

From India to Europe: The Production of the Kashmir Shawl and the Spread of the Paisley Motif

'What may be considered peculiar to Kachemire, and the staple commodity, that which particularly promotes the trade of the country and fills it with wealth, is the prodigious quantity of shawl ls which they manufacture, and which gives occupation even to the little children.'

-- Travels in the Mogul Empire, 1656-1668, Francois Bernier (trans.)¹

In the second half of the eighteenth century, a new garment entered European fashion. Noted for being exceptionally soft, warm, and light, it bore intricate patterns unlike anything Europeans had encountered before or had produced domestically. This product, a woollen shawl, originated in a region that would become so famous for its textiles that its name would pass into Western lexicons as a toponym for its woollen produce: Kashmir. The principal motif found on these shawls, known in India as the Buta, or *kairi*, would come to be called, in its altered form, Paisley in the West.

Not only was the garment practical and aesthetically pleasing, its oriental origins, clear status as a luxury item, texture, and patterning enabled it to permeate European high fashion. Patronage by Empress Josephine of France, and later Queen Victoria, solidified this popularity.

By the turn of the nineteenth century, Kashmir and the West regularly traded these textiles. A European industry, aimed at copying Indian originals, also thrived. The next six decades witnessed fervent European consumption of the shawl. This rapid consumption resulted in a host of changes to the production and designs of the garments.

While the history of the shawl and its relationship to the West has been subject to distortion, hyperbole, and fiction, recent scholarship has made considerable headway in demystifying information about these products. It is now possible to relate how the Kashmir shawl first came into production, its emergence onto the world stage as a luxury textile, and its status as the principal medium by which the Buta/ Paisley motif entered into the pantheon of historic fashion designs.

The Kashmir Shawl

In the popular imagination, any garment worn around the shoulders or neck, linked aesthetically to Kashmiri textile weaving, is often called a Kashmir shawl. Common synonyms include Paisley (with the pattern becoming a metonym for the textile), and pashmina (the name of the spun pashm wool that gave the shawl its characteristic texture). To complicate matters further, it is possible to correctly define a shawl using more than one name. There is also the issue of fakery and imitation; a less than scrupulous salesperson may misname an individual item on purpose, while some misname it by accident, such as a scholar in error.

The real definition of a Kashmir shawl, however, varies over time and place. Price, finery, purpose of wear, the intended wearer, constituent raw material, weaving technique, patterning present, and dyeing technique has changed this definition over generations.

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If a historian were to single out the most standard form of Kashmir shawl, it would most likely be the Kani shawl. Produced in a village called Kanihama in Kashmir, a Kani shawl uses the ‘twill tapestry’ technique and is woven by multiple weavers.² Twill refers to the way that the warp (vertical thread) and weft (horizontal thread) are interwoven. A simple technique, the Kashmiri practice was for each weft to go over two warps then under two warps: a plain 2:2 weft faced twill weave. This weave employed ‘discontinuous wefts to vary the weft colour and create distinct colour areas that are identical on the two faces of the fabric’ allowing for the creation of incredibly intricate designs such as the Buta.³

Typically, producers make Kashmir shawls using one of two distinctive raw materials – pashm or tus wool. Both types of wool come only from the under-hair of the animal: the finest, softest part of the fleece. Though pashm is the Persian generic word for wool of any kind, in Kashmir it specifically refers to the raw unspun wool of domesticated goats, called Changthangi, or pashmina goats. Although Kashmir has never produced pashm itself, until recently people in the West referred to products made using this wool as Cashmere or Pashmina since the region of Kashmir processed the wool.

Tus, on the other hand, reserved for only the most exclusive persons (such as the Mughal aristocracy), principally derives from the Tibetan antelope, the chiru (or *stos* in Ladakhi), whose down hair is the finest in the world, averaging between 7 and 10 microns.⁴ It can also less commonly come from wild mountain sheep or ibex. In modern times these animals are endangered; poaching is a serious problem and most countries forbid trade of their hair.⁵

Neither of these raw materials can be easily synthesised or substituted. Though demand for raw materials always exceeded supply, with the necessary animals located in neighbouring regions, Kashmir had a geographical advantage. This advantage allowed Kashmiri producers to secure monopolies on supply and helped to underpin Kashmir’s position as a centre of high-quality textile production.

