
REINTERPRETING SIRMAUR'S HISTORY: NEW INSIGHTS FROM THE SĀNCHĀ MANUSCRIPTS

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ABSTRACT

The primary purpose of this research paper is to reinterpret the history of Sirmaur through an in-depth analysis of a Sānchāmanuscript written by Rukam Pabuch in Vikram Samvat 1724 (1667 CE). The manuscript, a rare historical document from the 17th century, provides fresh insights into the region's political landscape. By comparing its contents with contemporary sources, this research aims to uncover hidden narratives of Sirmaur. The study highlights the manuscript's significance in reconstructing an authentic and nuanced historical account of the region. Sirmaur, a princely state in present-day Himachal Pradesh, boasts a rich and complex history. Nestled in the Shivalik foothills, it has long been a center of power and culture. This manuscript serves as a valuable resource in understanding the region's historical evolution, shedding light on its rulers and political transitions.

KEYWORDS: *Sirmaur, Sānchā, History, Manuscript.*

INTRODUCTION

The *Sānchā* manuscripts of Himachal Pradesh represent a remarkable aspect of India's rich manuscript culture, highlighting the linguistic, cultural, and intellectual diversity of the region. These manuscripts cover an extensive range of subjects including traditional medicine, astrology, tantric knowledge, health, history, and agriculture, reflecting the holistic intellectual pursuits of their creators.

The word *Sānchā* is believed to have originated from the Sanskrit terms *Sānchāḥ* or *Sānchāyah*, both of which mean "accumulation" or "collection", signifying the act of gathering or bringing together. Locally, some believe that *Sānchā* derives from *Sachai*, meaning "truth," as these scriptures were regarded as sources of true knowledge. However, in the Pahari language of the Sirmaur region, where these texts were primarily composed, the term *Sanja* refers to "collection" or "gathering." In this context, *Sanja* or *Sanjna* conveys the idea of accumulating or compiling knowledge, suggesting that *Sānchā* may have evolved from *Sanja*. This interpretation is further

supported by the contents of the *Sānchā Manuscripts*, which consist of various writings aimed at documenting and preserving knowledge across multiple disciplines.

Thus, *Sānchā Manuscripts* can be understood as comprehensive compilations of knowledge, encompassing traditions, methods, and sacred texts. These manuscripts serve as a repository of wisdom, covering a diverse range of subjects, including history, tantra, astronomy, agriculture, and more.

Materials and Methods

This research is based on a detailed analysis of the *Sānchā Manuscripts*. Virender Pabuch², a native of Khadkahan village in the Sirmaur District of Himachal Pradesh, provided the *Sānchā Manuscript*, which has a detailed chronology of Sirmaur's royals. Asha Ram Sharma³, a local expert, translated the document, which was written in Hindi and Sirmauri language and in the distinctive Pabuchi script. The research includes Decoding and interpreting the text. To make the text widely accessible, the distinctive Pabuchi script is interpreted and translated into English and hindi. Comparing the information with Tarikh-e-Sirmaur's and James Tod's existing record. This manuscript is a remarkable document that sheds light on the lineage of Sirmaur's royal family and provides significant historical insights.

Early History Sirmaur

The early history of Sirmaur is mingled with legend. One popular legend describes a mystical event that led to the downfall of the ruling dynasty. Madan Singh, a Surajbansi Rajput, was King of Sirmaur and Sirmaur was his capital⁴, during his reign, a woman skilled in necromancy presented herself before the king, boasting of her supernatural abilities. Skeptical of her powers, Raja Madan Singh challenged her to cross the Giri River, which flowed between the Toka and Poka ranges, using an acrobat's rope. He promised to grant her half his kingdom if she successfully crossed the river and returned the same way.

The woman successfully crossed the river and was returning when one of the king's officials, fearing she might claim her reward, treacherously cut the rope. She fell into the river and drowned. According to legend, this act of betrayal resulted in a devastating flood that swept away the capital, killing the king and his entire family. While the idea that a woman's curse caused the flood may be an exaggeration, it is historically plausible that a natural disaster led to the destruction of the capital, which later became linked to the legend.

