

Brahminism, which separated morality from politics, and there was a lack of centralized leadership amongst the Sikhs. Raṇjīt Singh was able to take advantage of this situation and employed his ruthlessness and ambition in order to gain power in Pañjāb. For instance, he made great use of his mother-in-law, Sadā Kaur's (ਸਦਾ ਕੌਰ) resources in the beginning of his political career and then imprisoned her in 1821.

Raṇjīt Singh's coronation ceremony was presided over by Bābā Sāhib Singh Bedī (ਬਾਬਾ ਸਾਹਿਬ ਸਿੰਘ ਬੇਦੀ) on the Vaisākhī (ਵੈਸਾਖੀ) of 1801. During his reign, Raṇjīt Singh struck coins in Gurū Nānak Sāhib's (ਗੁਰੂ ਨਾਨਕ ਸਾਹਿਬ) name (referred to as the *Nānakshāhī* coins) and abolished the discriminatory tax on Hindus and Sikhs. Raṇjīt Singh also made use of Sikh armed forces such as the *Akālīs* (ਅਕਾਲੀ) and the *Nihāṅgs* (ਨਿਹੰਗ) who constituted the core of his power and helped him to overrun one principality after another. However, his commitment to the faith of his birth was only skin deep and he used Sikhī for tactical purposes. Victor Jacquemont, on a visit to Pañjāb in 1830, "He is a Sikh by profession, a skeptic in reality". Raṇjīt Singh often made vows in the presence of Gurū Granth Sāhib (ਗੁਰੂ ਗ੍ਰੰਥ ਸਾਹਿਬ) and then violated them as suited his needs. In 1802, Raṇjīt Singh subjected himself to the punishment of Akāl Takht (ਅਕਾਲ ਤਖਤ) for his affair with the Muslim dancing girl by publicly baring his back to receive stripes but neither gave up the dancing girls nor his debaucheries even until his death. How far Raṇjīt Singh had strayed from Sikhī can be judged from the fact that his four Hindu wives and seven slave girls committed Satī (ਸਤੀ) on his funeral pyre, a practice that was forbidden by the Sikh Gurūs and absolutely against Sikh traditions. Raṇjīt Singh did make offerings to *Gurduārās*, but this was no extraordinary deed of generosity. If he got the exterior of Harimandar Sāhib (ਹਰਿਮੰਦਰ ਸਾਹਿਬ) plated gold, he made similar donations to the Vishvanāth Temple of Banāras and the Jvālāmukhī (ਜ਼ਾਲਾਮੁਖੀ) Temple in Kāngrā (ਕਾਂਗੜਾ). Raṇjīt Singh never sought to know what was pure or original Sikhī and he turned a blind eye to the Nirañkāri (ਨਿਰੰਕਾਰੀ) movement in 1815 which sought to infiltrate Brahminism into Sikh teachings.

Raṇjīt Singh's reign certainly left a lasting impression in Pañjāb but this period of "Sikh" rule was short-lived and contained within itself the seeds of its destruction. Raṇjīt Singh's failure to judge the character of the men that he put in key positions ultimately resulted in the downfall of his kingdom. Raṇjīt Singh placed a great deal of trust in Ḍogrā Rājput Diān Singh (ਡੋਗਰਾ ਰਾਜਪੂਤ ਧਿਆਨ ਸਿੰਘ) and his sons who proved to be treacherous and were instrumental in dismantling Raṇjīt Singh's kingdom after his death. Raṇjīt Singh ultimately caused irreparable damage to Sikhī by his dismantling of the traditional management apparatus at Harimandar Sāhib at Amritsar. Taking over the management of the *Gurduārās* by the state authorities was destructive to the Sikh values and later paved the way for the British take over and management of these Sikh institutions. In 1805, (Mahārājā) Raṇjīt Singh stopped the gatherings of the Sarbat Khālsā at the Akāl Takht Sāhib.

Adapted from: Singh, Saṅgat. The Sikhs in History. New Dillī: Uncommon Books, 1999. p 115 - 121

Analyzing Primary Sources

Time and Place Rule

To judge the quality of a primary source, historians use the time and place rule. This rule says the closer in time and place a source and its creator were to an event in the past, the more reliable the source will be. Based on the time and place rule, better primary sources (starting with the most reliable) might include:

- Direct traces of the event;
- Accounts of the event, created at the time it occurred, by firsthand observers and participants;
- Accounts of the event, created after the event occurred, by firsthand observers and participants;
- Accounts of the event, created after the event occurred, by people who did not participate or witness the event, but who used interviews or evidence from the time of the event.

