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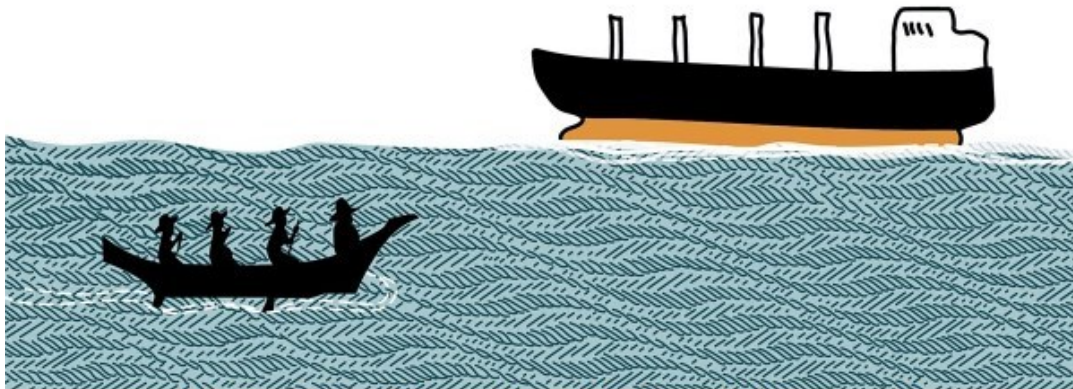
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The Social Fabric: Deep Local to Pan Global



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The Deep Origins of Kashmir Shawls, Their Broad Dissemination and Changing Meaning. Or Unraveling the Origins and History of a Unique Cashmere Shawl¹

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Mystery Mesa Shawl, 1850s, wool. Joan Hart Collection

¹ This article has been renamed “Unraveling the Origins and History of a Unique Cashmere Shawl”, but the above first title was for my talk at the Textile Society of America Conference in fall 2018. Copyright Joan Hart, 2019. No images from the Joan Hart Collection may be reproduced without approval in advance by Joan Hart.

One never knows where an interesting shawl will turn up. The production of shawls in the nineteenth century was profuse and distribution was wide. Found in a thrift store in Mesa, Arizona, this shawl (above) is absolutely unique. The shawl from the front appears to be a typical Kashmir square shawl dating from around 1850, composed of kani or double interlock tapestry twill woven pieces, all sewn together like a quilt. By the 1850s, Kashmir weavers reduced production time using this piecing method, flooding the market with these often crudely woven shawls.

Kashmir shawls have several distinct and unique characteristics despite the huge variation among them. From the Mogul period on, they were made from varying qualities of pashmina wool that were collected from the underbelly of goats and antelopes from Tibet; their patterns consist of paisley or boteh asymmetrical designs which grew in flamboyance over time; designs are always non-linear, always with staggered rows of flowers in the early period; colors derive from organic materials, especially indigo, lac, cochineal red and others indigenous to Kashmir. The most distinctive trait of these shawls is the method of weaving: it is a true tapestry weave with colored yarn inserted into the weft by hand. As the design and construction of the shawls changed from the 1700s to the late nineteenth century, this particular, time consuming and difficult weave was a constant almost to the end.



Left: Mystery Mesa Shawl. Right: Kashmir shawl, kani weave, double interlock tapestry twill, 1850s, wool. Joan Hart Collection

Juxtaposing the mystery shawl on the left with a Kashmir pieced shawl from around 1850 on the right, note the same use of elongated floral paisley motifs in the corners, the black defining contours, pervasive curvilinear forms, the colorful embroidered border tabs on all four sides, the small black central field. The colors of the mystery shawl are similar to those used by Indian weavers, and the fact that it sags and drapes is consistent with many shawls made in this

technique because the warp and weft do not line up from one woven piece to another, creating more distortion of the material.

The reverse of the Mystery shawl appears to be identical to that of a mid-nineteenth century Kashmir pieced shawl. The red bound ridges where the pieces of the shawl have been sewn together are identical to those on the reverse of the Kashmir shawl.



Detail of Mystery Mesa Shawl, 1850. Joan Hart Collection

This detail of the front of the mystery shawl clarifies the binding of one small woven piece with another. Within each woven section, blue, black, white, or red with organic patterns, one can see the twill diagonal weave and the different directions of this diagonal weave in each section. This twill pattern is characteristic of all Kashmir shawls, no matter what the date or style, except for the shawls made after 1870. The front of the known Kashmir square pieced shawl has the same piecing, the diagonal pattern of the twill weave, with the direction of the diagonal pattern arbitrarily varying from one piece to the next.

