

To Sikh or Not to Sikh: In Defense of the Sikh Shawl

Frank Ames

Abstract

This essay challenges the long-held claim that European, particularly French, design influenced the Kashmir shawl during the early 19th century. Instead, it argues that the transformation in shawl motifs, marked by architectural, geometric, and Khalsa-inspired imagery, originated within the Sikh cultural and political milieu of Punjab under Maharaja Ranjit Singh. Drawing on French archival records, rare *kani* shawls, and regional history, the study affirms the Kashmir shawl's indigenous evolution and rejects the notion of European artistic precedence.

Keywords: *Sikh shawls, Kashmiri shawls, kani shawls, colonial art history, Khalsa symbolism in textiles*

Introduction

Following Maharaja Ranjit Singh's annexation of Kashmir in 1819, the design of the Kashmir shawl underwent a significant transformation. Traditional floral paisley patterns, or *butas*, that typically adorned the ends of long shawls were replaced with geometric, architectural, and symbolic motifs inspired by the Khalsa culture of Punjab.

Under Ranjit Singh's peaceful reign, Punjab witnessed a surge in extensive construction projects, including forts, the renovations of monuments, and the Harmandir Sahib. This surge in architectural activity, and the detailed blueprints required for these endeavors, likely influenced the evolving artistry of the Kashmir shawl designs. Sikh warriors and the *Akalis*⁹ contributed motifs derived from their weapons, such as bows, arrows, and quoits, which hold metaphorical significance in the *Sri Guru Granth Sahib* [central religious scripture of Sikhism].

Some Western scholars have suggested that this design shift was influenced by Europe's emerging imitation shawl industry or have dismissed these creations as mere "export shawls"—a term that undermines India's rightful ownership of this textile art form.¹⁰ Such claims wrongly imply that Europe, rather than India, deserves credit for this unique artistic tradition.

This essay argues the opposite. It explores the geo-political, artistic, and cultural environment of early 19th-century Punjab, particularly the Khalsa ethos, wartime symbolism, and architectural innovations, that inspired the Kashmir shawl's design shift. It also demonstrates that the European imitation shawl industry,

⁹ Akalis, also known as *nihangs* (crocodiles), were extremely courageous warriors, some of whom formed a part of the Sikh army.

¹⁰ In *Kashmir Shawls* (TAPI Collection, 2010), Jeff Spurr dismisses the idea of a Sikh-period shawl without providing proof (p. 53). Professor Louis Fenech also expressed skepticism, both in his article (*Sikh Formations*, 2012) and in his review of *Woven Masterpieces of Sikh Heritage* (2015). I reached out to Fenech after his review, but no substantive reply was received. In private correspondence (2010), Dr. Steven Cohen likewise stated he would remain unconvinced without definitive evidence of a Sikh shawl tradition.

especially in France, had no influence on the authentic Kashmir shawls woven during Ranjit Singh's era. A detailed chronology of events in France—the then leading country in imitation shawl production—highlights the extent to which French manufacturers relied on India's unparalleled design creativity to satisfy the fashion demands of their noble clientele.

It was only after 1851, following the Crystal Palace Exhibition in Hyde Park, London, that French shawl agents arrived in Srinagar, with the latest fashion in shawl patterns. This is when the so-called “export shawl” was created (fig. 7).

To situate the present argument, I briefly trace the path my research has taken over the past four decades. My inquiry, first touched on in *The Kashmir Shawl and its Indo-French Influence* (1986), where I explored the shawl's design evolution under four successive regimes: Mughal, Afghan, Sikh, and Dogra. At that time, I mentioned the Sikh influence only briefly, considering it a plausible but unverified hypothesis. Little did I realize that I had uncovered an artistic legacy overlooked by both Indian and Western scholars. This early recognition deepened with my second book, *Woven Masterpieces of Sikh Heritage* (WMSH2010), which explored the potential Western influences, including the role of foreign mercenaries in early Sikh shawl development. Although constrained by the scarcity of surviving shawl examples, the book's strength lay in the rare and exceptional *kani* [woven twill tapestry] shawls I was able to gather. These pieces offered a compelling visual narrative, connecting Punjab's cultural environment with the intricate, evolving iconography of the shawls.

Since the publication of WMSH, no textile scholar has presented a credible counterargument supporting the European influence theory. Despite the absence of formal counterarguments in the literature, some scholars have expressed skepticism—both in published work and private correspondence. This ongoing silence may stem from limited knowledge about the history of the shawl in France, a country that held a leading role in European textile design and production. Understanding that context is essential if we are to have a meaningful debate.

With my forthcoming book, *Pashmina Jewels* (due out July 2025), I am now able to assert with greater confidence that the design transformation of the Kashmir shawl's was rooted not in Europe, but in the symbolic ideas, architectural motifs, and contemporary events of Sikh culture and Punjab.¹¹ Drawing on extensive, largely ignored French archival records, I present clear evidence that dispels any lingering doubts about France's influence on these designs in the 1820s and 1830s. Rather than inspiring Kashmir, France relied heavily on the innovative shawl patterns arriving from India year after year.

¹¹ *Pashmina Jewels: The Khanuja Family Collection of Kashmir shawls, with Introduction by Professor Jean-Marie Lafont*. Now in final stages of publication by Roli Books, New Delhi.

Note (Figs. 1–6): A rapid historical glimpse of the Kashmir shawl’s pattern development during the Mughal (1586–1753), Afghan (1753–1820), Sikh (1819–1846), and Dogra (1846–) periods. Shown here are boteh (also known as butas or paisley) motifs repeated along the extremities of long shawls.



Fig. 1: This collage of Mughal shawl details illustrates the open spacing between botehs, a trait that diminished under Afghan rule in Kashmir.



Fig. 2: Boteh details from the latter half of the 18th century.



Fig. 3: Boteh details, circa 1775–1810.

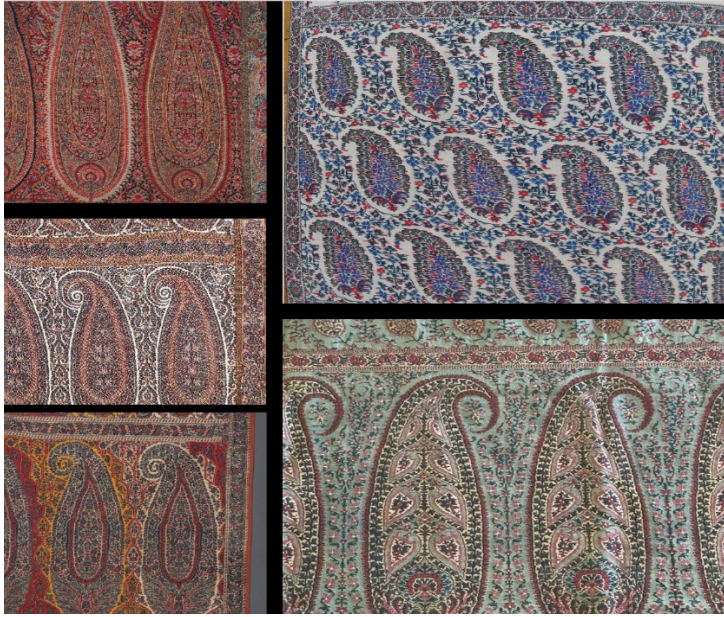


Fig. 4: These patterns (left side and bottom right) resemble sketches made by William Moorcroft and dispatched to England in 1822.



Fig. 5: Alongside traditional shawl products, there were essentially two types of long shawls during the Sikh period: the "Moorcroft" type (as seen in Fig. 4), and those represented here, showcasing a new design sensibility—the Sikh school—defined by geometric, architectonic, and symbolic ideas that emerged during Maharaja Ranjit Singh's reign.



Fig. 6: French influence profoundly impacted Kashmir shawl design following the Crystal Palace Exhibition of 1851. This selection of five images clearly illustrates that stylistic shift.