Bias Rule

The historians' second rule is the bias rule. It says that every source is biased in some way. Documents tell us only what the creator of the document thought happened, or perhaps only what the creator wants us to think happened. As a result, historians follow these bias rule guidelines when they review evidence from the past:

- Every piece of evidence and every source must be read or viewed skeptically and critically.
- No piece of evidence should be taken at face value. The creator's point of view must be considered.
- Each piece of evidence and source must be cross-checked and compared with related sources and pieces of evidence.

Questions for Analyzing Primary Sources

1. Who created the source and why? Was it created through a spur-of-the-moment act, a routine transaction, or a thoughtful, deliberate process?
2. Did the recorder have first-hand knowledge of the event? Or, did the recorder report what others saw and heard?
3. Was the recorder a neutral party, or did he have opinions or interests that might have influenced what was recorded?
4. Did the recorder produce the source for personal use, for one or more individuals, or for a larger audience?
5. Was the source meant to be public or private?
6. Did the recorder wish to inform or persuade others? (Check the words in the source. The words may tell you whether the recorder was trying to be objective or persuasive.) Did the recorder have reasons to be honest or dishonest?
7. Was the information recorded during the event, immediately after the event, or after some lapse of time? How large a lapse of time?

Kāzī Nūr Muhammad's Jaṅgnāmā (ਕਾਜ਼ੀ ਨੂਰ ਮੁਹੱਮਦ ਦਾ ਜੰਗਨਾਮਾ)

Section XLI: On the Bravery of the Sikhs (ਸਿਖ) in a Religious War and their Bravery in General

“Do not call the dogs (the Sikhs) dogs, because they are lions (and) are courageous like lions in the battlefield. How can a hero, who roars like a lion, be called a dog? (Moreover) like lions they spread terror in the field of battle. If you wish to learn the art of war, come face to face with them in the battlefield. They will demonstrate it (the art of war) to you in such a way that one and all will shower praise on them. If you wish to learn the science of war, O swordsman, learn from them. They advance at the enemy boldly and come back safely after action. Understand, Singh is their title, a form of

address for them. It is not justice to call them dogs; if you do not know Hindostānī (ਹਿੰਦੋਸਤਾਨੀ) language, then understand that the word ‘Singh’ (ਸਿੰਘ) means a lion.

“Truly, they are lions in battle, and at times of peace, they surpass Hātim (ਹਾਤਿਮ) (in generosity). When they take the Indian sword in their hands they overrun the entire country from Hind (ਹਿੰਦ) to Sindh (ਸਿੰਧ). None can stand against them in battle, howsoever strong he may be. When they handle the spear, they shatter the ranks of the enemy. When they raise the heads of their spears towards the sky, they would pierce even through the Caucasus (in the process). When they adjust the strings of the bows, place in them the enemy-killing arrows (and) pull the strings to their ears, the body of the enemy begins to shiver with fear. When their battle axes fall upon the armor of their opponents, their armor becomes their coffin.

“The body of every one of them is like a piece of rock and in physical grandeur every one of them is more than fifty men. It is said that Bahrām Gaur (ਬਹਰਾਮ ਗੌਰ) killed wild asses and lions. But if he were to come face to face with them even he would bow before them (Singhs). Besides usual arms, they take their guns in hand (and) come into the field of action jumping (and) roaring like lions and raise slogans. They tear asunder the chests of many and shed blood of several (of their enemy) in the dust. You say that the musket is a weapon of ancient times, it appears to be a creation of these dogs rather than the Sage Lukmān (ਲੁਕਮਾਨ). Who else than these (dogs) can be adept in the use of muskets. They do not bother (even if) there are innumerable muskets. To the right and the left, in front and towards the back, they go on operating hundreds of muskets angrily and regularly.

“If you do not believe in what I say, you may enquire of the brave swordsmen who would tell you more than myself and would praise them for their fighting. This bears witness to (my statement) that they faced thirty thousand heroes in the battlefield. If their armies take to flight, it is a war tactic of theirs. They resort to this deception in order to make the angry army grow bold and run in their pursuit. When they find them separated from the main body and away from help and reinforcement, they at once turn back and fight more ferociously (literal translation - they set fire even to water).

“Did you not see that while fighting the Paṭhāns (ਪਠਾਨ), they took to flight, which was deceptive? A world famous wrestler wielding high esteem and respect alighted from his horse and showed his great style as if he were Tuhamatan (ਤੁਹਮਤਨ) (a great warrior of Iran). O valiant fighter, do justice to their (act of) war. One of their armies invaded Multān (ਮੁਲਤਾਨ), put the city to plunder and devastation, and killed many of its inhabitants and carried away an immense booty. I am not sufficiently strong in mind to express what the dogs did there. But as God willed it, each of us has to submit to His Will.