The diagram below illustrates the “kani” or double interlock tapestry twill weave (known as *espouliné* in French).² The diagonal pattern occurs in twill weave because the weft (horizontal) yarn threads over and under every two warp (vertical) strands, moving successively one warp thread ahead each time the shuttle is passed. The Kashmir weavers integrated colored patterns

² Reproduced from Monique Levi-Strauss’s *The Cashmere Shawl* (Milan: Arnoldo Mondadori Editore S.p.A, 1986), p. 186.

into the twill weave by hand, linking adjacent colors twice (hence the double interlock) to form a very tight and strong weave, which appears seamless on the front. This interwoven weft creates a ridge on the reverse however and a diagonal twill weave on the front. Sometimes shawls will be totally shattered in the central field which, being of one color, has no linkages in the weave and thus a weaker structure, but will be undamaged in the border areas that are filled with inserted colored yarn.

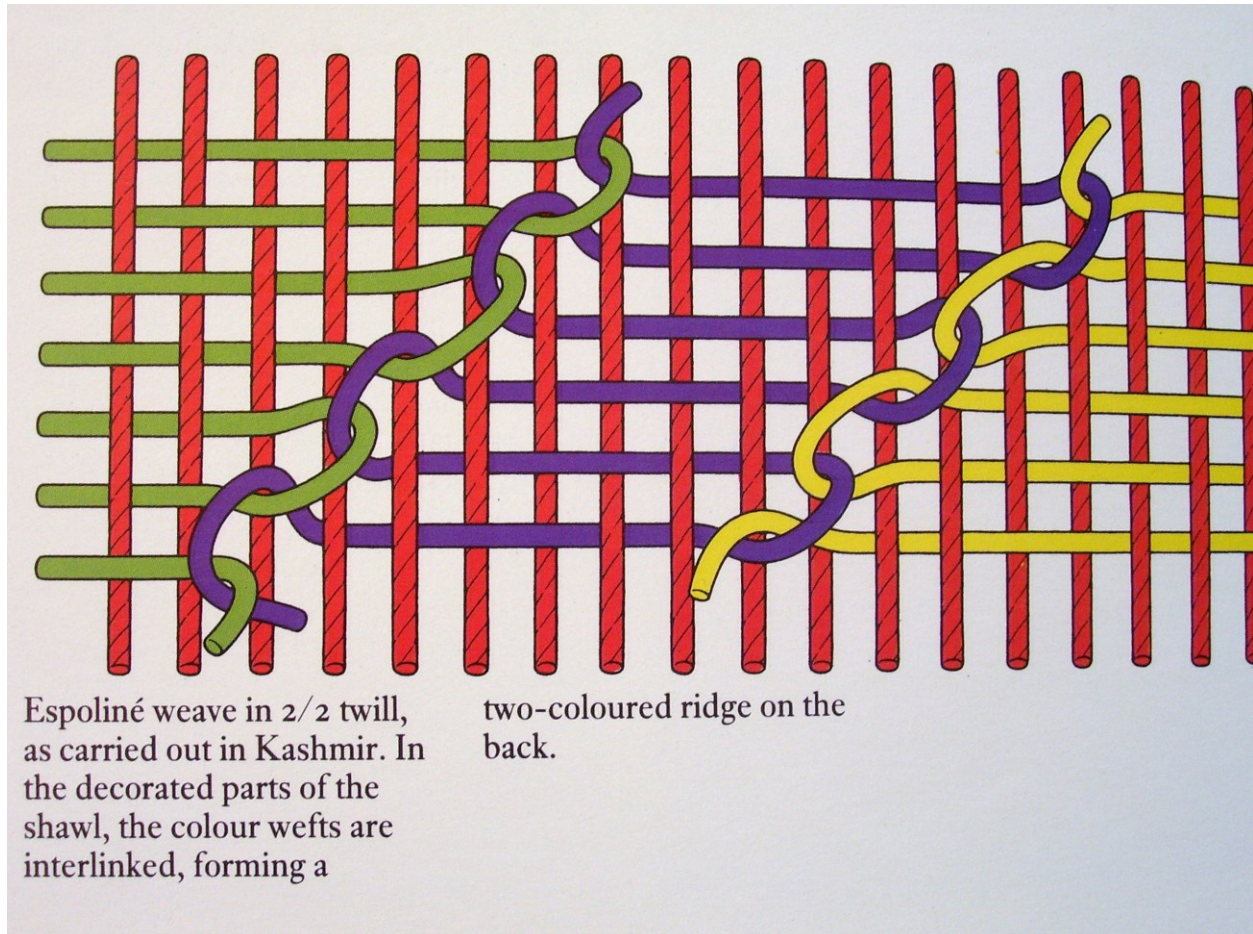


Diagram of Kani Double Interlock Tapestry Twill Weave, from Monique Levi-Strauss, The Cashmere Shawl.

The detail below (left) of the reverse of the Kashmir shawl illustrates the ridges created and the seeming chaotic structure which are often the only clear indicators of where the shawl originated. The weaver moved yarn around as needed to achieve the color pattern. This type of weave is an anomaly in this area and in most of the world, probably because it is so time consuming and difficult.

Viewing the weave of mystery Mesa shawl on the reverse (below right) reveals a structure similar to that of a Kashmir shawl. Similar, but is it the same? The all-over messy look of the reverse is similar, but there appears to be more of a horizontal weft presence than is typical of a kani woven Kashmir shawl.