These two principal aspects, the distinctive weaving technique and the outstandingly fine wool, combined to create this iconic luxury fabric: the Kashmir shawl. As a result of its dramatic surge in popularity in Europe from the 1800s, demand for the woven produce of Kashmir rapidly increased, overtaking supply and inducing changes in the wool content and methods of production. This famously led to a series of European attempts to copy or replicate the Kashmiri fabrics. These copies, whilst finding enthusiastic consumers in the market, could never compete with the Indian originals in quality. It does help to explain, however, why the terminology surrounding the shawl is fraught with difficulties.

The Symbolism and Significance of the Buta Motif

The Buta motif, and its modified westernised incarnation, known as Paisley, has become one of the most famous and recognisable textile patterns in history. Its origins, various forms and evolution through time have been the subject of a great deal of historical inquiry and popular interest.



Fragment of a Kashmir Shawl from the late 1700s or early 1800s. Ashmolean Museum, University of Oxford.

When it comes to the name of the pattern, the term Buta used to refer to the teardrop-shaped motif with potentially ancient origins. Now, it refers to the adapted form of that motif which appears on Kashmiri textiles produced from at least as early as the Mughal period. In this instance, it refers to the design which featured on shawls produced before European’s interfered with the design. Paisley, on the other hand, is the most common western term for the pattern.

Derived from the town of Paisley in West Scotland, this area became a prolific producer of imitation Indian textiles in the nineteenth century. Discussion over its name is particularly relevant because of the continued debate on the provenance of the motif, as well as whether historians should regard Buta and

Paisley as different incarnations of the same device or separate, distinct motifs.

Historians have put forth various ancient origins for the design that lies behind the Buta motif. Since so few shawls survive from before the Mughal period, it is perhaps unsurprising that we have the best physical and literary evidence for the beginning of the use of the Buta as shawl decoration from there onwards. One suggestion is that its core shape derives from images of the cypress tree in pre-Islamic Iran, with the cypress being significant in Zoroastrianism as a symbol of eternity.

Furthermore, producers seemingly incorporated floral elements, popular in the decorative arts in both Iran and the Mughal Empire, with this teardrop to produce the recognisable Buta of the Kashmiri textile. Finally, this motif may even have had direct regal connotations, both materially, because of the enthusiastic royal patronage of shawl production, and symbolically because of the cypress' adoption by the Mughal imperial aristocracy as a sign of kingly authority.

Owing to its distinct form, clear antecedents, and specific meaning, Europeans may have reimagined this motif due to their own conceptions of oriental motifs. Consequently, Europeans reintroduced the shawl decoration back to Kashmir, with amendments to fit their consumer tastes. The cypress/ Buta motif became largely supplanted by what the West call Paisley: a design conceived by Europeans, given to weavers in Europe and Kashmir. Paisley is more heavily stylised and less naturalistic, influenced by European, Iranian and Indian art.

Until the 1800s, if patterning did exist at all on Kashmir shawls, it had been mostly limited to borders on the fabric. Western design dictated that patterning would be present all over the whole garment, likely born out of their relative familiarity with Iranian carpets, which informed European notions of oriental textiles.⁶ With the rise of the Jacquard loom, it became viable to produce shawls that resembled carpets, i.e. with ornate patterning all over the fabric. With these changes, we can chart European dominance of shawl design, in both the West and Kashmir, from the 1830s, and the contemporaneous development of the Paisley pattern.

Shawl Weaving in Kashmir Before the Arrival of Europeans

Kashmir had long been a region on the border of civilisations: Persia and the Islamic world to the west; Tibet and the Himalayas to the north and east, and India to the south. Towards the close of the 1700s and into the 1800s, Europe would join this list. At various times, Kashmir had come under the sway of different foreign powers and various religions had dominated its borders: Hinduism and Buddhism prevailed in more ancient times, and then in the fourteenth-century Islamic rule came about, culminating in Kashmir's eventual inclusion in the Mughal Empire.