“Besides their fighting, listen to one more thing in which they excel against all other warriors. They never kill a coward who is running away from the battlefield. They do not rob a woman of her wealth or ornaments whether she is rich or a servant. There is no adultery among these dogs, nor are they mischievous people. A woman, whether young or old, they call a Buṛī (ਬੁੜੀ). The word Buṛī, means in Indian language, an old lady. There is no thief amongst these dogs, nor is there amongst them any mean people. They do not keep company with adulterers and house thieves, though all their acts may not be commendable.

“If you are not acquainted with their religion, I tell you that the Sikhs are the disciples of the Gurū (ਗੁਰੂ) - that glorious Gurū lived at Cak Ammrītsar (ਚਕ ਅੰਮ੍ਰਿਤਸਰ). The ways and manners of these people were laid down by Nānak (ਨਾਨਕ) who showed these Sikhs a separate path. He was succeeded

by Gurū Gobind Singh from whom they received the title of Singh. They are not part of the Hindus, who have a separate religion of their own.

“Now that you have familiarized yourself with the behavior of the Sikhs, you may also know something about their country. They have divided the Pañjāb amongst themselves, giving it to everyone, young and old.”

Excerpt from a translation of Qāzī Nūr Muhammad’s Jaṅgnāmā

Source: Prof. Surjīt Singh, *Sikhs as Nūr Muhammad Saw Them*. <http://www.sikh-history.com/sikhhist/archived/feature-july2000.html>

Tāhmas Khān’s Tāhmasnāmā (ਤਾਹਮਸ ਖਾਨ ਦਾ ਤਾਹਮਸਨਾਮਾ)

A. Expedition against the Sikhs during the Governorship of Mūinul Mulk (ਮੁਈਨੁਲ ਮੁਲਕ) (Mīr Mannū – ਮੀਰ ਮੱਨੂ) (1748-53)

... In a little amount of time, nine hundred *jazāīr*-wielding (ਜਜਾਈਰ) (long musket wielding) horsemen, together with *jazāīrs* usable in battle, were got ready, and the Mīr Mannū sent them off to chastise the Sikhs. They rode fast twenty Kohs (ਕੋਹ) at a time, in pursuit of those perdition-bound ones, and they extinguished the fire of their mischief and contention, wherever they encountered, by the blood-thirsty flame-throwing sword of that country, and sent them to hell. He (Mīr Mannū) gave to anyone who brought the cut-off heads of Sikhs, ten rupees for each such head; to him who brought a captured horse, he gave that very horse; and if the mount of any horseman happened to be lost in battle, he was granted a horse from the stable of His Highness’ own establishment.

...His Highness the Navāb (ਨਵਾਬ), after having in every way established a firm administration in the city of Lāhaur (ਲਾਹੌਰ), came out to restore order in the country of the Pañjāb, which had undergone a small revolution on account of the tumult caused by Ahmad Shāh Durrānī (ਅਹਮਦ ਸ਼ਾਹ ਦੁਰਾਨੀ) (1751-52) ...

... Afterwards, the Navāb, aiming to control the country and manage the affairs of that district, took his camp in the direction of Baṭālā (ਬਟਾਲਾ). The news arrived that a large number of Sikhs had raised a disturbance in that territory, plundered the population and obstructed the passage of travelers. Accordingly, he sent Saīd Jamīlūdīn Khān (ਸਾਈਦ ਜਮੀਲੂਦੀਨ ਖਾਨ) and the Beg Khān (ਬੇਗ ਖਾਨ), with some other captains, to chastise and expel that misguided sect. The said Khān made an attack on a body of Sikhs and pressed that sect so hard that, unable to oppose the victorious army, they took to their heels. Nine hundred of the Sikh infantry, going into the fort of Rām Rauṇī (ਰਾਮ ਰੌਣੀ), which is adjacent to Cak Gurū, Ammrītsar (ਚਕ ਗੁਰੂ, ਅੰਮ੍ਰਿਤਸਰ), were besieged there. Finally, the Sikhs wielding swords came out; from every side, Saīd Jamīlūdīn Khān and his troops, dismounting, took to battle with hand arms, and cut down the Sikhs like fodder by their sharp swords and sent them to hell.

... When news of any tumult raised by the Sikhs came from any quarter, he (Mīr Mannū) sent Khvāja Mirzā (ਖਵਾਜਾ ਮਿਰਜ਼ਾ), along with Mughal troops, to chastise and extirpate the Sikhs. Khvāja Mirzā with his own contingent traversed distance of twenty, even thirty kohs, to places where he had information of the Sikhs, and encountered and attacked them. Such persons as cut off the heads of some Sikhs, took their horses, or captured the Sikhs themselves and brought them alive, received rewards. A Mughal, who lost his horse in the fray, received a better horse from the Navāb’s establishment. Sikhs who arrived alive as captives, were put under the nail press and sent to hell ...