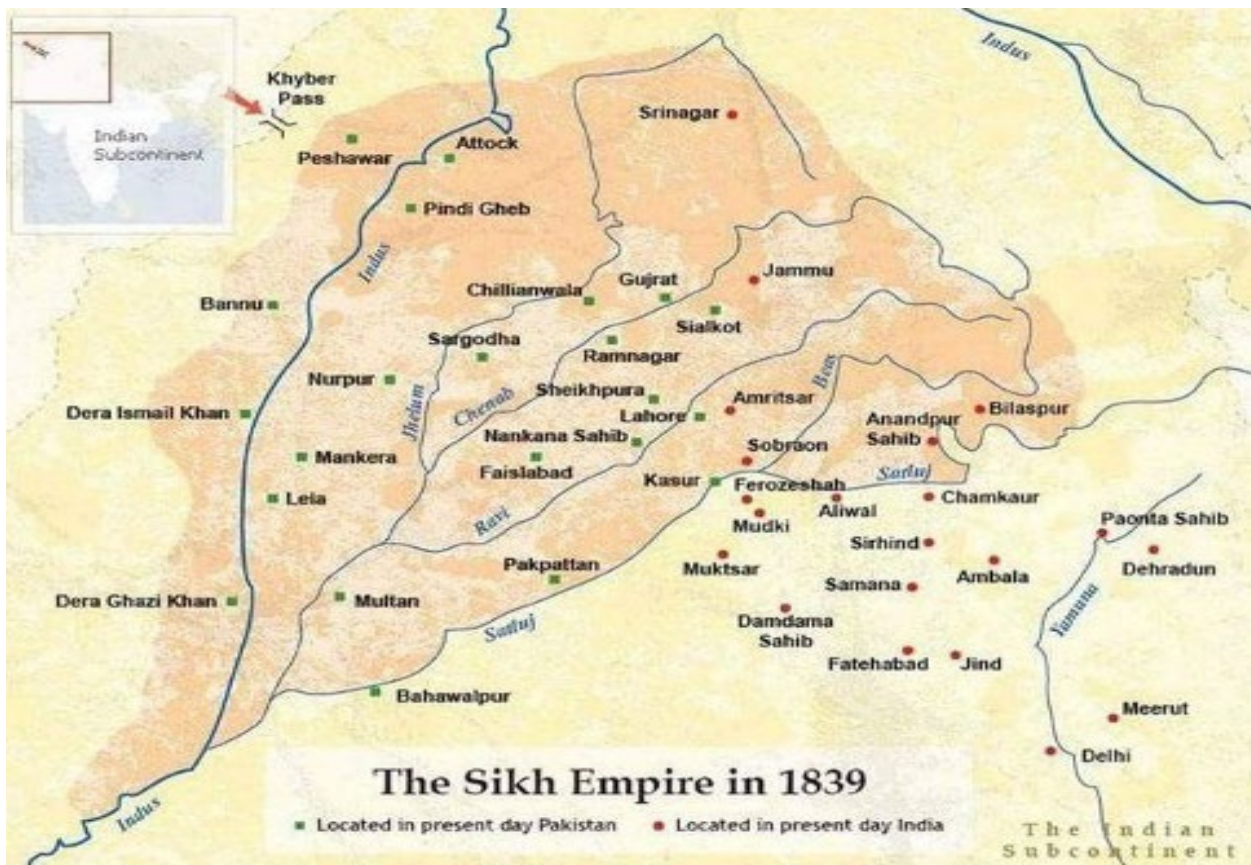


Fig. 7: Map of the Sikh Empire in 1839.

Setting the Stage

Situated just below Kashmir in northern India, Punjab is a region defined by five rivers, which endured intense conflict throughout the 18th century (fig. 7). It became a battleground for numerous powers and religious groups, including the Afghans, Mughals, Sikhs, Pathans, Marathas, Rohillas, and eventually the British, all vying for control over this strategically vital land, comparable in size to France. Amid this turbulence, the Sikhs emerged victorious under the leadership of Maharaja Ranjit Singh, who annexed Kashmir in 1819.¹

During the early years of Sikh dominance, around 1820-1825, a significant transformation occurred in the Kashmir shawl industry. The design, once dominated by simple paisley motifs (*buta*) placed at either end of the long, twill-woven pashmina shawl, evolved into a far more intricate and dynamic style, one that extended across the entire surface of the tapestry.

This article explores the relationship between these evolving shawl designs and the artistic, religious, and military milieu fostered under Ranjit Singh's reign. For the first time, the previously fragmented and often warring Sikh *misls* [chiefdoms] were united under a central authority, whose military strength nearly rivaled that of British India. In this environment, a wave of artistic innovation flourished among Kashmiri, Sikh, and Pahari artisans, giving rise to a distinctive design language.

Shawls began to feature geometric forms, such as eight-pointed stars, circles, spear shapes, sweeping curves, and architectonic patterns, all merging together in a flowing, rhythmic fashion (figs. 8 right, 9, and 10). This stylistic energy might be likened to a form of music, or even to bursts of fireworks. New symbolic motifs, such as bows and arrows, quivers, boats, quoits, and the Sikh ceremonial dagger [*kirpan*]²—one of the five symbols of the Khalsa—became prominent (figs. 11 and 12). Another recurring motif may represent the *gurdwara* [Sikh temple], woven into the shawl's twill patterns (fig. 9). Shawl designs, previously restricted to the extreme ends [*pallu*] of the shawl, began to expand across the entire fabric, leaving almost no part of the shawl unadorned except for a small, plain center.³ The majestic, avant-garde pattern in fig. 13, evoking the *sarlah*³ patterns of illuminated manuscripts (see fig. 14)—challenges our very definition of the word 'shawl'. Its theatrical statement foreshadows, by nearly a century, the West's Art Deco period.

¹ V. A. Smith, *The Oxford History of India*, p. 548-594, Oxford Univ. Press, 1981

² Until the dawn of the 19th century, long shawls were wide swaths of plain pashmina with just the extremities embellished with a running pattern of botehs (paisleys). French soldiers returning from Napoléon's Egyptian campaigns with Kashmir shawl souvenirs stirred a craze for the article. The fashion was fueled by Imperatrice Josephine who is said to have over 400 of these extremely expensive shoulder mantles.

³ The term *sarlah* refers to Sikh illuminated manuscripts and normally denotes the opening illuminated page containing the Mul Mantar.

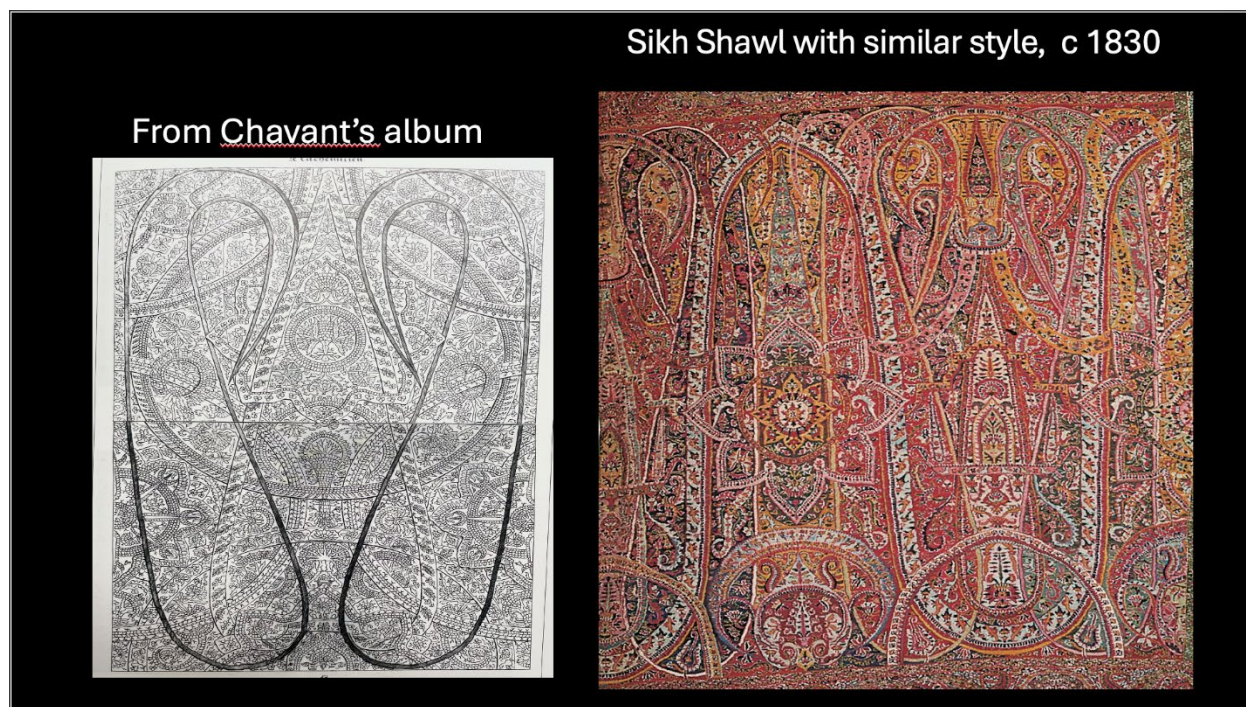


Fig. 8: Fleuri Chavant published albums for the French weaving industry based on Indian Kashmir shawls. In *Le Cachmirien*, (National Library, Paris) we see a pattern stylistically similar to the pallu detail on the right (Banaras Hindu University Art Museum). The lotus, quoit, obelisk, Ik Omkar flourish, star, cypress tree, and paisley all seem to vie for prominence.



Fig. 9: Colonnaded structure (pavilion or gurdwara?), pagoda-like roof (Himalayan influence), ogives, and heavy bracket. This enigmatic shawl's cryptic symbolism will likely puzzle scholars for years. Exceptionally rare and unique. Khanuja Coll.



Fig. 10: Pallu detail of a unique Kashmir shawl believed to depict the samadhi boat used to carry Maharaja Ranjit Singh's body. TAPI Coll. Kangra artists may have contributed to the weaving. (See Fig. 20 for boat detail. Color variation noted.)