This tragic event and its aftermath are significant in the context of Sirmaur's history. As there was no heir to the throne, the legend suggests that a delegation from Sirmaur went to Jaisalmer, seeking a new ruler from the Bhatti dynasty, which is later chronicled in the *Sānchā Manuscripts*. The Bhatti dynasty's arrival and establishment in Sirmaur marked the beginning of a new chapter in the kingdom's history.

Historical insights from the manuscript

The manuscript under study was written in Vikram Samvat 1724, corresponding to 1667 CE. The *Sānchā manuscripts*, which include the chronological chart of Sirmaur's rulers provide valuable insight into their writer and the context of their creation.

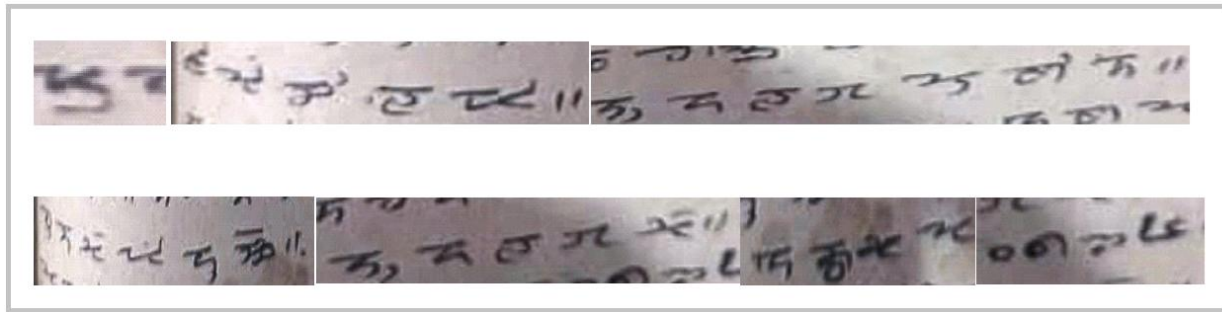


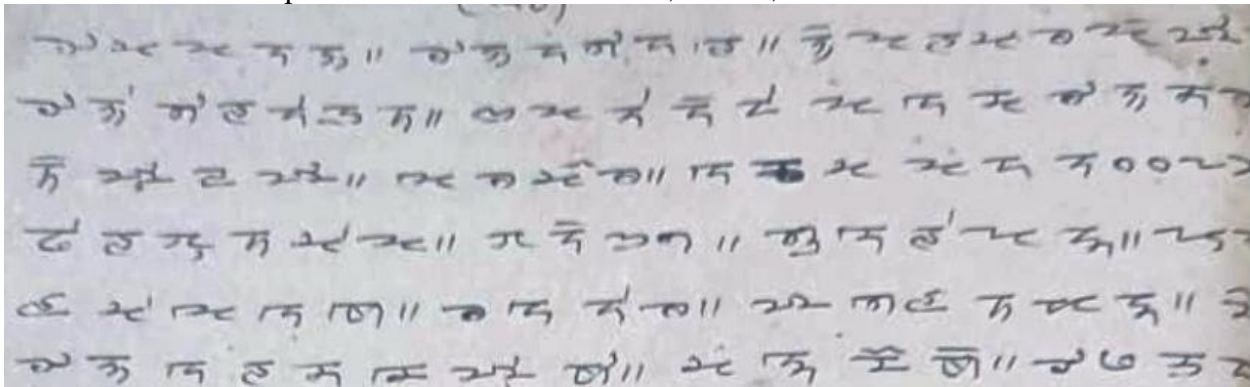
Image 1: details of the Writer of the Sānchā Manuscript.

Here is the transliteration of the given lines:

1. "Purāṇ Sānchā likhā. Jabalagsthān."
2. "RukamePābūche. Jabalag me. Vikram 1724."

This suggests that the *Sānchā Manuscript* was written at Jabalag (modern-day Jablog, Renuka, Sirmaur) in Vikram Samvat 1724 (1667 CE) by a person named RukamePābūch.

