging his light in [Aṅgad’s] light the Satgurū changed his form. None could comprehend this mystery; a wonder of wonders he revealed! Changing his body he made Aṅgad’s body his own.²

There can be no doubt whatsoever that Aṅgad was the disciple chosen to succeed Nānāk as Gurū. This is the starting-point and from this origin it is possible to trace an evolving pattern of supplementary anecdotes. These do not form a single cluster but rather three major clusters, each with its own distinctive sequence and selection of material. The analysis which follows will trace two of these three clusters. One emerges in the Purātan janam-sākhīs.³ The other appears in both the Ādi Sākhīs and B40 Janam-sākhī,⁴ and from the former descends to the Miharban Janam-sākhī.⁵ These two clusters were evidently the first to evolve, although some of their supplementary components are subsequent additions. The third cluster is a later development which came to be attached to the Bālā janam-sākhīs.

The pattern of development for both of the earlier clusters begins with the authentic tradition concerning Nānāk’s choice of Aṅgad as his successor. To this a second authentic element can be added, namely the fact that at least during his later life Gurū Aṅgad must have lived in the village of Khaḍūr.⁶ The tradition now divides, one line of descent leading to the Purātan cluster and the other through the hypothetical Q2 source to an Ādi Sākhīs/B40 cluster.

According to the Purātan version Aṅgad resided in Khaḍūr prior to his first meeting with Nānāk. There he served as the priest (pujārī) of the Trehaṇ Khatriś who were worshippers of Durgā, and his conversion took place when he happened to overhear Khaḍūr’s solitary Sikh singing the hymns of Bābā Nānāk. His name during this pre-conversion period is said to have been Lahāṇā.⁷

¹ BG 1:38. SLTGN(Eng), p. 40.
² BG 1:45. SLTGN(Eng), p. 43.
³ Pur JS, pp. 106–8, 110–11.
⁵ Mih JS 11.66–156.
⁶ Pur JS, p. 106.
⁷ Amritsar District.
The other cluster agrees that Āṅgad was a Trehan Khatri named Lahanā who formerly worshipped Durgā, but in other respects it diverges markedly from the Purātan tradition. It relates that Lahanā dwelt in the village of Harike, near Matte di Sarāi, and that he first heard of Bābā Nānak while passing by Kartārpur during an annual pilgrimage to a temple of Durgā. Only after his conversion and a period of three years spent in Kartārpur did he move from Harike to Khāḍūr in response to a command from his new Master.1

Two supplementary features are added to both of the evolving traditions before they finally diverge and go their separate ways. The first is the explanation which is given to account for the change of name from Lahanā to Āṅgad. The latter name was chosen because Lahanā was to be a replica of his Master. He was to be a ‘limb’ (āṅg) from Nānak’s own body.2 The other anecdote common to both clusters is the story of how Āṅgad ruined a new suit of clothes rather than disobey a command given by his Master. Nānak had instructed him to carry home a bundle of dripping grass (Purātan) or paddy (Adī Sākhī/B40). When Nānak’s wife observed how the slime had ruined Āṅgad’s clothes she rebuked her husband. In reply Nānak assured her that it was really an ‘affusion of saffron’, not a ‘sprinkling of mud’. In other words, it was the seal of succession which she was observing.3

The two traditions now diverge completely, and it is only in a second recension of the Adī Sākhīs that they come together again. To the common material the Purātan tradition adds the following supplementary anecdotes.

1. Āṅgad observes how every night the goddess Durgā comes to massage the Gurū4
2. The maidservant’s vision5
3. Bābā Nānak tests his Sikhs by scattering coins before them. Only two pass the test (one of them Lahanā and the other unnamed)6
4. Bābā Nānak tests the two Sikhs by commanding them to eat a corpse7
5. Āṅgad is installed as Gurū8

Two shabads are added to the cluster, neither of them integral to the narrative.9 The compiler’s chronological concern has also prompted the insertion of an anecdote concerning Sheik Bahā’ al-Dīn Zakariyyā.10

All this appears to constitute a single tradition, developed by supplementing the original anecdotes with various sub-anecdotes. In contrast the Adī Sākhīs/B40 cluster is evidently a union of two such lines of development. One of these begins, like the Purātan tradition, with the original anecdotes and expands in the same manner. In addition to the supple-
mentary anecdotes already mentioned it adds a variant account of Gurū Aṅgad’s installation and also a version of the Achal discourse.

This tradition then unites with another issuing from different antecedents. The origin of this second contributory tradition is not an actual episode, but rather the ascetic ideal which, in accordance with the convictions of a particular group within the Sikh community, encouraged respect for faqirs, celibacy, and withdrawal from worldly activity. Elsewhere this ideal is expressed only as a gloss or as an interpretation laid upon an evolved anecdote. Here, however, it forms the basis of a small cluster incorporated within the larger Aṅgad cluster.

The smaller cluster has one principal component relating directly to the person of Gurū Aṅgad. This is the story of Aṅgad’s loyal fortitude (an account of how he endured the torment of rain and cold in order to maintain a vigil while his Master was bathing). The remainder relate to him less directly, but all involve his presence and emphasize his special status. Four anecdotes of this kind can be distinguished.

1. The story of Mūlā the Khatri
2. A course of austerities performed by Bābā Nānak
3. Bābā Nānak’s adoration
4. Bābā Nānak seeks solitude

The last of these narrates a series of stratagems adopted by Bābā Nānak at Gorakhnāth’s suggestion to rid himself of the company of his disciples. First he imposes hard labour on them; next he reduces their food ration to vanishing point; thirdly he burns the harvest which they have so laboriously gathered; and finally, feigning madness, he threatens them with a dagger. (The last of these was evidently suggested by the theme of the shabad Siri Rāg 29.) Although the origin of this series appears to be the ascetic emphasis upon the value of withdrawal it is implied at one point that the various stratagems are really tests designed to prove Aṅgad’s worth.

These two traditions were evidently recorded by the Q2 compiler and then utilized by his Ādi Sākhis and B40 successors. The only significant difference distinguishing the two successor versions of the common cluster is the omission from the extant Ādi Sākhis of the ‘Installation of Gurū Aṅgad’ sākhī. This was probably present in an earlier recension of the Ādi Sākhis, but omitted from the later recension because its redactor preferred another version of the same sākhī.

It was this preference which led to renewed contact between the Ādi Sākhis/B40 tradition and that of the Purātan janam-sākhīs. Although the precise source is not clear it appears that the Ādi Sākhīs redactor has used a version of the installation sākhī which finds expression in the Purātan tradition. This is the conclusion indicated by the same redactor’s use of the corpse-eating sākhī, and even if some doubt must persist concerning

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1 See above, pp. 79–81. 2 B40, f. 104a–105a. 3 B40, ff. 100b–101b. 4 B40, ff. 102b–104a. 5 B40, f. 106a–b. 6 B40, ff. 106b–110a. 7 B40, f. 107b. 8 In the Ādi Sākhīs the two clusters appear as sākhīs 8b–d and 24–25e. AS, pp. 23–6, 76–84.
the installation sākhī the corpse-eating anecdote certainly provides a link between the two traditions. The two anecdotes are included in another supplementary cluster attached by the Ādi Sākhīs compiler to the ascetic cluster. This later supplement comprises the following anecdotes:

1. A recitation of Ḍapījī
2. Dead birds revivified: Bābā Nānak’s remorse
3. An interview with God: recitation of the shabad Sōdar
4. Bābā Nānak summons the Gāṅgā to thirsty Sikhs
5. Bābā Nānak continues testing his Sikhs
6. The story of Vaiśīṣṭ
7. Āṅgad commanded to eat a corpse
8. The installation of Gurū Āṅgad

The first four anecdotes should be separated from the remainder, for they evidently represent an interpolation drawn from a Mihārbān source. The remainder consists of additional anecdotes which further expand the Āṅgad cluster of the Ādi Sākhīs first recension.

This composite Ādi Sākhīs cluster underwent one further expansion. The entire cluster has been recorded, with some further additions, in Pothi Hariji of the Mihārbān Janam-sākhī. There can be no doubt that it appears there as a relatively late addition to the Mihārbān Janam-sākhī, and little doubt that the source must have been the second recension of the Ādi Sākhīs. The precise point of inclusion within the Mihārbān Janam-sākhī was probably determined by the earlier inclusion of a version of the Achal discourse. To the cluster was added an interview with God, and it is possible that one other anecdote included in this late Mihārbān collection was also introduced at this time. This latter anecdote purports to describe a second marriage by Nānak.

The extant Mihārbān text represents the final stage in the evolution of the second tradition, just as the Colebrooke and Hāfizābād manuscripts provide a terminal point for the first. The two traditions diverge at an early stage and the only close link during the later stages of their respective developments is the small borrowing which appears in the second recension of the Ādi Sākhīs. There is, however, one other collection which combines elements drawn from both traditions. This is the account of Bābā Nānak’s life given in the Mahimā Prakāṣ Vāratāk. The Mahimā Prakāṣ Vāratāk of Kirpāl Dās Bhallā (or Kirpāl Sīṅgh Bhallā) is distinguished above all by the measure of attention which it devotes to Khaḍūr village and to the person of Gurū Āṅgad. In view of this special interest it is not

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1. AS, pp. 85–98. A concluding death sākhī follows this cluster.
2. See below, pp. 212–14.
4. In the interview with God (Mīḥ JS II.152–6) Nānak is said to have reproached the Almighty for the status bestowed upon him at birth. When God replies that he was given the respected status of a Khatri he responds with the shabad Sīrī Rāg 29 which the Ādi Sākhīs/B40 version sets a little earlier in the narrative. The interview concludes with a ringing assurance from God that all who enter Nānak’s panth will find salvation. It seems that this addition to the earlier version should be interpreted primarily as an attempt to sustain Khatri authority within the community. The apocryphal account of a second marriage (Mīḥ JS II.141–3) may have been included in an intermediate recension of the Ādi Sākhīs and then dropped by the redactor responsible for the extant text.
surprising that its author should have utilized so much of the available Aṅgad material. The following anecdotes appear in the Mahimā Prakāś Vāratak:¹

1. The meeting with Lahanā (Ādi Sākhis/B4o tradition)
2. Lahanā’s clothes ruined
3. The birth of Lakhmi Dās and Siri Chand
   (Both conceived in response to Aṅgad’s intercession)
4. The loyal fortitude of Aṅgad
5. Aṅgad shakes sweets from a tree
6. Absolute loyalty
   Bābā Nānak asks Buḍhā and Aṅgad to tell the time during the night.
7. The coins test
8. The corpse-eating test
   (Buḍhā named as the other disciple)
9. Lahanā becomes Aṅgad
10. Aṅgad instructed to move to Khaḍūr
11. The adoration of Māi Birāī
12. Aṅgad’s lost children: the return of Dāsū and Dātā
13. Perfect obedience
   Aṅgad, misunderstanding a command of Bābā Nānak, remains rooted to the same spot for several years.

Two concluding sakhis follow this large cluster of Aṅgad anecdotes. The first is the Bahā’ al-Dīn anecdote which has been added to the Purātān janam-sākhis; and the second is a version of Bābā Nānak’s death which obviously derives from the tradition used by the Ādi Sākhis and B4o compilers.²

Although this lengthy list includes anecdotes drawn from both the main traditions outlined above it does not necessarily follow that Kirpāl Dās Bhallā was using any of the manuscripts which today represent either of the two Aṅgad clusters. It seems much more likely that his sources were oral (probably the oral tradition current in Khaḍūr during the early eighteenth century), and if in fact they included any manuscripts these are unlikely to have been any of those mentioned above. Whereas the Mahimā Prakāś Vāratak appears to have come from Khaḍūr the other manuscripts all seem to have been located further to the north-west. The text of the Mahimā Prakāś Vāratak also supports this conclusion.

This pattern is represented diagrammatically in figure 15.

Example II: Mardānā and Bālā
Dispersed references

The significant references to Gurū Aṅgad are almost all concentrated within three distinct clusters of sākhis, and any attempt to understand his

¹ SLTGN(Eng), pp. 77–84. SLTGN(Pbi), pp. 41–4.
² SLTGN(Eng), pp. 84–7. SLTGN(Pbi), pp. 44–6.
THE EVOLUTION OF SĀKHĪS

Authentic tradition: Lahanā (Ângad) chosen as successor

Residence in Khadūr

Pre-conversion residence in Khadūr

Instructed to live in Khadūr

Renamed Ângad

Clothes ruined

Corps-eating test

Coins test

Durgā's visit

The maidservant's vision

Sirī Rāg 3

Arjan's Majh 18

Death of Bahā' al-Dīn

Cole JS  Haf JS

Pur JS 53-4, 56

Mahimā Prakāš

Visit to temple of Durgā

Birth in Harike

Visit to Residence temple of Durgā

Khadūr Oral Tradition

Ascetic Ideal

Loyal fortitude of Ângad

Mūlâ the Khatrī Austerities

Devotional discipline

Nânak seeks solitude

Achal Discourse

Story of Vasiṣṭ

AS first recension

AS second recension 29-36/22-5

Installation sakhī dropped

Installation with God

Discourse with God

Extant Mih JS

Figure 15
THE EVOLUTION OF SĀKHĪŚ

role within the janam-sākhīs need proceed little further than an analysis of this limited material. The Miharbān Janam-sākhī makes extensive use of him as an interlocutor, but for this purpose others could easily have been chosen. Gurū Āngad has, in most instances, been selected because for the later period of Bābā Nānak’s life he could be regarded as a regular attendant upon his Master. The treatment of Mardānā and Bālā is, however, different and no single sākhī or cluster of sākhīs can adequately exemplify their roles.

Mardānā the Minstrel enjoys a particular prominence in modern accounts of the life of Gurū Nānak. This status he owes largely to the interest accorded him by the Purātana tradition. In other traditions his importance is considerably diminished, and in one significant source he is almost completely absent. The primitive tradition which will later be designated Narrative III mentions him only twice.¹ Within this tradition he is merely one of a number of companions to whom passing reference is made, with no special significance attached to his presence. He serves a purpose which could conceivably have been fulfilled by Ajittā Randhāvā or Gurū Āngad.

Mardānā acquires his distinctive function and corresponding prominence when the janam-sākhī narrators begin introducing into their anecdotes quotations from the works of Nanak. Almost all Nānak’s numerous compositions are intended to be sung, and if the Gurū was to give utterance to them in the janam-sākhīs he would obviously require an accompanist as companion. Because Mardānā bore the title of Mirāsī (a low caste-grouping of Muslim minstrels) he was accordingly well suited to this role. This is not to suggest that Mardānā never existed. The united testimony of the janam-sākhī compilers suggests that his existence can safely be taken for granted and that he must have been intimately associated in some manner with Gurū Nānak. Moreover, it can be assumed that as a Mirāsī he must surely have participated as an accompanist in the hymn-singing (kirtan) of the small community. It is the detailed description of his association with Gurū Nānak which cannot be taken for granted. These descriptions bear too close a correspondence to the function of Mardānā within the janam-sākhī narratives to permit any firm assumptions beyond the simple assurance that there must certainly have been an association of some sort.

For the janam-sākhī narrators Mardānā’s distinctive function was that of minstrel to accompany the Gurū’s singing. As the quotations from Nānak’s works increase so too do Mardānā’s appearances. This can be appreciated if the Narrative III sākhīs are compared with the source designated Narrative I.² The latter is a much more highly evolved tradition

¹ B4o, ff. 158a-b, 164a. The number of references increases to four if B4o sākhīs 56 and 57 (B4o, ff. 219a-220a) are ascribed to the Narrative III tradition. For the Narrative III tradition see below, pp. 220-6. There is a passing reference to Mardānā at the beginning of sākhī 31, another of the Narrative III anecdotes. B4o, f. 127b. This, however, occurs in a brief introduction which has been appended to the Narrative III sākhī, evidently by the B4o compiler. The Miharbān version of the anecdote lacks the introduction. Mih JS I.231-2.

² See below, pp. 181 ff.
and as such it regularly includes suitable quotations in its sākhis. Because *Narrative I* material has been extensively used by the *Purātan* compilers, and because their supplementary material is similarly evolved, scriptural quotation is a particularly common feature of the *Purātan* janam-sākhis. Within this tradition Mardānā enjoys, in consequence, a particular prominence, a prominence which has been carried over into modern accounts as a result of the fondness for the *Purātan* source shown by Macauliffe and almost all his successors.

The process is well illustrated by example 4, 'The Rich Man's Pennants', where the *Purātan* narrator, having added a quotation from Vār Āsā also introduces Mardānā to accompany it.1 This same feature may also be observed in the various versions of the anecdote entitled 'The Monster's Cauldron'. The *Ādi Sākhī* text, which provides a version very close to the original proto-anecdote, includes no quotation from the works of Nānak and so makes no mention of Mardānā.2 It is only when Gurū Arjan's shabad Mārū 14 is anachronistically introduced that Mardānā appears in the narrative.3 If the examination is extended to other sākhīs it will be observed that Mardānā rarely participates in any active sense.4 When he does it is in a manner which might well have indicated someone else.5 In other words, he serves as one of a small panel of regular participants. It is only when the singing of shabads becomes a prominent feature that his importance escalates.

As time passed and interpretations shifted Mardānā gradually acquired a new role without abandoning his earlier function as minstrel. The earlier role continued to increase in importance as more quotations were introduced, and having acquired prominence in this manner he was increasingly used as a participant in preference to other regular candidates. His new role was, however, something distinctively different, one which he alone of the regular participants was fitted to play. As the janam-sākhīs developed their theme of recognition by both Hindus and Muslims of Nānak's divine status Mardānā was enlisted as a symbol of Muslim acceptance. This role has ever since gathered an increasing importance, strengthening the earlier emphasis of the *Purātan* tradition. As a result Mardānā now commands an eminence which stands in conspicuous contrast to his relative obscurity in the more primitive traditions. The fact

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1 See above, p. 126.
2 *AS*, p. 28.
3 *B40*, f. 40a. See above, pp. 76–7. The *Miharbān* version includes Mardānā without the shabad. *Mīh JS* 1.231. This version is, however, a relatively late addition to the *Miharbān* tradition, drawn from the *Ādi Sākhī* or a source very close to it (i.e. from a source lacking both the shabad and Mardānā). See below, p. 202. It was interpolated at a point where Mardānā figures in the continuing narrative and where his absence would have seemed incongruous. *Miharbān* redactors normally noted this kind of inconsistency and it was presumably for this reason that they introduced Mardānā. In this late *Miharbān* version Mardānā's role undergoes a further extension. In order to avoid the necessity of putting Bābā Nānak in the cauldron later narrators make Mardānā suffer the indignity instead.
4 *B40*, sākhīs 7, 8, 12a, 18a, 22, 37, and 57.
5 The only exception amongst the *B40* sākhīs of this kind is number 57. This concerns Bābā Nānak's hymns and so indicates Mardānā as an obvious choice.
that as a Mirāṣi he could also serve as a symbol of the lower castes has in recent times provided him with yet another role.

It must be repeated that this analysis does not question the actual existence of Mardānā, nor should it imply that he was never a companion of Gurū Nānak. On the contrary, there is sufficient evidence to conclude that he certainly did exist and that he must have been an intimate associate of the Gurū. Bhai Gurdās's references to him put this beyond doubt.¹ The conclusion which follows from the analysis is that this historical person must be distinguished from the functions which Mardānā performs in the janam-sākhī traditions. The activities narrated in the traditions should be related almost exclusively to these roles. Only occasionally can they reasonably and safely be connected with actual incidents in the life of the historical Mardānā.

The same conclusion should also be applied to the figure of Bālā, putative narrator of the janam-sākhīs which bear his name. Little significance attaches to the doubtful historicity of the actual person. It is his function which matters. Bālā's original function was to set a seal of authenticity upon the janam-sākhīs of a particular tradition. The janam-sākhīs of this tradition begin by claiming that Bālā was the constant companion of the Gurū on all his travels, and if this claim were to be accepted it would follow that the narrative which he delivers must be an authentic account. Later he too acquires a supplementary role, and in precisely the same manner as Mardānā. Just as Mardānā symbolizes Muslim acceptance, so too does Bālā serve as a symbol of Hindu acceptance. His presence is essential to complete the image, an image which retains its popularity to this day. When represented in visual form it depicts Bābā Nānak sitting in the centre, flanked by Mardānā and his rābāb on one side and Bālā with his peacock-feather whisk on the other.² It is a representation which epitomizes a fundamental aspect of the janam-sākhī message.

¹ BG i:35, xi:13.
In chapter 8 a brief description was given of the assembling and transmission of janam-sākhī traditions. The concluding chapter of this section on the origins and growth of the janam-sākhī traditions will examine transmission procedures in greater detail. It will begin by postulating an early grouping of sakhis to form the first coherent traditions concerning the life of Nānak. On the basis of this postulate it will attempt a description of the manner in which this primitive tradition must have expanded and diversified. It will also indicate how certain versions of it came to be consciously regrouped in order to provide a chronological sequence. Finally, it will analyse at some length the process of selection from both written and oral sources which constituted the method of later compilers.

All extant janam-sākhīs belong to the later stages of this pattern of development. Although some of the earliest include substantial quantities of material which must have been first recorded in the late sixteenth century or early seventeenth century all are, in their extant form, products of an augmented selection drawn from even earlier sources. The janam-sākhī which retains the closest connection with the initial stages of the pattern is the version recorded in the manuscript designated LDP 194. Even this manuscript must, however, be classified with other early manuscripts. Like them it is patently an expanded version of an even earlier tradition.

The fact that the janam-sākhīs are so obviously evolved works has naturally suggested the existence of an ‘original’ janam-sākhī. Two claims have been advanced in this respect. The earlier is based upon the express declaration made at the beginning of all versions and recensions of the Bālā tradition. All claim to record the words of an eye-witness to the life and travels of Bābā Nānak. The association of the Bālā tradition with the schismatic Hindālis occasionally prompted a measure of doubt concerning the authenticity of the eye-witness claim, but until a century ago such misgivings were rare. Santokh Singh suggested a solution to the problem during the early nineteenth century by acting on the assumption that the Hindālis must have interpolated an earlier and authentic version of the tradition.

A more recent claim dates from the discovery of the two principal Purātan manuscripts (the Colebrooke and Hāfizābād janam-sākhīs). The version which they record appeared to be an early one, lacking both the

1 See above, pp. 16–18.
Hindāli taint and the more fanciful flights of Puranic fancy which characterize the Bālā janam-sākhīs. It was accordingly accepted by many Sikh scholars as the earliest of all extant versions. Vir Singh and Macauliffe expressed this conviction in the titles which they chose for their editions of this version. For Vir Singh it was the Purātan janam-sākhī, or ‘Ancient Janam-sākhī’, and for Macauliffe The Most Ancient Biography of Bābā Nānak. It is, of course, evident that both the Colebrooke and Hāfizābād manuscripts must be later recensions, but Macauliffe had referred to another manuscript in his possession dated S. 1645 (A.D. 1588). Others have subsequently assumed that this must have represented either the ‘original’ janam-sākhī or a version very close to it. This point of view had already been expressed by Trumpp following his discovery of the Colebrooke manuscript. The newly discovered janam-sākhī was, he declared, ‘the fountain from which all others have drawn largely’. Recently a modified version of the same claim has been advanced by Professor Piar Singh. This qualified version claims archetypal status not for the Colebrooke manuscript but for an earlier hypothetical recension of the same tradition to which Piar Singh has attached the name proto-Purātan janam sākhī.

The Bālā claim is specifically stated in the prologue appended to all janam-sākhīs of this tradition. Bhai Bālā, the putative narrator of the tradition, is represented as a constant companion of Bābā Nānak. If this claim can be sustained it follows that the account which he is said to have related in the presence of Gurū Aṅgad must be an eye-witness account and the original janam-sākhī. It is, however, impossible to sustain the claim. Several features of the Bālā tradition require positive rejection of its self-proclaimed origins and its implied precedence over all other traditions.

A major objection to the Bālā claim derives from the complete absence of any reference to Bhai Bālā in the works of Bhai Gurdas (including his Vār xi list of Gurū Nānak’s more prominent disciples) or in any non-Bālā janam-sākhī which predates the eighteenth century. Even the support offered by eighteenth-century janam-sākhīs is of no consequence. The portions of the extant Gyun-ratanāvalī which refer to Bālā are plainly later additions; and the sole reference in the earlier Mahimā Prakāś is far removed from any suggestion of regular companionship. This situation could never have arisen if in fact Bhai Bālā had occupied the position claimed on his behalf by the Bālā janam-sākhīs.

A second objection concerns the ineptly contrived nature of the explanatory prologue. It would be altogether inconceivable that Gurū Aṅgad had never heard of one who had been a constant companion of Bābā Nānak, or that the same companion should never have heard of his

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1 Macauliffe, i. lxxvi. See above, p. 27.
4 See above, p. 16.
5 GNSR, pp. 26–7.
Master's successor. The date of the alleged encounter between the two (A.D. 1525) must also arouse some suspicion. Nānak died in A.D. 1538 or 1539.

Thirdly, it is evident from the structure of the janam-sākhī that its origins belong to a period which followed the assembling of the more rudimentary collections. The length and substance of the earliest Bālā travel itineraries, as implied in the prologue and worked out in the manuscripts, indicate that the originator or originators of the tradition were able to build upon earlier models.

There can be no doubt that some very early traditions have been preserved in several of the individual Bālā sākhīs, but equally there can be no doubt that the collection as a whole must belong to the middle seventeenth century, not to the late sixteenth or early seventeenth century. Although Bālā himself may perhaps have been a real person, he could not have been a constant companion of the Gurū in the manner claimed by the tradition which bears his name. His function within this tradition is manifestly that of lending it the measure of authenticity which would be required in order to establish its pretensions over those of other traditions.

Although Macauliffe made some of the more obvious objections abundantly clear, the theory of an ‘original’ janam-sākhī delivered before Gurū Angad did not die an immediate death. Vir Singh was perhaps the most influential amongst those who suggested that the original version delivered in this manner must have been destroyed by the Hindāli authors of the Bālā tradition. Without making his interpretation entirely clear he seems to have reverted to the old theory, associated with the name of Santokh Singh, which explains the Bālā tradition as an interpolated version of this ‘original’ janam-sākhī.1 If this were to be accepted it would mean that the identification and excision of all Hindāli references from the earliest extant Bālā manuscripts would leave something very close to the account narrated before Gurū Angad. There is, however, no evidence whatsoever to support this nostalgic assumption. An analysis of the Bālā contents shows that it must be regarded as a middle-period product, a predecessor of the Gyān-ratanāvāli and the two Mahīmā Prakāś versions but later than the earlier portions of all other major janam-sākhī traditions.

This leaves the claim to originality advanced on behalf of the Purātan version. The Purātan claim cannot be rejected in the same summary manner, although as it stands it must certainly be qualified. In its extant form the Purātan tradition is a highly evolved product, and if in fact there lies behind it an ‘original’ janam-sākhī the Colebrooke and Ḥāftsābād manuscripts are far removed from this prototype in terms of development.

1 Vir Singh, Sri Gur Pratāp Sāraj Granthāvali (Amritsar, 1964), p. 54. Macauliffe fails to make his opinion clear, but seems to imply acceptance of the Purātan claims. The Hindālis, he states, were able to destroy ‘nearly all the older accounts of the life of Guru Nanak’. Macauliffe, i. lxxxiii. Later he declares the Purātan version to be ‘beyond dispute the most trustworthy detailed record we possess of the life of Nanak’. Ibid., p. lxxxvii. The first statement implies the survival of at least one ‘older’ account and the second suggests that this is to be identified with the Purātan version. He does, however, add that the Purātan account is ‘deformed by mythological matter’ (ibid.), thereby implying a measure of corruption in the Purātan text.
An analysis of the sources used by this tradition and by a number of other janam-sakhis does, however, suggest that the Purātan janam-sakhīs may be directly descended from a nucleus of sakhis which constituted the earliest tradition concerning the life of Nānak. If this hypothetical nucleus is to be designated the 'original' janam-sakhī there must be a clear understanding that it did not constitute a janam-sakhī of the kind represented by extant collections. It must obviously have been something much more rudimentary than the surviving janam-sakhīs.

A comparison of the Purātan janam-sakhī with LDP 194, the B40 Janam-sakhī, the Ādi Sakhīs, and the Miharbān Janam-sakhī indicates that at some early date a small selection of anecdotes must have been grouped in a simple connected sequence. This cluster of primitive sakhīs will have constituted an archetype. In the following analysis of sources this earliest of all coherent collections will be referred to as the Narrative I tradition. The cluster was certainly small and almost certainly oral in its earliest version. This latter conclusion is implied by the absence of any manuscript version, by the obvious importance of oral tradition in the later development of the janam-sakhīs, and by analogy with similar collections of popular hagiography.

An important feature of this early nucleus will have been its links with authentic incidents from the actual life of Gūrū Nānak. It is no accident that almost all of the few janam-sakhī constituents which withstand the test of vigorous historical analysis can be traced to this cluster. These authentic constituents, however, account for only a small proportion of the material included within the cluster. It is clear that the impulse to augment operated from the very beginning. This process will have followed the lines indicated by the analysis of individual sakhīs set out in chapter 9, and as a result of its operation the nucleus must have included appreciable quantities of legendary material by the time it emerged as a recognizable tradition. This need occasion no surprise. It is the basic myth which must retain its consistency, not the material which is used to give it expression.

Following the emergence of this first coherent tradition the augmenting impulse assumed complete control. Surviving memories which related to actual events were soon utilized in the continuing development of the tradition and within a short space of time were largely transformed by the addition of extra features, many of them essentially interpretative. Although passages from the works of Nānak continued to provide an indirect link, the sakhīs which were developed on the basis of such passages almost always related legendary rather than authentic anecdotes. In their choice of material the narrators responsible for the expansion of the earliest tradition were directed by the influence of traditional concepts, by the nature of the emergent community’s needs, by its understanding of its role, and above all by the myth which justified and sustained its existence.

The consolidation of the first nucleus was thus followed by a rapid multiplication of anecdotes. Like the original nucleus these supplementary anecdotes will have originally developed as oral tradition. Many must
have remained unrecorded and, after circulating within a particular area, assimilated to associated traditions or gradually disappeared.

In this manner there developed a large and ever-increasing fund of oral anecdotes. Some will have had a restricted circulation within certain areas and amongst certain groups within the Sikh panth, whereas others obviously enjoyed a much wider circulation. At various points in time a particular congregation (sangat) or individual evidently perceived the benefits of possessing a recorded version of the current tradition. In response to this realization collections of anecdotes were compiled for the edification of the congregation. In the case of the B40 manuscript this is specifically declared to have been the origin of the collection.1

Although recorded versions could not have kept pace with the proliferation of oral anecdotes, the expansion of oral tradition was inevitably followed by a corresponding expansion of the written tradition, later and more restricted in content. These documents presumably began to circulate during the latter half of the sixteenth century and certainly continued to grow in length and number during the centuries which followed. The process reached a climax during the last three decades of the nineteenth century in a period of rapid Bālā development. Since then it has weakened but never disappeared. Collections of anecdotes which are essentially janam-sākhīs still appear as 'biographies' of Nānak.

Whereas the earliest of these collections will necessarily have relied exclusively upon oral tradition for its source the extant manuscripts show a marked preference for existing manuscripts. Oral tradition continued, however, to provide a supplementary source of considerable importance. Once again the B40 collection serves as an example. Although the original basis of the B40 janam-sākhī has obviously been provided by the Narrative I tradition, the largest single source was evidently the oral tradition of the locality in which the collection was compiled. In the analysis of sources which follows this major supplementary source is designated Narrative III.

The differences which so plainly distinguish Narrative I material from Narrative III anecdotes demonstrate the composite nature of the B40 collection. In other instances a compiler's preference will incline him strongly towards a single major source and in many cases he will have had no choice other than a single available manuscript. As a result most extant manuscripts can be associated with well-defined traditions. The Hāfizābād compiler, for example, shows a marked preference for the Narrative Ia source which issues in the Colebrooke janam-sākhī. Other copyists reproduced the same material, with its distinctive content and sequence. The distinctive selection and arrangement constitutes the Purātan tradition, and manuscripts which follow this version can all be classified as Purātan janam-sākhīs. Others belong to the equally distinctive Miharbān, Bālā, Ādi Sākhīs, Gyān-ratanāvali, or Mahimā Prakāś traditions.

One significant difference which distinguishes the Bālā janam-sākhīs and much of the Miharbān tradition from the others is their conspicuous

1 B40, f. 84b.
lack of coherent chronological order. In this respect the two traditions may reflect an earlier stage of development than the others. The earliest nucleus evidently possessed a recognizable order, but this was scarcely surprising as its content consisted largely of anecdotes concerning the childhood of Nanak. Only one sākhi related to the period in Sultanpur, one to his travels, one to his return, and perhaps one to his death. This imposed an obvious order upon the small cluster and all that remained was to add two miscellaneous anecdotes narrating incidents which had occurred in the Pañjāb.

If in fact the Bālā pattern represents a feature of early janam-sākhi compilation it means that at the earlier stage supplementary anecdotes drawn from oral tradition will have been added indiscriminately to the nucleus, the only deference to chronological sequence being a general grouping under the categories of childhood, manhood, and death. The obvious point at which the Narrative I cluster could be supplemented was its brief reference to Babā Nanak's period of travels. The twelve years allocated to this period provided ample scope for expansion of the tradition and it is scarcely surprising that many anecdotes were introduced in order to fill the gap. Another such opportunity was provided by the period following Nanak's return from his travels, a period which he spent in the village of Kartāpur. Anecdotes relating to these periods must have been narrated with little regard for chronology, and only later could efforts have been made to order the generally incoherent collection into a chronological pattern.