From these influences, Kashmir absorbed a variety of religious, cultural, and economic practices whilst always retaining a distinct character. In the early 1800s, Kashmir passed to the control of the Sikh empire. In the 1840s, that empire suffered military defeat against Britain; British holdings in India then annexed this area, forming part of the princely state of Jammu and Kashmir during the Raj. This lasted until partition in 1947 and the development of Kashmir's contemporary situation of being a disputed territory between India and Pakistan.

Textile weaving has a long association with Kashmir, with some scholars attesting that its origins lie in antiquity. Certainly, scholarship can trace clear evidence of it back at least one thousand years.⁷ With the Kashmir shawl, one of the most important periods in its development is the reign of the region's eighth Sultan, Zain-ul-Abidin (ruled 1420-1470).

Many misconceptions surrounding the origin of the Kashmir shawl are the result of an account written by Austrian diplomat and explorer, Baron Charles von Hügel, during his travels in the nineteenth century. He retold the traditional local folktale that while held hostage at the court of Tamerlane in Samarkand, Zoltan Zain-ul-Abidin encountered luxury textile production and later imported necessary equipment and personnel from Central Asia and Iran to set up the shawl industry in Kashmir when he became ruler.

This tale, however, cannot be true. The Sultan had not even been born when Tamerlane, his alleged captor, invaded India in 1398. Hügel further muddied the waters with claims that Kashmir shawls required imported loom technology and unusual weaving pattern; recent scholarship shows this was not the case.

Though John Irwin, author of 'The Kashmir Shawl' and curator of the Indian collections at the Victoria

and Albert Museum from the 1940s to the 1970s, attempted to tackle the problematic history of the Kashmir shawl, his work, unfortunately, served to propagate certain inaccuracies. He told readers of the ‘local legend’ that the Sultan was responsible for the beginning of shawl weaving in the 1400s.⁸ Unfortunately, many works on the subject since have not treated this anecdote with sufficient scepticism and it has become reiterated as a fact in subsequent literature. The tale contained enough truth that it was not wholly unhelpful. A more effective interpretation would be to address the undue emphasis on the role of Sultan Zain-ul-Abidin: whilst he did not bring the shawl trade into existence, he nevertheless energised it with enthusiastic patronage. He elevated it, among the handicrafts of Kashmir, to the high status it would subsequently enjoy.



Ishwari Sen. *Raja Mandi (1784-1826), a Mughal noble.* Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

A contemporary of Irwin, Moti Chandra, once director of the Prince of Wales Museum in Bombay, was more critical of this tale. He noted that the literary evidence on the origins of shawl weaving in India was simply too fragmentary to make many conclusive assertions.⁹ With reference to various chronicles in Hindi and Sanskrit, he distinguished evidence of an established loom weaved shawl industry going back at least to the eleventh century and probably beyond.

In his examination of Hügels’ claims, Chandra demonstrates that this myth may have come about because the chronicle does speak of Zain-ul-Abidin as a fervent sponsor of the textile industry; he had a reputation among the rulers of India as a patron of the arts. This had a side effect of encouraging craftsmen and artisans to migrate to his country to perform their trade. In any case, it is generally agreed that by the 1400s, producers in Kashmir made high-grade weaved fabric for sartorial purposes. Interestingly, it seems that from the outset, shawl production in Kashmir was not geared towards local consumption: it was a commercial endeavour patronised by the ruling elite and aimed at foreign markets.