The *Sānchā Manuscript* state that Shali Vahan's son, Savīch, became the ruler of Sirmaur.

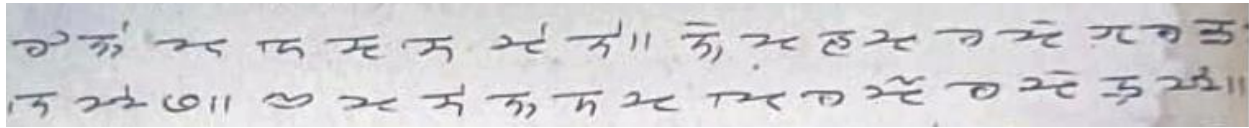


"Rām Sat Jī. RājVaṃśāvalī. Jesalmer se ā RājāŚālīVāhan. Uskābeṭā Savīch rāj ne āyā Sirmaur. Vikram Samvat 1152. Phālgunmās. Gate 27. ŚuklaPakṣ. Pūrṇimāsītithī. Ravivār. Āsilnakṣatra. Rājtilakkiyāthā. Matrī do the."

Rama Sat Ji. Royal Genealogy. Came from Jaisalmer, Raja Shali Vahan. His son Savīch came to rule sirmaur. Vikram Samvat 1152 (1095 CE). The coronation ceremony was performed and became the ruler of Sirmaur. There were two ministers.

This passage from the *Sānchā Manuscripts* is crucial in reconstructing the royal history of Sirmaur, according to the *Sānchā Manuscripts*, Raja Shali Vahan, a significant figure in the Bhatti lineage, was associated with Sirmaur's founding dynasty. Shali Vahan is documented as the son of the founder of Jaisalmer and became the king of Jaisalmer in 1168 CE⁵. This suggests that it was his son who migrated to Sirmaur. The *Sānchā Manuscripts* mention that Vikram Samvat 1152 (1095 CE) marked the start of Raja Savīch's rule in Sirmaur. James Tod in *Annals and Antiquities of Rajasthan* mentions the Yadu princes of the Bhadrinath mountains and the succession crisis in a nearby state, leading to a deputation to Jaisalmer to bring a prince, Hasso, to fill the vacant throne. He was the son of Shali Vahan. However, he records that Hasso died⁶ on the way to Sirmaur, leaving his pregnant wife to continue the journey. The wife gave birth to a

son, according to Kanwar Ranjor Singh, who later became the first ruler of Sirmaur, named Shubhansh Prakash⁷. The *Sānchā Manuscripts* explicitly state that Raja Savīch's mother left Jaisalmer while pregnant and gave birth to him in Sirmaur.



Rājā Savīch kīmātā. Jesalmer se garbhīā. Uskājanm Sirmaur me huā.

'Raja Savich's mother left Jaisalmer while pregnant and gave birth to him in Sirmaur.'

This evidence suggests that Savīch and Shubhansh Prakash might be the same historical figure, and linguistic distortions over centuries may have altered the name. The consistency of this maternal migration narrative across different historical sources strengthens the argument that Sirmaur's ruling dynasty was established by a prince of the Bhatti Rajput lineage, marking a pivotal transition in the region's history.

Kanwar Ranjor states that James Tod's mention of the state being in the Bhadrinath mountains does not actually refer to the present-day Bhadrinath but rather to the Himalayas. It is possible that the term "Bhadrinath" was mistakenly written instead of "Himalayas." He also suggests that the state might have extended as far as Garhwal during that time⁸. The *Sānchā Manuscripts* claim that Sirmaur's first ruler, Raja Savīch, ascended the throne in 1095 CE. In contrast, Kanwar Ranjor Singh's research provides a different account. He states that Prince Hasso, son of Shali Vahan II, set out for Sirmaur with his pregnant wife, but he died near Sirhind before reaching Sirmaur. His widowed, pregnant wife continued the journey and, upon reaching the outskirts of Sirmaur, gave birth to a son beneath a Palash (Dhak) tree, who was named Palasu in remembrance of the event⁹. Over time, the royal family of Sirmaur came to be known as "Palasiya." When Palasu came of age, he was crowned as Shubhansh Prakash, recognized as the first ruler of the Sirmaur dynasty. Kanwar Ranjor Singh's chart begins the Sirmaur lineage with Shubhansh Prakash, ruling from 1195 CE. This century-long discrepancy aligns better with the timeline of Shali Vahan's reign in Jaisalmer and his son Hasso's migration.