This progression did not, of course, take place with a neat and orderly consistency. Whereas some janam-sākhi compilers have followed a developed chronological pattern others, contemporary or later, have paid heed to chronology only in the most general sense. There can be no doubt that the developed patterns have been devised by narrators who were adding to the nucleus, but it is not entirely clear at what stage this was done. All that can be affirmed is a tendency to develop increasingly intricate patterns, a process which reaches its most advanced phase in the chronology of the Purātan janam-sākhis. The four major journeys (udāsi) of the Purātan tradition are evidently a later recording either of an earlier twofold pattern, or perhaps of a single travel narrative. The Ādi Sākhīs offer a travel narrative which groups a restricted number of anecdotes into a single journey; the Pothi Sach-khaṇḍ version of the Miharbān tradition (which evidently derives in part from the Ādi Sākhīs tradition) enlarges this to constitute two journeys; and the Purātan version, following the four points of the compass, devises four separate journeys. In all such instances the extra material required to fill out the itinerary has been added to the nucleus in the form of supplementary anecdotes.

Two distinct patterns have thus emerged as the collections of anecdotes have progressively expanded. One can be described as a pattern in only the loosest sense. Anecdotes are added singly or in small clusters with

1 Chronological order is a feature of Pothi Sach-khaṇḍ, the first section of the Miharbān Janam-sākhī, but not of the succeeding sections.
regard being paid to nothing more than the most rudimentary of chrono-
logical sequences. These are the essentially unstructured janam-sakhis
which reach their climax in the twentieth-century collections of the Bālā
tradition. To this same category belongs the B4o Janam-sākhīs and the two
versions of the Mahimā Prakāś. It should be added that their significant
resemblance to the Bālā tradition is confined to this feature.

The other pattern is represented by the Ādi Sākhīs, Pothi Sach-khād
of the Miharban tradition, the Purātan janam-sākhīs, and the Gyan-
ratana-valī. These versions are, in varying degrees, structured accord-
ing to assumed chronologies. Sākhīs which occur indiscriminately in the Bālā
or B4o versions are here regrouped in order to constitute a logical sequence.
None actually achieves the ultimate objective. The Purātan version, which
comes closest to it, misplaces some individual anecdotes and records at the
conclusion of its first journey a cluster of sākhīs which could more
logically be assigned to the conclusion of the fourth journey. One impor-
tant feature which derives from this impulse to arrange a coherent sequence
is that anecdotes which in their earlier versions are unlocated are given
definite geographical settings in order to accommodate them within a
developed itinerary. This results in the same anecdote being set in
different places by different compilers. Bābā Nānak’s encounter with
Sajjan, for example, is located in South India by the Miharban tradition
(which is here following the Ādi Sākhīs pattern); in or near the Pañjāb by
the Purātan janam-sākhīs; near Tulambā in Multān district by the Bālā
janam-sākhīs; and in Hastināpur by the Gyan-ratana-valī.¹

It was in this manner that the janam-sakhis evolved. All are collections
of anecdotes, or of exegetical discourses strung on a loose sequence of anec-
dotes. Without exception the extant janam-sakhis are either straight copies
of earlier manuscripts, or composite collections based upon an earlier manu-
script or manuscripts augmented with material drawn from current oral
tradition. All are ultimately descended from oral tradition and all, whether
directly or indirectly, represent the process of continuing expansion in
accordance with the evolving understanding of the Sikh community and
changes in its social patterns. In some instances a shift in understanding re-
ffects the development of heretical notions within the community; in others
the emergence of new social customs or a reversion to earlier practice. The
introduction of new ideas into rural Pañjāb inevitably produced results
which become particularly pronounced in the nineteenth and twentieth
centuries, and the pressure of historical events, while reducing the
functional importance of the janam-sakhis, also left an impress upon their
content. Finally (although this is much more difficult to document), it is
apparent that the growing Jaṭ ascendancy within the Panth made its mark
upon the development of the janam-sakhis. This issue relates primarily to
the emergence and later the overwhelming dominance of the Bālā
tradition.

The process outlined above produced ever-expanding traditions with
their abundance of anecdote and their wealth of exegesis. To this expansive

¹ GNSR, pp. 117–18.
impulse most narrators added a concern for chronology and with varying results reordered the received tradition and its supplements into a coherent sequence.

It must be stressed that the various stages of this growth have, since the late sixteenth century, been developing simultaneously, and although the printing-press and the spread of education have done much to arrest the process it continues to this day. A concern for sequence must have been evident in some of the earliest collections, and the oral tradition continues to develop new anecdotes while shedding others which have lost their relevance. As in the case of early accessions the more recent additions reflect new needs and new influences, many of which can be identified. One twentieth-century writer relates how Nānak, while travelling west, proceeded as far as the city of Rome. There he conversed with 'the Popes' and denounced their Indulgences as hypocrisy. It is not difficult to identify the source of this particular supplement to the tradition.

The next task must be to examine the extant janam-sākhīs in order to determine their sources and, in a more precise sense, their manner of compilation. In the section which follows the term 'source' refers to actual manuscripts from which later narrators drew material in compiling their own manuscripts or to distinct oral traditions which were utilized in the same way. The analysis will be selective, for it would require an account of considerable length and complexity to unravel the multitude of tangled strands which connect the various janam-sākhīs to their sources and to each other. Attention will be directed primarily to the sources of the B40 Janam-sākhī, and secondarily to those janam-sākhīs which bear a close relationship to it. It can, however, be claimed that the same principles apply to the janam-sākhīs which receive only passing notice, and that in some instances these other janam-sākhīs are obviously drawing from sources close to those used by the B40 compiler. The chief disadvantage of the selective approach is that there exists a distinct cleavage within the corpus of janam-sākhī traditions, the Bālā janam-sākhīs standing on one side and most of the remainder on the other. A concentration on the B40 sources places us firmly on the latter side. Although it can be insisted that the same principles apply to any analysis of the Bālā development, it must at the same time be acknowledged that the Bālā tradition warrants a separate treatment which in this study it will receive only in the most cursory sense.

NARRATIVE I

One of the reasons why the B40 Janam-sākhī has received scant attention in the past has been the persistent belief that it is merely another Purātan manuscript. Karam Singh, author of the celebrated Kattak ki Visākh, included in his list of Purātan manuscripts a copy dated S. 1790 which he had noticed in a Lahore bookshop. There can be little doubt that the

janam-sākhi which he saw on this occasion was the B40 manuscript now in the India Office Library, and likewise there can be little doubt that he did no more than scan its opening folios. Others following his example have declared the B40 manuscript to be a version of the Purātan tradition.

This misunderstanding has arisen because the opening sakhis of the B40 janam-sākhi do indeed correspond closely to the analogue recorded in the Ḥāfīzābād manuscript of the Purātan tradition. It is also true that this correspondence extends to a few sakhis which are included at other points in the B40 collection. A more thorough scanning of the manuscript soon reveals, however, that much of the B40 janam-sākhi is totally distinct from the Purātan version. The correspondence is generally consistent up to the point where Bābā Nānak leaves Sultanpur, and the next two B40 sakhis do occur elsewhere in the Purātan narrative, but thereafter the two versions diverge and further correspondence is only occasional.

The common source which provides the area of correspondence is not to be described simply as one amongst several sources of equal importance utilized by the B40 compiler. It seems clear that the sakhis which have entered the B40 manuscript from this common source constitute the primary basis of the janam-sākhi. Furthermore, it appears that this common cluster of sakhis carries us close to the earliest nucleus or proto-janam-sākhi. This nucleus we have already designated Narrative I. It appears in the Ādi Sākhis, in the B40 janam-sākhi, and in the Ḥāfīzābād and Colebrooke manuscripts. It also appears, vastly augmented, in the extant Miharbān janam-sākhi, and in a transformed but recognizable form in the Bālā janam-sakhis. Later still it is included in the Gyān-ratana-vālī, and in every version of Nānak’s life up to the most modern of accounts. The term Narrative I has been chosen because in its earliest version this nucleus must have consisted exclusively of simple narrative anecdotes.

The figure I represents the assumption that it is upon the foundation provided by this cluster of anecdotes that all later janam-sākhis have been erected.

Narrative I is, of course, a hypothesis. There exists no manuscript which corresponds exactly to our assumptions concerning its content and form. This is scarcely surprising, for it is clear that many manuscript records of janam-sākhi traditions have been lost, and a collection as crude as the early Narrative I version could hardly have appeared a strong candidate for preservation. Moreover, the Narrative I material must originally have circulated in oral tradition and even if the earliest recorded version had survived it would be unlikely to conform in all respects to the collection of simple anecdotes which constituted the initial form of the Narrative I cluster.

A hypothesis is, however, necessary in order to begin a reconstruction of the janam-sākhi sources, and apart from this Narrative I postulate there appears to be no satisfactory way of explaining both the relationship which links the various janam-sākhis and also the differences distinguishing common anecdotes which are plainly amongst the earliest to have entered their narratives. This applies with particular force to the Ādi Sākhis,
B40, Colebrooke, and Hāfizābād janam-sākhīs. It is also strongly supported by the form and content of LDP 194, and it may be possible to derive further support from the evident fact that almost all of the anecdotes with some claim to historical authenticity are to be found in this group.

The elements which, according to this hypothesis, constituted the earliest collection of the Narrative I tradition are the following:
1. Anecdotes concerning the birth and childhood of Nānak
2. Bābā Nānak's employment in Sultānpur
3. His travels and return to Talvāndī
4. A visit to Pāk Paṭṭan to meet Sheikh Ibrāhīm, the successor of Sheikh Farīd
5. Bābā Nānak's presence at Bābur's sack of Saidpur
6. An encounter with a rājā named Śivanābha.

Certain features may be noted in this collection. First, there is a heavy concentration upon Nānak's childhood and early manhood. (Item 1, unlike the remainder, embodies several anecdotes.) Secondly, the few remaining anecdotes almost all relate explicitly to places within or very near the Pañjāb (Talvāndī, Pāk Paṭṭan, and Saidpur). This observation may also apply to the encounter with Śivanābha. The belief that Śivanābha resided in Śri Lanka is certainly a much later addition to the tradition, and the Mihārbān references to this rājā suggest that an unspecified location 'over the sea' is also the product of later development. Thirdly, there is only one travel sākhī.

This outline probably corresponds closely to the earliest tradition concerning the life of Nānak. It reflects, in the first place, a predictable interest in childhood anecdotes, with a strong emphasis upon the early manifestations of Nānak's greatness. Such episodes exercise a particular fascination in the development of legend and hagiography, and in this case the impulse will have been strengthened by an authentic knowledge of Nānak's family connections. It must, however, be remembered that these anecdotes will have been fewer in number and appreciably simpler in form than those contained in the versions recorded by our extant janam-sākhīs.

A second factor reflected by the hypothetical content of the earliest Narrative I tradition is an authentic knowledge concerning not merely the family connections of Bābā Nānak but also his adult life in the Pañjāb. An analysis of individual sākhīs has suggested that authentic episodes probably lie behind the accounts of the Guru's experiences in Sultānpur, Pāk Paṭṭan, and Saidpur. Although the conclusion cannot be set beyond all doubt, there exists in these instances a degree of probability which is conspicuously absent from almost all other janam-sākhī anecdotes.

These fragments of knowledge concerning the Guru's life within or near the Pañjāb are set in contrast to a lack of information concerning his period of travels. It was obviously known to his later disciples that he had undertaken a lengthy journey beyond the Pañjāb, but apart from this

1 GNSR, pp. 114–17. See above, p. 162.
3 GNSR, pp. 106–10, 132–8, 140.
general statement there was evidently little that could be added from authentic knowledge. The small supplement must have included a tradition that Mardānā the Bard had accompanied him, for the single travel sākhī which can be included within the cluster centres upon the figure of Mardānā. It would, however, be rash to read too much into this emphasis or to assert on this basis that Mardānā did, in actual fact, accompany the Guru wherever he went. Mardānā is absent from many of the later traditions relating to the period of travels and in most instances his entry into a particular anecdote can be explained by the function which he fulfils in the structure of the narrative. Although it would certainly be going too far to claim that Mardānā never existed, and although the tradition that he accompanied Nānak may be correct, it is nevertheless necessary to treat his appearances with some caution. His inclusion within the travel sākhī of Narrative I may possibly indicate that we have not pushed our hypothesis back far enough, that we have instead permitted an early development to appear as an element of the original tradition.

The same degree of caution is required in the case of the claim that Bābā Nānak travelled for twelve years. This appears in the earlier extant versions of the Narrative I tradition. The fact that twelve years was a conventional figure for such pilgrimages suggests, however, that the earliest narrators did not actually know the extent of Nānak's travels in terms of years any more than they knew it in terms of his itinerary.

There is thus a distinct possibility that our hypothetical Narrative I nucleus, though primitive in form and brief in length, may nevertheless contain later elements. Later elements are certainly present in all extant versions of the Narrative I tradition, and for this reason it must be stressed that the earliest expression of this tradition would not have corresponded to any of the texts which are now available. In the B40 Janam-sākhī the Narrative I material is reproduced in the following sākhis:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Narr. I</th>
<th>B40</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>1.</td>
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<tr>
<td>2a.</td>
<td>The Birth of Nānak</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2b.</td>
<td>Instruction by the Paṇḍit</td>
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<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Bābā Nānak's Betrothal and Marriage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4a.</td>
<td>The Ruined Crop Restored</td>
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<tr>
<td>4b.</td>
<td>The Tree's Stationary Shadow</td>
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<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Bābā Nānak's Discourse with the Physician</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6a.</td>
<td>Sultānpur</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6b.</td>
<td>Immersion in the River</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6c.</td>
<td>Bābā Nānak's Discourse with Daulat Khān's Qāzī</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>Bābā Nānak's Travels in the Uninhabited Wilderness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>Bābā Nānak returns to Talvanḍi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17.</td>
<td>Bābā Nānak's Discourse with Sheikh Braham</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18a.</td>
<td>The Sack of Saidpur</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34b.</td>
<td>Bābā Nānak and Rājā Śivanābh.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1 B40, f. 221a. AS, p. 44. Pur JS, p. 48.
Certain elements contained within clusters as they appear in the *B40 Janam-sākhī* are certainly later additions to the earlier tradition. To *sākhī* 6, for example, there has been appended an account of Nānak's departure from Sultanpur which is obviously an expansion of the tradition.\(^1\) Other versions of the same *sākhī* lack it and the fact that it consists largely of hymns attributed to Nānak indicates a later development. This amounts in practice to the addition of an extra *sākhī*, a feature which also appears in the *B40* version of the Saidpur visit. In this latter instance there has been introduced a discourse with Bābur based on current Sufi tradition and upon references in Guru Nānak's own works.\(^2\) Elsewhere the expansion is evidently to be found in the addition of extra details to a primitive version of a *sākhī*. It has already been observed how most of the quotations from Guru Nānak's *shabads* and *shaloks* have been interpolated at a later stage. All extant janam-sākhīs bear this impress. *LDP I94* illustrates a slightly less developed version than that of the *B40 Janam-sākhī*, whereas the *Colebrooke* and *Hāfizābād* manuscripts both represent a more advanced enlargement.

This differential development in the various janam-sākhī versions indicates that the elements responsible for the expansion of the original nucleus entered the tradition at different points in time. A comparison of the texts enables us to determine a sequence for these additions. It seems likely that the discourse ‘The True Field and the True Merchandise’, evolved out of the *shabad* *Sorath* 2, must have been added to the cycle of childhood anecdotes soon after the original nucleus first emerged in a coherent form.\(^3\) ‘A Discourse with Bābur’ obviously entered the tradition later, and ‘Bābā Nānak’s Departure from Sultanpur’ is evidently an even later addition made by the *B40* copyist himself.

**Division of the Narrative I tradition: Narrative Ia**

Another important development which becomes evident from a comparison of the *B40* and *Colebrooke* janam-sākhīs is a division of the *Narrative I* tradition. It is immediately clear from this comparison that although both versions contain *Narrative I* material they have received it through different lines of descent. The line which eventually issues in the *Colebrooke Janam-sākhī* we shall designate *Narrative Ia*. The other series of recensions, descending to the *B40 Janam-sākhī*, we shall designate *Narrative Ib*. This latter line also emerges in *LDP I94* and the *Ādi Sākhīs*. Both lines reunite in the *Hāfizābād Janam-sākhī*.

*Narrative Ia* evidently developed in the following manner. The primitive *Narrative I* nucleus, having already undergone a limited measure of expansion before the division, subsequently received a substantial accession of extra anecdotes and discourses. Most of the supplementary material related to the period of Nānak’s travels, an area which inevitably commanded a particular interest. This interest it attracted partly because

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\(^1\) *B40*, *sākhī* 6d, ff. 24b-27b.

\(^2\) *B40*, *sākhī* 18b, ff. 70a-73b (1).

\(^3\) In the *B40* manuscript this discourse appears as the second part of *sākhī* 4. *B40*, ff. 9b-13b.
it had been left unfilled by the earlier tradition and partly because it provided unrivalled scope for the more fanciful variety of anecdote. The development or appropriation of anecdotes set within the Pañjāb was still inhibited by first-hand knowledge of the area and, to some extent, by authentic memories concerning the Gurū's life there amongst his disciples. The period of travels was, in contrast, largely devoid of such inhibitions. This feature will account for certain elements which figure prominently in the supplementary material, and others can be explained by the evident and altogether reasonable assumption that the Gurū, in the course of his travels, must certainly have visited some of the more important centres of Hindu pilgrimage. The same assumption also extended, with rather less justification, to the far-flung centres of Muslim pilgrimage. First-hand experience and authentic memory did not, of course, constitute an insuperable barrier to the development of anecdotes and discourses set within the Pañjāb. Although such anecdotes are not as numerous as the travel sakhis they are by no means absent. Expansion of the childhood narratives also takes place, and in all three areas (childhood, the period of travels, and adult life in the Pañjāb) there are to be found the characteristic constituents from which the janam-sakhīs draw their supplements. This supplementary material will have been entering oral tradition ever since the death of Nānak. From this fund of oral anecdotes a selection has been added to a recorded version of the Narrative I tradition. In this manner the Narrative I tradition acquired the distinctive form designated Narrative Ia.

There is no clear evidence of the order in which these supplementary sakhīs entered the recorded tradition and if it is suggested that there was a series of accessions in clusters it must at once be added that this is still in the nature of conjecture. It does, however, seem a likely conjecture, for several of the supplementary sakhīs are evolved products which have a history of development behind them. The Colebrooke version of the Mecca sakhī is an example. It has already been demonstrated, by means of a comparison with other versions, that the Colebrooke Mecca narrative represents a conflation of three separate anecdotes, one of which seems originally to have been set in a different context. A comparison already drawn between two versions of the 'Rich Man's Pennants' sakhī similarly reveals that the Colebrooke version is a more highly evolved product than its B40 analogue. The fact that these sakhīs appear in conjunction with such primitive anecdotes as 'A Watchman Receives Royal Authority' suggests that the latter variety represents a later borrowing from oral tradition.

Other distinctive points may be briefly noticed. The anecdote 'Bābā Nānak's Travels in the Uninhabited Wilderness', which constituted a single sakhī in the Narrative I nucleus, has, in the Narrative Ia tradition, been split into two parts. Both portions have been expanded and between

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1. See above, pp. 137-41.
them seventeen travel sākhīs have been inserted in order to construct the 'Eastern Journey' of the Colebrooke version. The anecdote concerning Rājā Śivanābha has been expanded but still lacks the introductory portion which later enters the Purātan tradition through the Hāfizābād Janam-sākhī. Quantities of scriptural quotation have been added at many

Oral Traditions concerning Bābā Nānak

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Narrative Ia</th>
<th>Cole JS</th>
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Figure 16

points, and the entire collection has been arranged in the distinctively Purātan sequence with its travel itinerary based on the four points of the compass. This sequence obviously derives from the Narrative Ia line of development, not from the Narrative Ib line with which it is linked in the Hāfizābād Janam-sākhī.

It was in this manner that the Narrative I tradition, augmented with numerous additional sākhīs and ordered into a particular pattern, followed a line of development which ultimately produced the celebrated Colebrooke Janam-sākhī. This development may be diagrammatically illustrated as in figure 16. The precise location of this Narrative Ia development has not been determined, but the distinctly Poṭhohāri element in the language of the Colebrooke Janam-sākhī suggests that the tradition may have evolved in the area around Rawalpindi.

**Division of the Narrative I tradition: Narrative Ib**

During the period of Narrative Ia growth the Narrative I nucleus had meanwhile been undergoing a variant development, probably in an area south-east of Rawalpindi. To the original cluster a different selection of supplementary sākhīs had been added. In this case the supplement was evidently much smaller and the number of recensions appears to have been fewer. This was the line of development which we have designated Narrative Ib. To the original nucleus were added a discourse with Bābur;

1 Pur JS, pp. 74-8.
2 Several of the scriptural quotations included in the Colebrooke Janam-sākhī must have been added to the nucleus before the distinctive Narrative Ia tradition began to evolve.
an account of how a proud karóri, having been humbled by the Gurú, donated the land on which the village of Kartárpur was erected; and a story which related how contact with Rájá Śivanábh had first been established by a Khatri disciple of Bábá Nának. It seems likely that the cluster of anecdotes which appear in the B40 manuscript as sákhís 10–14 were also derived by the B40 compiler from his Narrative Ib source, and it is possible that he may have obtained his version of the Achal discourse from the same manuscript.

In addition to the extra anecdotes there was also expansion of the material inherited from the Narrative I nucleus in a manner distinguishing it from the Narrative Ia treatment of the same material. This certainly happened in the case of the original portion of the Śivanábh sákhí. Some extra quotations from the works of Nának were added to those which had already entered the parent tradition, and, inevitably, numerous variant readings of lesser significance distinguished Narrative Ib renderings of common sákhís from their Narrative Ia analogues.

The earliest extant example of the Narrative Ib tradition is provided by the manuscript LDP 194, a collection which consists of the original nucleus, together with the Narrative Ib supplement noted above. The supplement includes both the Achal and the Kaliyug sákhís, but in a position which may indicate that they were additions to the manuscript by its copyist rather than integral parts of his Narrative Ib source. Both occur at the conclusion of the narrative portion of the manuscript, and the Achal sákhí is actually set within a lengthy section which otherwise comprises only scriptural quotation. Because this section is so obviously a supplement to a basic Narrative Ib source it may follow that at least the Achal sákhí, and perhaps also the immediately preceding Kaliyug sákhí, should be regarded as parts of the supplement rather than as elements of the basic source. On the other hand, the possibility that they may have belonged to the Narrative Ib tradition should not be obscured.

This same Narrative Ib tradition reappears in the Háfiszábád janam-sákhí, where only a selective use has been made of it. The Háfiszábád janam-sákhí is primarily based upon the Narrative Ia tradition. It is clear, however, that the Háfiszábád compiler also had access to a Narrative Ib manuscript. This he collated with his Narrative Ia text, a text which if not actually the Colebrooke janam-sákhí must have been a manuscript very close to it. The Háfiszábád compiler obviously followed the longer Narrative Ia manuscript in preference to his Narrative Ib manuscript, and whenever a common sákhí appeared it was the Narrative Ia version which he copied. Only at points where the Narrative Ib manuscript recorded material missing from Narrative Ia did he turn to it. Having

1 In the B40 janam-sákhí these Narrative Ib sákhís appear as numbers 18b, 19, and the first portion of 34. B40, ff. 70a–75a. 133b–145a.
2 See below, pp. 192–4.
3 Although a version of the Achal discourse may well have formed part of the Narrative Ib tradition it seems much more likely that the B40 compiler used a different source for this particular sákhí. See below, pp. 198 ff.
4 LDP 194, ff. 56a–117b.
5 Ibid., ff. 49a–54a.
copied the extra material he immediately reverted to his *Narrative Ia* source.

It is this feature which explains the *Hafizabad Janam-sakhī*’s illogical placement of the introduction to the Śivanābī sakhī. In the briefer *Narrative Ib* manuscript the Śivanābī sakhī followed immediately after the story of the converted karoṛī. The Karoṛī anecdote was not to be found in the *Narrative Ia* recension and so had to be added to the new composite version. The *Narrative Ib* tradition had also attached an introduction to the Śivanābī sakhī (the story of the Khatri disciple noted above). This introductory portion was retained in its *Narrative Ib* position by the *Hafizabad* compiler and so follows immediately after the Karoṛī sakhī in the *Hafizabad Janam-sakhī*.\(^1\) The second portion of the *Narrative Ib* Śivanābī sakhī was, however, dropped in accordance with the compiler’s preference for *Narrative Ia* versions wherever available. The *Narrative Ia* version comes later, having been allocated a position in the ‘Southern Journey’ narrative,\(^2\) and the *Hafizabad* compiler records it when he reaches it in his *Narrative Ia* source.

In this manner the *Narrative I* tradition reunited in the composite *Hafizabad Janam-sakhī*, although in a fashion which involved a much greater dependence upon the longer and more evolved *Narrative Ia* line of development than upon the *Narrative Ib* line. The result was the so-called *Purātan* tradition, which in spite of obvious links must be distinguished from such distinctively *Narrative Ib* janam-sakhīs as LDP 194. The diagrammatic representation can now be extended as in figure 17.

This analysis is confirmed by a comparison of the two major *Purātan* manuscripts (i.e. the *Colebrooke* and *Hafizabad* janam-sakhīs) with the *B40 Janam-sakhī*. Two conclusions follow from the comparison. First, it is clear that the *B40* compiler did not have access to the *Colebrooke* manuscript, nor to any other recension of the *Narrative Ia* tradition. Wherever the *B40* and *Colebrooke* janam-sakhīs contain analogues which cannot have existed in any *Narrative Ib* recension the *B40* version diverges widely from *Colebrooke*.\(^3\) In such instances it is clear that the *B40* compiler derived his versions from sources other than the *Colebrooke Janam-sakhī* or its immediate antecedents.

Secondly, in contrast with this marked divergence from *Colebrooke* analogues, there is a remarkably close correspondence in the case of precisely those sakhīs which the *B40 Janam-sakhī* shares with the *Hafizabad* manuscript but which are missing from the *Colebrooke* manuscript. In other words, the *B40* and *Hafizabad* compilers agree when recording *Narrative Ib* sakhīs which were not included in the *Narrative Ia* tradition, but disagree when recording sakhīs which are common to both *Narrative Ia* and *Narrative Ib* (i.e. the sakhīs which must have been incorporated in the earlier *Narrative I* tradition before it branched into

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\(^{1}\) *Pur JS*, p. 74. GNSR, p. 46.  

\(^{2}\) *Pur JS*, pp. 86–90. GNSR, p. 48.  

the two derived traditions). This can only mean that whereas the Ḥāfizābād compiler used a Narrative Ib manuscript as a mere supplement to his Narrative Ia source, the B40 compiler regarded his Narrative Ib manuscript as a basic source, following it as far as it would take him and finding his supplements in non-Narrative I sources. Where the Ḥāfizābād compiler abandoned his Narrative Ib source in preference for Narrative Ia, the B40 compiler adhered to it. This appears to be the obvious explanation for the pattern which emerges from a comparison of the B40 and Ḥāfizābād janam-sākhis, a pattern of close correspondence in some sākhīs and variant versions in others.

The degree of correspondence which distinguishes the B40 and Ḥāfizābād readings of Narrative Ib sākhīs is so close that with only rare exceptions it amounts to a virtual identity. This suggests that the B40 and Ḥāfizābād compilers must have had access to the same Narrative Ib manuscript. In the case of the Karoṛī sākhī only two differences of any
Sources Used by the Janam-Sākhī Compilers

Significance emerge from a comparison of the B40 and Ḥāfizābād texts, both of them evidently brief additions made to the source manuscript by the two later compilers. During the course of the narrative the B40 compiler inserts a sentence which the Ḥāfizābād text lacks: tā karoṛī kahīā ju nānakhu vaḍā maradu hai ("Nānak is a great man," declared the karoṛī). The second addition appears in the Ḥāfizābād text. Towards the end of the sākhī it repeats a sentence which the B40 manuscript records only once: bābā bahut khusi hoā (‘Bābā [Nanak] was filled with joy’). The former instance represents the kind of pious aside which so easily creeps into later recensions of any hagiographic tradition, and the latter is plainly a simple mistake by the Ḥāfizābād copyist.

Correspondence of such remarkable closeness suggests that the two compilers must have used a common source. This hypothetical manuscript we shall designate Qr. The existence of such a manuscript derives further support from hints concerning the original localities of the Ḥāfizābād and B40 manuscripts. The Ḥāfizābād manuscript, as its name indicates, was discovered in Ḥāfizābād, a small town in Gujranwālā District. Although the B40 manuscript first appears in a Lahore bookshop, internal evidence points to a location within Gujranwālā District, or perhaps the adjacent Gujrat District, as a likely place of origin. The convergence upon a limited geographical area renders the copying of a single manuscript by two different compilers entirely possible. Manuscript copies of janam-sākhīs would not be common, and if a sāṅgat or individual within any particular area possessed such a manuscript neighbouring sāṅgats would presumably be aware of its existence and, if proposing to acquire a janam-sākhī for their own use, would quite naturally turn to it as a source. Qr can accordingly be located in, or very near, Gujranwālā District.

After LDP 194, B40, and Ḥāfizābād the Narrative Ib tradition next appears in the Ādi Sākhīs. Although there can be no doubt that the Ādi Sākhīs compiler utilized a Narrative Ib source it is clear that his source was not Qr, at least not in an immediate sense. The Ādi Sākhīs analogue is longer and more developed than the version which derives directly from Qr. As the date given for its compilation (A.D. 1701) is earlier than that of the B40 Janam-sākhī (A.D. 1733) it seems more reasonable to postulate another Narrative Ib version which developed more rapidly during the late seventeenth century and emerged in a relatively mature form at the beginning of the eighteenth century. This suggests the pattern in figure 18. It will be observed that LDP 194 has been affiliated with the Qr group rather than with the Ādi Sākhīs. This relationship is indicated by a comparison of the three texts.

To this extent the Narrative Ib tradition can be defined with reasonable assurance. There seems to be little doubt that the following anecdotes common to the B40 Janam-sākhī and the Ādi Sākhīs must have been taken from separate recensions of the tradition.

1 B40, f. 74b.
2 Pur JS, p. 74.
3 See B40(Eng), Introduction pp. 19-25.
Figure 18

B40 Ādi Sākhīs

1. The Birth of Nānak
2a. Instruction by the Paṇḍit
2b. Bābā Nānak's Betrothal and Marriage
3. The Ruined Crop Restored
4a. The Tree's Stationary Shadow
4b. The True Field and the True Merchandise
5. Bābā Nānak's Discourse with the Physician
6a. Sultānpur
6b. Immersion in the River
6c. Bābā Nānak's Discourse with Daulat Khān's Qāżī
7. Bābā Nānak's Travels in the Uninhabited Wilderness
8. Bābā Nānak returns to Talvāndī
9a. Baba Nanak's Discourse with Sheikh Braham
18a. The Sack of Saidpur
18b. A Discourse with Bābur
19. The proud Karoṛī humbled
34a. The Merchant and Rājā Śivanābh
34b. Bābā Nānak and Rājā Śivanābh

Possible B40 borrowings from the Narrative Ib tradition

In the case of the B40 Ḣanam-sākhī the anecdotes listed above were evidently copied from Q1. To this list the following should perhaps be added:

10. The Monster's Cauldron
11. Bholā the Robber
12a. The Encounter with Kaliyug
12b. Lamenting Women Commended
13. A Poor Sikh's Devotion

These six anecdotes obviously constitute a distinct cluster drawn by the B4o compiler from a single source. This is indicated not only by the fact that they have been recorded as a group, but also by a general correspondence in terms of language, structure, and stage of development. The same distinctive verb-endings recur (notably dā followed by thā in the Imperfective past tense), Imperfective participles are commonly repeated, and some characteristic expressions are to be noted. These include merā gunāhu bakhshie, charani lāunā, jāi baithā, and pairi paīa followed by kharā hoiā. The narrative style manifests a considerable degree of homogeneity and there appears to be no doubt that the B4o compiler must have taken the six anecdotes from a single source.

Was this source the Qī manuscript? Arguments based upon language and style are inconclusive. Although the cluster does indeed correspond in general terms to Narrative Ib language and style, the distinctive features noted in the preceding paragraph are less prominent in other Qī material. A comparison of the cluster with recognizably Qī sakhis leaves the question open.

A more serious objection is raised by the Ḥāfizābād Janam-sākhī. The Ḥāfizābād compiler, who also had access to Qī, fails to reproduce any of the six anecdotes in the same versions as the B4o Janam-sākhī. In the case of sakhis 10, 11, 12a, and 14 this can be easily explained by a preference for the Narrative Ia analogues which he does in fact use, but this still leaves sakhis 12b and 13.

Although these two Ḥāfizābād omissions cannot be altogether dismissed they are at least amenable to plausible explanations. Sākhī 12b, consisting of only a few sentences, may have been omitted by the Ḥāfizābād compiler because it was attached to the Kaliyug anecdote. The Ḥāfizābād compiler follows his Narrative Ia source both for the Kaliyug anecdote and for its successor. Under these circumstances it would scarcely be surprising if he were to follow through without interrupting the Narrative Ia text.

The omission of sākhī 13 can be explained in a different way. In order to purchase food for Bābā Nānak the poor Sikh of sākhī 13 voluntarily removes his hair and sells it in the market.1 The objection to hair-cutting which receives such prominence during the eighteenth century was certainly upheld by many Sikhs during the seventeenth century, and if the Ḥāfizābād compiler shared this particular conviction he would have had a compelling reason for regarding the anecdote as mischievous.

These conjectures offer possible reasons for the omission of the two anecdotes by the Ḥāfizābād compiler. To them can be added the fact that the B4o compiler records this cluster between two substantial blocks of Qī material. It is true that the cluster is immediately preceded by a single sākhī which is certainly not from the Narrative Ib tradition and that it is

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1 B4o, f. 49a.
immediately followed by another two such sākhis. Elsewhere, however, the B4o compiler interrupts one of his major sources in precisely this manner. If we assume a separate source for this cluster we must also envisage a compiler with access to several manuscripts, abandoning one such manuscript for another and then reverting to the first for another run of sākhis. This is by no means an impossibility, but it seems less likely than a continuation of the same basic manuscript. The cluster comprising sākhis 10–14 of the B4o Janam-sākhī will accordingly be assigned to the Narrative Ib tradition and specifically to the QI manuscript. It must, however, be emphasized that this represents a cautiously tentative conclusion. The possibility of a separate, independent source should not be overlooked.