Left: Detail of reverse of Kashmir shawl, 1850. Right: Reverse of Mystern Mesa Shawl.

Note on the left selection that the ridges indicate the kani weave and you can see the pattern from the back that is seen on the front. The Mystery piece on the right is very similar, but there are fewer ridges. There is a clear horizontal weave that would indicate a jacquard machine produced this shawl. The Mesa shawl looks less refined in color, weave, even the stitching of the binding. We would agree that the weave patterns are very similar but not identical. Looking at the colors, I am struck by that olive green which never appears in a Kashmir shawl, and the harsher tonality of the colors in general. The embroidered borders are a bit too regular and machine-like in their appearance and the colors are not quite the same saturation and hue one would see on a Kashmir shawl. The wool is not like pashmina and the center field feels like silk. I conclude that this is not a Kashmir shawl.

If this is not a Kashmir shawl, then what is it?

When I first saw this shawl from the front, I thought it was just another typical Kashmir shawl from the 1850s, but I now am obliged to admit that I knew instantly when I saw the reverse of this shawl that it was not a Kashmir shawl. Many reproduction shawls were made of this style of Kashmir shawl in Scotland and France, but they were made on jacquard looms which create typical horizontal wefts from one end of a shawl to another. After years of looking at shawls of all kinds, I knew what it was and I knew that it was absolutely unique. It is a very rare battant brocheur shawl, made in France on a special loom, then pieced, in imitation of the square pieced Kashmir shawls of the 1850s of which there are many in the US and abroad. More will be revealed about this technique later.

Why would a manufacturer go to such lengths to create a knock-off that would fool anyone who was not an expert looking at it? The idea of creating pieces of pretend kani fabric and then stitching them together by hand, because this could not have been achieved on a machine, to create an almost exact replica of a pieced Kashmir shawl is an astonishing one. What could be the possible motivation? Surely it results from more than a desire to sell a typical reproduction shawl with unique branding, because that had been achieved long before this shawl was made.

The answers to these questions go to the heart of some controversies about the development of the Kashmir shawl, and the nature of its status in India and in the West.

From the beginning of scholarly discussions about Kashmir shawls by Westerners, it has been asserted that the Kashmiris and Indians in general became deeply influenced by Western taste and markets from almost the beginning of the export of the shawls from India to Europe.³ Frank Ames, among others, has asserted that the earliest Mogul shawls with quasi-naturalistic flowering plants derived their patterns from imported European botanical books given to the Mogul Emperor. While no direct linkage between the herbal books of the Renaissance and the Mogul emperors has yet been found, the similarities between herbarium illustrations and Mogul illuminations and shawl weavings of flowers are very close. A beautiful example found in a shawl is a seventeenth century one with lilac bushes in the Textile Museum, Washington, D.C. It is certainly known that these botanical books were available and used in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth century period. This shawl is made of pashmina and has swaying bushes, early premonitions of the paisley motif.



Shoulder Mantel, Kashmir, 17th century. Textile Museum, Washington, DC

After this very early shawl production, however, the shawl weavers often transformed the naturalistic plant to a consistently more abbreviated and schematic sprig (see below).

³ John Irwin and Katharine B. Brett, *The Origins of Chintz* (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1970), pp. 1-30. Vivian Anne Rich, *The origins of Mughal floral paintings and its development with particular reference to the 17th and 18th centuries*, (Thesis, Ph.D., University of London, School of Oriental and African Studies, 1981), *passim*. Frank Ames, *Woven Masterpieces of Sikh Heritage* (China: Antique Collectors' Club, 2010), Chapter 3, pp. 43-67.



Shawl border, Kashmir, kani weave, c. 1725. Joan Hart Collection

This form gradually changed to a developing paisley form, often with a millefiore (many flowers) patterns within the paisley itself. In these early shawls, there is no longer the form of a European botanical image, not ever again, although the small blooms within the paisleys are identifiable as iris, rose, carnation, based on a simpler basic rendering of shape and color (see harlequin shawl below). The weavers appear to have returned to a far earlier schematic rendition of flowers that preceded the naturalistic phase of the seventeenth- and early eighteenth centuries.

Beginning in the seventeenth century and ending in the late nineteenth century, there is a noticeable stylistic development in the Kashmir shawl production from simple format to increasingly larger and more complex and more colorful forms. Frank Ames' book *The Kashmir Shawl* catalogues this development in meticulous detail.⁴ Let's take a look at the consistent stylistic development in Kashmir shawl design comparable to stylistic developments in many regions and periods of art:

This early shawl (see below) with four rows of enlarged sprigs with tilting flowers, perhaps bluebells, dates from the late eighteenth century, based on the border pattern, colors and leaf pattern. The origin of the paisley curve and the characteristic staggered rows are present here. Kashmir shawls never have rectilinear patterning.

⁴ Frank Ames, *The Kashmir Shawl and its Indo-French Influence*. (England: Antique Collectors' Club, Ltd., 1997), pp. 253-357.