Fig. 11: Detail of a recurve bow with its vibrating string and a downward-pointing arrow—possibly just released. An exceptionally rare and unique shawl. Khanuja Coll.

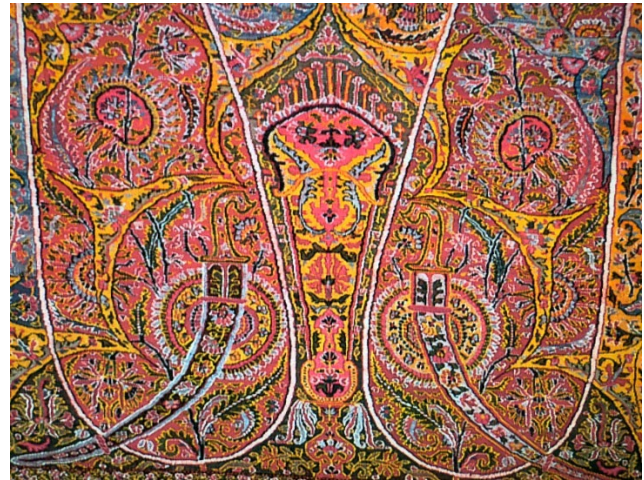


Fig. 12: Shawl detail showing two kirpans (possibly miri-piri) sheathed and facing one another. Between them a quiver - also flanked by shields-filled with seventeen arrows.



Fig. 13: This striking 1825 Kashmir shawl pattern not only anticipates Art Deco but, with its avant-garde graphic language, evokes sarlah motifs from illuminated Sikh or Islamic manuscripts. Crafts Museum, Delhi.



Fig. 14: Page from a Guru Granth Sahib manuscript illustrating the expansive cursive flourish above "Ik Onkar," melding into the sarloh illumination. (See Fig. 27.)

Artistic Influences in the Rise of the Sikh Shawl

What sparked this new artistic movement during the Sikh period? Could it have drawn inspiration from sacred Sikh texts like the *Janamsakhi* [biographies of Guru Nanak] or the *Sri Adi Granth* [Sri Guru Granth Sahib, the Sikh scripture]? Perhaps it was influenced by artists closely associated with Maharaja Ranjit Singh's court in Lahore. Was Imam Bakhsh Lahori, one of the most prominent Punjabi artists of the time, a key figure in this creative wave?⁴

Or did the influence trickle down from the Pahari princely states, following Raja Sansar Chand's submission to Ranjit Singh? Maybe it originated with the Pandit Seu family of artists from Guler, whose legacy shaped the work of numerous regional painters. Lahore itself housed many thriving workshops, including Muhammad Bakhsh Sahhaf's atelier, where these ideas could have blossomed. The foreign military commanders and mercenaries who trained Ranjit Singh's elite forces (*Fauj-i-Khas*) may also have played a role. Their distinctive battle gear (fig. 15), and the extravagant military style of Ranjit's Napoleonic generals, Allard and Ventura, who arrived between 1822 and 1827, could have left an impression.⁵ Was it due to commemorative designs inspired by the Sikh's major victory at the battle of Naushera in 1823? Undoubtedly, this vibrant and cosmopolitan environment stirred the imaginations of weavers and craftsmen, who eagerly incorporated bold and artistic influences into their designs.

⁴ Barbara Schmitz and Jean-Marie Lafont, "The Painter Imam Bakhsh of Lahore", pp. 74-99 in *After the Great Mughals: Painting in Delhi and the Regional Courts in the 18th and 19th Centuries*, Ed. By Schmitz, Marg Publications, June 2002

⁵ For details on foreign mercenaries working under Maharaja Ranjit Singh: *Jean-Marie Lafont Essays in Indo-French Relations 1630-1976* Indika, Manohar, 2000.

One traveler, William Moorcroft⁶, an early 19th-century British veterinarian and explorer, stands out for his detailed account of the Kashmir shawl industry. During his extended stay in Srinagar (a city in the Kashmir Valley) in 1822, just a few years after Ranjit Singh's annexation of the valley, Moorcroft observed a shawl with an unusual border known in Kashmiri as *hashiyadar kunguradar*. He described it as having a distinctive border with an inner design resembling the crenellations of Asiatic forts, complete with narrow embrasures for wall pieces or matchlocks, thus giving it its name.⁷

A surviving shawl corroborates Moorcroft's account, showcasing an early example of *kani* [twill tapestry] architecture and signaling a pivotal shift in shawl design trends (fig. 16).⁸ By 1830, the shawl had become a vibrant canvas for an eclectic mix of geometric, architectural, curved forms, oblongs, and strange, hybrid shapes, all intermingling in a visually enigmatic and intricate manner.



Fig. 15: Akali with dasta bunga, 19th c.

Left Variations of the quoit, a sharp war instrument. Khanuja Coll.

Right: A Sikh warrior's armament—including recurve bow, arrows, quiver, and shield—woven into Kashmir tapestry shawls. (See Figs. 11 & 12.)



Fig. 16: A detail of the hashiya (border) from a long Kashmir shawl. This kani weave (twill tapestry) is the earliest known example of architectural illustration on an Indian Kashmir shawl. While not matching Moorcroft's 1822 description, it reflects early use of architectural motifs in shawl design. Thakar Coll.

⁶ Moorcroft, W., (and Trebeck, G), *Travels in the Himalayan provinces of Hindustan and the Panjab; in Ladakh and Kashmir; in Peshawar, Kabul, Kunduz and Bokhara from 1819-1825*. London, 1841

⁷ John Irwin, *The Kashmir Shawl*, p. 28, V&A, 1973

⁸ See, for example, WMSH, p. 190

The Sikh Imprint on Shawl Design

The transformation of Kashmir shawl design in the early nineteenth century was not a coincidence, but the natural outgrowth of a new visual vitality sparked under Sikh rule. The quintessential Sikh-era shawl pattern is a mosaic of overlapping imagery, conveying a multitude of intricate relationships and potential metaphors, many of which remain open to interpretation. When we explore these designs within the framework of Euclidean spaces and isometries (where one form is embedded within another; motifs are mirrored, rotated, and arranged in layered symmetry), we encounter a pivotal moment for the Kashmiri shawl. At this crossroads, simplicity, order, and clarity of line converge with the layered complexity of a new pictorial language woven from symbolic motifs.

Earlier Kashmir shawl designs, particularly in the Mughal weavings, there was little to dissect intellectually—nothing to disturb the viewer’s sense of balance. These patterns, such as Mughal floral motifs (fig 1), evoked an immediate visual connection. The graceful movement of flowers and blossoms mirrored the iconic Mughal aesthetic, typified by the triple-bend [*tribhanga*] sway of floral motifs found on carpets, in miniatures, and even in architectural sculptures. This style was a creative fusion of Persian and European iconography with an indigenous Indian artistic heritage. During the Afghan period in Kashmir, the shawl retained its signature *boteh* motif (a teardrop, pinecone, or mango shape), with artists competing to see how creatively they could arrange flowers within the *boteh*’s distinctive curvilinear form (figs. 2 and 3).

In recent decades, interest in Sikh art has been reignited, beginning with William Archer’s landmark publication *Paintings of the Sikhs* (1953), followed by the pioneering research of B.N. Goswamy. Over the past two decades, three significant exhibitions on Sikh art have taken place, showcasing paintings, coins, textiles, metalwork, and armaments.⁹ While these exhibitions may not define a singular, unified “Sikh style,” they highlight what Barbara Schmitz has described as “a new function,” which, when considered alongside visual style, serves as a hallmark of the era’s art.¹⁰ Yet, in the absence of a cohesive Sikh artistic style, the extensive catalogues from these exhibitions tend to feature artifacts that, while ethnically and culturally significant, are often utilitarian objects typical of the Punjab region during that time, rather than definitive examples of Sikh art.

Understanding Sikh art requires familiarity with the Sikh sacred texts, primarily the *Sri Guru Granth Sahib* and the *Janamsakhis*. The *Granth Sahib*, the central sacred scripture, comprises over 6,000 poetic hymns (*shabads*), each composed within specific raga styles. In contrast, the *Janamsakhis* recount the life stories of Guru Nanak, compiled by early followers and later Sikh scholars. In the late 18th and 19th centuries, both texts experienced a renaissance of artistic expression, making them rich sources of Sikh iconography. The illustrations and illuminations in these scriptures may also offer valuable insights into the artistic evolution of the Kashmir shawl.

⁹ Susan Stronge (ed.), *The Arts of the Sikh Kingdoms*, V&A Museum, 1999; B. N. Goswamy, *Piety and Splendour: Sikh Heritage in Art*, 2000, exhibition held at the National Museum, Delhi and the Rubin Museum, NY.