One further complication should be briefly noted before leaving the cluster. Three of its anecdotes have analogues in the Ādi Sākhīs and in all three instances the Ādi Sākhīs compiler has used a source distinct from the Narrative I tradition. This may perhaps mean that the cluster was added to the received Narrative Ib tradition by the QI compiler or by a predecessor. Indeed, there may have been supplements added by both. The fact that LDP I94 includes the Kaliyug sākhi may perhaps indicate that the six anecdotes were not added to the Narrative Ib tradition simultaneously.

**Narrative I material in the Miharbān Janam-sākhī**

Before leaving the Narrative I tradition reference should be made to its influence upon the Miharbān Janam-sākhī. It appears that an early recension of the Narrative Ib tradition must have been used by the first of the Miharbān compilers, or perhaps by a redactor who closely followed the original compiler. In its extant form the Miharbān Janam-sākhī is a late and highly evolved product, but a comparison of its contents with the Narrative I material indicates that Narrative Ib must have been used at a stage when the Miharbān tradition was assuming a coherent form. Whereas distinctively Ib sākhis are conspicuously absent from the Miharbān version, all the nucleus material and one of the unmistakably Ib anecdotes (the Karorī sākhi) have been included. This suggests that at some early stage in the evolution of the Miharbān Janam-sākhī use was made of a Narrative Ib recension, prior to the entry of the Ib Babur discourse or the Ib development of the Śivanāb story. Although the Miharbān Janam-sākhī does include references to Śivanāb they indicate a much earlier source than the evolved Narrative Ib version.

The Miharbān references to Śivanāb provide a rare instance of an early form preserved within the highly developed Miharbān tradition. A characteristic feature of the Miharbān Janam-sākhī is its considerable expansion of earlier tradition. This applies to most of the material which it derived from its early Narrative Ib source. Even the Śivanāb references

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1 B4o, sākhīs 9 and 15–16.  
2 B4o, sākhī 28.  
4 Mih JS II.1, 63–6.
SOURCES USED BY THE JANAM-SĀKHĪ COMPILERS 195

- Pre-Nānak traditions (mainly Epic and Puranic)
- Authentic incidents
- Anecdotes developed within the later community
- Works of Nānak
- Traditions associated with other great figures, esp Sūfī pirs and Gorakhnāth

ORAL TRADITIONS CONCERNING BĀBĀ NĀNĀK

Narrative I

- Narrative la
- Narrative lb

Commentary

- LDP 194
- Q1
- Cole JS
- Haf JS
- B40
- AS
- Mih JS
- Purātan

Figure 19
manifest the same feature, the essential difference from other versions being that the Miharbān commentators have developed the references in their own distinctive way. The result is that the Narrative Ib borrowings have been scattered within the Miharbān tradition and each anecdote has been greatly expanded in accordance with the distinctive exegetical concerns of the Miharbān school. Although this dispersion and expansion of the individual Narrative I anecdotes serves in some measure to obscure the connection, there seems to be no doubt that the Miharbān Janam-sākhī must be linked to Narrative I antecedents through a Narrative Ib source.

This pattern may now be illustrated as in figure 19. In this diagram a double line under a janam-sākhī indicates a manuscript wholly or largely derived from the Narrative I tradition, as opposed to others only partially based upon Narrative I material. It must be stressed that in several respects it represents an oversimplification of the pattern, particularly with regard to the supplementary sources which have been used to develop the Narrative I tradition. In the analysis which follows only the B40 collection will be subjected to comprehensive treatment, and of the remaining janam-sākhīs only the Ādi Sākhī will be considered at any length. The same kind of analysis could also be applied to the Narrative Ia products, and were this to be done the strands which merge in the Colebrooke and Ḥāfizābād janam-sākhīs would be considerably diversified. Some of them would also have to be linked with strands following different routes to non-Purātan janam-sākhīs, the Bālā material would have be to introduced, and the only alternatives would be either another extended series of diagrams or a comprehensive diagram of impossible complexity.

One further complication should, however, be noted before the Narrative I analysis is terminated. This concerns the multiplication of cross connections which can result from a comparison of the different versions of a single sākhī. Complications of this sort can emerge not only in comparisons of Ia and Ib versions of anecdotes from the original nucleus but even within the generally consistent Ib tradition. Although variant readings are common, most versions of Narrative Ib sākhīs are characterized by a general agreement in terms of structure. Whenever this agreement is disrupted by a particular compiler's temporary use of an alternative source a more diverse pattern results.

The clearest and most substantial example of this feature is provided by the incorporation of Miharbān material in the B40 version of the sākhī 'A Discourse with Sheikh Braham'. This borrowing has already been analysed in order to illustrate the manner in which individual sākhīs have expanded.1 If it is to be represented in the Narrative I diagram the pattern must be extended as in figure 20.

This concludes the analysis of Narrative I, the collection of anecdotes which was evidently the first to emerge in a coherent form and which,
Sources Used by the Janam-Sākhī Compilers

Although the B40 compiler clearly began his work with a Narrative Ib manuscript before him, and although the anecdotes drawn from this tradition constitute the basis of his janam-sākhī, Narrative Ib material actually supplies only a small proportion of the complete B40 janam-sākhī. In the case of the Ādi Sākhīs there is a higher proportion of Narrative Ib sākhīs, but only because the supplementary material is less than in B40. Almost half of the Ādi Sākhīs consists of Narrative Ib anecdotes. In the longer B40 janam-sākhī the proportion is appreciably less.

A comparison of the supplementary sākhīs in the two collections reveals a second narrative source. It has already been observed that the Narrative Ib material in B40 and the Ādi Sākhīs, although clearly descended from a common source, nevertheless shows marked divergences in the two
versions. Obviously the two compilers used different recensions for this portion of their respective collections. Elsewhere, however, it becomes clear that they did have access to a common manuscript. Just as the B40 compiler shared Q with the Háfiżábád compiler, so too did he share another manuscript with the person responsible for the Ādi Sākhí. This conclusion follows from a comparison of the B40 and Ādi Sākhí texts of the following sākhis:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>B40 sākhí no.</th>
<th>Ādi Sākhí sākhí no.</th>
<th>Title</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>20. 8b.</td>
<td>8b.</td>
<td>Bābā Nānak's Austerities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21. 8c-d.</td>
<td>9.</td>
<td>Bābā Nānak's Visit to the Pilgrimage Centres</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23. 24a.</td>
<td>24a.</td>
<td>Bābā Nānak's Discourse with the Siddhs on Mount Sumeru</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24b. 22b.</td>
<td>24b.</td>
<td>The Meeting with Lahanā</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24c. 22c.</td>
<td>24c.</td>
<td>Angad moves to Khaḍūr: his clothes ruined</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24d.</td>
<td>24d.</td>
<td>The installation of Gurū Angad</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25. 24.</td>
<td>25.</td>
<td>Mulā the Khatri</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26a. 25a.</td>
<td>26b.</td>
<td>Bābā Nānak's daily discipline</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26b. 25b.</td>
<td>27a.</td>
<td>The loyal fortitude of Angad</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27b. 25d-e.</td>
<td>27b.</td>
<td>Bābā Nānak's adoration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27b. 25d-e.</td>
<td>27b.</td>
<td>A Discourse with Gorakhnāth: Bābā Nānak seeks solitude</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29. 23.</td>
<td>29.</td>
<td>A Discourse with Siddhs at Achal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30. 1.</td>
<td>30.</td>
<td>An Interview with God</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31. 13.</td>
<td>32.</td>
<td>Bābā Nānak in the Land of Unbelievers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32. 15.</td>
<td>32.</td>
<td>Mecca: Bābā Nānak's miraculous arrival.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The degree of textual correspondence which can be demonstrated by a comparison of the two versions places the existence of a common manuscript source beyond all doubt. Most of the material constitutes in actual fact a single version, for variants within the main narrative of any of the sākhis listed above are of little significance. A large majority can be explained by a tendency to assimilate to the compiler's own dialect, as where the Ādi Sākhí uses the verb-form sī in preference to a more common B40 usage of āhā. More significant variants do appear outside the main narrative, but all such differences, whether of text, content, or arrangement are amenable to simple explanations.

This manuscript we shall designate Q2 and the tradition which it records we shall distinguish with the title Narrative II. The latter term, when set in contrast with Narrative I, is intended to imply both similarities and differences. There is certainly a strong similarity in terms of style, for both consist almost exclusively of simple anecdotal narratives and of narrative discourses developed out of passages from the works of Nānak. The differences, though not absolute, relate chiefly to age and doctrine Whereas Narrative I offers an amalgam of the earliest traditions and later
developments, *Narrative II* appears to lack the former. This should not, however, be understood to mean that *Narrative II* is late. Some of its material, though not a part of the original nucleus, is obviously very early.

In terms of doctrinal emphasis *Narrative II* is distinguished by the ascetic ideal which in *Narrative I* emerges only in an obvious interpolation. A limited number of *Narrative II* anecdotes have found their way into the *Narrative I* tradition, both *Ia* and *Ib*, but the measure of divergence in such instances is vast. This suggests that common anecdotes have been derived from oral tradition rather than from any recorded source, a feature which serves to emphasize the gap separating *Narrative I* and *Narrative II*.

The existence of *Q2* is indicated not only by the degree of textual correspondence linking *B40* and the *Adi Sakhis* but also by the differences which distinguish them. The two *Janam-sakhis* present edited versions of the common text and it seems clear from the nature of the editorial supplements that the later *B40* manuscript cannot have been copied from the earlier *Adi Sakhis*. The two compilers introduce sakhi divisions at different points, and it is actually the later *B40* version which follows a more primitive sequence in its arrangement of the common sakhis. Although a particular manuscript must have been used by both compilers it is the *B40* collection of A.D. 1733 which brings us closer to it, not the *Adi Sakhis* of A.D. 1701.

Differences of arrangement are at once apparent from the list of *Narrative II* anecdotes given above. The two clusters recorded by the *B40* compiler (*B40* sakhis 20–7 and 29–32) have been in some measure dispersed and rearranged by his *Adi Sakhis* counterpart. The *Adi Sakhis* order clearly derives from its compiler's concern for chronological order. Like the Colebrooke collection, but unlike *B40*, the *Adi Sakhis* offers a deliberate reordering of earlier sources designed to construct a coherent sequence. A discourse with God which comes relatively late in the *B40* *Janam-sakhī* must have seemed out of place to the *Adi Sakhis* compiler. The sakhi which embodies this discourse relates the original commissioning of Nānak by God and the divine command to venture forth into the world for its salvation. The logical occasion for such a commissioning evidently appeared to be prior to the first appearance of Nānak in this world. This, it seems, was the line of reasoning which explains the placement of the sakhi at the very beginning of the *Adi Sakhis*, prior to the birth of Nānak. To a redactor of the *Narrative Ia* material a more suitable context appeared to be an experience of divine illumination in early manhood. In the *Purātan* *Janam-sakhis* the commissioning accordingly takes place during Nānak's submersion in the Sultanpur stream, and is immediately followed by the commencement of journeys which now assume the nature of missionary tours.

2 The Country Ruled by Women, the Sumeru discourse, the meeting with Lahanā and his appointment to succeed Nānak, the interview with God, the Achal discourse, and the miraculous arrival in Mecca.
The sequence which the *Adi Sākhīs* develops by reordering its anecdotes is of considerable interest in that it represents the earliest extant example of a consciously coherent itinerary. In the *Adi Sākhīs* the sequence assumes the form of a single journey lasting twelve years. Later *Adi Sākhīs* manuscripts add to the geographical details,¹ but do not alter the structure. The *Miharbān* itinerary, which appears to be based in part on the *Adi Sākhīs* pattern, divides the single journey into two, allowing for a temporary return to Sultanpur which is missing from the *Adi Sākhīs*.² This pattern diversifies still further within the *Narrative Ia* tradition, perhaps by analogy with the *digvijaya* ideal.³

This chronological concern is conspicuously absent from the intention of the *B40* compiler, who apparently copied his material in the order he found it in *Q2*. It seems clear that he must have followed his model closely in terms of sequence, the only divergence being an interpolation which he introduced at one point. While copying from *Q2* the *B40* compiler turned briefly to another source in order to record an anecdote concerning Ajitā Randhāva (sākhī 28). He then returned to *Q2*. In *Q2* the sākhīs which *B40* has recorded in two clusters presumably constituted a single cluster. This must have followed the order which results from a simple removal of the *B40* sākhī 28.

From the editorial supplements which have been added in both *B40* and the *Adi Sākhīs* it appears that *Q2* must have been even less coherently structured than *B40*. Although *B40* lacks a consistent sequence it does indicate an awareness that one sākhī can often be linked with its predecessor. In the case of the *Narrative Ib* material this was normally unnecessary, for a comparison of the divergent *B40* and *Adi Sākhīs* versions shows that this rudimentary editing had been performed by an earlier compiler. *Q2* did possess a certain measure of unity, but it was the common ascetic ideal which provided this unity rather than any emendation of earlier sources by the *Q2* compiler.

This was evidently as unsatisfactory to the *B40* compiler as to the person responsible for the *Adi Sākhīs*. Both have added sentences and paragraphs with the obvious intention of improving the continuity of *Q2*’s disjointed narrative. The *B40* supplements are generally attached to the customary announcement that ‘the sākhī is finished.’ but occasionally an editorial clarification is worked into the actual narrative. The most prominent of the editorial additions occur, quite naturally, at the beginning or the conclusion of sākhīs. For example, *B40* concludes the Sumeru discourse by slightly extending a brief reference to the coming selection of a successor as Guru.⁴ The *Adi Sākhīs* compiler has, however, decided to send Nānak to Mecca at this point. Accordingly he adds to the next sākhī a brief introduction which will serve to connect the Sumeru dis-

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¹ An example is the addition of a reference to *Setu-bandha Rāmaśvaram* which is missing from one of the *Adi Sākhīs* manuscripts. *AS*, p. 28.

² *GNSR*, p. 66.

³ *GNSR*, p. 32n.

⁴ *B40*, f. 93a.
course with the Mecca visit.\(^1\) The variant conclusions with which the Achal discourse ends probably illustrate the same feature,\(^2\) although in this instance it is possible that B40 may have preserved a Q2 reading which the \(\text{Adi Sākhī}\) compiler had dropped.

The same editorial concern has also produced two brief summaries of Bābā Nānak’s travels. In the \(\text{Adi Sākhī}\) this summary is attached to the Q2 Mecca sākhī and serves as a transitional passage leading back into Narrative Ib material.

And so all who were there prostrated themselves and became disciples (sevak). Having seen the entire territory of Mecca and Medīnā, and all the countries of that area, following the twelfth year [of his travels] Bābājī returned to Talvāṛḍī. Twelve years from the time when he had given away his property and left Sultānpur he returned to Talvāṛḍī. For two years he worked for Daulat Khān in Sultānpur. For twelve years he travelled. Then he returned home.\(^3\)

The much briefer B40 summary is attached to its concluding sākhī.\(^4\)

Other additions to either B40 or the \(\text{Adi Sākhī}\) can be explained by a variety of reasons. At one point the B40 compiler has evidently been unable to resist interpolating a feature which he presumably derived from oral tradition. This seems to be the most likely explanation for the B40 account of how Bābā Nānak eluded the Siddhs at Achal by means of a miraculous dissolution in the four elements.\(^5\) It seems inconceivable that an episode of this kind would have been omitted by the \(\text{Adi Sākhī}\) compiler had it been present in Q2.

In other instances an addition can presumably be explained by reference to the doctrinal predilections of the compiler. An example appears to be a variant which occurs at the conclusion of the B40 sākhī relating Bābā Nānak’s visit to the pilgrimage centres, and at the beginning of the following sākhī in the \(\text{Adi Sākhī}\) version. The B40 version, which probably adheres to the source at this point, declares that Bābā Nānak ‘neither saw nor met a perfected guru’.\(^6\) The suggestion that Bābā Nānak, himself the divinely appointed messenger, should be in quest of a guru was evidently more than the \(\text{Adi Sākhī}\) compiler could accept. This seems to be the explanation for his variant reading, which, by omitting several words, succeeds in making the ‘perfected guru’ reference apply to Bābā Nānak.\(^7\)

At another point he indicates an interest in the meat-eating controversy by inserting a direct reference to flesh (sagauti) when specifying the diet which Bābā Nānak permitted his Sikhs to observe.\(^8\)

One further reason for expanding Q2 was the ever-present impulse to add quotations from the works attributed to Nānak at convenient (and sometimes inconvenient) points in the received narrative. This is obviously

\(^1\) AS, p. 42. The \(\text{Adi Sākhī}\) version of the Sumeru discourse also provides an example of editorial clarification inserted during the course of the main narrative. To the extract \(\text{Vār Rāmkali 122:2}\) there is added the note: ‘Īsār Nāṭh said this.’ AS, p. 39.

\(^2\) B40, f. 122b. AS, p. 76.

\(^3\) AS, p. 44.

\(^4\) B40, f. 221a.

\(^5\) See above, p. 152. The anecdote still figures prominently in the oral tradition of the Bāṭlālā area.

\(^6\) B40, f. 82a.

\(^7\) AS, p. 26.

\(^8\) AS, p. 80. Cf. B40, f. 103b. The earlier portion of the \(\text{Adi Sākhī}\) version of this anecdote contains several sentences which are lacking in B40.
the source of the apocryphal *Tilang Aṣṭapadi* 1 quotation at the conclusion of the *B40* sākhī 21. The hymn is in no sense an integral part of the sākhī which purports to provide a context and it is absent from the *Ādi Sākhīs* version. Its introduction can be explained by its theme, which, in a limited sense, bears some resemblance to the theme of the sākhī's concluding anecdote.

All such variants do not, of course, prove an interpolation. In some instances a difference distinguishing the two versions arises from the obvious omission by one of the compilers of material which was evidently recorded in *Q2*. In the more significant instances (those which involve complete anecdotes) this feature can be explained by a compiler's preference for an alternative version to which he apparently had access. It seems likely that this must have been the reason for the *Ādi Sākhīs* compiler's omission of the account of Gurū Aṅgad's installation. Elsewhere he introduces a different version, obviously a later, more evolved anecdote and for that reason a more attractive choice. The *Narrative II* version was deliberately omitted and at the chronologically logical point (the period leading to Bābā Nānak's death) the alternative version was introduced.

The *B40* compiler also seems to have omitted anecdotes which were recorded in *Q2*, but for a slightly different reason. In the *Ādi Sākhīs*, between two clusters which are certainly from *Q2*, there occurs the following cluster:

10. The Monster's Cauldron  
11. The Encounter with Kaliyug  
12. Sajjan the Robber.

There is good reason for regarding these sākhīs as further borrowings from *Q2*. They accord with the other *Q2* clusters in terms of language and style, and they appear in the midst of *Q2* material where no evident reason for changing source exists. Moreover, they have analogues in the *Miharbān Janam-sākhī*. The significance of this parallel lies partly in the distinctive pattern followed by the *Ādi Sākhīs* versions, and partly in the material which the *Miharbān Janam-sākhī* associates with them.

The three anecdotes, as they appear in the *Ādi Sākhīs* version, are distinctively different from the better-known versions of the *Purātan* janam-sākhīs. The Monster's Cauldron sākhī omits Gurū Arjan's Mārū 14, which, because it contains a reference to a cauldron, has subsequently been attached to the anecdote; the encounter with Kaliyug is heralded by the approach of a hill which later turns out to be a man; and the Sajjan of the *Ādi Sākhīs* is a different person from Sheikh Sajjan of the *Purātan* tradition. All of these features appear in the *Miharbān Janam-sākhī*. As one would expect they have been amended and expanded, but they are plainly derived either from a source shared with the *Ādi Sākhīs*, or perhaps from a manuscript copy of the *Ādi Sākhīs* collection itself.

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1 *B40*, ff. 81a-82a.  
2 *B40*, sākhī 24d, ff. 98b-99a. The shabad *Sīrī Rāg* 25 which *B40* appends may be an addition by its compiler to his *Q2* source.  
4 *AS*, pp. 28-33.
In the *Miharbān Janam-sākhī* these sakhis constitute three of the anecdotes in a cluster of five. The second in this group, a typical *Miharbān* discourse, is an expansion of a question concerning the existence of God which occurs in the fourth sākhī of the cluster. This fourth sākhī is the anecdote 'Bābā Nānak in the Land of Unbelievers'. It is a *Q2* sākhī, and there are several other examples of late *Miharbān* borrowings from the *Narrative II* tradition. The conclusion which this indicates is that the *Ādi Sākhīs* compiler must have taken the three sakhis from *Q2*. The *B40* compiler's temporary abandonment of *Q2* can be explained by the fact that he had already recorded other versions of these same sakhīs.

Although *Q2* must have been an early manuscript, it could not have represented a collection of anecdotes drawn from a single source. For the *B40* and *Ādi Sākhīs* compilers it constituted an important single source, but behind it lay several different sources. The *Narrative II* tradition was, in fact, a composite tradition. This diversity is evident from the varying content of the *Q2* material, and at least two of its sources can be positively identified. The major distinction can be observed in a comparison of the *B40* sakhīs 21 and 22. Sakhīs 20 and 21, the first of the *Narrative II* cluster, represent the ascetic ideal to which reference was made earlier in this section when distinguishing *Narrative II*. Here the emphasis is upon renunciation, upon separation from the world in order to obtain salvation, upon a philosophy which testifies to the reassertion of traditional ideals within the Sikh panth. When in *B40* sakhī 21 Bābā Nānak makes his first converts these 'first disciples' are said to have become renunciant *bairāgis*, and to this the *B40* compiler adds the apocryphal *Tilāṅg* hymn in praise of renunciation.

This was not a philosophy which commended itself to all within the community, but obviously it did retain a hold on some and their convictions emerge in these sakhīs. Other *Q2* borrowings which manifest the same concern are *B40* sakhīs 25, 26a, 26b, 27a, 27b, and, in a strictly qualified sense, 31. In the janam-sakhīs this element emerges later than the simple wonder-narrative and we shall accordingly designate it *Narrative IIb*. The origins of this tradition should probably be traced to the Udāsi panth, the sect within the Sikh community which was avowedly dedicated to the maintenance of ascetic belief and practice. The connection is indicated not only by the ascetic tone of the *Narrative IIb* material but also by a reference in the *B40* sakhī 31 which describes how Bābā Nānak, having arrived in the Land of Unbelievers, installed a *dhūān* (hearth). The practice of constructing simple hearths was a Nath custom which had been appropriated by the Udāsi sādhūs and subsequently the word *dhūān* was extended to designate any Udāsi establishment.

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2 See above, pp. 192–4.
4 See above, p. 76.
6 For a description of the Nath *dhūān* see G. W. Briggs, *Gorakshāśī and the Kāmpṭha Yaṅgīs* (Calcutta, 1936), p. 21. The words *dhūān* and *dhūānī* both mean, in their literal sense, 'smoke', but were used by the Natha and Udāsī to designate the ritual hearths which produced the smoke.
A change in tone within the Q2 material becomes evident as we move from the Narrative IIb sākhī 21 into sākhī 22. Once again we are back in the realm of the wonder-narrative, the anecdote which expresses the basic janam-sākhī myth in its simplest terms. Bābā Nānak is the divinely commissioned giver of salvation. All who oppose him are humbled and converted. Even the most crafty of dark magic will fail to overcome him, for his strength lies in the infinite power of the divine Name. Needless to say, this theme is by no means absent from the Narrative IIb sākhīs. The primary distinction lies in the ascetic ideal which the Narrative IIb sākhīs attach to the common theme. The simpler sākhīs which lack this ideal we shall designate Narrative IIa. To this group belong the balance of the B40 borrowings from Q2: sākhīs 22, 23, 24a-d, 29, 30, and 32. The three sākhīs recorded in their Narrative II form only by the Ādi Sākhīs (nos. 10, 11, and 12) also derive from this source.

Narrative IIa sākhīs are also distinguished from Narrative IIb material by an obvious link with the Narrative I tradition, probably in its Ia development. All of the sākhīs which omit the characteristic ascetic emphasis of the Narrative IIb anecdotes have analogues in the Colebrooke Janam-sākhī. In each case the Narrative IIa version (i.e. the version recorded in Q2) is obviously nearer to the common source than the Narrative Ia analogue as recorded in the Colebrooke Janam-sākhī. This is best illustrated by a comparison of the two variant treatments of the Mecca sākhī. In its Narrative IIa version this anecdote possesses a simplicity of form which must derive directly, or almost directly, from the earliest oral tradition. The Narrative Ia version, in contrast, has evolved its much more complicated narrative by conflating this anecdote with the story of the moving miharāb and with the separate Rukn al-Dīn discourse.¹ This indicates a distinct but somewhat remote link with the Narrative I tradition. It appears that there may also be a link at this point with Bhai Gurdās's Vār 1. Bhai Gurdās’s brief account of the life of Nānak is essentially an independent selection, including amongst its six anecdotes two which do not find a place in any of the major janam-sākhīs.² Of the remainder three do have analogues in both the Narrative Ia and Narrative IIa traditions,³ and it is this feature which suggests a link with Q2, B40, and the Ādi Sākhīs.

An even closer connection may be observed in the case of the tradition which we shall be designating Narrative III.⁴ This link is evident at two points. Narrative III is, of all traditions, the easiest to recognize, for it follows a distinctive structural pattern and includes several characteristic formulae. Some of these formulae appear in a brief prologue which is attached to sākhī 25 of the B40 Janam-sākhī.⁵ The prologue does not

¹ See above, pp. 137–9.
² A version of Bābā Nānak’s visit to Bāghdād, and the story of his encounter with the pirs of Mūltān. BG 1:35–6, 44.
⁴ See below, pp. 220–6.
⁵ ‘Mūlā the Khatri.’ B40, ff. 100a–100b (line 3). AS, pp. 76–7.
relate in any obvious way to the sakhī which follows it and there can be little doubt that it has been taken from the Narrative III tradition, probably by the Q2 compiler himself.

The second appearance of Narrative III material occurs in B40 sakhī 31, 'Bābā Nānak in the Land of Unbelievers' (muniūk def). This is another composite sakhī consisting, like B40 sakhī 25, of a single anecdote prefaced by a brief eulogy of Bābā Nānak. In this instance (unlike B40 sakhī 25) it is the anecdote which derives from a Narrative III source. Whereas its prologue lacks the characteristic Narrative III formulae, the anecdote itself possesses both the typical Narrative III structure and its formulae. In its B40 and Ādi Sākhis form this sakhī accords reasonably well with the ascetic ideals of Narrative IIb, and this may explain its inclusion within the Narrative II tradition as recorded by Q2. Alternatively an earlier Narrative III anecdote may have been augmented with elements which conformed to the Narrative IIb ideal.

Another recognizable source which appears within the Narrative II material of Q2 is the Miharbān tradition. This emerges in the form of another interpolation, this time within a Narrative IIa sakhī. The B40 and Ādi Sākhīs versions of the Achal discourse both incorporate an exegetical passage wholly out of character for any of the Narrative sources. The passage is however in complete conformity with the Miharbān style and there can be no doubt that an early recension of the Miharbān Janam-sākhī has provided its source. This particular feature has already been discussed in the section dealing with the evolution of individual sakhīs. Once again the analogue in the extant Miharbān Janam-sākhī testifies to the lateness of this extant version.

The B40 and Ādi Sākhīs debt to the Q2 manuscript (their Narrative II source) may be summarized as in the table on page 206.

The relationships linking B40 and the Ādi Sākhīs to each other and to their common sources now form the pattern shown in figure 21. The twofold link with the Miharbān tradition represents first the interpolation from a Miharbān source in the Achal sakhī of Narrative IIa; and secondly the later appearance of Narrative II material in the Miharbān Janam-sākhī. Narrative II sakhīs which appear in the Miharbān Janam-sākhī comprise all the Narrative IIb sakhīs, including the Narrative III borrowing; the three Narrative IIa sakhīs which do not appear in the B40 manuscript (Ādi Sākhī numbers 10–12); and the Narrative IIa cluster concerning Gurū Aṅgad which both B40 and the Ādi Sākhīs record as a

2 The preface occupies folio 127b of the B40 manuscript and probably extends to line 12 of folio 128a. The portion which appears on folio 128a may, however, be the remnant of another anecdote.
3 See above, pp. 152–3.
4 See above, pp. 152–3.
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Narrative IIa

Narrative IIb

Narrative III

Q2

SOURCES USED BY THE JANAM-SĀKHĪ COMPILERS
single sākhī (B40 number 24, Ādi Sākhīs number 22). Four features of the Miharbān versions of these sakhīs indicate that the borrowing must have been from the Ādi Sākhīs to Miharbān rather than vice versa; and that it must have been from an Ādi Sākhīs manuscript rather than from an early Narrative II source.

First, it is immediately evident that the Miharbān analogues are conspicuously out of character for the Miharbān tradition. The typical Miharbān sākhī, or goṣṭ, consists of a brief narrative introduction followed by quotations from the works of Nānak and copious quantities of exegesis. Sustained narrative of the kind followed in these Narrative II sakhīs is alien to the Miharbān tradition and indicates a later borrowing.

Secondly, there is commonly an agreement in terms of sequence between Miharbān and the Ādi Sākhīs. A comparison of the Ādi Sākhīs and B40 texts has already indicated that the Ādi Sākhīs sequence is a

Figure 21

1 Miḥ JS II.66–8. Although most of the other Narrative IIA anecdotes also have analogues in the Miharbān Janam-sākhīs all diverge widely from the B40/Ādi Sākhīs text. The Miharbān versions have clearly been taken from sources other than the Narrative II tradition.
pattern imposed upon the Q2 anecdotes by the Ādi Sākhī compiler himself. If this conclusion is correct the Miharbān agreement can only mean that Miharbān is following the Ādi Sākhī.

Thirdly, there is a harmony within the Miharbān clusters which the Ādi Sākhī text lacks. This becomes even clearer when to the Narrative II borrowings are added others which the Ādi Sākhī apparently derived from different sources. In the Ādi Sākhī the breaks which mark changes of source are apparent; whereas in the Miharbān version these have been largely obliterated.

Fourthly, there is the presence of the Anģad cluster within the borrowed material. Had the analogues been confined to Narrative IIb material and the Narrative IIa sakhis which are absent from B40 it would have been difficult to resist the conclusion that the Miharbān borrowing must have been from a source which predated the union of IIa and IIb in Q2. The inclusion of the Anģad cluster greatly weakens this possibility, supporting instead the theory of a Miharbān borrowing from the Ādi Sākhī. More IIa material can also be discerned in the Miharbān prologue to the Śumeru discourse.1 There is a general correspondence between the Miharbān version on the one hand and the B40/Ādi Sākhī text on the other, and distinctive expressions are common to both.2

The conclusion indicated by this analysis is that a late Miharbān redactor borrowed these and (as we shall see) a number of other sakhis from an Ādi Sākhī manuscript. The borrowing must have been a relatively recent one, for had the sakhis been contained within the Miharbān tradition for any appreciable period they would inevitably have assimilated to the Miharbān pattern of quotation and exegesis. The omission of the remaining Narrative IIa sakhīs can perhaps be explained in all cases but one by the presence of an analogue in earlier Miharbān recensions. The one exception, the ‘Country ruled by Women’ sakhī, may possibly reflect the general Miharbān reluctance to record the more fantastic variety of wonder-story.3

The Anģad cluster which appears in this segment of borrowed material has already been discussed separately as an example of how anecdotes relating to a particular person, place, or event tend to form a distinct pattern and to be transmitted in the same regular sequence. The diagram illustrating this process which appears on page 170 can now be reproduced with the various sources indicated.

The reason for including a second recension of the Ādi Sākhī will be made clear in the next section.

1 Mih JS 1.384-5.
2 For example, Bābā Nānāk’s claim that he had come from āsā-amātasā, literally ‘hope-anxiety’. B40, f. 86b. AS, p. 37. Mih JS 1.385. Both texts also contain the word vāh. The Miharbān version clearly intends it to mean ‘marriage’, whereas the B40/Ādi Sākhī text seems to be referring to the Belis river. See B40(Eng), p. 92n.
3 GNSR, p. 31. The fact that the Miharbān tradition already included a Kaliyug sakhī did not prevent the late redactor from borrowing the Ādi Sākhī version, for it differed sufficiently to seem a different anecdote. The resemblance was nevertheless close enough to suggest a point at which one of the borrowed clusters could be interpolated. Mih JS 1.226.
One final conclusion which may be drawn from this pattern is that $Q_2$ must certainly have been found within the same geographical area as $Q_I$, $B_40$, and the Ḥāfizābād ājanam-sākhi.\(^1\) This is indicated not only by the fact that the $B_40$ compiler had access to it, but also by the Narrative III borrowings which appear in $Q_2$. Narrative III appears to have been the oral tradition current in the $B_40$ compiler's locality.\(^2\) The fact that the Ādi Sākhīs compiler could also copy from $Q_2$ suggests that he too may have lived within this same area. This possibility must, however, be attended by some doubt. The connection of the Ḥāfizābād ājanam-sākhi with the Colebrooke manuscript as well as with $Q_I$ indicates that a compiler could draw on sources which must have been widely separated in terms of geographical distance. If in fact $Q_I$ was located in the $B_40$ area, and if the Ādi Sākhīs compiler lived within easy reach of the same locality, it seems likely that he would have known of its existence and would have utilized it. On the other hand access to $Q_I$ may, for some

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\(^1\) See above, p. 191.