A significant discrepancy exists between the *Sānchā Manuscripts* and Kanwar Ranjor Singh's genealogy, with a gap of over a century in their accounts of Sirmaur's rulers. It is possible that linguistic evolution, oral tradition, phonetic changes, and transcription errors over generations led to variations in names, reign periods, and succession records and these discrepancies have led to the hypothesis that the *Sānchā Manuscripts* may contain a scribal error. Some rulers listed in the *Sānchā Manuscripts* have different names in Singh's genealogy, yet their succession order and ruling periods align, suggesting historical misinterpretations or modifications over time. Despite these inconsistencies, the *Sānchā Manuscripts* remain an invaluable historical source, offering a unique perspective on Sirmaur's past. Their analysis not only helps uncover the interwoven nature of history, tradition, and folklore but also provides a broader and multidimensional understanding of Sirmaur's ancient legacy.

Correlation Between James Tod's Account, the *Sānchā Manuscripts*, and Kanwar Ranjor Singh's Version

While all three accounts establish a connection between Sirmaur's rulers and the Bhatti Rajputs of Jaisalmer, they differ in names, dates, and specific details. By analyzing these variations, we

can better understand how historical records evolved through oral traditions, manuscript documentation, and structured historical research.

Succession Crisis and Appeal to Jaisalmer

The succession crisis in Sirmaur and the subsequent appeal to Jaisalmer is a well-documented event in multiple historical sources. James Tod, in *Annals and Antiquities of Rajasthan*, records that a succession crisis arose in a state near the Bhadrinath mountains, prompting a delegation to seek a prince from Jaisalmer to assume the vacant throne¹⁰. The *Sānchā Manuscripts* provide a similar account, attributing the crisis to a catastrophic flood in the Giri River that wiped out the ruling dynasty, leaving Sirmaur without a legitimate heir. This disaster-driven political vacuum led to a formal request being sent to Jaisalmer for a new ruler, affirming the strong connection between Sirmaur's emerging leadership and the Bhatti Rajput lineage of Jaisalmer.

Kanwar Ranjor Singh's historical research further supports this narrative, acknowledging that Sirmaur's ruling dynasty perished because of a natural calamity.¹¹ His account reinforces the idea that a prince from Jaisalmer was invited to rule Sirmaur, ensuring the continuity of governance. While the specific details and location of the original state in distress may differ slightly across sources, all three accounts—James Tod's records, the *Sānchā Manuscripts*, and Kanwar Ranjor Singh's account—converge on the fundamental fact that Sirmaur's early royal lineage was established through a Bhatti Rajput prince from Jaisalmer, marking a significant dynastic transition in the region's history. This event laid the foundation for the Sirmaur royal family, whose legacy continued for centuries.

The Identity of the Jaisalmer Prince Sent to Sirmaur

The accounts of James Tod, the *Sānchā Manuscripts*, and Kanwar Ranjor Singh all narrate the arrival of a Bhatti Rajput prince from Jaisalmer to rule Sirmaur, though they differ in detail regarding the prince's identity and the circumstances of his arrival. According to James Tod's account, Prince Hasso, son of Shali Vahan II, was chosen to rule Sirmaur, but he died on the journey, leaving his pregnant wife to continue alone. The *Sānchā Manuscripts* present a slightly different version, stating that Shali Vahan's son, Savīch, arrived in Sirmaur and became its ruler. However, they also mention that his mother was pregnant when she arrived, suggesting that Savīch was actually born in Sirmaur. This discrepancy indicates a confusion in the manuscript's recording of events, where Hasso's posthumous son, Shubhansh Prakash, might have been mistakenly identified as *Savīch*.