Border Fragment of Kashmir Shawl, 1760. Joan Hart Collection

As the shawl style changed in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, the borders contained often larger paisley or cone patterns which became larger and larger over time, as evidenced in this early harlequin shawl with a single line of paisley or *botehs* (the Kashmiri term) and simple border framing from circa 1790.

This shawl dates from around 1790 and exhibits the multi-floral design and a barely tilted paisley indicating early production. The detail of the harlequin shawl demonstrates clearly the kani weave used, with the ridges formed when the yarns interlock.



"Harlequin" Kashmir shawl, 1800. Joan Hart Collection



Detail of "Harlequin" Kashmir Shawl, 1800. Joan Hart Collection

By 1820, the shawls became larger and more varied in design. The dochalla or long shawl below shows not only a border pattern that is full of floral design, but also a gallery that weaves around the entire circumference of the central white field. Weavers used more indigo at this time and introduced geometric patterns into the paisley, adding more complex shapes. By 1810, the Kashmir shawls were getting larger, the motifs were larger and more complex, while the solid field of the shawl was shrinking.



Kashmir Long Shawl, 1820, Kani Weave. Joan Hart Collection.

Just ten years later (see below), the shawls became very large with bigger and bolder interior design. Again the paisleys increased in size, the scale of the entire shawl became immense in comparison with the earlier shawls, the gallery became larger while the central golden field shrank. More colors were introduced like the gold center of this shawl, while red, blue and green fields were also frequently made. Naturalistic forms, like the peacocks in the lower border of this shawl were also not uncommon.



Kashmir long shawl, Sikh style, 1830. Joan Hart Collection



Detail of Kashmir Long Shawl, Sikh Style, 1830. Joan Hart Collection

In the 1840s, there was further enlargement and elaboration of the all the borders of the shawl with a multitude of bright colors. In the shawl below, borders are enhanced with architectural motifs including arches, columns, relief-like circular panels, all interlocking in a fantastic geometry. With the addition of two galleries around the central red field, and additional bands dividing these galleries, the central field is minute compared to shawls made just a few decades prior. This is a magnificent Sikh style Kashmir shawl, with a mind-bending geometry.



Kashmir Long Shawl, Sikh Style, c. 1840. Joan Hart Collection

In the 1850s, a sudden change transpires to a de-construction of shawl into small woven pieces which are then reconstructed, like the Mystery Mesa shawl. The late Dogra period shawls of the 1860s demonstrate the stylistic evolution to increasing size, complexity of patterns, greater use of large and small motifs to create a horror vacui. This shawl is composed of large rectangular pieces to form the central square which is woven separately as well at the large borders. They become like tapestries, heavier and more flamboyant, in the final years of shawl production.



Dogra period Kashmir Shawl, 1850. Joan Hart Collection

The final years of the paisley shawl, after the 1860s, reveal a devolution of the double interlock tapestry twill weave, the main and richest component of a Kashmir shawl, to single interlock tapestry twill with substantial embroidered contours. New bright aniline dyes are used. The shawl (below) exhibits the day-glo colors and insubstantial weave of the late doruka shawls. To shore up the weaving, embroidered contours and colored areas were introduced, yet these shawls

tend to shatter more quickly than ones made eighty years earlier due to this fragile weave. Each decade brought an enlargement of the shawls, greater complexity in their design, the proliferation of colors and brightness. The presence of western influence is nowhere to be found in the basic styling of flowers or any other decorative feature of these shawls.



Kashmir shawl "doruka", 1870s, single interlock tapestry twill weave. Joan Hart collection

A founder of the discipline of art history, Heinrich Wölfflin, wrote about stylistic development in European art from Renaissance art that conformed to a clear, classic style to a mannerist and then Baroque art that exhibited complex and vivid patterns.⁵ Wölfflin's description of painting's stylistic changes from Renaissance to Baroque emphasized these five contrasting characteristics: linear, planar, defined contours, a multiplicity of clear forms and absolute clarity in Renaissance art, changing to painterly, recession, open composition, unity of composition and only relative clarity in Baroque painting. The two shawls below exhibit these same basic formal patterns: the earlier 1800 harlequin shawl on the left has linear contoured forms, indicates no spatial features, has a multiplicity of clear forms and is absolutely clear in the definition of forms. The later Dogra period shawl of 1860, has painterly, more obscure forms, has some overlap and other spatial recessive formatting, reveals an open composition that appears to overlap and continue

⁵ Heinrich Wölfflin, *The Principles of Art History. The Problem of the Development of Style in Later Art.* (New York, NY: Dover, n.d.).

Joan Hart, *Heinrich Wölfflin: Antinomies of Experience in Art.* (Dissertation for the Ph.D., University of California at Berkeley, 1981).

beyond the border of the shawl, and is very unclear in many passages. Wölfflin's theory appears to have some relevance for the stylistic development of Kashmir shawls.