¹⁰ Private email correspondence with Dr. Barbara Schmitz, June 2008

The *Granth Sahib* makes repeated references to dyeing, particularly in the color red, which serves as both simile and metaphor in Guru Nanak's teachings. "The Lord dyed in deep red; the Lord is an expert dyer; He who has been dyed in the red is of great good fortune; dyed in fast color, the color that never fades" is one example of how Nanak linked spiritual depth with the act of dyeing. Although red is frequently mentioned, it seems that green during this period emerged as one of the favored colors among Sikhs, (fig. 17) while saffron held sacred significance, especially for Hindus.¹¹

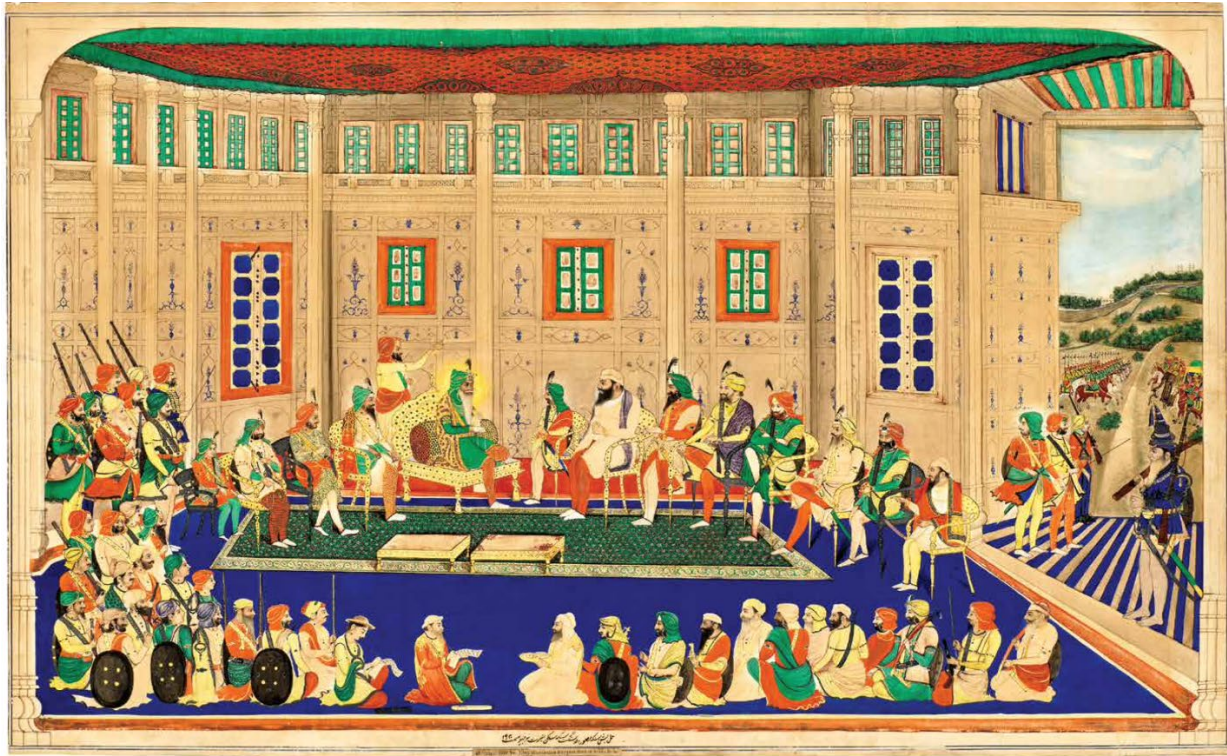


Fig. 17: Maharaja Ranjit Singh in Durbar, by Bishan Singh (1836–1900). Possibly Amritsar. Note the prominence of green in clothing and shawls. Khanuja Coll.

In Guru Nanak's moral teachings on clothing, we also find symbolic descriptions of attire: "Truth and charity are my white clothes; the blackness of sin is erased by my wearing of blue clothes, and meditation on the Lord's Lotus feet is my robe of honor; contentment is my cummerbund."¹² The metaphor extends further, suggesting that wearing virtuous attire leads to spiritual fulfillment: "O Baba, the pleasures of other clothes are false, wearing them, the body is ruined, and wickedness and corruption enter into the mind."

The *Granth* also draws on warrior imagery, likening spiritual understanding to the warrior's gear: "The understanding of Your Way, Lord, is horses, saddles, and bags of gold for me¹³; the pursuit of virtue is my

¹¹ Henry T Prinsep writes, "All dressed in yellow and light green being the favorite colour of his court, and called Basanti, or the colours of Spring". P129 of *Origins of the Sikh Power in the Punjab and Political life of Maharaja Runit Singh with and account of Religion, Laws and customs of the Sikh* (compiled by HTP) 1970 Language Department, Punjab, Patiala.

See also: Gurdeep Kaur & Rohita Sharma, *Interpretation of Maharaja Ranjit Singh in Portraiture: An Overview*. *Bharatiya Pragna*., Phagwara, Punjab, vol. 1, no. 3, Lovely Professional University, 2016

¹² Sri Guru Granth Sahib Ji – Ang 16

¹³ From Srigranth.org: [Page 16, Line 17](#) [ਘੋੜੇ ਪਾਖਰ ਸੁਝਨੇ ਸਾਖਤਿ ਬੂਝਣੁ ਤੇਰੀ ਵਾਟ ॥ ਘੋੜੇ ਪਾਖਰ ਸੁਝਨੇ ਸਾਖਤਿ ਬੂਝਣੁ ਤੇਰੀ ਵਾਟ ॥]

bow and arrow, my quiver, sword and scabbard; to be distinguished with honor is my drum and banner (Ang 16, SGGS).” See figs. 11, 12, and 18.



Fig. 18: Full pallu (end panel) featuring bow, arrow, shield, and kirpan motifs. (See Figs. 11 & 12 for close-up details).
Khanuja Coll.

Despite these vivid references to dyes, garments, and warrior attire, there is a notable absence of any reference to shawls in the *Granth Sahib*, even though Guru Nanak was born near Lahore and married in Batala¹⁴, both towns situated on the main route connecting Punjab to Kashmir, a region synonymous with shawl-making.

In contrast, the *Janamsakhi* present vivid anecdotes about the life of Guru Nanak, many of which later entered the visual arts through miniature painting. Some of the most popular stories include Nanak’s wedding, his sleeping at Mecca with his feet pointed toward the Kaaba, and the famous tale of Nanak lying under a tree, with a snake’s hood providing him shade from the sun. Nanak’s loyal companions, Bhai Bala and Mardana, the rabab player, frequently appear alongside him in these paintings. However, beyond miniature art, the influence of *Janamsakhi* narratives appear limited in other crafts. This absence is notable when compared to some 19th-century *kani* shawl weavings, which feature Hindu devotional figures such as Krishna and Radha.

¹⁴ See *Guru Nanak’s Life and Thought*, M. Kaur & P. Singh, Guru Nanak Dev University, Amritsar, 2012

Key Players in the Punjab

During the early nineteenth century, Lahore thrived under Maharaja Ranjit Singh, becoming a vibrant center of building and artistic activity. Among the notable figures was Muhammed Bakhsh Sahhaf, the city's most prominent bookseller and an accomplished artist. He was a close associate—if not a relative—of the famous artist Imam Bakhsh Lahori¹⁵. Sahhaf's illustrated and calligraphic books were in high demand across India and Iran. The Ahluwalia, Majithia, and Sandhanwalia misls, long-time patrons of the arts, became even more prominent during Ranjit Singh's rule. His court, alongside European officers like Generals Allard and Ventura, frequently employed mural painters to decorate their palaces, gurdwaras, public buildings, and homes. Additionally, the influential Dogra Brothers—Gulab, Suchet, and Dhyan Singh—worked closely with Ranjit Singh, contributing to the flourishing artistic scene.

Many artists during this time hailed from Kangra, which had been ruled by Raja Sansar Chand, a serious art connoisseur and avid collector of miniature paintings. After Ranjit Singh annexed Kangra in 1809, many artists migrated¹⁶ to other hill regions and cities like Lahore and Amritsar, continuing their craft in these vibrant hubs and enriching the emerging Sikh visual culture. Indeed, the well-known shawl-motif paintings dispatched to England in 1822 were painted by Kangra artists engaged by Moorcroft (fig. 19).



Fig. 19: During his two-year sojourn in Kashmir, Moorcroft commissioned Kangra artists to create dozens of shawl sketches, which he sent to England in 1822. Shown at right is an actual example (MET Museum); on the left is a photocopy that highlights a barely visible hooked vine—a principal motif of the Sikh period and an early indicator of the Sikh school.

A particularly remarkable discovery linking Kangra artistry and shawl iconography comes from a Kangra miniature painting depicting the funeral of Maharaja Ranjit Singh¹⁷ (fig. 20 right). In this somber painting, the body of Maharaja Ranjit Singh is laid out on a bier, while seven of his slave girls prepare to commit sati on the pyre. In the corner of the

¹⁵ In a personal correspondence of 28 July 2010 Dr. Barbara Schmitz has stated "Only time will tell if M. B. Lahori and M. B. Sahhaf, the bookseller and bookbinder of Lahore are the same person or two different artists. There is an ambiguity here, true"

¹⁶ W. G. Archer, *Paintings of the Sikhs*, p. 25, V&A Museum, London, 1966

¹⁷ The Cremation of Maharaja Runjit Singh, gouache painting, Kangra, British Museum, c. 1840. For a detailed discussion, see WMSH, p. 112. The actual shawl is in the TAPI Coll. Surat

painting, a garland-draped boat with flags is depicted on a bier placed stern to bow. Some years ago, I identified an unusual motif on a *kani* shawl in my collection that closely corresponded to the garlanded boat depicted in the Kangra painting (fig. 10). This motif of the boat, along with the bow and arrow mentioned earlier, became popular symbols in Kashmir shawl designs.