\(^2\) See below, p. 223.
reason, have been denied to him, or he may have had even easier access to a Narrative Ib manuscript other than Q1. We may therefore suggest as likely conclusions that Q2 and B40 were both compiled in the area of Gujranwala District; that Q1 and the Häfizábād manuscript were either compiled there or at least held by owners who lived in that same area; and that the conclusion applied to Q1 and the Häfizábād manuscript may perhaps also apply to the Ādi Sākhīs.

OTHER SOURCES OF THE ĀDI SĀKHĪS

Narrative Ib and Narrative IIa–b together provide almost all the sakhīs recorded in the Ādi Sākhīs. To complete the analysis of sources used for this janam-sakhī there remain only the five concluding sakhīs:

26. A recitation of Japji
27. Dead birds revivified: Bābā Nānak's remorse
28a. An interview with God: recitation of the shabad Sodar
28b. Bābā Nānak summons the Gangā to thirsty Sikhs
29a. Bābā Nānak tests his Sikhs (continued)
29b. The story of Vasiṣṭ
29c. Bābā Nānak tests his Sikhs (continued):
   Aṅgad commanded to eat the corpse
30a. The installation of Gurū Aṅgad
30b. The death of Bābā Nānak.

These remaining sakhīs raise considerable difficulties concerning source and transmission, difficulties which emerge with particular sharpness when the five sakhīs are compared with analogues in the Miharbān tradition.

Sakhī 26 begins with the statement: 'When this discourse was completed Gorakhnāth said to Bābā [Nānak] . . . '1 As the latter portion of the preceding sakhī is not in fact a discourse the sentence suggests that the Ādi Sākhīs compiler had at this point turned to a different source. This possibility is supported by the B40 switch to a different source at the same point,2 and the reference to Gorakhnāth (who had also appeared in sakhī 25) suggests a reason for the Ādi Sākhīs introduction of sakhī 26 at this particular juncture. These features indicate a break at the end of sakhī 25, without conclusively proving it. The fact that the brief narrative portion of sakhī 26 continues the Pañjābī of its predecessor means that some measure of doubt must persist, but it is scarcely a compelling doubt. The linguistic continuity could be the result of assimilation either to the language of the preceding Q2 material or to the compiler's own usage. In view of the fact that this narrative portion comprises only two sentences such a process would be quite possible.

The question of language is, however, of subsequent importance, for the three anecdotes which immediately follow sakhī 26 are expressed in a Khaḍī Boli (or a Sādhukkāri closely related to Khaḍī Boli) which at once distinguishes them sharply from the Narrative II material of Q2. Whatever the origin of sakhī 26 there can be no doubt that for the next two sakhīs

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1 AS, pp. 84–5.
2 B40, f. 111a.
the compiler is utilizing a source or sources other than Qz. In addition to
the language difference three further features mark this distinction. First,
there is the style, which, in sākhi 27, assumes the form of a soliloquy.
This is not a feature to be associated with Qz. Secondly, a comparison of
the Ādi Sākhis' sākhi 28a with its sākhi 1 (sākhi 30 in B40) reveals that the
two are analogues. Sākhi 1 comes from Qz, which suggests that sākhi 28a
is unlikely to have derived from that particular source. Thirdly, there is
the failure of B40 to record this material. The conclusion which follows is
that the Ādi Sākhis compiler has almost certainly drawn sakhis 27 and 28
(both 28a and 28b) from a source to which the B40 compiler did not have
access; and that sākhi 26 may have come from this same source.

A further conclusion which emerges from a study of these three sakhis
is that in all likelihood they entered the Ādi Sākhis tradition as an addition
made by a later copyist rather than as a part of the first recension. This
conclusion is indicated by the failure of one of the extant Ādi Sākhis
manuscripts to include them.\(^1\) The association of sākhi 26 with sākhis 27
and 28, rather than with sākhi 25, derives further support from this
omission.

The beginning of sākhi 29 marks a reversion not only to Pañjābī but
also to the story of how Bābā Nānak tested his Sikhs. This was the theme
of sākhi 25 and its reappearance at this point suggests a continuation of the
same source following the irruption of sākhis 26–8 in the later recensions
of the Ādi Sākhis. The story continues with an account of how Bābā
Nānak tested Āṅgad by banishing him from his sight, but before reaching
a conclusion it suffers another interruption. This consists of a lengthy anec-
dote concerning Rṣi Vasiṣṭ, Rām Chandar, and Lachhman (sākhi 29b).\(^2\)

In a sense this anecdote, though distinctly alien to the janam-sākhī
Narrative traditions, is not an interruption. It purports to be a speech of
reassurance uttered by Āṅgad in order to comfort the Sikhs who had been
puzzled and frightened by Nānak's sudden resort to threats of violence.\(^3\)
As such it seems to accord with the theme of the sākhi within which it
occurs. It is, however, plainly an addition to earlier traditions concerning
the tests which Bābā Nānak imposed on his followers in order to determine
the measure of their loyalty to him. Moreover, it is at once clear that the
source of the digression is the ever-popular cycle of Rāmāyaṇa legends.
The issue which is not clear is whether the interpolation was limited to
sākhi 29b, or whether it also included the setting provided by sākhi 29a
and the beginning of sākhi 29c. In the Ādi Sākhis version all three
sections of sākhi 29 have been fused into a single coherent narrative with a
link passage leading into the final anecdote of the series.\(^4\) This suggests
that the interpolation was not the compiler's own work, but that of his
source.

The concluding anecdote of the series is the celebrated story of how
Bābā Nānak tested Āṅgad's loyalty by commanding him to eat a corpse.\(^5\)

\(^1\) The manuscript in the possession of Shamsher Singh Ashok. AS, p. xi.
\(^2\) AS, pp. 91–4.
\(^3\) B40, f. 109b.
\(^4\) AS, pp. 94–5.
\(^5\) AS, pp. 95–7. GNSR, p. 50.
This reaches a climax with an ascription of praise to Bābā Nānak, the Giver of Salvation, and leads naturally into sākhi 30a. The first part of this final sākhi narrates an account of the installation of Aṅgad as Guru and introduces a brief reference to the objections raised by Nānak’s own sons. At this point another obvious break occurs and it is evident that the compiler has once again changed his source.

The reason for the change evidently relates to the anecdote concerning Nānak’s sons, for the new material takes up the account of their objections. The break is, however, patently obvious. The two sons who in the previous section are already arguing with their father are represented in the new material as absent from him, and for the first time hearing the news of his approaching death. They at once hasten to his bedside and begin lodging the objections already set forth in the earlier narrative. The two sentences which begin the new material do not in fact refer to the sons but to funeral preparations. This points back to a preceding narrative in the new source, a narrative which has been omitted by the Ādi Sākhī compiler because the reference to the two sons seemed to provide a more appropriate point at which to introduce his new source material. The nature of the preceding narrative can be determined from the B40 analogue, for it is at this point that the Ādi Sākhīs and B40 draw near to each other again. They do not, however, coincide. Somewhere behind the two versions there lies a common source for this ‘Death of Nanak’ sākhi. The two compilers have used widely divergent versions of this common material, and each has joined to it anecdotes drawn from mutually different sources.

Sākhi 30b concludes the Ādi Sākhīs narrative. Nānak’s date of death is given as Asū sudi 10, S.1595, and the janam-sākhī terminates with the customary offering of praise to the Guru. An effort must now be made to identify the sources which have contributed to these five concluding sākhīs. Unfortunately the pattern which they present is unusually complicated and most conclusions concerning their origins must be regarded as strictly tentative.

The five sākhīs begin with a break, and two further breaks have been noted within the group. The initial break seems to mark the abandonment of Q2 in favour of a Kharī Boli source; the second marks a reversion to a Pañjābī narrative which appears to connect with sākhi 25; and the final break, while continuing the Pañjābī narrative, makes its presence clear by means of a clumsy repetition. This leaves us with three clearly defined sections. Within the second of these a lengthy sub-section (the Rāmāyaṇa borrowing) can be discerned. This indicates the pattern shown in figure 23. These four elements must be identified before the analysis of the Ādi Sākhīs sources is complete.

A possible source of the first cluster (26–8b) is the Miharbān tradition.

1 AS, p. 97.
2 B40, ff. 221a–227a.
3 The appearance in some manuscripts of vadi (the dark half of the lunar month, or period of the waning moon) in place of sudi (the light half) is clearly a later amendment intended to bring the Ādi Sākhīs date closer to the generally accepted date. AS, pp. xxi–xxi, 100 n. 3. GNSR, pp. 100–1.
This identification is suggested by the sentence, quoted above, with which sākhi 26 begins. Whereas the reference in this sentence to a discourse (goṣṭ) does not connect logically with the conclusion of sākhi 25, it could conceivably indicate a connection with the Ādi Sākhīs conclusion of sākhi 23 (the Achal discourse). At the end of this sākhi both the Ādi Sākhīs and B40 state that Bābā Nānak, on this occasion, recited his Siddh Goṣṭ. To this the Ādi Sākhīs adds a sentence which does not appear in the B40 text: tis kā nāle arath nāle paramārath. ‘With it (the text of the Siddh Goṣṭ) is the meaning and exegesis.’ This formula plainly indicates the Miharbān tradition and suggests that the Ādi Sākhīs compiler had before him a Miharbān source which at that point he was relinquishing. This source he may have been using earlier in the Achal sākhi, for his version of the Miharbān interpolation differs appreciably from the shorter B40 version. The nature of the difference consorts well with the possibility of a compiler having recognized a Miharbān borrowing within Q2 and having thus been prompted to turn briefly to a Miharbān source which was in his possession.

It is possible that the introduction to sākhi 26 marks a return to this source. The reference to a goṣṭ seems to indicate this; the Khāṛī Boli language of the cluster supports it; and the shift from narrative to soliloquy in sākhi 27 evidently adds to this support. Finally, there exist within the Miharbān Janam-sākhī analogues for all the sākhīs in the cluster. The first sākhi of the cluster (the Japji recitation) is set by the Miharbān version in the context of the Achal discourse, where it follows the Siddh Goṣṭ text and commentary. It includes more stanzas than the Ādi Sākhīs version, but agrees with it in beginning the recitation at the twenty-eighth stanza.

The existence of analogues, though seemingly the strongest argument of all, must be examined before it can be adduced in support of the

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2 B40, f. 122a.  
3 AS, p. 76.  
4 See above, p. 205, n. 3.  
Miharbān identification. It has already been argued that the Miharbān tradition was itself indebted to the Ādi Sākhis and it is possible that these analogues should be classified in the same manner. The case for an original Miharbān borrowing from the Ādi Sākhis is, however, weaker in this instance. A much stronger case can be made when a Miharbān analogue follows a narrative pattern which can be recognize as untypical of the distinctive exegetical style of the Miharbān tradition. The passages in the Miharbān Janam-sākhī which appear to derive from Narrative II sources via the Ādi Sākhis are all of this uncharacteristic narrative variety. In contrast the sākhīs now under examination are, with one exception, cast in the Miharbān mould.¹

There are, it is true, objections to this identification of a Miharbān source for sākhīs 26–8, notably, the fact that the Ādi Sākhis versions lack the exegetical passages which constitute the most prominent feature of the Miharbān style. This may perhaps be explained by the Ādi Sākhis compiler's evident preference for narrative, a preference which may have prompted him to paraphrase his Miharbān source. It will be noted, however, that conjectures are accumulating with distressing speed. Our conclusion is that the Miharbān tradition provides the most likely source for the cluster, but that the identification can be no more than tentative.

The second cluster, sākhīs 29a–30a, connects with the narrative of sākhī 25 and suggests that the Ādi Sākhis may at this point have reverted to Q2. Although this possibility receives further support from a general identity of language and idiom it cannot be accepted without question. A number of features point to a different source.

The first of these features is the structure and content of the sākhīs which constitute the cluster. In them we find a well-integrated narrative, developed by fusing different anecdotes with a skill unusual in Q2 material. This implies a later stage than Q2, and some of the incidental details within the cluster indicate the same conclusion. When, for example, Aṅgad and Mardānā lift the shroud to eat the corpse they discover not putrid flesh but confectionery.² This is rather more sophisticated than the Narrative Ia analogue, which makes Nānak magically replace the corpse with his own body.³ Sophistication of detail is not characteristic of Narrative II material.

A second distinctive element within the cluster is the stress which it lays upon a particular point of doctrine. 'The Gurū is God and not a man,' ¹

¹ The exception is the brief anecdote which relates how Bābā Nānak once summoned the Ganges river to a group of thirsty Sikhs in a jungle. AS, p. 90. Mih JS 11.175. See above, p. 31. Both versions claim that this story was related to Akbar. AS, p. 90. Mih JS 11.137. The Miharbān version adds that the recitation took place on an occasion when Akbar met Gurū Arjan in Lahore. In the Miharbān Janam-sākhī the cluster which includes this anecdote and the interview with God (goṣṭ 176) also includes a narrative account of how Bābā Nānak contracted a second marriage, the second wife being a Muslim woman of the Raṅghar caste (goṣṭ 177). This story, which has been omitted from the published text of the Miharbān Janam-sākhī, may possibly have been omitted by the Ādi Sākhis compiler for similar reasons. There is no evidence to suggest that the story has a factual basis.

² AS, p. 96.

³ Pur JS, p. 108. GNSR, p. 50.
it declares in sākhī 29a, and repeats the claim in sākhī 29c. This insistence, which provides the integrative principle linking the three parts of sākhī 29, is not to be found in Q2.

Thirdly, the lengthy digression which constitutes sākhī 29b has no parallel in Q2 material; and finally it is difficult to understand why the B40 compiler would have omitted these anecdotes had they been in Q2. The fact that he provides an alternative version of the installation of Gurū Aṅgad, one which accords better with the general Narrative II style, suggests that Q2 did not include these anecdotes.

Perhaps the most likely solution to the problem is a theory which envisages a later post-Q2 extension of the Narrative II anecdote concerning Bābā Nānak’s decision to test his Sikhs. This drew upon two sources. The first was the Rāmāyaṇa cycle, to which was added a narrative linking it to the Narrative II tradition and providing a context for the insistence upon Nānak’s divinity. The second was a developed version of the corpse-eating anecdote, an anecdote which emerges in a cruder form in the Colebrooke Janam-sākhī. The distant connection with the Narrative Ia tradition indicated by the Colebrooke analogue continues up to the point where the compiler abandons his source during the course of his concluding sākhī. This source we shall designate Narrative IIC.

The last portion of the cluster is the most perplexing of all. Two obvious analogues exist, but neither enables us to make a positive identification. The first is B40, which records an appreciably longer and less coherent version of the death narrative. Although there can be no doubt that B40 and the Ādi Sākhīs have drawn from sources which must ultimately converge, it is equally obvious that the two versions are some distance apart. The greater length of the B40 version can be explained only in part by the fact that the Ādi Sākhīs compiler chose to take up his source during the course of its narrative rather than at its beginning. During the later stages B40 adds extra material which the Ādi Sākhīs lacks, and in the process jumbles the various elements to a degree which may perhaps reflect a haste to be finished with the janam-sākhī. The Ādi Sākhīs, though briefer and more coherent than B40, also has its inconsistencies. The disciple who seeks freedom for his kuram is variously named Sādhāran (as in B40) and Bhagīrath.

The second analogue is to be found in Bālā manuscripts which have obviously derived their ‘Death of Nānak’ sākhī from the Miharbān tradition. The earlier and more consistent Bālā tradition terminated its account prior to the death of Nānak. This was necessary as Bhāī Bālā had previously been represented as a companion of the Gurū who had left him prior to his death. Inevitably the deficiency proved to be unsatisfying to Bālā audiences and a supplement was later added, wherein Gurū Aṅgad narrated for Bhāī Bālā’s benefit an account of the Gurū’s death.

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1. AS, p. 91.
2. AS, pp. 95, 97.
This account, as we have already observed, was taken from a Miharbān source.¹

Are any of these three analogues copies of either of the others? It seems probable that at least the Bālā/Miharbān version was a copy and that it was taken from the Ādi Sākhīs. This is indicated by two features.

First, there is the convincing hypothesis that much of the Ādi Sākhīs text, particularly the sākhīs which are recorded in its latter part, has been copied by a Miharbān redactor. Narrative II borrowings by the Miharbān tradition have already been noted, and the same procedure has also been followed in the case of sākhī 29a–c of the Ādi Sākhīs. These sākhīs, expressed in the same integrated form, constitute goṣṭ 180 of the extant Miharbān Janam-sākhī.² The fact that this goṣṭ immediately follows the analogue of sākhī 25 may possibly add further weight to the suggestion that sākhīs 26–8 represent an interpolated cluster within the later Ādi Sākhīs tradition. On the other hand it must be remembered that the constituents of this cluster also have their Miharbān analogues and that most of these immediately precede the Miharbān analogue of sākhī 25 in the Ādi Sākhīs.

The analogues of cluster 26–8 as they appear in the extant Miharbān Janam-sākhī may, indeed, represent a case of double borrowing. Some of this cluster, having originally entered the Ādi Sākhīs from an early Miharbān source, could have passed back into a later Miharbān recension in their Ādi Sākhīs form. The same process may also have applied in the case of the Achal sākhī. This theory is perhaps open to some doubt, but the doubt does not extend to goṣṭ 180. Goṣṭ 180 of the Miharbān Janam-sākhī must certainly be a late borrowing by the Miharbān tradition from the Ādi Sākhīs or a source very close to it. From this it follows that a borrowing of sākhī 30b would be entirely natural.

The second feature which supports this conclusion is a clear break within the Bālā text. It appears from the Bālā manuscripts that their Miharbān source provided them with an account beginning at precisely the same point as sākhī 30b of the Ādi Sākhīs. For the earlier portions of its death narrative the Bālā account relies on a source very close to B4o, perhaps on B4o itself.³ It need occasion no surprise that the Bālā manuscripts do not follow a Miharbān version of the installation of Gurū Aṅgād, and that accordingly we possess no Miharbān analogue for sākhī 30a of the Ādi Sākhīs. The Bālā janam-sākhīs earlier record a different version of this episode, one which is important for the distinctive Bālā emphases which it expresses.⁴ There was thus no need to copy the Miharbān version. This latter version, which like the death sākhī must have been included in the missing Prem Pad Pothi of the Miharbān Janam-sākhī, will presumably have followed the Ādi Sākhīs text.

This eliminates the Miharbān tradition as an original source, but leaves

¹ See above, p. 19; also AS, p. xxxv, note.
² Mih JS 11.148–52.
³ CUL MS Add. 921, ff. 197a–198b.
⁴ Ibid., ff. 181a–184b.
us unable to proceed further with any firm assurance. The hypothesis which seems to come closest to probability is that yet another Narrative source lay behind both accounts, and that for the area which it covers the Ādi Sākhis version brings us nearer to this tradition than does the heterogeneous B40 sākhī. With considerable hesitation we designate this source Narrative IIId, adding that it may perhaps coincide with Narrative Ib.

This latter possibility is suggested by the nature of the relationship between the Ādi Sākhis and B40 versions. On the one hand they are clearly relating the same anecdote; on the other, the two texts are distinguished by a considerable measure of disagreement. This is the kind of relationship which links the two janam-sākhis at points where they use common material from the Narrative Ib tradition, and a comparison of the Narrative Ib
language in each janam-sākhī with its version of the 'Death of Nānak' sākhī offers some further support to the theory. There is the same mingling of Khāri Boli forms in a predominantly Panjabi text, such versions as ākhan lagā and āī miliā recur in all instances, and use is made of the relatively uncommon title ‘Tapā’ which B40 employs in its version of the ‘Death of Nānak’ sākhī.¹

It must, however, be acknowledged that this is a slender base upon which to erect a theory, for most of the similarities are to be found elsewhere in material which does not derive from the Narrative Ib tradition. The Hāfizābād manuscript does not help us at this point. Its failure to refer to the sākhī may merely mean that, as in other instances, its compiler preferred to use Narrative Ia material wherever possible. Narrative Ib remains a possible source, but not a proven one. An independent source could have equally strong claims. Finally, it should be noted that the B40 compiler has evidently supplemented this principal source with material drawn from some other source or sources. The result is a composite sākhī at once the most muddled and the most sublime of all that the B40 manuscript contains.

¹ For example B40, f. 224b. It has been translated as ‘Master’ in B40(Eng).
The tentative pattern which now emerges for the five concluding sākhis of the Aṭī Sākhīs is shown in figure 24. Linked with the earlier paradigms this diagram produces the complete pattern for the sources of the Aṭī Sākhīs shown in figure 25.

In this final diagram for the Aṭī Sākhīs the upper link with the Miharbān tradition represents not only the cluster but also the later Aṭī Sākhīs redactor’s apparent reliance on his Miharbān source for his variant version of the sākhi 23 interpolation.¹

Once again it is necessary to stress the tentative nature of portions of this Aṭī Sākhīs pattern. It represents a combination of established sources and conjecture. The same qualification must be attached to the table, which indicates sources for individual sākhīs.

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<tr>
<th>Sākhi no.</th>
<th>Title of Anecdote</th>
<th>Source</th>
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<td>1.</td>
<td>An Interview with God</td>
<td>Narrative II (Q2)</td>
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<td>2a.</td>
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<td>2b.</td>
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<td>3a.</td>
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<td>3b.</td>
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<td>4.</td>
<td>The Tree’s Stationary Shadow</td>
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<td>The True Field and the True Merchandise</td>
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<tr>
<td>5b.</td>
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<td>6.</td>
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<td>7a.</td>
<td>Immersion in the River</td>
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<td>7b.</td>
<td>Bābā Nānak’s Discourse with Daulat Khān’s Qāzī</td>
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<td>8a.</td>
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<td>8c.</td>
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<td>9.</td>
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<td>10.</td>
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<td>11.</td>
<td>The Encounter with Kaliyug</td>
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<td>15.</td>
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¹ See above, p. 205.
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<th>Title of Anecdote</th>
<th>Source</th>
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<td>21a.</td>
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<td>Aṅgad moves to Khaḍūr: his clothes ruined</td>
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<td>25e.</td>
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<td>26.</td>
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<td>28a.</td>
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<td>28b.</td>
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<td>29a.</td>
<td>Bābā Nānak tests his Sikhs (contd.)</td>
<td>Narrative IIc</td>
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<td>29b.</td>
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<td>29c.</td>
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**OTHER SOURCES OF THE B40 JANAM-SĀKHĪ**

1. Narrative III

It has already been shown that much of the *B40 Janam-sākhī* derives from *Narrative I* and *Narrative II* sources. The third and last of the *B40* compiler's major narrative sources is the easiest of all to recognize. He does
not turn to it until he reaches sākhī 35 on folio 149b, but thereafter he uses it for most of the remainder of his janam-sākhī. Material drawn from this source runs without a break from sākhī 35 to sākhī 49, misses sākhī 50, and reappears with sākhī 51. The point at which the compiler finally abandons it is not clear. Another break certainly comes at the end of sākhī 51 and this may perhaps mark its terminus. There remain, however, two brief narrative sākhīs (56 and 57) which should perhaps be assigned to the same source. The nature of the narrative material which commences with sākhī 35 plainly indicates that this source cannot possibly be identified with any which have been included within either the Narrative I or Narrative II group. This source we shall designate Narrative III.

Most anecdotes drawn from the Narrative III tradition are readily distinguished by a number of characteristic features. In all cases their language is a simple, relatively modern Pāṇḍī, their sākhī structure is elementary yet generally consistent, and their narrative vigorous with little extraneous material. Within the entire cluster only one anecdote (sākhī 39) violates this rule of conciseness. Throughout the cluster there is a strong emphasis upon certain clearly defined ideals and in most sākhīs several formulae recur. In all sākhīs there is a complete absence of quotations from the works of Gurū Nānak.

The standard narrative pattern for these Narrative III anecdotes is as follows. Bābā Nānak arrives in a particular locality (commonly unspecified). Initially he is either neglected or positively rejected by the populace, but eventually one person is persuaded to associate with him and so to provide a means of contact with the local community. Having established this contact Bābā Nānak then performs a miracle, as a result of which the entire population is converted. To his new disciples he issues a set of stock instructions and then proceeds on his way.

It is in Bābā Nānak’s concluding instructions and in the new disciples’ response to them that the distinctive ideals and formulae of the Narrative III tradition are to be found. The most prominent feature of all is a brief threefold creed, nām dān ismān, which literally translated reads ‘Name, Charity, and Bathing’. In the translation of the BĀO Janam-sākhī it has been rendered: ‘the discipline of repeating the divine Name, giving charity, and regular bathing’. Most sākhīs of the Narrative III tradition include this distinctive formula, sometimes in an expanded form, but normally in its simple threefold expression.¹ It is at once a formula and an ideal, a brief credal statement which evidently enshrined all that was regarded as necessary for salvation. In almost all instances the verb which is attached to this formula is dīrīāt, ‘inculcated’ or ‘instilled’.

A second basic formula occurring in most Narrative III sākhīs is the command to establish a dharamsālā, or place where the newly formed saṅgat (congregation) might meet for regular kīrtan (the singing of

¹ BĀO, ff. 157b, 162b, 170a.
² BĀO, ff. 155a, 157a, 165b, 167a, 169b, 173a, 174b, 176a, 176b, 186a, 190a, 193a, 205a. For a brief discussion of the formula see BĀO(Eng), p. 110n. Gurū Arjan uses the formula in his shabad Sīrī Rāg 21–29, AG, pp. 73–4.
devotional songs). This image of the saṅgat gathered in the dharamsālā for kirtan constitutes another of the central ideals of the Narrative III tradition, obviously reflecting a condition which actually existed in the contemporary Sikh community. It is also within this Narrative III tradition that we encounter the first signs of an emergent belief concerning the eternal presence of the Gurū within the gathered community of the faithful. To this doctrine the B40 compiler adds his own fervent assent.

The invariable response of the newly converted Sikhs provides a third basic formula and corresponding ideal. Having accepted Nānak as Master, his new disciples at once adopt the practice of repeating the single word ‘Guru’ (gurū gurū lagā japan).

Mechanical repetition of this word was evidently the understanding of nām simaran which the Narrative III tradition sought to inculcate. This is of considerable interest, for it diverges appreciably from the refined doctrine of nām simaran as taught by Nānak himself. The Narrative III emphasis upon mechanical repetition, together with occasional references in other sources, indicates that the earlier pre-Nānak understanding of repeating the divine Name very quickly reasserted itself within the community of his followers. Moreover, this particular formula is not confined to Narrative III sakhis. Its appearance in other traditions, although less common than in Narrative III, indicates that the practice must have been extensively followed within the seventeenth-century community.

These statements constitute the basic formulae of the Narrative III tradition. To them others of less significance may be added.

dhan eh deś jithai tusāđe charan phirai, ‘Blessed is this country wherein your feet have trodden.’ Variant forms of the same formula use bhāg instead of deś, or darṣan hoīa instead of charan phirai.

tān sabhai sikh hoe, ‘then all became Sikhs’, or a variant of this form.

marāṇ jīvaṇ kafīa, ‘[the transmigratory round of] death and rebirth was broken’.

nihāl hoīa, ‘he found happiness’.

vāh gurū ākhī, ‘Utter, “Praise to the Gurū”’, used not as salutation but as a magical formula.

Narrative III sakhis commonly apply the appellation mahā purukh (‘Exalted One’) to Bābā Nānak and lay considerable emphasis upon the

1 B40, ff. 155a, 157a, 158b, 162b, 165b, 167a, 170a-b, 173a, 174b, 176a, 185b, 193a. The formula occurs in two variant forms: dharam-sālā hoīa and dharam-sālā badhīa. These are sometimes expanded by the addition of the words ghar ghar, ‘in every house’, or girāi girāi, ‘in every village’.

2 B40, f. 197a. See below, p. 262.

3 B40, f. 230b.

4 B40, ff. 132a, 155a, 159a, 162b, 163a, 165b, 167a, 167b, 190a, 190b, 190c, 193a, 193b, 193c, 193d. In one place the formula is said to be vāhī gurū, vāhī gurū. B40, f. 196b.

5 GNSR, pp. 214–19.

6 For Narrative Ia examples see Pur JS, pp. 22, 27, 31, 33, 45, 71, 80, 89.

7 B40, ff. 150a, 157b, 158a, 158b, 163a, 163b, 173a, 173b, 174a, 176a, 182a, 185b, 186b, 190a.

8 B40, ff. 157a, 167b, 173a–b, 176a, 185b. Cf. also ff. 180a, 199a.

9 B40, ff. 158b, 159a, 162b, 162b, 167a, 167b, 190a, 190b, 173a, 173b, 174a, 176a, 185b, 196b.

10 B40, ff. 183a, 185b, 189a, 190a, 193a.

11 B40, ff. 158a, 161a, 181b, 182b, 184b.

12 B40, ff. 155a, 156a, 158b, 165a, 165b, 170a, 172b, 185a, 187a, 190b.
duty of *sevā*, or ‘service’, in the sense of ministering to the needs of visiting Sikhs. In most instances these formulae occur towards the end of the *sākhī* and together constitute a standard conclusion for *Narrative III* stories. The closing sentences of *sākhī* 40 provide an illustration.

"tā uhu mulaku sabho hi sikhū hoiā. lage gurū gurūjapaṇi. āte gharīghari dharamsālā hoiā. tā gurū bābe unū nū nāmu dāmu iṣanūmū dirāiū. us mulaku de lage ākhaṇii jo dhanu asāḍe bhāgu ju tusāḍā darasanū hoiā. ēt mulaku tusāḍē charanū phīre."  

The entire population of that land became Sikhs. They took up repeating ‘Gurū. Gurū’ and in every house a dharamsālā was established. Gurū Bābā Nānak inculcated in them the threefold discipline of repeating the divine Name, giving charity, and regular bathing. Everyone in that land declared, ‘Blessed is our destiny that we have beheld your presence and that your feet have trodden in this land.’

The style is unmistakable, and likewise the structure of the *sākhīs* which follow this standard pattern.

From where did the *B40* compiler obtain his *Narrative III* anecdotes? The distinctive features of the *Narrative III* material suggest that the actual source was not a manuscript but oral tradition. The simple structure, the vigorous narrative, and the repetition of particular words, expressions, and formulae all point to this conclusion. Further support is provided by the complete absence of scriptural quotation; by the conspicuous lack of features which indicate copying from another manuscript (haplography, dittography, metathesis, incorrect reading, etc.); by the failure of any earlier janam-*sākhī* to reproduce this material in a form resembling the *B40* version; and by the relative modernity of the language used in the narrative. Anecdotes drawn from oral tradition will be expressed in the language current during the period in which they were recorded. As expressed in the *B40* collection *Narrative III* anecdotes accord well with early eighteenth-century usage.

These *Narrative III* anecdotes constitute the most primitive element in the *B40 Janam-sākhī*. In them we have an excellent example of the first stage in the development of the recorded janam-*sākhīs*. A series of anecdotes has been drawn from the current oral tradition, grouped in a crude sequence, and recorded in much the same manner as a narrator would have uttered them orally. The oral tradition from which they have been drawn would presumably be that of the *B40* compiler’s own area. This suggests that the *Narrative III* source used by the compiler was probably the oral tradition current during the early eighteenth century in a portion of Gujranwālā District or the immediately adjacent area of Gujrāt District.

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1. *B40*, ff. 155a, 166a, 167a, 170b, 203a. Cf. also ff. 171b, 176b.
3. The material from this source provides examples not only of the Law of Repetition but also of the Law of the Number Three (viz. the formula *nām dān īmān*).
5. Some *Narrative III* anecdotes are reproduced by a late manuscript, the so-called *Prāchīn Janam-sākhī*. See above, pp. 26–7. Some also appear in the Nānak Prākāl.
Narrative III sakhis thus offer a generally consistent cluster of anecdotes, one which seems to have been recorded directly from an oral source. Having in this manner stressed both the general uniformity of the cluster and its immediacy to oral tradition we must now add three qualifications. The first arises from a comparison of the following two sakhis with the Narrative III material surrounding them:

43 a. Ajitta Randhāvā rebuked for greed
    b. Abdul Rahmān humbled
44 a. Ajitta Randhāvā rebuked for revivifying dead birds at Achal
    b. A Visit to Tīllā.

Sakhis 43 and 44 do not present the distinctive Narrative III structure and they lack almost all the characteristic formulae. There can be no doubt concerning their close connection with the sakhis which precede and follow, for the same language and idiom continues throughout the entire cluster. Moreover, the differences which distinguish the two sakhis may perhaps be explained by the fact that they relate a different variety of anecdote. The likelihood still seems to be that the two sakhis were recorded from the same oral source as the standard Narrative III material. The structural difference cannot, however, be overlooked and it raises the possibility that the B40 compiler may have taken these two sakhis from a different source.

The second qualification concerns the point at which the Narrative III material terminates. Specifically it concerns the question of whether or not the following brief sakhis should be attributed to the Narrative III source:

56. An injunction to recite the Arati Sohila
57. The magnificence of Bābā Nānak's hymns.

This tiny cluster poses the same problems as sakhis 43 and 44, enhanced by the fact that it has been recorded apart from the main Narrative III cluster instead of within it. On the one hand its two anecdotes lack the distinctive structure and formulae of the standard Narrative III pattern. On the other, they continue the same linguistic style and narrate a different variety of story. If they are not to be linked with the Narrative III cluster it will be necessary to postulate yet another narrative source, for there is little to support a connection with either Narrative I or Narrative II.

The third and final qualification merely repeats a point already made. It is, however, a point which deserves to be illustrated with reference to Narrative III material. Having stressed the distinctive qualities of the Narrative III tradition we must repeat that features indicating a distinctive tradition do not mean complete independence from other traditions. Even when the distinguishing features are as prominent as those of the Narrative III material this insistence must be maintained. Complete independence would mean no sharing of distinctive features and no analogues. In neither respect will the Narrative III tradition sustain a claim to complete independence.