Left: Harlequin Kashmir Shawl, 1800. Right: Dogra Period Kashmir Shawl, 1850. Joan Hart Collection

Clear linear contours of and within the paisley of the borders appear in early shawls, pre-dating 1825. Later shawls, from the 1820s on, increasingly display the overlapping and recession of forms, more difficult to read compositions, patterns that look like they could extend forever, and unclear contouring.

All kinds of things can affect, impinge on and mold artists and society to influence the development of a style over time, but the consistency of a development from linear to painterly and related symptoms would seem to indicate a culture in which artists and craftsmen were looking at each other's work, competing in the marketplace of ideas and in the market, and creating new patterns. This regional stylistic evolution requires a mostly indigenous development, not dependent on outside influence. It requires an artistic environment in which guilds, families, groups of weavers train younger weavers over many decades, which we know occurred in Kashmir. My own view is that of an art historian: the stylistic evolution from simple patterns to more complex and finally flamboyant ones is one we see over and over again in the production of art. It makes sense that artists begin with simple forms and play with and enhance them over time.

Why does it matter? Some writers about the shawls believe that European merchants, particularly French merchants, had an outsize influence on the changes in shawl design in the

nineteenth century. It is certainly the case that merchants came to Kashmir, placed orders, expressed preferences, like all exporters do. But one has to consider: Is there anything else in all of European design, fashion, art from 1810 to 1875 that looks anything at all like a Kashmir shawl apart from the imitation shawls manufactured in Europe? There is nothing remotely like the efflorescence of the Kashmir shawls. The shawl manufacturers in France and England first mainly copied the imported shawls and then began in the 1830s to create their own patterns as well as copying the Kashmir shawls. The next few images of European shawls illustrate their reliance on Kashmir design with enhancements.

This 1780 French or Scottish shawl is almost an exact reproduction of a Mogul shawl with a European style secondary smaller border and fringe.



French or Scottish drawloom silk shawl, 1780. Joan Hart Collection

The Edinburgh or French shawl below from around 1820 reproduces the Kashmir shawl development of that time with the added gallery around the central field and paisleys in the corner, with the increasing complexity of forms.



Edinbutgh or French Shawl, drawloom, 1820. Joan Hart collection

By 1845, you may recall, the designs of Kashmir shawls had become far more exuberant, filling almost fully the entire surface of the shawl with overlapping, colorful, somewhat unclear shapes and designs. The shawl below from France illustrates the closeness of this change in style to that of the Kashmir shawls of the 1840s and 1850s.



French Square Shawl, 1845, jacquard woven. Joan Hart Collection

And finally by 1855 and beyond, the French and other European manufactured shawls exhibit a riot of shape, color, overlapping forms and spaces, and are relatively unclear in their overall structure. The European shawls followed the Kashmir shawls in stylistic development, for the most part, and it is clear where the inspiration began.

If the European market was so influential on the Indian market, with consumers demanding certain styles, why did they continue to import Kashmir shawls? They could make their own, although the prestige and value of the Kashmir shawls was always higher than local production. European imitation shawls reliably depend on Kashmir designs, not the other way around.

The Kashmiris led the market, led the creative development of the shawls with their mastery over weaving technique, material and design, dyes and ideas. The stylistic evolution tells the story, despite the desire of western writers to appropriate this creation as their own or denigrate it.

A recent writer, Jeffrey Spurr has created a category of the “market shawl,” that for him begins around 1830 and continues to the end of production in the 1870s.⁶ This development of shawl styles has been described by Spurr and uniquely by him as the change from indigenous production for indigenous use of shawls to market production for Europeans. The term “market shawls” suggests that those Kashmir shawls are of lesser quality overall since they are not “indigenous,” “authentic” and purely derived from the imagination of a Kashmiri weaver.

To prove the pure market incentive for producing these shawls, he theorizes that no one in Kashmir used, wore or otherwise valued the later shawls, hence they were only made for export and the market. By calling them “market shawls” he devalues and colonizes the shawls. What is his proof of the lack of “authenticity”? His proof is that he finds few images of Kashmiris wearing these shawls. He examines photographs taken from 1867 on that were made to chronicle Indian life and discovers few examples of people wearing the shawls. Two historical facts are relevant here: photography as we know it was not invented until the 1840s and the photographs he describes were made long after the heyday of the Kashmir shawl which ended at the same time those photographs were taken. And there is even less photographic evidence of shawl wearing in Europe at the time, but we certainly know that a great many of the shawls were being made and worn.⁷ The photographs tell us nothing at all. So much for that theory.⁸

Ultimately, it does not matter if the shawls were made only for the “market” or only for Kashmir, although I believe both was true, as do most other scholars. The artistry they embody is uniquely Indian. They introduced something beautiful, colorful, complex, “other” into cultures that had nothing like them. The fact that Indians today still value them, want them for the dowry and special gifts for special occasions also tells us about their unique place in Indian memory and culture.