Kanwar Ranjor Singh's version aligns closely with James Tod's account, confirming that Hasso, the son of Shali Vahan II, embarked on the journey to Sirmaur but died near Sirhind before reaching his destination. His widow, carrying his unborn child, continued the journey, and upon reaching Sirmaur, she gave birth under a Palash (Dhak) tree. The child was named Shubhansh Prakash, and he later ascended the throne as the first ruler of the new Sirmaur dynasty. The difference in names—*Savīch* in the *Sānchā Manuscripts* and Shubhansh Prakash in Kanwar Ranjor Singh's genealogy—suggests that the manuscripts may have inaccurately recorded or altered the name over time. Despite these minor discrepancies, all three sources confirm the central historical event: a Bhatti Rajput prince from Jaisalmer was intended to rule Sirmaur, but after his death, his posthumous son was the one who established the ruling dynasty, linking Sirmaur's lineage to the Bhatti Rajput of Jaisalmer.

The Birth of the First Ruler in Sirmaur and Establishing the Bhatti Rajput Connection

All three sources—James Tod, the *Sānchā* Manuscripts, and Kanwar Ranjor Singh's research—agree that Sirmaur's first ruler was born after his father's death and was raised in Sirmaur. All three sources confirm that Sirmaur's first ruler was descended from the Bhatti dynasty of Jaisalmer. While names and timelines differ, all sources confirm the migration of a Bhatti prince from Jaisalmer to Sirmaur, reinforcing the historical connection between the two regions. The discrepancies likely arose due to oral traditions, linguistic shifts, and transcription errors over time, but the core historical event remains consistent.

Key Differences and Explanations

Aspect	James Tod's Account	<i>Sānchā</i> Manuscripts	Kanwar Ranjor Singh's Version	Possible Explanation
Name of the Prince	Hasso (Son of Shali Vahan II)	<i>Savīch</i> (Son of Shali Vahan)	Hasso (Son of Shali Vahan II)	<i>Sānchā</i> Manuscripts may have confused Hasso and his son (Shubhansh Prakash/ <i>Savīch</i>).
Year of Rule	Not specified	Vikram Samvat 1152 (1095 CE)	1195 CE (historically verified)	<i>Sānchā</i> Manuscripts may contain a scribal error; the correct date is 1195 CE.
Birth of First Ruler	Hasso's widow gave birth	<i>Savīch</i> 's mother arrived pregnant and gave birth in Sirmaur	Shubhansh Prakash was born under a Palash tree	All sources agree the ruler was born in Sirmaur, though names and dates slightly differ.
Title of Royal Family	Not mentioned	Not mentioned	" <i>Palasiya</i> " (due to Palash tree birth)	Kanwar Ranjor Singh provides additional historical details not found in the manuscripts.

CONCLUSION

The *Sānchā Manuscripts* serve as a valuable primary source for understanding the dynastic and political history of Sirmaur, offering unique insights into the integration of historical records, folklore, and regional traditions. Despite some inconsistencies, these manuscripts bridge gaps in historical documentation and align with other sources, such as James Tod's colonial-era records and Kanwar Ranjor Singh's structured genealogy.

The chronological discrepancy between the *Sānchā Manuscripts* (which date *Savīch*'s rule to 1095 CE) and Kanwar Ranjor Singh's historically verified timeline (which places Shubhansh Prakash's reign closer to 1195 CE) suggests that a scribal error or oral transmission changes over time may have led to inconsistencies in recorded history. However, the core migration and succession narrative remain consistent, reinforcing the Bhatti Rajput origins of Sirmaur's rulers. This research highlights how oral traditions, manuscript records, and historical analysis must be studied together to reconstruct a comprehensive and accurate history. The *Sānchā Manuscripts* not only confirm the Rajput lineage of Sirmaur's rulers but also provide a broader perspective on regional historiography, migration patterns.

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