The next major development in the evolution of the Kashmir shawl came in the Mughal period, specifically the rule of Emperor Akbar. Akbar conquered Kashmir in 1586 and incorporated the region into the Mughal Empire. The area consequently became popular with the imperial elite as a summer retreat until they lost it during war in the middle of the 1700s. Fortunately, the history of Akbar’s relationship with the Kashmir shawl, noted in the reputable *Ain-i-Akbari*, the Constitution of Akbar, written by his vizier, Abul Fazl, acknowledges the Emperor’s appetite for shawls, specifically what was now known as the *shahtoosh*.¹⁰

The *shahtoosh* was an especially high-value shawl, produced with wool from the aforementioned *chiru*. This was the so-called ‘ring-shawl’ – a product so fine that wearers could pass the entire garment through a finger ring. It was customary in Islamic societies for luxury textiles to act as signifiers of rank and status, and they commonly featured as diplomatic gifts. Rulers also gifted these shawls as a mark of high service, great achievement, or simply royal favour. This tradition, known as *khilat*, was well established in the Mughal Empire at the time of Akbar and had become one of the main drivers of demand for the Kashmir shawl industry. As well as indicating the favour of the gift giver, it also indicated a recognition by both parties of the sovereignty of the giver and the subordination of the receiver.

Until the time of Shah Jahan, royalty reserved *tus* woven shawls for their use only. From this, it can be inferred that rulers used the more common *pashm* woven shawls in the *khilat*, among a variety of other textiles. This ceremonial bestowal of textiles as a mark of honour or authority pervaded Mughal courtly life and was a significant feature in the Durbar, the royal meeting, court or council. In fact, this tradition was so heavily embedded in South Asian high culture that it outlasted the Mughal Empire itself; successor states practised this in the region too. The complexities of this system confused Early Europeans who arrived in India but after a while they became accustomed to it and co-opted it into their colonising efforts in the region. The British East India Company, in particular, participated in this ceremony. As their power increased to the detriment of the Mughal emperor, they became enthusiastic patrons of *khilat* to reinforce



Empress Josephine, 1808 by Antoine-Jean Gros (1771-1835).



William Simpson's illustration of Kashmir shawl makers (1867).

shawls in the second half of the eighteenth century. A more commonly accepted view in recent scholarship is thus holds that the shawls came to Europe via British (and possibly French) individuals active in the Indian subcontinent in the later 1700s, most likely employees of the East India Company.

Officers and company officials would have seen the shawl both as a luxury commodity and potentially as part of the aforementioned prestigious *khilat* ceremony that endured beyond the heyday of the Mughal Empire. Officials would then return to Europe and gift shawls to their wives and other high-status women. Owing to the extremely high price of Kashmir fabrics, it is unsurprising that there is evidence of European textile centres in places such as Edinburgh, Norwich, and Lyons attempting to replicate Indian products as early as the 1780s. By the 1800s, the Indian originals, and to a lesser extent European copies, were a fashion staple for Western high society. Interestingly, in Europe the shawls were exclusively worn by aristocratic women. In India, they were more commonly worn by high-status men.

In India, the shawl and the Buta/ Paisley motifs were separate entities. It was common for shawls produced prior to the late eighteenth century to have either a floral motif, which had not yet merged with the Buta,

their authority over local elites.¹¹

By the eighteenth century, the Kashmir shawl was a well-established luxury handcraft of Kashmir. The artisans themselves, the weavers of the Kashmir textile, being of low caste received little recompense for their labour. Though some writing has suggested production required significant technical skill, in reality, this was not the case – it did, however, take a great deal of dexterity and patience. Distributors paid designers (*naqqash*), vital contributors to the overall product, more than producers but they still received a small minority of the overall value of the sale of an item. Most of the profits went to the shawl merchants or brokers (*mokhuns*). Purchasing items from loom owners (*ustads*), brokers then sold them either to high-status domestic consumers or foreign merchants.

The Arrival of the Kashmir Shawl in Europe

It is still commonly retold that the Kashmir shawls arrival and popularisation in Europe were due to Napoleon and Josephine respectively. Supposedly, when on campaign in Egypt from 1798-1801, Napoleon came into possession of some form of high-quality Kashmir shawl, perhaps a *shahtoosh* or a Kani, and, on returning to France, he presented it to his wife. Being a figure of universal admiration and noted taste, Josephine is then supposed to have brought the garment into vogue in the courts and salons of early nineteenth-century Europe.