Excerpt from translations of Tāhmas Khān’s Tāhmasnāmā

Source: Grevāl, J.S. & Habīb, Irfān. *Sikh History from Persian Sources*. New Dillī: Tulikā, 2001.

Tāhmas Khān's Tāhmasnāmā

F. Resurgence of Sikh Power (1762-65)

... Also in those days (December 1763), news arrived that the Sikhs gathering together had martyred Zain Khān (ਜੈਨ ਖਾਨ) (an Afgān commander) and had plundered his army. They also sacked the city of Sarhind (ਸਰਹਿੰਦ) and made it entirely desolate. At that time Kāsim Khān (ਕਾਸਿਮ ਖਾਨ) and Murtazā Khān (ਮੁਰਤਜ਼ਾ ਖਾਨ), becoming aggrieved, had left Zain Khān's army some days before the battle of the Sikhs, and, with their effects and baggage, had passed Kañjpurā (ਕੰਜਪੁਰਾ). The Sikhs, after ravaging the city of Sarhind, crossed the Jamunā (ਜਮੁਨਾ) at the Būriyā Ghaṭ (ਬੂਰਿਆ ਘਾਟ), and marched towards Sahāranpur (ਸਹਾਰਨਪੁਰ), Shamlī (ਸ਼ਮਲੀ) and Khaṇḍlā (ਖੰਡਲਾ), with the aim of extortion. However, from fear of the coming of the Rohilā (ਰੋਹਿਲਾ) armies, the Sikhs abandoned that territory and went back to their own seats ... From that year onwards every year the Sikhs crossed the Jamunā to plunder the territory of Najīb Khān (ਨਜੀਬ ਖਾਨ), and from this side too, Najīb Khān marched out with his troops to chastise them, and time and again, battles were fought.

... Now I shall relate the turn of fortune that occurred when three years after the incidents related in the previous chapter, Ahmad Shāh Durrānī (ਅਹਮਦ ਸ਼ਾਹ ਦੁੱਰਾਨੀ) marched from Kābul (ਕਾਬੁਲ) to chastise the Sikhs and arrived near Thānesar (ਥਾਨੇਸਰ). The Jamunā (ਜਮੁਨਾ) river is fourteen kohs (ਕੋਹ) distant by road from there, and Navāb Najīb Khān had encamped in the rear of that river. Ahmad Shāh sent men to summon him to his presence, and taking Najīb Khān with him, returned towards Sarhind. Making a military campaign against the Sikhs as their main object, he busied himself in endeavoring to chastise and root out the Sikhs. The army of the vanguard proceeded two days or three days' marches ahead. The Sikhs, not being able to resist the Shāh's army, fled like crows and kites out of terror of the intrepid falcon (i.e., the Shāh's troops). The Shāh's army had reached up to the Doāb (ਦੋਆਬ); the Sikhs fleeing from there and crossing the Jamunā river, then fordable, sacked the city of Meraṭh (ਮੇਰਠ), which was in the possession of Navāb Najīb Khān. The Shāh, frustrated by their wily [literally, fox-like] tactics, stayed where he was, and from there sent off ten thousand brave and veteran horsemen under Sardār Jahāndār Khān (ਸਰਦਾਰ ਜਹਾਨਦਾਰ ਖਾਨ) along with Navāb Zābitā Khān (ਨਵਾਬ ਜ਼ਾਬਿਤਾ ਖਾਨ) to chastise the Sikhs. The said Sardār (ਸਰਦਾਰ) reached the town of Shamlī (ਸ਼ਮਲੀ) by forced marches. The Sikhs came to confront them, but, unable to give battle, fled away. That day perhaps nearly nine thousand men from amongst the Sikhs had their heads cut off ...

Excerpt from translations of Tāhmas Khān's *Tāhmasnāmā*

Source: Grevāl, J.S. & Habīb, Irfān. *Sikh History from Persian Sources*. New Dillī: Tulikā, 2001.

News Reports from Dillī, 1759-65 (During the Re-emergence of Sikh Power)

Kāzī Nūr Muhammad (ਕਾਜੀ ਨੂਰ ਮੁਹੰਮਦ)

- Kāzī Nūr Muhammad's Jaṅgnāmā was compiled in 1765, and is an account of Ahmad Shāh Abdālī's raid into the Pañjāb in 1764-65.
- It mainly discusses Abdālī's encounters with the Sikh misals.
- Probably the only surviving account of Abdālī's invasions from an Afgān point of view, it describes Sikh resistance in detail.
- Despite Kāzī Nūr Muhammad's extreme hostility towards the Sikhs, his narrative corroborates the picture of the heroic fight put up by them just as is given in Sikh traditions.
- In one account Kāzī Nūr Muhammad describes how thirty Sikhs willingly sacrificed their