Three examples of links connecting Narrative III with other traditions have already been noted. One of the distinctive formulae appears in the B40 version of 'The Monster's Cauldron' sākhī (tentatively assigned to the
Narrative Ib tradition). This may perhaps be a gloss by the B4o compiler, for neither the Narrative Ia nor the Narrative II version of the anecdote contains it. The same explanation cannot, however, be applied to the case of the two Narrative III portions which appear within the Narrative II material of Q2. These represent a genuine penetration of Narrative III elements into a separate tradition. The process is scarcely surprising if, as we have already suggested, Q2 is to be located in the same geographical area as Narrative III.

A more complex example of Narrative III influence is to be found in the B4o version of the Śivanabh story (sākhis 34a and 34b). In this version several of the distinctive Narrative III features appear and some of them occur more than once. Bābā Nānak does not inculcate the threefold nām-dān-isnān formula, but we do find that he inculcated the divine Word (tabad diṛāṭā). Stress is twice laid upon the building of a dharamsāla. Śivanabh’s slave-girls begin to chant ‘Gurū, Gurū’, a reference is made to the Narrative III variety of sevā, Bābā Nānak is frequently referred to as a mahā-puruṣh, and Śivanabh declares in characteristically Narrative III style, ‘dhan merā bhāg.’ Other features strengthen this impression of Narrative III influence. ‘The portals [of his understanding] opened’ (uṣ de kapiit khuli gae) is an unusual expression which occurs both in the Śivanabh story and in two sākhis from the Narrative III cluster. Finally, Śivanabh’s collapse has an obvious parallel in the anecdote concerning Uttam BhaQ̄āri and Sultānā Gujār.

The two Śivanabh anecdotes are too highly developed to have been taken from the Narrative III source. There seems to be little doubt, however, that they have been strongly influenced by Narrative III style and ideals. This influence can be explained in the same manner as the elements which entered the Narrative II tradition. It has already been argued that the B4o version of both parts of the Śivanabh story was derived from the Narrative Ib tradition. All the features mentioned above are to be found only in the Narrative Ib account of Śivanabh. They do not occur in the Narrative Ia tradition as represented by the Colebrooke Janam-sākhi. This appears to support our earlier suggestion that Q1 of the Narrative Ia tradition should also be located in the same geographical area as B4o. Such a location would account for the appearance of so many Narrative III features in the Narrative Ib version of the Śivanabh story. It would also

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1 See above, p. 192.  
2 Pur JS, p. 82. AS, p. 28.  
3 See above, pp. 204–5.  
4 B4o, f. 154a.  
5 B4o, ff. 152b–153a, 154a.  
6 B4o, f. 148b.  
7 B4o, f. 146b.  
8 B4o, ff. 140a, 140b, 142b, 143b, 143b, 149b, 150a.  
9 B4o, f. 146a.  
10 B4o, ff. 140a–b, 189b, 204b.  
11 B4o, ff. 153a, 186a.  
12 The Colebrooke Janam-sākhi does, however, include three of the Narrative III formulae near the conclusion of its Śivanabh sākhi: janam maratru... kaṭā, sikhū hoḍ, and gurū gurū lagā japānī. Photonizograph Facsimile, p. 335. Pur JS, p. 89. The third of these is found elsewhere in the Colebrooke Janam-sākhi, but the other two are distinctively Narrative III expressions. In place of the second the Colebrooke Janam-sākhi normally uses the formula nāh dhartiḥ hoḍ, ‘he became a Name-believer.’ Pur JS, pp. 22, 27, 31, 37, 45, 71, 79–80, 81, 82, 93. The appearance of the three formulae in this context suggests that the Narrative Ia tradition, though further removed from Narrative III oral tradition than Narrative Ib, was not altogether immune from it.
explain the appearance of the expression 'the portals [of his understanding] opened' in the Narrative Ib discourse with Babur.¹

Links with other traditions can also be found in a number of analogues. The two anecdotes which are common to Narrative Ia and Narrative III illustrate both the connection between the two traditions and also the distance which separates them. The anecdotes which, in the B40 table of contents, bear the titles 'Bābājī visited Gujrat' and 'A sākhī describing an encounter with robbers'² have analogues in the Purātan anecdotes entitled 'The Salvation of Dūnī Chand' (second part) and 'The Robbers' Salvation'.³ In both cases the narrative differs considerably and in both the differences indicate the greater maturity of the Purātan version. The first has already been quoted in order to illustrate the manner in which an anecdote changes as it descends through different traditions.⁴ The B40 version of the second is actually longer than its Purātan counterpart, but lacks the shabad which has been attached to the latter and which distinguishes it as a more evolved product. Although the Purātan analogues were probably recorded at an earlier date than the B40 versions they are actually later in terms of development.

Narrative III links with other traditions are certainly fewer and more tenuous than those which connect the Narrative I and Narrative II traditions or the sub-traditions within either. As these examples indicate, they do, however, exist. Their relative scarcity and the pronounced differences which distinguish them can evidently be explained by the oral quality of Narrative III. If this assumption is correct it means that the B40 compiler was, at this point, carrying out the first stage in the development of the recorded janam-sakhis. The fact that he was doing this in the year 1733 serves to illustrate the manner in which all stages could be operative at the same time. When set beside the blocks of material borrowed from other sources this large Narrative III cluster also illustrates the way in which several different forms and stages could be embodied within a single janam-sakhī. It is precisely because it incorporates so many different elements that the B40 collection is of all janam-sakhīs the most interesting and useful.

2. The Miharbān tradition

All narrative sākhīs recorded in the B40 janam-sakhī have now been assigned, confidently or tentatively, to their appropriate sources. The remaining B40 sākhīs consist of two discourses borrowed from the Miharbān tradition and eight miscellaneous discourses inserted at various points throughout the janam-sakhī. Ideally any such reference to the Miharbān

¹ B40, f. 71a.
² B40 sākhīs 47 and 48, ff. 189a–193a (Gurmukhi pagination), 228b (Arabic pagination). In the English translation of B40 these sākhīs have been entitled respectively 'The Rich Man's Pennants' and 'The Robbers and the Funeral Pyre'.
³ PurJS, pp. 71, 32–3. GNSR, pp. 45, 40–1. These two Purātan sākhīs are derived, through the Colebrooke janam-sakhī, from the Narrative Ia tradition.
⁴ See above, pp. 124–7.
Sources Used by the Janam-sākhi Compilers

Tradition as a source should be preceded by a discussion of its own sources. This would, however, constitute a task of some considerable complexity, one which deserves a volume in its own right. Here we can do no more than note that the Miharbān tradition, having itself drawn on a number of sources, has regularly served as a source for other janam-sākhi collections.

One Miharbān borrowing within the B40 Janam-sākhi has already been noted. This was merely a portion of a discourse interpolated in a Q2 narrative sākhi. Later it was suggested that a small cluster of Ādi Sākhis anecdotes might perhaps be another borrowing from the Miharbān tradition. This opinion, however, had to be qualified by a measure of doubt concerning the source and by an acknowledgement that the cluster, if in fact it had been derived from the Miharbān tradition, must represent a paraphrase rather than a copy. It is only towards the end of the B40 Janam-sākhi that there appear complete discourses in the typical Miharbān style.

Although the Miharbān tradition in its various recensions owes some of its material to borrowings from narrative sources by far the greater portion of its content has been generated within the tradition itself in accordance with the obvious intention of its compilers and redactors. Narratives which describe the life and travels of Bābā Nānak express only a secondary purpose within the Miharbān tradition. Its primary purpose is, as we have already noted, exegesis of the works of Nānak. The distinctive form which it employs for this purpose is the gośt, literally ‘discourse’ but more accurately described as discourse plus exegetical supplement.

A gośt from the Miharbān tradition is easily recognized and for this reason there can be no doubt that sakhīs 54 and 55 of the B40 Janam-sākhi have been taken directly from this tradition. Both are plainly discourses in the standard Miharbān style. In each instance the discourse begins with the characteristic Miharbān setting in Kartaṛpur, and following a brief introductory narrative the commentator turns to the quotation of passages from the works of Nānak and to the exegesis of these passages. The interlocutor who is introduced in order to pose necessary questions is one who commonly fulfils this role in the Miharbān tradition, namely Gurū Aṅgad.

The reason for introducing this small cluster from a Miharbān source evidently relates to the subject treated in the two discourses. The Miharbān commentators commonly chose their material in order to provide answers to questions of contemporary concern. One such issue was evidently the question of whether or not the early-morning bath should be regarded as mandatory for all Sikhs, and within the Miharbān tradition an effort had been made to provide a divine sanction for the affirmative case by constructing a discourse from relevant works by Nānak. The effort was not entirely successful, and eventually the commentator, in order to clinch his argument, was compelled to put into Gurū Nānak’s mouth words which were actually those of Gurū Aṅgad. The issue is treated at some length in the extant version of the Miharbān Janam-sākhi, and it seems clear from the commentator’s efforts to provide a conclusive answer that an important

1 See above, p. 205.  
2 See above, pp. 212–14.  
3 B40, ff. 210a–218a.
controversy within at least a section of the Sikh community must have lain behind the question.1

The importance of the controversy presumably accounts for this unique example of a direct B40 borrowing of complete gosâts from a recension of the Mihârbân tradition. This recension was obviously earlier than that of the extant Mihârbân Janam-sâkhi. A comparison of the two B40 sakhis with the analogue in the extant version of the Mihârbân Janam-sâkhi indicates that the latter has been considerably developed.

3. Miscellaneous discourses

The eight remaining B40 sakhis form a miscellaneous collection of heterodox discourses, drawn from a variety of sources and recorded at several different points in the janam-sâkhi. This final group comprises the following:

9. A discourse with Abdul Rahman
15. A discourse with Shâh Rukandi
16. A discourse with Rattan Hâjî
28. A discourse with Ajittâ Randhâvâ
33. A discourse with Kabîr
50. A discourse with Sheikh Sharaf
52. A discourse concerning true renunciation
53. Discourses with Gorâkhnâth and with Kâl.

Heterodox discourses are easily distinguished from the characteristic didactic form of the Mihârbân tradition and there is little likelihood that any of them could have entered B40 from a Mihârbân source.2 The B40 compiler will almost certainly have taken them from independent manuscripts, some of which must have been limited to a single discourse. Manuscripts of this kind are still extant and their existence indicates that during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries extra-canonical compositions of this kind enjoyed an extensive popularity within the Sikh community.3 It was inevitable that some of these works, or selections from them, should be incorporated in the janam-sâkhis, and in this manner eight such discourses found their way into the B40 Janam-sâkhi. The number suggests that they held a considerable fascination for its compiler, or perhaps for its patron.

The eight discourses which have been included in the B40 Janam-sâkhi can be distributed between two of the three categories of heterodox discourse. Five of them belong to the popular Sûfism category. Rukn al-Din and Sharaf al-Din were both celebrated Sûfi pîrs;4 and Rattan Hâjî, though less famous internationally, must nevertheless have possessed a considerable local following within the Pañjâb.5 The meeting with Rukn al-Din

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1 Mih JS II.395-401. W. H. McLeod, introductory essay in Mih JS II.xi-xii.
2 For a definition of the heterodox discourse form see above, pp. 101-4.
4 B40, ff. 53a, 200a.
5 B40, f. 56a.
provides the occasion for introducing a work entitled the *Tih Sipāre*,¹ and to Rattan Hāji there is delivered a homily entitled the *Hāzar-nāma*.² Sheikh Sharaf, who is represented as a transvestite and located in Bāghdād, relates in verse the story of his failure to find union with God. Bābā Nānak replies with a brief poetic instruction in *Dhanāsari rāga*.³ Although Abdul Rahmān is remembered as a writer rather than as a pir, the pattern followed in sākhī 9 indicates that this discourse should also be included in the popular Sūfism category.⁴ Sākhī 52 names no interlocutor, adding instead the subtitle: ‘A discourse took place with a learned faqir’.⁵ The content of the discourse certainly entitles it to be classified as a Sūfī-oriented work.

The three other discourses in this miscellaneous group can all be regarded as examples of esoteric Nāth-oriented compositions, although none of them gives particularly clear expression to *hatha-yoga* doctrine. ‘A Discourse with Ajīttā Randhāvā’ is perhaps more important as an expression of conflicts within the early eighteenth-century Sikh community.⁶ The *hatha-yoga* emphasis is similarly muted in the Kabir discourse, although its presence can certainly be detected in the portions attributed to Gurū Nānak.⁷ Finally there is sākhī 53, ‘Discourses with Gorakhnāth and with Kāl’.⁸ This brief composition is distinguished only by an abundance of cryptic allusions, producing a general impression of total obscurity. Once again *hatha-yoga* concepts are nowhere expressed clearly and directly. The identity of the first interlocutor suggests, however, that this discourse should also belong to the third category. Its cryptic allusions may perhaps be a crude imitation of the ‘intentional language’ of the Nāths.

The fact that the eight miscellaneous discourses recorded by the *B40* compiler may be grouped in two categories should not imply that the compiler was using only two sources. Sākhīs 15 and 16 are almost certainly from a common source but there is no evidence of any such link connecting any of the remaining six discourses. The manner in which they are dispersed throughout the jānam-sākhī suggests that several independent manuscripts (one of them incomplete⁹) were utilized by the compiler. In some instances he may perhaps have relied upon his own memory or upon an oral recitation.

**A SUMMARY OF THE B40 SOURCES**

The complete range of sources used by the *B40* compiler may now be summarized in tabular form.

1 *B40*, ff. 53a–55b.
2 *B40*, ff. 56a–57a. See *B40*(Eng), p. 58n.
3 *B40*, ff. 200a–202a. The Colebrooke *Jānam-sākhī* correctly places Sheikh Sharaf in Pānpāt, but his dates render any such meeting completely impossible. GNSR, p. 82.
4 *B40*, ff. 177b–180a.
5 *B40*, ff. 205b–207b.
6 *B40*, ff. 111a–116b. See above, p. 104.
7 *B40*, ff. 136a–138a.
8 *B40*, ff. 208a–209a.
### SOURCES USED BY THE JANAM-SĀKHĪ COMPILERS

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<td>Cakes miraculously cooked</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>38.</td>
<td>Bābā Nānak’s Visit to Kashmir</td>
<td>Misc. Discourse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>39.</td>
<td>Bābā Nānak enslaved in the Land of the Paṭhāns</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40.</td>
<td>Bābā Nānak provides grain and fire</td>
<td>Misc. Discourse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41.</td>
<td>Floods banished from a land beside the sea</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>42.</td>
<td>A Demon Arsonist converted</td>
<td>Misc. Discourse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>43a.</td>
<td>Ajīttā Randhāvā rebuked for greed</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>43b.</td>
<td>Abdul Rahmān humbled</td>
<td>Misc. Discourse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>44a.</td>
<td>Ajīttā Randhāvā rebuked for revivifying dead birds at Achal</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>44b.</td>
<td>A Visit to Tīllā</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45.</td>
<td>Uttam Bhaṇḍārī and Sultānā Gujar: Springs from a mountain-side</td>
<td>Misc. Discourse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>46.</td>
<td>A Visit to Hivanchal: Discourse with Datta</td>
<td>Misc. Discourse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>47.</td>
<td>The Rich Man’s Pennants</td>
<td>Misc. Discourse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>48.</td>
<td>The Robbers and the Funeral Pyre</td>
<td>Misc. Discourse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>49a.</td>
<td>A Robber Landowner Converted</td>
<td>Misc. Discourse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>49b.</td>
<td>A Rājā’s daughter turned into a boy</td>
<td>Misc. Discourse</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Sources Used by the Janam-Sākhī Compilers

Sākhi no. | Title of Anecdote |
--- | --- |
50. | A Discourse with Sheikh Sharaf in Bāghdād |
51. | The Reward of Meeting a Sādhū |
52. | A Discourse concerning True Renunciation |
53. | Discourses with Gorakhnāth and with Kāl |
54. | The Way of Salvation: A Discourse which Gurū Bābā Nānak held with Guru Aṅgad |
55. | Another Discourse with Guru Aṅgad concerning the Way of Salvation |
56. | An Injunction to Recite the Ārati Sohīlā |
57. | The Magnificence of Bābā Nānak’s hymns |
58. | The Death of Bābā Nānak |

Of these sources Narrative III was almost certainly an oral tradition. Some of the Miscellaneous Discourses may also derive from an oral tradition, but not from the same cycle as the Narrative III anecdotes. The remainder were all documentary sources. In diagrammatic form this pattern may be represented as in figure 26.

Figure 26
Epic and Puranic legends
Other pre-Nānak traditions
Authentic incidents from the life of Nānak
Anecdotes developed within the later community
Works of Nānak
Sūfī tradition
Nāth tradition

ORAL TRADITIONS CONCERNING BĀBĀ NĀNAK

Narrative I
BG

Narrative Ia

Narrative Ib

Narrative II

a-b
LDP 194

b-c

Cale JS

Haf JS

Nānak Prakāś
Later Bābā
Modern "biographies"

Narrative III
Miharbān tradition
Miscellaneous discourses

Commentary
Sundry miscellaneous fragments

Extant GR
Bābā JS
Nānak Prakāś
Later Bābā

Extant Mih JS

Figure 27
A SUMMARY OF THE JANAM-SĀKHĪ SOURCES

In the course of this analysis particular attention has been paid to the Bānījanam-sākhi and the Ādi Sākhīs. The same attention could also be directed to the other important janam-sākhīs, with varying degrees of success, eliciting patterns of varying complexity. It must surely be obvious that any attempt to combine all within a single, comprehensive pattern will be, in some measure, foredoomed to failure. Quite apart from the impossible complexity of such a diagram there would be the risk of imputing total assurance to a pattern which must still remain tentative at certain points.

A simplified paradigm can, however, be devised and figure 27 represents an attempt to do so. It must be stressed that notwithstanding its apparent complexity this diagram is considerably simplified at several points. Four areas to which this observation should be particularly applied are the Bālā tradition, the Gyan-ratanāvali, the Narrative Ia tradition, and the Mihar-bān tradition. If due allowance is made for these shortcomings the diagram can serve its intended purpose of providing an over-view of the entire janam-sākhi field. If it be urged that the summary diagram is still excessively intricate it can only be answered that the material which it represents is, in actual fact, exceedingly intricate. Any further simplification of the paradigm might well obscure this basic fact.
SECTION III
Although the Sikh Gurus are all regarded as manifestations of the same divine spirit two of the ten have in practice been accorded a particular affection, a loyalty of unusual intensity and duration. The two are the first and the last of the line, Guru Nanak and Guru Gobind Singh. Both have been associated with particular phases in the development of the Sikh Panth and it is as symbols of these two major phases that their respective images have been of such substantial importance. Guru Nanak stands as the image and ideal of the pre-Khalsa stage, the period in which the Panth's primary concern attached to a distinctively religious message. Guru Gobind Singh, in contrast, has symbolized the Khalsa era, the period in which primary allegiance moved away from the earlier soteriological concern to sociological patterns deriving from the dual impact on the Panth of Jat custom and eighteenth-century disturbances. Each period has given rise to a single dominant myth. The image of Guru Nanak enshrines one of these; the image of Guru Gobind Singh expresses the other.

The janam-sakhis belong to the period of religious ascendancy and for this reason they are exclusively concerned with the first of these images. It is an avowedly religious purpose which the janam-sakhis compilers pursue, and their products continue to serve a viable function for as long as religious interests retain a primacy within the Panth. Only when the religious concerns are largely submerged in the eighteenth-century flood do the janam-sakhis become increasingly dysfunctional. New needs demand new ideals and new vehicles for those ideals. Functional substitutes are required for a role which the janam-sakhis can no longer fulfil with a sufficient competence. The janam-sakhis did not, however, suffer a total eclipse, for the community was not wholly transformed by its eighteenth-century experience. The teachings of Baba Nanak have certainly not been lost, and wherever a concern for his message of salvation has survived there the janam-sakhis have sustained their pre-Khalsa role. Even where they have lost much of their functional importance they have lost little of their audience appeal. To this day the janam-sakhis are widely read in Sikh homes and gurdwaras, and evidences of a final recession have yet to appear in rural Punjab.

It will be noted that these comments concern the function of the janam-sakhis within the Sikh community. The function of the janam-sakhis must be clearly distinguished from their purpose, and it is because this distinction can be drawn so clearly that the two aspects of the janam-sakhis...
literature will be treated separately in the brief analysis which follows. Questions of purpose relate to the motives and intentions of narrators, compilers, and redactors; whereas the function of the janam-sākhis concerns the role which they have played in the history of the Panth. This role accords only partially with the conscious intentions of the narrators and their later editors. It was a much more subtle need which provided the janam-sākhis with their primary function and which earned them a significant status during the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. This is made clear by the manner in which the janam-sākhis retreated from the centre of the community’s life as the distinctively religious interest receded, and by the corresponding advance of functional substitutes fulfilling the same role in a strikingly different way. The primary function which they served from the late sixteenth century to the early eighteenth century must be construed in terms of panthic cohesion, a role which the narrators and compilers would never have suspected.

A functional analysis will reveal something of the importance of the janam-sākhis for the Sikh Panth of three hundred years ago. This constitutes a major aspect of their importance as historical source material. Their chief value in this respect is closely related to their functional role. The janam-sākhis’ most notable fulfilment of their functional role took place during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the period of their principal expansion. Because they were evolving during this period (and particularly during the seventeenth century) the janam-sākhis record much that derives directly from its circumstances. As such they constitute a primary source for the two centuries extending from the late sixteenth century to the eighteenth century.

For this period the principal interest concerns the evidence provided by the janam-sākhis of a religious community striving towards identity and self-understanding. Less obvious but nevertheless important are the recurrent glimpses of the wider life of the Pañjab. For too long historians of Mughal Pañjab have relied almost exclusively upon the standard Persian chronicles. The Persian chronicles do indeed retain a considerable value, particularly the relevant sections of Abu al-Fazl’s A’in-i-Akbari and Sujān Rāi Bhaṇḍārī’s Khulāsāt-ut-Tavarikh. Alone, however, they are inadequate, for their range is strictly limited by their distinctive interests. The janam-sākhis are also inadequate if compelled to stand alone, but at least their locus is the rural society so commonly ignored by the chronicler. For this reason the janam-sākhis provide a valuable supplement to the Persian chronicles and the reports of early European visitors.

The value of the janam-sākhis as historical source material is discussed in the fourth chapter of this section. In the fifth and concluding chapter there follows a brief note on the importance of the janam-sākhis in the history of Pañjābī language and literature. This importance is twofold. The janam-sākhis warrant attention as the first examples of sustained Pañjābī prose, and also as a continuing influence upon later creativity. The latter feature can be easily appreciated when one becomes aware of the extent to which the janam-sākhis have been read in Sikh homes and gurd-
waras. Together with the Ādi Granth, the works of Muslim Sūfis from the Pañjāb, and eventually the example of western models, they rank as a major influence in the development of Pañjābī literature. When Pañjābī eventually receives the attention it deserves the janam-sākhīs will receive a significant share of this recognition.
THE PURPOSE OF THE JANAM-SĀKHĪS

He who from the depths of his being reads and hears this testimony will find salvation. Of this there is no doubt.¹

It is at once obvious that an important reason for the popularity of the janam-sākhīs has been an inveterate taste for anecdotes and wonder-stories. It is also evident that this affection was not confined to audiences, but that it extended also to the narrators who related the tales and to the compilers who gathered them into janam-sākhīs. The janam-sākhīs contain an abundance of these stories, many of which have lost nothing of their interest with the passing of several centuries.

It would, however, be entirely mistaken to interpret the purpose of the narrators and the compilers as the mere delectation of their audiences. The popularity of anecdote and legend was a means to a nobler end, to an objective which most compilers express in explicit terms at appropriate points in their collections. Salvation is the issue which concerns them and the promulgation of a particular way of salvation constitutes their conscious intention. This salvation is to be won through an acceptance of Bābā Nānak as Master. Nānak preached a particular method of attaining release from the cycle of death and rebirth. He who accepts Bābā Nānak as his guide and model will himself attain to the same salvation. In order to understand the method three things are essential. First, he must heed the actual words of the Master as enshrined in his sacred utterances; secondly, he must listen to the exemplary narratives of the Master's life; and thirdly he must join the community of the Master's followers. The janam-sākhīs served the second of these needs and increasingly they served the first also. The third must be the responsibility of the disciple, but at least the janam-sākhīs could be used to make his duty clear.

This is an explicitly soteriological concern and in giving expression to it the janam-sākhī narrators and compilers were following in the footsteps of their acknowledged Master. Nānak's own central and ever-present purpose had been salvation, and the janam-sākhīs remain faithful to this intention. There is, however, a radical shift of emphasis. Nānak insists repeatedly that salvation is to be obtained by hearkening to the divine Word (sabad) of the Gurmū and, in accordance with the inward revelation imparted by the divine Word, by regular meditation upon the divine Name (nām). The janam-sākhīs do use the term nām in a sense akin to Nānak's meaning,² but

¹ B40, f. 116b.  
² Cf. B40, f. 120b.
THE PURPOSE OF THE JANAM-SĀKHĪS

the words *tabad* and *gurū* have in their janam-sākhī usage acquired significantly different meanings. The *gurū* is no longer the inner voice of God, but the personal manifestation of that voice in Bābā Nānak. From this it follows that the divine Word must be identified with the actual utterances of Nānak, and so the term *tabad* (shabad) is almost exclusively used as a synonym for a *pada* or 'hymn' of Nānak. The same usage is also applied to the compositions of his successors, for all are but different manifestations of the same single Gūrū.

The principal features of this janam-sākhī doctrine of salvation may be traced through a number of quotations. A basic element is the concept of *nām japa* or *nām simaran* as it was understood over a wide area of North Indian devotional life during this period. 'Remembrance of the divine Name' was practised in two ways, one individual and the other corporate. The individual discipline consisted of repeating a chosen word or *mantra* for protracted periods, the belief being that the qualities of the chosen word or *mantra* could thereby be acquired by the devotee. Mechanical repetition of this sort clearly had serious limitations as far as Nānak was concerned, but the janam-sākhīs plainly indicate that many of his later followers did not share his misgivings.¹

The janam-sākhīs were, however, in complete accord with Nānak's interpretation of corporate 'remembrance'. Both for the Master and for his followers, as also for numberless other inheritors of the North Indian devotional tradition, the way of salvation required participation in the *satsaṅg*, the congregation of the faithful. Salvation depended not merely upon individual devotion (however it might be understood and practised) but also upon the singing of God's praises (*kirtan*) at regular gatherings of the *satsaṅg*. It was for this purpose alone that the *satsaṅg* gathered, and in singing together each participant absorbed not merely the qualities of the divine words which he sang but also the qualities of the other pious participants. This activity was a prerequisite to salvation and it is clear that Nānak's own works were composed for use in this particular context.

The singing of *kirtan* within the regular *satsaṅg* was accepted as normative by the janam-sākhī narrators and one of their purposes was to encourage the practice. It was, however, no more than a part of their wider concept of salvation. Devotional songs abounded, but all were by no means equal in value. Supreme value attached only to those of Bābā Nānak and, later, to those of his successors. The loyalty of the Sikh community was not to an idea nor to a particular doctrine of salvation but to the person who had propounded the doctrine with a unique clarity and beauty. Faith was due not to a theory but to a particular person.

This faith is explicitly affirmed at various points in the janam-sākhī literature, sometimes as a terminal declaration by a narrator or compiler, and sometimes as a statement attributed to one of the dramatis personae. A *Miḥarbhīn* discourse concludes with the following affirmation:

Gurū Bābā Nānak is the vessel which carries us across the Ocean of the World. Gurū Bābā Nānak has carried over the entire world. He who becomes a Nānak-

¹ Cf. B40, f. 118b.
panthi will be carried across. He who cleaves to the divine Word of Gurū Bābā Nānak shall be saved. Such was the grace of Gurū Bābā Nānak that he imparted the divine Name to the entire world. Glory be to Gurū Bābā Nānak! Praise be to Gurū Bābā Nānak, the True Gurū Bābā Nānak! 1

The status which is thus attributed to Bābā Nānak is explicitly declared to be the result of a divine commission received direct from God. This is made clear by the various versions of the sākhī entitled 'An Interview with God'. 2

Datta the Sage carries the attribution of divinity one stage further. Bābā Nānak is not merely a supreme teacher. He is jotī sarūp, the divine effulgence, God Himself incarnate in human form for the salvation of the world.

Blessed are you Bābā Nānak! Blessed are you Bābā Nānak! And blessed is this which you have done! You are yourself God, but for the salvation of the world you have come in this human guise. If anyone beholds your presence, sings and recites your sacred words, and instructs others in the recitation and singing of them he will be exalted. For him the round of birth and death will be brought to an end. 3

It will be observed that three qualifications are specified as essential to salvation. The first is to behold the presence of Bābā Nānak (darsan); the second is to sing and recite his sacred utterances (sabad); and the third is to teach others the same way of salvation. The janam-sākhīs are concerned with all three but above all with the first. This need they alone can meet. While Bābā Nānak was present in the flesh darsan could be obtained by visiting him in Kartārpur or by meeting him during the course of one of his journeys. The same purpose might be achieved up to the beginning of the eighteenth century by appearing before one of the successor Gurūs, but as the community grew in numbers and in geographical distribution such personal visits became increasingly difficult. Moreover, an occasional encounter was no substitute for a permanent presence.

The primary purpose of the janam-sākhīs was to provide that permanent presence, or at least a satisfactory substitute. Death, disability, or distance need raise no insuperable obstacle to regular darsan, for darsan could be obtained through the true testimony (sākhī) of the Gurū's life and utterances. The understanding of darsan which this implied was the same as the understanding of a personal darsan. Whereas for some devotees a personal visit to the chosen Master would necessarily involve some direct teaching and also some observing of the Master's own example, others would be content merely to appear before him. The same variety of understanding could also be applied to the janam-sākhīs. For some there would necessarily be a conscious acceptance of the model set forth in the words of the testimony; for others it would be sufficient merely to hear the words. Most of the narrators would, of course, belong to the former group. Their intention was not simply to tell a pious tale but also to point

1 Mih JS II.178. Cf. also Mih JS 1.461 (gobi 137).
3 B40, f. 188a–b.
deliberately to a particular pattern of pious behaviour. Faith alone was not enough. There must also be personal participation. For the narrator of the Narrative III tradition this is expressed in the insistent repetition of the formula nām dān isnān, the threefold discipline of repeating the divine Name, giving charity, and regular bathing. Occasionally the same narrator is even more specific, as in the prologue attached to the story of Mūlā the Khatri.

Bābā Nānak revealed to the world a wise and enlightened belief concerning the remembrance of God. He established dharamsālas throughout the world and inculcated the virtues of remembrance of the divine Name, charity, bathing, mercy, and the performance of one’s appointed duties (dhārma). He would say, ‘Son, if anyone is my Sikh let him remain firmly rooted in three things. In what three things? In the divine Name, charity, and bathing.’

The disciple of Bābā Nānak is to follow a distinctive belief concerning the remembrance of God (paramēṣar kā simaran); he is to forgather regularly with the satsāṅg in the dharamsāla; and he is to observe a number of devout practices. All of these instructions proceed from Bābā Nānak himself. The sākhīān bear testimony to this authority and provide in their descriptions of the Gurū’s life the perfect model of their fulfilment.

The purpose of the janam-sākhī narrators was thus to set forth a soteriological interpretation of the life of Nānak. This interpretation constitutes the myth of Nānak, a myth which is expressed in anecdote, in discourse, and in an occasional declaration of faith. A part of the intention was evidently the conversion of others to the same interpretation; an even greater part was obviously the confirming and strengthening of the faithful. For this reason the sākhis were written down and then regularly read in the dharamsālas (which eventually became gurdwaras) and in the homes of devout Sikh families. No janam-sākhī contributor has expressed the basic purpose with greater force and clarity than the Ādi Sākhsis compiler, and his closing declaration is worth repeating.

He who reads or hears this sākhī shall attain to the supreme rapture. He who hears, sings, or reads this sākhī shall find his highest desire fulfilled, for through it he shall meet Gurū Bābā Nānak. He who with love sings of the glory of Bābā Nānak or gives ear to it shall obtain joy ineffable in all that he does in this life, and in the life to come salvation.\footnote{\textit{Bāg.,} f. 100a.} \footnote{\textit{AS,} p. 101.}
THE FUNCTION OF THE JANAM-SĀKHĪS

The function of the janam-sākhīs must be clearly distinguished from their avowed purpose. Whereas their purpose concerns the conscious intention of their authors, their function concerns the role which they actually played within the later community. There can be no doubt that the intention was in some considerable measure fulfilled and that to this extent the janam-sākhīs performed a function which corresponded to their purpose. This was not, however, their principal role. Their principal function was the maintenance of the community's cohesion during the pre-Khālsā period. Although it was not the only cohesive agent during this period it was certainly a very important one, and it was largely because they fulfilled the cohesive role so well that the janam-sākhīs flourished during the seventeenth century. The seventeenth-century momentum continued into the following period and then weakened as eighteenth-century circumstances created new needs which they were ill suited to serve. During the Siṅgh Sabhā renewal movement of the late nineteenth century they recovered a considerable measure of their popularity, but never regained the stature which they had possessed during the seventeenth century.

For the first Sikhs identity and cohesion presented no problems. The first Sikhs were the disciples who gathered around Bābā Nānak during the first half of the sixteenth century, and for as long as their Master was present in the flesh there could be no serious difficulty as far as self-definition was concerned. Bābā Nānak provided in his person a focus for the loyalty of his disciples and no bond was needed other than their common allegiance to him. For this stage the word sikh is best represented with a lower-case initial letter. The word simply means 'disciple', and the principal difference distinguishing this particular group of disciples from innumerable others was their decision to accept Bābā Nānak of Kartārpur as their spiritual guide. A more appropriate designation for this stage (and one which the janam-sākhīs normally use in preference to sikh) is nānak-panthī. The early community constituted a panth, a loose congeries linked by a common ideal. Bābā Nānak provided in his person and in his teachings that ideal, and accordingly the panth of his followers bore his name.