Fig. 20: Left: Detail of Maharaja Ranjit Singh's 'Samadhi' Shawl. Note details of boat, bier, fluttering flags, and flames. Right: Kangra painting, c 1840. In the lower left corner of the painting is the boat used for Maharaja Ranjit Singh's samadhi procession. British Museum.

Although Ranjit Singh annexed Kashmir in 1819, the real artistic and cultural energy of the Sikh world remained firmly anchored in Punjab. The revival of Kashmir shawl design owes more to the fertile imagination of Punjab than to Srinagar, where Sikh presence was minimal beyond the Maharaja's military forces. The Sikh heartland was in Punjab, particularly in the area west of the Sutlej River, where twelve misls controlled the region, with Lahore as the political and cultural center.

French botanist Victor Jacquemont, who traveled through Punjab during Ranjit Singh's reign, observed that noble Sikh sardars maintained shawl workshops¹⁸ in Srinagar to ensure a steady supply of high-quality shawls. Furthermore, a series of Company style paintings produced for the 1867 Universal Exhibition in Paris¹⁹ (fig. 21) suggests that Lahore itself may have housed its own shawl ateliers perhaps even before Kashmir's annexation.

Studying textiles from this period, however, presents significant challenges. India's harsh climate, along with early neglect of preserving archival materials, means that many pieces of the puzzle have been lost. As Jeevan Singh Deol, an eminent scholar of Sikh studies, notes, that many illustrated texts depicting Sikh themes, or commissioned by Sikh patrons have been widely scattered across regions, making serious study difficult. In his seminal article, "Sikh Scriptural Manuscripts", Deol observes, "In a very real sense, illustrated and illuminated Adi Granth manuscripts are a window into a lost Sikh cultural universe. Their disappearance marks a major change in notions of cultural prestige and attitudes toward the

¹⁸ V. Jacquemont, *Voyage dans l'Inde*, vol. 3, p. 289, Paris, 1841

¹⁹ Exhibition Catalogue, *Kashmir Shawls; Woven Art & Cultural Document. A unique collection of Indian drawings illustrating the production of Kashmir shawls, commissioned for the 1867 Paris Exposition*. Kyburg Limited, London, 1988

physical form of scripture. At this stage of research, we know regrettably little about the geographical, temporal, and social distribution of adorned manuscripts, and even less about the patrons, scribes, and artists who created them.”²⁰ Until more of these fragmented records are recovered, it will remain somewhat difficult to understand the multiple meanings and intentions that lay behind the creation and use of the Sikh shawl.

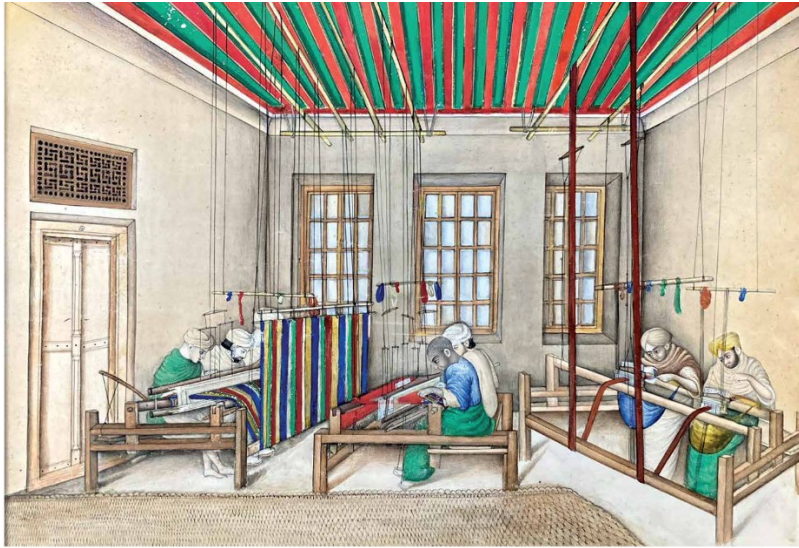


Fig. 21: A karkhandar (weaving workshop), likely in Amritsar, showing weavers managing tojis (bobbins) to insert tapestry wefts. Attributed to Bishan Singh. Likely commissioned by the French East India Company for the 1867 Paris Universal Exhibition. Khanuja Coll.

While initially skeptical about the Sikh authorship of shawl design, Professor Louis Fenech has also offered important insights into the possible symbolic meanings of the Sikh shawl. In an illuminating essay, he suggested a particularly intriguing idea: that the Sikh shawl may have symbolized a subtle defiance against the British, serving as a way of “contesting claims of authority put forward by British hegemony.”²¹ This interpretation would have been especially true of the richly detailed map shawls (shawls woven with cartographic imagery) of Srinagar (fig. 22). It also aligns with other Kashmir *rumals* [handkerchiefs or square cloths] that depict soldiers on parade, highlighting Sikh military strength, albeit more overtly than the classic Sikh shawls with geometric and architectural motifs that represent a unique artistic language.



Fig. 22: Map shawl (detail) of Srinagar, c. 1830s–1840s. V&A.

²⁰ Deol, Jeevan Singh, *Illustration and Illumination in Sikh Scriptural Manuscripts*, Marg, Mumbai, Vol. 54, No. 4, June 2003

²¹ Ranjit Singh, The Shawl, and the Kaub-I Iqbāl-I Punjāb, *Sikh Formations*, Volume 8, 2012 - Issue 2

Fenech averred that an opportunity was missed by not referencing the use of *rumals* covering the Sri Guru Granth Sahib, though no known examples in *kani* cloth exist. Traditionally, such covers were made of silk, satin or velvet. Since the average Kashmir *kani rumal* measures six feet, it would have been way too large and impracticable as a book covering.

Additionally, Fenech noted the absence of Persian poetry's association with flowers in Kashmir weavings²². This critique seemed misplaced, as WMSH includes a moving love poem by Emperor Jehangir, richly suffused with floral metaphors, which I directly compared to contemporaneous Kashmir shawl designs.

By the time we enter the Sikh period, however, floral motifs had become so highly stylized that botanical comparisons begin to lose their relevance. While Tikku's insightful *Persian Poetry in Kashmir*, may speak at length of flowers, it makes no direct reference to the shawls themselves. The Sikh Kashmir²³ shawl was in no way a floral device or a "vocal text" created to perform poetry. Its symbolic "performance" emerges through its graphic elements and patterns, in what Fenech insightfully describes as a "technology of rule". The notion of Kashmir shawl as a poetic text is, in my view, unfounded. Despite years of discussions with Persian scholars, no evidence has ever substantiated this connection—a paradox for a tradition so integral to an ancient culture's spiritual identity.

France's Imitation Kashmir shawl

At the outset of this article, I acknowledged that lingering doubts may persist about France's role in the evolutions of the designs of the Sikh Kashmir shawl. In the above analysis, we have explored the Indian context in which Sikh designs evolved, including Moorcroft's early observation of *kani* architectural motifs (fig. 16). To complete the picture, we now turn to contemporaneous events in France—the other side of the story. The comparison reveals not only France's lack of influence on Kashmir shawl design but also the lengths to which French manufacturers went to obtain the latest patterns from India, year after year. Together, these parallel histories make a compelling case against the notion of European artistic precedence in the evolution of the Sikh Kashmir shawl.

Of all European nations, France emerged as the undisputed leader in producing imitations of the Indian Kashmir shawl. After the French soldiers returned from Napoleon's Egyptian campaign in 1799, the first authentic Indian shawls began to circulate in France (figs. 2 and 3). Shawl manufacturers are awestruck by the complexity of the weave, the brilliance of the dyes, and, above all, the beauty and enigmatic symbolism of these seductive patterns.