The Europeans were far more interested in emulating the Kashmir production, I believe, than the reverse. French manufacturers worked tirelessly over ninety years to create a shawl that reproduced every aspect of the Kashmir shawl to the point that inventing a loom that could fake the kani weave was the ultimate goal. Of all the properties of the Kashmir shawl, the unique

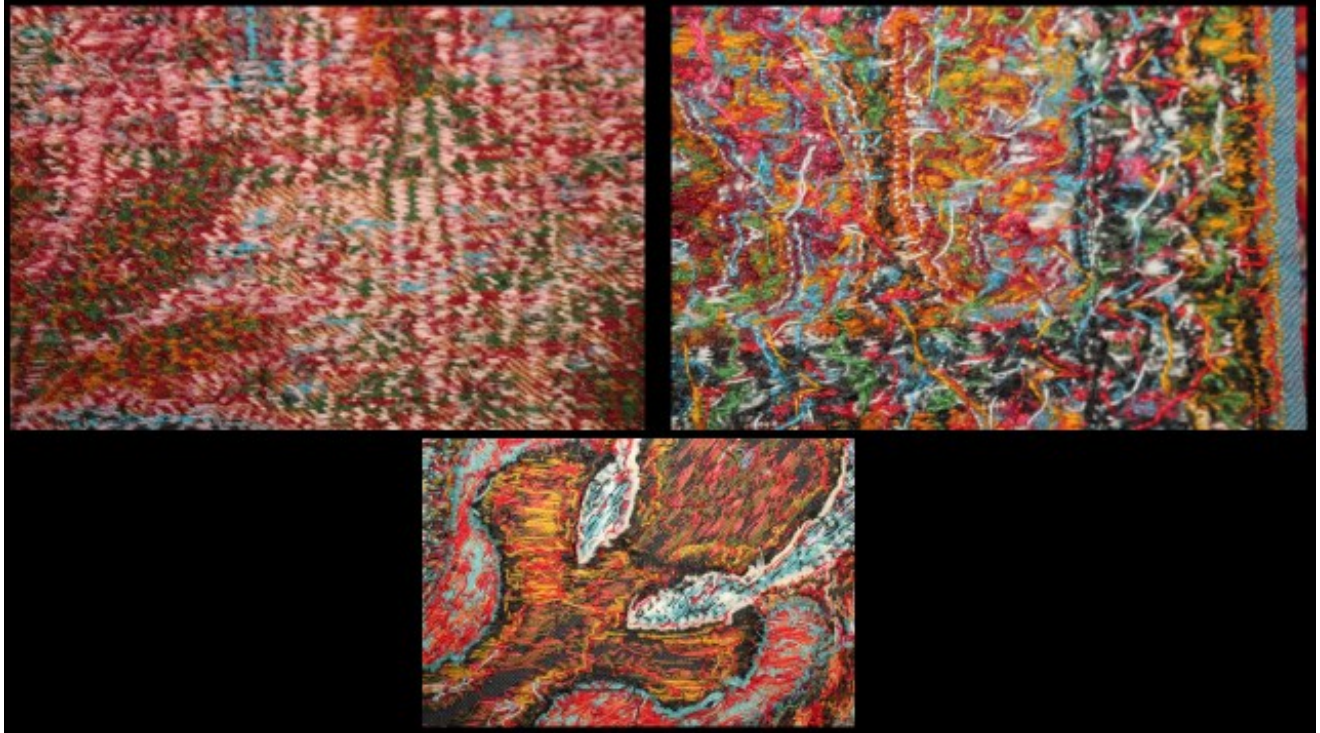
⁶ Jeffrey B. Spurr, “The Kashmir Shawl: Style and Markets.” in *Kashmir Shawls, the Tapi Collection*. (Mumbai: The Shoestring Publisher, 2012), pp. 52-55.

⁷ Levi-Strauss, *Cashmere Shawl*. Levi-Strauss illustrates the development of shawl production in France and Kashmir with numerous paintings and drawings, both European and Indian, of people wearing the shawls, from the beginning of production to the end in the 1870s. She produced only one photograph of a woman wearing a French shawl and even now, very few have surfaced.

⁸ Andrew Hale, “No Case for Lakai Suzani,” in *Vok Collection*, (Rippon Boswell Auction Catalogue, Wiesbaden: BDK, Selection 3, March 2017), pp. 17-20. Hale relates the tale of Spurr’s conjuring a whole new category of suzanis where suzanis were never made. Apparently Spurr’s assertions are suspect in other areas. Janet Rizvi, *Pashmina. The Kashmir Shawl and Beyond*. (Mumbai: Marg, 2009), Chapter 10 “The Kashmir shawl in India.” Rizvi provides extensive research to demonstrate that Kashmiris continued to value and wear the shawls during the first half of the nineteenth century and beyond, in the maharajas’ courts, in the business class, militias, in every walk of life. They were worn and traded far and wide throughout Kashmir, and beyond.

tapestry weave of the finest pashmina was the most revered. European production followed Kashmiri production.