1 For a definition and discussion of the term 'function' as opposed to 'purpose' or 'motive' see Robert K. Merton's essay, 'Manifest and Latent Functions', in his Social Theory and Social Structure (Glencoe: the Free Press, 1957), pp. 19–84.
2 In Merton's usage the fulfilment of the intended purpose constitutes a 'manifest function', and the more significant but unforeseen role a 'latent function'. Op. cit., p. 51.
THE FUNCTION OF THE JANAM-SĀKHĪS

For as long as Nānak lived in Kartarpur the question of identity required no attention, nor did it seriously concern the growing community during the period immediately following his death. Nānak had, in the usual manner, appointed a chosen disciple to succeed him as leader of the community, and the loyalty due to the first Gurū was automatically transferred to the second. This succession continued until the death of Gurū Gobind Siṅgh in 1708, not without challenge from various contenders but generally stable and always commanding a majority allegiance within the community. Its authority was considerably increased by attaching to it the ancient theory of spiritual transmission represented in the image of a succession of torches. Though the torches be many the flame is the same. Ten men were successively Gurū, but a single spirit inhabited them all and all bore the name Nānak.¹

This projection of the first Gurū’s personal authority through a line of successor Gurūs constituted the principal cohesive agent up to the death of the tenth Gurū in 1708. It was not, however, the only means devised by the community to determine its identity and maintain its cohesion. The personality of the first Gurū was projected not merely through the line of successors but also through the janam-sākhīs. Both the dynastic succession and the hagiographic tradition were fulfilling the same function in essentially the same way. Both were concerned with authority, identity, and cohesion; and both served these needs by sustaining a continuing loyalty to the person of the Gurū. The same answer could still be given to the ever-present question: What is a Sikh? A Sikh could still be defined as one who followed the Gurū.

This cohesive role the janam-sākhīs fulfilled by providing a single focus for a common loyalty. The single focus was not primarily any set of doctrines. The teachings of Nānak were certainly of vital importance, and the continuing reinterpretation of those teachings was a task necessarily imposed by a new experience and a new constituency. It was however the person of the community’s first teacher which provided the actual focus, and in so far as any doctrines served to identify the community they did so only through a close connection with the acknowledged Master. Doctrine is in practice a treacherous maze within which a sect or community soon loses its compact unity. Loyalty to a person is a far more effective means of maintaining sectarian or communal cohesion, and although the janam-sākhī narrators could hardly have been aware of this fact their products certainly followed the more effective way. It is always the personality of the Gurū which receives their primary attention. Although later janam-sākhī narrators, and specifically the Miharbān commentators, developed a considerable interest in doctrinal issues, they were always careful to relate these issues directly to their image of Bābā Nānak.

The only point at which the janam-sākhīs do suggest an awareness of functional issues is in their occasional insistence that those who put their faith in Bābā Nānak must also identify themselves with the

¹ The Gurūs who composed shabads and shaloks all refer to themselves as ‘Nānak’ in these compositions.
community of his followers. To Angad Bābā Nānak is said to have declared:

If anyone bears the title of nānak-panthī he will be saved.¹

It is, however, no more than a vague awareness, and the precise meaning of such statements must always be obscured by the indistinctness of the word panth. Although such references do indicate a community struggling towards definable identity, they do not imply a clear consciousness of the issues involved in the endeavour. For the janam-sākhī narrators and compilers the maintenance of a single focus served a purpose which must be distinguished from its more important function.

It is, of course, an image of Nānak which provides this vital focus. The historical Nānak was soon replaced by the Nānak of myth and it was this latter figure to whom the common allegiance was so insistently directed. It was, moreover, a variable image. The community could never remain static, and any significant change in its needs and its self-understanding eventually produced a corresponding amendment of the image. The janam-sākhīs clearly reflect a community striving over a period of more than a century to attain an understanding of its own identity. The person and the teachings of the acknowledged founder provide the common loyalty and the common ideal. As new situations develop they raise new questions and demand different responses. The authentic person and teachings of Nānak provide a convenient core to which are added theories and conclusions emerging from subsequent experience.

These theories and conclusions are in some instances to be traced to a resurgence of earlier pre-Nānak ideals, and in others to social and economic pressures of the later Gurū period. Considerable changes inevitably resulted, but one thing remained constant. Loyalty to the person of the first Gurū remained a sine qua non. The person who owned this allegiance thereby qualified as a Nānak-panthī, and the common allegiance shared by all members of the Panth provided the essential cohesive factor. The theory was not a complete success, for schism did develop, and some contenders to the succession claiming to be the true heirs to the first Gurū’s authority managed to detach segments of the community. It was, however, a generally successful ideal and a considerable measure of its success must be traced to the traditions concerning the first Gurū, both in their oral expression and in their recorded janam-sākhī form.

Throughout the seventeenth century and into the eighteenth, oral tradition and the janam-sākhīs continued to serve this function. Their decline came when the death of the last personal Gurū and the confused events of the eighteenth century forced a radically different situation upon the Panth. The inevitability of a later transformation had already been assured by the entry into the Panth of substantial numbers of Jāts. In 1708 the death of Gurū Gobind Śīṅgh produced a leadership crisis, and the turmoil which persisted throughout the eighteenth century provided the occasion for a radical change in Sikh identity. Two elements within this situation

¹ B40, f. 105a. Cf. also ff. 125a–126a.
dictated the actual form of the change. One was the dominant Jaṭ constituency and the other was the fact that the invasions of Ahmad Shāh Abdālī (1747–69) came to be understood as a war of Muslims against Sikhs. A third which also exercised some influence was the impact of Śakti ideals. The sixth Gurū, Hargobind, had moved to the Śivalik Hills in 1634 and all his successors spent substantial periods in this area. Śakti beliefs were strong in the Śivaliks and their influence can be detected in some of the later Sikh developments.

The principal elements were, however, the Jaṭ constituency and the conflict with Muslims imposed by the Afgān invasions. It was no longer possible to define a Sikh simply as one who followed the Gurū, and although the doctrines of Gurū Panth (the corporate community as Gurū) and Gurū Granth (the scripture as Gurū) successively emerged neither was sufficient to meet eighteenth-century needs. These needs were largely met by recourse to distinctively Jaṭ patterns and to institutions which explicitly distinguished the Sikh from the Muslim. Gradually there evolved and crystallized the distinctive Khālsā rahit, or Khālsā ‘Code of Discipline’, with its insistence upon such features as the obligatory symbols termed the pañj kakke or ‘Five K’s’.

This code provided a new and different answer to the old question of what is a Sikh. A Sikh is one who accepts baptism into the Khālsā and promises to abide by its discipline. Features of the discipline which commanded a particular importance were the Jaṭ custom of leaving hair uncut, and the anti-Muslim prohibition of tobacco and halāl meat. Other institutions which supplemented the code and served to strengthen the community’s cohesion were regular assemblies in the cult centre (the dharamsalā which later became the gurdwārā), a pronounced reverence for the sacred scriptures, and a new historiography which devoted primary attention to the perils and triumphs of the eighteenth century.

Meanwhile the janam-sākhīs gradually moved away from the position of central importance which they had previously held. Functional substitutes had become necessary and had been found. The janam-sākhīs were not stripped of their function entirely, but from the eighteenth century onwards they shared it with other elements, some of them far more efficient because they related with such greater intimacy to the transformed condition of the Sikh community. The retention of the janam-sākhīs actually involved some contradictions, for the janam-sākhī traditions are much different in tone and intention from the ideals and institutions erected by eighteenth-century experience. Their intention is, however, entirely understandable. A sanctity and an affection still adhere to them and their narrative power provides an anchor of considerable strength. If it be claimed that they will eventually decline to a status which interests only the occasional historian or student of literature, assuredly that day has not yet come.
THE JANAM-SĀKHĪS AS HISTORICAL SOURCES

Lives of Baba Nanuk called 'Junum Sakhis' are very common, but they are so full of fable and invention, displaying such intense ignorance, that they are more calculated to deceive than instruct.

R. N. Cust, *The Life of Baba Nanuk, the Founder of the Sikh Sect of the Hindu Religion in the Punjab.*

Cust's brief account of Guru Nanak was published in 1859.¹ Eighteen years later Ernst Trumpp repeated, in language of similar disdain and condescension, the same opinion of the janam-sākhīs.² Conventions have long since changed, and because their style now sounds highly insulting those who still accept their derogatory interpretation usually demonstrate a much greater degree of sensitivity in their choice of words. Against this extreme view can be set its more popular opposite, the attitude which persists in treating the janam-sākhīs as generally trustworthy and accurate. Only minor changes are permitted by this popular interpretation. The more marvellous of the wonder-stories are commonly rationalized or removed, details which impose an undue strain upon the reader's credulity are similarly discarded, and the substantial balance is then accepted as historically reliable. Both extremes claim to be assessments of the janam-sākhīs as historical sources. Variously modified they represent every possible theory from total acceptance to total rejection.

Of the two interpretations the acceptance theory has, understandably, been much the more popular, and books relating the life and travels of Guru Nānak are now legion. Ever since Macauliffe published the first volume of *The Sikh Religion* studies of the same kind have continued to appear, most of them in Panjābī but several in English and other languages. Up to 1969 this succession of biographies could be more appropriately described as a trickle rather than as a stream. In that year, however, the trickle suddenly enlarged and briefly became a flood. The quincentenary of the Guru's birth created an unprecedented demand and, as in the case of the Guru Gobind Siṅgh tercentenary three years earlier, the demand produced a vigorous response.

Inevitably the authors who attempted biographies of Guru Nānak were compelled to rely almost exclusively upon the janam-sākhīs for their material, and for those who purposed to write lengthy accounts of his life this reliance had to be generally uncritical. This has been the standard

¹ The essay was published in Lahore as 'a pamphlet for use in schools'.
method from the time of Macauliffe onwards, and in so far as the janam-sakhis have been used as historical source-material their usage has been almost exclusively limited to this biographical concern. Although this dependence upon the janam-sakhis is inescapable two major qualifications are vital. The first is that the janam-sakhis can tell us very little about the historical Nānak, of the man who lived in the Pañjāb during the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries. Although the investigation of his actual life must still rely largely upon the janam-sakhīs the source is for this purpose a very unreliable one and its yield necessarily scant.

The second qualification is that whereas the janam-sakhīs tell us relatively little of the historical Nānak they do communicate much concerning the later myth of Nānak and of its importance within the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century community of his followers. They also tell us much of the wider life of that community and of the Pañjāb in which it lived during that later period. It is most important that this potential contribution should be appreciated. For too long the use of the janam-sakhīs as historical sources has been confined to biographical endeavours, an approach which assumes that the janam-sakhī narratives relate primarily to the times of Nānak. It is to their own times, and particularly to the seventeenth century, that they primarily relate, and it is for this later period that they can make a major contribution to historical understanding.

1. THE JANAM-SĀKHĪS AS SOURCES FOR THE LIFE OF GURŪ NĀNAK

This issue may be treated very briefly, partly for the reason given above and partly because it is more extensively discussed elsewhere.¹ The procedure which must be followed in any attempt to use the janam-sakhīs as biographical sources should consist of a patient analysis of the anecdotes and discourses directed to the identification of elements which may safely be traced to the historical Nānak or his immediate environment. This amounts in practice to a lengthy series of tests, and for these tests a set of basic criteria must be devised.

One criterion to which constant appeal must be made is the evidence of external sources. This is an obvious procedure, but one which must be used with caution. References to Nānak which occur in other sources require careful checking, and if upon analysis they leave room for serious doubt this element of doubt should not be glossed over. There is, for example, a reference to the Gurū in the Chaitanya Bhāgavat which has been taken as conclusive proof of a meeting between Nānak and Chaitanya.² Such a meeting is certainly a possibility, but the reference does not provide sufficiently convincing evidence to permit any categorical affirmation. One must also take account of the age of the Chaitanya Bhāgavat, which, according to Bimanbehari Majumdar, ‘could not have been written before the seventeenth century’.³ Anecdotes concerning Nānak quickly became a

¹ GNSR, pp. 68–147. See esp. pp. 68–70.
² SLTGN(Eng), p. 336.
³ Ibid., p. 335.
THE JANAM-SĀKHĪS AS HISTORICAL SOURCES

feature of North Indian bhakti hagiography (as the works of Mahipati indicate) and traditions concerning Bābā Nānak had certainly reached Bengal by the seventeenth century. It could be argued that just as Nānak had to be represented as meeting Kabir, so in like manner did Chaitanya have to encounter Nānak. Although it cannot be asserted that such a meeting did not take place, nor can it be affirmed that its historicity has been established.

The same caution must also be applied to the traditions concerning Nānak’s visits to Sri Lanka and Bāghdād, and likewise to the numerous conclusions based upon phonetic similarities or popular etymologies. The ‘Land of Āsā’ has in this manner been identified with Āssām; the ‘Land of Dhanāsari’ is similarly identified with the valley of the Dhansiri river in the same province; Mumajik Deś, the ‘Land of Unbelievers’, is treated as a version of Kāfīr-stān in the Hindu Kush; and a visit to China has been declared proven on the grounds that the city of Nanking must have been named in memory of the Gurū.

In practice the appeal to external sources rarely sustains a janam-sākhī tradition. It is the reverse which is true, namely that such an appeal will commonly enable the historian to set particular claims aside. Whereas contemporary references to Nānak appear to be non-existent there is abundant evidence to indicate that many of the anecdotes or details attached to his person by janam-sākhī narrators were present in earlier traditions. External sources may not help much in confirming janam-sākhī claims, but they do render much assistance in distinguishing features which relate to the later image of Nānak rather than to the authentic historical person.

Most of the other criteria serve a similar purpose, their contribution being in terms of rejection rather than affirmation. The result, inevitably, is the conclusion that although much can be known concerning the teachings of Nānak very little can be positively affirmed concerning his life. Many incidents must remain unproven either way, but given the general unreliability of the janam-sākhīs as testimony to the historical Nānak the historian must usually incline strongly towards scepticism.

Three considerations will however mitigate any sense of disappointment which this conclusion may cause. The first is that the analysis does at least confirm the broad outline of his life in the Pañjāb. The second is that his works have been preserved and that from this source all aspects of his teachings may be known. The third is that for the historian the later image and its impact upon the later community will be of even greater interest than the historical figure. This image the janam-sākhīs describe in super-abundant detail.

2. THE JANAM-SĀKHĪ IMAGE OF BĀBĀ NĀNAK

For the janam-sākhī narrators Bābā Nānak was above all else the Giver of Salvation. Although there is no single word to express this status explicitly,

1 See above, p. 162. GNSR, pp. 125–32.
the promise of salvation (*mukti*) is repeatedly held out to those who will own Nānak as their Master and Guide. The single-word descriptions which do recur in the *janam-sākhī* narratives serve rather to express particular aspects of his saviour status. In all instances they are drawn from earlier usage, but there can be no gainsaying the uniqueness of the figure which emerges through the multitude of the *janam-sākhī* anecdotes. This figure, a blend of traditional symbols with surviving memories of the authentic personality, constitutes the *janam-sākhī* image of Nānak.

Although there is a generalized image common to all *janam-sākhī* traditions there are also a few features which are characteristic of particular sources. One of these, the image of Nānak the Ascetic, is of sufficient importance to warrant separate notice. The image depicts Nānak as one who consorted with celibate langot-band sādhūs, lived by begging, practised tapasya, and sought withdrawal from the world in his quest for salvation. This particular representation is plainly the creation of the continuing ascetic tradition within the Sikh community and, as one would expect, its distinctive features find their fullest expression in the *Narrative IIb* source. Their incidence is not, however, limited to this source. The ascetic ideal, though obviously stressed by a particular sect, exercised a wide appeal throughout the entire community, and occasional references to the Great Ascetic image are to be found amongst descriptions of a more conventional kind. One which begins in the *Narrative IIb* tradition but spreads much further is the belief that Nānak subsisted for many years on a daily *ak* pod and handful of sand, and that he made his bed upon stones. In some references his diet is limited to either the *ak* pod or the sand, and elsewhere it is reduced to the consumption of air.

Nānak the Ascetic is not, however, the dominant image of most *janam-sākhī* traditions. The Miharbas commentators do betray a certain fascination for an ascetic interpretation of the person and mission of Nānak, but their normal preference is for the image projected by almost all the narrative traditions. This generally consistent image also draws extensively upon traditional models, but not the same models as those of the dissenting *Narrative IIb* source. Various features may be identified and scrutinized separately.

Several of these features may be treated as aspects of piety, a quality which is represented throughout the *janam-sākhīs* by the regular tide of Baba. Whereas Nānak is now almost invariably called Gurū Nānak the *janam-sākhīs* with equal consistency refer to him as Baba Nānak. ‘Gurū’ is certainly used and where it appears there is generally an evident stress upon Nānak’s status as the Supreme Teacher. It is, however, relatively

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1 See above, p. 203. For examples see esp. B40, ff. 76a, 102b.
3 B40, f. 180a.
4 Pur JS, p. 78. AS, p. 79.
5 Pur JS, pp. 25, 89.
6 Cf. B40, fl. 125a, 126b. The *Narrative IIb* tradition represents Nānak’s travels as a quest for a guru, implying thereby Nānak’s willingness to accept the role of disciple. B40, f. 70b. It does, however, suggest that this was unnecessary, for later in the same *sākhī* a multitude of people at the Ganga acclaim him as their guru. B40, f. 79b. Aṅgad, Rām Dās, and Arjan all refer to him as Gurū Nānak. AG, pp. 150, 710, 1297. The more exalted forms Satgurū and Gurūdev are occasionally used by *janam-sākhī* compilers.
uncommon in the earlier traditions and at no stage in the development of the janam-sākhīs does it overtake 'Bābā' in popularity. The fact that 'Gurū' was used so infrequently during the early period presumably reflects the standard convention of the period and the tradition. Modern usage can easily suggest that the title possesses an immemorial sanction. This was certainly not the case within the territory occupied by the early Sant tradition, nor by other movements with related beliefs and attitudes. If in fact Gorakhnāth was characteristically known as Gurū Gorakhnāth during the pre-Nānak period he must be regarded as something of an exception. The title was not commonly used in this sense and it should therefore come as no surprise to discover that the janam-sākhīs use it so sparingly.

The early use of 'Gurū' as a title applied to Nānak may also have been inhibited by an awareness of the meaning which Nānak himself had so explicitly attached to it. For Nānak the only gurū was the inner voice of God. Although the shift from actual voice to human mediator is a comparatively simple one, the stress laid by Nānak on his own understanding of the term is a clear one and may well have served to retard any such process. It is even possible that the ascription of praise, vāh gurū ('Praise to the Gurū'), and the practice of chanting gurū gurū, both of which were to become standard usages in the later seventeenth century, may have originally possessed the same meaning as Nānak intended. There is, of course, no doubt that in their later standard usage they refer to Nānak himself.¹

Within the janam-sākhīs, however, 'Bābā' is strongly dominant. The honorific bābā (literally father, grandfather, old man) evidently goes back to the earliest disciples who attached themselves to Nānak during his lifetime. This assumption is based not merely upon the common usage of the term in the popular devotion of the period but also upon a reference which Nānak himself has left. In his shabad Gaurī Cheti 13 he indicates that 'Bābā Nānak' is what others call him.² The meaning which it bears is that of respect based upon piety and religious wisdom. The later preference for 'Gurū' retains this sense, adding to it the dimension implied by the assimilation of the divine inner voice to the human communicator. It could also be urged that the increasingly specific application of sikh to the disciples of Nānak would encourage the same development. Although the janam-sākhīs sometimes use sikh in a general sense to designate the followers of other leaders or teachers, the term eventually acquires the exclusive Nānak-panthi meaning which it retains to this day. A sikh is necessarily the follower of a preceptor and although, as we have just noted, gurū had not conventionally been attached to a preceptor's name as an actual title of address it was nevertheless an appropriate one.

Increasingly, therefore, the preference shifted away from 'Bābā' to

¹ Cf. the final sentence of the Bāo Janam-sākhī (loc. cit., f. 231a). Later still the two words vāh and gurū coalesced to form a name of God ('Vāhgurū', generally translated nowadays as 'Wonderful Lord'). See Bāo(Eng), p. 45n.

'Guru'. This, however, carries us beyond the janam-sakhis. In so far as we can detect the beginnings of this gradual shift of preference operating within them there is little trace of any significant change in the image. Babā Nānak, Gurū Nānak, and Sri Gurū Bābā Nānak are all expressions of essentially the same impulse and interpretation. The marked preference of the janam-sakhī narrators for the first of these affirms the piety and spiritual wisdom of the Master without denying those features subtly evoked by the later title. Although they opt so strongly for Bābā there can be no questioning their acceptance of Nānak as the mediator of a divine message, nor their own status as his disciples.

A conventional understanding of piety is also implied in the terms bhagat,1 sādī (or sādhū),2 and faqīr,3 all of which are applied to Nānak by various janam-sakhī narrators. In referring to him as a faqīr they were not implying that he was to be regarded as a Sūfī. (On the rare occasions when they wish to attribute distinctively Muslim qualities they call him a ṣīr.) The word faqīr had been completely assimilated to popular Hindu usage as a synonym for sādhū, and both were commonly used as terms of respect due to those who had attained to spiritual wisdom and freedom from worldly desires. The same variety of assimilation is also evident in the Purātan affection for the Sūfī title darvīs (dervish).4 All four terms express the traditional form of piety which constitutes such a significant part of the janam-sakhī image.

Mere piety was not, however, the sum total of the janam-sakhī image. Babā Nānak was a badā bhagat and a bhalla faqīr, and he was also much more. Others could be true sādhūs, but Nānak was unique. This uniqueness is represented by a number of characteristic terms which may be taken in ascending order of eminence.

He was, first, a mahā-purukh or 'Exalted One'. Rājā Śivanābh, in devising a method of recognizing Babā Nānak, instructs his slave-girls to approach all sādhūs who visit his domain. Nānak when he first arrives is identified merely as another faqīr, but when he successfully resists the temptations proffered by Śivanābh’s slave-girls he is declared to be a mahā-purukh.5 Although uniqueness is implied it is not yet specifically stated. The term is particularly common in Narrative III material, but is by no means confined to it.

Secondly, Nānak is declared to be an avatār, a divine incarnation sent for the salvation of men. He is, in fact, said to be a reincarnation of Rājā Janak (presumably the first Janak, although this is not made absolutely clear).6 For some obscure reason Rājā Janak held a curious fascination for the early Sikh community. A reference by Kirat the Bard included in the Adi Granth identifies Nānak with Janak;7 the author of the Dabistān-i-Mazāhib was sufficiently impressed by the same popular belief to note it

1 B40, ff. 86a, 94a. 2 B40, f. 192b. 3 B40, ff. 20b, 71a, 146a. 4 Pur JS, pp. 22–3, 24, 40, 63. 5 B40, ff. 144b, 146a, 149b. 6 This identification with the first Janak is implied in a reference to 'Janak Videha' which occurs in the B40 sakhī entitled 'A Discourse with Kabir'. B40, f. 137b. 7 Sādhīs mahale dīje ke (3), AG, p. 1391.
in his account of the Sikhs;¹ and references to it appear at various places in
the janam-sákhis.²

The status of a divine avatār is high, but there is one higher still. The
supreme status is that of God Himself and the climax of the janam-sákhi
elevation of Nānak is the declaration that he is actually God. He is not
merely one avatār amongst the small number of divine incarnations, nor
even the most exalted of this tiny élite. The position which the janam-
sákhis finally reach is that Bābā Nānak must be identified with God, a
unique and perfect manifestation of the Timeless One. 'Thou art the
reader of inward thoughts,' confesses Rājā Śivanābh, and he continues,
'Thou art the supreme God!'³ Many other references point to the same
exalted status, and in a late addition to the Ādi Sākhīs the claim is stated in
words which leave no room for doubt.

The Gurū is God (paramesar). Whatever he does is true and whatever he says is
true. The Gurū is God, not a man.⁴

The context makes it absolutely clear that the reference is to Gurū Nānak.⁵
From his own works it is abundantly evident that Nānak himself could
never have contemplated any such claim to divinity, but given the janam-
sákhi doctrine of salvation his apotheosis is but a natural outcome.

All janam-sákhi narrators do not press their convictions to this logical
conclusion, but with only one exception all unite in according Bābā Nānak
a divine status far above that attained by any other incarnation of the
divine. The one exception is the inimical Hindāli tradition appearing in the
earliest Bālā janam-sákhis. This claims a threefold succession from Kabir,
through Nānak, to a climax in Bābā Hindāl, seeking thereby to demon-
strate the supremacy of Hindāl over both his predecessors.⁶ Elsewhere the
image is generally consistent and differs only in the degree of divinity
attributed to Nānak. For the Sikh community of the seventeenth and
eighteenth centuries Bābā Nānak was, in progressively ascending degrees
of exaltation, a manifestation of God. Thus were the soteriological claims
authenticated.

This image had to be set within a Pañjāb context. Inevitably this meant
a confrontation with the conflicting claims of Hindu and Muslim doctrines
of religious authority and salvation. For Nānak himself the conflict of
claims was ultimately irrelevant for neither 'knew the mystery'.⁷ Salvation
could be obtained only by ignoring both and instead seeking direct access
to God through the immanent Word.

The janam-sákhis are by no means unfaithful to this vision, and the

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² Mih JS I.1-9. AS, p. 3. For Purāṇa references see PHLS i. 341 and ii. 230. For a Gyañ-
ratanācālī reference see PHLS ii. 241.
³ pārabraham paramesar. B4o, f. 152a.
⁴ AS, p. 91. For other examples in the B4o Janam-sākhī see ff. 79b, 85a, 140a, 140b, 162a,
188a-b, 205a, 217b, 229b.
⁵ B47, f. 166b. BL MS Or. 2754. I, f. 162a-b.
most famous of all their pronouncements on the subject can be interpreted in a sense which would accord closely with Nānak’s own intention.

There is neither Hindu nor Muslim.

There is, however, a distinctive difference to be noted between Nānak’s own utterances and the janam-sākhī treatment of the issue. For Nānak the message alone was sufficient and his emphasis is strongly upon its positive aspects; criticisms of contemporary belief and practice are certainly present in his works, but they are strictly subordinate to his repeated insistence upon the divine Name as the vehicle of salvation. When he does pass strictures they are commonly aimed at Nāth yogīs. Muslims and Islamic doctrine receive much less attention.

The situation of the janam-sākhī narrators was, however, different. The growth of the Sikh Panth involved a growing measure of opposition, and this in turn involved the Panth in polemic. If the community was to sustain distinctive claims it could do so only by transgressing limits set by other communities. Increasingly this polemic came to mean rivalry between Nānak-panthis and Muslims, and inevitably this later rivalry was reflected in the janam-sākhī reconstruction of the Gurū’s own life and times.

As a result of this situation two allied themes run through the janam-sākhis, both of them making substantial contributions to the janam-sākhī image of Nānak. The first is that of Nānak the Unifier, the one to whom both Hindu and Muslim must owe allegiance. This theme emerges in the opening sākhī with a united welcome accorded to the infant Nānak and it receives a corresponding prominence at the very end when Hindus and Muslims quarrel over the disposal of Nānak’s corpse. Between these two events Bābā Nānak is pointedly called a Hindu, but with equal emphasis he is described as one who mixed Hindu and Muslim garments and customs in such a manner that his precise affiliation was a puzzle to those for whom all men must belong to one religion or the other. As a result crowds of both Hindus and Muslims flocked to him. The theme also finds a later expression in the constant presence of two disciples, the Muslim Mardana and the Hindu Bāhī.

The second theme marked a stronger response to the contemporary situation. The principal challenge to the Panth came from Muslim claims and these claims had to be answered. The result was a ‘Triumph over Islam’ theme. This finds expression in Bābā Nānak’s celebrated discourse with Daulat Khān’s qāzī; in missionary visits to Mecca, Mecca, Bāghdād, and Multān; and in successful encounters with celebrated Sūfī pīrs.

The ‘Triumph over Islam’ theme is well illustrated by the Bālā sākhī
entitled ‘How the Gūrūjī met Mālo Takkān’. This anecdote relates how Sheikh Mālo, a resident of Pakho or somewhere near it, heard that a Hindu called Nānak was showing respect to none of the traditional teachings of Islam. Filled with anger he came to Nānak but was promptly converted by the recitation of two shabads.

Sheikh Mālo prostrated himself before Gūrū Nanākji and laid his head upon his feet. ‘Gūrūjī,’ he declared, ‘you are my pir and I am your murid. Grant me even greater spiritual satisfaction. The Hindus make one claim and the Muslims another. Both are false. Whatever you say is true!’

In such declarations the Hindu claims are commonly bracketed with Muslim so that both may suffer a common condemnation. It is, however, usually a Muslim who has to suffer the dialectical defeat and make the confession. Apart from the Nāths (who are treated separately) there are relatively few controversies involving representatives of Hindu society. When they do occur they normally involve obvious targets such as the overly scrupulous Brāhmaṇ or the miserly money-lender. The Nāth encounters should be noted as a third theme, one which plainly accorded rather more closely with Nānak’s own attitudes.

Of these three themes only the first commands a notable following today. Once again the pressure of contemporary circumstances is dictating the choice of material and the image which emerges in consequence. Whereas the Nāth conflict, so significant for Nānak himself, is now largely forgotten, the Muslim–Hindu unity theme answers a contemporary yearning and so receives a powerful emphasis in all modern representations of the Nānak image. This is well illustrated by the frequency with which a particular eighteenth-century couplet is quoted today.

babā nānak shāh faqīr
hindū dā gurū musalmān dā pir

Babā Nānak, the supreme Faqīr!
The Hindu’s Gūrū and the Muslim’s Pir.

The image is never static. There are, however, definable images for particular periods, and it is the image of the seventeenth-century Sikh community which the janam-sākhīs project.

3. THE SIKH COMMUNITY IN THE SEVENTEENTH AND EARLY EIGHTEENTH CENTURIES

It has frequently been observed how in terms of historical source-material the value of the jātaka and Hadīth literature largely concerns periods later

1 Bālā JS, pp. 338–41. Takkān = Tarkhān, the carpenter caste.
2 Ibid., p. 340. The same message is repeated in the three succeeding sākhīs, relating discourses with Ubārā Khān Paṭhān and Abdul Rahmān. Ibid., pp. 341–9.
3 See above, pp. 144–57.
than those which the literature purports to describe. The Hadith may be closer to Muhammad than the Jatakas are to Gautama, but the principle remains the same. As historical source-material they must be related primarily, and indeed almost exclusively, to the later periods which produced them. The same principle must be applied to the Janam-sakhis. The historical record which they provide is a record not of the early sixteenth-century period of Guru Nanak but of the seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century situation of the Sikh community within which the Janam-sakhis traditions evolved.

The image of Nanak projected by the Janam-sakhis is by no means the only feature to emerge with clarity from this record. Because the narrators were describing a person and not a set of doctrines it was essential that they should provide a setting within which the Guru's activities might take place. Inevitably they drew the form and details of this setting from their own contemporary experience, and it is accordingly to the post-Nanak period that the Janam-sakhis social patterns must be related. When for example the Miharban Janam-sakhī provides a lengthy account of Nanak's wedding the description of this event must be applied not to the conventions of the late fifteenth century but to those of the early or middle seventeenth century. The sole detail which can be related to the historical Nanak is the brief statement that at some indeterminate age he was married in Baṭalā to the daughter of Mūlā, a Chōrā Khatri. The remainder concerns the later period. If it be protested that marriage customs in the Paṭībād change slowly and that a seventeenth-century description could still correspond closely to a fifteenth-century event the reply must be that this is no more than an assumption, and that it could be a very misleading one. It is to the seventeenth century that the detailed description applies, and it is accordingly as a source for seventeenth-century marriage procedures that the Janam-sakhī must be used.

The same principle also applies to the Janam-sakhī descriptions of Nanak's funeral, and to other less formalized customs. In the case of the Bāṅ funerary rites it is interesting to observe the continuing authority of brahmanical traditions. These orthodox conventions may have been practised by the early followers who disposed of Nanak's body, but we cannot be sure. What we can assume with some assurance is that such customs must have been general within the Sikh community during the late seventeenth century.

The general background against which the Janam-sakhis set their tales of Baba Nanak is unmistakably that of rural Paṭībād, and it is clear from their descriptions that the Sikh Panth of this period must have been almost exclusively a rural community. This impression is in no way disturbed by the prominence given to Khatri in the Janam-sakhī narratives. Although the Khatriś constitute an urban-based caste grouping they are by no means

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1 *Mih* JS 1.29–37.
8 *Bāṅ*, ff. 222a–230a *passim*.

4 The source which in 1733 provided the Bāṅ compiler with material for his funeral sakhī was in existence more than thirty years earlier when the Adī Sakhīs collection was compiled.
exclusively urban, and when the janam-sākhis so commonly place their Khatris in rural contexts it must follow that most of the Sikh Khatris of the janam-sākhi period were in fact rural dwellers. Nānak himself had been a village Khatri, and one popular anecdote has as its setting a village of Uppal Khatris.¹

The rural base of the community is clearly implied by the absence of knowledgeable references to urban life, and by a corresponding abundance of authentic village descriptions. Lahore is occasionally mentioned, but there is no indication that any of the narrators have a distinct notion of its size or way of life. For the narrator who first related the story of the Lahore merchant converted on his way to Kartarpur the city was evidently envisaged in terms more appropriate to a large village.² The same applies to Sultānpur and other towns.

This rural consciousness is also to be detected in anecdotes which purport to have occurred outside the Pañjāb. When Nānak visits the Land of Unbelievers the locality is variously described as vilāīt or dés, both of which imply areas at least as large as a modern district.³ Elsewhere in the same sākhi, however, the reference is simply to a nagari (small town or village),⁴ a pīnd gīrāu (village),⁵ or a vasādi (cluster of dwellings).⁶ The narrator’s description of the area plainly indicates that the diminutive terms correspond to his own understanding, and that this understanding is of a distinctively Pañjābī variety. From his narrative it soon becomes clear that Munāfik Des, the Land of Unbelievers, consists of a single small town or village surrounded by its cultivated land. The situation which it reflects is that of the bār dweller, living in an interfluvial tract where streams are too far distant for irrigation and where well irrigation is exceedingly difficult or impossible.