For the French nobility, owning a Kashmir shawl became a symbol of refinement tantamount to *noblesse oblige*. Parisian weavers approached the task of replication with forensic determination, analyzing the technical and aesthetic aspects of the Indian originals. Within a few years, ateliers were established around Paris, employing the same labor-intensive tapestry techniques (*kani*)³⁵ used in Kashmir. The work required

²² Woven Masterpieces of Sikh Heritage: the stylistic development of the Kashmir shawl under Maharaja Ranjit Singh 1780–1839. Pp. 261–265 | Pub. online: 16 Oct 2012, Sikh Formations

²³ G.D. Tikku, *Persian Poetry in Kashmir, 1339–1846: An Introduction*, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1971

³⁵ In *kani* weaving, as in tapestry, each color is inserted separately. In Jacquard weaving the weft is 'shot' clear across the full width of the fabric.

nimble fingers and remarkable dexterity, leading manufacturers to hire orphaned children to work the looms, a troubling but documented practice in early 19th-century European industry.³⁶

As demand for real Indian shawls grew, French weavers turned to the new mechanical loom of Joseph-Marie Jacquard, (fig. 23) which slowly began to replace traditional handlooms. Even so, by 1820, there were barely 80 Jacquard looms in operation in Paris.³⁷ Nevertheless, a bustling industry had been born, and by the end of the second decade, over 3,000 weavers were actively employed, with thousands more engaged in loom preparation and thread work.³⁸

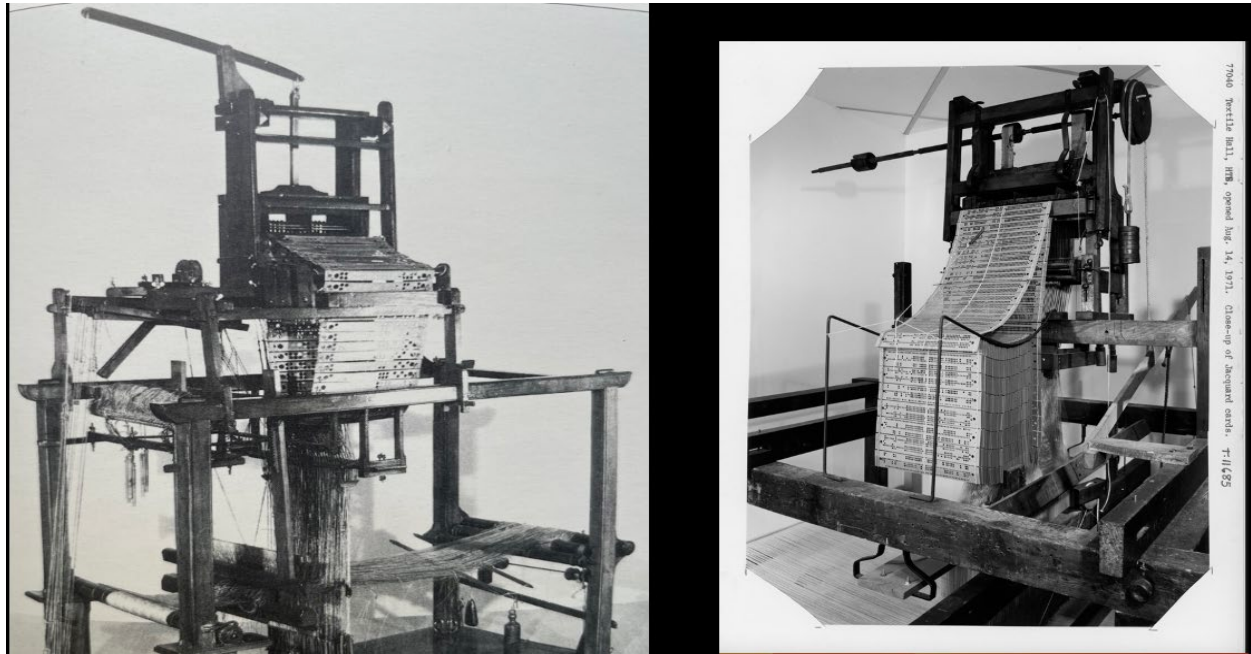


Fig. 23: Two early Jacquard looms with punch cards—an early form of programmable software—c. 1820s.

French manufacturers grew increasingly frustrated that aristocratic families were spending upwards of \$25,000³⁹ (in today's currency)⁴⁰ for imported Indian Kashmir shawls, while weaving companies struggle to create a domestic replacement. This pressure fueled the expansion of the industry.

³⁶ Picard, Charles, *"Saint-Quentin de son Commerce et de ses industries"* p. 136, vol. 2, 1867.

³⁷ The draw loom began being replaced by the Jacquard loom in 1818. P. 339 *Les Ouvriers des deux mondes : études sur les travaux, la vie domestique et la condition morale des populations ouvrières des diverses contrées et sur les rapports qui les unissent aux autres classes* Published by Société internationale des études pratiques d'économie sociale (dir. Frédéric Le Play, 1857

³⁸ Picard, p. 136: From 1804 to 1814 the shawl industry witnessed a big activity; in 1811 there were 3000 weavers, 6000 'dévideuses' (silk unwinders), and as many children working as 'tireurs' (thread pullers) and 'brocheteurs' (shuttle handlers).

³⁹ In 1812, the Parisian shawl dealer, Jean-Michel Soëhnée, was observed to have a shawl priced at 10,000 Francs. During this Napoleonic period, the franc was backed by gold and silver. ChatGPT calculates its today's value at \$36,000, based on the silver backing, alone. Jean-François Luneau, *L'affaire du Blanc-Misseron*, p. 8. (see also end note 14)

⁴⁰ Thirty years later, finely commissioned shawls still maintained a very high value. Ireland, a New York lawyer visiting Srinagar in 1853, witnessed the weaving of a special shawl for Empress Eugénie and noted in his diary, "The price, when finished, will be about 1300 rupees or \$650, and is such a shawl as would sell for about \$4000 [\$150,000 in today's currency!] in London or New York." John B. Ireland, *A Journal of Five Years in Asia, Africa, and Europe*, p. 409, New York, 1859

Napoléon's blockade of 1806 halted the legal importation of shawls from India, but the insatiable desire to own a genuine Kashmir shawl, along with the need to nurture a fledgling weaving industry remained powerful. Additional import restrictions followed, and it wasn't until 1836 that legal trade resumed. In the meantime, Parisian dealers devised creative means to smuggle the shawls into France.

During this prohibition period, shawl manufacturers lamented the lack of new Indian designs. When news circulated that Kashmir shawls had been confiscated by border customs, designers were quickly dispatched to sketch the pieces before they were auctioned (with proceeds going to the state) and legally re-exported.⁴¹

In 1820, architect and industrial designer Amedée Couder opened one of the first atelier dedicated to all types of industries, including shawls. For the 1823 *Exhibition of French Products* held in Paris, he displayed a full-length painting (fig. 24) of a Kashmir shawl design mimicking contemporary shawls arriving from Kashmir, India. But by the 1827 exhibition, not a single Jacquard shawl is mentioned by the exhibition commentators. It wasn't until 1834 that Couder succeeds with a Jacquard-woven square shawl, the *Isfahan*, illustrating an architectural pattern with pseudo-Islamic buildings (fig. 24). Notably, it contained not a single recognizably Indian element. Even Couder's final "Renaissance" shawl, *Nou-Rouz*, exhibited in 1839, illustrated a massive Gothic building and a parade of dignitaries on camels and elephants (fig. 25). Although visually elaborate, it had no discernible influence on Kashmir shawl production. By then, the new Sikh patterns are already well established.⁴²



Fig. 24: Amédée Couder created this shawl for the 1823 Paris Exhibition of French National Products. Reviewers said little about it except that it was offered to Queen Eugénie for a colossal sum. I found its original cartoon tucked behind a stairwell at the Musée des Arts et Métiers, Paris. It is a further testament to France's ongoing appropriation of imported Kashmir shawls, even as Sikh patterns were taking form on the subcontinent. On the right is a detail of Couder's Jacquard-loomed square shawl, integrally dated and signed within the weave. Hart Coll.

⁴¹ Jean-François Luneau, L'affaire du Blanc-Misseron, in *Jean-Baptiste Amédée Couder (1800-1864), Dessinateur pour manufactures*, pp 1-16. (PhD thesis to be published)

⁴² Fleury Chavant, in his *L'Album du Cachemirien* (1837) definitively establishes the existence of Sikh patterns long before the Paris' 1839 exhibition. This evidence is supported by the observations of Captain Wade and Alexander Burnes, on commerce in the Punjab.



Fig. 25: Couder's NouRouz (Islamic New Year) shawl, exhibited in 1839, highlights his architectural talents. A true tour-de-force requiring over 100,000 Jacquard cards. Four known examples exist. Like his Isfahan, it had no impact on Kashmir's weaving industry. After Lévi-Strauss, *Cachmire*, 2013.

One might ask how European shawls could have made their way to the remote, land-locked regions of Punjab and Kashmir in the early 19th century. Until 1849, the Punjab remained largely untouched by both the Industrial and Transport Revolutions. Claude-Martin Wade⁴³, a British political agent overseeing relations between Calcutta and Lahore, reported on the region's commerce and listed only calicoes and muslins, of both British and Indian origin, as the primary textiles in circulation. Meanwhile, France was preoccupied with developing its domestic shawl industry to meet a ravenous local demand. While English manufacturers produced excellent imitations using hand looms (before the adoption of the Jacquard loom), their patterns never strayed far from Indian originals. Shipping delays further complicated matters: it took four to six months for vessels to reach Mumbai and even longer to reach Calcutta, the two major ports for textile imports. On land, the Punjab, Jammu, and Kashmir regions were strategically and tightly controlled, and travel was dangerous – thieves and bandits pose a constant threat. In short, there was no viable market for European shawls in India.