There are a variety of problems with this theory. Initially, when presented with a shawl she wrote to her son Eugène: “I find them hideous. Their great advantage lies in their lightness, but I doubt very much if they will ever become fashionable.”¹² Of course, she would reverse this opinion and go on to own a collection of hundreds of examples of Kashmir shawls (pictured). However, even if one argues that Josephine did much to promote the garment in continental Europe, its popularity preceded both her and Napoleon. There is plenty of evidence for European, and particularly British, textile production centres attempting imitation



A shawl produced in Kashmir in the 1860s for European who preferred the Paisley pattern to cover the entire garment. Ashmolean Museum, University of Oxford.

no patterning at all, and/or no dying either. It seems, however, that the majority of examples that made it to Europe, produced from the early 1700s onwards did contain some form of the Buta and therefore in Western eyes, almost from the outset, were thought to come as a package. A further development, around or just after this time, saw the weight of Kashmir shawls grow heavier as patterning became denser and covered more of the shawl; it lost some of the lightness of earlier examples.

Over the first half of the nineteenth century, efforts burgeoned in the European textile industry to imitate the famous Kashmir shawl. Though towns with existing traditions of textile production made considerable efforts to manufacture products they could never match the quality and delicacy of the Kashmiri originals.

One problem Europeans faced was the lack of access to raw materials such as *pashm* wool. At the zenith of enthusiasm for the Kashmir shawl, the First Sikh War in the 1840s shows British desperation to acquire pashmina goats. As part of the Treaty of Amritsar, which the victorious British enforced on the Sikh Empire, the British stipulated that Gulab Singh would pay an annual tribute of twelve shawl goats, and three pairs of shawls. This, however, was not nearly enough to satisfy European demand.

Decades prior, William Moorcroft, an English explorer, travelled to Kashmir in an attempt to enable England to break the Kashmiri monopoly. Rather than try and muscle in on the agreements between the Kashmiri weavers and the shepherds, Moorcroft decided to secure a population of the Changthangi goats for England. Having secured 50 goats, officials made the decision to put all the females on one ship and the males on another. Unfortunately, the ship carrying the females never made it to England thus a population of around 25 male Changthangi were unable to procreate. Presented with the relatively mild climate of Britain, they assimilated rapidly to the new environment and did not materialise the very fine under-down, harvested usually as *pashm*.

The French had more success in this regard, albeit temporarily. Textile magnates William-Louis Ternaux and Jean-Baptiste Decrétot managed to import a herd of around 150 goats to contribute wool to produce highly regarded shawls known as cachemires or ‘Ternaux’. Not long after their arrival, however, they experienced similar problems to the British. Though the hardier goats adjusted to the milder European climate, most of them died due to the radical change in environment.¹³ Kashmir thus retained its monopoly as the processing centre for the finest wool in the world. Lacking a reliable source of the coveted *pashm*, European producers had to be content with producing goods of a lesser quality.

European counterparts were also not prepared or able to replicate the time-consuming, strenuous, and meticulous practices of the Kashmiri weavers. In the Indian territory, it could take one weaver a day to produce a square inch of a Kani shawl. Although producers commonly shared the work on one shawl between many weavers, it would take one weaver years to finish one. This model was not followed by the Europeans.

From a technological perspective, Europeans were further restricted in their ability to produce high-quality works owing to their weaving abilities. Kashmiri weavers used a simple loom; all it did was hold the warp stiff. Though it required a great deal of patience and dexterity, it also allowed for complete freedom of weft insertion giving them complete creative freedom. On earlier European looms this was not the case; this hindrance consequently precluded European weavers from equivalent intricacy.

Still, discerning commentators consider the early European imitations to have redeeming qualities of their own, partly owing to the inventiveness of the workers who tried to circumvent the issue of the lack of *pashm*. A common substitute was to try and use silk. Norwich, for example, produced shawls with silk warps, silk wefts for the plain background, and local wool for the pattern wefts (shown to the right). As a long-standing centre of textile production centre, skilled weavers innovated quite successfully.