And this returns us again to my shawl found in Mesa, Arizona. Let us take another look (first image). We found the weave was not kani nor is it a normal jacquard. The weave structure produced by a jacquard loom has a clear horizontal weft that is seen on the reverse of the shawl (lower left, top), which is quite different from a kani woven Kashmir shawl (bottom right) and the Mesa shawl (bottom). Until one masters recognizing the weave on the reverse of these shawls, it can be very difficult to distinguish a Kashmir shawl from a European one.



Upper Left: detail of reverse of jacquard woven shawl. Upper Right: reverse of Kashmir kani or double interlock tapestry woven shawl. Bottom: reverse of Mystery Mesa Shawl. Joan Hart Collection

While the Kashmir weavers maintained their hand weaving process, French manufacturers of shawls constantly improved jacquard looms to simplify and speed production, because even their shawls could be very time-consuming to set up and weave. The price differential between a Kashmir shawl and a jacquard shawl was immense.⁹ If one could figure out a method of emulating the kani weave using fast mechanical looms, and then fooling those who bought and sold shawls into believing they were authentic kani woven shawls, that might be a lucrative path to take.

The International Exhibition record of 1867 contains a discussion of a motorized loom that could activate the shuttle for “battant lanceur” and “battant brocheur” weaves which eliminated the

⁹ Rizvi, *Pashmina*, Chapter 11. Rizvi has done extensive research on pricing of shawls throughout all periods of production. Levi-Strauss, *Cashmere Shawl*, p. 19 on. Empress Josephine paid 8000 to 12,000 francs for her shawls.

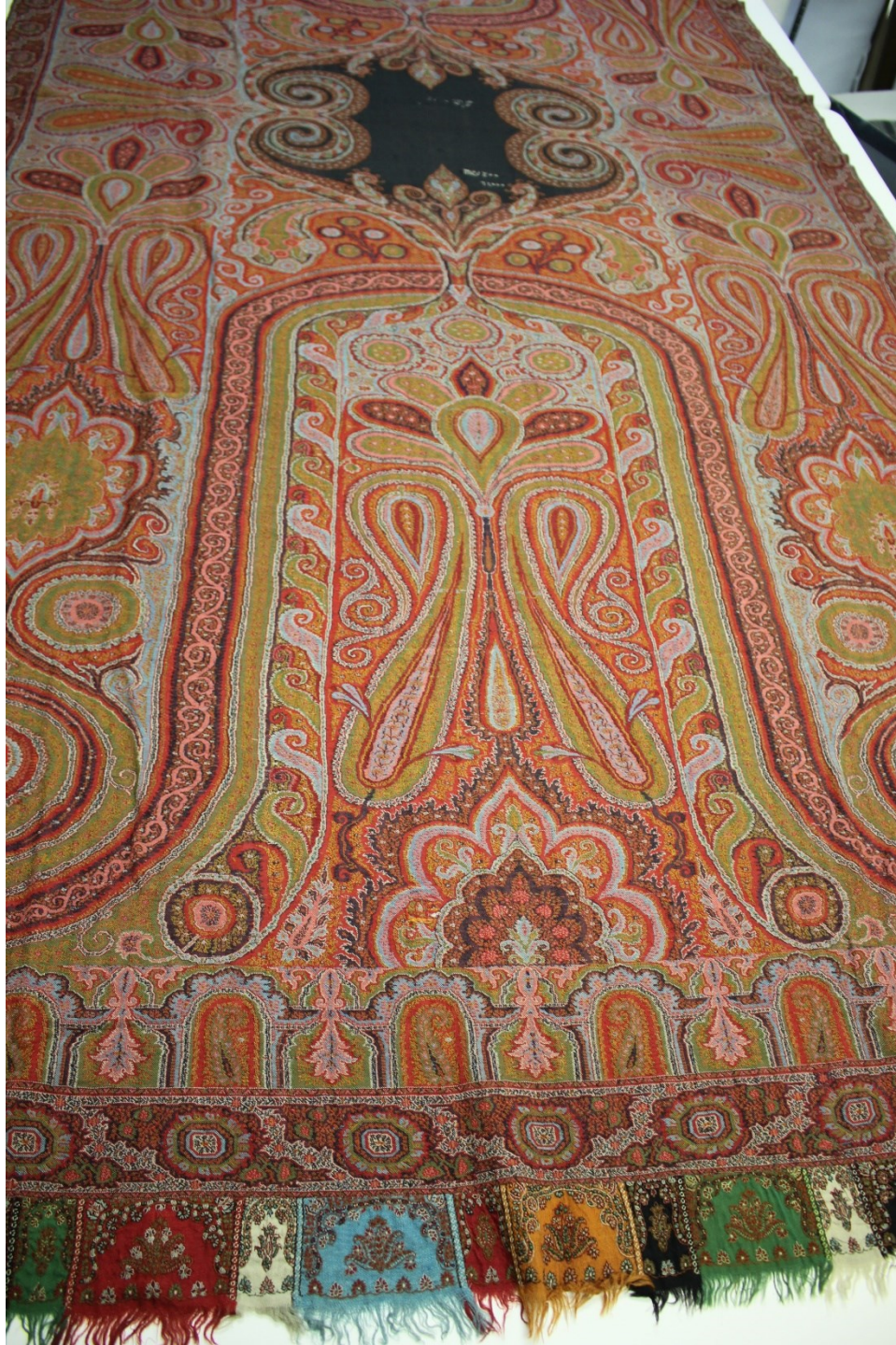
weft floats on the back of a shawl.¹⁰ For fifty years, French and other jacquard weavers had spent almost as much time cutting off the weft floats on the reverse of a shawl as it took to weave the shawl. Thus eliminating the weft floats was a substantial improvement. It sped up the weaving process. And the reverse side looked remarkably like the reverse of a Kashmir shawl. While it is probable that a large number of these battant brocheur shawls were made, the market for shawls was collapsing. In the past, only one of these battant brocheur shawls was known. I am introducing two more: one unpublished from Martha Boyd's collection, now in the Boston Museum of Fine Arts, and my Mystery Mesa shawl with a more radical weave, with each section of the pieced shawl woven battant brocheur and then sewn together.