Some prominent French shawl makers, such as Hérault & Léon, attempt to break away from the Indian model, but with little success. Frédéric Hébert, on the other hand, faithfully followed the latest Indian fashions, prompting at least one critic to write that Hébert maintained an “unerring sense of beauty in copying the Indian shawls” (fig. 26). Monique Lévi-Strauss, France's foremost expert on the French Jacquard shawl, observed that the Renaissance style “had only a very short longevity.”⁴⁴

⁴³ Indika, p. 353. Mountstuart Elphinstone points out in 1809 that “shawls exported to Persia are of a pattern entirely different from those seen in India or England.” *An account of the Kingdom of Caubul and its dependencies in Persia, Tartary and India comprising a view of the Afghaan Nation and a History of the Dooraunee Monarchy*, p. 290, London, 1815

⁴⁴ Monique Lévi-Strauss, *The Cachmere Shawl*, p. 42, 1986

The bans on imports under Napoleon, followed by further prohibitions specifically targeting Indian shawls, deprived French manufacturers of new sources of inspiration. This scarcity led figures like Moyse Fichel, a prominent shawl dealer, to assert, “In these [imported] shawls lies an inexhaustible source [of design] for French industry.”⁴⁵ A well-known political philosopher and activist, Auguste Blanqui, echoed the sentiment, saying, “The almighty Indian [shawl] model has the same effect on our weaver barons as a sojourn to Florence and Rome does on our painters and sculptors!”⁴⁶

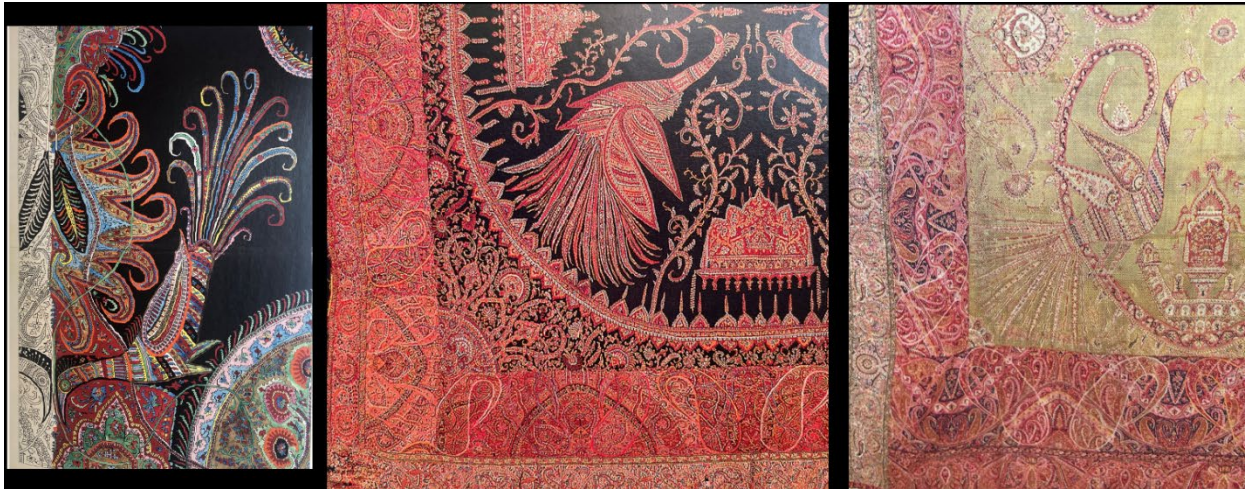


Fig. 26: Center and right: Indian Kashmir shawls with peacocks and early iconography, c. 1830. Stylistically similar to Chavant’s 1825 pattern (see Fig. 27).

Left: The French shawl manufacturer Hébert faithfully copied these designs from Indian shawls, using superior wool and dyes for high-quality Jacquard weavings.

The early 19th-century French archives are filled with critics praising Parisian manufacturers for their faithful copying of the Indian shawl.⁴⁷ Yet, despite their dependence on the Indian Kashmir shawl, the French never once directly acknowledged the brilliant creativity of Kashmir’s weavers.

During the 1820s and 1830s, French weavers adopted the peacock motif found on imported Indian shawls (fig. 26). Given their wealth of design vocabulary, one might wonder why they did not—if truly attempting to create original patterns—draw instead on national symbols like the Gallic rooster, eagle, or even the Napoleonic bee.

So now the question remains: do we have any concrete proof of what these early imported shawls looked like? Yes, we do. In 1837, Fleury Chavant published several sketch albums with dated patterns (fig. 8 left and 27). The earliest is from a shawl dated 1825, and another from 1831. In these designs, we can already

⁴⁵ Luneau, *L’affaire du Blanc-Misseron*, p. 11

⁴⁶ *Ibid*, p. 11

⁴⁷ The reader is referred to the comprehensive list of French National and Universal Exhibitions in the bibliography of *The Kashmir Shawl* (Ames, 1986). It catalogues the jury reports for almost all the events. See also, Monique Lévi-Strauss’ *Cachemere*, 2013

see a mature Sikh design style. Considering that a fine shawl took two and three years to weave, and another six months to arrive in France, Chavant most likely copied these designs from contraband shawls.⁴⁸

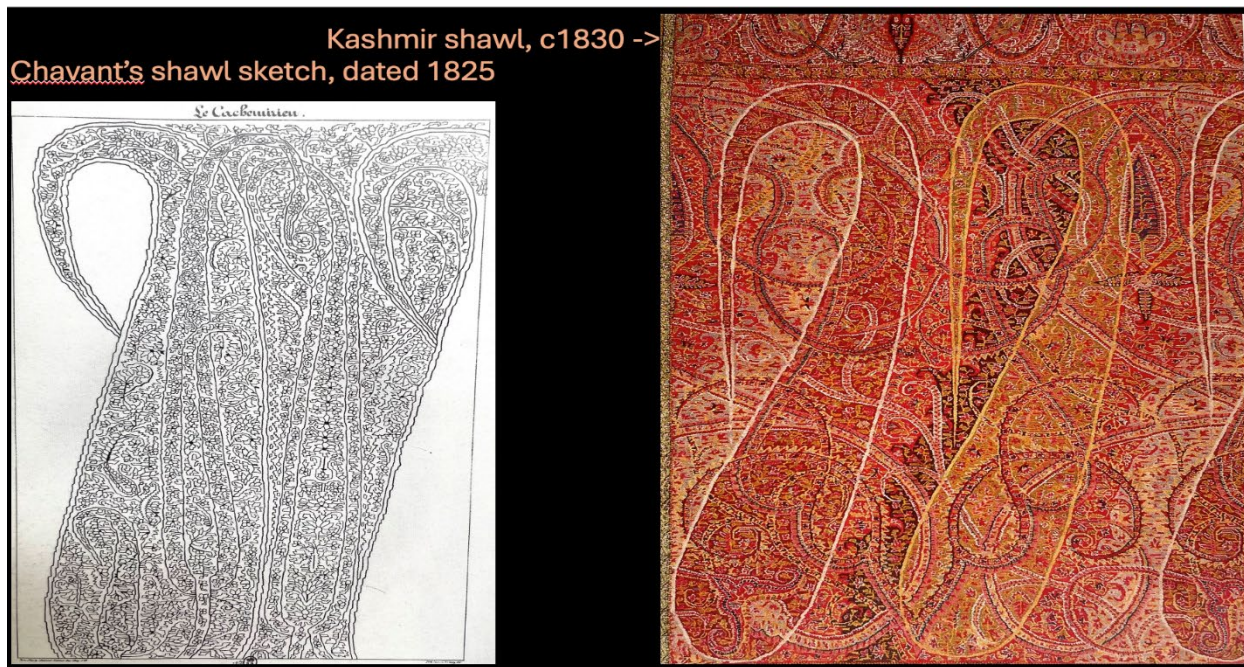


Fig. 27: Left: An 1825 sketch of a long shawl *Le Cachemirien* (National Library, Paris) showing an early iteration of the Sikh style—keeping in mind the shawl would have taken two years to weave, plus six months for shipping.

Right: While stylistically similar to the left, this example features elongated cursive motifs that echo the curve above the “Onkar” in older *Guru Granth Sahib* manuscripts. That curve is often seamlessly woven into the illuminated border, symbolizing the indivisible reality that pervades all. (See Fig. 14.)

Further evidence of the Sikh Kashmir shawl’s is fully development before any possible French influence comes from Claude-Martin Wade’s 1832 report on commerce in the Punjab and Kashmir. Regarding Kashmir shawls, Wade writes: “The most expensive shawls are sent to Persia, Turkey, and Bokhara, as their price cannot be obtained in the markets of Hindustan. Those made for Bokhara usually go by Peshour and Cabul, but the quantity is not great. They have large, heavy borders, richly embroidered. The open space in the center is left very small. Those for Persia and Turkey are of a more delicate nature.”⁴⁹

Wade clearly describes two distinct shawl types: one delicate, and one heavy and elaborately bordered. The latter can refer to the long Sikh shawls, with ends laden with large patterns, leaving only a small plain center. Nearly all extant shawl examples of this type, many bearing Russian customs stamps, prove to be of high caliber, finely woven, and rich in Sikh patterns.