However, along with workers at Edinburgh, Norwich workers used a drawloom. This equipment was not able to produce complex patterns to the same level of the Indian charka wheel and was thus less able to accurately reproduce Kashmiri designs like the Buta.

The popularity of the Kashmir shawl in Europe not only engendered the rise of European imitations but also caused changes in production within Kashmir. Demand for the shawl had always been higher than supply, but this became deeply pronounced in the early 1800s. As a result, Kashmiri producers innovated new techniques and designs, often with the direct involvement of Europeans. Administrators, mainly British, and designers, mainly French, arrived in Kashmir to take charge of the industry and direct its efforts to fulfil the taste of the European consumer. French taste became dominant; by the 1840s British centres mainly engaged in copying French designs.¹⁴

Until this time, producers defined the standard Kani shawl mainly as *kanikar* owing to its composition: a shawl made of one whole woven piece of fabric. Although vital in producing the exquisite final product which was so desirable, producers began to phase out this method in favour of ones which were less labour and time intensive and would increase output. The first innovation in this area was *tilikar*. Several pieces of woven pashmina would be skilfully sewn together by a *rafugar*, an embroiderer. This would still produce a high-quality garment but demanded less value than a single woven *kanikar* to a discerning buyer. Subsequently, producers developed the *amlikar* method. This was an embroidered shawl whereby the patterning was entirely sewn onto a plain woven pashmina base by a *rafugar*. Again, this item demanded corresponding less value because it was less fine than a *kanikar* where the pattern was a direct constituent of the woven piece. Nevertheless, both the *tilikar* and *amlikar* shawls were popular in European markets, possibly because of their more affordable price.¹⁵

The best attempt at replicating Kashmir shawls came out of the town of Paisley in West Scotland. Production began in 1805. From the 1810s onwards, Paisley began to have significant success in copying designs and techniques from longer established textile centres like Norwich. By the 1820s and 1830s, Paisley became the first weaving centre in Britain to adopt the new Jacquard loom and thus cemented its prominence on the back of the shawl trade. By the 1850s it was employing over 6,000 weavers. This new Jacquard loom granted Paisley market dominance as vastly out-produced its rivals in terms of quantity, and, by European standards, quality. Although it was greatly superior to earlier European looms like the drawloom, in allowing greater flexibility, detail and scale in woven design, producers could not replicate the distinctive twill tapestry weave that the Kashmiri chakra facilitated. This resulted in one side of a shawl woven by a Jacquard being markedly inferior: it had loose threads and betrayed the garment's technical and aesthetic superiority.

Paisley, although producing a limited number of high-end reproductions, was generally a centre geared towards fulfilling the demands of the mass market with high volume output. Industrialisation, one commentator wrote, meant that European shawl production 'became limited to what a machine could do'.¹⁶ The town itself became successful because it ultimately offered a decent inexpensive alternative to a genuine luxury 'Cashmere' for the less wealthy consumer. This success is evident, most of all, in that its name became synonymous for the textile, and, more enduringly the pattern that is still recognisable today. The impact of the mass-produced Paisley, as well as the dominance of French design, would diminish the market for Kashmir-made shawls in Europe from the 1840s.¹⁷

The Fall of the Shawl and the Revival of Paisley

From the mid-1860s into the 1870s, several factors caused a marked decline in the popularity of both the Kashmir shawl and its European copies such as the Paisley shawl. When it comes to fashion, the crinoline skirt declined in popularity. Common since the 1840s, this skirt was visually pleasing when combined with Paisley. Fashionista's, however, replaced the crinoline with the bustle, an item not so straightforwardly paired with Paisley. The shawl, therefore, became increasingly replaced by alternatives such as capes or jackets.

Another factor in the decline of Paisley owes to the Franco-Prussian war. As the first major land war in Europe for decades, the war caused considerable disruption in the trade between India and Europe and contributed to a severe economic downturn in regions of Kashmir which had now grown dependent on the export trade with Europe. Kashmir experienced a famine in the late 1870s and this continued to an economic downturn, decreasing the number of skilled craftspeople engaged in the Kashmiri textile industry. Whilst the weavers in Kashmir suffered famine and sometimes died as a result of the sudden

drop in the market for shawls, the embroiderers were often able to survive, mostly by diversifying to work with other fabrics.