To this instance many other rural references could be added. The anecdote entitled “The Ruined Crop Restored” bears all the marks of an authentic village experience⁷ and so too does the celebrated story of how Bābā Nānak directed the well-dressed Lāhanpī to carry dripping grass on his head.⁸ The same sort of background is also evident in the account of how Nānak sent his servant Kamalā to cut grass for his horses and buffaloes from the village wasteland (beldā).⁹ These tales are products of rural Pañjāb, and the community which produced them was obviously reflecting its own situation. At certain points this is stated directly. When Bābā Nānak sets his Sikhs to work it is, inevitably, agriculture which he chooses.¹⁰

Within the general context of rural Pañjāb the janam-sākhis indicate three social groups as primary constituents of the seventeenth-century Sikh community. The most prominent is the Khatri caste grouping. From other sources it is well known that the ten Sikh Gūrs were all Khatris. The janam-sākhis indicate that Khatri influence in the Panth was not limited to the authority of the incumbent Gūr, but that it extended much

THE JANAM-SĀKHĪS AS HISTORICAL SOURCES

further within the community. The three principal figures in the story of the Lahore merchant are all Khatris;¹ Dūnī Chand with his seven pennants is said to be a Khatri;² in the Purātan account it is a Khatri who converts Lahanā in Khaḍūr;³ and the B40 manuscript was actually written by a Khatri.⁴ In several instances their sub-castes are also given.⁵ They are not always the heroes of janam-sākhi anecdotes (Mula and Malak Bhagō are both said to be Khatri), but of their prominence in the janam-sākhīs there can be no doubt and this prominence must reflect substantial influence within the seventeenth-century community.

The Jats, in contrast, receive much less attention than one might expect from their eighteenth-century and subsequent predominance in the community. Eighteenth-century developments indicate that their numbers must certainly have been substantial during the earlier period, and a direct reference by the author of the Dabistan-i-Mazāhib, recorded during the first half of the seventeenth century, confirms their importance within the community during that period.⁶ The janam-sākhīs suggest nevertheless that their influence within the Panth must have been less than that of the Khatri, at least within those areas of Sikh life which interested their narrators and compilers. Perhaps the likeliest explanation is that whereas the Jat Sikhs were prominent numerically, and also in communal administration and military activity, the Khatri retained their status as religious leaders. During the eighteenth century the Jats rose to prominence through the jathās and the misls (both military organizations), whereas the Khatri retained their hold on the religious saṅgats where these were not transformed into military groups.

It should, moreover, be observed that although references are not as numerous as one might expect Jats do nevertheless constitute a second prominent caste grouping within the janam-sākhīs, and with the advent of Bālā Sandhū their importance increases. A Randhāvā Jat named Jīttā, or Ajittā, is one of the most prominent of all disciples;⁷ the Hāfizābād Janam-sākhi provides two Jats as companions of the Guru during his second Purātan journey;⁸ and the Bālā tradition introduces another Randhāvā, this one bearing the name Buŗā or Buḏhā.⁹ The B40 Janam-sākhi also refers to a single Gujar disciple.¹⁰

The third group consists of a number of artisan castes. Artisan Sikhs (the self-styled Rāmgarhīs) constitute an important segment of the community today and it is evident from the janam-sākhis that their allegiance

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¹ B40, ff. 136b ff.
² Pur JS, p. 70.
³ Pur JS, p. 106.
⁴ See below, p. 264. The Bālā janam-sākhīs also name a Khatri as copyist. Bālā JS, p. 1. See above, p. 16.
⁵ Bhagirath is an Aṇād Khatri, Dūnī Chand is a Dhuppar, and the Khaḍūr Sikh a Bhallā. The B40 Janam-sākhi names a Bhauḍārī disciple (B40, f. 184a) and the Colebrooke Janam-sākhi mentions a Ghei (Pur JS, p. 79). Nānak, himself a Bedī, married the daughter of a Chopā (B40, ff. 15, 6a). Bhāī Gurdās, a Bhallā, refers to several more Khatri in a list of disciples notable for its strong predominance of Khatri names (BG XI:13–14).
⁸ Pur JS, p. 79.
¹⁰ B40, f. 184a.
must date from at least the seventeenth century. Carpenters (*tarkhān*) are the most prominent.¹ Others named by the Purātan janam-sākhīs are a Kalāl (brewer), a Lohār (blacksmith), and a Chhimā (calico printer).² Alam Chand, the illustrator of the *B40* manuscript, was a Rāj (mason) by caste.³

These three rural groups evidently constituted the bulk of the seventeenth-century community. Brāhmaṇs are almost completely absent except as convenient functionaries or as targets for some of the anecdotes. Out-caste groups are also conspicuously absent. The nearest approach to out-caste representation is Mardānā the Dūm. He, however, stands alone. There is no evidence to suggest that members of his caste entered the community in any numbers.

A constituency comprising three distinct caste groups inevitably raised the question of how the Sikh community should be defined. In theory a common allegiance to Nānak's message of salvation through the divine Name should have been sufficient, but in practice no community will tolerate such a slender base. The message of mystical union through *nām simaran* could sustain its appeal amongst a religious élite but it could not hold together the heterogeneous group which constituted the seventeenth-century Sikh community. Villagers who subscribed to the Panth because of simple piety, sub-caste solidarity, or a desire for social advancement needed objective conventions, and for their descendants born into the faith the need was even greater.

The janam-sākhīs reveal something of this struggle for identity, and of the tensions which it involved. There was, on the one hand, an evident awareness of links with the Hindu society from which the vast majority of Sikhs had come, and to which many still felt that they belonged. Without this continuing link it would have been impossible for the janam-sākhi narrators to have Nānak declare 'I am a Hindu'. On the other hand, there was a strong if ill-defined sense of difference and distinction from Hindu society. The nearest the janam-sākhīs come to defining this distinction is a pronouncement included in God's instructions to Nānak.

Go, Nānak. Your panth will flourish. The salutation of your followers shall be: *pairī pavanā satigūr hoiā*. The salutation of the Vaiṣṇava panth is: *rām krispa*. The salutation of the Sanyāśī panth is: *namo narāyān*. The yogīs' salutation is: *ādeś ādi purukh kau*. The Muslims' cry is: *salām-'alaik*. You are Nānak and your panth will flourish. Your followers shall be called Nānak-panthis and their salutation shall be: *pairī pavanā satigūr hoiā*.

I shall bless your panth. Inculcate devotion towards Me and strengthen men's obedience to their *dharma*. As the Vaiṣṇavas have their place of worship, the yogīs their āsān, and the Muslims their mosque, so your followers shall have

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¹ *B40*, f. 182b. *Pur JS*, pp. 45, 90. *Bālā JS*, p. 87. *Tarkhān* Sikhs are generally called Rāmgarhī Sikhs. The name was assumed by the famous *mid* leader Jassī Singh of Ichogāl following his capture of the Amritsār fort Rāmgarh in 1748. Jassī Singh was himself a *Tarkhān* and the name which he had adopted (or which had been bestowed on him) was subsequently assumed by all other Sikhs of the *Tarkhān* caste. The title is also applied, in a more general sense, to Sikhs of other artisan castes.

² *Pur JS*, pp. 65, 90.

³ *B40*, f. 84b.
their dharamsālā. Three things you must inculcate in your panth: repeating the divine Name, giving charity, and regular bathing. Keep yourself unspotted while yet remaining in the condition of a householder.1

The stress which this passage lays upon a separate cult centre is confirmed by the numerous janam-sākhī references to Sikh dharamsālās. This term, which now designates a rest-house attached to a temple, clearly means in seventeenth-century Sikh parlance a room or building in which local groups would meet for communal singing (kīrtan). Repeated references are made to the dharamsālā, particularly in Narrative III material, and it is clear that these buildings provided a distinctively Sikh cult centre. Within these dharamsālās there would be regular conventicles, meetings of the saṅgat or satgat at which the songs of the Gurūs would be sung. There was nothing either original or unique in this practice, for the satgat had long been a feature of the bhakti tradition and during the janam-sākhī period it flourished in other parts of Northern India.2 Its significance lay not in any feature peculiar to Sikh practice but rather in the existence of distinctively Sikh (or Nānak-panthī) saṅgats meeting in separate Sikh dharamsālās. These conventicles were concentrated in rural Pañjāb but already Khatri enterprise was founding saṅgats in places far beyond its borders.3

The word gurduārā (gurdwara) does not appear during this period. For the seventeenth-century community the standard term was dharamsālā. No hint of size, pretentiousness, or furnishings is ever given and it seems safe to assume that these buildings were usually humble structures, perhaps rooms which served other purposes when not being used for kīrtan. This is suggested by a reference to a new disciple converting his house into a dharamsālā.4 Other references indicate that a portion of a house might be used as a dharamsālā.5

A glimpse of a saṅgat meeting for kīrtan in a dharamsālā is given in the B40 sākhī 49b, a Narrative III description which probably relates to early eighteenth-century conditions.

Beneath the rājā’s palace was the dharamsālā where the Sikhs sang hymns and performed kīrtan. Sitting there the rājā would fix his attention on the music of whatever hymn the Sikhs were singing. One day the rāni said to the rājā, ‘Rājā, how is it that no children have been born in our house? Let us go to the dharamsālā and lay our petition before the congregation, for the Gurū is present in the congregation.’

Next day the rājā and the rāni both joined the congregation. It was an Ekādasi gathering. There was a congregational festival and a large gathering was present.

4 B40, f. 162b.
5 B40, ff. 167b, 173a. BG 1:27.
A hymn was being sung and all were sitting enthralled. The rājā and the rāṇī then presented their petition, saying, 'You are the assembly of the Gurū and whatever is sought from you is granted. May it please you to hear our intercession so that the Gurū may grant a son.'

Those who were present in the congregation offered a prayer in order that the rājā's faith might remain unshaken. Then they assured him, 'The Gurū Bābā will grant you a son.'

The passage is of interest for the picture of the saṅgat which it presents and also for the doctrine which it so explicitly declares. For the narrator of the janam-sākhī (and presumably for many others) the Gurū was believed to be present in the saṅgat, and decisions of the saṅgat were regarded as pronouncements of the Gurū himself. The doctrine to which this clearly points is that of the Gurū Panth, the Khālsā belief that decisions of the Khālsā brotherhood expressed the intention of the Gurū. At the conclusion of the B40 Janam-sākhī the same conviction is expressed with even greater clarity.

The other members of the congregation (saṅgat) constitute the court of the perfect Gurū. And the abode of the perfect Gurū is in your midst.

It was presumably this doctrine of the Gurū's presence which suggested the change from ḍharamsālā to gurduārā (gurdwara). No mention is made of the presence of the Granth Sahib, nor of any special authority accorded it as a book. The later doctrine of the Gurū Granth is still no more than implicit in the reverence attached to the hymns sung in the dhangramālā.

The theory of the Gurū's presence in the saṅgat is a relatively late development in the janam-sākhīs. A much earlier and less sophisticated doctrine of the Gurū's presence can be observed in declarations concerning the merit of darśan, or 'audience' with the Gurū. This belief, like the custom of gathering for kirtan, is distinctively Sikh only in so far as it normally limits the benefits of darśan to the presence of Bābā Nānak. Even this limitation is not invariably applied. The B40 sākhī 51 explicitly attaches the merit to a meeting with anyone who qualifies as a genuine sādhū. This is, however, unusual. In other instances the benefit is reserved for those who appear before the Gurū. For these fortunate people the results can be dramatic. A leper is instantly cleansed of his disease as a result of darśan. A scurvy sinner is saved from perdition because the smoke from his funeral pyre is seen from afar by the Gurū. Even the miserly Mūlā obtains salvation because at the point of death he was granted darśan.

Another concept which obviously held much meaning for the seven-

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1 B40, ff. 196b–197a. For another description see B40, f. 102b.
3 B40, f. 230b. Cf. also ff. 167b, 186a, 199a. All these examples come from the late Narrative III tradition.
4 B40, ff. 203a–205a.
5 Pur JS, p. 57.
6 B40, f. 95a.
7 B40, f. 192b. Pur JS, p. 32.
8 B40, f. 101b.
teenth-century community was the merit of sevā, or 'service'. The content of this word has undergone some interesting changes within the community and its janam-sākhī meanings must be distinguished from later applications. In the janam-sākhīs it is sometimes used to designate worship or an act of devotion. Ignorant worshippers of the sun are said to have been performing sevā,¹ and the same word is used to describe Nānak's own devotional discipline.² The characteristic janam-sākhī usage is, however, a much more specific variety of 'service'. When the Sikhs are exhorted to provide sevā the duty to which they are directed is that of ministering to the needs of visiting sādhūs, particularly Nānak-panthi sādhūs. The supreme sevā is, of course, the welcome accorded to the Gurū himself. It is this which prompts the later development. After the janam-sākhī period sevā is increasingly directed to the abode of the Gurū, which means first the saṅgat and later still the gurdwara. Assistance in building a gurdwara, the maintenance or cleaning of an existing gurdwara, and donations in money, goods, or labour to a laṅgar (the gurdwara kitchen) are all common expressions of the modern concept of sevā within the Sikh community. Present indications suggest a further extension to cover humanitarian service to all mankind.

The janam-sākhī understanding of sevā marks a slight shift from Nānak's own meaning. A difference of a much more radical nature distinguishes the janam-sākhī understanding of nām simaran from the technique indicated by the Gurū. There is, it is true, more than one interpretation of 'remembering the divine Name' to be found in the janam-sākhīs, and a few narrators are evidently aware of Nānak's meaning. There is, however, a general insistence upon the sufficiency of mechanical repetition, the most common form being the chant 'gurū gurū'.³ Nānak had sought to interiorize this devotional technique. The janam-sākhīs suggest a reversion to practices which he regarded as thoroughly inadequate as a means of salvation. Another evident deviation from the Gurū's teachings concerns the janam-sākhī concept of God. Whereas for Nānak God was strictly formless (nirāṅkār, nirguṇ), the janam-sākhīs usually depict him in strongly anthropomorphic terms. Nānak's characteristic name for God, Niraṅkār, has passed into common usage, but its meaning has been so completely forgotten that a narrator can speak of Nānak actually seeing the Formless One with his eyes.⁴ Comments of this kind imply a general acceptance of such doctrines within the community. Elsewhere a narrator or commentator emphasizes an issue so deliberately that one must assume a background of contemporary controversy. The stress laid upon the importance of the daily ritual bāth suggests that the doctrine affirming it was either disputed or widely neglected during the seventeenth century.⁵

¹ By40, f. 171b.
³ Other words or phrases recommended for repetition are rām, vāḥ gurū, nānak, and vāḥ nānak.
⁴ By40, f. 123b.
Although references to the ritual bathing obligation appear in several of the janam-sakhis all do not treat the controversy with the same concern. In this, as with so many other issues, it is the Miharbān tradition which betrays the strongest interest.¹ This underlines the necessity of distinguishing the different janam-sakhī traditions and, wherever possible, of determining their particular interests, the date of their composition, and the dates of individual manuscripts. Conclusions are not always easy to reach, particularly in the case of the composite Miharbān tradition, but the effort should certainly be made. The historical value of a janam-sakhī is greatly enhanced when its distinctive point of view and period of compilation can be identified. For the same reason the geographical location of a janam-sakhī and information concerning its narrator or compiler can also be of considerable interest.

Whereas most janam-sakhis raise serious problems of identification, one at least offers some explicit answers and where direct information is lacking it provides sufficient pointers in its text to suggest tentative answers. This is, once again, that most useful of all janam-sakhīs, the B4o manuscript. The compiler of this janam-sakhī was a Khatri, Dayā Rām Abrol by name, who completed his work in S. 1790 (A.D. 1733).² He does not name the geographical location of the sangat for which he prepared his janam-sakhī, but internal evidence points to the area of Gujranwālā or Gujrāt.³ Several sources were used in compiling the collection, and most of these can be identified.⁴ Two other members of the sangat are mentioned. These are the patron of the janam-sakhī, Saṅgū Mal, and its illustrator, Ālam Chand the Mason.⁵

The importance of this information and of the contents of the janam-sakhī becomes apparent when this 1733 janam-sakhī is set within its historical context, or, to be more accurate, within that historical context as generally understood today. Our twentieth-century understanding of the early and middle eighteenth-century Sikh community derives almost exclusively from Khālsā sources, most of them much later than the period which they purport to describe. These sources represent the history of the period as one of Mughal persecution and of Sikh triumph over the attempt to exterminate the community. Everything is related directly to the growing power of the Khālsā, which, with its distinctive doctrines and discipline, constitutes the orthodox Sikh Panth of today. This status it owed (according to later tradition) to the intention and explicit commandments of Guru Gobind Singh.

All this is completely absent from the B4o janam-sakhī. It bears no evident mark of turbulent conditions, no mention of Bandā, no hint of persecution, no reference to the existence of the Khālsā or of either its

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¹ See above, pp. 227-8.
² B4o, ff. 84b, 230a-b.
³ See B4o(Eng) Introduction, pp. 19-25. The reference is to Gujrāt District in the Pañjab, not to the Indian state of Gujrat.
⁴ See above, pp. 230-2.
⁵ B4o, ff. 84b, 231a. B4o(Eng), pp. 90-1.
military activities or its code of discipline. On the contrary, it suggests a *sangat* peaceably pursuing its devotional ideals with no evident awareness that the Khalsā brotherhood even exists. There is no evidence of a doctrine of the scriptural Gurū, the name Singh is nowhere mentioned, there are none of the characteristic Khalsā prohibitions (the *kurahit*), and at one point there is an unconcerned acceptance of the greatest of all Khalsā sins. Sākhī 13 relates how a poor Sikh cut his hair in order that he might sell it to buy food for Bābā Nānak.¹ The complete indifference shown towards this detail suggests that for this particular compiler and his *sangat* the issue could have been of no importance.

The obvious explanation is that the *sangat* for which the B4o Janam-sākhī was written must have represented the continuing ‘religious’ tradition of the Nānak-panth as opposed to the growing martial and political traditions of the Khalsā. For this *sangat* it was the religious message of *nām simaran* that mattered and questions of Sikh identity could still be answered by reference to the old ideal of direct allegiance to the first Gurū. The Jaṭ depilatory prohibition was of no concern, and other features of the Khalsā discipline which derived from Jaṭ custom or the struggle against Muslim invaders are likewise absent. Either they had not developed by 1733 or else they had not yet affected this *sangat* of Nānak-panthi Sikhs living, it seems, in a rural area near Gujranwālā or Gujṛāt. The only issue which suggests a significant link with Khalsā doctrine is the stress which the B4o compiler lays upon belief in the Gurū’s mystical presence within the *sangat*.

Eventually Khalsā doctrine was to emerge as the sole orthodoxy and the normative means of determining Sikh social identity. Circumstances favoured the Khalsā ideal, and its later eighteenth-century growth increasingly reduced the ‘religious’ tradition to insignificance. The tradition has survived as the so-called *sahaj-dhārī* segment of Sikh society and it has always continued to command a substantial Khatri following.² Its influence upon the later development of the Sikh community has, however, been far less than that of the dominant Khalsā. As the Khalsā rose to predominance it reinterpreted both doctrine and history in the light of its own struggles and ideals. The B4o Janam-sākhī reveals the continuing existence of other ideals and of earlier patterns of Sikh life and conduct during a period when the martial tradition is supposed to have been sovereign in the Panth. There can be no doubt that the Khalsā tradition was strongly in the ascendant by 1733, but clearly its dominance did not emerge with the speed or the completeness of later interpretations.

The B4o Janam-sākhī speaks with an unusual clarity. Others, though less explicit, do make their own distinctive contributions, particularly for the seventeenth-century period. Although gaps, large and tantalizing, must inevitably remain there is much to be learnt from the janam-sākhīs concerning the pre-Khalsā Sikh community of the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. This, and not their testimony to the historical Nānak, is the primary value of the janam-sākhīs as historical sources.

¹ B4o, f. 49a. Cf. also f. 113a.
² GTC ii. 507.
4. THE JANAM-SĀKHĪS AS SOURCES FOR THE WIDER HISTORY OF THE PAṆṆĀB

Although the principal yield of the janam-sakhīs must be in terms of distinctively Sikh history their value is by no means limited to the community and its interests. The narrators never divorce themselves from their rural context and as a result there are recurrent references to the village community and its way of life. In some instances such features are directly described as settings for anecdotes or as essential elements in a narrative; elsewhere they appear as aspects of the imagery which rural narrators inevitably use. The fact that these features are recorded unconsciously adds considerably to their value. There could be no possible reason for misrepresentation on such points, for any failure to accord with the experience and understanding of the narrator's audience would merely defeat the purpose of his anecdotes. In the janam-sakhīs rural PaṆṆāb speaks with an authentic voice, and although they rarely tell us more than a small part of what we should like to know the janam-sakhīs do nevertheless provide a valuable supplement to the Persian chronicles and European reports of the same period.

The range of possibilities is wide, and different interests will extract different items from the janam-sakhī material. Only two brief examples will be offered here, examples which illustrate both the usefulness of the janam-sakhī contribution and its fragmentary nature. In the Purātan version of 'The Rich Man's Pennants' the central figure, Dūnī Chand, is described as a Khatri of substantial wealth.¹ From a narrowly economic point of view the interesting feature of this anecdote is the use which Dūnī Chand makes of his wealth. It will be observed that he does two things. Much of it he spends on ostentatious ceremony (a large śrāddh feast) and the remainder he hoards as treasure. Such observations do not provide any final solution to the question of bullion disposal, but they do provide a glimpse of one seventeenth-century PaṆṆābī's views on the use of surplus wealth.²

The second example is to be found in the B4₀ sakhī describing the death of Nānak, a portion of the janam-sakhī which consists of seventeenth-century material. Many years ago Moreland, while assuming the existence of landless labourers during the sixteenth century, acknowledged his inability to find any examples of such a class in the literature of the period.³ Bābā Kamalā who served precisely this function⁴ would not have provided a complete answer to Moreland's problem, but had this reference been known to him he could hardly have overlooked it.

It is generally in this circumstantial manner that the janam-sakhīs yield

¹ Pur JS, pp. 70-1. See above, p. 126.
⁴ B4₀, f. 221a.
their significant information concerning the wider life of seventeenth-century rural Pañjāb. When Nānak sets out on a minor trading enterprise it is the setting of the anecdote which refers the reader to issues beyond the essentially hagiographic interests of the narrator. The story of the indigent Sikh who cut his hair briefly describes cooking procedures, and a later discourse concerning true purity refers to the ritual purity of the Hindu cooking-square. A declaration of Nānak's spiritual supremacy prompts a list of contemporary religious pathns, and an esoteric discourse on true renunciation provides an inventory of articles carried by a faqir. In some instances the value of a testimony lies in its failure to mention particular details, as for example the absence of references to irrigation. Elsewhere an absence noted by a narrator can be converted into a positive statement by the reader. When Chatur Dās, the pañḍit of Banāras, comments on what Nānak is not wearing he thereby supplies a list of what a conventional Vaiṣṇava bhagat might be expected to wear.

To many this variety of information may seem a poor return for the labour which is required in order to extract it. Much will depend on one's view of what is important in history. If the historian's interest is to be confined to dates, chronologies, and the mighty event then the janam-sākhīs have little to offer. The Persian courtly chronicles will be much better suited to his purposes. If, on the other hand, significance is to be found rather in the unspectacular life of the people of any particular place over any particular period of time, then there is much to be derived from the janam-sākhī testimony. Any significance of this kind will be considerably enhanced when a clear connection can be traced between an unspectacular past and living issues in the present. This certainly applies in the case of the janam-sākhīs. For any understanding of the modern Sikh community a knowledge of both Khālsā and pre-Khālsā Sikh history is vital.

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1 Rāja JS, p. 16.
2 B4o, f. 49a.
3 B4o, f. 80a–b. See also Pur JS, p. 72.
4 B4o, f. 106a. See also Mih JS II. 301.
5 B4o, f. 205b–207b.
THE JANAM-SĀKHĪS IN PAᦆJĀBĪ LITERATURE

Although this examination of the janam-sākhīs is not intended to be a literary study it would be inappropriate to conclude it without some brief mention of their considerable importance in the history of Paᦆjābī literature. Their significance in this respect is twofold. The janam-sākhīs are important as the first examples of sustained Paᦆjābī prose, and in a more general sense they have continued to exercise a perceptible influence upon the style and imagery of all later generations of Paᦆjābī writers.

Paᦆjābī literature has, like most literature in South Asia, been predominantly poetic. It reached an early climax in the supremely beautiful compositions of Guru Nanak and has since produced a steady stream of notable works. Prominent amongst these are the hymns of some of the later Gurus (particularly the Sukhmani of Guru Arjan1) and the works of Paᦆjābī Sūfis. The more celebrated amongst the latter include Shāh Husain (1539–93), Bulhe Shāh (1680–1758), and Hāsham Shah (1735–1823). The song cycles of Hir Rānjhā, Sassī Punnū, Mirzā Sāhibān, and Sohī Mehīval, which have for centuries held a place of particular affection in the Paᦆjābī heart, are merely the most famous of a substantial corpus of poetic folk literature. This poetic impulse continues to the present day.

Urdu is not the only language used at mushīfaras in the Paᦆjāb, and suggestions that Paᦆjābī is an uncouth language can only be made by those who have no knowledge of its literature.

Prose has been a less important part of this literature and with only one significant exception did not achieve widespread popularity as a literary form until the twentieth century. The single exception was the janam-sākhī. Paᦆjābī prose literature was inaugurated by the earliest janam-sākhīs and sustained by later representatives of the form for a period of almost three centuries. Today it has yielded this primacy, but it has done so to a literary form which is in some measure its descendant. The virile Paᦆjābī short story traces its antecedents to the janam-sākhī anecdote as well as to more obvious western models.2

It is not surprising that a hagiographic tradition should emerge as the first important contribution to Paᦆjābī prose. Early prose is commonly derived direct from a dominant oral tradition; and hagiography, which gives expression to an inevitable impulse, is better suited to prose anecdotes

1 AG, pp. 262–96.
than to verse. Other Indian vernaculars have produced the same pattern, and the Pañjabi example shares most of the features observed in these other early representatives of regional prose traditions.\(^1\) Although it is not true to claim that the janam-sâkhî narrative style 'reads like poetry in bad prose rendering',\(^2\) one will certainly find in the earlier janam-sâkhîs a predictable absence of developed sentence structure and repeated recourse to a limited range of stylistic conventions. Conjunctions are rarely used, and punctuation is either restricted to pairs of vertical strokes (\(\text{do da\(\underline{\text{nde}}\)}\)) or completely omitted. Sentences frequently begin with the adverbial \(\text{ta\(\underline{n}\)}\) or \(\text{tab (\text{\textquoteleft then\textquoteright})}\) or with such expressions as \(\text{b\(\underline{\text{bâji \akhi\(\underline{\text{i}}\)}}\}\) (\text{\textquoteleft Bâbâji said . . .\textquoteright})). Tenses are restricted in range, compound forms are rare, and even the future tense is sparingly used.

Later janam-sâkhîs gradually improve their prose style, but the process is a slow one. Although the printed Bâlî versions of the late nineteenth century are not the primitive products of the early seventeenth century it can scarcely be claimed that they represent a mature prose style. This does not emerge in the janam-sâkhî literature until the twentieth-century appearance of Vir Singh's \textit{Sri Gurû Nânak Chamatkâr}.\(^3\) In Vir Singh's work it emerges in a highly distinguished form, a testimony to the author's considerable literary skills as well as to his deep personal piety. His was the last important contribution to the form. Vir Singh himself marks the first significant beginnings of the Pañjabi novel, and the growth of the Pañjabi short story followed soon after.

The well-springs have thus run dry and the flow of sâkhîs has at last ceased. We still live, however, in a period of continuing influence. There must be very few Sikh children who do not know at least some of the more popular janam-sâkhî anecdotes, and Pañjabis of all generations can readily call to mind stories of the first Gurû which have been firmly implanted in their earliest memories. Although this influence must certainly diminish, it is inconceivable that it could ever be completely extinguished. Memories of Nânak are too intimately tied to janam-sâkhî images and impressions for this to occur. To suggest that the legacy of the janam-sâkhîs may eventually disappear would be to imply that the Pañjâb may one day forget Gurû Nânak.


\(^3\) Two volumes, Amritsar, 1928 and 1933.
APPENDIX 1

THE CONTENTS OF THE EARLIEST BĀLĀ VERSIONS

It was noted in the section dealing with the Bālā janam-sākhīs that the first of the Gurmukhī printed editions (Lithographed Edition A) generally corresponds closely to the earliest of the extant manuscript versions (Recension A). It was also observed that some significant differences do occur. Because Lithographed Edition A has been used for most Bālā citations in this study it is important that these differences should be distinguished. Three general differences are the omission of all Hindāli references in the lithographed edition; its occasional use of the Purātan tradition as a substitute for Bālā material; and inevitably the addition of a small cluster of death sākhīs. Although the latter feature suggests an association with Recension B, a textual comparison will at once demonstrate that the bulk of the printed material has been taken from a Recension A manuscript. Specific differences involving more than isolated words and sentences are as follows.

1. 'Bābā Nānak’s Visit to Nānakmatī', sākhī 23 of the printed edition, does not appear in the manuscripts. The editor of the printed edition has interpolated it from a Purātan source.

2. Sākhī 25 of the printed edition follows the manuscript text for only a few lines and then takes up a Purātan text. This Purātan text continues through to the end of sākhī 28 of the printed edition, covering in the process the following anecdotes:
   25. The Country Ruled by Women
   26. The Encounter with Kaliyug
   27. The City of Insects
   The actual break takes place on page 103 of the printed edition at the beginning of line 13, and with the opening of sākhī 29 ('The Meeting with Rājā Śivanabh') the printed text reverts to that of the manuscripts. The manuscripts have a more primitive version of 'The Country Ruled by Women' sākhī. They do not have versions of the other three interpolated sākhīs.

3. The editor of the printed edition has introduced the Purātan version of the anecdote 'Mecca: the moving miharāb' into the Bālā Mecca sākhī. The interpolation begins in line 6 of page 184 and concludes with line 20 of page 185. In the manuscripts this anecdote appears in the Medina sākhī, and is there repeated in its distinctive Bālā form by the printed edition.

4. In the course of an encounter with Kabīr the manuscripts introduce references to a mysterious Jaṭ who is obviously Hindāl. This passage has been omitted from the printed text.

5. Both texts have a discourse with Sheikh Sharaf, but the printed edition abandons the Bālā manuscript version and uses instead a radically different Purātan version.

6. Immediately after its Sharaf discourse the manuscript version records the

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2 B4I, f. 122a. Bālā JS, p. 188.
3 B4I, ff. 142a–143a.
Hindī narrative which describes previous incarnations in the court of Janak and contrasts Hindī’s exalted status with the lowly position occupied by Nānak. This theme is continued in a briefer passage which occurs shortly after the principal narrative. Both passages have been omitted from the printed edition.

7. The manuscript version includes a lengthy discourse with various persons (Lālo, Gopināth, Hayat Khān, Ajittā, etc.) which the printed edition has omitted.

8. Sākhīs 74 and 75 of the printed edition do not correspond to the two sākhīs which appear at this point in the manuscripts. In the manuscript version both sākhīs relate discourses with Jittā (i.e. Ajittā Randhāvā) in Pakho village, and the second makes an insulting reference to an alleged liaison between Nānak and the daughter of a Muslim Raṅghar. The printed edition substitutes the Purāṇ sākhīs ‘The Proud Karori Humbled’ and ‘The Kashmirī Paṇḍīt’.

9. The manuscript version includes two further Pakho discourses which the printed edition omits. One is said to have been held with Mātā Chọṇī and Māṇjot; and the other with a Sindhi.

10. The two texts diverge at their conclusions, with the printed edition recording the Recension B death sākhīs. The manuscripts are not all consistent at this point. In the India Office Library B4I manuscript the conclusion consists of three brief sākhīs, one of which narrates the mischievous tale of how Bābā Nānak asked Āṅgad for his daughter.

These variants must be borne in mind when using the table of contents set out below or when consulting the printed edition published by Hāfaz Qutub Dīn in 1871. The table of contents includes both the manuscript Recension A sākhīs and also those of the Lithographed Edition A (the Hāfaz Qutub Dīn edition). The serial numbers in the first column are the sākhī numbers used by the editor of the Hāfaz Qutub Dīn edition. Those of the second column are the numbers attached to successive sākhīs in the 1658 Delhi manuscript. The third column lists the relevant folio numbers of the India Office Library B4I manuscript. This latter manuscript, unlike the Delhi version, does not have a table of contents attached, and the numbering of sākhīs in the actual text is irregular. For this reason each sākhī is identified by the folio on which it commences.

The titles used for individual sākhīs are not necessarily translations of Paṇḍībī titles appearing in either the manuscript or printed versions. Where a Paṇḍībī title conveys little or no impression of the actual content of a sākhī it has been replaced by a more helpful title.

Square brackets indicate sākhīs which appear only in the printed edition. They do not constitute a part of the authentic Bālā tradition and should not be regarded as such. The absence of a number in the first column indicates material which is present in the manuscripts but absent from the printed edition. This material


The sākhī numbers are those used in the actual text, not those given in the book’s table of contents. Numbers 60–6, as recorded in the table of contents, misdirect the reader.

The table of contents appended to this manuscript was copied by Dr. Rattan Singh Jagt of Paṇḍībī and reproduced by Professor Piṅg Singh as an appendix to his doctoral thesis ‘A Critical Survey of Panjabi Prose in the Seventeenth Century’ (Panjab University, Chandīgarh, 1968), pp. 300–3.