⁴⁸ Fleury Chavant, *Album du Cachemirien*, *Reproduction exacte de tous les beaux châles des Indes et de la Perse fabriqués à Lahore, Ispahan, Teheran, Caboul, Kashmir, et Candahar qui arrivent en Europe calqués fidèlement et dessinés aux traits simples dans leurs grandeurs naturelles. Ouvrages précieux pour servir de matériaux aux dessinateurs.* Paris et Kashmir, 1837

⁴⁹ Lafont, Indika, *Essays in Indo-French Relations, 1630-1976*. P. 356. Manohar, 2000

Wade was not alone in his observations. Alexander Burnes, British explorer and political agent, also noted that Russian markets demanded only top-quality Kashmir shawls.⁵⁰ Bokhara and Peshawar served as the primary overland gateways to the destinations further north, toward Russia and Europe. The most expensive shawls, bore Sikh patterns featuring small centers surrounded by large elaborate patterns. Shawls of a more “delicate nature” were likely the classic long shawls with large fields of plain pashmina and narrow boteh or paisley-patterned ends.

The final piece of evidence comes from Moyse Fichel, the French shawl dealer mentioned above, who, in 1834, published a scathing ten-page critique of the French shawl industry⁵¹. He condemned its failure to acknowledge the superiority of Indian shawls and France’s inability to produce original designs. His reproach highlights the hypocrisy and unwarranted arrogance of French manufacturers. Fichel’s sharp criticism serves as compelling testimony, reaffirming what has already been established: up to that point, the French had contributed nothing new to shawl design.

Conclusion

There is no doubt about the Sikh shawl’s indigenous authenticity. In my forty years of dealing in and writing about the shawl, I have never encountered a Kashmir shawl pattern based on any of the architectonic Jacquard-loomed designs from France. Nor have I seen any nascent European development that could plausibly be considered a precursor to the Sikh style motifs. What I have seen, however, is the reverse: France’s manufacturers, especially Hébert, frequently borrow and blend Sikh motifs with European design conventions.

Herein lies the fallacy of the skeptic’s argument. Unless one is referring strictly to format, color palette, or dimensions, to label shawls woven in the first half of the nineteenth century as ‘export shawl’ is misleading. Their patterns do not conform to any known European model, stylistically. The Sikh shawl is purely Indian. The European shawl is modeled after the Indian one. It is only by mid-nineteenth century that a dramatic shift occurs, and one begins to see Indian shawls patterned after European designs.

Some Indian scholars may argue that it’s impossible to define Sikh art. For many years this was accepted as fact. The discovery and identification of Sikh patterns from the Ranjit Singh period, however, forces us to reconsider that view. These designs possess graphic power that must be recognized. They challenge us to understand a new artistic language. We know something is here, enigmatic, fascinating; secrets yet to be discovered.

⁵⁰ Alexander Burnes discusses the demand for high-quality Kashmir shawls in Russian markets in his work *Travels into Bokhara*, Vol. 3, 1835. Specifically, this discussion is found in Chapter I, titled *On the Commercial Relations of the Punjab, and the Advantages of Opening the Indus*, pp. 315-329. Burnes notes on page 318, that some shawls were specially prepared for the Russian and Persian courts at the substantial price of 30,000 rubles per pair costing approximately 12,000 rupees or about \$135,000 today! He also mentions that merchants complained about a decline in shawl quality, stating that good articles are now only obtainable by commissioning them directly from the valley of Kashmir. This confirms that Russian markets demanded only top-quality Kashmir shawls.

⁵¹ M. Fichel, *Un mot sur le cachemire des Indes e le cachemire français, Marchand de Cachemires des Indes*. 12 pages, L. E. Herhan (Publisher), Rue Saint-Denis 380, Paris, 1834

If the abrogation of Article 370⁵² signals a profound shift in Kashmir's future, that is one matter. But to compound this by threatening its cultural heritage—claiming that Sikh motifs originated from European designs—repudiates the extraordinary skills of the Kashmiri and Punjabi artists, whose remarkable talents, though often anonymous, are undeniable. The Sikh shawl must be recognized and celebrated for what it truly is, not undermined and discredited.

In the words of the eminent Professor and Indian scholar, Jean-Marie Lafont, “The Sikh school of design represents a major artistic expression of paramount importance to the Indian subcontinent.”⁵³

⁵² The government of India under Modi, on 5 August 2019, revoked the special status (autonomy), granted under Article 370 of the Indian constitution, to Jammu and Kashmir.

⁵³ Private correspondence with Professor Lafont, 5 Jan. 2014

References

- Ames, F., *The Kashmir Shawls and its Indo-French Influence*. United Kingdom: ACC, 1997.
- Ames, F., *Woven Masterpieces of Sikh Heritage: The Stylistic Development of the Kashmir Shawl under Maharaja Ranjit Singh, 1780-1830*. United Kingdom: ACC, 2010.
- Ames, F., 'Khalsa and Explosive Graphics in the Age of Maharaja Runjit Singh's Kashmir'. *Textiles Asia Journal*, May 2011, vol. 3, issue 1.
- Ames, F., 'A Kashmir Paradigm Shift: Qajar and Zand Paintings as Evidence for Shawl Dating'. *Hali*, 2005, issue 139, pp. 70–75.
- Ames, F., 'Woven Legends: Carpets and Shawls of Kashmir 1585-1870', *The Arts of Kashmir*, P. Pal (ed.) New York: Asia Society, 2007, pp. 192–209.
- Ames, F., 'A unique Mughal Kashmir Shawl at the Musée Guimet'. *Orientations*, October 2007, pp. 69–72.
- Abul Fazl, *Ain-i-Akbari*, H. Blochmann (trans.). Calcutta: Asiatic Society of Bengal, 1873.
- Archer, W.C., *Paintings of the Sikhs*. London: HMSO, 1966.
- Bamzai, P.N.K., *A History of Kashmir*. New Delhi: Gulshan Press, 1973.
- Bernier, François, *Voyage dans les etats du Gran Mogol*. Paris : Fayard, Burnes, Alexander, Travels into Bukhara, 1834
- Chandra, Moti, 'Kashmir Shawls', *Bulletin of the Prince of Wales Museum*, vol. 3, 1954.
- Deol, Jeevan, 'Illustration and Illumination in Sikh Scriptural Manuscripts,' *Marg Magazine*, June 2003
- Fenech, Louis E., 'Ranjit Singh, The Shawl and the Kaukab-i Iqbal-i Punjab', *Sikh Formations*, 2015.
- Fichel, Moyse, *Un mot sur le Cachemire des Indes et le Cachemire français*. 1834, Paris
- Goswamy, B.N., *Piety and Splendour: Sikh Heritage in Art*. New Delhi: National Museum, 2000 (Ex. Cat.).
- Goswamy B.N. & C. Smith, *I See No Stranger: Early Sikh Art and Devotion*. New York: Rubin Museum, 2006 (Exh. Cat.).
- Irwin, John, *Shawls: A Study in Indo-European Influences*. London: Victoria and Albert Museum, 1975.
- Jacquemont, V., *Correspondence de V. Jacquemont pendant son voyage dans l'Inde, 1828-1832*, 2 vols. Paris, 1841.
- Jacquemont, V., *Voyage dans l'Inde*, 4 vols. Paris 1841.
- Jacquemont, V., *Letters from India, 1829-1832*. London: Macmillan and Co., 1936.
- Khanuja, Dr. Parvinderjit Singh, *Splendors of Punjab Heritage*, with intro by Dr. Paul Michael Taylor (ed.). Delhi: Roli Books, 2022.
- Jahangir, *Tuzuk-i-jahangiri* (memoires), Henry Beveridge (ed.)
- Lafont, Jean-Marie, *La presence française dans le royaume Sikh du Penjab: 1822-1849*, Ecole Française d'Extrême-Orient. Paris, 1992.
- Lafont, Jean-Marie, *Indika : Essays in Indo-French Relations, 1630–1976*. Pub'd: 2000 by Manohar Publishers in New Delhi.
- Lafont, Jean-Marie, *Maharaja Ranjit Singh: Lord of the Five Rivers*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2002.
- Lévi-Strauss, Monique, *Cashmere: A French passion 1800-1880*. London: Thames & Hudson, 2013.
- Lévi-Strauss, Monique, *The Cashmere Shawl*. Rome: Arnoldo Mondadori, 1987.
- Moorcroft, William, *Travels in the Himalayan Provinces of Hindustan and Panjab; in Ladakh and Kashmir; in Peshawar, Kabut, Kunduz, and Bukhara*, by Mr. George Trebeck and William

Moorcroft from 1819 to 1825. London, 1841, 2 vols.

Stronge, Susan (ed.), *The Arts of the Sikh Kingdoms*. London: Victoria and Albert Museum, 1999