The previously unknown battant brocheur shawls from around 1867 (below) in Boston closely resembles a kani woven shawl from Kashmir made thirty years earlier.¹¹ The clear intention was to faithfully reproduce a Kashmir shawl from the 1840s. The shawl has the same dimensions, same smashing symmetrical overall pattern, the same border designs with embroidered end gates, the same additional borders surrounding the main pattern of the ends, and has a signature in the center and on the ends that is difficult to read. All the features are present, although some of the colors are clearly aniline and harsher than those in a Kashmir shawl.

¹⁰ Ames, *Kashmir Shawl*, pp. 154-156, and 117. Ames indicates that the battant brocheur weave is recognizable, but the loom process is little understood. Special brocading shuttles were used to eliminate the floating wefts on the reverse, thus avoiding their removal, which was a wool and time saver. Ames offers information from the Exhibition of 1867.

Monique Levi-Strauss, *Cashmere, A French Passion 1800-1880*. (London: Thames and Hudson, 2013), pp. 96-98. In identifying a previously known battant brocheur shawl which she and Ames illustrate, Levi-Strauss concludes that they should be called "spoulineur" shawls and that they were most probably made by Lecoq, Gruyer and Cie. who won a first class medal for their "Indian shawls" at the Exposition of 1867 in France. As this is as much a guess as the battant brocheur nomenclature, I am sticking with that for now.

¹¹ I studied and photographed this shawl when it was in the American Textile History Museum in Lowell, Massachusetts and thank the former museum curators Karen Herbaugh and Stephanie Hebert for their kind permission to photograph and study this and other shawls in the collection of Martha Boyd. I thank Pamela Parmal at the Boston Museum of Fine Arts where the shawl now resides.



French Battant Brocheur woven Shawl, c. 1860. Boston Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, Massachusetts. Accession number 2017.1186. (Formerly collection of Martha Boyd)

The idea for French weavers was to continually improve looms, add technological advances like steam motors to run the looms, reduce waste in materials, be prepared for new style developments, and speed up the process. The battant brocheur breakthrough was a huge advance, but it came too late to make a dent in the Kashmir production. The resulting shawls are

an almost perfect emulation of the Kashmir shawl: note the end border or gate design that is embroidered exactly as a Kashmir shawl would be, with the same type of lotus pattern in the woven border and all the large patterns emulating exactly Kashmir paisley patterns. The reverse of this shawl is identical to the small pieces comprising the square Mystery Mesa shawl. It may have been made on the same loom. However, the weavers failed in one area: the warp yarn is tie dyed and it can be seen in the central field (see below) in red and white. These warp threads were not exactly aligned with the weft in these sections and are a clear indication this is a French shawl, as no other region used the tie dyed aligned warp yarns!



Detail, center, French Battant Brocheur shawl, c. 1860s. Boston Museum of Fine Arts. Boston, Massachusetts.

I have proposed that the trajectory of the design of the Kashmir shawl from simple to complex followed a similar development to that of other art objects, like paintings. I have argued that this development was indigenous to the Muslim weaving culture of Kashmir. This development did not occur in a vacuum.

The motivation of Europeans to imitate the Kashmir shawl has been demonstrated in many ways, while the reverse has not been empirically proven. The very otherness and Oriental presence of the Kashmir shawls made it an object for desire and emulation, as it became a central motif in French literature as well as costume. And it is often called the most beautiful textile ever made. The French finally were able to achieve a successful imitation of the shawls, but too late because the market was dying out just when the fakes could be mass produced. This and the other battant brocheur shawls illustrate the last attempt to coopt and fully conquer the Kashmir shawl. The

theory of the masterful input of the French and other merchants on the Indian shawl trade and the “market” shawl should end. It is an irrelevant remnant of the colonial past.

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