10 In so far as it retains consistency it agrees with the 1658 Delhi manuscript.
must be treated as a part of the authentic Bālā tradition. The absence of a figure from the second column does not, however, mean that the relevant sākhī is necessarily missing from the 1658 manuscript. This should be assumed only when the entry is bracketed. In some instances the 1658 manuscript has amalgamated sākhīs which appear separately in the printed edition, and at the very beginning of its table of contents the numbering is confused. It has also omitted number 43 by mistake.

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Sākhī title

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4. Grazing the Buffaloes: the Tree’s Stationary Shadow
5. The Cobra’s Hood
6. Sowing the Field
7. Kharā Saudā, the Good Bargain
8. The Marriage of Jai Rām and Nānakī
9. A Meeting with an Ascetic
10. Sultānpur
11. Employment in Daulat Khān’s Commissariat
12. Betrothal
13. The Marriage of Nānak
14. The Birth of Nānak’s children
15. An Encounter with Sāmā Paṇḍit
16. Mūlā Choqā appeals to Daulat Khān: discourse with the Qāzī
17. Departure from Sultānpur
18. Mardānā meets Firandā the Minstrel
19. Bābā Nānak meets Firandā
20. Bābā Nānak visits Lālo the Carpenter
21. Malak Bhāgo’s feast
22. Discourse with Malak Bhāgo
23. Return to Talvaṇḍī: Discourse with parents and Rāi Bulār
24. Nānakmatāl
25. Visit to Dacca in Bengal: Mardānā eats the forbidden fruit
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28. The City of Insects
29. The Meeting with Sheikh Farīd in the Land of Āsā
30. Rājā Sivanābh
31. The Monster’s Cauldron
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34. Bābā Nānak’s Meeting with Kāl and Nārad
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<td>The Disappearance of Bābā Nānak's Body</td>
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APPENDIX 2

CONTENTS OF THE PURĀTAN JANAM-SĀKHĪS

The Ḥāfizābād janam-sākhī contains the sākhīs listed below. The serial numbers correspond to the numbering used by Vir Singh in his Purātān janam-sākhī. Lower-case letters indicate the separate anecdotes included in composite sākhīs. The Colebrooke janam-sākhī corresponds exactly in terms of contents, except that it lacks numbers 35b, 40, and 41, and includes number 29b which the Ḥāfizābād version lacks. Numbers 26 and 27, although recorded in the text as separate sākhīs, actually constitute a single anecdote. Most other janam-sākhīs which include both 8 and 9 incorporate them within a single Sultānpur sākhī.

1. The Birth of Nānak
2. Instruction by the Pāṇḍit
3. Bābā Nānak’s Betrothal and Marriage
4. The Ruined Crop Restored
5. The Tree’s Stationary Shadow
6. The True Field and the True Merchandise
7. Bābā Nānak’s Discourse with the Physician
8. The Departure for Sultānpur
9. Employment in Daulat Khān’s Commissariat
10. Immersion in the River
11. Bābā Nānak’s Discourse with Daulat Khān’s Qāżī
12. Bābā Nānak’s Travels in the Uninhabited Wilderness (I) (Mardānā commanded to throw offerings away)
13. Sajjāj the Robber
14. Discourse with Sheikh Sharaf of Pāṇipat
15. Delhi: the Sultān’s Elephant Resurrected
16. Sheikh Bajīd
17. Banāras: Discourse with Chatur Dāś
18. Nānakmatā
19. The Death of the Trader’s Infant Son
20. A Watchman receives Royal Authority
21. The Coal and the Thorn
22. The Robbers and the Funeral Pyre
23. The Country Ruled by Women
24. The Encounter with Kaliyug
25. The City of Insects
26. The Inhositable Village Unmolested
27. The Hospitable Village Dispersed
28. A Discourse with Sheikh Farīd in the Land of Āsā (three anecdotes)
   a. Sheikh Farīd and the Gold Coins
   b. Sheikh Farīd and the Unbroken Skull
   c. Sheikh Farīd’s Wooden Loaf
29a. Jhanḍā the Carpenter
29b. A Recitation of the Jūgāvalī [Colebrooke only]
APPENDICES

30. Bābā Nānak's Travels in the Uninhabited Wilderness (II) (Mardānā eats the forbidden fruit)
31. Bābā Nānak returns to Talvaṇḍī: Discourse with Mother and Father
32. Discourse with Sheikh Braḥam
33. The Leprous Faqīr
34. The Devotees of Kīrīn Paṭhānān
35. The Sack of Saidpur
35a. A Discourse with Bābur [Hāfizābād only]
35b. A Discourse with Mīān Miṭhā
36. Dūnī Chand and the Wolf
37a. Dūnī Chand's Pennants
37b. Dūnī Chand's Cooking-square
38. The Brāhman's Discourse with Mother and Father
39. A Pious Boy
40. The Proud Karori Humbled: the founding of Kartārpur [Hāfizābād only]
41. The Merchant and Rājā Śivanābha [Hāfizābād only]
42. The Meeting with Khwājā Khizar
43. Anabhī the Jain
44. The Monster's Cauldron
45. A Meeting with Makhdūm Bahāuddīn
46. A Discourse with Machhendranāth and Goraḵnāth
47. Bābā Nānak and Rājā Śivanābha
48. The Destruction of the Hospitable Carpenter's Hut
49. The Kashmiri Paṭākā
50a. A Discourse with Siddhs on Mount Sumeru
50b. A Discourse with Siddhs at Achal
51a. Mecca: Bābā Nānak's miraculous arrival
51b. Mecca: the moving miharāb
52. A Discourse with Siddhs at Goraḵ-haṭārī
53a. The Meeting with Lahaṇā of Khaḍūr
53b. The Goddess Durgā serves Bābā Nānak
53c. Lahaṇā's clothes ruined
53d. Lahaṇā and the maidservant
54a. The testing of Aṅgad: the coins test
54b. Aṅgad commanded to eat a corpse
55. The Death of Bahāuddīn
56. The Installation of Gūrū Aṅgad
57. The Death of Bābā Nānak
APPENDIX 3

CONTENTS OF THE ĀDI SĀKHĪS

This table of contents follows the text of the Motī Bāgh Palace manuscript of the Ādi Sākhīs, and Piār Singh’s printed edition based on the Motī Bāgh text.

1. An interview with God
2a. The Birth of Nānak
2b. Instruction by the Paṇḍit
3a. Bābā Nānak’s Betrothal
3b. The Ruined Crop Restored
4. The Tree’s Stationary Shadow
5a. The True Field and the True Merchandise (Brief reference to Nānak’s marriage)
5b. Bābā Nānak’s Discourse with the Physician
6. Sultānpur
7a. Immersion in the River
7b. Bābā Nānak’s Discourse with Daulat Khān’s Qāzī
8a. Bābā Nānak’s Travels in the Uninhabited Wilderness
8b. Bābā Nānak’s Austerities
8c. Bābā Nānak’s Visit to the Pilgrimage-centres
9. The Country Ruled by Women
10. The Monster’s Cauldron
11. The Encounter with Kaliyug
12. Sajjan the Robber
13. Bābā Nānak in the Land of Unbelievers
14. A Discourse with Siddhs on Mount Sumeru
15. Mecca: Bābā Nānak’s Miraculous Arrival
16. Bābā Nānak Returns to Tālvanḍī: Discourse with his Mother and Father
17. Discourse with Sheikh Brāham
18. The Sack of Saidpur
19. A Discourse with Bābur
20. The Proud Karoṛ humbled: the founding of Kartārpur
21a. The Merchant and Rājā Śiwanāḥ
21b. Bābā Nānak and Rājā Śiwanāḥ
22a. The Meeting with Lahanā
22b. Aṅgād returns to Matte dī Sarāī
22c. Aṅgād moves to Khaḍūr: his clothes ruined
23. A Discourse with Siddhs at Achal
24. Mūlā the Khatrī
25a. Bābā Nānak’s Daily Discipline
25b. The Loyal Fortitude of Aṅgād
25c. Bābā Nānak’s Adoration
25d. A Discourse with Gorakhnāth: Bābā Nānak seeks solitude
25e. Bābā Nānak tests his Sikhs
26. A recitation of Japji
27. Dead birds revivified: Bābā Nānak’s remorse
28a. An Interview with God: recitation of the shabad Sodar
28b. Bābā Nānak summons the Gangā to thirsty Sikhs
29a. Bābā Nānak tests his Sikhs (contd.)
29b. The Story of Vasiṣṭ
29c. Bābā Nānak tests his Sikhs (contd.): Aṅgad commanded to eat a corpse
30a. The Installation of Guri Aṅgad
30b. The Death of Bābā Nānak
APPENDIX 4

THE CONTENTS OF LDP 194

1. The Birth of Nānak
2. Instruction by the Paṇḍit
3. Bābā Nānak’s Betrothal and Marriage
4. The Ruined Crop Restored
5. The Tree’s Stationary Shadow
6. The True Field and the True Merchandise
7. Bābā Nānak’s Discourse with the Physician
8. Sultānpur
9. Immersion in the River
10. Bābā Nānak’s Discourse with Daulat Khān’s Qāzī
11. Bābā Nānak’s Travels in the Uninhabited Wilderness
12. Bābā Nānak Returns to Talvāṅ: Discourse with his Mother and Father
13. Discourse with Sheikh Braham
14. The Sack of Saidpur
15. A Discourse with Bābur
16. The Proud Karori Humbled: the founding of Kartarpur
17. The Merchant and Rājā Śivanābh
18. Bābā Nānak and Rājā Śivanābh
19. The Encounter with Kaliyug
20. A Discourse with Siddhs at Achal

For a list of B40 contents see above, pp. 230–2. The contents of the Miharbān and Gyan-ratanavali collections are much more extensive than those of the other major janam-sākhis and for this reason are not listed in appendices. The more important anecdotes and discourses are included in the comparative table set out on pages 73–6 of GNSR. On pages 51–64 of the same work there appears a summary paraphrase of the contents of Pothī Sach-Khaṅ (the first and most important of the three sections of the extant Miharbān janam-sākhi).
APPENDIX 5

ENGLISH TRANSLATIONS OF JANAM-SĀKHĪS

I. The Colebrooke Janam-sākhī

Trumpp included a translation of the Colebrooke Janam-sākhī in the introduction to his The Adi Granth (pp. vii–xliv). Like his rendering of the opening rāgas of the Adi Granth this translation contains numerous errors and is stilted to the point of being almost unreadable. Allowance must, however, be made for the pioneering nature of the work (Trumpp published it in 1877), and if one can look beyond the dullness of the work and its insulting references to the Sikh scriptures one must acknowledge that Trumpp was, for his period, an observer of considerable perception. The contents of the Colebrooke Janam-sākhī are listed in Appendix 2. For a note on the decision to commission the translation and also a brief biographical sketch of Trumpp see Robert Needham Cust, Linguistic and Oriental Essays, Third Series (London, 1891), pp. 262–5.

2. Selections from the Bālā tradition

(a) E. Trumpp, The Adi Granth, pp. xlvi–lxxvi.

Trumpp designated the Colebrooke manuscript Janam-sakhi A, and the Bālā manuscript catalogued as Panj. B41 in the India Office Library he labelled Janam-sakhī B. The latter he erroneously describes as an ‘enlarged recompilation of A’.¹ His translation of the Bālā manuscript shares the characteristics noted above in the description of his Colebrooke translation. Of the sakhīs listed in Appendix 1 it covers only numbers 1–15, the opening sentences of 16, and 85–6. At its conclusion Trumpp adds a translation of the Lithographed Edition A² version of the death of Nānak.

(b) Henry Court, History of the Sikhs, pp. 142–239.

Court’s History of the Sikhs, published in Lahore in 1888, is an English translation of Šardhā Rām’s Paṇjābī work Sikhān de Rāj di Vithiā (sic: Vithiā), first published in Ludhianā in 1884. Šardhā Rām had included a selection of twenty sakhīs from a late nineteenth-century Bālā version, and this selection Court reproduces in his translation. It comprises the following anecdotes. The titles are those used by Court, with explanatory comments added in parentheses where necessary to identify particular anecdotes.

1. Discourse with Gupāl the Teacher (Instruction by the Paṇḍit)
2. Discourse regarding the Brahmanical Thread
3. Discourse with the Physician
4. Discourse about the store (Talvāṇḍi, not Sultanpur)
5. Conversation regarding the betrothal of Nānak (Bābā Nānak’s betrothal.

¹ Loc. cit., p. xlvi.
² See above, pp. 21, 271.
APPENDICES

The departure for Sultānpur. Employment in Daulat Khān’s commissariat. Nānak accused of embezzlement.)

6. The discourse regarding the marriage of Nānak
7. The discourse with Paṇḍat Sāmā
8. The discourse with Nawāb Daulat Khān (Bābā Nānak’s discourse with Daulat Khān’s qāзи)
9. The discourse with Rāi Bulhār
10. The discourse regarding the idol Sālig Rām
11. Conversation about the Ārtī Sohilā
12. The discourse in Sanglā with Rājā Siv Nāth
13. The discourse with Mīān Miṭthā (Two parts, the first corresponding to Bāṇ sakhī 9, and the second to Purātan sakhī 36.)
14. The discourse with the Siddhs, or Hindū saints (The first part corresponds to Bāṇ sakhī 53. The second part set in an unnamed location over the sea.)
15. The discourse with the worshippers of Govind (in Ajudhīā)
16. The discourse with the Demon Kaṇḍā (the Monster’s Cauldron)
17. The discourse with Sultān Hamīd Kārūn (Qārūn of Rūm)
18. The discourse with Paṇḍat Chattardās Banārsī
g. The discourse with Kālū (the Return to Talvanḍī: discourse with his mother and father)
20. The discourse with the Paṇḍats of Banāras (corresponding to a portion of Bāṇ sakhī 21)


An English translation of Bhai Gurdās’s account of Bābā Nānak has been published in Sources on the Life and Teachings of Guru Nanak.1 Bhai Gurdās’s account includes, in full or in part, the following anecdotes. Vār I stanza numbers are given in parentheses.

1. Bābā Nānak’s Austerities (24)
2. An Interview with God (24)
3. Bābā Nānak Visits the Places of Pilgrimage (25–6)
4. A Discourse with Siddhs on Mount Sumeru (28–31)
5. Mecca: the moving mihārāb (32–4)
6. Bāghdād: Discourse with Dāstgīr (35–6)
7. Visit to Medīnā (37. Brief reference only)
8. The Installation of Gurū Aṅgad (38, 44)
9. A Discourse with Siddhs at Aḥal (39–44)
10. Multān: the jasmine petal (44)

1 SLTGN(Eng), pp. 32–43. For the Pañjābī text see SLTGN(Pbi), pp. 13–19.
5. The Mahimā Prakāś Vāratak

Sources on the Life and Teachings of Guru Nānak also includes a translation of the portion of the Mahimā Prakāś Vāratak relating to Nānak. The following anecdotes are to be found in it. Numbers in parentheses indicate the page-numbers of the English Section of Sources on the Life and Teachings of Guru Nānak.

1. The Birth of Nānak (59)
2. A Visit from Gorakhnāth (59–60)
3. The Naming of Nānak (60)
4a. Investiture with the Sacred Thread (60–1)
4b. Instruction by the Paṇḍit (61–2)
5. Instruction by the Mullah (62–3)
6. The Restored Field (63)
7. A field devastated by cattle and birds yields an abundant crop (63–4)
8. The Tree’s Stationary Shadow (64)
9. Bābā Nānak’s Discourse with the Physician (64–5)
10a. The True Field (65)
10b. Betrothal and Marriage (65)
11. Kharā Saudā: the Good Bargain (65–6)
12a. The Departure for Sultānpur (66)
12b. Employment in Daulat Khān’s Commissariat (66–7)
12c. Nānak accused of embezzlement (67)
12d. Immersion in the River (67)
12e. Bābā Nānak’s Discourse with Daulat Khān’s Qāzī (67–8)
12f. Bābā Nānak’s Travels: Mount Sumeru, Nānakmatā, and the return to Sultānpur. Discourse with Nānakī (68)
12g. Bābā Nānak Returns to Talvāndī: Discourse with his Mother and Father (68–9)
12h. Discourse with Bābur in Kābul (69)
12i. Hasan Abdāl provides milk (69–70)
12j. Discourse with Sheikh Braham (70–2)
13a. Multān: the jasmine petal (72)
13b. Bābā Nānak opens a spring for Mardānā (72)
13c. Bābā Nānak’s discourse with Sākhī Sarvār Sultān (72–3)
13d. Mecca: the moving miharāb (73–4)
13e. Khaḍūr: the devotion of Māi Bīrāī (74–5)
13f. Eminābād: Lālo and Malak Bhāgo (75–6)
13g. The Proud Karori Humbled: the founding of Kartārpur (76–7)
13h. The Meeting with Lahaṇā (77–8)
13i. Lahaṇā’s Clothes Ruined (78)
13j. The Birth of Lakhmī Dās and of Siri Chand (78–9)
14a. The Loyal Fortitude of Aṅgad (79–80)
14b. Aṅgad shakes Sweets from a Tree (80)
15. Absolute loyalty: the hour of the night (80–1)
16a. The testing of Aṅgad: the coins test (81)
16b. Aṅgad commanded to eat a corpse (81–2)
17a. Aṅgad moves to Khaḍūr (82)
17b. The adoration of Māi Bīrāī (82)

1 SLTGN(Eng), pp. 59–87. For the Paṇḍī text see SLTGN(Pb), pp. 32–46.
17c. Aṅgad's lost children: the return of Dāsū and Dātā (82–3)
17d. Perfect obedience: Aṅgad remains immobile for several years (83)
17e. Bābā Nānak reveals a well in Khaḍūr (83–4)
18. The Death of Bahāuddīn (84–5)
19. The Death of Bābā Nānak (85–7)
APPENDIX 6

HOLDINGS OF JANAM-SĀKHĪ MANUSCRIPTS

The principal library collections of manuscript janam-sākhīs within the Pañjāb are held by the following institutions:

1. The Sikh History Research Department of Khalsa College, Amritsar.
2. The Sikh Reference Library at the Golden Temple, Amritsar.
3. Bhashā Vibhāg, Pañjālā (the Languages Department of the Pañjāb Government)
4. The Central Public Library, Pañjālā.
5. Pañjāb University, Chandīgarh.

Important private collections are those of the former Maharājā of Pañjālā, Dr Gāndhra Singh of Pañjālā, Professor Prītam Singh of Amritsar, and Sardār Shamsher Singh Ashok of Amritsar. Individual manuscripts are held by various families and institutions. For details of most manuscripts currently located in the Pañjāb see Shamsher Singh Ashok, Pañjābī hath-likhatiin di sūchī (Pañjālā, 2 vols., 1961 and 1963, cited in footnotes as PHLS); Gāndhra Singh, A Bibliography of the Punjab (Pañjālā, 1966); and Kīrpal Singh, A Catalogue of Punjabi and Urdu Manuscripts in the Sikh History Research Department (Amritsar, 1963).

The most significant of overseas collections is the India Office Library holding, a group of three manuscripts which owes its importance to the age and representative nature of its contents rather than to its size. For descriptions of its manuscripts Panj. B6, Panj. B40, and Panj. B41 see above, pp. 20, 23–5, 43. See also the introduction to B40 (Eng); and C. Shackle, Catalogue of the Panjabi and Sindhi Manuscripts in the India Office Library (London, 1977), pp. 19–22. The smaller British Library holding merely duplicates a portion of the India Office Library collection. The libraries of the School of Oriental and African Studies in London and the University of Cambridge each possess one Bālā manuscript.
APPENDIX 7

THE ṆDI GRANTH

The structure of the Ṇdi Granth

One of the distinctive features of the Ṇdi Granth is the systematic order of its contents. A regular pattern is plainly evident throughout the volume and very few exceptions to this pattern can be found. In the case of the modern printed editions regularity is carried to the extent of maintaining a standard pagination. All editions have a total of 1,430 pages, and all correspond exactly in terms of the material printed on individual pages. The complete volume may be divided into the following primary categories:

A. Introductory section pp. 1–13
B. The rāgas pp. 14–1353
C. Miscellaneous works pp. 1353–1430

The first and third of these involve no further subdivisions, but within the second category individual works are recorded in accordance with a detailed system of classification.

Introductory section

The opening pages of the Ṇdi Granth record the following compositions:

1. The Japī of Gurū Nānak, preceded by the Mūl Mantra and ending with a stanza by Gurū Aṅgad. This work, which is regarded as an epitome of the teachings of Gurū Nānak, is customarily recited by devout Sikhs shortly after rising in the morning.2

2. Sodar. A collection of nine hymns, four of which are by Gurū Nānak, three by Gurū Rām Dās, and two by Gurū Arjan. The collection takes its name from the first word of the first hymn (a variant version of stanza 27 of Japī). The nine hymns together constitute the greater portion of Sodar Rahāraṇ, a selection which is customarily sung at sunset.a

3. Sohila, or Kirtan Sohila. A collection of five hymns, three of them by Gurū Nānak and one each by Gurū Rām Dās and Gurū Arjan. This selection is customarily sung immediately before retiring at night, and also at funerals.4

All the hymns which constitute Sodar and Sohila are subsequently repeated under their appropriate rāgas (including the one which has already appeared as a stanza of Japī). Their appearance at the beginning of the Ṇdi Granth suggests that they had already acquired a distinctive devotional or liturgical function by the time the original volume was compiled in A.D. 1603–4.

The rāgas

This section constitutes by far the greater portion of the Ṇdi Granth and it is within this section that we find the characteristic pattern of division and subdivision. The system of classification is as follows:

1 See B̃40(Eng), p. 3n.
3 Ibid., p. 11.
APPENDICES

1. The entire section is first classified according to rāga, or metre. The first of these, Sīri Rāg, begins on page 14 and continues to page 93. It is followed on page 94 by the rāga entitled Māih, which in turn is followed by Gauri (pp. 151–346). Next comes Āsā (pp. 347–488), and in this manner the text continues through a total of thirty-one rāgas. The section finally terminates with the minor rāga Jaijavanti (pp. 1352–3).

2. Within each rāga there is a secondary classification, as follows:
   (a) Chaupad. Hymns by the Gurūs, each consisting of four short stanzas with refrain.
   (b) Aṭṭapadi. Hymns by the Gurūs, normally consisting of eight stanzas each (occasionally more), with refrain.
   (c) Chhant (chhand). Hymns by the Gurūs of variable length, commonly of four or six long stanzas.
   (d) Miscellaneous longer works by the Gurūs (e.g. Gurū Arjan’s Sukhmani in Gauri rāga; Gurū Nanak’s Sidh Goṣṭ in Rāmkali rāga).
   (e) Vār. The vār of the Ādi Granth is a distinctive form, to be distinguished from the ode-form to which the name is normally applied.1 The framework of an Ādi Granth vār is constituted by a series of stanzas (paurī). Each paurī is preceded by a number of couplets or subsidiary stanzas called šlok (shalok). With one exception2 the vārs are all composite structures embodying selections from the works of the Gurūs. The paurīs of any particular vār will all be by one Gurū, but the shaloks may be by any of the Gurūs. Of all the vārs the most famous is Vār Āsā, the paurīs of which are by Gurū Nanak.3
   (f) Bhagat bāṇī, 'the works of the bhagats', i.e. the compositions of religious poets whose doctrines accorded with those of the Gurūs. Particular prominence has been given to Kabīr, Nāmdev, and Ravidās (Rājidās).

3. Yet another classification is made within the chaupads, aṭṭapadīs, and chhants. Each of these three groupings is itself divided according to author. First come the chaupads of Gurū Nānāk, next those of Gurū Amar Dās, followed by those of Gurū Rām Dās, and finally those of Gurū Arjan.4 These are followed by the aṭṭapadīs of Gurū Nānāk, and in this manner the classification continues to the end of the chhant section. Each of the Gurūs is designated not by name but by the word mahalā, followed by the appropriate number. The formula mahalā 1 denotes Gurū Nānāk, mahalā 3 denotes the third Gurū, Amar Dās, etc. The šlok of Gurū Aṅgād are distinguished in the same manner (i.e. with the formula mahalā 2).5 The designation is often abbreviated to its initial letter (Mr denoting Gurū

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1 I. Serebryakov, Punjabi Literature (Moscow, 1968), pp. 18–21.
2 Vār Rāmkali by Rāi Bālvāṇḍ and Sattā the Dūm, AG, pp. 966–8. This vār, a panegyric of the Gurūs by two of their followers, is simply a series of stanzas with no shaloks. It represents the standard ode-form, not the composite form found elsewhere in the Ādi Granth.
3 Vār Āsā, or Āsā dī Vār, AG, pp. 463–75, has acquired a liturgical function and is sung in gurdwaras during the early hours of the morning. It consists of twenty-four paurīs, each with attendant shaloks (normally two), and may be sung in full or in an abridged form. For the singing of the unabbreviated form a period of three hours is required.
4 In the case of Gurū Aṅgād, the second Gurū, only shaloks have been recorded. A few compositions by the ninth Gurū, Tegh Bahādūr, also appear, having been added later to the collection originally compiled by Gurū Arjan.
5 See B4ο(Eng), p. 3n.
Nānak, etc.) and is occasionally dropped altogether, leaving only the relevant number.

**Miscellaneous works**

The epilogue which follows the conclusion of the rāga section consists of a series of miscellaneous works. Prominent among these are a collection of ślokās attributed to Sheikh Farīd, a similar collection attributed to Kabīr, and a collection of surplus ślokās by the Gūrūs for which no place could be found in the vārs.

In this unusually systematic manner the Ādi Granth was compiled. There are exceptions to the pattern, but they are few and unimportant.

**Terminology relating to the Ādi Granth**

The title Ādi Granth itself requires a brief note of explanation. Granth means simply 'book', and to this has been appended the adjective ādi, or 'first', to distinguish this Granth from the Dasam Granth, the 'Tenth Book'. In Sikh usage the Ādi Granth is normally referred to as the Gurū Granth Sāhīb (to which further honorifics may be added). This expresses the Sikh belief in the scripture as Gurū. The contents of the scripture are commonly referred to as bāṇī ('utterance'), or as gurbāṇī ('the utterance of the Gurū').

Any individual hymn from the Ādi Granth (chaupad, aṣṭapadī, or chhant) is invariably called a śabad, literally 'word'. The usage evidently derives from the weight of emphasis laid by Gurū Nānak and his successors upon the doctrine of the Śabad. According to the teachings of Nānak the Śabad, or divine Word, is the vehicle of communication between God and man. The bāṇī, or 'utterance', of the enlightened guru or bhagat embodies this divine Word, and the term used for the Word itself thus came to be applied to the composition which gave it expression.

The term is very extensively employed in the janam-sākhīs and in all later Sikh literature, and for this reason it has been given an anglicized form in this study of the janam-sākhīs. The word śabad, when used to denote a composition by Gurū Nānak, is rendered 'shabad'. For the same reason ślok has been rendered 'shalok'. The two forms 'shabad' and 'shalok' both approximate closely to Pañjābī pronunciation. (In speech, as in its written Gurmukhī form, Pañjābī normally separates conjuncts.) The third basic term, paufī, has been translated as 'stanza'.

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1 The appendage dasam is normally taken to refer to the belief that the contents of this later collection are all the works of the tenth Gurū, Gobind Siṅgh. It has, however, been suggested that it should properly be understood to mean 'one tenth', i.e. a tenth part of a much longer collection. Khushwant Siṅgh, *A History of the Sikhs*, vol. i (London, 1963), p. 316.

2 *GNSR*, p. 2.

3 Hindi tabda. This particular usage corresponds to the Hindi term pada.

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### DATE CHART

<table>
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<td>1498</td>
<td>Arrival of Vasco da Gama</td>
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<td>1526</td>
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<td>1749</td>
<td>Battle of Plassey</td>
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<td>1784</td>
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<tr>
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<td>1919</td>
<td>Government of India Act</td>
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<th>Year</th>
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<td>1699</td>
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<td>1747</td>
<td>Invasions of Ahmad Shāh Abdāli</td>
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<tr>
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### JĀNAM-SĀKHĪS

**Development of Narrative I tradition**

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<tbody>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>1828</td>
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1909 Macauliffe’s The Sikh Religion

1926 Vir Singh’s Purātan Janam-sākhī
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Mahīmā Prakāś Vāratak

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GLOSSARY

Punjabi forms are given in all instances. Corresponding Hindi forms are in some instances given in parentheses.

akhārā: 'arena', temple or monastery of the Udāsi panth.
āśan: yogic posture; abode of yogis.
āṣṭapadi: a hymn of eight (occasionally more) stanzas.
Bābā: 'Father', a term of respect applied to holy men.
badā: big, great.
bhairāgi: Hindu renunciant.
bāni (vāṇī): speech; the utterances of the Gurus and bhagats (q.v.) recorded in the Ādi Granth. The amplified form gurbāṇi is commonly used.
bhagat (bhakta): an exponent of bhagti (bhakti) (q.v.); a devotee.
bhagti (bhakti): belief in, and adoration of, a personal God.
bhallā: good, noble.
chaudhari: head man of a village or caste grouping.
dān: gift, charity, alms.
darśan: view, vision; audience with a person of regal or spiritual stature, visit to a holy shrine or object; the six systems of brahmanical philosophy.
darvēt: dervish, a Muslim mendicant (esp. Sūfī).
dharamsālā: in early Sikh usage a room or building used for devotional singing and prayer.
dīgvijaya: the conquest of territories in all four directions, an achievement imputed to particularly powerful kings or (as spiritual conquest) to a powerful preacher.
faqīr: 'poor man', Muslim renunciant; loosely used to designate Sūfīs and also non-Muslim renunciants.
ghost, goṣṭi: discourse.
gurbāṇi: 'the utterance of the Gurus', cf. bāṇī (q.v.).
gurdwārā: gurdwara, Sikh temple.
Gurmukhi: the script used for writing Punjabi.
guru: a spiritual preceptor, usually a person but sometimes understood as the divine inner voice.
halāl: 'lawful', in accordance with Muslim prescriptions.
haṭha-yoga: 'yoga of force', a variety of yoga requiring physical postures and processes of extreme difficulty.
isnān: bathing.
jathā: military detachment.
kabhī: a poetic metre.
karoji: a high-ranking revenue collector of the Mughal period.
kathā: narrative; oral exposition.
Khālsā; the Sikh order, brotherhood, instituted in 1699 by Gurū Gobind Singh.
khāṅgāh: residence of a Sūfī pīr, with buildings for disciples, charitable purposes, etc.
kirtan: corporate singing of hymns.
kos, koh (krośa): a linear measure varying from one to two miles in different parts of India. In the Punjabi it has generally been computed as the equivalent of one-and-a-half miles.
GLOSSARY

kuram: the relationship subsisting between the fathers of a married couple. A husband's father is the kuram of the husband's father-in-law and vice versa.
lotā: small, round, metal pot.
Mahālā: a code-word used to distinguish works by different Gurūs in the Ādi Grānṭh. Gurū Nānāk, as first Gurū, is designated Mahālā I or simply M I; the second Gurū, Āṅgad, is designated Mahālā II or M 2; etc.
mahānt: chief; superior of a monastery or other religious institution.
mahā-pūrkh: a person of exalted spiritual status.
māṭh: religious establishment, monastery.
miharāb: the niche in a mosque which indicates the direction of the Ka'bah in Mecca.
mlī: Sikh military bands of the eighteenth century.
mullāh: a teacher of the law and doctrines of Islam.
murīd: disciple (Muslim).
mush'ara: an assembly gathered to recite and hear poetry.
Nāgari, Devanāgari: the script used for writing Sanskrit and Hindi.
nām: the divine Name, the expression of the nature and being of God in terms comprehensible to the human understanding.
nām jāpāī: the same process as nām simāran (q.v.).
nām simāran: repeating the divine Name of God; meditating on God.
Nāṭh: lit. 'master'. A yogic sect of considerable influence prior to and during the time of the early Sikh Gurūs. Its members, who are also known as Kānphaṭ yogīs, practised ḫaṭa-yoga (q.v.) in order to obtain immortality.
pāndī: an erudite person; a mode of address used for Brāhmaṇs.
pānth: lit. path, road. System of religious belief and practice. The form 'Panth' designates the Sikh community.
pargana: subdivision of a district.
paurī: stanza.
pīr: the head of a Sūfī order; a Sūfī saint.
pūṭhī: volume, tome.
qalāndar: itinerant Muslim ascetic.
qāṣī, qādī: a Muslim judge, administrator of Islamic law.
qībāla: the direction of the Ka'bah in Mecca.
rābāb: stringed instrument resembling a rebeck.
rāg: raga; a series of five or more notes on which a melody is based.
rāhat, rahīṭ: the code of discipline of the Khālsā (q.v.).
rāhīṭ-nāmā: a recorded version of the Khālsā code of discipline.
sabād: shabad; word; the divine self-communication; a hymn from the Ādi Grānṭh.
sādh, sādhū: one who has attained spiritual excellence; holy man; renunciant.
Sahaj-dhārī: A Sikh who neither accepts baptism into the Khālsā (q.v.) nor observes its code of discipline.
sākhī (pl. sākhīān): (1) testimony, witness, evidence; (2) section of a janam-sākhī.
samādhi: tomb, cenotaph.
saṅgat: assembly, religious congregation.
satsāṅg: the fellowship of true believers, congregation.
sevā: deeds of piety; service rendered to a person or place of religious eminence.
Siddh: Eighty-four exalted personages believed to have attained immortality through the practice of yoga and to be dwelling deep in the Himalayas. In the janam-sākhīs the term is confused with Nāṭh (q.v.).
śiva-linga: phallic emblem of Śiva.
ślok: shalok; couplet or stanza.
śraddh: rite commemorating deceased forbear.
sudi: the light half of a lunar month, the period of the waxing moon. Cf. vadi.
tapā: ascetic, one skilled in the practice of tapasya (q.v.).
tapas, tapasya: religious austerities.
vādi: the dark half of a lunar month, the period of the waning moon. Cf. sudi.
vār: a heroic ode of several stanzas; a song of praise; a dirge.
yajya, yajna: sacrificial rite; ritual feast.
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