Shawl weavers in Europe were not exempt from difficulties. With high fashion having dismissed Paisley, the demands of the mass market were increasingly met by machine weaved printed fabrics. Many weavers using hand-operated looms lost their livelihoods and emigrated to the United States, Canada or Australia. The Kashmir shawl industry never really recovered after this dramatic decline. In modern times the Indian government has made efforts to preserve the expertise of Kashmiri weaving and to promote its resuscitation.

The Paisley pattern, unlike the shawl which had borne it to worldwide renown, ultimately survived this period of difficulty. In the late 1800s and early 1900s, Paisley survived in a variety of formats: on coats, jackets, ties and wallpaper. However, it was not until the 1960s that the pattern found favour in the world of fashion, on the back of a popular enthusiasm for flamboyant styles in men's fashion, termed the Peacock Revolution. The Etro brand, created in Milan in 1968, became one of the most prominent fashion design companies to reintroduce Paisley to the catwalk. Its founder, Girolamo Etro had a collection of nineteenth-century shawls, both Kashmiri and European, and began to include the Paisley pattern in his output from the 1980s. This has led to Etro to become the company most closely associated with Paisley in contemporary times.

Paisley's origins, as a motif derived from ancient art traditions in Asia, has also received renewed emphasis. Azerbaijan continues to use the Paisley, or rather the Buta, as a national symbol owing to its cultural heritage as part of Greater Iran. It is still popularly used in Azerbaijani textile ornamentation. During the 2010 Winter Olympics, the team from Azerbaijan even dressed in uniforms decorated with the Buta/Paisley motif.

Conclusion

The example of the rise and spread of the Buta/Paisley, through the medium of the Kashmir shawl, serves as a vehicle for the exploration of multiple historical phenomena: modernity, industrialisation and imperialism, to name a few. As an example of the material culture of empire, the Kashmir shawl was a physical reminder to British consumers of the impact of their global expansion. By the middle of the nineteenth-century, Kashmir was a household name across Britain; it was a commodity that had permeated European fashion.¹⁸

Some historians have explored negative facets of this phenomenon, arguing that the commodification and co-option of the shawl by the West should be seen as colonialism; that it was only made possible by violent imperialism.¹⁹ Others have used the shawl's history as a vector for the examination of nineteenth-century society and culture, in particular, because of the shawls role in informing aspects of gender and class identity.²⁰

In the history of the global economy, the Kashmir shawl provides an important reminder of the historical primacy of Asia, specifically India, in the production of textiles. The first industrial revolution, when Britain and France mechanised the production of the Kashmir shawl and co-opted its design for the European consumer, can now be contextualised as a historical aberration since it was the only period when Asia ceded this primacy to Western Europe. Technological progress, and the replacement of a cottage industry with large-scale manufacturing were central to economic change in nineteenth-century Europe.

The story of the shawl reflects the broader economic change: a luxury handcrafted item of incomparable quality imitated for mass-market middle-class consumption through the use of new production methods. Industrialisation rendered the most exclusive garment, once the preserve of the Mughal courtly elite, a commonplace household item in Europe. By the twenty first century, a 'Pashmina' shawl was an accessory that could be easily purchased on the streets of London, New York, or Paris for little more than cost of a daily meal.

Endnotes

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³ Emery, Irene, *The Primary Structures of Fabrics*, Washington DC Textile Museum, 1966, p.106.

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⁶ Yale University Art Gallery, *The Kashmir Shawl*, New Haven, 1975, p.34.

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²⁰ Hiner, Susan, *Lust for "Luxe": "Cashmere Fever" in Nineteenth-Century France*, *Journal for Early Modern Cultural Studies*, Vol. 5, No. 1 (Spring - Summer, 2005), pp.76-78.